

Mother's Day

A Historical Overview and the Scholars' Rulings on This Day (1)

Definition of the Word 'Eid

As Mother's Day is known in Arabic as "Eid al-Umm" or "Mothers' Festival"; the word Eid is derive from the root 'aada/ya'ood meaning to come back or return.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said:

"Eid (festival) is a name that is given to an occasion which returns, when people gather in a festive manner, whether that is annual or weekly or monthly and so on." (Iqtidaa' al-Siraat al- Mustaqeem, 1/441).

Ibn 'Aabideen (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

" An 'Eid is so called because Allaah repeatedly bestows blessings, i.e., kinds of blessings that come back to His slaves on these days, such as breaking the fast after refraining from eating, sadaqat al-fitr (obligatory charity paid at the end of Ramadaan), completing the Hajj by doing Tawaaf al-Ziyaarah, the sacrificial meats, and so on; and because the tradition on such occasions is to express joy and happiness, and to be energetic and happy." (Haashiyat Ibn'Aabideen, 2/165)

How many festivals are there in Islam?

The Muslim may note the large number of festivals that are observed among the Muslims nowadays, such as the Festival of Trees, Workers' Day (May Day), anniversaries of the king's accession to the throne, birthdays, etc... There is a long list of such days, but each of these is the innovation of the Jews, Christians and polytheists; they have no basis in Islam. There are no festivals in Islam apart from 'Eid al-Adha' and 'Eid al-Fitr.

It was narrated that Anas ibn Maalik said:

"During the Jaahiliyyah, the people had two days each year when they would play. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Madeenah he said, 'You had two days on which you would play, but Allaah has given you something better than them: the day of al-Fitr and the day of al-Adha.'" (Narrated by Abu Dawood, 1134; al-Nasaa'i, 1556; classed as saheeh by Shaykh al- Albaani).

Honouring one's mother

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Worship Allaah and join none with Him (in worship); and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, Al-Masaakeen (the poor), the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess. Verily, Allaah does not like such as are proud and boastful.” [al-Nisaa4:36]

And Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour” [al-Isra' 17:23]

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah said:

“A man came to the Messenger of Allaah (pbuh) and said: ‘O Messenger of Allaah, who among the people is most deserving of my good company?’ He said, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then who?’ He said, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then who?’ He said, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then who?’ He said, ‘Then your father.’” (Narrated by al- Bukhaari, 5626; Muslim, 2548)

Al-Haafidh ibn Hajar said:

“Ibn Battaal said: what this means is that the mother should be honoured three times more than the father. He said, that is because of the difficulties of pregnancy, then giving birth, then breastfeeding. These are hardships that are experienced only by the mother, then the father shares with her in raising the child. This is also referred to in the aayah (interpretation of the meaning):

‘And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years’ [Luqmaan 31:14]

So the recommendation to be dutiful and good refers to both parents, but the mother's share is greater because of the three things mentioned above. Al-Qurtubi said: what is meant is that the mother deserves a greater share of her child's honour, and her rights take precedence over those of the father in cases where a choice must be made. ‘Iyaad said: the majority of scholars were of the view that the mother takes precedence over the father in terms of honouring one's parents. And it was said that both must be honoured equally, and this was narrated by some from Maalik, but the former view is the one which is correct.” (Fath al-Baari, 10/402).

Indeed, even if one's mother is a mushrikah (polytheist), the wise and pure sharee'ah of Islam encourages one to uphold ties of kinship with her:

It was narrated that Asmaa' bint Abi Bakr said:

“My mother came to visit me at the time of the Messenger of Allaah (pbuh) and she was a mushrikah. I consulted the Messenger of Allaah (pbuh), saying, ‘My mother has come to visit me for some purpose, should I uphold ties of kinship with my mother?’ He said, ‘Yes, uphold ties of kinship with your mother.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2477)

Mothers in Kaafir Countries

Those who study the situation of families in general and of mothers in particular in the non-Muslim societies will hear and read of strange things. You can hardly find any complete family whose members keep in touch with one another, let alone meeting and conversing or staying together. As some observers in kaafir countries have said: "In the marketplaces or streets you may see a mother and her son or daughter, or a father and his son or daughter, but you will rarely see a whole family going shopping or walking in the streets." When the father or mother grows old, the best among their children hastens to put them in seniors' homes. Some Muslims went to some of these homes and asked a dozen of seniors what their greatest wish was. All of them said, "Death!" That is only because each of them is living in misery, grief and regret for the way they have ended up and the way their children have deserted them at the time when they need them most.

Timing of Mother's Day in Different Countries

The date of Mother's Day, and the way in which it is celebrated, differs from one country to another. In Norway it is celebrated on the second Sunday in February. In Argentina it is celebrated on the second Sunday in October. In Lebanon it is on the first day of spring. In South Africa it is celebrated on the first Sunday in May. In France it is celebrated more as a family festival, on the last Sunday in May, when family members get together for dinner, then they give a cake to the mother.

Sweden also has a holiday for Family Day on the last Sunday of May. A few days before that the Swedish Red Cross sells small plastic roses for people to give to their mothers who will spend the holiday taking care of their children. In Japan this day is celebrated on the second Sunday in May, as in North America, where exhibitions are held of pictures drawn by children aged 6-14; these exhibitions are called "My Mother" This exhibition is moved every four years and has appeared in a number of countries.

Mother's Day – A Historical Overview

Some researchers have said:

"Some historians have suggested that Mother's Day started with the ancient Greeks' celebrations of spring festivals. These festivals were devoted to the mother goddess Rhea, the wife of Cronos, the father god. In ancient Rome there was a similar celebration devoted to the worship or veneration of Sybil, another mother of the gods. This began approximately 250 years before the birth of the Messiah [peace be upon him]. These religious celebrations of the Romans were called "Hilaria" and lasted for three days from March 15 to March 18."

Sunday in England

This was a day similar to the modern Mother's Day celebration, but it was called "Mothering Sunday" or (the Sunday half-way through Lent), because it occurred during their major fasting period (Lent). Some say that the celebrations that were held to worship and honour the Roman goddess Sybil were changed by the church to celebrations meant to honour and venerate Mary (peace be upon her). This custom began with some people encouraging people to visit the central church in their locality, bringing offerings. In 1600 young men and women of simple professions and servants started to visit their mothers on "Mothering Sunday", bringing gifts and food. This is what happened in England. In the USA it was a different story.

The United States

Anna M. Jarvis (1864-1948): She had the idea of making Mother's Day an official holiday in the United States. She never married and she had a very strong relationship with her mother. She was the daughter of a minister and Grafton, West Virginia. Two years after her mother died, she launched a campaign addressed to bosses, ministers and congressmen, to declare Mother's Day an official holiday in the country. She felt that children did not appreciate what their mothers had done for them during their lives, and she hoped that this day would strengthen the feelings of children for their mothers and fathers, and strengthen family ties.

The Beginning

The church honoured Miss Anna Jarvis in Grafton, West Virginia, and in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania on May 10, 1908. This was the beginning of Mother's Day in the United States. Carnations were one of her mother's favourite flowers, especially white ones, because they were supposed to represent goodness, purity and patience, which are characteristic of a mother's love. As time went by, red carnations became a symbol that the mother was still alive, and white carnations became a symbol that the mother had passed away.

The first official declaration of Mother's Day in the United States was in West Virginia and Oklahoma in 1910. In 1911 the entire U.S. celebrated this day. By then these celebrations had also spread to Mexico, Canada, China, Japan, Latin America and Africa. Then the U.S. Congress officially agreed to announce celebrations of Mother's Day, on May 10, 1913, and the first Sunday in May was chosen as Mother's Day.

Mother's Day in the Arab World

The idea of celebrating Mother's Day in the Arab world began in Egypt, and was started by the two brothers Mustafa and 'Ali Ameen, the founders of the Akhbaar al-Yawm newspaper. 'Ali Ameen himself had received a letter from a mother complaining of her children's meanness and bad treatment towards her, and suffering because of their failure to appreciate her. It so happened that another mother visited Mustafa Ameen in his office and told him her story; briefly, she had been widowed when her children were small, and she had not remarried. She had devoted her life to her children, playing the role of both father and mother, spending all her energy in taking care of her children, until they left to go to university and get married. Each of them was living an independent life, and they only visited her on rare occasions. Mustafa Ameen and 'Ali Ameen wrote in their famous column Fikrah ("Idea") suggesting that a day should be set aside for mothers, to remember their virtues. They

pointed out that the west did that, and that Islam enjoined taking care of one's mother. Many letters were sent to the newspaper, supporting this idea. Some suggested that a whole week should be devoted to mothers, not just one day, and others rejected the idea, saying that every day of the year should be for one's mother, not just one day. But most readers agreed with the idea of setting aside one day, and they voted to choose March 21, which is also the first day of spring, to be Mother's Day and a symbol of open-heartedness, purity and beautiful feelings. Egypt celebrated Mother's Day for the first time on March 21, 1956. From Egypt this idea spread to other Arab countries. At some point some people suggested that Mother's Day should be called Family Day, so as to honour fathers as well, but this idea was not widely accepted, as people thought that this detracted from the rights of mothers, or they accused the proponents of the Family Day idea of thinking that it was too much to allocate a day just for mothers. Even now the Arab countries still celebrate this day through the various kinds of media and honour the ideal mothers who have gone through immense struggles for their children's sake at every level. After knowing that, it comes as no surprise that most of those who celebrate Mother's Day are the Jews and Christians and those who imitate them, and that they say that this is because of their concern for women and mothers, and that Mother's Day is celebrated by some of the Masonic clubs in the Arab world such as the Rotary Club and Lions Club. We may also note that Mother's Day, which is March 21 (in the Arab world) is also the New Year of the Coptic Christians, and the Nawroz festival of the Kurds.

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