

Status of Eid prayer in Islam

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The Eid Prayer is wajib (obligatory) according to the majority of scholars. The Prophet (peace be upon him) performed it consistently and commanded all the people to go out for it.

He (peace be upon him) even specifically commanded all of the women to attend; Umm `Atiyah (may Allah be please with her) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded:

Let the free women, the virgins, and the menstruating women go out to attend the Eid prayer, and witness the good and the supplications of the believers. As for the menstruating women, they should stay away from the musalla. (i.e., should not participate in the prayer itself).

Sheikhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said: "... Thus we lean towards the opinion that Salatul-Eid is fard `Ayn (individual obligation) on each individual. This is the opinion of Abu Hanifah and others, and is one of the two reported opinions of ash-Shafi`i and of the school of Ahmad. The

opinion held by some people, that it is not wajib, it is extremely unlikely, because it is one of the greatest rites of Islam; more people gather for it than for Friday; and the Takbir has been legislated for its sake. The opinion of those who say that it is fard kifayah (communal obligation) is unjustified..."

Ash-Shawkani said: "Note that the Prophet (peace be upon him) consistently performed this prayer on every Eid, never neglecting it. He commanded the people to go out for it; he even commanded the free women, the virgins, and the menstruating women to go out, instructing the latter to refrain from praying, in order for all of them to witness this good and the Muslims' supplications. He (peace be upon him) further commanded the woman who did not own a jilbab (outer overall garment for women) to borrow her friend's.

All of this proves that this prayer is wajib on every individual, not only a kifayah obligation. Commanding the people to go out for it entails the command to perform the prayer (for those who have no excuse). This is the content of his (peace be upon him) address, because going out is a means for performing the prayer (an end); if the means is obligatory, then the end is. And this obligation applies to men even more so than women.

Further evidence is that it overrides the Friday prayer when both occur on the same day. That which is not wajib cannot override that which is.

Furthermore, it is confirmed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed it consistently in Jama`ah (congregation) from the time that it was legislated until he died. To this is added his command to people to go out for it."

Commenting on the Hadith of Umm `Atiyyah, our sheikh al-Albani states: "The Prophet's (peace be upon him) command mentioned here indicates obligation; when it is wajib to go out for it, it is wajib to pray it, because of its higher priority. Thus the truth is that it is an obligation - not a mere recommendation."

No prayer before or after Eid prayer

No sunnah prayer may precede or follow the Eid prayer - except if it is performed in a masjid instead of the musalla, in which case one must pray two Rak`at before sitting down. Ibn `Abbas narrated:

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) went out (of his house) on the day of Fitr, prayed two Rak`at, and did not pray before or after it."

Ibnul-Qayyim said: "Neither he (peace be upon him) nor his companions prayed when they arrived at the musalla - before the prayer or after it."

And Ibn Hajar said: "... In short, there is no confirmed sunnah prayer before or after the Eid

prayer - contrary to those who compare it to the Jumu`ah prayer."

But it is confirmed from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri that:

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) would not pray at all before the Eid prayer; but when he returned to his house, he prayed."

Al-Albani commented on this: "So the negation of praying before and after the Eid prayer refers only to praying at the musalla."

Time of the Eid Prayer

`Abdullah Bin Busr (may Allah be please with him) went out with some people to pray on a Fitr or Adha morning. He expressed his disapproval of the imam's delay of the prayer beyond the time of tasbih, and said:

"We (at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him)) used to be finished with the prayer by now."

This is the most authentic report regarding this issue. There are other reports, but are not confirmed in terms of their chains of narrators. Ibnul-Qayyim said:

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) delayed the prayer of Eidul-Fitr, and was prompt with that of al-Adha. And Ibn `Umar, despite his extreme adherence to the Sunnah, would not go out until the sun had risen."

Siddiq Hasan Khan said: "The time of the two Eid prayers is after the sun has reached the height of a spear, and until noon. The consensus of the scholars about this is in agreement with the (related) Hadiths - despite their weakness."

Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri said: "The time of the two Eid's prayers is after the sun has reached the height of a spear, and until noon. However, it is best to pray al-Adha at the earliest time, to enable the people to slaughter their sacrifices; and is recommended to delay al-Fitr prayer, to enable the people to give out their Sadaqah (zakatul-Fitr)."

Late report of crescent sighting

If the day of Eid is not determined until late in the day (past the time of the Eid prayer), then the Eid prayer is held the next day. Abu `Umayr Bin Anas reported that some of his uncles, who were from the Ansar, and who were companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), told him:

"The crescent of Shawwal was obscure to us. So we continued to fast that morning; later in the day, a group of travelers arrived and testified before Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) that they had seen the hilal (crescent) the previous day; so he (peace be upon him) commanded the people to break their fast on that day, and to go out to the musalla the following morning."

No Athan or Iqama

The Eid prayer is not preceded with Athan or Iqamah. Jabir Bin Samurah reported: "I prayed the Eid prayer with Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him), on more than one occasion, without Athan or Iqamah."

Ibn `Abbas and Jabir (may Allah be please with him) said: "Athan was never given (for the Eid prayer) on the day of Fitr, nor the day of Adha."

Ibnul-Qayyim said: "He (peace be upon him) would arrive at the musalla and start the prayer without Athan, Iqamah, or announcing, 'Congregate for prayer'. The Sunnah is not to do any of that."

Al-San`ani commented on the above reports: "This provides evidence that it is not permissible to do that (announcing) for the Eid prayer. So, doing it is a bid`ah (innovation)."