226504 - How should she react to her friends and the gifts that they offer her on her birthday?

the question

I have a problem; I am not quite sure about the ruling on celebrating birthdays. Is it in innovation (bid‘ah) that is tantamount to disbelief (kufr)? I am hoping for clarification from you, because I heard that celebrating birthdays is a type of innovation, but I may find myself with no option but to accept some congratulations from some of my friends, or even accept some gifts as well on my birthday. In this case, I have no choice but to respond politely to this kindness, according to etiquette, meaning that I should say some words of thanks and appreciation to the one who gives me a gift or congratulates me. Of course I do not intend by doing that to introduce anything into the religion, because I know that this is an innovation, but I have been compelled to deal with this matter against my wishes. Does this mean that all my righteous deeds in the future will never be accepted?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Celebrating one’s birthday is haram and is not permissible, for two reasons:

1. Because it is an innovation that has been newly introduced, and introducing repeated celebrations is not permissible.

2. It is an imitation of the disbelievers, because this is one of their traditions. This has been discussed previously in the answers to questions no. 1027 and 26804 .

The wisdom behind the prohibition on imitating or resembling the disbelievers in their outward

actions and traditions is to protect the Muslim from going astray, because the Shaytan may, if he begins to imitate them, gradually lead him to admire their way of life and conduct, as a result of which he will go astray from the truth as they went astray.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The reason for the prohibition is that imitating others in their outward conduct is a means that leads to emulating them in their aims and deeds."(*I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in* 5/13-14).

If a Muslim celebrates his birthday, that does not constitute disbelief and it does not cause the reward of his righteous deeds to be lost, but it is prohibited for the reasons mentioned above.

Secondly:

Feeling under pressure from your friends and acquaintances, which leads you to accept the congratulations and gifts and to thank the one who does that, could be interpreted as meaning that you are pleased with the celebration of this occasion.

In such cases, what you should do is explain the shar'i ruling gently and kindly, and in a good way, to those who offer gifts and congratulations.

If you are afraid that the relationship between you and them may be spoiled as a result of that, then you can thank them for their kindness and explain to them that you will accept the gift because of the friendship and love that there is between you, and not because of your birthday. You can also ask them not to do this again, because you do not celebrate this occasion at all, and this occasion only concerns you [and you do not want to celebrate it], so why would others celebrate it?

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 146449 .

And Allah knows best.