60252 - What Is 'Aqiqah?

the question

What is 'aqiqah? Is 'aqiqah mentioned in the Quran? Is 'aqiqah mentioned in the sunnah? When should 'aqiqah be offered? What are the rulings on 'aqiqah for a baby boy and a baby girl? Why should I offer one sheep for a girl and two for a boy?

Summary of answer

1. 'Aqiqah refers to the sacrifice that is offered on behalf of the newborn on the seventh day after birth.
2. There are sahih ahadith from the Prophet which prove that ‘aqiqah is prescribed in Islam.
3. It is prescribed to slaughter two sheep for a newborn boy and one sheep for a girl, as is indicated by the saheeh evidence.
4. The best time for offering the ‘aqiqah is seven days after birth.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What is 'aqiqah?

'Aqiqah refers to the sacrifice that is offered on behalf of the newborn on the seventh day after birth. 'Aqiqah was known among the Arabs during the Jahiliyyah. Al-Mawardi said: 'Aqiqah refers to a sheep that is slaughtered on the occasion of the birth; it was a custom practised by the Arabs before Islam. (*Al-Hawi al-Kabir*, 15/126)

Is 'aqiqah sunnah?

There are sahih ahadith from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) which prove

that 'aqiqah is prescribed in Islam , such as the following:

1 –Buraydah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: During the Jahiliyyah, if a boy was born to one of us, we would slaughter a sheep and smear his head with its blood. When Allah brought Islam, we would slaughter a sheep and shave (the child's) head and smear it with saffron. (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 2843; classed as sahih by Shaykh al-Albani in Sahih Abi Dawud)

Saffron is a type of perfume.

2 –Salman ibn 'Amir (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "For a boy there should be 'aqiqah so shed blood for him and remove the dirt from him." (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5154)

'Aqiqah for a male newborn and a female newborn

It is prescribed to slaughter two sheep for a newborn boy and one sheep for a girl, as is indicated by the sahih evidence, such as the following:

1 –Umm Karaz narrated that she asked the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about 'aqiqah, and he said: "For a boy, two sheep, and for a female one sheep, and it does not matter if it is male or female." (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 1516, who said this is a sahih hasan hadith; and by al-Nasai, 4217; classed as sahih by Shaykh al-Albani in Irwa al-Ghalil, 4/391)

2 – 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded them (to slaughter) two sheep of similar type for a boy and one sheep for a girl. (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 1513, who said it is hasan sahih; classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih al-Tirmidhi)

'Aqiqah: Why one sheep for a girl and two for a boy?

These ahadith clearly show that there is a difference between male and female with regard to 'aqiqah.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) explained this difference between male and female as follows:

“This is a principle of Shari’ah, for Allah differentiates between male and female, and gives the female half the share of the male in terms of inheritance, *diyah*, testimony, freeing slaves and ‘aqiqah, as was narrated by al-Tirmidhi in a hadith which he classed as sahih from Umamah from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who said: “Any Muslim who frees a Muslim, he will be his ransom from the Fire, and each of (the slave’s) limbs will suffice for his limbs. Any Muslim man who sets free two Muslim women, they will be his ransom from the Fire, and each of their limbs will suffice for his limbs.” (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 1547)

This differentiation with regard to ‘aqiqah would apply even if there was no clear sunnah concerning the matter, so how about when the Sunnah is clearly established and shows that there is this differentiation?” (*Tuhfat al-Mawdud*, p. 53, 54)

Ibn al-Qayyim also said:

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has favoured the male over the female, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And the male is not like the female” [Aal ‘Imran 3:36]

This differentiation is reflected in Islamic rulings, whereby the male is regarded as equivalent to two females in terms of testimony, inheritance and blood money (*diyah*), and ‘aqiqah also comes under these rulings.” (*Zad al-Ma’ad*, 2/331)

What are the benefits of 'aqiqah?

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

“Among the benefits of ‘aqiqah is that it is a sacrifice that is offered on behalf of the newborn when he first emerges into this world.

Another benefit is that it “releases” the newborn, for he is held in pledge for his ‘aqiqah so that he may intercede for his parents.

Another benefit is that it is a ransom that is paid for the newborn just as Allah, may He be exalted, ransomed Isma’il with the ram.” (*Tuhfat al-Mawdud*, p. 69)

What is the best to offer 'aqiqah?

The best time for offering the ‘aqiqah is seven days after birth, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Every child is held in pledge for his ‘aqiqah, which should be slaughtered on his behalf on the seventh day, and he should be shaved and given his name.” (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 2838; classed as sahih by Shaykh al-Albani in Sahih Abi Dawud)

If it is delayed until after the seventh day, there is no sin, and it should be offered when the Muslim is able to do that.

And Allah knows best.