127851 - Takbir in Unison Before the ‘Eid Prayer

the question

Before the `Eid prayer, the people recite dhikr (words of remembrance) in unison. Is this an innovation or is it  prescribed in the `Eid prayer? If it is regarded as an innovation, what should we do? Should we leave the prayer place until the prayer begins?

Summary of answer

Takbir in unison before ‘Eid prayer is an innovation because there is no evidence for it, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever does an action that is not part of this matter of ours will have it rejected.” What `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did is not evidence for reciting takbir in unison; rather what `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did was to say takbir by himself, and when the people heard him they said takbir, each one by himself. This does not indicate that they all said takbir in unison.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The takbir (formula used to magnify Allah) of `Eid is one of the Sunnahs (Prophetic traditions) that were prescribed by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and it is an act of worship like all other acts of worship: we should limit ourselves to what is narrated and it is not permissible to introduce anything new into the way it is done; rather that which is narrated in the Sunnah and reports is sufficient.

Our jurists have examined the takbir in unison that is done nowadays, and they did not find any evidence to support it, so they ruled that it is an innovation. This is because introducing a new act of worship or introducing a new manner in which an act of worship is done is regarded as a blameworthy innovation and is included in the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah

be upon him): “Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not part of it will have it rejected.” (Narrated by Muslim, 1718)

Al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibrahim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The takbir which was done in al-Masjid al-Haram on the day of `Eid was where one person or a number of people would sit on the roof of Zamzam and say takbir, and the people would repeat after them in the mosque. Then al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz denounced this way and said that it was an innovation. What the Shaykh meant was that it was a partial innovation when done in this particular manner. He did not mean that the takbir itself was an innovation. Some of the common folk of Makkah were upset by this, because they were used to it, and this is the reason why he sent this message. With regard to doing the takbir in this manner, I do not know of any basis for it. The one who claims that this way is prescribed in Shar`iah (Islamic law) has to bring proof and evidence. Moreover, this is a minor issue that should not have reached the level it did.” (Majmu’ Fatawa al-‘Allamah Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, 3/127, 128)

Al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad and all his family and Companions.

I have studied what was published by the respected Shaykh, Ahmad ibn Muhammad Jamal (may Allah help him to do that which pleases Him) in one of the local newspapers, in which he says that he finds odd the ban on takbir in unison in the mosque before the `Eid prayer because it is regarded as an innovation which must be stopped. In his article, al-Shaykh Ahmad tries to prove that takbir in unison is not an innovation and that it is not permissible to ban it, and his opinion is supported by some writers. Because of the fear that this matter may cause confusion for those who do not know the truth, we have to explain that the basic principle with regard to the takbir on the night before `Eid and before the `Eid prayer of `Eid al-Fitr after Ramadan, and during the first ten days of Dhu’l-Hijjah, and on the days of al-tashriq, is that it is prescribed at these great times and that it has a great deal of virtue, because Allah says concerning the takbir on `Eid al-Fitr

(interpretation of the meaning):

“(He wants that you) must complete the same number (of days), and that you must magnify Allah [i.e. to say Takbir (Allahu Akbar: Allah is the Most Great)] for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him.” [al-Baqarah 2:185]

And He says about the first ten days of Dhu’l-Hijjah and the days of al-tashriq (interpretation of the meaning):

“That they may witness things that are of benefit to them (i.e. reward of Hajj in the Hereafter, and also some worldly gain from trade), and mention the Name of Allah on appointed days (i.e. 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th day of Dhul-Hijjah), over the beast of cattle that He has provided for them (for sacrifice).” [al-Hajj 22:28]

“And remember Allah during the appointed Days.” [al-Baqarah 2:203]

What is included in the dhikr that is prescribed on these known days is both takbir in general and specific takbir, as is indicated by the Sunnah and the actions of the early Muslims (the salaf). The description of the takbir that is prescribed is that each Muslim should say takbir by himself on his own, raising his voice enough so that the people can hear him and follow his example and be reminded by it. As for the innovated takbir in unison, that is when a group of people -- two or more -- raise their voices in saying takbir together, so they start together and end together in unison and in a certain manner.

There is no basis for doing this and there is no evidence to support it, so it is an innovation in the manner of takbir for which Allah has not sent down any authority. So the one who denounces takbir done in this manner is in the right, because the Prophet (peace and blessings 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 Muslim), i.e., it is rejected and is not prescribed. And he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Beware of newly invented matters, for every newly invented matter is an innovation and every innovation is a going astray.” The takbir in unison is a newly invented matter, so it is an innovation. If what the people do is contrary to the Shari`ah then it

must be stopped and denounced, because the acts of worship are tauqifi (i.e., limited to what is mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah) and nothing is prescribed therein except what is indicated by the Quran and Sunnah. As for people's views and opinions, they cannot be taken as proof if they go against the shar'i evidence. Similarly, acts of worship cannot be proven on the basis of al-masalih al-mursalah (i.e., that which serves the interests of the Muslim community). Acts of worship can only be proven with a text from the Quran or Sunnah, or definitive scholarly consensus.

What is prescribed is for each Muslim to say takbir in the manner prescribed and proven according to the shar'i evidence, which is to say takbir individually.

Takbir in unison was denounced and banned by al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, the mufti of Saudi Arabia (may Allah have mercy on him), and he issued a fatwa (verdict) concerning that. I have issued more than one fatwa stating that it is not allowed, and a fatwa stating that it is not allowed was also issued by the scholars of the Standing Committee for Academic Research and Issuing Fatwas.

Al-Shaykh Hammud ibn 'Abd-Allah al-Tuwaijri (may Allah have mercy on him) wrote an important essay denouncing and banning it, which has been printed and is in circulation. In this essay he quotes sufficient evidence to show that takbir in unison is not allowed, praise be to Allah. As for what our brother al-Shaykh Ahmad quoted about the actions of 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and the people in Mina, this does not prove anything, because what he (may Allah be pleased with him) and the people did in Mina does not come under the heading of takbir in unison; rather it comes under the heading of takbir that is prescribed, because he (may Allah be pleased with him) raised his voice in takbir in accordance with the Sunnah and so as to remind the people of it, so they said takbir, each one on his own. This does not mean that they and 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) agreed to raise their voices in takbir in unison from beginning to end, as those who say takbir in unison do nowadays. Thus everything that is narrated from the righteous early generations (may Allah have mercy on them) about the takbir was all done in the prescribed manner. Anyone who claims something other than that has to produce evidence. Similarly, the call

to prayer for the `Eid prayer , Tarawih, qiyam (night prayer) or Witr is all innovation for which there is no basis. It is proven in the sahih hadiths (authentic narrations) from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that he used to offer the `Eid prayer with no adhan (call to prayer) or iqamah (final call to prayer), and as far as we know, none of the scholars said that there is a call with other words. The one who claims that has to establish proof. The basic principle is that there is no call to prayer in these cases. So it is not permissible for anyone to prescribe an act of worship, whether it involves words or actions, except with evidence from the Noble Quran or the sahih Sunnah or scholarly consensus -- as stated above -- because of the general meaning of the shar'i evidence which forbade innovation and warned against it, such as the verse in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Or have they partners with Allah (false gods) who have instituted for them a religion which Allah has not ordained?" [al-Shura 42:21]

This evidence also includes the two hadiths mentioned above, such as that in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not part of it will have it rejected." (Sahih – agreed upon)

And he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said in the Jumu'ah khutbah (Friday sermon): "To proceed. The best of speech is the Book of Allah and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The worst of matters are those which are newly invented and every innovation is a going astray." Narrated by Muslim in his Sahih. And there are many similar hadiths and reports.

And it is Allah Whom we ask to guide us and al-Shaykh Ahmad and all our brothers to the proper understanding of His Religion and help us to remain steadfast in adhering to it, and to make us all callers to guidance and supporters of the truth, and to protect us and all the Muslims from everything that is contrary to His laws, for He is Most Generous. May Allah send peace and blessings upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and Companions." (Majmu' Fatawa Ibn Baz, 13/20-23)

It says in Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah, 8/310:

“Each person should say takbir out loud, but there is no proof from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) for reciting takbir in unison. He said: “Whoever does an action that is not part of this matter of ours will have it rejected.”

It also says (8/311):

“Reciting takbir in unison is not prescribed; rather, it is an innovation, because it is proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever introduces something into this matter of ours that is not part of it will have it rejected.” The righteous early generation (the salaf) did not do that, neither the Sahabah nor the Tabi’in, nor those who followed them, and they are the example to be followed, and what is required is to follow and not innovate in matters of religion.”

It also says (24/269):

“Takbir in unison is an innovation, because there is no evidence for it, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever does an action that is not part of this matter of ours will have it rejected.” What ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did is not evidence for reciting takbir in unison; rather what ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did was to say takbir by himself, and when the people heard him they said takbir, each one by himself. This does not indicate that they all said takbir in unison .”

It also says (2/236), volume 2:

“Reciting takbir all together in unison after the prayer or at times other than prayer is not prescribed; rather it is an innovation that has been introduced into the Religion. What is prescribed is to remember Allah a great deal, without reciting in unison, by reciting tahlil, tasbih and takbir, reading the Quran, and asking for a great deal of forgiveness, in obedience with the words of Allah (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Remember Allah with much remembrance.

And glorify His Praises morning and afternoon." [al-Ahzab 33:41-42]

"Therefore, remember Me (by praying, glorifying). I will remember you." [al-Baqarah 2:152];

and in obedience to what was encouraged by the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he said:

"To say Subhan Allah wa'l-hamdu Lillah wa la ilaha ill-Allah wa Allahu akbar (Glory be to Allah, praise be to Allah, there is no God but Allah and Allah is most great) is dearer to me than everything on which the sun rises." Narrated by Muslim. And he said: "Whoever says Subhan Allah wa bi hamdihi (Glory and praise be to Allah) one hundred times a day will have his sins forgiven, even if they are like the foam of the sea." (Narrated by Muslim and al-Tirmidhi)

And it is following the early generation of this ummah, as it is not narrated from them that they recited takbir in unison; rather that was done by those who follow innovations and whims and desires. Moreover, dhikr is an act of worship, and the basic principle with regard to acts of worship is that they should be restricted to that which is enjoined by the Lawgiver, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) warned against innovations in Religion and said: "Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not part of it will have it rejected."

And Allah knows best.