178782 - The people of their village who follow the Hanafi madhhab delay Eid prayer; should they pray on their own?

the question

I live in a village in India, with a population of approximately five thousand people, all of whom are Muslims who follow the Hanafi madhhab, apart from fifty of them who follow the Salafi path. I am one of these fifty. The men of the village, of whom there are approximately two thousand, delay offering the Eid prayer on Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, until 11 o'clock in the morning, and the way in which they offer the prayer is also different. Therefore we fifty people decided to withdraw from them and offer the prayer on our own, and to avoid mixing with them. What is your opinion? Is this decision correct? Or is it better to mix with them and pray with them, despite all these differences? I hope that you will answer, mentioning the views of the scholars.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We ask Allah, may He be exalted, to unite you on truth and goodness, and to bring about harmony between you in obedience to Him. We are very happy to see all Muslims following the path of the salaf (early generations) in terms of beliefs, rulings and conduct, for we believe that all goodness is in the following those who came before us.

You should understand that the Salafi way does not approve of causing division among the Muslims; rather unity and harmony among the Muslims are among the greatest aims of sharee'ah. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah (i.e. this Qur'an), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allah's Favour on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren (in Islamic Faith), and you

were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.,) clear to you, that you may be guided”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:103].

This harmony and unity becomes more necessary if division is due to minor practical issues of fiqh in which there is room for differences of opinion. The Salafi way is very tolerant towards differences of opinion, even if these differences have to do with other matters that are more important than the issues that you mentioned. They regard it as permissible to pray behind an imam who differs with the one who is praying behind him with regard to that which invalidates wudoo’, such as whether wudoo’ is invalidated by eating camel meat, and even with regard to some essential parts of the prayer, such as the Hanafi view that reciting al-Faatihah is not an essential part of the prayer. They also regard as acceptable the prayer of one who thinks that the Basmalah (the phrase “Bismillah ir-Rahmaan ir-Raheem (in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful)”) is not a verse of al-Faatihah behind an imam who thinks that it is a verse. And the same is true of some other issues which we do not have room to discuss here, so these examples will suffice.

Please see the scholars’ views concerning this matter in the answers to questions no. 59925, 12585 and 66613.

All of this is assuming that there is a difference of opinion between what you think is the correct time for the Eid prayer and what the Hanafi brothers who differ with you think. So how about if there is no difference of opinion between you concerning this matter? The time when these brothers pray is the time for the Eid prayer according to scholarly consensus! All the madhhabs are agreed that the end of the time for the Eid prayer is when the sun reaches the meridian, i.e., close to the time for Zuhr prayer. However they differ concerning the beginning of its time. The view of the majority of Maalikis, Hanafis and Hanbalis is that the time for it begins from when the sun reaches the height of a spear, whilst the Shaafa‘is are of the view that the time for it begins from when the sun first rises.

It says in al-Mawsoo‘ah al-Fiqhiyyah (27/243): The majority of fuqaha’ – Hanafis, Maalikis and Hanbalis – are of the view that the time for Eid prayer begins when the sun has risen to the height of a spear, as seen with the naked eye – which is the time when it becomes permissible to offer naafil prayers – and its time lasts until the sun reaches the meridian. The Shaafa‘is say that its time lasts from sunrise until the meridian. The evidence that they quote for its time beginning with sunrise is that it is a prayer that is done for a reason, so no attention need be paid to the times during which (naafil) prayers are disallowed. End quote.

Based on that, there is no difference of scholarly opinion that what these brothers are doing is permissible and is in accordance with Islamic teachings about the performance of the Eid prayer on time. But they should be advised with regard to Eid al-Adha prayer, to bring it forward so that there will be more time available afterwards to offer the sacrifices. But there is nothing wrong with delaying the time of Eid al-Fitr prayer, so that the Muslims will have time to distribute the zakat al-fitr to those who are entitled to it, for the best time to distribute zakat al-fitr is between Fajr on the day of Eid and the Eid prayer.

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It is Sunnah to bring forward the time of Eid al-Adha prayer to allow more time for offering the sacrifice, and to delay Eid al-Fitr prayer so as to allow more time for giving zakat al-fitr. This is the view of ash-Shaafa‘i and I do not know of any difference of opinion concerning that. … and because each Eid fulfils a purpose. The purpose of Eid al-Fitr is to give zakat al-fitr, and the time to doing that is before the prayer. And the purpose of Eid al-Adha is to offer the sacrifice, and the time for doing that is after the prayer. So delaying the prayer on Eid al-Fitr and bringing it forward on Eid al-Adha allows more time for fulfilling the purpose of each Eid.

End quote from al-Mughni (2/232)

So our advice to you is to join the people of your town, praying behind one imam for the Eid prayer and for Jumu‘ah prayer and prayers in congregation. Beware of being a cause of division among the Muslims, for the path of the Salaf is too sublime and too important for its followers to be a cause of division among the Muslims. But that does not mean that you should not explain the

Sunnah to people with regard to their worship. But you have to differentiate between matters in which there is room for differences of opinion and matters in which there is no such room. With regard to the rituals of the Muslims, such as Jumu‘ah prayer and prayers in congregation, there is nothing in them that should cause division between you and any of the followers of the prominent fiqhi madhhabs. The answers to which we have referred you above explained that very clearly. May Allah guide you and take care of you.

And Allah knows best