20018 - Is Aqiqah Compulsory?

the question

Allah has blessed me with a baby boy, and I heard that my husband has to sacrifice two sheep for him for the `aqiqah. If his circumstances do not allow him to do that because he has many debts, is he excused from that? What takes priority hajj or `aqiqah?

Summary of answer

Scholars have different views on the ruling on `aqiqah. Some say that it is obligatory, some say that it is recommended and some say that it is a confirmed Sunnah. The latter is the most correct view. But there is no difference of opinion that `aqiqah is not obligatory for one who is poor, let alone one who is in debt.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Is Aqiqah Obligatory?

There is a difference of scholarly opinion concerning the ruling on `aqiqah , with there being three different views. Some say that it is obligatory, some say that it is mustahabb (recommended) and some say that it is Sunnah mu'akkadah (a confirmed Sunnah). The latter is the most correct view.

The Scholars of the Standing Committee said:

"`Aqiqah is Sunnah mu'akkadah . For a boy two sheep which meet the conditions for sacrifice should be slaughtered, and for a girl one sheep. The sheep should be slaughtered on the seventh day, but if it is delayed it is permissible to slaughter them at any time, and there is no sin in delaying it, but it is better to do it as soon as possible." (Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah, 11/439)

Is `aqiqah obligatory on the poor?

But there is no difference of opinion that `aqiqah is not obligatory for one who is poor, let alone one who is in debt. Something that is more important than `aqiqah – such as Hajj for example – does not take precedence over paying off debts.

So `aqiqah is not obligatory for you, because of your husband's financial circumstances.

The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked:

If I am blessed with a number of children, and I cannot do `aqiqah for one of them because I am not well off, as I am an employee and my salary is limited and is only sufficient to cover my monthly expenses, what is the ruling on the `aqiqahs of my children in Islam?

They replied:

"If the situation is as you described and you are not well off, and your income is only sufficient to cover your spending on yourself and those under your care, then there is nothing wrong with you not doing the `aqiqah for your children, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope." [Al-Baqarah 2:286]

"and [Allah] has not laid upon you in religion any hardship." [Al-Hajj 22:78]

"So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can." [Al-Taghabun 64:16]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If you are commanded to do a thing, do as much of it as you can; and if you are forbidden to do something then avoid it." So whenever you can afford it then it is prescribed for you to do it." (Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah, 11/436, 437)

The scholars of the Standing Committee were also asked:

A man had a number of sons and he did not do `aqiqah for them, because he was poor. A few

years later, Allah made him independent of means by His Bounty. Does he have to do `aqiqah?

They replied:

“If the situation is as described, then it is prescribed for him to do `aqiqah for them, two sheep for each boy.” (Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah, 11/441, 442)

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin was asked:

A man has a number of sons and daughters, and he did not do `aqiqah for any of them, either because of ignorance or carelessness. Some of them are grown up now. What should he do now?

He replied:

“If he does `aqiqah for them now, that will be good, if he was ignorant of the ruling or if he kept saying, “I will do `aqiqah tomorrow” until too much time had gone by. But if he was poor at the time when `aqiqah was prescribed, then he does not have to do anything.” (Liqa al-Bab al-Maftuh, 2/17-18)

His family do not have to do the slaughtering on his behalf, even though that is permissible, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did the `aqiqah for his grandsons al-Hasan and al-Husayn, as narrated by Abu Dawud (2841) and al-Nasai (4219), and classed as sahih by Shaykh al-Albani in Sahih Abi Dawud, 2466.

What takes priority; hajj or `aqiqah?

If you have to choose between Hajj and `aqiqah, then priority should definitely be given to Hajj. If you want to do `aqiqah for your children, that is permissible even if they are grown up. You do not have to tell the people whom you invite that this is an `aqiqah , and it is not permissible for them to make fun of what you are doing, because what you are doing is the right thing. It is not essential to cook the meat and invite the people, rather it is permissible to distribute the meat raw .

The scholars of the Standing Committee said:

“`Aqiqah refers to the animal sacrificed on the seventh day after birth as an act of thanksgiving to Allah for the blessing of a child, whether male or female. It is Sunnah, because of the hadiths that have been narrated concerning that. The person who does `aqiqah for his child has to invite people to come and eat it, in his house or wherever, or he can distribute the meat raw or cooked to the poor and to his relatives, neighbours, friends, etc.” (Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah, 11/442)

And Allah knows best.