

The Ruling Concerning Answering the Invitation for the One Who is Fasting

Fasting is not an excuse for not responding to the wedding feast invitation. If a person is invited while he is fasting, he must respond in the same way that one who is not fasting must respond. The purpose will be met by him simply appearing at the feast, even if he does not eat. The people offering the food and those present will benefit from his supplications or he is protected from what he would not be protected from in his absence.

It is obligatory on the fasting person to respond to the invitation but it is not obligatory upon him to eat. "It is confirmed that Abdullah ibn Umar used to respond to the invitation of a wedding feast or other feasts and he would come while he was fasting."¹

The fasting person will be in one of two cases:²

The first case is where he is fasting an obligatory fast, such as a fast that is the result of a vow or the fast of Ramadhan. If he is invited under this case, he must attend but he does not eat. This is because it is forbidden for him to break his obligatory fast for Allah has said,

وَلَا تُبْطِلُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ

"Do not invalidate your deeds" (*Muhammad* 33). It is preferred for the fasting person to inform [the host] so that they will know his excuse [for not eating].

In the second possible case, the person is performing a voluntary fast. In this case, he must respond to the invitation and it is permissible for him to break his fast or not to eat. However, if by not eating he will dishearten his host, it is best for him to break his fast and put his brother's heart at ease and make him happy by his breaking his fast.³ If that is not the case, it is better to complete the fast than to break it.

¹ *Al-Muballa Sharh al-Mujalla*, vol. 11, p. 22, issue #1824; *Fath al-Baari*, vol. 9, p. 246.

² *Al-Mughni*, vol. 10, p. 196, issue #1219.

³ *Al-Mughni*, vol. 10, p. 197.

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) saw a person separating himself from the people and he explained that he was fasting. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him,

دعاكم أخوكم وتكلف لكم كلُّ ثم صم يوماً مكانه إن شئت

“You brother has invited you and exerted efforts on your behalf. Eat and then fast another day in its place, if you wish.”¹

The one who was fasting an obligatory fast must attend and it is recommended for him to pray for the people and then leave. This is based on what Abu Hurairah narrated from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him),

إِذَا دُعِيَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيُجِبْ فَإِنْ كَانَ صَائِمًا فَلْيُصَلِّ وَإِنْ كَانَ مُفْطِرًا
فَلْيَطْعَمْ

“If one of you is invited, he must respond. If he were fasting, he should pray [or invoke blessings on the people] and if he were not fasting, he should eat.”²

Al-Nawawi said, “Scholars have stated that the meaning of ‘he should pray,’ means ‘he should supplicate.’ And the meaning of the last word is ‘he should eat.’”³ In fact, in the narration of Abu Dawood it states, “he should supplicate.”⁴

It is not obligatory upon the person attending to actually eat, even if he were not fasting. The thing that he must do is attend; that is

¹ *Al-Sunan al-Kubra* by al-Baihaqi, vol. 4, p. 279. It was also recorded by ibn Maajah. However, in its chain is a weak narrator but he is supported in this narration. Such has been stated by ibn Hajr in *al-Fath*, vol. 9, p. 248. [Al-Albaani also concludes that this hadith is *hasan*. See al-Albaani, *Irwaa*, vol. 7, pp. 11-14.—JZ]

² Recorded by Muslim (#1431), the Book of Marriage, Chapter on the order to respond to the invitation when one is invited.

³ *Riyaaadh al-Saaliheen*, p. 264, hadith #738. See also *Sbarh Saabeeh Muslim*.

⁴ *Sunan Abi Dawood* (#3736), Book of Food, Chapter on what has been narrated concerning responding to invitations.

the act that there is a warning concerning not doing. However, he does not have to eat. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ دُعِيَ فَلْيُجِبْ فَإِنْ شَاءَ طَعِمَ وَإِنْ شَاءَ تَرَكَ

“Whoever is invited should respond to the invitation. If he wishes, he may eat; and if he wishes, he may abstain [from eating].”¹

Ibn Taimiya stated,

It is not necessary for the host to insist on feeding the guest if he refuses to break his voluntary fast or if he refuses to eat even if he is not fasting. Both of those matters [fasting or not eating] are permissible [for the guest]. The host should not make a vow that his guest must eat. Similarly, the guest should not insist on not eating if he sees that such will result in some harm, for it is permissible for him to break his fast. If his not doing something permissible will lead to something that should be avoided, he should then do that permissible thing. In fact, [under such circumstances,] it may even become obligatory upon him [to do that otherwise simply permissible act].²

¹ *Sunan Abi Dawood* (#3740), Book of Foods, Chapter on what has been narrated concerning responding to invitations. [According to al-Albaani, this hadith is *sahih*. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Sabeeh Sunan Abi Dawood* (Riyadh: Maktabah Tarbiyyah al-Arabi li-Duwal al-Khaleej, 1989), vol. 2, p. 713.—JZ]

² *Al-Ikhtiyaaraat al-Fiqhiyyah min Fataawa Shaikh al-Islam ibn Taimiyah*, p. 241.

The Acceptable Excuses for Not Attending the Wedding Feast¹

It has been stated that it is obligatory to attend the wedding feast. However, if one has a valid excuse or if there is some evil that the person will not be able to put an end to, this obligation is dropped due to that reason. Other excuses include the following:

(1) The invited person is invited to a place in which there is a great deal of evil and wrong, such as alcohol, mixing of the sexes, music and so forth. Only if he has the ability to stop such evil should he then attend.

(2) If the invited person has a *shareeah* excuse for not attending, such as what excuses a person from attending the prayer in congregation in the mosque (rain, fear, illness), then it is not obligatory upon him to attend.

(3) If the invited person will be harmed with respect to his religion, such as when backbiting is taking place in such a gathering, he is excused from attending.

(4) If the invitation is for which only the rich are invited, to the exclusion of the poor, it should not be responded to.

(5) If the person is invited to the third day of the wedding feast, he should not attend for such is considered a day of showing off and acting for reputation.²

(6) If the inviting person is not careful about permissible or forbidden foods or delves into doubtful matters, the invited person is excused from attending.

(7) If the inviting person is from the non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic state, it is disliked to respond to the invitation. This is because a goal is to belittle the non-Muslim citizens, to remain away from doubtful matters or what contains something forbidden. But if there is some

¹ Cf., *Al-Mughni*, vol. 10, pp. 194-107; *Sharh Sabeeh Muslim*, vol. 9, p. 234; *Haashiyah al-Raudh al-Muraba bi-Sharh Zaad al-Mustaqni*, vol. 6, pp. 408-416; *Sharh al-Sunnah* by al-Baghawi, vol. 9, pp. 147-149; *Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuhu* by Wahbah al-Zuhaili, vol. 7, p. 127; *Fath al-Baari*, vol. 9, pp. 247-248.

² [The permissibility of a third day for the *waleemah* was discussed in an earlier footnote.—JZ]

benefit with respect to calling that non-Muslim to Islam, then he may attend.

(8) If the person is invited to a funeral feast, it is disliked to attend. Similarly, if he is invited to a feast [where the host] is boasting about his invitation, he should not attend.

(9) According to ibn Taimiyah, a person should not greet or accept the invitation of a person who does not pray.

(10) If a person is invited by a spendthrift who will have musical instruments or complete statues, casting shadows not just etched in the walls or furnishings, one should not attend. This is because pictures or statues of animals are forbidden by consensus if they cast a shadow, as opposed to partial figures which are missing a part of the animal that would be needed for it to live and as opposed to sketches that do not cast a shadow which are found in paper or walls. Looking at something forbidden is forbidden in itself. However, pictures of other than animals, such as the ocean or trees, are not forbidden.

(11) Another excuse that makes it not obligatory to attend the wedding feast is if the place is too crowded or if the person comes but finds the doors locked preventing his entrance. Allah knows best.

Here are some of the texts [of hadith] related to the above aspects:

Abu Dawood recorded in his *Sunan* from ibn Umar who said, "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) forbade sitting at the place where food is served which has alcohol with it and for a person to eat while he is lying on his stomach."¹

Abu Dawood recorded through his chain of transmitters in his *Sunan* that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

الْوَلِيمَةُ أَوْلَ يَوْمٍ حَقٌّ وَالثَّانِي مَعْرُوفٌ وَالْيَوْمَ الثَّلَاثَ سُمْعَةٌ وَرِيَاءٌ

¹ *Sunan Abi Dawood* (#3774), The Book of Foods, Chapter on sitting at a tablespread that has some items which are disliked. [The hadith with the above wording recorded by Abu Dawood has some problems with its chain of narrators. However, the meaning of the hadith is acceptable as both acts mentioned have been prohibited or disapproved of in other acceptable hadith. See al-Albaani's discussion of the hadith in al-Albaani, *Irwaa*, vol. 7, pp. 40-41. In *Sabeeh al-Jaami al-Sagheer*, vol. 2, p. 1159, al-Albaani stated that the above hadith is *hasan*.—JZ]

“The food of the *waleemah* on the first day is a right act, on the second day it is a well-known accepted act and on the third day it is done for reputation and showing off.”¹ Qataada said: A man narrated to me that Saeed ibn al-Musayyab was invited on the first day and he responded. He was invited on the second day and he again responded. He was invited on the third day and he did not respond, saying, “[They are] people of showing off and acting for reputation.”²

In the *Sunan* [of Abu Dawood] it is recorded from that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade eating the food of those who are simply competing against others.³

Al-Khattaabi stated, “Those who are competing are those who are going against each other to see who can outdo the other. A scholar was once invited but he did not attend and it was said to him, ‘The people of the early generations would attend when they were invited.’ He responded, ‘They used to be invited based on brotherhood and friendship. You people invite out of boasting and outdoing each other.’”⁴

Al-Bukhari recorded in his *Sahih* from Aisha, the mother of the believers, may Allah be pleased with her, that she purchased a cushion that had pictures on it. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw it, he stood at the door and did not enter [the room]. [Aisha said,] “I saw his displeasure on his face.” She said, “O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), I repent to Allah and to the Messenger of Allah. What sin did I commit?” The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, “What is with this cushion?” She said, “I bought it for you to sit on it and lay your head on it as a pillow.” He replied, “The companions of these pictures [that is, those who made them] will be punished on the Day of Resurrection. It will be said to them, ‘Give life to what you have

¹ [This is the same hadith as that recorded by al-Tirmidhi and mentioned by the author in an earlier footnote. As noted in that footnote, it is a weak hadith.—JZ]

² *Sunan Abi Dawood* (#3745), the Book of Foods, Chapter on how long it is preferred to have the wedding feast. See the earlier discussion under, “The ruling of responding to the invitation for one who is not fasting.”

³ *Sunan Abi Dawood* (#3754), Book of Foods, Chapter on the food of those who are competing. [According to al-Albaani, this hadith is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Sabeeh Sunan Abi Dawood*, vol. 2, p. 715.—JZ]

⁴ *Maalim al-Sunan* by al-Khattaabi, vol. 4, p. 132 (on the margin of *Sunan Abi Dawood*).

created.” Then he said, “The angels do not enter a house in which there are pictures.”¹

Al-Baghawi stated in *Sharh al-Sunnah*, “This [hadith] indicates that if one is invited to a wedding feast that contains detestable aspects or musical instruments, he should not attend—unless he is from those people that if he attends, such things will be removed due to his attendance or due to his stopping them.”²

If a person sees something engraved or a picture of trees and so forth, there is no harm in that as such engravings are like markings on clothing.³ If the picture of the animal is in a place that is stepped on or reclined upon, such as in something spread out on the ground, like a carpet, or a cushion, it is permissible.⁴ If it is on a curtain or wall, something that is not walked upon, and one can remove it or cut its head off, he should do so and then sit down. If he cannot do that, he should leave and not sit down. This is the view of the majority of scholars.

As for covering the walls with coverings that do not contain pictures, if such is done due to a need, like protection from heat or cold, there is no harm in it. In that case, it is being done due to a need and it is similar to having a curtain over a door or what a person wears on his body. If it is not needed, then it is disliked and it serves as an excuse for a person to return from an invitation and not attend that wedding feast. The evidence for that is in the narration from Saalim ibn Abdullah ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) who said: I was a newlywed during my father’s lifetime. My father informed the people and among those people we informed was Abu Ayyoob [the

¹ *Sabeeh al-Bukhari* (#5181), the Book of Marriage, Chapter on should one return if he sees something objectionable at the invitation.

² *Sharh al-Sunnah*, vol. 9, p. 147.

³ [This is not the proper place to enter into a detailed discussion of this question, but the author here is following one interpretation of what is meant by “markings or engravings in clothing”. According to ibn Hajr, the strongest interpretation is that engravings on clothing that do not represent the complete animal or that could not be of a living creature are the only ones that are permissible. See Ahmad ibn Hajr, *Fath al-Baari bi-Sharh Sabeeh al-Bukhari* (Makkah: Maktabah al-Tijaariyyah, 1993), vol. 11, pp. 591-592. Allah knows best.—JZ]

⁴ [Although this is the opinion of many scholars, it seems to clearly contradict the hadith the author just mentioned from Aishah, wherein the Prophet (peace be upon him) objected to the pictures on the cushion or pillow.—JZ]

Companion]. [The walls of] my house were covered with green carpets or sheets. I met Abu Ayyoob among the first and he looked and saw that the house had been covered with green material. He said, "O Abdullah, do you cover the walls?" My father, ashamed, said, "The women have overpowered us, O Abu Ayyoob." Abu Ayyoob then said, "There are some for whom I feared they would be overpowered by women but I did not fear that they would overpower you." Then he said, "I will not eat your food nor will I enter your house," and he left. Recorded by al-Baihaqi and others.¹

In *Sharh al-Sunnah*, al-Baghawi wrote, "Similarly, if the host has most of his wealth from forbidden sources or he is one that you cannot be safe from being harmed, either with respect to your religion or worldly affairs, it is not obligatory upon you to respond."²

Warning Concerning Extravagance at Wedding Parties

Islam encompasses a number of teachings that are related to the lives of Muslims in particular. Their purpose is to organize the physical, economic and psychological affairs on noble bases. There are, for example, manners related to food, dress, housing and other goals that people seek after in this life. There is no need to incline toward extreme monasticism or materialistic greed. Instead, life is based on moderation and justice with respect to attaining pleasure; there is neither extravagance nor miserliness.

In twenty-two verses of the Quran, Allah censures extravagance and rebukes those who are spendthrifts. For example, Allah says,

¹ *Sunan al-Baihaqi*, vol. 7, p. 272. Al-Bukhari recorded it in his *Sabeeh* but without its chain [meaning it is not necessarily an authentic hadith]. Al-Bukhari stated in the Book of Marriage, "Chapter: may one may return if he sees something objectionable at the invitation? Ibn Masood saw a picture in the house so he returned. And ibn Umar invited Abu Ayyoob and he saw in the house coverings on the wall..." Al-Haafidh ibn Hajr stated in *al-Fath* (vol. 9, p. 239), "Ahmad recorded it with a complete chain in *Kitaab al-Wara* as did Musaddad in his *Musnad*, and from his chain al-Tabaraani recorded it in *al-Kabeer* [vol. 1, p. 192]..." The scholar of hadith al-Albaani, in *Adaab al-Zafaaf* (p. 201, al-Maktabah al-Islaamiyyah edition), considered al-Tabaraani's chain good.

² *Sbarh al-Sunnah*, vol. 9, pp. 147-148.

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا

“And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly but hold a medium (way) between those (extremes)” (*al-Furqaan* 67). Allah also says,

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

“O Children of Adam! Take your adornment [by wearing proper clothing] at every masjid, and eat and drink but be not excessive. Indeed, He loves not those who commit excesses” (*al-Araaf* 31).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also cautioned about lavishness and arrogance. He said,

كَلُوا وَشَرَبُوا وَتَصَدَّقُوا فِي غَيْرِ سَرْفٍ وَلَا مَخِيلَةٍ إِنْ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَنْ يَجِبَ أَنْ يَرَى أَثَرَ نِعْمَتِهِ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ

“Eat and drink and give in charity but without lavishness or arrogance. Verily, Allah loves the effects of His bounty upon His servant to be seen.”¹

There are also other hadith and reports that encourage moderation, control and justice and fleeing from extravagance and lavishness.

Unfortunately, though, in the same way that the phenomenon of elaborate dowers has spread, there has come to us the disease of extravagance and lavishness in the wedding parties. The people are competing in the large amount of wealth that they are spending. At the same time, many objectionable aspects are also taking place, such as picture taking, mixing between men and women, male and female

¹ Recorded by al-Nasaai (vol. 5, p. 79), the Book of Zakat, Chapter on being arrogant in giving charity; al-Haakim in *al-Mustadrak* (vol. 4, p. 135), and the wording is from him, from hadith of Amr ibn Shuaib on the authority of his father on the authority of his grandfather. This chain is *hasan*.

singers singing over microphones, using musical instruments and so forth. Lots of wealth is being spent upon those forbidden acts. In fact, this has even led many young men to stay away from marriage because they simply cannot afford the great expenses involved in wedding parties these days. There is no need for such expenses. They are simply an impediment on the road to marriage. They have become part of the necessary aspects of a wedding these days although Islam has nothing to do with them.

Nowadays, one person may even slaughter up to forty or fifty sheep for the wedding party. They may also even slaughter a camel along with that, not to mention the rice, fruits, sweets, gifts and other things that are also involved. Many times, those people who were invited do not come and the meat is left as it was, uneaten, and therefore it is thrown into the garbage while the poor and needy are in great need of extending a hand of help to them as their stomachs are left empty. Allah indeed is the only one who may be turned to for rescue [from this plight].¹

Another custom that one commonly finds in wedding feasts and parties is what is known as *al-nithaar*. This is where money, almonds, sugar or sweets are flung out to people during the wedding or at other times. It is disliked to do this act during weddings or at other times. It causes people to jostle and swarm after these things and for them to do such is truly demeaning and embarrassing. Furthermore, some people will get those things and others will be left empty-handed. Therefore, it is preferred not to perform this practice.²

¹ From the good things that can remedy this evil is the existence of charitable institutions that will come and pick up the surplus food and distribute it to those who are deserving of it. First, one should not prepare more food than what is needed. If there is more food than what is needed, it should be given to these charitable institutions in order to preserve this bounty of food and to use it in the proper way.

² *Al-Mughni* by ibn Qudaamah, vol. 10, p. 208, issue #1221.