

60013 - Al-'Ateerah and rulings thereon

the question

What is al-'ateerah, and what is the ruling on it?.

Detailed answer

Al-'ateerah is a sacrifice was that was offered by the people of the Jaahiliyyah during the month of Rajab. They made that a tradition amongst themselves, like the offering of the udhiyah sacrifice on Eid al-Adha.

With regard to the ruling thereon, the scholars differed. The reason for their difference of opinion is the difference in the ahaadeeth that have been narrated concerning that. Some of the reports enjoin it or allow it, and some forbid it.

The correct view, as we shall see below, is that the ahaadeeth which enjoin it or allow it came at the beginning of Islam, then the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade it.

The scholars differed concerning the ruling on it and there are a number of opinions.

The first view is that it is Sunnah and mustahabb. This is the view of Imam al-Shaafa'i (may Allaah have mercy on him). He quoted a number of things as evidence for that, including the following:

1-

The report narrated by Imam Ahmad (6674) and al-Nasaa'i (4225) from 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb from his father from his grandfather, according to which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was asked about al-'ateerah and he said: "Al-'ateerah is true."
Classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami', 4122.

2-

The report narrated by Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawood (2788) and al-Tirmidhi (1518) from Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym who said: We were standing with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in 'Arafaat, and I heard him say: "O people, every family must offer udhiyah and 'ateerah every year. Do you know what 'ateerah is? It is that which you call al-rajabiyyah." Classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood.

3-

The report narrated by al-Nasaa'i (4226) from al-Haarith ibn 'Amr, according to which a man said: O Messenger of Allaah, (what about) 'ateerahs? He said: "Whoever wishes may offer 'ateerah and whoever wishes may not do so." Classed as da'eef by al-Albaani in Da'eef al-Nasaa'i.

See al-Majmoo', 8/445, 446

The second view is:

That it is neither mustahabb nor makrooh. This was the view of some of the Shaafa'is, as was narrated by al-Nawawi in al-Majmoo', 8/445.

The third view is:

That it is makrooh, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) disallowed it. Some of them said that it is haraam and invalid.

They said: The ahaadeeth which allow it and enjoin it were at the beginning of Islam, then they were abrogated by the Prophet's forbidding of it.

In Sharh Muslim (13/137), al-Nawawi narrated that al-Qaadi 'Iyaad said: The command to offer 'ateerah is abrogated according to the majority of scholars.

They quoted the following evidence to show that it is haraam:

1-

The report narrated by al-Bukhaari (5474) and Muslim (1976) from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him), according to which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “There is no fara’ and no ‘ateerah.”

The fara’ was the first foal born to the she-camel, which they used to sacrifice to their idols.

2-

The ‘ateerah was a feature of the people of Jaahiliyyah, and it is not permissible to imitate them in their acts of worship because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.” Narrated by Abu Dawood, 4021), classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Irwa’ al-Ghaleel, 1269.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said after mentioning some of the ahaadeeth which indicate that ‘ateerah is allowed in Islam:

After quoting some of the ahaadeeth about ‘ateerah, Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: The Arabs used to do that during the Jaahiliyyah, and some of the Muslims did that. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) enjoined it, then he forbade it and said: “There is no fara’ and no ‘ateerah.” So the people stopped doing that because of the prohibition. It is well known that disallowing applies to something that used to be done. We do not know of any scholar who says that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to forbid it then he allowed it. The evidence that it was done before it was disallowed is to be found in the hadeeth of Nubayshah: “We used to offer the ‘ateerah during the Jaahiliyyah, and we used to offer the fara’ during the Jaahiliyyah.” The fact that the scholars of all regions are unanimously agreed to disallow ‘ateerah indicates that they were aware of the prohibition. Moreover there are proven reports which indicate that it is forbidden. End quote.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem (R) stated in his Fataawa (6/165) that ‘ateerah is haraam. He said:

The words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “There is no fara’ and no ‘ateerah” are, as far as I know, show that it is more likely to be prohibited.

The negative form indicates that something is not valid, as in the hadeeth “There is no ‘adawa and no tiyarah.” Does not saying “There is no fara’ and no ‘ateerah” indicate that they are invalid?

This is in addition to the evidence: “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.” So it is forbidden to imitate the Jaahiliyyah.

Moreover, this comes under the heading of acts of worship, and the ruling on acts of worship is tawqeef (i.e., they are to be based only on that which is mentioned in the Qur’aan and Sunnah). Even if the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had not specifically disallowed it, it would still be disallowed, because all matters of the Jaahiliyyah are disallowed and there is no need to state a specific ruling on each one of them.

Some of the scholars stated that it is makrooh, but what we understand is that it is haraam. This is with regard to those who slaughter the first foal born to a she-camel, or offer a sacrifice in the first ten days of Rajab. As for that which they used to do in the Jaahiliyyah for their gods, this is shirk. End quote.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said in al-Sharh al-Mumti’ (7/325):

The words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “There is no fara’ and no ‘ateerah” (according to another report: “There is no fara’ and no ‘ateerah in Islam”) indicate that this is a characteristic of the Jaahiliyyah, hence some scholars regarded ‘ateerah as makrooh, unlike fara’, because some Sunnahs were narrated concerning it. But in the case of ‘ateerah – i.e., offering a sacrifice at the beginning of Rajab – it deserves to be makrooh, especially if it is slaughtered at the beginning of Rajab and people have been told that there is nothing wrong with it. For people are inclined towards such things and the month of Rajab is like the month of sacrifice, Dhu’l-Hijjah. The people do that a great deal, so it has become a symbol and ritual. There is no doubt that this is prohibited.

It seems most likely in my view that there is nothing wrong with fara', because it is mentioned in the Sunnah, but as for 'ateerah, the least that can be said is that it is makrooh. End quote.