

Fatwa on inviting non-Muslims to Iftar

We received questions from members of our Muslim community regarding a hadith that is narrated in *Jami' At Tirmidhi* and *Sunan Abi Dawud*, and whether it forbids offering food to non-Muslims and forbids them from attending Muslim community events.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Dear brother

I want to congratulate you and the Muslim community in your area for their efforts in building a positive community vibe through your events including your community iftar as well as your work towards establishing a good future for the Muslims of the area. I ask Allah to reward you all immensely for your time, effort and money spent in this endeavour.

The hadith in question does not apply to the context of having guests at community events. Rather it emphasizes the importance of maintaining close friendships with people who will help you both in this life and the next. The hadith is as follows:

لَا تُصَاحِبْ إِلَّا مُؤْمِنًا وَلَا يَأْكُلْ طَعَامَكَ إِلَّا تَقِيًّا¹

Do not accompany (take as a close companion) except a (devout) believer, and none but a taqi should eat your food – Narrated by At Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud.

The grading of the hadith:

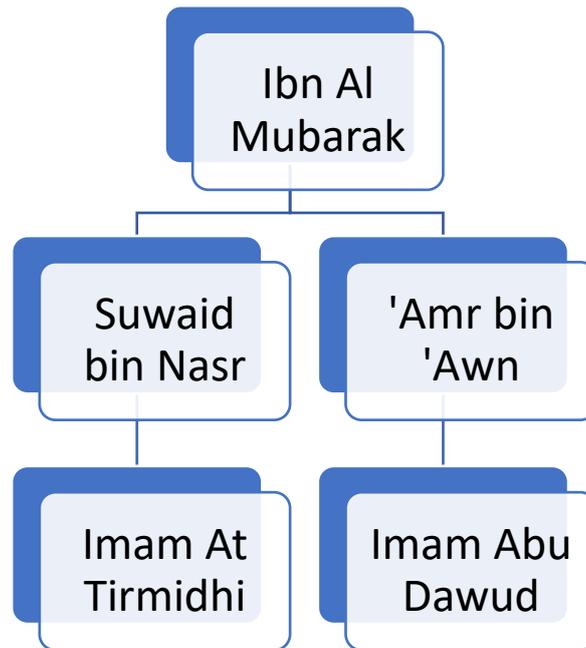
This hadith is graded Hasan by Imam Tirmidhi, which would be 3rd in level of authenticity on the following scale:

1. *Sahih* (authentic)
2. *Sahih lighairihi* (authentic as a result of other strengthening evidence)
3. **Hasan** (good, or sufficient)

¹ Jami' At Tirmidhi: Book of *Zuhd*, Chapter: what has been related about accompanying the believer, hadith 2395. Sunan Abi Dawud: Book of *Adab*, Chapter who we are instructed to spend time with, hadith 4832

4. *Hasan lighairihi* (good as a result of other strengthening evidence)
5. *Da'if* (weak).

I was only able to find the hadith in two compilations (At Tirmidhi, and Abu Dawud), branching from the same chain:



Relevant words

- *Suhbah*: the scholars describe this as *mukhalatah* and *mulazamah* (spending time with each other and sticking with each other). It is the quality of a close friend, and it was the word used by Allaah in the Quran to refer to the companionship of Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه to Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم.
- *Taqi*: someone who is mindful of Allaah, the Creator. This means they are aware of what is appropriate for the both of you and as such the risk of falling into what is forbidden is reduced. In Arabic we say *الصاحب صاحب* the friend pulls you. So it's important to maintain good friendships where you motivate each other to do good.
- *Ya-kul*: Eat, and when explaining the hadith Imam Khalil Ahmad Alsharanfuri² highlights that this hadith does not exclude all non-Muslims and referenced the Quranic verse from *Surah Al Insan* which I will mention further into this Fatwa.

² A great Hanafi scholar of Indian heritage, from the 19th century. He wrote an extensive compendium explaining the *Ahadith* of Sunan Abi Dawud

The view that this *hadith* an encouragement to take pious friends and does not include the way you would treat a guest or a neighbour is supported by the following:

- The wording of the hadith is in the singular form, as if directed at an individual, like personal advice
- The Narrator is Abu Sa'id Al Khudri رضي الله عنه, who was born 10 years before the migration to Madinah. This means he was likely a teenager (or younger) at the time he heard the hadith. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned him away when he wanted to participate in the battle of Uhud due to his young age.
- It seems from my brief research that Abu Sa'id is the only Sahabi who has narrated the hadith. The hadith appears to have only one chain pathway (from ibn Al Mubarak), despite the fact that Abu Sa'id رضي الله عنه was known for relaying *ahadith* and for speaking his mind, even to people in power. This lends to the idea that the hadith is applicable to how you choose your close friends rather than an instruction on who you can or cannot offer food.
- The Prophet peace and blessings upon him as well as the *sahabah* were known to accept food and drink from non-Muslims and uphold high standards of hospitality with Muslim and non-Muslim alike.
- Muslims are guided to feed the destitute, orphan and captive, regardless of religion³. Allah says in Surah Al Insan, verse 8:

■ ((وَيُطْعَمُونَ أَلْطَعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِۭۤ مَسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا))

■ ((And they feed, out of love for Allah, any destitute, orphan, and captive))

- Muslim men are permitted to marry chaste Christian or Jewish women. This is a more intimate relationship than that of a close friend, and you share food much more often.
- The Prophetic advice to be good with your neighbour is not specific to Muslim neighbours.

■ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، أَنَّهُ دَبَّحَ شَاةً فَقَالَ أَهْدَيْتُمْ لِحَارِي الْيَهُودِيَّ فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " مَا زَالَ جِبْرِيلُ يُوصِينِي بِالْحَارِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ سَيُورَثُهُ " .

■ Abdullah ibn Amr bin Al 'Aas slaughtered a sheep and said: Have you presented a gift from it to my Jewish neighbour, for I heard the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings upon him say: (The Angel) Jibreel kept on advising me regarding my neighbour till I thought he would make him an heir.⁴

³ Badhlul Majhud fi Halli Sunani Abi Dawud, Imam Khalil Ahmad Al Saharanfuri, p. 254.

⁴ Sunan Abi Dawud: the Book of Adab, Chapter on the rights of the neighbour, hadith number 5152.

- The prophetic advice to feed people (تطعم الطعام) is not specific to Muslim recipients. The Prophet peace and blessings upon him, when asked about what great act a Muslim can do, is reported to have said:

تطعم الطعام، وتقرأ السلام على من عرفت ومن لم تعرف ■

- To give food, and to greet people, whether you know them or do not.⁵

Conclusion regarding the hadith:

This hadith instructs Muslims to take devout Muslims as their close friends, as they share the same goals for their worldly life as well as their afterlife.

Regarding our relationships with non-Muslims, Allah gives us the following guidance.

Allah سبحانه وتعالى states in the Quran in surah Al Mumtahanah verse 8:

((لَا يَنْهَى اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُقْسِطِينَ))

Allah does not forbid you from dealing kindly and fairly with those who have neither fought you nor driven you out of your homes. Surely Allah loves those who are fair

The time and money you spend in the pursuit of bringing success to the projects of the Muslim community is praiseworthy and cause for reward from Allah *in shaa Allah*. This includes building appropriate ties with relevant community members or politicians who may not be Muslim. This also includes food you may serve any guests you have to the center or mosque during community days, etc.

Finally, as Muslims we take opportunities to introduce people to Islam and Muslims. Inviting them as guests to such events is a good introduction that helps soften their hearts, spark their curiosity and find answers to their questions.

والله ولي التوفيق

Sheikh Mohammad Trad

AFIC Dawa and Iftaa Manager

Imam of Zetland Mosque

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Authorised by: Dr Rateb Jneid (AFIC President)

The most Eminent Sh Abdul Quddoos Al Azhari, National Grand Mufti of Australia

⁵ Sahih Al Bukhari: The Book of Iman, Chapter to greet is part of Islam, hadith number 21