

The Reality of “Mother’s Day” Celebrations

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ALL PRAISES are due to Allāh, and may the Peace and Prayers be upon His Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), his family, his Companions, and whoever follows them in righteousness until the Day of Resurrection.

In light of the many “Mother’s Day” greetings spreading across social media, we wanted to state, unequivocally, that Islām forbids us from practicing pagan holidays or man-made celebrations that have no foundation in the legislation of the Creator of mankind, and “Mother’s Day” is one such celebration.

In the Revelation, Allāh has decreed that we honor our mothers at all times, due to the great sacrifices they have made on our behalf. He states,

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي ۗ إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾

“And We have enjoined upon man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother carried him in hardship and gave birth to him with hardship, and his gestation and weaning [period] is thirty months. [He grows] until, when he reaches maturity and reaches [the age of] forty years, he says, ‘My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to work righteousness of which You will approve and make righteous for me my offspring. Indeed, I have repented to You, and indeed, I am of the Muslims’” [al-Ahqah: 46:15].

This verse clearly illustrates that honoring our mothers is a lifelong commitment, and setting aside a single day for such an honor falls a lifetime short of this duty. The noble scholar of Qur’anic commentary al-Sa’dī states, “We have been commanded to be good to our parents and honor them throughout their lives and after their deaths” (*Tafsīr al-Sa’dī*).

There are also numerous traditions from our Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) that establish this. Once a man came to Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and asked, “Who is most deserved of my honor?”

“Your mother,” The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) responded.

“Then who?”

“Your mother.”

“Then who?” the man repeated.

“Your mother.”

On the fourth time, Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, “Your father” (*al-Bukhari and Muslim*).

Also, during the treaty of *Hudaibiyah*, Asmá bint Abū Bakr’s mother, who was then a pagan, came from Makkah to see her. Asmá informed the Prophet (ﷺ) of her mother’s arrival and that she came with a need. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Be good to your mother” (*al-Adab al-Mufrad*).* These two narrations are only a small sampling of the many traditions that inform us that honoring our mothers is a religious duty that covers the span of one’s lifetime.

The origins of specific days celebrating mothers can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, who held festivals in honor of the mother goddesses Rhea and Cybele. Therefore, one should be mindful that such celebrations are rooted in paganism and polytheism. Later, in Medieval England, during Lent, servants would be given the fourth Sunday off to visit their mothers. This would be called “Mothering Sunday.” As for the modern day incarnation of “Mother’s Day,” it was created by a disbelieving woman named Anna Marie Jarvis, who first dedicated the day to her mother on the second anniversary of her mother’s death, at a church memorial in her honor. Some years later, at another memorial, she gave out white carnations—her mother’s favorite flower—which would become the official symbol of the holiday. Thus, it was this woman who spearheaded the movement that would make “Mother’s Day” a national holiday. Ironically, this same woman would later become disillusioned with the commodification and commercialization of this celebration, and would spend years fighting against and boycotting the very holiday she helped create.

As Muslims, we maintain a strict monotheistic belief and eschew the worship or celebration of any deity besides Allāh. We also reject celebrations and festivals invented and practiced by the disbelieving people, for which Allāh has given no permission. When our Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) came to the city of Madīnah, he found the people there celebrating two holidays whose origins went back to *al-Jāhiliyyah* (pre-Islamic days of ignorance), and said, “Allāh has given you two days that are better than them: *Eid al-Adḥa* and *Eid al-Fiṭr*” (*Abū Dawūd*).

To conclude, we leave the noble reader with a statement of the esteemed scholar of Islām, Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn (رحمته الله), “A mother has more right than to be merely honored on one day of the year; rather, a mother has the right to be cared for, honored, and obeyed—in that which there is no disobedience to Allāh—by her children in every time and place” (*Majmu’ al-Fatāwa*). This is what our Lord has revealed in the scriptures and has enjoined upon us. In Islām, we honor our mothers every day.

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* al-Bukhārī collects this in the chapter entitled “Kindness to the *Mushrik* Parent.”