

The Importance of Eating Permissible and Wholesome Foods

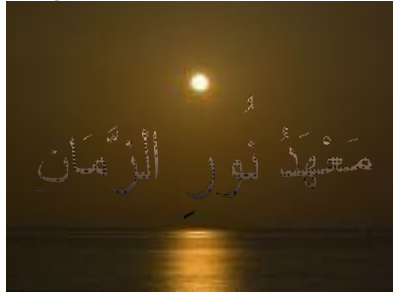
And Avoiding the Prohibited and Doubtful Foods



By Imam Naeem Abdullah

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The Importance of Eating Permissible and Wholesome Foods And Avoiding the Prohibited and Doubtful Foods



Part One

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صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَكَفَى وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَى أَمَّا بَعْدُ: فَيَقُولُ اللهُ تَعَالَى:

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. May Allah bless our master (*sayyidina*) Muhammad, his family and companions and give them peace. All Praises are due to Allah, He is sufficient (for us). Peace be upon His slaves, who He has chosen. As to what follows:

Allah, the Most High, has always impressed upon mankind the significance of what he consumes. The human diet has always been regulated by Divine intervention. In other words, every Prophet, from Adam to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon all of them, came with some dictate from Allah regarding what was permissible or forbidden to eat. This is illustrated by the following verse from the Holy Qur'an:

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ
شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

And We said, 'Adam, dwell you and your wife, in the Garden, and eat thereof, easefully, but do not come near this tree, lest you be, evildoers.'¹

Allah gave our mother and father (Adam and Hawwaa) the freedom to eat whatever they pleased in the Garden, but told them "Laa *taqrabaa haadhihi sh-shajarah*" – Do not come near this tree! Which was an emphatic way of prohibiting them from eating any of the fruits of that particular tree!² This was mankind's first prohibition – a dietary one! This would alert the intelligent, god-fearing person to the importance of guarding what he or she allows to enter his or her stomach.

Even though there is a disagreement (*ikhtilaf*) among the '*ulamaa*' (scholars), the following *ayah* (verse) is considered by many of them to be the last one that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالْدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنزِيرِ وَمَا أَهَلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ
وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا
ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَامِ ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ
الْيَوْمَ يَنْسَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ الْيَوْمَ
أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمْ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا
فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرِ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah. that which hath been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death; that which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless ye are able to slaughter it (in due form); that which is sacrificed on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows: that is impiety. This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion: yet fear them not but fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. But if any is forced by hunger, with no

inclination to transgression, Allah is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.³

This makes it all the more critical, due to the fact that the Messenger of Allah was the seal of the Prophets (*khaatam an-nabiyyeen*); meaning that there will be no more Prophets or Messengers sent after him; which also would mean that the first prohibition revealed to the human race was food-related and possibly the last prohibition revealed to the human race was also food-related.

Upon close examination of the life (*as-Seerah*) of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the Qur'anic commentary (*at-tafseer*) one will notice that Allah has revealed guidance directly related to permissible and prohibited food consumption during every revelatory period. In other words, Allah informed the believers several times of what food is prohibited in the Meccan period, and in the Medinan period – including the farewell pilgrimage on Mount Arafat. This point should, at least, be interesting in light of the fact that the revelation sent down in Mecca was primarily concerned with Heaven, Hell, and other matters related to the Hereafter. Most of the legal rulings and social injunctions were not revealed until the Medinan period; with the primary exception being the prohibition of certain foods, which was revealed early in the Meccan period. Some of these injunctions will be mentioned a little later in this discourse.

Consider what was just stated above in light of the fact that intoxicants were only prohibited once. It is well-known that Muslims do not drink alcohol or use drugs, even though the prohibition of *khamr* was only revealed one time in the Qur'an. Logic would have us believe that eating unlawful meat must be even more harmful because the revelation which prohibits its consumption was sent down on numerous occasions.

The issue regarding food in general and meat in particular is so important that it has been connected to our belief, by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He said

((مَنْ صَلَّى صَلَاتَنَا، وَاسْتَقْبَلَ قِبْلَتَنَا، وَ أَكَلَ ذَبِيحَتَنَا، فَذَلِكَ
الْمُسْلِمُ، الَّذِي لَهُ ذِمَّةُ اللَّهِ وَ ذِمَّةُ رَسُولِهِ، فَلَا تُخْفَرُوا اللَّهَ فِي
ذِمَّتِهِ))

“Whoever prays our prayer, faces our *qiblah* (direction of prayer), and eats our slaughtered animals is a Muslim (lit. that is the Muslim) for whom is the protection of Allah and his Messenger.”

((أَمَرْتُ أَنْ أَقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ، حَتَّى يَقُولُوا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، فَإِذَا قَالُوهَا،
وَ صَلَّوْا صَلَاتِنَا، وَ اسْتَقْبَلُوا قِبْلَتَنَا، وَ ذَبَحُوا ذَبِيحَتَنَا، فَقَدْ حُرِّمَتْ
عَلَيْنَا دِمَاؤُهُمْ وَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ، إِلَّا بِحَقِّهَا، وَ حِسَابُهُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ))

I have been commanded to fight the people until they say, "There is no god except Allah." If they say it and pray our prayer, face our *qiblah*, slaughter (the way) we slaughter, their blood and their wealth is [considered] sacred to us, except when there is due right. And their reckoning is with Allah.

"In this hadith, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, mentions the slaughtering of animals in the same context as the ritual prayer (*salaah*) and facing the Ka'ba when praying. He places it among the distinguishing features of Islamic law that separate a Muslim from a non-Muslim. He makes it one of the symbolic Islamic rituals, which show that one is a Muslim and by which one's blood and wealth become safeguarded. Whose statement could prove more conclusively than the Prophet's – such as these, as well as others – that slaughtering an animal through a legally prescribed method is indeed a ritual act and is a fundamental religious rite that affirms the very faith of the one who does it?"⁴

Not only did Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, connect slaughtered animals to our belief system – as illustrated in the preceding Prophetic narrations – but he also informs us that those who believe in Allah are held to the same standards as the Prophets regarding what they eat.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ((أَيُّهَا
النَّاسُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ طَيِّبٌ لَا يَقْبَلُ إِلَّا طَيِّبًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِمَا
أَمَرَ بِهِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ، فَقَالَ تَعَالَى * يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ
وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ * وَقَالَ تَعَالَى * يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ * ثُمَّ ذَكَرَ الرَّجُلَ يُطِيلُ السَّفَرَ
أَشْعَثَ أَعْبَرَ يَمُدُّ يَدَيْهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ يَا رَبِّ يَا رَبِّ وَمَطْعَمُهُ حَرَامٌ

وَمَشْرُبُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَلْبَسُهُ حَرَامٌ وَغُذْيِي بِالْحَرَامِ فَأَنَّى يُسْتَجَابُ
لِذَلِكَ))

“Verily Allah, the Most High, is pure and He only accepts that which is pure. Indeed Allah commands the Believers the same way He commanded the Messengers when He says, ‘O ye Messengers! Eat from what is Pure and do good.’ Similarly, the Almighty says, O Believers! Eat from the pure things provided to you.” He then mentioned the case of the man, traveling a long journey, disheveled and dusty crying, O Lord! O Lord! But his food is unlawful, his drink is unlawful, his dress is unlawful, and he was nourished on the unlawful, then how can his request be granted.”⁵

This *hadith* is packed with wisdom! And our scholars have been extracting from this *hadith* and building upon it ever since these precious words left the mouth of the seal of the Prophets, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. This *hadith*, recorded by *Imam* Muslim in his Sahih, is also included in *Imam* an-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith, which says a lot about the importance of this *hadith*. In his introduction, he said “...Every *hadith* in it being one of the great maxims from the foundation of the Religion (*ad-deen*).” This tradition highlights many points, namely; [1] Those who believe in Allah are held to the same standards as the Prophets and Messengers regarding their diet; [2] The eating of pure and lawful foods produces good and righteous actions; [3] The consumption of the opposite (foul and unlawful foods) produces evil and corrupt actions and; [4] The consumption of haram food prevents ones prayers from being answered.

Shehu ‘Uthman dan Fodio emphasized the need to protect the stomach in his book called Tareeq ul-Jannah or The Path to Paradise.

ثُمَّ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَخِي بِحِفْظِ الْبَطْنِ عَنِ الْحَرَامِ وَالشُّبْهَةِ أَوْلَا، ثُمَّ عَنِ
الْفُضُولِ ثَانِيًا إِنْ كَانَ لَكَ هِمَّةٌ فِي عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّمَا يَلْزَمُكَ بَحْثُ
الْحَرَامِ وَالشُّبْهَةِ أَوْلَا لِثَلَاثَةِ أُمُورٍ <أَوْلَاهَا> حَذْرًا مِنْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ
<وَتَانِي> أَكْلُهُمَا مَطْرُودٌ لَا يُوفَّقُ لِلْعِبَادَةِ <وَالثَّالِثُ> أَكْلُهُمَا
مَرْدُودٌ غَيْرُ مَقْبُولٍ وَ أَمَّا فَضُولُ الْحَلَالِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ عَافَاتٍ وَ هِيَ

قَسْوَةُ الْقَلْبِ ، وَ فِتْنَةُ الْأَعْضَاءِ ، وَ قِلَّةُ فَهْمِ الْعِلْمِ ، وَ قِلَّةُ الْعِبَادَةِ ،
وَ قَفْدُ حَلَاوَةِ الْعِبَادَةِ ، وَ خَطَرُ الْوُقُوعِ فِي الشُّبْهَةِ وَ الْحَرَامِ ، وَ
شُغْلُ الْقَلْبِ وَ الْبَدَنِ وَ شِدَّةُ سَكْرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ وَ نُقْصَانُ الثَّوَابِ فِي
الْعُقْبَى وَ الْحَبْسِ فِي الْحِسَابِ فَهَذِهِ عَشْرَةٌ فِي أَحَدِهَا كِفَايَةٌ بِالْغَةِ .

Protection of the Stomach

It is obligatory, my brothers, to guard the stomach (*al-butn*) from: [1] the forbidden (*haraam*) and dubious (*shubhat*); and [2] from excess (*fuduul*). Enthusiasm for the worship of Allah entails first investigating the forbidden and dubious for three reasons: [1] being wary of the Hellfire; [2] eating the forbidden and the doubtful is an impediment and does not give success in one's worship (*al-'ibaadah*); [3] Eating the forbidden and the dubious is rejected (*mirduud*) not acceptable (*ghayru maqbuul*) by Allah *ta`ala*.

As for permissible food which is excessive, eating it causes ten calamities: [1] hardness of the heart; [2] affliction in the limbs; [3] decreased comprehension of knowledge; [4] decreased worship; [5] loss of the sweetness of worship; [6] danger of falling into what is dubious and forbidden; [7] preoccupation of the heart and body; [8] severe agony during death; [9] loss of reward in the next life; and [10] obstructions on the Day of Reckoning. From these ten calamities, the first of them is sufficient in conveying the message.

We could continue in this vein for as long as Allah wills, however, it is not our desire to exhaust the issue. Our intent is only to highlight how serious our food intake actually is and to do away with the erroneous notion that what a person eats is some mundane act that is really insignificant.

This discourse will be limited to clarifying some of commonly misunderstood issues connected with the intake of meat (*lahm*), namely; [1] "Muslims can eat any meat except pork"; [2] "Muslims can eat the regular meat found in most American supermarkets or restaurants?"; and [3] "Just say *"Bismillah"* and eat it."

We pray that this contribution adds clarity to the matter and brings those who take benefit from it closer to Allah, *ta'ala*. Success is with Allah!

Success is with Allah

اللَّهُمَّ أَرِنَا الْحَقَّ حَقًّا وَارْزُقْنَا اتِّبَاعَهُ وَارِنَا الْبَاطِلَ بَاطِلًا وَارْزُقْنَا اجْتِنَابَهُ

O Allah! Show us the truth as true and make us follow it. Show us falsehood as false and make us avoid it.

1 Surah al-Baqarah: Verse 35.

2 Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi, Ma'ariful Qur'an: A Comprehensive commentary on the Holy Qur'an (Maktaba-e-Darul-Uloom, Karachi, 1998), 176.

3 Surah al-Maa'idah: Verse 3.

4 Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, The Islamic Laws of Animal Slaughter (California, USA, White Thread Press, 2006), 23.

5 Ezzedin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies, An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith (New Delhi, India, Islamic Book Service, 2005), 50.