

Friday Khutbah 25/01/2013 – Halal and Haram in Food

Imam Muslim reported the *Hadith* in which Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, said *Rasullah (salla Allahu alaihi wassalam)* said: “Allah is Pure and Wholesome and He only accepts that which is pure and wholesome. Allah commanded the believers with the same commandment as the messengers and said: “O Messengers eat of the wholesome and do good deeds. Verily I am aware of what you do.” And He said: “O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you and be thankful to Allah.” He then mentioned a person who travels for a long time. His hair becomes untidy and he is covered with dust. He lifts his hands towards the sky, supplicating: O Lord! O Lord! Whereas his food is Haram! His drink is Haram! His clothes are Haram! And his nourishment is Haram! How can then his supplication be accepted!

Allah (*subhanahu wa ta’ala*) commanded His servants to eat from the good and wholesome things which He has provided for them – and to thank Him for that. He said: “O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is Him you worship.”

In the *Hadith*: “Seeking what is Halal is an obligation upon every Muslims.” In another narration: “Seeking what is Halal is an obligation after the obligations....”

Eating what is Halal enlightens the heart and makes it soft. It activates one to make good deeds. It is a cause for the acceptance of good deeds and for the acceptance of *du’a*.

Rasullah (salla Allahu alaihi wassalam) advised Saad ibn Abi Waqas saying: “Let your food be *tayyib* (Halal) and your *du’a* will be accepted.”

Saad was later one of the people whose *du’a* was always accepted because he acted upon the advice of *Rasulullah (salla Allahu alaihi wassalam)*

On the opposite, consuming what is Haram darkens the heart and makes it hard. It is a cause for the rejection of deed and supplication (*du’a*.)

To highlight that eating what is Haram causes the rejection of *du’a*, *Rasullah (salla Allahu alaihi wassalam)* mentioned in the aforementioned *Hadith* a person who travels extensively until his hair becomes untidy and outward appearance humble. That person raises his hands towards the sky and supplicates: O Lord! O Lord! Whereas his food is Haram! His drink is Haram! His clothes are Haram! Although that person has realised four reasons for the acceptance of *du’a* i.e. travel, humility, raising of the hands when making *du’a* and persistence in *du’a* by saying *Ya rabb! Ya rabb!*- yet because his nourishment was Haram, his *du’a* could not have been accepted!

There are two conditions for the food we eat to be Halal. The first condition is that the food in itself should be permissible to eat and not of the prohibited types. The second condition is that it should be bought by money which is earned through Halal means.

Because of the time factor I will talk about some of the issues relating to the first condition i.e. the food itself must to be of the type which is not prohibited in itself.

Allah (*subhanahu wa ta’ala*) says in *surat al-Ma’idah*: “Prohibited for you are: carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and those upon which (a name) other than that of

Allah has been invoked (at the time of slaughter), animal killed by strangulation, or killed by a blow...”

It is well known that for the meat of animals and poultry to be permissible for a Muslim to eat, the animal must be slaughtered according to the rules of Shari’ah, otherwise it will be considered as dead animal - and the meat of a dead animal is not permitted for a Muslim to eat.

In this time of ours things have become very mixed up with regard to the issue of Halal meat and other food products which contain meat ingredients. This is not only a problem for Muslims who are living in non-Muslim countries but also for Muslims in their countries. This has come about as a result of globalisation and open trade. If you go to any of the Gulf States, for example, you will find that most of the chicken in the markets is imported from Brazil or Thailand or other non-Muslim countries. So, for Muslims – almost - everywhere the issue of the Halalness of the food they eat has become a serious issue. Knowing whether the meat they eat is slaughtered in the Halal way or not has become extremely difficult.

It is therefore, very important for every Muslim to be careful and check the source of meat and other products before eating them. One should do this by questioning the sources and checking and reading the product label. This is very important because the food one eats has its great effect upon the *akhlaq*, behaviour and *deen* of one.

Some Muslims (a small minority of them) argue that it is permissible to eat the meat found in the markets of Christian countries because it is part of the food of *ahl-ul kitab* (people of the book.) They quote the Qur’anic words: “The food of the People of the Book is lawful for you....”

However, in light of the current methods of slaughtering practiced by *ahl al-Kitab*, this argument is not valid. What is meant by the food of the People of the Book in the *ayah* is the meat of animals slaughtered by them in accordance with the legal way prescribed by Allah in their book. (For Christians the law of Musa, *alaihis-Salam* is their law because Isa - peace be upon him- did not abolish the Torah or the law.) If a Muslim slaughters in the wrong way the meat would not be Halal because it will be meat of dead animal. Similarly, if a Christian or a Jew does not slaughter in accordance with the legal way the meat would not be permissible for a Muslim to eat.

We know for sure that Christians have changed the correct way of slaughtering. So, there is no excuse for anyone to say that we do not know how they slaughter or to say that we are not required to ask! Nowadays they stun the animals using electricity or bullets to head – and most likely the animal will die before slaughter and its meat becomes meat of dead animal.

In a *fatwa* by Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz, he said: Allah says: “This day, good things have been made lawful for you. The food of the people of the Book is lawful for you....” He continues: This *ayah* explains that the food of the Jews and Christians is permissible for us unless we know that they slaughtered the animal in a way other than the legal way such as they slaughtered it by strangulation or electricity or by knocking it on the head. The animal would be killed by strangulation or by a blow and it would be Haram for us.

Perhaps some of you have heard about the horse and pig meat scandal which captured the news headlines here last week. Tests carried out by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland on beef burger samples from Tesco, Dunnes Stores, Lidl, Aldi, Spar and other supermarkets tested positive to pig and horse DNA. Out of 27 beef burgers 23 or 85% tested positive to pig DNA while 10 tested positive to horse DNA.

The basic rule is that a Muslim should not buy non-Halal food from these stores and the likes of them. If any Muslim has been buying from these sources, then that was wrong and not permissible. Anyone who did so, perhaps he/she has been eating pork meat or fat without knowing.

The issue of Halal meat is a very complex one. Even the meat which is sold as Halal in restaurants and shops, one must make sure that it is so. The Muslim owners of restaurants and shops should have *taqwa* of Allah and must make sure that the meat they sell to their Muslim brothers and sisters is Halal. Material profit and loss considerations must not come first before the considerations of Halal and Haram.

In an attempt to advise and help correct the situation, we in the Islamic Foundation of Ireland have prepared a Halal questionnaire to Muslim owned shops and restaurants to ascertain that the supplies of meat they stock are Halal. These two questionnaires are currently available on the Islamic Foundation of Ireland website. After collecting the information and checking it we will *-insha' Allah-* prepare a list of trusted Halal shops and restaurants. We will intend to make this information available on the Islamic Foundation of Ireland website for the benefit of those Muslims who are concerned about the Halal issue.