

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Prophet Muhammad's Recommendations Regarding Food



Produced By:

Islamweb Staff

Editorial & Translation Department

Introduction

Many people, including some Muslims, misunderstand the concept of worship in Islam. Usually, most people take worship to mean performing ritualistic acts such as prayers, fasting, charity, etc., which reveals a very simplistic and limited understanding of worship in Islam.

In Islam, worship may be defined as an all-inclusive term for all that Allaah The Almighty loves, in terms of the external and internal sayings and actions of a person. This means that worship is everything one says or does for the pleasure of Allaah The Almighty, which includes rituals, beliefs, social activities and personal contributions to the welfare of one's fellow human beings.

Allaah The Almighty instructed Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, in the Quran (what means):

{Say, "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allaah, Lord of the worlds. No partner has He. And this I have been commanded, and I am the first [among you] of the Muslims."} [Quran 6:162, 163]

The natural result of this submission is that a Muslim's activities should conform to the instructions of the One to whom the person is submitting. Islam, being a way of life, requires that its followers model their life according to its teachings in every aspect, religious or otherwise. This might sound strange to some people who think of religion as a personal relationship between the individual and God, having no impact on one's activities outside rituals. However, Islam does not think much of mere rituals when they are performed mechanically and have no influence on one's inner life and attitude.

In Islam, every act is considered an act of worship if done in accordance to the ways prescribed by Allaah The Almighty. Eating is an act that fulfills one's physical needs, and is considered a form of worship when performed in the way prescribed by Allaah The Almighty and Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, with the proper intention.

The role of food in our lives

Food plays an important role in an individual's life, as it is required for the survival of a human being and the nourishment of the body and mind. However, in modern times, people have developed an unhealthy relationship with food, in that they use (or abuse) it as a means of entertainment and comfort, to ward off boredom or to combat a feeling of ennui or emptiness in their lives. Consequently, most people are engaged in perpetual warfare against their bodies by binging on food or by resorting to extreme diets, leading to health problems like obesity and eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia.

Nowadays, eating is not an act of giving our bodies nourishment, but something that makes us feel full as fast as possible. Mindless eating has led to the development of a fast food culture that makes it impossible for us to keep track of how much we eat. At the end of the day, we may even struggle to recall what we put in our bodies. Over time, we may find ourselves gaining weight without really knowing why, leading to an epidemic of obesity and lifestyle diseases like hypertension and Type 2 diabetes, which are so difficult to tackle. Modern diet counselors and therapists advocate a technique called "mindful eating", which makes the act of nourishing the body a contemplative practice. Mindfulness changes one's attitude towards food and transforms the way one nourishes and cares for the body. Interestingly, the Quran and *Sunnah* (Prophetic tradition) pre-date this

advice by many centuries, serving as precursors to the principles of modern nutrition.

Food in the Quran and *Sunnah*

The Quran and *Sunnah* both recommend food rich in nutrients and prohibit the consumption of substances that have been proved to be harmful, or whose harms outweigh their benefits.

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):

- *{O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.}* [Quran 2:168]
- *{And indeed, for you in grazing livestock is a lesson. We give you drink from what is in their bellies - between excretion and blood - pure milk, palatable to drinkers.}* [Quran 16:66]
- *{So eat of that [meat] upon which the name of Allaah has been mentioned, if you are believers in His verses.}* [Quran 6: 118]
- *{Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allaah , and [those animals] killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten, except what you [are able to] slaughter [before its death], and those which are sacrificed on stone altars, and [prohibited is] that you seek decision through divining arrows. That is grave disobedience. This day those who disbelieve have despaired of [defeating] your religion; so fear them not, but fear Me. This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. But whoever*

is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin - then indeed, Allaah is Forgiving and Merciful. } [Quran 5: 3]

- *{They ask you, [O Muhammad], what has been made lawful for them. Say, "Lawful for you are [all] good foods and [game caught by] what you have trained of hunting animals which you train as Allaah has taught you. So eat of what they catch for you, and mention the name of Allaah upon it, and fear Allaah ." Indeed, Allaah is swift in account.} [Quran 5: 4]*
- *{The game of the sea and its food are permitted to you} (Quran 5:96).*

Live to eat or eat to live?

Islam emphasizes the concept of moderation in eating, as Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): *{And be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess.} [Quran 6: 141]*

Muslims ought to eat for survival and to maintain good health – they should not live to eat, or make food the sole focus of their existence. Moderation in dietary habits can help people to lead healthy and balanced lives. Modern research has proven that excessive eating and improper diet can increase the chance of diseases such as obesity, high cholesterol, heart diseases and diabetes.

As with many other subjects in Islam, prevention is considered better than cure. Therefore, overeating has been strongly discouraged in the Quran and *Sunnah* (Prophetic tradition).

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):

- *{Eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.}* [Quran 7:31]
- *{'Eat from the good things with which We have provided you and do not transgress [or oppress others] therein, lest My anger should descend upon you. And he upon whom My anger descends has certainly fallen.'}* [Quran 20:81]

In addition to the Quran, many *Hadeeths* (narrations) of Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, encourage moderation.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: *“No man fills a vessel worse than his stomach. A few mouthfuls that would suffice to keep his back upright are enough for a man. But if he must eat more, than he should fill one third (of his stomach) with food, one third with drink and leave one third for easy breathing”* [Ahmad]

Reading these Quranic verses and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, one may wonder, why is there so much stress given to something mundane like food and eating, when there are so many more important matters like justice, charity, mercy, love, and piety that need our attention? This stress on the everyday details of life is, however, part of the worldview of Islam. The essence of Islam lies in the relationship between the human being and his or her Creator, Allaah The Almighty. Therefore, Islam lays down injunctions and rules for living in order to promote the lifestyle that achieves the best results. Consequently, Islam believes that optimum spiritual health goes hand in hand with a sound, healthy physical constitution.

Dietary prohibitions and recommendations in the Quran and Sunnah

Numerous Quranic verses and Prophetic narrations recommend certain foods, such as honey, dates, figs, milk, and olives, for their healing properties.

For example, the Quran mentions the healing properties of honey:

{And your Lord inspired to the bee, "Take for yourself among the mountains, houses, and among the trees and [in] that which they construct. Then eat from all the fruits and follow the ways of your Lord laid down [for you]." There emerges from their bellies a drink, varying in colors, in which there is healing for people. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who give thought.} [Quran 16:68-69]

Honey is also mentioned in *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari* in a narration by ‘Aa’ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, wherein she says, *"The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, used to love sweet edible things and honey."* The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, also attributed many healing powers to honey, as when he recommended it to a man suffering from stomach upset. Honey is not just a sugar, but also a complex combination of enzymes, organic acids, esters, antibiotic agents, trace minerals, and other, unidentified components. One pound of honey contains 1.4 grams of protein, 23 milligrams of calcium, 73 milligrams of phosphorus, 4.1 milligrams of iron, 1 milligram of niacin and 16 milligrams of vitamin C. Honey has been attributed externally with healing wounds and burns, and making the skin supple and smooth. Internally, honey is a cure-all, with specific benefits for the digestive system and as a tonic for general health and well-being.

The date, a fruit known for its rich nutrient value, is also recommended. Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*,

said: *“There is a tree among the trees which is similar to a Muslim (in goodness), and that is the date palm tree.”* [Al-Bukhaari]

The olive is mentioned several times in the Quran, for example in the verse (which means): *{And He it is who causes gardens to grow, [both] trellised and untrellised, and palm trees and crops of different [kinds of] food and olives and pomegranates, similar and dissimilar. Eat of [each of] its fruit when it yields and give its due [Zakah] on the day of its harvest. And be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess. }* [Quran 6:141]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, is reported to have said about salt: *“Salt is the chief of your food.”* Thus, contrary to modern belief, salt used for flavoring in moderation is a useful condiment and preservative. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, is also reported to have said: *“Allaah The Almighty sent down four blessings from the sky: fire, water, iron and salt.”* [Ibn Maajah] Only minute amounts of iodine (from iodized salt) are needed by the body to function properly. Yet, a lack of the nutrient causes various disorders, from stunted growth to cretinism, a most serious condition. Even mild deficiency produces mental impairment. Studies estimate that children living in iodine- deficient areas forfeit up to 10 to 15 IQ points.

Doctors often recommend replacing water and salt lost during exercise and when working outdoors in strenuous jobs such as agriculture. Increased salt intakes have been used successfully to combat Chronic Fatigue Syndrome as well. Dramatic deficiencies or "excessive" sodium intakes have been associated with other conditions and diseases such as stomach cancer. Testing the salinity of perspiration has proven to be a good test for cystic fibrosis. The most

talked-about effect of salt is the association of dietary sodium and elevated blood pressures (hypertension). However, the American Society published a good overview of recent scientific evidence as a supplement to The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition for Clinical Nutrition in February 1997, and the Medical Journal of Australia reviewed that debate earlier this year. They found that the kidneys efficiently process this "excess" sodium in healthy people. In fact, in cases of hypotension, genetic factors explain a quarter to a half of blood pressure variability – five times more than environmental factors such as stress, physical activity/exercise, smoking and, of course, diet. Among dietary risk factors, obesity is generally recognized as the most important followed by excess alcohol consumption and then salt intake.

In May 1998, JAMA published a large meta-analysis confirming a 1996 study and documenting, as well, a series of adverse changes to blood chemistry among those placed on low-sodium diets in clinical trials. In all, there have been six clinical trials, five of which were limited to randomized controlled trials. These provide consistent evidence of only a minor blood pressure response to a restriction of dietary sodium.

Olives are also mentioned both in the Quran and *Sunnah*. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, advised us to: ***"Use olive oil as a food and ointment for it comes from a blessed tree"*** [At-Tirmithi]. In Crete, a recent study showed that even though 90% of Cretans consume an average of 60-70 pounds of oil a year per person, the incidence of coronary disease is very low compared to other countries.

It is now common knowledge that animal fats contain saturated fatty acids that directly increase blood cholesterol levels. However, mono-

unsaturated fatty acids, like olive oil, control LDL levels while raising HDL levels. In fact, no other naturally produced oil has as large an amount of monounsaturated fatty acids (mainly oleic acid) as olive oil.

Olive oil also contains vitamins E and K, and polyphenols, which provide a defense mechanism that delays aging and prevents carcinogenesis, atherosclerosis, liver disorders, and inflammations. Oleates in the oil also promote bone formation in children and protect the bones of the elderly. Even The Journal of the National Cancer Institute reported that olive oil offers strong protection in the fight against breast cancer.

Vinegar is also mentioned in the narrations of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, is reported to have called vinegar a "blessed condiment." [Muslim] Modern science has confirmed that it indeed does have many "blessings." A recent book called, simply, '*Vinegar*' talks about many ways in which vinegar benefits our health, and cites numerous scientific proofs of this claim. However, vinegar "miracles" were known even before the time of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. The first-century Greek physician Dioscorides, who traveled widely with the Roman army, was a careful observer of the medicine of his time. In his writings, he describes the use of a substance he calls 'oxymel,' or sour honey, for arthritis-like pains.

Over the centuries, oxymel – a combination of apple cider vinegar and honey – has been widely used to dissolve painful calcium deposits in the body, and for other health problems such as hay fever. This is because apple cider vinegar is nutrient-rich, including amino acids, enzymes, manganese, magnesium, potassium, and silicon. It improves

metabolism and can counteract the effects of excess lactic acid in the bloodstream released during exercise and stress.

It has also been used as a tonic to help those with arthritis, blood pressure, cholesterol, colds, constipation, cramps, diabetes, diarrhea, indigestion, muscle stiffness, and sore throat. In his 300-page book *Vinegar*, D. Lawrence cites over 100 studies in praise of the condiment. Many more claims of vinegar's benefits are documented in respected journals like *Science Digest*, *The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics* and *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Perhaps, though, the most important thing we can learn from Prophetic nutrition is moderation. As we sort through the wisdoms of Prophetic nutrition in our attempt to reconcile them with modern "science," we must always remember what the Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{“Eat of the good things We have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess therein.”}*** [Quran 20: 81]

The Quran lays down certain injunctions regarding diet:

- ***{He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allaah. However, whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allaah is Forgiving and Merciful.}*** [Quran 2: 173]
- ***{They ask you, [O Muhammad], what has been made lawful for them. Say, "Lawful for you are [all] good foods and [game caught by] what you have trained of hunting animals which you train as Allaah has taught you. So eat of what they catch***

for you, and mention the name of Allaah upon it, and fear Allaah." Indeed, Allaah is swift in account. } [Quran 5:4]

Alcohol is also among the categories of prohibited food, as Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):

{ "They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, "In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit." And they ask you what they should spend. Say, "The excess [beyond needs]." Thus Allaah makes clear to you the verses [of revelation] that you might give thought." } [Quran 2:219]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, not just prohibited the obviously harmful categories of food, he also recommended limiting one's intake of food to the bare minimum to maintain health.

On the authority of Al-Miqdaam ibn Ma'addi-Karb, may Allaah be pleased with him, who said, *"I heard the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, saying: 'No human ever filled a vessel worse than the stomach. Sufficient for any son of Adam are some morsels to keep his back straight. But if it must be, then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath.'"* [Ahmad, At-Tirmithi, An-Nasaa'i, Ibn Majah, *Hadeeth Saheeh*]

Upon reading this *Hadeeth*, Ibn Masaweh, an eminent Muslim physician, said, *"If the people only applied these words, they would avoid all diseases and maladies and the clinics and pharmacies would be idle."*

Another, Al-Haarith ibn Kalada said, *"That which has killed humankind is partaking food on top of food before it has been digested."*

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, also said: ***"The believer eats with one stomach while the unbeliever eats with seven stomachs."*** This means that the believer eats with the manners of Islam and in moderation, while the unbeliever eats based on desires and gluttony and so he eats excess food, which would be enough to fill seven stomachs.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, once said: ***"The food for one is enough for two and food for two is enough for three and food for three is enough for four."***

The Prophetic recommendations of limiting one's intake of food are remarkable for their prescience, as they came centuries before research was conducted on calorie-restricted diets and their benefits to the body. Besides, there are numerous spiritual benefits of a restricted diet, such as achieving humility of the heart, strength of understanding, weakening of base desires, lessening of personal opinions and anger, while overeating induces the opposites of all of those.

The best generations – the Companions of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and their Followers did not indulge in eating to excess. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, in fact predicted the decline in the moral and ethical standards of the subsequent generations in one of his narrations, when he said: ***"The best generation is my generation, followed by the one after them then the one after them. Then will come a people who bear witness but are not asked to bear witness, who swear oaths but do not fulfill them and fatness will appear among them."*** [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

Al-Hasan Al-Bastri, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *"O son of Adam, eat with one third of your stomach and drink with one third and leave one third of your stomach to breathe so that you may think."*

Another saying attributed to him is, *"The test of Aadam (Adam), may Allaah exalt his mention, was food and it is your test until the Last Day."* One day, Al-Hasan, may Allaah have mercy upon him, offered some food to his companion who said, *"I have eaten until I am no longer able to eat."* At this, Al-Hasan, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *"Subhaan Allaah! Does a Muslim eat until he is no longer able to eat?"*

A man said to Ibn 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, *"Shouldn't I bring you some Jawaarish?"* Ibn 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *"What is that?"* He said, *"Something which aids in digesting your food after you eat."* Ibn 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *"I have not eaten to my fill for four months. That is not because I am not able to do so, but I was with a group of people who were hungry more than they were full."*

Muhammad ibn Wasi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *"Whoever eats little will understand and make others understand and will be clear and humble. Overeating weighs a person down and keeps him from much of what he wants [to accomplish]."*

It is said that Allaah The Almighty grants this world to those whom He loves and those He does not love but only grants hunger to those whom he loves. It was also said: *'Whoever takes control of his stomach gains control of all good deeds'* and *"Wisdom does not reside in a full stomach."*

Ash-Shaafi'ee, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *"I have not eaten to my fill in sixteen years because filling oneself makes the body heavy, removes clear understanding, induces sleep and makes one weak for worship."*

Prophetic guidance on the etiquette of eating and drinking

The guidance of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, is the perfect guidance – even with regard to an ordinary matter, such as the manners of eating food. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, had certain habits when it came to eating, and he fostered them in others as well.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, recommended a certain etiquette for eating:

Before a meal:

It is from the *Sunnah* (Prophetic tradition) to ask about the food being served if you are a guest and you do not know what it is (i.e., what type of food it is), and you are not sure about what has been offered to you. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, did not eat food until he had been informed about what it was called and what it contained, so that he would know exactly what it was.

Imaam Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, narrated from Khaalid ibn al-Waleed, may Allaah be pleased with him, that he and the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, entered upon Maymoonah, may Allaah be pleased with her, who was his [Khaalid's] maternal aunt and the maternal aunt of Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him. They found that she had some roasted *Dhab* (a kind of sand lizard) that her sister Hafeedah bint al-Haarith, may Allaah be pleased with her, had brought from Najd.

She offered the dish to the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, but he would rarely stretch forth his hand to eat any food that was offered to him until he had been told what it was. The Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, stretched forth his hand, then one of the women who were present said, “*Tell the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, that what has been offered to him is lizard.*” The Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu*

'alayhi wa sallam, withdrew his hand from the dish, and Khaalid ibn al-Waleed, may Allaah be pleased with him, asked, "Is lizard haraam, O Messenger of Allaah?" He said: "**No, but it is not found in the land of my people and I feel that I would have no liking for it.**" Khaalid, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, "Then I chewed it and ate it, and the Messenger of Allaah was looking at me." [Al-Bukhaari, Muslim]

Ibn at-Teen, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said,

"The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, used to ask, because the Arabs would eat anything because food was hard to come by amongst them. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, may not have liked some things, so that was why he asked. It may be understood as meaning that he used to ask because some animals were forbidden in the Sharee'ah (Islamic law) and some were allowed, but they (the Arabs) did not regard anything as forbidden, and they may have brought him some grilled or cooked meat that could not have been distinguished from another type except by asking." [Fat-hul-Baari]

One should take care not eat and drink from vessels of gold and silver, because that is *Haraam*. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: "**Do not wear silk or brocade, and do not drink from vessels of gold and silver, or eat from plates thereof. They are for them in this world and for us in the Hereafter.**" [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

Part of honoring one's guest is to hasten to offer him something, and part of the guest's honoring the host is to hasten to accept his food and eat from it. If the host sees the guest not eating, he may think badly of him, so the guest has to reassure his hosts by hastening to eat his food, because that will reassure him.

It is obligatory to mention the name of Allaah The Almighty before eating by saying “*Bismillaah* (in the name of Allaah)” when starting to eat. It was narrated from Umm Kulthoom from ‘Aa’ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, that the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“When any one of you eats, let him mention the name of Allaah. If he forgets to mention the name of Allaah at the beginning, then let him say ‘Bismillaahi awwalahu wa aakhirahu (In the name of Allaah at the beginning and at the end).”** [At-Tirmithi, Abu Daawood and Ibn Maajah]

‘Umar ibn Abi Salamah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *“I was a young boy in the care of the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, and my hand used to wander all over the platter (of food). The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said to me: “O young boy, say Bismillaah, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is directly in front of you.”* [Al-Bukhaari, Muslim]

Etiquette while eating

It is obligatory for the Muslim to eat with his right hand; he should not eat with his left hand as it was narrated from Ibn ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“No one among you should eat with his left hand, or drink with it, for the Shaytaan eats with his left hand and drinks with it.”** [Muslim] The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, commanded people to eat with their right hands and forbade them to eat with their left hands. He said: **“The Shaytaan eats with his left hand and drinks with his left hand.”** [Muslim] This implies that eating with the left hand is *Haraam*, and this is the correct view, because the one who eats with his left hand is either a *Shaytaan* (a devil), or he is imitating the *Shaytaan*.

It was also reported in a *Saheeh Hadeeth* that he told a man who was eating with his left hand in his presence: **“Eat with your right hand!”** The man said, *“I cannot.”* He said: **“May you never be able to!”** and the man never lifted his right hand to his mouth after that. [Muslim] If it was permissible (to eat with the left hand), he would not have prayed against him for doing so. It was the man’s stubborn arrogance that made him refuse to obey the command, and this is the utmost disobedience that deserved this prayer against him.

This applies so long as there is no excuse; if a person has an excuse for not eating and drinking with his right hand, such as sickness or injury etc., then there is nothing wrong with his eating with his left hand. The *Hadeeth* indicates that a person should avoid doing actions that resemble the actions of the *Shaytaan*.

It is also from the *Sunnah* for a person to eat from the food that is directly in front of him, and not reach out to take food that is directly in front of others, or from the middle of the platter, as indicated earlier, in the narration where the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said to ‘Umar ibn Abi Salamah, may Allaah be pleased with him: **“O young boy, say Bismillaah, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is directly in front of you.”** [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

Eating slowly is recommended for health. Slow eating reduces the consumption of food, as it postpones much of the meal to a time when the absorption of nutrients begin to produce physiological signals of satiety. Slow eating helps in chewing the food well. This results in the exercise of the jaws and mixing of the saliva with food. Hence, efficient digestion takes place because the food particles are cut into smaller pieces, not requiring as much churning in the stomach or intestine. Thus, there are fewer incidences of heartburn and similar ailments and discomforts.

It is considered impoliteness or bad manners for one to eat from his companion's place, as others may find this off-putting. That is because Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***“The blessing descends in the middle of the food, so eat from the edges and do not eat from the middle.”*** [At-Tirmithi, Ibn Maajah] However, if the food is dates or something of that type, the scholars narrated that it is permissible to eat from all parts of the plate.

It is *Sunnah* is to eat with three fingers; eating with more than three fingers is a sign of greed and is considered bad manners, because there is no need for more than three in order to gather up a morsel. If it is necessary to use more than three, because the food is light and cannot be gathered in three fingers, then he may use the fourth or fifth. [*Fat-hul-Baari*] This applies if a person is eating with his hand. However, there is nothing wrong with using a spoon etc, as we shall see below.

One should eat any piece of food that falls on the floor. If a piece of food falls on the floor, then the person eating should remove any dirt that gets onto it and eat it; he should not leave it for the Shaytaan, because he does not know where the blessing is in his food; it may be in the piece that fell, and leaving it makes a person miss out on the blessing of the food. Anas ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that when the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, ate, he would lick his three fingers. Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, ***“And he said: ‘If any one of you drops a piece of food, let him remove any dirt from it and eat it, and not leave it for the Shaytaan.’ And he commanded us to clean the plate, and said: ‘For you do not know where in your food the blessing is.’”*** [Muslim]

In addition, one should not recline whilst eating. That is because the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***“I do not eat whilst I am reclining.”*** [Al-Bukhaari] The scholars differed as to what reclining meant. Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said,

“The scholars differed as to what reclining meant. It was said that it means sitting too comfortably to eat in whatever manner; or that it meant leaning on one side; or that it meant resting with one’s left arm on the ground... Ibn ‘Adiyy narrated with a Dha’eef (weak) Isnaad that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, rebuked a man for resting on his left arm when eating. Maalik said, ‘This is a kind of reclining.’ I say, this indicates that Maalik regarded as Makrooh everything that may be counted as reclining whilst eating, and he did not mention any one specific type thereof.” [Fat-hul-Baari]

One should not spit or blow one's nose whilst eating, unless that is necessary; as this may disgust or be off-putting to those eating with him.

The etiquettes to be followed while eating also include eating with a group, not speaking about *Haraam* things whilst eating, eating with one's wives and children, not keeping a particular food to oneself unless there is a reason for that, such as it being for medicinal purposes – rather one should offer the best food to others first, such as pieces of meat and soft or good bread. If the guest has had enough and stops eating, his host exhort his guest to eat and repeat it, so long as he does not think that his guest has had enough, but he should not repeat it more than three times.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would repeatedly urge his guests to eat, as he was the best example of hospitality and generosity. This is mentioned in the *Hadeeth* of Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be

pleased with him, narrated by Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, about the story of drinking milk, where he repeatedly said to him: **“Drink!”** He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, kept telling him to drink until Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, **“By the One Who sent you with the truth, I have no more room for it!”** [Al-Bukhaari]

Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, demonstrated to his followers the pleasures of sharing as opposed to selfish over-indulgence in the good things of life. The sharing of food with neighbors, relatives, friends, the needy, and the destitute is emphasized. Ibn Abbas, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that he heard the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* saying: **“He is not a believer who eats to his fill but his neighbor goes without food.”** [Saheeh Al-Bukhaari]

Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, elaborated on the duty of the Muslim to suppress greed, especially in eating. This appears in a very specific situation reported by Ibn Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, in which the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* prohibited anyone taking two dates together before asking permission from his companions [Saheeh Al-Bukhaari].

Muslims are encouraged to eat together, as mentioned before. Eating with others bring about harmony and understanding among people. People are usually more relaxed when eating in company, and this is one reason why families should always try to eat together. This is the *Sunnah* of the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. When eating in company, one’s mind is less absorbed in their daily activities and is free of worries. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, brought the attention of Muslims to the importance of eating together (However, ‘eating together’ does not imply intermixing between

males and females at parties or banquets): ***“Eat together and not separately, for the blessing is associated with the company.”*** [Ibn Majah]

It is also recommended to clean between his teeth and not swallow any bits of food that come out from between his teeth.

There is nothing in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, that indicates that it is *Mustahabb* to drink water or sips of water before eating food. Those who think that that is *Sunnah* probably imagined it because it is proven in the *Sunnah* that it is *Mustahabb* to drink in three draughts. It is the same whether one drinks before or after eating or whilst eating, or in any other situation; it is *Mustahabb* for him to consume his drink in three draughts.

It was narrated that Anas ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *“The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, used to breathe three times when drinking, and he would say: ‘It is more thirst-quenching, healthier and more wholesome.’”* [Muslim]

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *“What is meant by breathing whilst drinking is moving the vessel away from the mouth and breathing outside of it, then going back to drinking.”* [Zaad al-Ma’aad]

There are great wisdom and important benefits in drinking in this manner. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, drew attention to them when he said: ***“It is more thirst-quenching, healthier and more wholesome.”*** ‘Thirst-quenching’ means it is more hydrating and beneficial. ‘Healthier’ means it is better for one. ‘Wholesome’ means that it is healing; it relieves one from intense thirst and sickness to which that may lead, because it comes to the stomach in stages one after another; the second draught soothes that which could not be

soothed by the first, and the third soothes that which could not be soothed by the second. It was also said that ‘wholesome’ means that it is free from any disease or harm that may result from drinking in one draught. [*Sharh Saheeh Muslim* by Imaam an-Nawawi, may Allaah have mercy upon him]

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, “*One of the problems caused by drinking in one draught is that there is a fear of choking, as the oesophagus may be blocked by the large amount of liquid flowing through it. But if he breathes slowly, then drinks, he will be safe from that.*” [Zaad al-Ma’aad]

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, summarized the practice of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, while eating as follows,

"When he, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, put his hand in the food, he would say, "Bismillaah (in the Name of Allaah), and he told people to say this when eating. He said: 'When any one of you eats, let him mention the name of Allaah. If he forgets to mention the name of Allaah at the beginning, let him say Bismillaahi fi awwalihi wa aakhirih (in the name of Allaah at its beginning and at its end).'" [Saheeh Hadeeth, narrated by At-Tirmithi and Abu Daawood, may Allaah have mercy upon them both]

The correct view is that it is obligatory to mention the name of Allaah (say *Bismillaah*) when eating. The narrations which state this are *Saheeh* and are clear, with no contradictions in them.

When the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, raised the food to his mouth, he would say: “*Al-hamdulillaahi hamdan katheeran tayyiban mubaarakan feehi ghayri makfiyyin wa laa muwadda' wa*

laa mustaghni 'anhu Rabbanaa 'azza wa jall.” (Allaah be praised with an abundant, beautiful, blessed praise. He is the One Who is Sufficient, Who feeds and is never fed, The One Who is longed for, along with that which is with Him, and the One Who is needed. He is Our Lord, may He be glorified). [Al-Bukhaari]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, never criticized the food he was offered under any circumstances. If he liked it, he would eat it, and if he did not like it, he would leave it and not say anything. [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim] At the most, he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would say: *“I do not feel like eating this.”* [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim] What is referred to here is permissible food; as for *Haraam* food he would criticize it and forbid it. An-Nawawi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *“Part of the confirmed etiquette of food is not to criticize it such as saying it is too salty, or too sour, or not salty enough, or thick, or thin, or not well-cooked, etc. Ibn Battaal, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, ‘This is part of good manners, because a person may not like food that others like, but there is nothing wrong with eating anything that is permitted in Sharee’ah.’”* [Sharh Muslim]

Furthermore, sometimes he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would praise even the plainest food, in order to show his gratitude for even the most simple fare, such as on the occasion when he asked his family for food, and they said, *“We have nothing but vinegar.”* He asked for it and started dipping the bread in and eating it, saying: *“What a good condiment is vinegar!”* [Muslim]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used to talk whilst he was eating, as is seen from the report quoted above about vinegar.

In one well-known incident, when he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was eating with his step-son ‘Umar ibn Abi Salamah, may Allaah be

pleased with him, he admonished him: ***“Say Bismillaah and eat from that which is in front of you in the dish.”*** [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

During the time of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, people used to eat together from one dish, and children would sometimes need to be reminded about the correct etiquette and manners of eating.

Etiquette after eating

The Muslim should praise and thank Allaah The Almighty for His bounty and the food He provided him with. Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***“Whoever is fed by Allaah, let him say, ‘Allaahumma baarik lana fihi, wa at'imna khayran minhu (O Allaah, bless it for us and feed us with better than it).’ And whoever is given milk to drink by Allaah, let him say, ‘Allaahumma baarik lana fihi wa zidna minhu (O Allaah, bless it for us and give us more).’”*** [At-Tirmithi in *Saheeh Sunan At-Tirmithi*]

Moreover, it was narrated from Anas ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***“Allaah is pleased with His slave when he eats something and praises Him for it, or drinks something and praises Him for it.”*** [Muslim]

Several ways of praising Allaah The Almighty have been narrated from the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*:

1. Imaam Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, narrated that Abu Umaamah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, ***“When the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, finished eating, he would say: ‘Alhamdulillah hamdan katheeran mubaarakan fihi ghayra makfiyyin wa laa muwadda'in wa laa mustaghnan 'anhu rabbana (Praise be to***

Allaah, much good and blessed praise. O our Lord, You are not in need of anyone, and we cannot do without Your favour nor dispense with it.)’” [Al-Bukhaari]

Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, “‘*Ghayra makfiyyin (You are not in need of anyone)*’ means that He has no need of any of His slaves but He is the One Who feeds His slaves and suffices them.”

2. It was narrated from Mu’aath ibn Anas, may Allaah have mercy upon him, that his father said, “*The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: ‘Whoever eats some food then says, ‘Al-hamdu Lillaahi Allaahi at’amani haadha wa razaqnihi min ghayri hawlin minni wa laa quwwata (Praise be to Allaah Who has fed me this and provided me with it with no power or strength on my part),’ his previous sins will be forgiven.’*” [At-Tirmithi, Ibn Maajah, in Saheeh at-Tirmithi]
3. It was narrated that Abu Ayyoob al-Ansaari, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, “*When the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, ate or drank anything, he would say: ‘Alhamdulillah allathi at’ama wa saqaa wa sawwaghahu wa ja’ala lahu makhrajan (Praise be to Allaah Who has given food and drink, made it easy to swallow and provided an exit for it).’*” [Abu Daawood]
4. It was narrated from ‘Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Jubayr, may Allaah be pleased with him, that a man who served the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, for eight years told him that he used to hear the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, saying, when food was brought near him: “*Bismillaah.*” And when he had finished eating he would say: “*Allaahumma at’amta wa asqayta wa hadayta wa ahyayta, fa laka’l-hamd ‘ala ma a’tayta (O Allaah, You have fed, given to drink, guided and*

brought to life, so praise be to You for what You have given).”

[Ahmad, *As-Silsilah as-Saheehah*]

It is *Mustahabb* (recommended) to use all the words of praise that have been reported in narrations of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, after finishing eating. So, you can say one *Du'aa'* (supplication) on one occasion, another *Du'aa'* on another occasion, and so on, so that you will have followed the *Sunnah* in all ways and attain the blessing of these *Du'aa'*s, as well as feeling the meanings of these words in your heart when you say them on various occasions, because if you get used to saying a particular *Du'aa'* all the time, you think less about its meaning, because you have said it so often. [*Al-Aadaab* by Ash-Shalhoob]

One should wash one's hands after eating. It is *Sunnah* to wash with water only. Ibn Raslaan, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, “*But it is better to wash the hands with potash or soap or something similar.*” [*Tuhfat al-Ahwathi*] Therefore, washing the hands is *Mustahabb* (recommended) both before and after eating, even if a person has *Wudhoo'*.

One should also rinse one's mouth after eating. It is considered *Mustahabb* to rinse the mouth after eating, because Basheer ibn Yassaar, may Allaah have mercy upon him, narrated that Suwayd ibn al-Nu'maan, may Allaah be pleased with him, told him that they were with the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, in As-Sahba', which is a place at some distance from Khaybar, and the time for prayer came. He called for food, but he did not find anything but some *Saweeq* (barley mush). So he ate some and we all ate with him. Then he called for water and rinsed out his mouth, and then he prayed, and we prayed, and he did not do *Wudhoo'*. [Al-Bukhaari]

One should pray for one's host if they are eating as a guest. Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, came to Sa'd ibn 'Ubaadah, may Allaah be pleased with him, who brought him some bread and oil, and he ate. Then the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***“May fasting people break their fast with you, may the righteous eat your food, and may the angels send blessings upon you.”*** [Narrated by Abu Daawood, *Saheeh Sunan Abi Daawood*]

When the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, ate with others, he would not leave until he had made *Du'aa'* (supplication) for them. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, made *Du'aa'* in the house of 'Abdullaah ibn Bishr, may Allaah be pleased with him, and said: ***“O Allaah, bless for them that which You have provided for them, forgive them and have mercy on them.”***

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, commanded those who complained that they never felt satisfied to eat in company and not separately, and to mention the name of Allaah (say *Bismillaah*) over the food ***“so that He might bless it for them.”*** [Abu Daawood and Ibn Maajah, *Zaad al-Ma'aad*]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used to eat using the first three fingers (of his right hand), which is the best way of eating. [Zaad al-Ma'aad]

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, summarized the teachings of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, with regard to food and drink, which he derived from the *Saheeh Ahaadeeth* in *Zaad al-Ma'aad*. He says,

“Similarly, the practice of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, was not to reject what was available, and not to go out

of his way to seek that which was not available. No good food was brought to him but he ate it, unless he had no appetite for it, in which case he left it but did not forbid it. He never criticized any food. If he wanted it he ate it, otherwise he would leave it, as he refrained from eating lizard meat because he was not used to it, but he did not forbid it to the Ummah. He ate sweets and honey, which he liked. He ate camel meat, mutton, chicken, bustard, onager, rabbit and seafood. He ate grilled meat and both fresh and dry dates. He did not refuse good food, and he did not go out of his way to seek it, rather he would eat what was available, but if it was not available he would be patient, and he would tie a stone to his stomach because of hunger. Three new moons in a row would be sighted, and no cooking fire would be lit in his house."

The inner dimensions of food

One of the famous sayings of the Arabs goes, *"The stomach is the home of disease and restraint is the basis of the remedy."* Gluttony is considered one of the cardinal sins that lead to many physical and spiritual diseases. Eating to one's fill increases sexual desire, followed by the desire for status and wealth in order to fulfill the first two desires, which, in turn, generate boastfulness and arrogance. In most cases, the result of giving in to one's desires indiscriminately is evil.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, advocated eating in moderation and strongly discouraged a lifestyle of extravagance and indulgence. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"The son of Aadam does not fill any vessel worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Aadam to eat a few mouthfuls, to keep him going. If he must do that (fill his stomach), then let him fill one third with food, one third with drink and one third with air."*** [At-Tirmithi]

He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used to eat enough to keep him going, but not so much as to make him fat. Ibn 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***“The believer eats in one stomach whilst the disbeliever eats in seven.”***

Thus, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, taught his *Ummah* something to protect them from diseases caused by eating and drinking.

Eating in moderation is part of the etiquette of eating. One should not fill the stomach. The most that a Muslim is permitted to do in this regard is to divide his stomach into three thirds: one-third for food, one-third for drink and one-third for air. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: ***“A man does not fill any vessel worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Adam to eat enough to keep him alive. But if he must do that, then one-third for his food, one-third for his drink and one-third for his air.”*** [Narrated by At-Tirmithi and Ibn Maajah, may Allaah have mercy upon them both; classed as *Saheeh* by Al-Albaani, may Allaah have mercy upon him, in *Saheeh at-Tirmithi*]

This keeps the body healthy and light, because eating one's fill makes the body heavy, which leads to laziness in worship and work. One-third is defined as being one-third of that which would make you feel full. [*Al-Mawsoo'ah*] Not only is eating one's fill or overeating bad for the bodily health of an individual, it is equally bad, or rather worse, for his spiritual health and wellbeing, as well as for his Hereafter.

The Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, also followed the same principles of austerity and abstinence. It was narrated that Naafi', may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *"Ibn 'Umar, may*

*Allaah be pleased with him, used not to eat until a poor man was brought to eat with him. I brought a man in to eat with him and he ate a great deal. He said, 'O Naafi', do not let this man enter upon me, for I heard the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, say: **'The Kaafir eats in seven intestines.'***" [Al-Bukhaari, Muslim]

An-Nawawi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, commenting on this *Hadeeth*,

"The scholars said, 'What the Hadeeth means is to be content with little in this world and encouraging asceticism and contentment, in addition to the fact that eating little is a good characteristic, and eating a great deal is the opposite. As for the words of Ibn 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, concerning the poor man who ate a great deal in his presence, 'Do not let him enter upon me,' he only said that because he was behaving like a Kaafir, and if a person behaves like a Kaafir it is Makrooh (disliked) to mix with him unnecessarily. Moreover, the amount that this man ate could had fed a number of people."

In addition, Abu Juhayfah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, "A man burped in the presence of the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and he said: **'Keep your burps away from us, for the one who eats his fill the most in this world will be hungry for the longest time on the Day of Resurrection.'**" [at-Tabaraani] After hearing that, Abu Juhayfah, may Allaah be pleased with him, did not eat his fill until he departed from this world; if he ate breakfast he would not eat dinner and if he ate dinner he would not eat breakfast, and he said, "I have not filled my stomach for thirty years." Look at how the noble Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, clung

fast to the *Sunnah* and teachings of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam!*

There are benefits of moderation in food, include attaining purity of heart, mental alertness and deep insight. Satiety generates lethargy, slows the mind and blinds the heart, hence the proverb, that says, *“The one whose stomach is hungry will become able to think deeply and his intelligence will honed.”*

Moderation in eating fosters humility and lessens arrogance, insolence and false pride, which form the basis of oppression and heedlessness of Allaah The Almighty. The scholars enumerate multiple benefits of eating in moderation. Eating less keeps the body healthy and light, keeps the heart soft, increases memory, weakens desires, and disciplines the soul while excessive eating brings about the opposite of these praiseworthy qualities. Haatim at-Taa'iy said, *“If you give your stomach and your private part what they ask for, you will end up regretting it.”* [Fat-hul-Baari]

By eating in moderation, a person remains cognizant of the wrath and punishment of Allaah The Almighty, or the people who are afflicted by calamities, for the one who has his fill forgets the one who is hungry and he forgets hunger. However, the person who is mindful does not see someone else afflicted by a calamity without being reminded of the calamity in the Hereafter.

One of the greatest benefits of moderation in eating is that it puts an end to all sinful desires, and brings control over the self that is inclined towards evil, because the source of all sins is desires and energy, and the fuel for energy and desires is food. Thun-Noon, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *“I never ate my fill except that I sinned or thought of sinning.”*

Restricting one's food intake helps in warding off sleep and enables a person to make do with fewer hours of sleep. Excessive sleep causes one to miss out on *Tahajjud* (voluntary night prayer) and *Fajr* prayers; it also makes one slow and hardens the heart.

Harms of extravagance in food and drink

Al-Haakim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, narrated that Abu Juhayfah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said that the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***“The more people eat their fill in this world, the more hungry they will be on the Day of Resurrection.”***

Ibn Abid-Dunya, may Allaah have mercy upon him, who narrated this *Hadeeth*, added that Abu Juhayfah, may Allaah be pleased with him, never filled his stomach until he departed this life. [*Saheeh* by Al-Albaani, may Allaah have mercy upon him, in *as-Silsilah as-Saheehah*]

‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *“By Allaah, if I wanted I could wear the finest clothes among you, and eat the best food, and have the most luxurious life. But I heard that Allaah will condemn people for some of their actions and said (what means): {“You received your good things in the life of the world, and you took your pleasure therein. Now this Day you shall be recompensed with a torment of humiliation, because you were arrogant in the land without a right, and because you used to rebel against Allaah’s Command (disobey Allaah)”}* [Quran 46:20]

Ironically, extravagance in food and drink is seen the most during the month of *Ramadhaan*, which is the month of worship. This distracts people from many acts of obedience and worship, such as reading the Quran, performing voluntary prayers and giving in charity, which is

what the Muslim should focus on during this blessed month, as was the practice of the *Salaf* (righteous predecessors).

However, many people end up spending a major portion of the month shopping for food, preparing it, and consuming a variety of delicacies. In fact, every year doctors report a sharp increase in the number of patients complaining of indigestion and other digestive disturbances with the advent of *Ramadhaan*.

Excessive eating is what keeps one away from the sincere and focused worship of Allaah The Almighty that one is searching for. This is because eating one's fill makes the body heavy, which leads to yawning and laziness in worship and work, as mentioned earlier. All of us can speak from our experiences in *Ramadhaan*, when the worship of Allaah The Almighty becomes heavy and laborious, if we eat too much.

This reminds us again of the saying of the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* said: **"A believer eats in one intestine (is satisfied with a little food), and a kafir (unbeliever) or a hypocrite eats in seven intestines (eats too much)."** [Al-Bukhaari]

If a person eats too much, he becomes sluggish and sleeps a great deal, and wastes a lot of his time. Sufyaan ath-Thawri, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *"If you want your body to be healthy and to sleep less, then eat less."* Eating too much also makes the heart hard and heedless of Allaah. It was said to Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy upon him, *"Does a man find any softness and humility in his heart when he is full?"* He said, *"I do not think so."*

And that is why the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* and his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, used to go hungry quite frequently, even in the presence of abundant food. The Mother

of the Believers ‘Aa’ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said, *"From the time of their arrival in Madeenah up until his death, the family of Muhammad never ate their fill of bread made from wheat three nights in a row."* [Al-Bukhaari]

Some people argue that as long as what they are eating is *Halaal*, they can eat whatever they want, whenever they want and in whatever quantity they want. Clearly, they not heed the words of Allaah The Almighty, Who condemns everyone who is extravagant, even in things that are permissible, Saying (what means): ***{and eat and drink but waste not by extravagance, certainly He (Allaah) likes not those who waste by extravagance}*** [Quran 7:31]

‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *"By Allaah, if I wanted I could wear the finest clothes among you, and eat the best food, and have the most luxurious life. But I heard that Allaah will condemn people for some of their actions and Said (what means): {You received your good things in the life of the world, and you took your pleasure therein. Now this Day you shall be recompensed with a torment of humiliation, because you were arrogant in the land without a right, and because you used to rebel against Allaah's Command (disobey Allaah)}* [Quran 46:20]

Ibraaheem ibn Ad-ham, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *"Anyone who controls his stomach is in control of his Deen, and anyone who controls his hunger is in control of good behavior...Disobedience towards Allaah is nearest to a person who is satiated with a full stomach, and furthest away from a person who is hungry."*

In fact, the scholars say that if a person eats food in such large quantities that it harms him, then this is *Haraam*. That is because anything that harms one is not allowed in Islam. Allaah The Almighty

Says (what means): {"**Do not kill yourself....**} [Quran 4:29] Also, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: "**There should be no harming or reciprocating harm.**"

Weight loss and the Sunnah

A Muslim considers his food and drink as a means to attaining greater strength for worship and doing good deeds. They are not a goal and pleasure in themselves. He eats and drinks in order to keep his body healthy so that he may worship Allaah The Almighty. This is the worship that will make him qualified for the honor of the life and happiness of the Hereafter. He does not eat and drink for the sake of eating and drinking itself or its desires. Therefore, if he is not hungry, he does not eat. If he is not thirsty, he does not drink.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: "**We are a people who do not eat until we are hungry. And if we eat, we do not eat to our fill.**" The wisdom behind all that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said or did fourteen hundred years ago is being proven now with science, and it shows the truthfulness of his Prophethood and the beauty and excellence of Islam, the perfect way of life.

Today we see that the weight loss industry is a multi-billion dollar business. Obesity is a major problem in the 'developed world', affecting millions of people of all ages. Overeating is leading people to a variety of illnesses; from heart disease to diabetes, arthritis to asthma, from sleeping disorders and insomnia to depression and anxiety, just to name a few.

The way to stop eating too much is to do it gradually. If a person is used to eating a lot and he stops all of a sudden and starts eating very little, he will become weak and his appetite will increase. So he

should reduce it gradually, by eating less and less of his usual food, until he reaches a moderate intake of food.

When it comes to eating better, less is definitely more. Besides, eating less is the perfect way to lose those extra pounds we have been trying, futilely, to shed for years. While we were trying so hard and looking every place under the sun to lose that weight, we forgot to look right under our noses. We forgot that the best and most perfect diet is to follow the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. For, indeed, it is only his way that is the best and his guidance that is perfect.

From all that has been mentioned, the importance of healthy eating, a *balanced diet and hygiene can be understood in the light of the Quran and Sunnah*. Islam has stressed on the importance of these things right from the start unlike health authorities etc., which have just recently begun to stress its importance. This could be counted as just another gem that manifests the perfection of Islam.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, ate from the foods that were freely available and which suited his constitution. Whole foods formed the bulk of his diet, such as grains like barley and wheat, seasonal vegetables like gourd and fruit like dates. Whole foods are the healthiest as they contain all the nutrients that we need to thrive as human beings in their natural form. The more we change them from their original state, the less benefit we get from them. With new vitamins and minerals being discovered every year, it is increasingly obvious that the creation of Allaah The Almighty is way ahead of us, and we are not qualified to duplicate or improve upon it through our efforts to "enrich" processed foods in laboratories or make genetically-modified versions. Bernard Jensen, says in his book,

Chemistry of Man, "Natural foods contain all the vitamins that have been and will be discovered."

This fact should make it obvious that the only way we can guarantee we are getting all of our nutrients is to get them from whole foods. Attempting to build our health any other way is to merely make an educated guess. Furthermore, it does not make sense to eat devitalized foods, and then spend time and money buying vitamins and supplements, and following various health programs. In fact, processed foods actually have the ability to leech nutrients from the system. E. Cheraskin, in his book *Diet and Disease*, reports that laboratory tests indicate that processed foods do not have enough vitamins and minerals to help in their own assimilation. Pasta, for instance, does not have sufficient amounts of vitamins, enzymes or even fiber to aid in the digestive process.

Manufacturers claim their products contain high nutritious value, but they can only claim that by adding synthetic vitamins and minerals that are not useful to the human body to them. The elements that comprise organic minerals are loosely held together so that when they enter the body, they can easily be assimilated. However, the constituent parts of inorganic minerals are held together by bonds that are so tight that the body cannot easily break them apart; therefore, we rarely benefit from their consumption.

Donald Lepore, a nutritionist and author of the book *The Ultimate Healing System*, has found in his allergy relief therapies that, "God did not permit foods that are antagonistic to man's existence to be grown in the area of consumption." We can often avoid most of our problems by simply eating foods that are grown nearby and in season. Bernard Jensen, in his book *Chemistry of Man*, reports that unripe or imported produce, often found in grocery stores, is lacking in natural sodium

among other things. Furthermore, he has found that the chemistry of barley, for instance, warms the blood and is thus appropriate for winter months, but is not as advisable as a regular summer food unless there is a "cold" illness involved.

Sunnah and Science

As one reads through the Quran and Prophetic narrations and compares them to modern scientific research and "discoveries," we will find again and again that Quranic and prophetic wisdoms are being rediscovered. This is, perhaps, one of the best reasons to refer to Quran and the *Hadeeth* as not only the starting point for all knowledge, but as a "double-check" system for what we find in secular literature as well.

The Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, is reported to have said: *"The stomach is the central basin of the body, and the veins are connected to it. When the stomach is healthy, it passes on its condition to the veins, and in turn the veins will circulate the same; and when the stomach is putrescence, the veins will absorb such putrescence and issue the same."*

The most important thing we can learn from Prophetic nutrition is moderation. As we sort through the wisdoms of Prophetic nutrition in our attempt to reconcile them with modern science, we must always remember what the Quran says (which means): *{“Eat of the good things We have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess therein.”}* [Quran 20: 81] According to a *Hadeeth* of Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, we are advised to leave one third of our stomach empty after finishing the meal.

Certain types of food i.e. fruits are especially emphasized in Quran (36:57, 43:73, 16:67, 50:68)

Fruits are low in calorie, high in vitamins and minerals, and fiber and the sugar contained in fruits is fructose and not sucrose. In a recent study, fructose has been shown to cause no rise in blood sugar and even lowers the high blood sugar of diabetics. Honey, which has also been recommended by the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, contains fructose too.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, advised all Muslims to teach their children swimming, archery and horse riding. He, himself used to walk at a fast pace, and on two occasions even raced with his wife, 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her. Most importantly, he used to work with his hands whether at home, in the kitchen, or with his companions collecting wood for fire, lifting stones and digging trenches, or fighting during wars etc.

There are a number of words of advice and nutritional habits of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, that have substantial support in recent scientific literature. Among this advice is that we should eat whole foods, we should combine foods properly, we should eat foods in their seasons, and we should not drink with meals.

In *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari*, a number of examples can be found showing how carefully the prophet combined foods. One *Hadeeth* relates, "A man from among the Companions of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* said, 'The Prophet, *sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, forbade (mixing) unripe dates and dried dates, and (mixing) raisins and dried dates.' "

Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, related, "*The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, used to eat melon with fresh dates, and he used to say: 'The heat of the one is broken by the coolness of the other, and the coolness of the one by the heat of the other.'* He was also said to have never combined fish and milk.

Modern science supports these habits by informing us that the combination of foods we eat and the order in which we eat them are very important factors in health. Recently, it has been found that foods require different digestive processes in the body; thus, they are most easily digested when combined properly. Modern scientists say that improper food combinations can cause a person to inadequately digest their food, which can create imbalances in pH levels, improper absorption of nutrients, constipation or other digestive troubles. Dr. Ted Morter, in his book *Your Health... Your Choice*, advises us to not eat fresh fruit with any other food, even dried fruit, since it is a pre-digested food that moves straight through the stomach and into the intestines. When it is eaten with any other food, it ferments itself and anything else that is in the stomach.

The second advice given by Dr. Morter in his book is that we should start each meal off with something raw. The reason is that raw foods contain the enzymes we need to digest our food. His third rule of food combining is to avoid mixing protein and starches. We may eat starches with vegetables or vegetables with meat, but we should do our best to avoid combining starches and proteins. The reason is that proteins and starches require completely different environments for digestion. Proteins need a more acidic environment while carbohydrates and starches can be digested much more quickly. When a person combines them, neither food has the ideal environment. Furthermore, a protein meal takes up to five hours for the body to digest so it should be the last meal of the day when your body is not digesting other foods as well.

An improper food combination will not cause a person to become immediately sick, but it will prevent what they are eating from being digested and utilized to the best of its ability, which means they will need to eat more food to get additional nutrients.

Modern allergists also advise against improper food combining and tell us that many combinations can create synergistic allergic reactions. In the book *The Whole Way to Allergy Relief and Prevention*, Dr. Krohn advises us not to combine milk with chocolate, mint, or fish; corn and bananas; beef and yeast; eggs and apples; or cola and chocolate.

There are numerous examples of the respect the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, had for the purity and value of water, and relate that he did not drink while eating a meal. *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari* relates that, "*The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, came out from the valley of a mountain... there were some dried dates on a shield before us. We called him and he ate with us. He did not touch water.*" Experts in the field of food combining inform us that water impedes the digestive process in the stomach when eaten within a half hour of a meal.

Personal food habits and altruistic lifestyle

The food served in the household of Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was of a modest quality, yet was rich in the terms of the blessings gained by helping the poor and praising Allaah The Almighty. Nothing of a forbidden nature was ever included on the Prophet's table, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: "***Eat the food together, do not be separate; bounties undoubtedly come from eating together***", stating that eating alone is not productive and that it is necessary for a family to sit together at the table. Even though Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, favored certain foods over others, he nevertheless did not let his distaste for a certain food override the foods offered nor did he ban this sort of food. He

said: "**Leave what you don't like and let others benefit from it**", emphasizing that people need to respect the likes or dislikes of others, thus preventing food from being wasted.

Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was always economical and prudent and never allowed bread or food to be wasted. He took great care not to leave any food on the plate and stated that morsels and food that had been dropped should be eaten after cleaning any dust particles that might stick to them, to avoid wastage. He advised people not to be extreme in the act of eating and said: "**No one can fill a vessel that is worse than his stomach**".

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, liked certain kinds of food and favored them over others. Yet, he did not seek them out every day or over indulge in them. For instance, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, liked honey and other traditional desserts, and ate them whenever he was presented with them. *Thareed* – a dish that is prepared by adding wheat bread to meat broth – was one of his favorite foods. He liked eating watermelon and dates, both ripe and unripe. He also liked eating salted cucumber and gourd and is quoted in certain narrations as having liked to eat the meat of the flank.

There is no doubt that the foremost food resources of the family of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, were dates and barley as these were also the main nutrients of people in Arabia.

Milk was also a drink which the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was frequently known to drink. It is known that Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, himself would milk the cattle in his yard and help his family. Milk, as it was in other families, constituted the basic food in addition to date and barley bread. Moreover, milk would always be served to his guests.

Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and his family often experienced hunger and a shortage of food. Since he was entrusted with the responsibility of spreading the revelation and the message of Islamic Monotheism, Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, did not occupy himself with business ventures and the like, to enhance his lifestyle and earn a livelihood beyond the bare minimum. The Companions who were helping him with his holy duty also experienced the same hardships.

There are numerous *Hadeeths* in relation to the hardships experienced by Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and his family in terms of the provision of food. Among these hardships was the time during the Battle of the Trench when the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, had to tie a stone on his stomach to stop his hunger pains. The Mother of the Believers, 'A'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, provided comprehensive information about the household and lifestyle of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, speaks of the Prophet's frugal use of food, "*The Prophet never ate two different types of food in a single day. When he ate meat, he didn't add any other food to it. When he ate dates, he never mixed anything with them, when he ate bread, he did not add anything to it.*"

There was never a great variety of foods eaten at a single meal in the household of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. The Companion Anas bin Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, described the quality of the bread eaten by the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and said, "*The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, never ate fried mutton or bread made of thin flour until he reached Allaah.*"

It is understood from some *Hadeeths* that the family ate whole-wheat bread; as the Prophet's wives, may Allaah be pleased with them all,

did not have any sieves they were only able to partially clean the chaff by blowing at the flour. It is understood that in these periods the Muslims were not able to reach the areas mentioned in the Holy Quran where olives, pomegranates and figs grew.

The household of Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was the farthest from extravagance and leisure. His wives, may Allaah be pleased with them all, cooked the meals and cleaned the house themselves. For instance, Safiyyah, may Allaah be pleased with her was well-known for her cooking and 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, once remarked that she had not seen any other person who could cook like her.

There are no reports of slaves working in the kitchen of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. Indeed, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, set free all of the slaves that he acquired and encouraged others to do some. While in his custody, slaves were employed for short periods of time in the garden and to tend the cattle or were assigned to work outside the house for only a very short period of time. Although Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, did not have a cook, some people from the Companions had cooks or bakers. For instance, even Anas, who served the Prophet for ten years, later acquired a baker.

Prophet Muhammad's wives and his daughter Faatimah, may Allaah be pleased with them all, used to grind the flour for bread themselves, using hand mills. In fact, once his daughter Faatimah, may Allaah be pleased with her, requested a servant as her hands had been greatly calloused by using the hand mill, however, Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, refused her request, telling her that it was more beneficial to do *Thikr* because the needs of the poor were more worthy of being fulfilled.

Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, who served the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, for a period of ten years when he was young, provides information about how the Prophet's table was prepared. Unlike the rulers and dignitaries of today, gold or silver plates, spoons and drinking utensils were banned and never used. Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, "*I do not know of an incident where the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, ate from small plates or any time when they baked for him from refined flour or when he ate at a table*" And when they asked him, "*Where did they eat their meals?*" Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, answered, "*They ate on the (floor) cloth.*" According to other reports, in the Prophet's household, the family would eat meals on a woven mat of date branches and leaves. In general, plates, pans and other kitchen utensils were used.

Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would care for the homeless people living in As-Suffah and other needy and hungry people. In some cases, he would take some of the poor to his home and ask other wealthy Muslims to do the same.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would also host envoys and political delegations with the resources he acquired from the various spoils of war and areas that had been given over to his personal administration. After the 9th year of the *Hijrah*, many delegations came to Madeenah and the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would accommodate these people in the *Masjid* and would order Muslims to host the guests.

There are reports about the foods that were served to the delegations of Bani Haneefah from Yamamah. It is recorded that the delegation consisted of ten people who were accommodated in the guesthouses. They were served with bread and meat or bread and milk, other times

they were served bread and butter and dates. Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, records that due to the large numbers of people arriving in the delegations, many times the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, himself was not able to eat a meal, but he ensured that the delegations were served well.

Conclusion

Let us take a final look at the heart-softening narrations in the collection *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari*, in *Kitaab Ar-Raqaa'iq*, regarding the attitude of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, his household and his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them all, towards food:

- Narrated Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, *"The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, did not eat at a table till he died, and he did not eat a thin nicely baked wheat bread till he died."*
- Narrated 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, *"When the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, died, nothing which can be eaten by a living creature was left on my shelf except some barley grain. I ate of it for a period and when I measured it, it finished."*
- Narrated Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, *"By Allaah except Whom none has the right to be worshipped, (sometimes) I used to lay (sleep) on the ground on my liver (abdomen) because of hunger, and (sometimes) I used to bind a stone over my belly because of hunger. One day I sat by the way from where they (the Prophet and his companions) used to come out. When*

Abu Bakr passed by, I asked him about a Verse from Allaah's Book and I asked him only that he might satisfy my hunger, but he passed by and did not do so. Then Umar passed by me and I asked him about a Verse from Allaah's Book, and I asked him only that he might satisfy my hunger, but he passed by without doing so. Finally Abu'l-Qaasim (the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) passed by me and he smiled when he saw me, for he knew what was in my heart and on my face. He said, "O Aba Hurr (Abu Hurayrah)!" I replied, "Labbayk, O Messenger of Allah!" He said to me, "Follow me." He left and I followed him.

Then he entered the house and I asked permission to enter and was admitted. He found milk in a bowl and said, "From where is this milk?" They said, "It has been presented to you by such-and-such man (or by such and such woman)." He said, "O Aba Hurr!" I said, "Labbayk, O Allaah's Apostle!" He said, "Go and call the people of Suffa to me." These people of Suffa were the guests of Islam who had no families, nor money, nor anybody to depend upon, and whenever an object of charity was brought to the Prophet, he would send it to them and would not take anything from it, and whenever any present was given to him, he used to send some for them and take some of it for himself. The order of the Prophet upset me, and I said to myself, "How will this little milk be enough for the people of As-Suffah?" thought I was more entitled to drink from that milk in order to strengthen myself, but behold! The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, came to order me to give that milk to

them. I wondered what will remain of that milk for me, but anyway, I could not but obey Allaah and His Messenger so I went to the people of As-Suffah and called them, and they came and asked the Prophet's permission to enter. They were admitted and took their seats in the house.

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said, "O Aba-Hirr!" I said, "Labbayk, O Messenger of Allaah!" He said, "Take it and give it to them." So I took the bowl (of milk) and started giving it to one man who would drink his fill and return it to me, whereupon I would give it to another man who, in his turn, would drink his fill and return it to me, and I would then offer it to another man who would drink his fill and return it to me. Finally, after the whole group had drunk their fill, I reached the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, who took the bowl and put it on his hand, looked at me and smiled and said. "O Aba Hirr!" I replied, "Labbayk, O Messenger of Allaah!" He said, "There remain you and I." I said, "You have said the truth, O Messenger of Allaah!" He said, "Sit down and drink." I sat down and drank. He said, "Drink," and I drank. He kept on telling me repeatedly to drink, till I said, "No. by Allaah Who sent you with the Truth, I have no space for it (in my stomach)." He said, "Hand it over to me." When I gave him the bowl, he praised Allaah and pronounced Allaah's Name on it and drank the remaining milk."

- Narrated Sa'd, may Allaah be pleased with him, *"I was the first man among the Arabs to throw an arrow for Allaah's Cause. We used to fight in Allaah's Cause while we had nothing to eat except the leaves of the Hubla and the Sumur trees (desert trees) so that we discharged excrement like that of sheep (i.e. unmixed droppings). Today the (people of the) tribe of Bani Asad teach me the laws of Islam. If so, then I am lost, and all my efforts of that hard time had gone in vain.*
- Narrated 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, *"The family of Muhammad had never eaten their fill of wheat bread for three successive days since they had migrated to Madeenah till the death of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam".* She, may Allaah be pleased with her, also said, *"The family of Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, did not eat two meals on one day, but one of the two was of dates."* And she, may Allaah be pleased with her, said, *"A complete month would pass by during which we would not make a fire (for cooking), and our food used to be only dates and water unless we were given a present of some meat."*
- It is narrated that 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said to Urwa, may Allaah be pleased with him, *"O, the son of my sister! We used to see three crescents in two months, and no fire used to be made in the houses of the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, (i.e. nothing used to be cooked)."* 'Urwa, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *"What used to sustain you?"* 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said, *"The two black things i.e. dates and water, except that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, had neighbors from the Ansaar who had some milch she-camels, and they used to give the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa*

sallam, some milk from their house, and he used to make us drink it."

Once, Abu Bakr, may Allaah be pleased with him, once left his house in the burning heat of the midday sun and went to the mosque. Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, saw him and asked, "*Abu Bakr, what has brought you out at this hour?*" Abu Bakr, may Allaah be pleased with him, said he had left his house because he was terribly hungry and Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said that he had left his house for the same reason. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, came up to them and asked: "***What has brought the two of you out at this hour?***" They told him and he said: "***By Him in Whose hands is my soul, only hunger has caused me to come out also. But come with me.***"

They went to the house of Abu Ayyoob al-Ansaari, may Allaah be pleased with him. His wife opened the door and said, "*Welcome to the Prophet and whoever is with him!*"

"Where is Abu Ayyoob?" asked the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. Abu Ayyoob, may Allaah be pleased with him, who was working in a nearby palm grove, heard the Prophet's voice and came hurriedly.

"Welcome to the Prophet and whoever is with him!" he said and continued, "*O Messenger of Allaah, this is not the time that you usually come.*" (Abu Ayyoob, may Allaah be pleased with him, used to keep some food for the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, every day. When the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, did not come for it by a certain time, Abu Ayyoob, may Allaah be pleased with him, would give it to his family.) ***"You are right,"*** the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, agreed.

Abu Ayyoob, may Allaah be pleased with him, went out and cut a cluster of dates in which there were ripe and half-ripe dates. **"I did not want you to eat this,"** said the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. **"Could you not have brought only the ripe dates?"**

"O Messenger of Allaah, please eat from both the ripe dates (Rutb) and the half ripe (Busr). I shall slaughter an animal for you also," he said.

"If you are going to, then do not kill one that gives milk," cautioned the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. Abu Ayyoob, may Allaah be pleased with him, slaughtered a young goat, cooked half and grilled the other half. He also asked his wife to bake, because she baked better, he said.

When the food was ready, it was placed before the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and his two Companions. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, took a piece of meat and placed it in a loaf and said: **"Take this to Faatimah, for she has not tasted the like of this for days."**

When they had eaten and were satisfied, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said reflectively: **"Bread and meat and Busr and Rutb!"** Tears began to flow from his eyes as he continued: **"This is the Na'eem, the bountiful blessing about which you will be asked on the Day of Judgment. If such comes your way, put your hands to it and say, Bismillaah (In the name of Allaah) and when you have finished say: 'Al hamdu lillaah allathee huwa ashba'na wa an'ama alayna (Praise be to God Who has given us enough and Who has bestowed his bounty on us). This is best."**

The lifestyle of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and his Companions undoubtedly gives us food for thought, in our age where

conspicuous consumption, and not contemplative moderation is the motto by which many Muslims live their lives.

