

Cautiousness in the matter of

ḤALĀL

&

ḤARĀM

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In light of the recent meat contamination issue that has shaken Europe¹, I would like to touch upon the subject of ḥalāl and ḥarām. For a Muslim, life revolves around doing only what is permissible (ḥalāl) and refraining from the impermissible (ḥarām). This applies when deciding what food we consume and in every other aspect of our lives too.

In the Qur’ān Allāh ﷻ addresses the best of humanity, the Ambiyā’ ﷺ, saying:

*O Messengers, eat from the good things and act righteously...
(23:51)*

The importance of the command to eat only what is good can be realised when we consider that in this āyah Allāh ﷻ directs the command to His Messengers ﷺ. Moreover, Allāh ﷻ has addressed the believers with a similar command, as explained by Rasūlullāh ﷺ:

O people, Allāh is pure and only accepts what is pure; Allāh has commanded the believers to do [the same as] that which He has commanded His Messengers to do: “O Messengers, eat from the good things and act righteously. I am fully aware of what you do.” And He has said, “O believers, eat of the good things We have provided to you...” (Muslim, At-Tirmidhī)

Ḥalāl and Ḥarām Affects Your Deeds

The Mufasssīrīn state that the reason Allāh ﷻ mentions consuming

¹ At the time of writing this article, certain foods advertised as containing beef were found to contain horse meat.

pure things together with doing righteous deeds is that one assists and leads to the other; consuming only what is ḥalāl and pure results in the tawfīq to do good deeds.

As a result of consuming ḥalāl, du‘ās are readily accepted by Allāh ﷻ. Once Sayyidunā Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ؓ asked Rasūlullāh ﷺ to make du‘ā that Allāh ﷻ make him from the mustajāb-ud-da‘wah (one whose du‘ās are always accepted). Rasūlullāh ﷺ replied, “O Sa‘d, make your food pure: you will become mustajāb-ud-da‘wah.” (Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, Al-Bayhaqī)

Conversely, consuming ḥarām creates serious obstacles in the acceptance of du‘ās, as can be understood from the ḥadīth in which Rasūlullāh ﷺ describes a weary traveller, unkempt and dishevelled, who raises his hands to beseech Allāh ﷻ, saying, “O my Rabb, O my Rabb!” Despite the fact that Allāh ﷻ readily accepts the du‘ā of someone in that state, his pleas are not accepted because his food is ḥarām, his drink is ḥarām, his clothes are sourced from ḥarām and he has been nourished with ḥarām.

Further, the ‘ibādah of someone who consumes ḥarām is not accepted for forty days. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, “A person tosses a ḥarām morsel into his stomach, and [as a result] his deeds are not accepted for forty days.” (Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, Al-Bayhaqī)

In another ḥadīth Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, “Whoever’s flesh has grown from ḥarām, the Fire [of Jahannam] is more deserving of him.” (Al-Ḥākim) And he said, “That body will not enter Jannah which has been nourished with ḥarām.” (Al-Bukhārī)

On the basis of this ḥadīth, Sahl ibn ‘Abdullāh ؓ said, “Salvation lies in three things: eating ḥalāl, fulfilling the farā’id and following the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.”

Learn the Rules of Ḥalāl and Ḥarām

Therefore, it is essential to know the rules and injunctions related to ḥalāl and ḥarām, and to make sure we follow them. We need to refer to reliable ‘Ulamā to acquire this knowledge, without which we cannot be sure whether what we are consuming is ḥalāl. Sahl ibn ‘Abdullāh ؓ said, “Consuming ḥalāl will not be correct except with knowledge.”

It is necessary that we have the knowledge of what we are eating and drinking. It is our responsibility to check the lists of ingredients on products we buy and to be familiar with which ingredients are ḥalāl and which are ḥarām. We should take heed from the meat contamination scandal and be ever vigilant that the food we buy really is what it is claimed to be. It is not sufficient to take at face value any company or authority that claims to certify food as ḥalāl. We need to know that the criteria and processes such authorities use are fully compliant with the Sharī‘ah and rigorously implemented. Whether food products are certified or not, it is ultimately our responsibility and religious duty to check thoroughly and ensure that what we purchase is ḥalāl. We must be content at heart that we are buying ḥalāl and not just ignore the doubts in our hearts and be complacent. Being negligent in matters of ḥalāl and ḥarām is one of the signs of Qiyāmah. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, *“There will come a time upon the people when a person will not care where he takes from, whether from ḥalāl or ḥarām.”* (Al-Bukhārī)

Cautiousness in the Matter of Ḥalāl and Ḥarām

It is reported in the ḥadīth that one night Rasūlullāh ﷺ found a date under his side and ate it. He then spent the rest of the night in restlessness. When his wife asked him about it he replied, “I

found a date under my side and I ate it. [Then I remembered that] we had some ṣadaqah dates [in the house] and I feared that it was from them.” (Aḥmad)

Such was the cautiousness of Rasūlullāh ﷺ in matters of ḥalāl and ḥarām. The Ṣaḥābah ؓ too went to great lengths to ensure they only consumed what was pure and ḥalāl. Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ؓ had a servant who used to bring him food. On one such occasion, after Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ؓ had eaten some of the food, the servant asked, “Do you know what that was?” Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ؓ replied, “What was it?” He said, “I used to practice divination in the times of Jāhiliyyah (ignorance), and I was no expert. I deceived a person, and he came to me and paid me for it, and what you just ate was from that [payment].” Hearing this, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ؓ inserted his hand into his mouth and vomited out the contents of his stomach. (Al-Bukhārī)

Our pious predecessors also shared this concern. Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Ya‘qūb Nānotwī ؓ was once invited to a meal at a person’s house. He had eaten only one morsel when he felt that there was something wrong with the food: possibly it had not been purchased with ḥalāl earnings. When he queried the origin of the food it turned out that indeed it was not from ḥalāl, but he had unsuspectingly swallowed that one morsel. The respected Shaykh states that he did tawbah and istighfār, but continued to experience the negative effects of that ḥarām morsel for months. For months he was haunted by urges to commit various sins. Only pure-hearted people such as the Shaykh can identify such feelings and understand them. Those whose hearts are accustomed to sin will not be able to understand this as their hearts will not feel the effects of ḥarām.

Earnings Must be Ḥalāl Too

Normally, when the subject of ḥalāl and ḥarām is discussed, we assume it only applies to food and drink. However, it is evident from this ḥadīth that the Sharī‘ah requires all that comes into the possession of an individual to be pure and ḥalāl, starting with the wealth he earns. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said:

When a servant [of Allāh ﷻ] earns anything from ḥarām and spends from it, he is not blessed in it; and if he gives it in charity, he is not rewarded for it; and if he leaves it behind [after death], it becomes his provision for the [journey towards] hellfire. (Aḥmad)

Indulging in usury, deceit, theft and dealing in ḥarām commodities, such as alcohol and drugs, are all examples of ḥarām and illegitimate sources of income. This means that if someone earns a living through ḥarām, then no matter if the food he buys is not ḥarām in itself, it will be ḥarām due to the earnings with which it was bought. And if he bought ḥarām food with this ḥarām wealth, its severity will obviously be two-fold.

May Allāh ﷻ grant us all the true understanding of ḥalāl and ḥarām and make us from amongst those who always consume ḥalāl, and may He save us from all types of ḥarām.

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