



KHUTBAH NOTES

**a basic outline
for
IMAMS**

Sustainable Eating in Islam

SUSTAINABLE EATING IN ISLAM

***Eat and drink but
DO NOT BE WASTEFUL:
God does not like wasteful people
(Qur'an 7:31)***

Allah created the earth and all that is on it, and He created us to use it, but it is not just for human beings; it is for **all** His creatures:

There is not a creature that moves on earth whose provision is not His concern. He knows where it lives and its [final] resting place: it is all [there] in a clear record. It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six Days—His rule extends over the waters too—so as to test which of you does best.

(Qur'an 11.6-7)

Human beings have recently multiplied hugely in the earth so that there are already 7 billion of us to feed and soon this is expected to reach 9 billion. In 1980 there were only around 4 billion. To feed, clothe and provide shelter, firewood and furniture for ourselves we have adopted unsustainable and inhumane new forms of industrial scale agriculture and tree felling, which have devastated animal habitats like forests, wetlands and even the lands we use to grow food. Now more and more land is being taken over for this kind of agriculture, leaving small subsistence farmers, in Africa for example, to work for large agri-business firms owned in rich countries. Less and less is left for the local people to grow their own food supplies, and less still for the wild creatures whose habitats are destroyed and broken up. Poor, newly landless people and animals are being forced into large cities and other human habitations to find work, food and

shelter in favelas and slums on the margins of big cities. Falcons nest in skyscrapers and foxes maraud the streets of London, brown bears invade homes in North America, seagulls flock to landfill waste sites and inland parks and so on. Poor people and animals starve while ordinary people in rich countries get fatter and fatter.

How can we live in a way which allows Allah's provision to be more evenly distributed?

Islam shows us in principle several ways to do this.

LIMITING OUR CONSUMPTION

Allah told Adam and his wife in the garden to

'Eat freely ... as you will, but do not go near this tree, or you will both become wrongdoers',

2:34

and likewise on earth there are limitations to our consumption that Allah has set for us abide by.

Food is a test for us, like all Allah's other provisions. The way we use it profoundly affects the lives of other people and creatures.

HALAL AND TAYYIB V. HARAM

The Qur'an defines what kinds of **meat** are *halal* and *haram*:

You who believe, eat the good things We have provided for you and be grateful to God, if it is Him that you worship. He has only forbidden you carrion, blood, pig's meat, and animals over which any name other than God's has been invoked. But if anyone is forced to eat such things by hunger, rather than desire or excess, he commits no sin: God is most merciful and forgiving.

(Qur'an 2:172-3)

You are forbidden to eat carrion; blood; pig's meat; any animal over which any name other than God's has been invoked; anything strangled, victim of a violent blow or a fall, gored or savaged by a beast of prey, unless you still slaughter it [in the correct manner]; or anything sacrificed on idolatrous altars...

(5:3)

It is permitted for you to catch and eat seafood—an enjoyment for you and the traveller—but hunting game is forbidden while you are in the state of consecration [for pilgrimage]. (5:96)

Muslims in non-Muslim countries have a hard time finding meat that is Halal even according to the Qur'an's liberal definition, which is summarized as:

Today all **good** things have been made lawful for you. (5:5)

Good - Tayyib - is the key word.

EATING ANIMALS

The Prophet (S) said that 'There is a reward for kindness to every living thing'¹ so we should take care that the animals we eat have been **cared for with kindness and slaughtered with kindness**.

The rules of slaughter (*dabh*) in Islam are there to ensure that each animal killed receives this respect and kindness, and that the slaughterer invokes the name of Allah to give him permission to take the life of one of His creatures.

Mass-produced birds and animals on factory farms, slaughtered in industrial scale abattoirs, do not meet this standard. It's better to **eat less meat but pay more for products made from properly reared animals and birds**, fed on

¹ A man walking along a path felt very thirsty. Reaching a well he descended into it, drank his fill and came up. Then he saw a dog with its tongue hanging out, trying to lick up mud to quench its thirst. The man saw that the dog was feeling the same thirst as he had felt so he went down into the well again and filled his shoe with water and gave the dog a drink. God forgave his sins for this action'. The Prophet was asked: 'Messenger of God, are we rewarded for kindness towards animals?' He said, 'There is a reward for kindness to every living thing'.

From the *Hadith* collections of Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi and Bayhaqi

natural grass and grains and allowed to wander free range. Mass-produced food animals are being cooped up in unhygienic conditions in crowded sheds, crates and cages and fed on industrially-produced meal containing bits of other animals, antibiotics, growth hormones and other things that make their meat unhealthy and harmful to humans.

Our Prophet ate very little meat:

The Prophet's wife Aishah (RA) 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.'

(Hadith: Muslim)

This shows that much of his food was **both vegetarian and raw**.

Some religions go so far as to forbid the eating of all meat. Islam allows meat because in some places that is all there is to eat - the local vegetation cannot support cultivation of crops for human consumption, but can support some kinds of animals.

However there are plenty of vegetarian alternatives to meat which are nourishing and *Tayyib*. In al-Jannah, as described in the Qur'an, people are given mainly fruit, hanging low where they can pick it easily.

They will sit on couches, feeling neither scorching heat nor biting cold, with shady [branches] spread above them and clusters of fruit hanging close at hand.

(76:13-14)

Only twice is 'meat' mentioned - after fruit:

[there will be] any fruit they want; the meat of any bird they like

(56:20-1)

We provide them with any fruit or meat they desire (52:22)

This is in the next world, not this finite one, where we need to restrain our desires for such things in order to deserve the delights of al-Jannah!

FASTING IN RAMADAN²

Fasting in Ramadan (and at other times) promotes awareness of hunger in the world and self restraint in consumption. If we could refrain from binge eating at *sahur* and after sunset, we would find our appetites shrinking and our pockets bulging towards the end of Ramadan, so that more is available to share with others.

The Prophet (s) said:

“The son of Adam does not fill any vessel worse than his stomach;
for the son of Adam a few mouthfuls are sufficient to keep his back straight.
If you must fill it, then one-third for food, one-third for drink and one-third for air.”

Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 2380; Ibn Maajah, 3349. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *Saheeh al-Tirmidhi*, 1939).

Sufyaan al-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

'If you want your body to be healthy and to sleep less, then eat less.'

Eating too much also makes the heart heedless:

It was said to Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him):

'Does a man find any softness and humility in his heart when he is full?'
He said, 'I do not think so.'

And Allah knows best.

² See the template for the **Green Mosques Ramadan Calendar**

SHARING THROUGH ZAKAH, SADAQAH

For those of us who have more than we need, Allah showed us the way to use up our surpluses:

*They ask you what they should give: say, ‘**Give what you can spare.**’ In this way, God makes His messages clear to you, so that you may reflect on this world and the next.*

(2:219-20)

Instead of wasting our money on buying food and other goods we don't need, or even on indulging in *haram* activities, we could be giving it as Zakah and Sadaqah, just as some of us send money back home to our families. Mosques and Islamic aid agencies can help.

AVOID WASTE - BUY WISELY

We should buy only what we need and eat fresh foods in order of age, the oldest ones first, so that nothing rots and is wasted. Keep checking your fridge!

Much of our mass-produced and processed food is depleted in the nourishment it provides, polluted with chemicals and harmful additives. Some of it is produced by genetically modifying seeds to resist powerful pesticides. To encourage more natural ways of farming and food production, we can buy more organically grown food, an organic food box once a week perhaps, or look out for organic labels in shops and supermarkets. There are now several Muslim organic farms in the UK.

Once we have bought and cooked food, we should share surpluses as much as possible with others, especially our families, neighbours and poor, homeless or lonely people. Now that we have fridges and freezers, we can also keep left-over bits of food to use another day. Some scraps can be fed to birds and animals. For anything that can't be shared or re-used, many of us now have recycling bins for food waste, or compost bins in our gardens, where the food can be recycled into compost to feed new plants.

GROWING YOUR OWN FOOD

If you had to grow your own food, would you eat as much as you do?
If you had to raise and slaughter your own animals, would you eat as much meat?

If everyone grew even a fraction of the food they eat, it would save a lot of money, water, energy, and pollution being wasted on agriculture, transport, processing, preserving etc. Nearly everyone can find a pot or a window-box, a grow-bag, a vegetable patch or allotment to cultivate.

Anas reported that the Prophet said, **"If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as a charitable gift (*sadaqah*) for him."** (Bukhari)

At the very least growing our own food can teach us to respect nature and the slow rate of growth of most food crops, so that we appreciate the food we eat and don't waste it. If we have room to rear our own food animals and birds, we learn to respect them as individual creatures made by Allah, like ourselves. It is much harder to kill an animal you have been feeding and caring for regularly than to buy a lump of meat from a supermarket freezer.

COMMUNITY ACTION

Many community groups, in the UK and around the world, have set up food banks and feeding centres to help feed those who can't afford to feed themselves. Some are stocked with supermarket surplus products. For example, My Community UK, a Muslim-led group, has set up feeding centres in West London and Manchester. (<http://mcuk.org.uk/>)

Other groups, like MADE in Europe, www.madeineurope.org.uk are taking part in 'Live Below the Line', an annual awareness and fund-raising exercise where each participant volunteers to live for £1 worth of food a day for five days and is sponsored to do this. £1 a day is what many people in this world have to live on, not just for food. The volunteers are made aware of how much they

normally spend on food, and how little they really need to survive, and the sponsorship money supports charities to feed the poor and promote further awareness of world food poverty.

DU'A

Say, 'God, holder of all control, You give control to whoever You will and remove it from whoever You will; You elevate whoever You will and humble whoever You will. All that is good lies in Your hand: You have power over everything. You merge night into day and day into night; You bring the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living; You provide limitlessly for whoever You will.'

(Qur'an 3:26-7)

Allahu barik lana fi thamarina wa barik lana fi madinatina

O Allah bless us in our crops and in our city.

Allahumma barik lana fima razaqtana waqina adhaban-nar. Bismillah.

(Oh Allah! Bless the food You have provided us and save us from the punishment of the hellfire. In the name of Allah.)

Alhamdulillah il-ladhi at'amana wasaqana waja'alana Muslimeen.

(Praise be to Allah Who has fed us and given us drink, and made us Muslims.)

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَطْعَمَنِي هَذَا
وَرَزَقَنِيهِ مِنْ غَيْرِ حَوْلٍ مِنِّي وَلَا قُوَّةٍ.

Alhamdu lillahil-ladhi 'at'amani hadha, wa razaqanihi, min ghayri hawlin
minnee wa la quwwatin.

Praise belongs to Allah Who has given me this food and sustained me with it
though I was unable to do it and powerless.

Tirmidhi 3/159, Abu Dawud, and Ibn Majah

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Eat and drink [as We have permitted] but do not be wasteful: God does not like wasteful people.

(Qur'an 7:31)

