

CHAPTER ONE: On Eating and Drinking

On Types of Eating and an Explanation of the Legal Ruling of Each Type

Eating can be:

1. Obligatory (*farḍ*), which entails a reward; it is the amount by which destruction is warded off, and with which one is able to perform the prayer (*ṣalāt*) while standing. So if one abstains from eating and drinking until he perishes, then he has sinned, for that entails casting the self to destruction, which is forbidden in the decisive and unequivocal (*muḥkam*) text of revelation. This differs from one who refuses to take treatment [for an illness] until he dies, as there was no certainty that it would cure him.
2. Recommended (*mandūb*); it is that which helps one to perform voluntary acts of worship, teach knowledge, and learn it.
3. Permissible (*mubāḥ*); it is that which leads to being satiated (*shabaʿ*), so as to increase one's strength.
4. Disliked (*makrūh*); it is that which goes a bit over satiation, yet is not harmful.
5. Unlawful (*ḥarām*); it is that which is well beyond satiation, unless one intends thereby strength for fasting the next day, or so as not to embarrass one's guest, or the like.

On the Sunnas and Etiquette of Eating:

When eating, one should intend to gain strength for worship, so as to be in a state of obedience, and not intend by it seeking pleasure and enjoyment. Now if you maintain that one will necessarily enjoy eating when hungry, then know that there is no harm in that, as long as one does not seek out enjoyment; rather, the harm is when one seeks out pleasure, enjoyment, and filling one's stomach.

It is recommended to eat on a mat (*sufra*) spread out on the ground, rather than on a table, as that is closer to humility. The one eating should move forward to the food and not order it to be brought to him, as doing so would entail debasement [of the food] and arrogance. One should sit over food the way humble people sit—one should not lean, recline, or rest on anything; rather, the sunna is to sit while eating, leaning toward the food and bending in its direction, sitting on the left leg and propping up the right.

One should strive to increase the number of hands over the food, even if from one's wife or children, for verily the best food is that which has many hands over it.

One should not outstretch his hand toward the food unless he is hungry—indeed, hunger should be one of the prerequisites before partaking in food.