



THE EFFECT OF HALAL NUTRITION AND HUMAN HEALTH

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MAKALE BİLGİSİ

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ABSTRACT

The excessive intake of daily required energy may lead to the accumulation of excess energy in the body, potentially causing obesity. Consuming foods high in protein is essential for a balanced diet. In this context, this article discusses the lifestyle and advice of Prophet Muhammad regarding healthy and balanced eating. The benefits of eating two meals a day for health and the importance of halal food in raising children are highlighted in the methods of nutrition according to the Sunnah. According to the Sunnah, eating two meals a day and not overindulging during these meals may be more beneficial for a healthy life. The Prophet recommended skipping lunch and only eating in the morning (at forenoon) and evening. This practice is known as "Eating according to the Sunnah." The verses of the Qur'an regarding nutrition command the consumption of halal and pure foods and avoiding wastefulness. The Prophet placed great emphasis on maintaining physical health, which is based on the fundamental principles of nutrition as outlined in the Qur'an. It is important to study the Prophet's dietary habits and how these principles were applied in his life. The Prophet's lifestyle and worldview have been presented as a "beautiful example" for the believers. Therefore, reports related to nutrition and food have been carefully examined from a holistic perspective. Devout Muslims have always sought halal food and avoided consuming doubtful foods. Halal foods are those permitted according to Islamic dietary rules. According to the rules set forth in the Qur'an and Hadith, Muslims are prohibited from consuming pork and pork products, meat from animals not slaughtered in the name of Allah, blood and blood products, alcohol, and the meat of carnivorous animals. As a leader of the community, the Prophet served as an example to his Ummah in matters of nutrition, as in all aspects of life. In this regard, this study aims to emphasize the importance that the Prophet placed on balanced and healthy eating, identify the measures that should be taken in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah to prevent diseases that may arise from unhealthy eating, such as obesity, and explain the importance of Muhammadan nutrition in raising children.

HELAL BESLENMENİN İNSAN SAĞLIĞI ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ

ÖZET

Günlük alınması gereken enerji miktarının fazla alınması, vücutta aşırı enerji birikimine yol açarak obeziteye neden olabilir. Sağlıklı ve dengeli beslenme için yüksek protein içeren gıdaların tüketilmesi önemlidir. Bu bağlamda makalede, Hz. Muhammed'in sağlıklı ve dengeli beslenme konusundaki yaşam tarzı ve tavsiyeleri ele alınmıştır. Sünnete uygun beslenme yöntemlerinde, günde iki öğün yemek yemenin sağlık açısından faydaları ve çocuk yetiştirmede helal gıdanın önemi belirtilmiştir. Sünnete uygun olarak, günde iki öğün yemek ve bu öğünlerde aşırıya kaçmamak, sağlıklı bir yaşam için daha faydalı olabilecek bir uygulamadır. Peygamber Efendimiz, öğle yemeğini terk ederek sadece sabah (kuşluk vakti) ve akşam yemek yemeyi tavsiye etmiştir. Bu uygulama, "Sünnete göre beslenme" olarak bilinmektedir. Kur'an-ı Kerim'de beslenme ile ilgili ayetler, helal ve temiz gıdaların tüketilmesi ve israftan kaçınılmasını emretmektedir. Hz. Peygamber, kendi beden sağlığını korumak için büyük bir özen göstermiştir. Bu özen, Kur'an'ın beslenme konusuna atfettiği temel prensiplere dayanmaktadır. Hz. Peygamber'in beslenme alışkanlıklarının ve bu ilkelerin, onun hayatında nasıl uygulandığının incelenmesi önemlidir. Hz. Peygamber'in yaşam tarzı ve dünya görüşü, inananlar için "güzel örnek" olarak sunulmuştur. Bu nedenle, çalışmada beslenme ve gıda konusuyla ilgili rivayetler, bütüncül bir bakış açısıyla dikkatlice incelenmiştir. Dindar Müslümanlar, sürekli helal gıda arayışında olmuş ve şüpheli gıdaları tüketmekten kaçınmışlardır. Helal gıdalar, İslami beslenme kurallarına uygun olarak izin verilen gıdalardır. Kuran ve Hadislerde belirtilen kurallara göre, Müslümanlara domuz eti, domuz yan ürünleri, Allah adına kesilmemiş hayvan eti, kan ve kan ürünleri ile alkol ve etçil hayvan etleri haram kılınmıştır. Peygamberimiz toplum lideri olarak, hayatının her alanında olduğu gibi beslenme konusunda ümmetine örnek teşkil etmiştir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, Hz. Peygamber'in dengeli ve sağlıklı beslenmeye verdiği önemi vurgulamayı, obezite gibi sağlıksız beslenme sonucu ortaya çıkabilecek hastalıklara karşı Kur'an ve sünnet ışığında alınması gereken tedbirleri ve çocuk yetiştirmede sünnete uygun beslenmenin önemini açıklamayı hedeflemektedir.

1. Introduction

Nutrition is of vital importance for sustaining life. As the most essential of human needs, nutrition is a cornerstone of survival and health preservation. Life cannot continue without eating and drinking, which is why proper eating habits are of great importance. Poor nutrition is one of the primary causes of many diseases. Additionally, having a healthy body is a solid foundation for religious life as well (Çiftçi and Açık, 2021). In short, nutrition is a critical factor that affects both the quality of life and religious practice. However, people want to maintain their lives or lifestyles in accordance with their religious beliefs. This desire is directly linked to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration

states, "The consumer's right to be informed includes the right to request verification that the goods and services purchased are reliable in terms of health, environment, and religious values." Therefore, having "food labeling" information that is complete and understandable, ensuring that foods are safe for consumption, and that they are not produced in violation of religious beliefs is of utmost importance for consumers. This is because Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifies, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (Anonymous, 1948).

Nutrition is divided into two main categories: healthy and unhealthy. While healthy nutrition refers to the moderate and balanced consumption of food, unhealthy nutrition is the excessive and unbalanced intake of food (Çiftçi and Açıkel, 2021). Health is not only the absence of disease and disability but also a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Disease generally refers to any condition that disrupts the normal functioning of the body. Obesity, in general, is the condition where the ratio of fat mass to lean mass increases excessively, resulting in body weight exceeding the desired level relative to height (Ministry of Health, 2023a and b). Halal nutrition falls under the category of healthy eating. Muslim communities living in various continents and regions of the world have paid great attention to halal nutrition. As Muslims, it is essential to know and seek halal food in order to ensure a prophetic diet. A believing Muslim desires to live their life in accordance with their belief system, following the commandments of Allah (SWT) as revealed in the Qur'an. When searching for the meaning of life, the primary focus is on the relationship between Allah (SWT) and the human being. Therefore, a Muslim avoids what Allah (SWT) has forbidden. With this sensitivity, millions of devout Muslims live their lives according to Islamic beliefs and culture, choosing halal in everything they eat and drink (Batu, 2015).

Muslims believe that their purpose on Earth, and their reason for being in any given country, is to live in accordance with the lifestyle Allah desires for them. With this belief, Muslims with high religious awareness, whether in countries where they are the majority or minority, wish to know whether the food and drink they consume is halal and pure, and act accordingly. This is both a human and Islamic right. Muslims avoid haram food and drink (Batu, 2012a). Regardless of

the governing system in the country they live in, believers living in any region of the world believe they must adhere to the rules of Islam, paying particular attention to ensuring that the food they consume is both halal and pure. Muslims living in Europe, America, Russia, China, and certain Islamic countries especially avoid foods that are definitively haram, such as pork and animals slaughtered without the invocation of Allah's name, as well as other foods they find questionable (Batu, 2012b).

Foods that are prohibited from consumption, animal products whose slaughter method according to Islamic rules is unknown, and additives that, despite being plant-based, may have been treated with alcohol are considered suspicious. It is essential to clearly know the source of the raw materials and additives used in such suspicious products. Halal food certifications issued by institutions or companies located outside of Islamic countries and managed by non-Muslim individuals solely as a field of expertise may be questionable in terms of reliability, thus raising doubts (Haug and Draget, 2009). Societies with Islamic beliefs stand out with their cultural values, lifestyles, and eating and drinking habits. Every society has its own unique culture (Tezcan, 1997). The Qur'an not only emphasizes moderation in eating and drinking but also places importance on the quality of the food consumed. In the Qur'an, the verse "O people! Eat of what is lawful and pure from the earth..." (Al-Baqarah/168) highlights the necessity of consuming lawful and pure foods, thereby outlining the boundaries of healthy eating.

In Islamic history, the etiquette and culture of eating and drinking hold a highly significant place. Reflecting this importance, a chapter in the Qur'an is named "Al-Ma'idah,"

meaning "the table." In this context, the eating and drinking etiquette followed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him-PBUH) is of great importance for us as well. As commanded in our holy book, the Prophet (PBUH) was meticulous about ensuring that the food was both halal and pure. He did not have a habit of being picky or finding fault with the food. Although he preferred certain dishes over others, he never said, "I do not like this" about any food (Çakır, 2013).

Certain foods and drinks on earth have been forbidden to us by Allah. According to the rulings specified in the Qur'an and hadiths, actions, foods, and drinks that are explicitly prohibited are considered haram in our religion. It is Allah, the Almighty, who determines and informs us of what is haram. Haram refers to what Allah (SWT) has forbidden. The Qur'an, which teaches us Allah's commands, also clearly outlines these prohibitions. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), through his own life and his advice (hadiths), conveyed these commands to us in the most accurate way. The judgment of whether something is halal or haram belongs solely to Allah and, by His permission, to His Prophet (PBUH), and these rulings cannot be altered by human desire. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid haram, as what is forbidden holds harm, not benefit, for mankind.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Allah (SWT) is pure and only accepts what is pure. How can Allah accept the prayer of someone who consumes what is haram?". Islam emphasizes that every food and drink deemed haram inevitably harms the individual. The Prophet (PBUH) also warned that alcohol is the mother of all evils (Kutub al-Sittah, 8/160), as alcohol, beyond a certain dose, acts as an intoxicant. It is well known that drugs and alcohol corrupt both the body

and mind. Moderate to heavy alcohol consumption can lead to serious health problems; alcohol poisoning (intoxication) can cause respiratory depression, coma, and death. Additionally, issues like hypothermia, severe withdrawal symptoms, malnutrition, and vitamin B deficiency may arise (Baduroğlu and Durak, 2010). Those who use drugs or alcohol may experience such health problems, and even if they stop using them, full recovery and a return to normal life may not always be possible. Allah (SWT) says in Surah Taha, verse 81: "Eat from the purest provisions We have provided for you and do not exceed limits, or My wrath will descend upon you. And whoever My wrath descends upon is certainly ruined."

Some protein-based additives used in the food industry carry a high risk of being derived from pork (Sakr and Büyüközer, 2011). In addition, it is known that alcohol production and consumption have steadily increased over the years, and alcohol-containing food additives may also be used in the food industry (Çelen, 2010). As a result of such incidents, consumers with religious sensitivity justifiably doubt whether many of the foods they consume are truly Halal. Additives are used in food production to extend shelf life, prevent microbiological spoilage, maintain stability, bleach products, and for similar purposes. These additives are also used for coloring, flavoring, or enhancing the nutritional value of foods (Küçüköner, 2011). However, these additives can only be used under certain regulations and standards. Unfortunately, these concerns often do not interest the producers as much as they should.

Today, many Muslims consume food without paying sufficient attention to its content and source. However, Almighty Allah (SWT), who created us, has warned us about

eating halal and pure food. In the Qur'an, it is stated: "O mankind! Eat from what is lawful and pure on the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy. He only commands you to do evil and immorality and to say about Allah what you do not know" (Al-Baqarah/168-169). Additionally, the importance of this matter is emphasized in the light of the Sunnah. Regarding our purpose of creation, the Qur'an also states, "I did not create jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Dhariyat/56). These verses demonstrate that consuming halal and pure food is not only a physical necessity but also a spiritual responsibility.

In various verses of the Qur'an, it is emphasized that obedience to the Prophet (PBUH) is equivalent to obedience to Allah (SWT). In Surah An-Nisa, verse 80, it is stated: "Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah," indicating that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) serves as a model for believers. Additionally, the Qur'an affirms this in Surah Al-Ahzab, verse 21: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah, you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often." This further reinforces that the Prophet should be taken as a role model. Moreover, in Surah An-Najm, verse 4, it is said, "He does not speak from his own desire; it is nothing but a revelation revealed to him." Given these verses, neglecting to follow the lifestyle of the Prophet (PBUH) seems illogical. In a time when many values are being overturned, and spiritual life is weakening, adhering to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could resolve many of our problems (Çakır, 2013). Indeed, in his Farewell Sermon, the Prophet (PBUH) declared: "I am leaving you with two things. As long as you hold fast to them, you will never go astray: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of

His Prophet" (Muslim, Hajj, 147). These statements clearly show that following the Prophet's life and strictly adhering to his Sunnah are fundamental to living Islam in its fullest sense.

Throughout history, devout Muslims have been mindful of everything they consumed, avoiding what is haram, and this effort has contributed to the development of the concept of halal consumption (Batu, 2022). When examining the verses of the Qur'an and the Hadiths related to Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) approach to nutrition, it becomes clear that there is a strong emphasis on taking preventative measures to maintain health before illness arises. The Prophet (PBUH), through both his personal advice and lifestyle, taught the fundamental principles of healthy eating. In our study, we address the issues of obesity and raising the new generation, which are among the major challenges of today. There are various practices and warnings both in the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet (PBUH) aimed at preventing obesity. In this context, our study seeks to highlight the importance that the Prophet placed on balanced and healthy eating, to identify the precautions that should be taken within the framework of the Qur'an and Sunnah to prevent diseases that may arise from unhealthy eating habits such as obesity, and to explain the significance of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) approach to nutrition in child-rearing.

2. Balanced Nutrition and Avoiding Over-eating

Today, with advancements in scientific research, it has been established that one of the primary causes of disruption to our immune system is the consumption of excessively caloric foods. This leads to an accumulation of surplus energy in the body, which causes obesity in the body (Gürbüz & Pehlivan-

Tevfikoğlu, 2020). Over time, these excess substances may transform into harmful agents and increase in quantity, potentially becoming the cause of various diseases (Çıkman, 1992). People now need to learn that they can live better with less food. Humanity has generally become conditioned to eating three meals a day. Since our stomachs expand and grow, when mealtime approaches, a psychological discomfort arises, resulting in a conditioned reflex and a false sense of hunger. The drop in blood glucose levels and the rise in blood free fatty acid levels trigger the feeling of hunger. The body's state of hunger is when no food is consumed, and the energy needed is drawn from internal stores (Schauf, Moffett, Moffett, 1993).

One of the most important issues in nutrition is determining the ideal amount of dietary fat. Researchers suggest that a high intake of fat can lead to weight gain and increase the risk of chronic diseases through metabolic disorders (Molero-Conejo et al., 2003). Chronic overconsumption of saturated fatty acids is consistently associated with high insulin resistance, while the consumption of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids seems to enhance insulin sensitivity without increasing total fat intake (Panico and Iannuzzi, 2004).

Islam advises people to be moderate and balanced in all aspects of life, including diet, and to avoid excess. This principle is emphasized in many hadiths related to nutrition. These hadiths highlight the importance of adequate and balanced nutrition, avoiding overeating, not overfilling the stomach, and choosing healthy foods. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "No vessel is worse to fill than the stomach. A few bites are sufficient to keep a person upright." He also recommended that one-third of the stomach be filled with food, one-third with water, and

one-third left empty for breathing, indicating that the stomach should not be completely filled (Tirmidhi, Zühd 47; Ibn Majah, At'im-mah 50). This measure has been accepted as a standard for balanced eating (Gençel-Efe, 2023). It has been emphasized that leaving the table before becoming completely full and without appetite suppression is more beneficial both physically and spiritually (Çakır, 2013).

When combining studies on the immune system with practices of eating less, a result can be achieved. Today, the term "normal eating regime" is understood as three meals a day. The saying "Breakfast is like gold" is often heard. According to a general saying, "Breakfast should be eaten like a king, lunch with a friend, and dinner should be given to an enemy" (Sadık, 2015). In other words, if you see someone not eating dinner, it could lead to their early decline. The Prophet also advised, "If nothing is available for dinner, then eat a handful of dates" (Tahiru'l-Mevlevi, Şerhi Mesnevi, 3/832-834). This is because cell regeneration in adults occurs more rapidly during sleep, and energy is needed during this time. Eating a certain amount at dinner provides this energy (Sadık, 2015). However, dinner should not be a late-night meal but should be consumed in the early evening hours.

Although some nutrition books written in recent years reference energy values from 30-40 years ago, it is reported that a normal person should consume 2500-3000 calories based on eating habits in Türkiye and around the world. These calorie tables were prepared decades ago (Baysal, 2010). Some opinions suggest that a daily intake of 1000-2000 calories may be sufficient for an adult. A portion of society is interested in and applies these views. However, it is recommended that a certain portion of this energy

come from protein sources. It is argued that this would lead to healthy and balanced nutrition (Karatay, 2011). Consuming more energy than these values can lead to weight gain. Additionally, even for a somewhat active person, energy below 2500 calories (possibly much lower) may be adequate. Models or fashion models are a good example of this. Despite consuming relatively little food (though high-quality food) according to current standards, this group of people maintains a healthy lifestyle (Batu, 2015). Today, many diseases are suspected to be caused by overeating. Instead of resorting to a diet after becoming ill, normal eating should be recommended before illness occurs. To this end, recalculating daily caloric needs can be useful. By consuming normal portions at appropriate times rather than overeating, one can maintain a healthy palate throughout life (Batu, 1993; Batu, 2005).

For a healthy life, red meat should be consumed in sufficient and balanced amounts. Otherwise, despite being a high-quality and nutrient-rich food, meat can become harmful to the body. The relationship between meat consumption and morality is not currently understood from a medical perspective. In fact, the existing medical logic cannot grasp this truth, as heart rigidity arises from insensitivity to spirituality, while good morality is maintained through spirituality (Sadık, 2015). It is important to avoid consuming less than the necessary amount of red meat for a healthy lifestyle. Otherwise, it can lead to diseases caused by iron and vitamin deficiencies. Consuming a certain amount of red meat daily is crucial for infants, growing adolescents, and women of childbearing age. Those who do not consume enough meat may develop deficiencies in iron, vitamin B6, and vitamin B12 (Cobos and Diaz, 2015; Batu, 2024). Particularly in older age, there are claims in the media that insufficient meat

intake can lead to partial forgetfulness. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an: "We have given them plenty of fruits and meat" (Tur/22). In a hadith reported by Ebi'd-Derdâ (r.a) in Ibn Majah's Sunan (Hadith No: 3305) the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is said to have stated, "The best food for the people of this world and the Hereafter is meat." This need is somewhat higher in growing boys. However, it should not be thought that consuming more of the protein-rich meat group is always better. Moderation is key, as excessive meat consumption can negatively affect the kidneys. Elevated protein levels can cause fatigue and lead to edema. Excessive meat consumption increases the body's acidity, which results in faster organ function. Increased meat consumption can lead not only to heart and vascular diseases but also to stomach, liver, and intestinal disorders, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Although some researchers have claimed that continuous high-protein food consumption disrupts the physiological structure of vital organs like the liver and kidneys (Linn et al., 2000; Morens et al., 2000; Skov et al., 1999), balanced and adequate meat consumption remains very important for health.

3. Halal and Doubtful Foods

Humans often seek to align their lives or lifestyle with their belief systems and religious obligations. The term "halal" means permissible in terms of religion, hygiene, and health. It is an essential standard of living for a practicing Muslim. A devout Muslim desires to live according to the way prescribed by Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an, integrating their faith into all aspects of life. They wish to consume foods produced using halal methods and free from haram additives (Batu and Regenstein, 2014). While the distinction between halal and haram is often clear, some products fall into a category of uncertainty or doubt. For these doubtful

products, having a halal certification is necessary. It is crucial to have accurate and reliable information about the raw materials used in their production or the additives employed, as well as the processing methods (Anonim, 2013; Batu et al., 2015).

Halal food refers to food that is permitted by Allah for Muslim consumers and is prepared entirely in accordance with Islamic rules, from farm to table. In a broader sense, halal food includes food products derived from plant, animal, chemical, or microbial sources, and ensures that raw materials, processing aids, ingredients, additives, processing methods, operating conditions, and packaging conform to Islamic regulations (Güneř & Yetim, 2020). Non-halal foods include pork, dead animals, animals slaughtered in the name of anyone other than Allah, animals that have been strangled, killed by a blow, fallen from a height, gored, or torn apart by a wild animal, animals slaughtered on stone altars, alcohol and intoxicating substances, blood, and blood-derived products. These products or foods that have come into contact with them are prohibited in Islam (Al-Ma'idah/3; Batu, 2015). Suspicious foods mainly include additives such as gelatin, enzymes, and emulsifying agents. The uncertainty about the sources of these additives places such foods in the doubtful category.

From a historical perspective on halal consumption, the concept of "halal food" first emerges. The initial test that humanity faced after creation was related to food. Allah (SWT) instructed Adam (peace be upon him) and his wife Eve (peace be upon her): "O Adam, dwell you and your wife in Paradise, and eat from wherever you will, but do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers" (Al-Baqarah/35). They lived in peace in Paradise, obeying this command.

However, under the deception of Satan, they ate from the forbidden tree and were consequently expelled from Paradise (Al-Baqarah/36). This event indicates that the test related to food for humanity will continue throughout worldly life, until the Day of Judgment. The situation that led to their expulsion from Paradise was their consumption of a food that Allah had prohibited. This highlights the importance of consuming halal food. It is understood that consuming haram food or not adhering to Allah's commands could prevent a person from entering Paradise. However, Allah knows what is best. Therefore, our Lord commands us to consume only pure and halal foods and to give thanks to Him, while violating this is seen as following Satan (Çakır, 2013). This underscores the significance of consuming what is permissible and maintaining halal taste through it (Batu, 2022). It is incorrect to label what is haram as halal, and vice versa. Halal and haram are clearly defined; situations outside of these are considered "doubtful." Conscious Muslims exhibit great sensitivity towards doubtful foods. Allah (SWT) has created both haram and halal, as well as doubtful situations. Avoiding doubtful matters is crucial as it helps protect one's religion and life, elevating them to higher spiritual levels (Çakır, 2013).

The concept of halal not only signifies religious permissibility but also reflects suitability in terms of hygiene and health. For Muslims living in societies where religious sentiment and respect for Allah have weakened and morals have deteriorated, it is crucial to be meticulous about halal foods and drinks (Haug and Draget, 2009). Not every food and drink without a "halal" label is automatically haram; however, ensuring the halal status of such products can be challenging. For example, the statement "Contains no pork" on processed foods does not prove that

the product is halal (Sakr and Büyüközer, 2011). This is because haram foods are not limited to pork. Meat from animals not slaughtered according to religious rules is also considered haram, as explicitly stated in the Qur'an (DİB, 2023). Allah says, "He has only forbidden you dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah" (Al-Baqarah/173); and "Forbidden to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah, and (those animals) that have been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored, and those which have been (partly) eaten by a wild animal, unless you are able to slaughter it (before its death), and those which have been sacrificed on stone altars (for idols), and (forbidden is) the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows. That is impiety" (Al-Ma'idah/3). Similarly, in beverages, the claim "Contains no alcohol" may also be insufficient. For a drink to be considered halal, it must not be harmful to health and should not contain any discernible haram substances in terms of color, taste, or smell (Haug and Draget, 2009).

In countries like Türkiye, where many Muslims live, expressions such as "Is this food halal?" or "We live in a Muslim country, could the food produced here be haram?" carry significant responsibility and accountability. Halal and haram are determined solely by Allah's commands; no one can declare what is halal to be haram or what is haram to be halal based on personal opinions and views (Çakır, 2013). Allah (SWT) warns against this: "Do not say about what your tongues assert falsely, 'This is lawful and this is unlawful,' to invent falsehood against Allah. Indeed, those who invent falsehood against Allah will not succeed" (Surah An-

Nahl/116). This verse indicates that declaring things halal or haram without Allah's determination is equivalent to lying about Allah, and such behavior will not lead to success and can jeopardize one's afterlife. Therefore, to attain piety, approach Allah, and successfully pass the Divine test, it is essential to avoid doubtful matters. Caution is necessary regarding doubtful foods as they could lead to haram. Nowadays, there are many religiously doubtful topics, and there is concern that Muslims might accept these topics as halal (Kütüb-ü Sitte, 8/160).

Food additives can make many products questionable. After food is chewed in the mouth, it is digested in the stomach and intestines, breaking down into its components. These components are absorbed from the intestines into the bloodstream and transported to the body's cells (Akca, Çağındı, and Köse, 2023; Törüner, 2024). The nutrients derived from food are used for energy production, repair, and general functions of the cells. The halal or haram status of food is crucial for managing this process healthily. Halal foods are digested into halal components in the body, contributing to righteous deeds. However, consuming questionable foods may cause the organs to hesitate in performing righteous acts or risk directing towards unlawful deeds. Consuming a single haram bite could create a barrier between a person and Allah. Therefore, it is important that the foods consumed are not questionable to avoid falling into dubious actions. Pious individuals avoid certain foods and drinks to prevent becoming lax regarding haram matters (Çakır, 2013). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of piety by stating, "A person does not attain piety until they abstain from the permissible things due to their fear of falling into what is forbidden" (Tirmidhi, "Qiyama", 19; Ibn Maja, "Zuhd", 24). In another hadith, he

said, "A person does not reach the level of piety until they leave what bothers their conscience" (Bukhari, "Iman", 1). Additionally, the Quran states, "This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah" (Al-Baqarah/2). These verses and hadiths clearly illustrate the importance for pious believers to avoid questionable foods.

Suspicious foods refer to situations where there is no clear information about whether certain foods are halal or haram. In this context, according to Abu Huraira, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warned, "There will come a time when people will not care whether what they eat is halal or haram" (Bukhari, Buyu' 7; Nasai Buyu', 23; Bukhari, Buyu' 23). This highlights the risk of an Islamic society drifting towards a mindset where selfishness and personal gain overshadow religious principles, and where material power and wealth are excessively prioritized, with corrupt practices such as bribery and deceit becoming normalized and even viewed as skills rather than wrongdoings (DITIB, 2013). Therefore, avoiding suspicious foods, which have become increasingly common in recent years, is of great importance. In another hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "The harams are clearly defined, and the halals are clearly defined. Between the two, there are doubtful matters. Most people do not know about them. So whoever avoids the doubtful matters protects his religion and honor" (Bukhari, Iman, 39; Buyu', 2; Muslim, Musakat, 107, 1599; Tirmidhi, Buyu', 1, 1205). These hadiths emphasize the importance of caution in doubtful situations and being careful to avoid falling into what is forbidden. Those who live by this principle believe they are under the protection of Allah. In this context, it can be said that "the realm of halal suffices for one's needs."

4. The Truth of Halal and Haram with Verses and Hadiths

The topic of halal food was addressed in detail centuries ago in the Qur'an and Hadiths. Specifically, it is stated: "Do not make unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors," (Al-Ma'idah/87), emphasizing the importance of halal food once again. The concept known as "halal food," mentioned in the Qur'an centuries ago, refers to the standard of food prepared in accordance with Islamic regulations. This standard includes the characteristics of food prepared according to Islamic procedures, slaughtering methods, additives used, and the qualities of the places where such food is served. A devout Muslim is keen to learn about the sources of the food they consume, the production methods, and the ingredients involved (Sakr & Büyüközer, 2011). This individual consciously chooses halal food to maintain both physical and spiritual well-being. Verses and hadiths frequently emphasize the importance of consuming halal food. The Qur'an contains numerous verses on this subject (Özek et al., 1992). Allah (SWT) created humans pure and Muslim, and has provided them with pure and halal foods. In many verses, it is commanded for people, believers, and prophets to consume halal, pleasant, and pure foods, while avoiding those that are haram, harmful, or impure (Al-Baqarah/57). Only pure and good foods are made lawful for Muslims. This is expressed in the verse: "They ask you what is lawful for them. Say, 'Lawful for you are all good foods...'" (Al-Ma'idah/4-5). This verse indicates that certain things are impure, bad, and harmful, and consuming such things can be detrimental to Muslims. Some of the warnings in the Qur'an are as follows: "O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and pure,

and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy” (Al-Baqarah/168). Another verse says, “O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah” (Al-Baqarah/172).

In Islam, what is halal and haram has been clearly defined; however, there are also doubtful matters between these two, and many people do not have sufficient knowledge about them. Knowing the concepts of halal, haram, and doubtful (shub-hah) is the first step toward being a conscious consumer. Islamic scholars generally agree that things are inherently halal, meaning that everything is considered permissible unless there is a clear ruling that prohibits it. However, other criteria must also be taken into account. When examining the Qur'an and Hadiths, it becomes clear that the scope of what is halal is quite broad. In this context, Allah says, “It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth” (Al-Baqarah/29), indicating the vastness of what is halal. Additionally, “Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and amply bestowed upon you His favors, [both] apparent and unapparent?” (Luqman/20) suggests that things in the heavens and on the earth, for which no specific ruling has been revealed, are considered halal. For something to be deemed haram, there must be definitive evidence indicating its prohibition. For example, certain prohibited items are mentioned in the Qur'an as follows: “He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful” (Al-Baqarah/173). From this verse, it is understood that if there is no halal

alternative available to sustain life, one is permitted to consume haram items, but only in amounts necessary for survival.

The Qur'an encourages the consumption of halal foods and clearly specifies the foods that are prohibited. In one verse, “O Messengers, eat from the good [lawful] foods and work righteousness. Indeed, I, of what you do, am Knowing” (Al-Mu'minun/51). Additionally, some foods that are forbidden are stated in the following verse: “Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah, and those [animals] killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall...” (Al-Ma'idah/3). Another verse emphasizes: “And do not eat of that upon which the name of Allah has not been mentioned, for indeed, it is grave disobedience” (Al-An'am/121). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also considered the consumption of halal food and the avoidance of haram as a fundamental issue for Muslims. For instance, he said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not drink wine and should not sit at a table where wine is consumed", stressing the need to avoid forbidden intoxicants. The Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has served as a guide for Muslims. Regarding doubtful matters, he said, “The lawful is clear, and the unlawful is clear, and between them are matters that are unclear, which many people do not know. Whoever avoids the doubtful safeguards his religion and honor” (Bukhari). Furthermore, the Prophet also stated, "Allah has not placed your cure in what He has forbidden for you" (Narrated by Ibn Mas'ud), highlighting the importance of avoiding what is haram. These verses and hadiths clearly demonstrate the significance that Muslims must place on consuming halal food and avoiding haram.

The rulings on halal and haram hold significance for those who see themselves as devout Muslims. For someone who lacks religious sensitivity and boundaries, the concepts of "halal and haram" may hold little value. The Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah approach the topic of halal and haram with great care. Living as a Muslim is achieved by knowing what is permissible and forbidden and leading a life accordingly. The importance of this is clearly reflected in the words of Hazrat Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: "Do not look at how a person prays and fasts, but look at whether he speaks the truth when he talks, fulfills the trust when entrusted, and whether he observes halal and haram when engaging with worldly matters" (Bayhaqi, al-Sunan al-Kubra, VI, 288; Shu'ab, IV, 230, 326). These words emphasize the significance of adhering to halal and haram for a devout Muslim. As understood from the above verses and hadiths, even a small amount of alcohol is forbidden for Muslims to consume. Alcoholic beverages such as wine and beer should not be used, even as flavorings or during cooking. The addition of any alcoholic drink to food renders that food haram, and thus it ceases to be halal. Therefore, chefs and cooks must avoid using alcohol or alcohol-containing additives when preparing halal foods.

5. A Healthful and Balanced Dietary Example from Prophet Muhammad: Eating Two Meals a Day

The Qur'an commands moderation in matters of eating and drinking. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also condemned excessive consumption and encouraged his followers to eat less (Bukhari, Et'ima, 12; Muslim, Ashriba, 182-185; Tirmidhi, Et'ima, 20). According to the sources, the Prophet typically ate no more than two meals a day (Ibn Sa'd, 1968: I, 406). He advised not to skip the

evening meal (Tirmidhi, Et'ima, 46; Ibn Majah, Et'ima, 54). The Prophet adopted the Qur'an's emphasis on consuming lawful sustenance and encouraged earning through permissible means (Bukhari, Zakat, 50; Buyu', 15; Nasa'i, Buyu', 1). Moreover, he placed great importance on avoiding unlawful ways of acquiring wealth, such as through usurpation (Bukhari, Mazalim, 13), bribery (Abu Dawud, Aqdiya, 4), hoarding (Muslim, Musaqat, 130), and cheating in trade (Muslim, Iman, 164). This guidance highlights the Prophet's balanced and healthy approach to food and the importance of ensuring that one's income and sustenance are lawful and ethically earned (Akyüz, 2020).

In matters of nutrition, one of the most important points emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is cleanliness. He used this concept to refer to both the physical and microbiologic cleanliness of the person eating and the food being consumed. The Prophet was always careful to ensure that the food and drink he consumed were clean (Akyüz, 2020). A diet in accordance with the Sunnah does not lead to obesity for those prone to gaining weight, nor does it cause excessive weight loss for those who are inclined to lose weight. Those who are overweight can reduce their calorie intake and achieve weight loss by following this dietary system. As observed in both medicine and our spiritual lives, eating in moderation benefits not only physical health but also mental well-being. Let's not forget that by controlling our willpower, we can protect our health. This advice remains relevant today and must be taken into consideration for our well-being, as overeating tires the body and can lead to premature aging.

According to sources, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ate no more than two meals a

day. One of these meals often consisted of light foods like dates. He emphasized the importance of the evening meal and warned that it should never be skipped (Tirmidhi, Et'ima 46; Ibn Majah, Et'imah 54). The prophetic way of eating strengthens willpower and teaches patience. According to nutritionist Kılıç (2013), the processes involved in the production and processing of modern foods have led to an increase in obesity, driven by the mindset of "living to eat." As a result, greater caution is required today compared to ancient times. The claim that the Sunnah-based dietary practice cannot be applied in the modern era is unfounded. On the contrary, the method of eating less but more frequently, as recommended for treating obesity and various illnesses, has been shown to yield positive results. If people were to eat two meals in accordance with the Sunnah and avoid excess in these meals, they would likely be healthier. However, today people consume excessive amounts of food, loading their bodies with more energy than needed, which the body cannot fully break down, leading to the storage of excess fat. This contributes to the rise of an imbalanced and obese generation. Yet, if the Sunnah of eating two meals and leaving the table before being fully satisfied were followed, a healthier and non-obese generation could emerge. We must use our willpower to eat less (Batu, 2015).

Neither the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) nor his companions remained idle while eating one meal a day. Absolutely not. They crossed continents, reaching as far as China, deep into France and Spain, and also arrived at the gates of Sicily and Istanbul. Such a dietary regimen made it possible to accomplish these feats (Sadık, 2015). Obesity has now become not just an individual but a global public health issue. For healthy eating and weight loss, it is essential to follow a

diet. It is recommended to reduce the fat content in consumed food, avoid certain sugary foods, and opt for lighter sweets and drinks. Instead of consuming heavy protein-rich meat dishes, it is suggested to eat plant-based protein sources like peas, beans, or lentils on certain days of the week (Sarioğlu & Velioğlu, 2018).

Late Dr. Zeki Çıkman, a medical professor, implemented the practice of eating two meals a day, as recommended by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), instead of the usual three meals. Despite not being overweight, he reported losing 7 kilograms over three months, reducing his weight from 62 kilograms to 55 kilograms (Sadık, 2015). Additionally, another author who followed the Prophet's method of eating two meals a day lost 26 kilograms over seven years (Batu, 2015). Both authors noted significant improvements in their physiological, psychological, and biological well-being after starting this practice. They experienced greater relaxation, reduced fatigue, and increased energy and productivity in their daily lives. In fact, following the Sunnah inherently involves a form of dieting. This suggests that deviations from the Sunnah can lead to weight gain. By implementing the Hadiths into one's life, individuals can overcome weight issues (Batu, 2015). In an interview given to a magazine in 1992 (published in another magazine in 2015), the late Dr. Zeki Çıkman (Sadık, 2015) highlighted the key benefits of eating two meals a day or sometimes even one meal, which he personally experienced. Some of these benefits he observed were:

1. He felt more energetic, had a stronger awareness and clearer memory compared to previous times, and was able to memorize hundreds of phone numbers without any special effort.

2.His hair color, which was once brown, turned black, and there was no graying or hair loss; he suggested that the reasons for these changes should be investigated by dermatologists.

3.An application indicated that his heart rate would decrease by about 15,000 beats per day, allowing the heart to rest more and, as a result, become stronger.

4.Thus, he noted that the genetic chain would be passed on to future generations without disruption, potentially eliminating congenital abnormalities.

Additionally, Prof. Dr. Canan Karatay, a specialist in Internal Medicine and Cardiology in Türkiye, suggests that eating two meals a day is healthier. She recommends focusing on meals prepared with butter, yogurt, olives, and olive oil during these two meals (Anonymous, 1979). Karatay (2011) points out that the Turkish people generally eat 8-12 meals a day, which she argues contributes to weight gain and liver fat accumulation in the community. She emphasizes that for balanced nutrition, individuals should consume foods that meet their body's energy needs based on their gender, age, and physical activity. Especially for individuals with chronic conditions such as diabetes, maintaining self-control and eating small, frequent meals can be beneficial (Sadık, 2015). This approach can speed up metabolism, burn off the consumed foods without storing them in the body, and prevent weight gain (Tařbilek-Yoncalık & Sarıkol, 2023). Following the Sunnah practices to achieve a healthy body structure, consuming two meals a day can help the metabolism adapt to a slower pace and encourage eating less (Sadık, 2015). For obese individuals who may not be able to maintain the habit of eating two meals a day and consuming less even after losing excess weight, it might be more

suitable to continue a diet based on small and frequent meals to manage weight control.

Understanding the relationships between metabolic rate, eating habits, and energy consumption is important for healthy eating (Tařbilek-Yoncalık & Sarıkol, 2023). The literature indicates a significant relationship between eating habits and basal metabolic rate (Türkoğlu & Pekcan, 2013). One study investigated the effects of changes in eating habits on basal metabolic rate in individuals on a diet for weight control, finding that reductions in protein and carbohydrate intake partially affected basal metabolic rate (Stiegler & Cunliffe, 2006). The positive relationship between nutrition and basal metabolic rate causes variations in energy consumption based on individual eating characteristics, and accordingly, differences in body composition relative to basal metabolic rate. Additionally, high energy consumption in individuals with high basal metabolic rates supports this view by leading to a decrease in body mass index (Temur & Ceylan, 2020).

6. The Importance of Halal Food in Child Rearing

Marriage and raising a good generation require great responsibility. On the Day of Judgment, a person will be held accountable for this. A child is raised according to the religion of their parents, who are influential factors in the child's development. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Every child is born in a state of fitrah (Islamic nature). Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian" (Abu Dawood, Sunan 17; Ahmad, 2/233).

One crucial element in shaping a person's character is the halal status of the food they consume. Halal food guides a person towards the right path, while haram food distances them from Allah (SWT). The role of

consuming halal food in spiritual development is significant. Allah says: "O mankind, eat from whatever is on the earth, [that is] lawful and good..." (Qur'an 2:168), emphasizing that we should consume clean and lawful food. There are many important warnings from the righteous about the negative effects of haram food on our hearts. For example, Hazrat Mevlana said: "I found that my inspiration was cut off this morning. I realized that a few doubtful bites had entered my body. Knowledge and wisdom come from halal food. Love and mercy also come from halal food. If heedlessness arises from a morsel, know that it is doubtful or haram" (Tahiru'l-Mevlevi, *Sharh-i Masnavi*, 3/832-834). Hazrat Abdul-Qadir Gilani also warned us: "Haram food kills the heart, while halal food revives it. Some morsels occupy you with the world, while others engage you with the Hereafter. Some morsels make you inclined towards your Creator" (Topbař, 2014).

Research on nutrition indicates that cognitive development during the preschool years affects academic performance in later years (Nyaradi et al., 2013). Cognitive development is related to genetic factors, but environmental factors such as adequate nutrition and stimuli can also positively impact cognitive development. It has been proven that healthy eating habits significantly influence children's academic success (Kim et al., 2016). Additionally, proper and halal nutrition, along with nutritional education, has a positive effect on children's achievements. It is mentioned that generations raised on halal food will be protected by Allah, and the attention that family members pay to what is halal and haram reflects their religious sensitivity (Atalay, 2013). The Qur'an provides an example of the prayers made by angels for the children of good people: "Our Lord, ad-

mit them to eternal gardens which You have promised them, and to those who were righteous among their forefathers, their spouses, and their descendants. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise" (Mü'min/8).

Many products can become questionable due to food additives. When consuming halal foods, the components are broken down in the body's detailed systems, leading to righteous deeds. On the other hand, consuming doubtful foods carries the risk of actions being tainted with doubt or engaging in unlawful deeds. A single haram bite can create a barrier between a person and Allah. Therefore, to avoid falling into doubt and committing sins, it is crucial to ensure that the consumed foods are not dubious. Righteous individuals avoid eating or drinking suspicious things to prevent their desires from becoming lax regarding haram (Çakır, 2013). The words of those who pay attention to truly halal food are more impactful, while those who consume haram might have less effect and can even cause discord and corruption.

Individuals who do not progress on the path of spiritual development are deprived of higher values and fall to a lower standard of living. As stated in the Qur'an, "But whoever turns away from My remembrance indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind" (Taha/124), this indicates spiritual distress and a personality crisis. According to the Qur'an, if a person's sustenance is acquired through unlawful means, it negatively affects their positive character traits. As the saying goes, "You are what you eat" (Yalızıçanlar, 2013), thus, nourishment obtained through haram means can undermine the consciousness of worship. This lost consciousness of worship also diminishes the satisfaction of the heart. The Qur'an teaches that hearts are only satisfied through the re-

membrance of Allah, which involves remembering and worshiping Him in every moment and aspect of life (Ra'd/28).

The development of a fetus in the mother's womb is directly related to being nourished with halal food from the earliest stages. Reproductive cells settled in the mother's womb are nourished from the mother's blood. Therefore, the mother's consumption of halal food ensures that the baby is also nourished in a halal and healthy manner. If the mother consumes food deemed haram by Islam or takes harmful substances such as cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs, it negatively affects the miraculous contents of her milk (Yeřilay, 2024). Thus, it is crucial for breastfeeding mothers to pay attention to these matters.

Breast milk contains the necessary macro and micronutrients required to meet the infant's nutritional needs and includes biological and chemical components that strengthen the immune system, protecting the newborn from infections, diarrhea, and malnutrition (Kural, 2018). However, it has been found that breast milk from mothers who consume alcohol, use tobacco, or live in areas with environmental pollution may contain chemical and toxic substances. Some toxic substances that can be present in breast milk include pesticides, heavy metals, organic solvents, Ochratoxin A, and bisphenols. Since chemical substances dissolve in fat, they can accumulate in the fat deposits of postpartum women and transfer to breast milk during lactation (Landrigan et al., 2002). Additionally, maternal smoking during lactation can negatively affect the levels of nutrients in breast milk, including iodine, vitamins C and E, long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, lipids, and proteins (Ahmed et al., 2019; Banderali et al., 2015). Alcohol consumption by the mother can also have detrimental effects on infant development and behavior (Haug

et al., 1998; Giglia and Binns, 2006). Smoking and passive smoking have been associated with various health issues in newborns, such as respiratory and ear infections, an increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome, and discomforts like colic, diarrhea, and vomiting (Williams, 1995; Cangöl and řahin, 2014). Therefore, it is crucial for breastfeeding mothers to maintain a balanced and adequate diet and participate in educational programs on alcohol, tobacco use, and halal nutrition (Barut-Uyar, 2013). It is emphasized that a child should be breastfed by a woman who scrupulously avoids haram and only consumes halal food, as a child nourished by haram milk may develop negative inclinations associated with haram. One of the points that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stressed is that a newborn should be fed with the milk of its own mother. He said, "There is no milk better for the baby than its mother's milk" (Musnad al-Zayd, p. 481). Breast milk establishes a special bond between the mother and the child; the child recognizes the person who nourishes them as the closest person. A person is responsible first for themselves and then for their family and children according to the degree of closeness. Just as one takes care to protect oneself from various dangers, the same care should be extended to one's family and children. The Quran expresses this as follows: "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones" (Tahrim/6). As mentioned in the Quran, a person should be nourished with halal and clean foods. Families should remember that a child's intelligence, good character, and virtues are founded on the halal milk they receive from their mother. Haram food changes a person's heart, and it cannot return to its previous state. The effects of consumed food on the human body last for a long time, and this applies to both halal and haram foods. Dr. Piero

Anversa from New York University has noted that the heart renews itself over 20 years, while the British Liver Foundation states that the liver renews itself every six months, and the lungs renew themselves once a year depending on air quality and tobacco use (B y k zer, 2012).

When Hz. Omar asked, "O Messenger of Allah, we can protect ourselves from dangers, but how can we protect our family members?" the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded: "If you keep them away from what Allah has forbidden and command them to do what He has commanded you, then you will have protected them" (Hak Dini Kur'an Dili, 7:5122-23). These words emphasize the importance of clean and halal sustenance over merely having an abundance of food and drink. There are fundamental dynamics in child-rearing, one of which is halal sustenance. Parents who make an effort to feed their children halal food find it easier to educate them, as halal and clean sustenance nurtures good emotions, directs them towards what is right, and inclines them towards goodness.

The food we consume affects not only our bodies but also our behavior. It is quite difficult for a child nourished with haram foods to grow up to be a quality person, a sincere believer, or a Muslim with Islamic morals. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) mentioned that "eating and drinking what is halal is a condition for entering paradise" (Heysemi, 10/229) and stated that "a person whose body is nourished with haram is deserving of hell" (M slim, Taharet, 1; İbn Mace). It is said that a person who grows up on haram food is more deserving of the fire (Tirmizi, Cuma, 79). Consuming haram foods makes a person's deeds ugly, prevents their soul from receiving angelic inspiration, and their heart from finding companionship.

Such a person cannot reach worship and obedience, nor can they attain a calm and gentle demeanor. Haram food leads to heedlessness and makes obedience to Allah more difficult, thus changing the person's attributes. In contrast, halal food is like a seed; its fruit is beautiful thoughts, contemplation, and repentance (İldırar, 2013).

7. Obesity and Balanced Nutrition in the Example of Muhammad's Dietary Practices

Obesity is a significant health condition characterized by an excess of caloric intake compared to caloric expenditure, leading to the accumulation of fat in the body. This condition adversely affects health and requires effort for treatment ( ift i and A ikel, 2021). Another definition of obesity is a chronic condition characterized by a higher ratio of body fat mass to lean body mass, resulting from an imbalance where the energy intake from food exceeds the energy expenditure, in addition to physical inactivity (Anonim, 1997). The prevalence of obesity is increasing daily, especially in developed and developing countries. Obesity not only affects aesthetics but also predisposes individuals to a range of serious health issues such as fatigue, shortness of breath, joint pain, diabetes, and arteriosclerosis (Salihoglu, 2011). The dietary habits of obese individuals are often disrupted. Normally, eating speed is regulated in proportion to the body's fat and carbohydrate stores. In a healthy person, once these stores exceed optimal levels, eating speed is reduced to prevent excessive storage. However, this regulation does not occur in obese individuals (Guyton and Hall, 2002). Obesity is a major health problem that affects all body organs and systems, leading to various disorders and even deaths. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines obesity as "excessive fat accumulation in the body that may impair

health." The WHO considers obesity one of the top 10 most risky diseases, and recent research by the organization has highlighted its close association with cancer. Today, obesity is recognized as both a disease in itself and a condition that leads to serious social, psychological, and economic issues, as well as a foundation for lifelong chronic diseases (Anonim, 1997).

The cornerstone of a healthy life is maintaining a balance between caloric intake and expenditure. In adult men, approximately 15-18% of body weight consists of fat tissue, while in women, this percentage is around 20-25%. Exceeding these proportions leads to obesity (Saęlık Bakanlıęı, 2023a). According to the 2022 European Obesity Report by the World Health Organization's (WHO) European Regional Office based in Copenhagen, about 59% of the adult population in Türkiye struggles with overweight or obesity (Sarıakçalı, 2022). However, by 2024, this rate has risen to 66.8%, gaining significant media attention. An increase in body fat percentage is defined as obesity, which is associated with serious health issues such as cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, lipid disorders, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea syndrome, and certain types of cancer (Sarıakçalı, 2022).

A diet that aligns with the Sunnah not only strengthens willpower but also teaches patience. As noted by a prominent dietitian today, the interventions in the processing and production of foods have led to obesity as a consequence of the "living to eat" mindset (Kılıç, 2013). While the method of eating small, frequent meals can yield positive results in managing obesity and various diseases, for individuals without chronic conditions like diabetes, adhering to the Sunnah's two-meal approach may be sufficient, provided that moderation is maintained during

these meals. However, influenced by the media and modern times, our tables are rarely lacking; indeed, there is a prevalent tendency to consume excessive amounts of food in a single meal. Particularly in "all-inclusive" hotels, the uncontrolled increase in food intake can reach alarming levels (Batu, 2015). As a result, people overload their bodies with excessive energy.

Adequate and Balanced Nutrition is the Foundation of Health. Nutrition is not just about suppressing hunger, filling the stomach, or eating what one craves. If any of the nearly 50 essential nutrients required for human life are not consumed, or are consumed in insufficient or excessive amounts, it hinders growth and development and deteriorates health. When consumed excessively, the nutrients are stored as fat in the body, which can be harmful to health. This situation is referred to as Unbalanced Nutrition. Preventing unbalanced nutrition is crucial, and it is important to instill a healthy eating awareness through nutrition education (Ministry of Health, 2023b).

Today, obesity is a disease that requires intense effort for treatment and holds a significant place among health problems. Obesity is not only an aesthetic issue but also leads to many serious health problems. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) highlighted this danger centuries ago, saying: "The things I fear most for my ummah are: excessive eating, excessive sleep, laziness, and lack of *yaqīn* (faith)" (Feyz-ul-Kadir, 1/278), emphasizing the dangers of obesity and laziness. Excessive eating is described as living to eat rather than eating to live, which was a primary concern of the Prophet regarding the people of this world and the hereafter. Similarly, Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) drew attention to the worldly heedlessness of

people, saying: “People are asleep (heedless), but when they die, they wake up (realize the truth)” (Acluni, Keřfu’l-hafa, 2/312). Therefore, today, Muslims need to be more cautious about obesity and health issues and avoid falling into heedlessness. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and paying attention to religious sensitivities are crucial for both physical and spiritual well-being (Batu, 2015).

There is a significant relationship between inadequate and unbalanced food consumption and obesity. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized moderate consumption in healthy eating and prohibited overeating. In this context, he pointed out the characteristic of a believer by saying: “A believer eats for one stomach, while a disbeliever eats for seven stomachs” (Bukhari, “At’ima”, 12; Muslim, “Ashriba”, 186; Tirmidhi, “At’ima”, 20). This means that while a disbeliever views eating as an end in itself, just as they view the world as an end, a believer sees the world as a means to achieve the hereafter and considers eating as a way to gain the strength needed to practice their faith. They do not seek pleasure from eating itself; rather, they eat to live (Demir, 2015). This is the fundamental principle taught to Muslims in the ethics of eating by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) advised that the stomach should not be filled completely. As such, overeating should be avoided, and only a sufficient amount of food should be consumed (Çiftçi and Açıkel, 2021). Excessive consumption, that is, filling the stomach and making it a habitual practice, leads to many health issues. Among these health problems, obesity, which signifies excessive weight gain, is at the forefront. Research links obesity, a significant health risk, to the fact that the amount of energy consumed exceeds the amount of energy expended (Altunkaynak and Özbek, 2006). Therefore, a

balance between the amount and type of food consumed and the body's digestive process must be maintained.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Nutrition is not just about satisfying hunger; it is also one of the fundamental elements of human life and includes cultural codes. Therefore, the Quran intervenes in human eating and drinking habits, emphasizing that food is a blessing from Allah and commanding the consumption of what is clean and halal, while also highlighting the importance of avoiding wastefulness. It is necessary to distinguish between the local and universal dimensions of the etiquette of nutrition established by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). While what the Prophet ate can be considered a local practice, principles such as ensuring that food is halal and clean, eating in moderation, saying Bismillah (In the name of Allah), avoiding wastefulness, adhering to cleanliness rules, and expressing gratitude to Allah hold universal value (Akyüz, 2020). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) embraced these fundamental principles of the Quran and provided clarifications on various matters. Our foundational hadith books contain much information about the reflections of these principles in the lives of Muslims. This information is based on the dietary rulings and fundamental principles of Islam.

Understanding and applying the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) regarding nutrition extends beyond individual lifestyle and piety, and has the potential to offer solutions to universal issues such as drought, scarcity, hunger, wastefulness, and obesity. In addition to fulfilling the purpose of satisfying hunger and sustaining life, many food items also have therapeutic properties. Various narrations mention that foods such as meats, dairy products, fruits, vegetables,

honey, and salt have been used for healing. Therefore, the connection between nutrition and health has been emphasized in these narrations, highlighting this aspect. This clearly demonstrates the importance Islam places on the development and maintenance of a healthy body.

With the acceptance of Islam, the use of meats, meat products, and plants in the daily lives of Muslims largely continued, but some significant changes were made. Among these changes are the criteria that foods should be healthy, clean, halal, and slaughtered with the mention of Allah's name. The Qur'an mentions the countless blessings created by Allah and provided for humans. Specific divine criteria and limits have been set for these blessings. Foods that fall within these limits are considered clean and halal. The characteristics of clean and halal foods are clearly stated, and there are warnings about the potential harm if these recommendations are not followed. Foods presented as *tayyib* are not only free from physical impurities but also consider how they are earned and how much is consumed. Clean and halal foods are those permitted and approved by the religion, and they must be obtained through lawful means. Furthermore, clean food refers to nutrients that do not harm the body and that are pleasant to consume.

Obesity, one of the significant health issues today, occupies an important place in the list of health problems. Obesity not only affects aesthetics but also leads to the development of many diseases. Therefore, Muslims need to be more cautious and avoid negligence regarding this issue. The Sunnah of eating provides great importance in strengthening one's will and teaching patience.

The need to eat is one of human's basic necessities, but it has also become a pleasurable habit. As a result, some individuals may adopt the mindset of "living to eat" rather than "eating to live." With the variety and increased tastiness of ready-to-eat foods today, the mindset of "living to eat" has become more common, which has exacerbated health issues such as obesity. The method of eating less and more frequently has shown positive results in treating obesity and various diseases. This approach suggests eating two meals in accordance with the Sunnah and avoiding excess during these meals. However, due to the influence of modern media and the current era, our tables are often filled with abundant food, and consuming large amounts of food at each meal has become a widespread habit. Especially in all-inclusive hotels, the abundance of food leads people to consume more energy.

The Qur'an commands balanced behavior in eating and drinking. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) condemned excessive eating and drinking, and encouraged his followers to eat moderately. The Prophet generally ate two meals a day and emphasized the importance of the evening meal, advising not to skip it. He also placed great importance on consuming lawful sustenance and encouraged earning through permissible means. Obese individuals can reduce excess calories and lose weight by following a diet in accordance with the Sunnah. Today, it is evident that eating less not only improves physical health but also enhances spiritual well-being.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) consistently ate bread made from barley flour, and it is known that he did not favor the refined, bran-removed bread that is widely available

today. In his time, bran was not sifted out with a sieve, but processes like blowing or tossing were used to partially remove the bran (Bukhari, Et'imah, 22; Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 38). This highlights the importance of whole wheat bread, which has become popular in recent years, as the bran remains intact.

For a healthy and honest society, consuming lawful food is of great importance. Therefore, children should be born and grow up on a solid foundation, both materially and spiritually, to ensure their physical and biological health. Additionally, to raise children as moral, well-mannered, kind, and beneficial members of society, their parents must avoid unlawful practices. There should be nothing unlawful in the family environment. Future generations should be free of unlawful elements. It is crucial for children to be nourished with food obtained from lawful earnings, both before and after birth.

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