

THE ETIQUETTE OF EATING (PART 2 OF 2): AFTER EATING

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Before a Muslim begins any task or action, he or she mentions the name of God. He says Bismillah (I begin with the name of God) to invoke God's blessings on whatever he may be about to do, from the grand life changing moments to the mundane everyday tasks such as washing hands or eating. The first thing a Muslim does when he finishes eating is to praise and thank God. He says 'Alhamdulillah' (all praises and thanks are due to God) as an acknowledgement that God is the one who provides all our sustenance. Whether it be a little or a lot, we thank Him and we praise Him.

***“And no moving (living) creature is there on earth but its provision is due from God”
(Quran 11:6)***

Food is an important part of everyday life, it sustains us and gives us energy, and a great deal of our time is spent acquiring, preparing, and eating food. God provides some people with a lot and others with very little. The reason for this is beyond our comprehension but we do know that the conditions we survive under are part of a test, not an indication of honour, or humiliation. God tests us to determine who is patient and grateful for the blessings He provides. A Muslim understands that he should be equally grateful for one morsel of food, or a banquet.

It is from the traditions of Prophet Muhammad to praise God and to make supplication after one has finished eating. Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, would say, “Praise be to God, good and blessed praise. What we have eaten now will not suffice us for perpetuity (rather Your graces are continuous upon us) nor will this meal suffice us such that it will be the last that we eat. We, O our Lord, cannot do without Your favor nor part with it”^[1] Alternatively, he would say “O God, bless it for us and feed us with better than it”^[2] Prophet Muhammad also told us that “God is pleased when one of His slaves eats something and praises Him for it, or drinks something and praises Him for it,”^[3] and that is what a true believer is aims for – to please God!

Cleanliness is part of faith

Islam places great emphasis on cleanliness. Prayers are not performed unless the body is in a state of cleanliness, and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad contain advice pertaining to keeping both the body and mind clean. Islam is a holistic way of life and God said in the Quran that He **“loves those who turn to Him in repentance and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.” (Quran 2:222)** To this end, it is important to clean oneself after eating by washing the hands, rinsing the mouth and if possible, cleaning the teeth.

Prophet Muhammad advised us all to wash our hands before and after eating regardless of whether we are in the state of ritual purity or not. It is acceptable to rinse with water, but the scholars of Islam have said it is preferable to use soap or a cleaning liquid. It is also recommended to rinse the mouth after eating. When Prophet Muhammad was in a place called Al Sahba he called for food but found only some barley mush, the Prophet and his companions ate the food after which they rinsed their mouths.[\[4\]](#)

Islam attaches great importance to oral cleanliness and over 1400 years ago, Prophet Muhammad taught his followers the importance of cleaning their teeth. He recommended using a tooth stick called a miswak or siwak. It is a natural twig fortified with minerals that cleans the teeth, prevents the gums from bleeding, kills bacteria, and freshens the breath. Prophet Muhammad said, “Use siwak, for it purifies the mouth and pleases the Lord,” and “Had it not been for fear of making things too difficult for my Ummah (nation), I would have commanded them to use the siwak before every prayer”.[\[5\]](#)

Good advice is a mercy

Prophet Muhammad was sent to the world as a mercy, he came to complete God's only religion and to teach us in practical ways how to please and worship God.

“He listens to what is best for you; he believes in God; has faith in the believers; and is a mercy to those of you who believe.” (Quran 9:61)

His advice about the etiquette of eating is an important part of his guidance. As we have seen, the etiquette of eating involves actions before, during, and after eating, and Prophet Muhammad also suggested ways for the believers to drink water. He advised that water should be drunk in three breaths rather than gulping the water in one mouthful, and he cautioned against breathing into the vessel because it contaminates the water with spittle.[\[6\]](#) Correct etiquette is an important part of the religion of Islam.

Reading about the good morals and good manners that are inherent in the Islamic faith it is possible to see that Islam is a complete way of life, and every act that a Muslim does is a chance to please God and earn rewards. Even mundane acts like eating or drinking are viewed as opportunities to worship God, thus etiquette for eating and drinking has evolved from the words of God in the Quran and the traditions of his Prophet, Muhammad.

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[2] *At Tirmidhi*

[3] *Saheeh Muslim*

[4] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[5] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[6] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

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