

## Introduction

ALL PRAISE IS for Allāh, Lord of the Worlds. And may peace and blessings be upon the Noble Messenger Muḥammad, upon his entire family, and upon his Companions and the righteous ones who follow in their footsteps until the Day of Judgment.

Allāh Almighty has made it lawful for Muslims to eat the meat of pure animals and to take benefit from their various parts. But He has made this lawfulness contingent on adherence to firm injunctions presented in the Qurʾān and the Sunna. The driving principle behind these injunctions is that an animal, in essence, bears similarity to a human being in that it has a soul and perception and can sense comfort and pain. Looking from this perspective, the seemingly logical ruling is that it would not be lawful for a human being to slaughter an animal, eat its meat, and take benefit from its various parts. However, Allāh has made man the most noble of creation and has placed the world at his disposal. All that He has created is for man's advantage. He says, "It is He who created for you all that is in the earth" (Qurʾān 2:29).

It is clear that Allāh has made the consumption of animals permissible purely out of His vast kindness. As this is the case, He has made consuming them subject to some "ritual" (*taʿabbudī*) laws [those that

are strictly and precisely determined by Allāh through the Qurʾān and the Sunna of His Messenger ﷺ]. A servant of Allāh who abides by these ritual laws thereby displays his acknowledgment that the lawfulness of an animal is a great blessing from Allāh, and that he really does not deserve to derive benefit from or take relish in eating from an animal until he recognizes this blessing, shows thanks for it, and follows the method that Allāh has prescribed for slaughtering the animal.

Of all law systems, Islamic law (Sharīʿa) is exceptional in its treatment of the issue of animal slaughter. It delineates in superb detail the acceptable slaughtering methods, founding them on sound principles from the Qurʾān and Sunna. In view of the thorough attention Islamic law pays to this matter, the act of slaughtering an animal is not a “non-ritual” (*ʿādī*) act. That is, it is not an act for which one need not adhere to any principles or laws; one may not do it however he pleases, according to his need, personal interest, or simply what he finds easiest. It is, rather, a ritual act, for which it is obligatory to conform to the laws outlined in the Qurʾān and Sunna.

The conclusion arrived at by Muftī Muḥammad ʿAbduh and his student Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā—that the slaughtering of animals is a non-ritual act that one may freely do however he wishes<sup>1</sup>—is an egregious error and a statement in utter conflict with clear Islamic texts. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ states in a rigorously authenticated (*ṣaḥīḥ*) ḥadīth:

Whoever prays as we [Muslims] pray and faces the Kaʿba [during prayer] and eats our slaughtered animals, that is a Muslim for whom is the protection of Allāh and His Messenger. (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*)<sup>2</sup>

Even clearer than this is another narration related by Anas ibn Mālīk رضي الله عنه, in which the Messenger ﷺ said:

I have been commanded to fight mankind until they say, “There is none worthy of worship except Allāh (*lā ilāha illa ʾLLāh*).” If they say this,

1 See Muḥammad ʿAbduh’s *Tafsīr al-Manār*.

2 *Kitāb al-Dhabāʾih wa ʾl-Ṣayd, Bāb Faḍl Istiqbāl al-Qibla*.

pray as we [Muslims] pray, face the Ka‘ba [during prayer], and slaughter [animals] as we do, their blood and wealth become sacred for us, [and neither of these may we violate] except when there is due right. (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*)<sup>3</sup>

In this ḥadīth, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ mentions the slaughtering of animals in the same context as the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) and facing the Ka‘ba when praying. He places it among the distinguishing features of Islamic law that separate a Muslim from a non-Muslim. He makes it one of the symbolic Islamic rituals, which show that one is a Muslim and by which one’s blood and wealth become safeguarded. Whose statement could prove more conclusively than the Prophet’s ﷺ—such as these, as well as others—that slaughtering an animal through a legally prescribed method is indeed a ritual act and is a fundamental religious rite that affirms the very faith of the one who does it? Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (may Allāh have mercy on him), in explanation of this ḥadīth, writes:

The import of this ḥadīth is that the affairs of people are judged by their outward appearance. Therefore, if anyone outwardly fulfills the fundamental rites of Islam, all of the laws protecting Muslims come into effect for him, so long as he does not openly do anything that negates [his fulfillment of these rites]. (*Fatḥ al-Bārī* 1:197)

Were the slaughtering of an animal not subject to specific laws, then any animal killed by, say, a polytheist or atheist would be permissible, and lawfulness would not be restricted to the slaughter of a Muslim or *Kitābī* (member of the *Ahl al-Kitāb*, or People of the Book; i.e., a Jew or Christian).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Islamic law makes it clear that for foods of non-animal origin, such as those made from plants, it is not required that their producer be a Muslim or *Kitābī*. Consumption of these foods is permissible regardless of the religious affiliation of their producer. So

<sup>3</sup> *Kitāb al-Dhabā‘ih wa ‘l-Ṣayd, Bāb Faḍl Istiqbāl al-Qibla.*

<sup>4</sup> For simplicity, the transliterated Arabic term *Kitābī* will be used throughout instead of “a member of the People of the Book.” (Translator)

if slaughtering were something unrestricted by ritual (*ta'abbudi*) laws, it would be permissible to eat an animal regardless of the religious affiliation of the one who slaughtered it. In the case of animal slaughter, therefore, the well-known fact that the slaughterer must be a Muslim or a Kitābi is in itself proof that foods of animal origin have a special place in Islamic law. For the permissibility to consume them, there must be complete conformity with the laws of slaughter laid down in the Qur'ān and Sunna.

It is no surprise that the laws for animal slaughter, as well as for hunting, have become one of the most important topics of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Drawing from the Qur'ān, the Sunna, and the statements of the Companions ﷺ, the jurists have expounded these laws, such that not a single recognized book of jurisprudence lacks a chapter on "Hunting and Slaughtering."

In this book, I do not intend to examine the minute intricacies of these laws. The purpose instead is to clarify their legal basis and arrive at an understanding of their application in modern-day situations. I have divided the book into the following basic parts:

- I. The Requirements of Islamic Law for Animal Slaughter
- II. People of the Book: Slaughtered Animals and Related Issues
- III. Modern-day Automated Methods of Animal Slaughter

We ask Allāh to give us success in arriving at what is correct and to guide us to what brings us His pleasure.