



(Sayyidah ‘Aaishah [radhiyallahu ‘anha] – Part Three)

In various ahaadeeth, Sayyidah ‘Aaishah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) explains the food of the household of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam).

In one narration, she mentions, “From the time Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) came to Madeenah Munawwarah, until the time he departed from this world, his household were never satiated with food prepared from wheat for three consecutive nights.”

(Saheeh Bukhaari #5416)

Likewise, in another narration, she mentions, “At the time when Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) departed from this world, we would satiate our hunger with dates and water.” *(Saheeh Bukhaari #5383)*

As far as Sayyidah ‘Aaishah (radhiyallahu ‘anha) is concerned, then even after the demise of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), she maintained this level of simplicity in her own life. Hence, when wealth began to pour into Madeenah Munawwarah and large amounts of money would be sent to her, she never kept anything for herself. Instead, she hastened to spend it all in charity, emulating the blessed example of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam).

The nephew of Sayyidah ‘Aaishah (radhiyallahu ‘anha), ‘Urwah bin Zubair (rahimahullah), mentions that on one occasion, Sayyiduna Mu‘aawiyah (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) sent 100 000 dirhams (silver coins) to her as a gift. On receiving the gift, she began to distribute it among the poor, until none of the money remained.

At that time, her freed slave, Sayyidah Bareerah (radhiyallahu ‘anha), remarked, “You are fasting. Why did you not purchase some meat for us with (at least) one dirham?”

Sayyidah 'Aaishah (radhiyallahu 'anha) replied, "Had I thought of it, I would have done so."
(*Mustadrak Haakim #6745*)

Similarly, on another occasion, her nephew, Sayyiduna 'Abdullah bin Zubair (radhiyallahu 'anhuma), sent her two sacks, filled with money, as a gift. Contained in these sacks was wealth equal to approximately 180 000 dirhams.

On receiving the gift, Sayyidah 'Aaishah (radhiyallahu 'anha) asked for a tray to be brought. She then (placed the money in the tray and) sat, distributing the money among the people.

By that evening, none of the money remained.

Since Sayyidah 'Aaishah (radhiyallahu 'anha) was fasting, she called to her servant, "Please bring my iftaar (the food with which I will break my fast)." The servant obliged and presented her with some bread and olive oil. Observing this, her freed slave, Sayyidah Ummu Zarrah (radhiyallahu 'anha) remarked,

"From the money you distributed today, could you not have used one dirham to purchase meat for us to eat when breaking our fast?"

Sayyidah 'Aaishah (radhiyallahu 'anha) replied,

"Do not reprimand me! If you had reminded me, I would have done so!"

(*Sifatus Safwah vol. 1, pg. 318*)

Lessons:

1. Food prepared from wheat (e.g. bread) is not an exclusive or exotic type of food. Rather, it is among the basic, staple foods. However, the simplicity and generosity of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) and his blessed household was such that they voluntarily chose to spend all their wealth in the path of Allah Ta'ala, assisting others and securing the rewards of the Hereafter. Hence, they did not even have wheat bread to eat for three nights in a row. Rather, they would eat barley bread (which was cheaper) or satiate their hunger by eating dates (which were abundantly available) and drinking water.

2. The effect of remaining in the blessed company of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) was that even after his demise, his household emulated his blessed example. They had imbibed the values of generosity and simplicity to such an extent that they too voluntarily sacrificed the material possessions, for the sake of others, and sufficed on the simplest of foods.

3. When Sayyidah 'Aaishah (radhiyallahu 'anha) was asked as to why she had not purchased

meat for her iftaar, she remarked that if it had occurred to her, or she had been reminded, she would have done so, not for herself – but to accommodate her servant and make her comfortable. In other words, although she was fasting, and had probably not eaten meat for many days, food was the furthest thing from her mind and she was not pining for meat. On the other hand, we constantly obsess over our food and our menu – even more so when we are fasting.

In many ways, our lives actually revolve around our stomachs.

However, as we can see from the above incidents, this was not the way of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) and the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu 'anhum).

They ate to live, not lived to eat.