



Question:

In the beginning of sura al-Maidah (chapter 5:1-3), Allah talks about what kind of food has been made lawful for the believers and the prohibition of the unlawful. In the verses that follow (5:4-5), the believers are told that the food of those who have been given the Book (People of the Book) is also lawful for them. Does this mean that the believers can also eat the meat served by the People of the Book even though they don't slaughter the lawful animals in the manner prescribed by Islam?

Answer:

By making the food of the People of the Book lawful for the believers it does not imply that Allah has laid down two separate rules. In other words, the speech, "and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you" has not ordained a new law contrary to the previous law mentioned in verses 5:1-3. The reality of that which is made lawful remains constant and thus does not change.

"at-ta'am" in the verse 5:5 refers to all that is eaten and taken as nourishment and the word can also be used to mean "wheat" exclusively (vide lisaanu 'l-Arab). In most traditions narrated from the Imams (a.s.), it has been declared that at-ta'am in this verse means wheat and other grains.

Thus, the permission to eat the food of the People of the Book does not cover those animals whose meat is forbidden nor does it cover those lawful animals, which have not been slaughtered according to the rules laid down by Allah. The prohibition of the unlawful items has also been mentioned in the chapters of "the Cow" and "the Bee".Reference:

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