

EUREKA! EUREKA! :**THE SECRETS OF DATES AND HONEY**

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“Dates are known as the “Bread of the Desert” and its tree, the date palm as the “King of Oasis.”

And of the fruits of the date-palm, and grapes, whence ye derive strong drink and (also) good nourishment. Lo! therein is indeed a portent for people who have sense.

And thy Lord inspired the bee, saying: Choose thou habitations in the hills and in the trees and in that which they thatch;

Then eat of all fruits, and follow the ways of thy Lord, made smooth (for thee). There cometh forth from their bellies a drink divers of hues, wherein is healing for mankind. Lo! herein is indeed a portent for people who reflect. [Chapter 16 (Al-Nahl): 67—69]

The above three verses from Holy Quran emphasize the importance of dates and honey, as the agents of nourishment and healing. The antiquity of these two elements of nature has prompted me to choose a very old Greek exclamation of joy EUREKA! EUREKA! (translated as *I have found it, I have found it*) by the renowned ancient Greek mathematician, physicist, engineer, and astronomer Archimedes (c. 287 BC – c. 212 BC), to express the similarity of my wonder and amazement over the discovery of hidden qualities and efficacies of dates and honey.

What is a Date Fruit?

A date fruit is the product of a date palm, a tree native to Northern Africa and the Middle East. A fully grown date palm tree, technically called as *Phoenix dactylifera* can attain a height of about 82 feet with its green palm leaves measuring about 10 to 20 feet in length and spread like a crown at the top of the tree.

The Holy Quran praises this tree in such terms as: *And lofty date-palms with ranged clusters.* [Chapter 50(Qaf): 10]

There is an old Arab saying that the uses of the date palm are as many as the number of days in the year. In fact, the online

Encyclopedia Britannica also substantiate this saying. Traditionally speaking, there are four noticeable stages with distinct names in Arabic, in the growth of date palm fruit in relation to the changes in its color, texture and taste or flavor. The various stages in its growth are: first stage **KIMRI** (green), second stage **KHALAL** (yellow), third stage **RUTAB** (bright red), fourth and final mature stage **TAMAR** (reddish brown or almost black). Dates are known as the “Bread of the Desert” and its tree, the date palm as the “King of Oasis”.

The medicinal and nutritious importance of dates starts with the pre-birth stage of man and goes along to the old age. It is a common medical recommendation these days that a woman needs a hormonal secretion Oxytocin,



which is produced naturally in her body in the pituitary gland and causes increased contraction of the womb during labor and stimulates the ejection of milk into the ducts of the breasts. Imagine how Mary, the mother of Jesus more than two thousand years ago was given a compact divine prescription of dates and water, when she was alone

at the time of her delivery in wilderness. So, Allah says in Holy Quran:

And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of the palm-tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died ere this and had become a thing of naught, forgotten!

Then (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not! Thy Lord hath placed a rivulet beneath thee.

And shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee. [Chapter 19 (Maryam): 23-25].

Moreover, the necessary elements like magnesium, calcium and potassium (being helpful in the arrest of bleeding) are also found in dates. It is also worth noting the wisdom here that Maryam (AS) was asked to hold unto the

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palm tree and pull it towards her, an act as per modern science, which eases her labor too. Once a child is born and started feeding upon mother's milk, she is still advised to take dates which contain a number of vitamins and minerals which will be passed onto the infant ensuring his or her healthy growth.

Chemical Composition of Dates:

A general chemical picture of dates is more or less as follows: 70-80% of sugar, 6.5% of dietary fiber (in the form of polysaccharides like cellulose, pectin and insoluble proteins), 2.5 % of protein, negligible 0.4 % of fat and the rest is moisture, vitamins (chiefly A, B1 and B2) and a plethora of minerals in varying amounts like fluorine (which defeats teeth decay) boron, calcium, cobalt, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorous, sodium and zinc. Additionally, the seeds contain aluminum, cadmium, chloride, lead and sulphur in various proportions. Selenium, element believed to help prevent cancer and important in immune function, is also found in dates. Dates are considered as an excellent source of potassium. The high levels of sugar retain moisture in the fruit and prevent it from bacterial growth. As the fiber cannot be metabolized in the human digestive tract, it helps in bowel movements.

Dates being most easily absorbed and digestible nutriment containing a plentiful of vitamins and minerals can form an ideal diet for children, when soaked overnight in water and given along with milk. This way they become a laxative and act as roughages to ease constipation in adults too. On the growing scale of life, dates proved beneficial in the treatment of obesity, to purge liver from accumulated toxins and as supplementary sustenance for the people who fast in Ramadan and for the aged, in addition to the curing of several other minor ailments.

What is Honey?

Honey is a sweet yellow to rich amber colored viscous (dense) fluid or syrup produced by honey bees. It has been consumed for centuries as a sweetener by human beings. Honey is mentioned with its equivalent word in Arabic (**ASAL**) only once as a reward for the righteous in the Hereafter when Allah says:

A similitude of the Garden which those who keep their duty (to Allah) are promised: Therein are rivers of water unpolluted, and rivers of milk whereof the flavour changeth not, and rivers of wine delicious to the drinkers, and rivers of clear-run honey; therein for them is every kind of fruit, with pardon from their Lord. [Chapter 47 (Muhammad) : 15]

The bees feast on flowers, collecting the flower nectar in their mouths. This nectar then mixes with special enzymes in the bees' saliva, turning it into honey. The bees carry the honey back to the hive where they deposit it into the cells of the hive's walls. The fluttering of their wings provides the necessary ventilation to reduce the moisture's content making it ready for consumption.

The infrastructure of the hive or honey-comb, which is composed of beeswax and formed into a replicating series of almost perfectly shaped hexagonal cells is made with wisdom behind this particular shape. In fact, the comb is the stage for the activity of the colony and is used for almost everything imaginable, from larval nursery to pantry to message centre, exactly as a masjid is a hub of social activity for a Muslim.

The communication system of honey bee (in the form of honey bee dances) is very intricate and is administered with the help of powerful chemical substances called pheromones produced by the queen.

The ingredients of honey made in a miraculous way by honey bees become a promise of healing and treatment for mankind as confirmed by Holy Quran. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) also said: *'Honey is a remedy for every illness and the Qur'an is a remedy for all illness of the mind, therefore I recommend to you both remedies, the Qur'an and honey.'* (Bukhari) In fact, Honey is more of a medicine than food or nourishment and it is reverse in case of dates because Allah Himself has allocated the two—dates and honey—their predominant roles, as evi-



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dent in the verses of Surah Al-Nahl quoted above at the very beginning of this paper.. In short, honey is a " *kind of first aid item, valuable to have around the house.*"

In fact, Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) too specifically stressed upon the curative effects of honey on stomach or gut as evident from the following hadith narrated by Abu Said Al-Khudri:

A man came to the Prophet and said, "My brother has some abdominal trouble." The Prophet said to him "Let him drink honey." The man came for the second time and the Prophet said to him, "Let him drink honey." He came for the third time and the Prophet said, "Let him drink honey." He returned again and said, "I have done that". The Prophet then said, "Allah has said the truth, but your brother's abdomen has told a lie. Let him drink honey." So he made him drink honey and he was cured.

Thus, honey is proved beneficial in many gut diseases too like gastroenteritis, peptic ulcers, dyspepsia etc. Honey with its relatively high resistance to flow and the innate ability to absorb moisture from its surroundings helps to heal wounds very quickly, in addition to its antibacterial qualities. Honey being an antioxidant and a substance which produces free radicals helps considerably in the reduction of inflammation of wounds. Honey has been used since ancient days as a traditional treatment for coughs. It has the capacity to dilute the bronchial secretions which cause cough and pull them out of the body through excretory mechanism, in addition to support and repair the bronchial epithelium. Hence, recently a research team of Pennsylvania State College of Medicine has come to the conclusion that the buckwheat honey is far better than the over the counter like dextromethorphan.

Conclusion:

Both dates and honey are the favorites of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) . They are very easily digestible and can form a complete food for survival along with any kind of milk.

Dates are the chosen fruits to break the fast in Ramadan as an act of Sunnah. There are hundreds of varieties of dates but the chosen kind of dates by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was the Ajwah dates of Medina Munawwarah, though, he ate other varieties as well. He used to eat seven [an important numeral] dates in the morning as breakfast along with cucumber or water-melon as per various traditions quoted. He advised his followers to take dates preferably in odd numbers.

The regular use of the twin elements of nature Dates and Honey along with a routine of mild physical exercises may allow us to practice the well known English proverb "*An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*"

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