

By Sameh Strauch

Smoking was discovered by the Spanish conquistadors in America, about 500 years ago; from Spain, it spread to the rest of Europe, and thence to the Muslim world about 100 years later.

Unfortunately, while the West has long realized the dangers of smoking and attempted to reduce it, in the Muslim lands, it has spread with little or no interference. Early Muslim scholars, confronted with this obnoxious habit, declared it to be makrooh (detested), comparing it with such things as garlic and onions. This was due to the fact that, at that time, no one was aware of the harmful effects produced by smoking, which include, cancer, heart disease, strokes, miscarriages and premature birth in women and several other diseases.

Since it has become clear that smoking is harmful, it is obligatory upon all Muslims to abstain from it, for Allah has said: **And do not kill yourselves, Allah is indeed Merciful to you** Soorah 4: Verse 29), and the Prophet sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam said: "Let there be no harming and no reciprocating harm." (Narrated by Ahmad). Unfortunately, some Muslims, either deliberately, or through ignorance, have been guilty of misleading Muslims, by repeating the earlier judgements of scholars, that smoking is only disliked, and therefore, not forbidden.

The Messenger of Allah sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam also said: "The feet of man will not depart, on the Day of Judgement, from his standing before his Lord, until he is asked about five things: His lifetime and how he spent it; his youth and how he used it; his wealth - where he earned it and how he spent it; and how he followed what he knew." (Narrated by At-Tirmizi)

He sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam also said: "Whoever imbibes poison, killing himself with it, will be consuming his poison in the Hell-fire and will dwell therein eternally." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari)

Smoking is also harmful to the human mind and reason. One only has to observe a smoker who has been deprived of his cigarettes for a while: He is rude, nervous, quick to anger and incapable of concentration. He cannot relax until he has had his "fix". He is affected by insomnia, indigestion, episodes of acute anxiety and so on... The effect upon those around him is almost equally unpleasant: They have to bear the disgusting fumes emitted by him; even a mild rebuke habitually elicits a violent reaction from the smoker, who is apparently only aware of the violation of what he perceives to be his rights, i.e. his right to inflict this foul smoke upon any person in any place. It has been firmly established by scientists, that secondary smoking is at least, if not more harmful than primary smoking, particularly for children. Asthma, or allergy sufferers are forced to vacate the vicinity of the smoker.

Allah's Messenger sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam said: "Anyone who believes in Allaah and the Last Day should not hurt his neighbour." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari) He sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam also said: "Verily, the example of a good companion and a bad one is like that of a perfume seller and a blacksmith: As for the perfume seller, he would either give you (some perfume), or you would buy (some) from him, or at least, you would get a good smell from him. And as for the blower of the bellows, you would either get a foul odour from him, or he would burn your clothes." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Smoking is also a waste of one's wealth on things which offer only harm and no benefit, for Allaah, Most High says: **And do not waste [your wealth] extravagantly. Indeed the squanderers are brethren to the devils are brethren to the devils** Soorah 17: Verse 26-27 and the Messenger of Allah sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam said: "Allaah hates for you three things: Gossiping, begging and wasting money." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Smoking involves consuming an evil substance. It has a noxious smell, a horrible taste and is harmful to the body. Allaah says: **He [the Prophet e] who will enjoin upon them the doing of what is right, forbid them from wrongdoing, make lawful to them the good things of life, forbid for them the evil things and lift from them their burdens and the shackles that were [formerly] upon them** Soorah 7:Verse 157

A smoker is not only a faasid (corrupt person), but also a mufsid (one who spreads corruption): Because of his bad example, his family members, friends and colleagues may also smoke. It is useless to say: "Do as I say, and not as I do." The problem is exacerbated when the smoker affects an air of religious piety or knowledge, because many people will take him as a role model. This multiplies his sins and increases his burden.

Genuinely pious people avoid smoking and smokers, thus the smoker is excluded from the company of the righteous.

Smokers find fasting during the month of Ramadan more difficult than non-smokers, because they are suffering a form of drug addiction. They rarely fast voluntary fasts since even the obligatory fast is a trial for them.

The prohibition of smoking applies equally to the user, the seller, the manufacturer, the advertiser and all those involved in its production, sale or consumption, for Allah says: **Cooperate with one another in righteousness and piety, and do not cooperate with one another in sinning and transgression. And fear Allah; verily, Allah is severe in punishment** Soorah 5:Verse 2 and the Messenger of Allah sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam said: "Indeed, when Allah prohibits something, he prohibits eating its price." (Narrated by Ahmad)

So dear brothers and sisters, if you are addicted to this foul habit, you must make your intention firmly to Allah to stop and seek aid with Him Who hears and sees all, and always answers the supplication of the sincere believer. He, Most High says: **And when My slaves ask you about Me, [oh, Muhammad, say that] verily, I am near [in hearing, seeing and knowledge]: I answer the supplication of the one who asks when he asks Me** Soorah 2:Verse 186.