

The Halal and Haram of Food

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يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُواتِ الشَّيْطَانِ
إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

O you mankind! Eat of what is on earth, Lawful and good; and do not follow the footsteps of the devil, for he is to you an avowed enemy.
(2:168)

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The Halal and Haram of Food for Muslims

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَحُلْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

He has only forbidden you **dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that (any food, meat or not) which has been dedicated to other than Allah.** But if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, or transgressing due limits; then is he guiltless. For Allah is Oft-forgiving Most Merciful. (Qur'an 2:173)

Forbidden are ONLY:

1. Dead meat/animals.
2. Flesh/meat of the pig. From 2:259, 16:14, 22:37 we understand that **حُلْمٌ** refers to the flesh of the animal, not the bones or blood. As bones are not edible and as blood is to be avoided, this means that we should not eat anything from the pig.
3. (Running/flowing) Blood.
4. Any food that is dedicated to any other than Allah (before, during or after slaughter if it is an animal).
 - a. Note that this is not the same as saying that any food which is not dedicated to Allah is forbidden. There are three possibilities in this situation: -
 - i. The food is dedicated to Allah (by mentioning His name on it). This is the best/recommended way.
 - ii. The food is not dedicated to anything.
 - iii. The food is dedicated to other than Allah. This is totally forbidden.
 - b. Had Allah stated “and any food which is not dedicated to Allah”, **then** it would imply that if the name of Allah is not taken in dedication (for example at slaughter for animals), then it would be haram.
 - c. We must again note here that it is ANY food and not just meat that is referred to here, Allah is not short of words. What is being talked of here is the act of dedication of any food to anyone other than Allah.

That is it, these are the 4 categories, and there are no other categories. Hence anything else that appears in the Qur'an is a subcategory to these.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَحُلْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلِيَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَفْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَامِ ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ الْيَوْمَ بَيَّسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنَ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Forbidden for you are **carrion, blood and pork**, and what has been **dedicated to other than Allah**, and animals which have been **strangled**, and animals which have been **killed by a blow**, and animals which have **fallen to their death**, and animals which have **been gored**, and **animals which wild beasts have eaten**—except those you are able to slaughter properly—and animals which have been sacrificed on altars, and deciding things by means of divining arrows—that is deviance. Today those who disbelieve have despaired of overcoming your religion. So do not be afraid of them but be afraid of Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed My blessing upon you and I am

pleased with Islam as a religion for you. But if anyone is forced by hunger, not intending any wrongdoing, Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Qur'an 5:3)

Forbidden are animals that:

1. Are strangled to death.
2. Are Beaten/Struck until they are dead, refers generally (though not limited to) to a powerful strike to the head.
3. Have fallen (or are thrown) from a height (to their death).
4. Are gored (to death).
5. Eaten (partially) by other animals, except if they can be properly slaughtered before dying.

1-4 are under the category of carrion (dead animal(s)) and its different forms. So this verse expands upon the term (الْمَيْتَةُ) by adding information on how the animal may have died. However, if dead animals are generically forbidden, then what is the purpose behind mentioning the specific categories above? Simple, none of these mentioned methods or their equivalents can be used in any part of its slaughter. Beating/striking, strangling, throwing from a height or goring an animal to death makes it forbidden to eat.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ قُلْ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُم مِّنَ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِينَ تُعَلِّمُونَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللَّهُ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا
أَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

They ask you what is lawful to them (as food). Say: lawful unto you are (all) things good and pure: and what ye have taught your trained hunting animals (to catch) in the manner directed to you by Allah. Eat what they catch for you, and **mention** the name of Allah over it: and fear Allah. For Allah is swift in taking account. (Qur'an 5:4)

Lawful for us to eat are:

- All good things.
- What our trained animals have caught for us, over which we mention the name of Allah.
 - This may be the only situation where eating something dead is allowed, as it is dead due to your method of catching it. When hunting we cannot guarantee that we can get our prey and that it will be alive.

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِن كُنْتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ, وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ مَا حَرَّمَ
عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا لِّيُضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوَائِهِمْ بَعْضَ عِلْمٍ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ

So eat of that (any food, meat or not) on which Allah's name has been **mentioned**, if ye have faith in His signs. What is the matter with you that you do not eat that over which the name of Allah has been **mentioned**?, and He has made clear to you what He has made forbidden for you except when you are forced to eat it. Many people lead others astray through their whims and desires without having any knowledge. Your Lord knows best those who overstep the limits. (Qur'an 6:118-119)

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَآئِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ
لَمُشْرِكُونَ

And do not eat from that which the name of Allah has not been **mentioned**, for it is a transgression/sin. The Satans will reveal to their guided ones to argue with you. If you obey them,

you shall indeed become idolaters. (Qur'an 6:121)

- a) We **must** mention the name of Allah over any food we eat before eating, or know that this act has been done at some point. Otherwise we transgress.¹
- b) The general understanding (among Muslims) from Qur'an 6:118-119 and 121 is that this is referring specifically to meat/animal. This is not the case though, as Allah has not indicated this in these verses.
- c) The term (ذَكَرَ) is used in 22:36 in reference to mentioning Allah at the slaughter of the camels at Hajj. This would indicate best practice for slaughter includes mentioning the name of Allah on the animal before slaughter. This would fit in without contradiction with the 4th category at the start of this section.
- d) As all food must have Allah's name mentioned on it we can only be sure of this if we do it ourselves at the time of eating, regardless of c). This is the only way we can guarantee avoiding transgression.

As a result of the fact of the 4 categories mentioned at the start of this section, we cannot add this as a requirement for what makes food Halal. Rather we learn from this the command of Allah on what to say and recall upon the mercy and gift that is food.

قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهْلًا لِعَبِيرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Say: 'I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, any food that is forbidden to eat except for carrion, flowing blood or blood poured forth, and pork—for that is unclean—or some deviance consecrated to other than Allah. But if anyone is forced to eat it, without desiring to or going to excess in it, your Lord is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.' (Qur'an 6:145)

Forbidden for us to eat is:

- Flowing blood.
- This clarified all the other verses, as it is obvious that we can never get meat without blood, however we can aim to remove as much as we can of flowing blood, that is, the blood that can be shed or poured forth at slaughter.

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَافٍ فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوبَهَا فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطِعُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

The sacrificial camels we have made for you as among the symbols from Allah. in them is (much) good for you: then mention the name of Allah over them as they line up (for sacrifice): when they are down on their sides (after slaughter), eat ye thereof, and feed such as (beg not but) live in contentment, and such as beg with due humility: thus have We made animals subject to you, that ye may be grateful. (Qur'an 22:36)

As part of the rites of Hajj, when animals (e.g., Camels) are to be slaughtered, we must mention the name of Allah over them before slaughter. It is our intention in this act that reaches Allah, not the

¹ At this juncture note that this is not the same as dedication of the meat before/during/at slaughter (and any food in general) to someone/something. The term for dedication that is used is (أَهْلًا) whereas here what is used in Qur'an 6:118-121 is (ذَكَرَ) which is to mention.

meat. This is the best and recommended method for slaughtering the animals. To be noted that this is the only place where mentioning the name of Allah at slaughter is mentioned, it is within the context of Hajj sacrifice.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O believers, wine and gambling, idols and divining arrows are abominations from the work of Satan. Avoid them, in order that you prosper. (Qur'an 5:90)

- Alcohol and any intoxicant are forbidden.

So to summarise, the following foods are forbidden to Muslims:

1. Blood, specifically flowing blood. This is because it is impossible to avoid blood in animals; however with draining much of the flowing blood can be removed.
2. Pork meat, pork fat not mentioned.
3. Any food dedicated to other than Allah.
4. Any food over which you have not mentioned the name of Allah.
5. Animals which are dead before you slaughter them (carrion). Under this category are animals that: -
 - a. Have fallen to their death.
 - b. Have been strangled to death.
 - c. Have been killed by a blow.
 - d. Have been gored to death.
6. Anything which is bad².

Special cases:

- Animals that have been (partly) eaten by wild beasts and can be properly slaughtered are halal, otherwise they are haram.
- Animals that are caught by your trained animal(s), these may be dead by the time you get them.

There is nothing else, and anyone who wishes to say that there is should read section 'A Warning'.

The following foods are allowed:

- All that is good and pure for us and which we gratefully mention the name of Allah over.³

The proper method of slaughter in the Qur'an, based upon all available verses is:

- a) Have a live animal.
- b) Except if caught by your hunting animal and pronounce the name of Allah on it.
- c) Pronounce the name of Allah over the animals, whether one or many. (Qur'an 22:36)
- d) This is a recommended practice that we learn from its usage in the rites of Hajj. However This may not be a requirement given previous discussion and c)..
- e) Slaughter the animal (and bleed it, which is implied by the commandment to avoid flowing blood) with consideration to points 4(b,c,d).
- f) Be grateful.

The proper method of eating is: -

- Mention the name of Allah (Qur'an 5:4, 6:118-119,121) in gratefulness (Qur'an 16:114).
- Eat whatever is lawful.

And Allah knows best.

²Refer to section "All Good Things Have Been Made Lawful for You" for more on this point.

³Refer to section "All Good Things Have Been Made Lawful for You" for more on this point.

Marriage to Mushriks

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَاتِ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنَ وَلَا أُمَّةٌ مُؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنُوا وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ أُولَئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Do not marry women of the mushriks until they believe. A slave girl who is one of the believers is better for you than a woman of the mushriks, even though she may attract you. And do not marry men of the mushriks until they believe. A slave who is one of the believers is better for you than a man of the mushriks, even though he may attract you. Such people call you to the Fire whereas Allah calls you, with His permission, to the Garden and forgiveness. He makes His Signs clear to people so that hopefully they will pay heed. (2:221)

This verse makes clear that a Muslim, be it man or woman, should not marry a mushrik until they believe. A slave/servant who is a Muslim is superior to any mushrik.

The Exception, Qur'an 5:5

الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

Today all good things have been made lawful for you. And the **food of those given the Book** is also lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. So are chaste women from among the believers and **chaste women of those given the Book** before you, once you have given them their dowries in marriage, not in fornication or taking them as lovers. But as for anyone who rejects faith, his actions will come to nothing and in the hereafter he will be among the losers. (Qur'an 5:5)

There are 2 ways to interpret this exception: -

1. A major exception.
2. No exception.

A Major Exception

In this approach we say that the exception given can fully negate the prohibition against marrying mushriks and against eating food that is not Qur'anically Halal.

This verse gives the Muslims two exceptions to the rules on Haram and Halal in Food and on marriage to mushriks (and other than (Muslim) believers). Because for sure the people of the book have committed shirk and for sure their food is not Islamically Halal based upon the verses present in the section "The Halal and Haram of Food for Muslims". It is likely that the allowances in this verse are due to the fact that they would allow for Muslims to deal more easily with them and allow for easier da'wah. This would mean that we can better visit with and eat with them (and them with us), and marry their women and hence create ties with them. What other reason(s) could there be

for such allowances? And Allah knows best.

No Exception

In this approach we say that no exception is given in either the food or the marriage to mushriks. So we interpret this ayah in a manner which is in full harmony with both the Qur'anic guidelines of Halal food and with the guideline of not marrying mushriks and marrying believers⁴.

The 1st issue is that it is not possible to marry of the People of the Book without contravening the guidance of not marrying mushriks and marrying believers. Because note, Allah says that any who do not judge by what has been revealed, are disbelievers. The Jews and Christians are for sure disbelievers and they are for sure Mushriks.

The 2nd issue is that as the people of the book as a generality are mushriks and disbelievers in the correct revelation, how can we expect them to have the exact same practice as us in regards to food? The reality is that mostly, it is not. To say that their food is only Halal to us if they do it exactly like we do is to say "Although Allah has allowed us the food of the People of the Book, (knowing their deviance and error in deen) in reality we cannot eat it". Who knows best in this regard? Allah or some Muslims?

However, as always, we must avoid what is harmful, no matter who produces it. And Allah knows best.

The People of the Book and their Religion/Belief

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَلْ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ لَّهُ قَانِتُونَ

They say, 'Allah has a son.' Glory be to Him! No, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him. Everything is obedient to Him. (2:116)

فِيمَا نَقَضْتُمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهَا وَتَسْوَأُوا حِطًّا مَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

But because of their (Jews) breaking of their covenant, We have cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort the true meaning of words and have forgotten a good portion of what they were reminded of. You will never cease to come upon some act of treachery on their part, except for a few of them. Yet pardon them, and overlook. Allah loves good-doers. (5:13)

وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَى أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوا حِطًّا مَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ

We also made a covenant with those who say, 'We are Christians,' and they too forgot a good portion of what they were reminded of. So We stirred up enmity and hatred between them until the Day of Rising when Allah will inform them about what they did. (5:14)

⁴The general impression given in the Qur'an is that Muslims should marry Muslims, unless some fahisha/fornication/adultery or the like takes place.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ
وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Those who say, 'Allah is the Messiah, son of Maryam,' are disbelievers. Say: 'Who possesses any power at all over Allah if He desires to destroy the Messiah, son of Maryam, and his mother, and everyone else on earth?' The kingdom of the heavens and the earth and everything between them belongs to Allah. He creates whatever He wills. Allah has power over all things. (5:17)

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ
فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ

Those who say that the Messiah, son of Maryam, is Allah are disbelievers. The Messiah said, 'Tribe of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. If anyone associates anything with Allah, Allah has forbidden him the Garden and his refuge will be the Fire.' The wrongdoers will have no helpers. (5:72)

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرٌ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ
قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ

The Jews say, "Uzayr is the son of Allah," and the Christians say, 'The Messiah is the son of Allah.' That is what they say with their mouths, copying the words of those who disbelieved before. Allah fought them! **How perverted they are!** (9:30)

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَابَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ
عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allah, and also the Messiah, son of Maryam. Yet they were commanded to worship only one God. There is no god but Him! **Glory be to Him above anything they associate with Him!** (9:31)

In short, the selection of verses presented in this section and other verses demonstrate the following points:

- Both the groups have joined lords with Allah (shirk).
- Both are described as disbelievers.
- Both have lost and/or corrupted their revelation and do not follow what was revealed.
- Jews are treacherous and are big enemies to Muslims.

Now to the best of our knowledge the Bible as is available today, is pretty much the same as it was back in the time of the Qur'an's revelation. So Qur'an 5:5 is a general statement that is for all time.

A Warning

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

You who believe! Do not make forbidden the good things Allah has made lawful for you, and do not overstep the limits. Allah does not love people who overstep the limits. (Qur'an 5:87)

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هَذَا حَلَالٌ وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ لَتَفْتُرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتُرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ

But say not - for any false thing that your tongues may put forth, - "This is lawful, and this is forbidden," so as to ascribe false things to Allah. For those who ascribe false things to Allah, will never prosper. (Qur'an 16:116)

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُمْ مِنْهُ حَرَامًا وَحَلَالًا قُلْ اللَّهُ أَدِنَ لَكُمْ أَمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَفْتُرُونَ

Say: 'have you considered the provision that Allah has sent down for you, and some you have made unlawful and some lawful?' say: 'has Allah given you his permission, or do you forge (falsehood) against Allah?' (Qur'an 10:59)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ تَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتَ أَزْوَاجِكَ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

O Prophet! Why do you forbid that which Allah has made lawful to you? You seek to please your consorts. But Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Qur'an 66:1)

We have no authority; indeed the Prophet has no authority to make what is Halal Haram nor to make what is Haram Halal. Doing so it is a serious sin and it must be avoided. In fact, 16:116 comes directly after the following verse: -

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالْدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخَنزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلِيَ لِعَٰبِرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

He has only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and any (food) which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, - then Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Qur'an 16:115)

So its context is specifically that of food!

Discussion of Qur'an 5:5

The key verse around which an understanding must be built is (Qur'an 5:5):

الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

Today all good things have been made lawful for you. And the food of those given the Book is also lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. So are chaste women from among the believers and chaste women of those given the Book before you, once you have given them their dowries in marriage, not in fornication or taking them as lovers. But as for anyone who rejects faith, his actions will come to nothing and in the hereafter he will be among the losers. (Qur'an 5:5)

The questions here are:

1. What is meant by “All good things have been made lawful for you”?
2. What is meant by “the food of those given the Book” with respect to the issue of Halal and Haram food for Muslims?

All Good Things Have Been Made Lawful for You

This means that any food or drink which has no intrinsic harm to it or extrinsic evil to it is acceptable for us to eat or drink.

By intrinsic harm I mean any food or drink which is known to produce negative consequences either physically or emotionally/mentally by its very nature. In the case of meat, then for Muslims this means proper slaughter of any meat except what is forbidden (pork, carrion). By extrinsic evil I mean that food acquired by forbidden means such as exploitation, robbery, the changing of the fundamental nature of what Allah has created⁵ or food dedicated to idols.

Specifically mentioned lawful foods are:

- Seafood in Qur'an 5:96 and 16:14.
- Livestock (الأنعام) in Qur'an 22:30 and 40:79.
 - This category includes Sheep, Cattle, Goats and Camels from Qur'an 6:143-144.
- All grazing livestock, except for what is forbidden, are allowed in Qur'an 5:1.
- Products of the Earth in Qur'an 2:168.
- Fruit in Qur'an 6:141.

The Food of Those Given the Book

The first question that can be asked is “What is the food that the Jews can eat and what is the food that the Christians can eat?”.

The Jews have laws similar to those in the Qur'an, however Allah added some more regulations to punish them and some they made up themselves⁶. They have similar rules regarding slaughter methods and have more rules for what exactly can and cannot be eaten. And the religious Jews follow these rules. However let us recall their disbelief and their joining partners with Allah, so just because their methods of slaughter may be similar, does not mean it is religiously equivalent to Islamic slaughter.

Neither Jews nor Christians require the recitation of the name of Allah at slaughter as far as I know.

⁵And most certainly I will lead them astray and excite in them vain desires, and bid them so that they shall slit the ears of the cattle, and most certainly I will bid them so that they shall alter Allah's creation; and whoever takes the Shaitan for a guardian rather than Allah he indeed shall suffer a manifest loss. (Qur'an 4:119)

⁶Found mostly in Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, other made up rulings found in the Talmud.

The Christians however seem to have more lax rules⁷. In the New Testament there are some verses which (supposedly) indicate that the Old Testament Laws are to be kept and other (and more numerous) verses which (supposedly) indicate that the Old Testament Laws are to be left behind.

However most Christians have followed the opinion that all foods are acceptable while a minority have followed some⁸ or all Old Testament regulations⁹. But it must be noted, that the vast majority of Christians from everyday follower to Priests and Bishops eat pretty much any food, nowadays and in the past.

These are the reasons why Allah has to make the exception specifically in (Qur'an 5:5), namely, this exception is unnecessary if the food they eat (or how they slaughter) was exactly like the Muslim food (and slaughter method). So it must be recognised that the food of the People of the Book is not and need not be like the food of Muslims. Note in this regard that Allah simultaneously made the exception of allowing marriage to the women of the People of the Book, even though we have iron clad Qur'anic proof that they practice shirk. And just as no qualification is made for the women (other than they are chaste/free women), there is no qualification made for the food.

The main question on which some precision is needed is this, what does the following phrase “the food of those given the Book” mean? Does it mean:

1. The food that they *should* be eating, that is, if they were properly following what was initially revealed to them (but which no longer exists)?
2. The food that they are religiously allowed to eat based upon their general understanding of what they have (from 7th century to now) of their 'revelation' which may not correspond with 1 above?
3. Is it food that is prepared and served by them?
4. The food that they themselves produce (regardless if 1 or 2 is correct), I.e., is it food produced from the raw ingredients? In terms of meat, did they slaughter the animal?

Now from the verses in the “The People of the Book and their Religion/Belief” section and other verses, we can see that the Jews and Christians have left/lost a good part of what they were given and that they are mostly disbelievers and mushriks. This was even back at the time of the prophet in the 6th/7th century, where their beliefs were pretty much what they are now. This is at the same time that Allah has allowed us their women for marriage and their food.

Now in (Qur'an 5:5) Allah makes no distinctions in referring to the people of the Book, the ruling is generic in nature and it includes knowledge of their religious and textual corruption. However, given that they are referred to as the People of the Book, we must assume that they are believers who believe in the revelation that they have with them.

Knowing these facts, the 2nd option above would make the most sense between the 1st and 2nd options. The final question therefore is on whether one or both of the 3rd and 4th options is correct.

The best way to understand the phrase “the food of those given the Book” would be a combination of the 2nd and 4th options above as the exception is specific to those given the Book. Namely, we can eat food produced by the Jews and Christians in the manner they find religiously acceptable.

⁷Interestingly though, Acts 15:29 indicates that Christians should avoid blood, strangled animals and meats offered or dedicated to idols. “That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well” (Acts 15:29). This is probably the only bit of direct New Testament guidance on the issue of eating meat, however it is not alleged to be the actual words of Jesus.

⁸Jehovah Witnesses follow the bit of guidance from Acts 15:29.

⁹There is at least one sect in Christianity that accepts the Old Testament rulings on diet, and this is the Seventh Day Adventists.

This means that we have an exception here in that even if they produce meat in a manner not sanctioned by the Qur'an, as long as it is (or is acceptable in) their religious custom, we are allowed it.

The second best way to understand the phrase “the food of those given the Book” would be a combination of the 2nd and 3rd options. Namely, we can eat food prepared and served by the Jews and Christians in the manner they find religiously acceptable even if they did not produce it. This means that we have an exception here in that even if they prepare and serve meat in a manner not sanctioned by the Qur'an, as long as it is (or is acceptable in) their religious custom, we are allowed it.

If only the 2nd option is considered and the 4th and 3rd is ignored, then by extension we can also eat any food that they themselves find acceptable, which they did not produce or prepare and serve and which may contravene the Qur'anic standard of Halal and Haram. The implication of this is that the exception of Qur'an 5:5 is extended to all groups. Thus nullifying the Qur'anic guidelines on acceptable food to a large extent. This is not acceptable.

However, let's look at the implications if the 3rd option is rejected (the second best way) so that only the 2nd and 4th options (the best way) for the meaning of “the food of those given the Book” is accepted. These implications are:

- Muslims can only eat food which the People of the Book produce (how we could confirm this fact (even if Christians or Jews are serving it to us), in the current environment is an issue!).
- Therefore Muslims can realistically no longer eat with Christians (and Jews) without wondering if the food was prepared by one who is not of the People of the Book. As what is the practice now and has been for quite a long time (back to even before the 6th century for Christians¹⁰) is that Christians regularly eat the food produced by non Christians. This practice now exists to a much lesser extent among the Jews too, although it is not supposed to¹¹.

Given the fact that the only way to understand the exception of Qur'an 5:5 in a way that allows it to:

- Be generally applicable from its time of revelation for the rest of time.
- Fulfil its (assumed) function of allowing for easier interaction between Muslims and the People of the Book.

Is to accept the 2nd, 3rd and 4th options. So that if any of the following combinations hold: -

- 2nd, 3rd and 4th (Best)
- 2nd and 4th (Second best)
- 2nd and 3rd (Third best)

Then the food is acceptable.

¹⁰“23)“Everything is permissible”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible”—but not everything is constructive. 24) Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. 25) *Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience*, 26) for, “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.” 27) If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. 28) But if anyone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake 29) the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? 30) If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? 31) So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:23-31 (NIV)

¹¹Where a Kosher slaughter house would hire non-Jewish labour to do the job. Unbeknownst to the general populace.

What Secular Slaughter Methods are Acceptable?

There are 2 main issues to consider in this analysis:-

1. Does the animal die before it is slaughtered?
2. How is the animal subdued before or at slaughter?

There are 3 (maybe more) major categories of slaughter methods: -

1. Captive Bolt Gun stunning followed by slaughter and bleeding.
 - a. The bolt gun rapidly penetrates the skull and then retracts out of the head. Supposedly¹² this stuns, not kills, the animal.
 - b. Used mostly with cattle and large animals like oxen. Used with sheep and pigs also.
2. Electric stunning followed by slaughter and bleeding.
 - a. Used with sheep, poultry and pigs.
3. Gassing to lose consciousness followed by slaughter and bleeding.
 - a. Used with pigs and poultry.

Generally, cows and other large livestock such as bison and maybe horses are slaughtered with Captive Bolt Guns. However sheep, lamb and goat can also be 'stunned' in this way. This method can damage the skull and can pierce the brain, potentially pushing it into the blood stream. The animal will die if this is properly done, after how long is variable. May be possible to slaughter before death, though may be possible not to. However, as this would fall under the category of an animal being killed by a blow (to the head). This meat is Haram because: -

1. The method of stunning kills the animal.
2. The method of stunning/killing the animal falls under the category of being killed by a blow.

The electric stunning method comes in two major forms: -

1. Head only stunning
2. Cardiac arrest stunning which stops the heart.
 - a. Stunning baths are used with poultry and are designed to cause cardiac arrest.

The only method which may be allowable, though not recommended is head-only stunning because:

1. It does not kill the animal; rather the animal can revive from it.
2. It does not fall directly under any of the forbidden killing categories.

CO₂ or Argon/Nitrogen gassing is used to knock out both pigs and poultry. The CO₂ method seems to/can cause some agitation as animals can have sensors for increased levels of this gas; however the Argon/Nitrogen method seems to cause less as animals have no receptors for these gasses. In reality this method is about suffocating the animal, with the Argon/Nitrogen method potentially making it like 'going to sleep' more so than 'can't breathe'. However this method can be better than pre-stunning/stunning in terms of stress. If suffocation is painful or torturous to the animal, then it is forbidden. In summary: -

- If this method works by just putting the animal to sleep or an unconscious state without torturing it with suffocation, then it can be acceptable.
- If it however this tortures and painfully suffocates the animal, then it is Haram.

¹²“Practical experience in slaughter plants indicates that cattle shot correctly with a penetrating captive bolt have irreversible damage to their brain and they will not revive.” from <http://www.grandin.com/humane/cap.bolt.tips.html>
. In reality this means the animal is killed by the blow.

Conclusion

The conclusion on the food issue is this: -

1. Muslims must follow the regulations set out in the Qur'an with food, they cannot follow the customs of anyone else when they slaughter meat and produce food.
2. Muslims can eat food that is produced by and/or prepared and served by the People of the Book.
3. Food prepared by Muslims is always preferable.

The conclusion on the women of the People of the Book issue is this: -

1. Muslims can marry Chaste and free Jewish or Christian women and give them their proper dues.
2. Muslim women are always preferable.

The conclusion on the stunning issue is this: -

1. The only tolerable method of electric stunning is the head-only stunning used with sheep.
2. Gas stunning, if done correctly may also be a tolerable method of stunning.