271273 - Ruling on eating the larvae of bees

the question

Is it permissible to eat the larvae of bees?

Summary of answer

It is not permissible to eat the larvae of bees, because that is akin to eating bees and eating worms and other insects, concerning which the basic principle is that it is not permitted.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The larva is the immature form of an insect that emerges from the egg; it is regarded as a transitional stage before the insect is fully grown; its shape resembles that of a worm.

The larval stage in bees begins when the egg hatches and a small, cylindrical larva emerges; it has no legs or eyes, and is white in colour. Before the egg hatches, the worker bees secrete a little royal jelly around it, then when it hatches, the workers continue to secrete royal jelly to feed the larva for three days. After a while, the larva begins to expand lengthways in the honeycomb, then it begins to spin a cocoon, which is called the pupal stage.

The larva is one of the stages in the lifecycle of the bee, and it is narrated that it is forbidden to kill bees; the prohibition on eating them is understood from the prohibition on killing them, because the basic principle is that whatever it is forbidden to kill, it is not permissible to eat, because if it were permissible to eat it, it would be permissible to kill it.

Abu Dawood (5267) narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade killing four creatures: ants, bees, hoopoes and sparrow-hawks. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

The scholars of the Permanent Committee said:

There is a prohibition on killing hoopoes, and from the prohibition on killing them it is understood that it is prohibited to eat them, based on the principle that prohibition means a thing is haraam. It was narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade killing four creatures: ants, bees, hoopoes and sparrow-hawks. Narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and Ibn Maajah. Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar said regarding this hadith: Its men are the men of as-Saheeh. Al-Bayhaqi said: It is the strongest report that has been narrated concerning this matter.

End quote from Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa’imah (22/293).

Because the larva is one of the stages in the lifecycle of the bee, killing the larva is like killing the bee, and eating the larva is like eating the bee. Therefore it is not permissible. Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan (may Allah preserve him) was asked about the ruling on eating the larvae of wasps, and he replied:

The wasp is a type of bee, and the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade killing bees, so it is haraam. End quote.

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Moreover, eating larvae is akin to eating worms and insects, the basic principle concerning which is that it is not permissible, especially if they are the main element of a dish and are eaten on their own, and are not found in some food or fruit in which they have grown.

See the answers to questions no. 21901 and 114855.

And Allah knows best.