

110111 - Ruling on buying and using Dead Sea products

the question

Is it permissible to use products such as face and body wash etc, which contain salts from the Dead Sea or other substances from the Dead Sea?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

In al-Mawsoo‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah al-‘Aalamiyyah it says:

The Dead Sea is a salt lake in occupied Palestine and Jordan, at the mouth of the River Jordan. Its elevation, which is 399m below sea level is regarded as the lowest point (on land) on the face of the earth. The Dead Sea is the saltiest body of water in the world; it is nine times as salty as the ocean. This sea lies on the border between Palestine and Jordan. This lake is called the Dead Sea because nothing is found in it apart from a few plants, and no fish are found in it, apart from some types of crustaceans. In addition to that, plant life is almost completely non-existent in the saline land that surrounds it.

The Dead Sea is located in a deep rift valley; it covers an area of approximately 1,040 square kilometres; it is 18 km wide at its broadest point and 80 km long.

In the Dead Sea there is a peninsula known as al-Lisaan, which extends towards the middle of the Dead Sea from its eastern shore; this peninsula divides the lake into the large northern basin and the smaller southern basin. The northern basin is the deepest part of the lake and reaches a depth between 400m and 799m.

The Dead Sea is mentioned in the Bible by the name Yam ha-Melah (lit. Sea of Salt); the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah also existed close to its shores. End quote.

Secondly:

Using things that have been produced from the Dead Sea such as salts, minerals, medicinal clay and other things depends on the answer to a difference of opinion among historians: is this region the region of the cities of the people of Loot or not? If it is proven that their cities were there, and the punishment came upon them there, then it is not permissible to use anything that comes from this lake. If that is not proven to be the case, then the ruling on whatever is produced from it is that it is permissible, and it comes under the same rulings as the rulings on what is in other lakes or seas.

Has it really been proven that this place was the location of the dwellings in which the people of Loot wronged themselves?

There is a difference of opinion concerning this matter. Most of the historians and mufasssireen (scholars who write commentaries on the Qur'an) affirm that this is the case; in this matter they differ with some scholars in other fields.

There follow quotations from two mufasssireen, one of whom is well known in the fields of tafseer and history, and the other is a contemporary scholar, confirming that Loot (peace be upon him) was sent to the people of Sodom and its environs, and that it is the area that is now called the Dead Sea.

-1-

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Loot was the son of Haraan ibn Aazar; he was the nephew of Ibraaheem al-Khaleel (peace be upon them both). He believed with Ibraaheem (peace be upon him) and migrated with him to greater Syria. Allah sent him (as a Prophet) to the people of Sodom and neighbouring cities, to call them to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, to enjoin them to do good and to forbid to them the sins, haraam actions and shameful deeds that they were doing, that they had invented and that had no precedent among the sons of Adam or anyone else, namely homosexuality. This is something that was unknown among the sons of Adam and had never even crossed their minds, until the people of Sodom did that (may the curses of Allah be upon them).

Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 3/444, 445

-2-

At-Taahir ibn 'Ashoor (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The people to whom Loot (peace be upon him) was sent were the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the land of Canaan (Kan'aan). The names of Sodom and Gomorrah may refer to their inhabitants, who were the predecessors of the Phoenicians. They were located on the shores of as-Sadeem (Biblical Siddim), which is the Salt Sea, as mentioned in the Torah. It is the Dead Sea, which is also known as the Lake of Loot, near Jerusalem. The people of Sodom and those who were with them introduced the shameful act of homosexuality, so Allah commanded Loot (peace be upon him), when he halted in their city of Sodom, on his journey with his paternal uncle Ibraaheem (peace be upon him), to forbid them to do that and to address them sternly.

At-Tahreer wa't-Tanweer, 8/230

Here we will quote the most famous verses that are quoted as evidence that the location of the people of Loot was a place that was well-known, through which caravans passed and which was well-known to travellers during the Jaahiliyyah and earlier, and after Islam came.

-1-

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Has not the story reached them of those before them? - The people of Nooh (Noah), Ad, and Thamood, the people of Ibraheem (Abraham), the dwellers of Madyan (Midian) and the cities overthrown (i.e. the people to whom Lout (Lot) preached), to them came their Messengers with clear proofs. So it was not Allah Who wronged them, but they used to wrong themselves”

[at-Tawbah 9:70]

“And Firaun (Pharaoh), and those before him, and the cities overthrown (the towns of the people of (Lout (Lot)) committed sin”

[al-Haaqqah 69:9]

“And He destroyed the overthrown cities (of Sodom to which Prophet Lout (Lot) was sent).

So there covered them that which did cover (i.e. torment with stones)”

[an-Najm 53:53, 54].

Overthrown means turned upside down; this refers to the cities that were turned upside down with the punishment of Allah, may He be exalted, namely the cities of the people of Loot (peace be upon him).

Shaykh Muhammad al-Ameen ash-Shanqeeti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The word mu'tafakah (overthrown) comes from the root ifk, which means turning upside down???. This refers to the cities of the people of Loot, based on the fact that Allah says elsewhere “al-mu'tafikaat (the cities overthrown)”, in the plural. This [in an-Najm 53:53, where the word translated as “the overthrown cities” appears in the singular in the original Arabic] is an example of the singular being used when what is meant is the plural, as we have explained on several occasions.

Rather it is used in the singular here because Jibreel overturned them, so they were overturned (in one go). What is meant by their being overturned is that he lifted them up towards heaven, then he turned them upside down. This is what is meant by their being overthrown.

Allah, may He be exalted, clarified this meaning in Soorat Hood and Soorat al-Hijr, where He said (interpretation of the meaning):

“So when Our Commandment came, We turned (the towns of Sodom in Palestine) upside down, and rained on them stones of baked clay, piled up”

[Hood 11:82]

“So As-Sayhah (torment - awful cry, etc.) overtook them at the time of sunrise,

And We turned (the towns of Sodom in Palestine) upside down and rained down on them stones of baked clay”

[al-Hijr 15:73, 74].

Adwa’ al-Bayaan, 7/474, 475

-2-

Allah, may He be exalted, tells us that Shu ‘ayb (peace be upon him) said:

“And O my people! Let not my enmity cause you to suffer the fate similar to that of the people of Nooh (Noah) or of Hood or of Salih (Saleh), and the people of Lout (Lot) are not far off from you!”

[Hood 11:89].

At-Taahir ibn ‘Ashoor (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What is meant by being not far-off is in terms of time, place and lineage. The time of Loot (peace be upon him) was not far removed from the time of Shu‘ayb (peace be upon him), and their lands were not far away from one another, because the dwellings of Madyan (Midian) were at ‘Aqabah or Aylah, in the vicinity of Ma‘aan, which adjoins the Hijaz, and the lands of the people of Loot were in the region where the Jordan flows into the Dead sea. Madyan ibn Ibraaheem (Midian son of Abraham), the ancestor of the tribe that was named after him (known as the Midianites in the Bible) was married to a daughter of Loot.

At-Tahreer wa’t-Tanweer, 12/147

-3-

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, you pass by them in the morning

And at night; will you not then reflect?”

[as-Saaffaat 37:137, 138] .

Imam at-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Here Allah, may He be exalted, says to the mushrikeen of Quraysh: You pass by the people of Loot, whom We destroyed, in the morning, by day, and by night.

Tafseer at-Tabari, 21/105

-4-

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And verily! They (the cities) were right on the highroad (from Makkah to Syria i.e. the place where the Dead Sea is now).

Surely! Therein is indeed a sign for the believers.

And the dwellers in the wood (i.e. the people of Madyan (Midian) to whom Prophet Shuaib was sent by Allah), were also Zalimoon (polytheists and wrong-doers, etc.)

So, We took vengeance on them. They are both on an open highway, plain to see”

[al-Hijr 15:76-79].

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“And verily! They (the cities) were right on the highroad” means: the city of Sodom, which was overturned, literally and metaphorically, and pelted with stones until it became a putrid and foul lake, is on a clear highway that has remained in use until today, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, you pass by them in the morning

And at night; will you not then reflect?”

[as-Saaffaat 37:137, 138] .

The “dwellers in the wood” (ashaab al-aykah) are the people of Shu‘ayb. Ad-Dahhaak, Qataadah and others said that “al-aykah” (translated here as wood) refers to bushy trees, and that their wrongdoing consisted of their shirk (ascribing partners to Allah), banditry, and cheating in weights and measures. Allah wrought vengeance upon them by means of the sayhah (awful cry) and earthquake, and the day of the canopy (referred to in al-A‘raaf 7:171: “And (remember) when We raised the mountain over them as if it had been a canopy”); they were near to the people of Loot, coming after them but living nearby. Hence Allah, may He be exalted, said: “So, We took vengeance on them. They are both on an open highway, plain to see” [al-Hijr 15:79], that is, they are on a major route.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/544

-5-

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And indeed We have left thereof an evident Ayah (a lesson and a warning and a sign the place where the Dead Sea is now in Palestine) for a folk who understand”

[al-‘Ankaboot 29:35].

Shaykh ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan as-Sa‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

That is, We left clear traces of the people of Loot, for people who understand lessons in their hearts, so that they might benefit from them.

Tafseer as-Sa‘di, p. 630

These verses clearly indicate that the cities of the people of Loot and their exact locations were known to the people who came after them, and that the mushrikeen of Quraysh were aware of them. Were it not for that, Allah would not have told them that they could learn a lesson from them as they passed by them on their journeys to and from Greater Syria. Allah, may He be exalted, stated that He had left a clear sign of them, and that could not be the case if the location was unknown.

Thus this indicates that the cities of the people of Loot were themselves known, and there are many opinions that suggest that they were in the area that is now known as the Dead Sea. There have been recent discoveries which confirm that, in addition to the fact that this is also known among the People of the Book. All of this strengthens the idea that they were located in the area of the Dead Sea.

Thirdly:

If a person accepts what we have mentioned and clearly sees that this lake is the location of the landslide and punishment, it is not permissible for him to use any of these products, or even to visit that place for the purpose of leisure or tourism. If he passes by, he must hasten to leave it behind and he should weep.

It was narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Do not enter upon these people who are being punished, unless you are weeping. If you are not weeping then do not enter upon them, lest there befall you the like of what befell them.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 423; Muslim, 2980.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This includes the dwellings of Thamood and others who were like them, even though the hadeeth refers specifically to the dwellings of Thamood.

Fath al-Baari, 6/380

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said, discussing what we learn from the campaign of Tabook:

We also learn that whoever passes by the dwellings of those with whom Allah was angry and who were punished, he should not enter them or stay there; rather he should hasten to move on and he should cover his head with his garment until he has passed them, and not enter upon them unless he is weeping and learning a lesson from what happened to them.

Zad al-Ma'aad, 3/560

With regard to the evidence for not making use of anything from places where people were subjected to divine punishment:

It was narrated from Naafi' that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with them) told him that the people stopped at al-Hijr, the land of Thamood, with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and they drew water from its wells and made dough with it. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told them to throw away the water they had drawn from its wells.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 3199

Ibn al-'Arabi al-Maaliki (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

... The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) instructed them to throw away the water from the land of Thamood, and to throw away the dough they had made with it, because it was water that was subjected to divine wrath, so it was not permissible to make use of it, so as to avoid the wrath of Allah. And he said: "Feed it to the camels." This also indicates that with regard to food and drink that it is not permissible to use, it is permissible to feed it to camels and other animals, because they are not accountable. For that reason, Maalik said concerning impure honey, that it may be fed to bees. Similarly, it is not permissible to pray in those lands, because they are lands that were subject to divine wrath and anger. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not enter them unless you are weeping." And it was narrated that he covered his head with his rida' (upper garment) and made his mount move faster until he came out of that place.

Ahkaam al-Qur'an, 5/152

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade entering upon the places of those who were subjected to divine punishment, unless one is weeping, lest there befall the one who enters the same as befell them. He also forbade making use of their water, to

such an extent that despite their need for it during that campaign –the campaign of hardship (the campaign to Tabook), which was the hardest campaign for the Muslims – he instructed them to feed the dough made with that water to their camels.

Iqtida' as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem, p. 80

Based on that, you should not use any of the Dead Sea products; at the very least we may say that it is better to keep away from them and look for other, permissible products that are not harmful.

And Allah knows best.