

Abu Shurayḥ al-Ka'bī narrated that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

1

Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should be kind to his neighbour.

2

And whoever believes in God and the Last Day should be generously hospitable to his guest. People asked: For how long does generous hospitality last, Messenger of God? He said: One day and night. Hospitality is for three days, and what is beyond that is a *ṣadaqah*, or charity for the guest.

3

And whoever believes in God and the Last Day should say what is good or remain silent. <sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6019; Muslim, 48.

#### From the Qur'an

- ﴿Worship God alone and do not associate with Him any partners. Be kind to your parents and near of kin, to orphans, the needy, the neighbour who is related to you and the neighbour who is a stranger, the friend by your side, the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess. God does not love those who are arrogant and boastful.﴾ (4: 36)
- ﴿Every word he utters [is noted down by] an ever-present watcher.﴾ (50: 18)
- ﴿Have you heard the story of Abraham's honoured guests? (24) They went in to see him and bade him peace. He answered, 'Peace', [and added to himself] 'These are strangers'. (25) He turned quickly to his household and brought out a fat calf. (26) He placed it before them, saying: 'Will you not eat?'﴾ (51: 24-27)

#### The Narrator

Abu Shurayḥ al-Ka'bī was a distinguished companion of the Prophet and was mostly known by his appellation, Abu Shurayḥ. His name was given variously as Ka'b ibn 'Amr, or 'Amr ibn Khuwaylid. Perhaps it is more correct to say that his name was Khuwaylid ibn 'Amr ibn Ṣakhr ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzā. He was known to be a man of wisdom. He embraced Islam before the takeover of Makkah. He was in the Prophet's army on the day of the takeover of Makkah, bearing one of the banners of the Ka'b ibn Khuzā'ah clan. He then moved to Madinah, where he died in Year 68 AH 688 CE.

#### Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) urges believers to be kind to their neighbours and to be very hospitable to their guests. On the first day, a person should serve his guest the best food he can afford. Subsequently, the guest shares the normal food of his host's family. The Prophet also urges us to watch what we say to ensure that we only say what is good.



# Message and Meaning

1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) highlights some good qualities, starting with kindness to neighbours. Every believer is required to be good to his neighbours, ensuring that a neighbour's rights are honoured. Thus, good neighbourliness means extending good treatment to one's neighbours, enquiring after them, speaking to them in a gentle and friendly manner, helping them with their needs and doing them no wrong, either verbally or practically.

God Himself urges good treatment of one's neighbours. He says: 'Worship God alone and do not associate with Him any partners. Be kind to your parents and near of kin, to orphans, the needy, the neighbour who is related to you and the neighbour who is a stranger, the friend by your side, the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess. God does not love those who are arrogant and boastful'. (4: 36) On repeated occasions, Gabriel recommended that the Prophet be kind to his neighbours. The Prophet said: 'Gabriel continued to urge kindness to my neighbour, until I thought that he would give him a share of inheritance'.<sup>(1)</sup>

The Prophet states an oath confirming that a person who harms his neighbour is deficient in faith. He says: 'By God, he is not a believer. By God, he is not a believer. By God, he is not a believer'. People asked: 'Who is that, Messenger of God?' He said: 'The one whose neighbour is not secure from his evil designs'.<sup>(2)</sup>

2

The Prophet then highlights hospitality to one's guests as a sign of belief in God and the Last Day. He mentions that a host's perfect hospitality is that he gives his guest the best food and accommodation he can afford for a day and night. After that, he gives him of the normal food he gives his family. Such hospitality lasts for three days. If the host invites his guest to stay beyond three days, this is an act of charity and generosity. It is not incumbent on the host to do so, because having been host for three days fulfils his responsibility.

The Prophet stresses the need to be extra hospitable to one's guest on the first day and night because the guest will be tired and perhaps exhausted after a day of travel. When he is met with generous hospitality, he feels that he is welcome, and this is bound to strengthen the bond of mutual love and care within the Muslim community. After the first day, no extra burden is placed on the host. He gives his guest the same as he and his family have.

3

The third quality highlighted by the Prophet is that a believer should consider what he is about to say. If it is good or leads to what is good, he says it. If not, he refrains from saying it. To remain silent when speaking leads to something sinful is a gain, because everyone is accountable for what they say. God says: 'Every word he utters [is noted down by] an ever-present watcher'. (50: 18) The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'A person may utter a good word that pleases God, without considering what it means, and God will raise his grade by several steps. And a person may utter a bad word that displeases God, without considering what it means, and it sinks him in Hell'.<sup>(3)</sup>

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6015; Muslim, 2625. It is Hadith No. 97 in this work.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 6016.

3 Related by al-Bukhari, 6478; Muslim, 2988.

This hadith is one that combines the best of good things. Scholars say that Islamic manners and values are summed up in four hadiths. This is one of them. The other three are: 1. 'A clear indication of a person's good adherence to Islam is that he abandons what is of no concern to him'. 2. The Prophet's summed up his counsel to one of his companions by saying: 'Do not give way to anger'. 3. 'None of you [truly] believes unless he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.'



# Implementation

1

One of the signs of faith taking hold in a believer's heart is that he is kind to his neighbour, causing him no harm. Everyone should check whether they reflect this sign.

2

Beware of harming your neighbour, as this may lead you to be denied entry into Heaven, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'A person whose neighbour is not secure from his evil designs shall not enter Heaven'.<sup>(1)</sup>

3

The closer a neighbour is the greater his claim to kindly treatment is. It is important to respect a neighbour's claims, refraining from trying to find out his faults. On the contrary, one should extend good treatment to neighbours and exchange visits and gifts with them.

4

Good neighbourliness is not limited to extending good treatment to them. It also includes tolerating any harm one's neighbours unintentionally cause to you. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: 'Good neighbourliness does not mean refraining from causing one's neighbours any harm; it means tolerating the harm they may cause'.<sup>(2)</sup>

5

Extending hospitality to one's guests is an aspect of belief in God, and following the tradition of prophets. The Qur'an describes the generous hospitality of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). On the other hand, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was exceptionally generous. His generosity is described as 'more forthcoming than unrestrained wind'. Hence, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr said: 'A person who is not hospitable to guests does not belong either to Muhammad or to Abraham'.<sup>(3)</sup>

6

A Muslim should be keen to have the quality of being hospitable to his guests. He should not refuse to admit a guest seeking hospitality, whether that person is known to him or not. Abu Hurayrah stopped at the quarters of some people where he was unknown. They refused to take him as a guest. He was later brought some food and he invited the same people to share his meal, but they refused. He said to them: 'You neither offer hospitality nor accept invitation! You have no Islamic manners.' One of them recognized him and said to him: 'Come down and be our guest'. He answered: 'This is even worse. Do you only welcome someone you know?'<sup>(4)</sup>

7

Every Muslim must watch what he says. He should not be casual saying what is lawful or unlawful. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: 'Whoever says much, errs often; and whoever often errs, his sins increase; and whoever increases his own sins takes his way to Hell'.<sup>(5)</sup>

1 Related by Muslim, 46.

2 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Ḥikam*, Vol. 1, p. 353.

3 Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 356.

4 Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 356.

5 Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 339.

8

Muhammad ibn 'Ajlān said: 'Appropriate speech is of four types: God's glorification and praise, recitation of the Qur'an, answering a question seeking information, and discussing something of this life that concerns yourself'.

9

A man said to Salmān: 'Give me some good advice.' Salmān said: 'Say nothing'. The man said: 'A person who lives among people cannot refrain from speaking'. Salmān said: 'If you speak, then say what is true or stay silent'.

10

Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq used to point to his tongue and say: 'This one has landed me in unpleasant areas'.

11

Ibn Mas'ūd said: 'By God other than Whom there is no deity, nothing on the face of the earth deserves to be in chains more than the tongue'.

12

Be in control of what you say and you will gain admittance into Heaven. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'I guarantee entrance into Heaven to whoever secures the organ in between his jaws and the one in between his thighs'.<sup>(1)</sup>



1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6474.

