

Shaddād ibn Aws said: I memorized two qualities from God's Messenger (peace be upon him); he said:

1

God has certainly prescribed proficiency in all things.

2

Therefore, when you kill, kill well;

3

and when you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each of you sharpen his blade and place his animal comfortably'.<sup>(1)</sup>

#### From the Qur'an

- ﴿Persevere in doing good; for God loves those who do good.﴾ (2: 195)
- ﴿God enjoins justice, kindness [to all], and generosity to one's kindred; and He forbids all that is shameful, all reprehensible conduct and aggression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed.﴾ (16: 90)

#### The Narrator

Abu Ya'la Shaddād ibn Aws ibn Thābit ibn al-Mundhir of the Anṣār was one of the distinguished scholars among the Prophet's companions. 'Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit said: 'Shaddād ibn Aws was one endowed with scholarly knowledge and good tolerance'. Abu al-Dardā' said: 'God, Mighty and Exalted, may give someone knowledge but does not grant him forbearance; or He may give him forbearance but grant him little knowledge. However, Abu Ya'la Shaddād ibn Aws was one to whom God granted good knowledge and fine forbearance'. He lived in the city of Homs in Syria, where 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb appointed him governor. When 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān was killed, he relinquished his post. He was very devoted and God-fearing. He died in Palestine in Year 58 AH 678 CE. He was 75 years of age.

#### Summary

God orders that all creation must be treated with kindness, even when we slaughter an animal for food. If we have to kill, then we should choose the least painful way of killing. When we slaughter an animal, the knife must be sharpened and the animal prior to slaughter comfortably laid down.

1 Related by Muslim, 1955.



# Message and Meaning



God orders that we should try to do every thing well, and to seek what is better in all matters. He says: 'Persevere in doing good, for God loves those who do good'. (2: 195) Doing good means looking for what is better and seeking to do it, in all matters and life affairs. In worship, we should try to worship God as though we see Him. Do good to oneself means that one does not do what incurs God's punishment in the life to come. It also means that one should not burden oneself with what one cannot carry. Doing good to other people means that in our dealings with them we implement Islamic values: we do not treat anyone unjustly, or deny them their rights. We should treat them well, returning their good deeds with better ones, and we overlook their faults. We do not repay wrong for wrong.

Good treatment of others is of two types: a duty, which includes fairness and giving everyone their rights, while doing our duties towards them. The other type is recommended, which is going beyond the duty, doing what is of benefit to them, whether physical, material or related to knowledge and scholarship. It also includes advising them with regard to what benefits them in this life and in the life to come. Whatever good we do to other people is counted as *ṣadaqah*, or an act of charity.



Doing well is required even in causing death. No human being, Muslim or non-Muslim, may be killed unjustly. Doing things well applies even in killing a criminal who incurs the death punishment. He must not be tortured to death. It is not permissible to kill such a person by poisoning, nor is it permissible to incapacitate him, leaving him to die. The easiest and least painful method should be chosen.

Islamic law makes an exception in the case of a person who seeks to spread corruption on earth. If such a person incurs the mandatory punishment for armed highway robbery, it should be enforced, so as to serve as a deterrent for anyone else who contemplates such a crime.

Another exception is retaliatory killing. A murderer is killed in the same way he used to kill his victim. If he killed his victim by poisoning, shooting, pushing from a high building, etc. he is killed in the same way. God says: 'If you should punish, then let your punishment be commensurate with the wrong done to you'. (16: 126) During the Prophet's lifetime, a Jew killed a maid by hitting her head against a stone. The Prophet (peace be upon him) enforced the capital punishment, hitting his head in between two stones.<sup>(1)</sup>

Yet another aspect of doing things well is that a killed person, whether in battle or punishment for a crime, should not be disfigured or mutilated. This comes under 'carrying things into excess', which Islam does not approve of. God says: 'Do not kill any one, for God has forbidden killing, except in [the pursuit of] justice. If anyone is slain wrongfully, We have given his heir authority [to seek just retribution]. He [the heir] must not exceed the bounds of equity in [retributive] killing. He is given help'. (17: 33)

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 5295; Muslim, 1672.



Doing things well also applies to animal slaughtering. To start with, it is not permissible to slaughter an animal for any reason other than for food. It is forbidden to use an animal as a target for shooting with arrows or any other object, in a competition or for pastime. 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar narrated: 'God's Messenger (peace be upon him) cursed anyone who uses a living creature as target'.<sup>(1)</sup> Slaughtering an animal must be done well. The animal must not be dragged forcibly to the place of slaughter, and must not be slaughtered among other animals. The slaughterer must not start to skin the animal or cut it into pieces before confirming its total death. Rather, he should do everything to keep the animal comfortable and quick to die with minimum pain. Thus, the knife or blade to be used should be sharpened, and the animal should be laid down. The butcher should cut the jugular veins, throat and oesophagus to assist the quick departure of the soul. He then leaves the animal to cool, making sure that it is completely dead.



1 Related by Muslim, 1958.

# Implementation

1

One of the best ways of doing good is to respond to a bad turn with a good one. God mentions that this is a fine status which can only be attained by a person who has a great measure of faith and patience in adversity. He says: 'Good and evil cannot be equal. Repel evil with what is better, and he who is your enemy will become as close to you as a true friend. (34) Yet none will attain this except those who are patient in adversity; none will attain it except those endowed with truly great fortune'. (41: 34-35)

2

Every deed is requited with something of the same type. If you do good, God will be good to you. He says: 'Shall the reward of good be anything but good'. (55: 60)

3

Good deeds that are duties include being good to one's family, taking care of their religious and general needs, being gentle with them and looking after them.

4

An aspect of doing things well which is obligatory for a Muslim is that he or she should do their duties and abandon what is forbidden. Every duty should be done in full, without omission of any of its essential or obligatory parts. Every Muslim must also refrain from what is forbidden and from what leads to whatever is forbidden.

5

Since we are commanded to be kind when we execute the death penalty, there is no doubt that protecting people's lives and prohibiting assault on them are among the most essential aspects of doing good.

6

One aspect of killing well is that we must not verbally abuse a person who has incurred the death penalty. Referring to the woman verbally abused by Khālid ibn al-Walīd when she was being stoned for having committed adultery, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Hold on, Khālid! She has repented, and her repentance is such that it would be sufficient for one who levies tributes to ensure his forgiveness'.<sup>(1)</sup>

7

It is important that when an animal is slaughtered, only a skilled person undertakes the task. This is one aspect of doing it well.

8

A person who is about to slaughter an animal should start by expressing gratitude to God His favour, enabling him to use such animals for food. Had He willed it otherwise, He could have set such animals against that person.

1 Related by Muslim, 1695.



It is important to make sure to have a sharp knife and to take the animal to be slaughtered away from other animals. The slaughterer should be in full control of the animal, so that it does not run away when he makes his cut, as it will be in pain. He should be quick and must not show his knife to the animal. He should make a cut clean, cutting the jugular veins, throat and oesophagus, as this will ensure the animal's quick death.





