

Abu Hurayrah narrated that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

1 People! [Know that] God is good and He only accepts what is good.

2 God has commanded the believers the same as He commanded messengers, as He says: 'Messengers! Eat of that which is wholesome, and do good deeds: I certainly have full knowledge of all that you do'. (23: 51) And: 'Believers, eat of the wholesome things We have provided for you'. (2: 172)

3 He then mentioned the case of a man who goes on a long travel, uncouth with dust on his body. He raises his hands to the sky and says, 'My Lord! My Lord!' Yet, his food is unlawfully earned; his drink is unlawfully earned; his clothes are unlawfully earned; and he was fed, when young, with what was unlawfully earned. How can such a supplication be answered?⁽¹⁾

1 Related by Muslim, 1015.

From the Qur'an

- ﴿Believers, eat of the wholesome things We have provided for you, and give thanks to God, if it is truly Him that you worship.﴾ (172)
- ﴿Believers, spend on others out of the good things you have earned, and out of that which We bring forth for you from the earth. Do not choose for your spending the inferior things which you yourselves would not accept without turning your eyes away in disdain. Know that God is free of all want, ever to be praised.﴾ (2: 267)
- ﴿Say: 'Evil and good are not equal, even though the abundance of evil may be pleasing to you'.﴾ (5: 100)
- ﴿Messengers! Eat of that which is wholesome, and do good deeds: I certainly have full knowledge of all that you do.﴾ (23: 51)
- ﴿Whoever desires might and glory should know that all might and glory belong to God alone. To Him ascends all good words, and He exalts the good deed.﴾ (35: 10)

The Narrator

'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Şakhr al-Dawsī al-Azdī of Yemen was better known by his appellation, Abu Hurayrah. This is what is best known about his name and his father's name. He embraced Islam in the year in which the Battle of Khaybar took place, i.e. Year 7 of the Hijri calendar. He remained close to the Prophet, eager to learn, and he accompanied the Prophet wherever he went. He was one of the best memorizers of the Prophet's companions and the one who narrated the largest number of hadiths. Al-Bukhari mentioned that more than eight hundred companions of the Prophet or those who belonged to the *tābi'īn* generation narrated hadiths from him. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb appointed him as Governor of Bahrain. Later he returned to Madinah and devoted his time to narrating the Prophet's hadiths and educating people about their faith. He died in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) tells us that God is good and He does not accept anything which is not good. Therefore, He has commanded all people to eat of wholesome good food. The Prophet tells us that buying food with earnings that are unlawfully made blocks the answering of a supplication.



Message and Meaning



The Prophet (peace be upon him) states that God is good with no fault, defect or negative thing applicable to Him. The Arabic word *ṭayyib*, which is the equivalent of 'good', essentially denotes goodness, purity and freedom from whatever is foul.

Therefore, God accepts only what is good of deeds and people. He does not draw to Himself a wicked person who harbours hatred and enmity towards others, or one who ill-treats people and behaves ill towards them, or one who eats and drinks what is forbidden.

Likewise, God only accepts good deeds. He does not accept a deed that involves any aspect of polytheism or hypocrisy. Nor does He accept a charity taken from what has been unlawfully acquired. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Whenever a person gives a *ṣadaqah* [i.e. charity] from good earnings – and God accepts nothing except what is good – God, the Lord of Grace will take it in His right hand. Even if it is as little as one date, it will grow in the Lord of Grace's palm until it becomes larger than a mountain, just like any of you rears his weaned cow or weaned camel'.⁽¹⁾ He also said: 'No prayer is accepted without ablution, and no charity from an unlawful source is accepted'.⁽²⁾

What is unwholesome and unacceptable to God is that a person selects the worst type of his property and pays his zakat out of it. God says: 'Believers, spend on others out of the good things you have earned, and out of that which We bring forth for you from the earth. Do not choose for your spending the inferior things which you yourselves would not accept without turning your eyes away in disdain. Know that God is free of all want, ever to be praised'. (2: 267)



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then shows that the divine command to select only what is good for what a person eats and drinks applies to prophets and God's messengers, and also to their followers who are the believers. God requires all people to eat of what is good and to do good deeds. This order applies to His prophets and messengers and also to all mankind. Everyone is required to seek what is lawful and abandon what is unlawful.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then tells us that eating what is unlawfully earned is one reason for not answering a supplication, even though there may be other reasons for its answer. A person may undertake a journey for a religious purpose that earns God's reward, such as hajj, or jihad, or advocacy of Islam, etc. His appearance tells of the discomfort and fatigue of travel, and he stretches out his hands, appealing earnestly to God to answer his prayer. Yet, he does not scruple to take money unlawfully. What he eats, drinks and wears are purchased with unlawful earnings. How, then, could his supplication be answered?

The Prophet says at the end of the hadith: 'How can such a supplication be answered?' This is a question that expresses wonder and improbability. It is not a clear statement that such a supplication is never answered. It may be that God answers it out of His grace and generosity. Or He may answer his prayer to give him more respite. Therefore, it is understood from all this that indulging much in unlawful earnings and using them for one's living is a cause that precludes answering one's prayers.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 1410; Muslim, 1014.

2 Related by Muslim, 224.



Implementation

1

A believer is totally good: he is good at heart, in himself and in speech, and his goodness is the result of the faith established in his heart, God's glorification which he often repeats, and the good deeds he does using his different organs. Such words and actions are the fruit of his belief in God and reflected also in the fact that he is a believer. All these are good things which God accepts. Therefore, a Muslim should always try to strengthen his faith so that he increases his goodness.

2

God loves that His servants acquire some of His own attributes which are not exclusive to Himself, such as mercy, gentility, overlooking other people's faults, etc. He also loves to see His servant behaving as a good person, steering away from error and whatever is unbecoming.

3

Everyone should endeavour to ensure that what he eats, does and thinks is good, so that God will love him and accept his deeds. Wahb ibn al-Ward said: 'Were you to devote all your time to worship in the mosque, it will benefit you nothing unless you ensure that what goes into your belly is lawful, not unlawfully obtained.

4

An educator who wants his student to do something should himself provide the example. If he urges his student to attend congregational prayers, he himself should be among the early attendants. If he urges his student to offer the sunnah, i.e. recommended prayers, he should be seen doing it himself. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions that God's messengers were commanded to seek what is lawful and refrain from what is unlawful in all their affairs, in the same way as all believers. There is no distinction on this.

5

The hadith enhances the status of believers, as God gives them the same orders as He commands His messengers. They are worthy of this because of their faith.

6

The Prophet mentions that travel increases the possibility of answering prayers, because it adds to one's feeling of humility due to being away from home, and enduring the difficulties of travel. Humility is one of the most important causes of answering prayers.⁽¹⁾ The Prophet says: 'Three prayers are answered without doubt: a parent's prayer, a traveller's prayer and the prayer of one who suffers injustice'.⁽²⁾ When a Muslim is on a journey, he should increase his supplication, as he is in a better position to have his prayers answered.

1 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Ḥikam*, Vol. 1, p. 269.

2 Related by Abu Dāwūd, 1536; al-Tirmidhī, 1905; Ibn Mājah, 3862.

7

Stretching one's hands when supplicating earnestly improves the possibility of having one's prayer answered. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Your Lord, Blessed and Exalted, is generous and noble. When His servant raises his hands appealing to Him, He feels shy to let him go empty-handed'.⁽¹⁾ Therefore, a Muslim should raise his hands when supplicating, particularly at the places where the Prophet raised his hands.

8

Stressing one's need and urging one's appeal are causes for having one's prayer answered. Therefore, a Muslim should not be hasty, supplicating once and stopping. On the contrary, he should supplicate time and again, urging God's answer. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Your supplication is answered unless you are hasty, saying: I have prayed to my Lord but He did not answer my prayer'.⁽²⁾

9

Eating only what is lawful is one of the most important reasons for answering prayers, while eating what is unlawful is a cause to block such an answer. Hence, Wahb ibn Munabbih said: 'Whoever looks forward to his prayer being answered by God should ensure that he eats only of what is lawful'. Yūsuf ibn Asbāṭ said: 'We have been told that a person's supplication is not raised to heaven because the supplicant eats what is unlawful'.⁽³⁾

10

When the prayer of a person who is travelling to do something in obedience of God and attending to all its requirements remains unanswered only because his food is of an unlawful source, what hope is there for one who is fully preoccupied with worldly concerns, or one who is unfair to others, or one who neglects different types of worship and goodness?

11

Muslims of the early generations were keen to ensure that what they ate was clearly lawfully obtained. They refrained from what was in doubt as to whether it was lawful or not. 'Ā'ishah reported: 'Abu Bakr had a servant who brought him every day what he earned for him, and Abu Bakr used to eat of what that servant brought him. One day he brought him something and Abu Bakr started eating. The servant said to him: 'Do you know what you are eating?' He said: 'No, what is it?' He said: 'In pre-Islamic days, I told the fortune of a certain person. I did not know how to tell the fortune, but I deceived the man. He later met me and gave me something. This is what I have served you now. Abu Bakr put his fingers in his mouth and threw up all that was in his belly'.⁽⁴⁾

1 Related by Abu Dāwūd, 1488; al-Tirmidhī, 3556; Ibn Mājah, 3865.

2 Related by al-Bukhārī, 6340; Muslim, 2735.

3 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Hikam*, Vol. 1, p. 275.

4 Related by al-Bukhārī, 3842.

