

Fast 15: Prophets and Messengers of Allah — Mercy of the Prophet Muhammad

- In the last Study we said that the actions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad show his great concern for animals and kindness towards them. Here we give some examples of what he said and did in this regard from Hadith collections.
- There is a chapter in Sahih Bukhari entitled 'The superiority of (the good deed of) providing water for drinking'. It contains three reports and they all relate to providing water to thirsty animals:

“Allah’s Messenger said: ‘While a man was walking he felt thirsty and went down a well and drank water from it. On coming out of it, he saw a dog panting and eating mud because of excessive thirst. The man said: **This (dog) is suffering from the same problem as me.** So he (went down the well,) filled his shoe with water, caught hold of it with his teeth and climbed up and watered the dog. **Allah thanked him for that deed and forgave him.**’ The people asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, Is there a reward for us in serving the animals?’ He said: ‘For every creature having a liver fresh with life, there is a reward (for serving it).’” (hadith number 2363)

An interesting point arising from this is that, in the Quran and Hadith, Allah is said to “thank” people who do good. Allah is called *shākir*, ‘one who thanks’, in 2:158 and 4:147, and in both cases He is called *‘alīm* (Knowing) with it. When applied to Allah, the word *shākir* is taken to mean ‘one who multiplies rewards’.

- The other two reports in that chapter in Bukhari are about a woman who ill-treated her cat. The Holy Prophet saw hell in a vision, very close up. What he saw in it was:

“A woman was being punished, having gone to hell, because she had a cat which she kept locked up so much so that it died of hunger. Allah said to her: You did not feed it nor gave it drink when you locked it up, nor did you set it free to eat worms of the earth.” (hadith number 2365)

These reports show that, not only is it an evil act to torture an animal or deprive it of its necessities, but it is a virtuous, commendable act, positively to treat animals well and to provide them with their natural needs.

- Another report in Hadith is about a distressed camel that the Holy Prophet saw. He said to its owner: “It has complained to me about you”.

“He (Holy Prophet Muhammad) entered the garden of a man from the Ansar (Muslims of Madinah). All of a sudden, when a camel saw the Prophet, it wept tenderly, producing a yearning sound and its eyes flowed. The Prophet came

to it and wiped the temple of its head. So it became silent. He then said: ‘Who is the master of this camel? Whose camel is this?’ A young man from the Ansar came and said: ‘This is mine, Messenger of Allah.’ He said: ‘Do you not fear Allah about this beast which Allah has given in your possession? It has complained to me that you keep it hungry and load it heavily which fatigues it’.” (Abu Dawud, hadith number 2549)

- Another incident shows his concern even for birds and ants:

“We were with the Messenger of Allah during a journey. He went off to relieve himself. We saw a bird with her two young ones and we captured her young ones. The bird came and began to spread its wings. The Messenger of Allah came and said: ‘Who distressed her for its young ones? Return its young ones to it.’ He also saw an ant colony that we had burnt. He asked: ‘Who has burnt this?’ We replied: ‘We have.’ He said: ‘It is not proper for anyone to punish with fire, except for the Lord of fire’.” (Abu Dawud, hadith number 2675)

- He once told a story about a prophet of the past:

“The Messenger of Allah said: Once while a prophet of the prophets (of Allah) was taking a rest underneath a tree, an ant bit him. He ordered that his luggage be taken away from underneath that tree and then ordered that the dwelling place of the ants should be set on fire. Allah sent him a revelation: ‘Wouldn’t it have been sufficient to burn a single ant?’ ” (Bukhari, hadith number 3319)

In another version of this report it is stated that Allah revealed to that prophet:

“Because one ant bit you, you have destroyed a (whole) community from among the communities which glorify Allah” (Bukhari, hadith number 3309). This statement, about *a community from among communities which glorify Allah*, is supported by certain verses of the Quran. One of these has already been quoted in the last Study:

“And there is no animal in the earth, nor a bird that flies on its two wings, but are *communities like yourselves*.” (6:38).

Another verse on this, mentioning glorifying Allah, is as follows:

“Do you not see that Allah is He Whom **do glorify all those who are in the heavens and the earth**, and the birds with wings outspread? Each one knows its prayer and its glorification. And Allah is Knower of what they do.” (24:41)

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مِنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرُ صَافِيَةٌ كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Different creatures have their own way of “praying” to God and “glorifying” Him. Of course, they don’t pray in words or by the postures of prayer as we do, nor do they say *Subhan Allah* to glorify Him. They do so by means of their very behaviour and state.

The Quran also says in this connection:

“The seven heavens and the earth and those in them declare His glory. And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification.” (17:44)

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ط
وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ
تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ط

Man, by a cursory glance and superficial observation, cannot understand how everything glorifies God with praise. But by pondering over the matter, studying nature and acquiring knowledge of it, he may be able to realize what is meant by this.