

Obligation of kindness to animals

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Shaykh Abdul-Azeez ibn Baaz (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)¹: to my dear respected brother,

As-salamu ‘alaykum warahmatullah wabarakatuh (May Allaah’s Peace, Mercy, and Blessings be upon you!)

I read your message dated 24/1/1982 asking me to write on the issue of transporting animals from your country, Australia, to the Middle East. You mentioned the bad shipping conditions and the conditions on the ships that are used to transport animals, which results in overcrowding, etc. I ask Allaah to guide me, you, and all Muslims to His Straight Path. I really want to thank you for your concern for this important issue and it is my pleasure to answer your question in the light of the Qur’aan and the purified Sunnah, which urge complete kindness in the treatment of animals, whether they are eatable or non-eatable. I will also mention a number of authentic Hadeeth that warn of severe punishment for torturing animals, whether by letting them starve or neglecting them when transporting them or otherwise.

The following Ayah (Qur’aanic verse) enjoins doing good in its broadest sense, whether to animals or otherwise. Allaah (Exalted be He) says: [**...and do good. Truly, Allaah loves Al-Muhsinoon (the good-doers)**]. He (Exalted be He) also says: [**Verily, Allaah enjoins Al-‘Adl (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allaah Alone - Islaamic Monotheism) and Al-Ihsaan [i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allaah, totally for Allaah’s sake and in accordance with the Sunnah (legal ways) of the Prophet ﷺ in a perfect manner]**]. Also, the Hadeeth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) reported by Muslim and the Compilers of the Sunan (Aboo Dawood, Al-Tirmidhee, Al-Nasaa’ee and Ibn Maajah) in which he (peace be upon him) said: [**“Verily, Allaah has enjoined Ihsaan (perfection and excellence) in all things. So when you kill, kill in a good way and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.”**] In another narration [**“Make your slaughter in the best manner. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.”**]

¹ (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

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Regarding giving relief to the animals who need it, there are authentic Hadeeth promising those who relieve them a great reward, Allaah's Forgiveness of their sins and thankfulness for their kind deed. It was narrated on the authority of Aboo Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) said, [**"A man became very thirsty while walking down a road. There, he found a well, so he went down into it, drank (his fill) and came out. Then he saw a dog panting, eating mud out of thirst. The man said (to himself), 'This dog is as thirsty as I was.' So, he went back down into the well, filled his shoe with water, caught hold of it with his mouth until he ascended and watered the dog. Allaah appreciated him (his good deed) and forgave him."** They said, 'O Messenger of Allaah! Is there a reward for us regarding these animals?' He said, 'Regarding every wet liver (i.e. animate being) there is a reward.'"]

It is also related from Aboo Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) said, [**"A dog was walking around a well, about to die of thirst. One of the prostitutes from the Children of Israel saw it, so she took off her shoe, drew water with it and gave it to the dog to drink. So, she was forgiven because of that."**]².

As Islam encourages and obligates extension of kindness to those who need it, it forbids its antithesis, which is oppression and transgression. Allaah (Exalted be He) says: [**...and transgress not the limits. Truly, Allaah likes not the transgressors**]. He (Exalted be He) also says: [**And whoever among you does wrong (i.e. sets up rivals to Allaah), We shall make him taste a great torment**]. It is recorded in "Saheeh Muslim" that **Ibn 'Umar** (may Allaah be pleased with them both) **passed by a group of men who had tied a hen up and were firing arrows at it. When they saw Ibn 'Umar, they dispersed away from it. Ibn 'Umar said, "Who did this? The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) cursed those who do this."**

Concerning this issue, it is related on the authority of Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said, [**"The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) forbade that any beast should be tied alive and made a target, until it is killed."**] In other words, confined until it dies. In another narration the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, [**"Do not take anything in which there is a soul as a target (for marksmanship)."**] It was narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both): [**The Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited the killing of four creatures: The ant, the bee, the hoopoe, and the sparrow-hawk.**]³

It is also related in "Saheeh Muslim" that the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) said, [**"A woman was tortured (in the Hereafter) because of a cat which she had imprisoned until it died; thus she entered the Fire because of it. She neither fed it nor watered it when she locked it up; nor did she leave it to eat from the vermin of the earth."**] It is related in "Sunan Abee Dawood" on the authority of Aboo Waqid (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the

² Related by Muslim in his Saheeh

³ (Related by Aboo Dawood through an Isnaad [chain of transmission] that is Saheeh [that has been transmitted by people known for their uprightness and exactitude; free from eccentricity and blemish])

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Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) said, [**“Whatever is cut off an animal, while it is alive, is dead meat.”**] Related by Al-Tirmidhee, with the wording: [**“Whatever is cut off the living is dead.”**]

It is related on the authority of Aboo Mas'ood that he said, [**“We were travelling with the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him); he went to relieve himself when it happened that we saw a little bird with two chicks, so we took its two chicks. The little bird came and began to flap its wings. The Prophet (peace be upon him) came and asked, ‘Who grieved this over its young ones? Return its young ones to it.’ Then he (peace be upon him) saw an ant village which we had burnt. So, he (peace be upon him) asked, ‘Who burnt this?’ We replied, ‘We did.’ He (peace be upon him) said, ‘None should punish with fire except the Lord of the Fire.’”**]

It is related on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with them both) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) said, [**“Any person who kills a sparrow or anything smaller than it without a just cause, Allaah (Glorified and Exalted be He) will ask them about it (on the Day of Judgment).”** He was asked, **“O Messenger of Allaah! What is the just cause for it?”** He replied, **“To slaughter in order to eat, and not to chop its head off and then throw it away.”**]

It is also related on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both): [**“A donkey, branded on its face, passed before the Prophet (peace be upon him). He (peace be upon him) said, ‘May Allaah curse the one who branded it.’”**]

(According to another narration related by Muslim, The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) forbade beating on the face or branding on the face. This includes both humans and animals.

These Noosoos (Islaamic texts from the Qur’aan or the Sunnah) and others holding the same meaning indicate the prohibition of any torturing of any animal, even those animals which the Sharee'ah (Islaamic law) permitted killing them. The meaning and connotation of these proofs show the care of Islaam for animals in what benefits them and protects them against harm. It is obligatory to keep before our eyes the Islamic teachings that urge kind treatment of animals and warn against torturing them, in whatever is related to them, and pay close attention to them. This is especially so in relation to the above-mentioned type of animals, which are respected in themselves as both food and property. In addition, some rules of the Sharee'ah are connected with these animals pertaining to offering them as sacrifices and employing them in acts of piety and charity. This is apart from the many hardships that animals will be subjected to during shipping and transporting them in large quantities over long distances. This may result in their being so overcrowded that the weak among them cannot survive, they may suffer hunger and thirst, diseases may spread among them, or they may face other perilous situations.

⁴ Related by Aboo Dawood

⁵ Related by Al-Nasaa'ee and Al-Hakim, who ranked it as Saheeh

⁶ Related by Muslim

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Therefore, all these aspects require prompt consideration and serious investigation on the part of the authorities to make sure that comfortable arrangements are made for transporting, moving, and sustenance, in terms of feeding, watering, ventilation, treatment, separating the weak from those who are dangerously strong, and the ill from those who are well, in all stages, as far as possible, until they are sold. This can be done today by the investing authorities and the individuals and companies that are importing and exporting the animals. It is part of the expenses that must be paid on reasonable basis by their owners or the persons under whose care they are held.

What is to be regretted and is obligatory to be condemned and warned against are the methods that are now used in slaughtering animals whose meat is eaten in most foreign countries, and the different types of torment they face when being prepared for slaughter. Some of these include: electrical shocks being passed through their brains to anesthetise them and hooks passing the animals and snatching them, and hanging them upside-down while they are still alive. In some slaughterhouses, animals are carried on conveyer belts to the person who will slaughter them, and the feathers of chickens and birds are plucked while they are alive or they are plunged alive into very hot water or steam is used on them to remove their feathers. They claim that these methods are kinder to the animals that need to be slaughtered, which is what is wrongly believed about some of them. Certainly, the torture these ways involve is in clear contradiction to the Noosoos of the noble Sharee'ah that prescribe and urge kindness to animals. Every act that contradicts the Sharee'ah is a transgression and wrongdoing that will have to be accounted for, due to the reasons mentioned above as well as the following authentic Hadeeth: [**“Verily, rights shall be fulfilled to their owners on the Day of Resurrection, until the hornless sheep is avenged of the horned sheep.”**]

If this is so with animals, then how much more so with humans who understand the meaning of injustice and its bad consequences and still commit it?

Based on the Noosoos of the Sharee'ah and their requirements, the Fuqaha' (Muslim jurists) of Islaamic law have classified what is Waajib (obligatory), Mustahab (desirable), Haraam (prohibited) and Makrooh (disliked), in relation to animals in general and in relation to slaughtering animals whose meat is permitted to be eaten in particular, in detail. We will mention some of the matters pertaining to the kindness that should be shown to animals when slaughtering them. The following are Mustahab acts:

1. Offering water to an animal that is to be slaughtered, acting upon the above-mentioned Hadeeth: [**“Verily, Allaah has enjoined Ihsaan in all things.”**]
2. The implement used for slaughtering must be sharp and in a good condition. The slaughterer should pass it powerfully and quickly over the prescribed parts of the animal's body for executing slaughtering. The camels are slaughtered by cutting the carotid arteries at the root of the neck, while all other animals can be easily slaughtered by cutting the throat.

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3. Camels are to be slaughtered standing, with their left front leg tied, if this is possible, and while facing the Qiblah (direction faced for Prayer towards the Ka'bah)

4. Animals other than camels are to be slaughtered lying on their left side facing the Qiblah. The slaughterer should put his leg on the side of the animal's neck, without the front or back legs being tied and without twisting or breaking it before its life has ended and its movements have stopped. It is Makrooh to cut the head off before this time and also to slaughter an animal while another animal is looking at it.

These precepts are among the Mustahab acts when slaughtering an animal out of mercy and kindness towards it. It is Makrooh to practice anything that contradicts this or is unkind, such as dragging an animal by its legs. It was narrated by 'Abdul-Razzaq in a Hadeeth Mawqoof (words or deeds narrated from a Companion of the Prophet that are not attributed to the Prophet) that Ibn 'Umar saw a man dragging a sheep by its legs to slaughter it, so he said to him, "Woe to you! Lead it to death kindly."

It is also Makrooh to sharpen a blade while the animal is looking at it at the time of slaughtering. This is based on the authentically reported Hadeeth in "Musnad Imaam Ahmad" on the authority of Ibn 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with them both), who said, [**The Messenger of Allaah** (peace be upon him) **ordered the blades to be sharpened and be hidden from the animals.**] There is also an authentic Hadeeth recorded in both "Al-Mu'jam Al-Tabaraanee Al-Kabeer" and "Al-Mu'jam Al-Tabaraanee Al-Awsat" - whose narrators are Riijaal Al-Saheeh (narrators of Hadeeth compiled by Al-Bukhaaree and/or Muslim) - on the authority of `Abdullah ibn `Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both), who said, [**The Messenger of Allaah** (peace be upon him) **once passed by a man who placed his foot on the side of a sheep's neck and was sharpening his blade while the sheep was looking towards it. So, he** (peace be upon him) **said, "Why have you not done it before this (laying it down)? Do you want to make it die two deaths?"**]

As for animals that cannot be slaughtered, such as bestial or wild animals, and stray camels that cannot be controlled, it is permissible to fire an arrow or the like at them after mentioning Allaah's Name. The implement should be one that can cause blood to flow out, but is not a bone or a nail. When the arrow has killed the animal, it becomes permissible to eat because killing it this way comes under the same ruling as Shar'eh (Islaamically lawful) slaughtering of an animal that is possible to slaughter, as long as the death did not result from other than the arrow or some cause along with it.

I gave you brief information following your request and I have not discussed it in detail to include all what has been authentically reported on the subject of treating animals, with their different types. Islaam is the Deen (religion) of mercy, the Sharee'ah of kindness, the comprehensive way of life, and the way leading to Allaah and the abode of His Honour. It is, therefore, obligatory that it should be invited to, referred to for judgment, efforts exerted to

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propagate it among those who do not know about it, and the general Muslims be informed of the rulings they do not know and be reminded of its objectives, for the sake of Allaah. The objectives of the Islamic Sharee'ah are very fair and wise and there is no prohibition against anything beneficial from animals, unlike the beliefs of the Buddhists. There is also no permissibility of taking anything harmful from animals, unlike those who eat impurities, such as pigs, predatory animals, and those having the same ruling as them. There is no injustice; no breach of the sanctity of anything declared inviolable, whether it is soul, property, or honour. We must, therefore, show gratitude to Allaah for His Bounties, the most valuable of which is Islaam, and supplicate to Him to support His Deen, keep His Word lofty, and make us not objects of Fitnah (trial) for disbelieving people due to our negligence. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who clearly conveyed His Message, and upon his family, Companions, and those who follow his guidance until the Day of Judgment.

As-salamu 'alaykum warahmatullah wabarakatuh (May Allaah's Peace, Mercy, and Blessings be upon you!)