
PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ: THE ARCHETYPE OF MERCY

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ABSTRACT

If we were to select one overarching term that defines the nature and mission of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, it would surely be *mercy*. Mercy is what Allah ﷻ uses in the Qur'ān to describe His beloved messenger ﷺ. He ﷻ states: ﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾ We have sent you 'O Prophet' only as a mercy for the whole world.⁴ Throughout his blessed life, the noble Prophet ﷺ embodied compassion in every way possible and spread it to every person, animal, place, and object that he met. Those who opposed him were not excluded from experiencing his mercy and even those who did not interact with him were either recipients of his compassion or benefactors of his mercy in some manner, whether directly or indirectly. We are living through turbulent times in our world today and humanity is in much need of compassion. There is clearly a shortage of mercy in the lives of many individuals and societies. Violence, war, corruption, injustice, social and political discord, and other kinds of unrest are all too common everywhere we look. For this reason, it is imperative that people of all walks of life, study the prophetic embodiment of mercy and compassion. The researchers will use the inductive method in order to collect the texts spread out in various old and contemporary books related to the subject, and then the analytical method to extract the most important issues related to mercy. The results of the research: When examining the life of the prophet of mercy, it is effortless to understand the ways in which he brought harmony between people of different views and backgrounds. Studying the biography of the Prophet Muhammad helped to achieve security, peace, and justice in the hearts of people, believers and unbelievers amidst many hardships and challenges.

Keywords: Prophet Muḥammad, the Archetype, Mercy

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⁴ Qur'ān 21:107



Introduction

It was in the year 570 C.E. in Makkah that the mercy to the worlds, the final prophet and messenger, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim ﷺ was born. Since birth, he was an orphan—raised by his beloved mother, Āminah bint Wahb. It was very common for widows to remarry—especially young women of noble lineage. Instead of going that route, Āminah decided to remain a single mother and dedicate her life to her one and only child, Muḥammad ﷺ. She gave priority to her son’s emotional fulfillment over her own personal fulfillment—which is what makes her so inspirational.⁵

As commonly practiced, families would send their newborns away from the cities with wet-nurses to the deserts which would provide them a healthier upbringing in a natural setting. Ḥalīmah al-Sa‘diyyah had the honor to nurse and look after baby Muḥammad ﷺ from his early days till he was four years old. At the age of four, he was returned to the care of his mother who eventually died when he was just six. He then went into the care of his grandfather ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib and grandmother Fāṭimah bint ‘Amr. Both showered him with their love.

⁵ Hesham Al-Awadi, Muhammad: *How He Can Make You Extraordinary*, (Delaware: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 10.

In a society where it was customary to raise children with strict discipline, ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib was very lenient when it came to his grandson. It is related that when conducting meetings with Makkan notables, ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib, the chief of Quraysh would let his grandson sit on his couch. His own sons would not sit on it and instead sit around it out of respect. The young Muḥammad ﷺ would sit on his grandfather’s couch and his uncles would drive him away. Ibn Hishām writes:

When ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib saw this, he said, “Let my son alone, for by Allah he has a great future.” Then he would make him sit beside him on his bed and would wipe his back with his hand. It used to please him to see what he did. When the Prophet ﷺ was eight years old, his grandfather dies. That was eight years after the Year of the Elephant.⁶

When Muḥammad ﷺ was eight, he lost his beloved grandfather and then he went under the care of his uncle, Abū Ṭālib ibn ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib and aunt, Fāṭimah bint Asad رضي الله عنها, where he also received so much love and affection. In fact, it was in this household that he spent his entire adolescent and teenage years. Ābū Ṭālib loved his nephew dearly and displayed his love in many ways. Some of the ways that he expressed his love include waiting for him before having meals together as a family; sleeping near him; and taking him along on errands and trips.⁷ When they traveled to Syria, Baḥīrah the monk told Abū Ṭālib: “Great things are in store for your nephew...”⁸ It was such encouraging words that young Muḥammad ﷺ heard growing up. Despite not seeing his father and losing his mother at the tender age of six, young Muḥammad ﷺ was showered with

⁶ ‘Abd al-Mālik ibn Hishām, *Sīrat ibn Hisham*, (Cairo: Al-Falah Foundation, 2000), 24.

⁷ Al-Awadi, 82.

⁸ Ibn Hishām, 26.

so much love from his extended family. Seventeen years with his uncle Abū Ṭālib and his family, he received profound affection and respect. He lived with them until he married Khadījah bint Khuwaylid رضي الله عنها at the age of twenty-five.

In terms of work, young Muḥammad ﷺ began his career as a shepherd. The profession of sheep herding requires a number of different personal skills and attributes that include leadership, integrity, focus, compassion, and perseverance. All prophets worked as shepherds at some point in their life. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Allah did not send any prophet but shepherded sheep.” His companions asked him, “Did you do the same?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “Yes, I used to shepherd the sheep of the people of Mecca for some Qirats.”⁹ As a young man, Muḥammad ﷺ guided and looked after sheep. As a prophet from the age of forty and on, he guided and looked after human beings.

The meaning of mercy linguistically and idiomatically

The meaning of mercy linguistically: The word mercy is derived from the word Rahm. However, there are two names of Allah, The Most Merciful, the Most Merciful: the two names are derived from mercy, and the mercy of God encompasses everything.

Idiomatic meaning of the concept of mercy: Al-Jurjani defined mercy as delivering good to those who deserve it¹⁰.

Manifestations of mercy in the personality of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace.

PEACEMAKER

⁹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Ijārah, Bāb 2, no. 2262, vol. 3, 254.

¹⁰ Al-Jurjani, *Al-Ta'rifat*, Beirut, Darul-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1st edition, 110.

In his twenties and thirties, the Prophet ﷺ was actively involved in the affairs of his people. He helped solved problems and conflicts that would arise. As much as he was a family man, he was also a community man. The Prophet ﷺ was beloved to his people and admired for his integrity. He was known as *Al-Ṣādiq Al-Amīn*. He was very just and creative in the way that he handled complex situations. An incident that illustrates this is when the Quraysh had completed the renovation of the Ka‘bah after its damage—there was one final piece left in finishing the project and that was to place the black stone in its place. Each clan wanted the honor of placing the stone and eventually a dispute started between them. The situation worsened and it was going to get violent until they decided to let the first person to enter Masjid al-Ḥarām, mediate the conflict.

The first person to enter was none other than the Prophet ﷺ, and excitedly they all shouted, “Al-Amīn is here!” They were very confident that Muḥammad ﷺ was going to solve their dispute. The Prophet ﷺ proposed that a cloth be brought, the stone be placed on it, and a person from each clan hold the cloth and bring it to the designated location. They all agreed to this idea and it was carried out without any objection. The sheet was brought close to the corner of the Ka‘bah and the Prophet ﷺ himself positioned the stone in its place.¹¹

The way in which the Prophet ﷺ brought the disputing parties together portrays his compassionate and caring nature. He proposed an idea that pleased all those involved and essentially prevented a severe civil conflict from erupting. The Prophet ﷺ was a peacemaker and

¹¹ See Ibn Hishām, 28-30.

problems solver. Likewise, young followers of Muḥammad ﷺ must strive in the effort to be peacemakers. Young people should seize the opportunities to solve problems of whatever scale—in order to prevent harm in society or to cure an existing harm(s).

Mercy for the whole world

From birth to adulthood, the Prophet ﷺ was the recipient of immense love from his family and relatives. He was divinely blessed with mercy; he was showered with compassion while growing up; and expressed compassion throughout his noble life. He embodied mercy and displayed it to everyone that he interacted with. He was sent by the Lord of mercy *as* a mercy to all of existence. Allah ﷻ states:

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

We have sent you 'O Prophet' only as a mercy for the whole world.¹²

Commenting on this *āyah*, Muftī Muḥammad Shāfi'ī explains that *ālamīn* is plural of '*ālam*' which comprises of all creatures including humans, animals, plants, *jinns*, etc. To properly understand the meaning of the verse, it is important to know that the true essence of existence is the worship of Allah ﷻ. When the universe and all of existence is void of its essence i.e. when the worship of Allah ﷻ no longer exists – all of creation will cease to exist. When there is no one to worship Allah ﷻ, the Day of Judgement shall commence. With this in mind, one is able to better appreciate the

¹² Qur'ān 21:107

Prophet ﷺ as a gift and mercy to the worlds because it is his teachings and the purity of his personal life alone which keep alive the worship of Allah ﷻ until the end of time.¹³

There are numerous narrations of the Prophet ﷺ describing himself as the Prophet of Mercy. Abū Mūsá Ash‘arī رضي الله عنه reported that Allah's Messenger ﷺ mentioned many names of his and said: “I am Muḥammad, Aḥmad. Muqaffī (the last in succession), Ḥāshir, the Prophet of repentance, and the Prophet of Mercy.”¹⁴

It was from the mercy of Allah ﷻ that he made the Prophet ﷺ so compassionate. The Prophet’s ﷺ merciful and forbearing nature attracted people to him. He was very lenient with his followers. He excused them easily and valued their input. Allah ﷻ states:

﴿فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ﴾

It is out of Allah’s mercy that you ‘O Prophet’ have been lenient with them. Had you been cruel or hard-hearted, they would have certainly abandoned you. So pardon them, ask Allah’s forgiveness for them, and consult with them in ‘conducting’ matters. Once you make a decision, put your trust in Allah. Surely Allah loves those who trust in Him.¹⁵

Commenting on this *āyah*, Imam ibn Kathīr writes: “Allah ﷻ addresses his Messenger ﷺ and reminds him and the believers of the favor that he has made his heart and words soft for his *Ummah*, those who follow his command and refrain from what he prohibits.”¹⁶

¹³ Mufti Muhammad Shafi, *Ma‘āriful-Qur‘ān* (Karachi: Darul Uloom, 2019), vol. 6, 236.

¹⁴ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Kitāb al-Faḍā’il*, Bāb 34, no. 2355, vol. 1, 199.

¹⁵ Qur‘ān 3:159

¹⁶ Ismā‘īl Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr ibn Kathīr*, (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2003), 303.

The following *āyah* highlights the Prophet's ﷺ concern for the well-being of his ummah and his deep love and mercy towards the believers:

﴿لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾

There certainly has come to you a messenger from among yourselves. He is concerned by your suffering, anxious for your well-being, and gracious and merciful to the believers.¹⁷

Reflecting on this, Sayyid Qutb writes:

He would never lead you to ruin. If he calls on you to strive for God's cause, and to endure any difficulty in doing so, then you should know that he does not take this lightly, and that there is no cruelty in his heart. His call is a manifestation of compassion. He simply does not like to see you humiliated. He is too concerned that you should not suffer the ignominy of sin. He is keen that you should have the honor of conveying this message, earn Allah's ﷻ pleasure and admittance into heaven.¹⁸

The heartfelt concern that the Prophet ﷺ had for the well-being of his *ummah* stemmed from his divinely bestowed mercy. He always wanted ease for his followers and not difficulty. Whether it was relating to worship or daily life, he would always prefer that which was convenient for his *ummah*. It is narrated by our mother رضي الله عنها 'Ā'ishah:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was never given the choice between two things but he would choose the easier of the two, so long as it was not a sin; if it was a sin he would be the furthest of the people from it. And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ never took revenge for his own sake, unless the sacred limits of Allah were transgressed.¹⁹

¹⁷ Qur'ān 9:128

¹⁸ Sayyid Qutb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, (Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2009), vol. 8, 250-251.

¹⁹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Faḍā'il, Bāb 20, no. 2327, vol. 6, 177.

Qāḍī ‘Īyaḍ ibn Mūsá al-Yaḥsubī explains in *Al-Shifā’*: “Part of his compassion towards his community was that he made things easy for them. The Prophet ﷺ disliked doing certain things out of the fear that they would become obligatory for them.”²⁰ There are many examples that could be presented in this regard but for the sake of brevity, we shall present two narrations that illustrate the Prophet’s ﷺ mercy for his ummah and wanting ease for them in worship.

In a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth found in *al-Tirmidhī*, Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger ﷺ said: “If it were not that it would be difficult on my nation, then I would have ordered them to use the *Siwāk* for each prayer.”²¹ ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها narrated: “Allah’s Messenger ﷺ forbade Al-Wiṣāl out of mercy to them. They said to him, “But you practice Al-Wiṣāl?” He said, “I am not similar to you, for my Lord gives me food and drink.”²² Although the Prophet ﷺ used to personally practice the above, out of his mercy he made sure that his followers did not have to undergo any kind of additional hardship in carrying out their obligations. Time and time again, the he would instruct his companions: “Make things easy for the people, and do not make it difficult for them, and make them calm (with glad tidings) and do not repel (them).”²³

Allah ﷻ Himself is merciful and compassionate and expects us to be compassionate as well. He loves those who are merciful and dislikes harshness. ‘Abdullah ibn Mughaffal رضي الله عنه

²⁰ Qāḍī ‘Īyaḍ ibn Mūsá al-Yaḥsubī, *Al-Shifā’ Bi Ta’rīf Huqūq al-Muṣṭafá*, (Norwich: Diwan Press, 2011), 65.

²¹ Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī, Abwāb al-Ṭahārah, Bāb 18, no. 22, vol. 1, 55.

²² Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Ṣawm, Bāb 48, no. 1964, vol. 3, 115.

²³ Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Adab, Bāb 80, no. 6125, vol. 8, 87.

reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah is compassionate and loves compassion. He gives for compassion what He does not give for harshness.”²⁴ One of the ways to qualify for Allah’s ﷻ mercy is to show mercy unto others. A person who does not show mercy will be deprived of mercy from the most Merciful ﷻ. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Someone who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.”²⁵

The Prophet’s ﷺ mercy emanated in every situation and circumstance. His mercy extended to anyone and everyone: men and women, young and old, rich, and poor, believers and disbelievers, hypocrites and criminals, animals and birds, plants and insects, and the natural environment. Ḥadīth literature is replete with narrations of the Prophet’s ﷺ mercy towards the creation. In the following pages, we shall present a selection of these inspiring prophetic examples.

Mercy to His Family

The Prophet ﷺ was extremely compassionate towards his family. He was always at the service of his family. Our mother, ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها was asked about what the Prophet ﷺ did at home; she replied: “He used to keep himself busy serving his family and when it was the time for prayer, he would go for it.”²⁶

²⁴ Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, 2015), Bāb 219, no. 472, 334.

²⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Bāb 53, no. 95, 119.

²⁶ Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Adhān, Bāb 44, no. 676, vol. 1, 385.

A person may be very occupied with life, but we can surely say without any doubt that the most occupied person was the Prophet ﷺ himself. Despite his many responsibilities, when the Prophet ﷺ was at home, he was busy at the service of his family. Young people should incorporate some time to serve their family within their busy schedules.

Mercy to Children

The Prophet ﷺ was extremely compassionate towards children. He would greet them, carry them, hug them, kiss them, cuddle with them, and show mercy in various forms. Anas bin Mālik رضي الله عنه said:

The Prophet ﷺ, was the most merciful of people towards members of his family. He had his son (Ibrahim) suckled in part of Madinah and the husband of his wet-nurse was a blacksmith. We used to go to him, and the house would be full of smoke from the bellows. He would kiss the child and take him in his lap.²⁷

Abū Qatādah رضي الله عنه narrated:

We were sitting in the mosque when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came upon us carrying Umāmah daughter of Abul 'Āṣ ibn al-Rabī'. Her mother was Zaynab daughter of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. She (Umāmah) was a child and he (the Prophet) was carrying her on his shoulder. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ led (the people) in prayer while she was on his shoulder. When he bowed, he put her down and took her up when he got up. He kept on doing so until he finished his prayer.²⁸

²⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Bāb 175, no. 376, 283.

²⁸ Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2008), Kitāb al-Ṣalāh, Bāb 164-165, no. 918, vol. 1, 536. (Hadīth grade:



The numerous narrations exhorting compassion towards the youth and elderly all begin with showing mercy to the youth followed by honoring the elderly. Youth should remember that one day they were children and now it is their turn to share express compassion to those that are younger than them. Small gestures as simple as a smile and wave can change a little child's life. Youth especially, should not underestimate the power of mercy towards the young.

Mercy to Women

Women, prayer, and fragrance were the most beloved to the Prophet ﷺ. He was especially compassionate towards the women in his life. The era and environment that he was sent to; women did not have rights and freedoms like their male counter parts. Women generally were looked down upon and the practice of female infanticide was not uncommon. The Prophet ﷺ was the champion of female rights in a such a male dominated society. He understood the needs of women and instructed the male members of his community to take proper care of the females that they were entrusted with. The Prophet ﷺ was fully aware of the soft and delicate nature of women and their tender hearts and bodies. The following ḥadīth sheds further light on the Prophet's ﷺ compassion towards women: Anas bin Mālīk رضي الله عنه narrated:

Once the Prophet ﷺ was on one of his journeys, and the driver of the camels started chanting (to let the camels go fast). The Prophet ﷺ said to him. “(Take care) Drive slowly with the glass vessels, Oh Anjasha! Wayḥak (May Allah be Merciful to you).²⁹

²⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Adab, Bāb 116, no. 6209, vol. 8, 129.

Anjasha رضي الله عنه had a very sweet voice and it caused the camels to move fast. The Prophet's ﷺ compassion for the women on board led him to direct Anjasha to slow down. The term *qawārīr* was used to compare the delicate and precious nature of women. Just like how one must take care of glass gently—women must also be taken care of gently.

Mercy to Parents

The people that are most deserving of one's compassion are his or her parents. Mothers deserve three times the kindness followed by fathers. Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه reported that a person said: “Allah's Messenger, who amongst the people is most deserving of my good treatment? He said: Your mother, again your mother, again your mother, then your father, then your nearest relatives according to the order (of nearness).”³⁰

It is part and parcel of our faith to be compassionate to parents and to pray for them while they are alive and while they move on to the next life. Allah ﷻ teaches us the Du‘ā’ to make for parents in the Qur‘ān:

﴿وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا﴾

And be humble with them out of mercy, and pray, “My Lord! Be merciful to them as they raised me when I was young.”³¹

Mercy to the Elderly

³⁰ Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Adhān, Bāb 163, no. 868, vol. 1, 476-477.

³¹ Qur‘ān 17:24

The Prophet ﷺ used to revere and honor the elderly and he taught his followers to do the same. There is a wide array of narrations emphasizing the station of the elderly people and the need for younger people to be compassionate towards them. In fact, respecting those that are older is connected with respecting Allah ﷻ. Abu Mūsā al-Ash‘ari reported: “Part of respect for Allah is to show respect to an old Muslim...”³² Whether the elderly person(s) is ones parents, family member, relative, or a stranger—it is imperative for youth to show their utmost respect and compassion towards them.

Mercy to Animals

The Prophet ﷺ used to express his mercy towards living creatures as he was a mercy to all of creation. Indeed, one can dedicate an entire study to the Prophet’s ﷺ compassion towards animals alone. For the purposes of the current study, we will share a few narrations illustrating the noble Prophet’s ﷺ mercy for animals.

In a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth found in *Sunan ibn Mājah*, Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “A woman entered Hell because of a cat which she tied up and did not feed, or let it loose to eat of the vermin of the earth, until it died.”³³ It is evident from this ḥadīth

³² Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Bāb 164, no. 357, 272-273.

³³ Muḥammad ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), Abwāb al-Zuhd, Bāb 30, no. 4256, vol. 5, 367. (Ḥadīth grade: Ṣaḥīḥ)

that being cruel to a cat could potentially lead one to the fire. The woman mentioned in the narration did not show any compassion to the poor cat ultimately leading to its death. If she went to the fire for being harsh to a cat, then what would be the state of a person if they were harsh to another human being? Indeed, every living creature is deserving of our mercy.

Once the Prophet ﷺ stopped by an area and someone took a bird's eggs and the bird began to beat its wings around the head of the Messenger ﷺ. He asked, "Which of you has taken its eggs?" A man said, "Messenger of Allah, I have taken its eggs." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Return them out of mercy to the bird."³⁴ Seeing the bird in distress caught the attention of the Prophet ﷺ which promoted him to order the eggs to be returned. Any kind of discomfort or unease whether it be to a bird or any other creature, the Prophet ﷺ ensured that it was not deprived of compassion. He instructed that the eggs be returned *out of mercy*.

On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ noticed a camel in distress and once it saw him, it wept tenderly producing a yearning sound and its eyes flowed with tears. The Prophet ﷺ came to it and wiped the temple of its head. So it kept silence. He then said, "Who is the master of this camel? Whose camel is this? A young man from the Anṣār came and said, "This is mine, Messenger of Allah ﷺ." He said, "Don't you 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."³⁵

³⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Bāb 177, no. 382, 287.

³⁵ Sunan Abū Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Jihād, Bāb 44, no. 2549, vol. 3, 233. (Ḥadīth grade: Ṣaḥīḥ)

The Prophet ﷺ had been granted the special ability to communicate with the animal kingdom. The camel in distress found comfort in the Prophet ﷺ and complained to him regarding the mistreatment by its owner. The merciful Prophet ﷺ immediately searched for its owner and commanded that he should be mindful of Allah ﷻ in how he deals with the animal under his possession. This order is extended to all people until the end of time—that no matter what kind of animal is in our possession, a living creature with a heartbeat deserves our compassion.

Even while slaughtering animals, the Prophet ﷺ instructed that people do so with compassion so the animal does not experience any hardship. The Messenger ﷺ said, “Anyone who shows mercy, even to an animal meant for slaughtering, will be shown mercy by Allah on the Day of Rising.”³⁶

Mercy to Trees

Jābir bin ‘Abdullāh رضي الله عنهما narrated: “The Prophet ﷺ used to stand by a stem of a date-palm tree (while delivering a sermon). When the pulpit was placed for him, we heard that stem crying like a pregnant she-camel till the Prophet ﷺ got down from the pulpit and placed his hand over it.”³⁷ After the construction of the Prophet’s ﷺ pulpit, he no longer stood by the tree that he would deliver his sermons from. Realizing this and missing the Prophet ﷺ, the tree expressed

³⁶ Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Bāb 176, no. 381, 286.

³⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Jumu‘ah, Bāb 26, no. 918, vol. 2, 39.

its sadness. The Prophet ﷺ out of his mercy understood the situation and consoled the tree. Various narrations reveal what he said to comfort the tree. One report states that the Prophet ﷺ gave the good news to the tree that it would be with him in paradise. This incident alone contains many benefits—one valuable lesson that young people can take away from this is that a tree being the way that it is had a type of softness that prompted it to cry out of the love of the Prophet ﷺ; longing for him and yearning to be in his proximity.

The question to ask is, how much do we know the Messenger ﷺ? Do we miss him and long to be with him? The tree certainly knew the Prophet ﷺ and loved being close to him. Not being near him brought tremendous sorrow. When we ignore the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ, do we feel a sense of sadness? Youth should develop a relationship with the Prophet ﷺ by studying his biography, his sunnah, and engage in sincere effort to emulate his teachings. By engaging in this, it will instill a natural love for him ﷺ and a desire to meet him and be in his company in the afterlife.

Mercy to the Environment

Anas bin Mālik رضي الله عنه narrated: Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, "There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him."³⁸ This noble deed is considered an ongoing charity as well as an act of compassion. So long as the tree exists and the creation benefits from it, the one

³⁸ Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Ḥarth wa'l Muzāra'ah, Bāb 1, no. 2320, vol.3, 293.

who planted this and looked after it would continue to get the reward for it—even if they are no longer alive. The act of mercy is always appreciated by Allah ﷻ and in return, it will bring forth immense compassion from the Most Merciful Lord Himself.

Mercy to Mountains

The Prophet ﷺ loved the Mountain of Uḥud. He said regarding it, “This is a mountain that loves us and is loved by us.”³⁹ The Prophet ﷺ often used Mount Uḥud as a reference to explain the gravity of a matter. He had a very special spot for this mountain in his heart. The love was also reciprocal as the mountain loved the Prophet ﷺ and the believers. Youth should display mercy to the natural world around them and live in such a way that even mountains love them.

Mercy During Combat

During military expeditions, the Prophet ﷺ ensured that his men abided by the Islamic standards of war ethics. He forbade harming children, youth, women, the elderly, people of religion, and all non-combatants. He also prohibited the destruction of houses of worship, cutting down of trees, and marching through agricultural land. Anas bin Mālīk رضي الله عنه reported:

March by Allah’s name and help, and on the basis of the message of Allah’s Messenger. Do not kill an elderly person, a child, a youth or a woman. Do not hoard anything of war gains, but group them together. Put things right and do well, for Allah loves those who do well.⁴⁰

³⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Maghāzī, Bāb 28, no. 4083, vol. 5, 249.

⁴⁰ Sunan Abū Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Jihād, Bāb 82, no. 2614, vol. 3, 264-265. (Ḥadīth grade: Ḍa‘īf)

Mercy to Enemies

The Prophet ﷺ was merciful to his enemies—those among the disbelievers and even the hypocrites. Just to name a couple, there were longtime opponents like ‘Ikrimah ibn Abī Jahl and Ka‘b ibn Zuhary, who were recipients of the prophetic compassion despite the fact that they were ordered to be killed when the Prophet ﷺ took over Makkah. Staunch opponent and leader of the hypocrites, ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, who caused so much hardship to the Prophet ﷺ, his family, and to the Muslim community was also not deprived of prophetic mercy. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ expressed his compassion even after Ibn Ubayy’s death. He prayed his *janāzah* prayer and followed the funeral until he was buried. It reached a point where Allah ﷻ had to tell the Prophet ﷺ that Ibn Ubayy will never be forgiven no matter how many times the Prophet ﷺ himself prays for him.

﴿أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ۚ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ﴾

‘It does not matter’ whether you ‘O Prophet’ pray for them to be forgiven or not. Even if you pray for their forgiveness seventy times, Allah will never forgive them. That is because they have lost faith in Allah and His Messenger. And Allah does not guide the rebellious people.⁴¹

Adil Salahi expounds on this point:

⁴¹ Qur’ān 9:80

Here is compassion at its most encompassing. Ibn Ubayy was very hostile to the Prophet and to his message, and he tried hard to undermine the Prophet's position and the Muslim community. When he died, he was no longer of any consequence. By that time, most of his supporters had either become true Muslims or became totally ineffective. Neither the Prophet nor the Muslim community would gain anything through kindness to him. Yet the Prophet would pray more than seventy times for his forgiveness.⁴²

Research results:

At the end of this article, we reached the following results:

1. The research proved that Prophet ﷺ forgave individuals and groups of people from his expansive mercy.
2. The researchers concluded that the term mercy is a living and active term and it must be used with everyone, starting with the self, then the parents, then the teachers who taught us, then the neighbors, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims, then with Muslims, then with non-Muslims, then with animals, plants and inanimate objects.
3. The term mercy is the most common term used by the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace.
4. The term mercy is most of the terms mentioned in the Qur'an and which Muslims repeat with their tongues every day in prayer. It is repeated on the tongues of Muslims every day more than 30 times.

⁴² Adil Salahi, *Muhamamad ﷺ His Character and Conduct*, (Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2013), 124.

5. Mercy was a major reason for the spread of Islam in the world in the shortest possible time, and it was one of the most important reasons for the establishment and survival of civilizations.
6. The research proved that the Messenger of God, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, is a mercy to the worlds, and he is truly a role model for all people in promoting the concept of humanity in people's hearts. Without mercy, people become like animals in the forest, the strong eat the weak.

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