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Message From The Imam

AL-'IHSAAAN – GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Brothers and Sisters,

A topic we have addressed in our past few khutbas is one that touches each and every one of us and that is the construct of 'ihsaan, seeking excellence, as defined to us by our beloved Prophet Muhammad (S) in the following Hadeeth related by Abu Ya'la Shaddad bin Aws (R),

"Verily Allah has prescribed 'ihsaan (perfection) in all things. Thus if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters." [Muslim]

For the beginning learner the Hadeeth appears to contain a simple instruction about the etiquette of slaughtering according to Islam. However, scholars categorize this Hadeeth as being among the Ahadeeth that touch upon all Islamic aspects such as the Hadeeth on actions being judged by intentions. In fact, this particular Hadeeth addresses all the doors of Islamic knowledge and practice.

So what is it that the Prophet (S) is informing us in these few lines? First, that Allah (SWT) both *farada* and *qadara*, both made obligatory and predetermined 'ihsaan in all matters. Prophet Muhammad (S) explains the obligation in the lines that follow illustrating the manner in which a Muslim is obligated to slaughter minimizing the pain of the animal.

This very literal depiction demonstrates the many meanings contained in the word 'ihsaan which incorporates perfection,

continue on page 2

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continue from page 1

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mercy, compassion, promoting good, and avoiding harm. Allah predestined that *'ihsaan* exists in everything and He obligated us to emulate His attribute of *'ihsaan* in all of our actions.

Muslims mistakenly presume that *'ihsaan* refers only to matters of worship such as perfecting salat, siyam, zakat, and Hajj. But the aforementioned Hadeeth dispels this assumption by clarifying that *'ihsaan* must be adopted in every action the Muslim takes on even when it comes to slaughtering an animal or cutting a tree. Imam Ahmad narrates that we were obligated to hide the blade from the animal we planned to slaughter in order to prevent it from panicking. Islam obligates the Muslim to be merciful and compassionate to the feelings of an animal that will be killed in a few moments. Allahu Akbar! How beautiful is our religion! Islamically, even killing harmful animals such as snakes or rodents must also be done in a merciful way just as a woman entered hellfire as Prophet Muhammad (S) informed us for torturing a cat.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad (S) reminds us to practice *'ihsaan* in biggest and smallest of matters. This is because *'ihsaan* is a foundational element of our Islam. This ties into the belief that as Muslims living in this country, practicing *'ihsaan* means being a good citizen and abiding by the laws of the land. This includes being honest, compassionate, respectful, and responsible.

The laws of this country do not ask us to go against the teachings of Islam and the majority of its laws go hand-in-hand with Islam. Unfortunately, it is often the case that when Muslims are not obeying laws they are in reality not being good Muslims. A good Muslim is a good citizen and Islam does not ask us to break the law.

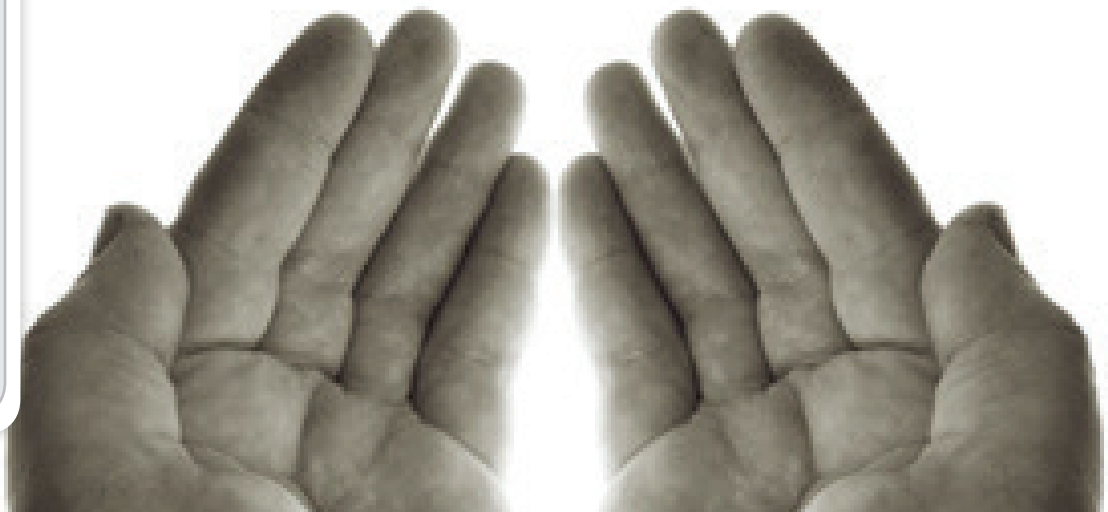
As Muslims we should strive to be honest in all our affairs including legal transactions and public duties. A Muslim should be recognizable as a *muhsin* when he or she is a professional, a neighbor, a college student, a visitor at the library, a customer in the store, a driver on the street, an attendee of a celebration at a hall, etc. etc. A Muslim should not be recognized by their lack of *'ihsaan*, for example, sometimes Muslims are labeled as those who bend the rules or are irresponsible and careless.

Practicing good citizenship is especially important considering the challenges of Islamophobia we face as an American Muslim community. Therefore, brothers and sisters, I remind you and remind myself to practice *'ihsaan* in all of our matters and affairs no matter how insignificant the matter might seem as Prophet Muhammad (S) admonishes us.

Allah (SWT) states,

"Verily, Allah enjoins justice, and 'ihsaan and giving help to relatives, and He forbids immoral sins, evil and tyranny. He admonishes you, so that perhaps you may take heed."

[An-Nahl:90]



EL REGALO DE LA FE

Alhamdulillah que tengo la oportunidad de poder escribir este artículo una vez mas para mis hermanos de fe. Esta es una manera de como puedo comunicarme con ustedes y una vez mas compartir lo bello de nuestra gran religion. Alabado sea Allah, El Misericordioso, que nos ha unido a todos con este gran regalo que es la fe; cual alhamdulillah crece por haber sido guiados al Islam. Allah, El Creador, El Que Guia nos dice en el Sagrado Coran; capitulo 3:103, "Aferraos todos a la religion de Allah y no os dividais. Recordad la gracia de Allah al hermanaros uniendo vuestros corazones despues de haber sido enemigos unos de otros, y cuando os encontrais al borde de un abismo de fuego, os salvo de caer en el. Asi os explica Allah Sus signos para que sigais la guia." Alhamdulillah, por la misericordia de Allah, que de toda Su creacion nos escogio a cada uno de nosotros y nos guio al sendero recto. Nos saco de la oscuridad, de la ignorancia y nos ilumino con la luz a la verdad y eso es una gran bendicion.

Esta fe que sentimos en nuestros corazones siempre es probada por Allah en diferentes maneras. Por medio de las dificultades asi como tambien por medio de la facilidad damos evidencia de nuestra fe a nuestro Creador. En el Sagrado Coran Allah, El Todopoderoso dice en el capitulo 29:2-3; "Acaso piensan los hombres que se les dejara decir: ¡Creemos! sin ser puestos a prueba? Por cierto que probamos a quienes les precedieron; y Allah bien sabe quienes son los sinceros y quienes los mentirosos." Es facil para el creyente darse cuenta que su fe esta siendo probada por Allah, Grandioso Sea cuando experimenta dificultades en su vida; pero como en la facilidad el creyente es probado? Cuando al recibir todas las bendiciones que tiene en su vida se acuerda de dar gracias a Su Creador. Por medio de la fe el creyente se abstiene o trata de no cometer pecados y esta fe motiva y da esperanza a continuar buscando el Placer Divino de Allah. En una hadith; Abdullah ibn Amr reporta que el Mensajero de Allah (saws) dijo, "Realmente, los corazones de los hijos de Adan todos ellos, estan entre medio de dos dedos de El Misericordioso como un corazon. El los dirige donde El quiera." Entonces el Profeta dijo, "Oh Allah, El que mueve los corazones, mueve nuestros corazones hacia Tu obediencia." [Saheeh Muslim vol.4, p.1397, no6418]

Podemos aumentar nuestra fe al leer el Sagrado Coran y escuchar la recitacion, reflexionar sobre los Nombres y Atributos de Allah y observar los signos de Allah en el universo. Tambien cuando recordamos a nuestro Creador y lo glorificamos, al hacer las cinco oraciones prescritas, al estudiar las historias de los profetas, y tratar de tener buenas amistades pues influye con la fe. Tenemos que vigilar nuestra

fe y tratar de mantener nuestra fe fuerte pues asi lograremos la dulzura de la fe y no perderemos ese regalo cual no tiene precio. ¡El regalo mas bello que nuestro Creador nos ha regalado!

Finalmente los dejo con esta suplica que el Profeta Mohammad(saws) dijo: "Ya Muqallib al-Quluub, thabbit qalbi ala Deenik" "O Controlador de los corazones manten mi corazon firme en Tu religion" (Sahih Muslim)

Su hermana en Islam

Celia Snowber

Faith
daring the soul to go beyond
what the eye can see