

non-Muslims, and Umm Salamah, a wife of the Prophet, reported that the Prophet (pbuh) said to her, *"I have sent An-Najashi <sup>(1)</sup> a robe and some silk."*<sup>(2)</sup>

Indeed, Islam respects a human being in general because he is human; how much the more then, if he is from the People of the Book or if he is a *dhimmi*? Once a funeral procession passed by the Prophet (pbuh) and he stood up. Thereupon someone remarked, "O Messenger of Allah, it is the funeral of a Jew." The Prophet (pbuh) replied, *"Was he not a soul?"*<sup>(3)</sup>

Thus, truly, in Islam every human being has a dignity and a place.

### **The Extension of Islam's Universal Mercy Even to Animals**

The universal mercy of Islam embraces not only human beings, whether Muslims, People of the Book, or unbelievers, but all other living creatures of Allah as well. Accordingly, Islam prohibits cruelty against animals. Thirteen hundred years before any societies for the prevention of cruelty against animals were established, Islam made kindness towards animals a part of its faith and cruelty against them a sufficient reason for a person to be thrown into the Fire.

The Prophet (pbuh) related to his Companions the story of a man who found a dog panting with thirst. The man went down into a well, filled his shoes with water which he gave to the dog, and continued to do so until the dog's thirst was quenched. The Prophet (pbuh) said, *"Then Allah praised his (deed) by forgiving him (his sins)."* The Companions asked, "Is there a reward for us in relation to animals, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied *"There is a reward in (relation to) every living creature."*<sup>(4)</sup>

Side by side with this radiant picture of Allah's forgiveness and pleasure, the Prophet (pbuh) drew another picture depicting Allah's anger and punishment. He said,

*"A woman was sent to the Fire because of a cat. She imprisoned it and neither fed it nor set it free to feed upon the rodents of the earth."*<sup>(5)</sup>

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1. The then ruler of Abyssinia who was Christian but secretly embraced Islam. (Translator)

2. Narrated by Ahmad and At-Tabarani.

3. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

4. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

5. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

Respect for Allah's living creature reached such an extent that when the Prophet (pbuh) saw a donkey with a branded face, he denounced such a practice saying,

*"By Allah! I would not brand (an animal) except on the part of its body farthest from its face."*<sup>(1)</sup>

In another report, someone passed by the Prophet (pbuh) with a donkey with a branded face, so he said,

*"Have you not heard that I have cursed anyone who brands an animal on its face or who hits it on its face?"*<sup>(2)</sup>

We have already mentioned that when Ibn `Umar saw some people practicing archery using a hen as a target, he said, "The Prophet (pbuh) cursed anyone who makes a living thing into a target."

And Ibn `Abbas said the Prophet (pbuh) forbade that animals be made to fight each other, since people would goad animals into fighting each other until one of them was pecked or gored to death, or close to it. Ibn `Abbas also reported that the Prophet (pbuh) strongly condemned the castration of animals.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Qur'an condemned the Arabs of *Jahiliyyah* for their slitting the ears of cattle, calling this a practice inspired by Satan. (An-Nisa': 119)

In relation to the method of slaughtering an animal, we have already pointed out that Islam insists that the manner of slaughter should be that which is least painful to the animal and its requiring that the knife be sharpened but not in front of the animal. Islam also prohibits the slaughtering of one animal in front of another. Never, prior to Islam, had the world witnessed such concern for animals, a concern which is beyond its imagination.

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1. Narrated by Muslim.

2. Narrated by Abu Dawud.

3. Narrated by Al-Bazzar on sound authority.