

## Islamic readings

### CHARITY AND HOSPITALITY

Giving alms to the poor and hospitality to strangers are traditional virtues encouraged by all religions. A relationship to the Highest Good naturally builds a bond among all members of the community--for all people are as brothers and sisters with the absolute value of (potential) Enlightened Beings or God's children. Giving alms and charity is a concrete expression of this spiritual bond. Along with admonitions to practice charity,

They feed with food the needy wretch, the orphan, and the prisoner, for love of Him, saying, "We wish for no reward nor thanks from you."

*Islam. Qur'an 76.8-9*

Every person's every joint must perform a charity every day the sun comes up: to act justly between two people is a charity; to help a man with his mount, lifting him onto it or hoisting up his belongings onto it is a charity; a good word is a charity; every step you take in prayers is a charity; and removing a harmful thing from the road is a charity.

*Islam. Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi 26*

Be kind to parents, and the near kinsman, and to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbour who is of kin, and to the neighbour who is a stranger, and to the companion at your side, and to the traveller, and to [slaves] that your right hands own. Surely God loves not the proud and boastful such as are niggardly, and bid other men to be niggardly, and themselves conceal the bounty that God has given them.

*Islam. Qur'an 4.36-37*

The gods have not ordained that humans die of hunger;  
even to the well-fed man death comes in many shapes.  
The wealth of the generous man never wastes away,  
but the niggard has none to console him.

He who, possessed of food, hardens his heart  
against the weak man, hungry and suffering,  
who comes to him for help, though of old he helped him--  
surely he finds none to console him.

He is liberal who gives to anyone who asks for alms,  
to the homeless, distressed man who seeks food;  
success comes to him in the challenge of battle,  
and for future conflicts he makes an ally.

He is no friend who does not give to a friend,  
to a comrade who comes imploring for food;  
let him leave such a man--his is not a home--  
and rather seek a stranger who brings him comfort.

Let the rich man satisfy one who seeks help;  
and let him look upon the long view:  
For wealth revolves like the wheels of a chariot,  
coming now to one, now to another.

In vain does the mean man acquire food;  
it is--I speak the truth--verily his death;  
he who does not cherish a comrade or a friend,  
who eats all alone, is all sin.

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Whoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, Allah will remove from him one of the griefs on the Day of Judgment. Whosoever alleviates the lot of a needy person, Allah will alleviate his lot in this world and the next. Whosoever shields a Muslim, Allah will shield him in this world and the next. Allah will aid a servant of His so long as the servant aids his brother.

*Islam. Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi 36*

Universe!" He will say, "Did you not know that My servant so-and-so was ill and yet you did not visit him? Did you not know that if you had visited him you soon would have found Me with him?"

*Islam. Hadith of Muslim*

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Let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day be generous to his neighbour, and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day be generous to his guest.

*Islam. Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi 15*

According to Abu Hurairah, a man came to find the Prophet and the latter asked his wives for something to give him to eat. "We have absolutely nothing," they replied, "except water." "Who wants to share his meal with this man?" asked the Prophet. A man of the Companions then said, "I." Then he led this man to his wife and said to her, "Treat generously the guest of the Messenger of God." She replied, "We have nothing except our children's supper." "Oh, well," he replied, "get your meal ready, light your lamp, and when your children want supper, put them to bed." So the woman prepared the meal, lit the lamp, put the children to bed, then, getting up as if to trim the lamp, she extinguished it. The Companion and his wife then made as if to eat, but in fact they spent the night with empty stomachs. The next day when the Companion went to find the Messenger of God, the latter said to him, "This night God smiled." It was then that God revealed these words, "and they prefer the others before themselves, although there be indigence among them" [Qur'an 59.9].

*Islam. Hadith of Bukhari*