

Understanding our responsibility BS Foad, MD 2012

What does responsibility mean?

Masouleyya or feeling our responsibility means that we are obligated to do certain things and we are responsible for it, or in other words accountable. Therefore responsibility means:

- We do what we are responsible for doing
- Understanding that we are accountable for what we do

Man is responsible in many spheres:

- 1-Responsibility towards Allah: to know Him and to worship Him and to serve Him and to get close to Him and to seek His pleasure
- 2-Responsibility towards our families: by being a leader and setting a good example and being just and good in treating our families
- 3-Responsibility towards our work: being honest and competent and doing the work to the best of our ability
- 4-Responsibility towards the community that we live in: by being a useful member and by working with others to improve the life of everyone in our community

Responsibility towards Allah

The Qur'an refers to this as Amana (Trust).

We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; - he was indeed unjust and foolish; -

Al-Ahzab 33: 72

Mankind was entrusted to be God's representative on earth, and as such to be in charge and to take care of God's creation. We understand that we are charged with this Amana not to spoil or corrupt things but to improve life, and we understand that we are accountable for what we do.

Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good.

Al-Araf 7: 56

God gave us our intellect and senses and abilities in order that we may carry on our responsibility

It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection: that ye may give thanks (to Allah).

An-Nahl 16: 78

Allah subjected everything on earth to the use of man:

Do ye not see that Allah has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen? Yet there are among men those who dispute about Allah, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a Book to enlighten them!

Luqman 31: 20

Man is responsible and accountable for his actions:

Therefore, by thy Lord, We will, of a surety, call them to account,

Al-Hijr 15: 92

For all their deeds.

Al-Hijr 15: 93

And

"Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)?"

Al-Mumenoun 23:115

Allah knows everything that we do. We are accountable for what we say and for what we do

Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him, ready (to note it).

Qa F 50: 18

And

Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it!

Az-Zulzala 99: 6

And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it.

Az-Zulzala 99: 7

We are also responsible for our senses:

And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).

Al-Isra'a 17: 36

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized four areas that each human being is responsible and accountable for:

1-His whole life: what did he do?

2-His youth: when he had energy and creativity: did he use this blessing correctly
Or did he abuse it

3-His wealth: did he hoard his money or use it only for selfish pleasures or
Did he use it to help those who needed help?

4-His knowledge and wisdom: did he share and teach it to others, or did he hide
It?

(After death every human being will be asked on the Day of Judgment to account for four things: about his whole life: what did he do? And about his youth: did he abuse it? And about his money: how did he earn it, and how did he spend it? And about his knowledge: did he spread useful knowledge or keep it to himself?)

Termedhi

This responsibility is an individual responsibility. Each person is responsible and accountable for his deeds only and does not carry the burden of someone else

Who receiveth guidance, receiveth it for his own benefit: who goeth astray doth so to his own loss: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another: nor would We visit with Our Wrath until We had sent a Messenger (to give warning).

Al-Isra'a 17: 15

And

Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds.

Al-Muddathirr 74: 38

And

Say: "Ye shall not be questioned as to our sins, nor shall we be questioned as to what ye do."

Sa Ba 34: 25

Allah rewards those who do good and punishes those who abuse their trust and do wrong

For those who reject Allah is a terrible Penalty: but for those who believe and work righteous deeds, is Forgiveness, and a magnificent Reward.

Fatir 35: 7

In addition to the individual responsibility there is a collective responsibility in which as members of a community we are charged with certain responsibilities. We need to inform and guide others to what is right, and we need to take care of the poor and needy and the sick and disadvantaged among our community.

Nor should the Believers all go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil).

At-Tawba 9: 122

And

And fear tumult or oppression, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong: and know that Allah is strict in punishment.

Al-Anfal 8: 25

If we guide to something useful we are rewarded, but if we mislead others we incur their sin. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Whoever guides to something good he will get the reward of those who follow him, without decreasing their own reward; and whoever guides to something wrong he will incur the sin of those who follow him, without decreasing their own sins)

Ahmad & Muslim

Despite our shortcomings and our sins Allah forgives again and again. He also multiplies our good deeds

"But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgives again and again, to those who repent, believe, and do right, who, in fine, are ready to receive true guidance."

Ta Ha 20: 82

And

He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit: he that doeth evil shall only be recompensed according to his evil: no wrong shall be done unto (any of) them.

Al-Ana'm 6: 160

And

If any does good, the reward to him is better than his deed; but if any does evil, the doers of evil are only punished (to the extent) of their deeds.

Al-Qasas 28: 84

Responsibility towards our families

Each person in the family is responsible and accountable. The man is responsible as well as the woman and each has his role and must shoulder his/ her responsibility. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Everyone of you is a guardian and each is responsible and accountable for those under his care. The leader is supposed to guide his people and he is responsible and is accountable for those under his authority. The man is responsible to guide his family and he is accountable for his family. And the woman is a guardian in her home and is accountable for her family)

Bokhari & Muslim

Responsibility towards our community

We can summarize this responsibility as:

- 1-To abide by the laws that govern this community
- 2-To help and work with and cooperate with others
- 3-To spread useful knowledge

The Qur'an emphasizes these concepts:

Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour: fear Allah: for Allah is strict in punishment.

Al-Maeda 5: 2

And

(They are) those who, if We establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid wrong: with Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs.

Al-Hajj 22: 41

Those who are in a position of power and authority should be humble and understand their responsibility of leadership. Their duty is to govern and set an example of righteous behavior and listen to others and seek council.

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

(Any leader who closes his door and prevents those who are needy and who have complaints from being able to see him and explain their distress till Allah will close the gates of heaven and not listen to his needs and complaints)

Termedhi

In another Hadeeth the Prophet (PBUH) emphasized the sin of those leaders who cheat or mislead their subjects:

(Any servant whom Allah employs to care for his people, if he dies having cheated those under his care, Allah will forbid him the Garden)

Bokhari & Muslim

We should serve as good examples to others in our community in the way we behave and in our character. The young especially need role models and it is important to lead by example.

Only those who are capable should serve as leaders because it is a trust between those leading and their community. When Abi Dhurr asked Allah's messenger (PBUH) to employ him his reply was:

(O Aba Dhurr you are a weak person and such is a trust and responsibility. On the Day of Judgment it can be humiliation and regret, unless it is done properly and such responsibility discharged)

Muslim

Understanding our responsibility

BS Foad, MD 2012

Responsibility means that we do what is required and understand that we are accountable

We are responsible in several aspects

1-Responsibility to serve Allah

Man accepted the trust (Amana) to carry on his obligations and to be God's representative on earth. *"We indeed did offer the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof; but man undertook it, he was indeed unjust and foolish"*

Al-Ahzab 33:72

God subjected everything on earth to serve mankind

"Do you not see that Allah has subjected all things in the heavens and on earth to your use, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, both seen and unseen" Luqman 31: 20

Man is responsible and accountable for his actions

"Therefore, by your Lord, We will surely call them to account for all their deeds" Al-Hijr 15: 92 & 93

"Not a word does he utter, but there is a sentinel by him ready to note it" Qa F 50: 18

"Pursue not that of which you have no knowledge: for every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of feeling in your heart will be inquired into on the Day of Reckoning" Al-Isra'a 17: 36

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (After death every human being will be asked to account for four things on the Day of Judgment: about his whole life, what did he do?; and about his youth, did he abuse it?; and about his money: how did he earn it and how did he spend it; and about his knowledge: what did he do with it?) Termedhi

Individual responsibility: No person carries the burden of another person

"No bearer of burden can bear the burden of another" Al-Isra'a 17: 15

There is also a collective responsibility: we need to inform and educate and help others and set an example *"If a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion and to warn their people when they return to them" At-Tawba 9: 122*

"And fear a trial which affects not only those of you who do wrong" Al-Anfal 8: 25

Responsibility towards our families

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (Everyone one of you is a guardian, and is responsible and accountable for those under his care. The Imam is a guardian and is accountable; and the man is a guardian in his home and is accountable; and the woman is a guardian in her home and is accountable) Bokhari & Muslim

We need to guide and to set an example in our character and behavior

Responsibility in our work: To do the work to the best of our ability and not to cheat others

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (Allah likes that every one of you perfects his work) Ahmad

Responsibility towards our community

-To abide by the laws of the society

-And to help those in need

-And to work with and cooperate with others

- And to spread useful knowledge

"Help one another in righteousness and piety, but not in sin or transgression" Al-Maeda 5: 2

"Those who if We establish them in the land establish regular prayer and give in charity, and enjoin right and forbid evil" Al-Hajj 22: 41

Leaders in the community should be humble and listen to advice and be just and not abuse their authority Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Any leader who closes his door and refuse to listen to the complaint and distress of his subjects Allah will close the gates of heaven and not listen to his needs) Termedhi

Only those who are capable should seek position of power because it is a trust. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told Abu Dhurr: (It is a trust and responsibility, and on Judgment day it can be humiliation and regret unless the work is done properly and the responsibility discharged) Muslim. The Prophet (PBUH) also said: (Any servant whom Allah employs to care for his people, if he dies having cheated them Allah will forbid him the Garden) Bokhari & Muslim