



Imagine a shepherd, entrusted to protect a herd of valuable, pedigree racehorses. Yet, every day, the shepherd allows the horses to roam the countryside unsupervised and unwatched, claiming that “horses need their freedom”.

When a horse is bitten by a rattlesnake and becomes lame in one leg, he casually says, “Oh well! These things happen! Part of growing up!” When a second horse roams off and disappears, never to be seen, he casually brushes it off as “something that horses do from time-to-time”. When a third horse eats a poisonous plant and dies, he says, “There are always these dangers and risks, you know.”

At no point does this shepherd realize or acknowledge and accept that as a shepherd, he is responsible for the safety of the flock and should do everything within his ability to protect them. To allow the flock to roam off into the wilderness, unsupervised and unprotected, is irresponsible and negligent. Thus, he will be held accountable and liable for the damage and harm that befalls the herd.

In the same manner, the hadeeth has referred to every parent as being a shepherd. (*Saheeh Bukhaari #893*)

However, instead of being shepherds to horses or cattle – they are shepherds to their ‘flock’ of children who are far more valuable and important than any livestock.

Hence, just as a responsible, loving shepherd will care for his flock by keeping an eye on them, keeping them close by, etc., caring, loving and responsible parents will likewise keep an eye on their children and keep them close by at all times. They will always be apprised regarding their children’s whereabouts and will ensure that they always remain in good company. If the children are using cell phones or the internet, they will ‘shepherd’ them in that usage as well, ensuring that the rattlesnakes and other dangers of the internet and social media cannot harm them.

In essence, just as parents make a concerted effort for the physical well-being and safety of

their children, it is even more important that they do the same for the Deeni and imaani well-being and safety of their children. In fact, they should do everything within their ability to protect and safeguard the imaan and Deen of their flock.

Sadly, in society today, there is a sentiment among parents that 'kids will be kids' and will be liable to experiment and engage in untoward behaviour. Accordingly, such parents allow their children the freedom to do as they wish with hardly any discipline being exercised or any moral or Deeni values being enforced. In this regard, we must bear in mind that while horses may tend to wander off, or try to nibble from the wrong bush, or disturb a rattlesnake – it is the shepherd who will be blamed and held responsible for being negligent and not safeguarding the flock. Thus, the tendencies of the ignorant children do not excuse the parents from knowing better, being responsible and exercising control over them for their own good.

We must bear in mind that one day, we will be made to stand before Allah Ta'ala and account for our flock. Thus, before they leave the home, or use the phone, or make friends, we should first ask ourselves whether we can answer for our flock. At no point should we turn a blind eye, allowing them unsupervised use of devices and the freedom to go where they wish and with whom they wish without our prior approval. Remember, it takes just a few moments of negligence for the flock to fall into disaster, but the regret and consequences will haunt the shepherd for a long time thereafter. Hence, the shepherd must remain vigilant and concerned at all times.

May Allah Ta'ala assist us to fulfil our duty as shepherd to our children, and may He safeguard our flocks from all dangers.

*Just as a responsible **shepherd** will care for his **flock** by keeping an eye on them, responsible **parents** will keep an eye on their **children** and will always be **apprised** regarding their **activities** and **whereabouts**.*

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+27 72 566 4856

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