

Chapter 2: Islamic Clemency and Mercy in the Holy Qur'an

With a brief study and reflection on some verses of the Holy Qur'an, we can find numerous examples of the Islamic clemency and mercy in this Divine Book, which is the basis and foundation of this religion.

Ratio of Lenience and Violence in Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an consists of one hundred fourteen Surahs, one hundred thirteen of which start with the phrase, **بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ** ("*In the Name of Allah The Most Compassionate The Most Merciful*") **as** the message of Islamic kindness, mercy and affection, however one Surah does not start with this phrase¹ for a clear reason.

The surah is a notice of war, battle and hate to the obstinate and stubborn enemies of Islam for whom there was no hope of guidance and correction. Obviously, there is no room for talking about affection and mercy when fighting with the vindictive enemy. In other words, the ratio of violence and clemency in the Holy Qur'an is one to one hundred and fourteen. That is to say, clemency and lenience is the basis and violence is an exception. Is it possible then to call a religion, the miracle of which is this Qur'an, as the religion of violence?

Return Evil with Goodness

God says:

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ

"Shall the recompense of goodness be other than goodness?" (55:60)

This verse which is full of affection, clemency and amity is an Islamic motto for Muslims. Surprisingly,

studying other Qur'anic verses, we find that not only instructs to recompense goodness with goodness, but also bids Muslims to reply evil with goodness!

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ ۗ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ

"Repel thou the evil with that which is fairer. We Ourselves know very well what they describe."
(23:96)

O Prophet! Even though the dupes have wronged with you, but you let them return to Islam through kindness and affection.

Does the religion, the logic of which is violence and severity recommend to its prophet to reply others' evil with kindness? Or such religion is the religion of affection, kindness, clemency, tranquility and warmth?

Islamic Clemency even with non-Muslims

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَغْفِرُوا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ أَيَّامَ اللَّهِ لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْمًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

"Say unto those who believe, that they forgive those who do not look for the days of God, that He may recompense people for that they have been earning." (45: 14)

According to the above verse, Islamic clemency and benevolence is not allocated and restricted just to the Muslims and believers. Rather, God instructs Muslims to be kind with non-Muslims too.

Is such religion the religion of violence?

We read in the story of People of Lot that the divine messengers commissioned for punishment appeared to Hazrat Abraham (as) in the shape of strangers. They were commissioned to destroy and ruin the city of People of Lot. Abraham (as) prepared food for them, but none of them touched it. This did not sound good at that time, because when a stranger guest did not touch food, the host was not secure of his evil. On the contrary, if he took food, the host felt tranquility and security. On this account, Abraham (as) conceived fear of them and felt danger, he asked them the reason. They replied: "Don't worry. We are messengers from your Lord who have appeared to you for accomplishment of two missions:

First, we would like to give you the glad tidings of Isaac and after Isaac, of Jacob; although your wife is an old woman and you are an old man too.

Abraham (as) and his wife became very happy and were delighted.

The other is that we are commissioned to extinguish People of Lot who are sinful and evildoer”.

This in contrary to the first news was very distressing and disturbing for Abraham. Then, he negotiated with the divine messengers for deferment or alleviation in punishment of People of Lot, and disputed with them on this.

The angels replied to his request:

يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا ۖ إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ

"O Abraham, turn away from this; thy Lord's command has surely come, and there is coming upon them a chastisement not to be turned back." (11:76)

While People of Lot were one of the most sinful, tainted and dirty of the precedent nations and people, Abraham's (as) clemency and benevolence embraced them, and he was even trying to spend his honor with God for them and intercede for delay or alleviation in their chastisement.

Abraham's (as) charity and lenient attitude is really an exemplary one, and Qur'an and Islam encourage such kindness and benevolence.

Is it acceptable to accuse such religion which is full of clemency, kindness and benevolence to violent? Never!

Prophet's (S) Benevolence, an Attracting Factor for Muslims

One of the miracles of Holy Prophet of Islam (S) is to be soft at heart and bring hearts together:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظًا لَفُضِّسُوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

"It was by mercy of God that thou wast gentle to them; hadst thou been harsh and hard of heart, they would have scattered from about thee." (3: 159)

According to this verse, Prophet's (S) clemency and benevolence (originating from divine mercy) attracted people and their trust to him. We read in verse 63, The Spoils surah:

لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَا أَلْفَتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلْفَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

"Had thou expended all that is in the earth, thou could not have brought their hearts together; but God brought their hearts together; surely He is All-mighty, All-wise." (8:63)

Formation of a powerful Muslim nation from amongst the stubborn and ignorant people, while changing their scattered and spiteful hearts to hearts that are united and kind was a divine miracle.

Therefore, we have not exaggerated if call “bringing hearts together”, uniting the rude and spiteful people and seeding affection, benevolence and intimacy among them as one of the important miracles by Islam Prophet (S).

Is the religion that is bringing hearts together with benevolence and clemency as one of its miracles, the religion of violence?

Peace and Truce, the Basic Islamic Program

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السَّلَامِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

"O believers, enter the peace, all of you, and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you." (2:208)

According to the above verse, peace and truce is a basic Islamic program. It is interesting that Qur'an calls those who arouse dissidence, and seek war and struggle – a follower of Satan. In other words, peace and truce is a divine and merciful attitude, while war, arousing dissidence and violence is a Satanic and devilish one.

Amity and Mercy Are Among the Signs of God

Some verses of Holy Qur'an indicate the signs of God's Magnificence, which is the subject of "Argumentation of Order" in theology:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses, that you might repose in them, and He has set between you love and mercy. Surely in that are signs for a people who consider." (30:21)

Here, “between you” may refer to the spouses. However, it could be applied and extended to all human beings. So, one of the signs of God is that He has brought affection, amity and mercy among all humans.

Right! “Bringing hearts together” is one of the divine signs, because otherwise, social life was not possible.

1. It is interesting that this single case has been compensated somewhere else in the Holy Qur'an, because the phrase بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ, has been repeated two times in the Surah An-Naml, The Ant, n.27.

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