



THE TOLERANCE OF THE PROPHET TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIONS

By [M. Abdulsalam](#) (© 2006 IslamReligion.com)

The dealings of the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, with other religions can best be described in the verse of the Quran:

"To you be your religion, to me be mine."

The Arabian Peninsula during the time of the Prophet was a region in which various faiths were present. There were Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, polytheists, and others not affiliated with any religion. When one looks into the life of the Prophet, one may draw on many examples to portray the high level of tolerance shown to people of other faiths.

In order to understand and judge this tolerance, one must look into the period in which Islam was a formal state, with the specific laws laid down by the Prophet in accordance with the tenets of religion. Even though one can observe many examples of tolerance shown by the Prophet in the thirteen years of his stay in Mecca, one may incorrectly think that it was only due to seeking to raise the profile of the Muslims and the social status of Islam and in general. For this reason, the discussion will be limited to the period which commenced with the migration of the Prophet to Medina, and specifically once the constitution was set.

The Saheefah

The best example of the tolerance shown by the Prophet to other religions may be the constitution itself, called the 'Saheefah' by early historians.^[1] When the Prophet migrated to Medina, his role as a mere religious leader ended; he was now the political leader of a state, governed by the precepts of Islam, which demanded that clear laws of governance be laid out to ensure harmony and stability in a society which once had been distraught by decades of war, one which must ensure the peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Jews, Christians and polytheists. Due to this, the

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Y O U T H C O R N E R

MIRACLES OF THE QURAN



Fourteen centuries ago, God sent down the Qur'an to mankind as a book of guidance. He called upon people to be guided to the truth by adhering to this book. From the day of its revelation to the day of judgement, this last divine book will remain the sole guide for humanity.

The matchless style of the Qur'an and the superior wisdom in it are definite evidence that it is the word of God. In addition, the Qur'an has many miraculous attributes proving that it is a revelation from God. One of these attributes is the fact that a [number](#) of scientific truths that we have only been able to uncover by the technology of the 20th century were stated in the Qur'an 1,400 years ago.

However, the Qur'an is not a book of science, it is a book of Signs! Many scientific facts that are expressed in an extremely concise and profound manner in its verses have only been discovered with the technology of the 20th century. These facts could not have been known at the time of the Qur'an's revelation, and this is still more proof that the Qur'an is the word of God.

In order to understand the scientific miracle of the Qur'an, we must first take a look at the level of science at the time when this holy book was revealed.

In the 7th century, when the Qur'an was revealed, Arab society had many superstitious and groundless beliefs where scientific issues were concerned. Lacking the technology to examine the universe and nature, these early Arabs believed in legends inherited

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from past generations. They supposed, for example, that mountains supported the sky above. They believed that the earth was flat and that there were high mountains at its both ends. It was thought that these mountains were pillars that kept the vault of heaven high above.

However all these superstitious beliefs of Arab society were eliminated with the Qur'an. In Surah Sad, verse 2, it was said: "God is He who raised up the heavens without any support..."(The Qur'an, 38:2). This verse invalidated the belief that the sky remains above because of the mountains. In many other subjects, important facts were revealed at a time when no one could have known them. The Qur'an, which was revealed at a time when people knew very little about astronomy, physics, or biology, contains key facts on a variety of subjects such as the creation of the universe, the creation of the human being, the structure of the atmosphere, and the delicate balances that make life on earth possible.

Some of these scientific miracles revealed in the Qur'an are:

The Earth's Atmosphere

The Quran on Human Embryonic Development

The Qurans on Mountains

The Quran on the Origin of the Universe

The Quran on the Cerebrum

The Quran on Seas and Rivers

The Quran on Deep Seas and Internal Waves

The Quran on Clouds

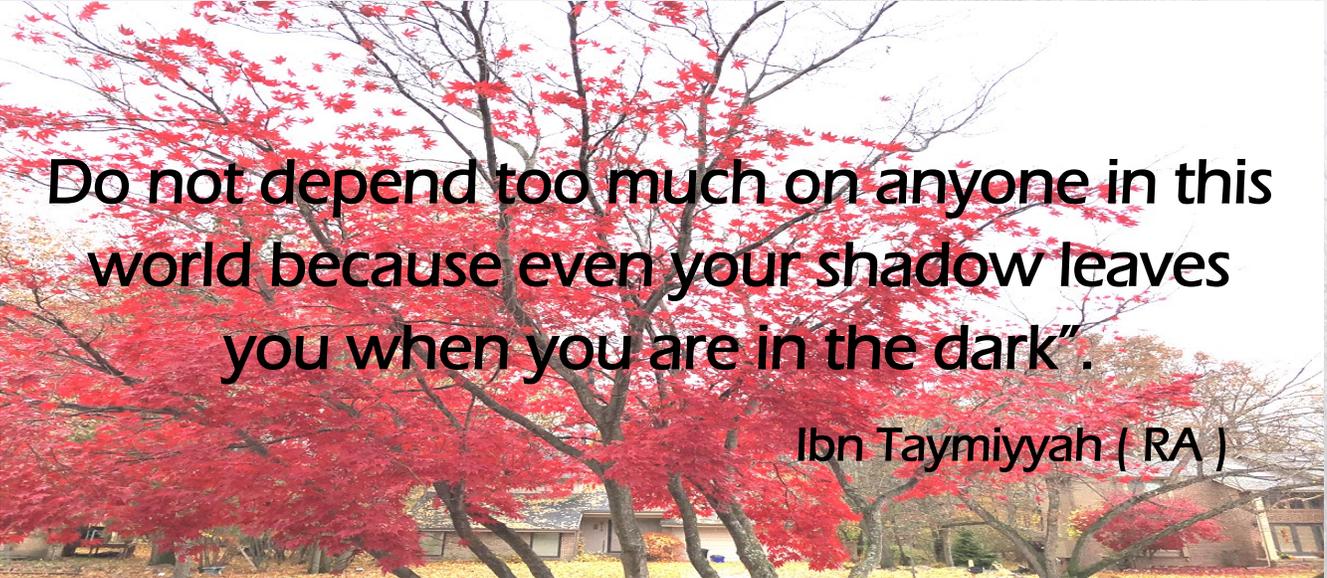
Scientists' Comments on the Scientific Miracles in the Holy Quran

The Miracle of Iron

The Quran on the Expanding Universe and the Big Bang Theory

The Victory of the Romans and the Lowest Point on Earth

The Seven Earths



Do not depend too much on anyone in this world because even your shadow leaves you when you are in the dark".

Ibn Taymiyyah (RA)

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Prophet laid down a 'constitution' which detailed the responsibilities of all parties which resided in Medina, their obligations towards each other, and certain restrictions which were placed on each. All parties were to obey what was mentioned therein, and any breach of its articles was regarded as an act of treachery.

One Nation

The first article of the constitution was that all the inhabitants of Medina, the Muslims as well as those who had entered the pact from the Jews, Christian, and idolaters, were **"one nation to the exclusion of all others."** All were considered members and citizens of Medina society regardless of religion, race, or ancestry. People of other faiths were protected from harm as much as the Muslims, as is stated in another article, **"To the Jews who follow us belong help and equity. He shall not be harmed nor his enemies be aided."** Previously, each tribe had their alliances and enemies within and without Medina. The Prophet gathered these different tribes under one system of governance which upheld pacts of alliances previously in existence between those individual tribes. All tribes had to act as a whole with disregard to individual alliances. Any attack on other religion or tribe was considered an attack on the state and upon the Muslims as well.

The lives of the practitioners of other religions in the Muslim society was also given protective status. The Prophet said:

"Whoever kills a person who has a truce with the Muslims will never smell the fragrance of Paradise." (Saheeh Muslim)

Since the upper hand was with the Muslims, the Prophet strictly warned against any maltreatment of people of other faiths. He said:

"Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment." (Abu Dawud)

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To Each Their Own Religion

In another article, it states, **“the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs.”** In this, it is clear that anything other than tolerance would not be tolerated, and that, although all were members of a society, each had their separate religion which could not be violated. Each was allowed to practice their beliefs freely without any hindrances, and no acts of provocation would be tolerated.

There are many other articles of this constitution which may be discussed, but emphasis will be placed on an article which states, **“If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise, it must be referred to God and His Messenger.”** This clause maintained that all inhabitants of the state must recognize a higher level of authority, and in those matters which involved various tribes and religions, justice could not be meted out by individual leaders; rather it must be adjudicated by the leader of the state himself or his designated representatives. It was allowed, however, for individual tribes who were not Muslims, to refer to their own religious scriptures and their learned men in regards to their own personal affairs. They could though, if they opted, ask the Prophet to judge between them in their matters. God says in the Quran:

“...If they do come to you, either judge between them or decline to interfere...” (Quran 5:42)

Here we see that the Prophet allowed each religion to judge in their own matters according to their own scriptures, as long as it did not stand in opposition to articles of the constitution, a pact which took into [account](#) the greater benefit of the peaceful co-existence of the society.

There are many other examples during the lifetime of the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, in addition to the Saheefah that practically portray the tolerance Islam shows for other religions.

Freedom of Religious Assembly and Religious Autonomy

Given consent by the constitution, the Jews had the complete freedom to practice their religion. The Jews in Medina at the time of the Prophet had their own school of learning,

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named **Bait-ul-Midras**, where they would recite the Torah, worship and educate themselves.

The Prophet emphasized in many letters to his emissaries that religious institutions should not be harmed. Here in a letter addressed to his emissary to the religious leaders of Saint Catherine in Mount Sinai who has sought the protection of the Muslims:

“This is a message from Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by God! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their [jobs](#) nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims’ houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God’s covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure [charter](#) against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray. Their churches are declared to be protected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world).”[2]

As one can see, this Charter consisted of several clauses covering all important aspects of human rights, including such topics as the protection of minorities living under Islamic rule, freedom of worship and movement, freedom to appoint their own judges and to own and maintain their property, exemption from military service, and the right to protection in war.

On another occasion, the Prophet received a delegation of sixty Christians from the region of Najran, then a part of Yemen, at his mosque. When the time for their prayer came, they faced the direction of east and prayed. The Prophet ordered that they be left in their state and not harmed.

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Politics

There are also examples in the life of the Prophet in which he cooperated with people of other faiths in the political arena as well. He selected a non-Muslim, Amr-ibn Umaiya-ad-Damri, as an ambassador to be sent to Negus, the King of Ethiopia.

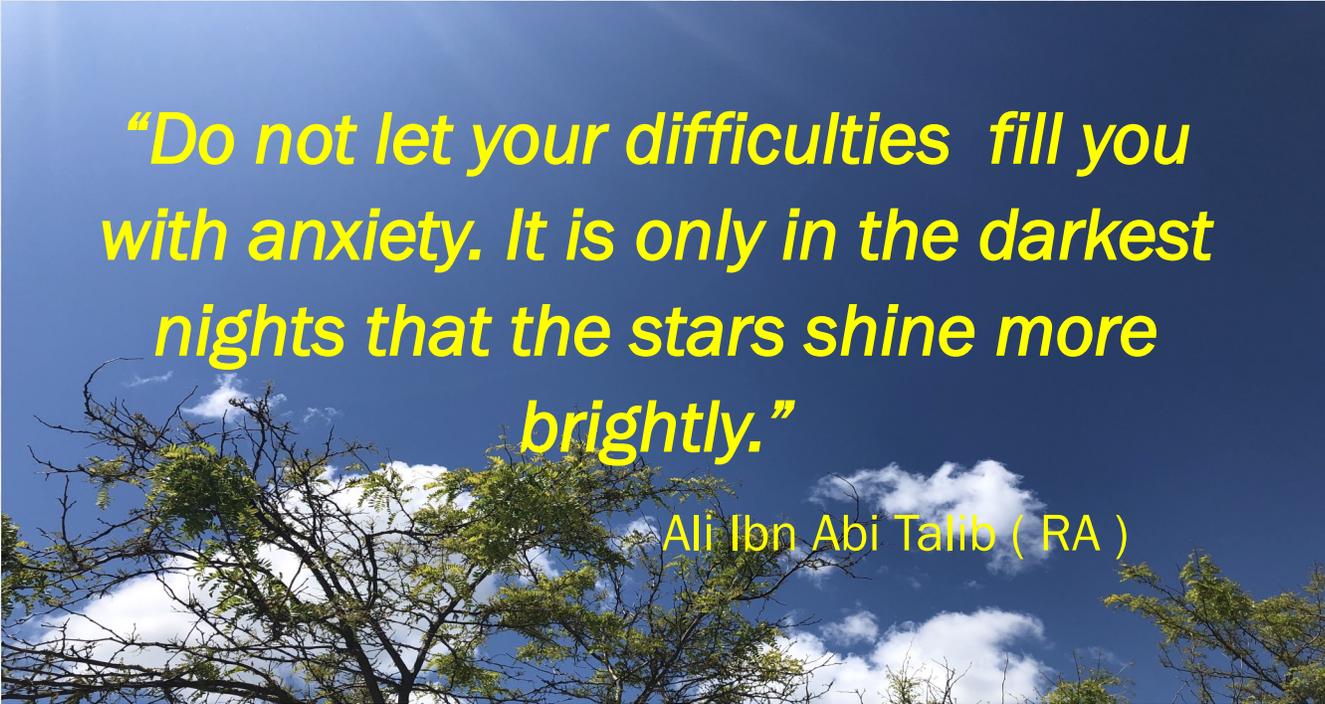
These are only some of the examples of the Prophet's tolerance of other faiths. Islam recognizes that there are a plurality of religions on this earth, and gives the right to individuals to choose the path which they believe to be true. Religion is not to be, and was never, forced upon an individual against their own will, and these examples from the life of the Prophet are an epitome of the verse of the Quran which promotes religious tolerance and sets the guideline for the Muslims' interaction with people of other faiths. God says:

"... There is no compulsion in religion..." (Quran 2:256)

FOOTNOTES:

[1] *Madinan Society at the Time of the Prophet*, Akram Diya al-Umari, International Islamic Publishing House, 1995.

[2] *"Muslim and Non-Muslims, Face-to-Face"*, Ahmad Sakr. Foundation for Islamic Knowledge, Lombard



"Do not let your difficulties fill you with anxiety. It is only in the darkest nights that the stars shine more brightly."

Ali Ibn Abi Talib (RA)

ISLAM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

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**God instructs men to be nice to their wives and to treat them well to the best of their ability:
"And [live](#) with them in kindness..." (Quran 4:19)**

The Messenger of God said, The most perfect of believers in belief is the best of them in character. The best of you are those who are the best to their women. The Prophet of Mercy tells us that a husband's treatment of his wife reflects a Muslim's good character, which in turn is a reflection of the man's faith.

Women in Islam are thought to be subjugated, degraded, oppressed - but are they really?

Are millions of Muslims simply that oppressive or are these misconceptions fabricated by a biased media?

"And for women are rights over men, similar to those of men over women." Qur'an 2:228

Over fourteen hundred years ago, Islam gave women rights that women in the West have only recently began to enjoy. In the 1930's, Annie Besant observed, "It is only in the last twenty years that Christian England has recognised the right of woman to property, while Islam has allowed this right from all times. It is a slander to say that Islam preaches that women have no souls." (The Life and Teachings of Mohammed, 1932).

Men and women all descended from a single person - the Prophet Adam (peace be upon him). Islam does not accept for either of them anything but justice and kind treatment.

Equal Reward & Equal Accountability

Men and women worship Allah in the same way, meaning they worship the same God (Allah), perform the same acts of worship, follow the same scripture, and hold the same beliefs. Allah (the Arabic word for the One true God of all creation), judges all human beings fairly and equitably. Allah emphasises the just treatment and [reward](#) due to both men and women in many verses of the Qur'an:

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"Allah has promised to the believers, men and women, gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss."Qur'an 9:72

"Never will I allow the loss of the work of any worker amongst you, male or female; you are of one another."Qur'an 3:195

These verses show that reward is dependent upon one's actions and not one's gender. Gender does not play any part in how a person is rewarded and judged.

If we compare Islam to other religions, we see that it offers justice between the sexes. For example, Islam dismisses the idea that Eve is more to blame than Adam for eating from the forbidden tree. According to Islam, Adam and Eve both sinned, they both repented and God forgave them both.

Equal Right to Knowledge

Both men and women are equally encouraged to seek knowledge. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Education is compulsory for every Muslim."

Also, great female Muslim Scholars existed at and around the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Some were from his family and others were his companions or their daughters. Prominent amongst them was Aisha, the wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him) through whom a quarter of the Islamic law has been transmitted.

Other females were great scholars of jurisprudence and had famous male scholars as their students.

Equal Right to Choose a Spouse

Islam has honoured women by giving them the right to choose a spouse and keep their original family name once married. Additionally, many have the impression that parents force their daughters into marriage. This is a cultural practice, and has no basis in Islam. In fact, it is prohibited.

At the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), a woman came to him and said, "My father has married me to my cousin to raise his social standing and I was forced into it." The Prophet sent for the girl's father and then in his presence gave the girl the option of remaining married or nullifying the marriage. She responded, "O Messenger of Allah, I have accepted what my father did, but I wanted to show other women (that they could not be forced into a marriage)."

Equal yet Different

While men and women have equal rights as a general principle, the specific rights and responsibilities granted to them are not identical. Men and women have complementary rights and responsibilities.

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Aside from external and internal anatomical differences, scientists know there are many other subtle differences in the way the brains of men and women process language, information and emotion, just to mention a few.

A socio-biology expert, Edward O. Wilson of Harvard University, said that females tend to be higher than males in verbal skills, empathy and social skills, among other things, while men tend to be higher in independence, dominance, spatial and mathematical skills, rank-related aggression, and other characteristics.

It would be foolish to treat both genders the same and to ignore their differences. Islam teaches that men and women have complementary, yet different, roles because it is best suited to their nature. God says:

"And the male is not like the female."Qur'an 3:36

"Does not the One who created, know? And He is the Most Kind, the All Aware."Qur'an 67:14

The Family Unit

God created men and women to be different, with unique roles, skills and responsibilities. These differences are not viewed as evidences of superiority or inferiority, but of specialisation. In Islam, the family is of central importance. The man is responsible for the financial well being of the family while the woman contributes to the family's physical, educational and emotional well being. This encourages cooperation rather than competition. By fulfilling their mutual responsibilities, strong families are created and hence strong societies.

Also, emotionally, neither men nor women live a happy life without one another. Allah describes this beautifully by saying:

"They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them."Qur'an 2:187

Clothing provides comfort, warmth and security as well as making one look good - this is how the relationship between the husband and wife is defined in Islam.

Love & Mercy in Spousal Relations

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also encouraged men to treat their spouses in the best way, "The best of you are those who are best (in treatment) to their wives."

"And among His signs is that He created for you wives amongst yourselves that you may dwell in

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tranquillity with them; and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts). Surely in this are Signs for people who reflect."Qur'an 30:21

Aisha (the Prophet's wife) was once asked how the Prophet's conduct was in his home. She said, "He was like one of you at [home](#), yet he was most lenient and most generous ... He was ready to give a helping hand to his wives in the ordinary work of the house, [he] sewed his own clothes and mended his own [shoes](#)." In general, he helped in whatever work his wives did.

Lofty Positions of Mothers & Daughters

A mother has the greatest influence on a child especially in the earlier years through her affection, care and love. Undoubtedly, the success of a society is due to mothers. Therefore, it is only right for Islam to honour and raise their status.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And we have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his Parents, His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship."Qur'an 46:15

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was once asked, "O Messenger of Allah, who among people is most deserving of my good treatment?" He said, "Your mother." The man asked twice more, "Then who?" and was given the same response. Only until the fourth time did the Prophet respond, "Then your father." Reward is not only given to the good and kind treatment towards mothers. In fact, Islam has designated a special reward for raising daughters that is not granted for raising sons.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever Allah has given two daughters and is kind towards them, they will be a reason for him entering Paradise."

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Conclusion

Before Islam, women were considered shameful, female children were buried alive, prostitution was rampant, divorce was only in the hands of the husband, inheritance was only for the strong, and oppression was widespread. Islam came and abolished these practices. Even now, in "developed countries", women are not granted respect, dignity and honour, let alone equal pay for equal work. Islam, however, regards women as precious and valuable, not to be disrespected or disgraced. The mistreatment of women in some Middle-Eastern countries or Muslim families is due to cultural factors that some Muslims wrongly follow, not because of Islam. Why would many women around the world willingly enter Islam if it is an oppressive religion?

We end with the words of our Lord and your Lord, the Creator and Sustainer of all men and women:

"Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obedient men and the obedient women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women - Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward."Qur'an 33:35



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The Arabic word "ALLAH" also contains a deep religious message due to its root meaning and origin. This is because it stems from the Arabic verb ta'allaha (or alaha), which means "to be worshipped". Thus in Arabic, the word "ALLAH" means "The One who deserves all worship". This, in a nutshell, is the Pure Monotheistic (one) message of Islam.

ALLAH...

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Some of The biggest misconceptions that many non-Muslims have about Islam have to do with the word "ALLAH".

For various reasons, many people have come to believe that Muslims worship a different God than Christians and Jews. This is totally false, since "ALLAH" is simply that Arabic word for "God" - and there is only One God. Muslims worship the God of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus - peace be upon them all. However, it is certainly true that Jews, Christians and Muslims all have different concepts of Almighty God.

For example, Muslims - like Jews - reject the Christians beliefs of the Trinity and the Divine Incarnation.

First of all, it is important to note that "ALLAH" is the same word that Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews use for God. If you pick up an Arabic Bible, you will see the word "ALLAH" being used where "God" is used in English. This is because "ALLAH" is the only word in the Arabic language equivalent to the English word "God".

Additionally, the word "ALLAH" CANNOT be made plural or given a gender, which goes hand in hand with the Islamic concept of God. If we were to use the name God, it can be made into plurals and given gender, i.e. god's, goddess, etc.

The Aramaic word "El", which is the word for God in the Language that Jesus (pbuh) used and spoke, is certainly more similar in sound to the word "ALLAH" than the English word "God". This also holds true for the various Hebrew words for God, which are "El" and "Elah", and the plural [form](#) "Elohim". The reason for these similarities is that Aramaic, Hebrew and Arabic are all Semitic languages (Sister Languages), with common origins.

Translating the Bible into English, the Hebrew word "El" is translated variously as "God", "god" and "angel"! This imprecise language allows different [translators](#), based on their preconceived notions, to translate the word to fit their own views. The Arabic Word "ALLAH" on the other hand presents no such difficulty, since it is only used for The Almighty God alone.

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