



THE PLEASURES OF PARADISE

By M. Abdulsalam (© 2006 IslamReligion.com)

The reality of Paradise is something which people will never be able to understand until they actually enter it, but God has shown us glimpses of it in the Quran. He has described it as a place essentially different to the life of this world, both in the very nature and purpose of life, as well as the types of delights which people will enjoy therein. The Quran tells people about Paradise, which God offers to them, describes its great blessings, and proclaims its beauties to everyone. It informs people that Paradise is one of two ways of life prepared for them in the afterworld, and that every good thing will be theirs in Paradise to a degree that surpasses our present ability to imagine. It also shows that Paradise is a place where all blessings have been created perfectly and where people will be offered everything their souls and hearts will desire, and that people will be far removed from want and need, anxiety or sadness, sorrow and regret. Every kind of beauty and blessing exists in Paradise and will be revealed with a perfection never seen or known before. God has prepared such blessings there as a gift, and these will be offered only to people with whom He is pleased.

But what is the nature of these delights in Paradise, and how will it be different from the delights of this world? We will try to highlight a few of these differences.

Pure delight without pain and suffering:

While people in this world experience some delight, they also face much toil and suffering. If one was to scrutinize the life which they live, they will find that the amount of hardship they face is much more than the ease and comfort. As for the life of the Hereafter, there will be neither hardship nor suffering in it, and people will live therein in pure joy and delight. All the causes of sorrow, pain and suffering which people experience in this life will be absent in the Hereafter. Let's take a look at some of these causes.

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YOUTH CORNER

THE TOLERANCE OF THE PROPHET TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIONS

By M. Abdulsalam (© 2006 IslamReligion.com)

TO EACH THEIR OWN RELIGION

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.

Continued on page.....3

Continued from page.....2

Due to this, the 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)

Continued on page.....9

Continued from page.....1

Wealth:

When one thinks of success in this life, they usually conjure the image of big houses, fine jewelry and clothing, and expensive [cars](#); [financial](#) stability is seen to be the key to a happy life. To most people, success is inseparably related to wealth, even though this is the furthest from the truth. How many times have we seen the wealthiest of people living such miserable lives, that it sometimes even leads them to commit suicide! Wealth is something which humans in their very nature desire at any cost, and this desire has been created for a great and wise purpose. When this desire is not satiated, it causes some extent of grief in a person. For this reason, God has promised the inhabitants of Paradise that they will have all that they imagined as far as wealth and belongings are concerned, both for those who were extremely poor, experiencing even hunger and thirst, to those well-to-do but who desired even more. God gives us a glimpse of this when he says:

“... there will be there all that the souls could desire, all that the eyes could delight in ...” (Quran 43:71)

“Eat and drink at ease for that which you have sent forth (good deeds) in days past!” (Quran 69:24)

“... They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade. They will recline therein on raised thrones. How good [is] the recompense! How beautiful a couch [is there] to recline on!” (Quran 18:31)

Disease and Death

Another cause of pain and suffering in this life is the death of a loved one or disease, which are both non-existent in Paradise. None will feel any sickness or pain in Paradise. The Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said about the people of Paradise:

“They will never fall ill, blow their noses or spit.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

Continued on page.....5

Continued from page.....4

None will die in Paradise. All shall live eternally enjoying the pleasures therein. The Prophet Muhammad said that a caller will call out in Paradise when people enter it:

“Indeed may you be healthy and never be sick again, may you live and never die again, may you be young and never grow feeble again, may you enjoy, and never feel sorrow and regret again.” (Saheeh Muslim)

Social Relationships

As for the remorse felt due to a rift in personal relationships, people will never hear any evil or hurting comments or speech in Paradise. They will only hear good words and words of peace. God says:

“They will not hear therein ill speech or commission of sin. But only the saying of: Peace! Peace!” (Quran 56:25-26)

There will be no enmity between people nor ill-feelings:

“And We shall remove from their breasts any (mutual) hatred or sense of injury (which they had, if at all, in the life of this world)...” (Quran 7:43)

The Prophet said:

“There will be no hatred or resentment among them, their hearts will be as one, and they will glorify God, morning and evening.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

People will have the best of companions in the Hereafter, who were also the best people in the world:

“And whoever obeys God and the Messenger – those will be with the ones upon whom God has bestowed favor – of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions!” (Quran 4:69)

The hearts of the people of Paradise will be pure, their speech will be good, their deeds righteous. There will be no hurtful, upsetting, offensive or provocative talk there, for Paradise is free of all worthless words and deeds.

Continued on page6

Continued from page5

If we were to discuss all the causes for anguish in this life, we would surely find its absence or opposite to be true in Paradise.

The Eternalness of the Hereafter

The Pleasures of this world are transient whilst the joys of the hereafter are lasting and eternal. In this life when a person enjoys something, it is only a short while before they get bored with it and proceed to search for something they feel is better, or they may not feel a need for it altogether. As for the delights of Paradise, a person will never feel bored with anything, but rather, its goodness will increase each time they indulge in it.

Also, the life of this world is very short. Humans only live on this earth for a short while, and very few people reach the age of seventy.

“... Say: Short is the enjoyment of this world. The Hereafter is (far) better for him who fears God...” (Quran 4:77)

As for Paradise, people will live forever. God says:

“...its provision is eternal and so is its shade...” (Quran 13:35)

“What is with you must vanish, and what is with God will endure ...” (Quran 16:96)

“(It will be said to them): This is Our Provision, which will never finish” (Quran 38:54)

Superior Delights

The delights of the people of Paradise, such as their clothing, food, drink, jewelry and palaces, will be far superior to their counterparts in this world. There is in fact no room for comparison, as even the smallest space in Paradise is better than this world and all that is in it. The Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:

“The space of the bow of any one of you in Paradise is better than all that the sun rises upon” (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh 3/85, no. 5615)

Continued on page.....7

Continued from page.....6

Free from all Impurities

Paradise is free from all the impurities of this world. Eating and drinking in this life results in the need for excretion and its associated unpleasant odors. If a person drinks wine in this world, he loses his mind. Women in this world menstruate and give birth, which are sources of [pain](#) and hurt. Paradise is free from all of these discomforts: its people will not urinate, defecate, spit or suffer from catarrh. The wine of Paradise, as described by its Creator, is:

“Crystal-white, delicious to those who drink (thereof), free from intoxication, nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom” (Quran 37:46-47)

The water of Paradise does not become brackish, and its milk never changes in flavor:

“...rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes...” (Quran 47:15)

The women of Paradise are pure and free from menstruation, postnatal bleeding and all the other impurities suffered by women in this world, and all are free from stool and feces. God says:

“...and they shall have therein purified mates...” (Quran 2:25)

The prophet answered a person when they asked how the people of Paradise will relieve themselves:

“They relieve themselves by perspiring through their skins, and its fragrance will be that of musk, and all stomachs will have become lean.” (ibn Hibbaan)

What we have mentioned has been a mere comparison in order to understand the nature of Paradise, but as God said, its delights are truly hidden:

“No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy, as a [reward](#) for what they used to do.” (Quran 32:17)

Paradise: There is Nothing Like It

The delights of Paradise surpass the imagination and defy description. They are like nothing known to the people of this world; no matter how advanced we may become, what we achieve is as nothing in comparison with the joys of the Hereafter. As is mentioned in several reports, there is nothing like Paradise:

Continued on page.....8

Continued from page.....7



“It is sparkling light, aromatic plants, a lofty palace, a flowing river, ripe fruit, a beautiful wife and abundant clothing, in an eternal abode of radiant joy, in beautiful soundly-constructed high houses”. (Ibn Maaajah, Ibn Hibbaan)

The Sahabah asked the Prophet about the buildings of Paradise and he replied with a wonderful description:

“Bricks of gold and silver, and mortar of fragrant musk, pebbles of pearl and sapphire, and soil of saffron. Whoever enters it is filled with joy and will never feel miserable; he will live there forever and never die; their clothes will never wear out and their youth will never fade.” (Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, ad-Daarimee)

God says:

“And when you look there (in Paradise) you will see a delight (that cannot be imagined), and a great dominion.” (Quran 76:20)

What God has kept hidden from us the delights of Paradise is beyond our ability to comprehend. The Prophet said that God said:

“I have prepared for My slaves what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart can imagine.” Recite if you wish:

“No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do.” (Quran 32:17)

In another report:

“Never mind what God has told you; what He has not told you is even greater.” (Saheeh Muslim)

In other articles, we will attempt to mention some of the specific details of Paradise and the delights therein described to us by God and His last Prophet.



Continued from page.....3

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.

RELIGIOUS AUTONOMY AND POLITICS

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

Continued on page.....10

Continued from page.....9

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.

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 Umayyah-ad-Damri, as an ambassador to be sent to Negus, the King of Ethiopia.

Continued on page.....11.

Continued from page.....10

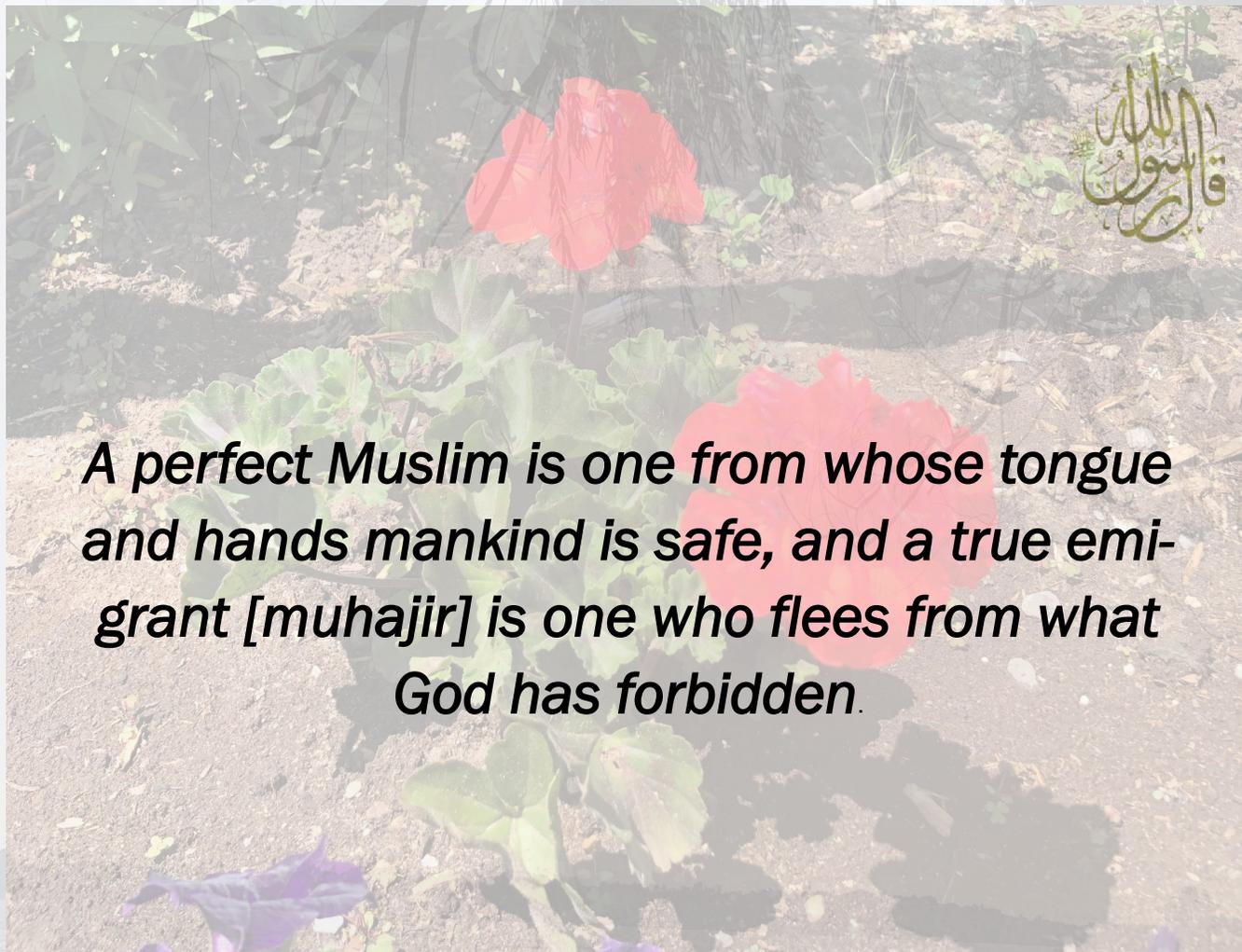
These are only some of the examples of the Prophet's tolerance of other faiths. Islam recognizes that there are a plurality of religions on this earth, and gives the right to individuals to choose the path which they believe to be true. Religion is not to be, and was never, forced upon an individual 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)

OOTNOTES:

[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 IL.





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Our address:

8801 N. Cental Street

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The Islamic Center of Northland, Inc.

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