



THE TOLERANCE OF THE PROPHET TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIONS

By M. Abdulsalam (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

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Khutbah

A khutbah is a sermon, and the most important sermon is the Friday khutbah, which is done before the Jumu'ah prayer (Friday noon prayer). It is a key component of Jumu'ah, and is considered a replacement for the two rak'ahs that are usually read for Zuhur (noon prayer). The khutbah is obligatory, so without it, the Friday prayer is invalid[1] Finally, the Qur'an says, regarding the Friday prayer: *O believers! When the call to prayer is made on Friday, then proceed diligently to the remembrance of Allah and leave off your business. That is best for you, if only you knew.*[2]

Preparing for the Khutbah

Choose a good topic. Avoid controversial topics that are likely going to cause divisions within the congregation. As the Jumu'ah prayer is a time for coming together, you should choose a topic that will unite the congregation. Also avoid complicated topics, such as the nitty-gritty rules of inheritance, as the time limit won't allow you to cover this in-depth. The congregation should be able to leave the prayer with a lesson learnt, and if you over-explain something or choose something confusing, the congregation won't have learnt or remembered anything.

Try to choose a relevant topic. For example, if Ramadan, Eid or the Hajj season is approaching in a few weeks, speak about the virtues of these events.

Learn how to give a presentation.

During the Friday prayer, usually double the amount of people that usually visit the mosque come, and there is often a feeling of eagerness to seek knowledge. With that in mind, you need to know that these people have a respect for knowledge, so you should be able smoothly and coherently deliver the sermon. There are many ways to do this, for example:

- Look at the audience. When they feel that you are speaking directly to them, they will feel engaged.

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- Raise your voice to emphasise certain points. This will bring back any attention that may have been lost.
- Know your verses and hadiths. The worst thing to do when delivering a khutbah is being unable to recite a certain verse, mispronouncing the verse, or forgetting a verse.
- Come prepared beforehand; revise the verses or narrations you are going to say. This is also especially important because you don't want to constantly be looking at your script. Learn as much of the English as you can by heart, and definitely memorize the Arabic. Remember: if you misread a verse, you may change the meaning, so be careful, and don't be afraid to have a quick glance at your notes to remind you of the words.
- Going over the English is just as important as going over the Arabic; if English isn't your mother-tongue, it may be best to avoid words that you may have difficulty pronouncing. Some people might get distracted, and even find it funny, if you mispronounce a word.

(To be continued in the November, 2020 issue)



***Don't depend too much on anyone
in this world, because even your own shadow
leaves you when you are in the dark!***

Ibn Taymiyyah (RA)

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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 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

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free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment.” (Abu Dawud)

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.

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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.

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 IL.

*"But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you,
And perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you.
Allah knows, while you know not. "*

Quran 2:216

WHY PORK IS FORBIDDEN IN ISLAM

By Aisha Stacey (IslamReligion.com)

OBEYING THE LAWS OF GOD

Islam is a holistic way of life, taking into account physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being, each a separate but overlapping part of the structure of a human being. God created us with a purpose; to worship Him, (**Quran 51:56**) but He did not abandon us to a world of instability and insecurity. He gave us a book of guidance, the Quran, and the example of Prophets and Messengers to explain that trusting in God was the way for us to achieve success in this life and in the hereafter.

. A Muslim spends his or her life endeavouring to please God by worshipping Him and obeying His laws, or rules. One of those rules is that the eating pork, or pork products is forbidden.

At first, one might wonder what harm could come from pork, a product eaten in many parts of the world, and the fact that pork contains parasites and diseases harmful to man may spring to mind as a justifiable reason for abstaining. However, when analysing why Muslims are forbidden to eat pork, this becomes a secondary reason. Muslims simply do not eat pork or pork products because God has prohibited it.

“He has forbidden you only dead animals, and blood, and the swine, and that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for other than God.” (Quran 2:173)

Sometimes we may never know or understand why God has ordained some things and prohibited others. In the case of pork, no specific reason for the prohibition is given except in **Quran 6: 145** when God says, in reference to the flesh of swine (pig), **“for that surely is impure”**. A Muslim submits to God’s commands willingly, without needing to know the reason behind the divine rule. Moreover, God has expressly stated that a believer hears the words of his Lord and obeys them.

“‘We hear and we obey.’ And such are the successful (who will live forever in Paradise).” (Quran 24:51)

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“When God and His Messenger have decreed a matter, they (the believers) should not have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger; he has indeed strayed into a plain error.” (Quran 33:36)

A believer understands that God is the Most Wise and the Most Just; therefore, His rules are designed to benefit us in our daily needs, be they physical, emotional, or spiritual. The Creator knows the best way for His creation to live in this world and prepare for the next. It is not permissible for a Muslim to consume pork under any circumstances except in cases of dire necessity, such as, if a person's life depends on eating it. In cases of dire necessity, prohibited things are permitted.

God allows us to enjoy all the good lawful things and forbids us to partake of those things that may be harmful to our beliefs, health, well being, or morals.[1] Consequently, Muslims are acutely aware of the dangers of eating things that are forbidden and therefore make concerted efforts to seek out permissible food, even if it involves extra effort or expense.

If a believer consumes pork unknowingly or by mistake, there is no sin of him or her. God does not punish anyone for lack of knowledge, nor for unintentional mistakes or forgetfulness. However if a believer is certain, or thinks that any pork, or pork products may be in his food, drinks or medicines then it is not permissible for him or her to consume it. If he has doubts then he must make an effort to inquire about the ingredients or ask for details.[2] Nowadays knowledge about ingredients and the manufacturing process is readily available and the prohibition applies whether there is a small amount of pork or pork products, or a large amount.

The scholars of Islam differ over the issue of whether or not changing the form of the impurity (in this case pork products) lifts the prohibition. The Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences is of the opinion that changing the form (for example, food, and medicine additives) so that it becomes something different, *does* lift the prohibition. However, there is no doubt and no difference of opinion that it is forbidden to consume meat derived from the pig, including ham and bacon.

The recent outbreak of swine flu in Mexico and North America led some countries to slaughter pigs en masse however there is ample scientific evidence to suggest that pigs harbour parasites that are harmful to humans and the pig has long been considered the ideal breeding ground for influenza.

IS PORK UNCLEAN

We discussed the primary reason for Muslims abstaining from eating pork and pork

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products, and that is, that God has forbidden it. As the Creator of humankind and all that exists, God knows what is good for us, and He has sent guidance enabling us to make wise decisions. Just as a computer would not work properly if it were incorrectly programmed, a human being is not able to function if he is not nourished correctly. Islam is a holistic religion that recognises the interconnectedness of spiritual, emotional, and physical health. What a person eats and drinks has a direct bearing on their overall health and well-being.

Virologists have long been aware that the pig is an ideal breeding ground for influenza, so it is no surprise that the latest threat, swine flu, originated in pigs. Microbiologist and immunology expert, Dr Graham Burgess[3] says, "Viruses that would normally grow in the chicken can potentially grow in the pig and ones that grow in humans will potentially grow in pigs. So we consider the pig a great mixing pot for viruses and this is where it can play a real role in generating new viruses".

The pig is known to harbour parasites as well as bacteria and viruses. Cysticercosis is an infection caused by the **pork tapeworm**, *Taenia solium*. Infection occurs when the tapeworm larvae enter the body and form cysticerci (cysts). When cysticerci are found in the brain, the condition is called neurocysticercosis. This tapeworm in pigs is found worldwide but is most problematic in poor and developing countries where pigs are allowed to roam freely and often eat human faeces. This infection can occur even in modern developed countries but the CDC reports that it is very rare in Muslim countries where eating pork is forbidden.[4]

Trichinellosis, also called trichinosis, is caused by eating raw or undercooked meat of animals infected with the larvae of a species of worm called *Trichinella*. Infection occurs most commonly in certain wild carnivorous (meat-eating) animals but it may also occur in **domestic pigs**. The CDC warns that if a human eats meat containing infective *Trichinella* cysts, the acid in the stomach dissolves the hard covering of the cyst and releases the worms.

The worms pass into the small intestine and, in 1-2 days, become mature. After mating, adult females lay eggs. These eggs develop into immature worms, travel through the arteries, and are transported to muscles. Within the muscles, the worms curl into a ball and encyst (become enclosed in a capsule). This infection occurs when these encysted worms are consumed in meat. The number of cases of trichinellosis throughout the world has steadily decreased due to an awareness of the dangers of eating raw and undercooked pork products and legislation prohibiting feeding raw meat garbage to pigs.[5]

Pigs are **omnivores**, which means they consume both plants and animals. Pigs will scavenge and eat any type of food, including dead insects, worms, tree bark, rotting carcasses, garbage, and even other pigs. Pigs have very few sweat glands so therefore they are unable to completely rid their bodies of toxins. New evidence indicates that farming practices are leading directly to the spread of human bacterial infections.

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Pigs often live in the small spaces and fetid conditions that exist in many modern factory farms and studies are revealing that pigs frequently harbour antibiotic resistant staph bacteria. This drug resistant bacterium is now entering our food supply and recent investigations in the United States of America indicate that 49% of pigs and 45% of pig workers now harbour these bacteria responsible for killing more than 18,000 people in the US every year.[6]

“He has forbidden you only dead animals, and blood, and the flesh of swine...” (Quran 2:173)

“For that surely is impure” (Quran 6:145)

Muslims refrain from eating pork and pork products because God has forbidden it. However a little investigation into the anatomy and lifestyle of the pig reveals that it is certainly an unclean animal. Those interested in consuming healthy, natural, and pure foods would do well to abstain from pork and pork products.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]At Tabarani (classified as authentic by Sheikh al Albane).

[2]Scholars of the Standing Committee for issuing Fatwas (Islamic rulings) Saudi Arabia.

[3]James Cook University, Queensland Australia. (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/27/2554021.htm>)

[4](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/cysticercosis/factsht_cysticercosis.htm)6[5](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/trichinosis/factsht_trichinosis.htm)

[6](<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=sick-farms-infected-food>) &

(<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=new-drug-resistant-mrsa-in-pigs>)

*“ The Life Of This World Is Nothing But The
Enjoyment Of Deception. ”*

Quran 3:185



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Our address:

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The Islamic Center of Northland, Inc.

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