

Muhammed: Mercy for the Universe

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“We have not sent you (O Muhammed) except as a mercy to the universe/worlds.” (Qur'an, 21: 107) This verse comes near the end of the Chapter of the Prophets which tells us the stories of the different prophets and messengers of God.

In this short paper we will try to take a close look at the life of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) and reports of his own teachings and actions that demonstrate this idea of him being a mercy to the universe(s). Since the Prophet's sayings and actions are reflections of Divine revelation (the Qur'an), reference will often be made to relevant Qur'anic verses.

Universality of Muhammed's Message

The Qur'an is very explicit on this idea of the universality of the Message of Islam and Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). Among the many relevant verses are the following:

“Say: O Mankind! I am the messenger of God to you all.” (Qur'an, 8:158) “And We have not sent you, [Muhammed], except to the whole of mankind as a bringer of glad tidings and a warner. But most of the people do not know.” (Qur'an, 34:28)

In fact, Muhammed's message is directed to other rational beings, called “the Jinn” (beings invisible to man). We read in the Qur'an, for example: “Say (O Muhammed): It is revealed unto me that a company of the Jinn gave ear, and they said: Lo! It is a marvellous Qur'an, which guideth unto righteousness, so we believe in it and we ascribe no partner unto our Lord.” (Qur'an, 72:1-2) “And We directed to you, [Muhammed], a few of the Jinn, listening to the Qur'an. And when they attended it, they said, 'Listen attentively.' And when it was concluded, they went back to their folk as warners. They said: '... O our people, respond to the Caller of God [Muhammed] and believe in him so that He [God] may forgive you your sins and protect you from a painful punishment.” (Qur'an, 46: 28-31)

Mercy for the Universe:

Examples of the Merciful and Compassionate Nature of Muhammed

1. General

In the Hadith ('traditions of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), we read:
"Have mercy on those on earth, you will receive Mercy from the One in Heaven (God)."

"Merciful people will receive Mercy from God."

In a tradition of the Prophet (PBUH), we see him telling his companions and followers that he is to them like a man who has lit some fire. Moths and butterflies keep rushing into it, **while the man strives to keep them away from the fire.**

Even devotion in worship would not stop Muhammed (PBUH) from giving priority to mercy and kindness to it. Once a follower of his complained that a leading companion used to stand for too long a time while leading a congregation in prayer. Was the said companion praised by the Prophet? No, he was chided and reminded that when one leads a congregation in prayer, he should not make it too long, "because among the congregation might be the weak, the elderly and people who have things to take care of."

1- Mercy to Followers of Islam:

As mentioned earlier, in the Chapter of the Prophets of the Noble Qur'an, we read: "We have not sent you (O Muhammed) except as a mercy to the universes" (Qur'an, 21: 107). Note the emphatic structure of the verse: "We have not ... except as a mercy...." It is a well-known fact that mercy is the motto of Islam (the religion of SALAAM, 'peace'). The words al-Rahman and al-Raheem, 'the Most Gracious/ the Beneficent, Most Compassionate' and 'the Most Merciful' are the two Divine attributes of God most repeated by Muslims the world over. They are part of the expression used by Muslims at the beginning of any good or important action, including eating and drinking ("In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful"), and recited before almost every chapter of the Noble Qur'an (all 114 chapters, except Chapter 9). They are part of the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an, recited at least seventeen times per day by every Muslim in his formal prayers.

Just before the end of Chapter 9 (The Chapter of Repentance), we read: “There has come unto you a messenger, (one) of yourselves; **grievous to him is your suffering; anxious is he over you, gentle to the believers, compassionate (merciful).**” (Qur'an, 9: 129). In Chapter 3, we read God addressing His Prophet and Messenger Muhammed (PBUH): “So by mercy from Allah, [O Muáammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon All  h. Indeed, All  h loves those who rely [upon Him]..” (Qur'an, 3:159)

We read in the Qur'an Almighty God addressing Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) “Yet perchance, if they believe not in this tiding, **thou wilt consume thyself**, following after them, with grief.” (Qur'an, 18:6)

2- Mercy to Chrisians and Jews:

Referring to Jews and Christians, we read in the Noble Qur'an, “Those who follow the Messenger, the illiterate Prophet [Muhammed] (PBUH), whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel, bidding them to honour, and forbidding them dishonour, making lawful for them the good things and making unlawful for them the bad things, and **relieving them of their loads, and the fetters that were upon them.** Those who believe in him and support and help him, and follow the light that has been sent down with him—they are the prosperers.” (Qur'an, 7: 157)

3. Mercy and Kindness to Parents:

Mercy and kindness to parents are emphasized in more than four different chapters of the Noble Qur'an (Chapters 2, 4, 6, 17 and 31)

“And your Lord has decreed that you do not worship except Him, **and to parents, good treatment... And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy** and say: “My Lord, have mercy on them as they brought me up (when I was) small.” (Qur'an, 17:23-24)

In fact, even one’s parents try to force him to reject Islam, one is still obliged to show them kindness. We read in the Noble Qur’an: “But if they strive to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them **but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness**” (Qur'an, 31, 14-15)

4. Mercy and Kindness to Women

A well-known teaching of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), was: "The best of you is the best to his family, and I am the best to my family." His wife 'Ayshah reports that the Prophet used to be engaged in house chores for his wives whenever he was home, though he was the most honored person in the community and its leader. In one of his sayings, he referred to women as fragile glass which requires gentle handling.

In fact, parents are not equal in treatment when it comes to women. A man came to the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) and asked: "Who of all people deserve good treatment from me?" The answer was: "Your mother." The man asked, "Then, who?" The Prophet (PBUH) responded, **"Your mother." It was only after the third time that the man was told: "Then, your father."**

With reference to **daughters**, Muhammed (PBUH) is reported to have said that if any man has female children, and he takes care of them until they are married off, they will be a shield for him from Hell-Fire (on the Day of Judgment).

Widows received a special attention from the Prophet of Islam (PBUH). He says in one of his traditions: "A person who looks after a widow or a poor person is like someone who fights for the Cause of God or prays all night and fasts every day."

5. Mercy and Kindness to Children

The Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) used to greet the children he passes by, and wipe the head of some of them (as a gesture of kindness). He would interrupt his sermon and step down from the pulpit to help grandsons who were tripped by clothes in the mosque. Once he stayed for quite a while in his prostration. After the prayer he told his companions that he did so because his grandson had mounted his back, and the Prophet hated to disturb the child, so he waited in that position until his grandson climbed down from his back. Again, while the Prophet (PBUH) was leading a congregational prayer, he heard a baby crying, so as he later told his companions, he hurried a little to finish the prayer in order for the mother to take care of her baby.

While the Prophet was talking to one of his important visitors, the man commented (in a disapproving manner) on the Prophet's kissing his grandson, saying that he had a dozen children whom he had never kissed.

What was Muhammed (PBUH)'s reaction? He said: "What can I do if God has removed mercy from your heart? God will not show mercy to those who do not show it to others."

6. Mercy and Kindness to Orphans

In a couple of the teaching of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), we read that he said that whoever fosters an orphan will be his (the Prophet's) companion in Paradise. The exact wording is: "like these two fingers (index and middle fingers) in Paradise." Naturally, this is in spirit of the Qur'anic injunctions regarding orphans and their rights, such as the ones we find in the Qur'an (4: 9; 2: 220; 4:6 and 4: 10).

7. Mercy and Kindness to Slaves and Servants

Slaves are known throughout history and in different civilizations to have been the subject of suffering and inhuman treatment, whether in 'civilized' Athens or Rome in the ancient times or in America and elsewhere before the enactment of the emancipation laws in the West. What did Muhammed (PBUH) have to say about that? We are told that Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) forbade his followers from mistreating their bondsmen and bondswomen to the extent that a slave may be set free if treated in a certain cruel manner. The master according to Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) had to be punished in a manner equal to the bodily harm he causes to his slaves. Not only that; even the human dignity and psychological well-being of slaves was taken care of by Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). He is reported to have said, "Do not say my slave boy or slave girl. Say my boy or girl." He instructed his followers to be good to their slaves, "For God made them your slaves. He could have made you theirs." He also is reported to have said: "Your slaves (or servants) are your brothers whom God has put under your control. Whoever has a brother under his control, let him feed him of what he eats himself and clothe him of what he wears. Do not ask your servants to do things beyond their abilities. If you ask them to do something beyond their abilities, then help them with it."

Anas ibn Malik, a companion who served the Prophet (PBUH), says: "I have served the Prophet (PBUH) ten years. He never showed me a sign of annoyance. He never chided me for anything I did or did not." In line with this, we read the Prophet (PBUH) teaching his followers: "When a servant of yours brings you food, unless you seat him with you (over it), give him a couple of bites from it. It was he who had prepared it."

The Prophet of Mercy, in fact, went even further when he said: "Whoever has a slave girl, brings her up, treats her well, then sets her free and marries her will get double rewards."

8. Mercy to Animals

While the Prophet (PBUH) was sitting with his companions a bird came hovering over their heads, fluttering its wings. Muhammed, the merciful Prophet, asked, "Who has taken the young ones of this bird?" He instructed that those chicks be immediately returned to their nest and mother.

Among the traditions of Prophet Muhammed(PBUH), we read him saying that "a man entered Paradise on account of a thirsty dog. The man went down a well to drink from it. Upon climbing up he saw a dog showing the signs of thirst. So he went down, filled his boot with water and gave water to the dog to drink. Therefore, God caused the man to enter Heaven." One of the companions wondered, "Are we rewarded for helping dumb animals?" The Prophet (PBUH) answered: "There is a reward (in helping) any living being."

On the other hand, the Prophet (PBUH) warned that a woman went to Hell-Fire because of a cat. She locked up the cat, depriving it of food and preventing it from seeking food for itself.

In fact, Muslims are told by Prophet Muhammed(PBUH) that if they plant anything, they will be rewarded every time a human or animal eats from it.

Animals according to the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) should not be slaughtered except for food. Even then we should make the animal comfortable and use a sharp knife in order not to cause it any unnecessary suffering.

9. Mercy to Non-Muslims in General:

Islam, since its inception, has always recognized freedom of belief and the rights of Jews and Christians, especially to practice their own religion in an Islamic state. We read in the Noble Qur'an, "Let there be **no compulsion** in religion for Truth has become clear from the wrong" (Qur'an 2: 256). Jews and Christians are given the special name of "People of the Book" (meaning followers of revealed scriptures). Non-Muslim citizens are called "dhimmis" ('people under Islamic State

protection'). The Prophet of Islam was very careful to warn his followers of dealing with them in any unjust and offensive manner.

10. Mercy Even to Enemies:

Even the enemies of the Prophet enjoyed his mercy and kindness. At one of the most distressful moments of his life, when the Prophet was harassed by the Makkans and chased by children and slaves of the people of Taif who threw stones at him, Archangel Gabriel asked him if he needed his help to punish those people harassing him, and the angel of mountains expressed readiness to crush them with the mountains of Makkah. What was Muhammed's (PBUH) response? He told him that he hoped that to those insolent people would be born offspring who believed in him. He also used to supplicate, "O God, give guidance to my people for they are ignorant."

Upon his victorious return to Makkah after 10 years of exile. He asked the Makkans, "What do you think I am going to do with you?" They knew that his gentle nature would not allow him to seek revenge and punishment for all their atrocities against him and the persecution of his followers, over a span of thirteen years, and the wars they had waged against them in the preceding nine years. They answered: "You are a generous brother and son of a generous brother." He said: "Go! You are free." Naturally, the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) could have punished them, seeking justice. However, he preferred something better and showed them mercy instead. Therefore, he let them go without even a harsh word uttered against them. The Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was acting on the Divine teaching, "In the Qur'an we read: "And the retribution for an evil act is an equal evil one. **But whoever forgives and make reconciliation – his reward is with God.** Indeed, He does not like wrong doing." (Qur'an, 42:40)

In fact, the Divine Book of Islam, the Qur'an, teaches Muslims to show justice and fairness even in dealing with hateful enemies. We read in the Qur'an: "**Let not the hatred of a people make you swerve from justice. Be just** for that is closest to God fearing and piety." (Qur'an, 5:8)

We further read: "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes- from **being good to them and to act justly toward them**, Allah loves those who act justly." (Qur'an, 60:8)

11. Respect of the Environment and Moderation in Dealing with Other Beings

Even inanimate beings are protected by the Prophet of Mercy, Muhammed (PBUH). For example, he has forbidden cutting down trees unnecessarily, and he instructed his followers to conserve water, saying: "Do not waste water even if you are on the bank of a running river."

Conclusion:

We have seen a glimpse of the merciful nature of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) and the region he brought to the Universe. By contrasting this with the teachings of 'Muslim' propagators of hatred and killing, we can clearly see that they are certainly not following Islamic teachings and that Islam is innocent of such movements.