

My Mercy Prevails Over My Wrath (part 2 of 2)

Description: Mercy extended to enemies and animals.

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Could This Be War?

Mercy in Islam also extends to enemies, in times of war and peace, as Prophet Muhammad used to urge his Companions to maintain family ties with relatives who were still disbelievers by calling on them and giving them gifts.

As for times of war, God commands Muslims to grant refuge to enemies if they should ask for it, and forbids anyone to harm them. This is stated in the Quran, where God says what means:

"If one amongst the pagans ask thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of God; and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge" (Quran 9:6)

As for the Prophet, he forbade his Companions to harm the elderly, injured, women, children, and people in places of worship. Also, destroying fields was forbidden. Defacing the corpses of enemies was strictly banned and giving them rapid burial was commanded out of respect.

The Prophet's orders regarding captives were strictly obeyed by his Companions. In one of the stories about a battle related to us by a captive, he says that he was staying with a Muslim family after being captured. Whenever they had their meals, they used to give him preference by offering him bread while they would eat only dates.

When the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, victoriously entered Makkah after defeating the Quraish, he approached them and asked:

"How do you expect me to treat you?"

They replied, **"You are a noble brother and the son of a noble brother! We expect nothing but goodness from you."**

Then the Prophet announced, **"I speak to you in the same words as Yusuf (the Prophet Joseph) spoke unto his brothers:**

"No reproach on you this day, God will forgive you, He is the Most Merciful of the Merciful" (Quran 12:92).

Go, for verily you are free."

On this day, when tolerance and forgiveness were least expected, the Prophet set an example of mercy and forgiveness by releasing all the captives without ransom, and forgiving them for the persecution and brutal torture of the Muslims, which was continuous during the first 13 years of conveying the message of Islam.

All of God's Creatures

Animals were not ignored and were given many rights in Islam. For instance, when the Prophet saw a donkey with a branded face, he said:

"Have you not heard that I have cursed anyone who brands an animal on its face or who hits it on its face?" (*Saheeh Muslim*).

The Prophet once said that a woman was sent to Hell because of a cat that she imprisoned, neither feeding it nor setting it free to hunt for its own food. On the other hand, the Prophet said, a man went to Paradise for giving water to a dog in the desert that was panting out of thirst.

The Prophet forbade that knives should be sharpened in front of animals before slaughtering. In addition, the slaughtering of an animal before another was prohibited. This is clear in one of the Prophetic sayings:

"God calls for mercy in everything, so be merciful when you kill and when you slaughter: sharpen your blade to relieve its pain" (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*).

One of the Companions related this incident: When they were traveling with the Prophet, they found a bird with its young ones, so they took them from their mother. The bird came and started flapping its wings, so the Prophet asked:

"Who has distressed this bird by taking its young? Return them to it at once" (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*).

Animal rights were affirmed by the Prophet when he said that anyone who took a living thing as a target is cursed. Forcing animals to fight till one gores the other was also strictly banned, for animals have feelings and this would be definite torture for them.

The Islamic concept of mercy is holistic and stresses the interconnectedness of all of creation with itself and with the Creator. Mercy starts with God and is bestowed by Him to every living creature. Animals and humans alike show each other mercy, to live harmoniously with one another, and in turn, by showing this mercy, they themselves are shown even more mercy from God. This vision of Islam encourages the breaking down of barriers between peoples and is the underlying foundation upon which both life and civilization are built.

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