

## Is Islam a Cruel religion?

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I have a lot of time these days and I spend some of it surfing the internet. In a thread on the Yahoo News, I tried to explain a few things about Islam. Before I knew it someone unloaded a collection of questions/criticisms. The purpose of the post was to “prove” that the teaching of Islam is cruel. I responded to those questions and I think my responses may be of use to other readers. My point is that (a) interpreted properly Islam recommends violence only in defense (b) you cannot “prove” that Islam is a cruel religion by picking portions of verses without proper context and (c) Islam is no harsher than other religions. The highlighted parts are the questions/criticisms and each is followed by my response, somewhat more elaborate than what I posted.

Before you start reading this note, it would be good to note that Islam is the most criticized religion on earth today. The main reasons are (a) the misunderstandings about Islam that have been spread by its enemies over the centuries, (b) the Muslims have forgotten the true message of Islam and are clinging to some of the popular misunderstandings about Islam. (For example it is a popular misunderstanding among Muslims that Jihad only means war or violence against non-Muslims.), (c) there are some Muslims who are having to fight because their lands are occupied by foreigners and their persecutors want to label them as terrorists and (d) there are some folks with Muslim names who for their local politics or for minor gains get their followers riled up on trivial matters. The questions/criticisms clearly indicate misunderstandings which can be easily removed. I have tried to keep my responses conversational and the order of my responses to meet the order of the various questions and criticism in the post.

### deny this islamic dog

**The Hadith No. 284, The Muslim, volume one, says that any Jew or Christian, who heard of Muhammad but did not convert to Islam, and died in disbelief, would rot in hell! Thus Islam withdraws from all Jews and Christians the right to believe in their faiths, and practice them as such.**

The Hadith that you have quoted reads as:

**Muslim Book 01, Number 0284:** It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) observed: By Him in Whose hand is the life of Muhammad, he who amongst the community of Jews or Christians hears about me, but does not affirm his belief in that with which I have been sent and dies in this state (of disbelief), he shall be but one of the denizens of Hell-Fire.

You seem to convey the notion that if some people go to Hell for assigning a son to God or for making a mockery of their religion it is the fault of Muslims or at least that of this Hadith or that of the Prophet. Is it? This Hadith is simply saying that believing what the Jews and Christians do and knowingly turning away from Islam will ultimately take them to Hell. It is not taking away any rights. One can believe what one wants. The Prophet just warned and warning is no compulsion. According to the Quran:

**2:256, Translation:** There is no **compulsion** in religion. Surely, the right way has become distinct from error; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah, has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

I have a suspicion that the phrase “heard of Muhammad” may be bothering you. Any sane person would know that merely hearing the name “Muhammad” is not going to put anyone in jeopardy. What one should really be worried about is hearing the message of Muhammad and taking an antagonistic posture after understanding the message. The Hadith is saying that if one has received and understood the message of Islam and disbelieved it, then the Atonement is not going to work nor being the “Children of God” is going to help. What is going to help save one from the wrath of God is repenting and truly accepting the latest message. By the way even being a Muslim is not going to save anyone, unless one does act righteously in obedience to Allah.

**4:124, Translation:** But whoso does good works, whether male or female, and he or she is a **believer**, such shall enter heaven, and shall not be wronged even as much as the little hollow in the back of a date-stone.

Note here, according to this verse good deeds and being a believer, have to go hand in hand for someone to be rewarded. I bet this is news for you.

What I would like you to see also is the next Hadith in Muslim:

**Muslim Book 01, Number 0285:** It is narrated on the authority of Sha'bi that one among the citizens of Khurasan asked him: O Abu! some of the people amongst us who belong to Khurasan say that a person who freed his bondswoman and then married her is like one who rode over a sacrificial animal. Sha'bi said: Abu Burda b. Abi Musa narrated it to me on the authority of his father that verily the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: There are three (classes of persons) who would be given a double reward. One who is amongst the People of the Book and believed in his apostle and (lived) to see the time of Apostle Muhammad (may peace be upon him) and affirmed his faith in him and followed him and attested his truth, for him is the double reward; and the slave of the master who discharges all those obligations that he owes to Allah and discharges his duties that he owes to his master, for him there is a double reward. And a man who had a bondswoman and fed her and fed her well, then taught her good manners, and did that well and later on granted her freedom and married her, for him is the double reward. Then Sha'bi said: Accept this hadith without (giving) anything. Formerly a man was (obliged) to travel to Medina even for a smaller hadith than this.

This Hadith tells us how much the People of the Book have to gain from accepting Islam. Now here is a question: is there any religion that does not have some notion of punishment for bad deeds? Or for denying the God it presents or gods? So why are you so angry with Islam? The only reason that comes to mind is that it is fashionable today to take a bash at Islam, without understanding what it has to say.

**"The unbelievers of the People of the Book and the idolators shall be in the Fire of Hell therein dwelling for ever; those are the worst of creatures. But those who believe, and do righteous deeds, those are the best of creatures..."** (XCVIII: The Clear Sign: 5) Here those Jews and Christians, who spurn Islam, have been lumped together with the idolators such as the Hindus, and classified as 'the worst of creatures'.

**98:5, Translation:** Those who disbelieve from the People of the Book and the idolators will be in the fire of Hell, abiding therein. They are the worst of creatures.

So, my God is saying that the disbelievers will go to Hell. If you have any other god who says something different, tell him to go fight my God. Why are you blaming me? This is my belief that people as described above will burn in Hell and that if I do not act righteously I would be there with them! Now if you go around and look at other religions you will find that there is no religion that does not "prescribe" a path to salvation or the pleasure of God (or gods) and looking at it closely you would find a clear warning that if you do not follow this path you are doomed. Modern day Jews may appear to have a slightly different attitude, as most of them have shed the notion of life after death, but they too are familiar with the notion of divine chastisement.

Now compare (98:5) with what Jesus said about all non-Jewish folks:

"21 Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." 23 But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." 24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" 26 But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

(MATTHEW 15:21-26)

The Fire of Hell and being the worst of the creatures in the eyes of an unseen God have nothing to do with this world. But everyone outside the House of Israel being called a "little dog" could raise some eyebrows! Think of all those non-Jewish folks who accepted Jesus as their savior! Here's more.

31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. 33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"

(MATTHEW 23:31-33)

Let me make a non-religious point here. The prophets, who come to reform us, apparently do not have any worldly powers and they have the task of bringing people to God. All they can do is try to instill fear of God in us. That is what Moses did, that is what Jesus did and that is what Muhammad did. So, do not take it personally. They all said it out of their concern for us.

**Therefore the Koran commands:**

**"O believers, take not as your friends those of them, who were given the Book before you, and the unbelievers, who take your religion in mockery and as a sport..." (V: The Table: 60)**

Your 5:60 is 5:57 whose translation reads as:

O' ye who believe take not those for friends who make jest and sport of your religion from among those who were given the Book before you and the disbelievers. And fear Allah if you are believers.

This verse is clear. It tells me not to trust something like you who calls me an "Islamic dog" and makes fun of my religion. People who do not believe in their God properly are people who do not possess a moral code or whose moral code is faulty. Trusting such people can be dangerous. Ask the Arabs who trusted the Allies. The Allies carved them into small countries and caused a bad sore, Israel, in their midst. To me it is the ultimate proof that what the Quran says is true. You can also read (MATTHEW 15:21-26), which I have copied above, to see that what is in the Quran is a lot lighter and kinder than what is in the bible.

**"The true believers say: Has not God ordered a chapter that commands the holy war" (Sura 47:22)**

What I could find with the given reference is the verse:

**47:20, Translation:** And those who believe say "Why is not a Surah revealed". But when a decisive Surah is revealed and fighting is mentioned therein you see those in whose hearts there is disease looking towards you like the look of one who is fainting on account of approaching death. So, woe to them.

This is house cleaning, nothing for you to worry about. There were people amongst Muslims who wanted just to cash in on being Muslims but when came time to fight to defend fellow Muslims some of them got worried. This Verse is to cajole them. A Surah for holy war, you say? Yes it was a permission to fight back? Call it a Surah for holy war if you like. But there were set forth conditions for war and injunctions not to exceed.

**"Kill the idolaters wherever you find them, imprison them, besiege them, ambush them" (Sura 9:5)**

**9:5, Translation:** And when the forbidden months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever you find them and beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent and observe prayer and pay the Zakat, then leave their way free. Surely, Allah is most forgiving, Merciful.

Oh yes. This happened in the bygone days and has nothing to do with you. Taken out of context it may be a little frightening but with the proper context and translation there is nothing to worry about after 14 hundred years. But if you are "offended" read the next verse:

**9:6, Translation:** And if any of the idolaters seeks protection, grant him protection so that he may hear the Word of Allah; then convey him to his place of sanctuary. That is because they are a people who have no knowledge.

You see 9:5 is for those who were ready to fight, but my God is so Merciful that He did not ignore those among the idolaters who did not want to fight. By the way the 9<sup>th</sup> Surah (or Chapter) was revealed close to the fall of Makkah. Note here the Prophet comes to Makkah with an army of ten thousand. Takes over Makkah, has the power to kill all those who made his and his followers' lives a misery, but his tory tells us that the Makkans were given a sort of amnesty; in fact there was no war for the capture of Makkah, just a few skirmishes for which there was a clear instruction in 9:5. (There is however a danger that a corrupt Mullah or a terrorist may misuse (9:5) stating it out of

context. But there is very small chance of that.) Now let me tell you what the Bible tells us happened for a similar situation and there is no danger of “misusing” it.

“7 And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males. 8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword. 9 And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. 10 And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.

ii And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. 12 And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho. 13 And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. 14 And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. 15 And Moses said unto them, have ye saved all the women alive?”

(NUMBERS 31:7-15)

I do not believe that Moses did or said all those things. But since the Bible has it, I can use it to show the mirror to those Judeo Christian humanists who try to portray all Muslims as terrorists. Now go back and read again, the Quran said that (9:5) and it did not happen on a large scale, and the Bible is recording, in (NUMBERS 31:7-15), what happened.

**"Make war on unbelievers" (Sura 9:29)**

In proper context the translation 9:29 is: Fight those from among the people of the book who believe not in Allah nor in the last day, nor hold as unlawful what Allah and His messenger has decreed as unlawful, nor follow the true religion, until they pay the tax considering it a favor and acknowledging their subjection.

This verse and 9:13, 9:14 have essentially to do with the idolaters and the people of the book living in Arabia at that time. There is a clear way out given in it, to pay tax. Muslims paid Zakat and so expecting a tax from non-Muslims is logical, and fighting them if they do not pay is logical too. Have you ever tried not paying taxes in a “civilized country”? This is a local issue, again, and it should not bother you much. To see why 9:29 is to do with the people of the book, read the reasons in 9:30 and 9:31.

**"When you come upon unbelievers, massacre them, tighten the bands of the captives that you will have taken. Then you will set them free, or you will release them for a ransom" (Sura 8:57).**

The closest verse to what you have thrown at me as 8:57 is 47:4 which is translated as:

And when you meet in regular battle those who disbelieve, smite their necks; and when you have overcome them, by causing great slaughter among them, bind fast the fetters—then afterwards either release them as a favor or by taking ransom—until the war lays down its burdens. That is the ordinance. And if Allah had so wished, He could have punished them Himself, but He has willed that He may try some of you by others. And those who are killed in the way of Allah—He will never render their works vain.

You can see that this verse has what you hinted at but it conveys a totally different picture. It tells Muslims to fight when they are in battle (and not make love). I would say it is quite logical. (Every culture has some notion of that.) Then it says that when you have killed a bulk of them and the rest have given up, bind them. This seems to indicate that God does not want unnecessary killing to go on. (Not all cultures believe in letting your enemy go.) Then there is the order to free the captives as a favor or for ransom, indicating that keeping them as slaves is not permitted. Romans are often taken as role models in the USA; they would enslave their prisoners of war and make them fight as gladiators! Would you rather have Quran order that kind of treatment of prisoners of war? Or would you want Muslims to follow the example apparently set in the Bible?

**"To Allah, there are no animals viler than those who do not believe and remain unbelievers" (Sura 8:57). That is why it is necessary to Islamize them by force and by humiliation.**

**8:57 translates as:** Surely the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the disbelievers, who will not believe.

Again you cannot blame Muslims for what your God thinks of those who do not believe in Him. If you read my article Misconceptions about Islam and Muslims, <http://www.lohar.com/misconceptions.pdf> you would find that Allah is the name of the same God that Abraham worshipped. So, if you do not believe in that God you have something to worry about. Of course I would also invite you to go back and read what Jesus had to say in connection with those who disbelieved (MATTHEW 23:31-33).

**And those who resist Islam and its founder must be chastised, according to the Koran: "Here is the fate of those who fight Allah and his messenger: you will put them to death or you will make them suffer the torture of the cross; you will cut their hands and their feet alternately. They will be driven from the country" (Sura 5:37). And, since the Muslims are realists, they take into account circumstances and make, accordingly, temporary peace or war: "Do not display cowardice, and do not call the infidels to peace when you are superior to them" (Sura 47:22).**

Your 5:37 is close to 5:33 and translation of that reads as:

The only reward for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to create disorder in the land, is that they be slain or crucified and their hands and feet be cut off on account of their enmity, or they be expelled from the land. That shall be a disgrace for them in this world, and in the Hereafter they shall have a great punishment.

Think of a single example to yourself, where a war was waged against a people and they would treat their killers kindly. Now read the next Verse, which is linked to this one.

(5:34) Except those who repent before you have them in your power. So know that Allah is most Forgiving and Merciful.

Yeah some of the punishments sound cruel, but the alternatives are: repent, leave the country, or do not fight. What else do you want? Even in recent times, there are severe punishments for people who create disorder. Remember the bombings of Tora Bora? Remember what went on in Iraq? Though in both of these cases mostly the miscreants got away and the innocent folks got the rap. (I have already taken care of your 47:22.) Verse (5:34) and 9:13, 9:15 have essentially to do with the People of the Book living in Arabia at that time. There is a clear way out given in this case, to pay tax. Muslims paid Zakat and so expecting a tax from non-Muslims is logical. This is a local issue and it should not bother you much.

**"When you come upon unbelievers, massacre them, tighten the bands of the captives that you will have taken. Then you will set them free, or you will release them for a ransom" (Sura 8:57).**

I have taken care of it, already.

**That is why it is necessary to Islamize them by force and by humiliation. And those who resist Islam and its founder must be chastised, according to the Koran: "Here is the fate of those who fight Allah and his messenger: you will put them to death or you will make them suffer the torture of the cross; you will cut their hands and their feet alternately. They will be driven from the country" (Sura 5:37).**

This appears to be 5:33 which I have already explained to you in conjunction with 5:34. I do not think your conclusion about "Islamization" carries much weight. I have already given you a verse that tells us that there is no compulsion in religion.

**And, since the Muslims are realists, they take into account circumstances and make, accordingly, temporary peace or war:**

**"Do not display cowardice, and do not call the infidels to peace when you are superior to them" (Sura 47:22).**

I have taken care of that and it is totally different from what you are trying to convey or are afraid of.

Having seen those responses to the poster, let's look around. It appears that there is a flood of such "decisive" arguments to "prove" that Islam is a violent religion and Muslims are killers. Some of those "decisive arguments" would be a bunch of statements taken out of context and/or badly translated **portions** of Quranic verses. The purpose of these appears to be to work the readers into a frenzy of hate and fear so that they write to their Senators to do something about "this religion of killers". For example a recent "sermon of peace" starts with: **(Al-Qaida) will continue to attack USA. Madrassa teaches to kill all Americans.** This sermon of peace then gives "references" from the Quran to "prove" that Islam is all bad. Those "references" are either cousins of what I have already dealt with or they are gross misrepresentations. The purpose appears also to be to paint a picture of Muslims and Islam so that a violent treatment of them appears to be morally acceptable. The particular post that I have recently seen ends at (5:33) which I have dealt with. Another "proof" is that "God is a plotter" which I think is a poor misrepresentation of "God turns the tables on the plots of mischief mongers". Then there is a reference to "God deceiving humans". Points that can be easily explained away, but a page full of those shorthand quips could be used to deceive those who do not have knowledge of the Quran. These do not have an effect on the believers but they could be used to persecute innocent law abiding Muslims. I end the present part of this ongoing project with a couple of verses from the Quran which may not appear directly related to the situation but contain the rules that mischief and persecution are worse than killing and that God does not allow mischief makers to prosper:

**Chapter 2 (Al-Baqarah) Verse 217**

They ask thee about fighting in the Sacred Month. Say, 'Fighting therein is a heinous thing, but to hinder men from the way of Allah, and to be ungrateful to Him, and to hinder men from the Sacred Mosque, and to turn out its people therefrom, is more heinous in the sight of Allah; and persecution/mischief is worse than killing.' And they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your Faith, if they can. And whoso from among you turns back from his Faith and dies while he is a disbeliever, it is they whose works shall be vain in this world and in the next. These are the inmates of the Fire and therein shall they abide.

The next is a verse about a contest that happened thousands of years ago between Moses and the magicians of Pharaoh, and it is the faith of every Muslim that if God made it possible thousands of years ago, He can make it possible even today. There is also the eternal promise here that God does not allow mischief makers to prosper:

**Chapter 10 (Yunus) Verse 81**

And when they had cast, Moses said, 'What you have brought is mere sorcery. Surely Allah will bring it to naught. Verily, Allah does not permit the work of **mischief**-makers to prosper.