

Allah as the ultimate Creator-God is a great mystery. He shows us a bit of his attributes through the Torah (Taurat), Gospels (Injil), and the revelations given through Prophet Muhammad as recorded in the Noble Qur'an. But Allah can never be fully known by his created beings. He is greater than they are, understands things at both higher and deeper levels than they do, and is completely sovereign in his will. The greatest of Allah's messengers, including Adam, Noah (Nuh), Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Musa), Jesus (Isa), and Muhammad; peace be upon them all; in their human form could gain only a glimpse of God's totality and greatness. Even taken together the revelations given them all do not begin to allow a human mind to grasp Allah's fullness.

There is some danger, therefore, in being overly doctrinaire about this Most High God. We only know what he has chosen to reveal, and we are forced to make assumptions about apparent inconsistencies that we see within and among the scriptures. We cannot hope to understand his ways fully, so it is probably best not to add any of our own interpretation to his meaning.

And yet this is exactly what we do all the time. Man has a need to explain what he does not understand, and frequently trespasses on the great mystery by elaborating his own theology and doctrine. We strive to reduce the greatness of God to something small enough to be grasped by the human mind, and in so doing, minimize Allah himself. We generalize to all people the directives Allah gave to a specific person, at a point in time, related to a specific circumstance. We write new commentaries on prior ones and progressively move further and further from God's original words and intent.

Many of the conflicts of the ages, including some of the worse in our present time, have been fought under the rubric of Allah's will. Shi'a and Sunni in some places are as bitterly locked in contests with each other as they are with Jews and unbelievers. Each sect struggles for the purity of its religion, serving God as it best knows how, and defending Allah when he is dishonored – even though he needs no help defending himself.

If we expect to speak for Allah's will in situations, then it is imperative that we see things from his perspective. Such discernment begins with an intimate knowledge of who Allah is and what he desires from his creatures. This paper elaborates on both the loving and judging aspects of Allah in a way that will help us better understand him as he wants to be understood.

The Importance of the Other Revealed Books

Allah loves those that are submitted to him, obey his commands, and believe in:

- Allah as the one God
- Angels
- Messengers, including Muhammad as the last
- Revealed Books (eg., Torah, Gospels, Qur'an)
- Day of Resurrection
- Allah's sovereign will

Despite their importance to the faith, many Muslims do not study the Torah, Prophets, and Gospels because these revealed books to the Hebrews are assumed to have been corrupted, and are therefore superseded by Muhammad's revelations to all people as recorded in the Qur'an. While it is true that the Torah and Gospels were fashioned with human hands, and even Reform Jews allow that some human mistakes may be found there, they cannot be completely wrong, and therefore offer useful background and supplement to Allah's revelation to Muhammad. Certainly, he commented upon and affirmed some of their content.

There are many similarities among the revealed texts.

He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days and then rose over (Istawa) the Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty). He knows what goes into the earth and what comes forth from it, and what descends from the heaven and what ascends thereto. And He is with you (by His Knowledge) wheresoever you may be. And Allah is the All-Seer of what you do. [Noble Qur'an. 57:4]

Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned {above} the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. [Holy Bible. 2 Kings 19:15]

This should give us some confidence that what has been revealed about God in the Hebrew Scriptures can be used with some caution to supplement our understanding of God found in the Qur'an.

Allah said to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel (Jibrail, Ruh-ul-Qudus):

Say (O Muhammad): "We believe in Allah and in what has been sent down to us, and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the offspring of the twelve sons of Jacob, and what was given to Moses, Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between one another among them and to Him (Allah) we have submitted (in Islam)." [Noble Qur'an. 3:84]

The lives of most of these messengers are detailed in the Hebrew Scriptures, including the Torah and the Prophets. The life and teachings of Jesus are found in the Gospels. These men were all submitted to God, and brought a basic message of the oneness of God and repentance as the keys to his approval. This leaves the Hebrew Scriptures and Gospels as our primary source for understanding the revelation God gave through each of them.

The Hebrew people were entrusted with the original scriptures, and they are deeply loved and honored by Allah.

Verily, those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. [Noble Qur'an. 2:62]

That being so, commentators such as Ibn Abbas (Tafsir At-Tabari) teach that the above sura was abrogated by a subsequent revelation given below.

And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers. [Noble Qur'an. 3:85]

Allah is not ultimately concerned with religious labels; he is concerned about whether the hearts of men are submitted to him alone, lead to righteous deeds, and believe in God as the ultimate judge. Such a person is a submitted Muslim regardless of whether he has had the privilege of being exposed to the Qur'an or not. Honoring the scriptures and prophets is important, but Allah is compassionate and merciful to all who are submitted to him as their one God no matter what their ethnicity, cultural faith, or religious label.

Assuming then that the prophets and messengers of the Hebrew Scriptures were such men, the following are insights from the other revealed books that potentially show us more of Allah.

Allah of Love

Muslims agree that Allah does not resemble his creatures, and needs nothing from them. He is sovereign and able to accomplish or manifest whatever he desires. He exists outside creation and time as we know them.

Despite his grandeur and distance from us, most Muslims do recognize that Allah speaks his will into the souls he gave us and thereby helps us to know how to walk the right path. We can sense his approval when we do well. Although it is assumed that Allah does not have a personality or emotions as humans do, he nevertheless created the personality and emotions we have and can interact with them any time he likes. There is a definite spiritual connection between God and man.

This is consistent with the way the Hebrew Scriptures portray YHWH (Allah). The Hebrew people call this spiritual connection the "Spirit of God" or the "Holy Spirit" (Ruach HaKodesh). It is less important how the Spirit and Allah relate to one another, or even to know which messages are spoken by his will or brought by his angels. It is more important to recognize that Allah cares about his creatures enough to speak with them in ways they can perceive.

Allah is called compassionate (Ar-Rahmaan), merciful (Ar-Raheem), and loving (Al-Wadood). These are attributes of YHWH as described in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Torah and Gospels frequently use a parent-child or groom-bride metaphor when showing how God deals with his people. Both describe a relationship based on love and mutual covenant. This distinguishes Allah, who is involved in our lives, from the gods of other people groups and religions (eg., Indigenous Nordic) that are assumed to be ambivalent and uninterested observers of man. The Qur'an says that Allah is LORD. The word used here is "Roubb" which means a caretaker in the sense of a parent heading a family.

Prophet Muhammad did not comment specifically on Allah as a father, except to say that God could not have a human son. Nevertheless, his fatherly character is affirmed by many Muslim teachers and appears clearly in the other revealed writings. Among his fatherly attributes are the source of love and comfort, provider, protector, and teacher. The following scriptures illustrate these.

"Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created." [Holy Bible. Revelation 4:11]

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear [of judgment] in love; but perfect love casts out fear [of judgment], because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears [judgment] is not perfected in love. [Holy Bible. 1 John 4:16-18]

"I [Allah], even I, am He who comforts you." [Holy Bible. Isaiah 51:12]

Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided." [Holy Bible. Genesis 22:14]

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You [Allah] are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. [Holy Bible. Psalms 23:4]

My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, For whom the LORD loves He reproveth, Even as a father {corrects} the son in whom he delights. [Holy Bible. Proverbs 3:11-12]

These scriptures portray Allah as the father of all humans, with a desire that they all would honor him as their one God. Even when some turn away to lawlessness and reject him, (as he knows in advance they will), his character nevertheless remains merciful and compassionate.

The story is told of pagans who came to Muhammad as unbelieving adulterers and murderers who had never done good deeds. Allah revealed that despite not meeting any of his required conditions, he was still willing to forgive them out of his mercy if they were honest about their repentance.

Say: "O humans who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. [Noble Qur'an. 39:53] (See also 25:67-70)

This, then, should be our attitude toward all other people, both believer and unbeliever. We cannot know what is in a person's heart, and must always approach them in grace and honor because Allah desires that they be saved from punishment. What a reward awaits us if we are the person chosen to help fulfill Allah's will for that person's repentance!

Allah of Judgment

We have shown Allah to be a loving Father God who has given us the gift of his Messengers as part of bringing his believers to himself. We also know that Allah is perfectly holy, gives us laws by which to live, and must be perfectly just in sovereignly evaluating our lives against those laws.

There are some striking similarities between the revelations of Allah in the Qur'an and YHWH in the Torah. In both cases God speaks to his Messenger and exhorts him to lead the believers against others in the land. This is in punishment for worshiping other gods and violating the covenants given them by their Creator.

Let those (believers) who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter fight in the Cause of Allah, and whoso fights in the Cause of Allah, and is killed or gets victory, We shall bestow on him a great reward. [Noble Qur'an. 4:74]

"Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. "Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. "But {rather,} you are to tear down their altars and smash their {sacred} pillars and cut down their Asherim --for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—" [Holy Bible. Exodus 34:11-14]

Most believers understand that these scriptures calling for warfare were specific to the times when the religions were being established and God's covenantal lands needed to be cleansed. They are not intended to be eternal instructions to believers to persecute non-believers wherever they find them. Allah loves them as well, even if they do not yet have the right to enter Paradise. Our focus today, unless God gives a very specific new prophetic word to the contrary, should be on convincing people of Allah's love and not tormenting them with his wrath.

YHWH used the laws of the Torah as his standard for judging Israel. Muhammad condemned the people of the Book in his day not because of their race, but because so many were not following the Siniatic law more closely. A Jew that kept Torah and honored Allah as the one true God was acceptable in Muhammad's sight. Similarly, Muhammad condemned Muslims that strayed from the Qur'an, but would never have condemned a believing Indonesian just because he was not an Arab.

Many Muslims today view Israel as occupying land that is not theirs. Yet Muhammad never repudiated God's gift of Canaan given to all of Abraham's children as documented in the Torah. The Torah cannot be corrupted on this point because that would negate God's half of the covenant that Muhammad condemned the Hebrews for not keeping. Doing so would have placed Muhammad in the position of battling against Allah's will. Allah loves the people of the Book, and blessed both Ishmael and Isaac with a lasting legacy that inherited the blessings given their father Abraham.

Allah loves all his creatures, even when he knows they will make choices that incur his wrath. We must clearly separate the eternal principle of Allah's judgment against polytheism (shirk) and disbelief (kufr) from the circumstantial judgments against the pagans of Canaan and Arabia. Surely Allah still judges idolatry and lawlessness today, but it is a judgment against the hearts of individual people.

This raises the question of whether Allah pre-destines some people for salvation and some for unbelieving destruction. In the Torah YHWH made all his creatures to be very good". He gave every person the free will of choosing the path of spiritual life or death.

Then God [Elohim] saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. [Holy Bible. Genesis 1:31]

I [Adonai] call Heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." [Holy Bible. Deuteronomy 30:19-20]

In seeming contrast we read in the Qur'an that some creatures are destined for destruction, implying that our efforts to educate or convert them are pointless.

Whomsoever Allah guides, he is the one who follows the right way; and whomsoever He causes to err, these are the losers. And certainly We have created for hell many of the jinn and the men; they have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; they are as cattle, nay, they are in worse errors; these are the heedless ones. [Qur'an 7:178-179]

...Those are they for whom Allah does not desire that He should purify their hearts; they shall have disgrace in this world, and they shall have a grievous chastisement in the hereafter. [Qur'an 5:41]

Is the Torah wrong about our free choice? Are our efforts to show others the right way to Allah futile? Many Muslim scholars interpret Allah's words to mean that he *preknows* our choices in advance, not that he *predestines* our behavior. After all, a perfectly just God cannot judge us against a law we have no ability to obey. Unfortunately, these and other verses in the Qur'an (and Bible) have been used to rationalize ungodly persecutions throughout the ages.

Allah is interested in our personal struggle (jihad) for righteousness. Some take a more literal view in which warfare cannot end until an Islamic theocracy has been established worldwide by the hand of man. Yet if Allah wills that Islam be followed everywhere then we can be confident he will make it so. He does not need our help punishing disbelievers. Acting on his behalf suggests that we do not believe he is capable of accomplishing his own will.

Obligations of the Believer

We have seen that Allah loves all his creatures, desires that they will all follow his path, and justly evaluates our behavior against his laws. It is our job to purify ourselves before him so we will be found worthy on the Last Day. Our focus should always be on Allah's holiness, and never on the failures of other people. God alone is able to judge a man's heart. If we are to do anything at all in this world, it should be showing others Allah's love for them by being good examples. Our duty is to honor Allah as our one God, his messengers as givers of his word, and his Messiah who will rule the coming kingdom. We must also do the good deeds that show others that we, like Allah, believe love is the right path.

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