

Slavery is forbidden in Islam

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The newspaper accounts of fighters from ISIs taking on slaves and having sex with female slaves and stating that this is allowed in Islam is shameful and wrong interpretation of Qur'anic verses, and is against the teachings of Islam.

At the time the Qur'an was revealed more than 1400 years ago slavery was a common practice. When a tribe invaded another tribe the victors captured those defeated and took them as slaves. The Qur'an urged the freeing of slaves, and made this one of the conditions to obtain atonement for certain sins or crimes. For example killing a person accidentally is atoned for by freeing a believing slave "Whoever kills a believer by mistake, it is ordained that he should free a believing slave" chapter 4, verse 92. Also freeing a slave is an option as atonement for making an oath and not fulfilling it "Allah will call you to account for your deliberate oaths: for expiation feed ten indigent persons, similar to what you you're your families or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom" Chapter 5, verse 89. The Qur'an, therefore urged the freeing of slaves and took the first step towards the abolition of slavery, but it took centuries to achieve this goal, and now slavery is forbidden all over the world.

The words "What your right hand possess" in the Qur'an refers to slaves that a person possessed at that time. The Qur'an did not give the master the right to do as he wishes with his slaves, but required him to marry her if he is unable to marry a free woman "Whoever among you is unable to marry free believing women, then he can marry believing girls among those whom your right hand possess, and Allah has full knowledge about your faith. You are one from another; wed them with the permission of their family, and give them their dowers, according to what is reasonable" Chapter 4, verse 25. The Qur'an orders Muslims to be good to their parents, their relatives, the orphans, the needy, their neighbors, the way farer and what their right hand possess (Chapter 4, verse 36).

Yazidis are to be considered as As-Sabe-een (The Sabians). They are to be treated like the people of the book (Jews & Christians) as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ordered us to do. The Qur'an orders Muslims to treat the people of the book, namely Jews & Christians with kindness and justice "Allah forbids you not, regarding those who do not fight you because of your faith, nor drive you out of your homes, to treat them with kindness and justice, for Allah loves those who are just" (Chapter 60, verse 8). The Qur'an also allows Muslim men to marry Jewish or Christian women "This day all things good and pure are made lawful for you. The food of the people of the book is lawful for you and yours is lawful for them. Lawful to you in marriage are chaste believing women, and chaste women among the people of the book revealed before your time, when you give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness" (Chapter 5, verse 5). The Qur'an also states that we should not force anyone to become a Muslim against his will "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (Chapter 2, verse 256). Man was given a free choice: to believe or reject faith, hence he is accountable for his choice "Let him who will believe,

and let him who will reject faith” (Chapter 18, verse 29). The Qur’an forbids Muslims from forcing others to faith against their will “If it was the will of your Lord then everyone on earth would have believed; are you then forcing people to believe against their will?” (Chapter 10, verse 99). The Qur’an also orders Muslims to state that they believe in all of God’s divine revelations, because it all came from one source, the one and only God “Do not argue with the people of the book except in the best possible way, and say: “We believe in what was sent to us, and what was sent to you, our Lord and your Lord is one, and to him we submit in Islam” (Chapter 29, verse 46). The Qur’an also states that Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabians that have faith and do righteous deeds will be rewarded by God, and has nothing to fear “Indeed those who believe, and those who are Jews and Christians and the Sabians, anyone who believe in God and the Last Day, and works righteous deeds will have their reward with their Lord, and will have no fear, nor shall they be sad” (Chapter 2, verse 62).

Therefore, taking Yazidi girls and women as slaves is against the teachings of the Qur’an. They should be treated with dignity, kindness and justice as Jews & Christians are to be treated, unless they are enemy combatants. As human beings we tend to explain divine text to our likings, and in the process ignore the rationale and wisdom underlying God’s message. Certainly God in the Qur’an, and in previous divine revelations taught us to treat each other with respect, kindness and justice, and to help those who are poor or needy or oppressed. It is not the intent of our creator that we as human beings enslave others, or humiliate them or deprive them of their rights or human dignity. The article published in the New York Times talks about fighters from ISIS raping young girls, and thinking that this is Ebada (worship) to God. When we commit a sin and inflict pain and suffering on another human being our barbaric behavior does not bring us closer to God, rather we become subject to and deserving of God’s wrath.

Some take the words in the Qur’an literally and apply them according to their desires, likes and dislikes. We should understand the Qur’an in historical context and understand the spirit and goal of divine orders. This way religion becomes applicable in any society according to the norms of that society and what is accepted. The same is true of Prophet Muhammad’s sayings and teachings. We should understand his sayings in historical context and in the context of the Qur’an. When the Prophet (PBUH) said: “I have been commanded to fight the people, till they bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that I am his messenger” narrated by Muslim, he was referring to the enemy combatants of the tribe of Quraish, not all mankind. The Prophet (PPBUH) was not ordered by God to fight all mankind till they submit to Islam, because this view is against the teachings of the Qur’an, which states clearly that Muslims cannot force others to become Muslims against their will.