

Good News

And give good news to those who do good (to others)

–Holy Quran 22:37

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Quranic Guidance for Muslims Living in a Plural Society

By Ebrahim Mohamed

I begin in the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful,

‘And serve Allah, and associate nothing with Him, and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbour of (your) kin and the alien neighbour, and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess.

Surely Allah loves not such as are proud, boastful.’ – 4:36

This verse gives excellent guidance to Muslims living in a plural society as we do here in South Africa for example. It teaches that everything one does should be to serve Almighty God and NOT one’s egos or to derive some favour from the rich and influential. Instead the Holy Quran directs our attentions first to the needs of our parents, loved ones, siblings, and near relatives. By doing just this creates a culture of wellness within the family unit, nowadays, acclaimed by medical experts as essential for mental health and stability.

The Holy Quran then directs attentions beyond family circles and calls on the doing of good to the orphans, the needy, the Muslim and non- Muslim neighbour including foreigners. Thus calling for the wellbeing of not only one’s own families but of fellow citizens as well is a clear injunction of the Holy Quran. Indeed, the lot of the orphans and

the poor is as much our responsibility as that of our own families and near relatives.

The same goes for the neighbour. It does not matter whether the neighbour is White, Black, Indian, Christian, Jewish etc.; they should all be treated with equal respect and dignity. Unless of-course a neighbour might be involved in criminal activities, then you have the right to distance yourself from them. Perhaps draw up a petition signed by the rest of the neighbourhood and bring it to the attention of the authorities.

The Holy Quran teaches not to be self-righteous and judgmental:

‘Hast thou not seen those who attribute purity to themselves? Nay! Allah purifies whom He pleases.’ – 4:49

That Divine goodness is a quality inherent in man regardless of race, religion, and ethnicity is what the Holy Quran teaches:

‘So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit.’ - 15:29

Thus it also teaches to avoid unsociable behaviour such as boastfulness and mischief:

‘Surely Allah loves not the self-conceited boaster.’ – 31:18

‘Surely Allah loves not the mischief-makers.’ – 28:77;

Rather the ‘doing good to others’, is the recurring theme that runs throughout the Holy Quran for this draws one closer to God: ‘Surely Allah loves the doers of good.’ – 2:195

Religious Tolerance

Although Muslims are strict monotheists, they are told to be tolerant of others’ beliefs even if it involves idol worship:

‘And abuse not those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest, exceeding the limits, they abuse Allah through ignorance. Thus to every people have We made their deeds fair-seeming then to their Lord is their return so He will inform them of what they did.’ – 6:108

Granted, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s¹) did clear the Sacred House at Makkah of idols because it was the first House of worship of the One Universal God of all mankind since the beginning of time. It was this tradition that was carried forth and handed down by Abraham and Ishmael who raised its foundations centuries before the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s). Over time idolatry set in among the Arabs and idol worshippers started to abuse the sacred character of the Sacred House by

¹ *Sallallahu alayhi wasallam –Peace and blessings of God be upon him*

placing their idols therein. So the Holy Prophet (s), under the command of God, removed all the idols and purified the Sacred House of worship once more, forever.

However, this does not mean idolatry disappeared completely from Arabia; and thus Muslims are told to be tolerant towards idolaters and not to abuse their idols. What better advice for Muslims and others finding themselves in a multi-religious society as ours? In fact it is sacrosanct for a Muslim to believe in all of the prophets of God; and therefore to slander, defame, and abuse the Founders of other Faiths is regarded as a serious sin in Islam unlike some Europeans that derive cheap pleasure from doing so in the name of freedom of speech. Rather Muslims are taught to invite to Islam ‘with wisdom and goodly exhortation’- 16:125 and to enlighten and remove the prejudices and misconceptions that prevail out there about Islam and the prophet Muhammad (s).

The Holy Quran does not teach conversion to Islam as a primary duty of a Muslim as we see some over-ambitious organizations do. To bring about a change in the mindset of people is the work of God alone. A Muslim’s duty is to deliver the message of Islam; and the best way to do so is by practical example. This was the commandment given to the Holy Prophet

(s) whose example Muslims are called upon to follow:

‘And the Messenger’s duty is only to deliver (the message) plainly.’ – 25:45

‘And certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar.’ – 33:21

The Holy Quran encourages Muslims to vie with other faith communities and nations in virtuous deeds.

‘And if Allah had pleased He would have made you a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you. **So vie one with another in virtuous deeds.**’ -5:48.

Every nation therefore will be judged according to the laws that were given to them as guidance and the acts of devotion that were assigned for them. Thus if others promote peace and harmony in society then Muslims should double up their efforts to promote living in peace and harmony with all. This also tells us that by being Muslim, does not mean being anti-Christian, anti-Jew, or anti-Hindu. On the other hand, being civil and neighbourly does not mean compromising one’s beliefs and values as a Muslim merely for the sake of blending in with society. No, it means being true to the Holy Quran which teaches to be tolerant, courteous and

respectful towards all mankind whilst standing up against all forms of corruption and injustices as well.

Significance of the *Adhān*

(The Muslim Call to Prayer)

By Miesqa Mohamed

In light of recent events regarding the ban of the *Adhān* in Isipingo Beach, Durban, I have decided to share some insight and give a brief analysis of the true meaning of the *Adhān* for non Muslims who would like to know more.

The word *adhān* is derived from *idhn* which means originally anything that is heard (*udhun* meaning the ear) and hence it comes to mean knowledge or giving knowledge that a thing is permitted, and *adhān* or *ta'dhin* means an announcement, or an announcement of prayer and of the time thereof – the call to prayer.²

We can therefore say that the *adhān* is the call to announce that it is time for a particular obligatory prayer. It is an announcement made five times daily and goes as such;

Allahu Akbar –

Allah is the Greatest

(repeated four times).

Ashhadu an lā ilāha ill-Allāh –

I bear witness that nothing deserves to be worshipped except Allah

(repeated twice).

Ashhadu anna - Muhammad-ar Rasulu-llāh.

I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

(repeated twice).

Hayya ‘ala-s-salāh –

Come to Prayer

(repeated twice, turning the face to the right).

Hayya ‘ala-l-falāh -

Come to Success

(repeated twice, turning the face to the left).

Allāhu Akbar –

Allah is the Greatest

(repeated twice)

Lā ilāha ill-Allāh –

Nothing deserves to be worshipped except Allah.

The following sentence is added in the call to the early morning prayer after *Hayya ‘ala-l-falāh*.

² Lane's Lexicon

As-salatu khair-un minan-naum - Prayer is better than sleep (repeated twice).

In Islam the *Adhān* is contained in words that carry deep meaning to the listening ear. The *Adhān* contains language that is meant to inspire and attract the worshipper to prayer, thus a horn/bell/chanting is not used.

The *Adhān* is not only an announcement of the time of prayer, but also contain the greatest principle on which Islam is based i.e. the Unity of Almighty God and the Prophethood of Muhammad (s). It also contains a message saturated with wisdom for the *success* of the worshipper and man in general.

So let us take a closer look at the significance underlying this important principle and message contained in the *adhān*.

The words *Allāhu Akbar* (God is the Greatest) signifies the Unity of God, so that man must bow only before Him and before none else. It impresses on the mind that there is no other superlative Being than the One True Divine Being.

Another beautiful gem found in the *Adhān* is the realization of the Divine in man, which in itself is the real message of religion. This is declared with equal force – *Hayya ‘ala-s-salāh* (Come to Prayer), immediately followed by – *Hayya ‘ala-l-falāh* - (Come to success).

So the message that the *Adhān* is giving us is that by means of prayer we will attain *success in* life; because it is only through the realization of the Divine in man that complete Self Development (*falāh*) is attained.

The English word ‘success’ is referred to in Arabic as *falāh*, however, the Arabic version carries a much deeper meaning than the English word ‘success’. The Arabic *falāh* is not confined to mere success on the material plane but is all encompassing, primarily, referring the unfoldment of the soul. Thus the Islamic philosophy of *success* is contained in the word *falāh*. The broader significance of the word *falāh* (in a literal sense also means a ‘farmer’) means ‘bringing the noble and good faculties placed inside all of us by Almighty God to fruition just like seeds planted in cultivated land by a farmer, unfold and grow. And just like we do not see the seeds when they are planted by the farmer under the soil until it grows into plants, so the seeds of goodness in us are hidden until it manifests in good manners, righteousness and morality which grow into even into greater indescribable attributes (i.e. the Divine in us) which the mind cannot fathom on this material plane but will indeed on the higher spiritual plane of the next life.

So *falāh* mentioned in the *Adhān* refers to our own personal growth and the

evolution of our souls. Like a farmer we must nurture and feed the soul so that it grows into a good, healthy crop. In the case of the human species, this means the development into good, upright, moral beings.

Come to Prayer, Come to Success, Come to the Unfoldment and Evolution of your soul. This is what is contained in the Muslim Call to Prayer, called the *Adhān*. Why, we rightly ask, would one deprive oneself of such spiritual sustenance? Just like our bodies need sunlight, so does the soul need prayer.

I write this on Heritage Day in beautiful South Africa where our culture is rich and filled with diversity. Multiple religions and races fill our land. So with the spirit of *Ubuntu*³ I sincerely hope this article gives you a better understanding of the Islamic *Call to Prayer* thus creating Unity, Tolerance and Love through understanding and knowledge.

May your life unfold beautifully.

‘Behold! How Good and How Pleasant it is, for Brethren to Dwell Together in Unity.’ – Psalm 133:1



³ An endearing expression used in African Tradition signifying Love for Humanity.

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