

greatly rewarded in the Hereafter. The Noble Qur'an stated that obligatory charity and charity funds could be used for the purchase of slaves to be freed and freeing a slave is cited therein as expiation for breaking an oath and for the commission of particular kinds of sins and errors. Moreover, a slave could enter into a contract with his master to earn his freedom. Thousands of slaves requested and were granted contracts of emancipation by their Muslim owners.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) repeatedly emphasized good treatment of all slaves. They were not to be overworked, their dignity was to be preserved and they were to be treated with justice and kindness. In many cases a slave would become a close friend and advisor of his master or the master would even regard him as a son. It was not uncommon for slaves to be given precedence over free men regarding religious or worldly matters in which one of them excelled.

Islam has always encouraged the emancipation of slaves with the object of gradually diminishing their numbers and integrating them into society. As a result of Islamic teachings, slavery was almost completely eradicated from many areas of the Muslim world, peacefully and without bloodshed. Now can any other religion or civilization make such a claim?

Q: If a man is allowed to have more than one wife, then why does Islam prohibit a woman from having more than one husband (polyandry)?

A: Many people, including some Muslims, question the logic of allowing Muslim men to have more than one spouse while denying the same 'right' to women. Let me first state emphatically, that the foundation of an Islamic society is justice and equity. Allah has created men and women as equal, but with different capabilities and different responsibilities. Men and women are different, physiologically and psychologically. Their roles and responsibilities are different. Men and women are equal in Islam, but not identical.

The following points enumerate the reasons why polyandry is prohibited in Islam:

If a man has more than one wife, the parents of the children born of such marriages can easily be identified. The father as well as the mother can easily be identified. In case of a woman marrying more than one husband, only the mother of the children born of such marriages will be identified and not the father. Islam gives tremendous importance to the identification of both parents, mother and father. Psychologists tell us that children who do not know their parents, especially their fathers undergo severe mental trauma. Often they have an unhappy childhood. It is for this reason that the children of prostitutes do not have a healthy childhood.

Biologically, it is easier for a man to perform his duties as a husband despite having several wives. A woman, in a similar position, having several husbands, will not find it possible to perform her duties as a wife. A woman undergoes several psychological and behavioural changes due to different phases of the menstrual cycle.

A woman who has more than one husband will have several sexual partners at the same time and has a high chance of acquiring venereal or sexually transmitted diseases which can also be transmitted back to her husband even if all of them have no extra-marital sex. This is not the case in a man having more than one wife, and none of them having extra-marital sex.

The above reasons are those that one can easily identify. There are probably many more reasons why the Almighty, in His Infinite Wisdom, has prohibited polyandry.

For more information about Islam, contact Hope & Help.



PERTINENT QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Common, relevant questions about Islam and their answers



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Q: Why does Islam demand harsh punishments for sex outside of marriage?

A: Punishment in Islam has a social purpose which is to dissuade others from committing crimes. People are opposed to the Islamic punishment for fornication and adultery because they see it as too harsh or disproportionate to the offence. A basic problem is the difference in standards by which the severity of a crime is measured.

The Western view of man-woman relationships is usually that of permissiveness, one that accepts extramarital and illicit relationships as normal. The greatest casualty of irresponsible sexual behaviour has been the family, in particular the children.

Islam views sexual relationships outside of marriage as a very serious matter because they destabilize the family and thus contribute to the breakdown of the entire social system. Islam emphasizes protection of the family by imposing severe punishments for activities that threaten the family foundation. These punishments are the same for men and women and only a legitimate Islamic government has the right to implement them. This is just one aspect of a complete system which in addition to providing prohibitive obstacles in the path of unlawful relationships, strongly encourages and facilitates lawful marriage. In cases of confirmed incompatibility or dissatisfaction, a wife as well as a husband may request separation, enabling each to seek a more harmonious union.

Q: Why does Islam oppose homosexuality? Where is freedom of choice?

A: In the West today, homosexuality has been seen as an alternative lifestyle subject to personal preference. It is no longer considered an abnormality, and is being actively promoted by its adherents and their sympathizers as a legitimate way of life. Arguments in favour of tolerance toward same sex relationships are based on the assumption that homosexual behaviour is biologically sound.

Islam rejects this and considers homosexuality to be the result of human choice. Humans choose how to behave and the Almighty holds them responsible for their choices. It is inconceivable that the Almighty would have made some people homosexuals then declared it a punishable crime.

Inclinations can exist within humans towards a variety of natural acts and unnatural ones such as rape, paedophilia or bestiality. These inclinations may arise but it does not mean that free reign should be given to them. Muslims are under obligation to control and overcome such perverse inclinations. It should be noted that Islam did not introduce anti-gay legislature to the world. The texts of the Torah are replete with clear condemnation of such practices. But among the things foretold by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is this; "Immorality will not appear among a people to the extent that they publicize it but that painful diseases will spread among them which were not known to their predecessors."

Sexually transmitted diseases are steeply on the rise in permissive societies. In particular, HIV/AIDS, which causes loss of acquired immunity and usually leads to death. The early spread of AIDS was first observed among homosexual communities. Later it entered the heterosexual community through so-called bisexuals as well as blood transfusions and intravenous drug usage and now it continues to spread among promiscuous heterosexuals. AIDS remains incurable and infections continue to increase in gay and bisexual men who accounted for more than half of HIV infections in 2006.

God established the means for populating the earth and maintaining life by the creation of male and female, not only in man but among almost all living things. Islam considers deliberate efforts to change this nature as rebellion against the Creator.

Islamic teachings emphasize the distinctions between male and female. Islam instructs parents to separate their children in their beds by the age of ten in order to avoid sexual experiences which may result from childhood

experimentation. Such experiences are often reinforced by contacts in school or through abuse from perverted adults. Islam also encourages early marriage in order to facilitate lawful sexual relations for young people as soon as possible and keep them away from unlawful and unnatural ones.

Q: Does Islam accept slavery?

A: Sometimes people ask why Islam did not abolish slavery. They tend to forget that other religions did not do so either. In fact, there are several passages in the Bible that order slaves to serve their masters well. It is well known that when Europe made contact with Africa, the black people of that continent were faced with a major calamity of human misery that lasted more than five centuries. Slavery was not abolished worldwide until the year 1953 through a resolution issued by the United Nations.

At the time of the Noble Qur'an's revelation, slavery was a universal institution upon which the economics of every civilization were dependant. There were many ways by which a slave could be obtained such as poverty (forcing one to sell himself or his children into slavery), debt (when a debtor could not pay off his debt he became a slave), kidnapping and raids. Islam limited the sources that existed previously to one and that was the capture of enemy prisoners during war whilst all others became prohibited.

Actually Islam is unique in its concern for the peaceful elimination of this practice.

Due to His perfect knowledge and wisdom, the Almighty did not order that slavery be abolished outright since the economy of every civilization on earth was based and dependent upon this system, not only would this have disadvantaged the Muslim community but the slaves themselves would have been unprepared for release into society without homes or any means of support. Mercifully, the Almighty made the freeing of slaves within Islam a gradual transition. Manumission by the state and by individual Muslim was encouraged as a righteous deed