

ISLAMIC VIEW OF PUNISHMENT

1. Islam understands the concept of punishment in three ways. There are punishments which Allah inflicted on past nations, punishments in the present situation and punishments in future life.

PUNISHMENTS IN HISTORY

2. Islam talks about a number of punishments which Allah inflicted on the past nations and peoples in order for Muslims to reflect upon them and avoid falling in the same mistakes that led to such punishments. They include the following:
3. **The people of Aad**; these were powerful and wealthy men and women who built wonderful palaces and fortresses. They were strong idol worshippers.
4. According to **Q (7:65-71)**, Allah sent to them Prophet **Huud** to teach them Tawheed but they refused and the leaders among them called him a liar.
5. They also called him a foolish man and challenged him if Allah could cause a punishment to them if they refused to follow him. Allah sent a strong wind which destroyed all of them.
6. **The people of Thamud**; these were cousins of the people of Aad who, due to their civilization, became Godless and extremely arrogant.
7. Allah sent to them Prophet **Swaleh** with a she-camel as His symbol to them. Due to a long drought, there was scarcity of water and pasture and the arrogant privileged class refused the poor from accessing the little water available.
8. According to **Q (7:73-79)**, Prophet Swaleh appealed to the rich to allow the poor to access water and warned them against killing Allah's she-camel but they refused and secretly killed it.
9. Allah destroyed them with a deadly earthquake which threw them underground and buried them with their strong buildings.
10. **The people of Lut**; these practiced a lot of adultery and fornication and time came when they started involving in homosexuality (sodomy). Allah sent to them Prophet **Lut** to warn them against their evil practices but they did not listen to him.
11. One time in the evening, Prophet Lut was visited by two angels in form of handsome men and the inhabitants of Sodom stormed Prophet Lut's house to have sex with them.
12. According to **Q (7:80-84)**, Allah destroyed the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah with a shower of brimstone including Prophet Lut's wife.
13. **The Madyan people**; these people used to give wrong weights and measures and practiced other mischiefs like highway robbery, abusing people, exploiting religion for their own benefits e.t.c.

14. According to **Q (7:85-93)**, Allah sent to them Prophet **Shu'aib**, their own brother, to teach them belief in Allah and to do well to others. A few of them believed him while the rest refused and Allah destroyed all of them with a strong earthquake.
15. **The people of Nuhu**; these were strong disbelievers and polytheists who used to make noisy drums and putting fingers in their ears so as not to hear Allah's message.
16. According to **Q (7:59-64)**, Allah sent to them **Prophet Nuhu** but they refused to listen to him including his own son. He requested Allah to punish them and through inspiration, Allah instructed him to make a boat.
17. Meanwhile, the disbelievers laughed at him calling him a madman and wondered how he would take the boat (Noah's Ark) on water.
18. Allah brought heavy rains for some good days and brought with it strong floods. The believers and animals climbed the **Nuhu's Ark** while the disbelievers including his **son** were taken by the floods.
19. **Pharaoh and his people**; Pharaoh was king of Misiri who never believed in the existence of Allah. Allah sent to him **Prophet Musa** to show him His signs but he refused to accept him and even called himself the exalted God.
20. Pharaoh attempted to kill Prophet Musa and his followers but Allah directed Prophet Musa to take his followers to the liberated land across the Red sea.
21. According to **Q (2:50)**, Pharaoh tried to follow Prophet Musa and his followers in order to kill them but Allah divided the sea for them and drowned Pharaoh and his people.
22. **Haruna**; this was one of the chiefs of Pharaoh and at one time a king in history. He was very rich and history tells us that the keys to the stores of his wealth could be lifted by more than a hundred strongest men of the time. He misused his wealth by disobeying Allah and mistreating His people. Allah destroyed him with his wealth by sinking him in the ground till the day of judgement.
23. **Namuruthi**; he was another arrogant and powerful king of the time. He misused his power by comparing himself to Allah and promised that one day he would face and crash Allah's army. Allah challenged him by sending a mosquito which killed him.
24. **Iblis** (Satan); Allah cursed **Iblis** when it refused to prostrate down to Prophet Adam as Allah had directed all the angels. According to **Q (2:32-38)**, Allah sent Iblis away from Paradise and it is among the residents of hell on the Day of Judgement.
25. **Abu Lahab** and his wife, **Ummu Jamir**. Abu Lahab tried to frustrate Prophet Muhammad's mission in its early stages while beginning his public call on mountain Swafa because of his wealth and children.
26. According to **Q (111:1-3)**, wealth and children count nothing in the sight of Allah because this is what tempted Abu Lahab to ridicule the Prophet PBUH. In fact his wealth and children

never saved him when he was attacked by a strange contagious disease because everyone feared to come nearer to him. He will also be thrown in the midst of fire-blast on the day of judgement.

27. **Ummu Jamir** was Abu Lahab's wife who used to slander the Prophet PBUH and went about abusing him. She also used to collect thorns and scattered them in the prophet's way. She was always seen carrying thorns and she was nick named Carrier of Thorns. She met an unfortunate death whereby she was found strangled with a rope around her neck and on the day of judgement, she will be thrown in hell.
28. **Adam and Hawa**; Adam was the first person to be created by Allah and after sometime He created for him a spouse called Hawa and placed them in paradise but He refused them to eat the forbidden fruit.
29. According to **Q (2:30-38)**, Iblis overpowered them and ate the forbidden fruit. Allah punished them by removing them from paradise and sent on earth as a punishment but Adam pleaded and Allah forgave them.
30. **King Abraha Al-Ashram**; he was king of Yemen who tried to divert the Arabs from making pilgrimage to the Kaaba. When he failed, he organized an army of six thousand men with thirteen elephants to go and destroy the Kaaba. According to **Q (105:1-5)**, Allah sent against Abraha's army birds in flocks and struck them with stones of baked clay (Sijil). Abraha and his army were destroyed completely and were left like dried up grass eaten by animals.

LESSONS FROM THESE PUNISHMENTS

1. It cautions Muslims to reflect on what happened in the past and act according to Allah's laws i.e they should learn from the past and avoid falling in the same mistakes.
2. We learn that Shirk is a major sin and we should try our level best to avoid because it led to the destruction of the **people of Aad**.
3. We also learn that Allah is the guardian of the holy Kaaba and City of Mecca. He safeguards them together with the Muslims up to date.
4. We learn that children and wealth count nothing in the sight of Allah. Allah destroyed **Abu Lahab** because he was influenced by his wealth and children to frustrate the prophet's mission.
5. It is a lesson to the believers that those whom Allah bestows with His favours and turn against Him will face His wrath on the day of judgement like the favours Allah gave the Arabs by defending them against Abraha and later turned against His prophet.
6. Muslims learn that the most powerful on earth are the weakest in the sight of Allah. That is why He destroyed Abraha's elephant army with just mere birds and people of Nuhu with floods.

7. Much respect should be accorded to the holy places of worship such as mosques, churches, Kaaba and others. They should not be destroyed even during holy wars.
8. It is a lesson to man that before disobeying Allah, he should reflect first upon what He will do to him like in the case of Abraha, Pharaoh, Haruna and Ummu Jamil.
9. It is a lesson that Allah has many ways of dealing with His enemies. He can destroy using earthquake, floods, animals and birds e.t.c
10. We learn from the people of Thamuud that arrogance is a sin and should be avoided because it led to the destruction of the whole nation.
11. We also learn from the past that messengers have an exalted place in the sight of Allah and they should be obeyed because whichever nation that disobeyed them Allah destroyed them angrily.
12. It is a lesson to believers that we should not put too much trust in the people we live with about religious matters. That is, little did Prophet Lut know that his wife was a sinner of Sodom and Gomorrah.

PUNISHMENTS IN THE PRESENT SITUATION

1. In the present situation, Islam classifies punishments into two i.e Hudud (fixed) punishments and T'azir (discretionary) punishments.
2. **Hudud punishments** are punishments for fixed offences mentioned in the holy Qur'an. Such punishments are explained by the traditions of Prophet Muhammad PBUH.
3. They include punishments for theft, fornication, adultery, highway robbery, false accusation of adultery, murder and others.
4. **Theft**; if one is guilty of theft, his hands are cut off depending on the extent of the theft.

Q (5:38) says; *“As to the thief, male or female cut off his or her hands: a punishment by way of example from Allah for their crime...”*

5. **Armed robbery**; this is intended take away of one's property by force. Accordingly, the offender must be killed or his hands cut off as per **Q (5:33)**.
6. **Illegal sexual intercourse (Zina)**; this is sexual relations between man and woman without legal rights as taught by Islam. It is divided into fornication and adultery.

Fornication is illegal sex between unmarried couples or when one of the couples is not married while adultery is illegal sex by a married couple outside the marriage bond.

Q (24:2) says; *“The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication; flog each of them with a hundred stripes...”*

7. **Homosexuality**; this is where man plays sex with fellow man. Both offenders must be banished and isolated.

Q (4:16) says; *“If two men among you are guilty of vulgarity (homosexuality), punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone...”*

8. **Lesbianism**; this is an act where a woman plays sex with a fellow woman. The punishment for the offenders is found in **Q (4:15)** which says;

“If any of your women are guilty of vulgarity, take evidence of four reliable witnesses from amongst you against them; and if they testify, confine them to houses until death do claim them or Allah finds them some way”

9. **Bestiality**; this is a situation where a human being commits sexual intercourse with an animal. Islam declares that such a person be killed.

10. **False accusation of adultery**; this is an act of alleging that one has committed Zina and fails to bring four eye witnesses. This is a grave sin in Islam which carries a severe punishment.

Allah states in **Q (24:4)**; *“And those who accuse against chaste (pure) women and do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and reject their evidence ever after...”*

11. **Taking intoxicants**; intoxicants are things which befog one’s mind e.g alcohol, cocaine, marijuana and the like. According to the traditions of the Prophet PBUH, the punishment for the offender ranges between forty to eighty lashes.

12. **Apostasy**; this is the act of denouncing Islam. A person who denounces Islam is called an apostate (murutard). According to the prophet’s traditions, an apostate must be killed.

13. **Murder**; this is the unlawful taking of one’s life intentionally. It is one of the greatest sins in Islam and the punishment for the offender is **Qisas (retaliation)**.

Allah says in **Q (2:178)**; *“O you who believe! The law of retaliation is prescribed to you in cases of murder; the free for free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman...”*

14. **Manslaughter**; this is the unintentional taking of one’s life or mistakenly killing a person. According to the traditions of the prophet PBUH, the punishment for the offender is to free a believing slave and pay blood money to the heirs of the murdered person.

15. **T’azir (Discretionary) Punishments** are punishments which are not found in the Qur’an or prophet’s traditions but they are administered by the Muslim judge (Qadhi).

16. Such punishments are administered by the Qadhi according to the extent or gravity of the offence committed and its consequential effects on the society. They include the following:

17. **Admonition;** this means warning the offender that he/she has behaved unlawfully. It is normally administered on people who commit crimes for the first time.
18. **Reprimanding;** this is where the judge (Qadhi) expresses official disapproval of the crime committed by using words he feels are sufficient to make the offender reform.
19. **Threatening;** this is where the offender is forced to change his/her bad behaviours out of fear of a severe punishment. It involves promising him/her a strong punishment if he commits the offence again or the current punishment can be referred until when he/she commits a related or same offence.
20. **Boycotting;** this is the act of isolating the offender in the society because of his/her bad behaviours so that he/she is forced to change after suffering lowliness.
21. **Public disclosure;** this is where the criminal is publically announced to all Muslims due to his misconduct. It is intended to make the offender reform out of the shame caused to him/her and to warn the public against his/her offences.
22. **Paying fines and seizing property;** this is administered to offences of theft in which the minimum requirement for inflicting Hudud punishment cannot be reached. For example refusing to pay zakat.
23. **Imprisonment;** the Qadhi administers this punishment depending on the extent of the offence. The offender can be imprisoned for one day as a minimum depending on the type of the offence and the person.
24. **Flogging;** this is administered to offenders whom the Qadhi thinks that circumstances require giving them a number of strokes. The strokes given vary from person to person and crime to crime.

PUNISHMENT IN FUTURE LIFE

1. Allah's punishments in future will depend on the crimes one commits on earth because Allah sent messengers to teach man what He allows and forbids.
2. Allah gave man freewill to exercise his faculty of reasoning before doing anything because whatever he does is recorded and will be accountable for it on the day of judgement.
3. In the holy Qur'an, Allah clearly illustrates the punishments for wrongdoers.

Q (32:20) says; *“As to those who do evil, their abode will be fire; every time they try to get out, they shall be driven back and a voice will say to them ‘taste the torment of hell which you have persistently denied’”*

4. From the above verse, the punishment on the final day will be Jahannamah (Hell) in which evil-doers will be thrown forever and ever.

5. Furthermore, Allah says in **Q (14:16-17)**;

“Hell lies before him and he is given shrinking water to drink. He takes it in portion but cannot swallow it. Death will come to him every quarter but he will not be able to die. A dreadful torment is before him”

6. From the above verse, the wrongdoers will be thrown in Hell-fire and their dear drink will be boiling water mixed with bloody lust and yet it will be hard for them to take it.

7. The punishments after death will be administered by Allah himself. He will instruct the angels of punishment led by Malik to carry out the punishments. This means that there will be no appeal after judgement.

8. The situation on the last day will be gloomy with no refreshments nor any kind of pleasure. People will stand in the hottest sunshine and will suffer from the deepest thirst.

9. Wrongdoers will taste the curst tree called Zaqqam, described to be growing at the bottom of hell. Such will be the situation from time to time.