



# 40 Hadiths on Social Justice

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## Lecture Notes

## Chapter 30:

# In Islam There Is No Slavery Except to the Most High

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:  
"None of you should say: My slave and my slave-girl, for all of you are the slaves of Allah, and all your women are the slave-girls of Allah; but say: My servant, my girl, and my young man and my young girl."

[Sahih Muslim]

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى  
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ "لَا يَقُولَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ  
عَبْدِي وَأَمَّتِي . كُلُّكُمْ عِبِيدُ اللَّهِ وَكُلُّ  
نِسَائِكُمْ إِمَاءُ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ لِيَقُلْ غُلَامِي  
وَجَارِيَّتِي وَفَتَاتِي"

[صحيح مسلم]

### Introduction

- In Islam there is no slavery except to Allah (swt), the most high.
  - To be able to understand this claim, we have to set aside our post-atlantic slave trade mindset of what *riqq* (slavery) means.
- The Hadith tells us that in terms of our status as human beings, we cannot be slaves to anyone except Allah.
  - The concept of *riqq* (slavery) in Islam is a condition (as opposed to a status) that dealt with captivity, specifically after a war.

### The Treatment of Slaves

- Hadith of Jami' Tirmidhi: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِخْوَانُكُمْ جَعَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِتْنَةً تَحْتَ أَيْدِيكُمْ فَمَنْ  
كَانَ أَخُوهُ تَحْتَ يَدِهِ فَلْيُطْعِمْهُ مِنْ طَعَامِهِ وَلْيُلْبِسْهُ مِنْ لِبَاسِهِ وَلَا يُكَلِّفْهُ مَا يَغْلِبُهُ فَإِنْ كَلَّفَهُ مَا يَغْلِبُهُ فَلْيُعِنِّهِ ."
  - "Allah has made some of your brothers as slaves under your care. So whoever has his brother under his care, then let him feed him from his food, and let him clothe him from his clothes. And do not give him a duty that he cannot bear, and if you give him a duty he cannot bear, then assist him with it."

- Hadith of Abu Dawud: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "Whoever kills his slave, we will kill him."
- Hadith: "There is no expiation for hitting a slave, except for freeing him."
  - There is another narration where the prophet (ﷺ) reprimanded a man for hitting his slave. The man freed his slave and the prophet (ﷺ) told the owner that he would have entered hell fire had he not freed him.
- Why did the prophet (ﷺ) say not to say "my slave" or "my slave-girl"? Was it simply because it was disrespectful?
  - No, it was because it wasn't a true representation of that person's state. This is clear from the prophet (ﷺ) later saying "you are all the slaves of Allah".
  - The prophet (ﷺ) broke the barrier that existed between the 'slave' and the 'master'.

### The Sahabah and Slavery

- Five of the first seven to show their Islam were slaves. The prophet (ﷺ) was told that victory will come from those in society that were oppressed.
- The companions understood Islam as a religion that was liberating and emancipatory.
  - Rib'ee Ibn 'Aamir (ra) was sent to Rustum, the ruler of Persia. He said to him, "Allah has sent us that we may take people out of slavery to other slaves, to slavery to the lord of all slaves. And from the constriction of this world to the expanse of the hereafter. And from the injustices of all other systems of life to the justice of life."
  - The story of Bilal (ra) was also discussed in a previous lecture.
- When Salman (ra) was describing all the times he switched hands, he said "From lord to lord, from master to master." Abu Hurayrah said that Salman didn't know the Prophet (s) had forbade calling slave owners lord.

### Our Understanding of Slavery

- *Raqiq* was used to describe a slave in the Islamic context.

- *Abd* means slave and is what the prophet (ﷺ) said should not be used except when referring to our relationship to Allah.
- The term slavery is loaded with all sorts of connotations that aren't accurate in an Islamic context. The term is functionally useless today.
- Professor Rudolph Ware said that 19th and 20 Century western post enlightenment to denigrate African and Muslim society. The goal was to make European liberation synonymous with liberation and the east synonymous with barbaric regressiveness.
- The Harriet Tubman Institute states that the overwhelming majority of slavery historiography is written by Europeans/Americans.
- According to Michael Zeuske. (Historiography and Research Problems of Slavery and the Slave Trade in a Global-Historical Perspective), most of the religious rhetoric that stemmed from western historians has been nothing more than "Christian-globalist pamphlets directed against "Islamic slavery."

### The Apparent Contradiction in Muslim Practices of Slavery

- Conventional Islamic sources are full of inspiration against conditions of slavery and exploitation.
- Someone may object: why did Muslim countries abolish slavery so late? Mauritania and Saudi Arabia were one of the last countries to abolish slavery.
  - It is unfair to associate the practice of Islam with actions of certain countries. Tunisia abolished slavery in 1846, 19 years before the 13th Amendment was ratified in the United States. Whose to say that isn't a closer representation of the Islamic tradition.

### Are We Being Apologetic?

- We are not focusing on the conditions of slavery to downplay abuse and aggression in the past. Rather, we are focusing on the conditions to recognize the abuse and aggression in the present.
- There is more human exploitation, abuse, and inequity today than there ever has been in the history of the world.



- Examples are human trafficking, brutal working conditions for migrants in some countries, and mass incarceration in America

### The Double Standard Against Islam

- There is a double standard against Islam with regards to slavery.
- Excerpts from the Bible:
  - However, you may purchase male or female slaves from among the foreigners who live among you. You may also purchase the children of such resident foreigners, including those who have been born in your land. You may treat them as your property, passing them on to your children as a permanent inheritance. You may treat your slaves like this, but the people of Israel, your relatives, must never be treated this way. (Leviticus 25:44-46 NLT)
  - When a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod so hard that the slave dies under his hand, he shall be punished. If, however, the slave survives for a day or two, he is not to be punished, since the slave is his own property. (Exodus 21:20-21 NAB)
- We are not trying to attack the Bible but are simply pointing out the double standard. Islam does not encourage slavery at all. On the contrary, it strongly encourages freeing slaves.
  - Surah Balad ayah 12-13: وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعُقْبَةُ فَكَ رَقَبَةً
  - "Shall I not tell you what the straight path is? It is to free the neck of the slave."
- Unfortunately, the Prophet (s) who died having freed every slave he ever owned is treated differently than Abraham, Solomon, and other prophet's.
- The Islamophobic machine attempts to attribute the Libyan slave trade to Islam even though there is no connection. Many of the slaves are actually Muslim.
  - On the other hand, they ignore the conditions of the Pygmies in Congo.
- Religions should be examined for their overall views on human rights to gain a complete picture of the subject.

## Modern Day Slavery

- ISIS' call to slavery is uniquely deviant. No other Islamic movement with political undertones, no matter where it falls on the spectrum of orthodoxy, has called for a return to slavery. Without exception they viewed it as an outdated institution that was meant to end in Islam.
- Hizb at-Tahrir calls for a return to Khilafah yet never called for a return to slavery. Shaykh Taqiuddin Nabahani says in Shakhsiyyah Islamiyyah: "...so there does not remain even one situation in which enslaving occurs. Therefore, Islam has abolished slavery and there are no situations where slavery would return in a future Khilafah."
- Sayyid Qutb, one of the founders of the muslim brotherhood, wrote: "And concerning slavery, that was when slavery was a world-wide structure and which was conducted amongst Muslims and their enemies in the form of enslaving of prisoners of war. And it was necessary for Islam to adopt a similar line of practice until the world devised a new code of practice during war other than enslavement."
- There is a consensus among scholars against the perpetuation of slavery and against its reappearance in the present day.
- In a 2014 letter addressed to the leader and fighters of ISIS, hundreds of prominent Muslim scholars around the world wrote the following: "No scholar or Islam disputes that one of Islam's aims is to abolish slavery...For over a century, Muslims, and indeed the entire world, have been united in the prohibition and criminalization of slavery, which was a milestone in human history when it was finally achieved...After a century of Muslim consensus on the probation of slaver, you have boiled this...You have resuscitated something that the Shari'ah has worked tirelessly to undo and has been considered forbidden by consensus for over a century. Indeed, all the Muslim countries in the world are signatories of anti-slavery conventions."
  - The strength of this statement and its signatories suggests that there is no room for the re-introduction of enslaving practices according to some of the most prominent Muslim scholars.

## Conclusion



- We need to deal with slavery-like conditions that exist today.
- We should not allow our outrage to be directed by agenda-driven politics.
- We should not allow ourselves to fall victim to epistemology rather than historical reality.
- Our present day reality is extremely important when discussing these issues.