

SECTION 1: CONCEPT OF *AL-WALA'* AND *AL-BARA'*

This section gives the definitions of the terms *al-wala'* and *al-bara'*, as well as the various forms of both.

1. Introduction to *Al-Wala'* (loyalty) and *Al-Bara'* (dissociation)

Some Muslims understand interfaith relations as summarized and restricted by the notions of either one of “loyalty and allegiance” (*al-wala'*) or of “dissociation and disavowal” (*al-bara'*), with little or no regard to other Islamic concepts such as kindness, compassion, fairness and justice. What actually is the correct meaning of *Al-Wala'* (loyalty) and *Al-Bara'* (dissociation)?

Al-Wala' literally means loyalty, love, support, help and follow; while *al-Bara'* means to despise, desert and keep innocent of.

The terms “*al-Hub fi Allah* (loving for Allah sake) and *al-Bughd fi Allah* (hating for Allah sake)” and “*al-Muwalat* (loyalty) *wa al-Mu'adat* (enmity)” are sometimes used instead of *al-Wala'* *wa al-Bara'*.

Ibn Abbas was reported to have said: “Whoever loves for the sake of Allah and hates for the sake of Allah and gives for His sake and holds for His sake has completed his faith”.¹

Basically, the concept refers to liking and desiring what Allah likes and disliking or forsaking what Allah dislikes.

¹ Sulaiman bin Ahmad al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, Dar al-Haramayn, Cairo, 1415AH, hadith no. 9083

The concept of *Al-Wala'*:

The technical meaning of *al-Wala'* is to totally agree with the sayings, deeds and beliefs which please Allah and the persons whom He likes.² It is to love what Allah loves and to be loyal to what Allah approves of. The concept of *al-Wala'* therefore does not contradict or go against justice (*qist*), kindness (*birr*), mercy (*rahmah*) and excellence (*ihsan*) towards others irrespective of religious affiliation.

The concept of *Al-Bara'*:

Al-Bara' is to disavow, dislike and disagree with everything that Allah hates and condemns.³ The concept of *al-Bara'* however does not imply injustice, cruelty or any other unethical or inhumane behaviours which are not acceptable even towards an enemy of Allah or something that Allah hates. It also does not imply that Muslims cannot forgive their enemies and those who do wrong to them from among non-Muslims, as can be seen from the Sunnah of the Prophet (p) towards his enemies and the enemies of Allah.

Interfaith relations are not defined by only *Wala'* (loyalty) and *Bara'* (disassociation), but also by *Birr* (kindness), *Qist* (justice) and *Ihsan* (goodness). Allah says:

“As for such (of the unbelievers) who do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness (birr) and to behave towards them with full equity (qist): for verily, God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship

² http://www.muslimtents.com/aminahsworld/Al_wala.html (accessed on 05/06/2017)

³ For further reading see: Muhammad Sa'id al-Qahtani, *al-Wala' wa al-Bara' fi al-Islam*. In Al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13; See also www.kalamullah.com

towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth: and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship (wala'), it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!" (Qur'an 60: 8-9)

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah says, "This verse permits association with those who have not declared war against the Muslims and allows kindness towards them, even though they may not be allies."⁴

In his *Tafsir* (commentary) on Qur'an 60:8, Imam Al-Qurtubi said:

"The majority of commentators have agreed that this verse has not been abrogated. They cited the story reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim about Asmā' bint Abubakr when she asked the Prophet (p) if she could receive and be kind to her non-Muslim mother who visited her in Madina and the Prophet (p) said 'Yes'. It was said that this verse was revealed in this specific incident. Al-Mawardi and Abu Dawood reported that Amir ibn Abdullah ibn Al-Zubair narrated that his father told him that, before accepting Islam, Abubakr divorced his wife Qatila, the mother of Asmā'. When the truce was held between the Prophet (p) and the polytheists of the Quraish, the mother visited her daughter in Madina and brought her a pair of earrings and other gifts. Asmā' was reluctant to accept the gifts before asking the Prophet (p). In answer to her question, Allah revealed this verse [i.e. Qur'an 60:8]."⁵

⁴Zad al-Masir, vol.8, p.39; cited in Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities: Some Basic Reflections*, International Institute of Islamic Thought, London, 2003, p.26

⁵ Al-Qurtubi, quoted by Shaykh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghudda, *Islamic Manners*. Trans. by Muhammad Zahid Abu Ghudda. Edited by S.M. Hassan Al-Banna, Awakening Publications, 2001, pp.76-77; See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.3, hadith no. 789 for the hadith.

Similarly, Allah encourages justice ('*adl* and *qist*) – even to an enemy. He says: "*Do not let hatred of any people cause you to swerve from justice. Be just: this is nearest to being God-conscious*" (Qur'an 5:8). Also, "*O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves, or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over (the claims of) either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice; for if you distort (the truth), behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!*" (Qur'an 4:135).

Also, Allah encourages forgiveness and returning evil with good. He says: "*Repel by (means of) what is best, (their) evils. We are most knowing of what you describe.*" (Qur'an 23:96) Following this Qur'anic injunction, forgiveness was exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (p) in many difficult situations such as forgiveness of war crimes by the *Quraish* after the conquest of Mecca;⁶ and the forgiveness of the people of *Ta'if* when he went there to preach the message of Islam but instead of appreciating him, they stoned him.⁷ He also overlooked the ill behaviour of Jews (i.e. Banu Qaynuqa and Banu Nadhir) in Medina, before he expelled them after their betrayal.⁸

⁶ Al-Baihaqi, *Ma'rifah al-Sunan wa al-Athar*, vol.14, p.417; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal*, Muassasah al-Qurtubah, Cairo, vol.2, p.538; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, vol.4, p.307

⁷ Safy al-Rahman Mubarakfuri, *Al-Rahiq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet)*, Dar al-Salam Publishers, Riyadh, 1996, p.137

⁸ Safy al-Rahman Mubarakfuri, *Al-Rahiq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet)*, Dar al-Salam Publishers, Riyadh, 1996, p.239; Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Fiqh al-Sirah*, International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations, Riyadh, 1997, p.292, Ahmad 'Ali al-Majdub, *al-Mustawtanat al-Yahudiyyah 'Ala 'Ahd al-Rasul*, al-Dar al-Misriyyah al-Lubnaniyyah, Cairo, 1992, p.77-89

More textual evidences showing what the concept of 'al-Bara' is not:

- A young Jewish boy used to serve the Prophet (p) and he became sick. So the Prophet (p) went to visit him. He sat near his head and asked him to embrace Islam. The boy looked at his father, who was sitting there; the latter told him to obey Abu al-Qasim and the boy embraced Islam. The Prophet (p) came out saying: "Praises be to Allah Who saved the boy from the Hell-fire."⁹ Similarly, Sa'id bin Al-Musayyib said: When Abu Talib was on his deathbed, the Prophet (p) visited him.¹⁰ This shows the permissibility and encouragement of visiting sick non-Muslims.
- During the peace treaty period of Hudaibiyah¹¹, the Prophet Muhammad (p) gave Abu Sufyan (the leader of the polytheists of Mecca then) the very generous sum of 500 dinars (gold coins)¹² with which to assist the poor of Mecca during their brief period of severe food shortage.¹³ This financial aid to the Meccans was made despite

⁹ Al-Bukhari, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, edited, Muhammad Fu'ad Abd al-Baqi, Dar al-Bashair al-Islamiyyah, Beirut, 1989, p. 185, hadith no. 524; Al-Baihaqi, *Sunan al-Kubrah*, Maktabah Dar al-Baz, Mecca, hadith no. 6389; Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, hadith nos. 3097 and 3095; Ibn Hibban, *Sahih bn Hibban*, edited, Shu'aib al-Arna, 2nd edition, Mu'assasah al-Risalah, Beirut, 1993, hadith no. 4884; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 1356; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal*, hadith no. 13375

¹⁰ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 7, Book 70, hadith no. 561

¹¹ Many lessons have been derived by Muslim Scholars from the treaty of Hudaibiyah between the Muslims of Media and the Polytheists of Mecca. These lessons are relevant to Muslim minorities living under non-Muslim rule, treaties and constitutional concessions, the priority of peaceful co-existence etc. For further reading, see: Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, Dar al-Qalam, Beirut, vol.1, pp. 321-336; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, Maktabat al-Ma'arif, Beirut, vol. 1, pp. 164 – 177; Adil Salahi, *Muhammad, Man and Prophet: A Complete Study of the Life of the Prophet of Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, Markfield, UK, 2002, pp. 495-530; Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 149 – 163.

¹² 500 Dinars of gold, which was half the "blood money" (diyyah) for manslaughter, is approximately USD \$100,000.

¹³ Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Sahl Shams al-Din Sarakhs, *Al-Mabsut*, Dar al-Ma'rifa, Beirut, 1986, vol.10, p.92; Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fatawa Mu'asirah*, al-Mansurah, Egypt: Dar al-Wafa', 1996, vol.1, p.295 ; Imtiaz Ahmad, "Friendship with Non-Muslims" in *Speeches for an Inquiring Mind*, Al-Rasheed Printers, Medina, 2001, p.56.

their belief in idols, their past persecution and murder of Muslims, warfare and other inhuman atrocities and crimes against the Muslims of Mecca and Medina, and the fact that these same Meccans were responsible for the murder of a number of close companions and even relatives of the Prophet (p) himself.

- It was narrated by Asma bint Abu Bakr that, "My mother came to me during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (p) and she was a polytheist. I said to Allah's Apostle (seeking his verdict), "My mother has come to me and she desires to receive a reward from me, shall I keep good relations with her?" The Prophet (p) said, "Yes, keep good relations with her."¹⁴
- Allah says in Qur'an 28:56, "*Verily, you cannot guide aright everyone whom you love (man ahababta), but it is Allah who guides whom He wills, and He is fully aware of all those who receive guidance.*"

Major Qur'anic commentators cite the context of the revelation of this verse as being related to the Prophet's polytheist uncle Abu Talib¹⁵ who supported him and whom he loved dearly but could not convince to become a Muslim, as evident in the narration below:

¹⁴ Al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, vol.24, p.78; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith nos. 2620, 5979 & 2477; Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no. 2372; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad*, edited, Shu'aib al-Arnaut and others, 2nd Ed. Mu'assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 1999, hadith no. 26915; Abu Bakr Abd al-Razzaq bin Hammam al-San'ani, *Musannaf Abd al-Razzaq*, edited, Habib al-Rahman al-A'zami, 2nd Ed., Al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut, 1403 AH, hadith no 9932

¹⁵ Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari, *Jamiu al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Quran*, Mu'assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 2000, vol. 19, p. 598; Abul Fida' Ismail bin Umar Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, Dar Tayba li al- Nashr wa Tawzi', Medina, 1999, vol. 6, p.246; Abd al-Rahman bin Nasir al-Sa'di, *Taysir Karim al-Rahman*, Mu'assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 2000, p.620.

Sa'íd bin Al-Musayyib¹⁶ narrated from his father, "When the time of the death of Abu Talib approached, Allah's Apostle (p) went to him and found Abu Jahl bin Hisham and 'Abdullah bin Abi Umayyah bin Al-Mughira by his side. Allah's Apostle (p) said to Abu Talib, "O uncle! Say: None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, a sentence with which I shall be a witness (i.e. argue) for you before Allah. Abu Jahl and 'Abdullah bin Abi Umayyah said, "O Abu Talib! Are you going to denounce the religion of Abdul Muttalib?" Allah's Apostle (p) kept on inviting Abu Talib to say it (i.e. 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah') while they (Abu Jahl and 'Abdullah) kept on repeating their statement till Abu Talib said as his last statement that he was on the religion of Abdul Muttalib and refused to say, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah.' Then Allah's Apostle (p) said, "I will keep on asking Allah's forgiveness for you unless I am forbidden (by Allah) to do so." So Allah revealed (the verse) concerning him: *"It is not fitting for the Prophet and those who believe that they should invoke (Allah) for forgiveness for polytheists even though they be of kin, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of the fire* (Qur'an 9:113).¹⁷

The verse (28:56) is therefore a clear indication of the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (p) loved a polytheist who refused to accept Islam. This is a proof that non-Muslims are among those whom Muslims may love and hold close relationships with.¹⁸

¹⁶ Also referred to by some as Sa'íd bin Al-Musayyab.

¹⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 2, Book 23, hadith no. 442

¹⁸ Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*. Revised by The Presidency of Islamic Researches, IFTA, Call and Guidance, King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, Medina, 1411 AH, p.1136, footnote no. 3388.

- Allah says: “*And the food of those who were given the scripture is permissible for you, and your food is permissible for them*” (Quran 5:5)

In a hadith narrated by Anas bin Malik, “A Jewish lady brought a poisoned (cooked) sheep for the Prophet (p) who ate from it. She was brought to the Prophet (p) and he was asked, "Shall we kill her?" He said, "No." I continued to see the effect of the poison on the palate of the mouth of Allah's Apostle (p).”¹⁹

- Abdullah bin Uraiqit, a Meccan non-Muslim was trusted by the Prophet (p) and Abubakar – to lead them to Medina during their *hijra* (migration), even though there was a price of 100 camels on the Prophet (p) dead or alive.²⁰
- Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt sent a rich present of a thousand measures of gold, twenty robes of fine cloth, a mule, and two Coptic Christian ladies who were held in great respect in Egypt to the Prophet (p). And the Prophet (p) accepted the presents.²¹
- It was narrated by Abdullah bin Umar that Umar bin Al-Khattab saw a silken dress (cloak from Utarid bin Hajib) being sold at the gate of the Mosque and said, "O Allah's Messenger (p)! Would that you buy it and wear it on Fridays and when the delegates come to you!" Allah's Messenger (p) said, "This is worn by the one who will have no share in the Hereafter." Later on, some silk dresses were brought and Allah's Messenger (p) sent one of them to Umar. Umar said, "How do you give me this to wear while you said what you said about the dress of Utarid?" Allah's Messenger (p)

¹⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Volume 3, Book 47, hadith no. 786

²⁰ Safy al-Rahman Mubarakfuri, *al-Rahiq al-Makhtum*, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13, vol.1, p.131

²¹ Al-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, hadith no. 3497

said, "I have not given it to you to wear." So, Umar gave it to a polytheist brother of his in Mecca."²²

- Aisha reported that the Prophet (p) bought some foodstuff from a Jew on credit for a limited period and mortgaged his armour for it.²³
- It was narrated by Aisha that she asked the Prophet (p), "Have you encountered a day harder than the battle of Uhud?" The Prophet (p) said, **"Your tribes have troubled me very much, and the worst was the day of Aqaba when I presented myself to Ibn Abd Yalail ibn Abd Kulal and he did not respond to what I intended. I departed, overwhelmed with excessive sorrow, and I could not relax until I found myself at a tree where I lifted my head towards the sky to see a cloud shading me. I looked up and saw Gabriel in it. He called me saying: Allah has heard your people's saying to you and how they have replied, and Allah has sent the Angel of the Mountains to you that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people. The Angel of the Mountains greeted me and he said: O Muhammad, order what you wish, and if you like, I will let the mountains fall on them."** The Prophet (p) said, **"No, rather I hope that Allah will bring from their descendants people who will worship Allah alone without associating partners with him."**²⁴

²² Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, hadith no. 5522; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 2612

²³ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 3rd Ed., edited, Mustafa Dib al-Bagha, Dar Ibn Kathir, al-Yamamah, Beirut, 1987, hadith no. 2374; Al-Baihaqi, *al-Sunan al-Kubrah*, Majlis Da'irah al-Ma'arif al-Nizamiyyah al-Ka'inah fi al-Hind bi Balad Haidar Abad, 1344 AH, hadith no. 11414; Muhammad bin Yazid Abu Abdallah al-Qazwini, *Sunan bin Majah*, edited, Muhammad Fu'ad Abd al-Baqi, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, hadith no. 2436; Ahmad bin Shu'aib Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Nasa'i, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, 2nd Ed., edited, Abd al-Fatah Abu Guddah, Maktab al-Matbu'at al-Islamiyyah, Halab, hadith no. 4609

²⁴ Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, Vol.2, p.15; Safiy al-Rahman al-Mubarakfuri, *Al-Rahiq al-Makhtum*, vol.1, p.100, in Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13; Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 3231; Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Dar al-Jil, Beirut, hadith no. 4754.

- The constitution (*Sahifah*) of Medina was charted by the Prophet (p) for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect of rights between Muslims and Jews as citizens.²⁵

Prohibited and Permissible forms of *Al-Wala'*

Some forms of *Al-wala'* could be prohibited, for example, helping non-Muslims in any way that could be unjustly harmful to Muslims or others. It could also be permissible such as when it comes in the form of kindness to those who are not hostile among them; for example, marrying *kitabiyyah* wives (from the “People of the Book”), eating their foods, greeting them, giving them gift, etc.²⁶ The case of Asma' bint Abu Bakr and her mother as cited earlier on is a good example of acceptable *al-wala'*, so also is the Prophet's relationship with his uncle and that of the Muslim emigrants with the Christian Negus of Habashah (Abyssinia).

Also, marrying a *kitabiya* and the ensuing love between the Muslim husband and the non-Muslim wife naturally leads to *mawaddah* (love), *rahmah* (mercy), *sakinah* (tranquillity), *hubb* (love), trust, etc. and does not contradict the concept of *al-wala'*.

²⁵ Safiy al-Rahman al-Mubarakfuri, *al-Rahiq al-Makhtum*, vol.1, p.148, in Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Zad al-Mi'ad fi Hady khair al-'Ibad*, vol.3, p.58; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, vol.3, p.34.

²⁶ See Abd al-Aziz bin Ris al-Ris, *al-Burhan al-Munir*, p.52, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13.