

Lying in Islam

By Abdullah Al Araby

Like most religions, Islam in general, forbids lying. The Quran says, "Truly Allah guides not one who transgresses and lies." Surah 40:28. In the Hadith, Mohammed was also quoted as saying, "Be honest because honesty leads to goodness, and goodness leads to Paradise. Beware of falsehood because it leads to immorality, and immorality leads to Hell."

However, unlike most religions, within Islam there are certain provisions under which lying is not simply tolerated, but actually encouraged. The book "The spirit of Islam," by the Muslim scholar, Afif A. Tabbarah was written to promote Islam. On page 247, Tabbarah stated: "Lying is not always bad, to be sure; there are times when telling a lie is more profitable and better for the general welfare, and for the settlement of conciliation among people, than telling the truth. To this effect, the Prophet says: 'He is not a false person who (through lies) settles conciliation among people, supports good or says what is good.'"

In exploring this puzzling duplicity within Islam, we will examine first some examples from recent and ancient Islamic history. These examples demonstrate that lying is a common policy amongst Islamic clerics and statesmen.

In June of 1967 Egypt was defeated by Israel and lost the Sinai Peninsula during the "Six Day War." Subsequently, Egypt's primary focus became to regain the lost territory. President Nasser, and then, President Sadat, adopted the motto: "No voice should rise over the voice of *The Battle*." The soldiers that had been drafted in 1967 were kept in service and remained on high alert in the expectation that at any day "the battle" would ensue. Nonetheless, years pasted and Egypt's people became disgruntle with the political hype and the "no peace, and no war" status. In 1972 Sadat proclaimed with finality that it was to be the year for the long anticipated battle. Throughout the year he swore, "*I swear to you by my honor that this year will not pass by, before we launch The Battle.*" People believed him because he was staking his reputation and honor through an oath. To everyone's amazement the year passed without a single shot being fired. As a result many, inside and outside Egypt, began to dismiss him as a "hot air bluff". This opinion was confirmed in the following year of 1973. He made no further mention of his oath about the battle. Many of the draftees were released and numerous officers were given vacation furloughs. Then without warning, in October of 1973, he launched the attack and what was known as the Yom Kippur war began.

As a military commander, Sadat was expected to use the element of surprise to trick the enemy. As a devout Muslim, Sadat was not the least bit concerned about his un-kept oath. He understood that the history and teachings of Islam would exempt him from spiritual accountability if he used lies as a foundation for a strategic military maneuver.

This point is proven by many incidences in the life of Mohammed. He often lied and instructed his followers to do the same. He rationalized that the prospect of success in missions to extend Islam's influence overrode Allah's initial prohibitions against lying. A good example of sanctioned lying is the account of the assassination of Kaab Ibn al-Ashraf, a member of the Jewish tribe, Banu al-Nudair. It had been reported that Kaab had shown support for the Quraishites in their battle against Mohammed. This was compounded by another report that infuriated Mohammed. It was alleged that Kaab had recited amorous poetry to Muslim women. Mohammed asked for volunteers to rid him of Kaab Ibn al-Ashraf. As Mohammed put it, Kaab had "Harmed Allah and His Apostle."

At that time Kaab Ibn al-Ashraf, and his tribe were strong, so it was not easy for a stranger to infiltrate and execute the task. A Muslim man by the name of Ibn Muslima, volunteered for the murderous project on the condition that Mohammed would allow him to lie. With Mohammed's consent, Ibn Muslima, went to Kaab and told him fabricated stories that reflected discontent about Mohammed's leadership. When he had gained Kaab's trust he lured him away from his house one night and murdered him in a remote area under the cover of darkness.

A similar example can be found in the story of killing Shaaban Ibn Khalid al-Hazly. It was rumored that Shaaban was gathering an army to wage war on Mohammed. Mohammed retaliated by ordering Abdullah Ibn Anis to kill Shaaban. Again, the would-be killer asked the prophet's permission to lie. Mohammed agreed and then ordered the killer to lie by stating that he was a member of the Khazaa clan. When Shaaban saw Abdullah coming, he asked him, "From what tribe are you?" Abdullah answered, "From Khazaa." He then added, "I have heard that you are gathering an army to fight Mohammed and I came to join you." Abdullah started walking with Shaaban telling him how Mohammed came to them with the heretical teachings of Islam, and complained how Mohammed badmouthed the Arab patriarchs and ruined the Arab's hopes. They continued in conversation until they arrived at Shaaban's tent. Shaaban's companions departed and Shaaban invited Abdullah to come inside and rest. Abdullah sat there until the atmosphere was quiet and he sensed that everyone was asleep. Abdullah severed Shaaban's head and carried it to Mohammed as a trophy. When Mohammed sighted Abdullah, he jubilantly shouted, "Your face has been triumphant (Aflaha al- wajho)." Abdullah returned the greeting by saying, "It is your face, Apostle of Allah, who has been triumphant. (Aflaha wajhoka, ye rasoul Allah)."

Provisions for lying in Islam

Most Muslims are familiar with the principles of Islam that will justify lying in situations where they sense the need to do so. Among these are:

- War is deception.
- The necessities justify the forbidden.
- If faced by two evils, choose the lesser of the two.

These principles are derived from passages found in the Quran and the Hadith.

In the Quran, Allah, allegedly, says:

*"Allah will not call you to account for what is **futile in your oaths**, but He will call you to account for your deliberate oaths: for expiation, feed ten indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days. That is the expiation for the oaths ye have sworn. But keep to your oaths. Thus doth Allah make clear to you His signs, that ye may be grateful." Surah 5:89*

*"Allah will not call you to account for **thoughtlessness (vain) in your oaths**, but for the intention in your hearts; and He is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing." Surah 2:225*

*"Any one who, **after accepting faith in Allah, utters Unbelief**, except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in Faith - but such as open their breast to Unbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a dreadful Penalty." Surah 16: 106*

The noted Islamic commentator, Al-Tabary explained Surah 16:106 as a verse that had been revealed to Mohammed after he learned that Ammar Ibn Yasser was forced to deny his faith in Mohammed when kidnapped by the Banu Moghera tribe. Mohammed consoled Ammar by telling him, "If they turned, you turn." (Meaning: if they again capture you, you are allowed to deny me again.)

These and similar passages from the Quran clearly reveal that Muslims' unintentional lies are forgivable and that even their intentional lies can be absolved by performing extra duties. It is also clear that if forced to do so, Muslims can lie while under oath and can even falsely deny faith in Allah, as long as they maintain the profession of faith in their hearts.

In the Hadith, Mohammed, emphasizes the same concept.

From "Ehiaa Oloum al-Din," by the famous Islamic scholar al-Ghazali, Vol. 3: PP.284-287:

One of Mohammed's daughters, Umm Kalthoum, testified that she had never heard the Apostle of God condone lying, except in these three situations:

1. For reconciliation among people.
2. In war.
3. Amongst spouses, to keep peace in the family.

One passage from the Hadith quotes Mohammed as saying: "The sons of Adam are accountable for all lies except those uttered to help bring reconciliation between Muslims."

Another says, "Aba Kahl, reconcile among people." (Meaning: even through lying.)

The following quote demonstrates the broadness of situations in which the prophet permitted lying. "The sons of Adam are accountable for all lies with these exceptions: During war because war is deception, to reconcile among two quarreling men, and for a man to appease his wife."

The principle of Al-Takeyya

The Arabic word, "Takeyya", means "to prevent," or guard against. The principle of Al Takeyya conveys the understanding that Muslims are permitted to lie as a preventive measure against anticipated harm to one's self or fellow Muslims. This principle gives Muslims the liberty to lie under circumstances that they perceive as life threatening. They can even deny the faith, if they do not mean it in their hearts. Al-Takeyya is based on the following Quranic verse:

*"Let not the believers Take for friends or helpers Unbelievers rather than believers: if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah: **except by way of precaution (prevention), that ye may Guard yourselves from them (prevent them from harming you.)** But Allah cautions you (To remember) Himself; for the final goal is to Allah." Surah 3: 28*

According to this verse a Muslim can pretend to befriend infidels (in violation of the teachings of Islam) and display adherence with their unbelief to prevent them from

harming him.

Under the concept of Takeyya and short of killing another human being, if under the threat of force, it is legitimate for Muslims to act contrary to their faith. The following actions are acceptable:

- Drink wine, abandon prayers, and skip fasting during Ramadan.
- Renounce belief in Allah.
- Kneel in homage to a deity other than Allah.
- Utter insincere oaths.

The implications of the principle of Al-Takeyya

Unfortunately, when dealing with Muslims, one must keep in mind that Muslims can communicate something with apparent sincerity, when in reality they may have just the opposite agenda in their hearts. Bluntly stated, Islam permits Muslims to lie anytime that they perceive that their own well-being, or that of Islam, is threatened.

In the sphere of international politics, the question is: Can Muslim countries be trusted to keep their end of the agreements that they sign with non-Muslim nations? It is a known Islamic practice, that when Muslims are weak they can agree with most anything. Once they become strong, then they negate what they formerly vowed.

The principle of sanctioning lying for the cause of Islam bears grave implications in matters relating to the spread of the religion of Islam in the West. Muslim activists employ deceptive tactics in their attempts to polish Islam's image and make it more attractive to prospective converts. They carefully try to avoid, obscure, and omit mentioning any of the negative Islamic texts and teachings.

An example of Islamic deception is that Muslim activists always quote the passages of the Quran from the early part of Mohammed's ministry while living in Mecca. These texts are peaceful and exemplify tolerance towards those that are not followers of Islam. All the while, they are fully aware that most of these passages were abrogated (cancelled and replaced) by passages that came after he migrated to Medina. The replacement verses reflect prejudice, intolerance, and endorse violence upon unbelievers

In conclusion, it is imperative to understand, that Muslim leaders can use this loop-hole in their religion, to absolve them from any permanent commitment. It is also important to know that what Muslim activists say to spread Islam may not always be the whole truth. When dealing with Muslims, what they *say* is not the issue. The real issue is, what they actually *mean* in their hearts.

[top](#)

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