

## 182686 - Is the Arab Muslim better than the non-Arab Muslim?

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### the question

A while ago I read a hadith from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): It was narrated from 'Utbah ibn 'Abd that he said: A man said: O Messenger of Allah, curse the people of Yemen for they are tough fighters and great in number, and their fortresses are well fortified. He said: "No." Then the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) cursed the non-Arabs, and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "If they come to you, with their women and carrying their children on their shoulders (then show kindness to them), for they are of me and I am of them." Narrated by Ahmad, and also by at-Tabaraani, except that he said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) cursed the non-Arabs, the Persians and Romans (Byzantines), and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "If the people of Yemen pass by you, with their women and carrying their children on their shoulders (then show kindness to them), for they are of me and I am of them." The isnaads of both reports are hasan, and Baqiyah clearly stated that each narrator heard it from another.

My question is:

Why did the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) curse the non-Arabs, the Persians and Byzantines? Didn't many of them become Muslim after the conquest of Syria and Iraq, and even as far as China? Is the hadith proven to be sound and of a high level of authenticity? Why did he not say, O Allah, curse the disbelievers, and leave it at that? Is the Arab Muslim considered to be better than the non-Arab Muslim? I am from Syria and am not fully Arab; does this mean that my Islam is less than the Islam of those who are fully Arab among you? Were there any of the Sahaabah who were not Arabs?

### Detailed answer

Firstly:

We have explained previously that Islam does not pay attention to differences in colour, race or lineage. All people are descended from Adam, and Adam was created from dust. Rather according to Islam, superiority of some people over others is measured by faith and taqwa (piety, mindfulness of Allah), doing what Allah has enjoined and refraining from what Allah has forbidden.

At-Tirmidhi (3270) narrated from Ibn 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) addressed the people on the day of the conquest of Makkah and said: "O people, verily Allah has taken away from you the arrogance of Jaahiliyyah and its pride in forefathers. People are of two types: righteous and pious, who are dear to Allah, and doomed evildoers, who are insignificant before Allah. People are the descendants of Adam, and Allah created Adam from dust. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): 'O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted' [al-Hujuraat 49:13]."

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi.

Ahmad (22978) narrated from Abu Nadrah: Someone who heard the khutbah of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) on the second of the days of at-Tashreeq told me that he said: "O people, verily your Lord is One and your father is one. Verily there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or of a non-Arab over an Arab, or of a red man over a black man, or of a black man over a red man, except in terms of taqwa. Have I conveyed the message?" They said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has conveyed the message.

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in as-Saheehah (6/199).

Al-Bukhaari (4898) and Muslim (2546) narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: We were sitting with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and Soorat al-Jumu'ah was revealed to him: "And [He has sent the Prophet to] others of them who have not yet joined them" [al-Jumu'ah 62:3]. I said: Who are they, O Messenger of Allah? He did

not answer him until he had asked three times. Among us was Salmaan al-Faarisi and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) put his hand on Salmaan and said: “If faith were at the Pleiades, some men from among these people [the Persians] would get it.”

Al-Bukhaari (5990) and Muslim (215) narrated that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say, out loud and not secretly: “The family of Abu Fulaan (the Father of So and so) are not my friends. My friends are Allah and the righteous believers.”

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was speaking of a clan that was closely related to him, and pointed out that mere lineage did not make them his friends; rather his friends were Allah and the righteous believers of all backgrounds.

End quote from *Iqtida’ as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem* (144).

See also the answers to questions no. [12391](#) and [3793](#).

Secondly:

Imam Ahmad (17195) narrated: Haywah ibn Shurayh told us: Baqiyah told us, Baheer ibn Sa‘d told me, from Khaalid ibn Ma‘daan, from ‘Utbah ibn ‘Abd that he said: A man said: O Messenger of Allah, curse the people of Yemen for they are tough fighters and great in number, and their fortresses are well fortified. He said: “No.” Then the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) cursed the non-Arabs, and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “If they come to you, with their women and carrying their children on their shoulders (then show kindness to them), for they are of me and I am of them.”

The commentators on *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad* (ar-Risaalah edn., 29/194) said:

Its isnad is da‘eef (weak). Baqiyah – who is the son of al-Waleed – is mudallis [i.e., he engaged in tadlees, which is when a narrator narrates a hadith that he did not hear directly from his shaykh, without mentioning the name of the third party from whom he did hear it, using

wording that may or may not give the impression that he heard it directly], and narrated by saying ‘an (“from”, without clearly stating that he heard the hadith himself from another narrator). His hadith cannot be accepted unless it is clearly stated that each stage of the isnad that one narrator heard it directly from another.

It was also narrated by Ibn Abi ‘Aasim in al-Aahaad wa’l-Mathaani (2280); at-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer (17/304) and in ash-Shaamiyyeen (1139), via ‘Abd al-Wahhaab ibn Najdah al-Hooti; and by Ibn Abi ‘Aasim (2280) from Hishaam ibn ‘Ammaar, both of whom narrated it from Baqiyah ibn al-Waleed with this isnaad. In ash-Shaamiyyeen it mentions Ismaa‘eel ibn ‘Ayyaash instead of Baqiyah, and we think it most likely that this is an error on the part of the copyist. End quote.

Even if we assume that the hadith is saheeh (sound), it is to be understood as referring to those among them who are deserving of being cursed, namely the disbelievers, evildoers and their ilk. These people were only singled out for mention because in most cases they were disbelievers and were misguided, especially at that time.

Thirdly:

In the answer to question no. [115934](#), we noted that Ahl as-Sunnah wa’l-Jamaa‘ah are unanimously agreed that the Arabs are superior to others in terms of descent and lineage, and that regarding the Arabs as superior is in general terms, and does not apply at the individual level. So a non-Arab who is pious and righteous is better than an Arab who falls short in his duties to Allah, may He be exalted.

Therefore an Arab Muslim cannot be superior to a non-Arab Muslim just because he is an Arab. Rather superiority is based on taqwa (piety, mindfulness of Allah). So whoever is more mindful of Allah and obedient to Him is better than his counterpart, regardless of whether he is an Arab or a non-Arab.

So the fact that you are not fully Arab does not mean that you are less than one who is fully Arab in terms of virtue and status simply because of that. As is clear from what we have mentioned above, the real standard is faith and righteous deeds.

Fourthly:

There were some of the Sahaabah who were not Arabs, such as Salmaan and Miqsam, who were Persians, Bilaal al-Habashi (who was Ethiopian), Zunayrah ar-Roomiyyah (who was Byzantine), Barakah al-Habashiyyah (who was Ethiopian) and others such as Suhaym the freed slave of Banu'l-Has-haas, Ya'eesh the slave of Banu'l-Mugheerah, Khaalid ibn al-Hawaari, and Tamaam al-Habashi.

Al-Haakim (8194) narrated that Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "I saw (in a dream) many black sheep who were joined by many white sheep." They said: How did you interpret it, O Messenger of Allah? He said: The non-Arabs will join you in your religion and your lineage." They said: The non-Arabs, O Messenger of Allah? He said: "If faith were at the Pleiades, some men from among the non-Arabs would get it."

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in as-Saheehah (1018).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The confirmation of that is seen in the many Persians, both free men and freed slaves, among the Taabi'een and those who came after them, such as al-Hasan, Ibn Sireen, 'Ikrimah the freed slave of Ibn 'Abbaas, and others, and those who came after that of people who were prominent in faith, religious commitment and knowledge, until these prominent figures became better than most of the Arabs.

Similarly, among types of non-Arabs, such as the Ethiopians, Byzantines, Turks and others, there are people who excelled in faith and religious commitment, too many to be counted, which is something well known to the scholars, because true virtue is in following that with which Allah sent Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of faith and knowledge, both inwardly and outwardly. So the more strongly a person adheres to it, the better he is, and virtue is only in terms of the praiseworthy qualities mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah, such as Islam, faith, righteousness, taqwa, knowledge, righteous deeds, ihsaan and so on. There is no

virtue in a person simply being an Arab or non-Arab, or being black or white, or being a city dweller or desert dweller.

End quote from *Iqtidaa' as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem* (p. 145)

And Allah knows best.