

DERIVING SUNNATIC CODES IN ABRAHAMIC HOSPITALITY FOR HOSPITABLE EVENT

MERUMUSKAN ATURAN SUNNAH DARI KERAMAHAN NABI IBRAHIM UNTUK PELAYANAN ACARA RESEPSI

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ABSTRACT

The Qur'an commanded the Prophet Muhammad PBUH to convey the story of Prophet Ibrahim's (Abrahamic) hospitality to the believers, which emphasizes the urgency for them to ponder the story and derive relevant lessons from it. Hence, the current study aims to identify those lessons and design a Sunnatic code applicable to hospitable events. By employing the thematic exegesis method, the study paid a thorough on the Qur'an to sort out the relevant verses related to the concerned topic and further elaborates them with support of Prophetic hadiths and scholarship interpretation. The study discovered that the story of Abrahamic hospitality was repeated thrice throughout the Qur'an further its importance and intertwining information to be emulated by the believers and adherents. Several words used in the story enshrined specific guides pertinent to hospitable reception such as salam which represents the best greeting; Ibrahim and his wife meant by the reception by the owners or highest person in authority; waited not meant to hasten; calf signifies local material; fat for the quality of the ingredients; hanidh for a fast but aesthetical meal; while showing the wariness meant to be honest in expressing the emotion.

Keywords: *Abrahamic (Sunnatic) Hospitality, Event Reception, Greeting*

ABSTRAK

Al-Qur'an memerintahkan Nabi Muhammad SAW untuk menyampaikan kisah keramahtamahan Nabi Ibrahim (Abraham) kepada orang-orang beriman, yang menekankan pentingnya bagi mereka untuk merenungkan kisah tersebut dan mengambil pelajaran yang relevan darinya. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi pelajaran-pelajaran tersebut dan merancang aturan Sunnah yang dapat diterapkan pada acara ramah tamah. Dengan menggunakan metode tafsir tematik, penelitian ini mengkaji secara mendalam Al-Qur'an untuk memilah ayat-ayat yang relevan dengan topik yang bersangkutan dan menguraikannya lebih lanjut dengan dukungan hadis Nabi dan tafsir keilmuan. Studi ini menemukan bahwa kisah keramahtamahan Ibrahim diulang tiga kali di seluruh Al-Qur'an, semakin penting dan saling terkait informasi yang harus ditiru oleh orang-orang beriman dan penganutnya. Beberapa kata yang digunakan dalam kisah tersebut memuat panduan khusus yang berkaitan dengan sambutan ramah seperti salam yang melambangkan sapaan terbaik; yang dimaksud Ibrahim dan istrinya adalah penyambutan oleh pemilik atau tuan rumah; menunggu yang berarti tidak terburu-buru; betis menandakan bahan makanan lokal; lemak berarti bahan makanan berkualitas; hanidh berarti hidangan cepat saji namun tetap estetik; sambil menunjukkan kehati-hatian berarti jujur dalam mengungkapkan emosi.

Kata Kunci: Sunnah Keramahan Nabi Ibrahim, Acara Resepsi, Pelayanan

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INTRODUCTION

Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, "Who is faithful to Allah and the Last Day must take great care of his guest." (Al-Bukhari: 6475, and Muslim: 47. Sahih). Muslim scholars have various interpretations of how 'take great care' (Ikram) in the hadith recorded above should be. For instance, al-Nawawi (1972) said it is in the form of providing shelter, necessities, courtesy, and meals without specifying the perfection level of services, while al-Asqalani (1961) said it signifies the best services that can be provided which is within the capability of the host especially during the first day, and according to one's average ability and normal practice for the second day onward. However, according to al-'Aini (n.d), ikram indicates all kinds of services that are above average of what is enjoyed by the host in his daily life.

This study aims to derive Sunnatic codes of this ikram based on the hospitality of Prophet Ibrahim. The selection is due to fact that Prophet Ibrahim holds a special position in hospitality, in which in a hadith marfu', Prophet Ibrahim was stated as the first to serve the guests. (al-Dhiya, 2016 [11/531]. Hasan.) While a hadith maqtu' from 'Ikrimah, he was nicknamed as Abu al-Dhiyafah which translated as "Father of Hospitality" (Ibn Abi al-Dunya: 7).

Understanding the model of Abrahamic hospitality from the Qur'anic perspective offers two angles of benefits. First, it enhanced the underlying comprehension of contemporary Islamic or Muslim-Friendly hospitality practices by observing the source of Islamization of knowledge, which is the Qur'an and involves theological aspect, instead of merely looking from the angle of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) which mainly comprises which it can and

cannot. Second, as the Abrahamic hospitality model is an established topic within Biblical studies, this study contributes to enriching the comparative religion field of study. Thus, this study limits its scope to deriving hospitality elements from three places in the Qur'an, in Hud (11):69-76, al-Hijr (15):51-60 and al-Dhariyat (51): 24-33 where the story of Prophet Ibrahim attending his guests was mentioned, and use other sources to support the findings, not as additional elements.

While interpreting the story, scholars like al-Zuhaili (1998), Ibn Kathir (1999), al-Baghawi (2000), and al-Tha'labi (2015), etc. had highlighted some important elements of Abrahamic hospitality such as salam, the fact that the wife of Ibrahim joined him in serving the guests, the reason behind his selection of calf cooked by hanihd style, etc. However, when specific books on Islamic hospitality such as by Ibn Abi al-Dunya (1997), al-Harbi (1985), Ibn Abd al-Bar (n.d.), etc., none of them discussed Abrahamic hospitality as a standalone hospitality concept, in contrast to Biblical scholars like Conti et al (2008), Moyaert (2011), Reaves (2017), McAvan (2020) and Baah (2023) who are among those who discussed the Abrahamic hospitality from Biblical perspective as an independent hospitality model.

The novelty of this study came in the form where the stories of Prophet Ibrahim attending his guests in the Qur'an were analyzed as an autonomous hospitality model by itself, similar to how Biblical studies perceive it, but from an Islamic narrative. However, due to such selective scope, the model is to be perceived as a part of Islamic hospitality practice which could not represent the whole concept of Islamic hospitality.

METHOD

This exploratory study used qualitative methods mainly inductive, analytical, and descriptive approaches which were the main methods for thematic exegesis (al-Jumai'i, 2022). Thematic exegesis is unique and inimitable in collecting the main data as it requires the identification of a specific topic to discuss including comprehending its synonyms, followed by attentive and critical reading throughout the Qur'an to identify the verses related to the topic (Mohyedin, 2022). The same concept was categorized by Mansur (2002 [188]) as Scientific Exegesis.

Hospitality was translated into Arabic as *dhiyafah* (Baalbaki, 1995 [715]). Thus, the study looked at its derivatives including *dhaif*, *dhuyuf*, and *dhaifan*. By using the www.quranwow.com search box, the word *dhaif* showed two results, three for *dhuyuf* and none for *dhaifan*. The results of *dhuyuf* were eliminated as they were about Prophet Lut and not Ibrahim. The study then used Tafsir Ibn Kathir to identify the verses related to the first two expressions and found out that al-Hijr: 51-56 and al-Dhariyyat: 24-30 were related and thus became subjects for analysis. However, al-Hijr: 53-56 were phased out as they were not related to hospitable services, but to the people of Prophet Lut.

After classifying all of the related verses, the research continued by analyzing scholars' interpretations of those verses, and through the words that the interpreters singled out, the study identified suitable keywords that contain hospitality-related elements and the results were *salam*, Ibrahim, his wife, *waited not*, calf, *hanidh*, *wary/fear* and *strangers* were the aftermath. The study is also able to pinpoint issues related to those elements and investigate them thoroughly through classical (*turath*) and contemporary

sources. During the process, the study found that interpreters kept referring to Hud: 69-76 which related to the same story and posited before the other verses. Since they contain additional and important hospitable elements, these verses were included in the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Abrahamic hospitality in the Quran

The Qur'an said "Our messengers came to Ibrahim with good news. They greeted, '*Salam*', He answered, '*Salam*'. He waited not and came with a *hanidh* calf. (69) When he saw their hands not reaching towards it, he became suspicious of them and conceived a fear of them. They said, 'Do not fear, we were sent to the people of Lut.' (70) His wife was standing by, so she laughed, and we gave her the good news of Ishak; and after Ishaq, Yaacub. (71) She queried, 'Alas for me. Shall I give birth, when I am an old woman, and this, my husband, is an old man? This is truly a strange thing.' (72) They answered, 'Do you marvel at the decree of Allah'. His mercy and blessing are upon you O people of the house. He is Praiseworthy and Glorious.' (73) When Ibrahim's fear subsided, and the good news had reached him, he started pleading with Us concerning the people of Lut. (74) Verily, Ibrahim was gentle, kind, and penitent. (75). [The Qur'an, 11:69-75].

The Qur'an also said, "And inform them (O Muhammad) of the guests of Abraham. (51) When they entered upon him, and said, '*Salam*'. He said, 'We are wary of you.' (52) ... she will be of those who lag behind." [The Qur'an, 15:51-60] and: "Has the story of Abraham's honorable guests reached you? (24) When they entered upon him, they said, '*Salam*', he replied, '*Salam*, o

strangers.’ (25) Then he slipped away to his family and brought a fatted calf. (26) He put it before them. He said, ‘Why you do not eat?’ (27) And he harbored a fear of them but they responded saying, ‘Do not fear,’ and they told him the good news of a knowledgeable boy. (28) His wife came forward crying and clasped her face saying, ‘A barren old woman?’ (29) They answered, ‘Thus spoke your Lord. He is the Wise, the Knowing.’ (30) The Qur’an, 51: 24-33]

According to Ibn Jama’ah, the benefit of the repetition of some stories in the Qur’an was among others, new information was delivered in each expression that was not mentioned in former or later, in addition to repetitive reminder for readers to pay close attention to the story and learn from it. (al-Suyuthi, 1974 [3/230]), which the story of Abrahamic hospitality was subjected to.

Sunnatic codes of conduct in the hospitable event

From the aforementioned verses, the study extracted the Sunnatic codes of conduct pertinent to hospitable events as follows:

1. The best greeting is *Assalamu’alaikum*

Even though the *Assalamu’alaikum* was associated with Islam, it was brought through the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. The *salam* was mentioned to be already in use before that by Prophet Ibrahim as in the aforementioned verses. To emphasize its value, this greeting shall also be used by the angels in Paradise when they greet its residents in the Hereafter (The Qur’an, 13:23-24), and anything associated with paradise meant the epitome of its kind.

However, there were a few aspects in need of more detailed discussion. First, should the host greet the guests with just *Assalamu’alaikum*, or should he continue

with ‘*wa rahmatullah* with/without *wa barakatuh*? The study suggests that the preferred greeting in this situation should be the simple *Assalamu’alaikum* due to its simplicity and convenience for both the staff and guests, in addition to the fact that even the angels in Paradise use that simple form of the greeting, as recorded in the Qur’an. (13:23-24).

The second aspect was how non-Muslim guests should be greeted. Should they be greeted similarly as muslim guests or differently? Here, the answer was a clear no as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) prohibited initiating *salam* to Jews and Christians. (Muslim: 2167). As for the alternative, should the *Assalamu’alaikum* be translated to peace be upon you, or should it be totally replaced with something unrelated? Here, the Department of Standards Malaysia (2012 [26]) suggested that staff should greet guests using any form of greetings according to the local and/or national cultures. For example, in Malaysia, to greet with ‘*Selamat pagi*’ was more preferred than ‘Good morning’, ‘*Selamat tengahari*’ than ‘Good afternoon’, and so forth, even though the meaning were the same. Similarly, as a body in Arab Country, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs State of Kuwait (1993 [25/168]) mentioned *Ahlan wa sahlan* (trans. Welcome) to replace *Assalamulaaikum* to non-Muslims, and this word promotes the Arabian culture.

Islamic hospitality encouraged the promotion of local values including greeting and food to the visitors especially foreigners due to the instruction within the verse, “*O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another.*” (The Qur’an, 49:13). Logically, in order to achieve ‘may know one another’, a group of people

need to travel outside of their national environment to others, and the hosting nation need to let the travelers know hosts, especially their unique traits.

The objective behind the concerned instruction was to fully realize that each nation has its quality and setbacks, and no nation is above the other. This objective was the gist of what Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, "*O men, your God is One and your father is One. There is neither superior for Arab upon non-Arab, nor for non-Arab upon Arab, nor for redskin upon the black, nor black upon the redskin, except by piety.*" (Ahmad: 23489. *Sahih*)

The third aspect was about the utilization of automated greeters, instead of humans. This study opined that if a hospitality premise was unable to employ a doorkeeper, then the utilization of a bell was better than nothing. However, research findings that indicate customers' disapproval of interactive voice response (IVR), which was alternatively known as machine answering operator was a good example to show that technology could not replace humans when it came to greeting and conversation. (Turtle, 2011)

2. *The warmest greeting was for the owner to receive the guest himself*

This code of conduct was derived from the fact that Prophet Ibrahim himself attended to the guests. In a situation where the owner is not available, then the highest person in charge should take place. This code was derived from the fact that when Prophet Ibrahim was on pause, his wife attended to the guest. The epitome of greetings was indeed for the highest person to converse with guests. It gave a guest a great psychological experience. It was also the most significant

aspect of *ikram* the guest. Moreover, the Quran mentioned that the best favors in Paradise will be the meeting session between the residents of Paradise and Allah the Almighty, the Owner and Creator of Paradise. (Muslim: 181. *Sahih*)

O'Gorman and McAlpine (2008) also stated that hospitality was not to be left to the servants; it must be done by the masters of the household. However, it was equally significant to highlight that these important personnel should never be selective and focus only on the VIP guests, as an instant example. Such an action was prohibited in Islam, as Prophet PBUH said, "*The worst food is the food of a wedding feast to which the rich are invited, and the poor are not.*" (Al-Bukhari: 5177 and Muslim: 1432. *Sahih*) The gist of the hadith was more about discrimination against guests who were invited than the food served. As discrimination was concerned, the *qiyas* between food and greeting: the worst greeting is for the host to only attend high-ranking individual while ignoring the others.

In addition, there was also an issue regarding inter-gender reception and interaction, whether it was permissible or the opposite. According to al-Zuhaili (1998 [12/110]) it was a preferable conduct for the ladies in the family of the host to attend to the male guest. Ibn Ashur (1984 [12/118]) also said it was an Arab customary for the wife of the owner to receive the guest. This was in line with the story of Ibrahim in the Qur'an. In *hadith*, al-Bukhari (1993 [7/26]) named a sub-topic under the Book of Wedlock as 'The ladies attending the male guests during wedding reception'. He derived his opinion from a hadith narrated by Sahl bin Sa'd who said.

“When Abu Usaid al-Sa`idi got married, he invited the Prophet PBUH and his companions. None prepared the food for them and brought it to them but his wife. She soaked some dates in water in a stone pot overnight, and when the Prophet PBUH had finished his food, she provided him with that drink (of soaked dates).” (Al-Bukhari: 5182. Sahih)

Thus, it was permissible for women to receive male guests, but the rules of intermingling between opposite genders ought to be abode accordingly. Al-Khatir and al-Abd al-Qadir (2019) said the rules were: (1) covering the aurah (body parts that are not allowed for shown), (2) lowering the gaze (avoiding a state of being pro-miscuous), (3) not use flirting language or tone, (4) not taking the mix as leisure, but due to circumstance.

3. Prioritize serving the meals before engaging in long conversation

The Qur'an used the word 'he waited not' to show that Prophet Ibrahim did not engage in any longer conversation other than replying to *salam*. Instead, he waited not to get his ingredients and served the guests with his food. In situations where the main course or heavy meal was planned to be served later, or due to inability or unsuitability, a light course could play the role and it was known as a welcome drink and refreshment, and it is consistent with the Abrahamic hospitality model.

4. Food ingredients should be of high quality and have local value

The word ‘fat calf’ in the verses contained a message about how the food ingredient came from the host's backyard and was high quality. While interpreting the verses, Ibn Ashur (1984 [12/117]) and al-

Zuhaili (1998 [12/109]) said that the ‘fat calf’ signified the best that Prophet Ibrahim had to offer, and it came from his backyard, reared and slaughtered by Prophet Ibrahim himself. If backyard material was not available, then it should be as local as possible.

The word ‘fat’ in livestock represented high quality livestock. However, there was another type of quality trait conveyed through the word ‘calf’. Why it was a calf and not a cow or cattle? It is because in Arab culinary customs, the younger the animal is, the more tender the meat will be, and thus it was considered as a higher quality ingredient.

5. Quick preparation, luscious presentation

Ibn Ashur (1984 [12/117]) and al-Zuhaili (1998 [12/109]) also mentioned that the word *hanidh* was among the fastest way to cook meat. It meant that Prophet Ibrahim chose the fast way to cook so the guests did not need to wait long. Additionally, *hanidh* also goes beyond basic with aesthetical presentation as it requires several procedures and additional ingredients, including spices and varieties of vegetables.

6. Honesty especially in emotion and acceptance

Even though the gist of hospitality is a warm greeting, friendliness, and utmost kindness, the Abrahamic hospitality provided a leeway in which if the host was wary of something, he may convey it to the guest. This code was derived from the sentence ‘we are wary of you’. (The Qur’an 15:52). The gist was to be honest and avoid pretentious. This code was also consistent with the general Islamic teaching of reciprocation in which if the host was responsible for making the guest feel as comfortable as possible, the guest was responsible for reciprocating. Reciprocation

in Islam was by *hadith marfu'*, "Whoever do you a favor, then you must reciprocate." (Abu Daud: 5109 and al-Nasa'ie:2567. *Sahih*) Even though the hadith only mentions favorable reciprocation, it is also applicable to the opposite.

CONCLUSION

By contemplating the record of Abrahamic hospitality in the Qur'an, this study concluded that the Sunnatic code in receiving guests consisted of six qualities starting from greeting with *Assalamualaikum* to the host to receive the guest himself, to quickly serving the guest with an aesthetic meal or refreshment which were made from good quality ingredients and have locality value, and lastly to be honest in expressing what they concerning about while conversing the guest. Those qualities were also applicable in event reception, in addition to other hospitality entities like hotels and restaurants. To be mentioned in the Qur'an, moreover repetitively, bespeak the significance of the researched subject to be referred to Islamic tourism and hospitality stakeholders throughout the ages, especially for them to ensure that their claim of Islam is thorough and in line with the main source of Islam itself, which is the Qur'an.

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