

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The People of Sodom. Homosexuality or Rape?

Question

How do we respond to the argument that in the story of Lut (as) the Qur'aan condemns rape rather than homosexuality?

Answer

Introduction

At the onset, remember that every aayah of the Qur'aan has to be understood in the light of the rest of the Qur'aan, the sunnah and the explanations of the earliest experts. Interpretation to the contrary is distortion of the truth. Hence, a short answer to the above argument is that it is baseless and inconsistent with Qur'aan, the sunnah and the explanations of the earliest experts. It also contradicts ijmaa' (consensus of the ummah).

Inconsistent with the Qur'aan

Aayaat Regarding Lut (as)

- The story of Lut (as) and the people of Sodom is mentioned in more than one place in the Qur'aan. In Surah 'Ankaboot Allah Ta'aala tells us that Lut (as) reprimanded the people saying:

أَنتُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ

Do you go to men . . .?

Firstly, this is a rhetorical question to show disapproval and reprimand. Secondly, this question is general and unrestricted. Hence, it refers to all forms of homosexuality, whether consensual or not.

- In Surah Shu'araa we are told that Lut (as) said to them:

أَتَأْتُونَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ

Do you go to the men of the worlds and forsake your wives
whom Allah created for you?

Needless to say, the purpose of this question is also to show disapproval and reprimand. Furthermore, the words 'do you go to men . . .' are also general and hence, refer to consensual and non-consensual homosexuality. The fact that this refers to homosexuality in general is reiterated by the next part of the question i.e. 'and (you) forsake your wives . . .'

Perhaps some fool will argue that the Arabic word azwaaj is the plural of zawj which means spouse, whether male or female. Hence, this aayah is not showing impermissibility of same-sex marriages. However, this argument is baseless. Were such an argument valid, Lut (as) would have asked them, 'do you go to whom you are not married?' instead of 'do you go to men . . .?' The general and unrestricted usage of the word dhukraan (men) supports our understanding that this refers to homosexuality in general.

- In Surah Naml we read that Lut (as) said to them:

أَإِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ

Do you go to men instead of women to satisfy your lust? You are
ignorant people.

- Like the previous aayaat, here too the wording is general and unrestricted.
- If the aim was to only disapprove of non-consensual homosexuality, Lut (as) would not have asked them, 'do you

go to men instead of women?’ He would have rather said, ‘do you go to men without their permission?’ Using Arabic expression, he would have said أَتُنْكَمُ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ إِذْنِهِمْ instead of أَتُنْكَمُ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ

- If the sin of the people of Sodom was based on lack of consent, would that not be rape? Considering that rape is cruel and an abuse of the victim’s rights, it seems unlikely that Lut (as) would have described his people as simply ignorant. Instead, he would have used a much harsher word and described them as oppressors. Perhaps he would have said بَلْ أَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ instead of بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُجَاهِلُونَ

- In Surah Naml Allah Ta’aala tells us that when Lut (as) reprimanded them, they taunted him and his followers saying:

إِنَّهُمْ أَنْاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ

They are very clean people.

This was obviously sarcasm. Anyway, the point we are making is that, as mentioned above, if the problem was restricted to non-consensual relations, then it would be a question of rape. That being the case, they would not have described Lut (as) and his followers as being ‘very clean’. What is the connection between cleanliness and shunning rape? Considering that rape is violent, would they not have described Lut (as) and his followers as ‘very gentle’ instead of ‘very clean’?

- In Surah Hud Allah Ta’aala narrates that on their way to punish the people of Sodom, the angels first visited Nabi Ibrahim (as). When they informed Ibrahim (as) of their mission to punish the people of Sodom, his wife laughed. Considering the violent and abusive nature of rape, it seems most unlikely that she would have laughed if their sin was that of rape. On the other hand, homosexuality is unnatural and was never practised by anybody before the people

of Sodom. Moreover, our fuqaha have also noted that a member of the same sex can never satisfy one as much as a member of the opposite sex. Hence, people laugh at the very idea of such an action. It therefore stands to reason that Ibrahim (as)'s wife laughed for the same reason i.e. their foolishness. In short, her laughter also proves that their sin was homosexuality and not rape of other men.

- When the angels arrived at the home of Lut (as), neither he nor the rest of the people in the city were aware that they were angels. Thus, the men of the city rushed to Lut (as)'s house and tried to forcibly enter in order to sodomise his guests. Still unaware that his guests were angels, Lut (as) pleaded with the people not to embarrass him. Pleading with them, he said:

يَا قَوْمِ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ

O people, these are my daughters. They are purer for you. So fear Allah and do not embarrass me!

The fact that he offered them his daughters also supports our view that their sin was homosexuality in general. Were their sin restricted to non-consensual relations with other men, why would Lut (as) offer them his daughters instead of men who would willingly partner with them?

- The extent to which Lut (as)'s people were punished indicates that all of them were guilty. However, if their crime was rape (non-consensual homosexuality), not all of them would have been guilty. Thus, the extent to which they were punished is yet another proof that their crime was homosexuality, whether with consent or not.

Anal Intercourse

The primary reason for the permissibility of marriage and sexual intercourse with one's spouse is procreation. Hence, Islam prohibits

anal intercourse. Thus, the Qur'aan describes women as a tillage for their husbands. In Surah Baqarah Allah Ta'aala tells men that:

نَسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثُكُمْ فَأَتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ

Your women are your tillage . . .

This is obviously a figurative description of the women's role in bearing children. Scholars explain that this description alludes to the impermissibility of anal intercourse. It is impermissible because it does not lead to the *planting of seeds*. So this is yet one more reason for the impermissibility of homosexuality. Put differently, homosexuality with and without consent contradicts this aayah of the Qur'aan as well.

One More Aayah

Here we refer to the sixteenth aayah of Surah An-Nisaa, the aayah that reads:

وَالَّذَانِ يَأْتِيَانِيهَا مِنْكُمْ فَأَذُوهُمَا فَإِنْ تَابَا وَأَصْلَحَا فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

Although some scholars of tafseer opine that this aayah refers to the adulterer and the adulteress, the preferred opinion is that it refers to males who engage in homosexuality. Hence, according to the preferred opinion, this aayah mentions the punishment for homosexuality. The fact that there is a punishment for homosexuality is also proof that it is impermissible. Were it permissible, why would there be a punishment for it?

Hadith of Rasulallah sallallahu alaihi wasallam

Rasulallah sallallahu alaihi wasallam said, 'The person whom you find engaging in the activity of the people of Lut, then kill the penetrator and the penetrated'.

- This hadith is recorded in Sunan Abi Da'ud, Sunan Tirmidhi, Sunan Ibn Majah and Musnad Imam Ahmad.¹
- The wording of the hadith is 'kill the فاعل and the مفعول به The meaning of فاعل is the doer and the meaning of مفعول به is the one on whom the action was done. Thus, we translated it as the penetrator and the penetrated.
- In a similar hadith recorded in Sunan Ibn Majah, Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wasallam said, 'pelt the one above and the one below. Pelt both of them'.²
- The important point in the context of the present discussion is that if the action of the people of Lut (as) was confined to non-consensual homosexuality, why would both parties be punished? Hence, these ahaadith prove that the prohibition includes all forms of homosexuality, with and without consent.

Ijma' (Consensus)

Over the past fourteen hundred years there has not been a single scholar of the shari'ah who differentiated between consensual and non-consensual homosexuality. There is ijma' (consensus) among the entire ummah that homosexuality is totally haraam. Now remember that in view of a hadith which states that the ummah will never be unanimous on falsehood, latter opposition to former consensus is impermissible and holds absolutely no significance. Were we to consider modern day opposition to consensus from the earliest generation of Muslims, it would mean that the entire ummah was in error for fourteen centuries.

¹ Sunan Abu Da'ud (Hadith 4462), Sunan Tirmidhi (Hadith 1456), Sunan Ibn Majah (Hadith 2561) and Musnad Imam Ahmad (Hadith 2732)

² Sunan Ibn Majah (Hadith 2562)

Hence, proponents of such opinions are guilty of introducing something new to Islam. Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wasallam said:

مَنْ أَحْدَثَ فِي أَمْرِنَا مَا لَيْسَ مِنْهُ فَهُوَ رَدٌّ

Whoever introduces anything new to this deen of ours should be rejected.³

In simpler words, such ideas are a bid'ah. However, there are two types of bid'ah. Some render the perpetrator a faasiq (sinner) while others render a person a kaafir (disbeliever). Proponents of the permissibility of homosexuality fall under the second category. Remember that a person who engages in homosexual activity but acknowledges that his behaviour is haraam is a sinner but does not lose his imaan. However, a person who regards homosexuality as permissible loses his imaan and is no longer a Muslim.

Conclusion

The argument that the Qur'aan only condemns rape of members of the same sex is totally baseless and false. It is inconsistent with the Qur'aan, sunnah and ijmaa' (consensus of the entire ummah).

Abu Hudhaifa

20 Safar 1444

17 September 2022

³ Saheeh Bukhari (Hadith 2697), Saheeh Muslim (Hadith 1718), Sunan Abi Da'ud (Hadith 4606) and Sunan Ibn Majah (Hadith 14)