

A reflection on Muslim and Mumin, Islam and Iman; Titles of humane behaviour

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In traditional Islamic theology, the terms Muslim and Momin are used to indicate a religious person following the Islamic religion. This concept is a later development when the understanding of the Qur'anic message was changed from a rational, scientific socio-secular guideline that was sent by the First Cause of all existence, into a dogmatic religion, that although was still very tolerant and openminded, lost sight of many of the original goals of the Qur'anic message.

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When researching the Qur'an, it is observed that Muslim and Mumin are universal conditions of humans, not specifically bound to religious beliefs, but on their peaceful and humanistic output.

The word Islam and Muslim come from the root Salama, which means **peace, to be in good health, to be secure.** ¹⁾

The word Mu(o)min and Iman come from the root Amina, which means **to be secure, to make others secure, to be safe, to create safety, to be entrusted with safety.** ²⁾

In the Qur'an, the term Kafara became the opposite of Amina. Izutsu in his famous work "God and Man in the Koran" and in his "The structure of Ethical terms in the Quran", discusses how the term Kafara (to be ungrateful) was the opposite of Shakara (to be grateful), but in the Qur'an it also was given a new meaning by becoming the opposite of Amina. (page 30-33 God and Man in the Koran by Izutsu)

While he retains the traditional meanings mostly in his semantic discussion, his observation is very significant as it shows also the intention the Qur'an tries to explain to Mankind. Amina means to be secure and give security to other people. This means life is important as it deserves protection. Kafara means to

be ungrateful, and when put opposite of Amina, it means to be ungrateful of life and thus wants to destroy it. Which again gives also a very non-religious understanding of Kafara (which is normally understood as meaning to disbelieve), since it refers to ones morality and humane actions, and not directly to ones beliefs and convictions. ³⁾

The famous Arabic dictionary Taj-ul-Roos mentions:

Momin is one who stands guarantee for peace, upon whom one can depend, rely and then rest at peace, one who guarantee international peace.

Naq'atun Amoon is a she-camel which is dependable by virtue of her qualities and can take one through the journey without getting weak or falling down after stumbling

Amana is to satisfy someone and put him at ease without fear, to provide peace or protection to someone, to take over the responsibilities of someone's protection

In the Holy Quran, Allah has called Himself Al-Momin (59/23) - as He is responsible for the safety, security of the entire universe - and, therefore, Momin is also a person who ensures peace and security in the world by acting and enforcing the Laws given by Allah.

(page 25-26, Exposition of the Holy Quran by GA.Parwez)

Professor Arne Ambros says in his "A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic" that the religious meaning of 'believing' or 'faith' was a non-Arabic meaning which was created later:

Amina/ ya'manu: To be or feel safe, to be safe and secure, not to fear. Mumin: giving security, rendering safe. Whereas most derivatives of the root '-m-n are genuinely Arabic (to be and create safety), the technical religious meaning of 'believing' appears to have developed under the influence of Aramaic and/or ethiopic."

(page 29 under the root amina)

Lane's Lexicon also says Amina means: "**To be secure, safe or free from fear**", and mentions several examples in the Arabic language where it refers to safety and security or to to be entrusted with the security. Example:

"Aminu al-Maali means What is secure from being slaughtered of the camels, because of it being highly prized.

Lane also mentions the understanding of verse 44:51 as mentioned in the Mughrib by al-Mutarrizee:

Inna almuttaqeena fee maqamin ameenin

Verily the pious shall be in an abode wherein they shall be secure from the accidents, or causalities of fortune."

(Lane's an Arabic-English Lexicon Book 1, page 102-103)

When using cross-reference, the root amina is mostly used as referring to security and safety. For

example:

9:6 *Wa-in ahadun mina almushrikeena istajarakafaajirhu hatta yasmaAAa kalama Allahithumma ablighhu **ma/manahu** thalika bi-annahum qawmun layaAAlamoona*
*And if anyone of the idolaters seeketh thy protection , then protect him so that he may hear the Word of Allah, and afterward convey him to **his place of safety**. That is because they are a folk who know not.*

16:112 *Wadaraba Allahu mathalanqaryatan kanat **aminatan** mutma-innatanya/teeha rizquha raghadan min kulli makaninfakafarat bi-anAAumi Allahi faathaqaaha Allahulibasa aljooAAi waalkhawfi bima kanooyasnaAAoona*
*Allah coineth a similitude: a township that dwelt **secure** and well content, its provision coming to it in abundance from every side, but it disbelieved in Allah's favours, so Allah made it experience the garb of dearth and fear because of what they used to do.*

70:28 *Inna AAathaba rabbihim ghayru **ma/moonin***
*Verily, the punishment of their Developer is that before which none **can feel secure** -*

106:4 *Allathee atAAamahum min jooAAinwa **amanahum** min khawfin*
*Who hath fed them against hunger and **hath made them safe** from fear.*

26:193 *Nazala bihi alrroohu **al-ameenu***
*Which was brought down by/with **the securing/protecting** spirit/blessing/wind*

44:51 *Inna almuttaqeena fee maqamin **ameenin***
*Lo! those who kept their duty will be in a place **secured**.*

95:3 *Wahatha albaladi **al-ameeni***
*And by this land **made safe**;*

I had a long discussion with Abdur Rab (author of Exploring Islam in a new Light) about the same issue. Here are some excerpts:

"Yu'minuna bil-Graib(2:2) is better translated as *Those that feel safe with the unknown/that which is beyond perception.*" Amana refers to make safe and feel safe and secure. So no, the root still is not connected to believing. I can believe in ghosts, but do not feel safe about it. Amana does refers to believing or acting in a certain way or thing which makes you feel secure and safe, and also makes you make other people safe and secure. Acknowledging as Edip translates it still is not a correct definition of amana, since you can acknowledge anything without directly feeling safe about it. While the root amana is all about feeling and creating safety and security. So it is rather to trust and feel secure, although you find that to fall under belief also, I personally see the original root meaning explaining itself more clearer. And many dictionaries agree that believing is a more later development of the word amana, created after the revelation.

Indeed Islam means peacekeeping. And Deen is a word that conveys the meaning "shared values/morality" and "obligation" in its original root meaning. Thus Islam, peacekeeping, is the natural morality and obligation shared by all humans on earth as expressed in 30:30, the Deen is our fitrah, our instinct & natural behaviour. This is why I do not see the Qur'an conveying a religion, but a natural universal and secular morality with guidelines how to keep global peace and universal development as a species.

The root Salama means to be safe and in good health. Amana is to feel safe yourself, and to make others be safe and secure. Thus salama is a result of amana in a sort of sense. When we look at a sentence as *aslantu lirabbi alAAalameena (2:131)*, I agree the general understanding of submit is not entirely wrong, but it again does not convey the purpose of the word used. The submitting is done as the person is safe

with Rabbi alameen. Thus the sentence is by my understanding better renditioned as:

"I am safe and will be in good health by submitting to the Developer of all universes."

Thus the word salama reflects the reason why submission is accepted voluntarily. We can all submit to a tyrant, but we are not safe and in good health with a tyrant. Thus it is very important to do justice to the word used and use the whole root meaning because it reflects a contract between us and God. If we are not safe and secure because of the contract, it means we do not understand the contract (i.e. Quran) correctly as is the case with hadith followers.

But this again is not related to "faith" or "belief" in the sense as it is understood now. The word religion (mazhab) is never used in the Qur'an, and deen reflects more the sense of morality and obligation towards the community and the results of acting upon that obligation by neglecting it or fulfilling it.

When we look at 6:71 it uses umirna from Amr. Which means both commanded and directed. Thus personally I would rather use "We are directed that we be safe and secure by submitting ourselves to the Developer of all universes". Directed conveys more the concept of Free Will and also reflection on the goal of the direction, and nuslimau reflects the reason why the direction is accepted. As we are safe and secure with our beings when we accept the direction of the guidance.

39:54 And turn back to the right path (anibu from naba/to return from time to time) towards your Rabb and be safe and secure by submitting (aslimu) with Him (lahu (i.e. to his Guidance)) before that there comes to you the punishment, then you will not be helped/aided/given victory (tunsaruna).

So Salama refers to being safe and secure with the guidance given by God i.e. agreeing with the morality and peaceful goals mentioned it, as this is the reason why they accept it. Muslims are the ones that are safe and in good health by accepting the conditions, and they are protected by the Mumin, the ones that are entrusted with the safety and security of others."

Footnote1: Page 267-269 under the root Salima. Dictionary of the Holy Qur'an by Abdul Mannar Omar, 2006 4th

edition. Salima means: Safety, security, freedom, immunity, peace, deliver, acknowledge, pay in advance, submit, sincerity, humility, submission, conformance, obedience, resign, quit, relinquish, to be in sound condition, well without blemish, gentle, tender, soft, elegant. Thus a Muslim is a person who acknowledges

the general values of peace and freedom and makes sure these are secured for everyone on Earth. It is not a religious title, but a secular description of someone's values and goals, not his personal beliefs. See also V4, pages 136-141, Arabic-English Lexicon by Edward William Lane. And page 137-138, Professor Arne Ambros' A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic.

Footnote2: From the root Amina. Page 24-27, Exposition of the Holy Qur'an, Mafhum Al-Qur'an by G.A. Parwez.

1990. It quotes the dictionaries and explains: Amnun means peace, safety, state of mind where one feels safe from fear or danger (2:24). Also when one feels safe, secure and at peace. Ibn-e-Faris says that its basic meanings are: Peace of mind, To testify, The opposite of dishonesty. Amana is to satisfy someone and

put him at ease without fear, to provide peace or protection to someone, to take over the responsibilities of

someone's protection (Taj). Aitimanun is to trust someone, have confidence on someone, take someone as trustee or protector (Taj). Naq'atun Amoon is a she-camel which is dependable by virtue of her qualities and can take one through the journey without getting weak or falling down after stumbling (Taj). Momin is

one who stands guarantee for peace, upon whom one can depend, rely and then rest at peace, one who guarantee international peace (Taj). manat is something which is entrusted to someone (Moheet). Ameen is

one who is contended, at peace, trustworthy, reliable, dependable. Baladun Ameen is a city where peace and security prevails (95:3). Muqamun Ameen is a place which provides adequate provisions of protection and security (44:52). To declare Ei'man, therefore, means:- To believe, admit, accept or not to reject. To testify the truthfulness, not to contradict. To have confidence, reliance, trust. To accept, to obey, to bow in

obedience. [...] Ei'man on the following five fundamental entities is needed in order to become a Momin (2:177):- Allah (God). The Law of Mukaf'at (Cause and Effect) and the life Hereafter (Akhira). The Malaika (Laws of Nature). The revealed Books (That God has given Revelations given to previous nations and now are all presented in the Qur'an). The Anbia (The Prophets send to mankind as helpers and mediator of Revelation).[...] In the Holy Quran, Allah has called Himself Al-Momin (59:23) - as He is responsible for the safety, security of the entire Universe - and, therefore, Momin is also a person who ensures peace and security in the world by acting and enforcing the Laws given by Allah. See also VI, page 102-103, Arabic-English Lexicon by Edward William Lane. And page 29 Professor Arne Ambros' A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic.

Footnote3: Page 489-491 under the root Kafara. Dictionary of the Holy Qur'an by Abdul Mannar Omar, 2006 4th

edition. Page 14-15, Exposition of the Holy Qur'an, Mafhum Al-Qur'an by G.A. Parwez. 1990. It quotes the dictionaries and explains: Kufr means to conceal, to hide, to cover. Ibn-e-Faris also agrees that its basic meanings are to cover or conceal. Therefore, A person whose body is fully covered with weapons is called K'afir. Night is also called K'afir, as its darkness covers everything. A farmer is called K'afir as he hides the seed under the soil (Taj). A grave is called Al-Kafro as it hides the dead-body. In the same way, K'afir is a person who conceals the fundamental and absolute values of life, given to man by Allah. A person who hides his own or other peoples' potentialities and does not permit them to develop is also known as K'afir. Keeping in view this meaning of hiding or covering, it was also used in the meaning of denial, refusal or rejection. Therefore, it was also used in contrast to the concept of Ei'man, i.e., one who denies the absolute truth as given in the Quran (2/4-2/6). K'afir is used as an opposite of Momin. Kufr is also used as antonym of Shukr, as Shukr means something which gets prominent (14/7). From here the word "Kufran-e-N'aimat" is derived which means to hide bounties of nature, or to refuse to offer them for the good of mankind.

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