

See also: ALMSGIVING; ANIMALS; APPORTIONMENT; AWE OF ALLAH; BELIEF; BODY; BONES; CHRONICLES OF THE QUR'ĀN; COHERENCE; COLORS; DEATH AND THE DEAD; DISBELIEF AND DOUBT; FEAR; FIR'AWN; INIMITABILITY OF THE QUR'ĀN; INTELLECT; LANGUAGE OF THE QUR'ĀN; LIFE; LOVE, DESIRE, AND LUST; MERCY; THE NATURAL WORLD AND THE QUR'ĀN; PEOPLE OF REMEMBRANCE; POWER; REMEMBRANCE AND REMINDER OF ALLAH; SEEING AND BLINDNESS; SIGNS; SPENDING; SUBSERVENCE; TAWHĪD.

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CONTENTMENT

RIDĀ

This article comprises the following sections: i. Definitions and Usage; ii. Divine Good-Pleasure with Islam (Q 5:3); iii. Verses mentioning those with whom Allah is content and pleased; iv. Contentment with the Divine Decree; v. Contentment Bestowed or Earned?; vi. Excellence of Contentment; vii. Levels of Contentment; viii. Prophetic Teachings; ix. Bibliography.

Definitions and Usage

Contentment in this article refers to the Qur'ānic theme of satisfaction and good-pleasure which has three aspects: Divine good-pleasure with human beings; human contentment with the Creator and contentment between human beings. The human contentment is either a state (*ḥāl*)—a transient state, if it has not matured and stabilized yet—or a station (*maqām*), which is more permanent than a *ḥāl*. These three layers of meaning are encapsulated primarily through the eleven derivatives of the root *r-d-w*, and inferentially through certain derivatives of four other roots—*ḥ-b-b*, *f-r-ḥ*, *ʿ-t-b*, and *q-n-ʿ*—all of which signify contentment in certain contexts (see below).

The noun *riḍā* does not appear in the Qur'ān but eleven other derivatives used seventy-three times all connote contentment as a reciprocal and relational quality. Form I verb *raḍīya-yarḍā* (“to be content, satisfied, and pleased”) is the antonym of “*al-sukht*” (“discontent, anger”) (Ibn Manzūr; Ibn Fāris). *Riḍā* is sometimes directly linked with the acceptance of Divine Decree (*q.v.*), as noted by most scholars who have produced conceptual definitions of the Qur'ānic terms.

Abū-l-Ḥusayn al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī (d. ca.502/1108), for instance, explains that contentment of the slave

with Allah means that he does not dislike (*lā yakrahu*) what befalls him by His Decree; and the contentment of Allah with the slave is that He finds him fully complying with His commands and avoiding His prohibitions. *Riḍwān* (“the supreme contentment/pleasure”), the hyperbolic nominal form, *al-ism al-mubāligha*, is reserved in the Qur'ān for Divine contentment since it is the greatest *riḍā*” (*Mufradāt*; also Fayrūzābādī, *baṣīra fi-l-riḍā*). Two centuries later, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (740-816/1340-1413) produced a concise version of this definition in his *Book of Definitions*: “*riḍā* is the pleasure of the heart with the Divine Decree— *bi-murri-l-qaḍā*” (*Taʿrīfāt*, *sub bāb al-rā*). This linkage of contentment with “what befalls through Divine Decree” initially took shape during the formative first two centuries of Islam, especially among the Sufīs, who, through an intense process of introspection and reflection on the Qur'ān, systematically delineated the human condition in reference to the Creator (see below).

The root *r-d-w* is used 38 times as the Form I verb *raḍīya*; three times as the Form IV verb *yurḍu*; twice as the Form VI verb *tarāḍa*; three times as the Form VIII verb, *irtaḍā*; 13 times as the noun *riḍwān*; once as the noun *raḍīyy*; five times as the verbal noun *marḍāt*; four times as the active participle *raḍīyat*; once as the passive participle *marḍīyy*; once as the passive participle; and twice as the Form VI verbal noun *tarāḍ*.

Certain derivatives of four other roots have the connotation of contentment:

I. *ḥ-b-b*, “love”

i. in the Qur'ānic expression, “*wa-llahu yuḥibbu—indeed Allah loves—*” is a reference to His contentment towards “*the doers of good—al-muḥsinīn*” (Q 2:195; 3:134, 148; 5:13, 93); those who do not cast themselves to perdition by preferring their own desires to His contentment (Qushayrī, *sub* Q 2:195); “*those who are constantly repentant—al-tarwābīna*” (Q 2:222); “*those who are mindful of Him—al-muttaqīn*” (Q 3:76; 9:4, 7); “*the steadfast—al-ṣābirīn*” (Q 3:146); “*those who rely [upon Him] al-mutawakkilīn*” (Q 3:159); “*those who act justly—al-muqsiṭīn*” (Q 5:42; 49:9; 60:8); those who purify themselves—*al-muttaḥharīn* (Q 9:108) and *al-mutataḥharīn* (Q 2:222); and “*those who fight in His Cause*” (Q 61:4)—these are those who are seeking His Face, that is, they are seeking His Contentment in earnest (Samarqandī).

ii. in Q 49:7: *But Allah has endeared to you Belief*