

Muslim Responses by Randy Desmond

Date: Thu, 9 Jan 1997

I haven't responded for a while to this contradiction list and wasn't planning to anytime soon, except a Muslim from England emailed me and said that this web site's proposed contradictions had given him problems at one time. So my intent is to respond simply for the Muslims out there who may be bothered by what this web site proposes. May God protect us from the deceiving promises of Satan and his followers.

I had talked to a scholar about this question a while ago. I forgot the terms the scholar had used and the exact meanings of those terms. So anyone wishing more information should seek it through those who know. I am not a scholar - just a very concerned Muslim. And eventhough I do not like putting up my answer without full knowledge, I think it is more important to stress to my fellow brothers and sisters in Islam (and in the human race) that these contradictions have no basis in reality and can easily be refuted by those who have the knowledge.

There seems to be two cases which are misunderstood by the author of this "contradiction". First, there is the case of the inheritance portions summing to less than one. Second is the misunderstood portioning of inheritance which would seem to total more than one.

The case of portions of total less than one

Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 80, Number 724:
Narrated Ibn 'Abbas:

The Prophet said, "Give the Fara'id (the shares of the inheritance that are prescribed in the Qur'an) to those who are entitled to receive it. Then whatever remains, should be given to the closest male relative of the deceased."

The case of portions seeming to total more than one

4:11 - parents and children
4:12 - spouse and "no direct heirs"
4:176 - "no direct heirs" = neither descendants or ascendants

The unfounded assumption, based on an English translation, is that these three verses MUST be taken in tandem when calculating inheritance. However, we can equally wonder why the ordering of shares starts with children then parents then wife then indirect heirs. Could there not also be a priority here?

So as to not bore the reader by refuting every single case brought up. I will simply highlight the faults in the three examples which are used to stress this contradiction claim. Certainly the issues are not ignored in doing so.

First, notice that in the calculation of "a man dies leaving three daughters, both parents, and his wife" the total of the inheritance

sums to exactly one BEFORE taking into account the wife's share. Please also notice the wife's share is part of the NEXT verse.

Next, for one son and one daughter, that example misinterpreted the part of 4:11 which is talking about only one child as an heir which is a daughter. Then attempts to add a son which couldn't exist if there is only one daughter and no other child is not possible.

Next, notice that claims are put forth that when a man dies leaving only his mother, his wife, and two sisters, the total is $1/3 + 1/4 + 2/3 = 15/12$. The problem is that Jochen is adding apples (mother) and oranges (sisters). The mother is a "direct heir" the sister is not. Notice the clause in 4:12 and 4:176: The person who has died has no descendants or ascendants.

Now, in anticipation of Jochen jumping on an incomplete response, I have not answered the issue of differentiation between indirect heirs in 4:12 and 4:176. I haven't looked into it nor asked about it. I honestly do not know who Razi is either. So please give me some information if you have some. Unfortunate for the author of the contradiction, I can not presume his point is correct knowing all of the other points are baseless as is his whole list of proposed contradictions. So let me suggest that for those who want to know the truth of the matter, go seek answers from those who know better.

This response completely side-steps my proposed cases. I am not that naive. My questions were chosen very carefully.

Total summing to less than one: Giving undistributed inheritance to the nearest male relative. So, the above would mean that if I only have a daughter and a male cousin of an uncle, i.e. only one very remote male relative (and not other male relative whatsoever), this remote male relative would get half the inheritance? As much as my daughter? That is what this hadith would suggest.

According to my taste, this is not justified. [Neither do I know of any country's civil or religious law where things are dealt with that way.] But then, maybe I am not the one to define what is justice.

More important that is **not** how Islamic law has decided to handle the case. I don't know why the "Muslim responses" so often only look at a small part of my page and pick on that instead of reading **all the details** I provide and these details are given because they are an important part of the argument. I purposefully gave the following link and have to give it again: In [Islamic Inheritance Law, #2737 \(i\)](#) refutes this solution. Everything is given to the daughter which is the common sense solution of justice, **but that is not what the Qur'an says.**

Furthermore, it helps to answer the questions which were posed instead of inventing your own question that is easier to answer. Left-over inheritance shares can only be given to

the nearest male relative **if there is a nearest male relative**. When I state a certain group of relatives then I mean these are the only relatives. I.e. a nearest male relative is only of relevance if there is one, and in my first case the only relative is the daughter without any other male relative, however remote. Who gets the money? The question is not answered in the Qur'an (nor the hadith as it seems) nor was it answered by the above response.

Total summing to more than one:

This is so involved that I have to quote the whole thing and answer paragraph for paragraph.

4:11 - parents and children
4:12 - spouse and "no direct heirs"
4:176 - "no direct heirs" = neither descendants or ascendants

The unfounded assumption, based on an English translation, is that these three verses **MUST** be taken in tandem when calculating inheritance. However, we can equally wonder why the ordering of shares starts with children then parents then wife then indirect heirs. Could there not also be a priority here?

Sure there *could be* a priority, if you invent one. But it is **not indicated** in the Qur'an. It does not say, first give to these and from what is left over give the following shares to those. Basically you accuse me, that reading the text in its plain meaning is an "unfounded assumption". But in reality it is you who introduces invisible extra assumption to repair the problems. The most I could agree to is to allow reading the text in sequential order, i.e. give out the shares in the order they are mentioned in the verses 11 and 12. But the problem is still there as you will realize just two paragraphs down in your argument. Furthermore, if you strictly do priority ordering in the order the persons are mentioned, interpreting in each case "and from what is left, to this person the following share", then you obviously will never use up all the inheritance and have left overs. So you do have to use group some together and there seems to be no indication of grouping nor of order explicitly mentioned in the text. Some possible groupings (parallel) and priorities (sequential order) will solve some of my problem question, but no such system solves them all.

So as to not bore the reader by refuting every single case brought up. I will simply highlight the faults in the three examples which are used to stress this contradiction claim. Certainly the issues are not ignored in doing so.

They certainly have been ignored. Please bore me with explaining the questions I brought up. And I am sure that many of the Muslim readers here would also like to see answers to the questions instead of making up your own questions. Let me now respond to your "highlights".

First, notice that in the calculation of "a man dies leaving three daughters, both parents, and his wife" the total of the inheritance sums to exactly one **BEFORE** taking into account the

wife's share. Please also notice the wife's share is part of the NEXT verse.

Exactly. You stated the problem, but what is your answer? After you have given the daughters and the parents their share, it already is all used up "BEFORE taking into account the wife's share" as you aptly observe. Where then is the wife's share going to come from?

You could say [even though you don't], that you have to give the share of the wife **first** and then the rest is given to parents and children which would in this case sum to one. But you would again have to make an even more strenuous assumption, namely that you actually have to read the verses backwards, starting with 4:12 before you go to 4:11. This will help in this case, but not in all cases and is surely far from obvious. These would be two extra assumptions not stated anywhere in the text, namely that they are to be taken sequential instead of parallel and backward instead of forward in order of mentioning.

Next, for one son and one daughter, that example misinterpreted the part of 4:11 which is talking about only one child as an heir which is a daughter. Then attempts to add a son which couldn't exist if there is only one daughter and no other child is not possible.

If there are two children, one daughter and one son, then surely there is only one daughter. Or is the son also a daughter? In the original article it has already been stated that I don't insist on this literal interpretation though and can accept the customary Muslim reading. Hence there was no need to quibble about that anyway.

Next, notice that claims are put forth that when a man dies leaving only his mother, his wife, and two sisters, the total is $1/3 + 1/4 + 2/3 = 15/12$. The problem is that he is adding apples(mother) and oranges(sisters). The mother is a "direct heir" the sister is not. Notice the clause in 4:12 and 4:176: The person who has died has no descendants or ascendants.

That is not what it says. It says he has no children.

I am adding fractions, not "apples and oranges". This response is pretty confused and even contradicting what you said in the beginning of your own response. Several points: As we find in 4:11, obviously the indirect heirs (in this case the brother) do influence the shares of the direct heirs (in this case the mother) since we read: "... and to his parents to each one of the two the sixth of what he leaves, if he has children; but if he has no children, and his heirs are his parents, a third to his mother, or if he has brothers, to his mother a sixth, ..." [So where is this sixth from the mother going if not to the brother? This is one of the questions the Muslim who responded didn't want to bore us with].

Therefore, what is the problem in principle that mother and sisters can both inherit since mother and brother can both inherit at the same time?

4:176 states: "Say: 'Allah pronounces to you concerning the indirect heirs. If a man perishes having no children, but he has a sister, she shall receive a half of what he leaves, ...' Now, this verse is about the indirect heirs. It does not say [this is the unfounded assumption of this Muslim response] that indirect heirs ONLY receive shares if there are NO direct heirs. With this assumption he contradicts himself in the solution he proposed to the very first problem. When there is only one daughter (a direct heir) she will get half, he wanted to give away the second half to the nearest male relative (an indirect heir). Either indirect heirs can inherit even if there are direct heirs, or they cannot. But please stick to one rule.

If we agree that indirect heirs can inherit even when direct ones are present, this is a valid reading of the verse, since the verse only talks about the share of indirect heirs in case there are no children [not: in case there are no parents]. This would actually fit in with 4:11 and the brother inheriting together with the mother if there are no children. In any case, my suggested example does not violate any of the explicitly stated conditions. And the only condition mentioned in the Qur'an so that sisters can inherit is that there are no children.

I honestly do not know who Razi is either. So please give me some information if you have some. Unfortunate for the author of the contradiction, I can not presume his point is correct knowing all of the other points are baseless as is his whole list of proposed contradictions. So let me suggest that for those who want to know the truth of the matter, go seek answers from those who know better.

Yes, I agree, do go to those who know and ask them the difficult questions. And go to your Imam and ask who Razi is. He is after all one of the most famous Qur'an commentators. And the quote mentioned in the article on inheritance is in his Qur'an commentary in the obvious place, i.e. the verses under consideration.

Given that you have sidestepped each and every one of the questions posed on this issue, I find it not very wise on your part to call "baseless" my whole list of observations on Qur'an contradictions.

I want to repeat again. Experts on Islamic law are just as intelligent as everybody else and they have found ways to distribute inheritance to the heirs in generally accepted ways. The point of contention is not the practice of the Sharia but the observation that the shares in the Qur'an do not add up correctly and it is impossible to obey the Qur'an as it is without making many further outside assumption or blatantly change the shares and disregard the fractions prescribed in the Qur'an.

This might be a good place to remind everybody of the purpose in regard to these contradiction pages. I do not for a moment expect that a Muslim will forsake Islam because a few fractions don't add up correctly. There are a number of question in regard to the Bible for which I do not know a fully satisfactory answer. And I will admit that I don't know, should you ask me one of these. But I hate pretense of having answers if there are none. And I hate the often pridefully displayed and claimed superiority of the

Qur'an over the Bible. If these contradictions pages help Muslims to become more humble and realistic and especially stop claiming the corruption of the Bible because they found a few difficult passages, then the goal of this page has been reached. If we all realize that we are finite human beings and that we might not understand everything about God and his word, and begin with openness and humility to listen to each other, then this would be a great success.

May God bless you all in your search for truth and quest to understand and worship the one true God. I seek to follow and obey the truth as I perceive it. I am willing to listen to you. I pray for willingness on the side of Muslims to also listen to the Christians and not dismiss everything because "something doesn't add up".

Muslim Response by Randy Desmond

Date: Thurs, 13 Mar 1997

Your response to my response to your proposed contradiction (whew!) is asking me to respond once more. I cannot refuse seeing that (1) you have accused me of answering my own question instead of your original proposed contradiction, and (2) you have misunderstood the response to your questions, and (3) I just got a new Arabic dictionary which sheds some light on some of the words in the verses.

If my original response "completely side-steps" the contradiction you are proposing, tell me how? You didn't tell how, but you did responded to my points. So let's try to establish some common ground. Aren't you proposing that the verses on inheritance are contradictory? Yes or no? Don't we have to establish that "fact" first before we entertain any other questions? Yes or no?

Assuming you agree that a contradiction of these verses must be established first, I want to show you that, in reality, they do not.

But before I dive in, I just want to say that eventhough I do not like your approach (just as you do not like some Muslims' approach to the Bible), you have raised some interesting questions owing to the translation of the Qur'an in English and lack of explanations in those translations. These questions have really helped me in my faith as a Muslim. They have made me do research which has given me greater conviction in the way of life of Islam as revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

Let me re-write portions of the verses subsituting Arabic words next to the English translations.

4:11

...Your fathers or your sons; you know not which out of them is nearer in profit to you. **Fariidatin** from Allah; surely Allah is All-knowing, All-wise.

4:12

...If a man or woman have no heir direct [i.e. children or parents], but have a brother or a sister, to each of the two a sixth; but if they are more numerous than that, they share equally a

third,
after any bequest they may bequeath, or any debt not prejudicial;
Wasiyatin from Allah. Allah is All-knowing, All-clement.

I substituted the Arabic words in for a reason: the Qur'an is in clear Arabic (not English). It is the Arabic from which the meanings are derived. So let's look at it more closely.

Regard to me assigning a priority of the shares of 4:11 over 4:12, you had said, "Sure there *could be* a priority, if you invent one. But it is **not indicated** in the Qur'an." I can't blame you for that because of my lack of explanation, but I can support that claim by simply defining two terms that Allah uses in these verses. First, in 4:11, the instructions of shares to children and parents are called *fariidatun*. *Fariidatun* means an obligatory ordinance from Allah. Second, in 4:12, these instruction of shares are called *wasiyatun*. *Wasiyatun* means an order/command/recommendation. The definition is of an entirely different semantic feel. Hence, a priority is implied (if not outright stated).

Again, it is the Arabic which needs to be understood, not the (mis)translations.

Please don't think I am side-stepping your original questions about the distribution of shares. If you look back at those questions, they have presuppositions. Namely, (1) that the Qur'an explicitly says what to do with all the inheritance of one who dies and (2) that the Qur'an says how to apportion all the shares of inheritance explicitly and (3) that The Qur'an apportion all shares in inheritance and (4) All the portions of inheritance mentioned in the Qur'an are to be taken in tandem when distribution to inheritors is taking place. There is subtlety in the difference of these presuppositions. Do you agree that your questions do, in fact, presuppose these points? If I just attempt to answer those questions, I would first have to agree to those presuppositions. And I may be able to agree with some or none of them. That is what is sometimes a problem with your proposed contradictions. I have to address the presuppositions (which seem to be false in most cases) before I can give the clear answer.

Please notice that I am not saying that the original questions with respect to shares of inheritance are invalid within the Islamic framework of the Qur'an, Hadith, and Sunnah. That is not the case, and answers can be sought. However, that is not the point of this discussion. The point is the relevancy of the questions with respect to proving a contradiction within the Qur'an. Is that not true?

I admit that my response is incomplete (I don't address the apportioning of shares to colaterals). I also admit that I don't have requisite knowledge to answer all your concerns. But that is a limitation on me, not the Qur'an or Islam. I said what I know and try not to go talk about things I don't know about.