

The Justice of GOD

العدل الالهي

Objectives >>>

Students should:

Lesson 1

- Discuss the concept of Justice
- Gain an understanding of the Justice of Allah

Lesson 2

- Understand Allah's Justice in this world
- Understand Allah's Justice in the Hereafter
- Discuss the importance of taking ourselves to account for our actions

Lesson 3

- Understand the reason for tests and difficulties in life
- Discuss the benefits of tests and difficulties in life

Lesson 4

- Discuss why there is 'evil' in the world
- Understand that Allah is Just and never oppresses His creatures
- Understand that Allah tests us according to our ability
- Understand why we are tested
- Discuss the way we should deal with tests
- Discuss the Hereafter and Allah's Justice in the Hereafter
- Discuss the importance of keeping account of our own actions

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 3

Lesson 1: Introduction to God's Justice

Reviewing the Pillars of Islam

These five beliefs are:

- There is one Unique God- in Arabic this is called *al-Tawhīd*

التوحيد •

- God is Just- *Al-'Adl*

العدل •

- God sent us Prophets to guide us- *Nubuwwah*

النبوة •

- God sent us Imams to guide us, the Imams continue the message of the prophets- *Imamah*

الامامة •

- The Hereafter: after we die, we will be brought back to life and face the consequences of our actions – *al-Ma'ād*

المعاد •

In our previous lessons, we discussed the Unity of Allah and some of the attributes of Allah (SWT). In this lesson, we will discuss another important attribute, which is the Justice of Allah. As followers of the Ahlul Bayt, we believe that Allah (SWT) is Just. We will discuss the meaning of justice and in particular Allah's Justice in this unit.

DEFINING JUSTICE

What is justice? Justice is to give each person or thing their right. This means that people should be rewarded according to their actions. If a person does good deeds, he will be rewarded with good, and if a person does evil, he will be rewarded with evil. Allah, the Exalted, confirms that He is Just in this way. For example He says in the Holy Qur'an:



“So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom shall see it. And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom shall see it.” (99:6-7)

Justice (or being fair) also means to not discriminate between people based on their characteristics such as race, nationality, lineage, age, or gender, no matter what the view of our society in general. Allah (SWT) is the most Just and He never discriminates or favours one group over another.

He looks at all equally and the only reason for Him to look at one person more favourably than another is because of their piety. This is very just because this means that *all* people have an equal opportunity to earn Allah's (SWT) satisfaction.

TO MEMORISE:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْتَأَمُّكُمْ

“Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqua (piety). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.” (49:13)

THE IMPORTANCE OF JUSTICE

Justice is something that we all like and hope for. No person likes being treated “unfairly” and when they are treated like this, they become upset. Imagine if your friend at school speaks while the teacher is speaking, but you get blamed for this. You would become very upset with this. Or imagine that someone at school treats you unfairly because of the colour of your skin, or that you do

well in a test but someone else who did not do as well as you receives an award instead of yourself. All of these things make us upset. When the opposite happens and we are treated fairly and get rewarded according to what we did, we feel satisfied and happy. This shows us that justice is something we are all born to like. Once we know this, it is easy to see that we should also treat other people with justice. The Prophet (saw) and the Imams (as) have taught us how to be just with other people and to “treat others as you would like to be treated.”

ALLAH (SWT) DOES NOT OPPRESS

As mentioned earlier, Allah (SWT) is the All-Just. By this we mean that He is Just with “everyone and everything” in all situations. In fact, we all naturally seek justice because it is an attribute of God.

Allah (SWT) never oppresses anyone nor treats anyone unfairly. He states in the Qur'an...

“Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope. He gets reward for that (good) which he has earned, and he is punished for that (evil) which he has earned” (2:286)

This verse tells us not only that Allah (SWT) will never be unfair to us in any situation, but He will be Just when it comes to responding to our actions. That is, He will reward our good deeds but punish us for our bad deeds, either in this world or the Hereafter or both.

IMAM ALI'S JUSTICE

When Imam Ali (as) was the Caliph of the entire Muslim nation, an interesting event occurred that showed how much Imam 'Ali (as) cared about putting God's command of being just into practice.

A Jewish man stole Imam Ali's shield and when the Imam saw him holding his shield, he asked him to give the shield back. However, the man denied that he had stolen it. When this happened, Imam Ali went to court to argue that the shield was his, while the Jewish man was adamant that it was not Imam Ali's shield. When the judge asked Imam Ali if he had any witness, the Imam said 'no', whereas the Jewish man brought forward false witnesses who falsely testified that the shield was his. Imam Ali accepted the judge's decision. The Jewish man was happy he had won his court case. Soon though, the Jewish man found out that the person he stole the shield from was the leader of the entire Muslim nation. He was so amazed that Imam Ali didn't just use his powers to get the shield from him and punish him, but instead was fair

and used the system in a just manner, just like everyone else would have to. The Jewish man felt so embarrassed and ashamed that he gave back the shield to Imam Ali.

Now, if we all like to be treated justly and fairly, and if we know that justice is a good thing, we should aim to become just and fair ourselves, and to also work hard against injustice.

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah; even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be they rich or poor, Allah is a Better Protector to both.” (4:135)

This verse highlights the importance of justice so much so that Allah tells us no matter what, even if it is difficult and will cause us suffering, still we must aim to be just and fair.

Review Questions:

Q1. What does justice mean

Q2. What do we all intuitively like and seek justice?

Q3. What do we mean when we say ‘Allah is Just’?

Lesson 2: Justice in the Hereafter

We have learnt that Allah (SWT) is Just, and it is important to know that He is Just in this world and in the Hereafter.

ALLAH’S (SWT) JUSTICE IN THIS WORLD

In this world, Allah (SWT) has put in place the ‘law of reflection’. This means that whatever good or evil we do in this world, will somehow come back to us later in our life. Other cultures have discovered this law and sometimes it is called ‘karma’.

Look at this example. A woman spends a great part of her time and wealth looking after the orphans in her

community. She treats them kindly, smiles at them and gives them food and clothing. Unfortunately, she dies suddenly one day, her husband dies and her own children are orphans. She is unable to support them and needs help. She soon sees that there are many people who want to help her, and that her orphans are being looked after. Allah (SWT) tells us in the Qur’an that those who help orphans can expect that if they then have orphans of their own, these orphans will be looked afterⁱ. The law works the other way too. A person who is able to help but refuses to help orphans, a time may come that he needs help desperately for himself or his family but finds that there is no one who offers to help.

Another aspect of Allah’s (SWT) Justice in this world is that He gives everyone what they need to reach their own purpose and perfection. One person may be given physical strength, while another person is given mental strength. One person might be given the attribute of patience, while another is generous. God gives each of us the qualities that are required for us to reach our own purpose and perfection, and He judges only according to what He gave us the potential to do.

THE JUDGEMENT DAY

Allah (SWT) is also Just to us in the Hereafter. After we die, we are brought back to life in the Hereafter and judged for the actions that we performed in this world. Those who did good will be rewarded with good, and those who did evil will be punished. The rewards and punishments we receive are the reality of our actions. If our actions were good, we create rewards for ourselves and if our actions are evil, we create punishments for ourselves. Let us look at some examples:

- If we make people around us happy, then when we are raised from our graves, we will have a beautiful friend to protect us. While other people will be terrified by all the horrifying things that are happening on that day, this friend will walk ahead of us and protect us from all of these scary things.ⁱⁱ
- When people are in Hell, they will be attacked by vicious dogs. The food for these dogs is the words of people when they are backbiting. When we speak about someone behind their back, we are feeding the dogs of the Hell-fire which will attack us.ⁱⁱⁱ
- When we remember Allah (SWT) and recite words of remembrance like ‘alḥamdulillāh’ or ‘la ilāha illa Allāh’ then we are building bricks for our castles in paradise or we are planting trees for ourselves in paradise.^{iv}

ALLAH'S JUSTICE IN THE HEREAFTER

As you can see, Allah (SWT) gives us the rewards and punishments that we created with our own actions. This is another example of Allah's Absolute Justice. He gives us rewards and punishments only according to what we have done, and He does this with complete fairness.

In fact, any person who does not receive justice in this world will receive justice in the Hereafter. For example, our Imams (as) tell us that on the Judgement Day a person will be raised with all the people who knew him. Then he will be able to take any right he had from those people, and they will be allowed to take any right they had from him. For example, if someone had spoken about him behind his back, he would be able to take from the good deeds of that person. However, if he had spoken about someone behind their back, that person would have the right to come and take his good deeds.

Therefore, we must be extremely careful in all our actions and make sure we remember that every action will be judged and we will have to answer questions about everything we did.

Of course, besides Allah's (SWT) Justice there is His Mercy. Allah's Mercy can take the form of Allah (SWT) multiplying the rewards of our small actions. It can also take the form of God forgiving our sins if we truly regret them and repent from them.

KEEPING AN ACCOUNT OF OUR ACTIONS

Since we know that after our death, we will be asked about all of our actions, we should begin to ask ourselves about our own actions so that we can fix them before we are asked about them after our death. Every night, before we go to bed, we should think about all our actions. We can make a table like the following one that has been made for you and write down all of our good actions and all of our evil ones. For our good actions, we should thank Allah (SWT) and protect these actions by continuing to perform them and not wrecking them with evil deeds. For our evil actions, we should:

- Ask forgiveness from Allah
- Fix whatever harm we have done (for example, if we bullied or hurt someone, we should apologise to them until they forgive us)

- Making up for any missed actions (e.g. missed daily prayers) where necessary
- Promise to Allah (SWT) that we will not do such actions again

We should keep a track of our actions with this diary and try to increase the number of good deeds we do, but decrease the number of evil deeds that we do. Always remember that whatever we are doing in this world will be waiting for us in the next world. To help us remember this very important fact, we should try to repeat this ayah as much as we can and memorise it by next week.

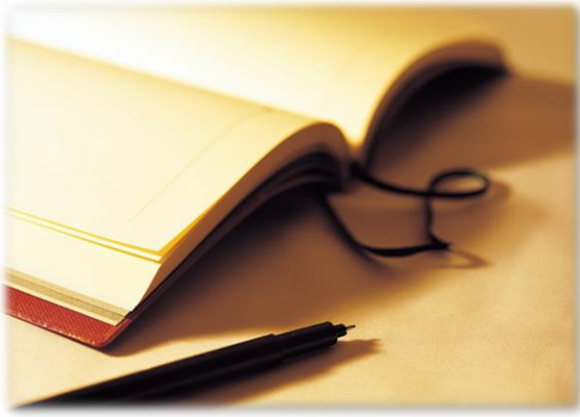
TO MEMORISE:

وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِإِعَادِ

“And let every soul look to what it has sent forth for its tomorrow” (59:18)

KEEPING AN EYE ON OUR ACTIONS

Once our Holy Prophet (saw) was travelling with his companions when he stopped at a deserted place where there was nothing growing. The Holy Prophet (saw) told his followers to go and collect wood. They replied that they would not be able to find any wood in such a deserted place. The Holy Prophet (saw) told them that they should still go and try to find some. So they went and brought back whatever little they could. In a short while there was a big heap of wood stacked in front of the Holy Prophet (saw), made up of all the small pieces that each person had found. The small pieces, which seemed insignificant, had now become a huge pile. The Holy Prophet (saw) then told them that their sins could just as easily be searched for and collected, and that small sins, which might seem insignificant, can pile up into something huge. The Holy Prophet (saw) was teaching them about self accounting. In the same way that the wood was collected although it could not be seen before collecting, people's sins are not easily seen or remembered. But when they are looked for and accounted, they may make a long list.



Review Questions:

Q1. Describe two examples of how we see the realities of our actions in the Hereafter

Q2. Explain the justice of Allah (SWT) in this world

Q3. Explain the justice of Allah (SWT) in the Hereafter.

- Orphaned at a young age
- Mocked and teased by his people
- Thrown out of his hometown
- Lost his wife and two dear uncles
- Had to live in a valley in starvation and terrible living conditions for years
- Had to endure many wars and battles

However, despite all these tests, he stayed patient, and never lost his faith and trust in Allah. At the beginning, it was only he, Imam Ali (as) and Khadija (his wife) who would stand and pray, alone. Imagine how those three people felt at that time, alone against the whole world. But they stayed patient. What was the result? Within a few years, Islam spread throughout all of the prophet's country, and in fact soon it spread around the whole world. Because the prophet worked through the hardships he faced and never gave up, the result was so amazing.

Let's look at an example of a scientist. Thomas Edison was told he was too 'dumb' to go to school and was expelled. He had to stay home and had no one to teach him. So he decided to teach himself and after a while he thought of producing electricity to light a lamp. He started to work on this in his garage, but he faced so many tests. In fact, his diary shows that he failed 1000 times, and was only successful after this. What was the result of working so hard and enduring through so much hardship? He made some of the greatest inventions in history and is now one of the most famous and respected scientists.

So you can see that when people have tests or hardships in their life, this is not necessarily a bad thing. These tests are a way for people to improve themselves and become better people. So if you think you have more tests than others in your life, then be glad, because this means you have an opportunity to become an even better person.

TESTS HAVE REWARDS

Every test we face in this world has its own special reward. This reward can come both in this world and the Hereafter. So if a person has more tests and hardships in this world, it means more rewards either later on in their life or in the Hereafter. Look at some examples from the Qur'an and the narrations:

- Imagine one day you are walking home and there is no way inside the house, and only you have the keys

Lesson 3: Allah (SWT) Tests us

As we discussed in our last lesson, Allah (SWT) is Absolutely Just and fair. However, sometimes we see that bad things happen in our life, or that some people have easy lives while others have difficult lives. Does this mean that Allah (SWT) is not just or fair? Let us try to answer this question.

THE REASON FOR TESTS

The difficulties that some people face in their lives are tests for those people. By working hard and overcoming these tests and difficulties, these people can achieve so much. For example, look at our Prophet Muhammad (saw). For so many years of his life, he was:

to get in. You reach into your right pocket and you realise the keys are not there. This frightens you and so you quickly reach into your left pocket and find the key there and say ‘pheww...’ Our Imam tells us that even such a small hardship which scared us just for a few seconds will cause lots of sins to drop from us. Imagine how many sins would drop from us and how much reward we will get when we are faced with bigger tests in our life^v

- On the Day of Judgment, when people see the rewards they are getting for the hardships they faced in this world, they will wish to get back to this world and go through the same hardships again^{vi}
- The Prophet (saw) had a son with his wife Khadija. This boy’s name was Ṭāhir. Unfortunately, Ṭāhir passed away while he was still an infant. The Prophet (saw) told Lady Khadija not to cry. However, one day, Khadija saw something that really reminded her of her baby and so she cried. The Prophet (saw) said to her: ‘don’t you want to find him waiting for you at the door of paradise, and when he sees you, he will take your hand and take you into the best place in heaven?’ She said: ‘if this will happen, then yes, I would like it’. The Prophet (saw) said: ‘Allah (SWT) is far too generous to take away the loved one of a servant of His then punish him, if that person is patient, trusts God and thanks God.’

TO MEMORISE:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

“Surely, Allah is with those who are patient: (2:153)

HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH TESTS?

As you just heard from the Prophet (saw), the rewards that we talked about are only given to people who know how to act when they are tested. People who become angry at God and give up on His Mercy and accuse Him of being cruel are not rewarded for these tests. However, people who are patient and who keep their hope and trust in Allah (SWT) will receive those rewards. Here are some tips to remember for the next time you are going through a tough test in your life:

- We should keep patient and remember those who are much less fortunate than us

- The difficulty we are going through is only a trial and with patience and perseverance, we will come out successful
- No matter how much we are going through, we can always be grateful that God has also given us faith in Him to keep us going
- We should remember Allah (SWT), because by remembering Him, we can become at ease and feel more confident that we are not alone.
- We should remember that God tests those whom He loves. This is why the Prophets and Imams went through the toughest tests of all. When Allah (SWT) tests us, He is showing His love for us, and is helping us to get closer to Him.

Review Questions:

Q1. What are the benefits of being tested?

Q2. What are the some of the rewards of being tested?

Q3. Is everyone rewarded for being tested? What is the criteria for being rewarded?

Lesson 4: The Question of Evil

WE have been discussing Allah’s (SWT) Justice. One of the main questions we need to answer within this topic is the following: ‘why do evil things happen?’ When evil things happen, we often question God’s justice and ask why such things occur. We may also ask ‘does God create evil? In this lesson, we will try to analyse this question and see whether evil actually does exist.

WHAT IS THE REALITY OF EVIL?^{vii}

In order to fully understand and grasp this problem, it is important to think deeper about what we mean when we refer to things as ‘evil’ or ‘bad’.

- 1- **‘Evil’ can be the absence of a quality:** Sometimes, when we say something is ‘evil’, we are referring to the absence of something. For example, poverty might be called evil, because a person who is poor suffers and is in pain. However, poverty is not a real thing, it is actually the absence of wealth. So it is not something that God created. In fact, it is usually because people do not have enough wealth to live, because other people have been greedy, selfish or deceitful. Therefore, some ‘evil’ things are actually the absence of something good.
- 2- **Evil can be relative-** Some things we refer to as evil do however definitely have an existence. Things like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, etc. These things are evil if they lead to death and destruction. However, in themselves they are not evil. A volcanic eruption or an earthquake are necessary for the Earth’s survival and if they didn’t happen worse disasters may occur.
- 3- **Evil disappears in bird’s eye view^{viii}:** often things happen in our life that we think are bad or evil. For example, we may be forced to leave the city in which we have lived for most of our life, leaving behind our friends, our home and our comforts. However, many years later, we may look back at this and see how much we benefitted from moving, and the difficulties we faced were all worth it. We might have made new friends, settled in a better home and so on. What we thought was evil turned out to be very good for us.

Memorisation Activity

وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ

“...and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you...” (2:216)

WHY IS THERE ‘EVIL’?

We have seen then that ‘evil’ is either the absence of something, or is only relatively evil, or disappears when looked out in a bigger context. But why does it exist at all? Well, we have learnt about tests, and that tests help us

improve as people, and gain more rewards in this world and the Hereafter.

‘Evil’ events or things are a test for us, and therefore an opportunity to improve ourselves. God created this world with tests and seemingly evil things and events so that we human beings can reach our perfection and earn our place in Paradise.

Review Questions

1. **Does God create ‘evil’? What is the reality of evil? Explain in your own words.**

ⁱ Sheikh Mansour Leghaei, Journey to the Unseen World, Lectures on the Law of Reflection

ⁱⁱ Sheikh Mansour Leghaei, Journey to the Unseen World, Lectures on the Law of Reflection

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} Ibid

^v eHAWZA, Semester 1, Course 3, lecture 5

^{vi} Ibid

^{vii} From eHawza Semester 2 course 1 lesson 22

^{viii} Lessons about Allah, Prophet, Justice, leadership and resurrection – Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi.