

~~Lies~~  
Truth

## LYING

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

### Objectives >>>

#### Students should:

- Understand what it means to be truthful in speech and action
- Understand that lying of any sort is forbidden in Islam
- Understand that there are levels and types (speech and action) of lying and the most horrible are lies against God and His Prophets
- Be reminded that lying for deception and fun is also impermissible
- Understand briefly what Tarwiyah means and when it is permissible
- Understand that lying only under very specific circumstances is permitted
- Know some basic reasons why people lie and how one can stop lying
- Understand briefly the consequences of lying in this world
- Be reminded of the punishments for lying
- Understand that lies lead to more lies
- Know that listening intently to and following falsehood is also impermissible

### LESSON 1: TRUTHFULNESS AND LYING

“O you who believe! Be God-conscious, and be with those who are true (in words and deeds)” (9:119)

The meaning of lying is obvious. It is to say or claim something that is not true. We all know that lying is a great sin. The bad thing is that we do not realise how often we are doing it. If a person has a habit of telling lies, he is a hypocrite until he rids himself of the habit.

Allah (SWT) tells us in the Holy Qur'an also tells us not to lie:

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“And do not mix up the truth with the falsehood, nor hide the truth while you know (it).” (2:42)

### BEING TRUTHFUL IN SPEECH AND ACTION

From the above introduction, we can see that we have to be truthful and honest in our speech i.e. when we use our words, we should not say something that we know is false. Also, when it comes to our actions, we must not practice that which we do not believe or mean. Our actions must be the same as our beliefs and our words.

Imam al-Şādiq (as) advises us in the following narration that before we speak, we need to learn to be truthful at all times:

“Learn truthfulness before speech”<sup>ii</sup>

Imam al-‘Askari (as), the eleventh Imam said:

“Wickedness was put inside a house, and the key (of its door) was rendered to be lies.”<sup>iii</sup>

Lying opens the door to so many sins, and thus it is considered a major sin, whether it is lying with words or with actions.

Lying with actions refers to when a person's actions do not match their words. For example, a person who claims to believe in and obey God, but who clearly disobeys God is a liar in his actions.

## LEVELS OF LYING

There are several levels of lying in both speech and in action. Some examples of lying in speech include:

- Deceiving others about something you know is not true – for example, if you did something wrong and are asked whether you did it or not, and you knowingly say you didn't do it.
- Pretending to believe something that you don't believe in or practice

Some examples of lying in action include:

- Not practicing what you believe in – for example, if you believe and know that it is wrong to smoke, but you yourself do it, either in public or private – this is form of lying.
- Acting differently in public that you would in private

However the worst form of lying which makes a person become a disbeliever is lies that are told about God and His Prophet (saw). This means saying or believing in something that is not true about God or His Prophet (saw).

وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ

“...AND SHUN LYING SPEECH” (22:30)

In the above ayah, the Holy Qurān associates lying with worshipping idols and this shows just how evil it is and just how much we should avoid it.

Therefore, just as we are so careful about alcohol and idol worship and would never come near it, we should have the same attitude towards lying and false speech.

## LYING FOR FUN

Lying can come in many forms, sometimes it seems innocent and can even make people laugh if done as a joke. However, the person who is the victim of the joke is the only one who doesn't laugh, but instead feels humiliated and degraded.

Islam has forbidden us to lie even as part of a joke. If we are going to joke or play innocent tricks on our friends, we should do it without lying.

The consequences of lying for fun are that no one will believe you when you actually speak the truth. Remember the famous story of the boy who cried 'wolf'? When there was a real wolf – no one believed him – and the wolf ate the sheep from his flock! It is also important not to lie even as a joke so that we do not get into the habit of lying in general.

Imam al-Sajjad (as) said:

*"Avoid telling lies irrespective of small or great, whether it is in earnest or joking, because when a person tells a lie in small (things), he dares to tell a lie in great things, too."*<sup>11v</sup>

## **Review Questions**

### **Q1. Lying in actions means:**

- a. When a person's actions do not match their words
- b. When a person tells a lot of lies
- c. When a person lies as a joke

### **Q2. Lying as part of jokes or pranks is not allowed because:**

- a. It will lead us to the habit of lying in general
- b. It will make people not believe us when we are actually telling the truth
- c. Both a & b

## LESSON 2: EXCEPTIONAL SITUATIONS

### وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ

“...and shun lying speech” (22:30)

In the previous lesson we learnt the evils of lying and that lying in Islam is seen as a mortal sin.

In this lesson, we will learn that in some situations it is permissible to lie. However, we should be fully aware of the conditions under which this is allowed and also how it can be done.

### WHEN LYING IS PERMISSIBLE

In some specific circumstances, lying is not only allowed, but it is compulsory.

### TO SAVE AN INNOCENT PERSON FROM AN OPPRESSOR



This is a situation where, by lying one can stop an oppressor from oppressing an innocent person.

One day, the Prophet (saw) was sitting on the side of a road when he saw someone fleeing from some evil people. After

the man passed, the Prophet went and sat on the other side of the street. When those people chasing the man saw the Prophet (saw) and asked him whether he had seen anyone, he (saw) said: ‘since I have been sitting here, I have not seen anyone’.

This above example show us how to ‘lie’ in such a situation – so since the time the Prophet (saw) moved across the street, after that no one passed him – so by ‘here’ he (saw) meant specifically that particular place which he (saw) was sitting in at that moment, not before.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (as):

*“If a Muslim is asked about a Muslim and he harms that other Muslim by telling the truth, he is written as a liar.*

*However, if a Muslim is asked about a Muslim and he benefits that other Muslim by lying, he is written as a truthful person in the eyes of Allah”.*<sup>v</sup>

## RESOLVING A CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE

If one can make reconciliation between two people by lying then they should do this. It is not permissible to go and tell a person that someone has said something bad about them. Instead, a person should try to make peace between two people even if it means lying about what they said about each other. This is especially true in situations like divorce where if one lies, it could save a marriage and a family – then lying is obligatory.

The Prophet (saw) advised Imam ‘Ali (as):

*“Allah, the Exalted, loves lying with the purpose of reconciliation, and detests truth if it leads to mischief”.*<sup>vi</sup>

### WHY DO PEOPLE LIE?

There are perhaps three major reasons why people lie:

- It has become so common that it is no longer seen as something wrong or detestable. Once a sin becomes public and commonplace, people become less sensitive to it. This is why in Islam, while it is bad to commit a sin, it is far worse to publicise that sin.
- People may think that by lying they can reach their goal faster and so they lie in order to get ahead in life. In this regard Imam ‘Ali (as) gives us a true test for how faithful we are, saying:

*“Faith is when you prefer truth, when it would harm you, over lying, when it would benefit you”.*<sup>vii</sup>

Wealth which is gained through illegal means such as lying has no blessing, and it is often lost from the person’s possession through one calamity or another.

- The third reason people may lie is because of fear of the consequences

However, the lifestyle of the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt was such that they did not worry about these consequences and kept the pleasure of Allah (SWT) as their priority. For example, one day a man wanted to speak to Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) but the Imam was in a state of Janābah. Rather than making any excuses, the Imam (as) told the man directly that he was in a state of Janābah and asked him to come back later.



In another example, the Imam (as) is walking home with his son and a friend and when they reached the Imam's house, he did not invite the man inside. When the Imam's son asked why the Imam (as) had not invited the man at least as a formality, the Imam (as) said that Allah (SWT) does not like people who pretend.

On this note, we should make sure that we do not miss our prayers because we are too shy to perform Ghusl. Even though this may be awkward, we must learn to overcome this awkwardness and perform our obligations on time.

We can stop lying by following the examples set for us by the Ahlul-Bayt (as) and especially remembering Allah (SWT), fearing only Him and no one else. By keeping in mind His Pleasure and being strong we can overcome lying.

## Review Questions:

### Q1. A test of true faith is:

- a. To fast and pray
- b. To tell the truth, even if it would harm us
- c. To tell the truth, even if it causes problems between two believers

### Q2. Lying is allowed if:

- a. It will get us out of trouble
- b. If it would save an innocent person from an oppressor
- c. If it will help us get what we really need

## LESSON 3: CONSEQUENCES OF LYING

Having learnt the different aspects of lying and the commandment to stay away from lying, in this lesson we shall look at the consequences of lying in this world including the punishments. This lesson will also explain that even listening to a lie is not allowed.

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF LYING

Lying has its evil consequences both in this world and the Hereafter. We will first look at the consequences of lying in this world and its effects on the individual and the public in general.

## CONSEQUENCES IN THIS WORLD

### Lack of Trust & Responsibility

A person who lies often in this world will never be trusted by others. To be successful, it is very important for human beings to be generally trustworthy because in all our dealings whether in business or with family and friends, we place trust in people. A businessman who lies will never be successful and will lose his customers, because once they find out he's cheating them, they will never buy from him again. A father who tells his child not to lie, but lies to his wife – will be setting a bad example, and the child will follow the practical example set by the father, and later on will not trust his own father.

### Loss of reputation, friends and family

People who lie about others create rumours. Rumours are very dangerous for society because they can destroy families and friendships if they become uncontrolled and serious. Sometimes people lie about others whom they don't like, just to make life difficult for them – this also leads to slander. People lose their reputation, friends and sometimes even families due to lies.

### Lying leads to a person being lied to

Giving advice to others without practising it ourselves does not work. This is why the Prophet (saw) would not even advise a young boy not to eat dates until he himself had practiced it for a while. When it comes to business, it is permissible to not tell the truth by saying for example: 'this is my car, you can check it for yourself and see if it has any faults' without telling the person all its faults.

However, it is not permissible to lie to the person by decorating the car or lying about its features or condition.

### Lying is the key to the house of sins

If you can imagine all sins being locked in a warehouse, the key to that warehouse would be lying. This is one of the major dangers of lying: it leads to multiple other sins.



## CONSEQUENCE OF LYING IN THE HEREAFTER

### Lying is a mortal sin

Mortal sins are sins that lead to the Hell-fire unless a person truly repents from such sins.

### God has cursed the liars

فنجعل لعنة الله على الكاذبين

“and invoke the Curse of Allah upon those who lie” (3:61)

## PUNISHMENTS FOR LYING

There are several punishments for people who lie regularly and die without repentance. Some of them are as follows:

### 1. A liar develops a foul smell in the Hereafter

انّ المؤمن اذا كذب بغير عذر لعنه سبعون الف

ملك و خرج من قلبه نتن حتى يبلغ العرش

“When a believer lies without a valid excuse, seventy-thousand angels curse him and a foul smell emanates from his heart, such that it reaches The Throne”<sup>viii</sup>

### 2. The Angels will punish the liars in the hereafter

The Prophet (saw) describes the punishment of a liar as seen during Me’raj (Ascension):

“I saw a man, who lay flat on his back while an angel mounted his head. The angel who was standing upon the head had a pointed iron rod. He repeatedly injured the sleeping person. The face of the victim was shattered up to the neck. But when the rod was lifted the head returned to its original form. Again the rod was hit on the face and the man suffered the same retribution.”

The Holy Prophet (S) says that he inquired,

“Why is this man punished?”

He was told, “This is a man who left his home in the morning and uttered a lie that caused harm to the people. So he shall be punished in this manner (after death) till the Day of Resurrection.”

## LISTENING TO FALSEHOOD IS IMPERMISSIBLE

It is not permissible to listen and follow those who speak falsehood. Those who speak against God and His religion, and those who spread sinful thoughts and advertise sinful actions should not be listened to. If we listen to such people, it is as if we are worshipping Satan.

Imam Ja’far al-Şādiq (as) was asked whether one can listen to a liar. He replied:

“One who listens intently to a speaker, worships him. If the speaker is (speaking) from Allah the listener has worshipped Allah. But if the speaker is (speaking) from Satan the listener has worshipped Satan.”

Again, we remember the words of the Holy Qur’an:

وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ

“...and avoid false words.” (22:30)

These types of verses confirm that even listening to lies is not allowed. When a liar is speaking a lie which is a great sin, the place where he commits this sin becomes a place of divine wrath and the listener shall also be included in it.

## Review Questions

### Q1. A liar:

- Will not be trusted
- Will be lied to later in his life
- Both a & b

### Q2. Lying in business:

- Is allowed
- Is not allowed
- Is sometimes allowed if one is desperate

<sup>i</sup> **References:**

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<sup>ii</sup> [al-Kaafi 2:85]

<sup>iii</sup> [Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 263]

<sup>iv</sup> [Tuhaful-Uqul, p. 201]

<sup>v</sup> [Mustadrakul-Wasa’el vol.9 p.95]

<sup>vi</sup> [Wasa’elu-Shi’a vol 12 p.252]

<sup>vii</sup> [Nahjul-Balagha, Wisdom No. 458]

<sup>viii</sup> (Mustadrakul Wasail, 9:86)