



سوء الظن

Suspicion

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that assumptions can become negative and that Allah (SWT) has made negative assumption a sin
- Understand that there is a healthy balance between suspicion and naivety
- Understand that naivety is also forbidden in Islam
- Know strategies for avoiding suspicion
- Understand that we have to try to avoid suspicion against us by being transparent

Suspicion

“O you who believe, avoid most assumption because some assumption is evil...” (49:12)

We have learnt in previous lessons that suspicion is a vice strongly condemned in the Holy Qur'an. Allah (SWT) commands us to avoid most of the negative thoughts or assumption that we have toward other people's words and/or actions.

You will also remember from previous lessons that Allah (SWT) uses a strong prohibition against suspicion by using the word 'avoid'. This is because suspicion is like a chronic disease which eventually destroys the physical and spiritual dimensions of a person unless it is diagnosed and treated early.

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

In addition, we also need to avoid those actions that would make others suspicious about us. While most suspicious behaviour is harmful and condemned, suspicion towards our enemies is encouraged and is also considered a sign of intelligence. This lesson will discuss the evils of suspicion, practical tips to avoid suspicion and when suspicious may be a permissible act.

HARMS OF SUSPICION

When a person thinks negatively of others, he begins to develop a feeling of mistrust towards them. This mistrust in turn causes him to act with them in accordance to his thoughts. If this behaviour continues, it generalises to more members of his community and the person begins to distance himself from people as he tries to avoid their company and so his social relations suffer.

Not surprisingly, the impulse to suspect others is most powerful toward our loved ones. For this reason we often hear of a wife consistently accusing her husband of something totally foreign to him or vice versa and over time this becomes a cause for a divorce. This incident is one such example of a woman trying to verify her suspicions towards her husband.

A telephone operator once related that she received a phone call. She answered, 'Public Utilities Board.' There was silence. She repeated, 'utilities.' There was still no answer. When she was going to cut off the line, she heard a lady's voice, 'Oh, so this is utilities. Sorry, I got the number from my husband's pocket but I do not know whose number it is.'

Now imagine what will happen to the couple if the telephone operator answered with just 'hello' instead of 'utilities.'

In addition to the loss of peace of mind that a suspicious person suffers from, his spirituality and faith is also negatively affected. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said:

“When a believer suspects his fellow brother, his faith disappears from his heart like salt disappears in water”ⁱ

ARE ALL SUSPICIONS BAD?

As mentioned, a person needs to be intelligent to decide when suspecting about others is bad and when it is necessary. The important thing to remember is that we should avoid suspecting our family, friends and other believers.

However, when it comes to the enemies of Islam, we should not be naïve, and we should have reasonable suspicions about them so that they cannot harm us.

AVOIDING SUSPICIONS AGAINST OURSELVES

Whilst we can control our thoughts against others, we can't control other people's negative thoughts against us. However, we can to some extent help people not to suspect us. Imam 'Ali (as) says:

“A man who places himself in a suspect situation must not blame those who suspect him”ⁱⁱ

Sometimes, we should not only let our actions do the talking but at times, we would need to talk to explain our actions. This will ensure that we maintain our dignity, respect and trust in the eyes of others. For example, if one who wishes to go pray in a mosque finds no parking except next to a bar, it would be useful if he can explain to other why he parked next to a pub. You also may remember the example of the Holy Prophet mentioning to his companion that the woman he was talking to in the market was his aunt. We also need to avoid doing those things or going to places that may raise suspicions against us.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO AVOID SUSPICION

1) Every time a negative thought crosses the mind, replace it with a positive one. Also actively remember that it is Satan who is contributing to this thought, and that we need to overcome him by dispelling this thought.

2) Consider everyone around us to be better than us. This will make it easier to justify their actions which may seem suspicious.

3) Make as many excuses as possible to justify the actions of others. This will help keep the relationship strong, and will give us peace of mind also.

4) Remind yourself of both the physical and spiritual harms of suspicion, which include:

- Paranoia
- Losing friends
- Conflict with family members
- Agitation and anxiety

Also remind yourself of the benefits of always thinking positively about loved ones and other believers:

- Peace of mind
- Strong relations
- Close family ties

Homework

Q1. Negative assumptions are mostly dangerous when they are against:

- a. The enemies of Islam
- b. Our family and other believers
- c. The general population

Q2. The Holy Qur'an commands us to:

- a. Not be suspicious
- b. Be suspicious sometimes
- c. Avoid suspicion

ⁱ (Mizan Al Hikmah No. 6804, Pg 1198)

ⁱⁱ (Mizanul Hikmah No. 6808, Pg 1199)