



Islamic

School Syllabus

MANUAL

LEVEL
4
2015

Term Four



THEOLOGY

JURISPRUDENCE

SOCIAL-ISLAM

Teacher's Name: _____

Student's Name: _____

THE UNITY OF GOD

التوحيد

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand why we need God
- Be able to prove the existence of God using the proofs of causality and order
- Understand why God is not created
- Realise that because Allah (SWT) is our Lord and we are His slaves, we have to obey him
- Understand the significance of worshipping Him
- Know the difference between mere knowledge and belief
- Know the proofs for the Unity of Allah (SWT) through the signs in creation
- Understand that Allah (SWT) is necessarily Infinite and Unique
- Gain a better understanding of the Attributes/Names of Allah (SWT) and their significance
- Understand that to reach our perfection we need to embody the Attributes of Allah (SWT) within ourselves
- Gain a better understanding of the Attributes of Allah (SWT) and the divisions of the attributes
- Understand the importance of contemplating the creation of Allah (SWT)
- Understand that the blessings of Allah (SWT) are countless
- Understand that Allah (SWT) is the True and Only source of all blessings
- Know that there are two forms of blessings, the apparent and the hidden
- Realise that reflection is one of the important steps in appreciating and acknowledging Allah's (SWT) blessings and consequently His Absolute Beauty.
- Understand that true gratitude to God is only possible by using the blessings He has provided in the way He has prescribed
- Understand that Kufr (ungratefulness) is opposite to Shukr (gratitude & belief) and that those do not use their gifts correctly are kāfir (ungrateful)

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

WHY DO WE NEED GOD?

Human beings are created by Allah (SWT) as weak and needy beings in their very essence. Many examples in our lives demonstrate this, for instance, when we feel hungry, we go to the markets to buy food. In other words, we depend on the food provided by the markets to satisfy our hunger. These markets in turn depend on the work of farmers who provide them with vegetables, fruits, milk, meat and so on. Also, the farmers depend on rain, sunshine, gentle winds etc. for a good harvest. Without sunshine, plants would die and bear no fruit. Without rain, rivers would dry up and cattle would die leaving us deprived of milk and meat, which would lead to the extinction of the human race. Now, who is it that controls the sun and the rain that the farmer and everyone else ultimately rely? Do human beings have the power to control such things? This is just one simple example among innumerable examples that clearly show our neediness towards God.

One reason why Allah (SWT) has created us so weak, to the extent that we cannot even prevent a microscopic virus from entering our bodies, is for us to become aware of our weakness. This awareness helps us remain humble and always turn only to Him for help.

Have you experienced a desire to talk to Allah (SWT) more when faced with problems in life? This is because we are instinctively 'programmed' to turn towards Him, similar to a baby who finds rest only at the bosom of its mother. Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qurān:

TO MEMORISE:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

“O mankind! It is you who stand in need of Allah, but Allah is Rich (Free of all wants and needs), Worthy of all praise.” (35:15)

PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Despite the fact that we naturally and instinctively turn towards Allah (SWT), we often become oblivious to this because our environment preoccupies us. Therefore, we often need proofs for the existence of Allah (SWT) to remind ourselves of His Existence. In this regard, Prophet Jesus (as) says:

“With truth I tell you that verily just as the sick man can only look at good food but cannot enjoy it due to the intense pain he suffers, similarly the man engrossed in worldly affairs cannot enjoy worship nor taste its sweetness because of the love that he harbours for worldly possessions”ⁱ

In this lesson, we will examine some rational arguments establishing the existence of God, even though this is something we all know inherently as discussed above.

1. THE ARGUMENT OF CAUSATION

Human beings are curious by nature and as a result, when we witness something we ask ourselves what caused it. Whilst you are reading these sentences, you have no doubt that someone has written them. Similarly, we know that the reason things fall to the ground is due to a force called gravity. The sentences that you read here and the things that fall to the ground are effects while the writer of the sentences and the force of gravity are the causes. An established principle exists in the system of the universe and that is, **every effect must have a cause**.

Now when we observe the creation in the universe, there could be two possible explanations for its creation:

- 1- The universe has brought about its own existence i.e. it is its own cause.
- 2- The universe has a cause or a creator.

We know the universe could not have created itself. If the universe created itself, it means it would have had to exist before it came into existence and this is logically

impossible. Therefore, the universe must have a cause, to bring it into existence. This cause cannot be part of this universe; otherwise it would need a cause itself. Therefore, the cause for the universe must be something ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ this material universe’. We call this First Cause or First Being, God.

2. THE ARGUMENT OF ORDER (TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT)

The world we live in is full of order. Consider the amazing network of neurons in our brain that controls all our bodily functions such as eating, sleeping, fighting harmful bacteria and viruses and so on. This system is so complex that it is impossible for scientists to create anything as complex as the human brain in any machine. The human brain is able to perform more functions simultaneously than any computer.

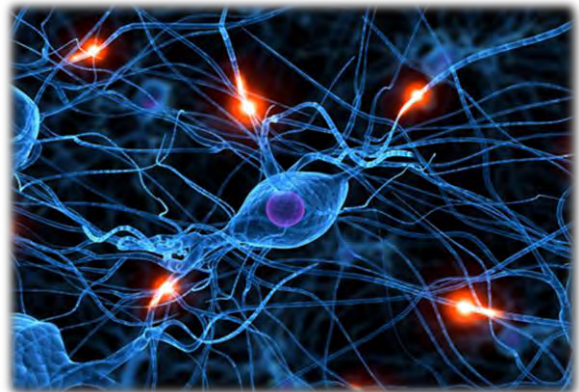


Figure 1: The circuitry of our brains!

Then consider the way the planets are aligned around the sun, and the way the Earth is positioned in relation to the sun. If the Earth was slightly closer to the sun, it would be far too hot to live on and life would be impossible. Similarly, if the Earth was slightly further from the sun, it would be too cold for life as we know it to exist on Earth. The Earth is positioned perfectly in order to support life. Another example is the gradual change of day and night. At dawn, light gradually pierces the curtains of darkness, and at night, light stealthily withers away providing darkness. Can you imagine waking up at a time when the sky is totally black and then suddenly within a few seconds it becomes as bright as midday? This gradual change can only occur because of the precise rotation of the earth along its axis, in the most gentle and calculated of manners, so that we feel the least possible discomfort.



Figure 2: Night enveloping day

The examples are numerous and are beyond the scope of this lesson. The possibility of such perfect order and intelligent law coming about by chance is so minuscule that a rational being would dismiss it. The chances of an ape accidentally typing a Shakespearian masterpiece when put in front of a typewriter would be greater than this universe, with all the order witnessed therein, being created by chance. A rational being accepts that such perfect order is only possible if the one who has put it in place is Wise and Knowledgeable. This Wise and Knowledgeable Creator is God.

In the Qurān, Allah (SWT), the Exalted, challenges us to examine and analyse His creation to see if we can find any faults or flaws. If we find them, then we may be able to attribute this world to chance or to an imperfect being. However, there are absolutely no flaws and thus we can only attribute this world to a Perfectly Wise and Perfectly Knowledgeable Creator.

“Who has created the seven heavens one above another; you see no fault in the creation of the Most Beneficent; then look again: ‘can you see any rifts?’ Then look again and yet again, your sight will return to you worn-out, in a state of humiliation.” (Surat Al-Mulk 67:3-4)

KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

Now, we have learnt some proofs for the existence of Allah, the Exalted. This will give us knowledge of His Existence. However, this knowledge is not beneficial if it does not lead to virtuous action. Knowledge leads to action only when it becomes belief. Belief is when knowledge is so instilled in the heart of a person that it leads naturally to action that suits that knowledge.

Therefore, our aim is to purify ourselves so that the knowledge that we have of God becomes belief that is firmly set in our hearts and our actions match that knowledge of God.

Once we know of the Existence of God and His Absolute Wisdom, we would submit to Him as slaves, and follow all His commands, because of the realisation that He always wants the best for us. Therefore, we would become obedient slaves to God.

Review Questions

Q1. The proof of cause and effect for the existence of God is based on the principle that:

- a) This world came about by chance
- b) Every effect must have a cause, and so this world that we live in must have a cause
- c) This world we live in created itself

Q2. The proof of order for the existence of God is based on the principle that:

- a) If there is order, there must be a Wise Creator behind it
- b) Order can come about by chance, according to the law of probability
- c) There is no exact order in our world

Q3. The difference between mere knowledge and belief is:

- a) Belief is based on faith only and does not need logic
- b) Belief is based on logic only and does not need faith
- c) Knowledge may not lead to suitable action, but belief is knowledge that is firmly in the heart, such that it leads to suitable action

LESSON 2: THE UNITY OF GOD

In our previous lessons we have proven that God exists and that He is the cause of everything to come into being. In this lesson we will learn that it is necessary for God to be Infinite and Unique. We will also learn about the Attributes of God and their significance in our lives.

ARGUMENTS ESTABLISHING THE UNITY OF ALLAH (SWT) IN NATURE

When we look at the different patterns in nature we realise that they all have one thing in common; they all have a system whereby there is one centre to which all of them return to or revolve around.

The tiniest object in creation is the atom which is made up of electrons and a nucleus (protons and neutrons). The pattern we realize is that the electrons revolve around the centre of the atom which is the nucleus.

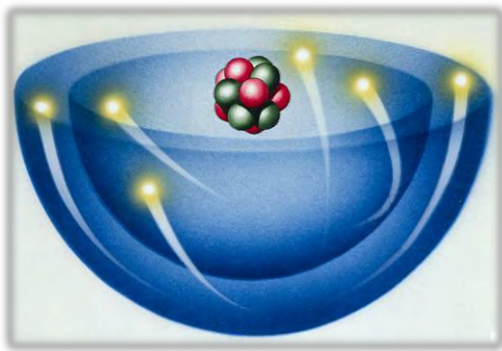


Figure 3: Electrons orbiting a central nucleus

Looking at the body as a whole, the main centre is the brain. This pattern is also repeated in the celestial bodies, we see the Moon orbiting one planet, the Earth. On a greater scale, all the planets orbit one Sun and do so in the same direction, whilst the sun orbits the centre of the Milky Way galaxy and so on.

As you can see, there is a distinct pattern in the world where everything inclines towards a central point. These are signs to make us reflect on the fact that there is **ONE** centre to which everything naturally and necessarily turns to.

Furthermore, the fact that everything in the universe works in harmony with one another is proof that there can only be **ONE UNIQUE** God and Lord creating and sustaining the creations (hence we refer to Him as Rabb – The Cherisher).

Let us consider one example of how everything in nature intertwines and how different systems work in harmony. The trees hold the soil together and at the same time the earth provides trees with nutrients. Trees then provide humans with oxygen to breathe and we provide trees with carbon dioxide to 'breathe'. Animals use trees for food and nutrition, and then their waste enters the soil

and becomes a fertiliser that helps plants grow. Each ecosystem is kept in perfect balance by every organism in that ecosystem so that no particular plant or animal dies out or becomes too numerous. If there was more than one god then nothing in the universe would be as balanced and harmonious as it is, and the systems would not be so intertwined. This is because each god would have their own distinct creation and there would be too many conflicts and collisions between the different sets of creations.

IS GOD INFINITE?

To be infinite means neither to have any limits nor to be limited by anything. Some examples of limits include time, space, shape and neediness.

Everything we see around us (including ourselves) is limited by space, time and shape. Everything depends on everything else within its ecosystem and the wider system of nature to exist and thrive. For example, we depend on plants as one of our sources of food and oxygen to survive. In turn, plants depend on the earth and sun to survive. The sun is in need of different forces and chemicals to continue existing, and the chain of one needy being depending on another needy being continues.

This pattern of dependency is seen amongst all creations in the universe. If one of the items in the 'chain of dependency' was to be removed, the rest of the items in the chain would be affected and cease to exist. This is because each item in the chain is limited.

Ultimately, we are in need for someone to ensure that the existence of all limited creations are maintained and kept in order. This being cannot be limited as well otherwise if he ceases to exist then everything else will also perish. The fact that everything in the universe is intact and exists indicates that there is an unlimited (infinite) being looking after it and keeping it in order. This infinite being is God, the Creator and Maintainer.

ONE INFINITE GOD OR MANY?

As we have proven above, there can only be one god; otherwise the universe would not work harmoniously. We have also proven that God has to be infinite. It is impossible for there to be more than one infinite God because:

- Imagine infinity, now try to imagine something outside or beyond that infinity. As you can see, it is impossible
- If there were two infinite gods, for example, how would we be able to distinguish between them? The only way we could distinguish between them is one or both of them were limited in some way so that they lacked something the other one had. This would make them limited and not infinite, and therefore not a god.



Figure 4: Every element of an ecosystem whether large or small, alive or inanimate, fulfils its God-given potential to ensure balance and order are preserved

GOD IS NECESSARILY ONE AND UNIQUE:

Once we understand that God is infinite, we can understand that God cannot be limited by anything including space, time and shape. Hence God is Unique; He has no partner or equal and there is nothing like Him. Whatever our minds imagine is not God because He has no form or shape and is infinite. Our senses of touch, sight, hearing, taste and smell cannot perceive Him, and even our imagination and intellect fall short of perceiving His Essence.

ACTIVITY:

Learn the Translation of the first part of Ayatul Kursi:

“Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever living, the One who sustains and protects all that exists. Neither slumber nor sleep overtake Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth.”(Surat al-Baqarah, 2:255)

HOMEWORK

Q1. We can prove God is One by examining nature because:

- Everything in nature is independent and different
- All systems in nature work harmoniously and are linked to one another
- All systems in nature have a central point that they turn to and that unites them
- Both b & c

Q2. If there were two Gods managing the universe:

- Everything would be the same as we see it now
- The two gods would clash and conflict and there would not be harmony in the universe
- One god would be more powerful than the other and he would manage the universe

Q3. Infinite means:

- Very large
- Not limited by time, space or shape
- Unique

LESSON 3: FURTHER DISCUSSION ON TAWHĪD

We learnt in the previous lesson that Allah (SWT), the Exalted is the One and Unique Creator and Cherisher of this world. In this lesson, we will discuss some other aspects of our belief in Allah (SWT) as the One Lord.

THE QUESTION OF “WHO CREATED GOD?”

The question of who created God is a very common one asked by both theists and atheists alike. To be able to answer it, we have to understand the nature of all created things. Everything that has been **created** possesses the following properties:

1. They are all **limited**. A table for example only occupies a certain area of a room. We discussed this issue in our last lesson.
2. They are all **subject to change**. The table will over time begin to deteriorate, break down and eventually cease to exist as we know it.
3. They are in **need**. The table is in need of the wood it was made from; the wood in turn comes from trees which depend on sun and water.

We humans also have the same properties in terms of being limited. For instance, it is impossible for a person to be physically present in two places at the same time. We are also subject to change i.e. from birth to youth and then to old age and eventually death. Man is also in need of sunshine for warmth, air to breath and rain for water.

If everything that has been created is in need and is eventually going to perish, there has to be something that all these things can depend on for their survival. Such an entity must be beyond these limitations and hence be needless of anything, not undergo any deterioration and not be limited by anything otherwise it too would perish and as a result nothing would exist. In part of his response to a question posed by a Jewish man about how God came to being, Imam Ali (as) said:

*".....He exists without coming into being; He is before 'before' itself, before any limits. Limits do not apply to Him for He is the ultimate limit of all limits"*ⁱⁱ

Since God is not limited and not needy towards anyone or anything, He does not need a creator. We and the creatures with us in this world need to be created because we are needy, but God does not need a creator because He is neither needy nor limited. Therefore, the question of 'who created God' does not actually make sense because by definition God does not need a creator.

HOW CAN WE KNOW ALLAH (SWT)?

Allah (SWT) out of His infinite mercy has provided us with certain tools that we can use to know Him and get closer to Him. He has sent us prophets and the Holy Qurān as the greatest tools to achieve this. They introduce Allah (SWT) to us through His Attributes. In addition to this, pondering over all His signs in the universe and within our own selves are means of knowing Him.

All these signs of God allow us to know His Attributes. However, His Essence remains inaccessible to us. We can only know Him from the effects of his presence or his attributes (*As-Sifāt*). This is because it is impossible for us who are finite and limited beings to be able to grasp an Infinite and limitless entity. In this regard, Imam Riḍa (as) says:

*"He is too exalted for sight to be able to perceive Him, for imagination to be able to fathom Him and for the intellect to be able to grasp Him"*ⁱⁱⁱ

HOW DO WE DESCRIBE GOD?

We will never be able to comprehend the Essence of God because we are limited and cannot perceive something infinite or limitless. Therefore, we cannot describe His Essence. However, the best way to describe God is the way in which God has described Himself. As mentioned in previous lessons, God has introduced Himself with 99 different names or attributes. The most unique amongst all these names is the name Allah (SWT).

Although Allah (SWT) has 99 attributes, it does not mean that there are 99 different parts to Allah (SWT) because God does not have parts. Allah (SWT)'s attributes cannot be separated from His Essence. An example to help us understand is that sweetness is an attribute of sugar, but it is inherent to sugar (not a part of it that can be removed or isolated) and makes its essence.

UNITY OF ALLAH (SWT)'S ATTRIBUTES:

Each of Allah's (SWT) attributes is infinite in the way that Allah (SWT) is infinite. So when Allah (SWT) says that He is al-Mālik, it means that He is the only Real Owner of everything. The only reason we think we own a bike, a house, a pen is because Allah (SWT) has in a way lent it to us to give us temporary 'ownership' of it. But, He can take it away from us at any time.

Allah (SWT) (s.w.t.) is also al-Qadīr. This means that He is the only Real Powerful Being and is the only source of power. The only reason we have strength to do things is because Allah (SWT) has enabled us and given us the strength to do so.

WHY DO WE NEED TO KNOW THESE ATTRIBUTES?

We have been created with an instinct to love perfection and hence each person strives towards the perfection that they perceive. Allah (SWT), being Infinite and Needless, is absolute perfection. He has introduced His attributes to us so that we can know what perfection is. In that way, we can try to reflect them in order to reach our level of perfection. For example, Allah (SWT) is al-Ghafūr (The Forgiving). In order for us to reach our level of perfection in this aspect, we need to try our best to forgive others. Allah (SWT) is also al-Ṣabūr (The Patient One). We need to strive to be patient throughout life in order to reach our level of perfection in this aspect.

The most perfect human ever was Prophet Muhammad (saw) followed by the other 13 infallibles, because they were the most perfect human manifestations of these attributes. Allah (SWT) describes the Holy Prophet (saw) in the Qurān as *Ra-ūf* (compassionate) and *Raḥīm* (merciful). The Prophet (saw) manifested both of these attributes in their highest possible perfection that a limited human could achieve. Furthermore, the Holy Prophet said:

تَخَلَّقُوا بِأَخْلَاقِ اللَّهِ

“Adopt the characters of Allah (SWT)” iv

This means that we need to try to reach our perfection by developing attributes such as being forgiving, merciful, truthful etc. This will help us in our journey towards perfection.

REMEMBERING GOD BY HIS ATTRIBUTES:

By remembering Allah (SWT)’s 99 names, we always remind ourselves not only of the Magnificence of Allah (SWT), but also that we need to try our utmost to resemble His character. For example, the more we remember the name al-Halīm (Forbearing) it reminds us that Allah (SWT) (s.w.t.) does not get angry and punish people for their wrong actions immediately; rather He gives everyone time and chances to improve themselves and correct their mistakes.

The benefit of remembering Allah (SWT) always is that it builds a connection between us and Allah (SWT) and this leads us to loving Allah (SWT). When we love someone we try to be like that beloved and this will help us to perfect ourselves. Also when we remember Allah (SWT), Allah

(SWT) remembers us. Allah (SWT) revealed to Prophet Mūsā: *“I am the companion of one who remembers me.”*^v What better companion than Allah (SWT) can one have?

THE ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAH (SWT) IN THE HOLY QURĀN:

In the Holy Qurān, the attributes of Allah (SWT) are often paired. This helps us understand more about these attributes. For example, the attributes of ‘Forgiving’ and ‘Forbearing’ are paired in the Qurān, showing that Allah, the Exalted, gives people time and respite and then forgives them.

The following are some of the *āyāt* of the Qurān in which Allah (SWT) describes Himself:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ
الرَّحِيمُ

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ
الْمُهَيِّمُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

He is Allah (SWT) besides Whom there is no god; the Knower of the unseen and the seen; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful,

He is Allah (SWT), besides Whom there is no god; the King, the Holy, the Giver of peace, the Granter of security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of every greatness, Glory be to Allah (SWT) from what they associate (with Him).

He is Allah (SWT) the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; His are the most excellent names; whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares His glory; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

(22-24)

Homework

Q1. When we want to know Allah (SWT), we can know:

- a) His actual Essence
- b) His Attributes
- c) We cannot know His Essence or His Attributes

Q2. It is good for us to remember God's Attributes because:

- a) It will help us adopt the characteristics of God
- b) It will help us come to love God
- c) A & B
- d) So that we can memorise them

Q3. In relation to the question of 'who created God'?

- a) God needs a creator but we don't know who created Him
- b) He is not limited and a being who is not limited is not created
- c) God was created by another God

Extra Activities:

- Choose one of the attributes of Allah (SWT), such as The Forgiving, and focus on this name for a week. Throughout this time, try to reflect this name in your actions towards other people.

LESSON 4: THE ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAH (SWT)

As we learnt in the previous lesson, Allah (SWT)'s Attributes are no different to His Essence. Thus, they cannot be separated from His Essence. Also the Attributes of Allah (SWT) are not different components of Allah (SWT). If they were, it would make Him needy of his parts, and this is impossible. Therefore, they are all one and the same. However, as we said in previous lessons, we cannot fathom Allah (SWT)'s Essence. Therefore, to help us understand Him, Allah (SWT), the Exalted, has provided us with different concepts, which we can relate to, such as mercy, generosity and knowledge. In reality, in His Essence, they are one and the same. However, to us, looking from our point of view, they seem different.

It is also important to note that we understand these concepts in their limited form. We understand generosity, but only in the limited form seen among humans, mercy, but only in the limited and imperfect form seen among

humans and so on. However, when it comes to Allah (SWT)'s Attributes, even though we understand the concept of mercy and generosity, we can never understand the way that that concept is exemplified in His regard, because again in His example it is limitless and absolute, whereas our minds are limited and finite.

THE BEST WORSHIP IS CONTEMPLATING AND REMEMBERING ALLAH (SWT):

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said: *"The best of worship is continuously contemplating about Allah (SWT) and His power."* The Imams have also indicated that contemplating for an hour is better than worshipping for a year^{vi}. This is because it leads to one of the higher forms of worship which is continuous remembrance of Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) states in the Holy Qur'an:

وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

"...and certainly the remembrance of Allah (SWT) is the greatest..." (29: 45)

Wondering about Allah's creation is therefore one of the best acts of worship and brings us closer to Him and increases our faith in Him. This is why in this lesson, we will watch a video that shows some of the miracles within Allah's creation.

LESSON 5: GRATEFULNESS TOWARDS ALLAH

The universe and particularly this earth, was created in a desirable state in which man is able to live and grow. Everything that man needs for his life is provided, and everything that Allah (SWT), the Merciful, has created is essentially good and for the benefit of mankind. Having acknowledged this, one naturally becomes grateful towards Allah (SWT), the Creator, for having granted us all these bounties and favours. Being grateful is to express gratitude either verbally or through action and to appreciate the favour done by the one to whom we are grateful. Allah (SWT) asks repeatedly in Sura *Ar Raḥmān*:

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

"Then which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?"
(55:13)

THE BLESSINGS OF ALLAH (SWT) ARE COUNTLESS

Gratefulness to Allah (SWT) is one of the most emphasised concepts in the Qurān. In almost seventy verses, the importance of showing gratefulness to Allah (SWT) is mentioned, the examples of those who are grateful and ungrateful are provided and the consequences that each group face are described. The reason why so much importance is given to this concept is because it is an indication of one's faith and an affirmation of the unity of Allah (SWT). It is human nature to thank the one who has favoured you. Therefore by being ungrateful, one is merely going against their own nature, whose natural consequence is suffering which is a form of punishment from Allah (SWT).

Part of being grateful is to acknowledge that we can never be sufficiently grateful to Allah (SWT), the Exalted. This is because His blessings surround us and we are dependent on them for everything. This idea is expressed by Imam Sajjad (as) in his *Saḥīfa Sajjadiya* says:

"So how can I achieve thanksgiving? For my thanking You requires thanksgiving. Whenever I say, 'To You belongs praise!' it becomes thereby incumbent upon me to say, 'To You belongs praise!'"

This shows that our entire existence depends on Allah (SWT) and that even our breath is a favour from Him, and that even for our acts of gratitude we are dependent upon Him and the ability He has given us. Therefore thanking Him sufficiently can never be possible.

Allah (SWT) states in the Qurān:

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

"And if you would count the graces of Allah, never could you be able to count them. Truly! Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (16:18)

This ayah reiterates the point made above by clearly stating that we can never count or realise the blessings of Allah (SWT), and that our only hope is that His Forgiveness and Grace will encompass us so that even if we have not been sufficiently grateful, He will still accept whatever little gratefulness we have shown. It emphasises that no

matter how much we express our gratefulness, we always need to do more because it is never enough.

ALLAH (SWT) IS THE TRUE AND ONLY BENEFACITOR OF ALL BLESSINGS

The world around us and the world within ourselves is full of marvellous things. The sun and moon, the plants and trees, the mines and minerals hidden deep in the heart of the earth; all of them are of great benefit to mankind.

Within ourselves, we have the digestive system, the respiratory apparatus, the heart and other organs of the body; as well as the greatest blessing of all, the intellectual ability through which we can overcome so many great difficulties. Allah (SWT) says in the Qurān:

سُورِهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ
أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

"We will show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth. Is it not sufficient in regard to your Lord that He is a Witness over all things?" (41:53)

These are all signs of Allah (SWT)'s infinite Mercy and Compassion towards His creatures, one and all.

It is therefore our duty to appreciate and acknowledge this and thus be eligible for continued blessings and favours. If we fail to show our gratitude, the blessings will eventually be taken away from us.

TYPES OF BLESSING

Of all the numerous blessings that Allah (SWT) has provided us with, we can divide them into two main categories. These are:

- Apparent Blessings
- Hidden Blessing

APPARENT BLESSINGS

These are things that are mostly physical blessings. Examples include our bodies and the various systems within our bodies, such as the digestive system, respiratory systems, and our five senses etc.

HIDDEN BLESSINGS

These are the more important blessings which are perhaps less obvious to us. They include our mental and intellectual abilities, our emotions, and other values that we can appreciate. Within this category we also have the power of freewill which enables us to achieve a status higher than that of angels if used correctly.

However, if we misuse these blessings and show ungratefulness by doing so, we will end up worse than even animals.

Another type of hidden blessing is those things which at first seem like hardships and problems. This may include difficult situations in our personal, academic or social life. For example, sitting an exam is very stressful and difficult at times, however, the results and consequences of it are that it makes you much more confident in what you know, and through your exams you learn to apply your knowledge. Furthermore, with good results you progress in life and become stronger.

The most important blessing however is the blessing of guidance in the form of religion. This includes the divine books and prophets sent to mankind. Muslims, in accepting the Quran and Prophethood of Muḥammad (saw) use more of this crucial blessing than others. The Sh'iah, in accepting the station of the Imams of the AhlulBayt (a) use even more of this blessing than other Muslims. Hence, the Shi'ah should express the more gratitude due to the blessings that Allah has given them.

HOW TO BE GRATEFUL TO ALLAH (SWT)

True gratitude to God is only possible by using the blessings He has provided in the way He has prescribed and to be content with what He has given us.

Each blessing has a purpose and a function and it is our responsibility to use them responsibly. Only then can we derive the full pleasure and achieve the maximum benefits of that blessing. We can only do this by following the instructions that Allah (SWT) has sent to us through the Qurān and the Ahlul Bayt.

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: "Being grateful for God's blessings is not committing divinely forbidden acts." vii

It would not be right for us to misuse a blessing and then offer thanks – that defeats the sense of gratitude and is in fact a sign of ungratefulness. For example, if your parents out of love buy you an Mp3 player to facilitate memorising the Qurān, and you use it to listen to haram music, your parents will not be pleased with you because you are misusing the gift they gave you.

Besides the above form of gratitude, which is the best one, there are other ways in which we can express our gratitude to Allah (SWT) for His abundant blessings:

- ✓ To thank Him verbally by saying '*Alḥamdulillah*'
- ✓ To go into prostration and utter verbally thanks for the blessing you have realized even if it is in your own words, and;
- ✓ To realise in our hearts that God is showering us with blessings that we have done nothing to deserve

Imam Ṣadiq (a.s.) said: "One who whole-heartedly realizes a God-given blessing has expressed the due thanks."

Whole-hearted realization can only come when we spend some time and thought in acknowledging the blessings and goodness we have all around us and within us, from the very basic to things that one would count as bonuses which many other people have been deprived of.

A STORY TO REMIND US...

A young man was getting ready to graduate from college. For many months he admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom, and knowing his father could well afford it, he told him that was all he wanted. As Graduation Day approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car.

On the morning of his graduation his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautiful wrapped gift box.

Curious, but somewhat disappointed the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Holy Qurān. Angrily, he raised his voice at his father and said, "With all your money you give me a holy book?" and stormed out of the house, leaving the holy book.

He did not contact his father for long time. Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family, but realized his father was very old, and thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day.

Before he could make arrangements, he received a telegram telling him his father had passed away, and willed all of his possessions to his son. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things. When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart. He began to search his father's important papers and saw the still new Holy Qurān, just as he had left it years ago. With tears, he opened the Holy Qurān and began to turn the pages. As he Read those words, a car key dropped from an envelope taped behind the Holy Qurān. It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words PAID IN FULL.

How many times do we miss God's blessings because they are not packaged as we expected? Also, this shows that we should be grateful for whatever we receive, though it may not at first look like all that we would want, there may be something more in it than meets the eye – therefore never judge a blessing just by its cover – there may be more good hidden in it than what can be seen at first sight.

CONSEQUENCES OF BEING UNGRATEFUL

Imam Ṣadiq (a.s) said:

“God the Almighty granted a group of people some blessings, but they did not give thanks, and it became a burden for them. God brought a calamity upon some people and they persevered. Then they got blessings from their perseverance.”

One who does not give thanks is like one who does not acknowledge the giver. The one who does not acknowledge the giver is like he has disbelieved in the existence of the giver.

Allah (SWT), the Exalted, says in the Qurān

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي
لَشَدِيدٌ

“And when declared your Lord: 'If you are grateful [to Me], I shall most certainly increase (My favours) unto you; but if you are ungrateful, verily, My chastisement will be severe indeed!’”
(14:7)

In the Qurān, the opposite of being grateful is defined by the term “disbelief” (فِرَ), which is similar to being ungrateful. This indicates that ungratefulness is a character of disbelievers. Only this definition indicates the importance attached to being grateful as worship and the detrimental consequences it may have for a believer.

There are many stories of such people in the Qurān. For example the story of Fir'awn and Qarān show clearly the consequences of being ungrateful for Allah (SWT)'s favours. Both of them were very wealthy but were ungrateful and they attributed their wealth to their own selves as the cause instead of acknowledging Allah (SWT) as the giver. This made them proud and haughty among the people, and they became tyrants and greedy. Thus Allah (SWT) punished them for such behaviour.

Review Questions:

Q1. Which of the following is the best form of showing gratefulness to Allah (SWT)?

- a) Saying 'alḥamdulillah'
- b) Prostrating and thanking Allah
- c) Using the blessings God gave us in the way He wanted us to use them

Q2. Hidden blessings are:

- a) Blessings which are not very obvious to us unless we take a closer look at them
- b) Blessings which at first may seem like difficulties or problems
- c) Both a & b

Q3. We can never thank God enough for His blessings because:

- a) We cannot even count or realise them
- b) When we thank Allah for a blessing, we owe him thanks for giving us the opportunity to thank Him
- c) a & b

Homework

Memorize one ḍikr of thanksgiving so as to be able constantly mention it when you remember a certain gift or appreciate something good. See Surat al-A'rāf (7:43) for this.

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ⁱ Mizānūl Himah, pg. 689, no. 3958

ⁱⁱ Mizānūl Himah, pg. 716, no. 4126

ⁱⁱⁱ Mizānūl Hikmah pg 711, no. 4102

^{iv} Behārul-Anwār 61:129

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^{vii} Mishkatul Anwr fi Ghuraril Akhbar



THE JUSTICE OF GOD

العدل الالهي

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that we intuitively know the goodness of justice and evil of oppression, and thus we should be just
- Be introduced to the concept that God is Just, in the three main facets of justice
 - Justice in creation
 - Justice in legislation
 - Justice in punishment
- Know that tests that cause apparent misery or evil in this world may be seen as being against God's justice but in reality are not.
- Use this as a springboard for a more detailed discussion of how we should face tests

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: THE JUSTICE OF GOD

The goodness of justice is something we all know within ourselves, without needing any proof for it. We all naturally like to be treated justly, and dislike being oppressed or treated unjustly.

Allah (SWT) describes Himself as being Just. He also says that He never oppresses any of His creatures. Over the next four lessons, we will be discussing the justice of Allah (SWT), and exactly what this means.

THE IMPORTANCE OF JUSTICE

As we discussed at the start of this lesson, justice is something whose goodness is naturally obvious to us. Therefore, Allah, who is Absolutely Just, also orders us to be just too, especially in the way we deal with people around us. One of the people who personified justice during his life was Imam 'Ali (as).

IMAM ALI'S JUSTICE

Favouritism, nepotism, partiality and bribery are common negative traits among unjust politicians and leaders. When Imam 'Ali (as) became the leader of the community, the politicians with their hopes and expectations were disappointed. Their disappointment soon grew into conspiracies against Imam 'Ali's government. Well-meaning friends, with sincere goodwill, advised Imam 'Ali (as) to adopt greater flexibility in his policies for the sake of higher interests. Their advice was:

"Extricate yourself from the tricks of these politicians by bribing them to keep their mouths shut. These are influential persons, some of whom are from the elite of the early days of Islam. Presently, your real enemy is Mu'āwiyah ibn Abi Sufyān, who is in control of a rich and fertile province like Syria. The wisdom lies in setting aside, for the time being, the matter of equality and justice. What harm is there in it?"

Imam 'Ali (as) replied to them:

"Do you ask me to seek support through injustice [to my subjects and to sacrifice justice for the sake of political advantage]? By God! I will not do it as long as the world lasts and one star follows another in the sky [i.e. I will not do it as long as the order of the universe exists]. Even if it were my own property I would distribute it with justice, and why not when it is the property of God and when I am His trustee?"ⁱⁱ

FACETS OF THE JUSTICE OF ALLAH (SWT)

As we discussed earlier, we believe that Allah (SWT) is absolutely just. There are three major facets of His Justice:

- 1- **Justice in Creation:** We believe that Allah (SWT) has given a divine decree for everything to come into existence. With that decree, Allah (SWT) also has given it a certain measure to specify its limits, shape, form, time, place etc. In His creation, Allah (SWT) is Just, which means that He provides His creation with the ability to fulfil its purpose. Allah (SWT) decrees mountains to act as supports for the earth, decrees humans the power of free will, etc... Each decree follows the limits Allah (SWT) has set.
- 2- **Justice in legislation:** We believe that Allah is just in His laws. Allah (SWT) has created us and therefore knows us and our limits. For instance, He has created women with different limits to men and therefore it is necessary that they have different rules to ensure they remain within the limits!
- 3- **Justice in reward and punishment:** We believe that Allah (SWT) has created the laws of cause and effect (what goes around comes around). Allah (SWT) is absolutely just when He punishes and rewards in this world and in the Hereafter. The rewards and punishments, both in this world and the Hereafter, are direct results of our actions. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said:

"God the Almighty will apologize to his needy servants in this world just as a brother apologizes to his brother, and says: "I swear by My Honour that I did not make you poor to humiliate you. Now push the curtain aside and see what I have given you instead. When the curtain is pushed aside and he sees what God has rewarded him with instead of this world, he says: "O' God! There was no harm for me due to what You took away from me (in

the world) considering what you have given me instead (now in the Hereafter)."ⁱⁱ

THE JUSTICE OF GOD: A SPECIAL CATEGORY

The followers of Ahlul Bayt (as), unlike all other Muslims, have as one of their five pillars of faith the belief in the Justice of God. Our Imams (as) emphasised especially on this fact, in order to counter the false beliefs of others when it comes to the Justice of God.

Certain sects of Muslims believe that God determines all our actions, and therefore we are forced to do what we do. This led to such Muslims blaming God for all the problems that occurred in their lives, and not taking responsibility for their evil deeds. It also led them to the following question: why would God send someone to Hell for doing evil when God forced him to do evil? In contrast, other sects believed that God hands over control to us and so we have complete free will. Their beliefs seemed to limit God's power with this statement.

In contrast, our Imams (as) have taught us that although some things in our lives are predetermined (like the colour of our hair or who our parents are or where we were born), many other things in our life are under our control. We have been given the gift of free will. We make decisions based on our own free will. Although God knows what choices we will make, He does not force us to choose one option over another.

Therefore, we are responsible for our actions, because it was we who chose to do them through our own free will. Imam al-Ṣādiq explains this:

"Whatever that you could blame man for, is his action; and whatever you could not blame him for, is the act of God. God blames man for drinking alcohol, committing adultery etc. Thus these are acts of man. However, God does not blame man as to why he is sick or why his skin colour is black or fair. These are the acts of God."ⁱⁱⁱ

This then means that when God rewards or punishes us in the Hereafter, He is doing so in accordance with the choices we made in this world. God has promised in the Qur'ān to reward those who do good with blessings and bliss, and those who do evil with punishment and torture.

Review Questions:

Q1. As followers of the Ahlul Bayt, we:

- We believe that God is Just and that this is one of the fundamentals of faith
- Do not believe that God is Just
- We believe that God is Just but this is not an essential part of faith

Q2. God's Justice means:

- He is Just in rewarding and punishing His creatures
- He is Just in that He creates everything according to a measure and gives it according to its potential
- Both a & b

Q3. Which of the following is true?

- Justice is something whose goodness we need to prove
- Justice is something whose goodness we know naturally in ourselves
- Justice is not always good

LESSON 2: A WORLD OF TESTS AND TRIALS

In the previous lesson, we learnt about the justice of God. In this lesson, we will discuss the issues of tests and trials. Almighty God tests us in order to purify us and make us deserving of the eternal bliss of paradise.

TESTS ARE A MEANS OF PURIFICATION

As Muslims, we believe that one of the reasons Allah (SWT) has put us in this world is to test us. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an:

TO MEMORISE:

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ
سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا... إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا
كَفُورًا

"Verily, We have created man from a nutfah in order to try him, so We made him hearing, seeing. Verily, We showed him the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful"
(72:2-3)

There are two major types of tests that humans face:^{iv}

1- **Test of sharī'ah**- This is the test of following the laws Allah (SWT) has decreed for us. This is the test of not exceeding the limits He has created us with. If we exceed the limits, we become unjust and not only do we suffer the natural effects of this, we also suffer His punishment in the hereafter.

2- **Test of difficulties**: Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'ān:

"And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient ones. Who, when afflicted with calamity, say: 'Truly! To Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return.'" 2:155-156)

Some of these difficulties come about as a result of our own wrong actions or negligence. For example, a person who trusts his wealth to a foolish person will lose it, but this is a natural consequence of his own action. Other difficulties do not come about as a direct result of our own actions but are part of the natural order of the world. These include difficulties like natural disasters, as well as difficulties brought on by people around us.

ENDURING TESTS

We have seen that many tests we face in our life are not due to our own doing. We may think that God is not being fair by inflicting us with these tests. But, the more we suffer the higher our status in paradise and the more rewards we will receive. In addition, we have to remember that Allah (SWT) gives more tests to those He loves because He wants them to reach the highest positions in paradise and be as close to Him as possible. Imam al-Bāqir (as) said:

"One has a very high noble position near God. God will make him suffer a lot of calamities to reach that position. Lots of people will rush in to express their condolence to him and express their sympathy. If the people only knew what position God has granted him, they would have never sympathized with him, or expressed their condolence. God sends down some worldly things to some people to seize their Hereafter, and the people rush in to express congratulations. If the people only knew what is awaiting him in the Hereafter, they would have never become happy or congratulate him."^v

It has been narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) that there was a man in the past who was content with whatever hurt him in this world, and so many good deeds were

recorded for him that were not recorded for anyone else on the Earth, and he never committed any sins. One of the angels who liked him asked God for permission to descend down to Earth and visit him. He was standing in prayer and the angel sat down near him. Suddenly a lion jumped on the man and tore him into four pieces and threw each piece in a different direction. The angel stood up, collected the parts of his body and buried him. Then he went to the seashore and saw a polytheist there for whom the people brought a variety of foods in gold and silver dishes. The man, who was the king of India, was uttering polytheistic beliefs. The angel ascended to the heavens. He was summoned and asked what he had seen. He said:

"The most amazing thing that I saw was that You let a lion tear to pieces the man for whom You recorded the best good deeds, and I saw that You gave perfect health to a polytheist to whom You gave a kingdom, and for whom the people brought a variety of foods in gold and silver dishes." God the Almighty said: "Do not be surprised about My first servant. He had asked Me for a high rank in Heaven which he could not attain any other way. I fed him to a lion to let him reach that rank. However, I did not do anything for the other man, since he will get My torture in the Hereafter."^{vi}

What we can learn from these two narrations is that we have to patiently endure any difficulties that come our way.

- 1- We should not lose hope in the mercy of Allah (SWT).
- 2- We should understand that each difficulty elevates our status and gives us more reward.
- 3- We should always be thankful, even for difficulties in life, not only the good things.
- 4- We should avoid complaining and whining about things that we cannot control.

Review Questions

Q1. Which of the following is true?

- a) God tests those whom He hates with greater difficulties in this life
- b) God tests those whom He loves with greater difficulties in this life
- c) God does not test us

Q2. Tests:

- a) Are a means for us getting closer to God
- b) Are a means for us to earn a place in paradise

- c) Both a & b

Q2. Which of the following is true?

- a) According to the Qur'ān, one of the purposes of human existence is to be tested
- b) Tests are not an essential part of life, according to the Qur'ān
- c) Neither of the above.

LESSON 3: LIVING THROUGH THE TESTS AND TRIALS

We have learnt that the world we live in is full of tests and trials. In this lesson, we will further discuss how we can deal with tests and emerge from them successfully.

REACTIONS TO DIFFICULTIES

NEGATIVE REACTIONS

Whenever a person faces a test, they may react in a number of ways. Often, the lower the level of knowledge, faith and understanding the more negative a person's reaction is^{vii}.

In the infinite Wisdom and Mercy of Allah, He has advised that if we want to live healthy and happy lives, we have to try our best to avoid negative reactions to difficulties. Some negative reactions (e.g. denial) are not sinful, while others (e.g. giving up hope in God) are sins which lead to greater and greater sins, eventually leading to suicide! On the other side, Allah, the Compassionate, has made it such that not only do we have the capacity to remove the negative reactions to difficulties, but also to surpass them and in fact use them as a stepping stone to reach our perfection and be rewarded handsomely in this world and the Hereafter. Imam Ali (as) has said:

"Verily if you are patient, the trials of destiny will befall you and you will be rewarded for them, whilst if you are anxious, not only will the trials of destiny still befall you, but you will be sinful"^{viii}

POSITIVE REACTIONS

As much as there are different levels of negative reactions, there are different levels of positive reactions to difficulties as well. As the knowledge, faith and understanding of a human being increases, it becomes easier to face these tests and grow because of them. The highest forms of these reactions were practiced by our Imams and Prophets, and their examples still shine.

TACKLING DIFFICULTY THROUGH PATIENCE

Although the details of patience are discussed elsewhere, we will briefly review it here. Patience in the Qur'ān and ḥadīth is defined as:

- The resistance shown by man on the road towards perfection, against mischief, corruption and degradation^{ix}. Take the example of a mountain climber who is trying to reach the top of a mountain. He has to overcome numerous internal (will power, fear, despair etc...) and external (gravity, rocks, thorns, animals etc.) obstacles to reach his goal. Having the resistance to overcome these obstacles is called patience.
- Not getting angry, flustered or upset about the difficulties we face, instead remaining calm and composed throughout these tests.

The following narration gives us a definition of patience as well as presenting a great examples of patience:

I heard Abu 'Abd Allah (A) say, 'A free human being is free in all circumstances. Should a misfortune befall him he bears it with patience (ṣabr). If calamities strike him, they don't shatter him. If taken captive and subdued; he turns hardship into ease, as was the case of Joseph, the truthful and trustworthy. His freedom saved him from harm, although he was enslaved, subdued, and imprisoned. The darkness of the pit, the dread and whatever befell him did him no harm, until God favoured him and made the insolent tyrant, who had been his master, his slave. Then God made him His apostle and through him was merciful to a people. In this way patience is followed by good. So be patient and reconcile yourself to patience in order to be rewarded.'^x

Patience has been described by our Imams as being like the 'head' in relation to the 'body' of faith. One cannot have a functioning body without a head, and so one cannot have true useful faith if one does not have

patience. Here, we will look at a few quick tips on developing patience:

- Maintaining our firm belief in Allah (SWT), and that He has sent us this test for a reason and will come to our rescue when we need Him. Imam Ali (as) has said:

"The origin of patience is to have strong conviction in Allah"^{xi}

- Remembering the greater tests others face. When a companion complained to the Prophet about losing his wealth, the Prophet (saw) said:

"Your predecessors (earlier Muslims) sometimes were slaughtered by an iron saw cutting their skin, veins and flesh to the bone, but they remained committed to their faith, and never complained, even when in some cases they were cut into two pieces!"^{xii}

- Converting difficulty into ease by looking at the positives of any situation we are in. Happiness truly comes from within, and even though it is influenced by factors outside ourselves, we can influence how we feel about these factors by looking at the positives. When Imam Musa al-Kāḍim (as) was imprisoned for a long time, he used to in fact thank Allah for giving him the time to devote himself to the worship of God.

Review Questions:

Q1. The best way to deal with tests is to:

- a) Get angry
- b) Give up on overcoming the test
- c) Remain patient

Q2. Patience is:

- a) Not getting angry, anxious or upset over the difficulties that we face
- b) Overcoming the obstacles that are put in front of us on the path to our perfection
- c) Both a & b

LESSON 4: A DISCUSSION ON 'EVIL'

In previous lessons, we have learnt about the fundamentals of the Justice of Allah, and why, as the followers of the Ahlul Bayt (as), we pay special importance to this belief. We believe that Allah, the Most Merciful, is Just in every affair. We believe that Allah tests each creature to its ability and that each test is unique. It is as if Allah, the Wise, gives each person an individualized examination based on the person's abilities and that God only gives to each person a burden that he can handle, not more.

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. In this lesson, we will try to analyse this question and see whether evil actually does exist.

EVIL IS RELATIVE- IT IS NOTHING BUT THE ABSENCE OF GOOD

This philosophical premise is best explained by an incident that happened in a regular university class in a conversation between a student and his professor.

An atheist professor of philosophy speaks to his class on the problem science has with God, The Almighty.

He asks one of his new students to stand and asks...

Prof: So you believe in God? **Student:** Absolutely, sir.

Prof: Is God good? **Student:** Sure.

Prof: Is God all-powerful? **Student:** Yes.

Prof: My brother died of cancer even though he prayed to God to heal him. Most of us would attempt to help others who are ill. But God didn't. How is this God good then? Hmm? (Student is silent.)

Prof: You can't answer, can you? Let's start again, young fellow. Is God good? **Student:** Yes.

Prof: Is Satan good? **Student:** No.

Prof: Where does Satan come from? **Student:** From...God...

Prof: That's right. Tell me son, is there evil in this world? **Student:** Yes.

Prof: Evil is everywhere, isn't it? And God did make everything. Correct? **Student:** Yes.

Prof: So who created evil? (Student does not answer.)

Prof: Is there sickness? Immorality? Hatred? Ugliness? All these terrible things exist in the world, don't they?

Student: Yes, sir.

Prof: So, who created them? (Student has no answer.)

Student: Professor, is there such a thing as heat? **Prof:** Yes.

Student: And is there such a thing as cold? **Prof:** Yes.

Student: No sir. There isn't.

Student: Sir, you can have lots of heat, even more heat, superheat, mega heat, white heat, a little heat or no heat. But we don't have anything called cold. We can hit 458 degrees below zero which is no heat, but we can't go any further after that. There is no such thing as cold. Cold is only a word we use to describe the absence of heat. We cannot measure cold. Heat is energy. Cold is not the opposite of heat, sir, just the absence of it.

Student: What about darkness, Professor? Is there such a thing as darkness?

Prof: Yes. What is night if there isn't darkness?

Student: You're wrong again, sir. Darkness is the absence of something. You can have low light, normal light, bright light, flashing light...But if you have no light constantly, you have nothing and it's called darkness, isn't it? In reality, darkness isn't. If it were you would be able to make darkness darker, wouldn't you?

Prof: So what is the point you are making, young man?

Student: Sir, my point is your argument is flawed.

Prof: Flawed? Can you explain how?

Student: Sir, you are working on the premise that good and evil both have real true existence. However, things that we call evil do not in fact exist, they are nothing but the absence of good in a certain situation.

WHAT IS THE REALITY OF EVIL?^{xiii}

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:** the situations of things we often describe as ‘evil’ are those in which there is the absence of a certain positive attribute. For example, illness is evil, because it is the absence of health, poverty is evil, because it is the absence of sufficient livelihood. This is important to note because it means that God did not create these evil things. Rather, he created the positive attribute, and in places where this is absent, evil comes about.
- 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^{xiv}:** When we look at the world as a whole, or even some situations as a whole, we see that things that we thought were evil when we first considered them are in fact good. These seemingly evil things are part of what makes our life and our world a perfect place. Imam Ali (as) says:

“Behold! This world could not be established unless in the way that God has made it with all its BLESSINGS AND CALAMITIES and rewards in hereafter, and whatever He may wish that you do not know. Thus, should any part of it confuse you blame but your ignorance.”^{xv}

Therefore, for instance, if there was no death, there would be no life. For example, in a food chain, if the carnivores did not eat the animals below them in the food chain, those animals would grow to great numbers and disturb the entire ecosystem. **Evil – a platform to perfection:** We have discussed in previous lessons that the reason for our creation is so that we attain perfection. It is not for apparent material pleasure! Those things that appear to be evil are actually blessings (hidden blessings) that are sent our way so that we can reach our true purpose of perfecting ourselves and getting closer to God. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur’ān:

وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“...and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know” (2:216)

Review Questions:

Q1. Which of the following is true?

- a) Evil does not really exist, it is only the absence of good
- b) Evil exists, but it was not created by God
- c) Evil in itself exists as and was created by God

Q2. Things or events that we call ‘evil’:

- a) Can be a platform that helps us achieve perfection
- b) Often are not evil when we look at the bigger picture of our life or our world
- c) Both a & b

Q3. The relation of evil to good is the same as:

- a) The relation of black to white
- b) Darkness to light
- c) The number one to the number two

ⁱ <http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/justice.in.islam.asp>

ⁱⁱ *Mishkāt Al-Anwār* Pg 712 hadith 1697

ⁱⁱⁱ *Biharul anwār* Vol. 5 Pg 58

^{iv} Section extracted from the book “Justice Of God” by Sayyid Sa’eed Akhter Rizvi http://www.al-islam.org/adl_ilahi/

^v *Mishkāt Al-Anwār*- Hadith 1702

^{vi} *Ibid.* 1749

^{vii} Stages of grief adapted from the Kubler-Ross model of grief- Kubler-Ross, E. (2005) *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*, Simon & Schuster Ltd, Information can be found summarized on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%BCbler-Ross_model

^{viii} *Mizan-ul-Hikmah* tradition 3454

^{ix} Discourse on patience, Sayyid Khamenai.

^x *Al-Kafi*, quoted in *Forty Hadith of Imam Khomeini*, chapter on Patience

^{xi} *Mizan-ul-hikmah*, tradition 3459

^{xii} Discourses on patience- Sayyid Khamenai

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

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

^{xv} *Nahjul Balagha* Sermon 7

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ

37:181

PROPHETHOOD

النبوة

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand the necessity of looking towards Prophets for guidance, particularly in moral conduct
- Gain an insight into the concept that there must be a Proof of God on earth.
- Understand the reasons why Prophets must be divinely protected (ma'sūm)
- Understand that as Muslims we must demonstrate good conduct at all times
- Understand that although people do not believe in the same religion, the duty of a Muslim is to treat them kindly and fairly
- Understand how to deal with people of other faiths in different situations according to the commands of Allah

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: PROPHETHOOD

In previous years we have discussed the roles of the Prophets and understood that the Prophets of God are the practical guides of mankind who have come with a revelation from God. They are practical examples whose guidance we are in need of.

In this lesson we shall review what we have learnt in the past, while also discussing the reasons why the Prophets must be ma'sūm (Divinely Protected from sinning). We shall also discuss the concept that the Prophets are the divine guides and the proof of God on this earth. This will lead us to the conclusion that the Prophets of God did not only come with theoretical teachings, but were also practical examples of the teachings of God. As their followers, we should also be the best examples of the teachings of our religion.

MISCELLANEOUS FACTS

Number of Prophets: 124,000

Number of Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an: the names of 25 or 26 Prophets are mentioned in the Qur'an. There are also references to other prophets without a specific mention of their names.

Prophets all around the world: the Prophets did not only come from the Middle-East, rather from all around the world. Allah (SWT) states:

وَأِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ

"...and there never was a nation but a warner had passed among them." [35:24]

Ūlul 'Azm Prophets: Possessors of strong will, the distinguished (or arch) Prophets of God, these were: Prophet Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad (as).

The Final Messenger: The Final Messenger to mankind was Prophet Muḥammad (saw), He came with the Final Revelation from God (the Holy Qur'ān). The Holy Qur'ān is the most complete form of guidance for mankind. The teachings of Islam are the most complete teachings. We have discussed the fact that the different religions are like grades within a school, in which a person moves from one grade to the next, building on their previous knowledge but gaining more knowledge every year.



PROOF (HUUJAH) OF GOD

For every community throughout the ages, God sent a proof for (and against) that community, in the form of a prophet. This proof of God is called a *Hujjah* in Arabic. This includes all communities throughout history without exception.

People cannot be held accountable unless there was a proof present in their time. If that proof was there but they ignored it, then they are liable. Because the prophets showed practically that the laws of Allah (SWT) could be put into practice and showed people miracles, they were a proof against people. Whoever ignored these signs would then be liable for censure or punishment.

In the absence of a practical proof, people would have no way of knowing how to apply the theoretical teachings of religion in their daily life.

WHY WE NEED PROPHETS

Living in this world we are all moving closer to our perfection and success as human beings. To attain the highest degrees of perfection man has found himself with two tools, an inner Prophet (intellect) and an outer Prophet (messengers of God)

Our intellect is capable of realising some of the realities and truths in this world. However, the realities of the Hereafter, as well as some of the deeper realities of this world are beyond the scope of our intellect, especially when it is clouded by our desires and inclinations. Because of this, we need Prophets, whom because of their purity have been given direct access to these realities by God. They teach us about these realities and show us signs for their truth, and help us to live our lives according to these truths.

PROPHETS ARE GUIDES

Whenever we are faced with a problem we cannot solve, or something we do not know, we turn to those who know or who have more experience than us and seek their advice. Think of how many times during the last week you asked your parents, teachers or friends for help or advice? Similarly, whenever we are in need of guidance in matters in any way related to our religion, we need guides, who because of their real, true knowledge; give us the perfect advice in all situations in life.

Our life is a journey towards Allah (SWT) and just as when we are going on an excursion our teacher guides us with his compass or map, on the journey towards Allah (SWT) the prophets are the guides who show us the best and easiest way.

PROPHETS TEACH US OUR DUTY TOWARDS ALLAH

The Prophets guide us on our journey by teaching us our duty before Allah, our Lord and Creator. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:

*"Surely, once one knows he has a Creator, then it is expected from him to also know that his Lord is pleased with certain things and displeased by certain other things and that they will not be understood except through revelation or through a Messenger. Thus, those who do not receive the revelation should seek the knowledge from the Messengers (of God) for they are the proof of God and their obedience is obligatory."*ⁱⁱ

THE BEST LIFE IN THIS WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

As we discussed above, the Prophets have direct access to the realities of knowledge. They are not like the scientists, economists or even jurists of today, who use their limited resources and knowledge to get as close to the truth as possible. Rather, prophets have access to the truth, as it is, in matters related to both the Hereafter and this world. Therefore, their presence amongst their community gives that community the opportunity to know how to improve their life, both in this world and the Hereafter.

“Those who follow the Messenger-Prophet...who believe in him and honour him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful.” (7:157)

Review Questions

Q1. The Prophets (as) teach us:

- The realities of the Hereafter that we are unable to comprehend with our intellect
- The deeper realities of this world that our intellect cannot understand
- Both a & b

Q2. The Prophets (as) teach us about what is:

- Best for our Hereafter
- Best for our worldly life
- Best for our Hereafter and worldly life

Q3. The Prophets (as) were proofs for and against their communities because:

- They showed practically how the laws of Allah (SWT) can be followed
- They performed miracles
- Both a & b

LESSON 2: ‘IṢMAH (SINLESSNESS OF THE PROPHETS)

PROPHETS ARE SINLESS (MA’ŠŪM):

We have already established two principles:

- The Prophets are the practical examples which we must follow
- The Prophets are our guides who tell us what Allah (SWT) wants from us

These two principles necessitate that the Prophets must be sinless or *ma’šūm*. This will be our main point of discussion in this lesson.

Ma’šūm: means to be protected from sinning by Allah (SWT). This does not mean that they do not have the ability to sin. They are still human and they still have free will and are able to sin. However, they have been given the ability to see the reality of sins and so they avoid them completely. If we could see that when a group of people gossip they are literally ‘eating’ the flesh of their brother, we would not even come close to such an act. One who is *ma’šūm* can see exactly this and so they avoid all sins.

One day, a man came to one of our Imams (as) and asked if the Imams were truly sinless. The Imam (as) answered that yes, they were sinless. The man could not fathom this and said ‘how is this possible?’ The Imam (as) was sitting next to a small fire. He picked up one of the pieces of coal in the fire which was intensely hot and asked the man to put it in his mouth. The man was surprised at the Imam’s request and obviously refused. The Imam (as) then explained that when the Imams come across a sin, they see its horrible reality and for them sinning is just like putting a piece of burning coal into their mouth, something which no sensible person would do.

This is the meaning of divine protection or *‘Iṣmah*.

We can see from this that the sinlessness of the Imams is not like that of the angels. The angels have no desire to sin, nor do they have the ability to do so. In contrast, the Imams have the ability to sin, but in each and every instance they choose not to do so.

WHY DO PROPHETS NEED TO BE MA'ŞŪM?

Protecting the revelation: if prophets could possibly commit sins or make mistakes, how can we know that they have not made a mistake or lied about the revelation? They are our only route of access to revelation and so if it is possible for them to lie or commit a mistake, then we have no guarantee that the revelation is in fact true. For example, if Prophet Muḥammad could possibly lie, how can we know that the entire Qur'ān is true and is the actual word of God?

So if prophets could commit mistakes or lie, the whole point of sending prophets would be lost. Therefore, once we believe in prophets who come with revelation, we must necessarily believe that they are sinless and free from mistakes when delivering revelation.

Being true guides: the Prophets are guides, and so if they commit sins or make mistakes, people would have no reason to follow them. Again, this would defy the very purpose of their mission and message. Therefore, the Prophets must be sinless and free from mistakes for the entirety of their life in order for the people to be able to trust them. It is for this reason that even before Prophet Muḥammad (saw) became a Prophet, he was known as 'The Truthful' and 'The Trustworthy'.

The Prophet (saw) used his previous good standing with his community as a proof against them. When he first announced his message, he went to the hill on the outskirts of Mecca and asked his people 'have you ever known me to lie to you before?' They answered 'no!' He then proceeded to tell them: 'would you believe me if I told you there was an enemy coming from behind the hills to attack you?' They answered 'yes'. He then asked them to declare that there is no God but Allah and began delivering his message. If he had not been of immaculate character previously, he would not have been able to use this as a proof against his people.

Being Practical Role Models: as we established earlier, the prophets are the practical role models of how the theoretical teachings should be applied. So, if they made mistakes or committed sins, we would have no point of reference, and would not know how to apply the teachings of our religion. In other words, we would no longer have point of reference to tell us what is right and what is wrong. For example, Allah (SWT) commands us to give charity. How would we know how much charity to give, when to give it, and who it is most important to give

charity to? We learn all this from the lifestyle of the Prophets (as).

THE PROPHETS WERE IMMACULATE ROLE MODELS

Now that we have established the above principles, let us look at how the Prophets fulfilled their role of passing on the revelation and being the perfect examples.

Because of the above reasons, the Prophet (saw) never stated something or made an order, without applying it to himself first. This was firstly to show people his sincerity and secondly to give them a practical example of how to apply the teachings correctly. When the Muslims had arrived in Medina, one of the first orders of the Prophet (saw) gave was to construct the Mosque. As the companions began to collect the stones to build the mosque, they were expecting the Prophet to stand back and take a supervisory role. However, he refused to just watch his followers build the Mosque as a king might do. The Prophet (saw) worked along with his companions, gathering and carrying stones from one place to another. A companion by the name of Usayd ibn Ḥuzayr came to him and said: 'O Prophet of Allah! Permit me to carry it (the stone)'. The Prophet said: 'Go and bring another'. In this manner he showed a glimpse of his sublime character. He said: 'I am a practical man. I am a man of action and not of words only'.

Here is another example of how the Prophet (saw) never preached without practicing first: a woman came to him and asked if he would advise her young son to not eat so many dates, as they were starting to harm him. The Prophet (saw) asked her to come back the next day, and when she did come back the Prophet (saw) advised the young boy as his mother had requested. The Prophet (saw) was then asked why he did not advise the boy on the first day. He answered that he himself had eaten dates that day, and so he could not bring himself to give advice before following it first.

This is the way the Muslims took the example of the Prophet and this is the way all of the Prophets of God had guided mankind: through their actions. In his worship, in war, in peace, amongst family members, and in particular his manners with people, he was the practical example of Islam. It is to this extent that Imam Ali (as) describes the Prophet (saw):

“Certainly in the Prophet (saw) of Allah (SWT) was a sufficient example for you...You should follow your Prophet, the pure, the chaste, may Allah bless him and his descendants. In him is the example for the follower, and the consolation for the seeker of consolation. The most beloved person before Allah is he who follows His Prophet and who treads his footsteps.”ⁱⁱⁱ

WE ARE NOW THE ROLE MODELS OF ISLAM

So far, we have come to see that Prophets taught and spread Islam primarily through their actions. Today, we, who identify ourselves as Muslims and call ourselves by Muslim names such as Muḥammad, ‘Ali, Ḥasan, Zaynab and Zahra’, must strive our best to be the best examples of our religion that we can. If we are good examples of Islam, then Islam will look good, and if we are bad examples of Islam, then Islam will look bad.

Memorisation Task

“Be ornamentations for us and do not be a shame upon us”^{iv}

It is not enough for us to say that we are Muslims without acting upon our words. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur’ān:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

“O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do.” (61:2-3)

One of the best ways in which we can make Islam look good and make our Prophets and Imams proud of us is to display good manners and social etiquette.

The Prophet, our highest example, was humble, kind, and compassionate, showed amazing subtlety when dealing with people’s emotions, always made them feel comfortable, would smile very often and never insulted or humiliated people or treated them rudely. We should follow his example and tread in his footsteps. Imagine the following situations and how the choice of action you make can influence others’ opinion of you and Islam:

- *Letting someone into line before you vs. fighting over the spot in the line*

- *Insulting with anger vs. Replying to an insult with kind words*
- *Holding the door open for someone vs. ignoring them and walking through yourself*
- *Smiling at a person vs. frowning at a person*
- *Being humble before your teachers and respecting them vs. being rude and arrogant towards them*

The following story serves as an example for us:

A man from Syria saw Imam Ḥasan (as) riding a horse and started insulting him. Imam Ḥasan (as) did not reply to the man. When the Syrian stopped, Imam Ḥasan (as) proceeded towards him, cheerfully greeted him and said:

“Old man, I believe you are a stranger. Maybe you have confused me with another person. If you ask forgiveness, it is granted to you. If you ask for a means of transportation, we shall provide it for you. If you are hungry, we shall feed you. If you are in need of clothes, we shall clothe you. If you are deprived, we shall grant you. If you are being sought, we shall give you refuge. If you have any need, we shall fulfil it for you. And if you wish to proceed with your caravan be our guest until you leave, it would be more useful to you, for we hold a good position, great dignity and vast belongings.”

When the man heard the words of Imam Ḥasan (as) he cried and said: ‘I testify that you are Allah’s heir on His earth. Allah surely knows to whom He assigns His Message. You and your father were the most hated of Allah’s creatures to me, but now you are the most beloved of Allah’s creatures to me.’

Here is another example from the life of our seventh Imam, Musā al-Kāḍim (as): there was a poor uneducated farmer who was very rude to our Imam. He would insult the Imam whenever he got a chance. However, our Imam never said anything or got angry in return. Oneday Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) rode out to the rude man’s farm where the man was working. When the man saw the Imam, he stopped working and put his hands on his hips, ready to be abusive again.

Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) dismounted, went towards the man and greeted him with a friendly, smiling face. The Imam then told him that he should not overwork himself and that the land he had was very good. He then asked him how much he was expecting to receive for the crop.

The farmer was amazed at Imam Musā al-Kāḍim's (as) politeness and sincerity. He waited a little then said that he was expecting to get around 200 gold pieces. Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) took out a purse and gave it to the farmer telling him that in it was 300 gold pieces, more than the value of his crop. Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) told the man to take the money and also to keep the crop, and that he hoped the man would receive more for it. The farmer, faced with such kind behaviour and good manners, was very ashamed of himself and asked Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) for forgiveness.

After that whenever the man would see Imam Musā al-Kāḍim, he would greet him very politely.

We should emulate our prophets in practising our religion in all aspects of our daily life, especially when it comes to our manners and how we treat the people around us.

Review Questions

Q1. Being MA'ŠŪM MEANS:

- A person is not able to sin
- A person is able to sin but always chooses not to do so
- A person does not sin after becoming a prophet

Q2. The Prophets and Imams (as) always:

- Practised good manners
- Practised good manners only towards those who were good to them
- Practised good manners only towards their followers

Q3. The Prophets are MA'ŠŪM so that:

- We have a perfect example to follow when we want to apply our religion
- We know for sure that there are no mistakes or lies in the revelation
- Both a & b

LESSON 3: OTHER RELIGIOUS TEXTS

In previous years we have learnt a little about other faiths and how to deal with people who have different religions such as the Jews, Christians, Buddhists, etc. In this lesson we will expand on the way we should interact with people of other faiths by looking at what the Qur'ān teaches us about this.

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH NON-MUSLIMS?

We come across a variety of people every day in different situations such as at school, when shopping, at work, in the street, neighbours and so on. As we all know, these people are all created by Allah (SWT) and so we feel inclined to respect them. At the same time they do not have a similar belief as we do as Muslims and others may not believe in God at all so we become confused as how we are to treat them. How does Allah (SWT) tell us to deal with His creatures and what is our duty towards them?

When it comes to dealing with people in general, there are two key āyāt that we need to keep in mind:

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily the most honourable of you with Allah is the most dutiful (of his duty towards God)" (Quran 49: 13)

"Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who did not fight against you on account of your religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily Allah loves those who deal with equity. It is only as regards those who fought against you on account of your religion and have driven you out of your home, and helped to drive you out, that Allah forbids you to befriend them. And whosoever will befriend them, then such are the wrong-doers" (60: 8-9)

We need to treat all people with justice and kindness regardless of their faith, religion or race because we are all created by Allah. We should treat others the way we would like to be treated.

We also need to remember that the people we take as friends have a great influence on the way we think, behave, believe etc.... and so we need to be careful when it comes to whom we befriend. We also have to be careful not to befriend the enemies of Islam, who fight against us or our fellow Muslims because of our religion.

Allah (SWT) describes to us the limits that we should observe in certain situations:

- When people of other religions try to debate with us, we should try our best not to cause fights and divisions amongst people. Try to see the similarities between each religion and build on that; this also has the advantage of leading them to see the beauty of Islam. Try not to argue about things which will only cause harm and from which no one will benefit. However, discussing issues that cause unity is favourable. For example, many Christians do not know that we believe in Jesus (as a prophet) so when we mention this to them they feel happy and more comfortable and it can open up many positive discussions.
- We should not insult other religions or the ‘gods’ of other religions such as Buddha, or the Christian faith because if we do, there is a big chance that in return they will insult Islam and Allah (SWT).
- Regardless of the religious or cultural background of those who try to defame Islam, we should never take them as friends as there is a good chance that they may lead us astray or deceive us somehow when we befriend them. Not being their friend does not mean that we attack them or say insulting or harmful things to them. Rather it means that we should not keep regular company with them and we should not follow their bad habits nor encourage their anti-Islamic (or anti-religion) attitude.

PEACE WITH NON-MUSLIMS

We see in many instances during the life of the Prophet (saw), that he entered into peace treaties with people of different religions. This happened with some Jewish tribes who lived in or around Medina at the beginning of Islam. It also happened with the Christian tribe of Najran, who did not become Muslim, but had no intention of fighting Muslims.



When the Christians of Najrān challenged the Prophet about Jesus being the son of God, the Prophet explained to them the truth in a logical manner. However, when they refused to accept the truth the last option was for the Prophet (by the command of Allah) to challenge them by invoking Allah’s curse on the liar (regarding the ‘divinity’ of Jesus).

We see another example of Muslims and Christians working together peacefully in the early history of Islam. When the Muslims were still in Mecca, they were oppressed and tortured by the pagans of Quraysh. The Prophet (saw) decided to send a group of Muslims to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) where a Christian Emperor ruled to ask for his refuge. He dispatched the group of Muslims under the command of Ja’far (the brother of Imam ‘Ali). Upon their arrival, they were greeted well due to the Muslims’ respectful mannerism and behaviour. Ja’far was asked about Islam and in particular Jesus in the view of Islam. Ja’far recited verses of Ṣurat Maryam which touched the Christian Emperor deeply and so he offered the Muslims protection in his land. Allah (SWT) describes the Emperor’s reaction as follows:

“And when they hear what has been revealed to the apostle, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognise...” (5:83)



This is the effect of good behaviour towards non-Muslims. If we treat them kindly, they will be willing to listen to you when it comes to Islam. Even if they don’t accept Islam, they are inclined to remain at peace with Muslims and this prevents a great deal of fights, wars and chaos. This is explained in the following Ayah of the Quran:

“And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! He between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend.” (41:34)

Review Questions

Q1. Prophet Muḥammad:

- a. Never made peace treaties with non-Muslims
- b. Made peace treaties with non-Muslims on many occasions
- c. Always made peace treaties and never fought in any wars

Q2. Which non-Muslims are we not allowed to treat with kindness?

- a. All of them
- b. Jews
- c. Those who fight Muslims because of their religion and force them out of their lands

Q3. When debating with non-Muslims:

- a. We should be very aggressive so we can convince them
- b. We should maintain our manners and debate only about useful things
- c. We should never debate with non-Muslims

ⁱ Bibliography

- 1- Ehawza, Semester 1, Course 3, Lectures 7-9
- 2- Man and Universe, Shaheed Murtadha Muttahari
- 3- Shi'ah, Allamah Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai
- 4- The Holy Qur'an
- 5- Nahjul Balagha
- 6- Behar Al-Anwar
- 7- Imamate and Leadership, by Sayyed Mujtaba Mousavi Lari

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 1- Short Clips of stories from the life of the Prophet (s):
www.youtube.com/lostprophet786
Subsequently type in Prophet Mohammed Stories in the search tab.

- 2- More information about 'Esmah:

Go to the online library at: www.ihic.org.au and click on the link titled, 'Infallibility'

- 3- Seal of the Prophets and His Message Lessons on Islamic Doctrine (lessons 1-8)- <http://www.al-islam.org/Seal/index.html>
- 4- The Prophet and Prophetic Tradition - The Last Prophet and Universal Man- <http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/default.asp?url=prophet.htm>
- 5- For more stories from the life of the Prophet (s) and the Imams (as)

ⁱⁱ (Majlesi, Beharul-Anwaar, vol.23, p.18)

ⁱⁱⁱ (Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 158)

^{iv} (Biharul Anwar, v. 85. P. 83)

THE HOLY QURAN

القرآن الكريم

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that the Qur'ān is the verbatim word of God
- Understand the different proofs of the authenticity of the Qur'ān
 - its unmatched eloquence
 - the fact there is only one version of the Qur'ān till today
 - its scientific miracles
 - its numerical miracles
 - its historical miracles
 - its true prophecies
- Understand the importance of understanding the words of the Qur'ān and applying them to ourselves.
- Be introduced to the fact that the Qur'an contains very specific and noble guidelines on social etiquette
- Introduce the students to the style of the Qur'ān - that it is not just a narrative (like the bible) and that even the structure contains messages. Explain that this is another proof of its authenticity.
- Introduce the range of topics discussed in the Quran emphasising that most of the Qur'ān talks about our fundamental beliefs
- Understand that the Qur'ān has clear and ambiguous **ĀYĀT**, and that we need to take guidance from the Ahlul Bayt in understanding the Qur'ān correctly
- Understand that the Qur'an has unconditional and limited verse, thus before we come to a conclusion on a topic we must know what the Qur'ān as a whole says about that topic
- Show the students how much importance the Qur'ān places on the use of the intellect. The Qur'ān asks us to judge everything based on our intellect.
- Explain that the Qur'ān discourages imitation of others and following whims and desires. Everything should go back to the intellect to judge.
- Give example of some propositions that the Qur'an poses and asks us to consider intellectually. Explain how we may stray from these Qur'ān propositions because of our environment or desires

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

As we have previously learnt, the Holy Quran was revealed by Allah (SWT) to the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muḥammad (saw).

THE WORD OF ALMIGHTY GOD

When we hold in our hands the Holy Qur'ān, and read its words, do we really ever stop and think about where these beautiful words came from?

This great Book that we have in our hands today, The Holy Qur'ān, has come from Allah (SWT), the Creator of everything in existence. They are the exact words of God, sent through the Arch Angel Gabriel (as) to our Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw).

Thereafter, by the command of Allah (SWT) of "Read (O Muhammad)", the Holy Prophet (saw) spoke these words to the people in the Arabic language, exactly as they were delivered to him by Gabriel (as).

These words were memorised and written down, and compiled into a book during the life of the Prophet. The Qur'ān we have before us today is the same as that original Qur'ān that was compiled at the time of the Prophet (saw). Every word, letter, and sentence is exactly the same.



PROVING THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE QUR'ĀN

- Authentic, what does that mean?

Authentic simply means: something true and therefore reliable. In this case, when we want prove the Qur'ān is authentic, we mean we want to prove that it really is the unchanged Word of God.

- Proofs for the Authenticity of the Qur'ān:

Here, we will look at the main proofs for the authenticity of the Holy Qur'an. In our next lesson, we will look at some other proofs:

UNMATCHABLE ELOQUENCE

The power and influence of language for the Arabs in the period before Islam is very important for us to understand why God Almighty gave the Holy Prophet (saw) the Quran as his miracle. Poets were highly respected members of society.

When the Holy Prophet (saw) spoke the holy words of the Qur'ān, the beauty and eloquence of those words and their powerful meanings left most poets and the public amazed to the extent that some people claimed that the Holy Qur'ān was some kind of magic.

The Holy Qur'ān challenged the skilled Arab poets to produce even one chapter similar to the chapter of the Qur'ān in eloquence. This challenge was put forward multiple times. Of course, no one was able to meet such a challenge.

THE QUR'ĀN: UNCHANGED THROUGHOUT HISTORY

All Muslims, despite their numerous differences of opinion on all sorts of topics in Islam, all believe in the same book. What's more, wars were fought between various groups within the Muslims, yet all without exception, refer to the same book, that is; the Holy Qur'ān, in the exact same form.

The Qur'ān has remained unchanged and this is why 1400 years after the Prophet (saw) died, we still have only one copy of the Qur'ān, used by Muslims of all sects, nationalities and races. If this were a book written by a

human, it would be easy to change and alter. However, this is a Divine Book, and is protected from any change or alteration by Allah (SWT). This is one of the miracles of the Qur'ān and one of the proofs for its being the Word of God.

THE QUR'ĀN'S NOBLE GUIDELINES ON SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

In the remainder of this lesson, we will be trying to learn some of the values the Holy Qur'an teaches. One of the proofs for the authenticity of the Qur'an is its sublime teachings when it comes to social issues. As we will see, the Qur'an's teachings are timeless and universal.

Some examples of social guidelines in the Holy Qur'ān include:

ISLAM AND RACISM

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taḳwa (piety). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (49:13)

The above āyah from the Holy Qur'ān makes it very clear that human beings are not better than each other because of their skin colour, culture or race. Rather, the best people among mankind are those who are most careful of their duties to their creator, Allah (SWT).

For example, the Holy Prophet (saw) wanted to show the Muslims of the time that there is no such thing as racism in Islam, so he arranged a marriage between an African Muslim who was a former slave, and an Arab woman from the tribe of Quraysh. The woman's family rejected the marriage proposal and felt insulted. This upset the Prophet (saw), and the following was revealed:

"It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed in a plain error." Holy Quran (33:36)

This is the example and guideline that we should follow in our lives today, especially since we live in a world that has become filled with different cultures and races living together in the same cities and towns.

We should consider everybody as equal, and that the only thing that distinguishes one person over another is their level of piety.

BACKBITING IN ISLAM

Backbiting is a very common sin that is committed everyday by a lot of people. Backbiting, besides its bad effects on the spirit, also has negative effects on the people in societies, because it creates problems and hatred between people. The Qur'ān again, teaches us to stay away from backbiting, by saying:

“... Nor backbite one another; would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it”. (Qur'an 49:12)

The Holy Qur'ān has told us here that if one backbites against another Muslim, it is as if he is eating that person's dead body. The Holy Prophet (saw) once said about backbiting, that:

“No fire is faster in consuming dry wood than backbiting in consuming a devotee's virtues”ⁱⁱ

So what we understand here is that the Holy Qur'ān is teaching us to refrain from backbiting because of its negative spiritual effects. This is another guideline that we as Muslims should follow while living in today's society, so that our society becomes even stronger, a society based on trust among brothers and sisters in Islam.

Review Questions

Q1. The Qur'ān has remained unchanged for 1400 years because:

- It was written down very carefully
- It was compiled very carefully
- It is the Word of God and therefore God has protected it from any change or alteration

Q2. Islam teaches that:

- Arabs are better than non-Arabs
- People are only better than one another based on their piety
- People are only better than one another based on their tribe and ancestry

LESSON 2: FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON THE HOLY QUR'AN

In our last lesson, we discussed two proofs for the authenticity of the Holy Qur'ān. In this lesson, we will revise those two proofs and look at some other proofs.

- The Qur'ān has remained unchanged over 1400 years, indicating that it is the Word of God, as no other book has ever remained so. It is protected by God.
- Unmatchable Eloquence: no one has ever been able to produce even one chapter that is similar to the Qur'ān in its style and eloquence. This is part of the reason the Qur'ān has remained unchanged

SCIENTIFIC MIRACLES OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

The Holy Qur'ān contains a lot of information that could only be known through modern scientific tools. It is a miracle then that this Book contained this information 1400 years ago.

EXPANSION OF THE UNIVERSE

“And it is We Who have constructed the heaven with might, and verily, it is We Who are steadily expanding it” (Qur'an, 51:47)



For a very long time, scientists and thinkers thought of the universe as constant in nature, meaning that it is always the same in size, and that it has always been around i.e. had no beginning.

By the beginning of the 1900s, famous scientists such as the Russian physicist Alexander Friedmann, the Belgian cosmologist Georges Lemaitre, the American astronomer Edwin Hubble and the German-born Albert Einstein, all

had seemingly proved, in one way or another, that the universe was constantly (continuously) expanding.

Amazingly, we have a passage in the Qur'an which seemingly refers to this phenomenon. This is incredible, considering that the Qur'an was revealed at a time when telescopes and such advanced scientific understanding were not even close to being invented or thought of.

THE CREATION OF HUMAN BEINGS FROM WATER

"Allah has created every moving (living) creature from water..." (24:45)

It is commonly believed in modern science that water is the main component of organic (living) matter. Furthermore, it is accepted that 50-90% of living things consist of water. Simply put, without water, we cannot think of life. We regularly hear nowadays on the news, astronauts sending space probes to other planets in space such as Mars, to search for any signs of water. Because they know that if water is present, then life is possible. So it is said that water is the precursor to life, and hence this could be another meaning for the verse from the Qur'an that we mentioned above (God Knows Best).

The fact that this scientific information, which has only been found out very recently, was in the Qur'an 1400 years ago, indicates that the Qur'an is not the word of a man, but the Word of God.



Cells are the building blocks of our bodies and could not possibly exist without the presence of the water which forms the majority of their mass

NUMBER MIRACLES OF THE QUR'ĀN

The words of the Qur'an have some interesting numerical patterns. These interesting patterns form part of the miracle of the eloquence of the Qur'an. We can call these

"Numerical" or "Mathematical Miracles". Some examples:

- The statement of "seven heavens" is repeated seven times. "The creation of the heavens" is also repeated seven times.
- The word "day" is repeated 365 times in singular form, while its plural and dual forms "days" together are repeated 30 times. The number of repetitions of the word "month" is 12.
- The number of times the words, "world" and "hereafter" are repeated is also the same: 115
- The words "paradise" and "hell" are each repeated 77 times.

There exist many more such examples that we are aware of, and there is possibly hundreds more which we haven't yet discovered. How could an unschooled man who recited the words of the Qur'an over 23 years keep track of such delicate calculations? Surely, this is not the word of a human but the Word of God.

PROPHECIES IN THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

There are various predictions made in the Holy Qur'an about future events that have already taken place. We mention a few here:

- The Victory of the Romans:

"The Romans have been defeated. In the nearer land (Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine), and they, after their defeat, will be victorious. Within three to nine years. The decision of the matter, before and after (these events) is only with Allah..." (30:2-4)

According to historians, these words were revealed around 620 A.H.; almost 7 years after the then idol-worshipping Persian Empire had severely defeated the Christian Roman army in 613-14 A.H. In fact, the Roman Empire (Byzantium) was defeated so badly that it seemed that the empire was on the verge of collapse, let alone the thought of becoming victorious again.

In a nutshell, everyone was expecting the collapse of the Roman Empire. During this time though, the words above were revealed, declaring that the Roman Empire will be victorious again in 3-9 years. The Arab polytheists found this impossible to believe. However, of course, this is exactly what

occurred. The Romans fought the Persians again a few years later and were victorious.

- The Exploration of Space:

“O company of jinn and human beings. If you are able to pierce through the confines of the heavens and Earth, pierce through them. You will not pierce through, except with a clear authority.” (Qur'an, 55:33)

Here, the Quran seems to refer to the exploration of space by man, which only began in the late 1950s. The first man into space was a Russian cosmonaut by the name Yuri Gagarin.

The Arabic word *sultan*, translated here as “clear authority” has other meanings as well including force and power. It is suggested that here the meaning is the great power or energy contained within the flying objects that are launched into space.

Review Questions

Q1. The scientific miracles of the Qur'ān prove it is the Word of God because:

- No human could have had this knowledge 1400 years ago
- They are true
- Neither of the above

Q2. Which of the following is true:

- The Qur'ān is a book of prophecies
- The Qur'ān includes some prophecies, some of which have already come true
- The Qur'ān has no prophecies

LESSON 3: UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY QUR'AN

In previous lessons, we learnt about many aspects of the Qur'ān, including its structure, its miracles and the way we should show respect to the Qur'ān. In this lesson, we will continue to increase our knowledge about the Qur'ān and learn some of the sciences of the Qur'ān.

THE QUR'ĀNIC STYLE

Most books, including the Bible and the Old Testament, are set out in a narrative format. The stories within them are told as narratives, from beginning to end. In contrast, the Qur'ān tells stories based on themes. Often, the Qur'ān discusses one story in many different places, each time emphasising a certain point and teaching a certain lesson.

Let us look at the example of the story of Prophet Noah:

- In *Sūrat Hūd*, the majority of the story of Prophet Noah is told. In this Surah, Allah (SWT) tells the story of many of the prophets, and the main lesson being taught in this surah is that throughout history, there is always conflict between two groups. The first group is that of people who follow the truth, while the other group is those who oppose them and victimise them because of their personal interests. We learn many other lessons from this part of the story of Noah, but in this *Sūrah* the main lesson seems to be that the story of truth fighting falsehood is repeated throughout history and that truth always wins out.

“It was said: "O Noah, Come down (from the ship) with peace from Us and blessings on you and on the people who are with you but (there will be other) people to whom We shall grant their pleasures (for a time), but in the end a painful torment will reach them from Us. This is of the news of the unseen which We reveal unto you, neither you nor your people knew them before this. So be patient. Surely, the (good) end is for the pious” (11:48-49)

- In *Surat Nūh*, the Qur'ān tells a summarised version of the story of Prophet Nuh, and one of the main points of this *sūrah* is that of the different teaching styles that Prophets, including Prophet Noah, tried with their people, and how stubborn and blind people can often be.

“He said: O my Lord! surely I have called my people by night and by day! ... Then surely I called to them aloud: Then surely I spoke to them in public and I spoke to them in secret...” (71:5-9)

As you can see from the above example, the story of one prophet is told in different places, allowing us to learn a different lesson and to focus on a different point in each place. This is something that is very unique to the Qur’ān: it is only the Holy Qur’ān that uses this concept-based way of telling stories, in contrast to other books which have different styles. In fact, this is one of the unique miracles of the Qur’ān and one of the proofs that it is the true Word of God.

THE CONTENT OF THE HOLY QUR’ĀN

If we have grown up in a Muslim family, we often take the Holy Qur’ān for granted. We probably recite verses from the Qur’ān every day and we are familiar with it. However, have we ever asked ourselves what we would answer if someone who had never read the Qur’ān asked us: ‘what does the Qur’ān talk about?’

This is a difficult question to answer, because the Holy Qur’ān covers so many diverse topics. However, the Holy Qur’ān introduces itself as a Book of Guidance, and so the answer we should probably give is that the Holy Qur’ān talks about the reality of the world and how we should live our lives the right way.

What do we mean by ‘the reality of the world?’ We mean that the Qur’ān answers the main questions in life, like: ‘Is there life after death?’, ‘Is there a God?’, ‘What is the purpose of life’. By discussing these topics, the Holy Qur’ān shows us the world as it really is. This is part of what we call ‘theology’, and most of the Qur’ān deals with theology. The *āyāt* revealed to the Prophet while he was in Mecca are called ‘Makki’ (Meccan) and they deal mainly with theology and teaching us about the reality of the world.

Once we know the reality of the world and the answers to all the above questions, we then need to know how to put all that knowledge into practice and to find out how we should live in this world in the best way possible. This is the other major issue the Qur’ān discusses. The *āyāt* revealed to the Prophet after he migrated from Mecca are called ‘Madani’ and they deal mostly with social and jurisprudential rules and laws and teach people how to live life in the best way possible.

UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY QUR’ĀN

Since the Holy Qur’ān is a Book of Guidance and teaches us how to live, we have to be able to understand it. Firstly, we should do our very best to learn the Arabic language so that we can understand the direct and literal meanings of the Qur’ān as ordinary people do. The words of the Holy Qur’ān often have layers of meaning. Allah (SWT) has made the surface meanings of the words of the Qur’ān very easy to understand:

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

“And We have indeed made the Qur’an easy to understand and remember, then is there any that will remember” (54:17)

However, we should also learn how to ‘study’ the Qur’ān and understand the correct meaning from the *āyāt* of the Qur’ān. In other words, when we read an *āyah* or its translation, we have to be careful not to misunderstand that *āyah*, and to make sure we have understood it in the right context. So sometimes we are looking for the deeper meanings of the words of the Qur’ān. In this case, there are certain rules to follow before we can come to know the real meaning of the words.

1. Firstly, we refer to the Holy Qur’ān itself to find out.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - a. The context of the words and reason for revelation (*asbab un-nuzūl*)
 - b. The timing of revelation (*makki* or *madani*)
 - c. The usages of the particular words within the Qur’ān (e.g. what does *wali* mean in the Qur’ān)
 - d. Other parts of the Qur’ān that deal with the same topic. In this way, we can get an idea of what the Qur’ān says about this topic as a whole, and not make mistakes because we have looked at only one part.
2. Secondly, we refer to the dependable narrations of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Ahlul Bayt (as). The Qur’ān itself refers to them when it says:

“He it is Who raised among the inhabitants of Mecca an Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom.” (62:2)

All this means that for one to be able to understand the true deeper meanings of the Holy Qur'ān they need to be an expert in many sciences including the Arabic language, Arabic eloquence and the Sciences of Narrations.

The main point to take from all this is although there are many straightforward and obvious meanings which we can learn from the Qur'ān ourselves, there are also parts of the Qur'ān which are more difficult to understand and for which we need to refer to scholars who are experts in the above sciences.

There are a few more points we need to remember about the *āyāt* of the Qur'an. We will discuss these in our next lesson.

Q1. When we want to analyse the meaning of the words of the Qur'ān to understand their deeper meaning, our first reference should be:

- The rest of the Qur'ān itself
- The words of the Ahlul Bayt
- The books of philosophy

Q2. When we refer to the Qur'ān to understand an *Āyah* better, we mean:

- Understanding the context of the *āyah*
- Studying other parts of the Qur'ān that deal with the same topic
- Both of the above

Q3. The style of the Qur'ān is based on:

- Narratives like the Bible and most other books
- Concepts and lessons to be learnt from stories and examples
- Neither of the above

Q4. The Qur'ān is mainly a book of:

- Social and jurisprudential laws
- Guidance about the realities of the world
- Science and mathematics

LESSON 4: FURTHER DISCUSSION ON UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

In our last lesson, we discussed a few of the basic principles of understanding or studying the Qur'ān. The main two principles were the following:

- Firstly, we refer to the Holy Qur'ān itself, including other parts of the Qur'ān dealing with the same topic
- Secondly, we refer to the dependable narrations of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Ahlul Bayt (as).

However, as we mentioned last week, there are a few more important principles to remember.

CLEAR AND AMBIGUOUS *ĀYĀT*

The Qur'ān has clear *āyāt* and ambiguous ones.

- Ambiguous means something that may have more than one meaning. For example, the *āyah*: 'God's hand is above their hands' or 'He (God) settled on the throne' might confuse some people into thinking that God has physical hands just like us and that he sits on thrones physically like human kings do. Of course, this would indicate that God has limitations, which is an obvious falsity, and this cannot be what the Qur'ān means. So how do we find out what the Qur'ān really means? We do this by referring to the clear *āyāt* of the Qur'ān. One of these *āyāt* says: 'there is nothing like Him (God)' while another *āyah* says: 'and there is no equal to him'. These *āyāt* clearly show that God cannot be physical, because there is nothing like Him or equal to Him. Now that we know this, we return to the *āyāt* about the hands and the chair and realise that those *āyāt* were using words that we humans can understand (like 'chair' and 'throne') to help us understand the reality of God's power. God's power is too great to be described by words, but in order to make us limited human beings understand, the Qur'ān uses ordinary words and ordinary concepts to help us understand the point.

UNCONDITIONAL AND LIMITED *ĀYĀT*

The Qur'ān has unconditional and limited *āyāt*. Unconditional *āyāt* set out rules and laws that apply in every situation. For example: 'repel (evil) with what is good' is an unconditional *āyah* that applies in every situation.

It is the default rule that a Muslim should follow. An example of an unconditional āyah is the following:

“Say: My Lord has enjoined justice...” (7:29)

In this āyah, Allah (SWT) orders us to be just, without any other details or conditions being given.

Now in the following āyāt, there is another order to be just, but this time with more conditions and details. This is an example of a limited āyah.

“Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you out of your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice. Allah only forbids you respecting those who made war upon you on account of (your) religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust.” (60:8-9)

STUDYING THE QUR’ĀN AS A WHOLE

When we are trying to learn from the Qur’ān, we have to make sure that we do not just take one āyah and base our belief on that. We have to make sure we look at the entire Qur’ān to see what the unconditional and limited āyāt say, as well as what the clear and ambiguous āyāt say, so that we can get the whole picture.

The last point to remember is that every āyah of the Qur’ān was revealed in a certain context and situation. Before we draw any conclusions from an āyah, we have to make sure we know the context in which the āyah was revealed.

Now that we have learnt some of the principles for understanding the Qur’ān, let us go ahead and learn another lesson from the Qur’ān.

THE QUR’ĀN GUIDES THE INTELLECT

The Holy Qur’an repeatedly encourages us to use our intellect when it comes to our beliefs about the world we live in and the decisions that we make in our life. Let us look at some examples.

In this āyah, Allah (SWT) says that He brings about miracles and shows His signs so that people may use their intellect and understand:

“Thus Allah brings the dead to life, and He shows you His signs so that you may understand” (2:73)

In the following āyah, Allah (SWT) puts forward a logical argument and then at the end asks us to judge using our intellect. He compares this world, which is nothing but idle play which will soon disappear with the other world, which is eternal and real, and then asks us to judge using our intellect.

“And this world’s life is naught but a play and an idle sport and certainly the abode of the hereafter is better for those who guard (against evil); do you not then understand?” (6:32)

In the following āyāt, another logical argument is presented to idol-worshippers, asking them to consider why they would worship something that cannot harm or benefit them, when it is God who has control over everything. Again, there is a logical argument and we are asked to reach a conclusion:

“He said: What! do you then serve besides Allah what brings you not any benefit at all, nor does it harm you? Fie on you and all that ye worship instead of Allah! Have you then no sense?” (21:66-67)

These āyāt are quoted from Prophet Ibrāhīm (as). He was a prophet who used intellectual reasoning with all sorts of people in order to guide them towards the true path of worshipping One Lord. The above words are how he tried to convince people who worshipped statues. The following āyah shows us how he tried to convince people who worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars:

“So when the night over-shadowed him, he saw a star; said he: Is this my Lord? But when it set, he said: I do not love things that set. Then when he saw the moon rising, he said: Is this my Lord? But when it set, he said: If my Lord had not guided me I should certainly be of the erring people. Then when he saw the sun rising, he said: Is this my Lord? This is bigger. But when it set, he said: O my people! surely I disassociate myself from what you worship besides Allah. Surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists.”

Here, we see that Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) uses an indirect way of presenting another logical argument. He pretends to consider the moon, sun and stars as gods, but then tells people that he cannot worship such things because they disappear. This means that they are under the control of something else which makes them come and go, and he did not want to worship something that was so powerless. He then clearly states that he will worship the

Being who created the entire universe (including the sun, moon and stars) because He is the true Powerful Lord. It is a very simple logical argument which everyone at his time would have understood. It makes much more sense to worship the Creator of all these things than to worship them, when they are weak and powerless just like humans.

OBSTACLES TO USING THE INTELLECT

Despite the very clear and logical arguments that Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) presented to his people, they did not believe in him and his teachings. This was the same for many other prophets. This is because people often ignore the conclusions that their intellect has reached for the following reasons:

- **Personal desires and interests:** the Qur'ān gives the example of Jewish rabbis who would understand the Old Testament and know it was true but would change the words so they could keep their power and wealth.

“Do you then hope that they would believe in you, and a party from among them indeed used to hear the Word of Allah, then altered it after they had understood it, and they know (this)” (2:75)

- **Imitating people of the past:** many good and correct ideas are rejected simply because they go against what the society had believed in the past. We all know about Galileo and how he was persecuted because he claimed that the centre of the solar system was the sun and not the earth, and Socrates, the Greek philosopher who was forced to drink poison because he asked people too many questions about the purpose of life and their ethics and morals. Similarly, the Prophets were persecuted throughout history because they tried to change the false ideas of society and to teach the truth about the Unity of God.

“And when it is said to them: Follow that which Allah has revealed, they say: We follow that which our fathers believed. What! Even though their fathers had no sense at all and had no guidance?” (2:170)

- **Fear of tyrants:** often people rejected the truth because it was too difficult to try to bring about change, as it would cause them to be persecuted or

killed by the evil tyrants of their time. A famous example from the Qur'ān is the example of Pharaoh.

This is why the Qur'ān places so much emphasis on using the intellect. We have to make sure that when we make decisions in our life and about our beliefs, we are using our intellect only, and not allowing fear, imitation or desires to influence our decisions.

We have to learn to think independently and make decisions based on what makes sense, not based on what our friends think, or what our society thinks, or what suits us best. If we do not learn to do this, we will end up making big mistakes in our life. We should always remember the following narration from Imam al-Kāḍim (as) when it comes to making decisions based on the evidence we have and thinking independently:

“If you had a walnut clasped in your hand and the entire world told you it was a nugget of gold, it would remain a walnut, and if you had a nugget of gold clasped in your hand, it would remain a gold nugget even if the entire world told you it was only a walnut”.

Review Questions

Q1. The Qur'ān encourages us to use what to make decisions?

- What our society follows and believes in
- What our desires want and what will make us rich and comfortable
- What our intellect sees as the truth

Q2. An ambiguous āyah should be understood:

- By looking at the clear āyāt of the Holy Qur'ān dealing with the same topic
- By guessing
- By our personal opinion

Q3. When we want to know what the Qur'ān says about a particular topic, we should:

- Study the first āyah dealing with that topic only
- Study any āyah dealing with that topic that we come across
- Study all the āyāt in the Qur'ān that deal with that topic

ⁱ Main reference for this lesson was: Sheikh Mansour Leghaei, eHAWZA Course: Sciences of the Qur'an

ⁱⁱ [Al-Mahajjat Al-Bayda, vol 5, pg 264].

ⁱⁱⁱ The best example of this kind of interpretation is Al-Mizan by Ayatollah Tabataba'ee



IMAMAT

الإمامة

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand the incident of Saqīfah and the incidents just prior to the death of the Holy Prophet including the incident of the 'Black Thursday'
- Be reminded of the unique characteristics of the Imams including their knowledge, leadership and divine protection
- Understand the concept of sincerity in belief using examples of the hypocrisy of some of the companions of the Holy Prophet
- Be reminded of the concept of sincerity in Islam highlighting the fact that sincerity means being true to God
- Be reminded of the characteristics of the hypocrites as a means to identify them (with the emphasis of identifying these characteristics in ourselves and trying to overcome them)
- Understand the benefits of being sincere and the evil consequences of hypocrisy
- Outline some ways of trying to attain sincerity as recommended by the Qur'ān and narrations

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: DISCUSSIONS ON IMAMAT

In previous years, we have learnt some general facts about Imamat, and discussed the roles of the Imams. In this lesson, we will review these discussions briefly and also discuss the importance of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

THE MEANING OF IMAMAT

As we discussed in previous lessons, Imamat literally means leadership. However, we use it to specifically refer to divinely appointed leaders: people who were appointed to lead the Muslim community by God.

As Shi'ah, we believe that the position of leadership of the Muslim community is one of the most important issues in Islam. Without the most qualified leader, the Muslim community would stray from the right path and Islam itself would be compromised. When the Prophet (saw) was alive, he was obviously the leader of the Muslim community. However, after his death, there was much dispute and controversy about this position.

Unlike other Muslims, we believe that Allah and His Messenger would not leave the Muslim community without a leader who was chosen and appointed by Allah. In fact, we believe that Allah (SWT) instructed His Prophet to appoint twelve successors, each of whom in turn would lead the Muslim community.ⁱ We argue that it is impossible for the Prophet, who instructed the Muslims on the smallest of issues (such as which side to sleep on and which foot to walk out of the bathroom with) would not instruct them on who should be the leader after himself. Therefore, the Prophet definitely appointed leaders after himself, chosen by Allah, whom we refer to as Imams.

There is a significant amount of documented historical evidence for this from all Muslim sects, evidence from the Qur'ān itself and logical reasoning as seen above, all of which leave this matter beyond doubt.

Further References:

We have provided you with references for further research. These references are useful for learning factual information about our belief in Imamat and the differences between the Shi'ah belief and the belief of other sects.

- Then I was Guided- Sayed Tijani Simawi- available online at al-islam.org
- Al-Muraj'āt, Sayyed Sharaful Din al-Musawi- available online at al-islam.org
- Al-Nass wal Ijtihad, Sayyed Sharaful Din al-Musawi, available in English as hard copy
- Peshawar Nights, available online at al-islam.org

TWELVE IMAMS

The Prophet appointed twelve Imams after himself. The first of these was Imam 'Ali (as). The last of these Imams is Imam al-Mahdi (atfs), who is still alive today. He was born over 1200 years ago, and lives in occultation. We will have further discussions on Imam Mahdi (atfs) in future lessons.

THE IMAMS ARE DIVINELY PROTECTED FROM SIN (MA'ṢŪM)

One of our major beliefs is that the Imams, just like the prophets, were sinless (ma'ṣūm). We have discussed in previous lessons that the prophets were sinless, why they must be sinless and we have refuted any objections against this belief. To quickly recap:

- We need a role model to follow, and the Imams are our greatest role models along with the prophets. If they were not sinless we would have no point of reference to check our actions against.
- Secondly, if they were not sinless, we would not be sure that what they are telling us is in fact the command of Allah or otherwise as they could be lying. This would therefore shake the very foundations of our faith.

The Imams choose not to sin because of the special divine protection that God has blessed them with.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IMAMS

The leader of the Muslim community must have the following characteristics.

1-The highest level of faith: for example, it is unanimously agreed that Imam 'Ali (as) never prostrated before any idol whilst Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān indisputably all worshipped idols at some time in their lives. Eight years had passed since the rise of Islam and 'Umar (the second Caliph) was still an idolater! Even after embracing Islam he would question the Prophet's decisions and cast doubt on them on various occasions. ⁱⁱ

2-The highest level of knowledge: is also necessary for the leader of the Muslim community.

"Say: Are those who know equal to those who know not?"
[39:9]

The Prophet said about Imam 'Ali (as):

*"I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its gate. Whoever wishes to enter the city, should enter it from its gate."*ⁱⁱⁱ

In contrast to this, 'Umar would often be corrected in his Islamic knowledge, such as when a woman stood up in the mosque one day to correct 'Umar's ruling on dowries and when Imam 'Ali (as) stopped a woman from being wrongly executed due to 'Umar's mistake.^{iv} An insane woman was taken advantage of and became engaged in an illegitimate relationship. 'Umar ordered that she be executed. Imam 'Ali (as) saw that this was about to happen and stopped the guards from taking her to be executed. He explained that he heard the Messenger of Allah (saw) saying that an insane person is not responsible for their actions unless or until they become sane.

3-The best in Jihād: this is another necessity of leadership mentioned in the Qur'ān:

"Allah has preferred in grades those who strive hard and fight with their wealth and their lives above those who sit." [4:95]

There is no doubt that no one came close to Imam 'Ali (as) and his progeny in this category. The examples of the Battles of Khaybar and Ṭḥud are two of the most famous.

Review Questions

Q1. We believe that the twelve Imams of the Ahlul Bayt are:

- Appointed by God
- Appointed by the Prophet (saw)
- Appointed by the Muslim community

Q2. The Imams are *ma'sūm*, which means:

- They are not able to sin
- They choose not to sin because of special divine protection given by God
- They do not have the desire to sin, like angels

LESSON 2: THE EVENT OF SAQIFAH- THE FIRST DIVIDE WITHIN ISLAM

We have learnt in the previous lesson about the basic beliefs of the Sunni and the Shi'ah with regards to the major division between these two groups of Muslims: Imamat, or leadership after the Prophet (saw). In this lesson we will briefly discuss the roots of this division. We will learn about the first incident after the death of the Prophet which caused a division amongst the Muslim community. This event has been referred to as 'The Tragedy of Thursday' or 'Black Thursday'.

THE INCIDENT OF THE TRAGEDY OF THURSDAY

The political divide amongst the Muslims began very early in the history of Islam. As Islam had grown very powerful during the last few years of the Prophet's (saw) life, many people were lured by the promise of power, wealth and material success. This disease spread even to the very companions of the Prophet (saw). One of the most painful incidents that demonstrated the betrayal of some of the companions of the Holy Prophet happened just prior to the demise of the prophet (saw).

Ibn 'Abbās, a close companion and cousin of the Prophet said: "Thursday, and what a Thursday that was! The Messenger's pain became very severe, and he said, *"Come here, I will write you a document which will prevent you from straying from the right path."* But 'Umar said about the Prophet: 'the man is speaking nonsense', and that the Qur'ān was sufficient as a guide.

The companions then differed and quarrelled amongst themselves, some of them agreeing with what the Prophet said, while others supported 'Umar's view. When the debate became heated and the noise became louder, the Messenger of Allah said to them, *"Leave me alone."*

Ibn 'Abbās said: 'The disaster was that the disagreement among the Companions prevented the Messenger from writing that document for them^v.'

THE INCIDENT AT SAQIFAH

As we have learnt previously, there were numerous occasions where the Prophet (saw) introduced Imam 'Ali (as) as his successor. One famous occasion is when the Prophet gathered his entire family to invite them to Islam. At the end of this gathering, he introduced Imam 'Ali (as) as his eventual successor. Another famous occasion is when the Prophet (saw) left Medina in preparation for a battle and asked Imam 'Ali (as) to stay back in Medina to protect it from the plots of the hypocrites, saying to him: 'You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there will be no prophet after me.'

Despite this, some of the companions of the Prophet (saw) decided to ignore the command of the Prophet and later even claimed that the Prophet never mentioned a successor.^{vi}

The Muslims at the time were in two major groups: the Anṣār (the 'helpers' — natives of Medina) and the Muhājirīn (the immigrants from Mecca who had followed the prophet to Medina). After the Prophet's death and even before his burial, the Anṣār gathered in Saqifah and proposed to declare a person from among themselves as the new leader of the Muslims. Some among them started a discussion about how they should respond if the Muhājirīn disputed with them in the issue of leadership.

While this discussion was going on among the Anṣār in Saqifah, 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭab (one of the Muhājirīn) was informed about it. He sent for Abu Bakr who left the Prophet's funeral proceedings and joined 'Umar. In Saqifah, Abu Bakr gave a speech in which he exhorted the virtues of the Muhājirīn and proposed that the leader should be from the Muhājirīn. He ended his speech as follows: *"So we are the rulers, and you are the ministers and the counsellors. We will not do anything without consulting you."*

After this, a quarrel occurred between the two groups of Muslims. In the middle of all this chaos, `Umar swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. Then Bashir ibn Sa`d, leader of the `Aws tribe of Anṣār, swore allegiance to Abu Bakr as well. Seeing this, the rest of the Anṣār also pledged allegiance so as not to lose favour in the eyes of Abu Bakr. This is how Abu Bakr became the Caliph of the Muslim community.^{vii}

A SHORT REVIEW OF SAQIFAH

The event narrated above, which is based on Sunni historical sources, shows that what happened at Saqifah was not a consultation among the Muslims, but a plot to usurp the leadership of Imam `Ali (as).

Firstly, while on his way to Saqifah, `Umar sent word only to Abu Bakr, and not to anyone else. Then Abu Bakr, who was in the house of the Prophet with the great companions and Imam `Ali, did not tell anyone about the plot of Saqifah and left the funeral proceedings of the Prophet (saw).

Secondly, the best comment on Abu Bakr's leadership can be found in the words of `Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb himself. During his own leadership, which came later, `Umar said, *"We have heard that one of you said that if `Umar dies I shall swear allegiance to so-and-so. Someone said to him that the allegiance to Abu Bakr was without consultation. It is true that allegiance to Abu Bakr took place all at once without much thought, but Allah protected us from mischief. However, no one should give you the example of Abu Bakr to follow."*^{viii}

Thirdly, `Umar himself said, *"After the Prophet, `Ali, Zubayr and their companions rose up against us, and assembled in Fāṭimah's house."*^{ix}

Finally, if the matter of leadership was to be resolved on the basis of consultation, the Prophet of Islam would certainly have explained before his death the way it should have been done. Is it feasible that the Prophet would explain some small and minor issues, but make no mention of such a great matter as the leadership?

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IMAMS OF AHLUL BAYT

Our belief, based on the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Prophet (saw), is that leadership is a matter determined by God, and therefore the people in that position must be divinely appointed. For a person to be divinely appointed, they have to have the required characteristics. We discussed some of these in our previous lesson, and here we discuss a couple more:

- 1- **Sinlessness (al-ʿIṣma):** as discussed in our previous lesson, the Imams were given special knowledge by God which protected them from sinning. The Imams would see the reality of sins and therefore they would avoid sin altogether. All our Imams, like the Prophets, were sinless.
- 2- **Karāmāt:** all our Imams performed miracles of one form or another. Miracles performed by the Imams are called karāmāt.
- 3- **Exalted character:** all our Imams (as) have the highest level of etiquette and manners which they learnt directly from the Holy Prophet (saw). They practiced and taught Makārimul Akhlāq (noblest of moral traits).
- 4- **Justice-** They all practiced and taught the highest forms of justice.

Unfortunately, because of these very characteristics, all our Imams (as) were very badly treated, tortured and killed. The people around them had immense jealousy, hatred and malice toward them, and feared that their power would be challenged by the Imams and their followers. The major enemies of the Imams were always hypocrites; people who pretended to be Muslims and care about Islam but who had only personal interests in mind. In our next lesson, we will learn about the qualities of hypocrites, and try to make sure that we purify ourselves from these characteristics.

Review Questions

Q1. Abu Bakr was appointed:

- a. By an election involving all Muslims
- b. By all the companions who were close to the Prophet
- c. By a few random companions who happened to be at Saqifah

Q2. The incident of Saqifah occurred while:

- Imam 'Ali was present in Saqifah
- Imam 'Ali was outside Medina
- Imam 'Ali was attending to the funeral proceedings of the Prophet (saw)

Q3. Miracles performed by an Imam are called:

- Mu'jizāt
- Karāmāt
- Both of the above

LESSON 3: SINCERITY

Perhaps the most important value that our Imams exemplified in their lives was sincerity. Sincerity is to do things for the sake of Allah alone, without caring about the opinion of anyone else, or what material benefits an action may have. One of the greatest examples of this was Imam 'Ali (as).

Imam 'Ali (as) lived purely for the sake of Allah alone. He did not care what people thought or said about him, as long as God was pleased with him. In Du'ā' Nudba, Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) describes Imam Ali (as) in the following away:

“When it came to God, he did not care about the chastisement of anyone.”

Due to Imam 'Ali's complete and absolute sincerity, the Prophet (saw) used to say:

“Truth is with Ali, it turns with him as he turns”

The Prophet (saw) also used to say that whoever loved 'Ali was a true believer and whoever opposed 'Ali was a hypocrite or disbeliever. This is why on the Day of Ghadir the Prophet (saw) prayed to Allah:

“O Allah be a friend to whoever follows 'Ali, and be an enemy to whoever opposes 'Ali...”

Imam 'Ali (as) used to dig many wells and donate them to poor families. One day, a person asked the Imam (as): 'you have donated over a thousand wells, and you yourself are still poor, is this not enough?' The Imam (as) replied: “if I knew for sure that even one of them was accepted by Allah, that would be enough”. This story demonstrates clearly that the Imam (as) had only one

thing in mind, and that was the Pleasure of Allah, the Exalted.

In another story, the Prophet (saw) invited all his companions to a challenge. He said that if anyone could completely and fully concentrate only on their prayer for a whole two-rak'ah prayer, he would gift them one of the two very valuable camels that he had received as a gift. All the companions tried but could not manage this feat. Finally, Imam 'Ali (as) tried. At the end of his prayer, the Prophet (saw) smiled and said that Imam 'Ali (as) had concentrated fully until he had reached the salām of his prayer. When he had reached the salām, he had started thinking about which of the camels was better to take. Imam 'Ali (as) admitted that this was true. However, the Prophet (saw) smiled again and said that Imam 'Ali (as) deserved the camel anyway, because he was thinking which camel was better so that he would pick the better one to give away as charity. The Prophet (saw) explained that this was still an act of sincerity and attention to God, and thus it had not spoiled 'Ali's prayer, and so he deserved the gift anyway.

HYPOCRISY

Hypocrisy is the opposite of sincerity. A hypocrite is someone who does things for his own sake and for the sake of people, while pretending to be a real believer.

The word hypocrite (munāfiq) is derived from the Arabic word “nifāq”. The term hypocrite refers to a person whose inward reality differs from his outward appearance, one who is two-faced. Hypocrite is the most dangerous of enemies. He sneaks his way into our communities and destroys them from the inside. The Prophet of Islam (saw), in one of his treasured speeches, introduced the hypocrites as Islam's most dangerous enemy. He said:

“I have never been frightened of any nation conquering Islam. I only worry about one group of people: the unbelievers who pretend to be Muslim, the two-faced hypocrites. They are with you in their words, but they would never take a step with you.”^{xi}

Imam 'Ali also said:

“I warn you about the hypocrites. They are misguided and they misguide as well. They have appeared in society in different colours and with different faces. Their speech is eloquent, profitable and is even a cure for pain. But their actions are like incurable diseases.”^{xi}

HYPOCRITES

The following signs of the hypocrites are characteristics we should look for in ourselves so that we do not become hypocritical in our actions and words. Allah (SWT) in the Qur'ān says:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ وَإِنْ يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ
كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُسَنَّدَةٌ يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ هُمُ
الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرُهُمْ قَاتِلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَتَى يُؤْفَكُونَ

“When you look at them, their exteriors please you. When they speak, you listen to their words. They are as (worthless as hollow) pieces of timber propped up, (unable to stand on their own). They think that every cry is against them. They are the enemies; so beware of them. The curse of Allah be on them! How deluded they are (from the truth)!” (63:4)

In short their characteristics are:

- 1- **They have the ability to hide their true face-** the hypocrites hide their true face in front of the believers. The way that they conduct themselves would please anyone. Believers think them to be righteous individuals.
- 2- **They are outspoken and eloquent speakers:** Often hypocrites learn the customs and language of believers, and try to deceive them with eloquent words which seem to be in agreement with Islamic values.
- 3- **They are as worthless as hollow pieces of timber propped up:** hypocrites, although they may be within the Muslim community, they do not and cannot benefit from all the goodness Islam offers.
- 4- **They are frightened by any calamity:** The Qurān mentions that fear and agitation dominates the hearts of hypocrites. They are scared of any commotion, change or sound which they think is to their detriment.

SIGNS OF HYPOCRISY

Our Imams (as) have taught us some of the signs of sincerity and hypocrisy. The purpose of discussing this is so that we can examine ourselves and see whether we have the signs of hypocrisy or the signs of sincerity, or some from each group. We should endeavour as much as we can to remove the signs of hypocrisy from our personalities, and instil the signs of sincerity. Here, we discuss the most important of these signs:

- A sincere person does not like to be praised for actions that He performs for the sake of Allah^{xii}
- A sincere person only has hope in Allah and only fears Allah^{xiii}
- A sincere person prefers to attain things through his own work rather than asking people^{xiv}
- A sincere person trusts Allah enough to spend in the way of Allah^{xv}
- A hypocritical person is lazy when they stand for prayers^{xvi}
- A hypocritical person does not make a firm decision and does not take a firm side, he is torn between this side and that^{xvii}
- A hypocritical person remembers Allah (SWT) very little^{xviii}
- A hypocrite announces his actions and boasts about them^{xix}
- A hypocrite breaks his promises^{xx}
- A hypocrite lies most of the time^{xxi}
- A hypocrite betrays trusts^{xxii}
- A hypocrite is not likeable and is arrogant^{xxiii}

Review Questions

Q1. A sincere person:

- a. Likes to be praised but only for their good actions
- b. Does not like to be praised for their good actions performed for the sake of Allah
- c. Breaks promises but only to non-believers

Q2. A hypocrite:

- a. Lies most of the time
- b. Betrays trusts
- c. Both of the above

Q3. The Qur'ān describes hypocrites as:

- a. Hollow
- b. Frightened and paranoid
- c. Both of the above

ⁱ References for these narrations can be found in the books recommended below. However, upon those who are insane (among others) and so she could not be punished. Again, Umar we have also provided some specific references for you here: admitted his mistake and confessed that if it were not for the advice of Imam Ali (as), he would have perished.

-Bukhari 8:127 ^v Al-Tafsir al-Kabir by al-Fakhr al-Razi

-Muslim 3:1452 ^{vi} For more details please read- THEN I WAS GUIDED by Muhammad Tijjani as-Samawi,

-Refer to eHAWZA, semester 2, course 6, lecture 2 for more details ^{vii} Al-Nass wal Ijtihad, p.198-202. The story is regarding the treaty of Hdaybiyah. The Peshawer Nights by Sultān al-Wa'izīn Shirāzī and many other books on this topic.

ⁱⁱ Al-Nass wal Ijtihad, p.198-202. The story is regarding the treaty of Hdaybiyah. The Peshawer Nights by Sultān al-Wa'izīn Shirāzī and many other books on this topic. Prophet had a dream that the Muslims would perform Hajj and so they all set out towards ^{viii} A Review of Saqifah - Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, Mecca. Before they reached there, the Quraysh confronted them in an aggressive manner <http://www.imamreza.net/eng/imamreza.php?id=7679> and the Prophet (saw) decided to enter into a treaty with them rather than engage in war. ^{ix} Tabari, Ta'rikh, vol. 4, p. 1820-1823

So the Muslims stopped their journey to Mecca and the Prophet asked them to shave their ^x Ibid heads and to slaughter their animals of sacrifice, for they were not going to Hajj that year. ^x Imām 'Alī (a), Nahj al-Balāghah, volume 3, page 29

Umar was very upset by this and would not stop objecting to the Prophet's decision and ^{xi} Imām 'Alī (a), Nahj al-Balāghah, speech 192 even personally confronted the Prophet. However, the Prophet told him that he had ^{xii} The Scale of Wisdom, narration no. 1880

promised they would go to Hajj, but not that year. ^{xiii} Ibid, no. 1881

ⁱⁱⁱ Dua al-Nudba, Mafatihul Jinan ^{xiv} Ibid, no. 1883

^{iv} The two stories are as follows: ^{xv} Ibid, no. 1883

-one day, Umar had become upset about the rising dowries within the Muslim community ^{xvi} The Holy Qur'an and so he ordered that there should be an upper limit on dowries. A woman stood up in the ^{xvii} Ibid crowd and quoted the ayah: 'and if you had given her a heap of gold', which clearly showed ^{xviii} Ibid that it was permissible to give a woman a very large dowry. Thus, Umar was mistaken in his ^{xix} The Scale of Wisdom, narration no. 6208 ruling and he admitted to this. ^{xx} Ibid.

-One day, Imam Ali (as) saw an insane woman being prepared for execution. He enquired ^{xxi} Ibid why this was happening and they said that she had committed adultery and was being ^{xxii} Ibid punished. He stopped all the proceedings and brought the woman back before Umar. He ^{xxiii} Ibid, no. 6210 reminded Umar of the narration which says that the pen (i.e. responsibility) is lifted from



JOURNEY TO THE UNSEEN WORLD

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: THE SOUL

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand and be reminded of the nature of the soul and that it exists
- Understand some of the proofs for the existence of the soul
- Learn about the different stages the self goes through in its development
- Learn more about the trials of death (the pangs of death) and the trials of the grave.
- Understand the idea that we need to be conscious of what we take with us on the journey after death
- Realise the importance of observance (al-Muraqabah) and the methods with which this can be done
- Understand that observance should always be coupled with consequences or conditions on the self or action (mu'ataba)
- That observance must lead to supervision which is ensuring that we protect our good actions till the Day of Judgement
- Understand the characteristics of Barzakh
- Understand the importance of supervising our actions

In this lesson we shall begin to discuss the last of the five fundamental beliefs of Islam: the **Resurrection (al-Ma'ād)**. We would have no access to the details of this knowledge were it not for the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet (saw). While some of the general concepts can be proven by the intellect, the details must be obtained through the scripture. In Islam, unlike in other faiths, the emphasis on Resurrection in Islam is so great that over 25% or 1640 ayātⁱ of the Qur'ān refer to this. It is a fundamental part of the belief in the Unity of Godⁱⁱ, the selection of prophetsⁱⁱⁱ, self-purification^{iv}, staying on the right path^v, piety, worshipping, peace of mind, bravery, justice etc. A denial of this fact can lead mankind to social and economic crimes^{vi}, a sinful life^{vii}, immoral behaviour etc.

Before discussing any of the above topics in more detail, it is important that we acknowledge that Allah, the Most Wise, has created us with a body (the physical existence) and a soul (the spiritual existence). We have to understand our soul as this is what will lead us to understanding Allah. We also believe that some of our journey in the afterlife is carried out through the soul (Barzakh). The soul will then be reunited with the body during resurrection. Imam 'Ali (as) says:

Memorisation Task

من عرف نفسه عرف ربه

"One who attains inner knowledge of his soul attains inner knowledge of his Lord"^{viii}

WHAT IS THE SOUL AND HOW DO WE KNOW IT EXISTS?

The soul makes 'me' me, such that if we were to think of ourselves without distraction, that would be the soul.

A further proof of the existence of the soul is the mere fact that the body we have is like a vessel in which our soul is housed. This can be explained in one of many ways:

1. Scientifically we know that the physical body we have now is not what we had or will have in the future because most of the cells in our body are constantly dying and regenerating (every 7-9 years). Despite this, we can still identify ourselves as 'me'!
2. Similarly, when we refer to our limbs we say "my arm" or "my leg" and even though they are part of the body they are not 'me'. Instinctively we know that our body parts in themselves do not have an identity of their own^{ix}. Just in the same way we refer to the 'body' of a deceased because we instinctively know that upon death, the soul is separated from the body and therefore we cannot refer to the dead body as a person!
3. Other phenomenon such as real dreams, near death experiences, and interactions between soul-mates further highlight this instinctive proof of the soul.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Just as we grow physically through our life and become bigger and more mature over time, we are also supposed to develop spiritually. Our spiritual development is even more important than our physical development. The soul goes through a number of stages in order to develop and reach its perfection.

According to our belief, the soul has three degrees from the most base to the most perfect

1. The Evil-Commanding Soul (al nafsul al ammārah)

This is often referred to as the desire. It is the soul that commands one to sin. It is the inner Satan that prompts man to perform evil. Imam 'Ali (as) says:

"the carnal, seducing soul flatters as a hypocrite flatters, and simulates the characteristics of an agreeing friend and as soon as it tricks and overcomes man, it overpowers him as an enemy overpowers, and controls him like a controlling tyrant and hence drives man towards his ruin"^x

This soul is therefore characterised by:

- A flattering character- Always putting self before others, above others (ego)
- Invites to sin at every opportunity
- Makes one have long-reaching drawn-out hopes for this world- and leads to procrastination
- When a difficulty is encountered it causes one to complain and freak out
- When ease and blessings are encountered it causes one to be mean, stingy and greedy^{xi}
- Finally it stops one from repenting or listening to the 'blaming soul'

2. The blaming soul (al nafsul al lawwāmāh)

The reproaching (blaming) soul- often called the conscience; it is the soul that is the court that is constantly judging. It makes us regret our actions and makes us feel guilty and when it is overpowered makes us uncomfortable. This is the soul that helps us reach the most perfect station as it keep us 'uncomfortable' when we commit a sin and 'at peace' when we do good actions.

3. The tranquil soul (al nafsul al muṭma'innah)

Once the struggle between the above two facets of our soul is over and the 'good guy wins' the soul becomes at rest. The ultimate reward for having achieved this is that Allah accommodates the person in paradise! Allah says in the holy Qur'ān:

"O soul that art at rest! Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with him), well-pleasing (Him), So enter among My servants, And enter into My garden." (89:27-30)

There are two major qualities this soul possesses:

- Raḍīyah- Completely satisfied with the will of Allah. Therefore never complaining, content with the will of God.
- Marḍīyyah: Allah is pleased with this soul

HOW DO WE TAME OUR COMMANDING SOUL?

Before we begin this section, it has to be noted that the aim of a Muslim is not to kill his desires but to control or tame them, so that instead of the desires controlling the person, the person controls their desires. For example, instead of my desire telling me what and when to eat, I tell it when and what to eat. Imam 'Ali (as) says:

“Rule your souls by continuously struggling with them.”^{xii}

As alluded to earlier, the most effective way of taming the soul is to struggle with oneself (or in other words-the commanding soul). This struggle (or Jihād) is considered the greatest struggle of all.

Allah tells us in the Holy Qur'ān:

“And the soul and Him Who made it perfect, Then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it; He will indeed be successful who purifies it, And he will indeed fail who corrupts it.” (91:7-10)

Imam 'Ali (as) says, “One who does not refine his soul will be disgraced by bad habits”^{xiii}.

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (a) said in regards to a particularly difficult battle fought during the life of the Prophet:

“The Prophet (saw) of God dispatched a contingent of the army (to the battlefield). Upon their (successful) return, he (s) said: ‘Blessed are those who have performed the minor jihād and have yet to perform the major jihād.’ When asked, ‘What is the major jihād?’ the Prophet (saw) replied: ‘The jihād of the self (struggle against self)’^{xiv}

This struggle is considered as the major struggle (*al-jihād al-akbar*) as it is much more difficult than fighting in the battlefield, for in the struggle against the self, one has to constantly battle enemies that are hosted inside his own existence and this struggle lasts a life time. It is for this reason that it was only when Imam 'Ali was struck with a fatal blow that he declared victory in this world! The one who succeeds in this struggle can rise above and beyond the level of angels, and one who fails in this struggle will descend to a level lower than the level of animals, and may even be grouped among the legions of the devil.

Review Questions

Q1. 'al nafasul al ammārah' is:

- Our desire
- Our conscience
- Our tranquil soul

Q2. The greatest struggle in the life of a human is:

- Fighting in a war
- Fighting a disease
- Fighting against the desires of his self

Q3. Imam 'Ali (as) says that we should tame or rule ourselves by:

- Listening to our self (our desire)
- Killing all our desires
- Constantly struggling with our self (our desire)

LESSON 2: DEATH

Death is an inescapable reality. Regardless of whether we are believers or not, each of us accepts death as a fact of our existence. Since it is inescapable, we begin to ask questions. What is death? What does Islam say about death? Is it destruction, annihilation, and non-existence or is it a change, a development and a shifting from one world to another? In this lesson, we will have an understanding of our main beliefs about death and the importance of preparing ourselves for this journey.

WHAT IS DEATH?

Death, in essence, is the separation of the soul from the body. Death occurs when the soul leaves the body. The body dies and remains in this material world and decomposes, while the soul moves on to the next stage of its existence.

Therefore, death is not 'anti-life', rather just like life, 'death' is something which is created. Allah, the Exalted says in the Qur'ān:

“Blessed be He... who has created death and life, so that He might test you which of you is most righteous in action” (67:1-2)

Death is a continuation of the life of the soul, a transition from one abode, this temporary world, to an eternal life. As Imam Ḥasan (as) had said:

“(Death is) the greatest happiness which comes to the believers, when they migrate from the house of misery to the eternal bliss; and (it is) the greatest disaster which befalls the unbelievers, when they go from their paradise (i.e. this world) to the Fire which will never be extinguished and will never burn itself out”^{xv}

REASONS FOR DEATH

There are many reasons why death was made a must for every living creature, whether it is plants, animals or even human beings.

- One of the basic rules of creation is that it is not possible for life in the physical world to continue forever. This is because, for one creature to live, another must die. For example, for a lion to live a gazelle must die or for a goat to live it must eat grass and so on.

However, when it comes to human beings, there is a lot more importance given because there is more meaning and knowledge behind death.

- Death is a movement from one world to another, a world in which we are judged and rewarded for our choices.
- Human beings were not created to live in this world forever, we came here only to learn and death in one way is like our graduation from school.

STAGES OF DEATH

Each stage of death is a reflection of our actions and belief.

For the believer, when the Angel of death arrives, he tells him not to worry:

“By Allah, I am kinder to you than your father. Now, open your eyes and look.”

Then his spiritual eyes are opened and he sees (in his vision) the faces of the Messenger of Allah (s) and the Imams and is given the good tidings that he would be their companion. He then hears a call:

“O thou tranquil soul, return to Your Lord, well pleased, well pleasing (to Him): enter You amongst My servants, and enter My paradise.” (89:27-30)

THE STUPOR OF DEATH (SAKRATUL MAWT)

“And the stupor of death will come in truth; that is what you were trying to escape.” (Qur’an: 50:19)

This is the stage of Sakratul Mawt and is extremely difficult for the soul. This refers to the last moments of life, when death is about to befall man. This is the most critical time as our faith will be put to the test.

Every night, Imam ‘Ali (as) would cry out to the people of Kufah three times:

“Prepare yourselves, for you have been called to depart, and one cannot return to this life once they have been called to depart and take the provision of piety as your transport”^{xvi}

REMEMBRANCE OF DEATH

We will learn in later lessons that whatever happens to us after our death is a direct result of what we did in this world. Whatever happiness or suffering our soul will experience in its next life is a consequence of what we do here. Therefore, it becomes imperative that we constantly remember death. Through remembering that this may occur at any moment we begin to be more aware of our actions. Imam ‘Ali (as) says to his son Imam al-Hasan (as):

“Enliven your heart by preaching...make it humble by remembering death, make it believe in mortality...recall what befell those who came before you...You will find that they departed and lodged in a lonely house...”^{xvii}

We should we remember the mysteries and suddenness of death:

1. Location: *“...and no one knows in what land he shall die; surely Allah is Knowing, Aware...” (31:34)*
2. Time: *“What! do the people of the towns then feel secure from Our punishment coming to them by night while they sleep? What! do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming to them in the morning while they play?” (7:97-98)*
3. State: *“...therefore die not unless you are Muslims” (2:132)*

OBSERVANCE OF OUR ACTIONS

When we remember death, we will become more aware of the importance of our actions, and that we need to improve ourselves as soon as possible, because death can come at any moment.

A lot of us observe our actions, but only for a little period of time, then we forget about it and go back to our old ways. What we have to remember is that it is not how we were three years ago that matters, it is where we are when we die. So if we were very pious a few years ago, but now have lost our faith, we will be coming to Allah (SWT) as a disbeliever, not the way we were three or four years ago. So we must ensure that we are keeping up our good deeds regularly. This can happen when we remember that death is not a stranger that will come knocking at our doors when we are 90. It is a reality that can happen at any time! If you go to the cemetery you can see how many young people have died unexpectedly.

There was once a man who after hearing the message of the Prophet (saw) began to accept the religion, however the fact that Islam forbade the drinking of alcohol bothered him. So he said to himself that he will remain drinking alcohol for another year and then he will believe in Islam. He died before that year and met his Lord as a disbeliever and a drinker of wine. We must make sure that since death may come at any time, we are in such a state that we are greeted pleasantly by the angel of death when he collects our souls.

STEPS OF OBSERVANCE AND ACCOUNTING

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِإِعَادٍ
 وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ {18} وَلَا
 تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
 الْفَاسِقُونَ {19}

“O you who believe! be careful of (your duty to) Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do. And be not like those who became oblivious of Allah, so He made them oblivious of their own souls: these it is that are the transgressors.” (59:18-19)

Imagine you are a student in class and each term your teacher comes to check that you have completed all the tasks that they have set for you throughout the term. If you have carefully kept an account of all of the tasks given, those completed and those not completed, then when your teacher announces that she wants to check if

you have kept your work up to date, you wouldn't have anything to worry about. On the other hand, the student who has not kept his work up to date, will panic when the teacher comes around to check everyone's work. Death is like this, because it can come at any time.

This is the same for our deeds and actions. From the age of responsibility until our death all of our actions are being taken into account. After twenty or thirty years, we don't remember everything that we have done, so we may have lost count of our sins. We have to be very careful about this.

The Prophet (saw) says in his will to his close companion Abu Dhar:

“Oh Abu Dhar no one can be from the pious people unless he keeps an account of his actions, what you have done, eaten and said today.”

Imam Musa Al-Kāḍim (as) said:

“One who does not examine and evaluate himself every day is not one of us. (A person who examines himself), if he does a good deed, he beseeches God to increase him (in virtues) and if he has perpetrated a vice, he seeks God's forgiveness for it and is penitent before Him.” xviii

The Imam is reminding us of the etiquette of a follower of the Ahlul Bayt (as). When he is taking account of his actions, he does not get overjoyed over his actions, rather he asks Allah (SWT) to bless him with more.

Review Questions

Q1. Death is:

- a. Annihilation
- b. Anti-life
- c. The beginning of another life

Q2. Which of the following is true?

- a. We should start preparing for death when we are old or ill
- b. We should expect death at any time
- c. We should not worry about death at a young age and get depressed

Q3. Death is:

- a. Something unnatural and strange
- b. A natural part of the world we live in
- c. Neither of the above

LESSON 3: BARZAKH

By now we should already be familiar with some of main concepts of death. To begin this lesson, we will go through some of the points from the previous lesson, which shall briefly be followed by a short discussion on Barzakh, its philosophy and some of its characteristics, and we will then conclude the lesson with a discussion on one of the most effective and practical methods to prepare for it.

REVISION

The dissociation between the body and the soul is called death. As soon as we die, the soul enters the stage of Barzakh which literally means a 'barrier' between two things. In other words it means that Allah (SWT) has placed a curtain or an intermediary stage between this world and the Hereafter.

Barzakh is followed by the day of resurrection. Everyone who has died so far, good or evil, old or young is currently in Barzakh. They are either enjoying a taste of paradise or suffering temporary punishment, and all of them are 'waiting' for the day of judgement.

In previous years, we have discussed the characteristics of the life in Barzakh, including:

- The pressure of the grave, which is a special punishment for specific sins
- Being able to hear the people still alive in this world without being able to reply
- Being questioned about our actions
- Being able to visit loved ones in this world

CHARACTERISTICS OF BARZAKH

QUESTIONS

Questioning in the world of Barzakh is for those who purely believe in God as well as those who purely disbelieve in Him. The rest will be questioned in the Hereafter. People will be asked about their Creator, Prophet, Imam, religion, Scripture, life, youth, and wealth.

Imam Sadiq (a.s): "A deceased will be asked in his grave about five things: His Salaat, his Zakaat, his Hajj, his fasting, and his love and obedience to Ahlul-Bayt. Then the Welaya says to the other four from the side of the grave: Whatever you are short of I will complete it (for him)."^{xix}

When man is buried in the grave, two angels will confront him/her asking the dead person about his/her belief and all what s/he has done. It should be noted that, grave, in this terminology does not merely mean a pit in which a dead body is buried. Grave in Islamic literature is another expression for Barzakh. Imam Sadiq (a.s) said:

"The Barzakh is 'grave' and it is the reward or punishment between this world and the Hereafter."

Also, questions and answers are not a matter of the tongue. We will be questioned of the reality of our belief and the answers come from the inner voice. In other words, a mere knowledge will be of no use, if it is not combined with belief and action.

PRESSURE OF THE GRAVE

This is a type of punishment which varies for different people. It means the soul of a dead person will be under a type of pressure as a means of torturing to cleanse the soul. According to a Prophetic saying maltreatment of the family as well as abusing the blessing of God will result in the pressure of grave. Also, it is quoted from the Prophet (saw) that consistently performing good actions will make man free from the pressure of the grave. Thus, the pressure of grave does not include all the dead.

VISITATION OF THE SOULS AND BENEFITING FROM THE LIVING ONES

Depending on the status of the souls, they may be able to visit their families. If it is the soul of a believer, s/he will be shown only the good actions of his or her family, whereas, a soul of a non-believer will be shown the bad actions of his or her family. This is another type of reward or punishment in Barzakh.

It is narrated from the Holy Prophet (saw) that the departed souls visit their homes every Friday and call out:

"O people of my house! May Allah bless you! Have mercy on us! Whatever we have done in this world, we are facing its consequences now while the fruits of our hard work (in the world) are being enjoyed by others. Favour us by giving on our behalf a dirham, or bread, or clothes (to the needy), so that Allah may reward you with heavenly attire".

It is very important that we should not forget our dead, for they have no power to perform good deed, and they totally rely on their children, brothers and relatives. They eagerly await the favours. Particularly pray for them in the Midnight prayers and after every prayer and never forget to pray for your parents.

HEARING WITHOUT REPLY

The dead during their status in Barzakh can hear when we communicate with them although they are unable to respond, or we cannot hear their response. Several cases of the prophets and Imams talking to the dead have been recorded. Two such cases are briefly given below:

After the battle of Badr, the Prophet of Islam (saw) addressed the dead soldiers from the troops of Quraysh and spoke to them. Similarly, Imam 'Ali (as) sat down next to the corpse of Ka'b ibn Sāra and Ṭalḥa after the battle of Camel and said to him:

"Surely, I found the promise of my Lord to be true, so did you find the promise of your Lord true too?"

WHY DO WE NEED TO SUPERVISE OURSELVES?

Supervision means that a person is constantly attentive to Allah (SWT) and believes that He is watching over him. As a result only those things that please Him are allowed into the soul and those things that result in His displeasure are dispelled. Sight, hearing, taste, smell and thoughts which are all considered windows that lead to the soul are carefully guarded and opened or closed at the person's will. The driving force behind this supervision is the belief that Allah (SWT) who is the most important observer is watching and recording every action and thought.

Such people 'see' Allah and He sees them, they cannot but obey Him. Prophet Yusuf paid no attention to Zulaykha when she tried to seduce him because he saw Allah (SWT) with the eyes of his heart.

To remind us that He is watching and that there is never 'privacy' for us, Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'ān:

Memorisation Task:

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand."
(50:18)

Imam 'Ali (as) says:

"Know that for you there are some spies from your own organs. Every breath of yours is recorded. The darkness of the night does not hinder them. No matter how many locks you have placed, there is no security against them"

The short stories below will help to understand that none of our actions pass unless they are recorded:

A man once was visited by a deceased relative in his dream pleading to him to act kindly (on his behalf) towards those who worked for him. On inquiring as to why the sudden and urgent need, the deceased said that he had he been very harsh with those working under him during his life and that he is now experiencing unbearable noise in the grave for which relief can only be achieved if all the bad is compensated by good towards them.

In a similar story, a pious deceased man comes to his daughter in her dream. She sees him suffering in the grave and wonders why such a pious man undergoes through so much. Her father then tells her that when he was young, every Friday morning he used to steal fruits from a neighbour's house – something that was considered fun and that he is now being punished for it.

This is the state in Barzakh. We will receive compensation for every good deed and punished for every bad.

Review Questions

Q1. Good people in Barzakh:

- See the bad things that happen to their families in this world
- See only the good things that happen to their families in this world
- Cannot see anything in this world

Q2. The souls in Barzakh:

- Can hear what is said to them in this world
- Cannot hear what is said to them in this world

Q3. Which of the following actions is mentioned in many narrations to lead to a person being punished with the pressure of the grave?

- Lying
- Backbiting
- Being ill-mannered with one's family

ⁱ Sheikh Mansour Leghaei – Journey to the Unseen World lesson 1

ⁱⁱ Repeated 30 times in the Quran is the concept of belief in Allah resulting in a belief in the hereafter

ⁱⁱⁱ Holy Quran 38:46-47

^{iv} Holy Quran 79:39-41

^v Holy Quran 38:26

^{vi} Holy Quran 83:1-5 (if time permits, the teacher can possibly discuss the concept of the Gyges Ring (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ring_of_Gyges) (or the Harry potters 'cloak of invisibility')- Whereby if one is not caught one can get away with anything or whether a typical person would be moral if he did not have to fear the consequences of his actions

^{vii} Holy Quran 75:5-6

^{viii} (*MizĀn ul ġikmah*- tradition 4065)

^{ix} Sayyid Mohammed Naqvi – Lecture 2 <http://www.azadari.com/mnaqvi.htm>

^x Scale of Wisdom- Tradition 6191

^{xi} Holy Quran 28:26-28 Qarun was such

^{xii} Scale of Wisdom – tradition 6195

^{xiii} Scale of wisdom – tradition 6199

^{xiv} Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 19, p. 182, hadith no. 31 (from an article http://www.al-islam.org/nutshell/merits_soul/)

^{xv} (Quoted in the book: Day of Judgement, by Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, pg. 22, no reference was given)

^{xvi} Imam Ali (as), Mishkatul Anwar, no. 1772

^{xvii} Tuhaful Uqool, Imam Ali's advice to Imam Hasan, Chapter on Imam Ali

^{xviii} (Al-Kafi, Vol. 2, Kitab al-Iman wal kufr, bab muhasabat al-a'mal, Hadith no. 2)

^{xix} [al-Kaafi 3:241)

RESURRECTION

المعاد

Objectives >>>

Students should understand:

- The three major proofs for the existence of the day of resurrection:
 - the proof of the Innate Knowledge of the Resurrection
 - the proof of Justice
 - The proof of wisdom
- That both body and soul are resurrected and reunited
- In more detail, the stages/events of the resurrection day described in previous years
- The transience of this world especially in comparison to the eternity of the Hereafter
- That those closest to Allah care about this world only as long they can use it to benefit their Hereafter and the lowly and abased care for this world in and of itself and ignore the Hereafter
- That the pleasures in this world are illusions and are never free from pains, while pleasures in the Hereafter are real and free from any pain
- That Heaven and Hell are the realities of our own actions
- That those who enter Heaven remain there forever, but only those who are stubborn remain in Hell forever
- The levels within both Heaven and Hell
- The role of hope and fear in reaching Heaven and avoiding Hell

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HEREAFTER

In the previous lessons, we have discussed various aspects of life after this world, from death to Barzakh. In this lesson we shall discuss one of the fundamental beliefs of all major religions, especially Islam: that of Ma'ād or Resurrection. As we have learnt in previous years, there are many names for the Day of Resurrection (Yawmul dīn, Yawmul Qiyāmah, Yawmul Ḥashr, Yawmul Ḥisāb etc.). It should be noted that 'yawm' or 'day' in this context does not mean the regular day (24 hours) as we have it here, this only refers to a period of time which is not describable with the measures of time we know today. This is why the Qur'ān uses very large time spans, such as one thousand years, to describe itⁱ. The other opinion is that it is called 'day' because just like the sun exposes everything, the 'light' of truth will expose the reality of our actionsⁱⁱ.

PROOFS OF THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

1. THE PROOF OF INNATE KNOWLEDGE

Human beings are born with some characteristics already pre-programmed in us. These characteristics are called innate characteristics. Some of these include hunger, thirst, love etc. and as Allah, the Almighty, has pre-programmed these things in us He has also created legitimate and good ways to fulfil them. Loving immortality and the attribute of survival after death is a natural desire of mankind and hence, it appears to have been held by human beings from the earliest of times. The instinct of immortality will not be satisfied unless there is an immortal life after this mortal one.

Creating an innate characteristic and not allowing it to be fulfilled would be vain and incongruent with divine wisdom.

2. PROOF OF WISDOMⁱⁱⁱ

We are living in a meaningful world in which everything has a purpose and an aim. If death were the end of everything the creation of the entire universe would be in vain (without purpose).

3. PROOF OF JUSTICE

Justice is one of God's attributes as mentioned in the previous lessons. The whole universe is established on justice. However, the history of man presented many criminals that never received their full punishment in this world. How many innocent people are killed without their murderers found? How many properties are stolen and the thieves never caught? Therefore, there must be a great day of judgement in which all tyrants, oppressors, and criminals will be judged with justice.

RESURRECTION – AL MA'ĀD

Islam, out of all the 'divine' religions has put a very great emphasis on the concept of the Day of Judgement and the Hereafter. Ma'ād means the re-joining of scattered particles and the joining of the soul to the body after their separation. Ma'ād therefore does not mean that Allah brings something out of non-existence. The question then arises as to how Allah will bring us to life after our body has completely disintegrated?

Once a man called Ibn Abi Khalaf came to the Holy Prophet with an old bone in his hand. He was pressing and crushing it with his hand. When it all became powder he blew it off with his mouth and asked, "Who will make this stuff alive?" It was then that a verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet:

"And he strikes out a likeness for Us and forgets his own creation. Says he: Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten? Say: He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first, and He is cognizant of all creation" (36:78-79)^{iv}

Allah brought us into being from nothing, surely He can bring us back!

PROPHET IBRĀHĪM AND THE BIRDS

On many occasions, Allah, the Almighty has proven this concept through his Prophets. One prominent story is mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān is that of Prophet Ibrāhīm (as). He asked Allah to show him how Allah gives life to the dead, so that his heart may be at ease. It is narrated that as directed by Allah, Ibrāhīm (as) took four birds, cut them into very small pieces, mixed them together and put portions of the mixture on the top of four separate mountains, and then called out to them. The birds came flying to him as individual birds, as they were originally!^v This example very clearly demonstrates that certainly the Almighty Allah has the power to bring back the dead to life and make them as they were!

STAGES OF THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

The Holy Prophet described the Resurrection Day as follows. 'Amr was one of the most famous brave and courageous men among Arabs. The history of Islam has recorded him as one of the greatest warriors in a number of battles. Once, when he was a polytheist, he visited the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet (saw) invited him to Islam, and said: "If you believe in Islam, God Almighty will protect you from the greatest fright on the Day of Resurrection." He asked, "O Muḥammad! What is the great fright? I am so tough-hearted that nothing can frighten me." The Holy Prophet (saw) said:

"O 'Amr! It is not so, as you imagined. It will be a tremendously frightening sound, which will make all the dead alive and make the entire living die, except those whom God wishes that they should not die. Then again there will be a terrible roar which will make all the dead stand and line up. The sky will be fragmented. All the mountains will break up and become scattered. Thus there will be no living being whose heart will not be palpating due to fear, remembering the sins committed by it. All will be worrying only about their own selves except those whom God wills (that they may not become restless)."^{vi}

THE BLOWING OF THE TRUMPET

It is narrated^{vii} that the first thing that will happen is the blowing of the trumpet (by the angel Isrāfīl). This is the first sound and it is the point at which every living thing will die (except those Allah wishes). All the remaining humans shall die and also experience Barzakh.

Once all the souls have been taken, the Angel of Death will come to God to report this and Allah will command that even the angel of death die! The second trumpet will be blown and everyone will come back to life.

THE RISING FROM THE GRAVE

One day the angel Gabriel came to the Holy Prophet (saw) and asked, "Would you like to observe the condition of people on the Day of Resurrection?" "Yes," the Prophet replied. Gabriel, the trustworthy angel, took the Holy Prophet to the graveyard of Baqī' (Medina). He kicked a grave and said, "Get up at the order of your Lord." The grave split at once and a man with radiant face raised his head from the grave saying: '(All) praise is due to Allah, Who has made good to us His promise' (39:74). Thereafter, he kicked another grave and said, "Rise up at the command of your Lord." At once, another man with a very ugly and frightened face came out of this grave and said: 'O woe to us!' Gabriel said, "The faithful and the unbelievers will rise up from their graves in this condition."viii

ASSEMBLY ON THE FIELD OF MAḤSHAR

Upon rising from their graves, everyone will be astonished at the sight before them and their own sight. Fear then will set in, such fear that they will wish to flee from the scene and Allah (SWT) says that they will be like **"scattered moths"** (101:4) or **"scattered locusts"** (54:7). On that day, everyone will try to hide themselves from each other; mother will flee from daughter and father from son! Their running away will be of no use! Those who had any connection with God in this world will flee to Allah whilst for others there will be no escape. Realizing that there is no escape, they will ask each other for their share of good deeds but no one will help as they will need whatever they have! It is for the fear of this day that we should gather as many good deeds as we can for ourselves as nothing shall avail us then.

BOOK OF ACTIONS

Soon after, every individual shall be handed their book of actions. In general, the Book of Actions is something that each and every individual or each nation will carry with them which consists of their entire actions in this world, good or bad. Every single action, word or in some cases thought will be recorded. Allah says:

"He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand".
(50:18)

A man once asked the Imam (as) how angels know the good intention of a faithful person? The Imam replied:

"As soon as a servant thinks of doing a good deed his body emanates a pleasing fragrance. So the angels understand it and they record that good intention. When someone thinks of committing an evil, the bad smell of it hurts the angels. If a man thinks of doing good, a good is at once noted in his record of deeds. Then, if he carries out that good deed, ten goods are noted in his record."

On the Day of Resurrection, every soul shall read its Book of Actions. The book will be handed over to its, and only its, author, i.e. the doer. Once you look at your book, every single action accompanied with its real intention is precisely and accurately engraved in the book. It will be the most comprehensive biography ever of the person's life. It contains the entire life of the person, from cradle to the grave. By then:

"...because of what is recorded therein, they will say: Ah! Woe to us! What a book this is! It leaves out nothing small or great, but takes account thereof." (18:49).

We have learnt in previous years that this book is not like a book we know of in this world. It will be a record of our deeds such that even our limbs will testify to our actions!

- Those who believed and did good in this world will be given their book in their right hand. They will be happy and relieved. Just like when we get really good marks in an exam and are proud to show off the result! They will say:

"Surely I knew I shall meet my account. So he shall be in a life of pleasure." (19:69).

- The sinners shall be given their book of actions in their left hand and they will be do ashamed and they would say:

"O would that my book had never been given me: And I had not known what my account was: O would that it had made an end (of me): My wealth has availed me nothing: My authority is gone away from me." (69:25-29)

- There also will be some people in the field of Maḥshar on the Day of Judgement, who will be handed over their records of deeds from behind: *"And as to him who is given his book behind his back, He shall call for perdition, And enter into burning fire." (84:10-12)*

This (giving of record from behind) can be in two ways: First, both of his hands may be tied to his back and his head will be turned so that he can read his record. Another way can be that his left hand will pierce in his chest forcing it to come out of his back and then his face will be turned and he will be ordered to read his record:

“Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day.” (17:14)

QUESTIONING

Before being allowed to proceed through to the *Ṣirāṭ* (which has been discussed in previous years) everyone will be questioned about how they used the bounties and gifts they were given in this world especially how they used their life. The questions will include:

- 1- How did he spend his life and in which deeds was he engaged during his youth?
- 2- Where from and how he or she earned money and where and how they spent it?
- 3- There will be questioning about the Wilāyah of Prophet Muḥammad and his progeny (as).^{ix}

Review Questions

Q1. The Proof of Wisdom for the existence of the Resurrection is based on the principle that:

- a. If death was the end, this world and our lives would be in vain and without purpose
- b. Allah is Wise and He would not create a world that is without purpose
- c. Both a & b

Q2. Al Ma'ād means:

- a. The souls being brought back to life
- b. The soul being re-joined to the same body it had in this world
- c. The body being brought back to life

Q3. The Book of Actions on the day of Judgement contains:

- a. The main events of a person's life and their major sins
- b. Every action performed by a person
- c. Every action, word and even thought of a person

LESSON 2: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

THE TRANSIENCE OF THIS WORLD AND THE ETERNITY OF THE HEREAFTER

From what we have learnt of the stages of the Day of Judgement, we have to always keep in mind that we have been put in this world to gather as much provision as we can for that Day. The period of time we spend in this world is so short when compared to the Hereafter. Allah says in the Holy Qur'ān:

To Memorise:

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَهْوٌ وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

“And this world's life is naught but a play and an idle sport and certainly the abode of the hereafter is better for those who guard (against evil); do you not then understand?” (6:32)

THE NATURE OF THIS WORLD

One of the primary causes of punishment and suffering in the Hereafter is the love for this world. We often tend to forget the Hereafter and focus only on the temporary pleasures of this world. Allah says in the Qur'ān:

“Beautified for mankind is love of the joys (that come) from women and offspring; and stored-up heaps of gold and silver, and horses branded (with their mark), and cattle and land. That is comfort of the life of the world. Allah! With Him is a more excellent abode.” (3:14)

It must be kept in mind that all things mentioned in the above verse, being divine blessings, may not be condemned. Moreover, proper use of divine blessings is also not an unworthy thing to do. However, what is undesirable is becoming attached to these things, and giving them a fundamental significance in one's life – an emphasis which may exceed even that given to God.^x

To illustrate this we can use an analogy. There was once a big ship that landed on an Island. The captain said to the people: 'Dear passengers, we will anchor here for you to gather provision and admire the nature and we shall move on with our journey in a few hours' time'. All passengers got off and roamed around the island in groups. Some 'wise' gentlemen and ladies walked peacefully, collected some souvenirs and food for the

journey and returned quickly to the ship. Since they were the first ones back, they got the best and comfortable places on the ship.

The second group of 'forgetful' people walked, played and enjoyed their time. They admired the island and explored its nature. But soon they remembered the ship, so they ran back, without any food and souvenirs. Coming on board, they were tired, but alas the best seats were taken, so they had to do with the less comfortable ones.

The third group of 'Greedy and Lustful' people got amazed by the wonders of this island and they began to collect its plants and precious stones. After a while, having heard the call of their captain, they started to head back to the ship, carrying plants, stones and jewellery of all colours and value. However, the heaviness of the treasure they eagerly wanted to bring back slowed their return, and by the time they reached the shore, the boat had already left.

And finally, some 'Aimless and Narrow-Minded' people, convinced themselves that the island was all there is and the ship was just something they had imagined. They thus explored the island and built for themselves houses. The boat, of course left them to perish on the island and to be forgotten by everyone.

Similarly, on our journey to Allah (SWT), The Creator, we have landed on this island, called the World (Dunyā).

Some 'Wise' people will walk around and collect good deeds, love and knowledge of Allah (SWT) and quickly return to The Creator. They of course will be handed Heaven, the best of it!

The second group of 'Forgetful' people will get distracted by the world (Dunyā) until their last moment. They will then repent and hope that they will make be saved from the Hell-fire.

The third group of 'Greedy and Lustful' people will be amazed by the world, and get attracted by its temporary and fake beauty. Perhaps, a call will bring them back to realization, but alas, the attraction will be too much to leave behind and they will miss the ship of salvation.

And finally, some 'Aimless and Narrow-Minded' people will just ignore the journey to Allah (SWT) and pretend that this world is all there is. They will take their houses as their homes and their desires as god. Indeed history

as seen many people as such, but no one remembers them. They have been left in Hell.

So, the ship is waiting, please jump on board! Your Creator Allah (SWT) is calling you:

"Oh man! Surely you must strive to your Lord, a hard striving, until you meet Him. (84:6)

Imam 'Ali (as) warns of the deceptive nature of this world when he says:

"Regard your stay in the world as very short, and return (to Allah) with the best provision that is with you, because surely, in front of you lies a valley, difficult to climb, and places of stay full of fear and dangers. You have to reach there and stay in them. And know that the eyes of death are approaching towards you. It is as though you are (already) in its claws and it has struck itself against you. Difficult affairs and distressing dangers have crushed you into it. You should therefore cut away all the attachments of this world and assist yourselves with the provision of Allah's fear"^{xi}

CONSEQUENCES OF THE VICE OF THE LOVE OF THE WORLD

The Holy Prophet said:

"One who wakes up with his whole attention directed towards the world is cut off from God, and God shall make four qualities to accompany him;

endless sorrow,

never ending occupation,

a neediness which is never relieved, and

a hope which is never achieved."^{xii}

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq said:

"One who passes his evenings and mornings in such a way that the world be his biggest concern, God ordains poverty between his two eyes and causes his affairs to become disjointed and dissipated, while he does not attain anything except what has been apportioned for him. And as for one who passes his evenings and mornings while his biggest concern and goal is the Hereafter, God puts contentment into his heart and gives a wholeness and unity to his affairs."^{xiii}

HOW DO WE PRACTICE DETACHMENT FROM THIS WORLD?

In order to be successful both in this world and the Hereafter, we have to detach ourselves from this world and understand that everything we have belongs to Allah. We have to use the bounties given to us by Allah to purchase a place in Heaven in the Hereafter. This means that we have to spend our energy, our money and our time not to obtain more pleasure in this world but to obtain everlasting pleasures in the Hereafter. Imam 'Ali (as) also has said:

"The pleasures of this world are like the sun, you will be blinded if you look into it, but using it will enlighten your path"^{xiv}

We can do this by^{xv}:

- 1- Shortening our wishes and desires for this world
- 2- Appreciating every blessing
- 3- Abstaining from *Ḥarām*
- 4- Not being interested in what other people possess

To know if we really are not attached to this *dunyā*, we can test ourselves and see whether we become upset and flustered when we lose something worldly, or if we become extremely happy when we gain something worldly.^{xvi} Remember, this is not limited to money and objects; it also applies to popularity and reputation regarding worldly things.

Homework

Next week, bring to class anything that you are attached to (like mobile phone, PSP, Nintendo DS etc.) and we shall all put these things away for a week so we have no access to them. During that week, we have to avoid thinking about these items and try to detach ourselves from them.

Review Questions

Q1. In the Qur'ān, this world is described as:

- a. Play and idle sport
- b. The true life
- c. The most important life

Q2. In Arabic, the life of this world is called:

- a. Al *Dunyā*
- b. Al *Ākhirah*
- c. Barzakh

LESSON 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO HEAVEN AND HELL

Heaven and Hell are the last stops in the journey of our life. These two places show that there are two destinations where the journey of our life might take us. As we learnt from previous lessons, Heaven is the reward for those who believed in the truth and did good actions, while Hell is the punishment for those who denied, altered or corrupted the truth and did evil actions which resulted in mischief and disorder.

In this lesson we will learn about the features of Heaven and Hell, and see how best we can achieve Heaven and avoid Hell.

HEAVEN AND HELL REFLECT THE REALITIES OF OUR OWN ACTIONS

From an Islamic point of view, each action has a worldly appearance as well as a reality that most of us in this world cannot see. The worldly appearance is what is seen in this world and may or may not be the same as the reality of the action. For example, in the Qur'ān, Allah, The Exalted says, about taking the rights and possessions of orphans:

"Behold, those who sinfully devour the possessions of orphans but fill their bellies with fire: for [in the life to come] they will have to endure a blazing flame!" (4:10)

Also, in another Prophetic saying, it is mentioned that every mention of a Name of Allah, The Exalted, is like a brick, which is used to build your house or palace in Heaven. The more one remembers and recites *dhikr* the bigger the palace the angels build for him/her in Heaven.

Similarly, our bad actions also reflect the same kind of reaction. Every bad action that we do in reality cancels the good we do. When a person commits certain sins, then the palace that has been built for him or garden that has been prepared will be burnt away and the person will have nothing in the next world.

We therefore see that Heaven and Hell expand or shrink based on our actions – the more good actions we perform, the bigger our place and pleasures in Heaven and vice versa. The existence of both Heaven and Hell are as a result of our choices and actions. If it was not so, then there would be no purpose in being given the ability to know and choose between right and wrong.

A DESCRIPTION OF HEAVEN

It is impossible to describe the real picture of Heaven. Every beautiful thing which we find in this world is lower and of lesser value compared to the bounties of Heaven. The Holy Qur'ān has described Heaven in 76 *āyāt* just to give us some idea of blessings we may enjoy there. However, the reality of Heaven is beyond our imagination. What we know is limited by language and imagination.

The bounties of heaven have been described in the following way:

1. The greatest bliss in the Heaven will be Allah's proximity.
2. The people in Heaven will get in abundance numerous kinds of foods, drinks, fruits and tasty things.
3. The people in Heaven will have full comfort, security, stability. There will be no pain or fear of anything. No death and no disease, no poverty and no distress.
4. The people in Heaven will live in big castles. These castles will have beautiful big gardens, streams, rivers and many other things which we cannot imagine.
5. The people in Heaven will have many kinds of entertainment.
6. The people in Heaven will get anything they would like to have.
7. The people in Heaven will be allowed to visit the Holy Prophet (saw) and Imams (as) and any other person they would like to meet.
8. The people in Heaven can invite The Holy Prophet, Imams and many other people at a time.

The Holy Qur'an and the narrations summarise the blessings of Heaven in the following words:

*"No person knows what enjoyments of the eyes are kept hidden in Heaven for them as a reward for their good deeds."
"I have kept ready for my servants what no eye has ever looked at and no ear has ever heard, nor has any heart ever imagined." Hadith Qudsi*

Thus, all beautiful and precious things of this world are just ordinary samples to give us some idea of Heaven.

A DESCRIPTION OF HELL

Hell is a deep, wide and large pit. It is the last jail in which will be various kinds of punishments, pains, troubles, hardships and calamities. They will be such that we cannot even imagine them. In fact it is exactly opposite to Heaven. There will be no room at all for peace, happiness and comfort. Here are some of the tortures (punishments) the offenders face in Hell, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān.

The food of the people of Hell will be a bitter and thorny fruit called *Zaqqūm*, which will be melted in fire like copper. It is also said that there will be the boiling oil of the olive which will boil in stomach like boiling water. *Zaqqūm* will boil in the stomachs of proud disbelievers like water boiling or like olive oil heated over fierce fire. Then this boiling water will be poured on their heads which will melt all the outer and inner organs of the sinners. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'ān:

"Indeed those who defy our signs, we shall soon make them enter a fire; as often as their skin become scorched, we shall replace them with other skin, so that they may taste the punishment. Indeed Allah is all-mighty, all-wise."

”(4:56)

THE DURATION OF STAY IN HEAVEN OR HELL

It is mentioned in some of our most famous books of narrations that a companion called Abu Hashim asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) why the dwelling in Heaven or Hell will be permanent? The Imam (as) replied:

"The people of Hell will live in Hell forever because their intention in the world was that had they to live in the world forever they would disobey God forever. Likewise the reason of the people of Heaven living there permanently is also that their intention in the world was that if they had to live in the world forever they would always obey God and would never defy his commandments."

So, it is the intention that results in the permanent residents of the people of Heaven in Heaven and the permanent dwelling of the people of Hell in Hell.

However, some punishments are short in duration or less painful while others last longer and more severe. The wrongdoers' sins are not the same either in quantity or quality, and the punishment awarded them also

cannot be the same. There are those who are hardened criminals and deliberate deniers of truth. They are those who will remain in Hell forever. Allah, The Exalted says this in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān, for example:

"Those who engaged in disbelief and called Our signs lies are the people of Hellfire; they shall dwell in it eternally" (2:39)

The verses state that permanent residence in Hellfire will be for those unbelievers for whom all possible opportunity to rescue are blocked. As for those who have committed a certain number of lesser sins and offences, they shall either spend an appropriate amount of time in Hellfire or receive the kindness and forgiveness of God. Therefore there is a possibility that some people will leave Hell after a certain time which only Allah, The Exalted knows.

However, when it comes to residing in Heaven, whoever enters it will remain there forever. This is a sign of the Mercy of Allah, The Exalted, as a person can only enter Heaven if they are in a state of complete purity and this deserves staying in Heaven eternally.

"Who will inherit Heaven: they will dwell therein (for ever)"
(*Al-Mu'minun* 23:11)

Review Questions

Q1. Once a person enters Heaven:

- They remain there forever
- They might be kicked out later
- They might be removed but let back in

Q2. The description of Heaven that we have is:

- Limited by our imagination and our language, the Reality of Heaven is beyond our imagination
- Better than the reality of Heaven because we imagine it so wonderfully
- Exactly the way the reality of Heaven is

Q3. The greatest bliss in Heaven will be:

- The wonderful large castles from beneath which rivers flow
- The never-ending fruit, drinks and rest
- Being close to Allah (SWT)

LESSON 4: HOPE AND FEAR

In this lesson, we will be discussing hope and fear. We will first try to understand these two concepts.

WHAT IS HOPE?

Hope in a general way is a feeling you get, when your heart is comfortable, relaxed and in peace. It occurs when you are expecting something good to come to you or happen to you. This feeling depends on your goals and desires.

An example of hope is when a person is working towards a job promotion. He is not certain he will get it, but he has a hope which drives him onwards.

Effective hope is hope which is accompanied by work, not an unrealistic hope where one remains idle and says 'I have hope.'

From the Islamic point of view, the lowest goal a believer has hope in, is in the Mercy of Allah, The Exalted, for the forgiveness of his sins.

WHAT IS FEAR?

This is a feeling we have where we are afraid that something bad might happen to us in the future.

This feeling can come about in many ways. A good example is when the people of a town are warned a flood is coming to their town by the weather bureau. Their fear motivates them to put up sandbags and levies to prevent water from destroying their homes and property. This is beneficial fear, it drives a person to avoid or flee from the thing they fear. Simply saying one fears something without fleeing from it or taking precautions against it is not beneficial fear.

From an Islamic perspective fear can come about for example, when you read about the punishment of the sinners in the Hell fire, you begin to fear that something like that can happen to you too. A Muslim should fear no one but Allah (SWT), and this will allow him to fear nothing in this world:

"He who fears Allah, Allah will make all others fear him, and He who does not fear Allah, Allah will make him fear everything"^{xvii}

A BALANCE OF HOPE AND FEAR

“A slave will not be a believer, unless he is fearful and hopeful”^{xviii}

We need hope to motivate us to achieve our goals and we need fear to prevent us from being careless and irresponsible. For example, before a test, a person has both fear and hope. The fear motivates the person to study and work extra hard to make sure they don't fail, while hope of succeeding and the reward of doing well also motivates a person to do the same.

In the same way, believers hope for the Mercy and reward of Allah, The Exalted, but at the same time fear the result of disobeying Allah. Hope helps us achieve our lawful desires, but at the same time fear of punishment helps us police ourselves and avoid making mistakes.

Hope alone, without fear, will cause us to follow our desires without observing the boundaries placed by Allah and this will result in us committing many sins. If you look at the Christian belief, it only teaches hope and its followers don't fear doing bad deeds because they falsely believe that they will be forgiven for everything.

Similarly, fear alone is also dangerous as it will prevent us from acting and achieving our goals, from making changes to our past mistakes and improving our future. Fear alone makes a person quit trying to improve him/herself and this results in the person continuing to commit sins. Therefore, despair is caused by fear alone and is a great sin itself.

Thus hope and fear together are often seen like the two wings of a bird. For a believer who is moving towards perfection and nearness to Allah, The Exalted, it is the wings of hope and fear that help him/her achieve that. Imam al-Ṣādiq reminds us that we have to have true fear and hope, and that is that:

“A person who hopes for something seeks it (by working for it) and a person who fears something flees from it”^{xix}

HOW TO DEVELOP A BALANCE OF FEAR AND HOPE

This can be done by looking at both sides of achieving our goals. The benefit of the goal is what creates hope in us, and the possible risk involved on that path creates fear in us. Once we see both sides, we can

decide properly on a certain goal and can do it carefully and responsibly.

From an Islamic point of view, it is necessary for us to keep in mind the rewards of doing good deeds. At the same time, we should be also aware of the punishments of disobeying Allah, The Exalted, so we don't become proud of our good deeds.^{xx}

Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says: “Fear Allah in such a way that you would not dare to disobey Him, and have hope in Allah in such a way that you would not despair from His Mercy”^{xxi}

Review Questions

Q1. A believer:

- Has more fear than hope
- Has more hope than fear
- Has a balance of hope and fear

Q2. Allah (SWT) promises a believer that if he fears Allah only:

- God will make him afraid of everything
- God will make everything afraid of him
- God will leave him alone

ⁱ Quran - “The measure of which is thousand years of what you count” (32:5) also “the measure of which is fifty thousand years” (70:5)

ⁱⁱ The Hereafter (Ma’ad)- Ayatollah Dastghaib Shirazi also supported in the Quran “and what they never thought of shall become plain to them from Allah” (39:47)

ⁱⁱⁱ There are number of Ayaat in the Quran providing this proof. For instance see: 15: 85, 23:115.

^{iv} Al Ma’ad- Ayatollah Dastghaib Shirazi- Page 95

^v “And when Ibrahim said: My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead, He said: What! and do you not believe? He said: Yes, but that my heart may be at ease. He said: Then take four of the birds, then train them to follow you, then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to you flying; and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.” (2:260)

Commentary from Sayyid Mahdi Pooya <http://www.al-islam.org/quran/>

^{vi} Ma’ad Pg. 109

^{vii} Ibid. Page 113

^{viii} Ibid Page 116

^{ix} Ibid- Page 138

^x Teachers can talk about the story of Qarun (28:76-79) as has been discussed in previous years.

^{xi} Najhul Balagah Sermon- 203

^{xii} Jami’ As Sa’adat

^{xiii} Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi (Tehran), Vol. IV, p.8

^{xiv} Nahjul balagha sermon?

^{xv} eHawza- Practical Irfan Semester 2- Lesson on Zuhd

^{xvi} “So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you; and Allah does not love any arrogant boaster” (57:23)

^{xvii} Mishkatul Anwar, n. 582

^{xviii} Mishkatul Anwar, n. 588

^{xix} Mishkatul Anwar, n. 584


^{xx} References

Mishkat ul Anwar Fi Ghurar al Akhbaar (section 3, chapter 4, no. 593, p 298)

Basic Beliefs of Islam, Sayyed Kamoounpuri PhD, page 149 – 150

Holy Qur’an

^{xxi} Mishkatul Anwar, m. 590



PROPHET MUḤAMMAD (PBUH)

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص)

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: THE EARLY STAGES OF THE PROPHET'S LIFE

In this unit, we will discuss many of the aspects of the Prophet's life before he moved from Mecca to Medina. We will learn a lot about the Prophet's life in Mecca and the great events that occurred there.

ARABS BEFORE ISLAM

We learnt in the previous years that the Prophet was sent to a very ignorant and ruthless Arab community. Their practices included:

- Considering newly born daughters to be an evil omen and thus burying them alive
- Families taking pride and boasting about the number of sons and cattle they possessed
- Women being treated as slaves who were expected to yield to any demand of the men's lust.
- Brutal wars being caused by very insignificant reasons with no party willing to compromise, leaving them to fight for years. Due to this bloodshed and instability, most Arabs lived a nomadic life moving from place to place in order to find safety and greener pastures for their cattle.

In the more populated regions, prostitutes hung white flags outside their homes as an indication that they were available for a customer. Heavy drinking and gambling was the norm while superstition and witchcraft was considered to be systems that ran the universe. Above all, the community suffered from anarchy and corruption; there were no systems in place to correct misdoings.

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand the environment at the time of the beginning of the Prophet's mission
- Appreciate and understand how and why the Prophet selected Ḥalima
- Be able to understand the false narrations from the true ones regarding the first revelation
- Understand the consequences of the first general invitation to Islam and the difficulties faced by the first Muslims
- Learn about the main events of the Prophet's life in Mecca
- Learn about the struggles of the early Muslims and their patience
- Know that Islam abolished all forms of racism and prejudice
- Learn about the economic blockade imposed by Quraysh against the Muslims, and how the Muslims suffered patiently through this
- Learn about patience and ways of achieving patience
- Learn briefly about the Prophet's ascent to heaven

To summarise, it can be said that the environment in which the Prophet's mission began could not have been any worse because not only were people indulging in every kind of uncivilised and inhumane act, but also were extremely resistant to any form of change and would go to the extent of eliminating anyone who proposed change.

THE PROPHET SELECTS HIS OWN WET NURSE

Because the cities tend to be more polluted and disease-infested than the rural areas, mothers from the cities would send their babies away to the rural areas and pay a woman to breast feed their child. Such women who breast-feed and look after others' children are called wet nurses and such practice was very common in Arabia. The advantage was that the baby would be safe from pollution and would enjoy a healthier environment in the rural areas.

The Holy Prophet's mother *Āmina* was able to breast feed her son for only a few days due to a sickness, after which she began searching for a wet nurse for him. Traditions say that up to 480 wet nurses were offered to the Prophet but he rejected all of them. Like previous wet nurses, *Ḥalīma*, a pious lady from the tribe of *Sā'd* also tried her luck. She says that due to the drought at that time, she did not have any milk in her right breast and in the left one there was very little remaining. Out of desperation *Āmina* accepted for Mohammed to try her out.

Ḥalīma hugged the baby against her bosom and deliberately kept him away from her right breast in case *Āmina* would come to know of her situation. As much as *Ḥalīma* prevented him from doing so, Muhammad constantly turned towards her right side while rejecting the left. *Ḥalīma*, feeling very embarrassed, prayed to God to intervene as this was her last opportunity if she was to be successful in being the foster mother of the unique child.

Ḥalīma placed the child on her right and as soon as he touched her right breast milk began to flow like a fountain. *Ḥalīma* burst out in tears unable to believe what she was seeing since for several years she had no milk and all of a sudden milk was flowing from her breast freely.

Upon returning to her house with the Prophet, she also realised that her cattle began to produce a greater yield of milk despite the drought and she realised that all these blessings were received because the child was a special one!

One possible reason why the Prophet selected only *Ḥalīma* as his wet nurse was because out of all 480 women she was the only one who believed in one God. In order to prevent the evils of polytheism from affecting the purity of his faith, the prophet only chose a monotheist. Imam 'Ali (as) gives a reason for this selectivity:

“Take into account who it is that suckles your children, for verily this is what a child grows on” (Mizan-ul-Hikmah, no: 2601)

BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE TRADITIONS REGARDING THE FIRST REVELATION

In the last lesson, we discussed some of the narrations regarding the first revelation that the Prophet ever received. By now you should be able to differentiate which narrations are authentic by checking them against the principles of Islam and our logical reasoning. We will very briefly go over the arguments.

Some Muslims believe that when the Prophet received the first verse of Surah 'Alaq from *Jibrā'il*, he became very frightened. He doubted what he saw, thought he had become insane and after a brief cessation of revelation, even contemplated suicide. According to the same sourcesⁱ, the prophet rushed home and narrated the story to his wife Khadija who asked him to calm down.

Since the Prophet doubted whether what he saw in the cave was an angel or a devil, Khadija performed a test to determine which was true. Whilst accommodating the Prophet in her lap, she asked him whether he was seeing an angel or devil to which the Prophet says that he was unsure. Khadija then removed her head covering and asked the Prophet what he could see, to which he replied 'nothing'. Then Khadija tells the Prophet that he had definitely been seeing an angel because as soon as she removed her head-covering only an angel would feel ashamed and go away.ⁱⁱ

These narrations imply that:

- The Prophet was unable to distinguish angels from devils and needed his wife to guide him
- The Prophet was not aware of his purpose in life (due to the surprised reaction to Jibrāʾīl's message).

Also, could a man who was supposed to be the best example and the best leader for the whole of mankind ever think of committing suicide? How weak would such a leader be? Was Allah (SWT) not aware that such would be the condition of his beloved Prophet when he would receive this message? Furthermore, where did Khadija learn that test? Was Muḥammad so heedless that he could not tell the difference between a devil and an angel? Are angels responsible like men for lowering their gaze?

In contrast let us see what our Imams have told us about the incident. Imam al-Hādī (as) says:

"...When Muḥammad (saw) reached the age of forty, Allah looked at his heart and found it the brightest and the softest heart. Thus, He ordered the Gates of Heaven to be opened for him. Then Allah sent the angels down to him. Muḥammad saw them. Muḥammad looked at Jibrāʾīl who was within an aura of brightness around him. Jibrāʾīl came to him and shook his hand and said to him: Recite! He said what should I recite? The angel said: Recite in the name of your Lord who created..."

Muhammad (saw) was overjoyed and excited. He came down from the mount and was wondering if the pagans of Quraysh would deny him. Thus, Allah willed to empower his Messenger with more certainty and hence he did not pass by any vegetation or rock but they greeted him as the 'Messenger of Allah'..." ⁱⁱⁱ

Any clear-minded person would be able to judge which of the narrations are closer to reality.

Review Questions

Q1. When the Prophet (saw) received the first revelation:

- a) He did not know an angel was speaking to him and he became very frightened and almost killed himself
- b) He went to ask his wife and her uncle what was happening to him because he did not know
- c) Knew he was chosen by God to start his mission, and although he felt great responsibility, he knew He was chosen as a Prophet

Q2. Before the Prophet's message, Arabian society:

- a) Was very advanced and had high morals
- b) Was very backwards and had terrible morals
- c) Was wealthy and had great technology

Q3. The Prophet chose Ḥalīma as his wet-nurse because:

- a) She was kind and gentle
- b) She was an experienced wet-nurse
- c) She was a believer in One God

LESSON 2: THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE BEGINS

GENERAL INVITATION TO ISLAM AND THE FIRST MUSLIMS

Three years after receiving the first revelation, the Prophet began inviting the general public to Islam. In those first three years, the Prophet invited his family and a select few companions to Islam. After this core had formed, he began to publicly preach the message of "There is no God but Allah" and "Muḥammad is His messenger". He informed them of the hereafter and the system of reward and punishment therein.

Many people found his words very attractive because they conformed to reason and logic. At the same time, many reacted angrily towards him because they realised his teachings threatened their status and interests. They called him a magician who wished to create discord and disunity amongst them. They even urged their children to throw stones and rubbish at him as he walked in their alleys. With a lot of forbearance, Prophet Muhammad (saw) continued his message together with a few companions who had secretly accepted Islam before this general invitation. These include the likes of Bilāl, Abū-Dhar al Ghifārī, Salmān al Fārisī, Miqdād and Ammār ibn Yāsir. The Quraysh leadership, headed by Abū Sufyān, could no longer tolerate the Prophet's message and behaviour anymore and eventually decided to kill him and subject his companions to extreme torture with the hope of forcing them to surrender. We recount the torture they experienced briefly so that we can appreciate that we are Muslims today because of the enormous sacrifices the Prophet and his distinguished companions made.^{iv}

BILAL

Bilāl had undertaken the protection of the Prophet on himself, but his Master Umayya became furious and wanted to take revenge. He made Bilāl lie bare on the hot sand during the hottest days, placed a big red-hot stone on his chest and addressed him in these words: "I will not release you until you die in this condition or leave the faith of Muḥammad and worship Lāt and 'Uzza (idols)". Despite this torture, Bilāl replied with these words: "Aḥad! Aḥad! Aḥad!" (Professing the Oneness of Allah).

'AMMAR IBN YĀSIR

'Ammār and his parents Yāsir and Sumayya were amongst the first Muslims. They were tortured with the sword and flames of fire and were severely whipped. This persecution was repeated so many times that Yāsir and Sumayya became the first martyrs in Islam, but amazingly, they never forsook their belief in God and His Messenger.

Such was the faith of the close companions of the Prophet. Can we claim to be as strong in faith as them? Would we succumb to such pressures? Are we now putting to waste the blood that these men and women shed for Islam by following our own desires instead of following Islam and the Prophet's teachings? If not, are we desperately looking for ways to improve ourselves and help the cause of Islam before our time runs out and before we have to stand to answer our Prophet?

THE PROPHET DID NOT TOLERATE DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

One of the main parts of the Prophet's message was that everyone, whether male or female, black or white, rich or poor, Arab or non-Arab, were all equal and only the more pious would enjoy greater superiority over others in the eyes of Allah (Quran 49:13). The Prophet did not differentiate between these classes and this was most annoying to the arrogant of Quraysh. They were asked to sit and dine together with the poor, accept their proposals of marriage to their daughters and also to share positions of leadership with them.

These messages were not taken very well by that community because it meant that they would have to change their old habits and attitudes at the onset of accepting Islam.

The oppressed loved these teachings but the oppressors detested them. The short incident below is an example of how particular the Prophet was in ensuring that equality prevailed.

Once a father arrived in the presence of Prophet Muḥammad (saw) accompanied by his two children. In his presence he kissed one child and ignored the other. Noticing this incorrect act Prophet Muḥammad (saw) commented: "*Why do you not treat your children equally?*"

Another story that also highlights this point:

A rich person dressed in clean and elegant clothes arrived in the presence of the Prophet (saw) and sat down before him. A short while later, a poor person wearing old and tattered clothes, appeared, saluted the assembly, and sat down upon finding a vacant place.

The Prophet (saw) had taught them that all Muslims were brothers and in an assembly one should sit wherever one finds a place, regardless of any status. Now, it so happened that this poor man was seated next to a very rich man. The rich man felt very disturbed and tried to collect the edges of his dress around himself, so that the poor man didn't touch them.

Having observed this, the Prophet (saw) remarked to the rich man: "Did you fear that the poor person next to you might make your clothes dirty?"

"No," replied the rich person.

"Then why did you behave so?" asked the Prophet (saw).

"I admit that was the most undesirable thing to do. It was an error and I confess my guilt. I have a companion (soul) that makes good deeds appear evil to me and vice-versa. O Prophet of Allah! As a punishment for this reprehensible act of mine, I gift half of my wealth to the poor man."

Turning to the poor man, the Prophet (saw) inquired, "Do you accept the offer?"

"No, O Prophet of Allah," said the poor man.

People present were taken by surprise, they thought that the poor man was a fool, but then he explained: "O Prophet of Allah, I refuse to accept this offer because I fear that I might then become arrogant and ill-treat my Muslim brothers the way he did to me."

ENJOINING GOOD AND FORBIDDING EVIL

The Prophet (saw) taught the above morals and values, as well as many others, and he also tried his very best to encourage people to put them into practice. The Prophet's main obligation in implementing all these morals and teachings was to enjoin good and forbid evil. The Prophet (saw) was a master in this, and his life is full of lessons for us when we want to follow in his footsteps and do the same.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“He who sees wrong being done should redress the situation with his own hand, and if he cannot do so then with his tongue, and if he cannot do so then with his heart (disapproving the act), and that is the weakest level of faith.”^v

We should always remember the above narration. We should also remember that there is a correct way to go about this obligation. Here are some quick tips:

Speak kindly to people: This will encourage them towards doing good. For example, screaming at someone to offer their prayers is obviously not encouraging and if anything, will cause them to dislike praying.

Educate: If someone is listening to music or dancing, it is best to explain to them what the negative effects of music and dancing are in order for them to understand. This will be more effective than just saying that music is *ḥarām*.

Limit to kindness?: If you have explained numerous times to a person the reasons why something is wrong but they insist on their evil action or keep encouraging you to do that evil action, then frowning at them or avoiding them may be the only option left in order to protect yourself and others in the community.

Review Questions

Q1. The Prophet preached that:

- a) Arabs should have priority over non-Arabs
- b) Men have more rights than women
- c) All people are equal, and we should only precedence according to faith

Q2. The Prophet taught that:

- a) We should enjoin good and forbid evil in any way we feel is right
- b) We should enjoin good and forbid evil but in the correct way as he did it
- c) We do not need to enjoin good and forbid evil, as long as we live a good life ourselves

Q3. Which of the following were close and loyal companions of the Prophet (there may be more than one answer)

- a) Salmān al-Fārisi and ‘Ammār
- b) Abu Hurayrah and Abu Bakr
- c) Miqdād and Bilāl

LESSON 3: GREAT EVENTS IN THE PROPHET'S LIFE

So far, we have discussed the early part of the Prophet's message. We discussed the first revelation, and then the general invitation the Prophet made to Quraysh. We then saw how Quraysh tortured the Prophet and his companions in order to make them turn away from Islam. The companions remained steadfast however and continued to declare their faith in Islam and the Prophet (saw).

THE ECONOMIC BLOCKADE

After several failed attempts to extinguish the light of Islam, the chiefs of Quraysh led by Abu Sufyan decided upon an economic blockade. They formed terms and conditions that every person belonging to the Quraysh had to follow. In brief, these conditions included a ban on:

- every sort of trade with the prophet and his supporters
- association with the prophet and his supporters
- marriage with the prophet and his supporters

The prophet and his companions were exiled and had to live in a valley known as the 'valley of Abu Talib'. They were forced to set up small houses and tents in this region. The blockade which lasted for three years placed immense pressure on the Muslims such that at times all they ate during the day was one date, and even that would have to be shared between two people.

Even in such intense conditions, the Prophet remained patient, calm and composed, placing his full trust in Allah (SWT). Whenever he got an opportunity to preach, he did so. It was also in these three years that the wealth of Khadija served to keep the Muslims alive. She exhausted all her wealth for the sake of Islam.

After three years of intense suffering, the Muslims returned to their homes and trade with the Quraysh was restored. However it was not long before that the Holy Prophet lost his dear uncle Abu Talib and just two months after his beloved wife Khadija passed away. This was a great loss for the Prophet- he called this the year of sorrow- because Abu Talib had taken care of the Prophet since he was young and therefore was a father to him. Even though the Prophet had lost two loved ones successively, he practiced high levels of patience and continued his responsibilities towards Allah undeterred.

Now let us briefly turn our attention to the virtue of patience and see how, where and when we should practice it.

PATIENCE (SABR)

In a famous hadith, Imam 'Ali (as) states that:

“Success will not be denied to one who is patient, even though it (success) may take a long time to reach him”.

The truth of this can clearly be seen in the process of building Islam by the Prophet (saw) and the early Muslims. Today Islam is thriving in all corners of the world, after a lot of hardship and suffering in the early days –had the Prophet (saw) and early Muslims not been patient, Islam would not have survived over these generations.

SO WHAT IS PATIENCE?

There are many definitions of patience, but the best and closest ones are the following:

The famous scholar Nasir al-Din al-Tusi said:

“Ṣabr means restraining the self from agitation when confronted with undesirable events.”

From this we understand that patience is the ability to tolerate a bad, hurtful or painful situation and to deal with it in a reasonable way without becoming angry, agitated or hopeless.

WAYS TO ACHIEVE PATIENCE

Below is a piece of advice from Imam Khomeini (r.a) for achieving patience:

“This world is a believer’s prison. Gather all the strength at your command and be patient and forbearing throughout its ups and downs. With courage and fortitude, stand against adversities and calamities. Make yourself understand that the agitation and anguish inside you, aside from involving a great disgrace by themselves, are futile in confrontation with sufferings and calamities. Be happy with God and don’t complain in front of creatures about His irresistible decrees and unavoidable ordainments.

During the times of hardships, turn your heart’s attention to God and you will witness its effects in this world itself and your heart will attain such an expanse that it will witness God’s Power. Richness and contentment will then spread through your heart such that everything related to this world will become worthless in your eyes. Patience, forbearance and restraint bring fair, plentiful rewards and have sublime and beautiful forms in the world of Barzakh (purgatory).

If you have faith in God and you believe that all the affairs lie in His mighty hands, you will not complain before God Almighty of the hardships of life and the adversities that strike you. Rather, you will accept them willingly, fulfil your duties and thank Him gratefully for His bounties.” (Forty Ḥadīth, Chapter 16, Ayatollah Khumayni)

ME’RĀJ - THE HEAVENLY ASCENSION

Now we come to another great even in the Prophet’s life which occurred while the Prophet was still in Mecca. The Prophet (saw) achieved the most lofty and sublime spiritual station by personifying great qualities such as patience. This led to a unique achievement for the Prophet, which was that of the heavenly ascension or Me’rāj.

Me’rāj was one of several unique distinctions given to the Holy Prophet by Allah (SWT). This was the physical journey of the prophet at night-time beginning from Masjidul Ḥarām in Mecca to Masjidul Aqsā in Quds, and then to an unspecified spiritual realm where the heavens and hell and other realities were witnessed by him. The Qurān refers to Me’rāj:

“Glorified be He who took His slave for a journey by night from Masjidul Ḥarām to Masjidul Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed in order that We might show him of our Signs. Verily, He is the All-hearing, the All-Seeing.” (17: 1)

It is important to note that, the Me'rāj of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad has taken place more than once. As the Qur'ān mentions, the Prophet began his journey from Masjidul Ḥarām in Mecca to Masjidul Aqsa in Jerusalem. From this spot he then proceeded to the skies (heavens) where he observed the stars and the systems of the world and conversed with the souls of the previous prophets, and also with the angels of the heavens, peace and blessing be upon them all. Prophet Muḥammad (saw) saw the centre of the tortures and the blessings (hell and heaven) and became fully aware of the secrets of creation, the extent of the universe and the signs of the Omnipotent Allah (SWT).



Figure 1 Masjid-ul-Aqsa in Al-Quds

According to an old tradition, when the Prophet returned, the Quraysh asked the account of his journey, and Holy Prophet Muḥammad, not only described the physical particulars of Masjidul Aqsa, rather, to prove that he had gone to Jerusalem, he even informed them of the event that took place between Masjidul Aqsa and Mecca. The Prophet (saw) said to them that he met the caravan of such and such tribe who lost their camel and he asked them to give him water and that he drank from their water. It was not long after that the travellers (of that caravan) reported the exact events (as the Prophet had already reported).

A person asked Imam al-Sajjād (as): "Is there a particular place for Allah (SWT)?"

The Imam (as) replied: "no."

The man said: "Then why did He make his Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessing be upon him and his progeny, journey through the skies?"

Imam al-Sajjad (as), replied: "He made him ascend so that he might become aware of the expanse of the universe and see and hear wonderful things, the like of which had not been seen and heard by the eyes and ears before."¹

CONCLUSION

In our lessons this year, we have learnt a great deal about the Prophet's life while he was still living in Mecca. In future years, we will review this history and we will also learn about the Prophet's life after leaving Mecca and travelling to Medina, where the spread of Islam became very quick and the Prophet established a Muslim community.^{vi}



Figure 2 Masjid-an-nabawi in Medina

Review Questions

Q1. Me'rāj refers to:

- The Prophet's ascent to heaven during the night, both physical and spiritual, which happened only once
- The Prophet's ascent to heaven during the night, both physical and spiritual, which happened multiple times
- The prophet's great moral values

Q2. Besides Imam 'Ali (as), the Prophet's main moral supporter during his life in Mecca was:

- His grandfather Abdul Muttalib
- His distant cousin Abu Sufyan
- His uncle Abu Talib

Q3. The Prophet's main financial supporter during his life in Mecca was:

- His grandfather Abdul Muttalib
- His wife Khadija
- His cousin Ja'far

ⁱ Bukhari 1:3, Muslim 1:141, Tabari 2:47, Behar 18:206

ⁱⁱ Al-Kaaeml 2:31,

ⁱⁱⁱ Behar 18:205

^{iv} For a more comprehensive report, please refer to the book: THE MESSAGE by Ayatollah Subhāni, under the chapter GENERAL INVITATION

^v Scale of Wisdom, IadDth number 4210

^{vi} General Bibliography:

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IMAM ALI

امام علي (ع)

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: IMAM 'ALI, THE IMAM OF THE PIOUS

Objectives >>>**Students should:**

- Understand that Islam is a religion of submission
- Be able to discuss at least two events exemplifying the Imam's submission to Allah (SWT)
- Understand consequences of submission to Allah
- Discuss the proofs for the leadership of Imam 'Ali (as)
- Learn one more of the titles of Imam 'Ali (as)
- Appreciate Imam Ali's contributions to the growth of Islām

Imam 'Ali (as) is a great and peerless personality whose qualities have been recognised by friends and foes alike. He had the unique distinction of being born in the Holy Ka'bah. He first opened his eyes in this world to see the beautiful face of our beloved Prophet (saw), and was brought up under the care of the Prophet (saw). For this reason, the Imam's heart absorbed the actions and the exemplary character of the Prophet (saw). In his early days, our first beloved Imam dedicated himself to the task of spreading Islam and he became a pillar of support for the Prophet. He was neither scared of the hardships nor the threats of the enemies of Islam.

It is only by studying the lives of such holy personalities that we begin to realise how to deal with all the hardships and sufferings of life. The ability to cope with these turmoils of life can only be achieved if one has fully submitted to Allah (SWT). We can liken the Imam's submission to Allah (SWT) to a strong tree trunk giving rise to several different branches, each growing leaves bearing sweet fruits. Virtues such as courage, generosity, kindness and humility- all virtues that our Imam had, are but a few examples of many such fruits, all of which were results of that submission.

In this unit, we will focus on Imam 'Ali's submission to Allah (SWT) and the consequences of that submission.

THE IMAM OF THE PIOUS

Imam 'Ali (as) had many titles that described his various great qualities. One of these was the title of 'the Leader of the Pious'.

Imām al-Muttaqīn (the Leader of the Pious). Being pious means performing all the obligations that God has commanded, and staying away from everything that God has forbidden. Imam ‘Ali (as) was one of the greatest examples of a pious person. No one after the Holy Prophet (saw) can ever claim to be more deserving of this title.

We see many instances in the Imam’s life where he was extra careful to avoid forbidden or dubious actions. For example, during his time as a Caliph, two people visited him to speak about official government business. It was night-time and the Imam had lit a candle so he could see them and be able to write. Soon they finished their business, and were about to begin talking about personal matters. At this point, the Imam blew out the candle and replaced it with another one. When they asked him why he had done so, he told them that the first candle was purchased with public wealth, while the second was his own candle. He did not want to use the candle purchased from public wealth for personal reasons. The two visitors were shocked, yet this story shows the extent of care the Imam (as) showed in avoiding forbidden acts and practising piety.

CONSEQUENCES OF SUBMISSION

As mentioned in the beginning, submission to Allah (SWT) is like a strong trunk of a tree which has several branches. Each branch in turn has several leaves which bear a variety of sweet fruits. The fruits are knowledge, truthfulness, generosity, bravery, satisfaction and so on. All these qualities were elaborately manifested in the Imam’s life. In this section we shall briefly look at some fruits that the tree of submission bore for Imam Ali (as).

HUMILITY

On the battlefield Imam ‘Ali (as) showed matchless bravery and aggression such that no one would dare to challenge him. However, it is this same person that was very often seen dining with the poor and feeding them with his own hands. Moreover, when he used to engage in private communications with his Lord, he would be seen crying and in absolute awe of Allah. There is enough evidence for this in his famous supplications such as *Duā’ Kumail*, *Duā’ Mashlāl* and *Duā’ Šabāh*. For instance in *Duā’ Kumail* we read:

“O Allah! Accept my apology and have pity on my intense sufferings and set me free from my heavy chains. My Cherisher! Have mercy on the infirmity of my body, the delicacy of my skin and the brittleness of my bones”

SATISFACTION

Despite all the hardships that the enemies of Islam and the hypocrites imposed upon him, Imam ‘Ali (as) never complained nor did he appear like one who had given up hope in the affairs of this world. This is because his heart had deeply submitted to the will of Allah (SWT) and therefore, whether he received good or bad, it all seemed beautiful since the source of it all is the possessor of all beauty. Hence he was always satisfied with what Allah wanted. As a result, when the Imam was struck with a poisonous blow in the mosque of Kufa, he said: “I swear by the Lord of the Ka’ba that I have been successful”. The Imam (as) explains how he achieved this high level of satisfaction:

“The source of satisfaction (contentment) is trust in Allah”ⁱ

ISLĀM: A RELIGION OF SUBMISSION

This is the true meaning of the word Islām: complete submission to what Allah wills and not what our desires wish. Imam ‘Ali is the perfect example of true submission.

Review Questions

Q1. The word Islām means:

- Submission
- Peace
- Love

Q2. According to Imam ‘Ali (as), the source of being satisfied with whatever occurs in our life is:

- Being wealthy
- Being cheerful
- Having trust in Allah (SWT)

Q3. Being pious means:

- Praying and fasting
- Avoiding all impermissible things and performing all obligatory acts
- Being brave

LESSON 2: IMAM 'ALI: THE GREAT WARRIOR

In our last lesson, we discussed Imam 'Ali's submission to the commands of Allah (SWT). We also discussed some of the consequences of submission, including bravery. In this lesson, we will look at three main examples of how Imam Ali's bravery helped Islam advance and spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

THE HERO OF THE BATTLE OF BADR

This was the first battle that the Muslims fought against the polytheists of Mecca. At the time, Imam 'Ali (as) was just a youth with not much war experience. Despite this, his valour and courage in fighting for the sake of Allah (SWT) was matchless. He killed three eminent persons of the infidels first off and this developed fear and chaos in the ranks of the enemies as to who should fight him in single combat. Imam 'Ali in this battle scared the enemies similar to a lion running towards a flock of sheep. The Imam did all this not for any fame or physical luxury but for the sake of removing any obstacles in the path of the religion of his Lord. Once again, the Imam's bravery became manifest – a result of true submission to Allah (SWT).

THE BATTLE OF ŪHUD

In this battle, the Muslims did not follow the instructions of the Prophet (saw). Wishing to cover their rear in view of their small numbers, the Muslims posted themselves at the foot of Mt. Ūhud. Their right flank and rear were covered by the mountains, but their left flank lay in open ground and was thus exposed to a charge by the enemy cavalry. To guard against this, the Prophet posted fifty archers on this flank, with orders not to leave their post in any situation. At some point during the battle, the Muslims, upon seeing that many of the disbelievers have been killed, began to sense victory and therefore lost their discipline. The archers, who had been posted by the Prophet at the strategic pass, also imagined that the enemy had already been beaten, and was in retreat. Against the direct orders of the Prophet, they descended into the plain below to capture their share of the booty. Their head, Abdullah ibn Jubayr, ordered them not to abandon the post but they paid no attention, and descended into the valley. Their love of booty cost the Muslims victory in the battle of Ūhud! The enemy took

advantage of this and decided to attack the Muslims from the rear. As a result of this disarray and fear, majority of the Muslims began fleeing from the battlefield as soon as they smelled defeat. The Prophet was calling for their help but they ignored his cries.

It was at this time that Imam 'Ali was the one to come to the forefront. Although he was fatigued as a result of constant fighting throughout the day and had several injuries too, his spirit to protect the Messenger of Allah (SWT) was indomitable. Imam 'Ali says that at a time when everyone deserted the prophet, I was moving like a butterfly around the prophet endeavouring to protect him. Such is the submission of our holy Imam to the Prophet (saw) and hence to Allah (SWT). Would we protect our Imam (as) when he reappears in this same manner? Or would we run away like the other Muslims?

THE BATTLE OF AHZĀB

In this battle, there was an exceptionally strong and daring fighter by the name of 'Amr in the ranks of the enemy forces. No one dared to fight him because of his extraordinary skill and power. The faith of Muslims was tested when he shouted at their camp demanding that someone stand up and fight him one-on-one. At a time when all those in the Muslim army were afraid, it was Imam 'Ali (as) who with no hesitation sought permission from the Prophet to fight 'Amr. The battle began and it was not long before the master of the believers had gained an upper hand over his enemy. The Muslims heard Imam 'Ali (as) exclaim: "Allāhu Akbar." The scenario reached a point such that the Imam (as) was sitting on the chest of this vicious enemy just about to sever his neck when 'Amr spat at him. At once, Imam 'Ali (as) walked off, leaving 'Amr on the ground. The Imam walked around the body of 'Amr for a while before returning to kill him with a final blow.

When the Imam returned to the Muslim camp, a few of the companions asked him of his strange delay in finishing off his enemy. The Imam's reply was astounding! He said that if he would have killed 'Amr immediately after he was spat at, it would have been as a result of his own anger and not for the sake of Allah (SWT). To avoid this, he let his anger subside and then carried the action out later solely for the sake of God. This was the level of submission that our Imam showed. Every action in his life was dedicated to the pleasure of Allah (SWT) and not for his self.

SUBMISSION TO ALLAH (SWT)

Similarly, whenever we are doing any action for the pleasure of Allah, however difficult the situation becomes, we have to endeavour to make sure that our intention remains purely for the sake of Allah and not for our own good. Once we do this, Allah elevates our status and gives us the full reward of that action.

Review Questions

Q1. In which of the battles did the Muslims disobey the Prophet's orders and then abandon him?

- Badr
- Uḥud
- Aḥzāb

Q2. Why did Imam 'Ali not kill 'Amr after he spat at him?

- To make him suffer more
- To make sure that when he killed him it was for the sake of God only
- Both of the above

Q3. Which was the first battle the Muslims fought against the Meccans?

- Badr
- Uḥud
- Aḥzāb

LESSON 3: PROVING IMAM 'ALI'S LEADERSHIP AFTER THE PROPHET (SAW)

The first Imam and successor of the Prophet (saw) was Imam 'Ali (as). The Prophet (saw) announced this many times throughout his life. Unfortunately, after the Prophet passed away, many Muslims ignored the instructions of the Prophet and followed other leaders besides Imam 'Ali (as).

Imam 'Ali (as) was patient when his right was taken away. He remained silent so that there would not be division among the Muslim community. He did what he could to help the Muslim community in all situations. However, when it was appropriate, he spoke about his right and the fact that he was chosen by God and the Prophet to be the next leader of the Muslim community. An example of this comes from his famous sermon of al-Shiqshiqyah in Nahj al-Balaghah:

"Beware! By Allah, the son of Abu Quhafah (Abu Bakr)² dressed himself with it (the caliphate) and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill. The flood water flows down from me and the bird cannot fly up to me. I put a curtain against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it.

Then I began to think whether I should assault or endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations wherein the grown up are made feeble and the young grow old and the true believer acts under strain till he meets Allah (on his death). I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throat"

As followers of Imam 'Ali (as), it is important for us to know how and when the Prophet (saw) announced that Imam 'Ali (as) would be his successor. In this lesson, we will look at the main instances in which this happened, so that we can have firm knowledge regarding this fundamental belief of ours.

THE PROPHET INVITES HIS FAMILY TO ISLAM

One incident where the Prophet announced that Imam 'Ali (as) would be the first Imam after him was an event known as Da'wat Dhul 'Ashīrah. When the Prophet (saw) first received the revelation he was ordered by Allah, to not announce the message publicly and to only preach to those closest to him. This is when Imam 'Ali (as), Khadījah, and some other people very close to the Prophet (saw) became Muslims. The next stage was that the Prophet had to present the message to his relatives—the family of Bani Hāshim. So the Prophet (saw) invited them to his house for a meal and explained to them the belief of Islam and asked them to become Muslims. Some of them responded in a positive way, while others made fun of the Prophet and were arrogant. One of the Prophet's uncles, Abu Lahab (as we have learnt in previous lessons) mocked the Prophet in a hurtful way.

During this gathering, one very important event occurred that shows that even at the beginning of the message, the Prophet (saw) was mindful about who will be his successor and the Imam after him. It is for this reason that the Prophet (saw) asked in this gathering: "which one of you will be my supporter so that he may become my brother (akhi), vicegerent (waṣī) and successor (khalifah)?"

When the speech reached this point there was perfect silence. All of a sudden 'Ali, who was then a young boy of about twelve or thirteen, broke the silence. He stood up and said in a forceful tone: "O Prophet of Allah! I am prepared to support you". The Prophet ordered him to sit down. He repeated the words three times and each time only Imam 'Ali rose with the same response. He then turned to those present and said: "People! This young man is my brother, vicegerent and successor amongst you. Listen to his words and follow him"

THE EVENT OF GHADIR

The Prophet (saw) made it very clear to the Muslims that his first successor was Imam 'Ali, peace be upon him. We have already seen what happened in the incident of the gathering of the family of the Prophet (saw). There is another major event in the life of the Prophet which happened towards the end of his life after the last Hajj. After this there would be no doubt as to who Allah (swt) and His Prophet (saw) had chosen as the first Imam.

As the Prophet (saw) was returning from the Farwell Pilgrimage (the Hajj which the prophet performed a few months before passing away), an āyah was revealed to the Prophet where he was ordered to do complete a very important task. This task was so important that if he did not do it, it would have been as if he did not reveal the entire message of Islam! This was the following verse:

"O Messenger! Proclaim that which has been sent down to you from your Lord. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His Message. Allah will protect you from mankind. Verily, Allah guides not the people who disbelieve." (5:67)

When this verse was revealed, the Prophet (saw) immediately gathered all those that were in front of him and all those behind him. Now, he was to reveal to the people the important news that he was ordered to announce by Allah (swt). As we see from the āyah the issue that the Prophet was to announce might not be taken well by some people, so Allah (SWT) tells his Prophet that He will protect him from the people.

What was this important news?

The following is a narration of the event. This event has been recorded by 110 companions and 360 scholars, from both Shi'a and Sunni sources:

The Prophet stopped at Ghadīr Khumm, offered midday prayers and then called all the people. He then held the hand of Imam 'Ali (as) and said: 'Do you not know that I have

superior authority over the lives of the faithful than the faithful themselves?' 'Yes you have,' they replied. He again inquired: 'Do you not know that I have superior right to the life of every believer than the believer himself?' 'Surely, you have,' they answered. Then he grasped the hand of 'Ali and said: 'Ali is the Maula (master) of all those of whom I am the Maula (master). O Allah! Befriend those who take him as their master and forsake those who forsake him.

...Then 'Umar came to 'Ali and said: 'Congratulations to you the son of Abu Tālib. You have become the maula (master) of all the faithful men and women.'" ii

After the Prophet delivered the news, the following Ayah was revealed to the Prophet (s):

"This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (5:3)

Through the appointment of Imam 'Ali (as) as the successor of the Prophet in front of all of the people, the religion of Islam was now complete. Imam 'Ali had been clearly and undoubtedly been appointed as the successor of the Prophet (saw) in front of all the Muslims. Unfortunately, this event was later forgotten or misinterpreted by most Muslims.

As the followers of Imam 'Ali (as), we refer to this event to prove that Imam 'Ali was the rightful leader of the Muslim after the Prophet (saw) without any doubt. The reason that we emphasise this point is that the progress, health and safety of Islam depended on Imam 'Ali (as) being the leader and taking his rightful position. The Imam was appointed by God to lead the Muslims to greater success. Unfortunately, God's orders were ignored and the Muslims eventually suffered a great loss by turning their back on Imam 'Ali (as).

TO MEMORISE:

فقال : من كنت مولاه ، فعلي مولاه ، اللهم وال من
والاه ، وعاد من عاداه

"The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: "Whoever I am his Maula (master), 'Ali (as) is his Maula (master). O Allah befriend the one who takes him as his master, and forsake the one who forsakes him"."

Review Questions

Q1. The Prophet appointed Imam 'Ali as his successor:

- a. Only at Ghadīr
- b. Only at Ghadīr and at the gathering with his family
- c. At Ghadīr, at the gathering with his family, and many other instances

Q2. Who ordered the Prophet (saw) to appoint Imam 'Ali as his successor?

- a. He decided himself
- b. The Muslim community voted
- c. Allah (SWT)

Q3. The event of Ghadīr happened:

- a. At the beginning of the Prophet's message
- b. At the end of the Prophet's life
- c. In the middle of the prophet's life

ⁱ (Mizān ul Hikmah, p.458 no. 2613)

ⁱⁱ Musnad Imam Ahmad, v. 4, p. 281

Multiple other sources from both Shi'a and Sunni sources



يا فاطمة الزهراء يا بنت محمد يا قرينة الرسول يا سيدتنا و مولانا
انا نوجهنا و نستشفقنا و توسلنا بك الى الله و فجعناك بين يدي حاجتنا

SAYYIDAH FĀṬIMAH (AS)

سَيِّدَةُ فَاطِمَةَ (ع)

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Engage in a discussion on chastity
- Engage in a discussion on physical and social ḤIJĀB and understand these
- Listen to one or more stories from the life of Sayyedah FĀṬimah (as) showing the importance of chastity
- Discuss the status of Sayyedah FĀṬimah (as) in the eyes of Allah, including that God loves those who love her, and hates those who hate her
- Discuss the importance of love for Sayyedah FĀṬimah (as) and the different aspects of this
- Discuss the importance of goodness to parents
- Discuss Sayyedah FĀṬimah's (as) relationship with her father (saw)

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: FĀṬIMA'S (AS) CHASTITY

In previous years we have learnt about Sayyedah Fāṭimah's noble family tree and the different aspects of her amazing character for which she earned her honourable titles. Through her we learnt about the importance of being chaste and discussed the effects of ḥijāb and chastity in both males and females and how to implement and maintain chastity in our society today. In this lesson we will further develop these ideas in order to appreciate chastity as being a key factor in nurturing a healthy individual, family and society as a whole.

CHASTITY

As we have always mentioned, our aim in life is to achieve self-purification and perfection in order to be closer to Allah (SWT). Among the essentials required for our journey to perfection is chastity and hence there is so much emphasis on Sayyedah Fāṭimah as a role model in Islam as she exemplified it perfectly.

When we hear the word chastity the first thing that comes to mind is ḥijāb! We will discuss the way in which Fāṭima (as) presented and perfected the different levels of ḥijāb. Keep in mind that all the following levels of ḥijāb are important components of chastity for males and females.

PHYSICAL ḤIJĀB

Islam is a very comprehensive religion through which Allah (SWT) wants to maintain the respect and dignity of a person through all means. The way we dress influences other people and also ourselves.

Don't look and don't be seen: The Messenger of Allah (saw) asked his companions: *"What is best for women?"* No one knew the answer so Imam 'Ali asked Sayyedah Fāṭimah for the answer to which she replied: *"It is best for them not to see men and not to let men see them."* When the Prophet heard the answer, he said: *"Surely she has spoken the truth, for she is part of me."*ⁱ

From this we understand that we (both females and males) should not expose ourselves to people of the opposite gender and when others want to expose themselves to us then we should not look at them. It does not mean that we walk around with a blind-fold on our eyes! Rather it means that we should keep our limits when it comes to dealing with the opposite gender and we should know what is *ġarām* to look at. For example while we are going shopping or to school and we see a lady or man dressed indecently then we should look away and not stare. By looking away we are controlling our desires, we won't be influenced by the scene emotionally and psychologically and we maintain our respect and dignity by not following such worthless things.

The other part of Sayyedah Fāṭimah's advice was that we should not let ourselves be seen in an indecent manner. This means we should dress in a way that does not show our body or the shape of our body and that maintains our dignity.

Hijāb even after death: Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) maintained her *hijāb* even after she left this world. In her will to Imam 'Ali (as) before she passed away she asked him to carry her body to her grave in a closed coffin so that no one would be able to see the shape of her body while she lay in it.ⁱⁱ Hence no matter what situation we are in we should never abandon our chastity.

SOCIAL HIJĀB

Allah (SWT) has given us five senses which are different pathways (or doors) to our hearts and souls: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. Once we use one of these senses to commit any sinful act, it will affect our heart. Imagine the sense as a door that we usually shut in the face of evil. Once we open the door a little it makes it easier for the door to open wider, even the slightest of winds will open it. When we start to interact with someone from the opposite gender inappropriately

(whether directly or over the phone, messages, emails, Facebook etc...), we are beginning to open that door. Hence if we don't close that door in time, there's a great chance that we will fall into major sins.

Hijāb in front of a blind man: One day, a blind man asked for permission to enter Fāṭimah's house, but she kept a veil between them. The Messenger of Allah noticed her actions and asked: *"Why did you keep a veil between you when he cannot see you?"* Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) answered: *"Messenger of Allah, it is true that he cannot see me, but I can see him and he can smell my fragrance."*ⁱⁱⁱ From this we can see that it isn't only the way we dress that has an effect on the other person, and that *hijāb* includes a number of other aspects also.

At the Prophet's mosque:

When Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) went to the mosque to speak to the men about their violation of the message of the Prophet, she did not go on her own even though she was the most respected lady and would never commit any *ḥarām*. She took with her a group of ladies and also had a curtain



put up between themselves and the men so that no one would see her and to maintain the respect and dignity of women.^{iv} From this we also learn that a lady should not put herself in any situation in which she's at risk of compromising her chastity and dignity (such as being alone with a non-*maḥram* of the opposite gender). Furthermore, Sayyedah Fāṭimah did not try to soften her voice to sound 'good' giving her speech because a flirtatious voice can incite sinful thinking; rather she spoke with a strong voice which carried her message across. She presented herself in the most respectful manner especially when addressing males.

Helping and preaching: When poor men would come to her door to ask for help she would ensure she was covered and spoke to them at the door (she wouldn't let them in without the consent of her husband or if her husband wasn't home) and answer their questions or give them what she could in charity.^v

Class Activity: Discussion

For the girls classes, participate in a discussion on *ḥijāb* with your teacher. Bring up any questions you have on physical and social *ḥijāb*.

Review Questions

Q1. Social ḤIJĀB refers to:

- Not doing anything that would incite a member of the opposite gender to think lustfully or do *ḥarām*
- Not backbiting, gossiping, or lying
- Wearing *ḥijāb* in public

Q2. Physical ḤIJĀB refers to:

- Not looking at members of the opposite gender
- Covering our bodies and body shape appropriately
- Both a & b;

Q3. Complete ḤIJĀB involves:

- Wearing the right clothes
- Being wary not to do anything that excites the opposite gender with any of our five senses
- Not looking at the opposite gender

LESSON 2: FĀṬIMA (AS): THE MOTHER OF HER FATHER

In this lesson, we will briefly discuss Sayyedah Fāṭimah's status before Allah (SWT), before having a detailed look at her relationship with her father, Prophet Muḥammad (saw) and the respect, love and kindness she had towards him.

THE STATUS OF SAYYEDAH FĀṬIMAH (AS)

Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) is the most gracious lady that the world has known and seen. She has such a high status in the eyes of Allah (SWT) that He has promised to save all those who truly love her (as), from Hell, and allow them to enter Paradise.

In fact, the Almighty Allah has given Fāṭimah (as) the great title of 'the leader of the all women of the world' (sayyedatu nisā'il ālemīn), confirming her as the greatest woman who ever lived.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE FOR FĀṬIMAH

Such is Fāṭimah's (as) status, that the Almighty has promised that whenever Fāṭimah (as) becomes angry at someone, God Himself shall be angry, at that person, and whoever loves and obeys her, Allah, The Exalted will love that person.^{vi} This narration can also be used to argue for the fact that she was Ma'ṣumah.

Having love for her is so important that it will save us from the fire of Hell. Love is enough to help us stop doing bad things. To understand love in such a case, we can break it up into types of love that reflect our devotion to her. For example, we can have:

- Love in the form of obedience
- Love in terms of hating her enemies
- Love in the form of respect for her status
- Love in the form of imitation: we should take her as a role model and perform the virtuous actions that she performed
- Love in the form of charity: to do practical acts of kindness which she used to do

One of the lessons we learn from the Life of Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) is that of practicing goodness to parents. If we want Allah, The Exalted, to be happy with us, then one of the things we can do to show our love to Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) is to practice goodness to our parents, which is what she taught us to do.

LOVE AND RESPECT BETWEEN FATHER AND DAUGHTER

Sayyedah Fāṭimah and her father (saw) had a very strong bond between them. The love and respect they had for one another was expressed in all aspects of their interactions.

Respect and honour: Whenever Fāṭimah (as) entered the house, the Prophet would stand, greet her, kiss her hands and ask her to sit near him. Likewise, when he entered the house, she would stand, greet him, kiss his hands and ask him to sit near her.^{vii} Here we see that they both reciprocated their respect for one another.

Love and compassion: As a child and even when Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) was married, the Prophet would see her last before going on a trip and she was the first he'd visit when returning. This was because when he left, Fāṭimah, with her love and compassion, would be the last image in his mind and when he returned she was the first person he wanted to see.^{viii}

A helping hand: The Prophet (saw) once entered Fāṭimah's house (as was his usual practice) and found her and Imam Ali grinding grains. The Prophet asked, "Who amongst you is more tired?" Imam Ali replied, "Fāṭima is, O Messenger of Allah." So the Prophet told Sayyedah Fāṭimah to stand out of her spot and he took her position and started to grind the grains with Imam Ali, allowing Sayyedah Fāṭimah to rest.^{ix}



Dropping the formalities: At a particular stage of the Prophet's life in Medina, an āyah was revealed that gave the following orders to the Muslims: 'do not speak to the Prophet (saw) in the same way that you speak to one another'. It was an order to show greater respect and honour to the Prophet (saw). Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) feared that this āyah might apply to her and so she said, "I feared to call the Messenger of Allah, 'Father'; so I began calling him Messenger of Allah. He ignored me two or three times and finally said: 'Fāṭimah, this āyah was not revealed about you or your family, nor does it include your progeny; for you are from me and I am from you. Rather, this āyah was revealed regarding the vain and crude people of Quraysh who are arrogant and spendthrifts. Call me Father; it surely is better for the heart and more satisfying to the Lord.'"^x

Mother of her father: Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) cared for her father like a mother cared for her child. After every battle, Sayyedah Fāṭimah would attend the wounds of her father. Due to the love and compassion she showed him throughout her life, the Prophet referred to her as Ummu Abihā which means: 'the mother of her father.'

Spiritual trainer: the Prophet (saw) also focused on the spiritual upbringing of Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as) and always encouraged her to turn only to Allah for help. Another such action which we can benefit from by practicing every night is the following. Fāṭimah (as) said: "My father the Messenger of Allah (saw) entered when I had gone to bed to sleep, and said: 'O Fāṭimah! Do not go to sleep before doing four things: reciting the whole of the Qur'an, making the Prophets your mediators (with Allah), making the believers satisfied with you and performing ḥajj and umrah'. Then he started praying! So, I stayed in bed until he finished the prayer and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! You ordered me to do four things which I could not do in this hour!' The Messenger of Allah smiled and said: 'If you recite Surah Tawḥīd three times it is as if you have recited the whole of the Qur'ān; and if you recite blessings (ṣalawāt) upon me and the prophets before me, then we shall be your mediators on the Day of Judgement; and if you pray that Allah forgives the believers, they shall be satisfied with you; and if you say: Subḥān Allāh wal ḥamdu lillāh wa lā ilāha illallāhu wallāhu akbar, it is as if you have performed the ḥajj!'"^{xi}

Due to her spiritual upbringing and the respect her father showed her, she also raised her children in a similar manner. Furthermore, the respect, love and compassion she showed her father was reciprocated to her not only from her father but her children as well.

There are many lessons we can learn from the relationship between Fāṭimah (as) and her father. The main lesson to learn is that we should treat our parents with love, kindness and respect at all times. They will always remain the most important people in our lives, and we should treat them as such.

Review Questions

Q1. Fāṭimah was called 'the Mother of her Father' because:

- She was wise
- She looked after her father and was very kind to him
- She was patient

Q2. Who gave Fāṭimah (as) the title of the 'Mistress of the Women of the World'?

- The Prophet (saw)
- Imam Ali (as)
- The Almighty Allah (SWT)

Q3. How can we show our love for Fāṭimah (as)?

- Obedying her advice
- Loving those who love her and hating those who hate her
- Both a & b

ⁱFatima the Gracious

ⁱⁱ*Rawdat al-Wāṭithīn*, by Muhammad ibn al-Fatal an-Naysaboori. It is also narrated that only the loyal companions of AhlulBayt were permitted to attend the funeral such as Salman al-Muhammadi, Abu Dhar al-Ghifari, al-Miqdad etc hence due to non-mahram men attending the funeral she wanted to ensure her chastity was intact and her body-shape not revealed.

ⁱⁱⁱFatima al-Ma'suma, by Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah

^{iv}Fatimaaz-Zahra min al-mahd ilal-laḥd, by Sayyed Muhammad Kādhim al-Qazwīnī

^vSuch as when the poor man asked the Prophet for charity but he had nothing to give rather directed him to the house of Fatima. When the poor man came to her house she spoke to him at the door and all she had was her necklace so she gave that to him to sell and by his needs with it. It was bought by 'Ammar bin Yaasir who then sent the necklace with his slave both as a gift to the Prophet. The Prophet sent both the necklace and the slave as a gift to Sayyeda Fatima who then accepted the necklace and freed the slave. (Biharul-anwarvol 43 page 56)

^{vi}*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 43, chapter 8, p. 220

^{vii}Fatima the Gracious, chapter 41

^{viii}Fatima al-Ma'suma, by Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah (<http://www.al-islam.org/fatimahrolemodel/>)

^{ix}As-Sayyedah Fatima az-Zahra, by Muhammad Bayumi.

^xFatima the Gracious

^{xi}Fatima al-Ma'suma, by Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah



SOCIAL ISLAM

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand the importance of social rules in Islam
- Understand that Islam encourages socialisation and discourages seclusion
- Understand that social rules in Islam involve all rules associated with social interactions with family, friends, neighbours etc...
- Understand that social rules also include rules of interactions with animals, plants, and the environment
- Review and memorise the Āyah (2:83) and the principle: 'speak and do good to people'

SOCIAL ISLAM

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

"Speak (and do) good to people" (2:83)

In this lesson, we will be discussing the rules of socialisation in Islam. Although the rules of jurisprudence are important in Islam, the rules of socialisation are also extremely important. In fact, the rules of jurisprudence are called 'the minor jurisprudence', while the rules of socialisation are called 'the greater jurisprudence'.

Our lesson will be based on the above ayah from the Holy Qur'ān which commands us to say and do only good things to all people in general. The word 'قولوا' in this ayah includes actions as well as words.

ISLAM ENCOURAGES SOCIALISATION

In Islam, socialisation is very much encouraged and Islam discourages isolation. In fact, the Prophet (saw) says that the 'asceticism' or isolation which is practiced in the Christian religion and in Buddhism is not encouraged in Islam and that the asceticism of a Muslim is: 'Hajj', 'Jihād', and 'daily prayers'. In other words, Islam encourages practical action within society rather than isolation.

One of the most famous narrations related from Imam 'Ali (as) on social interaction is as follows:

*"Mingle amongst people in such a way that when you die they should weep for you, and when you are alive, they should long for you"*²ⁱⁱ

SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS AND STRANGERS

Islam also encourages socialization with our families and condemns people who abandon their families or do not treat them well. We know this from one incident when some women went to the Prophet (saw) complaining to him that their husbands had stopped eating meat and no longer spent time with their wives and children. The Prophet (saw) was upset at this and reminded his companions that this was not what he had recommended.

When our Imams were asked about how we as Shi'a should treat people of different beliefs, they said they wanted us to treat them well in order to set a good example for them and attract them towards our beliefs, and to be a good reflection of our Imams and our school of thought.

Mu'āwiyah ibn Wahab, a student of the Imam (as), asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (as): "How should we interact with our brothers in faith and with other people that we mix with who do not follow our faith?" The Imam (as) said:

*"Look at your Imams whom you take as guides and do what they do. By Allah, your Imams visit their ill, and attend their funerals, and give testimony for them or against them and fulfil their trusts...once you become very careful about your religion, tell the truth, fulfil the trusts and make your manners with people good, then they will say: 'this is a Ja'fari...' and that would please me"*ⁱⁱⁱ

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AROUND US

Islam also encourages us to be responsible for and take care of our environment and surrounding. This includes our relationship with animals, plants and the general environment. It means that we should not abuse or misuse anything from or in the environment that would damage it.

The environment is a creation of Allah (SWT) and we are responsible for treating every creation of Allah (SWT) with care and respect. The trees have been created to change carbon dioxide to oxygen to refresh the air around us, from the pollution that is caused. Cutting down trees without growing new ones will be harmful to all living

creatures. Therefore, pollution of the environment is considered wrong in Islam.

There is a lot of reward in feeding animals in need of feeding, and this act can free someone from many of their sins. It also acts as a charity for the person who does these deeds. There are many narrations which encourage this, including the following:

The Prophet (saw) said: "every single Muslim that cultivates or plants anything which humans, animals or birds may eat from, this act will be counted as charity for them"^{iv}

Planting trees has also been encouraged in Islam. We have a hadith from the Prophet (saw) in which he says:

"When the Last Hour comes, if any of you happens to be holding a seedling in his hand, then if he is able to, let him not stand until he has planted it."^v



Review Questions

Q1. Islam:

- Encourages isolation and cutting of relations with the general society
- Socialising without any rules or limits
- Socialising, but with certain rules and limits

Q2. The ayah quoted at the beginning of the lesson (2:83) indicates that:

- We should speak good words to people in general
- We should speak and do good to people in general
- We should speak and do good only to good people

ⁱ Bibliography:

Dar-al-Hadith, Cultural Scientific Institute - <http://www.darolhadith.net>
Sheikh Mansour, Social Rules Series, lecture 1

ⁱⁱ [Nahj al-Balagha, Saying 10]

Islamic Studies Syllabus Online: Islamicsyllabus.com

ⁱⁱⁱ [al-Kaafi vol.2. p. 464]

^{iv} [Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 9051]

^v [Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 9056]



TAQLID

التقليد

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Learn about the process of picking a Marja'
- Learn the conditions of being a Marja'
- Learn ways of finding out the rulings of a Marja'
- Review the signs of Taklīf
- Be able to find rulings through the website or book of their Marja'
- Briefly learn the biography of two prominent Marāji'
- Learn about the important role of scholars in Islam

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: SELECTING A MARJA'

Just as a patient refers to a doctor when they have a medical problem, we need to refer to a scholar who is an expert in Islamic law when we have a question about the laws of Islam. Therefore, once we reach the age of responsibility (taklīf) we need to do some research and choose a scholar to follow when it comes to all issues related to Islamic rules. We have a responsibility to research and find the most knowledgeable Mujtahid and refer to him.

A SHORT GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Before we begin discussing the process of choosing a Marja', let us review the meanings of some words we will come across when referring to our Marja's rulings.

In previous years we have learnt the meaning of:

- Wājib (obligatory)
- Mustaḥab (recommended)
- Mubāḥ (permissible)
- Makruh (disliked)
- ḥarām (forbidden)

Now let us discuss some other terms you may come across:

- You may come across the word 'Pak' in the English books of some Maraji'. This is the Farsi word for 'Ṭāhir'.. It is used because the translators of these books often have a Farsi background.

- **Mujtahid:** a person who has the ability of *Ijtihād*. *Ijtihād* is the academic capability of the person to deduce and infer a legal opinion from religious sources and evidence.ⁱ
- **Marja':** a Mujtahid in all fields of jurisprudence. A scholar is called a Marja' when people start to perform *Taqīd* to him (referring to his rulings). At some point, the Marja' may publish a compilation of his edicts (*masā'il*) but this is not a necessary requirement
- **Obligatory precaution:** this is when a Marja' does not have a definite ruling on a particular issue. However, because he is leaning more to one side, or because of other reasons, he gives an obligatory precaution towards that side. For example:

Sayyed Sīstāni (rule 743): The obligatory precaution is that as long as the redness in the eastern sky appearing after sunset has not passed overhead, Maghreb prayer should not be performed.

In the above example, there is a question about the definition of Maghreb. Is it either when the disk of the sun sets, or when the redness in the eastern sky has passed overhead. For one of a number of possible reasons, the scholars here gives an obligatory precaution that Maghreb by definition is when the eastern redness has passed overhead.

In this case, his follower can either follow the precaution that the Marja' has suggested or follow another qualified Mujtahid, if that second Mujtahid has a definite ruling.

- **Recommended precaution:** In this case, the Marja' issues a ruling, but adds a recommended precaution. The followers of this Marja' has the option of practising or not practising this precaution.

Sayyed Sīstāni (rule 797): A woman should cover her entire body while offering prayers, including her head and hair. As a recommended precaution, she should also cover the soles of her feet.

Here, Sayyed Sīstāni has a definite ruling, which is that women do NOT need to cover the soles of their feet during prayer. However, he also believes there is sufficient evidence to take a precaution of covering the feet.

The follower of Sayed Sīstāni has a choice whether to act according to the 'recommended precaution' or not.

*Remember that this is only in regards to prayers. If there are males around, a woman needs to cover her feet at all times.

THE DIFFERENT WAYS OF SELECTING OR IDENTIFYING A MARJA'

The following are the ways of identifying a Mujtahid or the most learned Mujtahid:

- 1) When a person is certain that a particular scholar is a Mujtahid, or the most learned Mujtahid. For this, he should be a learned person himself, and should possess the capacity to identify a Mujtahid or the most learned Mujtahid
- 2) When two persons, who are learned and just and possess the capacity to identify the most learned Mujtahid, confirm that a person is a Mujtahid or the most learned Mujtahid, provided that two other learned and just persons do not contradict them. In fact, being a Mujtahid or the most learned Mujtahid can also be established by a statement of only one trusted and reliable person
- 3) When a number of learned persons who possess the capacity to identify the most learned Mujtahid, certify that a particular person is a Mujtahid or the most learned Mujtahid, provided that one is satisfied by their statement.

ACCESSING THE RULINGS OF A MARJA'

Once we have selected a Marja', we need to know how to find out the rulings in regards to our questions. There are a few ways of doing this:

- Referring to that Marja's book of Islamic Laws, this is usually available in the libraries of most Islamic centres or can be bought online.
- Referring to the Marja's official website. Here, we can refer to the online version of the Marja's book. These books are usually categorised and we can find the topic we are looking for and click on the link (e.g. if I am travelling and want to learn about how to

shorten my prayer, I click on the link that says 'Prayers of a Traveller')

- Referring to the Q & A section of the Marja's official website. Again, this usually has categories. For example, if I want to know about what type of music is haram, I can click on the link 'Music' or 'Musical instruments'.
- Asking a qualified sheikh in our community. Our sheikhs can often explain rulings to us and if they do not know, they can refer to the Marja' themselves and come back to us with an answer. Often when we have difficult questions, this is the best way to get a correct answer.
- We can also learn the rulings of our Marja' by:
 - Hearing it from a person we trust knows the verdicts of the Marja', as in the example of a local qualified sheikh
 - Hearing it from the Marja' himself

Review Questions

Q1. A Mujtahid is:

- a) Any scholar who has studied for at least 10 years
- b) A scholar who is older and more experienced
- c) A person who has the academic capability to deduce a ruling from the religious sources and evidence

Q2. We can choose or find a Marja' by:

- a) Asking two qualified sheikhs to identify a Marja'
- b) Following someone who is well-known in the Shi'a community as a Marja'
- c) Both a & b

LESSON 2: THE ROLE OF SCHOLARS

In this lesson, we will look at some narrations showing the importance of scholars in our society; then we will take a brief look at the lives of two of the most knowledgeable and respected scholars today.

THE VALUE OF A SCHOLAR

Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:

*"Whenever a scholar passes away, a gap appears in Islam which nothing can repair until the Resurrection Day."*ⁱⁱ

Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) says:

*"On the Resurrection Day, Allah (SWT) will gather all the people in one place and the scales will be set up. The blood of the martyrs will be weighed against the pen of the scholars, and the pen of the scholars will outweigh the blood of the martyrs."*ⁱⁱⁱ

SCHOLARS ARE THE HEIRS OF PROPHETS

The narrations from the Ahlul Bayt (as) tell us that the closest people to the prophets are those who are most knowledgeable about the message of the Prophets. They also tell us that the scholars are the heirs and trustees of the Prophets:

Imam al-Ṣādiq:

"...the scholars are the heirs of the Prophets...the Prophets do not pass on Dinars and Dirhams (i.e. wealth) as inheritance, but they pass on knowledge as inheritance."^{iv}

In the next section of our lesson, we will take a brief look into the lives of two of our most prominent maraji'.

AYATOLLAH SAYYID 'ALI KHAMENĀ'I



Figure 1 Ayatollah sayyed 'Ali Khamenā'i

Website: <http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php>

Click on: 'Practical Laws of Islam' for his Risalah

HIS HUMBLE CHILDHOOD IN HIS OWN WORDS

"We had a difficult life. I remember that sometimes at night we didn't have anything in the house for dinner.... The house only had one room and a gloomy basement. Whenever a guest came to see my father - his idea was that a religious scholar's home is a place where people come to seek help - we had to go to the basement until they left."



HIS ACADEMIC SUCCESS

He began Islamic studies from a very young age, and by the age of 18 he was doing '*Baḥthul Khārij*' - the highest level of Islamic studies. He left his hometown Mashhad for Qum in order to further his Islamic studies.



HIS CARE FOR HIS PARENTS

When his parents became elderly and ill, he did something that is difficult for any great scholar. He left the academic arena, in which he was so comfortable and in which he was excelling, to care for his parents back at home. Recalling this, he says: *"If I have been successful in life, I believe that it all stems from this good deed that I did for my father; indeed, for both my father and mother."*

HIS POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

He was one of the students of Imam Khomeini, and he was involved in a lot of political activity against the corrupt regime of the Shah in Iran in the 1950-1970s. Every now and then, he would be arrested and tortured and then released again. He continued to be active and sometimes had to live underground and give lectures and lessons in secret. Finally, the revolution in Iran succeeded and he was one of the few selected by Imam Khomeini to lead the Iranian Islamic Republic. After Imam Khomeini

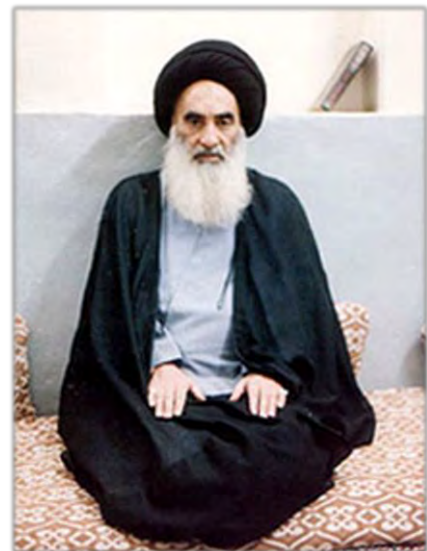
passed away, he was elected by the 'Assembly of the Experts' (which is a body similar to MPs elected by people), as the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Sayyed 'Ali Khamenā'i still has this role and is acknowledged by many as the political leader of the Muslims around the world.



HIS STATUS AS A MARJA'

The fact that Ayatollah Sayyed 'Ali Khamenā'i is a Mujtahid and a Marja' is commonly accepted and was officially announced by the testimony of over 50 Mujtahids.

AYATOLLAH SAYYID ALI SĪSTĀNĪ



Website: www.sistani.org

Click on: Islamic Laws at the top menu to find his Risalah

Born: 1930, in Mashhad

Figure 2 Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Sistani

HIS CHILDHOOD AND EARLY ACADEMIC CAREER

Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Sīstāni grew up in Mashhad and began his Islamic studies at the age of 5. By the age of 18 he moved to Qum to study and two years later he moved on to Najaf. His main teacher in Najaf was Ayatollah Khaz'i.

A UNIQUE TEACHER AND STUDENT

-As a student, he stood out because of his attention to detail, intelligence, hard work and diligent research.

-At 30 years of age, he received certification from his teachers as a Mujtahid and soon began teaching various topics in the Najaf *Hawza*.

-He was a unique and outstanding teacher with a special style. His students state that he always respected others' opinions, was polite and mannered in discussions and in general life, and was extremely pious.

HIS STATUS AS A MARJA'

-He was the special student of Ayatollah Khaz'i- himself a great Marja'- and when Ayatollah Khaz'i passed away, Sayed Sīstāni was acknowledged as the most learned Marja' after him.

HIS SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Once he became a Marja' and people began to follow him in great numbers, the oppressive Iraqi regime closed his mosque and later arrested and tortured him. This happened later on in his life as well. However, no matter what the hardships, he believed that the most important thing was maintaining the *Hawza* in Najaf and so he continued his teaching and other work there.



Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Sīstāni is currently still residing in Iraq and plays a great role in influencing the Iraqi people.

Review Questions

Q1. Who are the heirs of prophets?

- a) Scholars
- b) Martyrs
- c) People who are descendants of the prophet

LESSON 3: FURTHER RULES OF TAQLĪD AND TAKLĪF

This lesson will focus on the conditions of being a Marja', the different ways of accessing their rulings, as well as reviewing the signs of Taklīf.

CONDITIONS OF BEING A MARJA'

In order to become a Marja', a person must meet nine requirements. These are being:

1. Male
2. Sane
3. Shia Ithna 'Ashari (a Shi'a) who believes in all of the twelve Imams, as opposed to certain sects of Shia who only believe in some of the Imams)
4. Of legitimate birth
5. Mature (Mukallaf)
6. Just*
7. The most learned on issues where the Maraji' have different opinions
8. Al-Ḍabt: meaning he is not suffering from any kind of memory loss like Alzheimer and dementia.
9. Living: (for those who choose a Marja' for the first time)

* A person is said to be just when he performs all those acts which are obligatory upon him, and refrains from all those things which are forbidden to him. And the sign of being just is that one is apparently of a good character, so that if enquiries are made about him from the people of his locality, or from his neighbours, or from those persons with whom he lives, they would confirm his good conduct.^v Given the sensitivity and significance of the position of being a Marja', in addition to being 'just', having full control over one's desires and restraining oneself from worldly aspirations are required of a Marja', based on obligatory precaution.^{vi}

A REVIEW OF THE SIGNS OF TAKLĪF

If any one of these signs appears, the boy or girl is considered to be a Mukallaf or a Mukallafa respectively. This means that they have reached an age where all the laws of Islam apply to them, and they are considered responsible in the eyes of Allah. We have learnt these signs in previous years but we will review them again.

BOYS:

- 1) Reaching 15 lunar years of age (about 14.5 solar years)
- 2) Growth of rough hair on the private parts
- 3) Emitting semen while sleeping or awake

GIRLS:

- 1) Reaching the age of 9 lunar years
- 2) Growth of rough hair on the private parts

Review Questions

Q1. The signs of Taklīf in a boy include (there may be more than one answer):

- a) Reaching 16 years of age
- b) Reaching 21 years of age
- c) Having the first wet dream or discharge of semen
- d) Growth of rough hair on the private parts

Q2. Which of the following is NOT true?

- a) A Marja' must be a Muslim Shi'a Ithna 'Ashari
- b) A Marja' can be male or female
- c) A Marja' must be of legitimate birth

Q3. A Marja' must be just. This means:

- a) He is fair and does not cheat
- b) He performs all obligatory acts and refrains from acts which are forbidden
- c) He is knowledgeable

Homework

For those of you who have not yet picked a Marja', spend some time and effort to research and choose a Marja'.

ⁱ Ayatollah Makrem Shirazi, Rulings of Taqlid

ⁱⁱ *Mishkātul Anwār*, p. 334

ⁱⁱⁱ (*Mishkātul Anwār*, p.340)

^{iv} *al-Kāfi*, 1:34

^v Ayatollah Sistani, Practical Laws of Islam

^{vi} Ayatollah Khamenei, Practical Laws of Islam



SEEKING COUNSEL

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

SEEKING ADVICE

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Be reminded of the importance of getting help and advice when required
- Understand from whom they must seek advice and the responsibilities of the person giving advice including expertise, honesty, trust and ability to keep a secret
- Understand that seeking advice from Allah (SWT) is always best. The easiest way to do this is to do Istikhāra
- Understand briefly the rules of Istikhāra

In the previous lesson we learnt of the importance of seeking advice when making major decisions in our life and the basic condition the advisor should have is that they should be an expert in the area.

In this lesson, we will go a little further and look at the various other conditions that a person giving advice must fulfil. We will also look at taking advice directly from Allah (SWT) with the help of Istikhāra, and also the best times to seek and give advice.

IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING ADVICE

We know that people who are more knowledgeable and more experienced than us are always in a better position to guide us. This is because they are able to see many of the consequences of our decisions better than we can. By seeking advice, we are actually getting more knowledge and with more knowledge we can obviously make better and more profitable decisions.

Seeking advice also demonstrates a person's intellectual and social development. Imam 'Ali (as) says:

"He who consults with men of understanding, shows his development...."ⁱⁱ

WHO SHOULD I ASK ADVICE FROM?

When seeking advice, we should go to a person who is an expert in the area we are seeking advice about. This is the main condition. The following narration from Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) clarifies the remaining conditions of a counsellor:

- Expertise
- Ability to keep a secret
- Impartiality
- Religiousness

A companion by the name of al-Ḥalabī narrates from Imam al-Ṣādiq (as):

“Seeking advice from others is a virtue. If you do not do it, you will face a great loss. However, there are conditions. The first is that the person you seek advice from should have intellect (i.e. be an expert). Secondly, he should also be religious and impartial. Thirdly, he should also be a friend. Fourthly, you must divulge all the details to him, so that he knows your affairs as much you do. The counsellor should then keep this a secret and not divulge it.”

We can see from this that a person giving advice must also be honest and trustworthy so that the advice given is given in our best interests.

ISTIKHĀRA

The actual meaning of ‘Istikhāra’ is “asking what is best and proper from Allah, the Merciful” which in itself is a form of supplication. Reliance (upon Allah), leaving all of one's affairs (to Allah) and having a good or favourable opinion of Allah are the requirements before one performs any supplication. This means that in all of one's affairs, the person supplicates to Allah and sincerely asks Him to make his path easy and give him a good outcome.

The Istikhāra by supplication in all instances takes precedence. It has been recommended that before one performs even the smallest act, he start off by supplicating to Allah (SWT). In the narrations, it has been emphasized that this type of Istikhāra should be performed before every action, and is one of the reasons for the success of a person

The Istikhāra with the *tasbeḥ* beads and the Qur'ān is the final step after one still entertains doubts and uncertainty in his mind and should only be done after seeking the best from Allah (SWT) through *duā'*, thinking, weighing out the pros and cons, and requesting advice from others.

RULES OF ISTIKHĀRA

As discussed above, the form of Istikhāra by the *tasbeḥ* or Qur'ān is only the last resort after fulfilling several conditions and still being in doubt. Therefore, before one does the Istikhāra through these methods, he must have fulfilled these conditions:

- Doing one's own research and weighing out the advantages and disadvantages i.e. having as much knowledge about the facts as one can reasonably get
- Praising and Glorifying Allah and reciting the various *du'ā'* asking for the best outcome. One particular *du'ā'* is Imam Sajjad's *du'ā'* in asking for the best outcomes. (*du'ā'* 33 in *Ṣaḥīfa Sajjadiyah*)
- Seeking Advice from others especially experts in the field

If one is still in doubt after these steps, then they can do an Istikhāra using the *tasbeḥ*, or the Holy Qur'ān.ⁱⁱⁱ If one does undertake this form of Istikhāra, they must then stick to the decision they have made based on the Istikhāra, and should not ignore it.

Review Questions

Q1. When seeking advice from a person, we should go to someone who is:

- Impartial
- Religious
- Both a & b

Q2. Istikhāra by the Qur'ān and *tasbeḥ* is:

- The last resort after asking advice from experts, doing research and praying to Allah for the best outcome
- Should be done in all situations where we have any doubt
- Should never be done at all

Q3. When asking for someone's advice on a particular situation:

- We should only tell them part of the story
- We should tell them the full story so they can give us the right advice
- We should only tell them our side of the story

ⁱ “A Bundle of Flowers from the Garden of Traditions of the Prophet (saw) & Ahlul-Bayt (as) - Counselling”, Compiled by Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faghhi Imani – available online at: <http://www.al-islam.org/flowers/>
 Sheikh Mansour Leghaei-Lecture on Social Rules in Islam – Counselling

ⁱⁱ [Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 75, p. 105]

ⁱⁱⁱ “Istikhara: Seeking the Best from Allah (SWT)”, by Muhammad Baqir Haideri – available online at: <http://www.al-islam.org/istikhara/>

LAVATORY RULES

احكام التخلي

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- The importance of cleanliness and hygiene in Islam
- That they must wash their private parts after using the lavatory and how to wash them
- The general rules of the lavatory
- The general etiquette of the lavatory ¹

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: RULES OF THE LAVATORY

In previous years, we have learnt the importance of keeping clean and *ṭahir* at all times especially with food, drink and most importantly, when approaching any acts of worship like *ṣalāt*.

In our daily life, the most common type of *najāsah* we will come across is when using the toilet. It is therefore very important to know the rules and etiquette of using the lavatory, not only to remain clean and healthy physically, but also to make sure you purify yourself from any *najāsāt* that you are exposed to.

CLEANLINESS

The importance of cleanliness in Islam can never be over emphasised. The most authentic and direct expression of love for cleanliness is from the Qur'an itself where Allah (SWT) says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

Truly, Allah loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves (2:222)

In the majority of the places in the West, toilets do not contain water inside toilet cubicles. The most common facilities available will be those which are against Islamic codes such as "**standing urinals**" for boys. Since we are now responsible for our actions, it cannot be emphasized enough that we must understand how Islam expects us to maintain *ṭahārah*.

WASHING THE PRIVATE PARTS IN THE LAVATORY

It is important to wash the private parts as prescribed by our jurisprudential laws. This protects us from harmful diseases, keeps up our spirituality, and keeps us *ṭāhir* for prayer and other acts of worship.

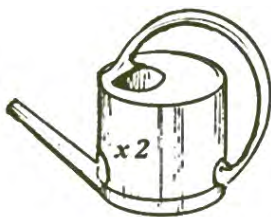
It is also important to remember that it is obligatory to conceal one's private parts in the toilet and at all times from adult persons even if they are our family or near relatives. This includes ensuring that when we visit public showers or changing rooms in school, gyms, pools and other recreational facilities, we must keep private parts fully covered.

RULES OF WASHING PRIVATE PARTS

URINE

The urinary organ cannot be made *ṭāhir* without water. After urinating,

- If using a bottle/container wash twice (better thrice), after removing the essential najāsah



- If washing with running water through a hose pipe then washing once is enough, after removing the essential najāsah

Istibrā' - this is a recommended act which is performed by men after urinating. It is done to ensure that no more urine is left in the urinary organ. The method of performing Istibrā' is:

- i. After the passing of urine, the part between the anus up to the root of the urinary organ should be pressed thrice with the middle finger of the left hand.
- ii. Then the thumb should be placed above the urinary organ and the finger next to the thumb should be placed below it and it should be pressed thrice up to the point of circumcision.
- iii. Finally, the front portion (fore part) of the organ should be squeezed three times. And finally the part concerned must be cleaned twice (Wājib), (better thrice) with water.

STOOL

1. If the anus is washed with water, one should ensure that no trace of faeces is left on it. However, there is no harm if colour and smell remain. And if it is washed thoroughly in the first instance, leaving no particle of stool, then it is not necessary to wash it again.
2. The anus can be made *ṭāhir* with stone, tissue or cloth provided they are dry and *ṭāhir*. If one makes oneself totally *ṭāhir* with stone or cloth or tissue once, it will be enough, though it is better to do it three times. In fact, it is better to use three pieces.

Review Questions:

Q1. When using public changing rooms:

- a) It is okay not to cover the private parts if there is no one of the opposite gender around
- b) We must always make sure private parts are covered if there is anyone else around
- c) It is better to cover our private parts if there are others around

Q2. Istibrā' is:

- a) A recommended act to ensure no more urine is left in the urinary organ
- b) A Wājib act that is needed for *ṭahārah*
- c) Neither of the above

Q3. When cleaning ourselves after passing stool:

- a) We have to make sure that no trace of stool is left
- b) We have to wash three times
- c) We have to wash twice

LESSON 2: FURTHER RULES ON USE OF THE LAVATORY

GENERAL RULES IN THE LAVATORY

There are many *mustahab*, *makruh* and *haram* acts that should be done or avoided respectively. Below are some of these rules.

1. HARAAM

- It is *haram* to relieve oneself at certain places, including the following:
 - In blind alleys, without the permission of the people who live there
 - On the property (land) of a person who has not granted permission for the purpose
 - Sacred places (e.g. graves of believers) or places dedicated to certain purposes (e.g. schools)
- It is not permissible to keep the **front or back** toward the Qiblah whilst relieving oneself. Knowing the direction of the Qiblah is therefore necessary before using a bathroom.

2. MAKRUH

- It is *makruh* to eat while relieving oneself
- It is *makruh* to take longer than the usual time, or to wash oneself with the right hand
- Talking is also *makruh* unless necessary
- It is *makruh* to urinate while standing, or on hard earth, or in the burrows of the animals, or in stationery water
- It is *makruh* to suppress or constrain one's urge for urine or excretion, and if it is injurious to one's health, it becomes *haram*

3. MUSTAHAB

- Using the left foot to enter the toilet and exiting using the right foot
- To wear slippers or shoes in the toilet.
- To utter words remembering Allah (SWT) like reciting *du'a* or *dhikr*.

GENERAL LAVATORY ETIQUETTE

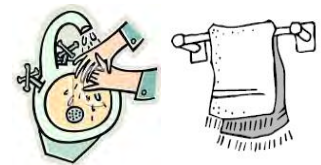
- ✓ Wear a pair of slippers when you go to the lavatory to avoid exposure to any *najasa*t that may be on the floor.



- ✓ Flush the toilet after use, wipe the seat and keep the seat down, for the next person.



- ✓ Wash and dry your hands after you have finished using the lavatory.



- ✓ Avoid splashing and spilling water on the floor and walls, as this can spread *najasa*



- ✓ Leave the lavatory/bathroom as clean as, or cleaner than you found it.

Review Questions

Q1. Which of the following is true?

- a) Facing the Qiblah when relieving oneself is *haram*
- b) Facing the Qiblah when relieving oneself is *makruh*
- c) Facing the Qiblah when relieving oneself is permissible

Q2. Urinating while standing:

- a) Is *makruh*
- b) Is *haram*
- c) Is permissible

Q3. Relieving oneself on property where the owner hasn't given permission is:

- a) Is *haram*
- b) Is *makruh*
- c) Is permissible



PERSONAL HYGIENE

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON I

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ...

“O Children of Adam! Take your adornment at every mosque...”

In this lesson we will discuss the above āyah and the importance of personal cleanliness in Islam.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

This issue is very significant in Islam. Islamic role models have paid great attention to this aspect of life. The way the Ahlul Bayt (as) practised personal hygiene is miraculous considering the time in which they lived and the very limited facilities available to them. This shows us that in our day and age, with so many facilities for staying clean and taking care of ourselves, we have no excuse for being untidy.

We have covered the importance of following the rules of *Ṭahārah* and *Najāsah* in previous lessons, so please refer to those lessons. In addition to these rules, Islam also recommends us to take care of our physical appearance and our image in terms of dressing well and looking presentable, especially when going to places of worship and being clean at all times.

DRESSING WELL & SELF GROOMING

Amongst the most obvious expression of cleanliness and beauty is the way a person dresses and grooms him or herself. In this section we will see the different recommendations Islam gives us to dress modestly and decently, but at the same time smartly, to groom ourselves and to also smell good.

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Be reminded that Islam teaches us to be neat and tidy ourselves.
- Know that a Masjid (Islamic centre, place of prayer etc.) is a very special place and must be respected by dressing and grooming appropriately.
- Learn that we should groom ourselves (Smell good, comb hair, dress decently) well before going out or even at home
- Understand the meaning of ‘Dress of Piety’
- Know briefly the rules of tattoos
- Know that keeping their environment and room/house tidy and clean is an obligation

The following hadith from the Prophet (saw) shows this very well:

“The Prophet (saw), when he saw a man whose hair on his head was dishevelled, whose clothes were dirty, and who had a bad appearance, said, ‘It is part of religion to enjoy oneself and to display one’s bounties.’”^{xi}

Imam Kāḍim (as) summarises self-grooming into ten parts:

“There are five sunnah about the head and five others related to the body. The first five concerning the head, are: washing the mouth, trimming the moustache, combing the hair, and drawing up water through the mouth and nostrils.

The second five, concerning the body, are: circumcision, shaving the pubic hair and armpits, clipping the nails, and cleansing the private parts”^{xii}

Some of the recommendations for personal hygiene and dressing well are as follows:

- **Ghusl/Bathing:** Islam obligated six or seven types of Ghusl, in addition to the many recommended ones. At a time when people did not have ready access to running water and would not shower every day, this was a way of encouraging and obligating people to remain clean.
- **Perfume:** the Prophet (saw) was well known for his use of perfume. He never refused a gift of perfume and he encouraged others to use it. It is very recommended to wear perfume before going to prayer.



The importance of using perfume is seen from this narration related from Imam al-Ṣādiq (as):

“Using perfume is a practice of the messengers”^{xiv}

- **Grooming:** Islam encourages us to trim the hair in our under arm and pubic areas, in order to prevent a bad odour to emanate from our body.
- **Hair/Beard:** we should keep our hair tidy and neat.

The Prophet (saw) said, “Whoever keeps his hair long should care for it well, otherwise, he must cut it.”^{xv}

When it comes to our beard, we should make sure it is maintained properly and looks neat, and is not bushy and dishevelled.

The Prophet (saw) said: Each one of you should trim his moustache and the hairs in his nose and he should groom himself for this enhances his beauty.”^{vi}

- **Clothing:** Islam recommends wearing white clothes as it has some psychological benefits. It also has hygienic benefits because any dirt shows up clearly and so one cleans their clothes more often. Clothes should be ironed and kept short. The clothes should also be appropriate and well matched- one should not dress in a ridiculous manner (e.g. sports shoes with a suit).

“The Prophet (saw) prohibited clothes that express notoriety (shubra), both thin and thick, soft and rough, long and short. It should be something appropriate between these two and economical.”^{vii}

- **Oral hygiene:** we should rinse our mouth regularly, especially during the month of Ramaḍān in order to keep our mouth clean and stop it from having a bad odour.



- **Foot Hygiene:** we should find a solution for the smell of our feet if they smell after we have worn shoes or socks because this can be very unpleasant especially when we go to public places like the Islamic Centres where we have to take off our shoes.

ETIQUETTES OF COUGHING AND SNEEZING

Islam has also given us recommendations on the etiquettes of sneezing or coughing when we are sick or even in general. These recommendations are the same as those that science and medicine in this day and age have encouraged people to follow, since many diseases are spread through uncleanness of the body.

Influenza (flu) and other serious respiratory illnesses like respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), whooping cough, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) are spread by coughing, sneezing, or unclean hands^{viii}.

TO HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.
- You may be asked to put on a facemask to protect others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Review Questions:

Q1. In Islam, it is recommended:

- To wear black as much as possible
- To wear white
- To wear red

Q2. A Muslim man's beard:

- Can be messy and extra long
- Should be neat and well-kempt, not longer than a fist length
- Should be shaved

Q3. Islam:

- Recommends shaving or removing the pubic hair
- Recommends leaving pubic hair to grow
- Neither of the above

LESSON II

^{ix}In the previous lesson, we learnt the importance of dressing well and grooming ourselves when we go out, especially to places of worship. However, we must know that dressing well does not mean dressing in an un-Islamic fashion outside the rules of *Hijāb*. We must observe modesty and decency in our dressing.

Allah (SWT) explains this beautifully in the Holy Qur'ān:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوَاتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا
وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَذَكَّرُونَ

"O Children of Adam! We have bestowed clothing upon you to cover yourselves and as an adornment, and the dress of righteousness, that is better. Such are among the Signs of Allah, that they may remember" (7:26)

THE DRESS OF PIETY

In the verse of Holy Qur'ān we discussed above, Allah (SWT) mentions that the dress of piety is better than all other types of clothing. This means that we have to be careful of our Islamic obligations and duties at all times and with everything we do, including dressing. We cannot dress to attract people's attention especially between opposite genders, for this is sinful. Also, our dressing should be to please Allah (SWT) and to give Islam a good image, not to show-off and be proud of our wealth and status.



Imam 'Ali (as) said, 'No one can adorn himself with a better adornment than the obedience of Allah.'^x

Let us look some of the narrations which condemn dressing for the sake of other than Allah (SWT) or dressing for the purpose of attracting people's attention or to show pride.

The Prophet (saw) said: "Whoever wears clothes to show off so other people will look at him, Allah will not look at him until he takes it off."^{xi}

Imam 'Ali said that the Prophet (saw) prohibited the ornamentation of a woman for someone else other than her husband, and said: "Thus, if she does so, it is the right of Allah, Almighty and Glorious, to burn her in Hell."^{xii}

SOME RULES ON TATTOOS

It is quite common in our day and age and the environment we live in to see people getting tattoos on themselves for different reasons. It is important again for us to know what the limits and rules are on this too, because each area of our lives, be it dressing, eating or appearance and grooming has to be according to piety and the Law of Allah (SWT).

Putting a tattoo on the body by itself is not Haram. It becomes Haram if we put the Holy Names of Allah (SWT) or the Ahlul-Bayt (as) on the body or things that are morally and Islamically inappropriate. Tattooing is something that is generally discouraged, because it resembles the lifestyles and practice of disbelieving or ignorant people.

CLEANLINESS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSE

It is very important for Muslims not only to keep themselves clean and pure, but also their environment and houses. Unfortunately, non-Muslim houses and suburbs are usually far more neat and tidy than our houses and suburbs –which gives a bad image to Islam. We must make sure that we follow our religion properly and keep our houses and neighbourhoods clean.

The Prophet (saw) said: “Do not leave garbage overnight in your houses, and take it out in the daytime, for it is the dwelling place of the devil.”^{xiii}

Our duty also means to keep our own rooms clean and tidy, including our working tables and wardrobes etc. As a Muslim, our lifestyles should be organized, neat and tidy, as this helps us be more efficient in our work and also keeps us safe from many disadvantages of dirty and untidy living.

Review Questions:

Q1. The best way of dressing is:

- a) The Dress of Fashion
- b) The Dress of Poverty
- c) The Dress of Piety

Q2. Tattoos in general:

- a) Are highly discouraged in Islam
- b) Are encouraged in Islam
- c) Are *ḥarām*

Q3. Dressing to show off:

- a) Is forbidden in Islam
- b) Are discouraged in Islam
- c) Is recommended in Islam

ⁱ **References**

Social Rules in Islam: Personal Hygiene – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei
A Bundle of Flowers –www.al-islam.org
Dar-al- Hadith, Cultural Scientific Institute -
<http://www.darolhadith.com/index.php>
Holy Qur'an
Centres for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

ⁱⁱ [Al-Kafi, v. 6, p. 439, no. 5]

ⁱⁱⁱ Khisal by Saduq, p. 125

^{iv} [al-Kafi, v. 6, p. 510, no. 2]

^v [Wasael al-Shi'aah, v. 1, p. 432, no. 1]

^{vi} [Qurb al-Isnad, p. 67, no. 215]

^{vii} [Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 41172]

^{viii} Centres for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

^{ix} **References**

Social Rules in Islam: Personal Hygiene – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei
A Bundle of Flowers –www.al-islam.org
Dar-al- Hadith, Cultural Scientific Institute -
<http://www.darolhadith.com/index.php>
Holy Qur'an

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

^x [Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 9489]

^{xi} [Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 41203]

^{xii} Man La Yahduruhul Faqih, vol. 4, p. 6

^{xiii} [al-Faqih, v. 4, p. 5, no. 4968]

UNCLEAN THINGS (NAJĀSĀT)

النجاسات

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Be reminded about cleanliness and hygiene and its importance in Islam
- Review the concepts of najāsah and ṭahārah
- Learn most of the categories of Najāsah with common examples
- Understand that Najāsah can be transferred through moisture and by actual contact
- Learn the principle that ‘everything is ṭāhir until you know it is najis’

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: ISLAMIC UNCLEANLINESS¹

In the previous classes we learnt about the importance of cleanliness and hygiene in Islam. We also learnt about najāsah and the things which are considered unclean (Najis) in Islam. Furthermore, we learnt that najāsah can be transferred and this happens when one najis thing comes into contact with another thing, making it najis also.

In this lesson, we will learn most of the things that are Najis (unclean) according to the laws of Islam, and some of the rules in relation to them.

UNCLEAN THINGS

In Islam, there are certain things that are considered to be Najis (unclean). Besides the physical benefits of keeping ourselves away from these things, there are also spiritual benefits. Uncleanliness (Najāsah) acts as a barrier between us and Allah (SWT).

It is good to remain free of any najāsah at all times. However, it is obligatory in the following situations:

- 1) Acts of worship – This includes keeping our body, clothes and surroundings clean (ṭāhir) at all times, during prayer especially. It is also obligatory to make a mosque Ṭāhir if it becomes Najis
- 2) Food
- 3) Drink

HOW IS NAJĀSAH TRANSFERRED?

When something that is najis comes into contact with something that is ṭāhir, the ṭāhir thing also becomes najis and must be cleaned.

However it has to be noted that najāsah will only be transferred if either of the two things is wet or moist. If both things are dry, the najāsah will not spread. For example, if a person touches a dog that is dry and his hand was also dry, his hand remains *ṭāhir*.

However, if either object is wet and the two come into contact, the najāsah spreads from one to the other. For example, if a person touches a dog while their hands are sweaty or wet, their hands become najis. However, the transfer of najāsah goes on for only two or maximum three steps. The transfer of najāsah does not continue forever, from one thing to another, even if all the things are wet.

THE UNCLEAN THINGS

URINE AND STOOL

The urine and faeces of humans is Najis.

The urine and faeces of animals whose meat is *ḥarām* to eat and whose blood gushes forth when slaughtered is also Najis. Example of these animals include kangaroos and cats.

The excrement of birds is *ṭāhir*.

SEMEN

This is the fluid that comes out from the male private part when sexually excited. It could be discharged in one's sleep (a wet dream) or while awake. It is usually a white or yellowish, sticky substance.

Semen is najis, and if a person touches semen or their clothes come into contact with semen, the body parts and the clothes that have been touched by semen must be washed.

BLOOD

The blood of humans and animals is Najis.

The only exception is the blood of animals whose blood does not gush forth when slaughtered.

Note: if an animal is slaughtered according to Islamic rules and its blood gushes out naturally, but some blood is left in the body despite this, this remaining blood is considered *ṭāhir*.

DEAD BODY

The dead body of a human or animal is najis.

The only exception is the corpse of an animal whose blood does not gush forth when slaughtered.

Note: the dead body of a Muslim becomes *ṭāhir* after being given the ritual bathing for the dead body. If we touch a dead person's body after it has gone cold and before it has been bathed we must perform Ghusl. We will discuss Ghusl in future lessons.

Review Questions:

Q1. Najāsah is transferred from one object to another if:

- The two objects come into contact with each other
- The two objects come into contact with each other and one of them is wet
- The two things thoroughly mix with each other

Q2. The droppings of birds are:

- ṭāhir*
- najis
- neither of the above

Q3. The dead body of a Muslim person:

- Is *ṭāhir* after it has been given the ritual washing
- Is always najis
- Is never najis

LESSON 2: UNCLEAN THINGS

In this lesson, we will continue to learn some rules related to things which are unclean according to the laws of Islam.

DOGS AND PIGS

All dogs and pigs are najis, to the extent that their hair, nails, teeth, bones and sweat are also najis.

Therefore any products including food items produced from these animals are najis. We need to be careful about this when eating or buying food.

As we discussed earlier, if a person touches a dog or a pig and they or the animal are wet, the body part which touched the animal becomes najis and needs to be made *ṭāhir*.

KĀFIR – A DISBELIEVER

A *kāfir* is a person who is not a Muslim. A *kāfir* is *najis*.

However, even though Christians and Jews are *kāfir*, they are considered to be *ṭāhir* by a number of contemporary scholars.

Practically speaking, if, for example, one shakes hands with an atheist and his hand was wet, he must wash his hand to make it *ṭāhir*.

WINE

Wine, and other alcoholic drinks which intoxicate a person, are *najis*. If they come into contact with food or even a drop of it falls into food, the food becomes *Najis*.

Islamic law about alcohol is so strict that if wine is served on a table, it is *ḥarām* to eat at that table, even if one does not touch the wine.

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (as) informs that the Holy Prophet (saw) said:

“Accursed, accursed is the one who sits at a table where wine is being served.” (Wasa'il ul-Shi'a)

All kinds of industrial alcohol used in perfume, medicines and paints is not *najis*.

WAYS OF PROVING NAJĀSAH

Sometimes, people can become obsessive about *najāsah* and make their own life difficult. To avoid this, Islam has set clear rules for proving whether something is *najis* or not.

There are some important ways of proving whether a thing is *najis* or not. These are very basic and simple ways which are very practical and flexible in any environment that we may find ourselves in. Here is where you can see the true ease which Allah (SWT) intends for us.

Before we proceed, it is very important to always remember the following principle that we learn from the teachings of our Prophet (saw) and Imams (as):

“Everything is *ṭāhir* until you know that it has become *najis*”

There are three ways of proving that a thing has become *najis*:

- 1) One should be sure, or satisfied that something is *najis*. If one merely suspects/doubts that something may be *najis*, it is not necessary to avoid it. For example, if you visit the mall and sit on a bench which is wet or step on something wet, if you do not see another person making it *najis* somehow and are not sure whether it is *najis*, then it is not necessary to purify your clothes or your shoes.
- 2) If a reliable person says that it is *najis*. For example, if the cook says that a particular utensil or any other object which s/he handles is *najis*, it will be accepted as *najis*.
- 3) If you were sure that something was *najis*, you should consider it *najis* until you are sure it has become *ṭāhir*. Consider this example: you are sure your shirt had some blood on it yesterday, but now you are not sure whether you made it clean or not. In this case, you should make it clean again.

The opposite also applies. If you were sure something was *ṭāhir*, you should consider it so until you are sure it has become *najis*. You do not need to investigate further.

Review Questions:

Q1. I enter the toilet at school and the floor is wet. In relation to this situation, which of the following is true?

- a. Everything is *najis* until we know that it is *ṭāhir*
- b. Everything is *ṭāhir* until we know that it has become *najis*
- c. If we are not sure, we have to investigate about whether something is unclean or clean

Q2. Dogs and pigs:

- a. Are *ṭāhir*
- b. Are *najis*
- c. Only small poodle dogs are *ṭāhir*

Q3. A disbeliever is a person who:

- a. Is not a Muslim, Christian or Jew
- b. Is not Muslim
- c. Neither of the above

¹ References:

- Ayatollah Sistani- Islamic Laws
- Sayyed Rizvi, Taharah and Najasah

- Wasailul Shi'a

UNCLEAN THINGS

النجاسات

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Be reminded about cleanliness and hygiene and its importance in Islam
- Review the concepts of najāsah and ṭahārah
- Learn most of the categories of Najāsah with common examples
- Understand that Najāsah can be transferred through moisture and by actual contact
- Learn the principle that ‘everything is ṭāhir until you know it is najis’

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

Lesson 1: Islamic Uncleanlinessⁱ

In the previous classes we learnt about the importance of cleanliness and hygiene in Islam. We also learnt about najāsah and the things which are considered unclean (Najis) in Islam. We also learnt that najāsah can be transferred and this happens when one najis thing comes into contact with another thing, making it najis also.

In this lesson, we will learn most of the things that are unclean according to the laws of Islam, and some of the rules in relation to them.

UNCLEAN THINGS

In Islam, there are certain things that are considered to be unclean. Besides, the physical benefits of keeping ourselves away from these things, there are also spiritual benefits. Uncleanliness acts as a barrier between us and Allah (SWT).

It is good to remain free of any najāsah at all times. However, it is obligatory in the following situations:

- 1) Acts of worship – This includes keeping our body, clothes and surroundings clean (ṭāhir) at all times during prayer especially.
- 2) Food
- 3) Drink

HOW IS UNCLEANLINESS TRANSFERRED?

When something that is Najis in itself thing comes into contact with something that is ṭāhir, the ṭāhir thing also becomes najis and must be cleaned. However it has to be noted that najāsah will only be transferred if either of

the two things is wet or moist. If both things are dry, the najāsah will not spread. For example, if a person touches a dog that is dry and his hand was also dry, his hand remains clean.

However if either object is wet and the two come into contact, then the najāsah spreads from one to the other. For example if a person touches a dog while their hands are sweaty or wet, their hands becomes najis. However, the transfer of najāsah goes on for only two or maximum three steps. The transfer of najāsah does not continue forever, from one thing to another, even if all the things are wet.

THE UNCLEAN THINGS

URINE AND STOOL

The urine and stool of humans is Najis.

The urine and stool of animals whose meat is ḥarām to eat and whose blood gushes forth when slaughtered is also Najis. Example of these animals include dogs and cats.

The excrement of birds is ṭāhir.

BLOOD

The blood of humans and animals is Najis.

The only exception is the blood of animals whose blood does not gush forth when slaughtered.

Note: if an animal is slaughtered according to Islamic rules and its blood gushes out naturally, but some blood is left in the body despite this, this remaining blood is considered ṭāhir.

DEAD BODY

The dead body of a human or animal is najis.

The only exception is the corpse of an animal whose blood does not gush forth when slaughtered.

Note: the dead body of a Muslim becomes ṭāhir after being given the ritual bathing for the dead body. If we touch a dead person's body after it has gone cold and before it has been bathed we must perform Ghusl. We will discuss Ghusl in future lessons.

Review Questions:

Q1. Najāsah is transferred from one object to another if:

- The two objects come into contact with each other
- The two objects come into contact with each other and one of them is wet
- The two things thoroughly mix with each other

Q2. The droppings of birds are:

- ṭāhir
- najis
- neither of the above

Q3. The dead of a body of a Muslim person:

- Is ṭāhir after it has been given the ritual washing
- Is always najis
- Is never najis

Lesson 2: Unclean Things

In this lesson, we will continue to learn some rules related to things which are unclean according to the laws of Islam.

DOGS AND PIGS

All dogs and pigs living on land are najis, to the extent that their hair, nails, teeth, bones and sweat are also najis.

Therefore any products including food items produced from these animals are najis. We need to be careful about this when eating or buying food.

As we discussed earlier, if a person touches a dog or a pig and they or the animal are wet, the body part which touched the animal becomes najis and needs to be made ṭāhir.

KĀFIR – A DISBELIEVER

A kāfir is a person who is not a Muslim Christian or Jew.

Such people are najis. If, for example, one shakes hands with an atheist and his hand was wet, he must wash his hand to make it clean.

WINE

Wine, and other alcoholic drinks which intoxicate a person, are najis. If they come into contact with food or even a drop of it falls into food, the food becomes Najis.

Islamic law about alcohol is so strict that if wine is served on a table, it is *ḥarām* to even sit at that table, even if one does not touch the wine.

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (as) informs that the Holy Prophet (saw) said:

“Accursed, accursed is the one who sits at a table where wine is being served.” (Wasa'il ul-Shi'a)

All kinds of industrial alcohol used in perfume, medicines and paints is not najis.

WAYS OF PROVING NAJĀSAH

Sometimes, people can become obsessive about najāsah and make their own life difficult. To avoid this, Islam has set clear rules for proving whether something is najis or not.

There are some important ways of proving whether a thing is najis or not. These are very basic and simple ways which are very practical and flexible in any environment that we may find ourselves in. Here is where you can see the true ease which Allah (SWT) intends for us.

Before we proceed, it is very important to always remember the following principle that we learn from the teachings of our Prophet (saw) and Imams (as):

“Everything is *ṭāhir* until you know that it has become najis”

There are three ways of proving that a thing has become najis:

- 1) One should be sure, or satisfied that something is najis. If one merely suspects/doubts that something may be najis, it is not necessary to avoid it. For example, if you visit the mall and sit on a bench which is wet or step on something wet, if you do not see another person making it najis somehow and are not sure whether it is najis, then it is not necessary to purify your clothes or your shoes.
- 2) If a reliable person, says that it is najis. For example, if the cook says that a particular utensil or any other

object which s/he handles is najis, it will be accepted as najis.

- 3) If you were sure that something was najis, you should consider it najis until you are sure it has become *ṭāhir*. Consider this example: you are sure your shirt had some blood on it yesterday, but now you are not sure whether you made it clean or not. In this case, you should make it clean again.

The opposite also applies. If you were sure something was *ṭāhir*, you should consider it so until you are sure it has become najis. You do not need to investigate further.

Review Questions:

Q1. I enter the toilet at school and the floor is wet. In relation to this situation, which of the following is true?

- a. Everything is najis until we know that it is *ṭāhir*
- b. Everything is *ṭāhir* until we know that it has become najis
- c. If we are not sure, we have to investigate about whether something is unclean or clean

Q2. Dogs and pigs:

- a. Are *ṭāhir*
- b. Are najis
- c. Only small poodle dogs are *ṭāhir*

Q3. A disbeliever is a person who:

- a. Is not a Muslim, Christian or Jew
- b. Is not Muslim
- c. Neither of the above

ⁱ References:

- Ayatollah Sistani- Islamic Laws
- Sayyed Rizvi, Taharah and Najasah
- Wasailul Shi'a



PURIFIERS (MUṬAHIRĀT)

المطهرات

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Review rules related to water as a purifier
- Review the different categories of water and learn some new categories
- Know the standard method of purifying with water
- Know cases where specific requirements additional to the standard process of purification are required
- Understand that the Earth is a purifier
- Understand the process of 'subjection' as a purifier
- Understand that becoming a Muslim is a purifier
- Understand that the removal of 'Najisul 'ayn' can be sufficient as a purifier in some cases

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: TYPES OF WATER

In previous years, we have learnt that there are various purifiers and that the most important one is water. In this lesson, we will review some of the rules we learnt in previous years as well as learn some additional rules regarding the process of purifying. Before we begin our discussions however, let us review the different types of water.

CATEGORIES OF WATER

RUNNING WATER

This is water which comes from a source in the earth and flows, such as the water of a river, sea, canal or spring. If Najāsah comes into contact with running water, only that part of the water which has changed colour, smell or taste because of the najāsah becomes Najis. The rest remains ṭāhir.



TAP WATER IS RUNNING WATER



Water flowing into our homes through pipes and taps is considered to be running water and the rules of running water apply to it. This is because it is connected to a supply of running water.

KURR WATER

This is water which is still and not flowing, but fills a container which is three and a half hand (average) spans wide, long and deep. In other words, the container must be 42.875 cubic hand spans.

If Najāsah comes into contact with Kurr water, the Kurr water becomes Najis only if its taste, colour or smell changes. For example, if a small amount of blood falls into a large water tank, that water will remain *ṭāhir* if its colour, smell or taste does not change.

QALĪL WATER

This is water which is still and not flowing, and which is not enough to fill a container three and a half hand spans wide, long and deep. In other words, it does not reach the limit of Kurr water. If najāsah comes into contact with Qalīl water, the entire body of Qalīl water becomes Najis, even if its smell, colour and taste have not changed. For example, if a small drop of blood falls into a bottle of water, all that water becomes Najis, even if its smell, colour or taste do not change.

When it comes to making things *ṭāhir*, in some cases the rules are different depending on whether we are using Kurr (e.g. tap water) or Qalīl (e.g. from a bottle) water. We will discuss these differences as we come across the specific cases.

THE CONDITIONS OF PURIFYING WATER

In order to purify anything with water, the water used must meet the following two conditions:

- It must be *ṭāhir*
- It must not be mixed with anything that makes it something other than water (e.g. juice or coffee)

Therefore, if water is mixed with soap or detergent to the extent that it would no longer be called water, it cannot make something *ṭāhir* no matter how many times we wash that thing. For the purpose of Islamic cleanliness, we must use only plain (mutlaq) water.



Review Questions

Q1. Qalīl water is:

- Still water which cannot fill a container which is three and half hand spans in every dimension
- Any still water
- Running water

Q2. If najāsah comes into contact with qalīl water:

- The entire body of water becomes najis
- The water remains *ṭāhir*
- Neither of the above

Q3. When making something *ṭāhir* with water, we have to use:

- Plain water (mutlaq)
- Mixed water (muḍāf)
- Any water

LESSON 2: THE PROCESS OF PURIFYING

In our last lesson, we learnt about the different types of water. In this lesson, we will learn how we can make things pure using water.

REVISION: CONDITIONS RELATED TO WATER

In order to purify anything with water, the water used must meet the following two conditions:

- it must be *ṭāhir*
- It must not be mixed with anything that makes it something other than water (e.g. juice or coffee)

THE PROCESS OF PURIFYING

In general, for something to be purified by water, the following two things must happen:

- It should be washed with plain water until the water that flows off from the object being washed should not turn into mixed water. In other words, its smell, colour or taste should not change as it flows off from the object being washed. Therefore, the najis object should be washed until the water flowing from it is *ṭāhir* (for example, if washing blood off a shirt, it should be washed until the water dripping off from the shirt is not red or pink-coloured)
- The particles of the najāsah (e.g. blood, urine etc...) should not remain on the object after it has been washed. If microscopic particles remain or some smell remains, this is okay and the object is still considered *ṭāhir*.

SPECIAL CASES

When it comes to clothes and utensils, some special rules apply. In general, we should know that there are some extra requirements besides those above to make clothes and utensils *ṭāhir*. Here are the most important examples:

- If the body or clothes become najis with urine, they must be washed at least twice if we are using qalīl water
- If the interior of a utensil (e.g. pot or plate) becomes najis, it must be washed three times, whatever

category of water we are using. We must pour water inside the utensil then throw that water out and repeat this three times.



- If we are using qalīl water to purify clothes, carpet, cloth or similar things, we must wring or squeeze the clothes after washing so that the water remaining it runs out. However, if we are using running water, it is only a precaution to squeeze it.



SOME IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES

Often we face situations of doubt when it comes to Najāsah and *Ṭahārah*. In such situations, it is very important to remember the following rules:

- If you previously knew a thing was *ṭāhir*, you should consider it to still be *ṭāhir* until you are sure it has become Najis.
- If you previously knew a thing was najis, you should consider it to still be najis until you are sure it has become *ṭāhir*.
- In the case where you didn't know whether a thing was *ṭāhir* or Najis previously, you should consider it *ṭāhir*.

CONCLUSION

The most important two points that we should take from this lesson are the following:

- In general, when something becomes najis, it should be washed until the water flowing from the object is *Ṭāhir* and the najis particles disappear

- In some special cases, such as with urine, extra conditions apply and in this lesson we have discussed four of these which you should remember as they are common in our daily life

Review Questions

Q1. If I am washing my clothes with water:

- a) I need to wring the clothes after washing
- b) I only need to wring the clothes if I am using qalīl water
- c) I never need to wring the clothes

Q2. If I knew something was ṭāhir previously, but now I am not sure:

- a) I should assume it is najis
- b) I should assume it is ṭāhir
- c) I should do an investigation to find out

Q3. If my clothes become najis with urine, I should:

- a) Wash them twice
- b) Wash twice only if I am using qalīl water
- c) Wash once



LESSON 3: OTHER PURIFIERS

So far, we have discussed water as a purifier. In this lesson, we will look at some of the other less common ways of purifying things which have become najis.

THE EARTH AS A PURIFIER

The Earth here means surfaces such as soil, rock and sand. But how can the Earth purify?

Example:

Ali was walking back from school when he noticed that he stepped on dog waste while walking on the grass.

Besides the grass there is a dirt patch, and Ali rubs his shoes while walking on this dirt patch to get rid of the waste. After walking a few metres and rubbing his shoes, he gets rid of the excrement.

In this way, Ali made his shoes ṭāhir. The rule, as an obligatory precaution, is that we can't make our shoes or feet ṭāhir from any najāsah that did not come from the Earth. For example, let's say some blood drops from a small cut in your hand, and lands on the bottom of your shoes while you are seated. You decide to make your shoes ṭāhir again, so you walk on dirt for a while. Does this make your shoes ṭāhir?

No. Because the blood did not come from what was already on the ground, it came from your hand.

We should also remember that the Earth can't make things like our pants or other parts of our body ṭāhir.

Also, remember that the Earth we are using to make your feet or shoes ṭāhir, should be:

1. Dry, as a precaution
2. ṭāhir

'SUBJECTION' (TABA'IYAH)

In simple words, the process of 'subjection' is when a najis thing becomes ṭāhir as a result of making another najis thing, which is somehow related to it, ṭāhir as well.

'Subjection' is when a najis thing (for e.g. a person's hands) becomes ṭāhir as a result of making another najis thing, which is somehow related to it (e.g. a kitchen knife with blood on it which you are holding in your hand), ṭāhir as well.

'BECOMING A MUSLIM'

Once a disbeliever becomes Muslim they become immediately *ṭāhir*. Before this, that person's body, was najis, but as soon as they declare their belief in Allah (SWT) and His Messenger, they become *ṭāhir*.



REMOVAL OF 'NAJISUL 'AYN'

In special cases, we do not need to wash things to make them *ṭāhir*, and it is enough just to remove the *najāsah*.

For example, if there is a drop of blood on your hand, it is not enough that you just wipe the blood off your hand with a tissue to make it *ṭāhir*. After wiping the blood off, you need to pour water on the spot where the blood was in order to make it *ṭāhir*.

However, sometimes there are situations where we can just remove the particles of *najāsah* and that is enough for that area to become *ṭāhir*. The most important examples of this is if the inner parts of the human body, for example the inner parts of mouth, or nose or inner ears become najis with blood for example. Once we remove the blood the area becomes *ṭāhir*, and there is no need to wash the inside of the nose, mouth or ears.

Class Activity

Fill in the following table:

	Running Water	Kurr Water	Qalīl Water
Description			
What happens if Najāsah comes into contact with it?			

Review Questions

Q1. The Earth can purify:

- a) Any part of our body
- b) Only our feet or shoes
- c) Nothing

Q2. I am holding a najis shirt and my hand becomes najis because of this. Then I wash the shirt under the tap while holding it and the shirt becomes *ṭāhir*. Do I need to wash my hands afterwards?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Sometimes

Q3. Once a disbeliever becomes a Muslim:

- a) He becomes *ṭāhir* immediately
- b) He remains najis
- c) He becomes *ṭāhir* but only after performing ghusl

ⁱ References

Sayyid Sistani, Islamic Laws,

<http://www.sistani.org/local.php?modules=nav&nid=2&bid=59&pid=2873>

~~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”ⁱⁱ

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.”ⁱⁱⁱ

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."^{iv}

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”.^v

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”.^{vi}

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”.^{vii}

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:

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

Q2. Lying is allowed if:

- It will get us out of trouble
- If it would save an innocent person from an oppressor
- 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”^{viii}

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:

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

Q2. Lying in business:

- a. Is allowed
- b. Is not allowed
- c. Is sometimes allowed if one is desperate

ⁱ **References:**

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ⁱⁱ [al-Kaafi 2:85]

ⁱⁱⁱ [Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 263]

^{iv} [Tuhaful-Uqul, p. 201]

^v [Mustadrakul-Wasa’el vol.9 p.95]

^{vi} [Wasa’elu-Shi’a vol 12 p.252]

^{vii} [Nahjul-Balagha, Wisdom No. 458]

^{viii} (Mustadrakul Wasail, 9:86)



KEEPING PROMISES

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

Objectives >>>

Students should:

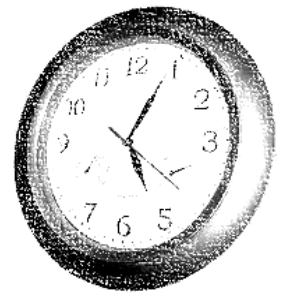
- Be reminded that keeping promises is a sign of a believer and breaking trust is a sign of a hypocrite
- Understand that a promise made to anyone must be fulfilled and failure to fulfil it (without a just cause) is a sin
- Understand briefly the rules of Nadhr and 'Ahd
- Understand that trust needs to be earned through being worthy of it

KEEPING PROMISES

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

"Those who are faithfully true to their trusts and to their covenants" (23:8)

In the social rules of Islam, it is extremely important for a Muslim to keep a promise they have made, and this is one of the signs of a believer, as can be seen in the ayah quoted above. The Imams (as) would say that their promise was a debt they owed and they would not rest until they had repaid that debt.



THE PROBLEM OF BREAKING PROMISES

Unfortunately, breaking promises is a problem that is common amongst Muslims. We easily break promises we have made to other people, especially when it comes to turning up on time when we have promised to do so. Our gatherings always begin late and finish late, and we have become very used to this. We also often make promises we know we cannot keep. We promise our children an expensive gift, or promise a person we will help them with a problem, but later realise this promise is too difficult to keep and so we back out. These acts are not liked by Allah (SWT), who says in His Holy Book:

"O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do." (61:2-3)

Therefore, before we speak and make a promise, we need to think first and see whether we can keep this promise or not. If we cannot, it is far better to not make the promise in the first place.

In fact, breaking promises is one of the signs of a hypocrite. The Prophet (saw) says:

“The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he lies, when he makes a promise, he breaks it, and when he is entrusted, he betrays”ⁱⁱ

THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING PROMISES

As with fulfilling trusts, keeping promises is an obligation without exceptions, as we can see from this narration.

Imam al-Bāqir (as) said:

ثلاث لم يجعل الله عز وجل فيهنّ رخصة: أداء الأمانة
الى البرّ و الفاجر، و الوفاء بالعهد للبرّ و الفاجر، و بر
الوالدين برّين كانا أو فاجرين

“There are three situations where Allah (SWT) did not make any exceptions: respect to parents, keeping promises and fulfilling trusts”ⁱⁱⁱ

Even the people of the Age of Ignorance saw breaking promises as a bad and evil thing. Therefore, as Muslims, we must be extra careful to not do something that even the people of the Age of Ignorance knew was wrong.



As Muslims we **must** keep our promises to **anyone** we make them to. It does not matter whether the other person is young or old, Muslim or non-Muslim, good or bad. We also have an example from Imam Zainul Abidin (as) who said that even if a person entrusted him with the sword that his father was killed with, and he promised to return it to the owner, he would do so.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NADHR AND ‘AHD

The following jurisprudential ruling also shows the importance of a promise. Nadhr and ‘Ahd are two specific types of promises. A nadhr is one someone promises to do something if a certain other things occurs (e.g. if I pass my exams, I will fast two days), and uses the name of Allah in making this promise. An ‘Ahd is when uses the name of Allah to make a covenant with Allah that he will do a certain thing, using the specific wording: ‘Ahadtul Allah’ or ‘Allaya ‘Ahdul Allah’.

If one makes a nadhr and later breaks it, the penalty is that he must feed ten poor people or fast three days. However, if he makes an ‘Ahd and then breaks it, then this is considered a bigger offence and he must feed sixty poor people or fast sixty days if he or she breaks the ‘Ahd.

EARN YOUR TRUST

In Islam it is wrong to simply trust anyone without first seeing the person’s actions and behaviour. For you to trust anyone, it is important to first know that he or she is a person who always speaks the truth. As we said earlier, the one who breaks their promise is a hypocrite – and trusting a hypocrite will only cause you loss and suffering.

Therefore when it comes to wanting your parents or teachers to trust you, you have to prove to them that you are a person who keeps your promises, does not lie and does not abuse the trust or responsibility that is given to you. If you can do that, your parents, teachers and even friends will trust you.

Homework

Q1. Keeping our promises has the benefit of:

- a. Earning us trust amongst people
- b. Earning us rewards from Allah (SWT)
- c. Both of the above

Q2. If a person makes a vow or promise to do something for the sake of God:

- a. They must do that thing or pay a penalty
- b. They do not have to do it
- c. They should not do it

Q3. The signs of a hypocrite are:

- a. He or she does not pray
- b. He or she does not fast
- c. He or she does not keep their promises

ⁱ References

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ⁱⁱ [al-Faqih vol.4 p.361]

ⁱⁱⁱ [al-Kaafi vol.2 p. 162]



TRUSTWORTHINESS

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that trustworthiness has several meanings in the belief context and social context
- Know that being trustworthy is an obligation in Islam and there are no exceptions to it whatsoever
- Understand that trustworthiness is a true sign of belief in Allah (SWT)
- Understand the responsibility of the trustee
- Understand that our body and everything we think we own is a trust from Allah (SWT) and we have to look after it

TRUSTWORTHINESS

One common theme among the narrations we have about social rules is that one of the most important of these social rules is trustworthiness. This trait is always one of the first and most important traits that a believer is encouraged to practice.

THE DIFFERENT CONTEXTS OF TRUSTWORTHINESS IN ISLAM

Trustworthiness has several meanings in different contexts. Trustworthiness can mean faith in the beliefs of Islam, because this is fulfilling the trust of Allah, the Exalted. For example believing in the day of Judgement means knowing that all our blessings are from Allah (SWT) as trusts for us to use properly in this world, after which we will be accountable for them.

Trustworthiness also has a meaning in the social context, where it means to fulfil the trust that a person has been given. This trust may be wealth, such as when a person's friend leaves money with them, or a bank lends money to a person. The trust may be a person's health, such as when a doctor is looking after a patient. There are many other examples of trust in everyday life, and in each case, the person who is expected to fulfil the trust is obligated to fulfil it in all circumstances.



TRUSTWORTHINESS: AN OBLIGATION WITH NO EXCEPTIONS

Trustworthiness is an obligation without exceptions or limitations. As the following narration shows, it is an obligation that all prophets have commanded. Breaking a trust is not allowed in any religion. *Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said:*

“Allah, the Glorified and Exalted, did not depute any prophet except with (teachings of) truthful speech and fulfilling the trusts, whether it is the trust of a good person or an evil person”.ⁱ

The following narration shows that fulfilling the trust is among a number of selected obligations in which there are no exceptions, and where there is no difference in the obligation whether the people involved are believers or non-believers. *Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:*

“there are three situations where Allah (SWT) did not make any exceptions: respect to parents, keeping promises and fulfilling trusts”.ⁱⁱ

In fact, in one narration narrated by Abu Ḥamza al-Thumālī, Imam al-Sajjād says that even if the killer of his father, Imam Husain (as), were to leave the sword with which he killed Imam Husain in Imam Sajjād’s trust, the Imam would give it back to him and fulfil the trust. A similar narration is narrated from Imam Hassan regarding the killer of Imam ‘Alī, the Commander of the Faithfulⁱⁱⁱ.

Taking these narrations into consideration, it becomes very clear that there is no excuse for the scams and tricks that some people use in order to obtain money by illegal means or by obtaining benefits from social welfare systems without deserving them. Also, people who take loans and leave the country or who use similar tricks to cheat banks or the government out of money have absolutely no excuse. These actions cannot be justified by saying that this is reclaiming the property for the Muslims or any other weak justification. There is absolutely no excuse for such actions and they are considered to be stealing in Islam.

TRUSTWORTHINESS: THE REAL CRITERIA FOR BELIEF

The Ahlul Bayt (as) have taught us that if a person wants to be known as a real follower of theirs, they must be known within their community to be the most trustworthy person.

In another narration, Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) clearly states that believers should not be judged solely on their prayers, fasting and other ritualistic deeds. Rather, they should be judged according to their truthfulness and trustworthiness. *Ishāq ibn ‘Ammār and others narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (as):*

“Do not be deceived by their prayers and their fasting. A man may become so habituated to praying and fasting that he would feel strange if he did not perform them. Rather, examine them when it comes to truthfulness in speech and the fulfilling of trusts”.^{iv}

We should keep their criteria in mind when it comes to making decisions in our lives and the lives of our family members. If someone proposes to a daughter of ours, we need to check his trustworthiness and truthfulness. Our child will be a trust in that person’s hands and we need to make sure that this person is trustworthy. Our criteria should not be family relations or country of origin, but real trustworthiness.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TRUSTEE

The trustee (a person who holds the trust) has several responsibilities. Many of which are common or obvious. As seen from the discussion above and the traditions, we know that it is *Wājib* to return the entrusted thing to its owner without having damaged it, or used it for our own benefit (if we did not have the permission to use it), and to guard and protect that thing while the trustee is in possession of it.

Therefore in summary, the trustee should:

- Guard & protect the trust from any damage, misuse or loss
- Return the trust the way it was given, to its lawful owner when asked to return it
- Not use it for his/her own benefit without the permission of the owner

- Not delay in returning the trust
- In the case of orphans or people who cannot take care of their own property, the trustee has to guard and manage the property by maintaining it and if possible also to invest in it to make the value of the property grow. So for example, a trustee of an orphan should educate the orphan, train them and if they have any money or property, it should be given back to the orphan when they reach maturity (both mental and physical).



TYPES OF TRUSTS

1. **Trust of Allah (SWT):** What is meant by Divine trust? The scholars have a variety of opinions in this regard. Some say that it means the grace of intellect given by Allah (SWT). The safeguarding of this trust (intellect) means that man should use it to recognise and obey his Creator. According to other scholars this trust consists of the laws of Islam that Allah (SWT) has sent through His Prophet (saw). These laws are a Divine trust. To guard these laws means to obey them faithfully.



2. **Blessing of Intellect:** Intellect or the faculty of reasoning is one of the greatest trusts that Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon man and this trust demands that man continually honours it. We must not say or do anything that is against reason. If we allow our desire to conquer reason we would have committed a breach of trust with Allah (SWT).



In regards to the safekeeping of trust with reference to the rules of Sharʿaʿ, Imam Muhammad Bāqir (as) says:

“Misappropriating the trust of Allah and His Prophet (saw) is their disobedience. As far as the breach of trust is concerned, every person is the trustee of the laws revealed by Allah.”^v



3. **Blessings of Allah(SWT):** These could include everything from our health, property, money, family, friends etc. It is important that we use our health for good deeds and take care of our health by following the laws of Allah (SWT). The best way to be a good trustee of the blessing of Allah (SWT) on us is that we should use them according to how He has shown us to use them i.e. by not doing anything forbidden with them e.g. speaking lies or rude words with the tongue that He has blessed us with. We should also avoid *Isrāf* (being extravagant or wasteful) especially with our food and money. We should not throw away good food or buy too many things and then not use them or we should not buy useless things which we don't need.

We should know that in Islam, whatever you own is not yours but Allah's (SWT) and He will ask you about how you used it. Therefore, it is important that we, for example, pay our *Khums* and *Zakāt* because this money is the trust of Allah (SWT). If we refuse to pay these obligatory charities, it is like we have stolen from Allah (SWT).

Therefore, whatever we have, we should look after very carefully and avoid misusing or damaging it, because one day it will have to be returned to its real Owner. If we have not kept the trust properly, we will definitely be punished for it!^{vi}

Review Questions

Q1. The trust that Allah (SWT) has left with us to look after includes:

- a. Our intellect
- b. The rules of religion
- c. The many blessings He has given us
- d. All of the above

ⁱ [al-Kaafi vol2 p.104]

ⁱⁱ [al-Kaafi vol.2 p. 162]

ⁱⁱⁱ [Beharul-anwaar vol.75 p.114]

^{iv} [al-Kaafi vol.2 p.104]

^v (Tafsir Safi)

^{vi} **References**

Q2. Being trustworthy is:

- a. An important social obligation mentioned in a few narrations
- b. An important social recommendation
- c. One of the most important social obligations emphasised in multiple narrations

Q3. The Ahlul Bayt have taught us that the real criteria for belief is:

- a. How often a person prays
- b. How much a person fasts
- c. How trustworthy a person is

Social Rules in Islam – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei:

Trustworthiness

Greater Sins: The Complete Book, by Ayatullah Abdul Husayn Dastaghaib

Shirazi, Chapter 24 “Khayanat” - [http://www.al-](http://www.al-islam.org/greater_sins_complete/)

[islam.org/greater_sins_complete/](http://www.al-islam.org/greater_sins_complete/)



MINDING THE TONGUE

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that the gift of the tongue can be used for good or evil (it can take us to paradise or to hell)
- Understand the basic rule of not speaking to people unnecessarily (especially those from the opposite sex) including via electronic media
- Be reminded briefly of speaking to everyone (especially adults) with respect
- Know the basic rules of speech and communication

MINDING THE TONGUE

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

"And speak good words to people" (2:83)

Undoubtedly, our tongue is one of our greatest blessings. The tongue, with the ability to speak, is a gift that Allah (SWT) has bestowed on man in His creation. This has been stated in the following verse of the Noble Qur'an:

"He has created man: He has taught him speech (and intelligence)"ⁱ (55:3-4)

Humans are social creatures who cannot live in isolation. They naturally incline towards living together and communicating with one another. The main form of communication between humans in their social life is speech. In fact, the complexity of human language is one of the things that sets humans apart from other creatures.

A PERSON IS CONCEALED UNDER THEIR TONGUE

We learn a lot about a person through their speech. While we may know some things about a person before speaking to them, we usually get to know a lot more about them once we start talking to them. Often, it is once the person begins to speak that we come to see either the ugliness or the beauty of their personality. This is why Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

"Beauty is in the tongue, and perfection is in the intellect"ⁱⁱ

Imam 'Ali (as) also says:

"Man is concealed under his tongue."

It is because of the above that a person's tongue can be the best or the worst part of a person. Luqmān - the wise man introduced in the Qur'an- was asked to bring the most expensive and valuable part of an animal. He went to the market and bought a tongue (of a sheep). The next day, he was asked to bring the cheapest and least worthy part. Again, he brought the tongue. When questioned, he said that the tongue may be the least or the most valuable part of the body, depending on how it is used.

One unique characteristic of the tongue is that most other body parts require a third party for a sin to occur (e.g. a lustful look at a scantily dressed woman). However, the tongue's sins require no third party. On the other hand, another unique characteristic of the tongue is that it is with the action of the tongue that one expresses their faith in Islam, when they recite the two testimonies.

MINDING THE TONGUE

Now that we know how important and also dangerous the tongue can be, we must know how to use it properly to avoid harming ourselves (our reputation) and also others' (feelings).

Many feelings and relationships are based on the communication of speech. Hence, it is vital to regulate who we speak to, when we speak and where and how we speak. One should ask these four questions before speaking:

1. **Who** – are we speaking to? Is it someone we are allowed to speak to?
2. **When** – are we speaking? Is necessary to speak?
3. **What** –are we saying? Is it important, true, good and useful/relevant?
4. **How** – are we speaking? Is it polite, rude, angry, or sarcastic?

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE GENDERS

From this, it is important to realize that we are not supposed to speak to people of the opposite gender (whom we are not related to) unnecessarily or casually. This is because, through our speech it is easy to flirt and flirting is enjoyable because it creates feelings – sometimes these feelings can develop into something more in either the boy or girl and due to mixed communication, there can be problems caused – the biggest problem is that of falling into sin.



This includes speaking to people of the opposite gender via phone, email, text messaging or any other form of communication that includes words and sounds or even vision.

The best test to judge whether the communication between the genders is good is to ask yourself the following questions:

- It is necessary to speak?
- What is being said in the conversation?

A person's *Hijāb* is not only confined to their bodies and appearance, but especially to their speech and behaviour. In this case both men and women have an equal responsibility to maintain chaste and modest speech.

*Imam Kāḍim (as) also advised a man: "Mind your tongue and you will be honoured."*ⁱⁱⁱ

In another narration, Abu Dhar (may God be pleased with him) is narrated to have said:

"Seal your tongue as you seal your gold and silver."

Allah (SWT) has also taught us how to speak to our family and people in general. We must always be polite in our manner, avoid speaking in very loud and angry tone and always be mindful of the other person's feelings and respect. Especially when speaking to elder people, we must maintain full respect and dignity in how we speak to them.

Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

"And speak good words to people" (2:83)

SOME RULES TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN SPEAKING

1. Avoid all the plagues of tongue – this includes lies, swearing or vulgar words, negative sarcasm and insults, rudeness and other ill words
2. Don't be the sole speaker, also listen to the other person
3. Don't prolong your stories. The more you speak, the more you slip, the more you bore people, and above all the more you harden your heart.
4. Don't say but what you know, and also don't say all that you know.
5. **Try to practice silence as much as possible (avoid speaking when it's not necessary to speak)**

RULES OF ONLINE COMMUNICATION



1. Avoid casual (unnecessary and unimportant) communication to people of the opposite gender
2. Use kind and proper words – not words that are rude, or that arouse inappropriate feelings
3. Make sure what you speak or write is true, good and useful/relevant – avoid giving opinions on subjects you have little or no knowledge on.
4. Make sure you are not bullying someone online!

Review Questions

Q1. Hijāb:

- a. Is only about how we dress and how much of our bodies we cover
- b. Is also about how we speak and communicate with the other gender
- c. Is about how we look at the other gender and how we dress

Q2. When speaking to the other gender:

- a. We can speak to them normally as we speak to someone of the same gender
- b. We should speak to them as necessary and without flirting
- c. We should never speak to someone of the opposite gender as it leads to sin

Q3. According to Imam 'Ali (as), a person's real beauty is shown in their:

- a. Clothes
- b. Looks
- c. Speech

ⁱ [Sura Rahman 55:3-4]

ⁱⁱ [Beharul-Anwaar Vol. 1 p.96]

ⁱⁱⁱ [al-Kaafi 2:93]



WUDU', GHUSL AND TAYAMMUM

الوضوء و الغسل و التيمم

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Learn how to perform WUDŪ' by watching a video demonstration
- Learn when it is necessary or recommended to perform WUDŪ'
- Know the invalidators of WUDŪ'
- Understand other general rules of WUDŪ'
- Know the method of performing Ghusl
- Know the main situations where Ghusl is obligatory
- Learn when it is necessary to perform Tayammum
- Learn what substances can be used for Tayammum
- Learn how to perform Tayammum

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: A PRACTICAL LESSON ON WUDŪ'

Practical Activity

Your teacher will take you to the nearest washrooms. There, each of you should demonstrate *Wudū'* to your teacher. Your teacher will assess you on the *Wājib* and *Mustaḥab* aspects of *Wudū'*.

LESSON 2: THE RULES OF WUDŪ'

WHEN DO WE NEED TO PERFORM WUDŪ'?

It is *Wājib* to perform *Wudū'*:

- Before all obligatory prayers (except for *Ṣalātul Mayyit*)
- Before we touch the script of the *Qur'ān* in Arabic
- Before we touch the names of Allah
- Before performing *Tawāf* in *Ḥajj*

It is recommended to perform *Wudū'*:

- Before we touch the names of the the Prophets and Ahlul Bayt
- Before any act of worship, such as reading the *Qur'ān* or *du'ā'*
- Before sleeping
- All the time

CONDITIONS OF WUḌŪʻ

When we are about to perform *Wuḍūʻ*, we need to remember the following rules:

1. The water we use and the place we are doing *Wuḍūʻ* in need to be *Mubāḥ*- this means that we must have permission to use them.
2. Water (not any other liquid) must be used. The water must also be *ṭāhir*
3. Before we start *Wuḍūʻ*, the parts of our body which we will wash or wipe during *Wuḍūʻ* must be *ṭāhir*.
4. A person has to do *Wuḍūʻ* for themselves without help from anyone, unless they are disabled.
5. We should do the different parts of *Wuḍūʻ* without leaving a significant gap. A good way to understand this is that the previous parts of the body (e.g. face) should not dry before we wash the next part (arm). Of course, there are exceptions to this such as on very hot days.
6. We must make sure to perform the actions of *Wuḍūʻ* in the correct order.
7. It is important to remember that we are allowed to wash our face and arms a maximum of two times during *Wuḍūʻ*. As for wiping the head and feet, this can only be done once.

THINGS WHICH INVALIDATE WUḌŪʻ

There are seven things that make *Wuḍūʻ* void. If any of these occur, a person must renew their *Wuḍūʻ* before they can do something that requires *Wuḍūʻ*.

These seven things are:

- Urinating
- Defecating
- Passing wind from the rear
- Sound sleep (in which one cannot hear anything)
- Situations in which a person loses his senses e.g. insanity, intoxication or unconsciousness. A common example would be fainting or going under an anaesthetic for an operation.
- Menstruation (in women only)
- Discharge of semen (for example after a wet dream or after sexual intercourse)

GENERAL RULES

- It is important to understand that *Wuḍūʻ* can be performed with very little water – even half a glass of water is sufficient, as it takes only about a handful of water for each act of washing.
- When performing *Wuḍūʻ* with tap water, it is recommended that you close the tap after each act, while you wash/wipe, so as to avoid wasting water.
- You should not delay or miss your prayers because of not having access to water – as there is an alternative to this called *Tayammum* which we will discuss in the next few lessons.
- If a person is about to pray but is not sure whether they have performed *Wuḍūʻ* or not, they must perform *Wuḍūʻ* before praying.
- If a person is certain they have performed *Wuḍūʻ*, but are now not sure if it has become void or not, they should assume that their *Wuḍūʻ* is still valid. Even if a person doubts whether their *Wuḍūʻ* has become void during prayer, they should continue their prayer and complete it.

Review Questions

Q1. Which of the following voids *Wuḍūʻ*?

- a) Light sleep
- b) Complete sleep in which one cannot hear anything
- c) Sleep does not void *Wuḍūʻ*

Q2. When performing *Wuḍūʻ*:

- a) We should use lots and lots of water
- b) We should use as little water as possible
- c) Using lots of water for *Wuḍūʻ* is not considered waste

Q3. The water used for *Wuḍūʻ* must be:

- a) Plain (*mutlaq*)
- b) *ṭāhir*
- c) Both a & b

Lesson 3: Ghusl

In this lesson, we will learn about the rules of Ghusl. Ghusl is another way of cleaning ourselves and is *wājib* in certain situations.

HOW DO WE PERFORM GHUSL?

There are two ways of performing Ghusl. The most common way of performing Ghusl is the following:

- Make sure the body has been washed from any impurity or barrier that would block water
- Make the intention of performing Ghusl to become pure for the sake of Allah, the Exalted
- Wash the head and neck, making sure water reaches every part.
- Wash the right side of the body completely; making sure the water reaches every part.
- Wash the left side of the body completely; making sure the water reaches every part. Note: According to some scholars (including Sayed Sistani) there is no need to wash the right side before the left. One can wash the head and neck first, then the rest of the body.
- Remember that water must reach every single part of the body.

Remember that just 'having a shower' is not enough. We must have the intention of Ghusl and we must perform Ghusl according to the steps above.

WHEN DO WE PERFORM GHUSL?



One of the common types of Ghusl is Ghusl Janābah. This is a Ghusl we must perform if we enter the state of Janābah. A person enters the state of Janābah in one of two ways:

1. **Sexual intercourse**
2. **Discharge of semen**, with lust or not, voluntarily or involuntarily, and awake or asleep. This includes a wet dream and ejaculation through masturbation (haraam act).

Once a person enters a state of Janābah by any of these means, they must perform Ghusl in order to offer prayers and other acts of worship.

There are also situations where Ghusl is recommended (*mustaḥab*). The most common reasons for this are:

- Friday Ghusl: it is recommended to perform Ghusl on Friday morning- this has the effect of washing many of our sins away
- Ghusl on special days or nights of the year: such as the two 'Īds and Laylatul Qadr

ACTS THAT ARE FORBIDDEN FOR A PERSON IN THE STATE OF JANĀBAH

Once someone enters the state of Janābah, certain acts become forbidden to them because of the state of impurity. This impurity can only be removed by Ghusl (or Tayammum depending on circumstances). The forbidden acts are four

1. Touching the script of the Qurān, and touching the names of Allah, no matter what language they are written in. It is better not to touch the names of the prophets and Ahlul Bayt as well.
2. Entering Masjidul Ḥarām (in Mecca) or Masjidul Nabi (in Medina) including passing through one gate and exiting another



3. Staying in a mosque or entering it to put something in it or take something out of it
4. Reciting the verses of the Quran in which Sajdah is obligatory.



Review Questions

Q1. How does one enter into a state of Janābah?

- a) Sexual intercourse only
- b) Wet dream only
- c) Sexual intercourse or any discharge of semen

Q2. Can I touch the script of the Holy Qurʾān if I am in a state of Janābah?

- a) No
- b) Yes
- c) Yes, but it is much better not to

Q3. Which ayāt of the Qurʾān am I not allowed to recite if I am in the state of Janābah?

- a) All of them
- b) The ones with obligatory sajdah
- c) None of them

Lesson 4: Tayammum

In previous years, we have learnt that Tayammum is another way of purifying ourselves for acts of worship. Tayammum is basically purification with soil rather than water and is a substitute for *Wuḍūʿ* or *Ghusl* when one cannot perform *them* for some reason. In this lesson, we will discuss in more detail the situations in which Tayammum becomes obligatory. We will also quickly review the method of performing Tayammum as well as the things that we can perform Tayammum with.

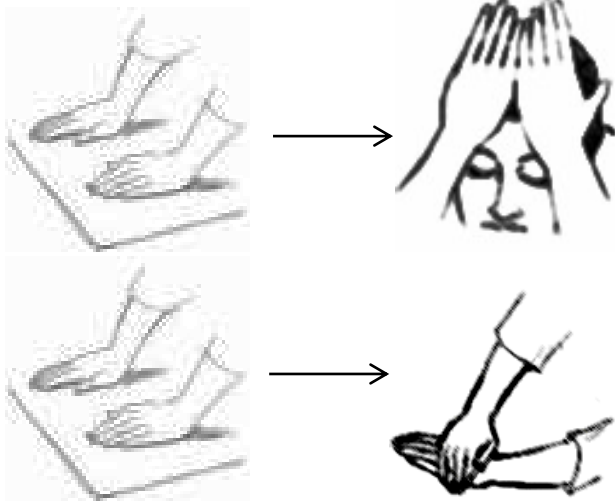
PERFORMING TAYAMMUM



The method of performing Tayammum is very easy. It is outlined in the following steps:

1. Remove any barriers that may stop the dust of Tayammum reaching the hand or forehead (e.g. rings). Also, if there is any impurity on these areas, it should be purified.
2. One must make the intention (*niyyah*) of performing Tayammum for the sake of Allah. As you know by now, this need not be said out loud, you simply need to know in your mind what you are doing and why.
3. One must strike both palms together on the object which they are using to perform Tayammum.
4. The entire forehead should be stroked or wiped with the palms of both hands, from where the hair begins to grow down to the eyebrows (passing the palms over the eyebrows is recommended) and just above the nose. Start from the top and wipe downwards towards the eyebrows.
5. (Recommended step): Strike the hands on the object of Tayammum again
6. Stroke the left palm over the whole back of the right hand and then stroke the right palm over the whole back of the left hand. Start from just above the wrist and make sure the whole back of the hand is wiped. However, you do not need to wipe between the fingers. Start from the wrist and wipe towards the tips of the fingers.

When striking the hands on the object of Tayammum, particles of the object should stick to the hands (where possible) and after striking, one should not shake off all those particles from the hand.



OBJECTS OF TAYAMMUM

The following objects can be used for Tayammum, in descending order of preference:

1. Earth (the soil from the earth)



2. Sand



3. Lumps of clay or stone



SITUATIONS WHERE TAYAMMUM IS INDICATED

The following are some of the situations where Tayammum becomes obligatory:

1. When it is not possible to procure enough water for *Wuḍūʿ* or *Ghusl*.
 - A person should first do their best to search for water in the place where they are. If they cannot find water, they need to then perform Tayammum.
2. Lack of access to water due to Special Circumstances
 - If a person is unable to get water on account of old age or weakness, or fear of a thief or a beast, or because he does not possess means to draw water from a well, he should perform Tayammum.
3. When water is harmful
 - If a person is certain or has a reasonable fear that if he uses water his life will be endangered, or he will suffer from some ailment or physical defect or make his illness worse, he should perform Tayammum.
4. When the time for prayer is running out
 - If there is very little time left for prayer and it takes less time to perform Tayammum than it would to perform *Ghusl* or *Wuḍūʿ*, one should perform Tayammum

Review Questions

Q1. The best object to use for Tayammum is:

- a) Soil from the earth
- b) Clay
- c) Sand

Q2. If I have an illness and my doctor tells me that doing *Wuḍūʿ* will make it worse, I should:

- a) Perform Tayammum
- b) Perform *Wuḍūʿ*
- c) Not pray

Q3. When performing Tayammum:

- a) We do not wipe the hands
- b) We wipe the palm of the hands
- c) We wipe the back of the hands

PRAYER TIMES

أوقات الصلاة

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Have an overview of the importance of praying the five prayers on time
- Understand the importance and benefits of praying at the prescribed time
- Know the signs of the time at which the different prayers are to be said
- Know the reasons behind the option of combining the prayers or praying them separately

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: PRAYER TIMES

In previous years we learnt about the five daily prayers, the importance of praying on time and also how to make up for missed prayers (qada'). In this unit, you will learn about the signs of the time at which the different prayers should be performed and the option of combining or separating the prayers.

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYING AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TIME OF PRAYERS (FADĪLAH)

There is quite a long time period in which each prayer can be prayed. However, it is always best to pray each prayer at the beginning of its prescribed time. This time is known as 'fadīlah' or 'prime time'. This creates the spirit of punctuality and discipline in us, and also reflects our dedication and commitment to communicate with Allah (SWT).

Offering our prayer on time is a highly recommended act, take the following hadith qudsi for an example:

“And when he (the worshipper) knows that it is time of Prayer but does not pray, he is indeed careless about Me”ⁱⁱ



Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) has also said:

“Whoever performed the obligatory prayers at the beginning of their times and observed their restrictions, the angels would raise them white and pure into heaven. The prayer would say (to the performer): ‘May Allah (SWT) preserve you as you preserved me and entrust you to a generous angel as you looked after me’. But whoever performed them after the appointed times with no excuse, and did not observe their restrictions, the angels would raise them, black and dark. The prayer would shout at the performer: ‘you have lost me, may Allah (SWT) lose you, and may He not care for you as you did not care for me’.”

PRAYER TIMINGS ACCORDING TO THE QUR'ĀN

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ
الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

“Undertake the prayer at the time of the declining sun to the darkness of the night and the morning recitation; for indeed the morning recitation is witnessed” (17: 78)

It is clear from the above āyah that the *times* of the obligatory prayers are three:

1. The time of the two obligatory prayers, Ḍuhr (noon) and ‘Aṣr (afternoon), which is shared between the two.
2. The time of the two obligatory prayers Maghrib (dusk) and ‘Ishā’ (night) which is also shared between the two.
3. The time for the Fajr (morning) prayer which is specific to it.



THE OPTION OF COMBINING THE PRAYERS

Most of the Sunni schools of law allow the combining of the obligatory prayers only in the case of rain, travel, fear, or other emergencies.

The followers of the Ahlul Bayt (as) usually combine the five prayers into three times, by praying Ḍuhr and ‘Aṣr consecutively after another at around noon, and praying Maghrib and ‘Ishā’ consecutively after one another at Maghrib time. Despite the objections of the Sunnis, this practice is in complete agreement with the Qur'ān as well as authentic traditions from the Prophet (saw).

The above āyah from the Qur'ān clearly endorses our practice by showing that there are three, not five, prayer times. In addition, there are also authentic hadith which testify that the Holy Prophet (saw) used to combine his noon and afternoon prayers and the evening and night prayers, without reasons like fear, travel or rain.

However, we should remember that according to the narrations of the Ahlul Bayt (as), it is more recommended to separate our prayers into five, unless this means that we would miss out on praying in congregation or praying at a mosque or Islamic centre.

Review Questions

Q1. According to the Qur'ān, there are:

- a) Three prayer times
- b) Five prayer times
- c) Three prayer times only when it is raining

Q2. The best time to pray is the beginning time for each prayer about half an hour after the adhān. This is called the:

- a) Mustaḥab time
- b) The Faḍīlah time
- c) The wajib time

Q3. According to the narrations we read in this lesson:

- a) A prayer is best accepted when it is prayed on time
- b) A prayer is accepted the same no matter when it is prayed
- c) Neither of the above

LESSON 2: THE SIGNS OF THE PRAYER TIMES

Now that we know it is extremely important for us to offer our prayers on time, we must know the times for each prayer. We learned in previous years how to find out the prayer times using a prayer calendar. However, at times we have no access to a calendar and so we should know the different ways to know the times of prayer including the natural signs for the prayer times.

TIMES OF THE PRAYERS

FAJR PRAYER

Just before dawn a vertical column of whiteness rises upwards from the east. This is called the false dawn. This is not the time for Fajr. When this whiteness spreads and become a horizontal line, it is called the true dawn (al-fajrul ṣādiq). This is the beginning of the time for the Fajr prayers. This time continues until sunrise (usually 1.5 hour later). The prime time for Fajr prayers is from true dawn until just before the sky becomes bright (about 20 minutes before sunrise).

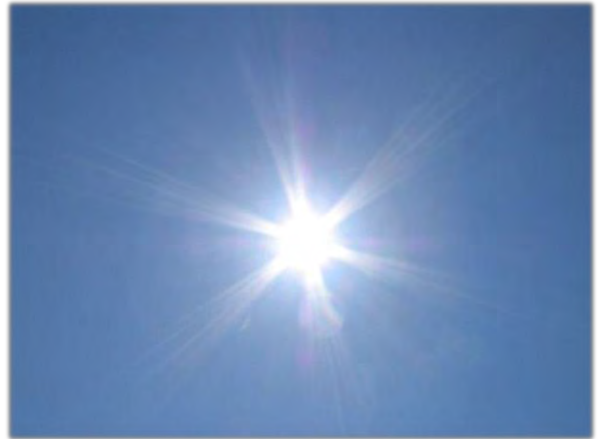


ḌUHR PRAYER

The time for Ḍuhr prayers begins when the sun starts declining at midday (directly overhead) and continues until sunset. The best way to know the time for Ḍuhr prayer is to use a stick in the ground.

If a stick, a pole, or anything similar to it, which acts as an indicator is made to stand on level ground, its shadow will fall westwards when the sun rises in the morning, and as the sun continues to rise the shadow cast by the indicator will reduce in size, becoming smallest at Ḍuhr time. And as Ḍuhr passes the shadow cast by the indicator turns

eastwards, and as the sun moves towards west the shadow gets longer. Based on this, when the shadow is the shortest, and it begins getting longer again, this indicates the time for Ḍuhr has begun. The best time for Ḍuhr prayer is usually within an hour after the adhān.



‘AṢR PRAYER

The time for ‘Aṣr prayers is the same that for Ḍuhr prayer. The only condition is that Ḍuhr prayer should be prayed first. The prime time for ‘Aṣr prayer is usually within 2 or 3 hours after midday.

MAGHRIB PRAYER

The obligatory precaution is that the time for Maghrib prayer is when the sun has set and the redness that appears after this disappears from the eastern half of the sky. In other words, sunset is not the time for Maghrib prayers. Rather, we must wait for more than half the sky to go dark. The prime time for Maghrib prayers is from this time until that the entire sky is dark. This is usually one and a half hours after sunset.



Note that the sun sets in a westerly direction

'ISHĀ' PRAYER

The time for 'Ishā' prayers is the same as that of Maghrib. The only condition is that Maghrib prayer should be prayed first. The time continues until Islamic midnight. This is calculated as the halfway point between sunset and true dawn. The prime time for 'Ishā' prayers is from when the redness has gone from the whole sky until one third of the night is gone.

It is important to note that for girls or women in the state of *ḥayḍ*, the time for Maghrib and 'Ishā' extends till Fajr.

Another important point to remember is that if a person sleeps, forgets or has another valid excuse for not praying Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayer before midnight, the time for these prayers extends t

Review Questions

Q1. The time for Fajr prayer is:

- a) When the first vertical ray of light appears in the horizon
- b) When the first horizontal ray of light appears in the horizon
- c) Just before sunrise

Q2. The time for Ḍuhr prayer is:

- a) When the sun is directly overhead, in other words midday
- b) An hour after midday
- c) An hour before midday

Q3. The time for Maghrib prayer is:

- a) Sunset, when the disk of the sun can no longer be seen
- b) A little after sunset when the redness disappears from the eastern half of the sky
- c) When the redness disappears from the sky completely

ⁱ REFERENCES

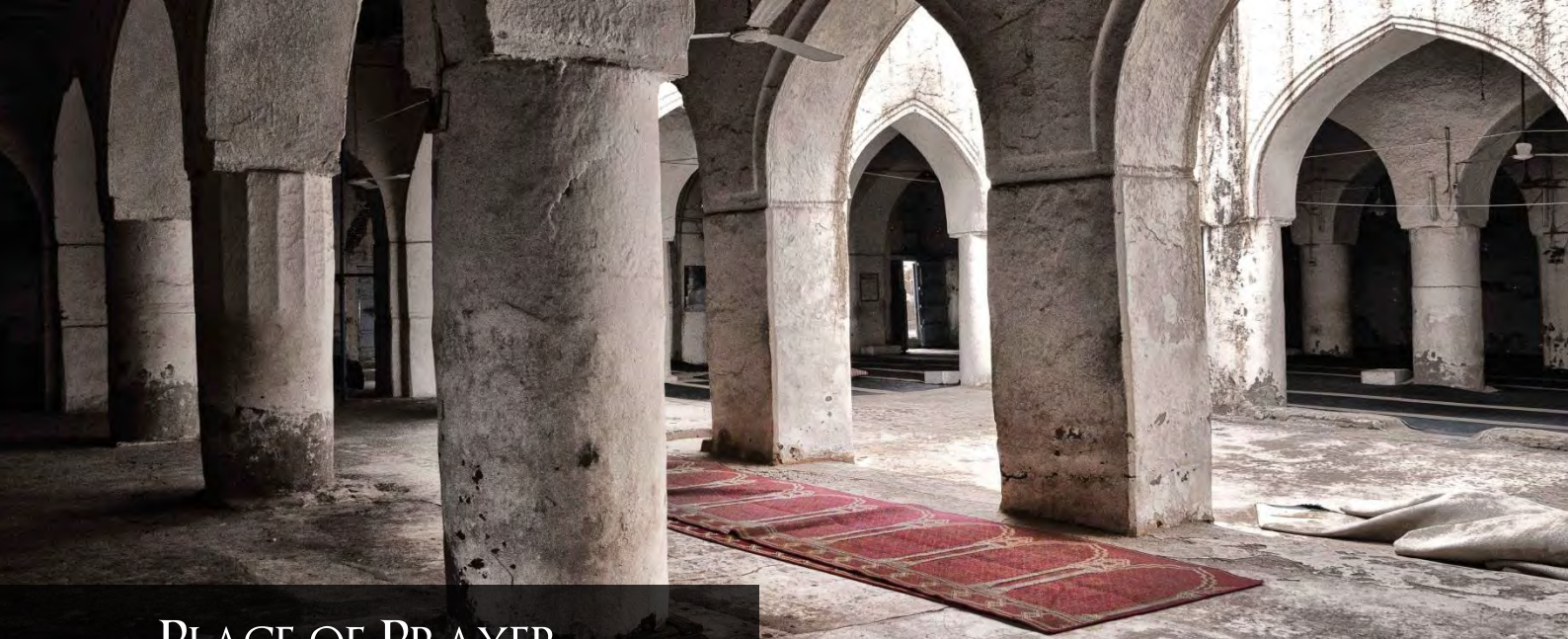
Jameel Kermalli, *Concentration in Prayer*, page 7
Ayatollah Sistani, *Islamic Laws* <http://www.sistani.org/> chapter 86, 88, 89
<http://www.madressa.net>
<http://www.al-islam.org/nutshell/#LawsandPractices> – why do the Shia combine prayers?

Wasa'il al-shi'ah, vol. 3, page 90

Hadith al Qudsi

Holy Qur'an

ⁱⁱ (*Hadith al Qudsi*)



PLACE OF PRAYER

مكان المصلي

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand the conditions of the place of prayer in brief detail
- Be reminded of the rewards of praying at the mosque

Lesson 1: The Place of Prayer

In this lesson, we will discuss the conditions for the place in which we choose to perform our prayer. In this lesson, we will discuss the most important conditions, and leave other conditions for discussion in later years.

THE PLACE OF PRAYER SHOULD NOT BE USURPED

One of the major conditions of the place of prayer is that it should not be usurped. This means that one must have permission to pray in that place. It is important to remember that although we usually discuss this condition when it comes to prayer, this rule applies to any type of usage of a place. Therefore, living in, sleeping in or walking through a place that one does not have permission to use is forbidden in Islam and considered a sin.

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

If a place belongs to someone else, we need to have their permission before we pray in that place. When it comes to vast expanses of land such as large farms, deserts or gardens which are not bound by fences, then one can pray in such places without the permission of the owner, unless they know that the owner has explicitly made it clear, that they are not happy with anyone praying there

THE PLACE OF PRAYER MUST BE TĀHIR (PURE)

The place where a person is praying should not be impure (Najis) in such a way that the impurity would reach the person's body or clothes. Therefore, if a place is impure but dry, such that the impurity would not reach the person's body or clothes, it is permissible to pray there. Even if the place was impure and wet, one is allowed to place a prayer mat or something else over it to stop the impurity from being transferred to the body or clothes and pray there.

The only exception to this rule is that the place of prostration must be pure, whether it is dry or wet.

MEN SHOULD PRAY IN FRONT OF WOMEN

If a man and a woman are praying close to each other, the woman should pray behind the man. This is the case even if the man and woman are *maḥram* (e.g. a teenage

boy needs to pray in front of his mum). Different scholars give different criteria for what is considered 'behind'.ⁱ This rule does not apply if:

- They are more than ten arm spans far from each other (about 5 metres)
- There is a curtain or other barrier between them not allowing them to see each other

OTHER RULES

- The place of prayer must be steady and not moving (for example, we cannot pray on a rocking boat)
- We cannot pray on very steep hills or steps because the place we perform sujūd on should be roughly level with where we are standing.

PRAYING IN A MOSQUE

As we have learnt in previous years, it is highly recommended to pray at the mosque and that the rewards of a prayer prayed at the mosque are far greater than a prayer prayed at home. This is especially the case for people who live close to a mosque or Islamic centre.

"He who walks to a mosque intending to join the congregation gets the equivalent of seventy thousand good deeds for every step he takes, and he is raised just as many levels..."ⁱⁱ

Review Questions:

Q1. If a man and woman are praying close to each other, the man must pray in front of the woman:

- a) Whether they are maḥram or not
- b) Only if they non-maḥram
- c) Only in a mosque

Q2. The place of prayer:

- a) Can be very steep
- b) Must not be very steep
- c) Must be completely flat

Q3. Praying in a usurped place:

- a) Is a sin but our prayer is accepted
- b) Makes our prayer void
- c) Both of the above

ⁱ Aytollah Sistani: the woman's place of prostration must be in line with the man's thighs

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi: the woman's place of prostration must be 'a little more behind than that of men'.

Ayatollah Khomeini: the woman's place of prostration must be in line with the man's feet

ⁱⁱ Mizanul Hikmah, no. 2930



PRAYER CLOTHES

لباس المصلي

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Be able to briefly understand the importance of appropriate clothing in prayer
- Revise and understand the basic conditions for the clothes of prayers
- Be reminded of the rules of silk, gold and leather during prayer

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: DRESS OF PRAYER

Objectives

In this lesson, we will discuss the rules about what we can and can't wear during prayer. This is another important aspect of the rules of prayer.

COVERING THE BODY DURING PRAYER

The rule for covering the body during prayer is different for males and females. If one intentionally or carelessly does not cover the parts of the body that are required to be covered, the prayer is void. However, if one realises that any part which should be covered is uncovered during prayer, they can cover that part and continue their prayers and even if one finds out after the prayer that certain parts were visible, their prayer is valid.

- **Males:** The minimum that needs to be covered is the private parts, even if no one is looking. However, it is preferred to cover the body from the navel to the knee as a minimum.
- **Females:** Are required to cover their entire body except the face, the hands up to the wrist, and the upper aspect of the feet up to the ankles (if there are no non-*maḥram* men around).

CONDITIONS OF CLOTHES OF PRAYER

As we have discussed in previous years, there are certain conditions one must meet with regards to their prayer clothes in order for the prayers to be correct. We shall discuss a few details in this regard below.

TAHĀRAH

The condition of *Tahārah* means that the clothes and body of the person offering prayer must be free from any *najāsah*. The prayer is invalid if one intentionally ignored a *najāsah* or was wilfully ignorant.

There are certain exceptions which make prayer valid even if the body or dress are *najis* with blood:

- If the body is stained with blood discharged from a wound or sore on the person's own body
- If the body or dress is stained with blood spaced over a space smaller than the tip of the thumb
- Blood is on a piece of clothing that would not be big enough to cover the private parts (like socks or cap)

CLOTHING MUST BE MUBĀH

Praying in usurped clothing intentionally or on account of negligence makes the prayer void. This means, for example, that one cannot pray in a stolen shirt or a shirt bought with stolen money.

RULES OF LEATHER AND FUR

Wearing clothing made from the skin or hide of an animal that has not been slaughtered islamically or an animal whose meat is *haram* to eat in the first place, is not allowed. We will go into the details of these rules further in future lessons.



RULES OF GOLD AND SILK

It is *ḥarām* for men to wear gold or silk whether it touches the skin or not, although for women this is allowed. Any prayer said by a man wearing these two items is void. These things are *ḥarām* for men even outside of prayer.



Review Questions

Q1. If a person has blood on their shirt that is not their own blood:

- a) Their prayer is void in all cases
- b) Their prayer is void if the area covered by blood is bigger than a 5 c coin
- c) Their prayer is not void in all cases

Q2. Praying in a stolen shirt:

- a) Voids the prayer
- b) Is a sin but the prayer is still accepted
- c) Is not a sin and the prayer is accepted

Q3. During prayer, it is *wājib* for men to cover:

- a) Their private parts
- b) Their shoulders
- c) Their knees



AVOIDING ARGUMENTS

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

AVOIDING ARGUMENTS

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Know that different people have different opinions about things
- Know the ills of arguing with parents and those in authority
- Understand that arguing can have many bad effects on the person and the society
- Understand some ways of avoiding arguments especially:
 - the practice of agreeing to disagree
 - avoiding arguments where one has little or no knowledge
 - accepting criticism as improvements not as personal attacks
 - avoiding talking back in anger/frustration and discussing disagreements when calm.
- Understand that Allah does not like those who argue and fight between themselves.

Arguments and quarrels are usually a result of a difference of opinion on an issue and usually arise when one party or more, often both sides, have little or no access to the truth or reality. We as Muslims believe that there is only one truth, but sometimes we may have access to only part of the truth and we may think that that is the whole truth. This ignorance makes us feel as if we are right and everyone else is wrong. This is arrogance and is disliked by Allah (SWT)

On the other hand, sometimes we may know the truth but no one is willing to listen or agree to it. Allah (SWT) in the Qur'ān teaches us that when we meet such people, instead of arguing and quarrelling we have to agree to disagree.

"To you be your religion, and to me my religion" (109:6)

WHY WE ARGUE

There are many reasons why people argue

- 1- Sometimes we feel we know the truth and need to share it with others and when others do not agree, an argument erupts. As Muslims, though we must share the truth, we are discouraged from trying to convince someone who is not willing or ready to be convinced.

The Ahlul Bayt have told us that:

"If a person meets Allah with these three qualities, he will enter paradise from whichever gate he wishes: he whose manners are good, he who fears Allah (swt) when in public and when alone, and he who avoids quarrelling even when in the right"

- 2- Sometimes we feel threatened by someone else and in order to show ourselves as strong or in control we do not concede to the truth if it is presented to us. We feel that if we concede then we will be perceived as weak. As Muslims, we are encouraged to submit to the truth however painful it may be. We cannot be stubborn to the truth.
- 3- Sometimes we argue and rebel when we want to be heard, when we feel no one is listening to us and we feel frustrated. This is as a result of anger. This kind of anger is also prohibited in Islam. Imam 'Ali (a) said:

“Protect yourself from anger for its beginning is insanity and its end is remorse.”ⁱ

We shall discuss anger further in future lessons.

- 4- Sometimes we get defensive and argue when we are criticized about something we have done. This is because we have pride in our hearts. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:

“Amongst my brothers my favourite is one who informs me of my failings and defects”ⁱⁱ.

- 5- Sometimes, or many times, we are completely ignorant of an issue and yet we argue. This is the most disliked from of argument and is a symptom of a disease of the soul. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:

“Avoid arguing, for it leads to disease of the heart”.

This can be due to nationalistic attitudes (e.g. my country/ethnicity is somehow better than yours!), nepotistic family attitudes (e.g. my family is better and bigger than yours), arguments around sports and sporting teams, etc...

- 6- Sometimes we are bored and have nothing to talk about so we start arguments on issues that have no relevance in this world or the next (blue is better than white!?). This Idle talk is also highly discouraged in Islam.

THE EFFECTS OF BEING ARGUMENTATIVE

Entering arguments unnecessarily has many effects on the society in general and on the person as well:

- It leads to animosity between the people arguing and therefore a lack of trust and co-operation especially if arguments happen between friends and family. It can destroy relationships leading to divorce, family feuds and sometimes often lead to major sins such as backbiting, lying etc....
- It leads to the faults of people being exposed and therefore the erosion of trust between people.
- It can waste a lot of time and often perpetuates ignorance and malice.
- It brings about enmity: even though we may be trying to convince a person of the truth, if we are very argumentative, we may end up driving people away from us.

PREVENTING QUARRELS

As Muslims, we are encouraged to stop arguments to the extent that we can even lie to bring believers closer.

“And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah’s command; then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably; surely Allah loves those who act equitably. The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that mercy may be had on you.” (49:7-10)

Allah (SWT) says, in this āyah, that we have to promote peace between believers. This āyah applies especially between biological brothers and sisters.

HOW CAN WE STOP BEING ARGUMENTATIVE?

There are several ways in which we can stop being argumentative

- Agree to disagree- This is the most effective means and is encouraged in Islam as we have discussed.
- Only have discussions when the intent from you or the other party is to gain knowledge or increase understanding.

- Avoiding arguments and discussions where one has little or no knowledge
- Accepting criticism as constructive, not as a personal attack
- Avoiding talking back in anger/frustration and instead discussing disagreements when calm. Also accepting scolding in anger (even when we are right or have not done anything wrong) from a parent or authority and discussing the matter calmly once tempers have dissipated. Arguments are often more lethal when in anger and one should avoid and be very passive to an angry person, rather than antagonise them.
- Avoid places of idle talk and ignorance, especially online chat rooms and arguments on social media (Facebook etc...) and similarly avoid people who like to argue.

EXCEPTIONS

We should always remember, however, that engaging in mannered, constructive debates in order to defend or promote Islam is a highly rewarding act. For example, if we have a friend who genuinely wants to learn about Islam, or who accuses Islam but is genuinely interested in getting answers, it is very good to talk to such a person about Islam, especially if we are knowledgeable in this regard.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Al-Amidi, *Gharar ul-Hikam wa darar ulKalim*, hadith # 2635

ⁱⁱ Bihar, Vol 74, Page 282

ⁱⁱⁱ References: Social Rules in Islam, 'Avoiding Arguments' – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei

Review Questions

Q1. Arguing a lot:

- a. Improves our debating skills
- b. Improves our reputation
- c. Leads to disease of the heart

Q2. If someone is not willing to listen to the truth, we are encouraged to:

- a. Get angry at them and never give up until they start listening
- b. Speak to them in a calm and mannered way, and leave them be if they do not want to accept
- c. Get our friends to join in and try to convince them as well. They will be scared of big numbers

Q3. Allah (SWT) promises paradise to a person:

- a. Who avoids quarrelling when they know they are wrong
- b. Who avoids quarrelling when they know they are right
- c. Both of the above

QIBLAH, ADHĀN & IQĀMAH

القبلة والاذان والاقامة

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Know the rules regarding actions that require the Qiblah to be known
- Know how to determine the Qiblah from various sources and in different places
- Know and understand the reason we recite Adhān and Iqāmah and memorize it

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

QIBLAH, ADHĀN & IQĀMAH

In the previous years we discussed the Qiblah which is the Holy Ka'bah in Mecca, and the obligation of facing it during obligatory prayers, recommended prayers and whilst performing other acts of worship. We also discussed Adhān and Iqāmah, which are recommended to be recited before performing the daily obligatory prayers and in other situations. In this lesson, we will continue to cover the above two issues.

FINDING THE DIRECTION OF QIBLAH

There are generally several ways of finding the Qiblah. Some of these can be summarized as follows:

1. Determining west (the rough direction of the Qiblah in Australia) by observing the sun's declination
2. Using the stars
3. Using a generic Qiblah compass
4. Using a street directory or the internet and other similar sources –Your teacher will demonstrate this to you in class, but very basically, find west and pray slightly to the North of west.



5. When a person is travelling by air or other means of transport, where he is a passenger, they can ask the pilot or driver for the direction of Mecca, and based on that evidence, they can offer their prayer, even if the information is from a non-Muslim, but is reliable based on scientific knowledge.



ACTIONS THAT REQUIRE QIBLAH TO BE KNOWN

The Qiblah must be known and the relevant rule must be followed in the following situations:

- Obligatory prayers (see above) and recommended prayers
 - The exception is that a *mustaḥab* prayer offered while one is walking, or riding, does not require facing the Qiblah.
- 1) Slaughtering an animal
 - 2) Using the toilet
 - One cannot relieve oneself while facing the Qiblah or having their back to it directly

CLASS ACTIVITY: ADHĀN & IQĀMAH

In this part of the lesson, all students will be tested on the words and meaning of the Adhān and Iqāmah.



Review Questions

Q1. Which of the following is true?

- a) A person cannot face or have their back directly to the Qiblah when relieving oneself
- b) A person cannot face the Qiblah when relieving oneself but can have their back to it
- c) A person can face the Qiblah when relieving oneself

Q2. When an animal is being slaughtered in an Islamic way:

- a) It must be facing the Qiblah
- b) It does not need to face the Qiblah
- c) It is recommended for it to face the Qiblah

Q3. True or false: a person can pray a *mustaḥab* prayer without facing the Qiblah if they are walking or travelling:

- a) True
- b) False
- c) Neither of the above



PRACTICAL PRAYER

الصلاة

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

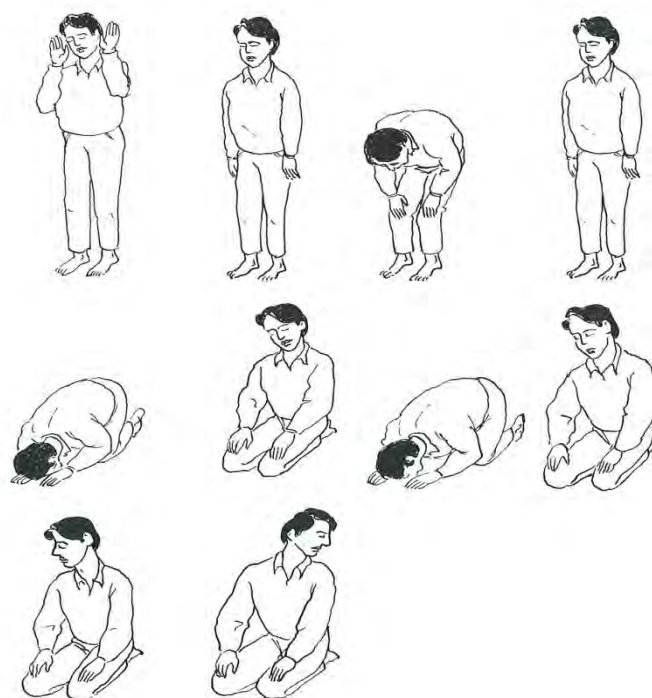
PRAYER PRACTICAL LESSONS 1-2

'How to Pray' DVD

Objectives

Students should:

- In this lesson students should learn the *mustahab* acts associated with the following acts in prayers:
 - TAKBIRATUL IHRĀM - position of the body and the hands
 - QIRĀ'AH - the method of reciting the Surah's and what can be said before and after each surah
 - RUKŪ' - the position for men (for the boys' class) and ladies (for the girls' class)
 - SUJŪD - the position of the arms for men and for ladies accordingly
 - QUNŪT - position of the hands
 - TASHAHHUD - mustahab things to say before Tashahhud
 - TASLĪM - distinguish between the mustahab and obligatory parts of Taslīm
- Understand the difference between Rukni and Ghayr-Rukni acts of prayers
- Know which mistakes in prayers render the prayer void based on whether it is a Rukni act or not



TEACHER NOTES

In this lesson, the students will watch a DVD about prayers demonstrated by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei. By this stage, the students should know all the obligatory parts of prayers. In this lesson the teacher should point out or focus on the mustahab acts with the students (these are mentioned by the Sheikh during the demonstration). These Mustahab acts include:

TAKBIRATUL IHRĀM AND QIYĀM

- When praying especially in the position of Qiyām, to stand with the hands on the thighs, fingers together, shoulders dropped humbly like a slave in front of his/her Master, feet apart by 3 fingers to one hand span distance for men (for ladies the feet should be kept together) and looking at the place of sujūd
- Raising, and keeping, the hands parallel to the ears when saying Takbiratul Ihṛām (especially) and other Takbirs throughout the prayers
- Pausing after saying Takbiratul Ihṛām (enough to refresh the breath) before proceeding to Qirā'ah

QIRĀ'AH

- Saying "*A'udhu billāhi minash-shaytānir rajīm*" before beginning the recitation
- *pausing* between each ayah of the surah (such that it is recited in tartīl).
- When we complete surah al Ḥamd to say "Alhamdulillāhi Rabbil 'Ālamīn" (saying 'Āmīn' at the end of al Ḥamd intentionally makes our prayer void!)

RUKŪ'



Figure 1 - Position of Rukū' in Salat

- In the position of Rukū' it is mustahab for a man to bend to an extent that he is able to keep the palms (with fingers open) on his knees. His legs should be straight (not bent) keeping his back flat, stretch forth his neck and keep it in line with his back. In this position he should look between his two feet and say the dhikr. For ladies it is mustahab in Rukū' to have the knees a little bent

and the hands to be on the thighs (a little above the knees).

- When standing up from Rukū' to say "*Sami' Allāhu liman ḥamidah*"

SUJŪD:

- When going into sujūd men should put their hands on the ground first before the knees. For ladies it is better to put the knees on the ground first before the hands
- In Sujūd men should put the palm of the hands only on the ground (next to his head) and the elbows up in the air (i.e. not leaning on anything). However for ladies it is better to put the whole arm up to elbow on the ground.
- To say "*Astagfirullāha Rabbi wa atūbu ilayh*" between the two sajdahs
- To say "*Bi ḥawḷillāhi wa quwwatihi aqūmu wa aq'ud*" while rising to stand after sujūd

QUNŪT

- Performing Qunūt: placing the hands in front of the face, opened facing upwards towards the sky. It is also mustahab to look at the palms during qunūt. (remind students that the du'ā' of qunūt can be anything in any language)



Figure 2 - Position of Hands in Qunūt

TASHAHHUD AND TASLĪM

- Before saying the Tashahhud to say "*Alhamdulillah*". It is mustahab to look at the lap during Tashahhud.
- In Taslīm, saying "*Assalāmu ‘alayka ayyuhan Nabi wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātub*" is mustahab. If this is said then the second ("*Assalamu ‘alayna wa ‘ala ‘ibadillāhi sālībīn*") and third ("*Assalāmu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātub*") are alternatively waajib. Otherwise just to say "*Assalāmu ‘Alaykum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakātub*" is wajib to say.
- Tasbīh Sayyeda Fatima (as) and Ziārah of Imam Husayn after prayers is highly recommended



Figure 3 - Position of Tashahhud

- Qirā’ah
- Rukū’ (bowing)
- Sujūd (two prostrations)
- Tashahhud
- Dhikr of Tasbīhātul Arba’a
- Taslīm
- Tartīb (sequence – that the prayer is offered in the correct order)
- Muwalāt (to perform the different acts of prayers in regular succession)

These 11 obligatory acts are divided into two:



Figure 4 - Classification of Obligatory Acts

ADDING AN OBLIGATORY ACT IN PRAYER

Any addition made to the Foundational (Rukni) acts intentionally or unintentionally, will make the prayers void.

Some examples are:

- Reciting Takbiratul Iḥrām twice with the intention of both being obligatory
- Performing 4 rak’at in a 3 rak’ah prayer or similar additions
- Performing 4 sajdahs in one rak’ah
- Performing two rukū’ in one rak’ah

If a non-Rukni act is added intentionally, the prayer is void. However, if it is added unintentionally, the prayer can be rectified by performing Sajdatul Sahw (discussed in the next lesson).

LESSON 3: FOUNDATIONAL AND NON-FOUNDATIONAL ACTS IN PRAYERS

In previous years we have learnt how to pray and the obligatory parts of prayers. In this lesson we will focus on the Rukni (foundational) and Ghayr-Rukni (non-foundational) acts in prayers. We will also discuss how mistakes in these acts can invalidate the prayer or be rectified.

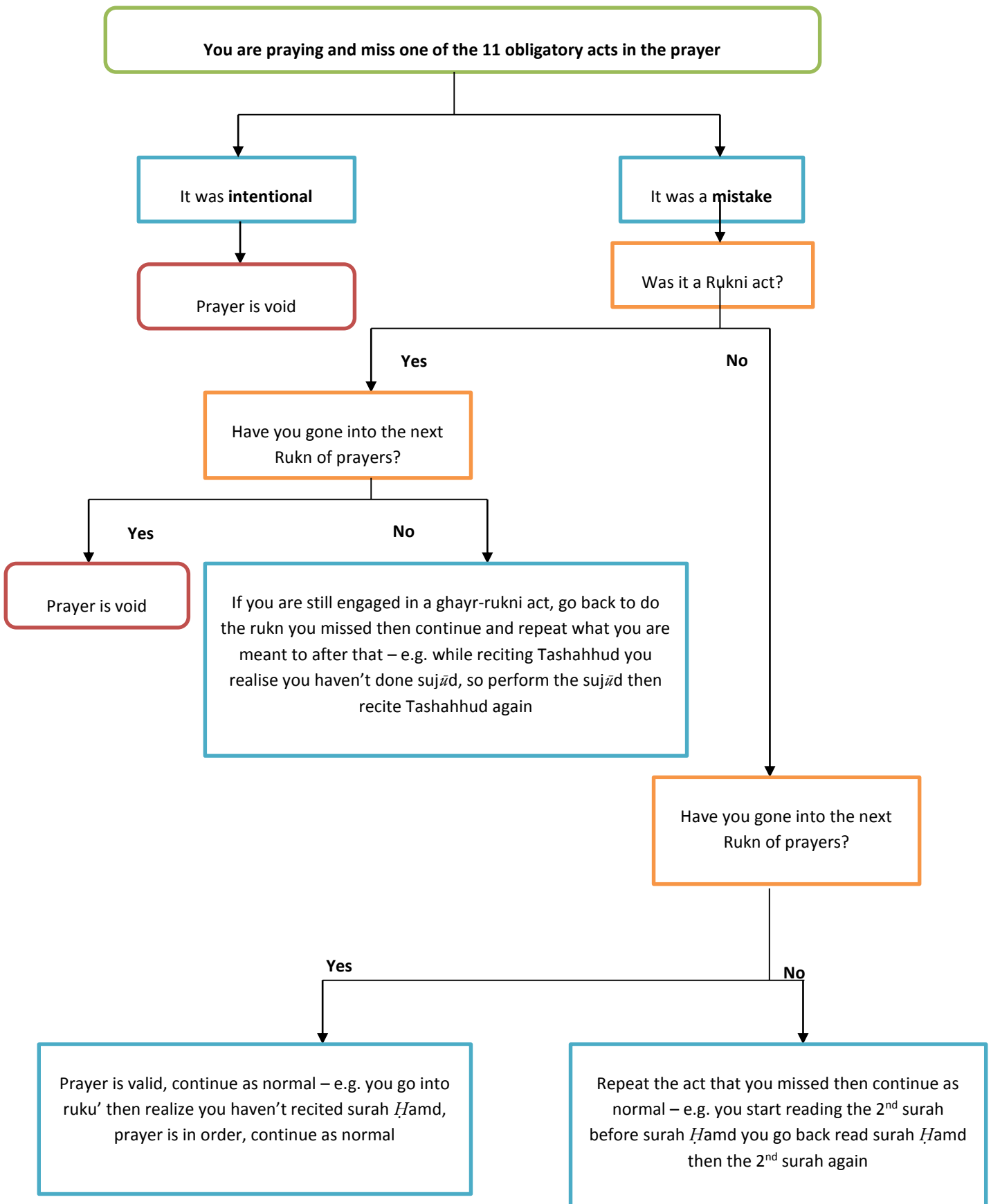
OBLIGATORY ACTS IN PRAYERS

As we have previously learnt, there are 11 obligatory acts in prayers:

- Niyyah (intention)
- Qiyām (standing upright)
- Takbiratul Iḥrām

MISSING OUT ON AN OBLIGATION IN PRAYER

Follow the chart to see the rules for missing one of these acts. See flow chart below.





INVALIDATORS OF PRAYER

مبطلات الصلاة

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand why prayers has restrictions in what one can or cannot do
- Learn more of the actions that invalidate prayer
- Know when prayers can be broken
- Know the Makrūh acts in prayers

Invalidators of Prayer

Activity: Review Quiz

In the quiz below, the situations given are those occurring during your prayer. Some invalidate prayers and some do not. Using the knowledge you have gained from previous lessons, place a tick in the appropriate columns on the right. On completion, ask you teacher for the answers and give yourself a score out of 10.

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

SITUATION IN PRAYER	Invalidates Prayer	Does not invalidate prayer
I reply to Salamun 'Alaykum		
Wearing a shirt that I had stolen		
Forgetting both sajdahs of the same rak'ah		
Crying due to fear of Hell		
My face turns away from the Qiblah completely		
Only eating half an apple while in Qiyam (standing)		
Sleeping for only five seconds in sajdah		
Crying because I failed my exam		
Forgetting tashahhud of the second rak'ah		
Laughing loudly and uncontrollably		

THE ETIQUETTE OF PRAYER

As Muslims we get an opportunity to communicate with Allah (SWT) throughout the day by praying. This is not an ordinary opportunity but a very special one because we are talking to the Lord of the Worlds, The Most Powerful. Allah (SWT) sees, listens and pays attention to us when we stand for prayer. For this reason we have to be very careful that we do not show negligence and

inattentiveness towards Him because that, in the least, is rude. In this regard, Imam al Reḍa (as) says:

“Stand in from of your Lord as a slave appears before his master. Keep your feet in order and your stature (body) firm. Do not look here and there. Be as if you could see Him, and if you do not see Him, He sees you”

Eating and laughing loudly whilst talking to Him are some of the things that are not supposed to be done whilst praying and thus they invalidate our prayer. Even if you stand in the presence of the president of your country and act in a rude manner, he will not accept your request or he will be unhappy with you. Similarly, we have to be very careful to avoid all things that our Prophets and Imams have taught us that are rude and inappropriate to do when standing in front of Allah (SWT).

INVALIDATORS OF PRAYER

LAUGHING OR CRYING

- If a person laughs loudly and uncontrollably, whether intentionally or unintentionally, then his prayers become invalid. If he laughs without emitting any voice then his prayers will be valid. If however in order to control himself, the condition of the person praying changes, like if the colour of his face turns red, then he should as an obligatory precaution pray again.
- If a person cries for worldly reasons e.g. loss of property or loss of a dear one then his prayers will be void. But if he cries for the fear of Hell or begging for paradise or on the pain that the Ahlul Bayt (as) suffered, then his prayers will be in order.

TALKING

- Deliberately uttering any words which are not part of prayer invalidates the prayer.
- Replying to salaam is wājib even if one is praying. The reply should however be identical to the greeting. So if one says “Salāmun ‘Alaykum”, the reply should be “Salāmun ‘Alaykum”. It is also important that the reply should be given immediately. Not replying to salām does not invalidate the prayer but it is counted as a sin. One does not have to reply to a salām that is done out of fun.

EATING OR DRINKING

- If a person eats or drinks in such a way that it changes the form of the prayer (similar to laughing, jumping and talking) then he has to repeat it.
- If he however only swallows the food from between his teeth, then his prayers will be in order.

OMISSION OR ADDITION OF CERTAIN ACTS

- If one adds or omits a foundational obligation (wājib rukni) intentionally or unintentionally then the prayers will become void.
- If one adds or omits a non-foundational obligation (wajib ghayr rukni), then his prayer is void.

FRUTHER ETIQUETTE OF PRAYER

So far, we have discussed the Wājib rules about which things break the prayer. Now let us look at some other things which are makrūh (disliked or better to avoid) things during prayer:

- To face slightly towards the right or left, remember if one turns completely away, it breaks the prayer, but turning away only a little is makrūh
- To close the eyes
- Fidget and play with one’s hands
- Anything that disturbs us while we are praying is makrūh (for example praying near the TV, or praying in front of a picture or a mirror or next to noisy friends so that we can hear what they are saying)



- Praying when one has the urge to use the toilet is makruh

- It is also makrūh to pray when one is tired and drowsy
- One common problem is trying to pray when we have noisy younger brothers or sisters. The best way to deal with this is to find a quiet room and close the door so that our siblings can't get in and disturb us. If this is not possible, give them something to play with to distract them or promise them that if they are quiet during prayer, you will play with them afterwards.



Homework

Analyse how you pray from the beginning to the end and list down the things that break prayer and the makrūh things that you have been doing. Make sure to eliminate all invalidators and aim to reduce the Makrūh acts when you stand for prayer again.

Review Questions

1. Turning slightly to the right or left:

- a. Breaks the prayer
- b. Is makrūh
- c. Is okay

2. Laughing out loud during prayer:

- a. Is makrūh
- b. Breaks the prayer
- c. Is okay

3. Replying to 'Salamun 'Alaykum' during prayer is:

- a. Wājib
- b. Mustaḥab
- c. Breaks the prayer