

AKHLAQ

(Ethics)

Lesson 1

Dressing and Bedtime Manners

Dressing

The Qur'ān tells us that dressing is to cover us from being naked and to make us look good. So we dress in order to hide our nakedness, to protect ourselves (e.g. from the cold or injury) and to make ourselves presentable before others.

Islam also asks us to dress modestly. Modest and decent clothing means clothes that are not too tight or short to reveal the shape of the body. We should also not dress to imitate people who are associated with being irreligious like musicians, movie stars and other celebrities.

Rasulullāh (s) has said, 'It is not right for a person to stay naked whether during the day or night.' This means we should never be without clothes for no reason, even when we sleep. This prevents shaytān from making us think sinful thoughts.

When putting on clothes or removing them, always seek refuge with Allāh from shaytān by saying '*a'udhu billāhi min ash-shaytani rajeem*' and '*Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim*'.

Having many clothes is ok if we are using them all. But we should not hoard clothes and keep buying and collecting new ones while our cupboards are full of clothes we no longer wear. Instead we should give away clothes we don't wear to charity so that others can benefit from them.

Our clothes should be clean. Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'Clean clothes removes sorrow and makes our salāh more acceptable.'

But our clothes should also be simple. Wearing expensive clothes even when there is no occasion, just to show off or to keep up with the latest fashion, is not recommended because it encourages us to give more importance to our body than our soul and it makes others jealous and

even hurts the feelings of the poor who cannot afford such clothes. When we dress modestly and simply, others are also encouraged to dress simply and there is no 'competition' in the community of who is more fashionable, etc.

And instead, we should 'adorn' ourselves with good manners and a lot of knowledge so that even the poor may imitate our behaviour. People should love us because of our character and not our money.

Indecent Dressing

Indecent dressing means to dress disrespectfully by wearing clothes that reveals the shape of the body and attracts wrong attention from others. Even if the body is covered, if what we are wearing is tight and/or see-through than according to Islamic standards, it is classified as indecent.

If we see someone dressed indecently, the Qur'ān commands us to look down or turning our gaze elsewhere:

﴿قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ . وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ...﴾

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: and Allāh is well aware with all that they do.

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear; that they should draw their veils over themselves and not display their beauty except to their husbands..."

- Surah an-Nur, 24:30-31

What is wrong with exposing our bodies when everyone does it?

When we live in countries where the majority are not Muslims and hijāb is only worn by a minority, we sometimes feel that dressing indecently or without hijāb is 'normal'.

Islam believes that when we dress in such a way, we may think we are only dressing to look good but we in fact spread sin in society. People look at our bodies and this leads them to temptation and to commit sins and disobey Allāh.

A society that encourages women to dress indecently takes away the dignity of women and uses them as objects to make money by portraying them on magazine covers, TV commercials, websites, and so on.

Every Muslim, male or female, should strive to change the image of women in society so that they are not seen as object. One way to do this is to wear hijāb very well and to reject the temptation to dress indecently. Wearing a scarf with a tight T-shirt and pair of tight jeans that reveals the shape of the body is not hijāb! The only purpose it serves is to spoil the name of Islam because then everyone knows that the indecently-dressed girl is a Muslim!

Besides wearing clean and decent clothing, men should not dress like women and women should not dress in male clothing. Some scholars say the reason why a beard is wājib for men is for the same reason: Allāh does not want men to resemble women. There is no beauty in a man who imitates women or a woman who imitates men. And this is not how men and women become 'equal'. Instead men and women should complement each other by proudly being who they are meant to be.

In particular when we go to the masjid, we should wear our finest clean clothes. It is not respectful to go to the masjid in casual, dirty or even torn clothes. We should also dress modestly at all times even when we are at home in the presence of our parents and siblings. Even for boys, it is very poor akhlāq to walk around the home without a shirt or to dress indecently.

Ornaments and Jewellery

By ornament we mean what we wear besides our clothing to make ourselves look beautiful, such as a bracelet, ring or chain.

It is harām for men to wear gold ornaments or jewellery and also to wear silk clothing. Women are allowed to wear gold and silk. But Muslims should not wear ornaments or jewellery to imitate others who have no Islamic values and in particular they should avoid passing trends such as tattoos, piercings, dyeing the hair in shocking colours, hairstyles to imitate unislamic and sinful icons and personalities, and so on.

How we dress has a strong influence on how we see ourselves, our thoughts and feelings, our values, our understanding of God and religion, and even our goals and ambitions in life.

Sleep

It is makruh to sleep at the time of fajr. It is mustahab to stay awake and worship Allāh until sunrise. During summer days when fajr time is too early and a person cannot stay up until sunrise, they should try and at least recite some Qur'ān, tasbih, and ad'iyā (pl. of du'a) after their fajr salāh (as *ta'qibāt*) before going back to bed again. It is also makruh to be asleep at Maghrib time.

When the days are long and it is hot, it is also recommended to take a short nap closer to noontime, before the time of salāt adh-dhuhr.

Praying and worshiping Allāh at Fajr and Maghrib time also increases a person's *rizq* (sustenance) and protects them from Hellfire.

Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا﴾

...and [observe particularly] the dawn recital. Indeed the dawn recital is witnessed [by angels].

- Surah al-Isrā, 17:78

It is makruh to sleep too much and unnecessarily. Sleep is to allow the body to rest and re-energize. Islam encourages us to sleep early and rise early instead of sleeping late and waking up late.

The following are some of the etiquette of sleeping and waking up in Islam:

- Before going to bed, use the washroom, brush your teeth and do wudu.
- Say ‘*Fi Amānillāh*’ to everyone at home or around.
- Before sleeping, think of your day and all the things you did. If there were any bad deeds or sins committed, ask Allāh for forgiveness before falling asleep, with a resolution to make the next day better.
- Lie down on your right side. Never sleep on your stomach and face.
- Recite some surahs of Qur’ān that you know and recite the Kalima.
- Whenever Rasulullāh (s) used to sleep, he would say:

اللَّهُمَّ بِاسْمِكَ أَحْيَيْ وَ أَمُوتُ

O Allāh! In Your name I live and I die.

- And when Rasulullāh (s) would wake up, he would say:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانَا بَعْدَ مَا أَمَاتَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ

Praise be to Allāh who gave us life after death and to Him we will return.

By thanking Allāh for sending our souls back into our bodies we remind ourselves that one day we shall die and we should therefore strive to make each day special.

- When you wake up, after using the washroom and brushing your teeth, do wudu again.
- Greet those who are already awake with ‘as-salāmu ‘alaykum’.

Lesson 2

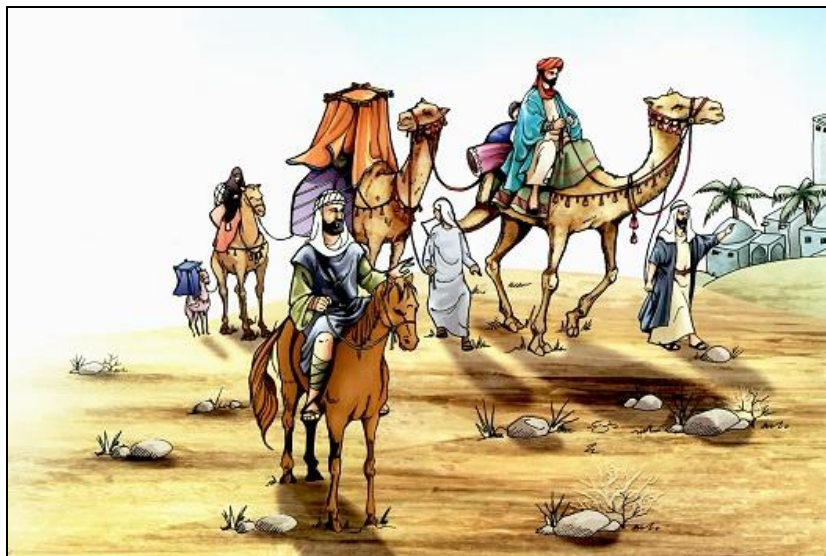
Helping Others

Allāh loves Muslims who like to help others. The best Muslims are those who not only help others but also do not like to be praised for it. They help others only to please Allāh and don't want their name to be mentioned or to be given any reward.

We should always try and volunteer at the masjid and other places where people need help such as the food bank, hospitals and so on, but never for reward or praise. Always volunteer your time cheerfully and help others only for the sake of Allāh.

The following story is about our fourth Imām, Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin ('a) and how he loved to serve people without being recognized.

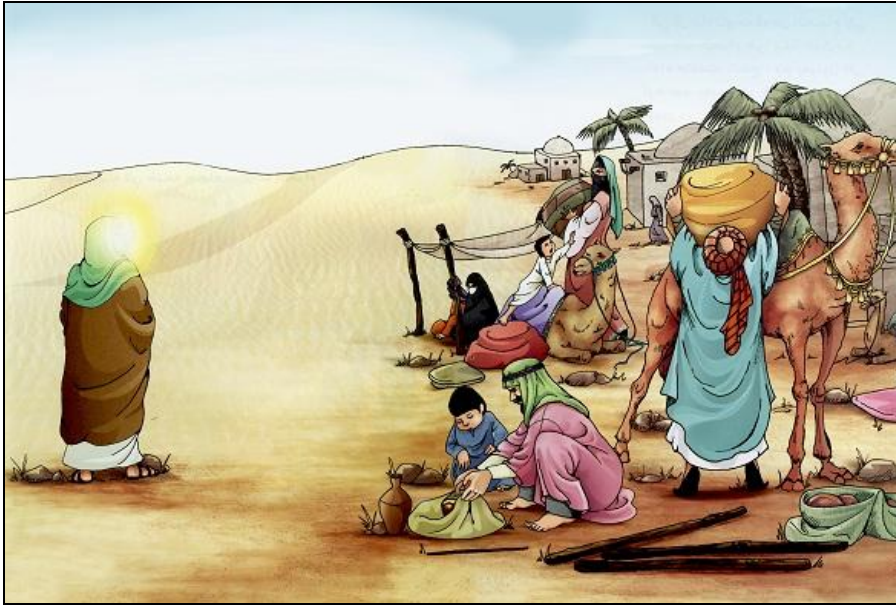
The Hajj Caravan



Every year groups of people go to Makkah to visit the Ka'bah and to perform the Hajj. In the olden days, when people travelled with camels and horses only, they would return to their homes after many months.

And every Hajj caravan would need some people to help in the caravan during the journey, so as to make it as comfortable as possible. This of course was a very tiring job because in addition to helping and serving

others, the volunteers would also have to work for themselves and would get tired from the long journey.

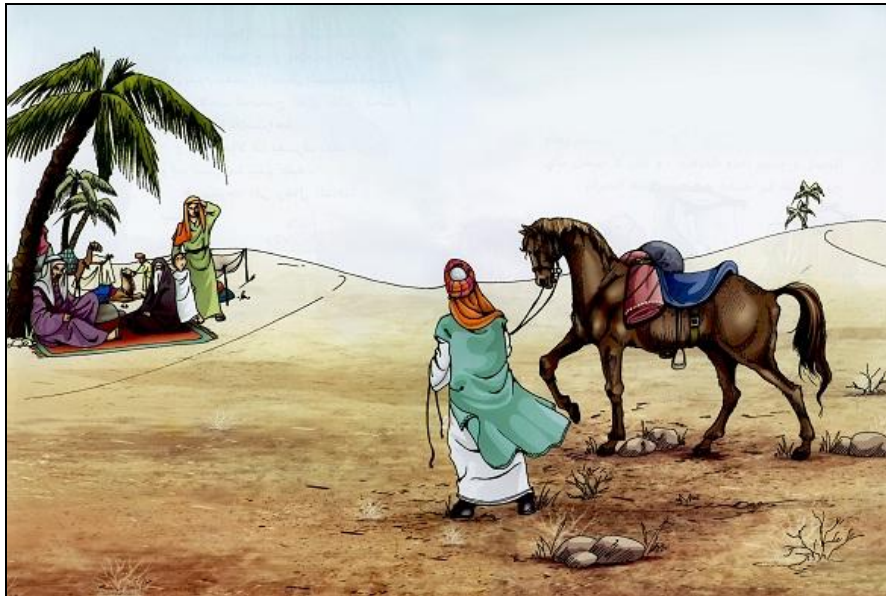


One of these groups once stopped outside Madina on their way to Makkah. And a man met them and said he intended to go for Hajj as well and asked to join the caravan. He looked like a very pious man and no one knew who he was. One of the travellers said, 'he seems like a pious Muslim who wants to go for Hajj. We should take him with us.'



After resting for a few days in Madina, the caravan set out for Makkah and the pious man joined them and helped everyone throughout the journey. He would hold the reins of the camel for some people and walk

in front of the group and he would not shy away from any hard work, always serving the pilgrims going to visit the House of Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*).



At one of the stops between Madina and Makkah, the caravan met a man who was travelling alone but whom they knew. So they greeted and welcomed him to stay for a bit. The man began talking to them and asking them about their journey and so forth. Just then....



...the man who was travelling alone saw the pious man serving people and getting water for them while they were relaxing under the shade of trees.

The man recognized who this pious man was and said to the people in the caravan, 'do you know who this man is who is busy serving you and working so hard for you?'



'No,' they replied. 'We don't know him. He joined our group in Madina but he seems like a pious and religious man who loves to help others but doesn't take help from others.' The man said, 'No wonder you don't know him! If you knew who he was, you would never let him do the work he is doing for you.'

'Who is he?!' they asked. And the man said, 'He is Imām Ali Zayn al-'Abidin ('a), the son of Imām Husayn ('a).'



The men in the caravan stood up and went to the Imām feeling very embarrassed and ashamed because they let him do all the work without realizing who he was.

They apologized to him. But he said to them, 'I only wanted to join your caravan and be with your group *because* you didn't know me. When I travel with those who know me, they don't let me help or do any work. That is why I always travel with those who don't know me so I can get the *thawāb* of serving them!'

Lesson 3

Exercises

Practical Activity on Lesson 2. Possible ideas include:

- A Visit to the Hospital
- Helping at a Soup Kitchen
- Helping at the Muslim Food Bank
- Fund-Raising to Dig a Well in a poor country

Lesson 4

The Evils of Waste

﴿وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ﴾

...and eat and drink and do not be wasteful; He (Allāh) does not love the extravagant.

- Surah al-A'rāf 7:31

In Arabic, wastefulness is called *isrāf*. Islam teaches us that it is harām to do *isrāf*. *Isrāf* means to waste something that other people need or can use.

In Book 3, you learnt various ways on how to keep away from *Isrāf* such as:

1. When you are eating, don't put too much food on your plate.
2. When you drink water, don't fill the glass and then spilling what's left. And if you do fill your glass by mistake and cannot finish it, then keep the left-over water for later or use it somewhere else like watering a tree or plant in your backyard.
3. When you are showering, brushing or doing wudu, be careful not to waste water by letting it run continuously.
4. If you have clothes, toys, furniture and anything in the house that you don't want but others can use, don't throw them in the garbage or hoard them until they are of no value. Donate them to the masjid (if they are collecting used items to help others) otherwise donate them to a thrift store or give them away for free to others.
5. When you leave a room, always turn off the lights. Leaving the lights on all over the house is *isrāf* and therefore harām. If it is during the daytime, open the blinds or curtains to let in natural light.

We will now discuss *isrāf* in more detail.

Isrāf in History

Before Islam, the Arabs in Makkah were very wasteful. When the rich among them invited someone for dinner, they slaughtered several extra camels just to show off their wealth. And whatever food was left was thrown in the garbage. Some people do this even today. Allāh hates such waste that is only to show off to others.

People don't just waste food, water and money. They even waste time. Wasting time is also harām in Islam. In the past, entertainment just for the sake of 'passing time' did not exist. But today it is widespread because of the profit that some people make by entertaining others and because of all the extra free time that many people have. Many will spend their entire evenings and weekends just having fun. Islam does not forbid relaxing and enjoying oneself in moderation. But when people are addicted to 'entertainment' for no other reason except passing time, then it is a waste of precious human life and a form of Isrāf.

Some people waste vast sums of money collecting expensive things as a hobby and only to show off, or even for a reason they don't know themselves. They may for example, purchase gold collars and leashes for their dogs and cats while people in other parts of the world are starving.

Rasulullāh (s) said even building a very expensive home or purchasing a very expensive means of transportation that is above a person's financial status – only to show off – is harām and a sign of pride and isrāf.

Isrāf in Qur'ān and Hadith

﴿وَلَا تُبْذِرْ تَبْذِيرًا إِنَّ الْمُبْذِرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ﴾

...and do not waste. The wasteful are the followers of the devils...

- Surah al-'Isrā', 17:26-27

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) used to tell his companions that even after they eat dates, they should not throw the seeds in the garbage because it can be used as food for camels and Allāh does not like the wasteful. Muslims, and especially Shi'ahs, should therefore set an example in recycling and putting food wastes like peels, bones, etc. in special bins

for organic waste that can be converted into compost (e.g. 'green bins') instead of garbage bags.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) also taught his companions not to spill leftover water because it can be drunk later on or used to water plants.

The sign of a true believer is that he or she will neither be wasteful nor miserly. Instead, a *mu'min* is moderate in everything: shopping, wearing, eating, living, travelling, etc. Allāh describes them in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا﴾

(The servants of Allāh are) those who when spending, are neither wasteful nor miserly, and moderation lies between these [two extremes].

- Surah al-Furqān, 25:67

When Allāh blesses us with wealth, it is not all for us. Some of the surplus is wājib to give away as zakāh and khums. And in addition, Allāh makes us a means through which other people get help. When we waste money, we are wasting the surplus wealth that we don't need but is the share of others. So we are denying others their share.

According to Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a), if a person is wasteful and later becomes poor because of this habit, Allāh does not answer his du'ās when he asks Allāh to help him out of poverty. In other words a person who is not moderate should not expect Allāh to keep giving him what he does not deserve or cannot spend wisely.

Even handing over something valuable to a child or a foolish person who does not understand its value and who will spoil it is a form of israf.

There once lived a Prophet called Nabi Daniyal ('a) and during his time, wastage of bread was rampant. The people used to throw away leftover bread and it could be seen lying everywhere on the streets. Prophet Daniyal ('a) prayed to Allāh to punish these people and they were inflicted with such a severe famine, that they were prepared to kill other humans and eat their flesh.

Generosity vs. Wastefulness (Isrāf)

If a person is generous and gives a lot of money or gifts to other fellow Muslims, is it isrāf? Not necessarily.

Isrāf is when you give a person more than he or she deserves or when you give others and neglect a person who is more deserving. Generosity means to give with wisdom.

For example, when you have a family member who is poor and needy and you send money to charity, it is not generosity. Because your immediate family and relatives have a greater right and are more deserving to be helped first.

However if you have something that you need yourself yet you give it to another needy person i.e. you prefer them over yourself then that is generosity and highly praised because it shows a spirit of sacrifice. The Qur'ān mentions such believers and says:

﴿وَيُؤْتِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ﴾

...and they give preference (to others) over themselves though they have a need (themselves).

- Surah al-Hashr 59:9

When Imām Ali ('a), Sayyida Fatima ('a), Imām Hasan ('a), Imām Husayn ('a) and their maid Fidda (r.a.) fasted for three days and kept giving the little food they had to the poor and needy who kept knocking on their door, Allāh praised them in the Qur'ān in Surah al-Insān (76:8).

Also, Imām Hasan ('a) on three occasions during his own lifetime gave half his wealth in charity to the poor and needy. The charitable deeds of Imām Husayn ('a) and other Imām ('a) are also well known.

These examples teach us that it is not wasteful to even give large sums in charity as long as we are not being unfair to those who have a right. Rasulullāh (s) said, 'There is no goodness in isrāf and there is no isrāf in goodness.'

The Real Meaning of Isrāf

Isrāf can sometimes be more than just spending wastefully. For example, even spending one dollar or less on something useless is isrāf and therefore harām.

Isrāf is not about quantity ('how much') – it is about taking and using what is unnecessary or spending where it is not appropriate.

If you can buy decent clothes for a lower price and you buy the same thing but much more expensive only because it is a 'brand name' then it is isrāf.

Imām Ali ('a) said, 'Wasteful people have three qualities: they eat more than they need to, they wear more than what is suitable for their status and they buy things unnecessarily.'

We must therefore be very careful not to do 'impulsive shopping'. Before you buy something ask yourself: Do I really need this? And make a shopping list before you go to the mall. That way you have had more time to think about what you need and you don't just shop impulsively.

Care for the Environment

When human beings live on the earth, they leave their mark or 'footprints' on it. In other words they use the earth's blessings until they die. Almighty Allāh says:

﴿وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا﴾

The servants of the Merciful (Lord), are those who walk gently on the Earth...

- Surah al-Furqān, 25:63

Walking gently can mean living a humble and gentle lifestyle in which we do not waste the precious resources of the earth like water and we do not pollute the environment.

Some countries use a lot of the earth's land and water and produce a lot of waste while other countries suffer with famine and poverty because they cannot produce and enjoy the blessings of the earth easily.

Not caring for the environment and wasting resources senselessly is also one possible meaning of the Qur'an āyah:

﴿ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ﴾

Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of the doings of the people's hands...

- Surah ar-Rūm, 30:41

To help the environment and our beautiful earth, we can do a lot individually and as a community. But we have to make sacrifices and we may have to change our lifestyle and give up conveniences that we have become accustomed to. It means a return to old-fashioned ways of doing things and a conscious choice of living simply and making do with less. The following are some examples that should become a part of every Muslim's lifestyle:

1. Carry a reusable mug or bottle with you instead of using disposable cups and bottles.
2. Use fabric bags for shopping. Avoid using plastic bags.
3. Spend less time in the shower. Reducing showering time by 2 minutes saves 10 gallons of water.
4. Don't print if you can email. Use less paper. Over 300 gallons of water are used to produce every kg of paper.
5. Clean without chemicals. Natural cleaners like vinegar and baking soda clean well without harming the earth.
6. Use energy-saving light bulbs.
7. Reduce usage of the dryer. Hang out clothes in the sun, or inside during cold weather and let clothes dry the old fashioned way. It is good for your clothes too!
8. Do not use weed killers and pesticides in your lawn and gardens. Use natural treatments if you have to.

This is how we can thank Allāh for all His blessings. Allāh asks in the Qur'ān after mentioning the favours He has created in Nature:

﴿أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ﴾

Will they not then give thanks?

- Surah Yā Sin, 36:35

Allāh made human beings the inheritors of the earth. He gave us the world and all the creatures within it so that we may live and prosper by *using* them, not *abusing* them. We must therefore show our gratitude to Allāh and find ways of cleaning up the mess and damage we cause to the earth.

Lesson 5

Rights of Parents & the Sin of Disobedience to Parents

Children as a Blessing

Islam views children as a blessing when they believe in Allāh, are dutiful to their parents and are well-mannered. Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) said that a man once said he didn’t see the need to have children until one day when he went for Hajj and saw a young boy praying near the mount of ‘Arafah and saying, ‘O Lord! (Bless) my father! My father!’ It was then that he wished he had a child who could pray for him like this.

Rasulullāh (s) advised parents and said, ‘Love your children and show mercy to them’ and Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘Allāh sometimes shows mercy to a person because of how much he loves his child.’

‘When a person kisses his child,’ Rasulullāh (s), ‘Allāh writes a good deed for him. If a person brings joy to his child, Allāh will bring joy to him on the Day of Judgement. And if parents teach their child the Qur’ān, they will be called on the Day of Judgement and given robes whose light will shine and give light to the faces of the people of Jannah.’

A cruel man once said to Rasulullāh (s), ‘I have never kissed my child’. When he turned, Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘This man is from the people of Hellfire.’

In one narration, Rasulullāh (s) was playing with his young grandsons Imām al-Hasan (‘a) and Imām al-Husayn (‘a) and kissing them, when a man said to him, ‘I have ten children but have never kissed even one of them.’ Rasulullāh (s) got so angry, the colour of his face changed. Then he said to the man, ‘If Allāh has removed mercy from your heart, what can I do? One who does not have mercy on the young and does not respect the old is not from us!’

But all such love for children is provided they are good and obedient to Allāh and His commands.

Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘A righteous (*sālih*) child is a flower from paradise.’

And Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘Daughters are gifts and a mercy from Allāh. Sons are blessings from Allāh. Allāh will reward you and not question you for what He gives you as a gift. But He will question you about His blessings.’

The rights of a child on parents is that they give their child a good name, provide them with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothes and shelter, and that they educate them, especially in how to recite the Qur’ān and in having religious knowledge of what is *halāl* and *harām*. It is also recommended to teach children swimming and a form of self-defence (especially for boys).

Children as a Trial

Not all children are a blessing however. Sometimes, no matter how hard parents may try, a child may be rebellious and simply a test and a trial for their parents. They neither obey Allāh nor respect their parents.

Allāh warns the faithful of such children:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ...
 إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ...﴾

O you who have faith! Indeed among your spouses and children you have enemies; so beware of them.... Rather, your possessions and children are a trial...

- Surah at-Taghābun, 64:14-15

Imām Ali (‘a) advised the faithful in his time, ‘Do not make all your life a pre-occupation for your spouse and children. Because if they are friends of Allāh then Allāh will not ignore and leave His friends uncared for. And if they are enemies of Allāh, then why are you so worried and occupied about the enemies of Allāh?’

Rights of Parents

After the worship of Allāh, Islam lays great emphasis on the rights of parents. With parents, it is not 'do good to them if they do good to you'. Rather they must be obeyed and respected regardless of how they treat you. Islam forbids us from even looking at our parents with anger even when they have been unfair to us.

Notice how, in the following āyah, the kindness to parents is mentioned along with and immediately after the worship of Allāh. And also how, when your parents upset you, instead of expressing displeasure, we are commanded to pray for them:

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِنَّمَا يُبَلِّغُنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ۖ وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا﴾

Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him, and [He has enjoined] kindness to parents. Should they reach old age at your side—one of them or both—do not say to them, 'Fie!'⁷ And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words. Lower the wing of humility to them, out of mercy, and say, 'My Lord! Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]!'

- Surah al-Isra, 17:23-24

When Rasulullāh (s) was asked about parents and their rights, he said, 'They (i.e. your mother and father) are your paradise and your hell.'

This means depending on how you deal with them, they will become the means that will lead you to either paradise or hell.

Rasulullāh (s) was asked what action was loved most by Allāh and he said, 'Praying on time.' 'What thereafter?' he was asked again and Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Doing good to your parents.'

⁷ That is, do not grumble or speak to them in an ill-tempered manner. The Arabic word for 'Fie!' in the āyah is *Uff*. *Uff* is any expression of displeasure and being fed up.

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) has said, ‘Being good to your parents and obeying them is wājib. If they are not Muslims then don’t obey them if they ask you do something harām. Otherwise obey them in everything else.’

A person who grows up and then forgets his or her parents and neglects them commits a major sin called *‘uquq al-walidayn*, which means ‘breaking ties with parents’ and such a person is called *‘āq al-walidayn* i.e. one who is disowned by his or her parents. The rights of parents are so great that it is wājib for a person to remember and to serve his or her parents all their lives and even after they die. Serving parents after they die can be done by praying for them, fasting for them, giving *sadaqa* on their behalf, going for hajj for them, and so on.

Fathers

The right of a father is that you must never call him by his name. When you walk with him you must walk besides him or behind him but never in front of him, regardless of how old and weak he may have become. When he enters the room you must stand up for him out of respect. His right is also that you never raise your voice above his or talk back to him rudely or stare at him angrily. All his orders must be obeyed unless he orders you to disobey Allāh. And from his rights is that after he has passed away, you keep a relation with his friends and respect them. One of the rights of the father is that you fear him when he is angry.

A man came to complain to Rasulullāh (s) and said, ‘My father wishes to take my property.’. Rasulullāh (s) said to him, ‘Both you and your property belong to your father!’

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) has explained that a father can take from his son whatever he needs without even asking, provided it is not wasteful and does not leave his son penniless.

Mothers

The rights of a mother are similar: that you stand up in respect for her when she enters the room; that you obey her in everything except sin; that you never raise your voice above hers; that you show love and

respect for her and you protect her and support her when she is alone, and that you continue to pray for her even after she passes away.

Rasulullāh (s) has said, 'Jannah is under the feet of mothers.'

A man called Ibrāhim b. Mazāhim once had an exchange of words with his mother before he came to see Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a). As soon as he came in Imām as-Sādiq ('a) said to him, 'Why did you speak to your mother in anger and rudely? Do you not know her womb was once your home where you lived? That her lap was your cradle? And she fed you from her own body?!' 'Yes' Ibrahim replied. 'Then don't argue with her and upset her' said the Imām and he asked him to go back and apologize to his mother.

A man said to Rasulullāh (s) once, 'I have committed many sins. Can I do anything besides *tawbah* to be forgiven?' Rasulullāh (s) asked him, 'Are any of your parents still alive?' And he said, 'my father is still alive.' So Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Go and be good to him.' Then when he turned and left, Rasulullāh (s) said, 'If only his mother was alive!'

This shows that the rights of mothers and the reward of serving her are greater. And in a famous hadith, Rasulullāh (s) said the rights of mothers are three times greater than that of fathers.

Disobeying Parents

Imām as-Sādiq ('a) commented on the āyah of Qur'ān we saw earlier and said, 'Allāh has used *uff* in the Qur'ān (17:23) but if there was any word smaller than that in Arabic to show disgust, then Allāh would have used that.' Therefore don't even sigh or express displeasure with your parents with even a word less than that.

And as for the part in the āyah that says: '*but speak to them noble words*' Imām as-Sādiq ('a) said that even when we feel our parents are unfair, we should pray for them and say, 'O Allāh forgive them!'

Our fifth Imām, Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) said, 'my father saw a man and his grownup son walking and the son was leaning on the father

disrespectfully. My father was so angry that he never spoke to the son until he died.'

Rasulullāh (s) has said that Allāh says to one who displeases his parents and is disowned by them (*'āq*): 'Do as much good as you please. I will never forgive you!'

And Rasulullāh (s) also said, 'Anyone who prays to Allāh against his parents will be struck with poverty.'

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said, 'Part of *'uquq (al-walidayn)* is to stare back at your parents angrily.' And he also said, 'A person who looks at his parents angrily even while they have been unjust, his prayers are not accepted.'

They are very many other such ahādith to show that Rasulullāh (s) cursed a person who beats his or her parents and that a person who displeases his or her parents and then does not ask them for forgiveness will never enter Jannah, regardless of much good they do or how much else they worship Allāh.

WWW.VAKIL.ORG

MOTHER

Soft Comics
Kaf & Ali

O PROPHET MUHAMMAD WHO HAS GREATER RIGHT OVER ME? MY MOTHER OR FATHER?



WHY DO YOU GIVE THE MOTHER THREE RIGHTS TO THE FATHER'S ONE?



HE REPLIED:
YOUR MOTHER
AND THEN?
YOUR MOTHER
AND THEN?

"YOUR MOTHER AND THEN YOUR FATHER"

THE PROPHET REPLIED:

YOUR MOTHER CARRIED YOU FOR NINE MONTHS, AND GAVE BIRTH TO YOU



SHE GAVE UP HER SLEEP, SUCKLED YOU, CARRIED AND CLEANED YOU

FOR YEARS SHE COOKED FOR YOU FED YOU, AND SERVED YOU FOOD



WHEN YOU WERE 40, 50, 60 SHE STILL FOLLOWED YOUR PROGRESS WITH INTEREST



COULD I REPAY HER FOR ALL THAT SHE'S DONE FOR ME?



"NOT EVEN ONE NIGHT'S DUE!"

SUPPOSE I CARRY HER ON MY BACK FOR YEARS!



... COOK & FEED HER ...



CLEAN UP FOR HER



FOR AS LONG AS SHE LIVES!



THE PROPHET SAID:

"THERE WILL STILL BE THIS DIFFERENCE: YOUR MOTHER LOOKED FOR YOU TO LIVE, WHILE YOU ARE WAITING FOR HER TO DIE."

Lesson 6

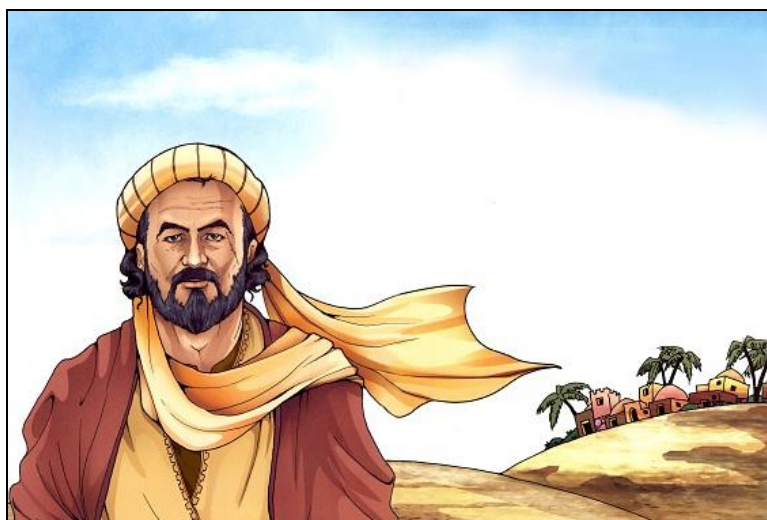
Forgiving Others

When we make mistakes or disobey Allāh, we do *istighfār* and *tawbah*, meaning we ask Allāh to forgive and pardon us for our mistakes and to give us a second chance. And when we hurt other people, we say ‘sorry’ to them and we hope they will forgive us too.

But sometimes other people hurt us and do wrong *to us*. Allāh loves us to become kind and forgiving like Him so that instead of getting angry or taking revenge, we also should forgive others and give them a second chance.

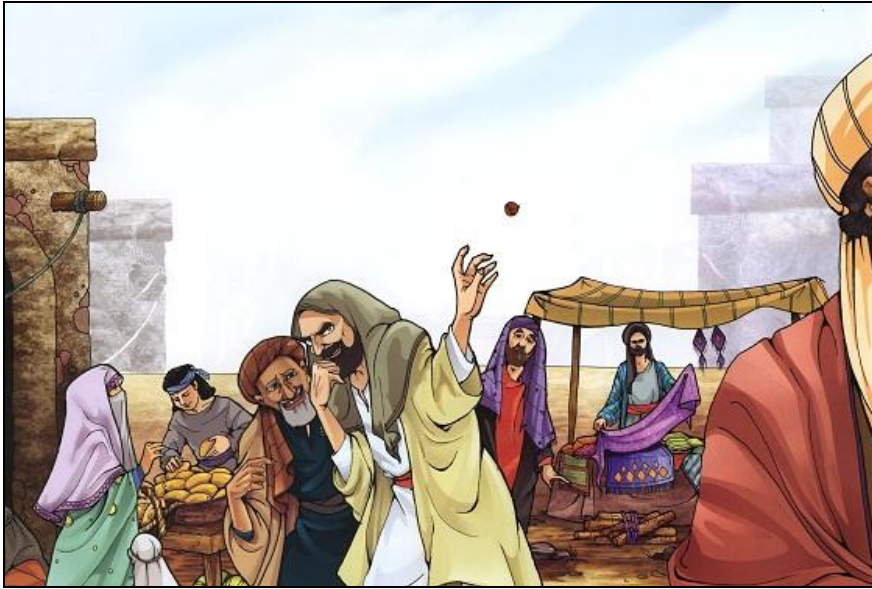
Remember not everyone is bad to us on purpose. Some people are ignorant and make mistakes. If someone is really cruel and bad, of course we should not be kind to him or her because that will encourage him or her to do more evil. But if someone is ignorant or just being silly, we should control our anger and pray to Allāh to forgive him or her and to guide him or her to become better. This is how a true Shi’ah behaves. One such Shi’ah was Mālik al-Ashtar, the famous companion of Imām Ali (‘a) and we will now read a story about him.

The Shopkeeper and the Passer-by



Malik al-Ashtar was the commander of Imām Ali (‘a)’s army and was one of the bravest and most feared soldiers in battle. He was very tall and

strong. He loved to imitate his teacher, Imām Ali ('a), in all his behaviour and manners.



One day, Mālik was passing by the market in Kufa when one of the shopkeepers decided to make fun of him and threw a hazelnut at Mālik. Then he waited a little to see what this passer-by will do. The people in the marketplace were surprised to see what this man had done.



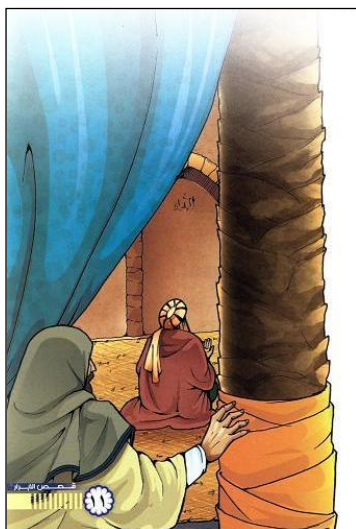
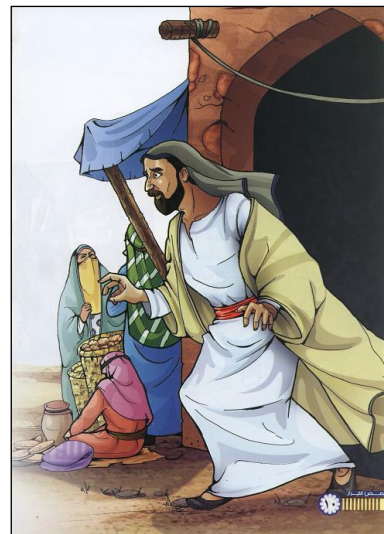
But Mālik al-Ashtar did not care about what this shopkeeper had done. He did not even look back or pay any attention to what the shopkeeper had done and continued walking on until he disappeared in the crowd of people. As he walked he just looked down with humility. What was Mālik al-Ashtar thinking? What was going on in his mind?



One of the other shopkeepers in the market said to this shopkeeper, ‘Do you know who was the man that you threw the hazelnut at?’ ‘No,’ said the man, ‘he was just a passer-by like all the other passers-by’.

‘No, he was not,’ said the other shopkeeper. ‘That was Mālik al-Ashtar, the follower of Amir al-Mu’minin Imām Ali (‘a) and the commander of his army.’

‘Was this really the same Mālik al-Ashtar from whom even the lions tremble in fear and the bravest of warriors flee from him in battle?’ asked the man in disbelief.



‘Yes, that was him,’ replied the other shopkeeper. The shopkeeper ran after Mālik al-Ashtar to apologize to him but he could not find him because Mālik had disappeared in the crowd and was now far away. But the shopkeeper kept asking about him until he was told that Mālik had gone to the masjid. The man then started looking for Mālik in the masjid and saw him praying to Allāh.

When Mālik finished praying, the man fell at his feet and wanted to kiss them and beg for forgiveness because he thought the commander of the Muslim army would punish him severely because of what he did to him in the marketplace.



But Mālik moved his feet away and held the man's hands and asked him, 'What is wrong?!'



The shopkeeper said, 'I am very sorry because of what I did at the marketplace. I am the one who threw a hazelnut at you to make fun of you but I have come to ask for your forgiveness.'

Mālik replied him politely and in a beautiful manner, 'Do not worry. It is not a problem. I only came to the masjid to pray to Allāh to forgive you... you are free to go and I have no hatred for you in my heart.'

Lesson 7

Controlling Our Anger

A Muslim should only get angry about something that Allāh or Rasullāh (s) or an Imām ('a) is angry. When a person gets angry for something personal, he or she is not able to think clearly or control himself or herself. Shaytān controls an angry person and makes him or her do harmful things like being rude to others, swearing, saying hurtful words, blaming others, and even fighting with others physically.

Anger is like fire or poison that harms the angry person more than it does others. Our seventh Imām, Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) is called 'al-Kādhim', which means 'One who controls his anger', because he never lost his temper. A Shi'ah never gets angry unnecessarily and always tries to resolve a problem with love, peace and calm thinking. Allāh does not like people who get angry easily nor people who cannot control themselves when they are angry.

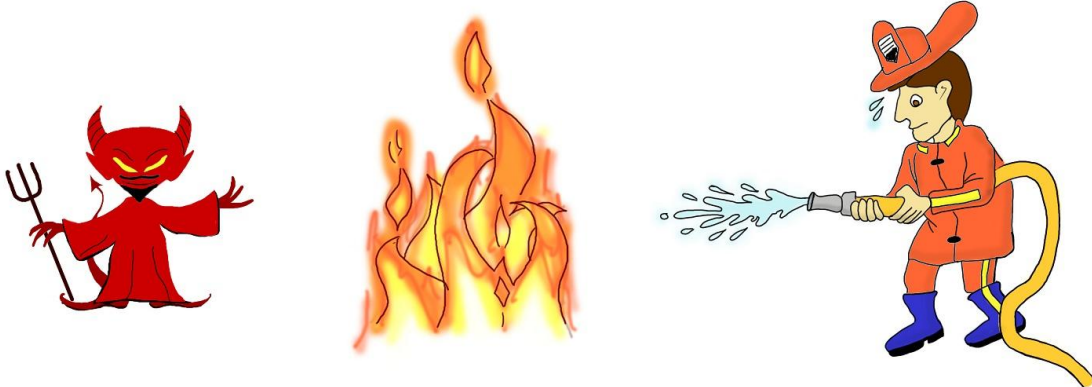


Controlling Anger

Many tips are given to us in hadith on how to control anger. Here are some of the common ones:

- If you're standing when you get angry, immediately sit down. If you're already sitting, lie down. (And if you're lying down, stand up!)
- Recite salawāt loudly until your anger subsides.
- Do wudu.

Wudu is recommended because uncontrolled anger is from shaytān and shaytān is created from fire. Uncontrolled anger is therefore a form of fire and fire is extinguished with water.



This, however, does not mean that we should never get angry. Controlled anger is necessary to allow us to defend ourselves from danger and even to uphold justice such as in punishing a criminal or during jihād when we express anger for the sake of Allāh and Islam.

What is important however, is **how** we express our anger. It must always be done with control and forethought. For example, when others insults the Qur'ān or Rasulullāh (s), the solution is not for Muslims to burn buildings, throw stones, chant slogans and shout and abuse others or threaten to kill them. The solution may be to create awareness in public of why this is wrong and blasphemous and to find ways to stop the insults without harming the image of the Qur'ān or Rasulullāh (s) even further (with our own angry reactions)!

Allāh promises to forgive on the Day of Judgement a *mu'min* who forgives others when they anger him or her. And those who restrain their anger are praised in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ
الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاطِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ
يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

*And hasten towards your Lord's forgiveness and a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the Godconscious - those who spend in ease and adversity, **and suppress their anger**, and excuse [the faults of] the people, and Allāh loves the virtuous.*

- Surah Al-Imrān, 3:133-134

﴿...وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ وَالَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ
كِبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ﴾

*...what is with Allāh is better and more lasting for those who have faith and who put their trust in their Lord; those who avoid major sins and indecencies, **and forgive when angered**.*

- Surah ash-Shura, 42:36-37

Abusive Language

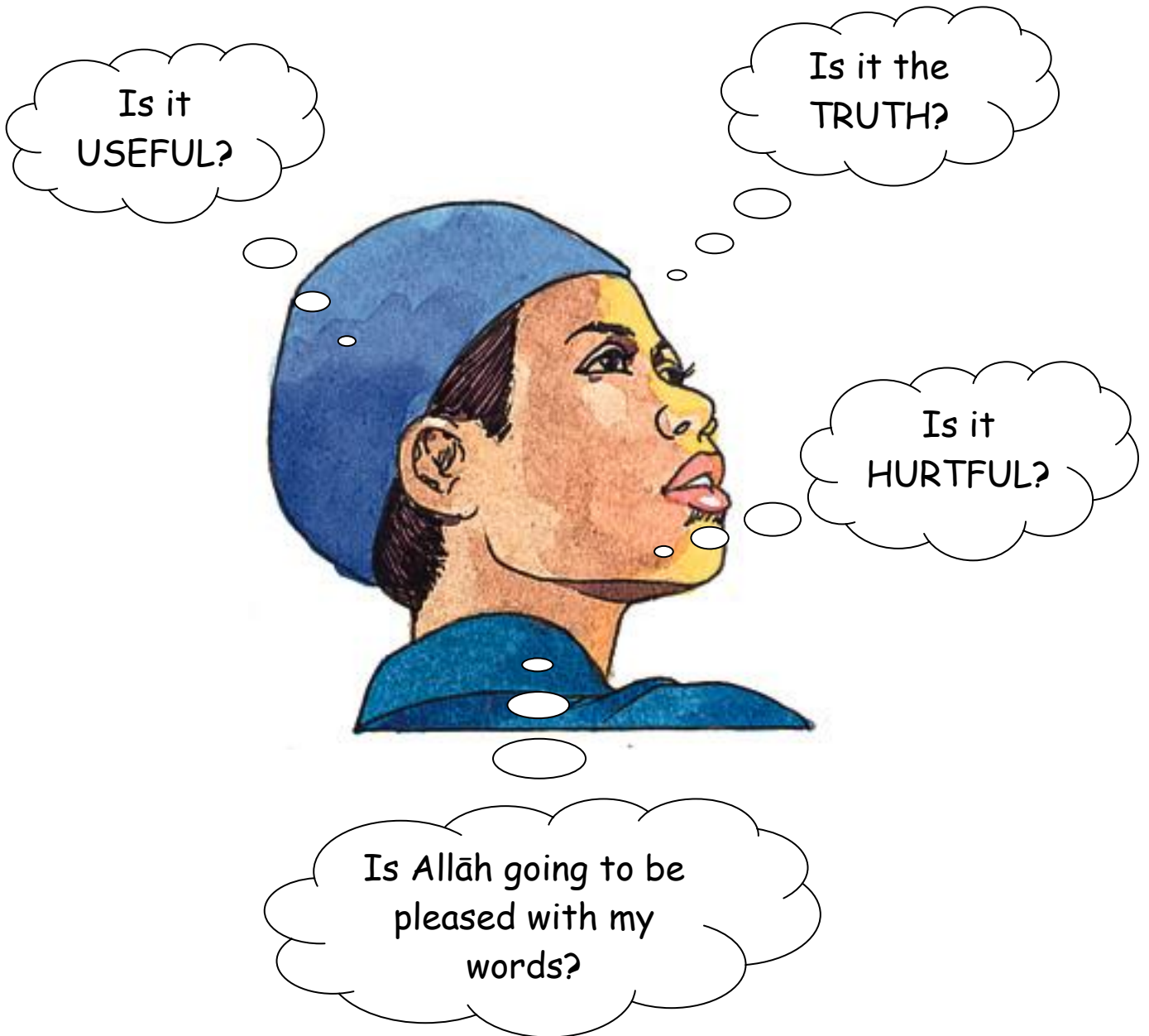
By abusive language we mean to swear or insult someone. Typically this is done in anger. Any sensible person knows this is wrong yet surprisingly it is a common habit especially amongst the youth.

Most people swear when something bad happens to them or when someone does something that they don't like. Swearing does not actually help a person calm down or feel better. It in fact makes them feel even worse.

Imām Ali ('a) said that a person from whose tongue others are afraid is from the people of Jahannam. The key to avoiding anger and saying or doing something we would regret later in life is to be patient and polite. No matter how upset we are, we must discipline ourselves to express our anger politely.

The Mouth Test

Before you speak always take the Mouth Test:

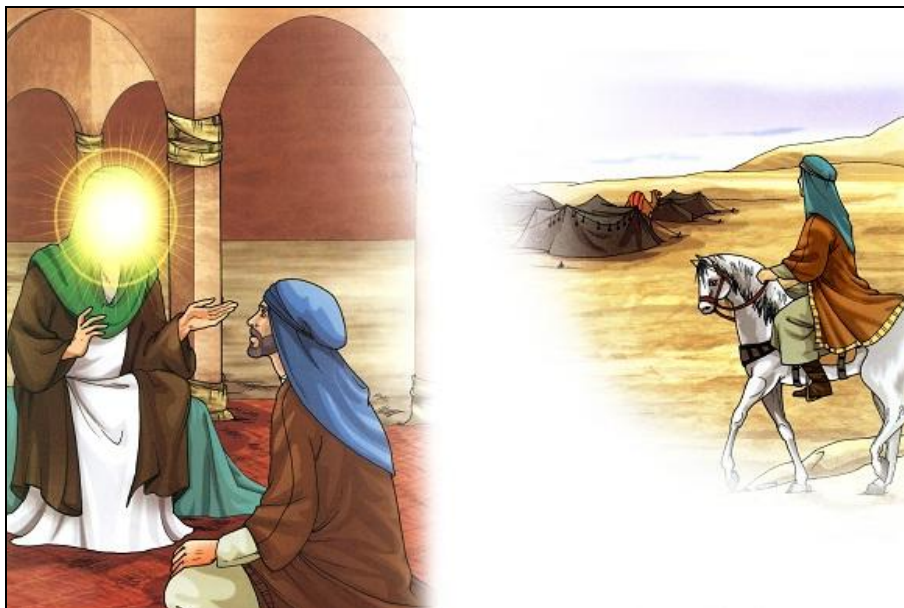


The man Who Asked for Advice



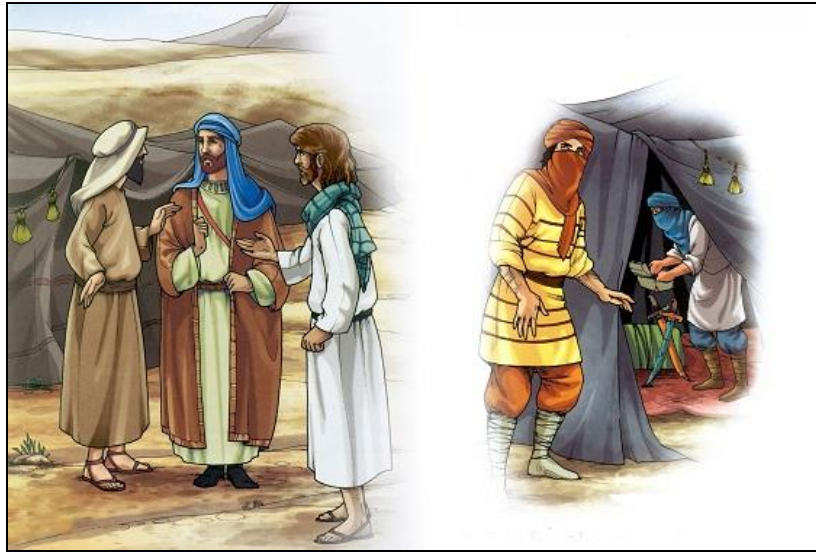
Sālim bade farewell to his family and brothers in the desert and set out with his horse towards Madina. Even though the sun was hot, every time Sālim thought of where he was going, he did not feel tired and he forgot the heat of the desert.

In Madina, the first thing Sālim did was to ask where the masjid of Rasulullāh (s) was and soon the people guided him to it.

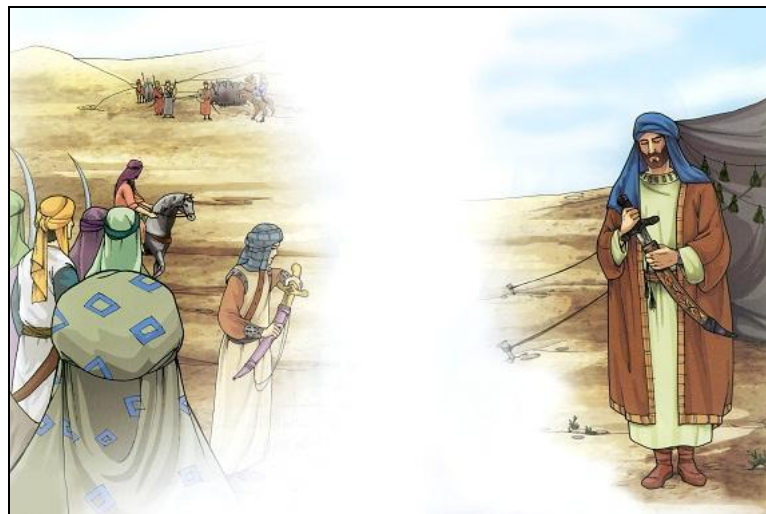


Sālim sat before Rasulullāh (s) and asked him for advice, listening attentively. Rasulullāh (s) said to him, 'Go back, dear Sālim, to your family and your people but remember: never get angry without reason or lose your temper.'

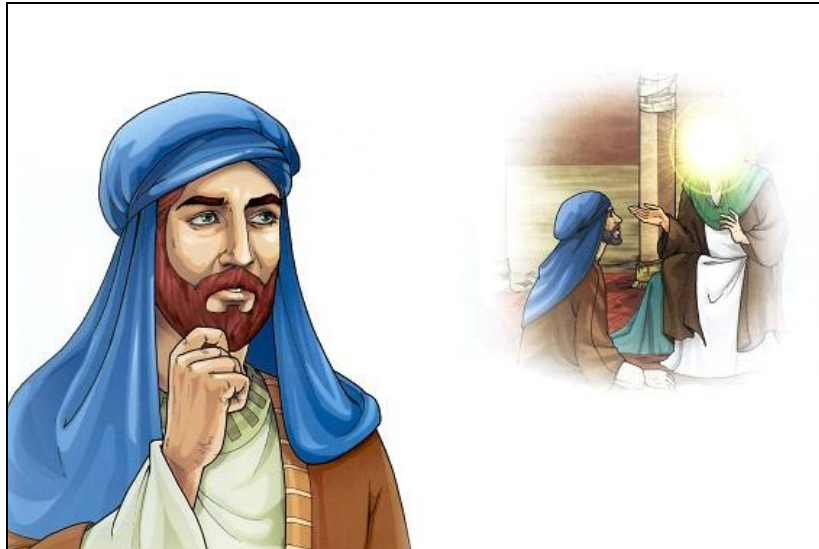
'This advice is sufficient for me, O' Messenger of Allāh!' said Sālim happily. Then he bade Rasulullāh (s) farewell and returned to his family and people in the desert carrying in his heart and mind the advice of Rasulullāh (s).



After Sālim had returned home, his people told him what had happened while he was away. Some children from his tribe had stolen some goods from another tribe. When the other tribe came to know of the theft and that the thieves were from the tribe of Sālim, they did the same thing and stole goods from Sālim's tribe.

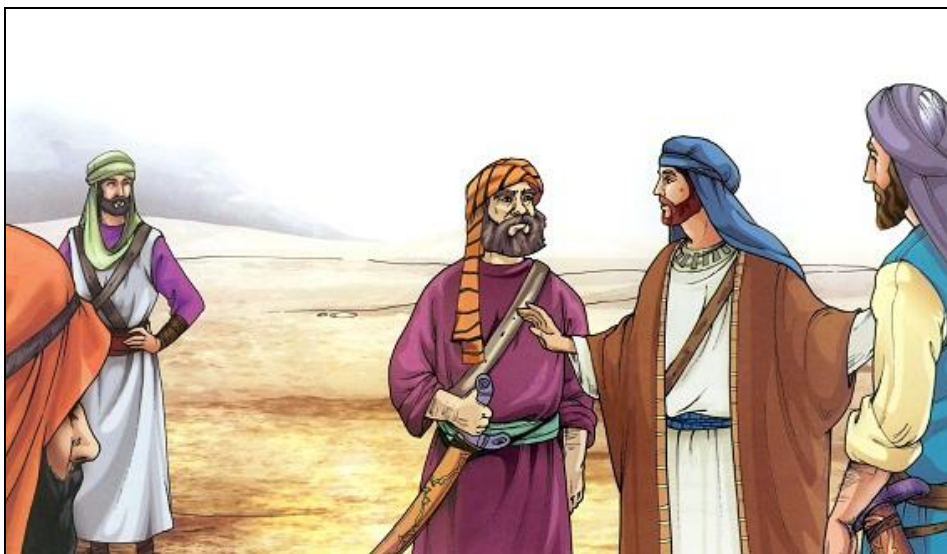


The result of this was serious and the two tribes decide to go to war. The men from both tribes prepared themselves to fight with swords and even die. When Sālim heard of this, at first he got very angry, took his sword and headed towards the battlefield to support his people and fight against the other tribe.



As Sālim stood with the men in his tribe, he recalled what Rasulullāh (s) had told him in Madina and the advice given to him never to lose his temper because anger is the key to every evil. ‘Anger,’ Rasulullāh (s), had told him, ‘stands between a man and his reasoning.’

When Sālim had calmed himself down and his anger had left him, he came to his senses and began asking himself, ‘Why are we so angry? Why are we ready to kill each other? Is war the solution to our problem?’



Then Sālim went to the other tribe and said to them, ‘O People... why are we so angry? What are we fighting for? If you have lost any wealth or property, I will pay you back from my wealth and property. Can we not give up this fighting?’

Then he went back to his people and said the same thing until they too calmed down and he convinced them to find a better solution and not to fight.



When the men in the other tribe saw what Sālim did and what he said, they were affected by his words and they too calmed down and their anger went away.

They said to the tribe of Sālim, ‘We accept peace. Let us discuss a solution instead of fighting. Forgive us for your losses and we forgive you and will not take anything from you either.’

So the two tribes made peace and put away their swords. Every man returned to his tribe. All this was because of the advice Sālim heard from Rasullāh (s) that he followed and practiced.