

AKHLAQ

(Ethics)

Lesson 1

Happy & Sad Occasions

A happy occasion may be specific to an individual or it may be general to the whole Muslim community. For example, it may be the birth of a child or someone's marriage and it may also be occasions such as the days of 'Id.

Similarly a sad occasion may be individual, such as the demise of a person and his or her funeral, or it may also be a general community occasion such as the months of Muharram and Safar when we mourn the tragedies that befell Rasullāh (s)'s family.

We generally know how we should behave at happy and sad occasions (like for example, congratulating people on happy occasions and not laughing or being insensitive to people's sadness or suffering). In this lesson we shall review more specific etiquette of what Islām recommends on some of these events.

Happy Occasions – 'Ids

'Id is an Arabic word which means an event that recurs (happens again and again) and in Islām it is used to refer to festivals that occur every year.

The word 'Id is also used in the Qur'ān when Nabi Isa ('a) prayed to Allāh on behalf of his disciples (*hawāriyun*) and said:

﴿قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا أَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ تَكُونُ لَنَا عِيدًا لِأَوَّلِنَا
وَأَآخِرِنَا وَآيَةً مِنْكَ وَارزُقْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ﴾

Isa son of Maryam said, 'O Allāh! Our Lord! Send down to us a table from the sky, to be a festival for us, for the first ones and the last ones among us and as a sign from You, and provide for us; for You are the best of providers.'

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:114

Muslims have many occasions to mark as festivals and five of the most common ones are:

- 'Id al-Jumu'ah
- 'Id al-Fitr
- 'Id al-Hajj
- 'Id al-Ghadeer
- 'Id al-Mubāhala

‘Id al-Jumu’ah

Thursday nights and Friday days are the most religious occasions of the week for Muslims. Fridays are therefore days of *‘id* for Muslims. Some of the etiquette for Thursday nights and Friday days include:

- Recite Surah Ya Sin (chapter 36 of the Qur’ān) on Thursday night.
- Recite Dua Kumayl on Thursday night.
- Remember Imām Husayn (‘a) and his suffering on Thursday e.g. by reciting Ziyārat Wārith.
- Visit the Cemetery and remember our marhumeen on Thursday.
- Perform Ghusl of Jumu’ah on Friday.
- Trim fingernails and toenails on Friday.
- Give some money as alms (*sadaqa*) on Friday.
- Pray Salāt al-Jumu’ah instead of Salāt adh-Dhuhr on Friday.
- Visit/Call relatives on Friday and bring home some gifts for our family even if it is some fruits.

‘Id al-Fitr

‘Id al-Fitr is marked on the 1st of Shawwāl every year. It marks the end of the sacred fasting month of Ramadān.

Some of the etiquette of ‘Id al-Fitr include:

- Performing a mustahab ghusl for the day of ‘Id.
- Wearing clean and if possible new clothes before going to the Masjid.
- Going to the Masjid to pray Salāt al-‘Id.
- Greeting fellow Muslims with ‘Id Mubārak’.
- Applying perfume before going out and meeting others.
- Having a special meal with loved ones and family.
- Giving some alms (*sadaqa*) to the poor.
- Asking Allāh for forgiveness and praying to Allāh to accept our fasts and to bless us with another Ramadān the following year.

It is *harām* to fast on the day of ‘Id al-Fitr. The rules for Salāt al-‘Id will be taught in Book 9 (under Fiqh).

‘Id al-Hajj

‘Id al-Hajj is marked on the 10th day of Dhul Hijjah every year. It marks the end of the annual Hajj pilgrimage. It is also known as ‘Id al-Ad-ha or ‘Id al-Qurbān which means *‘Id of Sacrifice* because an animal is usually sacrificed as part of the Hajj acts of worship. This is done in remembrance of the sacrifice of Nabi Ibrahim (‘a) of his son Nabi Ismā’il (‘a).

The etiquette of 'Id al-Hajj is very similar to those of 'Id al-Fitr and additionally:

- On the day of 'Id al-Hajj it is recommended to sacrifice an animal (such as a goat or sheep) even if we haven't gone for Hajj and to eat some of the meat and distribute some of it to relatives, friends and the poor.
- On the day of 'Id al-Fitr it is recommended to eat something before going for Salāt al-'Id. However on the day of 'Id al-Hajj, it is recommended to pray Salāt al-'Id first and then to have something to eat.

It is also *harām* to fast on the day of 'Id al-Hajj. The rules for Hajj will be taught in Book 10 (under Fiqh).

'Id al-Ghadeer

'Id al-Ghadeer is celebrated on the 18th of Dhul Hijjah. After Rasulullāh (s) went for Hajj for the last time, he stopped at a place called Ghadeer Khum (outside Makkah). At Ghadeer Khum Rasulullāh (s) gave a lengthy sermon known as the Final Sermon of Rasulullāh (s) and the climax of the sermon was his declaration that he was going to leave the world soon and that Imām Ali bin Abi Tālib was chosen by Allāh to be his successor.

Allāh had first revealed to Rasulullāh (s):

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

O Messenger! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allāh shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allāh does not guide the faithless lot.

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:67

When Rasulullāh (s) was finishing his sermon, he asked the Muslims with him, who numbered 100,000 or even more: 'O People! Do I not have a greater right over you than even what you have over your own selves?' And all the people replied with one voice, 'Yes indeed! O Messenger of Allāh!' Then Rasulullāh (s) lifted Imām Ali ('a)'s arm and showed Imām Ali ('a) to the crowd of people and declared:

مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَهَذَا عَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ

Whoever regards me as his master then this Ali is (now) his master!

Then Rasulullāh (s) raised his hands towards the heavens and prayed three times:

اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاهُ، وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ، وَأَنْصِرْ مَنْ نَصَرَهُ، وَأَخْذُلْ مَنْ خَذَلَهُ، وَأَدِرْ
الْحَقَّ مَعَهُ حَيْثُ دَارُ

O Allāh! Love one who loves him (Ali) and be an enemy to one who is an enemy to him (Ali). Help and support one who helps him and disgrace and defeat one who tries to defeat him (Ali). And turn the truth with him wherever he (Ali) turns.

Thereafter, Allāh revealed to Rasullāh (s):

﴿...الْيَوْمَ يَيْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ
لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا...﴾

Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islām as your religion....

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:3

Thereafter Rasullāh (s) sat Imām Ali (‘a) in a tent and all the Muslims came in one by one to congratulate Imām Ali (‘a) for being appointed as their master. All Muslim historians have reported the incident of Ghadeer widely and it is a day of great joy for the faithful (*mu’mineen*). Imām Ali (‘a) is known as *Amir al-Mu’minin* which means ‘the Commander of the Faithful’.

On the day of ‘Id al-Ghadeer there is no special salāt like the Salāt al-‘Id for ‘Id al-Fitr and ‘Id al-Hajj. However it’s etiquette includes:

- Fasting on the Day of ‘Id al-Ghadeer as a thanksgiving to Allāh.
- Performing a mustahab ghusl for the day.
- Greeting fellow Shi’ah Muslims by saying ‘All praise is to Allāh Who made us and you amongst those who hold on to the guardianship of Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a)’ (*al-hamdulillāhi ladhi ja’alana wa iyyakum min al-mutamasikeena bi wilāyati Amir al-Mu’minin*).
- Reciting the du’as and ziyārāt recommended for the Day of ‘Id al-Ghadeer.

‘Id al-Mubāhala

We have already briefly studied about the event of Mubāhala under Tārikh Lesson 7 and we shall study it again in detail in Book 9.

The event of Mubāhala took place on the 24th of Dhul Hijjah. Every year on the 24th of Dhul Hijjah, we celebrate how Allāh gave victory to Rasullāh (s) and his Household (Ahl al-Bayt) over the Christians of Najrān.

The etiquette of 'Id al-Mubāhala is similar to that of 'Id al-Ghadeer. We should fast on this day as a thanksgiving to Allāh and also perform a mustahab ghusl for the 'Id.

Two other very special occasions in Islām are the 15th night of Sha'bān known as *Laylat al-Barā'ah* and the 23rd night of Ramadān known as *Laylat al-Qadr*.

Laylat al-Qadr

Laylat al-Qadr or 'The Night of Power' is the most important night in the Muslim calendar. It falls in the month of Ramadān and it occurs on one of the odd nights between the 19th and 29th of Ramadān. It is a night that the Qur'ān calls 'better than a thousand months' and therefore we are encouraged to stay up all night in worship. Because we can never be certain which of the odd nights it falls on, we are also encouraged to worship Allāh and stay up on all the odd nights from the 19th night until the end of the sacred month i.e. 19th night, 21st night, 23rd night and so on.

On the night of Qadr, it is recommended to:

- Perform ghusl after sunset.
- Pray some specific salāt, duas and 'amāls that are given in the books of duas.

And of course the next day we also fast because it is in the month of Ramadān.

Rasulullāh (s) used to cut himself off from his family in the last 10 days of Ramadān and devote himself completely to the worship of Allāh. Isolating ourselves in the masjid for 3-10 days in fasting and worship is called *I'tikāf*. It is like a spiritual retreat and is recommended in the month of Ramadān especially in the last 10 days.

Laylat al-Barā'ah

Laylat al-Barā'ah is the 15th night of the month of Sha'bān. This is a very special night and is considered to be the second best night of the year after *Laylat al-Qadr*. There are special duas and 'amāls to be recited on this night and it is also highly recommended to stay up in worship on this night and then to fast the next day (the day of 15th Sha'bān). One of the reasons why the night of 15th Sha'bān is so special is because the Imām of our time, Imām al-Mahdi (may Allāh hasten his reappearance) was born on this night.

On this night it is recommended to:

- Perform ghusl after sunset.
- Recite Du'a Kumayl.
- Recite Surah Ya Sin three times for (a) Long life (b) Safety against misfortunes, and (c) Protection against sudden death

There are many other 'amāls, duas and tasbihs that are recommended for this night and these are to encourage us to stay up all night in worship.

Sad Occasions – Muharram & Safar

The saddest months of the Islāmic year are the first two months of Muharram and Safar. Several Imāms passed away in these two months and Muslims are supposed to treat these months as sacred and not to engage in festivities or even to hold joyous events like weddings, engagements, celebrating birthdays, and so on.

Muharram is particularly sad because of the tragedy of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imām Husayn (‘a) and his 72 companions on the Day of Ashura (10th Muharram) in the year 61 AH. This tragedy took place when Imām Husayn (‘a) refused to pay allegiance to the Yazid, the tyrant Muslim caliph. And thereafter the womenfolk of Rasullāh (s)’s household were taken as prisoners to Damascus.

Safar is particularly sad because the wafāt (passing away) of Rasullāh (s) took place on the 28th of Safar.

Our etiquette in these two months should be:

- Expressing sadness and not showing joy and laughter especially when attending majālis at the masjid.
- Participating in the ‘aza (mourning) events including the majlis and matam.
- Holding majālis in the name of Imām Husayn (‘a) in our homes.
- Not celebrating our birthdays if they fall within the months of Muharram and Safar.
- Not getting engaged or married and not attending the engagement or wedding ceremonies of others.
- Not making new purchases if we can avoid it especially if it is luxuries that are meant to bring us joy and entertainment.
- Avoiding ‘fun’ things like going on a vacation, to theme parks and rides, etc.
- Wearing black clothes on the Day of Ashura, the wafāts and when attending majālis during these two months.
- Helping to propagate the message of Imām Husayn (‘a) to others who may not be aware of his sacrifices for humanity.

We express sadness in general out of respect for these great personalities whom Allāh sent to mankind as His signs. And Allāh says in the Qur’ān:

﴿ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ﴾

And one who shows respect for the signs of Allāh—indeed that arises from the Godconsciousness of hearts.

- Surah al-Hajj, 22:32

Lesson 2

Moderation & Balance

What makes Islām the most ‘natural’ religion in the world and the most perfect way of life is the way it upholds everything in balance and promotes moderation.

Some religions teach marriage is bad and we should live like hermits and monks. Others teach that the physical human desires are evil and we should starve ourselves and wear rags and patched clothes or go around naked or in one sheet of cloth in one colour. Some religions teach money is evil and the rich will never enter paradise. Islām is opposed to all this.

Islām teaches ‘everything in moderation’. Too much food is bad, too little food is bad. Too much meat is bad, no meat at all is bad. Hoarding wealth is bad. Giving all your wealth away is also silly and wasteful. Not getting married is bad but leading an immoral life and committing adultery is also evil. Don’t wear too expensive clothes but don’t wear torn and dirty clothes either. Instead eat, drink, marry, and enjoy the blessings of Allāh in life but always in moderation and in consideration of others.

The following āyāt of the Qur’ān are just two examples of how important moderation is in Islām.

﴿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-Ar’āf 7:31

﴿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

Eating & Drinking

As we have seen in one of the āyāt above, Islām allows us to eat and drink what is halāl and to enjoy and be thankful for Allāh’s blessings. But food can sometimes become an addiction and an obsession. And when we eat too much, not only is it bad for our health but we become overweight, lazy and don’t feel like worshipping Allāh or doing anything useful for others. Excessive food (especially ‘junk’ food) also causes outbursts of desires and juvenile behaviour in people. Our bodies naturally react to whatever is allowed into them.

And because people usually have a problem with eating too much rather than too little, Islām encourages fasting as a means of controlling the problem of food addiction.

The following are ahādith on the merits of eating and drinking less. Remember by eating less we mean eating in moderation and not starving ourselves. We mean not to overeat all the time and always get up from the table feeling 'too full'.

Your teacher will only discuss some of these ahādith and you can read the rest on your own or do a class assignment and write an essay on some of the ahādith and what you understand of them.

Ahādith on Eating and Drinking

1. Rasulullāh (s), 'One who eats less, his or her accounting (on the Day of Judgement) will be less.'
2. Rasulullāh (s), 'One who eats less, his or her stomach will be healthy and his or her heart will become clean. And one who eats too much, his or her stomach will be sick and his or her heart will become hard.'
3. Rasulullāh (s), 'One whose tasbih¹⁰ and tamhid is much but his or her food and drink and sleep is less, the angels long for him or her (i.e. for his or her company).'
4. Rasulullāh (s), 'Do not kill your hearts with too much food and drink because the heart dies just like a plant when it is watered too much.'
5. Rasulullāh (s), 'One who always overfills his or her stomach will not enter the kingdom of the heavens (i.e. Jannah).'
6. Rasulullāh (s), 'Blessed are those who are patient and do not overeat (in this world). They are the ones who will eat to their fill on the Day of judgement.'
7. When Rasulullāh (s) went for Mi'rāj, he asked Allāh many questions, one of which was, 'O Allāh, what are the signs of Your most special servants?' And Allāh replied, 'They are like prisoners in the world because they imprison their tongues from excessive talking and their stomachs from excessive food.'
8. Rasulullāh (s), 'The light of wisdom is in hunger. And overeating distances you from Allāh... Do not overeat for it will extinguish the light of knowing (Allāh) from your hearts.'
9. Rasulullāh (s), 'Eat only when you are hungry and you desire food. And stop while you still have a desire for food.' I.e. do not eat out of habit or being bored and do not keep eating until you are too full and disgusted with food and cannot eat anymore.

¹⁰ Tasbih generally means to glorify and praise Allāh but literally tasbih is to say 'subhān Allāh' and tamhid is to say 'al-hamdu lillāh' and takbir is to say 'Allāhu Akbar' and tahlil is to say 'lā ilāha ilal lāh'. And together they are known as Tasbihāt al-Arba'a ('The four Tasbihs').

10. Imām Ali ('a), 'One who eats less, his illnesses will be less.'
11. Imām Ali ('a), 'One who eats less, his thinking will become clear.'
12. Imām Ali ('a), 'When Allāh intends good for a person, He makes him or her concerned about less speech, less food and less sleep.'
13. Imām Ali ('a), 'Eating less is part of chastity. And excessive eating is part of wastefulness (isrāf).'
14. Imām Ali ('a), 'Hunger and sickness do not go together.'
15. Imām Ali ('a), 'The best support and encouragement for sinning is over-eating.'
16. Imām al-Bāqir ('a), 'A person is furthest from Allāh when his or her stomach is overfilled.'
17. Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'Nothing harms the heart of a *mu'min* (faithful) like excessive food because it results in two things: a hard heart and an outburst of desires.'

It is mustahab to do wudu before eating and to say 'Bismillah' and then also to remember Allāh a lot during eating and not to talk too much with others. It is not good to look at the plate of others to see what they are eating, how much they are eating, etc. Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'If a person says 'Bismillah' before eating anything, it will never harm him.'

You should never blow into your food even if it's hot. Instead wait for it to cool. Never drink water that has been heated with direct sunlight. Also if you take a piece of meat out of your mouth, don't put it back in your mouth.

Never overfill your plate and always drink water in 3 sips (not large gulps). Chew your food properly, eating it in small morsels, as this is better for digestion.

Utensils

Imām as-Sādiq ('a) has forbidden us from eating or drinking from any utensil made of gold or silver. And Imām al-Kādhim ('a) has said, 'The utensils of gold and silver are the temporary enjoyment of those who do not have conviction (in Allāh and the Day of Judgement).'

Sleeping

﴿وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا﴾

and We made your sleep for rest

- Surah an-Naba, 78:9

Sleep is a great blessing of Allāh when it is enjoyed in moderation. It refreshes the mind and the body. But excessive sleep does the opposite. It makes us dull and lazy. We should therefore try to sleep and wake up early and not sleep too much especially during the day.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said, 'Sleep is a rest and comfort for the body. Speech is comfort for the soul and silence is rest for the mind.'

And Rasulullāh (s) cautioned us, 'Beware of excessive sleep. One who sleeps too much will be poor on the Day of Judgement.'

Our seventh Imām, Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) has said, 'Allāh does not like a person who is always sleeping and idle.'

The etiquette (*ādāb*) of sleep is that a person should wear clean clothes and sleep on a clean bed. They should do wudu beforehand. Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) has said, 'A person who sleeps after wudu, his bed becomes like a masjid and he gets the thawāb of worship all night while he sleeps.' And Rasulullāh (s) said, 'If a person does wudu and then dies in his or her sleep, they are like a martyr (*shahid*) with Allāh.'

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) has told us to always do some self-accounting when we go to bed. Instead of thinking of fantasies and past events, we should ask ourselves, 'what did I eat today? What did I earn today? Did I commit any sins for which I have not asked Allāh to forgive me?' And we should remember death and that one day we will die and be raised again on the Day of Judgement for accounting.

We should then recite Qur'ān and duas before falling asleep. Rasulullāh (s) said, 'One who recites (Surah) *Qul huwa Allāhu Ahad* when he goes to bed, Allāh forgives him the sins of 50 years.' And Imām Ali ('a) said the angels protect such a person. It is also recommended to recite Surah *Alhākum at-Takāthur*.

It is recommended to sleep on our right side facing the Qibla. Imām Ali ('a) said, 'Never sleep on your stomach and on your face for this is how shaytān sleeps. And if you see anyone sleeping on his face, then wake him up and do not leave him like that.'

Because sleep is a form of temporary death, when Rasulullāh (s) used to sleep, he used to recite:

اللَّهُمَّ بِاسْمِكَ أَحْيَىٰ وَأَمُوتُ

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

And when he (s) would wake up, he would recite:

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.

Talking

Human beings are social creatures and they love to interact with each other. This is often done by communicating with speech. But when enjoying ourselves talking, we must be careful not say meaningless things or to lie, backbite, slander, gossip, flatter and indulge in other such harām habits.

Do you remember **The Mouth Test** you learnt about in Book 3 (Akhlāq Lesson 6) and Book 6 (Akhlāq Lesson 7)?

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Do not speak too much without remembering Allāh. Because excessive speech without Allāh's remembrance hardens the heart and the person furthest from Allāh is the one whose heart is hard.'

Imām Ali ('a) said, 'I am surprised at a man who says things that do not benefit him in this world and for which he gets no *thawāb* in the hereafter.'

And Imām as-Sādiq ('a) has said, 'A learned person (*'ālim*) never talks useless talk.'

In summary then, it is ok to talk, chat, laugh, etc. as long as it is not harām and is in moderation. When a person talks excessively, they will end up speaking things that are useless and sinful and it reduces their respect in the eyes of others.

Islāmic Culture & Values

Culture is a way of living. It embraces the ways people live together, the food they eat, how they dress, talk, interact and the general manner in which they behave. Islām, as a universal religion, accommodates the practices from all cultures, as long as they are within the Shari'ah (Islāmic Law).

At present we live in a world surrounded by the 'Western culture'. All cultures have some good in them, and the western culture is no exception. We, the children of the West, have to find how we can be good Muslims in the western environment i.e. how we can adapt to the world we live in without sacrificing any of our Islāmic principles. This can be done by again keeping in mind Islām's call for moderation. Otherwise there is a lot in western culture that is either against Islāmic culture or becomes so when practised without moderation.

It would be hard to list and discuss everything in the western culture from wearing low-hanging baggy pants, to tattoos, piercings, and shocking hair colours and hair styles. And from eating 'fast food' to following the latest craze, speaking in a particular manner, swearing, and how we treat our parents. What we can summarize however is that we should not follow blindly what we see on TV or in our friends at school. Being 'taken in' by western culture means we lose our balance between Islām and the culture we live in and we then lose our identity as Muslims. Never, for example, change your name because people at school or work think it's cool. You

must insist on keeping your Islāmic identity including your name and how it is spelt and pronounced.

Always remember: we are Muslims FIRST and then Canadian or American or Indian or Arab or any other race, culture, citizen or ethnicity. And when you see anyone excessive in his or her practice, dress, behaviour, food or culture, know that it is against Islām no matter how good it may seem. This is because Islām teaches moderation in all things and values.

Lesson 3

Generosity vs. Miserliness

We saw in the previous lesson how Islām teaches us not to be miserly or wasteful even in how we spend. This means how we spend our money, our time, our youth, and so on. Miserliness is called ‘*bukhl*’ in Arabic and a miser is called ‘*bakheel*’ (female: *bakheela*). The opposite of being a miser is to be generous. This is called ‘*sakhāwah*’ and a person who is generous is called ‘*sakhi*’ (female: *sakhiya*). And the other extreme of being too generous to a point of being wasteful is called ‘*isrāf*’ and a wasteful person is called a ‘*musrif*’ (female: *musrifa*).

We now look at miserliness and generosity in more detail:

Miserliness (Bukhl)

Allāh warns us in the Qur’ān that misers will be punished on the Day of Judgement and that if we do not spend in the way of Allāh, then it is only we who will suffer the consequences. Allāh will easily replace us with others who will not be stingy:

﴿الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا﴾

Those who are stingy and bid [other] people to be stingy, and conceal whatever Allāh has given them out of His grace; and We have prepared for the faithless a humiliating punishment.

- Surah an-Nisa, 4:37

﴿هَا أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يَبْخُلُ وَمَنْ يَبْخُلْ فَإِنَّمَا يَبْخُلُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَاللَّهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَالَكُمْ﴾

Ah! There you are, being invited to spend in the way of Allāh; yet among you there are those who are stingy; and whoever is stingy is stingy only to himself. Allāh is the All-sufficient, and you are all-needy, and if you turn away He will replace you with another people, and they will not be like you.

- Surah Muhammad, 47:38

Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘A miser is far from Allāh and far from people but near to the Fire (of Hell).’

And Imām Ali (‘a) said, ‘A miser is only a safe keeper for his heirs.’ He also said, ‘Looking at a miser makes the heart hard.’

In a thought-provoking hadith, the Imām of our time, Imām al-Mahdi (‘atfs), said, ‘I am ashamed before my Lord that when I see a brother-in-faith, I should ask Allāh to give him Jannah but yet to be a miser when it comes to giving the same brother some dirhams or dinars (money). Then on the Day of Judgement, Allāh would say to me, ‘(you asked Me to give him Jannah but you weren’t willing to give anything you had and it therefore means) if Jannah had been yours (you would not have given it to anyone and) you would have been a miser, a miser and a miser!!!’

Question: What do you understand of this hadith from Imām al-Mahdi (‘atfs) and can you explain it to the teacher in your own words?

A miser is not just miserly with this money. He or she is also miserly with his time. He or she never volunteers unless he or she is going to get something out of it like school credits or pocket money or recognition. He or she is also miserly with sharing happiness with others. That is why one hadith says, the most miserly is the person who cannot even say salām to others. And another hadith from Rasulullāh (s) says, ‘The most miserly of all people is the one who hears my name but is too miserly to even recite salawāt!’

Generosity (Sakhāwah)

To give others generously is also called *infāq* in Arabic. *Infāq* or *sakhāwah* comes from *tawakkul* (complete trust and reliance in Allāh), while miserliness shows a lack of *tawakkul*. This is because a person who trusts that Allāh will look after his or her needs has no reason to hoard or fear poverty. But a person whose faith and trust in Allāh is weak always lives with fear of loss and poverty and holds on to everything without sharing or even using them for himself or herself.

Allāh tells us in the Qur’ān:

﴿الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

Shaytān frightens you of poverty and prompts you to [commit] indecent acts. But Allāh promises you His forgiveness and grace, and Allāh is all-bounteous, all-knowing.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:268

The first step to being generous is therefore to realize that everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allāh alone.

﴿وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا﴾

To Allāh belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and Allāh suffices as trustee.

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:132

Hence the possession or use of anything by human beings is only temporary. Allāh gives us things temporarily and when we die we have to give it all away to others and ultimately everything and everyone returns to Allāh. In other words, Allāh is the only Real Owner of anything. When we are generous we are not really giving 'our' wealth or possessions. We are simply sharing what was given to us by Allāh and in a sense we are giving it back to Him as we show trust in Allāh Whose treasures are unlimited. And when we are miserly, we behave like a person who believes he or she is the real owner of what he or she possesses as if he or she will always be able to keep what they have even after death.

If we wish to keep our wealth or possessions with us after death, the only way to do this is to give it back to Allāh by giving it to others in His Name and for His pleasure:

﴿...وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ

خَيْرٍ يُوفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ﴾

And whatever wealth you spend, it is for your own benefit, as you do not spend but to seek Allāh's pleasure, and whatever wealth you spend will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:272

In order to ensure that our generosity is sincerely for Allāh and it is not to show off or impress others, we should give in charity both openly and secretly. Openly to encourage others to give and to set an example; and secretly so that Allāh may multiply what we have given in utmost sincerity such that no one else besides Him knows about it. We know giving others or doing good deeds in secret is better because Allāh says:

﴿إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعْمًا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ

عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ﴾

If you disclose your charities, that is well, but if you hide them and give them to the poor, that is better for you, and it will make up for some of your misdeeds, and Allāh is well aware of what you do.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:271

And Allāh commanded Rasulullāh (s) to tell the Muslims:

﴿قُلْ لِعِبَادِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً مِنْ قَبْلِ
أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعُ فِيهِ وَلَا خِلَالٌ﴾

Tell My servants who have faith to maintain the prayer and to spend out of what We have provided them with, secretly and openly, before there comes a day on which there will be neither any bargaining nor friendship.

- Surah Ibrāhim, 14:31

And if we do that, then Allāh assures us that we will never experience any fear or grief:

﴿... وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ . الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ
سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

...And whatever wealth you may spend, Allāh indeed knows it. Those who give their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:273-274

Hoarding and being miserly is bad because it prevents others from getting help and it shows a lack of trust in Allāh. It prevents humans from learning to benefit each other and it interferes with the process of how Allāh gives to some of His creatures through others. The worst form of hoarding and stinginess is to hoard what people need the most, such as knowledge, wealth and necessities of life like food and water.

Lesson 4

Music, Gambling & Recreation

Sports and Recreation

Leisure and recreation is necessary for relaxation after hard work; without it a person runs the risk of breaking down under stress and strain. Islām recognizes the needs of human nature, and is not a religion of renunciation in which one must always be engaged in serious work or in worship.

From hadith we learn that it is permitted and even encouraged, for Muslims to have fun, to laugh and joke, or to play games. Rasulullāh (s) said: ‘There is a time for this and a time for that.’ Rasulullāh (s) himself and Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) sometimes joked lightly and such anecdotes are recorded in the books of history and traditions (*ahādith*).

However, it is undesirable to joke about sacred matters or to ridicule other people. The Qur’ān says:

﴿وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا...﴾

Leave alone those who take their religion for play and diversion and whom the life of this world has deceived...

- Surah al-An’ām, 6:70

And also:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

O you who have faith! Let not any people make fun of another people: it may be that they are better than they are; nor let women [make fun] of women: it may be that they are better than they are. And do not defame one another, nor insult one another by [calling] nicknames. How evil are profane names after faith! And whoever does not repent—such are the wrongdoers.

- Surah al-Hujurāt, 49:11

Those sports that relieve the tension of serious work and help one to keep fit are encouraged in Islām. Martial arts are especially recommended; archery and hunting are also mentioned in hadith, because they are recreation and also help for self-defence. Other sports that build up the physique are also permitted. But sports are

only a means and not an end. A person should not be overly preoccupied with them. A Muslim should never forget that there are serious aims in life.

Sports that involve injury or in which fatal accidents are likely to occur, such as boxing, are also not permitted. It is disapproved to set animals against each other or involve them in violence just for sports (e.g. chicken fights, bull fighting).

Betting & Gambling

Betting or gambling of any sort is forbidden. Those games that usually involve gambling such as backgammon, chess or playing cards are also forbidden.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) taught that is harām to play chess or even to sell chessboards or keep them in the house and that we should not even watch others playing chess.

People who gamble at casinos usually get addicted to it and over a period of time lose large amounts of money.

It is for this reason that even objects that are used in gambling like playing cards and gambling dice should not be played with (even if money is not involved).

Gambling and betting of any sort is harām even if the reward is not money. Rasullāh (s) said, 'Any kind of competition is considered gambling if the loser has to pay something - even if it is just a cashew-nut...'

Imām Ali ar-Rida ('a) narrated that when the head of Imām Husayn ('a) was taken before the tyrant Yazid, he (Yazid) was drinking alcohol and playing chess. Therefore we should avoid even looking at others playing chess and/or drinking wine and whenever we hear of these vices we should remember how hurt Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin ('a) was when he was taken as a prisoner and he had to see his father's head near alcohol and chess.

Purchasing lottery tickets is also harām even if it is in the name of charity. It does not change it from being gambling. It is like paying for a music concert to raise money for a humanitarian cause. The means is harām and it does not justify the end result.

Music

Watching films as a recreation is permitted, but if they contain such matter that promote sinful acts and incite lust, or if they contain singing and dancing, they should be avoided. Moreover, time should not be wasted on movies, and particular care should be taken that children do not watch too much television or spend too much of their time watching films.

Similarly Muslims should not play computer games with too much music or sinful images and violence that involves crime, stealing, murder, etc. It is ok to play games that teach us strategy provided it does not encourage violence and hate.

Playing instruments of music or keeping musical instruments in the house is harām. Some mujtahids allow 'classical' music that are not the kind played at parties and places of sin (night clubs, bars, etc.). But for the most part, music should be avoided and instruments like drums, guitars, flute, pianos, etc. are harām to learn, play or keep at home regardless of whether they are traditional, electronic or on the computer.

Mujtahids also agree that manufacturing, installing, selling or buying musical instruments are also harām professions.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) reported from Rasulullāh (s) who said, 'I forbid you from dancing and even playing flutes and drums...' In another hadith, Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Allāh has sent me as a mercy to the worlds, to guide people. And He ordered me to eradicate the playing of flute and other instruments of music, all games of vice, idol (worship) and all practices of the days of ignorance.'

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said, 'Playing the violin promotes the growth of hypocrisy in the heart like water helps the growth of vegetation.' He also said that if drums and cymbals are played in a house for forty days, Allāh will impose a shaytān (devil) in the house who will make its inhabitants shameless and immodest with no care of what they say or what is said about them.

A man came to Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) and said to him, 'when I go to the washroom, I can hear music from my neighbour's house.' The Imām told him to try and avoid listening to it as much as possible. The man then argued and said, 'But I don't go to his house to listen. I only hear it from the washroom.' And Imām as-Sādiq ('a) replied him, 'Have you not read the āyah of the Qur'ān that says:

﴿... إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا﴾

...Indeed the hearing, the eyesight, and the heart—all of these are accountable.

- Surah al-'Isrā, 17:36

When the man realized his mistake, he repented right away and promised never to listen to music again. And the Imām said to him, 'Get up and go perform ghusl. Then offer (2 rak'ah) salāh and ask for forgiveness from Allāh.... Certainly Allāh only dislikes the evil things. Leave the evil things to the evil people because there are different people suitable for different things.'

Amir al-Mu'minin Imām 'Ali ('a) has said, 'Angels do not enter a house that has alcohol, drums, tambourines or a flute. Even the prayers of the people of this house are not accepted.'

One of the signs of the end of times (*ākhir az-zamān*) before the coming of Imām al-Mahdi (‘atfs) is that people will make music halāl and it will become so common that it will even spread to the holiest cities in Islām i.e. Makkah and Madina.

We must therefore seek refuge with Allāh from music and ensure we do not become part of this spread of corruption and sin.

Lesson 5

Respect for Qur'án, Rasululláh (s), Ahl al-Bayt (a) & Other Sígn of Allāh

Showing disrespect to anything sacred is harām. The sacred matters are what are also called the 'sígn' of Allāh, such as the Qur'án, the Ka'bah, masājid, the names, personalities and graves of Prophets and Imāms as well as their pious members of family and companions.

Respect for the Qur'án

When Rasulullāh (s) was leaving this world, he advised the Muslims saying, 'I am leaving amongst you two important things: The Book of Allāh and my family, the Ahl al-Bayt. If you hold on to these two, you will never be misled. And these two will never separate until they return to me on the Day of Judgement.'¹¹

And according to Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) Allāh (s.w.t.) will say to the Qur'án on the Day of Judgement, 'I swear by My Honour and Majesty, today I will honour the one who honoured you and disgrace the one who has disgraced you.'

The greatest disrespect we show the Qur'án is when we ignore it and no longer read it, ponder on it or make it an important part of our lives.

Rasulullāh (s) will complain to Allāh on the Day of Judgement about those Muslims who neglected the Qur'án in this world:

﴿وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا﴾

And the Messenger will say, 'O my Lord! Indeed my people took this Qur'án as a forsaken thing.'

- Surah al-Furqān, 25:30

It is important to remember:

1. It is harām to even disrespect or make najis the cover of the Qur'án, apart from its pages and writing.
2. It is harām to write Qur'án āyāt with ink that is najis.

¹¹ This is famously known as *Hadith ath-Thaqalayn* (the Hadith of Two Important Things).

3. It is harām to hand over the Qur’ān to non-Muslims if they are going to disrespect it. Some scholars believe it is harām even if they won’t disrespect it because they will touch the writings but it is ok to give them a translation of the Qur’ān. However, even for translations, we should give copies to those who ask for it and are genuinely interested. We shouldn’t shove it in people’s hands who may then disrespect or throw it.
4. If any sacred object like the Qur’ān, pages containing names of ma’sumeen or some soil of Karbala (turbah or tasbih) etc. accidentally fall in a najis place like the toilet, it is wājib to remove it and make it tāhir even if removing it incurs lots of expenses. Until the time it is not removed it is harām to use that toilet.
5. When a sacred object like the Qur’ān becomes najis, it is not just wājib on the person who owns it or the person who made it najis to make it tāhir again. Rather it is *wājib Kifāi* i.e. wājib on all Muslims who are aware of it. And until someone undertakes to make it tāhir, all are answerable and held responsible.
6. It is harām to touch the writings of the Qur’ān without wudu, whether with the fingers, lips or any part of the body.
7. It is harām to buy or sell the Qur’ān. So when we have to pay for it or take money for it, our intention should be to pay or receive the money to cover the cost of the paper, shipping, the cover or binding and not the Qur’ān itself. The buyer should pay the seller with the intention of giving a *hadiya* (gift) and not ‘purchasing the Qur’ān.’

A person who is conscious of Allāh and respects the greatness and majesty of his or her Creator will naturally treat the words of Allāh with utmost respect. For example, they will never dare touch the Qur’ān without wudu or when their hand or body is najis. They will never turn their backs to the Qur’ān or stretch their legs towards it. They will not place anything on top of Qur’ān. They will always sit facing the Qibla while reciting the Qur’ān and will recite it with a pleasant tone, slowly and whilst reflecting upon the meaning of its āyāt. Allāh tells us in the Qur’ān:

﴿وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ﴾

And when the Qur’ān is recited, then listen to it and remain silent, that mercy may be shown to you.

- Surah al-Ar’āf, 7: 204

Some ways in which we respect the Qur’ān include:

1. Always do wudu before touching or carrying the Qur’ān. Touching the writings without wudu is harām.
2. Always hold the Qur’ān with both hands or with your right hand.
3. Never place other books or objects on the Qur’ān.
4. Never place the Qur’ān on the floor.

5. Cover your head when reciting the Qur'ān.
6. Keep the Qur'ān away from being touched by any najāsah.
7. Make sure you are not carrying the Qur'ān or anything with āyāt of Qur'ān on it to the washroom (e.g. necklace, ring, amulet, book).
8. Kiss the Qur'ān when you first pick it up and when you last put it down.
9. Do not leave the Qur'ān lying about open.
10. Face Qibla when reciting the Qur'ān. Do not stretch your legs towards the Qur'ān or even when you are reciting it. Do not lie on your back and recite the Qur'ān. Sit up respectfully when reciting it (unless you have a medical condition and are bedridden).
11. Most Important: Do not neglect the Qur'ān and/or allow dust to gather on it. Read it every day even if it is only one āyah.

Suggested Class Activity: Watch parts of the HBO documentary “Koran by Heart” (on Teacher’s DVD) to encourage memorization of the Qur'ān.

Respect for the Ka’bah

The Ka’bah stands on the most sacred spot on the earth and is the most sacred structure on the earth. Nabi Ibrāhim (‘a) and his son Nabi Ismā’il (‘a) built it and according to some scholars it was there since the time of Nabi Adam (‘a) but Nabi Ibrāhim (‘a) restored it again after its walls had crumbled down.

Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) has said, ‘Nothing is more honourable in the eyes of Allāh than these three: The Qur'ān, which is His wisdom and Light, His House (the Ka’bah) which He has appointed as the Qibla for mankind, and the Progeny of his Prophet (the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)).’

Disrespecting the Ka’bah is a very serious crime in Islām. Some of the levels of disrespect to Ka’bah include:

1. Taking any najāsah into Masjid al-Harām that could make the masjid or the Ka’bah najis.
2. Committing sins whilst inside Masjid al-Harām and in front of the Ka’bah, such as theft, backbiting, looking at ghayr mahram sinfully, and so on.
3. Killing an animal, bird or any creature of Allāh in the area around the Ka’bah and Masjid al-Harām. This is forbidden (*harām*).
4. Destroying trees or vegetation around the area.
5. Entering Makkah without ihrām. This is not allowed except for the people who live and work there. Anyone entering Makkah must make the niyyah of Umra and wear the ihrām before entering Makkah and then perform Umra

before they can take off the ihrām. To enter Makkah any time of the year without ihrām is a great sin.

6. Relieving oneself (i.e. using the toilet) facing the Ka'bah or with one's back towards it. This is *harām* regardless of where in the world and how far from the Ka'bah a person is.

The Qur'ān describes the Ka'bah as a sanctuary of safety and that 'whoever enters it will be safe.' (Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:97). This means even if a criminal runs into Masjid al-Harām to seek refuge, he cannot be harmed. He must be isolated until, due to hunger, thirst or other needs, he is forced to come out himself. Then he can be arrested and charged.

Whenever you visit Masjid al-Harām in Makkah, try and kiss the Black Stone (*al-Hajar al-Aswad*) that is in the corner of the Ka'bah near its door. And when you are leaving Makkah, perform a *Tawāf al-Widā* (Farewell Tawāf) and ask Allāh to bless you with another chance to come back to visit His House and the most sacred place on earth.

Lesson 6

Respect for the Sacred (cont'd)

Respect for Masājid

﴿وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ...﴾

And that the mosques are Allāh's...

- Surah al-Jinn, 72:18

Since all masājid are the houses of Allāh, to disrespect a masjid is an insult towards Allāh, the Blessed and the Most High.

The Qur'ān condemns people who break masājid or stop others from coming in to worship Allāh:

﴿وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَى فِي خَرَابِهَا...﴾

And who is more unjust than he who prevents (men) from the masājid of Allāh, that His name should be remembered in them and strives to ruin them?

- Surah al-Baqarah 2:114

1. Making a masjid najis is harām. It is also harām to take any najis al-'ayn (dog, pig, alcohol, urine, etc.) inside a masjid.
2. It is wājib to immediately make a masjid tāhir when it becomes najis and it is *wājib kifāi* on all Muslims. The expense to make it tāhir is also wājib on everyone even if it is a costly matter. If a person cannot bear the cost alone, it is wājib on him to ask help from others.
3. Staying in the masjid when a person is in the state of *janābah* or *haid* is harām.
4. It is mustahab to light a lamp in the masjid or to pay for its lighting and cleaning.
5. A masjid should be kept as clean as possible.
6. If you are passing through a masjid e.g. from one door and leaving from another, it is makruh to pass by without praying at least a 2 rak'ah mustahab salāh in respect of the Masjid. This is called *Salāt Tahiyat al-Masjid*.
7. It is makruh to raise your voice in the masjid, except for the adhān or making an announcement such as for lost property to find the owner.
8. It is makruh to talk about worldly matters in the masjid, to joke around or chat unnecessarily on the phone.

9. It is makruh to go to the masjid after eating onions, garlic or anything with a strong or sharp smell until you remove that from your breathe.
10. It is makruh to take young children and the mentally handicapped to the masjid if they may make noise or disturb the worshippers.
11. When in a masjid, recite Qur'ān, tasbih, istighfār, duas and salawāt as frequently as possible.
12. Be aware that angels are also present in masājid.
13. When entering, go in with your right foot first, saying Bismillah and ask Allāh to enter you into His forgiveness and mercy. When exiting, leave with your left foot first and ask Allāh not to exit you from His forgiveness and mercy.

The Different Status of Masājid

The most sacred and honourable masjid is Masjid al-Harām that houses the Ka'bah. A salāh inside this masjid equals 100,000 (one hundred thousand) prayers in ordinary masājid. The next in status is Masjid an-Nabi (Rasulullāh (s)'s masjid in Madina). A salāh performed in it equals 10,000 (ten thousand) prayers in ordinary ones. Next in line are the Masjid of Kufa (in Irāq) and Masjid al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem). A single salāh offered in these masājid carry the reward of one thousand prayers in other masājid. After this, are the Jami' Masājid (where Friday prayers are held) of the city that carry a hundred times more reward than prayers in other places. After Jāmi' Masājid are the main masājid of an area that deserve greater respect because a single prayer in it equals twenty-five prayers. And lastly are the small masājid that are common in Muslim countries in the markets, alleyways, residential areas, etc., where prayers earn the worshipper twelve rewards in comparison to one reward for other prayers (such as at home).

Of course praying in congregation also has various degrees of thawāb depending on how many people are present. This was already taught in Book 7 under the Fiqh lesson on Salāt al-Jamā'ah.

Respect for the Haram of the Ma'sumin ('a)

Respect for the shrines of the Ma'sumin ('a) is wājib and a necessity of faith and their disrespect is a great sin. In fact it is considered a sin to the extent of *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk* (polytheism).

The rules for such sacred places are similar to those of masājid. If any najāsah enters them, it must be cleaned immediately. It is not permitted for people who are not in tahārah to enter them, and so on.

Salāh at the Graves of Ma'sumin ('a)

It is harām to prostrate (do sajdah) on the grave of Rasulullāh (s) or any Imām ('a) or even facing it, during any wājib or mustahab salāh (unless of course you are facing qibla and it happens to be in the same direction).

However you can keep your right cheek on the grave or kiss it in respect or in seeking Allāh's blessings and thanking Allāh for the opportunity to visit His special servant and trustee (*wali*).

While praying salāh near the grave of Rasulullāh (s) or an Imām ('a), even as we face qibla, we must be careful not to stand ahead of them or to have our backs towards them. It is also better not to stand on the right or left (parallel) to them but to try and pray somewhere behind them.

The books of du'ās and ziyārāt like Mafātih al-Jinān have details of the etiquette (*ādāb*) of visiting Rasulullāh (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and how to ask permission of Rasulullāh (s), the angels around the sacred place, and the personality you are visiting, before entering. As well, when leaving, there are etiquettes on how to bid farewell such as reciting Ziyārat al-Widā (the Farewell Salutation).

Respect for the Turbah of Karbala

The soil that is in the vicinity of the grave of Imām Husayn ('a) in Karbala is sacred. Allāh has blessed it with special qualities unmatched by any other material on the earth. It can cure illnesses and is a source of blessing (*barakah*) and Divine mercy.

It is therefore the most recommended earth to use for sujud when worshipping Allāh. The benefits of the turbah of Karbala (also called *Turbah Husayniyya*) manifest most to those who show utmost respect for it.

The Turbah Husayniyya must never be disrespected such as by throwing the turbah or tasbeeh made from it into a bin carelessly. If you step on it accidentally, pick it up and kiss it unless someone in salāh is using it and you will distract him or her from salāh. If it becomes najis, it is wājib to make it tāhir.

When a Muslim dies, as part of the shrouding (*takfin*) process, camphor is rubbed on the seven parts of the body that touch the ground in sajdah. This is called hunūt. It is mustahab to mix a little bit of *Turbah Husayniyya* with the camphor that is rubbed on the forehead and palms. Out of respect for the turbah, it should not be rubbed on the knees and toes, for which only camphor should be used.

There are very many incidents in the books of history about people who were cured from incurable diseases by drinking water with a pinch of the blessed turbah of Karbala. As well, there are many incidents of people being cursed and punished for disrespecting the turbah of Imām Husayn ('a).

In a sense, all the signs of Allāh are like the Qur'ān. They offer a healing and a mercy to those who have faith and they add punishment to those who disregard and disrespect them. Allāh tells us this about the Qur'ān:

﴿وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا﴾

We send down in the Qur'ān that which is a cure and mercy for the faithful; and it increases the wrongdoers only in loss.

- Surah al-'Isrā', 17:82

In other words the signs of Allāh can help us or harm us, depending on how we treat or mistreat them.

Lesson 7

Silat ar-Rahm & Qata' ar-Rahm

﴿...وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ...﴾

...and be careful of (your duty to) Allāh, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship...

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:1

The word 'rahm' in Arabic refers to one's blood relatives. *Silat ar-Rahm* means to maintain cordial relations with one's blood relatives and it is a wājib duty on all Muslims, even if their blood relatives do not reciprocate (i.e. even if they do not keep relations with you in return). *Qata' ar-Rahm* on the other hand means to cut relations and ties with one's blood relatives. This is one of the greatest sins in Islām.

The Qur'ān curses people who 'cut what Allāh has ordered to join' meaning relationships of blood (such as in Surah al-Baqarah, 2:27; Surah ar-Ra'd, 13:25; and Surah Muhammad, 47:22-23).

That is why Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said, 'Beware of cutting off relations (with your blood relatives) because I have found them cursed thrice in the Qur'ān.'

A man once approached Rasulullāh (s) and asked, 'What is the worst deed in the eyes of Allāh?' And Rasulullāh (s) replied, 'To associate partners to Allāh.' Then the man asked, 'After this, what is the worst sin?' And Rasulullāh (s) said, 'To cut ties with relatives.' 'And after that?' asked the man again. And Rasulullāh (s) said, 'To tell others to do evil and to forbid them from doing good.'

Those Included in Rahm

The *Shari'ah* of Islām has not provided any fixed definition of who falls under these two terms (*Silat ar-Rahm* and *Qata' ar-Rahm*). In this case the meaning as judged by common sense must be accepted. We must consider all the relatives from our father's side and mother's side, irrespective of whether they are close or distant, as having a right on us. In the same way the children of the daughters and their descendant also come in this category as the Qur'ān says:

A man named Urwah asked Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) the meaning of this āyah of Qur'ān:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ...﴾

And those who join together (i.e. *Silat ar-Rahm*) what Allāh has commanded to be joined...

- Surah ar-Rā'd 13:21

And the Imām ('a) replied, 'You have been commanded to practice *Silat ar-Rahm* towards all your relatives. Whether they are mahram or non-mahram, whether they are distant relatives or closely related, whether they are immediate relatives or separated by several generations.'

It is generally observed that people tend to behave graciously towards their wealthy relatives and avoid the poor ones. Islām does not differentiate or discriminate between the rich and the poor relatives. What is important is the closeness of relationship. The more closely a person is related to you, the more important and necessary it is to fulfill his or her rights.

What is Silat ar-Rahm

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) once said, 'Show *silat ar-rahm* towards your relatives and the near ones even if it is just by offering a glass of water to them.'

What we also understand from many ahādith is that the highest stage of *silat ar-rahm* is to consider our relatives as our own selves. That is, we should wish for our relations whatever we wish for ourselves. Part of *silat ar-rahm* is also to help our relatives when they face difficulties. This may be giving them a loan, helping them find jobs, advising them in matters of religion, and so on.

The simplest kind of *silat ar-rahm* maybe calling them to say salām or even conveying our salām to them through someone. The least act of *silat ar-rahm* is to pray for our relatives.

Any act of *silat ar-rahm* that if we fail to do will be viewed as *qata' ar-rahm* is wājib on us to do. For example, if due to poverty a person is unable to get medical aid or is unable to pay off his debt and he approaches a rich relative for help, it becomes wājib on the rich relative to help him. Even if the rich person is not approached directly but comes to know of the predicament of his poor relative, it is wājib on him to help his less fortunate relative. The wealthy relative who fails to carry out these obligations will be guilty of *qata' ar-rahm*.

It is however not wājib for a person to help his poor relative if he himself is not in a position to do so and fears that he himself may become destitute. Also, *silat ar-rahm* is not wājib if it involves an act that is *harām*. For example it is not wājib to visit a relative if they don't observe hijāb or drink alcohol or play music in their homes.

Sometimes we may be in doubt whether our behaviour is considered as *silat ar-rahm* or *qata' ar-rahm*. In such cases we should go by what people generally view that behaviour to be. For example, if we live in a society where not saying salām or calling someone is seen as breaking ties with them then doing this with our relatives would constitute *qata' ar-rahm*, and so on.

The Benefits of Silat ar-Rahm

Silat ar-Rahm has worldly advantages as well as benefits in the hereafter.

According to Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) silat ar-rahm perfects our character. Through repeated and continuous kindness towards our relatives, our morals are refined and kindness and consideration for others become a part of our nature. And in this manner our soul is also purified.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) also said, 'Kindness to relatives makes the accounting (*hisāb*) (of the Hereafter) easy.' And in numerous reports from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) we learn that silat ar-rahm increases a person's life, delays his or her death and increases his or her sustenance (*rizq*) and the number of his or her descendants.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) once told a companion called Maysar, 'O' Maysar, the time of your death has arrived many times but Allāh has postponed (your death) due to your kindness to the relatives and good behaviour towards them.'

Rasulullāh (s) encouraged silat ar-rahm even if one has to travel long distances and he said to Imām Ali ('a), 'O 'Ali! Even if you have to travel for two years to do good to your parents, do it; even if you have to travel for one year to perform silat ar-rahm to your kinsfolk, do so. Even if you have to journey a mile to see a sick person, do it. Even if you have to walk two miles to attend a funeral, do it. Even if you have to travel four miles to meet a believing brother, do it.'

Some hadith mention that for every step a person takes to visit his relatives, he gets forty thousand rewards, forty thousand of his sins are forgiven and his status is raised by forty thousand levels.

Silat a-Rahm Wājib Even With Those Who Don't Keep Ties

A man complained to Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) about his relatives. The Imām ('a) said to him, 'Swallow your anger and behave nicely with your relatives.' The man said again, 'But my relatives give me all sorts of trouble and there is hardly any cruelty they have not committed upon me.' The Imām ('a) told him, 'Do you also want to cut off relations with them? If you also become like them, then Allāh will never have mercy for you.'

This makes it very clear that we must not sever relations even with those relatives who are unkind to us and who want to cut off relations with us. In other words we must practice silat ar-rahm even with those who practice qata' ar-rahm with us.

When Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) was about to leave this world, he made a will for some money to be given to one of his cousins. One of his servants said to him, 'Master! You are leaving money for someone who once attacked you with a sword?' And the Imām ('a) replied, 'don't you think I want to be included among those

concerning whom the Qur'ān says: *'And those who join together what Allāh has commanded to be joined...'* (Surah ar-Rā'd, 13:21)?'

Some ahādith tell us that when Allāh created Paradise, He purified it and made it very fragrant. Its fragrance is felt at a distance of two thousand years (of travel). But one who disobeys his parents or breaks ties with family and relatives will be so far away from Paradise, that he or she will not even experience its fragrance.

Rasulullāh (s) as well has said, 'Do not break ties with your relatives even if they break them with you.'

Silat ar-Rahm Wājib Even with Non-Muslim Relatives

The traditions of the Ma'sumin ('a) leave no doubt whatsoever that the fulfilling of the rights of one's relatives is wājib. Whether the relatives are Shi'ah or Sunni, pious and religious or sinful and transgressors or whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims. It is wājib to maintain ties with them to the degree possible within the limits of shari'ah.

A man asked Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a), 'my relatives are not Muslims. Do they have any rights upon me?'

'Why not?' replied Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'the rights of relatives do not become invalid for any reason. However if the relatives are Muslims then their rights are twice as much. One for their being relatives and second because of their being Muslim.'

The rights mentioned by the Imām are what we have discussed earlier such as keeping in contact and helping our relatives when they need it. The laws of Islām may of course deny some rights like for example, non-Muslims cannot inherit from Muslims but that is a rule in shari'ah and should not be confused with 'breaking ties' with family.

Relatives with Whom Qata' ar-Rahm is Allowed

If silat ar-rahm towards a non-Muslim relative strengthens his or her conviction towards his own religious views or if silat ar-rahm towards a sinful Muslim relative provides him with opportunity and encouragement in his unlawful ways, then this kind of silat ar-rahm is forbidden. In fact, if qata' ar-rahm causes a disbeliever relative to reconsider his disbelief, then qata' ar-rahm becomes wājib on us. Similarly, qata' ar-rahm is wājib if it discourages a Muslim relative from his or her sinful ways.

There is also another situation where qata' ar-rahm is wājib. That is when the relative has clear hatred towards Islām. Allāh (s.w.t.) tells us in the Qur'ān:

﴿لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ...﴾

You shall not find people who believe in Allāh and the Last Day befriending those who are opposed to Allāh and His Messenger, even though they are their (own) fathers, or their sons or their brothers or their kinsfolk...

- Surah al-Mujādilah, 58:22

This āyah clearly indicates that one must abstain from silat ar-rahm towards even the closest of relatives if they are inimical towards Allāh (s.w.t.) or Rasullullāh (s) or Islām or any of the signs of Allāh such as the Qur’ān, the Ahl al-Bayt, and so on.

Consequences of Qata’ ar-Rahm in this World & Hereafter

Rasullullāh (s) has said, ‘One who severs relationships will not enter Jannah.’

And in one of his sermons Imām Ali (‘a) said, ‘I seek refuge from the sin that cause the hastening of death.’ When he was asked what this sin was, he replied, ‘the breaking of ties with family (*qata’ ar-rahm*).’

In other words, one who breaks ties with family reduces his lifespan. And in the hereafter awaits him even more severe punishment.

Concerning the Night of Qadr that falls in the month of Ramadān and is considered to be the greatest night of the year ‘better than a thousand nights’ (Surah al-Qadr, 97:3) Rasullullāh (s) said that Allāh forgives all sins on this night for anyone who asks except for those who do not repent from drinking alcohol, disobeying parents, harbouring enmity towards believers and breaking ties with relatives.

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) related from Rasullullāh (s) who said that the *Sirāt* (the bridge passing over Hell that everyone has to cross on the Day of Judgement) would have on each side (of it) *Silat ar-Rahm* and ‘*Amānah*’ (keeping a trust). One who maintains ties with relatives and maintains trusts shall be able to cross the *Sirāt* easily to reach Paradise. No good deed will benefit those who have broken ties with relatives or committed breach of trust. They will slip from the *Sirāt* and drop into Hellfire.

In a hadith from Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) sometimes a person has only three years of life remaining but because of performing an act of kindness to his or her relatives, Allāh increases his or her life by thirty years. And in the same way, a person may have thirty years of life remaining but due to his breaking off the ties of relationship, his lifespan is reduced to three years.

A Word on Our Islāmic ‘Family’

Even though this is not strictly related to the terms silat ar-rahm and qata’ ar-rahm, it is useful to remember that the Qur’ān describes the faithful as being brothers:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ﴾

The faithful are indeed brothers...

- Surah al-Hujurāt, 49:10

There is also a hadith from Rasulullāh (s) that says, ‘I and (Imām) Ali are the fathers of this nation (*ummah*).’

So we must not forget that outside our immediate family and blood relatives, we also have a spiritual family that consists of spiritual fathers and a large Islāmic nation (*ummah*) that we are all part of with no boundaries of language, ethnicity, race or culture.

Project:

Read Surah al-Hujurāt (chapter 49 of the Qur’ān) and list (in bullet points or number format) as many instructions from Allāh about what to do and what not to do to our fellow Muslim (brother or sister). The title of this list should be ‘The Rights of a Fellow Muslim’. For each commandment, quote the āyah number as well. For example:

- Do not insult or call anyone by nicknames (verse 11).

Remember: Some āyāt will have more than one right of a fellow Muslim so you can break it up into several bullet points or numbers. If you wish to add your comments or thoughts for some of the rights, you can also add them as paragraphs under the appropriate bullet or number.