

AKHLAQ **(Ethics)**

Lesson 1

Husn adh-Dhan & Su'u adh-Dhan

The Arabic word 'dhan' can mean 'to think', 'to believe', 'to suppose' and even 'to suspect'. The Arabic word 'husn' means 'good' and 'su'u' means 'bad.'

Therefore *Husn adh-Dhan* means to think positively and well of others. And *Su'u adh-Dhan* – which is the opposite – means to be suspicious of others and to always think negatively of them.

Islām teaches us always to give people the benefit of the doubt. This means if a fellow Muslim says or does something and it can be interpreted positively or negatively we should always suppose that they meant well and they were trying to be good and not bad.

A lot of times we hate people or stop talking to them only because of something they did or said and we assume they meant harm but in fact it is only a suspicion and we have no proof and we just jumped to that conclusion.

In the Qur'ān, Allāh says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ...﴾

O you who have faith! Avoid much suspicion (dhan). Indeed some suspicions (dhan) are sins.

- Surah al-Hujurāt, 49:12

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Do not be suspicious of others. Suspicion is a form of lying.'

And Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'If someone says something to you that can mean a good or bad thing, always assume the good' i.e. give them the benefit of the doubt.

Nabi Isa ('a) once said to the people, 'O slaves of evil! How come you blame others only on suspicion but you never blame yourselves even though you are sure' i.e. you are certain of the wrong you have done but never blame yourself and others you blame easily though you have no certain proof.

We usually suspect and blame others because we only judge them by their actions while we are not aware of their intentions. But we don't blame ourselves because we know our intentions and we justify our actions to ourselves.

Allāh is the only rightful judge as He sees everything and is aware of everyone's real intention. We have no right to judge other people whether they are Muslims or not. The only exception is the judge in an Islāmic court who passes judgement based on known and certain evidence in order to uphold law and order in an Islāmic country.

Our fourth Imām, Imām Ali Zayn al-‘Abideen (‘a) taught that we should always think that a person younger than us is better than us because he has had less time than us to do bad deeds. And we should always think that a person older than us is better than us as he has had more time to do good deeds. And we should always think of a person the same age as us that he is better than us, because we do not know what else he has done but we know exactly what good and bad we have done.

On the converse, if others think bad of us, we should leave the matter to Allāh to judge and if others think good of us, we must strive to become better and pray to Allāh not to let pride enter our hearts.

Imām Ali (‘a) said, ‘If someone thinks well and good of you then make what he thinks come true!’

An Anecdote on the Vice of Su’u adh-Dhan (Suspicion)

There was a farmer who owned a guard dog. He had trained the dog from its first day and looked after it very well.

Many times the farmer and his wife used to work together in the farm near their house. On such days, they would leave their young son at home with the dog.

One day, when the farmer and his wife were returning to their home, they saw the dog at the gate. They saw that the dog’s mouth was stained with blood.



The farmer thought that the dog had killed his son, so he started to hit the dog with his spade. He hit the dog so much that the dog died.



When the farmer’s wife ran to the house, she saw that their son was alive and there was a dead snake nearby. When the farmer came in and saw the dead snake, he realized his mistake. The dog had actually saved his son’s life. The blood on the dog’s mouth was that of the snake. But now it was too late to do anything for the faithful dog. The farmer made the mistake of suspecting the dog.

This anecdote is very simple but it teaches us how easily we can be so unjust and cruel to others when we assume things and suspect others without proof.

Practical Examples of Husn adh-Dhan and Su’u adh-Dhan

Supposing you see a Muslim man with a girl who is a non-mahram to him, what should you assume? If you assume that they are on a date or are of loose morals, then you have already shattered his reputation in your eyes and passed judgement

on him without proof. If you then tell others about your suspicion, you have committed *tuhmah* (false accusation) that is worse than even backbiting (*ghibah*) because *ghibah* is when we reveal the bad about a person that is true whereas *tuhmah* is when we accuse someone of something that may be untrue.

Now if our suspicion is false, we will have to account for it on the Day of Judgement before Allāh. And even if it is true, Allāh will hold us against it for revealing the fault of a person when He was hiding it. Allāh covers our faults all the time and takes pride in His being 'Sattār al-'Uyub' (the Concealer of Faults). Who then are we to reveal what Allāh conceals? So in the example above, we should think of a positive reason for the Muslim's action and assume he is not doing anything harām. Can you think of a reason?

In hadith we are told to think of seventy different excuses in defence of our Muslim brother or sister before even thinking of suspecting him.

Of course it is different if a person regularly commits sins openly in public and without care for Allāh's commands. Such a person is called a *fāsiq*. But even then we should not spread his mischief to others otherwise we become his ambassadors in helping him spread his habit of sin in the society.

Here is another example: Supposing you see a person stand up in the masjid and donate thousands of dollars for a charitable cause, what should you think of him?

Su'ū adh-Dhan would be to think he is showing off and wants to be praised for his generosity. Husn adh-Dhan would be to think that he is sincere and he wants to set an example so as to encourage others to follow his act of generosity.

In conclusion, always give others the benefit of doubt. Even if you know for sure that they have done something wrong, do not tell others. If Allāh can keep our secrets, we should also try and keep the secrets of others. If we really want to do something about our suspicion then we should try and approach the person privately and speak to them about it. And if we are convinced they acted wrongly then we should think of practising *al-amr bil ma'ruf* and *an-nahi 'anil munkar* by persuading him or her that what he or she is doing is wrong. Or we could speak to someone who we think can help him or her as well.

Husn adh-Dhan with Allāh

Besides thinking well of people, we should also always think well of Allāh. When we hear of a natural disaster and calamity, we should not rush to ask: Why did Allāh do this or allow this? There may be a good reason or wisdom behind it that will only become apparent many years later.

Similarly, we should not always suspect that Allāh is only waiting to punish us. Instead we should do our best to keep away from harām and along with that, we

should have a positive opinion (*husn adh-dhan*) that Allāh will protect us and save us from Hellfire and in the end, He will admit us in Jannah.

Our eighth Imām, Imām Ali b. Musa ar-Rida (‘a) has said, ‘Have a good opinion of Allāh because Allāh says, ‘I am to my faithful (*mu’min*) servant what he thinks of Me. If (he thinks) good then (I am) good (to him) and if bad then bad.’

In other words, a person who commits evil loses hope in Allāh’s mercy and expects to be punished, and so he is punished. Losing hope in Allāh’s mercy and infinite kindness is also a kind of punishment. As long as a person is not evil, they will always hope in Allāh’s mercy and He will never disappoint a person who has hope and good expectations of Him.

Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘I saw a man from my nation (*ummah*) on the *sirāt* (bridge to Jannah) shaking and quivering like a palm leave on a day of strong winds. Then his *husn adh-dhan* about Allāh came and it rescued him and stopped the shaking.’

And Rasulullāh (s) also said, ‘Do not die except with *husn adh-dhan* about Allāh. For *husn adh-dhan* in Allāh is the price of Jannah.’

And in the Qur’ān, Allāh describes the hypocrites (*munāfiqin*) and polytheists (*mushrikin*) as those who have a bad opinion about Allāh:

﴿وَيُعَذِّبُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّالِمِينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنًّا

السَّوْءِ...﴾

That He (Allāh) may punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the polytheists, men and women, who entertain a bad opinion (*dhan*) of Allāh...

- Surah al-Fat-h, 48:6

Lesson 2

Tolerance (Hilm) & Humility (Tawádu)

Tolerance (al-Hilm)

Tolerance means being very patient. Like for example when others do wrong to us and we have every right to get angry or take revenge but instead we bear patience and forgive them. In Arabic this is called *Hilm*. And one who practices hilm or has this quality is called *halim* (female: *halimah*).

Hilm is one of the qualities of Allāh because despite the sins we commit and despite our deserving to be punished, Allāh keeps giving us more time to repent and He continues to hide our faults from others. Imām al-Hujjah al-Mahdi ('atfs) in the Du'a al-Iftitāh that we recite every night in the month of Ramadan, teaches us to say:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ عَفْوَكَ عَنْ ذَنْبِي وَتَجَاوُزَكَ عَنْ خَطِيئَتِي وَصَفْحَكَ عَن ظُلْمِي وَسِتْرَكَ
عَلَى قِيحِ عَمَلِي وَحِلْمَكَ عَن كَثِيرِ جُرْمِي عِنْدَمَا كَانَ مِنِّي خَطِيئِي وَعَمْدِي
أَطْمَعَنِي فِي أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَا أَسْتَوْجِبُهُ مِنْكَ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى حِلْمِهِ بَعْدَ عِلْمِهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى عَفْوِهِ بَعْدَ قُدْرَتِهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى
طَوْلِ أُنَاتِهِ فِي غَضَبِهِ وَهُوَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى مَا يُرِيدُ

*O Allāh, Your pardon for my sins and Your overlooking my mistakes, and Your lenient view of my disorderly conduct, and Your cover up of my foul actions, and Your **tolerance (hilm)** despite my many transgressions committed wilfully or negligently, all tempt me to ask You for that which I do not deserve from You...*

*All praise be to Allāh for His **tolerance (hilm)** despite of His knowledge (of my sins); and all praise be to Allāh for His amnesty despite His being All-powerful (to punish); and all praise be to Allāh for the respite He allows even when His wrath is deserved and He is able to do what He wills....*

Hilm is therefore more than just being patient. It is to be forbearing and tolerant. It is to be very compassionate and forgiving so that you are always ready to overlook the

mistakes of others and to excuse them. Allāh praises Nabi Ibrāhim ('a) for this quality and mentions in the Qur'ān:

﴿إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ﴾

*Ibrāhim was indeed most **forbearing (halim)**, tender-hearted, [and] often turning [to Allāh in supplication].*

- Surah Hud, 11:75

Our second Imām, Imām Hasan ('a) was asked about *hilm*. He said, 'It is to swallow anger and control the self.'

And Imām Ali ('a) said, 'There is no *hilm* like patience and silence.'

Hilm is therefore to forgive someone when you are able to punish him and you have the right to take revenge. That is why Imām Ali ('a) has also said, '*hilm* puts out the flames of anger, while taking revenge fuels the fire.'

We can only know how much *hilm* we have when others make us angry and how we react or how stressed we become. The wise Luqman ('a) (who some believe was a Nabi) once said, 'One who is *halim* is not known except (how he behaves) when angry.'

Finally, remember that what makes people *halim* or *halimah* is knowledge. The more ignorant we are, the more easily we get emotional and angry because our minds and egos use us to vent and take revenge and we have no control over ourselves. Conversely, as we increase in knowledge, we become more humble and we recognize human nature; and as we get angry, we notice the rise of anger in our minds and body and we are able to control it through patience and praying to Allāh constantly.

Allāh describes Himself as 'All-knowing, All-forbearing' ('*alimun halim*) in Surah an-Nisā, 4:12. And Imām Ali ('a) has said, '*Ilm* (knowledge) is the root of *hilm*. And *hilm* is the adornment of '*ilm*.'

Humility (at-Tawādu)

Along with forbearance and tolerance (*hilm*) goes the quality of humility (*tawādu*). Humility is the opposite of being proud and boasting. When we talk of *tawādu* as a positive quality we don't mean to disgrace ourselves or allow others to make fun of us and humiliate us. What we mean is not to be too proud to worship Allāh and not to be too proud to help Allāh's creation.

A person with *tawādu* does not feel it is below his or her dignity to help even with a humble task or to work in a job that is seen to be humble. If we work in a profession that is *harām* like working in bar or a casino or any place of sin, that is a disgrace and

humiliation. But if we work hard to earn a halāl livelihood, it doesn't matter whether we are a doctor or a janitor. What matters is that we are not begging from others and we place our trust in Allāh.

Similarly when we are in the masjid, if we have *tawādu*, we will not feel ashamed to pick up any litter we see on the ground or to serve others with tea, and so on. Or if we are in a public park and it is time for salāh, we will not feel ashamed to pray to our Lord and Creator. The opposite of *tawādu* is pride where we feel ashamed of worshipping or serving Allāh because we feel others will laugh at us or we care more about our image and prestige than what Allāh expects from us.

Rasulullāh (s) described *tawādu* as the main ingredient that brings 'sweetness' to worship. In other words when we pray with humility (*tawādu*), it has a unique pleasure and 'sweetness' that only people who are humble can appreciate. That is why people who are humble are often seen to pray for long periods with prolonged ruku' and sujud in their salāh. And the more they humble themselves before Allāh, the more honourable Allāh makes them in the eyes of His creation. Sometimes due to *tawādu* a person reaches a status that even the angels of Allāh admire.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said, '*Tawādu* is to sit in a crowd without expecting special recognition; to do salām to everyone you meet instead of expecting others to greet you only; and to give up your right to others even though you have a greater right than them.'

Imām Ali ('a) described *tawādu* as 'the fruit of knowledge'. In other words it is like *hilm* as well. The more knowledgeable a person is in religion and about Allāh, the less materialistic they will be, and the more humble and forbearing they will become. And when you see someone who is greedy for the world or who is intolerant, always judging others, never forgiving others, always ready to take revenge and fight for his rights and even take the rights of others, proud and boastful, wanting praise and recognition, these are all signs of ignorance and a lack of true knowledge and wisdom.

As a person becomes more humble, they pay less attention to the faults of others and they concentrate on their own faults. They become more concerned with what Allāh thinks of them and how to become better so that Allāh is more pleased with them.

Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'Blessed is one who is so occupied with his own faults that he does not notice the faults of others.'

Remember: *Tawādu* is only for the sake of Allāh. As we said earlier, it does not mean to humiliate ourselves before others, especially when we want some worldly gain.

For example, Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'One who respects a rich person and humbles himself before him only because of his richness, loses one-third of his religion.'

And other traditions (*ahādith*) also tell us that a person who bows before a rich man only because of his wealth, will find his faith (*imān*) melting away like salt dissolves in water.

So even when a true believer (*mu'min*) is humble before others, it is only before other true believers (*mu'min*). A believer regards others as being better than himself or herself because of their piety and faith and not because of how rich or influential they are.

Pride (at-Takabbur), the Opposite of at-Tawādu

Takabbur is defined as pride or arrogance. It is also called *Kibr*.

The sign of a person who is arrogant (*mutakabbir*) is that he or she is also boastful. Allāh dislikes people who are proud or who boast and He says in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ﴾

And do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land with pride; surely Allāh does not love any arrogant boaster.

- Surah Luqman, 31:18

Pride destroys a person and the best example of this is Shaytān who refused to obey Allāh because he thought he was better than Nabi Adam ('a). When Allāh commanded all the angels to bow before Adam, Iblis (Shaytān) said: "I am better than he (Adam), You created me of fire and him of clay." For this display of pride he was thrown out of the heavens and cursed forever.

If we read the Qur'ān carefully we will see that it explains that the reason why people do not believe in Allāh and the Day of Judgement, or the reason why some people don't pray and as well disobey Allāh, is all because of *takabbur*. *Kibr* or *takabbur* is therefore a primary cause of taking people to the fire of Hell.

This is perhaps why Rasulullāh (s) said a person who has even an atom of pride in his heart would never enter Jannah.

As part of our efforts to have *tawādu* and keep away from *kibr*, we should live simple lives. We should try and avoid talking about ourselves and how good we are, or dressing up just to show off, and so on.

When we have an opportunity to do good like praying *salāt al-layl* or fasting a *mustahab* fast or helping someone in need or donating some money in charity, we should do our best to keep it a secret from others. This will prevent us from believing or thinking we are better than others.

How do you think a person with *kibr* would talk about the following events, compared to a person with *tawādu*?

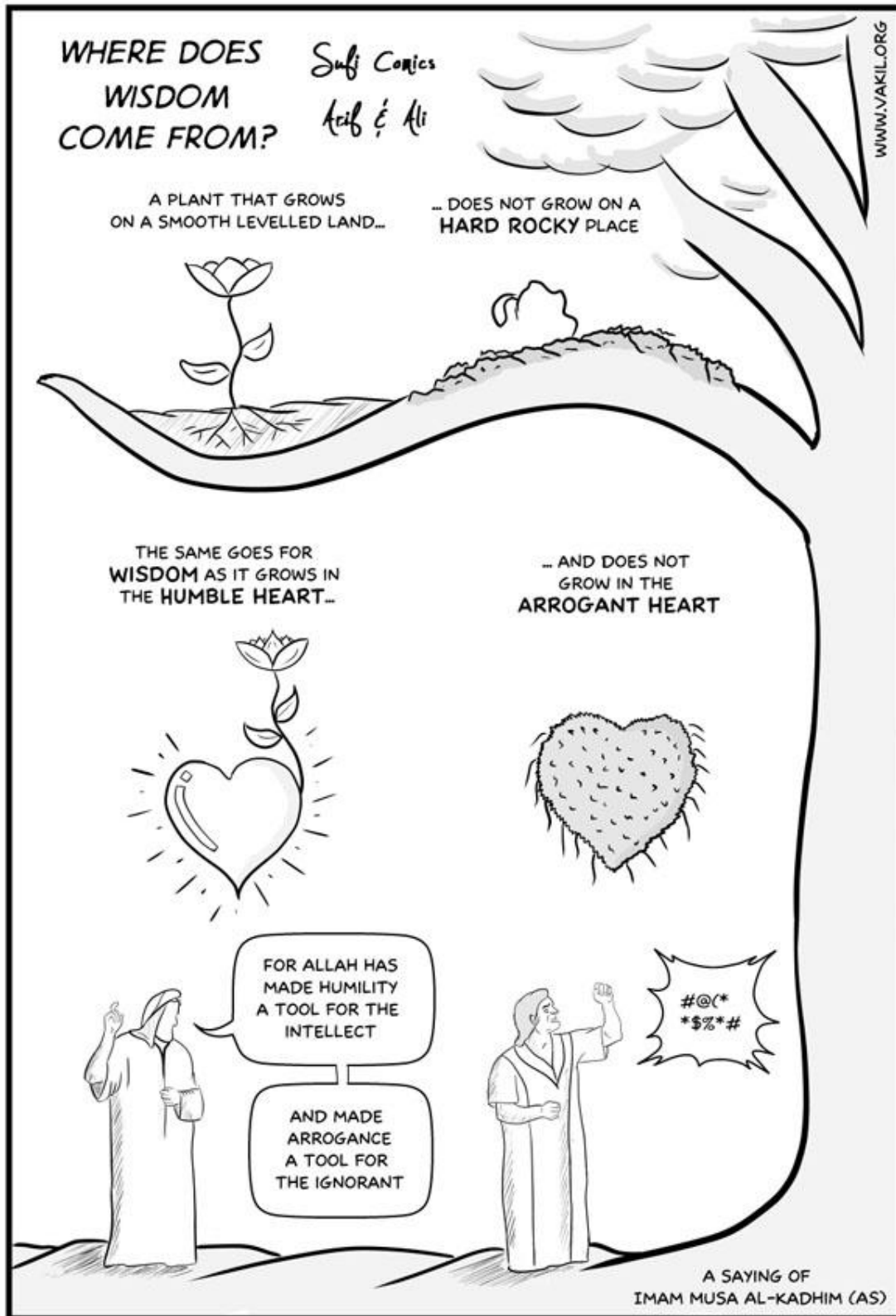
- Coming first in a test or examination
- Reciting du'a in the masjid in front of a large crowd or giving a speech in public
- Winning a medal at a sports event.
- Winning over their friend in a game or sport
- Talking about their ancestors if they were famous

When we accomplish something good, Shaytān whispers to our *nafs* (egos) that we are great, and that we are better than the rest. And this continues until we actually believe it and starting behaving as if we are better than others.

Takabbur enters our hearts very secretly; it tries to hide from us, and takes over our thoughts quietly. That is why Rasullāh (s) once said, 'Pride enters your heart like a black ant crawling under a rock in a dark night.'

The first thing that we should do when we achieve something good is to thank Allāh. Just by saying 'Alhamdulillah', we acknowledge that in reality we are not capable of doing anything good. Whatever good we achieve is actually from Allāh. And we thank Allāh that He did a good act through us and used us for that deed.

Most of our ad'iya (plural of du'a) teach us to thank Allāh and to realize that whatever blessings and good qualities we have are all from Allāh. He is the Giver and it is He who inspires us to do good and therefore it is only He who is deserving of praise.



Lesson 3

Contentment vs. Greed

Contentment means to be satisfied with what we have and not to constantly want more or even want what others have. It is ok to work hard to gain more blessings of Allāh but not with a sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction or with a constant greed for more and more without ever feeling we have enough.

Contentment is called *Ridā* or *Qanā'ah* in Arabic. And greed, which is the opposite, is called *Hirs* in Arabic.

Contentment (ar-Ridā wa al-Qanā'ah)

Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'Blessed is one who remembers the Resurrection, works for the Accounting (of Judgement Day), is content with little, and is pleased with Allāh (i.e. His Decree for him).'

And Imām Ali ('a) also said, 'The most thankful (to Allāh) of people is the most content.' This means when we are satisfied with what Allāh has blessed us with – materially or in our bodies – we show gratefulness to Allāh. But when we are never satisfied no matter how much Allāh blesses us with, we are being ungrateful and always demanding more.

We need to realize that if we give in to greed, it will never be enough, no matter how much we get. The secret to being wealthy and financially independent is being content. Imām Ali ('a) once said, 'Contentment is not found until greed is given up.' And he also said, 'One who is not satisfied with little in this world will never be happy or benefit from having more.'

In the end, we will only stop being greedy when we have conviction (*yaqin*) and trust in Allāh that He will always give us more when we need it; and that we don't have to hoard for the future. That is why Imām Ali ('a) said, '*Ridā* (contentment) is the fruit of *yaqin* (conviction).'

Imām Ali ('a) taught us a great way to practice *ridā* and *qanā'ah*. Instead of wanting Allāh to agree with what we want, we can learn to surrender to Allāh and ask Him to give us what **He** wants and what **He** thinks is best for us. Hence Imām Ali ('a) said, 'If what you want will not happen, then want what *will* happen.'

People often commit sins because they can't get what they want lawfully so they even commit harām just to get what they want. This is the result of not being content with what one has. Imām as-Sādiq ('a) taught, 'The foundation of obedience to Allāh is to be content with what Allāh does, in whatever a person likes or dislikes.'

And Imām al-Hasan (‘a) asked, ‘How can a true believer (*mu’min*) be a *mu’min* when he is displeased with what Allāh has decreed for him?’

Greed (al-Hirs)

Greed is the desire to possess more than what we need. It results in humiliation and weakness and leads to other vices. It shows a weak faith and a lack of trust (*tawakkul*) in Allāh (that He will provide in future). It makes people miserly and insensitive to the suffering of others. Greed is what drives people to usury (*ribā*), gambling, bribery and cheating others. It is the main cause why some humans exploit others, why most wars are fought and why humans hurt and destroy the environment and waste natural resources.

One of the reasons Islām asks us to give khums and zakāh is to help us reduce our greed for wealth and attachment to it.

Imām Ali (‘a) said, ‘Greed (*hirs*) reduces the value of a human being but does not increase his sustenance (*rizq*).’ And he said ‘One who is greedy has no shame.’

When Imām Ali (‘a) was asked, ‘what form of disgrace is the most humiliating?’ he replied, ‘Greed for the world.’

And Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘How bad it is for a *mu’min* to have a desire that humiliates him.’

One who is greedy is a prisoner of disgrace and humiliation because he or she cannot break its shackles as long as he or she remains greedy. In other words greed and humiliation are always together. You cannot be greedy and not humiliate yourself.

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) said that Amir al-Mu’minin (Imām Ali), blessings be on him, used to say, ‘Son of Adam! If you want from the world what will suffice you than even the least in it will suffice you. And if you want what will not suffice you than even everything in it will not suffice you.’ This shows that greed has no limit.

Imām Ali (‘a) was asked, ‘what is *hirs*?’ He said, ‘It is to seek less by giving up more.’ What he meant was that one who is greedy seeks wealth or pleasure but gives up his self-respect. And he seeks the world (less) by giving up the hereafter and jannah (more).

How to Cure Greed

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) said to his companion Abu Basir: ‘when you feel greed for the world, remember death and your loneliness in the grave. Remember how, in the grave... the worms and insects will eat your flesh and how you will be cut off from

the world. This will encourage you to work for the hereafter and keep you away from the greed of most things in the world.'

And another way to treat greed and to stop it is to share what you have with others who need it and never to hoard things in the house or bank. It is all right to keep some for 'a rainy day' but in moderation. We should give away to others most of what is surplus and not needed by us.

And finally, the only type of greed that Islām *does* encourage is greed for knowledge. Rasulullāh (s) has said, 'Two greedy persons are never satisfied; those greedy for knowledge and those greedy for wealth.' As Muslims, we should always be greedy for knowledge as it helps us get closer to Allāh and prepares us for the next world, which is our permanent home.



Lesson 4

Bravery vs. Cowardice

In Arabic, bravery is called *Shujā'ah* and cowardice, which is the opposite, is called *Jubn*.

Sometimes we can see bravery vs. cowardice easily. For example, when a strong or bigger person oppresses or beats up a smaller or weaker person we know the bigger person is a coward. And sometimes we see a person who is smaller or appears weaker but instead of running away, he stands and defends himself and we know he is brave and courageous.

This tells us that cowardice is to pick on others when we have an unfair advantage over them and to run away when we don't think we can win. And bravery is not necessarily to win a fight but to be able to stand for the truth and for what is right.

In order to be brave, a person must truly believe in what they stand for and also must have true faith and conviction that Allāh is watching and able to help him or her.

That is why a Muslim fears no one except Allāh, whether it is in saying the truth or fighting in a battle. Allāh describes such brave Muslims in the Qur'ān by saying:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ...﴾

*O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allāh will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, [who will be] humble towards the faithful, stern towards the faithless, waging jihād in the way of Allāh, **not fearing the blame of any blamer...***

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:54

Furthermore, Allāh emphasizes that fear and cowardice is from Shaytān. Meaning it is the result of a weak faith. We have no reason to flee and run away if we are convinced that the greatest Power in the universe (i.e. Allāh) is with us. Hence Allāh says:

﴿إِنَّمَا ذَلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونِي إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

That is Shaytān, frightening his friends, therefore do not fear them, but fear Me, if you are believers.

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:175

In the past there were people who were tested with fear, and others tried frightening them, but they stood firm because of their trust (*tawakkul*) in Allāh. Allāh quotes their words in the Qur'ān as well:

﴿الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا
حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ﴾

Those to whom the people said, 'All the people have gathered against you; so fear them.' That only increased them in faith, and they said, 'Allāh is sufficient for us, and He is the most excellent One to trust.'

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:173

Tawakkul in Allāh therefore frees a person from the shackles of fear and cowardice and makes him or her brave. It's not about physical strength or advantage. Take for example how bravely Sayyida Zaynab ('a) spoke in the court of Yazid. Yazid was the caliph with a court full of his ambassadors, military commanders and supporters. Sayyida Zaynab ('a) was brought in as a prisoner tied in ropes. But her trust in Allāh was so great that her physical circumstances didn't matter. She was still able to show courage and bravery because of her trust in Allāh.

A person may, for example, fear dying. But *tawakkul* that Allāh is in control of life and death, and that we came from Him and we return to Him, removes that fear.

That is why when Allāh describes His 'friends' (*awliyā*) in the Qur'ān, He says:

﴿أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

Look! The friends of Allāh will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve.

- Surah Yunus, 10:62

Why is it important for us to be brave and not to be cowardly? It is because when we are cowardly, we will never stand up for the truth. We will always be filled with fear: fear of losing our wealth, fear of losing our name and prestige, fear of losing our lives, and so on. Bravery allows us to take sides with the truth instead of 'sitting on the fence'. In fact, it is impossible to separate truth and bravery just as it is impossible to separate falsehood and cowardice.

Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'If qualities were segregated, then truth would be with bravery and cowardice with lying.'

To be brave does not mean to have *no* fear. A person can have fear as a natural human reaction. But to be brave means to remain steadfast because of knowing that

the cause we stand for is greater than our lives and therefore not to run away. Bravery makes us realize that it is worth sacrificing our lives for the truth and enduring pain for it. Running away from death is pointless because sooner or later we all must die. We might as well die for a noble cause in exchange for eternal bliss. Or in the words of Imām Ali ('a), 'bravery is to be patient for a moment.'

The wise Luqman ('a) said, 'The brave one is only known during battle.' This can have many meanings. One of course is the literal meaning that the one who does not flee in battle and stands firmly holding his ground is brave. But another meaning could refer to the 'battle' against our *nafs* (ego) – what is called *Jihād al-Akbar* (the Greater Jihād). A coward gives in to temptation and falls for sin. The brave one is known because he or she does not flee during the 'battle' against their desires. They continue 'fighting' with patience and prayer until they overcome the 'enemy' within. It is they who are truly brave and courageous in spirit. That is perhaps why Rasūlullāh (s) once said, 'Brave is not he who can throw another man to the ground. Rather brave is he who can overcome his own desires.'

Lesson 5

Hubb ad-Dunya

The term *hubb ad-dunya* literally means ‘love of the world’. When Islām condemns ‘love of the world’ it is not in the sense of enjoying Allāh’s blessings such as food, getting married, earning a living, having a nice home, travelling, and so on. These are all good and in fact recommended in Islām. But what Islām means by ‘love of the world’ is being completely taken in by the pleasures of the world and making the life of the world our main focus, goal and aim in life. For example, it would be wrong if our goal in life were only to make as much money as possible, in any way possible. Or for example, we would be guilty of ‘love of the world’ if we are constantly focused on physical pleasures only and how to get more of it day and night. Obsession with the world is wrong because it makes us forget Allāh and the hereafter (our real life).

Being completely immersed with the material world only while forgetting the hereafter and all spiritual matters is also called materialism. We will discuss the evils of materialism in more detail in Book 11 inshā Allāh.

Imām Ali (‘a) has said the world is the abode (i.e. ‘home’) of the hypocrites (*munafiqin*) and not the abode of the pious. Therefore we should take from it only what is necessary and not collect and hoard as if it is our permanent place of stay.

As we have mentioned earlier, the life of the world in itself is not evil. It is in fact very good and necessary because it is the best place to earn Jannah. That is why in some *ahādith* the world is called ‘the farmland of the hereafter’. We plant seeds of good deeds here and we reap the crops of *thawāb* in the hereafter. Without the world we couldn’t make it to Jannah. So we must see this life as a blessing and our youth, health and energy as precious commodities and raw material that can be used to build our place in Jannah. Instead of wasting time and being distracted with just playing games all day, watching TV, surfing on the internet and chatting with friends, we should race against time because we don’t know how much time we have left before we die. The harder we work for the hereafter, the more successful we will be after death and the easier our transition to Paradise (Jannah).

How do we work for the hereafter while we live in this world? Working for the hereafter involves serving Allāh and serving Allāh’s creatures. Serving Allāh is by obeying Him, not sinning, praying, fasting, reciting the Qur’ān and constant remembrance of Allāh on our lips and in our hearts. Serving Allāh’s creatures is by helping the poor and needy, volunteering for humanitarian activities, giving others our money and time (e.g. through teaching at the madrasah), obedience to parents, kindness to others especially the old, weak and even animals, birds and all of Allāh’s creatures. Looking after the environment, recycling, not being wasteful with water, and even working hard to earn a *halāl* living so that we don’t have to depend on others to look after our families and ourselves. All these are also ways of serving Allāh’s creation and working for the hereafter. Whether we are occupied with

servicing Allāh or His creation, we are constantly purifying our souls and readying them to be able to live in Jannah.

Each day has 24 hours. Think of every day as being worth 24 precious diamonds that you can either earn or throw away. Imagine each diamond is worth a million dollars. When you waste a whole day, you have just thrown 24 million dollars in the trash. You may get more tomorrow but you'll never get what you lost today ever again.

In one hadith we are taught that the love of the world (i.e. materialism) is like drinking seawater. The more you drink, the thirstier it makes you until it kills you.

The world enslaves those who are enamoured by it. That is why Imām Ali ('a) used to ask, 'is there no free person to give up this world?' Because only those who are not slaves of worldly pleasures are truly free.

Imām Ali ('a) described the world as a 'left-over bone of a pig in the hand of leper' and also as 'the sneeze of a goat'. In one hadith, it is said the world has less value to Allāh than the wing of a fly. If Allāh thought the world was great and special, He would never give it to the hypocrites and disbelievers, and the faithful would never suffer in it.

The faithful (*mu'minin*) are told to bear patience in the world because according to Rasullullāh (s), 'the world is a prison for the faithful' and therefore a faithful Muslim should not expect luxury and comfort in a prison. A *mu'min* sees the world as a very temporary place, like a shadow that extends for a few hours and then shrinks and disappears.

A faithful (*mu'min*) is never overly occupied with what he or she possesses in the world, whether it be the home, car, clothes, business, gadgets, sports, games or even a hobby. It is not wrong - and in fact even recommended - to enjoy the blessings of Allāh in this world. But we must never forget that in the end, we are just 'travellers' who have stopped at an 'inn' for a few decades before we move on to the next world. A *mu'min* or *mu'mina* therefore spends his or her precious time and money to find ways to make himself or herself better, to please Allāh, and to purchase and build his or her permanent place in Jannah.

Imām Ali ('a) warns us not to be fooled by the world because it is 'like a snake whose skin is soft to touch on the outside but is full of poison'. It is also like a shadow because it seems permanent when it is extending. But when it starts shrinking, it soon vanishes without warning. Furthermore, just like a shadow, when you run after the world, it will run away from you. But when you run away from it, it will run after you. Once the world and its pleasures attract you and you become occupied and interested in it or fall in love with it, it will disappoint you and let you down.

Remember: The *halāl* we enjoy in this world still requires accounting (*hisāb*) on the Day of Judgement and the *harām* in this world of course leads to punishment ('*iqāb* or '*adhāb*) on the Day of Judgement.

In summary, the world and the hereafter are like the two ends of a seesaw. Or like the east and the west. You cannot rise in one without falling in the other and you cannot get closer to one without getting further from the other. It is impossible. But when we say 'the world' we must distinguish the 'good world' that is used as a farmland to sow good deeds that will grow and thrive in the next world vs. the 'bad world' that is only lived for the sake of enjoyment and that stops the growth of the soul, gives us the illusion of permanence and makes us forgetful of death.

This lesson ends here. What follows are āyāt of Qur'ān and ahādith on the world (as in 'worldliness and materialism') to elaborate what we have discussed so far. If time permits your teacher will quote some of these āyāt and ahadith. He or she may also assign some of ahādith to you as homework or a project to write an essay on. It is important that you express your understanding of what 'love for the world' means to you so that your teacher can correct it if your understanding is wrong.

Qur'ān and Hadith on Hubb ad-Dunya (Love of the World)

Qur'ān

﴿وَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ﴾

They are the ones who bought the life of this world for the Hereafter; so their punishment shall not be lightened, nor will they be helped.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:86

﴿زَيْنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْحَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ﴾

Worldly life has been glamorized for the faithless, and they ridicule the faithful. But those who are Godconscious shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection, and Allāh provides for whomever He wishes without any reckoning.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:212

﴿...مِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ...﴾

...Some of you desire this world, and some of you desire the Hereafter...

- Surah Aal-i Imrān, 3:152

﴿وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَغَرَّتْهُمْ 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'am, 6:70

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنُّوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ أُولَٰئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ﴾

Indeed those who do not expect to meet Us and who are pleased with the life of this world and satisfied with it, and those who are oblivious of Our signs - it is they whose refuge shall be the Fire because of what they used to earn.

- Surah Yunus, 10:7-8

﴿وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

The life of this world is nothing but diversion and play, but the abode of the Hereafter is indeed Life, had they known!

- Surah al-Ankabut, 29:64

﴿يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ وَإِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ﴾

O my people! This life of the world is only a [passing] enjoyment, and indeed the Hereafter is the abiding home.

- Surah al-Ghāfir, 40:39

﴿مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ﴾

Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We will increase for him his harvest, and whoever desires the harvest of the world, We will give it to him, but he will have no share in the Hereafter.

- Surah ash-Shura, 42:20

﴿فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَىٰ وَآثَرَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ﴾

As for him who was rebellious and preferred the life of this world, his refuge will indeed be hell.

- Surah an-Nāzi'āt, 79:37-39

﴿بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى﴾

Yet you prefer the life of this world, while the Hereafter is better and more lasting.

- Surah al-A'la, 87:16-17

Hadith

1. Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Be the children of the hereafter and do not be the children of this world.'
2. Rasulullāh (s) said, 'The world is the faithful (*mu'min*)'s prison and the faithless (*kāfir*)'s paradise.'
3. Rasulullāh (s), 'The most amazing thing is how a person who is convinced of the everlasting life is busy striving for this vain life!'
4. Imām Ali ('a) said, 'The bitterness of the world is the sweetness of the hereafter and the sweetness of the world is the bitterness of the hereafter.'
5. Imām Ali ('a) said, 'The world is like poison. Only the one who doesn't know it will eat it.' And also, 'The world is a trap. Only one who doesn't know it will fall into it.'
6. Imām Ali ('a), 'One whose concern for the world is great, so will be his sorrow and grief.'
7. Imām Ali ('a), 'Beware that you are not cheated out of the permanent abode (of the hereafter).'
8. Imām Ali ('a), 'Strive against yourself and work for the hereafter as hard as you can.'
9. Imām Ali ('a), 'You are a creature of the hereafter so work for it. You were not created for the world so abstain from it.'
10. Imām Ali ('a), 'How can a person work for the hereafter when he is busy with (running after) the world?'
11. Imām Zayn al-Abidin ('a), 'The life of this world is like a slumber while the hereafter is like waking up from sleep.'
12. Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) asked, 'If you are certain the world is temporary, then why all this greed and eagerness for it?!'

Don't Confuse the Praiseworthy World with Materialism or Love for Worldly Pleasure



Lesson 6

The Evils of Alcohol and Drugs

An addiction is a habit that a person finds hard to give up. Most human beings have some form of addiction or the other, such as tea, coffee, smoking, internet, food, sleep, shopping, and so on. The most perfect human beings are those who are not addicted to anything or anyone besides Allāh.

So in general, any kind of addiction is not good and we should always strive not to have a 'habit' that we are enslaved to and that we cannot shake off. In particular, there are some forms of addictions that are harām even if they are not a habit and even if a person indulges in them once in a while only. These include alcohol, drugs, gambling and pornography. The evils of gambling and betting were discussed in Book 8 and the evils of pornography will be taught in Book 10.

In some non-Islāmic societies when drug or alcohol "abuse" is condemned, they only mean it is wrong to be addicted to them or to overuse them. Keep in mind that in Islām, not only is drug and alcohol "abuse" wrong, but even their "use" is harām. Meaning it is harām to even try a drop, regardless of whether you get addicted or not or whether you get intoxicated or not.

Islām forbids human beings from using any substance that causes them to lose control of their minds and become irrational or behave like animals. This is not only humiliating and degrading for the human being but also detrimental to society and causes domestic violence, family break-ups, fatalities on roads, depression, addictions, crime, and in general utterly ruins a human being's life.

Alcohol

By 'alcohol' we mean all forms of intoxicants such as beers, spirits, wines and so on, regardless of whether their effect is strong or weak, immediate or delayed, a drop or in large quantity, pure or diluted.

Allāh forbids alcohol as an intoxicant in the Qur'ān:

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا...﴾

They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say, 'There is a great sin in both of them, and some profits for the people, but their sinfulness outweighs their profit...'

- Surah al-Baqarah 2:219

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ
الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

O you who have faith! Indeed wine, gambling, idols and the divining arrows (a form of gambling) are uncleannesses from Shaytan's work, so avoid them, so that you may be successful.

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:90

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) was asked that if a person takes alcohol in a small quantity so that it doesn't intoxicate him or her, is it permissible? And he said, 'absolutely not'. Anything that intoxicates in large quantities is harām even in small quantities. In other words even tasting a drop of alcohol is harām and a major sin in Islām.

Imām as-Sādiq ('a) was also asked what if a person dilutes alcohol with water and he still forbade it because in addition to being *najis al-'ayn*, alcohol is also harām in itself. And a harām thing does not become halāl by mixing with water. Therefore 'fear Allāh and do not drink it,' said the Imām.

Imām Ali ('a) once said that if he knew a drop of wine fell into a well and the water of the well was used to water the earth and then grass grew from that earth and an animal ate the grass, he would still not eat the meat of that animal. In other words he wanted to show us the lasting effect of alcohol.

Even children whose fathers and mothers take alcohol before they are born show signs of its harmful effect. If a pregnant woman takes alcohol her child may be born with FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome). Even a drop of alcohol can permanently harm the development of a child in the womb.

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) warned that a person who drinks alcohol will be raised on the Day of Judgement with a darkened face with his or her tongue hanging out, with saliva dripping on his or her chest and with extreme thirst. He or she will scream 'Thirst! Thirst!' until he or she enters the fire of Hell and drinks from its filth and dirt.

Rasulullāh ('a) cursed ten types of people who have anything to do with wine:

1. The person who plants and cultivates grapes (or any such fruit) with the intention of producing wine.
2. The person who crushes the grapes.
3. The person who transports the wine.
4. The person who takes delivery of the wine from the supplier.
5. The person who sells the wine.
6. The person who buys the wine.
7. The person who serves the wine.

8. The person who drinks the wine.
9. The person who sits at the same table with the person drinking the wine.
10. The person who uses the income that is earned by (making or selling) wine.

In other words, anyone who has anything to do with alcohol is cursed by Rasullāh (s) even if it is just advertising it, creating a TV or computer ad, wearing a T-shirt that advertises alcohol, and so on.

One of the necessities of religion is to consider alcohol to be *harām*. If a Muslim considers alcohol to be *halāl* then he or she becomes faithless (i.e. a *kāfir*).

Imām as-Sādiq ('a) also said that if a person drinks even a drop of alcohol and then does not repent, he or she would intensely regret this at the time that his or her soul is leaving the body. And the Imām ('a) also said that Rasullāh (s) said 'Cursed and cursed again is the one who sits at a table where wine is being served.'

So even when we go out with non-Muslim friends from work, it is important that we do not sit with them if they are drinking alcohol. We should avoid any restaurant that has a bar, sells alcohol or even permits people to bring their own alcohol.

If you buy anything with alcohol or someone gives you a gift with alcohol (e.g. chocolates or cake with rum), you cannot even give it to a non-Muslim. You must throw it in the trash.

If a Muslim restaurant owner allows alcohol in his or her restaurant, we should not eat there or trust their meat is *halāl* even if they say so.

Rasullāh (s) said, 'One who believes in Allāh and the Last Day should not even sit at the table where wine is kept.' And Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said, 'Do not sit with drunks because when the curse of Allāh descends on them it engulfs everyone, including the people in the company of the drunks.'

A man called Ibn Abi Yazūr told Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a), 'I suffer from a disease. When the pain intensifies I drink some wine and the pain subsides.' Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said to him, 'Do not drink it. It is *harām*; it is nothing but *shaytān* who is making you believe this helps.' The next time Ibn Abi Yazūr was in intense pain, he remembered the words of the Imām and did not drink wine. And sure enough after a while, the pain disappeared.

In a similar incident, a woman called Umm Khalid said to Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) that doctors had told her that if she adds some alcohol into her bread it would cure the pain in her heart. Imām as-Sādiq ('a) asked her what she plans to do and she said, 'You are my Imām. I will only do what you command me. And on the Day of Judgement I will say to Allāh, "I did what Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sādiq ordered me to do".'

What a sincere Shi'ah she was! The Imām was proud of her and told her, 'Do not even take a drop of it as medicine otherwise you will intensely regret it when your soul leaves your body.'

We have many *ahādith* to show that even if a person who drinks alcohol prays and fasts and believes in Allāh, at the time of dying they will deny Allāh and lose their faith and thus die faithless and become one of the people of Hellfire.

In an Islāmic government and under Islāmic law, the punishment (*hudúd*) for drinking alcohol is eighty lashes the first time, 160 lashes the second time, 240 lashes the third time. If a person drinks alcohol a fourth time on purpose and without any genuine reason then the punishment is death.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) also advised Muslims never to give their daughters in marriage to a person who drinks alcohol. And he said, 'If a person who drinks alcohol falls ill do not visit him. And if he dies do not attend his funeral.'

By adopting this attitude we fulfill our duty of *an-nahi 'anil munkar*. A drunk should never be trusted or believed in and no one should deal with them or do any business with them even when they are sober. Muslims should not maintain relations with those who consume alcohol so that they have no influence on them or their families and society. Alcohol generally leads to shamelessness and immodesty and influences others as well to lose their chastity and moral values.

Finally, Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) explained why alcohol is so condemned in Islām. He said, 'Alcohol is the root of all evils and sins. A person who drinks alcohol loses his sanity. At the time he is drunk, he does not know Allāh, does not fear committing any sin, respects the rights of no one and does not stop from committing evil openly. The spirit of piety and faith departs from him and only the impure and vicious spirit, which is far off from the Mercy of Allāh, remains in his body. Allāh, His angels, His prophets and the true believers curse such a man, and his daily prayers are not accepted for forty days....'

Drugs

In this lesson, by 'drugs' we do not mean medicines. We mean intoxicants that are taken to alter a person's state of mind. Sometimes such harmful drugs are called narcotics. They are addictive and besides inducing stupour and reducing pain, they alter a person's mood and behaviour (just like alcohol).

Everyone has heard of narcotics such as opium, heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and so on. But there are innumerable types of drugs that exist in very many forms including plants, liquids, powders, and so on. And those who deal in them use so many jargons and names for them that it would be impossible to list them all. Sometimes painkillers are taken in larger quantities or stronger doses just to give the same effect as narcotics, and in such usages they would also be classified as harām drugs.

In particular drugs are common at high schools, colleges and universities and among the homeless and those who roam the streets in the night. Those who sell and deal in drugs are always looking for new and fresh 'customers' because it is very profitable for them and they love the idea of more people being addicted to drugs. Young people are very easy to prey upon because of their lack of experience in life. Drugs are also very addictive and anyone who makes the mistake of even 'just trying' to use drugs soon finds it very hard to break the habit and will constantly go back for more.

It is therefore very important that you keep away from friends who may be using and dealing with drugs. Never give in to any pressure to even try once. When you find yourself in such a situation, stand up and walk out immediately even if such 'friends' laugh at you, call you names or tease you for being a coward. You will always be glad and thankful you walked out.

If you know of anyone with a drug problem, do not try and help them on your own or even get close to them as friends even if you feel sorry for them. They need professional help and you put yourself in danger by becoming close friends with them. Also beware of being lured into drugs on the internet through chat sites and 'nice' or very friendly strangers you meet online. If a stranger offers you anything to eat or drink, never accept it even if it looks like ordinary candy, chocolate, etc.

A young person addicted to drugs will start off by losing interest in studies and soon after will also have no ambitions for a career and lose interest in life in general. When they have no money to purchase drugs they will turn to theft and crime to get the means to buy drugs. Death from an overdose is common. Drugs also expose people to serious illnesses and diseases because of the exchange of contaminated needles and apparatus.

It is important to know that many of the drug addicts you see roaming in the downtown streets of large cities were once active, healthy and good young people just like you. They had career ambitions and wanted to succeed in life and even had loving parents, siblings and families. But as they became victims of drug use, they eventually found no place or person who could help them and even their own families had to finally let go of them and give up.

Many of the homeless you see on the streets and in the alleyways abuse drugs. But they did not turn to drugs because they were poor and homeless – they became poor and homeless because of their addiction to drugs through the influence of bad friends.

A person who risks using drugs not only risks ruining their life in this world but destroys their *ākhirah* (hereafter) forever. And that is why, even after you start college or university, it is so important that your friends are from the Muslim community and that you continue visiting the masjid regularly and be part of a youth group at your local masjid.

And as teenagers or youth, there are always times when you will feel bored, lonely, confused, misunderstood and even feel your parents don't understand you. Whatever the issue you face is, talk to an elder or your teacher. But never turn to alcohol or drugs because it will ruin your world and your hereafter and you *will* regret it when it's too late.

Not only is drug use absolutely harām in Islām but a person who sells or passes on drugs to others is punishable by death in Islām. This is because he or she destroys another life and it is as if he or she has killed the other person. Drug dealers prey on innocent lives for the sake of money. They must always be punished in the most severe of manners with no tolerance.

Lesson 7

Vandalism & Mischief

The Arabic word for mischief is 'Fitna' or 'Fasād'. And one who causes mischief is called a *fāsid* (female: *fāsidah*).

Fasād can take many forms. It can be physical where a person destroys property, kills innocent people, commits arson, and harms others just 'for fun' or out of anger, being drunk, etc. This leads to a lot of confused reactions in the society that in turn leads to mischief and disunity.

Allāh condemns this kind of mischief in various places in the Qur'ān. For example:

﴿وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْفُسَادَ﴾

And if he (the fāsid) were to gain authority, he would try to cause mischief in the land, and to ruin the crop and the cattle, and Allāh does not like mischief.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:205

Mischief can also be verbal where a person spreads rumours about others, creates lies and causes fights between people just to create disunity and to weaken the society. Sometimes people cause mischief without even knowing that they are doing so. They think they are doing good and fighting for truth and justice when in fact they are the mischief-makers. Allāh mentions them as well in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ
الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ﴾

When they are told, 'Do not cause mischief on the earth,' they say, 'We are only reformers!' Indeed! They are themselves the agents of mischief, but they are not aware.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:11-12

Such mischief makers may be nations and countries that see themselves as 'superpowers' or may even be individuals in a Muslim community who have a habit of gossiping and they believe their habit is 'harmless' when it in fact causes marriages to break up, families to break ties, people to fight, and so on.

Mischief can also be non-physical and non-verbal. When a person commits sins in public or tells others about their own sinful habits, it also spreads mischief. That is why it is harām to even confess one’s sins to another human being.

For example, when a girl goes out dressed indecently and walks around the shopping malls without a care, she encourages the spread of mischief. When a young man drinks alcohol in public, plays harām music loudly in his car or dresses and behaves like irreligious ‘celebrities’, all these apparently ‘no-harm-done’ and ‘personal’ actions also spread a form of corruption in society.

Mischief spreads faster when we live in a society where everyone ‘minds his or her own business’ and *al-amr bil ma’ruf* and *an-nahi ‘anil munkar* is not practised. A society is like a group of travellers in one ship. If one person starts digging a hole in his room in the ship, everyone would try and stop him. The travellers won’t say ‘it’s not my business’ because they know they will eventually sink with him. In the same manner, when we allow corruption and sin to permeate society, it eventually catches up with us.

Sinning openly in public is mischief because it makes the sin appear small and light in the eyes of others and they begin to think ‘maybe it’s not so serious’ and ‘others do it, why can’t I?’ If the first person had not started doing it, no one else would have dared to do the same. So when we become the trendsetters of sin and mischief, we also become the cause of others sinning and in this manner we spread mischief and corruption in society. And on the Day of Judgement, we would have to bear a share of the burden of everyone else that sinned because of us.

What is most important to remember about mischief is that it is inexcusable even if the end seems noble. The end does not justify the means. And when we try and harm others through mischief, in the end it will always backfire and we will harm ourselves.

An Anecdote on the Consequences of Mischief

During the time of Rasulullāh (s) there was a Muslim who loved reciting the following āyah all the time:

﴿إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا﴾

If you do good, you will do good to your [own] souls, and if you do evil, it will be [evil] for them (i.e. your souls).

- Surah al-Isrā, 17:7

A Jewish woman who used to hear him wanted to prove him wrong, so as to show that the Qur’ān was wrong. One day, she prepared some sweets mixed with poison and sent them to him.

On the day that he received them it so happened that he was going out of town, so he took the sweets with him on his journey. On the way he met two men who were returning home from a long journey. They looked tired and hungry.

The man remembered the sweets he had and thought that the two men would like them. So he gave them the sweets not knowing that they were poisoned.

No sooner had the two men eaten the sweets that they collapsed and died.

When the news of their death reached Madina, the man was arrested and brought before Rasulullāh (s). The man told his story and the Jewish woman who had given him the sweets was also brought to the court.

When the woman saw the two dead bodies, she was stunned, because it so happened that the two dead travellers were her two sons returning from a long journey.

She admitted her evil intention to Rasulullāh (s) and all the people present. The poison she had mixed in the sweets to kill the Muslim had instead killed her own two sons.

The moral of the story is that we reap what we sow. Sometimes we reap in the next world and often we reap here in this world even before we reap more in the next world. If we take part in the spread of mischief and evil, it will come back to us. Always do to others what you wish done to yourself. The whole universe operates on this principle: **As you do, so shall be done to you.**

Imām Ali ('a) said, 'One who lights the fire of mischief, will be its fuel (on the Day of Judgement).'

And Rasulullāh (s) said, 'My nation (ummah) will be covered with mischief after me like pieces of the dark night. A man will rise in the morning a believer and retire at the end of the day a disbeliever and some will sleep a believer and wake up a disbeliever. For a small price, people will sell their religion for the world.'

This hadith means that mischief will be so widespread that except for the very pious, people will take part in the mischief and corruption in society. They will sell their faith only because they fear displeasing a friend or relative or because of running after desires and widespread sin in society. Morals and spiritual values will no longer be treated as valuable or even meaningful qualities to possess or live by.

And sometimes we may not be mischief-makers but others around us will try and use us to support them by speaking or acting in their favour. To prevent this, Imām Ali ('a) advised us: 'During mischief, be like a baby camel who can neither be milked nor rode on its back.'

In other words don't let people use you to spread sin and corruption in society. When people use you to get what they want (that is sinful or take advantage of their relationship to you), they 'ride on your back' or they 'milk you'. But if you don't put yourself out for people to use and take advantage of then you don't become a part of their mischief.

Another way in which a believer keeps away from mischief is by not hanging out in public for no reason. In hadith we are told that a *mu'min* never leaves his or her home except to earn a lawful livelihood or to go to the masjid to worship Allāh or to help others or to purchase something that his or her family needs or to visit a fellow believer. In other words a *mu'min* only goes out of the home **for a purpose** and not only for the sake of 'hanging out'. Imām Ali ('a) warned his companion Harith al-Hamdāni to beware of sitting or hanging around the marketplaces (today's shopping malls) because these are the places where shayātin (devils) hang out and 'the sources of mischief.'

We can also keep away from mischief by increasing our knowledge of Islām and becoming more Godconscious (*mutaqqi*).

Rasulullāh (s) also said, 'There shall come mischiefs when a man will rise a believer and sleep a disbeliever, except one whose (heart) is kept alive by Allāh through knowledge.'

And Imām Ali ('a) said, 'Know that for one who is Godwary (*muttaqi*), Allāh will make a way out for him from mischiefs and (provide him) a light from darkness.'