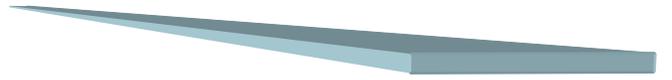




IMAMIA
SUNDAY
SCHOOL



SIRAAT

Name: _____

Class: _____

Teacher: _____

BOOK : 10

AGES: 14 Yrs

IMAMIA SUNDAY SCHOOL
Proposed School Calendar 2013-2014

| WEEK | DATE | ISLAMIC DATE 1434/1435 | COMMENTS | ISLAMIC EVENTS/NOTES |
|------|----------|---------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | 09/15/13 | Dhu al Qa'dah 9 | | First Day of School/Orientation/25 Shawwaal Martyrdom of 6th Imam, Hazrat Imam Jaffer Sadiq (AS). 11 Dhu al qa'dah Birthday of 8th Imam, Hazrat Imam Reza a.s. |
| 2 | 09/22/13 | Dhu al Qa'dah 16 | | |
| 3 | 09/29/13 | Dhu al Qa'dah 22 | | 25 Dhu al qa'dah Birthday of Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) and Hazrat Eesaa (AS) |
| 4 | 10/06/13 | Dhu al Qa'dah 30 | | 1 Dhu al Hijjah Wedding of Imam Ali (AS) and Syedda Fatima Zehra (SA) |
| 5 | 10/13/13 | Dhu al Hijjah 7 | | 9 Dhu al Hijjah Martyrdom of Hazrat Muslim ibne Aqeel (AS) / 10 Dhu al Hijjah Eid-ul-Adha |
| 6 | 10/20/13 | Dhu al Hijjah 14 | | 15 Dhu al Hijjah Birthday of 10th Imam, Hazrat Imam Ali un Naqi a.s / 18 Dhu al Hijjah EID e Ghadeer |
| 7 | 10/27/13 | Dhu al Hijjah 21 | | 24 Dhu al Hijjah Eid e Mubahila |
| 8 | 11/03/13 | Dhu al Hijjah 28 | | |
| 9 | 11/10/13 | Muharram 6 | | |
| 10 | 11/17/13 | Muharram 13 | | |
| 11 | 11/24/13 | Muharram 20 | | |
| 12 | 12/01/13 | Muharram 27 | HOLIDAY | Thanksgiving Weekend/25 Muharram Martyrdom of 4th Imam, Hazrat Imam Zainul Abedin (AS). |
| 13 | 12/08/13 | Safar 4 | | 7 Safar Birthday of 7th Imam Mossa Kazim (AS) |
| 14 | 12/15/13 | Safar 11 | | 13 Safar Martyrdom: Bibi Sakina (SA) binte Hussain (AS) |
| 15 | 12/22/13 | Safar 18 | | Safar 20 - Arbaeen(40 th) of Shuhada of Kerbala |
| 16 | 12/29/13 | Safar 25 | | Safar 28-Martyrdom Prophet Muhammad SAW & 2nd Imam; Safar 29-Martyrdom 8th Imam Ali al Ridha AS |
| 17 | 01/05/14 | Rabi' al Awwal 3 | MID TERM | 4 Rabi' al Awwal -Wafat: Masooma-e-Qum (SA) |
| 18 | 01/12/14 | Rabi' al Awwal 10 | MID TERM | 9 Rabi' al Awwal -Eid e Zehra (S.A.) |
| 19 | 01/19/14 | Rabi' al Awwal 17 | | 17 Rabi' al Awwal - Prophet Muhammad SAW & 6th Imam Jaffer as Sadiq AS / 18 Rabi' al Awwal - Birthday Syedda Umme Kulsoom bint Ali (AS) |
| 20 | 01/26/14 | Rabi' al Awwal 24 | PARENTS DAY | Parents - Teachers Meeting |
| 21 | 02/02/14 | Rabi' at Thaani 1 | | |
| 22 | 02/09/14 | Rabi' at Thaani 8 | | 10 Rabi' at Thaani - Birthday 11th Imam Hassan al Askari AS |
| 23 | 02/16/14 | Rabi' at Thaani 15 | HOLIDAY | Presidents Day |
| 24 | 02/23/14 | Rabi' at Thaani 22 | | |
| 25 | 03/02/14 | Rabi' at Thaani 29 | | |
| 26 | 03/09/14 | Jamaada al Ula 7 | | 5 Jamaada al Ula - Birthday Sayyida Zainab AS |
| 27 | 03/16/14 | Jamaada al Ula 14 | | 13 Jamaada al Ula - Martyrdom Sayyida Fatima Zehar (S.A) |
| 28 | 03/23/14 | Jamaada al Ula 21 | | 15 Jamaada al Ula - Birthday Hazrat Imam Zainul Abedin (AS). |
| 29 | 03/30/14 | Jamaada al Ula 28 | | |
| 30 | 04/06/14 | Jamaada al Thaani 5 | | 3 Jamaada al Thaani - Martyrdom Sayyida Fatima Zehar (S.A) |
| 31 | 04/13/14 | Jamaada al Thaani 12 | | 10 Jamaada al Thaani - Battle of Mu'ta & Maryrdom of Jaafar al Tayyar 8 AH |
| 32 | 04/20/14 | Jamaada al Thaani 19 | | 20 Jamaada al Thaani - Birthday Sayyida Fatima Zehra S.A. |
| 33 | 04/27/14 | Jamaada al Thaani 26 | | 26 Jamaada al Thaani - Martyrdom Imam Ali un Naqi (A.S.) |
| 34 | 05/04/14 | Rajab 4 | | 1st Rajab - Birthday 5th Imam Ali un Naqi (A.S.)Mohammad Baqir (AS) |
| 35 | 05/11/14 | Rajab 11 | FINALS | 13th Rajab - Birthday 10th Imam Mohammad Taqi (A.S.) |
| 36 | 05/18/14 | Rajab 18 | FINALS | |
| 37 | 05/25/14 | Rajab 25 | HOLIDAY | Memorial Day Holiday |
| 38 | 06/01/14 | Shaban 2 | RESULTS | RESULTS/GRADUATION PICNIC |

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Introduction

The Book in your hands is part of a twelve-book series named “Sirāt Books”, produced by the ISSC West Madrasah (of Brampton, Canada) as part of their Religious Education (Diniyāt) programme.

Each book consists of 28 lessons: 7 each on Islamic Beliefs (Aqāid), Islamic Laws (Fiqh), Islamic History (Tārikh), and Islamic Ethics (Akhlāq). The first seven books are also supplemented by Workbooks from which teachers can assign exercises either in class or as homework.

The ISSC West Madrasah’s objectives in imparting Islamic education to students as well as their approach and strategy in the creation of these Textbooks, can be reviewed in the “White Paper on Teaching at the Madrasah” available at its website: <http://www.madrasah.ca/>

The Sirāt Textbooks and Workbooks are also accompanied by a Teacher’s DVD and a Quiz Book. The DVD contains media intended to serve as a teaching aid and the Quiz Book covers all Diniyāt key concepts in every Sirāt Textbook. This Quiz Book, it is hoped, will be a great resource for children at home as well as at inter-Madrasah quiz events.

The ISSC West Madrasah hopes to *inshā Allāh* continue developing and enriching the Sirāt Textbooks and their related resources on an annual or bi-annual basis.

Each Sirāt Textbook also has the syllabus and objectives for its own grade printed at the start. Topics that are highly recommended for students to demonstrate proficiency in before the end of the Madrasah year are prefixed with an asterisk (in the syllabus). The ISSC West Madrasah plans to use this as their criterion for promoting students to the next grade.

It is hoped that these Textbooks will *inshā Allāh* not only be of relevance to other Madāris, especially in the North American continent, but will also benefit parents living in places where there is no local Madrasah and they need to home-school their students in Islamic education.

Note: The ISSC West Madrasah’s Islamic education programme consists of two main streams: Qur’ān and Diniyāt. These Sirāt books are related to the Diniyāt stream only. For Qur’ān, please visit our website: <http://www.madrasah.ca/>

Was salām
Management, ISSC West Madrasah
Brampton, Ontario (Canada)

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The ISSC West Madrasah would like to acknowledge the following individuals, institutions and publishers whose works are referred to and/or partially used in the creation of the Sirāt Books:

- Br. Khalil Jaffer : For the creation of the ISSC West Madrasah’s Diniyat Syllabus and the production of all the initial Textbook and Workbook drafts and updates.
- Br. Hasnain Abdulaziz : For all the original artwork produced specifically for the ISSC West Madrasah, including the creation of the Yusuf and Amina characters (and their family members!). Also for the design of all cover pages and ongoing help with other artwork.
- Hujjat Madrasah : Whose Madrasah resources continue to be a valuable resource for many madāris around the world. Ideas and some minimal content has been taken from their website: <http://www.hujjat-workshop.org/>
- Sufi Comics : For all the wonderful, edutaining comics produced by Arif and Ali Vakil (<http://www.vakil.org/category/sufi-comics/>).
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- All ISSC West Madrasah teachers and volunteers : For their support, review of new content, and ongoing help in the development of lesson plans, worksheets, and so forth.

DU`A BEFORE STARTING A LESSON

In Islam, learning and teaching, like other virtuous acts, are *`ibādāt* – acts of adoration and worship of Almighty Allāh (s.w.t). They have both physical and spiritual aspects. The physical is what we normally do while learning and teaching. The spiritual is when we invoke Allāh (s.w.t) to purify our souls and give us success in our endeavours. This we can do by performing *wudu* and reciting a supplication (*du`a*) before learning and/or teaching. The following is a *du`a* that can be recited before studying. It is given in the *Mafātih al-Jinān* of Shaykh `Abbās al-Qummi.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(I begin) in the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

O Allāh, send your blessings on Muḥammad and his household

اللَّهُمَّ أَخْرِجْنِي مِنْ ظُلُمَاتِ الْوَهْمِ

O Allāh, remove me from the darkness of ignorance

وَ أَكْرَمْنِي بِنُورِ الْفَهْمِ

And favour me with the light of understanding

اللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ عَلَيْنَا أَبْوَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ

O Allāh, open for us the doors of Your mercy

وَ أَنْشُرْ عَلَيْنَا خَزَائِنَ عُلُومِكَ

And unfold for us the treasures of Your knowledge

بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

By Your mercy, O the most Merciful of the Merciful

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

O Allāh, send your blessings on Muḥammad and his household

Syllabus for Book 10

Note: The [●] symbol indicates topics the ISSC West Madrasah highly recommends a student to know (and where applicable demonstrate successfully) before he/she is promoted to study the next Book.

| Lesson | Aqāid | Fiqh |
|--------|--|--|
| 1 | TAWHID - The Purpose of Life - The Big Bang Theory - The Creation by Chance Theory - Pascal's 'Bet' - Anthropomorphism | IJTIHAD - resources for knowing the shari'ah - necessity of mujtahids; is it really blind following? teachings of Masumeen ('a) about taqlid and ijtihād - reasons for differences in fatāwa |
| 2 | TAWHID - The Evolution Theory - Fallacies of Darwinism - Micro vs. Macro Evolution - Intelligent Design in Creation | Hajj & 'Umra - wājib parts and sequence of each [●] - Types of Hajj - on whom wājib |
| 3 | TAWHID - Humans during Trials & Ease - Why is it Important to Know Whether God Exists or Not? | Hajj & 'Umra (cont'd) |
| 4 | ADALAH - The Meaning of Adālah - Predestination vs. Freewill | Amr bil ma'ruf - Nahi 'anil munkar - Jihād in Islām |
| 5 | QIYAMAH - al-'Arāf and Ashāb al-'Arāf | Ghusl al-Mayyit and Hunoot [●] |
| 6 | QIYAMAH – al-Jannah wa an-Nār | Takfin and Salāt al-Mayyit [●] - Ghusl Mass al-Mayyit [●] |
| 7 | QIYAMAH – al-Jannah wa an-Nār (cont'd) | Gender-Specific Issues - Types of wājib ghusl - Rules of Janāba. For Boys: Not shaving one's beard. For Girls: Nifas |

| Lesson | Tārikh | Akhlāq |
|--------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | SIRAH – Hijjat al-Wida – Ghadir Khum | Faith (Iman) and Conviction (Yaqin) vs. Doubt (rayb/shak) in Allāh and Islām - Living and Dying for Allāh |

| Lesson | Tārikh | Akhlāq |
|--------|---|---|
| 2 | SIRAH – Illness of Rasulullāh (s) - Demise and Burial - Events immediately after Rasulullāh (s) | Losing hope in Allāh’s Mercy (ya'as and qunut) |
| 3 | AIMMAH - Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin ('a) | Feeling safe from Allāh’s Wrath (amn min makrillah) - the delicate balance between hope and fear |
| 4 | AIMMAH - Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) and Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) | TAQWA – meaning and importance |
| 5 | AIMMAH - Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) | TAWBA & ISTIGHFAR – Sincere repentance – Self-Accounting |
| 6 | AIMMAH - Imām Ali ar-Rida ('a) – Imām Muhammad al-Jawād ('a) | PARENTS – Bonding with them - looking after them in old age – understanding the generation gap |
| 7 | AIMMAH – Imām Ali al-Hādi ('a) & Imām Hasan az-Zaki al-Askari ('a) | Chastity & Modesty in Islām: Hijāb and Interacting with the opposite gender - masturbation, pornography, fornication and homosexuality. Chastity when on the internet, mobile devices & watching movies |

Objectives for Book 10

At the end of the year the student should:

For Aqāid

- understand Islām's response to Darwinism and the Evolution Theory
- realize how perfection in creation proves the unity and perfection of its Creator. Also understands why creation by chance is not sensible and the improbability of that even scientifically
- have a deeper understanding why the Shi'ah emphasize 'Adalah in their Aqāid and the views of the Mu'tazilites, Ash'arites and the Shi'ah on 'adalah-related topics like predestination and freewill
- know what 'Arāf means in relation to the Day of Judgement and who the Ashāb al-'Arāf are
- be aware of the descriptions of Paradise and Hell given in Qur'ān and Hadith

For Fiqh

- (a) be comfortable finding a law from the risāla of a marja'
- (b) have studied the rituals performed during Hajj and 'Umra and the various types of Hajj and 'Umra in Islām as well as when it becomes wājib on a person to perform the Hajj
- (c) know the importance of amr bil ma'ruf and nahi 'anil munkar, how to practice it and when it is wājib
- (d) know why Islām has a provision for jihad and when it is wājib to sacrifice one's life for Islām
- (e) know the importance of knowing how to give ghusl and kafan to a Muslim who has passed away and the basic mandatory steps to performing these rituals
- (f) know how salāt al-mayyit is performed and when ghusl mass al-mayyit is wājib

For the gender specific class:

- (g) in the girls class have reviewed gender issues from the previous books and also know about the ghusl of janābah and nifās and what is harām during janābah and it affects salāh and sawm
- (h) in the boys class have reviewed gender issues from the previous books with emphasis on not shaving the beard

For Tārikh

- (a) know how Rasulullāh (s) arranged to equip Muslims to continue on after him in the final year of his life through the Hijjat al-Wida and event of Ghadir Khum
- (b) understand how Rasulullāh (s) passed away and key events related to it such as Usama's Expedition
- (c) know the brief biography of the 4th - 11th Imams ('a)

For Akhlāq

- (a) understand the value of faith (iman) and the importance of conviction (yaqin) over doubt (shak)
- (b) understand the sin of losing hope in Allāh's mercy or feeling safe from His wrath and balance of hope and fear that a Muslim must always have
- (c) know the meaning and importance of taqwa
- (d) understand the importance of tawba and self-accounting and that one's soul is not lost until one gives up on repentance
- (e) know the importance of parents in Islām and be able to discuss matters like generation gap, importance of taking the 'parent' role as parents grow older, and so on
- (f) appreciate the importance of modesty and chastity in Islām and matters of concern related to these in the present society

Aqáid **(Beliefs)**

Lesson 1

Tawhīd vs. Atheism

The Purpose of Life

Our life on this earth has a specific purpose; it is not the result of nature's accident, nor is it a punishment for 'eating from the fruit of the forbidden tree'. We are here according to Allāh's plan. The life of this world is a test and a chance to prove ourselves as deserving of the eternal blissful life in the Hereafter. But most of all it is a place for learning, where we develop our souls to perfection whilst living within the limitations of the human body. An important realization regarding the purpose of life is to know that Allāh did not create us just for few decades of this life. That would have meant that our Creator had no purpose or aim in His creation. Instead, Allāh (s.w.t.) says in the Qur'ān:

﴿أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ﴾

Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly, and that you will not be brought back to Us?'

- Surah al-Mu'minun, 23:115

And Rasullāh (s) said, 'You have not been created to perish (fanā). Rather you have been created for eternal life (baqā).'

It was to help us attain this blissful eternal life that Allāh (s.w.t.) sent us prophets, messengers and scriptures. Just as He sustains us and provides for our physical needs, so does He provide our souls their spiritual needs, which are in fact far more important.

When a person does not realize how special they are to Allāh and why they were created, they assume they have no worth. They see themselves as simply one amongst thousands of other creatures struggling to survive. The idea that human beings are simply "higher mammals" or "socio-political animals" and that all our feelings and desires are just "chemistry", is the result of this loss of belief in the human soul and a purpose to life.

And this wrong understanding has also led many to disbelieve in God and to the idea that we came about by accident and evolved from apes and other animals and now we simply exist on the basis of "survival of the fittest".

In this and the next two lessons we shall explore ideas proposed by evolutionists and atheists and disprove them.

The Big Bang Theory

Atheists usually argue that there is no God and that the universe began with a mass that exploded; and from the fragments of this explosion came all the stars, galaxies and the universe that is continuously expanding. This is called the 'Big Bang Theory'. But they don't know where that mass that exploded came from in the first place! They keep saying one day they'll find out. But the fact is, they know they will never find out because something cannot come into existence out of nothing, just as unconsciousness cannot create consciousness, and non-awareness cannot create self-awareness and intelligence.

Islam is not opposed to science. If science has proven that there was a big bang then in fact the Qur'an supports that theory with the following verse:

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

Have the faithless not regarded that the heavens and the earth were joined together and We separated them, and We made every living thing out of water? Will they not then have faith?

- Surah al-Anbiya, 21:30

It is quite amazing that the Qur'an should have said this 1400 years ago. The fact that science believes there was a big bang and that life started in water does not mean that Allāh did not cause it or that He doesn't exist.

On the contrary, if we believe that there was a big bang but no God, then many questions remained unanswered. For example: Where did the first mass come from that exploded? If the universe is constantly expanding, it must be expanding in some 'space'. Who created the space? Who created the first space in which the mass that exploded existed? How did something just come out of nothing? And so on.

Creation by Chance Theory

Another argument given by atheists is that after the Big Bang, the earth (as a fragment from that Big Bang) just happened to be orbiting the Sun in the perfect set of conditions so that, after millions of years, the earth cooled off, water and vegetation appeared and life began to sprout. It was all just an accident and by chance. This is called the 'Creation by Chance' theory.

Now we must ask: what are the chances that such a thing could ever happen?

Imagine putting the pieces of a million fine wrist watches in a big paper bag. Now shake this bag for 6 billion years. Do you think that if you do this long enough, there is a 'chance' that all the pieces in the watch will just come together and fit perfectly

and one day you'll have watches assembled and running on perfect time? Ridiculous, isn't it? Yet some 'scientists' (who are atheists) want us to believe that a far more complicated universe came into existence just by accident and chance after an unintelligent and unconscious 'Big Bang'! If you study even just DNA molecules, you will know with absolute certainty that it is impossible for creation to have come about by chance and without an Intelligent Designer behind it.

When we look at a beautiful painting on a canvas or a machine automatically manufacturing products or we read a book that inspires us and touches our hearts, we know that it is not possible that the picture came into existence without an artist or the machine just existed without an engineer or the book came into being without an author.

Supposing someone told you the painting or the machine just came into being by accident, what would you think? What if someone told you that the very scientific book in your hands or the beautiful novel was not written by anyone... some pieces of paper were flying in the wind and some ink just spilt on it in the right place and time and words got written on it and it just happened to be the most perfect, scientific or beautiful words... what would you say? What if you tried to convince others about this, what would people think of you? Common sense tells you that people will laugh at you and think you've gone mad.

Look at the heavens and the stars and the sun and moon. Look at the perfect distance of the earth from the sun to provide light and warmth to all living things. Look at the land we live on and how water from the rivers, lakes and seas are carried by clouds into inner lands and they shower on the earth and make them fertile and from them grows a variety of plants and food for all creatures. Look at the water we drink, neither salty nor too sweet; the air we breathe; the night in which we rest and the day in which we work... look at how wonderful every creature is: the variety of birds, and fish and animals.. look at how wonderful the human body is and how it functions... could it all just have happened by accident?

Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَانِ مِنْ تَفَاوُتٍ فَارْجِعِ
الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُطُورٍ . ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ

حَسِيرٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

He created seven heavens in layers. You do not see any flaw in the creation of the All-Beneficent. Look again! Do you see any flaw? Look again, once more. Your look will return to you humbled and weary.

- Surah al-Mulk, 67:3-4

﴿قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِضِيَاءٍ أَوْ لَيْلٍ تَسْمَعُونَ. قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ. وَمَنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ﴾

Say, 'Tell me, if Allāh were to make the night perpetual over you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than Allāh could bring you light? Will you not then listen?' Say, 'Tell me, if Allāh were to make the day perpetual over you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than Allāh could bring you night wherein you could rest? Will you not then see?' Out of His mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest therein and that you may seek from His grace (i.e. your livelihood) and so that you may give thanks.

- Surah al-Qasas, 28:71-73

﴿أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ. أَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ. لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلَلْتُمْ تَتَفَكَّهُونَ. إِنَّا لَمَغْرُمُونَ. بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ. أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ. أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ. لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ. أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِي تُورُونَ. أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنشِئُونَ﴾

Have you considered what you sow? Is it you who make it grow, or are We the grower? If We wish, We would surely turn it into chaff, then you would be left regretting [saying to yourselves,] 'Indeed we have suffered loss! Rather, we are deprived!' Have you considered the water that you drink? Is it you who bring it down from the rain cloud, or is it We who bring [it] down? If We wish We can make it bitter. Then why do you not give thanks? Have you considered the fire that you kindle? Was it you who caused its tree to grow, or were We the grower?

- Surah al-Wāqī'ah, 56:63-72

﴿... فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ﴾

...So blessed is Allāh, the best of creators!

- Surah al-Mu'minun, 23:14

Other examples of Chance Creation

We can also use mathematical laws to prove that it would be impossible for the world to come into existence by chance or probability. When we calculate the

probability of something happening, we calculate the chance of one thing happening against the number of other possibilities that could also happen. For example, if we take ten coins and number them 1 to 10 and put them in a bag and shake them, what are the chances that we can take out the coins without looking and they will also come out in the right order i.e. 1 first and then 2 and then 3 and so on? Mathematically, the chances that the first coin will be the "No. 1" coin is one in ten. The chance that we will take out No. 1 and then No. 2 in succession is one chance in a hundred. The chance that we will pull out No. 1, then No. 2 then No. 3 in order, is one chance in a thousand. To take all ten coins out in order from 1 to 10 is therefore one chance in 10,000,000,000 (ten billion). What this means is, that you would have to try ten billion times and *perhaps* you may succeed in getting it out in this order.

For the world to exist as it does today, a lot more than 10 conditions are necessary. A Swiss mathematician Charles Eugen Guye calculated that each living creature is made up of 5 elements. The chance that only these 5 elements would come together in just the right amounts and method, besides the hundreds of other elements, is one chance in 10^{160} . To understand this, you would have to write 160 zeros after the number 10). Then he computed that for this one cell to occur by chance, the time required would be 10^{243} years. A human body is made up of billions of cells. Each cell would have to come into being by chance! Then you would have to calculate the chance of all these cells organizing themselves to form different organs and to carry out different functions of the human body. It is in fact impossible to even calculate this chance, let alone for it to actually occur.

Then of course there are the millions of other conditions outside the human body that would need to all happen by chance. Just as an example, if the earth rotates on its axis at 1000 miles an hour, this is a perfect speed. Now if the earth was to slow down to say, 100 miles an hour, then our days and nights would be 10 times longer. Which means the sun would burn up all the vegetation during the day and everything would freeze over in the night. The sun is also a perfect distance from the earth to give us light and warmth. If it moved even a little further or gave out less radiation, we would freeze or starve to death; and if it moved even a little closer or gave out more radiation, we would burn up and the earth would be scorched and roasted. If the moon was closer, the ocean tides would be so enormous that twice a day all the continents would be submerged. If the oceans were deeper, its waters would absorb all the carbon dioxide and oxygen and no vegetation would exist.

Millions of such reasons can be listed why it is impossible for the earth to have supported life by chance.

Can any honest person believe all this harmony, order and perfection came about by chance?

Creation in Six ‘Days’

Atheists will often argue against God’s creation of the universe because the Qur’ān (and even the Bible) says that the whole universe was created in six days whereas we know that everything developed gradually over millions of years.

Here is an example of a verse from the Qur’ān:

﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ...﴾

Indeed your Lord is Allāh, who created the heavens and the earth in six days...

- Surah al-A’rāf, 7:54

The cause of the misunderstanding is that in Arabic the word ‘ayyām’ can mean days (as plural of *yaum*) but it can also mean periods or stages. Each period could be millions of years.

Secondly, in every language we use the word ‘days’ to also mean more than 24 hours. For example, when we say, ‘in the days of Nabi Musa (‘a)’, we mean ‘at the time of’ or ‘in the era of’ and not literally a set of 24 hours.

Furthermore, we measure a ‘day’ based on a complete rotation of the earth on its own axis. When Allāh was creating the heavens and the earth, the sun and the earth were not immediately in place so we cannot assume that the ‘six days’ are six 24 hour periods.

And lastly, ‘six days’ to Allāh may not be the same as ‘six days’ to us as humans. For example, when Allāh talks of the Day of Judgement, He tells us:

﴿تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ﴾

The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him in a day whose measure is fifty thousand years.

- Surah al-Ma’ārij, 70:4

Time is therefore a dimension that binds us as creatures but not Allāh (s.w.t.) the Creator of time!

‘Pascal’s Bet’

The famous Muslim mystic and philosopher al-Ghazāli, as well as other Muslim scholars, have quoted some verses of poetry from Imām Ali b. Abi Tālib (‘a) to show why it makes sense to believe in God, regardless of whether one finds proof or not.

The verses of poetry from Imām Ali (‘a) are as follows:

قَالَ الْمُنَجِّمُ وَالطَّيِّبُ كِلَاهُمَا
 قَالَ الْمُنَجِّمُ وَالطَّيِّبُ كِلَاهُمَا
 إِنْ صَحَّ قَوْلُكُمَا فَلَسْتُ بِخَاسِرٍ
 لا تُحْشَرُ الْأَمْوَاتُ قُلْتُ: إِيَّاكُمَا
 إِنْ صَحَّ قَوْلِي فَالْخَسَارَ عَلَيْكُمَا

The astrologer and the physician both said

'The dead will never be resurrected.' I said, 'Keep your counsel.'

'If what you say is true, then I will have lost nothing,

But if what I say is true, the both of you will be at loss!'

A thousand years later, the famous mathematician Pascal (d. 1662 CE) came up with his famous "Parido Pascal" (Pascal's Bet) by which he wished to prove the same thing to the same group of people. He stated: 'If you believe in the life-hereafter you will gain everything if it really exists; and you lose nothing if it does not exist. Therefore, it is better to bet that it does exist.'¹

Is it mere coincidence? Or did Pascal get the idea of his 'Pari' (= bet) from Islamic sources? Scholars believe that Pascal must have read it in Ghazālī's famous work, *Ihyā Uloom ad-Din*. And Ghazālī himself says this is the argument of Imām Ali b. Abi Tālib ('a).

Of course the reason why Imām Ali ('a) said this was not because there is a chance that those who believe in God or the Hereafter are wrong. After Rasulullāh (s), there was no one more certain of the existence of God than Imām Ali ('a). But the argument is just to show that even those who claim to be agnostics (i.e. unsure whether God exists or not), it does not make sense for them to become atheists. What is at stake is eternal life and it is foolish to take such a risk based on weak arguments like the evolution and chance theories.

Anthropomorphism encourages Atheism

Anthropomorphism is to believe that God has a physical body like human beings. This is a belief found amongst Christians i.e. that God made man in His 'own image'! And hence it also made them believe that God gave birth to a son (Jesus)! (we seek refuge with Allāh from such blasphemy!)

Amongst the Muslims, the Wahābbi also hold this belief that God sits on a throne up in the heavens and he resembles a man. This is because they interpret some verses of Qur'ān that mention 'the face of God' or 'the hand of God' or 'God sat on the throne' literally. These verses, according to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), are to interpreted symbolically. 'The face' or the 'The hand' of God refers to the dominion and power of the Almighty and God 'sat on the throne' means He established His authority over the whole universe.

¹ Bensees, *Pascal*, edited by Y Brunchiricy, Paris, 1912, p. 439.

The problem with believing in God as having a physical body is that it encourages idol worship and it brings God into the limited human imagination. Furthermore, it raises many questions by atheists that cannot be answered. For example, if God has a body, then how can He be everywhere at once? If He is sitting on a throne, where was He sitting or standing before He created the Throne? How did He occupy space before He created space? Is He wearing clothes or naked? If He is wearing clothes, did He create the clothes Himself? What was He wearing before He created them? And so on.

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have rescued the concept of Tawhid and have offered the best understand of God: that He is beyond name or form. Allāh has no physical presence and cannot be perceived by the human imagination or the human eye. Allāh is everywhere and permeates everything yet nothing holds or contains Him and He does not incarnate anything. We shall learn more about the Shi'ah understand of Allāh (s.w.t.) in Book 12 but it is important to realize that many atheists argue against the existence of God because they assume everyone who believes in God believes in a physical God, which of course is not the belief of the Shi'ah Ithnā Ashari who follow Islam as taught by the Household (Ahl al-Bayt) of Rasullāh (s).

The First Cause

Muslim philosophers sometimes refer to God as the First Cause (*al-illat al-ula*). The reason is because we know that everything is the effect of a cause. When I see a building, I know it is the effect of the builder, who is its cause. But the builder himself is the effect of his parents, who are the cause of his existence. The parents themselves are the effect of their parents, and so on. If you keep going back, you will constantly find that nothing can exist unless it has a cause. However, at some point, there must have been a First Cause that was not the effect of anyone or anything, otherwise the cause-effect chain would continue for infinity.

Even the Big Bang is the effect of the mass that overheated and exploded, but the mass must have come into existence as an effect to some other intelligent cause.

Therefore in order to stop the infinite chain of cause and effect, we must accept that it must have all started with one Cause that was the First Cause. And that First Cause is Allāh, the Mighty and Glorious (*'azza wa jall*)!

Lesson 2

Tawhíd vs. Atheism (cont'd)

Evolution and Darwinism

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) was a British naturalist who is now famous as the 'Father of Evolution' because of his work 'On the Origin of Species' in which he wrote that all species of life have descended over time from one common ancestry.

In time, atheists used his work to "prove" that God did not create humans but every living organism evolved from the tiniest living organisms in water called plankton, and so on. This is called the Evolution Theory.

Based on this theory, the atheists therefore believe that a fish, a parrot, a polar bear, a human being, a lion, a giraffe and a mosquito all originated from the same species.

L.M. Davies, a British Scientist, once said, 'It has been estimated that no fewer than 800 phrases in the subjunctive mood (such as '*Let us assume,*' or '*We may well suppose,*' etc.) are to be found between the covers of Darwin's 'Origin of Species' alone.

And other scientist for the Atomic Energy Commission once said, 'Scientists who go about teaching that evolution is a fact of life are great con-men, and the story they are telling may be the greatest hoax ever. In explaining evolution we do not have one iota of fact.' He called it 'a tangled mishmash of guessing games and figure juggling.'²

In other words, even the atheist who rejects God because of the lack of scientific 'proof' is actually accepting the evolution theory on a great deal of 'faith' rather than any solid proof!

Today, a lot of people are afraid of being labelled 'religious' so they hesitate to even use the word 'God'. Instead they'll use words like 'fate' and 'nature' and say, 'look at what Nature has created!' or 'the laws of Nature' and so on.

What is this 'Nature' or 'Mother Nature' anyway? It is nothing but an abstract idea formed in the human brain after careful study of the behaviour of things. It may be found within things (i.e. the 'nature' of things) but it has no independent existence. And in any case, there is no record of any conference held by the 'natures' of various things to decide how to co-ordinate their functions. Flowers never consulted with the bees to seek the bees' co-operation in their pollination, offering them, in exchange, their nectar! But we know that bees could not live a single day without flowers; and thousands of flowers would long have been extinct but for the bees.

² Sayyid Akhtar Rizvi, *God of Islam*, p. 17 (1980 Edition)

We can therefore conclude that the evolutionists recognize the need of a Planner and Designer but they stubbornly go on repeating that that designer and planner was 'Nature' (which is just an abstract idea) or 'Matter' which is an unconscious, senseless and lifeless thing at best.

Micro vs. Macro Evolution

We may believe that micro-evolution is true. This would mean small changes in creatures of the same kind. For example, a panther and a cheetah may have come from the same family, or one kind of horse from another, or one type of sparrow from another. This is because the variation is very small and could have been affected by climate change and environment. This is how we may even explain why some humans are black but others are not or why some humans have a lot of body hair and others do not. These differences are caused by generations of the same species living in different geographical regions of the earth.

Using evidence for such 'micro-evolution', the atheists and evolution theorists have tried to prove 'macro-evolution' i.e. that all species are related. The problem with macro-evolution is that it is just a theory – there is no evidence whatsoever, even though it has been well over 100 years since Darwin himself died.

Consider for example, when we ask evolutionists to explain that if life began in water only, how did the fish develop legs and lungs and how did they begin to start breathing air outside water and crawling out of the oceans?

The evolutionists say, the transition was through amphibians who could live both in water and on land. And then with a great stretch of imagination, they desperately argue that the fish kept coming to the surface of the water to try and breathe and to the shores of the oceans, until gradually, over millions of years, they developed lungs and the legs to walk out.

The greatest evidence for such lies is that to this day, **there is no fossil evidence for the evolution theory**. What we mean by this is that all the fossils that are found of skeletons thousands or even millions of years ago are of creatures known to us, such as apes or dinosaurs. But no one has ever found any fossil that is half fish and half amphibian or half amphibian and half bird, and so on. Which proves, that this is only a fancy hypothesis (unproven theory) and nothing else. The idea of micro evolution is being used to create doubt in people's minds that there is a Creator for all species.

Allāh tells us in the Qur'ān:

﴿ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّا تُؤْفَكُونَ﴾

That is Allāh, your Lord, the creator of all things, there is no god except Him. Then where do you stray?

- Surah Ghāfir, 40:62

Humans are not from Apes

One of the arguments offered by evolutionists is that human beings evolved from apes that learnt to walk on two feet instead of four legs. A lot of times drawings are shown of 'ape-like' humans around caves. Scientists who believe this theory also love to compare humans to apes and show how similar we look in our skeleton and even how we use our arms and legs, and so on.

The question asked is: if humans did not evolve from apes, why do they look so similar?

The answer to this is that it was apes actually who "devolved" from humans. Both the Bible and the Qur'ān talk of communities that were punished by Allāh because of their excessive sins and they were disfigured to look animal-like and hence ape-like. Look at the following verses of Qur'ān, for example:

﴿فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا عَنْ مَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ﴾

When they defied [the command pertaining to] what they were forbidden from, We said to them, 'Become you despised apes!'

- Surah al-A'rāf, 7:166

Another question to ask is this: if apes evolved into humans, why don't the apes today continue evolving into humans?

Rather it is Allāh who created the first human being – Nabi Adam ('a) – and gave him the honour of being His representative:

﴿إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِنْ طِينٍ. فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ﴾

When your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed I am about to create a human being out of clay. So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down in prostration before him.'

- Surah Sād, 38:71-72

Often our innermost beliefs show us that what is said by the mouth is not what people really believe. Scientists for example, are constantly concerned about human extinction due to a plague or even being hit by a meteorite from outer space. And often scientists will talk about finding another planet where humans can inhabit so that we do not become extinct.

The question is: If humans came into existence by accident and are bound to become extinct one day, why are we so concerned about trying to survive and preventing our extinction? If there is no life after death, why the concern?

It is therefore very easy to be stubborn like an atheist and say, 'I only believe in what I can see, touch, hear, taste or smell'. But for life to be meaningful and for us to have a sense of purpose and to be courageous when we face difficulties in life, we need to realize that there is a God and that physical death is not the end of life. Allāh created Nabi Adam ('a) to be His representative and we are all the descendants of Nabi Adam ('a) and Sayyida Hawwa ('a).

Allāh is also the Creator of the entire universe and all that we see around us – the sun, the moon, the stars, the oceans, the mountains, the vegetation, the animals, etc. are all created as signs of Allāh and have been made subservient to us (i.e. we have been given the ability to control them) provided we ourselves learn to surrender to Allāh and do as He wills.

﴿وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ... وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بِالْغَيْهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ... وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا... هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ. يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ... وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ... وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ... وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاحِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ... وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ . وَعَلَامَاتٍ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ. أَفَمَنْ يَخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَا يَخْلُقُ... وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

He created the cattle, in which there is warmth³ for you and [other] uses and some of them you eat.... and they bear your burdens to towns which you could not reach except by straining yourselves.... and horses, mules and donkeys, for you to ride them... It is He who sends down water from the sky: from it you get your drink and from it are [sustained] the plants wherein you pasture your herds. With it He makes the crops grow for you and olives, date palms, vines, and fruits of all kinds... He made the night and the day for you, and the sun, the moon and the stars serve you by His command.... And whatever He has created for you in the earth of diverse colours... It is He who made subservient the sea [for your benefit] that you may eat from it fresh meat, and obtain from it ornaments, which you wear - and you see the ships plowing through it - and that you may seek of His grace (i.e. earn your living), and that you may give thanks. He placed in the earth firm mountains lest it should shake with you,

³ That is, in the garments made from wool and leather.

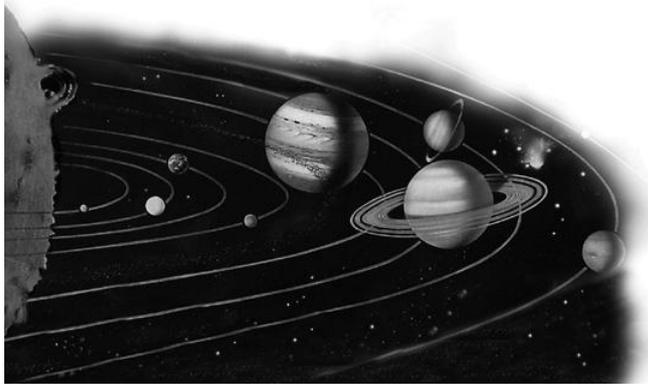
and [made] streams and ways, so that you may be guided - and the landmarks [as well], and by the stars they [i.e. people] are guided. Is He who creates like one who does not create? ... If you count Allāh's blessings, you will not be able to do so. Indeed Allāh is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.

- Surah an-Nahl, 16:5-18

It is perhaps for this reason that in Surah ar-Rahmān (chapter 55 of the Qur'ān), Allāh keeps mentioning the wonders of His creation and then repeatedly asks, 'then which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?' [see Surah ar-Rahmān]

Intelligent Design and One Architect

The more we study how the universe functions and how different creatures live their lives and how even our own body and mind works, the more we see perfection in the design of all creation.



We can also see that the manner of design in all things is very similar, which means the Architect, Artist or Author is one and the same. For example, the way an atom works (electrons rotating around the centre of the atom) is exactly the same as how the solar system works

and how the rest of the universe works!

Lesson 3

Tawhīd vs. Atheism (cont'd)

Humans During Ease vs. Trials

When humans lead materialistic lives and have all their physical needs met, they feel very secure and happy with themselves as if they will never die and they are in control of their lives. This false sense of security and control leads them to sin and to doubt in God or to associate others with Him:

﴿كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنَّاظِرٌ
أَلَمْ يَرَأْهُ اسْتَجْنَىٰ﴾

Indeed man becomes rebellious when he considers himself without need.

- Surah al-Alaq, 96:6-7

But the same human being, when he is in trouble and his false sense of security and control is shattered, all his illusions of being independent or doubting in God go away and he begins to pray earnestly and desperately to God to save him. The Qur'ān gives several of such examples. For example:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَرَينَ بِهِمْ بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ
وَفَرَحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ
بِهِمْ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنِ أَنْجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ فَلَمَّا
أَنْجَاهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ
مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

It is He who carries you across land and sea. When you are in the ships, and they sail with them with a pleasant breeze, rejoicing in it, there comes upon them a storm wind and waves surrounded them from every side, and they think that they are doomed, they pray to Allāh putting exclusive faith in Him, 'If You save us from this, we will surely be among the grateful.' But when He saves them, behold, they commit rebellion on the earth unjustly! O mankind! Your rebellion is only to your own harm. [These are] the temporary enjoyments of the life of this world; then to Us will be your return, when We will inform you concerning what you used to do.

- Surah Yunus, 10:22-23

﴿إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا. إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا. وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا﴾

Indeed man has been created restless: when a misfortune befalls him he is filled with self-pity and when good comes his way, he becomes selfish [to others].

- Surah al-Ma'ārij, 70:19-21

This shows that when we stop the constant chatter of the mind and we put aside all our so-called 'scientific theories', deep down we all know that the existence of a Creator and Sustainer is a self-evident truth i.e. a truth that requires no proof.

When Instinct in Allāh is Strongest

Even if a person suppresses or ignores the 'voice' inside and refuses to have faith in Allāh, there are two occasions when such a person will have faith in Allāh because the mind's thoughts are suspended and the God-given instinct to believe in Him is very strong:

1. In Difficulties: We have just discussed this but in summary, every human being will face hardship and suffering on various occasions in life. It may be the loss of a loved one or the loss of something material like wealth or their home or business or they may fall severely ill or get injured. The doctor may tell them they are dying of an illness that has no cure or they may even face sudden danger and think they may not live through it. At all such occasions, a person feels desperate and calls out to Allāh. He may 'promise' Allāh that if he survives he will never deny Him again or disobey Him but as soon as he thinks he is 'safe', he goes back to his old thinking. Even those who deny Allāh because He didn't 'help' them, they first hope in Allāh's help and then out of anger or pride deny Him. For those who are humble, they realize their constant need for Allāh and their faith in Allāh increases during misfortunes. Suffering is therefore a blessing at times. If human beings never experienced hardship then most of them would probably turn away from Allāh.
2. At the Time of Death: Even if a person denies God all his or her life, at the time of death he or she will realize with shock and extreme regret that in fact they were wrong and that God does exist and there is life after death. Now they will have to account for all the things they did in life. In other words, at the time of death, a person 'wakes up' to the truth but it is of course too late to repent when one is dying.

Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) at the time of Nabi Musa ('a) realized he was not God and tried to repent when he was about to drown but it was of no use to him:

﴿وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ بَغْيًا وَعَدُوًّا حَتَّى إِذَا
أَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ. أَلَا آنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ﴾

We carried the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his troops pursued them out of defiance and aggression. When overtaken by drowning, he called out, 'I believe that there is no god except Him in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am one of those who submit [to Him]!' [He was told,] 'What! Now? When you have been disobedient all the while before and were among the mischief-makers?!

- Surah Yunus, 10:90-91

The Qur'ān and hadith therefore encourage us to ponder about death and how it will feel when we are about to die. We are also encouraged to be with people who are dying and to attend funerals and cemeteries. These are all opportunities for us to wake up and let our God-given instinct (*fitra*) guide us. For example, the Qur'ān tells us:

﴿فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلُقُومَ. وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ. وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا
تُبْصِرُونَ. فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ. تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

So when it (i.e. the soul) reaches the throat [of the dying person], and at that moment you are looking on [at his bedside]- and We are nearer to him (i.e. the dying person) than you are, though you do not see- then why do you not send it [i.e. the soul] back [into the body], if you are not bound, should you be truthful?

- Surah al-Wāqi'ah, 56:83-87

Why is It Important to Know Whether God Exists or Not?

There are various reasons:

The Search for Truth: All humans have a natural curiosity to know how they came to be. As humans grow in knowledge and experience, they see a purpose in everything including what they create themselves. Questions like 'Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of life? Why live if there is no purpose to life?' and so on cannot be suppressed nor do they go away by being ignored.

To Thank the Benefactor: Good etiquette demands that we show gratitude to those who favour us. Consider a person who is a guest at someone's home. When he arrives, he finds arrangements have been made for all his needs. He has a room ready to rest in, food on the table, someone to wash, dry and iron his clothes, someone to guide him and take him around, and so on. Would he not want to thank his host? Even if the host was not in town and the servants were looking after him, it

would be ill mannered not to call the host or contact him by any means possible to thank him. From the time we were in the wombs of our mothers and throughout our lives, we enjoy innumerable blessings. From the wonderful body to a beautiful earth, trees, fruits, flowers, animals and countless blessings all working for our use and benefit. Surely we need to ask, 'Is there Someone who is providing these blessings to me?' It would be most ungracious if there was a Sustainer and Provider and we did not bother to find out who He is and thank Him.

Outlook to Life: How we live our lives is tremendously affected by whether we believe in a God or not. A person who does not believe in God will base his life around material and worldly benefits only. He has no reason to do good deeds just for the sake of it or even to tolerate any pain or suffering because if he does not believe in God then he also does not believe in life after death or a Hereafter. The outlook of such a person would be completely different from one who believes in God and consequently believes in the Last Day. We therefore need to find out if God exists because it will determine our outlook to life.

Avoid Possible Harm: Whenever we are warned of a possible harm, we immediately take heed and find out if the danger is possible. For example, if health experts warn that a disease might spread and many will die, people immediately consider vaccinations and try and find out ways to protect themselves. Even if there is a scare that computers will be affected by a virus, anyone with a computer will ensure his or her antivirus software is updated and that he or she is protected from its harms. Many prophets and messengers arose amongst people in different regions of the earth, speaking different languages, in different eras and they all warned people of punishment after death for those who deny God. It is therefore sensible that we must take these warnings seriously and find out more about them. We must at least not risk eternal punishment until we have studied the possibility that God does indeed exist and that these warnings are to be taken seriously. It would be foolish to ignore the warnings and take a chance that may cause severe harm to us.

There are two ways to find out if God exists: an outer way and an inner way. The outer way is through observing nature and what surrounds us and by exploring all the signs that Allāh has placed for humans to discover. The inner way is from within a human being himself, through our natural instinct and intellect, such as reflecting deeply on how the human body functions and pondering over the verses of the Qur'ān and the ahādith of Rasūlullāh (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).

Allāh (s.w.t.) hints at these two ways in the Qur'ān:

﴿سُرِّيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ...﴾

*Soon We shall show them Our signs **in the horizons and in their own souls** until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real...*

- Surah al-Fussilat, 41:53

And Allāh (s.w.t.) also praises those who reflect on the outer signs of Allāh and then reflect on their inwardly and pray humbly to their Lord:

﴿الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ﴾

Those who remember Allāh standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth [and say], 'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Immaculate are You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.

- Surah Aal-i Imrān, 3:191

Homework Suggestion:

Read what Imām Ali ('a) says about the Peacock (Nahj al-Balāgha, sermon 163) and the Bat (Nahj al-Balāgha, sermon 153). Alternatively, have you been to an animal zoo, marine park or aviary? Write a short essay on any one creature you were most impressed by (how it lives and the wonderful things you have discovered about it on the internet, etc.).

Lesson 4

Shi'ah Understanding of Adālah

In Islam, the primary Usul ad-Din are Tawhid, Nubuwwah and Ma'ād (Qiyāmah). The followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) also teach 'Adālah and Imāmah as parts of Usul ad-Din even though 'Adālah is actually a part of Tawhid and Imāmah branches from Nubuwwah. The reason for distinguishing these two additional parts is because the rest of the Muslims have a very different understanding of 'Adālah and Imāmah from the teachings of the Household (Ahl al-Bayt) of Rasulullāh (s).

We have already discussed the necessity of Imāmah in Book 6 and studied proofs of Imāmah in Qur'ān and Hadith in Book 8. In this lesson we wish to study 'Adālah and see why the Shi'ah have a unique understanding of the matter from the rest of the Muslims.

The Meaning of 'Adālah

'Adālah in Usul ad-Din refers to 'the Justice of Allāh'. Some people incorrectly say, 'the Sunni do not believe in the Justice of Allāh but the Shi'ah do'. This is of course not exactly true because no one will ever believe that God can be unjust. The actual difference is as follows:

The Shi'ah believe that Allāh is just and fair in the same sense that humans generally understand justice and fairness vs. injustice and unfairness. So for example, if Allāh (s.w.t.) has promised to deal with everyone with justice on the Day of Judgement then we can be sure that He will act with fairness to all just like we may consider someone to be fair to others in this world.

The Sunni Muslims on the other hand have a different understanding of what it means for Allāh to be just. A long time back, the Sunnis believed that Allāh is just in the sense that He *must* reward the good and punish the evil and He cannot do otherwise. Those who go to Hell will never be forgiven and no one can intercede (do shafā'ah) for them either. This was called the Mu'tazilite view.

Then around the time of the Caliph Mutawakkil, the Sunni view on 'adālah changed to the complete opposite. And this new view is called the Ash'arite view and is what is believed by the majority of the Sunni Muslims today. In the Ash'arite view, Allāh is not bound by any rules of justice because He is the Creator and Owner of everything. The Sunni scholars therefore say that the rules of justice apply to human beings only but for Allāh, whatever He does is just even if it is considered unjust by human beings.

The Sunni Ash'arites also say that people must obey Allāh without questioning and they must follow the rules of justice amongst themselves as He commands but these

very same rules of justice do not apply to Allāh. They go as far as saying that if Allāh throws all the good into Hellfire on the Day of Judgement and He admits all the evil into Paradise, then that would still be just and fair. The reason they believe this is because they say if you believe Allāh *has to* reward the good and *has to* punish the evil (which was the Mu'tazilite view) then you are limiting Allāh's power to do as He pleases.

The Shi'ah Muslims, based on the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have disagreed with this view by saying, there is a vast difference between what Allāh *can* do and what Allāh *will* do. It is true that Allāh has the power and freedom to do as He pleases, but it does not mean He will act in a manner that humans consider unfair just because He can do it. So neither the Mu'tazilites are correct (in saying Allāh *has to* reward the good and *has to* punish the evil) nor the Ash'arites are correct (in saying whatever Allāh does is justice even if humans think it is unfair).

If Allāh's promise cannot be relied upon, then why would anyone do good or keep away from sin? People obey Allāh mostly because they are hopeful of His promise to forgive them and to admit them to Paradise. And Allāh Himself says in the Qur'an:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ حَقًّا وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا﴾

But those who have faith and do righteous deeds, We will admit them into gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them forever—a true promise of Allāh, and who is truer in speech than Allāh?

- Surah al-Nisā, 4:122

﴿وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

A promise of Allāh: Allāh does not break His promise, but most people do not know.

- Surah al-Rūm, 30:6

So 'adālah is to believe that if Allāh has promised that He will act justly with everyone, then it will be according to what humans accept as justice so that no one will feel they were treated unfairly. It is for this reason that Allāh says He will have an accounting and weighing of deeds on the Day of Judgement and He will judge between people. Allāh already knows the outcome of who deserves Paradise and who should go to Hellfire but He will hold the accounting and Day of Judgment because that is how humans deal with justice and He does not want anyone to think that Allāh has been unfair to him or her.

﴿يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ فَمَنْ أُوْتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَأُوْتِكَ يَتْرَعُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا﴾

The day We shall call every group of people with their leader (Imām), then whoever is given his book in his right hand—they will read it, and they will not be wronged so much as a single date-thread.

- Surah al-Isrā, 17:71

﴿وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَا لِ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا﴾

The Book will be set up. Then you will see the guilty afraid of what is in it. They will say, 'Woe to us! What a book is this! It omits nothing, big or small, without recording it.' They will find present whatever they had done, and your Lord does not wrong anyone.

- Surah al-Kahf, 18:49

'Adālah in this World

So far we have discussed the justice of Allāh in the Hereafter. But there are other issues related to this world as well that are concerned with 'adālah.

Consider that fact that some people are born rich while others are born poor. Some are born handicapped while others are born healthy. Some die young and some live a long life. Some are always happy while others are always suffering. If Allāh is kind and just, how do we explain this?

In the past, when some religions could not explain this, they created the idea of 'two gods' - a god of good and a god of evil. When people experienced a suffering, they thought they had displeased the 'god of wrath' or evil and they would offer sacrifices to appease this god.

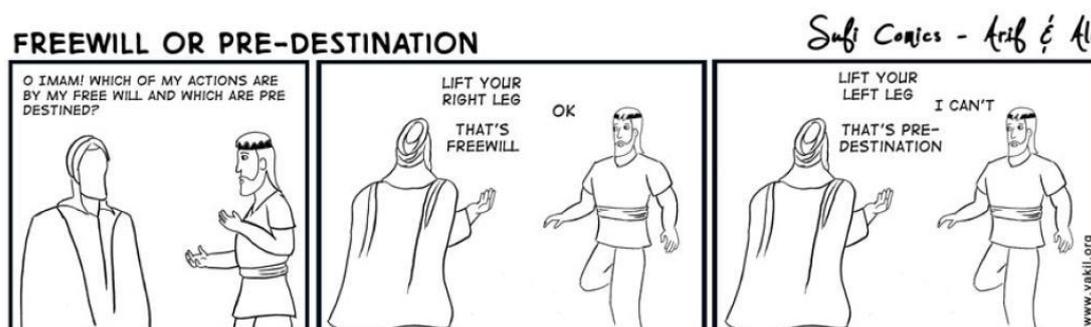
When the Sunni Muslims use to follow the Mu'tazilite view, they used to believe that that people are completely free and Allāh does not interfere in their actions. In other words they believed that after Allāh created humans He left them in a world of cause and effect and everything that happens is because of something we do or something that someone does to us.

But now the Sunni Muslims follow the Ash'arite view and they believe the complete opposite: that people are completely bound by Allāh's decree. Everything is predestined and we are just puppets. Everything that happens to us and everything

we do – good or evil – is caused by Allāh and we have no choice but to act according to Allāh’s Will.

The Shi’ah again disagree with both groups. The Imāms from the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) taught another understanding that is called ‘al-amr baynal amrayn’ (i.e. “the matter is between the two matters”). What this means is that the real truth is between the understanding of the Mu’tazilites and the Ash’arites. Humans are neither completely free nor completely forced in their actions. There are certain matters that are predestined for us, such as how long we will live, where we are born, how much we will earn and eat in life, where we will die and so on. But in matter of actions, we have a choice. For example, when we are tempted to sin, we have a free choice to act or to stop out of fear of Allāh.

Someone asked Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) to explain the concept of *al-amr baynal amrayn* and how we can be partly free but partly bound by Allāh at the same time. The Imām (‘a) told the man to stand on one foot and then told him to raise the other foot. The man could not and Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) told him he could raise one foot because he had been given freewill to do so but he could not raise the other without falling because he was bound by the laws of Allāh (such as gravity).



The Concept of *al-Amr Baynal Amrayn*

If Allāh had wished He could have bound us completely so that we could not raise even one leg; and if He wished, He could have given us the freewill to raise both feet and float in the air!

There are many, many reasons why people may be born with a disadvantage or they may suffer in this world without any apparent reason. It could be a test from Allāh, for example. We have already discussed why evil exists in the world and why people suffer, in Book 6 (Aqāid Lesson 2).

Imām Musa al-Kādhim (‘a) and Abu Hanifa

One day, Abu Hanifa – the founder of the Sunni Hanafi School (madhhab) – came to see Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a). While he was waiting outside to be admitted, he saw Imām Musa al-Kādhim (‘a) outdoors. Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) was only 5 years old.

Abu Hanifa, just to pass some time, asked the young boy, 'Tell me, are we responsible for what we do or does Allāh makes us do everything?'

The young Imām replied Abu Hanifa:

There are only three possibilities. Either Allāh forces us to act. Or we and Allāh are both responsible for our actions. Or we are free to act ourselves.

If we say Allāh forces us to do everything, then it does not make sense why Allāh should judge us on the Day of Judgement for actions that He had committed Himself.

And if we say Allāh and humans are partners in committing sins then it is not fair that the stronger partner should punish the weaker partner on the Day of Judgement.

So the only possibility is that we are free to act and we are responsible for our actions. That is why Allāh can judge us and reward or punish us!

This reply of Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) is very logical and powerful. It is enough to convince anyone that there is no predestination in our actions and Allāh does not force us to act on our good or evil deeds.

Bahlul and Abu Hanifa

Bahlul was a famous companion of Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) and Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a). To save himself from the cruelties of the Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashid, he used to pretend to be a madman but his actions were full of wisdom.

One day, Bahlul heard Abu Hanifa (the Sunni Imām) saying to his students that Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) [who was also Abu Hanifa's teacher] was wrong to say that humans are free in their actions. Abu Hanifa believed that Allāh does everything, good or evil.

Bahlul therefore threw a brick at Abu Hanifa and injured him. When Abu Hanifa complained to the Muslim Judge, Bahlul defended himself by saying, 'according to the belief of Abu Hanifa, it was Allāh who made me do it. So he should complain against Allāh, and not me because Allāh hit him!'

What Bahlul taught us is that if we believe in predestination of all actions then it does not make sense to have a court of law or any police officers. Every murderer, thief and criminal will say 'Allāh predestined for me to act this way.' And every sinner will use this as an excuse on the Day of Judgement to claim innocence.



Some people even argue that since Allāh knows what is going to happen tomorrow and what I am going to do next, therefore I don't have a choice and I have to act according to what He knows.

But is this true? Does knowledge mean the one who knows is causing the action? Scientists know in advance when the next sun or moon eclipse will occur. Does it mean they are causing it? A teacher knows who will definitely pass the exam and who will definitely fail. Is the teacher forcing the students to pass or fail? A doctor knows if a patient will live or die. Is the doctor giving life or death to the patient?

Therefore Allāh’s knowledge of the future is because He is not bound by time. He sees the future just as He sees the present or the past. There is no past, present and future for Allāh. But it doesn’t mean His knowledge of what will happen is forcing us to act in a particular manner.

Why Doesn’t Allāh Give Everyone Equally

Allāh’s justice (‘adālah) does not mean giving everyone equally. Rather Allāh’s justice means to give everyone what is best for them and what they ‘need’, not what they ‘desire’. The Shi’ah ‘ulama therefore define ‘adālah as “placing everything where it rightly belongs.”

An example would be a mother who has several children, some very young and some much older and of different genders. If she treats them all exactly the same then she is actually being unfair to them. The children deserve to be treated differently depending on their age and gender even if they all belong to the same mother. Similarly, ‘adālah is that Allāh should treat people differently depending on their circumstances and abilities and what is best for them to succeed in the next world (that is permanent) rather than just giving them whatever they want for their temporary needs in this world.

We have already looked at this difference between “equality vs. equity” in Book 4 and why Allāh does not give everyone the same. You may want to review the anecdotes in that Book. We also studied in Book 6 about the wisdom behind suffering and how every action of Allāh is based on wisdom.

Conclusion

We can therefore summarize our belief in ‘adālah as part of our Usul ad-Din as follows:

1. Allāh is just to all His creation.
2. Allāh never does anything evil or wrong. It is not proper to say that because He is the Owner He does as He pleases even if humans feel it is unjust. Humans have been programmed by Allāh to believe all His Beautiful Names (Asmā al-Husna) are good and their opposite is evil. So if Allāh is al-‘Aadil (The Just), and humans regard justice as good, and Allāh takes pride in being just, then we must believe He will never do to His creation what they would consider as unjust.
3. Allāh never fails to do anything that is necessary for justice to be upheld.
4. There is no injustice in any decision of Allāh.
5. When Allāh tests us or commands us to do something, it is never beyond our ability and what we can do.

6. Allāh will always reward those who obey Him and do good even though He is not forced to do so (because He has promised and He never breaks His promise).
7. It is for Allāh to decide if He wishes to punish the wrong or not.
8. If Allāh punishes a person, the punishment is never beyond what the person deserves.
9. Allāh never forces a person to sin or commit injustice and thereafter punish him or her for it.

Imām Ali ('a) has said, '**Tawhid** means that you should never bring Allāh to your imagination (*an lā tatawahhamu*) and '**adālah** means you should never accuse Allāh of anything (*an lā tattahimu*).'

In other words, to believe in the 'adālah of Allāh means never to accuse Allāh of being unfair or of favouritism even in thoughts or feelings.

Lesson 5

Ashāb al-A'rāf

Al-A'rāf literally means "the Heights" or "the Elevations". It refers to a mountain-like place or an elevated bridge that is between al-Jannah (Paradise) and an-Nār (Hellfire) and separates them. This elevated place is mentioned in the seventh surah of the Qur'ān. The surah is in fact named Surah al-A'rāf because of the verses in it that describe it. The verses are as follows:

﴿... وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيمَاهُمْ وَنَادَوْا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُونَ﴾

... And on the Elevations will be certain men who recognize each of them by their mark. They will call out to the inhabitants of paradise, 'Peace be to you!' They (i.e. the People of Paradise) will not have entered it, though they would be eager to do so.
- Surah al-A'rāf, 7:46

﴿وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَاءَ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾
And when their (i.e. the People of Paradise's) look is turned toward the inmates of the Fire, they will say, 'Our Lord, do not put us among the wrongdoing lot!'
- Surah al-A'rāf, 7:47

﴿وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَعْرِفُونَهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ قَالُوا مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ﴾
And the People of the Elevations (Ashāb al-A'rāf) will call out to certain (evil) men whom they recognize by their marks, 'Your amassing (of wealth, etc.) did not help you, nor what you used to be proud of.
- Surah al-A'rāf, 7:48

﴿أَهْوَلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ إِذْ خُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ﴾
Are these (i.e. the people about to enter Paradise) the ones about whom you swore that Allāh will never cover them with mercy?' 'Enter paradise! (they will say to the people of Paradise) You shall have no fear, nor shall you grieve.'
- Surah al-A'rāf, 7:49

In this lesson we wish to study more concerning the Ashāb al-A'rāf (the People of the Elevations) and understand who are these People on the Elevations that the Qur'ān is talking of.

The Sunni and Shi'ah Mufasirrun (commentators or exegetes) of the Qur'ān have given various opinions on who the Ashāb al-A'rāf will be and why this place exists. These opinions include:

- That the Ashāb al-A'rāf are those who will neither deserve Paradise nor Hellfire so they will live in this in-between place.
- That the Ashāb al-A'rāf are those whose actions cannot be judged as good or bad. These are, for example, those who died in infancy or were mentally-handicapped or those who died without every knowing about Islam.
- That the Ashāb al-A'rāf are special people with authority from Allāh (s.w.t.) and they are able to intercede (i.e. do shafā'ah) for others.

Who are the Ashāb al-A'rāf (the People of the Elevations)?

According to the ahādith of the Aimmah ('a), the Ashāb al-A'rāf are actually the Anbiyā (Prophets) ('a) and their Awsiyā (Successors) and in particular Rasulullāh (s) and the Imāms from his the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) who will intercede (i.e. do shafā'ah) for everyone of the good. And it is they who will be standing on the elevation (A'rāf).

The reason why some people assume the Ashāb al-A'rāf are those about whom a decision has not been made and they are neither going to Paradise nor to Hellfire is because they assume the words *"They will not have entered it, though they would be eager to do so"* (verse 46) is concerning the Ashāb al-A'rāf. Actually these words are said by the People of Paradise. Similarly, the people who have misunderstood who the Ashāb al-A'rāf are, also assume that the words *"Our Lord, do not put us among the wrongdoing lot!"* (verse 47) is said by the Ashāb al-A'rāf. But in fact these words are all concerning the People of Paradise just before they are admitted into Paradise.

So the true fact is that after all judgement has been passed and the People of Paradise and the People of Hellfire have been separated, they will be waiting to enter their final abode. Between them will be an Elevation (mountain or bridge) on which the Ashāb al-A'rāf will be standing. The People of Paradise will be waiting at the Gates of Paradise and the Ashāb al-A'rāf will congratulate them saying, *'Peace be to you!'* (verse 46) and when the Gates of Paradise open for them, the Ashāb al-A'rāf will say to them, *'Enter paradise! You shall have no fear, nor shall you grieve.'* (verse 49).

The People of Paradise, while *"they will not have entered it, though they would be eager to do so"* (verse 46) will be looking at the people of Hellfire with some anxiety and fear. *"And when their look is turned towards the inmates of the Fire, they will say, 'O Lord, do not put us among the wrongdoing lot!'"* (verse 47).

Similarly, the Ashāb al-A'rāf will scold the people of Hellfire. They will call out to them and say, “*your amassing did not help you...*” (verse 48) and they will mock them and say, “*are these (the people of Paradise) the ones about whom you swore that Allāh will never cover them with mercy?*” (verse 49).

Proof that Ashāb al-A'rāf are the Aimmah ('a)

If we look at the four āyāt of Qur'ān on al-A'rāf closely, we can see that the Ashāb al-A'rāf have a lot of authority on the Day of Judgement. They are able to recognize everyone (good or evil) by their mark (verses 46 and 48) and they can also call out to the People of Paradise and to the People of Hellfire and speak to them as they please. Therefore we know immediately that the Ashāb al-A'rāf are not ordinary beings.

It is also interesting to know that the word A'rāf comes from the word “*arafa*”, which means “*to recognize*” and therefore suggest a place of recognition or a people who have deep recognition of others. It is not a ‘holding’ place for people who will go neither to Paradise or Hellfire.

The following are some ahādith concerning the Ashāb al-A'rāf.

It is reported from Salmān al-Fārisi who said, ‘I swear by Allāh that I heard Rasulullāh (s) saying to (Imām) Ali ('a), ‘you and your successors are the (Ashāb of) A'rāf. Allāh is not recognized except by way of recognizing you. None will enter Paradise unless they recognize you and you recognize them and none will enter Hellfire except those who deny you and whom you deny.’⁴

Asbagh b. Nubāta reports that a man once asked Amir al-Muminin Ali b. Abi Tālib ('a) about verse 46 of surah al-A'rāf and what it meant. Imām Ali ('a) said, ‘...we are the (Ashāb of) A'rāf who will stand on the Day of Judgement between Paradise and Hellfire. So none will enter Paradise except one whom we recognize and who recognizes us (i.e. our rights) and none will enter Hellfire except one who denies us and we deny him....’⁵

A man asked Imām Abu Ja'far, Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) about verse 46 of surah al-A'rāf and the words “*..on the Elevations will be certain men...*” in it. Imām al-Bāqir ('a) replied, the “men” are the Imāms from Aali Muhammad (s). And the man then asked, ‘what about the “Elevations”?’ And the Imām ('a) said, ‘It is a bridge between Paradise and Hellfire. So whoever amongst the sinful believers that the Imāms from us intercedes for, will be saved. And whoever is not interceded for will be doomed.’⁶

⁴ *Basāir ad-Darajāt*, v. 10, c. 16, p. 497, hadith 7. *Aalam mā ba'd al-mawt*, p. 225.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

Lesson 6

Al-Jannah & an-Nār

In Book 7 (Aqāid), we learnt all about the events that will take place on the Day of Resurrection (*yaum al-qiyāmah*) until the time when people will be sent to their final homes i.e. to Paradise (al-Jannah) or Hellfire (an-Nār).

In this lesson and the next we will learn about these final homes or abodes; what their names are in the Qur'ān and the kinds of punishments in Hellfire and rewards in Paradise that are recorded in the Qur'ān and hadith.

We will first begin with the description of Hellfire. Keep in mind that the next World is very different from this world and it is impossible for us to understand what quite happens in the next world with our limited five senses and experiences in this world. Trying to understand the punishments or pleasures of the Hereafter is like a baby in the womb of its mother trying to understand this world before it comes to see for itself and live in it! But Allāh nonetheless tries to give us an idea with many examples in the Qur'ān.

The Forms of Punishment in Hellfire

The Fire of Hell is a place of disgrace and punishment. It is reserved for people who are absolutely evil and there is no goodness in them, like for example those who murdered the prophets of Allāh and their descendants and those who oppressed others without any compassion or kindness in their hearts. The people of Hellfire will not be allowed to die or to escape from the Fire even though they will try. Neither will they get any rest nor any relief from the thirst, hunger and heat in Hell. We shall learn more about this through verses of the Qur'ān and ahādith.

The Food and Drinks

The people of Hellfire will always be hungry and thirsty. When they wish to quench their thirst, they will only have boiling water to drink that will burn them and make them even thirstier or they will be made to drink pus.

As for food, they will eat from a tree called Zaqqum, whose fruits (called dari'i) are thorny and resemble the head of Shaytān and are extremely bitter and putrid. These are mentioned in the many āyāt of the Qur'ān such as:

﴿إِنَّ شَجْرَةَ الزُّقُومِ طَعَامُ الْأَثِيمِ كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِي فِي الْبُطُونِ كَغَلِي الْحَمِيمِ. خُدُوهُ فَاعْتَلُوهُ إِلَى سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ. ثُمَّ صَبُّوا فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيمِ. ذُوقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ. إِنَّ هَذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَمْتَرُونَ﴾

Indeed the tree of Zaqqum will be the food of the sinful. Like molten copper it will boil in the bellies, boiling like boiling water. 'Seize him and drag him to the middle of hell, then pour over his head the punishment of boiling water.' 'Taste! Indeed you are the [self-styled] mighty and noble! This is indeed what you used to doubt!'

- Surah ad-Dukhān, 44:43-50

﴿أَذَلِكْ خَيْرٌ نَزْلًا أَمْ شَجْرَةُ الزُّقُومِ. إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِلظَّالِمِينَ. إِنَّهَا شَجْرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ. فَإِنَّهُمْ لَأَكَلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَا لَيْتُوا مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ. ثُمَّ إِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِنْ حَمِيمٍ. ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ﴾

Is this (Paradise) a better hospitality, or the Zaqqum tree? Indeed We have made it a punishment for the wrongdoers. Indeed it is a tree that emerges from the depths of hell. Its produce is as if they were devils' heads. Indeed they will eat from it and devour with it their bellies. Indeed, on top of that they will take a solution of burning water. Then indeed their retreat will be toward hell.

- Surah as-Saffāt, 37:62-68

﴿... وَإِنَّ لِلطَّاغِينَ لَشَرَّ مَأْبٍ. جَهَنَّمَ يَصَلُّونَهَا فَيَنْسَوْنَ الْمِهَادُ. هَذَا فَلْيَذُوقُوهُ حَمِيمٌ وَغَسَّاقٌ﴾

*...and as for the rebellious there will surely be a bad destination - hell, which they shall enter, an evil resting place. This; let them taste it: **burning water and pus...***

- Surah Sād, 38:55-57

﴿ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ أَيُّهَا الضَّالُّونَ الْمُكَذِّبُونَ. لَأَكَلُونَ مِنْ شَجَرٍ مِنْ زُقُومٍ فَمَا لَيْتُوا مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ فَشَارِبُونَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيمِ. فَشَارِبُونَ شُرْبَ الْهَيْمِ﴾

*Then indeed, you, astray deniers, will surely eat from the Zaqqum tree and stuff your bellies with it, and drink boiling water on top of it, **drinking like thirsty camels.***

- Surah al-Wāqī'ah, 56:51-55

The Company of Devils, Darkness and Smoke

The people of Hellfire will live in total darkness where they will experience extreme heat and fire and in other places extreme cold that burns. Their faces will be darkened and they will always look wretched. Besides that, they are chained to the devil (shaytān) whom they used to obey in this world. Even though they will hate the sight of the devils and it will constantly haunt them, they will not be able to separate themselves from the devils.

﴿الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِالْكِتَابِ وَبِمَا أَرْسَلْنَا بِهِ رُسُلَنَا فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ. إِذِ الْأَغْلَالُ فِي
أَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَالسَّلَاسِلُ يُسْحَبُونَ. فِي الْحَمِيمِ ثُمَّ فِي النَّارِ يُسْجَرُونَ﴾

Those who deny the Book and what we have sent with Our messengers. Soon they will know when, [with] iron collars around their necks and chains, they are dragged into burning waters and then set aflame in the Fire.

- Surah al-Ghāfir, 40:70-76

﴿وَأَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ فِي سَمُومٍ وَحَمِيمٍ وَظِلٍّ مِنْ يَحْمُومٍ
لَا بَارِدٍ وَلَا كَرِيمٍ . إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ. وَكَانُوا يُصِرُّونَ عَلَى الْحِنثِ
الْعَظِيمِ. وَكَانُوا يَقُولُونَ أَإِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ. أَوْ آبَاؤُنَا
الْأَوَّلُونَ﴾

And the People of the Left Hand - what are the People of the Left Hand? Amid infernal heat and boiling water and the shadow of a dense black smoke, neither cool nor beneficial. Indeed they had been well-off before this, and they used to persist in the great sin (i.e. shirk). And they used to say, 'What! When we are dead and become dust and bones, shall we be resurrected? And our forefathers too?'

- Surah al-Wāqī'ah, 56:41-48

﴿خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ. ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ. ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ﴾

The angels will be told: 'Seize him, and fetter him! Then put him into hell. Then, in a chain whose length is seventy cubits, bind him.

- Surah al-Hāqqah, 69:30-32

The Clothes of the People of Hellfire

As clothes, the people of Hellfire will wear hot tar on their bodies that is called "sarābil al-qatirān". Qatirān can mean 'pitch' as in any dark, sticky and oil substance like coal tar or it can also mean 'molten copper'.

﴿وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ سُرَابِلُهُمْ مِنْ قَطِرَانٍ وَتَغْشَى
وُجُوهُهُمُ النَّارُ﴾

*On that day you will see the guilty bound together in chains, **their garments made of pitch (qatirān), and the Fire covering their faces.***

- Surah Ibrāhim, 14:49-50

In a du'a we recite daily in the month of Ramadān, we ask Allāh to protect us from this:

وَإِذَا جَمَعْتَ الْأُولِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَارْحَمْنَا ، وَبِرَاءةٍ مِنْ النَّارِ فَارْحَمْنَا ،
وَفِي جَهَنَّمَ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنَا ، وَفِي عَذَابِكَ وَهَوَانِكَ فَلَا تَبْتَلْنَا ، وَمِنْ الرُّقُومِ وَالضَّرِيعِ فَلَا
تُطْعِمْنَا ، وَمَعَ الشَّيَاطِينِ فَلَا تَجْمَعْنَا ، وَفِي النَّارِ عَلَيَّ وَجُوهِنَا فَلَا تَكُبَّنَا ، وَمِنْ ثِيَابِ
النَّارِ وَسُرَابِيلِ الْقَطِرَانِ فَلَا تُلْبِسْنَا

And when You gather all the people of the earlier and the later periods on the Day of Judgement, then have mercy on us. Write for us a protection from the Fire. Do not confine us to Hell and do not try us with Your punishment and disgrace.

Feed us not from the bitter tree (of Zaqqum) nor the thorny fruit (Dari'i). Do not place us with the devils, nor throw us face downwards in Hell. And do not clothe us with the clothes of flames and tar (qatirān) of Hell.

Other Punishments of Hellfire

From ahādith we have a lot of graphic descriptions of Hellfire that are extremely frightening. People who do evil in this world and do not repent will see their evil deeds come alive to them on the Day of Judgement as beasts and harmful creatures that will constantly torment them. Their deeds may come in the form of wild dogs, serpents, scorpions, and so forth.

It is also important to keep in mind that Paradise and Hellfire are living creatures. The Fire of Hell, for example, when it grabs hold of a person, it knows and is aware of this and it consciously burns the person. That is why we are told in hadith that the fire of this world is seventy times cooler than Hellfire. Similarly, Paradise also speaks and is aware of those living in it.

Allāh has also created angels in Hellfire who are not affected by the heat but who constantly punish the evil. These angels are called Zabāniya. Every time the inmates of Hell try to crawl out of the pits of Hellfire or escape, the angels will hit them with maces of fire and send them back. These angels are also mentioned in the Qur'ān:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ﴾

O you who have faith! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [assigned] angels, severe and mighty, who do not disobey whatever Allāh has commanded them, and carry out what they are commanded.

- Surah at-Tahrim, 66:6

The people of Hellfire will be screaming and shouting constantly. They will have no friends or company in Hellfire and even when they see those whom they were friends with in this world, they will be cursing each other and blaming each other for misleading and tempting them.

It is reported from Rasullāh (s) that he said, 'if there were a hundred thousand people in this masjid or even more and a person from Hellfire took a breathe and that breathe was exposed here, it would annihilate the masjid and everyone in it!'⁷

Allāh says in the Qur'ān that the people of Paradise will look down into Hellfire and ask the people of Hellfire, 'what made you end up in Hell?' Let us read and understand their answers so that we make sure we are not one of them inshā Allāh:

﴿إِلَّا أَصْحَابَ الْيَمِينِ فِي جَنَّاتٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ عَنِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ وَلَمْ نَكُ نُطْعِمِ الْمَسْكِينِ وَكُنَّا نَحُوضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ وَكُنَّا نُكَذِّبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ حَتَّى أَتَانَا الْيَقِينُ﴾

...except the People of the Right Hand. [They will be] in gardens, asking about the guilty: 'What brought you into Hell (Saqar)?' They will answer, 'We were not among those who prayed. Nor did we feed the poor. We used to gossip along with the gossipers, and we used to deny the Day of Judgement, until death came to us.'

- Surah al-Mudaththir, 74:39-47

Gates of Hellfire

Hellfire has seven worlds for different classes of people and each place has its own Gate. The Qur'ān confirms this:

﴿لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ لِكُلِّ بَابٍ مِنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَقْسُومٌ﴾

It has seven gates, and to each gate belongs a separate portion of them.'

- Surah al-Hijr, 15:44

⁷ Mulla Fayd Kāshāni, *Aalam ma ba'd al-Mawt*, p. 265-6

The Qur'ān also mentions different names for Hellfire and from ahādith we know that these names are the names of the Gates and areas in Hell. The ahādith also give us a brief description of each place:

1. **Jaheem:** This is a place where the evil will be made to stand on a burning stone that will make their brains boil as a cooking-pot boils. In some hadith we are also told the least punishment in Hellfire will be sandals of fire that will make the head of the person who wears it to boil.

﴿فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الطَّامَّةُ الْكُبْرَى. يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا سَعَى وَبُرَزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِمَنْ يَرَى. فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَى. وَآثَرَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا. فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى﴾

*When the Greatest Catastrophe befalls, the day when man will remember his endeavours, and hell (**Jaheem**) is brought into view for one who sees, as for him who was rebellious and preferred the life of this world, his refuge will indeed be **Jaheem**.*

- Surah an-Nāzi'āt, 79:34-39

2. **Ladhā:** This will be the place for those who turned away from Allāh and were busy amassing wealth without paying the dues of Allāh and His creatures. The fire will catch them by their hands, feet and forehead and suck them inside.

﴿كَلَّا إِنَّهَا لَظَى. نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوَى. تَدْعُوا مَنْ أَدْبَرَ وَتَوَلَّى. وَجَمَعَ فَأَوْعَى﴾

*Never! Indeed it is a blazing fire (**Ladhā**), which strips away the scalp. It invites him who has turned back [from the truth] and forsaken [it], amassing [wealth] and hoarding [it].*

- Surah al Ma'ārij, 70:15-18

3. **Saqar:** The description of Saqar is given by the Qur'ān itself (in the following verses). And we also saw its mention earlier when the People of Paradise ask the People of Hell, 'what brought you into Saqar?'

﴿سَأُصْلِحُ سَقْرًا. وَمَا أُدْرَاكَ مَا سَقْرًا. لَا تُبْقِي وَلَا تَذَرُ. لَوْاحَةٌ لِّلْبَشَرِ. عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ﴾

*Soon I shall cast him into **Saqar**. And what will make you know what is **Saqar**? It neither spares, nor leaves [anything]. It scorches the mortal [human]. There are nineteen [keepers] over it.*

- Surah al-Muddathir, 74:26-30

In a hadith from Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a), he said, 'Saqar is actually a valley within Jahannam. It gets so hot that at times it complains to Allāh about its

own heat and asks Allāh for a chance to breathe. So when it is permitted, and it breathes, it engulfs the whole of Jahannam with fire!⁸ (We seek refuge with Allāh from such a fire that is tormented by its own heat!)

4. **Hutamah:** The word ‘hutamah’ literally means, ‘that which crushes to pieces’. It will crush everyone who is flung inside it and grind him to powder, and then they will be made whole, again and again. Hutamah is also like a sealed vault where the people burning in it are sealed off from above and all sides. It is sealed and fortified with outstretched columns to prevent anyone escaping.

﴿وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ. كَلَّا لَيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ. وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ. نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُبْقَدَةُ. الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ. إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ. فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ﴾

*Woe to every scandal-monger and slanderer, who amasses wealth and counts it over. He supposes his wealth will make him immortal! No indeed! He will surely be cast into the Crusher (**Hutamah**). And what will show you what is the Crusher (**Hutamah**)? [It is] the fire of Allāh, set ablaze, which will overspread the hearts. Indeed it will close in upon them in outstretched columns.*

- Surah al-Humazah, 104:1-9

5. **Hāwiyah:** This is a dark pit of fire that has no end.

﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ. فَأُمُّهُ هَاوِيَةٌ. وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَّة. نَارُ حَامِيَةٍ﴾

*But as for him whose deeds weigh light in the scales, his home will be the Abyss (**Hāwiyah**). And what will show you what it is? It is a scorching fire!*

- Surah al-Qāri’ah, 101:8-11

6. **Sa’eer:** It means “Blazing Fire”. There are in it three hundred curtains of Fire; behind every curtain are three hundred forts of Fire; in every fort are three hundred abodes of Fire; and in every abode are three hundred types of punishments.

﴿إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلًا وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا﴾

*Indeed We have prepared for the faithless chains, iron collars, and **Sa’eer**.*

- Surah al-Insān, 76:4

⁸ Mulla Fayd Kāshāni, *Aalam ma ba’d al-Mawt*, p. 265

7. **Jahannam:** This is the most well known name for Hellfire and it is the place that is most feared because its punishments are the most severe of all seven places of Hell. Jahannam has been mentioned many times in the Qur'ān. In it are Falaq, Sa'ud and Atham. Falaq is a well inside Jahannam. When it is opened it makes the Fire blaze even more fiercely. Sa'ud is a brass mountain of fire in the centre of Jahannam and it is also mentioned in the Qur'ān (74:17). And Atham is a valley of molten brass around Sa'ud.

﴿وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا

شَهيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ تَكَادُ تَمَيِّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ...﴾

For those who defy their Lord is the punishment of hell (Jahannam), and it is an evil destination. When they are thrown in it, they hear it blaring, as it seethes, almost exploding with rage...

- Surah al-Mulk, 67:6-8

Lesson 7

Al-Jannah & an-Nār (cont'd)

The Pleasures & Rewards of Paradise

Paradise is a place of eternity and peace. In Paradise there is neither death nor old age, neither sickness nor disease. There is no handicap, sorrow, worry, need or poverty. It is a place of plenty and bliss, permanence and honour. The people of Paradise will never get bored or tired. They will have whatever they desire and even beyond their imagination, in the company of those they love, forever and ever. Life in Paradise is physical and not just spiritual.

It is Allāh's wish that most people should live in Paradise and benefit from His Mercy and Grace. Anyone who believes in Allāh and does not associate partners with Him and believes in His messengers and prophets and the Books He revealed and he or she respects, loves and follows Rasullāh (s) and his Household (Ahl al-Bayt ('a)) is assured of Allāh's forgiveness and Paradise provided they have done their best in this world to obey Allāh in all that is wājib and to keep away from what He has forbidden and made harām.

Both al-Jannah (Paradise) and an-Nār (Hellfire) have been created and exist even today. Rasullāh (s) saw them both when he went for mi'rāj and Allāh also says in the Qur'ān:

﴿كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ. ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ﴾

No indeed! Were you to know with certain knowledge, you would surely see hell.

Again, you will surely see it with the eye of certainty.

- Surah at-Takāthur, 102:5-7

Al-Jannah and an-Nār are like two opposite sides of a coin. Or to use an analogy, there are like the two opposite sides of an air conditioning unit that gives out pleasant, cool air on the inside and hot, unpleasant air on the outside. Allāh (s.w.t.) in fact describes Paradise and Hell in this manner with mercy on the inside and punishment on the outside:

﴿...فَضْرَبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ﴾

...then there will be set up between them a wall with a gate, with mercy on its interior and punishment toward its exterior.

- Surah al-Hadid, 57:13

The Gates of Paradise

The Gates of Paradise are said to be eight. Various names of Paradise are given in the Qur'ān that are quite likely the names of different worlds or levels in Paradise and besides these names, various names for the Gates through which people will enter Paradise are also mentioned in ahādith.

For example, we are told in Qur'ān and hadith that some of the Gardens of Paradise are called Jannat al-Ma'wa, Jannat al-'Adn, Jannat al-Khuld, Jannat al-Firdaws and Jannat al-Na'im. Other names of Paradise are also Dār as-Salām (the Abode of Peace) and Dār al-Muqāmah (the Abode of Permanent Stay).

In a hadith from Rasullāh (s) it is related that Jannah itself is made of bricks of gold and silver and sapphire cemented together with fragrant musk. As for its gates, there is the Gate of Mercy (Bāb ar-Rahmah) that is made of red ruby; and there is the Gate of Patience (Bāb as-Sabr) through which the patient will enter. There is also the Gate of Thanksgiving (Bāb ash-Shukr) for those who constantly thanked Allāh (s.w.t.) for His blessings, and it is made of white sapphire; it constantly cries out to Allāh, even now, with a yearning and longing, 'O Allāh! Bring me my inhabitants!'

There is also the Gate of Trials (Bāb al-Balā) that is the place from where those who suffered in this world with faith and courage will enter. It is made of yellow sapphire. Those, however, who are honoured to enter through it will be few in comparison.

Then there is the Great Gate (Bāb al-'Adham) through which all the righteous and the ascetics will enter. They will be the ones who preferred Allāh over the temporary and weak pleasures of this world. When they enter Paradise through this gate, they will be received by angels who will take them to a river of pure water and there they will board ships of rubies whose oars are made of pearls. Angels of light who are dressed in garments that are intensely green like emerald, will row the ships and sail them down the river to their homes in Paradise. Jannat al-'Adn is in the middle of Paradise. Even its pebbles and gravel are pearls.⁹

The Extent of Paradise

Paradise is limitless in this size and there are endless worlds to explore without any restrictions. In some ahādith we are told that the person with the least reward will have a place that is seventy times larger than this whole world.

Allāh mentions in the Qur'ān only about the width of Paradise without telling us its length:

⁹ Mulla Fayd Kāshāni, *Aalam ma ba'd al-Mawt*, p. 243-4

﴿وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

*And hasten towards your Lord's forgiveness and a paradise whose width is (as vast)
as the heavens and the earth.*

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:133

And Allāh also tells us that the people of Paradise of a higher rank will roam about Paradise wherever they please:

﴿وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ نَتَبَوَّأُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ
فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ﴾

*They will say, 'All praise belongs to Allāh, who has fulfilled His promise to us and
made us heirs to the earth, that we may settle in paradise wherever we may wish!'
How excellent is the reward of the workers [of righteousness]!*

- Surah az-Zumar, 39:74

The Palaces and Homes

The palaces of the faithful (mu'mineen) in Jannah are beyond imagination in beauty. To give us an idea, we are told in hadith that they are made of gold and silver and rubies and pearls with beautiful, vast gardens covered with lush trees beneath which run rivers of pure and brilliant water, milk, honey and wine that does not intoxicate.

The faithful sometimes enjoy themselves in their palaces and sometimes stroll in the gardens with their loved ones or sail in the rivers. At other times they recline on their thrones and meet with other people of Jannah and socialize with them. They are able to fly or ride or walk wherever they please in Paradise. The earth of Paradise is made of musk and its pebbles and gravel are made of pearls. Wherever one looks, there will be unimaginable beauty. Everything in Paradise has colours and beauty never imagined before, sounds never heard before and the food and drinks will have a taste never experienced before.

﴿وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَّثُورًا. وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثَمَّ
رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمَمْلَكًا كَبِيرًا. عَلَيْهِمْ ثِيَابٌ سُنْدُسٍ خُضْرٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُّوَا أَسَاوِرَ مِن
فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا. إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيِكُمْ مَشْكُورًا﴾

*They will be waited upon by immortal youths, whom, when you see them, you will
suppose them to be scattered pearls. **As you look, you will see there bliss and a
great kingdom.** Upon them will be cloaks of green silk and brocade and they will be*

adorned with bracelets of silver. Their Lord will give them to drink a pure drink. [They will be told]: 'This is indeed your reward, and your endeavour has been well-appreciated.'

- Surah al-Insān, 76:19-22

Fruits and Rivers of Drinks

Amongst the rivers of Paradise are Kawthar, Salsabil and Tasneem. The fruits may resemble those of this world except that their taste will be unique and far greater than anything that ever existed in this world. It is as if the pleasures of this world are a very poor version of the real thing that is only given to us here to help us imagine that which cannot be imagined!

﴿مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ مَاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ خَمْرٍ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ عَسَلٍ مُصَفًّى وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ...﴾

*A description of the paradise promised to the Godwary: therein are **streams of unstaling water**, and **streams of milk** unchanging in flavour, and **streams of wine** delicious to the drinkers, and **streams of purified honey**; there will be for them every kind of fruit in it, and forgiveness from their Lord.*

- Surah Muhammad, 47:15

﴿وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ﴾

And give good news to those who have faith and do righteous deeds, that for them shall be gardens with streams running in them: whenever they are provided with their fruit for nourishment, they will say, 'This is what we were provided before,' and they were (only) given something resembling it. In it there will be chaste mates for them, and they will remain in it [forever].

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:25

﴿وَجَزَاءُهمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةٌ وَحَرِيرًا. مُتَكِنِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا. وَذَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلَالُهَا وَذُلَّتْ قُطُوفُهَا تَذَلِيلًا. وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِآنِيَةٍ مِنْ

فِضَّةً وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرَ. قَوَارِيرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا. وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا
كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا. عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا ﴿١٢﴾

*And He rewarded them for their patience with a garden and [garments of] silk, reclining therein on couches. They will find in it neither any [scorching] sun, nor any [biting] cold. Its shades will be close over them and its clusters [of fruits] will be hanging low. They will be served around with vessels of silver and goblets of crystal - crystal of [transparent] silver - [from] which they dispense in a precise measure. They will be served therein with a cup of a drink seasoned with Zanjabil (lit. 'ginger'), a spring in it, named **Salsabil**.*

- Surah al-Insān, 76:12-18

﴿١٣﴾ إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ. عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ. تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ. يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ. خِتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ. وَمِزَاجُهُ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Indeed the pious shall be amid bliss, observing, [as they recline] on couches. You will perceive in their faces the freshness of bliss as they are served with a sealed wine, whose seal is musk - for such let the aspirers aspire - and whose seasoning is from Tasneem, a spring where those brought near [to Allāh] drink.

- Surah al-Mutaffifin, 83:22-28

The Clothes of the People of Paradise

﴿٢٣﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

Indeed Allāh will admit those who have faith and do righteous deeds into gardens with streams running in them, adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearl, and their dress therein will be silk.

- Surah al-Hajj, 22:23

﴿٢٥﴾ إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي مَقَامٍ أَمِينٍ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ يَلْبَسُونَ مِنْ سُندُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Indeed the Godway will be in a secure place, amid gardens and springs, dressed in fine silk and brocade, sitting face to face...

- Surah ad-Dukhān, 44:51-53

The Angels of Paradise

Allāh (s.w.t.) has created the most beautiful angels, both in appearance and character, to be companions and friends with the People of Paradise. Every faithful man and woman will have numerous angels to serve him or her and keep them company. Every time the faithful (mu'mineen) enter their palace or leave it, there will be angels at every one of their thousands of doors to greet them and wish them.

﴿جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ
يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ﴾

The Gardens of Eden, which they (the faithful) will enter along with whoever is righteous from among their ancestors, their spouses, and their descendants, and the angels will call on them from every door: 'Peace be to you, for your patience.' How excellent is the reward of the [ultimate] abode!

- Surah ar-Ra'd, 13:23-24

The Company of Family and Friends

As opposed to the People of Hellfire who will always be lonely, sad and depressed and always cursing or being cursed by those around them, the People of Paradise will have the company of their righteous family members (see verse above and the next one below). Any feelings of hatred will be removed from their hearts. Similarly, the People of Paradise will also be married to the most beautiful spouses in Paradise created especially for them. These spouses are called *Hoor al-Ayn*.

﴿رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتِ عَدْنِ الَّتِي وَعَدْتَهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ
وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

Our Lord! Admit them into the Gardens of Eden, which You have promised them, along with whoever is righteous among their ancestors, their spouses and their descendants. Indeed You are the All-mighty, the All-wise.

- Surah Ghāfir, 40:8

﴿إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ. ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ. وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ
غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ. لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ﴾

Indeed the Godwary will be amid gardens and springs. 'Enter it in peace and safety!' (they will be greeted and told). We will remove whatever ill-feelings there is in their chests; [close like] brothers, [they will be reclining] on couches, facing one another. Therein neither weariness shall touch them, nor will they [ever] be expelled from it.

- Surah al-Hijr, 15:45-48

﴿كَذَلِكَ وَزَوَّجْنَاهُمْ بِحُورٍ عِينٍ. يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِنِينَ. لَا يَذُقُونَ فِيهَا
 الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولَىٰ وَوَقَاهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ. فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
 الْعَظِيمُ﴾

So shall it be, and We shall wed them to houris with beautiful eyes. There they will call for every fruit, in safety. There they will not taste death except the first death, and He will save them from the punishment of hell - a grace from your Lord. That is the great success.

- Surah ad-Dukhān, 44:54-57

The Tree of Tuba

Tuba means 'Blessed'. In Paradise Tuba is a huge tree whose roots are in the house of Rasulullāh (s). Its branches extend to every faithful's palace in Paradise. Whenever a faithful wishes for anything, the branch will make his or her wish come true. The Tree of Tuba is so massive that if a horse rider galloped for a hundred years, it would not come out of its shade and if a bird flew from its roots upwards, its life would end but it would not reach the top of the tree.¹⁰

The Shi'ah of Aal Muhammad ('a)

The first Nabi or Rasul to enter Paradise will be Rasulullāh (s) and he will not enter without his family (the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)) who will not enter without their true and sincere followers (i.e. Shi'ah). They will all be the first to enter and to be ushered and welcomed into Paradise. Thereafter the other nations (umam) will enter.

In a hadith from Amir al-Mu'mineen ('a), even the non-Shi'ah Muslims who were faithful to Islam will enter Paradise as long as they don't have even a grain of hatred for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) of Rasulullāh (s). But such Muslims as well as those who loved the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) but did not follow them will have a lesser rank than those who were loyal and true followers (Shi'ah) of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and supported their cause.

The Greatest Reward

One of the greatest pleasures and rewards of Paradise will be the peace and tranquillity of knowing that one will now never ever suffer or feel pain again. That one will never die or fall sick or grow old or be asked to leave Paradise. The feeling of knowing that one has finally made it to Paradise and that all the patience and suffering in this world was definitely worth it, cannot be described. And those who

¹⁰ Mulla Fayd Kāshāni, *Aalam ma ba'd al-Mawt*, p. 251

make it to Paradise will be forever grateful to Allāh for saving them from the influence of bad friends and from the temptation of Shaytān.

﴿الَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ. أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَعْلُومٌ. فَوَاكِهُ وَهُمْ مُكْرَمُونَ. فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ. عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ. يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَعِينٍ. بَيْضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ. لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنْزَفُونَ. وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ عِينٌ. كَأَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَكْنُونٌ. فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ. قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ. يَقُولُ أَأِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ. أَإِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَأَنْتَا لَمَدِينُونَ. قَالَ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُطَّلِعُونَ. فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ. قَالَ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كِدْتَ لَتُرْدِينِي. وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُخْضَرِينَ. أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِينَ. إِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْأُولَى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ. إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ. لِمِثْلِ هَذَا فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعَامِلُونَ﴾

...except Allāh's exclusive servants. For such there is a known provision – fruits - and they will be held in honour, in the gardens of bliss, [reclining] on couches, facing one another, served around with a cup from a clear fountain, snow-white, delicious to the drinkers, wherein there will be neither headache nor will it cause them intoxication, and with them will be maidens of restrained glances with big [beautiful] eyes, as if they were protected [delicate] eggs. Some of them (in Paradise) will turn to others, questioning each other. One of them will say, 'Indeed I had a close companion who used to say, "Are you really among those who believe [that] when we are dead and have become dust and bones, we shall indeed be brought to judgement?"' He will say, 'Will you have a look?' Then he will take a look and see him (the close companion) in the middle of hell. He will say, 'By Allāh, you had almost ruined me! Had it not been for my Lord's blessing, I too would have been among those brought [into torment]!' 'Is it [true, what you used to say in the world] that we shall not die [anymore], aside from our first death, and that we shall not be punished?' This (Paradise) is indeed the great success! So let all the workers work for the like of this!

- Surah as-Saffāt, 37:40-61

Then there are rewards and pleasures that are too great for the human mind to understand in this limited world. So Allāh only hints at them but they cannot be imaged:

﴿فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

No one knows what has been kept hidden for them of comfort, as a reward for what they used to do.

- Surah as-Sajdah, 32:17

But by far, the greatest reward of all will be knowing that Allāh (s.w.t.) Himself is pleased with us. *Ridwānullah* (The Pleasure of Allāh) is the greatest reward of all. It is the ultimate pleasure because one will get individual attention from the Creator Himself when He speaks to us one-on-one with love and mercy. This is enough to make a creature swoon with pleasure and delight and it has no comparison to any other pleasure by far.

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسَاكِينَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ وِرْضًا مِنْ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ﴾

*Allāh has promised the faithful, men and women, gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them [forever], and good dwellings in the everlasting Gardens. **Yet Allāh's pleasure is greater [than all these]; that is the great success.***

- Surah al-Tawbah, 9:72

Fiqh **(Laws)**

Lesson 1

Ijtihād and Taqlīd

Introduction

Islam has an opinion on every imaginable and possible action of a human being and it categorizes them as either wājib, harām, mustahab, makruh or mubāh. No human action falls outside of this.

A mujtahid is an expert in Islamic Law and one who has the ability to find the correct category (of these five categories) for every human situation and action based on the original sources of Islam i.e. the Qur'ān, the Traditions (ahādith) and Practice of Rasulullāh (s) and the Imāms ('a) (i.e. the Sunnah), reasoning ('aql) and so forth. A mujtahid does not give his own personal opinion on any matter. Every ruling (*fatwa*) he gives is based on the opinion of the Qur'ān or a *ma'sum* (Prophet (s) or Imām ('a)). What a mujtahid practices is called *ijtihād* i.e. Ijtihād is the process of deriving Islamic rulings and laws from the Qur'ān and other primary sources and principles.

When a mujtahid is emulated and followed by others (in his findings on all the Islamic Laws), he is called a marj'a. And one who follows him is called a muqallid.

In addition to being learned and an expert in Islamic law, a mujtahid must possess the following qualifications:

- sanity
- legitimate birth
- puberty (bulugh)
- must be an Ithna 'Ashari (Twelver) Shi'ah
- justice ('adālah), meaning not having a reputation as a sinner (fāsiq)

A mujtahid has to be 'ādil (just) because it is only when a mujtahid is seen to be acting fully in accordance with his learning and knowledge that it can be understood that he is doing so for no other reason than a desire to submit completely to Allāh's will.

A woman can become a mujtahida but not a marj'a (one whom others emulate in Islamic law). Therefore a marj'a must have all the qualities of a mujtahid and also:

- be male.
- be the most learned mujtahid of his time i.e. the most able at finding the laws of shari'ah in his time.

A marj'a can be recognized in any one of three ways:

- If you are sure that he is a marj'a and the most learned based on your own knowledge.

- If two knowledgeable and *'ādil* (just) persons tell you who the most learned marj'a is.
- If it is commonly accepted by the scholars (*'ulama*) and it is widespread knowledge that a particular person is the most learned marj'a of his time.

Taqlid in Qur'ān and Hadith

For matters relating to *'aqāid* (also called the 'roots' of religion (*usul ad-din*)), every Muslim must be convinced of and have faith in them, through his or her own reason. It is forbidden (*harām*) to have faith in the fundamentals of Islam by following another blindly. For example, we cannot say we have faith in Allāh and His unity, or that there is life after death and a Day of Judgement, just because a marj'a says so. We have to be convinced ourselves through the signs we see around us, the Qur'ān, our own reasoning, and so on.

Taqlid is also unnecessary in the basic wājib matters of Islam like believing that salāh is wājib or fasting in Ramadan or going for Hajj once in a lifetime is wājib. We know these are wājib from the Qur'ān and we don't need a marj'a to tell us this. And no marj'a could ever change these rules.

However, within the Furu' ad-Din and other matters of fiqh (jurisprudence), there are details that are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān; and we need an expert in Islamic law to tell us how to act. Such an expert has studied the ahādith of Rasulullāh (s) and the Imāms ('a) from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and can tell which ahādith are genuine vs. forged, what to follow if two hadith seem to contradict each other, and so on. Such an expert (also called a *faqih*) has studied many sciences like the tafsir of Qur'ān, classic Arabic language and grammar, the history of Islam, how and when every āyah of Qur'ān was revealed, etc.

Without a marj'a there would be a lot of confusion because each person would do his own thing without knowing or understanding fully all the ahādith available in Islam and without studying all the books of Qur'ān, history, etc. that are needed to understand each issue fully. Or, they would end up referring to a person who would issue fatwas based on his own personal understanding, which is *harām* in Shi'ah law. As Shi'ahs we believe there is no matter that has not been explained by Allāh, His Messenger (s) and the rightful Imāms. Or at least, they have given clear guidelines and principles that the *fuqaha* can use to derive laws.

And of course, ignorance is not an excuse. We cannot tell Allāh on the Day of Judgement that we didn't follow the law because we couldn't read Arabic. In other words, if there was no *taqlid*, it would be wājib on every Muslim to become a mujtahid and to study for many years (10-20 years) to be able to understand what to do in every situation in life and what is halāl, harām, wājib, mustahab, makruh, etc.

Taqlid is therefore not 'blind following' as some ignorant people think it to be. Taqlid is a logical necessity. When you are stuck and don't know how Allāh wants you to act, it is logical to ask the person who you think is most learned in religion for his opinion and what he understands the law to be. As long as we try our best to find the law, even if it is not exact, Allāh will overlook it because He knows we tried our best. But when we have someone in our midst who knows the answer, we cannot ignore his opinion and just do as we please ignorantly.

A marj'a does not force us to act in a particular manner. He simply tells us his opinion based on all his years of research for each matter. Then it is our duty (*taklif*) to follow his opinion, unless of course we are mujtahids ourselves and can research and find the answer to every situation on our own.

If a person cannot become a mujtahid himself or herself and also does not wish to follow the opinion of the most learned marj'a (i.e. does not want to practice taqlid), there is a 3rd option and it is called *Ihtiyāt* (precaution). This is the most difficult because every time a person doesn't know the answer to a problem and how to act, they must take precaution. If they are not sure whether something is wājib or mustahab, they must assume it is wājib. When they are not sure if something is harām or makruh, they must assume it is harām. They would also need to know the general opinion of all the major marāj'i so that whenever they are confused whether something is wājib or harām, they must find out the general opinion of the marāj'i and then follow the strictest rule as a precaution (*iẖtiyāt*).

A marj'a is therefore a blessing for us because we can rely on his opinion without having to study for many years or worry about doing something harām or missing something wājib. If a marj'a makes a mistake, it seems logical and fair that Allāh will excuse him and those who followed him on the Day of Judgement. Why? Because the marj'a has done everything humanly possible to find the right answer. He has read all the ahādith available and verified them, studied the history of all the āyāt of the Qur'ān on that issue. He has researched the opinion of all the other previous scholars. He has used all his logic and all the material available to him to find the right answer. Thereafter he cannot be punished or blamed for being negligent or not doing his best.

Who Should We Follow?

Following the most learned mujtahid, as your marj'a is logical. Especially in this day and age when all the mujtahids are very easily accessible through their websites, offices, representatives, etc.

If you had a medical condition and you could ask the most learned, experienced and qualified doctor about your problem, would you still insist on asking the one who is less learned only because he has the same ethnicity or culture or citizenship as you?

The first quality of the marj'a you follow and refer to is that he should be the most learned in Islamic Shi'ah Ithna Ashari law. We have already listed all the necessary qualities of a mujtahid and marj'a earlier on.

Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) has also given us a good description of whom to follow during the absence (*ghayba*) of an Imām. He ('a) said:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْفُقَهَاءِ صَائِنًا لِنَفْسِهِ حَافِظًا لِدِينِهِ مُخَالَفًا لِهَوَاهُ مُطِيعًا لِأَمْرِ مَوْلَاهُ
فَلِلْعَوَامِ أَنْ يُقَلِّدُوهُ

As for the one who is among the scholars, who guards his own self, protects his religion, opposes his low desires, obeys the command of his Master: then it is for the general public to emulate him (i.e. do his taqlid).

Importance of 'Ulama and Marāj'i in Islām

It is true that some ahādith condemn taqlid and ijtihād. But it is important to understand the history behind these ahādith. In the early days of Islam, some non-Shi'ahs used to practice ijtihād and taqlid but according to them, being a mujtahid meant being able to give one's own personal opinions.

In Shi'ah faith, a marj'a is a researcher. He only bases his legal opinion (*fatwa*) on the Qur'ān and the teachings of Rasullullāh (s) and the ma'sum Imāms. A marj'a cannot give his personal opinion as a ruling (*fatwa*) or order (*hukm*) no matter how learned he may be. The ahādith that condemn ijtihād and taqlid are about the non-Shi'ah 'ulama and followers who practiced Islamic law based on personal opinion.

In the absence of the physical presence of a ma'sum Imām ('a), the Muslims still need to be united and to have a pious just leader who can unite them on acting rightly in matters of religion and society. Many people incorrectly assume that the marāj'i are only collecting khums money.

We should visit the marāj'i and see how simple their lives are. Remember that even when Imām Ali ('a) was the caliph, there were some governors in his government who took zakāh money and ran away. This doesn't mean Imām Ali ('a) was not faithful to the Muslims. So on rare occasions, a marj'a may have a representative who is not honest. But we have many ways today to ensure that when we give our zakāh and khums, it is accounted for and used properly.

For example, most marāj'i don't ask us to give *them* the money directly. We can spend it on any worthy cause like a humanitarian project or building a masjid, school, hospital, etc. However we must ask the marj'a for permission because the rightful owner of the khums is the Imām and in his absence, we trust the marj'a would be able to help us judge the best place to spend the Imām's money.

Without the marāj'i, not only would we not have answers to all our religious questions, but it would be very easy for our enemies to destroy our faith. There are many examples in history where foreign powers have tried to take over the economy or political leadership of a Muslim country. And it is only through the marj'a's guidance that people were able to see the plot and oppose it. Ayatullah Khomeini's opposition and overthrow of the tyrant Shah of Iran in 1979 is one example. The guidance of Ayatullah Ali Sistāni to the Shi'ahs of Iraq, after the fall of the dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003, is another good example to study.

We should always pray for the safety and long, healthy lives of our ulama and marāj'i and that Allāh should continue guiding them until the return of our Imām ('atfs).

How to Source Rulings:

The Risāla

Every mujtahid who allows others to follow his opinion in Islamic law publishes a book with his findings and research as rulings (*fatāwa*). This Book is called the '*Risāla*' of the marj'a and it lists the rulings of all matters of worship like tahārah and najāsah, all the Furu' ad-Din, marriage, business transactions, etc.

Your teacher will show you an English translation of a marj'a's *risāla*. You should have a copy at home of the *risāla* of the marj'a you follow. Most *rasāil* (pl. of *risāla*) look the same because the laws are the same for the most part. Some minor issues may be different between one marj'a and another depending on their research and findings.

You can also find most English *rasāil* on the internet. For example, the *risāla* of Ayatullah Ali Sistāni can be found at <http://www.al-islam.org/laws/>

Marāj'i Websites & the Internet

Besides the basic laws for day-to-day issues, when you have a specific situation or case and you need to know what Islam's view is on the matter, you can write to your marj'a's office and ask for an answer. Most marāj'i websites allow you to submit questions in English. Asking a marj'a a question on Islam is called '*Istiftā*'. If you search for your marj'a's website, you will find a section on it called '*Istiftā*' where you can email or post a question.

There are also many websites that keep archives of specific questions and you can search for answers there as well. For example:

Ahl al-Bayt Aalim Network Archives

<http://www.al-islam.org/organizations/AalimNetWork/>

Following a Deceased Marj'a

Usually when our marj'a passes away, we must switch to the next most learned marj'a because new issues may come up and we may need to ask about them. But at times, when the marj'a who passed away was very learned and hard to replace, we can still follow his rulings – provided the next most learned marj'a allows us to do so.

So when our marj'a passes away, we should ask the next marj'a that we find to be most learned and he will guide us on whether we can still follow the deceased marj'a on the matters we have always followed or not. For new matters that come up, of course we would have to ask the living, most learned (*a'lam*) marj'a.

Why Marāj'i Differ

Ideally, all the Shi'ah Muslims should follow one marj'a who is the most learned. This would also bring a lot of unity. But unfortunately due to various reasons and circumstances, some people may not believe they need to follow the most learned or may differ on how to identify who is the most learned. And once there are several marāj'i being followed, there are bound to be minor differences between them.

Since a marj'a is not inerrant (*ma'sum*) and his knowledge is not perfect, even though he does his best to find the answer to all issues, it may not always be the same as that of another marj'a.

This of course does not mean Allāh would punish or hold accountable the marj'a who differs from others and/or punish all those who follow him. What matters is that the marāj'i do their best to find the answers and we do our best to identify who is the most learned and follow him.

Sometimes the difference of opinion is an opportunity for people to learn how to be kind and tolerant towards each other. For example, if two people follow a different marj'a whose rulings on moon-sighting are not the same, they may end up marking the day of 'Id al-Fitr on a different day. Instead of fighting and accusing each other of doing the wrong thing, they could learn to respect each other's marj'a and to wish good for each other even if they each mark 'Id on a separate day. Remember each marj'a has researched the best he can and every muqallid has done his best to determine whom to follow. To Allāh, what we do is important but more important is our intention, our love for the truth and how sincerely we try to do the best we can.

Lesson 2

Hajj and 'Umra

Introduction and For Whom?

Hajj is one of the Furu' ad-Din or wājib acts of worship (*'ibādāt*) of Islam. It refers to the annual pilgrimage to Makkah that is performed every year in the month of Dhul Hijjah, the last month in the Islamic calendar.

Participation in Hajj is wājib on every Muslim once in his lifetime, as long as he or she fulfils the following conditions.

1. **bulugh** (puberty, boys 13-15 years+, girls 9 years+ Islamically)
2. **'aql** (sanity)
3. **istitā'a** (affordability)

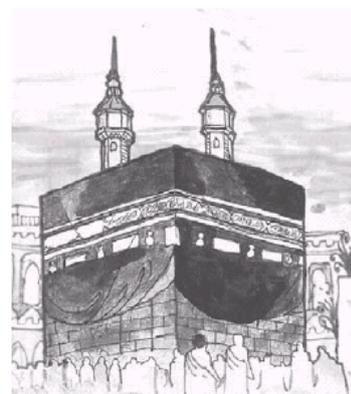
Istitā'a (Affordability)

The conditions of *istitā'a* are: wealth, health and transport.

1. Wealth: The person should be able to afford the Hajj financially. A person who does not have enough money to bear the expenses of going to, staying in, and coming back from Makkah, does not have to perform the Hajj.

If a person has enough money but needs this money to pay rent or get married or get one of his dependants married, he should first execute his duty to his family; Hajj is not wājib for him unless he has more money.

It is not necessary to borrow for Hajj, but if someone gives money to you for the expenses of the journey, Hajj becomes wājib. If someone performs Hajj with this donated money, he or she has fulfilled their religious duty and Hajj is no more wājib on them even if they come to possess their own money later on. But if someone who had enough money to perform Hajj does not perform it at that time and subsequently becomes poor, he or she will still have to find a lawful means to fulfil this obligation in anyway.



A person planning to go for Hajj should also consider if he has enough money to meet his own and his family's expenses *after* the performance of Hajj and returning home from Makkah.

2. Health: If a person's health cannot bear the exertions of the journey, or his or her health could be adversely affected, then Hajj is not wājib on them.

If a person is healthy and also has the money to perform Hajj but does not, and then later on becomes unable to perform it due to illness or old age, they should appoint someone else to perform the Hajj on their behalf and should bear all his expenses.

A person who is hired by someone to perform Hajj should perform the rituals on behalf of the one who hires him. The hired person cannot in turn appoint another person on his behalf without the permission of the person who has hired him.

3. Transport: Hajj becomes wājib only if the way to Makkah is safe and one has the necessary means of transport to make the journey. If there are dangers along the way, for instance a hostile enemy, robbers, an epidemic, or if a means of transportation is not available, then there is no wujub for Hajj.

Preparation for Hajj

Before a person goes for Hajj, they should:

- ensure they have no debts to pay. If they owe money to anyone they should pay it back first or ask their permission to pay it later.
- ensure the money for Hajj is clean. This is by ensuring that any wājib taxes like khums and zakāh have been paid.
- prepare a Will just in case they die before returning home; and ensure the executor(s) of their Will who is not travelling with them knows where to find the Will if they ever need to.
- it is recommended to give some alms (sadaqa) before setting out on the journey.

Types of Hajj & 'Umra

There are three kinds of Hajj:

- a. al-Hajj al-Ifrād Only for residents of Makkah (within 48 miles). It is a Hajj done with a separate 'Umra.
- b. al-Hajj al-Ihrām Only for residents of Makkah (within 48 miles). Both 'Umra and Hajj are done but with the same 'ihrām', meaning without a break between the 'Umra and Hajj.
- c. al-Hajj at-Tamattu' For the rest of the world. First 'Umra is done. Then a person can remove the ihrām and take a break and rest, before the Hajj starts on the 9th of Dhul Hijjah and ends on the 12th of Dhul Hijjah.

Al-Hajj at-Tamattu'

The annual Hajj (Hijjat al-Islam) that most people (non-residents of Makkah) perform is actually made up of two parts:

- **Umra at-Tamattu** (that can be done anytime between 1st Shawwāl and 8th Dhul Hijjah), and
- **Hajj at-Tamattu** (that must be done from the 9th to 13th Dhul Hijjah of the same year as the Umra at-Tamattu').

When a person goes for Hajj, they start at one of five possible places away from Makkah. These five places are called *Miqāt* and you can start from anyone of the five miqāt. Two of these five miqāt are Johfa, a place between the city of Jiddah and Makkah, and Masjid ash-Shajarah (or Abar 'Ali) a place just outside Madina on the way to Makkah. At a miqāt, a pilgrim puts on a special dress called the *ihrām* and they make their niyyah for Hajj and recite the *talbiya*.

The *ihrām* for men is usually two pieces of unstitched clothes like, for example, two cotton towels. One piece is for covering from the waist to the knees and the other piece is for the upper body to cover the back, shoulders, chest up to the elbows at least. Men cannot cover their head or feet. For women *ihrām* is a simple long dress with hijāb. It is recommended for the *ihrām* to be white, both for men and women.

The *talbiya* is recited as follows:

Labayk, Allāhumma labayk. Lā sharika laka labayk

Translation: 'At Your service (here I am) O Allāh, at Your service. There is no partner for You. At Your service.'

It is wājib to recite the *talbiya* loudly at least once at the miqāt when putting on the *ihrām* and making the niyyah. Thereafter it is highly recommended to continue reciting the *talbiya* until you reach Makkah. In Makkah the *talbiya* should not be recited until the day you put on *ihrām* again for Hajj at-Tamattu' (when leaving for 'Arafah). Whenever you recite the *talbiya*, you can also add:

Innal hamda wan ni'mata laka wal mulk, lā sharika laka

Translation: 'All praises are for You and Yours alone is the Kingdom. You have no partner.'

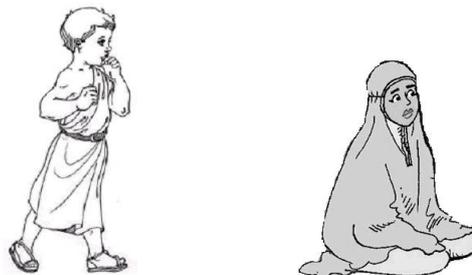
From the miqāt, pilgrims head to Makkah and upon arrival, they perform the 'Umra at-Tamattu.

The wājib acts in **‘Umra at-Tamattu** are as follows:

1. **Ihrām:** To be in ihrām until the Umra is over. When wearing the ihrām at the miqāt, the niyyah should be made as follows: *‘I am becoming a muhrim for Umra at-Tamattu, for Hijjat al-Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.’* Thereafter the talbiya must be recited immediately and loudly. As soon as the talbiya has been recited, a person is now called a ‘muhrim’ until the Umra is over. This means 25 actions are harām on him/her. (These 25 actions will be covered in the next lesson).
2. **Tawāf:** To go around the Ka’bah seven times, starting from and ending at the corner where the Black Stone (*al-Hajar al-Aswad*) is lodged in the Ka’bah near the door of the Ka’bah. The left shoulder must always be facing the Ka’bah as you walk around it. And the tawāf should be outside Hijr Ismail (a semi-circle on one side of the Ka’bah) and not inside Hijr Ismail. Niyyah: *‘I am performing tawāf of the Ka’bah, seven times for Umra at-Tamattu, for Hijjat al-Islam, wājib qurbatan ilallāh.’*
3. **Two Rak’ahs after Tawāf** near the Maqām Ibrāhim (Station of Nabi Ibrāhim (‘a) that is also near the Ka’bah. Niyyah: *‘I am performing 2 rak’ah salāt of tawāf for Umra at-Tamattu, for Hijjat al-Islam, wājib qurbatan ilallāh.’*
4. **Sa’i:** To walk briskly seven times between the hills of Safā and Marwa. Start at Safa. When you reach Marwa, that is counted as one trip. Go back to Safa, that is second trip. Seventh trip ends at Marwa. Niyyah: *‘I am performing Sa’i between Safa and Marwa seven times, for Umra at-Tamattu, for Hijjat al-Islam, wājib qurbatan ilallāh.’*
5. **Taqsir:** To clip one’s fingernails or to clip some hair from the head, after the Sa’i. Niyyah: *‘I am performing taqsir to make halāl for me everything that was harām in the ihrām for Umra at-Tamattu, for Hijjat al-Islam, wājib qurbatan ilallāh.’*

Thereafter a person can remove their ihrām and wear normal clothes. They would continue to stay in Makkah and wait for the **Hajj at-Tamattu** to begin on the 9th of Dhul Hijjah. The wājib parts of Hajj at-Tamattu’ are explained in the next lesson.

A Boy and Girl in Ihrām



Tawāf Conditions

For a tawāf around the Ka'bah to be valid, the following conditions must be met:

1. The person doing the tawāf must be in wudu or have done a wājib ghusl.
2. The body and clothes of the person must be *tāhir* (not najis).
3. The body must be covered with the minimum requirement for salāh. This means for men, the private parts and at least up to the knees and for women, full covering except the face and the palms.
4. The ihrām must be halāl and mubāh. Halāl means not bought with harām money e.g. money on which khums or zakāh has not been paid. Mubāh means not *ghasbi* i.e. stolen or used without permission of owner.
5. There must be a niyyah e.g. *'I am performing tawāf of the Ka'bah, seven times ... qurbatan ilallāh'*.
6. For men, they must be circumcised.

The left shoulder must always be pointing to the Ka'bah as you walk around it. And the tawāf should be outside the Hijr Ismail (a semi-circle on one side of the Ka'bah) and not inside the Hijr Ismail. If someone pushes you during tawāf and your left shoulder turns completely away from the Ka'bah, you should try and take a few steps back before continuing with your left shoulder facing the Ka'bah.

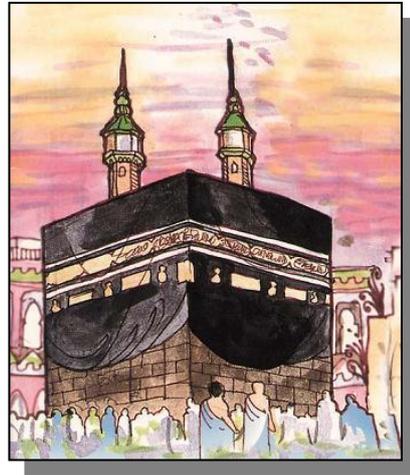
Lesson 3

Hajj and 'Umra (cont'd)

The wājib acts in **Hajj at-Tamattu** (the 2nd part of the annual Hajj) are as follows:

1. **Ihrām**: To make the niyyah for Hajj at-Tamattu and wear the ihrām in Makkah. This is usually done on the 8th night of Dhul Hijjah or the 9th morning of Dhul Hijjah before heading out to Arafah. Niyyah: *'I am becoming muhrim for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, qurbatan ilalāh.'* Then immediately recite the *talbiya* loudly. Now you are a muhrim and the 25 acts that are harām on a muhrim apply to you (covered in the next 2 pages).
2. **Wuquf at Arafah**: *Wuquf* meaning 'stopping'. This means to go outside Makkah to an open plain called Arafāt or Arafah and to stay there on the 9th of Dhul Hijjah from dhuhr time until Maghrib time. Niyyah: *'I am staying at Arafāt from Dhuhr to Maghrib, for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.'* Dhuhr and 'Asr salāh is prayed here.
3. **Mabeet at Mash'ar**: Mabeet means to 'spend the night'. Mash'ar is a place between Arafah and Makkah and is also called **Muzadalifa**. After maghrib on the 9th of Dhul Hijjah, a pilgrim then goes to Mash'ar where he or she prays salāt al-maghrib and 'ishā and spends the night until sunrise of the next day. It is wājib to be here from Fajr time to sunrise. At Mash'ar a pilgrim collects enough pebbles (at least 70) for hitting the three Jamarāt in Mina. Niyyah: *'I am spending this night at Mash'ar until sunrise, for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.'* Fajr salāh is prayed here.
4. **Rami al-Jamarāt, Qurbān and Halaq at Mina**: After sunrise on the 10th of Dhul Hijjah (which is also 'Id al-Ad-ha), a pilgrim has to go to Mina, a place closer to Makkah. At Mina a pilgrim has to do three things:
 - a. **Rami al-Jamarāt (Throwing of Pebbles)**: To throw seven pebbles on **Jamarat al-Uqba** - the last of three Jamarāt (but not the first two). Jamarāt are three stone pillars or walls that are symbols for shaytān. The three Jamarāt are called Jamarat al-Ula, Jamarat al-Wusta and Jamarat al-Uqba. Niyyah: *'I am throwing seven pebbles at Jamarat al-Uqba, for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.'*
 - b. **Qurbān (Sacrifice)**: To sacrifice a goat, sheep, cow or camel. Niyyah: *'I am offering this sacrifice for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.'*
 - c. To shave off one's head (*halaq*) or to clip some hair from the head (*taqsir*). Women are not allowed to shave their head. They only clip some hair. For men it is highly recommended to shave their heads. Niyyah: *'I am performing halaq (or taqsir) for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.'*

5. **Mabeet at Mina:** To continue staying at Mina for two more nights. A pilgrim can go back to Makkah during the day but they must spend the night in Mina. (Mabeet means 'to spend the night'). **On both the 11th and 12th of Dhul Hijjah, the pilgrim must also throw pebbles at the Jamarāt but now at all three of them.** Niyah at Mina: '*I am spending this night at Mina for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.*'
6. **Tawāf:** To return to Makkah and perform tawāf of the Ka'bah seven times. This is called **Tawāf al-Hajj**. Niyah: '*I am performing tawāf of the Ka'bah seven times, for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.*'
7. **Two Rak'ahs after Tawāf** near the Maqām Ibrāhim. Niyah: '*I perform 2 rak'ah salāt at-tawāf, for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.*'
8. **Sa'i:** between Safa and Marwa. Niyah: '*I perform sa'i between Safa and Marwa seven times, for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.*'
9. **Tawāf an-Nisā:** Another tawāf around the Ka'bah. Niyah: '*I perform Tawāf an-Nisā, for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.*'
10. **Two Rak'ahs for Tawāf an-Nisā** near the Maqām Ibrāhim. '*I pray 2 rak'ah salāt for Tawāf an-Nisa, for Hajj at-Tamattu, for Hijjatul Islam, wājib qurbatan illalāh.*'



This marks the end of **Hajj at-Tamattu** and a pilgrim can then remove his or her ihrām.

What is Harām for a Muhrim

A Muhrim is a person who is in *ihrām*. This period is from the time they put on the ihrām and make their niyyah for Umra or Hajj until the time when they finish all the wājibāt of Umra or Hajj and are allowed to remove the ihrām.

When a person is in ihrām the following 25 actions are harām for them and if they do any of them, there is a penalty (*kaffāra*) that must be paid (e.g. sacrificing an animal):

1. To hunt animals of any kind.
2. To have sexual intercourse, kiss, etc.
3. To recite the 'aqd of nikāh (your own or anyone else's).

4. To witness another person's nikāh.
5. *Istimna* (masturbation) [which is harām even when not in ihrām].
6. To apply perfume to the body or clothes or even to smell perfume.
7. To close your nose from a bad odour or smell (but you can move away).
8. Wearing any clothes that are sewn (for men).
9. To apply kohl to the eyes.
10. To look into a mirror.
11. To lie, boast, scorn and abuse someone.
12. To cover the feet completely (for men) i.e. the upper part of the foot from the tips of the toes to the ankle.
13. To swear in the name of Allāh.
14. To kill insects.
15. To wear a ring (for men), or ornaments (for women) for beauty. Rings like *aqiq* are ok because they are mustahab and not for ornament or fashion.
16. To apply henna.
17. To have your teeth extracted.
18. To take blood from the body (e.g. blood donation).
19. To cover the face (e.g. with a *niqāb*) for women.
20. To cover the head (for men) e.g. for shade or wearing a cap.
21. Applying oil (any kind) on the body.
22. Cutting or removing hair from any part of the body.
23. Clipping or trimming finger or toe nails.
24. To uproot or cut leaves or trees in and around Makkah.
25. To carry a weapon of any kind (sword, dagger, gun, etc.).

Notes:

Before leaving Makkah, it is mustahab to do a final tawāf called *Tawāf al-Widā* followed by 2 rak'ahs near Maqām Ibrāhim.

During 'off-season' when it is not Dhul Hijjah and a person wishes to visit Makkah, it is wājib to enter Makkah in the state of Ihrām and perform the '**Umra at-Tamattu**' exactly as it is described above during the Hajj season. But the Hajj at-Tamattu portion is not done. Hajj at-Tamattu is only done in Dhul Hijjah. So when 'Umra is done at other months, a pilgrim does not go to Arafah, Muzdalifa (Mash'ar) or Mina. Only the wājib acts of Umra are done (that are in Makkah only).

It is highly recommended to go to Makkah for 'Umra during the rest of the year, besides the Hijjat al-Islam that is performed in the month of Dhul Hijjah.

Finally, whenever a person goes for 'Umra or Hajj, it is also highly recommended to go to Madina and visit Rasulullāh (s) and members of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) buried in Jannat al-Baqi near the Masjid an-Nabawi – the masjid where Rasulullāh (s) is buried.

This is the end of this lesson. The following notes are optional and will be covered by the teacher only if time permits. Otherwise students can read these on their own.

Additional Notes

Besides Rasulullāh (s) who is buried in his masjid, important personalities buried in Jannat al-Baqi (Madina) include:

- 1) Imām Hasan al-Mujtaba ('a).
- 2) Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin ('a).
- 3) Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a).
- 4) Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a).
- 5) Sayyida Fatima bint Asad ('a), the mother of Imām Ali ('a).
- 6) Umm al-Banin ('a), the wife of Imām Ali ('a) and mother of Hadrat Abbās ('a).
- 7) Hadrat Abbās b. Abdul Muttalib (r.a.) – the Uncle of Rasulullāh (s).
- 8) Hadrat Ja'far b. Abu Tālib ('a), the brother of Imām Ali ('a) also known as Ja'far at-Tayyār.
- 9) Sayyida Safiya (r.a.) and Sayyida Aatika (r.a.), the aunts of Rasulullāh (s).
- 10) Hadrat Ibrāhim ('a) the son of Rasulullāh (s) who died in infancy.
- 11) Sayyida Halima ('a), the nursing foster-mother of Rasulullāh (s).
- 12) Some of the pious wives of Rasulullāh (s) and his companions (ashāb) (r.a.).

Other important sites to visit or see in Madina include:

- 1) The room of Sayyida Fatima ('a) in the Masjid of Rasulullāh (s) – same place as where Rasulullāh (s) is buried.
- 2) The pulpit (minbar) of Rasulullāh (s) near to where he is buried.
- 3) The prayer niche (mihrāb) of Rasulullāh (s) near to where he is buried.
- 4) The *Rawda* – a place between Rasulullāh (s)'s pulpit and grave that is said to be a part of Jannah.
- 5) The Door of Jibrāil (Bāb Jibrāil) – an entrance to the Masjid of Rasulullāh (s) from where the archangel Jibrāil ('a) used to visit Rasulullāh (s). Also the maqām (station) of Jibrāil ('a) inside the Masjid.
- 6) The pillar of Abu Lubāba inside the Masjid of Rasulullāh (s).
- 7) Masjid Quba.
- 8) Masjid Qiblatayn.
- 9) Sab'a Masājid (Seven Mosques) – the place where the battle of Ahzāb/Khandaq took place.
- 10) Masjid Mubāhala – the place where Mubāhala was to take place with the Christians of Najrān.
- 11) Uhud – the place where the Battle of Uhud took place.
- 12) Hadrat Hamza ('a) – the uncle of Rasulullāh (s) who was martyred and buried at Uhud.
- 13) Masjid al-Ghamāmah – where Rasulullāh (s) used to perform 'Id Salāh.

14) Masjid ash-Shajarah – a Miqāt for pilgrims going for Hajj.

The exact place where Sayyida Fatima (‘a) is buried is unknown. She may also be buried in Jannat al-Baqi (‘a) near where the Imāms are buried.

In Makkah as well, after performing ‘Umra, there are important sites and places to visit. Some of which include:

- 1) It is recommended to try and kiss the Black Stone (al-Hajar al-Aswad) in the side of the Ka’bah. But it is not recommended if you have to push people and behave in a manner that is not appropriate for a Muslim.
- 2) Besides the Ka’bah, see the footprints of Hadrat Ibrahim (‘a) in the Maqām Ibrahim.
- 3) The well of Zamzam – the well is no longer visible. It is mustahab to drink the water of Zamzam found everywhere in Masjid al-Harām.
- 4) Jannat al-Mu’ala – the second holiest cemetery after Jannat al-Baqi. Here is where the following personalities are buried:
 - a. Umm al-Mu’minin, Sayyida Khadija (‘a), the first wife of Rasulullāh (s).
 - b. Hadrat Abu Tālib (‘a), the guardian of Rasulullāh (s) and father of Imām Ali (‘a) is buried.
 - c. The ancestors of Rasulullāh (s) – Abdul Muttalib (‘a) (grandfather of the Rasulullāh (s), Hāshim (great grandfather of Rasulullāh (s), and so on.
 - d. Sayyida Amina bint al-Wahab (‘a), mother of Rasulullāh (s). Some say she is buried in Abwa, a place between Makkah and Madina. Rasulullāh (s)’s father – Abdullah (‘a) – is also buried in Madina – he passed away on his way back from Syria before Rasulullāh (s) was born.
 - e. Qāsim (‘a) the son of the Rasulullāh (s) who died in infancy.
- 5) Masjid Jinn.
- 6) Birth place of Rasulullāh (s).
- 7) Mount Abu Qubays.

Just outside Makkah, you can visit:

- 1) Jabal ar-Rahmah (the Mountain of Mercy) at Arafah.
- 2) Jabal an-Nur (Mountain of Light) where the Cave (*Ghār*) of al-Hira is located. This is where Rasulullāh (s) used to meditate and where the first revelation (opening āyāt of Surah al-Iqra) was revealed to him.
- 3) Cave (*Ghār*) of Thawr where Rasulullāh (s) hid from his enemies on the night of Hijrah on his way to Madina.
- 4) Masjid Kheef in Mina.

For a list of places to visit during Hajj, ‘Umra or Ziyārah, see <http://www.al-islam.org/ziyarat/>

Homework Assignments:

Research on the internet for the answers to the following questions. Your teacher will divide the questions and assign them to you. Write your answers (a few paragraphs) on a separate piece of paper and hand them in at the next class to your teacher for marking:

- 1) What is the story behind the pillar of Abu Lubāba in Masjid an-Nabawi? Why do we remember it in history?
- 2) What is the significance of Masjid Quba? And why is Masjid Qiblatayn called by this name?
- 3) Why is Masjid Jinn in Makkah called by this name?
- 4) Why is Masjid Kheef in Mina important? What is the *thawāb* (spiritual reward) of praying in Masjid Kheef?
- 5) What is the importance of Jabal ar-Rahmah in Arafah? Can you find a hadith about the importance of praying at this mountain?
- 6) What are the four corners of the Ka'bah called? Hint: They all start with the word 'Rukn', which means 'Corner'.
- 7) Ask your parents if they have gone for their wājib Hajj and what it was like. Write an essay with some of their experiences including the best and most difficult experiences in their journey to and from Makkah.
- 8) What is the philosophy behind Hajj? For example, we know that fasting helps us remember the poor, think of the thirst and hunger of the Day of Judgment, etc. What do you think are the benefits of Hajj? Here are some hints:
 - a. People from all over the world, of different colours, nationalities, ages get together.
 - b. Millions of people dress the same.
 - c. Millions of people do the same acts of worship at the same time.
 - d. The white *ihram* resembles the shroud (*kafan*) and the plain of Arafah resembles the place where all people will gather on the Day of Judgement.

Lesson 4

Al-Amr bīl Ma'ruf, an-Nahī 'anil Munkar & Jihād in Islam

Al-Amr bil Ma'ruf & an-Nahī 'anil Munkar

﴿وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾

*There has to be a nation among you summoning to the good, bidding what is right,
and forbidding what is wrong. It is they who are the successful.*

- Surah Al-Imrān, 3:104

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ
بِاللَّهِ...﴾

*You are the best nation [ever] brought forth for mankind: you bid what is right and
forbid what is wrong, and have faith in Allāh.*

- Surah Al-Imrān, 3:110

Al-Amr bil ma'ruf means 'commanding good' and *an-Nahī 'anil munkar* means 'forbidding evil'. These two acts of worship are from the Furu ad-Din i.e. it is wājib on every Muslim to encourage people to act according to the laws of Allāh and to discourage them from sinful and improper behaviour.



You can encourage and teach those younger to you how to practice *al-amr bil ma'ruf* and *an-nahī 'anil munkar*.

When you see someone skipping something wājib or doing something harām, there are different levels of al-Amr bil ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil munkar to be practised. The first level is to use wisdom and love to guide the person. If it does not work, the second level is to show your disapproval and disappointment even if it is with facial expressions such as not being too friendly and happy around them so that they may realize that they need to change and improve themselves. The third level is by speech where you try and admonish them politely but firmly and try and convince them to change, even if it means showing some anger. And if all fails, as a last resort, the final level is to try and physically stop them if it is at all possible.

This last level – of using physical force to stop evil – needs to be clarified: The first time, it is wājib to tell a Muslim to practice a wājib act if they are neglecting it (e.g. salāh, sawm, hajj, zakāh, wearing hijāb, etc.). If they don't listen to you, the second time it is mustahab but you cannot force them. The same is true for nahi 'anil munkar. The first time, it is wājib to tell a Muslim not to practice a harām act if they are doing it (e.g. drinking alcohol, gambling, listening to harām music, etc.) But if they don't listen to you, the second time it is only mustahab. Unless of course by their sinful act they are harming Islam or other people in which case they must be stopped by force.

Al-Amr bil ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil munkar are only wājib under the following conditions:

1. When it is possible that a person's advice will be effective. If a person knows that their actions, words or attitude will make a positive difference (especially with a family member or friend) then it is wājib. But if there is no hope that it will make a difference then it is not wājib.
2. The person doing al-Amr bil ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil munkar should know the laws of Islam concerning what he or she is bidding or forbidding otherwise they may do more harm than good.
3. The person doing al-Amr bil ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil munkar should be practising what he or she is bidding and keeping away from what he or she is forbidding himself or herself. It is wrong to preach what we don't practice ourselves.
4. The person doing harām or not doing what is wājib should be guilty of this constantly. In other words if a person makes a mistake once or forgets once but usually knows and practices correctly, we don't have to point out their mistake.
5. Al-Amr bil ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil munkar should not be carried out in a manner that may hurt the feelings of people and drive them further away from Islam. We should always try to be sympathetic, kind and persuasive but never insulting or offensive to others. When Imām Hasan ('a) and Imām Husayn ('a) were young and they saw an old man doing wudu the wrong way, they didn't tell him upfront that he was wrong. They asked him to watch their wudu and tell them who was doing it correctly. The old man realized his mistake and said, 'You are both right. I am the one who is wrong!' This is a

beautiful example of how we should always think of ways to correct people's mistakes without hurting their feelings.

Ask Yourself & Think....



6. It should not put a person's life in danger or put them in harm unless by not doing al-amr bil ma'ruf or an-nahi 'anil munkar, another person will be seriously harmed or will die, OR if Islam is in danger. For example, if a person is oppressing or torturing another person, it is wājib to try and stop them regardless of whether the victim is a Muslim or not.

An effective way for Muslims to practice al-amr bil ma'ruf and an-nahi 'anil munkar is to participate fully in public life and not behave like recluses, and this includes the political life of their society. While participating fully in the life of society, Muslims should not forget their obligations to Allāh or the laws of *shari'ah*, and should always strive to do what is in the interest of religion, the Islamic community, and humanity in general.

Also, when a Muslim takes a responsible role in society, he or she should take extreme care not to fall prey to the evils of power-seeking. Muslims should not go after position or fame for themselves, but only insofar as this is required in order to carry out their religious duty. If a Muslim thinks that he or she can better serve Allāh and the community by attaining higher office or position, every effort should be made to gain it, but that position should always be seen as a trust from Allāh. The utmost should be done to promote goodness and justice and to serve humanity.



Even young children can be taught to promote good and discourage evil Luqmān ('a), who according to some

traditions was a prophet, was known for his wisdom. One of his advices to his son was:

﴿يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ﴾

*O my son! Maintain the prayer (salāh) and **bid what is right and forbid what is wrong**, and be patient over whatever befalls you. That is indeed the steadiest of courses.*

-Surah Luqmān, 31:17

Bear in mind, no one is perfect and at times, others may correct us or advice us. If someone corrects our mistake (e.g. how we do wudu or pray salāh) or tells us not to behave in a sinful manner, we should not get upset or angry. Instead we should thank them for guiding us and we should be grateful to them for having the courage to practice al-Amr bil ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil munkar. It is easy (and harām) to criticize someone behind their back but it takes a lot of courage and love to help someone become better and to tell them politely and directly what they are doing is wrong.

The Consequences of Neglecting al-Amr bil Ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil Munkar

When people stop practising al-Amr bil ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil munkar, then evil and corrupt people take over the community and at times even the power and leadership of the country. The result is that they then oppress people and no one can stop them. As a punishment for not practising al-Amr bil ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil munkar, Allāh does not answer the prayers of people asking for help when they are ruled by an oppressor because they did nothing to stop evil when it was spreading.

Human societies are like a big ship in which all the individuals of the society travel and live together. When you see someone digging a hole in his side of the ship, you will always do your best to stop him because otherwise you will all sink and drown. Even if the person says, 'mind your own business, this is my part of the ship. I paid for it.' You still won't keep quiet because his actions put you in danger. Similarly, we should not be indifferent or quiet when we see wrong and evil spreading in our community and society.

On the moral responsibility of the community to enjoin good and forbid evil, numerous traditions (*ahādith*) are related to show how Allāh holds the entire community accountable and even punishes the 'good' if they keep quiet and/or are indifferent to the action of transgressors. For example:

It is reported from al-Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir, peace be on him, that Allāh, the Mighty & Exalted, revealed to Nabi Shu'ayb ('a): 'I am about to punish from your nation, a hundred thousand. Forty thousand from the worst of them and sixty

thousand from the best of them.’ So he (Shu’ayb), peace be on him, said: ‘Lord! These (forty thousand) are evil. But why the good?’ So Allāh revealed to him again: ‘They (the good) flatter the sinners and are not angered with what I am angered.’

Rasulullāh (s) said to Imām Ali (‘a), ‘O Ali, if Allāh guides someone through you, it is better for you than everything that the Sun has ever shone upon (i.e. better than the whole world).’

During the time of Rasulullāh (s), Allāh revealed concerning some of the Jews in Madina with the following words:

﴿...سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُوا وَقَتْلَهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَتَقُولُ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ﴾

...We will record what they have said, and their killing of the prophets unjustly, and We shall say, ‘Taste the punishment of the burning.’

- Surah Al-Imrān, 3:181

﴿فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ...﴾

Then because of their breaking their pledge, their defiance of Allāh’s signs, their killing of the prophets unjustly...

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:155

Even though the people from the Banu Isrāil who murdered the prophets of Allāh lived long before Rasulullāh (s), the reason why the Jews at the time of Rasulullāh (s) are being associated with the crime is because they were still proud of their forefathers and did not condemn the actions of their forefathers who had killed prophets. And therefore they have a share in the crime and will be punished for it as well.

That is also why in the salutation (ziyārah) of Imām Husayn (‘a) we say to the Imām:

لَعْنُ اللَّهِ أُمَّةً ظَلَمْتِكَ وَلَعْنُ اللَّهِ أُمَّةً قَتَلَتْكَ وَلَعْنُ اللَّهِ أُمَّةً سَمِعَتْ بِذَلِكَ فَرَضِيَتْ بِهِ

May Allāh curse the nation that oppressed you. May Allāh curse the nation that killed you. **And may Allāh curse the nation that heard about it and was pleased with it.**

So when we see wrong being done and we keep quiet, that means we don’t care and are therefore pleased with it and ok with it. We become the same as the ones committing the evil.

In Nahj al-Balāgha, sermon (*khutba*) 201, it is recorded that Imām Ali (‘a) said:

O People, certainly what gathers people together is (their) agreement (to good or bad) and (their) disagreement. For only one individual killed the camel of Thamud but Allāh held all of

them in punishment because of all of them joined him in their consent. Thus Allāh said:

﴿فَعَقَرُوهَا فَاصْبَحُوا نَادِمِينَ فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ...﴾

But **they** hamstrung her (the camel), whereupon **they** became regretful. So the punishment seized **them**...

-ash-Shu'arā, 26:157-8

Jihād

Another *wujub* from the ten Furu' ad-Din that is also related to al-Amr bil Ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil Munkar is **Jihād**. Allāh praises those who do Jihād in many āyāt of the Qur'ān. For example:

﴿لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾

Not equal are those of the faithful who sit back - except those who suffer from some disability - and those who do jihād in the way of Allāh with their possession and their persons. Allāh has graced those who do jihād with their possessions and their persons by a degree over those who sit back. And to each Allāh has promised the best reward, and Allāh has graced those who do jihād over those who sit back with a great reward.

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:95

The word Jihād literally means 'to struggle' and in Islam it means 'to struggle for the sake of Allāh'. There are actually two types of Jihād in Islam. One is called *Jihād al-Akbar* (the Greater Jihād) and it refers to struggling against one's self such as against sinful habits. Jihād al-Akbar is taught under Akhlāq as different topics (such as fighting greed, envy, hatred, miserliness, selfishness, love of the world and so on).

The other type of Jihād is called *Jihād al-Asghar* (the Lesser Jihād) and it refers to armed struggle, meaning to go to war in order to defend Islam or to fight against oppressors, invaders of Muslim lands and tyrants. This is the Jihād that we are discussing in this lesson.

Jihād is a higher level of al-Amr bi l-ma'ruf and an-Nahi 'anil munkar. It means to exert the greatest possible effort to remove obstacles to human beings' progress towards Allāh. Some people define Jihād as 'Holy War'. But this can be easily misunderstood. Jihād can be positive. For example, to struggle by every possible means to spread education and literacy and to 'fight' ignorance is a form of jihād.

Secondly, it is *harām* to go to Jihād for worldly reasons like to take over land or to force others to become Muslims. Even though some caliphs in history (like the Umayyads and the Abbasids) did that, it was not Islamic. It was only to expand their dynasties. The only permissible way to spread the message of Islam is by *tabligh* (propagation) and this is done by dialogue and preaching, the way Rasullāh (s) did.

Jihād can only be declared by a *ma'sum* Imām or his representative (a marj'a) and it is only to stop the enemies of Islam when they wish to destroy Islam, kill Muslims, oppress innocent people or take over Muslim lands. When a *ma'sum* Imām or the Nāib (representative) of a *ma'sum* Imām calls for Jihād, it is wājib on all bāligh Muslim men to respond and go for jihād, regardless of where they live and whether they have had any previous military training or not (unless a condition is specified and only the Muslims of a particular region or qualification are asked to respond).

One who dies in jihād is called a martyr (*shahid*) and it is the noblest form of death and the highest form of sacrifice one can give i.e. sacrificing one's life. We are also taught in hadith that one who dies whilst eagerly awaiting for Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs) to return and restore peace and justice in the world, dies a martyr even if he or she dies in bed (i.e. a natural death). And in some hadith, we are told:

مَنْ مَاتَ عَلَى حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ ، مَاتَ شَهِيدًا

One who dies with the love of the family of the Prophet (s), dies a martyr.

Love of Ahl al-Bayt ('a) of course means following their teachings and practising their ways as well. We should always pray to Allāh for the death of a martyr (*shahid*).

It is important to stress that Islam does not like or wish to kill human beings or 'exterminate' wrongdoers. It wants to eradicate and remove sin and corruption.

Evil deeds or sins are seen as a disease. The solution is to treat it. When a doctor sees a patient with an illness, he does not hate the patient or try to get rid of him. He tries to cure him and get rid of the sickness with medicine, as far as possible.

Sometimes when the sickness gets too far out of hand, the doctor may have to take more serious measures like surgery or to amputate a limb, etc. only to save the patient's life. This may seem very cruel and painful but it is not to torture the patient. It is to save his life.

Similarly, human beings all together, in one society, are like one body. When one part of it is sick with a spiritual illness (i.e. an evil habit or sin), Islam does not hate the people who cause or promote that illness. First it tries to use every medicine possible to cure it by kind persuasion (in the form of al-amr bil ma'ruf) and pleading with the wrongdoers to stop their habit (through an-nahi 'anil munkar).

When nothing works and there is a danger of the whole society becoming spiritually sick and losing the success and eternal happiness of their souls in the hereafter, a

spiritual doctor (like Rasulullāh (s) or a ma'sum Imām ('a)), with guidance from Allāh, may have to carry out a "surgical operation", in order to save the rest of the society that is still not infected with the spiritual illness. This may be done by ordering jihād. It is only as an absolutely necessary last resort, and is limited only to the part that is affected. And it stops as soon as the danger to the rest of the human society is gone.

In other words, jihād is not used to take over people's land, to become rich, to force people to become Muslims, etc. even if some Muslim leaders did that in history. Islam condemns their actions. We see repeatedly in the history of battles fought by Rasulullāh (s) and Imām Ali ('a), that they kept trying to avoid a battle even when the enemy stood opposite them in the battlefield and the fight only broke out when the enemy began it and refused to listen to reason. But once the fight was in full motion, then of course they did not show any cowardice and they rained upon the enemy with full force to stop them.

Supposing someone you love was sick and you suspected they needed surgery, would you let anyone carry out the surgery? That would be foolish. You will only allow it after a qualified doctor has told you so and you are convinced there is no other way and this is the best solution. And you will also want the best doctor to carry out the surgery. In Islamic law, therefore, not everyone or anyone can declare Jihad. It has to be a *ma'sum* (infallible) who represents Allāh and is guided by Him. A representative of an Imām such as a marj'a can do so under very special circumstances and with very limited power.

The reason for this strict rule is that life is a creation of Allāh. No one has the right to destroy it and/or kill others unless Allāh authorizes it through His representative (such as a prophet or Imām). During the days of ghayba of the Imām ('atfs), jihād is not allowed. The only exception is if oppressors and the enemies of Islam attack an Islamic nation. In this case Muslims are allowed to fight back and defend their land and their rights. And this too, the representative of the Imām (i.e. the marj'a who is considered to be the most learned) has to order it.

Lesson 5

Ghusl & Hunoot of Mayyit

Introduction

In this Book we will study some matters that are wājib regarding the rites for a Muslim after death. Specifically, we will study how to wash the dead body of a Muslim, how to shroud it and the final prayers that are said over a dead Muslim's body before burial. In the next Book (Book 11) we will review other matters such as the recommended acts to perform when you are besides a Muslim who is dying, as well as recommended acts to perform after a Muslim has passed away and during the funeral. The burial of a Muslim is also wājib and will be discussed in Book 11.

The ablution for the dead (*ghusl*), the shrouding (*takfin*), and the burial (*tadfin*) of a Muslim is an obligation on every bāligh sane Muslim. However It is a communal duty (*fard al-kifāya* or *wājib al-Kifāya*): This means if it is carried out by one or some of the community, the rest are free of this obligation; but if it is carried out by none, all are held responsible and will have committed a major sin.

If a Muslim is certain that there are others who are arranging the last rites (ablution, shrouding, burial) of a dead person, it is not wājib for him or her to become involved. But if he or she is doubtful about this, they must act immediately. If one leaves the job half done, then, also, it is the duty of others to complete it.

If a person is certain that the last rites of a dead Muslim have been performed incorrectly, he or she must make sure that they are repeated correctly, but if there is only doubt about this, it is not wājib to act.

All of the above mentioned rites should, as a matter of precaution, be performed with the permission of the guardian (*wali*) of the deceased. The *wali* of a wife is her husband, and of the father is the eldest son. In all cases the *wali* is the nearest adult male relative who inherits the most according to the Islamic law. If the dead person has appointed someone to arrange his or her last rites, that person is to be considered the (*wali*) in these matters.

Ghusl al-Mayyit

The ritual ablution or washing (*ghusl*) is wājib for all dead Muslims even if it is the body of a Muslim infant, someone who was mentally handicapped and even an illegitimate child. A miscarried child of four months or more should also be given *ghusl*, but an aborted child of less than four months should be wrapped in a cloth and buried without giving the *ghusl*.

The person who gives a corpse the *ghusl* must be:

1. Shi'ah Ithna Ashari Muslim
2. Aware of the rules regarding ghusl al-mayyit
3. Of sound mind (sane) – 'āqil
4. bāligh (except in an emergency)
5. Same gender as the dead person (with some exceptions)

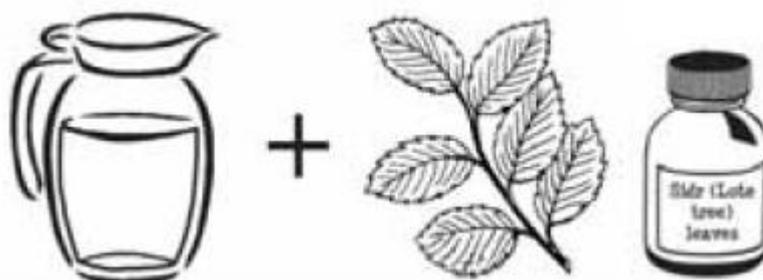
A wife may give the ghusl for her husband's corpse and vice versa, but the recommended precaution (*ihtiyāt mustahab*) is that they should avoid this. However, both men and women can give ghusl to the corpse of a child of the opposite sex who is less than three years old. In cases of emergency, when persons of the same sex are not available for giving the ghusl, *mahārim* (pl. of *mahram*) of the opposite sex can give it, but they should wash the body under a cloth or some kind of cover.

Ghusl al-mayyit must be done with the niyyah of *qurbatan ilallāh*. It is harām to charge a fee for performing the ghusl for a corpse. If someone undertakes it for the sake of money, it will be bātil. However one can charge for providing the means or things that will be necessary to perform the ghusl i.e. for the place, the water, etc.

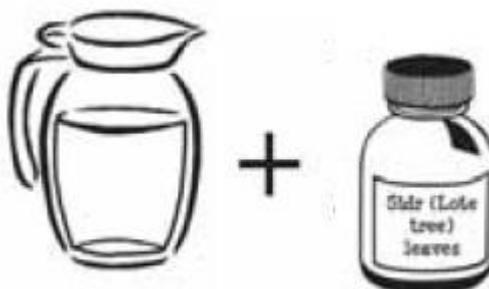
Procedure of Ghusl

It is wājib to wash the corpse three times in the following sequence:

1. First, with water mixed with *sidr* leaves (the leaves of a berry tree also called the lotus tree).



2. Second, with water mixed with camphor.



3. Third, with pure (*mutlaq* or *khālis*) water.



The manner of ghusl al-mayyit is exactly as any ghusl (like ghusl for janāba) using the sequential method (*al-ghusl at-tartibi*). If a person dies in the state of *janābah* or *haid*, it is not necessary to give them ghusl for that. The ghusl al-mayyit will suffice.

Step-by-Step

1. Take permission from the *wali* to give ghusl to the corpse.
2. Lay down the corpse where the ghusl is to be carried out, with its feet facing the qibla.
3. Place a piece of cloth large enough to cover the private parts of the corpse.
4. Remove all the remaining clothing on the corpse. The private parts of the corpse should be properly covered: it is a sin to look at them except in the case of the spouse, although even in this case it is better that they should be covered. If a man is giving ghusl to a man, or a woman to a woman, it is better that, with the exception of the private parts, the corpse be bare.
5. Remove any rings, jewellery, watch or obvious impurity or unnatural attachments to the body unless it is not possible to remove the object or impurity easily or without harming the body.
6. Before starting the three wājib ghusls mentioned above, wash the entire body with soap and water just to ensure there is no impurity, bleeding, etc. This is just a general wash and cleansing and does not have to be done according to the rules of ghusl or in sequence.
7. All the persons performing the ghusl al-mayyit should make a niyyah of what they are doing in obedience to Allāh's command.
8. Now commence the first ghusl using water mixed with sidr. All involved should make their niyyah. Niyyah: '*I am giving ghusl to this corpse with sidr water, wājib qurbatan ilallāh.*' The head and neck should be washed thoroughly, then the right half of the body, and then the left half of the body in the manner of the ghusl of janābah. Ideally there should be at least three people involved. One would hold the head up, turn the body to the left and right, etc. the second would pour the water and the third would use his or her hands to rub the body gently and ensure the water reaches everywhere e.g. behind the head, the back, etc.

9. Those giving ghusl can wear plastic or latex gloves and when washing the private parts, the water should be poured under the cloth covering the private parts ensuring the cloth does not move and expose the body.
10. The second ghusl given with water mixed with camphor follows the same method: Niyah: '*I am giving ghusl to this corpse with camphor water, wājib qurbatan ilallāh*', then wash head, then right side and finally left side, from top to bottom.
11. The third ghusl given with pure water again follows the same method. Niyah: '*I am giving ghusl to this corpse with khālis (pure) water, wājib qurbatan ilallāh.*'

Note:

Sidr and camphor must not be present in such quantities that the colour of the water is changed, so that the water would no longer be called 'water' and would be considered mixed (*mudāf*). Nor should they be present in such small quantities that it could not be said that the water is mixed with sidr or camphor. Ideally, the water should have the scent of sidr leaves or camphor but not have changed in colour. If enough sidr or camphor cannot be found, as much as is available should be used; if only one, or neither, of them is found, ghusls 1 and 2 should, as a precaution, be given with pure water instead, and then tayammum should be given.

Mustahab Acts During Ghusl al-Mayyit

1. At least two persons should be engaged for giving ghusl. One should pour water on the dead body, while the other should change its sides.
2. The soles of the feet of the dead body should face Qibla.
3. Ghusl should not be given under the open sky, but in a covered place or a house.
4. Wudu may be given to the dead body before the ghusls.
5. The main person giving ghusl should be on the right side of the body, and before each of the three ghusls, they should wash their own arms up to the elbows.
6. If the dead person has Ghusl Janābah due, then it may be given before the three Ghusls of Mayyit. But this is not wājib. Similarly, if a woman dies in the state of *haid*, no ghusl for it is necessary and the three wājib ghusls will suffice.
7. All involved in washing the body should recite du'as and ask for the forgiveness of the dead person throughout the ghusls.
8. When the ghusls are over, the dead body should be dried with a towel before starting the *takfin* (shrouding).

Tayammum

In case that water is not available for the three ablutions, or only enough for one or two of them, *tayammum* should be given in place of the omitted *ghusls*. The same applies if the corpse is not in a state to be washed with water (e.g. due to injury).

How to Perform Tayammum al-Mayyit

If it is possible, the corpse's hands should be placed on earth and then rubbed on his forehead and the back of his hands in the manner of *tayammum* (taught in Book 5). However, the person who is performing the *tayammum* should also place his own hands on the earth and then rub them on the corpse's forehead and the back of its hands.

When *tayammum* is done for a corpse for all three *ghusls*, as *ih̥tiyāt wājib* (obligatory precaution), a fourth *tayammum* should be performed for all three *ghusls*.

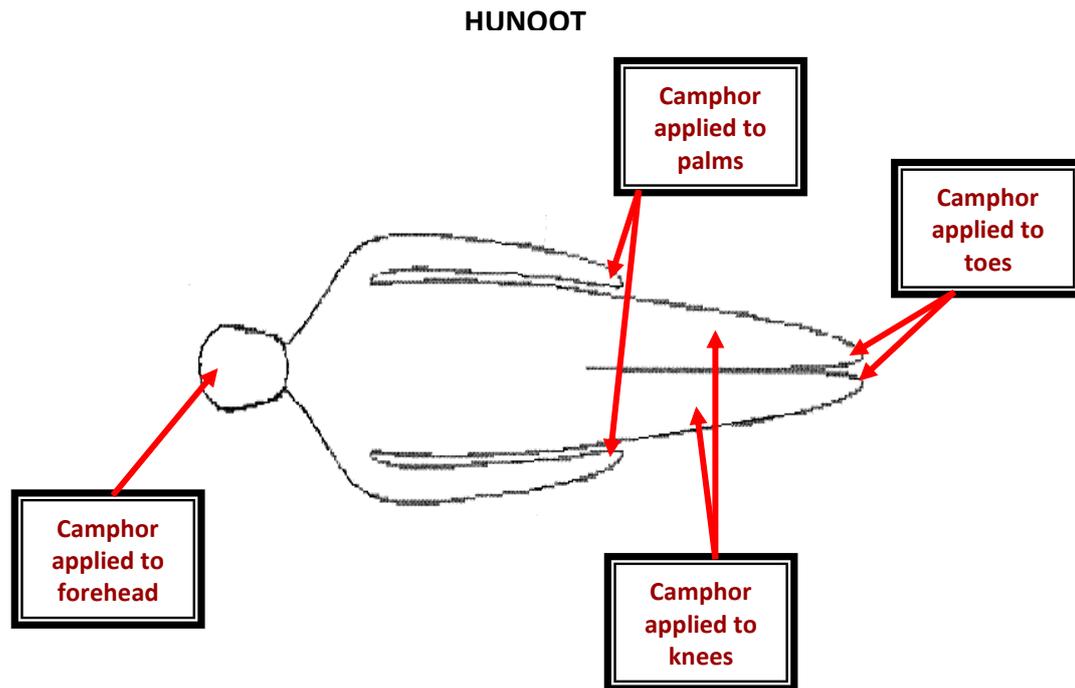
Camphorating (Hunoot)

Hunoot means rubbing with camphor the seven parts of body that touch the ground during the *sujud* of the daily prayers. Hunoot is *wājib* and should be performed after the *ghusl al-mayyit*. It is *mustahab* to perform it *before* the shrouding but there is no harm if it is done during or after the *takfin*. The forehead, the palms of the hands, the knees, and the big toes should be rubbed with powdered, fresh camphor. To rub camphor on the nose is *mustahab* (recommended).

Camphor should be rubbed first on the forehead; but there is no recommended order for the remaining places. As an obligatory precaution (*ih̥tiyāt wājib*), the camphor should not be mixed with any scent, but it is recommended to mix it with a little earth from Karbala, but only a little, so that the mixture will still be regarded as camphor. The camphor mixed with the turbah of Karbala should only be rubbed on the forehead and palms but not on the knees or toes.

The camphor must be fresh and have fragrance. If it is stale and without fragrance, it will not suffice.

Since it is also *wājib* to use camphor in one of the three *ghusls* of *mayyit*, if there is only a small amount of camphor available that is not enough for both the *ghusl* and the *hunoot*, the *ghusl* should be given priority and the *hunoot* will no longer be *wājib*.



It is also mustahab to place two pieces of fresh, green twigs in the grave with the dead body. These two twigs are called *jaridatayn* and are usually placed on either side of the arms of the deceased or on either side of the grave or coffin.

Lesson 6

Takfín, Salát al-Mayyít & Ghusl Mass al-Mayyít

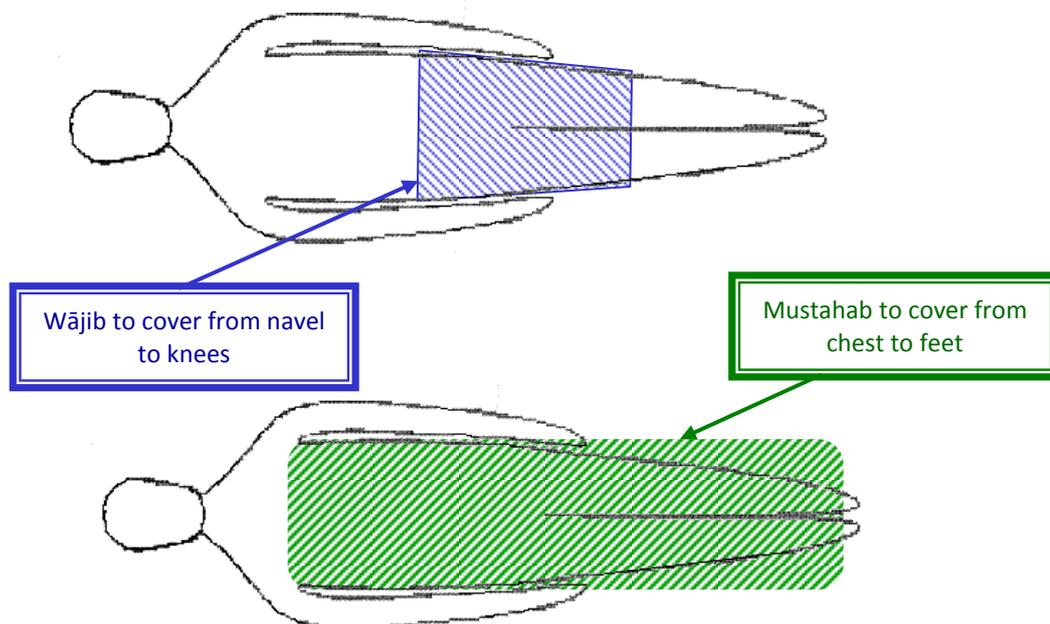
Takfin

Like Ghusl al-Mayyit, shrouding the corpse (takfin) of a Muslim is also *fard al-kifāya* (a communal duty). Takfin is done after the ghusl is over, the body is dried and *hunoot* has been done.

The corpse must be shrouded with at least three pieces of cloth, which should all be wide and long enough to enable them to wrap generously around the body:

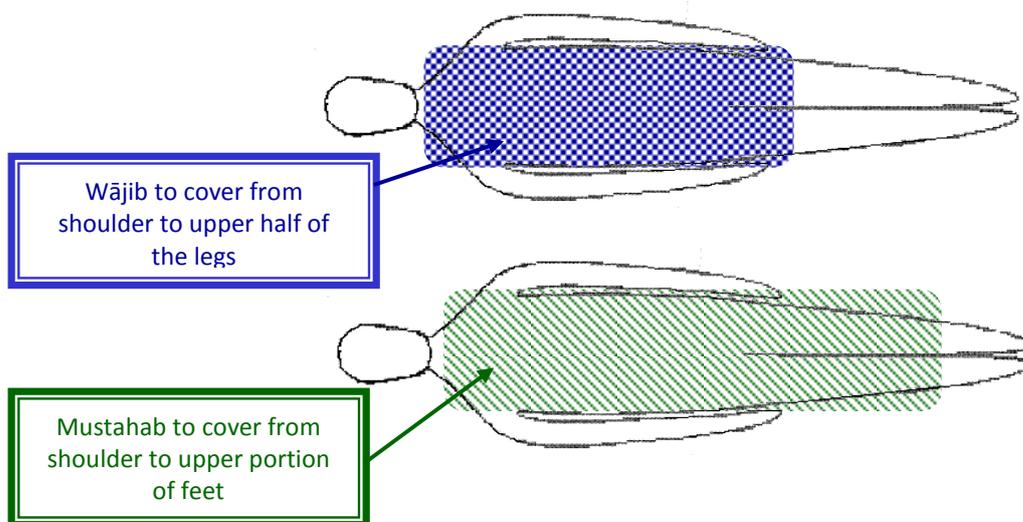
1. **A cloth for the waist:** It is wājib for this cloth to cover the body from the navel (just below waist line) down to the knees. And it is mustahab if it covers the corpse from the chest to the feet.

THE APPROXIMATE SIZE OF THE FIRST CLOTH IS 60" X 54" (150cms x 135cms)



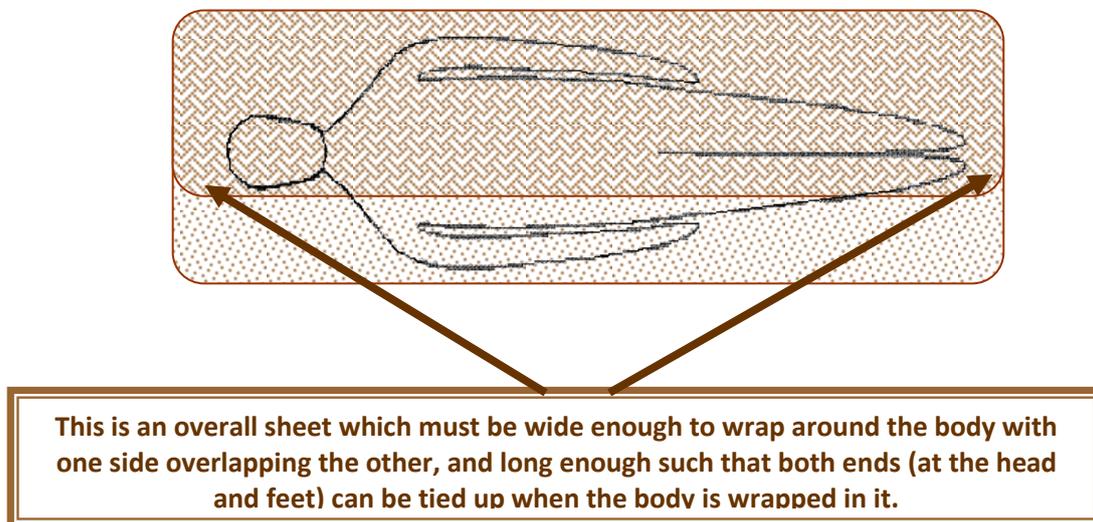
2. **A shirt cloth:** it should cover the corpse from the shoulders to the thighs (wājib). It is mustahab to cover from the shoulders to the upper portion of the feet.

THE APPROXIMATE SIZE OF THE SECOND CLOTH IS 36" X 110" (90cms x 275cms)



- 3. **A cloth to cover the whole corpse:** it should be wide enough to wrap around the whole body, and long enough to be tied at both the head and the foot of the corpse

THE APPROXIMATE SIZE OF THE THIRD CLOTH IS 60" X 90" (150cms X 225cms)



Rules About the Cloth Used as Kafan

These three pieces of the shroud (*kafan*) are wājib, although there are some other recommended pieces. A person who is in *ihrām* should also be shrouded, like any other corpse.

It is mustahab that the kafan should be white cotton cloth. If the kafan is being taken from a large reel of cloth, it is better not to cut the cloth with a metal instrument. Instead the hand can be used to rip the cloth.

The wājib three pieces of the shroud should not be so thin that the corpse may be seen underneath them. The kafan should not be of pure silk, unless no other cloth is available. Similarly, it is not permitted, except in emergency, to shroud the corpse with cloth made of the wool or the hair of an animal that is forbidden to eat, or with the hide of an animal whose meat is permitted.

It is permitted to use cloth made of the wool or hair of an animal whose meat is permitted, although the recommended precaution (*ihtiyāt mustahab*) is not to use these two materials.

The pieces of the shroud must not be of usurped (*ghasbi*) material. If the shroud is made of usurped material, it should be removed from the body of the dead person, even when he is buried. The shroud, also, should not be of najis material except in cases of emergency. If it becomes najis it should be cleaned or the unclean part should be removed, even when the body is placed in the grave. If it is impossible to clean it or remove the unclean material, the whole shroud should, if possible, be changed. If there is bleeding from a wound, the part of the corpse from which the bleeding comes may be covered with some impermeable material and sealed off so that the blood does not leak out and stain the shroud.

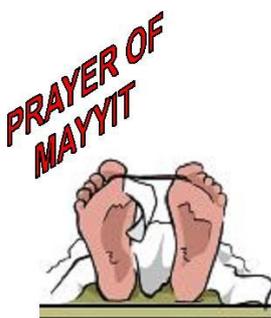
It is recommended that a person should purchase his or her own shroud while alive, or should mention in his or her Will the source of his or her shroud. Otherwise it may be provided out of the original wealth of the deceased. However, a wife's shroud should be provided for by her husband, even if she has her own wealth.

Mustahab Additions to the Kafan

There are several other mustahab additions to the kafan that have not been described here in detail. For example, for a man, it is mustahab to tie another piece of cloth around the head like a turban, a cloth around the first wājib piece like a belt and even a separate smaller piece of cloth just to cover the private parts (like an underwear). Similarly, there are pieces like these for a woman except that the piece on the head is tied like a scarf and there is an extra piece tied around the chest.

These extra pieces should be learnt about by those who regularly help with the ghusl and takfin of Muslims. But to keep it simple, for those who only need to know what is wājib (for emergencies), the mustahab additions are not being covered in these notes. You can find out more from the *risāla* of your marj'a.

Salāt al-Mayyit



The prayer for the dead (*salāt al-mayyit*) must be performed (i.e. is *wājib*) for all adult deceased Muslims and for children who are six years of age or older as long as at least one of their parents is Muslim. If a child was not six years old but knew what *salāh* was, then, as *ihtiyāt wājib*, *salāt al-mayyit* should also be performed. Otherwise for younger children, the *salāt al-mayyit* can be prayed only with the *niyyah* of *rajā* (i.e. not as *wājib* but just for the *thawāb*). It is neither necessary nor *mustahab* to pray *salāt al-mayyit* for a still-born child.

The *salāh* for the dead person should be said **after** the *ghusl al-mayyit*, the *hunoot*, and the shrouding (*takfin*). If it is performed before the above-mentioned rites, it will be considered void (*bātil*).

If a dead person is buried without the *salāh*, or it is discovered later that the *salāh* was invalid, the *salāh* for the dead must be performed after burial on the grave before the body has decomposed.

Performing the *salāh* for the dead for a deceased person more than once is normally disapproved, but if the deceased is a religious figure of repute, due to his piety, knowledge, or service to Islam, it is desirable.

The *salāh* for the dead can be performed at any permissible (non-*ghasbi*) place, but it is disapproved to pray it in a *masjid* (the Grand Mosque (*Masjid al-Harām*) in Makkah being an exception).

Even though *Salāt al-Mayyit* is *wājib al-kifāi*, it is highly recommended and there is great spiritual reward for as many Muslims as possible to join in the *salāh*.

General Rules Regarding Salāt al-Mayyit

Salāt al-Mayyit is different from other prayers in several respects. In this *salāh* it is not necessary for the persons who performs it to have done *wudu* or *ghusl*. Nor is it necessary for the clothes or body to be clean (*tāhir*), though it is recommended that those who perform this *salāh* should be in a state of ritual purity (*tahārah*) and should have done *wudu* or *tayammum*.

As is the case in all other prayers, the person who is praying for the dead must face the *qibla*.

It is *wājib* that the corpse should be placed on its back in front of those who are performing the *salāt al-mayyit*, such that the head of the corpse should be to the right of the people and the feet to the left of them (whilst they are facing *qibla*).

There must not be any curtain or obstacle between the corpse and those performing the salāh. The corpse may be placed in a coffin, but there should not be any considerable distance between the coffin and the place where those who pray are standing. If the salāh is said in congregation (jamā'ah), then everyone should stand in continuous rows such that everyone is connected with each other and therefore to the corpse.

When the salāh is said in congregation, it is recommended that the Imām should stand in front of the middle of the corpse (i.e. around the waist of the corpse) if the corpse is that of a male, and in front of the chest if the corpse is that of a woman. The distance between the coffin and the Imām of the congregation should be so little that if the wind blows, his cloak (*abā*) or loose clothing would touch the coffin.

It is recommended that those saying the salāt al-mayyit should stand barefoot. Before the salāh, it is recommended that instead of the adhān the faithful should be summoned to the prayer by calling '*as-salāh*' three times. Even if there are only two people praying the salāt al-mayyit, the one following should stand behind the Imām. A woman in the state of *haid* (menses) can pray salāt al-mayyit but she should stand alone and not join the lines in the congregation.

How to Pray Salāt al-Mayyit

1. If the Imām who will lead Salāt al-Mayyit is not the guardian (*wali*) of the deceased, he should first ask permission from the *wali*.
2. The Imām and those performing this salāh should make the niyyah that they are performing it for such-and-such a person *wājib qurbatan ilallāh* (i.e. in order to carry out the instructions of Allāh and to seek closeness to Him).
3. Then five *takbirs* should be made, each *takbir* followed by a certain supplication. It is recommended to raise one's hands up to the ears during each *takbir*. The Imām of the congregation should read the supplications aloud, and those in the congregation should repeat them quietly:

a. After 1st Takbir:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

I bear witness there is no god but Allāh and that Muhammad (s) is Allāh's Messenger

b. After 2nd Takbir:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

O Allāh, bless Muhammad (s) and the progeny of Muhammad (s)

c. After 3rd Takbir:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

O Allāh, forgive all the faithful – men and women

d. After 4th Takbir:

if it is a man:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِهَذَا الْمَيِّتِ

O Allāh, forgive this dead body

if it is a woman:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِهَذِهِ الْمَيِّتَةِ

O Allāh, forgive this dead body

e. The 5th Takbir marks the end of the salāt al-mayyit. The corpse is now ready to be taken away for burial.

There are longer versions to each of the four supplications after each takbir and you can review them in the *risāla* of your marj'a. But you should learn the above minimum for emergencies when you are travelling and there is no scholar around and you have no access to the *risāla* but are required to perform the salāt al-mayyit. (Since *ghusl al-mayyit*, *hunoot*, *takfin*, *salāt al-mayyit* and *tadfin* are *fard al-kifāya*, you must know the minimum rules for each at all times.)

Another reason to learn the minimum recitations for salāt al-mayyit by heart is that a person who joins a salāt al-mayyit in congregation late, should still recite all the five takbirs and supplications.

In summary:

Salāt al-mayyit has five takbirs (“Allāhu Akbar”)

1. After the first takbir, *kalima ash-shahadatayn* is recited.
2. After the second takbir, *salawāt* is recited.
3. After the third takbir, a prayer is offered for all the believers and muslims.
4. After the fourth takbir, a prayer is offered especially for the deceased one.
5. After the fifth takbir, the prayer comes to an end.

After the completion of salāt al-mayyit, it is recommended to recite:

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Our Lord! Give us good in the world and in the hereafter good. And protect us from the punishment of the Fire.

The five takbirs must be said without any unnecessary interval that disrupts the sequence (*tartib*) of the salāh. If salāt al-mayyit is performed in congregation (*jamā'ah*), everyone has to recite the whole salāh. It is not correct just to say 'Allāhu Akbar' and remain silent between the takbirs.

Ghusl Mass al-Mayyit

Ghusl mass al-mayyit is a wājib ghusl that must be done for touching a corpse after it goes cold and before it is given ghusl al-mayyit. (The Arabic word *mass* literally means 'to touch' and is pronounced 'muss'). This is wājib regardless of whether a person touches a corpse voluntarily or involuntarily, in sleep or while awake, and even if just a person's fingernails touched the body. The only exception is if one's hair touches the body or one touches the hair of the corpse and it is long enough so that the head is not touched. In this case, it is recommended but not wājib.

If a person touches a body before it has become completely cold, even though he or she may have touched a part which has become cold, it is not wājib to perform the ghusl.

After the dead body of a Muslim has been given ghusl al-mayyit then no ghusl is necessary for touching it.

Ghusl mass al-mayyit is also wājib for touching a severed part of the body which contains a bone, whether it belongs to a living person or has separated from a dead body (before it is given ghusl). But no *ghusl* is wājib for touching a part of the body which does not contain the bone.

If a person touches the bone or teeth of a deceased person he must perform *ghusl mass al-mayyit*, but it is not necessary after touching the bone or tooth of a living person which does not have flesh attached to it.

Someone who touches the body of a dead child, even a miscarried fetus who is at least four months old, must perform *ghusl mass al-mayyit*. For touching a fetus that is less than four months it is not wājib but still recommended to perform *ghusl mass al-mayyit*.

One who has touched a corpse cannot perform the daily wājib salāh etc. before performing *ghusl mass al-mayyit*. However, unlike in *janābah* and other such states of uncleanness, in the case of touching the dead it is not harām to stay in a masjid or to recite the wājib *sajdah āyāt* of the Qur'ān.

Also, whereas one does not have to do wudu for salāh after ghusl of *janābah*, after one performs *ghusl mass al-mayyit*, they still do have to perform wudu before salāh.

Note: Because salāt al-mayyit does not require one to be tāhir or in wudu or ghusl, you can pray salāt al-mayyit without *ghusl mass al-mayyit*. For example, if you are involved in washing the dead body then quite likely *ghusl mass al-mayyit* will be wājib on you. But you can complete the hunoot, takfin and even pray the salāt al-mayyit before going home to perform the *ghusl mass al-mayyit*.

Lesson 7

Gender-Specific (for Boys)

Not Shaving Beard

Allāh dislikes men who imitate women and women who imitate men. He created men and women to be physically distinct and gave each gender their own physical beauty. Allāh caused a beard to grow on man's face as a sign of being a man. Thus no gender should imitate the other.

Towards this goal, shaving the beard is harām for boys and men. According to Ayatullah Ali as-Sistāni even the part of the beard that grows on the cheeks is wājib to keep and harām to shave. It is not necessary that the beard should be very long. It is permitted for a man to trim his beard and highly encouraged that he keeps it clean. A medium growth is best where it is not too short so that it cannot be seen, nor too long so that it appears untidy and unkempt. The moustache should not be allowed to grow too long. It should be trimmed so that it does not cover the lips.

Grooming the beard does not mean 'playing' with it and trying different 'styles'. It simply means not leaving it to look dirty and not trimming it so short that a person across the room cannot even tell if you have a beard or not.

Keeping a beard is a part of a Muslim's '*adālah* (being just). One of the qualities of an '*ādil* (just) Muslim is that he does not sin and disobey Allāh openly and publicly.

In the Western society that we live in a beard is also often seen as a sign of a man being religious. A Muslim man who keeps a beard will therefore find it also acts as a form of chastity just like the hijāb does for a woman. The hijāb that a woman wears is a sign of her religious beliefs and keeps men from flirting with her while acting as a form of chastity and protection for her.

All the Prophets and Messengers of Allāh ('a) always grew a beard and so did all the Imāms ('a) and their pious companions.

Just as a Muslim woman wears hijāb to school, work, etc. and is not ashamed to be seen as a practising Muslim, you too should be proud to keep your beard at school, work, etc. and not be ashamed of keeping it.

When a young man wishes to marry a girl who is pious and God-fearing, one of first things he checks is whether she observes hijāb. Similarly, when a Muslim girl who seeks a pious husband sees a suitable man who wears a beard, it tells her that he is respectful of the laws of shari'ah and he is not ashamed to obey Allāh in public. This means our physical appearance and practices are very important. They reflect the faith in our heart: whether it is the decent clothes we wear, how clean we look or dress, or the beard or hijāb we wear. All these say something about us to others and

will later in life, influence who we attract into our lives, who we become, what we do for a career, where we end up living, etc.

This doesn't mean that a woman who does not wear hijāb or a man who shaves cannot be pious. And we shouldn't judge others especially when we don't even know their personal circumstances and the reason for their behaviour. Our concern should first and foremost be about ourselves – not others. We must try and practice Islam as much as possible and do all we can to be as pious as possible. A pious man attracts a pious wife and raises pious children, for the pleasure of Allāh. He enjoys true happiness both in this world and the hereafter. And that should be our goal.

When most men in the Muslim community keep a beard, it encourages others to do the same. Equally, when we shave our beard we set a precedence and encourage other Muslim men around us to shave.

Types of Wājib Ghusl

In Islam, there are seven types of wājib ghusl. These are summarized below. The last three are for women only:

1. **Ghusl al-Janābah:** This is wājib after a man or woman becomes *mujnib*. A man becomes *mujnib* whenever semen ejaculates from his body. A woman becomes *mujniba* only after having sex.
2. **Ghusl al-Mayyit:** This is a wājib ghusl given to the body of a deceased Muslim.
3. **Ghusl Mass al-Mayyit:** This is wājib on a Muslim who touches a dead body after it has become cold and before it has been given *Ghusl al-Mayyit*.
4. **Ghusl for a Nadhr:** A *nadhr* is an oath or promise that a person makes to Allāh that he or she will do something (e.g. ghusl or fast, etc.) if they get what they are making the pledge for. Sometimes it is called *qasam* or *'ahd*.
5. **Ghusl al-Haid:** This is done by women only after the end of a regular monthly menstruation cycle that lasts between 3-10 days.
6. **Ghusl al-Istihādha:** This is performed by women during an irregular bleeding.
7. **Ghusl an-Nifās:** This is done by women after the bleeding that occurs after childbirth.

Janābah

In Book 8, you already learnt about Janābah, its ghusl and the rules for it. You should review the rules of Janābah relating to Ghusl, Salāh and Sawm.

Briefly:

Whereas a man becomes mujnib (or in the state of janābah) as soon as semen comes out of his body (for whatever reason), a woman only becomes mujniba after having sex.

Before a man or woman in janābah can pray or fast, they must do the wājib ghusl of janābah.

In the case of salāh, If the time before *qadā* for the salāh is very little, they should perform tayammum and pray the wājib salāh and then perform the ghusl.

And in the case of fasting (*sawm*), it is *harām* for a man and woman to do anything that will make them mujnib during the month of Ramadan when fasting (from fajr to maghrib).

If a Muslim becomes *mujnib(a)* in the night, he or she must do the Ghusl of Janābah before Fajr time for the next fast otherwise he or she will have to pay (*qadā*) for the fast and pay an additional *kaffāra* (which is feeding 60 poor people or fasting 60 days) for breaking the fast intentionally.

If there is not enough time for ghusl al-janābah before fajr, they should do tayammum instead so that their fast will be valid. And then they should do ghusl as soon as possible and before praying fajr.

What is Harām in the State of Janābah

1. Touching the letters of the Qur'ān, the names of Allāh, and the names of the prophets (*anbiyā*) and the fourteen ma'sumeen ('a).
2. Entering the sacred masjid of Makkah (Masjid al-Harām) and the sacred masjid of Rasulullāh (s) (Masjid al-Nabawi) in Madina.
3. Staying at other masājid or taking anything in or out of the masjid. However, passing through masājid without stopping is allowed. A mosque is only the area that is designated as a 'masjid' and does not include a hall where people pray but also have other functions (e.g. a Husainiya).
4. Reciting any of the four āyāt of Qur'ān for which sajdah is wājib. These are: Surah as-Sajdah (32) āyah 15, Surah al-Fussillat (41) āyah 38, Surah an-Najm (53) āyah 62, and Surah al-Iqra (96) āyah 19.

Lesson 7

Gender-Specific (for Girls)

Types of Wājib Ghusl

In Islam, there are seven types of wājib ghusl. These are summarized below. The last three are for women only:

1. **Ghusl al-Janābah:** This wājib after a man or woman becomes *mujnib*. A man becomes *mujnib* whenever semen ejaculates from his body. A woman becomes *mujniba* only after having sex.
2. **Ghusl al-Mayyit:** This is a wājib ghusl given to the body of a deceased Muslim.
3. **Ghusl Mass al-Mayyit:** This is wājib on a Muslim who touches a dead body after it has become cold and before it has been given *Ghusl al-Mayyit*.
4. **Ghusl for a Nadhr:** A *nadhr* is an oath or promise that a person makes to Allāh that he or she will do something (e.g. ghusl or fast, etc.) if they get what they are making the pledge for. Sometimes it is called *qasam* or *'ahd*.
5. **Ghusl al-Haid:** This is done by women only after the end of a regular monthly menstruation cycle that lasts between 3-10 days.
6. **Ghusl al-Istihādha:** This is performed by women during an irregular bleeding.
7. **Ghusl an-Nifās:** This is done by women after the bleeding that occurs after childbirth.

Nifās

In previous Diniyat books, you have learnt about *Haid* and *Istihādha* and the wājib ghusls related to them.

The bleeding that women experience at the time of giving birth to a child or when a foetus is miscarried is called *nifās*.

The maximum duration of *nifās* is ten days, but there is no minimum limit - the bleeding may stop in a few moments.

When the bleeding after childbirth or miscarriage continues for more than ten days, a woman should consider the first ten days of her bleeding as *nifās*

and the rest as *istihādha*. If a woman usually has a regular menstrual period (*haid*) both in duration and dates and she experiences *nifās* for more than ten days, then she should consider the period equal to her menses (*haid*) as *nifās* and the rest as *istihādha* even if it includes the dates in which she had the habit of menstrual bleeding.

All acts that are *harām* for a woman in *haid* are also *harām* during *nifās*. Similarly those things that are *wājib*, *mustahab* and *makruh* in *haid* are likewise in *nifās*. For example, a man cannot divorce his wife during her *haid* period. Therefore he cannot divorce her during *nifās* either.

After the first ten days following childbirth, a woman is supposed to perform the *wājib* ghusl for *nifās* and pray, fast and perform all acts that are permitted for *istihādha*. It is a sin not to do the ghusl for *nifās* without reason and/or not to practice what is *wājib* or to keep away from one's duties and think of oneself as ritually unclean after ten days, regardless of whether the bleeding has stopped after ten days or before it stops (when it is considered to be *istihādha*).

In Book 8, you learnt about the matters that are *harām* for a woman during *haid* (and therefore *nifās*). You should review them again. Additionally, it is *harām* for a woman to have sexual relations with her husband during *haid* and *nifās*. Once her bleeding stops, she can have sexual relations with her husband again but it is recommended that she does the ghusl of *haid* (or *nifās*) first.

Janābah

When a woman has sex she becomes ritually impure i.e. is in the state of Janābah. To come out of Janābah, she must do a *wājib* ghusl (just like any other ghusl but with the niyyah of Janābah) called Ghusl al-Janābah.

Before a man or woman in janābah can pray or fast, they must do the *wājib* ghusl of janābah. After the ghusl of janābah, a man or woman do not have to do wudu for salāh unless something happens that would normally break the wudu (like passing gas, falling asleep or urinating after the ghusl).

In the case of salāh, If the time before qadā for the salāh is very little, they should perform tayammum and pray the *wājib* salāh and then perform the ghusl. But if they delayed doing the ghusl until there wasn't enough time, then they have committed a sin nonetheless and should ask Allāh for forgiveness.

And in the case of fasting (sawm), it is *harām* to have sex during the month of Ramadan when fasting (from fajr to maghrib). If a man or woman enters janābah in the night, he or she must do the Ghusl of Janābah before Fajr time for the next fast otherwise he or she will have to pay (qadā) for the fast and pay an additional kaffāra (of feeding 60 poor people or fasting 60 days) for breaking the fast intentionally. If a man or woman delays the ghusl of janābah until there is not

enough time before fajr, they should do tayammum instead so that their fast will be valid. And then they should do ghusl before praying fajr. It is nonetheless a sin to delay the ghusl of janābah intentionally until there is not enough time to pray or start fasting and one is forced to do tayammum.

When a woman is in the state of janābah, the things that are harām during *haid* are also harām during janābah and they are listed here:

What is Harām in State of Janābah

1. Touching the letters of the Qur’ān, the names of Allāh, and the names of the prophets (*anbiyā*) and the fourteen ma’sumeen (‘a).
2. Entering the sacred masjid of Makkah (Masjid al-Harām) and the sacred masjid of Rasulullāh (s) (Masjid al-Nabawi) at Madina, even if it is only in order to pass through them. As an *ihtiyāt mustahab*, one should not pause or stop within the area around an Imām’s tomb.
3. Staying at other masājid or taking anything in or out of the masjid. However, passing through masājid without stopping is allowed. A mosque is only the area that is designated as a ‘masjid’ and does not include a hall where people pray but also have other functions (e.g. a Husainiya).
4. Reciting any of the four āyāt of Qur’ān for which sajdah is wājib. These are: Surah as-Sajdah (32) āyah 15, Surah al-Fussillat (41) āyah 38, Surah an-Najm (53) āyah 62, and Surah al-Iqra (96) āyah 19.

What is Makruh in State of Janābah

1. Reading more than seven āyāt of the Qur’ān
2. Touching the cover or blank pages of the Qur’ān (even if writing is not touched – which is harām)
3. Applying henna
4. Rubbing oil on the body
5. Sleeping
6. Eating or drinking

If a person needs to eat, drink or sleep before doing ghusl al-janābah, it is recommended for them to do wudu first.

TARIKH (History)

Lesson 1

Híjjat al-Widá & Ghadír Khúm

In Book 9, we studied the events of 8 AH and 9 AH and how, after the Treaty of Hdaybiyya, the Quraysh violated the treaty and the Muslims came to Makkah in large numbers and took it over without bloodshed or fighting, freeing Makkah of idol worship forever. This event came to be known in history as Fath Makkah.

In the month of Dhul Qa'adah 10 AH, Rasulullāh (s) announced he would be going to Makkah again to perform a final pilgrimage (Hajj). This is known in Islamic history as Hijjat al-Widā (The Farewell Hajj). Rasulullāh (s) passed away just two and half months after this last Hajj.

As Rasulullāh (s) got ready to leave Madina for Makkah, thousands of Muslims from all over Arabia joined him, many waiting outside Madina to join him halfway. This was also going to be an opportunity for Rasulullāh (s) to demonstrate the wājibāt (mandatory) and mustahabāt (recommended) practices of Hajj and to do away with any undesirable practices from the days of ignorance (jāhiliyya) when people came to Makkah for pilgrimage, trade and idol worship.

Rasulullāh (s) left for Makkah on 28th Dhul Qa'adah 10 AH, taking with him 60 animals for sacrifice. Just outside Madina, at the place now called Masjid ash-Shajarah, Rasulullāh (s) put on him ihrām and recited the talbiyya. All the Muslims with him did the same and then continued their journey to Makkah. The distance between Madina and Makkah is about 340 kms.

Imām Ali ('a) had been sent on a mission to Yemen by Rasulullāh (s). So he left Yemen and came directly to Makkah where he joined Rasulullāh (s) and performed the Hajj with him as well.

When Rasulullāh (s) got to Makkah, he entered Masjid al-Harām from the Gate (Bāb) Banu Shaybah, glorifying Allāh and seeking blessings for his ancestor Nabi Ibrāhim ('a), who had first established the Hajj practices after building the Ka'bah.

Rasulullāh (s) then performed the tawāf, Salāt al-Tawāf and Sa'i. He permitted those who had not brought a sacrificial animal to clip some of their hair or trim their nails and remove their ihrām, treating their previous actions as Umra at-Tamattu. Thereafter they would wait until the 9th of Dhul Hijjah to put on their ihrām again for the main part of Hajj. And those who had already brought a sacrificial animal with them had the option to remain in ihrām until the start of the main part of Hajj on 9th Dhul Hijjah.

On the 8th of Dhul Hijjah, Rasulullāh (s) left for Mina where he stayed until the sunrise of 9th Dhul Hijjah when he mounted his camel and came to Arafāt. Over

100,000 Muslims accompanied Rasulullāh (s) as he performed all the ceremonies of Hajj at Arafāt, Muzdalifa (Mash'ar al-Harām), Mina and Makkah.

Ghadir Khumm

When the ceremonies of the Hajj were over, Rasulullāh (s) departed from Makkah for the last time, heading back to Madina. When he reached Rabigh, a place 3 miles from Ju'fah, the angel Jibrāil ('a) revealed the following verse to him:

﴿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-Mā'idah, 5:67

Rasulullāh (s) therefore gave instructions for a pulpit to be made from the saddles of horses and camels. He asked Bilāl, who had a loud voice, to call back the people who had gone further ahead and to attract the attention of those who were behind.

According to some narrators, 120,000 Muslims gathered at the place that was known as Ghadeer Khum (The pond of Khum). It was noon time and very hot. Rasulullāh (s) led the Dhuhr salāh and then stood on the pulpit of saddles so that all the people could see him.

He then gave a sermon in which he praised and glorified Allāh. He declared the tenets of Islam once again and then told people that he would be returning to Allāh very soon.

Many of the Muslims wept in sorrow when they heard this and undoubtedly many began thinking what would happen to the Muslims after Rasulullāh (s).

To ensure they would never be left alone and to give them hope to continue on the path of Islam, Rasulullāh (s) told the people that he was leaving behind the Qur'ān and his family, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), and that if they held on to these two, they would never go astray.

Rasulullāh (s) then asked the people, 'do you bear witness that I have delivered the message of Allāh to you and all the teachings of Islam?' and they all shouted, 'yes, O Messenger of Allāh!'

Then he asked them, 'O people! Do I not have a greater right over you than even you have over your own selves?' and they replied together, 'yes indeed, O Messenger of Allāh!'

Then Rasulullāh (s) brought Imām Ali ('a) (who was standing beside him) in front of him until people could see the face of Imām Ali ('a) instead of Rasulullāh (s) and then he lift the arm of Imām Ali ('a) high up and declared, 'O People! Allāh is my Mawla (Master) and I am the master (mawla) of the faithful. Whoever considers me to be his master, then this Ali is his master (now)!'

Thereafter, Rasulullāh (s) told all the Muslims present, 'let those of you who are present here today take this message back to those who are absent!' (i.e. even those who will be born later).

Rasulullāh (s) then prayed to Allāh, 'O Allāh, love those who will love Ali and oppose those who will oppose him. Help those who help him and defeat those who will seek to defeat him.'

When the sermon of Rasulullāh (s) came to an end, the angel Jibrāil ('a) descended once more and revealed the following verse:

﴿...الْيَوْمَ يَيْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ 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 Islam as your religion....

- Surah al-Mā'idah, 5:3

A tent was then set up at Ghadir Khum and people lined up to congratulate Imām Ali ('a) for his appointment as the successor of Rasulullāh (s).

One of the first people to congratulate Imām Ali ('a) were Abu Bakr and Umar who soon after the passing of Rasulullāh (s) denied this right and took the successorship (khilāfah) of Rasulullāh (s) for themselves.

Umar in particular is reported in Hadith as saying to Imām Ali ('a), 'congratulations! Congratulations to you, O son of Abu Tālib! This day you have become my master and the master of all the faithful (mu'mineen).'

Thereafter the people began leaving for their individual hometowns and different caravans headed back towards Madina, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and so forth. Some 10,000 Muslims accompanied Rasulullāh (s) back to Madina, where they arrived just before the start of Muharram 11 AH.

The day of Ghadir is one of the most important events in Islamic history and to this day, the Shi'ah of Amir al-Mu'mineen Imām Ali b. Abi Tālib ('a) throughout the world joyfully celebrate this event on the 18th of Dhul Hijjah as 'Id al-Ghadir.

Lesson 2

The Last Days of Rasūlullāh (s)

Illness of the Prophet (s)

After Rasūlullāh (s) announced at Ghadir Khumm that he would leave the world soon and that Imām Ali (‘a) would be his successor, several groups - jealousy of Imām Ali (‘a) and greedy for power - were watching events in Madina very closely.

Some simply disliked Imām Ali (‘a) because of his closeness to Rasūlullāh (s) and could not tolerate having someone from the Banu Hāshim lead the Muslims after Rasūlullāh (s). Others had personal ambitions. Also, by 10 AH, Islam was firmly established in Arabia and there was a lot to be gained by taking power and authority. The Quraysh of Makkah (led by Abu Sufyān) who had fought against Rasūlullāh (s) all their lives had lost Makkah just 2 years before and they now saw an opportunity to regain power through Islam.

Rasūlullāh (s) himself also realized that there would be a struggle for power after him. At the beginning of the month of Safar 11 AH, Rasūlullāh (s) fell ill. Just then he also received news of a potential attack on Madina by the Romans to the North-West of Arabia. Rasūlullāh (s) therefore asked a young man named Usāma b. Zayd to lead an army of Muslims against the Romans. He specifically asked all the Muhājirun, except for Imām Ali (‘a), to leave Madina and join Usāma’s army. Usāma set out and camped at a place called Jurf, 3 miles outside Madina and everyone was asked to gather there before departing for battle against the enemy.

Some of the leading figures from the Muhājirun refused to go and disobeyed the orders of Rasūlullāh (s) making up excuses such as Usāma being too young to lead them. In reality they knew Rasūlullāh (s) would not recover from his illness and they did not want to be absent when the leadership of the Muslims passed on to someone else after Rasūlullāh (s).

Rasūlullāh (s) was disappointed when he found out that people were not setting out of Madina to join Usāma. He said, ‘may Allāh curse one who turns away from the army of Usāma.’ But it still did not make a difference for some of the people.

As time passed, the health of Rasūlullāh (s) worsened and the expedition of Usāma never took place. It is interesting to note that later on, when Imām Ali (‘a) was denied his right, the same reason was given – that he was too young to lead the Muslims.

On some occasions Rasūlullāh (s) was too ill to even walk on his own or go to the masjid to lead the salāh. His two wives – A’isha and Hafsa – would argue for their own fathers to lead the salāh. A’isha would say, ‘tell Abu Bakr to lead the salāh’ (meaning her father) and Hafsa would argue, ‘tell Umar to lead the salāh’. Rasūlullāh

(s) would get up, leaning on a stick, with a bandage around his head, and would go to the masjid and lead the salāh himself.

There came a time however when Rasulullāh (s) could not even get up from bed. On the Thursday before he passed away, a large number of his companions came to see him. Rasulullāh (s) said to the people, 'bring me a pen and paper that I may dictate something to you so that you will never go astray after me.'

Umar b. al-Khattāb, who was present, knew that Rasulullāh (s) wanted to put in writing that his successor is Imām Ali ('a). So he began shouting, 'the man is talking nonsense! The Book of Allāh is enough for us!' Others in the room were shocked to hear this and began shouting that the Messenger of Allāh (s) must be given a chance to write his will. Before long, everyone in the room was shouting at each other. Rasulullāh (s) knew that even if he insisted writing a will now, Umar will argue that Rasulullāh (s) was not himself when he wrote it. So he told all the people, 'get out and leave me alone!' This was a very sad event. People used to remember this event even much later and they would weep bitterly. It is known as *Raziyat Yaum al-Khamees* (The Calamity of the Thursday).

Rasulullāh (s) passed away on Monday, 28th Safar 11 AH at the time of Dhuhr. In his last moments, he was surrounded by the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) only. Imām Hasan ('a) and Imām Husayn ('a) were hugging Rasulullāh (s) as he lay on the bed with his head on the lap of Imām Ali ('a). Sayyida Fātima az-Zahra ('a) sat beside her father crying. At one point Rasulullāh (s) opened his eyes and whispered something to his daughter Sayyida Fātima az-Zahra ('a) and she smiled. When she was asked later why she smiled she said her father had told her that she would be the first one from his family to come to him in Jannah. Sayyida Fātima ('a) passed away within two and half to three months after Rasulullāh (s).

Demise and Burial

The Angel of Death (Malak al-Mawt) asked permission before entering the house of Sayyida Fātima ('a) and even asked Rasulullāh (s) if he wanted to remain longer in the world. Rasulullāh (s) knew the Will of Allāh and chose to return to Allāh. When he took his last breathe, Imām Ali ('a) placed his palm near the mouth of Rasulullāh (s) and wiped his face with this last breathe.

Imām Ali ('a) personally carried out the funeral rites for Rasulullāh (s) and also went down in the grave of Rasulullāh (s) and received the body of Rasulullāh (s) and lowered it into the grave. Imām Ali ('a) wept a lot over the loss of Rasulullāh (s) saying, 'we have suffered because of your loss, O beloved of our hearts! In losing you, revelation from Allāh has been cut off from us! From Allāh we come and to Him is our return!'

Before the burial of Rasulullāh (s), the Muslims came in small numbers to pray over the body of Rasulullāh (s). Imām Ali (‘a) told them no one would lead the salāh in the presence of Rasulullāh (s) and everyone prayed without a leader.

The grave of Rasulullāh (s) was dug in the exact same spot where he passed away.

There were less than 10 people for the washing and burial of Rasulullāh (s). The most prominent members like Abu Bakr and Umar were completely absent, busying themselves with fighting over who should be the next leader. Thus they did not even pray over the body of Rasulullāh (s).

Rasulullāh (s) had lived all his life in perfect submission to Allāh. His life was blameless and his character was unmatched. Allāh praised him in the Qur’ān saying:

﴿وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

And indeed you possess a mighty character.

- Surah al-Qalam, 68:4

Allāh has also referred to Rasulullāh (s) in the Qur’ān as the Bearer of Good News (*Bashir*), the Warner (*Nadhīr*), a Brilliant Lamp (of Guidance) (*Sirāj al-Munīr*) and a Mercy for the Worlds (*Rahmatun lil ‘Alamin*).

Rasulullāh (s) had surrendered himself to Allāh so completely that Allāh would even take credit for his actions. When Rasulullāh (s) fought the enemy or even threw a handful of dust at them, Allāh said:

﴿فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ...﴾

You did not kill them; rather, it was Allāh who killed them; and you did not throw when you threw, rather, it was Allāh who threw...

- Surah al-Anfāl, 8:17

When people pledged allegiance to Rasulullāh (s), Allāh said:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ...﴾

Indeed those who swear allegiance to you, they swear allegiance only to Allāh: the hand of Allāh is above their hands....

- Surah al-Fath, 48:10

Allāh also guaranteed that everything Rasulullāh (s) said was from Him:

﴿وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ﴾

Nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him],

- Surah an-Najm, 53:3-4

And one who obeyed Rasulullāh (s) had in fact obeyed Allāh (s.w.t.), the Creator Himself:

﴿مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ...﴾

Whoever obeys the Apostle certainly obeys Allāh...

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:80

Thus passed away, and was buried in isolation, the greatest man to have ever lived.

Peace and blessings of Allāh be on the Messenger of Allāh, Muhammad al-Mustafa (s) and his Household, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).



Masjid an-Nabawi, Madina. The original masjid where Rasulullāh (s) is buried is at the far end in this picture, under the Green Dome (Qubbat al-Khadra).

Events Immediately After Rasulullāh (s)

As soon as Rasulullāh (s) passed away and the voices of the Banu Hāshim weeping were heard, some of the people came in to verify that indeed Rasulullāh (s) had passed away. This was despite the fact that Imām Ali (‘a) had already said so.

Umar b. al-Khattāb in particular behaved very strangely. He came in, looked at the face of Rasulullāh (s) and then began shouting that Rasulullāh (s) had not passed away but had gone to meet his Lord and would return. He then pulled out his sword and shouted, ‘if anyone says Rasulullāh is dead, I will behead him with my sword!’

It is not clear why he behaved like this but it was as if he was buying some time. As soon as Abu Bakr was called and he arrived, Umar calmed down. Someone came to tell them that people had gathered at a place called Saqifa to discuss the leadership after Rasulullāh (s) and the two men left hurriedly to go to Saqifa, leaving Imām Ali (‘a) and others to attend to the body of Rasulullāh (s).

We shall study more about Saqifa in Book 11. But after a lot of dispute and having ignored the declaration of Rasulullāh (s) at Ghadir Khumm that Imām Ali (‘a) was his successor, the people chose Abu Bakr as their Caliph and everyone was asked to pledge allegiance to him. Imām Ali (‘a) refused to do so because it was his right and duty to lead the Muslims. Umar tried to force Imām Ali (‘a) by burning the door of his house. As a result, within barely days of Rasulullāh (s) passing away, Sayyida Fātima (‘a) was injured and she lost her baby – Muhsin; a rope was tied around Imām Ali (‘a)’s neck to force him to come to the masjid to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr but he refused; the estate of Fadak that Rasulullāh (s) had given to his daughter Sayyida Fātima (‘a) was taken away by force from her; and other such atrocities were committed against the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).

Overnight, the Family (Ahl al-Bayt) (‘a) of Rasulullāh (s) were isolated, alone and oppressed. For the short period that she lived after Rasulullāh (s), Sayyida Fātima (‘a) cried day and night and called out to her father, Rasulullāh (s):

*Such afflictions have befallen me (after you),
If they were to befall on a day, it would change to a dark night!*

Imām Ali (‘a), who was once the most active individual in service of Islam, now stayed at home. And for the next 25 years, he simply ‘disappeared’ from public. He remained oppressed and was denied his right continuously. We shall study the events related to the early Caliphs in the next book as well.

Lesson 3

Imām ‘Alí Zayn al-‘Abídín (‘a)

Imām Ali b. al-Husayn (‘a) is the 4th Imām from the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and he is one of the divinely appointed successors to Rasulullāh (s). His father was Imām Husayn (‘a) and his mother Sayyida Shahzanān, the daughter of the Persian king Yazdajurd.

Imām Ali b. al-Husayn (‘a) was born in Madina on the 5th of Sha’bān 38 AH. He was poisoned by the Umayyad Caliph Walid b. Abd al-Malik and he passed away on 25th Muharram 95 AH at the age of 57. He is buried in Jannat al-Baqi in Madina next to his uncle Imām Hasan (‘a) (our 2nd Imām).

Imām Ali b. al-Husayn (‘a) was known by many titles, the most famous being ‘Zayn al-Abidin’ (The Adornment of the Worshipers), as-Sajjād (One who prostrates to Allāh a lot) and Sayyid as-Sājideen (The Master of those who prostrate before Allāh). This is because he was unmatched in his worship and prayers and he loved to supplicate to Allāh. His most famous supplications are all compiled in one book that is called Sahifa as-Sajjādiyyah. It is such a beautiful collection that the book has been called Zabur Aali Muhammad. This is because Zabur was revealed to Nabi Dāwud (‘a), who is famous in history for his supplications to Allāh. So the du’a collection of Imām Ali b. al-Husayn has also been called the Zabur of the family of Rasulullāh (s).

Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) was also very knowledgeable and pious. Many people benefited from his knowledge. And he loved to help the poor. He would come out in the darkness of the night carrying bags of money, food and even firewood and distribute it to the needy. When he reached the houses of the poor, he would knock their door and distribute everything he had to them. But he would hide his face so that no one could recognize him. It was only after he passed away that some people realized who had been helping them all the time.

Imām as-Sajjād (‘a) loved to sit with the poor, the orphans and the crippled and he often shared meals with them. His generosity and character was admired by all. He would eat with all his servants at the same table and every month he would tell them, ‘if anyone wants to get married, I will get them married. If anyone wants to be free, I will let him/her go free.’

Whenever someone came to him with a need and asked him for help, he would say, ‘Welcome to you who are helping me take my savings to the Hereafter!’

Like the Imāms before him, he would pray 1000 rak’ahs every day. When it was time for salāh, Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) would start shaking like a tree branch being blown with strong winds and his face would turn yellow out of fear of Allāh.

Because of excessive praying and worship, the skin on his forehead, knees and toes would become very hard and every six months or so, a doctor would have to cut off this excess hard skin on his body.

Whenever Imām Ali b. al-Husayn (‘a) remembered any favour of Allāh, he would immediately fall into sajdah and thank Allāh. Whenever he finished his wājib salāh, he would do sajdah for a long time to thank Allāh. Even when he was able to make peace between two people, he would fall into sajdah and thank Allāh. That is why he came to be known by these beautiful titles like as-Sajjād and Sayyid as-Sājideen.

All the people of his time would praise him and say, ‘We have never seen a man like him.’

An Example of His Kindness & Generosity

One day a maid was bringing a jug of water to Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) when it slipped from her hand and hit the Imām on the face. He raised his head to look at her. She got very scared and recited from the Qur’ān: ‘Those who control their anger...’ (Surah Al-Imrān, 3:134). And the Imām said, ‘I have controlled my anger’. Then she continued reciting the verse and said, ‘...and forgive others...’ and Imām Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) was very pleased with her knowledge of the Qur’ān and replied, ‘May Allāh forgive you’. And the maid completed the verse and said, ‘...Allāh befriends those who do good.’ And the Imām said to her, ‘Go, I have freed you for the sake of Allāh!’

This incident not only shows how much the Imām could control his anger and how he loved to forgive others, but also how generous he was. It also shows that even the servants in the house of our Imāms were learned in the Qur’ān, knew it by heart and could recite and apply it when necessary! Imagine how proud our Imāms would be of us if we memorized the whole Qur’ān!

His Imāmah

Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) spent the first two years of his life under the care of his grandfather Imām Ali (‘a), and the next twelve years under the Imāmah of his uncle Imām Hasan (‘a). In 61 AH, Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) was 23 years old when he accompanied his father to Karbala. Our fourth Imām fell severely ill and was unable to sacrifice his life with the family members and companions of Imām Husayn (‘a) but through him, Allāh preserved the Imāmah. Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) nonetheless saw the ruthless manner in which his father and family members and companions were killed by Yazid’s men and he was taken prisoner along with the women and children of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), from Karbala to Kufa and from Kufa to Sham (Damascus).

When Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) was first taken prisoner in Karbala, the cruel army of Yazid chained and shackled his hands and feet and made him wear a very heavy iron collar with spikes facing inwards. The chains used to heat up in the hot desert and burn his flesh to the bone. These wounds continued to give him discomfort for the rest of his life.

On the way to Kufa and Sham, whenever the women or children from the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) would cry or move slowly, the cruel soldiers of Yazid would whip Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) and the marks of these whips remained on his back even when he passed away much later.

In Sham, Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) was kept with the women and children of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) in very harsh conditions and in a prison that exposed them to extreme heat during the day and extreme cold during the night. But whenever Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) got a chance to speak to people, he exposed the crimes of Yazid and informed people of what was done to the grandson of Rasulullāh (s) in Karbala. In the Umayyad courts of Kufa and Sham, for example, Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) delivered sermons with such force and eloquence that people wept and began turning away from Yazid in hatred.

After keeping them prisoners for one year, the caliph Yazid was under a lot of pressure to release the family of Rasulullāh (s). Out of fear of an uprising and losing his power over the Syrians, he finally released Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) from prison and allowed him to return to Madina with the women and children.

After the tragedy of Karbala, Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) lived for 34 years in Madina as the Imām of the Time and the Proof (Hujjah) of Allāh on the earth. He spent his time in prayers and worship and teaching Islam to others, as well as mourning for his father and keeping the message of Karbala alive.

After Yazid died, another branch of the Umayyads - the Banu Marwān - came to power. On one occasion, when the Caliph Walid b. Abd al-Malik b. Marwān came for Hajj to Makkah, he kept trying to touch the Black Stone (Hajar al-Aswad) that is lodged in a corner of the Ka’bah but he could not reach it because of the throngs of people present. He finally gave up and sat behind waiting for the crowd to reduce. In the meantime, he saw a man enter Masjid al-Harām and approach the Hajar al-Aswad. The sea of people began parting and giving way to the man until he came and kissed the Hajar al-Aswad. This was none other than Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a).

Walid was extremely jealous and humiliated by this event. He was the ‘Caliph’, yet no one cared for him or made way for him. He pretended not to recognize the Imām and began asking, ‘who is this man?’, ‘I wonder who he is?’

Farazdaq, a poet who loved the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), was standing nearby and was annoyed to hear the Caliph’s remarks. He began reciting a poem in praise of Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) that humiliated the Caliph even further. A part of the poem was:

*This is he whose ability the valley of Makkah recognizes;
And whom the Sacred House (Ka'bah) knows.*

*This is the son of the best of all of Allāh's servants;
This the pure pious man, the pure eminent man.*

*When he comes to touch the corner of the wall of the Ka'bah,
It almost grasps the palm of his hand.*

Lesson 4

Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) & Imām as-Sādīq (‘a)

Imām Muhammad b. Ali al-Bāqir (‘a)

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) is the son of Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a). He is the fifth Imām of the twelve successors of Rasulullāh (s). His mother is Sayyida Fātima, the daughter of Imām Hasan (‘a). This means both his grandparents were Imāms (i.e. Imām Hasan (‘a) and Imām Husayn (‘a)).

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) was born on the 1st of Rajab 57 AH in Madina and he was famously known as “al-Bāqir” because of his tremendous knowledge. Al-Bāqir means ‘One who splits open’ and he famous by this title because he ‘split open’ the knowledge of Rasulullāh (s) and taught many difference sciences to numerous people who went on to become great scholars themselves.

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) was poisoned by the Umayyad caliph Hishām b. Abd al-Malik and passed away on the 7th of Dhul Hijjah 114 AH at the age of 57. He is buried in Jannat al-Baqi (Madina) next to his maternal grandfather Imām Hasan (‘a) and his father Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a).

Besides being very knowledgeable, Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) was very kind-hearted, patient and humble. A Christian man once insulted him and called him a bull (‘baqar’ in Arabic) and he politely replied the man, ‘actually I am al-Bāqir’ (one who splits open knowledge). The man got even angrier and said, ‘your mother was a cook!’ and the Imām replied politely again, ‘that may have been her job.’ So the man now began insulting his mother and said, ‘you are the son of a barbarian mother!’ and Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) again said to him politely, ‘If what you say is true, may Allāh forgive her. And if what you say is a lie, may Allāh forgive you.’ Seeing how much in control of his anger the Imām was and how kind-hearted he was, the Christian apologized and became a Muslim. This is a great lesson for us on how to behave when others insult us out of ignorance.

Rasulullāh (s) had many companions but most of them had passed away by the time of Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a). One of the only ones still alive was Jābir b. Abdullah al-Ansāri. Jābir says that one day when he was with Rasulullāh (s) and Imām Husayn (‘a) was still a little boy sitting on Rasulullāh’s lap, Rasulullāh (s) said to him, ‘O Jābir, this (grand)son of mine will one day have a son by the name of Ali (meaning Imām Zayn al-Abidin). On the Day of Judgement, someone will announce, ‘where is the beauty of the worshippers?’ and it is as if I can see Ali b. al-Husayn breaking through the ranks and coming forward. This Ali son of Husayn will have a son named Muhammad. O Jābir, you will live long enough to see him. When you see him, convey my salām to him!’

And so Jābir lived in anticipation until he grew very old and one day he saw Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) while he was still a little boy and he gave him the salām of Rasullāh (s).

So knowledgeable was Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) that some people described him as an ‘Ocean of Knowledge’. He would answer every question without hesitation. A famous scholar Ibn Ata al-Makki once said, ‘I never saw great scholars feeling so inferior in front of anyone as I saw them before Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir. Indeed I have seen (the famous scholar) Hakim b. ‘Utayba sitting in the presence of the Imām like a child in front of his teacher.’

Muhammad b. Muslim relates, ‘Whenever any question flashed across my mind, I would ask Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir and he would reply me, until I had asked him thousands of questions.’

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) loved remembering Allāh with constant tasbih and dhikr of Allāh’s Names. His son Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) related, ‘my father would glorify Allāh at all times. Whenever I accompanied him I saw him glorifying Allāh... he would pray *tahajjud* (i.e. salāt al-layl) at length and he loved to worship Allāh. He would weep out of the love of Allāh.’

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) was also present in Karbala but he was only three and a half years old. He therefore suffered along with the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and was also in the prison of Sham with his father Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a).

By the time Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin (‘a) was martyred, the Umayyad dynasty had weakened significantly and they were fighting for survival against the Banu Abbās. And as the two tyrant groups fought one another, they left the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) alone in peace for some time. This gave Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) and thereafter his son Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) a chance to teach Islam and spread the knowledge of Rasullāh (s) widely.

People came from far and wide to Madina to learn from Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) and Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) and the Imāms even began teaching different branches of science and arts such as mathematics, chemistry, language grammar, and so forth.

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) also continued the practice of holding gatherings (majālis) to mourn for his grandfather Imām Husayn (‘a) and to remember the tragedy of Karbala. And this practice was continued by all the Imāms from the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) after him.

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) also helped the Caliph of his time with issues that would help promote Islam, such as the minting of Islamic coins and starting the use of an Islamic currency instead of depending on the Roman currency that was prevalent at the time.

Just before his martyrdom, Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) called the leaders in Madina and made his will, declaring his son Ja’far as his successor and the next Imām of his Shi’ah.

Imām Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sādiq (‘a)

Imām Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sādiq (‘a) is our sixth Imām. He is the son of Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) and his mother’s name is Sayyida Fātima (and according to other historians it is Sayyida Farwa).

Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) was born on 17th Rabi ul-Awwal (the same day as Rasulullāh (s) was born) in the year 83 AH. He was therefore 31 years old when his father Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) was martyred and he became the Imām of the Time.

Imām Ja’far b. Muhammad (‘a) possessed vast amounts of knowledge. No one ever doubted what he said. Even when he quoted a Hadith and said, “Rasulullāh (s) said....”, no one questioned him for proof. So he came to be known as ‘as-Sādiq’ (‘The most Truthful’). He was extremely pious, wise and knowledgeable of the shari’ah (Islamic law) and he possessed a great personality. Like his forefathers, he was generous, brave and a master of many qualities.

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) led such a simple life that even the Sufis who are not Shi’ahs regard him as a saint, an ascetic and a mystic to this day. Other non-Shi’ah Muslims also revere him for his piety and knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, during the time of Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) the Banu Umayyah Caliphs were busy fighting with the Banu Abbās so they ignored Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) and he was therefore able to preach Islam and the teachings of Rasulullāh (s) easily. In fact, the times that Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) lived in were even more favourable than the era of Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) and at one point, Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) ran a university in Madina and had 4000 students.

It is for this reason that very many ahādith (plural of Hadith) in our books are from Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) and some people refer to the Shi’ah of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) as ‘Ja’fari’.

Many of the students of Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) later on went to become famous themselves. For example, Jabir b. al-Hayyān was a polymath (gifted in many sciences). He was a chemist, alchemist, astronomer, engineer, philosopher, physicist, pharmacist, geologist and physician. Much later, when Europe came out of its ‘dark ages’ and began learning sciences from the Muslims, Jābir became famously known as “the Father of Chemistry”. He was known as Geber in the West. All historians agree that Jābir was a student of Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) and his knowledge came from Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a).

Another example is Abu Hanifa, who at first learnt Qur'ān tafsir, Hadith and Islamic sciences from Imām as-Sādiq ('a) but later on formed his own opinions and became the founder of the Hanafi Sunni sect. Imām as-Sādiq ('a) also taught medicine to his students and many physicians prescribed cures for illnesses based on his advice.

Shaykh Mufid wrote, 'Scholars of religion obtained from Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) much more than they did from any another member of the Prophet's progeny. There is no one who was more prolific in propagating religion among the scholars of history and traditions (Hadith) than Imām as-Sādiq ('a).'

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a)'s diet was very simple. He also wore simple, coarse garments. At times his clothes were full of patches and he would toil in his garden his own self. Many at times he would be seen digging the earth and planting crops under the hot sun while sweating and working to provide for his family.

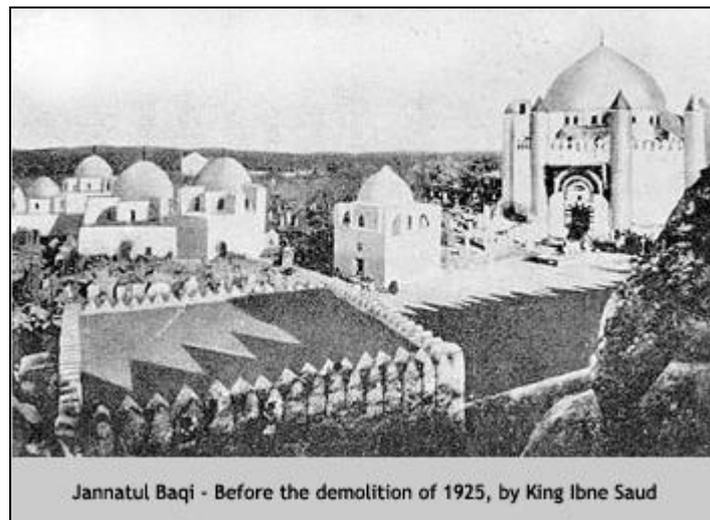
When Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) would worship Allāh, he would do it so intensely that often he would become unconscious out of the remembrance of Allāh and in awe and love for the Almighty Creator.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) loved giving money in charity. He was gentle in nature, soft-spoken, cooperative and pleasant to work with.

One night, the Abbāsīd Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd sent a messenger to go and summon Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) from his home. The messenger reports, 'I went to the Imām's place and I found him in his private room. His cheeks were covered with dust and with utmost humility he was praying to Allāh with his hands raised towards the heavens; his face and hands were covered with dust.'

Towards the end of Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) life, the Banu Abbās had gained full control of the Muslims. The Abbāsī Caliph Mansoor could not tolerate to see how popular Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) was amongst the Muslims. He therefore arranged for the Imām to be poisoned. Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) passed away on 25th Shawwal 148 AH at the age of 65. He is buried in Jannat al-Baqi in Madina, next to his great-grandfather Imām Hasan ('a), his grandfather Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin ('a) and his father Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a).

When the Saudi rulers ransacked and looted Madina in 1925, they destroyed all the shrines in Jannat al-Baqi and so the graves of the Imāms today stand without any shade or cover on them. We should always pray to Allāh to hasten the appearance of Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs) and to destroy the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and make us one day see the shrines rebuilt over the graves of our Imāms. Amen.



Jannatul Baqi - Before the demolition of 1925, by King Ibne Saud



Jannatul Baqi - After the demolition of 1925, by King Ibne Saud

The Jannat al-Baqi Cemetery in Madina today. The single grave is of Hadrat Abbās b. Abd al-Muttalib, the uncle of Rasullullāh (s). The four graves below it are of the four Imāms: Imām Hasan al-Mujtaba ('a), Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin ('a), Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) and Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a).

Anecdotes from the Life of Imām as-Sādiq ('a)

A True Shi'ah

Once a man from Irān by the name of Sahl b. al-Hasan came to Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) and asked him why he did not fight for his right when there were hundreds of thousands of Shi'ah in Khorāsān (Irān) ready to fight with him. In reply Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) took Sahl to the kitchen where there was a large furnace burning and he asked Sahl to jump into the fire. Sahl began trembling with fear and begged to be excused. The Imām told him to sit down.

In the meantime, another close Shi'ah of the Imām entered to see the Imām. His name was Hārun al-Makki. The Imām asked him to enter the furnace and without asking any questions, Hārun jumped into the blazing furnace.

After a little while, as the Imām was talking to Sahl, he could see that Sahl was clearly worried. So the Imām smiled and took him to see the furnace. Sahl found that Hārun was unharmed by the fire or heat and was sitting in the furnace worshipping Allāh. Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) then asked Sahl, 'how many of such Shi'ahs do I have in Khorāsān?' and Sahl admitted, 'none, my master!'

The Prayer of the Imām

A man jealous of Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) once falsely accused the Imām of plotting against the Banu Abbās Caliph Mansoor. The Caliph summoned the Imām to his court and when he arrived, Imām as-Sādiq ('a) denied the allegation.

When the Caliph asked for proof, Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) asked the man accusing him to take an oath. The man first swore in the name of Allāh that he was saying the truth. Imām as-Sādiq ('a) told him to say that if he was lying then Allāh should not protect him anymore. The man swore again and said if he was lying then he was out of Allāh's protection. As soon as he said that, his leg was paralyzed and he fell. The Caliph Mansoor was amazed to see this miracle and how quickly Allāh had protected Imām as-Sādiq ('a). He had the accuser thrown out of his court and allowed the Imām to return home.

Justice and Love for Humanity

There was one a drought in Arabia and a shortage of wheat flour in Madina. Prices of the flour were very high. Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) asked his servant what their condition was. The servant replied that they had plenty of wheat flour and their family should have no problem for a long time.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said to the servant, 'Take the wheat flour to the market. Sell it at the regular (not inflated) price. Then purchase some of it like everyone else.'

In this way, Imām as-Sādiq ('a) taught us not to hoard things and not to wrongfully take advantage of people, especially when they are desperate and in need.

Project Idea

Search for **Jābir ibn Hayyān** on Wikipedia and write down five interesting facts about him that you can find. Here is one fact from the site:

"In response to (Imām) Ja'far as-Sādiq's wishes, [Jabir ibn Hayyān] invented a kind of paper that resisted fire, and an ink that could be read at night. He invented an additive which, when applied to an iron surface, inhibited rust and when applied to a textile, would make it water repellent."

Lesson 5

Imām Musa al-Kādhīm (‘a)

Our seventh Imām is Imām Musa b. Ja’far (‘a). His father is Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) and his mother is Sayyida Hamida (‘a). He was born in Abwa (a place between Makkah and Madina) on Sunday the 7th of Safar 128 AH.

Imām Musa b. Ja’far (‘a) was poisoned whilst in prison in Baghdād (Irāq) by the ruthless Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashid. This was after he was kept imprisoned for 14 years bearing untold hardships and oppression. He was martyred on 25th Rajab 183 AH. The Caliph Hārūn had ordered the cruel prison guard Sindi b. Shāhik to oversee the torture of the Imām (‘a) and after the Imām’s martyrdom, the Caliph ordered Sindi to abandon the Imām’s body on a bridge in the city of Baghdād. A pious and wealthy Shi’ah man then took the Imām’s body from the bridge and all the Shi’ah gathered to give Imām Musa b. Ja’far (‘a) an honourable funeral and burial. He is buried in Kadhmayn (an area of Baghdād) where his shrine stands today.

Even though the Caliph Hārūn tried to show people that he was superior to Imām al-Kādhīm (‘a) and deserving of more respect, he always failed. In one incident, when Imām Musa al-Kādhīm (‘a) was still in Madina, the Caliph Hārūn came for a State Pilgrimage to Madina. Then he came before the grave of Rasulullāh (s) and loudly spoke with pride, ‘Greetings (salām) be to you, Rasulullāh (s), greetings be to you, my cousin!’

He referred to Rasulullāh (s) as his ‘cousin’ because the Banu Abbās Caliphs were all descendants of Abbās b. Abd al-Muttalib the uncle of Rasulullāh (s). (Which is why they were called ‘Banu Abbās’.) And Hārūn wanted people to see how close he was to Rasulullāh (s).

However, shortly after, Imām Musa al-Kādhīm (‘a) entered and stood before the grave of Rasulullāh (s) saying, ‘Peace be on you, O Rasulullāh! Peace be on you, O my grandfather!’ This humiliated the Caliph Hārūn before the people’s eyes and to whom he was showing off just a little while ago. In the days to come, Hārūn realized he could never become more popular than Imām Musa al-Kādhīm (‘a) and he had the Imām arrested and brought to Irāq as a prisoner.

Imām Musa b. Ja’far (‘a) was extremely patient and never got angry without reason. For this reason he was called ‘al-Kādhīm’, which means ‘one who controls his anger’. He was also the most learned man of his time. There was no person more generous, gentle, brave or pious than him in his lifetime.

An example of his generosity was that he would go around with small bags of money and quietly give it to the poor without drawing attention to himself. Because of this, he became a symbol of generosity and whenever any person was very generous,

people would say, 'he has the pockets of Musa' meaning he is as generous as Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a)!

His love for worship had no match either. When Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) was imprisoned, he thanked Allāh for giving him the chance to worship Him day and night without interruption! By the time he passed away, Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) was so thin that a person looking at him in sajdah would think there was only a sheet of cloth on the ground!



Because of his piety and righteousness, Imām Musa ('a) was also called al-Abd as-Sālih (The Righteous Slave of Allāh). And the people of Madina used to call him, 'Zayn al-Mutahajjidin' ('The Adornment of those who spend the night in worship'). Just like Hadrat Abul Fadl al-Abbās ('a) who is buried in Karbala, Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) is also well known today as Bāb al-Hawāij (The Door of Wishes) because a lot of people pray to Allāh (s.w.t.) for their need at the shrine (haram) of Imām al-Kādhim ('a) and their prayers are accepted.

Once a man came to Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) and begged him for 100 dinārs. The Imām asked him some questions to test his religious knowledge and then gave him 2000 dinārs. And on one occasion Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) had a debate with a Christian priest called Burayha and at the end of it, the priest became a Muslim. Our Imāms always wanted their Shi'ah to be learned in religion and loved for them to be knowledgeable and practicing of the laws of Islam.

Imām Musa b. Ja'far al-Kādhim ('a) had a beautiful voice and when he recited the Qur'ān, anyone who heard him would weep with joy. He would worship Allāh for hours on end and would recite the Qur'ān and prostrate himself before Allāh for long periods of time. He would often weep out of love for Allāh (s.w.t.). In fact, after

being poisoned, when Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) passed away from this world he was in sajdah (just like Imām Husayn (‘a)).

Abu Hamza, a companion of Imām al-Kādhim (‘a), once saw the Imām toiling in his farm while sweat was pouring from his body. Abu Hamza asked the Imām where his servants were and in reply the Imām said to him that there were others who were even better than him who toiled in their own farms. When Abu Hamza asked who they were, he said, Rasulullāh (s) and Imām Ali (‘a). Then Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) said that all his forefathers and ancestors used to work with their own hands. This was the sunnah (practice) of the anbiyā (prophets), their successors (awsiyā) and all of Allāh’s righteous servants.

An Imām Speaks to All in Their Language

Abu Basir once asked Imām Musa al-Kādhim (‘a), ‘how is an Imām recognized?’

‘By special characteristics,’ replied the Imām, ‘His father (i.e. the previous Imām) gives a sign to show who his successor is. Whenever he is asked any question, he can answer it. He can tell a person what will happen tomorrow (with knowledge given by Allāh) and he can speak to each person in his own language.’

Shortly after, a man from Khorāsān (Irān) arrived and tried speaking to Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) in Arabic. The Imām answered him in Farsi. ‘By Allāh,’ said the Khorāsāni, ‘what stopped me from speaking to you in Farsi was that I thought you were not fluent in it.’

‘Subhān Allāh,’ said the Imām, ‘If I was not fluent enough to reply you, I would have no merit over you by which I am entitled to being the Imām.’ Then Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) said to Abu Basir, ‘No speech of people is hidden from the Imām. Not even the language of the birds nor anything that has a soul.’

The Imām Saves Ali b. Yaqtin

Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) had a Shi’ah called Ali b. Yaqtin who worked in the court of the Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashid but he hid his faith from the Caliph to protect his life. One day, Hārūn ar-Rashid gave an expensive robe to Ali b. Yaqtin as a gift. Ali b. Yaqtin sent the expensive robe along with some khums money to Imām Musa b. Ja’far al-Kādhim (‘a). The Imām kept the khums money but sent the robe back with the message, ‘Keep this robe with you and do not give it away. An incident will happen because of which you will need it.’

Ali b. Yaqtin did not understand why the Imām returned it but he kept it nonetheless. After sometime, one of his servants was dismissed from service. The servant knew about the robe being sent to Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) and that Ali b. Yaqtin was actually a Shi’ah. So he went to the Caliph to betray his ex-master. He told Hārūn

ar-Rashid that Ali b. Yaqtin was actually a Shi'ah who gave khums money to Imām al-Kādhim ('a) and if he didn't believe him, Ali b. Yaqtin had give the expensive robe of the Caliph to Imām al-Kādhim ('a).

Hārūn ar-Rashid was furious. 'I will expose this,' he said, 'and if it is as you say, then I will destroy the life of Ali b. Yaqtin.' The servant was overjoyed for he would now take his revenge. The Caliph summoned Ali b. Yaqtin and when he came before him, he said, 'what have you done with the robe I gifted you?'

'O Caliph,' replied Ali b. Yaqtin, 'I still have it in a sealed chest where I keep it with perfume. In the mornings I open it and look at it to gain blessings from it. I kiss it and then put it back in its place. In the night I do the same.'

'Bring it immediately,' the Caliph ordered. 'Yes Caliph,' Ali b. Yaqtin replied. Then while he waited with the Caliph, he called one of his servants and told him, 'Go to such-and-such room in my house. Take the key for it from my family and open it. Open such-and-such a box and bring me the sealed chest that is in it.'

It was not long before the chest was brought and place before the Caliph. The seal was broken and there was the robe, neatly folded and laid out with perfume.

Hārūn ar-Rashid calmed down and said to Ali b. Yaqtin, 'Take it back. I will never doubt you again or believe anyone who says things about you.' Then he ordered a magnificent gift to be sent to him and ordered the man who spied (Ali b. Yaqtin's previous servant) to be flogged with a 1000 lashes. After about 100 lashes the man died.

In another incident, Imām al-Kādhim ('a) wrote to Ali b. Yaqtin with instructions to start doing wudu differently, following the Sunni method of washing the feet and the ears, etc. Ali b. Yaqtin was very surprised but he obeyed the orders of the Imām. In the meantime, someone came to complain about Ali b. Yaqtin to the Caliph and said, 'he is actually a Shi'ah and should not be trusted.'

The Caliph thought to himself that he hears a lot of rumours about Ali b. Yaqtin yet he seems very loyal and he has tested him several times. So he decided he would observe him without Ali b. Yaqtin knowing he was being watched. Hārūn ar-Rashid was told, 'O Caliph, watch him secretly when he does wudu. If he is a Shi'ah he will do it differently.'

So one day, the Caliph arranged to spy on Ali b. Yaqtin during wudu while Ali b. Yaqtin was not even aware. Hārūn ar-Rashid himself watched him and when he saw he was washing his ears and his feet and washing his hands in reverse from the fingers to the elbow, he could no longer contain himself. He came out of his hiding place and said to him, 'Ali b. Yaqtin, those who claim you are a Shi'ah, are liars. I will never believe them again!'

Shortly after, Ali b. Yaqtin received another letter from Imām Musa al-Kādhim (‘a) informing him to now do the wudu correctly as taught by Rasullullāh (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).

An Imām Over All of Allāh’s Creatures

Ali b. Abi Hamza reports that one day he went riding out with Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) on mules. As they got out of the city of Madina they came across a lion blocking their path. ‘I stared at it in terror,’ said Ali b. Abi Hamza, ‘but Imām Musa al-Kādhim (‘a) kept moving forward without any worry. Then I saw the lion become subdued as if it was muttering something and Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) was listening to him. The lion put its paw on the saddle of the Imām’s mule. My soul trembled and I was absolutely terrified. Then the lion moved to the side of the road. Imām al-Kādhim (‘a) turned towards the qibla and moved his lips saying a prayer that I could not understand. Then he indicated with his hand to the lion that it should go and the lion muttered for a long time and Imām Musa b. Ja’far (‘a) said, ‘Amen. Amen.’

The lion went away until it disappeared from our sight. The Imām kept moving forward and I followed him. When we are far off, I caught up with him and said, ‘What was that business with the lion? By Allāh I was frightened for you and surprised at how you dealt with it.’

‘He came out to complain of the difficulty his lioness was having in giving birth,’ replied the Imām. ‘And he asked me to ask Allāh to make it easier for her and I did that for him. He asked him if I knew in my heart if she would bear a male and I told him that. Then he told me, ‘Go in the protection of Allāh. Allāh will never impose on you, or your offspring, or any of your Shi’ah, any trouble from wild beasts,’ and I said, ‘Amen. Amen.’



The Shrine (Haram) of Imām Musa al-Kādhim (‘a) and his grandson Imām Muhammad al-Jawād (‘a) in Kadhmayn, Irāq.

Lesson 6

Imām ar-Ridā (‘a) & Imām al-Jawād (‘a)

Imām Ali b. Musa ar-Ridā (‘a)

Imām Ali b. Musa (‘a) is the eighth divinely-appointed successor of Rasulullāh (s). His father is Imām Musa al-Kādhim (‘a) and his mother is Sayyida Najma. His most famous title is ‘ar-Ridā’ which means ‘One who is content’ i.e. pleased with Allāh’s Decree. Imām Ali b. Musa ar-Ridā (‘a) was born on 11th Dhul Qa’adah 148 AH in Madina. He was poisoned and martyred on 29th Safar 203 AH by the Caliph Ma’mun (the son of the Caliph Hārun who poisoned Imām al-Kādhim (‘a)).

Imām Ali ar-Ridā (‘a) lived in Madina most of his life until the Caliph Ma’mun forced him to move to Tus in the district of Khorāsān (North-East Iran near the Russian border) where he poisoned him only 3 years later. The place where Imām Ali b. Musa ar-Ridā (‘a) was buried is now called the city of Mashhad and a splendid shrine (haram) stands over his grave.

The Caliph Ma’mun forced Imām ar-Ridā (‘a) to move to his capital city of Tus because he wanted to fool the Muslims into believing that Imām ar-Ridā (‘a) was supporting him. He even declared Imām ar-Ridā (‘a) as his successor even though Imām Ali ar-Ridā (‘a) was much older than Ma’mun. This was to win the support of the Shi’ah. And later when Ma’mun saw that Imām ar-Ridā (‘a) was becoming too popular, he felt threatened and had him poisoned.

Imām Ali b. Musa ar-Ridā (‘a)’s knowledge, generosity, humility, worship and pleasant disposition are widely known. Even the Sufi mystics hold him in high regard.

During the time that the Imām ar-Ridā (‘a) was in Tus, Ma’mun arranged for various debates between Imām ar-Ridā (‘a) and the scholars of different religions. Imām ar-Ridā (‘a) overcame everyone who debated him, quoting each individual’s own religious scriptures. No one was able to match his knowledge regardless of the subject. Every traveller who came to the capital city would go back to his town and talk about the knowledge of Imām Ali ar-Ridā (‘a).

Imām Ali ar-Ridā (‘a) would often stay up all night in worship and he would finish reciting the entire Qur’ān in three days. He would worship for hours on end like his father and he would pray 1000 rak’ahs in a day like all the Imāms from his ancestors. Often he was seen prostrating himself before Allāh for long periods of time.

Imām ar-Ridā (‘a) would also fast frequently, round the year. He would never interrupt anyone who was talking nor would he abuse anyone. When he was with others he always sat upright and never reclined his back on anything. He never

laughed loudly but would smile instead. When it was time to have a meal, he would sit with his whole family including the servants and maids and they would all share their food together.

Imām Ali b. Musa ar-Ridā ('a)'s Overwhelming Personality

When the Caliph Ma'mun forced Imām Ali ar-Ridā ('a) to move from Madina to Tus, he asked his men to escort the Imām through cities where there were no Shi'ah so that the Imām would not become more popular than he already was. But this made no difference. As soon as people found out that the grandson of Rasulullāh (s) was passing through their town or village, they came out in large numbers to greet him.

When Imām Ali ar-Ridā ('a) stopped at a place called Nisābur, some 20,000 (or according to others 24,000) scribes came to visit him and asked him to relate a Hadith to them before he leaves. The Imām was already on his mount, leaving Nisābur. So he turned to them and said, 'I heard my father Imām Musa al-Kādhim ('a) say that he heard his father Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) say, that he heard his father Imām al-Bāqir ('a)... (and so on until)... Imām Ali b. Abi Tālib ('a) say, that he heard Rasulullāh (s) say that he heard the angel Jibrāil ('a) say that Allāh (the Mighty and Glorious) has said, **"The testimony 'lā ilāha ilallāh' is My fortress. So whoever enters My fortress will be safe from My wrath."**

Then as the mount of Imām ar-Ridā ('a) was about to move, the Imām ('a) turned again to the scribes and said, 'But with certain conditions (*shuroot*)! And I am one of those conditions.'

In other words the Imām was telling them that true Tawhid is not just to surrender to Allāh in His worship but also to surrender to Allāh in obedience. And Allāh has commanded us to obey those whom He has given authority. For Allāh has said, '*Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority (Ulil Amr) among you...*' (Surah an-Nisā, 4:59) and Allāh has also said, '*Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allāh...*' (Surah an-Nisā, 4:80).

So whoever obeys the Imāms, has obeyed Allāh and his or her claim of *lā ilāha ilallāh* is true and whoever disobeys the rightful Imāms has disobeyed Allāh and is therefore removed from the fortress of Tawhid.

This beautiful hadith is known as the **Hadith of the Golden Chain** (*Hadith Silsilat adh-Dhahabiya*) because everyone in the chain of narrators, from Imām ar-Ridā ('a) all the way to Jibrāil ('a) is infallible and pure.

When Imām Ali ar-Ridā ('a) finally arrived in Tus, the Caliph Ma'mun began insisting that the Imām should agree to being his heir and successor. Imām ar-Ridā ('a) knew that Ma'mun simply wanted to use him to win the Shi'ah so he tried hard to refuse but Ma'mun began threatening him. Finally, Imām ar-Ridā ('a) accepted the position but then made the whole arrangement meaningless by insisting that Ma'mun agrees

that the Imām would not be involved in any of the government affairs. Ma'mun agreed to this because he only wanted to show the people that the Imām was his heir.

When the first 'Id came, the Caliph Ma'mun decided that Imām ar-Ridā ('a) would lead the Salāt al-'Id. Imām ar-Ridā ('a) reminded Ma'mun that they had an agreement and that he would not be required to hold any official position. Ma'mun however insisted and when there was no way out of it, Imām ar-Ridā ('a) finally sent him a message saying, 'If you would have excused me it would have been better. But since you have not, I will go out the way Rasulullāh (s) used to go out and Amir al-Muminin Ali b. Abi Tālib ('a) used to go out for 'Id prayers.'

'Go as you wish,' replied the Caliph and then he ordered all the military commanders and leaders in his court to go to the door of Imām ar-Ridā ('a) the next morning and escort him to the place of 'Id prayers.

The people of Tus found out that the grandson of Rasulullāh (s) was going to go out and lead the 'Id prayers escorted by the Caliph's men. So from early in the morning, they sat on their rooftops and by the roadsides waiting for him to come out so they could see him. Even the women and children lined up, waiting eagerly to see the Imām.

When the sun rose, the military leaders and soldiers arrived at the door of Imām ar-Ridā ('a). The Imām took a bath and put on his 'Id clothes. He put on a white, cotton turban. One end he left hanging on his chest and the other end he put between his shoulders. Then he rubbed himself with a little perfume. He took his stick in his hand and said to his servants who were going to walk with him, 'Do as I do.'

Imām Ali ar-Ridā ('a) then came out barefoot (as is mustahab for 'Id salāh) and he began walking towards the place for 'Id salāh. He would walk a little bit and then raise his head towards the heavens and say, 'Allāhu Akbar!' and all the servants and people with him would echo 'Allāhu Akbar!'

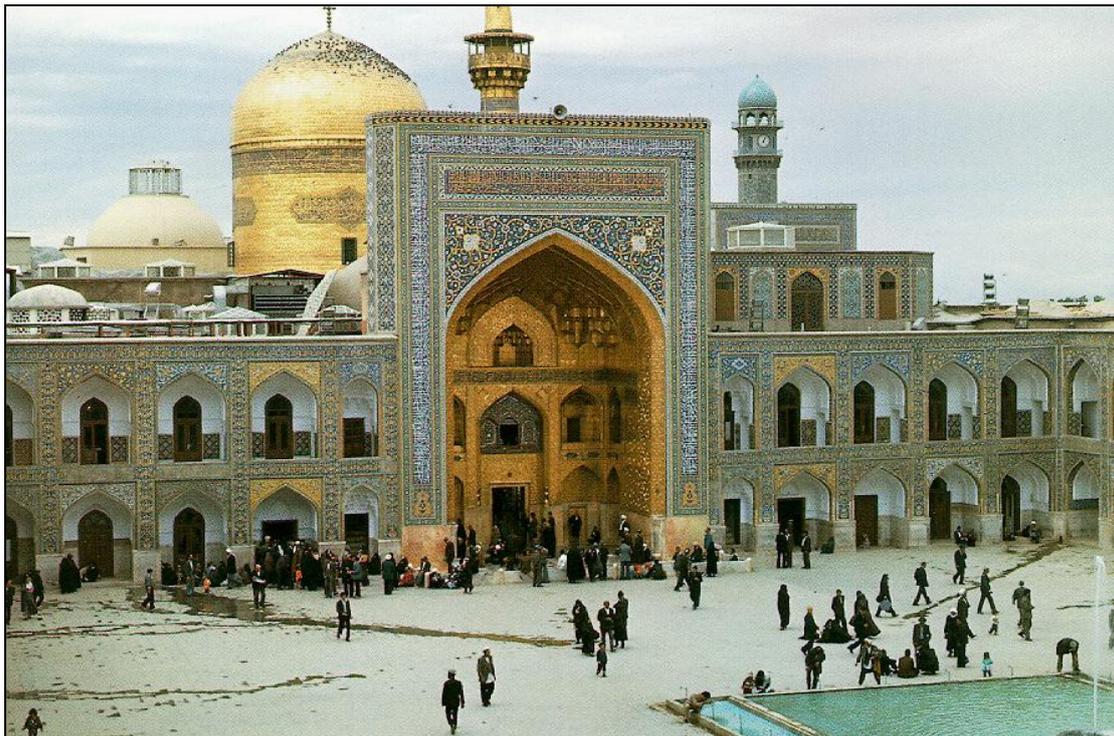
When the military commanders and soldiers saw him doing this, they all dismounted from their horses and did the same. Those with a knife quickly cut off the straps of their sandals and went barefoot as well.

The books of history report that as Imām Ali ar-Ridā ('a) would call out 'Allāhu Akbar!' and everyone would repeat it, it felt as if the sky and the walls of all the buildings were calling out with him. The city shook with weeping and clamour when the people heard Imām ar-Ridā ('a) glorifying Allāh in this manner. The military commanders sent Ma'mun a message immediately and warned him: 'If ar-Ridā reaches the place of 'Id salāh in this way, the people will overthrow you. There is so much commotion, even we are afraid for our lives. Please send me him a message to return home.'

Ma'mun sent a message to Imām ar-Ridā ('a) saying, 'We have put excessive burden on you and caused you hardship. We request that you go back and let someone else lead the 'Id prayers in the usual manner.'

Imām ar-Ridā ('a) therefore called for his shoes. He put them on. Then he mounted a horse and went back home.

This incident shows the power an Imām can hold over the hearts of people and how everything around him responds to him by the will of Allāh!



The Shrine (Haram) of Imām Ali ar-Ridā ('a) in Mashhad, Irān

Imām Muhammad b. Ali al-Jawād ('a)

The ninth Imām from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) of Rasullāh (s) is Imām Muhammad b. Ali ('a). He is well known by two titles: al-Jawād (The generous one) and at-Taqi (The pious one). His father is the eighth Imām, Imām Ali b. Musa ar-Ridā ('a) and his mother is Sayyida Sabika. He was born on 10th Rajab 195 AH in Madina and he was martyred after being poisoned by the Abbāsīd Caliph Mu'tasim Billāh on 29th Dhul Qa'adah 220 AH.

Imām Muhammad al-Jawād ('a) was only four years old when his father Imām Ali ar-Ridā ('a) was forced to go to Tus and he was therefore left alone in Madina. He is also the youngest Imām to be martyred, at the age of 25 years only.

Imām Muhammad al-Jawād (‘a) was 8 years old when his father was martyred and he became the Imām of the time. Yet he was the most learned individual of his time. Several people doubted that such a young boy could be the Imām but they were spellbound when they tried asking Imām al-Jawād (‘a) for answers to their questions.

After the Caliph Ma’mun poisoned Imām ar-Ridā (‘a), he pretended to mourn for him and shortly after, he gave his daughter Umm Fadl in marriage to Imām Muhammad al-Jawād (‘a). Ma’mun was hoping that the children of Imām al-Jawād (‘a) from his daughter would become the next Imāms and therefore his grandchildren. But Allāh so willed that while Imām al-Jawād (‘a) had other children from other wives, he had no children from the daughter of Ma’mun.

When Ma’mun first wanted to get his daughter married to Imām al-Jawād (‘a), the other elders of the Banu Abbās opposed him. So Ma’mun arranged for a widely-publicized debate in his court between the young Imām and the person whom everyone considered to be the most learned scholar of the time - an old man named Yahya b. Akhtam.

At this debate, Yahya tried asking Imām al-Jawād (‘a) various questions that he thought would be difficult for the Imām to answer. Not only did the Imām reply them all but he asked Yahya some questions that Yahya was unable to reply. Soon, the proud Yahya was sitting before the young Imām very humbly, like a student sitting before a grand master, and asking him to enlighten him.

Imām Muhammad al-Jawād (‘a) was very eloquent in his speech and very generous, gentle and humble. He would often go around distributing food and money to the needy.

When Ma’mun died, he was succeeded by Mu’tasim Billāh who ruled from Baghdād. He had Imām al-Jawād (‘a) arrested in Madina and brought to Baghdād where he kept him under house arrest before having him poisoned. Imām Muhammad al-Jawād (‘a) is therefore buried next to his grandfather Imām Musa al-Kādhim (‘a) in Kadhmayn (a suburb of Baghdād).

Lesson 7

Imām al-Hādī (‘a) & Imām al-Askarī (‘a)

Imām Ali b. Muhammad al-Hādī (‘a)

Imām Ali b. Muhammad (‘a) is the tenth divinely-appointed successor of Rasulullāh (s). He is well known by two titles: al-Hādī (The guide) and an-Naqi (The pure one). His father is the ninth Imām, Imām Muhammad b. Ali al-Jawād (‘a) and his mother is Sayyida Samāna.

Imām Ali al-Hādī (‘a) was born in Madina on 15th Dhul Hijjah 212 AH. Towards the latter part of his life, the Abbāsīd Caliph Mu’tazz Billāh forced him to move to the city of Samarra in the north of Irāq where he was kept under house arrest. The Imām was finally poisoned on 3rd Rajab 254 AH. He is buried in Samarra where his shrine stands today.

Imām Ali b. Muhammad al-Hādī (‘a) was unmatched in his character and knowledge. No one was more learned or generous than him. He was always soft-spoken, pious and gentle with others.

One day the Caliph sent 30,000 dirhams to the Imām to see what he would do with the money. The Imām simply gave it away to a poor Arab from Kufa who was visiting him and asking for help. The Imām told him to use it to pay off his debts and to support his family.

Like his father Imām al-Jawād (‘a), Imām Ali al-Hādī (‘a) was also only 8 years old when he took over as the Imām of the Time. After the Caliph Mu’tasim Billāh (who poisoned Imām al-Jawād (‘a)) died, Wathiq Billāh became the Caliph and ruled for 5 years. The Imām and the Shi’ah were allowed to live somewhat peacefully during the time of Wathiq. But when Wathiq died, Mutawakkil became the Caliph. He was the cruelest Abbāsīd Caliph and his favourite pastime was to shed the blood of the Sādāt (descendants) of Rasulullāh (s) and the Shi’ah.

The Caliph Mutawakkil was a sinful and cruel man like the Umayyad Caliph Yazid. He loved living a life of immodesty and intoxication and was always surrounded by singing girls and wine. Often he would order for Sādāt and the Shi’ah to be arrested and tortured or killed. Many Sādāt were buried alive between walls or their blood was used to mix the cement for Mutawakkil’s palaces.

Imām Ali al-Hādī (‘a) was therefore kept under very close watch by the Caliph. At first Imām al-Hādī (‘a) was living in Madina and Mutawakkil would have his spies watching the Imām. But later, Mutawakkil ordered that the Imām be arrested and

brought to his capital Samarra. Here Mutawakkil had the Imām kept in a poor and run-down home.

One day someone rumoured to the tyrannical Caliph Mutawakkil that Imām al-Hādi ('a) had weapons and money in his house. Mutawakkil sent a man called Sa'id to enter Imām Ali al-Hādi ('a)'s house unexpectedly and seize whatever he found there. Sa'id says he went in the middle of the night with a ladder and climbed up the roof and then tried coming down into the house courtyard. But it was dark and he didn't know where he was. Suddenly he heard Imām Ali al-Hādi ('a) saying to him, 'Sa'id, stay where you are until a candle is brought to you.' Then he came down and he found the Imām dressed in a humble woolen garment. His prayer mat was open on the floor facing the qibla. He said to Sa'id, 'In front of you are the rooms.'

Sa'id says he went in and searched but could not find anything. The story continues a bit but finally Sa'id says 'I felt ashamed before the Imām and I apologized to him and said, "master, it grieves me to have entered your house without your permission but I was ordered to do so."'

And the Imām replied by reciting a verse of Qur'ān:

﴿... وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ﴾

And soon shall those who have been oppressive know what kind of an overturning they will be turned to!

Surah ash-Shu'arā, 26:227

Out of his hatred for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), Mutawakkil tried flooding the grave of Imām Husayn ('a) in Karbala but failed. Then he ordered that anyone going to Karbala for ziyārah would have his hand or leg amputated, but people still went for the ziyārah of Imām Husayn ('a).

Finally, when Mutawakkil was once drunk, his son Muntasir revolted against his father and had him killed. Shortly after, Muntasir himself was killed and he was succeeded by Mustain Billāh. After him the caliph was Mu'tazz Billāh. It was Mu'tazz Billāh who arranged for Imām Ali al-Hādi ('a) to be poisoned. The Imām was martyred within a few hours of being poisoned and he was buried by his son Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) in Samarra.

Imām Hasan b. Ali az-Zaki al-Askari ('a)

Imām Hasan b. Ali ('a) is the eleventh divinely-appointed successor of Rasulullāh (s). His father is our tenth Imām Ali b. Muhammad al-Hādi ('a) and his mother is Sayyida Haditha. He was born on 10th Rabi al-Akhar 232 AH and he was poisoned and martyred by the Abbāsīd Caliph Mu'tamad on 8th Rabi al-Awwal 260 AH. He was only 28 years old and was the second youngest Imām to be martyred after his

grandfather Imām Muhammad al-Jawād ('a) (who was martyred at the age of 25). Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a)'s funeral was conducted by his son, Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs) and he is buried next to his father Imām Ali al-Hādi ('a) in Samarra.

His most famous title is az-Zaki (The pure one) but he is also known as al-Askari because he lived in Samarra and it was a city where the Caliph's army lived and was therefore also known as al-Askar ("The army camp").

Imām Hasan az-Zaki al-Askari ('a) was well known for his generosity, worship, knowledge and humility. He was well built in physique and had handsome features. He is said to have resembled Rasullāh (s).

One day a man hid 100 dinars in the ground and then went to beg for money from Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a). He waited for the Imām on the roadside and as soon as the Imām passed by, he asked him for help. The Imām told him, 'I know you are lying that you have no money. You have hidden 100 dinars in the ground. I am not saying this because I don't want to help you. But you will never enjoy the 100 dinars you have hidden.' Then the Imām gave him 100 dinars. And later on when the man went to dig up the money he had hidden, it was missing. His son had stolen the money and run away.

Whenever a person would ask the Imām for a specific amount of money, the Imām would give him a little more.

On one occasion, there was a drought in Samarra but a Christian priest was able to raise his hands to the sky and it would rain miraculously. Many people became confused and were in doubt about their faith. The Caliph Mu'tamad was in a terrible dilemma so he was forced to bring Imām Hasan b. Ali az-Zaki ('a) out of prison and ask him for help. The Imām went to the place where the Christian was praying and took away a little bone that the Christian was hiding in his hands. This was from a prophet of the past and that is why it would rain every time he raised his hand, explained the Imām. Then the Imām told him to pray again and it didn't rain. Then Imām Hasan az-Zaki ('a) prayed with his hands raised in the air and it began raining. This showed the special status of the Imām with Allāh and his ability to perform miracles by the permission of Allāh.

Imām Hasan b. Ali az-Zaki al-Askari ('a) loved worshipping Allāh and would pray salāt al-layl (tahajjud) for the most part of the night.

When the Caliph Mu'tazz Billāh (who poisoned Imām al-Hādi ('a)) died, he was succeeded by Mu'tad and thereafter by Mu'tamad. All these Caliphs continued to harass Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) and either kept him in prison or under house arrest. Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) lived in such extreme poverty that according to some narrations, the women in his home had only one dress that was not torn and they would wear it in turns to pray their salāh.

On one occasion the Caliph Mu'tamad even tried putting Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) in a cage of hungry lions. But the lions, despite being very hungry, came and put their heads at the feet of the Imām, rubbing their heads against him like kittens, while the Imām stood in prayer.

The Abbāsīd Caliphs were particularly harsh on Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) because they had heard that the Shi'ah believed that his son would be the Mahdi ('atfs). It was under these difficult circumstances that Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) had to both, hide his son as well as inform the close Shi'ah of his birth.

Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a)'s son, Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs) was born on 255 AH, just five years before Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) was martyred. Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs) was therefore only 5 years old when he lost his father and became the Imām of the Time. We shall learn more about the twelfth Imām in the next book but a brief summary is given at the end of this lesson.

The Miracles of Imām Hasan b. Ali al-Askari al-Zaki ('a)

An Ingot of Gold

A man called Abu Hāshim complained to Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) about his poverty. The Imām rubbed his whip on the ground and took out from it an ingot of gold that was worth at least 500 dinars. Then he gave it and said, 'Take it Abu Hāshim, and forgive us (for not giving you more).'

An Imām speaks all languages

A man called Abu Hamza Nāsir once heard Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) speaking to each of his servants in their own languages. Abu Hamza Nāsir was amazed. He began thinking, 'This man (Imām al-Askari) was born in Madina. No one saw him that much until after his father Imām al-Hādi passed away. How is this possible?'

As he was thinking this, Imām Hasan az-Zaki al-Askari ('a) came up to him and said, 'Allāh has separated his proof (hujjah) from the rest of His creatures and has given him knowledge of everything. He (the Imām) knows languages, genealogies and events. If it wasn't for that, there would be no difference between the Hujjah (proof) and those who follow them.'

Reading the Minds of Others

Husayn b. Zarif reports that two questions were constantly on his mind and he wanted to write to Imām Hasan al-Askari ('a) to ask him. So he wrote to ask him about the first question and forgot to ask the second question which was about how to cure a fever.

Imām Hasan al-Askari (‘a) wrote back to reply his question then he added, ‘You also wanted to ask about fever but you forgot to write. Take a piece of paper and on it write the verse of Qur’ān, ‘*O fire, be cold and a safe for Ibrāhim*’ (Surah 21:69). Then hang it over the person who has fever.’

Husayn b. Zarif was amazed at this. And he wrote what the Imām instructed him and the person who was ill with fever recovered.

The Askariya Mosque and Shrines

On February 22, 2006, at 6:55 a.m. a group of terrorists and enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) stormed the Askariya Mosque that contains the shrine of Imām Ali al-Hādi (‘a) and Imām Hasan al-Askari (‘a) and they tied up the guards. Then they rigged the place with bombs all night and in the morning they detonated the bombs and severely damaged the mosque and destroyed its golden dome. The whole dome crumbled on top of the graves of the Imāms.



The Haram of Imām Ali al-Hādi (‘a) and Imām Hasan al-Askari (‘a) after the first bombing, when the minarets were still standing.

On June 13, 2007 around 9 a.m. local time, terrorists bombed the mosque again and the two ten-story golden minarets that were still standing were destroyed.

This shows that the hatred and jealousy for the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) continues to this day. It is only with the return of Imām al-Mahdi (‘atfs) that the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) will truly be vanquished. Allāh (s.w.t.) has however promised that the remembrance of Rasullāh (s) and his Household will never be lost because they are the ‘Light’ (Nur) of Allāh and the Qur’ān promises:

﴿يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

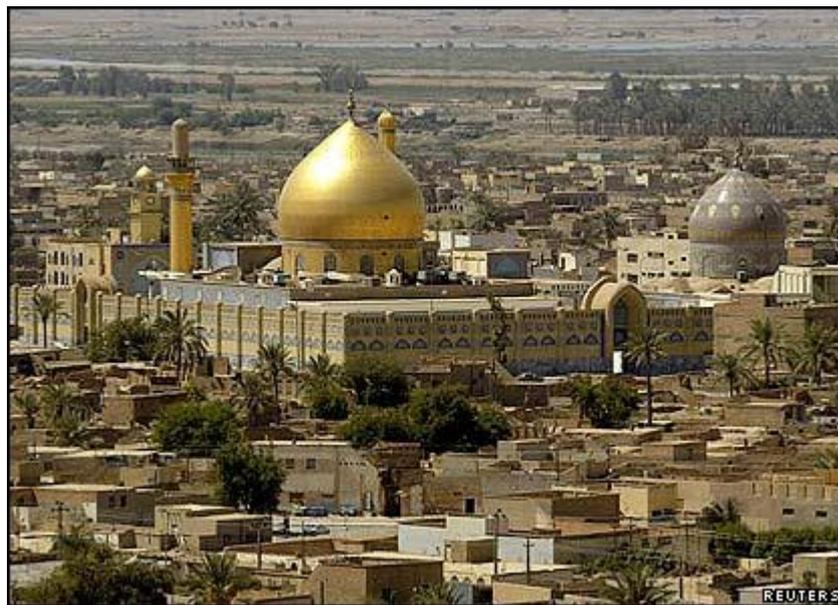
They desire to put out the light of Allāh with their mouths, but Allāh shall perfect His light though the faithless should be averse.

- Surah as-Saff, 61:8

The Askariya mosque is now kept under close security and its dome and minarets are being rebuilt.



Old pictures of the haram of Imām Ali al-Hādi (‘a) and Imām Hasan al-Askari (‘a) before the bombings of 2006 and 2007. The blue dome on the side is the ‘sardāb’ (cellar) where Imām al-Mahdi (‘atfs) was last seen when he was 5 years old.



Imām al-Hujjah al-Mahdi ('atfs)

The last Imām and final successor of Rasulullāh (s), appointed by Allāh, is our twelfth Imām. His name is Muhammad - the same as the name of Rasulullāh (s) but he is known by his many titles including al-Hujjah (the Proof of Allāh), al-Mahdi (the one guided by Allāh), Sahib az-Zamān (the master of this age) and Baqiyatullah (the remainder of Allāh).

After our eleventh Imām, Imām Hasan b. Ali az-Zaki al-Askari ('a) was martyred, Allāh decreed that the last Imām would be hidden from people's knowledge. He would live amongst them but they would never recognize who he is. This was to protect him while allowing him to help the true and sincere Muslims without them realizing. And towards the end of the world, Allāh will allow the Imām to reveal his identity and to establish a true Islamic world nation that is full of peace and justice.

Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs) was born on 15th Sha'ban 255 AH and is alive to this day. When we say his name, we should also say "*ajallāhu ta'āla farajahush shareef*", which means 'may Allāh hasten his return'. To wait for the Imām's return is one of the greatest forms of jihād and worship ('ibādah).

The Imām's hidden identity is known as the ghaybah in Arabic (Occultation in English). Many great scholars have met the Imām during his ghaybah but they didn't realize it was him until after he left and they couldn't find him anymore.

In the next book we will learn more about the Imām of our time and the signs before his reappearance. All Muslims, Shi'ah and Sunni, have related ahādith that Rasulullāh (s) said the world will not end until Allāh sends the Mahdi ('atfs) to fill the earth with justice and peace.

The Qur'ān also says:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَىٰ الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ

شَهِيدًا ﴿

It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion that He may make it prevail over all religions, and Allāh suffices as witness.

- Surah al-Fath, 48:28

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا...﴾

*Allāh has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds **that He will surely make them successors in the earth**, just as He made those who were before them successors, **and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them**, and that He will surely change their state to security after their fear, while they worship Me, not ascribing any partners to Me.*

- Surah an-Nur, 24:55

These are prophecies in the Qur'ān that have not come true as yet and will never happen until Imām al-Hujjah ('atfs) returns.

Make a habit of remembering Imām al-Hujjah ('atfs) every day and saying salām to him after every salāh and praying to Allāh to hasten his return and to make us amongst his sincere followers. Amen!

Project Ideas:

1. Draw a map of the Middle East showing all the cities where the 14 Ma'sumeen ('a) are buried.
2. In Arab custom, a man or woman is referred respectfully by an epithet (kunya) rather than their own name. For example, if a person's name is Muhammad and his eldest son is called Ja'far, then people would address him as 'Abu Ja'far' (Father of Ja'far) instead of 'Muhammad'. Similarly, the mother of Ja'far would be called 'Umm Ja'far' instead of being addressed by her own first name. At times, a person may even be called by his daughter's name e.g. Abu Zahra. Create a table showing the kunya of each of the twelve Imāms and some basic facts about them. An example is given below:

| No. | Name | Kunya | Age Martyred | Place Buried |
|-----|------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| 3 | Imām Husayn ('a) | Abu Abd Allāh | 57 yrs | Karbala, Irāq |

AKHLAQ

(Ethics)

Lesson 1

Imān & Yaqín vs. Shak

Imān (Faith)

Imān (الإيمان) is loosely defined as ‘faith’. Some people define it as ‘belief’ but that is incorrect. Belief is what you believe with the mind. Faith is what you carry in your heart. Atheists do not *believe* humans have souls or have the ability to realize anything with the heart. They believe everything is just a mental, rational process. Muslims believe the mind is useful in making day-to-day decisions and even comparing things to determine good from bad or right from wrong. But knowing Allāh or understanding spiritual concepts deeply is only possible with the heart or soul because it is a matter of *having faith* and not just believing in words or with the mind and thoughts.

And from the word *imān* we have *mu’min* (المؤمن) and (female) *mu’mina* (المؤمنة), which some translate as ‘believer’. But more accurately it is ‘faithful’.

Imān is a higher level of faith than Islām. A person who says he believes ‘There is no god by Allāh and Muhammad is His Messenger’ may be a Muslim but he can only be a faithful (*mu’min* or *mu’mina*) after his or her actions also show faith in Allāh and submission to Him. When a person becomes a *mu’min* or *mu’mina*, they surrender to Allāh. They don’t challenge the laws of Islam and ask ‘why can’t I do this’ and ‘why is that not allowed’. That is because they don’t think they are doing Allāh a favour by believing (i.e. being a Muslim) or having faith (i.e. being a *Mu’min*). Rather they realize that it is Allāh who has done them a favour by guiding them to the right path.

Reflect on the following āyāt of the Qur’ān:

﴿قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ... إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ. يَمُنُّونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمُنُّوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُم بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

The Bedouins say, ‘We have faith (*imān*).’ Say, ‘You do not yet have faith (*imān*); rather, say, “We have embraced Islam,” because faith has not yet entered into your hearts...

The faithful (mu'minin) are only those who have attained faith in Allāh and His Apostle and then have never doubted, and who struggle (do jihād) with their possessions □ and their selves in the way of Allāh. It is they who are the truthful.

They count it as a favour to you (O Muhammad) that they have embraced Islam! Say, 'Do not do me any favours with your Islam. Rather, it is Allāh who has done you a favour in that He has guided you to faith, should you be truthful.

- Surah al-Hujurāt, 49:14-15,17

Yaqin (Conviction)

Above the level of imān is the level of *yaqin* (اليقين) (conviction). A *mu'qin* (or *mu'qina*) is one who has total conviction and trust in Allāh. Nothing can shake their faith or trust in Allāh. Even in the bleakest of situations and greatest dangers, their faith (*imān*) does not shake.

Examples of this *yaqin* is seen repeatedly in the lives of Rasulullāh (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) like when Rasulullāh (s) is almost killed in the cave on the day of Hijrah or when Imām Ali ('a) sleeps under the shadow of the swords of assassins on night of Hijrah; or Imām Husayn ('a) when he stands alone against 30,000 soldiers in the army of Yazid.

In Surah Al-I Imrān, Allāh describes the people with absolute trust and conviction in these words:

﴿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 (imān), and they said, 'Allāh is sufficient for us, and He is the best One to trust.'

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:173

You notice that the greater the danger, the more their faith (*imān*) increases and they place their trust in Allāh.

When Nabi Musa ('a) left Egypt with the Children of Israel, some say they were over 100,000 unarmed men, women and children with him. When he got to the sea, the army of Fir'aun surrounded them and came charging towards them to massacre them.

Everyone there was certain this was the end and they will never survive the attack from Fir'aun.

﴿فَلَمَّا تَرَأَى الْجَمْعَانَ قَالِ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَى إِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُونَ﴾

When the two armies sighted each other, the companions of Musa said, 'Indeed we have been caught up.'

- Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:61

But Nabi Musa ('a) even at that moment did not shake in his faith and conviction. He replied:

﴿قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِي﴾

He said, 'Certainly not! Indeed my Lord is with me. He will guide me.'

- Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:62

And it was then that Allāh commanded him to strike the sea and it separated:

﴿فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنْ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فَرَقٍ كَالطُّوْدِ

الْعَظِيمِ﴾

Thereupon We revealed to Musa: 'Strike the sea with your staff!' So it parted, and each part was as if it were a great mountain.

- Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:63

When your *yaqin* is so great, Allāh will never let you down. He will even split the sea open to help you achieve your goal. In the case of Imām Husayn ('a), obviously it was his martyrdom (*shahādah*) and blood that would save Islam forever. So he wasn't looking to be saved from physical death. He was looking for his message and sacrifices not to be lost in the desert of Karbala. We are witnesses to the miracle of Karbala even today and how Allāh has kept Imām Husayn ('a)'s message alive and how Imām Husayn ('a) is larger than life itself.

Shak (Doubt)

The opposite of *yaqin* is *shak* (الشك) (doubt). *Shak* is a sign of weak *imān* at best or hypocrisy (*nifāq*) at worst. A Muslim or Mu'min without *yaqin* may sometimes doubt in Allāh or His mercy briefly but soon realizes his or her mistake and repents. A hypocrite never recovers from his or her doubt. The more signs they see, the more they doubt. Nothing convinces them.

Imān, *Yaqin* and *Shak* can vary depending on how much importance we give to our souls and how hard we struggle against our *nafs* (egos). Everything we do physically affects us spiritually. What we eat, wear, say, do, watch, the friends we keep, our thoughts, our career and livelihood, all this and more (i.e. everything we do physically) affects our intention (*niyyah*) and our souls and therefore determines the level of *imān* and *yaqin* vs. *shak* we have.

The best way to understand *imān*, *yaqīn* and *shak* is through the Qur'ān and the words of the ma'sumeen ('a) i.e. from hadith.

Your teacher will only discuss a few of the āyāt of Qur'ān and *ahādith* given below. Thereafter you are encouraged to read and reflect on the rest yourself. You may even want to take one of the hadith and write an essay on it so that you think about it deeply.

Imān (Faith) in Hadith

What is Imān?

1. Rasullāh (s), '*Imān* is to know with the heart, to speak with the tongue and to act with the limbs.'
2. Rasullāh (s), 'The best *imān* is for you to know that Allāh is with you wherever you are.'
3. Imām Ali ('a), '*Imān* is a tree. Its root is conviction (*yaqīn*). Its branches are being Godwary (*taqwa*). Its light (*nur*) is modesty (*hayā*) and its fruit is generosity (*sakhā*).'
4. Imām Ali ('a), '*Imān* is to be patient during afflictions and to be thankful during ease.'
5. Imām al-Bāqir ('a), 'Islam is to accept (the truth) without action. *Imān* is to accept with action.'
6. Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'Cursed is the person who claims *imān* is just words without action.'
7. Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'The reality of *imān* is that you prefer truth over falsehood even if the truth is harmful to you and the falsehood is beneficial to you (materially).'

Note: This hadith means *imān* is to love and hate everyone and everything for the sake of Allāh only. For example loving someone whom Allāh loves even if he is a stranger and not related to you; and to dislike someone whom Allāh dislikes because of his actions, even if he is a close relative.

What Removes Imān

1. Rasullāh (s), 'When a person's constant and greatest concern is to get more pleasure and engage in more lusts, the sweetness of *imān* is removed from his heart.'

Who is a Mu'min / Mu'mina?

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ﴾

The faithful are only those whose hearts tremble [with awe] when Allāh is mentioned, and when His signs are recited to them, they increase their faith, and who put their trust in their Lord, maintain the prayer and spend out of what We have provided them. It is they who are truly the faithful. They shall have ranks near their Lord, forgiveness and a noble provision.

- Surah al-Anfāl, 8:2-4

See also the opening āyāt of Surah al-Mu'minun (Surah 23).

1. Rasulullāh (s), 'Whoever has three qualities will taste the sweetness of *Imān*: one who loves nothing more than Allāh and His Messenger; one who would rather be burnt with fire than to turn away from his religion (of Islam); and one who loves and hates others only for the sake of Allāh (i.e. those whom Allāh loves and hates).'
2. Imām Ali ('a), 'A *mu'min* is constantly remembering Allāh and frequently reflecting (on nature and the signs of Allāh). On blessings he gives thanks (to Allāh) and on suffering he bears patience.'
3. Imām Zayn al-Abideen ('a), 'A *mu'min* is pious and obedient to Allāh even when alone and no one is watching; and he gives charity even when he has little. He is patient in suffering and forbearing when angry and he speaks the truth even when afraid.'
4. Imām al-Bāqir ('a), 'A *mu'min* is stronger than a mountain. A mountain can be demolished and moved from its place. But nothing can move a *mu'min* from his religion.'
5. Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'A *mu'min* is not overcome by his lust and his stomach does not disgrace him.'

Note: 'stomach' in this hadith means 'greed for food'.

6. Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'A *mu'min* is stronger than solid iron. Because iron, when it is put in fire, it changes in shape. But a *mu'min*, if he is killed, brought back to life, then killed again, his heart will still not change.'

Yaqin (Conviction) in Hadith

﴿كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ﴾

No indeed! If you were to know with certain knowledge ('ilm al-yaqin), you would surely see hell. Again, you will surely see it with the eye of certainty ('ayn al-yaqin).

- Surah at-Takāthur, 102:5-7

1. Rasulullāh (s), 'People have not been given anything in this world better than *yaqin* and well-being (*āfiyah*), therefore ask Allāh for these two.'
2. Rasulullāh (s), '*Sabr* (patience) is half of *imān* and *yaqin* is complete *imān*.'
3. Rasulullāh (s), 'The best thing to ever enter a heart is conviction (*yaqin*).'
4. Rasulullāh (s), 'Nabi Isa ('a) used to walk on water. If his *yaqin* was even more, he would have walked in the air and prayed on water.'
5. Imām Ali ('a), 'How great is the achievement of one whose heart is blessed with the glad-tidings of *yaqin*!'
6. Imām Ali ('a), 'To sleep with *yaqin* is better than to pray (*mustahab*) with doubt (*shak*).'
7. Imām Ali ('a), 'Yaqin is the pillar of *imān* (faith).'
8. Imām Ali ('a), 'Sincerity (*ikhlas*) in action comes from having *yaqin*.'
9. Imām as-Sādiq ('a), '*Imān* is better than Islam. And *yaqin* is better than *imān*. There is nothing more precious than *yaqin*.'

Shak (Doubt) in Hadith

1. Imām Ali ('a), 'Doubt (*shak*) is the result of ignorance.'
2. Imām Ali ('a), 'I have never doubted in the Truth ever since it was shown to me.'
3. Imām Ali ('a), 'Doubt (*shak*) extinguishes the light (*nur*) of the heart.'
4. Imām Ali ('a), 'A person does not go astray until his doubt (*shak*) overcomes his conviction (*yaqin*).'
5. *Shak* is form of filth (*rijs*) in the heart. Imām as-Sādiq ('a) has said, the *rijs* (impurity) mentioned in the ayah of tathir (33:33)¹¹ is *shak*. Then said, 'By Allāh, we (the Ahl al-Bayt) never doubt in our Lord, ever!'

¹¹ The translation of the āyah at-tathir is: "Indeed Allāh desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification." (33:33)

Lesson 2

Despair vs. False Hope

Muslims are required to live a balanced life in which they neither fool themselves that they can take wrong advantage of Allāh's mercy (doing as they please), nor do they lose so much hope in Allāh's mercy that they give up trying to go to Jannah.

Losing hoping in Allāh's mercy is called *al-Ya'as* (اليأس) or *al-Qunoot* (القنوط)¹². It literally means 'To Despair'. And the opposite – false hope or feeling safe from Allāh's wrath - is called *al-Amn min makrillah* (الأمن من مكر الله). Both these extremes are major sins in Islam. According to some scholars these two are the greatest sins after *shirk* (associating a partner to Allāh).

Despair in Allāh's Mercy

Shaytān does not really care whether we commit sins or not. What he is really after is that we should no longer have a relationship with Allāh through du'as and istighfār. So he tempts us to sins in the hope that after sinning many times, we finally won't bother asking Allāh for forgiveness. When we reach a point in life where we feel it is useless to do istighfār and Allāh will never forgive us, that is when Shaytān has truly won our souls and hearts.

A Muslim must believe firmly that no matter how much they have sinned, the mercy, kindness and love of Allāh is still limitless and Allāh is still willing to forgive someone if they turn back to Him – even until the last breathe of their lives. To despair in Allāh's mercy is a sign of disbelief.

Allāh tells us in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَلَا تَيْسُّوْا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللّٰهِ اِنَّهٗ لَا يَيْسُّ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُوْنَ﴾

And do not despair of Allāh's Mercy; indeed no one despairs of Allāh's Mercy except the unbelieving people.

- Surah Yusuf, 12:87

Despair in Allāh's mercy brings a state of utter hopelessness. A person imagines himself or herself as definitely going to Hell and therefore they see no benefit in praying or doing any good or keeping away from any sin or evil.

¹² Don't confuse this with *al-qunoot* in salāh that is القنوت.

Thereafter they start thinking that they might as well enjoy as much worldly pleasure as possible since they are definitely not going to make it to Jannah and Allāh won't ever forgive them. It is for this reason that in hadith we are told, even if your sins are as many as the drops of water in the ocean or the grains of sand in the desert, Allāh can and *will* forgive all of them, as long as you repent sincerely. It doesn't matter how many times in life you already made a promise to Allāh not to sin and fell into sin again. Never lose hope that Allāh will still forgive you. The only condition is that when you do istighfār, always be as sincere as possible.

﴿قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ
الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

Say: 'O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Indeed Allāh will forgive all sins. He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful.'

- Surah az-Zumar 39:53

Despair in Allāh is not just when we sin. Sometimes people despair when they are in trouble and their prayers are not answered. By their nature, when things are going well in life, people feel Allāh is on their side but when Allāh tests them, they lose hope and think Allāh has abandoned them and no longer cares about them. This is also a form of *ya'as* and *qunoot* that is *harām*.

History shows us that Allāh always rescues the faithful at the last minute after they pass their test of showing they never despair of Allāh's help.

For example, Nabi Ibrāhim ('a) was actually thrown into a fire but he didn't despair even as he was flying in the air towards the fire. So Allāh changed the fire and made it cool for him (Qur'ān, 21:69). Nabi Ibrāhim ('a) also put a knife on the throat of his only son (Nabi Ismā'il ('a)) in obedience to Allāh – never losing hope in Allāh's mercy – and Allāh saved his son.

The example of Nabi Musa ('a) was given in the previous lesson; how he never despaired even when he was trapped on the shores of a sea with hundreds of thousands of men, women and children of Israel against the army of Fira'un.

Nabi Ayyub suffered terrible diseases and tests. All his children and wives died. He lost all his wealth and farms. But he never stopped asking Allāh for help:

﴿وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا
مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَعِندَنَا وَذَكَرَىٰ لِلْعَابِدِينَ﴾

And Ayyub, when he called out to his Lord, 'Indeed distress has befallen me, and You are the most merciful of the merciful.' So We answered his prayer and removed his

distress, and We gave him [back] his family along with others like them, as a mercy from Us, and a reminder for the pious.

- Surah al-Anbiyā, 21:83-84

Similarly you can think of lots of other examples: Nabi Yunus (‘a) saved from the belly of a fish, Nabi Ibrāhim (‘a) and Nabi Zakariya (‘a) have children at a very old age, the Ka’bah is saved from the attack of Abraha and his elephants, Rasulullāh (s) narrowly escapes assassination on the night of hijrah, Imām Husayn (‘a)’s sacrifices for Islam survive against all odds for 1400 years and to this day, and so on. All these People of Allāh had one thing in common – trust in Allāh’s kindness and never despairing or losing hope in Him; that in the end they will succeed.

And it is not only for Prophets and Messengers and Imāms. Even ordinary people can attain Jannah if they don’t despair. For example, the magicians of Fir’aun. They were the worst of people. But in one moment, when they showed courage and faith, they became Muslims. Thereafter even though Fir’aun threatened to chop their hands and legs and to crucify them (and he did that), they never lost hope or despair. You can read about what they said when Fir’aun threatened them in Surah ash-Shu’ara, 26:49-51.

Other examples of people who placed their trust in Allāh even though they were surrounded by evil are Asiya, the wife of Fir’aun, the People of the Cave (*ashāb al-kahf*), Hurr bin al-Yazid al-Riyāhi (at Karbala), and so on. You can research and read about these individuals and their stories on your own.

Not only should we not despair in Allāh’s mercy for ourselves, but also we should never lose hope about others. Even if we know a person who commits harām or does not practice a wājib act, don’t assume ‘they are definitely going to end up in Hell’. What counts most are the last moments of our lives. A person may realize the truth and repent sincerely at the very last moment of their lives.

When we despair in Allāh’s mercy, we are saying, ‘We no longer believe Allāh has more love to give’ or ‘He is not great enough or kind enough to accept us.’ Even if we don’t deserve to be forgiven, it doesn’t mean Allāh is not kind enough to forgive the undeserving who sincerely repents.

Consider for example, is there any wrong you can do that your mother would not forgive? Allāh loves you far, far more than your mother can ever love you. In fact even the love in your mother’s heart is a gift from Allāh that He gives all mothers.

When you have a great need and you pray to Allāh desperately but your prayers are not answered immediately, you must trust that there is a reason for it that you may realize one day.

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

It may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, maybe that you love a thing while it is evil for you. Allāh knows and you don't know.

- Surah al-Baqarah 2:216

Finally, remember that duas and repentance (*tawbah*) are cords that connect us to Allāh. When we despair, we cut this cord. It is for this reason that despair is such a major sin. Allāh tells Rasulullāh (s) in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِي إِذَا دَعَانِي﴾

And when My servants ask you about Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the one who calls out, when he calls on Me.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:186

﴿وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ﴾

And your Lord says: 'Call out to Me, I will answer you.' Those who are too proud to worship Me, will enter the fire of Hell.

- Surah Ghāfir, 40:60

Lesson 3

Despair vs. False Hope (Cont'd)

Feeling safe from Allāh's Punishment

The opposite of despair in Allāh's mercy (*al-ya'as*) is *al-amn min makrillah* - to feel safe from His wrath. In other words, instead of the other extreme where a person is so frightened of Allāh that he or she loses hope in His mercy, in this extreme, a person feels so confident that he or she does not fear sinning against Allāh.

This is also a major sin and there are two main groups of people who commit this sin. The first group are usually disbelievers in Allāh. They don't care about Allāh's punishment and mock the idea that Allāh can or would ever punish them. The second group are usually believers but they mistake Allāh's infinite mercy for weakness and think because Allāh is so merciful, they can get away with anything even without trying to obey or repenting sincerely for their sins.

The first group of people might laugh and say, 'I am ready. Allāh can even punish me now. I don't care!' The second group of people might say, 'My Lord is too merciful. Even if I don't pray and fast, He will forgive me.' Or 'I really love Imām Husayn ('a) so as long as I cry for him, he will intercede for me on the Day of Judgement even if I don't do what is wājib or keep away from harām.'

The people in both cases are wrong. They are delusional and are fooling themselves.

In the case of the first group, who mock at Allāh's warnings, Allāh says:

﴿أَفَأَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ أَوْ أَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ
بَأْسُنَا ضُحًى وَهُمْ يُلْعَبُونَ أَفَأَمِنُوا مَكْرَ اللَّهِ فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ﴾

What! do the people of the towns then feel secure from Our punishment coming to them by night while they are asleep? What! do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming to them in the morning while they fool around? What! do they feel secure from Allāh's plan? No one feels secure from Allāh's plan except the people in loss.

- Surah al-'Arāf, 7:99

In the case of the second group, we should never forget that the Prophets and Imāms are obedient servants of Allāh. They don't do as they please but only do what is the will of Allāh. Even when they intercede (do *shafā'ah*) on the Day of Judgement, it will only be for those whom Allāh wishes to forgive. It won't be against Allāh's wishes. The example of Prophets and Imāms is that like that of angels whom Allāh describes as follows:

﴿بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

They are (Allāh's) honoured servants. They do not speak ahead of Him, and they act (only) by His command.

- Surah al-Anbiyā, 21:27

To be careless of Allāh's warnings of His punishment means to be disrespectful to Allāh. It means a person does not take Allāh's warning seriously or thinks he or she can get away from Allāh's punishment.

It is sufficient to read history to realize how no one escapes or gets away from Allāh's punishment when they disobey. Thousands of nations have come and gone. Great empires and 'superpowers' that no one thought would ever disappear have gone without a trace.

Allāh says:

﴿قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ﴾

Travel over the land and then observe what was the fate of the deniers.

- Surah al-An'ām, 6:11

Sometimes Allāh allows a person to do wrong for a while (i.e. He gives them respite or 'more time'). Then punishment descends on them suddenly. And a more painful punishment awaits them in the hereafter.

And sometimes Allāh punishes a person gradually through 'blessings'. This is called *Istidrāj*. For example, a person runs after wealth and forgets Allāh. As a punishment, they get more wealth! The more they get, the further they go away from Allāh. That is why Imām Ali ('a) warned us to be careful when we see that the more we disobey Allāh, the more blessings we get. It means we are being set up!

Of course this doesn't mean that Allāh does not give blessings to good people. But always ask yourself: When I get more blessings, do I forget Allāh or do I remember Him more? If you thank Him and remember Him more, it is a blessing. But if it makes you forget Allāh, then it is a form of punishment for previous sins. What matters most to Allāh is how pure your soul is and how much you remember Him. It doesn't matter as much, how rich or poor or ill or healthy your body is in this world except how these affect your soul and your permanent home in the hereafter.

Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ نِعْمَتَنَا لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّأَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نَمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ﴾

And let not those who disbelieve think that the respite We grant them is good for their souls: We give them respite only that they may increase in sin, and there is a humiliating punishment for them.

- Surah Āli- 'Imrān, 3:178

Respite and *istidrāj* of course only apply to those who when they sin, ignore repentance (*istighfār* and *tawbah*).

The people who are truly learned and who realize the greatness and majesty of Allāh, never take Allāh's warnings lightly. Instead they fear Him and are in awe of their Lord.

The Qur'ān says:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ﴾

Only those of His (Allāh's) servants who possess knowledge truly fear Allāh

- Surah al-Fātir, 35:28

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'The root of wisdom is the fear of Allāh.' In other words, a person cannot be called wise if they don't fear Allāh.

Fear of Allāh doesn't mean fearing that Allāh will just punish without reason. Fear of Allāh means fear of committing sins and disobeying Allāh intentionally. We can succeed in the hereafter and live happily forever and ever in the most beautiful place Allāh has ever created (Jannah), but we must work for it whilst hoping in the mercy of Allāh.

Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'Do not be of those who hope for the hereafter without working for it.' And he has also said, 'I have never seen a person who truly wants to go to paradise asleep nor a person who really wants to flee from hellfire asleep.' By saying 'asleep' Imām Ali ('a) means 'being lazy, heedless and not working hard or doing something about one's hereafter.'

Summary of Despair and Hope

The summary of the previous lesson and this lesson then is that the true *mu'min* neither despairs in Allāh's mercy nor feels safe from Allāh' wrath. He or she keeps both in mind based on āyāt of the Qur'ān like:

﴿نَبِّئْ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ﴾

Inform My servants that I am the All-forgiving, All-merciful, and that My punishment - that is the painful punishment.

- Surah al-Hijr 15:49-50

﴿غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ شَدِيدِ الْعِقَابِ ذِي الطَّوْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ إِلَهُ الْمَصِيرِ﴾

*The Forgiver of sins and the Acceptor of repentance, severe to punish, Lord of bounty.
There is no god but He – to Him is the return.*

- Surah Ghāfir, 40:3

In one hadith we are told that the heart of a *mu'min* is like the two pans of a scale in perfect balance. If you put a *mu'min's* fear of Allāh's punishment on one side of the scale and his hope in Allāh's mercy on the other, neither side will tip. It will rest in perfect balance.

We should also be the same when we preach to others. Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'The perfect scholar in Islam is one who does not let people despair and lose hope in the mercy and kindness of Allāh and yet does not make them feel safe from Allāh's wrath.' (Nahj al-Balāgha, saying number 85).

Lesson 4

Taqwa

The word 'taqwa' (تقوى) is very often misunderstood, yet it occurs in the Qur'ān very frequently. Some translate it as 'Fear of Allāh' and others as 'Piety'. The word taqwa comes from the Arabic word *wiqāya* that means 'to safeguard' or 'to abstain from something in order to protect oneself from its harm'. So taqwa is to abstain from sin so as to safeguard oneself from eternal punishment. And this is done by constantly being conscious of Allāh's presence. In other words, taqwa is not to fear Allāh but to fear disobeying Him through sin. Allāh does not want His creatures to be afraid of Him because of His ability to punish them. He wants them to realize that He is warning them for their own good and they should fear sins that can cause them to end in Hellfire.

So even when we say 'Fear Allāh', we don't mean 'be scared of Him'. We mean be ashamed or sad at doing something that would displease Him. We will therefore define taqwa as 'Godwariness' or 'Godconsciousness'.

One who practises taqwa is called a *muttaqi* and the plural is *muttaqun* or *muttaqeen*. So again, instead of defining *muttaqi* as 'pious' or 'God-fearing', we will define a *muttaqi* as a 'Godwary' or 'Godconscious' person.

When Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) was asked to explain meaning of the word, 'taqwa' he replied, 'It is to submit to the command of Allāh (s.w.t.) and not to go near the prohibited (*harām*).'

A Muslim who has taqwa is always conscious of Allāh and therefore always concerned about pleasing Him. It is impossible for a Muslim or even *Mu'min* to be a *muttaqi* and still not practice something that is *wājib* or still practice anything that is *harām*. In fact, over and above *wājib* and *harām*, you will always find a *muttaqi* trying to practice everything *mustahab* and avoiding anything *makruh*.

Importance of Taqwa

Taqwa is not just important for a person's spiritual growth and to attain closeness to Allāh. It is also an important ingredient in any good work being accepted by Allāh, along with other ingredients like intention (*niyyah*).

Just like Allāh does not accept a good deed that is not done 100% for Him and Him alone, similarly Allāh does not accept good deeds except from the *muttaqun*, meaning from those who make every effort to do what is *wājib* and keep away from *harām*.

In the days of Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a), a man saw someone stealing a loaf of bread. So he followed the thief and further along he saw the thief giving half the loaf to a beggar. The man was surprised. He caught up with the thief and asked him, 'what are doing? First you steal and now you are helping a hungry beggar? Don't you know stealing is harām?'

The man said, 'Leave me alone. I know what I'm doing. Allāh records ten rewards for doing one good deed and only one sin for doing one bad deed. I stole and got one sin. I gave some to the beggar and got ten rewards. So I still have a balance of nine good deeds!'

The man did not know how to answer him and rushed to Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) and told him what he had seen. The Imām smiled and recited the following āyah of the Qur'ān:

﴿...إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

Allāh accepts only from the Godwary.

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:27

In other words, the thief was not getting any reward for giving the beggar because it was done without taqwa. And if you read the start of this āyah (5:27), it talks of the two sons of Nabi Adam ('a) – Hābil and Qābil – and Allāh says in the same āyah, 'When the two of them offered a sacrifice, it was accepted from one of them and not accepted from the other.' This further proves Imām as-Sādiq ('a)'s explanation that Allāh only accepts from the Godwary.

Another man called Sulaymān bin Khalid says, 'I asked Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) regarding the āyah:

﴿يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَا بُشْرَىٰ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ وَيَقُولُونَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا وَقَدِمْنَا إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً مَّنْثُورًا﴾

The day when they see the angels, there will be no good news for the guilty that day, and they (the angels) will say, 'Keep off [from paradise]!' Then We shall attend to the works they have done and then turn them into scattered dust.

- Surah al-Furqān 25:22-23

Imām as-Sādiq ('a) replied, 'By Allāh, even if their deeds are as white as Egyptian cotton it will be scattered like dust because when they see sin and shamelessness they do not keep away from it.'

The Imām gave the example of Egyptian cotton because it was considered to be the whitest and purest cloth at the time.

Think of Taqwa as a shield or a protective covering. It is what keeps us from committing sins. When we don't care about sinning or we are oblivious that Allāh is watching us while we sin (i.e. we are not Godconscious) then we don't have our shield to protect us from the Fire of Hell.

In fact, in the following āyah, Allāh uses the word 'qu' to mean 'save' and it comes from the same word as taqwa:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ﴾

O you who have faith! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones...

- Surah at-Tahrim, 66:6

In one hadith we are told, 'Even if you stand (very long) for prayers like a tent peg planted in the ground and keep fasting till you resemble a dried stick and stoop like a bow, Allāh will not accept any of your deeds till you have *taqwa* to guard against sinful actions.'

Consider now the following āyah of Qur'ān:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ﴾

When those who are Godwary are touched by a visitation of shaytān, they remember [Allāh] and, behold, they perceive.

- Surah al-A'rāf, 7:201

Notice the difference between a muttaqi and any other person. For people without the shield of taqwa, when shaytān tempts them or whispers evil in their ears, they are not even aware of it. So they go along with the thoughts planted in their minds by shaytān and sooner or later they give in to temptation. What the āyah above is saying is that the people with taqwa are always on guard. Their Godconsciousness (taqwa) is like a radar that picks up on signals from shaytān. As soon as they are 'attacked' by a thought from shaytān, their taqwa defence system kicks in. They are conscious and wary of Allāh so they clearly see this is from shaytān and they seek refuge with Allāh for His protection by reciting phrases like *ta'āwudh* (*au'dhu billāhi min ash-shaytānir rajeem*) and *istighfār* (*astaghfirullāha rabbi wa atubu ilayh*).

Then they reinforce themselves with more du'as and more dhikrs and tasbihs until one day they reach a level where shaytān does not even bother to whisper to them because they are totally Godconscious at all times. Make this a habit: Every time a sinful thought comes to your mind, recite the *ta'āwudh* and *istighfār* and sincerely ask Allāh to protect you from shaytān and to increase your taqwa.

If you read the sermons of Rasullāh (s) and the Imāms (like Imām Ali ('a)'s sermons in Nahj al-Balāgha), you will find that very often the first thing they said, was 'I advise

you to adopt the taqwa' (أُصِيكُم بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ) meaning 'I advise you to first be conscious of Allāh and ensure you do everything wājib and keep away from everything harām, before you start thinking of doing other noble deeds'.

So whether we want to go for ziyārah or do 'azā of Imām Husayn ('a) or whether we want to help the world and build schools and orphanages and dig wells and feed the poor, the first and foremost matter is to get the foundation right. Anything you do in life must be accompanied with taqwa (conscious of Allāh and keeping away from sin).

Remember: As long as we keep sinning, we are not of the muttaqun. So every time we sin without repenting, we erase some of the previous good deeds we did.

We should therefore not measure how good we are just based on how much good we do. We must first look at how much taqwa we have i.e. how God-conscious we are when it comes to keeping away from harām and submitting to Allāh's will and orders. With taqwa even little actions are great in Allāh's eyes but without taqwa our good works and acts of charity carry little weight.

The following are now āyāt of the Qur'ān and the words of the ma'sumeen ('a) (i.e. hadith) on taqwa. Your teacher will only discuss some of them. Thereafter you are encouraged to read and reflect on the rest yourself. You may even want to take one of the hadith and write an essay on it so that you think about it deeply.

Taqwa in Qur'ān and Hadith

﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ﴾

If the people of the towns had been faithful and Godwary, We would have opened to them blessings from the heaven and the earth. But they denied; so We seized them because of what they used to earn.

- Surah al-'Arāf, 7:96

1. Rasulullāh (s), 'One who is nourished with taqwa is nourished with the best of this world and the next.'
2. Rasulullāh (s), 'Do what is wājib, you will be a muttaqi.'
3. Imām Ali ('a), when he was asked the best of deeds, he said: 'Taqwa'.
4. Imām Ali ('a), 'The cloth of taqwa is the most honourable of robes.'

5. Imām Ali ('a), 'One who plants the tree of taqwa will reap the fruits of guidance.'
6. Imām Ali ('a), 'Fear Allāh and be conscious of Him to some degree, even though it be little. And place between you and Him a curtain (of shame), even though it be thin.'

Note: In other words, even if you cannot be very Godconscious, don't become completely shameless when it comes to sinning and disobeying Allāh.

7. Imām Ali ('a), 'One who controls his lusts will be a muttaki.'
8. Imām Ali ('a), 'Taqwa is to keep away' i.e. from what is harām.
9. Amir al-Mu'minin, Imām Ali b. Abi Tālib ('a) in one of his sermons said, 'Beware that sins are like unruly horses on whom their riders mount, and their reins have been set loose, so they plunge with them into Hell. Indeed piety and Godconsciousness (taqwa) are like trained horses on whom their riders mount with the reins in their hands, so that they make them enter paradise.'

Note: This hadith is beautiful. It is full of imagery and very graphic in description. It is an excellent hadith to write an essay on, explaining in detail what you understand of it and expanding on its meaning and implication.

10. Imām al-Bāqir ('a) narrated that Imām Ali ('a) used to say, 'Any action performed with full Godconsciousness (*taqwa*) is never deemed little, and how can it be deemed little when it is an action that is accepted?'
11. Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a), 'The most difficult act of worship is to refrain from sinning.'
12. Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'The (Day of) Resurrection is the wedding day of the muttaqeen.'
13. Mufaddal, the companion of Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a), was once sitting with the Imām when he (Mufaddal) lamented, 'How few are my deeds!' Imām as-Sādiq ('a) told him not to speak like that and to ask Allāh for forgiveness. Then the Imām said, 'Few deeds performed with Godconsciousness (taqwa) are better than many deeds performed without it.' So Mufaddal asked, 'How can deeds be many in number yet be without Godconsciousness?' And Imām as-Sādiq ('a) replied, 'They can. It is just like a man who feeds people, is kind to his neighbours, helps people with their needs when they are going on a journey (and so on), but when the gate to forbidden things (harām) is opened in front of him, he will enter it, because his (good) actions were without Godconsciousness (taqwa) (i.e. so he has no shield to protect him or his

actions from being destroyed by his sins). Whereas another person may not have acquired many deeds, but when the gate to forbidden things (harām) is opened in front of him, he will never enter it.'

14. Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a), 'I advise you to be Godconscious, pious and to strive; and know that striving (to do good) without refraining from sins is useless.'
15. Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'A person is not considered one of our (elite) Shi'ah if he lives in a town with a population of a hundred thousand, and there is someone among them who is more pious than him.'
16. Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'A person is not considered one of our Shi'ah if he proclaims (our virtues (*fadā'il*)) with his tongue, yet his actions contradict our actions and sayings. Our Shi'ah are those whose tongues are in harmony with their hearts; they listen to our sayings and act according to our actions – those are our Shi'ah.'

Taqwa is to be Conscious of Allāh's Presence at All Times



Lesson 5

Istighfār & Tawba

One of the greatest signs of Allāh's love and mercy for human beings is that after giving them freewill to do as they please, He also gave them a way out to make up for mistakes. When a person commits a sin out of ignorance or forgetfulness or accidentally, they harm their own soul. This harm can be erased and they can return their soul to its original state of purity by asking Allāh to forgive them and by turning back to Allāh.

Asking Allāh to forgive us for our sins and mistakes is called *istighfār*. Making a firm resolution not to sin again and turning back to Allāh is called *tawbah*. This means when a person commits a sin repeatedly and habitually and then decides to repent, they first do *istighfār* (ask for forgiveness) and then *tawbah* (turn back to Allāh). *Tawbah* is therefore a higher state of repentance than *istighfār*.

A complete and most sincere change of heart and turning back to Allāh is also called *Tawbat an-Nasuha* (Sincere and Complete Repentance) in the Qur'ān.

As we studied in Lesson 2, one of the greatest sins in Islam is to lose hope in Allāh's mercy and that is what Shaytān really wants for us. This means no matter how many times we fall and sin and no matter how many times we have already asked for forgiveness, we must never stop asking Allāh to forgive us once more. The only condition is that every time we ask, we must be sincere and not say words of *istighfār* knowing very well that we plan to sin again.

﴿قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ
الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

Say [that Allāh declares,] 'O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Indeed Allāh will forgive all sins. Indeed He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful.

- Surah az-Zumar 39:53

Allāh is too kind and too merciful to allow a person to beg Him and then to turn him or her away and refuse to forgive. If a beggar knocks on our door we feel bad turning them away empty-handed. How can Allāh do that then? If Allāh did not want to forgive us then He wouldn't even give us the opportunity or thought to ask Him for forgiveness. So whenever we find an opportunity and willingness to repent sincerely, we should also know that Allāh has decided to forgive us once more.

Not asking Allāh for forgiveness is a sign of pride. Allāh loves to see His creatures ask Him for His forgiveness and blessings. To recognize that Allāh is our Master and we are His slaves is a sign of humility and it makes us pure and sincere. To refuse to

accept that Allāh is our Creator and Master is a sign of false pride and defiance to surrendering to Allāh and it is this false pride that stops people from praying salāh or asking Allāh for forgiveness.

Of course for our repentance to be sincere, we must also undo any harm we have done. For example, if we steal something, asking Allāh for forgiveness is not enough. We must also return what we stole. If we backbite, we must ask Allāh for forgiveness but also ask the person we have hurt for forgiveness or do something nice for him or her. If we missed our salāh or sawm, we must pay them back (in addition to asking for *maghfira* (forgiveness)).

Sometimes we forget to ask Allāh for forgiveness or we treat some of the sins we commit as ‘minor’ and therefore we continue on with our lives not realizing how we have harmed our souls. A true faithful (*mu’min*) must therefore always do some self-accounting (*muhāsabah*) before going to bed every night. Muhāsabah means reviewing what we did for the day and if we realize any sin we have committed we should ask Allāh for forgiveness immediately. Shaytān also tries to make us delay istighfār and tawbah by telling us to wait until tomorrow, or Thursday night or the month of Ramadan or when we go for Hajj, and so on. But of course no one knows when they will die and therefore istighfār and tawbah must always be done as soon as possible.

If we can shed tears of remorse when asking Allāh for forgiveness then that is a sign of our sincere repentance and also proof that Allāh has forgiven us.

Istighfār and tawbah can be simply saying ‘*astaghfirullāha wa atubu ilayh*’ (I seek forgiveness from Allāh and turn back to Him’) i.e. turn back to His obedience. But it must come after sincere regret and remorse and after we undo any harm we have done - and we should have a sincere plan never to sin again before asking Allāh to forgive us.

Most Muslims will do their best to keep away from major sins like alcohol, adultery, and so on. The challenge usually is what is ignored as ‘minor’ sins.

Rasulullāh (s) was once travelling with his followers when he stopped at a desert where there was nothing growing. Rasulullāh (s) asked his followers to go and collect wood. They replied that it was a desert – there was only sand around and it was not possible to find any wood in such a deserted place. Rasulullāh (s) however insisted that they try and find some.

So off they went and sure enough, as they brought back what they could find, soon there was a big heap of twigs and wood before Rasulullāh (s)’s feet. Rasulullāh (s) then used this as a practical lesson and told them that sins are like these twigs that we do not notice at first. When we look at our lives it seems as if there are no sins we have committed. But it is only by searching our hearts carefully that we can recollect them all and ask Allāh to forgive them. What Rasulullāh (s) was teaching them was the importance and art of *muhāsabah* – self-accounting.

Is it not better to self-account and find all our 'little' sins now while we can still ask Allāh for forgiveness rather than on the Day of Judgement when it will be too late? Muhāsabah should be done every day at bedtime or after our last salāh ('ishā).

Allāh takes pride in being the most merciful and forgiving and He assures us that if we commit a sin and then ask for forgiveness, He will most definitely forgive us:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَكَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

and those who, when they commit an indecent act or wrong themselves, remember Allāh, and plead [Allāh's] forgiveness for their sins - and who forgives sins except Allāh? - and [those] who do not persist in what they have committed while they know [He forgives them].

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:135

But forgiveness is only for those who are sincere and who make a mistake. It cannot of course be for those who sin knowingly and don't bother with repenting until the time when they are dying when it is too late:

﴿إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا وَكَيْسَتْ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْآنَ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا﴾

Acceptance of] repentance by Allāh is only for those who commit evil out of ignorance, then repent promptly. It is such whose repentance Allāh will accept, and Allāh is all-knowing, all-wise. But [acceptance of] repentance is not for those who go on committing misdeeds: when death approaches any of them, he says, 'I repent now.' Nor is it for those who die while they are faithless. For such We have prepared a painful punishment.

- Surah al-Nisā, 4:17-18

By keeping the doors of istighfār and tawbah open until the end of a person's life, Allāh ensures that no one has a valid excuse as to why they could not make it to Jannah. On the Day of Judgement if a person says, 'O Allāh! I was unaware and ignorant; I was chained by passions and desires and I could not resist the temptations from shaytān!' he will be told in reply, 'Was not the door of tawbah always open for you?'

We should of course still avoid sins even though the opportunity for istighfār and tawbah is always there. The reason is that when we try hard to obey Allāh and then

make a mistake once in a while, we will rush to do istighfār out of shame and regret. But if we make a habit of sinning then our hearts will become hard and we will become too proud to ask Allāh for forgiveness and soon we will find that even when we repent we are not sincere and we do it only half-heartedly.

Allāh loves a person who repents sincerely so much that Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said Allāh is more pleased with the *tawbah* of a *mu'min* than we are when we find something we had lost and had no hope of every finding again.

One of the rewards of sincere *tawbah*, that also shows how kind and loving Allāh is, is that not only does Allāh erase the evil deeds of a person who repents but He actually changes them into good deeds so that the time that was spent in sin is now counted as time spent in doing good. Hence He says:

﴿إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا﴾

except those who repent, have faith, and act righteously. For such, Allāh will change their vices with good deeds, and Allāh is all-forgiving, all-merciful.

- Surah al-Furqān 25:70

One of the punishments in this world for sinning a lot without repentance is that a person's life is shortened and such a person's du'as are not accepted.

It is reported in a hadith that Allāh told Nabi Dāwūd ('a), 'O Dāwūd! Give good news to the sinners and warn the pious people!' Nabi Dāwūd ('a) was obviously surprised to hear this. He asked, 'My Lord! What should I give as good news to the sinners and how should I warn the pious?' And Allāh replied, 'Give good news to the sinners that I will accept their repentance and warn the pious not to become proud of their piety because there is no one who is not deserving of being punished if I insist on taking his or her account with justice (instead of mercy).'

Istighfār and *tawbah* is so important that even Rasulullāh (s) and Imāms ('a) used to do it all the time. Every du'a from our Imāms includes istighfār and *tawbah* and our fourth Imām, Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin ('a) has a special du'a just for this called *Du'a at-Tawbah*.

The ma'sumeen ('a) of course do not commit sins but they would still beg Allāh forgiveness, out of humility because they always felt they had not worshipped Allāh as He deserves to be worshipped so they would ask forgiveness for that.

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'I recite istighfār seventy times every day.' And Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said that Rasulullāh (s) never got up from any gathering without reciting istighfār 25 times. One good habit to form is to recite a tasbeeh of istighfār ('*astaghfirullāha rabbi wa atubu ilayh'*) every day. This can be at bedtime or after

Fajr salāh. Allāh praises in the Qur’ān those who do istighfār in the early hours of the morning:

﴿الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ﴾

(The Godconscious are) Patient and truthful, obedient and charitable, and pleading [Allāh’s] forgiveness at dawns.

- Surah Al-Imrān, 3:17

﴿كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ﴾

They (the Godconscious) used to sleep a little during the night, and at dawns they would plead for forgiveness

- Surah adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:17-18

An Anecdote on Sincere Repentance

When the order prohibiting wine was revealed, Rasulullāh (s) sent out a caller who announced in all the streets of Madina that henceforth no one should consume alcohol. By chance, one day Rasulullāh (s) was passing through an alley when a Muslim also entered it carrying a bottle of wine in his hand. He was terrified on seeing Rasulullāh (s) approaching and he prayed to Allāh, ‘O Allāh! I sincerely repent for this and I shall never drink again. Please save me from being disgraced before your Messenger!’

When Rasulullāh (s) came closer, he asked, ‘What is there in the bottle?’

‘It contains vinegar’¹³, replied the man. Rasulullāh (s) put forward his hand and asked the man to put a little bit on his palm. With trembling hands, the man did so and when Rasulullāh (s) examined it, it was indeed vinegar. The person was overwhelmed with emotions and he began to weep and say, ‘By Allāh! It was wine! But just now I had repented and begged Allāh not to disgrace me,’ he cried.

Rasulullāh (s) confirmed this and said it was a practical example of how if a person repents sincerely, then *‘for such, Allāh will change their vices with good deeds, and Allāh is all-forgiving, all-merciful.’* (Surah al-Furqān, 25:70)

¹³ When wine is exposed to the air for a while, it changes to vinegar.

Lesson 6

Obedience, Love and Care for Parents

Obedience to Parents is a *Fard* (Obligation)

Allāh says in Qur'ān:

﴿وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا...﴾

And worship Allāh and do not join any partners with Him; and do good to your parents...

- Surah al-Nisa, 4:36

These āyāt among others, that mention parents immediately after the worship of Allāh, show how important parents are in Islam. Numerous ahādith show us that it is absolutely wājib to obey parents and harām to disobey them.

Regardless of how good we are, if we displease our parents we cannot go to paradise (Jannah). That is why Rasullāh (s) said about parents, 'They (i.e. your mother and father) are your paradise and your hell.' Meaning depending on how you deal with them, they will become the means that will lead you to either paradise or hell.

Some children and youth think it is only wājib to obey parents if they ask you do a religious activity like praying or fasting. That is not true. Doing a religious activity is wājib anyway, whether your parents ask you to do it or not, because Allāh commands it. The reason it is wājib to obey parents *in addition* to Allāh is because parents may ask you to do something that is mubāh (neither wājib nor harām, and neither mustahab nor makruh). For example, if your parents ask you to go out with them shopping, or not to go out with your friends, or to do something for them or not to wear something, it is all wājib. And even when they ask you to do something mustahab, like going to the masjid or reciting the Qur'ān or going to madrasah, it becomes wājib because they have said so. Similarly, when they ask us not to do something, it becomes harām even if previously it was only mubāh or makruh.

Anything we do that makes our parents happy has a lot of thawāb and Allāh blesses us for it tremendously. Our wishes come true and life is lengthened. Anything we do to make our parents sad or unhappy brings Allāh's anger on us and it shortens our life, happiness and sustenance (*rizq*) as well.

The only time we *have* to disobey our parents is if they tell us to do something harām. This is because obedience to Allāh comes first. For example, if we are bāligh and our parents tell us to shave our beard (for boys) or not to wear hijāb (for girls) or not to get up for fajr salāh or not to fast in the month of Ramadan, then we *have* to

disobey them. But even when we refuse to obey them in sin, we cannot be rude to them. We have to politely refuse and try and explain to them.

Sometimes our parents are unfair to us and it is entirely their fault why they are upset with us. But even in such cases, we have no right to be upset with them or to blame them.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘A person who looks at his parents angrily even while they have been unjust, his prayers are not accepted.’ And he also said, ‘If they beat you, you say, “O Allāh forgive them!”’

Rasulullāh (s) has said that Allāh says to a person who displeases his or her parents until they disown him or her: ‘Do as much good as you please. I will never forgive you!’

That is why, in Islam, even if our parents are not Muslims, we still cannot cut off relations with them and we still must be polite to them and serve them and look after them in their old age. And in fact we still must obey them unless they ask us to do something harām.

Why does Islam place so much emphasis on parents? This is not easy to understand until we become parents ourselves. Parents give up all their comfort, freedom, wealth, time and practically all their life just for their children’s happiness and well-being. Parents fall in love with their children from the time they are conceived and well before they are even born. They busy themselves shopping for their children, deciding on what to name them and planning all the wonderful things they would like to do for them when they are born. Thereafter they stay up in the night and work hard during the day just for the children’s happiness. They try and give them the best education possible and they constantly worry about them and look out for them, stopping anyone or anything from harming them. Parents are overjoyed when they see their children happy, or enjoying themselves, even if it just eating or sleeping, because they know they played a part in their children’s comfort and happiness - though the child never thanks them or appreciates it. So in sense parents play the role of Allāh’s agents because Allāh is the one who blesses us, feeds us, clothes us, and gives us happiness. But when we are children, He does all this for us through our parents.

When we are ungrateful to our parents, we are actually selfish and ungrateful to Allāh. Allāh reminds us why we must be grateful to our mothers for example:

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي
 وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا
 تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا...﴾

We have enjoined man concerning his parents: His mother carried him through weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years. Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the return. But if they urge you to ascribe to Me as partner that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them (but) keep their company honourably in this world ...

- Surah Luqmān, 31:14-15

Parents also play a very important role in the upbringing of children. Islam considers the training during our childhood to be very important because a child is like a clean slate that is ready to accept every impression. Our character as adults is largely influenced by our upbringing as children.

Our parents usually look after themselves. They work, earn money, buy food and clothes, pay the bills, and look after their own home. But we cannot pay the rent or even afford our own meals. Being younger, we still depend on them to provide for us out of their love. Our sense of security and confidence also comes from their presence (even if we don't realize that). If it were not for their love and care, most of us would not grow up being healthy and well mannered.

As we begin to grow into teenagers and older, we must realize that no one has perfect parents and that parents are also human like us. They are just older. They usually want only what is good for us based on their past experiences. They have lived longer and understand the challenges of being an adult much better.

Some of the many ways to respect our parents include:

- Never raise your voice at them.
- Do not walk in front of them unless told to do so.
- Do not speak when they are speaking.
- Never correct them in front of others.
- Never insult, argue or shout at them.
- Never call them by name but use respectful words like 'dad' and 'mum'.
- Do things to help them without waiting to be asked first.
- Do not sit when they are standing. If you are sitting and they enter the room, stand up until they sit. Never stretch your legs in their presence.
- Thank them often and pray for them every day.

Rasulullāh (s) has said, 'One who hurts his parents hurts me, and one who hurts me hurts Allāh, and whoever hurts Allāh is cursed in the Tawrāt, Injeel, Zabur and Qur'ān!'

In Surah al-Isrā (chp. 17) āyah 24, Allāh gives us the perfect du'a to recite for our parents everyday:

﴿وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا﴾

'My Lord! Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]!'

The Love of Parents for Us as Adults

Humans are said to be fully grown and mature at the age of forty. Once a Muslim reaches forty, all his or her excuses for disobeying Allāh or not focusing on the hereafter are exhausted. From this point onwards, not only do people begin to weaken physically and decline but they must also now work harder for the next life instead of this life.

Parents not only want us to be happy in this world but also the next. Even when we are fully grown, independent adults, parents continue to advise us and worry about us. If we are good and obedient to Allāh, they pray for us and encourage us. And if we have chosen to disobey Allāh and are heading towards Hellfire, no one cares about us but parents will still not lose hope and will continue trying to guide us.

This is shown graphically in the following āyāt of the Qur'ān:

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ تَتَّقِلُ عَنْهُمْ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَتَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَدَ الصَّادِقُ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ. وَالَّذِي قَالَ لُوَالِدَيْهِ أَفٍّ لَكُمْمَا اتَّعَدَانِي أَنْ أَخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلَّتِ الْقُرُونُ مِنْ قَبْلِي وَهُمَا يَسْتَعْجِلَانِ اللَّهَ وَيُنَازِعَانِي مِنْ إِيمَانِي أَنْ أَدْعُو اللَّهَ فَقُلُّ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ. أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمِّ قَدْ خَلَّتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ﴾

We have enjoined man to be kind to his parents. His mother has carried him in travail, and bore him in travail, and his gestation and weaning take thirty months. When he comes of age and reaches forty years, he says, 'My Lord! Inspire me to give thanks for Your blessing with which You have blessed me and my parents, and that I may do righteous deeds which may please You, and invest my descendants with righteousness. Indeed I have turned to you in penitence, and I am one of the muslims.'

Such are the ones from whom We accept the best of what they do, and overlook their misdeeds, [who will be] among the inhabitants of paradise—a true promise which they had been given.

As for him who says to his parents, 'Fie on you! Do you promise me that I shall be raised [from the dead] when generations have passed away before me?' And they invoke Allāh's help [and say]: 'Woe to you! Believe! Indeed Allāh's promise is true.' But he says, 'These are nothing but myths of the ancients.'

Such are the ones against whom the word became due concerning the nations that have passed away before them of jinn and humans. They were indeed the losers.

- Surah al-Ahqāf, 46:15-18

When Parents Grow Old

When people grow old, they go back to being a child in every way. A child is weak, ignorant, fussy and helpless. So are humans as they grow old. They lose their energy and strength, they get hurt easily, they begin losing their memory, their eyesight dims, their hearing dims, they lose their teeth, they become irritable and dependent on others.

The Qur'ān talks about this in several places. For example:

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْقَدِيرُ﴾

It is Allāh who created you from [a state of] weakness, then He gave you power after weakness. Then, after power, He ordained weakness and old age: He creates whatever He wishes, and He is the All-knowing, the All-powerful.

- Surah ar-Rūm, 30:54

﴿وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ﴾

And whomever We give a long life, We cause him to regress in creation. Then will they not apply reason?

- Surah Yā Sin, 36:68

A lot of times adults will lose patience with their old parents and fight with them or break relations or even abandon them and leave them on their own. The main reason for this tragedy is because they assume their parents are adults and therefore should behave like them and be reasonable and understanding, etc. What they forget however is that when humans grow very old, they are only adults in physical size. But in their understanding, reasoning and insecurity, they are no different from infants and little children.

Islam demands that the more our parents grow older (and weaker) and we grow stronger, the gentler and kinder we need to be.

Which is what Allāh tells us clearly in the Qur’ān as well:

﴿...إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا﴾

...Should they reach old age at your side—one of them or both—do not say to them, ‘Fie!’¹⁴ And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words. Lower the wing of humility to them, out of mercy, and say, ‘My Lord! Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]!’

- Surah al-Isra, 17:23-24

The Rights of Parents after their Demise

The rights of our parents remain even after they pass away. It is in fact wājib to continue serving parents even after they are dead. Those who forget their parents after they die are the same as those who forget them while they are alive in this world. Some of their rights after they die include:

- We should remember them in our prayers and pray for their forgiveness.
- If they have any debts against Allāh (e.g. *qadā*), we should repay it for them.
- If they have any debts with other people, we should settle it for them.
- We should respect their friends who are still alive and keep in touch with them.
- We should not do anything to spoil their name.
- We should pray to Allāh to grant them a place in Jannah and to unite us there with them.

The books of du’as and a’māls have many prayers that we can recite to ask Allāh to bless our parents while they are alive and even after they pass away.

¹⁴ That is, do not grumble or speak to them in an ill-tempered manner. The Arabic word for ‘Fie!’ in the āyah is *Uff*. *Uff* is an expression of displeasure and being fed up.

Lesson 7

Chastity & Modesty in Islam

In Book 7 (Akhlāq Lesson 7) we learnt about ‘Sins of the Tongue’ such as lying, backbiting, slander, boasting, and flattery. In this lesson we wish to look at major sins in Islam that are related to the private parts, such as fornication and adultery (*zinā*), homosexuality (*liwāt*), pornography and masturbation (*istimnā*).

Islam views sins related to sexual behaviour and lifestyles as the result of a lack of chastity and modesty or put simply, a lack of shame (*hayā*) i.e. shamelessness. In the western world chastity is defined only as sexual abstinence before marriage. But the word ‘chaste’ and ‘chastity’ originally meant ‘pure’ or ‘virtuous’. In Islam a person who fulfills the needs of his or her body lawfully but is essentially pure and pious in character and behaviour is said to be chaste. In other words, a Muslim can and should be chaste in speech, dress, interaction with others, as well as of course in their sexual behaviour.

Similarly, modesty is often defined as downplaying one’s achievements, being humble or shy. But in this lesson when we say ‘modesty’ we mean behaving and appearing in public decently as opposed to, for example, dressing indecently or suggestively to incite sinful desires and lust in others.

Chastity and modesty are particularly emphasized for women on whom hijāb is wājib. *Hayā* is like self-respect. If a person loses it, it requires a lot of effort to regain it again.

Hayā

Let us first review some ahādith on *hayā*. Your teacher will not read all of them but will review some and you can review the rest on your own.

Keep in mind that in the following ahādith, wherever the word *hayā* occurs, we mean modesty, chastity and shamefulness (in the positive sense and as opposed to shamelessness),.

1. Rasulullāh (s), ‘One who is not ashamed of Allāh in public will not be ashamed of Allāh in private.’
2. Rasulullāh (s), ‘A person should feel shame from the two angels with him as if he has two righteous neighbours that are with him night and day.’
3. Rasulullāh (s), ‘Hayā has ten parts. Nine parts are in women and one in men.’

4. Rasulullāh (s), 'Whenever there is indecency in something it makes it ugly. And whenever there is hayā in a thing – without exception – it makes it beautiful.'
5. Rasulullāh (s), 'If hayā was a person, he would have been a virtuous one.'
6. Rasulullāh (s), 'Hayā is religion itself, all of it.'
7. Imām Ali ('a), 'The best clothing in this world is hayā.'
8. Imām Ali ('a), 'A lot of hayā in a person is proof of his or her faith (imān).'
9. Imām Ali ('a), 'Three things are not to be ashamed of: For a man to serve his guests (himself), to stand up in the midst of a gathering for one's father or teacher, and to seek a right (that belongs to a person) even if it is little.'
10. Imām al-Hasan ('a), 'One who has no religion has no shame (hayā).'
11. Imām al-Kādhim ('a), 'Hayā is from faith (imān) and faith (imān) is in Jannah.'
12. Imām al-Kādhim ('a), 'Be ashamed of (disobeying) Allāh in privacy as you are ashamed of people in public.'

Zinā (Fornication & Adultery)

In English, fornication is usually referred to sexual relations between an unmarried man and woman. And adultery is when a married man or woman has sexual relations with another married man or woman who is not his or her spouse. In Islam, both are harām and major sins and referred to by one word – *zinā*.

Zinā is therefore to have sexual relations with anyone besides one's lawfully wedded husband or wife. The Qur'ān forbids it strictly:

﴿وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزِّنَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا﴾

Do not go near fornication. It is indeed an indecency and an evil way.

- Surah al-Isrā, 17:32

﴿... وَلَا يَزْنُونَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا يُضَاعَفْ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَيَخْلُدْ

﴿فِيهِ مُهَانًا﴾

...and (those who) do not commit fornication. Whoever does that shall encounter its retribution, the punishment being doubled for him on the Day of Resurrection. In it (Hell) he will abide in humiliation forever,

- Surah al-Furqān, 25:68-9

So it is clear that those who commit zinā and do not repent are promised Hellfire in the hereafter. And in this world as well, the punishment is severe. A married person who commits zinā, for example, is sentenced to death in an Islamic court of law and an unmarried person is lashed a hundred times. This of course is only after they are proven guilty beyond doubt and with four witnesses.

Rasulullāh (s) warned, 'Zinā has three punishments in this world and three in the hereafter. In this world, a person loses his or her respect, their life is shortened and they will become poor (i.e. their sustenance – *rizq* – will be cut off). And in the hereafter, they will have a harsh trial (*hisāb*), Allāh will be wrathful with them and they will live in Hell forever.'

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) also warned, 'The person who will be punished most severely on the Day of Judgement is the man who commits zinā.'

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) said, 'Rasulullāh (s) said, 'When zinā becomes widespread after me, sudden deaths will also become very common.' And Imām as-Sādiq ('a) similarly predicted, 'When zinā becomes widespread, earthquakes will become more frequent.'

Zinā of course starts first with looking at a non-mahram. This is called zinā of the eyes. Then it is followed by thinking sinful thoughts (zinā of the mind) and then followed by speaking sinful things or walking towards it. That is why we are taught in hadith that even the legs can commit zinā and even putting perfume just to attract a non-mahram is a form of zinā. A Muslim is filled with purity and shame and modesty and never thinks of going towards zinā.

Imām Ali ('a) said that only those who were born out of wedlock will love zinā and he said, 'One who thinks he was born legitimate while he loves zinā is lying (to himself).'

The best way never to be attracted to zinā and not to even be tempted by it is to associate it with dirt and filth. When a person thinks of anything sinful (*harām*) to be the same as, for example, sticking one's hand down a dirty toilet, they will never be attracted to it because they will always associate sins with filth.

Some of the many reasons why Islam forbids zinā is because it discourages people from getting married, it brings social calamities in societies, it breaks families, causes children to be born without knowing who their fathers are (i.e. the spread of illegitimate children), denies children their rightful inheritance, causes the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs), promotes prostitution (that in turn leads to alcohol and drug use) and generally drives human beings to become immoral and to live like animals in the wild. And as this continues from generation to generation, with no sensible family set-ups, human beings continue to be raised without values and it leads to the increase of crime and other social ills.

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) said, 'Whoever commits zinā with a Muslim, Jew, Christian or Majus (Magian) woman, whether she is a slave or a free woman; and

dies without repenting of his sin, then the Almighty Allāh opens three hundred doors of punishment in his grave. From each door many snakes and scorpions emerge from the fire and burn and torment him till the Day of Judgement.'

And Imām Ali ('a) has said that on the Day of Judgement a bad stench shall be released in the air and all the people will become restless because of it. So much so that it would be difficult to breath. Then a caller will proclaim loudly, 'O people! Do you know what this stench is? It is the stench from the fornicators who died without repenting for their sins...' And there will not remain a single person who will not curse them.

Allāh promises Paradise and much rewards in this world and in the hereafter to a young person who is offered the chance to commit zinā but he refuses (like Nabi Yusuf ('a)) and says '*I fear Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds.*'

To counter zinā, Islam encourages early marriage. As soon as a young person is mature physically and emotionally, Islam asks them to get married so as to safeguard them from falling into harām and sins like zinā. Even if a young person still has to go to university and find a job, etc., Islam encourages parents to help their children get married and to support them so that they remain chaste.

This is also why the requirements of marriage in Islam are so simple and easy. In an Islamic State the government is required to help the poor who are unmarried to get married so as to minimize the danger of corruption spreading in society due to permissiveness and uncontrolled sexual desires.

It is also because of the evils of zinā that Islam forbids all matters related to it such as pornography, night clubs, dressing indecently, listening to music that incites lust, unnecessary interaction between non-mahrams, and so on.

Liwāt (Homosexuality)

Practising homosexuality or a 'gay' lifestyle (also called sodomy) is having a sexual relationship with someone of the same gender. This is a major sin in Islam and has unfortunately become widespread in the world today as being 'normal' and 'natural'.

Islam expressly forbids it and regards it as unnatural and shameless and those who are caught practising homosexuality with witnesses as proof, are sentenced to death in an Islamic court of law, without exception.

The Qur'ān talks of the people of Nabi Lūt ('a) who practised liwāt and it curses them and describes how severely they were punished:

﴿فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَابًا مِّن سَجِيلٍ مِّنْ نُورٍ﴾

So when our decree came to pass, we turned them upside down and rained down upon them stones, of what has been decreed, one after another.

- Surah Hud, 11:82

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'May the curse of Allāh and the angels and all of mankind be on one who masturbates and one who engages in homosexuality.'

Rasulullāh (s), Imām Ali ('a) and Imām as-Sādiq ('a) all said that if a person practises homosexuality and dies unrepentant, they are 'hit' with a stone similar to that of the people of Nabi Lut ('a) and after they are buried or cremated, their souls move to the same place of torment as the people of Nabi Lut ('a) and on the Day of Judgement they will all be raised together and sent to the fire of Hell.

Islam takes several steps to discourage zinā and liwāt. Firstly it forbids any two adults who are not husband and wife from sharing a bed or the same sleeping space or one blanket, even if they are in their clothes, on a journey travelling together or any other circumstances.

Furthermore, Rasulullāh (s) has said, 'Keep a separate bed for your children above ten years. And two brothers or two sisters or a brother and a sister should not be made to sleep on the same bed.'

It is also discouraged in Islam for a man to keep a child over 6 years of age on his lap or to kiss them on the face or have excessive physical contact with them even if they are the father or uncle of the child.

Homosexuality Today

In the Western world today, being gay is considered as normal and an acceptable way of fulfilling the sexual urge. Countries like Canada have even taken the shameful step of legislating and legalizing gay marriages. Communities that uphold and promote homosexuality are always at risk of being punished and destroyed by Allāh.

Homosexuality is of course not a 20th or 21st century phenomenon; it has always been there. But in the past, being gay was considered a perverted sexual behaviour whereas now it is being labelled as 'natural' and as a result of an 'inborn tendency'. However, all revealed religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam preach against such sexual behaviour. It has been clearly condemned in the Bible and the Qur'ān.

The argument that are given in favour of accepting gay relationships is that 'some people are just born that way' and that they do not feel any attraction to the opposite gender due to their genetic makeup and it is through no fault of theirs.

Islam does accept that it is possible for someone to be born without the natural attraction to the opposite gender at puberty. However this does not mean that it is 'normal'. There are many people who are born with certain medical conditions

through no fault of theirs or due to their genetic makeup. Yet we don't ignore it and say it is 'normal'. Instead the society tries to help them to find solutions that will allow them to live in society like the rest of humankind.

Similarly Islam does not say that anyone who is born without a natural attraction to the opposite gender is evil and must be killed or even condemned. They can choose to live in society without practising a gay lifestyle or if they like, Islam allows them to have a medical procedure to change their gender i.e. to have a sex change. Thereafter there is no reason for them not to live like other members of society.

What happens in societies that do not respect the laws of Allāh is that the excuse of the few who are truly born without this natural attraction is used by others who have no reason to be gay and are just unchaste and permissive. They promote gay clubs, gay movements, and so on. This is why increasingly now there are people in the west who claim to be bisexual meaning they have sexual relationships with both the opposite and the same gender. All this proves that it is evil that is behind the spread of the gay movement and not a genuine issue that cannot be solved.

To discourage people from condemning anyone who practises homosexuality, those with evil motives create words like 'homophobic' (i.e. 'one who has an irrational fear of homosexuals') and as soon as you condemn anyone who practises homosexuality, you are labelled as being 'homophobic'. As Muslims we should not be afraid to condemn the gay lifestyle even if people label us. We distance ourselves from anything that Allāh curses and opposes.

Ways to distance ourselves from zinā and liwāt include:

- Do not watch TV programmes or movies that promote gays or adulterers.
- Keep a distance from any students or work colleagues that you know openly lead a gay lifestyle.
- Do not be ashamed or embarrassed of condemning homosexuality even if others call you 'homophobic'. For example, speaking against governments that legalize gay marriages does not mean you are calling for violence against gays. You are simply stating your religion's belief that promoting the gay lifestyle is detrimental to society.
- If you have to work with someone who is openly gay, do not socialize with them or smile or laugh or be too friendly with them so that they imagine you are ok with their lifestyle. Instead keep conversations with them to a minimum and do not associate with them beyond what is necessary.

Masturbation (Istimna)

Masturbation is any form of self-stimulation to get sexual pleasure.

Many secular schools and ‘experts’ teach students that masturbation is natural and normal. Islam does not believe this to be a natural or normal habit. It considers this to be a depraved habit that is *harām* under all circumstances. It is therefore *wājib* on all Muslims to keep away from this shameful act and to consider this as a serious sin that should not be practised.

Masturbation is also habit-forming and if a person makes a habit of it, it can and does affect their marital relationship later in life.

Typically, before a person commits any sin, they use their imagination to fantasize and create sinful thoughts that then leads to acting out the fantasy physically. In their imagination, they may fantasize satisfying their natural desires with an imaginary spouse but because it is not natural for a person to satisfy their sexual desire on their own, it leads to further frustrations rather than creating any sense of satisfaction or giving any peace of mind.

Islam does not view sex as being sinful, evil or even bad. But it wants people to use sex as a means to seek and provide physical satisfaction with one’s lawfully wedded spouse and as a means to start a family.

For those who attain puberty but are not able to get married as yet, some advice given by the *‘ulama* include:

1. All sin starts with the thought of it. One should learn to control one’s thoughts and as soon as a sinful thought comes to mind, one should remove it by saying “*astaghfirullah*” aloud and glorifying and remembering Allāh.
2. Keep in touch with religion and seek inspiration from it: constantly praying to Allāh for help, reciting the Qur’ān, adopting a habit for *salāt al-layl*, reciting *du’as*, and trying to elevate one’s level of Godconsciousness (*taqwa*).
3. Never stay alone at home especially when you are not busy with things to do. Try and stay in the company of friends and family especially when you know you are likely to be tempted to sin. If you are all alone at home and are tempted to sin, eradicate the thought and distract yourself e.g. read the Qur’ān, reflect on the punishment of the sin and the terror of the Day of Judgement, reflect on the reward of one who remains chaste, go out for a walk, etc.
4. Avoid being idle all the time. Have hobbies and take up physical sports that will require you to channel your energies in healthy activities.
5. Avoid eating excessively, especially rich foods such as meat, chocolates, cookies, ice creams, oily foods (burgers, fries) and in general junk and processed foods. All these cause outbursts of desires. When you’re not fasting, try and eat more fruits and vegetables and drink more water instead of soda pop, artificial juices, etc. Eating healthy and drinking water flushes your body and keeps it clean that in turn keeps your mind and thoughts healthy and clean. Your thoughts and behaviours are influenced by the foods you eat, hence the saying, ‘You are what you eat’!

6. Make a habit of fasting often even when it is not Ramadan. The Messenger of Allāh (s) used to encourage those who are not married to fast, in order to keep away from sins caused by excessive desires.
7. Avoid excessive sleep and lying in bed when you are not sleepy.
8. If you can, discuss with your parents or an older relative you trust (who can speak to your parents on your behalf) about your need to get married sooner. This is especially true if your parents expect you to complete university, find a job, etc. before getting married. Parents usually want their children to show a sense of responsibility before they get married. Learn to be responsible and mature so that you can take on the responsibility of your own family sooner.
9. Be sincere. Unless one really wants to avoid committing a sin, one will not have the willpower to resist it.
10. Avoid watching TV programmes or reading books/magazines/websites that will further tempt you to sin.
11. Avoid the influence of bad friends who love talking about sex, dirty jokes, etc.
12. Avoid hanging around the malls and gazing at non-mahram (which itself is *harām*).

In one hadith we are told that when a person is tempted to look at a non-mahram but lowers his gaze, Allāh marries him to a *hour al-ʿayn* (beautiful maiden) in paradise who eager awaits him. But if a person fills his eyes with gazing sinfully at one who is *harām* for him, Allāh will fill the sockets of his eyes with nails of fire on the Day of Judgement.

A man asked Imām as-Sādiq [a] concerning masturbation. The Imām said: ‘It is a major sin. Allāh has forbidden it in His Book (the Qurʾān). If I knew that a man masturbates, I would not sit to eat with him.’ The man then asked: ‘Son of Allāh’s Messenger, please show me where it is mentioned in the Qurʾān’. The Imām replied: Allāh says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَعْيُنِهِمْ هَارِطُونَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ
مَلُومِينَ فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ﴾

‘(The faithful are those) ...who guard their private parts except from their spouses...
for then they are not to be blamed; **but whoever seeks [anything] beyond that**—it is
they who are transgressors.

- Surah al-Muminun, 23:5-7

‘Istimna is part of ‘*whoever seeks [anything] beyond that*,’ added the Imām (‘a).

In another hadith Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘One of the people whom Allāh will refuse to look at on the Day of Judgement and nor will He purify them and for them is a painful punishment is one who masturbates.’

And Rasulullāh (s) also said, ‘One who masturbates is cursed (*mal’un*).’

One of the reasons why schools in the West teach children that there is nothing wrong with *istimna* and it is in fact beneficial is because they are thinking from the perspective of the human body only. They are also hoping that this habit will keep young people away from *zinā*, which will in turn stop the spread of diseases and teenage pregnancies.

But Islam does not look at the needs of the society first. It looks at the needs of the individual first. And Islam does not look at the body alone. It looks at the health of the body, the mind and the soul altogether.

If a person relies on the mind and imagination to fantasize sexual acts just for *istimna*, in due course not only will they not be able to hold a healthy sexual relationship in marriage but their fantasies will keep getting more perverted until they will start thinking of all forms of sinful sexual acts only to get a brief unfulfilling satisfaction.

Imām Ali (‘a) says in one hadith, ‘How evil is the act whose desire passes away quickly but whose consequences and sin remains forever. And how good is the act of patience whose pain passes away but whose reward remains forever!’

Pornography

Pornography is any material (books, pictures & photographs, websites, video clips, TV channels, etc.) that depicts erotic (sexual) behaviour and is intended to cause sexual excitement.

To engage (read, look, listen, etc.) in any form of pornography is absolutely *harām*. Firstly, it is *harām* to see another person when he/she is naked or dressed sensuously unless it is one’s spouse. Secondly, pornography creates the temptation to commit sins such as masturbation, fornication, etc.

It is therefore *harām* to even go to shops, bookstands, websites, etc. where one fears they may be exposed to pornography. We must also avoid “friends” who take an interest in pornography and could influence us. They are not true friends but enemies of our soul because they will lead our soul to Hellfire on the Day of Judgement.

There are many reasons why pornography is *harām* even if it seems harmless. Pornography will destroy and shatter your sense of chastity, and your purity and faith in Allāh. It creates unnecessary sexual arousal and excitement. It leads to wicked thoughts and fantasies. It is very addictive and does not stop until a person becomes totally depraved. It is unhealthy for the body and the mind. It decreases attraction towards marriage for the unmarried and towards the spouse for the married. And it also depicts violence and abuse of women or children.

How Can we Be Chaste?

Remaining chaste in today's world is not easy. This is because physical pleasure is greatly emphasized and sex is thrown at our face everywhere – in newspapers, the TV, computer games, the internet, advertising billboards, magazines at checkout counters and really all around us.

In addition, most societies are now Godless. This means religion has no value to people and no one sees a problem with having a girlfriend/boyfriend, dressing indecently, drinking alcohol, listening to all kinds of music, swearing, partying and just making physical pleasure the goal of life.

Even when people take an interest in spirituality, they do so outside religion and the laws of Allāh so that it is a convenient self-styled 'new age' spirituality to make people feel good about themselves and give them the illusion of being 'spiritual'. Whereas true spirituality is to surrender to Allāh. To be humble and simple. To stand in awe and fear before Allāh and to obey Him and prostrate before Him while being pure in thought, speech and action.

The desire for a companion and spouse is not evil or wrong. It is natural. But Islam has provided marriage as the means to acquiring that. One of the ways of combating the indecency all around us is to be married.

Another way to be chaste is to observe hijāb especially when interacting with the opposite gender. Hijāb starts with wearing a scarf by women but does not stop or end there. Hijāb for men is to lower their gaze, to grow a beard, to dress modestly, to speak with Godconsciousness and not to flirt with the opposite gender. Hijāb for women is also to dress decently with loose clothing, not to interact excessively with the opposite gender, whether in person or online, and so on.

We can also be chaste by avoiding places where we know we will see people dressed indecently such as beaches and swimming pools or roaming around and hanging out unnecessarily in shopping malls during summer time.

It is not permitted for a person to swim in the same pool, beach, etc. with non-mahrams. Allāh tells us in the Qur'ān:

﴿قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ﴾

Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts; that is purer for them; indeed Allāh is Aware of what they do.

﴿وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ﴾

And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and do not display their ornaments except what appears, and let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms, and not display their ornaments except to their husbands...

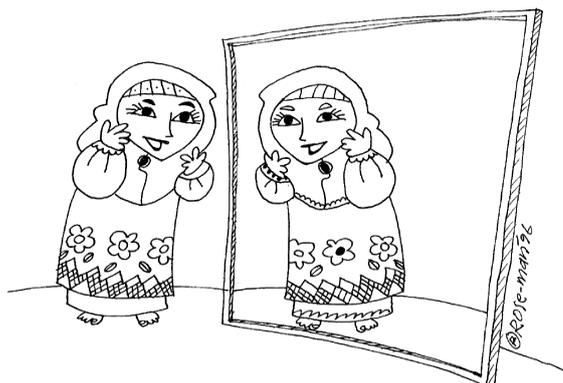
- Surah an-Nur, 24:30-31

Being chaste means to be decent and modest. It means to be morally pure in our thoughts and behaviour. Being chaste does not mean to isolate oneself from society. We can get involved in society whilst ensuring that we remain chaste.

When we dress modestly and don't like to imitate those who dress indecently, we are chaste. We can be chaste in our speech by avoiding telling dirty stories, rude jokes, swearing, and watching films that display these habits. Not only should we avoid this but also we should strongly dislike and hate it.

We can be chaste in our eyes by not looking at other people's bodies with sinful thoughts or flirting with people of the opposite sex.

Chastity starts with being pure in thought and heart. We should always be aware that Allāh is watching us and always ask ourselves this question: "If Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs) was with me here today would he be proud to call me his Shi'ah? What would Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs) think of me if he saw me doing this right now, or was with me in the shopping mall right now, or was sitting beside me while I'm on the internet or using my cellphone right now?"



Sometimes young people who are very chaste in their speech and dress will behave indecently when on the computer, chatting with friends, etc. This is because it is easier to 'hide' behind the keyboard, webcam, text messages, etc. But we must never forget, it doesn't matter whether people can see us or not. What matters is that Allāh can see us.

Imām Ali (‘a) has said, ‘Beware of sinning when you are alone because at that time, the Judge is also the only Witness!’

Being chaste also means avoiding unislamic culture such as imitating the latest fashion, craze and music in non-Islamic societies.

Movies & Music

Everyone loves to watch movies. But movies often have scenes that are sexually explicit or with too much or too loud harām music. Instead of going to watch movies out where you cannot control what you see and hear, rent movies and watch them at home instead. When the movie comes to scenes that are sinful fast-forward them. You don’t need to see that to understand the movie’s plot. When the music is too much or too loud, reduce the volume or mute it.

Remember: In Islam, wasting time is harām. Rather than watching movies just because you are bored, try and select movies and documentaries that are beneficial and that you can learn from and gain inspiration. Avoid horror movies, movies filled with senseless violence, etc. as these affect your thoughts, behaviour and moral values.

In hadith we are told, music is a part of the ‘vain talk’ that the Qur’ān condemns. The Qur’ān praises the faithful in the following words:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ﴾

(the faithful are those)...who avoid vain speech...

- Surah al-Mu’minun, 23:3