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Chapter 2: The Rights of a Suckling Infant

During the period of breastfeeding, an infant has two fundamental rights:

1- Suitable Nutrition

According to the recommendations of the great leaders of Islam, the best food for a baby is the mother's milk. For a suckling child, nothing can be substituted for the mother's milk. Therefore, one of the rights of a baby is to be breastfed by its mother, if possible.

The Holy Qur'an clearly says that the mothers who are willing to accomplish this duty perfectly must breastfeed their infants for two complete years. According to what is narrated from Imam al–Ridha (a.s), the right of children is that they are breastfed for the minimum of twenty one months, and anything less than that is doing injustice to them.

If the baby cannot suckle the mother's milk due to any reason, the father must choose a worthy wetnurse to feed the baby. She must have spiritual and physical exquisiteness, because the milk itself has an effect on the upbringing of the child's body and soul, and hence narrations have warned against choosing wet-nurses who are deviated in their belief, deeds, and morals, or are suffering from a disease.

2- Respecting the Feelings

Another important aspect to be mentioned in the conduct of the Prophet (s.a.w.) in observing the rights of suckling babies is respecting their feelings. According to a tradition, the messenger of God one day unlike usual, ended his prayers so fast that Muslims thought a new revelation was coming down to him. When they asked him about its reason, they surprisingly heard him say: "Did you not hear the cry of the baby?"

It was realized that the reason for shortening of the prayers was the cry of a restless infant who was beside the people and the Prophet (s.a.w.) shortened the prayers so that they could pacify the baby.

It frequently happened that people brought a baby to the Prophet (s.a.w.) in order that he would recite an invocation for him. The Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) took the baby in his bosom and, when he was busy reciting invocation, the infant polluted the Prophet's clothes. People wanted to separate the baby from him so that his clothes might not be more polluted, but he (s.a.w.) did not let them do so.

By these kinds of wise treatments, besides appearing the child's family, the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) would not allow the feelings of the child to be hurt, as he knew that ignoring the child's sentiments would have some unpleasant sequels in his future life.

2.1: Being Breastfed from the Mother's Milk, if Possible

A) The virtue of breastfeeding the infant

184. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "When a woman becomes pregnant, her station will be like a person who fasts during the day and vigilant by night, and she is like a struggler who strives with her soul and wealth in the path of Allah. When she delivers her child, she has such a reward that you do not know what it is because of its magnitude. When she breastfeeds, for every suckle made, she will receive the reward of emancipating one of the children of Isma'il; and when the time of weaning comes an angel will say: "Continue your act [of breastfeeding], for you have been forgiven."1

185. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "If it were not for hurting their husbands, no pregnant, wet-nursing and compassionate woman who perform prayers, would enter Hellfire."2

رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: إذا حَمَلَتِ المَرأَةُ كانَت بِمَنزِلَةِ الصّائِمِ القائِم، المُجاهِدِ بِنَفسِهِ و مالِهِ في سَبِيلِ .184 اللهِ، فَإذا وَضَعَت كانَ لَها بِكُلِّ مَصَّةٍ كَعِدلِ عِتقِ مُحَرَّرٍ اللهِ، فَإذا وَضَعَت كانَ لَها بِكُلِّ مَصَّةٍ كَعِدلِ عِتقِ مُحَرَّرٍ اللهِ، فَإذا وَضَعَت كانَ لَها بِكُلِّ مَصَّةٍ كَعِدلِ عِتقِ مُحَرَّرٍ اللهِ، فَإذا وَضَعَت كانَ لَها بِكُلِّ مَصَّةٍ كَعِدلِ عِتقِ مُحَرَّدٍ ...

عنه صلى الله عليه وآله: حامِلاتٌ والداتٌ مُرضِعاتٌ رَحيماتٌ، لو لا ما يَأتينَ إلى بُعولَتِهِنَّ ما دَخَلَت مُصلِّيَةٌ .185 منهُنَّ النّارَ.

B) The Blessing of the Mother's Milk

186. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "There is no milk better for an infant than its mother's milk."3

187. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: "There is no milk that the infant feeds on more blessing than its mother's milk."

بَرَكَةُ لَبَنِ الأُم

.رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: لَيسَ لِلصَّبِيِّ لَبَنِّ خَيرٌ مِن لَبَن امِّهِ .186

.الإمام على عليه السلام: ما مِن لَبَن يُرضَعُ بِهِ الصَّبِيّ أَعظَمُ بَرَكَةً عَلَيهِ مِن لَبَن امِّه .187

C) The Duration of Nursing

"And the mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years for the one who desires to complete the period of suckling ..."5

"... and We did enjoin upon man concerning his parents, did his mother bear him with fainting upon fainting and his weaning takes two years ..."6

188. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) **said**: "Nursing is to twenty one months, and anything less than that is injustice to the infant."7

مُدَّةُ الإِرضاع

. (وَ الْوالِداتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضاعَة)

.(... وَ وَصَيَّنَا الْإِنْسانَ بِوالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْناً عَلى وَهْنٍ وَ فِصالُهُ فِي عامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَ لِوالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ)

.الإمام الصادق عليه السلام: الرَّضاعُ واحِدٌ و عِشرونَ شَهراً، فَما نَقَصَ فَهُوَ جَورٌ عَلَى الصَّبِي .188

2.2: Choosing a Righteous Wet-nurse to Breastfeed

189. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: "Choose [a wet–nurse] for breastfeeding [the infant] the same way that you choose someone for marriage, for milk changes one's nature."8

190. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: "Be aware of the one who breastfeeds your children, for a child will grow up based on that [milk]."9

191. Imam al-Baqir (**a.s.**) **said:** "Look for the milk of attractive wet–nurses for your child, and avoid the milk of the unattractive ones, for milk transmits [the characteristics of the wet–nurse to the child]." **10**

192. **Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said:** "Choose clean and affectionate wet–nurses, for milk transmits [the characteristics of the wet–nurse to the child]."11

2.3: Those Who Should not Be Asked for Suckling

- **193. The Prophet** (**s.a.w.**) **said**: "Avoid letting your children suckle from debauch or insane women, for milk transmits [the characteristics of the wet–nurse to the child]." 12
- **194. The Prophet** (**s.a.w.**) **said:** "Do not ask a foolish, blear-eyed or sick woman to breastfeed [your child], for milk transmits [the characteristics of the wet-nurse to the child]." 13
- **195. The Prophet** (**s.a.w.**) **said:** "Do not ask a foolish woman to breastfeed [your child], for milk transmits [the characteristics of the wet–nurse to the child] and the child will become resemblant to the milk, meaning in foolishness and idiocy." 14
- **196.** *al–Kafi*: From 'Ubaydullah al–Halabi who said: "I asked Abu 'Abdullah [al–Sadiq] (a.s.): "Can I get a woman who is born from an adulterine person to breastfeed." He answered: "No. Ask neither her nor her daughter to breastfeed." 15

.رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: تَوَقُّوا عَلَى أُولادِكُم لَبَنَ البَغِي مِنَ النِّساءِ والمَجنونَةِ؛ فَإِنَّ اللَّبَنَ يُعدِي .193

.عنه صلى الله عليه وآله: لا تَستَرضِعُوا الحَمقاءَ ولَا العَمشاءَ ؛ فَإِنَّ اللَّبَنَ يُعدي .194

عنه صلى الله عليه وآله: لا تَستَرضِعُوا الحَمقاءَ؛ فَإِنَّ اللَّبَنَ يُعدي، وإنَّ الغُلامَ يَنزَعُ إلَى اللَّبَنِ؛ يَعني إلَى الظِّئرِ .195 عنه صلى الله عليه وآله: لا تَستَرضِعُوا الحَمقاءَ؛ فَإِنَّ اللَّبَنَ يُعدي، وإنَّ الغُلامَ يَنزَعُ إلَى اللَّبَنِ؛ يَعني إلَى الظِّئرِ .195

الكافي عن عبيد الله الحلبي: قُلتُ لِأبي عَبد اللهِ عليه السلام: امرَأَةٌ وُلِدَت مِنَ الزّنا، أُتَّخِذُها ظِئرا؟ .196

قالَ: لا تَستَرضِعها، ولَا ابنّتَها

2.4: Feeding the Child Beneficial Foods

197. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: "Give pomegranate to your children, for it will make their teeth grow more rapidly." 16

198. Imam al-Sadiq (**a.s.**) **said**: "Give pomegranate to your children, for it will make them become mature faster." 17

199. *al–Mahasin*, narrating from Khidr who said: "I was at the presence of Abu 'Abdullah [al–Sadiq] (a.s.) when one of his followers came to him and said: "Our children are [usually] born light weighted and weak." The Imam said: "Why do you not give them *Sawiq*, 18 for it hardens the bone and makes the flesh grow." 19

إطْعامُ الْأغذِيَةِ النَّافِعَةِ

.الإمام على عليه السلام: أَطعِموا صبيانكُم الرُّمَّانَ؛ فَإِنَّهُ أُسرَعُ لألسِنَتِهم .197

.الإمام الصادق عليه السلام أُطعِموا صبِيانَكُم الرُّمّانَ؛ فَإِنَّهُ أُسرَعُ لِشَبابهم .198

المحاسن عن خضر: كُنتُ عِندَ أبي عَبدِ اللهِ عليه السلام، فَأَتاهُ رَجُلٌ مِن أصحابِنا فَقالَ لَهُ: يولَدُ لَنَا المَولودُ .199 فَيَكونُ مِنهُ القِلَّةُ وَالضَّعفُ، فَقالَ: ما يَمنَعُكَ مِنَ السَّويق فَإِنَّهُ يَشُدُّ العَظمَ، ويُنبتُ اللَّحمَ؟

2.5: Respecting the Infant's Feelings

200. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) **said**: "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) while performing the noon and afternoon prayer finished the [last] two units quickly. When he finished, people asked him: "O Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.)! Has something new about prayer been sent down?" He said: "Why are you asking?" They answered: "You performed the last two units quickly." He said: "Did you not hear the cry of a child?!"20

201. *Makarim al–Akhlaq*: People used to bring children to the Prophet (s.a.w.) for him to pray for them to be blessed and to give them a name. He (s.a.w.) used to hold them in his arms out of honour to their families. Sometimes it happened that the child would pass urine [on his (s.a.w.) clothes] and those who saw this would call out, but he (s.a.w.) would say: "Do not interrupt the child." So, they would leave the child to finish. Then he (s.a.w.) would continue to finish his prayer for the child or naming him, bringing happiness to their family in such a way that they never felt that he (s.a.w.) was displeased by the child's urinating. Then, when they left, he would wash his clothes."21

202. *Musnad Ibn Hanbal*, narrating from 'A'ishah who said: "Children were often brought to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and he would pray for them. One time, an infant who was brought to him urinated and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "Pour some water on it." 22

الإمام الصادق عليه السلام: صلَّى رَسولُ اللهِ صلى الله عليه وآله الظُّهرَ وَالعَصرَ فَخَفَّفَ الصَّلاةَ فِي .200 الرَّكعَتينِ، فَلَمَّا انصَرَفَ قالَ لَهُ النَّاسُ: يا رسولَ اللهِ أَحَدَثَ فِي الصَّلاةِ شَيَّءٌ؟ قالَ: وما ذاكَ؟ قالوا: خَفَّفتَ فِي الرَّكعَتينِ الأَخيرَتينِ! فَقالَ لَهُم: أَمَا سَمِعتُم صُراخَ الصَّبِي؟

مكارم الأخلاق: كانَ صلى الله عليه وآله يُؤتى بِالصَّبِيِّ الصَّغيرِ لِيَدعُو لَهُ بِالبَرَكَةِ أَو يُسَمِّيَهُ، فَيَأَخُذُهُ فَيَضَعُهُ في .201 حجرهِ؛ تَكرِمَةً لِأَهلِهِ، فَرُبَّما بالَ الصَّبِيِّ عَلَيهِ، فَيَصيحُ بَعضُ مَن رَآهُ حينَ بالَ، فَيقولُ صلى الله عليه وآله: لا تُزرِموا بالصَّبِيِّ، فَيَدَعُهُ حَتَّى يَقضِيَ بَولَهُ، ثُمَّ يُفرِغُ لَهُ مِن دُعائِهِ أَو تَسمِيَتِهِ، ويَبلُغُ سُرُورُ أَهلِهِ فيهِ، ولا يَرَونَ أَنَّهُ يَتَأَذَّى بِبَولِ بالصَّبِيِّ، فَيَدَعُهُ حَتَّى يَقضِيَ بَولَهُ، ثُمَّ يُفرِغُ لَهُ مِن دُعائِهِ أَو تَسمِيَتِهِ، ويَبلُغُ سُرُورُ أَهلِهِ فيهِ، ولا يَرَونَ أَنَّهُ يَتَأَذَّى بِبَولِ بالصَّرِيْةِ، فَيَدَعُهُ حَتَّى يَقضِيَ بَولَهُ عَسَلَ ثَوبَهُ بَعدُ

مسند ابن حنبل عن عائشة: كانَ رَسولُ اللهِ صلى الله عليه وآله يُؤتى بِالصِّبيانِ فَيَدعُو لَهُم، وإِنَّهُ أُتِيَ بِصَبِيّ .202 . فَبالَ عَلَيه، فَقالَ رَسولُ الله صلى الله عليه وآله: صبُّوا عَلَيه الماءَ صبَبًا

^{1.} al-Amali, by al-Saduq, p. 496, h. 678, narrating from Abu Khalid al-Ka'bi from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 104, p. 106, h. 1.

^{2. .} al-Kafi, vol. 5, p. 514, h. 2, narrating from Abu Basir from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 22, p. 146, h. 138.

- al-Mu'jam al-Kabir, vol. 8, p. 253, h. 7989, narrating from Abu UmÁmah. Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 16, p. 407, h. 45133.
- 3. 'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (a.s.), vol. 2, p. 34, h. 69. Sahifah al-Imam al-Ridha (a.s.), p. 101, h. 42. Both narrating from Ahmad ibn 'Amir ibn Sulayman al-Ta'i from Imam al-Ridha (a.s.) from his forefathers (a.s.).
- 4. al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 40, h. 1. Tahdhib al-Ahkam, vol. 8, p. 108, h. 365. Both narrating from Talhah ibn Zaid from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). Kitab Man la Yahdarhu al-Faqih, vol. 3, p. 475, h. 4663.
- 5. . Qur'an, 2:233.
- 6. Qur'an, 31:14.
- 7. al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 40, h. 3. Tahdhib al-Ahkam, vol. 8, p. 106, h. 357. Kitab Man la Yahdarhu al-Faqih, vol. 3, p. 474, h. 4661. All narrating from Sama'ah.
- 8. Qurb al-Isnad, p. 93, h. 312, narrating from al-Husayn ibn 'Alwan from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) from his father (a.s.). Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 103 p. 323, h. 10.
- 9. . al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 44, h. 10, narrating from Ghiyath ibn Ibrahim from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.).
- 10. . al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 44, h. 12, narrating from Muhammad ibn Marwan. Tahdhib al-Ahkam, vol. 8, p. 110, h. 376, narrating from al-Haytham ibn Muhammad ibn Marwan.
- 11. al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 44, h. 13. Tahdhib al-Ahkam, vol. 8, p. 110, h. 377. Kitab Man la Yahdarhu al-Faqih, vol. 3, p. 478, h. 4677. All narrating from Zurarah.
- 12. . al-Khisal, p. 615, h. 10, narrating from Abu Basir and Muhammad ibn Muslim from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) from his forefathers (a.s.). Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 105. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 479, h. 1655. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 103, p. 323, h. 9.
- 13. 'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (a.s.), vol. 2, p. 34, h. 67. Sahifah al-Imam al-Ridha (a.s.), p. 100, h. 41. Both narrating from Ahmad ibn 'Amir al-Ta'i from Imam al-Ridha (a.s.) from his forefathers (a.s.).
- 14. . al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 43, h. 8. Tahdhib al-Ahkam, vol. 8, p. 110, h. 375. Kitab Man la Yahdarhu al-Faqih, vol. 3, p. 478, h. 4679. All narrating from Muhammad ibn Qays.
- 15. . al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 42, h. 1. Tahdhib al-Ahkam, vol. 8, p. 108, h. 367. Da'a'im al-Islam, vol. 2, p. 242, h. 911, narrating from the Prophet (s.a.w.).
- 16. . al-Amali, by al-Tusi, p. 362, h. 753, narrating from 'Ali ibn 'Ali al-Di'bali from Imam al-Ridha (a.s.) from his forefathers (a.s.) from al-Nazal ibn Sirah. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 371, h. 1227.
- 17. al-Mahasin, vol. 2, p. 360, h. 2254, narrating from 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Hajjaj. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 66, p. 164, h. 47.
- 18. Pulverized wheat or barly mixed with sugar and flavoured with cardamoms.
- 19. . al-Mahasin, vol. 2, p. 287, h. 1938. Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 418, h. 1415. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 66, p. 276, h. 7.
- 20. . Tahdhib al-Ahkam, vol. 3, p. 274, h. 796. al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 48, h. 4. Both narrating from 'Abdullah ibn Sinan.
- 21. . Makarim al-Akhlaq, vol. 1, p. 65, h. 68. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 16, p. 240.
- 22. . Musnad Ibn Hanbal, vol. 9, p. 299, h. 24247. Musnad Ishaq ibn Rahwayh, vol. 2, p. 116, h. 587.

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