

Lesson 11: The Father and The Mother



وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا
تَنْهَرهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذَّلِيلِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

***Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve any but Him, and to be good to parents, whether one or both of them attains old age with thee; say not to them 'Fie' neither chide them, but speak unto them words respectful, and lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy and say; 'My Lord, have mercy upon them, as they raised me up when I was little.'* (Al Isra 17:23-24)**

In narrations, with regards to being good to parents, much advice has been given while hurting them is disapproved of:

The reward of a merciful look towards your parents is the acceptance of pilgrimage. Their approval is Divine approval and their anger is Allah's ﷻ anger. Goodness towards the father and the mother extends one's life and becomes the cause of our own children's goodness towards us.

In the narrations, it is said that even if they strike you, do not say "fie", don't give them disobedient look, do not raise your hand, do not walk ahead of them, do not call them by their names, do not do anything which may cause enmity from people towards them, do not sit before they do and assist them in their needs before they request assistance.

A man who was carrying his mother on his shoulders for the circumambulation during pilgrimage saw the Prophet (pbuh) at that moment, and asked; Have I filled my obligation towards my mother? The Prophet (pbuh) replied, you have not even fulfilled your obligation in return for a single moan she cried during your childbirth!

In narrations, it is stated that even if the parents hit their own children, the children should say "May God forgive you", the words which are the very same "respectful words".

The Prophet (pbuh) was asked if there were good deeds for the parents after their passing away? He replied affirmatively, reciting prayers for them and seeking forgiveness on their behalf, fulfilling their commitments, paying for the misdeeds and respecting their friends.

A man complained to the Prophet about his father. The Prophet (pbuh) sought the father and when questioned, the old man said there was a day when I was strong and wealthy and assisted my children, but today he is the wealthy one and does not assist me. The Prophet (pbuh) cried and stated there is no stone nor sand that heard this story and did not weep, then said to the son, you and everything you own is your fathers.

Goodness towards parents is of the characteristics of the Prophets. As Prophet Jesus (pbuh) was characterised as “وَبِرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ” (to cherish my mother)¹ and Prophet Yahya(pbuh) as “وَبِرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ” (and cherishing his parents²).

If parents are aware such is the case that the Holy Qur’an advises us to be good to parents after monotheism, it would stimulate life in to invite their own children to monotheism.

So we can derive some points from this Ayah:

1. Serving parents and goodness towards the father and mother is a character of a true monotheist. – *you shall not serve any but Him, and to be good to parents.*
2. The order of kindness towards parents is like the order of monotheism, definite, and never to expire. – *decreed.*
3. Goodness towards parents comes next to monotheism and obedience to Allahﷻ to point out that this deed is not only an intellectual and humane obligation, but also a religious one – *Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve any but Him, and to be good to parents.*
4. The new generation must, under the shadow of faith, have a strong relationship with the past generations – *you shall not serve any but Him, and to be good to parents.*
5. In goodness towards parents, being a Muslim is not a condition – *and to be good to parents.*
6. In goodness to the father and mother, there is no differentiation between the two – *and to be good to parents.*
7. Do good to your parents without an intermediary and with your own hands – *be good to parents.*
8. Doing good is higher than spending and includes showing love, politeness, teaching, consultation, obedience, thankfulness, attention, and the like – *be good to parents.*
9. Goodness towards parents is has no borders or limits – *be good to parents.* (Unlike the poor, where the obligation is until satiety is reached, and jihad, where it is only required until sedition is lifted, and

fasting where it is only until dusk sets in.)

10. The Holy Qur'an's advice to do good is directed at the offspring, not parents – *be good to parents*. That's because parents are naturally good and kind to their children and no advice is needed as such.

11. The more physical and psychological need the parents have, the stronger the obligation is to do good towards them – *whether one or both of them attains old age*.

12. A healthy father and mother should not be sent to a nursing home, but rather need to be looked after nearby – *with thee*.

13. Both good action and polite and good speech is required – *be good... speak unto them words respectful*.

14. With regards to doing good towards parents and generous words, there is no condition for anything in return. That means even if they do not return the generosity, you still need to fulfil your obligation, speaking well and doing good.

15. Under all circumstances, and in all their perfection, needs to stay humble towards their parents and not to show off their perfection – *and lower to them the wing of humbleness*.

16. Humility with regards to parents must be out of kindness and love, not superficial and made up, or for the sake of their wealth – *and lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy*.

17. Children must with regards to their parents be not only humble, but also seek mercy for them on their behalf from Allahﷻ – *My Lord, have mercy upon them*.

18. The supplication of the child for their parents is one that is answered, otherwise, Allahﷻ would not have given the command to supplicate for them – and say; *'My Lord, have mercy upon them'*.

19. Supplication for the father and mother is a Divine order and a sign of gratitude towards them – say; *'My Lord, have mercy upon them'*.

20. The mercy of Allahﷻ is in return for the pain and trouble parents go through in raising children – *'My Lord, have mercy upon them, as they raised me up...'*. Sometimes Allahﷻ says to the offspring; do not be regretful of your own mercy, and seek help from Allahﷻ, for one is never able to discharge their obligation towards them.

21. Do not forget your past, the hard times and the problems your parents bore for your sake during your childhood and tender years – *as they raised me up*.

22. The father and mother must raise their children based upon love – *have mercy upon them, as they raised me up*.

23. One must be thankful and show their gratitude towards their tutors – *have mercy upon them, as they raised me up.*

In Ayahs 83 of Surah Al Baqarah, 36 of An Nissa, 151 of An A'am, and 23 of Al Israa, advice has been given to do good to your parents, but in Ayah 14 of Surah Luqman (pbuh), goodness towards parents has been given in the shape of divine advice:

{وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ}

And We have charged man concerning his parents (Luqman (pbuh) 31: 14).

Yes, respect towards parents is a human right, not an Islamic one, an eternal right, not a seasonal or temporary one.

In the narrations, we read that goodness towards parents is an obligation under all circumstances, be it they are bad or good, be it they are dead or alive.

The Prophet was seen to be more respectful towards his sister³ than towards his brother through breastfeeding, when asked for the reason why, he said that because she showed more respect towards her mother⁴.

We read in the Holy Qur'an that both Prophets Jesus (pbuh) and Yahya (pbuh) were ordered to show respect towards their parents.⁵

The Prophet (pbuh) states that after the prayers at the peak of their time, a deed better than respect towards parents does not exist⁶.

An Extension Of The Meaning Of Parents

In the Islamic culture, your heavenly guide, teacher, tutor and father-in-law can all be coined the term father. In some narrations, the Prophet (pbuh) and Imam Ali (pbuh) are known as the fathers of the Islamic Nation.

أنا وعلى أبوا هذه الأمة

Ali and I are the fathers of this nation.

Just as Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) is considered the father of the Arabs

{مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ}

Being the creed of your father Abraham (Al Hajj 22:78).

In the final days of the Prophet's life while he was on his nursing bed, he said to Imam Ali, (pbuh) to go to the people and say with a loud voice

- May Allah's ﷻ curse be upon anyone who is disobedient to their parents
- May Allah's ﷻ curse be upon any slave that runs away from their master
- May Allah's ﷻ curse be upon anyone who does not pay the right of the worker and whom they hire

Imam Ali (pbuh) left and stated these words amongst the people then returned. Some of the companions thought this advice to be simple and plain, and wondered: The advice regarding parents and masters and workers was previously heard, it's not a new message for it to be sent to us from the messengers nursing bed.

The Prophet, realizing the people did not comprehend the depth of the message, sent Imam Ali back to the people with a follow up message, asking him to say that what was meant by disobedience to parents, is disobedience to the Divine Guide. Oh Ali (pbuh), you and I are the Fathers of this Nation and one who escapes from us, gives cause to receive of Allah's ﷻ anger. You and I have become hired to guide these people and anyone who does not pay the right of the hired gives cause to receive of Allah's ﷻ anger.

In this incident, an observation is made that though goodness and obedience towards parents is one apparent and official meaning, yet in Islam, the issue is a much wider one.

- [1.](#) Holy Qur'an Surah Maryam 19:32
- [2.](#) Holy Qur'an Surah Maryam 19:14
- [3.](#) This refers to his sister in whom he shared a wet nurse with rather than a biological sister from the same parents.
- [4.](#) (Al Kafi) V2 P118
- [5.](#) Holy Qur'an Maryam 19:14 and 32.
- [6.](#) (Mizan Al-Hikmah ميزان الحكمة)

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