

## Lesson 7

3–10–10 The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty *Ahadith* Text: Jalali, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al–Arba’in al–Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition 1987, pages 428–430.

### Summary

Islam insists on good upbringing of children by any means that instills self–esteem because children are the future as well as the hope of the parents. For example, Islam insists on choosing a good name for your child. Actually, a child has a right over the parent in which the parent must choose a good name for him or her. The name given to a child does have an effect on the child.

For example, research shows that children whose names were of lower socio–economic status than their siblings scored on average three to five percent less in exams.<sup>1</sup> The name given to a child may impact how the child views himself or herself and may impact how others view the child. Look at Saddam Hussein. The name Saddam means one who beats or crashes. This name may have had a subconscious negative effect leading to the atrocities ordered by that man.

From a practical point of view, a name given to a child becomes part of the child’s identity. If a child is named after a famous person, that child may be more willing to read the biography of that person and may choose, consciously or subconsciously, to adopt similar traits or characteristics. Therefore, if a name has such impact, then a good name should be selected. In some instances, when a person converted to Islam, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) would change his name if it were not appropriate.

For example, he changed a man’s name from Harb (meaning war) to Silm (meaning peace). Imam Muhammad al–Baqir (may peace be upon him and his family) said that *the best names for a child are those that denote servitude to God (the Almighty), and the names of the Prophets (peace be upon all of them)*.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that *whoever has four children and has not named any of them after me has oppressed me*. Another *hadith* (tradition) mentions that *when Shaytan (Satan) hears someone say Muhammad or Ali, he withers or melts away*.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that *when a child is born to us, we keep his name as Muhammad for seven days, and then we can change it if desired.* (Jalali, page 429). Another *hadith* mentions that *one should choose a name based on the ninety-nine beautiful names of God (the Most Merciful), such as by adding the term abd (servant), or choose a name of the Prophets or Imams (peace be upon them all), and if that is exhausted, one should choose from the titles or nicknames of the Prophets or Imams (peace be upon them all).*

Accordingly, based on these *ahadith* (traditions) and others, families are encouraged to choose good and positive names. Sometimes popular names become so common, families start using combined first names, such as Muhammad Ali, to distinguish children from each other. As an interesting side note regarding names, at the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), using someone's *kunyah* (title based on child's name) was a show of respect.

For example, it was the *sunnah* (act) of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) to call people by their titles, such as Abu Ali (father of Ali). This concept of *kunyah* also applied to women (*e.g.*, a woman may be referred to as, for example, Umm Abbas, meaning mother of Abbas). At that time and in that environment, if one did not call someone that is older by his *kunyah*, it would be considered disrespectful. Getting back to naming children, we see through social evidence as well as the *ahadith* that giving a child a good name is a matter of great importance. Other important early steps include reciting *adhan* (call for prayer) in the right ear and *iqamah* (second call for prayer) in the left ear of a child when she is born as well as performing *aqiqah* (slaughtering an animal for a newborn child) and shaving the hair of the child on the seventh day after birth.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that *everyone should have aqiqah done.* The meat of the slaughtered animal (*e.g.*, a sheep or ram) should be distributed as food, except to the parents. The hair cut from the child's head should be weighed, and the weight in silver (or gold) should be given to the poor.

Also, circumcision for a boy should be performed on the seventh day after birth. These are the first steps in raising a child, and all these elements contribute to the honor, chastity, spiritual life, and physical life of the child. (See Jalali, page 430). A next important step is teaching a child *salah* (ritual prayer). A *hadith* mentions that one should tell a child to start performing *salat* at the age of seven and beat the child if he does not pray. Now, the historical context of this *hadith*, as in all *ahadith*, must be taken into consideration. Over 1,400 years ago, beating was common to punish or discipline a child. Also, it was effective in that environment.

Nowadays, the effect of beating a child for punishment or discipline usually does not work. Actually, because of the society, environment, relationships, attitudes, and other means of discipline in today's world, the beating of a child has negative effects. For example, the child may be taken away from the parents, the parents may get in trouble with the law, the child may acquire hateful feelings or extreme fear towards the parents, etc. If the means do not work anymore, then does it make sense to use them?

When reviewing the Islamic record, it is understood that the beating mentioned in the *hadith* is only a means, not a goal. Islam does not want parents going around beating their children. Effect and applicability must be taken into account.

Accordingly, modern punishments or means should be employed that will have the desired effects to uphold the wisdom of the *hadith*. So, when you read the *hadith*, it would be fair to substitute the word “punish” for the word “beat.” Getting back to the wisdom of the *hadith*, *salat* is stressed because it is so powerful. It impacts both one’s spiritual and physical life. For example, one needs to take time out of the day and prepare herself to perform *salat* properly, and there are physical restrictions during the *salat*. Accordingly, physical discipline is mixed with a spiritual experience. This has an important impact on a human being. People that practice *salat* at an early age are protected from deviation, and even if they deviate, the seed of *salat* helps them come back.

1. See <http://www.brilliant-baby-names.com/SocialEffects.aspx> [1] (viewed on March 10, 2010).

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[1] <http://www.brilliant-baby-names.com/SocialEffects.aspx>