

Section 3: Goodness and Submission to Parents Ordained

Surah Isra' – Verse 23

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

23. “And your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him and (to show) kindness to parents; if one of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them ‘fie’, nor repulse them, and speak to them a gracious word.”

Next to the principle of monotheism, the Qur'an alludes to one of the most fundamental instructions of the prophets with regard to mankind, stating that:

“And your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him and (to show) kindness to parents...”

Placing Unity, monotheism, which is the most fundamental principles of Islam, alongside with being kind and good towards one's parents, is a further emphasis laid on this important Islamic commandment.

Later, it refers to one of the clear examples for kindness to one's parents, implying that whenever one of them or both reach old age while living with you, that is when they need your constant care, do not spare them any act of kindness and do not despise them or scorn them by insulting them the least. That is, even stop uttering the slightest despising murmuring sound.

Do not shout at them, but speak to them in a calculated kind and highly esteemed manner.

The noble verse continues saying:

“...if one of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them ‘fie’, nor repulse them, and speak to them a gracious word.”

Surah Isra’ – Verse 24

وَإِخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

24. “And out of compassion, lower unto them the wing of humility, and say: ‘My Lord! Have mercy on them both as they cherished me when I was little.’”

In words and in deeds, try your best to be humble towards your parents. The objective in mind by the Qur’anic term /ذُلٌّ/ is not meant to denote humility, but, it means ‘gentleness and humbleness.’

By the phrase: **‘lower unto them the wing of humility’**, which is literally mentioned in the above verse, is the simile which refers to making oneself in the utmost sense of submissive gentleness towards one’s parents. It makes one recall a bird which opens up its wings to provide shelter for its offspring.

The Almighty thus proclaims to cover your parents gently under your love and generosity by providing them with shelter and care as they provided you with shelter and care when you were little.

The verse says:

“And out of compassion, lower unto them the wing of humility...”

Imam Sadiq (as) in this regard said:

“That is, do not look at them except with compassion and kindness; do not raise your voice when talking to them above their voice; and do not raise your hand above theirs, and do not go before them when walking.”

Therefore, pray for them and ask Allah to allocate His blessings and forgiveness to them before and after their death, for they have brought you up as a child. This very recent one is in case that they are both believers.

The verse says:

“...and say: ‘My Lord! Have mercy on them both as they cherished me when I was little.’”

One can infer from this verse that the praying of children for their parents who are dead is acceptable by

Allah (s.w.t.), otherwise, there would be no use in saying:

“pray for them.”

Surah Isra’ – Verse 25

رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ إِن تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلأَوَّابِينَ غَفُوراً

25. “Your Lord is well aware about what is in your selves. If you be righteous, then verily He is for the repentant forgiving.”

Among the Divine powers and Divinity of the Almighty is His Omniscience, and every kind of service rendered to one’s parents, is carried out under His supervision.

The verse, in this respect, says:

“Your Lord is well aware about what is in your selves...”

If one is ignorantly having an unsuitable relationship or approach towards one’s parents, one can call Allah’s grace to the matter by repenting of his sins.

As it may sometimes happen that with regard to one’s relationship with his parents and respect for them and gentle submissiveness concerning them, there might be deviancies occurred which one might unconsciously or deliberately perform, the Qur’an in this holy verse implies that your Lord is better aware of what is in your mind than you.

For, His knowledge in all fields is intuitively direct, constant, original, eternal, everlasting and lacks all errors, while your knowledge does not possess such characteristics.

Therefore, if you, with no intention of disobeying against Allah, get involved in an erroneous behavior with regard to respect and goodness concerning your parents, and you regret it immediately, initiating compensation you will definitely be covered by His amnesty.

The verse says:

“...If you be righteous, then verily He is for the repentant forgiving.”

Quotations Concerning Respect for Parents in Islam

Islam has stressed respect for parents to the extend that one can find such respect for few other matters. As examples, some traditions are cited here in this connection:

1) In four of the Suras of the Glorious Qur'an, goodness towards one's parents immediately follows the subject of monotheism. Treating the matter in the same row, and equal basis with monotheism, exhibits the fact that to what extent it regards, for one's parents is considered important in Islam.

2) This issue is so important that both the Holy Qur'an and Islamic quotations have explicitly recommended that even if one's parents are pagans, respect for them is a 'must'.

3) Thanking parents, in the Glorious Qur'an, is placed on an identical basis with thanking Allah for His blessings. 1

4) The Qur'an has not allowed the slightest kind of lack of respect for the parents.

"...do not say to them 'fie'..."²

5) A tradition from Imam Kazim (as) declares:

"Some one called on the Prophet (S) and asked him about the rights of parents. He answered: 'One must not call them by name. (They must be addressed as: My Father...!) He should not go in front of them when walking; and should not seat himself before his parent.

One must not be acting in such a way as to be blamed for his parents. He must not behave such a manner that people say: 'Hoping that Allah does not forgive your father for having done such a job'." 3

6) The Prophet (S) has said:

"Let his nose be rubbed against the ground! Let his nose be rubbed against the ground! Let his nose be rubbed against the ground!"

Then he was asked:

"Whose nose O' Messenger of Allah?"

So he answered:

"The one who does not do a good job to enter the Paradise once his parents reach old age!"

This quotation has been cited by Moslem in his 'Sahih'.⁴

7) Abū-Sayyid-'Ansari has said:

"Once we were with the blissful Prophet. A man from the Bani-Salmah came and said:

'O' Messenger of Allah! Is there any thing good that I can do for them after the death of my parents? And is there any generous act which I can do for them?'

He answered:

‘O’, Yes. You can do them good by performing the prayer rituals for them; and asking forgiveness on their behalf from Allah; and keeping to the words and to their commitments and making payments for their debts as well as respecting their friends.” 5

8) In some of the quotations received, assisting and doing ‘good’ to one’s parents have been greatly recommended and doing them harm has been discarded. For instances, the reward for looking with compassion at one’s own parents has been equated with an accepted ‘Hajj’.

Their consent is identical with the consent of Allah and their outrage is on an equal footing with that by Allah. Kindness and generosity towards one’s parents prolongs one’s lifetime and causes our children to be kind and generous towards us.

We have it in quotations that: If you were even beaten by them, do not utter a low word; do not stare at them; do not raise up your hand against them; do not walk in front of them; do not call them by name; do not do what might lead the people to curse them or insult them; do not seat yourselves before them, assist them before being asked by them for assistance. 6

9) Generosity and kindness to one’s parents are among the attributes of the prophets as is explained about Hadrat-i-‘Issa (as)

“And (He has made me) kind to my mother...”⁷

and is also said about Hadrat-i-Yahya (as)

“And kindness to his parents...”⁸

10) Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) has remarked:

*“Kindness to the parents is the greatest (and the most important) of the Divine duties.”*⁹

11) Imam Sadiq (as) has stated:

“The best of the deeds are: Prayer rituals which are performed at their appropriate time; Kindness and goodness towards one’s parents, Fighting a holy war for the sake of Allah. 10

12) The prophet of Allah (S) has stated:

“Whoever obeys Allah’s command with regard to his parents, two of the gates of the Paradise will be laid wide open to Him; and if he obeys one (of them), one (of the gate-ways of the Paradise will be left open for him).” 11

13) The blissful Prophet (S) has stated:

“The person who obeys his parents and his Lord, will be assigned a highly-elevated position in Paradise.” 12

14) The Messenger of Allah (S) remarked:

“He who wishes his life be prolonged and his means of sustenance be made abundant, must treat his parents with kindness and observe the union of kindred.” 13

15) Imam Sadiq (as) said:

“A man turned up before the Prophet (S) and asked:

‘O’ Messenger of Allah! Whom should I do kindness to?’

He answered:

‘To your mother!’

Again, he asked:

‘Next to my mother, to whom (should I be kind)?’

He answered:

‘To your mother!’

Again, that man asked:

‘After her, to whom (should I do good)?’

He answered again:

‘To your mother.’

And, finally, he asked:

‘Following my mother, to whom (should I do good next)?’

He replied:

‘To your father.’” 14

16) The Messenger of Allah (S) remarked:

“Do your fathers good so as your children also do you good. Turn your eyes away from the wives of others so that others turn away their eyes from your wives.” 15

One must keep in mind the fact that one's parents are not regarded as only parents. In some quotations the blissful Prophet (S) and Amir-ul-mu'mineen (as) are considered as the '*fathers of nation*'. The Prophet (S) said:

"Ali and I are the fathers of this Ummat."

In conclusion, once the parents focus their attention on the fact that they stand in importance next to the principle of monotheism of Islam, they will be motivated strongly to call their children to adopt monotheism and Islam still further.

Surah Isra' – Verse 26

وَأَاتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تَبْذُرْ تَبْذِيرًا

26. "And give to the near of kin his due, and (to) the needy, and the wayfarer; and do not squander wastefully."

In this noble verse, the Qur'an explains still further another chapter from the interrelated fundamental principles of Islam regarding the rights of relatives and the needy as well as the wayfarer and, generally speaking, the issue of spending one's wealth, without immoderation and extravagance.

At first, the verse says:

"And give to the near of kin his due..."

This holy phrase signifies broadly and covers all of one's relatives, though the 'Ahl-ul-Bayt' of the holy Prophet (S) are the most clear examples of it, and the Prophet himself (S) is being clearly and straightly addressed in this verse.

Moreover, the verse continues saying:

"...and (to) the needy, and the wayfarer; and do not squander wastefully."

In the meantime, the Qur'an recommends all not to engage in wasting or spoiling and do not exceed the limits, giving them away more than what they merit.

Concerning the issue of immoderation and extravagance and concentration on this matter is so highly recommended that we read in quotations: The prophet (S) was walking once on a road. One of his companions called Sa'd was engaged in performing the ritual ablution for praying, and he was using a lot of water.

He (S) asked:

“Why is it that you are wasting so much water, O’ Sa’d?”

He said:

“Is there any immoderation in the water of ablution?”

He replied:

“Yes. Even once you find yourself by a flowing stream.”

Explanations

The Arabic term /tabāʾir/ which is derived from /baʿāʾr/ signifies ‘squandering’, like preparing 10 meals for two guests. In other words, that means spreading one’s wealth all over by means of wasting it.

Imam Sadiq (as) has stated:

“He who consumes something in ways other than the path of obedience of Allah, is a ‘squanderer’.” 16

Answering a query concerning the issue of spending in allowed cases, he has ascertained

“Yes, for, he who overspends in almsgiving and gives away out of his wealth, leaving nothing for himself, he has extravagated in using lawful properly.” 17

After the revelation of this verse, the blissful Prophet (S) was searching for the aim of Allah by the phrase /qarib qurba/ (near of kin) when Allah revealed to him to give ‘Fadak’ to Fatimah (as) and he did accordingly.

However, later Fadak was illegitimately taken back from the Ahl-ul-Bayt, who tended to document their claim by this verse. Therefore, by the relatives, the objective of /qarib qurba/ (near of kin) are: Ali, Fatimah, Hassan and Hossayn (as).

The Shi’ite commentators as well as Sunni commentators like Tabari, deducing from the quotations, write:

“When arriving at Sham along with other prisoners, Imam Sajjad (as) for demonstrating to their capturers as to why they considered the Ahl-ul-Bayt as aliens and non-Muslims, documented his speech with this verse, saying: “/qarib qurba/ (relatives) which is mentioned in this verse, directly refers to us and are intended for demonstrating our case.” 18

Some quotations consider this verse as relating to ‘khums’ (one-fifth), while some others regard the verse as speaking of matters higher than material issues. They have said that this verse commands the Prophet (S) to pay what is due to Ali-Ibn-’Abi-Talib by appointing him as his successor in his will.

Imam Sadiq (as) has mentioned with respect to this verse:

“The right of Ali-Ibn-Abi-Talib (as) which has been due to him, has been succession to the Messenger of Allah (S) and having the prophetic sciences.” 19

The objective in mind when mentioning the term /taba'ir/ in the verse, which has been cited and which prohibits Muslims from engaging themselves in is /quluww/ (exaggerations). 20

Fadak was a large farm which was placed at the disposal of the Prophet (S) without any fighting.

That the Prophet in turn left it at the disposal of the Ahl-ul-Bayt (as) for reasons of their popularity, chastity, devotion, trustfulness, and on order to support them economically in the line of propagation and removing the poverty of the Muslim Ummah.

However, after the passing away of the Prophet (S), Abū-Bakr re-occupied it, which was later returned to them by ‘Umar-Ibn-i-Abdul ‘Aziz. They again usurped it and it was returned to them during the era of Ma'mūn Abbasi. Once again they got furious.

There is an extensive literature on the discussions about the historical, legal, and political issues involved which is mentioned the commentaries concerning this verse, which we avoid stating them all in here.

Surah Isra' – Verse 27

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا

27. “Verily, the squanderers are the brethrens (accomplices) of the Satans and the Satan was very ungrateful to his Lord.”

This verse provides a firm justification and emphasizes once again the negation of squandering.

It implies that those who engage in over consumption are accomplices to the Satan, for they tend to spoil Allah’s blessings, and ‘the Satan’ was most ungrateful to Allah, for Allah had bestowed upon him an exceptional potentiality intelligence, as well as extraordinary capability, which he utilized for objectives other than what all of them were destined for, that is, he employed all towards seduction of the people.

The verse says:

“Verily, the squanderers are the brethrens (accomplices) of the Satans and the Satan was very ungrateful to his Lord.”

Incidentally, the term /'ax/ in Arabic often denotes both 'brother', as well as one's 'companion', and one's company, as in the case of /'ixwassafar/ which refers to the person who is constantly engaged in traveling and in the case of /'ixwal karam/ which refers to the person who is 'generous'.

'Brotherhood' is sometimes a hereditary issue which is established as a result of one's familial relationship and at times it is the consequence of one's political affiliation. The squanderers are thus, in a sense, the politically affiliated brothers of the Satan, that is, they are those who follow in the track of the Satan and keep his company.

There are frequent references made in the Qur'an to the 'Satanical temptations' or his mastership over individuals. But, the only occasion on which the phrase /'ixw an-uš-šay atin/ has been used is this verse, which means the squanderers are as the 'collaborators' of the Satan, and not under his domination.

As can be seen, one has here not only been overtaken by his temptations, but he has arrived at a stage of collaboration and assistance of the Satan.

The act of 'squander' is mostly used in the sphere of financial matters. However, it might also refer to other blessings such as 'wasting of one's youth', or of his 'life-time' or utilizing of one's thinking, eyes, ears and tongue in incorrect ways, assigning of responsibilities to indecent people, acceptance of responsibilities without having the proper qualifications and over and above one's capacities and limitations, instructing and learning of unessential and useless matters, etc. 21

Surah Isra' – Verse 28

وَأِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَيْسُورًا

28. "And if you turn away from them seeking mercy from your Lord, which you are hopeful for, then speak unto them a gentle word."

The Qur'an declares that whenever you are unable to do them good because of your lack of means and funds and you are about to ask Allah for help, hoping to get His help so as to assist them in fulfilling their needs, pledge to aid them in a good manner and use soft words as far as you can.

The verse says:

"And if you turn away from them seeking mercy from your Lord, which you are hopeful for, then speak unto them a gentle word."

Therefore, this noble verse deals with adopting a decent approach towards the people. That was why,

while waiting for Allah's grace and assistance for providing him with the necessary means and funds, the blissful Prophet (S) would pray for him who might turn to him for help when and if he lacked the means and the fund, saying:

"May Allah provide the means for you and I out of His Grace!" 22

Fatimah Zahra (as) once asked the Prophet (S) for a maid to help her with her chores. He answered:

"There are four hundred in the mosque who have no food and clothing. Were the case not so, I would appoint a maid servant for you."

He then taught her the 'hymms' known as 'Tasbihiy at' which are called as: 'Tasbih at-i-Hadrat-i-Zahra'.

23

The blissful Qur'an contains instructions concerning the ways of talking with people, among them one may name the gentleness, leniency, easiness, firmness, idiomatic and eloquent ways with which one must commence his speaking. The verse 3, TaHa; 44, 4, 'Isra'; 23, 5, 9, 6, 8, 7, and 63 Nisa confirm the above points.

Surah Isra' – Verse 29

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا

29. "And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it to the utmost (limit) of its stretching, so that you should sit down blamed, empty-handed."

As observing the issue of moderation in everything in life, even in cases of sharing one's wealth with others, is a prime factor, the Qur'an stresses this matter in this noble verse, saying:

"And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck..."

This expression provides a delicate allusion to the fact that one must be generous and not be a miser as those who behave in such a way as if their hands are both in chains and tied up to their necks, thus unable to give away anything to anyone.

This verse also recommends all not to be overgenerous and open-handed so as not to be blamed and get stuck with your job.

The verse continues saying:

"...nor stretch it to the utmost (limit) of its stretching, so that you should sit down blamed,

empty-handed.”

Imam Sadiq (as) remarked:

*“The Qur’anic term **Imahs** here is meant envy, poverty, and empty-handedness. Some also claim that ‘blame’ concerns with the beginning of the verse which refers to ‘miserliness’ while the term ‘empty-handed’ alludes to ‘lavishness’ in spending and is related to the end of the verse.”*

A woman once sent down her son to the Prophet (S) and asked his shirt for sanctification purposes of blessings. The Prophet (S) gave away his only shirt and as he had no other one to put on, he did not get out of the house for attending his prayers. This holy verse was revealed indicating that generosity does not imply that one gives away his only single shirt.

We have it in another quotation, saying: Some gold was brought and handed down to the Prophet (S) and he gave the whole of it away to the poor instantly. On the following day, a beggar came up to the Prophet (S), asked for something. He had nothing left to give him. The beggar insulted him.

As the Prophet (S) had nothing to give him, was saddened upon which occasion when this verse was revealed. 24

Surah Isra’ – Verse 30

﴿30﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا

30. “Verily, your Lord extends the sustenance for whomever He pleases; and straitens (it for whom He pleases), verily He is, of His servants, All-Aware, All-Seeing.”

Allah’s coffers are plentiful and well expanded, though as a matter of expediency, He sometimes widens the scope for the means of sustenance for some people, while, at other times, He tightens up and makes the means of it meager.

He is truly knowledgeable as to what is good for the servant, and He is all-seeing with regard to their advantage. Hence, while one’s scope of sustenance is broadened, another person’s sphere is tightened as He deems what is worthy for them.

Therefore, He (s.w.t.) examines some by enabling them to accumulate wealth while He does the same by leaving them in a state of empty-handedness and poverty. It is on the basis of this point that we find Imam Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) state in Nahj-ul-Balaqah, sermon 91, that:

The Almighty has predetermined people’s means of sustenance by augmenting in case of some and

decreasing in case of others so that He would be please to examine whomever He wants by putting him on trial, thus selecting the rich and the poor by their gratitude and perseverance which they express.

Moreover, a great many people start rebelling against everything as soon as they feel self-sufficient. Thus, they would better stay at a certain level of living which will neither make them stay in a state of dire poverty nor in a state of rebellion.

Concluding these mentioned remarks, one must proclaim that affluence or lack of it, are both characteristics of the Lordship of Allah and are required for the development and training as well as for the testing of human beings.

The verse says:

“Verily, your Lord extends the sustenance for whomever He pleases; and straitens (it for whom He pleases), verily He is, of His servants, All-Aware, All-Seeing.”

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1. Surah Luqman
 2. The current Surah, verse 23
 3. Usul-i-Kafi and Tafsir-us-Safi
 4. Cited in Majma‘-ul-Bayan, and Tafsir-us-Safi
 5. Tafsir-i-Majma‘-ul-Bayan
 6. Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, Usul-i-Kafi, Kanz-ul-‘Ummal, Tafsir-us-Safi
 7. Surah Maryam, No. 19, verse 32
 8. Ibid, verse 14
 9. Mizan-ul-Hikmah, vol. 10
 10. Bihar, vol. 74, p. 85
 11. Kanz-ul-‘Ummal, vol. 16, p. 467
 12. Kanz-ul-‘Ummal, vol. 16, P. 467
 13. Kanz-ul-‘Ummal, vol. 16, p. 467
 14. Bihar, vol. 74, p. 49
 15. Kanz-ul-‘Ummal, vol. 16, p. 466
 16. Bihar, vol. 75, p.302
 17. Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn
 18. ‘Ihtijaj-i-Tabarsi, vol. 2, p.33, Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn
 19. Kafi, vol. 1, p. 294
 20. Tafsir-i-Furqan
 21. Tafsir-i-Atyab-ul-Bayan, and Furqan.
 22. Tafsir-i-Lahiji
 23. Tafsir-i-Nur-uth- Thaqalayn
 24. Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn
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