

Step by Step

Student's Notes



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COURSE BREAKDOWN

Week ONE	<p>You may not have realised it, but your belief in Allah is not primarily as a result of learning or some personal deductive reasoning; actually, the primary reason we believe in God is because it is something intrinsic and instinctive that God has put into you and in the whole of humanity.</p> <p>So by accepting Islam, you have now fully responded to a call of your natural state, instinct and nature.</p>
Setting the foundations	<p>Welcoming students + What is the course all about + Getting to know each other + Just before we start + How to complete Case Studies etc + Typical Islamic Expressions</p> <p>The origin of our belief in Allah</p> <p>God's existence = Common sense</p> <p>Who is God?</p> <p style="background-color: #a6a6a6;">Break</p> <p>Case Study + Take the Step + Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A</p>

Week TWO	<p>By acknowledging Allah as your Creator, you have taken the essential steps to be guided. Because of this and because you have wilfully taken this step, Allah will guide you and help you to find what your whole purpose in life is all about.</p>
The Guidance	<p>Allah's Prophets and Messengers</p> <p>The ONE message!</p> <p>Allah sent different books</p> <p>The sources of Islam</p> <p style="background-color: #a6a6a6;">Break</p> <p>Take the Step + Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A</p>

Week THREE	<p>We will be starting our journey of the five pillars of Islam, which is the foundation block to everything else in Islam. This foundation will also play an important role in strengthening your relationship with your brothers and your sisters in Islam. So keep track of every single one of them as they will determine the state of your final destination.</p>
Stablishing your foundations	<p>Introduction: Islam is built upon 5 Pillars</p> <p>The First Pillar: Testimony of Faith (Shahadah)</p> <p>The principle of Tawheed</p> <p style="background-color: #a6a6a6;">Break</p> <p>Case Study + Take the Step + Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A</p>

Week FOUR

Allah's right upon you is that you should worship Him and not associate any partners with Him. Know how to fulfil your very first duty and His Mercy and abundant rewards will be guaranteed to you on the Day of Judgement!

Five Pillars | Tawheed

Allah's Uniqueness in Lordship (Tawheed Ar-Rububiyah)
 Allah's Uniqueness in His Names and Attributes (Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat)
 Allah's Uniqueness in worship (Tawheed al-'Ibadah)

Break

Case Study + Take the Step + Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A

Week FIVE

Some common practices can cause the wrath of your Lord. Know what they are and stay away from them!

Five Pillars | Ruling some common practices

3 Case Studies on Tawheed

Break

Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A

Week SIX

A great man has been sent by Allah as a role model and a mercy for you and the rest of mankind. By uttering the Shahadah, you have testified to his Prophethood.

But do you know what such a statement really implies?

Five Pillars | 2nd part of the Shahada

Who was the Prophet Muhammad

Believing in him; Obeying and following him; Loving him; Sticking to his Sunnah

Break

Case Study + Take the Step + Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A

Week SEVEN

Beware of your declared enemy: he has made your failure his only life mission! Know who he is, reinforce your connection with Allah and you will thwart his plan.

Shaytaan is your declared enemy

Who is Shaytan + Shaytan is your enemy + Story of Barsisa

Traps of Shaytan + Strategies

How can we protect ourselves from him?

Break

Case Study + Take the Step + Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A

Week EIGHT

Your unmissable five a day! Follow the prescription as being taught by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and you will enjoy the sweetness of the best connection ever!

SECOND PILLAR | Salah

Definitions + The excellence of Salah + The benefits of Salah
 The ruling on abandoning the Prayer + Conditions for the prayer
 Tips to help you increase your concentration (Khushu') + The 5 levels of prayer
 Break
 Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A

Week NINE

Purify and increase your wealth in every aspect: materially and spiritually.

THIRD PILLAR | Zakat

Definitions + Benefits + Who must give Zakah
 Zakatable wealth + Recipients of Zakah
 Break
 Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A

Week TEN

Fully immerse yourself into the 29/30 days physical and spiritual detox program and Insha Allah, you will experience what being conscious of God really tastes like!

FOURTH PILLAR | Fasting during the month of Ramadan

Definitions + The benefits of fasting + Conditions for the fast to be obligatory
 Actions that break the fast + Actions that do not break the fast + The importance of the intention
 Some recommendations for a fasting person + Recommended fast + Zakah al-Fitr
 Recommended Fasts + The three levels of fasting
 Break
 Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A

Week ELEVEN

A life changing experience! Follow the guidelines, summon your patience and you will return free of sin: as pure as a new-born baby.

FIFTH PILLAR | Hajj: Pilgrimage to Makkah

Definition + The History of Hajj
 The Excellence of Hajj + Signs of an accepted Hajj + The Wisdoms of Hajj
 The Prerequisites of Hajj + Let's embark to the journey of Hajj!
 Break
 Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A

Week TWELVE

Life! Life is like the ocean, sometimes it's calm, other times it's rough and rigid, but in the end, it's always beautiful. This is a reality, life has its ups and downs and it may be the case, that when you accepted Islam, for some, it was easy, but for others, life just got difficult. But at the end of the day, it's the nature of life that we will go through hardships and challenges.

Realising what these challenges really are will actually allow you to turn them to your advantage and more importantly, Islam gives us the right tools to be able to deal with our challenges insha Allah (God willing)!

Challenges of life

Why is my life so difficult?

What shall I do when I'm tested?

Break

Quick Quiz + Homework + The Most Empowering Point + Q&A

Week THIRTEEN

It is now time to take the inevitable final step for you to reach your ultimate destination! Today, you are going to meet your Lord.

If this day will be for many, a day they wished would never come, it can definitely be for you, the best day of your life!

First steps into the Hereafter

Face to face with a reality: Death

First steps into the Hereafter + And the final step begins

You have now reached your ultimate destination!

Break

Dua + Quick Quiz + Conclusion

1. WELCOME TO TAKING YOUR FIRST STEP

Brothers and sisters Congratulations!

Out of 7 billion people on Earth, Allah has chosen you to be among those who will, insha Allah - which means God willing - fulfil the purpose of their existence.

2. WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?

“Step By Step” Step-by-Step is an education programme designed specifically with you in mind. The unique objective of this course is to equip you with an unshakeable foundation that will allow you to become a strong believer, that will empower you to overcome and go through the challenges of life, so that on the day you meet your Lord, you will find Him fully pleased and satisfied with you!

Before we begin:

1. **Make sure you attend all the sessions** - it's called **Step By Step** because we are building on your knowledge and understanding of Islam one step at a time!
2. **Fully immerse yourself in the course through your participation:** there are many different activities and tasks for you to complete throughout the course. Please take the time to do them.
3. **Apply the knowledge you gain from each of the sessions.** Right now, everything you go through is just a lot of information. But information becomes knowledge when you act upon it and apply it in your daily life.

3. HOW TO COMPLETE CASE STUDIES AND HOMEWORK

Throughout this course, there are five different activities for you to get involved in. Please make sure you do these activities and take part - it is so important for your learning and development.



- 1] **'Take the step'** – this is an action plan for you to work on after the session.



2] **'Quick Quiz'** - this is a fast way to revise the session you have just studied. In some ways, you can use it as a summary.



3] **'Case Study'** - we put a scenario in front of you and you have to try to answer it based on some of what you have learnt during the session.



4] **'Homework'** - this is something to reflect and write on a particular matter between the sessions. We will review each homework in the following session, but you can also go over this with your mentor.



5] **'The Most Empowering Point'** - this is designed for you to interact with the session by recalling what you benefited from and what you were empowered by the most.

4. ICE BREAKER: GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Introduce yourself to your partner (name, city, age, when did you accept Islam, how did you hear about this course, what are you expecting from this course...)

5. JUST BEFORE YOU START...

A famous companion of the Prophet, whose name was Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, (peace be upon him), said:

"Allah, the Exalted, has teams of angels who go about on the roads, seeking out those who remember Allah. When they find some people remembering Allah, they call to one another and say, "come to what you are looking for", and they surround them with their wings until the space between them and the lowest sky is fully covered.

Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, asks these angels, even though Allah knows everything, "what are my slaves saying?" They say, "they are glorifying you by saying 'Suhana-Allah (Glory be to God), Alhamdulillah (Praise be to God), Allahu-Akbar (God is greater).' By remembering You, by glorifying your praises.

He then asks, "have they seen Me?" They reply: "No, indeed, they have not seen you". He asks, "how would they act if they were to see Me?" They respond, "if they were to see You then they would engage more sincerely in worshipping and in glorifying You, and would praise You even more."

He then says, "what do they beg of Me?" They say "they beg You for your Paradise". Allah says, "have they seen My paradise?" They say, "no,

our Lord". He says, "how would they act if they were to see My paradise?" They reply "were they to see it, they would be more intensely eager for it". The angels then say "they seek your protection"

He asks "against what do they seek My protection?" The Angels say: "Our Lord, from the fire of hell", Allah says, "have they seen the fire of hell? The Angels say: "No, by your honour they have not seen it." He says, "how would they act if they were to see My fire?" They say, "If they were to see it then they would be more sincere in being away from it and fearing it and they would beg for your forgiveness".

He says, "I call you to witness that I hereby grant pardon to them and confer upon what they ask for, and grant them protection against what they seek protection from".

One of the angels says, "Our Lord, there is amongst them such-and-such a slave, who does not belong to the assembly of those who are participating in your remembrance, but he passed by and he sat down with them." He says, "I also grant him pardon because they are the people by virtue of whom their associates will not be unfortunate."

(Bukhari)

This narration shows us the importance of remembering Allah and the blessings that come from it.

Note: Whenever something is mentioned from the Qur'an, the chapter and verse will be cited for your own reference. And when a saying of the Prophet is mentioned, which is called a "hadith", the hadith book it is found in which maybe, Bukhari, Muslim, Nisai, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi or Ibn Majah will be mentioned.

6. TYPICAL ISLAMIC EXPRESSIONS

"Assalamu alaikum" - "peace be upon you"

Meaning and when to say it: This is used when you greet another Muslim. When you meet a Muslim and they say "assalamu aliakum", the response to this should be "walaikum salam" - which translates to "and upon you be peace".

Three main ways of saying this greeting:

- 1) **"Assalamu alaikum"** and the response is "walaikum salam" ("peace be upon you", "and upon you be peace".)
- 2) **"Assalamualaikum warahmatullah"**. This means "peace be upon you as well as the mercy of Allah". To this, the response would be "walaikum salam wa rahmatullah" ("and upon you be peace as well as the mercy of Allah".)
- 3) **"Assalamu alaikum warahmatullahi wa barakatuh"** and the response would be "walaikum salam warahmatullahi wa barakatuh" and this means "peace be upon you as well as the mercy of Allah and His blessings".

Respond with what is equal or better: As part of Islamic etiquette and teachings, you must respond to the greeting with what is equal or better. For example, if someone says "Assalamu alaikum warahmatullah" you're not allowed to just say "walaikum salam"; you have to say equal to it - "walaikum salam warahmatullah" or better - "walaikum salam warahmatullahi wa barakatuh".

Saying salam is important: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that "you will not enter Paradise until you have faith and you will not have faith until you love one another. Shall I show you something that if you did you would love each other? Spread peace between yourselves". - meaning say "assalamu alaikum".

Rewards for saying salam: A man came to the Prophet and he said, "Peace be upon you." The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Ten good deeds." Then another man came to the Prophet and he said, "Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah." The Prophet said: "Twenty good

deeds.” Then another man came to the Prophet and he said, “Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah and His blessings.” The Prophet said: “Thirty good deeds.” (Tirmidhi)

Initiate the salam: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that “the better of the two - meaning two people who were meeting - is the one who initiated the greetings of peace”. So we should be eager to say “Assalamu alaikum” straight away when we meet another Muslim.

2] “Bismillah” — ‘In the name of Allah’

Meaning and when to say it: before you begin to do something, including eating, before you enter the toilet or even before you start this session – Bismillah! Basically, it means that whatever you do, you want to start it in God's name.

3] “Insha Allah”

Meaning and when to say it: The meaning of it is “if God wills” or “God willing”. It is like you are placing your hopes in Allah. For example, you may plan to do something, and by saying insha Allah, you are asking for Allah's help. It is to feel the ultimate power of Allah because when you say it, you declare that Allah has the ultimate say.

Future not present or past: It should be said if you want to do something in the future, not in the present or in the past.

Not after supplication: When we ask God for something in a prayer or a supplication, we should have a firm resolve in what we are asking for. For example, you shouldn't say something like “O Allah, forgive me if You wish”, “O Allah, have mercy on me if You wish”;

Note: Unfortunately, some people abuse this term to escape from a promise or from a duty. For instance, they'll say “yeah I'll do it tomorrow, insha Allah” but have no real intention to. What they mean by saying, Insha Allah here is, “I won't really do it”, which is an abuse of the word.

4] “SubhanAllah”

Meaning and when to use it: This means “glory be to God” or “God is above all things” or “God is removed from all imperfections”. This is said when you are shocked in a negative sense by something or it is an expression of wonder, which is something that is positive. This differs from culture to culture and it also depends on tone to understand whether it's positive or negative.

5] “Alhamdulillah”

Meaning and when to say it: This means ‘all praise and thanks belong to Allah’. This is said when something good happens. For example, if you get a new job, you would say “Alhamdulillah”. That said, it is not only used for when good things happen; it can also be said when something negative happens too - it really depends on the tone. For example, if something bad happens like losing your job, you can say ‘Alhamdulillah’ as you are saying that “whatever I am going through, even if it is something negative, I am still going to thank and praise Allah. He has given me so many things despite me losing this one thing.”

In all circumstances: We are told to say “alhamdulillah” in all circumstances - whether good and bad. A misconception is that alhamdulillah is for happy moments and subhanAllah is for sad moments, but that is incorrect.

6] “MashAllah”

Meaning and when to use it: This means “this is what God has willed.” Whatever good that has happened to me, this has come from Allah and He has the ultimate say. This did not happen because of my skills, my intelligence, or because of my education. No, Allah has blessed me with these things and it was because He willed it. This is a declaration that Allah is the only one who granted me all of the good things that I have.

Something I like in someone: For example, when you see someone with a nice car, good clothes, excellent character, then you should say MashAllah. (Note: It is probably more correct to say “Allahumma barik”, which means “may Allah bless you” or “May Allah put blessing in that thing” as there is a narration about this from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Also, this is a good way to protect yourself from jealousy from others.)

7] “JazakAllahukhair” or “JazakiAllahukhair”

Meaning and when to say it: It means “may Allah reward you with goodness”. JazakAllahukhair is what you say to a man and JazakiAllahukhair is what you say to a woman. And the reason why it's a little bit different is because, in Arabic, the “KA” sound in JazakAllahukhair is for males and “KI” in JazakiAllahukhair is for females. It is said after someone does something good for you. It's similar to saying thank you but you're asking the reward of Allah to be upon that person.

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LESSON ONE

SETTING THE FOUNDATIONS

DESCRIPTION

You may not have realised it, but your belief in Allah is not primarily as a result of learning or some personal deductive reasoning; actually, the primary reason we believe in God is because it is something intrinsic and instinctive that God has put into you and in the whole of humanity. By accepting Islam, you have now fully responded to a call of your natural state, instinct and nature.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Understand where our belief in Allah is actually coming from
- Understand why there is no need to prove God's existence,
- Understand what it actually means to be a Muslim and what it implies.
- To have a better understanding of the name of "Allah" and what this name means and who Allah is.



DISCUSSION

**What has made you believe in Allah?
Share the story of your journey to Islam!**



1. ORIGIN OF OUR BELIEF IN ALLAH

The main reason that led you to believe in Allah's existence is **your natural disposition, or what we call in Arabic, the 'Fitrah'**.

Innate belief: Our belief in Allah is not primarily because of some rational or deductive thinking. It is actually something instinctive that Allah has put into all of us. Every human being has an innate belief in a creator. Allah gives us an insight into this in the Qur'an, where He says:

“And ‘remember’ when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the children of Adam their descendants and had them testify regarding themselves. ‘Allah asked,’ ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They replied, ‘Yes, You are! We testify.’ ‘He cautioned,’ ‘Now you have no right to say on Judgment Day, ‘We were not aware of this.’ Nor say, ‘It was our forefathers who had associated others ‘with Allah in worship’ and we, as their descendants, followed in their footsteps. Will you then destroy us for the falsehood they invented?’”

[Chapter 7 verse 172 to 173]

Allah is telling us about something that happened before we were born; that every human being was brought in front of Allah and we all testified that Allah is our Lord. This covenant left a deep impression on us all and it is something that remains with us throughout our life.

Allah also says,

“So be steadfast in faith in all uprightness ‘O Prophet’—the natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in [all] people. Let there be no change in this creation of Allah. That is the Straight Way, but most people do not know.”

[Chapter 30 verse 30]

We also have a saying by the Prophet, (peace be upon him) about the fitrah, where he said, “No child is born but that he is upon the natural instinct (fitra). His parents make him a Jew, or a Christian, or Magian (fire worshipper).”

(Bukhari)

2. GOD'S EXISTENCE = COMMON SENSE

Common Sense: The fact that God exists or this belief in a creator is not something that is in dispute for most people because simple common sense bears witness to this.

Reflect: Allah invites us all to reflect in the Qur'an:

“Or were they created by nothing, or are they ‘their own’ creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? In fact, they have no firm belief ‘in Allah’.”

[Chapter 52, verses 35 to 36].

From common sense, we know that something cannot come from nothing, so knowing that the existence of the universe has a beginning, we cannot say that it just appeared all of a sudden from nothing.

Also, we cannot claim that the universe created itself as this would be a paradox. How can something that did not exist in the first place create anything? That would be equal to saying that our mother gave birth to herself!

From a painting, we know that there must be someone who made the painting - a painter. So from the universe, we know that there must be someone who made the universe - a creator.

Allah says in the Qur'an, He asks us rhetorically

“Their messengers asked ‘them’, “Is there any doubt about Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?”

[Chapter 14 verse 10]

Why is Allah repeatedly inviting people to observe and ponder over His creation if it's not to prove His existence? The real problem is not that people do not know that there is a creator; 'the real issue is that they don't want to worship Him.

Allah's Lordship: The fact that He is the Creator, Sustainer, Nurturer of all of His creation, as mentioned in the Qur'an - is to remind us all that if we accept His Lordship, then we must also obey His command and worship Him alone. In other words, if Allah is our creator, this necessitates that He alone is worthy of worship.

This is why being a Muslim is not just about recognising the that the creator exists, but it implies recognising that our attitude towards the Creator should be one of complete submission.

Part of this fundamental concept is included in the meaning of the word '**Islam**' itself. The word Islam is a verbal noun from the verb **AS-LA-MA**. This verb is defined as “the one who resigned or submitted himself”. When used with respect to God, it means someone who submits their will to God. **A Muslim is someone who has made the conscious decision to worship and to submit him or herself to the one and only God.**

In order for us to submit ourselves to God, we have to know, who is God?

3. WHO IS GOD?

How do we know who Allah is: The only way to know who Allah is, is through what He has told us about Himself. In the Qur'an, Allah says about himself:

“All praise is for Allah—Lord of all worlds, the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment.”

[Chapter 1 verse 2 - 4]

“Allah! There is no god ‘worthy of worship’ except Him, the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining. Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who could possibly intercede with Him without His permission? He ‘fully’ knows what is ahead of them and what is behind them, but no one can grasp any of His knowledge—except what He wills ‘to reveal’. His Seat encompasses the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not tire Him. For He is the Most High, the Greatest.”

[Chapter 2 verse 255]

“He is Allah—there is no god ‘worthy of worship’ except Him: Knower of the seen and unseen. He is the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. He is Allah—there is no god except Him: the King, the Most Holy, the All-Perfect, the Source of Serenity, the Watcher ‘of all’, the Almighty, the Supreme in Might, the Majestic. Glorified is Allah far above what they associate with Him ‘in worship’! He is Allah: the Creator, the Inventor, the Shaper. He ‘alone’ has the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth ‘constantly’ glorifies Him. And He is the Almighty, All-Wise.”

[Chapter 50 verse 22 - 24]

4. THE NAME "ALLAH"

الله

The name "Allah": For many scholars, this is His greatest name, as it encompasses all of His other beautiful names and attributes. The name Allah belongs exclusively to Him and no one else. He is the one and only deity worthy of worship. The One who possesses the attributes of divinity and to whom all His creation is enslaved.

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INTERESTING NOTE:

In Hebrew and Aramaic, 'El' or 'Elah' means God. In the Old Testament, the name 'Elohim' or (Eloah in singular form) is used to refer to the Hebrew God. In the New Testament, Jesus referred to God as "Elli, Elli" (my God, my God). So the personal name for God in Semitic languages which is Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic - the mother tongue of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace and upon them all), is in actual fact, 'Allah'.

5. CASE STUDY

After her first session about Allah's existence, Sakina is now very keen to share what she has learned with Rachel, her non-Muslim friend, who is also very interested in Islam.

After explaining to her why believing in Allah can also be rationalised, even if it is in the first place something innate, Rachel asks Sakina, **"but if the belief in God is natural and innate, then why do so many people lack this belief?"**

What would you answer if you were in her position?

LESSON TWO

THE GUIDANCE

DESCRIPTION

By acknowledging Allah as your Creator, you have taken the essential steps to be guided. Because of this and because you have wilfully taken this step, Allah will guide you and help you to find what your whole purpose in life is all about.

LESSON OBJECTIVES



- Understand why we are here.
- Understand what is expected of us in this life.
- Understand why Allah sent us revelation.
- Understand what are the main sources of Islam and their importance.

DISCUSSION



Before accepting Islam, did you ever wonder what your purpose in life was? If so, what conclusion did you come up with?

We know that Allah created us, but how can we know what He wants from us? This is the reason why Allah sent Prophets and Messengers - to teach us about Him. Who we must worship.

1. ALLAH'S PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS

Specific miracles as proof: Allah chose as Prophets and Messengers the best of human beings. Many of the Prophets were sent with a specific miracle according to what was predominant at their particular time. For example, the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was sent at a time when magicians and magic were widespread amongst the Egyptians, so Allah sent with him great miracles that would foil the magician's plans.

The Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was sent at a time when medicine was predominant, so Allah gave him the power and permission to cure people and resurrect the dead.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent at a time when poetry was the most honourable activity and the main interest of his people. However, Allah also knew that he would be the last messenger till the Day of Judgment. So, He sent to His messenger a miracle that would not only be relevant for the people of his time but also for the rest of humankind, up until the Day of Judgment - the Qur'an.

Allah chose his messengers: Many people in the past, and even nowadays, have questioned Allah's choice of messengers (i.e. why Jesus or Muhammad (peace be upon them)?) As a result, they have rejected His messengers because they did not think that they deserved to receive the revelation. But since Allah is all-Knowing, He knows best why He chose them to fulfil that mission and we don't.

NOTE:

Belief in Allah's Prophets and Messengers is a part of the six pillars of faith (iman).

2. THE ONE MESSAGE

Primary Message of all the prophets: to surrender to Allah's will and His worship. Allah says: "We never sent a messenger before you 'O Prophet' without revealing to him:

“There is no god worthy of worship except Me, so worship Me alone.”

[Chapter 21 verse 25].

This was the central message of all the prophets and messengers sent by Allah. The message of Abraham, Isaac, Ismael, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon them all.

Exclusive right of Allah: Allah has the exclusive right to be worshipped inwardly and outwardly by one’s heart and limbs. Not only can no-one be worshipped apart from Allah, but absolutely no one else can be worshipped along with Him. He has no partners or associates in worship, and worship in its comprehensive sense - along with all of its aspects - is for Him alone. Allah says,

“And your Lord is one God. There is no deity worthy of worship except Him. The Entirely merciful the especially merciful”.

[Chapter 2 verse 163]

“O humanity! Worship your Lord, Who created you and those before you, so that you may become mindful of Him. He is the One Who has made the earth a place of settlement for you and the sky a canopy; and sends down rain from the sky, causing fruits to grow as a provision for you. So do not knowingly set up equals to Allah in worship.”

[Chapter 2 verse 21 - 22]

3. CASE STUDY

“Why do I need revelation? Isn’t it enough just to be good in my own way?”

4. ALLAH SENT DIFFERENT BOOKS

Different Books: As part of our belief in revelation, we believe that Allah sent different books to His different messengers,

NOTE:

The belief in these scriptures revealed by Allah is part of the six pillars of faith.

Some of the books we are told about by Allah are:

The Scriptures of Ibrahim (Abraham) (peace be upon him): Allah says:

“Or has he not been informed of what is in the Scripture of Moses, and that of Abraham, who perfectly fulfilled his covenant? They state that no soul burdened with sin will bear the burden of another, and that each person will only have what they endeavoured towards, and that the outcome of their endeavours will be seen in their record, then they will be fully rewarded, and that to your Lord alone is the ultimate return of all things.”

[Chapter 53, verses 36-42]

The Torah - a sacred book that was revealed to Musa (Moses) (peace be upon him). Allah says,

“Indeed, We revealed the Torah, containing guidance and light, by which the prophets, who submitted themselves to Allah, made judgments for Jews.”

[Chapter 5 verse 44]

The Psalms or the Zaboor revealed to Dawood (David) (peace be upon him). Allah says,

“and to David, we gave the Psalms.”

[Chapter 4 verse 163]

The Injeel or the Gospel revealed to Jesus (Isa) (peace be upon him.). Allah says,

“Then in the footsteps of the prophets, We sent Jesus, son of Mary, confirming the Torah revealed before him. And We gave him the Injeel containing guidance and light and confirming what was revealed in the Torah — a guide and a lesson to the God-fearing.”

[Chapter 5 verse 46]



IMPORTANT NOTE:

When we talk about these books, we are not referring to the ones that are in existence today. For instance, the Injeel is not the same as the Bible that we have today, or the Old and New Testament. These are not the same thing as the Injeel. The Bible may contain remnants from the Injeel, but we can not say that they are exactly the same.

Finally, the other revelation we are told about is obviously the Qur'an, which we will cover next.

5. THE SOURCES OF ISLAM: THE QUR'AN & THE SUNNAH

A. THE QUR'AN: ALLAH'S LAST REVELATION

Linguistic and technical definition: "Quran" comes from the verb "Qa-ra-a", which means to read or to recite. The Qur'an is the speech of Allah that He revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in word and in meaning which has been preserved.

Source of Guidance: The Qur'an is the main source of Islam. It is the last of the books sent by Allah and it confirms what was said in the previous books concerning the message of monotheism and the obligation to worship and obey Allah alone.

The Criterion: The Qur'an abrogated all the previous books. This is why it is not permitted for us to abide by the laws of any other book that has been sent except from the Qur'an. Those books were revealed to a certain people, a nation, and at certain times. Allah says

"He has revealed to you 'O Prophet' the Book in truth, confirming what came before it, as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel previously, as a guide for people, and 'also' revealed the Standard 'to distinguish between right and wrong'. Surely those who reject Allah's revelations will suffer a severe torment. For Allah is Almighty, capable of punishment."

[Chapter 3 verse 3-4]

For all of mankind: The Qur'an was revealed to mankind at large, not to a specific nation, Allah says

"We have sent you 'O Prophet' only as a deliverer of good news and a warner to all of humanity, but most people do not know."

[Chapter 34 verse 28].

Allah has also preserved the Qur'an from all distortions, adulterations, additions or impairments. He says,

"It is certainly We Who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We Who will preserve it."

[Chapter 15, verse 9]

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B. THE SOURCES OF ISLAM: THE SUNNAH

Linguistic and technical definition: The Sunnah comes from a word which means "a way" or "a course". it refers to what the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said and did, and agreed to and approved of.

Following the sunnah is an obligation upon every Muslim: Allah says in the Qur'an

"O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Should you disagree on anything, then refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you 'truly' believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best and fairest resolution."

[Chapter 4 verse 59]

Allah also says

"Whoever obeys the Messenger has truly obeyed Allah. But whoever turns away, then 'know that' We have not sent you 'O Prophet' as a keeper over them."

[Chapter 4, verse 80]

There is also a narration of the Prophet (peace be upon him), when he said,

"all my nation will enter paradise except for those who refuse" his companions asked, "Who could possibly refuse?" The Prophet (peace be upon him), said "Whoever obeys me enters paradise whoever disobeys me has refused."

(Bukhari)

IMPORTANT NOTE:

There is no contradiction between the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah- they actually complement each other, where the Sunnah explains the Qur'an. (i.e. the Qur'an says "establish the prayer" and gives basic descriptions of what the prayer movements are, but the sunnah goes into detail of how to do it)

6. THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

Islam is the religion of knowledge: The first verse of the Qur'an to be revealed was in reference to reading, which is the key to knowledge. In Islam, knowledge comes before action and a Muslim should never do or say anything without knowledge.

Do not speak without knowledge: Allah warns:

“Do not follow what you have no ‘sure’ knowledge of. Indeed, all will be called to account for ‘their’ hearing, sight, and intellect.”

[Chapter 17 verse 36]

Value of seeking knowledge: Numerous narrations from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that make explicit the importance and the value of seeking knowledge. For example, Abu Dardah, who was one of the companions of the Prophet, reported, that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), said

“He who follows a path in the quest of knowledge, Allah will make the path of paradise easy for that person” The Prophet went on to say “the angels lower their wings over the seeker of knowledge being pleased with what he does, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth and even the fish in the depths of the oceans seek forgiveness for him. The superiority of the learned man over the devout worshiper is like that of the full moon to the rest of the stars in terms of brightness. The learned are the heirs of the Prophets who bequeath neither dinar nor dirham currency, but only that of knowledge, and he who acquires it has in fact acquired an abundant apportion.”

(Abu Dawud)

7. WHO ARE THE SCHOLARS?

If knowledge is important in Islam, knowledgeable people in Islam are also important! Who are these individuals? Who are the scholars? The scholars are those who have studied the religion of Islam and possess knowledge of the laws of Allah. They have an understanding of Allah's religion and they act upon their knowledge.

8. ETIQUETTES OF SEEKING KNOWLEDGE

1] Be patient. Seeking knowledge is one of the highest things to pursue. It cannot be reached except by working hard and striving. This means the seeker of knowledge must be patient until the end of their life.

2] Purify your intention. Only aim to seek knowledge so you can seek the pleasure of Allah. Beware of seeking knowledge just to try and impress others, to show off, or because you love making yourself appear superior to others. Also, ask for Allah's forgiveness continuously, especially when someone praises you and ask Allah to save you from showing off.

3] Act upon what you know. Allah likens those who know but do not act upon their knowledge to a very ugly thing when He says,

"The example of those who were entrusted with 'observing' the Torah but failed to do so, is that of a donkey carrying books. How evil is the example of those who reject Allah's signs! For Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people."

[Chapter 62 verse 5]

4] Make Du'a (supplication). Always call upon Allah, asking Him to bless you and grant you beneficial knowledge. If you are sincere, He will support you, help you and will cause you to attain the levels of the righteous scholars.

5] Choose your companions carefully. Strive to choose righteous friends who are also preoccupied with seeking knowledge, who can help you in achieving your aim, who encourage you to seek more knowledge and stop you from feeling bored and wasting your time.

6] Have good manners towards your teacher. Learning from a teacher who you trust opens the door to knowledge and keeps you away from making mistakes. Have good manners towards him or her; this is the way to successful learning and also strength in your foundations. Etiquettes when you sit with your teacher:.

- Ask questions in a proper manner and listen attentively.
- Be polite when studying and do not argue with him or her or compete with them.
- Do not speak too much in their presence or interrupt them when they are teaching.

9. QUICK QUIZ



1. What is our main purpose in life?
2. Who are the Prophets who were sent with a book or a scripture?
3. What do we call the Prophetic way?
4. Why is it so important to follow it?

3

LESSON THREE

ESTABLISHING YOUR FOUNDATIONS

DESCRIPTION

In this lesson, we will be starting our journey of the five pillars of Islam, which is the foundation block to everything else in Islam. This foundation will also play an important role in strengthening your relationship with your brothers and your sisters in Islam. So keep track of every single one of them as they will determine the state of your final destination.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To learn what the five pillars of Islam are and why they are so important.
- To focus on the first pillar, which is the shahadah - the testimony of faith. So we will look at the meaning of the Shahada and its conditions for it to be accepted by Allah.
- To understand and internalize what this implies.
- To understand the principles of monotheism, which in Arabic is called Tawheed.
- To understand what the opposite of Tawheed is and its dangers.



DISCUSSION

What is the importance of a foundation to a building?



1. INTRODUCTION: ISLAM IS BUILT UPON FIVE PILLARS

Islam is built upon five: One of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, Abdullah Ibn Umar, said that he heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say

“Islam has been built on five [pillars]: testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the Salah (prayer), paying the Zakah (obligatory charity), making the Hajj (pilgrimage) to the House (Kabah in Makkah), and fasting in Ramadhan.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)



IMPORTANT NOTE:

These five pillars were not only given to this nation - meaning the nation and followers of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) - but they were also given to the Prophets and people who came before us.

For example, Allah says about the Children of Israel - who are descendants of Prophet Jacob or Yaqub -

“And ‘remember’ when We took a covenant from the children of Israel ‘stating’, ‘Worship none but Allah; be kind to parents, relatives, orphans and the needy; speak kindly to people; establish prayer; and pay alms-tax.’ But you ‘Israelites’ turned away—except for a few of you—and were indifferent.”

[Chapter 2 verse 83]

Also about fasting, Allah says,

“O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you—as it was for those before you—so perhaps you will become mindful ‘of Allah’.”

[Chapter 2 verse 183]

And for Hajj or the pilgrimage, this is something that has been prescribed by Allah since the time of Abraham (peace be upon him) where Allah says,

“And ‘remember’ when We assigned to Abraham the site of the House, ‘saying’, ‘Do not associate anything with Me ‘in worship’ and purify My House for those who circle ‘the Ka’bah’, stand ‘in prayer’, and bow and prostrate themselves. Call ‘all’ people to the pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel from every distant path,”

[Chapter 22 verse 26-27]

2. THE FIRST PILLAR:

THE TESTIMONY OF FAITH (SHAHADAH)

Definition: The first pillar of Islam is the testimony of faith — the Shahada. The word Shahada in Arabic actually means testimony as it is the Muslim’s profession of faith and a covenant that you have with Allah.

CONDITIONS FOR SHAHADAH:

- 1] **Knowledge** - so a person must know what they are testifying to.
- 2] **Sincerity** - which means you are doing it only for the sake of Allah.
- 3] **Certainty** - you have no doubt about what you’re believing in.
- 4] **Being Truthful** - so you are saying it honestly and you actually mean it.

- 5] **Loving it** - which means that you love this testimony and whoever says it.
- 6] **Submitting** to this statement in physical enactments with our deeds
- 7] **Accepting** this statement means you accept whatever is implied by it.

3. THE FIRST PART OF THE SHAHADAH: THE PRINCIPLE OF TAWHEED

Definition: The first part of the shahadah (“ashadu anla ilaha ilAllah that “there is no God worthy of worship except Allah”) revolves around the Arabic word ‘**Tawheed**’ or what you could translate as ‘monotheism’. Linguistically, *tawheed* means to ascribe unity to something. Islamically, it means believing that Allah is one and unique in three things: In His Lordship, in His names and attributes, and also in His right to be worshipped alone.

Dividing Tawheed: Dividing Tawheed into these three things was not done by the Prophet (peace be upon him) nor by his companions. They are actually derived and can be extracted from the verses of the Qur’an and from the statements of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions.

Why do we have these categories? It became necessary after Islam spread to different regions because some people from these different regions carried with them some of their former beliefs and cultures when they accepted Islam. As a result, much confusion arose, which threatened the pure and Unitarian belief of Islam. To make sure the general masses had a clearer understanding of tawheed, scholars simplified it by breaking it down into these three categories.

4. WHY IS TAWHEED SO IMPORTANT?

Tawheed is the right of Allah upon us: The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked Muadh ibn Jabal,

“Oh Muadh, do you know what is Allah’s right over his slaves and what their right is over Him? Muadh replied “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said “Allah’s rights over his slaves is that they worship Him without associating any partners with Him in worship. And their rights over Allah is that He does not punish anyone who worships Him without associating any partners with Him in worship”.

(Ibn Majah)

Tawheed is a cause for entering paradise: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“if anyone testifies that none has a right to be worshipped but Allah alone who has no partners and that Muhammad is His slave and His apostle and that Jesus is Allah’s slave and His apostle and His word which he bestowed upon Mary and a spirit created by Him. And that paradise is true and the hellfire is true, Allah will admit him into paradise with the deeds which he had done even if those deeds were few.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

It forgives all sins and prevents one going to the hell: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), said

“Allah will bring forth a man belonging to my ummah (my nation) before all creatures and will spread ninety-nine scrolls [containing the record of his bad deeds] for him, each scroll extending as far as the eye can see. Then He will say, ‘Do you object to anything in this? Have my scribes who keep note wronged you?’ He will say, ‘No, my Lord.’ He will ask him, ‘Do you have any excuse?’ He will say, ‘No my Lord.’ Allah will say, ‘On the contrary, you have with Us a good deed, and you will not be wronged this Day.’ A slip of paper will then be brought out, on which are the words ‘Ashhadu an laa ilaaha ill-Allah wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhu wa rasooluhu (I bear witness that there is no true god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger).’ Allah will say, ‘Bring your balance.’ The man will say, ‘O Lord, what is this slip of paper in comparison to these scrolls?’ And He will reply, ‘You will not be wronged.’ The scrolls will then be put on one side of the Balance and the slip of paper on the other, and the scrolls will become light and the slip of paper heavy, for nothing could compare in weight to the name of Allah.”

(Tirmidhi)

5. THE OPPOSITE OF TAWHEED: SHIRK

Definition: The opposite of Tawheed is what we call in Arabic ‘shirk’. To take a partner along with Allah. Allah says

“He is the One¹ Who has made the earth a place of settlement for you and the sky a canopy; and sends down rain from the sky, causing fruits to grow as a provision for you. So do not knowingly set up equals to Allah ‘in worship’¹.”

[Chapter 2, verse 22]

6. THE ORIGINS OF SHIRK

The origins of shirk: It came with the people of Noah (peace be upon him). They were the first who did shirk. Before Allah sent Noah, the people were upon Tawheed. So, from the time of Adam, people believed and worshipped Allah alone. Then as generations passed, they started to worship idols, who were actually statues of righteous people. Initially, they did not worship these statues.

Ibn Abbas (the cousin of the Prophet) said

“When these righteous people died, Shaytan whispered to their people to make statues of them and to place these statues in their places of gathering as a reminder of them, so they did this. However, none from amongst them worshipped these statues, until when they died and the purpose of the statues was forgotten. Then (the next generation) began to worship them.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

And then Noah came commanding them to worship only Allah alone, however, none of them responded to the call except for a few. This is how shirk crept in - slowly but surely.

7. THE DANGERS OF SHIRK

It is the only unforgivable sin in the sight of Allah: Why? Because the essence of shirk involves giving Allah's right to other than Him and that is considered to be the greatest injustice. Allah says

“Indeed, Allah does not forgive associating others with Him ‘in worship’, but forgives anything else of whoever He wills.”

[Chapter 4, verse 48]

Shirk destroys a person's good deeds: Allah says

“It has already been revealed to you—and to those ‘prophets’ before you—that if you associate others ‘with Allah’, your deeds will certainly be void and you will truly be one of the losers.”

[Chapter 39 verse 65]

It prohibits a person from entering paradise and obligates a permanent abode in hell: Allah says

4

LESSON FOUR FIRST PART OF SHAHADAH

5 PILLARS-THE 3 CATEGORIES OF TAWHEED

DESCRIPTION

In this session, we are going to look at the topic of Allah's right upon us, and that is, that we should worship Him and not associate any partners with him. We will also look at knowing how to fulfil this right of Allah, and His mercy and abundant rewards that will be a guarantee to you on the Day of Judgment.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:



- To understand the different categories of Tawheed - of monotheism.
- To know the different aspects of shirk, which is associating partners alongside Allah, so that we may all be able to avoid falling into any of them.

4. ALLAH'S ONENESS IN HIS NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES (*TAWHEED AL ASMA WAS-SIFAT*)

Meaning: to believe that Allah alone is the possessor of ultimate perfection in His names and attributes in every sense.

As described by Allah: This belief is accomplished by describing Allah according to the names and attributes by which He has described himself in the Qur'an or by those used by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to describe Him.

Names of Allah are mentioned throughout the Qur'an:

Ar Rahman (Most Compassionate), ***Ar-Raheem*** (Most Merciful), ***Al-Aziz*** (All Mighty), ***Al-Khaliq*** (the Creator)

[Chapters 1 and 59].

We also find His attributes mentioned in the Qur'an and in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.

How do we understand and use Allah's names and attributes? Allah's attributes are to be taken in the absolute sense, free from human deficiencies. Allah says,

"there is nothing like Him".

[Chapter 42,verse 11].

In that, He is not like His creation. It is not permissible to give them meanings other than their apparent meanings. When Allah says that He sees, this means that He sees and it does not carry a metaphorical meaning. But the nature of how He sees is very different to the way we see. He sees everything, whilst our sight is very limited.

5. ITS OPPOSITE: *SHIRK IN AL ASMA WAS-SIFAT*

Shirk al-Asma was-Sifaat: This is done by comparing and likening Allah to His creation. For example, one of Allah's attributes is that He speaks, as mentioned in the Qur'an: "When Moses came at the appointed time and his Lord spoke to him" [Chapter 7, verse 143]

Remember the principle: Only describe Allah by the names and attributes he describes Himself with. For example:

- We speak and Allah speaks; but it would be shirk in asma wa sifaat (shirk in the names and attributes of Allah) if we say that the way Allah speaks is similar to the way that humans speak.
- It would also be shirk in al-asma wa-sifaat if we compared the creation to Allah. For example, saying that the mercy of a mother for her children is like the mercy of Allah for His servant.

- It would be shirk if we gave the names and attributes of Allah to other than Him. For example, we said Buddha was Ar-Rahman (The Most Merciful) or that Jesus was Al-Khaliq (The Creator)

“Slave of”: Allah’s names are in the definite and absolute form and can not be given to His creation unless they are preceded by the prefix “Abd”, which means a “slave of”. For instance, one of Allah’s names is “Ar-Rahman” - The Merciful.]

6. DISCUSSION

In the previous lesson, we said that it was not enough to believe in just the first category of tawheed (The Oneness of Allah’s Lordship - that He is the creator, sustainer and maintainer of everything). What about if a person believes in the first category and THIS category of the Oneness in His names and attributes, is this enough? If not, why not?

7. ALLAH’S ONENESS IN WORSHIP (TAWHEED AL-‘IBADAH)

Meaning: Allah’s Oneness in His worship; since Allah alone is deserving of all acts of worship, we single Him out for worship.

Meaning of worship: Generally, worship is submitting oneself to Allah with love and doing that which He has ordered us to do, and avoiding that which He has forbidden, in the manner laid down and prescribed by Him. Specifically, worship is everything that Allah loves and is pleased with, both in our sayings and our actions that are apparent and those that are hidden. So, Allah’s Oneness in His Worship consists of directing all our acts of worship to Allah alone and to seek the reward for our acts of worship from Him alone.

8. CONDITIONS FOR AN ACTION TO BE ACCEPTED BY ALLAH

Two conditions:

1. The act must be done sincerely for the pleasure of Allah and not for the recognition and the praise of human beings. The Prophet (peace be upon him), said:

"The actions are but by intentions and a person can get only what he intended".

(Bukhari and Muslim)

2. The act must be done in accordance the same way the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) did it (called the Sunnah). For example, we pray the same way the Prophet prayed, not how we feel or from our own opinions or desires.

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9. ITS OPPOSITE: SHIRK IN AL-'IBADAH

Shirk al-'Ibadah: when the act of worship that is directed to other than Allah and the reward for worship is sought from the creation instead of the Creator.

Two types of shirk (Major and Minor):

1. **Major shirk** means ascribing to someone other than Allah something that belongs only to Allah. For example, saying an idol they worship can answer their prayers - this is something only Allah can do. This type of shirk expels a person from Islam (makes a person a non-Muslim). It necessitates a person's eternal punishment in the hellfire and it nullifies all of a person's good deed.
2. **Minor shirk** means all those things that may lead to major shirk or they are described in the Qur'an and the Sunnah as being shirk, but they do not reach the extent of being major shirk. It does not expel a person from Islam; it only nullifies those deed that were done with that particular action of shirk.

It is still very serious and not something to be taken lightly. In fact, the Prophet said:

"that the thing that I fear most for you is minor shirk". They said, O Messenger of Allah, what is minor shirk? He said showing off, for Allah will say on the day when people are recompensed for their actions, go to those for whom you were showing off with your deeds in the world and see what reward you find with them."

(Ahmad).



NOTE:

Whoever obeys a scholar or a ruler by prohibiting what Allah has permitted or permitting what Allah has prohibited, has also committed a form of shirk.

Protection from shirk: The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us a specific supplication:

“Shirk among you will be more subtle than the footsteps of an ant, but I will teach you something which if you do it both minor and major shirk will be kept away from you”. Say, Oh Allah I seek refuge in you from knowingly committing shirk with you and I ask forgiveness for what I do not know about you. Allaahumma ‘innee ‘a’oothu bika an’ushrika bika wa’anaa ‘a’lamu wa’astaghfiruka limaa laa ‘a’lamu.”

(Ahmad)

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SUMMARY OF TAWHEED		SUMMARY OF SHIRK	
Tawheed Ar-Rububiyyah	<p>Allah is the True and complete Owner of His creation.</p> <p>He has the ultimate authority, so nothing happens without His decree.</p> <p>He is the One who nourishes and takes care of everything</p>	Shirk Ar-Rububiyyah	<p>Deny that the creation has a Creator.</p> <p>To believe that others share Allah’s Lordship over creation as His equal or near equal.</p>
Tawheed Al Asma was-Sifat	<p>Allah’s attributes are to be taken in the absolute sense, free from human deficiencies.</p> <p>It is not permissible to give them meanings other than their obvious meanings.</p> <p>Can’t call any of the creation with the supreme names and attributes of Allah.</p> <p>We can’t give to Allah the attributes of the creation.</p>	Shirk Al Asma was-Sifat	<p>Comparing Allah to His creation (humanization).</p> <p>Comparing the creation to Allah (deification).</p>
Tawheed Al-‘Ibadah	<p>Ibadah is based upon the guidance of Allah.</p> <p>The prescribed actions of worship cannot be done for other than Allah.</p> <p>We have to worship Him according to what He revealed.</p>	Shirk Al-‘Ibadah	<p>Acts of worship are directed to other than Allah.</p> <p>The reward for worship is sought from the creation instead of the Creator.</p>

LESSON FIVE

5 PILLARS:

THE RULING ON SOME COMMON PRACTISES

DESCRIPTION

In this section, we're going to look at some practices that have crept into some of the Muslim communities and as a result, have become quite common; however, many of these practices actually go against the principles of Tawheed and as a result, may cause the wrath of Allah.

LESSON OBJECTIVES



- Knowing the origin and the ruling of some very common practices that can cause the wrath of your Lord.
- Knowing how to stay away from them!

LESSON SIX

5 PILLARS:

THE 2ND PART OF THE SHAHADAH

DESCRIPTION

In this session, we are going to cover the second part of the Shahada - “wa ashadu anna muhammadur rasoolAllah (and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah).

A great man has been sent by Allah as a role model and as a mercy for us and for the whole of mankind. By uttering the Shahada, you have testified to his Prophethood, but do you know what such a statement really implies?

LESSON OBJECTIVES



- To learn more about the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
- To understand and realise the blessings and the benefits of following his example in our everyday life.
- To Increase our love for Allah by loving and following the Prophet. Increasing our love for Allah by loving and following him.

DISCUSSION



The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been sent as a mercy and a great blessing for all of mankind. Allah sent him to bring mankind out of darkness into the light, and to show us that which will bring us happiness in this world but also in the hereafter. So who was the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)? What do you know about the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)? Which aspects of his life touch you the most?

1. WHO WAS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PEACE BE UPON HIM)?

Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born in Makkah in 570 (Common Era) at a time when idol worship was the dominant religion, although there were some pockets of Christians in Yemen and Jews in Madina. Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born into the most noble tribe (Banu Hashim) in Arabia, losing his father Abdullah before he was born and his mother Aminah at the age of six. He was a trader in later life. Known for his honesty and upright character, he was at one point employed by an honourable, wealthy woman called Khadijah whom he later married, having six children with her.

Being in a society that was filled with idol-worship and evil practices, he would frequently visit the Cave of Hira (which is about 2 miles from the Ka'bah) for reflection and to distance himself from it all. It was here that he was visited by the angel Jibril revealing to him some verses of the Qur'an and making him a Prophet of Allah. He was ordered to spread the message of Islam initially to his family and friends and then later to the whole society. This call was to take people away from the worship and servitude of people to the worship of Allah alone. From the narrowness of this world to the spaciousness of the hereafter, from the injustices of other ways of life to the justice of Islam.

Although only having a few followers, he was met with great hostility by the Makkans who saw him as a threat to the status quo. The hostility went through a number of stages: ridicule, persecution and boycott. Only those who had a strong tribal backing were safe from persecution whilst the others endured severe tortures. The Prophet lost his protection and was susceptible to persecution once he lost his uncle Abu Talib, the chief of Banu Hashim. Around the same time, his greatest support and beloved wife Khadijah also passed away. It was during this difficult period that he went to the neighbouring city of Ta'if, to see if there was a possibility to move there with his followers. However, he was met with more hostility than in Makkah and was chased out of the city.

Shortly after, the Prophet was taken on the heavenly journey and ascension by night (Al-Isra wal-Miraj). He travelled to Jerusalem in one night, leading all the Prophets in prayer and meeting with Allah in the heavens. As if a soothing balm to his aching soul, he was gifted the five daily prayers and returned to Makkah rejuvenated to continue his mission. In the following years, the tides began to turn, and winds of hope emerged from Yathrib, a town north of Makkah, which would later be called Madina

The Prophet sent one of his followers to call the people to Islam, leading to the people of this city of Madina to accept his message. Subsequently, they invited the Prophet to migrate (hijra) and settle there, entering as their leader. Despite the attempts of the Makkans to assassinate him, the Prophet reached Madina in 622.

Upon his arrival, Muhammad (peace be upon him) built the first mosque in the city where he called people to Islam and developed his followers and united the various rival tribes together. The Prophet (peace be upon him) established a state that became a threat to the polytheist Makkans leading to two immediate wars, Badr (624) in which the Muslims were victorious being outnumbered by their enemies three to one and Uhud (625) in which they suffered great losses.

The whole of Arabia united against the Muslims in the Battle of the Trench (627), laying siege to Madina for a month only to retreat, dejected and defeated. The turning point occurred the following year when the Prophet (peace be upon him) marched to Makkah to perform the pilgrimage only to be prevented. This led to both groups signing a peace deal called the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. Although the clauses of the treaty were very unfavourable towards the Muslims, the period of peace allowed them to interact with the polytheists, illustrating to them the practices and principles of Islam. It also allowed the Muslims to develop and strengthen themselves further. This led up to the Conquest of Makkah (629) after the Makkans breached the treaty. The Prophet entered the city of Makkah with his head lowered in humility to his Lord. The Makkans surrendered themselves and asked for leniency. The Prophet pardoned and showed them mercy, accepting their entrance into Islam. Following this momentous shift of power, the tribes of Arabia converted to Islam or made peace deals with the Prophet. In 632, the Prophet (peace be upon him) delivered his Farewell Speech when performing the Hajj (major pilgrimage). Some months later, he received the final verses of revelation, passing away in Madina having brought humankind out of the depths of darkness into the light.

Allah gave the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) a status that he did not give to any other human being or creature. And so, the statement: "I bear witness that Muhammad is a Messenger of Allah" implies the following:

2. IMPLICATIONS OF 2ND PART OF SHAHADAH: BELIEVING IN HIM

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Linked beliefs: Allah says,

"So believe in Allah and His Messenger and in the Light We have revealed. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do." [Chapter 64 verse 8]. Allah has linked belief in Him with belief in His messenger. They are inseparable and this is what the declaration of faith - the Shahadah - means. The Prophet (peace be upon him), himself said that "By Him in whose hand is Muhammad's soul, no one from this nation or a Jew or a Christian will hear about me and then die without believing in that which I was sent but that he will be of the inhabitants of the hellfire."

(Muslim)

Importance of believing in him: Whoever does not believe in the final Messenger of Allah, and that he is the last of the Prophets and Messengers, they will not be considered to be a believer, even if he believes in all of the Prophets who came before him, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc (peace, be upon them all). Allah says,

"The 'true' believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger — never doubting — and strive with their wealth and their lives in the cause of Allah. They are the ones true in faith."

[Chapter 49, verse 15]

3. IMPLICATIONS OF 2ND PART OF SHAHADAH: OBEYING AND FOLLOWING HIM

Obedying the Messenger = Obey Allah: Allah says,

“O believers! Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn away from him while you hear ‘his call’.”

[Chapter 8 verse 20].

Allah has mentioned obedience to the messenger in connection with obedience to Him. You cannot have one without the other.

Follow his commands: Obeying the Messenger means following his commands and staying away from what he has prohibited. Allah says,

“Say, ‘O Prophet, ‘If you ‘sincerely’ love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins. For Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

[Chapter 3 verse 31]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

“All of my Ummah - my nation - will enter paradise except for those who refuse. So the companions asked, O messenger of Allah, who are those who refuse? He said, whoever obeys me will enter Paradise and whoever disobeys me has refused.

(Bukhari)

Allah says,

“Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah often.”

[Chapter 33 verse 21]

4. IMPLICATIONS OF 2ND PART OF SHAHADAH: LOVING HIM

Love for the Prophet (peace be upon him): This is not only a command from Allah but it is also a natural feeling that grows in every heart who gets to know who the Prophet really was.

Allah says,

“Say, ‘O Prophet, ‘If your parents and children and siblings and spouses and extended family and the wealth you have acquired and the trade you fear will decline and the homes you cherish — ‘if all these’ are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His Will. Allah does not guide the rebellious people.””

[Chapter 9 verse 24]

On one occasion, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“none of you will believe until I am more beloved to you than your children, your fathers, and all people. So Umar Ibn Khattab - one of his closest companions - said to the Prophet, “Oh messenger of Allah! I love you more than anything, except my own self”. The Prophet replied, “no, by Him in whose hand is my soul you will not have complete faith till I am dearer to you and your own self”. Umar said, “Now, by Allah, you are dearer to me than my own self.” So the Prophet then said, “Now O Umar (now you have it).”

(Bukhari)

A great reward for loving the Prophet: Anas, one of the companions, said, “that a man came to the Prophet and asked, when will the last hour come O messenger of Allah?” He said, what have you prepared for it?” He said I have not prepared a lot of prayers or fasting or charity, but I love Allah and His messenger. The Prophet said “you will be with the ones whom you love”. After narrating this from the Prophet, Anas said “ we had never been so glad as we were on hearing that saying of the Prophet - that you will be with the ones whom you love”.

(Bukhari and Muslim)

Signs of loving the Prophet (Knowing him): The more you get to know someone, the more you start to love them. The same applies with the Prophet (peace be upon him): the more you know about him, the more you will love him. Read his biography. Recommended reading: “Life of the Last Prophet” written by Yusuf Islam or Cat Stevens.

Signs of loving the Prophet (Following him): Preferring the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) way over your own desires. For example, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would eat with his right hand and say ‘bismillah’ (in the name of Allah) before commencing. He would perform wudhu (ablution) before sleeping and so on.

Signs of loving the Prophet (Mentioning him): Mentioning him often and love hearing about him whenever he is mentioned, yearning to meet him, reading his biography often, and respecting and honouring him, his family and his companions.

Signs of loving the Prophet (Respecting him): Respecting the Prophet includes calling him with the noblest of titles, such as the Messenger of Allah or the Prophet of Allah, or when we hear or say his name, we should send salutations upon him. This is when you say **“salallahu alayhi wasalam”**, which means “May Allah send His praise and His peace upon the Prophet.”.

Sending Salah which means sending peace or dua for the Prophet (peace be upon him) is one of our duties. Allah says,

“Indeed, Allah showers His blessings upon the Prophet, and His angels pray for him. O believers! Invoke Allah’s blessings upon him, and salute him with worthy greetings of peace.”

[Chapter 33 verse 56]

There are different ways of saying this, but this is one of the easiest. The meaning of Allah sending salah upon the Prophet means that Allah praises him amongst the Angels. By saying this, we are appropriately praising him, manifesting his excellence and nobility, honouring him and also drawing the Prophet (peace be upon him) closer to Allah.

We are rewarded for saying it! The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“Whosoever from amongst my Ummah (my nation) sends a salah - meaning praise upon me - sincerely from his heart, Allah sends salah or praise upon him tenfold and He will raise him up because of it 10 levels in Paradise, record for him 10 good deeds and wipe away 10 bad deeds.”

(Nisai)

In another narration, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that:

“The most deserving person of me on the day of resurrection is the one who has sent the most salah upon me” (meaning saying Salla Allahu alayhi wa-sallam). (Tirmidhi). He also said: “May the nose of a person - whom I am mentioned in front of - and he fails to send salah upon me, be smeared in dirt.”

(Tirmidhi)

This shows the importance of sending salah upon the Prophet saying Salla Allahu alayhi wa-sallam after mentioning his name. As for other Prophets like Adam, Noah (Nuh), Moses (Musa), Abraham (Ibrahim) or Jesus (Isa), after their name, we should say **“Alayhis Salam”**, which means “upon them be peace.”

NOTE:

As a sign of respect, it is not allowed to even joke about the Prophet or the religion of Islam. We should defend any sort of attack against the Prophet in the best possible manner and within the confines of the law.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF 2ND PART OF SHAHADAH: STICKING TO HIS SUNNAH AND AVOIDING INNOVATIONS

Meaning of innovation: An innovation is any form of seeking nearness to Allah (which is an act of the heart, the tongue or limbs), but this act has not been legislated originally by the Prophet (peace be upon him) or he prevented from doing so whilst he was alive.

Practices that go against his very teachings under the guise of loving and respecting him is an innovation and will only lead to the fire, for the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“Beware of newly invented matters in the religion for every invented matter in the religion is a curse innovation which leads astray”

(Tirmidhi).

A. DON'T DEIFY HIM

Deifying the Prophet is disbelief: Allah says: “Muḥammad is no more than a messenger; other messengers have gone before him. If he were to die or to be killed, would you regress into disbelief? Those who do so will not harm Allah whatsoever. And Allah will reward those who are grateful.” And this is in chapter 3, verse 144.

Example of Jesus: This is how the Christians went astray with their belief in Jesus (peace be upon him) because after his death, they began to worship him as their deity and left the monotheism that he brought. Allah says about them,

“Indeed, those who say, “Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary,” have fallen into disbelief. Say, ‘O Prophet, ‘Who has the power to prevent Allah if He chose to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, his mother, and everyone in the world all together?’ To Allah ‘alone’ belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and everything in between. He creates whatever He wills. And Allah is Most Capable of everything.”

[Chapter 5, verse 17]

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also said that:

“do not exaggerate in praising me as a Christians exaggerated in their praise of the son of Mary, for indeed I am a slave so say the slave of Allah and His messenger”.

(Bukhari)

We cannot claim he knew the unseen or brought harm or benefit, or even guided anyone. These are things that only Allah knows and has the power to do.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) only knew what knowledge Allah revealed to him and he did not have the ability to decree anything. Allah says,

“Say, ‘I do not know if what you are promised is near or my Lord has set a distant time for it. ‘He is the’ Knower of the unseen, disclosing none of it to anyone,”

[Chapter 72, verse 25 - 26]

B. DON'T CALL UPON THE PROPHET AND ASK FOR HIS HELP

Calling upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) for help instead of Allah is equivalent to shirk: which we know Allah does not forgive. Allah says:

“And ‘Do not invoke, instead of Allah, what can neither benefit nor harm you—for if you do, then you will certainly be one of the wrongdoers,’ and ‘If Allah touches you with harm, none can undo it except Him. And if He intends good for you, none can withhold His bounty. He grants it to whoever He wills of His servants. And He is the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

[Chapter 10 verse, 106-107]

C. DO NOT ASK THE PROPHET TO ASK ALLAH FOR YOU

Do not ask him to ask Allah for you: At the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), people used to come and ask the Prophet to supplicate for them but after the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away, none of the companions used the Prophet's status to supplicate to Allah, rather they asked Allah directly.

D. DO NOT CELEBRATE THINGS RELATED TO HIM THAT HAVE NOT BEEN PRESCRIBED

Two celebrations in Islam: We have two celebrations in Islam that have been prescribed for the Muslim community: **Eid ul Fitr**, which comes after **Ramadan** and **Eid ul Adha**, which comes after Hajj. So celebrating other events like his birthday, his night journey, his migration etc have no place in the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

On one occasion, the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to Medina and before accepting Islam, the people in Medina had two celebratory days for play and amusement. So the Prophet asked them, what are these two days? They replied: “We used to play on these days during Jahiliyyah - the days before Islam.” So the messenger of Allah replied, “Indeed Allah has replaced them for you by that which is better than them. The day of Adha and the day of Fitr- these are the two days of Eid”.

(Abu Dawud)

7 LESSON SEVEN

SHAYTAN IS YOUR ENEMY

DESCRIPTION

Beware of your declared enemy - Satan or in Arabic, Shaytan. He has made your failure his only mission in life. Know who he is, reinforce your connection with Allah and you will thwart his plan.

LESSON OBJECTIVES



- Knowing who is our declared enemy
- Knowing the origin of his enmity
- Knowing what his traps are and how to protect ourselves from them

1. WHO IS SHAYTAN?

To give you more of a background to Shaytan, it all starts with the story of Adam and Eve. So, it first starts with the Earth itself. Ibn 'Abbas (the cousin of the Prophet, may Allah be pleased with him) said: *“The first ones to dwell on earth were the jinn (another creation of Allah which we will discuss in more detail later), and they caused mischief therein, shedding blood and killing one another.”*

Allah then tells us,

“Remember¹ when your Lord said to the angels, “I am going to place a successive ‘human’ authority on earth.” They asked ‘Allah’, “Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?” The angels asked this because of what they knew already, as mentioned in the saying from Ibn Abbas before - meaning the jinns who inhabited the Earth and caused a lot of mischief. Allah responded, “I know what you do not know.””

[Chapter 2, verse 30]

Meaning, instead of just the jinn on Earth, Allah was going to place human beings on Earth as an authority.

Allah then created Adam and showed the Angels His wisdom. Allah tells us that:

“He taught Adam the names of all things, then He presented them to the angels and said, “Tell Me the names of these, if what you say is true?” They replied, “Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. You are truly the All-Knowing, All-Wise.” Allah said, “O Adam! Inform them of their names.” Then when Adam did, Allah said, “Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?””

[Chapter 2, verses 31-33]

Allah also honoured Adam, and this is where Shaytan comes in.:

“And ‘remember’ when We said to the angels, “Prostrate before Adam,” so they all did—but not Iblis (the original name for satan), who refused and acted arrogantly, becoming unfaithful.”

[Chapter 2, verses 34]

Allah is honouring Adam by asking the angels to bow to him - not as an act of worship, but as a sign of respect. In comes Iblis, who is a jinn - not a fallen angel - and he rejects this command from Allah.

He tells us the reason why Iblis did not prostrate. Allah asked, "O Iblîs! What is the matter with you that you did not join others in prostration?" He replied, "It is not for me to prostrate to a human You created from sounding clay moulded from black mud." Allah commanded, "Then get out of Paradise, for you are truly cursed. And indeed, upon you is the curse until the Day of Judgment."

[Chapter 15, verses 30-35]

So Allah expels Iblis from Paradise, but Iblis asks for respite. Allah tells us that Iblis says:

'My Lord! Then delay my end until the Day of their resurrection. Allah said, "You will be delayed, until the appointed Day."

Chapter 15, verses 36-38]

When Iblis was certain that he was doomed, as well as his being arrogant and ungrateful to Allah, he resolved to mislead whomever he could of the slaves of Allah, so that they would be with him in Hell. Allah says,

"[Iblis] said: "My Lord! For allowing me to stray, I will surely tempt them on earth and mislead them all together, except Your chosen servants among them."

[Chapter 15, verses 39-40]

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Notice here how Iblis is blaming Allah for being misguided! He doesn't blame himself for disobeying Allah. So arrogant! Also,

"...He said, "For leaving me to stray I will lie in ambush for them on Your Straight Path. I will approach them from their front, their back, their right, their left..."

[Chapter 7, verses 16-17]

Also,

"I will certainly mislead them and delude them with empty hopes." And whoever takes Satan as a guardian instead of Allah has certainly suffered a tremendous loss."

[Chapter 4, verse 119]

2. SHAYTAN IS YOUR ENEMY

From his origin story, it is clear that Iblis hates mankind because of what happened to him. He blames us. As a result, he is hostile towards us and eager to mislead and corrupt us. He knows that his destination is Hellfire, and out of envy, hatred, arrogance, pride, kufr (disbelief) and stubbornness, he hopes to take everyone else with him.

This is why Allah has warned us against him and said,

“Surely Satan is an enemy to you, so take him as an enemy. He only invites his followers to become inmates of the Blaze.”

[Chapter 35, verse 6]

In addition, Allah says clearly,

“Tell My ‘believing’ servants to say only what is best. Satan certainly seeks to sow discord among them. Satan is indeed a sworn enemy to humankind.”

[Chapter 17, verse 53]

In these verses, Allah not only tells us a problem, but He also gives us the cure:

- The problem is that Satan is our enemy
- The cure is that we should take him as an enemy!

As a new Muslim, this is even more the case! Think about it: before you were Muslim, you were already where he wanted you to be, so he was not bothered by you. But now that you have iman, you are on his “Most Wanted” list! By accepting Islam, Satan is now working on you to try and misguide you! So beware of him.

3. THE STORY OF BARSISA

After talking about Shaytan and how he plans to mislead us, it's worth mentioning an interesting story about how he goes about doing this - what we refer to as the traps of shaytan and this is from a famous story of a man called Barsisa. As the story goes, there were three brothers from the children of Israel and they were called upon to go to war, and these three brothers had a sister who did not have anyone else to take care of her other than them.

So they didn't know what to do; they didn't want to leave their sister behind, so they've thought of someone who could take care of her, and they thought of an individual by the name of Barsisa; he was a worshiper who lived in a monastery and he devoted all of his time to worship Allah alone.

So they went to him and they said: “We are being enlisted to go to war and we want to leave our sister with you. We trust no one in town but you”, Barsisa replied: “I seek refuge in Allah, get away from me.” This was a worshiper, who was not married, and he did not

want to deal with these problems or be burdened with looking after anyone! He just wanted to focus on worshipping Allah. The brothers pleaded with him: "We have nowhere else to leave our sister but with you, we don't trust anyone else."

So Shaytan came to Barsisa and said to him: "If you don't accept, she might be left with somebody who is not trustworthy. So you have to step up and take this responsibility." So Barsisa told the brothers to leave her in the empty house and this was a place which was separated from the monastery where he was staying. The brothers agreed and left her there.

So, Barsisa the worshipper would leave food at his doorstep and the young woman would come out of this house and walk all the way to the doorstep of the monastery to take the food. This way Barsisa would not have to leave his monastery; he never met the young woman and they didn't see each other. Days passed by like this.

One day, Shaytan came to Barsisa and said: "Somebody might see her when she is walking out, so rather than having her leave from her house, you should carry it and leave it at her doorstep."

So he started leaving the food at her doorstep and this happened for a number of days. Again one day, shaytan came to Barsisa and said: "You can't just leave the food at her doorstep. Somebody might see her when she opens the door and she is very beautiful. You would have to take the food and leave it inside her room."

So, Barsisa would go and knock on the door, she would open and he would walk inside and leave the food there. That continued for a while. Again, Shaytan came to him and said: "You can't leave this poor woman alone without any company. She has nobody to talk to so she may be feeling very lonely and that may lead her to commit a sin. Why don't you go and talk to her from behind the front door?" Barsisa liked the idea and so for a while he would sit outside and just talk to her for a few minutes at a time.

Minutes turned to hours over the coming days and slowly but surely, the relationship was building up; and at every step, Shaytan was finding it easier to drag him to the next step. Shaytan then came and said: "You can't just sit there talking to her. People might see you, you need to go inside, just sit in another room without looking at her and talk to her for some time", and that is what he did. Slowly, she started getting closer to him and every time they met, they got closer and closer until eventually, he committed fornication with her.

So the worshiper who devoted his life to service in the monastery committed fornication. Because of that she became pregnant and delivered a boy. Then Shaytan came to Barsisa and said, "When the brothers come back and find out that their sister has a child with you, you are going to be in big trouble. The only way for you to put an end to this is to kill the baby". Barsisa followed the advice of shaytan and killed the child. But it didn't end there, Shaytan came to him and said, "Do you think that this woman will keep your secret after you killed her own child? The only way out is to kill her also." So Barsisa killed her and buried both the mother and child in a certain location inside the house.

Later, the brothers came back and inquired about the sister. Barsisa lied and made up an excuse, saying "She had passed away and this is where she's buried" pointing to a false grave. They accepted their sister's fate and made a prayer for her.

That night, Shaytan came to the brothers in a dream and in that dream, they were told that Barsisa killed their sister and the proof was that she was buried in a different location under the rock inside the house.

When the brothers woke up, they started talking to each other and found out that they had all experienced the same dream. They thought that there must be some truth in it. So they went and uncovered the grave that Barsisa had pointed to and found it empty.

Then, they went inside the house and found the rock as mentioned in the dream. After digging underneath the rock, they found their sister's dead body along with the child. So they went to Barsisa and forced him to disclose the secret of what had happened.

He went ahead and told them the whole story. The three brothers took Barsisa to the King's court and he was given the punishment of execution. Whilst Barsisa was being dragged to his execution spot, shaytan came to him and said: "Listen Barsisa! I am Shaytan! I was me who was in communication with you since this whole thing started. The one who whispered into your ear. Now I can get you out of this trouble if you want, I am the one who put you in this trouble in the first place, and I can get you out of it".

Barsisa asked, "What should I do?" Shaytan said: "Prostrate to me and I will save you."

So Barsisa prostrated to Shaytan and as soon as he did it, Shaytan ran away and Barsisa was executed.

4. DISCUSSION



What lessons can we extract from this story? What is the main element missing in the story that would have made the whole difference?



IMPORTANT NOTE:

Shaytan wants us to fall into major sin and then despair of the mercy of Allah because he knows that we will not repent and will persist in the sin. But even if we fall, we should always remember what our merciful Lord has told us. He said in the Qur'an:

“Say, ‘O Prophet, that Allah says,’ ‘O My servants who have exceeded the limits against their souls! Do not lose hope in Allah’s mercy, for Allah certainly forgives all sins. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

[Chapter 39, verse 53]

We were not created to be perfect so we should never despair from Allah’s mercy. Allah also says, “Who would despair of the mercy of their Lord except the misguided?”

[Chapter 15 verse 56]

Every person sins, but we should strive to be “the best of sinners”. What does that mean? The Prophet explained:

“All the children of Adam are sinners but the best of sinners are those who repent often.”

(Tirmidhi).

Repentance is the act of remorse over your sins, turning back to Allah and asking for forgiveness for the sins you’ve committed.

5. REPENTANCE AND ITS CONDITIONS

Repentance has four main conditions.

- 1] To stop the sin immediately.
- 2] To feel remorse and regret at committing the sin in the first place.
- 3] To have a firm resolve not to return to that sin.
- 4] Seeking forgiveness if it was involving another person. So, if we stole something from someone, we hurt someone, then we should seek their forgiveness as well.

First three are connected to Allah and the last one is connected to the person that we may have hurt or transgressed against.

Sincere repentance: Repentance and asking Allah for forgiveness is such a powerful action and something that brings you closer to Allah. If you ask Allah for forgiveness, sincerely, He will forgive you. In a famous narration, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said,

“Allah the Almighty said, “Oh son of Adam so long as you call upon Me and ask of me I should forgive you for what you have done and I shall not mind. Oh son of Adam were your sins to reach their clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. Oh son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as that.””

(Tirmidhi)

6. THE SIX TRAPS OF SHAYTAN

1] KUFR AND SHIRK (DISBELIEF AND POLYTHEISM)

This is the big ticket item! The one he really wants us to fall into. This is the first thing shaytan wants from us and he tries his hardest to convince us to negate Allah's very existence or to direct our acts of worship to other than Allah.

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DISCUSSION

Why are kufr and shirk his main goals?

2] INNOVATION (BID'AH)

When he and his followers are unsuccessful in tempting the believer into disbelief, shaytan resorts to his second ploy and this is to attract us into committing innovations in religion, which in Arabic is called bid'ah.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that

“the worst of all affairs is innovations in a religion for every religious innovation is a misguidance, and every misguidance is in the hellfire.”

(Nisai)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said that “he who innovates something into our religion, that is not of it, will have it rejected.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Shaytan loves innovation more than immorality and disobedience because innovation harms the person that is doing the innovation as:

- 1] They think that the innovation is part of Islam whilst it is not.
- 2] They do not repent from it as they think it to be a good and acceptable deed, a deed that is worthy of reward and acceptance from Allah, whereas it is, in fact, a sin.
- 3] They do not realize that the innovation is actually against the message revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) because it is something other than which was revealed to him. So an innovation is more harmful than major or minor sin.



3] MAJOR SINS

If Shaytan fails to entice us to commit shirk or kufr and cannot get us to practice an innovation in the religion, he tries to tempt us into committing a major sin or sins.

Major sins include things like adultery, which can ruin families and homes, drinking wine and taking intoxicants, which can also ruin a person's life and family, gambling, lying and so on and so forth. Allah said

“Satan’s plan is to stir up hostility and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling and to prevent you from remembering Allah and praying. Will you not then abstain?”

[Chapter 5 verse 91]

4] MINOR SINS

Being unsuccessful in all the traps mentioned previously, shaytan now seeks to occupy the believer with minor sins. A lot of the time, when you hear or think of minor sins, you may think “oh they're just small”, but these sins may ruin a person if they accumulate. That is why we should be wary of them and not consider them insignificant.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“Beware of minor sins, like people who descend into the bottom of a valley. He comes with a log and another log until they can bake their bread. Verily, when the companion of minor sins is taken to account, they ruin him.”

(Ahmad)

5] DISTRACTING US WITH PERMISSIBLE ACTIONS

Instead of trying to get us to sin because we're not falling for these traps of *shirk* (polytheism), *kufr* (disbelief), *bidah* (innovation), major sin and minor sin, Shaytan and his followers now try a different tactic - he will tempt us to busy ourselves with permissible actions that don't have either reward or punishment.

Why would he do this? This person is at a loss because he is being prevented from doing recommended and rewardable deeds that will earn him Allah's pleasure. He's not gaining any rewards. So we may end up being busy with reading books or playing games - acceptable actions that have no rewards in them.

6] OCCUPYING ONE WITH GOOD DEEDS OF LESSER REWARDS

If shaytan and his followers are not even able to distract the believer with permissible actions, he resorts to this ploy and attempts to occupy us with good deeds that are of less reward. The believer who falls into this trap is at a loss because we are not maximising on the rewards we could potentially achieve. An example of this is doing voluntary prayer instead of answering the call of one's parents in need of help, which in Islam, holds a higher reward than voluntary prayer. It's interesting because we are generally unaware of this ploy as we do not attribute this to Shaytan as we assume that Shaytan only calls us to sins or harmful acts, but in reality, shaytan wants to try and win on every level!

7. WHAT ARE HIS STRATEGIES?

A. WHISPERINGS

Allah tells us,

“Then Satan tempted them in order to expose what was hidden of their nakedness. He said, “Your Lord has forbidden this tree to you only to prevent you from becoming angels or immortals.”

[Chapter 7, verse 20]

B. INTOXICANTS AND GAMBLING

Allah says, “O believers! Intoxicants, gambling, idols, and drawing lots for decisions are all evil of Satan’s handiwork. So shun them so you may be successful. Satan’s plan is to stir up hostility and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling and to prevent you from remembering Allah and praying. Will you not then abstain?”

[Chapter 5 verse 90 - 91]

C. ILLUSIONS AND LIES

Allah says,

“And ‘remember’ when Satan made their ‘evil’ deeds appealing to them, and said, “No one can overcome you today. I am surely by your side.” But when the two forces faced off, he cowered and said, “I have absolutely nothing to do with you. I certainly see what you do not see. I truly fear Allah, for Allah is severe in punishment.””

[Chapter 8 verse 48]

He also says that

“I will certainly mislead them and delude them with empty hopes. Also, I will order them and they will slit the ears of cattle and alter Allah’s creation.” And whoever takes Satan as a guardian instead of Allah has certainly suffered a tremendous loss.”

[Chapter 4 verse 19]

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D. FALSE PROMISES AND HOPES

Allah says

“Indeed, those who relapse ‘into disbelief’ after ‘true’ guidance has become clear to them, ‘it is’ Satan ‘that’ has tempted them, luring them with false hopes.”

[Chapter 47 verse 25]

He also says

“And Satan will say ‘to his followers’ after the judgment has been passed, “Indeed, Allah has made you a true promise. I too made you a promise, but I failed you. I did not have any authority over you. I only called you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; blame yourselves. I cannot save you, nor can you save me. Indeed, I denounce your previous association of me with Allah ‘in loyalty’. Surely the wrongdoers will suffer a painful punishment.””

[Chapter 14, verse 22]

8. OUR PROTECTION FROM SHAYTAN

A. SEEKING REFUGE WITH ALLAH

Allah tells us

“If you are tempted by Satan, then seek refuge with Allah. Surely He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”

[Chapter 7 verse 200].

So this is done by saying: *“a’oodhu billaahi min ashaytaanir-rajeem,”* which means “I seek refuge in Allah from the accused devil.”

B. REMEMBERING ALLAH

Allah tells us that “Indeed, when Satan whispers to those mindful of Allah, they remember their Lord then they start to see things clearly.”

[Chapter 7 verse 201]

C. STAY AWAY FROM SINS

Allah tells us

“Indeed, those believers who fled on the day when the two armies met were made to slip by Satan because of their misdeeds. But Allah has pardoned them. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.”

[Chapter 3, verse 155].

He also tells us

“Surely the wasteful are like brothers to the devils. And the Devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord.”

[Chapter 17, verse 27]

D. TRUSTING ALLAH AND FEARING HIM ALONE, NOT FEARING SHAYTAN

Allah tells us

“Secret talks are only inspired by Satan to grieve the believers. Yet he cannot harm them whatsoever except by Allah’s Will. So in Allah let the believers put their trust.”

[Chapter 58, verse 10]

8 LESSON EIGHT

THE SECOND PILLAR OF ISLAM: SALAH

DESCRIPTION

In this lesson, we will look at the second pillar of Islam - the five daily prayers or in Arabic, the salah. These are your unmissable five a day. So, follow the prescription as has been taught by the Prophet (peace be upon him), and you will enjoy the sweetness of the best connection ever.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:



- To understand the importance of the salah and its essential part in our life.
- To realise the beauty and the power of salah
- To realize the inner dimension of the prayer, which is the divine link to Allah.
- To understand the key essential rulings of the prayer.

DISCUSSION



Share your experience of the prayer. Can you think of one main difficulty that you had when praying and how did Allah make it easy for you?

1. DEFINITION OF SALAH

Definition: The linguistic definition means supplication; in the Islamic meaning and context, salah is the act of worship towards Allah, with a particular set of statements and actions that begin with *takbeer* (Allahu akbar) and they end with *tasleem* (assalamu alaykum warahmatullah).

2. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE SALAH

- It is the foremost obligation after the declaration of faith.
- It is the second pillar of Islam and it was given to the Prophet (peace be upon him) directly by Allah. Allah addressed the Prophet about the prayers without intermediaries (like angel Jibril). All of this points to the greatness of this act.
- It was given to the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the greatest night he ever experienced which was called the *al-Isra Wal-Miraj* (heavenly journey and ascension by night). This was when the Prophet travelled to the Jerusalem and then the heavens in one night.
- It is a direct link between us and Allah - between the slave and our Master and it is an act that Allah answers directly and also immediately.
- It was meant to be 50 prayers a day, but then, after the Prophet pleaded on behalf of his nation (including us), it was reduced to only five prayers a day. Amazingly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) informed us that it is 5 prayers but with the reward of 50 prayers, Alhamdulillah - praise and thanks is for Allah. This shows us the value of each prayer.
- It is the only daily continual act of worship we have and it is so important that even if a Muslim was at war as an example, the prayer would not be excused on the battlefield.
- It was the only obligation from the five pillars to be established at the very beginning of Islam. And it has been given its own public call for each and every prayer, which you may or may not have heard before. The call to prayer in Arabic is called the "Adhan".
- It is the closest anyone can get to Allah is when they are in the state of prostration - which is called the "*sajdah*".
- It is the defining characteristic of the Muslim, and it is a clear division between Islam and disbelief. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

"Indeed between a man, and Shirk and Kufr (polytheism and disbelief), is abandoning the prayer."

(Muslim)

We will touch on this in more detail later because it is important to understand what it means by abandoning the prayer.

- The prayer expiates our sins. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, that “The five daily prayers are like a flowing abundant river at your door. You wash from it every day five times.” One of the scholars commented, “no filth remains after that”. (Muslim)
- It is the first thing that we will be judged upon by Allah on the day of judgment will be our prayers - more specifically the condition and soundness of our prayers. Were they done correctly, with sincerity and humility? Were they done with full concentration and in the same way the Prophet taught us? The soundness of our prayers will dictate the soundness of the rest of our deeds. The Prophet (peace be upon him), said in this regard that

“The first thing that will be judged among a person's deeds on the day of judgment is the prayer. If that is in good order, he will pass the test and prosper, but if that is defective, he will fail the test and will be a loser.”

(Tirmidhi).

3. THE BENEFITS OF SALAH

A. INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT

Closer to Allah: We are conversing with our Lord, a one to one conversation. It is a relaxation for the soul. The Prophet (peace be upon him) would say to Bilal - one of his companions -

“O Bilal, make the call for prayer: give us comfort by it”

(Abu Dawud)

Opportunity to escape stress and difficulties: The Prophet (peace be upon him) would often do this and as Allah tells us

“And seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, it is a burden except for the humble.”

[Chapter 2, verse 45]

Protects us from evil and sin: Allah says

“Indeed, ‘genuine’ prayer should deter ‘one’ from indecency and wickedness.”

[Chapter 29 verse 45]

B. COMMUNAL BENEFITS

Unity and strength: It brings about the feeling of unity and strength through the gathering for congregational prayers, jama’ah. Being in the company of pious people helps you to become more righteous.

Increase in love: We increase our love and care for our fellow brothers and sisters through a single common outlet.

4. THE RULING ON ABANDONING THE PRAYER

Ruling: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“Indeed between a man, and shirk and Kufr (polytheism and disbelief), is abandoning the prayer.”

(Muslim)

The ruling on abandoning the prayer is something very severe. If someone believes wholeheartedly that it is not obligatory to pray, without having the excuse of ignorance, then this person is in a dangerous situation and could become a disbeliever as a result.

If someone does not pray because they are ignorant of its obligation, such as someone who just accepted Islam, then she or he is generally forgiven for this. But, if someone leaves the prayer out of laziness or without a valid reason, then it could be a form of disbelief. Allah says:

“But if they repent, perform prayer, and pay alms-tax, then they are your brothers in faith. This is how We make the revelations clear for people of knowledge.”

[Chapter 9, verse 11]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) famously said that

“the covenant that distinguishes between us (Muslims) and them (Non-Muslims) is the prayer. So whoever leaves it, he has committed disbelief”

(Ibn Majah).

W 8

IMPORTANT NOTE:

There is a serious difference between the principle of something being disbelief and then applying it to a specific individual. We learn about the principle to understand the importance of the prayer, but as for declaring someone specific a non-believer is the job of the scholars and not us.

So just because leaving the prayer is a form of disbelief, it does not necessarily mean that this person is a disbeliever. Declaring that a specific individual is a disbeliever is a very serious matter and not to be taken lightly by laypeople. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“ If a man says to his brother ‘Oh Kafir’ or ‘disbeliever’ - meaning they have declared them a disbeliever -, then surely one of them is such.”

(Bukhari).

In other words, you may declare him/her a disbeliever, but if they actually aren't one, then you risk yourself being declared one by Allah. So we have to be extremely careful of this and not make any impulsive statements that could come back on to us! We should leave this to the scholars.

5. THE PREREQUISITES/CONDITIONS OF THE PRAYER

CONDITIONS FOR SALAH:

These are acts that are required before you pray. They are not part of salah itself, but if any of these conditions are left, then the prayer needs to be repeated.

- 1] **Muslim:** Only the Muslim is accountable, so the person must be a Muslim. The prayer of the non-Muslim is not valid and is not accepted.
- 2] **Legally responsible:** this means you have to reach the age of puberty. You have reached this age when the first signs of puberty appear, such as hair around the pubic area, wet dream, menses, etc, or if those things don't appear, then at least, if you reach the age of 15.
- 3] **Sound mind:** the prayer is not valid for someone who is not sane or for someone who is drunk. If a person becomes unconscious or in a coma, then they do not need to make up the prayers they missed.
- 4] **Pray within their allotted time.** Allah says,

"Indeed, performing prayers is a duty on the believers at the appointed times."

[Chapter 4, verse 103]

Generally, the best time to pray is at the earliest time.

- **The time of Dhuhr** begins a short while after the Zenith which is when the sun is at its highest point or when there is no shadow and it ends when Asr prayer begins.
- **The time of Asr** begins when Dhuhr ends or when the shadow is equal to its object. You should avoid delaying this prayer when it's close to sunset (maghrib time).
- **The time of Maghrib** begins after the sun has set until the redness of the sky has disappeared.
- **The time of Isha** begins when the redness of the sky has disappeared until the beginning of Fajr, but you should avoid delaying the prayer past half the night, which may be around midnight.

- **The time of Fajr** begins when the whiteness is lying across the horizon and touching it until the rising of the sun.
This may sound quite confusing, but the easiest way is just to follow the timetable of your local mosque or there are phone apps nowadays that have the prayer times.



NOTE:

If a person forgets to pray Asr and only realizes when Maghrib begins, then that person should pray in order. Meaning they pray Asr first and then Maghrib.

5] Covering (in Arabic, 'the awrah'): the areas of the body that need to be covered during the prayer. For the woman, her whole body should be covered with loose clothing excluding the face and the hands. As for the man, then the minimum is to cover what is between the navel and the knee. However, this does not mean that he shouldn't cover himself up more. There is a difference between doing the minimum and doing what is appropriate. And loose clothing also applies. Because the prayer has different movements, wearing tight clothes or clothes that will expose your awrah, is not correct.

6] Removal of physical impurities: From three things: your clothes, your body and the place where you pray.

- Clothes should not have impurities on them such as dog saliva, faeces, urine, and semen.
- The places of prayer should be free of any impurities too. And there are some places a person cannot pray such as the graveyard, toilet and also generally the places of impurity.
- The body, if there is some impurity on your body, then you just wash it off. That said, there are certain things that put you in a state of impurity, meaning this state prevents you from praying and will mean you need to be in a state of purity before you pray. This is an Islamic bath, which is called 'ghusl', and we would need to do this if we had a wet dream, intercourse, menses or postnatal bleeding.

GHUSL (ISLAMIC BATH)

1. Make the right intention - the reason behind this bath - which is to come out of the state of impurity, just not simply having a bath to cool down on a hot day as an example.

2. Wash your whole body, making sure to include the head, the hair, all the way to the roots and also rinsing the mouth and the nose.

7] Anything that necessitates ablution (in Arabic: wudhu). These are the following:

- What comes from the front and the back of the body**, meaning urine, faeces and passing wind. If you do any of these, you need to make wudhu.

- b. Impurities that come from the body,** such as vomit.
- c. Deep sleep.** If you wake up from a deep sleep, you need to make wudhu. How do you know if you've had a deep sleep? if you were holding a pen and when you're at that point where you are asleep and it drops, that is a sign of deep sleep.
- d. Anything else that necessitates an Islamic bath (ghusl)** which was mentioned before.

WUDHU (ABLUTION)

Wudhu also has conditions: Wudhu is a condition for salah, but wudhu also has conditions. That is, the person must be Muslim, legally responsible, of sound mind, and have the sincere intention that it is being done for Allah alone. Pure water must also be used; so it can't be water that has impurity in it or diluted water with something else.

How to make Wudhu:

1. Remove anything that prevents the water reaching the skin, such as a really tight ring or nail polish.
2. Say 'Bismillah'
3. Wash your hands including the wrists three times beginning with the right. One is a minimum but three is much better (do this for all the actions except for wiping the head which you only do once.)
4. Rinse the mouth and nose three times.
5. Wash your face three times. The face is the chin to the forehead and from the earlobe to earlobe.
6. Wash the arms including the elbows and hands three times, beginning with the right.
7. Wipe the head once from front to back and then to the front in one motion.
8. Wipe the upper part of the ear lobes with your thumbs and enter the index fingers into the ears using the same water for wiping the head.
9. Wash the feet including the ankles three times, beginning with the right.

8] Facing the Qiblah: the direction of prayer towards Makkah. If you are a few degrees left or right from the Qiblah, it's not a problem and it's overlooked. Like the prayer times, there are apps they can use to locate the direction or if you know the direction, you can also just use a compass (for example, in the UK, the direction is generally South-East.).

9] Intention for each prayer must be precise: otherwise what is the difference between the four units of prayer (rakah) for Dhuhr and the four units for Asr prayer? They are the same number so how do you distinguish? The intention. As for our intention, you have to intend it in your heart and not uttering it upon your tongue. For example, you shouldn't say: I intend to pray four units of Salah al-Dhuhr.



6. CASE STUDY

Aisha has an accident; she is bed-bound and cannot move. She missed Dhuhr prayer and Asr is now coming in. She is not in a state of wudhu (ablution) and she doesn't know the direction of the Qibla. Should she still pray in her state or can she catch up and pray after she has recovered?

PRAYER	FIRST UNIT	SECOND UNIT	THIRD UNIT	FOURTH UNIT
FAJR (2 Units)	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostration Sitting (long)		
DHUHR (4 units)	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostration Sitting (short)	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostration Sitting (long)
ASR (4 units)	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostration Sitting (short)	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostration Sitting (long)
MAGHRIB (3 units)	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostration Sitting (short)	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostration Sitting (long)	
ISHA (4 units)	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations Sitting (short)	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations	Standing Bowling/Rising/ Descending 2 Prostrations Sitting (long)

THE 4 MAIN POSITIONS IN THE PRAYER

	Action	What to say	Translation to English
1] STANDING	Takbir Raise your hands to your shoulders. Place your right wrist over your left wrist. Look at the place of prostration throughout the prayer.	Allahu Akbar	God is Greater
	Recite: Al-Fatiha	Alhamdu lillahi rabbil alamin. Ar-rahmanir rahim. Maaliki yawmi-deen. Iyyaaka na'budu wa iyyaaka nasta-eenn. Ihdina- siratal- mustaqeem. Siratal- ladheena an amta alayhim Ghayril maghdubi alayhim wa laddaalim (Ameen)	All praise is for Allah—Lord of all worlds, the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help. Guide us along the Straight Path, the Path of those You have blessed—not those You are displeased with, or those who are astray.
2] BOWING	Takbir Raise your hands to your shoulders and bow down placing your hands on your knees with your fingers outspread, leveling your back.	Allahu Akbar	God is Greater
	In the bowing position	Subhaana rabbiyal 'atheem (X3)	How perfect my Lord is, The Supreme
	Rise from bowing, raising your hands up to your shoulders, placing your arms on either side of your body.	Sami 'allahu liman hamidah	May Allah answer the one who praises Him
	Before to descend	Rabanaa lakalhamd	Our Lord, for You is all praise
	Descend into Prostration with your knees or hands first	Allahu Akbar	God is Greater
3] PROSTRATION	Ensure both balls of the feet, knees, hands (avoiding the elbows and arms), forehead and nose are touching the ground.	Subhana rabiyal aa'la (X3)	How perfect my Lord is, The Most High
	Raise up into a sitting position so that you are sitting on your knees, with both your hands on your thighs	Rabighfirlee (X2)	My Lord, forgive me
	Descend into Prostration	Allahu Akbar	God is Greater
	Prostration	Subhana rabiyal aa'la (X3)	How perfect my Lord is, The Most High

If you are going to stand up for the next unit – say Allahu Akbar

If you are going to go into the sitting position – say Allahu Akbar

4] SITTING (SHORT)	<p>Have your right index finger slightly raised throughout the sitting position</p>	<p>At-Tahiyaat At-Tahiyaatu lillah wasalawaatu wattayibaatu Assalaamu alika ayyu han-nabiyyu wa rahmatullahi wa barakaatuhu As-salamu 'alayna wa 'ala 'ibad-Allah is-saliheen. Ashhauan laa ilaaha illaha wa ashadu anna muhammadan abdu hu wa rasewluhu.</p>	<p>All compliments, prayers, and pure words are due to Allah. Peace be on you, O Prophet, and also the mercy of Allah and His blessings. Peace be on us, and on the righteous slaves of Allah. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and messenger.</p>
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This is what you will need to recite up to for the first sitting for all the prayers except Fajr which only has one sitting which will require you to do the long sitting.

4] SITTING (LONG)	<p>Have your right index finger slightly raised throughout the sitting position</p>	<p>At-Tahiyaatu lillah.... At-Tahiyaatu lillah wasalawaatu wattayibaatu Assalaamu alika ayyu han-nabiyyu wa rahmatullahi wa barakaatuhu As-salamu 'alayna wa 'ala 'ibad-Allah is-saliheen. Ashhauan laa ilaaha illaha wa ashadu anna muhammadan abdu hu wa rasewluhu.</p>	
		<p>Allahumma salli 'alaa muhammadin wa alaa aali muhammadin kamaa salayta 'ala ibraheema innaka hameedun majeed Wa baarik ala muhammadin wa ala aali muhammadin. Kamaa baarakta ibraheem wa ala aali ibraheem innaka hameedun majeed.</p>	<p>O Allah, send prayers upon Muhammad and the followers of Muhammad, just as You sent prayers upon Ibrahim and upon the followers of Ibrahim. Verily, You are full of praise and majesty. O Allah, send blessings upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, just as You sent blessings upon Ibrahim and upon the family of Ibrahim. Verily, You are full of praise and majesty.</p>
	<p>Look towards your right shoulder and say...</p>	<p>Assalaamu alaikum wa rahmatullah (right shoulder) Assalaamu alaikum wa rahmatullah (left shoulder)</p>	<p>Peace and Allah's Mercy be on you</p>

7. TIPS TO HELP YOU INCREASE YOUR CONCENTRATION (*KHUSHU'*) IN SALAH

- 1] **Dress nicely:** you are about to meet the King of the kings.
- 2] **Select a place or spot** where there will be less or no distraction.
- 3] **Look forward to it**, be excited about it and don't be late.
- 4] **Reflect over the words 'Allahu Akbar'** which means Allah is Greater. Contemplate over these words because you are reminding yourself that Allah is greater than what you stopped your day for.
- 5] **Consider** each Salah as your final Salah.
- 6] **Slow down** the pace of your recitation.
- 7] **Know the translation** of what you are reciting so that you can contemplate each thing you say.
- 8] **Beautify** your recitation.
- 9] **Remember that**, when you learn and recite the first chapter of the Qur'an - this is called Surah Fatihah - then with every verse you read from surah fatihah, Allah responds directly to you. For example, when you say "Alhamdulillah rabil alameen" (all thanks and praise is to Allah), Allah replies to you "my servant has praised me".
- 10] **Make a lot of du'a**, especially in the prostrations (*sujud*).
- 11] **When the Salah is over**, do not move away from your position straight away, take some time to remember Allah. For example, it was the teachings of the Prophet (his sunnah) after the prayer to say "Alhamdulillah, SubhaanAllah and Allahu akbar 33 times after the prayer.

8. THE 5 LEVELS OF PRAYER

One of the scholars of the past, Ibn Qayyim, said there are 5 levels of the prayer.

He said, "And mankind, with regard to their performance of prayer, are on five levels.

1

THE FIRST: The level of the one who is negligent and wrongs his soul. He is the one who falls short in performing ablution properly, performing the prayer upon its time and within its specified limits, and in fulfilling its essential pillars. This person will be punished.

2

THE SECOND: The one who guards his prayers upon their proper times and within their specified limits, fulfils their essential pillars and performs his ablution with care. However, his striving is wasted due to whisperings in his prayer, so he is taken away by thoughts and ideas. This person will be held to account.



THE THIRD: The one who guards his prayers within the specified limits, fulfils their essential pillars and strives with himself to repel the whisperings, thoughts and ideas. He is busy struggling against his enemy (Shaytan) so that he does not steal from the prayer. On account of this, he is engaged in both prayer and struggle (jihad). This person will have his sin and shortcomings expiated.



THE FOURTH: The one who stands for the prayer, completes and perfects its due rights, its essential pillars, performs it within its specified limits and his heart becomes engrossed in safeguarding its rights and specified limits, so that nothing is wasted from it. His whole concern is directed towards its establishment, its completion and its perfection, as it should be. His heart is immersed in prayer and in enslavement to his Lord, the Exalted. This person will be rewarded.



THE FIFTH: The one who stands for the prayer like the one mentioned above. However, on top of this, he has taken and placed his heart in front of his Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, looking towards Him with his heart with anticipation, (his heart) filled with His love and His might, as if he sees and witnesses Allah. The whisperings, thoughts and ideas have vanished and the coverings which are between him and his Lord are raised. What is between this person and others with respect to the prayer, is superior and greater than what is between the heavens and the earth. This person is busy with his Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, delighted with Him.

This final level will be someone who will be close to his Lord because he will receive the portion of the one who makes his prayer the delight and pleasure of his eye. Whoever makes his prayer the delight and pleasure of his eye, will have the nearness to his Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, made the delight and pleasure of his eye in the hereafter. He will also be made a pleasure to the eye in this world since whoever makes Allah the pleasure of his eye in this world, every other eye will become delighted and pleased with him.

9. QUICK QUIZ



1. Why is Salah so important?
2. What are the individual and communal benefits of Salah?
3. List 3 conditions that make the prayer valid.
4. Can anyone declare that a specific individual is a disbeliever because he is not praying? Why?

10. HOMEWORK



Anna tells you that she has now stopped praying. She thinks her prayers were never accepted as she never concentrated in it and she could not feel any specific connection with Allah while she was praying. What would you tell her and what tips could you give her to improve her Khushu' (concentration) in the prayer? Write down your thoughts and we will review the answers for this in the next lesson.

9

LESSON NINE

THE THIRD PILLAR OF ISLAM: ZAKAH

DESCRIPTION

This session will teach you how to purify and increase your wealth in every aspect: materially and spiritually.

LESSON OBJECTIVES



- To understand the importance of the third pillar of Islam - the Zakah. This is the obligatory charity that Muslim must give.
- To appreciate the spiritual dimension of Zakah
- To understand the key essential rulings of the Zakah.

DISCUSSION



What do you know about Zakah?

- The one who pays their zakah has paid their dues to Allah as an act of worship, a token of their submission and an acknowledgement of their gratitude.
- For the one who receives Zakah, they receive it as a grant from Allah out of his bounty, a favour for which a person should be thankful to Allah for.
- Zakah is a means for us to maintain our relationship with Allah by maintaining our relationship with the people.
- It also functions as a social security for all people. Those who have enough money today pay for what they have. If they need money tomorrow, they will get what is necessary to help them live in a decent way.
- By the will of Allah, it blesses a person's property, increases them and protects them. This makes Zakah a great investment in the hereafter, as well as in this life.
- It circulates the wealth in the society so that nobody can hold and monopolise it against the social interests of the people.
- Other than the spiritual benefits, if all Muslims paid their Zakah, we would be one step closer to eradicating poverty. During the reign of Umar ibn Abdil Aziz (d.720), wealth was so well distributed that there was no Zakah to give to the poor.

3. THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THOSE WHO REFUSE TO PAY THE ZAKAH

Allah says,

“O believers! Indeed, many rabbis and monks consume people’s wealth wrongfully and hinder ‘others’ from the Way of Allah. Give good news of a painful torment to those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah’s cause. The Day ‘will come’ when their treasure will be heated up in the Fire of Hell, and their foreheads, sides, and backs branded with it. ‘It will be said to them,’ ‘This is the treasure you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste what you hoarded!’”

[Chapter 9 verse 34 to 35]

Abu Hurayrah reported that Allah’s messenger (peace be upon him) said:

“If any owner of gold or silver does not pay what is due on him when the day of resurrection would come, plates of fire would be beaten and out for him. These would then be heated in the fire of hell and his sides, his forehead, and his back would be cauterized with them. Whenever these cool down, (the process) is repeated during a day, the extent of which would be 50,000 years until judgment is pronounced among the servants and he sees whether his path is to take him to paradise or to the hellfire.”

(Muslim)

4. WHO MUST GIVE ZAKAH?

1] Any sane adult Muslim: This means that when it comes to a child and a person who's not sane, the scholars have differed over the rulings regarding these two groups of people.

- a. Some scholars say that the child and one who is not sane do not have to pay because they are not accountable for their actions.
- b. The majority of scholars say that they must pay it because it is the right of the poor upon their wealth. And this right still needs to be respected even if the child and the one who is not sane are not personally accountable for their actions. So the guardian of these two people will give this account in their stead.

2] Wealth exceeds the specified minimum threshold (in Arabic, '*nisab*'): This means that if a person's possessed wealth is over the threshold, they need to pay Zakah on it. If it is not, then they don't have to pay.

The Nisab: The nisab is calculated against gold and silver. Since the value of gold and silver fluctuates according to the currency we use, like dollars and pounds, the nisab will also fluctuate. In order to find out the nisab, do a simple search on the net: "What is the nisab today?" There will be 2 different nisabs, gold and silver. It is better to use the silver nisab as you will be able to give more towards the poor and benefit more people. For example, according to 15th June 2021 - the Nisab is worked out by doing the following:

The nisab on silver is 612.36 grams of silver and the value of silver for today's date is £0.63 . So by multiplying both amounts, the nisab for this date is £385.88.

This means that if you have more than this amount (£385.88), you are obligated to pay zakah. For example, if you have £500, then you will need to pay 2.5% of this which amounts to only £12.50. However, there are a few more things to take into consideration. For instance, the wealth you have excludes your personal needs, which will include rent, clothing and so on.

NOTE:

A number of charities give you the nisab on their website like <https://nzf.org.uk/nisab/> or if you are trying to find out the value of silver for a specific date, then you can go to the following website: (<https://www.bullionbypost.co.uk/silver-price/one-year-silver-price-chart/>)

3] Complete ownership over that wealth: The person must own and be in possession of the wealth and also be free to spend or dispose of the wealth in any manner they like. The only exception to this is money you have loaned to someone. You will still need to pay Zakah on this.

4] In your possession for a complete lunar year: This is called '*hawl*' in Arabic. So choose a date from the Islamic calendar (most Muslims use one from Ramadan) and stick to it every year. This is now your Zakah anniversary date.



NOTE:

There is no Zakah on any money that has been earned through haram means, which means things which are prohibited in Islam, such as robbery, alcohol, drug selling, and so on and so forth. The money we give to the poor must be pure.

5. ZAKATABLE WEALTH

Once you've worked out how much wealth is 'zakatable' (meaning the form of wealth that you can give as your Zakah), calculate 2.5% of this to give as Zakat. You can give it as gold or silver, or in the form of cash, business assets or savings.

6. RECIPIENTS OF ZAKAH

You meet the conditions for zakah. You've calculated the 2.5% on the accumulated wealth that is in your possession for one whole year...now what? Who do I give my Zakah to?

EIGHT CATEGORIES:

Allah tells us "Zakat is only for the poor and the needy, for those employed to administer it, for those whose hearts are attracted 'to the faith', for 'freeing' slaves, for those in debt, for Allah's cause, and for 'needy' travellers. 'This is' an obligation from Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise."

(Chapter 9, verse 60)

- 1] **The faqeer:** someone who does not have the basic needs and nor does he or she have the means.
- 2] **The miskeen:** someone who does not have the means but it does not satisfy their basic needs. So these are two types of poor people.
- 3] **Those who are employed** to collect and give out the Zakah because they are receiving a wage.
- 4] **Those whose hearts are being reconciled.** They can be of numerous different types:

10

LESSON TEN

THE FOURTH PILLAR OF ISLAM: FASTING IN RAMADAN

DESCRIPTION

Fully immerse yourself into a month long physical and spiritual detox programme and insha Allah (God willing), you will experience what being conscious of Allah (taqwa) really tastes like.

LESSON OBJECTIVES



- To understand the importance of fasting and realising its power.
- To appreciate the spiritual dimensions of fasting.
- To understand the key essential rulings of fasting.

1. DEFINITIONS

What is fasting? The word in Arabic for fasting is “*sawm*”. From a linguistic perspective, “*sawm*” is defined as abstinence. It is to abstain or refrain from something. From the technical Islamic definition, *sawm* is abstaining from food, drink and sexual relations with your spouse from dawn to sunset, with a specific intention doing it for the sake of Allah.

Why should we fast: Allah says in the Qur’an

“O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you—as it was for those before you—so perhaps you will become mindful of Allah.”

[Chapter 2 verse 183].

In this verse, Allah is telling us that previous prophets and messengers - and their followers - were commanded to fast. Not only that, but Allah tells us why. Why we should fast, which is to become mindful of Him (*taqwa*).

Ramadan: Allah says,

“Ramadan is the month in which the Qur’an was revealed as a guide for humanity with clear proofs of guidance and the standard to distinguish between right and wrong. So whoever is present this month, let them fast. But whoever is ill or on a journey, then let them fast an equal number of days after Ramaḍân. Allah intends ease for you, not hardship, so that you may complete the prescribed period and proclaim the greatness of Allah for guiding you, and perhaps you will be grateful.”

[Chapter 2, verse 185]

In this verse, Allah tells us the link between the month of Ramadan and the Qur’an. The first verses of the Qur’an were revealed to the Prophet in this month. It also teaches us some important information about those who do not need to fast (travellers and the ill), but they will need to make up for the days they have missed by fasting. And then Allah tells us extremely important and that is that Allah wants us ease for us, not hardship. Fasting is necessary for us to train our souls to come closer to Allah.

DISCUSSION:



What is the wisdom in asking us to withhold from these things for an entire month?

2. THE BENEFITS OF FASTING

Rewards: Fasting holds so many rewards! The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“Every action of the son of Adam is given a manifold reward; each good deed receiving ten times it’s like, up to seven hundred times. Allah the Most High said, ‘Except for fasting, for it is for Me and I will give recompense for it, he leaves off his desires and his food for Me.’ Fasting is a shield and for the fasting person there are two times of joy; a time when he breaks his fast and a time of joy when he meets his Lord, and the smell coming from the mouth of the fasting person is better with Allah than the smell of musk.”

(Nisai)

A demonstration of submission to the Will of Allah and an exercise of devotion: We are ultimately reinforcing in our hearts that Allah comes first and His pleasure is the ultimate objective before anything or anyone, including our own desires.

Balance: Fasting allows us to bring balance to the equation between the body and the soul. Our lives revolve around material pleasure with little regard to the soul. Ramadhan allows us to create an equilibrium between both the body and the soul. We humble the pleasures of the body by refraining from eating, drinking and intercourse. This allows our hearts to be elevated by actions which are an important part of Ramadan; recitation of the Qur’an and extra prayers.

Patience and perseverance: these are two essential qualities for the believer to develop. Patience by going against our carnal desires and perseverance by traversing this path for a whole month. It also allows us to sincerely empathize with the poor who do not have food or drink and of those who cannot get married or cannot be with their spouses.

It helps us to overcome the shaytan and decreases his influence upon us. This is specific to Ramadan. Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said, “When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained.” (Bukhari and Muslim) Allah has chained the devils who whispers in order for us to train our souls during this month with little distraction.

Binding Area

Removing sins: Fasting in Ramadan is also a form or a way of removing our sins. Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“Whoever fasts during Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah’s rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

3. THE CONDITIONS FOR THE FAST TO BE OBLIGATORY (IN RAMADAN)

- 1] **Muslim**
- 2] **At the age of puberty** - If someone is younger than the age of puberty, it’s not obligatory for them to fast, but it may be recommended for them and they will get some form of reward.
- 3] **Sound mind**
- 4] **A resident:** someone who is a traveller has been given two options: they can fast or they can make up that fast after Ramadan. According to most scholars, someone is considered to be a traveller if they journey more than 48 miles from their home city and do not return home until four days. This also means that if someone stays in a distant city for more than four days, is considered to be a resident and not a traveler.
- 5] **Ability to fast:** They cannot be someone who is very sick or someone who is very old and cannot cope.
- 6] **Free of excuses.** Someone who has a valid excuse, such as they’re on their menses or their postnatal bleeding, can make up those fasts at another time before the next Ramadan.

4. ACTIONS THAT BREAK THE FAST

- 1] **Someone who intentionally eats or drinks.** If you eat something forgetfully, then the fast is still valid.
- 2] **Someone who is on their menses or postnatal bleeding.**
- 3] **Ejaculation,** masturbation and intercourse all break the fast.

5. ACTIONS THAT DO NOT BREAK THE FAST

- 1] Having a wet dream or an involuntary ejaculation.
- 2] Swallowing your saliva does not break the fast.
- 3] Showering, using toothpaste and brushing your teeth does not break your fast, so long as you take care and not let anything go past the throat.
- 4] Tasting the salt in the food when cooking is also ok provided that you do not swallow.
- 5] Waking up in a state of janabah (a greater ritual impurity when a person is in a state after they've had intercourse).
- 6] Kissing and fondling to a minimal extent does not break the fast. It is however from the Sunnah or the way of the Prophet to close the door on this, especially if you are a younger person and are not able to control your desires.

6. IMPORTANCE OF THE INTENTION

Intention: For any act of worship, intention - meaning you do the deed for the sake of Allah alone - is important and necessary. Intention is an action of the heart, meaning it happens there, not on the tongue. For example, you don't need to state your intentions out loud. So it is in the heart, but for fasting, the timing of the intention depends on the type of fast that you're doing.

Intention for obligatory fasts: such as the ones in Ramadan, some scholars say that if a person makes the intention for the whole month at the beginning of Ramadan, then this is enough. Other scholars say that you need to do it the night before every single fast you do. The important thing is that you have to do it before the fast begins.

Intention for voluntary fast: the intention can be made at any time before midday or the Dhuhr prayers, provided you haven't eaten anything before the Fajr prayer began.

W 10

7. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A FASTING PERSON

Eating the pre-dawn meal (Arabic: 'Suhoor'): The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

"Eat the Suhoor for indeed there is blessing in it."

(Bukhari and Muslim).

It's also recommended to delay it to its maximum possible time, meaning eat it just before Fajr time - but not too late so you're still eating when fajr enters. Remember, the fast begins before the Fajr prayer has begun.

Hastening to break the fast: The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "People will not cease to be well, unless they hasten in breaking the fast." (Bukhari and Muslim). This means break the fast when the time of maghrib enters, not before the maghrib prayer, but as soon as maghrib enters, then break the fast.

What to break the fast with: The Prophet (peace be upon him) would break the fast with dates and if not dates, then with water.

Invite someone for iftar (breaking the fast): as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

"Whoever provides the food for a fasting person to break his fast with, then for him is the same reward for his, without anything being diminished from the reward of the fasting person."

(Tirmidhi)

Say the following supplication (dua) immediately after breaking your fast,

"the thirst has been quenched, the veins wetted and the reward established insha Allah." (Thahabadh-dhama'u wabtallatil-'urooqu, wa thabatal-'ajru 'insha Allah)

(Abu Dawud)

Read a lot of Qur'an and to give a lot of money to charity: These are both something that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would do, even more than normal in Ramadan.

Perform the night prayers in Ramadan: and one of the special nights about Ramadan is Laylatul Qadr - the Night of Decree. It is the night in which the Qur'an was sent down. Allah says:

"Indeed, 'it is' We 'Who' sent this 'Qur'an' down on the Night of Glory. And what will make you realize what the Night of Glory is? The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months. That night the angels and the 'holy' spirit [Angel Gabriel] descend, by the permission of their Lord, for every 'decreed' matter. It is all peace until the break of dawn."

(Chapter 97)

Laylatul Qadr: On this night, it is recommended to spend the night in worship of Allah, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "whoever stays up during Laylat al-Qadr out of faith and in the hope of earning reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." When is the night? The Prophet (peace be upon him) told us to search for it in the last 10 nights on the odd nights.

8. ZAKAT AL-FITR

Towards the end of Ramadan, it is obligatory to give something called “Zakat al-Fitr”. Ibn Abbas, the cousin of the Prophet, narrated that

“The Messenger of Allah enjoined Zakat-ul-fitr on the one who fasts (during the month of Ramadan) to purify him from any indecent act or speech and for the purpose of providing food for the needy. It is accepted as Zakah for the person who pays it before the Eid prayer and it is Sadaqah (voluntary charity) for the person who pays it after the Eid prayer.”

(Abu Dawud)

What exactly is this? It is an obligatory charity in food items due at the end of the month of Ramadan or just before it ends.

Who should pay for it? It is upon every single able Muslim or the father of the family can pay it for each person in his household.

How much do they have to pay? They have to pay a sa’a, which is around 2.25 kilograms of either wheat, barley, rice, raisins or dates.

When should they pay it? It has to be paid before or given before the Eid prayer which is the end of the month of Ramadan.

To whom? They should give this to poor people who need this.

Can it be given in the form of money? According to the majority of scholars, it should not be given in monetary form, but you can give it to an agent or a charity to distribute the food items to the poor people on your behalf.

9. RECOMMENDED FASTS

- Fasting most of the month of Sha’ban (which is the month before Ramadan).
- To fast six days of Shawwal (which is the month after Ramadan).
- To fast the first nine days of Dhul Hijjah, the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar.
- To fast the days of Arafat (9th of Dhul Hijjah, the last month) and Ashura (10th of Muharram, the first month).
- Fasting these two days separately carry a tremendous reward: the forgiveness of the previous years minor sins!
- The Prophet (peace be upon him) would also fast the middle three days of every month, which are the 13th, 14th, and 15th of the Islamic month.
- He also used to fast every Monday and Thursday.



10. THE 3 LEVELS OF FASTING

LEVEL 1 (THE BASIC LEVEL):

This is the level that every Muslim must reach, which means they should do the basics - abstain from food, drink and having intimate relations with their spouse during this month from just before Fajr prayer begins until Maghrib prayer. Every Muslim who is obligated to fast should, at the very least, be at this level.

Some tips to help you attain that level: have a good suhoor - this is essential if you don't want to feel weak, hungry, and thirsty during the day. Have some fruits, cereal, bread, and drink a lot of water before the fast begins. Keep your day busy, go out for a walk, read, reflect, visit friends or family, help others and you can listen to beneficial reminders on Islam. Try to take a nap during the day.

LEVEL 2 (THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL):

Not only abstaining from food, drink and intimate relations with your spouse, but it is also preserving your tongue, sight, hearing, and your limbs from what Allah dislikes. How?

Fasting of the tongue: Preventing your tongue from saying anything Allah is not pleased with. Your tongue abstains from committing sins, such as backbiting.

- a. **Do not backbite:** The Prophet (peace be upon him) defined backbiting as, to say something about someone that he or she would not like. Allah forbids us to backbite and tells us that backbiting is like eating the flesh of your dead brother or sister. This image should be enough to keep us away from this sin.
- b. **Do not lie:** Lying is a huge sin, whether it is said seriously or jokingly. It's actually so serious that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said "He who does not refrain from lying and indecent activities, Allah cares little for his refraining from eating and drinking." (Bukhari)
- c. **Do not swear:** Swearing is not part of the character of a Muslim. For those who are used to it, it can be a difficult habit to get rid of and the month of Ramadan is a perfect moment for that. This all comes under fasting of the tongue - stopping your tongue from sinning.

Fasting of our sight: Preventing your eyes from watching anything that is displeasing to Allah. Keep in mind that the eye is an entry into the heart. So what we see will have a positive or a negative impact on our heart. That's why Allah has ordered men and women to lower their gaze.

Fast with our ears and our limbs: Preventing our ears from listening to anything that Allah dislikes (i.e. listening to backbiting/lies), preventing our hands and our feet from doing or going to places Allah dislikes.

LEVEL 3 (THE ADVANCED LEVEL):

Not only fasting with their stomach, with their senses and their limbs, but they also fast with their hearts and their minds by not having bad intentions or having envy or having any form of egotism.

The fasting of the heart helps you to improve the levels: For example, when a person from the basic level fasts with their stomach, by fasting with their heart, they remember why they are fasting and refraining from eating and drinking. When they are fasting with their eyes, they are reminded by their heart, why they are refraining from looking at things which are displeasing to Allah.

How to achieve this level:

- 1. Always check your intention.** Make sure you are doing this act of worship for Allah alone and not for showing off or for other reasons. Check your intention before starting the action, during the action, and after you have completed the action.
- 2. Constantly ask yourself why you are doing this action.** When you remind yourself of the 'why', then the reason for fasting - to please Allah - will take you to the highest level inshAllah.

REFLECTION:

Evaluate the level of fasting that you are currently at and how you can move to the next level. If you have never fasted before, why not try and see what level you can achieve?

11. CASE STUDY

Ramadan is starting tomorrow and Lily will be fasting for the very first time. Today she gives you a call and says, "I'm sorry but fasting will definitely not be something for me. I know it's going to be too difficult for me. Also before I accept Islam, a lot of my friends used to invite me to iftar (which is the meal for breaking the fast), even if I was not fasting. But this year, no one invited me." What would you tell her?

11 LESSON ELEVEN

THE FIFTH PILLAR OF ISLAM: HAJJ (PILGRIMAGE)

DESCRIPTION

A life changing experience known as the Hajj, or the pilgrimage. Follow the guidelines, summon your patience and you will return free of sin as someone who is pure as a newborn baby!

LESSON OBJECTIVES



- Knowing the history of Hajj.
- Understand the key essential rulings of Hajj.
- Understand its importance and to also realise its power.
- Appreciate the spiritual dimensions of this greater pilgrimage.

DISCUSSION



What would you say to someone who tells you that the Muslim pilgrimage is like idol worshipping, because we walk around and bow to some black cube, meaning the Ka'bah?

1. DEFINITION

Definition: In the Arabic language, Hajj means to intend something. As for the Islamic meaning, Hajj means the intent to travel to the sanctified house of Allah, the Ka'bah, during a specified time, for a specific set of actions, in the worship of Allah. The main aspects of Hajj take place in the final month of the Islamic calendar, Dhul Hijjah.

2. THE HISTORY OF HAJJ

It begins with the Prophet Ibrahim or Abraham (peace be upon him), who was entrusted by Allah to build the Ka'bah in Mecca with his son Ismael. The Hajj and all its actions and rites were first ordained by Allah on Ibrahim, Allah says

“And ‘remember’ when We assigned to Abraham the site of the House, ‘saying,’ ‘Do not associate anything with Me ‘in worship’ and purify My House for those who circle ‘the Ka’bah’, stand ‘in prayer’, and bow and prostrate themselves.”

[Chapter 22, verse 26]

After Abraham and his son passed away, the way hajj was performed and the goal of Hajj changed over time. Idolatry spread throughout Arabia and the Kabah lost its original purity.

Idols were placed inside and around it; men and women would go around the Kabah naked, arguing that they should present themselves before God in the same condition that they were born.

Then, after two and a half thousand years, the time came for the supplication of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) to be answered. Allah tells us in the Qur'an he said:

“Our Lord! Raise from among them a messenger who will recite to them Your revelations, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Indeed, You ‘alone’ are the Almighty, All-Wise.”

This is chapter 2 verse 129.

For 23 years the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), spread the message of monotheism, of Tawheed, the same message that Abraham and all the other Prophets (may peace be upon them) all came with.

And he finally established the law of Allah upon the land. Not only did he purify the Kabah of all of its impurities, but he also reinstated the same ritual rites of Hajj that were established in the time of Abraham. Hajj once more became a model of devotion, piety and purity.

3. THE EXCELLENCE OF HAJJ

Hajj wipes off all past sins: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“That he who came to this house (meaning the Kabah), with the intention of performing the pilgrimage and neither spoke indecently nor did they act wickedly, would return free from sin as on the very first day his mother bore him.

(Muslim)

The Reward of Hajj is Paradise:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said “all sins committed in between the performance of one minor pilgrimage (umrah) and another are expiated and erased, but the reward of a Hajj mabroor, (which means an accepted pilgrimage), is nothing but Paradise.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

4. THE SIGNS OF AN ACCEPTED HAJJ

The signs of an accepted Hajj, once it's been completed, is that you complete your Hajj:

- With total sincerity, without showing off.
- In accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah.
- By paying for it with lawful (Halal) income.
- By making sure you refrain from doing any sins during this time.
- And the person's state after Hajj is better than what you were before Hajj, meaning your character, in your actions and in your obedience to Allah.

5. WISDOMS OF HAJJ

Hajj tests your character and develops you mentally: One is tested in regards to their wealth, their health, their mental state, patience, endurance, sacrifice, and also gratitude.

Muslims all around the world are gathered for a single purpose: to worship Allah and ask His forgiveness.

The journey to Hajj has some similarities with the journey to the hereafter. For instance, when one passes away, he is washed and shrouded in a cloth and leaves behind his family and his wealth. Similarly, when a person goes to Hajj, they leave their family, leave their wealth, then before going on the actual Hajj, they prepare for this state by making ghusl (Islamic bath), and they wear two cloths around themselves. This is called the ihram, which is being in a state of Hajj.

Reminds us of the gathering on the Day of Judgment, when every single human being will be resurrected and brought together. The Hajj has a similar setting, where all those on Hajj are together.

6. PREREQUISITES OF HAJJ

1] Being a Muslim

2] Reaching the age of puberty - like we said about fasting, a child can perform the Hajj, even though there is no obligation upon them, but the child would still need to complete a proper Hajj after they have reached the age of puberty.

3] Being sane or of sound mind - the individual needs to know what she or he is doing because the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“the pen has been lifted (meaning, some people are not accountable) from, (and then he mentioned a number of them and he then said), the one who is not sane until he regains sanity.”

(Tirmidhi)

4] Ability/Mean. There are four types of ability or means here:

- **Physical:** meaning you are physically able to perform the Hajj.
- **Financial:** you must have the provisions of getting there in terms of hotel, ticket, food, water, and also leaving enough money for your family who are left behind until you return.
- **If one has financial ability to go to Hajj but has debt,** then it is more important to settle their debt. However, if the debtors can wait for the debts or if the Hajj is unaffected, then he can go on Hajj.
- **Safe passage:** if it is unsafe to travel to Makkah, such as a pandemic taking place, then Hajj is not obligatory upon that person.
- **Mahram:** A prerequisite for Muslim women is having a mahram. A mahram is like a guardian, so a husband, a son, a nephew, uncle, father or someone that the Muslim woman cannot marry. The scholars agree that if a female does not have a mahram, then Hajj is not an obligation upon them. But some scholars do say that if a lady is of an older age, then she can travel with other elderly ladies and some Hajj groups actually facilitate that.



7. CASE STUDY

Jack accepted Islam six months ago. He has all of the financial and physical means necessary to go on Hajj, but he does not see it as a priority. He prefers focusing on other acts of worship, such as memorizing more surahs from the Qur'an and so on and so forth. Is this allowed or not? What are your thoughts?

8. LET'S EMBARK ON THE JOURNEY OF HAJJ!

A beautiful poem from Ibn Qayyim al Jawziyyah about Hajj that gives a good insight of the different actions performed during Hajj.

The Journey

*By Him whose House the loving pilgrims visit,
Responding with ihram at the appointed limit,
Uncovering their heads in total humility
Before One to Whom faces bow in servility.
They exclaim in the valleys, "We have responded to You -
All Praise is Yours, and Kingdom too!"
He invited and they answered, with love and pleasure;
When they called upon Him, nearer came the Divine treasure.
You see them on their mounts, hair dusty and dishevelled,
Yet never more content, never happier have they felt;
Leaving homelands and families due to holy yearning,
Unmoved are they by temptations of returning.
Through plains and valleys, from near and far,
Walking and riding, in submission to Allah.*

At The Ka'bah

*When they see His House - that magnificent sight
 For which the hearts of all creatures are set alight
 It seems they've never felt tired before,
 For their discomfort and hardship is no more.
 Now the eye of the Lover drowns in its streams,
 It sees through its tears the goal of its dreams;
 Now for Allah, how many tears are issued,
 Each one being followed by a multitude?
 When the eye perceives the House, its darkness clears,
 And from the sorrowful heart, pain disappears;
 Vision cannot encompass this beautiful sight:
 Each glance returns with greater delight!
 No wonder at this, for when the Merciful preferred
 The House for Himself, it became most honoured.
 He clothed it in Majesty, a magnificent garment;
 Embroidered it with Beauty, a wonderful ornament!
 The hearts all love the House therefore,
 Awed and humbled, in respect and honour.*

'Arafat

*Now to 'Arafat, hoping for Mercy and Forgiveness
 From the One overflowing with Generosity and Kindness;
 Now for Allah is that Magnificent Standing
 Like, though lesser than, the Day of Reckoning.
 The Irresistible draws near, His Majesty manifest,
 Boasting to His angels, for He is the Mightiest,
 "My slaves have come to Me so lovingly,
 I'll be Generous and Merciful, willingly.
 I have forgiven their sins, – to this you are witness –
 Fulfilled their hopes, and showered them with goodness."
 So joyous news! O people of that standing,
 When sins are forgiven and Mercy is spreading;
 How many slaves are set completely free?
 Whilst others seek a cure, and heal will He.
 Now Satan is never known to lose such face:
 He's blameworthy, rejected, in utter disgrace.*

*For he sees a matter that enrage him must:
He flees, slaps his face and covers it in dust!
Such Forgiveness he never did see
As granted by the Lord, and such Mercy!
He built his edifice from every temptation available
Till he thought it was complete, unassailable;
Then Allah struck his building at its very foundation,
So it fell upon him, tumbling in devastation;
What worth has his structure, this evil ploy,
That he does build, and the Lord does destroy?*

Muzdalifah & Mina

*Now to Muzdalifah, to spend the night
In the Sacred Area, then Prayer at first light;
Now on to the Great Pillar, which they need
To stone at the time of the Prayer of 'Id;
Now to their tents for the sacrifice prepared,
Reviving the tradition of a Father revered.
If sacrificing themselves were Allah's demand,
They would respond, submitting to the command;
Just as they'd expose their necks in Jihad
To Allah's enemies, till these stream with blood;
They discipline themselves, presenting the head for a shave:
Bringing humility and happiness to the obedient slave.*

The Tawaf Of Ifadah/Ziyarah

*So when they've removed those natural growths,
Completed their rites, and fulfilled their oaths,
He invites them again to visit His House:
What honour and welcome this visit allows!
By Allah, they visit it in so much splendour,
Receiving their rewards and plenty of honour;
There Allah bestows Grace, Favour and Kindness,
Showing Generosity, Mercy and Forgiveness.*

Mina

*Then they return to Mina, each to his tent,
 Every minute wish is granted, and they are content;
 They stay there a day, then another, then a third,
 They're allowed to depart early, but to stay is preferred;
 They stone the pillars daily after the sun's decline,
 With a slogan of Takbir in the presence of the Divine!
 If only you could see their standing there:
 Palms outstretched, hoping for Mercy's share!
 "O Lord! O Lord! Knowing as You do
 That we hope for no-one, only You!
 Then grant our wish, O You All-Knowing,
 We pray for Your Mercy overflowing."*

The Farewell Tawaf

*When they've achieved at Mina all their gains,
 Once more they fill the valleys and plains:
 To the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, by the end of the day,
 To circle it seven times, and then to Pray.
 When departure nears and they are certain
 That the bond of proximity is about to loosen,
 There's only a last stand for a final farewell:
 Now for Allah are the eyes that swell,
 And for Allah are the heavy hearts that turn
 Into cauldrons of desire where fire does burn;
 And the passionate sighs whose heat so vigorous
 Nearly melts the Lover, ecstatic, rapturous!
 Now you see those bewildered, perplexed in the throng,
 Whilst others chant their sorrowful song:
 "I depart, but there remains for You my yearning,
 My fire of grief is raging and burning;
 I bid farewell, but longing pulls my reins -
 My heart is encamped in Your eternal plains!"
 No blame today for saying what you feel:
 No blame for expressing what you used to conceal!*

12

LESSON TWELVE

CHALLENGES OF LIFE

DESCRIPTION

Life! Life is like the ocean, sometimes it's calm, other times it's rough and rigid, but in the end, it's always beautiful. This is a reality, life has its ups and downs and it may be the case, that when you accepted Islam, for some, it was easy, but for others, life just got difficult. But at the end of the day, it's the nature of life that we will go through hardships and challenges.

Realising what these challenges really are will actually allow you to turn them to your advantage and more importantly, Islam gives us the right tools to be able to deal with our challenges insha Allah (God willing)!

LESSON OBJECTIVES



- Appreciate the reality of life.
- Appreciate the mercy and the wisdom behind trials.
- Knowing how to react when faced with challenges and empowering ourselves.

DISCUSSION



What is the main challenge you went through when you accepted Islam and was it difficult? If so, why was it difficult?

1. I AM A MUSLIM NOW SO WHY IS MY LIFE SO DIFFICULT?

DISCUSSION:

Let's look at this statement: I'm a Muslim now, so why is my life so difficult? What would you say about that? Have you ever felt like this? How would you answer it?

There are a number of ways of answering this question. Here are some below:

A. ALLAH IS TESTING US TO DIFFERENTIATE THOSE WHO ARE SINCERE FROM THE HYPOCRITES

Distinguish true believers: Allah says

“Do people think once they say, “We believe,” that they will be left without being put to the test? We certainly tested those before them. And ‘in this way’ Allah will clearly distinguish between those who are truthful and those who are liars.”

[Chapter 29, verse 2-3]

This idea is repeated numerous times in the Qur'an, such as when Allah says

“Allah would not leave the believers in the condition you were in, until He distinguished the good from the evil ‘among you’.”

[Chapter 3 verse 179]

All the challenges we are facing should not turn us away from Allah! We are claiming at least 17 times a day when we read surah Fatihah, that “it is Him alone we worship and Him alone we ask for help” (*iybaka nabudu wa iybaka nastaeen*). But are we truthful to that claim when we are facing difficulties or when Allah does not give us what we want?

B. SUFFERING CAUSES PEOPLE TO REMEMBER ALLAH

Human beings tend to forget Allah when they are prosperous and only remember Him when we are afflicted with suffering. So, Allah sends us tests and tribulations so that we may turn to Him and seek His grace.

Allah says "It is your Lord Who steers the ships for you through the sea, so that you may seek His bounty. Surely He is ever Merciful to you. When you are touched with hardship at sea, you 'totally' forget all 'the gods' you 'normally' invoke, except Him. But when He delivers you 'safely' to shore, you turn away. Humankind is ever ungrateful."

[Chapter 17 verse 66 to 67]

A great scholar of Islam, Ibn Taymiyyah said **"A calamity that makes you turn to Allah is better for you than a blessing which makes you forget the remembrance of Allah."** (*al-Wabil al-Sayyib*)

C. THE SOUL IS PURIFIED THROUGH TESTS

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said

"No believer is stricken with fatigue, exhaustion, worry, or grief, or even a thorn, which pricks him but Allah will forgive him for some of his sins".

(Bukhari and Muslim)

He also said

"trials will continue to befall the believing man and woman with regard to themselves, their children and their wealth until they meet Allah with no sins on them."

(Tirmidhi)

NOTE:

Allah's tests can also be in the form of blessings, such as wealth, good health, children, family, etc. For example, many people are given great wealth, fame and material goods but they are not grateful to Allah for that and instead live their lives in sin and wickedness.

Allah says,

"And know that your wealth and your children are only a test and that with Allah is a great reward."

[Chapter 8 verse 28]

Therefore we see that Allah tests the people through both adversities as well as blessings, but regardless of the type of tests, the believers are those who remain grateful to Allah.

Allah says, “

You ‘believers’ will surely be tested in your wealth and yourselves, and you will certainly hear many hurtful words from those who were given the Scripture before you and ‘from’ the polytheists. But if you are patient and mindful ‘of Allah’—surely this is a resolve to aspire to.”

[Chapter 3 verse 186]

2. WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I AM TESTED?

DISCUSSION:

**What should I do when I am tested?
How would you answer this question?**



A. UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF OBSTACLES

One of the ways to deal with this all is to first understand the different types of obstacles in our path. There are two main types of obstacles:

- Obstacles that are within our control.
- Obstacles that are beyond our control.

They are the things that Allah has destined for us in our lives. These things are not really obstacles, but we have misinterpreted them as being obstacles. Allah tells us

“Perhaps you dislike something which is good for you and like something which is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know.”

[Chapter 2 verse 216]

Once we realize that all things are from Allah, we should realize that Allah is the Most Loving and the Most Kind. Therefore there is some good in whatever Allah has decreed for us, even if we do not immediately see what it is.

NOTE:

The belief in the decree of Allah - whether it is good or bad - is part of the six pillars of Iman (faith).



Our attitude: When we know these things are from Allah, what should our attitude be? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said something very interesting about this. He said,

“How wonderful is the affair of the believer for his affairs are good and this applies to no one but the believer. If something good happens to him, he is thankful for it and that is good for him. If something bad happens to him he bears it with patience and that is also good for him.”

(Muslim)

If we have the right mindset, any trials we go through in this life will seem insignificant to the reward we can get in the hereafter. In fact, the Prophet (peace be upon him) alluded to this when he said,

“The most privileged people in the world among the people of Hellfire will come on the Day of Resurrection to be dipped in Hellfire, then it will be said: O son of Adam, did you see any good? Did you get any blessings? He will say: No, by Allah, my Lord! Then, the most miserable people in the world among the people of Paradise will come on the Day of Resurrection to be dipped in Paradise, then it will be said: O son of Adam, did you see any hardship? Did you have any distress? He will say: No, by Allah, my Lord! I did not once see hardship or distress.”

(Muslim)

He (peace be upon him) also said

“There is no Muslim who is stricken with a calamity and then says what Allah enjoined him to say, “Indeed, to Allah we belong and to Him is our return. Oh, Allah. reward me for my affliction and compensate me with something better.” but Allah will compensate that person with something better.”

(Muslim).

The dua is *“Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un, Allahumma ajirni fi musibati wa akhlif li khairan minha”*.

Therefore, one of the words our tongue should be saying the most and it should be familiarised with is *“Alhamdulillah”* or praise and thanks are due to Allah! This is because, whatever happens to us whether good or bad, it is either a reward for us in this life or a greater reward for us in the hereafter.

B. REMEMBER THAT ALLAH TESTS THOSE WHOM HE LOVES MOST

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said “The greatest reward comes with the greatest trial. When Allah loves the people, He tests them. Whoever accepts this wins His pleasure.”

(Ibn Majah)

One of the Prophet's companions asked him,

“O messenger of Allah, who are the most tested and tried people in this world?” He answered “the Prophets and then those who are similar to them (in terms of being pious), and a man will be tested and tried according to his piety in faith. If the individual has strong faith, he will be tested and tried in a severe manner. Similarly, if the man's faith is weak he would be tested accordingly. A person would be struck by calamities until he is sinless.”

(Ibn Hibban)

Can you imagine arriving on the Day of Judgment with not even a single sin on your accounts?

C. TESTS ARE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO ATTAIN PARADISE

By passing the test that Allah puts us through, we are actually opening up the way for entering Paradise. Allah says

“Do you think you will be admitted into Paradise without being tested like those before you? They were afflicted with suffering and adversity and were so ‘violently’ shaken that ‘even’ the Messenger and the believers with him cried out, “When will Allah’s help come?” Indeed, Allah’s help is ‘always’ near.”

[Chapter 2 verse 214]

This shows us that the path to Paradise is with some things we will be tested with. The reward for all this sacrifice is Paradise.

Allah also says

“Allah does not require of any soul more than what it can afford”.

[Chapter 2, verse 286]

So He will never give you any trials that you cannot overcome. Remember brothers and sisters, that challenges are from Allah and He knows what is best for you. So put your trust in Him.



3. CASE STUDY

James tells you that he is so disappointed that he now feels like leaving Islam! The reason for this is because, since his conversion, he went through a lot of tests and he did not receive much support from his brothers in Islam. How would you respond to James?

4. TAKE THE STEP



Among the different reasons why Allah may test us, choose the one that speaks to you the most and that you know will help you to remain patient and steadfast each time you go through a test. Write it down and keep it in a place where you can access it at any time.

5. QUICK QUIZ



1. Why does Allah test us?
2. How does a test make you remember Allah?
3. How can Allah's blessing be a test?
4. What shall we do when we are tested?
5. Why is a belief in Qadar/destiny so important?

6. HOMEWORK 

Now that you know why Allah tests us and what are the wisdoms behind the tests we go through, think of the main challenge you went through or you may still go through when you accepted Islam and think of what you can do to learn from it. How did you grow? Or can you grow through it?

7. THE MOST EMPOWERING POINT 

What was the most empowering point you have learnt?

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LESSON THIRTEEN

PREPARING TO MEET ALLAH

DESCRIPTION

It is time for us to take the inevitable final step. For us to reach our ultimate destination: Death. Today, we are going to meet our Lord. For many, this day will be a day they wished would never come, but for you, it can definitely be the best day of your life.

LESSON OBJECTIVES



- Knowing the reality of this life.
- Knowing some of the different stages we will go through after we die.
- Preparing ourselves for the day we will meet our Lord.
- Knowing the reality of hell and knowing how to protect ourselves from it.
- Knowing the reality of Paradise and knowing how to be among its people.

1. FACE TO FACE WITH A REALITY: DEATH

DISCUSSION:

What do you think of death?

Death Date: We all know the date of our birth, but we don't know the date of our death, and if there are a lot of things human beings have doubts about, death is definitely something that no one can deny! This worldly life - what we call in Arabic as the Dunya - is a preparation for the eternal life, the hereafter - which in Arabic is the akhirah. After we leave this worldly life, we will not be given a further chance.

The reality of this world: it is imperative that we see this world for what it really is, and that we understand the reality and the nature of our existence and that we are not taken in by its deceptive attractiveness and its illusionary beauty.

Allah describes this worldly life as

“Rain We send down from the sky, producing a mixture of plants which humans and animals consume. Then just as the earth looks its best, perfectly beautified, and its people think they have full control over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, so We mow it down as if it never flourished yesterday! This is how We make the signs clear for people who reflect.”

[Chapter 10 verse 24]

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBERING DEATH

DISCUSSION:

Why is it important to remember death?

Negligence: The impact of it is that we become negligent of it and as a consequence, death comes as a surprise to us and we are not prepared for it. Allah tells us,

“As for the disbelievers, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert, which the thirsty perceive as water, but when they approach it, they find it to be nothing. Instead, they find Allah there ‘in the Hereafter, ready’ to settle their account. And Allah is swift in reckoning.”

[Chapter 24, Verse 39]

One of the Prophet's companions, Abdullah Ibn Umar, said I was with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and a man of the Ansar (a tribe from Medina) came to him and greeted the Prophet with Salam (the Islamic greeting). Then he asked him "O Messenger of Allah, which of the believers is best? The Prophet responded, "he who has the best manners is among them". He said: "Which of them is wisest?" He said: "The one who remembers death the most and is best in preparing for it, those are the wisest."

(Ibn Majah)

Be like a traveller: Abdullah Ibn Umar also said that the Messenger of Allah took hold of his shoulder and said, "Be in this world as if you are a stranger or a traveller". The person who narrated this added that Abdullah Ibn Umar used to say that:

"If you survive until the evening, do not expect to be alive in the morning and if you survive until the morning, do not expect to be alive in the evening. And take from your health for your sickness and take from your life for your death."

(Bukhari)

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WHEN YOU ARE DYING

Don't be Afraid! You will see the angels of mercy who will take away your soul and give you glad tidings of Paradise insha Allah (God willing), as Allah tells us in the Qur'an that

"those whose souls the angels take while they are virtuous, saying 'to them', "Peace be upon you! Enter Paradise for what you used to do."

[Chapter 16, verse 32]

Your tongue should be repeating the Shahadah: At the point of death, we should repeat the Shahada over and over again, saying La ilaha illAllah (there is none worthy of worship except Allah). This is because the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "whoever says la ilaha illAllah (there is none worthy of worship except Allah at the moment of death, then they will enter Paradise." (Bukhari)

You should hope for good from Allah: A companion of the Prophet, Jabir Ibn Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) said

"I heard the Messenger of Allah say three days before his passing away, that none of you should approach death without only hoping for good from Allah."

(Muslim)

Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) also said, Allah said

"that I with my slaves the way that he thinks of Me."

(Bukhari and Muslim)

If you have good thoughts about Allah, He will be good to you. Know that all affairs are judged according to the way that they end. So never take anything for granted but always ask Allah to keep you steadfast upon Islam and ask him to cause you to die with the best end.

Write a will: Even if we have nothing to give, we should write down some parting advice and duas for our loved ones.

Having a Sadaqah Jariyah: This is a type of charity that can benefit you even after you pass away. So this may be a library we can gift to a community which can be a great means of gaining reward from anyone who benefits from it. It may be a well in a poor country who use it to make ablution (wudhu) or drink from it etc.

4. FIRST STEPS INTO THE HEREAFTER

The agony of death: When a person dies, their soul transitions to the hereafter. So what are these first steps that take place? Well, the first one is the agony of death. When death takes away a person's soul, each part of the body feels the agony of death until it reaches the throat.

Then the dying person is cut off from the life of this world and the gate of repentance is shut, meaning a person can no longer seek repentance after this stage. Before this, Allah will accept our repentance! Except for the one who continuously does evil deeds until when death comes to them and, as Allah tells us,

"However, repentance is not accepted from those who knowingly persist in sin until they start dying, and then cry, "Now I repent!" nor those who die as disbelievers. For them We have prepared a painful punishment."

[Chapter 4, verse 18]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

"That Allah accepts the repentance of His servant up until His death rattle begins."

(Ibn Majah)

At that moment if you are a believer, you will see the angels of mercy taking away your soul and giving you glad tidings of Paradise insha Allah. As Allah says that:

“those whose souls the angels take while they are virtuous, saying ‘to them’, ‘Peace be upon you! Enter Paradise for what you used to do.’”

[Chapter 16, verse 32]

As for the evildoers and the unbelievers, Allah says

“If you ‘O Prophet’ could only see the wrongdoers in the throes of death while the angels are stretching out their hands ‘saying’, ‘Give up your souls! Today you will be rewarded with the torment of disgrace for telling lies about Allah and for being arrogant towards His revelations!’”

[Chapter 6, verse 93]

The Grave: *The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us that, once we are in our graves, we will hear the sound of footsteps of those who buried us, our family and friend, as they walk away, As they are leaving, two angels come to you, make you sit up in the grave and ask you three questions.*

The first question is: *who is your Lord? If you’re a believer, you will reply “my Lord is Allah”.*

The second question they will ask you is, *“what is your religion?” the believer will say “my religion is Islam”. Then the third question they will ask you, “what is your opinion about the man who was sent on a mission among you?” Then you will respond by saying that he is the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Then they will ask you “who made you aware of this?” And you will reply that “I read Allah’s book, believed in it and considered it true.”*

Then a sound will call from the heavens “My servant has spoken the truth so spread a bed for him from Paradise, clothe him from Paradise and open a door for him into paradise.” So some of its air and perfume will come to you and a space will be made for you as far as the eye can see.

But regarding the one who disbelieved, his spirit will be restored to his body. The two angels will come to him, make him sit up and ask him the same questions:

Who is your Lord? He will reply in pain, saying “Aaah Aaah, I do not know”.

They will ask him, “what is your religion?” Again, he will reply, “Aaah Aaah, I do not know”.

They will ask him “who was the man who was sent on a mission among you?” And again, he will reply “Aaah Aaah, I do not know”.

Then a sound will come from the heavens, “He has lied! so spread a bed for him from hell, clothe him from hell and open for him a door into hell.” Then some of its heat and wind will come to him and his grave will be compressed so that his ribs will be crushed together.

(Abu Dawud)

NOTE:

The punishment in the grave is not only reserved for those who disbelieved, but some believers may also go through some punishment in the grave.

The Prophet's cousin, Abdullah Ibn Abbas narrated a hadith where he said the Prophet was passing by the graves of Medina when he heard the cries of two people who were being punished in their graves. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“they are being punished, but they are not being punished because of a major wrong action and yet their wrong actions are serious. One of them used to avoid being soiled with urine and the other used to go about spreading false rumours.” Then the Prophet asked for a green palm tree branch and split it into two, placing one piece on each grave saying, “may the punishment cease for as long as these pieces of branches do not dry out”.

(Nisai)

To avoid punishment in the grave:

- The first thing is to obey the commands of Allah and stay away from wrong actions.
- We can also ask Allah to protect us from it, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said “when you finish the last tashahhud in prayer, (so in the prayer when you're sitting down saying *“at-tahiyyatu lillahi was-salawatu”* at the end), you should seek refuge in Allah from 4 things: from the punishment of the grave, from the punishment of the hellfire, from the trials of this life and death and from the trial of the *Masih ad-Dajjal* (antichrist).” (Muslim) In Arabic, the supplication is: *(Allaahumma 'innee 'a'oothu bika min l'athaabil-qabri, wa min 'athaabi jahannama, wa min fitnatil-mahyaa walmamaati, wa min sharri fitnatil-maseehid-dajjaal)*

5. AND THE FINAL STEPS BEGIN

We've discussed death and the grave. Now the final steps begin. Whilst we are in our graves, we will be awakened by the sound of the trumpet being blown, and we will be resurrected from the grave. The day of judgment has now arrived.

NOTE:

The belief in the Day of Judgment is part of the six pillars of iman (faith).

6. THE GATHERING AND THE STANDING AWAITING FOR THE JUDGEMENT

What happens after we are resurrected from our graves? The gathering and the standing, awaiting for judgment, this is the next stage where all the creation will be waiting for Allah to judge between them. The heavens and the earth will be completely transformed, the mountains will collapse, the stars will have fallen and scattered, the sea will burst forth like blazing fire and the graves will be turned upside down and will spill out what was in them. Souls will be reunited with their bodies and every single one of us will be waiting, naked and barefoot with our eyes staring in horror. Every nursing mother will forget about her baby and it will seem as if all of mankind is drunk while they are not.

The fire of hell is kindled to a fierce blaze and paradise is brought near. That day in itself will be long, as will the waiting and the standing.

IMPORTANT: *Even if we are terrified of this day, even then we are still full of hope of the immense mercy of Allah and we hope to be among those whom Allah has guaranteed a way out! The Prophet said that on that day, Allah will bring the believer close to him, shelter him, cover him and ask him about his sins. After acknowledging his sins, he will believe he is doomed. But Allah will say, "I concealed it for you in the world and I forgive it for you this day" (Muslim)*

Also, the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us that on that day,

"the sun will come so close to everyone that it will be as if it is only a mile or two away. The sun will melt them until they will be in sweat according to their deeds. Among them will be some who will be covered up to the ankles, some who will be covered up to their knees, some of them will be covered up to their waist and among them will be one who is bridled with it" and as he said this, the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) pointed to his with his hand towards his mouth.

(Tirmidhi)

However, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also taught us that the most merciful will preserve some people from the terror and the burning heat of that day. Seven types of people Allah will give the shade to on the day, when there would be no shade other than His shade. They are:

"A just ruler, a youth who grew up worshipping Allah, a man whose heart is attached to the mosque, two people who love and meet each other and depart from each other for the sake of Allah, a man whom an extremely beautiful woman tries to seduce him for illicit relations but he rejects this offering by saying "I fear Allah", a man who gives in charity and conceals it to the extent that the left hand does not know what the right hand has given and a person who remembers Allah in solitude and his eyes well up."

(Bukhari and Muslim)

Is there anything preventing you from being among one of these people? No, there is absolutely nothing. So Alhamdulillah, Allah has given us all a blessed opportunity to put all our efforts and our hope in Allah to ensure that we do not miss out!

7. THE INTERCESSION

The next stage brothers and sisters is: **'The Intercession'**. the Prophet (peace be upon him) said "the believers will be kept waiting on the day of resurrection so long that they will become worried and say, "let us ask somebody to intercede for us with our Lord so that He may relieve us from our place."

Then they will go to **Adam** and say: "You are Adam, the father of the people. Allah created you with His own hand and made you reside in His Paradise and ordered His Angels to prostrate before you and taught you with the names of all things. Will you intercede for us with your Lord so that He may relieve us from this place of ours?" Adam will say that 'I am not suitable to do this' and he will mention his mistakes that he had committed, like eating from the tree though he had been forbidden to do so. He will add "go to Noah the first Messenger sent by Allah to the people of the earth".

The people will go to **Noah**, who will say 'I am not suitable to do this'. He'll mention his mistake which he had done by asking his Lord without knowledge and he will say go to Abraham "*khailul Rahman*" - the intimate friend of the Most Merciful.

They will go to **Abraham** who will say, 'I am not suitable to do this'. He will mention three words by which he told a lie and say to them "go to Moses a slave whom Allah gave the Torah and spoke directly and brought near Him for conversation".

They will go to **Moses** who will say, 'I am not suitable to do this'. He will mention his mistake that he made, that he killed a person by accident and he will say "go to Jesus, Allah's slave and His apostle and a soul created by Him and His word, be and it is."

Then they will go to **Jesus** who will say, "I am not suitable to do this, but you'd better go to Muhammad, the slave whose past and future sins have been forgiven by Allah."

So they will come to me (**Muhammad**) and I will ask my Lord's permission to enter His house, then I will be permitted when I see him, I will fall down in prostration before Him, and He will leave me in prostration as long as He wills and then He will say, "O Muhammad, lift up your head and speak for you will be listened to and intercede for your intercession will be accepted and ask for anything for it will be granted". Then I will raise my head and glorify my Lord with certain praises, which He has taught me. Then Allah will put a limit for me to intercede for a certain type of people and I will take them out and place them into Paradise." (Bukhari)

This is when the judgement will begin.

8. BOOKS GIVEN OUT

We have now reached a stage where the books will be given out. These books contain all the good and bad deeds we did in our lifetime. Allah tells us about this and that the people will be in two categories:

1] Those who will be given their books in their right hands:

Allah says,

“As for those who are given their record in their right hand, they will have an easy reckoning, and will return to their people joyfully.”

[Chapter 84 verse 7 - 9]

And he will be happy to look at his record and they will announce their joy. He will say,

““Here ‘everyone’! Read my record! I surely knew I would face my reckoning.” They will be in a life of bliss, in an elevated Garden, whose fruit will hang within reach. ‘They will be told,’ “Eat and drink joyfully for what you did in the days gone by.””

[Chapter 69 verse 19 - 24]

2] Those who will be given their books in their left hands or from behind their back

Allah tells us “And as for those who are given their record ‘in their left hand’ from behind their backs, they will cry for ‘instant’ destruction.”

[Chapter 84 verse 10 - 11]

9. THE SIRAT (BRIDGE)

Another stage in the hereafter is the Sirat or “the bridge”. This is a bridge placed over the hellfire, over which the Muslims will pass to enter **Jannah** (Paradise).

The description of our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) that he gave about the Sirat is the following. He said:

“it is a slippery bridge on which there are clamps and hooks like a thorny seed that is wide at one side and narrow at the other and has thorns with bent ends, such a thorny seed is found in a place called Najd and is called as sa’dan. Some of the believers will cross the bridge as quickly as the blink of an eye. Some others will be as quick as lightning, a strong wind, fast horses or she-camel. So some will be safe without any harm and some will be safe after receiving some scratches and some will fall down into the hellfire. The last person will cross by being dragged over the bridge.”

(Bukhari)

10. YOU HAVE NOW REACHED YOUR FINAL DESTINATION!

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“When the people of Paradise have entered Paradise and the people of the fire have entered the fire, death will be brought and it will be placed between the Fire and Paradise and then it will be slaughtered and a call will be made that “O people of Paradise, no more death. O people of fire, no more death.” So the people of paradise will have happiness added to their previous happiness and the people of Fire will have sorrow added to their previous sorrow.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

Eternal pleasure or eternal punishment.

11. HELLFIRE AND ITS PUNISHMENT

The Depth and Heat in Hell: Abu Hurayrah, the companion of the Prophet, tells us

“once we were in the company of the Messenger of Allah when we heard a terrible sound, which the messenger of Allah said: “Do you know what that was?” We said: “Allah and His Messenger know best.” Then he said: “That was a stone which was thrown into the fire 70 years ago and it was falling all that time and only then did it hit the bottom?”

(Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah also narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“The fire which the children of Adam kindle is only one 70th of the fire of hell, they said: “O messenger of Allah, the fire here is certainly hot enough”, he said: “The fire there is 69 times hotter.”

(Muslim)

May Allah save us all from the fire of hell, ameen.

The Gates of Hell: Hell has seven gates. Allah says,

“and surely Hell is their destined place, all together. It has seven gates, to each a group of them is designated.”

[Chapter 15, verse 43 - 44]

Different Degrees of Punishment: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“there will be some who are in the fire up to the ankles. Some who are in the fire up to their knees and some who are in the fire up to their waist and some who are in the fire up to their collarbone”.

(Muslim)

Ibn Rajab, a great scholar of the past, said, “Know that the different levels of punishment suffered by the people of hellfire will be according to the level of their deeds for which they entered hell.”

The Sorrow, Regret and Supplications of the People of Hell: Allah says:

“And they will lament, “If only we had listened and reasoned, we would not be among the residents of the Blaze!””

[Chapter 67 verse 10]

Allah also tells us,

“They will cry, “Our Lord! Our ill-fate took hold of us, so we became a misguided people. Our Lord! Take us out of this ‘Fire’. Then if we ever return ‘to denial’, we will truly be wrongdoers.” Allah will respond, “Be despised in there! Do not ‘ever’ plead with Me ‘again’! Indeed, there was a group of My servants who used to pray, ‘Our Lord! We have believed, so forgive us and have mercy on us, for You are the best of those who show mercy,””

[Chapter 23 verse 106-210]

Allah Also tells us:

“And those in the Fire will cry out to the keepers of Hell,1 “Pray to your Lord to lighten the torment for us ‘even’ for one day!” The keepers will reply, “Did your messengers not ‘constantly’ come to you with clear proofs?” They will say, “Yes ‘they did’.”

The keepers will say, “Then pray! Though the prayer of the disbelievers is only in vain.””

[Chapter 40, verses 49-50]

DISCUSSION:

Going back to what you have learned throughout the course, think about all the different ways we can save ourselves from the hellfire?

12. PARADISE AND ITS REWARDS

DISCUSSION:

What do you hope the most to get or see in Paradise?

No matter how much we hear and read about the grace and the wellbeing and the abundance of paradise, our imaginations will never even come close to how wonderful and marvelous it is. Allah tells us

“No soul can imagine what delights are kept in store for them as a reward for what they used to do.”

[Chapter 32, verse 17]

Abu Hurayrah related that the prophet (peace be upon him) said that Allah has said,

“I have prepared for my righteous slaves things which will have never been seen by any eye, nor heard by any ear, nor imagined by any human being.”

(Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah also related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said

“there will be a caller in paradise who will announce truly you will always have good health and never fall ill, you will live forever and never die, and you will always be young and never grow old, and you will always be rich and never go poor for the words of Allah the exalted and the glorious are, “It will be announced to them, “This is Paradise awarded to you for what you used to do.””

[Chapter 7, verse 43] (Muslim)

The Gates of Paradise: If you recall, the gates of hell fire were seven but as for the gates of Paradise, then they are more.

Sahl Ibn Sa’ad related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that “Paradise has eight Gates, one of which is called Ar-Rayyan through which none of you will enter except for those who used to fast.”

(Bukhari)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that

“whoever gives two kinds of Sadaqah (charity) in the way of Allah will be summoned from all of the Gates of paradise. It will be said, O Allah’s slave, this is good and whoever is from among the people who used to do the prayer will be summoned from the gate of prayer. And whoever is from among the people who used to fight or do jihad, will be summoned from the gate of jihad and whoever is from among those who used to give Sadaqa or charity will be summoned from the gate of charity. And whoever is from among those who used to fast will be summoned from the gate of fasting, the gate of Rayyan” and Abu Bakr, one of the closest companions said, “whoever is summoned from any of these Gates will not feel any distress or need. Will there be anyone who will be summoned from all of these Gates?” The prophet replied “Yes, and I hope that you will be among them Abu Bakr.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

The Levels of Paradise: There are also many levels of Paradise. It is related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said

“Paradise has 100 degrees and the distance between each degree is like the distance between the heavens and the earth.”

(Bukhari)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“the people of Paradise will gaze at those who will dwell in its lofty mansions in the same way you look at a brilliant star on a far horizon in the East or in the West horizon and all of this will be because of their excellence over each other...”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

The highest degree in Paradise is called Firdaus:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“if you ask Allah for anything, ask Him for firdaus for it is the highest part of Paradise and the most exalted part of Paradise and above it is the throne of the Merciful from which the rivers of the garden gush forth.”

(Bukhari)

The Lowest Degree in Paradise: As for the lowest degree of paradise, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that

“Moses asked his Lord ‘who among the people of Paradise will be the lowest in rank?’ He replied, ‘it will be the last person to be allowed into Paradise from amongst those who deserve to enter it. I will say to him, ‘enter Paradise’ and he will reply, ‘O my Lord, how can I when it’s entire people have already settled in their dwellings and have been given what is due to them,’ it will be said to him, ‘will you be content if you have a garden the size of one of one of the Kings of the world?’ He will reply ‘I will be content, my Lord.’ He will say, ‘this is for you and this and this and this and this,’ after the fifth time, he will say ‘I am very content my Lord,’ He will say ‘it is all for you and 10 times more again like it, and for you is what your self desires and your eyes enjoy.’ He will say, ‘I am very content, my Lord.’ Moses then asks ‘who will be the highest in rank?’ He replied ‘whoever I have chosen, I’ve established their honor with my own hand and set a seal on it with what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has imagined...”

(Muslim)

The Dwellings in Paradise: Allah tells us,

“But those mindful of their Lord will have ‘elevated’ mansions, built one above the other, under which rivers flow. ‘That is’ the promise of Allah. ‘And’ Allah never fails in ‘His’ promise.”

[Chapter 39, verse 20]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

“that the tent in Paradise is like a hollow pole, which is 60 miles high and in every corner of the dwelling, the believer will have a family which cannot be seen by others.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

The Food of the People of Paradise: There’s so much detail but only a couple of things will be mentioned.

Allah says

“They will be waited on by eternal youths with cups, pitchers, and a drink ‘of pure wine’ from a flowing stream, that will cause them neither headache nor intoxication. ‘They will also be served’ any fruit they choose”

[Chapter 56, verse 17-21]

One of the companions of the Prophet, Anas Ibn Malik, said

“When the messenger of Allah was asked what Al-Kawthar is, he replied, “it is a river in Paradise which Allah has given me. It is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey with birds whose necks are like the necks of sacrificial animals.” Umar, a close follower of the Prophet remarked “they must have a pleasant life” and the messenger of Allah replied, “Those who eat them, have an even more pleasant life.”

(Tirmidhi)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said

“The people of Paradise eat and drink, but do not have to spit, defecate or blow their noses.” Someone asked, what happens to the food? And he replied, “They just burp and it will smell like musk and they glorify and praise Allah as easily as you breathe.”

(Muslim)

The Garments of the People of Paradise: Allah tells us

“It is they who will have the Gardens of Eternity, with rivers flowing under their feet. There they will be adorned with bracelets of gold, and wear green garments of fine silk and rich brocade, reclining there on ‘canopied’ couches. What a marvellous reward! And what a fabulous place to rest!”

[Chapter 18 verse 31]

One of the Prophet’s companions, Al-Bara Ibn Azib, narrated that

“the Prophet (peace be upon him) was given a silk garment as a gift and we started touching it with our hands and admiring it and the Prophet said, “Are you amazed with this? We said, ‘yes’ he said, “the handkerchiefs of Sa’ad Ibn Muadh (a close companion of the Prophet) in Paradise are better than this.”

(Bukhari)

The Attributes of the People of Paradise: The Prophet (peace and be upon him) said

“The people of Paradise will be without body hair, without beards and with their eyes anointed with kuhl (eyeliner) aged 33 years old.”

(Tirmidhi)

Paradise is full of surprises that Allah has not described, but reserved for his beloved servants. And he will definitely not leave any single one of them disappointed.

The Greatest Reward in Paradise: Allah says

“On that Day ‘some’ faces will be bright, looking at their Lord.”

[Chapter 75, verses 22-23].

Seeing Allah is considered to be the greatest reward.

The Prophet said

“when those who deserve the garden have entered the garden, and those who deserve the fire have entered the fire, Allah the Blessed Exalted will ask, would you like Me to give you anything more? They will reply, have you not illuminated our faces? Have you not brought us into the garden and saved us from the fire? He continued, then He will remove the veil and of everything given to them, nothing will be dearer to them than the vision of their Lord, the Mighty and Glorious. Then he recited the ayah of Allah “Those who do good will have the finest reward and ‘even’ more. Neither gloom nor disgrace will cover their faces. It is they who will be the residents of Paradise. They will be there forever.”

[Chapter 10, verse 26] (Muslim)

This indeed is the highest reward brothers and sisters, and all other awards are nothing compared to the moment when the people of the garden enjoy the vision of their Lord. They will experience a greatest bliss when they meet their Lord.

13. A DU'A (SUPPLICATION) TO BE MEMORIZED

“Oh, Allah I ask you for the delight of gazing upon your face and the eagerness to meeting you.” Allahumma Innī As'aluka Ladh dhata an-Nazari ilā Wajhika wash Shawqa ilā Liqā'ik.

(Nisa'i)

14. QUICK QUIZ



- Why is remembering death so important?
- What are the recommended actions to do when dying?
- How many angels will question us in the grave and what questions will they ask?
- What is the name of the highest level in paradise?

15. CONCLUSION

We have now reached the end of this lesson and the end of this course! May Allah accept your dedication and all your efforts, and may He make them fruitful.

Before you go, for one last time, write down the most empowering point you have learnt in this lesson on the hereafter? Make a note of it.

Also, because it's the last lesson, I want you to 'Take the Step' ...but two steps!

- 1] Choose one action that you are committed to stopping from today that will stop the wrath of your Lord.
- 2] Choose one action that you are committed to and start from today that will help you attain the pleasure of your Lord.

This course is only the very beginning of your journey towards seeking more knowledge about Islam. There are so many more things that you have yet to learn but this is the foundation. I hope that - insha Allah - you have the eagerness and the enthusiasm to continue your journey in learning more about Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and that you are regular in your prayers.

I ask Allah to accept your good deeds, that He gives you steadfastness, that He allows us all to live and die upon Islam, and I hope that you benefited from this course!

Step by Step