

The Rights of the Children and Parents

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Imam Ali said:

A child's right over his/her parents is to choose him a good name, to give him the proper upbringing and to teach him the Quran.

[Nahj ul-Balaghah, Hikmat, p399]

The Path to Prosperity

At first we will mention the following words from the Commander of the Faithful about prosperity. These divine and wise words have risen out of his heavenly heart to guide man towards prosperity. In response to one who asked what prosperity is he said: Prosperity does not depend on having more wealth, children, but it depends on having more knowledge, patience and perseverance; and on being proud of your worshipping of God. Thank God if you have good behavior. Ask God for forgiveness, if you do bad deeds.

There is no property in this world for anyone except those who have committed sins and repented; and those who have striven to do good deeds. Deeds which are done with piety are not trivial. How can such deeds be so small if they are accepted? [Nahj ul-Balaghah,

Commented on by Ibn Abel Hadid, v.18, p.250]

In these divine sayings three facts have been pointed out: being knowledge; perseverance; and the application of both which is God's worship. It is also mentioned that knowledge, perseverance and their application should be void of sin to be accepted by God. Knowledge of an impious one, perseverance mixed with sin, and worship without piety are all sources of harm or a waste of time.

Those who achieved something in this world achieved it through knowledge and wisdom, worship and repentance, and piety and abstinence. The uninformed and the unwise; the weak and the impatient; the slaves of lust and carnal desires; the ones who delve in sin; and the refugees from good deeds are all useless folks who are a source of harm.

We can conclude from these divine words that parents must first realize their Islamic duties towards their children, and then patiently perform their duties. They should be happy and proud of doing these duties, and thank God for enabling them to attend to the needs of their children, and respect their rights.

If they have had some shortcomings in performing their duties, they should ask God to forgive

them. They should be pious in all aspects so that their efforts are not wasted. There is no doubt that attending to the needs of the children, and striving to provide for them is a great form of worship and a good deed which will be rewarded both here and in the Hereafter.

Children's Rights

The Prophet (Pbuh) said:

The rights of the child over the father consist of teaching him/her writing, swimming and shooting, and should only feed him/her clean and lawfully-earned food.

Of course, one need not directly perform these duties. If the father just sends his child to school, and swimming and shooting classes, he has done his job. The duty of feeding them only lawfully earned food is really important, and one must be very careful about this so that no problems arise here or in the Hereafter.

How good it would be if there were sports clubs and mosques next to all our schools so that our children could go to learn how to swim or shoot after their studies, or could go to the mosque to learn religious matters. Thus, in addition to physical and mental development, they would receive spiritual training too.

Literacy, swimming, shooting and eating lawfully earned food are four sources of power for the children. Once they are equipped with these, they will be safe from many dangers. Pursuit of such activities shall fill the free time of the youth, and is very effective in balancing out their instincts and sexual energy. In the book entitled "Mukhlaf", Sheik Bahayee has narrated that a man called Hassan said:

Should I find a bit of lawfully earned bread, I will dry it; grind it firmly until it turns into powder, and keep it. Then whenever someone comes to me with an illness being difficult to cure, I will feed him with a bit of it so that he gets cured.

The Effects of Lawfully or Unlawfully Obtained Food

I heard the following from one of the great religious scholars: When I studied in Qum as a student of Imam Khomeini, I used to go to the villages for preaching during the first ten days of the month of Muharram. I went to Imam Khomeini and asked him for permission to go to a new village to preach for which I had been invited to do so.

The Imam prayed for me and advised me on how to treat the people and preach. I went to that village. When I entered that village which had no more than two to three thousand residents, I saw a religious-looking farmer who asked if I had come there to preach. When I replied positively, he told me to only preach about the lawful and the unlawful as ordained by God.

This, he said, is what they need to know the most about since they do not care about it. Then he asked me not to go to anyone's house except his since he is the only one who strictly watches out for the divinely ordained lawful and unlawful. He added that I would be more enlightened and preach better if I dined at his house. So I went to stay at his house, and everything was fine just as he had predicted. I could deliver a good speech whenever I wanted to preach in the mosque. He used to leave the house early each morning to go to the field, and I left the house with him. He would come to the mosque for evening prayers, and we returned to his house together after the preaching.

One day I accepted someone else's invitation to go to his house. I did not inform my host. When I wanted to preach that night I was not at ease. The audience did not notice anything but I had a hard time getting words out of my mouth! My host who was among the audience noticed my unusual state, and gave me a few bad looks which implied his objection to what I had done.

When we went back to his house that night, he asked me why I went to someone else's house to eat that day. He stated that he realized this from the way I preached. He ordered me not to go to anyone else's house to eat for the rest of the duration of my stay there. He also advised me never again to eat unlawfully obtained food and be careful about whom I associate with. Once again I shall remind you about what to feed your children by stating the divine words of the Prophet:

Do not take home anything but what is lawfully earned for your family's daily bread.

Sheik Zahed

Sheik Muhammad Husayn Zahed was a noble scholar in Tehran. He was a real mystic who attracted many young fellows to the mosque or religious ceremonies and gave them religious training. He once told me that he was invited to a place where he should not have gone. He had only one ice cream there. When he got up at night to perform his ablutions in preparation for prayers, and then he fell down the stairs.

He got injured and his wife treated the wound on his forehead. He could not pray due to the pain, and fell asleep. Then he heard a voice asking him why he had eaten that ice cream. He woke up and realized that his injured head was a penalty for committing that sin. The Prophet (Pbuh) said:

The child's right over his/her father is that a good name be chosen for him/her, the provision of the means for his/her marriage when the time comes, and teaching him/her how to read and write. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.10, p.720].

A man asked the Prophet (Pbuh) what rights do his children have over him? He replied: Choose good names for them, teach them proper behavior and place them in good position.

[Ibid]

He also said:

If a child grows up and gets ready for marriage, and the father can provide for his/her marriage but does not do so, then the father is responsible for any sin committed by the child. [Ibid].

The Commander of the Faithful said: The rights of a child over his/her father include the choice of a good name, good upbringing and teaching him/her the Quran. One of the men from the Ansar asked Imam Sadiq whom should he treat kindly? He replied: Your parents. He said they have perished. The Imam said: Treat your children kindly. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.104, p.98]

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Adorn your children with the following three characteristics: Love for your Prophet, love for the Household of the Prophet, and reading the Quran. It is the duty of the father to acquaint the children with the Prophet (Pbuh) and the pure Household of the Prophet. This should start from childhood so that the child grows up with their love and recognition. The child can also coordinate all his/her life affairs with them, and adopt no other model to follow. This is because love of the Prophet, of the Imams, and following them are the best sources of prosperity for man.

A Good Memory

The first time I was invited to preach in Tabriz, I asked those who invited me to get me a moderate-priced place to stay in the poor areas of town. They accepted my condition. When I reached Tabriz, I was housed in a two-story building. The house owner lived in one story and the other story was used for religious meetings. He was a common man with a moderate income.

He was religious. He asked me if I knew the reason why I was housed there? I told him that I had set up such a condition. He then told me that was not so. He said that he had attended one of the religious meetings I had held in Mashhad on the day of Arafah. At the end of that day, he had gone to the shrine of Imam Reza and prayed to house me if I should ever come to preach in Tabriz. He believed that Imam Reza had planned this.

He said that he and his family are all dedicated to serve the Household of the Prophet, and those who serve them. He then told me the following which was related to his father. He said his father used to say prayers at night throughout his whole life. He would kindly wake up his son since the age of thirteen and tell him that at night when everybody is sleeping, it is the best time to cry for the oppressions done to Imam Husayn. He told me that they are loyal to Imam

Husayn and will not quit serving him until they die and join him in the Hereafter to serve him again. Imam Sadiq said:
A child should play for seven years, then study the book for another seven years, and then learn about lawfully and unlawfully obtained goods during the next seven years. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.10, p.222]

The Commander of the Faithful said:
Ask your children to seek knowledge. [Ibid]

He also said:
Teach your children the prayer, and be serious about their prayers when they mature. We read in three important Prophetic traditions that the parents may be cursed by the children if they do not honor their rights, and the same holds for the children. Both sides are required to honor each other's rights. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p.70; Mizan al-Hikmat, v.10, p.723]

A Note to Parents

The Prophet (Pbuh) said:
A good deed is recorded for whoever kisses his/her child. God will be pleased in the Hereafter with whoever pleases his/her child. The parents who teach their children the Quran shall be called in the Hereafter and given two dresses which are so shiny that will illuminate the residents of Heaven. [Furu al-Kafi, v.6, p.49]

The Prophet (Pbuh) said:
Whoever has a small child, should play childish games with him. [Vasa'il, v.15, p.203]
The Prophet (Pbuh) said:
Whoever kindly raises his daughter, kindly trains her, and feeds her from whatever God has bestowed upon him, shall have prepared himself a shelter from the Fire of Hell. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.10, pp.705-707].

The Prophet (Pbuh) has made the following recommendations regarding children:
Fear God and treat your children equally.[Ibid]
Do not treat your children differently in terms of gifts, just as you like to be treated fairly. [Ibid]
God likes you to treat your children equally even when kissing them.[Ibid]
The Prophet (Pbuh) saw a man with two kids. He was kissing one and ignoring the other. He told him he should treat them equally, and kiss both of them if he wants to kiss them. [Ibid]

The Rights of the Parents

Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, And that ye be kind to parents. [Holy

A Heavy Burden

Honoring the rights of the parents is a really heavy burden which only those who truly believe in God and the Hereafter can bear. The Holy Quran has stated the characters of a believer in: The answer of the Believers, when summoned to God and His Apostle, in order that He may judge between them, is no other than this: They say, "We hear and we obey": It is such as these that will attain felicity. [Holy Quran: Nur: 24:51-52]

Note the following verse regarding the rights of the parents: Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, And that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, But address them in terms of honor. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: My Lord! bestow on them thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood. [Holy Quran: Banilsrail: 17:23-24]

The fact that the rights of the parents are placed right after the rights of God shows the importance of these rights. This has been discussed in detail in the highly valuable book "Kafi, v.2, p.157. A tradition from Imam Sadiq has been written there. Usul al-Kafi is an authentic book due to the author being the noble, late Kolayni who lived during the period of the short absence of the twelfth Imam, its contents, and their narrators being close to the times of the Immaculate Imams. Its order and the attention it has received make it one of the most important sources of religious principles.

Then no one's excuse shall be accepted after the interpretation of this important verse narrated from Imam Sadiq regarding the rights of parents. When Imam Sadiq was asked about the meaning of this verse, he said: When it is said treat your parents kindly it is meant that you should associate with them patiently and treat them kindly; do not encounter them with a bad attitude; provide for them whatever they may need without their having to ask for it, even if they are rich; and take them something whenever you go to visit them. Has not God said: By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love; [Holy Quran: Al-i-Imran: 3:92] Imam Sadiq said:

If one of your parents or both of them were old, impatient and weak so much so that it bothers you, do not say the least thing to them. Do not raise your voice even if they hit you. Speak with them kindly, using only noble words. If they try to hit you again, just tell them may God forgive both of you.

These are noble words. Then Imam Sadiq instructs us to be most humble with them; to look at

them with passion; to always honor them and to never walk in advance. He says you must pray for them to receive God's Mercy since they raised you from childhood till now. In another verse

God said: And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command),"Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal. But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear their company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love): in the End the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did." [Holy Quran: Luqman: 31:14-15]

An Amazing Point

Once he was appointed to the Prophethood, Moses was ordered to use gentle speech when dealing with the Pharaoh. He asked the reason why and was told that Pharaoh had spent fifteen years of his life to raise him, and had suffered much hardship to raise him from when he was a baby until he matured. Then he had the rights of parents and Moses should not talk in harsh words with him.

A Delicate Issue

In the Quranic interpretation called Menhaj, we read the following regarding the verse. Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter (and care)? [Holy Quran: Dhuha: 93:6] God the Almighty told the Prophet (Pbuh) that He took away his father before his birth, and took away his mother when he was still a child. This was done because the Prophet (Pbuh) would have had a great difficulty in honoring the rights of his parents, given his especial circumstances as a Prophet of God.

Traditions Regarding Parent's Rights

A narrator asked Imam Sadiq: Which of our deeds are the best? He replied: Being punctual about praying, being kind to parents, and fighting in the way of God. [Kafi, v.2, p.158] Imam

Sadiq said:

What prevents you from treating your parents kindly whether they are living or have passed away. One asked the Imam what he should do for his parents who have passed away. He replied: Pray, give charity, go on the Hajj pilgrimage and fast on their behalf.[Kafi; v.2, p.159]

Zacharias Serves His Parents

Zacharias, the son of Abraham, said he was a strict Christian, and then became a Muslim. He said he was happy and went to Mecca to see Imam Sadiq. Imam Sadiq told him to ask any questions he wished to ask. Then he told Imam Sadiq that his family members were all Christian.

His mother was blind, and he had to live with them since his father had no one else to rely on. He said his parents liked him to eat and drink from the same set of dishes. Imam Sadiq asked him if his parents ate any pork. He replied no. Then he asked if they touched any pigs? He answered no. Then Imam Sadiq ordered him not to leave their house; not to separate from his mother; to take care of her; to bathe her; to change her clothes; and to feed her.

He said he followed all these instructions upon his return to Kufa. Then his mother told him to tell her the truth about having become a Muslim. Then he told her yes, and said he had been ordered by his living leader, Imam Sadiq who was a descendant of the Prophet (Pbuh), to perform all these services. His mother asked him if he was the Prophet. He replied no.

He is the sixth Imam and is the descendant of the Prophet. The mother replied no: The things you do for me are the decrees of the Prophets of God. I am blind, but I realize that your religion is better than mine. I want you to guide me towards your religion. Then he guided his mother to become a Muslim, and she performed her noon prayers with him. At eve, she asked to say his evening prayers and let her say her prayers with him. She did so, and passed away after she had finished her prayers.

Then he remembered that Imam Sadiq had instructed him to bury his mother by himself if she passed away. He invited the Shiites early the next morning. Then they told him to call in her priest. He told them that she was a Muslim, and they helped him to bury her. [Vasa'il, v.21, p.491]. Jaber Jafi said the following: I was in the presence of Imam Sadiq. A man came and said: My parents are Sunni and very strict in their ways so how should I treat them? Imam asked him how he treats real Shiites. He replied with love, and assist them in solving their problems. Imam said: Treat your parents likewise. [Ibid, p.490]

Imam Baqir said:

A young fellow served his parents well during their lifetime. However, his parents willed that he should repay a loan they could not. He refused to do so, and did not even ask God to forgive them. For this reason, God ordered that he be registered as one who is damned by his parents. Another child who was damned by his parents during his lifetime, paid back their debts after they passed away, and sought God's forgiveness for them, and was registered amongst those who treat their parents well. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p.59].

Imam Sadiq has been narrated as saying the following in the book called "Amali:

Moses saw a beautiful face in the shade of heaven. He asked whose shadow was over him? He was told he was one who has really treated his parents well and had never gossiped or caused disunion.

The sixth Imam said:

If you desire death to be easy for you, visit your relatives and be kind to your parents. Then the angel of death will be told to take it easy on you, and you will not become poor during your lifetime.

Next to the Ka'aba a man asked Abuzar why he looked at Ali's face a lot. He replied that when he was next to the Prophet (Pbuh) and there was not any distance between him and the Imam, the Prophet, told him: Looking at Ali's face and kindly looking at one's parents is considered to be worship. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.38, p.196]

Imam Ali said:

Accept all your parents orders, except for sinning.

The seventh Imam said:

A man asked the Prophet (Pbuh) to explain the rights of the father. He said: Do not call him by his name. Do not walk ahead of him. Do not sit down before he does, and do not swear at him.

[Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p.45]

Imam Sadiq said:

Three things are obligatory for children regarding their parents. They should always be grateful to them; they should accept their advice on all matters except sinning, and they should always wish them well. [Tuhaf ul-Uqool, v.47, p.238].

The Prophet (Pbuh) said that the following statement implies parents' damnation:

Do whatever you wish, I will not forgive you. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, pp.61-74] He also said:

Two things are quickly penalized in this world. They are being damned by one's parents and committing fornication. [Ibid] He also said:

Anyone who makes his/her parents really sad, is damned by them. [Ibid] The sixth Imam said:

Looking meanly at parents causes damnation.

A man told the Prophet: There is no evil deed which I have not done. Is there any way for me to repent? The Prophet (Pbuh) asked him if his parents were alive. He replied that his mother had passed away, but his father was alive. He told him to go and treat his father kindly so that his sins be forgiven. When the man left the mosque, the Prophet (Pbuh) said: He would have been closer to forgiveness by God, if his mother was still alive. Moses asked God for some recommendations three times. Then he was twice recommended to treat his mother well, and

once to treat his father well. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.13, p.330]

Imam Baqir said:

One is not free in the following three cases: He is not free to do as he pleases in regards to what he is entrusted with, his promise, and being kind to his parents. [Vasa'il, v.21, p.490].

Sheik Ansari and His Mother

The great jurisprudent, and noble scholar called Sheik Ansari used to carry his mother on his back to the public bath house, and would then take her back home after her bath was finished. He used to come to kiss her hands at night, and would not leave the house without her permission. After she died, he cried a lot saying that he cries because he is now deprived of the great blessing of serving her. He compensated for all of her missed prayers by praying even though he was really busy teaching and had many who came to visit him. Although his mother was one of the most religious women at that time, he performed all those duties.

Mother's Damnation

A young man was about to die. The Prophet (Pbuh) came to visit him, and told him to profess to God's unity and his Prophethood. He turned away his face and refused to profess. The Prophet (Pbuh) asked if he had a mother. He replied positively. He called her in and asked if she was not pleased with him. She replied positively.

The Prophet (Pbuh) asked her to forgive him since he could not profess to God's unity. She said he had hurt her and she was upset with him. The Prophet (Pbuh) asked her to forgive him for the sake of the Prophet. She agreed and forgave her son. Then the Prophet (Pbuh) asked the young man to profess to God's unity and his Prophethood. The man uttered the words. Then the Prophet (Pbuh) asked him why he had not uttered it the first time. The man said a scary dragon would attack him and he could not talk. He added that now it had left and he could talk.[Manazel al-Akherat, Mohades Qumi].

Imam Sajjad said:

Note the following regarding your mother. She carried you for nearly nine months in her womb, no one else could do so. She dedicated her love to you, no one else would do so; she protected you with all her existence, fed you and was hungry herself; gave you things to drink; and she remained thirsty herself; she clothed you, and did not care for her own clothing; she felt hot, but protected you from heat; she stayed up to care for you at night; and protected you in all circumstances so that she may have a child like you. You cannot be grateful enough for all she did unless God helps you. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.14, p.6]

Hakam Nami said that he told the sixth Imam: My father had donated a house to me, and he now plans to move back into it. The Imam said: Your father's deed is not good, but do not fight [back if he fights with you; and talk calmly with him, if he yells at you. [Vasa'il, v.18, p.224