

Core Curriculum

3 Foundations of Islam - Obligatory Acts

3.5 **The Five Categories of Islamic Law**

INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Welcome back to the Muslim Converts Channel!

There are five categories of law in Islam.

They are the following: wājib, mustahab, mubāh, makrūh and harām. In this lesson, we will explain what these terms mean and give appropriate examples to help you understand them better.

BODY OF TEXT

The Messenger of Allah (s) once said: The halal is clear and the haram is clear, and between them are matters unclear that are unknown to most people. Whoever is wary of these unclear matters has absolved his religion and honor. And whoever indulges in them has indulged in the haram. It is like a shepherd who herds his sheep too close to preserved sanctuary, and they will eventually graze in it. Every king has a sanctuary, and the sanctuary of Allah is what He has made haram. There lies within the body a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the whole body is sound; and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted. Verily this piece is the heart.

Every single action we do, or situation we put ourselves in will affect our souls for the good or for the bad. For this reason, Allah has outlined and set guidelines and boundaries on everything we do so that our hearts

may be protected from pollutants.

In order to nurture us, God has set five categories in the Sharī‘a (or Islamic law). They are the following:

1. **Wājib:** Wājib means that something is necessary and obligatory. It means that if we don't perform this duty, then we become disobedient to God and are sinful. We have plenty of duties in Islam that are obligatory, like respecting our parents, praying, fasting, going to Hajj etc. Within the category of wājib, there is something called fard.

Fard is a wājib act that is explicitly found in the Qur'an. If we are to translate it to English, probably the best term would be "Qur'anic obligation." Prayer and fasting are good examples of acts that are fard in Islam since they are explicitly in the Qur'an. Fard or wājib are themselves divided into two further categories. These are called fard of wājib kifāya, and fard or wājib ‘ayn. Kifāya means that something obligatory upon community until a certain number of people fulfill the obligation. When the obligation is fulfilled by some members of the community, then the others become free from the duty.

However, if no one fulfills the obligation, then the sin is on all of the Islamic community. An example of this is becoming an Islamic judge (qādī). Many Muslim scholars believe that the Muslim ummah must produce judges. As long as there is a sufficient number of people becoming judges, others are relieved of the duty.

‘Ayn on the other hand means that something is obligatory for everyone. A good example of this is prayer. It is incumbent on every single individual who is eligible for prayer. So if you're the right age, sane and conscious, you have no choice but to pray.

1. **Mustahab:** Mustahab means recommended. It means that the act in question is not obligatory but if one does it he or she will receive tremendous rewards from God. An example of a mustahab act is performing the minor ablution (wūdū) before sleep.
2. **Makrūh:** Makrūh means disliked. If you do it, you're not sinning, but if you

keep away from it, then you will get rewards from Allah. An example of a makrūh act is divorce. It is permissible, however, it is hated by Allah. If one abstains from it, one will gain rewards from God in the Hereafter.

3. Harām: Hāram means forbidden. If you do it, then you have sinned. An example of a harām act is eating pork.
4. Mubāh: Mubāh is an action that is neutral, it is neither wajib, mustahab, makruh or haram. An example is drinking water regularly. If, however, you drink water so that you can stay fit and serve God better, then you will get rewards.

Remember that all of these acts are subject to change depending on conditions. Something may be wājib like fasting, however, if it becomes really dangerous for your health, then it becomes haram on you. The same thing does for a mustahab act. If a mustahab act impedes on your wājib acts, then the mustahab act becomes impermissible for you.

Again, something may be harām for us, but under certain conditions it may become wājib. For example, if you're stuck in a desert and you have nothing to eat and drink except for wine and pork and you see that you may die from hunger and thirst, then it becomes wājib on you to drink wine and eat pork!

On this subject, the Qur'an states:

But as for him who is forced by severe hunger, with no inclination to sin (i.e. the forbidden meats like pork) then surely, Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Chapter 5, verse 3 of the Holy Qur'an)

So remember, the guiding force and light behind all of these acts are our intentions.

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu 'Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh