

Core Curriculum

5 The Qur'an and Hadith

5.1 Islam and Other Religions

INTRODUCTION

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

Welcome back to our channel! Up until this point we’ve spoken a lot about Islam. We’ve covered quite a number of topics, from Islamic beliefs to Islamic practices. We’ve talked about law and we’ve also talked about spirituality.

One thing we haven’t talked about is Islam’s relationship with other religions. What does Islam say about other religions? What does it say about people of other faiths? How does Islam treat people of other religions?

These questions are really important given that not everyone in the world is Muslim. For those of us who are living here in the West, this question is even more urgent for the majority of people that most of us tend to deal with, whether it is at work or school, are non-Muslim. For those of us who are converts to Islam where most of our families are non-Muslim, these questions are even more pertinent.

In this lesson, we will overview some of the basic elements of Islam concerning its views and treatment of people of other faiths.

BODY OF TEXT

The Prophet Muhammad (s) once said:

“Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on non-Muslims, or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment.”

He also said:

“Whoever kills a person who has made peace with the Muslims will never smell the fragrance of Paradise.”

The Qur’an makes a distinction between two groups, the People of the Book (Ahl al-Kitāb) and polytheists and idol worshipers (mushrikīn). The mushrikīn are those who believe in, and worship gods other than Allah. The Ahl al-Kitāb refers to Jews, Christians and Sabians which are all, or for the most part, Abrahamic religions.

This means that the religions of the Ahl al-Kitāb can trace themselves back to the universal monotheistic message of the Prophet Abraham (as). There are a few fundamental differences between these two groups and how Islam views them.

In terms of the mushrikīn, Islam believes that such beliefs are deviant and contradict the truth and reality. In fact, Islam goes as far as believing that worshiping idols is in essence a Satanic activity. As such, there is no truth behind idol worship but it is instead a deviation of God’s plan for humanity.

The Ahl al-Kitāb, or People of the Book, trace their origins back to a divinely revealed religion and a divinely inspired Prophet. Islam, for example, believes in Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them both), their teachings as well as the Divine Books that were given to them by God.

One cannot be a Muslim without belief in the divine nature of these religions. For this reason, Islam will allow Muslims to marry non-Muslims under specific conditions and contexts whereas under no circumstances does Islam allow Muslims to marry idol worshipers.

Even though Islam may believe that other religions are false, or have been distorted from their original true message, it in no way wishes to disrespect or insult them. The Qur’an for example

states the following:

And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do. (Chapter 6, verse 108 of the Holy Qur'an)

The Qur'an is stating a simple rule. If you want others to respect you and your religion, you need to be kind enough to show them the same amount of respect. Disrespecting others is just a recipe for mutual fighting between human beings which the Qur'an wants to avoid completely. But there is another problem as well.

Some people think that respecting another person or system of belief means that one needs to accept it. This is absolutely incorrect. The Qur'an is very clear throughout its pages on the incorrectness of religions other than Islam. Respect in the Qur'anic view, however, means that one's discussion or relating to others should not result in insults or mockery no matter how incorrect the religion may be. One must always uphold the highest of manners and be polite and respectful.

This is an important point to consider for those who interact with non-Muslims regularly whether they are co-workers, classmates or family. Taking a condescending tone and putting someone down is a recipe for making them hate Islam. The above verse is implying just that. If you want to bring someone of another religion to come into the light of Islam, you need to be respectful and uphold the best moral character or risk alienating them from Islam forever by having them insult Islam. The Prophet (s) brought people into Islam mainly due to his impeccable respect and manners:

So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were gentle with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]. (Chapter 3, verse 159 of the Holy Qur'an)

The Qur'an is thus teaching us that the essence of Islam's relation to other religions, and by extension, what it expects from Muslims and how they relate to non-Muslims, is that of

gentleness, kindness and compassion. It is not taking away their rights, patronizing them or treating them like second class citizens. If a Muslim happens to mistreat a non-Muslim for no other reason than the person's religion, then he or she will be at fault according to Islam and answerable to God on the Day of Judgment.

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

5.2 What is the Qur'an? A Short Introduction to Islam's Holy Book

INTRODUCTION

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

Welcome back to the Muslim Convert Channel!

In this lesson, we will look into the nature of the Qur'an. We will look at who revealed it, and how it was revealed. We are also going to look at the purpose and aim of the Qur'an, as well as outside factors that enable the Qur'an's aims of guiding humankind to be realized.

BODY OF TEXT

Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah said:

"I saw the Messenger of Allah - upon whom be God's peace and blessings - in the course of his hajj pilgrimage on the day of 'Arafah. The Prophet (S) was seated on his camel [named] al-Qaswa', and was delivering a sermon. I heard him say: 'O people, I am leaving among you that which if you hold on to you shall never go astray: the Book of Allah and my kindred, my household.'"

The Qur'an is the Holy Book of Islam. It would be an incorrect statement to say that the book is simply divinely inspired. The Holy Qur'an is the literal word of God that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (s).

None of the words contained in the Qur'an are the words of the Messenger of Allah. Think

about it this way, if someone gives you a magazine article to read out loud which someone else has written, are you reading your own words or the words of someone else?

Obviously it's the words of someone else. The Qur'an functions in the same way, the words of God were delivered to the Prophet Muhammad (s) via the archangel Gabriel. The Prophet simply recited them to the people.

The Qur'an sometimes seems confusing to some people. Unlike many sections of the Bible, it's not really recounting stories from beginning to end, nor is it a straight forward philosophy book with a beginning, end and a conclusion.

Furthermore, it is often claimed that the Qur'an, that is, the physical book which we hold in our hands, contains all of the information of the world. Yet when someone takes a look at the book (which is of average size) one realizes that this is a claim that is hard to believe.

It's not that Islam is making these claims, but it is simply a misunderstanding. The Qur'an is a book of guidance. It contains all the central principals for the guidance of humankind.

The Qur'an says "And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darkneses of the earth and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear book. (Chapter 6, verse 59 of the Holy Qur'an)

The book here is in reference to al-lawh al-mahfūz, a divine tablet or book and not necessarily the Qur'an. This book contains knowledge of everything in the world and is different from physical Qur'an that we have in our hands.

The Qur'an is therefore a book of guidance for humankind. It contains all the central principals and guidelines we need in order to reach the salvation both as individuals and a collective Muslim community. In this sense, the Qur'an therefore acts like a constitution, that is, a guiding framework for our lives for avoiding sin, doing good works, having good manners and ultimately finding faith in God and success in the Hereafter.

The Qur'an is therefore not some super encyclopedia that contains all the details of the world. You wont', for example, find knowledge of computer programming in the Qur'an!

Many chapters and verses in the Qur'an are mixed and in non-chronological order. Topics do not always follow one another either. The reason for this is to make guidance easier. By reading a chapter, or part of a chapter, an individual reader will come across a variety of subjects thus giving him or her a good platform concerning how to lead the religious life.

Not many people will read the Qur'an from beginning to end. The Qur'an therefore solves this problem by putting many subjects within a small space where even the shortest read will give you ample information.

Despite the centrality of the Qur'an, it alone is not enough. Just like a constitution needs interpreters, so does the Qur'an. The Qur'an's interpreter is the Messenger of Allah (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as). The Qur'an thus needs a teacher so that humankind will be able to understand and implement the Qur'an properly.

Now obviously people today tend to differ about the Qur'an even while claiming to follow the Prophet (s). This is because not everything that was related from the Prophet (s) was actually uttered by him. Many people actively worked to distort his teachings about the Qur'an. This is why Allah implemented a safety mechanism, that is, the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), as a second set of teachers who would preserve the Prophet Muhammad's teachings about Islam and the Qur'an.

The Ahl al-Bayt (as), like the Prophet (s), are the infallible and sinless teachers of Islam. The Qur'an says:

Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the Prophet's Household (Ahl al-Bayt), and to purify you with an [extensive] purification. (Chapter 33, verse 33 of the Holy Qur'an)

So what does all of this mean? The Qur'an is a framework and constitution of guidance for humankind. The Prophet (s) is the teacher and explainer of the Qur'an. He also puts it into action.

However, the Prophet's (s) teachings may also get distorted by people of ill intention, so his Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the source of the Prophet's authentic teachings about Islam and the

Qur'an. They are also the perfect examples on how to put Islam and the Qur'an in action.

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

5.3 The Structure of the Holy Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

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

Welcome back to the Muslim Convert Channel!

In this lesson, we're going to be looking at the Qur'an on a more "structural" level. Here we will look into how the Qur'an is divided, the geographical and temporal division of verses, as well as the origins of its descent unto the earth and the reason why the Book was revealed in the Arabic language.

BODY OF TEXT

The Prophet Muhammad (s) once said:

"...when I was midway on the mountain, I heard a voice from heaven saying "O Muhammad! you are the apostle of Allah and I am Gabriel." I raised my head towards heaven to see who was speaking, and Gabriel in the form of a man with feet astride the horizon, saying, "O Muhammad! you are the apostle of Allah and I am Gabriel." I stood gazing at him moving neither forward nor backward, then I began to turn my face away from him, but towards whatever region of the sky I looked, I saw him as before."

Indeed, it is We who have sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Qur'an step by step. (Chapter 76, verse 23 of the Qur'an)

The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (s) by Allah during the month of Ramadan on what is known as the Night of Power or Laylat al-Qadr. Laylat al-Qadr, the night of the Qur'an's revelation, is the most important night of the Islamic calendar and praying on that night is the occasion through which Muslims can gain the most blessings from God. For

example, the Prophet (s) said the following about the greatness of Laylat al-Qadr:

“Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of earning reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven, and whoever stays up during Laylat al-Qadr out of faith and in the hope of earning reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven.”

The medium through which God revealed the Qur’an was the archangel Gabriel. The Qur’an was all revealed to the Prophet (s) at once, but it was gradually revealed to people over a span of two decades.

Each verse that was revealed to the Prophet (s) was revealed in a particular context. The reason for this is because each verse in the Qur’an has practical applicability. The teachings of the Qur’an are not abstract or theoretical, they are concrete and directly relevant to human life in this world as well as the Hereafter. The occasions of revelation in the Qur’an are what are called the *shan al-nuzūl*.

The occasions of revelation provide us with the historical context, moment, situation as well as the persons involved when the verse was revealed. Through this we are better able to apply the Qur’an’s verses in a practical way in most or all aspects of our lives. Some of the *shan al-nuzūl* are evident in the Qur’an, but others must be derived from the authentic hadiths or transmitted sayings of the Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as).

One *shan al-nuzūl* that the Qur’an provides us with are the divisions between Medinan and Meccan verses. Medinan verses are those verses that were revealed during the Prophet’s (s) stay in Medina. The Meccan verses were verses that were revealed during the Prophet’s (s) stay in Mecca.

A major indicator on whether or not a verse is, let’s say Medinan is the subject of its contents. If the verse is talking about Islamic rules, hypocrites, socio-political matters etc., we know the verse was revealed in Medina as this is where these subjects were dealt with. However, if the verses deal with matters of fundamental belief, polytheism, etc., then we know that the verse was likely to have been revealed in Mecca.

The Qur’an is divided into a 114 chapters, also in non-chronological order. The order of the Qur’an, its chapters as well as its verses were all set by the Prophet Muhammad (s) himself in

order to maximize the potential for guidance as we saw in our last lesson.

We know this as the Prophet Muhammad (s) himself was the one who compiled the Qur'an, it was only during the time of the third Caliph Uthman that Imām 'Alī (as) turned it into a standard book format to be mass produced.

The Qur'an is in the Arabic language. The Arabic language in itself is not holy, but the Arabic language of the Qur'an is. According to a hadīth from the sixth Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq (as), the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic because the Arabs at that time were the worst of people. Allah, as Imām al-Ṣādiq (as) explains, always sends Prophets and Scriptures to the worst of people.

According to Imām al-Sādiq (as), another reason why the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic is because the Arabs in their pride would never have accepted a book in a language other than Arabic.

As a sign of respect, Muslims must handle the Qur'an carefully and make sure to have upmost respect for it. This means that one should never leave it on the floor, or throw it. When touching the Qur'an, one must always have ritual purity, in other words, be in a state of wudū before touching its letters.

5.4 The Quran and 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 Convert Channel! Back in our section on the Furū' al-Dīn, we spoke a lot about Islamic law. One thing we did not really talk about are the sources of Islamic law. Where are they taken from? What source holds the most authority?

In this lesson, we'll briefly take a look at the sources of Islamic law and analyze how the Quran, Islam's holy book, is the most authoritative source of them all.

BODY OF TEXT

We have neglected nothing in the Book (Chapter 6, verse 38 of the Holy Qur'an)

This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah (Chapter 2, verse 2)

Islamic law has four major sources, they are the following in hierarchal rank:

1. Qur'an
2. Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as)
3. 'Aql (intellect)
4. Ijmā' (consensus of the community or scholars)

The Qur'an is the ultimate source of Islamic law. It sets the general principles on how we should understand the law. It sets the ethical and moral paradigms of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable behavior.

For example, the Qur'an rules against stealing the property of orphans or forcing women into prostitution. These rules are important for they set the parameters of how far we can interpret Islamic law. So if we take these two examples, we know that any interpretation that would somehow legalize forced prostitution or theft of an orphan's property would be totally invalid.

Allah says:

And give to the orphans their properties and do not substitute the defective [of your own] for the good [of theirs]. And do not consume their properties into your own. Indeed, that is ever a great sin. (Chapter 4, verse 2 of the Holy Qur'an)

He also says:

And do not compel your slave girls to prostitution, if they desire chastity, to seek [thereby] the temporary interests of worldly life. And if someone should compel them, then indeed, Allah is [to them], after their compulsion, Forgiving and Merciful. (Chapter 24, verse 33 of the Holy Qur'an)

Knowledge of the Qur'an is therefore essential in understanding Islamic law, especially in our modern world. We often see extremists committing many barbaric acts and justifying them

through a warped understanding of Islamic law.

But any in-depth reading of the Qur'an, and careful consideration of the moral and ethical principles that it preaches will make one quickly realize how unislamic the behavior of some violent extremists are.

The Qur'an, however, does not contain all of Islamic law. As we said, it sets the general principles, especially moral and ethical principles, which guide the law. For example, the Qur'an asks us to pray, but it does not tell us how many units of prayer we should perform. Similarly, it tells us to fast, but it does not give us the details as to how to fast.

So where are we supposed to get these details from? They are to be taken from the hadiths of the Messenger of God (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as). These hadiths give us the details, and the Qur'an gives us the general principles.

Why is this the case? Well think about it, if every single detail of Islamic law, or any other religious matter, was in the Qur'an, then the Qur'an would have endless volumes and it would become an impractical holy book! Imagine carrying a book that is hundreds of volumes long. Holy books are useful when we can carry them around and use them as sources of guidance!

The Qur'an and hadiths are therefore the originators and establishers of Islamic law. As the Qur'an commanded Muslims to perform deeds, the Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as) taught Muslims on how to perform them and shared all the important details that people needed to know.

Our third source of law is something we call 'aql. Aql is in reference to the human intellect. One of the tools of the intellect which is useful in the Qur'an is the power of inference which in Arabic is called istinbāt. Inference is sometimes used when Muslim scholars try to derive a specific law that may not be too clear both in the Qur'an and in the hadiths because the legal case at hand is unprecedented.

For example, we have a hadith from the Prophet and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) that "every intoxicant is forbidden" or "every thing that ruins your mind is forbidden." Some drugs, such as methamphetamines did not exist during the time of the Prophet or the Imams. However, with our intellects, we understand that modern drugs like methamphetamines ruin

the mind. As such, we can infer that these drugs are forbidden by Islamic law.

The other source is called *ijmā'* or consensus. Consensus can refer to multiple things, either consensus of scholars or consensus of the Islamic community. The idea behind this is that if Muslims agree on something, or at least scholars agree on a certain matter, then we should assume that the position is legally sound.

Now obviously there are many types of *ijmā'* in Islamic law, and it is a controversial source of law, especially among scholars. However, it does have some power in certain situations. For example, all Muslims agree that there are five obligatory prayers. The fact that all Muslims historically agreed on this is of great evidentiary value as it establishes, on a historical basis, that the Prophet (s) did in fact teach this.

Unfortunately, some people get boggled up in these details and forget the elephant in the room when we speak of Islamic law, namely the Qur'an. The Qur'an holds the number 1 say in Islamic law. Nothing supersedes it. No interpretation, or legal conclusion may contradict its ethical principles.

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

5.5 The Qur'an, Allah and Humankind

INTRODUCTION

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

Welcome back to Muslim Converts! The Qur'an is not just a book. The Qur'an is a relationship, As a relationship, it exists in a relational web on multiple levels. These include its relation to Allah, Islam as a religion, the Prophet, his Ahl al-Bayt (as), as well as the Islamic community and humanity as a whole.

In this lesson, we will briefly go over what the meaning of these relationships are and how they exist holistically.

BODY OF TEXT

And it was not [possible] for this Qur'an to be produced by other than Allah, but [it is] a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of the [former] Scripture, about which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the worlds. Or do they say [about the Prophet], "He invented it?" Say, "Then bring forth a surah like it and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allah, if you should be truthful." (Chapter 10, verses 37-38 of the Holy Qur'an)

The Prophet Muhammad (s) once said:

"The best of you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it"

He also said:

"Allah has His own people among mankind." They said: "O Messenger of Allah, who are they?" He said: "The people of the Qur'an, the people of Allah and those who are closest to Him"

The Qur'an is the holy word of God. It is an expression of Allah's will upon humankind in the form of a book. God's will is to guide people away from sins and spiritual diseases and towards salvation and spiritual healing.

The Qur'an says: This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah - (Chapter 2, verse 2 of the Holy Qur'an)

It also says:

Indeed, We sent down to you the Book for the people in truth. So whoever is guided - it is for [the benefit of] his soul; and whoever goes astray only goes astray to its detriment. And you are not a manager over them. (Chapter 39, verse 41 of the Holy Qur'an)

In this sense, the Qur'an is the foundation of all of Islam. The Qur'an sets the foundational beliefs of all Muslims, which includes tawhid, that is, belief in the absolute oneness of God, the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (s) as well as the reality of the Day of Judgment.

Many times over, we've seen how the Prophet (s) is the explainer of Islam's Holy Book. What

we haven't touched upon much, however, is how the Holy Qur'an is proof of the Messenger of Allah's (s) truthfulness, that is, it is a proof of his claim that he was indeed a Prophet from God. Every Prophet of Allah that wishes to establish himself as genuine Prophet must produce miracles.

The Qur'an was and is still the miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (s) for its sheer eloquence in Arabic was something which the Arabs of the time could not reproduce despite being having the top experts of Arabic eloquence in their communities.

One of the primary reasons for the existence of the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt was for them to expand and explain the Qur'an for us. Without the Ahl al-Bayt (as), the Qur'an remains incomplete, and similarly, without the Qur'an, the Ahl al-Bayt (as) cannot fulfill their mission.

Towards the end of his life, the Prophet (s) said:

"It seems the time approached when I shall be called away (by Allah) and I shall answer that call. I am leaving for you two precious things and if you adhere to them both, you will never go astray

after me. They are the Book of Allah and my Progeny, that is my Ahlul Bayt. The two shall never separate from each other until they come to me by the Pool (of Paradise)."

The Qur'an is not only a guidance for Muslims, but also for humankind. The Qur'an gives Muslims the general principles of how to lead an ethical and moral life, and it also shows them the basics of proper belief in God. It teaches them how to be kind, and how to avoid sin. But this is also relevant to humanity. Remember that the purpose of the Qur'an is to guide people towards salvation.

The Qur'an says:

The month of Ramadhan [is that] in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. (Chapter 2, verse 185 of the Holy Qur'an)

The Qur'an establishes the criterion or balance for what is truth and what is falsehood. It establishes the criterion for what is morally good and what is morally bad. For example, the

Qur'an says that there is only One God. This is not a subject that is up for a person's choice or taste, it is establishing a universal fact.

Similarly, when the Qur'an says that it is wrong to murder or commit adultery, it is not establishing a rule of Muslims only, but a general moral principal for all of humanity. According to the Qur'an, its core message is not supposed to be controversial. It is only controversial when people are ignorant and lack knowledge.

The Qur'an says:

Rather, they have denied that which they encompass not in knowledge and whose interpretation has not yet come to them. Thus did those before them deny. Then observe how was the end of the wrongdoers. (Chapter 10, verse 39 of the Holy Qur'an)

So here we can see the relational web between the Qur'an and the world. The Qur'an is the word of Allah (swt) and is meant to guide Muslims and humanity as a whole. It is also the proof which establishes the veracity of the Messenger of Allah's (s) claim to prophethood. It is also one of the existential reasons for why the Ahl al-Bayt (as) were there in the first place, namely as explainers and fulfillers of the Qur'anic message.

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

5.6 **Hadith and Sunnah, difference and variations**

INTRODUCTION

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

Welcome back to Muslim Converts!

In this lesson we're going to overview the difference between hadith and Sunnah, something which confuses many. We're then going to look at the role of the hadiths in the creation of Islamic law, and some of the different kinds of hadiths that exist out there. This lesson won't be about hadith reliability, that's for our next lesson!

BODY OF TEXT

And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware. And if you turn away - then know that upon Our Messenger is only [the responsibility for] clear notification. (Chapter 5, verse 92 of the Holy Qur'an)

Hadiths and Sunnah are often confusing terms for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The distinction between the two are sometimes hard to make so what we'll try to do here is try to unwrap some of these concepts so as to get a better understanding going.

Sunnah means tradition and practice. As such, Sunnah refers to the practice and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (s) and at times, that of his Ahl al-Bayt (as). Of course, everything the Prophet did was his own Sunnah, but in technical terms, sunnah refers to the good practices the Prophet did that are not necessarily obligatory. So, for example, one of the "sunnahs" of the Prophet was that he used to brush his teeth before prayer.

The following hadith is an example of Sunnah.

A companion of the Prophet related that the Messenger of Allah (s) would get up during the night and he would clean his mouth thoroughly with a brush.

Brushing teeth would therefore be called "Sunnah mustahabba" meaning "recommended Sunnah." Some Muslims are under the impression that every Sunnah of the Prophet (s) is necessarily recommended, but according to the school of Ahl al-Bayt (as), that is incorrect. There are practices of the Messenger of Allah (s) that from an Islamic perspective are neutral and would not necessarily be mustahabb.

For example, the Prophet (s) used to ride a camel which in a broad understanding would be considered a Sunnah of his, but this does not mean that it is recommended for Muslims to ride camels. Riding camels would be considered neutral and if anything, looked down upon in Islam if it acts as an impediment in one's life given that cars now exist!

So how do we know what is recommended and what is not? We know a Sunnah is recommended from a religious perspective when the Prophet (s) himself emphasized on people practicing it, or when the Ahl al-Bayt (as) notified us of its recommendation.

The following hadith is an example of a saying from the Prophet Muhammad (s) stating the recommended nature of brushing teeth:

“Were it not for the fact that I did not want to make things too hard for my ummah, I would have commanded them to use the toothbrush (siwāk) at every time of prayer.”

So what are hadiths and how are they different from the Sunnah? Hadith means “saying,” in other words, it refers to the transmitted sayings of the Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as). When we say transmitted, we mean that they were transmitted by a chain of people who heard the teachings of the Prophet and related it down onwards to other people until it was compiled into a book.

So as the Sunnah refers to the practices of the Prophet, the hadiths are the vehicles through which much of the Sunnah is transmitted to us from. Now whether or not hadiths are reliable is a discussion we will follow up on in the next lesson.

Remember that the word hadith literally means saying so it can also be another word for the saying of the Prophet as opposed to Sunnah which may refer to a practice instead. These multiple distinctions in so far as their several meanings are concerned are important to take into consideration. The best way to know is to look at the context of the hadith.

Not all hadiths are sayings of the Prophet (s), just like not all Sunnahs are the Sunnah of the Prophet (s). In addition to the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) having their Sunnah and Hadiths, so does Allah. So God’s treatment of humans throughout history would be considered His “Sunnah.”

We know that the Qur’an is the literal word of God, however, not everything God has said is in the Qur’an. These sayings or words of Allah were transmitted to us by the Prophet and made themselves not into the Qur’an but into the hadith books. These hadiths, as they are originally from Allah, are called Hadīth Qudsī, that is, Holy Hadiths!

The following is an example of a hadith qudsi that was related to us by the Messenger of Allah (s)

There are three (1) whose adversary I shall be on the Day of Resurrection: a man who has given his word by Me and has broken it; a man who has sold a free man (2) and has consumed

the price; and a man who has hired a workman, has exacted his due in full from him and has not given him his wage

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātu

5.7 The Reliability of Hadiths

INTRODUCTION

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

Welcome back to our channel!

The greatest elephant in the room when discussing hadiths is the question of their reliability. As we saw last time, a hadith is a saying of the Prophet or the Ahl al-Bayt (as) that is orally transmitted through a short or long chain of transmitters.

The objection that is often raised is, how do we know this system is reliable? Isn't this just hearsay? Hearsay, as we often experience nowadays, is not something that is reliable. In fact, it is often inadmissible in courts!

Any introductory study of hadiths will make us realize that Muslim scholars already pondered these self-evident questions from day one and as a result, set a system or science of verifying and sorting out what hadiths are reliable and which ones are not. In this lesson, we're going to go into some of the mechanisms that Muslim scholars developed over the centuries in trying to overcome some of these problems.

BODY OF TEXT

And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty (Chapter 59, verse 7 of the Holy Qur'an)

When Islam is attacked, it is often through the means hadiths. The idea is that hadiths are just hearsay and there is no way to know if people made mistakes or if the transmitters of the hadith are liars. Perhaps an issue that makes the matter even more complicated is how we have contradicting hadiths. Obviously if hadiths contradict each other, that means that they aren't reliable, right? Well, not necessarily!

So let's begin. Muslim scholars grade hadiths into a number of categories, the most popular of these categories are called *sahīh* (meaning reliable) and *daʿīf* (meaning weak). Obviously this does not exhaust the grading of categories for there are many more, but we just want to get an idea across at this point.

So a hadith is composed of a chain of transmitters. A chain of transmission in a hadith works like this. Imagine person A hears that the Prophet said X from person B. Person B says he heard the hadith from person C, and person D says he heard it from a companion of the Prophet (s) who was present when the Messenger of Allah (s) stated X.

So now if we go back to our question, how do we know these people are truthful? Early in Islam's history, Muslim scholars painstakingly researched about narrators. Often enough, they were contemporaries of these narrators. Through in depth study of these individuals, Muslim scholars would compile biographical dictionaries outlining their assessment of hadith narrators.

If all the narrators were reliable (both in their moral integrity and their memory) and the chain of transmission was unbroken, then the hadith would be labeled as *sahīh*, meaning authentic or reliable. If the chain of transmission contained people of dubious character, known to be dishonest, or at the very least, someone with a bad memory, then the hadith would be considered *daʿīf* or weak.

By no means did this mean that the hadith was reliable from a historical perspective. All it meant was that Muslims were giving the hadith the benefit of the doubt and a probable chance of being an authentic utterance of the Prophet (s) or his Ahl al-Bayt (as).

If there were two hadiths that contradicted one another, then Muslim scholars set a number of mechanisms to resolve them. For example, if a hadith stated that something X was haram, and another stated that it was halal, Muslim scholars reconciled them by stating that the prohibiting hadith simply meant that the issue was disliked (*makrūh*) and not literally forbidden.

If reconciliation was not possible, Muslim scholars often opted for the more reliable hadith and put aside the less reliable one.

As we said before, assessing chains of transmissions were not necessarily a means of

establishing the historical veracity of the hadith. The way we know whether or not a hadith is historically reliable is by assessing its tawātur, that is, the number of times it has been narrated through independent chains of transmission.

If there were enough independent chains of transmission relaying the same hadith, then it was understood that there would not have been a lapse of memory, or any kind of conspiracy to fool people into believing the hadith.

So for example, the hadith of Ghadīr is considered to be mutawātir, or having a high level of tawātur as it has innumerable independent chains of transmission. On this basis, we are certain that the Prophet (s) uttered the sermon concerning Imām ‘Alī’s (as) appointment as the Messenger of Allah’s successor.

Sunnis and Shias have their own major compendiums of hadith. The major hadith books of our Sunni brothers and sisters are the following:

Sahih al-Bukhari

Sahih Muslim

Sunan Abu Dawud

Jami al-Tirmidhi

Sunan al-Nasa’i

Sunan ibn Majah

Muwatta Imam Malik

The major compendiums of Shia hadiths are the following:

Kitab al-Kafi

Man Lā Yahduruhu al-Faqih

Tahdhib al-Ahkām

Al-Istibsār

Both of these sets of compendiums contain hadiths from the Prophet (s). Their major differences are the following:

The Prophetic hadiths in the Sunni compendiums are mostly transmitted through a select number of companions of the Prophet whereas most of the Prophetic hadiths in Shia books are transmitted through the Ahl al-Bayt (as) of the Messenger of Allah (s).

The Sunni hadith books contain many narrations from companions, whereas the Shia books will contain many, if not mostly, hadiths from the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). However, despite the Imams narrating most the hadiths, the Imams made sure to state that whatever they taught originated first from the Prophet. As such, nothing the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) said were from their own thoughts, they were all the teachings of the Messenger of Allah (s).

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

5.8 **A Reflection on Verses of the Holy Qur’an**

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! So far our way of approaching the audience has been through introducing various topics. Our aim this time is to do something a little different. We want to bring three verses from the Holy Qur’an and reflect on their possible meaning. There’s an important reason why we are doing this.

One of the unfortunate tendencies we find with some individuals today is that they sometimes find reading the Holy Scripture boring. This is not so much a problem with the text of the Qur’an, but the unfortunate state of the reader.

There are many reasons why this is the case, but here we’ll mention two. One of the primary reasons we get bored is because our interests and minds are largely shaped by the kind of lives we lead. Often enough, our primary concerns are with worldly things which are largely based on the pleasure of worldly gain and the fear of its loss. Our point here is not to say these are not legitimate concerns, but these concerns are a problem when they become the sole

object of our focus.

Now, how does this relate to the Qur'an? Well, when the world becomes the sole object of our focus and love, how can the subject material of the Qur'an, that is, the salvation of the human soul, be of any interest to him or her? Boredom is therefore not produced by the Qur'an, it is, instead, produced by the way we lead our lives.

A second reason is that a lot of commentaries on the Qur'an, although excellent works of scholarships, are often irrelevant to the lives Muslims live today. If they are relevant, the way they are written are often not very inviting and sometimes pedantic.

Here we will offer a very brief commentary or interpretation on the possible meaning of three verses in the Holy Qur'an concerning the Prophet Ya'qūb's (as) role as a parent. Our intention here is to try to tie the verses to modern experiences. We feel that this approach will further encourage daily reflections on Allah's Holy Book.

BODY OF TEXT

And they came to their father at night, weeping. They said, "O our father, indeed we went racing each other and left Joseph with our possessions, and a wolf ate him. But you would not believe us, even if we were truthful." And they brought upon his shirt false blood. [Jacob] said, "Rather, your souls have enticed you to something, so patience is most fitting. And Allah is the one sought for help against that which you describe." (Chapter 12, verses 16-18 of the Holy Qur'an)

Prophet Joseph (or Yusuf in Arabic) (as) was Prophet Jacob's (or Ya'qūb in Arabic) favorite son. Prophet Yusuf's (as) brothers were indeed jealous of their father's affection towards him. The brothers, out of jealousy, had wanted to get rid of Yusuf one way or another. They came up with a plan to take him on a trip. On that trip, they put him down a well and came back to their father with a fake bloody shirt claiming that their younger brother was eaten by a wolf.

Ya'qūb (as), as a Prophet and wise man, and was very much aware that his sons were lying. He knew that they were guilty, but instead of punishing them, or yelling at them, he decided that patience was better. The question here is why? Didn't the brothers commit a crime and weren't they deserving of punishment?

Here comes the wisdom of Ya'qūb. His guilty sons were already distant from the path of Allah (swt) and His religion. He knew that at this point there was nothing he could do to bring his son back. He knew that by punishing his older sons nothing would change Yusuf's situation.

The only thing that would happen would be that his sons would be driven away further from him and from Allah (swt). Ya'qūb therefore swallowed his pain and opted for patience lest his reaction drive his sons further way from the path of Allah.

What is the primary reason why our children lie to us? One of the main reasons why our children lie to us is because they have difficulty trusting us. They believe that by telling us the truth they will get punished or be shamed.

The fact that they have to lie to us may indicate that they are distant and aliened from us, at least to a certain extent. As parents, we are often the source of religion for our children. It is quite common to see that the alienation of children from their parents also results in alienation from religion, and in our case, alienation from Islam.

Sometimes this alienation is not our doing as parents. It is the product of many factors, including the time and place the children were raised which are different than ours. It is also the kinds of friends they have, and/or the type of media they consume. Whatever the reason may be, Ya'qūb (as) teaches us that our primary role and gut reaction with our children is not to attack or punish them, but to show beautiful patience (sabr).

Through patience, we have the possibility of lessening this alienation and gap between us and our children. As the story of Ya'qūb shows, in the end, his sons, through years of patience and kindness, found their way back into assuming good moral character, turning away from sin, and living the Godly path.

Notice how much we unraveled from the Qur'an from just a brief meditation over a few verses. Now imagine how much more treasure we can dig out if we reflect even more, and take, let's say, a 100 verses. How many life lessons can we derive from them?!

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

Hadith al-Thaqalayn

INTRODUCTION

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

Welcome back to the Muslim Convert channel! In today's lesson, we're going to look at the most famous hadith of the Islamic tradition, namely hadith al-Thaqalayn. Hadith al-Thaqalayn was one of the last sermons of the Prophet (s) where he established what the sources of guidance would be for the Muslim community after him.

BODY OF TEXT

"I, Husayn ibn Sabrah and ‘Umar ibn Muslim went to see Zayd ibn Arqam. When we sat down with him, Husayn said to him, 'O Zayd, you have been greatly fortunate. You have seen the Messenger of Allah, heard his speech, fought with him in battles and have prayed behind him. Indeed, O Zayd, you have been enormously fortunate. Narrate to us what you have heard from the Messenger of Allah.'" Zayd said: 'One day the Messenger of Allah, addressed us near a pond called Khumm between Makkah and Madinah. He praised God and extolled Him and preached and reminded (us). Then he said, "Lo, O people, I am only a human being and I am about to respond to the messenger of my Lord [i.e. the call of death]. I am leaving behind two precious things (thaqalayn) among you. The first of the two is the Book of Allah. In it is guidance and light. So get hold of the Book of Allah and adhere to it." Then he urged and motivated (us) regarding the Book of Allah. Then he said, "And my Ahlul Bayt (family). I urge you to remember God regarding my Ahlul Bayt. I urge you to remember God regarding my Ahlul Bayt. I urge you to remember God regarding my Ahlul Bayt" (Sahih Muslim)

The hadith we just read is called hadith al-thaqalayn. Thaqalayn means the two weighty or precious things. The term weighty is meant to represent the sense of their importance in so far as guidance is concerned. These two weighty things in the hadith we just read were the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt (as) of the Prophet Muhammad (s).

The Qur'an is important as it is the constitution of our salvation. It holds all the general principles of how to conduct our spiritual and worldly lives. The Ahl al-Bayt (as), as we have mentioned multiple times over various lessons, are the teachers of the Qur'an. Like the

Messenger of Allah, they were the living, talking, breathing and walking Qur'an.

The Prophet was only human and could not have lived forever. Islam had to have continuing role models, at least during the time of the first few generations of Muslims, as those times were the formative years of Islam. Allah chose the Prophet's progeny or Ahl al-Bayt (as) as his religious successors in guiding humankind to salvation in this world and the Hereafter.

The question here is, who are the Ahl al-Bayt (as), how do we know that they were who we say they are, namely Fatima, Imam Ali, Imam al-Hasan, Imam al-Husayn and his descendants (peace be upon them all)? There are plenty of sources that can help us in this regard. One important source is a hadith we call hadith al-mubahala.

Mubahala refers to an incident in history where the Prophet and his family and a group of Christians were to pray against each other to see whom God would favor. This ritual was meant to establish the truth of Islam. The following verse of the Qur'an provides us with the context of the hadith:

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, then say: 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah's curse upon the liars'. (Chapter 3, verse 61 of the Holy Qur'an)

The following is part of the hadith:

When the Prophet (s) called the Christians for mubahala, they said:

'Let us return and think over it.' When they were alone, they asked al-'Aqib - and he was a man of good judgment among them: 'O 'Abd al-Masih! What is your opinion? , He said: ' By Allah! You are well-aware, O Christians, that Muhammad is a prophet sent by Allah, and that he has brought to you the decisive word about your Companion ('Isa). By Allah! Whenever a nation has entered into mubahala with a prophet, their elders have perished and their youngsters have died. And if you do it, we shall surely perish; but, if refuse, for the love of your religion and (want) to remain on what you have at present, then make peace with the man and go back to your towns." So they came to the Messenger of Allah; and he had come out in the morning carrying Husayn in his lap, holding the hand of Hasan, with Fatimah walking behind him and 'Ali was behind her; and he was saying: 'When I pray, you say "Amen" '. Then the

Bishop of Najran said: 'O Christians! Surely I see the faces that if they ask Allah to remove a mountain from its place, He would surely remove it. Therefore, do not do imprecation, otherwise you will perish, and there will not remain any Christian on the face of the earth, upto the Day of Resurrection'. "Then they said: 'O Abu'l-Qasim! We have decided that we should not enter into imprecation against you; and that we leave you on your religion and we remain on our religion.'

The hadith of mubahala shows that Fatima, Imam Ali, Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon them all) were the Ahl al-Bayt of their time. The sheer weight of their spiritual light, as demonstrated in this hadith, is consonant with the Prophetic command of the Ahl al-Bayt's successorship, for in the end, who can surpass them? These were of course the Ahl al-Bayt (as) who were alive during that time.

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

5.10 Imam Ali (as) and Nahj al-Balagha.

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! Perhaps one the greatest distinguishing features of the school of Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the hadiths of Imam Ali (as). Imam Ali's (as) hadiths are known to be pithy and full of wisdom. They are often short but more inspiring than any book out there with the exception of the Holy Qur'an. The most famous book containing Imam Ali's (as) wisdom is called Nahj al-Balāgha.

In this lesson, we will have a brief overview of this book, and quote a number of inspiring passages from it. Hopefully this will inspire our audience to purchase the book if they don't have it, and use it as a continuous source of guidance and salvation in their lives.

BODY OF TEXT

Nahj al-Balagha is not just a contribution to Islam, but a contribution to religion. Within the school of Ahl al-Bayt (as), Nahj al-Balagha is the most famous book after the Holy Qur'an. Nahj

al-Balagha is a collection of sermons, letters and short maxims from Imam Ali (as). The sermons and sayings in Nahj al-Balagha were mostly delivered during Imam Ali's Caliphate. The text itself was compiled by the famous Muslim scholar al-Sharīf al-Rādī who died in the year 1015 AD.

The language of the book is quite complex. Even the most advanced scholars of Arabic have difficulties reading the work as the language is high. In Egypt for example where some of the greatest faculties of the Arabic language exist today, Nahj al-Balagha, as a work of Arabic literature that is usually studied at the doctoral level.

Despite the intentions behind the book, one cannot compile the sayings and sermons of Imam Ali (as) and be left unguided. Everything Imam Ali (as) ever said was in essence a form of guidance and a light from the Ahl al-Bayt of the Messenger of Allah. Reading Nahj Al-Balagha is an important book in helping our salvation in the Hereafter.

The following are just some passages from Nahj al-Balagha.

Part of Sermon 28:

Surely this world has turned its back and announced its departure while the next world has appeared forward and proclaimed its approach. Today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of race. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell. Is there no one to offer repentance over his faults before his death? Or is there no one to perform virtuous acts before the day of trial?

Beware, you have been ordered insistently to march and been guided how to provide for the journey. Surely the most frightening thing which I am afraid of about you is to follow desires and to widen the hopes. Provide for yourself from this world what would save you tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement).

The following are some short sayings or maxims from the book:

He who adopts greed as a habit devalues himself; he who discloses his hardship agrees to humiliation; and he who allows his tongue to overpower his soul debases the soul.

Miserliness is shame; cowardice is a defect; poverty disables an intelligent man from arguing his case; and a destitute person is a stranger in his home town.

Knowledge is a venerable estate; good manners are new dresses; and thinking is clear mirror.

Meet people in such a manner that if you die they should weep for you and if you live they should long for you.

The most helpless of all men is he who cannot find a few brothers during his life, but still more helpless. is he who finds such a brother but loses him.

Whenever a person conceals a thing in his heart it manifests itself through unintentional words from his tongue and (in) the expressions of his face.

Imam Ali (as) gave the following advice to his son Imam al-Hasan (as)

O my son, learn four things and (a further) four things from me. Nothing will harm you if you practise them. That the richest of riches is intelligence; the biggest destitution is foolishness; the wildest wildness is vanity and the best achievement is goodness of the moral character.

O my son, you should avoid making friends with a fool because he may intend to benefit you but may harm you; you should avoid making friends with a miser because he will run away from you when you need him most; you should avoid making friends with a sinful person because he will sell you for nought; and you should avoid making friends with a liar because he is like a mirage, making you feel far things near and near things far.

More sayings of Imam Ali (as) from Nahj al-Balagha

The sin that displeases you is better in the view of Allah than the virtue which makes you proud.

Victory is by determination; determination is by the turning over of thoughts; and thoughts are formed by guarding secrets.

There is no wealth like wisdom, no destitution like ignorance, no inheritance like refinement

and no support like consultation.

If you are met with a greeting, give better greetings in return. If a hand of help is extended to you, do a better favour in return, although the credit would remain with the one who was first.

Whoever places himself as a leader of the people should commence with educating his own self before educating others; and his teaching should be by his own conduct before teaching by the tongue. The person who teaches and instructs his own self is more entitled to esteem than he who teaches and instructs others.

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

5.11 Taqlid and Tawḍīh Al Masail Genre of Literature

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!

In this lesson, we will be looking at two issues in Islamic law. The first is a concept called taqlīd which is a process of following a Muslim jurist as a source or reference for Islamic law. The second issue is the tawḍīh al-masā’il which are treatises on Islamic law that contain answers on Islamic practice.

BODY OF TEXT

The Messenger of Allah once said:

One who proceeds on a path in the pursuit of knowledge, God makes him proceed therewith on a path to the Garden (Paradise). And, verily, the angels spread their wings for the seekers of knowledge out of delight. Verily, every creature of the heaven and the earth asks forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge, even the fish in the sea. The merit of the ‘alim (the learned) over the ‘abid (the devout) is like the merit of the moon over the stars on a full-moon night. The learned are the heirs of the prophets, for the prophets did not leave behind a legacy of wealth but that of knowledge. So whoever partakes of it derives a plenteous benefit.

And We did not send before you any but men to whom We sent revelation-- so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know (Chapter 16, verse 43 of the Holy Qur'an)

Few people have the time or ability to become scholars of Islamic law. Knowing the law and how it is derived is not an easy thing to do. It takes years of study, practice and time.

In our day to day lives, we constantly refer to sources of authority. When we are sick, or have medical questions, we go to medical doctors. When we want build a house, we go to architects and engineers.

No one can know everything, except for Allah. Muslim jurists or scholars of Islamic law, are just like doctors. They are a group of people who have studied the law for years in order to uncover truths about divine law.

The process of following a scholar of law is called taqlīd, which literally means to "imitate" where we imitate his laws. For taqlīd to be valid, the scholar in question must hold a number of characteristics. These characteristics include, among other things, being just, not having committed major sins and being knowledgeable about Islamic law.

Since we're not experts, it is obligatory to do taqlīd. We must do personal research or ask knowledgeable members of the community on who the most knowledgeable marja' is. A marja' is a jurist whom one does taqlīd of.

There are, of course, other alternatives to taqlīd. The most obvious one is for you to be a scholar of law yourself. Another alternative is something called ihtiyāt or precaution where one studies the rulings of all the top Marja's and after we've done this we take the most conservative opinion.

When a marja' gives a definitive verdict on a legal matter, this verdict is called a fatwa. Fatwas can be obtained in various ways. A popular way to get a fatwa nowadays is online. A person can find his or her marja's website and look through the question and answer section of the site.

Sometimes the subject or answer we're looking for cannot be found, so the website will have another option of emailing the Marja's office directly. In the vast majority of cases, the Marja himself does not answer the questions, it is usually the Marja's students who are familiar with

his legal positions. When students don't know the answer, they will usually ask the Marja himself.

There is no set deadline for the questions to be answered. It all depends on the resources that a Marja has and the number of staff working under him. It also depends on the type of question that is being asked and whether or not the question must be redirected to the Marja' himself.

A Marja's fatwas and legal views can usually be found in a genre of legal literature called *Tawḍīḥ al-Masā'il*, which can also be pronounced as *Tawzīḥ al-Masā'il* - meaning "explication of legal questions/problems."

The word *Tawḍīḥ al-Masā'il* is usually used when the contents of the work are in Persian. Arabic versions of *Tawḍīḥ al-Masā'il* are usually called *Minhāj al-Sālihīn* which means "the path of the righteous."

These works are usually short in nature and rarely go over two volumes. They're meant to be compact for believers so that they can carry them around. The contents of these works cover most of the major areas of the law.

The chapters begin with *Taqīd*, and then go into ritual practices related to ritual purity (*tahāra*), prayer, fasting and then move on to non ritual laws like marriage, business transactions, and so on and so forth.

This genre of legal literature therefore gives us the foundations of correct Islamic practice. Reading these books are pursuits of genuine knowledge that can teach us how to obey God and avoid sin.

The Prophet Muhammad (s) once said the following about the importance of gaining knowledge:

"If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, God will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise. The angels will lower their wings in their great pleasure with one who seeks knowledge. The inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth and (even) the fish in the deep waters will ask forgiveness for the learned man. The superiority of the learned over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars. The learned are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave (no monetary inheritance), they leave only

knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion.

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