

Core Curriculum

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7 The Legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as)

7.1

Islam and Knowledge: the Importance of Islamic Education

The word education comes from the latin word educatio which meant to “rear” or to “bring up.” Similarly, the word for education in Islam is tarbīyah, meaning to rear, bring up or nurture someone.

Education and the acquisition of knowledge therefore function in two ways in Islam:

1. Knowledge is not random facts and information. The ultimate goal of knowledge is not careerism or about making money either. Knowledge is supposed to leave an imprint on a person’s heart and soul. It is to transform them to the better, it is to set a person to the path of enlightenment and closeness to God.
2. Education or tarbīyah works hand in hand with knowledge. Tarbīyah is there to make us dignified human beings. It is there to fundamentally transform us into loving, compassionate and moral beings. It is a form of both spiritual and as well as bodily discipline. One is trained to want the good in others, to control one’s emotions, to develop empathy and compassion for others and so on and so forth.

The ultimate goal of knowledge and tarbīyah is the creation of a mu’min, that is, someone who has true faith in God and in whose heart one finds the living light of God. In one perspective, Islam, as a social system, is there to act as a cradle to

nurture īmān.

Who are we to gain knowledge and education from? In Islam, we are encouraged to ask others when we do not know. However, we are also asked to make sure that our sources of knowledge are credible. A troubling phenomenon that exists today is that of self-created scholars where people think that simply by reading books one can become a scholar.

When it comes to knowledge and education, we need to be very careful as it directly effects us in the afterlife.

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

7.2

The Ahl al-Kisa

One of the most important hadiths regarding the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is the hadith of Kisa. The Hadith of Kisa is the hadith that sets up the Ahl al-Bayt (as) as the foundational and infallible guides of Islam. The hadith mentions the divine role of the 5 holy ones, namely the Prophet, Imam Ali, Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn. The 5 are mentioned as they were the only ones who were living at the time and were the ones who came under the cloak.

In the hadith of Kisa, the Prophet (s) makes it clear that his wives are not part of it. He makes it clear that the people of Kisa are purified, infallible and are the guides of mankind and that true faith in Islam cannot be attained without holding them as role models and guides.

7.3

Imamah in the Qur’an

The Prophets before Prophet Ibrahim (as) were local Prophets for their own people. By becoming an Imam, Ibrahim became the first Prophet to be a guide for all of humankind instead of being confined to one region only.

As a product of having becoming an Imam, the Prophet Ibrahim (as) also assumed

power over creation and became the metaphysical light through which humankind could be guided towards God, either through direct personal guidance, or indirectly through his guiding light without meeting the person.

In other words, just like Satan could misguide millions of people through the metaphysical realm, Ibrahim (as), by the permission of Allah, could guide millions of people across the world through the metaphysical realm as well.

This was a new status that no one had attained before him. This is then the meaning of Imamah according to the Qur'an and is the status which the twelve Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) inherited.

So what's the difference between Prophethood and Imamah? Prophethood is where a person receives direct revelation from God in order to carry out a particular task in the world, such as conveying a message or fulfilling a specific mission. Imamah is a cosmic status, it is where a person becomes the metaphysical vehicle of guidance for all of the world and acquires power over all of creation.

One does not necessarily need to be a Prophet in order to acquire this status but the only non-Prophets who were worthy of this status were the Imams of the Messenger of Allah's Household. The Prophet Muhammad (s) was the greatest of all Imams.

7.4

Fatima al-Zahrah (as)

Fatima bint Muhammad (bint means daughter of), or better known as Fatima al-Zahra (as), was born around 615 A.D. and died around the year 632 A.D. She was the only living biological child of the Prophet (s) who survived until adulthood. She was born from the Prophet's (s) first wife Khadija.

Fatima was also the wife of the first Imam, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (as). Fatima is important in Islam for many reasons, however, the most outstanding of these reasons is being the mother of all of the 11 Imams. In other words, all eleven Imams, starting from her own direct sons Imam Hasan (as) and Imam Husayn

(as), are descendants of her. Without Fatima, Imamah would not have continued in this world and would have ended with Imam Ali (as).

Fatima (as) is also the means through which some of the most important practices of Islam were conveyed to Muslims. For example, the Tasbīh of Fatima al-Zahra (Fatima al-Zahra's Glorification of God) is a contemplative and meditative practice of recalling God through prayer beads. In almost all of the ritual practices that Muslims have been recommended to do, the Tasbīh of Fatima is one of the most meritorious and the most widely practiced among Muslims today.

7.5

A Brief Look at the Lives of the Imams (Imam al-Hasan until Imam Muhammad al-Baqir)

N/A

7.6

A Brief Look at the Lives of the Imams (Imam Jafar al-Sadiq until Imam Hasan al-Askari)

N/A

7.7

A Brief Look at the Life and Importance of Imam al-Mahdi (aj)

Imam Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdi (aj) is the son of our 11th Imam, Imam Hasan al-Askari (as). Al-Mahdi means "the guided one." He was born in the year 869 A.D. He is also known by other titles, such as Imam al-Zaman, or Sahib al-Asr, meaning the Imam of the Time, or the Master of the Time.

His mother was a slave named Narjis. He was born in a very tumultuous time. Towards the end of Imam Hasan al-Askari's life, the authorities of the Caliphate were fed up with the existence of Imamate. Over the generations, they had tried through various means to eradicate the power and influence of the Imams over the Muslim community.

He is called the Imam of the Time because he will be the Imam who will establish global justice on earth after being filled with oppression and evil.

In his mission to establish global justice, the Islamic tradition believes that Jesus (as) will be sent to earth to accompany Imam al-Mahdi (aj). Jesus' main task will be to bring Jews and Christians under the fold and guidance of the living Imam.

The death of Imam al-Mahdi (aj) is believed to trigger the complete end of the world and the end of life on earth. After the global death and destruction of the world, the world will be brought back and humans will be resurrected for their final Judgment by God.

7.8

Salawat and Atonement in Islam

The word salawat is plural which means to send blessings. In Islamic practice, the salawat is conferring blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as). The salawat can be said in almost any context. In all five daily obligatory prayers, one has to confer blessings upon the Prophet and His Family. The formula is as follows:

Allahumma Sallī 'Alā Muhammad wa Āli Muhammad

“Oh Allah, send your blessings upon Muhammad and upon the progeny of Muhammad”

According to all major schools of Islam, if the salawat is not said during prayer, the Islamic prayer will be considered null and void.

There are, however, more benefits to saying the salawat in addition to having it as a necessary condition for the acceptance of prayer.

According to one hadith from Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as), it is said that:

One who sends 10 Salawat on the Prophet and his family, Allah and the Angels send 100 Salawats upon him, and one who sends 100 Salawats upon the Prophet and his family, then Allah and the Angels send 1000 Salawat upon him. Have you not heard the words of Allah, Glorious and Magnified be Him, (here the Imam's own words ends, and he recites the following verse) “It is He who confers

blessing upon you, and His angels [ask Him to do so] that He may bring you out from darkneses into the light. And ever is He, to the believers, Merciful.” (Chapter 33, verse 43)

This hadith is quite telling as it outlines the function of the salawat. The salawat activates or establishes a celestial response whereby God and His angels send their blessings upon the one reciting it. The act of God sending His blessings upon a person is grace. As such, reciting the salawat is a means through which one acquires the grace of God. Grace refers to God's unmerited favor that He confers upon us.

7.9

The Companions (Sahaba) of the Prophet According to the Qur'an

The word companion in Arabic and Islam is sahabi, and its plural is sahaba. Historically speaking, we are aware that the Prophet (s) had good companions. In the Qur'an, a good companion is called a “follower of the Prophet” or muttabi'. However, as in the verses that were just read out from the Qur'an, we see that God is quite critical of the Prophet's companions.

For most Sunnis, being a companion of the Prophet (s) automatically makes a person good, faithful and just. This was the opinion of many Sunni scholars of hadith, including Abu Hatim al-Razi (d. 890), the great 10th century Sunni scholar of ilm al-rijal (ilm al-rijal is the science of assessing hadith transmitters).

For others, as the argument goes, the companions may have had flaws, but in general, their flaws were the outcome of mistakes in their understanding of Islam and not ill intent.

For the Shia however, this narrative of the companion contradicts the Qur'an. The Qur'an, the Shia believe, and like the numerous verses we read so far, attests that the companions of the Prophet can not only be unjust, but they can also be hypocrites and enemies of Islam. This doesn't mean that they are all bad, but it just suggests that being a companion of the Prophet doesn't automatically make a person good.

7.10

Clerical Hierarchies in Muslim Communities

N/A

7.11

Mosques in Islam

The word Mosque is the English equivalent of the word Masjid in Arabic. The word Masjid comes from the word sajada in Arabic, which means to prostrate.

The primary function that Mosques play for Muslims is their role as a gathering place for communal prayers and worship. It is thus designed to be a means for communal salvation.

In Islam, prayers are done both privately and publicly. The Mosque caters to both. People pray privately in Mosques for various reasons. For example, they may do their obligatory or recommended prayers. They may also perform i'tikaf which is a practice of confining oneself to the Mosque for a number of days in order to perform religious rituals and activities.

The Mosque is also a place for communal prayers. The five daily obligatory prayers are conducted in Mosques. The Friday prayers are also usually conducted in Mosques. In many Muslim countries, cities or areas within large cities have special Mosques dedicated for Friday prayers. These Friday Prayer Mosques are much larger in size so as to accommodate a larger number of people.

7.12

The Philosophy of Karbala and Majalis

Our fourth Imām's compendium of supplications, al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādīyah, is one of the best and most credible sources available to us delineating the true message of Karbala. Perhaps one of the most poignant stories of Imām as-Sajjād (as) tragic life was the initial phase of his captivity. The Imām was deprived of food, ridiculed and dragged around even after seeing his family slaughtered.

Humayd ibn Muslim was an individual tasked by Yazīd's army to guard over Imām al-Sajjād and the remaining members of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Despite his harsh treatment, Ḥumayd expected anger from the Imām. But instead, he saw him humbly looking down and crying whilst reciting the following supplication to Allah (swt):

Let good flow out of my hands upon mankind and dissolve it not by having them feel indebted. Give me the highest of moral dispositions and protect me from haughtiness. (supplication #20 in al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādīyah)

Imām al-Sajjād (as) was not concerned with revenge or destroying Yazid. He knew that by destroying one Yazīd at that moment, three more would replace him. Instead, he was concerned with the moral improvement and spiritual self-building of humankind. Any crime that takes place in this world is rooted in a deficiency somewhere in one's akhlāq or moral disposition.

Fakhr, or haughtiness, is a moral shortcoming in which one feels superior to others by perceiving them to be his or her inferiors. Fakhr is dangerous because it is the first step to a sense of entitlement through which one justifies his or her own misdeeds.

Imām as-Sajjād, having experienced the tragedy of Karbala, is teaching us that even in the darkest of moments we should strive for the greater good, not seek rewards from people and above all, maintain inner humility.

Imām as-Sajjād thus teaches us that the purpose of Karbala and Imām al-Ḥusain's (as) mission was to impart on humankind the importance of maintaining integrity, proper spiritual and moral disposition even in the darkest of times.

A Brief Biography of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (as)

Imam Ali's (as) father was none other than Abū Tālib, the guardian of the Ka'ba and the protector of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (s). Abū Tālib was therefore one of the greatest Muslims to have ever lived in the world.

Imam Ali (as) was born around the year 599 A.D. He was the first and only person ever to be born inside the Kaba. His mother was Fatimah bint Asad. Fatimah not only raised Imam Ali, but also raised the Prophet Muhammad (s) in his childhood.

Fatimah, like her husband Abū Tālib, was one of the first to believe in the Prophet's message. She emigrated with him to Medina when persecution in Mecca was at its highest. Given the all the care and sacrifices she had shown the Messenger of Allah, the Prophet wrapped her with his own clothes as a sign of devotion and gratefulness to her.

Imam Ali (as) was the first male to believe in the Prophethood of Muhammad (s). The Prophet Muhammad had taken Imam Ali into his household and raised him like a son. There he taught him the inner secrets of spirituality, morality, justice and knowledge of God. Imam Ali was to grow up to be the staunchest of the Prophet's supporters and defenders.

Imam Ali (as) was also the first successor of the Prophet and the first Imam after him. He was the source of most of Islam's mystical teachings as well as its moral message.

To learn more, please tune into the full version of this lesson.

7.14

The Battle of Karbala: A Brief History

N/A