

Surah AL-HUJURAT



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Ayah 6

- In the five earlier verses, we covered two of the eight major ethical rules; managing our adab with Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ).
- The third adab is how we interact and deal with information – this is a fascinating fact that is still relevant to us in this day and age.
- Many of the challenges we are faced with today stem from information. This is why the Qur’an acts as a framework for us to practice discretion.
- In this verse, Allah establishes that when a person comes bearing information, it is necessary to verify the information.
- This is because in such an event, we might unknowingly inflict harm upon someone else with a piece of unverified information and will end up being extremely remorseful over our actions.
- Therefore, to avoid such circumstances, Islam teaches us that we need to practice discretion and conduct a process of verifying information.
- According to scholars, the following was revealed regarding al-Walid ibn ‘Uqba whom the Prophet (ﷺ) had sent to the Banu Mustaliq tribe to collect zakah.
 - Al-Walid had encountered some problems with the tribe prior to embracing Islam. Hence, upon arriving in their territory, he became fearful of his life due to threats he had previously faced and so he returned to Madinah.
 - In another context of the story, the tribe’s leader, al-Harith ibn Dirar, after gathering the money, was waiting outside of the village with his men for the zakah collector to arrive.

- When al-Walid arrived, he became intimidated at this sight thinking that the men were gathered to kill him, so he returned to Madinah.
- When al-Walid returned without the money, he complained to the Prophet (ﷺ) that the tribe had refused to pay zakah and had even wanted to kill him. The Prophet (ﷺ) became upset hearing this report and dispatched Khalid ibn al-Walid to deal with the tribe.
- In the meantime, in the zakah collector's absence, al-Harith ibn Dirar gathered his tribesmen to set forth to Madinah to deliver the money. The delegations ran into each other and al-Harith explained to Khalid what happened on his end. Both troops proceeded to clarify the matter with the Prophet (ﷺ).
- This occasion is an example that on the account of believing a baseless report, it could have caused chaos within the Muslims and jeopardize lives. Hence, Allah gave the Muslims this guiding principle to be followed on receipt of information.
- While the internet facilitates information today and it is used as a tool for us to learn the Deen, we should not make it our goal and objective.
- We must be cautious and not simply trust anyone we see on the internet with our Deen. The verification process needs to start with their qualifications, the validity of the isnad of their teachers, and so on and so forth.

Ayah 7

- After establishing three very important ethical rulings to reflect and process, Allah pauses the lessons at verses seven and eight.
- In this interjection, Allah tells us to trust the source that comes bearing this information – which is the Prophet (ﷺ).
- The job of the Prophet (ﷺ) as Allah's Messenger is to teach us, guide us, command us, instruct us and not to obey us. Thus, we have to recognize that this guidance is necessary.
- Allah tells us that the lessons to come in the next verses are more challenging. Nevertheless, it is important not to pushback but rather embrace these challenges and let it humble us.

- If the Prophet (ﷺ) were to obey us, we would end up suffering. Therefore, Allah has adorned our hearts with faith and made obedience appealing to us.
- Faith and obedience are about entirely submitting ourselves to Allah. If we can get over ourselves and move past our ego, we will be able to taste the sweetness of it.
- For example, the more someone prays, the more they love prayer as opposed to someone who seldom prays and makes excuses not to pray.
- Faith is intuitively built in us. Once we connect to it, we will naturally submit to it. We have to learn to reconnect with our innate instinct (fitrah).
- Allah has made disbelief, rebelliousness, and disobedience detestable to the ones who have faith.
- Imam Qurtubi was of the opinion that this is a du'a embedded in the middle of the Surah, asking Allah to make faith beloved to us and adorn our hearts with obedience.
- This serves as a reminder that guidance is from Allah which is taught by His Messenger and therefore, we need to pay attention.

Ayah 8

- To conclude the interjection, Allah mentioned that this is a bounty and gift from Him.

Ayah 9

- The fourth ethical rule pertains to dealing with disagreements and handling conflict.
- In this verse, Allah describes the way to resolve an extreme conflict between two groups of Muslims fighting against each other.
- He describes a major conflict so we are able to resolve any minor conflict that comes our way.
- The way to resolve this conflict is by helping the opposing groups reconcile with one another instead of adding fuel to the fire.
- Allah commands believers to act as peacemakers and bring unity within the community and not cause discord.
- Nevertheless, when one party is clearly transgressing, we have to stand for what is right. Allah commands to push back the people who cross the line until they stop transgressing and submit to Allah.

- Once the opposing parties have come to terms with one another, Allah commands to make peace and not hold grudges.
- This is a display of our commitment and integrity in which we hold on to fairness and justice. Allah loves those who act justly and create peace when disputes arise.
- Whenever conflicts arise, we have to prioritize fairness and justice. If we are unable to handle it, then we should step aside.

Ayah 10

- The next ethical rule discussed in this verse deals with the Muslim community.
- Allah tells us that brothers and sisters of Islam are a family.
- In the Arabic language, there are two derivations that mean siblings in the plural form:
 - إخوه – Referring to biological siblings
 - إخوان – This is figurative; brothers aligned with something (i.e. faith)
- Fascinatingly, Allah uses the first version in this verse to highlight the relationship shared between brothers and sisters through faith.
- Even though our love for fellow Muslims might not be equal to the love we naturally have for our biological siblings, we have to make it a goal to try and care for them the way we would care for our own family as Allah has instructed us to do so.
- The Sahabah proved that this was possible – they sacrificed for each other and gave preference to one another above themselves; they went above and beyond for one another.
- If we wish to receive Allah’s mercy, we have to be merciful towards others; it is the foundation of forming a beautiful community. This was summarized in a hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ).
- Abdullah ibn Amr reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

الرَّاحِمُونَ يَرْحَمُهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ ارْحَمُوا مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَرْحَمَكُم مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ

“The merciful will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on the earth, and the One in the heavens will have mercy upon you.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhī)

Ayah 11

- In the following two verses beginning from this verse, Allah outlines the most detailed ethical rule in the Surah.

- This is the sixth adab; managing our own conduct and behavior (i.e. how do we treat people, our social interactions etc.).
- Allah highlights six bad habits throughout the eleventh and twelfth verse, starting with three in this verse:
- #1. We should not bully others
 - سخرية – Refers to mock, ridicule, humiliate, debase, denigrate someone, removing someone’s honor and dignity.
 - In other words, this is inclusive of all forms of bullying; verbally, physically etc.
 - Majority of mufassirun mentioned the first group referred to as ‘قوم’ is directed to the men. While the second group mentioned, is clearly the women.
 - To understand the reasoning behind Allah setting this delineation, we break it down to how we study the Qur’an; we study what Allah says, why He says it and how He says it.
 - The first reason is because there is a precept that exists within Islam pertaining social interactions between genders.
 - There is decorum and respect when it comes to the interaction between men and women, and the line will not be crossed. Hence, Allah gave this instruction separately to men with men and women with men.
- #2. We should not verbally assault ourselves
 - لَمَزَ – Refers to insulting someone using the tongue/words; slandering
 - This specifically refers to not shaming or defaming another person, and especially bringing up people’s past mistakes.
 - Transgressing and spreading slander among people is considered as assaulting ourselves as we will inevitably become a victim; what goes around comes around.
- #3. We should not assign mean names to others
 - Although this is similar to bullying, Allah mentioned it separately as calling people by mean names is pervasive in the society.
 - Sometimes, people use nicknames that are offensive to others unknowingly. Hence, it should be avoided.

- The Prophet (ﷺ) gave his Companions beautiful nicknames; as-Siddiq, al-Faruq etc. It is also important for the person to decide what nickname they would like to have.
- When Allah has given us iman, the worst characteristic one can have is ignoring His instructions and misbehaving.
- If we have made these mistakes, we can repent to Allah. Nevertheless, a person who keeps doing it despite knowing that it is wrong, they are the ones who are condemned by Allah.

Ayah 12

- #4. We should not be suspicious of others
 - Allah lays out the next habit is to stay away from being suspicious of people.
 - Interestingly, Allah uses the word 'أُجْتَنَّبُوا' which He similarly used to describe staying away from idolatry, lying under oath in court, intoxication and gambling.
 - We have to stay away from suspicion because some suspicions are evil, and therefore, we should stay away from all of them.
 - It is an unhealthy habit to develop such a suspicious nature, as our suspicions will soon overpower us and get the best of us.
- #5. We should not spy on another
 - As a result of ill suspicion, we start becoming obsessed and invade a person's privacy. Hence, Allah tells us not to invade people's privacy (eavesdrop, investigate etc.) and instead mind our own business and stay to ourselves.
 - Such actions can create further regression, especially when they find something in their search and start spreading it to others.
- #6. We should not backbite one another
 - غيبة – Refers to speaking about a Muslim in their absence and saying things that they would not like to have spread around or mentioned.
 - The act of backbiting can lead to slander, which is a major sin.
 - Allah depicts the graphic detail of a person eating the flesh of their dead brother/sister, which is disgusting and horrifying. Then, He poses a question "Would you ever do that?" If we wouldn't, then we shouldn't backbite.

- If we hear someone backbiting, we should prevent it from happening and if we are unable to prevent them, then we should leave. It doesn't matter who we are in this life, we should fear Allah.
- These six bad habits that Allah has outlined, violates the honor and dignity of a Muslim, and these are mistakes we have all made.
- If we are regretful of these mistakes and we fear Allah, we turn to Allah in repentance and ask Him for forgiveness, knowing that He is the Most Merciful.

Ayah 13

- The seventh ethical rule mentioned in this verse is dealing with diversity.
- Here, we see a departure of the pattern of Allah addressing "O believers". Instead, He mentions "O humanity".
- شُعُوبًا - Refers to ethnicity
- قَبَائِلَ - Refers to tribes
- Allah has diversified human beings not to create division, but rather, its purpose is so we can recognize one another and know who has rights upon us.
- Imam al-Razi says it is to recognize who we have a responsibility towards. This is Allah organizing us as a unit.
- Diversity has no bearing on the value or significance of a person as well as their dignity.
- Allah clarifies that ultimately, what makes a person more noble than others is defined by their level of taqwa (God-consciousness).
- On this occasion, the Prophet (ﷺ) pointed towards his chest three times saying,

”التَّقْوَى هَا هُنَا”

Taqwa is here

- Taqwa is in the heart and we cannot ascertain anyone's piety. Hence, everyone is afforded the same level of dignity and respect. Allah is All-Knowing and He will be the judge of our ultimate state.

Ayah 14

- This verse until the concluding verse of the Surah highlights the eighth and final ethical rule which deals with interacting with the Deen.

- This is the culmination of all earlier ethics that we have earlier outlined – religion ties everything together.
- In His Divine wisdom, Allah demonstrates this point by relating a story.
 - Some men from Banu Asad went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, “O Allah's Messenger! We embraced Islam, and before that, the Arabs fought against you, yet we did not fight against you.” Then, they kept mentioning to him the favors they thought they had done.
 - They were believers outwardly but disbelievers inwardly. Hence, Allah, revealed this verse about them.
- Allah instructed the Prophet (ﷺ) to rebuke them by saying: “You have no faith!” and emphasized that they should declare their faith by humbly submitting.
- Faith has not entered into their hearts because faith requires submission and obedience. And the key to such submission and obedience is humility – it unlocks all doors of goodness.
- One who obeys and submits themselves to Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), will never be deprived of any of their deeds. Meaning, Allah will reward them for all the good that they do.
- Nevertheless, Allah is forgiving and He will forgive those who repent and turn to Him.

Ayah 15

- In contrast to the previous verse, Allah provides a description of true faith in this verse.
- We all make mistakes, but the difference is in our attitude towards the mistake. The correct attitude is recognizing that Allah is in charge, and we are not; He is the Master and we are His servant.
- Allah makes the rules, and we obey them. It is clearly outlined and hence, we should not be confused about this fact.
- We must strive in the path of Allah; serving His Deen for the sake of earning His pleasure.
- This Deen is about humility, obedience, compliance and service.
- All the above-mentioned are the qualities of those who have true faith.

Ayah 16

- This is a continuation in which Allah refutes them by asking the Prophet (ﷺ) to tell them not to speak about their religion, brag about their accomplishments etc., because Allah knows everything that is in the heavens and the earth.
- An important point to highlight when it comes to managing our interaction of Islam, is that it doesn't have to be perfect. Allah knows we are all flawed and we will make mistakes.

Ayah 17

- The final conclusion to the eighth ethical ruling is mentioned in this verse.
- The important message conveyed through the eighth ethical ruling is acknowledging the fact that Islam is the greatest blessing and gift to us, but we are insignificant to Islam.
- Do not regard Islam as a favor. We need Islam, Islam doesn't need us. Allah has done us a huge favor by guiding us to Islam.
- To be true to faith, we have to realize and internalize this important fact that we have not done Allah any favors through Islam.

Ayah 18

- The entire Surah is like an active dialogue on how one should conduct, behave, interact and carry themselves. Hence, in the conclusion, Allah drives home the point that He is watching us and knows what we do, regardless if no one else knows.
- We must always be mindful that we have to answer to Allah for everything that we do in this life. Living with this in mind is the very essence of God-consciousness.