

BIRR AL-WALEDAIN

(BEING GOOD TO OUR PARENTS)

Definition:

The Qur'an and the Sunnah (Tradition of Prophet Muhammad) orders us to be good and kind to our parents, to stay close to them, not to say anything that could hurt their feelings and to take good care of them especially when they are older and in need of our help.

We Will Discuss The Following Concepts:

- The Qur'anic verses that orders us to be good and kind to our parents.
- The Tradition of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that emphasizes the importance of being good to our parents and its great reward.
- Such kindness to our parents is obligatory even if they are not Muslims.
- Our reward if we are good and kind to our parents.
- Our obligations to our parents after they die.

QUR'ANIC VERSES

▪ Surah Al-Isra'a (Chapter 17)

﴿ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ۝﴾

[الإسراء: ٢٣]

"Thy Lord has decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour" (Al-Isra'a 17 : 23)

﴿ وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذَّلِيلِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا ﴾

[الإسراء: ٢٤]

"And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: "My Lord! bestow on them thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood" (Al-Isra'a 17 : 24)

We learn from these two verses:

- To be good and kind to our parents is a duty incumbent upon those who believe in Allah. They are accountable to Him; such duty is second only to worshipping Allah and serving Him with devotion.
- We must be particularly good and kind to our parents when they reach an old age, become weak or need our help.
- As we grow older, our faculties such as vision and hearing may diminish. We may also become slow and our reflexes may not be as sharp as they once were. Our mental function may decline and our memory may fade. Sometimes, the decline in our mental ability may become pronounced to the extent that we become like babies and are truly dependent. The Qur'an alludes to this change:

﴿ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُتَوَفَّىٰ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ

عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا ﴾ [الحج: ٥]

"and some of you are called to die, and some are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known (much)" (Al-Hajj 22 : 5)

The manner of how we should speak to our parents is explained in these Qur'anic verses, as well as how we should listen to them. We are not allowed to say any word of contempt, show boredom, or display any sign of disrespect. We should not say anything that could offend them,

nor should we raise our voice or repel them. We must not say any bad words to them, rather we must treat both our parents with the utmost respect, being polite, courteous and kind in addressing or speaking to them.

We should be humble and kind with our parents. The Qur'an praises those who are humble and do not walk on this earth with arrogance or insolence.

﴿ وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا ﴾ [الفرقان: ٦٣]

"And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the illiterate address them, they say, "Peace"" (Al-Furqan 25 : 63)

If humility is our guideline in treating others, then we should be even more humble with our parents who cared for us and raised us.

We should pray to Allah on their behalf, seeking His forgiveness and mercy for our parents. Allah will respond to such a Du'aa and it will benefit our parents. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

Abou Horaira (May Allah be pleased with him) related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said,

"When man dies all his deeds cease except for three, a charity that continues to benefit others; a knowledge that is useful; and a righteous child that prays to Allah on behalf of his parents."

Narrated by Muslim and Bokhari in Adab Mufrad

▪ Surah Al-Ahqaf (Chapter 46)

﴿ وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفَصَّلُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي ۚ إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴾ [الأحقاف: ١٥]

"We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months. At length, when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says: "O my Lord! grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as Thou mayest approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in Islam" (Al-Ahqaf 46 : 15)

We learn from this verse:

- We are commanded by Allah to be kind to our parents.
- We are reminded of our indebtedness to our mothers. The mother bears her child during pregnancy then cares for him during infancy, feeding him and showing him love and mercy. She does all this despite pain, suffering and fatigue and she does this without complaint; therefore, we should show particular gratitude towards our mothers.
- We are ordered to show gratitude to Allah and thank Him for his blessings over us and our parents who took care of us.
- We should also take care of our children, as our parents took care of us, doing our best to raise them as righteous obedient servants of Allah.

▪ **Surah Luqman** (Chapter 31)

﴿ وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهَنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصْلُهَا فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ
 أَشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَىٰ الْمَصِيرِ ﴾ [لقمان: ١٤]

"And We have enjoined on man (To be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), "Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal" (Luqman 31 : 14)

We learn:

- The mother goes through a great deal of suffering during pregnancy and labor, yet she bears her difficulty and sacrifice willingly and with love.

- It is our duty to be grateful to our parents, particularly our mothers.
- Such duty to our parents is second only to our duty to serve God to the best of our ability. We cannot be grateful to God if we are not grateful and kind to our parents.

▪ **Surah Al-Ana'am** (Chapter 6)

﴿ قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا تَشْكُرُونَ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِنَّ رَبَّهُمْ بِهِمْ شَرِيفٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴾

[الأنعام: ١٥١]

"Say: "Come, I will rehearse what Allah has (really) prohibited you from": join not anything as equal with Him; be good to your parents;" (Al-Ana'm 6 : 151)

We learn:

- We are forbidden from worshipping or serving except the One and only God
- We should be good and kind to our parents

▪ **Surah An-Nesa'a** (Chapter 4)

﴿ وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ۚ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۚ ﴾ [النساء: ٣٦]

"Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good to parents," (An-Nesa'a 4 : 36)

▪ **Surah Al-Baqara** (Chapter 2)

﴿ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۚ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۚ ﴾ [البقرة: ٨٣]

"And remember We took a Covenant from the Children of Israel (to this effect): worship none but Allah; treat with kindness your parents" (Al-Baqara 2 : 83)

▪ **Surah Maryam (Mary)** (Chapter 19)

Describing **Prophet Yahya** (John the Baptist) the Qur'an enumerated several characteristics, among them was his kindness to his parents.

(To his son came the command):

﴿ يٰحٰى خُذِ الْكِتٰبَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَّءَاتَيْنٰهُ الْحِكْمَ صَبِيًّا ﴾ [مریم: ۱۲]

"O Yahya! take hold of the Book with might": and We gave him Wisdom even as a youth" (Maryam 19 : 12)

﴿ وَحٰنٰنًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا وَزَكٰوَةً وَّكَانَ تَقِيًّا ﴾ [مریم: ۱۳]

"And pity (for all creatures) as from Us, and purity: he was devout,"
(Maryam 19 : 13)

﴿ وَرَبًّا بِوٰلِدَيْهِ وَّلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا ﴾ [مریم: ۱۴]

"And kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious"
(Maryam 19 : 14)

And describing Prophet Eisa (Jesus) PBUH, the Qur'an praises his character. As he describes Allah's blessings over him, Jesus (PBUH) emphasizes that he was commanded to be kind to his mother.

﴿ قَالَ اِنِّىْ عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اٰتٰنِىَ الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلَنِىْ نَبِيًّا ﴾ [مریم: ۳۰]

"He said: I am indeed a servant of Allah: He has given me revelation and made me a prophet;" (Maryam 19 : 30)

﴿ وَجَعَلَنِىْ مُبٰرَكًا اَیْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَاَوْصٰنِىْ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَالزَّكٰوةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا ﴾

[مریم: ۳۱]

"And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live:" (Maryam 19: 31)

﴿ وَرَبًّا بِوٰلِدَتِىْ وَّلَمْ يَجْعَلِنِىْ جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا ﴾ [مریم: ۳۲]

"(He) has made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable;" (Maryam 19 : 32)

THE PROPHET'S HADEETH

The best deed most beloved to Allah is kindness to parents.

Abdullah Bin Masoud (May Allah be pleased with him) related that he asked the Prophet (PBUH), "What are the best deeds most loved by Allah?" He said, "Prayer at its proper time." Then he asked him, "What next?" He said, "Kindness to parents." Then he asked him, "What next?" He said, "Jihad (striving) in the cause of Allah."

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

We learn:

- To be kind to our parents is one of the best deeds that we can do that will bring us closer to Allah, and will allow us to deserve His pleasure and mercy.
- The Prophet (PBUH) was asked this question many times. He answered it and changed the order of what was most pleasing to Allah depending upon what was more appropriate to the person in question at that particular time. Sometimes safeguarding the prayer was of most importance, while at other times taking care of our parents was of most importance, and yet at other times Jihad became essential and took precedence.

Taking care of our parents comes first, before Jihad:

Mu'aweya Bin Jahima (May Allah be pleased with him) related that he asked the Messenger of Allah about going forth in Jihad with him seeking Allah's pleasure and His reward in the Hereafter, but Muhammad (PBUH) asked him, "Is your mother alive?" When he said, "Yes," the Prophet (PBUH) told him to return and be good and take care of his mother. He asked the same request twice, and each time, he asked him if his mother was alive, he ordered him to go back and be kind to her. Then he (PBUH) said, "Paradise is where your mother is."

Narrated by Nesa'ee, Ibn Majja, Ahmad and Hakim

We learn:

Jihad is of two types:

- Obligatory Jihad when each person is obligated to go forth and protect his home and country against aggression.

- And optional Jihad, the obligation is collective but not incumbent upon every individual.

When Jihad is optional, we should not go in Jihad if our parents need our help.

To take care of our parents, in this Hadith, our mothers is one way of earning Allah's pleasure and entering Paradise.

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) emphasized to that man his obligation toward his mother, and did not give him permission to go on Jihad, even though he knew how much he desired that honor. We should place our priorities according to what is necessary and will be most beneficial, not according to what we love the most.

We should honor our parents even after they die.

A man asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), "What obligations do I have towards my parents after they die, if any?" He was told, "To pray for them; and to seek forgiveness for them; and to fulfill their promises; and to stay close to those related to them; and to honor their friend."

Narrated by Abou Dawood, Ibn Majja, Ahmad and Hakim

We learn:

After our parents die we still have an obligation toward them, among these obligations are:

- To pray to Allah and say Du'aa on their behalf.
- To seek God's forgiveness for them.
- To fulfill the promises that they made, but were unable to keep.
- To stay close and be good to their relatives.
- To honor their friends.

Our Du'aa on behalf of our parents is responded to by Allah. Such a Du'aa is written as good deeds for them. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

Abou Horaira (May Allah be pleased with him) related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said,

“A person can see his status in Heaven elevated, and he asks why? He is told because your child is seeking forgiveness for you.”

Narrated by Ibn Majja

In another Hadith, also related by Abou Horaira who said that Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) said,

“When a person dies all his deeds cease except for three, a charity which continues to benefit others; a knowledge that is useful and beneficial to others; and a righteous son or daughter praying to Allah on his behalf.”

Narrated by Muslim

Being good and kind to our parents and relatives forgives our sins and prolongs our lives.

Ibn Omar (May Allah be pleased with him) related that a man asked the Prophet (PBUH), “O Messenger of Allah! I have committed a great sin, is there repentance for me? He said,

“Is your mother alive? He said, “no.” He said, “Do you have an aunt alive?” He said, “Yes.” The Prophet (PBUH) said, “Be good and kind to her.”

Narrated by Termedhi and Hakim

Thawban (May Allah be pleased with him) related that Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) said,

“Nothing prolongs your life except being good and kind to your parents and relatives; and nothing prevents Qadar (fate) except Du’aa (prayer to Allah) for the person is deprived of sustenance because of the sins that he commits.”

Narrated by Ahmad, Termedhi, Ibn Majja, Tabarani and Hakim

Our mothers have special rights over us, even more so than our fathers do.

Abou Horaira (May Allah be pleased with him) related that a man asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), “Who is most deserving of my good company?” He said, “Your mother.” He asked him, “Then who?” He said, “Your mother.” He asked him again, “Then who?” He said, “Your mother.” He asked, “Then who?” He said, “Then your father.”

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

This special distinction that our mothers deserve relates to our indebtedness to them because they:

- Carried us during pregnancy.
- Delivered us despite the pain of labor.
- Breast fed us when we were infants.
- Took care of us during our childhood.
- Nourished us with their love.
- Taught us and shaped our personality and character.

We are not allowed to distance ourselves from our parents even if they are not Muslims!

Asma'a Bint Abou Bakr (May Allah be pleased with her) said, "I asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), My mother has come and she is fearful yet hopeful that I get close to her, should I be good and kind to her?" He said, "Yes."

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

Even if our parents do not share our faith, we are commanded to stay close to them, be kind and help them. The Qur'an states,

﴿ وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا ۗ وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا ۗ وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ إِلَيَّ ۗ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ [لقمان: ١٥]

"But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (And consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love). In the End the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did" (Luqman 31 : 15)

We are not allowed to distance ourselves from our parents on the pretext that they do not believe or have not accepted Islam. Despite our differences, we are obligated to help them and be kind to them. We should continue to seek Allah's guidance for them; however, at the same time, we must not allow our love for our parents to distract us from our duty toward Allah or prevent us from serving Him. We are advised to

stay close but to follow the ways of those who are righteous and submit to their Lord.

This behavior of Muslims toward their non-Muslim parents is important in non-Muslim countries. The son or daughter having accepted Islam through conviction is likely to face fierce opposition from his parents who may remain loyal to their Christian heritage. Those children who accepted Islam may find that their parents threaten them or try to influence them in various ways. Their parents' goal is to persuade them or pressure them to renounce their new faith and return to their former convictions. Unless these new Muslims are welcomed and supported by other members in the Muslim community, they will feel both cut off and alienated.

Having the strong moral and religious faith to stand up against peer pressure and parental displeasure is not easy. But if the new Muslims explain their reasons for accepting Islam, and continue to exhibit love and kindness to their parents, such an attitude will have a positive influence on their parents. They will realize that they did not lose a son or a daughter, but that their children have made a decision and a choice that they must respect.

Other members of the Muslim community should help and support the new Muslims and emphasize that they expect them to be good, kind and close to their parents, irrespective of their parents' religious convictions. Such solidarity and understanding will relieve a lot of pressure and anxiety.

Our reward if we are good and kind to our parents:

- **To gain the pleasure of Allah:**

Abdullah Bin Amrou (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Prophet (PBUH) said,

“The pleasure of Allah lies in the pleasure of the parent; and the displeasure of Allah lies in the displeasure of the parent.”

Narrated by Termedhi

We learn from this Hadith:

- We should please our parents, for their pleasure brings about the pleasure of Allah.

- We should be careful not to displease our parents for such displeasure brings about the displeasure of Allah.

- **We are rewarded by entering Paradise:**

Abou Horaira (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Prophet (PBUH) ascended the pulpit, and then said “Amen, Amen, Amen.” He was asked, “O Messenger of Allah, why did you say Amen?” He said, “The angel Gabriel came and said, ‘O Muhammad! How much did a man lose if you are mentioned and he did not offer peace and greetings on you?’” “Say Amen, so I said Amen.” Then he said, “How much did a man lose if the month of Ramadan came and went, yet he did not receive forgiveness from Allah?” “Say Amen, so I said Amen.” Then he said, “How much did a man lose if one or both of his parents were with him, yet they did not let him enter Paradise!” “Say, Amen.” “So I said Amen.”

Narrated by Termedhi, Hakim & M

We learn from this Hadith:

- It is Allah’s great mercy that He allows us to enter His Paradise if we are kind to our parents. If we do not reach out for this opportunity, we have only ourselves to blame.
- It is also a great opportunity to avail ourselves of Allah’s forgiveness during the month of Ramadan. If we did not fast or if we behaved improperly, wasting this blessed month, then it is our own fault and loss.
- Muslims are commanded to send peace and greetings to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). If they do this, they are promised Allah’s mercy and blessings.

We are rewarded with prolonged life and increased earnings as is related in the Hadith of Abou Horaira who said that Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) said,

“Whoever wishes that Allah would increase the provision for him and let him live longer, let him be close to his relations.”

Narrated by Bokhari

We learn from this Hadith:

- Allah knew that such a person would be kind to his relations and has already given him longer life, but the angel appointed to keep count did not know that. Such knowledge is written in the **“Preserved Tablet.”**
- The increased life is only useful if we use it properly by doing good, being pious and helpful to others. Just living longer to enjoy ourselves will not add anything to our accountability.
 - **Allah accepts the Du’aa of the parents on behalf their children**

The Qur’an tells us about the two orphans whose father (or grandfather) was a righteous man, and because of him, Allah saved the treasure that he left for his children. In this way, they would be able to get it when they reached maturity.

﴿ وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴾ [الكهف: ٨٢]

"As for the wall, it belonged to two youths, orphans, in the Town; there was, beneath it, a buried treasure, to which they were entitled; their father had been a righteous man: so thy Lord desired that they should attain their age of full strength and get out their treasure a mercy (and favour) from thy Lord. I did it not of my own accord. Such is the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience" (Al-Kahf 18 : 82)