

Family Values - The Mother

Upholding family ties is obligatory, as Allah says:

“... fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (and do not cut of the relations of) the wombs (kinship)...” [al-Nisa’ 4:1]

“And give to the kindred his due and to the poor...” [al-Isra’ 17:26]

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah created His creation, and when He had finished, al-rahm (the tie of kinship) got up. He said, ‘What is it?’ Al-rahm said: “This is the position of one who is seeking refuge with You from being cut off.’ He said, ‘Will you not be pleased if I should take care of the one who takes care of you, and cut off the one who cuts you off?’ Al-rahm said, ‘Of course, O Lord.’ He said, ‘Then it will be so.’”

Abu Hurayrah quoted: “Would you then, if you were given the authority, do mischief in the land, and sever your ties of kinship?” [Muhammad 47:22]. (Reported by al-Bukhaari, 6948)

Upholding the ties of kinship means being kind to one’s relatives, whether by giving them material things or treating them well. The least of this is greeting them with salaam and not forsaking them.

Allah says:

“And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years – give thanks to Me and to your parents, - unto Me is the final destination. But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly, and follow the path of him who turns to Me in repentance and in obedience. Then to Me will be your return, and I shall tell you what you used to do.” [Luqmaan 31:14-15]

Allah has obligated the good treatment of parents that are mushrikin. Giving them respect and kindness, in spite of the heinous sin which they are telling their child to commit, which is the crime of associating something in worship with Allah. What then do you think is the case with Muslim parents, especially if they are righteous?

By Allah, their rights are among the most important and most certain rights, and fulfilling these rights in a proper manner is one of the most difficult and most important duties. The one who is guided to do this is truly guided, and the one who is not helped to do this is truly deprived. Innumerable ahaadeeth also confirm this.

According to a hadeeth narrated by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him): “A man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said:

O Messenger of Allah, who among the people is most deserving of my good companionship?’ He said, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then whom?’ He said, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then whom?’ He said, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then whom?’ He said, ‘Then your father.’” (Reported by al-Bukhaari, 4/13, and Muslim, 2548).

Being dutiful to your parents

Allah has commanded us to treat our parents well, and He has linked this to the command to worship Him and the prohibition of associating anything in worship with Him. The rights of the mother in this regard have been emphasized more than those of the father.

Allah says:

“Worship none but Allah (Alone) and be dutiful and good to parents...” [al-Baqarah 2:83].

Ibn ‘Abbas said:

This means treating them with respect and kindness, and lowering the wing of humility to them, not answering them harshly or glaring at them, not raising one's voice to them, but being as humble towards them as a slave towards his master.”

Allah says:

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, not shout at them, but address them in terms of honour. And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy, and say: ‘My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was small.’” [al-Isra’ 17:23-24].

Al-Baghawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This means not saying anything that may contain the slightest hint of irritation. [The word ‘uff’ in the aayah, translated here as ‘a word of disrespect’] comes from the word ‘aff’, which is similar to the word ‘taff’; both words refer to the dirt that collects under fingernails, and [in Arabic] when one is annoyed and fed up with something, one says ‘uff!’ to it.”

Abu Baddaah al-Tajeebi said:

“I said to Sa’eed ibn al-Musayyab: ‘I understood everything in the Qur’an about respecting one’s parents, apart from the aayah **“But address them in terms of honour” [al-Isra’ 17:23]**. What are these terms of honour [al-qawl al-kareem]?’

Ibn al-Musayyab said: ‘It is the way in which a slave who has done wrong approaches a harsh and strict master.’”

Makhool said:

“Respecting one’s parents is an expiation for major sins.”

You have to be patient with your mother and put up with the harsh treatment on her part, which at times maybe upsetting to you. By treating her with respect and dealing with her kindly, you will earn her good pleasure and love. Try to avoid things that will provoke her and make her angry, even if they are in your interests, without causing harm to yourself.

Your mother's rights over you, and your rights over her

1 – The mother's rights over her child

The mother has many major rights over her child. These rights are innumerable, but we may mention the following:

(a) Love and respect, as much as possible, because she is the most deserving of people of her son's good companionship.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "A man came to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said,

'O Messenger of Allah, who among the people is most deserving of my good companionship?' He said, 'Your mother.' The man asked, 'Then who?' He said, 'Your mother.' He asked, 'Then who?' He said, 'Your mother.' He asked, 'Then who?' He said, 'Your father.'"

She is the one who made her womb a vessel for you and nourished you from her breast. You have no option but to love her. The fitrah (natural inclination of man) calls you to love her. Love between mothers and children and children and mothers is something that Allah has instilled even in animals, so it is even more befitting for the children of human beings, and for Muslims in particular.

(b) Taking care of her and looking after her affairs if she needs that; this is a debt that rests on the child's shoulders. Did she not take care of him when he was a child and stay up with him at night and bear it all with patience?

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship. And she brings him forth with hardship..." [al-Ahqaaf 46:15]

This even take precedence over jihad if there is a conflict between the two.

'Abd-Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aas (may Allah be pleased with them both) said:

"A man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and asked him for permission to participate in jihad. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him, 'Are your parents alive?' He said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Then your jihad is with them.'" (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2842; Muslim, 2549)

(c) Not offending them or saying or doing anything that they dislike.

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“say not to them a word of disrespect” [al-Israa’ 17:23]

If Allah has forbidden us even to say “uff” [paraphrased as “a word of disrespect” in the translation of the meaning of the aayah] to our parents, then how about someone who hits them?!

(d) Spending on her if she is in need and does not have a husband who can spend on her or if her husband is poor; for the righteous, spending on one’s mother and feeding her is more precious than feeding their own children.

Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Three men went out walking and rain began to fall on them. They entered a cave in a mountain, then a rock fell (blocking the entrance to the cave). They said to one another, Pray to Allah by virtue of the best deeds that you have done. One of them said, O Allah, my parents were elderly and I used to go out and tend to my flocks, then I would milk them and bring the milk to my parents for them to drink from it, then I would give some to my children. One night I came home late and found them sleeping. I did not want to wake them, and the children were crying at my feet. I kept waiting and the children kept crying until dawn broke. O Allah, if You knew that I did that for Your sake, then open a way for us through which we can see the sky. So a way was opened for them...”
(Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2102; Muslim, 2743)!

(e) Obeying her when she tells you to do something good. But if she tells you to do something bad, such as shirk, then there should be no obedience to any created being if it involves disobedience to the Creator.

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not; but behave with them in the world kindly” [Luqmaan 31:15]

(f) After one’s mother dies, it is Sunnah to fulfil any vows that she had made, and to give charity and perform Hajj and ‘Umrah on her behalf.

It was reported from Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) that a woman from Juhaynah came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said:

My mother vowed to go for Hajj, but she died before she did so. Can I perform Hajj on her behalf?” He said, “Yes, perform Hajj on her behalf. Do you not think that if your mother owed a debt that you would pay it off for her? Fulfil her debt to Allah, for Allah is more deserving that what is owed to Him should be paid.” (narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1754).

(g) After she dies, it is also Sunnah to honour her by maintaining ties with those whom she used to keep in touch with, such as her relatives and friends.

It was narrated from ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Umar that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

The best of righteous deeds is for a man to keep in touch with his father’s friends after he dies.” (Narrated by Muslim, 2552).

2 – Your rights over your mother

(a) That she should take care of you when you are a child, breastfeeding and nurturing you. This is a well-known aspect of human nature that has been handed down from the beginning of creation.

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

The mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years, (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the term of suckling” [al-Baqarah 2:233]

(b) She should bring you up in a righteous manner, for she will be responsible for that before Allah on the Day of Resurrection. You are part of her “flock” and she is your “shepherd”.

It was reported that ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Umar said: “I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say

‘Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The imaam is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. A man is the shepherd of his family and is responsible for his flock. A woman is the shepherd of her husband’s house and is responsible for her flock. A servant is the shepherd of his master’s wealth and is responsible for his flock.’ I think that he said, ‘A man is the shepherd of his father’s wealth and is responsible for his flock. Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock.’” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 853; Muslim, 1829)

3 – Permissible things that it is permissible for you to do without your mother interfering in your affairs

She does not have the right to make decisions about what you should like with regard to permissible things over which she has no authority, such as food, drink, clothing, means of transportation, etc.

Neither does she have the right to interfere in your choice of a wife – if she is righteous – so long as you are not disobeying Allah with regard to that. At the same time it is prescribed (by Islam) that you should try to please her even in your choice of a wife, if she advises you in a way that will not harm you.

With regard to her interfering with such matters as when you go out of the house or come in, or your going out in the evening with your friends: both parents have to watch their children with regard to this, so as to keep control of things and not let their children be led astray by bad company. In most cases, when young people are corrupted it is because of bad company. Concerning this matter, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“A man will follow the way of his close friend, so let each of you look to who his close friends are.”

(Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 2387; Abu Dawood, 4833. This hadeeth was classed as hasan by al-Tirmidhi and as Sahih by al-Nawawi, as stated in Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi, 7/42).

Parents also have to watch when their child goes out and when he comes in, because they should not give him free rein, especially if he is not righteous.

You have to acknowledge their status and respect them and offer them good companionship, even if they give you a hard time with regard to things that Allah has made permissible for you. Allah has commanded us to treat our parents well even if they are kuffar who call you to shirk, so how about if they are calling us to something which they sincerely believe to be good? Even if sometimes it causes you some difficulty with regard to something that is permissible for you, the best thing to do is to obey them and do what they want. Even though you do not have to do this, it is a kind of sacrifice and giving them preference, because they are the most deserving of being given good treatment. In the Qur'an, Allah has mentioned obedience to parents immediately after worship of Him, in order to demonstrate the high status afforded obedience to parents.

4 – Your father has the final say concerning everything that comes under his responsibility. For example, he is the one who decides in which school a child who is dependent on him will study. The father also has the final say concerning anything to do with his property, such as your using his car, taking his money, etc.

With regard to a son who is grown up and independent, he makes his own decisions concerning things that Allah has permitted. It is prescribed for him to please his father so long as that does not conflict with his obedience towards Allah. The son must continue to respect his father no matter how old he gets, because this has to do with honouring one's parents and treating them kindly. It was narrated that Ibn 'Umar said:

“I never climbed onto the roof of a house in which my father was.”

If a father tells a child to do something good, or to stop doing something that is permissible, he should obey him so long as that will not cause the son any harm.

5 – With regard to how you can tell your mother that you want more freedom, this can be achieved by words and by deeds.

(a) Deeds

After proving to your mother in practical terms that you are no longer the child whom she used to know and that you have become a man who is able to bear responsibility and you behave like a man in front of her, if she sees that repeatedly, she will trust you. Then things will start to get better and you will have a higher status in your mother's eyes.

(b) Words

By clearly proving, quietly discussing and speaking softly, giving examples of your

sound attitude. May Allah open your mother's heart so that she will deal with you as a wise, mature, sensible, adult man, so long as you are like that.

The importance of honouring one's parents in Islam?

The importance of honouring one's parents is:

Firstly: it is obedience to Allah and His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We have enjoined on man to be good and dutiful to his parents” [al-‘Ankaboot 29:8]

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour. And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy, and say: ‘My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was young’” [al-Israa’ 17:23]

In al-Sahihayn it is reported that Ibn ‘Abbaas said:

“The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was asked which deed is the best? He said, ‘Faith in Allah and His Messenger, then honouring one’s parents...’”

And there are many other Aayat and Mutawaatir Ahaadeeth which say similar things.

Secondly: obeying and honouring one's parents is a means of entering Paradise, as it was reported in Sahih Muslim from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said “He is doomed, he is doomed, he is doomed.” It was said, “Who, O Messenger of Allah?” He said, “The person whose parents, one or both of them, reach old age during his lifetime but he does not enter Paradise.” (Sahih Muslim, 4627).

Thirdly: Respecting and honouring them brings friendship and love.

Fourthly: respecting and obeying them is a way of showing gratitude to them because they are the ones who brought you into this world. You should also show gratitude towards them for bringing you up and taking care of you when you were young. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents” [Luqmaan 31:14]

Fifthly: if a person honours his parents this may be the cause of his own children honouring him. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Is there any reward for good other than good?” [al-Rahmaan 55:60]

And Allah knows best.