

Lesson 2

11-12-09 The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty *Ahadith* Text: Jalali, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition 1987, pages 422-423.

Summary

The levels of responsibility of a person include one's self, then the family, and then the society. Focusing on the family, one must realize that each family is a part of and/or forms the society. As individuals, we live in society based on our respective families. Even families within the animal kingdom make up the society of living beings.

Humans are animals from a scientific point of view, but there is something that differentiates human families from animal families. That something is law. Some animals may have natural tendencies or natural rules of behavior, but the laws imposed on man and his family go well beyond the natural rules of the animal kingdom.

The laws regulating family, like any other law, stem from experience. For example, looking at the history of humans, usually laws are written to prevent an act or to keep order. People do not just wake up one morning and start writing laws randomly. There has to be a reason for a law, and that reason usually is based on experiences people go through. For example, if a certain group starts practicing an act, and other people are harmed by the act or the act causes disruption, then those responsible for writing laws may create a law to prevent or regulate that act. Even religious law is based on experience. Allah (all praise be to Him) in His unlimited wisdom knows (beyond our comprehension) how human beings will interact, and He is able to setup laws for us that take into consideration what we call experience.

For example, usually, mature individuals get married. These individuals, because of their maturity, understand the concept of responsibility, which is key to marriage. Therefore, the rules and laws of marriage are grounded on concepts, such as responsibility, that a human learns through experience. In Islam, marriage is a contract (between two people – a man and a woman), unlike a sacrament as Christians view it.

However, the marriage contract incorporates laws of justice, responsibility, respect, raising children, etc. Again, a human really appreciates the value of these laws based on experience. Because marriage is a contract, the two parties can stipulate conditions. Also, there may exist tacit or implied agreements based on culture or other conditions. When people marry, a family is born, and as mentioned above, different families make up the society. This family (marriage) needs laws to regulate it so that it does not deteriorate. A deterioration in family is a deterioration in society.

Well, there are two concepts one should comprehend when thinking about marriage and the laws of marriage. These concepts are 1) today and 2) the hereafter. One must understand the needs of this worldly life as well as the needs for the hereafter. One cannot just focus on one and ignore the other.

For example, when a man is looking to get married, he should choose a wife with wisdom. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that *when you want to get married, do not look for beauty or wealth alone, first look at religion.* (Jalali, page 423). Why? The quality of the wife (as well as the man), meaning her religious foundation, will keep the marriage strong because there is an understanding of the hereafter. If one's spouse only cares about this world, it is easy to go astray, but if one worries about the hereafter, then one may struggle to stay on the right path.

Also, the religious foundation of a wife will pass onto and educate the children. The real teacher of the family is the mother. A poet once wrote that a mother is the first teacher who teaches all teachers. (Jalali, page 422). Generally, the mother will spend the most time with the children, and that is why it is crucial that the mother has a strong religious foundation. Allah (the Most High) says via the **Qur'an (2:221)**, *inter alia*,

“Do not marry idolatresses until they embrace faith.”

(See Jalali, page 423). The mother is the real heart of the family, and the family is a cornerstone of society. That is why Islam considers the role of the wife/mother to be very important and honorable, and the role of the wife/mother is to be respected. Therefore, marrying a woman with a strong religious foundation is a great start. But it is only a start. One must maintain true Islamic teachings and rulings during the marriage. Allah (the Most Wise) says via the **Qur'an (30:21)**,

“And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect.”

(See Jalali, page 423). Accordingly, the husband and wife should respect each other and deal with each other with kindness, not anger. If the man does not respect the wife, then it is natural that the wife may not respect the man. Respect, love, and adherence to Islamic teachings will allow a marriage to flourish.

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