

the knowledge
vault

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with Ustazah
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A Divine Match

EP 4: ADVICE FOR PARENTS & LEADERS VIS-
A-VIS THE SACRED BALANCE OF REWARD
AND PUNISHMENT



CHAPTER MARKERS



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Chapter 1:

VERSES OF REWARD & PUNISHMENT



The First Verse on Fire

- Today, parents are always attributed as the primary caregivers and the only ones responsible for their children. But in Islam, parenting is always about community effort! We will learn more about this later in the lesson.

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ
وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

But if you are unable to do so—and you will never be able to do so—then fear the Fire fuelled with people and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers. (Al-Baqarah 2:24)

- لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا implies that we will **NEVER** be able to do the action that follows. It is a form of negation that is final and a done deal.
- أُعِدَّتْ implies that the fire is burning now, at this moment, waiting for its occupants.

- Why did Allah use فَاتَّقُوا instead of خَوْف (fear)? فَاتَّقُوا comes from the word تقوى Taqwa, which means 'trust', or 'belief'. Allah is telling them to trust that the Fire exists.
- The Quran is straight to the point - it does not have embellishments, unlike the elaborated way the Arab poetries and literature were written, those that the disbelievers were proud of.
- Allah SWT is the Source of Truth. When He says we should trust that the Fire already exists, fear should naturally be felt within us. This is because we know it is the true reality.





The Very Next Ayah: Good Tidings

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي
رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

And give good tidings to those who believe and do righteous deeds that they will have gardens [in Paradise] beneath which rivers flow. Whenever they are provided with a provision of fruit therefrom, they will say, "This is what we were provided with before." And it is given to them in likeness. And they will have therein purified spouses, and they will abide therein eternally. (Al-Baqarah 2:25)

- The description of reward tends to be more elaborate than the description of punishment in the Quran. This is because Allah SWT expands more on reward than punishment! For example, in verses comparing *Muttaqin* and Hypocrites, Allah talks more about how to become a *Muttaqin* (because he wants us to be one!).



Verses of Punishment

- Most things in life today run on politics of fear to control people, just like Firaun! The fear-mongering techniques play to people's insecurities and fears and tend to cripple them.
- But Allah doesn't want us to be crippled by fear - He wants us to be motivated! He doesn't want us to be scared of Him to the point that we are unable to see His Love for us.
- The mention of punishment in the Quran is to give us a dose of reality and to hinder us from wrongdoings. They are a wake-up call for us to return to reality!
- The verses of punishment in the Quran are also necessary as they give us hope, especially today when oppression is rampant. These verses act as Ayahs of Hope for victims of abuse and betrayal. It is **necessary** to have Ayahs of Punishment in the Quran!



His Justice Will Happen

- On the individual level, these verses of punishment may hinder us from wrong, but they also give us hope.
- We trust that Allah is Just and we trust in His Justice, however it may look. Sometimes when we are wronged or we see injustices, we want immediate revenge for the perpetrator. But Allah will exact justice in His Way, not necessarily in the way that we want.
- We may feel despair or hopeless with the news we read every day, but we trust in Allah that His Justice will take place. **We put our hope and reliance on Him as He Sees what the oppressed are going through.**





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The Tarbiyah of Children

- Allah is our Rabb (all that it encapsulates - He is our God and our King, He takes care of us, He maintains our affairs and more.)
- Parents play a similar role, although not to the extent of a Rabb, but primarily in taking care of their children and maintaining them. And though they are not owners of their children, they are in charge of them and their *tarbiyah*.
- Linguistically, *tarbiyah* has a meaning of 'laying the foundation' and 'to nurture, to grow, to thrive'. Tarbiyah goes beyond taking care of the child's physical needs; we have to lay the foundation in our children and make sure they grow. This is the *amanah* (trust) of parents towards their children.
- Tarbiyah doesn't end when children turn 12 or 18; it lasts a lifetime!

What About Juz 30?



- Allah SWT was setting boundaries with us humans from the start of revelation. How?
- Most of Juzuk 30 was revealed in Makkah, before the Conquest of Makkah, and most of the Surahs were among the first to be revealed to the Prophet ﷺ
- Juz 30 is also a summary of key concepts that Allah SWT has covered in the earlier parts of the Quran.
- But if we look at Juz 30 in chronological order, Allah is introducing to us broad concepts and key objectives of the religion. **He also introduces to us the concept of consequences.**



Verses to Ponder

- Allah is not trying to convince us what will happen on Judgement Day. Instead, He is telling us to ponder, think and reflect!
- Allah proceeds to inform the consequences of questioning His Signs and not believing in them in the following verses:

إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا (٢١) لِلطَّاغِينَ مَاءًا (٢٢) لَبِثِينَ
فِيهَا أَحْقَابًا (٢٣) لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا (٢٤) إِلَّا
حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا (٢٥) جَزَاءً وَفَاقًا (٢٦)

Indeed, Hell is lying in ambush as a home for the transgressors, where they will remain for 'endless' ages. There they will not taste any coolness or drink, except boiling water and 'oozing' pus— a fitting reward. (An-Naba 78:21-26)

- All they had to do was look above and around them; they would have been able to see the truth!



The Rewards He Wants To Give Us

- The Quran is a dance between reward and punishment. As Aida said, we don't have to hold our breath for so long when reading verses of punishment because the verses of relief for the believers will always come soon after!
- We are never drowning in fear when reading the Quran, because, after a right amount of fear, He responds with hope.

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا (٣١) حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا (٣٢) وَكَوَاعِبَ أَتْرَابًا
(٣٣) وَكَأْسًا دِهَاقًا (٣٤) لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِذًّا أَبًا
(٣٥) جَزَاءً مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَاءً حِسَابًا (٣٦)

Indeed, the righteous will have salvation— Gardens, vineyards, and full-bosomed maidens of equal age, and full cups 'of pure wine', never to hear any idle talk or lying therein— a 'fitting' reward as a generous gift from your Lord, (An-Naba 78:31-36)

- Allah wants us to do good and give us the best of things!



Which one will it be?

Our actions
will decide if
we earn Allah's
Generosity
or His
Consequences.



Chapter 2:

HOW TO SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

To Gentle Parenting or Not?

- The objective that we want to achieve in life is to attain the جَزَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَاءٌ (reward as a generous gift from your Lord) - His Jannah and His Redha (Pleasure).
- We can apply this concept of boundaries in our relationships, including with our children. Society raves about gentle parenting but it shouldn't result in the children walking all over the parents. Instead, we should set boundaries and be firm in a way that is healthier for the children.
- Our parents may not be gentle but they did what they felt was best within the context and information that they had at that time, whereas we are now exposed to different knowledge. We have access to more things (too much, if we can be honest).
- The way that parents set boundaries will always look different, as time passes.



How To Speak to Your Children

- Reward and punishment is an accepted tool in parenting, but we should not use fear all the time. **We should learn from how Allah speaks to us to speak to our children** - we have to question if we are being angry or being firm with them. Are we setting boundaries or coercing our children into doing what we want?
- The objective of setting boundaries with our children is to set them up for life so that they do not do things that they are not supposed to do at any given point in time. Hence, when we set boundaries, we are laying the foundation.
- Another concept that is rampant nowadays is the assumption that every small moment of our parenting will make a huge impact on our children's lives. **But this is not necessarily true!**



Setting Boundaries

- For example, we may think that we will give our children trauma *the moment* we argue in front of them. Every single moment seems to be inflated! But this is not true. **Trauma is the culmination of different specific moments, not just a singular moment.**
- We are only human and we make mistakes. **It is how we address and rectify our mistakes that matter. When our children see this, they will learn from it and add the skill to their 'toolbox of life'.**
- Setting boundaries applies to our children and also ourselves (within the boundaries Allah has set). For example, new mothers may struggle to prioritise between attending to their crying baby or praying. **#reality**
- We need to normalise conversations where new mothers grieve their past selves, in terms of their spirituality. We deserve a form of closure to say goodbye to our past selves and embrace our new motherhood selves.

Our Children is a Test

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ
أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

And know that your wealth and your children are only a test and that with Allah is a great reward. (Al-Anfal 8:28)

- Allah understands us and our struggles as parents but we have to set clear boundaries with ourselves. **We cannot keep using the same excuse and compromise Allah for our children! This is us failing our test.**
- We have to stop using our children as an excuse to not do better in our spirituality. While they are our *amanah*, they are also our tests. The larger test, especially if we think about our key objectives in life, is not allowing our children to compromise on our 'Allah'.
- We have to be more cognizant and start setting clear boundaries for ourselves moving forward.



We have to
stop using our
children as an
excuse to not
do better in
our spirituality.



STUDY BREAK





Chapter 3:

IT IS ALL ABOUT PROGRESS

It Takes Time

- The second lesson we can learn from the way Allah speaks to us is **on giving time**. For example, the alcohol ban in the Quran came in stages. The first stage comes in the following verse:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۖ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ
لِّلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا ۚ قُلْ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ
الْعَفْوُ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

They ask you 'O Prophet' about intoxicants and gambling. Say, "There is great evil in both, as well as some benefit for people—but the evil outweighs the benefit." They 'also' ask you 'O Prophet' what they should donate. Say, "Whatever you can spare." This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you 'believers', so perhaps you may reflect
(Al-Baqarah 2:219)

- Note: وَمَنْفَعٌ is in plural form to imply that there is a lot of benefit in intoxicants and gambling.
- Some Companions stopped drinking after this verse was revealed, but some continued since it was not prohibited for them.

Conditions on Drinking

- The second verse on alcohol came in the following verse discouraging to be near prayer if one is intoxicated:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا
مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مَّرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ
النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا
بُيُوتَهُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا

O believers! Do not approach prayer while intoxicated until you are aware of what you say, nor in a state of 'full' impurity—unless you merely pass through 'the mosque'—until you have bathed. But if you are ill, on a journey, or have relieved yourselves, or been intimate with your wives and cannot find water, then purify yourselves with clean earth, wiping your faces and hands. And Allah is Ever-Pardoning, All-Forgiving. (An-Nisa 4:43)

- More Companions stopped drinking after this as prayer was a priority to them. But still, others continued drinking with the conditions set.

The Importance of Progression

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَمُ
رَجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O believers! Intoxicants, gambling, idols, and drawing lots for decisions are all evil of Satan's handiwork. So shun them so you may be successful. (Al-Ma'idah 5:90)

- Shunning in this case is not merely turning away from the actions, **but it is also to hate them.**
- We apply these progressions to parenting by giving our children time to fix their mistakes or actions.
- When we introduce new things to people, we need to give them space to adapt to it because it is hard to accept at the get-go.

- As leaders or the eldest in the family, we apply this method of giving space for people to change by correcting their first few mistakes gently. But if it gets too repetitive, we need to set our foot down.

وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي
الْمَضَاجِعِ وَأَضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ
سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

And if you sense ill-conduct from your women, advise them 'first', 'if they persist,' do not share their beds, 'but if they still persist,' then discipline them 'gently'. But if they change their ways, do not be unjust to them. Surely Allah is Most High, All-Great. (An-Nisa 4:34)

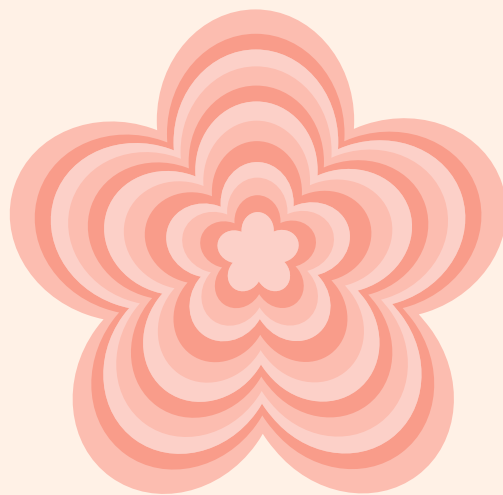
- Islam honours the concept of progression - even revelation was a progress of 23 years! Imagine if the Quran was sent down in one swoop. It will be too heavy for us!

Change needs time and progression

- Allah acknowledges that we are human and need time and space to grow within His set boundaries. We all grow at different levels and paces since we all prioritise different things.
- When the prohibition came in the final verse, the Companions were already mentally prepared since there were progressions to its prohibitions.
- There is even progression with traffic lights. The amber light is very important because can we imagine if the light turns from green to red immediately? There will be many accidents!
- Sometimes, we expect others to understand our instructions immediately, but children, especially, cannot do that. We need to give them time and space to absorb new concepts and change.
- The key to progression is repetition because everything around us is about repetition - prayers, Quran memorization, cooking and more.

Remember:

The key to
progression
is repetition.





Have Grace for Mistakes

- We gradually become better with practice and experience, but we still need a healthy dose of *tawakkul* (reliance in Allah).
- If Allah wills for us to be tested, things will not happen the way we want them to even if we keep repeating them. We should balance *tawakkul* with repetition.
- The last lesson is to **have the grace to allow mistakes to happen**. In the Quran, punishment is reiterated 117 times yet 'Forgiveness' is repeated 234 times (double the mention of punishment)!

مَنْ أَهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا
وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

Whoever chooses to be guided, it is only for their own good. And whoever chooses to stray, it is only to their own loss. No soul burdened with sin will bear the burden of another. And We would never punish 'a people' until We have sent a messenger 'to warn them'. (Al-Isra 17:15)

Do Not Lose Hope

- A lot of times we feel like we bear the burden of other people's sins. We may be questioned if we have tried guiding them to the Truth or not, but the onus is still on the doer to be responsible for finding guidance and knowledge for themselves.

قُلْ يٰعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ
الرَّحِيمُ

Say, 'O Prophet, that Allah says,' "O My servants who have exceeded the limits against their souls! Do not lose hope in Allah's mercy, for Allah certainly forgives all sins. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Az-Zumar 39:53)

- It's normal for us to feel that there is no hope for us after sinning so much. But this verse gives us hope that He will certainly forgive us.
- We have to allow mistakes from others because we are not created for perfection. It is essentially about having grace and Allah is the Most Gracious!



Be The Safe Space for Others

- Allowing mistakes in a relationship makes it healthier. It helps maintain the relationship in the long run - when our children or our loved ones mess up in the future, they know that they can come back to our safe space.

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

***Your wealth and children are only a test, but
Allah 'alone' has a great reward.***

(At-Taghabun 64:15)

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَسْمِعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا
لِّأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

***So be mindful of Allah to the best of your
ability, hear and obey, and spend in charity—
that will be best for you. And whoever is saved
from the selfishness of their own souls, it is they
who are 'truly' successful. (At-Taghabun 64:16)***

HEART WORK

ACTION:

Think about what parenting or relationship mistake you are trying to fix and do up an action plan using the three lessons - set boundaries, give time and allow mistakes.

REFLECTION:

Do we give others the space to make mistakes as how we expect others to do with us, or do we immediately punish them?

CONTRIBUTION:

Share the three lessons on communication with a friend who may be a parent or a leader.