

# The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

## PARENTS

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The Quran takes a very balanced approach in dealing with parents.

Throughout the Quran's narratives, parents are dealt with equally. At no point does one find any instruction that one parent is to be treated or favoured in preference to the other. This stands in some contrast to popular Muslim thought which often tends to skew this fine balance. Muslim beliefs which emanate from theology sourced from [Islamic secondary sources](#) often intimate a preference of one parent over another. As an example, heaven is understood to be present 'under the feet of one's mother, or gives the mother preference over the father in multiples of 3. The Quran however supports no such preferences. Rather, it underscores the message of **fair and equal treatment** to **both** parents.

The Quran never commands one to 'obey' one's parent. This obedience is naturally understood as long as parents operate within the boundaries of Islam. The only direct instruction given in the Quran to mankind with regards parents is to **be kind or good to them**. This is aptly captured in the following verse.

### 029.008

*"We have enjoined on mankind kindness (Arabic: Husn) to parents; but if they strive to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not. To Me is your return and I shall tell you what you used to do."*

Blind obedience to parents is not a concept supported by the Quran. Parents naturally represent a cross section of any human society and there exists the propensity to commit good or evil in any given relationship. Parents are no different. For example:

- Some parents lead their children astray both spiritually and morally.
- Some parents lead their children into committing sin (Stealing, sexual exploitation, committing injustices and atrocities)

- Some parents abuse their children.

As much as the above conditions may not affect the reader, one must at all times remain conscious to the fact that there are indeed many children that unfortunately do remain exposed to transgression by their parents. The Quran's guidance appeals to all mankind irrespective of their backgrounds and predicaments.

The requirement of mankind to stand for truth and justice is so imperative that it is powerfully and emphatically captured in the following verse.

#### 004.135

“O you who believe! Be custodians of justice, as witnesses to God, **even if it against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you deviate, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, then indeed God is well-acquainted with all that you do”**

### OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS AND ITS CONTEXT

True obedience is only reserved for God. We will note from the verses below that the emphasis of 'obedience' to God appears directly **before** the command to be 'kind / good' to parents. This sets up the perfect context and harmony in which to understand one's duties to parents. One should not make their parents an object of worship such as by blind obedience. We also note that God has not enjoined the requirement of kindness exclusively to parents, but also to one's relatives, orphans, neighbours and others.

#### 002.083

“And remember We took a covenant from the Children of Israel: **Worship none but God and with parents be kind** and with the kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and give Zakah (alms). Then you turned away, except a few among you, and you were refusing.”

#### 006.151

“Say: "Come, I will rehearse what God has (really) prohibited you from": **Join not anything as equal with Him - and be kind / good to your parents;** kill not your children on a plea of want; We provide sustenance for you and for them; come not near to shameful deeds. Whether open or secret; take not life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus does He command you, that you may learn wisdom.”

#### 004.036

**"Worship God, and do not join any partners with Him - and be kind / good to parents,** kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer, and what your right hands possess: For God loves not the arrogant, the boastful"

Therefore as noted, true obedience must only remain with God which requires one to be at all times fully cognizant of God's commands and the need for upholding truth, honesty and justice. Parents on the other hand, must be dealt with kindness at all times and even if they are not obeyed in matters which stand in contrast to the Quran's guidance, they must be dealt with kindness in all other worldly affairs.

#### **031:015**

"But if they strive against you to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them **but accompany them in (this) world with appropriate kindness** and follow the way of those who turn back to Me [in repentance]. Then to Me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do."

### **THE DIRECTIVE OF KINDNESS AND GOODNESS TO PARENTS MUST BE UPHELD EVEN IN DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIPS**

As noted in a verse shared above (31:15), one must always remain kind and good to parents even if there has arisen a need not to obey them. This is certainly the case when parents **fall foul** of upholding core values and lean to conducts and practices that are inconsistent with the spirit of Islam.

One should never be unduly difficult with parents nor speak to them in a harsh manner whether they are young or especially when they are of advanced age.

#### **017.023**

Thy Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that ye **be kind to parents**. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.

Examples are given as to why parents merit such kindness and respect.

#### **031.014**

"**And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents:** his mother carried him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning in two years, "Show gratitude to Me and to your parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal.""

#### **046.015**

"**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 You have bestowed upon me, **and upon both my parents**, and that I may work righteousness such as You may approve; and be gracious to me in my offspring. Truly have I turned to You and indeed I am of those who submit (**Arabic: Muslimina**)""

The mother is mentioned not to infer any exclusivity as this would be inconsistent with the directive of God to be kind to parents equally throughout the Quran. As the task of childbirth and weaning is only actionable by the mother, it seems likely that this example has been singled out for consistency as opposed to portraying exclusivity. Other tasks of provisions, support and care can be equally performed by either parent.

The message is one of fairness and equality as the verse cited above (46:15) further clarifies, "**O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour which You have bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents...**"

## WHY DID PROPHET ABRAHAM <sup>(pbuh)</sup> LEAVE HIS PARENT(S) AND PEOPLE?

### 060.004

"There is for you a good example in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: "We are clear of you and of whatever you worship besides God. **We have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred forever, unless you believe in God and Him alone**": **But not when Abraham said to his father: "I will pray for forgiveness for thee, though I have no power (to get) aught on thy behalf from God."** (They prayed): "Our Lord! In Thee do we trust, and to Thee do we turn in repentance: to Thee is (our) Final Goal"

It is one matter to have differences in theological beliefs than one's parents. However, if for any reason a parent or people then strive to harm one, then one must be willing to protect their own life as a priority and move away from the source of the harm. This finds some support in Prophet Abraham's <sup>(pbuh)</sup> actions, who moved away from his people after they, not only dismissed his beliefs, but then further transgressed by attempting to kill or harm him (21:69-70).

### 021.068-70

"They said: **Burn him** and stand by your gods, if you are doers. We said: O fire! Be cool(ness) and peace / safety for Abraham. And they intended to set a snare for him, but We made them the greater losers."

Therefore, differences in beliefs aside, the enmity and hatred that had arisen given by '*wabada baynana wa baynakum'l-adawatu wal baghdau abadan'* - *and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred forever* was arguably accentuated by the desire of his people to kill or seriously harm prophet Abraham. <sup>(pbuh)</sup> The only exception given was if they returned to proper religion.

Even though prophet Abraham's <sup>(pbuh)</sup> sentiments are captured as one depicting animosity and hatred towards his people (60:4), even so, prophet Abraham's <sup>(pbuh)</sup> heart still pleaded forgiveness for his father. Notwithstanding the fact that verse 60:4 provides an exception of this action of prophet Abraham <sup>(pbuh)</sup> not to be followed in such a context, it is further explained by the Quran as a promise he had made. However, when it became clear to him that his father was **an enemy of God**, he disassociated himself from him too (9:114). This presents evident limits of obedience towards parents and when matters go too far and peaceful compromise is not an option.

**009:114**

"And the request of forgiveness of Abraham for his father was only because of a promise he had made to him. But when it became clear to Abraham that his father was an enemy to God , he disassociated himself from him. Indeed Abraham was compassionate and patient."

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

The Quran does not instruct by way of guidance that one should blindly obey their parents. Rather a relationship based on kindness, honesty, justice and mutual understanding is alluded to. Obedience to parents should only remain till the point there is no fundamental breach of values which are part and parcel of any righteous society's expectation and within the spirit and teachings of the Quran.

Children are not the 'property' of parents for them to do whatever they like with them. Children have been entrusted to their parents by their Creator and should be treated with fairness, in kindness and within the boundaries of Islam. Parents have a duty of care to feed, clothe and enjoin on them truth, certainly till an age when they are of sound mind and or maturity.

Children are expected to remain civil, kind and respectful to parents even in difficult and strained circumstances. However, this should not mean that injustices by parents need to be tolerated or that one cannot seek to protect themselves from serious harm by removing themselves from the situation if any parent transgresses beyond bounds. The need for justice comes first.

The following is a befitting example to follow which is narrated with regards to Prophet John (Yahya)

**019.014**

"And kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious."

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