

Chapter Two

Parenthood

Parents' Obligations

Taking good care of and showing compassion towards children is one of the most commendable deeds in Islam. The Prophet (pbuh) was fond of children and advised the Muslim community to treat them kindly. Parents should meet their children's educational needs and teach them proper manners. Responsibility for the child's welfare since its birth is a top priority. According to the Prophet's (pbuh) instructions, by the seventh day of a newborn baby, it should be given a good, pleasant name and its head is recommended to be shaved, giving in charity its weight in silver or gold. A child's birth should be made a festive occasion marked with joy and charity.

It is a Prophetic tradition to give '*Aqiqah*', which means slaughtering a sheep or two as a sacrifice and distributing its meat among the poor. Salman ibn `Amir ad-Dabbi narrated, "I heard the Prophet (pbuh) say, '*Aqiqah is to be offered for a newly born boy, so slaughter (an animal) for him, and relieve him of his suffering.*'"¹

It has been quoted in *Fat-h Al-Bari* that the majority of Muslim scholars agree to the Prophetic tradition narrated in *Sahih At-Tirmidhi* that the Prophet (pbuh) was asked about '*Aqiqah*' and that he (pbuh) ordered two sheep in case the newborn baby is a boy and one sheep in case it is a girl.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari.

Another Prophetic tradition is that of ‘*Tahnik*’¹, which is to let the baby taste some softened dates or diluted honey with water.

Abu Musa (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, “A son was born to me and I took him to the Prophet (pbuh) who named him Ibrahim, did ‘*Tahnik*’ to him with a date, invoked Allah to bless him and then returned him to me.”²

Both parents are responsible for upbringing their child. During its early years, the father should provide material necessities. Jurists argue as to whether, when, where, and how the mother should nurse her child in return for material compensations or as a duty. However, they agree that the child should be provided with adequate care, and if it needs a wet nurse or hired services, the father is held responsible for that. Both parents together should attend to the mental and spiritual socialization of their child.

As modern psychology teaches us, home education has the most important influence on the child during the first years of life. A basic condition required to be available is that the parents should love and respect each other, be patient and extend cherishing care to their children. It is most important that children find in both parents, good and respectable Muslim models to imitate. Part of the parents’ religious responsibility is to try to raise their child to be useful, moderate, caring, generous, giving and strong Muslim in the best possible Islamic way. They should teach him from an early age Islamic morals and principles, the Qur’an, the *Sunnah* and stories of former prophets. Knowing that listening at an early age forms

¹ Chewing a date then rubbing it to the mouth of the newborn baby.

² Reported by al-Bukhari.

the consciousness of children, wise parents could gather all their love, intelligence and good humor to make up the most interesting and inspiring tales out of the Qur'anic guide. The Prophet (pbuh) urged parents to train their children to practice the daily prayers by the age of seven. If the child does not start praying by the age of ten, he should be disciplined by physical punishment without causing him harm or injury, but only to show disapproval of his behavior.

However, parents may not impose their religious beliefs on their child upon reaching the age of puberty since by this time the child is assumed to be capable of making responsible decisions. What parents are enjoined to do then is to show their child in words and deeds the Islamic way of life, hoping that such early socialization will be effective in later years.

There are certain obligations, which the parents must fulfill irrespective of their child's religious identity. Their responsibility for their child's welfare remains binding as long as it is minor and incapable of taking care of itself. In addition, the father is responsible for the support and maintenance of his needy children even after they come of age. The daughter is entitled to the same right until she actually marries. This right holds even if she is capable of earning a living, because in Islam it is not expected of a girl to work for a living. Her funds should be supplemented by her father, husband, son, brother or guardian to make sure that she is well provided for.

Responsibility for and compassion towards the child is a matter of religious importance as well as a social concern. Whether the parents are alive or dead, present or absent, married or divorced, the child is to be provided for with optimum care.

The Prophet (pbuh) represented a great example as a Muslim loving, caring and compassionate father and grandfather:

- Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) was reported to have said, “We went with the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) to Abu Sayf the blacksmith, who was the husband of the wet nurse of Ibrahim (son of the Prophet, pbuh). The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) held Ibrahim, kissed him, and smelled him.”
- Abu Qatadah al-Ansari said that the Prophet (pbuh) used to pray at times while he was carrying Umamah, the daughter of his daughter Zaynab and Abu al-`As ibn Rabi`ah. He would put her down when he dropped in prostration, then pick her back up when he rose.¹
- Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said, “The Prophet (pbuh) once went out during the day, and neither did he talk to me nor I to him until we reached the market of Banu Qaynuqa`, then he sat in the yard of Fatimah’s house and said, *‘Is the lad here? Is the lad here?’* (In reference to al-Hasan son of `Ali). She kept him back for a while, and I thought she might be putting a flower-pendant on him or washing him up. Finally, he rushed in until he hugged and kissed him and said, *‘O Allah, love him and love whoever loves him.’*”²

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Parents' Rights

In Islam, parental rights are second to worshipping Allah, the Almighty. The same idea is emphasized in the Prophet's (pbuh) statement that what pleases one's parents also pleases Allah, and what annoys them likewise annoys Him.

Among the various parental rights in Islam is to provide them with certain basic securities, irrespective of their religious beliefs. Parents may differ from their children with respect to religious values and moral standards. However, this does not affect the parents' basic rights upon their children.

The Glorious Qur'an sums up the whole matter in a master concept called '*Ihsan*', which denotes, among other things, kindness, compassion, mercy, charity, companionship, and sound performance. It is the Muslim's religious duty as well as a virtue to adopt '*Ihsan*' in treating his/her parents. This divine ordinance of '*Ihsan*' includes showing gratitude, patience, prayer for them during their lifetime and, especially, after their death, honoring their commitments on their behalf when they can no longer do so, sincere counsel and veneration. It is also implied in the concept of '*Ihsan*' that parents have the right to expect obedience from their children. However, if parents endanger their children's spiritual welfare or ask them to perform evil deeds, only then are children under no obligation to obey.

In addition, an integral part of children's absolute religious duty is to provide for their parents in case of need, and to help

them to be as comfortable as possible so long as one is capable of supporting them. All Muslim jurists agree that no individual is held responsible for the maintenance of other people except his wife, parents and children irrespective of their private beliefs. Such maintenance includes adequate provisions of food, lodging, clothing and general comfort. Moreover, one is even required to help his father or mother to remarry if this is needed for his/her comfort, and to provide for the new mate (e.g. stepmother). The parents' need-level, the children's capacity for support, and the constituents of comfort are to be determined in accordance with the standards of the time, but with a view of equity, kindness and moderation. Finally, support for poor parents is to be shared by their children equally regardless of the children's gender, according to one interpretation, or in proportion to their shares of inheritance, according to another.

Support for the parents was taken for granted so much that a certain pioneering Islamic savant, as-Sha`bi (d. c. 105/723), judged it improper to speak of it in legal terms. It was built into the religio-moral system of Islam to be kind to and thoughtful of parents.

Kindness to Parents

- **During their life**

1. The reward for kindness towards one's parents in this life and in the hereafter:

- a) In this life: blessed life and provision.
- b) In the hereafter: atonement of worldly sins and access to Paradise.

2. Kindness to parents is given precedence over group-obligations:

It is given precedence over:

- a) Fight in the Cause of Allah
 - b) The rights of wives and friends
 - c) Pilgrimage
 - d) Visiting the grave of the Prophet (pbuh)
 - e) Loving children
 - f) Voluntary acts of worship
3. The people most worthy of your company are your parents.
4. You and your possessions belong to your father.
5. Absolving parents from any due money.
6. Mutual supplication (*Du`a'* between parents and children).
7. Never insult your parents.
8. Ascribe yourself to your parents publicly and take pride in it.
9. Impiety (towards them) is a major sin.

- **After their death**

1. Carrying out their pledges and wills
2. Praying for them and asking for their forgiveness
3. Maintaining contact with their relatives and friends
4. Performing pilgrimage on their behalf and fasting or feeding the poor (two meals per each day they missed fasting) according to one's abilities
5. Diligent performance of good deeds to please them
6. Visiting their graves

Examples of kindness to parents from the noble *Sunnah*

- **Kindness to parents precedes kindness to wives and friends**

Abu al-Layth as-Samarqandi narrated that Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "During the life of the Prophet (pbuh), a young man named `Alqamah was dying. When he was advised to utter the *Shahadah*¹, he couldn't pronounce. When the Prophet (pbuh) knew of that, he asked, 'Are any of his parents still alive?' The answer was that his father was dead while his old mother was still alive. So, they sent for his mother, and when she came, the Prophet (pbuh) asked her about `Alqamah's behavior, she said, 'O Messenger of Allah, he used to pray much, to fast (for many days), and to spend plenty of *Dirhams* in charity; too much to be counted or weighed.' The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'But how was he with you?' She said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I'm very upset and

¹ The testimony of faith, '*La Ilaha Illa Allah, Muhammad Rasul Allah*' (There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah).

angry with him.’ He (pbuh) said, ‘*Why?*’ She said, ‘He used to favor his wife over me, and to obey her in all matters.’ Then, the Prophet (pbuh) said, ‘*As he had upset his mother, he was prevented from uttering the Shahadah,*’ and called, ‘*O Bilal, go gather a lot of wood so that I can light it and burn him.*’ Then, the mother said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, how come you burn my son, my heart's-blood?! How can my heart bear it?!’ The Prophet (pbuh) said, ‘*If Allah’s Forgiveness to him would make you happy, you should be satisfied with him. By He, in Whose Hands is my soul, he (your son) will benefit nothing of his prayer or charity as long as you are angry with him.*’ Thus, she raised her hands and invoked, ‘I bear witness to Allah, the Almighty in His Heavens and to you, Messenger of Allah and to everyone present that I’m pleased and satisfied with my son.’ Consequently, the Prophet (pbuh) said, ‘*O Bilal, go and see if `Alqamah can utter the Shahadah or not, for it may be that his mother has spoken something contradictory to what she harbors, being shy of me.*’ When Bilal reached `Alqamah’s door, he heard him utter the *Shahadah*. Then, he died on that day. He was washed and shrouded, and the Prophet (pbuh) performed the funeral prayer for him. Next, he (pbuh) stood by the brink of his grave and said ‘*O you Muhajirun¹ and Ansar², (know that) whoever preferred his wife over his mother would entail the curse of Allah, and no repentance or ransom would ever be accepted from him.*’³

- **Kindness to parents precedes setting for pilgrimage**

¹ Muslims who immigrated from Makkah to Medina.

² Muslims in Medina who received and entertained the immigrants.

³ The *hadith* was reported in different wording by Ahmad and at-Tabarani.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said, “*The virtuous slave is doubly rewarded.*” Abu Hurayrah added, "I swear by He in Whose Hands is my soul, if it were not for the sake of Jihad, performing Hajj and kindness to my mother, I would have loved to die while I were a slave."¹

(It's noteworthy that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) didn't perform Hajj until his mother passed away as a matter of devoting extensive care and kindness to his mother).

- **Kindness to parents precedes kindness to children**

Sincere kindness towards parents saves from the calamities and miseries of life. This is proved by the *hadith* narrated by 'Abdullah ibn `Umar, in which he stated that he heard the Prophet (pbuh) say,

“Long ago three men set out together till they reached a cave at night and entered it. By chance a big rock rolled down the mountain and closed the mouth of the cave. They said (to each other), 'Nothing could save you from this rock but appealing to Allah by giving reference to a righteous deed of yours, which you had done (only for Allah's Sake).' So, one of them began, 'O Allah! My parents were old and I never provided my family (wife, children or slaves) with milk before them. Once, it happened that I was delayed, and when I came they had slept. I milked the animals and took the milk to them, but I found them sleeping. I hated to provide my family and slaves with the milk before them. I waited for them with the bowl of milk in my hand and I kept on waiting for

¹ Reported by at-Tirmidhi.

them to get up till the day dawned. Then they got up and drank the milk. O Allah! If I did that for Your Pleasure only, please relieve us from our dilemma caused by this rock.' So, the rock shifted a little, but they could not get out."

The Prophet (pbuh) added,

"The second man said, 'O Allah! I had a cousin who was the dearest of all people to me and I wanted to have sexual relations with her but she refused. Later she had hardships in a year of famine and she had come to and I gave her one-hundred-and-twenty Dinars provided that she would not resist my desire, and she agreed. When I was about to fulfill my desire, she said, 'It is haram [unlawful] for you to outrage my chastity except by legitimate marriage.' So, I refrained from copulating with her, and left her though she was the dearest of all the people to me, and also I left the gold I had given her. O Allah! If I did it for Your Pleasure, please relieve us from the present calamity.' So, the rock shifted a little more but still they could not get out."

The Prophet added,

"Then the third man said, 'O Allah! I employed some laborers and I paid them their wages with the exception of one man who did not take his wages and went away. I invested his wage and I got much property thereby. (Later on) he came and said to me, 'O Allah's slave! Pay me my wage.' I said to him, 'All the camels, cows, sheep and slaves you see, are yours.' He said, 'O Allah's slave! Don't mock me.' I said, 'I am not mocking you.' So, he took all the herds and drove them away and left nothing. O Allah! If I did that for Your Pleasure only, please

*relieve us from the present suffering.' So, the rock shifted completely and they got out walking."*¹

- **Kindness to mothers precedes performing voluntary acts of worship**

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said,

*"There was an Israeli man called Jurayj who, while he was praying, his mother came and called him, but he did not respond. He wondered within himself whether he should continue the prayer or reply to his mother's call. She came to him the second time and called him and said, 'O Allah! Do not let him die until he sees the faces of prostitutes. Jurayj used to live in a hermitage. A woman said that she would entice him, so she went to him and presented herself (for an evil act) but he refused. She then went to a shepherd and made him commit an illegal sexual intercourse with her, and later she gave birth to a boy. She alleged that the baby belongs to Jurayj. The people went to Jurayj, pulled him out of his hermitage, broke it down and abused him. He performed ablution and offered the prayer, then he went to the male (baby) and asked him, 'O boy! Who is your father?'" The baby replied that his father was the shepherd. The people said that they would build for Jurayj a hermitage of gold (in recompense) but he asked them to make it of mud only."*²

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari.

² Reported by al-Bukhari.

Woman's Rights and Role as a Mother

The **Old Testament** in several situations commands kind and considerate treatment of the parents and condemns those who dishonor them. For example, 'If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death' (Lev. 20:9). Also, 'A wise man brings joy to his father but a foolish man despises his mother' (Proverbs 15:20). Although honoring the father alone is mentioned in many places, e.g. 'A wise man heeds his father's instruction' (Proverbs 13:1), the mother alone is never mentioned. Moreover, there is no special emphasis on treating the mother kindly as a sign of appreciation of her great suffering in childbearing and breastfeeding. Besides, the mother does not inherit at all from her children, while the father does. This was mentioned in Proverbs 13, verse 42.

In the **Hindu** scriptures, the mother has to obey her own son because being a woman basically means obedience in their culture regardless of her rank.

In **Islam**, the honor, respect and esteem attached to the motherhood is unparalleled. The Qur'an in several places puts special emphasis on the mother's great role in giving birth, breastfeeding and nursing. It places the importance of kindness to parents as second to worshipping Almighty Allah. A failure of either of these aspects is indeed a major failure in one's religious duties. The Glorious Qur'an states,

[Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you 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 in terms of honor. And say, 'My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they cherished me in childhood'.]

(Al-Isra': 23-24)

[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.]

(Luqman: 14)

Mothers' rights precede fathers' rights

Allah has made honoring one's mother a virtue and put forth the mother's right over that of a father. The very special position of mothers in Islam has been described by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), emphasizing care for mothers thrice and once for the father.

A man asked the Prophet (pbuh), "Who should I honor most?" The Prophet replied "*Your mother.*" The man continued, "And who comes next?" The Prophet replied, "*Your mother.*" The man further asked, "And who comes next?" The Prophet again replied, "*Your mother.*" The man went on, "And who comes next?" The Prophet then replied, "*Your father.*"¹

According to this previous Prophetic tradition, Islam specified to mothers three times the honor and kind treatment attributed to fathers for the labors they endure in pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Another famous saying of the Prophet (pbuh) reads, "*Paradise lies beneath the feet of mothers.*"¹

In addition, out of Islamic care for motherhood and the feelings of mothers, a divorced mother has greater rights and is worthier of looking after her children than the father. Therefore, she deserves the first consideration when it comes to disputes about children's custody.

On the authority of Ibn `Abbas who said, "`Umar ibn al-Khattab divorced his Ansari² wife, the mother of `Asim. He met her carrying the child in Mahsar (a marketplace between Qiba' and Medina). The child was weaned and could walk. `Umar took the boy's hand to take the child from her and disputed about it until the boy cried out of pain. `Umar said, 'I am worthier of my son than you!' They complained to Abu Bakr, whose verdict was that the mother should keep the child. He said, 'Her scent, her bed, and her lap are better for him than yours until he grows up and chooses for himself.'"

Again, the Glorious Qur'an orders kind treatment of both parents with a special emphasis on mothers:

[We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents, in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth.]

(Al-Ahqaf: 15)

As for being kind to her, it means treating her well, respecting her, humbling oneself in front of her, and obeying her without disobeying Allah.

¹ Reported by an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and Ahmad.

² Belongs to al-Ansar; the Companions from the inhabitants of Medina who embraced and supported Islam and who received and entertained Muslim immigrants coming from Makkah.

It is narrated that a man was circumambulating the *Ka`bah* carrying his mother. On meeting the Prophet (pbuh), he asked him, "Have I repaid her?" The Prophet (pbuh) said, "*No, not even for one of her throes (i.e. the pangs of childbirth).*"¹

Mothers' rights precede fighting in the Way of Allah (Jihad)

Islam stipulates seeking the mother's satisfaction and pleasure in all matters. Even in a Glorious war, if it is optional, he must have her permission.

A man came to the Prophet (pbuh) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, I want to fight (join the battlefield) and I seek your advice." He (pbuh) asked him, "*Do you have a mother?*" The man said, "Yes." The Prophet (pbuh) said, "*Do not leave her because Paradise is beneath her feet.*"²

Honoring mothers is not conditioned by their religious beliefs

It is amazing that Islam commanded us to be good to a mother even when she is an unbeliever. Asma' bint Abi Bakr asked the Prophet (pbuh) about her relationship with her unbelieving mother who had come to her. He (pbuh) said, "*Yes, be on good terms with your mother.*"

Among the precepts of Islam which Muslims still faithfully observe till the present time is the considerate treatment of mothers. The honor that Muslim mothers receive from their sons and daughters is exemplary. In fact, the warm relations between Muslim mothers and their children, and the deep

¹ Reported by al-Bazzar.

² Reported by an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and al-Hakim.

respect that Muslim men feel towards their mothers usually amaze Westerns.

Muslim mothers inherit from their children

Moreover, Islam gives the mother a full right in inheriting from her children. She even gets an equal share to that of the father in case the two parents inherit from their children:

[For parents a sixth share of inheritance to each if the deceased left children.]

(An-Nisa': 11)

More conclusively, the mother gets a bigger share than that of the father in case the deceased son left no children:

[If no children, and the parents are the only heirs, the mother has a third.]

(An-Nisa': 11)

The role of the mother

The mother, who is highly cherished by Islam and given all these rights, has a task to perform in return. She must take care of her children, raise them well, inculcate virtues in them, and make them loathe evil. She must teach them to obey Almighty Allah, encourage them to defend what is right, and not to dissuade them from fighting for the Sake of Allah out of her motherly sentiments. She should bring up her children to be sincere and good believers, loving for Allah and all the Prophets (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all) and living for the service of Islam. She should bring them up to be generous enough to offer their money and knowledge to help others, and to consider martyrs as heroes

and wish to imitate them. She should be ready to sacrifice them for the sake of Allah.

Al-Khansa' represented an example of a great believing mother, urging her four sons to be brave and steadfast in the battle of al-Qadisiyyah. Then, as soon as the battle was over and the news of the death of all four of them came to her, she said with certainty and contentment, "Praise be to Allah Who honored me with their martyrdom for His religion."

Immortal mothers

Out of the Qur'anic guidance, we have been supplied with many examples of great mothers who went down in history:

Musa's mother: She responded to Allah's Inspiration and Command when she cast her beloved son into the river, being assured of Allah's Promise:

[We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: 'Suckle (your child), but when you have fears about him, cast him into the river, but fear not, nor grieve: for We shall restore him to you and We shall make him one of Our apostles.']

(Al-Qasas: 7)

Mariam's mother: She promised to devote what she had in her womb to Allah, to be pure of any polytheism or worship of anything other than Allah. She prayed to Allah to accept her vow:

[When the wife of `Imran said, 'My Lord! I have solemnly pledged to You what is in my womb as a consecrated gift, so please accept this from me. Indeed You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.']

(Al `Imran: 35)

When the child turned out to be a female, which she had not expected, it did not prevent her from fulfilling her vow, asking Allah to protect her from all evil:

[So when she gave birth to her she said, 'My Lord, I have delivered a female' and Allah is best to know what she has delivered, and the male is not as the female, and 'I have named her Mary, and I seek refuge in your protection for her and her descendants from Satan, the outcast.]

(Al `Imran: 36)

Moreover, the Qur'an speaks about Lady Mariam (Mary, may Allah be pleased with her), daughter of `Imran and mother of `Isa (pbuh), as an example of purity, humility to Allah and of faith in His word:

[And Mariam the daughter of `Imran, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her of Our spirit, and she believed in the Words of her Lord and His books, and she was of the obedient.]

(At-Tahrim: 12)

Woman as a Mother-in-law

A Muslim should bear in mind that the mother-in-law is a mother in the first instance, and hence she should be treated as a mother with all due honor, respect, tenderness, love and care shown.

A wife should kindly treat her mother-in-law, besides encouraging her husband to be affectionate and look after his mother. She is rewarded if she looks after her mother-in-law, whether she gets along with her or not. Reciprocal feelings

and kind treatment should also be from the mother-in-law's side toward her daughter-in-law.

Children Are Divine Gifts

The institution of marriage and the desire to have children was the custom of the best of creation; the prophets chosen by Allah. Allah says about them,

[And indeed We sent messengers before you and made for them wives and offspring.]

(Ar-Ra`d: 38)

These prophets and messengers are the people whom Muslims should imitate. Almighty Allah says,

[They are those whom Allah has guided. So follow their guidance.]

(Al-An`am: 90)

The best example for the believers is the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who married and had children. He (pbuh) not only encouraged marriage but also encouraged marrying those women who are fertile. He stated, "*Marry the loving, fertile women for I shall have the largest numbers among the prophets on the Day of Resurrection.*"¹

From this Islamic perspective, children are a gift and a blessing from Allah. Allah mentions some of the bounties that He has bestowed upon mankind in the following verse:

¹ Reported by Ahmad and Ibn Hibban.

[And Allah has made for you spouses of your own kind and has made for you, from your wives, sons and grandsons, and has bestowed upon you good provisions.]

(An-Nahl: 72)

Allah also says,

[Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of this world.]

(Al-Kahf: 46)

The only true provider for all mankind is Allah. If Muslims follow what Allah has prescribed for them, Allah will provide for them. Allah has warned about killing one's children out of fear of poverty for either parents or the child. Allah says,

[Kill not your children because of poverty - We provide sustenance for you and for them.]

(Al-An`am: 151)

He, Exalted be He, also says,

[And kill not your children for fear of poverty. We shall provide for them as well as for you. Surely, the killing of them is a great sin.]

(Al-Isra`: 31)

It is not allowed to enact a general law that limits the freedom of spouses in having children. It is forbidden to permanently end a man's or a woman's ability to produce children, as long as that is not called for by circumstances of necessity according to its Islamic framework.

It is permissible to control the timing of births with the intent of distancing the occurrences of pregnancy or to delay it for a specific amount of time, if there is some *Shari'ah* need

for that in the opinion of the spouses, based on mutual consultation and agreement between them.

Rulings on Children From Birth to Adolescence

Requirements after birth

- Announcement is recommended, Almighty Allah said,

[(Allah said) ‘O Zakariya (Zachariah)! Verily, We give you the glad tidings of a son, His name will be Yahya (John). We have given that name to none before (him).’]

(Maryam: 7)
- It is recommended to recite the call to prayer (*Adhan*) in the newborn’s right ear and the second call (*Iqamah*) in its left ear. Abu Rafi` narrated, “I saw the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) recite the *Adhan* in the ear of al-Hassan ibn `Ali when Lady Fatimah gave birth to him.”¹
- It is also recommended to stroke the newborn’s mouth with a moistened date. Abu Musa narrated, “A son was born to me and I took him to the Prophet (pbuh) who named him Ibrahim, did *Tahnik* to him with a date, invoked Allah to bless him, and returned him to me.”²

Requirements on the seventh day

- Head shaving and giving the silver equivalent of the cut hair’s weight in charity.

¹ Reported by Ahmad, Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi.

² Reported by al-Bukhari.

It was reported that when Lady Fatimah gave birth to al-Hasan, the Prophet (pbuh) asked her to shave his head and give charity to the poor in silver equal to the weight of his hair.”¹

- Naming: This can be done from the first day to the seventh day, the day of the *`Aqiqah*. It was reported that the Prophet (pbuh) said, “A baby was born for me tonight so I named him after my father’s name, Ibrahim.”² Thus, the father should choose a good name for his newborn.
- Circumcision: This is one of the innate practices mentioned by the Prophet (pbuh). Abu Hurayrah narrated, "I heard the Prophet (pbuh) say, ‘Five practices are among the characteristics of the *Fitrah*³: circumcision, shaving pubic hair, cutting the moustache short, clipping nails, and depilating the hair of the armpits.’”⁴ He (pbuh) also told a man who had become a Muslim that he should be circumcised upon embracing Islam.

Regarding the timing, it was said that it should be done within the first week of birth, and it was also said that its timing can extend to near adolescence. The preferred opinion is to do the circumcision on the seventh day. Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) gave ‘an *`Aqiqah*’ for al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and circumcised them when they were seven days old.”⁵

Generally, circumcision is a practice required for men and recommended for women. It was reported that the Prophet (pbuh) said to Umm *`Atiyyah*, "*Slim (very small cut) very softly*

¹ Reported by Ahmad, at-Tabarani and al-Bayhaqui.

² Reported by Muslim.

³ Pure nature or innate character of man.

⁴ Agreed upon.

⁵ Reported by at-Tabarani and al-Bayhaqui.

and not intensely, that's healthier for the woman and more adorable to the husband."¹

`Aqiqah (birth offering) and its rulings

- An *`Aqiqah* means offering an animal in sacrifice for the newborn, and it is a confirmed practice of the Prophet (pbuh). Salman ad-Dabbi narrated, "The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, 'For every newborn baby there should be an *`Aqiqah*, so shed blood (as a sacrifice) for him and take the dirt away from him.'²

Moreover, ibn `Abbas narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) offered an *`Aqiqah* for al-Hasan and al-Husayn; it was two rams.³ In another *hadith*, Samurah narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said,

*"Each newborn baby is obliged to an `Aqiqah that should be sacrificed for him on his seventh day of birth, in which he should (also) be given a name and have his head shaved."*⁴

Regarding timing, Imam Ahmad said, "It should be slaughtered on the seventh day and, if not then on the fourteenth and, if not then on the twenty-first." He based his view on a narration by al-Bayhaqi attributed to Lady `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her).

- Similarity and excess between males and females:

An *`Aqiqah* is equally required for both males and females with the sole difference of number of sheep, for

¹ Reported by al-Khaythami and at-Tabarani.

² Reported by al-Bukhari.

³ Reported by Abu Dawud.

⁴ Reported by Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi.

the *`Aqiqah* of the boy is two rams while it is only one ram for the girl. Lady `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said, "The Prophet (pbuh) said, '*A sacrifice for the newborn baby boy is two equal rams (in age, rank, sex and weight), and for the newborn baby girl it is one.*'"¹

In another narration: Lady `A'ishah said, "The Prophet (pbuh) commanded us to make an *`Aqiqah* as a sacrifice for the girl by one ram and for the boy by two rams."²

- There are certain general rulings that must be observed in the *`Aqiqah*:
 1. The same rulings that apply to *Ud-hiyah* offerings apply equally to an *`Aqiqah* with regard to age, fitness, charity, gifts, and eating. The only exception is that, unlike *Ud-hiyah*, neither a camel nor a cow may be shared for an *`Aqiqah*, based on the command of the Prophet (pbuh) to accomplish the purpose of shedding blood for the child. If a cow or camel is slaughtered then it must be wholly dedicated to a single child.
 2. Another thing to be observed in the *`Aqiqah* is not to break any of the animal's bones at any time during the slaughtering or the eating of it. Lady `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said regarding the *`Aqiqah*, which Lady Fatimah had made as sacrifice for al-Hasan and al-Husayn, "*Send a leg (from the ram) to the woman who assisted in the delivery, and eat and feed others, but don't break its bones.*"³

¹ Reported by Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi.

² Reported by at-Tirmidhi.

³ Reported by Abu Dawud.

He (pbuh) also used to say, "*It should be cut in full parts without breaking its bones.*"¹

The right to inherit

The newborn is entitled to inherit upon birth, and it is also inherited from if it dies.

Zakat Al-Fitr²

It must also be paid on behalf of the newborn if it is born in Ramadan.

Rights of the fetus

The right to inherit:

Although the fetus' gender may not be known, Islam preserves its right considering it to be a boy. If it is born a girl, the other heirs receive the difference.

The right to live:

Islam protects children even before they are born. It forbids abortion for whatever reason after the embryo takes shape and life in its mother's uterus.

In case the mother is the one responsible for abortion: The majority of Muslim scholars agreed that she has to pay the *Diyyah* or the compensation due in addition to freeing a believing slave. While the *Hanafi* school agrees that she has to pay the *Diyyah* (compensation) only which is much easier. It is noteworthy that the *Diyyah* should be paid to the deceased's

¹ Reported by al-Hakim and adh-Dhahabi.

² The mandatory *Zakah* at the end of Ramadan which is obligatory for every Muslim as a provision for the needy. It is called charity of *Fitr*.

family (as in the case of killing by mistake). In this case the compensation is due to the inheriting people after excluding the mother (i.e. the mother pays the money to the father only).

In case someone else caused her abortion, he should pay the money to the mother and father where the money is divided according to their inheritance shares.

In all cases, the *Diyyah* (compensation) is equal to 5% of the *Diyyah* due for killing an adult person. For those who can't pay the money, they should fast for two consecutive months (60 days) as a means of repentance to God.

The Holy Qur'an says:

[Never should a believer kill a believer; but (if it so happens) by mistake, (compensation is due): if one (so) kills a believer, it is ordained that he should free a believing slave, and pay compensation to the deceased's family, unless they remit it freely. If the deceased belonged to a people at war with you, and he was a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (is enough). If he belonged to a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance, compensation should be paid to his family, and a believing slave be freed. for those who find this beyond their means, (is prescribed) a fast for two months running: by way of repentance to God: for God hath all knowledge and all wisdom.]

(An-Nisa': 92)

Duties of the parents towards their newborns

- The parents must raise their children in an Islamic manner, because Allah has made Islam the innate religion of all newborns, as we were informed by the Prophet (pbuh), “Every baby is born with a pure instinct until his

parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian (fire worshipper).”¹

- They must teach them the rulings of what is permissible and what is forbidden.
- They must instill in them the love for Allah, Exalted be He, love for the Prophet (pbuh), recitation of the Glorious Qur’an, practicing the Noble *Sunnah* and supplication in every situation.
- They must also teach them monotheism and the Prophetic tradition. Piety and worship and heartfelt reverence of Allah must also be entrenched in them, as well as mercy, fraternity, altruism, forgiveness, and courage. Besides, the Companions must be set as examples and models for children to follow.
- Children should be forbidden to imitate others in violation of the Islamic teachings.
- Girls must be ordered to wear Islamic dress, and all children must be forbidden from improper mixing and from imitating the opposite sex. They must be taught everything that they need to please Allah, particularly chastity and modesty.
- They must be protected from bad company as it is the prime influence on a child’s life.
- They must be commanded to observe the rights of their parents, relatives, neighbors, teachers, friends, the young, and the old.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Factors contributing to the delinquency in children

- Failure to monitor children, inquire about things they lack, sense their psychological and overall conditions, and satisfy their needs.
- Excessive leisure affecting their lives.
- Mixing with bad companions.
- Improper guidance and treatment by parents.
- Watching violent and dissolute movies.
- Negligence by parents of their children's upbringing.

These six factors lead children to such detrimental practices as smoking, drugs, fornication, and homosexuality. The parents will be questioned for neglecting their children by Allah on the Day of Reckoning.

Breastfeeding

In order to ensure that children are properly fed, clothed and looked after, the Glorious Qur'an lays down rules with respect to breastfeeding. These rules are meant to safeguard the interests of children both if the marriage continues and if it is ended by divorce. If the marriage continues, it is the responsibility of both parents to look after their child, since it is incapable of taking care of itself. In case the marriage is ended by divorce, parents should agree to some reasonable and equitable arrangements for the care of their child. Breastfeeding is a duty on both parents that Islam enjoins.

The Glorious Qur'an says,

[Mothers shall breastfeed their offspring for two whole years, if the father wishes to complete the term, but he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child, and they shall be chargeable in the same way. If they both decide on weaning by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them. If you decide on a foster-mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided you pay (the mother) what you offered on equitable terms. But fear Allah and know that Allah sees well what you do.]

(Al-Baqarah: 233)

The verse clarifies the following points:

1. The period of nursing is normally two years.
2. The responsibility of providing for the wife or the ex-wife and maintaining the child lies on the husband. He must bear the cost of food, clothing and enough care on equitable terms.
3. The woman nursing her child, and also the child, should be well treated by her husband knowing that Allah watches all our deeds.
4. Weaning the child should be performed by mutual agreement between both parents.
5. If the man dies, his heirs become responsible for maintaining his widow and the breastfeeding of his child.
6. If, for any reason, the mother herself cannot breast-feed, she and her husband are allowed to hire a wet nurse. However, the mother should still be provided for by the husband.

Foster Mother Breastfeeding: A Cure to Some Diseases¹

The Qur'an opens to the scientists new realms and areas for researching and experimenting, in the various fields and specializations. Once its words, underlying meanings and scientific symbols are correctly interpreted and understood, scientists can best utilize them in serving knowledge and scientific progress to reach the welfare, happiness and prosperity of Humanity. Allah the Almighty says,

[This Qur'an guides unto that which is straightest, and gives tidings unto the believers who do good works that theirs will be a great reward.]

(Al-Isra': 9)

An application to this, we can use the breastfeeding by an alternate mother² as a way for curing some diseases as derived from the following Islamic Texts:

1- *[Forbidden unto you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your father's sisters, and your mother's sisters, and your brother's daughters and your sister's daughters, and your foster mothers.]*

(An-Nisa': 23)

¹ Research by: Dr. Muhammad Gamil `Abd as-Sattar al-Habbal, published for the Seventh International Conference for the Scientific Miraculous Nature of Qur'an and *Sunnah*, Islamic World League, Government of Dubai, Sahari Co. for gifts & printing, 2003.

² The Islamic Legislation treats the alternate breastfeeding mothers in relation to the child as similar to his real mother in blood relations.

2- The Prophetic *hadith*, “*What has been prohibited according to the breastfeeding (are similar) to what’s been prohibited according to Kinship.*”¹

3- `Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) said, “Select (the one) for the breastfeeding as (carefully) as you select your mates for (the reason) that the breastfeeding (affects/shapes) the child's characteristics.”

According to the Islamic theory, the breastfeeding tight kinship relation is manifested through the transmission of the genetic and immunity elements from the milk of the real or the foster mother to the baby through the penetration of these elements to the baby’s cells and their fusion with his genetic Map/chain.

The immune system of the baby accepts easily the DNA genes coming from outsider sources (other than the mother) due to the immaturity of his immune systems in this early age as it’s the case with his other systems which are not completely grown except after months and years of birth.

It has been scientifically proven that the newly born babies who are fed on the manufactured or cows milk are easily infected by many diseases compared to their peers who were naturally breast-fed.

Examples to these diseases are the first grade diabetes, the inflamed colon and the Krons diseases which has a special type of the HLA system.

The bigger ration of infection is found among the babies who were being fed on cows’ milk which is considered as a proof on the breaking through and the adverse negative

¹ Reported by Muslim.

impact of the cows' milk constituents on the genetic and immune scheme of the baby.

Derived from this discovery, we can use the natural breast-feeding from a foster mother to cure many diseases. This can be applied by working on impacting the malfunctioning genetic immune scheme, but this time positively to fix it or at least work to decrease its negative infectious impact that causes the diseases.

Below are examples to the curative applications supporting the mentioned theory:

First: in the organs transplantation

An example of this is kidney transplantation, where it's favorable to choose the kidney donor from among the patient's closest blood kinship relatives (especially from the first grade). In case such first grade kinship is not available, it's recommended to turn to select one of the patient's brothers/sisters who were breastfed from his same mother before turning to an outsider donor who is not related to him in terms of the blood kinship circle.

Second: in the treatment of some hereditary diseases

Hereditary diseases were counted by the scientists to exceed three thousand in number, are being continually transmitted from either the parents or one of them to the children through a defect that happens in one abnormal gene.

Using the advanced technologies, medicine has diagnosed such hereditary diseases through examining the genetic life both inside the mother's womb and after the delivery.

In a pre-delivery case examination, the genetic life could be cured through breastfeeding the infected baby from a

foster mother, who's outside his blood kinship relatives and who enjoys a good health directly after the birth as a replacement to his real mother at least during his first six months of birth (the period when the baby can live on natural breastfeeding only).

Here it's hypothetical that the milk of the healthy foster mother will remove or diminish or come over the infected gene which the baby inherits from his parents, through the penetration of this milk to the baby's immune or genetic system - it's a true application of the words of Allah, the Almighty,

[But if you make difficulties (hardship) for one another, then let some other woman give suck for him.]

(At-Talaq: 6)

An interpretation to this verse is to hire a foster mother for the child in case they were different about the breast-feeding fees. "Hardship" here is not interpreted to be confined to a specific reason but by the general implications of the word. As is mentioned by ar-Raghib al-Asfahani, "hardship" is the opposite of "easiness". It has been used in the Qur'an in the case of financial difficulty or poverty in spending, and in case of difficulty in general. Here it comprises all the difficulties that befall man. Every problem between the married couple is considered a hardship. A hereditary disease in either parent that's transmitted to children is also considered a type of hardship.

This is a great precise medical symbol found in the Book of Allah that encourages using the proper instinctive and natural scientific way in place of the complicated highly expensive and insecure ways of treatment, i.e. gene therapy or bone marrow transplantation or abortion to get rid of the

infected child (as the case in the Western countries) which bear all kinds of dangers in themselves as well as their illegitimacy by applying such safe and natural curative method (the foster-mother breastfeeding).

Serious experiments and researches must be made on such safe and natural method of treatment (the foster-mother breastfeeding) to attain its full application and grasp its full details. Its success will achieve a medical revolution and great benefit to humanity.

Adoption

Adoption was widely practiced in pre-Islamic times. A man would adopt a child and thus the latter would be associated with his adoptive father and would inherit from him. However, Islam prohibited this practice, making it improper for a man to associate himself with a child not of his offspring, because this would lead to confusion of brotherhood, and would allow that outsider (adopted child) access to women in the household.

We know that Zayd ibn Harithah was kidnapped and sold as a slave to Hakim ibn Hizam. Lady Khadijah, (may Allah be pleased with her), eventually took him, and then granted him to the Prophet (pbuh). From then on, Zayd became the servant of the Prophet (pbuh). Later on, his original family, tracking him down, came to Makkah to claim him. The Prophet (pbuh) gave him the option of rejoining his family or staying in Makkah. In an outstanding act of faith and devotion, Zayd said that he would never favor anyone over the Prophet (pbuh). In return for his loyalty, the Prophet (pbuh) followed the observed custom at that time by adopting him and naming him Zayd ibn (son of) Muhammad.

We find that the custom was so widespread in the Arab community that even the household of the Prophet (pbuh) was host to one of its instances. However, Almighty Allah says,

[Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Apostle of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets, and Allah has full knowledge of all things.]

(Al-Ahzab: 40)

The verse put an end to that custom in a strict enough manner to include the Prophet (pbuh) himself. Some faultfinders try to claim a defect here by saying that the verse mentions that “*Muhammad is not the father of any of your men,*” while the Prophet (pbuh) in fact had three sons: Ibrahim, at-Tayyib, and al-Qasim, but the rebuttal is only too simple. Those three children never lived to be men, for they all died in their childhood.

Advice for Parents: How to Treat your Offspring?

Start with your fetus!

1. During pregnancy, the mother should take into consideration that most emotional disease affecting her child starts in the womb stage. So mothers should watch what she likes, listens and talks in order to give birth to healthy and good Muslim generations.
 - A joyful contented mother will give a happy offspring.
 - A pious mother listening to the Glorious Qur'an will give birth to a pious child loving the Glorious Qur'an. On the contrary, the one listening to music will give birth to a child loving music.
 - Depressed sad mother will transmit her negative emotions to the fetus, a matter which may make the child an introvert.
2. A mother who is refusing her child and try and fail to commit abortion will give birth to a child rejecting the society, refusing to socialize with the society and have hatred feelings towards others.
3. It is very important to interact and talk to your child.
 - I will never forget a very unique experience when I was calling for Islam an English pregnant lady for months until she decided to embrace Islam. What was stunning is that after she took a shower – which is an obligation

when reverting to Islam – and started to pronounce the *Shahada* after me, we could not stop crying when we saw the fetus moving to the right side of her womb doing repeated contractions of the tummy as if it was interacting with such an important moment of his mother's life.

- I have also read a story of a Lady who was raped while she was in comma. She got pregnant and remained in her comma for the whole nine months. What is amazing is that her child was born deaf, blind and dumb.

How to treat your child?

1. Never raise your voice, just change the tune to show you are upset when you want them to stop doing something.
2. A bad example of a mother is to be angry or yelling. This will render the child as irritable as she is, i.e. the child mirrors the mother's character. So we should not blame hyperactive and stubborn child unless we change the mother's behavior.
3. Beating should be avoided except in extreme cases such as stealing or lying.
4. Mothers should give a good example to her children, especially regarding her honesty. She shouldn't lie and say she is going to the doctor while she is going to the restaurant.
5. If she promises her child a certain reward, she should fulfill her promise, otherwise she is considered sinful and hypocrite in Islam.
6. How to treat your teenaged offspring?

While educating your teenaged offspring, you should take into consideration that they are going through a very delicate period in their life where their personality has not yet been developed. Stubbornness and obstinacy could be among their reactions to their parents when they try to correct them. In order to avoid such a negative feedback, we advise parents to treat their teenaged offspring as friends:

1. Be very selective regarding your wordings and timing when consoling them. You have to avoid using harsh words for admonishing and choose the most appropriate time.
2. You may start your advice indirectly by praising their good deeds and qualities. You may even offer them a gift then give them your advice in the form of a request. You may say for example: 'I really appreciate what you are doing but wouldn't it be better to do so and so ... '
3. End your talk by praising them again since the brain always stores the last information.

Advice for Stepmothers and Stepfathers

1. Offer presents often to your spouse's children.
2. Spend some of your time with your spouse's children. Play with them, go out together and try to gain their trust and friendship.
3. The stepmother should start her relation with her spouse's children by giving them affection and love until they get familiar with her and exchange love. A similar attitude is expected from stepfathers who should always present their good sides.
4. Never give direct advice to your spouse's children. The stepmother should refer to her husband who advises his children instead of her since the children will not accept any criticism from her.
5. True fathers/mothers should not spoil their children by offering them money or materialistic presents to buy their love. This will bring up conditional love in the children's hearts.

Family Planning

At the time of the Prophet (pbuh), the act of ‘*Azl*,’ which means coitus interrupts at the moment of male ejaculation, was justifiable. This justification is to prevent any harm to a nursing child if its mother becomes pregnant during his breastfeeding period. In this case, the mother’s milk loses its nutritive value and the child is more liable to weakness and disease.

Moreover, the great Muslim scholars allowed practicing ‘*Azl*’ (coitus interrupts) only with the permission of the wife. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal stated that it should never be done without the wife’s permission since she has every right to have a child as well as sexual satisfaction. Besides, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab forbade the practice of ‘*Azl*’ with a free wife without her permission. He (may Allah be pleased with him) was reported to have said that Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) forbade ‘*Azl*’ with a free woman without her consent¹. This *hadith* proves that the idea of natural contraception was allowed but only with the approval of both parties involved (i.e. husband and wife).

The use of artificial contraceptives was unheard of at the time of the Prophet (pbuh), the Righteous Caliphs, and the early Muslim states. Hence our discussion on this subject will be limited to the modern methods of family planning and contraception, and whether they are lawful or not according to the Islamic Law.

¹ Reported by Ahmad and Ibn Majah.

Generally, children are the joy of a family and procreation is a basic objective of the institution of marriage in Islam. But there are certain circumstances when childbirth is not welcomed with respect to the Islamic jurisprudence:

1. If child-bearing is going to endanger the life of the mother at the time of delivery, the following Qur'anic verses justify such contraception:

[Do not throw yourself into destruction with your own hands.]

(Al-Baqarah: 195)

[Do not destroy yourselves; undoubtedly, Allah is merciful to you.]

(An-Nisa': 29)

2. If there is a danger of ruining the health of the children, such as the case in which one of the parents or their ancestors is carrying hereditary disease that can be transmitted to the children.

Birth regulation is only good if it satisfies a necessary need of either spouse or both:

- Using contraception to space out children is allowed since every child needs nursing and care. A wife usually needs a sufficient period of time between one birth and the next in order to give her the time to rest after the difficulties of pregnancy and labor. The Glorious Qur'an states:

[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-Ahqaf: 15)

[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.]

(Luqman: 14)

- Using contraception is also allowed in order to prevent further reproduction once a couple has had a family, since the health of the mother must be taken into account. Sheikh ash-Sha`rawi even allowed wives to use contraceptive methods as a means of preserving their beauty and body shape.

Contraception

Contraception is not only a woman's issue; it should be discussed openly between husband and wife. Neither partner should seek to prevent pregnancy without the other's knowledge of it. The use of contraceptive methods to prevent pregnancy is quite a different issue from performing an abortion.

According to Islamic Law, the practice of birth control via contraceptives without legitimate reasons out of fear of poverty is forbidden since it expresses losing one's faith and trust in Allah.

The Holy Qur'an says,

[Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin.]

(Al-Isra': 31)

Abortion as a means of family planning

Islam forbids abortion as a means of family planning, and it is considered a murderous crime. Once pregnancy has taken place, it must not be harmed in any circumstances. All the jurists of the four *Fiqh* Schools have agreed that abortion after life has been infused in the embryo is unlawful and amounts to the crime of taking a life. Once the pregnancy reaches four months, it is medically proven, just as Muslim jurists indicated a long time ago, that the embryo becomes a fully-fledged child. Some Scholars permitted abortion before the pregnancy reaches four months (120 days). Others relied on the latest scientific researches, which proved that sperm as well as the egg are alive before this age. Consequently, no one has the right to induce their death from the very beginning of the pregnancy. The Glorious Qur'an says:

[Nor take life - which Allah has made sacred - except for just cause.]

(Al-Isra': 33)

If the pregnancy is aborted alive, apart from being a great crime, it becomes obligatory in Islamic Law to pay '*Diyyah*' (compensation).¹ If the pregnancy is extracted dead, fines have to be imposed which are less than the amount of '*Diyyah*'. In spite of taking the '*Diyyah*', or fine, abortion is still a crime if it is performed without any strict medical reasons, such as a real threat to the life of the expectant mother.

Supposing that, on medical grounds, it becomes essential to perform abortion in order to save the life of the mother, then it would be allowed. Islam stipulates that when you have to deal with two harmful matters, the less harmful should be

¹ Refer to: Abortion

adopted. The main life is the life of the mother as she is alive and has a right to live. Hence, the life of the mother must not be sacrificed for the sake of the life of the embryo.

Various methods of contraception are available, but not all are suitable for all women. Barrier methods (cap, sheath/condom) are possibly best, and closer to the particular way referred to in the *hadith*, i.e. ‘*Azl*’. They do not disrupt the natural functions of the woman’s body.

There are also the so called natural methods. A couple who do not wish to conceive can avoid sexual intercourse around the time of ovulation. Conversely, a couple trying for a baby can increase their efforts around this time. This method is particularly suitable for couples, who wish to avoid any artificial form of contraception, but it is not foolproof (nor, of course - is any other method 100 % reliable).