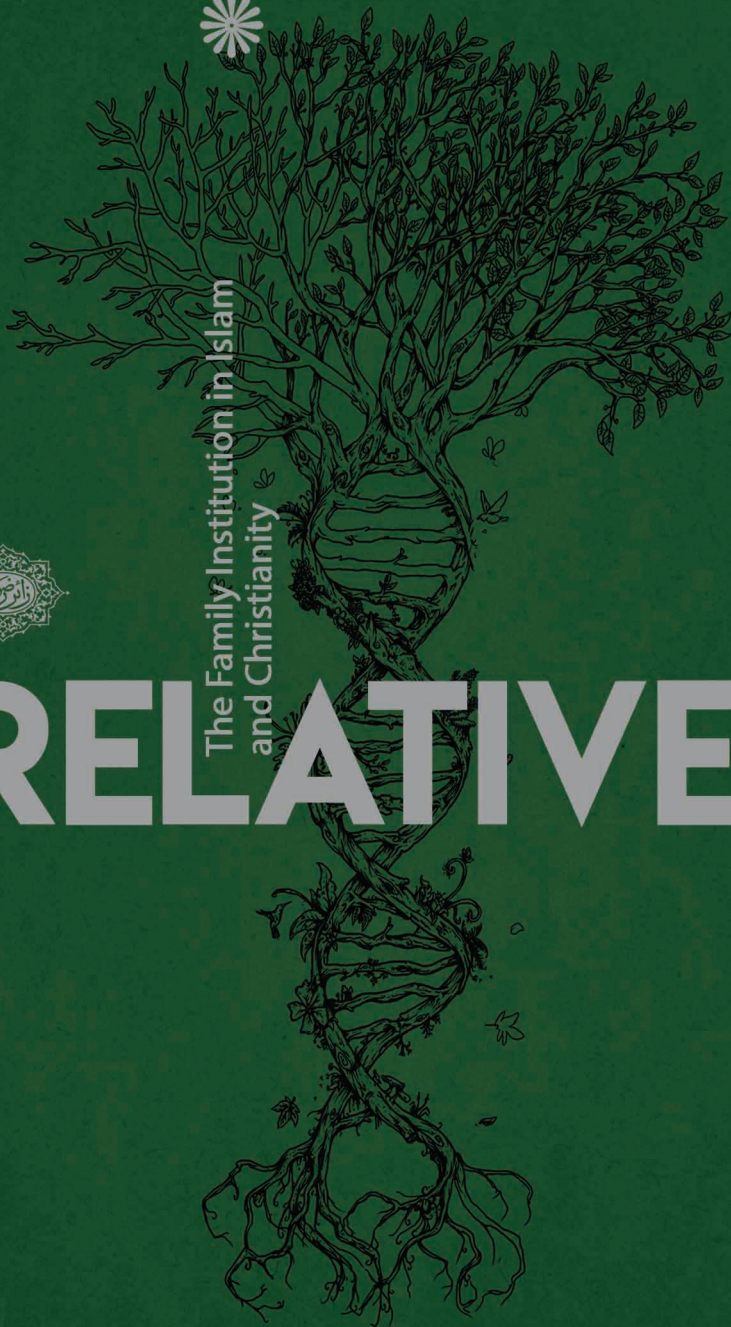


VOL
05



The Family Institution in Islam
and Christianity

RELATIVES





IN THE NAME OF GOD





RELATIVES

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and Christianity

05

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and Christianity

RELATIVES



Morteza Yeganeh Amiri

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Publisher's word

‘Abdullāh bin Ṣāliḥ al-Harawī narrates that Imam Riḍā (peace be upon him) has said, “May God have mercy on the one who revives our tenets.” I then asked him, “How can one revive your tenets?” “Through learning our knowledge and teaching it to others; If people find out about the merits of our words, they will certainly follow us”, the Imam (P.B.U.H.) replied.

‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (P.B.U.H.), vol. 1, p. 307

One of the great forms of God's grace and kindness toward us is His bestowal of the Infallible Imams (P.B.U.T.) upon us so that we may learn how to lead a Godly life through observing their way of life and eventually achieve eternal prosperity through practicing their valuable instructions.

The city of Mashhad is a piece of heaven as it is home to the son of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his household) who is the eighth star in the sky of Imamate. Every year millions of passionate pilgrims from around the world and other parts of Iran come to this spiritual sanctuary in order to quench the thirst of their souls by drinking from the limpid spring of the guidelines of the Infallible Imams (P.B.U.T.).

Each one of those serving at the Holy Shrine of Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.) is in one way or the other serving the respected pilgrims



of Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.) so that they may make their pilgrimage with peace of mind whilst being able to benefit from this heavenly shrine.

In line with the above, the Office for the Management of Foreign Pilgrims at the Holy Shrine of Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.) has also been making every effort to introduce in various ways the way of life of *Ahl al-Bayt* (P.B.U.T.) – and that of Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.) in particular – to the followers and devotees of this doctrine.

The measures taken by this office are in line with propagating the Islamic civilization and culture appropriate to the needs and requirements of non-Iranian pilgrims in order to provide them with insight and spiritual growth. Such measures take place in conjunction with the remarks made by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the instructions given by the custodian of the Holy Shrine of Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.) while at the same time taking into account the provisions stipulated in the Twenty-year Outlook Document of the Holy Shrine of Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.).

Some of the examples of the efforts made by this office in line with serving the non-Iranian pilgrims of Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.) in the international sphere are as follows:

1. Holding special cultural programs
2. Holding regular seminars on Islamic knowledge known as “Circles of Knowledge”
3. Holding academic conferences
4. Holding educational classes and workshops

5. Holding cultural competitions and contests
6. Holding poetry readings
7. Holding conversion ceremonies for new converts to Islam
8. Responding to letters received from pilgrims
9. Dispatching books and other cultural products to all over the world
10. Responding to religious enquiries
11. Offering live internet interaction at Razavi Talk
12. Publishing the best of Islamic literature in several languages in the form of authored and translated books

It has been for some time that the call of Islam is echoing in every corner of the world with the hope of bringing people back to the truth to which they have been a stranger while at the same time inclinations toward Islam and the tendency of hearts toward seeking the truth is growing rapidly throughout the world.

We hope that the seekers of truth would find this book a useful and informative read and that it would be a step in the right direction as far as increasing the knowledge of pilgrims and devotees of the Infallible Imams (P.B.U.T.) are concerned. Finally, we hope that this work would bring about the pleasure and satisfaction of the Glorious God.

O' God, bless Muḥammad and Muḥammad's Household, provide me with a sound guidance which I seek not to replace, a path of truth from which I swerve not, and an intention of right



conduct in which I have no doubts! Let me live so long as my life is spent in obeying you.

The Management of Foreign Pilgrims

Preface

From clay, God created an exquisite sculpture and breathed into it, and so man was created. As God found the man alone, He sculpted a charming figure, breathed into it, and the woman was created. The two were drawn to each other. The man asked God to allow them to be together and God agreed; thus love was created and the foundation of the family was formed. The man and woman had children whom they loved, and their love was reciprocated; thus parental love was created. The family gradually grew larger; children had their own children; some were named grandfathers and grandmothers, some uncles and aunts, and so on, and thus relatives came to exist. Over time families grew in number, their relationships became more complicated, and family as an institution assumed a pivotal function in the life of mankind. On the other hand, at times disagreements emerged between family members and the need arose to establish laws to govern the relationships between them.

In order to preserve the institution of the family, God sent prophets to grant mankind the gift of His commands, amongst whom Prophets Muḥammad and Jesus Christ (P.B.U.T.) presented a golden recipe for saving mankind and protecting the family's position.

Throughout history, the family has generally managed to main-



tain its function and significance, paving the way for the advancement and progress of mankind and coming to its aid in every difficulty. Nevertheless, ever since humanity came to learn about modernity, the foundation of the family has faced serious threats as relationships between the family members have grown weaker and weaker. Parents do not find enough time to dedicate to their children so that they would receive the attention they deserve. The children too refuse to acknowledge their parents' position. The relationship between spouses has also suffered; accordingly, the desire to form and start a family has subsided in human societies, being replaced instead by illegitimate models of life. The void resulting from the absence of children is gradually being filled by pets. Furthermore, the connections between relatives and members of a family are being severed. This pitiful situation is becoming worse and worse every day, to the extent that certain societies are even finding their very existence in jeopardy as fewer men and women tend to form families and fewer children step into this world.

In order to get through this self-inflicted crisis, mankind began to formulate laws and regulations to preserve the family's foundation. Factual experience, however, has shown that sometimes such laws yield opposite effects or fail to alleviate the intensity of the family crisis effectively and for extended periods of time, which in turn indicates that to overcome this human challenge which intensifies on a daily basis one has no choice but to return to the teachings of divine religions.

On the other hand, bodies of Western propaganda and extremist Christians strive day after day to manufacture a false image of Islam for their audience, constantly suggesting to them that Islamic teachings regarding the family are built upon a patriar-

chal, strict, and violent structure, whereas such an intentionally fabricated outlook has nothing to do with the actual teachings of Islam with respect to the family.

Therefore, it was decided that through scientific research we study the viewpoints of Islamic and Christian scriptures concerning the position and significance of the family as well as the mutual rights of its members, analyzing the religious teachings from their origins and sources.

The matter dealt with in the present research is the position of and mutual rights within the family from the viewpoints of Islamic and Christian scriptures.

The scriptures of the two religions in question comprise the scope of the present work. It is worth noting that the only revealed, sacred sources in Christianity are the “Two Testaments”, or the “Holy Bible”, which is composed of two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The former contains 39 books, divided into three parts: the historical books, the “wisdom” books, and the prophets, and the latter is composed of 27 books. According to Christians, these 66 books together have been compiled by 40 prophets or writers of Revelation within 1500 years, affirmed by the Holy Spirit, and are regarded as the legacy of the prophets of the Old and New Testaments.

It must be noted that although Christians do not deem it obligatory to follow the faith of the Old Testament, it does not undermine its divine and ethical worth. According to the New Testament, in a letter to his student Timothy, Paul declares that the Old Testament is the word of God: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting



and training in righteousness”¹. The book *The Teachings of the Catholic Church* also states:

The Old Testament is an inseparable part of the Bible. Its books are the revealed words of God and are of eternal worth, for the old covenant has never been nullified. ... The Church has always opposed the conception that the Old Testament must be rejected due to the fact that it has been discredited by the New Testament (Marcionism)... as an old saying goes, “The New Testament is implied in the Old, and the Old Testament is manifested in the New.”²

Christians regard the Two Testaments – the Holy Bible – as revealed words of God, and it is the old and immutable belief of the church that the Bible is faultless,³ which is emphasized by the theologians of the Protestant Church as well. It is declared in the Chicago Statement:

“The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. ... Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.”⁴

In Islam the Qur’an is regarded as the most important of the scriptures, as it is dictated by God to His Prophet through the

1. *The Holy Bible*, 2 Timothy 3:16.

2. *Teachings of the Catholic Church*, Articles 121–129.

3. From the viewpoint of the Holy Qur’an, nevertheless, there are parts of the Two Testaments that shine with the light of guidance and contain the commands of God. Furthermore, the Qur’an confirms the truth of the divine books before it (3): 50; on the other hand, it reproaches Jews for altering its words and presenting improper interpretations (4): 46. Moreover, God states in the Qur’an that People of the Book omitted and concealed portions of their holy books (2): 159 and made an even graver mistake as they fabricated many verses and introduced them to others as words of God (2): 79. Furthermore, the numerous contradictions between words of the Qur’an and those of the Two Testaments verifies the fact that although parts of the Testaments are confirmed by the Qur’an, there are portions of them that are not.

4. See: The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

Angel of Revelation, as it states:

“This is indeed [a Book] sent down by the Lord of all the worlds, brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit upon your heart.”¹

The Holy Qur’an was sent down to the noble Prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) in a period of 23 years. According to Islamic teachings, the Qur’an is a perfectly flawless book, all of its words and contents being the direct and exact word of God. In the Qur’an, God states:

“Indeed We have sent down the Reminder [that is, the Qur’an], and indeed We will preserve it.”²

He has also challenged all mankind:

“And if you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our servant, then bring a Sūrah (chapter) like it, and invoke your helpers besides God, should you be truthful.”³

The second to Islamic scriptures are the traditions and narrations reported from the Prophet Muḥammad and members of his household (P.B.U.T.), which are only considered authentic, of course, if they are ascribed to one of the fourteen Infallibles (P.B.U.T.) by proper proof and evidence. Based on Islamic teachings, the fourteen Infallibles (P.B.U.T.) are sources of Revelation,⁴ faultless and without any sins or mistakes in their words and

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (26): 192–194.

2. *Ibid*, (15): 9.

3. *Ibid*, (2): 23.

4. “We are the Prophet’s household and descendants. It was in our homes that Revelation was sent down, and it is through us that prophetic knowledge reaches people.” *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 39.



actions.¹ Their traditions are deemed authentic and valid and are regarded as Islamic scriptures and sacred, authentic texts after the Noble Qur'an.² The Holy Qur'an also commands people to obey the words of the Prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H. & H.H.): "Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you."³

After himself, the Noble Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) also leaves Muslims two authentic sources: the Book of God and his Household, asserting that one shall never stray if they cling to them.⁴

Traditions narrated from the fourteen Infallibles (P.B.U.T.) were stated in the period between the first year of the appointment of Prophet Muḥammad by God (13 A.H.) and year 260 A.H. in which the Occultation of Imam Mahdī (may God hasten his advent) began and were compiled in tradition or *ḥadīth* corpuses. In the present work, the researchers have done extensive research in the scriptures of Islam and Christianity and have attempted to provide a relatively comprehensive clarification of the content presented in the Old and New Testaments as well as in the Qur'an and Islamic traditions with respect to the subject under discussion.

The present work's method of research is based on library studies and its scope is limited to the scriptures of the aforementioned religions. Citation is based on the "direct relation" method, discussing only verses and traditions that directly offer teachings regarding the family.

1. *Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I'tiqād*, p. 471.

2. See: *Usūl al-Fiqh*, vol. 2, pp. 63–70.

3. *The Holy Qur'an* (59): 7.

4. «إِنِّي نَارِكُ فِيكُمْ الثَّلَاثِينَ مَا إِنْ قَسَمْتُكُمْ بِمَا لَنْ تُضِلُّوا، كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَ عَشْرَتِي؛ أَهْلَ بَيْتِي وَ إِيَّاهُمْ لَنْ يَغْوُوا حَتَّى تَرِدَا عَلَى الْحَوْضِ». *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 294; *Al-Sunan al-Kubrī*, vol. 5, p. 45; *Musnad Aḥmad*, vol. 5, pp. 183, 189.

In order to maintain scientific fairness in the present work, Christian research centers were appointed to extract verses from the Testaments. With regard to this matter, highly valuable resources in the English language have indexed all verses of the Holy Bible in various fields; such resources include the following websites: www.biblestudytools.com, www.openbible.info, www.bible.knowing-jesus.com, etc., which skillfully extracted all verses related to the subtopics discussed in the present work, thoroughly indexing the Testaments in very specific subjects and details. Thousands of indices and subjects were extracted from the Scriptures which may be taken into consideration as a trustworthy source. Furthermore, for every subject discussed in the present research several scientific articles and specialized books have been studied in detail, from which the verses in question have been extracted. These research sources have been cited in the present work.

This piece of writing aims to review and compare the teachings of Islam and Christianity regarding the subject of the family. It does not seek to put forward new opinions regarding the concept of family in religions; rather, what is intended is merely to undertake a comparison and review of the ethical teachings in Islamic and Christian scriptures with respect to the significance and position of the family, the dos and don'ts, mutual ethical rights, as well as the results of observing and the consequences of disregarding mutual rights within the family. We intend to study the degree of importance and attention granted to the subject of the family by Islamic and Christian scriptures.

The present work discusses some of the most significant fields of study with respect to the family, including the rights of parents, the rights of children, the rights of either spouse, the rights of



relatives, and the position of the institution of the family.

A group of expert, skillful teachers and researchers in the fields of Islamic and Christian studies have authored the present work, the result of whose efforts has been the creation of the first work presenting a comparative study concerning the mutual rights within the family in the scriptures of Islam and Christianity. The present work has been organized in six volumes, the titles and authors of each of which are as follows:

SERIES TITLE: The Family Institution in Islam and Christianity

- *The Nuclear Family in Islam and Christianity*, Yasser Abu-zadeh Gataabi
- *Filial Duties in Islamic and Christian Scriptures*, Abbas Zamani Dehyaqubi
- *Parental Duties in Islamic and Christian Scriptures*, Abbas Zamani Dehyaqubi, Elaheh Eskandarzadeh
- *Husbandly Duties in Islam and Christianity*, Mohammad Mahdi Kazemi
- *Relatives in Islamic and Christian Holy Texts*, Morteza Yeganeh Amiri
- *Interpersonal Relationships in Islamic Traditions*, Hossein Ansari Pour

At the end, we deem it necessary to express our gratitude and appreciation to the following individuals: the authors and translators whose hard work made this happen:

Sheikh Hossein Ansari Pour who, in addition to authoring one of the volumes of the present work, undertook the task of editing all the volumes.

Our dear brother Mr. Abbas Zamani who oversaw the authoring of the present work and our dear sister Ms. Qabuli who oversaw and proofread the translation of the present work.

The prominent lecturer Ḥujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimīn Sahhaf Kashani to whose scientific supervision and guidance we owe this work's strength.

We pray to the Creator of the home and the family for the ever-increasing success and achievement of all our colleagues and companions.

Dr. Hojjat Modarresi



Introduction

Although there are some exceptions in the universe, humankind is inherently a sociable entity and its life is defined by co-existence and collaboration with others. Family and relatives are one of inborn divine blessings that God has gifted to humankind for the development and perfection of its sociable nature so that it can grow in a social community and take its first steps for a greater test. Kinship, with its emotional and genetic bonds, is humans' first resort in their social experience on which they can rely and depend for overcoming deficiencies, facing hardships, sharing happiness, and sympathizing in sorrow and pain. Therefore, the Holy Qur'an puts a great emphasis on the maintenance of this social bond and principle considering it equal to God's worship. As it addresses the public in the form of a pledge with the Children of Israel: "When we took a pledge from the Children of Israel, [saying]: 'Worship no one but God, do good to your parents, relatives, orphans, and the needy, speak kindly to people, maintain the prayer, and give the *zakāt*, you turned away, except a few of you, and you were disregardful.'"¹

Despite the profound geographical, social, economic, cultural, political, and religious changes, the social institution of family is still of great significance and power, and its unique role is

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (2):83.

undeniable; In a way that ‘the values of traditional and religious families’ have been increasingly recommended as a solution to today’s modern concerns.

In the recent decades, the values of the family institution have unfortunately changed due to the chaotic and holistic changes of the West and their spread through orientology, technology transfer, and thousands of other phenomena. This has led to a wide range of concerns, the most important of which are identity losses, alienation, and moral degradation.

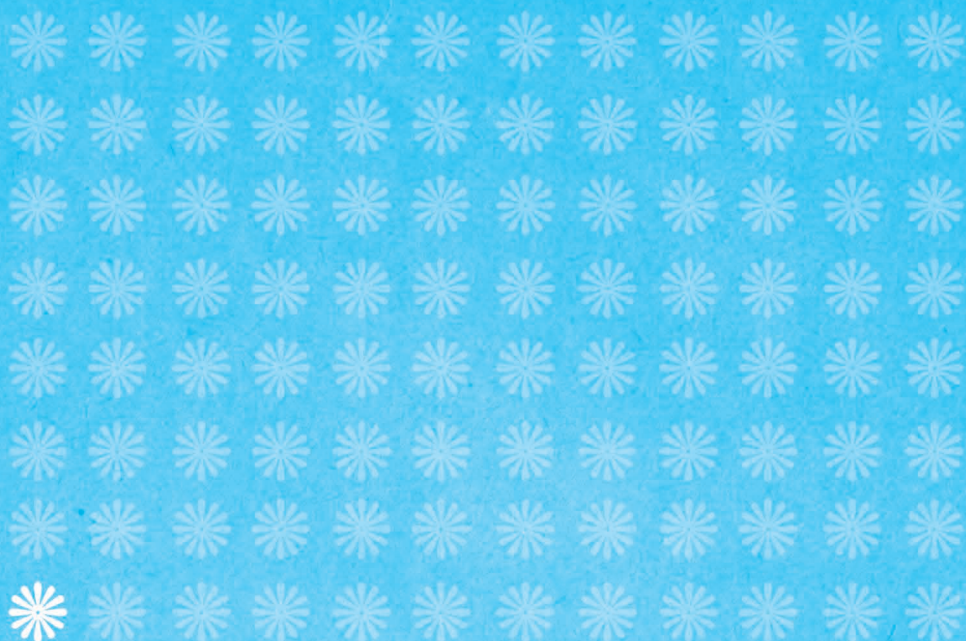
The destruction of relationships at different levels has led the intellectuals of all social sciences and different religions, such as Abrahamic ones, to take measures for the preservation of kinship, which has a fundamental role in the nations’ development and decay, by developing a variety of theories and approaches to strengthen this social and cultural foundation. This usually entails either the recommendations or the interpretations of religious holy texts with regard to the maintenance of this valuable human foundation.

Thus, the present work strives for a comparative analysis of Islam and Christianity’s concerns about kinship relations in their holy texts so that the reader can gain a better understanding of relatives from the viewpoint of Abrahamic religions. Since The Old Testament has been used by the church as an integral part of Bible in the history of Christianity, it is also taken into account as a reference for a better understanding of the New Testament. Moreover, each topic is comparatively discussed from the perspectives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam respectively.

In addition, in order to be objective and avoid impressionistic judgements on the discussed topics, it is attempted to cite re-



lated verses from the Holy Books in a manner similar to that of exegetes.



RELATIVES

The Family Institution in Islam
and Christianity

Etymology

In Hebrew, the word מִשְׁפָּחָה (*mish-paw-khaw'*) is defined as a Jewish family or a social unit like a tribe consisting of close and distant relatives who are bonded with blood or marriage.² However, The Old Testament³ uses a wide range of lexicons to convey the concept of kinship such as מוֹדָעַת (*mo-dah'-ath*) that means relative.⁵

The New Testament, which is written in Greek, uses the word συγγένεια⁶ (*soong-ghen'-i-ah*) for the concept of relatives.

In English, the word *kinship* is used for referring to either blood or in-law relatives; however, in Bible, more than one word is used to convey this meaning. The translators of Bible into En-

1. (*mish-paw-khaw'*)

2. *Merriam-Webster*.

3. Christianity refers to a collection of 39 to 46 Hebrew books, beginning from Genesis and ending with Malachi, that belong to Jews called The Old Testament. The term is mainly used by Christian to refer to the collection while Jews – who believe these books were written by Moses (P.B.U.H.) and other Israelites' prophets and elders – call it Torah, Tanakh, or Testament because the Old Testament is a justification of the New Testament in which they have no faith.

4. The KJV Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon.

5. For example, the word קָרוֹב (*kaw-robe'*) is occasionally used for kinship; or אָח (*awkh*) is used to address brothers, family, relatives, tribe members and such; the word is mostly used in Genesis and the first book of Chronicles in the Old Testament. There are also a number of words referring to kinship relations in the Old Testament with a specific meaning such as דָּד (*dod*) or with the meaning of uncle, דֹּדֵיךָ (*do-de-her*), or cousin.

6. The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon.



glish have used various words such as *kinsman*, *kinswoman*, and *relative* based on their interpretation of a Hebrew word in The Old Testament or a Greek word in the New Testament to convey the concept of kinship.

Similar to English, there is no specific and generalizable word to refer to the concept in Farsi, and words such as خانواده (*khānevā-deh*), قوم و خویش (*qowm-o-khīsh*), خویشاوند (*khīshāvand*), فامیل (*fāmīl*), بستگان (*bastegān*), اقوام (*aqvām*), دودمان (*dūdmān*), and such are used to convey the meaning, each having a particular definition and range across different sciences.

In the Qur'an, words like ذی القربى (*dhil-qurbā*) and اولوالارحام (*ulul-arḥām*) refer to the concept of relatives. Nevertheless, in the three aforementioned sources, filial, parental, and other relationships are specifically and separately referred to in the form of stories, words of wisdom, and advice, which are directly related to the study of relatives.

Qāmūs-e-Qur'an defines the word رحم (*rahīm*) as the woman's womb and a place where the fetus grows – its plural form is ارحام (*arḥām*) [wombs].

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ﴾

“It is He who forms you in the wombs however He wishes. There is no god except Him, the All-mighty, the All-wise.”¹

﴿وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ وَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ﴾

“He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs.”²

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (3):8.

2. Ibid, (31):34.



The word *raḥim* (womb), as defined above, is always used in its plural form [*arḥām*] in Qur'an. Thus, relatives are referred to as *raḥim* or *arḥām*, that is, those who are born from the same womb. ذورحم (*dhū-raḥim*) means kin and ذوى الرحم (*dhaw-il-arḥām*) is its plural form.

﴿وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ﴾

“Be wary of God, in whose Name you adjure one another, and the wombs. [Be wary of God and observe the rights of the blood relations and beware of breaking the ties of kinship].”¹

In this verse, *arḥām* means relatives.²

But who are *dhil-qurbā*? In the case of *raḥim*, it is mentioned that it includes all blood relatives of father-side or mother-side, male or female, *maḥram* or *non-maḥram*, inheritor or non-inheritor. *Dhil-qurbā* in the Qur'an's words, however, refers to closeness in relations that are bonded by blood or *raḥim*.³ In other words, those among *arḥām* who have a special bond and closeness⁴ are known as *dhil-qurbā*.

Types of relatives

Humans have two aspects: physical and spiritual. Their physical genesis and evolution stems from their blood relation and parentage, while the spiritual genesis and evolution of every individual, which determines their prosperity and spiritual life, depends on their spiritual *arḥām* and relatives. Therefore, we can

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (4):1.

2. *Qāmūs-e-Qur'an*, vol. 3, p. 68.

3. *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol. I, p. 662.

4. *Majma' al-Baḥrayn*, vol. 2, p. 139.



divide relatives into two subcategories: blood/in-law relatives and spiritual relatives.

Blood/In-law relatives

As mentioned before, kinship is, in fact, one of the signs of God's power that has made humans, who are created from a drop of water, so dependent on and bonded to one another that it [kinship] provides most of their physical and spiritual needs.

Blood kinship is usually defined as a relationship caused by the birth of one from another or between two people of the same origin. In this regard, they are customarily divided into first-degree and second-degree relatives. The former includes father, mother, and children (boy and girl). The latter, on the other hand, comprises the ancestry relatives such as father-side and mother-side grandparents and ancestors, as well as grandchildren, uncles, aunts, cousins, and anyone who relates to one through aforementioned relatives.

Concerning in-law kinship, it refers to a relationship caused by marriage; that is, the relationship between husband and wife who are each other's first-degree in-law relatives. It also includes other in-law relations such as father-in-law, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, etc., which form the further degrees of in-law kinship.

The Old Testament, in several cases, has referred to blood/in-law relations in the form of history-telling, advice, and commandments. The study of the stories in the Old Testament shows the extensiveness of blood relations and nepotism among the Children of Israel. In other words, the Old Testament is generally based on the blood relatives on the father-side, and it

rarely and briefly mentions mother-side blood relatives or in-laws.

Pedigrees are one the most common written parts of the Old Testament, which have mainly listed father-side blood relatives; in some of its verses such as the one below, it signifies the pedigrees of father-side ancestry.

“... and on the first day of the second month, they assembled the whole congregation together, who registered themselves by clans, by fathers’ houses, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, head by head.”¹

In most cases, children are associated with their fathers such as “Abraham fathered Isaac”², “Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh”³. There are only a few cases where a son is associated to his mother like “Joab the son of Zeruiah”⁴.

In *Sefer*⁵, one of the cases referring to both blood and in-law relatives is the story of Lot (P.B.U.H.), which is about the divine punishment of his people. In this story, two men or angels in the form of men who came to save Lot (P.B.U.H.) and his family said to him:

“Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place.”⁶

Two types of relatives are referred to in this verse: blood relatives by mentioning “sons” and “daughters” and in-law rela-

1. *The Holy Bible*, Numbers 1:18.

2. *Ibid*, 1 Chronicles 1:34.

3. *Ibid*, Numbers 14:6.

4. *Ibid*, 1 Samuel 8:16.

5. *Sefer* is a Hebrew word meaning text; it refers to the first five scriptures of the Old Testament which are attributed to Moses (P.B.U.H.).

6. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 19:12



tives conveyed through the word “sons-in-law”.

The New Testament does not speak of blood and in-law relatives as extensively as the Old Testament does. Nonetheless, like the Old Testament and based on the same Israelite tradition, pedigrees are an evident part of its content such as those related to Jesus (P.B.U.H.) in Matthew and Luke.¹

There is a verse attributed to Jesus (P.B.U.H.) in the New Testament which mentions both blood and in-law relatives. The verse quotes Jesus (P.B.U.H.) as follows:

“For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”²

In Synoptic Gospels, it is mentioned:

“And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever.”³

Based on these verses, the two kinship relations of blood and in-law relatives are understood from the New Testament as well.

From the Qur’an’s perspective, it is clearly stated that relatives are of either blood or in-law types in *Al-Furqān* surah, verse 54.⁴

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 1:1-17 / Luke 3:23-38.

2. *Ibid*, Matthew 10:35-37.

3. *Ibid*, 8:14.

4. *Al-Kūshī*, vol. V, p. 477.



﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا﴾

“It is He who created the human being from water, then invested him with ties of blood and marriage, and your Lord is All-powerful.”¹

This verse implicitly refers to and proves the kinships; blood relatives of father-side/mother-side such as parents, grandparents, ancestors and their children as well as those who belong to both groups; and in-law relatives related by the marriage of a man to a woman including spouse, son-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law, and such relations. Therefore, only on the basis of this verse, both relations are identified by the expression of human creation.

Spiritual relatives (Spiritual *rahim*)

Humans owe one of the main stages of their lives to their spiritual relatives (also referred to as *arḥām*); those who create every individual's worldly life and teach them how to live in this world and, more importantly, how to gain prosperity in the eternal life.

The story of Joseph (P.B.U.H.) is an obvious manifestation of spiritual kinship in the Old Testament. In this story, after introducing himself to his brothers, Joseph (P.B.U.H.) explains why he was sent from Canaan to Egypt:

“So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.”²

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (25):54.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 45:8.



The Children of Israel considered the Levites as their spiritual fathers, respected them, and allotted a share of their income to them; as in Micah's encounter with a youth of the Levites, he addressed him with the same title and said,

"Live with me and be my father and priest, and I'll give you ten shekels of silver a year, your clothes and your food."¹

However, it should be noted that blood kinship is of the greatest importance in the Old Testament. Contrary to the Old Testament, the empowerment and the spread of spiritual kinship outside the Children of Israel, more than a decade after Jesus (P.B.U.H.), can be seen in the New Testament. Because of this change, those who had been known as the strangers in the Old Testament and whose companionship had been permitted only with care and discretion in the Torah were introduced, in the New Testament, as relatives in faith.

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."²

This bond is certainly the spiritual and mystical kinship that leads to knowing Jesus (P.B.U.H.) as God's son or God in Christianity. And such kinship and adoption is only possible by believing in and uniting with Jesus (P.B.U.H.).

Under the influence of propagation and thoughts of Paulus the disciple³, a Jewish Pharisee, whose writings comprised a great

1. *The Holy Bible*, Judges 17:10.

2. *Ibid*, John 1:12-13.

3. Christians know Prophet or Saint Paulus as the refounder of Christianity. He was a born Jew, from Tarsus in today's Turkey, whose name, in Christians' belief, was put forward about a de-

portion of the New Testament, it is emphasized that, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”¹

Qur’an also emphasizes spiritual relatives in several verses and generally states, “The faithful are indeed brothers. Therefore, make peace between your brothers and be wary of God, so that you may receive [His] mercy.”²

In accordance to this verse, the faithful, in Islam, are responsible toward each other as spiritual relatives.

Ranks of kinship

Now that the different types of relatives – each including numerous individuals – are discussed, another question that is raised is whether the aforementioned relatives are of certain ranks which someone can prioritize and choose from in situations where one has to do so.

In the Torah, the most explicit advice is certainly given on parents, among all other relatives. As it reads in *Ten Commandments*: “... Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you ...”³

cade after Jesus (P.B.U.H.). As Paulus admits himself in the *Acts of the disciples*, he was cruel to the disciples and was involved in the murder of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. He claims while he was on a quest to arrest Christian refugees to Syria, he sees a light and hears a voice objecting to his cruelty against Christians. Thereafter, he repents and starts to propagate Christianity in a way that he claims he perceived directly from Jesus (P.B.U.H.). In doing so, he engages in many disputes with *disciples* which, in turn, leads to the separation of tradition from Christianity. This story is narrated in the books of Acts and Galatians in the New Testament.

1. *The Holy Bible*, Galatians 1:28–29.

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (49):10.

3. *The Holy Bible*, Deuteronomy 5:1–22 / Exodus 20:1–17.



Similarly, Qur'an indicates that God took a pledge of the Children of Israel to do good not only to their parents but also to some others; "And when We took a pledge from the Children of Israel: 'Worship no one but God, do good to parents, relatives, orphans, and the needy, and speak kindly to people, and maintain the prayer, and give the *zakāt*,' you turned away, except a few of you, and you were disregarding."¹

The Torah ranks relatives based on a general order in terms of inheritance. As one of the stories regarding this reads: "... And the LORD said to Moses, 'The daughters of Zelophehad are right. You shall give them possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers and transfer the inheritance of their father to them. And you shall speak to the people of Israel, saying, if a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. And if he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the nearest kinsman of his clan, and he shall possess it. And it shall be for the people of Israel a statute and rule, as the LORD commanded Moses.'"²

According to the above verses, should we consider inheritance priority as the basis for ranking kinship, father-side blood relatives are of the highest importance in the Old Testament.

Almost similar to Torah, the New Testament points out to the Ten Commandments in the words of Jesus (P.B.U.H.) and his response to a young man who is seeking the way of eternal life.

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (2):83.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Numbers 27:1-11.



“And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.’ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself ...’”¹

Consequently, as discussed before, the position of parents is higher than other relatives in the New Testament. However, with regard to the other aforementioned relatives, there are no explicit verses or inheritance commandments based on which we can tell if they are of the same ranks as those of the Old Testament.

According to the New Testament, one is allowed to break up such relationships with those who do not follow Jesus (P.B.U.H.), and based on the teaching of God’s fatherhood, it states the true inheritors as: “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.”²

The Qur’an, however, explicitly refers to an order for both physical and spiritual relatives who were mentioned before. In terms of spiritual relatives: “The Prophet is closer to the faithful than their own souls ...”³

As quoted from Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ibn Abbas: “Any prophet is the father of his people because all believers are brothers to each other and the prophet, therefore, is their religious father.”⁴

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 19:17–21.

2. *Ibid*, 19:29.

3. *The Holy Qur’an* (33):6.

4. *Translation of Jawāmi‘-al-Jāmi‘*, vol. V, p. 99.



This kind of kinship is not limited to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) as God orders him to say: "... Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives.' ..." ¹

But who are the Messenger's close relatives? As an answer to this question, it is stated in the verse of *Mubāhilah* (invocation of God's curse) that: "Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down God's curse upon the liars.'"²

In the event of *Mubāhilah* with the Christians of Najrān, both the Shia and Sunni³ said what was meant by the Prophet's 'sons' was Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusayn (P.B.U.T.), what was meant by 'women' was her Eminence Fatima (P.B.U.H.), and what was meant by the Prophet's 'soul' was the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī (P.B.U.H.), his cousin and son-in-law. This is also emphasized and referred to in *Ḥadīth al-Kisā'*.⁴

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (42): 23.

2. *Ibid*, (3):61.

3. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl li Qawā'id al-Taḥḍīr*, vol. I, p. 157.

«...فخرج رسول الله و أخذ بيد علي بن أبي طالب و معه فاطمة و حسن و حسين فقال: هؤلاء أبناؤنا و نساؤنا و أنفسنا فهموا أن يلاعنوا ثم إن أبا الحرث قال للسيد و العاقب: و الله ما نضع بملاعنة هذا شيئا، فضالجوه على الجزية...»

(The Messenger of God went out, took 'Alī's (P.B.U.H.) hand, while Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn were with him, and said, 'these are our sons, our women, and our souls, and let us call down God's curse'. Then, Abul Ḥārith told Sayed and al-Aqib, 'Swear to God that we cannot do anything by calling down God's curse, so compromise with him by paying a tribute'.)

Al-Kashshā' an Haqā'iq at-Tanzīl, vol. I, pp. 368.

«...فأتى رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم و قد غدا محتضنا الحسين أخذاً بيد الحسن و فاطمة تمشى خلفه و علي خلفها...»

(... The Messenger of God (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) came while embracing Ḥusayn and taking Ḥasan hand, and Fāṭimah was walking behind him, and 'Alī was walking behind her...)

4. «...فَقَالَ الْأُمَيُّوْنُ جِبْرَائِيلُ يَا رَبِّ وَمَنْ تَحْتَ الْكِسَاءِ، فَقَالَ غُرُوحٌ لَهُمْ أَلَمْ يَثْبُتِ الشُّبُوحُ، وَمَعْدِنُ الرِّسَالَةِ، هُمْ فَاطِمَةُ وَأَبُوهَا وَبَغْلُهَا وَبَنُوهَا ...» (...Gabriel the trusty asked, 'Oh God, who are those under the clock?' God answered, they are the house of prophethood and messengership, they are Fāṭimah, her father, her husband, and her sons.)

It is quoted from the Messenger of God, “I will intercede four groups of people even if they have committed as much sin as that of all the people on the earth: those who help my household, those who provide their necessities in need, those who love them by heart and soul, and those who help them overcome their troubles.”¹

Regarding the spiritual relatives, the Qur’an indicates, “the faithful are indeed brothers”². However, based on God’s commandment in the Qur’an, physical relatives are, at least, more important than a group of spiritual relatives in terms of materialistic issues.

Among physical relatives, parents who are the source of birth, physical existence, and human growth come at the top of kinship ranks. In a way that most cases of God’s advice on parents is preceded by advice about Himself. For example, “..., that you shall not ascribe any partners to Him, and you shall be good to the parents ...”³

Besides parents, God gives advice about relatives and *dhil-qurbā*: “Worship God and do not ascribe any partners to Him, and be good to parents, the relatives, ...”⁴

According to *Al-Aḥzāb* surah (verse 6) and other verses related to inheritance, the Muslim scholars have classified physical relatives to three different ranks: (1) spouses, parents, and children, (2) second-degree relatives; those of a special bond to a person but not of the first rank including brothers, sisters, and their children [nieces and nephews], and (3) other relatives who are

1. Translation of *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* (P.B.U.H.), vol. I, p. 197.

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (49):10.

3. Ibid, (6):151.

4. Ibid, (4):36.



prioritized based on their closeness such as uncles, aunts, and so on. As God asserts, “The blood relatives are more entitled to inherit from one another.”

Nonetheless, we cannot simply ignore or give up other relatives based on their closeness in kinship.

The importance of maintaining kinship relations

Obviously, with regard to the previous discussions and the emphasis on relatives by the two Testaments and particularly the Qur’an the question can arise whether it is important to maintain kinship relations from the perspectives of these sources.

Based on the Ten Commandments, the importance of maintaining kinship relations with parents is a definite issue in The Old Testament. The same importance can be perceived in terms of other relatives; for example, according to the Holy Bible, Lot (P.B.U.H.) was the son of Abraham’s (P.B.U.H.) brother, “And Abraham took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions”¹ They both had large herds and flocks, but there was a disagreement among their herdsmen and servants over the pasture, which could lead to an argument between Abraham (P.B.U.H.) and his nephew. In order to prevent the possible conflict, Abraham (P.B.U.H.) said to his nephew, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen.”²

In this verse, Abraham (P.B.U.H.) feared that the strife between the herdsmen could lead to a strife between him and his kin, so he suggested to divide the sheep pastures.

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 12:5.

2. *Ibid*, 13:8.



The importance of maintaining kinship relations is also emphasized in the story of the conflict between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel¹. In this story, when Rehoboam, the son of Solomon (P.B.U.H.), wanted to invade the country of Israel, with the help of Judah and Benjamin tribes, and reclaim his rule over the whole kingdom, God's words were spoken by His prophet Shemaiah.

“This is what the LORD says: ‘Do not go up to fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.’ So they obeyed the word of the LORD and went home again, as the LORD had ordered.”²

Concerning the story of Jesus (P.B.U.H.) and the words attributed to him, distinctions have been made with regard to the importance of maintaining kinship relations in the New Testament. On the one hand, an emphasis on tradition can be perceived from his words. For example, “For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ...”³, or as in his advice about brothers; “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times’”⁴.

1. After the reign of Solomon (P.B.U.H.), the land under his command was divided into two parts for the provoked conflicts. A country led by one of the descendants of Joseph (P.B.U.H.) with ten tribes in the North declared its existence under the name of Israel, and another, named Judah, with two tribes of Judah and Benjamin led by the son of Solomon (P.B.U.H.) remained in the South. The history suggests that the conflict had stemmed from the cruelty and licentiousness of Solomon's (P.B.U.H.) successor.

2. *The Holy Bible*, 1 Kings 12:24.

3. *Ibid*, Matthew 15:4–9.

4. *Ibid*, 18:21–22.



On the other hand, if this is the commandment, why is it stated about Jesus (P.B.U.H.) that “While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.’ He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’”¹

With regard to the aforementioned ranks, the Qur’an also puts a great emphasis on caring for and paying attention to relatives. This issue is not a matter of ethical guidance in the Qur’an, but, in case of kinship, it is considered as *Wājib* [obligatory]; therefore, God states in the Qur’an: “O mankind! Be wary of your Lord who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and from the two of them, scattered numerous men and women. Be wary of God, in whose Name you adjure one another, and the wombs. Indeed God is watchful over you.”²

According to the late Faḍl bin Ḥasan Ṭabarsī’s exegesis in *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, “Be wary of God from whom you ask for your personal and social needs and rights, and fear severing the ties with blood relations [*arḥām*]. In fact, *al-arḥām* is defined in reference to God. This has been mentioned by Ibn Abbas, Qatādah, Mujāhid, Ḍaḥāk, and Rabi’, and it is confirmed based on a *ḥadīth* which quotes from the Prophet; God said, I am *Raḥman* [the most compassionate] who created *raḥim* [womb] and derived its name from mine. Those who maintain ties with their kindred are rewarded, but those who break off connec-

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 12:46–50 / Mark 3:32–35.

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (4):1.



tions with their kindred are punished.”¹

In another verse, God considers the desertion of kinsfolk as equal to corruption in the land and says, “May it not be that if you were to wield authority you would cause corruption in the land and ill-treat your blood relations?”²

Thus, maintaining kinship relations is of crucial importance in the Qur’an and its abandonment is equal to corruption. Maybe, the secret of making distinctions between parents and other relatives is that if God has not separated them from other kinsmen, for their significant position, some might solely have considered parents as *dhil-qurbā* and ignored other relatives; based on such a view in the Qur’an, the importance and the position of parents is, therefore, evident while caring for other relatives is not to be neglected by humans. In other words, by only caring for parents, one cannot shirk the burden of an important social principle and its considerable influences, nor can he/she ignore maintaining kinship relations.

In addition to the verses conveying the importance of maintaining kinship relations, God’s Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) advises his people and all men and women to be born until the Resurrection Day saying, “I advise all the present or the absent and those who will be born from today to the Resurrection Day that you should maintain ties with your kindred even though you are a one-year-long journey away from them because maintaining ties with one’s kindred is a part of religion.”³ And once it is a part of religion, its observance and maintenance is both obligatory and necessary.

1. *The Translation of Majma’ al-Bayān fī-Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, vol. V, p. 8.

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (47):22.

3. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 151, [ʿadl]th 5.



Moreover, as it is quoted from Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.) in a ḥadīth, “Respect your elders, be kind to those who are younger, and maintain ties with your kindred.”¹

Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) also says, “Maintaining ties with one’s kindred is the best of chivalry.”²

As quoted from God’s Messenger (P.B.U.H. & H.H.), “When they took me to the heavens, I saw someone who was complaining about one of his relatives to God. I asked him, ‘how are you related?’ He answered, ‘we are related through our fortieth forefather’.”³

It can be inferred that although relatives are of different ranks, as far as possible, attention should be paid to even the most distant ones.

It is also important to note that Islam’s advice about relatives should not be taken for granted, but it has been given particular recommendations in accordance with different situations; at the personal level, everyone is advised to act with devotion and to be humble toward their relatives, despite their materialistic interests, in order not to loosen the kinship bond but to strengthen the depth and permanence of such relations: “And when the division is attended by relatives, the orphans and the needy, provide for them out of it, and speak to them honourable words.”⁴

The Messenger’s (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) declaration of his prophetic mission is the greatest example of social and religious interests that laid the foundations of Islamic society and Muslims’ social life.

1. ‘*Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 2, p. 265; وَقَرُّوا كِبَارَكُمْ وَارْحَمُوا صِغَارَكُمْ وَصَلُّوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ

2. *Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 406, [ḥadīth 9299]; «من أفضل المنزوة صلة الرحم»

3. *Al-Khiṣāl* (A. Fahari Zanjani Trans.), vol. 2, p. 643.

4. *The Holy Qur’an* (4):8.

At this level, God, with a great emphasis, advises the Prophet and the believers to be wary of anything that can make them neglect their responsibilities. In a public piece of advice, God asks the believers not to let affection, preference, or interest prevent them from loving God and trying to preserve the religion:

“Say, ‘If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk, the possessions that you have acquired, the business you fear may suffer, and the dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than God and His Apostle and to waging *jihād* in His way, then wait until God issues His edict, and God does not guide the transgressing lot.”¹

Relatives’ mutual rights

Kinship is not merely limited to a relationship or interaction between two people, but, consequential to it, certain rights have been established by Almighty God for those who are referred to as relatives.

In the two Testaments and, particularly, in the Qur’an, it has frequently been recommended to observe relatives’ rights. For example, “Indeed God enjoins justice and kindness and generosity toward relatives, and He forbids indecency, wrong, and aggression. He advises you, so that you may take admonition.”² “Give the relatives their [due] right, and the needy and the traveler [as well], but do not squander wastefully.”³

“Give the relative his right, and the needy and the traveller [as well]. That is better for those who seek God’s pleasure,

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (9):24.

2. *Ibid*, (16):90.

3. *Ibid*, (17):26.



and it is they who are the felicitous.”¹

So it is certain that relatives have rights toward each other as some of which are mentioned below.

Goodness

The Holy Bible, in both testaments, speaks of goodness which is mostly toward God, or it is advised in a general way.

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.”²

And goodness toward relatives can also be perceived from some of the stories and wisdoms in the two testaments. For instance, in the story of David (P.B.U.H.) becoming the king, his goodness toward the son of Jonathan, his brother-in-law, is stated as follows:

“David asked, ‘Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?’”³

Even in the story of Abraham (P.B.U.H.) and his journey to Egypt when he introduced his wife as his sister [for if they knew she was his wife they might have killed him], in fact, Pharaoh [who wanted to marry Sarai] regarded Abraham (P.B.U.H.) as his brother-in-law and treated him with kindness.

“As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (30):38.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Proverbs 3:27.

3. *Ibid*, 2 Samuel 9:1.

will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you. When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. 16 He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels."¹

Moreover, the story of Joseph (P.B.U.H.) in the Old Testament is also full of kindness toward his brothers.

"Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them."²

"After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, 'Serve the food.' They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians."³

The New Testament also indicates this concept; in the story of Jesus' (P.B.U.H.) encounter with Sadducee and Pharisee scholars, he said to them,

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."⁴

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 12:11–16.

2. *Ibid*, 42:25.

3. *Ibid*, 43:31–32.

4. *Ibid*, 23:23.



In these verses, if we consider mercy as synonymous with goodness, it can be inferred that the matter of goodness and mercy toward one another, as Jesus (P.B.U.H.) puts forward in the New Testament, is one of the greatest commandments in the tradition of Moses (P.B.U.H.); although, it does not explicitly refer to goodness toward relatives.

Nonetheless, the matter of goodness toward brothers and sisters is advised in the New Testament, but its indicators mainly refer to religious and spiritual relatives while not explicitly including one's physical relatives. For example:

“For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.”¹

Besides advising everyone to do good, Paulus also asserts putting the faithful in priority: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”²

In the form of a general principle, Qur'an has frequently stated that “... do good to parents, relatives, ...”³

1. *The Holy Bible*, 1 John 3:11–15.

2. *Ibid*, Galatians 6:10.

3. *The Holy Qur'an* (2):83.

“Indeed God enjoins justice and kindness and generosity toward relatives...”¹

“And when We took a pledge from the Children of Israel: ‘Worship no one but God, do good to parents, relatives, ...’”²

“Worship God and do not ascribe any partners to Him, and be good to parents, the relatives, ...”³

Say, ‘Come, I will recount what your Lord has forbidden you from. That you shall not ascribe any partners to Him, and you shall be good to the parents, ...’⁴

The same concept has been emphasized by the Imams in different ḥadīths. As Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.) said, maintaining ties with one’s kindred and goodness will bring ease in judgment and protection from sin, so visit your relatives and do good to your brothers, even though, by the means of properly saying hello or responding to it.⁵

Benefaction

Another responsibility of relatives toward one and other is the matter of benefaction which is of great importance. Ruth’s story in The Old Testament can imply the benefaction of Boaz toward Ruth and Naomi, his mother-in-law.

“Boaz replied, ‘I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland

1. *The Holy Qur’an*, (16):90.

2. *Ibid*, (2):83.

3. *Ibid*, (4):36.

4. *Ibid*, (6):151.

5. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 157, *Ḥadīth* 31.



and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.’ ‘May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord,’ she said. ‘You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.’ At mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.’ When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, ‘Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her. Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.’ So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah.”¹

Joseph (P.B.U.H.) also did good to his brothers and relatives from Canaan and gave them free wheat. “Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man’s silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them,”²

The New Testament, on the other hand, refers to benefaction in general, but not specifically toward relatives.

“Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”³

1. *The Holy Bible*, Ruth 2:11–17.

2. *Ibid*, Genesis 42:25.

3. *Ibid*, Matthew 5:42.

“Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.”¹

As it is stated in the Book of James:

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”²

However, this advice is mainly concerned with benefaction toward brothers and sisters in faith.

In the Qur’an, benefaction is relatives’ right as God says:

“Give the relatives their [due] right, ...”³

Similarly, He says in another surah:

“Give the relatives their [due] right, ...”⁴

Moreover, He [God] considers benefaction as one of the elements of faithfulness and goodness and says:

“Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by] those who have faith in God and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and who give their wealth, for the love of Him,¹ to relatives,

1. *The Holy Bible*, Luke 6:30.

2. *Ibid*, James 2:14–17.

3. *The Holy Qur’an* (17):26.

4. *Ibid*, (30):38.



orphans, the needy, the traveler and the beggar, ...”¹

A. Ties of kinship

The verses of the Testaments are not specific in enjoining the maintenance of ties of kinship. However there are references to some important figures missing one another and meeting each other. An example of such meetings is narrated in the New Testament, a meeting between Lady Mary (P.B.U.H.) and Elisabeth which represents the importance of connectedness with relatives.

“At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.’”²

The Qur’an states in regards to ties of kinship: “And those who join that which God has ordered to be joined and fear their Lord and are afraid of the evil of [their] account.”³

Ḥadīths have explained this subject more specifically and have stressed the importance of maintaining ties of kinship numerous times and at different places. It’s narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.):

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (177):2.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Luke 1:39–44.

3. *The Holy Qur’an* (13):21.

“The best way in which kinship ties are maintained is abstention from annoying them.”¹

In another ḥadīth, the Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) stressed maintaining ties of kinship and ordered everyone in every generation by saying:

“I advise my present and absent community and those who are still in the backs of men and the wombs of women until the Day of Judgment, that they maintain the ties of kinship. Even if the distance between them is a year’s journey because maintaining kinship ties are a part of Religion.”²

He (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) also said, “Journey two years to do good to your parents and journey one year to join the ties of kinship.”³

Likewise Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.) said, “Whenever your brother visits you uninvited, give him what is available with you, and whenever you invite him, make an effort for him.”⁴

Therefore there is no break from this important act of receiving guests, whether it be by invitation or uninvited.

B. Freedom in eating

Being free to eat from each other’s houses isn’t specifically mentioned in the bible nor is it alluded to; however, the Qur’an has clearly explained the permissibility and freedom to eat from the food of our relatives without permission, it says:

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 151.

2. Ibid; «أَفْضَلُ مَا تَوْصَلُ بِهِ الرَّجْمُ كَفُّ الْأَذَى عَنْهَا»

3. *Al-Fiqh al-Mansūb Ilā al-Imam al-Riḍā* (P.B.U.H.), p. 355.

«إِذَا أَتَاكَ أَخُوكَ فَأَتِهِ بِمَا عِنْدَكَ وَ إِذَا دَعَاكَ فَتَكَلَّفْ لَهُ»

4. *Mahāsin*, vol. 2, p. 410, *Ḥadīth* 138.



“There is not upon the blind [any] constraint nor upon the lame constraint nor upon the ill constraint nor upon yourselves when you eat from your [own] houses or the houses of your fathers or the houses of your mothers or the houses of your brothers or the houses of your sisters or the houses of your father’s brothers or the houses of your father’s sisters or the houses of your mother’s brothers or the houses of your mother’s sisters or [from houses] whose keys you possess or [from the house] of your friend. There is no blame upon you whether you eat together or separately. But when you enter houses, give greetings of peace upon each other – a greeting from God, blessed and good. Thus does God make clear to you the verses [of ordinance] that you may understand.”¹

In a ḥadīth, the narrator asks Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.) what the verse means regarding “There is no constraint upon yourselves when you eat... from the house of your friend”? The Imam replied: “By God, the intended meaning is when someone enters the house of his believing friend and eats without permission.”²

C. Pardoning

One of the mutually agreed upon concepts both in the Qur’an and the Bible is forgiveness or pardoning the misdeeds of our relatives. In the Bible it narrates about prophet Jacob (P.B.U.H.) and Esau:

“Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah,

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (24):61.

2. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 277, [ḥadīth] 1.

Rachel and the two female servants. He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.”¹

Another instance of forgiveness is in the story of prophet Joseph (P.B.U.H.) and his brothers which is filled with forgiveness and pardoning. One such instance is after the demise of his father Jacob:

“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?’ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: ‘this is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. ‘We are your slaves,’ they said. But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.”²

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 33:1–4.

2. *Ibid*, 50:15–21.



Pardoning and forgiveness is taught more clearly as an important lesson in the New Testament. However, the way forgiveness of blood relatives has been introduced in the New Testament is a bit difficult. For example when Saint Peter, the vicegerent of Jesus (P.B.U.H.) asked Jesus “My master, how many times shall I forgive my brother who has wronged me? Until seven times?” Jesus replied: “I say to you, not seven times but seventy seven times.”¹ Following the previous verses which states, “If your brother wrongs you, go to him and in secret tell him what he has done. If he accepts then you have recovered your brother. However if he refuses, take with you two or three people so that everything said is proven by two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them as well then tell the church and if he refuses the church then consider him as a stranger.”² Without a doubt this is related to the relatives of clerics.

In the Qur’an, forgiveness and pardoning of blood relatives is taught and the characteristics of being forgiving, pardoning and merciful is commended. Once when a woman was accused of adultery, there were some who fell to falsely accusing her and some Muslims swore to disassociate with them and not help them because of their false accusations. This was when a verse was revealed calling for forgiveness and pardoning:

“And let not those of virtue among you and wealth swear not to give [aid] to their relatives and the needy and the emigrants for the cause of God, and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that God should forgive you? And God is Forgiving and Merciful.”³

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 18:21–22.

2. *Ibid*, 18:15–17.

3. *The Holy Qur’an* (24):22.



Once a man came to the Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) and said, “O the Apostle of God! My family intend to attack me and disassociate from me and insult me. Do I have the right to disassociate from them?” The Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) replied: “In that case God will disassociate from all of you.”

The man said, “What shall I do then?” The Prophet replied, “Connect with those who disconnect from you and give to whoever denies you and pardon whoever has wronged you and if you do this then may God help you over them.”¹

Abdullāh bin Sanān said he asked Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.), “I have a cousin who disassociates from me no matter how much I associate with him. To the point that now I intend to cut ties with him if he cuts ties with me. Will you give me permission to disassociate from him?” the Imam replied, “If you connect to him and he cuts ties from you, may the Almighty God join you together. However if you cut ties and he cuts ties then may God disassociate from both of you.”

D. Compassion

The Old Testament has presented compassion to relatives among the stories. An example is Rebekah, the wife of Prophet Isaac (P.B.U.H.) speaking with her brother; Laban. The farewell displays a form of verbal kindness with relatives as it says: “And they blessed Rebekah, and said to her ‘You are our sister, May you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate them.’”²

Another good example of compassion is presented in the story

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 150, *Ḥadīth* 2.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 25:60.



of Joseph when at the peak of power he cooperates with his brothers and even tells them not to quarrel with each other on the way back even though they had intended to kill him:

“Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, ‘Have everyone leave my presence!’ So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it. Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph! Is my father still living?’ But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come close to me.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.’¹

“Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, ‘Don’t quarrel on the way!’”²

Likewise compassion can even be found in verses such as:

“‘Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelite and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.’ His brothers agreed.”³

Similarly, the story of Esther, who was the reason in the killing of Haman, the Persian vizier, his sons, and many more Persians, is an example of compassion toward relatives in the Old Testament:

“Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 45:1–5.

2. *Ibid*, 45:24.

3. *Ibid*, 37:27.

weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. Then the king extended the gold sceptre to Esther and she arose and stood before him. ‘If it pleases the king,’ she said, ‘and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king’s provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?’”¹

The clearest form of kindness and compassion toward relatives is in the example of Lady Mary (P.B.U.H.) in the New Testament when she came to know that Elisabeth is pregnant at an old age: she hurries to their house ecstatically.

“‘Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.’ ‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May your word to me be fulfilled.’ Then the angel left her. At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”²

A metaphor is narrated from his eminence Jesus (P.B.U.H.) regarding compassion to one’s relatives:

1. *The Holy Bible*, Esther 8:3–6.

2. *Ibid*, Luke 1:36–41.



“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?”¹

Additionally, there are many verses specifically for kindness, compassion and restraining anger toward our brothers and sisters, such as:

“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’² is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.”³

“Leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”⁴

Based on what is narrated in the New Testament, we cannot accept that Jesus meant physical brothers or sisters; consider such verses as the following:

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.”⁵

“Now Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.’ He replied, ‘My mother and brothers are

1. *The Holy Bible*, Luke 11:11.

2. An Aramaic term of contempt.

3. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 5:22.

4. *Ibid*, 5:24.

5. *Ibid*, 10:34–36.

those who hear God's word and put it into practice.”¹

Based on these verses, therefore, it must be said that in many of the verses the intended meaning by ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ are brothers and sisters in faith to Jesus.

In Islamic *ḥadīths* and Qur’anic verses, this topic of compassion toward relatives is explained more clearly and as one of the rights of relatives upon each other. The Qur’an instructs especially in inheritance division that compassion be observed for the present relatives as well as the orphans, the destitute by giving them something from the property and then to speak to them in the best and kindest manner:

“And when [other] relatives and orphans and the needy are present at the [time of] division, then provide for them [something] out of the estate and speak to them words of appropriate kindness.”²

And follows it up by saying that if you don’t have any property to give then speak to them kindly:

“And give the relative his right... And if you [must] turn away from the needy awaiting mercy from your Lord which you expect, then speak to them a gentle word.”³

This does not mean that if you do give them something then you don’t have to be kind since the previous verse included kind speech accompanied with giving property.

Similarly in the story of Joseph (P.B.U.H.) and his brothers, compassion is visible as the verse says:

1. *The Holy Bible*, Luke 8:19–21.

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (4):8.

3. *Ibid*, (17):26–28.



“And [Joseph] said to his servants, ‘Put their merchandise into their saddlebags so they might recognize it when they have gone back to their people that perhaps they will [again] return.’”⁴

“He said, ‘No blame will there be upon you today. God will forgive you; and He is the most merciful of the merciful.’”⁵

Similarly such kindness and compassion is displayed in the beautiful supplications of Moses regarding his brother Aaron:

“[Moses] said, ‘My Lord, forgive me and my brother and admit us into Your mercy, for You are the most merciful of the merciful.’”⁶

Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.) said to his companions, “Be God-wary and be polite brothers. Be friends in the path of God and have affinity and show affection. Visit and meet each other and discuss our matters and keep it alive.”⁷

It is narrated from Ammār bin Ḥayyān,

“I told Imam Ṣādiq that my son Ismail was very polite and well-mannered with me. He said, ‘I also loved him but now my love has grown even more. Indeed the foster sister of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) came to him and upon seeing her he became happy and spread for her his cloak and asked her to sit on it. He then faced her and spoke to her with a smile until she got up and left and her brother came. However the Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) did not show the same behavior

4. *The Holy Qur'an* (12):62.

5. *Ibid*, (12):92.

6. *Ibid*, (7):151.

7. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 175, *Ḥadīth* 1.

with him as with his sister. His eminence was asked, ‘You behaved in a way with his sister that you did not behave with him even though he is a man?’ He replied, ‘It is because that sister would treat her mother and father better.’”¹

Inheritance

Another issue that is discussed with regard to kinship rights is the issue of inheritance. Inheritance has been taken into account both in the Bible and in the Qur’an and *ḥadīths*.

The Old Testament considers inheritance a male right and prior to the right of the women. For example, the story of the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad has been referred to in the Old Testament below which the law of inheritance is stated:

“What the daughters of Zelophehad say is right: certainly, you are to give them a heritage among their father’s brothers: and let the property which would have been their father’s go to them. And say to the children of Israel, if a man has no son at the time of his death, let his heritage go to his daughter. And if he has no daughter, then give his heritage to his brothers. And if he has no brothers, then give his heritage to his father’s brothers. And if his father has no brothers, then give it to his nearest relation in the family, as his heritage: this is to be a decision made by law for the children of Israel, as the lord gave orders to Moses.”²

In any case, the inheritance right has been designated for relatives such as brothers and uncles and other male relatives in the Old Testament.

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 161, *Ḥadīth* 12.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Numbers 27:5–11.



The New Testament does not mention the right of inheritance of relatives from each other, although in general, the law of the Old Testament can be concluded for the New Testament as well.

However, the religion of Islam deals with this right in a careful manner, and recommends that you properly make your will for your parents and relatives and leave them an inheritance.

“Prescribed for you when death approaches [any] one of you if he leaves wealth [is that he should make] a bequest for the parents and near relatives according to what is acceptable – a duty upon the righteous.”¹

“And for all, we have made heirs to what is left by parents and relatives. And to those whom your oaths have bound [to you] – give them their share. Indeed, God is ever, over all things, a Witness.”²

And contrary to the Bible, the Qur’an refers to the right of inheritance of relatives by gender segregation and states that both men and women inherit from their relatives and have certain rights:

“For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much – an obligatory share.”³

One of the other issues raised in the Qur’an is the right to inherit from the property of the brother and sister, the law of which is described in detail as well.

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (2):180.

2. *Ibid*, (4):33.

3. *Ibid*, (4):7.



“They request from you a [legal] ruling. Say, ‘God gives you a ruling concerning one having neither descendants nor ascendants [as heirs].’ If a man dies, leaving no child but [only] a sister, she will have half of what he left. And he inherits from her if she [dies and] has no child. But if there are two sisters [or more], they will have two-thirds of what he left. If there are both brothers and sisters, the male will have the share of two females. God makes clear to you [His law], lest you go astray. And God is Knowing of all things.”¹

Moreover, the Qur’an, contrary to the customary practice of the Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.), in addition to the ethical recommendation regarding the status of the parents and the spouse, has also independently considered their financial issues, and if you consider the verses of the inheritance of the parents and the first relative of the causal relationship — spouse or husband — that is realized through lineage or marriage according to verse 54 of Sūrah al-Furqān, “... made him [a relative by] lineage and marriage ...”, a certain share has been taken into account for them, and this share is preceded by the share of the inheritance of the children.

And the children of the deceased have been considered to be superior to other relatives and family members. And contrary to what is mentioned in the Torah, that it is only the single daughter who inherit from the father with the assumption that she has no brothers, in the Qur’an, although the inheritance of the daughter is less than that of the son, but this is the daughter who is taken as the principle. Therefore, God states, “... for the male, what is equal to the share of two females...” This means that, while acknowledging the preservation of the daughters’

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (4):176.



share, the daughters' share has been taken as the scale based on which the share of the sons are to be designated, and this is a correction and reaction to the false tradition of the past when there had been no status for the daughters.

Helping

It is said that humans are eager to help each other in different situations and problems, and this issue is more observed with regard to relatives due to their kinship relations and affinity.

The Old Testament has more content breadth in terms of helping and paying attention to relatives than the New Testament.

The story of seeking refuge of Jacob (P.B.U.H.) from his uncle, Laban, to escape from the anger of his brother, Esau, and being welcome by Laban, is a kind of help to relatives in the Old Testament, which states:

“And Laban, hearing news of Jacob, his sister’s son, came running, and took Jacob in his arms, and kissing him, made him come into his house. And Jacob gave him news of everything. And Laban said to him, truly, you are my bone and my flesh...”¹

Or in the case of helping brothers, it states, “If your brother becomes poor, and has to give up some of his land for money, his nearest relation may come and get back that which his brother has given up.”²

“And if your brother becomes poor and is not able to make a living, then you are to keep him with you, helping him as

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 29:13–14.

2. *Ibid*, Leviticus 25:25.

you would a man from another country who is living among you.”¹

“And if one from another nation living among you gets wealth, and your countryman, at his side, becomes poor and gives himself for money to the man from another nation or to one of his family; After he has given himself he has the right to be made free, for a price, by one of his brothers, or his father’s brother, or the son of his father’s brother, or any near relation; or if he gets money, he may make himself free.”²

Or, despite the fact that the priests and Aaron’s children were prohibited from and would become unclean by touching the bodies of the dead, this permission has been granted only for blood relatives:

The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and tell them, ‘A priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean for any of his people who die, except for a close relative, such as his mother or father, his son or daughter, his brother, or an unmarried sister who is dependent on him since she has no husband...’”³

Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron’s uncle Uzziel, and told to them, “Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary.”⁴

Or, in another sentence of the Torah, which is repeated in the

1. *The Holy Bible*, Leviticus 25:35.

2. *Ibid*, 25:47-49.

3. *Ibid*, 21:1-3.

4. *Ibid*, 10:4.



Gospel of Matthew¹ as well, the brother shall do as following:

“If brothers are living together and one of them, at his death, has no son, the wife of the dead man is not to be married outside the family to another man: let her husband’s brother go in to her and make her his wife, doing as it is right for a brother-in-law to do. Then the first male child she has will take the rights of the brother who is dead, so that his name may not come to an end in Israel.”²

“Then Judah said to Onan, Go in to your brother’s wife and do what it is right for a husband’s brother to do; make her your wife and get offspring for your brother.”³

In the New Testament, in addition to the above, which is also mentioned in the two Gospels of Mark and Luke, a story has been narrated with regard to the Acts of the Prophets that deals with the story of Moses and his kinsman of Israel, and states:

“And seeing one of them being attacked, he went to his help and gave the Egyptian a death-blow.”⁴

This story also deals with the Old Testament.

And it seems that it is the only epistle in Paul’s letters that takes the physical relatives into account. It states: “But if one does not care for his relatives and especially his own household, he is a denier of faith and less than an unbeliever”.⁵

The Qur’an announces assistance and financial help to relatives

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 22:24.

2. *Ibid*, Deuteronomy 25:5–6.

3. *Ibid*, Genesis 38:8.

4. *Ibid*, Acts 7: 24.

5. *Ibid*, Timothy 1:5–8.

as one of the manifestations of goodness and states:

“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives ...”⁶

In the story of the mission of prophet Moses (P.B.U.H.) to rescue the Israelites and guide Pharaoh, he calls for such help and support through one of his relatives from God and states:

“And appoint for me a minister from my family – Aaron, my brother. Increase through him my strength and let him share my task.”⁷

In a *ḥadīth* from Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.), it is narrated, “A person who withholds his helping hand and generosity from his own relatives, he will deprive them of just one hand (helper), but he himself will be deprived of the help and generosity of many hands.”⁸

In other words, Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) says, “Man, although having property and children, should never turn his back on his own relatives, their friendship, their generosity, and their physical and linguistic support. They will support him tighter than all the others, they will be the kindest toward him, and if he confronts a calamity or misfortune, they will help him survive more than anyone else. And anyone who withholds his hand from his own relatives, he will deprive them of just one hand, but he himself will be deprived of many hands. And whoever is modest and

6. *The Holy Qur’an* (2):177.

7. *Ibid.*, (20):29–32.

8. *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, p. 407, *Ḥadīth* 9334.



humble, their friends will find them kind and will love them¹ ... respect your own relatives ... since they are the best support and help for you in situations of difficulty and easiness.”²

How to communicate with relatives

Considering all the recommendations about paying attention to and having communications with the relatives and also all the warnings about failing to pay attention to them and communicate with them, some questions are raised. How should this communication be? There is a common thought that observation of the bonds of relationship and communicating with relatives means only to pay them a visit once in a while. Is this enough?

It is wrong and against God's Commands to devalue the communication with the relatives to a mere visit. In order to find out the truth, we should refer to the verses of the Bible and the Holy Qur'an to see that the relatives depending on their degrees have different responsibilities toward each other.

It is possible to say that observing the relationship bonds and communicating with relatives should be realized in words and conduct in accordance with their needs.

Just like it is narrated from Imam 'Alī (P.B.U.H.): “Even if a person enjoys wealth and children, he should never cease to befriend, dignify and protect his relatives either in words or in conduct.”³

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 154.

2. *Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 407, *Hadīth* 9330.

3. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 154.

Communication in words

One of the different types of communicating with relatives is indeed communicating in words, which is of great importance and impact in its own way.

The Bible recommends to parents, “Honor your father and your mother,”¹

And narrating from prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.), this recommendation, combined with a verse from the Old Testament, can be seen in the Bible: “For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’”²

Considering these verses, it is possible to say that one of the examples of the communication with relatives, especially with parents, is by watching one’s tongue and respecting them. This fact was being acted upon even before the times of prophet Moses (P.B.U.H.). We read in the story of prophet Joseph (P.B.U.H.) in the Old Testament that he speaks kindly with his brothers and when they decide to go back to Kan‘ān he thus advises them:

“Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving, he said to them, ‘Don’t quarrel on the way!’”³. According the Old Testament a quarrel starts with words:

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”⁴

Although we see the Old Testament prohibiting any insults to

1. *The Holy Bible*, Exodus 20:12.

2. Ibid, Matthew 15:4.

3. Ibid, Genesis 45:24.

4. Ibid, Proverbs 15:1.



parents, in the gospels there are some verses related to prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) that are insults to his mother and his relatives.

For instance, in the story of the wedding of Cana, upon Lady Mary's request to provide the guests with new drinks, Jesus (P.B.U.H.) tells his mother, "'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied."¹

Although this verse changed in later translations but it was an insult to Lady Mary (P.B.U.H.).

The Qur'an also, through the verses related to the parents, focuses our attention on this matter (respect toward parents and relatives) and says:

"Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him, and [He has enjoined] kindness to parents. Should they reach old age at your side —one of them or both— do not say to them, 'Fie!' And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words."²

It's narrated in a short *ḥadīths* from Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) that he said, "Observe your relationship bonds even if it is by a greeting."³ A question can be raised here and that is: can a small greeting be considered as 'observing the relationship bonds?' The answer is yes; it is often seen that just a greeting sets the ground for reconciliation, ending enmity, starting a conversation and so many other things while not giving that mere greeting may result in long time enmities and separations.

In a great recommendation the Holy Qur'an says:

1. *The Holy Bible*, John 2:4.

2. *The Holy Qur'an* (17):23.

3. *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl*, p. 57.

“Give the relatives their [due] right, and the needy and the traveler [as well], but do not squander wastefully. Indeed the wasteful are brothers of satans, and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord. And if you have to overlook them [for now], seeking the mercy of your Lord which you expect [in the future], speak to them gentle words.”¹

In these verses the Almighty God states that if you are unable to give your relatives their [due] right, at least talk to them gentle words and make them reach peace [of mind] and this is the meaning of observing the bonds of relationship in terms of words.

However, beside all these recommendations, the matter of enjoining what’s good toward the relatives also gets recommendations as in the chapter Mary in the Holy Qur’an we see:

“And *mention* in the Book Ishmael. Indeed he was true to his promise, and an apostle and a prophet. He used to bid his family to [maintain] the prayer and to [pay] the *zakāt*, and was pleasing to his Lord.”²

Communication in conduct

Observing the bonds of relationship does not only come in words. In order to do this, one should act toward their relatives and depending on the relatives these actions can be different.

In the Old Testament, one of the meanings of paying attention to relatives in terms of action is the story of Lot and Abraham (P.B.U.T.) that was mentioned a lot.

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (17):26–28.

2. *Ibid*, (19):54–55.



In this story, prophet Abraham (P.B.U.H.) provides a suggestion in order to calm down Lot (P.B.U.H.) about the quarrels between their herders. A practical suggestion with an important reason: to prevent quarreling between brothers.

“So Abram said to Lot, ‘Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.’ Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company.”¹

Hence, in order to prevent any quarrels between him and his brother and keep their relationship intact, he suggests that they live in different places and the proof for this relation remaining intact is the next move of Abraham (P.B.U.H.) in which he rushes to save Lot (P.B.U.H.) and all his companions and his wealth. It is mentioned in the Torah:

“When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions,

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 13:8–11.

together with the women and the other people.”¹

Also, the Torah, in several verses, talks about poor brothers and says:

“If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you.”²

The story of Israelites entering Palestine in the Book of Joshua together with the story of Naomi and Ruth in the Old Testament are clear examples of acting toward relatives.

In the New Testament in the letter of Paul [the disciple] about acting toward relatives we read:

“But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.”³

“Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”⁴

The term “providing” for the relatives and especially one’s household shows that the latter have higher priority than the former. This term is general enough for us to say it can be any kind of practical help. However, considering the position of the verse which is amongst the recommendations for the priests and

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 14:14–16.

2. *Ibid*, Leviticus 25:35.

3. *Ibid*, 1 Timothy 5:4.

4. *Ibid*, 5:8.



the devout people, we can say that these recommendations are for the devout people amongst all Christians.

In the Holy Qur'an, besides recommending about the relatives, God points out some examples of the practical attention toward them so that no one will think that by just respecting and talking in good words they have fulfilled their responsibility. One of the best examples is the 177th verse of chapter 2:

“Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by] those who have faith in God and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and who give their wealth, for the love of Him, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller and the beggar, and for [the freeing of] the slaves, and maintain the prayer and give the *zakāt*, and those who fulfill their covenants, when they pledge themselves, and those who are patient in stress and distress, and in the heat of battle. They are the ones who are true [to their covenant], and it is they who are the Godwary.”¹

This verse correctly points out that religion is not just in praying. On the contrary, besides believing, it contains sacrificing one's wealth for the sake of the relatives who are in need and after that for the sake of orphans, the travelers, and the needy as mentioned in the verse.

Here and also in every financial matter, God prioritizes relatives over others and considers it as one of the meanings of observing the relationship bonds. As we read in the Holy Qur'an:

“Give the relatives their [due] right, and the needy and the

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (2):177.

traveller [as well], but do not squander wastefully.”¹

Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) stated, “Whoever takes a step toward his relative in order to observe bonds of relationship, the Almighty God will bestow him the reward of a hundred martyrs and will write for him, in every step, forty thousand good deeds.”

Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) narrates, “A man came to Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) and said, ‘O God’s Prophet! I have a dinar, what would you have me do with it?’ Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) replied, ‘Give it to your mother.’ The person said, ‘I have another dinar too. What would you have me do with that one?’ Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) replied, ‘Give it to your father.’ That person again said, ‘I have one dinar.’ Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) replied, ‘Give it to your brother.’ That man said, ‘I have one other coin and I swear to God that I have no more, what would you have me do with that?’ Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) replied, ‘Donate it [as charity] for the sake of God.’”²

Visiting [relatives] is also one of the meanings of observing the bonds of relationship. Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) has said in this regard, “To those who are present and also to those who are absent, also to those who will come in the future till the day of the resurrection, I recommend that they observe the bonds of their relationship, even if it is after a year because this is a part of religion.”³

Maybe one of the reasons for this much emphasis on the practical kind of observation of relationship bonds and visiting them is

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (17):26.

2. *Al-Amālī, Al-Tousī*, p.454.

3. *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, vol. 4, p. 405, *Ḥadīth* 7264.



because it drives enmity away and this fact can only be achieved in a face to face visitation which has always been the stressed point of our infallible Imams (P.B.U.T.).

It is narrated from Imam Bāqir (P.B.U.H.), “As Meysar narrates, in the presence of Imam Bāqir (P.B.U.H.), the subject of rage was put up for discussion. He said, ‘One becomes wrathful and he will not be content until he enters Hell (he will not become satisfied until he commits a sin). Hence, whoever became wrathful and angry and was standing, he has to sit immediately so that the evil would go away, and whoever gets angry over a relative should go near him and touch his body (for example, hold his hand) for the relative finds peace whenever he is touched.’”¹

Islamic *ḥadīths* have this emphasis about the spiritual relatives as well. It is narrated from Imam Ṣādiq, “Connection and relationship among religious brothers is visiting each other [if they are] in their home country and writing each other letters [if they are traveling].”²

Of course, it should not be inferred that all cases of observing kinship bonds in practice involve doing something; one of the very significant matters in practical relationship with relatives, which shall cut off kinship bonds if neglected, is bothering one’s relatives, which must be avoided, as it is narrated from Imam Ṣādiq in a *ḥadīth*, “Observe your relationship bond with your relative even if it is by giving him water. And the best way to observe your relationship bond is not to bother your relative.”³

In this *ḥadīth*, Imam (P.B.U.H.) talks about the greatness of two

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 302.

2. *Tuḥaf al-‘Uqūl*, Ja’fari translation, p. 377.

3. *Mizān al-Ḥikmah*, vol. 4, p. 410, *Ḥadīth* 7286.

deeds, one of which is better to be done and the other to be left: to host your relatives and to offer them refreshments, which is emphasized in Islam, and bothering them which is bad no matter who is bothered. Not bothering the relatives is considered as the lowest level of observing bonds of relationship.

It should be noted that sometimes some examples of observing the bonds of relationship can be bothersome for some relatives. For instance, when you become the guest of a relative who is in need himself for several days, it is considered as bothering. In this kind of situation, among the examples of observing the bonds of relationship, helping the needy relative and providing him with whatever he needs is the right thing to do. While visiting these relatives, one should stick to a short visit so that it would be considered as fulfilling one's duty and also it would not become a form of bothering.

The effects of maintaining ties of kinship

In this world, every phenomenon is followed by several effects. Pondering a bit on the ties of kinship, we can find out the effects of this significant issue as well as the absolute necessity of maintaining relations with relatives, more than before. Various effects have been mentioned about keeping the bonds of relations with relatives including bringing God's satisfaction, increasing the length of lifetime, increasing sustenance, solving the problems, maintaining the foundation of the society, learning social skills, and many others. We are going to study some of them from the viewpoint of the Qur'an and the Bible.



God's satisfaction

One of the important effects—and perhaps it could be said the first and the most important effect—of maintaining relations with relatives is God's satisfaction. The Old Testament emphatically says that performing the orders and commands of God shall lead to His satisfaction, "Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out."¹ "And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."²

One of the most important of these commands is the one that has been previously quoted from the Old Testament, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."³ God's satisfaction is noticeable not only in regard to parents but also in the story of the quarrel amongst the grandchildren of Israel. The general concept which was explained before can also be concluded from this story, "'This is what the Lord says: Do not go up to fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.' So they obeyed the word of the Lord and went home again, as the Lord had ordered."⁴ In the New Testament, on the one hand, God's satisfaction would be traced in one of the Ten Commands about the parents restated by prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.). On the other hand, what would lead to God's satisfaction or fade the importance of blood kinship, is the strong emphasis on spiritual kinship and affection toward those who believe in prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.). This issue is manifested in a statement attributed to prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) in the New

1. *The Holy Bible*, Deuteronomy 27:26.

2. *Ibid*, Deuteronomy 6:25.

3. *Ibid*, Exodus 20:12.

4. *Ibid*, 1 Kings 12:24.

Testament, “He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’”¹ As for the Holy Qur’an, it would suffice to contemplate the numerous verses regarding relatives to realize that God’s satisfaction lies in maintaining bonds of kinship.

In a clear and astonishing recommendation concerning the parents, the Holy Qur’an mentions that showing beneficence toward the parents is the most important obligatory deed after monotheism. “Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him, and [He has enjoined] kindness to parents. Should they reach old age at your side—one of them or both—do not say to them, ‘Fie!’ And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words.”²

That is to say, in addition to believing in monotheism, God’s satisfaction depends squarely on showing beneficence toward the parents, taking care of them, and refraining from yelling at them. In addition to the parents, the Holy Qur’an recurrently and on some pretext or other refers to the relatives without regard to gender. For instance, in the Holy Qur’an God says, “Indeed God enjoins justice and kindness and generosity toward relatives, and He forbids indecency, wrong, and aggression. He advises you, so that you may take admonition.”³

In this verse, God’s command is about showing generosity toward relatives which would be followed by His satisfaction. Of course it is not merely about generosity, rather fairness and be-

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 12:48–50.

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (17):23.

3. *Ibid*, (16):90.



neficence along with avoiding oppression, prostitution and evils should also be observed. As a result [people of this nature] would fit into the following words of Imam Sajjād (P.B.U.H.), “He who acts according to what God has prescribed for him is amongst the most pious of people.”¹ It has been quoted from the Messenger of God (P.B.U.H. & H.H.), “Whoever honors his brother, it is as if he honors God; what do you think God shall do to he who honors Him?”²

Concerning the issue of maintaining relations with relatives, Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) refers to God’s satisfaction and dissatisfaction in two sentences, “God the Sublime would establish connection with he who establishes [bonds of relations with relatives] and would break off relations with he who breaks with his relatives.”³

Increased lifetime

Amongst the relatives, parents are the only ones to whom showing affection is promised (to be rewarded) in the New Testament, “Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”⁴

A similar concept with the promise of increase in the lifetime is stated in Saint Paul’s letter to Ephesians, “‘Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise— ‘so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 84.

2. *Wasā’il al-Shī‘ā*, vol. 17, p. 189.

3. *Ghurar al-Hikam*, vol. 406, p. 9290.

4. *The Holy Bible*, Deuteronomy 5:16.

the earth.”¹

The quoted *ḥadīths* from the Infallibles (P.B.U.T.) fully cover this issue. For instance, in many sources it has been cited that the holy prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) says, “If a person establishes relations with his relatives while no [time] is left from his life but three days, God would postpone it for thirty years, and if a man severs the bonds of kinship while thirty years are left from his lifetime, God would make it into three days.”²

A similar concept has been quoted from Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.) as saying, “A person who establishes relations with his relatives while three days are left from his lifetime, God would make it into thirty years and God does whatever He wishes.”³

Such explanations from the words of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) and Imam Riḍā (P.B.U.H.) are actually an interpretation of one of the aspects of the following verse of the Qur’an, “It is He who created you from clay, then ordained the term [of your life]—the specified term is with Him—and yet you are in doubt.”⁴

In Ṣāfī interpretation, concerning the following verse it has been mentioned that “It is He who created you from clay” means that your primary creation was out of clay and done by God, “Then ordained the term [of your life]” means that a definite deadline has been written and destined for your death which would be neither preceded nor procrastinated, and “The specified term is with Him” means that He has placed some causes for postponing or hastening your death such as almsgiving, prayer and maintaining ties of kinship. Qumī has quoted a statement from

1. *The Holy Bible*, Ephesians 6:2-3.

2. *Wasā'il al-Shī'ā*, vol. 21, p. 537, *Ḥadīth* 27799.

3. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 150, *Ḥadīth* 3.

4. *The Holy Qur'an* (6):2.



Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.), “The Ordained Term [of life] is the destined one that God has defined and decreed, and the Specified [Term of life] is the one which is exposed to alteration; [that is to say,] it would be preceded [due to any reason] He intends or procrastinated [due to any reason] He intends while [as for] the Ordained Term [of life], there would be neither preponement nor postponement.”¹

Concerning the examples of alteration in the Divine will, Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.) says, “We do not know anything that increases the lifetime other than establishing bonds of kinship, even if the lifetime of a person is three years and he maintains relations with relatives, God shall add thirty years to his lifetime and make it thirty three years, and if the lifetime of a person is thirty three years and he severs bonds of relations with relatives, God shall decrease thirty years [from it] and make his lifetime three years.”² It has been also quoted from the holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.), “Indeed establishing bonds of relations with relatives would extend the lifetime.”³ The length of lifetime is not necessarily about the lifetime of one person; rather, as Lady Fātima (P.B.U.H.) states in a sermon, it can be about an increase in the number of generations as well as the continuation of each generation, “God has determined ties of kinship as [a means of] increasing the number [of generations].”⁴

Increase of sustenance

In the Bible those who obey God are given the promise of receiving sustenance and it is mentioned that “This is the way he

1. *Ṣāfi*, vol. 2, p. 107.

2. *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 152, *Ḥadīth* 17.

3. *Kanz al-Fawā'id*, vol. 2, p. 158.

4. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 71, p. 94, *Ḥadīth* 23.



governs the nations and provides food in abundance.”¹ But no increase in sustenance is regarded for those who pay attention to their relatives. Since in the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, paying attention to parents is deemed a Divine order, perhaps it can be concluded that the promise of increasing sustenance would be fulfilled merely in case of caring about the parents.

The Qur’an likewise does not include any evident verse in this regard. However, one of the effects of keeping ties of kinship and maintaining this relation is having a share in a heritage based on a will. Amidst talking about inheritance, the Qur’an enjoins you about showing benefaction toward the relatives, “and when the division is attended by relatives, the orphans and the needy, provide for them out of it, and speak to them honorable words.”² Islamic *ḥadīths* have also frequently pointed out this issue and referred to such results of keeping the bonds of kinship. Regarding this matter the holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) says, “Whoever becomes happy if God extends his life span and increases his sustenance should fear God and establish bonds of relations with his relatives.”³ In another statement he states, ‘Whoever gives me a guarantee for one thing, I shall give him a guarantee for four; [If] he establishes relations with his relatives, then the Exalted God shall love him, increase his sustenance, extend his lifetime, and take him to the Paradise which He promised.’⁴ He also says, “Giving alms in the right manner, doing that which is good, being kind to parents, and establishing relations with relatives convert misery into happiness, ex-

1. *The Holy Bible*, Job 36:31.

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (4):8.

3. *Al-Zuhd*, p. 39.

4. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 74, p. 92.



tend the lifetime, and prevent evil downfalls.”¹ Of course in the Islamic viewpoint, the impact of keeping bonds of kinship on the increase of sustenance and lifetime is not exclusively limited to the believers as the holy Prophet (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) says, “Verily when people act immorally and are not beneficent but establish relations with relatives, their wealth would increase and their lifetime would become long, let alone if they are righteous and beneficent.”²

Bringing safety and solving problems

According to one of the verses of the Bible, the philosophy of the presence of relatives is to offer help in times of hardships. It reads, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.”³ This issue was common amongst the relatives even prior to the revelation of Moses’ religion. The relatives used to help each other in times of difficulties and provide safety for one another. The example of this is noticeable in the story of Lot’s captivity: “When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.”⁴ In some excerpts of the New Testament the spiritual relatives are advised to “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”⁵ This is while prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.)

1. *Nahj al-Faṣāḥa*, p. 549, *Hadīth* 1869.

2. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 155, *Hadīth* 21.

3. *The Holy Bible*, Proverbs 17:17.

4. *Ibid*, Genesis 14:14–16.

5. *Ibid*, Galatians 6:2.



was not supported by either spiritual or blood relatives in times of hardships, like the time of being crucified. Sometimes he was called insane: “When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind.’”¹ As for the disciples of prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.)—who were deemed as his spiritual relatives and were amongst his friends—it has been quoted that not only did they not provide safety for him but they used to damn him and deny him to save their own life. “Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, ‘This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ He denied it again, with an oath, ‘I don’t know the man!’ After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, ‘Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.’ Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, ‘I don’t know the man!’ Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly.”² However, such a kind of attitude toward the apostles is rejected by Islam and the Holy Qur’an.

The Holy Qur’an explicitly advises that problems would be solved through worship and belief in religion and showing benefaction toward relatives: “Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by] those who have faith in God and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and who give their wealth, for the love of Him, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller and the beggar, and for [the freeing of] the slaves, and maintain the prayer and give the *zakāt*, and those who fulfill their covenants, when they

1. *The Holy Bible*, Mark 3:21.

2. *Ibid*, Matthew 26:71–74.



pledge themselves, and those who are patient in stress and distress, and in the heat of battle. They are the ones who are true [to their covenant], and it is they who are the Godwary.”¹ In this verse of the Qur’an, the Exalted God expresses an example besides defining this concept. He states that kindness is not merely about turning your face toward a predefined direction and worshiping God; rather, He refers to the sweetness of wealth besides believing in God, His Apostle, the Day of Resurrection, Reckoning, and angels. He also tells us that one of the examples of kindness is to solve financial problems of the relatives. It has been quoted from Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) that in a part of a sermon he says, “O people, although being in possession of wealth, it would not cause the man to have no need for his relatives and their protection by their hands and tongues; [relatives] are the greatest of people that support a person and relieve him of stress and sadness and are the most sympathetic of people toward him whenever calamities come upon him, and that no one of you should turn away and abandon his relatives in whom he notices poverty and [no one of you should] block his wealth, as [the wealth] would not be increased if he clutches it and would not be decreased if he destroys it, and whoever is miserly toward his relatives he has withdrawn one hand from them while many hands have been withdrawn from him and whoever is flexible, his relatives’ affection would continue [for him].”²

Such a support as well as the safety resulted by it is noticeable in the story of prophet Shu‘ayb (P.B.U.H.) mentioned in the Holy Qur’an: “They said, ‘O Shu‘ayb, we do not understand much of what you say. Indeed we see you are weak amongst us, and were it not for your tribe, we would have stoned you, and you

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (2):177.

2. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 23, p. 47.

are not venerable to us.”¹ The Holy Qur’an considers some limits for this issue and says, “Do not approach the orphan’s property, except in the best [possible] manner, until he comes of age. And observe fully the measure and the balance with justice. We task no soul except according to its capacity. ‘And when you speak, be fair, even if it were a relative; and fulfill God’s covenant. This is what He enjoins upon you so that you may take admonition.’”² In another chapter it says, “O you who have faith! Be maintainers of justice and witnesses for the sake of God, even if it should be against yourselves or [your] parents and near relatives, and whether it be [someone] rich or poor, for God has a greater right over them. So do not follow [your] desires, lest you should be unfair, and if you distort [the testimony] or disregard [it], God is indeed well aware of what you do.”³ Therefore, from Islam’s point of view, providing support and solving the problems should not be performed at any cost or through violating the rights of others and supporting falsehood.

Tranquility

The Old Testament has not vividly mentioned anything about tranquility as the result of having relations with relatives. Nevertheless, from some of its stories it can be concluded that one of the blessings of maintaining peace and friendliness with relatives is tranquility. For example, from the story of prophet Abraham (P.B.U.H.) and prophet Lot (P.B.U.H.) this issue can be inferred. It seems that in this story, Abraham does not let the argument last longer between his shepherds and those of prophet Lot (P.B.U.H.). Instead of siding against his nephews, he leads a logic conversation. While saying that they are brothers and that there should

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (11):91.

2. *Ibid*, (6):152.

3. *Ibid*, (4):135.



be no argument amongst themselves and their shepherds, he suggests, “So Abram said to Lot, ‘Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.’”¹ Some may say that such separation was out of resentment but prophet Abraham’s (P.B.U.H.) next action in which he endangered his own and his companions’ lives to save and help prophet Lot (P.B.U.H.) and his household rejects this possibility: “When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.”² However, whether in the story of shepherds’ argument—during which prophet Abraham (P.B.U.H.) starts to talk with prophet Lot (P.B.U.H.)—or in the story of rescuing Lot (P.B.U.H.) and his companions, the tranquility that could be achieved under the auspices of having relations with relatives is comprehensible. According to the Psalm in which prophet David (P.B.U.H.) says, “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”³ Genial life and gathering of brothers is preferred to separation. In the New Testament there are some words attributed to prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) that threaten the foundation of blood kinship and the tranquility amongst the blood relatives who are the bedrock of the huge human gathering. In the Gospel of Matthew it has been quoted from prophet

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 13:8–9.

2. *Ibid*, Genesis 14:14–16.

3. *Ibid*, Psalm 133:1.

Jesus (P.B.U.H.): “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household. Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”¹ It is as if the New Testament gives the good news of peace and tranquility merely to those who are under Prophet Jesus’s (P.B.U.H.) command. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”² This is while we could not notice such a promised tranquility even amongst the believers. The New Testament has reported some quarrels amongst the disciples of Prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.), most of which were triggered by Saint Paul. Such as the example of the argument between Barnabas and Paul that is narrated in the New Testament: “They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.”³ In the Holy Qur’an God refers to the creation of woman as a wife, who is deemed the first and most important blood relative of each man, and considers their company as the means of tranquility. He says, “And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you. There are indeed signs in that for a people

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 10:34–37.

2. *Ibid*, Matthew 11:28–29.

3. *Ibid*, Acts 15:39.



who reflect.”¹ The beautiful point about this verse is (the role of) woman as a cause of tranquility for man. Thus, the view that considers women as being merely suited to giving birth and doing housework is false. The Qur’an opposes such a view and introduces this influential creature in the world as the source of man’s tranquility and calmness. In *Sūrah al-Tawbah* it is mentioned, “Say, If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk, the possessions that you have acquired, the business you fear may suffer, and the dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than God and His Apostle and to waging *jihād* in His way, then wait until God issues His edict, and God does not guide the transgressing lot.”² Undoubtedly, whoever reads this verse without considering it as a whole, would only notice the last message that says, “God does not guide the transgressing lot.” But what is under discussion and consideration is that God the Sublime points out and reminds us that the relatives are amiable and the means of tranquility for everyone. So, it should not be the case that unbelieving relatives of you lead you astray and result in your disobedience through the tranquility and safety they provide for you. In the *ḥadīths* too, maintaining relations with relatives is propounded as the means of tranquility, as Imam Bāqir (P.B.U.H.) advises in an excerpt of his speech, “Any man who becomes angry with one of his relatives should come close to him and then touch him, as Indeed the relatives would calm down when being touched.”³ Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) has also referred to this important effect of keeping the ties of kinship: “Verily when the relatives touch each other, they would harbor mutual affection.”⁴

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (30):21.

2. *Ibid*, (9):24.

3. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 302.

4. *Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 406, *Ḥadīth* 9301.



Divine reward

Although in the Bible no Divine reward has been mentioned for those who keep the ties of kinship, allocating a Divine reward to the one who does not ignore this significant issue is amongst the consequences that have been quoted in Islamic *ḥadīth* sources. The holy Prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) says, “[The reward of] almsgiving is tenfold, and [that of giving] loan is eighteen-fold and [that of] establishing relations with relatives is twenty-four-fold and [that of] establishing relations with [re-ligious] brothers is twenty-fold.”¹ It is stated in a part of Imam ‘Alī’s words (P.B.U.H.) that “Whoever goes to one of his relatives with his body and money to establish relations with him, the Exalted God shall grant him the reward of one hundred martyrs, and by every step forty thousand good deeds would be [considered] for him and forty thousand of his sins would be wiped out and his degree would be elevated in the same way and it would be as if he has worshiped God for one hundred years patiently and while expecting a reward [in the Hereafter].”² Imam Bāqir (P.B.U.H.) thus quotes the Messenger of God (P.B.U.H. & H.H.), “Verily the quickest of rewards for good deeds is [the reward of] establishing relations with relatives.”³

Good-temperedness

In the Bible, there is no explicit statement concerning the fact that maintaining relations with relatives would bring about good temper. Islamic *ḥadīths* mention that keeping ties of kinship would result in one’s good-temperedness. It has been quoted from Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.) that “Establishing relations with rela-

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 4, p. 10, *Ḥadīth* 3.

2. *Ṣadūq, Amālī*, p. 431.

3. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 160.



tives would beautify temper, empower [a person] to act generously and make the soul delightful.”¹

Comfortable death

One of the results of maintaining bonds of relations with relatives is dying comfortably and passing the Reckoning easily on the Day of Resurrection. This issue is not touched upon in the Bible but Islamic *ḥadīths* have mentioned such an effect for having relations with relatives. Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.) says, “Indeed establishing relations with relatives and being kind [to them] would make the reckoning easy and protect you against the sins; so, maintain the bonds of relations with relatives and be beneficent to your [religious] brothers even through [giving] a good greeting and returning the answer.”² “Maintaining ties of kinship makes the reckoning easy on the Day of Resurrection, postpones death, prevents evil downfalls, and giving alms at nights puts out [the fire of] the Lord’s wrath.”³ He also says, “Whoever likes God the Sublime to ease the agonies of death for him should establish relations with relatives and be kind to his parents; if he behaves as such, God shall belittle the agonies of death for him and poverty shall never befall him during his life.”⁴

Atonement for sins

Reduction of the sins is amongst the numerous results of keeping ties of kinship that are quoted in narrative sources but do not exist in Bible. With regard to this subject, Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.)

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 151.

2. *Ibid*, p. 158, *Ḥadīth* 31.

3. *Ibid*, *Ḥadīth* 32.

4. *Ṣadūq, Amālī*, vol. 1, p. 389, *Ḥadīth* 14.

says, ‘Perform penance for your sins and endear yourselves to your Lord through giving alms and establishing bonds of kinship.’¹

The consequences of severing ties of kinship

Some of the effects of maintaining family relations were briefly discussed in the context of this work. Now, a question arises: Is severing these relations followed by any consequence in the viewpoint of the Bible and the Qur’an? Perhaps it could be said that obviously, in the same way that paying attention toward relatives is obligatory and followed by some consequences, failing to pay such attention would also be followed by some consequences. The repercussions discussed in the following can be derived whether explicitly or implicitly through the opposite connotation of some statements which recommend the maintenance of such relations.

God’s dissatisfaction

While considering the effects of maintaining ties of kinship in the Old Testament, we referred to some verses about the parents under the title of “God’s Satisfaction”. Versus those verses, we encounter some other excerpts of the Old Testament according to which, one will be cursed by God and people as a result of failing to honor parents.

“‘Cursed is anyone who dishonours their father or mother.’
Then all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’”²

Of course, God would not be satisfied with a mere curse; such

1. *Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, p. 539.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Deuteronomy 27:16.



dishonoring shall not only be recompensed by a threat of punishment in the other world, but also by a real punishment in this world.

“Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. Because they have cursed their father or mother, their blood will be on their own head.”¹

This rule has also been repeated by prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) in the New Testament:

“For God said, ‘Honour your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’”²

A verse of the Old Testament puts forward another aspect of God’s dissatisfaction in regard to breaking bonds of kinship from the words of the prophet of God (P.B.U.H.):

“Whoever brings ruin on their family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise.”³

Another aspect of God’s dissatisfaction with severing bonds of kinship can also be found out through the story of the war between the two countries Judah and Israel, where the Children of Israel were prohibited to fight against each other.

“‘This is what the Lord says: Do not go up to fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.’ So they obeyed the word of the Lord and went home again, as the Lord had ordered.”⁴

1. *The Holy Bible*, Leviticus 20:9.

2. *Ibid*, Matthew 15:4.

3. *Ibid*, Proverbs 11:29.

4. *Ibid*, 1 Kings 12:24.

The Holy Qur'an has an explicit and comprehensive command in this regard. When God considered maintaining relations with blood and spiritual relatives as obligatory in several verses, to which we already referred, He clearly states His dissatisfaction with severing these ties as well,

“But as for those who break God’s compact after having pledged it solemnly, and sever what God has commanded to be joined, and cause corruption in the earth —it is such on whom the curse will lie, and for them will be the ills of the [ultimate] abode.”¹

One of the remarkable points of this verse lies in the curse of God in this very world. As for the other world, He has issued a warning in this sentence: “And for them will be the ills of the [ultimate] abode.” Therefore, those who break off kinship ties and family relations would be punished by a curse in this world as well as the other.

The Prophet of God (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) has said, “No sin behooves God to hasten the punishment for its doer in this world in addition to what He stores up for him for the other world more than breaking ties of kinship, betrayal and lying.”²

In the following verse that was already brought up, God the Sublime has expressed His dissatisfaction with severing ties of kinship, in the form of a reporting interrogative:

“May it not be that if you were to wield authority you would cause corruption in the land and ill-treat your blood relations?”³

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (13):25.

2. *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, *Ḥadīth* 6986.

3. *The Holy Qur'an* (47):22.



Although this verse is about the conditions of hypocrites, God has implicitly referred to severing bonds of kinship as a kind of corruption. He has also attributed this deed to those in whose hearts is disease and He verily dislikes such deeds.

Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.) has said, “A man from *Khath‘am* tribe came to the Prophet [Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.)] and said, ‘Which deed is more hateful to the Exalted God?’ He answered, ‘To attribute associates to God.’ Then he asked, ‘What else?’ He said, ‘To break ties of kinship.’ Once more he asked, ‘And furthermore?’ He answered, ‘To enjoin the wrong and forbid the right.’”¹

Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) has criticized the belief (in God and in the religion) of he who breaks the bonds of kinship and said, “The one who breaks his ties of kinship has not believed in God.”²

It has been narrated from the Messenger of God (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) that “The most hateful deed to God is to attribute associates to Him, then to break bonds of kinship, and after that to enjoin the wrong and forbid the right.”³

Decreased lifetime

The Bible considers long lifetime to be the result of honoring one’s parents. The God of the Children of Israel gives prophet Moses (P.B.U.H.) a commandment according to which one would be put to death should they dishonor their parents.

“Anyone who attacks their father or mother is to be put to

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 290, *Ḥadīth* 4.

2. *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, p. 407, *Ḥadīth* 9327.

3. *Jāmi‘ al-Sa‘ādāt*, vol. 2, p. 342.

death.”¹

“Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.”²

The result of this commandment can be tantamount to lifetime decrease, which was previously mentioned as the result of severing ties of kinship. However, the Bible has not generalized this commandment to all relatives.

The Qur’an has not explicitly stated such a commandment, but the Infallibles (P.B.U.T.), who are the true exegetes of the Qur’an, have frequently warned about breaking ties of kinship and mentioned the serious repercussions of this deed. It has been narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.): “Beware of *ḥālīqa*, for it puts men to death.” Afterwards, he was asked, “What is *ḥālīqa*?” He answered, “Breaking bonds of kinship.”³

Mujāhid has narrated from his father who quotes Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.) as saying, “[The sin] ... that hastens death is breaking the ties of kinship and [the sin] that holds the prayer back and darkens the atmosphere is showing disobedience toward the parents.”⁴

Poverty

Although the Old Testament has touched upon poverty, it has not explicitly considered poverty to be the result of severing ties of kinship: “The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.”⁵

1. *The Holy Bible*, Exodus 21:15.

2. *Ibid*, 21:17.

3. *Al-Kāfī*, Mustafavi (*trans.*), vol. 4, p. 46.

4. *Ma’ānī al-Akhbār*, Muḥammadi (*trans.*), vol. 2, p. 151.

5. *The Holy Bible*, 1 Samuel 2:7.



Abū Ḥamzi Thumālī has quoted Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) as saying in a sermon, “God save me from those sins that hasten perdition!” Hearing that, “Abdullāh b. Al-Kawwā’ Al-Yashkurī stood up and said, “O Commander of the Faithful! Is there any sin that hastens perdition?” Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) said, “Certainly! Woe unto you! [That sin is] To break the ties of kinship. Many families get together and give each other mutual assistance while they are sinful and God provides them with sustenance as a result. Many families, conversely, become separated and break off their mutual friendship and God deprives them of sustenance while they are devout.”¹

It has been also narrated from Imam ‘Alī (P.B.U.H.) that “breaking bonds of kinship brings poverty.”²

Punishment in this world and in the other

According to the Old Testament, it can be found out that this very world is the place of punishment: “Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. Because they have cursed their father or mother, their blood will be on their own head.”³

The New Testament also repeats the same issue regarding the parents: “For God said, ‘Honour your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’”⁴

According to the verse “But as for those who break God’s compact after having pledged it solemnly, and sever what God has

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 347.

2. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 71, p. 91.

3. *The Holy Bible*, Leviticus 20:9.

4. *Ibid*, Matthew 15:4.



commanded to be joined, and cause corruption in the earth —it is such on whom the curse will lie, and for them will be the ills of the [ultimate] abode,”¹ and in conjunction with the sentence “and for them will be the ills of the [ultimate] abode,” the Holy Qur’an signifies that the first curse is for this world. As we have already predicated this concept upon a *ḥadīth* from Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) that he said, “No sin behooves God to hasten the punishment for its doer in this world in addition to what He stores up for him for the other world more than breaking ties of kinship, betrayal and lying.”²

Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.), in a *ḥadīth*, has referred to different worldly punishments for breaking bonds of kinship, saying, “Verily false oath and breaking off kinship ties leave lands as wastelands, [free] from its inhabitants (put people to death). It also removes kinship, and removing kinship means cutting off [one’s] progeny.”³

It has been quoted from Imam Bāqir (P.B.U.H.) that “the owner of [the following] three behaviors would never breathe his last unless he faces the consequence of these deeds: [These three qualities are] to treat unjustly, to sever bonds of kinship and to take a false oath, through which he fights against God. Verily, maintaining ties of kinship is the fastest [act of] obedience to be rewarded.”⁴

Of course, what we said in regard to poverty and decrease in lifetime, below the previous titles, can be considered as the worldly punishments for severing ties with relatives as well. Therefore, in order to avoid repetition we shall not discuss them once more.

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (13):25.

2. *Kanz al-‘Ummāl*, *Ḥadīth* 6986.

3. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 347, *Ḥadīth* 4.

4. *Tuḥaf al-‘Uqūl*, p. 294.



The Messenger of God (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) has said, “Whoever severs the bonds of kinship would not enter Paradise.”¹

Having relations with non-religious relatives

Now considering the religious nature of the Qur’an and the Bible, the question arises whether the recommendations in regard to relatives are merely about believing, pious and religious relatives or those relatives who have a different belief are also included.

The Old Testament has frequently warned the Children of Israel to turn away from the aliens—who were already mentioned—for they may cause corruption in their religion and drive them to commit a sin against him:

“Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.”²

The concept of the previous verse is echoed in the words of prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) who said, “You, Lord, have abandoned your people, the descendants of Jacob. They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and embrace pagan customs.”³

This is the common view of the Old Testament on the aliens that was afterward reformed by Saint Paul in the New Testament. Even prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) used to be careful not to establish relations with the aliens. The story of the Canaanite

1. *‘Awālī al-La‘ālī*, vol. 1, p. 270.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Exodus 23:32-33.

3. *Ibid*, Isaiah 2:6.



woman and prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) is an evidence of this issue.

In the Torah, the same stricture applies to the Children of Israel as well as the aliens. Those people who complained to prophet Moses (P.B.U.H.) in order to gain divination powers are glaring examples of this type. The Children of Israel were not even allowed to touch their possessions, lest they would be put to death.

“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Separate yourselves from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once.’ ... He warned the assembly, ‘Move back from the tents of these wicked men! Do not touch anything belonging to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins.’ ... As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart ... and all those associated with Korah, together with their possessions.”¹

Of course, there is a way to repentance for those who deviated and committed some sins. For example, it has been said regarding the establishment of relations with other people, “Now honour the Lord, the God of your ancestors, and do His will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.”²

According to the New Testament, it can be understood that the mission of prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) and the disciples was to do religious activities amongst the Family of Israel. However, its teachings and practical laws are not about relatives and non-relatives; it is rather about believers and unbelievers, whether they be related to one or not.

1. *The Holy Bible*, Numbers 16:20–32.

2. *Ibid*, Ezra 10:11.



In the Gospel of Luke, in a speech attributed to prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) it has been cited:

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.”¹

In contrast to the commandment of the Torah about the parents, Prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.), reacts to the request of his mother and his brothers in this way:

“While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.’ He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’”²

In the letters of Saint Paul too, the separation from the unbelievers is obvious. For instance, in his letter to Corinthians he writes:

“What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’ Therefore, ‘Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.’ And, ‘I will be a

1. *The Holy Bible*, Luke 14:26.

2. *Ibid*, Matthew 12:46–50.



Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”¹

It sounds as if the New Testament too, adheres to the separation from the unfaithful and those who are of different beliefs. Therefore, it cannot be said that its recommendations about relatives are general and include both believers and unbelievers.

It may be assumed that severing ties of kinship that is stressed upon in Islam is specific to believers and those who follow the same religion. However, these kinds of relations as well as maintaining them do not merely apply to those who follow the same religion and school of thought. Rather, God recommends all people in the Qur'an about having relations with relatives and says:

“O mankind! Be wary of your Lord who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and from the two of them, scattered numerous men and women. Be wary of God, in whose Name you adjure one another, and the wombs.² Indeed God is watchful over you.”³ Islamic *ḥadīths* also emphasize the comprehensive nature of this (Divine) decree and recommend that we follow it. It has been narrated that Jahm b. Ḥumayd asked Imam Ṣādiq (P.B.U.H.), “Some of my relatives follow a religion different to that of mine. Do they have any right upon me?” The Imam (P.B.U.H.) answered, “Of course. The right of relatives could never be denied. If they follow your religion, they would have two rights upon you: the right of [blood] kinship and the right of Islam (spiritual kinship).”⁴

1. *The Holy Bible*, 2 Corinthians 6:15–18.

2. That is, “Be wary of God and observe the rights of the blood relations and beware of breaking the ties of kinship.”

3. *The Holy Qur'an* (4):1.

4. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 157, *Ḥadīth* 30.



The Qur'an narrates a conversation between prophet Abraham (P.B.U.H.) and his uncle Āzar that is worth hearing:

“And mention in the Book Abraham. Indeed he was a truthful one, a prophet. When he said to his father, ‘Father! Why do you worship that which neither hears nor sees, and is of no avail to you in any way? Father! Indeed a knowledge has already come to me which has not come to you. So follow me that I may guide you to a right path. Father! Do not worship Satan. Indeed Satan is disobedient to the All-beneficent. Father! I am indeed afraid that a punishment from the All-beneficent will befall you, and you will become Satan’s accomplice.’ He said, ‘Abraham! Are you renouncing my gods? If you do not relinquish, I will stone you. Keep away from me for a long while.’¹ He said, ‘Peace be to you! I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you. Indeed He is gracious to me.’”²

In this advisory story, Prophet Abraham (P.B.U.H.) does not leave his idolater uncle alone. Modestly and leniently, he enjoins his uncle—who had adopted his guardianship like a father—to do right and forbids him from doing wrong and invokes God in favor of him when he encounters his hostility.

It should not be assumed that the Qur'an has left kinship ties and relations free from constraints. Rather, in spite of all the stress the Holy Qur'an has laid upon the relatives, in some of its verses it prohibits maintaining relations with close relatives such as a polytheist or unbelieving father or brother. As an example, God has said in the *Sūrah al-Tawbah*:

1. That is, “Go away. Stop annoying me.”

2. *The Holy Qur'an* (19):41–47.



“O you who have faith! Do not befriend your fathers and brothers¹ if they prefer faithlessness to faith. Those of you who befriend them—it is they who are the wrongdoers.”²

Below this verse, in *Majma‘ al-Bayān* (commentary of the Qur’an) it has been cited:

“This command is about religious affairs. However, regarding worldly affairs, socializing with them is permitted and this is according to the verse, ‘Keep their company honourably in this world.’³ Ibn ‘Abbās has said, ‘When the Exalted God ordered the believers to emigrate [from Mecca to Medina] and they intended to do so, the wives of some were affectionately attached to them and about the others, their parents and children were so. [These close relatives of them] were preventing them from immigrating and they were refraining from immigration for the sake of their relatives. Therefore, the Sublime [God] announced that the command of the religion is prior to kinship, and when breaking off relations with parents is obligatory, [doing the same with] the aliens is prior.’”⁴

In another verse, those people who escape from struggling in His way under the pretext of their kinship, relatives, properties, and business and love them more than God and His Messenger (P.B.U.H. & H.H.) are called the evil-doers and disobedient by God. He also considers them deprived of the blessing of guidance and says:

“Say, ‘If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk, the possessions that you have acquired,

1. Or ‘Do not take your fathers and brothers for intimates.’

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (9):23.

3. *Ibid*, (31):15.

4. *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, vol. 5, p. 25.



the business you fear may suffer, and the dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than God and His Apostle and to waging *jihād* in His way, then wait until God issues His edict, and God does not guide the transgressing lot.”¹

Elsewhere, in contrast with the previous group, God talks about the believers with the following attributes:

“You will not find a people believing in God and the Last Day endearing those who oppose God and His Apostle even though they were their own parents, or children, or brothers, or kinsfolk. [For] such, He has written faith into their hearts and strengthened them with a spirit from Him. He will admit them into gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them [forever], God is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. They are God’s confederates. Look! The confederates of God are indeed felicitous!”²

This verse along with the previous one conveys the idea that an innate relation and affection exists amongst relatives. A group of people would not abandon them for the sake of God, His Messenger and religious obligations and, as a result, descend to the level of evil-doers. However, in order to fulfill their divine duty, the second group abandon their dearest possessions for the sake of God and join the party of God.

Therefore, along with all the emphasis being put upon believing and unbelieving relatives, the Qur’an highlights that nothing should prevent you from practicing your religion or cause damage to it. For that reason, paying attention to relatives, regardless of their proximity, would never be prior to God, divine religion

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (9):24.

2. *Ibid*, (58):22.

and the Messenger of God (P.B.U.H. & H.H.), as the highest figure of spiritual kinship.



The last word

It can be concluded that relatives do not enjoy equal importance in the two religions of Islam and Christianity, and this is due to their beliefs and Holy Scriptures. We covered these differences in the context of this book, from now on this would be up to you to find out which religion is nobler in this regard.

Types of relatives	
Christianity	Types of relatives have not been directly referred to; however, from amongst the stories and precepts of the Holy Bible one can find the concepts of both physical and spiritual relatives.
Islam	It is clear regarding physical relatives—in-laws and blood relatives—and concerning spiritual relatives it can be proven in the form of recommendations made to believers or various statements.

Ranks of relatives	
Christianity	Beliefs crossing over from the Old to the New Testament indicate that physical relatives are of different ranks; the New Testament has not made any assertions in this regard, however.
Islam	They are of different ranks.

The scope of relatives	
Christianity	Physical relatives have not been specified, but it can be proven using verses concerning inheritance and others related to relatives in the Old Testament. Spiritual relatives, however, have been specified: all believers in Christ are relatives.
Islam	It is clearly asserted: whoever is connected to a person either by blood or through marriage is generally regarded as a relative. Spiritual relatives have also been specified: all believers are spiritual relatives.

Necessity of maintaining ties of kinship	
Christianity	No obligation can be inferred regarding maintaining connections with physical relatives; recommendations have only been made with respect to spiritual relatives. Furthermore, the words and conduct of prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) in the Bible practically lean toward the disintegration of this significant social institution.
Islam	Maintaining relationships is obligatory; one may also maintain ties with non-religious relatives as long as it does not pose a threat to one's faith.



The effects of maintaining ties of kinship (God's satisfaction)	
Christianity	This result is achievable merely for spiritual relatives and this is while the words attributed to prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) is in contrast with the beliefs in the Old Testament that focus on the necessity of this matter.
Islam	It explicitly says that maintaining ties of kinship would result in God's satisfaction.

The effects of maintaining ties of kinship (increased lifetime)	
Christianity	The Old Testament includes explicit decrees and recommendations merely about parents.
Islam	There are general explicit verses and <i>ḥadīths</i> in this regard.

The effects of maintaining ties of kinship (increase of sustenance)	
Christianity	There are no explicit verses in this regard.
Islam	There are explicit verses and <i>ḥadīths</i> in this regard, and this effect is not limited to the Muslims.

The effects of maintaining ties of kinship (bringing safety and solving problems)	
Christianity	In the Old Testament such a connotation can be inferred, but in the New Testament, not only the blood and spiritual relatives did not play any role in solving the problem of Prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.), but they acted against his safety.
Islam	It includes explicit verses concerning both parents and relatives and states that such a result would be achieved should the rights of others not be violated.

The effects of maintaining ties of kinship (tranquility)	
Christianity	In the Old Testament this effect can be realized from some of its stories and in the New Testament the spiritual relatives have been recurrently given the promise of such tranquility. This is while some arguments have been reported to happen amongst the disciples of prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.).
Islam	There are explicit verses and <i>ḥadīths</i> in this regard.



The consequences of severing ties of kinship (God's dissatisfaction)	
Christianity	The Old Testament includes some explicit verses, but in Christianity such consequences can be realized merely in regard to parents and in the form of the Old Testament's decree.
Islam	It includes explicit verses about parents as well as relatives.

The consequences of severing ties of kinship (decreased lifetime)	
Christianity	In the Old Testament, there are explicit verses concerning parents and in the New Testament there are also some references to the same decrees of the Old Testament.
Islam	It includes some clear verses in this regard.

The consequences of severing ties of kinship (poverty)	
Christianity	It does not include any clear explanation.
Islam	There are explicit verses and <i>ḥadīths</i> in this regard, and this effect is not limited to the Muslims.

The consequences of severing ties of kinship (worldly punishment)	
Christianity	It includes a clear reference to the Old Testament, even though according to the New Testament prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) himself did not observe this rule of kinship in regard to his mother and brothers.
Islam	Explicit verses and various examples of such a punishment have been quoted in Islamic Hadīths.

How to maintain relations with relatives	
Christianity	It contains some recommendations but Prophet Jesus (P.B.U.H.) himself did not adhere to them.
Islam	It includes strong recommendations about how to speak and behave properly with most of the relatives, particularly the parents. Regarding this matter, Islam considers some differences between worldly and religious issues.

Having relations with non-religious relatives	
Christianity	It has been commanded not to continue such kinds of relations. The prophet (P.B.U.H.) himself acted in the same way according to the Bible.
Islam	One should keep the ties of kinship unless it is in conflict with religion.



Arabic transliteration guide

ا	alif	^a ā (long vowel)	ط	ṭā	t/T
ب	bā	B	ظ	ẓā	z
ت	tā	T	ع	‘ayn	‘
ث	thā	Th	غ	Ghayn	gh
ج	jīm	J	ف	Fā	f
ح	ḥā	ḥ/H	ق	Qāf	q
خ	khā	Kh	ك	Kāf	k
د	dāl	D	ل	Lām	l
ذ	dhāl	Dh	م	Mīm	m
ر	rā	R	ن	Nūn	n
ز	zā	Z	هـ	Hā	h
س	sīn	S	و	Wāw	w (consonantal) ū (long vowel)
ش	shīn	Sh	ي	Yā	y (consonantal) ī (long vowel)
ص	ṣād	Ṣ/ṣ	ء	Hamza	,
ض	ḍād	Ḍ/Ḍ			
Short vowels	fatḥa		— [َ]		= a
	kasra		— [ِ]		= i
	ḍamma		— [ُ]		= u



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