

MODULE 2

Class Title: Gender Relations – Part 4

Aim of Lesson: To learn lessons from story of Musa (as) & his wife-to-be in Surah Al Qasas

Category: Interpersonal Relations

Class Format: Power point presentation with narration.

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(Ta'awwuz) A'oodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem

(Tasmiyah) Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

(Du'a) Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli (Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Slide 1 & 2:

We have been discussing gender relations for the past 3 weeks.

The thing is, these days when you talk about “gender roles” or etiquettes of gender interaction or how the opposite sex should behave with each other – the first thing that happens is – some people point a finger and say: “subjugation of women” or “Islam is unfair to women” or “there is no difference between men and women” etc. etc. etc. Such a lot of hoopla!

Allah (swt) says in Surah Al Hujurat 49: Verse 13 in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allâh is that (believer) who has Taqwa. Verily, Allâh is All-Knowing, All-Aware."

Allah (swt) has created us all – girls and guys – **equal** in standing before Him – in our spirituality, in our worship, in our relationship with Him.

In our relationship with each other –there are certain roles assigned to each sex and therefore certain responsibilities. It has to be so, to run the business of this world. Just like we see all around us – come on be honest, do we see men and women as “equal” anywhere? Physically, emotionally, psychologically we are different from each other and *Alhamdulillah* we complement each other real great! No one sex is superior or inferior to the other. That’s how our Creator has made us.

Look at your school. You have a headmistress, then an assistant headmistress, then teachers, then other staff – yes? They all have certain responsibilities so that the school runs properly. Everyone has to listen to the headmistress, yes? Does that mean she is “better” or “superior” to everyone else? No. she has the authority to supervise everyone else and because of that her

responsibility is greatest – if some problem arises in school, it's her neck! We can see many many examples like this where different people have different roles.

Now what our enemy Mr. Satan does is – he eggs on women and girls, whispers to them, see see, what **they** – meaning who? Muslims, mullahs and Allah (swt) *naudhubillah* have done to you! They have made you 2nd rate. **You** have to be covered, **you** have to be modest, **you** have to blah blah blah blah So unfair *na*?

And us girls – sometimes get caught in this trap – without thinking logically and carefully. The bottom line is this. If our frame of reference is Allah (swt), then Muslim women have no problems with the role Allah (swt) has chosen for us. If our frame of reference is something else, then we kinda get edgy.

It's important to understand this here because gender has become the G word these days.

Now, let's look at this beautiful story of Musa (as) and his wife-to-be in Surah Al Qasas, which is the 28th surah of the Qur'an..

In Surah Al-Qasas, verse number 23, Allah (swt) says:

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُونَ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءَ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ

“And when he arrived at the watering (place) in Madyan, he found there a group of men watering (their flocks), and besides them he found two women who were keeping back (their flocks). He said: "What is the matter with you?" They said: "We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take back (their flocks): And our father is a very old man.”

(Surah Al-Qasas 28: verse23)

Allah (swt) is talking about Musa (as). You all know who Musa (as) is right? Musa (as) was an amazing prophet *Alhamdulillah*. Allah (swt) is talking about Musa (as) and his wife to be. I love these verses. The way Allah (swt) has described the scene for us – we can almost see it. Very romantic also, in a way. He (swt) is talking about Musa (as) and his to be wife.

When he arrived at the watering well in Madyan he found a group of men watering their flocks and besides them he found two women who were keeping back their flocks. He asked the women what the matter was; they said that they could not water their flocks until the shepherds took back their flocks because their father was a very old man.

In those days there used to be watering wells where people would water their animals, their flocks. These two girls had their flocks but because the other shepherds were men, they were standing back. Why were they standing back you think?

Student: they didn't want to be pushed...

Teacher: yes, because they didn't want be pushed and shoved between the men. Instead they were waiting for them to get done. Musa (as) being very chivalrous asked them what the problem was. When they told him that they were waiting for the men to be done, he watered their flocks for them. Then he turned back to the shade and said,

Slide 3:

فَسَقَى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ

So he watered (their flocks) for them; then he turned back to the shade, and said: "O my Lord! truly I am in need of whatever good that You bestow on me!"

(Surah Al-Qasas 28: verse 24)

This was verse number 24. Then what happens in number 25?

Slide 4:

فَجَاءَتْهُ إِحْدَاهُمَا تَمْشِي عَلَى اسْتِحْيَاءٍ قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

Then one of the (damsels) came (back) to him, walking shyly. She said: "My father calls you that he may reward you for having watered (our flocks) for us." So when he came to him and narrated the story, he said: "Fear you not: you have escaped from unjust people."

One of the girls said to him, walking shyly; the word used over here in Arabic is *haya*. She said, my father calls you that he may reward you for having watered our flocks for us.

Note 2 things here: a) she was walking with *haya*, modestly and b) she said, my father calls you – she didn't invite him directly, lest he has some suspicious thoughts about her.

(Reference for teacher: It was narrated from the Commander of the faithful, `Umar(ra): "She was covering herself from them with the folds of her garment." Ibn Abi Hatim recorded that `Amr bin Maymun said, `Umar (ra) said: "She came walking shyly, putting her garment over her face. She was not one of those audacious women who come and go as they please." This chain of narrators is Sahih).

When Musa (as) came to him – meaning the girls' father, and narrated his story he said:

"...Fear you not, you have escaped from unjust people."

(Surah Al-Qasas 28: verse 25)

[The girls' father said this because Musa (as) told him why he had left Egypt – Musa (as) had killed a Coptic, we find this in the same surah some verses before this]

Slide 5:

In verse number 26 it is said:

قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ

“And said one of them (damsels): “O my dear father! Hire him! Truly the best of men for you to employ is the one who is strong and trustworthy.”

(Surah Al-Qasas 28: verse 26)

The well that they were watering from, had a big heavy stone for a cover, so the shepherds placed the stone back after they took their flocks away. Musa (as) was a strong person physically as well; so he helped these two girls by removing the stone and then he watered the flocks for them.

When they were walking back the girls invited him to come home because it was a strange land for him. They took him home and introduced Musa (as) to their father. While they walked Musa (as) walked in front of the girls and asked them to give him directions from the back.

[Reference for teacher: (And said one of them: "O my father! Hire him! Verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy.") One of the two daughters of the man said this, and it was said that she was the one who had walked behind Musa, peace be upon him. She said to her father:

(O my father! Hire him!) as a shepherd to look after the sheep. `Umar, Ibn `Abbas, Shurayh Al-Qadi, Abu Malik, Qatadah, Muhammad bin Ishaq and others said: "When she said:

(Verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy.) her father said to her, `What do you know about that' She said to him, `He lifted a rock which could only be lifted by ten men, and when I came back with him, I walked ahead of him, but he said to me, walk behind me, and if I get confused about the route, throw a pebble so that I will know which way to go.'" `Abdullah (Ibn Mas`ud) said, "The people who had the most discernment were three: Abu Bakr's intuition about `Umar; the companion of Yusuf when he said, `Make his stay comfortable'; and the companion of Musa, when she said:

(O my father! Hire him! Verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy.)."]

Why is that?

Because Musa (as) feared that if the girls were walking in front of him, he would be looking at them every time he lifted his gaze, and he didn't want to do that.

YES! This is a fact. If a girl is walking in front and a boy is at the back, he is likely to check her out, right? So he didn't want to do that. He asked them to follow him because he was a Prophet of Allah (swt) and his *haya* was supreme.

So was the girls', and as a result they had this beautiful interaction. It's not that they didn't interact with each other; it's not as if they were giggling and acting funny. No not at all. They were dignified and no-nonsense and then she suggested to her father that he could employ Musa (as) as a shepherd because he was a good strong man and he helped them out.

Slide 6:

Then, in verse number 27 it says that the father of the girls said:

قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَنْكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هَاتَيْنِ عَلَى أَنْ تَأْجُرَنِي ثَمَانِي حِجَجٍ فَإِنْ أَتَمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“I intend to wed one of these two daughters to you, on condition that you serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten years, it will be a favour from you. But I intend not to place you under any difficulty. You will find me indeed, if Allah (swt) wills, one of the righteous.”

(Surah Al-Qasas 28: verse 27)

Slide 7:

So Musa (as) replied:

قَالَ ذَلِكَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ أَيَّمَا الْأَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ

“that is settled between you and me whichever of the two terms I fulfill there will be no injustice to me, be Allah (swt) a witness to what we say.” (Surah Al-Qasas 28: verse 28)

So he worked for the girls' father for eight years, in fact he worked for them for ten years before he got married to one of the girls.

(Reference for teacher: Al-Bukhari recorded that Sa'id bin Jubayr said: "A Jew from the people of Hirah asked me; 'Which of the two terms did Musa fulfill' I said, 'I do not know until I go to the scholar of the Arabs and ask him.' So I went to Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, and asked him. He said: 'He fulfilled the longer and better of them, for when a Messenger of Allah said he would do a thing, he did it.'")

Do you think that in the time that Musa (as) worked for the father of the girls' – they (he and the girl) were having a romance on the side, kind of thing. No it wasn't like that; it was all done in a very respectable manner while he was working there.

Perhaps they got to know each other, god knows, *wallah u alam*, but eventually Musa (as) got married to the lady. We are talking about Musa (as) to be bride.

So is this the end? Allah (swt) does not tell a story in the Qur'an just for the sake of telling it or for our entertainment. Musa (as)'s future wife was modest, confident, straight forward,

honest, and no nonsense. Right? What kind of interaction did they have? Remember what we talked about, the interaction you have with non-*mehrams*?

Student: formal, reserved....

Teacher: formal and based on what? Based on what? Based on necessity.

So it wasn't like this; this is also a scene that we are familiar with, the water carrying scene. Water carrying scenes are by the way are very filmy right? I don't know whether they have it in films these days or not but in my time, when I was younger they used to have these you know *matka* (clay-pot) scenes all the time.

This scene is from Jungle Book – the girl deliberately topples her clay pot so Mowgli would get it for her and follow her to her village. And the flirtatious look she is giving her is so cheap and silly and frivolous!

Lets' analyze what lessons we learnt from this lovely story.

Do not squeeze in where there are girls and boys together; as it is even if there are just girls we should make a queue like civilized people!

School canteens are notorious for pushing, squeezing in to get to the counter first, aren't they? Do not squeeze in, wait your turn.

Student: yes, but the boys are going to keep coming.

Teacher: fine. Make a separate queue with the girls; do not squeeze in. That is the bottom line, you cannot have physical contact. What did the girls' do at the watering well? they patiently waited. If break time is little and you can't wait forever, then a bunch of you go talk to a teacher or the canteen person and say you want to stand in line and not squeeze-in to get some food.

Act normal when you talk to a boy, don't act silly, be confident . Being confident and being stupid are two different things. Talk in a no-nonsense manner. No need for jokes or unnecessarily stretching the conversation or getting personal. Keep a check on the tone of your voice. La di da ... tone is completely out. Take a cue from the story of Musa (as) and see how his future wife behaved.

Tell your parents who you meet and whoever you are interacting with. You should be openly talking about that with your parents. If you like something about someone say so in a straight forward manner. Like the girl told her father that Musa (as) helped them and he is a strong person so he should be hired as a shepherd.

For example, there is a class mate who helps you out or something, say thanks very confidently. Make sure that it is heard rather than not. If somebody does something nice for you, you should appreciate it, but say it in a very straight forward manner. And tell your parents that so and so was very helpful today.

When you share your day with your parents and tell them about who you met, who you spoke to etc. it builds a healthy relationship of trust between you and them. Parents worry about their kids you know. They can't be with you all the time! They fret and worry about who you are with, who your friends are.

If you are frank and upfront about your interactions with guys – it will show them 2 things:

1. There is no hanky-panky happening here
2. They can trust you

And it will show the guys that you have integrity and self-respect. You are not available for a “secret” relationship that doesn't involve parents/elders.

Have your parents involved in any interaction that you have with a boy. Keeping your doors locked and having twenty passwords on your laptop or on your phone; all this is a terrible, terrible idea! That's not a good idea. What do you have to hide? Somebody who has honest and straight forward dealings wouldn't need to have all of that. Is that true or not? What is this "privacy" business about? Think about it. I'm not telling you what it's about. You think about it.

You can have privacy settings for everybody on your facebook, in your life, but you cannot have Allah (swt) out of your life, whether you like it or not; there is no privacy setting on that, please remember that. It is very simple and straight forward. Allah (swt) is All Hearing, All Knowing.

In civilized societies where you have a bus lane and a cycle lane and the traffic is running smoothly, the possibility of accidents is lower. Otherwise the possibility of accidents is very, very high. There is a solid reason for traffic rules and regulations – it saves lives.

Similarly, Allah (swt) has prescribed certain guidelines for guys and girls for when they interact with each other. And they **will** interact – that's for sure. In various different ways – as siblings, as cousins, as neighbours, as student/teacher, as classmates, as colleagues at work and as people crossing the road of life.

If we all keep in our lanes and interact responsibly, then chances of relationship accidents, heart aches, sinful behavior, lewdness and immodesty will definitely be lower. This may seem like unnecessary precautions to some of you – particularly given today's social norms - but the wisdom behind this is profound.

So coming back to Jack and Jill. If their relationship was not defined – they had no business going up that hill!

Please remember that. We need to make sure that we have very clear cut guidelines about our interaction with the opposite sex.

InshAllah, may Allah (swt) make us like Maryam (as), like Musa (as)'s wife; modest, confident, full of *haya*, no-nonsense, and a practicing Muslim.

Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam 'alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*