



A Journey To Faith

*A Simple Guide for New Muslims:
According to the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (a)*

D A R A L - I S L A M C E N T R E



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FOREWORD

Converting to the beautiful religion of Islam from a non-Muslim background is a deeply rewarding and blessed step. It is a journey into a way of life that calls the human being to full submission to Almighty Allah — a submission that gives clarity of purpose, inner peace, and a clear path to success in this world and the next. Through Islam, the convert comes to recognise why we exist, what we are striving for, and where our final return lies. Yet this blessed step is not without its challenges. The convert enters a new way of living that often differs greatly from previous habits, routines, and social norms. They may struggle to navigate conversations with parents and extended family, feel overwhelmed by new religious obligations, or simply not know where to begin. For many, the excitement of faith is accompanied by confusion, loneliness, and a deep need for guidance and reassurance.

Several years ago, I conducted a survey examining the state of reverts within our communities and across the world. The results were concerning, though sadly not surprising. A significant number of female converts reported that they do not feel welcomed in their local mosques or community centres. Both men and women highlighted a lack of structured support, ongoing loneliness, difficulty opening up to family and friends, and challenges in finding suitable marriage partners. These findings revealed a painful reality: many converts walk their journey of faith in isolation.

In response to these challenges, we at Dar Al-Islam Centre Publications present this simplified and practical guide, *A Journey to Faith*. This book offers guidance on navigating relationships with non-Muslim family members, preserving one's identity, avoiding burnout, and understanding the foundations of the religion, alongside many other essential topics. We are grateful to Sayyid Ali Shobeiri, who contributed greatly to this work as a reflection of his own journey into Shia Islam. May Allah (swt) reward him for his dedication and sincere efforts. We are also grateful to Sheikh Mohammed Al-Hilli and Sheikh Ayub Rashid for their valuable review and insightful contributions. I pray that Allah (swt) makes this book a source of light, comfort, and companionship for every seeker who holds it in their hands — a reminder that they are not alone, that their struggles are seen, and that their steps are cherished by their Lord. May it strengthen their hearts, steady their path, and help them grow into confident, rooted believers who walk towards Allah with certainty, dignity, and hope.

Ali Al-Hilli

Director

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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00 | INTRODUCTION

When someone comes to Islam from a non-Muslim background, they often find themselves discovering a whole new world. Such a person is introduced to a completely different way of life, bringing changes that may be vastly different from their previous habits. This new way of life can feel overwhelming, as there is a vast amount to learn, and one might not know where to start. This can lead to confusion for the convert, and sometimes well-meaning Muslims who try to help, can inadvertently add to the confusion. Therefore, this simplified booklet aims to serve as a guide for new converts, helping them at the beginning of their journey. Much of the information in this booklet will be based on personal experiences of converts, which readers can likely relate to. However, each convert may have their own unique and personal experiences based on their background and circumstances. Inshallah¹ this booklet will provide help and advice to converts.

1| God-willing

01 | CONGRATULATIONS

Firstly, to the convert reading this booklet, we congratulate you for embracing the pure Islam of the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) and Ahlul Bayt (as), and being guided to Islam.



*This [Qur'an] is a clear statement to [all] the people
and a guidance and instruction for those conscious
of Allah. (3:138)*

*This is the Book about which there is no doubt,
a guidance for those conscious of Allah. (2:2)*

*We said, "Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from
Me, whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear
concerning them, nor will they grieve." (2:38)*

In Islam, we believe that each human being has an intrinsic nature (fitrah) that God has created within them. This intrinsic nature leads one to believe in an all-powerful creator and to worship Him in the pure, monotheistic manner that all Prophets and Messengers upheld. We can define this fitrah as an inherent disposition toward goodness and a primordial nature; however, revelation and further guidance are necessary for a human being to fully know God. For example, certain things, such as oppression, are inherently known to be wrong through one's fitrah and intellect. One does not need religion to understand that oppression is bad. However, there are various forms of oppression defined by the divine laws sent by the Creator. Similarly, while one can recognize the existence of God through their intrinsic nature, by observing the signs in the universe, understanding God's attributes and how to worship Him requires revelation.

A famous narration, mentioned in the books of Shia Muslims and the Sunnis, quotes the Prophet Mohammad (sawa)² saying:

“Every newborn is born upon the Fitrah”, that is, with the Ma’rifa (Recognition) that Allah Mighty and Majestic is his Creator. This then is His (Allah’s) words: “and if you were to ask them - who created the heavens and the earth - they will say Allah.” (39:38) ³

Therefore, when one becomes Muslim, they are converting to the pure intrinsic nature that Allah (swt) ⁴ created them with. Although parents may raise a child with a different religion or with no belief in God, this does not prevent the individual from coming to Islam through their fitrah. In certain exceptional situations, it may be that someone doesn’t have access to guidance.

2| The symbol (sawa) stands for the Arabic phrase “Salla Allahu ‘Alayhi wa Alihi”, meaning “May Allah’s blessings be upon him and his family.”

3| Mu’jam al-Ahādīth al-Mu’tabara Book 4, Chapter #9 Innate Knowledge and the World of Particles- from Kitab Al-Tawhid of Al-Saduq.

4| When “SWT” is written after the name of Allah, it stands for the Arabic phrase “Subhanahu wa Ta’ala” (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى). This phrase translates to “Glorified and Exalted is He” in English.

02 | CONTINUING THE PATH, EMBRACING A FRESH BEGINNING

By embracing Islam, you as a convert are following the path of the early Muslims, many of whom were converts. The pious companions of the Prophet and the companions of the Imams (as) received the divine message and accepted the truth. Many of them came from non-Islamic backgrounds, including Zoroastrianism - polytheistic pre-Islamic idol worship, and deviated beliefs. Therefore, as a convert, you can remind yourself that you are not to feel alone and to feel proud that you are continuing a noble path.

As a convert, it is important to remember that after taking your shahada, or testimony of faith, you are purified of your past mistakes. Yes, you will be tested in many ways, and staying on the pure path won't be easy. However, you should not dwell on your past mistakes and pre-Islamic lifestyle. Instead, you should learn more about Islam so that you can move forward in a positive way, using your previous lifestyle as a learning experience.

In Islam, among the names of Allah (swt) are the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful, so know that your past does not define you. The second major sin after shirk (polytheism) is despair, where one loses hope in Allah's (swt) mercy and believes that Allah (swt) will never forgive them. Every Muharram⁵, we reflect on the story of Hur ibn Ziyad Al-Riyahi, who was initially the commander of a part of 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad's⁶ army, the enemy, in Karbala. He later regretted his actions, switched sides, and joined the camp of Imam Al-Hussain (as)⁷.

5| Muharram is a month of the Islamic calendar that holds profound significance for us Shia Muslims. It is marked by the remembrance of the martyrdom of our 3rd imam, Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad (sawa), who, along with his family and companions, was martyred in the land of Karbala in 680 CE. This tragic event symbolizes the struggle for justice and resistance against tyranny. During the first ten days, especially on the 10th day, known as Ashura, the Shia communities participate in mourning rituals, processions, and gatherings to honour Imam Hussain's (as) sacrifice and reflect on the values of courage, loyalty, and faith.

6| Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad was an Umayyad governor and military commander who is infamous in Islamic history for his role in the events leading to the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (as) at the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE. Ubaydullah is remembered for ordering the forces that surrounded Imam Hussain (as) and his small group of supporters, cutting off their access to water and, ultimately, sanctioning their massacre on the plains of Karbala.

7| (as) stands for "alayhis-salam" meaning "peace be upon him." This phrase is placed next to the names of the Imams in Shia Islam to show respect and reverence.

Despite having fought against the third Imam and aligned himself with evil, Hur's repentance was accepted by Imam Al-Hussain (as).

Thus, whenever you feel ashamed of your past, remember that your sin is not greater than the act of fighting Imam Al-Hussain (as), yet even this was forgiven. There is no reason to believe that Allah (swt) will not forgive past mistakes and sins for those who strive to follow the noble path.

Some of the early converts to Islam came from humble or even disreputable backgrounds, but upon accepting Islam, they transformed themselves and became some of the most revered figures whose stories are still remembered and studied today. One such notable convert was Abu Dhar Al-Ghafari, a companion of the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) and Imam Ali (as), renowned for his piety. Al-Shaykh al-Mufid has narrated a hadith from Imam al-Kadhim (as):



“On the Day of Judgment, a caller will call: Where are the disciples of Prophet Mohammad (sawa) who did not break their promise; and then Salman, Abu Dharr and Miqdad would stand up”⁸

8| Mufid, al-Ikhtiṣāṣ, p. 61

03 | POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ATTENTION AS A CONVERT

When someone takes their shahada or testimony of faith in the mosque, they are typically met with congratulations and embraces from the community. This is because, by embracing Islam, they have entered a state of spiritual rebirth, leaving their past life behind. The community often rejoices in seeing someone embrace Islam, but this attention can sometimes become overwhelming. A convert might experience individuals attempting to become overly familiar or even treat them like a celebrity. While some may have good intentions, this can lead to a situation where, once the initial attention fades, the convert may feel neglected or forgotten.

Another concern is that the convert might feel like a 'monkey in a suit,' as if some members of the community are showcasing them or using them for their own benefit. Therefore, it is crucial to approach converts with a sense of balance. A convert should feel like a regular member of the community and receive support when needed. Unfortunately, there are instances where converts do not receive adequate support. Hence, the Muslim community should strive for a balanced approach and converts might find it beneficial to build connections online in addition to engaging with their local community.

Moreover, converts need to be cautious that such attention does not lead to arrogance. Some converts have admitted that the initial surge of attention made them somewhat conceited, a trait they later corrected through self-reflection.

04 | CHANGING ONES NAME AFTER EMRACING ISLAM

As a convert, you may have noticed that some others in your situation have changed their names after embracing Islam, and you might be wondering if you should do the same. The answer is that it is not obligatory to change your given name to a Muslim name. However, some converts choose to adopt a new name or an equivalent one. For example, a convert named David might refer to themselves as Dawud, which is the Arabic equivalent of the English name, and the name of a Prophet. Similarly, some individuals may keep the name such as Adam, as it is shared by both Christians and Muslims who believe in the Prophet Adam (as).

Generally, Islam recommends having a good name, as various hadiths highlight the importance of this.

It has been narrated from the Holy Prophet (sawa) :



“It is the responsibility of every father to choose a good name for his child.”¹¹

“The children have three rights over their fathers. The first is that they are given good names. Secondly, they are provided good education; and lastly, they help them to select good spouses.”¹²

It has been narrated from Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as):

“The first good that a father does to his child is that he selects a worthy name for him.”¹³

11 | Wasail al-shiah, v2, p. 618

12 | Wasail al-shiah, v104, p. 92

13 | Wasail al-shiah, v15, p. 122

These narrations emphasise the importance of selecting good names, particularly for one's children, as a name can significantly impact one's place in society. While certain names may be common and associated with admirable individuals, there are names that can carry negative connotations. For instance, the name 'Yazid' was once quite common. Some individuals with this name could have been pious, but today, the most prevalent association is with the tyrant who ordered the killing of the Prophet's grandson, Imam Al-Hussain (as). Therefore, choosing such a name is not advisable, even if there were pious individuals who bore it.

Similarly, consider the name 'Osama.' There is nothing inherently wrong with this name, but after the 9/11 attacks, it became associated with the terrorist Osama bin Laden. Therefore, some may have avoided giving such a name to their children during the post-911 period.

A convert may wonder when they should change their name. Although it is not obligatory, if their name has a negative connotation, such as being named after a false god from a polytheistic religion, it is advisable to consider changing it. A convert might also choose to adopt a second Muslim name. Some converts retain their non-Islamic name while adding a second name after a revered Islamic figure out of their love for the religion, which is perfectly acceptable.

Alternatively, a convert may prefer to be addressed exclusively by a Muslim name as a sign of their new identity. This is also acceptable; however, if a convert is concerned that their family might be offended or upset, they can allow their non-Muslim family to use their previous name while everyone else in the community uses their new Muslim name. Ultimately, having Muslims with diverse and unique names adds to the richness of the community, and a convert can choose to keep their birth name if they wish.

05 | NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR NON-MUSLIM FAMILY

A challenge that a convert may encounter is dealing with non-Muslim family members or even Muslim, non-Shia family members. While some converts are fortunate to have supportive families, others face significant difficulties. For instance, there was once an English sister whose mother threatened to kick her out if she wore a hijab. Such experiences can occur because some families perceive that their son or daughter have betrayed their culture, and disregarded their upbringing. However, this is not the case, as Islam strongly emphasises showing a great deal of respect to one's parents, even if they are non-Muslims.



*It has been narrated from Imam al-Rida (as),
“Being good to one’s parents is obligatory, even if they are polytheists, but
there is no obedience due to them if it entails disobedience to the Creator.”¹⁴*

For this reason, it is essential for the convert to adopt a balanced approach with their families and find a middle ground where possible. When someone feels ready to share their reversion with their family, they should do so with wisdom rather than overwhelming them with it. At the same time, it may be necessary for them to conceal their faith temporarily to avoid unnecessary hardship. By ‘rubbing it in their faces’ this means going overboard, which many people can do at the beginning of their reversion due to their enthusiasm and zeal. For instance, there was a convert brother who mentioned how he would blast out Islamic nasheeds loudly in his bedroom to ensure his non-Muslim Catholic mother could hear. Such an approach is counterproductive and might only irritate one's parents. As mentioned, introducing one's reversion to a non-Muslim family should be a gradual process. Just as the convert will implement gradual changes in their own life, their family will also need time to adjust to these changes. A convert cannot expect their family to instantly understand and accept all these changes at once. After all, if their family has known them to be a certain way for over 20 years, it can be challenging for their family to witness sudden changes.

14| Bihar Al-Anwar, V. 74, P. 72, No. 55

Some points one could mention to their family are the following:

1. Their reversion does not mean rejecting their heritage and upbringing; rather, Islam is a way of life suitable for individuals of any ethnic background. In fact, Islam is not an Arab religion; it actively opposes racism and nationalism, as emphasised in various narrations.¹⁵
2. One should quote their parents different verses and hadiths to show them the beauty of Islam. Verses and narrations which mention the importance of parents and family could be a good place to start.¹⁶
3. It is essential to clarify that the decision to embrace Islam is not about being 'radicalised' but is based on intellectual research and genuine conviction.
4. One should express their willingness to answer any questions their family might have about Islam and encourage them to ask if they do not understand certain practices. If one does not have all the answers, they should either research the questions or refer their family to someone with more knowledge.
5. It is also important to note that not all sects within Islam are equal. Violence and extremism are only from extremists.
6. If conversations with family members become unproductive, one should avoid arguing and as advised by the Quran, turn away from the ones who stubbornly remain ignorant.¹⁷

Ultimately, the convert will encounter situations where they cannot compromise on certain issues, regardless of whether their family members like this or not. While this may be challenging at the beginning, many families will eventually come to accept these circumstances.

15| On the authority of Abu 'Abd Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (as) that the Prophet (sawa) said, "Whosoever possesses in his heart 'asabiyyah (prejudice in any of its forms such as tribalism, racism, nationalism) even to the extent of a mustard seed, God will raise him on the Day of Resurrection with the (pagan) Bedouins of the Jahiliyyah (the pre-Islamic era) - Al-Kāfi - Volume 2, Book 1, Chapter #123, Racism.

16| One can read the chapters about the rights of the mother and father in the book of Resalah tul-Huquq (the treatise of rights) by the 4th Imam, Imam Ali bin Al-Hussain known as Imam Sajjad or Imam Zaynul 'Abadin. This book can be found on <https://www.al-islam.org> which has thousands of online Islamic books

17| "Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ones who stubbornly remain ignorant" - Quran 7:199

As the Quran states, one should not obey their parents if they instruct them to disobey Allah (swt). This situation can even arise with Muslim parents who may not be following the religion correctly.

Allah (swt) in the Quran says:



...And We have commanded people to honour their parents. Their mothers bore them through hardship upon hardship, and their weaning takes two years. So be grateful to Me and your parents. To Me is the final return. But if they pressure you to associate with Me what you have no knowledge of, do not obey them. Still keep their company in this world courteously and follow the way of those who turn to Me in devotion. Then to Me you will [all] return, and then I will inform you of what you used to do.¹⁸

This illustrates that while one must show kindness to their parents and not sever relations with them, it does not mean one should disobey Allah (swt) if parents attempt to lead them towards deviation. The specific example mentioned in the verse is shirk (associating partners with Allah), but the broader principle of prioritising obedience to Allah (swt) over one's parents is derived from this verse and can be applied to various situations.

A relatable example could be a family accustomed to their son or daughter going to the pub and having a drink with them. As a convert, such activities are no longer permissible. Instead of isolating oneself from the family, they should seek alternatives to the old activities they can no longer partake in as a Muslim. For instance, instead of going to a pub or bar, they could suggest meeting at a restaurant or coffee shop—activities that everyone can enjoy. This approach allows them to spend time with their family while adhering to their Islamic faith.

One should keep in mind that they can call others to Islam without having to preach or discuss it directly. This can be done by simply displaying outstanding moral behaviour.

18| Quran - 31:15-16

A famous narration from the 6th Imam, Imam Sadiq (as), states:

“Be callers to [the truth] through your actions, not merely with your tongues. Be a source of honour and not disgrace.”¹⁹

This hadith highlights that one of the most effective ways to inspire others towards Islam is through demonstrating moral excellence and integrity, showing that true invitation comes from actions and conduct, rather than just words. This approach can be particularly effective when a convert’s family members witness the positive transformation in their son or daughter.

There are some converts who have mentioned that their moral conduct was poor before their conversion to Islam and that they were disrespectful towards their families. Some have shared how they used to abuse substances and behave aggressively towards their families. However, after embracing Islam, these negative traits and habits vanished, and their families noticed the positive changes. This transformation allowed their families to see the profound impact Islam had on their lives.

Verily, such actions, where an individual becomes better by following Islamic values, can change any preconceived negative notions their family had about Islam. It may even inspire them to investigate Islam or read the Qur’an themselves.

19| | Al-Kafi, Volume 2, Page 78, Hadith 14 and Hadith 9.

06 | FINDING TRUSTED AND KNOWLEDGABLE PEOPLE

After one has dealt with the matter of telling their family that they have converted, they should aim to build up a support base of trusted brothers or sisters who have knowledge, which will benefit them. The reality is that many who are converts can face isolation, so having a support base, even if a handful of people, can help them when times are hard. Being in contact with students of knowledge and scholars is also important, as one always needs those higher in knowledge to ask.

As advice for sisters, it is better for them to maintain contact with fellow sisters who can offer support. Limiting interactions with the opposite gender can help prevent many unwanted situations.

A convert should also understand that there can be a difference between Islam and the actions of some Muslims; they may observe individuals in the community displaying un-Islamic attitudes or behaviours. Therefore, a convert should strive to distinguish between Islamic and non-Islamic conduct, so they do not become disheartened or discouraged from the religion by those who claim to follow it. Of course, there is no issue in sisters contacting male scholars as long as the Islamic boundaries are observed.

07 | PRESERVING YOUR PERSONAL IDENTITY

Converts to Islam often find it fascinating to interact with the diverse spectrum of cultures and languages within the Muslim community. While Muslim countries share the same religion, their cultures and practices are unique. This cultural diversity can be intriguing for converts. However, they may attend a centre or mosque that isn't very diverse, with a dominant ethnic group and this may cause the convert to feel that the centre may prioritise connecting with others from their own country and religion, rather than connecting with converts and non-Muslims.

Fortunately, with the current second generation, there has been improvement. English-speaking programs now attract people from various backgrounds. Converts may notice that some centres have a majority of Iraqis or another dominant ethnic group, such as Pakistanis. This can make converts feel pressured to conform to the dominant culture in that centre and abandon their own.

Converts should avoid this and remember their own heritage. They should not feel compelled to adopt another culture to be accepted, as long as their culture does not contradict Islamic values. If certain cultural practices do conflict with Islamic teachings, those aspects can be set aside. This applies to some elements of Middle Eastern and Arab cultures as well. It is important to recognize that many Muslims, despite being born into the faith, engage in practices that contradict Islam due to their ethnic culture as well.

As a convert, one should also know that there is no issue with wearing different cultural clothing or participating in cultural practices, if they align with Islamic principles. However, it is also important to remember that they are not obligated to imitate any particular culture. Culture can be a positive aspect within Muslim communities, as evidenced by the varying styles of eulogies recited or Husaini rituals during Muharram events.

08 | ISLAMIC CELEBRATIONS

As Shia Muslims, we have 3 main celebrations of Eid: Eid Al-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha and Eid Al-Ghadir.

Eid al-Fitr - is the first day of the month of Shawwal and one of the greatest religious holidays in Islamic tradition. "Fitr" means opening and since on this day Muslims break one month of fasting and there are some verses and hadiths that mention the importance of this day. Fasting is forbidden on this day and Muslims hold Eid prayer. Paying Zakat al-Fitrah is obligatory for many Muslims on this day and there are various acts of worship and supplications which one can perform.

Eid Al-Adha - is one of the greatest Eid's of Islam which is celebrated on the 10th of Dhu l-Hijja. According to hadiths, this is the day on which the divine command for Prophet Ibrahim (as) to sacrifice his son, Isma'il (as), was issued. He took Isma'il (as) to an altar and was about to fulfil the divine command when Jabra'il (Gabriel) came down with a ram, and Ibrahim (as) sacrificed the ram instead. Such an event showed the great obedience and reliance Ibrahim (as) had in God which many Muslims can learn from. The traditional rite of offering sacrifice on Eid al-Adha in the desert of Mina, is a commemoration of that event. Muslims who go to hajj, perform the rituals of Mina, including offering a sacrifice.

Eid Al-Ghadir - This Eid is held on the 18th of Dhu l-Hijja at the time where according to certain Qur'anic verses and hadiths, the Prophet (sawa) appointed Ali b. Abi Talib (as) as his caliph and the Imam after himself following an order from God. This event happened in the Prophet's (sawa) Farewell Hajj (Hajjat al-Wida'), in 10/632 in a place called Ghadir Khom. In Shi'a hadiths, the anniversary has been called "Eid Allah al-Akbar" (the Greatest Eid of God), Eid of Ahl al-Bayt (as) and "Ashraf al-A'yad" (Most Honourable Eid).

Wiladat of our Holy personalities - We both celebrate the births of our Prophet Muhammad (sawa) and the Imam's (as), and commemorate their Marytrdom.

09 | APPROACHING NON-ISLAMIC CELEBRATIONS

As a convert, you most likely grew up with different celebrations from the ones mentioned above, which were not Islamic. Living in Britain today, with its multicultural environment, you are likely to encounter various celebrations. For example, you can find Ramadan decorations in supermarkets and even in the streets. However, transitioning from your previous celebrations to Islamic ones may take time. Additionally, as a convert, you were likely used to celebrating with your family.

A common issue for many converts living in the west is Christmas. In places like the United Kingdom, Christmas has become more of a cultural celebration for many, serving as a day to gather with family members and exchange gifts. The religious significance of Christmas has largely faded, and many who celebrate it do not identify with any religion. Despite this, as a Muslim, you should not celebrate Christmas due to its association with beliefs that are contrary to monotheism²⁰, as Christians believe that Jesus (peace be upon him), considered part of the trinity, was born on this day. Moreover, other Christian groups, such as the Coptic Christians, do not celebrate Christmas on December 25th, recognizing that this date is not historically accurate for Jesus' birth.

One may now ask, "As a convert, I won't celebrate Christmas and will embrace my new Islamic celebrations. However, what about the awkward situation with my family? Should I bluntly tell them that I will no longer attend their Christmas celebrations, or am I allowed to attend even though I don't believe in Christmas? Also, should I ask my family to stop giving Christmas presents to my children and I?"

To answer this, we say that it depends on the situation. Some may claim that attending one's family home on Christmas constitutes polytheism, but we believe it is not so black and white.

For example, some converts may attend their family's Christmas celebration, while others do not. Some explain that their family celebrates it as a cultural event rather than a religious one. There are converts whose families understand that their son or daughter does not believe in Christmas and that their attendance is merely a family visit.

20| Polytheism (or shirk) refers to associating partners with Allah in His essence, attributes, or acts, considered the gravest sin, compromising Tawhid (the oneness of God).

If one finds that not attending could cause significant hurt and problems within the family, they should ask themselves the following questions: Would attending imply that they affirm and believe in the celebration? Will attending involve them in haram (forbidden) acts? Does their family know that they clearly do not believe in such a celebration and are merely visiting out of respect?

So, if one attends with the intention of showing respect and visiting their family—while ensuring the family understands they do not support the beliefs behind the celebration—then it is allowed as long as they don't partake in haram acts. However, if one can avoid attending places with certain non-Islamic celebrations, it is preferable, though we understand this may be challenging for converts.

In terms of greeting others on their religious festivals, many scholars state that it is permissible to do so and usually the non-Muslim being greeted, does not take a greeting from the person as their endorsement or belief in that celebration.

One might wonder what to do when their non-Muslim family members consume alcohol during celebrations or in everyday life. Does this mean that a convert cannot visit them? As a Muslim, one ideally seeks to avoid environments where alcohol is being consumed. However, it can be challenging when non-Muslim family members consider this a permissible part of their lifestyle. Therefore, it's important to understand the appropriate course of action.

It is not haram for a convert to visit their family members who may drink in their presence. However, they should avoid sitting at the same table where alcohol is being served and consumed. If their non-Muslim family members are drinking but not at the same table, it would not be haram for the convert to be in their company.

For example, if a convert visits their family during a religious celebration, knowing that some family members may be drinking, it is not haram to attend if they adhere to the above guidelines. It is also helpful that the non-Muslim family members are aware that the Muslim convert does not condone the consumption of alcohol.

As a convert, you might find that the days of Eid can feel lonely, especially if you are single and your family does not celebrate the occasion. Many converts have experienced this sense of solitude. Therefore, it would be beneficial to attend Eid-related events and potentially connect with other brothers and sisters in the community. Many people celebrate Eid with their families but extending

an invitation to a convert brother or sister for at least part of the day could be a deeply appreciated gesture. Such inclusivity can make a significant difference, offering companionship and warmth to those who might otherwise have no one to celebrate with.

10 | DINING WITH NON-MUSLIM FAMILY MEMBERS

As a Muslim, it is essential to follow Islamic dietary laws. While these laws cover various aspects of eating, the most common and important rule is to consume only halal ²¹ meat—meat that is slaughtered according to Islamic standards—and to avoid consuming swine altogether. Typically, halal restaurants or butchers will display a certificate or sign indicating that their products are halal. It is generally sufficient to trust the word of a Muslim vendor regarding the halal status of the meat they sell unless there is strong evidence to doubt it. Extensive research is not necessary, as the word of a fellow Muslim should be enough.

As a convert to Islam, you may find yourself in situations where you are eating with family members who consume non-halal meat. According to the Quran, the food of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) is permissible for Muslims to eat:



Today (all) good things have been made lawful for you, and (also) the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them. ²²

However, a common misconception is that this verse allows Muslims to eat the meat of Christians and Jews simply by saying “Bismillah” before consuming it. This interpretation is incorrect. A Muslim must always eat halal meat; saying “Bismillah” does not make non-halal meat permissible.

21| Some of the conditions of halal slaughter is: (1) all four main veins of the animal’s neck must be cut, (2) the name of God should be uttered, (3) the animal should face the qibla during slaughter, (4) an iron tool should be used (or another sharp tool in cases of necessity), and (5) the slaughterer must be Muslim and not hostile toward the Ahl al-Bayt.

22| Quran 5:5

The 6th Imam, Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq (as), interpreted the above qur'anic verse as follows in an authentic hadith:



“...Do not use it (non-halal meat) for food. It is a matter of name (mentioning the name of Allah) and no one can be trusted in it except a Muslim.’ A man then said, ‘Allah, most High, says, ‘Today We have made the good things lawful for you and the food of the people of the book is lawful for you.’ (5:5) Abu ‘Abd Allah (as), then said to him, ‘My father (as), would say that it is about grains and similar things.’²³

From this, we understand that a Muslim may eat certain foods from non-Muslims, but not their meat. A convert may then wonder what they should do when eating with their non-Muslim family members.

There are practical solutions to this situation where converts can ask their non-Muslim family members if they can prepare a dish with halal meat. It's important to ensure that halal meat is not mixed with non-halal meat to avoid cross-contamination. If family members are unwilling to make a halal dish, then the convert could bring their own halal food or opt for a vegetarian meal. One could also arrive early to a family event and help prepare certain foods if they wanted to avoid any cross contamination.

It is also important to explain to non-Muslim family members that a Muslim must adhere to certain dietary laws, a practice not exclusive to Islam—many Jews, for instance, follow kosher dietary rules. Additionally, there is no issue with a Muslim eating their halal dish at the same table where others are consuming non-halal food.

23| Al-Kāfi, Volume 6, Book 4, Chapter 15: “Slaughtering by the People of the Book.” H10.

11 | PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: THE HIJAB

When it comes to Muslim women, the most noticeable aspect of their appearance is often their attire, particularly the headscarf. However, the headscarf is just one part of the hijab²⁴, which also includes modest behaviour for both men and women. Modest behaviour refers to how individuals interact with the opposite gender.

For instance, a woman might be fully covered and observing the physical aspects of hijab, but her social hijab could be compromised if she engages in inappropriate or flirtatious conversation with men. The same applies to men; a man might dress modestly, yet his behaviour could undermine hijab if he flirts or jokes inappropriately with non-mahram women.

Men also have a responsibility regarding hijab, which includes lowering the gaze—meaning refraining from looking at forbidden things or lusting after women who are not their spouses. Islam emphasises preventive measures to protect moral boundaries, as even one inappropriate look can lead to worse actions, such as fornication.

Allah (swt) says in the Quran:



Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do.” (24:30) ²⁵

24| Hijab is derived from the Arabic root “ḥ-j-b,” which means “to cover” or “to veil.” In Islamic terms, hijab refers to the practice of modest dress and behaviour, especially for women, to preserve modesty and privacy.

25| Quran 24:30 - Similarly in the verse after Allah also gives the same order to the believing women - “And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts and not to display their adornment except that which [ordinarily] appears thereof and to wrap a portion of their headcovers over their chests...” 24:31

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) also emphasised the importance of lowering the gaze as a way of protecting one's faith:

“The glance is one of the poisoned arrows of Satan. Whoever abstains from it out of fear of Allah, He will grant him a sweetness of faith that he will find in his heart.”²⁶

This is why hijab should encompass both physical and social elements to be complete. Despite this, most people, when they hear the word “hijab,” tend to focus solely on the physical aspect, particularly the headscarf.

Muslim women are obligated to cover all of their hair and body by wearing loose and modest clothing in front of unlawful (non-mahram²⁷) men; the hands and face may remain uncovered.

The style of the hijab and clothing may vary depending on the culture of the person however, the khimar, jilbab and abaya are highly recommended for women to observe as they can be considered the best forms of hijab. It is also worth mentioning that hijab doesn't need to be black in colour as some may think.

26| Man Lā Yaḥḍuruḥu al-Faqīh, vol. 4, p. 18.

27| Non-Mahram (Arabic: غير المحارم) is someone who is not related to you by blood, by marriage or by suckling. For example, for a woman, your Mahrams are your father, your brother, your husband, your uncle or your son. For a man, your Mahrams are your mother, your sister, your wife, your aunt and your daughter. Observing the rules of hijab and looking are obligatory against non-mahram ones and marrying them is not prohibited. While a woman must observe hijab in front of strange men, those close relatives such as grandfathers, father, uncles, brothers, their husband, nephews, brothers by suckling and small male children are fine to be with while not observing hijab. Male cousins however are considered non-mahram so hijab should be observed in front of them

12 | SHOULD A CONVERT SISTER START OBSERVING HIJAB RIGHT AWAY?

A convert sister should ideally begin observing hijab as soon as possible, as it is obligatory in Islam. This is similar to the requirement for salah (prayer), which should also be started immediately. We do understand that adopting hijab can be a gradual process for many women, including those born into Muslim families however, one must observe it fully as soon as possible to fulfil the obligatory requirement. Some sisters may have some fear and hesitation of wearing the hijab for various reasons however they should take note of the following advice:

It has been narrated from Imam Ali (as):



If you fear something, throw yourself into it, for the intensity of caution in avoiding it is greater than what you fear. ²⁸

This approach often helps in overcoming fears and makes it easier for one to embrace new practices. Once a sister just wears the hijab, she will eventually get used to it and it will become a part of her.

We understand that adopting the hijab immediately may be challenging for some convert sisters who need to conceal their reversion from their families or who are in environments hostile to the hijab.

It is narrated by Imam al-Hussain (as),

“He who seeks to please Allah at the expense of displeasing people, Allah suffices him in everything including his affairs with people. But the one who seeks to please people at the expense of Allah’s displeasure, Allah relegates him to those very people.” ²⁹

28| One can find this quoted in Nahj al-Balagha and Mizan al-Hikmah

29| Bihar Al-Anwar, V. 71, P. 208, No. 17

This narration underscores that the ultimate goal for anyone should be to seek the pleasure of Allah (swt). Although one may feel disheartened or embarrassed when faced with opposition from others, as in the case of the sister and her colleagues, it is essential to remember that Allah (swt) will support them through their trials. If one chooses to displease Allah (swt) to gain the approval of others, those same people are likely to abandon them and offer no true support in times of need. Therefore, if a sister encounters negativity for wearing the hijab, she should remain steadfast and not be swayed by others' opinions or judgments. We ask Allah (swt) to grant strength to sisters in maintaining their hijab, especially in a society that often promotes obscenities and immodesty.

Physical hijab involves the covering of one's hair and body, The arms should be covered fully up to the wrists, and clothing should be loose, opaque and non-form-fitting so that the shape of the body is not outlined. The legs and feet should also be covered, ensuring your clothing as a whole promotes modesty and does not attract unnecessary attention.

We may ask ourselves: why is the hijab mandatory? What is its purpose? Allah swt commanded women to cover in this way for a multitude of reasons. The hijab is rooted in modesty, dignity and spiritual consciousness. It serves as a reminder of one's inner values, encouraging individuals to prioritise character, humility and self-respect over outward appearance. The hijab helps to one to abstain from un-Islamic behaviours and environments, serving as a daily reminder of God and a sacrifice that is being made for Him.

13 | UNDERSTANDING CIRCUMCISION IN ISLAM

An issue that some male converts frequently inquire about is circumcision. For those who come to Islam from a Jewish background, circumcision is often already performed, so this concern may not arise. However, for others, circumcision might not be common within their previous culture or religion. Thus, male converts may question whether circumcision is obligatory for them.

It is narrated by Imam Ali (as), Amir al-Mu'minin,



If a man becomes a Muslim he must circumcise even if he is eighty years old.³⁰

Circumcision is obligatory within itself meaning that it should be carried out as soon as possible. However, acts of worship such as prayer and fasting remain valid even if one is uncircumcised. Nonetheless, circumcision is a requirement for performing the Tawaf³¹ during Hajj and Umrah. Therefore, if Hajj becomes obligatory for someone who is uncircumcised, they must undergo the procedure before undertaking the pilgrimage. For those intending to perform an optional Umrah, circumcision is also required beforehand. If circumcision is not feasible for an adult due to medical conditions or if it poses a risk of harm, an exception may apply. In such cases, it is essential to consult the office of the Marja' they follow to explain their situation and receive a specific ruling.

Regarding females, the concept of 'female circumcision' should be defined correctly in Islam. Some anti-Islamic activists erroneously claim that female genital mutilation (FGM) is a part of Islam. FGM, practiced in some cultures, is entirely forbidden and has no basis in Islamic teachings.

30| Al-Kāfi, Volume 6, Book 1, Chapter 23, Cleansing, Circumcision.

31| The ritual of circumambulation around the holy ka'bah

14 | THE JOURNEY TO MARRIAGE

In the West, there has been a significant decline in marriages and a rise in promiscuity within society.³² What was once considered taboo—being in a relationship without being married—has now become normalised, with people living together and having children outside of marriage. As a result, we see many children growing up without knowing their fathers, which can lead to a lack of a father figure and have negative impacts on some. Yes, there are those who are raised by single parents and become great people, but many young people without parental guidance and discipline can become unproductive members of society. This is evident in the West, where some youth show a lack of respect for authority and the law.

Islam, however, places a strong emphasis on marriage. There are many Quranic verses and narrations from the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) and the Ahlul-Bayt (as) that highlight the superiority of being married. By maintaining the practice of marriage, the family structure is preserved, and the morals of society are protected. Unlike those who have no religious foundation, where marriage may be seen as just a ceremony or a piece of paper, the Islamic concept of marriage holds great spiritual significance and should not be taken lightly.

It has been narrated by the Holy Prophet (sawa):



The sleep of a married person is better with Allah than an unmarried one who fasts during the day and keeps vigil at night, establishing prayers.”³³

According to narrations, divorce is the most disliked of permissible actions by Allah. In some cases, divorce may be the only option; however, it should not be taken lightly, nor should couples divorce over trivial matters.

32| “Every year, the UK Office for National Statistics, the gold standard of national data, charts the decline of marriage in Britain. And 2021 was the first year on record that more babies were born to unmarried, cohabiting couples than to married couples as cohabitation becomes the norm. The latest set of ONS statistics for marriage rates shows they are at their lowest level ever. Next year will be the same.” Source: Marriage is Disappearing from Britain | Institute for Family Studies (ifstudies.org)

33| Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 103, p. 221

If a marriage is based on the wrong reasons—such as materialism, lust, or social status—it is unlikely to last or be blessed. We have narrations that emphasise that one should marry for the right reasons and not only for temporary things which will fade.

It has been narrated by Imam as-Sadiq (as):

“He who marries a woman for the hope of her wealth, Allah leaves him with only that wealth.”³⁴

It has been narrated by the Holy Prophet (sawa):

“He who marries a woman for her wealth, Allah will leave him only with that; and he who marries a woman (only) for her beauty, he will see in her what he does not like; but he who marries a woman for her religion, Allah will gather those merits for him.”³⁵

It has been narrated by the Holy Prophet (sawa):

“He who marries a woman (only) for her beauty, Allah will assign the beauty of that woman as a harm and trouble for him.”³⁶

Marriage in Islam is intended to be easy and simple. When marriage becomes difficult and people cannot marry, it can lead to societal corruption. Muslim youth who cannot marry may become hopeless and turn to sins such as fornication and masturbation. When certain Muslim families have high demands, such as expecting lavish weddings that put financial strain on the man or an excessively high dowry, they act as if they are selling their daughter and make marriage more difficult. It should be noted that such practices are not from Islam.

While a woman has the right to a wedding and a dowry, the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) emphasised simplicity.

34| Al-Kafi, vol. 5, p. 333

35| Al-Tahthib, vol. 7, p. 399

36| Wasa'il-ush Shi'ah, vol. 20, p. 53

You might be wondering what to look for in a spouse and when is the right time to get married, especially as a new convert to Islam. It is important not to rush into marriage, especially as a new convert. There are cases where a person converts to Islam and marries a Muslim that they were already considering; this is fine. However, we also find instances where new converts are pressured to marry immediately, which can be a mistake. While Islam highly recommends marriage, it does not mean one should not take their time in finding the right spouse. The general Islamic guidelines for choosing a spouse emphasise two main qualities.

Religiosity and good manners, these are crucial. However, as a new convert, it may not be easy to discern what true religiosity is if you are still new to the religion. Of course, there can be other factors to consider when choosing a spouse, such as attraction, shared life goals, and similar interests. If a person is truly religious and possesses good moral qualities, they are unlikely to oppress their spouse, and as such you should prioritise these when selecting a spouse.

Here is some advice for new converts considering marriage:

1. **Learn the Basics of Islam:** Take time to learn the basics of your religion and consider taking courses about Islamic marriage if you are single.
2. **Don't Assume Birthright Equals Piety:** Understand that being “born Muslim” does not necessarily make someone a better Muslim. Even if someone performs their prayers and fasts, it is not enough. They should also possess genuinely good moral traits.
3. **Seek Support from the Community:** If you are considering marriage, you should consult different community members to see if they know the prospective groom/bride. It is also beneficial to have someone who can assist her during the process. For example, if a convert sister does not have a present father, an experienced and pious member of the community, whether male or female, can look out for her interests if she feels they can help. She could appoint this wise community member to vet potential grooms.
4. **Be Cautious About Those Who Abuse Temporary Marriage (Mut'ah)³⁷:**

37| Mut'ah marriage or temporary marriage just like permanent marriage has a marriage formula and dowry. It does however have a fixed period and has no divorce. For example, two people can agree to a time of 3 months to marry each other and renew this once again when the time finishes. Some may use such a practice when they do not want to commit to a permanent marriage, or they may want to get to know each other in a halal way before committing to a permanent marriage.

Temporary marriage, a form of flexible marriage in Islam, is allowed in Shia Islam and can serve good purposes. However, convert sisters should be cautious about those who may try to exploit this practice. While it is permissible for two consenting adults to engage in a temporary marriage, sisters should be aware of false promises about a future permanent marriage after a temporary one. Unfortunately, some have deceived sisters by claiming they will marry them permanently after a temporary marriage, only to disappear after they are done with the temporary one. Deceiving someone in this way is completely impermissible according to Islamic teachings and is a sin. If a brother and sister do engage in temporary marriage, then the time of it should be known and clear. If they wish to extend this, end it or turn it into a permanent marriage, then this will be their decision.

5. Take Time to Know the Potential Partner: Divorce in Islam is not always a straightforward process, so a sister should be very sure about the partner she chooses. She should take time to know them well within Islamic boundaries, and ensure they are genuinely pious or striving to better themselves.
6. Marriage and Racism - As previously discussed in this book, Islam categorically opposes racism in all its forms. Unfortunately, some Muslims may still hold tribal or cultural attitudes that conflict with Islamic principles. Even though the Imams themselves had mothers from diverse backgrounds, including African, Indian, and Persian, some within the Muslim or Shia community remain resistant to interethnic marriage. For instance, a devout Shia might seek to marry a girl, but the family might reject the proposal solely based on the suitor's differing ethnic or cultural background. Although the younger generation tends to be more progressive, converts to Islam often encounter these barriers when seeking marriage, particularly if they come from less common cultural backgrounds. This issue also affects born Shias who face rejection in marriage proposals, for not sharing the same cultural background as the prospective in-laws.

By following these guidelines, converts can make informed and careful decisions when it comes to marriage, ensuring that their choice aligns with both their faith and personal well-being.

15 | AVOIDING BURNOUT ON THE PATH OF FAITH

When you first embrace Islam as a convert, you may experience a surge of enthusiasm and zeal, akin to a fully charged battery. However, this initial battery can gradually drain, and you might notice your zeal starting to go down. Some converts, initially devout in their practice, may eventually face complete burnout, reverting to their old lifestyle and abandoning their Islamic practices. Therefore, one should realise that their Iman³⁸ can fluctuate.

Various factors can contribute to this decline, one of which is rushing through the process of learning and practising Islam. Focusing on the wrong aspects or adopting an extreme approach can also lead to negative outcomes. Just as in many areas of life, excessive zeal without balance can have detrimental effects.

A famous saying reminds us that “Rome wasn’t built in a day,” and this principle applies equally to religion. The laws of Islam were revealed gradually over many years, so the early Muslims did not implement everything all at once. Similarly, a convert who has embraced a new lifestyle should not expect to master everything immediately. It is natural to feel a desire to learn as much as possible in a short time but remember, that even the greatest scholars and knowledgeable individuals started from humble beginnings. Their extensive knowledge was acquired through time and effort. As long as you remain committed to learning and applying what you have learned, you will progress steadily. This process and its development will be further discussed later in this book.

One common issue that has led to burnout among converts is becoming excessively involved in unnecessary debates and discussions. There was an instance involving a brother who converted to Shia Islam. He was very active online, engaging passionately in debates and polemical discussions on Facebook. His enthusiasm was evident, but suddenly, his account disappeared, and there were no updates from him for some time.

A year later, a Facebook profile was stumbled upon that was recognized as theirs. Shockingly, the profile reflected that the individual had returned to their previous non-Islamic lifestyle.

38| Faith

Concerned, someone reached out to them, and they appreciated the gesture. Before they could explain why they had deviated from the path, they were asked whether constant debating had been a factor. They admitted that it was indeed the main reason and that the relentless debates had become toxic for them. This was a classic case of 'burnout' which is seen with some converts.

At some point, everyone may engage in debates, but focusing excessively on these discussions can lead to burnout. It is essential to prioritise spiritual growth and self-improvement through acquiring knowledge that supports one's journey of self-development. Without a strong connection to the spirituality, narrations, and supplications of Ahlul Bayt (as), one may feel spiritually empty.

Debating is not suitable for everyone. The Imams (as) permitted some of their companions to engage in debate while advising others to refrain from it, as they were not equipped for such discussions. The appropriateness of debating depends on the individual's level and circumstances. Additionally, debating random people on social media can often be fruitless, as many are insincere and merely seek arguments for their own sake.

Another reason for burnout among some converts is the tendency to be overly strict and burden oneself with unrealistic expectations. While adherence to obligatory acts such as prayer, fasting, and Islamic laws is crucial, expecting immediate perfection and mastery of all aspects of the faith is impractical. Mistakes and slip-ups are a natural part of the learning process. It is unrealistic to expect oneself to perform numerous recommended acts of worship when only beginning to practise the fundamental obligations. Moreover, it is not always possible to abandon all bad habits at once. The community should also avoid being harsh on converts who stumble, as even the great companions of the Prophet (sawa) and the Imams (as) experienced moments of error and correction.

16 | BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION

It is crucial to approach the pursuit of knowledge in an organised manner to build a solid foundation. Just as one would not begin constructing a house with the roof, but would first lay a strong foundation and build upwards, the same principle applies to learning. Mastering fundamental subjects equips one to delve into more advanced topics. For example, learning classical Quranic Arabic enables one to go beyond mere translation and engage directly with primary Islamic sources. While numerous translations and Islamic texts are available in various languages, understanding Arabic allows individuals to evaluate these translations independently.

It is essential for converts to receive guidance on what to study initially. They may encounter discussions on social media or elsewhere that are not beneficial for their current level of understanding. Similarly, it is important for other Muslims not to overwhelm new converts with complex topics or disputes, such as debates over which marja' (religious authority) to follow or specifics of Hussaini rituals. Providing clear, structured guidance ensures that converts build their knowledge progressively and effectively.

17 | THE USUL AL-DIN AND FURU' AL-DIN

A great starting point for both converts and born Muslims to seek knowledge is in understanding the Usul al-Din (the Roots of Religion) and the Furu' al-Din (the Branches of Religion). Converts who previously identified with the Sunni sect may be familiar with the concept of the “Five Pillars.” However, in Shia Islam, we have our own categorization concerning the fundamental principles and practices of the faith.

Usul al-Din - The roots of religion

Usul al-deen means the roots of religion. Just as a tree's roots are its foundation, the religion of Allah (swt) has its foundation. These roots are the following set of 5 beliefs:

1. Tawhid - Oneness of Allah
2. 'Adalah - Justice of Allah
3. Nubuwwah - Prophet hood
4. Imamah - Vicegerency/Leadership
5. Mi'ad - Resurrection

These beliefs are very in depth and would take volumes to cover fully, but here we will just touch upon them briefly to get an overview of them³⁹.

1. Tawhid (Oneness of Allah)

This is the belief in the oneness of Allah (swt). He is without any partners. It is the belief in Him being the sole creator of the universe and all that it contains. There is nothing like Allah (swt); nothing that can compare. We cannot give Allah (swt) human attributes; because He is above the things He has created. Allah (swt) has no image, so we cannot be created in His image as some other religions assume. He is far exalted over His creation.

We cannot see Allah (swt) and never will be able to do so. When Prophet Musa (as) asked to see Allah (swt),

39| This summary of the Usul Al-Din is taken from the book: 'The Mystery of the Shia' by the convert Sheikh, Mateen Charbonneau. He also currently leads a project called 2nd chance books which provides Islamic support for inmates who are currently in prisons in the US. To find out more visit: 2ndchancebooks.org

He replied by saying that Musa would never be able to see Him,



And when Musa came to Our determined appointment and his Lord spoke to him, he said: 'My Lord! Show me Yourself so that I may gaze upon You.' Allah said: 'You will never see Me, but gaze upon the mountain! If it stands still in its place, then you will see Me. And when his lord revealed his glory to the mountain, he sent it crashing down. And Musa fell down senseless and when he woke up, he said: 'Glory to you! I turn unto you repentant and I am the first of the believers. ⁴⁰

Our intellect cannot perceive Allah (swt).

"Vision comprehends Him not but He comprehends all vision."⁴¹

He is infinite and boundless, while we are finite and limited. Allah (swt) is not like His creation. He does not have a mate, nor does he have offspring. He is above all that the unbelievers attribute to Him.

*"Say: He, Allah, is One"
"Allah is He on Whom all depend"
"He begets not, nor is He begotten"
"And none is comparable with Him"⁴²*

Also, some people believe that God is a spirit, but this is not the case as the spirits and souls are created beings of Allah (swt) as well.

40| Qur'an, 7:143 - It should be noted that Prophet Musa (as) was aware that Allah (SWT) cannot be seen however he asked Allah (SWT) this question to prove this concept to his people

41| Qur'an, 6:103

42| Qur'an 112:1-4

“And they ask you about the spirit. Say ‘the spirit is from the command of my Lord and you are not given of the knowledge except a little’”⁴³

2. ‘Adalah (Justice of Allah)

This is the belief in the ultimate justice and justness of Allah (swt) and that he does no injustice to anyone. He deals justly with all his creation. He will reward or punish us according to how we lived out our lives here, on Earth. Did we abide and act accordingly to Allah’s (swt) laws? Or did we discard the Qur’an, and live how we wanted according to our own desires?

“And we shall set up the balances of justice on the Day of Judgment so no soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And even if there be the weight of a grain of a mustard seed even that we will bring it into account. And sufficient are we as reckoners”⁴⁴

“Say: Our lord will gather us together then He will judge between us with justice. And He is the Greatest Judge, the All-knowing.”⁴⁵

3. Nubuwwah (Prophethood)

This is the belief that all the prophets of Islam were sent with a mission from Allah (swt). When Allah wants to communicate to the people, he sends messengers to teach the masses about Him and His message. The way He does this is through inspiration/revelation to His chosen righteous servant of the time, so that he may be Allah’s messenger and the role model for the people to follow.

These messengers are called prophets and are the infallible guides of humanity. They are the way for the people to receive Allah’s (swt) messages.

43| Qur’an 17:85

44| Quran 21:47

45| Quran 34:26

We mold our lives according to their teachings and their character. These messengers are inspired through revelations brought by the angel Gabriel who is sent by the command of Allah (swt). Also, some were spoken to directly by Allah (swt) such as Prophet Musa (as).

There are 25 prophets spoken of in the Qur'an, but it is reported that there were as many as 124,000 prophets, Adam (as) being the first and Mohammad (sawa) being the last final messenger of Allah (swt). There are five Major Prophets known as the Ulil-Azm⁴⁶ who were sent as universal prophets to all of mankind. All other prophets were sent to particular groups or nations and sent to limited areas or specific territories. These five Major Prophets were Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), 'Isa (Jesus) and the seal of the prophets Mohammad, peace be upon them all.

4.Imamah (Vicegerency/Leadership)

This is the belief in the successorship of the 12 Imams after the Prophet Mohammed (sawa). Since there are no prophets after Prophet Mohammad (sawa), we have Imams to carry on the message, and to lead humanity in its course towards Allah (swt). The Imams have been appointed by the order of Allah (swt) for us to follow, through revelation to His last messenger Mohammad (sawa). These are the Ulil 'Amr (those given the authority) that Allah (swt) speaks of in the Holy Qur'an.



*O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you . And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best result.*⁴⁷

The Shi'a believe that the Prophet appointed, by the order of Allah (swt), 12 successors from his progeny to be the Imams for his community. It is narrated that the holy Prophet (sawa) said "After me there will be Imams from my progeny their number will be equal to the number of Bani Isra'il's heralds. That is 12 of whom nine will be Hussain's (as) descendants.

46| The Steadfast ones

47| Qur'an, 4:59

Allah (swt) has bestowed upon all of them my knowledge and wisdom, so don't teach them because surely, they know better than you. Follow them since they are definitely with the truth, and the truth is with them."⁴⁸ We, Shia Muslims, also believe that just as the prophets are infallible, so are the 12 imams. Allah (swt) says:

"Allah's wish is to keep away all impurity from you O' people of the house (Ahl Al-Bayt) and purify you with a thorough purification!"⁴⁹

How could Allah (swt) and His messenger appoint us guides and allow them to be sinful and corrupt? This would indeed be against Allah's justice commanding us to follow someone in sin, God forbid!

These 12 Imams are as follows:

1. Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib
2. Imam al-Hasan Ibn 'Ali
3. Imam al- Hussain Ibn 'Ali
4. Imam 'Ali Zayn Al-'Abideen (al-Sajjad)
5. Imam Mohammad al-Baqir
6. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq
7. Imam Musa al-Kadhim
8. Imam 'Ali ar-Ridha'
9. Imam Mohammad at-Taqi, al-Jawad
10. Imam 'Ali an-Naqi, al-Hadi
11. Imam Hasan al-'Askari
12. Imam al-Mahdi (May Allah hasten his reappearance)

May Allah (swt) bless them all!⁵⁰

5. Ma'ad (Resurrection)

Ma'ad means "return." This refers to the belief in the resurrection, which takes place after the life of this world and all that is contained within it has come to an end. Allah (swt) will resurrect His creation, so that we may return before Him for judgement, before taking our place in the afterlife.

48| Peshawar Nights by Sultanul Waizin Shirazi page 472.

49| Quran 33:33

50| Later in the book we will give further reading material related to each individual personality for those who want to find out more on each personality

On this Day of Judgment, if the person was a believer and a doer of good his place will be in Jannah (paradise) and if he was a disbeliever and/or a mischief maker then his place will be in the hell-fire. Allah (swt) is the best of judges and He will judge us justly and according to our intentions. May He have mercy on us all!

When we die, our souls will reside in barzakh, which is an intermediary phase between death and the resurrection, also called the life in the grave. If we were a doer of good, our grave will be a similitude to paradise and if we were evildoers, then it will be a place of punishment. When each person dies, he or she will be questioned by the two angels about his or her beliefs.

1) Who is your Lord?

– Allah

2) Who is your prophet?

– Mohammad Al-Mustafa (sawa)

3) Who is your imam?

– From Imam Ali (as) to Imam al-Mahdi (aj), who is the Imam of our time.

May Allah (swt) allow us to all answer these questions with conviction and the certainty of strong faith!

These were a summary of the principles of religion, and a convert will find many books which elaborate more on each one. For example, one can find books, series and courses relating to the oneness of Allah (swt). Later on in the book we will give recommendations of resources relating to knowledge.

Furu' Al-Din - The Branches of Religion

In Islam, having the correct beliefs is essential — but true faith is not merely internal. To show genuine belief to Allah, one must embody it through action. It's common to hear people say, "What matters is what's in the heart," but this statement falls short. Often, it's used as a justification by those seeking to avoid religious commitment or by individuals who choose not to act upon their faith. Yet, as we know, words without action carry little weight. The following hadith from the Prophet Muhammad (saw) offers a clear and powerful definition of what true faith entails:

It has been narrated by the Holy Prophet (sawa):



Iman (faith) is conviction in the heart, confessing with the tongue, and action by the pillars [of worship].⁵¹

One cannot be without the other as all must exist simultaneously. For example, if one was to perform salah to show off, then they are trying to do it without their heart, so their actions and confessions are worthless. Similarly, if someone says that they are a believer in Allah (swt) but do not carry out any of the obligatory acts which have been legislated by Allah (swt), then they cannot truly call themselves a believer. One must prove their belief by performing actions and set this as a standard within our daily lives. For example, if one claims to be another's friend, they must show that through actions. If your friend came to you seeking help and you said: "you are my friend within my heart" but didn't help them, then would you be a true friend? Of course not! They must be your friend in your heart and through your actions in a time of need.

Therefore, if one truly believes in the foundations of religion, they must believe in the branches of religion which are performed through action.

'Furu' al-deen' means the branches of religion. These branches are the obligations that Allah (swt) has commanded us to follow. The 'usul al-deen' are the beliefs of a Muslim and the furu al-deen are the practices. These are the actions that when applied to the beliefs make us a mu'min (believer). If you believe without following the laws and doing the actions you will just be considered a Muslim (one who submits) and not a mu'min (a believer).

"The wandering Arabs say: 'We believe.' Say: 'You believe not but rather say you submit, for faith has not yet entered into your hearts. Yet if you obey Allah and his messenger, He will not withhold from you anything of your deeds. Verily Allah is the Oft-forgiving, the most Merciful.'⁵²

"The true believers are those who say, believe in Allah and His messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the sincere ones."⁵³

51| Al-Tusi's Amali, Volume 1, Page 290.

52| Quran 49:14

53| Quran 49:15

Iman (faith) must be accompanied with actions. These branches of religion are ten, which are:

1 | Salat - Prayer

2 | Sawm - Fasting

3 | Hajj - Pilgrimage

4 | Zakat - Consists of the payment of a portion of certain assets for the cause of Allah.

5 | Khums - Consists of 20% of one's surplus savings that is given for the cause of Allah.

6 | Jihad - Striving/Fighting in the cause of Allah with your wealth, property, and selves.

7 | Amr bil ma'ruf - Enjoining what is right.

8 | Nahi 'anil-munkar - Forbidding what is wrong.

9 | Tawalla - Love for Allah, the Prophet (sawa), the Prophet's Family (as) and their friends.

10 | Tabarra - Disassociation from the enemies of Allah, those who hate the Prophet (sawa), and who hate the Prophet's Family (as).

Salat

These are the five daily prayers that all Muslims are obligated to make. This is our direct line of communication to Allah. By staying in the remembrance of Allah we will refrain from sins.

“Recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book and keep up prayer; surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest, and Allah knows what you do.”⁵⁴

54| Qur'an, 29:45

These 5 prayers are as follows:

- 1) Fajr - the dawn prayer
- 2) Dohr - the noon prayer
- 3) 'Asr - the afternoon prayer
- 4) Maghrib - the after-sunset prayer
- 5) Isha' - the evening prayer

It has been narrated by the Holy Prophet (sawa) that on the Day of Judgment the first thing that we are going to be asked about by Allah is the salat. If the prayers are accepted then all other deeds will be accepted, but if the prayers are not accepted then all the other deeds will be rejected.

So, dear brothers and sisters let's please guard our salat and be punctual in performing them. It is a priority for a convert to thoroughly learn their salah and its meanings, so that they will benefit more when performing it.

We recommend a great video series on YouTube by Noor Islamic Education titled 'How to Pray Fajr' 'How to Pray Duhr/Asr' 'How to Pray Maghrib' & 'How to pray Isha'.

Sawm

This is the fasting in the Holy month of Ramadan, the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. This is the month that the Qur'an was revealed to our beloved Prophet (sawa). Fasting is made for us to obtain piety (taqwa). It is reported that fasting is a shield against the hell-fire. By attempting to live simpler during this time, we become more compassionate towards mankind, especially those who are less fortunate than us.

We abstain from eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, vain talk, etc. from dawn till sunset. This is a good time to work on ourselves and give up our bad habits and start fresh, Insha'Allah (God-willing). Blessings are also increased during this blessed month for the good deeds we perform. Traditions state that if you complete the month of fasting successfully all of your sins will be forgiven. May Allah (swt) grant us all this great mercy!

"O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may develop piety."⁵⁵

55| Quran 2:183

Hajj

This is the pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah (Mecca) to visit and fulfil the rituals at the Holy Ka'bah. The Ka'bah is the house of worship that prophet Ibrahim (as) and his son Isma'il (as) built. This trip to Makkah (Mecca) is obligatory upon the Muslim only once in his life if you have the means to do so, otherwise it is not held against you. We should all have the niyyah (intention) in our heart to make Hajj, so that even if we die not being able to do so, then may Allah reward us for our intentions, Insha Allah (God willing).

“In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim, and whoever enters it shall be secure, and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) every one who is able to undertake the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient, above any need of the worlds.”⁵⁶

Zakat

The Arabic word zakat means to purify. This charity is a way to purify our wealth. Zakat consists of the payment of a portion of certain assets for the cause of Allah.

From What Things Should Zakat Be Paid?

1. The three groups of grazing livestock: cows, sheep and camels.
2. The four types of grains: dates, raisins, wheat and barley.
3. Two types of coinage: gold and silver.

Thus, zakat has to be paid obligatorily from nine things. It is recommended that zakat should also be paid from other things like properties and business assets.

To Whom Should Zakat Be Given?

Zakat should be expended in eight categories:

1. The poor.
2. The penurious: one whose condition is more severe than that of a poor person.

⁵⁶| Quran 3:97

3. Officials who are appointed to collect the zakat.
4. Matters that may be considered to be for the cause of God, this is anything that is for the benefit of the Muslims, be it related to his religious or worldly affairs.
5. Debtors who are unable to pay their debts.
6. Wayfarers who cannot travel any further and cannot afford to return to their own homeland.
7. Those who receive from the zakat in order either to strengthen the faith already present in their hearts or to discourage them from harming the Muslims.
8. Slaves: bond persons who live under difficult conditions should be purchased with zakat money or freed.

Khums

This is the 20% of one's surplus savings, that is given for the cause of Allah.

“And know that whatever thing you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and for the Messenger and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, if you believe in Allah and in that which We revealed to Our servant, on the day of distinction, the day on which the two parties met; and Allah has power over all things.”⁵⁷

From What Income Should Khums Be Given?

From seven things:

1. Treasure from war.
2. Things that have been acquired by means of diving in the seas.
3. Mineral ore.
4. Profits and gains.
5. Land that a non-Muslim buys from a Muslim.
6. A halal (lawful or religiously permissible) gain that has been mixed with a haram (unlawful or religiously forbidden) gain.
7. Treasure.

⁵⁷| Quran 8:41

To Whom Should Khums Be Paid?

A portion of khums is given to a qualified Muslim jurist (Marja') — an authority in Islamic law — who allocates it toward religious and community needs as deemed appropriate. The remaining portion is used to support orphans, the poor, and stranded travellers from among the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (sawa).

Jihad

The Arabic word jihad means to strive. Jihad is generally divided into two forms: the greater jihad and the lesser jihad.

The greater jihad is an internal struggle to be pious and good. It is incumbent upon us to strive in the cause of Allah to better our surroundings and ourselves. The lesser jihad is an external struggle, or defence, in protection of Islam and Muslims. This defence must be done in accordance with Islamic rulings. Even in war, there are etiquettes that must be adhered to.

Let us look at what the Qur'an says about the severity of killing a person unjustly.

“Whosoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and whoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind.”⁵⁸

Let us also look at this hadith related by Imam as-Sadiq (as) about the rules and precautions of war:

“The Messenger of Allah (sawa), when he wanted to send out troops, called them and bid them to sit before him. He then said to them: Go out in the name of Allah and by Allah and in the way of Allah and according to the religion of the Messenger of Allah. Do not handcuff or tie up (the prisoners of war), do not mutilate (even the dead), and do not betray people. Do not kill the old man, the child or the woman, and do not cut down a single tree except when you are forced to do so. And if any Muslim be he lofty or lowly gives a man of the Polytheists sanctuary, then his safety must be secured so that he hears the word of Allah.

58| Quran 5:32

If he follows you then he is your brother in religion. If he refuses then give him his sanctuary and seek the help of Allah regarding him.”⁵⁹

Allah says in the Noble Qur'an:

“And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah. Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know.”⁶⁰

The Prophet Mohammad's (sawa) peaceful approach is well-known, especially in his conquest of Mecca. Despite years of persecution, including exile, assassination attempts, and the killing of his followers and daughter, the Prophet (sawa) conquered Mecca without bloodshed. He extended kindness to its people, even sending spoils from Khaybar to Mecca's poor. He pardoned key enemies like Abu Sufyan and his wife Hind, who had brutally mutilated his uncle Hamza. The Prophet (sawa) never forced Islam on the people of Mecca but allowed them to live peacefully under Islamic rule, hoping they would eventually accept the faith willingly.

As the Qur'an states:

“There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion.”⁶¹

So, as we can see, our Holy Prophet (sawa) and his family were never the aggressors. They defended their religion by performing Jihad when they were attacked, but they would always strive to resolve matters peacefully. When forced to perform Jihad there were very strict rules and regulations to ensure that the Muslims did not overstep the boundaries.

Amr Bil Ma'ruf

This means enjoining what is right; inviting others to piety and righteousness. This should be done upon yourself first, then your family, then upon the people in your surroundings. This is done with the intention to prevent a corrupt society. If we constantly remind one another to do good deeds then we will stay conscious of Allah (swt), and thus will stay on the straight path.

59| War, Peace and Non-Violence by Ayatollah S.M Shirazi page 21.

60| Quran 9:6

61| Quran 2:256

*“You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient.”*⁶²

Nahi ‘Anil Munkar

This means forbidding what is wrong; advising and admonishing against haraam (forbidden) acts. This goes along with the above obligation. If we see someone doing wrong and going astray then we should admonish that person. This way, he will remember Allah (swt) and seek his forgiveness. And refrain from the act of disobedience.

Wilayah

This is the love that we must cultivate in our hearts for the Messenger of Allah (sawa) and his family (as), and their followers. We must have love for these people, as they are the near and dear ones to Allah (swt). They are our role models, and our guides for this life. Allah (swt) commands us to love them in the Qur’an.

*“Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives (Ahl Al-Bayt); and whoever earns good, We give him more of good therein; surely Allah is Forgiving, Grateful.”*⁶³

Allah (swt) loves these individuals so we should also show our love for them. The Prophet (sawa) is reported to have said:

*“None of you truly believes until he loves me more than he loves his own family.”*⁶⁴

If it were not for them then we would still be in the realm of ignorance and misguidance. We should love them for showing us the truth, how to apply it to our daily lives and for all of the great sacrifices they made to preserve the religion! Praise be to Allah (swt) who made perfect His religion and completed

62| Quran 3:110

63| Quran 42:23

64| This can be found in the Sunni source of Bukhari and is attributed to the Prophet Mohamad (sawa) Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 15, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 44

His favor with the establishment of the commander of the faithful, ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib’s (as) love and authority!

Praise be to Allah (swt) who blessed us to be among those who cling and hold to the love and authority of the commander of the faithful and all of the Imam’s, peace be upon them all!

Tabarra

This is the disassociation that we have from the enemies of Allah (swt), enemies of His Prophet (sawa), enemies of the Prophet’s family (as) and their followers⁶⁵. Islam teaches us to love for the sake of Allah (swt) and also to disassociate for the sake of Allah (swt). Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an:

“Allah has not made for any man two hearts within him.”⁶⁶

So, love for Allah (swt) and for His enemy can never coexist in the heart of a true believer. We must disassociate ourselves from these people and their corrupt ideologies. Just think of it rationally, who would want to associate and be around someone who was hostile to Islam and hated your way of life?

So, love for Allah (swt) and for His enemy can never coexist in the heart of a true believer. We must disassociate ourselves from these people and their corrupt ideologies. Just think of it rationally, who would want to associate and be around someone who was hostile to Islam and hated your way of life?

“And [mention, O Mohammad], when Abraham said to his father (caretaker) and his people:

“...Indeed, I am disassociated (baree) from that which you worship”

“Except for He who created me; and indeed, He will guide me”

“And he made it a word remaining among his descendants that they might return [to it]”⁶⁷

65| For more details on the topic of Tabarra, it is recommended one reads the book of the convert Sheikh, Daniel Peyser which can be purchased on Lulu.com. Title of book: Uncovering the Idols of Ahl al-Saqīfah

66| Qur’an, 33:4

67| Quran 43:26-28

Remember, that Allah also says in the Qur'an that if a person, irrespective of their faith, is not hostile to Islam then we should treat them justly.

“Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice”

“Allah only forbids you respecting those who made war upon you on account of (your) religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust.”⁶⁸

68| Quran 60:8-9

18 | STARTING YOUR ISLAMIC LEARNING JOURNEY

Now that you have learned about the roots and branches of religion, you might wonder where to start building on this knowledge and how to delve deeper into each of the Usul and Furu al-Din. As a new convert, your priority should be to learn how to perform Salah, including the meanings of the prayers in your language and the ablutions required before them. All recitations within your salah must be said in Arabic.

To guide your learning, consider the concept of the Islamic triangle, which comprises Aqaid (beliefs), Ahkam (laws), and Akhlaq (ethics). Let us explain these components and corners of this triangle to help you build a solid foundation:

Corner 1: Ahkaam (the Islamic laws)

Islam is not just a religion but a comprehensive way of life with laws and principles covering every aspect of human existence. When it comes to practical and jurisprudential laws, Islam strikes the perfect balance. While the Jewish faith places heavy emphasis on ritual laws, and Christianity has abandoned many divine laws, allowing practices such as consuming pork, drinking alcohol, and dressing immodestly, Islam offers a balanced approach. It integrates laws, spirituality, and theological beliefs harmoniously.



Strive hard in Allah's Cause as you ought to strive. He has chosen you and has not laid upon you in religion any hardship ⁶⁹

Islam is not a religion to cause hardship; rather many of the laws are for the benefit of the human being and often there is a divine wisdom behind such laws whether one knows it or not. By understanding and implementing Ahkam, you can align your actions with the principles of Islam and develop a well-rounded practice of your faith. There are many Islamic laws, but the ones which a person should prioritise learning are those things which they need in their daily lives. Usually when one goes to study Ahkaam or Islamic law, they will start from the following:

69| Quran 22:78

- Tahara (purity) - Purity is divided into Khabath (physical impurity) and Hadath (spirituality or ritual impurity).
- Khabath: Intrinsically and Physically Impure Substances

Intrinsically and physically impure substances (najasa) in Islam include urine, faeces, semen, blood, swine, and alcohol. Understanding Islamic jurisprudential laws will teach one how to purify such substances. For instance, if someone gets an impure substance, such as blood, on their body or clothes, studying ahkaam (Islamic rulings) will guide them on how to purify it. This can be done by pouring water over it and then soaking up the water. This purification process is distinct from regular cleaning, where one might simply spray a disinfectant and wipe it.

In Islam, just as a person's heart should be pure with the correct intention when praying, their clothing and body should also be pure and free from physical impurities ⁷⁰. Purifying physical impurity does not require an intention in one's heart, which differentiates it from ritual or spiritual purification. When purifying something according to Islamic law, one merely carries out the purification in the correct manner, without needing a specific intention in their heart.

There is a big emphasis on water being a purifier in Islam, as the Quran says:

“And He it is Who sendeth the winds, glad tidings heralding His mercy, and We send down purifying water from the sky”⁷¹

Hadath (Ritual or spiritual impurity) - This type of purification isn't to do with purifying physical substances but relates to making one in a pure spiritual state. It is divided into 2 categories: Hadath Asghar (the minor impurity) and Hadath Al-Akbar (the major impurity). Let us give some simple examples:

The Minor Impurity

When preparing to perform salah, it is necessary to perform Wudu, the ritual ablution. This act of purification allows one to enter a temporary spiritual state, enabling the performance of certain acts of worship. However, this state of

70| There are some certain exceptions where one could have physical impurity on their clothes which one learns in detail when they study the laws relating to clothing in prayer and najasa

71| Quran 25:48

purity can be invalidated by specific actions such as passing wind, urinating, defecating, or falling into a deep sleep. If any of these occur, Wudu must be repeated before one can pray again. Additionally, if someone cannot find water or if using it would be harmful, they may perform tayammum, a dry form of ablution. Tayammum involves striking the palms on soil and then wiping the face and hands.

The Major Impurity

A major state of impurity arises from actions such as sexual intercourse, ejaculation, touching a dead body, or when a woman enters her menstrual cycle. To restore a state of spiritual purity, one must perform ghusl, a ritual bath or shower. Ghusl involves making an intention and then ensuring water touches all parts of the body. Unlike some practices in the Jewish faith, for example, which require a woman to go to a temple for purification, Islam simplifies the process by allowing it to be done at home in the shower. It is essential to remember that purifying oneself from a major hadath requires an intention before performing the action.

For example, one should say in their heart or mind: “O Allah, I perform ghusl al-janabah to gain closeness to You and purify myself from this state of ritual impurity” before performing ghusl. In contrast, purifying oneself from khabath (physical impurities) does not require such an intention; one simply needs to wash off the impure substance correctly.

One may think that this seems a bit full on and complicated, however all of these things have been simplified and can be learned by reading an Islamic law books from one the grand scholars who are usually referred to as a marja or ayatollah. It is important that one follows an expert in regards to fiqh rulings, because many of these scholars have studied the Quran and hadiths for decades. They produce the final package for anyone who wants to read the ruling in a few sentences. Of course, in the more advanced books and lessons of these scholars, the evidence will be shown.

Some individuals claim that one shouldn't follow a scholar and should derive rulings independently. However, this is incorrect, as one must be qualified to do so. Just as one consults a doctor, an expert in medicine, for medical advice, it is essential to seek guidance from the highest religious authorities in matters of faith. Would you trust a self-taught doctor who only reads things online?

There are many scholars to choose from and we are not promoting any particular scholar over another within this book. One example of a major and

highly followed scholar is, Ayatollah Sayed Ali Sistani. His books serve as excellent examples of texts where one can learn Ahkam (Islamic rulings).

Some of these books are:

1. Islamic Laws by Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Sistani
2. A Code of Practice for Muslims in the West by Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Hussein al-Sistani
3. Jurisprudence Made Easy by Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Sistani
4. Simplified Islamic Laws for Youth and Young Adults by Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Sistani

These books are available online and in Islamic bookstores. They can be studied comprehensively or used as reference guides when questions arise. Each grand scholar typically has a website in various languages, which can be consulted for rulings. These books will teach you the rulings of the first five Furu' al-Din (Branches of Religion) and even more.

The Islamic laws books after starting with purity (tahara), will then give one the rulings on:

Salah - The prayer one performs 5 times a day; for example, a question could relate to what one should do when they have forgotten which unit of salah they are in

Fasting - the rulings one needs for fasting on the holy month of Ramadan. For example, which things break one's fast and what should one do if they ate something due to forgetting that they are fasting.

Zakat - The obligatory Islamic charitable tax; for example, questions relating to what items this applies to and how much one should pay on the day of Eid for their zakat al-fitrah,

Hajj - While these rulings may not seem immediately relevant if one is not obligated to perform the pilgrimage, there may come a time when learning them becomes essential. The rulings for Hajj are generally detailed in Islamic law books, as well as in separate texts entirely dedicated to the subject. Preparing in advance allows one to fully understand and fulfil the requirements when the opportunity to undertake Hajj arises.

Transactions - How one deals with their wealth relating to themselves and others in a manner that complies with Islamic law. For example, questions may pertain to which items are allowed for one to buy or sell or whether it's permissible to engage in interest bearing transactions.

Marriage/divorce - How one conducts a marriage contract and its conditions. Questions can relate to how one is allowed to marry and what type of dowry one must pay etc

You will find many additional rulings on various topics, but we've highlighted the main ones here. It is highly recommended for converts and born Muslims alike to take courses that break down and clarify these rulings with practical examples. Alhamdulillah, with internet access, there are now numerous online courses in English that allow one to learn from home. These Hawza seminary courses can help build a solid foundation in an organised and accessible way. One may refer to the following courses for learning Ahkaam:

1. <https://imamsadiq.ac/en/course/en-an-introduction-to-islamic-laws> - The "Introduction to Islamic Laws" provides a foundational overview of Islamic jurisprudence. This pre-Hawza course is designed to introduce students to core principles, rulings, and the structure of Islamic law, addressing topics such as worship, ethics, and personal development. It's suited for those seeking a structured entry into Islamic studies, using English-language resources and beginner-friendly materials.
2. <https://hujjahseminary.com/> - Islamic Law (Fiqh) Year 1 course by Sayed Baqir Qazwini - The Islamic laws relating to purity and salah are taught. Additionally, it also mentions some of the evidence behind rulings from both Quran and hadiths.
3. <https://imamsadiq.ac/en/course/en-ahkam> - The Ahkaam course goes through the Islamic laws book of a marja' and explains the rulings
4. English-Fiqh and Life (Jurisprudence) Imam Hussain Foundation - These lessons are available on YouTube, covering topics like those mentioned above, and extending to marriage, divorce, breastfeeding, and other relevant issues.
5. Islamic Lessons Made Easy - These are short videos, each a few minutes long, explaining the basics of ahkam (Islamic rulings). The playlist titled "Islamic Law - Fiqh - Ahkam - Jurisprudence" includes more than 69 videos, using animations that make them suitable for younger audiences as well.

Corner 2: Aqaid (the Islamic beliefs)

When one chooses to follow a belief system, it is essential to understand the rationale behind it. Islam discourages blindly following one's forefathers and encourages individuals to be strong and informed in their beliefs.

Allah (swt) says in the holy Quran:



When it is said unto them, "Follow what God has sent down," they say, "Nay, we follow that which we found our fathers doing." What! Even though their fathers understood nothing, and were not rightly guided. ⁷²

Therefore, while one may imitate a jurist in rulings of Islamic law, it is forbidden to do so regarding one's theological beliefs. One can ask scholars for their evidence on theological issues and learn from them, but one should not follow them blindly. For example, belief in God should be based on genuine conviction and the various proofs available, not merely because a scholar said so.

From the previous chapter, you learned the basics of the Usul al-Din (the roots of religion):

1. Tawhid- Oneness of Allah
2. 'Adalah- Justice of Allah
3. Nubuwwah- Prophethood
4. Imamah- Vicegerency/Leadership
5. Ma'ad- Resurrection

When studying Aqaid, each principle is explored in depth. Scholars have written entire books and delivered a series of lectures on each aspect which can be delved into. For example, there are numerous books and lectures solely dedicated to Tawhid.

1. Tawhid: Courses will discuss proofs for God's existence, His attributes, names, the concept of God's oneness, negating the idea of Him being compound, and the impossibility of multiple gods.

72| Quran 2:170

2. Adalah: This covers the justice of God, including topics such as good and evil, how God never oppresses anyone, reward and punishment, and the actions of His servants.

3. Nubuwwah: Here, one learns about the necessity of prophets, their attributes, proofs of prophethood, miracles, infallibility, and Quranic verses and hadiths related to prophethood.

4. Imamah: This includes the need for Imams, who appointed them, infallibility, differences between prophethood and Imams, and identification of the Imams through Quran and hadiths.

5. Resurrection: Topics include whether the resurrection is physical or spiritual, the barzakh (intermediate state), the blowing of the trumpet, intercession from the prophets and imams, paradise, hell, the Sirat (bridge over hell), and more.

One could refer to the following courses to learn Aqaid and Usul e din:

1. Principles of Islam Course - Dr. Sayed Khalil Tabatabai (available as a YouTube playlist with 110 lessons).
2. Islamic Beliefs (Aqa'ed) Year One - Sayed Baqir Qazwini (available on Hujjahseminary.com). This series includes over 100 lessons across four courses.

Recommended reading list of English books related to Aqaid -

1. Principles of Faith (Usul Al-Din) - by Ayatollah Wahid A-Khorasani
2. Fundamentals of Islam - by Ayatollah Sayed Mohammad al-Shirazi
3. Doctrines of Shi'i Islam - by Ayatollah Sheikh Ja'far Subhani
4. Islamic Belief System - by Sheikh Mohammad Ali Shomali

Corner 3: Akhlaaq (ethics)

We have covered the first two topics of the Islamic triangle. The first corner of the triangle were the Islamic laws, which are crucial for understanding our ritual acts of worship and integrating them into our daily lives. The second topic is the importance of being strong in Islamic beliefs, which is especially vital when living in the West due to the constant ideological threats posed to us and our children. The third essential aspect to study within the Islamic triangle is akhlaaq (morality and ethics), as it develops one's spirituality. Islam places a significant emphasis on having the most upright character, and Allah describes the

Prophet Mohammad (sawa) in the following way:



*And verily, you (O Mohammad) are on an exalted standard of character.*⁷³

There is also a famous hadith attributed to the Prophet Mohammad (sawa), which states:

*“It is narrated by the Messenger of Allah (sawa), Verily, I have been sent to perfect morals.”*⁷⁴

The Prophet Mohammad (sawa) and the Ahlul Bayt (as) were sent to teach people the most perfect morals so that the people could implement these lessons in their own lives. The pre-Islamic Arabian era was full of darkness and ignorance, where people would bury their baby daughters alive, worship idols they crafted themselves, and kill each other over animals. The Prophet (sawa) came to lead people out of such darkness and instil well-established morals that remain relevant today, even as societal morals constantly change and become subjective.

Why is it essential to study akhlaaq? Akhlaaq is a science that provides precise definitions of good and bad qualities, guiding us toward a correct understanding of morality and its practical application. The study of akhlaaq trains us to develop our inner qualities, which are more crucial than external actions since actions can be performed for the wrong reasons if the underlying intention is incorrect.

Unfortunately, many people fail to diagnose their negative character traits, leading to their downfall. Consider someone experiencing constant pain; they would visit a doctor to diagnose and resolve the issue. Ignoring a serious medical problem can be detrimental, potentially leading to death. Similarly, a severe character flaw can be even more dangerous than a physical illness.

73| Quran 68:4

74| [Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 5217] - This hadith is often quoted by both Shia and Sunni scholars. Although the source of it may originate in Sunni sources, there is no issue with its content as it was something the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) did in his mission.

A physical illness affects one only in this world, whereas a spiritual disease can impact a person both in this world and the hereafter. If negative personality traits are not detected, they may worsen and lead to major sins.

Therefore, it is crucial to diagnose and address our negative character traits to find solutions for positive change. Diagnosing negative traits can only be done by studying akhlāq correctly. For instance, some people are naturally generous, while others are naturally stingy. Stinginess is a negative trait, but can it be changed? The answer is yes, but it requires effort and persistence. Just as building physical strength and muscles requires consistent effort at the gym, transforming negative traits into positive ones demands dedication and effort. One must first recognize the negative trait, then follow a spiritual prescription to replace it with its positive counterpart. In the case of stinginess, the opposite would be generosity.

It is also possible that an individual's disposition is not inherent but develops due to other spiritual diseases that they possess. For example, one might become stingy not because they were born with such a trait, but because of their lack of tawakkul (reliance) on Allah (swt). Without faith in Allah as Al-Razzaq (the Sustainer), they may be reluctant to spend their money or help others, fearing they will not be rewarded or recompensed for their generosity. In contrast, a true believer with complete reliance on Allah (swt) would not be concerned when spending in the way of God, as they firmly believe that Allah (swt) is the Provider and will reward them for their generosity and spending.

One should know that the goal of Akhlāq is to cultivate good traits into habits, forming a firm disposition. Studying and implementing good ethics not only benefits one in this world—making them beloved and sought after by others—but also earns rewards from Allah (swt) for demonstrating virtuous traits.

It is narrated by Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq (as):



*Moral behaviour is a gift that Allah, the Most Majestic, the Most Holy, that He bestows upon His creature. From moral behaviour comes habit and intentions.' Then he was asked, 'Which one is better?' The Imam said, 'A person with an established habit is not able to do anything else. The person who possesses the intention may exercise patience for worship and thus, is the better one of the two.'*⁷⁵

75| Al-Kāfi - Volume 2 Book 1, Chapter #49 Excellence in Moral Behaviours

In the aforementioned hadith, we understand that it is more commendable for a person to cultivate good traits through effort rather than being born with them. This can be seen as a test from Allah (swt). For instance, one individual may naturally be calm, while another, due to their genetics, may be prone to anger and short temper. The calm person, while inherently possessing this trait, does not need to strive for it, unlike the angry person who must exert considerable effort to maintain composure and control their anger.

On the other hand, a naturally calm person may struggle to exhibit anger in situations where it is needed. For example, it is necessary for a person to feel anger when witnessing injustice and oppression, as this emotion can drive them to oppose these wrongs. Thus, the balance lies in striving to develop the appropriate traits and reactions in various circumstances, as a reflection of one's inner moral and ethical growth.

When you study Akhlaaq, it will touch upon topics such as:

- Why one should be virtuous
- The powers of the soul and intellect
- Self-purification and its stages
- Showing off vs sincerity
- Knowledge vs ignorance
- Narcissism
- Arrogance vs humility
- Greed vs contentment
- Stinginess and generosity
- Patience
- The negative effects of anger and how to control it
- Forbearance
- Hypocrisy
- Having haya' (shame) and modesty
- Self-respect
- Courage
- Honesty

One may refer to the following courses in English to study the science of akhlaaq:

1. Philosophy of Ethics Course Akhlaaq Year One - By Sayed Ahmad Qazwini (available from Hujjahseminary.com with 15 lessons)
2. Philosophy of Ethics Course Akhlaaq Year Two- By Sayed Ahmad Qazwini (available from Hujjahseminary.com with 23 lessons)
3. Munyat al-Mureed Course - By Sheikh Mustafa Akhound (available on <https://imamsadiq.ac/en>) with 72 lessons)

Recommended reading:

1. “The Moral Stories of the Holy Prophets” by Sayyed Ali Akbar Sadaat.
2. “The Book of Guidance (Tuhaf al-Uqul)” translated by A. Q. Qara’i.
3. “Jami’ al-Sa’adat (The Collector of Felicities)” by Mohammad Mahdi Naraqi.
4. “Akhlaq al-A’imma, Morals & Manners of the Holy Imams by Ma’sum Ali Azarbaijani.
5. Islamic ethics By Sayyid Abdul-husayn Dastghaib Shirazi
6. Nobilities of Character: A Translation of Makarim al-Akhlaq by Abu Nasr al-Hassan ibn Fadl al-Tabarsi, a renowned Shia scholar and author.
7. “Greater Sins” by Ayatollah Abdul Husayn Dastghaib Shirazi.
8. The Treatise of Rights by the 4th Imam, Imam Al-Sajjad Zaynul ‘Abidin (as).

Note: It’s not necessary to read every book mentioned. One can simply choose one or two to begin with and explore them to see which they find most engaging and beneficial.

How to Pray

A great series is available on YouTube to help you learn how to pray your 5 daily prayers

19 | ADDITIONAL TOPICS OF STUDY

Before concluding this book, we will briefly mention additional Islamic subjects and sciences that one can study to deepen their knowledge even further after studying the initial courses that we recommended. It is important to note that the great scholars of Islam often study for over 60 years, continuing until their final days, as the pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong journey. Islamic knowledge can be likened to an endless ocean filled with pearls—vast and infinite, never fully attainable. However, through consistent and correct learning, one can acquire a deep understanding and be recognized as a well-learned individual. Such a person not only benefits personally from this knowledge but is also capable of teaching and spreading it to benefit others.

Topic 1: Arabic – Classical Arabic is the language of Islam, and it does not belong exclusively to Arabs but to all Muslims. Learning Arabic will enhance one’s understanding of the Qur’an, allowing them to recite it in its original language and more fully appreciate its eloquence and beauty. It also enables one to recite the supplications⁷⁶ of the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) and the Ahlul Bayt (as). While one can read the Qur’an and supplications in a translation of their native language, reading them in the original language helps deepen understanding and may offer greater spiritual rewards.

Additionally, learning Arabic allows access to the primary texts of Islam. While many books have been translated and continue to be translated into various languages especially English, knowing Arabic grants access to a much larger body of knowledge. The Arabic that one needs to learn for these purposes is Classical Arabic, which differs from the colloquial dialects spoken by Arabs today. For instance, while most Arabs understand Classical Arabic—heard in the Qur’an, news broadcasts, lectures, formal speeches, and even cartoons—they do not speak it in daily conversation. Classical Arabic is more of a written language but knowing it will allow one to communicate with Arabs from any country.

76| The Prophet (sawa) and Ahlul Bayt (as) left us with an abundance of supplications for various matters in our daily lives. One is recommended to visit <https://www.duas.org/> and also read the book *Sahifah Sajadiyyah*, which is a collection of supplications attributed to Imam Ali Zayn al-Abidin (as), the fourth Shia Imam. It contains profound prayers on spirituality, ethics, and seeking Allah’s mercy. Often called “The Psalms of the Ahlul Bayt,” it is highly regarded in Shia Islam for its guidance in personal worship and reflection. The book has been translated into English and is available online.

If one seeks to learn Arabic to gain knowledge and become more familiar with their religion, they should prioritise Classical Arabic. After mastering Classical Arabic, it will be easier to pick up a dialect if desired. However, Arabic dialects used for speaking vary significantly in expressions and words depending on the country.

New Muslims and converts should not worry if they cannot pronounce certain Arabic words and letters like a native speaker. What matters is their sincere effort, and according to one of our hadiths, Allah (swt) will grant them the same reward for their attempts.



Ali ibn Ibrahim narrated from his father, from al-Nawfali, from al-Sakuni, from Abu Abdullah (a.s) who said: The Prophet (sawa) said: “Indeed, a non-Arab man from my nation recites the Quran in a non-Arabic manner, and the angels elevate him to an Arabic level.”⁷⁷

There are many online courses and Arabic teachers available for those who wish to learn Arabic. It is not even necessary for the teacher to be a Muslim, as there are non-Muslims and non-Arabs who specialise in the language. In Shia seminaries, Arabic is typically taught by dividing it into Sarf (morphology)⁷⁸ and Nahw (syntax). The Hawza course books generally teach students in a way that helps them distinguish between the two, whereas general Arabic books may not. Below, we will provide a few recommended books, along with various online courses for those interested in learning Arabic.

77| Al-Kāfi - Volume 2 Book 3, Chapter #12 The Holy Quran will be Raised as it Was Sent Down Ḥadīth #1

78| Sarf (morphology) and Nahw (syntax) are two key branches of Arabic grammar, each serving a distinct purpose:

Sarf (Morphology): This deals with the structure and patterns of words. It focuses on how words are formed and transformed, including how root letters change to form different verb tenses, nouns, adjectives, and other word forms. Sarf helps in understanding word construction, conjugation, and how meanings shift with changes in word patterns.

Nahw (Syntax): This governs the structure of sentences, focusing on how words interact with each other to form grammatically correct sentences. Nahw deals with sentence rules, word order, and the roles that different words (nouns, verbs, particles, etc.) play within a sentence. It ensures proper sentence construction, helping to clarify meaning and relationships between words.

In short, Sarf is about word forms, while Nahw is about how those words are used in sentences.

Some Recommendations

1. Al-Arabiya Baynah Yadayk (Arabic at Your Hands) – by Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al Shaikh (up to 8 volumes).

This is a comprehensive series designed to teach Arabic to non-native speakers. It focuses on all language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—and is commonly used in Arabic learning institutions worldwide. The volumes cover a range of topics, progressing from beginner to advanced levels, with plenty of exercises and real-life dialogue practice. The books also come with a CD and mp3 files.

Audience: Beginner to advanced learners.

2. Arabic Morphology: An Introduction by Sayyid Mohammad Rida Tabataba'i.

This book introduces Arabic Sarf (morphology), the branch of grammar that deals with word forms and how root words change across different patterns. It's ideal for students of classical Arabic who want to understand how verbs and nouns are derived and conjugated.

Audience: Students of classical Arabic, particularly those interested in Quranic studies and Islamic sciences.

3. Madina Arabic Course – Full set of 3 volumes by Dr. V. Abdur Rahim,

This series is widely used to teach classical Arabic, particularly for those studying Islamic texts and the Qur'an. The course emphasises grammar and vocabulary essential for understanding the Qur'an and hadith, with structured lessons that build up a student's proficiency in Arabic.

Audience: Beginner to intermediate learners, especially those focusing on Islamic studies. There are plenty of free online video courses that teach all 3 books.

4. Arabic Essential Grammar (Routledge Essential Grammars) by Faruk Abu-Chacra.

This is a concise, clear guide to Arabic grammar, covering the key rules and structures of both classical and modern standard Arabic. It is easy to navigate and serves as a reference book for students looking to solidify their understanding of Arabic grammar in an accessible format. There are plenty of great reading exercises in Arabic and English with all the vowel signs on the words to make it easier. This was recommended by another convert hawza (seminary) student who was studying in the hawza in Syria.

Audience: Intermediate learners seeking a clear, structured overview of Arabic grammar.

5. Arabic Through the Qur'an by Alan Jones.

This book teaches Arabic through the lens of the Qur'an, using Quranic verses and vocabulary to illustrate grammatical rules. It's ideal for students who want to deepen their understanding of the Qur'an while simultaneously learning Arabic. The book assumes no prior knowledge and takes a gradual approach.

Audience: Beginners and those with an interest in Quranic Arabic.

6. Standard Arabic: An Elementary-Intermediate Course by Eckehard Schulz.

This book is a practical course that teaches Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) at the elementary and intermediate levels. It focuses on language used in formal settings, such as media and literature, and includes dialogues, grammar explanations, and exercises to build proficiency. The book was originally in German and then was translated into English.

Audience: Beginner to intermediate learners, especially those interested in modern Arabic used in the media, formal communication, and academic contexts.

Topic 2: – The Biography of the Prophet Mohammad (sawa), his Daughter Fatimah al-Zahra (as), and the Twelve Imams of Ahlul Bayt (as) - The life of the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) is a living embodiment of the Qur'an.

His actions, teachings, and decisions provide practical examples of how to implement Islamic principles. By studying his biography, known as the Seerah, we gain insight into the core values, ethics, and principles that define Islam.

Both the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) and the Ahlul Bayt (as) serve as perfect examples of moral and spiritual conduct. Their patience, courage, humility, and devotion to justice are models for Muslims to follow in their own lives.

Before departing from this world, the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) told the Muslims that he was leaving behind two weighty things: the Qur'an and his Ahlul Bayt (as). This teaching is found in various sources within both Shia and Sunni hadith collections. Therefore, one must strive to hold firmly to both for guidance. The Ahlul Bayt (as) faced their own unique circumstances and hardships, during which they taught and preserved the teachings of their grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (sawa). Studying their biographies helps build a personal connection to them and deepens one's appreciation for their role in Islam.

Some Recommendations

There are many books surrounding their biographies but for those books in English, one is recommended to read the books of Sheikh Baqir Sharif al-Qurashi who wrote biographies on the Prophet Mohammad (sawa), Fatima Al-Zahra (as) and all of the 12 imams (as) which have been translated into English. These can be read online and purchased in hardback cover. Some of these titles include:

1. The Life of the Prophet Muhammad (Sīrat al-Nabī Muhammad) - A detailed biography of the Prophet Muhammad, including his family and the context of his mission.⁷⁹
2. The Life of Fatimah al-Zahra (Sīrat al-Fātimah al-Zahrā) - A comprehensive account of the life of Lady Fatimah, covering her role in Islamic history and her significance.
3. The Life of Imam Ali (Sīrat al-Imām Ali) - An in-depth exploration of the life of Imam Ali, focusing on his leadership, wisdom, and contributions to Islam.
4. The Life of Imam Hasan (Sīrat al-Imām al-Hasan) - A biography that discusses the life and achievements of Imam Hasan, including his role in promoting peace.
5. The Life of Imam Husayn (Sīrat al-Imām al-Husayn) - A detailed account of Imam Husayn's life, emphasising his martyrdom at Karbala and its significance in Islamic history.
6. The Life of Imam Zayn al-Abidin (Sīrat al-Imām Zayn al-'Abidin) - Focuses on the life of the fourth Imam, particularly his contributions to Islamic spirituality and theology.
7. The Life of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (Sīrat al-Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir) - A biography that highlights the life and teachings of the fifth Imam, known for his scholarship and piety.
8. The Life of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (Sīrat al-Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq) - An exploration of the life of the sixth Imam, emphasising his contributions to Islamic jurisprudence and science.

9. The Life of Imam Musa al-Kadhim (Sīrat al-Imām Mūsā al-Kāzim) - A

⁷⁹| All books have been published by the well-known Ansariyan publications in Qom

biography focusing on the life and challenges faced by the seventh Imam.

10. The Life of Imam Ali al-Ridha (Sīrat al-Imām Ali al-Riḍā) - Discusses the life and contributions of the eighth Imam, particularly during the Abbasid period.

11. The Life of Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (Sīrat al-Imām Muhammad al-Jawād) - A biography of the ninth Imam, highlighting his wisdom and piety despite his young age.

12. The Life of Imam Ali al-Hadi (Sīrat al-Imām Ali al-Hādī) - Focuses on the tenth Imam's life, including his teachings and the challenges he faced under the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates.

13. The Life of Imam Hasan al-Askari (Sīrat al-Imām Hasan al-ʿAskari) - A detailed account of the eleventh Imam's life, his teachings, and the historical context of his time.

14. The Life of Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (Sīrat al-Imām Muhammad al-Mahdī) - Discusses the twelfth Imam, focusing on the concept of his occultation and the significance of his return.

Topic 3: Quranic Sciences - This science offers an in-depth exploration of the Holy Qur'an, covering key topics such as the timeline and method of its revelation, the different types of revelation, and the significance of the chapter names and the mysterious disconnected letters. It also examines how the Qur'an was compiled, whether it has been distorted or abrogated, and if non-Arabic words appear within its text.

Some Recommendations

1. Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an by Abbas and Masuma Jaffer

Overview: This book offers a comprehensive introduction to the various sciences related to the study of the Qur'an, including its compilation, preservation, interpretation, and the significance of its content. It is widely used in academic and religious circles for beginners and intermediate students of Quranic sciences. This book is taught in different Shia English seminaries

Topic 4: Usul Al-Fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence) - This science is the foundational science used to determine Islamic legal rulings and ethical guidelines. It provides a systematic framework for interpreting Islamic law (Sharia) by defining the methods and principles scholars use to extract rulings from primary sources, mainly the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Prophetic tradition),

including the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

This science focuses on examining primary sources—primarily the Qur'an and the Sunnah as preserved and taught by the Ahlul Bayt (as). It includes principles for resolving conflicting evidence, helping scholars reconcile or prioritise hadiths (narrations) that appear contradictory, based on credibility, context, and logical analysis. Additionally, Usul al-Fiqh is crucial for addressing modern issues, such as bioethics, finance, and technology, which may lack explicit guidance in traditional texts. Through Ijtihad (independent reasoning), scholars apply these principles to develop rulings that stay grounded in core Islamic values.

It is recommended that one at least studies an introductory course or more on this science so that they can understand how the scholars derive rulings, and what principles are employed in doing so. There are courses one can take online teaching some of the books below which one can search for.

Some Recommendations

1. Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence for Beginners by Ayatollah Ja'far Subhani
2. Principles of Jurisprudence: An Introduction to the Methodology of Fiqh by Shaykh Mohammad Ali Shomali
3. Thirty Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence by Sayed Fadhil al-Milani
4. Introduction to Jurisprudential Maxims by Shaykh Baqir al-Irwani
5. Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence by Sayed Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr

Topic 5: Hadith Studies - After the Holy Qur'an, hadith literature is the most essential source of guidance for Muslims. A hadith can be defined as the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Mohammad (sawa), his daughter Fatima al-Zahra (as), and the twelve Imams (as). Hadith studies are crucial for deriving legal rulings, preserving Prophetic and Islamic teachings, and addressing doctrinal questions like the concept of Imamate. Hadiths also provide essential context for understanding the Qur'an, clarify its deeper meanings, and offer moral and spiritual guidance. Through careful analysis, scholars rely on hadith to ensure the accurate transmission and application of Islamic teachings in both legal and personal spheres. Hadiths go alongside the Qur'an, and both are essential for a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings; one cannot be fully accepted without the other.

While the Qur'an is 100% authentic and free from error, the authenticity of hadiths can vary as some are stronger than others. Not every hadith is considered authentic, either due to its chain of narration, or its content. Studying the science of hadith equips individuals with the tools and methods to

distinguish between authentic and weak hadiths. ⁸⁰

It is especially important for converts to become familiar with the Qur'an and key hadith collections like Al-Kafi. While understanding all hadiths may require deeper knowledge, one can gain insight by studying courses or commentaries by scholars who interpret and elaborate on these narrations. Through a hadith studies course or related literature, one can learn about hadith terminology, sources, chains of narration, categories of hadith, criteria for evaluating narrators, transmission history, and the motives behind hadith fabrication.

Some Recommendations

1. Narrators and Narrations: A Beginner's Guide to Rijal and Dirayah by Shaykh Ja'far Subhani:
2. Introduction to Hadith by Abd al-Hadi al-Fadhli, including Dirayat al-Hadith by al-Shahid al-Thani
3. Al-Kafi - by Shaykh Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (Author), Islamic Texts Institute under the direction of Shaykh Rizwan Arastu (Author) ⁸¹

Book I: Intellect and Foolishness, Shaykh al-Kulayni collects 36 traditions about the intellect which define and describe this most basic faculty that God has created within humans to know truth and to guide them from within.

Book II: Knowledge and its Merits, collects traditions that speak about the obligation to learn, the virtues of learning and the learned, the etiquette of learning and teaching, the cosmic position of scholars, the dangers of ignorance and the misappropriation of knowledge, the correct sources of knowledge, and the historic development of learning and teaching as Islamic institutions.

Book III: God and His Oneness, documents the history of debates around God's existence and his attributes and helps us to know how to think about God and how not to think about him.

While there are additional courses and subjects we could recommend for new Muslims, we believe the above provides a sufficient foundation for the scope of this book.

80| The science of men, or *'ilm al-rijal*, is a specialised field focused on understanding the methods and classifications used to assess the authenticity or weakness of hadith by analysing the narrators within hadith chains. It is generally recommended to study this subject after completing an introductory course in hadith studies.

81| This edition published by the Islamic Texts Institute is ideal for converts, as it includes commentary on the hadiths, making it easier for readers to comprehend the traditions and gain deeper insights. These books are available for purchase online from Amazon and HujjatBookshop.co.uk.

20 | GLOSSARY: COMMON ISLAMIC TERMS

As a new convert, there will be common terms and Islamic related vocabulary that you will come across. Eventually such words will also become part of your own vocabulary, and you may find yourself also using such terms frequently. Therefore, we have provided a short glossary in alphabetical order of common Arabic and Islamic terms that are frequently used.

- Adhan - The call for prayer
- Akhira - The afterlife
- Ahkaam - Jurisprudential rulings for ex, what is halal and haram.
- Ahlul Bayt - Literally meaning the people of the house but a term to refer to Fatima Al-Zahra and the 12 imams (peace be upon them all) who are from the progeny of the Prophet Mohammed (sawa).
- Alhamdulillah - Meaning “All praise is due to Allah,” said in gratitude.
- Alayhis-salam - meaning “peace be upon him.” This phrase is placed next to the names of the Imams in Shia Islam to show respect and reverence.
- Astaghfirullah - An Arabic phrase meaning “I seek forgiveness from Allah.” It is often used to express repentance, seek pardon for sins, or show disapproval of something sinful.
- Bismillah al-Rahman al-Raheem - In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful
- Bid’ah - An impermissible innovation introduced into the religion, e.g., the prayer of Tarawih, instituted by Umar Ibn Al-Khattab.
- Bulugh - The age of adolescence. It is the completion of nine lunar years for the female, and fifteen lunar years for the male.
- Dhikr - Remembrance, often referring to specific utterances during *rukoo* and *sujood* in salah.
- Du’a - Supplication, usually when one raises their hands and asks Allah for something.
- Faqih/Fuqaha - Jurisprudent, a qualified expert in Islamic law.
- Fiqh - Islamic jurisprudence
- Fitrah - The natural disposition or intrinsic inclination towards the minimum good things which Allah created within human beings.
- Ghusl - Ritual head-to-toe wash or bathing, obligatory in some cases.
- Hajj - The pilgrimage to Mecca, obligatory for Muslims able to undertake it at least once in their lifetime.
- Haram - Forbidden; an action not permitted by Islam, e.g., drinking alcohol.
- Hijab - The dress code required for Muslim women in public or in the

- presence of men who are not mahram to her.
- Husseinayah –This is a congregation hall or a religious centre for Shia Muslims, primarily used for commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS), especially during the month of Muharram. It serves as a place for Majlis (gatherings), where sermons, recitations of the tragedy of Karbala, and communal prayers are held, fostering a sense of community and spiritual reflection.
- Iftar - Breaking of the fast during Ramadan.
- Ihtiyat - Precaution; a ruling may be based on ihtiyat as a precautionary measure.
- Jama'ah - Congregation.
- Jumuah - Friday - for example, Salah al- Jumuah the Friday
- Imami - One who believes in the authority of the divinely appointed 12 infallible Imams who were appointed by Prophet Mohammad (sawa) on instructions from Almighty Allah, glorified be He.
- Iman - Faith or belief in Islam, including belief in Allah, angels, the revealed books, prophets, imams, the Day of Judgment, and divine decree.
- Inshallah - Meaning "If Allah wills," commonly used to express hope or future intent.
- Istikhara - Seeking guidance from Allah using the Qur'an or a sibhah (rosary).
- Jahannam - Hellfire.
- Jama'ah - Congregation.
- Janabah - A state of ritual impurity due to intercourse or ejaculation. A man or a woman who has engaged in sexual intercourse is said to be in a state of janabah, even if ejaculation does not take place. A state of janabah is also acquired if semen is discharged or orgasm takes place, even if it does not involve penetration.
- Jannah - Paradise or heaven.
- Khutbah - Sermon.
- Mahram - A family member one is not permitted to marry, e.g., siblings
- Makrooh - Reprehensible; a discouraged action that may have a negative spiritual impact, but such an action is not haram or a sin to do
- Ma'sum - Infallible. One who does not commit sin, does not err, does not forget, and suchlike. Examples of ma'sum individuals are Allah's prophets and messengers, as well as the members of Ahl al-Bayt who are Prophet Mohammad, his daughter Fatima and the twelve Imams, peace be upon them all. They are not infallible due to force, rather they chose not to commit sins out of choice as they know the ugliness of such sins.
- Marja - A religious authority, to whom an individual who is not learned in Islamic law, must refer to for all acts of worship and other jurisprudence

- matters to ensure compliance with the teachings of Islam in all aspects
- Mashallah - Meaning “What Allah has willed,” often said in admiration.
- Masjid - Place of prostration, i.e., mosque.
- Masjid al-Haram - The holy mosque in Makkah where the ka’bah (The cubical building at the centre of Masjid al-Haram in the holy city of Mecca, which is referred to as Bayt al-Allah or the House of Allah) is located and where muslims pray towards
- Mubah - Permissible, an act that is neutral in terms of reward or sin.
- Mukallaf - An individual liable to perform obligatory religious duties upon reaching adolescence and who follows the opinions or decrees of a mujtahid.
- Muqallid - One who follows the opinions of a mujtahid.
- Mushaf - A bound copy of the Holy Qur’an.
- Mustahab - Recommended, desirable. Not only a halal action, but one is encouraged to do the mustahab thing, and one is rewarded for the mustahab thing. For example, the extra recommended prayers
- Mujtahid - A qualified jurist or expert in Islam Law who is competent to deduct the rulings of any given case from related sources and evidence.
- Najis - Ritually impure, opposite of tahir.
- Nasibi - One who harbours animosity toward the Ahl al-Bayt.
- Niyyah - Intention in religious acts.
- Qibla - The direction of the Ka’bah towards which Muslims pray.
- Ramadan - The holy month of fasting, obligatory for all adult Muslims.
- Ruku - The act of bowing during salah.
- Salah - Formal prayer, involving *al-Hamd recitation, rukoo’, and sujood.
- Sahabah - Refers to the companions of the Prophet Mohammad (sawa) and some of them were also companions of some of the earlier imams. Among the sahaba are pious individuals as well as hypocrites which is contrary to the Sunni belief that states they are all just and good
- Sawm - Fasting, especially during Ramadan.
- Shahada - the testimony of faith where one bears witness to the oneness of Allah, the prophethood of Mohammad and the authority of Imam Ali as the vicegerent of Allah
- Sujud - Prostration in prayer.
- Sunnah- The tradition of Allah’s Messenger, and his pure family (peace be upon them all)
- Surah - A chapter of the Qur’an.
- Tahir - Ritually clean, opposite of najis.
- Tasbihat - Refers to the four-tasbih uttered during certain rak’ahs in prayer and the tasbihat of Fatima al-Zahra.
- Tayammum - Dry ablution performed on earth or soil in the absence of water.

- Thawab - Reward for good deeds.
- Turbah/Mohr - A small clay tablet used for prostration in prayer.
- Ulema - Scholars.
- Ummah - The Muslim nation or community.
- Wajib - Obligatory, an action required in Islam, e.g., daily prayers.
- Wudu - The ritual washing required for performing salah, etc. Wudu consists of two washes and two wipes; the washes of the face and forearms, and the wipes of the head and feet.
- Zakat - Zakah literally means growth. In Islamic terminology, the term Zakah also means purification, and here it concerns the wealth of the individual, and is divided into two categories of Khums and Zakah. The reason this term is used in Islamic jurisprudential terminology is because zakah leads to the growth of society as a whole.
- Ziyarah - Visitation to shrines and other sacred places and locations. The term also applies to the salutations that are remotely recited when addressing the prophet, his divinely appointed successors, or other members of the Ahl al-Bayt.

Conclusion

Inshallah, we hope this book has been beneficial in addressing the challenges that a convert may face. We understand that some things may be overwhelming and maybe some issues were not covered too, so if there are additional concerns, support needed, or ideas for future projects related to converts, please feel free to share your thoughts by emailing us at: info@dar.org.uk

We pray for the success of all converts, asking Allah (swt) to increase them in knowledge and to bring them closer to Him. Ameen.

We conclude this book with a brief quote from each of the 14 Infallibles (as), as their words are a source of light and enduring guidance in our daily lives.

The Prophet Mohammad (sawa)



The best jihad is performed by one who wakes in the morning with no intention to wrong anyone.⁸²

82| Al-Mahasin, V. 1, P. 456, No. 1053

Sayyida Fatima al-Zahra' Sayyida al-Nisa al-Alameen (as)



The one who sends up to Allah his pure and sincere worship, Allah, Mighty and Exalted, sends down for him that which will be of most benefit to him.⁸³

The 12 Imams -

1st Imam: Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (as)

“Some people worship Allah out of their desire for rewards; this is the worship of traders. Another group worships Allah out of fear; this is the worship of slaves. Yet another group worships Allah out of gratitude; this is the worship of freemen.

Even if Allah had not warned those disobedient to Him of chastisement, it was obligatory by way of gratefulness for His favours that He should not be disobeyed.

Lord! I have not worshipped You out of fear of Your Hell nor out of greed for Your Paradise; but I found Thee worthy of being worshipped, so I worshipped Thee.”⁸⁴

2nd Imam: Imam al-Hasan Al-Mujtaba (as)

I am surprised at those who reflect on the food that they eat and yet do not think at all in regard to the food of their soul. They stay away from unhealthy foods, but they fill their hearts with various destructive matters.⁸⁵

83| Tanbih al-Khawahir, v. 2, p. 108

84| Nahjul-Balagha, Hikam, No. 237. The same quote is also found in al Kafi which is also said by the 6th Imam, Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq (as).

85| Safinat al-Bihar, Section on Food, Bihar Al-Anwar, vol 1, page 218.

3rd Imam: Imam Hussain Sayyid Al-Shuhada (as)

“One who reveals your faults to you like a mirror is your true friend, and one who flatters you and covers up your faults is your enemy.”⁸⁶

4th Imam: Imam Ali ibn Al-Hussain Zayn al-Abidin (as)

When Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as) would perform his ablution and prepare for prayer, his face would become pale and change colour. When asked about this, he replied, “Verily I am going to stand before the Great King.”⁸⁷

5th Imam: Imam Mohammad al-Baqir (as)

“Verily Allah loves the feeding of food [to others] and the spreading of peace.”⁸⁸

6th Imam: Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as)

When asked about noble moral traits, he replied, “Pardoning someone who has oppressed you, repairing broken ties, giving to the one who has deprived you, and speaking the truth even if it is against yourself.”⁸⁹

7th Imam: Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as)

“Verily the man of intellect never talks to one whom he fears will belie him, nor asks of one whom he fears will deny him, nor promises that which he is not able to fulfil, nor hopes for that which will dash his hopes, nor attempts to advance towards that which he fears he will be incapable of reaching.”⁹⁰

86| Bihar-al- Anwar, Vol. 78, p. 128

87| Da'aim al-Islam, v. 1, p. 158

88| Al-Mahasin, v. 2, p. 143, no. 1371

89| Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. 191, no. 1

90| Tuhaf Al-'Uqoul, No. 390

8th Imam: Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as)



*Modesty has different manifestations; one is for those who know their limitations, accept their position contently, like to treat people the way they expect to be treated, confront insult with benevolence, control their anger and forgive people. Allah loves the righteous.*⁹¹

9th Imam: Imam Mohammad al-Jawad (as)

*“Don’t pretend to be Allah’s friend while being His enemy in secret.”*⁹²

10th Imam: Imam Ali al-Hadi (as)

*“The world is a market, [where] a community reaps benefit in it and another faces loss.”*⁹³

11th Imam: Imam Hasan al-Askari (as)

*When asked about the obligation of fasting, he replied, “That the rich may experience the pain of hunger and bestow his generosity thereby upon the poor.”*⁹⁴

12th Imam: Imam Mohammed al-Mahdi (as)

*“I am the Mahdi (the rightly guided one) I am the upholder and the upkeeper of the age. I am one who fills it (the earth) with justice just as it filled up with aggression and cruelty. The earth does not remain empty of the proof and authority of Allah”*⁹⁵

91| Al-Kafi, vol.2, p.124.

92| Bihar al-anwar, vol.75, p.365.

93| Tuhaf al-Uqool, p. 483.

94| Tuhaf al-Uqool, p. 483.

95| Bihar al-Anwar, vol.52, p.2



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