**SILA AR-RAHM**



**2.215.** They ask you what they will spend (to provide sustenance for the needy). Say: "Whatever you spend of your wealth is for (your) parents and the near relatives, and the (needy) orphans, the destitute, and the wayfarer. " Whatever good you do, surely God has full knowledge of it.(1)



**4.36.** And (as the essential basis of contentment in individual, family and social life,) worship God and do not associate anything as a partner with Him; and do good to your parents in the best way possible, and to the relatives, orphans, the destitute, the neighbor who is near (in kinship, location, faith), the neighbor who is distant (in kinship and faith), the companion by your side (on the way, in the family, in the workplace, etc. ), the wayfarer, and those who are in your service. (Treat them well and bring yourself up to this end, for) God does not love those who are conceited and boastful;(2)



**17.23.** Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him alone, and treat parents with the best of kindness. Should one of them, or both, attain old age in your lifetime, do not say "Ugh!" to them (as an indication of complaint or impatience), nor push them away; and always address them in gracious words.(3)



**17.24.** Lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy, and say: "My Lord, have mercy on them even as they cared for me in childhood. "(3)

 **Observing Ties of Kinship**

Abu Hurayra said: “A man came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, what person is the most entitled to the best of my company?’ He answered, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then whom?’ He said, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then whom?’ He said, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then whom?’ He said, ‘Your father.’” (4)

Allah the Almighty has emphasized kindness to parents and observing the ties of kinship in various sections of the Qur’an and has warned human beings in this regard. Moreover, at times even placing the rights of parents above all else, He has enumerated it immediately after commanding human beings not to associate partners with Him.

And (as the essential basis of contentment in individual, family and social life,) worship Allah and do not associate anything as a partner with Him; and do good to your parents in the best way possible, and to the relatives, orphans, the destitute, the neighbor who is near (in kinship, location, faith), the neighbor who is distant (in kinship and faith), the companion by your side (on the way, in the family, in the workplace, etc.), the wayfarer, and those who are in your service. (an-Nisa 4:36)

In due reverence for Allah, keep from disobedience to Him in Whose Name you make demands of one another, and (duly observe) the rights of the wombs (i.e. of kinship, thus observing piety in your relations with Allah and with human beings). (an-Nisa 4:1)

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him alone, and treat parents with the best of kindness. Should one of them, or both, attain old age in your lifetime, do not say “Ugh!” to them (as an indication of complaint or impatience), nor push them away, and always address them in gracious words. Lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy, and say: “My Lord, have mercy on them even as they cared for me in childhood.” (al-Isra 17:23-24)

1. Obedience to parents is an important duty to which Allah gives great weight and which is second only to belief in His Unity, such that He exhorts human beings in this immediately after decreeing that they worship none but Him. It is inconceivable for those who are not careful in observing the rights of their parents, who have favored them with innumerable kindness, to duly observe the rights of others. The Messenger of Allah states that the person most deserving of the best treatment and conduct is the mother, to such an extent that they are three times more deserving of such benevolence than the father. This is because, compared to the father, the mother assumes the three added responsibilities of carrying the child for nine months during pregnancy, giving birth, and nursing them, among other arduous duties.

2. Again, as reported by Abu Hurayra, the Messenger of Allah said: “What a loss for him! What a loss for him! What a loss for him!” Someone asked: ‘Who, O Allah’s Messenger?’ He replied: ‘He whose parents reach old age, either one or both of them, but he does not enter Paradise.’” (*Sahih Muslim*, Birr 9, 10). Notwithstanding the age of their parents, a child is obligated to fulfill their duties towards them. They may be wealthy and not be in need of the financial assistance of their children. They may even have personal carers or employees attending to their daily chores. What falls upon the child in such a circumstance is to please them and to fulfill whatever needs they may have. Money is not everything. An affectionate glance, a heartfelt gesture, and a loving embrace are not things that can be bought with money.

3. Abu Hurayra again reports that Allah’s Messenger said: “A child cannot repay his father unless he finds him as a slave and the buys him and sets him free.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Itk, 25. See also: *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Adab, 120; *Sunan at-Tirmidhi*, Birr, 8; *Sunan ibn Majah*, Adab, 1).

4. The rights of parents over their children can be categorized as follows:

**a) Rights Pertaining to the Body**

If need be, we should carry our parents on our back. Upon seeing a man with a burden on his back during his circumambulation of the Ka’ba, Hasan al-Basri asked him why he performed this worship with a burden upon his back. The man replied, “This is not a burden, but is my father. I brought him here from Damascus and circumambulated the Ka’ba seven times with him. He taught me my religion and my belief. He raised me with an Islamic morality; his rights upon me are great.” Hasan al-Basri responded, “If you were to carry him on your back until the Last Day, your labor would go to waste in the event of your breaking his heart only once. Similarly, if you please him even once, it would be equivalent to this much labor.”

All the favors and spiritual degrees that Uways al-Qarani attained are due to his kindness to his mother. Anas ibn Malik relates: “During the time of Allah’s Messenger, there was a young man by the name of Alqama. He was very pious, spending his time in Prayer and fasting. He then fell very ill and, at the subsequent approach of death, became speechless. Being informed of this situation, the Messenger of Allah sent Ali and Ammar ibn Yasir to him. Despite their prompting Alqama to recite the Declaration of Faith, he was unable to do so. When Bilal al-Habashi informed the Prophet of the young man’s predicament, Allah’s Messenger asked, ‘Are either of his parents alive?’

‘O Messenger of Allah, his mother is alive, but she is very aged,’ he was told.

The Prophet then wished to speak with her. When she arrived, he asked her about her son, and she replied: ‘O Messenger of Allah, Alqama is very pious. He is always engaged in worship, but I am displeased with him, as he holds the approval of his wife above mine.’ Allah’s Messenger said, ‘Your displeasure has prevented Alqama’s tongue from pronouncing the Declaration of Faith. Forgive him, so that he may speak.’ When she refused, Allah’s Messenger turned to Bilal and said, ‘Bilal, call for my Companions to go out and gather firewood.’ Upon hearing this, she asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, what do you plan to do with this? Will my child be burnt in the fire? How am I to bear this?’ Allah’s Messenger said, ‘The flames of the Fire are more severe and long-lasting. If you want Allah to forgive him, be reconciled to him. His Prayer, fasting, and spending in charity are of no benefit to Alqama so long as you are displeased with him.’ When the elderly woman heard these words, she exclaimed, ‘I call upon Allah and His angels and the Muslims who are present to be my witness that I have forgiven Alqama.’ She then went to her son and heard his voice. He pronounced the Declaration of Faith with ease and passed away that same day. After his burial, Allah’s Messenger addressed his Companions saying, ‘The curse of Allah and the angels is upon the man who favors his wife over his mother.’”

**b) Rights Pertaining to the Tongue**

1. We must not even say “Ugh” to our parents. 2. Not raising one’s voice when speaking with them. 3. Refraining from excessive speech or exceeding the bounds of propriety while in their presence. 4. Not favoring one’s wife over them. 5. Not calling them by their names or interrupting them as they speak. 6. Avoiding the use of directives such as “Do” or “Don’t”, instead asking politely. 7. Obtaining their blessing.

**c) Rights Pertaining to the Heart**

1. Having mercy on them, being compassionate towards them. It is stated in a hadith: “Those who show no mercy will be shown no mercy.” (*Sahih Muslim*) 2. Love. One must make one’s parents feel loved at all times. Another hadith states: “Kissing the feet of one’s mother is like kissing the threshold of the doorway to Paradise.” (Shir’a) 3. Sharing their happiness. One must echo their joy when they are pleased with something. 4. Sharing their sorrow or pain. If they are upset with something, one must strive to convey one’s care and concern. 5. Being pleased with them. One must seek to attain their pleasure in every possible way.

**d) Rights Pertaining to Wealth and Property**

1. Preferring one’s parents to oneself in dress and eating and drinking. 2. Visiting them if they are at a distance: “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let them maintain the bonds of kinship.” (*Sahih al- Bukhari*) 3. Eating together. 4. Inquiring after their needs and wants and fulfilling these. 5. Cleaning their homes, undertaking any maintenance required such as painting or other repairs. 6. Helping them financially. They may be in need of monetary support but may be unable to express this. 7. Spending freely on them. It is declared in the Qur’an: “*Whatever you spend of your wealth is for (your) parents and the near relatives, and (needy) orphans, the destitute, and the wayfarer*” (al-Baqarah 2:215). To a person who asked on whom he was to spend, Allah’s Messenger said, “Start with your own self and spend it on yourself, and if anything is left, it should be spent on your family, and if anything is left (after meeting the needs of the family) it should be spent on relatives, and if anything is left from the family, it should be spent like this, like this.” And he was saying: “In front of you, on your right and on your left.” 8. Inviting them over to share in a meal. This is something that they desire but perhaps cannot articulate. 9. Being preoccupied with their medical treatment when they fall ill and purchasing their medication. One must strive to care for them themselves instead of hiring a carer to attend to them.

**e) Rights after Their Death**

1. Making haste with regard to their burial. 2. Washing them in accordance with the requirements of the Sunnah. One must ensure that the individuals washing them are comprehensively knowledgeable about and skilled in this task. 3. Shrouding them in accordance with the Prophetic practice. 4. Obtaining their shroud through their lawful earnings. 5. Always entreating Allah for their forgiveness. 6. Personally placing them in the soil. 7. Performing a helpful service to those who dig the grave and workers at the cemetery. 8. Burying them among good and righteous people. 9. Giving in charity by their grave. 10. Supplicating at their graveside. 11. Paying their debts. 12. To recite the *talkin*, or “prompting,” at the time of burial, instructing the deceased in the essentials of belief as to how to answer the interrogative angels. It is stated in a hadith: “When one of you dies and you have settled the earth over him, let one of you stand at the head of his grave and then say: ‘O So-and-so, son of So-and-so [name of the mother]!’ For he will hear him even if he does not reply. Then let him say a second time: ‘O So-and-so, son of So-and-so [name of the mother]!’ Whereupon he will sit up (in his grave). Then let him say: ‘O So-and-so, son of So-and-so [name of the mother]!’ At this the deceased will say: ‘Instruct me, and may Allah grant you mercy!’ Even if you cannot hear it. Then let him say: ‘Remember the state in which you left this world, which is your witnessing that there is no deity except Allah, and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger; that you are pleased with Allah as your Lord, Islam as your religion, Muhammad as your Prophet, and the Qur’an as your book.’” (Daylami) 13. Carrying out their last will and testament. If their request contravenes the religion, it is not fulfilled. 14. Entreating Allah in their supplications after the Prayer and conveying the spiritual rewards to their spirits. A hadith states: “If a person is undutiful to their parents but prays for their forgiveness and deliverance after their death, Allah will record them among those dutiful to their parents.” (Ibn Abi ad-Dunya) 15. Fasting on their behalf. It is again stated in hadith: “No one should offer a Prayer or observe a Fast on behalf of another; however, they can feed (the needy) instead.” (*Sunan an-Nasa’i*) Someone came to the Prophet and asked, “O Messenger of Allah, my parents have died; is there any act left with which I may be dutiful to them?” Allah’s Messenger said, “There are four such things: supplication and asking for their forgiveness, fulfilling their promises, honoring their friends, and maintaining good relations with those of your relatives with whom your kinship is established only through them.” (Hakim) 16. Performing the Pilgrimage and sending them the rewards therein. According to the majority of scholars, undertaking the Pilgrimage on behalf of one’s parents is permissible. A hadith states: “Whoever performs the Pilgrimage on behalf of his deceased parents, that Pilgrimage is accepted from both himself and his parents, and the souls of his parents are given the glad tidings of such.” (Dar al-Qutni) 17. Giving in charity on their behalf. As stated in a hadith: “Why should one who gives in charity not convey its reward to the spirit of their deceased parents when both will be rewarded without the reward of the sender not being lessened in the slightest.” (Tabarani) 18. Visiting their graves and reciting the Qur’an: “One who visits the grave of one or both of his parents sincerely with the hope of forgiveness, will receive the reward equivalent to that of a Pilgrimage, and one who visits their graves often, will have angels visiting his grave (after he passes away).” (Hakim) 19. Visiting their graves on Fridays: “Whoever visits the grave of his parents, both or either of them, every Friday, Allah will forgive all of his sins and include him amongst those who are dutiful to their parents.” (*Sunan at-Tirmidhi*) 20. Honoring their friends. It is stated in a hadith, “The finest act of goodness is that a person should treat kindly the loved ones of his father.” (*Sahih Muslim*) 21. Giving *sadaqa al-fitr* (the compulsory charity paid after the month of Ramadan) in their name, for the rewards to be bestowed upon them. 22. Offering a sacrifice on their behalf during the Festival of Sacrifice (*Eid al-Adha*). 23. Preparing their favorite foods and distributing them to the needy and, as such, pleasing their spirits. 24. Not speaking of their faults: “Speak well of the dead; do not mention their shortcomings.” (*Sunan at-Tirmidhi*).

**CARE OF KIN**

The Islamic term used for the care of kin is *sila al-rahm* which encompasses visiting one’s parents and relatives, asking after their welfare, and making them happy. Islamgives importance to relationships with people, particularly the mother and father and then other close relatives. Visiting them should become a principle in one’s life.

Khalid ibn Zayd (Abu Ayyub al-Ansari) narrated an event in which a man came and asked the Prophet, “O Messenger of God, can you tell me an act of worship that will help me enter Heaven?” God’s Messenger replied thus, “Worshipping God, not associating any partners with Him, performing the daily prayers, giving to charity, and visiting your relatives.”52

This hadith emphasizes the importance of *sila al-rahm,* stating that such actions can help Muslims go to Heaven. But *sila al-rahm* means more than just visiting relatives; it also includes taking care of their needs and always including them when doing something

helpful (like giving charity). The fact that this is mentioned direct- ly after the prescribed acts of worship, such as daily prayers and charity, shows the great importance given to *sila al-rahm* in Islam. For this reason, some Islamic scholars hold that such behavior is *wajib,* or necessary, for believers, and they consider it to be a great sin to neglect or refuse these duties. Indeed, in the Qur’an God commands:

O humankind! In due reverence for your Lord, keep from dis- obedience to Him Who created you from a single human self, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scat- tered abroad a multitude of men and women. In due reverence for God, keep from disobedience to Him in Whose name you make demands of one another, and (duly observe) the rights of the wombs (i.e. of kinship, thus observing piety in your relations with God and with human beings). God is ever watchful over you. (Nisa 4:1)

 In the verse above, as well as the following verse, God’s Word charges us to maintain the bond of family ties, look after relatives and never allow these relationships to be severed:

And those who unite the bonds God has commanded to be joined (among kin as a  requirement  of  blood  relationship, and among people as required by human social interdepen- dence), and stand in awe of their Lord, and fearful of (fac- ing) the most evil reckoning… But those who break God’s covenant after its solemn binding, and sever the bonds God commanded to be joined, and cause disorder and corruption on the earth—such are those on whom there is a curse (exclu- sion from God’s mercy), and for them there is the most evil abode.  (Ra’d  13:20,  25)

There are differences of opinion as to how far the designation of “relative” extends, or who, exactly, is meant by these verses and hadith*.* According to some, relatives are close relatives with whom marriage is forbidden; according to others, the word’s meaning is those relatives close enough to have rights to inheritance. Still oth- er scholars believe that the word *rahm* in the verse is inclusive of all relatives, even if they are distant relatives. In terms of social life the latter view is the most helpful.

Since it has been commanded by God and His Messenger Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to visit and care for relatives, it would be appropriate here to examine how this should be done. There are certain “degrees” of *sila al-rahm*:

1. The absolute minimum is to speak kindly to relatives and be amiable when talking to them, to greet them when we encounter them, to ask after their well-being, and to al- ways think positively about them and want the best for them.
2. The second level is to go and visit them and to come to their aid in various circumstances. Such actions are a more physical way of serving our relatives. This is especially im- portant as our relatives get older and need someone to as- sist them with things they can no longer do for them- selves.
3. The third and most important level of *sila al-rahm* is to give one’s relatives financial and material support.

There are exceptional circumstances, such as when someone is too poor to support their relatives materially. But the Muslim who is well-off cannot be said to have completed the duties of *sila al- rahm* simply by visiting and asking after their relatives. For such a person, these duties include financial support, as much as they can afford, for less well-off relatives. This support can be in the form of giving them a regular amount of  money,  or  providing  them with the things they need. This is what is meant by “looking after and caring for relatives” in Islam; a good Muslim should carry out all of the above three “degrees” of support to the best of their abil- ity. Otherwise, if they neglect to carry out those duties that are in their power, they will be held accountable. We must keep in mind the punishment for those who neglect these duties given in the above Qur’anic verse. Our Prophet also said, “Every Friday night each person’s deeds are presented to God; only those who neglect *sila al-rahm* will have their deeds denied.”53

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, spoke of this topic in another hadith, proclaiming that faith in God and in the Last Day requires looking after one’s relatives.54 The Prophet said that God’s mercy is on those whom God judges to be taking good care of their families and those who take care to maintain blood ties. Conversely, God curses anyone who makes no effort to maintain their relationships with their relatives.55

There are also other warnings that state that those who cut ties with their relatives will be punished.  The  Prophet  declared that such people will not be admitted to Paradise.56 He also taught that only those who take good care of their relatives will be grant- ed longer life and more abundance,57 and that one who gives fi- nancial help to relatives will be rewarded twice, both for helping family and for giving to charity.58

The term *relatives* usually implies close relations such as imme- diate family, cousins, aunts or uncles. There are special benefits in treating these relatives well. The Messenger of God said, “An aunt is like another mother.”59 Likewise, an uncle is like another father. It is only natural that as part of good morality such close family members have certain rights on us. Among these rights, paying visits is of particular importance. As explained below, the general rule is that one should visit close relations first on holidays, and then occasionally at other times, if possible bringing gifts.

Visiting strengthens the bond of love between relatives, and puts an end to estrangement. It allows people to share their sor- rows and joys, and to help one another through difficult times. In particular, the elderly need to spend their final years in peace and happiness in the bosom of their family, knowing they are loved and cared for.

There is another consideration that should be taken into ac- count when examining the subject of *sila al-rahm.* One should not expect anything in return; in this context, this means that we must not only look after the relatives with whom we are already close, but we should also attend to our duties toward those who have severed ties with us. The Prophet said, “One who simply returns good with good is not living the full meaning of ‘caring for rela- tives.’ True care means to care for the relation who has not shown us any regard.”60 In fact this is a general principle—we should al- ways think carefully and choose the good action in every situation. It is not correct to look after the well-being of those in need when one is weak and powerless but to change one’s conduct when wealth and power increase. This situation is one among the thou- sands of layers of meaning in the following Qur’anic verse:

But is it to be expected of you (O hypocritical ones), that you will break your promise and turn away (from God’s command- ments), and cause disorder and corruption in the land, and sever the ties of kinship? Such are they whom God has cursed (excluded from His mercy), and so He has made them deaf and blinded their eyes (to the truth). (Muhammad 47:22–3)

As a final point, I wish to point out a general principle found in a hadith of the Prophet. Being fallible humans, we may some- times let bad words slip, especially when we are agitated and an- gry. There is a striking hadith about this: Ibn Amr ibn al-As re- lates the following words of Prophet Muhammad, peace and bless- ings be upon him: “One of the greatest sins is to curse one’s par- ents.” Those with him asked, “Would any person curse their own parents?” The Messenger answered, “Yes! If anyone curses the par- ent of another person, as that person will then curse their parent in return, it is as if he has cursed his own parent!”61

**References**

**(1) 2:215./The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(2)4:36./The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(3)17:23-24/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(4)Sahih al-Bukhari, Adab, 2; Sahih Muslim, Birr, 1. See also: Sunan ibn Majah, Wasaya, 4; Sunan Abu Dawud, Adab, 120; Sunan at-Tirmidhi, Birr, 1.**

**(5)Gulcu, Dr. Musa Kazim. “Good Character” Tughra Books Press. February 2009.**