

# **Developing a Practical Curriculum and Teacher's Manual in an American Context: A Tool to Enhance Quality of Classroom Teaching**

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## **Introduction:**

Islamic Schools in North America can be broadly divided into two types: full time and weekend. Full time schools, although fewer in number, have a significant advantage over the weekend schools in the matter of trained teachers. All the full time schools have to meet certain state requirements—course materials and certification of the teachers being a few of them. This manuscript will not address the issues of full time schools. The aim of this article is weekend schools, which by their sheer nature, do not fall under the preview of any regulatory committee.

As has been the tradition of setting up such schools, some parents, usually immigrants and people in fields other than teaching and theology, decide to start a school for the benefit of their own children. Some such schools do not have a stable physical base, they move from one basement to another every week. Some have a stable base in a masjid, or at the facility of a full time Islamic School. The facilities for teaching in these varied settings are also far from meeting any standard. Few things are common to these schools:

- 1) A group of enthusiastic parents, who wish to provide the religious education to their children,
- 2) Children of different age grouped together, who otherwise attend a structured public school which follows a well-defined and well-tested curriculum.
- 3) Use of a published text book for weekend schools. Some parents however depend on books imported from their home countries, or they assemble some lessons together according to their viewpoints or goals.
- 4) The teachers—they are volunteers and usually without any teachers training.

**The expectations:** The expectations of the parents and teacher are often not the same. Parents expect that a child who attends a part time Islamic school will be able to read the Quran, will understand Arabic, and will have a sound understanding of Islamic principles. In addition parents expect that the child will continue to express interest in his/her religion and continue to learn. Since this paper is focused towards Islamic Teachings, we will not discuss expectations about learning Arabic. Usually the teacher begins a class with similar expectations as the parents, but during the course of the academic year the expectations of the teacher deteriorates. The teacher loses interest in reaching the goal either due to lack of a clear goal or due to the absence of tools to reach the goal. After few years of education, parents lose interest when they notice sufficient academic progress has not been made. Parents who continue to attend such school do so to continue a social contact. Children resent attending classes, as the teaching is not well organized. Such students are either dragged to the school or they come mainly to meet their friends.

**Tools to reach the expected goal:** The goal is achievable if the school can acquire certain necessary tools. First and foremost tool is a trained teacher. In addition, and probably not in lieu of, is a curriculum that guides the teacher how to teach. Most of the time part time Islamic schools lack both these tools.

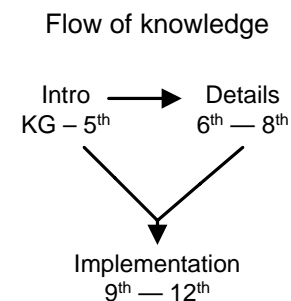
**Trained teachers:** The need for trained teachers can not be refuted. However availability of a trained teacher is a major issue that every school faces. Most of the Muslim communities either do not have enough teachers who are trained in education, or even if there are trained teachers, they may not be interested in teaching one extra day at a weekend school. If such teachers are available in the community who teach at regular public schools, such persons depend on a well-organized curriculum and teachers manual. When such teachers come to a weekend Islamic school, they feel at a loss due to unavailability of manuals. Since it is not easy to generate trained teachers solely for the purpose of weekend school, we have to resort to the second best way of achieving our expectation, i.e. by providing a well-designed curriculum and teacher's manual which could help an untrained teacher to deliver an effective class room education.

### THE CURRICULUM:

**A new curriculum in US context:** Although several published books on Islamic teachings are available, we identified some critical gaps in these books. Most of the lessons were prepared to provide religious information. These lessons provided rules and regulation which are part of the religion. That is alright, but emphasis is given to how the rituals are to be performed, not on why a particular ritual or work is beneficial for everyone. Children are by nature inquisitive and expect logical answers to their questions. Unfortunately, some of the lessons in some books actually degrade other religions. While we as Muslims do believe in the superiority of Allah's religion, demeaning other religions only harms the developing minds.

To form an effective curriculum, the system is divided into two broad parts: '**Formative**' and '**Implementation**'.

Formative phase starts from kindergarten class and extends all the way up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Lessons included in this phase are systematically selected to develop overall knowledge base on all areas of Islam. The lessons in the formative phase are again divided in two sections: 'Introduction' and 'Details'. Introduction phase lasts from kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. During this phase, in age appropriate manner, the students learn broad outline of faith, fundamentals, rituals, key concepts, Islamic ideologies and moral values, biographies of prophets with emphasis on their moral strength, Islamic history etc. Even if a student stops attending Islamic school after 5<sup>th</sup> grade, s/he will still have a good foundation about Islam. In the Details phase, lasting from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the topics covered in the Introduction phase are further elaborated. By the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students gain valuable insight about Islam.



Lessons shown in Figures 1 and 2 are examples of Introductory phase. Lesson shown in Figure 3 is an example of Details phase. While the students received Introductory lessons on Musa (A), the example lesson in Figure 3 is an extension to analyze the personality of Musa.

The Implementation phase starts from 9<sup>th</sup> grade and ends at 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The knowledge learned in the Formative periods is implemented through a vast array of topics. The topics selected in this phase address the intellectual, spiritual and practical needs of the students in an American context. Hypothetical real life problems are presented to the students to analyze the situation and arrive at decisions that are supported Islamically. In the lesson titled “Interaction with People of Other Faith” Musa’s example is cited. Students learn that the way Musa (A) interacted with Pharaoh (*Then you speak to him a gentle speech, perhaps he may mind or he may fear. Surah Ta Ha 20:44*), they too should talk politely during any debate, whether religious or otherwise.

**Brief outline of the curriculum:** Typical weekend schools start their academic year in September and end the session by first week of June. During the academic year, few weekends are actual holidays or fall close to holidays and there are occasional snow days. Four to five weekends are used for conducting test. Therefore, around 25-27 days are available for actual teaching. The curriculum was developed with about 29 topics, to fully utilize all the days if snow does not interrupt the class schedule.

For the Formative phase, the curriculum follows a pattern which is flexible to accommodate important age-appropriate topics. In each year, the lessons are roughly divided into the following topics:

- a) Each year, the curriculum starts with topics on Allah (swt): who is He, what He does, why it is necessary to follow His orders, His kindness, blessings, etc. At least two lessons on Allah (swt) are covered each year.
- b) Topics on the Qur’an: its revelation, compilation, format, different names, how it is preserved, how to study the Qur’an, etc. At least two lessons on this topic are covered each year.
- c) Topics on Muhammad (S): his life, life before prophethood, life during Makkah, life in Madinah, his conduct towards others, his family life, his teachings, his marriages, why he was in battles, his moral values, teachings from his life. Two to three lessons on the Prophet (S) are covered each year.
- d) Topics on other prophets: each year, the biographies of two or three prophets are introduced in two to three lessons. Usually, a theme is selected for a particular prophet (see below).
- e) Companions, khalifas, compilers of the Hadith are discussed in at least two lessons each year.
- f) Ritualistic parts of the religion, e.g. steps of salat, types of salat, sawm, hajj, zakat, etc. are taught in three to four lessons each year.
- g) Moral values based on Islamic principles are taught in at least 6-7 lessons. These topics include kindness, forgiveness, punctuality, perseverance, truthfulness, honesty, and other moral aspects of Islam.

- h) Other abstract concepts, such as angels, shaitan, ruh, taqwa, etc are covered in one to two lessons each year.
- i) Festivals, celebrations, dietary laws are covered in two or three lessons.
- j) For students in higher grades, brief history of spread of Islam to the East and to the West is covered in one or two lessons each year.

For Implementation Phase, the topics do not necessarily follow the above outline. Additional topics such as Jihad, interaction with people of other faiths, gender barrier and relationship, managing personal finances and inheritance, fiqh, ijtehad, etc are introduced in age appropriate manner.

**Make Qur'an your friend:** One of the advantages of the current curriculum is it requires students to constantly refer to the Qur'an. Most of the available books do not ask the students to refer to the Qur'an. Our approach was different. The teacher's manuals as well as the homework guide the students to search verses from the Quran. Without much realization, at the end of the year students have searched verses from majority surahs. Several parents reported that they grew up attending halaqas, and 'listening' to someone who had more knowledge than them. They felt that they understood Islam and Qur'an from second-hand source, without themselves taking any initiative to learn from the Qur'an itself. Majority of the parents acknowledged that by using this curriculum their children were actually "researching" the Qur'an.

As all the students in the school where this author had taught belonged to non-Arab families, and, thus, had limited Arabic knowledge, most of the homework for the Formative Phases were based on translation of the Qur'an. No particular translation was selected. In the Implementation Phase, while the students were still from non-Arab families, homework guided them to explore the meanings of certain Arabic words used in the Qur'an and then asked the students to explain why a similar word could have provided a different meaning. The students thus were able to explore different shades of meaning of a word, investigate the root of a particular word and understand the depth of knowledge in the Qur'an.

**Biographies of Prophets:** In the Formative period, the biographies of two or three prophets are introduced every year. In addition to describing detail events in the life of a prophet, one major theme identified for each prophet was discussed. The theme of the lesson on Prophet Adam (A) is "it is proper to seek forgiveness from Allah (swt) for any mistake". For the lesson on 'Isa (A), the central theme is "to stick to truth even if there is oppression". For the lesson on Musa (A), the central theme focused on how to help the oppressed even if you have to go against a significant power. Lesson on Yusuf (A) showed that the ultimate planner is Allah (swt). Lesson on Nuh (A) carried the theme that truth is more important than any kind of relationship. Students learned the stories of the prophets, but importantly learned key values that made them great. The biographies and the central themes are used to instill strong moral and ethical characters of the children. Students are given the message that even the prophets, who were finest human beings and Allah's favorites, had to struggle in their lives. Therefore, we all must struggle in every sphere of our lives.

**Moral values:** A society can flourish only if it has strong values and work ethics. The Muslim community in the US will become significant, not by sheer numerical presence but by large number of successful people. The success has to come in education, finance, business and in politics. To develop a generation of successful Muslims, we have to invest at this time with solid moral values founded on Qur’anic principles. Fourteen hundred years back, a group of *jahils* had excelled in every field of life within a very short time as they had adopted all the Qur’anic teachings. If the children growing in the US can follow the same teachings, then there is no doubt that they will excel equally. The lessons in the current curriculum thus strongly emphasize on Qur’anic moral and ethical values. Strong work ethics are shown from the lives of prophets who had to struggle to achieve their goals. The lessons repeatedly tell the students that they have to exert, just as the way the prophets did, in every aspect of their lives.

**Information and practical usage:** If appropriate with a lesson, a practice is encouraged. The message given to the children is any good work is Islamic. Following the lesson on **Charity**, students were encouraged to bring some item to donate at the local food share. In addition to food item, if the student brought his or her own toy to give to a needy child, that was appreciated most. Students thus learn not only sharing, but also giving.

In the homework for the lesson on **Responsibility**, the focus was on performing few household chores. The teacher provided the students the table of household or personal chores that they will be responsible for the next week (and hopefully for the future). Students performed these tasks, put a tick mark (which is another responsibility) and returned the table to the teacher next week for grading. Students are told daily household activities are parts of the religion, and have to be done properly. The life of Rasulallah (S) is described to show that he did household works, and thus had set an example for us to follow.

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Put shoes in the shoe rack							
Put toys in the toy chest							
Put dishes in the sink or dishwasher							
Put dirty clothes in the hamper							
Check at night if all outside doors are closed							
Feed the pet (if you have one)							

By using lessons, homework such as the above example and other practical tasks, students are given the message that Islam is not only five daily prayers and fasting. It is a complete way of life. It is expected that by realizing the values and teachings of Islam,

students will appreciate the rituals, and will continue to perform as Allah's khalifa on the earth.

### **TEACHER'S MANUAL:**

To support the curriculum, the author has also developed a teacher's manual. During his teaching in two different Islamic schools, the author felt the need for developing the curriculum and the teacher's manual. During this on-going process, he had shared his manual with few other teachers in the same school and also at a school in a different city. Suggestions from these teachers were incorporated to improve the lesson delivery. For the purpose of the current paper, we will use three lessons which were created by this author. The teacher's manual follows the lesson and provides a time frame for each topic. The time devoted for each class was 50 minutes.

**Guidelines:** The primary guideline given to the teachers are based on some principles initially developed by John Milton Gregory, and then re-described by Carl Shafer in his book "*Excellence in Teaching with the Seven Laws: A Contemporary Abridgment of Gregory's Seven Laws of Teaching*" (Baker Books, 1985). The author feels that this book should be a mandatory reading for all non-educator teachers to vastly improve their teaching ability and efficiency. Our modified guidelines are as follows:

1. Teacher has to be familiar with the topic that he or she wants to teach. This preparation may require only few minutes in case of beginners topic, and significantly longer time in case of higher classes.
2. Maintaining the attention of the students. It is thus crucial that the class size is kept small so that the teacher can see the face of each student clearly and that the student realizes that the teacher's eye is meeting his or her eye in every minute. There are different ways to maintain attention: short in-class quiz, in-class exercise, activity, a short debate, recognition of job well done.
3. Teacher should not use words that the students may not know. Every time a new word, particularly Arabic word is introduced, the teacher must explain the term well so that it is comfortable to each student. Care should be taken to limit introducing only few new words every day.
4. If appropriate, recall past lessons that discussed similar events or similar themes.
5. If appropriate, provide real life situations where the student has to make a decision. Explain how the current lesson can be used in the real life dilemmas.
6. At the end of the class, review of the lesson to reemphasize whatever was learnt the same day. Ask the students to review what they learnt the same day. Each student may mention one topic that they can remember from the lesson. This has to be done in a non-intimidating way.

Guidelines given in this section applies to any and all topics. The teacher may remember within 50 minute class s/he cannot go in-depth on any topic. The purpose of the class is not to create scholars in Islam, but simply give the students broad knowledge about a particular topic. The teacher must also carefully plan to finish each topic within one class, without requiring additional class to finish the topic. This will require the teacher to address key issues, key concepts. Question answer session is great tool of learning and

communicating, but it should not be a means to ‘kill’ time. At the beginning of each class, the teacher must allocate time to discuss and grade prior week’s home work. Time must be spent to judiciously finish the topic of the week. Proper planning of class time will not only attract student interest, but also reflect preparedness of the teacher.

The following additional guidelines will greatly help the teachers:

1. Well before the class the teacher must read the chapter s/he intends to cover
2. Do not assume you know the subject. Even if you do, spending some time to organize your thoughts and lesson plan will help.
3. Bring in class your own chit sheet
4. Use chalk board as much as you can, but –
5. Use chalk board judiciously so as not to waste time
6. While preparing for the lesson, keep in mind possible questions you might ask in exam. At appropriate time during class lesson, let the students know the question you might ask in exam. Let them take notes.
7. Think of bringing proper material in class as needed – e.g. map of Arabia, US, chart etc.
8. If you need to give your personal opinion, tell them it is your opinion
9. Always assign home works – not just reading at home that you cannot verify. Assign short questions to answer, give multiple choice questions, fill up the blank, true/false sentences etc.
10. If giving some additional homework beyond what is provided in the curriculum, then the teacher should bring computer printout of homework. Do not write them on black board. It is a waste of teaching time.

For this paper, we will discuss by citing three lessons and accompanying teacher’s manual that were used in three different grades of Formative Phases.

**Example from first grade teaching material:** Children in this class are 5-7 years old. This is a difficult class since the maturity levels of the students are vastly different. Some students cannot read, while the older students could independently read and understand short lessons. Further, some students had never been exposed to a class room setting. For such children, discipline and attention both remained important issues.

To maintain discipline and attention, the approach should be to put the students in semicircular rows with the teacher at the center. The teacher is advised is keep slight space between students to avoid physical contact. This physical contact is not necessarily to avoid inter-gender contact, but mainly to eliminate discipline problem.

Each class starts with two actions at the same time: 1) students exchange salaam to each other, and 2) they take out book, notebook and pencil. This needs about two minutes. This ritual also reminds the students not to leave the books and pencils at home.

Before the class starts, the teacher is advised to make a list of all the students under a header called “Best Students” on the right side of the black board. On the left side of the black board is an empty square. The teacher then announces “I am so happy that every student in this class is a best student. However, if some one does not do good, his or her name will move to this box. You do not want to get your name there”. My personal

experience is that students do not want their names ‘stained’ into the black hole. Once or twice, the teacher had to move a child’s name closer towards nasty box. Once the student controls himself or herself, his/her name moves back to the list of “Best Students”. Overall, the system was not punitive; students choose to remain disciplined as they were rewarded with the term Best Student. The manual reminds the teacher to use encouragement instead of punitive approach.

For next three four minutes, the teacher reviews what they have learned in the previous week. This is the typical starting of class every week. A number of encouraging words that were developed by Dr. Edward Kubany<sup>1</sup> can be modified for any Islamic school. Some of these words that this author found useful are included in the manual. Every day the teacher thus uses different words as grades on the homework page. The author noticed that the students eagerly wait to see a new word appearing as their daily grade.

Once the topic starts the manual guides the teacher to run the class. The teacher has full liberty to improve on the manual, but if the teacher wants to use only the guidelines given in the manual (s)he will still be able to efficiently conduct the class. The efficiency is determined by several factors: 1) completion of the study material in the allotted time, 2) maintaining discipline in the class, 3) delivering the core message of the lesson to the students, 4) majority of the students have mastered the concept and can employ the teachings in their lives.

Figures 1a, 1b and 1c show a sample lesson that I had created for a weekend school in Minneapolis. This lesson was for children in first grade. Some students were able to read the lesson by themselves. As some students struggled to read, the teacher was advised to read out the lesson to the class. The teacher’s manual was custom-made for a volunteer parent who had never taught in a class room setting. The teacher, who was initially hesitant, actually then enjoyed teaching and completed his full year of teaching. Parents were highly satisfied with the progress made by the students.

For younger students in early introductory phase, the homework was mostly drawing and coloring (see Figure 1b). They were not required to refer to the Qur’an. Since some students in the class could not write adequately, writing was mostly limited to “T” or “F” for true/false and short words. The homework styles varied, and each lesson came with a mandatory homework. The homework for the introductory phase (first and second grades) included some of the following

- True/false
- Puzzle
- Multiple choices
- Matching words of similar meanings
- Words that do not belong with other words
- Draw a picture
- Color the picture
- Draw lines to related words

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.noogenesis.com/malama/Kubany\\_encouraging\\_words.html](http://www.noogenesis.com/malama/Kubany_encouraging_words.html)

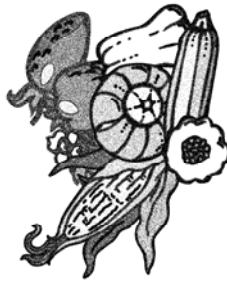


## classwork **weekend 2**

### Blessings of Allah (swt)

Allah (swt) is Most-Merciful. Merciful means someone who is kind and forgiving. As He is All-Merciful, one of His names is *Rahman*. He is also known as *Rahim*, which means He is All-Kind.

Because Allah (swt) is so kind, He gives us everything. Everything that you have came from Allah (swt). He gave us life, and He helps us to grow. He gave us our families. These all are blessings of Allah (swt).



All fruits and vegetables, and everything else that we eat are blessings of Allah (swt).

Allah (swt) gave us eyes, so that we can see. He gave us nose, so that we can smell. He gave us ears, so that we can hear. He gave us skin, so that we can feel things. He gave us brain, so that we can think.

Allah (swt) gave us all kinds of foods. He gave us delicious fruits, and healthful vegetables and tasty meats. We cannot finish counting the blessings of Allah (swt).

If there was no daylight, then the world would be very cold. Everything would be frozen. If there was no night, then the world would be too hot. The world would be drier than a desert. Allah (swt) is so kind that He gave us day and night.

Allah (swt) is so Merciful, that He gave us several seasons. Without the changes of seasons, fruits and vegetables would not grow. He gave us rain, so that all plants can grow.

If we become sick, Allah (swt) cures us. He relieves our pain. When we pray to Allah (swt), He responds to us very kindly.

If we make mistakes, and ask forgiveness, Allah (swt) forgives us. Nobody should give up the hope of the mercy from Allah (swt).

### Words that I learned today:

- Blessings
- Merciful
- *Rahman*
- *Rahim*
- Despair

homework **weekend 2**

1. Allah (swt) blesses us in so many ways. Can you think of some of His blessings? Please draw a picture showing some of Allah's gifts to us.

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2. True/False (Write T for True; F for False)

- a. \_\_\_\_ Rain is a mercy of Allah (swt) to plants and animals
- b. \_\_\_\_ Night is not a mercy of Allah (swt).

3. Fill in the blanks

- a. We can see, because Allah (swt) gave us \_\_\_\_\_
- b. We can hear, because Allah (swt) gave us \_\_\_\_\_
- c. We can smell, because Allah (swt) gave us \_\_\_\_\_

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Figure 1b. This is continuation of the lesson as shown in Figure 1a. Homework was simple. To answer Question #1, any item whether natural or man-made is indeed a gift from Allah (swt). Therefore, any drawing would be a correct answer.

## teacher's manual **weekend 2**

### **Topic: Blessings of Allah (swt)**

#### **The evening before the class:**

Prep time 30 minutes  
Read the complete lesson. It should not take more than 5 minutes of your time. Identify the core message of the lesson, i.e. every thing is a blessing of Allah. Even a punishment of Allah (swt) is a blessing, since this is a corrective approach so that we do not get into errors again. Look up the dictionary to find different shades of meaning of the word blessing. It will not be necessary to give all the meanings of the word, actually it is not recommended for this age group to involve them into linguistic nature of a word. The teacher will be better prepared if (s)he has full understanding of the word itself. Relax for few minutes and reflect on your own life or the lives of your children/student. Pick an incident which can be shown in an interesting way as a blessing of Allah (swt). Keep this story as a backup in case of a need to give an example.

Collect your materials for the class and put them in your bag. Tomorrow you may not have enough time.

#### **Your continuous practice:**

- 1) As a new teacher, you will practice your voice everyday during your interaction with other people. Avoid making a monotonous dialog. Raise your voice, change the rhythm, etc.
- 2) Practice on moving your eyes over the whole class, with fixing your eyes on one student for no more than few seconds and then moving on to the next. You will make personal contact with each student and the students are more likely to remain attentive to the teacher. Do not "talk" to the black board.
- 3) Practice your handwriting for the black board. Many new teachers write on the blackboard as if they are writing on a note book. Keep the letters big, and write clearly. Even if it seems that you are writing slowly, it is better than to re-read your writing to the students, or worse that the students will copy wrong words on their note books.

#### **ON THE DAY OF CLASS**

#### **Exchanging Salam, setting up books, pencils**

2 minutes  
5 minutes

#### **Review:**

The teacher will review the materials discussed in the previous class. Each student will display the drawing of things that they perceived as creation of Allah. They will briefly describe why they think Allah created those (most answers will be acceptable since Allah created everything, or Allah gave us resources for to use the raw materials to make some objects).

**Encouraging words to use today:** Alhamdulillah, MashaAllah, Impressive, Great, Nice work, Super.

**Aim:** Students will understand that each and every thing that we have are blessings of Allah (swt). If we are good, we get more blessings.

#### **Materials required:**

1. Pictures of nature, such as river, clouds, sun, moon, mountains, animals.
2. Handful of grains (rice, wheat, beans, etc) in separate zip-lock bags. You will not display all the items to the students at the same time. Keep them hidden in your bag and bring out one at a time. Young students like surprises.

**Content:** 25-35 minutes

Teacher will read the lesson to the students. During reading, give examples that every thing in this world was created for the benefit of human beings. Teacher will show pictures of clouds, and explain how rain helps us by the way of growing vegetations. Teacher will show a picture of sun and explain the gift of sunshine helps us. Similarly, the teacher will show the pictures of other elements of nature and explain how these benefit us. Then the teacher will show some pictures of grains (or actual handful of grains, rice, wheat or beans, let the students handle the grains) and explain how Allah gave us best of food. Teacher will show examples of day and night and explain how the changes help us. Teacher will also tell about our ability to think and Allah's guidance through prophets.

**Activities:** 5 minutes

Students will be asked to feel their pulse or listen to each others heart beats (maintain gender rules). Once they have listened or felt the pulse, the teacher will explain how Allah has placed continuously functioning organs for us to survive. Teacher will ask the students to cover their eyes for few moments and then open them. The teacher will explain the gift of sight. (In addition or alternatively, teacher can ask the class to remain quiet for few moments and then show the gift of hearing).

**Assessment:** 5-8 minutes

Teacher will ask the students to tell things that they get without any or minimal effort. Examples could be breathing, sunshine in the morning, etc. Let the students use their own imagination and thoughts to identify Allah's blessing. Most answers will be correct as everything that we do or we have is due to Allah's blessings.

**Home work:** Assignment time: 2-3 minutes

Figure 1c. Teacher's manual for lesson presented as Figures 1a and 1b.

**Example from Fourth grade teaching materials:** The second set of examples (Figures 2a, 2b and 2c) is a lesson created for children in the fourth grade. Starting from third grade, emphasis is placed on making regular contact with the Qur'an. The teacher and the students are asked to bring a copy of the Qur'an to the class. All the students in the class were non-Arab, and had minimal fluency or understanding of Arabic language. Therefore, all the students were asked to bring a copy of the Qur'an that has parallel translation in English. Students were not required to bring a particular translation, but were encouraged to bring different translations. During the class, the teacher asks the students to open the Qur'an and find a given verse related to the lesson. The students became accustomed in handling the Qur'an. The ultimate goal of the author was to raise the students, who when they are grown-up, will constantly refer to the Qur'an.

The lessons were created with abundant references to the Qur'an that were provided as a superscript along with the lesson. Students were thus able to read the lesson without much interruption by the references. During the class, whenever a question was raised, the teacher asked the students to search the complete verse from the Qur'an. The time burden was few minutes, however, the benefit was immense.

In the homework section (Figure 2b), the students were again required to open the Qur'an and find the answer. Not all the answers could be found from the lesson itself. The questions were easy, but could not be answered without referring to the Qur'an. Some questions refer to the verse by surah number, and some questions refer the verse by surah name. This way, a student learns different way of searching a verse in the Qur'an. Usual time burden for completing the homework was less than 20 minutes. The author has his own child in the same class, thus he was able to verify the time needed to complete the homework. Excessive and tricky homework are harmful; a student will loose interest and will distance him/herself from the religious teachings.

Teacher's manual was created to identify time share on each topic. Instead of continuous lecture by the teacher, the class was interrupted frequently to invite the students to actively participate in the class. In addition, preplanned activities related to the lessons were introduced.

As necessary (not shown in the attached examples), hints were given to make quick sketches on the black board. For example, to teach the sections on the battles of Badr, Uhud and Trench, the teacher quickly draws several camels, horses to show strength disparity between two warring factions. A camel was generated by drawing a triangle and adding few >> beneath the triangle showed a running animal. A horse could be drawn by making a rectangle. The sketches were simple and few >> representing legs simulated galloping horses of the Quraish soldiers, and few vertical lines as resting legs showed waiting horses of the Muslims. The archers were drawn with a simple drawing of the alphabet D and a straight line that crosses thorough the letter. The teacher, who was not a comfortable artist, was confident to generate an attention grabbing class with these few quick sketches.

## Why should we worship Allah (swt)

**Objective:** To discuss if worshipping Allah (swt) is necessary. The alternative of worshipping one God will also be discussed.

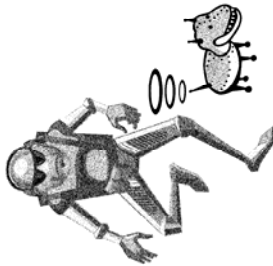
### A Big Mess

Let us travel to an imaginary land, where you are a genius scientist who makes robots. In this Roboland, you have created several fancy robots. You have programmed their computer brains, so they can work smoothly. These programs are the rules of Roboland so that the robots will work without any problem.

Mr. CherRobo cooks; Mr. GreenRobo tends the garden; and Ms EduRobo teaches the kids. DocRobo works in the hospital fixing the electric wires of other robots, and RuffRobo guards the yard.

One day, SillyRobo Jr., who was in charge of turning on the lights, decides not to follow the rules. He assumed there is no need to turn on the switch. Roboland turned dark. JunkRobo, who was a patient in DocRobo's hospital, fizzled out as soon as power failed. ChefRobo's waffles remained soggy, and GreenRobo's electric lawn mower smashed the TreeRobo, which fell on Ms EduRobo's class room. Your Roboland just turned into a big mess,

because SillyRobo Jr. refused to obey your rules—the rules of his creator.



*SillyRobo Jr. would have worked fine only if it had followed the rules of its creator, just the way RuffRobo was following.*

### Everything needs a rule

Just as in Roboland, everything in this real world also needs rules. A river cannot flow upstream, and a rock cannot float in the air. A lion cannot break the rule to live in the ocean. An eagle cannot start living under water, or a whale on top of a tree. The sun cannot take a day off next Sunday. We also need some rules so that we can be the way our Creator had planned.

### Meaning of worship

Worship means to show reverence and respect to Allah (swt). We can show respect only if we follow the rules set up by Allah (swt).

Some of these rules are related to ritualistic worships, and some rules are related to daily activities. Examples of ritualistic worships are salah, sawm (fasting) or sacrifice. Examples of worship through activities are how we behave to each other, how we conduct business and what we eat. Allah (swt) has set up rules for our behavior to others, business transaction, dietary requirements and many others. When we follow these rules as prescribed by Allah (swt), we are worshipping Him.

There are some rules of Allah (swt) that we cannot change even if we want to—we cannot make the kidneys to think; we cannot eat through our ear holes, we cannot make our toenails see the world. Whether we are Muslims or not, we still have to follow the rules made by our Creator, such as in using our body parts.

### Who makes the rules?

In the Roboland, you had made some rules, because you were the creator. SillyRobo should not have made his own rules—which started the mess. SillyRobo did not know how his wrong judgment would affect others.

In this real world too, the rules should be made by who created us. We may call

this Creator as Allah, God, Elohim or Ishwar.<sup>210</sup> The name of the Creator does not matter. The crucial matter is that rules should be made by someone who has full knowledge of every thing; has knowledge of past, present and future; and had created this universe. As you were owner of the robots, the owner of this universe is the Creator.

### Who is benefited from worship?

In Roboland, may be you were benefited when everything followed your rules. Not so in this world. Allah (swt) is not in need of money or food. When we follow the rules of Creator, our society works better, we become successful in our lives. When we sacrifice an animal, we are not feeding the meat to Allah (swt).<sup>227</sup> When we follow the rules, we are the ones who harvest the benefits of this world.<sup>228</sup>

يَسْأَلُكَ الْبَشَرُ لِمَ وَجَدْنَاكُمْ وَنَسْتَعِينُكَ  
لَنْ يَسْأَلَكَ اللَّهُ لِعُومِهِمْ وَكَلِمَتِهِمْ وَكَلِمَتِهِمْ

*Their flesh never reaches Allah, nor does their blood, but it is the reverence from you that reaches Him.....(Al-Hajj 22:37)*

### Any god here, please raise your hand

Instead of Allah (swt), may we select someone else to whom we may worship? It would be silly to worship a person, who becomes sick and dies. A person cannot have knowledge of every thing. He or she will need food to survive. When a bee stings her, it hurts. A human does not have

## homework weekend 7

1. Amirah, a girl in your class, is diet conscious. She thinks it is cruel to eat chicken, and should be called *haram* (unlawful). Is she violating the rules of Allah (swt)? Read verse 116 from *Sūrah Al-Nahl* to justify your answer.

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2. What does the Qur'an say about the number of God/gods? Search your answer in *Sūrah Al-Hijj* verse 34.

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3. Read the verse 51:56. Why did Allah (swt) create mankind and jinn?

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4. Suppose you are a scout in an expedition. The team is led by two persons of two different natures, and two different aims. Write a few sentences describing what could happen to this scout team.

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are hard? Most likely, our edited rules will turn out to be wrong. Governments of every country keep on changing their rules, because over a period of time they find that their rules were not good. The safest way for us would be to follow the rules created by the Creator, who knows everything, and who does not want any benefit from us.

### Why Islam?

If we can call the Creator as Allah, God, *Ishtar* or Elohim, is it also fine if we follow any religion other than Islam? Most of the religions that we see now were also given by Allah (swt). However, He gave these religions for a small group of people living in a small area, for a certain period of time only. Their scriptures were not preserved properly. Many of these scriptures were changed by people.<sup>25</sup> This means people have added or removed rules given by God in those scriptures.<sup>26</sup> The Qur'an is the last Divine Book, and it has been preserved the way it was revealed. No rules have been removed, and no new rules have been inserted in the Qur'an. If we follow the Qur'an, then we are following the rules set up by our Creator who owns us.

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the power to create us, because she herself was created by someone else, the Creator.

Along with Allah (swt), can we have another god or a band of gods? To be God, one must be the Creator. God must be eternal, one who does not die. God must be all-Powerful. No one, no statue, no powerful person, no one alive or dead can claim these qualities, except one and only Allah (swt).<sup>22,24</sup>

### May we worship none?

Is it necessary to worship Allah (swt)? Can we not live by ourselves, by setting some moral values as our guiding rules? Although we may not be performing the ritual worships as prescribed by Allah (swt), but we are still under Allah's rules. A problem of setting our own rules is due to our inability to see the future. What we think is good for us today may prove to be a blunder tomorrow. History is littered with examples of people who thought their own rules would be good, and they failed miserably in few years.

### May we partially worship Allah?

Would it be good to select some rules from Allah (swt) that makes sense to us, and change some other rules that we think

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Figure 2b. Continuation of the lesson as shown in Figure 2a.

## Why should we worship Allah (swt)

### Day before the class:

30 minutes  
The prep time for this lesson should not be more than 30 minutes. Please read the lesson completely. Practice on a dramatic presentation of SillyRobo story. Use voice and body action to show some of the mishaps that happened in Roboland.

Review from the dictionary the following words: Omniscent, Omnipresent, Omnipotent,

**Things to bring to the class:** No specific material required for this section.

**Aim:** Students will analyze, using different approaches, why one has to worship Allah only. The lesson will discuss different options of worship, and why worshipping the Creator, One and Only Allah, makes most sense.

### ON THE DAY OF THE CLASS

**Review of previous week's homework:** Every attempt has to be made to grade the homework before the start of the class. If this cannot be done by the teacher, she may ask a parent who could volunteer to grade the homework. Please provide this helping person with your own completed homework, so that the parent knows exactly what the correct answers are.

**Encouraging words to be used to grade homework today:**  
Alhamdulillah, MashaAllah, I am impressed, Very clean work, Congratulations. You only missed \_\_\_\_\_, I am glad you are in my class.

### Content and Method:

25-35 minutes  
First, teacher will talk briefly about SillyRobo and the mess that he created as he wanted to follow his own rule. Then the teacher will give examples of other day-to-day activities that require following a leader. Examples could be soccer game, field trip, swimming lesson, mathematics class, or anything that the students could relate to. Encourage a few students to give one example where it is crucial to follow a leader. Write down the examples in the blackboard. Then explain that even these leaders are human beings, who could not be correct all the time. Only Allah is correct all the time.

Teacher will explain that we are creation of One Allah. He wants well for all of us. Teacher will also quickly go over the key points in the lesson. Each key point is under a specific header in the lesson.

Although the lesson does not delve in to Shahadah, the teacher should take the opportunity to discuss briefly about this core statement. Explain the inner meaning of "La ilaha illallahu Muhammadar

rasul-ullah". When we state that there is no divinity except Allah, we understand that Allah is the only one to whom we should worship. Allah has no partners, no father or mother. He does not have any children. Allah is our sole Master. He created us and every thing else. He is most merciful on us. He provides us every thing that we need. He guides us to the right path. He forgives us if we know that we made a mistake. Allah never breaks His promises.

The teacher should also introduce some words to show the magnanimity of Allah. He is Omniscent, which means that Allah has the total knowledge on every thing. He is Omnipresent, which means that He is everywhere. He is closer to us than our jugular veins. He is Omnipotent, which means that Allah has unlimited power and authority. Nobody can have the power similar to Allah's. There is no limitation on His abilities.

In connection with the Shahadah, teacher should explain that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was a human being, and we do not worship him or any other prophets. When we state that Muhammad (pbuh) is the prophet of Allah, we believe on what Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) taught us. We believe that through Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Allah sent us the final Book of Guidance, the Qur'an. We also know that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the last prophet to the mankind. There will not be any other prophet from Allah.

### Activities:

5-7 minutes

Teacher will select two students who will act as 'boss' and will give opposite commands (go right, go left, sit down, stand up, etc) to a student who will act as their subordinate. Do this for about 2 minutes to show the confusing situation. Dismiss this group and bring in another student who will act as the sole 'boss'. Select few students as the subordinate. Demonstrate that commands from a single boss do not create any chaos.

### Assessment:

5-7 minutes

Since fourth graders have studied some science in school, ask them if any human can create solar objects, Grand Canyon or human body parts, such as an intricate cell? Let the students spend a minute or so in understanding this concept of Creation of Allah.

- Can a person for sure know what is in our mind? Can Allah know what we do in hiding, or we think?
- Should we pray to Prophet Muhammad to help us?
- Should we pray to any saints to help us?
- If someone claims divine power, should we believe in it?

### Vocabulary:

Omniscent, Omnipresent, Omnipotent,

### Home work:

Assignment time: 2-3 minutes

Figure 2c. This is the Teacher's manual for the lesson shown in Figures 2a and 2b.

classworkweekend **13**

## Mūsā (A): An Analysis of His Personality

Many surahs in the Qur'an are titled after the name of prophets. Surah #10 is named after Hud (A), # 11 is named after Yunus (A), #12 is named after Yusuf (A), #14 is named after Ibrahim (A), #47 is named after Prophet Muhammad (S) and #71 is named after Nuh (A). Although there is not a single surah in the Qur'an is named after Mūsā (A), his name or his account is mentioned in no less than twenty seven different surahs in the Qur'an. Not only that, as with prophet 'Isa (A), Mūsā's story is narrated from the time of his birth, but goes on to describe incidents from his youth, his marriage and his dealings with the Israelites in Egypt and in Sinai Peninsula.

During this entire period, amid ups and down in his life, through trials and tribulations, through difficulties and success, Mūsā (A) demonstrated highly dynamic personality. The objective of this lesson is to discuss some of the most prominent character attributes that readily stands out as we analyze his entire life.

In order to understand what made Mūsā (A) so distinguished and how his personality evolved during various life incidents, let us analyze entire life events of Mūsā (A) by dividing it in four broad phases.

**Phase 1:** This phase covers the part of life of Mūsā (A) from the time of his birth, adoption in Pharaoh's palace, youth, until he ran away after accidentally killing an Egyptian.

**Phase 2:** After running away from Egypt, Mūsā (A) arrived in Madyan - as a destitute, with no future and nowhere to go. But as Allah (swt)'s immense blessing, he not only got an offer to marry one of the women he helped, but also through the marriage he received shelter and security for about 8-10 years.

**Phase 3:** This phase started when Mūsā (A) was appointed as a prophet of Allah (swt) and was instructed to go to Egypt with twin objectives to accomplish: (a) rescue the Israelites, and (b) advise Pharaoh to surrender to Allah (swt).

**Phase 4:** After rescuing the Israelites Mūsā (A) brought them in Madyan, gave them the Ten Commandments, wanted to have them settle in Canaan and inherit the Promised Land. At the end of this phase, amid some disappointment with the Israelites, finally he passed away.

Now we are in a position to discuss some of the outstanding character traits of Mūsā (A). If we attempt to make a list of what made Mūsā's personality and character so distinguished, probably we would be filling pages after pages, but we will try to narrow it down to few important ones. These are: (a) knowledge and wisdom, (b) fight for law and order, (c) fear for uncertainty, (d) fearless, (e) determinedness, (f) far sightedness, (g) inquisitiveness, (h) God fearing, (i)

**Example from Eighth Grade teaching Material:** Starting from 6<sup>th</sup> grade, students are in “Details Phase” of the curriculum. While much earlier in the introductory phase students had lessons on Musa (A) and other prophets, the example here shows how one part of Musa (A)’s life is used in the Details Phase.

persuasiveness (j) strong faith, (k) anger, (l) compassionate, (m) forgiving, (n) patience. Below we will discuss some of the traits.

**Knowledge and Wisdom** These are truly gift of Allah (swt). It grows during entire life of a person as the person undergoes through various life experiences. But certain specific incidents may have more profound impact than others. It was a divine plan to let Mūsā (A) grow up in the king's palace as one of his adopted family member (20:39). From the very childhood Mūsā (A) must have been treated princely and exposed to all the privileges that come with a prince. His depth of knowledge must have come from varied experiences he had to undergo during his childhood and youth.

Sometimes we become wise after the effect, i.e. after a certain incident happens in our life. As we all know, Mūsā (A) was involved in a dispute when an Egyptian and an Israelite were involved in a brawl. Due to an unfortunate turn of event, Mūsā (A) hit the stronger and oppressive Egyptian with one fatal blow and the person died (28:15-19). After this incident Mūsā (A) became alarmed when he came to know that Pharaoh was conspiring to put Mūsā (A) in trial and probably to kill him. On the hindsight Mūsā (A) must have gained lots of wisdom as he reflected about the incident, for not only was he remorseful for the incident, he also prayed to Allah (swt) for forgiveness.

This event further took a dramatic turn in his life. He had to run away as a fugitive, into the wilderness of Sinai Peninsula, wandering aimlessly for days together. Once he reached Madyan, he was blessed to be in company of a prophet and his daughters. He helped the daughters to fetch water from well. In turn the father offered him to marry one of the daughters and settle down in Madyan for minimum eight years, and if he stayed for ten years he was told it would be better (28:27). Mūsā (A) was farsighted as he accepted the offer and decided to settle down in Madyan. For ten years as a young man raising a family, Mūsā (A) gained lots of knowledge and wisdom.

Towards the end of his life in Madyan, Mūsā (A) was traveling in Sinai Peninsula with his family; he felt a spiritual urge in his mind. He saw fire in the mountain and decided to go and check it out with the hope to get directions from it. When he approached the fire, he saw some kind of spiritual fire and had a unique experience when Allah (swt) directly talked to him. They had some conversation at the end of which Allah (swt) asked him to go to Egypt to give invitation to Pharaoh to accept Islam. At this point he was appointed a prophet of God.

After this Mūsā (A) returned to Egypt and approached Pharaoh (7:104-105). He lived in Egypt for a while, as a spiritual leader of the Israelites and continued to solicit Pharaoh to give up his wrongful religious practices and accept Islam. Then at one opportune moment, Mūsā (A) was divinely asked to leave Egypt with all the Israelites towards a promised land. He led them across wilderness, through sea back into Madyan, from where he would ask them to settle down in Canaan. But the Israelites refused to invade Canaan. So Allah (swt) punished them with forty years of banishment in the wilderness (5:26). During this phase he received the Ten Commandments. The Israelites continuously annoyed Mūsā (A) and refused to accept many of his commands. Later during the period of forty years of nomadic life in the desert, Mūsā (A) died.

Figure 3a. This and next two pages (Figures 3b and 3c) contain an example of a lesson and teacher’s manual prepared for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.



**Fight for Justice** At least two incidents in the life of Mūsā (A) show he was always fighting for the cause of justice or for the law and order. When the circumstance did not have clear cut law and order, he had to take up law and order in his own hand. The first incident was when he intervened in the brawl between the Egyptian and the Israelite. The second incident was when he helped the women in Madyan fetch water by chasing out the nomadic rogues from messing up the well. Although he was tired and exhausted from days of traveling in Sinai desert, but it did not deter him from helping those who are oppressed—the women in this case—and fight the oppressor. Later during his 2nd phase in Egypt, Mūsā (A) was seen relentlessly fighting for the civic rights of the Israelites—this time against the mighty oppressor Pharaoh.

**Fear for Uncertainty** No matter how strong and resourceful Mūsā (A) was, even he was fearful of uncertainty just like any other human. After accidentally killing the Egyptian, Mūsā (A) ran away for he was fearful of uncertainty (26:14). He was again fearful of uncertainty when he was asked by Allah (swt) to go back to Egypt and preach to Pharaoh. This time he was fearful of getting arrested for the past action of killing the Egyptian. Mūsā (A) was fearless when he rescued the Israelites through the sea. Mūsā (A) was fearless when he assumed the role of spiritual leader of unruly, disobedient Israelites.

**Fearless** Although Mūsā (A) was at times fearful of uncertainty he was overall fearless. He was not fearful when he intervened in the brawl between an Egyptian and an Israelite. He was fearless when he plunged into the wilderness of Sinai and fled towards uncertainty—not knowing whether he will survive in the desert. He was fearless when he went to the valley of Tia, the valley in Sinai where he received first revelation and talked to Allah (swt). He was fearless when he approached Pharaoh, knowing fully well he could have been arrested.

**Determinedness** This character attribute was noted in the personality of Mūsā (A) when he was determined to face Pharaoh even when he ran the risk of getting arrested. He was determined to rescue the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. He was determined to spiritually guide the Israelites even when they were not fully committed.

**Far Sightedness** Mūsā (A) had nothing to gain after he ran away from Egypt, but only to save his life. When he reached Madyan, after traveling in the wilderness for days, he was aimless and exhausted. When he received an offer to marry one of the women, he accepted the offer knowing that the marriage would provide him with security and opportunity to settle down rather to continue a nomadic life (28:27). The marriage provided him emotional support and stability in life. This decision clearly indicates far sightedness in Mūsā's personality.

**Inquisitiveness** Mūsā (A) must have been very inquisitive. Unless he was inquisitive, he could not have gathered the knowledge and wisdom. Particularly we can see Mūsā (A) was inquisitive when he wanted to see Allah (swt) with his eyes (7:143). At that time he was already a prophet, received revelations, talked to Allah (swt) in the valley of Tia. He was inquisitive when he was traveling with the mysterious sage *Khidir*. In surah 18, the story of Mūsā (A) traveling with Khidir is narrated. Each time Khidir did some strange activity, Mūsā (A) could not resist but to ask him the reason for the action, although he was told not to ask any question.

**Forgiving** A person who experienced forgiveness in life can in turn be forgiving to others.

After killing the Egyptian Mūsā (A) was very remorseful and sought forgiveness to Allah (swt). Here Mūsā (A) was guilty of a capital crime, yet Allah (swt) forgave him. This must have had profound impact in his life and he must have learned the virtue of forgiveness.

Mūsā (A) could not have been a leader of the Israelites, unless he had leadership abilities. He could not have motivated thousands of Israelites unless he was compassionate and kind. Unless he was persuasive, he could have easily given up all his efforts in Egypt when Pharaoh and his companions rejected his mission. Unless he had strong faith in Allah (swt), he could not have assumed the role of prophethood and could not have been a spiritual leader of the Israelites.

Only incident in the Quran where Mūsā (A) was seen angry was when he returned from the Mountain after forty days of solitude and found the Israelites built a golden calf to worship. Mūsā (A) was angry towards his brother *Hārūn* thinking that he supported the golden calf (7:130).

## homework weekend 13

1. Many of the prophets have a surah named after them. Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?

- (i) Muhammad and Nūh
- (ii) Yunus and Yusuf
- (iii) Ibrahim and Sulaimān
- (iv) Nūh and Ayyub
- (v) Yunus and Yaqub

- (a) Only (i) and (ii) are correct
- (b) Only (i) and (iii) are correct
- (c) Only (ii) and (iv) are correct
- (d) Only (iv) and (v) are correct
- (e) Only (i) is correct

2. Mūsā's story is related in the Qur'ān in approximately how many surahs?

- (a) Approximately 17 surahs
- (b) Approximately 27 surahs
- (c) Approximately 37 surahs
- (d) Approximately 15 surahs
- (e) Approximately 20 surahs

3. According to the class discussion in how many phases did the author divided the life span of Mūsā (A)?

- (a) Two phases
- (b) Three phases
- (c) Four phases
- (d) Five phases
- (e) Six phases

Figure 3b. Continuation of the lesson as shown in Figure 3a. Homework extends to three pages, and only a section is seen in this figure.

### Mūsā (A): An Analysis of His Personality

**Day before the class:**

The life of Musa was very intense and fascinating. Since his life involves many significant actions, it is crucial that the teacher spends at least an hour or more on reviewing his life. As advised in the previous lessons, it is highly beneficial to read the referred verses from the Qur'an.

**Things to bring to the class:** Topographical map of Middle East (including Egypt).

At least one hour

**ON THE DAY OF THE CLASS**

**Review of home work:**

As the teacher must have realized from the previous classes, the homework must be reviewed in a spare time and not during the class hour. The teacher must have his/her version of fully solved assignment paper handy so that grading may become quicker. If needed very briefly review the previous lesson. If an assistant teacher is available, the review can be done by the assistant teacher. However, it is advisable for the teacher to at least be briefed about the performance of the students—particularly the best and the weakest students.

**Aim of the lesson:** Emphasize that the personality of Musa, as well as other prophets, is characteristic of highly successful people. He had intense life, ups and downs, trouble, comfort, acceptance and rejection by his followers. His quest for knowledge and support for the persecuted are some characters that each one of us should try to nurture. The teacher will emphasize many of the character traits surfaced during each of the phases.

**Start of the class:**

It is preferable that the teacher returns the graded assignments at the beginning of the class. In case an assistant teacher is not available, ask only one student to help you in distributing the assignments back to all the students. Do not let every student come to the teacher's desk to collect their homework.

**Use chalk board:** Teacher will begin, as always, by writing the lesson title on the chalk board. The teacher is strongly recommended to use chalk board and interact with students. This lesson may tend to drag on into details of Musa's life. But all details must be avoided; otherwise the topic cannot be finished in one class. At this senior youth level, it is expected that the students already know quite a bit about Musa's entire life. Teacher will only aid to remind the students of appropriate indicants, and go into brief details - that can be told in one or two sentences.

Then the teacher will begin by saying that since Quran narrated Musa's life from various angle, it is a good exercise to analyze the personality and positive character attributes that made him a great prophet. All prophets must have had many such attributes, but we don't know much details since

the Quran did not tell their stories. The teacher will emphasize all character attributes cannot be covered in the limited time in class, but most of the major points will be covered.

In order to understand the traits in Musa's personality, we can divide his life in four phases. The teacher will draw a straight line and divide it into four equal parts to represent four phases. Then s/he will label each section of the time line as phase 1, phase 2, phase 3, and phase 4. Use judgment to abbreviate or shorten as needed.

After writing down, the chart may look like this:

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Birth Adoption Youth Killing an Egyptian	Running away from Egypt Wandering in desert Reaching Madyan Marriage Prophethood	Return to Egypt Rescue Israelites	Israelites in Madyan Ten Commandments Settle in Canaan Golden calf Death

**Student participation:**

Involve the students in discussion on character attributes of Musa (A). The teacher will ask the students to raise hand to tell what they think are some of the personality types or character attributes. Encourage each student to state at least one character trait. Remember that the lesson only shows some character traits of the prophet. Encourage the students to identify any additional trait not mentioned in the lesson. (Hint: family man, physical handicap, restrained behavior, and speech at Pharaoh's court, team player as he needed help of his brother at the court, etc). As the students speak, if the teacher agrees to certain trait, s/he will write down the traits on the chalkboard. Try to jot down at least ten traits, but remember all traits cannot be discussed in the class within the time limits. The teacher may speed up or slow down pace as needed. The list will provide the teacher the necessary points to discuss. These are discussed in detail in the textbook. Follow the discussion of each trait or character attributes from the book.

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Depending on the comfort level of the teacher and available time, s/he may read out parts of a paragraph from the textbook. It is preferable that s/he is prepared to discuss without reading out paragraphs. But the teacher must keep the textbook open in front, to emphasize and encourage the students to follow the textbook.

**Assignment of homework:**

1 minute  
Time must be saved to hand out printed home assignments at the end of the class. It is strongly encouraged to grade the home assignments. Based on the number of students in class, the teacher can grade each assignment by giving one point for each question and record the score for that particular assignment. If student number is more in the class, the teacher may assign 5 points for completing the assignments.

Figure 3c. This is the Teacher's manual for the lesson shown in Figures 3a and 3b.

**Dissemination of the materials:** Both the lessons and the manuals were sent to several weekend Islamic schools for evaluation. Overall comments were positive and the school principals showed keen interest to adopt the curriculum for their own schools. Partial curriculum was made available on the web, to help parents who home-school their children. At present, the full curriculum is being extensively reviewed for publication in book format for wider distribution.

**Conclusion:** A comprehensive curriculum was developed to address key issues lacking in the presently available Islamic Studies texts. The issues that this curriculum focused are a) increasing contact with the Qur'an, b) lessons that reward every good work instead of being a punitive one, c) an accompanying teacher's manual which helps any non-trained teacher to effectively teach in a class., d) students understand Islam as a complete way of life and e) as with all prophets, every one of us must struggle to reach our own goals.

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