

## ANSWER

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَهْلِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَذَكَّرُونَ  
فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمْ آرْجِعُوا فَآرْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا  
تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ  
لَّيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ

*O those who believe, do not enter any houses, other than your own houses unless you seek permission and greet their inmates with Salām. That is good for you, so that you may observe advice.*

*Then, if you do not find anyone there, do not enter therein until permission is given to you. And if it is said to you, 'Go back', just go back; it is more decent for you. And Allah is All-Knowing of what you do.*

*There is no sin on you if you enter uninhabited houses in which you have rightful benefit. And Allah knows what you reveal and what you conceal.*

[24:27-29]

## BRIEF COMMENTARY (RULINGS)

### RULING (1)

In these verses the address is with the phrase (**O those who believe**) which is used for men, (because the relative pronoun in the text is originally of masculine gender) but women are also included in the injunction, like other Qur'ānic injunctions, which are normally addressed to men but women are included in them, except in some cases where it is expressly mentioned that they are exclusive for men. Therefore, wives of the Sahābah included themselves in the address of the present verse and acted accordingly. Whenever they would visit any one's house, they used to seek permission. Sayyidah Umm Iyās radi'allāhu 'anhā has said 'We were four women who used to visit frequently Sayyidah 'A'ishah radi'allāhu 'anhā together, and used to seek permission before going in the house, and would enter only after she had permitted'. (Ibn Kathīr on the authority of Ibn Abī Hātim)

### RULING (2)

It is clear from the universality of this verse that on a visit to anyone's house the injunction of seeking permission is common to all, whether men or women, Mahram or non-Mahram. Either a woman goes to visit another woman, or a man goes to visit another man, it is obligatory on all to seek permission. Similarly, if a man visits his mother, sisters or any other Mahram woman, he should seek permission. Imām Mālik has narrated in Muwatta' quoting 'Atā' ibn Yāsir rahimahumallāh that someone enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether he should seek permission before going to his mother. He ﷺ said, 'Yes, do seek permission'. Then that fellow said, 'O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, I live with my mother in the same house'. He ﷺ said even then you should not enter the house without taking permission. He asked

again ‘O Messenger of Allah ﷺ! I am always at her service.’ He ﷺ replied, ‘You should still ask her permission. Would you like that you see your mother naked?’ He said ‘No, no’. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, ‘It is for this reason that you should seek permission, because there is a possibility that she might have uncovered some of her coverable parts in the house for some need.’ (Mazharī)

One learns from this Hadīth that the word “**other than your own houses**” in the phrase (24:27) as it appears in the Qur’ān, refers to those houses where one lives alone and no one else, like parents, brothers or sisters reside with him. (It is only in this case that seeking permission is not necessary).

### RULING (3)

If someone is living alone in the house with his wife, even then it is preferable and a sunnah to make some sort of sound, such as hem or thump, before entering, in order to make known his incoming, although seeking permission is not obligatory in this case. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas’ūd's wife *radi’allahu ‘anhā* has reported that whenever ‘Abdullāh would come in the house, he would always make a hemming sound at the door to announce his arrival before entering, so that he should not see us in a condition that he would like to avoid. (Ibn Kathīr quoting Ibn Jarīr with an authentic chain). In another situation Ibn Juraij inquired from ‘Atā’ *rahimahullāh* whether it is obligatory to seek permission before going in one's own house to his wife, and he said ‘no’. Ibn Kathīr after quoting this version has explained that what it means is that it is not obligatory but preferable.

### RULING (4)

The procedure of greeting first and then seeking permission for entry, as has been established by various Ahādith, can best be followed if the visitor himself announces his name for seeking permission. This was exactly the practice of Sayyidnā ‘Umar *radi’allahu ‘anhū*. He used to announce at the door of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, *Assalām ‘alā Rasūlillāh Assalāmu ‘Alaikum Ayadhbkhul ‘Umar?* that is, after the greetings whether ‘Umar can come in. (Ibn Kathīr etc.) Sahīh of Muslim has narrated that Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī *radi’allahu ‘anhū* went to see Sayyidnā ‘Umar *radi’allahu ‘anhū* and sought permission to get in by saying *Assalāmu ‘Alaikum bāthā Abū Mūsā, Assalamu ‘Alaikum bāthā al-Ash‘arī*. First, he gave his name as Abū Mūsā and then for further clarification added Ash‘arī. This is to help the host recognize the caller immediately and respond quickly, for without recognizing the visitor the host may hesitate to give permission for getting in.

### RULING (5)

Some people adopt the worst possible practice in this regard that they ask permission from outside to come in without disclosing their identity. And when the host inquires as to who was there, they would answer ‘It is me’. This is not the right answer to the host. If he has not recognized the voice on the first call, how can he recognize with the answer - ‘it is me’. - Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī has reported in his Jāmi’ quoting ‘Alī Ibn ‘Āsim al-Wāsitī that when he went to Basrah he went to see Sayyidnā Mughīrah Ibn Shu‘bah *radi’allahu ‘anhū*, and knocked at his door. Sayyidnā Mughīrah *radi’allahu ‘anhū* inquired from inside as to who was there. He answered *Ana’*, that is ‘It is me’. So, Sayyidnā Mughīrah

*radi'allāhu 'anhu* said 'I do not have anyone among my friends by the name *Ana*'. Then he went out and related the Hadīth to him that one day Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh *radi'allāhu 'anhu* went to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ and knocked at his door. The Holy Prophet ﷺ inquired from inside as to who was there, and Jābir *radi'allāhu 'anhu* said *Ana*', that is 'It is me'. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ repeated the words '*Ana Ana*' to explain that there is no point in saying *Ana, Ana*, as no one can be recognized by this word.

## RULING (6)

There is yet another very wrong practice which is commonly observed these days even by the educated people, and that is they would knock at the door and when the inmates would enquire from inside as to who was there, they do not reply at all and remain silent. This is the worst practice to tease the host, as he remains in suspense about the identity of the visitor, and the very spirit of seeking permission is defeated.

## RULING (7)

This has also been established by these narrations that it is also a correct procedure of seeking permission to knock at the door, provided one tells his name at the same time.

## RULING (8)

If one knocks at the door, it should not be so strong that the inmates get upset, rather it should be mild with the sole purpose of letting the inmates know that some one is at the door. Those who used to knock at the door of the Holy prophet ﷺ, they used to knock with their nails in a manner that the sound should not be loud enough to disturb him. (As narrated by Al-Khatīb in his *Jāmi' - Qurtubī*) If one understands the spirit behind *isti'dhān* that it is meant to seek permission with familiarization (*isti'nās*) of the caller, then automatically he would take care of all those things which could possibly trouble the host. What is required is to knock gently and announce the name for familiarization.

## Important Warning

These days people do not pay any attention toward seeking permission, which is a clear sin for forsaking an obligation. But on the other hand there are some problems in our time for those who do want to take permission in the prescribed manner, that is first offer greetings from outside and then seek permission by announcing their name. One problem is that the host to whom they want their voice to reach is not available close to the door, hence it is difficult to convey to him the sound of greetings and the name of the caller. Therefore, the important thing to note is that the spirit of the injunction is not to enter anyone's house without permission. There may be different forms of seeking permission in different places in different times. One such form is to knock at the door, which is established by the record of Hadīth. In the present time people fixup bells at their doors. It is sufficient for carrying out the obligation of seeking permission to press the button of the bell, provided the caller also announces his name after that in an audible voice for the host. Apart from this, it is also in order to adopt any other method of seeking permission in vogue at any place. The

present day system of sending in visiting cards to disclose the identity of the caller is a good practice in that not only the name of the caller but also his address is made known to the host without any effort on his part, which fulfils the spirit behind *isti'dhān*. Therefore, there is no harm in adopting this system.

## RULING (9)

If a person asks permission from someone and he replies in the negative that he cannot meet at that time, then the caller should go back and not feel offended. He should realize that every one's needs and circumstances are different, and at times it is beyond the control of persons to call in the visitor or to go out and meet him. Hence, his refusal to meet should be accepted with good grace. In the present verse the same thing is emphasized, that is, ***'If it is said to you, "Go back" just go back, it is more decent for you - 24:28***. Some people of the past ages are reported to have said 'I waited all my life wishing that I visit someone and seek permission to go in the house, and the host turns down my request asking me to go back so that I could be rewarded the grace of this Qur'ānic injunction by following it. But, alas, I could never get that blessing'.

## RULING (10)

The Islamic jurisprudence has established a two-sided system of teaching the mannerism of social graces and of saving all from the troubles and inconvenience. The way visitors are advised in this verse that if their request for permission to go in is turned down, they should not feel offended, similarly, the other side of the coin is taught in a Hadīth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said (*Surely your visitors have some rights to be observed by you*). It means that one who comes to meet you he too has his right on you. His right is that you should call him in, pay him respect and listen to him. Do not refuse to meet him without any serious excuse or a genuine reason.

## RULING (11)

If one goes to meet someone and seeks permission, to go in, but does not get an answer, then according to practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he should knock a second time, and still if there is no answer then he should knock a third time. If he does not get an answer the third time, then the injunction is, that he should go back. After knocking three times it becomes obvious that the inmate must have heard the knock, but presumably he is in a condition that he cannot answer, for instance, praying or in the toilet or taking shower. Alternatively, he does not want to meet at that time. In both the situations it is not advisable to keep on staying there or keep on knocking, as it will upset the host, which must be avoided. The real purpose of *isti'dhān* is to avoid any inconvenience to the host. (...) It is against the sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to keep on waiting there, which will be a cause of trouble for the inmate and tantamount to forcing the host to come out.

## RULING (12)

The foregoing ruling relates to the situation when one has sought permission thrice by knocking and greetings. In that situation to keep on waiting there would cause trouble to the host. But if someone waits at the door of a scholar or a pious person without seeking permission or without informing him,

in the hope that he would meet him when he would come out according to his convenience, such a waiting is not undesirable, rather it is a great respect shown by the caller. The Qur'ān itself has advised people that to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ while he is inside, with the purpose of calling him out of the house is disrespect to him. People should wait for him outside until he comes out on his own according to his convenience. The related verse says (**And if they had patience until you come out to them, that would be better for them – 49:5**). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās *radi'allāhu 'anhu* has said, *'Sometimes I keep on waiting the whole afternoon at the door of an Ansārī companion until he would come out on his own, for asking about some Abadīth. Had I sought permission to go in, he would have definitely allowed me, but I regarded that against ethics. That is why I used to bear the trouble of waiting'*. (Sahīh al-Bukhārī).

**There is no sin on you if you enter uninhabited houses in which you have rightful benefit - 24:29.**

Literal meaning of the word *Matā'* is to use, put to use, and to benefit from something. Anything from which some benefit is drawn is also called *Matā'*. In this verse *Matā'* is used in its literal meaning and is translated as 'rightful benefit'. It is reported by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr *radi'allāhu 'anhu* that when verses regarding isti'dhān (seeking permission) were revealed, he inquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "Yā Rasūl Allāh! What would the traders of Quraish do after this prohibition? They travel with trading caravans from Makkah and Madinah to Syria and have a number of resting places spread out all along the route, where they stay while traveling. There are no permanent inmates in those places. So, what will be the form of isti'dhān at those places? Whom will they seek the permission from?" On this enquiry the above verse was revealed (Mazharī on authority of Ibn Abī Hātim).

The background of revelation of this verse tells us that the phrase (uninhabited houses) relates to those houses and places which are not specifically meant for the residence of any individual or community. Rather they are open to all to go in and stay or use, such as public inns, which are made for the purpose of free stay of the travelers, mosques, shrines, schools, hospitals, post offices, railway stations, airports and community centers. Thus, all places built for the common welfare of people fall under this category, where every one is allowed to go in and use.

## **RULING (13)**

In all the welfare centers where there are some restrictions or conditions placed by the owners or by the organizers for entry, their observance is obligatory by religious law also. For instance, if it is necessary for entering a railway platform to purchase the ticket, it will not be permissible in Sharī'ah to enter it without the ticket. The ticket is compulsory. Similarly, going into the restricted area of an airport is not allowed without having the necessary permission.

## **RULING (14)**

However, if the specific rooms are reserved in mosques, shrines, schools, hospitals etc. for their staff, such as closets in mosques, shrines and schools or the offices in the hospitals, railway stations and

airports, they do not fall under the category of 'uninhabited houses'. In all such places entry without permission is prohibited by Shari'ah.

### Some other issues related to *Isti'dhan*

When we have learnt that the basic purpose of the Shari'ah injunction of *Isti'dhan* is to avoid giving any trouble to others, and teaching of ethics of social graces, on the same principle the following code of conducts can also be drawn.

#### RULING (15)

If you have gone to someone's house to meet him, and are waiting for the permission, in that situation you must not peep in, because the purpose of *Isti'dhan* is that you should not know what the host wants to hide from you. If you see it by peeping inside, then that purpose is lost. It is strongly prohibited in the hadith (Bukhārī and Muslim quoting Sahal Ibn Sa'd as-Sa'idi). It was the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that if he would go to meet someone and wait for the permission to go in, he would stand by the side of the door and not in front of it. He used to make *Isti'dhan* by the side of the door, because very seldom there were curtains on the door during that time, and if they were, there was the possibility of their opening up with the wind. (Mazharī)

#### RULING (16)

The prohibition to go in the houses mentioned in the above verse is meant under normal conditions. But if there is an emergency, like fire or demolition of the house, then one can enter without taking permission, rather it is desirable to go in immediately.

#### RULING (17)

If a person has sent someone to call another person, and he comes along with the person who had gone to fetch him, then he need not take permission to go in. The messenger who had gone to fetch him is permission by itself. But if he does not turn up along with the messenger, but goes later, then seeking of permission will be required. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, '*If someone is called and he comes along with the messenger, then this by itself is permission for going in*'. (Abū Dāwūd - Mazharī)

### FURTHER COMMENTARY

The issues and instructions regarding seeking permission before entering anyone's house (*Isti'dhan*) also fall within these injunctions (enjoined to curb the obscenity and immorality in the society, [and] which can check these obscenities and safeguard the chastity and continence, and also create an atmosphere to eliminate the conditions of their development). Hence, entering in anyone's house or to peep in without the permission of the owner has been prohibited. The wisdom in this instruction is that one should not cast an eye on women who are not one's mahram (with whom marriage is prohibited). In the above verses various instructions are given against various types of houses.

There are four categories of houses.

1. One, in which one lives, where there is no possibility of the presence of some stranger.
2. Two, where someone else is also residing, irrespective of being mahram or not, and where there is a possibility of someone's entry.
3. Three, where there are both possibilities that someone is living or the house is empty.
4. Four, a house which is not specified for anyone's living, such as, a mosque, school, monastery, shrine etc., where all people go in.

Out of these four categories it is obvious that there is no need of asking permission to go in the houses of the first kind. Hence, the first category is not mentioned specifically in these verses, but for the other three categories injunctions are spelled out.

An important aspect of Qur'ānic social ethic is that if you go to meet someone, first ask the permission and do not enter in anyone's house without permission.

It is worth noting that seeking permission (*Isti'dhān*) is that injunction of the Holy Qur'ān in which even the slightest laxity or alteration is termed by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās *radi'allāhu 'anhū* as the rejection of the Qur'ān itself.

### **Wisdom of seeking permission (*Isti'dhān*)**

Allah Ta'ālā has provided every person a place where he lives, whether he owns it or has acquired it on rent. Such a place is his home, and the real purpose of a home is to provide comfort and tranquility. When the Holy Qur'ān has referred to one's home as a great blessing of Allah, it has an indication towards this basic objective of a home. The Qur'ān says, (16:80) It means that Allah has given you peace and comfort through your homes. One can enjoy peace and comfort in his home only when he can live there without the interference of any one else, and can rest and work at will. Any interference in his freedom is tantamount to killing the very purpose of the home, which is naturally very damaging. Islam has prohibited harming anyone without any cause. A great wisdom in the injunction of seeking permission is to save people from interference of others and its consequent ill effects, which is obligatory on all peace loving people.

The other consideration in the injunction is for the visitor himself, in that if he would go in to meet someone after taking permission, then the host will also reciprocate his gesture by giving him due importance and respect. If his visit is with purpose then the host will be sympathetic and try to meet his need. On the other hand, if he would go in to call on someone without taking his permission, like an uncouth, then naturally he would not be so welcome, and the host would like to get rid of him as quickly as possible. Even if the host had any sympathy toward him, it would be reduced, and the sin for causing trouble to a Muslim would be additional.

The third consideration is the elimination of obscenity and immorality. If one enters someone's home without taking prior permission, the possibility is that he might see the ladies of the house, which may

lead to temptations. It is for this reason that the injunctions on seeking permission are placed next to punishment of adultery and punishment of false accusation etc.

The fourth consideration is that sometimes one is busy in the solitude of his home doing something which he does not want others to see. If someone comes into his house unannounced, then that act will be known to others, which he wanted to conceal. Any attempt to disclose the secrets of others is also a sin and a source of vexation. Some issues concerning seeking permission have been described in the above verses themselves, so they should be considered first. Other related issues will be dealt with later.

### The Traditional way of seeking permission

The procedure for seeking permission, as explained in the verse (24:27) is, that is do not enter into any one's house until carrying out two things. First, *Isti'nās* - its literal meaning is to seek acquaintance. Majority of commentators have taken this word for *isti'dhān*, that is to take permission. By the use of word *Isti'nās* instead of *isti'dhān* there is a hint that in taking permission before entering, the host gets acquainted with the visitor through his voice and the element of surprise is removed. The second requirement is greeting the inmates of the house with *salām*. Some commentators have elaborated it as; one should first seek permission and on entering the house should greet the inmates. Qurtubī has also adopted this explanation that one should first seek permission, and when it is granted, only then go in and greet the hosts. Sayyidnā Abī Ayyub Ansārī's hadīth also corresponds well with this explanation, to which Māwardī has added further that if the visitor happens to see an inmate of the house before seeking permission, then he should first greet him, and then seek permission to go in, otherwise one should first seek permission and then greet on entering. But the procedure that seems to be *masnun* through narrations of Hadīth, is that one should first greet from outside with *Assalāmu 'Alaikum* and then by announcing his name should seek permission to go in.

Imām Bukhārī in his *al-Adab ul-Mufrad* has quoted on the authority of Sayyidnā Abī Huraira *radi'allāhu 'anhū* that if someone seeks permission before greeting, the host need not reply (because he has deviated from the practice adopted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ) (Rūh al-Ma'ānī) Abū Dāwūd has narrated in his Hadīth that someone from Banī 'Āmir sought permission from the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying, أَلَجْ (that is, can I thrust in?). On hearing that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to his servant, "this man does not know how to seek permission. Go to him and explain to him that the permission should be sought by saying (that is, Assalāmu 'Alaikum, can I come in?)". Before the servant could go out that fellow himself said Assalāmu 'Alaikum as he had heard the instruction of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then he ﷺ permitted him to come in. (Ibn Kathīr)

Baihaqi has narrated in *Shu'ab al-Īmān* on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir *radi'allāhu 'anhū* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said, that is 'Do not let in the one who does not greet before seeking permission'. (Mazharī) In this case the Holy Prophet ﷺ has made two corrections. One, that one should greet first. Two, that he had used the word *adhbkebul* instead of *aliju* which was not proper,

# DAY 3

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because the word is derived from *wulij* which means, to make an entry with force into a narrow space. This expression is against all ethics. In any case, one learns from these narrations that the instruction of greetings given in the Qur'ānic verses relate to the greeting for seeking permission, which is offered from outside the house for inviting the attention of the inmates. On entering the house, the greetings should be repeated in the usual manner.

**End.**

