

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Hadith Umm Zar'

Living Quran – 5.7.19

Session 2

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I will be using Imam ibn Hajar Asqalani's comments in his *Fath al Bari*, which is an encyclopaedia summarising 8 other commentaries on Bukhari's *Jami al Sahih*.

When we understand what is behind the story, the cultural, social and psychological issues in this story they can teach us lessons as they are very relevant today. That was *Jahiliya* time and we live in a new *Jahiliya* time. If we do not change the status quo, life will keep going with the same issues. We need efforts to educate people with Allah Almighty's support and the right *ikhlas* (sincerity) and energy we can create change.

The etiquettes of gathering

This gathering of 11 women who are gossiping is so familiar it could well be in our community - our neighbours, our friends, our colleagues who are having this discussion. What are the etiquettes of such gatherings? It is so disgusting and forbidden, that in the Quran, Allah Almighty says:

O you who believe! Avoid most suspicion—some suspicion is sinful. And do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it. So remain mindful of God. God is Most Relenting, Most Merciful. (4:148)

The evil of gossiping

Gossiping creates disturbance and spreads hatred. The one being gossiped about will not send you a gift and say, 'Thank you very much for backbiting me'; he will feel angry, upset, and hurt. There are plenty of consequences which destroy good relationships between friends, relatives, neighbours and colleagues.

It is even worse, when the backbiting is of a husband or wife. The closeness of their relationship is described by Allah Almighty in Surah Baqarah:

They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them. (2:187)

A husband and wife are meant to cover one another's faults and defects. They don't expose them.

In the *hadith*:

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) said:

The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said, 'Do you know what is backbiting?' The Companions said: 'Allah and His Messenger know better.' Thereupon he said, 'Backbiting is talking about your (Muslim) brother in a manner which he dislikes.' It was said to him: 'What if my (Muslim) brother is as I say.' He said, 'If he is actually as you say, then that is backbiting; but if that is not in him, that is slandering.' (Muslim)

1. Saying something which you wouldn't like to be heard by the person you are discussing.
2. If it is true it is backbiting
3. If it is false it is slander.

What to do if others are gossiping

Try and stop in the best way. With kindness and gentleness steer the conversation away from it. If it continues, then leave the gathering. If you are in such a gathering even if you are not part of it, it can

affect your heart. It will make your heart cloudy, or be like a stone in your heart. DO NOT STAY. If the gathering involves alcohol, and people are semi naked, the sins are multiplied. Protect your *deen*. If there is any *haram* in a gathering, either try and change it or do not be part of it.

Be mindful of Allah in any gathering

In a sound *hadith* from Sunan Abu Dawoud,

Whoever sits in a place where he doesn't remember Allah, he will suffer loss and incur the displeasure of Allah (Abu Dawoud)

In a gathering devoid of the mention of Allah Almighty, try to interject to remind others of Him. Use *hikmah*. Allah Almighty stated whomsoever has been given *hikmah* has been given a lot of goodness.

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He gives wisdom to whomever He wills. Whoever is given wisdom has been given much good. But none pays heed except those with insight. (2:269)

If you do not remember Allah in that gathering it is a big loss.

Dua before leaving the gathering

When leaving the gathering, make *dua* for Allah to forgive any mistakes. Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said,

Whoever sits in a gathering and indulges in useless talk and before getting up supplicates:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ، أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ

Subhaanaka Allaahumma wa bihamdika, 'ash-hadu 'an laa 'ilaaha 'illaa 'Anta, 'astaghfiruka wa 'atoobu 'ilayka

Glory is to You, O Allah, and praise is to You. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship but You. I seek Your forgiveness and repent to You.

He will be forgiven for (the sins he may have intentionally or unintentionally committed) in that assembly. (Tirmidhi)

The prophetic gathering

Imam Tirmidhi described the gathering of the Prophet (peace be on him) who is our role model as a gathering of *hilm* (forbearance) and *haya* (humility), patience and trust. It is *haram* to betray an *amanah*.

The Prophet (peace be on him) taught his *ummah* to learn the *adab* of gathering, and protecting the dignity of those not present. No one would shout or scream. No mistakes were committed and they did not discuss issues which could lead to *haram*. The Prophet (peace be on him) protected his gathering from backbiting, raised voices, arguments, which would all have lead to animosity, people feeling insulted or bullied. His gatherings were harmonious and brought hearts together.

Can you discuss issues with a spouse

Do not name your spouse, talk in general about spouses. If you want to teach others from your own personal experience you don't need to put your stamp on it. You can generalise and say you came across something like that, but do not expose your private life.

Can you break a bad promise

The 11 women made a promise to disclose everything about their spouses. Is one obliged to fulfil a *haram* promise? Such as promising that you will buy alcohol if your son does well in his GCSEs. You are not obliged to fulfil a promise to carry out a *haram* action. However, if you make a promise to do a good action, e.g. pray 10 *rakahs*, or fast for 3 days or slaughter a sheep, it has to be fulfilled.

We need to make people aware what is a valid promise from shariah point of view which has to be fulfilled and what isn't, and should not be fulfilled. Some people make silly promises e.g. I will walk 3 miles barefoot. There are many silly scenarios which I have come across in my life.

The importance of privacy in marriage

When the women promise they will not conceal any details of their husband, this is a metaphor as some of the ladies have only said a line or two lines, so cannot possibly be all the details of their relationship with their husband.

If you tell your husband something and your friend repeats it back to you the next day how would you feel? If he passes on your secret to his friend, who tells his wife you would feel betrayed. And if it was intimate details that would make it even worse. Keep your private lives private.

The significance of the name Umm Zar' and understanding a context

The name Umm Zar' and Abu Zar' refer to *zar'* is from plants and plantation, which suggests that this couple have plenty of crops. These reflect the context of the story. Is the context important? Yes, because it is a rural setting, where the mentality and practices are different from a city or another village. Customs vary from place to place and time to time. The background of the *ayah* or *hadith* or the *speaker* are key in understanding them.

Similarly in cases of mental illness, it is very important to understand the community and environment in which assumptions, taboos and mindset. Often people jump to the conclusion that someone who has a mental illness is afflicted by the evil eye or black magic, instead of realising that they need professional help, support and medication.

Developing good communication between husband and wife

Spend time engaging in conversation

The exchange of this story between the Prophet (peace be on him) and his wife shows that it is good for couples to entertain each other, as it is a rewarding act. Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

It is also charity to utter a good word. (Bukhari and Muslim)

Who deserves good words more than our parents, spouses, children and family? Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

The best of you is the best to his wives, and I am the best of you to my wives. (Tirmidhi)

Give full attention

When a husband shares what happened in his day, it is important for the wife to listen to him a hundred percent without interrupting. And likewise when she wants to share her day, then he should listen attentively as well.

Learn to communicate more fully

Women are generally more chatty than men and can usually talk for a longer time with more detail, whereas men, when asked how their day was, might just say 'Alhamdulillah. Fine.' The wife should learn how to extract more detail from him to help him offload his burden.

Allow men space to retreat to their cave

The mentality of the man and woman are different. While women tend to like to discuss their issues, by contrast the majority of men keep to themselves. When they have a problem they retreat into their cave. They need space. They need to relax and then they can emerge again. Then they can discuss their issues. Otherwise it makes them feel weak.

Showing kindness to your spouse

The Prophet (peace be on him) taught us through hadith mentioned in Bukhari and others that even if one feeds the other a morsel of food from their own hand it is an act of mercy, which is rewarded, it fosters the love between them, increasing the closeness and goodness between them.

Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas narrates that Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said:

You will be rewarded for whatever you spend for Allah's sake even if it were a morsel which you put in your wife's mouth. (Bukhari)

Acknowledge shortcomings and work on them

We should start practicing this. It is not easy to change bad habits. We can change our habits with the right knowledge and practice. Realising we have a problem is the beginning of change. Then you can work on it, with the right intention and Allah Almighty's support and training.

Halal alternatives

Imam Tirmidhi mentioned in *Shamail* that staying late after *isha* is allowed. It is our *halal* alternative to all the *haram* out there. The building block of society starts with the husband and wife. We need a *halal* space for couples and families and communities. Broken families are the root of crime in the community. They are often the product of unhealthy marriages and broken homes.

Resolving unhealthy marriages

We see unhealthy marriages throughout the *hadith* – spouses suffering from physical and emotional abuse, bullying, compounded by culture which dictates that no matter what, the couple are not to consider divorce, even when they are being destroyed by the marriage. It is completely wrong to force a couple to stay together when they cannot bear it anymore, just because people say their culture does not allow divorce; it is taboo. For the sake of their family or their appearance in society they continue suffering.

I am not encouraging divorce, but Allah Almighty made divorce permissible, as an exit and an option when marriages reach a dead end. Once a couple have tried reconciling, counselling and failed it is *haram* to harm their selves and others, particularly children. Staying in an unhealthy marriage creates a vicious cycle for children. It is not *sabr* to stay in a bad marriage. If it isn't working, it is not worth staying in a bad relationship. It creates pain and prolongs conflict.

The couple need *yaqeen*. This is why Allah Almighty promised that he would support a couple after their divorce, so they have the courage to take this step if they need to.

*But if they separate [by divorce], Allah will enrich each [of them] from His abundance.
And ever is Allah Encompassing and Wise. (4:130)*

We ask Allah Almighty to give us deep understanding and live by the principles he sent us and have healthy relationships and follow the Quran and Sunnah and protect us from evil, backbiting and gossiping and to facilitate *sukoon* and serenity for our homes and our children, and to give us the best in *dunya* and akhirah and protect us from *fitan* and evil. Ameen.