

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Hadith Umm Zar'

Living Quran

Video 7 – Wife 6

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The sixth one said, 'If my husband eats. he eats too much (leaving the dishes empty), and if he drinks he leaves nothing, and if he sleeps he sleeps alone (away from me) covered in garments and does not stretch his hands here and there so as to know how I fare (get along).'

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them) used to say I like to dress up and take care of myself to please my wife, just as I like my wife to take care of herself for me.

Recap

Last week we covered Wife 5, who was praising her husband, but we commented that some of the praise might not actually be praise. She's happy with her husband, in general; he's a nice, strong, generous person, but at the same time she might be touching on a more sensitive topic. She didn't discuss it directly, but in comparing her husband to a leopard, she might have been talking about some roughness that he had with her.

Open relationship

We also mentioned a few things regarding the etiquettes of dealing with your spouse, and having an open discussion about what you both like and don't like. Relationships have to be open and clear, otherwise your partner has no way of knowing. And she also mentioned her husband's bravery, which is a good feature, but nevertheless it is an interesting comment from her.

Wife 6

Today we'll cover Wife 6, who says, 'If my husband eats, he eats too much, leaving the dishes empty. If he drinks, he leaves nothing. And if he sleeps, he sleeps alone, away from me, covered in garments, and does not stretch his hand here or there so as to know how I feel.' In the narration of Imam Nasai, he also adds, 'when he slaughters [a goat or sheep for guests], he chooses the smallest and weakest.'

Etiquettes of eating

Let's start at the beginning. Visualise what she's saying. He mixes everything on his plate, maybe he makes noises. This suggests he's greedy when he eats. She's commenting on his character: he has no etiquette when he eats. He doesn't have good manners.

Annoying habits

The question is, why did the wife mention her husband's eating habits first? Most likely because this is what annoys her the most. Maybe she doesn't see her husband except when he eats. He's always out, and he probably goes out early and comes back late. We need to understand the context. She probably only sees him once a day, when he's eating. And, she's very disgusted by the way he eats. So instead of being eager to see him, instead of missing him all day, she doesn't really want to see him. His way of eating is annoying and repellent to her. Moreover, this is happening repeatedly, every day, so she feels she can't take it anymore. It's the most urgent issue for her regarding her husband. And his habits are not normal; other people don't eat like this. It's the equivalent of saying, 'he eats like a pig.'

Having good manners while eating

The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us the etiquettes of eating nicely. He said:

'Oh young man. Say bismillah. Eat with your right hand. Eat from what's in front of you.'
(Bukhari and Muslim)

We have a full chapter in the *sunnah* and the *fiqh* about the manners of eating. Eat with your right hand - the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'Shaytan eats with his left hand.' Even left-handed people should try their best to learn to eat with their right hand, even though it's not *haram* if they try their best and still can't. Say *bismillah* – if you don't say *bismillah*, Shaytan will eat with you. You might forget at the beginning, so say:

bismillah awwalahu wa akhirahu. (Sunan Al-Darimi)

You can even say it at the end, if you think you forgot. This will prevent Shaytan from eating with you, and *barakah* will descend on your food.

Etiquettes of drinking

Listen to her second comment: 'when he drinks, he leaves nothing in his cup.' Maybe he makes noises when he's drinking too. Again, when you drink, drink with your right hand, say *bismillah*, divide it into three sips. Do not breathe into your cup. Sip it and put it down. The *sunnah* is also to sit down and drink, except sometimes, for example when drinking Zamzam.

Etiquettes are what help people to deal with each other in the right manner. Imagine if you were eating and drinking with no manners. It would be repugnant, and people wouldn't want to eat with you. The Prophet (peace be upon him) therefore taught us how to have good manners in all aspects of our life.

Over-eating

Being greedy and gluttonous is one of the things which Arabs are critical of. They praise people who don't overeat. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told us to divide our stomach into thirds: one for food, one for water, and one for air. You shouldn't fill it completely, that's not the *sunnah* or healthy.

Miqdam bin Ma'dikarib said that he heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) saying:

'The human does not fill any container that is worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Adam to eat what will support his back. If this is not possible, then a third for food, a third for drink, and third for his breath. (Tirmidhi)

Guests

The wife may also be particularly sensitive about her husband's eating habits when they are entertaining and have guests. Again, Arabs in general, have guests all the time. And however annoying her husband's habits are day to day, they are a thousand times more embarrassing when they have guests. She can't bear this anymore.

In the bedroom

Next she moves to something more private. 'When he sleeps, he sleeps alone.' He rolls himself up in his blanket, isolates himself from her and leaves her alone. Again, she's criticising him. There's no more to

their relationship. They don't have an intimate relationship. She says, 'He doesn't stretch his hand here or there to see how I'm getting along.' He has no interest in her, probably.

Loneliness

She has no one to talk to – her husband doesn't interact with her, he just eats and drinks in a very disgusting way and sleeps alone. This is very serious. You spend more time in your bedroom than anywhere else. If you're not comfortable there, it affects your whole life. This is why we have etiquettes for the bedroom too. To have good intimacy, good conversation and attentive listening. We see reflected by the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own conduct as this very *hadith* was narrated in the bedroom!

So the wife here is saying her husband has no interest in her. She says he doesn't touch her, literally. So she's lonely and isolated, she may as well be living on her own. This is enough to destroy any marriage.

Impotence

You can have a great relationship with someone – he might have a good character, he might be generous and attractive and nice, but when it comes to the bedroom, he's impotent. Then he needs to acknowledge that there's a problem; they need to go to the doctor and see what can be done. This is one of the Islamic rights of a wife – first seek medical advice, but if nothing can be done then it's her right to seek divorce.

Infertility

Maybe the husband is infertile; they have an intimate relationship, but they can't have children. From a *shariah* point of view, again this is legitimate grounds for divorce.

Cold and uncaring

A common opinion about the last line is also that this husband doesn't look after his wife when she's ill. He has no feelings whatsoever, he's a cold person.

The bottom line, in this situation is that this husband is not fulfilling his wife's rights.

Miserliness

He's a miserly man, again, from an Arab tradition. Islamically it's incumbent on you to host any guest for three days, and to feed them. And usually Arabs are generous – they will choose their best animals to feed their guest, and they will entertain them. Again there are etiquettes for how to deal with guests. Of course within reason, but you should be generous towards your guests. But this husband, when he has guests, chooses his worst, weakest animal. This is very revealing. It shows us his character.

The stigma of divorce and assessing a marriage

My question here is, why is this woman still in this marriage? Probably the cultural oppression and stigma attached to divorced woman is preventing her from leaving. She would rather live in this miserable life than be treated like trash by her community. This is wrong. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself married several divorced women, there's nothing wrong with it. This woman is saying, 'Look, he's such a miser; he's so disgusting; he's so mean. He's not fulfilling my rights, but I'm still living with him.' She shouldn't stay in such a marriage.

She's only asking for the basics. She wants him to eat with dignity and respect. She's asking to sleep with her husband and enjoy good discussion and a good relationship. She's asking for the minimum of care and support from her husband, but she's getting none of this.

The husband's version

Now let's see this situation in reverse. What would this husband say? He would probably say, we are a poor tribe, I have to work very hard. I go early in the morning and do lots of work in the field and with the animals, or moving bricks, and I come home late and tired and hungry. I just want to eat and go to sleep. This might be the case.

Maybe he came from a family where intimacy and kind words were not common, so he doesn't know what to say or do and just goes to sleep. Or he might say, she's always frowning at me, she will not allow me to say anything to her. She's not encouraging me to be better. I tried a few times, but she didn't open up, so I gave up. There are two sides to every story. It might be that she's not preparing herself for him. Maybe she's wearing bad clothes and not brushing her hair and the bedroom is dirty.

Taking care of your appearance

In the end, there are etiquettes. Some of the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say they liked to dress up and take care of themselves to please their wives, just as they liked their wives to take care of themselves for them. This is the right thing. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say:

I like to dress up and take care of myself to please my wife, just as I like my wife to take care of herself for me.

Nowadays it's the other way around: people dress up to go out, and when they come home, they take off their nice clothes and beautifications and are relaxed. You have rights, but you have to do the minimum in return as well. I'm not blaming the wife, of course, but both of them have to come together and support each other to be better. It's not about ticking the box and saying, yes, this one is your fault and this one is mine, it should be about moving past mistakes and helping each other be better communicators and spouses and parents.

This affects both of their work and both of their moods. Humans have needs for their bodies; this is why we have marriage so that we can fulfil them in a halal way. There is no celibacy in Islam.

We ask Allah Almighty to enable us to fulfil our obligations towards our families, our wives and husbands, and to Allah Almighty.