

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Hadith Umm Zar'

Living Quran

Session 9

Wife 8

Taught by Shaykh Haytham Tamim

Transcribed by Hana Khan

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Recap

We are still trying to benefit from every scenario we find in Hadith Umm Zar'; last week we had Wife number 7, which is probably the most complicated situation we've come across. She was talking about the harshness and foolishness of her husband, the misunderstandings; he is a very violent person, and on top of this he is not competent sexually. He has all sorts of troubles and she summarised them in just a few words: 'all defects are in him'.

The Soft Rabbit

This time is a completely different story. This couple have the highest level in intimacy, in care and love. She says, 'my husband is soft to touch, like a rabbit, and he has a good smell.' In another narration we have an addition which says, 'I dominate him, and he dominates people.' It's a very nice and eloquent description. She is saying that her husband is very soft; not just physically, but metaphorically as well. It means he is an easy-mannered person. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was also described as easy-mannered. It's not just soft to touch, though he has also been described as having the softest skin. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, 'my hands never touched anything softer than his [the Prophet (peace be upon him)]'s hands:

I have never touched silk or Dibaj (i.e. thick silk) softer than the palm of the Prophet ﷺ nor have I smelt a perfume nicer than the smell of the Prophet ﷺ. (Bukhari and Muslim)

So she's saying that the first thing you encounter from her husband is his softness.

What you mention first reflects your concerns

As we've mentioned in previous sessions, the thing that is most troubling to people is the one they mention first. Wife number 6 was talking about her husband's greed: this was the first thing she put forward. Similarly here, on the other hand, this wife is putting the most beautiful thing about her husband in the forefront. She's saying he's so soft, he's an easy-mannered person when you deal with him. And this doesn't mean that he's a coward or a weak person or has no personality. The other half of her testimony describes who he is: 'he dominates people'. So he's not a weak person, but reflected in his good manners and good character are that he is so gentle and easy going with his family. This is very important.

Taking care of yourself

It also means he looks after himself, if he's 'soft' it also means he's clean. His hands probably get rough from his work, if he's planting crops and so on. People at that time had mainly two professions to earn their money: either agriculture or trade. And even trade can cause rough hands. So, the bottom line is that he looks after himself. They may not have had creams and moisturisers, but they did have oil to look after their skin; the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself used to use these oils.

Why rabbit?

I'm not sure why in particular she used the rabbit to describe her husband; probably to express softness with no hardship or harm. It could have been the softness of a leopard, but a leopard could also harm you. Whereas a rabbit is not harmful, it's cuddly and nice and a joy to have. So she's saying that her

husband is all these things too – cuddly and nice and of good character, easy-mannered and taking care of himself.

The importance of smell

And the wife elaborates further by saying ‘he smells beautiful’. There is some discussion among commentators over what specifically she has said he smells like, but nevertheless the bottom line is that it’s something fragrant and pleasant. So it means he uses perfume. He puts on a good smell for his wife. He’s looking after himself for his wife. This is what makes a good relationship. He is beautifying himself for her. This is also why we have many hadith talking about the importance of cleanliness – even in that climate where water was scarce and a valuable commodity.

Personal hygiene and care

Even so, the Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged his ummah:

‘Ten things are part of the fitrah: trimming the moustache, trimming the nails, washing the joints, letting the beard grow, using the siwak [i.e. brushing your teeth], rinsing the nose, plucking the armpit hairs, shaving the pubic hair, washing after you go to the toilet, and rinsing the mouth.’ (Muslim)

When you look at these ten things, they all relate to hygiene. Getting rid of bad smells and having a good appearance, starting from the nails and moustache all the way through the body. It’s also recommended to wash yourself before you have a gathering or before an event, and before you have intimate relations with your spouse – not only after. There are many cases of someone complaining about their partner not looking after themselves, and them being fed up. This is why we need to understand what annoys our husband or our wife.

Beautifying yourself for your spouse and for Allah Almighty

The Prophet (peace be upon him) is recommending what to do and how to look, as a Muslim and more importantly for your wife. And we also mustn’t forget our relationship with Allah Almighty; we need to have a good appearance and good cleanliness for Him as well. This is why we have wudu before salah; it’s required to have a nice smell and be presentable. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once entered Aisha’s (may Allah Almighty be pleased with her) house and found some ornaments in her hands. He asked what they were, and she said she had made them specially to beautify herself for him. She understood that she was beautifying herself for her husband. Every wife should do the same, and so should every husband beautify himself for his wife.

The limits of beautification and wearing perfume

Having said that, we have some limits. For example, in perfume. Choose the perfume which your spouse likes. There might be one that you like but they hate: don’t use it! It’s not about you, it’s about both of you. Choose something you both like. You’re rewarded for putting perfume on for your spouse, but not for other people. Especially sisters; many of them shower themselves with perfume with the excuse that they don’t want to smell bad. There are authentic hadith which say that any woman who goes out wearing perfume, for everyone to smell, is doing as much as committing *zinah*. Abu Musa narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

Every eye commits adultery, and when the woman uses perfume and she passes by a gathering, then she is like this and that. [Meaning she is sinful]. (Tirmidhi)

I know it seems an extreme punishment, just for that, but he is warning sisters not to spread *fitnah* in the community. And I have received comments from many sisters asking what they should do to cover their sweat and bad smells, then? Of course Islam isn't asking you to smell bad. There are plenty of other solutions; you can use deodorant which has a less strong scent. Don't use a perfume which is so seducing. Smell is one of the biggest things that triggers lust and desire.

Anas reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

Beloved to me in the world are women and perfume, yet the delight of my eyes is in prayer. (Nasai)

From this first statement we can see that the Prophet (peace be on him) loved perfume. He used to use it all the time. But for sisters it's forbidden. Have very light perfume, and even then, don't shower yourself in it. Minimise the *fitnah*. Use just a little perfume with a light smell, so that you can barely smell it yourself. That's fine. And many people will disagree with me on this, but this is my understanding. To have strong perfume is *haram*, definitely *haram*. But to have no perfume whatsoever, and to smell bad, that's not allowed either. So we need moderation here.

Make up

Many scholars have written chapters on beautification, what is or isn't allowed. But within this, we need to understand the most important concept, which is not to overstep the limits of Allah Almighty. For instance, makeup. A woman beautifies herself for her husband. Outside the house makeup is not allowed. And only if your husband likes it, of course. And if he does, it's rewarding for her to wear it for him.

Wudu with makeup and nail polish

I often receive the question of wudu; of course it's best if she has wudu beforehand. Many makeup products do not allow water through to the face; it is not permitted to do wudu over these. If the makeup is preventing water from reaching the skin, she must take it off. And the same situation with nail polish – your wudu is not valid if you have nail polish on when you do it.

Fake eyelashes etc

Under beautification we have many other things, such as fake eyelashes, fake hair, etc. Is it allowed? Again, it's a different story inside and outside the house. You might even talk about different coloured contact lenses; again, that's fine for her husband but absolutely not for showing your beauty for other people.

Botox, implants and plastic surgery

And what about botox? Or facelifts? We have limits. We cannot go beyond these limits; we cannot have plastic surgery – *except* in the case of deformities or accidents. Not simply for cosmetic reasons. Allah Almighty has mentioned in a very clear ayah that Shaytan said:

'I will mislead them and I will create in them false desires; I will order them to slit the ears of cattle, and I will command them, whereby they shall alter the creation of Allah.'
(4:119)

Those who are altering and changing the creation of Allah Almighty are under the control of Shaytan. This goes for males and females, by the way. If there is a real need, in the case of deformities which cause psychological issues, for example, this sort of surgery may be permissible, however it must be discussed with an expert. Otherwise, it is *haram*.

Botox is very cheap and accessible in comparison to surgery. It is still not allowed. Of course, to a certain extent, it's less harmful than plastic surgery. Not in terms of medical risks but from a *shariah* point of view, there's less sin associated. So if we have a real need, we can talk to an expert, but again the need, apart from beautification, must be assessed. There is a fine line between changing the creation of Allah and bringing features back to normality. Surgery to rectify something deformed, to make it good, is fine. And again with implantation; unless there is a need – such as reconstruction after cancer treatment – this is not permissible for beautification. So we need to be careful and understand where to draw the limits. Be sure not to fall under the category of those who change the creation of Allah; these people are cursed.

Good husband at home as well as respected in the community

Returning to the wife. She loves his smell, she's been describing his softness and good character. And at the same time, she's making sure we know that just because he takes care of himself, we don't imagine that he's a weak person. No, this is why she adds 'I control him', but with his permission. Outside the house, he dominates people: he has a good and strong personality.

She's almost showing off about her husband, that he had the best of both characteristics – softness and generosity and good character, and he's a good, strong leader in the community. She is proud of him. You often find people who are good with other people but don't know how to deal with their family, or vice versa. Some wives even prefer to have a weak husband, to control.

So as we see from these very short lines from Wife 8 that she talks about the importance of beautification, and the importance of smell. So let's make our character good and fragrant - like the perfume you can smell through action. May Allah make our actions and our intentions good. Ameen