

Wisdom behind Prophet Muhammad's marriages

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) married to several wives following his migration to Madinah. His practice of polygamy was not something novel, as polygamy was widely practiced by all people and nations. Some societies allowed unlimited number of wives until some men had more than seven hundred wives, not including slave women. Some Arabs were reported to have taken in marriage more than ten wives. When Ghilan ibn Salamah Al-Thaqafee embraced Islam, he was married to ten wives. The Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed him, saying: Choose four of them (and divorce the rest).

Polygamy was also practiced by the ancient Greeks in Athens, China, Babylonia, Assyria, ancient Egypt, and the Jews were also polygamous. Prophet Sulayman (Solomon, peace be upon him) had seven hundred free women as wives and three hundred slave women. Al-Bukhaaree related in his Saheeh (authentic) Book of Hadeeth: Sulayman (the son of) Daawood (David) said, 'Tonight I will go to a hundred women, each of whom will give birth to a boy who will fight in the Cause of Allaah.' The Angel said to him, 'Say: Inshaa'allaah (If it be the Will of Allaah).' But he did not say so, as he forgot. He went to them but none of them gave birth, apart from one woman who gave birth to half a child. The Prophet (peace be upon him) further said, 'Had he said: Inshaa'allaah, he would not have broken his oath and he would have had more hope of fulfilling his wish.' The Christian church also permitted polygamy and did not object to it.

The Prophet's marriage to nine wives at the same time was merely an implementation of Divine Instructions and Wisdom. Allaah (may He be Exalted) states:

[So when Zaid had accomplished his desire from her (i.e. divorced her), We gave her to you in marriage, so that (in the future) there may be no difficulty for believers in respect to (the marriage of) the wives of their adopted sons when the latter have no desire to keep them (i.e. they have divorced them). And Allaah's Command must be fulfilled. There is no blame on the Prophet (peace be upon him) in that which Allaah has made legal for him. That has been Allaah's Way with those who have passed away of (the Prophets of) old.]

Stating the fact that it is Allaah Who made it lawful for His Messenger to marry several wives, He revealed:

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[O Prophet (Muhammad peace be upon him)! Verily, We have made lawful to you your wives, to whom you have paid their Mahr (bridal-money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage), and those (slaves) whom your right hand possesses – whom Allaah has given to you.]

Allaah then limited the number of the Messenger's wives to nine, all of whom he was forbidden to divorce. Allaah (may He be Glorified and Exalted) states:

[It is not lawful for you (to marry other) women after this, nor to change them for other wives even though their beauty attracts you]

Therefore, the marriages of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were all necessitated by Divine Command. It is not permissible to compare other cases with that of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This matter was restricted to the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) alone. None among the Muslim Ummah (nation) is permitted to marry beyond four women under the pretext that the Prophet (peace be upon him) married nine women.

Those who criticise the Prophet of Islam and brand Muslims as lustful are in manifest error. Worse still, we find Muslims who level blasphemous charges at the Prophet (peace be upon him) and take the subject of his marriages in jest. Had true faith entered their hearts, they would not have allowed such thoughts to occupy their minds. Had they carefully examined the circumstances that surrounded each marriage, they would have thought otherwise. The Prophet (peace be upon him) contracted marriages either to protect and support a widowed woman, or bring comfort to the families whose hearts were broken by the death of their beloved father, or to cement the bonds of love with the clan of his wives, or to honour a free woman who fulfilled Allaah's Command and went against the traditions of her society by marrying a slave rather than a master seeking the Good Pleasure of Allaah.

Had the Prophet (peace be upon him) been lustful, he would have opted to marry when he was in his prime youth, a period when desire for sexual gratification is at its peak. However, he married several wives only after he had grown into old age, when his desire for women had weakened. At the young age of twenty-five, he was married to only one wife, Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid (may Allaah be pleased with her), who was fifteen years older than him. She was forty while he was only twenty-five. He remained with her until she died.

It should also be noted that all the women whom he (peace be upon him) married had been married previously, except 'Aishah (may Allaah be pleased with her). The wives of the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) were:

1- Sawdah bint Zam'ah ibn Qays Al-Qurashiyah (may Allaah be pleased with her): The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) got married to her following the death of her husband, Al-Sakran ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abd Shams. This took place after the death of his wife, Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid, in Makkah and before his migration to Madinah. When she grew old, she gave up her day and night to 'Aishah (may Allaah be pleased with her).

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2- 'Aishah bint Al-Siddeeq (may Allaah be pleased with her): The Prophet (peace be upon him) contracted marriage with her before Sawdah. However, he did not consummate marriage with her until after its consummation with Sawdah. Among all his wives 'Aishah was the only virgin whom the Prophet (peace be upon him) married. His marriage to 'Aishah was meant to strengthen the bonds of kinship with Aboo Bakr Al-Siddeeq, the first man to embrace Islam and to support and believe in every word the Prophet (peace be upon him) uttered. He also sacrificed all his wealth for the sake of Allaah.

3- Hafsa bint 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allaah be pleased with her): The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) took her in marriage although she was a previously married woman who lacked feminine charm. The Prophet (peace be upon him) married her because of the close relationship he had with her father.

4- Umm Salamah Hind bint Suhail Al-Makhzumiyyah (may Allaah be pleased with her): The Prophet (peace be upon him) married her following the death of her husband, Aboo Salamah ibn 'Abd Al-Asad. His intention was to support her children. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) proposed to marry her, she said: "A woman like me is not suitable for marriage. I have become a barren woman, and I am jealous and have children." The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) replied: I am older than you; as for jealousy, Allaah will remove it, and as for children Allaah and His Messenger are responsible for them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then married her.

5- Zaynab bint Jahsh (may Allaah be pleased with her): The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) married her after she was divorced by her husband Zayd ibn Harithah, the freed slave (and adopted son) of the Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) was rewarding her compliance with Allaah's Command. It was through this marriage that Allaah established the permissibility of marrying the wife of one's adopted son, a matter which was difficult for the community at that time to undertake. Allaah (may He be Exalted) states:

[So when Zaid had accomplished his desire from her (i.e. divorced her), We gave her to you in marriage, so that (in the future) there may be no difficulty for the believers in respect to (the marriage of) the wives of their adopted sons when the latter have no desire to keep them (i.e. they have divorced them). And Allaah's Command must be fulfilled.]

6- Umm Habibah bint Aboo Sufyaaan (may Allaah be pleased with her): The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) married her after her husband, 'Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh, apostatised from Islam. She stayed away from him until he died.

She was in her thirties when the Prophet (peace be upon him) married her. He contracted the marriage while she was in Abyssinia (Ethiopia). The Prophet (peace be upon him) authorised Al-Najashy to conclude the marriage contract. Her authoriser was Khalid ibn Sa'id ibn Al-'As. Al-Najashy gave her four hundred Dinars as Sadaq (mandatory gift to a bride

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from the groom). This took place in the seventh year of Hijrah (the Prophet's migration to Madinah).

7- Juwayriyyah bint Al-Harith (may Allaah be pleased with her): The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) married her after her husband Musani' ibn Safwan was killed on the Battle of Al-Muraysi'. The Prophet (peace be upon him) intended to honour her people by this marriage relationship with them, especially after they had been taken as war captives in the Battle of Banu Al-Mustaliq.

8- Safiyyah bint Huyay ibn Akhtab (may Allaah be pleased with her): The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) married her to bring solace to her broken heart following the murder of her father, paternal uncle and husband.

9- Maymoonah bint Al-Harith Al-Hilaliyyah (may Allaah be pleased with her): The Messenger of Allaah (peace be upon him) married her following the death of her husband, Aboo Rahm ibn 'Abd Al-'Uzza Al-'Amiry. This marriage took place in the seventh year of Hijrah. She (may Allaah be pleased with her) was approaching forty by that time.