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JUMU'AH LECTURE:

SAYYIDAH 'Ā'ISHAH

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا

مَجَلَّة

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَنَتَوَكَّلُ عَلَيْهِ وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يَضِلَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَنَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَنَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا وَمَوْلَانَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدَهُ وَرَسُولَهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ وَبَارَكَ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ اللَّحِيْبَاتُ لِلْحَيِّبِينَ وَالْحَيِّبُونَ لِلْحَيِّبَاتِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ أُولَئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Introduction

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ stated: “**Ā’ishah’s virtue over other women is like the virtue of *tharīd* (a dish which includes bread, meat, and gravy; a delicacy among the Arabs) over other foods.**”¹

Today, we learn about this virtuous female, the Mother of the Believers, the most knowledgeable female scholar, the most prolific female transmitter of aḥādīth, and the most beloved wife to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ after Sayyidah Khadījah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا, Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah bint Abī Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا. We will highlight Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ love for her, due to her purity and passion to acquire knowledge.

Birth and Upbringing

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا was pure and blessed from her very inception. She was born to Sayyidunā Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and Sayyidah Umm Rūmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا in the seventh year of Nubuwwah. Both her parents had accepted Islam by then. Hence, she says, “I did not see my parents except that they were adherents of Islam.”² **She thus has the rare privilege of being born and nurtured in a home of Islam. As a result, Allah ﷻ selected her to be the wife of the purest and most chaste, Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.**

Allah ﷻ promises:

وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ

Pure women are for pure men and chaste men are for chaste women.³

Marriage

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said to Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا: “**You were shown to me twice in my dream. You were wrapped in a silken cloth and he (the angel) would say: ‘This is your wife.’ When I moved the cloth, I saw that it was you. I said, ‘If this is from Allah, He will let it be.’**”⁴

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ married her when she was six years of age and began living with her when she was nine. Despite her young age and liberty to spend time with her friends who would visit her, she fulfilled her household chores and served Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ diligently. She would knead the dough for bread, put in place the water for Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ wuḍū’, oil his hair, comb his hair, wash his clothes, etc.⁵ One can well imagine the place she earned herself in the heart

1 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 3770; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Ḥadīth: 2446.

2 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, vol. 1, Book 8, Ḥadīth 465 (467).

3 Sūrah al-Nūr: 26.

4 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Vol. 5, Book 58, Ḥadīth 235.

5 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī; Musnad Aḥmad; Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’.

of Rasūlullāh ﷺ by serving him in this loving way. It was her purity, however, that earned her a special place in his heart.

Her outstanding quality: Purity

The following report makes this very apparent. The Muslims were well-aware of Rasūlullāh's ﷺ love for Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا. Consequently, if one of them had a gift which he wished to give to Rasūlullāh ﷺ, he would delay the giving of it until Rasūlullāh ﷺ was in the house of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا. The other wives of Rasūlullāh ﷺ were naturally unhappy with this behaviour of the people and requested Sayyidah Umm Salamah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا to entreat Rasūlullāh ﷺ to tell the people to give gifts to Rasūlullāh ﷺ wherever he may be.

Sayyidah Umm Salamah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا complied with their request, but Rasūlullāh ﷺ did not reply to her. She spoke to him about it a second time but received no reply. When she brought up the subject for the third time, Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, **“Do not cause me grief regarding 'Ā'ishah, for revelation does not descend upon me when I am under the (same) sheet with any woman except 'Ā'ishah.”**¹ Allāhu Akbar! This is definite evidence of her purity. Revelation descends upon Rasūlullāh ﷺ when he is with her under the same sheet. It also confirms that Rasūlullāh ﷺ loved her dearly owing to her purity.

Love for her

The following reports indicate to the amount of love Rasūlullāh ﷺ had for her.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ had a Persian neighbour who excelled in preparing gravy. He once invited Rasūlullāh ﷺ over for meals. Rasūlullāh ﷺ enquired whether Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, his beloved, was invited as well. The Persian indicated in the negative, so Rasūlullāh ﷺ rejected the invitation. Only when the neighbour invited Rasūlullāh's ﷺ beloved, did he accept the invitation and attend.²

Once, some Abyssinian boys had a practical display of their lances at the Masjid. Rasūlullāh ﷺ stood at the door and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا stood behind him for concealment with her chin on his shoulder. She was fascinated at their skill and continued viewing their expert display. All this time, Rasūlullāh ﷺ stood patiently and allowed her to watch, owing to the intense love he had for her. Only when she moved, did he move.³

Rasūlullāh ﷺ once challenged her to a race while they were travelling together. They raced and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا won. The next time they raced, after she had gained some weight, Rasūlullāh ﷺ came first and commented, **“This for that.”**⁴

Rasūlullāh ﷺ would tell her, “I know when you are happy with me and when you are displeased.” “How is that?” she asked. “When you are happy, you say, ‘No, by the Rabb of Muhammad,’ and when you are upset, you say, ‘No, by the Rabb of Ibrāhīm.’” She acknowledged that it was only the name of Rasūlullāh ﷺ that she would leave out.⁵

Sayyidah Umm Salamah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا was asked whether Rasūlullāh ﷺ would kiss his wives whilst fasting. She replied in the negative. Her student informed her that Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا was teaching to the contrary. Her response to this was: **“Perhaps he could not hold back from her, out of his love for her.”**⁶

1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 3, Book 47, Ḥadīth 755.

2 *Sunan al-Nasa'ī*, Book 27, Ḥadīth 48 (3436).

3 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 454; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth: 892.

4 *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Ḥadīth: 2578.

5 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 5228; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth: 2439.

6 *Musnad Aḥmad*, Ḥadīth: 26691.

Just to give you an understanding of the level of romance and love in this marriage. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها relates: “I would eat the meat from a bone when I was menstruating. The Messenger of Allah would then take the bone and put his mouth where my mouth had been. And I would drink from a vessel, and the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم would take it and put his mouth where my mouth had been, and I was menstruating.”¹

Affirming that Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها was his most beloved wife is not the outcome of speculation. Rather, it is the product of revelation. Sayyidunā ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه narrates that he approached Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم and asked, “Who is the most beloved person to you?” “‘Ā’ishah,” was Rasūlullāh’s صلى الله عليه وسلم instantaneous reply. What is in the heart comes on the tongue, they say. He then asked, “From the men?” “Her father,”² came the reply. Here again, Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم did not say *Abū Bakr*, but said *her father*; indicating to the fact that Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها was still on his mind. And Rasūlullāh’s صلى الله عليه وسلم utterances are the product of revelation. Hence, she being the most beloved to him—after Sayyidah Khadījah رضي الله عنها—is from the revelation sent by Allah سبحانه وتعالى upon him.³

The Demand of loving Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم is loving ‘Ā’ishah

Love for Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها is the demand of love for Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. Anyone who loves Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم must definitely love his most beloved wife. In fact, Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم advised his most beloved daughter Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها saying, “O my beloved daughter, do you not love those whom I love?” “Definitely,” she replied. “Then love ‘Ā’ishah.” he commanded.⁴ When this was Rasūlullāh’s صلى الله عليه وسلم command to his most beloved daughter, then it is mandatory upon all his followers to have love for Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها.

Only the hypocrites do not have love for her. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah was told, “A man says that you are not his mother.” “He has spoken the truth,” she commented, “I am the mother of the believers; not the mother of the hypocrites.”⁵

Her blessings

Listen to the upcoming report of one of the travels of the golden era. You will realise the passionate love and compassion Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم showed her.

Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم was out on a journey accompanied by Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها, when her necklace broke and got lost. This happened during the night. Just imagine, you are driving on a long journey on the highway in the darkness of night and your wife’s scarf flies out of the window. What would you do? Would you stop your car and go back to look for it? Or would you continue your journey, presenting the darkness of night and danger of surroundings as your excuse?

Look at the love Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم has for his beloved wife. He stayed there in search of the necklace, to appease his wife. And this delays the entire caravan.

To add to the predicament, the place they halted at had no water and the people had no water with them. People grew anxious and restless due to the absence of water and told Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه to speak to Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها. Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه scolded her saying, “You have detained Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم and the people where there is no water and they have no water with them.” He admonished her, but she did not move because Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم had fallen asleep on her thigh. Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم woke up when dawn broke and there was no water to make wuḍū’ for Ṣalāt al-Fajr. The situation could not possibly get worse. And there was no solution in sight.

1 Sunan Ibn Mājah, Book 1, Ḥadīth 686.

2 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 4358; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Ḥadīth: 2384.

3 Ibn Ḥazam: *al-Faṣl fi al-Mīl wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal*, vol. 4 pg. 95.

4 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Vol. 3, Book 47, Ḥadīth 755.

5 Al-Ājurrī: *al-Sharīḥ*, vol. 5 pg. 393; ‘Ā’ishah Umm al-Mu’minīn by al-Durar, pg. 3.

Just then, Allah ﷻ revealed the verses of Tayammum. All the Muslims performed Tayammum and performed their Ṣalāt al-Fajr. Rasūlullāh ﷺ love for Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا and stopping there in search of her necklace was the means of ease for the entire ummah till the day of Qiyāmah. Sayyidunā Usayd ibn Ḥudayr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ commented: **“O the family of Abu Bakr! This is not the first blessing of yours.”**¹ He addressed Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا congratulating her, **“May Allah reward you. By Allah, no matter which you dislike ever came upon you, except that Allah brought some goodness out of it.”**²

Her knowledge

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا lived in the home of Rasūlullāh ﷺ for 9 years. During this period, she acquired from him an abundance of knowledge. She is renowned for being the most knowledgeable of all women.

Ibn Kathīr says: “No one is known among all the women of this ummah—in fact of other nations as well—to be more knowledgeable and more understanding than her.”³

Al-Zuhrī says: “If the knowledge of ‘Ā’ishah was compared with the knowledge of all women, ‘Ā’ishah’s knowledge would be superior.”⁴

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا lived for 47 years after Rasūlullāh ﷺ and passed on the precious knowledge she had acquired from Rasūlullāh ﷺ. **She is responsible for transmitting over 2000 aḥādīth. There is no reputable ḥadīth or fiqh book which does not contain the reports and verdicts of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا.**

May Allah bless her and reward her abundantly for this great favour upon the ummah.

One possible reason Allah ﷻ chose Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا as a wife for Rasūlullāh ﷺ, even though the age gap between them was so vast, was so that she may preserve his teachings. The sharpness of memory that a person has in his youth is something that is witnessed and accepted by all. This reason gains a lot of strength when one takes a look at the academic legacy of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا. To start off with, help was sought from her when the Ṣaḥābah could not understand certain aḥādīth. Secondly, two thousand plus narrations have reached us from her. Some of her prominent students were Sa‘d ibn al-Musayyab, ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn and Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī. Thirdly, she asked Rasūlullāh ﷺ certain questions, due to which matters were clarified for the ummah.

Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ final illness

It was during the 11th year of hijrah, when one day, both Rasūlullāh ﷺ and Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا fell ill. This illness was the prelude to his demise. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا describes these moments: I said, “O what a severe headache!” Rasūlullāh ﷺ replied, “Rather, I am the one who has a severe headache.”⁵ That was the beginning of the illness in which Rasūlullāh ﷺ passed away. Another subtle point deduced here is that their love was so intense and their connection was so strong, that they experienced each other’s pain just as they experienced each other’s happiness. This is the highest level of love and unity.

During his final illness, Rasūlullāh ﷺ desired to be nursed at the home of his most beloved and the other wives agreed to this. Sayyid Sulaymān al-Nadwī explains the wisdom behind this choice of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He says:

1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 1, Book 7, Ḥadīth 330 (334).

2 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 1, Book 7, Ḥadīth 332 (336).

3 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, vol. 2 pg. 431.

4 *Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*, Ḥadīth: 299; *Al-Mustadrak*, Ḥadīth: 6734.

5 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 7, Book 70, Ḥadīth 570 (5666).

“Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا was gifted with a few special abilities such as; a phenomenal memory, outstanding intelligence, deep understanding, and unsurpassed potential in deducing laws. Thus, it is not far-fetched that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ wanted to be in her home so that she could memorise all of his final sayings and actions. The truth of the matter, regarding which there is no dispute, is that the Muslims learnt of most of the happenings of these final moments only through Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا.”

Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ was resting upon Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا when Sayyidunā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ entered with a miswāk in his hand. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ began looking at the miswāk. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا observed this and knew that he loved using the miswāk. She thus took the miswāk with his permission and gave it to him. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ found it to be a bit hard so she offered to soften it and then gave it back to him. She relates: “I then saw him brushing (with it) in the best manner that I had ever seen him brushing.” Shortly thereafter, Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ fell unconscious. When he regained consciousness, he looked towards the roof of the house and said, “O Allah, the Most Lofty Companion!” Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا exclaimed, “Now he will not remain with us.”¹

And the soul of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ departed to the Most Lofty Companion (Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) while he lay in the lap of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah, in the home of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah, on the day of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah, a few moments after her saliva had mixed with his. Among her distinctive privileges she would boast over is that “Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ passed away in my lap and Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ is buried in my house.”²

Conclusion

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا was an outstanding wife and student of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and she brought great joy to his heart. Her legacy was one of loving Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ above all else, seeking his pleasure, avoiding his displeasure, and imparting his teachings to his ummah. If her legacy is revived today by the ummah, all of our difficulties will come to an end, as we are either faced with difficulties on account of our lack of zeal for knowledge, or our laxity in practicing upon the knowledge that Allah has blessed us with. May Allah be pleased with her and revive her legacy in the life of every Muslim.

May Allah be pleased with her, reward her abundantly on behalf of the entire Ummah, and make us all her devoted sons who continue to protect and preserve her legacy, and have love for her, more than we have for our own biological mothers.

Remember that in Jannah, Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا will be with Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ in the most exalted stage of Jannah. And according to the declaration of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, a person will be with the one he loves. **So if we have sincere love for her, it is clear where we will be, by the grace of Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى.**

وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العلمين

1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 5, Book 59, Ḥadīth 731 (4450).

2 *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*.