



JUMU'AH LECTURE: UMMAHĀT AL-MU'MINĪN (MOTHERS OF THE BELIEVERS)



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UMMAHĀT AL-MU'MINĪN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُسْتَعِينُهُ 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 وَآلِهِ وَاصْحَابِهِ وَبَارَكَ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

All praise belongs to Allah, the Almighty. Peace and Salutations be upon the Seal of the Prophets, upon his progeny, Companions, and those who follow his path until the Day of Reckoning.

The *Ahl al-Bayt* (Family of the Prophet ﷺ) have been granted a lofty rank and elevated status in the eyes of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah* in accordance with what Allah has decreed of loving them and honouring them. This is in keeping with the bequest of the Prophet ﷺ, when he said, “I remind you (to be kind) to the members of my family.” In light of this, we dissociate ourselves from those who exaggerate with regards to only specific members of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (ignoring the rest) and also from the *Nawāṣib*, who cause harm to them and harbour malice for the pure members of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

The Muslims in general, and in specific the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, love the noble members of the *Ahl al-Bayt* and consider it strictly forbidden to disparage, belittle, or harm them in any way, whether this be directed to the progeny of the Prophet ﷺ or his blessed wives, all of whom form part of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

In this lecture we wish to not only highlight the distinguished status and virtue of the blessed wives of the Prophet ﷺ as the *Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn* (Mothers of the Believers) as mentioned in the Noble Qur'an and Blessed Sunnah, but also highlight those verses and *aḥādīth* commending them and honouring them as part of the *Ahl al-Bayt* of the Prophet ﷺ; thus, awarding them a unique virtue.

Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn are from the Ahl al-Bayt

Ahl al-Bayt refers to the residents of a house. Similarly, the term *Ahl al-Qurā* means residents of a village and the *ahl* of a religion will refer to its adherents and followers. A man's *ahl*, thus, refers to his wife; and his children are also included.

Allah ﷻ praised the wives of the Prophet ﷺ as his *Ahl al-Bayt*:

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا وَادْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَىٰ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا

And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance. And establish prayer and give zakāh and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification. And remember what is recited in your houses of the verses of Allah and wisdom. Indeed, Allah is ever Subtle and Acquainted [with all things]. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 32–34]

Thus, the wives of Rasūlullāh ﷺ are included in the word *Āl* which is the plural of *Ahl* (family) in his statement:

إن الصدقة لا تحل لمحمد ولا لآل محمد

Verily, zakāh is not permissible for Muḥammad and his family. [Tārīkh Baghdād, vol. 8 pg. 38]

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها emphasized this:

أن خالد بن سعيد بعث إلى عائشة ببقرة من الصدقة فردتها وقالت إنا آل محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم لا تحل لنا الصدقة

Khālid ibn Sa'īd sent a cow from zakāh to 'Ā'ishah who returned the same explaining, "Zakāh is not permissible for us, the family of Muḥammad ﷺ." [Muṣannaf ibn Abī Shaybah, vol. 3 pg. 214]

The wives of Rasūlullāh ﷺ are implied in the following ḥadīth as well:

اللهم اجعل زرق آل محمد قوتا

O Allah, make the sustenance of Muḥammad's family sufficient. [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 6460]

As well as when the Prophet ﷺ supplicated when sacrificing during Ḥajj:

اللهم هذا عن محمد و آل محمد

O Allah, this is on behalf of Muḥammad and his family. [Musnad Aḥmad, vol. 6 pg. 391 Ḥadīth: 27234]

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها further also said when describing the times of difficulty endured by them:

ما شبع آل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من خبز بر

Rasūlullāh's ﷺ family never ate wheat flour to their fill. [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 5423]

The incident of Khalīl Allāh Ibrāhīm عليه السلام mentioned in the Qur'ān further strengthens the inclusion of wives in the term *Ahl al-Bayt*. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى while relating the incident of the messengers coming to Nabī Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with glad tidings says:

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ فَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ قَالَتْ يَا وَيْلَتَى أَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحِمْتُ اللَّهَ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

And his Wife was standing, and she smiled. Then We gave her good tidings of Ishāq and after Ishāq, Ya'qūb.

She said, "Woe to me! Shall I give birth while I am an old woman and this, my husband, is an old man? Indeed, this is an amazing thing!"

They said, "Are you amazed at the decree of Allah? May the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon **you, people of the house**. Indeed, He is Praiseworthy and Honourable." [Sūrah Hūd: 71-73]

The wife of Nabī Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is being addressed here and no one else.

It also appears in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī:

أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم دخل إلى حجرة عائشة فقال السلام عليكم أهل البيت و رحمة الله فقالت و عليك السلام و رحمة الله

The Nabī ﷺ entered 'Ā'ishah's room and greeted, "May peace be upon you, O Ahl al-Bayt, and the mercy of Allah."

She replied, "And may peace and Allah's mercy be upon you." [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 4793]

The status of the Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn

Allah ﷻ says:

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

The Prophet is more worthy of the believers than themselves, and his wives are [in the position of] their mothers. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 6]

In essence the Mothers of a believer are the wives of the Prophet ﷺ, and the Prophet ﷺ is like a father to the believer [Abū Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Ṭahārah, Bāb Karāhiyat Istiqbāl al-Qiblah 'inda Qaḍā' al-Ḥajāh, Ḥadīth: 8]. The Muhājirīn and the Anṣār are brothers to a believer as implied in the Qur'ānic supplication:

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts [any] resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful. [Sūrah al-Ḥashr: 10]

This is the Household of the Prophet ﷺ. Anyone who disparages even one of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ will be said to be void of īmān because if he were a believer in the true sense of the word then he would never have disparaged the Mothers of the Believers; as a son does not speak ill of his mother.

This motherhood is the same as biological motherhood as far as the rights of respect and honour are concerned, and also as a means of being proud of one's ancestry. Can anyone boast of having a nobler mother than those whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ chose to be his spouses? In fact, they were selected by Allah ﷻ Himself, as Allah says:

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَاءُ مِنْ بَعْدُ وَلَا أَنْ تَبَدِّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَاقِبًا

Not lawful to you, [O Muḥammad], are [any additional] women after [this], nor [is it] for you to exchange them for [other] wives, even if their beauty were to please you, except what your right hand possesses. And ever is Allah, over all things, an Observer. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 52]

Allah ﷻ stated regarding Sayyidah Zaynab bint Jaḥsh رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا:

فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا

So, when Zayd had no longer any need for her, We married her to you in order that there not be upon the believers any discomfort concerning the wives of their adopted sons when they no longer have need of them. And ever is the command of Allah accomplished. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 37]

Allah ﷻ said regarding their superiority over the women of the world:

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنَّ أَتَقِينَ

O wives of the Prophet ﷺ, you are not like anyone among women, if you fear Allah. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 32]

Such is their distinctiveness that Allah ﷻ has forbade any of the believers from ever marrying them just as it is prohibited for a son to marry his biological mother. Allah ﷻ says:

وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تَنْكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا

And it is not [conceivable or lawful] for you to harm the Messenger of Allah or to marry his wives after him, ever. Indeed, that would be in the sight of Allah an enormity. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 53]

The Prophet ﷺ is harmed by any word or action that would hurt his wives, to such an extent that Allah ﷻ even instructed the believers to only address them from behind a veil. Allah ﷻ says:

وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ

And when you ask [his wives] for something, ask them from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts. And it is not [conceivable or lawful] for you to harm the Messenger of Allah. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 53]

When this is the level of honour that has been accorded to the Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn, what can be said about those who disparage them, curse them, and attribute to them that which does not befit their noble status? Shortly after the above-mentioned verses, Allah ﷻ says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزُوجَكُمْ وَبَنَاتِكُمْ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 59]

Then Allah issues a stern warning:

لَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْمُرْجِفُونَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغْرِبَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is disease and those who spread rumours in al-Madīnah do not cease, We will surely incite you against them; then they will not remain your neighbours therein except for a little. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 60]

Referring to the rumours these hypocrites were spreading concerning the marriage of the Prophet ﷺ to Sayyidah Zaynab رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا. She was previously the wife of his adopted son, Zayd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, whose mention was made in the verses cited previously. This verse indicates that criticism of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ is amongst the traits of the hypocrites, and the Believers have been sternly warned from imitating them.

Allah ﷻ has clarified in this sūrah that He will not accept any justification for slandering the wives of the Prophet ﷺ. The one who does so abandons the Qur'ān and Sunnah and instead follows the path of the whimsical and foolish. If he does not repent and dies in this condition:

يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُولُونَ يَا لَيْتَنَا أَطَعْنَا اللَّهَ وَأَطَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا فَأَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلَا

The Day their faces will be turned about in the Fire, they will say, "How we wish we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger." And they will say, "Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our masters and our dignitaries, and they led us astray from the [right] way." [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 66, 67]

Is attributing to them that which does not befit their noble status a meritorious deed? Or is it one of the most heinous crimes? Just imagine for a moment—while you curse or belittle ‘Ā'ishah and Ḥafṣah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا, which the Shiah do—that you are standing in front of the Messenger ﷺ and he is looking at you and listening to your words... how does it feel now? Imagine what the Prophet ﷺ would be thinking of you?

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ

O wives of the Prophet ﷺ, you are not like anyone among women, if you fear Allah. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 32]

In other words, there are undeniably no women in this world superior to the wives of the Prophet ﷺ. This is not something unfathomable when one considers that they are after all the wives of that Prophet ﷺ who is the most superior of all the Prophets and Messengers—in fact the best of all creation—and they were preferred by Allah and the Prophet ﷺ over all other women in this world.

As for them fearing Allah ﷻ and possessing the quality of Taqwā, this too is proven from the Noble Book of Allah. Allah ﷻ says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ إِن كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَأُسَرِّحْكُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا وَإِن كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالْدارَ الْآخِرَةَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنْكُنَّ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

O Prophet, say to your wives, “If you should desire the worldly life and its adornment, then come, I will provide for you and give you a gracious release. But if you should desire Allah and His Messenger and the home of the Hereafter—then indeed, Allah has prepared for the doers of good among you a great reward.” [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 28, 29]

They chose Allah and his Prophet ﷺ and abandoned the life of this world and its adornments. There is no other reason for them choosing Allah and His Messenger ﷺ—which meant patiently enduring the hardship and difficulty which accompanied the office of Nubuwwah—except firmness of faith and their fear of Allah. Since their decision to remain with the Prophet ﷺ was motivated by Taqwā they were honoured by Allah:

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَاءُ مِنْ بَعْدُ وَلَا أَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ

Not lawful to you, [O Muhammad], are [any additional] women after [this], nor [is it] for you to exchange them for [other] wives, even if their beauty were to please you. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 52]

They were honoured in two ways in this verse:

- The Prophet ﷺ was prohibited from taking another wife after them.
- The Prophet ﷺ was prohibited from divorcing any one of them, in order to marry another.

The reason for this was so that they would be his wives for eternity; not only in this world but in the hereafter as well. This is also the reason why the Believers were prohibited from marrying them after his demise:

وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تُنكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا إِنَّ ذَٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا

And it is not [conceivable or lawful] for you to harm the Messenger of Allah or to marry his wives after him, ever. Indeed, that would be in the sight of Allah an enormity. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 53]

And they were awarded the position of mothers to every believer:

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

The Prophet is more worthy of the believers than themselves, and his wives are [in the position of] their mothers. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 6]

Every person should ponder deeply over these points and recognise the noble status awarded to the Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn. May Allah ﷻ guide us, grant us understanding, and the ability to honour the family of the Prophet ﷺ as they ought to be honoured.