



JUMU'AH LECTURE:

THE WIVES OF THE

PROPHET ﷺ



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The Wives of the Prophet ﷺ

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

We often here the expression *Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn*, which means ‘Mothers of the Believers’, and perhaps may understand that it refers to the wives of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, since Allah ﷻ awarded them this title in the Qur’ān and it was He Who referred to them as the “Mothers of the Believers.”

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are their (the believers’) mothers. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 6]

By using this reference and title, a special status was bestowed upon the wives of the Prophet ﷺ. They were accorded a high level of respect and after the Prophet’s ﷺ death they were not allowed to marry again because legally they were considered to be the mothers of all Muslim men. They were his wives in this world and will be his wives in the Hereafter as well. Each of them played a significant role in the dissemination of Islam, and the aḥādīth they imparted to us teaches us many lessons which are still applicable today. They excelled in both religious and social life and many received the glad tidings that their final destination would be Paradise.

But who exactly were the “Mothers of the Believers”? We will endeavour today to shed a little light on the lives of each of these illustrious personalities.

Sayyidah Khadījah bint Khuwaylid

Sayyidah Khadījah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا was highly regarded in society with noble ancestry, amazing qualities, and the richest from all the women of the Quraysh. The Prophet ﷺ married her when he was twenty-five years old. She was the first person to believe in the Prophet ﷺ and assisted him in his mission. The Prophet ﷺ would say that she is the most virtuous of all women of the world. All the Prophet’s ﷺ children were from her except Ibrahīm رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, whose mother was Sayyidah Māriyyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا. The Prophet ﷺ did not take any other wife during her lifetime. Thus, for twenty-five years she remained the only wife of the Prophet ﷺ. She passed away three years before hijrah. She was the best of all the women from the Ummah of the Prophet ﷺ. Al-Bukhārī has reported with his chain of narration from Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ:

I heard the Prophet ﷺ saying, “The best of women was Maryam and the best of women was Khadījah.” [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, # 3815]

Allah ﷻ sent greetings to her and gave her the glad tidings of a Palace in Jannah, where she will hear no noise or experience any fatigue:

أتى جبريل النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال يا رسول الله هذه خديجة قد أتت معها إناء فيه إدام أو طعام أو شراب فإذا هي أتتك فاقرأ عليها السلام من ربها ومني وبشرها بيت في الجنة من قصب لا صخب فيه ولا نصب.

Jibrīl عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “O Allah’s Messenger ﷺ! This is Khadījah coming to you with a dish having meat soup (or some food or drink). When she reaches you, greet her on behalf of her Rabb and on my behalf, and give her the glad tidings of having a Qasab (gold and silver) palace in Paradise wherein there will be neither any noise nor any fatigue (trouble).” [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb Manāqib al-Anṣār, Bāb Tazwīj al-Nabī ﷺ, Ḥadīth: 3820.]

Sayyidah Sawdah bint Zam‘ah

She embraced Islam early on and along with her husband migrated to Abyssinia the second time. It was here where her husband passed away. [Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, vol. 12 p. 455] She is the first woman to marry the Prophet ﷺ after Sayyidah Khadijah رضي الله عنها, which was before the hijrah while still in Makkah. . She desired deeply to remain in the wedlock of the Prophet ﷺ and sacrificed her day with the Prophet ﷺ out of love for him and to please him, so as to remain his wife in Jannah. She passed away during the final years of Sayyidunā ‘Umar’s رضي الله عنه Khilāfah. It has been reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* from Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها that she said, “I have not seen a woman whose temperament I would like to resemble more than Sawdah.” [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Ḥadīth: 1463]

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah bint Abī Bakr

She was born four years after Nubuwwah and the Prophet ﷺ married her when she was six years old. She came to live with the Prophet ﷺ when she was nine years old. The Prophet ﷺ did not marry any other virgin besides Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها. Her exoneration from the false accusations against her was announced from the Heavens, and she was the most beloved of the Prophet’s ﷺ wives to him after Sayyidah Khadijah رضي الله عنها. Al-Bukhārī رضي الله عنه reports from ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه:

The Prophet ﷺ deputed me to lead the army of Dhāt al-Salāsil. I came to him and said, “Who is the most beloved person to you?”

He said, “‘Ā’ishah.”

I asked, “Among the men?”

He said, “Her father.” [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 4358]

She is also renowned for being the most knowledgeable of all the women and many of the senior Ṣaḥābah would benefit from her knowledge. She was eighteen years old when the Prophet ﷺ passed away. The Prophet ﷺ desired to spend the last days during his illness in her house and he passed away in her home, while in her lap, on her day. Allah caused her saliva to be mixed with that of the Prophet’s ﷺ during his final moment in this world and his first in the Hereafter. [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 4438]

She passed away on 17 Ramaḍān 58 AH. Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه performed her Janāzah Ṣalāh and she was buried in al-Baqī‘, May Allah be pleased with her. The Prophet ﷺ gave her the glad tidings that she is amongst the People of Jannah. [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 3771]

Sayyidah Ḥaḥṣah bint ‘Umar

The Prophet ﷺ married her in the third year after hijrah after her husband Khunays ibn Ḥudhāfah al-Badrī رضي الله عنه passed away on account of the wounds he had sustained during the Battle of Uḥud. She fasted often and would perform ṣalāh diligently, hence, she was known as Sawwāmah Qawwāmah (One who fasts and performs ṣalāh abundantly). She was born five years before Nubuwwah and passed away in Sha‘bān 45 AH, may Allah be pleased with her. Al-Ṭabarānī reports from Qays ibn Zayd that the Prophet ﷺ gave Ḥaḥṣah a single divorce... but Jibrīl عليه السلام then came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “Take Ḥaḥṣah back as she fasts often and performs ṣalāh abundantly, and she will be your wife in Jannah.” Thus, the Prophet ﷺ revoked it. [Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr, vol. 18 p. 365, Ḥadīth: 934; Mustadrak al-Ḥākim, vol. 4 p. 16, Ḥadīth: 6753]

Sayyidah Zaynab bint Khuzaymah

She was known as *Umm al-Masākīn* (Mother of the destitute) on account of her charity towards them. Her husband, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Jaḥsh رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, was martyred in the Battle of Uhud and the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ married her thereafter. The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ married her shortly after he married Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا but she only remained in the company of the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ for two or three months thereafter and passed away in the fourth year after hijrah. The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ performed the funeral prayer upon her after her demise. This is exclusive to her only from all the Prophet’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ later wives as none of them passed away during his lifetime except Sayyidah Khadījah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا and Sayyidah Zaynab bint Khuzaymah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا. The prayers of the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ are an undeniable mercy upon the believers.

Sayyidah Umm Salamah bint Abī Umayyah

The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ married her after her husband, Abū Salamah ibn ‘Abd al-Asad رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ—her paternal cousin—passed away. Abū Salamah and Umm Salamah migrated together to Abyssinia and thereafter to Madīnah. It has been said that she was the first woman to enter Madīnah in a camel carriage. She was one of the most beautiful women, having the noblest of lineages. The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ married her and supplicated for her. [*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth: 918] The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ gave her the glad tidings that she will be in Jannah. [*al-Tirmidhī*, Ḥadīth: 3812]

Her wisdom and foresight was displayed on the Day of Ḥudaybiyyah when the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ instructed his Companions to slaughter their animals and shave their heads. The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ issued this instruction three times but the Companions still clinging on to the hope that they may yet enter Makkah did not carry out this instruction immediately.

The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ returned to Umm Salamah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا and said, “O Umm Salamah, what is the matter with the people?”

She replied, “O Messenger of Allah, the conditions you have witnessed have come upon them. Do not speak to any of them but proceed to your animal and sacrifice it, thereafter shave your head. When they see that you have done so, they will follow suit.”

The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ then left and without speaking to anyone slaughtered his animal and shaved his head. As soon as the Companions saw this, they too slaughtered their animals and shaved their heads. [*Musnad Aḥmad*, vol. 4 p. 323]

The advice which she offered to the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ on this occasion indicates the intelligence and wisdom she was blessed with.

Sayyidah Zaynab bint Jaḥsh

Her father was the leader of the Banū ‘Abd al-Shams. She was from amongst the first group of Ṣaḥābah who migrated. Her mother was Umaymah bint ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim, who was the paternal aunt of the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ married her three or five years after her marriage to Zayd ibn al-Ḥārithah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ—the freed slave of Allah’s Messenger صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ—the Ṣaḥābī who was commonly referred to as *Ibn Muḥammad* (the son of Muḥammad). It was concerning Zayd ibn al-Ḥārithah and Zaynab bint Jaḥsh رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا that the verses permitting marriage to the wives of one’s adopted sons was revealed; as the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ had adopted Zayd ibn al-Ḥārithah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ before receiving Nubuwwah and was thus called Zayd ibn Muḥammad. Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى abrogated this association with His words:

أَدْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

Call them by [the names of] their fathers; it is more just in the sight of Allah. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 5]

Then Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى further clarified and emphasised this by instructing the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ to marry Zaynab bint Jaḥsh رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا with the following verse:

فَلَمَّا قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاهَا لَكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا

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. [Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: 37]

She would thus boast to her co-wives, saying, “It was your families who performed your marriage to the Prophet ﷺ but Allah married me to the Prophet ﷺ above the seven heavens.” [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth 7420]

Zaynab رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا was amongst the leading women of her time with regards to religion, piety, and generosity. She is the first of the *Ummahāt al-Mu’minīn* (Mother of the Believers) to pass away after the demise of the Prophet ﷺ. At the time of her death, she was twenty years old.

‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا once said when recounting her virtues, “I have never seen a woman more superior in dīn, more Allah fearing, more truthful, more conscious of maintaining family relations, more generous, having a greater sense of self-sacrifice in practical life, and a charitable disposition that draws one closer to Allah ﷻ than Zaynab.” [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim, Ḥadīth 2422]

Sayyidah Juwayriyah bint al-Ḥārith

She was a captive in the Battle of Banū Muṣṭaliq, also known as the Battle of al-Muraysī, in the fifth or sixth year after hijrah. She was given to Thābit ibn Qays رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as part of his share in the spoils of war. He then made an agreement of *Kitābah* [where a master makes a deal with his/her slave to pay a certain amount in exchange for his/her freedom]. The Prophet ﷺ assisted her in fulfilling this agreement and married her thereafter. She was the widow of Musāfi’ ibn Ṣafwān, who fought against the Prophet ﷺ in the Battle of Muraysi’ and was killed therein. On account of her marriage to the Prophet ﷺ the Muslims set free a hundred of her family members who had been taken as captives. Thus, she was a source of great blessings for her people. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا affirmed, “I have not seen a woman who was greater source of blessing for her people than Juwayriyah.” [Musnad Ahmad] The Prophet ﷺ himself gave her the name Juwayriyah, her previous name was Barrah. She passed away in the year 50 AH.

Sayyidah Umm Ḥabībah bint Abī Sufyān

Sayyidah Umm Ḥabībah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا was born seventeen years before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ received Nubuwwah. She then accepted Islam with her husband, ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Jaḥsh al-Asadī. They both migrated to Abyssinia, where she gave birth to a daughter named Ḥabībah. He passed away while they were there, and Allah ﷻ granted her a much better husband, who was none other than the Prophet ﷺ. Al-Najashī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ performed her nikah to the Prophet ﷺ in Abyssinia and gave her four thousand silver coins as dowry on his behalf, before sending her to Madīnah. She is the closest wife to him in kinship and was given the most amount of dowry from all the wives. She was so conscious of fulfilling the rights of others that even before her demise she sought pardon from all her co-wives for any harm she might have caused them. She passed away in 44 AH during the Khilāfah of her brother, Mu’āwiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah bint Ḥuyayy

Prior to embracing Islam, Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا was first married to Salām ibn Mishkam and after him to Kinānah ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq, who was killed in the Battle of Khaybar. Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا was taken as a captive and given to Dihyah al-Kalbī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as his share from the spoils of war. He made an agreement of *kitābah* with her, which was paid by the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ then freed her and married her, her freedom being her Mahr (dowry). She passed away in the fifty second year after hijrah. Imām al-Tirmidhī narrates from Sayyidunā Anas رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ:

It reached Şafīyyah that Ḥaḥṣah had said about her, “The daughter of a Jew,” so she began to weep.

The Prophet ﷺ then entered upon her while she was crying, and asked her, “What makes you cry?”

She said, “Ḥaḥṣah said to me that I am the daughter of a Jew.”

So, the Prophet ﷺ pacified her, “Certainly you are the daughter of a Prophet, your uncle is a Prophet, and you are married to a Prophet; so, what is she boasting to you about?” [*Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī*, Ḥadīth: 3892]

Her lineage links up with Lāwī, the son of Allah’s Prophet Ya’qūb ibn Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and then later on again with the Prophet of Allah, Hārūn عليه السلام.

The Prophet ﷺ praised her truthfulness when she said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in his final sickness:

Verily by the oath of Allah, O Prophet of Allah, I wish for myself to be in your place and for you to be in mine (i.e. in good health). [*Muṣannaf ‘Abd al-Razzāq*, vol. 11 pg. 431, Ḥadīth: 20922; *Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa’d*, vol. 8 pg. 128.]

Sayyidah Maymūnah bint al-Ḥārith

Sayyidah Maymūnah رضى الله عنها was first married to Mas’ūd ibn ‘Amr ibn ‘Umayr al-Thaqafī during the days of ignorance, who separated from her. She then married Abū Raham ibn ‘Abd al-‘Ūzza but he passed away shortly thereafter. ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه—who was her *wakīl* (guardian)—married her to the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ married her at a place called Sarif which is near Makkah. She was the last woman whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ married. This marriage took place in the year 7 AH, during the ‘Umr al-Qaḍā’. It is reported from Ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The sisters who are (all) believers are: Maymūnah- the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, her sister Umm al-Faḍl bint al-Ḥārith [wife of ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه], her sister Asmā bint al-Ḥārith [wife of Ḥamzah رضى الله عنه], and Asmā’ bint ‘Umayy [wife of Ja’far رضى الله عنه]; they are all uterine sisters.” [*Mustadrak al-Hākim*, vol. 4 pg. 32-33; *Jāmi’ al-Ṣaghīr*, Ḥadīth 2763; *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, Ḥadīth: 1764.] ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها praised her with the words, “She was the most Allah-fearing from us and the best maintainer of family ties.” [*Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 4 pg. 34 ḥadīth: 6799; *al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8 pg. 138; *al-Iṣābah*, vol. 4 pg. 41.]

Every wife of the Prophet ﷺ passed away after him, except Sayyidah Khadījah and Sayyidah Zaynab bint Khuzaymah رضى الله عنها, as they both passed away during the blessed life of the Prophet ﷺ. All of them are buried in *Jannat al-Baqī* (a cemetery in Madīnah) except Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها who was buried in *al-Ḥajūn* in Makkah, and Sayyidah Maymūnah رضى الله عنها who was buried at a place near Banū Tamīm. The most preferred opinion amongst the scholars is that she is buried at the place where she married the Prophet ﷺ.

We have presented a small sketch of the noble traits of the Ummahāt al-Mu’minīn, which we will hold onto as a generous provision to keep us afloat amidst the tides of derision raised against them.

It is incumbent upon us, as well as our daughters and wives, to learn about them, then propagate it, adorning ourselves with those same virtues, and following in their footsteps. This will make our families of those who have the best of character and exemplary strength. In so doing, we will uphold the right of the Ummahāt al-Mu’minīn with regards to their reverence, honour, dignity, and greatness. And to honour the Prophet ﷺ means honouring his wives as well. May Allah grant us the ability to do so and unite us with these great personalities, who were the wives of the Prophet (saw) in this world and the next—our beloved mothers, the Mothers of the Believers.