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BEATING THE WIFE

CHAPTER 5

8:13 This was because they opposed Allah and His messenger. Ones who oppose Allah and His messenger will be severely punished by Allah.

- Men are superior to women.
 - Men can lightly beat their wives.
 - Mohammed hit one of his wives.
 - Sharia law supports beating the wife.
 - A wife should not be struck in the face.
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If the detailed rules of marital conduct are not followed by the wife, there is sacred force. Here we have the words of the Koran:

4:34 Allah has made men superior to women because men spend their wealth to support them. Therefore, virtuous women are obedient, and they are to guard their unseen parts as Allah has guarded them. As for women whom you fear will rebel, admonish them first, and then send them to a separate bed, and then beat them. But if they are obedient after that, then do nothing further; surely Allah is exalted and great!

When Mohammed gave his last sermon, he mentioned beating the wife:

1969 He also told them men had rights over their wives and women had rights over their husbands. The wives were never to commit adultery or act in a sexual manner toward others. If they did, they were to be put in separate rooms and *beaten lightly*. If they refrained from what was forbidden, they had the right to food and clothing. Men were to lay injunctions on women lightly for they were prisoners of men and had no control over their persons.

Beating the wife is sacred because both Allah and Mohammed sanction it. The Hadith is filled with examples that establish the Sharia law about how to go about beating the wife.

In this hadith, a wife has her face bruised from being hit by her husband and goes to see Mohammed for his judgment on a marital problem.

[B3,48,807;B7,63,186;B7,63,187;B7,63,190;B7,63,238;B7,72,684;B7,72,715;B8,73,107]

Rifa divorced his wife, who then married Abdur-Rahman. The lady came to Aisha, wife of Mohammed, wearing a green veil and complained to Aisha of her husband and showed her a green spot on her skin caused by beating. It was the habit of ladies to support each other, so when Mohammed came, Aisha said, "I have not seen any woman suffering as much as Muslim women. Look! Her skin is greener than her clothes!"

When Abdur-Rahman heard that his wife had gone to Mohammed, he came with his two sons by another wife. The wife in the green veil said, "By Allah! I have done no wrong to him but he is impotent and is as useless to me as this," holding and showing the fringe of her garment, Abdur-Rahman said, "By Allah, O Allah's Apostle! She has told a lie! I am very strong and can satisfy her but she is disobedient and wants to go back to Rifa." Mohammed said to her, "If that is your intention, then know that it is unlawful for you to remarry Rifa until you have consummated your marriage with Abdur-Rahman."

Then the Prophet saw two boys with Abdur-Rahman and asked (him), "Are these your sons?" After Abdur-Rahman replied that this was so, Mohammed said to the woman, "You claim that he is impotent? But by Allah, these boys resemble him as a crow resembles a crow."

Several things should be noticed. Aisha, the favorite wife of Mohammed, calls attention to the common mistreatment of Muslim wives by their husbands. Mohammed does not condemn the beating, nor even mention it. The wife may want a divorce, but before she can get it, she must have sex with the husband she wants to leave.

In the next hadith Mohammed does not condemn the fact that Abu Jahm beats his wives.

Muslim 009, 3527;3512;3526

...She said: Muawiya and Abul-Jahm were among those who had given me the proposal of marriage. Thereupon Allah's Apostle said: Muawiya is destitute and in poor condition and Abul-Jahm beats women, you should take Osama b. Zaid as your husband.

Not only did Abul Jahm beat women, this hadith shows that using a stick to beat the wife is not disapproved by Mohammed.

M009,3512

[...] She said: When my period of iddah was over, I mentioned to him that Muawiya and Jahm had sent proposals of marriage to me, whereupon Allah's Messenger said: As for Abu Jahm, he does

not put down his staff from his shoulder, and as for Muawiya, he is a poor man having no property; marry Osama. I objected to him, but he again said: marry Osama; so I married him. Allah blessed me and I was envied by others.

In the next hadith we have part of the code for beating. A woman may be beaten, but not on the face. This contradicts the earlier hadith where Mohammed did not condemn the husband bruising his wife's face.

Abu Dawud 11, 2137

Narrated Muawiyah al-Qushayri:

Muawiyah asked: Apostle of Allah, what is the right of the wife of one of us over him? He replied: That you should give her food when you eat, clothe her when you clothe yourself, do not strike her on the face, do not revile her or separate yourself from her except in the house.

At first Mohammed said that Muslims should not beat their wives.

Abu Dawud 11, 2138; 2139

Muawiyah said: Apostle of Allah, how should we approach our wives and how should we leave them? He replied: Approach your tilth (tilth is a plowed field, a term for the vagina) when or how you will, give her (your wife) food when you take food, clothe when you clothe yourself, do not revile her face, and do not beat her.

But the men complained about wives who were not submissive enough, and had to be put in their place. When the Muslim women came to his house to complain about their beating, he condemned them, not the husbands who beat them. Physical force is always an option in Islam.

Abu Dawud 11, 2141:

Mohammed said: Do not beat Allah's handmaidens, but when Umar came to Mohammed and said: Women have become emboldened towards their husbands, Mohammed gave permission to beat them. Then many women came round the family of Mohammed complaining against their husbands.

So Mohammed said: Many women have gone round Mohammed's family complaining against their husbands. They are not the best among you.

Here we have an example of Mohammed striking his favorite wife.

Muslim 004, 2127

...When it was my turn for Allah's Messenger to spend the night with me, he turned his side, put on his mantle and took off

his shoes and placed them near his feet, and spread the corner of his shawl on his bed and then lay down till he thought that I had gone to sleep. He took hold of his mantle slowly and put on the shoes slowly, and opened the door and went out and then closed it lightly.

I covered my head, put on my veil and tightened my waist wrapper, and then went out following his steps till he reached Baqi'. He stood there and he stood for a long time. He then lifted his hands three times, and then returned and I also returned. He hastened his steps and I also hastened my steps. He ran and I too ran. He came (to the house) and I also came (to the house). I, however, preceded him and I entered (the house), and as I lay down in the bed, he (the Holy Prophet) entered the (house), and said: Why is it, O Aisha, that you are out of breath? I said: There is nothing.

He said: Tell me or Allah would inform me. I said: Messenger of Allah, may my father and mother be ransom for you, and then I told him the whole story. He said: Was it the darkness of your shadow that I saw in front of me? I said: Yes. He struck me on the chest which caused me pain, and then said: Did you think that Allah and His Apostle would deal unjustly with you?...

Mohammed did not complain when Abu Bakr hit his daughter, Mohammed's wife.

[B5,57,21;B5,57,117;B6,60,131;B7,62,93;B7,72,770,B8,82,828;B6,60,132;B8,82,828;B1,7,330;B1,7,330]

Mohammed was on one of his journeys when Aisha lost her necklace, and so he stopped to look for it. The people who had stopped to look with Mohammed had no water, nor was there any water in this place. They complained to Abu Bakr (Aisha's father) that Aisha had caused them to stop in this place with no water. Abu Bakr came while Mohammed was sleeping with his head on Aisha's thigh, admonished her and struck her with his fist, but she did not move because she did not want to rouse Mohammed.

When Mohammed woke the next morning, Allah revealed the verse of purifying with dust. Later, they moved Aisha's camel and found her necklace beneath it.

Usaid said to Aisha, "May Allah reward you handsomely. Whenever you have a difficulty, Allah takes you out of it and brings with it a blessing for the Muslims."

This hadith determines Islamic social custom and family law about wife beating.

Abu Dawud 11, 2142

Mohammed said: A man will not be asked as to why he beat his wife.

This hadith equates camels, slaves and women.

Abu Dawud 11, 2155

Mohammed said: If one of you marries a woman or buys a slave, he should say: "O Allah, I ask You for the good in her, and in the disposition You have given her; I take refuge in You from the evil in her, and in the disposition You have given her." When he buys a camel, he should take hold of the top of its hump and say the same kind of thing.

More advice about slaves and women:

[B7,62,132]

The Prophet said, "None of you should flog his wife as he flogs a slave and then have sexual intercourse with her in the last part of the day."

Here we have another sacred example of beating the wife. It is not wrong to beat the woman, but compassion dictates making this beating symbolic. Job swore to beat his wife with one hundred blows. Later he softened, and, to fulfill his oath, he put one hundred small twigs in his hand and hit her once.

38:44 And We gave him back his family and doubled their number as an example of Our mercy and as a reminder for men of understanding. We said to him, "Take up in your hand a branch and strike her with it, and do not break your oath." Truly, We found him to be full of patience and constant. He was an excellent servant, because he constantly turned toward Us in repentance.

SHARIA LAW

The Hadith, the Sira and the Koran are all the basis of Islamic law, the Sharia. Here we see how Islamic law follows from the previous material.

DEALING WITH A REBELLIOUS WIFE¹⁾

m10.12 When a husband notices signs of rebelliousness in his wife whether in words as when she answers him coldly when she used to do so politely. or he asks her to come to bed and she refuses, contrary to her usual habit; or whether in acts, as when he finds her

1. Ahmad Ibn Naqib Al-Misri, *The Reliance of the Traveller, A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law* (Amana Publications, 1994).

averse to him when she was previously kind and cheerful), he warns her in words without keeping from her or hitting her, for it may be that she has an excuse.

The warning could be to tell her,

“Fear Allah concerning the rights you owe to me,”

or it could be to explain that rebelliousness nullifies his obligation to support her and give her a turn amongst other wives, or it could be to inform her,

“Your obeying me is religiously obligatory”.

If she commits rebelliousness, he keeps from sleeping (having sex) with her without words, and may hit her, but not in a way that injures her, meaning he may not bruise her, break bones, wound her, or cause blood to flow. It is unlawful to strike another’s face. He may hit her whether she is rebellious only once or whether more than once, though a weaker opinion holds that he may not hit her unless there is repeated rebelliousness.

To clarify this paragraph, we mention the following rulings:

(1) Both man and wife are obliged to treat each other kindly and graciously.

(2) It is not lawful for a wife to leave the house except by the permission of her husband, though she may do so without permission when there is a pressing necessity. Nor may a wife permit anyone to enter her husband’s home unless he agrees, even their unmarriageable kin. Nor may she be alone with a non-family-member male, under any circumstances.

(3) It is obligatory for a wife to obey her husband as is customary in allowing him full lawful sexual enjoyment of her person. It is obligatory for the husband to enable her to remain chaste and free of want for sex if he is able. It is not obligatory for the wife to serve her husband; if she does so, it is voluntary charity.

(4) If the wife does not fulfill one of the above mentioned obligations, she is termed “rebellious”, and the husband takes the following steps to correct matters:

(a) admonition and advice, by explaining the unlawfulness of rebellion, its harmful effect on married life, and by listening to her viewpoint on the matter;

(b) if admonition is ineffectual, he keeps from her by not sleeping in bed with her, by which both learn the degree to which they need each other;

(c) if keeping from her is ineffectual, it is permissible for him to hit her if he believes that hitting her will bring her back to the right path, though if he does not think so, it is not permissible. His hitting her may not be in a way that injures her, and is his last recourse to save the family;

Examples of rebelliousness are when a wife gives a cold answer or does not submit to sex when he asks. He should not hit her but tell her, "Fear Allah concerning the rights you owe to me,"

He can explain that rebelliousness means that he does not need to support her or it could be to inform her, "Your obeying me is a religious obligation."

If she commits rebelliousness, he may hit her but not in a way that injures her, meaning he may not bruise her, break bones, wound her, or cause blood to flow. It is unlawful to strike another's face. He may hit her whether she is rebellious only once or whether more than once.

THE PRACTICAL RESULTS

Here is a quote from a Muslim apostate about the practical state of Islamic marriage that results from the doctrine in this chapter. Every point about this perfect Islamic wife is based upon the eternal, perfect, universal doctrine of Islam.

A woman who is *baari* is like a pious slave. She honors her husband's family and feeds them without question or complaining. She never whines or makes demands of any kind. She is strong in service, but her head is bowed. If her husband is cruel, if he rapes her and then taunts her about it, if he decides to take another wife, or beats her, she lowers her gaze and hides her tears. And she works hard, faultlessly. She is a devoted, welcoming, well-trained work animal. This is baari.

If you are a Somali woman you must learn to tell yourself that Allah is just and all-knowing and will reward you in the Hereafter. Meanwhile, everyone who knows about your patience and endurance will applaud your father and mother on the excellence of your upbringing. Your brothers will be grateful to you for preserving their honor (ghira). They will boast to other families about your heroic

submission. And perhaps, eventually, your husband's family will appreciate your obedience, and your husband may one day treat you as a fellow human being.

If in the process of being baari you feel grief, humiliation, fatigue, or a sense of everlasting exploitation, you hide it. If you long for love and comfort, you pray in silence to Allah to make your husband more bearable. Prayer is your strength. Nomadic mothers must try to give their daughters this skill and strength called baari.²⁾

This is the Sunna of Mohammed

2 Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *Infidel*, Free Press-Simon and Shuster, NY, NY 10020, 2007, pg.12.