

## GLITTER OF THIS WORLD OR THE HEREAFTER

Allah said:

*"O Prophet (Muhammad)! Say to your wives: "If you desire the life of this world, and its glitter, - Then come! I will make a provision for you and set you free in a handsome manner (divorce). But if you desire Allah and His Messenger, and the home of the Hereafter, then verily, Allah has prepared for Al-Muhsinaat (good doers) amongst you an enormous reward."'" (Qur'an 33: 28, 29)*

Authentic Hadeeth narrations confirm that these two Verses were revealed after the Prophet secluded himself from his wives for an entire month. We also know that these Verses were revealed in the year 9 H.

As for the incident that prompted the revelation of these two verses, an account of it is related in Saheeh Muslim, in a Hadeeth that is related by Jaabir: One day, Abu Bakr went to the Prophet's apartment in order to ask for permission to SEE him. But upon arriving at his door, he found that a number of people were sitting in front of it, and he was told that not a single one of them had been given permission to enter. Abu Bakr, however, was given permission to enter; shortly thereafter, 'Umar came, and he too was given permission to enter.

Inside, the Prophet was sitting down, and his wives were gathered around him; they were extremely sad and reticent. 'Umar wanted to say something that would lighten the mood and make the Prophet laugh, and so he said,

*"O Messenger of Allah, if you had only seen Bint Khaarijah (her full name was Jameelah bint Thaabit, and she was 'Umar's wife; in this narration, 'Umar was ascribing her to her forefathers) when she asked me for spending money; I stood up, went to her, and poked her in the neck."*

Upon hearing 'Umar, the Messenger of Allah laughed and said,

*"As you can see, they are all around me, asking me for spending money."*

Abu Bakr then stood up, went to his daughter, 'Aishah and poked her in her neck; 'Umar then stood up and poked his daughter, Hafsah, in her neck. And both of them said to their daughters,

*"Are you asking the Messenger of Allah for that which he does not have?"* They responded,

*“By Allah! It is not true that we are asking the Messenger of Allah for that which he does not have!”*

The Messenger of Allah then secluded himself from them for a month or for twenty-nine days, upon the completion of which the above-mentioned Verses were revealed.

All of the Prophet’s homes were simply built and simply adorned; and though this was the reality of his homes, his wives were human beings, and had human desires and human aspirations for worldly things. When the Prophet first arrived in Al-Madeenah, apartments were built beside the Masjid, for him and his wives. These apartments were in no way like the houses and castles of kings and rulers; rather, they were the apartments of one who is interested not in this world, but in the Hereafter. Like the Masjid, the Prophet’s apartments were built from clay, mud, and stones; and the roofs were built from palm branches. The courtyard adjacent to the apartments was small, and the roof of the apartments was low, so low that a tall child or young man could touch the roof with his hand. Al-Hasan Al-Basree said,

*“I used to reach the first part of the roof of the Prophet's apartment with my hand!”*

And each apartment was equipped with two doors, an outer and an inner door; the inner door entered upon the Masjid, thus giving the Prophet easy access to the Masjid for prayer or for other matters! As for lighting, the Prophet did not even have lamps with which he could illuminate his apartments during the night.

Imam Bukhaaree (may Allah have mercy on him) related that ‘Aishah said:

*“I would sleep in front of the Messenger of Allah, and my legs would be in the direction of his prayer, so that, when he would perform prostration, he would poke me with his fingers, and I would draw my legs together; and when he would stand up, I would stretch out my legs (again). And houses in those days did not have lamps in them!”*

The Prophet’s apartments were not carpeted; the floor was sand and perhaps was partially covered with a straw mat. No mattress separated his body from the ground when he slept, and it did not take long before the sand made marks in his

sides. Nor did his apartments have sofas or large cushions; in one of his apartments, he had a single cushion made of leather that was stuffed with fibers, and nothing else, which is why, when 'Adee ibn Haatim visited the Prophet, 'Adee sat down on the only cushion in the apartment, and the Prophet sat down on the ground.

The Prophet's life was harsh. Anas ibn Maalik said, *"I do not know of any occasion on which the Prophet even saw a soft loaf of bread (as opposed to a coarse loaf of bread) up until the time (he died); nor did he ever see a Sameet sheep (a sheep whose hair is removed with hot water and is then barbecued)!"*

And 'Aishah said that she witnessed three new moons in a row, during which time no oven was ignited in any of the Prophet's apartments.

'Urwah ibn Az-Zubair then asked her, *"Then what did you live on?"* She said, *"Dates and water."*

The Prophet's wives were thus accustomed to harsh and austere lifestyles. But then Allah granted important victories to the Muslims, the conquests of Khaibar and Makkah being two prominent examples.

The wives of the Prophet read Verses of the Qur'an that permitted people to enjoy Allah's Blessings in this world, as long as they did not waste or become extravagant; since others were starting to enjoy various worldly pleasures, the Prophet's wives wanted to partake in the prosperous times that the Muslims were enjoying. Allah said:

*"O Children of Adam! Take your adornment (by wearing your clean clothes), while praying and going round (the Tawaaf of) the Ka'bah, and eat and drink but waste not by extravagance, certainly He (Allah) likes not Al-Musrifoon (those who waste by extravagance)." (Qur'an 7: 31)*

In another Verse, Allah said:

*"Say (O Muhammad): "Who has forbidden the adoration with clothes given by Allah, which He has produced for His slaves, and At-Tayibaat [all kinds of Halaal (lawful) things] of food?" Say: "They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) exclusively for them (believers) on the Day of Resurrection (the*

*disbelievers will not share them). Thus We explain the Ayaat (Islamic laws) in detail for people who have knowledge.” (Qur'an 7: 32)*

And in yet another Verse, Allah said:

*“And let not your hand be tied (like a miser) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift), so that you become blameworthy and in severe poverty.” (Qur'an 17: 29)*

These Verses made it clear to the Prophet's wives that, as long as one was moderate and stayed within proper limits, one could, with a clear conscience, enjoy the lawful pleasures of this world. But these Verses were directed at the general population of Muslims; the Prophet was an exception, in that Allah ordered him to turn away from worldly things; for example, Allah admonished the Prophet in the Verse:

*“Look not with your eyes ambitiously at what We have bestowed on certain classes of them (the disbelievers), nor grieve over them. And lower your wings for the believers (be courteous to the fellow believers).” (Qur'an 15: 88)*

And in another Verse, Allah said:

*“And strain not your eyes in longing for the things We have given for enjoyment to various groups of them (polytheists and disbelievers), the splendour of the life of this world that We may test them thereby. But the provision (good reward in the Hereafter) of your Lord is better and more lasting.” (Qur'an 20: 131)*

It is because the Prophet was chosen to lead a more austere lifestyle than others that he gave his wives the option to choose between the life of this world, in which case he would divorce them, and between Allah, His Messenger, and the abode of the Hereafter.

At first, they had asked for an increase of wealth. But once this choice was given to them, none of them hesitated for even a single moment; rather, all of them said with a unified voice:

*“We want (i.e., we choose) Allah, His Messenger, and the abode of the Hereafter.”*

‘Aishah said:

*“When the Messenger of Allah was ordered to give his wives a choice, he began*

*with me and said,*

*'I am about to discuss a matter with you, and before you make a decision regarding it, you will not do wrong if you first ask your parents to order you (to do what is right).'*

*He knew that my parents would not order me to part from him. He then said (to me),*

*'Verily Allah, Who is exalted and deserving of all praise, said:*

*O Prophet (Muhammad)! Say to your wives: "If you desire the life of this world, and its glitter, - Then come! I will make a provision for you and set you free in a handsome manner (divorce). But if you desire Allah and His Messenger, and the home of the Hereafter, then verily, Allah has prepared for Al-Muhsinaat (good-doers) amongst you an enormous reward." (Qur'an 33: 28, 29)*

*'I said, 'Regarding what should I seek out the command of my parents (i.e., I have already made my decision). Verily, I want (i.e., I choose) Allah, His Messenger, and the abode of the Hereafter.'"*

Then the other wives of the Messenger of Allah did exactly as I did.

All of the Prophet's wives were being given a difficult choice; in the first of the two above-mentioned Verses, they were promised **'the life of this world and its glitter'** if they chose to dissolve their marriages to the Prophet. They all passed the test, refusing to choose the glitter of this world over Allah, His Messenger, and the abode of the Hereafter. They thus proved their sincerity, their truthfulness, and the strength of their faith. A striking aspect of the above-mentioned Verses is that Allah promised them not any specific or known reward, but an enormous reward; the size of it was not specified because of the human mind's inability to appreciate its sheer enormity.

The rightly-guided Khaleefahs learned a valuable lesson from this incident. The life of this world and its glitter are not meant for the person who is in charge of the entire Muslim nation. His rewards and enjoyment are saved for the Hereafter; in this world, he must strive tirelessly, both day and night, to look after the well-being of his people. Just as the Prophet turned away from the glitter of this world, the rightly-guided Khaleefahs did the same.