

‘Ā’ishah, the Prophet’s wife, narrated that

1

God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) was with her when she heard the voice of a man seeking permission to enter Ḥaḥṣah’s home. I said: “Messenger of God, there is a man seeking entry to your home”. God’s Messenger said: “I think he is so-and-so”, (mentioning Ḥaḥṣah’s uncle through breastfeeding).

2

‘Ā’ishah said: “Had such-and-such (mentioning her own uncle through breastfeeding) been alive, would he enter my home?” He said: “Yes, breastfeeding blocks marriages in the same way as birth”.⁽¹⁾

From the Qur’an

﴿Forbidden to you [in marriage] are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your aunts paternal and maternal, your brother’s daughters and your sister’s daughters, your mothers who have given suck to you, your suckling sisters...﴾ (4: 23)

The Narrator

‘Ā’ishah bint Abu Bakr ‘Abdullāh ibn Abu Quḥāfah ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Āmir. She belonged to the Taym branch of the tribe of Quraysh. She was given the appellation Umm ‘Abdullāh, referring to ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr who was her sister’s son. The Prophet (peace be upon him) married her in Makkah two years before his migration, but her wedding took place in Madinah in the month of Shawwāl in Year 2 AH. She was the only one of the Prophet’s wives who was a virgin at the time of her marriage, while all his other wives had previous marriages. She was one of the Prophet’s companions who narrated a large number of hadiths, in total 2,210 of them. She was a leading Islamic scholar and one of the best female scholars. According to authentic reports, she died in Madinah in Year 57 AH, 677 CE, and was buried at al-Baqī’ graveyard.

Summary

‘Ā’ishah, Mother of the Believers, heard a man seeking permission to enter the home of another of the Prophet’s wives, Ḥaḥṣah bint ‘Umar. When she mentioned this to the Prophet, he said that he thought the man to be Ḥaḥṣah’s uncle through breastfeeding. The Prophet told ‘Ā’ishah that breastfeeding blocks marriages in the same way as birth.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 2646; Muslim, 1444.



Message and Meaning

1

God's Messenger was with his wife, 'Ā'ishah, in her apartment when she heard a man seeking permission to visit Ḥafṣah, another of the Prophet's wives. 'Ā'ishah told the Prophet and he said that he thought the man was Ḥafṣah's uncle through breastfeeding, mentioning his name. What he said to 'Ā'ishah meant permissibility of that man's visit to Ḥafṣah. Had it been otherwise, the Prophet would have acted and stopped the man's entry.

2

When 'Ā'ishah heard this, she mentioned her own uncle through breastfeeding and asked the Prophet whether, had he been alive he could visit her when she was alone? In other words, would he be treated like her real paternal uncle? The Prophet told her that breastfeeding has the same effect as birth, with regard to blocking marriages.

'Ā'ishah narrates another hadith on this subject: 'Aflaḥ, Abu al-Qu'ays' brother, sought permission to enter my home, after the decree of screening was revealed. [Abu al-Qu'ays was 'Ā'ishah's father through breastfeeding.] 'Ā'ishah said: 'I thought that I must not admit Aflaḥ until I had obtained God's Messenger's permission. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'What stopped you permitting his entry? He is your paternal uncle'. I said: 'Messenger of God, it was not Abu al-Qu'ays who breastfed me, but his wife did'. The Prophet said: 'Admit him; he is your paternal uncle'.⁽¹⁾

It is unanimously agreed upon by scholars that breastfeeding blocks marriages in the same way as blood relations. Ḥamzah was the Prophet's uncle. His daughter was suggested to the Prophet to marry. He said: 'She is unlawful to me. Breastfeeding blocks marriages in the same way as family relations. She is the daughter of my suckling brother'.⁽²⁾

However, it is a condition that the breastfeeding should be done during the normal time of child breastfeeding, which is a maximum of two years. If a woman breastfeeds a child when her own child has reached two years, has been weaned and stopped feeding on the breast, this has no effect on marriage. (Note: this requires further clarification as at first sight it appears contradictory.) 'Ā'ishah narrated: 'God's Messenger (peace be upon him) entered my home when I had a man sitting. He said: "'Ā'ishah, who is this one?" I said: "He is my suckling brother". He said: "Be careful whom you consider your suckling brothers. Breastfeeding is what satisfies hunger"⁽³⁾

If a child takes a drop or two, this does not count. The child must have five full feeds, taking the woman's breast each time and sucks its fill, then leaves it at will. Such is the feed, even though it may be short.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 4796; Muslim, 1445.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 2645; Muslim, 1447.

3 Related by al-Bukhari, 2647; Muslim, 1455.

Implementation



It is not permissible for a wife to admit anyone into her home without her husband's permission. This is why 'Ā'ishah informed the Prophet that a man was seeking admittance into Ḥafṣah's home.



The Prophet's companions were the best of people apart from prophets. Yet it was forbidden for them to enter someone's home and be alone with a woman. This applies even more strictly to other people.



It is not permissible for a person to be too strict in religious matters, unless there is need. A man may not prevent his wife's *maḥram*, [i.e. a man who is unlawful to her to marry], to enter her home, shake hands with her, travel with her, etc. unless that person is suspect in regard to his faith and morality. The Prophet did not stop the man entering Ḥafṣah's, nor did he express any displeasure.



It is not permissible for a man to enter the room of a woman who is a close relative without permission, even if she is his sister or mother.



The Prophet's statements are primarily taken as addressed to all and intended for legislation, except such statements as are evidently applicable to him only or the addressee. When 'Ā'ishah heard his permission for Ḥafṣah's uncle to visit her, she thought that it might be especially given to Ḥafṣah. Therefore, she asked him about her own paternal uncle through breastfeeding. The Prophet told her that had he been alive, he would not have prevented him visiting her.



A man should take care of his family and ensure that they learn what they need of the rulings of their faith.



It is not permissible to take a complacent attitude in matters of breastfeeding, visits, privacy and companionship in travel, etc. Every Muslim must make sure and confirm the status. Not every breastfeeding blocks marriages. It must be within the normal period of child breastfeeding and that it consists of at least five feeds, giving the child some satisfaction. Hence, the Prophet said to 'Ā'ishah: 'Be careful whom you consider your suckling brothers'.

