121424 - What is meant by the idea that the wife’s rights over her husband include that he should feed her as he feeds himself and clothe her as he clothes himself

the question

Does the hadith “He [the husband] should feed her [his wife] as he feeds himself and clothe her as he clothes himself” mean that if he buys a garment for himself that costs 500 riyals, he must give her the same amount of money, or he must buy her a garment for the same price?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It was narrated from Hakim ibn Mu`awiyah al-Qushayri that his father said: I said: O Messenger of Allah, what is the right of the wife of one of us over him? He said: “That you should feed her as you feed yourself, and clothe her as you clothe yourself; you should not strike the face or disgrace her, and you should not shun her except in the house.” Narrated by Abu Dawud, 2142; he said: “you should not disgrace her” means saying “May Allah make you ugly.”

This hadith indicates that spending on her maintenance is obligatory and is one of the wife’s rights. What is required in terms of this spending is ensuring that the wife has sufficient food, drink and clothing. If the husband provides what is sufficient, then he does not have to do more than that, and in that case the husband does not have to buy her a garment every time he buys a garment for himself, or to give her money instead.

The guideline mentioned in the hadith, “feed her as you feed yourself” is meant to encourage the husband to spend on his wife’s maintenance as he spends on his own. It does not mean that every time the husband buys a garment for himself, he must buy of similar value for his wife.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What is meant is: do not only spend on clothing for yourself and not her, or spend on food for yourself and not her; rather she is your partner, and you must spend on her as you spend on yourself. In fact, many scholars say that if the man does not spend on his wife and she asks the judge to annul the marriage, then the judge has the right to do so, because the husband has fallen short in his obligatory duty towards her.

End quote from *Sharh Riyadh as-Salihin*, 3/131.

See also the answer to question no. 103422.

And Allah knows best.