4601 - She argues defiantly with her husband in discussions on fiqh

the question

A wife is constantly arguing with her husband about matters of the deen for which there are 2 legal opinions. This is upsetting the husband and could break up the marriage.
She says I can argue with you because the wives of the Prophet often used to challenge and argue with him. However, she is often too "up-front" and disrespectful.
What advice can you offer this couple, in particular the wife?
Please, answer this question as this is turning into a bad situation between the spouses.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The advice we give to these two spouses is that they are both creatures who should submit themselves to the laws of Allaah, because this is where happiness lies. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“… And they (women) have rights (over their husbands as regards living expenses, etc.) similar (to those of their husbands) over them (as regards obedience and respect, etc.) to what is reasonable…” [al-Baqarah 2:228]

So both spouses must treat the other kindly. Marriage is based on love, not on defiance or provocation, because these usually occur between enemies, and if they happen between people who love one another, they usually cause hatred and do the couple no good. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy…” [al-Room 30:21]

So the husband should debate with his wife in a gentle manner, and approach her with the

intention of winning her over, not of imposing his views. He should give her room for polite debate, and he should realize that it is not right for him to impose any view on her in a matter of fiqh that concerns her alone. He has nothing to do with it if she is convinced of a different scholar's opinion, and she is permitted to follow that scholar. The wife must be aware that the husband's rights are great, that obeying him is obligatory and that pleasing him is part of pleasing Allaah. 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn 'Awf said: "The Messenger of Allaah SAWS (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'If a woman prays her five (daily prayers), fasts her month (Ramadaan), guards her modesty and obeys her husband, it will be said to her, "Enter Paradise through whichever gate of Paradise you wish."'"

(Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 1573; Saheeh al-Jaami', 660). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) also said, "If I were to command anyone to prostrate to anything other than Allaah, I would have commanded women to prostrate to their husbands. By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, no woman will fulfil her duty towards her Lord unless she fulfils her duty towards her husband, and if he asks her for herself when she is sitting on a saddle, she should not refuse him." The phrase "he asks her for herself" refers to the husband asking for intercourse, and the phrase "on a saddle" refers to the saddle used for riding a camel. The hadeeth is urging women to obey their husbands and if they cannot refuse them when they are in this situation (i.e., about to ride off on a camel) then how can they refuse them in other cases? (Hadeeth reported by Ibn Maajah, 1843; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 5239, 5295). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "It is not right for any human being to prostrate to another; if it were right for one human being to prostrate to another, I would have commanded women to prostrate to their husbands because of the great rights that they have over them. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, if a man were covered from head to foot with weeping sores oozing pus, and his wife were to come to him and lick his sores (to clean them), this would not fulfil the rights he has over her.'" (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 12153; Saheeh al-Jaami', 7725).

If the wife obeys her husband and treats him well for the sake of Allaah, she will earn a great reward with Allaah. By the same token, the man has to be patient with her, treat her well, win her over and teach her what his shar'i rights over her are.

With regard to her comment that the wives of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to argue with him a lot and challenge him, this is not right at all. They are far above such things. They asked him to spend on them at a time when he had nothing, and he did not have to spend more than Allaah had bestowed upon him. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Let the rich man spend according to his means, and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allaah has given him…”[al-Talaaq 65:7]

After this, they never repeated their demands again, may Allaah be pleased with them.

One time, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) entered upon one of his wives and she gave him honey to drink. Two other wives got jealous because he stayed there for a long time, just to drink the honey. So they agreed that each of them would say that she could smell an unpleasant odour and would comment that the bees that had produced this honey had eaten from a tree that was not good. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was always anxious about having an unpleasant odour. Allaah rebuked them when He said (interpretation of the meaning):

“If you two (wives of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), namely ‘Aa’ishah and Hafsah) turn in repentance to Allaah, (it will be better for you), your hearts are indeed so inclined (to oppose what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) likes), but if you help one another against him (Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)), then verily, Allaah is his Mawla (Lord, or Master, or Protector, etc.), and Jibreel, and the righteous among the believers, - and furthermore, the angels – are his helpers.” [al-Tahreem 66:4]

So they never did such a thing again, may Allaah be pleased with them. So how can this woman forget about the good deeds of the Mothers of the Believers and their good treatment of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), which are so well known, and fail to follow their example in this, then try to use as evidence the mistakes which some of them made, which were corrected by Allaah, and which they never did again?

May Allaah help you both to do that which He loves and which pleases Him, and may He reconcile between you.