10035 - He is married to two wives and he does not work; should he divorce one of them?

the question

My husband has two wives and no job should he divorce the first wife or the second?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

A man’s provision is written for him, and the provision of his family is written and decreed. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And no moving (living) creature is there on earth but its provision is due from Allaah. And He knows its dwelling place and its deposit (in the uterus or grave). All is in a Clear Book (Al-Laah Al-Mahfooz — the Book of Decrees with Allaah).

[Hood 11:6]

Divorcing a wife will not increase one’s provision or make things easier. Marriage and maintaining family stability is what brings blessings and provision. Hence Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And marry those among you who are single (i.e. a man who has no wife and the woman who has no husband) and (also marry) the Saalihoon (pious, fit and capable ones) of your (male) slaves and maid-servants (female slaves). If they be poor, Allaah will enrich them out of His Bounty. And Allaah is All-Sufficient for His creatures’ needs, All-Knowing (about the state of the people)”

[al-Noor 24:32]

This aayah indicates that marriage is a means of getting provision.

Moreover, Allaah commands men to spend on their families, and commands those whose provision is restricted to spend from what Allaah has given them, as much as they are able. He did not command them to get divorced; on the contrary He said that after hardship would come ease, and after hard times would come times of plenty. 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. Allaah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. Allaah will grant after hardship, ease”

[al-Talaaq 65:7]

Our advice is that the husband should not divorce any of his wives, and that he should put his trust in Allaah, be patient, and strive to earn provision. He should not be lazy or complacent. He has to put his trust in Allaah in the true sense. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “If you put your trust in Allaah in the true sense, He will grant your provision as He grants to the birds, who go out in the morning hungry and come back full.” (Narrated by Ahmad, Ibn Maajah and al-Tirmidhi).

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “What is meant by putting one’s trust in Allaah (tawakkul) is believing in what is implied by this aayah (interpretation of the meaning):

“And no moving (living) creature is there on earth but its provision is due from Allaah”

[Hood 11:6]

It does not mean giving up striving and relying on what one may get from one’s fellow-creatures, because doing that may lead to the opposite of what comes from tawakkul. Ahmad was asked about a man who sat in his house or in the mosque and said, “I will not do anything until my rizq comes to me.” He said, “This is a man who has no knowledge. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ‘Allaah has placed my provision under the shadow of my spear,’ and he said: ‘If you to put your trust in Allaah in the true sense, He will grant your provision as He grants to the birds, who go out in the morning hungry and come back full.’” He mentioned that they go

out and about seeking their provision. He said: “and the Sahaabah used to go out and engage in trade and tend to their date-palm trees, and they are the example to be followed.”

Wives should help their husbands. They should pay attention to his situation and abilities, and they should not expect more of him than he is able to give. If (these two wives) are able to work in suitable jobs and help their husband in spending, without transgressing the limits set by sharee’ah and without neglecting the needs of the house and children, then they will have the reward for that. It was stated in the hadeeth that a woman came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and said, “O Messenger of Allaah, I am a woman who has a skilled craft, and I sell things from that. I, my son and my husband have no other source of income, and they have kept me from giving in charity. I cannot give anything in charity; will I have any reward from what I spend (on them)? The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to her, “Spend on them and you will a reward so long as you spend on them.” (Narrated by Ahmad, no. 15504). According to a report narrated by al-Bukhaari, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “She will have two rewards: the reward for (upholding) family ties and the reward for giving in charity.”

We ask Allaah to make us independent and free of need, and Allaah knows best. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad and all his family and companions, and grant them peace.