



151353 - The hadith about the husband's rights over his wife which says that if he had an ulcer and she licked it, she would not fulfil his rights over her

the question

I want to ask how sound the following reports are:

“It is not appropriate for any human being to prostrate to another human, but if it were appropriate for any human being to prostrate to another human, I would have instructed the wife to prostrate to her husband, because of the magnitude of the rights he has over her... If he had from his feet to the top of his head an ulcer flowing with pus, and she came and licked it, she would not have given him his rights.”

A man brought his daughter to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and said: This daughter of mine refuses to get married. [The Prophet] (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to her: Obey your father. She said: By the One Who sent you with the truth, I shall not get married until you tell me what the husband's right over his wife is. He said: “The husband's right over his wife is that if he had an ulcer and she licked it, or his nose was running with pus and blood, and she swallowed it, she would not have fulfilled his right.” She said: By the One Who sent you with the truth, I will never get married. He (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Do not give them [daughters] in marriage except with their permission.”

Are the words “if he had an ulcer and she licked it, or his nose was running with pus and blood, and she swallowed it, she would not have given him his right” to be understood according to the apparent meaning, which suggests that it is permissible to lick pus and swallow it, or is it is a metaphor to highlight the great status of the husband? Is there anything in this hadith that contradicts the view that pus is impure (najis)? May Allah reward you with good.



Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Regarding the first hadith:

It was narrated that Anas ibn Malik said:

There was a household among the Ansar who had a camel which they used to bring water. The camel became difficult to handle and would not let them load anything on its back. The Ansar came to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and said: We have a camel that we use to bring water, and it has become difficult to handle and will not let us load anything on its back, and our crops and palm trees have become thirsty.

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to his companions: "Let's go." They went and entered the garden where the camel was. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) walked towards it, and the Ansar said: O Prophet of Allah, it has become like a vicious dog, and we fear that it will attack you. He said: "It cannot harm me." When the camel saw the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), it came towards him, then prostrated before him. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) took hold of its forelock, and it went with him with great humility, until he took it to the place where it should continue its work.

His companions said to him: O Messenger of Allah, this animal which has no understanding prostrated to you; we have understanding, so it is more appropriate that we should prostrate to you.

He said: "It is not appropriate for any human being to prostrate to another human, but if it were appropriate for any human being to prostrate to another human, I would have instructed the wife to prostrate to her husband, because of the magnitude of the rights he has over her. By the One in



Whose hand is my soul, if he had from his feet to the top of his head an ulcer flowing with pus, and she came and licked it, she would not have fulfilled his rights.”

It was narrated by Imam Ahmad in *Al-Musnad*, 20/65; ad-Diya' in *Al-Mukhtarah*, 5/265; Ibn Abid-Dunya in *Al-`Iyal*, no.527; an-Nasa'i in *As-Sunan al-Kubra*, 5/363; al-Bazzar in *Al-Musnad*, no. 8634; and Abu Nu`aym al-Asbahani in *Dala'il an-Nubuwwah*, no. 277.

All of them narrated it via Khalaf ibn Khalifah, from Hafs the nephew of Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him), from his paternal uncle Anas ibn Malik.

We say: as for Hafs the nephew of Anas ibn Malik, Abu Hatim said concerning him: His narration is sound. Ad-Daraqutni said: He is trustworthy. See: *Tahdhib at-Tahdhib*, 2/362.

As for Khalaf ibn Khalifah ibn Sa`id al-Kufi (d. 181 AH), he was born in 91 or 92 AH.

Ibn Ma`in and an-Nasa'i said regarding him: There is nothing wrong with him. Abu Hatim said: He is honest. Abu Ahmad ibn `Adiy said: I think there is nothing wrong with him, but I would not say that he did not make mistakes in some of his reports, yet he was described as becoming confused towards the end of his life.

`Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal narrated that his father said: I saw Khalaf ibn Khalifah when he was old; someone was holding his hand, and when he withdrew his hand, he screamed, because of old age. Someone said to him: O Abu Ahmad, Muharib ibn Dithar narrated to you... – And he quoted the hadith. He [Khalaf] said something unclear in a low voice that I could not understand, so I left him and did not write down anything from him.

Ibn Shahin said: `Uthman ibn Abi Shaybah said: He was honest and trustworthy, but he became senile, so his narration became jumbled.

Ibn Sa`d said: He became paralysed on one side of his body before he died, to the point that he became weak, and he changed and became confused.

Al-Qarrab narrated that from Ibrahim ibn Abil-`Abbas, that he [Khalaf] became confused. This was



also narrated by Maslamah al-Andalusi, even though he said that he was trustworthy, and he said: Whoever heard from him before he changed, his narration is sound.

For that reason, the commentators on the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal said:

[His hadith] is authentic because of corroborating evidence, apart from the words “By the One in Whose hand is my soul, if he had from his feet...” These words are narrated only by Husayn al-Marrudhi from Khalaf ibn Khalifah, and at that time [the time when Husayn al-Marrudhi met him], Khalaf had become confused, before he died.

End quote from *Musnad Ahmad*, Mu’sasat ar-Risalah edition, 20/65.

The second hadith:

It was narrated from Abu Sa`id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said:

A man brought a daughter of his to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and said: This is my daughter; she refuses to get married. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to her: “Obey your father.” She said: By the One Who sent you with the truth, I shall not get married until you tell me what the husband’s right over his wife is.

He said: “The husband’s right over his wife is that if he had an ulcer and she licked it, she would not have fulfilled his right.”

Some narrators added the words “or his nose was running with pus and blood, and she swallowed it, she would not have fulfilled his right.”

She said: By the One Who sent you with the truth, I will never get married. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Do not give them [daughters] in marriage except with their permission.”

Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in *Al-Musannaf*, 3/556; an-Nasa’i in *As-Sunan al-Kubra*, 3/283; al-Bazzar in *Kashf al-Astar*, no. 1465; Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih*, 9/473; al-Hakim in *Al-Mustadrak*, 2/205; al-Bayhaqi in *As-Sunan al-Kubra*, 7/291.



All of them narrated it via Ja`far ibn `Awn, who said: Rabi`ah ibn `Uthman told me, from Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Hibban, from Nahar al-`Abdi, from Abu Sa`id.

The isnad of the hadith is not one that could be attached to such a text, in addition to the text having some odd content.

Regarding Ja`far ibn `Awn, Ahmad said: There is nothing wrong with him. Abu Hatim said: He is trustworthy.

As for Rabi`ah ibn `Uthman, Yahya ibn Ma`in and an-Nasa'i regarded him as trustworthy, but Abu Hatim said about him: His hadith is odd (munkar).

As for Nahar al-`Abdi, an-Nasa'i said regarding him when he narrated this hadith here: He is Madani [from Madinah]; there is nothing wrong with him.

Hence when al-Hakim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is a hadith of which the isnad is sound, although they [al-Bukhari and Muslim] did not narrate it,

Adh-Dhahabi commented in his *Talkhis*:

Rather it is odd (munkar). Abu Hatim said: Rabi`ah narrates odd hadiths. End quote.

Shaykh `Abdullah al-Judayyi` said in his book *Tahrir `Ulum al-Hadith* (2/757), when discussing the signs which early narrators of hadith regarded as being indicative of problems:

What could be indicative of the oddness of a hadith is when the critic finds something weird and off-putting in the report, and the Revelation and the Prophet's words are far above using words of such a nature. What is meant is when such a feeling arises in one who is very familiar with the vocabulary and meanings discussed in the Prophet's words, to the extent that when uttering the Prophet's words it is as if he is tasting the saliva of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) from these words. Such a scholar may come across some reports which, when he repeats the words, he feels bitterness – or some bitterness – in his mouth, so he feels some



reluctance in his heart to attribute such a report to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). These feelings are a sign that there must be a problem with this report, and that he must study the matter further in order to identify the problem.

We do not mean that the critic should refer only to his whims or moods when deciding to accept or reject a hadith, because his own personal view may be wrong, no matter how fair the critic is and how much he fears his Lord, for no one can be completely safe from whims and desires.

What I found to be a good example of what I have mentioned above is a hadith with which I felt uncomfortable for a long time, until I identified the problem with it and became very certain about it. It is the hadith of Abu Sa`id al-Khudri...

Then he quoted the hadith mentioned above, then he said:

This hadith, when speaking of the rights that the husband has over his wife, uses these off-putting and objectionable phrases. This is not something that one would expect to find in the words of the most dignified of Allah's creation (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who was granted wisdom, eloquence and concise speech. Allah explained in His Book, and His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who was of an exalted character, explained in his Sunnah, the rights and duties of spouses in the most clear and beautiful of words, all of which is in harmony with the words of our Lord, may He be Glorified and Exalted: {And due to them [i.e., the wives] is similar to what is expected of them} [al-Baqarah 2:228].

As for the problem with the hadith, it is not only that the phrases used are off-putting. Rather the problem is that this hadith was narrated by Ja`far ibn `Awn, who said: Rabi`ah ibn `Uthman told me, from Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Hibban, from Nahar al-`Abdi, from Abu Sa`id. Al-Bazzar said: We do not know of it being narrated with any isnad other than this, and no one narrated it from Rabi`ah except Ja`far.

Al-Hakim said:

It is a hadith with a sound (sahih) isnad. Adh-Dhahabi commented on that by expressing



reservations about the character of Rabi`ah.

I was deceived for a while by the fact that Muslim narrated from this Rabi`ah in his *Sahih* the hadith about "The strong believer," which Rabi`ah narrated from Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Hibban. Therefore I trusted him on the basis of this hadith.

But actually the fact that Muslim narrated a hadith from that man does not mean that we can trust all of his hadiths, for Muslim may have selected a hadith from someone who was subject to scholarly criticism, although he was originally trustworthy, so he narrated from him hadiths concerning which it became clear to him that they were known to other narrators.

As for this hadith, the issue with it is what al-Bazzar mentioned, that it is narrated only by Ja`far from Rabi`ah, and no one else narrated it. Yahya ibn Ma`in and Muhammad ibn Sa`d said, regarding this Rabi`ah: He is trustworthy. An-Nasa'i said: There is nothing wrong with him. However, Abu Zur`ah ar-Razi said: He is more likely to be honest, but he is not very reliable. Abu Hatim ar-Razi said: He narrates odd hadiths, but his hadiths may be written down.

I say: When there is criticism of a narration, if the reason for it is identified and it becomes clear, then that is to be given precedence over the view that he is of good character, as I have explained this previously in this book. So at best we may say of this man that his hadith is acceptable, provided that he is not the only one who narrated it and no one else, and he narrates what others narrate, or there is a reference to this hadith through a different isnad that agrees with it.

That is not the case with this hadith. End quote.

Conclusion:

There are some reservations regarding the sentence mentioned, which is what the questioner has a problem with in the two reports quoted. What is most likely to be the case is that it is weak and not proven.

As for emphasising the rights of the husband over his wife, and what is mentioned in the hadith that this could reach the point of her prostrating to him, if it were valid for any human being to



prostrate to another human, is proven in the hadith which was narrated by a number of the authors of the *Sunans* from a number of the Sahabah, including Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "If I were to instruct anyone to prostrate to anyone else, I would have instructed the wife to prostrate to her husband."

Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, 1159; he said: Regarding this matter, it was narrated from Mu`adh ibn Jabal, Suraqah ibn Malik ibn Ju`sham, `A'ishah, Ibn `Abbas, `Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa, Talq ibn `Ali, Umm Salamah, Anas and Ibn `Umar. Abu `Isa said: the hadith of Abu Hurayrah is a hasan gharib hadith with this isnad, which was narrated by Muhammad ibn `Amr from Abu Salamah from Abu Hurayrah.

Al-Haythami (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Its isnad is sound (hasan).

End quote from *Majma` az-Zawa'id*, 9/10. Al-Albani classed it as sound (sahih) in *Irwa' al-Ghalil*, 7/54.

See also the answer to question no. [10680](#).

And Allah knows best.