164216 - Did the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) ever hit his wife ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her)?

the question

In Saheeh Muslim, in vol. 4, hadith no. 2127 it is narrated from the hadith of Muhammad ibn Qays that ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) stated that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) gave her a painful shove on the chest, then he said, “Do you think that Allah and His Messenger would be unjust to you?” As far as I know, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) never raised his hand against anyone to hit him, so can you explain to me the reason why the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) hit ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), as mentioned in this hadith? There are a lot of people who hate Islam and use this hadith to cast aspersions upon the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The hadith mentioned in the question is that which was narrated from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), who said:

When it was my night when the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was with me, he came in and took off his cloak, took off his shoes and put them by his feet, spread the edge of his waist wrapper on his bed and lay down. He waited until he thought that I had gone to sleep, then he picked up his cloak slowly, put on his shoes slowly, opened the door slowly, and went out, then he closed it slowly. I put my chemise over my head and veiled myself, and wrapped my waist wrapper around me, then I set out following him, until he reached al-Baqee‘ where he stood for a long time, then he raised his hands three times. Then he set off, so I set off, then he hastened, so I hastened, then he jogged, so I jogged, then he ran so I ran, then I reached home before him and went in. No sooner had I laid down but he came in and said: “What is the matter, O

‘Aa’ishah? Why are you out of breath?” I said: It is nothing. He said: “Either you tell me or the Subtle One, the All-Aware will tell me.” I said: O Messenger of Allah, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you! And I told him. He said: “So you were the person that I saw in front of me?” I said: Yes. He gave me a painful shove on the chest, then he said: “Did you think that Allah and His Messenger would be unjust to you?” She said: Whatever the people conceal, Allah knows it; yes. He said: “Jibreel came to me when you saw. He called me but he concealed it from you, and I answered him but I concealed it from you. He would not enter upon you when you were not fully dressed. I thought that you had gone to sleep and I did not want to wake you up, and I was afraid that you might be frightened. He said: “Your Lord is commanding you to go to the people of al-Baqee’ and pray for forgiveness for them.” I said: What should I say to them, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “Say: Peace be upon the people of these abodes, believers and Muslims. May Allah have mercy on those of us who have gone on before and those who come later, and we will – if Allah wills – join you soon.”

Narrated by Muslim, 974

The issue mentioned in the question may be explained from several angles:

Firstly:

The words of ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), “he gave me a painful shove in the chest” indicate that what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did was merely a shove, i.e., he pushed her or poked her in the chest; this does not reach the level of real hitting that is intended to cause pain and to humiliate. In fact it is stated in Lisaan al-‘Arab (3/393) that one of the meanings of the word lahd (translated here as shove) is poke. In Taaj al-‘Aroos (9/145) it says that one of the meanings of the word lahd is to apply pressure.

All of these meanings indicate that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not hit her in the sense meant by those who want to cast aspersions upon him; rather he poked her or pushed her in the chest in such a way that she felt pain, but it was mild and unintended pain; rather the purpose behind it was to point out something and teach.

Secondly:

If the reader reflects on this hadith he will realise that it is one of the proofs of the greatness of the Prophet's attitude. A man may live with his wife for many years, and she may do many things because of the jealousy that is an inherent part of women's character, but he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is not known to have ever caused her harm in word or deed, except for what is mentioned in this hadith, despite the large number of narrators who transmitted all the details of his life (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). This is indicative of his perfect character (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

As for those haters who seek to cast aspersions upon him, they wish that they could find any suggestion that he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) hit his wife in such a way that it caused pain, or at least that he hit her in a way that hurt her, by way of rebuking and humiliation. But they failed to do so. The most that is mentioned in this hadith is that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: He gave me a painful shove in the chest. The one who wants to hit and humiliate someone will not limit it to a shove in the chest; rather he will focus his energies on the sides of the body or the face, and have a humiliating impact on the mind of the one whom he hits. We do not see anything of that nature in the hadith of 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her).

Thirdly:

This hadith is indicative of the perfect character of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and of his compassion and tenderheartedness, because he did not rebuke or strike or tell off; rather he chided her gently with the aim of teaching 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) and the ummah after her. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) do not treat anyone unjustly, and it is not permissible for anyone to think negatively of Allah or His Messenger. Rather what is required of others is to think positively of Allah and to accept whatever Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, decrees. That "shove" was one of the means of teaching and highlighting a matter of great importance that it is not appropriate to forget or neglect, no matter how great her jealousy concerning the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and her love for him. It is not appropriate for it to be

thought that the Prophet of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would wrong any of his wives for the sake of another, Allah forbid.

Fourthly:

Another indication that this “shove” was not by way of beating and causing pain; rather it was by way of teaching and pointing out something, is the rest of the conversation between the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). It was a peaceful and beneficial discussion in which the compassion of the greatest teacher (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was manifested, as he explained to her the reason why he had gone out of the house at that late hour. He (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had opened the door quietly and left the house without a sound so as not to disturb her sleep. Such an explanation could not stem from anger or the aim of causing pain; rather it came from a compassionate, kind and noble husband who respected his wife and explained to her, telling her the details of what had happened with him, so as to share his story with her. Thus he instilled in her heart a sense of confidence and trust in her honest and sincere husband.

She said: Whatever the people conceal, Allah knows it; yes. He said: “Jibreel came to me when you saw. He called me but he concealed it from you, and I answered him but I concealed it from you. He would not enter upon you when you were not fully dressed. I thought that you had gone to sleep and I did not want to wake you up, and I was afraid that you might be frightened. He said: “Your Lord is commanding you to go to the people of al-Baqee’ and pray for forgiveness for them.” I said: What should I say to them, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “Say: Peace be upon the people of these abodes, believers and Muslims. May Allah have mercy on those of us who have gone on before and those who come later, and we will – if Allah wills – join you soon.”

Let the one who honestly and sincerely seeks the truth reflect on the story of a husband to whom an important matter came when he was sleeping in his wife’s bed at night. He wanted to go out and leave her, but he did not want to wake her up or disturb her sleep; he also did not want her to wake up and feel lonely, anxious and afraid that she had suddenly lost her husband who had been by her side.

Fifthly:

If we were to quote all the hadiths that highlight the forbearance of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with his wives, it would take a long time. He was forbearing and compassionate in situations where an ordinary husband might lose his cool. But the one who had this great character (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was patient and forbearing; indeed he refrained from doing anything that could upset his wife.

Another example of that is seen in the report narrated by Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her), which says that she brought some food in a dish of hers to the Messenger of Allaah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon her) and his companions, then ‘Aa’ishah came, wrapped up in a garment, with a stone pestle and broke the dish. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) gathered the broken pieces of the dish and said: “Eat; your mother got jealous,” twice. Then the Messenger of Allaah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) took the dish of ‘Aa’ishah and sent it to Umm Salamah and he gave the dish of Umm Salamah to ‘Aa’ishah

Narrated by an-Nasaa’i in as-Sunan, 3956; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh an-Nasaa’i

It was narrated that Nu‘maan ibn Basheer (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

Abu Bakr came and asked permission to enter upon the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and he heard ‘Aa’ishah raising her voice to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). He gave him permission to enter, so he entered and said: O daughter of Umm Roomaan! – and he grabbed her – do you raise your voice to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)? The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) separated them, and when Abu Bakr left, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) started saying to her, to make her feel happy: “Do you not see how I intervened between the man and you?”

He said: Then Abu Bakr came and asked for permission to enter upon him, and he found him laughing with her. Permission was given to him, and he entered, and Abu Bakr said to him: O Messenger of Allah, make me a partner in your peace as you made me a partner in your war.

Narrated by Ahmad in al-Musnad, 30/341-342. The commentators said: Its isnaad is saheeh according to the conditions of Muslim.

So let those haters reflect on how great the compassion of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was towards his wife ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), and how much he loved her, even in difficult circumstances in front of his guests before whom she broke the dish of food, and he looked for an excuse for her, saying: “your mother got jealous.”

Isn’t jealousy the same factor that motivated ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) to go out following the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that night, when she thought that he had gone out to see one of his other wives, but that did not cause him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to rebuke her by hitting her in a way so as to cause pain, as happens with many husbands.

Sixthly:

If this “shove” had been hitting in a real and violent sense, ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) would have wept like young women do, and she would have expressed her pain and objection to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). But she did not do that; rather she continued the conversation with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and showed politeness by asking about the dhikr that is recommended when visiting graves. This indicates that the “shove” was no more than a gesture aimed at alerting and teaching, and that ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) did not feel the slightest sense of hurt or offence that these haters are looking for to use against our noble Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Seventhly:

Moreover we say: if a husband hits his wife – if it is gentle and not by way of humiliation, and there is an urgent reason for doing so – this is something permissible that was permitted by the Holy Qur’an, in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands), and guard in the husbands absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husbands property, etc.). As to those women on whose part you see ill conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful), but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). Surely, Allah is Ever Most High, Most Great”

[an-Nisa’ 4:34].

‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) made a mistake by going out of her house without the permission of her husband (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), but the reason why she did it was that she wanted to catch up with him, as she felt happy being close to him. But – whatever the case – it was a mistake. Nevertheless, the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not use the means of striking lightly that is permitted by the Holy Qur’an, although if he had done that there would have been nothing wrong with it. It would have been within his rights to punish for such a mistake, as the Prophet of Allah Moosa (peace be upon him) took hold of his brother’s head and pulled him towards him. Rather our noble Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used “poking” the chest accompanied by a reminder to fear Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. This is an example of his perfect character and attitude (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

And Allah knows best.