285726 - Is the wife obliged to obey her husband in every permissible matter?

the question

Is it permissible for the husband to prevent his wife from teaching Quran in her house to women only via social media, without giving any reason, even though that will not have any impact on her housework? If the wife disobeys the husband in that regard, is she sinning? Does the husband have the right to absolute obedience in everything, so long as he does not tell her to do something unlawful, even though if she does this thing, she will not be doing anything unlawful either?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is obligatory for the wife to obey her husband and acknowledge his rights over her, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “If I were to command any human to prostrate to another human, I would have commanded women to prostrate to their husbands, because of the rights that Allah granted to them over them.” Narrated by Abu Dawud, 2140; at-Tirmidhi, 1159; and Ibn Majah, 1853. Al-Albani classed it as sahih in *Sahih Abi Dawud*.

In *Al-Mawsu`at al-Fiqhiyyah* (41/313): The jurists are agreed that obedience to the husband is obligatory on the wife, because Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth} [An-Nisa’ 4:34]

{ And due to them [i.e., wives] is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But men [i.e., husbands] have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority} [Al-Baqarah 2:228].

The jurists are also agreed that the wife's duty to obey is subject to the stipulation that it should not involve any disobedience to Allah, may He be Exalted, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "There is no obedience to any created being if it involves disobedience towards the Creator." End quote.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: What is required of her is obedience to her husband so long as he does not tell her to commit any sinful action.

End quote from *Mukhtasar al-Fatawa al-Masriyyah*, p. 347.

II.

Is it obligatory for the wife to obey her husband with regard to everything permissible, whether he instructs her to do something or to refrain from doing something, or is this obedience restricted to issues pertaining to the fundamental duties of marriage and so on?

What appears to be the case, and Allah knows best, is that obedience to the husband is only binding on the wife, and she is sinning if she goes against that, when he instructs her to do something having to do with issues pertaining to the fundamental duties of marriage and so on, and she has no excuse not to do it; or he instructs her to do something of which the purpose is clear, whether it has to do with the fundamental duties of marriage or it has to do with matters of their household and daily lives.

As for that of which the purpose is not clear, she should show her willingness to comply so as to maintain a good relationship between the spouses, and to avoid creating troubles and resentment between them.

Ibn Nujaym (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Al-Bahr ar-Ra'iq* (5/77): The wife is not obliged to obey her husband in everything he tells her to do; rather that is required only with regard to issues pertaining to the fundamental duties of marriage and so on. End quote.

Ibn as-Salah said:

The husband does not have the right to prevent her from sewing, embroidering, spinning and so on in his house.

End quote from *Fatawa Ibn as-Salah*, 2/453. There is a similar comment in *Asna al-Matalib fi Sharh Rawd at-Talib*, 3/430.

Ibn ‘Abidin said: What we should make clear is that he has the right to prevent her from doing any work that would lead to her falling short in her duties towards him, or would result in harming him, or require her to leave the home.

As for work that does not affect him, he has no right to prevent her from doing such work, especially if it is during his absence from the home, because if the wife is left without work at home, that could lead to her whims and desires and the Shaytan giving her bad ideas, or could lead to her wasting time with other people and neighbours.

End quote from *Hashiyat Ibn `Abidin*, 3/603.

Similarly, Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The words “He has the right to prevent her from committing to work” may be understood as meaning that if she is hired to do some work, such as if she is a seamstress for example, and she starts to sew for people at home in return for payment, he has no right to prevent her from doing that, unless he sees that it is causing her to fall short in her duties towards him, in which case he has the right to stop her doing it.

So if a woman commits to work, he has the right to prevent her from doing that in all cases; even if she says: I want to get a job whilst you are out of the country, he has the right to prevent her.

But if she commits herself to work in her husband’s house, he does not have the right to stop her, unless it will lead to her falling short in her duties towards him, in which case he has the right to stop her.

End quote from *Ash-Sharh al-Mumti`*, 12/425.

So if we say that she has the right to work teaching people to memorise the Quran, even without the permission of her husband, so long as that will not lead to her going out of the house, or falling short in any of her household duties or duties to her husband, then that will need to be at times when her husband is not present, so that he will not think that she is being stubborn towards him.

But is that possible and realistic?

What appears to be the case is that the matter is not really the issue of sinning by going against his instructions. That is if we overlook the issue of sin and affirm that obeying him is not obligatory in this case, because it could lead to difficulties in managing the situation in an effective way so as to make sure it does not lead to trouble between her and her husband for the sake of such a matter.

Therefore, if it could cause trouble between you and your husband, we do not advise you to do that at all, for it is not wise to do things that could destroy your marriage or prompt your husband to become resentful, if that would make him angry, for the sake of your teaching people to memorise the Quran. Islam teaches us to seek that which serves a greater purpose, even if it is at the expense of something that serves a lesser purpose. The wise man does not build a palace and destroy a city!

Hence you should strive to reassure your husband and put his mind at rest, and seek the help of Allah, the Controller of the hearts.

And Allah knows best.