# 96464 - Detailed discussion about the verse “But you did hide in yourself (i.e. what Allaah has already made known to you that He will give her to you in marriage) that which Allaah will make manifest” [al-Ahzaab 33:37]

**the question**

Is it true that when the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) saw the wife of Zayd ibn Haarithah he liked her and he asked Zayd to divorce her so that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) could marry her? Please explain this story. I ask Allaah to forgive me and you. Thank you very much.

**Detailed answer**

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Introduction:

The status of Prophethood is a noble one. Allaah chose the Prophets over all others on the basis of knowledge. What is narrated in the books of isra’iliyyaat (reports from Jewish sources) and some books of tafseer – unfortunately – detracts from that noble status of the Prophets (blessings and peace of Allaah be upon them). One example of that is the story narrated from some of them which says that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) fell in love with Zaynab bint Jahsh, but he told her husband – Zayd ibn Haarithah – “Keep your wife,” even though he was concealing his love for her. It is not appropriate to the status of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to narrate such a story or attribute it to him (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)?

None of these reports that have been narrated in the books of Tafseer from any of the salaf is

saheeh (sound), but there are those who have been misled by these reports and have used them to explain the verses which speak of this issue.

Imam Ibn Katheer (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Ibn Jareer and Ibn Abi Naatim narrated reports from some of the salaf (may Allaah be pleased with them) which we would like to ignore completely, because they are not saheeh, so we will not quote them.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer (6/424).

There is a report from Anas ibn Maalik and ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with them both) which indicates how difficult these verses were for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Based on their deep knowledge, these two Sahaabah (may Allaah be pleased with them) stated that if the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) were to have concealed anything, he would have concealed this verse.

It was narrated that Anas said: Zayd ibn Haarithah came complaining, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Fear Allaah and keep your wife.” Anas said: If the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had concealed anything, he would have concealed this. He said: Zaynab used to boast to the other wives of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) saying: “Your families arranged your marriages but Allaah arranged my marriage from above the seven heavens.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (6984).

Muslim (177) narrated a report like that of Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her).

Secondly:

The verse, the reason for its revelation and a summary of its meaning:

Allaah said (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when you said to him (Zayd bin Haarithah رضى الله عنه the freed-slave of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) on whom Allaah has bestowed grace (by guiding him to Islam) and you (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم too) have done favour (by manumitting him): ‘Keep your wife to yourself, and fear Allaah.’ But you did hide in yourself (i.e. what Allaah has already made known to you that He will give her to you in marriage) that which Allaah will make manifest, you did fear the people (i.e., their saying that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم married the divorced wife of his manumitted slave) whereas Allaah had a better right that you should fear Him. So when Zayd had accomplished his desire from her (i.e. divorced her), We gave her to you in marriage, so that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers in respect of (the marriage of) the wives of their adopted sons when the latter have no desire to keep them (i.e. they have divorced them). And Allaah’s Command must be fulfilled”

[al-Ahzaab 33:37]

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmaan al-Sa’di (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The reason for revelation of these verses was that Allaah wanted to a prescribe a law for all believers, that adopted sons did not come under the same rulings as real sons, in any way, and that there was nothing wrong with those who had adopted them marrying their wives (after divorce).

This was one of the regular customs which could not be changed except by means of a major incident. So Allaah wanted this law to be introduced by the words and actions of His Messenger. When Allaah wills something, He creates a cause for it. Zayd ibn Haarithah was called Zayd ibn Muhammad. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had adopted him and he was called by that name until the verse “Call them (adopted sons) by (the names of) their fathers” [al-Ahzaab 33:5] was revealed, then he became known as Zayd ibn Haarithah.

He was married to Zaynab bint Jahsh, the daughter of the paternal aunt of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). It had occurred to the Messenger that if Zayd divorced her, he might marry her, and Allaah decreed that there should happen between her and

Zayd that which would cause Zayd ibn Haarithah to come and ask the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) for permission to divorce her.

Allaah said “And (remember) when you said to him (Zayd bin Haarithah رضى الله عنه __ the freed-slave of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) on whom Allaah has bestowed grace” i.e., by blessing him with Islam.

“and you (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم too) have done favour” i.e., by manumitting him. When he came to you to consult you about leaving her, you told him, advising him despite what you felt in your heart towards her: “Keep your wife to yourself”, i.e., do not leave her, and bear whatever you face from her with patience. “and fear Allaah” in all your affairs in general, and with regard to your wife in particular, for fearing Allaah encourages one to be patient.

“But you did hide in yourself  that which Allaah will make manifest”. What he was hiding was that if Zayd divorced her, he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) would marry her.

“you did fear the people” when you did not disclose what you were thinking, “whereas Allaah had a better right that you should fear Him”, because fearing Him brings all goodness and wards off all evil.

“So when Zayd had accomplished his desire from her” means, when he willingly turned away from her and separated from her, “We gave her to you in marriage” and We only did that for an important purpose, which is, “so that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers in respect of (the marriage of) the wives of their adopted sons” when they see that you married the (former) wife of Zayd ibn Haarithah, who had previously been named after you.

Tafseer al-Sa’di (p. 665, 666)

There is a great difference between the idea that what he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was concealing in his heart was love for Zaynab, and the fact that what was being concealed was his thinking of marrying her. It is for this reason that Zaynab (may Allaah be pleased with her) used to boast that the One Who had arranged her marriage was Allaah, may He be exalted, as

stated above, where we quoted the report concerning that from Saheeh al-Bukhaari. This supports the correct view and no other view is acceptable, that what he was concealing was the idea of marrying her, and that he was afraid of what the people would say about that.

Thirdly:

Detailed discussion about the verse

1 – Imam al-Qurtubi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

It was narrated from ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had received revelation from Allaah telling him that Zayd was going to divorce Zaynab and that he should marry her on the basis that Allaah was giving her to him in marriage. When Zayd complained to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about Zaynab’s attitude, and said that she did not obey him, and told him that he wanted to divorce her, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to him, by way of good manners and advice: “Fear Allaah in what you say and keep your wife”, but he knew that Zayd was going to divorce her and that he was going to marry her, and this is what he was concealing. He did not intend to tell him to divorce her, because he knew that he was going to marry her, The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was afraid of what the people would say about him if he were to marry Zaynab after Zayd, who was his freed slave, if he told him to divorce her. But Allaah rebuked him for that fear of what the people would say about something that Allaah had permitted to him and for telling him to keep her even though he knew that he was going to divorce her, and He told him that Allaah was more deserving of being feared, i.e., in all things.

Our scholars (may Allaah have mercy on them) said: This is the best interpretation of this verse and it is the view adopted by the prominent mufassireen and the well-versed scholars, such as al-Zuhri, al-Qaadi Bakr ibn al-‘Ala’ al-Qushayri, al-Qaadi Abu Bakr ibn al-‘Arabi and others.

What is meant by the words “you did fear the people” refers to his concern about the propaganda of the hypocrites, suggesting that he had forbidden marrying sons’ wives, but he married the wife

of his own son.

As for the report which says that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) liked Zaynab the wife of Zayd, and some immoral people even use the word “fell in love”, this comes from one who is ignorant of the infallibility of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), who was protected against such things, or from one who has no respect for him.

Tafseer al-Qurtubi (14/190, 191).

2 – Shaykh al-Shanqeeti (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The correct view – in sha Allaah – concerning this issue is that which we have said the Qur’aan points to, which is that Allaah told His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that Zayd was going to divorce Zaynab, and that He would give her to him (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in marriage, and at that time she was still married to Zayd. When Zayd complained to him (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) he said to him: “Keep your wife and fear Allaah.” Allaah rebuked him for saying “Keep your wife” after he knew that she was to become his own wife, for fear that if he disclosed what he knew about her becoming his wife, the people would say that he wanted to marry his son’s wife at the time when she was still married to Zayd.

Two things point to that:

The first is what we have mentioned above, that Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted, said: “But you did hide in yourself that which Allaah will make manifest”. This is what Allaah had disclosed to him, which is that He was giving her to him in marriage, when He said: “So when Zayd had accomplished his desire from her (i.e. divorced her), We gave her to you in marriage”. Allaah did not disclose anything of that which they claim, namely that he loved her. If that had been what was meant, then Allaah would have disclosed it as you see.

The second point is that Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted, clearly stated that He was the One Who gave her to him in marriage, and that the divine wisdom behind this marriage was to put

an end to the prohibition on marrying the wives of adopted sons, as He says, “So when Zayd had accomplished his desire from her (i.e. divorced her), We gave her to you in marriage, so that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers in respect of (the marriage of) the wives of their adopted sons”. The phrase “so that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers” clearly explains the reason behind this marriage, as we have said. The fact that Allaah is the One Who gave her to him in marriage for this important purpose clearly shows that the reason why he married her was not because he loved her and that is why Zayd divorced her – as they claim. It is explained by the words of Allaah, “So when Zayd had accomplished his desire from her…” because it indicates that Zayd had accomplished his desire from her, and no longer had any interest in her, so he divorced her by his own choice, and Allaah knows all things.

Adwa’ al-Bayaan (6/582, 583).

4 – The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked:

What is the story of Zayd ibn Haarithah and his marriage to Zaynab, whom the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) married after him? How did their marriage begin, and how did it end? We have heard some people in some Arab countries say that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) fell in love with Zaynab and other things that I cannot bear to tell you what I have heard. Please advise me.

They replied:

Zayd was the son of Haarithah ibn Shurahbeel al-Kalbi, the freed slave of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), who manumitted him and adopted him, so he was known as Zayd ibn Muhammad, until Allaah revealed the words “Call them (adopted sons) by (the names of) their fathers” [al-Ahzaab 33:5], then he was called Zayd ibn Haarithah. Zaynab was the daughter of Jahsh ibn Rabaab al-Asadi, and her mother was Umaymah bint ‘Abd al-Muttalib, the paternal aunt of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). As for the story of Zayd’s marriage to Zaynab, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is the one who arranged that for him, because he was his freed slave and adopted son,

so he approached her on behalf of Zayd, but she refused and said: I am of a better lineage than him. It was narrated that Allaah revealed the words “It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allaah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allaah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed into a plain error” [al-Ahzaab 33:36] concerning that.  So she responded in obedience to Allaah and so as to fulfil the wishes of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). She lived with Zayd for nearly a year, then there arose between them the kind of problems that may arise between a husband and wife, and Zayd complained about her to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), because of their position in relation to him, as he was his freed slave and adopted son, and Zaynab was the daughter of his paternal aunt Umaymah. It is as if Zayd hinted that he wanted to divorce her, but the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told him to keep her and be patient with her, even though he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) knew from the revelation of Allaah that he would divorce her and she would become his wife. But he was afraid that the people would criticize him for marrying his son’s wife, as that was forbidden during the Jaahiliyyah. Allaah rebuked His Prophet for that in the words “And (remember) when you said to him (Zayd bin Haarithah رضى الله عنه the freed-slave of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) on whom Allaah has bestowed grace (by guiding him to Islam) and you (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم too) have done favour (by manumitting him): ‘Keep your wife to yourself, and fear Allaah.’ But you did hide in yourself (i.e. what Allaah has already made known to you that He will give her to you in marriage) that which Allaah will make manifest, you did fear the people (i.e., their saying that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم married the divorced wife of his manumitted slave) whereas Allaah had a better right that you should fear Him” meaning – and Allaah knows best – you hid in yourself that which Allaah had told you, that Zayd would divorce his wife Zaynab and you would marry her, in obedience to Allaah’s command, and in fulfilment of His wisdom, but you feared the people’s comments and criticism of you for that, but Allaah is more deserving that you should fear Him and announce what He has revealed to you about your situation and that of Zayd and his wife Zaynab, without worrying about what the people will say or how they will criticize you.

With regard to the marriage of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to Zaynab,

the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) proposed to her after the end of her ‘iddah following her divorce from Zayd, and Allaah gave her to him in marriage without any wali (guardian) or witnesses, because he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is the wali of all the believers, and is closer to them than their own selves. Allaah said (interpretation of the meaning): “The Prophet is closer to the believers than their ownselves” [al-Ahzaab 33:6]. Thus Allaah abolished the jaahili custom of adoption, and made it permissible for the Muslims to marry the wives of those whom they had adopted, after the latter separated from them by death or divorce, as a mercy from Him towards the believers and so as to relieve them of hardship.

As for the reports which say that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) saw Zaynab from behind a screen and that he was attracted to her and fell in love with her, and Zayd found out about that and began to dislike her, and he wanted to give precedence to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) concerning her, so he divorced her so that he could marry her after him, none of that has been proven by means of any sound isnaad. The Prophets are of the highest status and are too chaste in heart and too noble and honourable in attitude to do any such thing. Moreover, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is the one who had arranged her marriage to Zayd (may Allaah be pleased with him), and she was the daughter of his paternal aunt. If he had been attracted to her, he would have kept her for himself in the first place, especially since she was reluctant to marry Zayd and did not agree to it until the verse was revealed, then she agreed. This was the decree of Allaah which He arranged in order to abolish jaahili customs, and to show mercy to the people and make things easier for them, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“So when Zayd had accomplished his desire from her (i.e. divorced her), We gave her to you in marriage, so that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers in respect of (the marriage of) the wives of their adopted sons when the latter have no desire to keep them (i.e. they have divorced them). And Allaah’s Command must be fulfilled.

38. There is no blame on the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in that which Allaah has made legal for him. That has been Allaah’s way with those who have passed away of (the Prophets of) old. And

the Command of Allaah is a decree determined.

39. Those who convey the Message of Allaah and fear Him, and fear none save Allaah. And Sufficient is Allaah as a Reckoner.

40. Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allaah and the last (end) of the Prophets. And Allaah is Ever All-Aware of everything”

[al-Ahzaab 33:37-40].

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razzaaq ‘Afeefi, Shaykh ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Ghadyaan, Shaykh ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Qa’ood.

Fataawa Islamiyyah (18/137-141).

And Allaah knows best.