

WOMEN IN RAMADHAAN

Some of the most popular questions that I have been getting since the start of Ramadhaan pertain to women and the issue of women on their menstrual cycle in this month. Most of our sisters are anguished at being unable to fast while everyone else is enjoying their Ibaadaat, so we will dedicate the few minutes of this Halaqah to that issue. This Halaqah is directed more towards sisters but brothers need to be patient and it is also something they need to know. If they do not have a wife, they have mothers, sisters and aunts, and in the future Inshaa Allah Ta'aala they are going to have daughters so it will be something that they will need to know about.

Let me start off by saying first of all, our sisters should not feel anguished, sad or depressed or think that others beat you in Ibaadah because you were ordered not to fast or pray in Ramadhaan by the same One who ordered others to fast and pray. So you are in an Ibaadah (worship) by obedience to Allah.

This is a common feeling among our sisters and it is shared by many of our sisters. And before that, it was shared before that by our mother Aishah radhiallahu 'anha, may Allah grant our sisters lofty palaces next to that of Aishah. In the Hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari, the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam was heading towards Hajj, when he stopped in an area called Sarif on the outskirts of Makkah. He saw Aishah was weeping and crying, he said what is the matter? She said I wish I had not made Hajj this year. And the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam immediately knew what she was talking about so he asked her, maybe you got your menses? Aishah replied yes. The Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam then comforted and consoled her, he told her this is a thing which Allah has ordained and decreed on all the daughters of Adam. After he comforted her, then he gave her the ruling. He said do that which pilgrims do except do not perform your Tawaaf around the Ka'bah until you are clean. Pay attention to that statement because we are going to refer to it a few times through this class, do that which pilgrims do except performing Tawaaf around the Ka'bah until you are clean. So it is the feeling of agony our sisters go through of not being able to do significant, special worships like the rest of the Ummah in blessed times and in blessed situations.

THE REWARD FOR ONE WHO IS PREVENTED FROM IBAADAH FOR A LEGITIMATE REASON

Rest assured without a doubt that any sister who truly, genuinely and sincerely was going to an Ibaadah such as fast and pray (both Fardh and Nafl) yet the only thing that stopped her short of that was getting her monthly days, then she will get the full reward Inshaa Allah, not a tiny bit less than if she had done it.

Listen to this Hadith:

إِذَا مَرَضَ الْعَبْدُ أَوْ سَافَرَ ، كُتِبَ لَهُ مِثْلَ مَا كَانَ يَعْمَلُ مُقِيمًا أَوْ صَحِيحًا

In Sahih al-Bukhari, the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said if one gets sick or travels, he will get the same reward as he was when he was not travelling and healthy.

He was deprived for a legitimate reason so he will get the reward, the reward continues on. A woman in her days is no different than that, you can take the Hadith to mean if a woman is on her menstrual cycle, she will get the same reward of deeds as if she had fasted. When one is deprived of Ibaadah because of something beyond their means, they will get the reward for deeds they missed out on because it was not by their choice. The Hadith mentioned if one gets sick, they will get their deeds of Ibaadah they missed out because they are sick. One who is on her monthly days is very similar, near identical to that. The common denominator is both cannot perform their Ibaadah and they cannot perform it by force and not by choice. Ibn Hajr said this Hadith applies to anyone who otherwise would perform a deed, yet is not able to continue for circumstances beyond their means.

There are several Ahaadith indicating that if one is not able to perform worship due to circumstances not under their control, the reward of it will continue on, they will get the reward. Even in Jihad, the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam one time left for a battle and he left men behind in Madinah. He told the people with him, those men who did not join us, not a step you took or a valley you crossed except they will get the identical reward as you because they were held back for a legitimate reason.

The point of all this is do not feel sad, distressed or agonised. Sisters who do not do their Ibaadah are doing worship because Allah told them not to do so, and they will get the Ajr Inshaa Allah Ta'aala if they are sincere.

CAN A SISTER TAKE A PILL TO DELAY HER MENSTRUAL CYCLE?

The simple answer is yes. Why? Matters like these fall under general rule in Islam of being Halaal unless proven Haraam. The only one I have read and know of that considered it prohibited was Imaam Malik. He considered it prohibited but he also stated the reason was because it causes harm. That is a totally different reason, if it causes harm. In al-Mughni he quoted Imaam Ahmad as permitting it and likewise, ash-Shaafi'ee permitted it. It is very clear it is permissible unless it causes harm, that is a totally different story. You have to do your homework and make sure it does not cause harm to you.

In fact I remember when I was ten or maybe eleven years old, Wallahi I remember I sat with my father in one of his Halaqah in the Haram in Madinah, Shaykh 'Atiyyah Saalim Rahmatullahi 'Alayhi and he mentioned a Hadith that stuck in my mind about Miswaak and one of the benefits of Miswaak. I later read in Musannaf Abdur-Razzaaq, when 'Amr said that Ibn Umar was asked can a woman take medication to delay her menstrual cycle. Ibn Umar said there is no problem and he recommended the soup or water of Miswaak, so they had this back in the days. What they did was bring a Miswaak and you make sure it is an Araak Miswaak, the original Miswaak, the right main tree and not similar close plants. They cut it into small pieces, boiled it in a pot for what today would be about ten minutes and you drink it two to three times a day starting on the day before you expect the menstrual cycle to begin.

I am not sure if that works with the Miswaaks we have now because I label them as expired Miswaaks. The Miswaaks that I used to get in Madinah, I used to buy them from sellers who would freshly cut them days before they sold them. Some types have a strong natural taste, a peppermint like flavour that is sometimes so strong that you could not even keep the Miswaak in your mouth for a few minutes. That is natural, not something they added.

Another side issue and I do not want to get distracted with it, but let me mention it. In the Common Mistakes During Ramadhaan article that was taken from our Fiqh classes, I said I do not feel that toothpaste is even Makrooh, it is Mubaah actually based on Qiyaas (analogy). Miswaak is permissible throughout the day when you are fasting, even towards the late evening, and the Miswaak at times has a stronger taste than the toothpaste, so that was the rationale behind it.

The Miswaaks we get here are outdated, even if you buy them overseas sometimes, many of them are also outdated as well. Going back to our topic, I know that the soup of Miswaak was used in the old days as means for delaying the cycle. However, I am not sure in this day and age if these Miswaaks that come to us will have any affect because of the time since they were cut. They are old and they are like I said, expired. It is worth a try and if it works let us know, we will pass the word on.

WHAT CAN A WOMAN DO DURING THESE DAYS?

She can do everything except fast, make Salah or make Tawaaf if she goes to Umrah. She makes up her fasts but she does not make up her Salah. She can do everything else. What happens and it is a problem is that some sisters think it is that time of the month when they do not fast so Ramadhaan is on pause. They go sit in front of the TV and neglect these blessed days. Yes you cannot fast, you cannot pray, but you are still in blessed days and there is plenty of other Ibaadaat to do. There is Dhikr, exert your energy in Du'aa, you can recite the Qur'an, which brings us to the next point. Can a woman recite Qur'an and can she touch the Qur'an? Both are disputed.

CAN A WOMAN RECITE THE QUR'AN?

As to reciting the Qur'an from her memory without touching, there is a dispute on that and the correct opinion is that which Ibn Taymiyyah states in the 21st volume of the Fataawa. Imaam Malik, ash-Shawkaani and others adopted same opinion that it is permissible for a woman to read from memory or if she is not touching the Qur'an. The origin is that matters like these are Halaal unless proven by a solid proof that they are Haraam, and there is no solid proof. Let me repeat that, there is no solid, authentic proof to indicate it is Haraam for a woman to recite the Qur'an. Imaam Malik, Imaam Ahmad, ash-Shawkaani and Ibn Taymiyyah said a woman can read from memory because these are matters that can be prohibited with solid proof and there is no solid proof on that, and that is correct.

There is a saying attributed to the Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam that a woman on her menstrual cycle cannot read Qur’an. That is in Ibn Maajah and at-Tirmidhi but it is so weak that you cannot even attribute it to the Prophet Muhammad sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam.

Some used analogy to compare a woman to a man who is on his major impurity (Junub). We have an authentic, clear Hadith stating that the Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam did not recite while he was Junub. However, in order to compare a male who is on a major impurity to a woman on her menstrual cycle, it must be similar in order for Qiyaas (analogy) to take place. A man who is Junub (on his major impurity) is by choice, not by force. He can get his lazy self up and go take a shower, while a woman is not like that. She is forced to wait, so there is differences that invalidate the use of analogy and Qiyaas.

A woman getting her monthly days is a matter that happens to all women, since the time of the Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam and even before that. There was many Muslim women then and the Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam had many wives radhiallahu ‘anhunna who taught us the outmost, deep details of life of the Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam and their lives. Do you think we would not have had at least one solid, authentic Hadith that it is Haraam if it was really Haraam?

CAN SHE READ FROM THE QUR’AN BY TOUCHING IT?

This matter goes back to the root issue of whether one can touch the Qur’an while he is impure. The great, overwhelming majority of the ‘Ulamaa say that one must be pure. The minority say it is permissible for one to touch the Qur’an if they are impure, and among them is Ibn Abbaas, ash-Sha’bi, ad-Dahhaak, al-Hakm Ibn ‘Utaybah, Hamaad Ibn Abi Sulaymaan, Dawood adh-Dhaahiree and adh-Dhaahiriyyah. However, we do not go by vote, we go by proof, it is not a democracy here.

In my second year of Sharee’ah study when I was in Madinah, I had to do a short essay on every class that we took. I think it was fifteen pages or so and for my Fiqh class my teacher told me your topic is this, you have to write on this. That was in the early nineties and with Islamic knowledge, as long as you continue to research you develop and grow in your knowledge over time. And as time goes by you find the Hadith you missed out on, the opinion you did not know of or did not take heed of, you find that the Hadith you thought was authentic turned out to be weak or the opposite, but since then until today I stick behind the conclusion I put in the final sentence of my thesis on this issue. I said the conclusion is, every explicit, direct saying on this matter is not authentic and that which is authentic is not explicit. Let me repeat, every explicit saying on this matter is not authentic and that which is authentic is not explicit.

For example, there is many non authentic Hadith, but there is one proof that many use which is a verse in the Qur’an. It is on the tip of the tongues of the people who use this as proof.

لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ ﴿الواقعة: ٧٩﴾

A book none can touch but the purified. (Surat al-Waaqi'ah: 79)

Ibn Abbaas said this is the book in the heavens, the Lawh al-Mahfoodh. It is not even talking about the Qur'an, it is referring to the angels and the Preserved Tablets in the Lawh al-Mahfoodh, not us and the Qur'an.

And even more so, you do not use Mutahhar (مطهر) for the word purified in Arabic, except for those who are infallible. Me and you, you do not use that word for us. Even though similar to the word pure that we use, when we make Wudhu we use Mutatahhir not Mutahhar. Mutahhar is for those who are infallible like the angels.

More so, the first Hadith that I mentioned to you, when the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam told Aishah do everything women do except Tawaaf and Salah. During Hajj people read Qur'an and they touch it, and they did it every single day, more so in Hajj of course. So why did the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam not tell her do not touch the Qur'an and do not recite the Qur'an?

There is one authentic Hadith in al-Haakim, Ahmad, Maalik and others:

لَا يَمَسُّ الْقُرْآنَ إِلَّا طَاهِرٌ

No one touch the Qur'an but someone pure. But here Taahir could mean pure from Kufr, not necessarily pure from Wudhu.

...إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ... ﴿التوبة: ٢٨﴾

Verily, the polytheists are impure. (Surat at-Tawbah: 28)

That means the believers are pure, so here it could mean the purity of Islam.

There is other Hadith that say:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَا يَنْجُسُ

A Muslim does not become impure.

So it could be the purity of Islam versus Kufr. The Hadith was a letter written from the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam to 'Amr Ibn Hizaam when he was living in Najraan among Christians, so it may be that the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam was directing him not to let non believers touch the pages of the Qur'an.

So basically, there is not authentic, explicit proof to prohibit it and that which is authentic entails other meanings.

THE ISSUE OF RESPECT

Putting the issue of Halaal and Haraam aside on this matter, there is an issue of respect. The Qur'an, the word of Allah needs to be respected. That is a different story. Even though I do not believe there is explicit, authentic Hadith saying that a Muslim must be pure to touch the Qur'an, I do not recall any time from when I was a little kid that I ever while remembering touched the Qur'an while I was not on Wudhu. Even though it is not a must, there is an issue of respect.

ذٰلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعَظِّمْ شَعَائِرَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوٰى الْقُلُوْبِ ﴿الْحَج: ٣٢﴾

And whosoever honours the symbols of Allah, then it is truly from the piety of the heart.
(Surat al-Hajj: 32)

Some of the Salaf like Ibn Umar used to make Wudhu before touching the Qur'an. Others out of respect used to make Wudhu, go brush their teeth with a Miswaak, face the Qiblah, sit humbly with respect and recite Qur'an. This is the word of Allah!

A sister may choose to evade this entire dispute and read the Qur'an with some kind of barrier, and that is permissible. Or she can go further and read from an iPhone, an iPad, or a computer because that is not considered a Mushaf. The ruling does not apply on that, that is definitely permissible because the ruling of a Mushaf does not apply on that.