

## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

### The Recommendation of Looking at a Woman Before the Engagement

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((انظر إليها، فإن في أعين الأنصار شيئا. يعني الصغر))

**[95]: “Look at her, for indeed there is something in the eyes of the *Anṣār*, i.e. smallness.”**

On the authority of Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه): “A man intended to marry a woman from the *Anṣār*, and the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said to him...”<sup>1</sup>

I say (i.e. al-Albānī): He then cited [the aforementioned ḥadīth] with the wording collected by al-Bayhaqī. The wording in Muslim and Bayhaqī reads: “I was with the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), and a man came to him informing him that he had married a woman from the *Anṣār*. So [the Prophet] said to him: “Did you look at her?”

“No,” the man said.

“Look at her...” the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said.

**And** the reason for this command comes in an authentic ḥadīth:

((انظر إليها فإنه أحرى أن يؤدم بينكما))

**[96]: “Look at her, for indeed it is more likely to make the love last between you.”**

al-Mughīrah b. Shu’bah related that he proposed to a woman, and the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said to him: “Look at her...” Aḥmad and al-Bayhaqī added [the wording]: “I (i.e. al-Mughīrah b. Shu’bah) came to see [the girl] at her parents’, and she was behind her curtain. I said: ‘Verily, the Messenger of Allah instructed me to look at her.’ [Her parents] said nothing. The girl lifted up the side of the curtain and said: ‘If the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) commanded you to look, then look, and if he did not, then don’t.’ So I looked at her, then married her. I never felt that way about another woman, and I had married seventy or more women.”<sup>2</sup>

Al-Tirmidhī and al-Baghawī stated: “*ḥadīth ḥasan*.” Al-‘Irāqī concurred with this in *Takhrīj al-Iḥyá* (2/39).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This ḥadīth is collected by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (4/142), Sa’īd b. Maṣūrah in his *Sunan* (523), al-Nasā’ī (2/73), al-Ṭaḥāwī in *Sharḥ Ma’ānī al-Āthār*, Ibn Ḥibbān in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (4030), al-Daraqūṭnī (396), and al-Bayhaqī (7/84).

<sup>2</sup> This ḥadīth is collected by Sa’īd b. Maṣūrah in his *Sunan* (515–517), al-Nasā’ī (2/73), al-Tirmidhī (1/202), al-Dārimī (2/134), Ibn Mājah (1866), al-Ṭaḥāwī (2/8), Ibn al-Jarud in *al-Muntaqá* (p. 313), al-Daraqūṭnī (p. 395), al-Bayhaqī (7/84), Aḥmad (4/144–245/246), and Ibn ‘Asākir (17/44/2), from Bakr b. ‘Abd Allah al-Muzanī.

<sup>3</sup> I say (i.e. al-Albānī): All of the narrators are *thiqāt* (trustworthy); except that Yaḥyá b. Ma’īn stated: “Bakr did not hear [narrations] from al-Mughīrah.” However, al-Ḥāfiẓ [b. Ḥajr] says in *al-Talkhīs* (p. 291), after attributing it to Ibn Ḥibbān and others we mentioned: “al-Daraqūṭnī cited it in *al-‘Ilal*, and mentioned the difference of opinion concerning it, and confirmed that Bakr b. ‘Abd Allah al-Muzanī heard narrations from al-Mughīrah.”

Thābit related that Anas said: “Mughīrah intended to get married and mentioned it to the Prophet (ﷺ), and he stated the aforementioned ḥadīth.” He added: “So he did so and married her. He then mentioned how well they cohabitated.”<sup>45</sup>

It is permissible for [a man] to look at her, even if she does not know or perceive it, based on [the Prophet’s (ﷺ)] statement:

((إذا خطب أحدكم امرأة فلا جناح عليه أن ينظر إليها إذا كان إنما ينظر إليها  
لخطبته، وإن كانت لا تعلم))

**[97]: “If one of you proposes to a woman, there is no harm for him to look at her, as long as he intends to marry her, even if she is unaware.”<sup>6</sup>**

This ḥadīth was implemented by the companion Muḥammad b. Maslamah al-Anṣārī. Sahl b. Abū Ḥathmah said: “I saw Muḥammad b. Maslamah pursue Bathīnah bint al-Daḥḥāk atop her roof, going to great lengths to see her. I said [to him]: “Do you do such a thing, and you are a Companion of Allah’s Messenger?” He replied: “Indeed, I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say:

((إذا ألقى في قلب امرئ خطبة امرأة فلا بأس أن ينظر إليه))

**[98]: “When Allah places the desire to propose to woman in a man’s heart, there is no harm in him looking at her.”<sup>7</sup>**

And the majority of the scholars have specified this; for it is stated in *Fath al-Bārī* (9/157): “The majority of the scholars (*al-jamhūr*) say that it is permissible for a man to look at a woman if he wishes, without her permission. There is a narration from Mālik [b. Anas] in which he states: ‘Her permission is required.’ Al-Ṭaḥāwī cited a group of scholars who held that it was impermissible to look at the intended woman in any way before the contract, because at that time she is still *ajnabiyyah* (a non-relative woman); [al-Ṭaḥāwī] rebutted [this group] by citing the aforementioned ḥadīths.”

Perhaps, this is why al-Alāī did not cite it in *al-Marāsīl* (179/65). Al-Buṣayrī stated in *al-Zawā’id* (p. 118): “The [ḥadīth’s] chain is authentic; its narrators are trustworthy.”

And on the assumption that he did not hear from [al-Mughīrah], perhaps Anas b. Mālik is the intermediary between them, for Bakr al-Muzanī heard a number of narrations from him, and he related it from al-Mughīrah.

<sup>4</sup> It is collected by ‘Abd al-Razzāq in *al-Amālī* (2/47/1-2), Ibn Mājah (1865), Abū Ya’lā in his *Musnad* (1/170), Ibn Ḥibbān (1236), Ibn al-Jarud, al-Daraqūṭnī, al-Ḥākim (2/165), al-Dīyā’ in *al-Mukhtārah* (2/88), and al-Bayhaqī, all of them with the chain of ‘Abd al-Razzāq.

<sup>5</sup> Ḥākim said: “This narration is authentic, in accordance with the conditions of *al-Shaykhayn* (al-Bukhārī and Muslim).” Al-Dhahabī concurred with this. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān also authenticated it in his valuable work *al-Naẓr fī Aḥkām al-Naẓr* (2/70). Al-Buṣayrī stated in *al-Zawā’id* (1/117): “The [ḥadīth’s] chain is authentic; its narrators are trustworthy. Ibn Ḥibbān in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd in his *Musnad*, from ‘Abd al-Razzāq.”

<sup>6</sup> Collected by al-Ṭaḥāwī, Aḥmad (5/424), and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu’jam al-Awsaṭ* (1/52/898).

<sup>7</sup> Collected by Sa’īd b. Manṣūr in his *Sunan* (519), ‘Abd al-Razzāq in *al-Muṣannaḥ* (6/158/10338), and Ibn Mājah (1864).

BENEFIT: In *al-Amālī* (2/46/1), ‘Abd al-Razzāq relates the authentic chain from Ibn Ṭāwus, who said: “I intended to marry a woman, so my father said to me, ‘Go and look at her.’ So I went and washed my head and groomed [myself], and put on my finest garment, and when he saw me in that condition he said: “Do not go!”

It is permissible for him to see more of her than her hands and face, due to the generalization of the above-mentioned ḥadīths, and his (صلى الله عليه وسلم) statement:

((إذا خطب أحدكم المرأة، فإن استطاع أن ينظر إلى ما يدعوه إلى نكاحها، فليفعل))

**[99]: “If one of you proposes to a woman and is able to look at her in a way that will lead you to marry her, then do so.”<sup>8</sup>**

Jābir b. ‘Abd Allah related: “I proposed to a young girl, and I would hide myself from her [to look at her], until I saw from her that which drew me to wed her, so I married her.”

FIQH OF THE ḤADĪTH: The ḥadīth’s meaning is apparent, as found in our chapter heading, and is supported by the action of the narrator, the noble Companion Jābir b. ‘Abd Allah; and Muḥammad b. Maslamah did similar, as we cited in the previous ḥadīth, and they are sufficient as proof.

And we are not harmed by those who limit this narration to seeing only the hands and face, because this limitation lacks textual support, and negates the understanding of Companions, without evidence; not to mention, it is supported by the action of Rightly Guided Caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Al-Ḥāfiẓ states in *al-Talkhīs* (pp. 291–292): “It was on the authority of Muḥammad b. ‘Ali b. al-Ḥanafīyyah that ‘Umar sought to marry ‘Alī’s daughter Umm Kulthūm, and [‘Ali] mentioned her youth to him. ‘Ali said: ‘I will send her to you. If you are pleased, she is your wife.’ So he sent her to him, and [‘Umar] uncovered her shins. She said: ‘If you were not the Leader of the Faithful, I would have slapped you.’ This narration proves difficult for the one who says: ‘One may not look at other than the hands and face.’”<sup>9</sup>

This statement mentioned by al-Ḥāfiẓ [Ibn Ḥajr] is the position of the Ḥanafīs and Shāfi‘īs. Ibn al-Qayyim states in *Tahdhīb al-Sunan*: “Dawud states: ‘One may look at her entire body.’ There are three narrations from Aḥmad:

First: A man may look at [the woman’s] hands and face;

<sup>8</sup> Collected by Abū Dawud (2082), al-Taḥāwī, al-Ḥākim, al-Bayhaqī, and Aḥmad (3/334, 360).

<sup>9</sup> *Shaykh* al-Albānī indicates that this narration has *Inqitā* (breakage) in it. See his *al-Da‘īfah* (no. 1273) for further elaboration. Also, on a recording entitled “*Fatāwā Jeddah*” (no. 23), *Shaykh* al-Albānī further clarifies the defectiveness of this narration, collected by ‘Abd al-Razzāq in his *Muṣannaḥ*. Based upon the weakness of this narration, *Shaykh* al-Albānī goes on to explain that the intended woman cannot *knowingly* show her suitor more than the hands and face—even with the agreement and in presence of her male guardian. This is because there is no evidence to support this “agreed viewing” besides the weak narration of ‘Umar and Umm Kulthūm. However, it should be understood that the *Shaykh* did *not* change his stance on a man seeing from a woman what is customarily exposed; he merely clarifies that it must be done “without her knowledge,” as found in the narrations of Jābir b. ‘Abd Allah and Muḥammad b. Maslamah, and based upon these authentic reports, the suitor may strive with all due diligence to see from his intended “what will lead him to marry her.”

Second: He may see what is customarily exposed, like the knees, shins, etc.<sup>10</sup>;

Third: He may look at her in her entirety.”

The second statement is closest to the apparent meaning of the ḥadīth and to the practice of the Companions, and Allah knows best.

Ibn Qudāmah says in *al-Mughnī* (7/454): “The proof of the permissibility of looking at what is customarily exposed is that when the Prophet (ﷺ) allowed looking at her without her knowledge, he knew that he permitted a man to see all of what is customarily exposed, as it is not possible to single out the face from everything else that is commonly exposed. Thus, it is permissible to be viewed like the face, and because she is a woman who he is allowed to see, by the instruction of the Legislator. So, he may look at her in the same manner as the *mahram* (non-marriageable male relatives).”

I then came across the book *Rudūd ‘alā Abātīl* by the noble *Shaykh* Muḥammad al-Ḥāmid, where he said: “The statement permitting [a man] to look at other than the intended woman’s hands and face is falsehood, unacceptable.” This is considerable insolence from his likes; I did not imagine this coming from him, since there is difference of opinion concerning the matter, as previously clarified, and it is not permissible [for him] to resolutely label the statement that opposes his *madhab* (position) with falsehood, unless he responds to the proofs and evidences, like the aforementioned ḥadīths, yet, he did not do anything from this. Rather, he didn’t even allude to the ḥadīths whatsoever. So he gave the impression to readers that the statement has absolutely no evidence. However, the reality contradicts this, as you have seen. For these ḥadīths are in opposition to his statement. How not, when he opposed [the Prophet’s] (ﷺ) statement in hadith no. 99: “...**what will lead you to marry her.**” For every person of *fiqh* (understanding) knows that not only the hands and face are intended [in the narration]. And similar to this as evidence, his (ﷺ) statement in hadith no. 97: “...**even if she is unaware.**” This is supported by the action of the Companions, and they were most knowledgeable of his *Sunnah*, from them Muḥammad b. Maslamah and Jābir b. ‘Abd Allah. For both of them hid themselves from their intended spouses, so they could see from them that which would lead them to marry them. So does the person of intellect think they hid themselves to see only the hands and face? Also, the likes of ‘Umar al-Khaṭṭāb who uncovered Umm Kulthūm’s shins—if this is authentically attributed to him.<sup>11</sup> So these three elders from the Companions, one of the Rightly Guided Caliph, permitted looking at more than the hands and the face, and there is no opposition to this from any of the Companions as far as I know, so I don’t know how they deem opposing this to be permissible with these authentic ḥadīths...

And even with the authenticity of these narrations and the statement of the great majority of the scholars—with the aforesaid difference of opinion—many of the Muslims in these latter days have shunned this practice, for they do not permit the suitor to look at their girls—even in the

<sup>10</sup> In *al-Mughnī* (7/454), Ibn Qudāmah states: “Aḥmad said in the narration of Ḥanbal: ‘There is no objection for him to look at what will cause him to marry her, from a hand, body, etc.’ Abū Bakr [al-Marwazī] said: ‘There is no objection for him to look at her uncovered at the time of the engagement.’”

<sup>11</sup> *Da‘if* (Weak): See footnote no. 9 above.

most restrictive sense of the word—out of their so-called piety; and from the peculiarities of this inane piety is that some of them permit their daughter to go out in the street uncovered without *ḥijāb*, then do not allow the suitor to see her in her home among her family in street clothes.

Opposite of them are some irresponsible fathers who have no jealousy for their daughters—following after their European leaders—allowing a photographer to take pictures of them uncovered, and this photographer is a non-relative male. He may even be a non-Muslim. Then they send their pictures to some young men, allegedly for the purpose of seeking marriage. Then the affair ends without an engagement, and their daughters' pictures remain with them to ogle over and to stoke the flames of youthful passion by looking at them. Wretched are the fathers who do not jealously protect [their daughters]. From Allah we come, and unto Him we will return.<sup>12</sup>



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<sup>12</sup> Abridged from al-Albānī's *al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (no. 95-99).