

THE **F1RST**S

A Lecture Series

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INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH

Ali and Fatima

A Story of Love صلى الله عليه وسلم

Pursuit of the Prophet's Love صلى الله عليه وسلم

Many came to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, asking whom he loved the most, including Ali and Fatima. He صلى الله عليه وسلم had the most eloquent answer, while maintaining his character, which was that he never lied. Even though Fatima was very dear to him and his heart was very attached to her, he didn't want to answer that question in a way that would hurt Ali, whom he loved as his own son. He looked at Ali and said, "She is more beloved to me than you, but you are more precious to me than her", making them both very happy.

Their First Challenge

After they got married, they lived away from the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, which was difficult because they were all accustomed to being close to each other. Their home was away from the home of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Where the grave of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is now was actually Aisha's home. All of the homes of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were all built on land owned by Haritha Ibn Al Noman. Whenever the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم married, he would give him another portion of his land to build on.

When Ali & Fatima married, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was too embarrassed to ask Haritha for land so that they could live near him. One day Haritha noticed that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم looked sad and asked him if it's because he misses Fatima. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said yes and that he was too shy to ask him for land for them. This shows the humility of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in that he never took his status as the Messenger or the love of the people for granted or for exploitation. Noman answered that he loved the land that he gave to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, more than he loved the land he kept for himself. He told him to take a piece of land across from Aisha's house for Ali & Fatima, and the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made dua that Allah reward Haritha with a palace in Paradise. The home for Ali & Fatima was built on the land and the only window in both homes were facing each other. This made all of them very happy.

A Life of Poverty & A Lesson In Patience

Ali's life had always been of poverty, as was Fatima's. The Prophet ﷺ himself lived his whole life in poverty, he never moved into a palace, or ate more than one meal per day.

Ali developed back pain and Fatima developed blisters on her hands because of the amount of work they both had to do to survive. She was exhausted. Ali told Fatima to ask the Prophet ﷺ if he could provide them with a servant/maid to help out in the home. Fatima was so embarrassed to ask him, but decided to anyway. She went to her father's home but Aisha told her that the Prophet ﷺ was still at the masjid. Upon him finding out that he missed Fatima's visit, he ﷺ immediately went to Ali & Fatima's house and knocked on their door. Ali replied to please wait so they could tidy up the home for him to enter. The Prophet ﷺ told them, "don't worry, stay as you are, don't get up". He ﷺ went inside and sat between them (as they were wrapped in blankets because of the cold). He asked Fatima what she needed, and she said that she heard that maybe he ﷺ had a servant or someone that could help them out in the household. He ﷺ asked her who told her that he may have someone like that for her, but she didn't want to say that it was Ali who gave her the idea. The Prophet told Fatima "shall I not give you something that is greater and more beneficial than a servant to assist you"? Then they both said "of course". The Prophet said "before you go to sleep, glorify God 33 times (Subhan Allah), praise God 33 times (Alhamdulillah), and declare His greatness (Allahu Akbar) 34 times. They then again asked about the servant, and he ﷺ said, "I can't provide you a servant and leave the homeless people and the orphans from the Battle of Badr empty-handed. If you say these words before you sleep every night, Allah will provide for you more than the thing you are asking for". Ali would say that he never missed saying the 100 sayings after that and he swore that he & Fatima were increased in strength and sustenance and never needed a servant after that.

Despite their poverty, they were a generous family. Often things that entered their home would be given away to the poor and orphans before they ever tasted it.

A Home Full of Love & Laughter

It was a happy home, full of laughter. The Prophet would often knock on their door in the middle of the night so they could wake to pray the night prayer (Qiyam ul Layl). One of those nights, they didn't wake up and later when the Prophet asked Ali, he replied that if Allah wanted them to wake up He would have made them wake up. The Prophet then said "indeed human beings are always argumentative", jokingly with Ali.

Ali was a poet and often authored love poems for Fatima. After seeing her using a siwak (from the Arak tree) to clean her teeth, he eloquently spoke to the siwak in the poem of his love for Fatima and his jealousy even from the siwak in her mouth. She loved his poems that he recited for her.

It was a home of great laughter and Prophet Mohammad ﷺ sometimes asked them what they were laughing about and he would join them in laughter. Fatima would often tease Ali about being younger than her because no one really knew birthdays back then. Ali authored funny poems for Fatima as well as love poems.

The Prophet ﷺ maintained a balance in his relationship with each one ; Ali, who he still referred to as his brother, and his beloved daughter. He treated Ali as an adult, consulted him on sensitive matters, while not getting involved in their marital dynamic. It was well known to all He always maintained family cohesion very well ﷺ.

Aisha narrates that the PM asked Fatima if she loves who he loves, she said yes of course, so then he continued, “then love Aisha”.

He came home after a journey, as always, went to the masjid first, then visited Fatima, she started to cry, and said “you’re pale, your clothes are shabby and you’re not eating”. He comforted her “don’t cry because Allah has sent your father on a mission which He will cause to reach every single house on the face of this earth, whether it be in the towns, villages or tents in the deserts.” He assured her that the difficulty was worth it. She had perfect iman, with a special relationship with Allah, so that gave her comfort.

Typical Marital Challenges

They also got into disagreements like any married couple. This took a high level of emotional intelligence of the Prophet ﷺ to help them during those situations. Fatima once said that she could tell when Ali was upset with her because he would say “by the God of Abraham” when he was upset with her instead of “by the God of Mohammad”, when he was pleased with her. One time the Prophet ﷺ was visiting them, noticed that Fatima was upset and asked her, “where is your cousin”. She told him that they had an argument and that Ali was sleeping in the masjid. He walked into the masjid, saw Ali sleeping on the dirt floor of the masjid, uncovered. Despite the love for his daughter, the Prophet ﷺ lovingly brushed off the dirt from Ali, sat him up, put his shirt back on and said to him, “ sit up, oh father of dirt”. Ali began laughing (it became his favorite nickname), and the Prophet ﷺ told him “go back home to your wife”. This is how he diffused the situation.

Polygamy was primarily used to bring two tribes together, especially after resolving disputes between them. When Fatima heard that some of the elders of the tribes of Banu Makhzub and Banu Hashim (tribe of the Prophet)suggested that Ali marry Fatima bint Abu Jahl, she was deeply hurt. It hurt the Prophet that she found out about it and was so hurt by it. He said that he will not forbid what Allah has permitted, but that “Fatima is a part of me and what hurts her hurts me”. “It is not befitting that a person be married to the daughter of the Messenger of Allah at the same time that he is married to the daughter of the enemy of Allah. As a young child, Fatima had seen Abu Jahl torture her father and that would be very hurtful to her. He ﷺ acknowledged her pain without being unjust. This again shows the thoughtfulness and mercy of the Prophet ﷺ for his beloved daughter and the closeness and deep love between Ali & Fatima, that he would not consider hurting her.

A Very Special Grandfather

Fatima was pregnant with her first child (Hassan) during the Battle of Uhud. She was at the Battle serving the injured, including her father, who was severely injured. Hassan was born that year during Ramadan of the 3rd year after Hijra. When Hassan was born, Ali named him “War”. The Prophet ﷺ suggested instead he be named “Hassan”, meaning excellence, a source of good.

Hassan was very special and he greatly resembled his grandfather, Prophet Mohammad , ﷺ more than his own father, Ali. The Prophet ﷺ loved him and Hassan would often jump on his back during sujood, and the Prophet ﷺ would intentionally prolong his prostration. Whenever he ﷺ saw him, he would hold him and make duas for him often.

The following year, Fatima gave birth to their second son, who again Ali named “War”, but later the Prophet named him “Hussein”, meaning little Hassan. He became a source of great joy for the Prophet. Hassan resembled the Prophet from the top and face and Hussein resembled him in his lower body. Now they became a family of four.

The two grandsons were extremely dear to the Prophet ﷺ, and always around him. He was even known to sometimes pause the Friday sermon (khutba) when he saw them coming in and continue it with the boys in his lap instead of standing.

Aisha narrates that the Prophet ﷺ was once wearing a wide black cloak. Hassan ran to his grandfather and he wrapped him in his cloak. Then Hussein also ran to him and he let him into his cloak as well, playing with both of them. When he saw Fatima approaching, he put her in it as well. Even when Ali came, he put all four of them in his cloak. While he was

sitting with them and playing, he said صلى الله عليه وسلم, “Allah only desires to remove from you any type of impurity, O people of the household, and purify you through that which is purifying.”

When he صلى الله عليه وسلم would go to visit the home, he would say to Fatima, “call my two sons for me, Fatima would dress them up, he would squeeze them and smell their hair with utmost love.” He prayed for them often. It was a very loving relationship.

Zaynab was born in the 5th year of Hijra and Um Kulthoom was born in the 6th year of Hijra. A third son was born but died at birth. The Prophet named him Muhassin (also a version of the name, Hassan).

Ibn Abbas narrates that the Prophet said “Love God for what he nourishes you of His blessings, and love me due to the love of Allah, and love my family because of my love for them and your love for me.”

Sahih Muslim narrates that the Prophet was once carrying Hassan and said, “O Allah, know that I love him, so love him as well, and love those who love him”.

Another valid narration is that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said “Whoever loves these two boys loves me and whoever hates them or angers them, hates me”.

An Unbearable Loss

Aisha describes the moments of death of the Prophet. He was in and out of consciousness, he was sweating with a high fever. He could not walk. Fatima walked into the room, he could not get up to honor her as he always did, but he tried and said smilingly, “Welcome to my beautiful daughter”, he showed more energy in that moment than in his entire period of his passing. That was his show of strength and honor for his daughter. He signaled her to sit at his right side. He whispered to her something in her ear and she started to weep heavily. He signaled her again to come nearer, he whispered to her again, and she started laughing. She embraced him for the last time and left the room in joy. Aisha asked her what he said but she didn’t share it with anyone at first. Later, she told Aisha what the Prophet Mohammad صلى الله عليه وسلم told her. The first whisper was that he would indeed die. The second whisper was that she would be the first one to die after him from his family (at 27 years old) and join him. That’s what caused her to laugh and be able to somehow accept his death.

Prophet Mohammad’s head was on Aisha’s lap صلى الله عليه وسلم. When Angel Jibreel entered the room, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم lit up and he raised his hand to the sky and said “I choose the companionship of the Most High”. His hand fell and Aisha screamed. Fatima heard that scream and said “Oh my dear father, how close you are now to your Lord, Oh my dear

father, to Jibreel we announce your death, Oh my dear father, the highest garden of Paradise is now your abode.”

Ali could not speak for days, showing that people process things differently. Anas said when we finished burying the Prophet ﷺ, Fatima was standing behind us and she asked us how we could bring ourselves to put dirt on her father’s face. Anas said to her that they denied their heart and numbed themselves to be able to do what needed to be done. Fatima quietly walked away, not knowing how to come to terms with his death. She didn’t have the desire to live after his death. She immediately became ill a few days after.

Why did she love the Prophet ﷺ so much ? He showed her so much love and respect and gave her so much of himself and his time.

The Raw Pain of Grief

Fatima died during the first Ramadan after the death of the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ, in Medina. Everyone was already in pain, experiencing the first Ramadan without him. Ramadan 3, she went out to her courtyard, looked up at the sky, smiling, called out to Asma bint Omays, and told her that when she dies, she wanted to be buried at night, so not too many people attend and no one would see her figure. She wanted a very modest parting. She was known for her utmost modesty, and even asked her for a wide cloth to cover her with after her death. Asma told Um Salama, who had brought her a cloth she had brought from Abyssinia and Fatima was pleased with it.

Then Fatima called for Ali. Her last moments were with her family. They shared some moments of love and she told Ali whom she wanted him to marry after she died, Umama (daughter of her sister, Zaynab), so the children would be cared for. She embraced them all, and left the world laid out, looking at the heavens with light and a smile on her face, in complete peace. This was just as her father ﷺ had told her, that she would be the first of his family or companions to follow him in death.

Ali cried frequently during her washing, and he received and placed her body in the burial plot, and led the funeral. It was incredibly difficult for him. He said nothing had exhausted him more in his entire lifetime than the loss of these two beloved people to him in a very short period of time.

He recited her a poem at the gravesite, filled with unfiltered, raw pain. “What is wrong with me standing at the graveside saying salam to the one who has passed., the grave of my lover, but she is not responding to my greeting. My lover - why are you not responding to my salam, have you forgotten all of the intimate moments that were shared between the two of us ?” Then he started to recite Fatima’s reply in the poem, “My beloved one - how can I

respond to you now that I have been consumed with stones and dirt,” He cried and continued , “the dirt has consumed my beauty and that is why I have moved on, and I have been veiled from my family and my beloved ones, so my salam back to you and to them, those intimate moments have now passed.”

Ali didn't go back on his faith, but he did feel pain. We are not expected to not feel pain, that is not what is meant by patience. Rather, patience is to not say anything except that which is pleasing to God and to use that pain to do good.

Lessons Learned

1. See the love, pain and mercy in their marriage and the pain of separation in death.
2. Remember that they will be gathered together again in the Hereafter, insha'Allah (if Allah wills)
3. Gives us perspective:
 - What we should do during our lives in preparation for our death, who we should be with, and who we should love (Allah first, the Prophet Mohammad above all others)
 - How we should carry ourselves after the death of a loved one
 - Be accepting of Allah's will always and be patient, while still feeling emotions.

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