



EDITED BY

ASMA  
AFSARUDDIN

≡ The Oxford Handbook of  
**ISLAM AND  
WOMEN**

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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ISLAM  
AND WOMEN

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*Edited by*

ASMA AFSARUDDIN

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## CHAPTER 3

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# WOMEN IN THE ḤADĪTH LITERATURE

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FERYAL SALEM

ḤADĪTH literature is rich with its references to women from the ancient past as well as those from the Prophet Muḥammad's contemporary period. A study of the way in which women are portrayed and referenced in *ḥadīth* texts provides a unique glimpse into the roles women played for the narrators of these prophetic traditions. Women in the *ḥadīth* literature can be divided into four primary categories: (1) women whose stories are told from the past; (2) stories, narratives, and references to the wives of the Prophet whose rank as "Mothers of the Believers (*ummahāt al-mu'minīn*)," earned them a distinctive role as instructional models; (3) women who were considered Companions of the Prophet or *saḥābiyyāt*; and finally (4) statements and references to women as a general category without specific references to any particular individual.

While not an exhaustive study, bringing together all of these types of occurrences of women in *ḥadīth* texts helps us have a more accurate understanding of women's roles and contributions to early Islam through examining the *ḥadīth* corpus holistically. This is especially so since selective readings of *ḥadīths* can convey the biases of the reader, transmitter, or the memory of the individual narrator. A broad study of the different ways in which women are portrayed in early *ḥadīth* reports creates a significantly more nuanced perspective that acknowledges complexity and the human element in the transmission process.

## THE ḤADĪTH OF UMM ZAR<sup>6</sup>

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Among the most well-known *ḥadīths* in which women feature prominently is what is famously known as the "Ḥadīth Umm Zar<sup>6</sup>." This *ḥadīth* has received so much attention

by Muslim scholars that numerous commentaries and studies of this one prophetic tradition can be found in Islamic sources.<sup>1</sup> What is noteworthy however, is that despite the focus of this *ḥadīth* on women and its narration by a woman, this woman-centric perspective present in the narration is commonly overlooked by male scholars. This perspective tends to be restored when women are present in scholarly circles of interpretation, which leads to a more sustained reflection on the spiritual significance of this *ḥadīth*.

The *ḥadīth* of Umm Zar‘ begins with the Prophet’s wife ‘Ā’isha telling the story of eleven women from the pre-Islamic period, gathering to speak about their husbands and promising each other that they would be completely honest. The first woman begins by characterizing her husband as a piece of emaciated flesh on a camel that is neither easy to climb on nor flexible enough to move on its own. The second woman said that she would not start talking about her husband’s flaws because if she started, she feared she would not be able to stop.<sup>2</sup> The third woman said her husband was rough and if she dared speak, he would either divorce her or keep her in limbo.<sup>3</sup> The fourth woman compared her husband to the “night of Tihāma,” which was neither too hot nor too cold. He was neither menacing nor demanding. The fifth woman praised her husband saying that he was like a lynx in the house and a lion when he was in public. He also does not hold his family to account for gifts and provisions he has generously given them. The sixth woman said that when her husband eats, he feasts and when he drinks, he empties the jug. When he lies down, he curls up to himself without extending a hand of comfort to his wife. The seventh woman said her husband was a buffoon who had every illness. He will either hurt you or wound you or both. The eighth woman said her husband had the gentle touch of a rabbit and a fragrant smell. The ninth woman described her husband as being refined and of tall stature. His home is near the center of congregation. The tenth woman talked about her husband’s extensive wealth beyond the average imagination.

These ten women precede the eleventh woman, who is known as Umm Zar‘. Although this lengthy and much-cited prophetic tradition is better known by its second segment, which focuses on the story of Umm Zar‘, the inclusion of all of the detailed descriptions of the various types of husbands above is significant. In recalling this incident while with the Prophet, ‘Ā’isha could have omitted the first ten women’s stories, considering them superfluous. But the narrative indicates that she explicitly chose not to do so. This general structure of ten women’s descriptions preceding the story of Umm Zar‘ has also been preserved in a number of chains of transmission in different *ḥadīth* texts with little variation. While some commentators on the *ḥadīth* have highlighted the peculiar Arabic vocabulary in this narrative and others have commented on the Prophet’s patience with his family in his willingness to listen to what may be deemed as an old wives tale, what is often missing in examinations of this *ḥadīth* is its instructional relevance for men seeking to understand prophetic ideals of male companionship through analyzing the allusions and connotations of each of the ten women’s depictions of what constitutes a good husband and a bad one as portrayed by ‘Ā’isha to the Prophet Muḥammad.



Each of these ten women's husbands personify both vices and virtues that women look for and desire in marriage companions. The first two women describe bad husbands who are either so difficult to live with that they are like "insurmountable pieces of flesh on a camel," or they are full of so many flaws that if their wives began to speak about them in public, they "fear they would not stop." It would appear that through using metaphor and indirect critique of specific models of male companionship which do injustice to their female counterparts, 'Ā'isha is using this *ḥadīth* as a medium of instruction to men who will later hear this *ḥadīth*. Furthermore, if 'Ā'isha is perceived as the scholar and teacher to the early Muslim community that she was commonly believed to be, it would seem reasonable to assume that every part of the *ḥadīth*, including that of the first ten women, is deliberately included for instructional purposes, with particular attention to male listeners.

'Ā'isha's role as a leader and teacher to men is reminiscent of another *ḥadīth* in which she instructs men in a far more personal matter to follow the Prophet's example by telling them, "If someone relates to you that the Messenger of Allah urinated while standing, do not believe him."<sup>4</sup> The other *ḥadīths* on this specific issue are considered weak by *ḥadīth* transmitters. The exception is in 'Ā'isha's narration of the *ḥadīth* whose transmission has been relied on to derive preferred practices from a legal perspective (*fiqhī*) that ensure male modesty in these circumstances. Although there are numerous other examples of 'Ā'isha's religious authority, her ability to instruct men in such intimate matters reflects her strength of leadership in addressing an even more urgent matter for the cohesiveness of family structures in the early Muslim community by teaching men about good male companionship and what may be termed in contemporary contexts as "positive masculinity" through her story telling in the *Ḥadīth* of Umm Zar'.

The third and seventh women similarly describe men who are abusive toward their wives, either emotionally or physically. The placement of these qualities and vices is also tactfully instructive. When the tale of the eleventh woman begins, the listener may assume by the third woman that all of the men are villains in this narrative. However, this pattern is abruptly broken by the fourth woman, who in describing her husband as a lynx at home and a lion in public is alluding to his flexible and mild nature among his family members and his firmness among those who are unrelated to him. This gentleness among kin and firmness among strangers is reminiscent of the Qur'ānic verse in which believers are described as "firm towards the disbelievers and merciful among themselves" (Qur'ān, 48:29). The fifth woman's husband follows in stark contrast by being a slothful and lazy husband at home who eats and drinks too much. She also describes her husband as curling up when he sleeps and not extending a hand to "uncover any sorrow." Lest the implications of the absence of his intimate companionship be lost on the listener, the eighth husband is admired for his smooth touch and good smell.

The inclusion of these references to women's appreciation or lack thereof of the intimate companionship of their husbands is significant in that they affirm women's sexuality. This is explicitly mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of Umm Zar', in addition to other positive qualities of the husband, such as his ability to support his wife emotionally, and thereby affirming her humanity as another integral element of a marital partnership. The

ninth and tenth women expand further on the qualities that women seek in husbands through highlighting the generosity and material support that each of these men provided their wives.

The eleventh woman shifts the focus of this story to another chapter when she begins by saying that her husband was Abū Zar'. She is the first woman to actually name her husband. She then proceeds to ask the question, "And who was this Abū Zar'?"—after which she begins a lengthy description of her marriage that is notably longer than that of all of the ten women who came before. Abū Zar' gave his wife much jewelry and her earrings swung back and forth on her ears. Her arms became fleshy and Abū Zar' praised his wife until she began to praise herself. He married his wife from a modest family and brought her into luxury and comfort, indicating that he did not marry her for her family connections. The eleventh woman, whom we will learn is named Umm Zar', says that when she spoke her husband listened and did not turn her away. She slept until the morning and drank her fill.

The story describes in equal detail all of the comforts and luxuries that each of their children and members of their household enjoyed. But the story takes a turn in that one day, Abū Zar' went out and met a woman with two boys. Abū Zar' divorced Umm Zar' and married this other woman. Umm Zar' says that after Abū Zar', she too remarried and that her new husband was a noble and generous man who told her to eat and drink to her fill. He gave her various pairs of cattle and showered her with all the gifts she might desire. He also gave her everything she needed to support her family. After emphasizing the generosity of her new husband, Umm Zar' says that "If I combined everything he gave me, it would not have equaled the smallest vessel from Abū Zar'." Upon finishing the story, 'Ā'isha relates that the Prophet Muḥammad said to his wife, "I am to you what Abū Zar' was to Umm Zar', except that he divorced her and I will never divorce you."<sup>5</sup>

While many commentators have studied this *ḥadīth* for its rhetoric, Arabic folklore, and legal implications, such as the permissibility of relating stories about others when the identities of the participants are unnamed, there is a dearth of studies that examine the implications this report has for women's roles and representation in the early Islamic tradition. Considering that the silence of the Prophet toward words and actions done in his presence is considered by *ḥadīth* scholars as an act of approval and hence a part of the prophetic Sunna from which Muslims can draw ethical guidelines, the lack of correction or condemnation of the Prophet as he listened to his wife tell this tale is more than simply instructive of what constitutes backbiting (*ghība*) and whether the anonymity of characters in a story makes exposing their negative actions permissible, as has commonly been discussed in legal (*fiqh*) commentaries on the *ḥadīth*.

It goes further to indicate what kinds of behaviors and companionship models in husbands are regarded as encompassing prophetic ideals. This is even more pressing when one juxtaposes this *ḥadīth* to another in which the Prophet states, "the best among you are those who are best to their wives, and I am the best among you to my wife."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, we see in this *ḥadīth* that the Prophet is not only silent as 'Ā'isha relays the story to him, he himself becomes an active participant in the narrative by comparing himself to Abū Zar' in his relationship to 'Ā'isha with the important exception that he

will never leave her. Thus, the absence of a rigorous discussion of the significance of this *ḥadīth* to understanding gender dynamics by both past and present scholars is a conspicuous shortcoming in the study of this *ḥadīth* in particular, as well as the depiction of women in *ḥadīth* literature in general.

As mentioned, it would appear that in relaying this story ‘Ā’isha is seeking to convey an instructive message to the men of the early Muslim community about what women seek in their male companions. The prophetic approval and participation in this narrative, and its later reporting in the canonical *ḥadīth* books of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Tirmidhī, make this a tradition that cannot be ignored and forgotten.<sup>7</sup> Umm Zar’<sup>’s</sup> depiction of Abū Zar’ “praising her until she started praising herself” signifies the importance of men showing respect and value to their wives as a way to help them feel comfortable about their own self-worth. Abū Zar’ also listened to his wife when she spoke and “did not turn her away.” This is another Islamic ideal of male interaction with the women in their lives that is personified in the actions of Abū Zar’. He let her “sleep until the morning” and gave her everything she needed, indicating that an ideal husband takes responsibility for taking care of the needs of his wife and makes her comfort a priority. Abū Zar’ married a woman who came from a materially less privileged background and elevated her in rank through her shared life with him. This too is an indication that a husband who is following the model set out by the Prophet in this *ḥadīth* does not belittle his wife in their marriage and ensures that their marital bond is one of a mutual relationship that encompasses a shared identity rather than a woman being regarded as still affiliated with her parental family unit while the children and husband are affiliated with the man, as happens in some traditional cultures.

All of this behavior is then explicitly endorsed by the Prophet when he tells ‘Ā’isha that he is Abū Zar’ to her with the one major exception which is that he will never divorce her. It appears that even in this interaction is an instructive lesson to Muslim men who seek to emulate prophetic models of masculinity. The Prophet in this *ḥadīth* did not leave his wife “hanging” or cultivate in her a sense of insecurity as a form of domination. The Prophet is endorsing Abū Zar’<sup>’s</sup> benevolence to his wife and then surpassing it through giving his wife ‘Ā’isha a sense of permanence in her irreplaceable position in the Prophet Muḥammad’s life. In doing so, the Prophet appears to be exemplifying another *ḥadīth* in which he states that women are the other halves of men (*al-nisā’ shaqā’iq al-rijāl*)<sup>8</sup> and teaching men through his example how to make the women in their lives feel valued, loved, respected, and secure in their status. This challenges conceptions of masculinity that are sometimes framed as Islamic, but commonly transcend religious affiliation in which the expression of deep commitment to one woman, interacting with her on the basis of love, respect, and devotion are deemed as either weaknesses or imports from romanticized relationship models that are alien to Islamic norms.

Furthermore, the framing of Umm Zar’<sup>’s</sup> description of the events leading to their breakup is also significant. When Abū Zar’ went out and fell in love with another woman, he did not simply marry her as another wife in a polygamous relationship. Abū Zar’ divorced Umm Zar’ and married this other woman. The theme of monogamous relationships in this narrative is noteworthy in that it challenges assumptions that the

idea of a man and a woman having a monogamous loving relationship is alien to the early Islamic community.

Once again, the Prophet did not interrupt to ask why Abū Zar‘ needed to divorce Umm Zar‘ to marry the other woman, as some contemporary Muslim men may ask. Instead, the prophetic correction to this story is that unlike Abū Zar‘, the Prophet would never divorce ‘Ā’isha. This also challenges modern male conceptions of masculinity in which polygamy in some modern Muslim movements has taken on an ideological form and even considered by some as a religiously mandated manifestation of masculinity. For Muslims who rely on the *ḥadīth* tradition to derive the Sunna or prophetic precedent, the Prophet Muḥammad’s conspicuous silence on the option of polygamy is instructive. His corrective role in this story can also be instructive for Muslims. The Prophet makes no mention of polygamy as a corrective to Abū Zar‘’s behavior but rather mentions a superior form of loyalty to his wife as the corrective. It is, after all, noteworthy that the Prophet Muḥammad emphasizes that, unlike Abū Zar‘, he would never abandon his wife ‘Ā’isha to whom he expressed his love.

Other significant elements of the *ḥadīth* from the perspective of gender is that the woman whom Abū Zar‘ leaves Umm Zar‘ for is not a younger woman who had never been married. Instead, she is either a divorced or widowed woman with two male children at her feet when he sees her and falls in love with her. The lack of stigma for a woman in this stage in her life and her ability to tempt Abū Zar‘ away from his wife is in sharp contrast to later cultural norms that developed in many parts of the Muslim world in which a previously married woman with children, let alone male children, would be regarded as undesirable for marriage. In addition, Umm Zar‘ also remarries. The *ḥadīth* describes both characters, “he married her and I also remarried,” without alluding to any stigma associated with a woman remarrying after divorcing a husband. This too is in sharp contrast to the cultural norms that developed in Muslim lands that make it challenging for women to remarry after divorce.

## THE FOUR WOMEN OF PARADISE

Another well-known *ḥadīth* that refers to women of the past while maintaining an element of relevance to the period contemporary to the Prophet Muḥammad is, “The best of women among the people of Paradise are Khadija bint Khuwaylid, Fatima bint Muḥammad, Maryam bint ‘Imrān, and Āsiya bint Muzāḥim, the wife of Pharaoh.”<sup>9</sup> The role of Khadija in both the *ḥadīth* literature and historical reports is significant. One such tradition narrates that she had once gathered with her friends near the Ka’ba when she was a young woman when a wandering old man came to them prophesizing, “O women of Tayma, a prophet named Ahmad will be sent from your city with a divine message. Whoever has the ability to be his wife, should not hesitate.”<sup>10</sup>

This report in Ibn Sa’d’s *Ṭabaqāt* continues by stating that all of the women laughed at this man and turned him away with the exception of Khadija, who pondered these

words and considered that they may possibly be true. The portrayal of Khadija as anticipating Muḥammad's prophecy when she married him based on this report is a valuable glimpse into her character, yet it is commonly overlooked by contemporary scholars who often depict the significance of the historical accounts of her life as relevant to the extent that they reveal elements of the prophetic biography (*sīra*). Comparing this report to the numerous other *ḥadīths* that describe Khadija as having been exceptionally calm and supportive of the Prophet when he came to her for comfort during the time he is said to have first received Qur'ānic revelation, supports this portrayal of her expectations from her future husband.<sup>11</sup>

Various other *ḥadīths* portray Khadija as the bedrock of support for the Prophet in the earliest phases of Islamic history. She was a twice-widowed older woman with two children from a previous marriage before marrying the Prophet. She had the financial means to build a new family with Muḥammad, with whom she had six children. When Muḥammad used to retreat to the outskirts of Mecca, the *ḥadīth* literature presents Khadija as supportive of her husband's contemplative practices through regularly sending food to make his lengthy seclusion possible. *Ḥadīths* also assert that when the Prophet was first approached by the angel Gabriel, he was afraid and that it was in the bosom of Khadija that he found reassurance and support.<sup>12</sup>

According to the *ḥadīth* literature, Khadija has the distinction of being the first convert to Islam and having the rank of the first Companion (*ṣaḥābiyya*), which is regarded as a distinctive religious status with implications for *ḥadīth* transmission and religious leadership. Khadija is also depicted in the *ḥadīth* literature as being the only person who received greetings of peace from God transmitted through the angel Gabriel to her husband. It is reported that:

One day Gabriel delivered a salutation to Muḥammad, peace be upon him, saying: "Present Khadija with *salām* [i.e., greetings of peace] from her Lord." The Prophet, peace be upon him, declared: "O Khadija, that was Gabriel. He has delivered a salutation from your Lord!" Khadija replied: "God is peace and from Him comes peace and upon Gabriel I wish peace."<sup>13</sup>

Based on this narration, Khadija's response in the *ḥadīth* above has become a commonly recited supplication to this day after the completion of the five daily Muslim ritual prayers. The year that Khadija died is memorialized by Muslims as "The Year of Sadness (*'ām al-ḥuzn*)."<sup>14</sup> The *ḥadīth* literature depicts the Prophet as continuing to send gifts to Khadija's family and maintaining connections with them until he died. When this became a point of contention at one point with his wife 'Ā'isha, he replied in a well-known *ḥadīth*, "She believed in me when nobody believed in me. She believed the truth when people thought I was a liar. She supported me with her wealth when nobody gave me. And God granted me children from nobody else."<sup>14</sup>

For Muslims who regard the Prophet as an ethical model, this is another source for defining positive masculinity. While many men might deem such an eternal loyalty to one woman as compromising their manliness or while some may find pleasing a newer

and younger wife more expedient, the character of the Prophet in his interactions with Khadija's relatives, even after her death, challenge such notions of masculinity. Loyalty and love to a woman based on her inward qualities rather than her outward beauty is demonstrated throughout *ḥadīth* literature as a model of virtue for men who look to the Prophet Muḥammad for defining ideals that establish masculine norms for interacting with female partners.

Faṭīma, who is the second figure mentioned in the “four women of Paradise *ḥadīth*,” was the daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad. She is known in *ḥadīth* literature to have received the nickname the “mother of her father,”<sup>15</sup> due to the extent of the attentiveness she gave to her father after her mother's death. She is known to have emigrated to Abyssinia and then emigrated again to Medina. Several accounts of her marriage to 'Alī and her children are also extant in *ḥadīth* literature. The Prophet is reported to have had a special place in his heart for Faṭīma. *Ḥadīths* mention that whenever she would come into a room, the Prophet would stand to greet her, then kiss her and hold her hand, and then seat her in his place. It is said that when the Prophet would enter a room, Faṭīma would reciprocate by doing the same.<sup>16</sup> Faṭīma is said to have been the last person to whom the Prophet would bid farewell before leaving for a trip and the first person that he would visit upon his return.<sup>17</sup> The detailed descriptions of the extent of the reverence and affection that the Prophet showed his daughter provides further insight into gender relations based on the Muḥammadan model, according to which female family members were treated with the highest levels of respect and devotion.

While the *ḥadīth* literature is scarce in its portrayals of the other two women, Maryam and Āsiya, in the “four women of Paradise *ḥadīth*,” most of what can be gleaned about their significance to Muslims can be found in Qur'ānic narratives. The verses from the Qur'ān of special relevance are:

And God sets forth as an example for those who believe the wife of Pharaoh when she said, “My Lord, build for me a house near unto Thee in the Garden, deliver me from Pharaoh and his deeds, and deliver me from the wrongdoing people.” And Mary, the daughter of 'Imrān, who preserved her chastity. Then We breathed therein of Our Spirit, and she confirmed the Words of her Lord and His Books; and she was among the devoutly obedient. (Qur'ān 66:1–12).<sup>18</sup>

The *ḥadīth* that cites the two women mentioned in this verse as among “the four women of Paradise” is making an implied statement about the extent of their virtue. The verse from the Qur'ān above clarifies an essential question regarding the gender specific nature of the four women of Paradise *ḥadīth*. Namely one may ask, is the capacity for virtue by these women limited by their gender? Do Muslim sources conceive that women can also exceed men in their virtue and piety?

It is worthy of note that the Qur'ān refers to Āsiya and Maryam as models of virtue for all of humanity, rather than as models exclusively for women. Thus, the final verses of the Qur'ānic chapter *al-Taḥrīm* explicitly indicate a Qur'ānic vision of vice and virtue



that is not gendered. In other words, both men and women are depicted as being able to attain equal ranks of vice or virtue, regardless of their gender. Based on this context of Qur'ānic references to the same women in the “four women of Paradise *ḥadīth*,” it can be argued that the femaleness of the four characters is not intended to delimit the extent of their piety as distinctively inferior to that of male counterparts, but rather to highlight the extent to which women can attain piety that can exceed that of men while also being independent of them. This latter point will be further elucidated below.

Another significant feature of women as they appear both in this *ḥadīth* and the corresponding Qur'ānic references is that Āsiya is considered to have a holy status in Islam that is emblematic of universal virtue, not because of her adherence to her husband's beliefs but because of her pious and principled defiance of him. Her husband was the Pharaoh of Egypt who ignored the warnings of Moses. She believed in Moses despite the tyranny of her powerful husband and her precarious position as his wife in the cultural context of this ancient time period.

The second woman perceived to be emblematic of virtue in the “four women *ḥadīth*” is Maryam, who is deemed as saintly by Muslims without having any husband at all. In the Islamic narrative, there is no report of her ever marrying and there is no mention anywhere of Joseph, as there is in Christian narratives. This does not deny the possibility that she did later marry; but the lack of explicit reference to her marital status indicates the irrelevance of such a status for the story of Mary and Jesus within the Islamic tradition. According to the Qur'ānic narrative, Maryam is a single mother who faces the hardships and taunts from her community single-handedly without a male counterpart to save her. Her perseverance and sincere devotion to God then earns her a rank among those closest to God—hence, in the Qur'ān, Maryam represents a model of piety and goodness for all of humanity to follow. Furthermore, her son, Jesus or 'Īsā, is honored in the Qur'ān by being known through his affiliation to her as “'Isā ibn Maryam” or “Jesus, the Son of Mary.” Furthermore, God in the Qur'ān corrects Maryam's mother's assumption that “a male is not like a female” (Qur'ān, 3: 36) in terms of spiritual capacity and status in this Qur'ānic narrative in which this girl, that was mistakenly believed to not be as good as a male child, supersedes all the boys and men of her time in virtue and becomes a model of piety for both men and women—not only women—as indicated the verses from *al-Taḥrīm* mentioned above.

The two women mentioned in the verses before those referencing Maryam and Āsiya in the Qur'ān are the wives of Lot and Noah.<sup>19</sup> The Qur'ān juxtaposes them against the virtuous models of Āsiya and Maryam as models of vice of whom humanity is exhorted to be wary. These women were also married to men who were considered among the most pious individuals in Islam through their ranks as Prophets. Yet despite the righteousness of their husbands, they are presented as being their opposite in moral standing by virtue of their individual actions.

Thus, one of the lessons of these Qur'ānic narratives is that they indicate women's free agency in becoming either agents of vice or virtue without connection to their husbands or lack thereof (as in the case of Maryam). Since many elements of *ḥadīth* literature are fundamentally linked to Qur'ānic narratives that further explicate their

significance within *ḥadīths*, it is essential to examine related Qurʾānic verses to have a better understanding of the scriptural contexts in which these women in *ḥadīths* are referenced.

## ḤADĪTHS ABOUT WOMEN WHOSE QUERIES ARE ANSWERED BY THE QURʾĀN

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Among examples of *ḥadīth* reports linked to Qurʾānic references related to women are the *ḥadīths* that depict the context for the verse in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* that explicate the principle of spiritual equality of men and women. Among the various reports on this, it said that ʿUmāra al-Anṣāriyya came to the Prophet and said, “I do not see but that everything is about men, and I do not find the women mentioned with regard to anything.”<sup>20</sup> Another account relates that Umm Salama came to the Prophet and asked, “Why is it that we are not mentioned in the Qurʾān as are the men?”<sup>21</sup> After this query, the *ḥadīth* literature indicates that the following verse was revealed to the Prophet:

For submitting men and submitting women, believing men and believing women, devout men and devout women, truthful men and truthful women, patient men and patient women, humble men and humble women, charitable men and charitable women, men who fast and women who fast, men who guard their private parts and women who guard [their private parts], men who remember God often and women who remember [God often], God has prepared forgiveness and great reward. (Qurʾān, 33:35)<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, we find the contextual information within the *ḥadīth* literature for a Quraʾnic chapter named after a woman who complained to the Prophet (*Sūrat al-Mujādila*). Khawla bint Thaʿlaba is reported to have come to the Prophet after her husband initiated a pre-Islamic practice known as *zihār*. This practice entailed a man telling his wife that she is the equivalent of “his mother’s back.” This meant that he would neither approach her in marital relations nor divorce her. The woman was said to be “suspended” between these two states.

When Khawla bint Thaʿlaba’s husband declared that she was now the “equivalent of his mother’s back,” it is reported in the *ḥadīth* literature that she went to the Prophet saying: “He has worn out my youth and I let him enjoy me. But when I grew older and could no longer bear children, he put me away saying that I am as his mother’s back. O God, I complain to Thee!”<sup>23</sup> One version of the story relates that she did not move until the angel Gabriel came down with the verses from the Qurʾān:

God has indeed heard the words of she who disputes with thee concerning her husband and complains to God. And God hears your conversation. Truly God is Hearing, Seeing. Those among you who commit *zihār* against their wives, those are

not their mothers. None are their mothers save those who gave birth to them. Truly they speak indecent words and calumny. And truly God is Pardoning, Forgiving. (Qurʾān, 58:1–2).

Another version of the *ḥadīth* relates that the Prophet sought to resolve the conflict by pronouncing the *ḡihār* as an equivalent of a divorce. This was not satisfactory to Khawla, who argued that her husband did not actually declare a divorce and that a *ḡihār* was not the equivalent of a divorce. They argued about this matter back and forth, until it is reported that this portion of the Qurʾān was later revealed. The rest of the *ḥadīths* on this matter relate to the penalty that her elderly husband had to pay in order to restore the marriage.<sup>24</sup>

Both of these narratives in the *ḥadīth* literature portray an active presence of women around the Prophet in establishing the early Muslim community and participating in the revelatory process. Women's voices were heard and acknowledged as such in reports on sections of the Qurʾān that become known as providing the "cause of revelation" or *sabab al-nuzūl* for specific verses. In the cases above, we find that these specific causes that instigated the revelation of certain verses (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) referred to women who sought equality with men or were wronged by their husbands and sought justice. Just like Āsiya, who is honored for the defiance of her husband, Khawla bint Thaʿlaba becomes immortalized in Islamic narratives as having been a woman who not only challenged her husband but argued with the Prophet who was overruled by God in her favor.

We find the strong voices of women consistently in numerous other depictions of figures close to the Prophet within *ḥadīth* literature. Asmā' bint Yazīd was a woman from the Anṣār of Medina who participated in the oath of allegiance that the nascent Muslim community of Medina gave the Prophet. She had been known for excelling in learning and understanding of the Prophet's mission. She was also commended for her sense of modesty not preventing her in asking about intimately personal matters related to religious practice, such as menstruation and ritual cleansing. Asmā' was so esteemed among her female peers for her forthrightness and knowledge that they appointed her as their spokeswoman in asking the Prophet about matters related to the equality of men and women in religious status. It is reported in a well-known *ḥadīth* that Asmā' bint Yazīd approached the Prophet when he was seated among a group of his male Companions one day saying:

You are my mother and father O Messenger of God! I am a representative sent on behalf of the women to you. There is not a woman east or west who heard of my coming to you except that she holds the same opinion as me. God sent you to the entirety of men and women. Hence, we believed in you and in God. But we—the body of women—are deprived (*maḡṣūrāt*) and limited (*maḥṣūrāt*) [while] sitting in your homes, fulfilling your needs, raising your children. While you—O men—have been favored with [greater access] to gatherings and meetings, visiting the sick, witnessing funerals, and pilgrimage (Ḥajj) after pilgrimage. Even better than that is fighting in the path of God. When a man from among you set out for greater or lesser pilgrimage

or martial engagement, we protect your property, mend your clothes, and raise your children. Do we not share in divine reward with you O Messenger of God?<sup>25</sup>

The Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have turned to the men in his presence upon hearing Asmā's question saying to them, "Have you ever heard a woman's speech better than this one asking about her faith?" The men responded saying, "No, O Messenger of God. We did not think women could lead in this way." The Prophet then turned to Asmā' and said, "Return O Asmā', and inform the women behind you that the good companionship of one of you to her spouse and seeking his contentment and her following that which he concurs with, equals all of that [you have listed from the actions of men]."<sup>26</sup> The report finishes by saying that the woman left exultant (*tahallal*), jubilant, and ready to report back the good news to the women she represented. Different versions of this narrative have slight variations in their wording. However, the general framework of the *ḥadīth* remains the same.

Considering that this incident is reported to have taken place in the first/seventh century, a woman coming to the "populace" of men from the "populace" of women sounds much like a grassroots protest. The word used in the *ḥadīth* is *ma'ṣhar*, which has the connotation of a large community of people. Here we have a *ḥadīth* in which the entire female community has expressed concern to the Prophet regarding their access to equal opportunities for spiritual advancement in their faith. It is worthy of note that the women were not rebelling against their roles in running the household and raising a family, but rather they were concerned that these extra responsibilities were obstacles to their striving to have equal spiritual ranks before God through extra worship. This is indicated in the inclusion of the state of being *maqṣūr* or "falling short" in their opportunities for the same types of worshipful acts that men had, as presented in their list of concerns.

The women also complained about their being "limited" or "excluded" (*maḥṣūrāt*) from participation in the many public rituals that men were involved in by virtue of their household responsibilities. Such a case being brought to the Prophet and representing the unified voice of women in the first century of Islam and its subsequent preservation in *ḥadīth* literature is quite extraordinary in revealing the extent of women's courage to speak with strength, not only privately to the Prophet, but to also do so in front of all of the male Companions who were gathered around the Prophet.

The Prophet's response, as transmitted in the *ḥadīth*, is also informative. He did not find this kind of challenge from the women in his community as threatening. He did not ridicule Asmā' nor did he attempt to "put her back in her place." Instead, he elevated her and used this woman's strength as a teaching moment for the males of his community to acknowledge her and commend her for her words. Before addressing Asmā', the *ḥadīth* indicates that the Prophet turned to the men around him first and asked them a rhetorical question, "Have you ever heard a woman deliver a speech inquiring about her faith better than this?" The *ḥadīth* seems to indicate that the Prophet is highlighting both the eloquence of her words as well as the extent of her sense of urgency in practicing her faith.

The response of the Companions to the Prophet supports this interpretation. They respond saying they did not know that women could lead in this way. This ignorance was remedied with the Prophet's affirmation of this woman and the women's concerns she brought to him. In telling women that in performing different responsibilities, that are of course determined by societal limitations and norms of the seventh century, they receive the same reward as all the things that men do, he is setting a prophetic precedent (*sunna*).

The tone of the Prophet Muḥammad's words is positive and uplifting. When a woman came to him on behalf of the entire community of women with concerns regarding equity, his response was to assure her that men had no preference over women in matters of faith. The detail at the end of the report in which she left the gathering with her head held high and with good news for the women, is consistent with the portrayal of the response of the Prophet Muḥammad in the rest of this tradition. He does not let her down or belittle her in front of his male Companions, in fact the Prophet does the opposite by elevating this female Companion in front of the male Companions.

In the details of this story, we see parallel patterns of behavior with the narrative of Umm Zar' in terms of the Prophet's response to his wife 'Ā'isha in which he uplifts her and responds with affirmation. These details in *ḥadīth* literature have contemporary relevance for Muslims who look to prophetic precedents (*sunna*) for guidance regarding ideals of male interactions with women based on the Muḥammadan model.

Furthermore, Asmā' bint Yazīd is given the title of "orator" or *khaṭība* for her eloquence. This is significant in that it demonstrates that women were praised for public speaking and that there is a precedent for women speaking in front of a group of men during the lifetime of the Prophet. As Muslim practices began to limit women's public appearance including her public speech in later centuries, these types of reports of women in *ḥadīth* literature highlight the subjectivity of the reliance on *'urf* or customary practice to inform Islamic law based on changing gender norms that may contradict Muḥammadan principles depicted in hadith literature about the early Muslim community.<sup>27</sup>

Contemporary analysis of these types of reports leaves room for revision of gender related practices that are commonly assumed to be based on prophetic precedent, but closer analysis reveals that they are legal positions that were informed by the cultural context of later times. This does not discredit the ruling per se, as consideration of context is a hallmark of the genius of a skilled *fiqh* specialist. Rather, it simply highlights the need to revisit ossified *fiqh* rulings related to daily life (*mu'āmalāt*)—including matters related to marriage and gender relations—as contexts change.

Like Asmā' bint Yazīd, Nusayba bint Ka'b was another woman of the Anṣār who exemplifies in her life women's desires to participate in public ritual and observances. Her most well-known role in *ḥadīth* literature is her active participation in battle. It is known in Islamic practice that women are not required to take arms when men are called to do so. Thus, it can be said that Nusayba was a woman in the seventh century who joined Muslims in battle out of her own choice. This is not only an indicator of her

own initiative but also an indicator of an early Muslim community that was open to and allowed for women to make choices about their public roles.

Nusayba bint Ka'b's leadership started in her representation of women through her participation in the oath of 'Aqaba (622 CE) in which the new Muslim converts of Medina promised allegiance to and protection of the Meccan Muslim community. After her conversion to Islam, Nusayba bint Ka'b is known to have played an active role in every major battle that the Muslims were involved in. She was known to have been a veteran of the battles of Uḥud, Ḥunayn, Khaybar, and Yamāma. Even more worthy of note is the report in which it is said that when Muslims were surrounded during the battle of Uḥud and a large number of Muslims dispersed or fled, Nusayba was among a group who surrounded the Prophet and fought with him. Such courage on the battlefield attributed to Muslim women and preserved in *ḥadīth* literature is significant. Later, 'Umar was reported to have testified to her courage during his rule through favoring her with gifts and saying that he heard the Prophet say of the Battle of Uḥud, "I never turned right or left without seeing her fighting to defend me."<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, Nusayba bint Ka'b is among the Companions of the Prophet who witnessed the two most consequential events of this historic period, namely that of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya and the Conquest of Mecca. Among the events that led to the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya in which the early Muslim community was first recognized by the Meccans through a truce, was the disappearance of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān after he had been sent to the Meccans to negotiate. At this point, the Muslims believed that he had been killed and as a result upheld the unity of their community through renewing their allegiance of loyalty to the Prophet. This is said to be the context in which a verse from the Qur'ān was revealed saying, "Truly those who pledge allegiance unto thee pledge allegiance only unto God. The Hand of God is over their hands." (Qur'ān, 48: 10). Nusayba bint Ka'b, through her participation in this oath, was therefore included among those who pledged her allegiance and whose hands are said to have had the "hand of God" over them. A common interpretation for this expression of God's "hand being over theirs" is that God's protection and empowerment was granted to the likes of Nusayba when she pledged allegiance to God's messenger, Muḥammad.

## ḤADĪTHS COMPOSED OF SHORT STATEMENTS

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Perhaps, better known than the many detailed *ḥadīth* reports depicting women's lived experiences of Islamic practice and their interactions with the Prophet Muḥammad mentioned above, are numerous short statement *ḥadīths* that make references to women in ways that can be perceived as either positive or negative.

Examples of *ḥadīths* that may be regarded as positive are the following. "Whoever has three girls and is patient with them, feeds them, gives them drink, and clothes them to the best of his ability, he will be veiled from hellfire on the Day of Judgment, even if it were one [daughter]."<sup>29</sup> There are a number of different variations of this well-known



*ḥadīth*. One states that one who raises two daughters and treats them well will accompany the Prophet Muḥammad in Heaven like two fingers stuck to one another. Another version of this tradition explicitly states that if a parent does not favor his sons above his daughters and treats them with tenderness, they will be granted Heaven as their final abode.<sup>30</sup>

In another *ḥadīth*, a man approached the Prophet and asked him who is most worthy of his good companionship. The Prophet responded saying, “Your mother.” He asked, and then whom? The Prophet responded, “Your mother.” He asked again, and then whom? The Prophet said, “Your mother.” The man asked the Prophet one final time, “And then whom?” The Prophet responded, “Your father.”<sup>31</sup> This *ḥadīth* is viewed as highlighting the greater importance of showing love, kindness, and loyalty to a mother over a father by threefold.

Another (previously mentioned) *ḥadīth* reports that the “Best of you is he who is best to his wife. And I am the best to my wife.” The term *ahl* used here is interpreted to mean wife in the context of the Prophet’s time. Another exhortation to men to treat women well is contained in the famous final sermon of the Prophet Muḥammad in which he is reported to have said:

Fear God in your [relations] with women and deal with them in goodness. For they are under your custody and they possess nothing of their own. When you took them, you did so as a trust from God. Intimacy with them became permissible through the word of God. So, ponder my words, O people!<sup>32</sup>

It is worthy of note that the Prophet dedicated a significant portion of his last testament before his imminent death to emphasize the importance of men treating women with kindness and respect. While the outward form of this type of behavior is inevitably portrayed through what is considered good treatment within the norms of the seventh century, the broader message of a man’s responsibility to show respect and compassion toward women is highlighted by the choice of the inclusion of this injunction in what is memorialized as the Prophet’s Farewell Sermon (*khutbat al-wadā’*).

There are other *ḥadīths* that are similarly short statements that have been deemed controversial in modern times and that appear to challenge the content of women-friendly reports discussed above when singled out and read selectively. Among those that are viewed by some as “problematic” *ḥadīths* is one in which the Companions of the Prophet are said to have observed Christians in Syria prostrating to their bishops. When asked whether they should prostrate similarly to the Prophet, he told them that a Muslim should not prostrate to anyone but God. Upon informing his Companions it is impermissible for a Muslim to prostrate to anyone except God, it is reported he said, “If I were to order anyone to prostrate to anyone else, I would order a woman to prostrate to her husband.”<sup>33</sup>

Another *ḥadīth* along these lines states that women make up the majority of the inhabitants of Hell due to their ungratefulness to their husbands. It also states that

women are deficient in intellect and religion.<sup>34</sup> In a separate *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet was told that the Persian King Khosrow was succeeded by his daughter after his death, the Prophet is said to have stated that “No people will ever prosper who entrust their leadership to a woman.”<sup>35</sup>

These single short-statement *ḥadīths* can be subjected to methods of scrutiny so that apparent meanings that appear unfair to women can be measured in light of the larger *ḥadīth* and Qur’ānic corpus to determine the validity of such possible interpretations. For instance the *ḥadīth* apparently claiming to discourage women’s leadership abilities is challenged by portrayals of the Queen of Sheba in the Qur’ān<sup>36</sup> or the Prophet himself having sought advice from his wife Umm Salama during the signing of the Treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya (630 CE), which was a milestone event in early Islamic history. The meanings of the *ḥadīth* claiming that the majority of the dwellers in hell is composed of women can be challenged along similar lines.<sup>37</sup> While a comprehensive overview of each *ḥadīth* is beyond the scope of this particular study, the method by which misogynistic meanings derived from some interpretations of *ḥadīths* can be challenged by holistic readings of the larger corpus of Islamic scriptures is worthy of further study.<sup>38</sup>

## CONCLUSION

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*Ḥadīth* literature is a valuable source for analyzing the roles Muslim women played in the early history of Islam. *Ḥadīths* often portray women as leaders, teachers, and models of virtue; they further depict them as having challenged assumptions of inequality during their time in ways that are believed to have been later affirmed by Qur’ānic revelation. The various interactions of the Prophet Muḥammad with women recorded in a substantial number of *ḥadīths* also indicate a pattern of respect for women and concern on his part for their well-being.

*Ḥadīths* made up of solitary statements constitute a category of reports that can be perceived as including both favorable and unfavorable depictions of women. It can be argued that the latter have received disproportionate attention in the modern period due to atomistic readings of the *ḥadīth* corpus, a tendency that has arisen in recent times with the loss of traditional institutions of learning that required a contextualization of *ḥadīths* with lived practice and the consistency of interpretations with the larger corpus of Islamic scripture. While the invention of the printing press and the loss of access to educational models that ensured contextual readings of scriptures had the benefits of making knowledge more readily accessible, the social harms associated with the misuse of the large *ḥadīth* corpus through selective readings defined by contemporary political and social movements also became more likely.

A significant aspect of this shift has been a result of the historical context of European colonialism in Muslim lands in which family law became perceived as the last bastion of Islamic practice which elicited a reactionary response from various modern Muslim movements that made women’s rights an ideological issue. This was exacerbated by

European colonizers and Christian missionaries who often presented themselves as saviors of Muslim women who needed to be rescued from the control of Muslim male dominance and backward religious practices. With the disintegration of the classical educational systems, many self-made Muslim religious leaders who lacked the sophistication of thought engendered through classical training in the Islamic intellectual tradition rooted in pragmatism and rationalism, clung to elements of what may be perceived as outdated patriarchal cultural norms practiced by some Muslims as “social hooks.” This led them to regard such norms as essential (*dhātī*) to Muslim practice rather than incidental (*‘aradī*), in an attempt to preserve a misconceived presumption of Islamic orthodoxy.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Bāz and Ayman Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1997), *Kitāb al-nikāḥ: bāb ḥusn al-mu‘āshara ma‘a al-ahl*, 9:163 (al-Bukhārī *ḥadīth* no. 5189); and Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj* (Damascus: Dār al-Khayr, 1999), *Kitāb faḍl il al-ṣaḥāba: bāb faḍl ‘Ā’isha*, 15:579 (Muslim *ḥadīth* no. 2448).
2. Another interpretation of this section of the *ḥadīth* states that she feared getting divorced. However, the above interpretation appears to fit the context of the rest of the sentence in the original *ḥadīth* better, see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 9:169.
3. Commentators say this may mean an incomplete divorce, which would mean she was neither married nor free to remarry; see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 9:170.
4. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan al-Nasā’ī*, *Kitāb al-Ṭahāra*, *ḥadīth* no. 29; and al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī*, *Kitāb al-Ṭahāra*, *ḥadīth* no. 12.
5. This is one of the variations in wording in which this *ḥadīth* has been transmitted. Most chains of narration report the Prophet as having said, “I am to you like Abū Zar.” For the wording mentioned above, see: Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, ed. Ḥamdī ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, n.d.), 23:173 (*ḥadīth* number 270).
6. The term used in the *ḥadīth* is *ahl*. This has been explained to mean “wives” by commentators on the *ḥadīth*.
7. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Kitāb al-nikāḥ: bāb ḥusn al-mu‘āshara ma‘a al-ahl*, *ḥadīth* no. 123; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Kitāb faḍl il al-ṣaḥāba*, *ḥadīth* no. 5998; *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī*, *Kitāb manāqib ‘an rasūl Allāh*, *ḥadīth* no. 4156.
8. See *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Kitāb al-Ṭahāra*, *ḥadīth* no. 236.
9. Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Cairo: Dār al-Ta‘ṣīl, 2018), 5:473 (*ḥadīth* no. 3882).
10. Muḥammad ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Umar (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001), 10:16.
11. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Bāb kayfa kāna bada‘a al-waḥy*.
12. ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *Sīrat al-nabī* (Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṣabīḥ, 1963), 1:259.
13. Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:186.

14. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb manāqib al-Anṣār: Bāb tazwīj al-nabī ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam Khadija wa faḍlihā raḍiya Allāhu ‘anhā, ḥadīth no. 3607.*
15. Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba fī ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥāba* (Cairo: Dār al-Sha‘b, 1970–1973), 5:520.
16. Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:160.
17. Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *al-Sunan*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūt (Damascus: Dār al-Risāla al-‘Ālamiyya, 2009), 4:87.
18. Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., *Study Quran* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2015), 1392.
19. Qur‘an, 66:10.
20. See commentary in Nasr, *Study Quran*, 1029–1030.
21. Both versions of the narrative are found in the commentary of Nasr, *Study Qur‘an*, 1029–1030.
22. Nasr, *Study Qur‘an*, 1029–1030.
23. al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 5:447 (*ḥadīth no. 3837*).
24. See discussion in Nasr, *Study Quran*, 1341–1343.
25. Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba*, 7:19.
26. Ibid.
27. For research on how Hanafi *fiqh* shifts on the issue of women leading women in prayer, see: Behnam Sadeghi, *The Logic of Lawmaking in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, 2015).
28. Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 10:386.
29. *Sunan Ibn Mājah, ḥadīth no. 3669; Musnad Aḥmad, ḥadīth no. 17439.*
30. *Ḥadīth s* related to the virtues of raising daughters can be found in the following sources: *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī, Kitāb al-birr wa ṣila ‘an rasūl Allāh, ḥadīth no. 22* (or *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī, ḥadīth no. 1916*); *Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Kitāb al-adab, ḥadīth no. 374* (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd, ḥadīth no. 5146*); *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal, ḥadīth no. 11706.*
31. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-adab: bāb man aḥaqq al-nās bi ḥusn al-ṣuḥba, ḥadīth no. 5626.*
32. Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat al-nabī*, 4:277.
33. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Kitāb al-nikāḥ: Bāb fī ḥaqq al-zawj ‘alā al-mar‘a*, no. 95 (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd, ḥadīth no. 2140*).
34. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-ḥayḍ: Bāb tark al-ḥā‘iq al-ṣawm, ḥadīth no. 9* (al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth no. 304*).
35. See Ulrike Mitter, “The Majority of Dwellers in Hell-Fire Are Women: A Short Analysis of A Much Discussed *Ḥadīth*,” in *The Transmission and Dynamics of Textual Sources in Islam*, ed. Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, Kees Versteegh, and Joas Wagemakers (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 443–473.
36. See for example, Qur‘an, 27:22–44.
37. Mitter, “Majority of Dwellers.”
38. Modern rereadings and critiques of a number of these *ḥadīths* are discussed in chapter 5, by Khaled Abou El Fadl.

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