91868 - She was put under pressure and forced to steal from her maternal aunt

the question

I want to tell you about a problem in the hope that you can help me. I am a young woman, twenty years of age, religiously-committed and educated, from a religiously-committed and very conservative family. I live with my mother and sister, as my father died four years ago, and my only brother died three years before that. I fell victim to a friend who betrayed me and managed to take a picture of me without my knowledge, then she took me by surprise when she tinkered with my picture by using a computer programme and put my head on the body of a woman who was in a very immoral situation, and she demanded that I give her 5000 or she would send the picture to my mother. That evil woman knew that my mother suffers from spasms in her chest because of grief, and she said to me literally: “If you do not give me the money, I will send the picture to your mother and she will have a heart attack and die like your father and brother.”
I admit that I was naïve and I did not handle it well because I was so afraid for my mother and her feelings. She threatened me on the day when we were going to visit my maternal aunt, and I went into my female cousin’s room to pray, and I saw her bracelets, necklaces and jewellery, and I thought of stealing as something that came under the heading of necessity that makes forbidden things permissible. I said to myself: I will only take the chain because its value is sufficient for me, even though the jewels were in front of me, and I thought that if I took something from my own house and stole, my mother would find out, so I resorted to stealing from my aunt’s house. We have a very good relationship with this aunt and she is the dearest and closest of people to us. The only reason why I stole from my aunt’s house was that I could return what I had stolen to my aunt in the form of a gift in the future or some other way. I gave the money to that evil woman and I felt very bad after I had done this, because I had never stretched my hand towards any haraam things before. I am very religiously committed and I am memorizing the Qur’aan. After some time, this evil woman asked me for some more money. In the midst of my pain and suffering, my theft from my aunt’s house was discovered and my mother was shocked. As soon as she asked me I burst into tears and told her about the whole problem. Praise be to Allaah, my mother is a wise woman

and trusts me completely, and she understood the situation, and she regards what happened to me and to her as a test from Allaah, but she criticized me sharply for not turning to her and for committing the sin of stealing. She asked me to pray to Allaah for forgiveness and I calmed down, and she thought that this was the end of the matter. My mother explained to my aunt what had happened, and returned to her what I had taken from her, but unfortunately my aunt did not believe it. Now the matter has had other consequences that affect my honour and reputation, and when I am with my family and relatives I am one person and when I am away from them I am someone else. When I swore on the Holy Qur'aan in my aunt's presence that I was innocent, chaste and righteous, my aunt insisted that what had happened to me was no justification for stealing from her house and that she has lost trust in all young women after what I had done.
What made matters worse is that I have a cousin (daughter of my maternal aunt) who always used to say to me: "Have you ever loved someone?" or whatever, and I would respond by saying that I would never go against sharee'ah or religion. When my cousin saw my situation she started to incite her mother against me even more, and there was an argument between my mother who was defending my honour, and my aunt who was accusing me of taking drugs, or that the picture was genuine and was not a fake, and love and affection turned to hatred and resentment.
Our shaykh: I am turning to you to judge between us, for I am a victim who has been accused falsely. I admit that I made a mistake because I committed a sin to get out of this crisis. I admit that I made a mistake because I was not frank with my mother from the beginning, because I was so afraid for her and I thought that I could finish with this matter without her knowing.
I hope that you can judge between us and my aunt so that the love between us may be restored, if only partially, and the relationship may be restored between my mother and my aunt, whom our relatives thought would only ever be parted by death, especially since I am going to give my aunt your answer to read.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There follow three messages, addressed to you, your friend and your aunt.

The first message is addressed to you:

1.We ask Allaah to increase your reward, and to relieve your distress, and to reconcile your family.

2.We hope that what happened will be a lesson for you and for others, that women should not be careless about their pictures or allowing themselves to have their pictures taken, even with their friends, and they should not trust anyone with regard to such matters, even the closest of people to them such as their sisters, for example, because she cannot be sure that her sister's husband will not see them or publish them, let alone trusting a stranger on the grounds of friendship or being related.

3.You made a mistake before stealing by not consulting people of knowledge and wisdom. When we read your letter, we thought that it would end with your consulting them about what to do with this treacherous friend, and we were shocked by the way things developed and reached such an extent. Perhaps this is a lesson for everyone who finds themselves in such a dilemma to look for a solution with others before it gets even worse, because the more problems develop, the more complicated they get, specially problems that befall women with regard to evil and corrupt people.

4.What you did with regard to your aunt was absolutely necessary. You told her the truth, restored her rights and swore to her what the truth of the matter really was. She has to believe you and overlook this matter. Remember that being truthful will save a person, and Allaah will cause the truth to be known sooner or later. So be patient and seek the help of Allaah, and persist in making du'aa', asking Allaah to grant you relief and cause justice and truth to prevail.

5.We offer you this advice, which you need to discuss with your family and with a lawyer – if possible – because we do not know anything about the laws in your country: why don't you tell the police about your friend who betrayed you with this picture, because we think that if she is arrested and her computer is inspected, Allaah will suffice you against her evil and the truth will come out in sha Allaah.

The second message is addressed to your friend:

1.You have to repent to Allaah and seek His forgiveness for what you have done, and you should realize that you have committed many sins and caused many bad things to happen. You have betrayed your friend and made false accusations against her, you have helped to spread evil by means of bad pictures which you have spread after adding the picture of your friend to them, you have taken money from her unlawfully, and you have caused trouble for her and caused her to break family ties.

2.Part of repentance is admitting your error to your friend, her mother and her aunt. Allaah will not accept your repentance otherwise, because one of the conditions of repentance is setting right things that were affected by the sin. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Except those who repent and do righteous deeds, and openly declare (the truth which they concealed). These, I will accept their repentance. And I am the One Who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful”

[al-Baqarah 2:160]

You should understand that your admitting to what you did will relieve your friend of distress, and will lift the false accusation that has been made against her. Man’s life is short, then he will meet his Lord with his deeds, so beware of meeting your Lord with those deeds without having repented sincerely from them.

3.Another part of repenting properly is returning the wealth that you took unlawfully from your friend.

4.Another part of repenting properly is destroying the picture completely, and not committing this sin again either with your friend or with someone else.

The third message is addressed to your aunt:

1.You should understand that Allaah is always watching you, He hears what you say and He knows that which is hidden and that which is more secret. We do not wish anything but good for you. It is to a woman like you that people would refer with regard to problems, and it is to people like you

that those who are astray look for guidance. Your daughter and the daughters of your sisters turn to your for help, because you are the source of compassion and the merciful heart that they know, and our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The maternal aunt is like the mother.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2553).

2.We will ask you a single question which we hope you will answer to yourself: What if something this – Allaah forbid – had happened to one of your daughters? What if she had done what your sister’s daughter did? Would you like her aunt’s attitude towards her to be like your attitude now? We are sure – based on our good opinion of you – that you would never want that. So why do you agree to that for yourself? Do not think it is unlikely that bad would do things like that, and do not think it is unlikely that good people may be falsely accused of bad things.

We wish you and your sons and daughters well, and we hope that you will have an open mind and accept the truth and realize that your niece is innocent of the false accusation that her friend made against her. We have advised her friend to repent and admit the truth to you. May Allaah guide her to admit to you the awful thing she has done. But we also ask you to think about this false accusation and understand that it is pure fabrication, and your wisdom and compassion dictate that you should do the right thing in this case.

3.Your Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has enjoined something upon you and we do not think that you will do anything but respond to it. This command is that if someone swears to you by Allaah, you must believe him and accept his oath. You have no certain knowledge that contradicts your niece’s oath, so you have no choice but to obey the command of your Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

It was narrated that Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever swears by Allaah, let him fulfil his oath, and if an oath is sworn for a person by Allaah, let him accept it. Whoever is not content with Allaah has nothing to do with Allaah.” Narrated by Ibn Maajah (2101); classed as hasan by al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Baari (11/536) and by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Targheeb (2951).

Al-Sindi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said, commenting on Sunan Ibn Maajah: “if an oath is sworn for a person by Allaah” means: an oath is sworn for him by Allaah to please him. “Has nothing to do with Allaah” means, will never be close to Him.

The point is that that who are close to Allaah believe the one who swears an oath, out of veneration towards Allaah. The one who does not believe him when he is able to do so is not one of them. End quote.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Hasan (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the words “and if an oath is sworn for a person by Allaah, let him accept it. Whoever is not content with Allaah has nothing to do with Allaah”, if there is no way to settle the matter except by asking his opponent to swear an oath and he swears an oath, then undoubtedly he must accept it. But if what is happening between the people is something on a personal level, where people are trying to justify their positions with other and the like, then it is the right of one Muslim over another that he should accept what he says when he swears an oath absolving himself of blame or declaring his innocence of what he has been accused of or justifying his position. Another right that he has over him is that he should think well of him if there is no evidence to the contrary, as in the report narrated from ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him): “Do not think badly of a word that is uttered by a Muslim when there is a way of interpreting it positively.”

The hadeeth also points to humility, compassion, love and other interests that Allaah loves, as is clear to anyone who has any understanding. This is a means of uniting hearts in obedience to Allaah, and it also comes under the heading of the good attitude which is the heaviest thing that may be placed in a person’s balance, as it says in the hadeeth, and it is one of the noblest of characteristics.

Fath al-Majeed (p. 405).

We hope that you will think about the words of this Shaykh (may Allaah have mercy on him), for they are relevant to your situation. One of your niece’s rights over you is that you should accept

her oath, and one of her rights over you is that you should think well of her.

Do you know what ‘Eesa (peace be upon him) did when he saw a man stealing, and that man swore to him by Allaah that he did not steal? Think about it:

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “‘Eesa ibn Maryam saw a man stealing and ‘Eesa said to him: ‘Did you steal?’ He said: ‘No, by the One besides Whom there is no other god.’ ‘Eesa said: ‘I believe in Allaah and I disbelieve my own eyes.’” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (3260) and Muslim (2368).

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: The Messiah (peace be upon him), because of the great fear of Allaah in his heart, thought that this person who swore by the Oneness of Allaah was telling the truth, so his belief in Allaah made him believe him and make him think that his eyes had deceived him, and shown him something that he did not see, so he said: “I believe in Allaah and I disbelieve my own eyes.”

Undoubtedly one’s eyes may be mistaken and see things other than they really are, and may imagine things that do not really exist, then reason dictates that this is a mistake. The Messiah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) put his faith before his vision, and disbelieved what his eyes had seen, and attributed the mistake to himself.

Badaa’i’ al-Fawaa’id (3/1159, 1160).

We hope that what we have mentioned will be sufficient to persuade you to accept your niece’s oath and lift the accusation from her. You cannot afford to go against Islamic teachings by rejecting this ruling, We think that you are of a noble character, in sha Allaah.

4.We end this message to you by saying that if, Allaah forbid, your niece has committed any sin or error – and we would never say that you know that from a third party but we will say that you saw it yourself – then do you know what you should do? You should conceal it for her! Yes, conceal her sin and do not broadcast it among people. Do you know what the reward is that results from that?

You will be concealed by Allaah in this world and in the Hereafter.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever removes a worldly hardship from a believer, Allaah will remove one of the hardships of the Day of Resurrection from him. Whoever grants respite to (a debtor) who is in difficulty, Allaah will grant him relief in this world and in the Hereafter. Whoever conceals (the fault of) a Muslim in this world, Allaah will conceal him (his faults) in this world and in the Hereafter. Allaah will help a person so long as he is helping his brother.” Narrated by Muslim (2699).

Think about what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to a man who encouraged an adulterer to admit his sin. He said to him: “If you had concealed him with your garment it would have been better for you.”

Narrated by Abu Dawood (4377); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Targheeb (2335).

Think about the warning issued to the one who exposed his brother’s honour – which you would not do, because your niece’s honour is your honour, and whoever harms her (with regard to her honour) is harming you too.

It was narrated from Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever conceals the fault of his Muslim brother, Allaah will conceal his faults on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever exposes the fault of his Muslim brother, Allaah will expose his faults even if he did that in his own house.”

Narrated by Ibn Maajah (2546); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Targheeb (2338).

Please excuse us for having spoken at length, which we would not have but for our distress at the severing of family ties which resulted from your niece’s thinking well of people, and our concern about accusations being made unjustly against people’s honour. You did not see anything yourself, and your niece did not confess to any sin, rather she swore an oath to you and told you about her friend who caused all this trouble for her. What excuse is there for anyone to accuse her or impugn

her honour?

We ask Allaah, may He be blessed and exalted, to help you to do all that is good and to ward off evil and its people from you, and to reconcile between you, and to restore the ties between you and make them stronger than they were before.

And Allaah is the Source of strength.