

178418 - What should she do about her problems with her husband's mother? Does she have the right to prevent her from seeing her granddaughter?

the question

I am an American woman, married to a man of a different nationality. My problem is with his mother, who continually causes problems. My husband is far from home these days, and there is no communication with him. I ask Allah to bring him back to us safe and sound. I have a daughter from him who is nine months old, and she is the focal point of the problem with my husband's mother. She wants her to be with her all the time, and she ignores the fact that I am her mother and she has to stay with me, not with anyone else. My husband's mother is divorced, and lives in another house, whilst I live with my husband's father, who is the one who is looking after me and my daughter. He told me that I should not respond to her demands to give her my daughter. She is causing trouble and problems. She tells her children not to talk to me and she says bad things about me; the matter has gotten so bad that she even prays against my daughter, that Allah will take her in death, at which point she will be rid of me, because my husband will divorce me. This is what she says! My questions are: Can I prevent her from seeing my daughter? Do I have the right to prevent her from seeing her, even in the presence of my husband? How long do I have the right to prevent her from seeing her? What are the rights of grandmothers over their grandchildren, so that we can acknowledge her rights and fulfil them without wronging her? I have tried very hard to have a good relationship with her, but she does not want to cooperate with me. Now it has been two months since she has seen my daughter. I ask Allah to forgive us.

Detailed answer

Allah, may He be exalted, says
(interpretation of the meaning): "and making peace is better"
[an-Nisa' 4:128].

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no kindness in a thing but it adorns it, and it is not taken away from a thing but it makes it defective.” Narrated by Muslim (2594).

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that a man said: O Messenger of Allah, I have relatives with whom I try to keep in touch, but they cut me off. I treat them well, but they abuse me. I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me. He said: “If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot ashes in their mouths. Allah will continue to support you as long as you continue to do that.” Narrated by Muslim (2558).

These texts urge us to give precedence to kindness; the individual may respond to the one who mistreats him in like manner, but patience and forbearance in putting up with bad treatment is much better before Allah. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And if you punish (your enemy, O you believers in the Oneness of Allah), then punish them with the like of that with which you were afflicted. But if you endure patiently, verily, it is better for As-Sabirin (the patient ones, etc.)”

[an-Nahl 16:126].

The grandmother has ties of kinship with her granddaughter, and longs to see her as a mother longs to see her child, so depriving her of this right when there is no good reason to do so is a grave wrong. If you sense that she has this compassionate heart, then do not deny her a right that Allah has ordained for her, because this is her due.

In addition to that, respecting the grandmother and giving her her rights comes under the heading of honouring one's husband, bringing joy to his heart and treating him kindly. You do not know, perhaps if you treat her kindly, she will speak well of you in front of your husband, and that will help to put things right between you and your husband. Experience has shown that the mother of the husband or wife may be a means of bringing happiness, if you treat her well, and she may be a cause of misery if you mistreat her, so pay attention to this principle.

There is nothing wrong with treating her kindly and even trying to appease, and hugging her, kissing her head, and showing her respect. Perhaps that will remove the resentment that she feels in her heart towards you.

In fact some old people become bad-tempered as they grow old, and they get angry for any little reason. So put up with her annoyance and bear it patiently as a means of drawing closer to Allah, especially as she is divorced, and her ex-husband is with you and he is the one who is taking care of you and your daughter. This may be something that is making her more angry, so she is using your daughter as a means of causing trouble, but perhaps the real cause of the problem is the fact that you are living with the one who divorced her, and he is looking after you and he is the grandfather.

This does not mean that you should give her rights precedence over your own. Rather what is discussed above comes under the heading of responding in the way that is better. You are the mother of your daughter, and your right to take care of her and look after her takes precedence over the right of the grandmother.

With regard to answering your questions in detail:

1.

Can I prevent her from seeing my daughter?

Answer: It is not permissible to prevent her from seeing her, unless you fear that she will harm your daughter. In order to be on the safe side and avoid falling into sin or fearing for you daughter, you can make sure that she sees your daughter in your presence. So you can visit her, and spend some time with her, then you can leave and go back to your house without any trouble, taking your daughter with you; or you can meet her in the house of someone who is close to both of you, and that house can become the place where you meet and communicate.

2.

Can I prevent her from seeing my daughter in the presence of my husband?

Answer: This is also not permissible, unless there is the fear of harm. Preventing her from seeing her in this case is worse than the previous example, and it is unlikely that the grandmother would do something to your daughter in the presence of your husband, as your husband cares for your daughter as you do, and the decision in that regard is up to your husband. So beware of making him angry with you. If you think that it is better not to let her see your daughter, then you have to disclose to your husband the reason why you do not want to let his mother see his daughter, so that he can help you.

In this regard we would like to point out the following:

Try to tell your husband what happened with the grandmother, and explain to him what the problems are between you,

so that he will be able to solve the problem and bring about reconciliation, because the grandmother is more likely to listen to him than you, and his words are more likely to be believed by her.

So try to show his mother, gently and kindly, that your intentions are good and that you love her and regard her as equal in status to your own mother, and that it is not appropriate for her to treat you in this manner, when you are like her own daughter to her and you are indeed the wife of her son.

3.

With regard to how long you have the right to prevent her from seeing your daughter

The answer to that is that reference should be made to what is customary among people, because people vary with regard to such matters. One visit every month may be sufficient for some people, and may be regarded as severing ties of kinship among others. Some people regard frequent visits as the way to show respect and uphold ties, whereas others regard that as opening the door to problems. So you should look at the customs and traditions of people. But before all of that, you should examine the circumstance of every issue and the nature of parties connected to the issue.

4.

What are the rights of grandmothers over their grandchildren?

Answer: These rights are respect and honour, kindness and upholding ties of kinship, by doing whatever people regard as constituting respect, kindness and upholding ties of kinship, such

as meeting her needs, serving her, listening to her when she speaks, and not making her angry.

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “He is not one of us who does not show compassion towards our little ones and recognise the honour of our elders.” Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (1920); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi.

So how about if this elder is a grandmother? In fact the grandmother and grandfather come under many of the same rulings as parents with regard to it being obligatory to honour them, uphold ties with them and other rulings and etiquettes that are taught in Islam.

Please see the answer to question no.

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With regard to what you hear of criticism and prayers against you, seek reward with Allah and pray for her to be guided and set straight, and do not respond to her in like manner. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e. Allah ordered the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger, and to excuse those who treat them badly), then verily! he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend.

But none is granted it (the above quality) except those who are patient, and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion (of the happiness in the Hereafter i.e. Paradise and in this world of a high moral character.

And if an evil whisper from Shaitan
(Satan) tries to turn you away (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be
upon him)) (from doing good, etc.), then seek refuge in Allah. Verily, He is
the All-Hearer, the All-Knower”

[Fussilat 41:34-36].

And Allah knows best.