

# Cravings (Al-Waḥam) In Pregnant Women: Jurisprudential Rulings And Observed Etiquettes (In Consideration Of Natural Dispositions, Preservation Of The Family Environment, And In Pursuit Of Psychological And Medical Treatment)

**Prof. Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Thabit Shabala;H (Principal Investigator)**

Department of Sharia, College of Sharia, Najran University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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## Research Abstract:

*A large number of pregnant women experience behavioral disturbances during pregnancy, the most well-known of which is al-waḥam (cravings), wherein the pregnant woman's mood may change, and she may mistreat her husband. In some cases, this gestational cravings (waḥam) leads to divorce and the disintegration of the family. A pregnant woman experiencing waḥam may crave certain types of fruits and foods that a poor husband may be unable to afford. She may also exhibit unusual behaviors, such as eating clay, soil, or sand. All of these effects require jurisprudential and behavioral regulation.*

*The research aimed to achieve several objectives, the most important of which are:*

- 1. Providing Islamic legal answers to the questions of husbands and wives regarding the symptoms and effects of gestational cravings (waḥam).*
- 2. Collecting various scattered rulings and regulations related to this topic in one place.*
- 3. Demonstrating the ability of Islamic Sharia to provide appropriate solutions for emerging issues in people's lives.*

*This study concluded with a number of findings and recommendations, which were presented at the end of the paper.*

**Keywords:** *Gestational cravings (waḥam), divorce, family, health.*

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## INTRODUCTION:

Affliction (ibtilāʾ) is a divine law among creation. The mood changes that occur in pregnant women during their pregnancy are a manifestation of this affliction, one in which the woman is tested. The husband is likewise tested due to the change in his wife's behavior toward him. Islamic Sharia aims to bring about benefits and increase them, and to repel harms and minimize them. The books of Islamic heritage, across various disciplines, are replete with references to gestational cravings (waḥam) and its effects, and it is necessary that the jurists of Sharia play a role and make a contribution in regulating this matter.

## RESEARCH PROBLEM AND QUESTIONS:

This study seeks to answer a fundamental question: What is meant by pregnancy cravings (waḥam)? From this central question, several related inquiries are connected to the topic.

## REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE TOPIC:

The reasons for choosing this topic can be limited to two points:

1. A strong desire to document a number of rulings and guidelines related to the gestational cravings (waḥam) experienced by women during pregnancy.
2. The frequent inquiries made by both husbands and wives concerning jurisprudential cases and contemporary issues that have arisen due to this gestational cravings (waḥam).

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

It can be stated that the main objectives pursued by this research are as follows:

1. To serve the research orientations of Najran University in the field of contemporary jurisprudential issues related to marital life and personal status.
2. To contribute—through this research—to the dissemination of rulings and regulations related to gestational cravings (waḥam).
3. To gather the dispersed issues pertaining to this topic in a single comprehensive study.
4. To demonstrate the capability of Islamic Sharia to address people's problems in light of its original legal principles.

#### **PREVIOUS STUDIES:**

Following a thorough investigation and careful inquiry by the researcher, within the scope of his accessible sources, he found fragments of articles related to the topic and scattered fatwas; however, they do not rise to the level or content of this research.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

Due to the nature of the topic, I have followed an inductive-analytical method, based on uncovering the legal regulations and rulings related to gestational cravings (waḥam) in women during pregnancy.

#### **RESEARCH STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES:**

The research is composed of an introductory preface, three main sections, a conclusion, recommendations, and an index of topics and references, as follows:

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

It includes a summary of the research idea, a statement of its significance, its problems and questions, the reasons for choosing the topic, its objectives, previous studies, methodology, and structure.

**First Section:** Clarification of the terms used in the research title.

**Second Section:** Jurisprudential rulings and observed etiquettes concerning the condition of gestational cravings (waḥam) in pregnant women.

**Third Section:** Relevant jurisprudential regulations.

**Conclusion:** It presents the key findings of the research and its recommendations.

#### **INDEX OF TOPICS**

##### **Index Of Sources And References:**

**First Section: Clarification of the Terms Used in the Research Title:**

The proposed title for this research is: Cravings (al-Waḥam) in Pregnant Women: Jurisprudential Rulings and Observed Etiquettes. This necessitates clarifying the term waḥam from both linguistic and terminological perspectives.

Linguistic dictionaries have mentioned that the term waḥam refers to the intense craving of a pregnant woman for food. This is the original use of the term. Later, its usage expanded to include anyone whose desire becomes excessive toward a particular thing. The word is pronounced waḥam (with an open “wāw” and “ḥā”), wiḥām, and waḥām—with both open and broken forms of the “wāw” However, the term waḥām is specific to the craving of a pregnant woman. It is said: “A woman is waḥmā” if her condition of waḥam is apparent. Waḥam is also the name of the thing carved. The pregnant woman desires a thing in such a way that she wants nothing else and will not accept any substitute. It is said: “When a female becomes pregnant, she becomes obstinate,” and thus it is said: “She experienced waḥam” Likewise, it is said: waḥḥama the woman tawḥīman—meaning, he gave her what she craved—and waḥḥama lahā—meaning, he slaughtered something for her.

Among the proverbs of the Arabs concerning desire is: “Waḥmā wa lā ḥabal”—meaning, “A man with cravings but no pregnancy” This implies that nothing is mentioned to the overly desirous man except that he desires it just like a pregnant woman with cravings. Waḥām occurs only in the desire associated specifically with pregnancy. Thus, the man desires in the same way as a pregnant woman, though he is not pregnant himself.

[11][4][2]

This concludes the discussion on the term waḥam from the linguistic perspective. As for its technical (terminological) definition, the word waḥam (cravings) generally does not depart from its linguistic meaning. Thus, it has been defined as follows:

- a. “Al-waḥam is the craving associated with pregnancy”. [1]
- b. “Al-waḥam is the intense desire of the pregnant woman for something she eats”. [4]
- c. “Al-waḥam refers to what a pregnant woman craves at a particular stage of pregnancy, most often during the early weeks; or it is a form of unusual changes that accompany women during pregnancy, associated with fatigue, nausea, and a repeated urge to vomit”. [13]

Based on the above linguistic and terminological definitions of the term waḥam, the following can be concluded:

1. Waḥam is an intense, hidden craving that affects the pregnant woman beyond her will.
2. Through it, she craves a specific type of food or other items without there being a logical explanation for her intense focus on the object of her craving.
3. Waḥam has side effects, especially during the first months of pregnancy.

## **Second Section: Jurisprudential Rulings and Observed Etiquettes Regarding the State of Waḥam in Pregnant Women:**

Among the relevant matters is the following:

### **First: No Legal Accountability for the Onset of Waḥam in Pregnant Women**

Waḥam is a condition in which the pregnant woman has no control or deliberate involvement, especially since a human being has come into existence within her womb as a result of a lawful marital relationship with her husband. Many pregnant wives may severely blame their husbands, arguing that the fetus in their womb is a consequence of the husband's seminal fluid fertilizing

the woman's ovum. However, the reality is that the husband bears no blame, for it is a matter decreed and destined by Allah. Just as the pregnant woman is not to be blamed for the manifestation of waḥam in her behavior, likewise, the husband is not to be blamed for what led to the pregnancy. Moreover, the woman herself participated with her ovum, which combined with his fluid, and the fetus resulted from both—by the will and power of Allah.

It has been established in Islamic law that there is no accountability for forgetfulness and mistakes, as these are acts emanating from a human being. Therefore, it is more appropriate that one should not be held accountable for what befalls them that is beyond their will. Indeed, the behavior of waḥam is most similar to the actions performed by the insane, the child, the sleeping person, or the unconscious, which are acts that are neither obligatory, recommended, nor forbidden, but are closer to the category of permissibility. Al-Qarafi (the Maliki scholar) mentioned:

"It is established that the actions originating from the insane, the sleeping, the child, and the unconscious have no ruling in Islamic law; thus, one does not say regarding them that they are permissible, forbidden, obligatory, or otherwise. They are also not considered in the case of animals. In the Qur'an: 'There is no blame upon you for what you have erred in but [only for] what your hearts intended.' [Al-Ahzab: 5]. And He said: 'Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred.' [Al-Baqarah: 286]. He said: 'It has been done.' Also, the hadith reports that the pen is lifted from three: the child until he reaches puberty, the unconscious until he recovers; all of these have no intent, which is the reason for lifting the rulings of accountability from them". [7]

Al-Qarafi also mentioned the consensus of the jurists on the principle that: "Imposing obligations on one who has no intent is imposing what is unbearable". [7]

### **Second: The Recommended Consideration by the Husband of the Wife's Waḥam Condition and Responding to Her Cravings**

This falls within the scope of good marital conduct and is categorized under generosity. Some jurists even considered it obligatory and regarded it as a debt incumbent upon the husband if he fails to provide for the pregnant wife experiencing waḥam.

Al-Shibramli (the Shafi'i scholar) said:

"It is appropriate to fulfill requests such as coffee if it has become a habit, and things the woman asks for during what is called waḥam, such as what is called salty foods, if that is customary. When fruits, coffee, and similar items are obligatory during waḥam, it is a matter of ownership; thus, if the husband fails to provide them, she has the right to claim them". [5]

The opinion of obligation lacks a definitive proof, and it appears to be a highly recommended act (strong mustahabb), considering the joy and happiness it brings to the pregnant wife when her husband fulfills what she strongly desires during her waḥam.

The husband's understanding of the wife's waḥam condition and his tolerance of some unusual behaviors is the best means to maintain harmony and tranquility within the family environment. The greatest joy for Satan is to cause divorce and separation due to waḥam and other strange reasons.

### **Third: Correcting Misconceptions Regarding the Condition of Waḥam**

Among these misconceptions is a widely circulated belief among many women that if a pregnant woman does not obtain what she craves during waḥam, the fetus will manifest physical features resembling what was craved. Pregnant women may use this rumor to pressure their husbands into providing what they desire, especially if one claims that the waḥmah (mark or blemish) has possibly deformed a part of the fetus.

Many scholars have rejected this rumor. Sheikh Abu Abd al-Mu‘izz Farkous al-Jaza’iri stated:

"The idea that people portray today—that if a pregnant woman craves something and her desire is not fulfilled, the newborn will physically resemble the craved item—has no basis whatsoever in Islamic law. There is no authentic report about the reality or accuracy of this image. It is rather a common saying among women. If it were established in religion, the Prophet, peace be upon him, would have clearly and explicitly clarified it, leaving no room for doubt, as the necessity demanded it, and the trial was widespread. The Prophet warned us against anything harmful to the servants and provided complete clarification. He fulfilled the message and entrusted the trust.

Perhaps the woman in that period needs more care, tenderness, and kindness. The husband should consider her condition by providing what she craves of good things according to his ability without burdening himself, treat her well, avoid harming the fetus by harming her, and consider this an act of worship with reward from Allah". [12]

#### **Fourth: Avoidance by the Pregnant Woman of Abandoning the Marital Home under the Pretext of Waḥam**

The fundamental ruling regarding the wife is that she must remain in her husband’s home. Allah the Exalted says:

"And abide in your houses" [Al-Ahzab: 33]. She must not leave the marital home except with her husband's permission, which is unanimously agreed upon by the jurists.

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

"The woman in relation to her husband resembles a slave and a captive; she does not have the right to leave his home except with his permission, whether her father, mother, or others command her so, according to the consensus of the Imams". [8]

However, the woman’s chest may become constricted due to waḥam and she may strongly desire to go to her parental home. In this case, it is recommended (mustahabb) for the husband to permit her to go in order to relieve her distress. Yet, her going without his permission is religiously prohibited.

It is important to distinguish between an expected mild distress that does not justify leaving the marital home, and severe distress beyond endurance that excuses leaving it after seeking the husband’s permission. If the husband insists that she remain in the marital home despite the deterioration of her psychological state due to waḥam, this constitutes a real harm, lesser than the harm of her temporarily going to her parents’ house with his permission.

Jurists have established in their principles the rule:

"Choosing the lesser of two evils to prevent the greater". [10]

#### **Fifth: The Recommendation to Seek Medical Solutions to Alleviate the Severity of Waḥam**

For example, inducing vomiting, as mentioned by classical medical scholars such as Abu Bakr Al-Razi, who stated that pregnant women:

"Sometimes crave clay and charcoal, and this condition is more common until the third month. If it persists until the fourth month, some relief is achieved through induced vomiting". [6]

It is also permissible for the woman to visit a specialized female physician who may prescribe sedative medications to calm the nerves and alleviate pain.

#### **Sixth: The Prohibition of Accusing Lineage Due to Resemblance Resulting from the Effect of Waḥam**

Some pregnant women may have developed, before their pregnancy and waḥam, an addiction to looking at the child of a man unrelated to them. It may be that Allah wills that this visual fixation causes the fetus to resemble very closely the child the woman had been fixated on previously. The devil might then sow doubt in the husband's mind that the fetus is not his biological offspring and deny the lineage between him and the newborn.

The eminent scholar Taher Ibn Ashur stated that: "The resemblance resulting from waḥam may be used by some people as a means to attack lineage". [3]

#### **Third Section: Related Jurisprudential Regulations**

Some important general regulations can be established in light of the foregoing, including the following:

1. For every craving (waḥam) experienced by a pregnant woman for certain food, it is recommended (mustahabb) for the husband to provide it according to his financial ability.
2. Any resemblance in the fetus's appearance resulting from a visual fixation (addiction to looking) is a resemblance that repels accusations against lineage.
3. Any material damage caused by the pregnant woman's waḥam, such as breaking a neighbor's vessels or similar, necessitates compensation. The presence of waḥam does not negate the rights of others.

#### **RESEARCH FINDINGS:**

Among the most important findings of the research are the following:

1. The term waḥam has been extensively covered by linguistic dictionaries in revealing its meanings and clarifying its connotations.
2. Waḥam is an exceptional condition that affects the pregnant woman, causing changes in her mood and possibly accompanied by some behaviors that may be unpleasant to the husband.
3. It is among the virtues of good morals and fine manners for the husband to understand the condition of his pregnant wife and the waḥam she experiences, treating her kindly and accommodating some of her unusual behaviors.
4. The research documented some of the most important rulings related to waḥam, including: no legal accountability for the onset of waḥam in the pregnant woman; avoidance of the pregnant woman abandoning the marital home under the pretext of waḥam except with prior permission from the husband; the recommendation to seek medical solutions to alleviate the severity of waḥam; and the prohibition of accusing lineage due to resemblance resulting from the effect of waḥam.

#### **RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The research has yielded several research ideas for further study, including:

1. Compensation for damages occurring among neighbors (using waḥam as a case study).
2. The principle of exemption from accountability due to forgetfulness, mistake, or acts beyond human control: Contemporary jurisprudential applications.
3. The decision-making authority of wives in the household: Jurisprudential rulings and observed etiquettes.

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