

MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN

Translation and Brief Elucidation

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Surah An-Nisa – cont...

(Ayaat 22-35)

Translator's Note:

For the sake of continuity and coherent explanation, most of the general discourse has been made by employing the 'male' as a prototype, which is in no way meant to be diminutive of the opposite gender or disrespect the status of women. Moreover, each verse (Ayah) has been broken into sections in order to explain the subject matter of that particular portion and then relate it to the preceding and the proceeding ones. Sections of the same Verse are given in bold. Cross-references taken from other parts of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the messenger of Allah (SAW) are provided in italics.

Verse 22

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَمَقْتًا وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ۝

"And marry not women whom your fathers married, except what has already passed; indeed it was shameful and most hateful, and an evil way."

This verse also acts as a recap of the explanation of verses 15 through 21 which was published in the previous edition of the magazine.

Allah (SWT) condemns the practices of the pre-Islamic era when the sons of the deceased used to inherit their father's wives (step-mothers) as concubines or would marry them. Therefore, Allah (SWT) prohibits them from marrying their step mothers as it is a very shameful and disgraceful act. And pardons them for what happened

prior to this commandment provided that they mend their ways and avoid such shameful acts in the future.

Verse 23

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ وَعُمَّاتُكُمْ وَخَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأُخْتِ

"Forbidden to you are: your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your fathers' sisters, your mothers' sisters, your brothers' daughters, your sisters' daughters,"

This ayah describes those women relatives with whom a person is never eligible for marriage.

First of all it describes those women which are prohibited by blood relations.

وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُم مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ

"Your foster mothers who gave you suck and your foster milk suckling sisters,"

Secondly, the woman who suckles a child should be treated like a real mother and he cannot in any way marry her. Similarly the foster mother's daughters will also be regarded as his real sisters and thus are forbidden for marriage. There are different opinions amongst scholars on the amount of suckling that establishes relation and the age of the boy up to which suckling is permitted. For details refer to the books of Fiqh.

وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ

"Your wives' mothers,"

According to this section of the ayah, the mother of one's wife is also prohibited for marriage.

وَرَبَائِبُكُمُ اللَّاتِي فِي حُجُورِكُم مِّن نِّسَائِكُمُ اللَّاتِي دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ فَإِن لَّمْ يَكُنُوا دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ

"Your step daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives to whom you have consummated your marriage, but there is no sin on you if you have not consummated your marriage,"

Moreover, this section prohibits a person from marrying his step daughters, i.e. daughters from his wife's previous marriage, if he has consummated his marriage with his wife, but if he divorced his wife before consummating the marriage then there is no sin upon him.

وَحَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ

“The wives of your sons who (spring) from your own loins”

This refers to the wives of your real sons and not of your adopted sons.

وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ

“And that you should have two sisters simultaneously (in wedlock at the same time), except for what has already passed.”

Allah (SWT) also prohibited a person from keeping two sisters as his wives except for those marriages which occurred before this commandment. Likewise, the Messenger (SAWS) of Allah is reported to have said that it is also unlawful for a man to keep a niece and her real aunt as wives at the same time.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

“Verily, Allah (SWT) is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

The Ayah end with the Eternal attributes of Allah. Allah (SWT) will forgive their sins regarding these prohibitions which occurred prior to these commandments.

Verse 24

وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

“Also (forbidden are) women already married, except those whom your right hands possess.”

Allah (SWT) also prohibits a man from marrying those who are already married except for those married women who one acquires through war as slaves.

كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ

“Thus has Allah (SWT) ordained for you.”

Referring to all these prohibitions that are ordained by Allah (SWT), therefore, it is incumbent on all Muslims to follow them.

وَأَجَلَ لَكُمْ مَا وَّرَاءَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسْفِحِينَ

“All others are lawful for you, provided you seek (them in marriage) with dowry from your property, desiring chastity, not committing fornication”

This part of the verse makes it clear that all women except those prohibited in these Ayaat are lawful for a man to marry provided

that they give them their right i.e. the dowry, and they marry them desiring chastity and not only to satisfy their sexual desires.

فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا تَرَضَيْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيضَةِ

“So with those of whom you have enjoyed sexual relations, give them their dowry as prescribed; but if after a dowry is prescribed, you agree mutually (to give more or less), there is no sin on you.”

Once a person has sexual relations with his wife, he should give her the prescribed dowry, but if by mutual consent, they both agree to increase or decrease it then there is no harm in it.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

“Surely, Allah (SWT) is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

The Ayah end with the Eternal attributes of Allah, His Knowledge of all matters pertaining to marital relations and his wisdom in ordaining certain restrictions.

Verse 25

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا أَنْ يَنْكَحَ الْحَصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ فَمِنْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِنَ فَتَيَاتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

“And whoever of you has not the means sufficient to wed free, believing women; they may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands own.”

Those persons who cannot afford to marry free believing women, they are allowed to choose from their believing slave girls.

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِأَيْمَانِكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ

“And Allah (SWT) has full knowledge about your faith, you are one from another.”

All Muslims are equal and they are not distinguished by their social rank in the society but by the quality of their faith. Therefore it is quite possible that a believing slave girl may be more faithful and more honorable with her Lord than a free believing women.

فَالْكَافِرَاتُ الْإِثْمَانُ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ سَوَاءٌ وَإِنَّهُنَّ أَجْمَعُونَ وَالْمَرْءُ بِمَا كَفَرَ يُجْزَىٰ بِهِ الْإِنْسَانُ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُجِرِمًا

“Wed them with the permission of their owners and give them their dowry according to what is reasonable. They should be chaste, not adulterous, nor taking secret-lovers.”

This ayah describes the conditions for marrying a believing slave girl; firstly she should be an honorable woman, not of those who commit

fornication or look for illicit relationships. Secondly, do not marry them without the permission of their master, if they agree, then marry them and pay them their dowry in an honorable manner.

فَإِذَا أُحْصِنَ فَإِنْ أَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنَاتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ۗ

“And after they have been taken in wedlock, if they commit indecency, their punishment is half that for free women.”

After your marriage to them, if they commit adultery then their punishment will be half that of a free unmarried woman, which, in case of adultery, would be 50 lashes.

ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ ۗ وَأَنْ تَصْبِرُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ ۗ

“This is for him among you who fears indulging in fornication; but it is better for you that you practice self-restraint.”

Therefore, this concession for marrying slave girls is for those who are afraid of losing their chastity and cannot control their desires. But Allah (SWT) says that it is much better that they observe patience until He makes way for them to marry a free believing women.

وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

“And Allah (SWT) is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

Once again, the Ayah ends with the Eternal attributes of Allah. Allah (SWT) will forgive their sins regarding these prohibitions which occurred prior to these commandments and those who repent unreservedly.

Verse 26

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ لَكُمْ سُنَنِ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝

“Allah (SWT) wishes to make clear to you, and to show you the ways of those before you, and accept your repentance, and Allah (SWT) is All-Knower, All-Wise.”

In this section of the Ayah, Allah (SWT) has instructed the believers on the social and cultural reforms of their society so that the believers turn to Him in repentance and He takes them out of the ways of ignorance towards the path of guidance and morality as followed by previous Prophets of Allah (SWT) and their followers. And whatever He decrees is out of His perfect wisdom and He knows of His servants, who submit to His commandments.

Verse 27

وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ أَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا عَظِيمًا ۝

"Allah (SWT) wishes to accept your repentance, but those who follow their lusts, wish that you (believers) should deviate far away from the Right Path."

This refers to the followers of the evil forces, whether they are amongst the People of the Book or within the Muslims i.e. the hypocrites. They out of their enmity and jealousy want the believers to turn away from the teachings of the holy Prophet (SAW), which they know is the truth, and they intend to make them follow their ways of ignorance.

Verse 28

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا ۝

"Allah (SWT) wishes to lighten (the burden) for you; and humans were created weak."

Muslims are called upon to control and conquer their earthly and bodily urges by taking up the social and cultural reforms, so that the commands and prohibitions instructed by Allah (SWT) are made easier for them.

Verse 29

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ ۝

"O you who believe! Do not eat up your property among yourselves unjustly except it be a trade amongst you, by mutual consent."

Allah (SWT) commands the Muslims to respect other's life, family, property and honor and that they should not acquire each other's property by means which are against the Shrai'ah. Instead they should benefit from the opportunities of business and trade that Allah (SWT) has allowed for them e.g., commercial transactions, trade, industry etc. But these transactions should be carried out by mutual consent of the two parties involved and not by force or other illegal methods.

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۝

"And do not kill yourselves."

This section of the ayah prohibits committing suicide or killing another human being unjustly.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ۝

“Surely, Allah (SWT) is Most Merciful to you.”

He is Most Merciful to His servants in what He commanded them.

Verse 30

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِ نَارًا ۝

“And whoever commits that through aggression and injustice, We shall cast him into the Fire”

Whoever acquires others' property by force or injustice commits suicide or kills someone, then as a punishment he will be thrown into Hellfire.

وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ۝

“And that is easy for Allah (SWT).”

This means, that although Allah (SWT) is Most Merciful to His servants yet He is also the Just, thus this will not make Him hesitate in punishing the disbelievers.

Verse 31

إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبِيرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُدْخَلًا كَرِيمًا ۝

“If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden to do, We shall pardon you your (small) sins, and admit you to a Noble Entrance.”

This is similar to that which Allah (SWT) says in Ayah 32 of Surah An-Najam: *“Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, Only (falling into) small faults, verily your Lord is ample in forgiveness.”*

These Ayaat imply that those who abstain from committing major sins and shameful deeds, Allah (SWT) will forgive their minor sins and will admit them into the place of great honor i.e., Paradise.

Verse 32

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ۗ لِلرِّجَالِ مِمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ مِمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ ۗ

“And wish not for the things in which Allah (SWT) has made some of you to excel others. For men there is reward for what they have earned, (and likewise) for women there is reward for what they have earned.”

This ayah indicates that Allah (SWT) has preferred some of His men over others. One of the misconceptions in modern man's mind is that

men and women are equal in all aspects. This is not correct because Allah (SWT) has given men a degree over women in some aspects while women have their own responsibilities, so there should be no reason for jealousy and hard feelings between them. And they should not say that Islam teaches equality between men and women in all respects, rather they should say that Islam enjoins justice on them i.e., it gives each one that to which he or she is entitled, and they will be rewarded accordingly. For men is a portion of what they earn in piety, and for women is a portion of what they earn in piety.

وَأَسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ۝

“And ask Allah (SWT) of His Bounty. Surely, Allah (SWT) is All-Knowing of all things.”

In this section, Allah instructs as an advice as well as a commandment simultaneously that instead of jealousy and hard feelings for what Allah (SWT) has given to others; one should invoke Him for His bounties and place before Him his needs. And surely He knows who deserves His bounties. One should ask Allah for his grace and He has knowledge of all things.

Verse 33

وَلِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مَوَالِي مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ ۝

“And to everyone, We have appointed heirs of that left by parents and relatives.”

This ayah means that for every person there is a rightful heir who inherits his/her property and wealth. Similarly there will be those who will inherit what they inherited i.e., their children and relatives.

وَالَّذِينَ عَقَدْتَ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَأَنْتُمْ لَهُمْ صَيِّبُهُمْ ۝

“To those also with whom you have made a pledge, give them their due portion.”

Thus encouraging Muslims to give a share from their inheritance to those with whom they have a pledge of brotherhood i.e. friends or your Muslims brothers.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا ۝

“Truly, Allah is a Witness over all things.”

Thus the Ayat ends with warning that He himself (SWT) bears witness to all things.

Verse 34

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah (SWT) has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their wealth.”

When Islam differentiates between the two genders, it is in the interests of both, and this is the essence of the perfect wisdom of Allah (SWT) and for legal and administrative purposes. He has given men authority and the role of being in charge or head of the household so that they take care of their women; guide them in the best possible way, and issue commands and prohibitions to his family. Just as a ruler takes care of the people, a father takes care of his children, a teacher takes care of his students and a commander takes care of his soldiers. This is because men are made different to women, i.e. generally superior in strength and they have been assigned the role of being in charge of affairs i.e. by taking care of the family and spending on them. Otherwise a women's life, property and her honor is as sacred as that of men.

فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ

“Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in the husband's absence, by the aid and protection of Allah (SWT).”

An honorable woman is obedient to Allah (SWT) and obeys her husband in which Allah has enjoined obedience i.e. treating his husband's family well and looking after his children and his wealth. And the Prophet (SAW) said: *“If I were to command anyone to prostrate to anyone other than Allah (SWT), I would have commanded women to prostrate to their husbands. By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad (SAW), no woman can fulfill her duty towards Allah (SWT) until she fulfills her duty towards her husband. If he asks her (for intimacy) even if she is on her camel saddle, she should not refuse.”*

The Ayat continues and Allah (SWT) says:

وَالَّذِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا

“As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct and disobedience admonish them first, (next) avoid them in beds, and

(then) beat them, but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance)."

This means that if she is at fault or is guilty of misconduct, then he should first warn and advise her. Then he should withhold conjugal relations from her and should not speak to her, until she apologizes and returns to obedience. If even that does not work, then he is allowed to hit her, but not in a painful fashion because Islam does not allow him to hit her severely that leaves bruises on any part of the body, including the face. He is allowed to hit her lightly and within certain limits only for the purpose of discipline and not for revenge or to express one's anger. If she responds and returns to obedience, then he has no right to take further action against her.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٥٠﴾

"Surely, Allah (SWT) is Most High, Most Great."

The last section of this Ayah reminds the men to be mindful that if they deal unjustly with their wives, then Allah (SWT) will protect their wives from them and surely He The Most High will punish those who are wrongdoers. Surely, Allah (SWT) is the Most High, the Supreme.

Verse 35

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا ﴿٣٥﴾

"If you fear a breach of trust between them, appoint arbitrators, one from his family and the other from hers; if they both wish to set things right, Allah (SWT) will cause their reconciliation."

This ayah gives a solution for settling the disputes between a husband and his wife. If there is a dispute between a man and his wife then they should appoint two arbitrators i.e. one of the righteous men from his family and one of the righteous men from her family who try to resolve matter. Then whatever they decide, they should adhere to it, for that is good for both of them.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا ﴿٣٦﴾

"Indeed Allah (SWT) is All-Knower, Well Acquainted with all things."

If they wish to be reconciled, Allah (SWT) will bring them together again. Allah (SWT) is All-Knowing, Wise.