Have Taqwa of Allah Wherever You Are (Part 4)
Taqwa in Marriage

Today’s khutba is the fourth in the series of khutbas on the topic: “Have taqwa of Allah wherever you are.” Having taqwa of Allah is not just limited to one’s outward piety or modes of worship. It extends to one’s dealings with all the creations of Allah. Among them is one’s spouse. Today’s khutba focuses on having taqwa of Allah in marriage.

Surat al-Nisa’ begins by addressing mankind in the mode of command to have the taqwa of Allah. “O people, be conscious of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide; be mindful of Allah, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: Allah is always watching over you” (al-Nisa’, 4:1).

Among other issues dealing with moral, cultural, social, economic, and political issues, principles for the smooth running of family life have been laid down in this surah. Rules have been prescribed for marriage, and rights of wife and husband have been allocated. The status of women in the society has been determined. The only way to ensure a good relationship with one’s relatives, other human beings, and orphans, is to have the fear of Allah and the fear of the consequences in the hereafter of not having acted according to divine injunctions. It is perhaps for this reason that the Prophet (SAW) used to recite this ayah when delivering a nikah sermon. Most certainly, having taqwa of Allah with one’s spouse ensures a happy and successful marital life.

This ayah is a reminder to everyone to be mindful of Allah and to fear the consequences of the hereafter, lest this bond of humanity built upon honoring each other’s rights through mutual love, sympathy, and care, especially between the spouses remains unfulfilled. Another ayah that is typically recited and remembered at the time of conducting nikah, and that specifically elucidates the divine wisdom behind marriage is ayah 30 of Surat al-Rum. “Among His Signs is that He created spouses for you of your own kind so that you might find tranquility in them. And He has placed affection and compassion between you. There are certainly Signs in that for people who reflect (al-Rum, 30:21).

The Creator’s perfect wisdom is that He has created both men and women from the same genus or species, and He has created them both with the same matter. Yet the two have been created with different physical structures, different mental and psychological qualities, and different emotions and desires. And then there has been created such a wonderful harmony between the two that each is a perfect counterpart of the other. The physical and psychological demands of one squarely match with the physical and psychological demands of the other. This system has not come about by chance, but the Creator has brought it about deliberately with the ob-
ject that the man should find fulfillment of the demands of his nature with the woman and the woman with the man, and the two should find peace and tranquility in association and attachment with each other. This is the means of bringing the human civilization into existence, on the one hand, and of the survival of the human race, on the other.

In case one is confronted with problems in one’s married life, whatever the predicament may be, one should first and foremost seek counsel with Allah (SWT). Those who have the taqwa of Allah (SWT) can rest assured that Allah will help them out of their problems, and will make their matters easy for them. Incidentally, both these assurances are mentioned in Surat al-Talaq. “Whoever has taqwa of Allah; He will make a way out for him” (al-Talaq, 65:2). “Whoever has taqwa of Allah; He will make matters easy for him” (al-Talaq, 65:4). The Qur’an introduces a system of married life that takes into consideration the feelings of both the spouses. Such divine guidance when followed engenders feelings of love and harmony between the spouses and eliminates any bitterness, resentment or anger that may have existed between them.

The Qur’an does not only provide guidance for a healthy and harmonious spousal relationship, but also advocates the steps to be taken to settle disputes and discords that may take place between the husband and the wife. Promoting and encouraging reconciliation in the marital relationship, the Qur’an says, “If a woman fears ill-treatment or indifference on the part of her husband, it shall be no offence for her to seek reconciliation, for reconciliation is best. But people are prone to selfish greed. If you do good and fear Him, surely Allah is aware of what you do” (al-Nisa’, 4:128). The mutual displeasure between the married couple if not checked, and the mutual discord between them if not reconciled may lead to serious problems resulting in family feuds and perhaps killings.

Even if circumstances force the couple to end their married life, the same should be done properly with the taqwa of Allah (SWT). This will ensure that the parting process remains smooth and painless without any mutual hatred or animosity. The couple would then understand that the mishap was destined. This will make them part from each other in peace, each going his or her own way as destined.

In case all efforts of reconciliation fail and separation takes place, then the couple is advised to separate amicably, being gracious and kind to each other “Divorce may be pronounced twice, and then a woman must be retained honorably or released with kindness. It is not lawful for you to take away anything of what you have given your wives, unless both fear that they would not be able to observe the bounds set by Allah. In such a case it shall be no sin for either of them if the woman opts to give something for her release. These are the bounds set by Allah; do not transgress them. Those who transgress the bounds of Allah are wrongdoers” (al-Baqarah, 2:229).

The husbands who are in a position of strength over their wives are especially admonished to be kind and charitable to their wives. This is because often times they inflict harm upon their wives in various ways in defiance of the divine injunctions. “Once you divorce women, and they have reached the end of their waiting period (‘iddah), then either retain them in all decency or part from them decently. Do not retain them in order to harm them or to wrong them. Whoever does this, wrongs his own soul. Do not make a mockery of Allah’s revelations. Remember the favors Allah has bestowed upon you, and the Book and the wisdom He has revealed to exhort you. Fear Allah and know that Allah is aware of everything” (al-Baqarah, 2:231).

The family members (especially the parents) are instructed not to be an obstacle in the way of conciliation between the man and woman who may want to come back to each other in a marital relationship after she is separated from her husband. “When you divorce women and they have reached their waiting period, do not prevent them from remarrying their (former) husbands if they both agree to do so in a fair manner. Let those of you who believe in Allah and the Last Day take this to heart: that is more wholesome and purer for you. Allah knows and you do not.” (al-Baqarah, 2:232).
Allah has admonished men not to leave their wives suspended. Often times, men leave their wives in the lurch; neither divorcing them nor treating them as their wives. This may also happen when a man may have more than one wife and his treatment of his wives is not equitable. He favors one over the other(s). Surat al-Nisa’ addresses this situation: “But do not ignore one wife altogether, leaving her suspended [between marriage and divorce]. And if you make amends and act righteously, surely Allah is most forgiving and merciful” (al-Nisa’, 4:129).

A woman who is persistently ill treated by her husband, or if her husband is mafgood al-khabar (absent for an unreasonably long period of time and there is no news about him), or for any other valid reason, may exercise her right of khula, which means her right to legally seek release from her husband. This enables her to live singly or marry another man after she completes her waiting period (‘iddah).

Another area of concern in the marital relationship is the time when the woman is going through her menses. To make it very clear that intimate spousal relationship is forbidden with one’s wife during her menstruation, the Qur’an tells us, “They ask you about menstruation. Say, It is an impurity, so keep away from women during it and do not approach them until they are clean; when they have cleansed themselves you may approach them as Allah has ordained. Allah loves those who turn to Him in sincere repentance and He loves those who keep themselves clean” (al-Baqarah, 2:222). A man who either carelessly or unknowingly has not observed this prohibition or has approached his wife improperly must make sincere repentance for having violated a divine ruling.

The next ayah outlines the lawful way of having intimate relationship with one’s wife. “Your women are fertile fields for you, so come to your fertile fields however you like. Send good ahead for yourselves and have taqwa of Allah. Know that you are going to meet Him. And give good news to the mu’minun’ (Al-Baqarah, 2:223). It is unlawful (haram) for a man to approach his wife from any other place other than the place ordained by Allah (SWT), and that is where the seed is sown, and from where the progeny comes forth. A man who has taqwa of Allah in such matters will find Allah (SWT) blessing his conjugal life with happiness and tranquility.

Before the advent of Islam, women were regarded inferior to men. They were bereft of the usual human rights. They were treated as chattel and objects of sex. They were deprived from inheritance. Pagan custom allowed an infant baby girl to be buried alive. “And when the female infant buried alive is asked; for what sin she was killed” (al-Takwir, 81:8-9). With the advent of Islam, divine rules and regulations touching upon justice, family life, inheritance, the lawful and the unlawful, ethics and morality, and all other areas of human life were revealed to the Prophet (SAW).

In his sermon of Hajjat ul wada’, the Prophet (SAW), besides giving many advices and admonitions, reminded the people about rights of women over men and rights of men over women, about treating women with kindness, and about maintaining modesty and chastity. He said, “O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah’s trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste.”At the end of his sermon, he said, “All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O Allah, that I have conveyed your message to your people.”

In a hadith narrated by Abu Huraira (RA), the Prophet (SAW) said, “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt his neighbor. And I advise you to take care of women, for they are created from a rib and the most curved portion of the rib is its upper part; if you try to straighten it, it will break, and if you leave it, it will remain curved, so I urge you to take care of women.” It is also narrated by Abu Huraira (RA)
that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, “The most perfect among the believers in faith is one who has the best manners and best of you are those who are best to their wives.”

It is crucial that we take heed and pay attention to the divine laws and prophetic teachings related to marital relationship so as to have the taqwa of Allah (SWT) in marriage.

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