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THE FAMILY IN ISLAM

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of family in Islam within the framework of the Qur'an and Sunnah. It emphasizes that family is not merely a biological or social unit, but a moral, spiritual and institutional foundation of society. In Islamic thought, marriage is encouraged as a legitimate and sacred bond based on love, mercy, responsibility and tranquility. The Qur'an presents spouses as complementary partners and describes affection and compassion between them as signs of God's wisdom. The study also compares Islamic family principles with pre-Islamic practices and other religious traditions, highlighting Islam's reformative role in protecting women's rights, prohibiting harmful customs and strengthening family values. Furthermore, the prophetic tradition is presented as a practical model for family life, stressing kindness, mutual respect and care toward spouses and children. The text underlines the importance of faith, moral character, compatibility and responsibility in spouse selection. It also discusses the duties of men, women and society in maintaining family unity, privacy and stability. Overall, the study argues that Islam aims to establish a strong family structure grounded in love, mercy, justice and ethical responsibility.

Keywords: Family, Islamic Family, Marriage, Moral Responsibility, Social Stability.

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Introduction

Although the family occupies a central position in Islamic thought, studies examining the institution of the family through a combined analysis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah remain relatively limited. The present study aims to examine the concept of family in Islam within the framework of the Qur'an and the Sunnah by identifying its principal ethical foundations, values, and responsibilities. The study is limited to the normative understanding of the family in Islamic primary sources and does not seek to provide an empirical sociological analysis.

Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative document analysis based on the Qur'an, major hadith collections, classical Qur'anic exegesis, and relevant scholarly literature. Adopting a descriptive and thematic approach, it analyzes the principal concepts and values that constitute the Islamic understanding of family life.

Few institutions matter more to Islam than the family. It is the ground on which society stands. The Qur'an and the hadiths leave little room for doubt on this point: human beings find peace and happiness only where family life is sound, and nowhere else. This explains the care Islam has taken to protect the institution — the detailed provisions it lays down on marriage, on the love and mercy binding husband and wife, on how children are to be raised, on what family members owe one another. A family, on the Islamic account, is more than a biological arrangement. It is sacred. It carries spiritual weight, moral weight, social weight, all at once. Spouses, the Qur'an says, are a source of rest for each other; the life they build together must stand on love, on tenderness, on the willingness to give things up. And Muslims have never lacked a model — the Prophet's own household remains the pattern held before them. What emerges is a picture of the family as something Islam cannot do without: the place where character is formed, where a society's moral order is kept intact, where one generation passes soundly into the next.

The Qur'an traces the very first human social grouping back to the family (an-Nisā' 4:1)¹. Adam, Eve, their children — here is the earliest family we know of, spouses and offspring together. Everything the Qur'an asks of social life converges on keeping this structure upright, and it asks a great deal: love, mercy, goodness, solidarity, mutual help, truthfulness, fairness, fear of God. Every element of social existence, in the end, grows out of the family (Kırca, 1991, pp. 40-41).

¹ People, be mindful 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 God, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: God is always watching over you.

The Family in Judaism and Christianity

In Jewish tradition, the family has historically occupied an important social and religious position. Classical Jewish law has generally been described as patriarchal, while polygamy existed in certain historical contexts, although its practice differed across periods and communities. Likewise, attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and the status of women have varied among different Jewish traditions and interpretations. Some biblical passages emphasize respect and protection for women, whereas others have been interpreted in ways that reflect the historical and cultural context in which they emerged (Örs, 1996, p. 368).

In many historical Christian traditions, the family has likewise been regarded as a religious institution. Interpretations concerning the roles of husbands and wives have differed across theological traditions and historical periods. Certain historical interpretations emphasized the authority of the husband and the obedience of the wife, while contemporary Christian scholarship presents a broader diversity of perspectives on family life and marital relations (Temel, 2006, pp. 15–16). Set against this, the Qur'an and the Sunnah treat the family as an institution demanding the utmost care, one in which every member performs a function and which holds society itself upright.

Women in the Pre-Islamic Age of Jahiliyya

The family of the Jahiliyya period was, broadly speaking, patriarchal. Men married as many women as they wished and divorced whichever of them they pleased, whenever they pleased. The woman was used much like a household object, there to meet certain needs within the home and nothing more. During her menstrual period, no one would sit in the same room with her; meals were not even shared. Daughters counted for little in the family. A girl could not fight as a man did, brought the household no mark of honor, and offered no economic benefit — so she was given no value (Ateş, 1996, pp. 11-12).

The Family in Traditional and Modern Times

To form any real idea of today's family, one must first come to know the family of both these eras.

The type of family found in traditional societies is called, simply, the traditional family. Agriculture — the livelihood of the age — together with ways of living, beliefs, and the conditions the times imposed, all played a shaping role in this family type. Mention the traditional family and what generally comes to mind is a structure that is large, multifunctional, protective of privacy, and bound by tight kinship ties (Canatan & Yıldırım, 2009, p. 71). In families of this kind, a set of parameters does the defining: religion, solidarity, tradition, the demands of agricultural life. The man presides over the household; the parents answer for the

children's care; the man provides for the woman's livelihood, and the woman, in return, is expected not to neglect her family.

Truth be told, the traditional family lives on — some of its features have simply modernized. In the modern era, tradition's hold on the family has dissolved in some places and persists in others. This is why families moving toward modernization still show traces of tradition upon them (Canatan & Yıldırım, 2009, p. 76).

The family model known as the nuclear family stands among the most significant structures through which modernization, arriving with industrial growth, left its imprint on family life. What draws attention in the modern nuclear family is how few members it has. At its core, this model consists of husband and wife alone — parents, that is, together with children who have mostly not yet reached adolescence (Sayar & Bağlan, 2010, p. 3).

The most conspicuous trait of this society is that its members are consumers (Canatan & Yıldırım, 2009, p. 74). Among the root causes behind the emergence of such a family, several stand out: production shifting away from agriculture, a particular understanding of freedom, and the rapid changes and mobility running through society (Tezcan, 2010, p. 135).

Industrialization pushed individuals outside the family. The family's economic unity broke down as a result. Certain collective bonds within the family weakened in turn — and out of all this, in the end, the modern nuclear family was born (Topçu, 2006, p. 11).

1. The Family in Islam

Islam's family structure is patriarchal too. It differs, though — and differs considerably — from what one finds in other religions and belief systems, for Islam set limits on the authority of the head of the family. Islam also banned outright the pre-existing custom of killing infant daughters and stressed the heavy punishment awaiting this crime in the hereafter (al-Takwîr 81:9-10)². Nor did Islam load onto humanity the burden of the original sin spoken of in Judaism and Christianity, since the one who deceived Adam was not a human being but Satan (Âl-'Imrân 3:36; al-A'râf 7:20)³. Alongside all this, it regarded a partial precedence of the man within society as a matter of need and necessity (Aydın, 1989, II, 199; Önder, 2026, 213-230).

² "When the baby girl buried alive is asked, for what sin she was killed."

³ "Imran's wife said, 'Lord, I have dedicated what is growing in my womb entirely to You; so accept this from me. You are the One who hears and knows all.'
"But you and your wife, Adam, live in the Garden. Both of you eat whatever you like, but do not go near this tree or you will become wrongdoers."

1.1. The Family in the Qur'an

The family occupies its place within the social life Islam sought to bring into being — and it was never taken as a merely physical partnership. It was seen, rather, as an element and an institution whose establishment the religion itself demands. Marriage was encouraged for this reason; celibacy met with no approval.

“Marry those among you who are unmarried, as well as the righteous among your male and female servants. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty, for Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing.” (al-Nūr 24:32).

Other verses and hadiths stress the necessity of marriage as well. Every relationship outside this legitimate path — outside marriage — was forbidden. Adultery in particular was singled out as a grave sin; those who resorted to it were condemned in the harshest terms, and a set of punishments was laid down.

According to the Qur'an, the family consists of parents, children, and servants. Verses 58-61 of Sūrat al-Nūr trace the outlines of this⁴. These verses draw the boundaries of a family by listing the people with whom meals may be eaten in the home. The passage opens with “your own houses.” “Children” and “spouses” go unmentioned again because the opening phrase already contains them. What is essential in the family, then, is the mother, the father, and the children — which corresponds to what we today call the nuclear family. At the same time, by permitting the groups it lists to eat “together,” the verse sanctions the extended family as well (Canan, 1988, p. 204).

Addressing all Muslim women in the person of the Prophet's wives, the Qur'an tore down the corrupt, distorted, and mistaken notions about family and womanhood that the Jahiliyya era had held, and it presented the Prophet's family life — built on morality and religion — as the ideal, the finest model of a family.⁷ The bond between man and woman it treated not as a relationship of interest but as one of mutual love, tenderness, and repose, and it made the continuation of the human line an aim in itself.⁸

⁴ “Do not think [Prophet] that the disbelievers can escape God on earth; the Fire will be their final home, an evil end.”

“Believers, your slaves and any who have not yet reached puberty should ask your permission to come in at three times of day: before the dawn prayer; when you lay your garments aside in the midday heat; and after the evening prayer. These are your three times for privacy; at other times, there is no blame on you or them if you move around each other freely. In this way God makes messages clear: God is all knowing, all wise. When your children reach puberty, they should [always] ask your permission to enter, like their elders do. This is how God makes His messages clear to you: God is all knowing, all wise. “No blame will be attached to elderly women who are not hoping for sex, if they take off their outer garments without flaunting their charms, but it is preferable for them not to do this: God is all hearing, all seeing.

The Qur'an employs the concept of *zawj* to mean "each of two beings that complete one another, the existence of one helping the other to be understood" (al-Rāzī, 1997, p. 42). One verse of the Qur'an gives voice to precisely this:

"And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has set love and mercy between you" (al-Rūm 30:21).

Islam asks that this union, too, rest on definite measures. It made the family the foundation of society and saw in it the first step of a life lived as a Muslim ought to live. The Messenger of God said as much: "Whomever God has granted a righteous wife, He has helped him in half of his religion; so let him fear God concerning the other half" (al-Ṭabarānī, 972). And this is why the Qur'an, speaking on the choice of a spouse, declares: "Corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men for corrupt women; good women are for good men, and good men for good women" (al-Nūr 24:26). The measure of goodness ranked in this verse can, it seems, be drawn out of the following verse from Sūrat al-Aḥzāb: "Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the chaste men and chaste women, and the men and women who remember God often — for them God has prepared forgiveness and a great reward" (al-Aḥzāb 33:35).

1.2. The Family in the Hadiths

To be spouses at all, husband and wife must hold one another in esteem. Where esteem is absent, emotional sharing will not take root — this much is simply true. The Prophet spoke to the point: "This world is but a passing provision, and the finest provision this world holds is a good spouse" (Muslim, Raḍā' 64; al-Nasā'ī, Nikāḥ 15; Aḥmad, Musnad II: 168).

The Prophet gave weight to the idea of family throughout his life — before his prophethood no less than after it. He kept mentioning Khadija often, even long after her death; his love and tenderness toward his children have never ceased to be spoken of. A great many reports on these matters have reached us. Once, the Prophet kissed his grandson Ḥasan. Beside him stood al-Aqrā' b. Ḥābis, a Bedouin tribal chief, who asked: do you kiss children? I have ten of them and have never kissed one. The Prophet's answer: "He who shows no mercy will be shown none." To another man who asked the same sort of question he said, "If God has stripped mercy from your heart, what can I do?" (al-Bukhārī, Adab 18).

"The best of you is the one who is best to his family — and I am the best of you to my family" (al-Tirmidhī, Manāqib 63).

“Women are the other half that completes a whole together with men” (Abū Dāwūd, Ṭahāra 94).

“When a man spends on his family hoping for reward from God, that spending counts for him as charity” (al-Bukhārī, Īmān 41).

2. The Values That Hold the Family Together

In our day, when the foundations of society have been shaken, keeping the family sound matters enormously. Building and preserving family unity in a healthy way requires, first of all, that emotional unity be secured — and that the sensitivities surrounding it be guarded and watched over. Growing intolerance has bred a kind of indifference, and that this indifference damages emotional togetherness is plain to see. Hence the need to grasp, and grasp well, the key Qur’anic concepts that hold the notion of family together.

2.1. Mawadda and Raḥma

One verse lays bare the most important of the supports on which the family rests:

“And among His signs is that He created for you spouses of your own kind, that you may find warmth and closeness in them, and He placed love and compassion between you. Surely in this are lessons for people who reflect” (al-Rūm 30:21).

Mawadda means love (al-Iṣfahānī, n.d., p. 516); *raḥma* carries the senses of forgiveness, softness of heart, and compassion (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., 3:1611). In his commentary on this verse, al-Ṭabarī held that Eve was created so that Adam might find repose (al-Ṭabarī, 1954, 21:31). Al-Zamakhsharī and Ibn Kathīr explained that intimacy and tranquility arise between two people because they are of the same kind, glossing “he found rest in her” as “he inclined toward her, turned to her, found contentment in her” (al-Zamakhsharī, n.d., 3:530). The conditions for reaching tranquility within the family are these two: *mawadda* and *raḥma*. Our exegetes have offered various explanations on the subject. From all of this it would not be wrong to say that love and mercy constitute the general principle of value on which the family is to be seated.

2.2. Sukūn

Lexically, the word *sakīna* carries meanings such as “composure, dignity, trust, ease, peace” (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., 3:2052; al-Iṣfahānī, n.d., p. 236).

A verse that serves as evidence here:

“It is He who created you from a single soul, and from it made its mate, that he might find happiness with her. When the man lies with his wife, she bears a light burden and carries it for a while; when her pregnancy grows heavy, the two of them call upon God, their Lord: ‘If You grant us a sound child, we will surely be among the thankful’” (al-A’rāf 7:189).

This verse touches what might be called the very summit of the purpose of forming a family, and it says this: the clearest mark of a family that has found happiness is that it has reached *sakīna*. Exegetes have generally explained the word along the lines of “that he may find peace, find solace, be happy, be in harmony” (al-Ṭabarī, n.d., 13:304; Darwaza, 2000, 2:549).

Two people of differing natures come together to build something of value — a family. When we look at the values that will, as it were, keep this family standing, what matters as the couple takes the first step is this: that their moral and emotional maturity has reached the required level, that the worth of the marriage bond itself has been accepted, and that their preparation for shouldering the necessary responsibilities is complete. From the moment marriage is publicly declared through the *nikāḥ*, each spouse must recognize how much depends on the *mawadda*, *raḥma*, and *sukūn* that divine intervention will bring about between them — must value these states, and must do everything within their power to keep them alive.

3. Choosing a Spouse, and Why It Matters

Among the weightiest decisions in a person’s life stands the decision to marry. And the weightiest side of that decision is the choice of spouse. In earlier times this choice was settled according to the judgment of the family elders; today it has largely been left to the individuals who have resolved to marry (Ürkmmez, 2007, p. 8). What operates in the choice of a spouse can be counted as similar habits, shared outlooks on life, the same values. The Prophet, for this reason, encouraged prospective couples to meet before marriage. To al-Mughīra b. Shu’ba, then preparing to marry, he said: “Look at her — for this makes it more likely the marriage will last” (al-Nasā’ī, *Nikāḥ* 17). Meeting in the proper manner and deciding on marriage by mutual consent is fundamental. The Prophet declared: “If God casts into a man’s heart the thought of marrying a woman, there is no harm in his looking at her” (Ibn Māja, “*Nikāḥ*” 9). It matters, then, that prospective spouses see one another under suitable conditions and find one another pleasing. Given the weight of the matter, certain decisive qualities in the choice of a spouse call for examination as well:

3.1. Unity of Faith and Religious Devotion

The bond that directs a person’s thoughts and feelings, that shapes their world of meaning and value, that marks out the path to be followed for a lifetime, is unity of belief. God draws attention to this in *Sūrat al-Baqara*:

“Do not marry women who associate partners with God until they believe. Be certain of this: a believing slave woman is better than a free idolatrous woman, even if she pleases you. Nor give your women in marriage to men who associate partners with God until they believe. Be certain of this too: a believing slave is

better than a free idolater, even if he pleases you. They call people to the Fire, while God calls, by His leave, to Paradise and forgiveness, and He makes His verses clear to people that they may take heed" (al-Baqara 2:221).

The sources point to the following event as the occasion of this verse's revelation. According to Ibn 'Abbās, the Prophet secretly sent Marthad b. Abī Marthad — who had been granted protection by the Banū Hāshim and had then become Muslim — to Mecca to rescue Muslim captives. Word spread that Marthad was in Mecca, and a woman named 'Anāq came to him, an idolater he had known in the Jahiliyya period. Marthad had cut off relations with this woman upon becoming Muslim. When he returned to Medina, he asked the Prophet whether he could marry her. It was then that this verse, forbidding the marriage, was revealed (al-Qurṭubī, 2006, 3:454). Read in light of this report, the verse stressed that no division in faith can be accepted between those contemplating marriage — the marriage bond to be formed must be between people of faith. As for the continuation of the verse, "a believing slave woman is better than a free idolatrous woman, even if she pleases you," the report runs as follows:

Again from Ibn 'Abbās: 'Abdullāh b. Rawāḥa had a black slave woman. One day he lost his temper and struck out at her in anger, then regretted what he had done. He told the Prophet what had happened. The Messenger of God asked what sort of person she was. 'Abdullāh said: "She fasts, she prays, she performs her ablutions well, and she bears witness that there is no god but God and that you are His Messenger." At this the Prophet said, "O 'Abdullāh, she is a believing woman." 'Abdullāh replied: "Then I swear I will free her and marry her." When he did marry her, some people reproached him for marrying his own slave — and upon this the verse was revealed (al-Qurṭubī, 2006, 3:458; Ibn Kathīr, 1999, 3:432).

With this verse, the quality of faith in a person must stand as the ground of preference, without being weighed against any other kind of superiority. Shared faith confronts us as a crucial point in the harmony between spouses.

And when religious devotion is taken as a religious way of life, one hadith of the Prophet pointing to the matter cannot be passed over: "A woman is married for four things: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty, and her religion. Choose the religious one, that your house may be blessed" (al-Bukhārī, Nikāḥ 15; al-Nasā'ī 15). This way of life means living with morality, awareness, and steadfastness of direction. What emerges is that moral living and good character ought to be grounds of preference in choosing a spouse. It is essential to reflect on why the Prophet insisted so firmly that religious devotion be preferred in marriage. Difference of belief between spouses can give rise to troubles of various kinds — troubles that can shake the very foundations on which family life must be raised: mercy, solidarity, tranquility. Unbelief can bring moral weaknesses of many sorts

in its train. It can drain the meaning from values such as truthfulness, sincerity, trustworthiness, and the consciousness of final account.

3.2. Compatibility (Kafā'a)

This is not a matter of social classification; what is meant are the factors that will secure harmony between two people. The most significant statement on the point appears in this verse:

“A man who commits fornication marries none but a fornicating or idolatrous woman, and a fornicating woman is married by none but a fornicating or idolatrous man. This has been forbidden to the believers” (al-Nūr 24:3).

For a clean generation, the verse stresses, an understanding of compatibility grounded in chastity forms an essential element in the choice of a spouse. The believer must be chaste and must marry someone chaste. The religious and moral side of compatibility, then, is to be sought in the woman and the man alike. Beyond this, the closer and more harmonious the spouses are in age, in views, in ways of living, in outlook, in values, in wealth, in culture, and in religious devotion, the sounder their married life will prove — in exactly that measure.

3.3. The Consciousness of Responsibility

In the ordering of social life, it matters that responsibilities be known as mutual. The family is a setting in which these responsibilities multiply.

“Whoever does righteous deeds, man or woman, while being a believer — We shall surely give them a good life, and We shall surely reward them according to the best of what they used to do” (al-Nahl 16:97).

Every person carries responsibilities in proportion to their position: toward their religion first, then toward themselves, their family, their relatives, their neighbors, their friends, their surroundings, and humanity at large. The Prophet put it this way in a hadith reported from Ibn ‘Umar: “Every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you is answerable for those in your charge. The leader, the imam, is a shepherd, answerable for his flock. A man is head of his household, answerable for the people of his house. A woman is responsible for her husband’s house, answerable for those within it. A servant is responsible for his master’s property, answerable for what falls to him. Every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you is answerable for your charge” (al-Bukhārī–Muslim).

If everyone within the family carries out their duty in good faith, and each remains aware that their spouse is worth no less than they are, problems in the family do not grow — indeed, they may well be resolved before they ever get the chance to.

4. The Core Values Sustaining the Family in the Framework of the Qur'an and the Hadiths

Divorce, now turning into a major problem of our time, has eroded the worth attached to the very idea of family. Day by day, this has brought with it a drop in the number of individuals within society who possess a consciousness of responsibility. Shaking the continuity of the family as it does, this state of affairs has produced disquiet of various kinds in its wake. The family is the social structure through which the human line continues. Establishing a balance of rights and responsibilities within the family is a significant factor in its endurance.

4.1. The Woman's Responsibility

We are bound to recognize that the woman's sense of responsibility bears on whether a marriage lasts. The woman is a wellspring of love, mercy, and peace. In this respect she is the spouse who — conscious of what her nature has entrusted to her — turns a house into a home. It follows that within the family, respect toward one's spouse must never be let go of: not by the husband alone, but by the wife as well.

Within the family, the woman should stand beside her husband with all her abilities and means, supplying the devotion and self-sacrifice her home's happiness requires. The Prophet said: "A righteous wife is one who is agreeable to her husband, who does what he asks of her, and who does not betray him in her person or his property in his absence" (al-Nasā'ī, *Nikāḥ* 5). In another hadith: "If a woman prays her five daily prayers, fasts her month each year, guards her chastity, and lives in harmony with her husband, the gates of Paradise stand open to her" (Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:191). Among wives who supported their husbands, Khadīja is without doubt one of the finest examples. Seeing the anxiety and agitation the Messenger of God experienced at the first revelation, she consoled and steadied him with these words: "Do not fear — God will never disgrace you. For you look after your kin, you help those in hardship, you clothe the needy, you honor the guest" (al-Bukhārī, "Tafsīr" 1).

The Qur'an, asking women to show self-sacrifice for the family's continuity when they meet with harshness from their husbands, says: "If a woman fears ill-treatment or aversion from her husband, there is no sin on the couple if they set matters right between them through an agreement — and reconciliation is best. Souls are prone to selfish greed. But if you do good and act rightly, and guard against wrongdoing and discord, then surely God is aware of all that you do" (al-Nisā' 4:128). Through this verse, women are counseled to prefer the path of settlement.

Concerning the duties that fall to the woman in securing the family's peace and the marriage's continuation, the following report matters too. Asmā' bt. Yazīd b.

al-Sakan came to the Prophet as spokeswoman for the women and asked: "We have believed in you. We women are confined to the work of the house. We satisfy your desire; we bear your children. You men have your virtuous deeds — joining the congregation, visiting the sick, attending funerals, the hajj, jihad. When one of you leaves home for the hajj, we guard your property and raise your children. How shall we share in this reward?" The Prophet turned to those around him and asked, "Have you ever seen anyone state her case concerning the commands of religion so beautifully?" — and then gave this answer: "O women, if a woman keeps good company with her husband, seeks his good pleasure, and lives in harmony with him, this secures her equality. The woman then equals the man in reward" (Ibn Sa'd, 2001, 8:319). These verses and reports show how important, and how precious, the woman's effort is where the family's continuity is concerned.

4.2. The Man's Responsibility

The Qur'an, stating that the man must act with care in the awareness of his responsibility for his household, declares:

"Live with them (your wives) in kindness. If you dislike them — it may well be that you dislike a thing in which God has placed much good" (al-Nisā' 4:19).

This verse makes plain that the man must not abuse his position as head of the family. He is to be attentive to the woman's rights, and he must not make the mere fact that something displeases his own soul into a pretext (Darwaza, 2000, 8:56).

4.3. The Responsibility of Society

Society has significant functions to perform, both in shaping a positive perception of marriage and in preparing individuals for it. It should play an active part, above all, in helping couples preparing for marriage come to know one another and in securing compatibility between them.

"Marry off the unmarried among you, and the suitable ones among your male and female slaves. If they are poor, God will enrich them out of His bounty. God's treasure is vast; He knows all things" (al-Nūr 24:32).

This verse points to that active duty of society. Constructive, timely, and balanced guidance offered to prospective couples before marriage has proven effective in the founding of sound families — and has stood in the way of ill-suited ones. That society not neglect this weighty responsibility is itself an important duty owed to marriage. And when disagreements arise within a family, forming a body of representatives from the two families is a significant social task in resolving them: "If you fear a breach between husband and wife, send an arbiter from the man's family and an arbiter from the woman's. If the couple wish to be reconciled, and the arbiters wish to reconcile them, God will bring them to accord" (al-Nisā' 4:35).

The real aim of this practice is to secure the family's continuity. In communities where social censure is keenly felt, this structure not only proves effective in resolving problems; it also shields the family from outside influences and preserves the spiritual atmosphere within it.

4.4. The Privacy of the Family

One verse of the Qur'an on the subject should not escape attention: "O you who believe! Do not enter the Prophet's houses unless leave is given you, and do not linger waiting for the meal to be prepared; but when you are invited, enter, and when you have eaten, disperse — do not stay on, absorbed in talk. This conduct troubles the Prophet; he is reluctant to tell you so, but God does not shrink from declaring the truth. And when you ask anything of the Prophet's wives, ask it from behind a curtain: that is purest for your hearts and for theirs. It is not for you to cause the Messenger of God distress, nor ever to marry his wives after him; to do so would be a grave offense in God's sight" (al-Aḥzāb 33:53). Likewise, verses 27-28 of Sūrat al-Nūr⁵ speak of a set of measures directed at protecting the family's privacy — asking leave before entering the homes of others, offering the greeting of peace.

Conclusion

As society's hold over individual and family life has weakened, divorce numbers have begun to climb — and this has confronted the family, the very center of the social structure, with troubles of more than one kind. Marrying and founding a family is no longer received as a value in itself; we are drifting instead toward a society in which the single life is praised and living together without marriage passes for "getting to know each other," for a "respectable partnership." That values are wearing thin and morals decaying is, on the whole, plain to see. It could not be otherwise than that this state of affairs would leave its mark on family life. And it should not be forgotten that in warding off these ills, the values of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet's Sunnah remain a reality that is needed at every moment.

For marriages that are happy and at peace, then, it matters that individuals have brought their understanding of meaning and value to maturity — that they have attained, too, the emotional and moral ripeness that marriage demands.

⁵ "Corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men are for corrupt women; good women are for good men and good men are for good women. The good are innocent of what has been said against them; they will have forgiveness and a generous provision."
 "Believers, do not enter other people's houses until you have asked permission to do so and greeted those inside— that is best for you: perhaps you will bear this in mind."

Nor should this be forgotten: marriage is an element of balance in a human life. Through marriage the individual strikes a balance between their personal sphere and their true place within society.

Throughout history the family has been received as society's fundamental institution, and it has held an important place in the revealed religions. In Judaism the family carries worth both religiously and socially. The Jewish family structure is patriarchal on the whole, and polygamy appeared in certain periods. Marrying counted as an important religious duty, while divorce was accepted as legitimate. On the question of women, the approaches diverge: some texts command that women be treated well, while other accounts judge the woman unfavorably. Christianity, too, received the family as a sacred institution, and within it the man's authority was pushed to the fore. The understanding that the woman must obey the man became widespread.

In the pre-Islamic Jahiliyya period, women were held in very low regard. Men could marry an unlimited number of women and divorce their wives whenever they pleased. The woman was seen, more often than not, as little more than an object that served. Daughters were given no value — some families buried them alive. Women were kept to the background of social life.

Islam attached great importance to the institution of the family. The family structure in Islam is patriarchal, yet the man's authority was limited and the woman's rights were protected. The Jahiliyya custom of killing infant daughters was forbidden absolutely, and the woman was raised to a position of worth within society. The Qur'an defines the family not as a merely biological union but as a sacred institution founded on love, mercy, and peace. Marriage was encouraged for this reason; adultery and illegitimate relations were forbidden. The Qur'an presents spouses as two beings who complete one another and declares the love and mercy between them to be among the signs of God.

According to the Qur'an, the family is a fundamental structure made up of mother, father, and children — though the understanding of the extended family was accepted alongside it. For peace to be secured within the family, the Qur'an stresses, love, mercy, and mutual understanding must be preserved. The concepts of *mawadda* and *rahma* were seen as the principal supports of family life: love binds the spouses to one another, while mercy expresses self-sacrifice, understanding, and forgiveness. The concept of *sukūn*, in turn, expresses the forming of an atmosphere of peace and trust within the family.

The Prophet showed through his own conduct how much love and mercy matter in family life. He treated his children and grandchildren with the utmost tenderness and counted good treatment of one's family among the significant marks of being a Muslim. The hadith "The best of you is the one who is best to his

family” lays bare the weight of good conduct within the home. The Prophet stated that man and woman are two elements completing one another, and he encouraged mutual respect and understanding within the family.

The choice of a spouse carries great weight in Islam as well. Among the foremost criteria in marriage stand faith and good character. The Prophet stressed that religious devotion, honesty, and sound morals must come first in choosing a spouse. Harmony between spouses in belief, in values, and in outlook on life was declared important for the soundness of the marriage; cultural and social compatibility, too, was counted among the elements that strengthen peace within the family.

The consciousness of responsibility carries great weight within the family. The man bears the family’s material and spiritual responsibility, while the woman was seen as a vital element preserving the peace and order of the home — yet in Islam these duties rest on a balance of mutual rights and responsibilities. Society, too, must support the institution of the family: the elders of the two families, and the community at large, are counseled to take on a constructive role in protecting marriages.

The Qur’an and the hadiths give great weight to the privacy of the family as well. One must not enter the homes of others without leave; family confidences are to be kept; spouses are to treat one another with respect. In the end, Islam received the family as the foundation of society and set itself the aim of building a strong family structure resting on love, mercy, peace, and responsibility.

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