127066 - The wisdom behind the Prophet’s marrying more than four wives

the question

Why did the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) marry a number of women?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Allah’s wisdom is great, and part of His wisdom is that He has permitted men, in previous divine laws and in the sharee‘ah of our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), to marry more than one wife. Plural marriage was not something done only by our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Ya‘qoob (peace be upon him) had two wives. Sulaymaan ibn Dawood (peace be upon him) had one hundred less one wives; he went around to all of them in a single night, hoping that Allah would bless each one of them with a boy who would fight for the sake of Allah.

This is not something that is limited to Islam and it is not contrary to reason or the natural inclinations of man; rather it is what wisdom dictates. Women are more numerous than men, according to what is indicated by ongoing statistics, and a man may have the strength that prompts him to marry more than one woman so as to fulfil his desires in permissible ways, instead of fulfilling them in haraam ways or suppressing them. A woman may fall ill or there may be reasons that prevent her from engaging in intercourse, such as menses and nifaas (post-partum bleeding); this prevents a man from fulfilling his desire with her, so he needs to have another wife with whom he can fulfil his desires instead of suppressing them or committing immoral actions. So plural marriage is permissible and is justifiable in terms of reason, natural human inclinations and laws. It is something that was done by the earlier Prophets and in some cases it may be dictated by necessity or need. So it should come as no surprise that this was done by our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). And there are other reasons for his having several wives, which have been discussed by the scholars. These include the following:

·Strengthening the ties between him and some tribes, in the hope that this would make Islam stronger and help to spread it, because ties of marriage increase the bonds of friendship, love and brotherhood.

·Taking care of some widows and compensating them with something better than what they had lost, because this would bring peace of mind and consolation at times of calamity. It also set a precedent for the ummah of how to show kindness to those whose husbands were killed in jihad and so on.

·Hoping to increase the numbers of offspring, which is in accordance with human inclinations, increasing the numbers of the ummah and supporting it with those who it is hoped will support and spread the religion.

·Increasing the number of female teachers who would convey to the ummah what they had learned from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and what they knew of his private life.

The motive for him having more than one wife was not mere desire, because it is proven that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not marry any virgin or young woman apart from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). The rest of his wives were previously married women. If he had been controlled by his desires and that is what had motivated him to have many wives, he would have chosen young virgins in order to fulfil his desires, especially after he migrated and began to engage in jihad, and the Islamic state was established and the Muslims grew stronger and more numerous, in addition to the fact that every family would have welcomed ties through marriage with him. But he did not do that; rather he married for noble and sublime reasons, which are clear to anyone who studies the circumstances of his marriage to each of his wives.

Moreover, if he had been a man driven by desires, that would have been known from his life during the days when he was young and strong, at which time he had only one wife, Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid, who was older than him. (If he had been a man driven by desires), he would also

have been known to show favouritism and be unfair in dividing his time among his wives, who varied in their ages and degree of beauty. But he is known only to have been completely chaste and honourable in his conduct, both in his youth and when he grew older, which is indicative of his complete decency and sublime character, and his upright nature in all his affairs. In fact he was well-known for that even among his enemies.

And Allah is the source of strength. May Allah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions. End quote.

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