930 - The Man is Head of Household

the question

IF THE MAN IS NOT THE MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME IS HE CONSIDERED AS THE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Qiwamah (the role of being in charge or head of the household) is one of the things that Allah has given to men, exclusive of women. What is meant by qiwamah is that men are entrusted with the task of being responsible for women, to take care of them, to guide them in the best possible way, and to issue commands and prohibitions - just as a ruler takes care of the people under his control.

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "...but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them [women]..." [Al-Baqarah 2:228] and "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means..." [Al-Nisa’ 4:34]

Ibn Katheer said: "This means that men are in charge of women; they govern them and discipline them if they do wrong." Al-‘Allamah Shaykh al-Shanqeeti said: "This indicates that men are better than women, because the masculine is honour and perfection, whereas the feminine naturally has something lacking physically. All people are agreed on this, because all peoples give women the best of adornments, which is only to make up for this natural lack..."

Rare cases among women are nothing to go by, because the exception does not change the rule.

Some of the reasons why men are given the role of qiwamah include:

1. Men are more intelligent and have a better ability to distinguish right from wrong. Al-Qurtubi

said: "Men have the advantage of being more wise and more capable of management; for this reason they were given the right of qiwamah." 2. Men’s religion is more complete, because women menstruate and bleed after childbirth, and do not pray or fast at such times - unlike men. 3. Spending money in charity and on one’s family is a duty on men, but not on women.

Thus if a man refuses to spend on his wife, she has the right to seek an annulment of the marriage by going to a Qadi (Sharee’ah judge).

In summary, qiwamah is only for men, as is made clear in the Quran. If a woman spends on her husband, herself and her children, this is an act of kindness on her part, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "... but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it (the mahr) to you, take it, and enjoy it without fear of any harm (as Allah has made it lawful)." [Al-Nisa’ 4:4] Qiwamah is for men in all cases: one can hardly imagine a man asking his wife for permission to go out, for example. And Allah knows best.

For more information on this matter, please refer to: Ibn al-‘Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran, 1/531; Ahkam al-Jassas, 2/188; Tafseer al-Qurtubi, 2/169; Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 1/491; al-Shanqeeti, Adwa’ al-Bayan, 1/136-137)