269847 - What is Qiwamah?

the question

I have a question regarding the Historical context of Surah Nisa, Ayah 34. I have gone through Tafsir Ibn Kathir and the Shades of the Quran by Sayid Qutubuddin but did not get any information regarding the historical context.

Could you, therefore, kindly provide me the information When was Surah Nisa Ayah 34 revealed?

Why was it revealed? In response to whose action was it revealed? I extremely grateful if you can help me in this regards.

Summary of answer

The word Qiwamah as mentioned in verse 34 of Surat An-Nisa’ means that the man is in charge of the woman and has the authority to discipline her if he fears defiant disobedience on her part.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What is Qiwamah?

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Men are in charge of women because Allah has made one of them excel the other and because of what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear defiant disobedience - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Great,} [An-Nisa’ 4:34]

Verse 34 of Surat An-Nisa’ affirms that the man is in charge of the woman and has the authority to discipline her if he fears defiant disobedience on her part.

Allah, may He be Exalted, mentions two reasons for the man being in charge of the woman, one of which is something that He has bestowed on the man, which is causing him to excel over the woman; and the other is what the man attains through his efforts, which is his spending and his wife.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{because Allah has made one of them excel the other and because of what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth } [An-Nisa’ 4:34].

And He, may He be glorified, has mentioned this Qiwamah [men being in charge of women] elsewhere, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.} [Al-Baqarah 2:228]

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his Tafsir (1/363):

“The words {But the men have a degree over them} mean: they are superior to them both physically and psychologically, in status and in obedience to Allah’s command, in spending and in taking care of various matters, and in the fact that they attain greater virtue in this world and the hereafter, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says elsewhere:

{Men are in charge of women because Allah has made one of them excel the other and because of what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth} [An-Nisa’ 4:34].”

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also said: (1/635):

“The words {Men are in charge of women} mean that the man is in charge of the woman; in other words, he is her leader and superior, and he has authority over her and is the one to discipline her

if she drifts away.

{because Allah has made one of them excel the other} that is, because men are superior to women and men are better than women. Hence prophethood was only granted to men, and the position of ruler or head of state is also only for men, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of their affairs.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari from ‘Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Abu Bakrah, from his father). The same applies to the position of judge and other positions.

{and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth} that includes dowries, maintenance and other spending that Allah has made obligatory for men to spend on women in His Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Thus the man is inherently superior to the woman, and has an extra advantage over her because of what he spends on her maintenance. Therefore it is appropriate for him to be in charge of her, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]…} [Al-Baqarah 2:228].

‘Ali ibn Abu Talhah (may Allah have mercy on him) narrated that Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “{Men are in charge of women} means that they are their leaders, so the woman must obey the man in what he instructs her to do. Obedience to him means that she should be kind to his family and take good care of his wealth.”

Al-Baydawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his Tafsir (2/184):

“{Men are in charge of women}, so they are to take care of them as rulers take care of their subjects.

The reason for that is twofold; it is because of what Allah has bestowed and because of the men’s efforts, as Allah says: {because Allah has made one of them excel the other}, because of the advantage that He, may He be Exalted, has given to men over women, by granting them reason and wisdom, and greater physical strength to do good deeds and acts of worship. Hence certain things are granted only to men, such as prophethood, rulership, positions of authority, leading acts

of worship, giving testimony in various legal cases, fighting in jihad, being obliged to attend Jumu'ah prayers and the like, having a greater share of inheritance, and having the authority to issue divorce.

{and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth} including what they spend on them when they marry them, such as the dowry and maintenance."

Az-Zuhayli (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"The man is in charge of the woman, meaning that he is her leader and superior , and he has authority over her and is the one to discipline her if she drifts away. He is the one who is in charge of her, so he protects her and takes care of her. It is he who must engage in Jihad, not her, and he receives double her share of inheritance, because he is the one who is obliged to spend on her .

The reason why men are in charge is twofold:

- Firstly, the man has a physical advantage, because he is physically perfect, has strong powers of reasoning and the ability to understand things, is emotionally stable, and is physically sound. Therefore men excel women in reasoning, wisdom, resolve and strength; hence only men may be messengers, prophets, rulers and judges, and only men may carry out certain rituals such as the Adhan, Iqamah, Khutbah, Jumu'ah and Jihad; only the man has the authority to issue divorce, and is permitted to marry multiple wives; only men may give testimony with regard to injuries and Hadd punishments; and men receive a greater share of inheritance and may inherit as residual heirs [male relatives on the father's side].
- Secondly, the man is obliged to spend on his wife and female relative, and he is obliged to pay the dowry, which is a gesture intended to honour the woman.

Apart from that, men and women are equal in terms of rights and duties . This is one of the beauties of Islam. Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]} [Al-Baqarah 2:228].

In other words, men have a degree over them in managing the household and keeping an eye on the family's affairs, guiding them and watching them." (At-Tafsir Al-Munir, 5/54)

Hadiths on the cause of the revelation of Verse 34 of Surat An-Nisa'

There are inauthentic Hadiths one of which was narrated by At-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) in his Tafsir (8/291) from Al-Hasan, according to which a man slapped his wife, so she came to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and he wanted to let her retaliate, but Allah revealed the words: {Men are in charge of women because Allah has made one of them excel the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth}. So the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) called the man and recited this verse to him, then he said: "I wanted one thing but Allah wanted something else."

The Isnad (chain of narrators) is authentic up to Al-Hasan (may Allah have mercy on him), but Al-Hasan was a Tabi'i, so the Hadith is Mursal, and a Mursal Hadith is one of the inauthentic types on Hadith.

Muqatil (may Allah have mercy on him) said: This verse was revealed regarding Sa'd ibn Ar-Rabi' (may Allah be pleased with him), who was one of the leaders of the Ansar. His wife was Habibah bint Zayd ibn Abi Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with her); they were both among the Ansar. She was defiantly disobedient towards him, so he slapped her…

Context of Verse 34 of Surat An-Nisa'

With regard to the context of the verse and how it is connected to the verses that come before it, Allah, may He be Exalted, mentioned the reason why men are caused to excel over women, after stating the share of inheritance for each of them and forbidding both men and women to wish for that in which some of them have been caused to excel over others."(At-Tafsir Al-Munir by Az-Zuhayli, 5/45).

This is a reference to the verse in which Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of his bounty. Indeed Allah is ever, of all things, Knowing.} [An-Nisa' 4:32]

For more details, please see the following answers: 70042 and 5053 .

And Allah knows best.