372570 - Why Allah did permit polygamy even though it hurts the wife’s feelings?

the question

Why did Allah allow a man to have four wives, when at the same time He created women to be jealous and attached to their husbands? Why did He decree this torment for the wife, especially when she would initially get used to the idea of him being hers alone, then suddenly another woman is sharing him with her, especially when there are men and women who are naturally jealous, so this will hurt her a great deal, and ninety-nine percent of men nowadays cannot treat co-wives equitably?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

What is required of the Muslim is to submit to the ruling of Allah, even if he does not know the wisdom behind it

What is required of the Muslim, when he learns that this is the ruling of Allah, may He be Exalted, is to accept, surrender and submit, and it should not be his main concern to find out about the wisdom and reason behind it, let alone develop thoughts and ideas that reflect discontent with what Allah has ordained for His slaves.

Human reason may not be able to grasp the wisdom behind many rulings, or may understand only a little of it.

The believers believe that Allah, may He be Exalted, is All-Knowing, Most Wise, and He has the

attributes of perfect knowledge and perfect wisdom. Therefore He does not prescribe anything except that which serves important interests that a human may or may not know.

The fact that it is permissible for a man to marry four women is something that is proven in a clear and unambiguous text of the Quran, and the ummah is unanimously agreed on that. Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{If you fear that you shall not be able to deal fairly with orphan girls, you may marry other women who seem good to you, two or three or four; but if you fear that you will not be equitable, then marry only one, or any slave women you may own. That is more likely to keep you from committing an injustice} [An-Nisa' 4:3].

What is required of the believer is not to make compliance with the command of Allah dependent on knowing the wisdom behind it, because that is contrary to faith and submission to the command of Allah.

However, there is nothing wrong with the believer asking about the wisdom behind a ruling so that he may increase in faith and learn how to respond to deviant people who present specious arguments. He may or may not find out the wisdom behind that ruling, and he may or may not understand it, but whatever the case, he has strong faith in that which came down from Allah, and he submits in an absolute sense, with no hesitation, resentment, reservation or doubt about what Allah says in His Book and what He has ordained for His slaves.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you [O Muhammad] judge in all disputes between them, then find in their hearts no reservations about your verdicts, but accept them wholeheartedly} [An-Nisa' 4:65].

Ibn al-Qayyim said in *At-Tibyan fi Aqsam al-Quran*, 652 (`Alam al-Fawa'id edn.): Here Allah, may He be Glorified, swears by His Divine Self an oath which is emphasized by the preceding negation, that people will not truly believe until they make His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be

upon him) judge in all disputes between them , in both major and minor issues, rulings of sharia, rulings pertaining to the hereafter, divine attributes and all other matters. They are not to be described as believers for merely referring to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for judgement until they find in their hearts no reservations, which means discomfort, and thus they will be completely at ease with the Prophet's ruling and completely content with it, and they will accept it wholeheartedly.

And they are not to be described as believers until, in addition to the above, they accept the Prophet's ruling with contentment and submission, not disputing it, or objecting to it or turning away from it. End quote.

See also the answers to questions no. 242925, 245073 and 301677.

Secondly:

Allah, may He be Exalted and Glorified, has prescribed for people that which is in their best interests in this world and the hereafter

It is essential to point out that Allah, may He be Exalted, has prescribed for us that which is in our best interests in this world and the hereafter.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Verily, Allah enjoins justice, kindness and giving kinsfolk [their due], and He forbids obscenity, wickedness and aggression. He admonishes you, so that you may pay heed} [An-Nahl 16:90].

However, there may be some negative aspects to a thing, but the great interests that it serves outweigh those negative aspects, therefore Islam enjoins it because of the great interests that it serves, and its negative aspects will be negligible in comparison to those great interests.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Islamic teachings enjoin what is in people's best interests and seek to perfect the benefits thereof, and Islam strives to eliminate mischief and reduce it. Islam gives precedence to the greater of two good options and the lesser of two evils; it chooses that which will serve a greater interest over that which will serve a lesser interest, and it wards off the greater of two evils whilst putting up with the lesser evil.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 20/48.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Islamic teaching is based on a foundation of wisdom and aiming to achieve what is in people's best interests in this world and the hereafter.

End quote from *I`lam al-Muwaqqi`in*, 1/41.

An example of that is what Allah has prescribed for His slaves of polygamy, whereby one man may have several wives, subject to well-known conditions. There may be something hurtful for a wife in polygamy, but this negative aspect is outweighed by the many interests that may be served by the prescription of polygamy. These interests outweigh that negative aspect, so wisdom dictated that it should be permitted.

One of the most obvious benefits of polygamy is that it eliminates spinsterhood in communities, and it is a means of sponsoring and taking care of orphans and women, if a woman's husband dies and leaves her with small children, and she has no sponsor to take care of her; it also protects society from the immorality of zina.

In addition to that, there are other interests that are served by marriage in general, such as having many children, taking care of women, forming ties with her family as a son-in-law, creating bonds between the Muslims, and so on.

All of these interests – and many others – which we may not be able to understand on the basis of reason are among the benefits of polygamy. It is not stipulated in order for something to be beneficial and serve an interest that it should suit people's whims and desires; there are many

medicines that have clear benefits, but people do not have a natural inclination towards them because they are painful or bitter, and so on.

Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, may impose a ruling that serves a great interests, but people naturally find it burdensome.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not} [Al-Baqarah 2:216].

Islamic rulings are not meant to suit people's whims and desires; rather they are meant to rectify their condition and test how sincere they are in their faith and how they will surrender to the commands of Allah, may He be Exalted.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{We will certainly test you so that We may make known those among you who strive [in Allah's cause] and are steadfast, and We will expose your deeds} [Muhammad 47:31]

{And it is He Who has made you the successors of others on the earth, and has caused some of you to excel others [in worldly advantages], so that He may test you by means of that which He has bestowed upon you. Verily, your Lord is swift in punishment, yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful} [Al-An`am 6:165].

The woman who accepts with patience the fact that Allah, may He be Exalted, has ordained polygamy and believes that Allah is the Most Wise, the All-Knowing, the Most Merciful to His slaves, and refrains from complaining and from seeking that which suits her whims and desires, and wards off jealousy, is promised an immense reward.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{But as for the one who feared standing before his Lord and restrained himself from base desires,

verily paradise will be his abode } [An-Nazi`at 79:40-41].

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 148099.

Thirdly:

The injustice of some husbands cannot be taken as evidence that polygamy is bad

The fact that some husbands treat their wives injustly is not proof that polygamy is bad. Many husbands have only one wife yet they mistreat her and fall short in giving her her rights – does this mean that marriage is a bad idea?

Rather the best is to advise the husband to treat his wife kindly, whether he has one wife or more. This is what Islam urges men to do.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{but live with them in kindness. If you take a dislike to them it may be that you dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good} [An-Nisa' 4:19].

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words {but live with them in kindness} mean: speak kindly to them, treat them well and make yourself look as good as you can; whatever you would like from her, do the same for her, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says: {but live with them in kindness}. And the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "The best of you are those who are best to their wives, and I am the best of you to my wives." It was his character to be easygoing with people and always cheerful, and he would joke with his wives, treat them gently, spend generously on their maintenance, and laugh with them."

End quote from *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 2/242.

For more information, please see the answers to questions no. 14022, 49044 and 201309.

And Allah knows best.