

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All Praises to Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

4th Taraweeh Summary, Ramadan 1446 Hijri
Summary of Verses 4:1 – 4:147

Sura An-Nisa (Women)

The hallmark of a good family, the status of women, laws of marriage and inheritance, rights of orphans, social life, and cultural and religious foundations are the major themes of Sura "Nisa," or Women.

The opening verse of the Sura should be understood at many levels: Reverence for the Creator, creation of mates among human beings, honor and respect for mothers in whose wombs humans are born, and the sacred obligations thereof. *"O mankind! Revere your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from them many men and women. Revere Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual rights, and be heedful of the wombs that bore you, for Allah ever watches over you."* (4:1)

Verse (4:1) is frequently recited during Muslim marriages as an ideal aspiration, the honor that must be accorded to mothers, and the implication of harmony and respect between siblings born unto their respective mothers. Siblings disrespect the womb that bore them - their mothers - when there is discord, enmity, and indifference between them.

(Reflect for a moment on this: How many brothers and sisters remain alienated from each other for reasons big or small, the apathy and the bitterness continuing through subsequent generations, without realizing that they are not only dishonoring their mother but also violating Allah's

command! If siblings realize the enormity of such a sin, perhaps they will wake up and seek redemption through grace and magnanimity.)

The fundamental equality of men and women is made clear in the verse: *"If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them."*

(4:124) In the context of this verse, we must understand the injunctions stated in this Sura.

We commit sin due to haste, ignorance, laziness, greed, and other weaknesses, but Allah, the Forgiving and the Compassionate, leaves open the door of mercy. He wishes to reduce our difficulties because *"humankind was created weak."* (4:28) The key is repentance: *"Allah accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterward; to them will Allah turn in mercy, for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom."* But continuing to indulge in sins and repenting only when death knocks on the door are futile. *"Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil, until death faces one of them, and he says, 'now I have repented indeed ...'"* (4:17-18)

As flawed human beings, we sin knowingly and unknowingly, but Allah gives us hope: *"If you avoid the most heinous of the things that you are forbidden to do, We shall cancel your evil deeds and admit you to a gate of great honor."* (4:31)

Wealth and riches in their various manifestations are gifts from Allah. Wasting these gifts in vanities or being seen and praised by others constitutes sin. We can be violent in our love of wealth and obsessive in seeking the adornments and vanities of life. Believers are commanded not to covet those things *"in which Allah has bestowed His gifts more freely on*

some of you than on others." It is a sign of divine justice that *"to men are allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn."* (4:32) Holding back one's blessings from benefiting others is the attribute of a miser and a sinner. We must not be envious of those who have more than we have, whether in wealth, power, strength, looks, talent, happiness, or honor. Allah may equalize these in the aggregate or in the long run or equate them to our needs and merits on criteria known to Him alone. If we want more, and this is a perfectly human thing to do, we should pray to Allah and place our needs before Him, confident that He will do what is good for us. In the meantime, we must strive to do our best with the gifts Allah has already blessed us with, without suffering from jealousy or greed or falling for Shaitan's whisperings.

The criteria for success are clarified: *"Serve Allah and join not any partners with Him. And do good, to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are of kin, neighbors who are strangers, the companions by your side, the wayfarer you meet ... for Allah loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious."* (4:36) Notice how fulfilling the rights of parents, families, relatives, neighbors and the needy can keep us from becoming arrogant, a vice condemned several times in the Quran.

Allah's mercy knows no bounds. *"Allah is never unjust in the least degree. If there is any good done, He doubles it and gives from His own a great reward."* (4:40) Any good we do, little or big, must come from the purity of our intentions. With His mercy and grace, Allah multiplies the results of our good deeds in this world but He gives us an even greater reward: His good pleasure, which brings us nearer to Him.

Committing shirk – assigning partners to Allah – is an unforgivable sin: *"Allah does not forgive that He be assigned partners although He*

forgives anything else to whomever He pleases. To set up partners with Allah is to commit a most heinous sin indeed. (4:48)

This is repeated in (4:116): *"Indeed, Allah does not forgive any association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allah has certainly gone far astray."*

(This is also repeated in (5:72): *"They have certainly disbelieved who say, 'Allah is the Messiah (Christ), the son of Mary', when the Messiah himself said, 'O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.' Indeed, he who associates others with Allah, Allah has forbidden him Paradise, and his refuge is the fire. And there are no helpers for the wrongdoers."*)

Miserliness, boasting, bloviating, and showing off (4:37-38) are sins that can lead to greater sins. On the other hand, *"those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, we shall soon admit to gardens with rivers flowing beneath, their eternal home. Therein shall they have pure spouses and plentiful shade."* (4:57)

We must fulfill all trusts and agreements, as we must fulfill the demands of justice. *"Allah commands you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due. And when you judge between people, that you judge with justice ..."* (4:58)

Believers must defend their rights and the rights of the oppressed. There are Muslims who regularly pray and give charity but when it comes to serving Allah with action, they fear people more than they should fear Allah: *"... a section of them feared men as, or even more than, they should have feared Allah ..."* (4:77) This is *shirk* from any perspective. Allah forgives all sins except *shirk* or associating partners with Him. While we may convince

ourselves that we don't commit the enormous sin of *shirk*, we must look into our hearts and ask ourselves whether we fear people more than we fear Allah.

There is no avoiding death. *"Wherever you are, death will find you, even when you are in towers strong and high."* (4:78) We are delusional when we think or act as if we will live forever. We do not need to be morbid, but we need to remember that death is our common destiny. "Memento Mori" is the Latin phrase that means, "Remember, you will die."

We must also remember that *"whatever good happens to you is from Allah, but whatever evil happens to you is from yourself ..."* (4:79) The verse brings together the ideas of free will, accountability, and Allah's mercy.

Recommending and helping in a good cause makes one a partner in it. Likewise, recommending and helping in an evil cause makes one share its consequences. (4:85): *"Whoever recommends and helps in a good cause, becomes a partner therein, and whoever recommends and helps in an evil cause shares in its burden. And Allah has power over all things."*

Islam places premium value on humility and good manners, the foundation of civil societies. *"When a courteous greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or at least of equal courtesy. Allah takes careful account of all things."* (4:86)

(As a rule, we should offer peace greetings to others first without waiting for others to greet us first to rid ourselves of arrogance. In this time and age, we must also be conscious of the digital equivalent of 'salaam.' In communicating via email and in postings on social media, we should exemplify good manners by being polite and courteous. We do this by being

Careful with the words we use and the tone we adopt so that we do not end up hurting or maligning others. Physical fasting should be accompanied by digital fasting during Ramadan. We will miss the spirit of Ramadan if we do not curb our addiction to social media.)

There is no escaping accountability. If sinners and hypocrites try to claim at the time of death that they had no choice in committing sins because they were "weak and oppressed," the futility of their excuses will be revealed to them. They will be told: *"Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you ...?"* But for those who are weak and oppressed - men, women, and children without the means or the power to oppose or escape, *"There is hope that Allah will forgive, for Allah does blot out sins and forgives again and again."* (4:97-99)

When we sin, we only hurt ourselves. But when sin and blame it on someone else, we commit a bigger sin. *"If anyone earns a sin, he earns it against his soul ... but if anyone earns a sin and throws it onto one who is innocent, he carries on himself both a false charge and a flagrant sin."* (4:111-112)

How can we ensure that we are pleasing Allah? By inviting others to charity, engaging in beneficial work, and making reconciliations between people. *"No good is there in much of their private conversation, except for those who encourage charity or that which is right or conciliation between people. And whoever does that seeking to please Allah - We are going to give him a great reward."* (4:114)

How does Shaitan mislead us? By making promises that evoke 'false desires' and 'false hopes,' *"but Shaitan's promises are nothing but deception."* (4:119-120)

(Think about it: So many of our desires and hopes spring from Shaitan's whisperings, whether by envying others, craving worldly possessions, or seeking fame and power. When desires stir in our hearts for wants rather than needs, we should question these and resist Shaitan's seductive lures. By denying our dark desires, Allah saves and protects us.)

The fundamental equality of women and men in receiving the rewards of faith backed by action, with prophet Ibrahim (AS) as an example, is made clear: *"If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female, and have faith, they will enter heaven ... Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Ibrahim, the true in faith? For Allah did take Ibrahim as a friend."* (4:124-125)

The implication is that in Islam, doers have a higher status in the Sight of Allah than whiners, idlers, excuse-makers, and kismet-blamers. Also note that, of all the prophets mentioned in the Quran, it is prophet Ibrahim (AS) who is referred to as "Allah's friend," *Kalimullah*. This idea of "friendship" between the Creator and the created should profoundly enhance our understanding of how to live in a community and what it means to love all beings irrespective of social and moral status, education, influence, power, and wealth. (In the Quran, prophet Musa is called *Kalimatullah* (the Word of God), Prophet Daud *Khalifatullah* (the Representative of God), Prophet Isa *Ruhullah* (the Spirit of God), and Muhammad (s.a.w) *Rasulullah* (the Messenger of God)).

When we supplicate to Allah, we ask for good both in this life and in the Hereafter. But Allah's generosity is such that if we desire rewards in this life, He also includes rewards for the Hereafter in His gifts to us. *"If anyone desires a reward in this life, In Allah's gift is the reward of this life and of the*

Hereafter. For Allah is One who hears and sees all things." (4:134)

The quest for justice must be central to the lives of believers who are commanded to *"stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both."* (4:135)

Taking a stand against a rich person who has done wrong can enhance our sense of righteousness but note that Allah is commanding us to take a stand even against a poor person if that's what justice demands.

The hypocrites are warned that they will be *"in the lowest depths of fire"* but are also given hope: *"Except those who repent, mend their life, hold fast to Allah, and make their religious devotion sincere to Allah ..."* (4:145-146)

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