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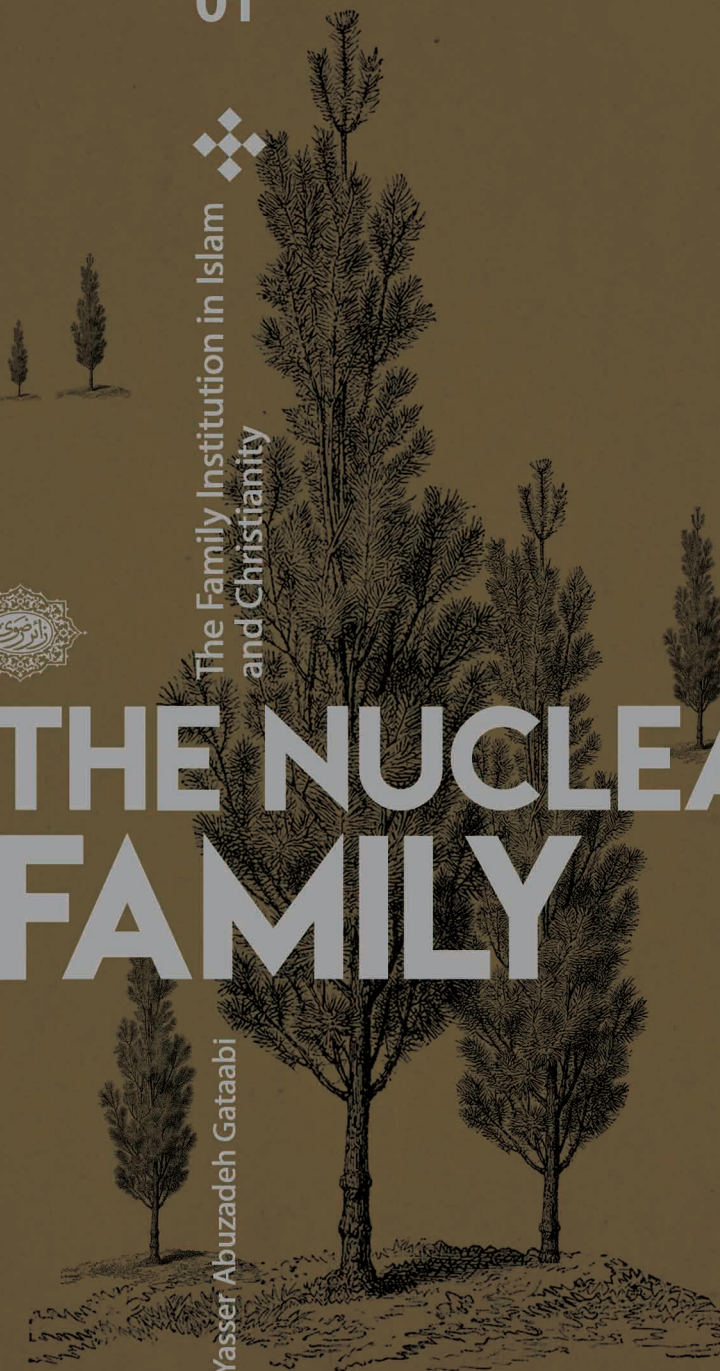


The Family Institution in Islam
and Christianity



THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

Yasser Abuzadeh Gataabi





IN THE NAME OF GOD





THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

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and Christianity

01

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Yasser Abuzadeh Gataabi

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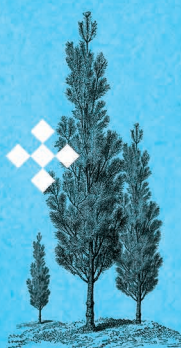


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and Christianity

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Yasser Abuzadeh Gataabi



Publisher's word

‘Abdullāh bin Šālih al-Harawī narrates that Imam Riḍā (peace be upon him) has said, “May God have mercy on the one who revives our tenets.” I then asked him, “How can one revive your tenets?” “Through learning our knowledge and teaching it to others; If people find out about the merits of our words, they will certainly follow us”, the Imam (pbuh) replied.

‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (pbuh), vol. 1, p. 307

One of the great forms of God’s grace and kindness toward us is His bestowal of the Infallible Imams (pbuh) upon us so that we may learn how to lead a Godly life through observing their way of life and eventually achieve eternal prosperity through practicing their valuable instructions.

The city of Mashhad is a piece of heaven as it is home to the son of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his household) who is the eighth star in the sky of Imamate. Every year millions of passionate pilgrims from around the world and other parts of Iran come to this spiritual sanctuary in order to quench the thirst of their souls by drinking from the limpid spring of the guidelines of the Infallible Imams (pbuh).

Each one of those serving at the Holy Shrine of Imam Riḍā



(pbuh) is in one way or the other serving the respected pilgrims of Imam Riḍā (pbuh) so that they may make their pilgrimage with peace of mind whilst being able to benefit from this heavenly shrine.

In line with the above, the Office for the Management of Foreign Pilgrims at the Holy Shrine of Imam Riḍā (pbuh) has also been making every effort to introduce in various ways the way of life of *Ahl al-Bayt* (pbut) – and that of Imam Riḍā (pbuh) in particular – to the followers and devotees of this doctrine.

The measures taken by this office are in line with propagating the Islamic civilization and culture appropriate to the needs and requirements of non-Iranian pilgrims in order to provide them with insight and spiritual growth. Such measures take place in conjunction with the remarks made by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the instructions given by the custodian of the Holy Shrine of Imam Riḍā (pbuh) while at the same time taking into account the provisions stipulated in the Twenty-year Outlook Document of the Holy Shrine of Imam Riḍā (pbuh).

Some of the examples of the efforts made by this office in line with serving the non-Iranian pilgrims of Imam Riḍā (pbuh) in the international sphere are as follows:

1. Holding special cultural programs
2. Holding regular seminars on Islamic knowledge known as “Circles of Knowledge”
3. Holding academic conferences
4. Holding educational classes and workshops

5. Holding cultural competitions and contests
6. Holding poetry readings
7. Holding conversion ceremonies for new converts to Islam
8. Responding to letters received from pilgrims
9. Dispatching books and other cultural products to all over the world
10. Responding to religious enquiries
11. Offering live internet interaction at Razavi Talk
12. Publishing the best of Islamic literature in several languages in the form of authored and translated books

It has been for some time that the call of Islam is echoing in every corner of the world with the hope of bringing people back to the truth to which they have been a stranger while at the same time inclinations toward Islam and the tendency of hearts toward seeking the truth is growing rapidly throughout the world.

We hope that the seekers of truth would find this book a useful and informative read and that it would be a step in the right direction as far as increasing the knowledge of pilgrims and devotees of the Infallible Imams (pbut) are concerned. Finally, we hope that this work would bring about the pleasure and satisfaction of the Glorious God.

O' God, bless Muḥammad and Muḥammad's Household, provide me with a sound guidance which I seek not to replace, a path of truth from which I swerve not, and an intention of right



conduct in which I have no doubts! Let me live so long as my life is spent in obeying you.

The Management of Foreign Pilgrims



Preface

From clay, God created an exquisite sculpture and breathed into it, and so man was created. As God found the man alone, He sculpted a charming figure, breathed into it, and the woman was created. The two were drawn to each other. The man asked God to allow them to be together and God agreed; thus love was created and the foundation of the family was formed. The man and woman had children whom they loved, and their love was reciprocated; thus parental love was created. The family gradually grew larger; children had their own children; some were named grandfathers and grandmothers, some uncles and aunts, and so on, and thus relatives came to exist. Over time families grew in number, their relationships became more complicated, and family as an institution assumed a pivotal function in the life of mankind. On the other hand, at times disagreements emerged between family members and the need arose to establish laws to govern the relationships between them.

In order to preserve the institution of the family, God sent prophets to grant mankind the gift of His commands, amongst whom Prophets Muḥammad and Jesus Christ (pbut) presented a golden recipe for saving mankind and protecting the family's position.

Throughout history, the family has generally managed to main-



tain its function and significance, paving the way for the advancement and progress of mankind and coming to its aid in every difficulty. Nevertheless, ever since humanity came to learn about modernity, the foundation of the family has faced serious threats as relationships between the family members have grown weaker and weaker. Parents do not find enough time to dedicate to their children so that they would receive the attention they deserve. The children too refuse to acknowledge their parents' position. The relationship between spouses has also suffered; accordingly, the desire to form and start a family has subsided in human societies, being replaced instead by illegitimate models of life. The void resulting from the absence of children is gradually being filled by pets. Furthermore, the connections between relatives and members of a family are being severed. This pitiful situation is becoming worse and worse every day, to the extent that certain societies are even finding their very existence in jeopardy as fewer men and women tend to form families and fewer children step into this world.

In order to get through this self-inflicted crisis, mankind began to formulate laws and regulations to preserve the family's foundation. Factual experience, however, has shown that sometimes such laws yield opposite effects or fail to alleviate the intensity of the family crisis effectively and for extended periods of time, which in turn indicates that to overcome this human challenge which intensifies on a daily basis one has no choice but to return to the teachings of divine religions.

On the other hand, bodies of Western propaganda and extremist Christians strive day after day to manufacture a false image of Islam for their audience, constantly suggesting to them that Islamic teachings regarding the family are built upon a patriar-

chal, strict, and violent structure, whereas such an intentionally fabricated outlook has nothing to do with the actual teachings of Islam with respect to the family.

Therefore, it was decided that through scientific research we study the viewpoints of Islamic and Christian scriptures concerning the position and significance of the family as well as the mutual rights of its members, analyzing the religious teachings from their origins and sources.

The matter dealt with in the present research is the position of and mutual rights within the family from the viewpoints of Islamic and Christian scriptures.

The scriptures of the two religions in question comprise the scope of the present work. It is worth noting that the only revealed, sacred sources in Christianity are the “Two Testaments”, or the “Holy Bible”, which is composed of two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The former contains 39 books, divided into three parts: the historical books, the “wisdom” books, and the prophets, and the latter is composed of 27 books. According to Christians, these 66 books together have been compiled by 40 prophets or writers of Revelation within 1500 years, affirmed by the Holy Spirit, and are regarded as the legacy of the prophets of the Old and New Testaments.

It must be noted that although Christians do not deem it obligatory to follow the faith of the Old Testament, it does not undermine its divine and ethical worth. According to the New Testament, in a letter to his student Timothy, Paul declares that the Old Testament is the word of God: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting



and training in righteousness”¹. The book *The Teachings of the Catholic Church* also states:

The Old Testament is an inseparable part of the Bible. Its books are the revealed words of God and are of eternal worth, for the old covenant has never been nullified. ... The Church has always opposed the conception that the Old Testament must be rejected due to the fact that it has been discredited by the New Testament (Marcionism)... as an old saying goes, “The New Testament is implied in the Old, and the Old Testament is manifested in the New.”²

Christians regard the Two Testaments – the Holy Bible – as revealed words of God, and it is the old and immutable belief of the church that the Bible is faultless,³ which is emphasized by the theologians of the Protestant Church as well. It is declared in the Chicago Statement:

“The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. ... Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.”⁴

In Islam the Qur’an is regarded as the most important of the scriptures, as it is dictated by God to His Prophet through the

1. *The Bible*, 2 Timothy 3:16.

2. *Teachings of the Catholic Church*, Articles 121–129.

3. From the viewpoint of the Holy Qur’an, nevertheless, there are parts of the Two Testaments that shine with the light of guidance and contain the commands of God. Furthermore, the Qur’an confirms the truth of the divine books before it (3): 50; on the other hand, it reproaches Jews for altering its words and presenting improper interpretations (4): 46. Moreover, God states in the Qur’an that People of the Book omitted and concealed portions of their holy books (2): 159 and made an even graver mistake as they fabricated many verses and introduced them to others as words of God (2): 79. Furthermore, the numerous contradictions between words of the Qur’an and those of the Two Testaments verifies the fact that although parts of the Testaments are confirmed by the Qur’an, there are portions of them that are not.

4. See: The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

Angel of Revelation, as it states:

“This is indeed [a Book] sent down by the Lord of all the worlds, brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit upon your heart.”¹

The Holy Qur’an was sent down to the noble Prophet of Islam (pbuh & hh) in a period of 23 years. According to Islamic teachings, the Qur’an is a perfectly flawless book, all of its words and contents being the direct and exact word of God. In the Qur’an, God states:

“Indeed We have sent down the Reminder [that is, the Qur’an], and indeed We will preserve it.”²

He has also challenged all mankind:

“And if you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our servant, then bring a Sūrah (chapter) like it, and invoke your helpers besides God, should you be truthful.”³

The second to Islamic scriptures are the traditions and narrations reported from the Prophet Muḥammad and members of his household (pbut), which are only considered authentic, of course, if they are ascribed to one of the fourteen Infallibles (pbut) by proper proof and evidence. Based on Islamic teachings, the fourteen Infallibles (pbut) are sources of Revelation,⁴ faultless and without any sins or mistakes in their words and actions.⁵

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (26):192–194.

2. *Ibid*(15):9.

3. *Ibid*(2):23.

4. “We are the Prophet’s household and descendants. It was in our homes that Revelation was sent down, and it is through us that prophetic knowledge reaches people.” *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 39.

5. *Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I’tiqād*, p. 471.

Their traditions are deemed authentic and valid and are regarded as Islamic scriptures and sacred, authentic texts after the Noble Qur'an.¹ The Holy Qur'an also commands people to obey the words of the Prophet of Islam (pbuh & hh): "Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you."²

After himself, the Noble Prophet (pbuh & hh) also leaves Muslims two authentic sources: the Book of God and his Household, asserting that one shall never stray if they cling to them.³

Traditions narrated from the fourteen Infallibles (pbut) were stated in the period between the first year of the appointment of Prophet Muḥammad by God (13 A.H.) and year 260 A.H. in which the Occultation of Imam Mahdī (may God hasten his advent) began and were compiled in tradition or *ḥadīth* corpuses. In the present work, the researchers have done extensive research in the scriptures of Islam and Christianity and have attempted to provide a relatively comprehensive clarification of the content presented in the Old and New Testaments as well as in the Qur'an and Islamic traditions with respect to the subject under discussion.

The present work's method of research is based on library studies and its scope is limited to the scriptures of the aforementioned religions. Citation is based on the "direct relation" method, discussing only verses and traditions that directly offer teachings regarding the family.

In order to maintain scientific fairness in the present work, Christian research centers were appointed to extract verses from

1. See: *Usūl al-Fiqh*, vol. 2, pp. 63–70.

2. *The Holy Qur'an* (59): 7.

3. «إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمُ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا، كِتَابُ اللَّهِ وَ عَشْرَتِي؛ أَهْلُ بَيْتِي وَ إِتِّهَمَا لَنْ يَغْوَيَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَى الْحَوْضِ»- *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 294 – *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. 5, p. 45 – *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 5, pp. 183, 189.

the Testaments. With regard to this matter, highly valuable resources in the English language have indexed all verses of the Holy Bible in various fields; such resources include the following websites: www.biblestudytools.com, www.openbible.info, www.bible.knowing-jesus.com, etc., which skillfully extracted all verses related to the subtopics discussed in the present work, thoroughly indexing the Testaments in very specific subjects and details. Thousands of indices and subjects were extracted from the Scriptures which may be taken into consideration as a trustworthy source. Furthermore, for every subject discussed in the present research several scientific articles and specialized books have been studied in detail, from which the verses in question have been extracted. These research sources have been cited in the present work.

This piece of writing aims to review and compare the teachings of Islam and Christianity regarding the subject of the family. It does not seek to put forward new opinions regarding the concept of family in religions; rather, what is intended is merely to undertake a comparison and review of the ethical teachings in Islamic and Christian scriptures with respect to the significance and position of the family, the dos and don'ts, mutual ethical rights, as well as the results of observing and the consequences of disregarding mutual rights within the family. We intend to study the degree of importance and attention granted to the subject of the family by Islamic and Christian scriptures.

The present work discusses some of the most significant fields of study with respect to the family, including the rights of parents, the rights of children, the rights of either spouse, the rights of relatives, and the position of the institution of the family.



A group of expert, skillful teachers and researchers in the fields of Islamic and Christian studies have authored the present work, the result of whose efforts has been the creation of the first work presenting a comparative study concerning the mutual rights within the family in the scriptures of Islam and Christianity. The present work has been organized in six volumes, the titles and authors of each of which are as follows:

SERIES TITLE: The Family Institution in Islam and Christianity

- *The Nuclear Family in Islam and Christianity*, Yasser Abuzadeh Gataabi
- *Filial Duties in Islamic and Christian Scriptures*, Abbas Zamani Dehyaqubi
- *Parental Duties in Islamic and Christian Scriptures*, Abbas Zamani Dehyaqubi, Elaheh Eskandarzadeh
- *Husbandly Duties in Islam and Christianity*, Mohammad Mahdi Kazemi
- *Relatives in Islamic and Christian Holy Texts*, Morteza Yeganeh Amiri
- *Interpersonal Relationships in Islamic Traditions*, Hossein Ansari Pour

At the end, we deem it necessary to express our gratitude and appreciation to the following individuals: the authors and translators whose hard work made this happen:

Sheikh Hossein Ansari Pour who, in addition to authoring one of the volumes of the present work, undertook the task of edit-

ing all the volumes.

Our dear brother Mr. Abbas Zamani who oversaw the authoring of the present work and our dear sister Ms. Qabuli who oversaw and proofread the translation of the present work.

The prominent lecturer Ḥujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimīn Sahhaf Kashani to whose scientific supervision and guidance we owe this work's strength.

We pray to the Creator of the home and the family for the ever-increasing success and achievement of all our colleagues and companions.

Dr. Hojjat Modarresi



CHAPTER ONE

THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

1. The role and importance of the family in Christianity

Introduction

The family is the most important institution in forming the foundation of society. Throughout history, and in various religions, understanding the place of the family and strengthening its role in society has been the main concern for the leaders of societies. In the Abrahamic religions, the importance of the family was shown from the very beginning, with the formation of the first human family by Adam and Eve (pbuh). Accordingly, the Holy Scriptures have reflected on the importance of the family by discussing the life of this first family and its development through later generations, thus demonstrating the importance of this institution for these religions. The current writing will focus on the concept of family, its role, importance, and functions, as well as factors that strengthen and weaken it, according to the Holy Scriptures.

Following this introduction, the next question that comes to mind about the family in Holy Scriptures is what does family mean in such texts? How do the Holy Scriptures define the family? One meaning of the word family can be summarized by saying it is a unit composed of a man and a woman, joined through marriage, which is typically blessed by one or more biological or adopted children. But is this the only meaning



of a family that can be found in the Sacred Scriptures? Before addressing this question, we will do a thorough analysis of the word family as used in the Holy Books.

There are different viewpoints on the word family:

a. Some researchers believe that there is actually no exact word in either Hebrew or Greek for what is known in English as “family”. In both of these languages, the closest word might be the word “house” or “household”. *Bayit* in Hebrew and *Oikios* or *Oikia* in Greek are used to refer to family. These words can be used to refer either to the building or to the people who live in this building. The words focus on the people of the house as a social and economic unit.¹

b. Another group of scholars believe that in ancient times the word *Mishpachah* or *Mishpaha* was used to refer to the family. This is a somewhat vague term that does not differentiate between family and tribe, and family and household. The word family or tribe is used 300 times in the Old Testament,² which is repeated 154 times in the Book of Numbers alone. In this usage, all blood relations are considered part of the same tribe or family. This meaning applies to all members of a group who share a blood relation with each other and who are related by tribe and thus are all part of a greater family.³

According to this definition, family refers to those who share a blood relation and who are gathered together living in one place. The term “house”⁴ is also vague. This can be applied to

1. “Home to Home: Toward a Biblical Model of the Family”, Anvil; “Vine’s complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words: with topical index”.

2. This term was used for the first time in Genesis: 8:19 “Every beast, every creeping thing and every bird, whatsoever moveth upon the earth after their families, went forth out of the ark.”

3. Extended family

4. House “Beth”

anything from the smallest family to a big tribe and even a complete nation¹ (e.g. the House of Israel).

c. From the perspective of yet another group of scholars, four words were used in relation to the family: people, tribe, clan, and paternal house. The word people² was used generally for the Nation of Israel. The word tribe was used for the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. The clan refers to a subgroup of the tribe, larger than a family.³

Types of families

According to the stated opinions, it can be concluded that the word family can be defined in two general ways:

1. The small or nuclear family

According to the Book of Deuteronomy, God created the first human being (Adam) to rule over His creation. Continuing, He created a woman, Eve, as a suitable helpmate to this man: “And God Almighty said, ‘It is not good that Adam should be alone. Thus, I will create an agreeable helper.’ And God the Almighty brought all the animals on land and the birds of the sky, all creatures on earth to Adam to see what each would be named. And each living creature was called by the name Adam gave it; Adam named each bird in the sky and all the creatures on earth. But there was no helpmate found for Adam. So Almighty God put Adam into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping took a rib

1. “Home to Home: Toward a Biblical Model of the Family”, Anvil. Vine; “Vine’s complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words with topical index”. p. 130.

2. (1) *am* (“people”); (2) *sebet matteh* (“tribe”); (3) *mispaha* (“clan”); and (4) *bet ab* (“house of a father”).

3. God, Marriage, and Family Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation. For more information about the family in other Christian sects, see: The role of religion in marriage and family counseling.



from his side and put the flesh in its place. And from Adam's rib, Almighty God formed a woman and brought her to Adam. And Adam said, 'Surely she is from my own flesh and bones, thus she will be named the woman, which is a derivative of the word man.' From then on, a man leaves his mother and father and joins his wife and they are known as one."¹

These verses of Holy Scripture discuss the basis for the formation of the family which was founded by God from the very beginning. A man and a woman become one when they are married, and a new, natural family comes into existence. In this context, "becoming one" does not only refer to the formation of a new family but also refers to the conjugal union of the man and woman which lead to the birth of children.² This matter also relates to the original divine command to the first married couple, "Go forth and bear children, and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it"³. Based on these points in the Sacred Scripture, the nuclear family is that family which is composed of at least two people and which increases through the birth of children.

2. Extended family

In ancient Hebrew times, the family was composed of one wife and husband, their children (and if their sons were married, their wives and children), the husband's parents, his brothers and their families, his single sisters, and other dependents. This included permanent and temporary spouses and their children and the families of these children. Along with these individuals who were either blood relatives or related through marriage, the household included servants and slaves, guests (those who

1. *The Holy Bible*, Deuteronomy 2:18-24

2. "The Bible's teaching on marriage and family", Family Research.

3. "Family in the Bible: A Brief Survey," Ashland Theological Journal 36.

were guests due the law mandating supporting guests), as well as temporary residents (strangers who were staying in the premises of the house and enjoyed the protection of the family, usually workers and employees).

In Greek and Roman texts, household referred to the larger family, along with servants and slaves, patrons, and guests. A family possibly also included foster children, even though this matter was seen less in the era of the Old Testament and began to appear in the New Testament.¹

This large household size helps us to understand the size of the family in sacred texts. Today, the nuclear family is composed of 2.63 people on average, but the households of *Banī Isrāʾīl* (Children of Israel) were composed of 50 to 100 people.² For example, the household of Jacob was composed of approximately 70 individuals.³

In the New Testament as in the Old Testament, both types of families existed, nuclear and extended. For example, in the time of Jesus Christ (pbuh), large families lived together, usually in a home with three or four rooms.⁴

The status of the family in Sacred Scriptures

A question about the Holy Scriptures that is worthy of examining is whether it is possible to use the Holy Scriptures as sources to understand family values and status. What do the followers of the Scriptures have to say about this matter?

1. "Family in the Bible: A Brief Survey". Ashland Theological Journal.

2. Ibid

3. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 46: 5-27

4. Ibid, Mark 1:30



Scholars of the Holy Scriptures believe that the discussion of the family begins from the very first verse of the Book of Genesis and all the episodes of the Book of Genesis are related to the issue of family.¹

After creating the first human being, Adam (pbuh), God created a spouse for him of his own substance, as a companion for his (Adam's) loneliness and as a helpmate.²

“And God said, ‘I fashioned Adam in our image and likeness so that he could rule over the fishes of the sea and birds of the air, and cattle and all of the earth and the creatures that crawl upon it.’ Thus, God created Adam in His own Image. He created male and female. And God blessed them and said, ‘Go forth and multiply, filling the earth and taking control over it. Rule over the fish in the oceans, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that walk on the earth.’”³

In this way, scholars of the Holy Scripture believe that the Book of Genesis, and by extension the entire Holy Book, challenges its readers to develop a broader perspective on this book and its discussion of the family. They believe that the stories and family trees that are discussed in this book are about a brother who killed his brother⁴, a father who exiled his son from his home⁵, a father who sets out to slaughter his son on the order of God⁶, older brothers who decide to take the life of their young-

1. “Genesis and family values”. Journal of Biblical Literature.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 2: 18 And God the Almighty said, “It is not good for Adam to be alone; thus I will form a suitable helper for him.”

3. Ibid, Genesis 1:26–28.

4. This refers to the story of the death of Abel at the hands of his brother Cain as mentioned in Genesis 4: 1–8.

5. *The Holy Bible*, 1:26–28 This refers to the settling of Hajar and Ismail in the Paran desert in Genesis 21:9–21

6. Reference to the events of the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22: 1–13

er brother¹, a father-in-law who has sexual relations with his daughter-in-law², etc. All these stories show that the writers of the Book of Genesis were first and foremost concerned about the issue of family. Secondly, the Book of Genesis is a text that is devoted to the family. Thirdly, this book explains some important and clear family values. Therefore, scholars and researchers of the Holy Scriptures believe that the Holy Scriptures can be considered as a scholarly resource when studying the family.³

Given the above points which argue that discussions pertaining to the family are a primary focus of the Holy Scriptures, the question now arises as to what status do the Holy Scriptures designate for the family?

To answer this question, it is necessary to mention a few points:⁴

a. From the viewpoint of the Holy Scriptures, the family unit is the basis for the formation of a society.

God's plan for creation was such that a man and woman would marry, become as one,⁵ have children, and along with these children form the institution of the family: an institution that is necessary for the formation of any human society. When we examine the story of Terah until the time of Prophet Moses (pbuh), we encounter societies such as the society of Banī Israel (Children or People of Israel), which was originally formed on

1. Reference to the plot of Joseph's brother, throwing him in the well, and ultimately selling him to Madean traders in Genesis 37: 12-28.

2. Reference to the story of the relations between Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamara, in Genesis 38: 1-30.

3. "Genesis and family values". Journal of Biblical Literature; "From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis", Evangelical Quarterly.

4. See "Family Life. Bible Principles", Churchman.

5. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 2: 24; "Thus a man leaves his mother and father, joins his wife, and (they) become as one"



the basis of familial relations. Many of the rules and precepts that were revealed by God to his prophets, such as Noah's seven laws, and the Ten Commandments, were done so with the motivation to protect family life and as such, established practical rules for the life of the clans and tribes of that era.

In addition to these points in the Old Testament, the writers of the New Testament also sought to protect the family as the basic unit of society. For example, Paul teaches that those who do not gather any provisions for their family, are deniers of the faith and worse than unbelievers: "But if anyone should fail to arrange for his relatives, especially his family, he is denying his belief and is worse than an unbeliever"¹.

The family code found in the Ephesians, Colossians, First Timothy, Titus, and First Peter, defends the Christian faith from the accusations brought against Christianity by the Greeks and Romans who claimed that Christianity brought about the end of the family and as a result destroyed the basis of society.²

For example, Peter, in his introduction to the laws that he explained for various classes of society asks his audience to follow every human authority, "Thus, obey human authority for the sake of God, even the king who is over all."³

b. The family is the best model that God has established for the human being.

The basics that God declares in the Holy Scriptures are considered the bases for a good and affluent life. The tapestry of human life is constructed on the basis of marriage, the sexual

1. *The Holy Bible*, Timothy 1, 8:5

2. "Understanding the social world of the New Testament", p. 30.

3. *The Holy Bible*, First Peter, 2:13)

encounter between spouses, having children, forming a family, and the family environment. Thus, when Jesus Christ (pbuh) forbade divorce and the separation of a husband and wife, his concern was not just for marriage, rather he was also concerned for the protection of the institution of marriage, a noble act that guarantees the health of every human generation.

In addition, the Fifth Commandment,¹ which was strengthened by the emphasis of Paul in the New Testament, ordered the appropriate protection of the family through fidelity that offered insurance for the success of the nation and its survival.²

According to this divine model, the basis of every new family is protected through marital commitment. As the Holy Scriptures say, and Jesus Christ (pbuh) has emphasized, marriage is the law through which man and woman become as one.³

c. The importance of the family in the Holy Scriptures

Having explained the status of the family in the Holy Scriptures, in this section, the importance of the family in the Old and New Testament will be examined separately.

1. The importance of the family in the Old Testament

The family and household are very important in the Jewish world, such that they are considered as the foundations of culture and society. In the era of the Old Testament, the father's family "Ab-bet" played an important social and religious role. In the viewpoint of scholars of the Holy Scriptures, the family

1. *The Holy Bible*, Exodus 20:12, Respect thy mother and father as long as you shall live.

2. Ibid, Ephesus 6: 1-3 Children, respect thy parents through God, because this is just. Respect your father and mother, which this is the first Law. Thus you will be forgiven and have a long life on earth.

3. Ibid, Genesis 2: 24, also Matthew 19: 4-6



was the place for the promotion of religion and religious leadership, such that later the Jewish people came to call the Old Testament the “Yahweh-bet”.¹

The importance of the family in the Old Testament can be found in the laws related to the time of Moses (pbuh). For example, Two of Moses’ Ten Commandments relate to family relations. The Fifth Commandment relates to respecting the parents² and this verse means that the children must accept the authority of their parents in the family. The Seventh Commandment relates to protecting the sanctity of marriage.³ Researchers believe that all rules pertaining to marriage and the family are taken from these two commandments. The health of the family is so important to God that He has issued important commands related to the family and its protection.⁴

2. The importance of the family in the New Testament

In the New Testament and in the Old Testament, the family is at the centre of religious life as the most important institution in building a society. Thus, it must be strengthened and protected. The reason for this is the structure of the early church: home churches were based on the family.⁵ Actually, most of church life took place within the family. For example, matters such as baptism,⁶ religious instruction,⁷ ceremonies related to taking re-

1. “Family in the New Testament. Social location, households and traditional family values”; see also “Family in the political economy of monarchic Judah”.

2. *The Holy Bible*, Exodus, 12:20; “Respect your parents as long so God may extend your days on this earth.”

3. *Ibid*, Exodus, 20: 14

4. See: “Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant”, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, *Intervarsity Christian Fellowship*.

5. *The Holy Bible*, Romans: 16: 5, First Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4: 15, Philemon 1:2

6. *Ibid*, Acts of the Apostles 16:15

7. *Ibid*, 20:20

ligious vocations¹, and conversions², all took place in the family environment. Thus, through this method, it was necessary that the borders of the family be porous so that those who were outside of the family could join the followers of the church.³

2. The status of the family in the pure religion of Islam

Introduction

From the viewpoint of the pure religion of Islam and in the Qur'anic culture, the first social unit that the individual joins is the family. This is an institution whose formation is based on the cornerstone known as the family, and the family is also considered to be the basis for the formation of society.⁴ This institution has aims such as a) ensuring the psychological health of three groups in society, husband and wife, mother and father, and children; b) providing the background and preparation for the individual to enter various parts of society, to be able to encounter various social phenomena.⁵ The importance of the family and its preparation in building the exemplary human society can be inferred from verse 74 of the Chapter of al-Furqān in the Qur'an. And those who say, "O Lord! Make my wife and children the light of my eyes, and make us an example for the pious."

In addition to pointing out the importance of the family, this noble verse identifies healthy family relations as ideals for the pious. Thus, in Islamic culture, the most important and desired

1. *The Holy Bible*, Acts of the Apostles 2: 46

2. Ibid, 5: 42

3. "Family in the Bible: A Brief Survey," Ashland Theological Journal ; "The New Testament teaching on family matters." HTS: Theological Studies 62.

4. "Avamel-e Tahkim-e Khanehvadeh in Islamic Culture", Qur'an Research Bulletin.

5. "Identifying the family according to the logic of the Qur'an". Qur'an Studies.



institution before God, the Glorious and the Exalted, is the family.

Imam Bāqir (pbuh) touching on the word of his ancestor, the Prophet of Islam (pbuh & hh) said that, “No other foundation was drawn up in the school of Islam that is dearer to the Sublime God than the family.”¹

The importance of this matter is to an extent that Imam ‘Alī (pbuh) said, “The best kind of mediation is to come between two people so that they may get married.”² Likewise, the attempts made by social reformists throughout history – especially the holy prophets of God – were to protect the firmness of the family as a lasting structure and not to allow anything to destroy this auspicious centre and small society.

Perhaps the most important verse of the Qur’an in which the family can be defined is verse 21 of the Chapter of Rome, “And of Our signs is that We created a spouse for you from your own substance so that you might find comfort in them, and that you may find kindness and affection with each other; this is a sign for those who ponder!”

This verse makes several important points about the family that are worthy of exploration:

a. Spouses from your own substance: This shows that men and women are created equal.

b. Kindness was established between you: The kindness between husband and wife is such that with mutual thought and cooperation in the path of knowing themselves and knowing

1. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 100, p. 222; *Al-Hidāyah fī al-Uṣūl wa al-Furūʿ*, p. 257; *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿah*, vol. 14, p. 30.

2. *Shiveh Hamsari Dar Khanehvadeh Nemoneh*, p. 17

God, they can find tranquillity and thus the phrase appears: so that you might find comfort in each other.

c. To find comfort: Each member of the family has the responsibility to create an environment in which everyone in the family can find peace and comfort.¹

d. Mercy: The presence of kindness among family members builds responsible, lasting relations, which have an impact on the solidity of the family institution and helps them reach perfection.

In conclusion, the institution of the family is a small society that is formed initially with the coming together of a husband and a wife. These two people who are supposed to take part in each other's spiritual and material perfection are expected to help allay each other's weaknesses and flaws through kindness and affection. Should anything threaten them or jeopardize the tranquillity and the very basis of the family, they have the responsibility to defend it, and through careful planning take steps to strengthen the family and the generations.²

The importance of the family institution in the Holy Qur'an and narrations

Given that the family is the first institution in which individuals are born and raised, it can have a great impact on them and

1. 'Allāmiḥ Ṭabāṭabāī, may God rest his soul, said the following in this regard: Tranquillity is a part of marriage since a man and a woman complete each other and are the basis of each other's joy and happiness. Each would be incomplete without the other. Since each thing that is incomplete is excited to find completion, and each needy person has a natural urge to fulfil their needs, thus it is natural for one being to be attracted to another being which completes it; when this is fulfilled, naturally a feeling of calmness occurs. *Tafṣīr al-Mīzān*, vol. 16, p. 166; *Pezhoheshi Qur'āni Dar Khos-e Jaygah-e Khanevadeh Dar Islam: Pezhohesh-haye Feqhi*.
2. *Khanevadeh Az Didgah-e Qur'an va Ahl al-Bayt (pbu)*, Farhang-e Kowthar.



subsequently on the greater society. As a result, examining the significance of this institution in verses and narrations is worthy of contemplation.

The sanctity of the family institution

Having enjoined God's worship and having proscribed the ascription of partners to God, the Noble Qur'an commands us to treat parents with kindness, though they may be polytheists¹. Taking this point into consideration shows that the institution which has been formed by parents is of such paramount importance that it should not be easily damaged. Therefore, the family institution is a sacred institution for the preservation and protection of which all its members should strive.

Formation of the family; a means of peace and confidence

Some verses of the Noble Qur'an explicitly express that God created spouses of your own species for you or for your benefit and efficiency, to arrive at tranquillity through them². The reason for this point is that the calm that emanates from marriage is not only physically and mentally, but also individually and socially. Hence, the vital balance of human beings would be disrupted if marriage and satisfying one's sexual instinct were to be abandoned. Furthermore, according to Islamic narrations, it would lead to immorality and evil³. Socially, single people feel less responsible, so the rates of suicide and crimes are often higher amongst them. People feel more responsible and confident through marriage as if they have found or developed a new

1. q.v. *The Holy Qur'an* (6): 151; (17): 23; (4): 36; (31): 14–15. Also some verses such as (46): 15, (2): 180 & 215 and (17): 23–24, can be mentioned.

2. Ibid, (7): 189; (30): 21.

3. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 103, p. 320.

personality.

Concerning the degree of comfort provided by spouses in comparison with other family members, it has been mentioned in a narration that whilst Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh & hh) was on his way back from a battle in which some of his companions had been martyred, a group of women who had come to welcome the Prophet began to ask about their men. A woman asked the Messenger of God about a man's name. "What is your relationship to him?" the Prophet asked her. She replied, "He is my father." The Prophet said, "Recite the words of *Istijā*¹ and praise God for he has been martyred." The woman did as she was told and then she asked about another man's name. "What is your relationship to him?" the Prophet asked. She replied, "He is my brother." The Prophet answered in the same way. The woman praised God and once again asked about another man's name. The Prophet asked, "What is your relationship with him?" "He is my husband," she replied. The Prophet repeated, "Praise God for he has been martyred too." The woman said, "Woe unto me!" The Prophet then said, "I did not think a woman would consider her husband as her whole life until I saw this woman in such a state." It is understood from this narration that the loss caused by the death of the spouse is not comparable to the loss of other family members. Perhaps that is why couples complete each other and others cannot recompense this imperfection.²

The gateway to blessings

Admonishing those who evade marriage and family formation

1. To recite the verse (2):156 "إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ" "Indeed we belong to God and to Him do we indeed return"

2. *Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, vol. 4, p. 174.



due to poverty and lack of financial facilities, the Qur'an explicitly states that the gateway to gaining sustenance and receiving divine blessings is through the channel of marriage: *"Marry off... If they are poor, God will enrich them out of His grace, and God is All-Bounteous, All-Knowing."*¹

In this verse, God asks all individuals to attempt to marry off unmarried and single people around themselves and to reassure them about overcoming financial problems. God says if they are poor and impoverished, He will sustain them from His bounty. The reason for that is that a single person will find himself accountable toward his family after marriage. A sense of responsibility will emerge to which he was a stranger before marriage. Therefore, he will use his full potential and talents to overcome his life problems with the help of his family.

There are similar wordings in many of the narrations quoted from members of the Household of the Prophet (pbuh). In a narration from Imam Ṣādiq (pbuh), he is quoted as saying, "Sustenance comes with wife and children." In another narration, it has been related that a man came to the Prophet (pbuh & hh) and complained of poverty. The Prophet (pbuh & hh) commanded him to marry. After the marriage, there was a financial breakthrough in his life.²

It has also been mentioned in some narrations that abandoning marriage due to fear of poverty is forbidden. Imam Ṣādiq (pbuh) said, "He who abandons marriage due to fear of poverty has become doubtful of God."³

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (24):32.

2. *Tafṣīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, vol. 3, pp. 560-595.

3. *Ibid*, p. 597, Quoted from *Man lā Yaḥḍuruhū al-Faqīh*.

Continuity and survival of the human race

Based on verses 31 of the Chapter of al-Isrā' and 151 of al-An'ām, killing one's offspring is considered a sin. If parents kill their own offspring due to financial incapacity, they have committed an enormous sin. The Almighty God reminds us that the reproduction of creatures is a form of grace, mercy, and a sign of His endless power.

“And aid you with wealth and sons, and provide you with gardens and provide you with streams.”¹

“And We aided you with children and wealth, and made you greater in number.”²

According to these verses, increasing children and high fertility, as well as property, wealth and power, are considered as examples of divine grace.

Another important point in the Qur'an is paying heed to the birth of righteous, virtuous, and faithful children. After Eve became pregnant, Adam and Eve asked God to bestow upon them a righteous and virtuous child, *“If You give us a healthy [child], we will be surely grateful.”³*

In addition, in the Noble Qur'an's point of view, childbearing will cause parents to be delighted and will guarantee the survival of the human race, *“And those who say, ‘Our Lord! Give us joy and comfort in our spouses and offspring, and make us inams of the God-wary.’”⁴*

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (71):12.

2. *Ibid*, (17):6.

3. *Ibid*, (7):189.

4. *Ibid*, (25): 74.



Also, in Islamic traditions, childbearing has been introduced as the factor contributing to the survival of the human race. Addressing Mufaḍḍal, Imam Ṣādiq (pbuh) said, “Ponder about the human’s acts including eating, sleeping, intercourse and what has been organized in them. So God has created an inner motive for each of them that provoke and stimulate them... Flaring up the sexual desire requires intercourse that will cause the continuity of the human race and its survival. If it were so that humans had intercourse only because of childbearing, it would be likely that this desire would be weakened in a way that would cause the reduction or halt of the human race, because some people are unwilling to have children.”¹ It is understood from this narration that in the event of the weakness of sexual motive, the continuity and the survival of the human race would not be guaranteed. So the principle of marriage is interpreted as having a sort of worshipping purpose and that is the continuity and durability of the human race in line with carrying out the mission of the caliphate on Earth, which has been entrusted to him.²

Mental health or immunity from sexual sin

Sexual instinct is one of the strongest human instincts. Adding this motive to other needs, such as beauty and love, and combining these needs in a single embodiment under the title of “sexual instinct”, can express a part of the sexual pressure. In the Noble Qur’an, the wives of the Prophet (pbuh & hh) are addressed, *“O wives of the Prophet! You are not like other women: If you are wary [of God], do not be complaisant in your speech, lest he in whose heart is a sickness should aspire; speak*

1. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 61, p. 255.

2. *Islam va Ravanshenasi*, p. 331.

*honourable words.”*¹

The abovementioned statement is very eloquent because when one's sexual instinct is balanced and applied within its legitimate framework can be the same as health, but when it goes beyond the bounds, it will become a kind of disease that sometimes leads to insanity.

The Exalted God has introduced several ways to tame and control the sexual instinct²; one of the most important of which is marriage and family formation, *“And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you.”*³

It is deduced from this verse that human's sexual instinct will be balanced within the framework of marriage and the couple will find peace and serenity as a result. Therefore, the most natural and main way of satisfying and controlling one's sexual instinct is marriage.

In addition, the participation of the Household of the Prophet (pbuh) in different issues related to family shows the importance of this institution in their opinion. Issues like wedding rituals⁴, taking care of women while in their post-natal state⁵, paying attention to the rituals related to the birth of the baby (recitation of the call to prayer [*Adhān and Iqāmah*] in the baby's

1. *The Holy Qur'an*, (33): 32.

2. Some of these ways are: a) to control one's eyes or “Ghaḍḍ al-Baṣar” (24): 30–31, b) fasting (2): 183, c) chastity (24): 33.

3. *The Holy Qur'an*, (30): 21.

4. Rituals like choosing an auspicious time, holding the wedding party openly, celebrating, feasting, and holding the wedding party at night. q.v. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 3, pp. 354–363.

5. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 11, p. 379.



ear¹, naming of the baby² and making sacrifice for the newborn known as *'Aqīqah*³), keenness to protect the reverence of the family⁴, acting well toward the family⁵, teaching good manners⁶, morality and spirituality in the family environment⁷, etc. All these demonstrate the importance of family in the opinion of the members of the Household of the Prophet (pbut).⁸

1. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p.23.

2. *Malādh al-Akhyār fī Fahm Tahdhīb al-Akhhār*, vol. 12, p. 410; *Al-Shāfī fī al-'Aqā'id wa al-Akhlāq wa al-Ahkām*, vol. 2, p. 1725; *Tatqīl Wasā'il al-Shī'ah ilā Tahqīl Masā'il al-Sharī'ah: Kitāb al-Nikāh*, vol. 21, p. 395.

3. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 28. [A sheep that is slaughtered on the seventh day of a baby's birth]

4. *Usd al-Ghābah fī Ma'rifa al-Ṣaḥābah*, vol. 2, p. 269.

5. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 18, p. 108.

6. *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, p. 216; *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 105.

7. *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il wa Mustanbaṭ al-Masā'il*, vol. 12, p. 201; *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 5, p. 62; *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl 'An Āl al-Rasūl (pbut)*, p. 322; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 68, p. 394.

8. q.v. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 3, pp. 251-316.



CHAPTER TWO

THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SOLIDARITY OF FAMILY ACCORDING TO ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

The factors behind the solidarity of family according to Christianity

After examining the status and importance of the family in Christianity and Islam, in this section, the factors contributing to family solidarity will be examined based on the Bible.

Participation of members in providing family needs

In some verses of the Bible, each family member has been ordered to participate in family affairs. For example, the following instance can be referred to, *“Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*¹

At the time of Christ, large families used to live together, generally in houses with three or four rooms. Girls, like mothers, used to participate in home affairs², and boys also used to emulate their father’s work, based on the old Israelite’s proverb *“like father like son”*. Christ also learned his father’s trade, as an artist, “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?”³

1. *The Holy Bible*, 1 Timothy 5:8.

2. Ibid, Matthew 10:35; Luke 12: 53.

3. Ibid, Matthew 13:55; Mark 6: 3.



Attention to spiritual matters, obedience to God, and divine commands

At the time of the Old Testament, the family was the centre of worship. The father was considered the clergyman and priest of the family, as its guardian.¹ Later, the centre of worship was transferred to the tabernacle and temple and eventually the official clerical system was formed. However, even after the establishment of the temple, families were obliged to perform marriage ceremonies, circumcision, mourning, observe the dietary rules and participate in religious structures.

It is mentioned also in the New Testament that through marriage and bonding of spouses, both of them were obliged to try to encourage the other side to attain the pleasure and satisfaction of God. Thus, the quality of marriage provides a basis for the quality of life. A marriage that is based on God's word, can form a family that will worship God and will live according to His standards. Therefore, the believers are asked to set their lives on the Biblical priorities and to bring up and raise their children on the basis of love for the word of God, *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lordy our God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."*²

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 22: 1–14, 26: 23–25; Exodus 12: 3–11

2. Ibid, Deuteronomy 6:4–7



Establishing an intimate relationship along with respect and love amongst family members

Respecting each other is an important principle, which is mentioned in various verses of the Bible. *“Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is givin’g you.”*²

According to this verse, parents have a duty to deal with each other with respect and the children have the same duty toward their parents³. When a person is born, the family is the first thing that they learn to love. Hence, the family is a place where an individual learns for the first time the concept of affection and love. Throughout their life and after their marriage, the very same person shares this love with their spouse in the form of friendship, companionship, and assistance in sexual and spiritual affairs related to the family: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”*⁴

Mutual loyalty of couples

Marriage is a covenant with God. An obligatory and firm agreement that is made before God and the people. An alliance that comes with bilateral oaths. Through taking oath, the husband participates in a contract that should never be broken. Thus, loyalty is an important part of the continuity of marriage. For example, in the book of Proverbs, marriage is referred to as a “covenant” and a “mutual contract”, and adultery is condemned: *“Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous*

1. *The Holy Bible*, Exodus 20:12.

2. Ibid, Colossians 3: 21; Ephesians 6: 1-4.

3. Ibid, Proverbs 11: 29,15: 20; Colossians 3: 13,20; Romans 12:10; Ephesians 5: 21,33; Matthew 7:12; 15: 4; I Peter 3: 7.

4. Ibid, Ephesians 5:25.



woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God.”¹

Therefore, the human being cannot break the bond that God has contracted². Christ also affirms in Hebrews 13:4 that, “*Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*” So one can conclude that:

First- If the two sides separate from each other and then marry again, they have committed adultery.³ Because they have damaged the permanency of the principle of marriage.⁴

Second- Human beings have no right to terminate a bond that God has contracted.⁵

Third- Adultery and relationships outside marriage are condemned.⁶

Forth- Homosexuality⁷ and incest⁸ are also condemned.

Fifth- Polygamy often has consequences. The first polygamy occurred in Cain’s ancestry⁹. Yet monogamy is still considered the ideal and Christ also emphasized that monogamy is God’s ideal.

1. *The Holy Bible*, Proverbs 2:16–17.

2. Ibid, Matthew 19:6; “so they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate”.

3. Ibid, Matthew 5: 32.

4. Ibid, Matthew 19: 6; Mark 10: 6; 1 Corinthians 7: 10–11.

5. Ibid, Hebrews 13: 4, Matthew 5:27; Exodus 14: 20.

6. Ibid, Leviticus 18: 22, 20: 13; Romans 1: 26–27.

7. Ibid, Corinthians 5: 1–5.

8. Ibid, Genesis 4:19.

9. Ibid, Matthew 19: 8.



Family members' support and care of each other

It has been recommended to family members to take care of and support each other. When God asked Cain, "Where is your brother, Abel?" "Am I the guardian of my brother?" He replied insolently. This question of God shows that Cain had a duty to take care of his brother and Abel also had the same duty. Not only Cain killed his brother, but it was also the first instance of a brother killing his brother in history.¹

The devotion of family members toward one another is considered as one of the aspects of support and care that the Bible has referred to, *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."*²

Avoiding hostilities and increasing the spirit of pardon and forgiveness

The Bible refers to an informative story in the form of the narratives of Prophet Abraham and Lot, which is mentioned in Genesis 13. Abraham and Lot both lived in the land of Canaan. They were wealthy and owned lots of herds that many shepherds used to care for.³ Although the two did not live together in the same land, their shepherds were constantly in conflict with each other⁴. Abraham designed a plan so that dissensions amongst the family would vanish. He suggested to Lot to determine the land

1. The description of this story is mentioned in Genesis 4.

2. *The Holy Bible*, 1 John 3:16-18.

3. *Ibid*, Genesis 13:2-5.

4. *Ibid*, 13:6-7.



he wanted to live in¹. Because of this plan, Abraham and Lot prevented the conversion of conflict into violence.

Sometimes in family conflicts, contentions and disputes are so great that it seems there is a serious potential for violence. Therefore, a simple separation, as mentioned in the story of Abraham and Lot, is not enough. In the story of the dispute between Jacob and his father-in-law, Laban², they terminated the disturbance via reciprocally giving and receiving words, taking an oath, and concluding a contract with each other.

Jacob, after having separated from Laban, knew that now he had to face his brother Esau. He was worried about the wrong that had been done to his brother beforehand. He knew that Esau was planning to take revenge from him³, so by choosing a clever strategy, he prevented the occurrence of a war between the two brothers, who had encountered each other after many years. In fact, his strategy was to prevent a bloody strife by giving a valuable gift to his brother and using careful and deliberate words.⁴

Another example that shows the importance of pardon and remission, is the forgiveness of Joseph toward his brothers, which has been emphasized in the Bible.⁵

The health of the family's economy

Multiple recommendations of the Bible to earn property through legitimate means and that unlawful property will en-

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 13: 8-9

2. *Ibid*, Genesis 31

3. *Ibid*, Genesis 27:41; Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

4. The description of this story is mentioned in Genesis 32.

5. *Ibid*, Genesis 50:17

danger the safety, prosperity and future of the family, are regarded as the most important factors contributing to the solidity of the family foundation.

“The greedy bring ruin to their households, but the one who hates bribes will live.”¹

“A good person leaves an inheritance for their children’s children, but a sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous.”²

Supporting inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages

The patterns of marriage that are implicitly referred to in the holy texts are amongst the factors that have been extremely important in the continuity of the family institution in the passing of time. Abraham married Sarah, who was almost one of his close relatives. Anthropologists named this kind of marriage endogamy. Such choices are important to the formation of a larger family though Sarah was not able to become pregnant. Since as a wife, her position and situation in the family depended on the ability of childbearing as the heir of the family, she planned to bring a child to the family. She ordered her husband to marry her Egyptian maid. This strategy of Sarah is not condemned anywhere in the sacred text. Anthropologists have found that such sexual access is found in other cultures as well. They have considered the term “polygyny” for this action that refers to a family in which a man has intercourse with some women in order to have heirs.³

The life of Abraham and Sarah was not the only unusual form of

1. *The Holy Bible*, Proverbs 15:27.

2. *Ibid*, 13:22.

3. “Genesis and family values.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124.



family in Genesis. Jacob married two sisters, Rachel and Leah. Such a marriage is called sisterly polygamous marriage. Apparently, the reason for such marriages is for the family to preserve its property. This type of family has a strong structure. Hence, the families that often have been mentioned in Genesis 12–36 are large ones, so that the family inheritance will be preserved in this institution and will not be lost. It seems the reason is that God made a covenant with Abraham that his generation will be numerous. Therefore, the family institution should not disappear. Apparently, Ezra's order to divorce unbelieving spouses and even to abandon the children of these marriages has been also for the same reason.

In the New Testament too, some phrases about intra-religious marriage are seen. Paul explicitly emphasizes that Christians should only marry other Christians on the basis of God's word because in his view the wife of a person should belong to Christ. Therefore, he disagrees on the unity of a believer with a non-believer, *“A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.”*¹

When a believer marries a non-believer and the non-believer turned out to be deceptive, the believer should leave their spouse without any difficulty and hardship. Now that the believer is married to such a person, he should be more submitted to God². The believer shall be very obliged to God and bring their children up according to God's rules. He must try to always win over the non-believer for the sake of God³. Ephesians (5:22–33) leaves no doubt that marriage, especially amongst be-

1. *The Holy Bible*, I Corinthians 7:3; Also q.v. II Corinthians 6:14.

2. Ibid, Matthew 10: 37; Luke 9: 59–62.

3. Ibid, I Corinthians 7: 12–16; I Peter 3: 1–12.

lievers, has a central role in Christian society.

Childbearing

The Bible has commanded men and women to bear children because marriage must have fruits and this will only be achieved through a sexual union between man and woman¹. When Adam and Eve were driven out from paradise, Adam slept with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant, and she gave birth to Cain and after him to Abel.²

The Bible, in some verses, encourages people to bear children, and mentioned children as the cause of blessings and the prosperity of a family, *“Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.”*³

Happiness and mirth in the family

Another factor for the solidarity of families is the presence of a cheerful and happy atmosphere in the home. The invitation to be happy along with family members has been mentioned in many verses in the Bible⁴. Hence, some solutions are offered to create happiness in the family:

- a. Ignoring and forgiving the mistakes of other family members: *“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell*

1. *The Holy Bible*, Psalm 127:3–5, Genesis 1:28.

2. *Ibid*, Genesis 4:1–2.

3. *Ibid*, Deuteronomy 33:24.

4. *Ibid*, Deuteronomy 26: 11, 16: 14, 14:26; Luke 1: 58, 15: 6 & 9



*you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”*¹

b. To teach the truth to children to have abundant health, *“All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace.”*² and the inclusion of divine blessings; *“If your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever.”*³

c. Studying and contemplation in the Bible; *“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”*⁴

d. Serving family members, *“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”*⁵

Properly performing individual tasks in the family institution

Whenever family members properly perform duties that they are charged with, not only the family environment will be always calm and filled with hope for the future, but also there will not be any harm against its solidarity. Therefore, the father in the family is the one who provides the marriage and the family with safety⁶. He is the head of the family⁷, the heart of God⁸,

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 18: 21–22

2. *Ibid*, Isaiah 54:13.

3. *Ibid*, Psalm 132:12.

4. *Ibid*, Deuteronomy 6:6–7.

5. *Ibid*, Matthew 25: 40.

6. *Ibid*, Ephesians 5:25.

7. *Ibid*, I Corinthians 11: 3.

8. *Ibid*, Matthew 6: 14–15; Mark 16: 17–18, 10: 24.

an example of the power of God¹, the guardian and protector², the trainer of the children³, and the one who provides the necessities of life⁴. The mother of the family should also provide a healthy and calm environment for the family members via wisdom, chastity, staying at home, love for children, and obedience to her husband⁵. Children are also required to help parents⁶ and follow⁷ them respectfully. The husband and wife must also carry out the mutual duties that are assigned to them properly.⁸

The factors behind the solidarity of family according to the Qur'an and Islamic narrations

So far, it has become clear that the formation of a family institution, not only is of paramount importance in the establishment of the foundations of a society but also has a special place in the culture of Islam in terms of valuation, legality, culture, society, economy and emotions. In this chapter, the factors contributing to the solidity and solidarity of the family will be examined according to the verses of the Glorious of God and Islamic traditions and narrations.

Beneficence toward the family

Based on the divine verses, beneficence toward family members will bring about divine rewards as well as eliminating undesirable traits such as humiliation and miserliness.

1. *The Holy Bible*, II Corinthians 10: 5-6.

2. Ibid, I Corinthians 5:35.

3. Ibid, Proverbs 22: 6; Psalm 78: 5; Ephesians 6: 4; I Timothy 3: 4.

4. Ibid, I Timothy 5: 8

5. Ibid, Titus 2: 4-5

6. Ibid, Mark 7: 9-13

7. Ibid, Proverbs 1: 7; Ephesians 6: 1-3; Proverbs 15:20

8. Ibid, I Corinthians 7: 3-4; Philippians 2: 2; Ephesians 4: 3-4; 5: 21 and 22; 28 and 33; I Peter 3: 1



“But if you are virtuous and God-wary, God is indeed well aware of what you do.”¹

Beneficence is amongst the duties that Islam obligates on children too, which means whatever causes satisfaction, mirth and happiness of parents: *“We have enjoined man to be good to his parents.”²*

It seems that an example of beneficence, which is also mentioned in the narrations, is the teaching of knowledge and politeness to the family members. “A believer always endows their family members with the proper knowledge and politeness to bring them all into Paradise.”³

Maintaining family secrets

Some issues that happen in the family institution are specific to that family and there is no need for others to be aware of them. Therefore, it is necessary for each family member to be devoted to maintaining the family secrets and not to discuss those issues out of the family circle or even in some cases, before other members of the family: *“When the Prophet confided a matter to one of his wives, but when she divulged it [instead of guarding the secret] and God apprised him about it, he acquainted [her] with part of the matter and ignored part of it. So when he told her about it, she said, ‘Who informed you about it?’ He said, ‘The All-Knowing and the All-Aware has informed me.’ If the two of you repent to God... for your hearts have certainly swerved, and if you back each other against him, then [know that] God is indeed his guardian, and his supporters are Gabriel,*

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (4): 128.

2. *Ibid.*, (29): 8 ; This point is also emphasized in (2): 83 and (19): 14.

3. *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il wa Mustanbat al-Masā'il*, vol. 12, p. 201, tradition No. 13881.



the righteous among the faithful and, thereafter, the angels.”¹

Enjoining right and forbidding wrong in the family

In Islam, the prescription of enjoining right and forbidden wrong is a divine duty that has become obligatory for all believers. Observation of this prescription in the family environment, will enhance the family solidarity, reduce domestic conflicts and prepare the ground for the salvation of family members from the hellfire: *“O you who have faith! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel will be people and stones, over which are [assigned] severe and mighty angels, who do not disobey whatever God commands them and carry out what they are commanded.”²* Therefore, practical recommendations for performing worship such as prayer, which in itself prevents the act of sinning, are considered as examples of enjoining right: *“And bid your family to prayer and be steadfast in maintaining it. We do not ask any provision of you: it is We who provide for you, and to God wariness belongs the ultimate outcome [in the Hereafter].”³*

Verse 59 of the Chapter of al-Aḥzāb has commanded women to observe the Islamic dress code known as *ḥijāb* and other Islamic values and thus has prohibited them from wearing questionable clothing by expressing its disadvantages e.g., to not attract the attention of dissolute people: *“O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the faithful to draw closely over themselves their chadors [when going out]. That makes it likely for them to be recognized and not be troubled...”⁴*

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (66): 3–4.

2. *Ibid*, (66): 6.

3. *Ibid*, (20): 132.

4. *Ibid*, (33): 59.



Religious upbringing

Several verses of the Noble Qur'an emphasize the importance of religious upbringing and education:

- a. Verses 54 and 55 of the Chapter of Maryam and verse 132 of the Chapter of TāHā highlight religious upbringing, educating the family and encouraging worship.

*“And mention in the Book Ishmael. Indeed, he was true to his promise, and an apostle and prophet. He used to bid his family to [maintain] the prayer and to [pay] the zakat (alms), and was pleasing to his Lord.”*¹

*“And bid your family to prayer and be steadfast in maintaining it.”*²

- b. The religious upbringing of family members shall lead to salvation from the hellfire.³

- c. God's recommendations to believers are to take care of their family members against the causes of misery and Hell and praying for them: *“My Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and whoever enters my house in faith, and the faithful men and women, and do not increase the wrongdoers in anything but ruin.”*⁴

- d. The attention of the father to the religious future of the family and the necessity of having a sense of responsibility toward them is considered as a valuable issue: *“Were you witnesses when death approached Jacob, when he said to his children, ‘What will you worship after me?’ They said, ‘We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael, and*

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (19):54–55.

2. *Ibid*, (20):132.

3. *Ibid*, (66):6.

4. *Ibid*, (71):28 ; Verse 6 of the Chapter of al-Tahrīm also mentions this point.



Isaac, the One God, and to Him do we submit.””¹

In this regard, it is mentioned in a narration that the Noble Prophet of Islam (pbuh & hh) said, “Whenever God wishes well-being for a family, He will make them knowledgeable of the religion, the younger people of them will respect the older ones. He will grant them courtesy in life and moderation in expenditure, and will make them aware of their faults so that they may remove them.”²

Formation of the family on the basis of Qur’anic criteria

Another factor that is effective in the solidarity of the family is that its foundation should be based on the right criteria. The Noble Qur’an has also considered two important factors when forming a family: chastity³ and being equal in terms of faith and beliefs (homogamy).⁴

Spirituality

Paying attention to spiritual factors is one of the most important factors that influence the solidarity of the family. Factors like:

Providing religious needs

The most important and basic factor of internal security and peacefulness in the family is religion. Therefore, observance of religious values and preservation of the family from belief-oriented traumas are considered as one of the most important fac-

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (2): 133.

2. *Nahj al-Faṣāḥah*, p. 181

3. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, these points are mentioned in (4): 25, (5): 5 and (24): 26.

4. Verse 221 of the Chapter of al-Baqarah mentioned this point.



tors behind the solidarity of the family.¹ About the role of the religion in the tranquillity of life, Imam ‘Alī (pbuh) has said, “Whenever I discover [only] one characteristic, amongst all good characteristics, is stable in a person, I will tolerate him and ignore his lack of other good characteristics due to having that one, but I cannot ignore his being irreligious and unwise, because separating from the religion is separation from the security [and tranquillity]. Life with fear is not pleasant and being unwise is also [a kind of] death, and nobody pursues a relationship with the dead.”²

The Noble Prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H & hh) has also been quoted as saying, “Bring up your children on the basis of three characteristics: love for your Prophet, love for his Household, and recitation of the Qur’an.”³ In this narration, the Prophet of Islam has emphasized on the relation of Muslims with the Book of God (Qur’an) and (his Household’s) traditions as two important pillars of the religion of Islam and he has implicitly recommended their eternal accompaniment.

God-fearing

The feeling of being God-fearing in the environment of the family is considered to be amongst the attributes of the believers and prepares the ground to create a spiritual atmosphere in the family environment: “*The faithful and their descendants who followed them in faith—We will make their descendants join them... They will say, ‘Indeed, afore time, we used to be apprehensive about our families.’*”⁴

1. *Daneshnameh Qur’an va Hadis*, vol. 3, pp. 483–491

2. *Tuḥaf al-‘Uqūl*; ‘*Uyūn al-Ḥikam wa al-Mawā’iz*, p. 170

3. *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Muḥraqah*, p. 172; *Tahkim Khanevadeh az Negah Qur’an va Sunnat*, p. 260

4. *The Holy Qur’an* (52): 21–26



God-consciousness in the family

The Noble Qur'an highlights consciousness of God as a criterion for the superiority of people and considers those who are conscious of God as being the most honourable people¹. Accordingly, any family that is more conscious of God will observe divine boundaries: *"Your women are a tillage for you, so come to your tillage whenever you like, and send ahead for your souls, and be God-wary, and know that you will encounter Him, and give good news to the faithful."*²³

Being conscious of God in the family environment shall be followed by a divine reward⁴, leads to forgiveness for human beings⁵, causes the elimination of problems in a couple's relationships, and reduces the pressures on family life⁶.

The narrations of the members of the Household of the Prophet (pbuh) also emphasize the necessity for the occurrence of this feature in family formation. Someone consulted with Imam Hasan al-Mujtabā (pbuh) about her daughter's marriage. He said, "Marry off your daughter to a man who is conscious of God because if he loves your daughter, he will respect her and if he does not love her, he will not do wrong to her."⁷

It is quoted from Imam Ṣādiq (pbuh) as having said, "If a man marries a woman because of her wealth or her beauty, he will be divested of those things, but if he marries a woman because

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (49): 13; "...Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most God-wary among you..."

2. *Ibid*, (2): 223.

3. *Ibid*, (2): 231 & 233;(65): 1.

4. *Ibid*, (4): 128.

5. *Ibid*, (4): 129.

6. *Ibid*, (65): 1-2.

7. *Makārim al-Akhlaq*, vol. 1, p. 446.



of her religiosity, God shall grant him wealth and beauty, too.”¹ Although Islam is not opposed to wealth and beauty, in the opinion of Islam a religious woman will be the source of the human being’s felicity and prosperity and a factor in line with strengthening the foundations of the family.

Praying for the family

In the opinion of the Qur’an and the narrations of the Infallibles, praying and seeking forgiveness for parents and family members are recommended acts and signs of an individual’s faith, such that it is prohibited in the narrations of the Household of the Prophet (pbut) to curse the children in the form of supplication.²

*“My Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and whoever enters my house in faith, and the faithful men and women, and do not increase the wrongdoers in anything but ruin.”*³

Such a supplication has an undeniable role in creating affection and love amongst the family members and in strengthening human and religious values among them. In addition, it is effective in consolidating family relationships, strengthening sentiments and ending the pressures of life⁴. Imam Sajjād (pbuh) has said in a prayer, “O Lord, do not leave me alone, and you are the best of heirs. Grant me a child from your own side, to be my heir in life who would seek forgiveness for me after my death. Make him healthy and harmonious in terms of creation, and do not put any benefit for Satan in him. O, God! I seek forgiveness from you

1. *Wasā’il al-Shī’ah*, vol. 14, p. 31; *Da’ā’im al-Islām*, vol. 2, p. 196.

2. *Daneshnameh Qur’an va Hadis*, vol. 2, p. 196.

3. *The Holy Qur’an* (71):28; In verse 169–170 of the Chapter of Shu’arā’, Prophet Lot prays for himself and his family’s release from the evil of sinners..

4. *Daneshnameh Qur’an va Hadis*, vol. 4, pp. 50–54.



and repent to you since you are forgiving and merciful.”¹

Prayer in the family

In the view of the Qur’an, *ṣalāh* (the daily ritual prayer) is the best way of compensating for one’s wealth and ease: *“And bid your family to prayer and be steadfast in maintaining it. We do not ask any provision of you: it is We who provide for you...”*²

Protecting the family hearth and home

One of the recommendations of God in the Noble Qur’an is to try to protect the family hearth and home. It is certain that if couples try to protect the institution that they have formed together, the pillars of this institution will not be volatile and will not cause misery and adversity for them. Verse 6 of the Chapter of al-Taḥrīm and a verse from the Chapter of al-Nisā’ – which was pointed out earlier – state the same point.

Amongst the issues that affect the protection of the family hearth is the resolution of family disputes by choosing an arbitrator from relatives in the family institute: *“If you fear a split between the two of them, then appoint an arbiter from his relatives and an arbiter from her relatives. If they desire reconciliation, God shall reconcile them. Indeed God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”*³

In addition, observing the mutual rights of family members is important in the protection of the hearth of this institute. The first and second verses of the Chapter of al-Ṭalāq emphasize that faith in God and the Day of Resurrection affects the establishment of proper relationships between the spouses and obser-

1. *Man lā Yaḥḍuruhū al-Faqīh*, vol. 3, p. 474.

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (20): 132.

3. *Ibid*, (4): 35.



vation of their mutual rights in the family environment.

Moreover, in verse 229 of the Chapter of al-Baqarah, it is outlined that not observing the divine boundaries concerning family rights and marital relations will cause that person to be amongst the wrongdoers: *“[Revocable] divorce may be only twice; then [let there be] either an honorable retention, or a kindly release. It is not lawful for you to take back anything from what you have given them unless the couple fears that they may not maintain God’s bounds; so if you fear they would not maintain God’s bounds, there is no sin upon them in what she may give to secure her own release. These are God’s bounds, so do not transgress them, and whoever transgresses the bounds of God—it is they who are the wrongdoers.”*¹

Paying attention to the rights of the family is abundantly visible in the traditions of the Household of the Prophet (pbut)². A clear example of this point is the book, *Risālah al-Ḥuqūq* (the Treatise on Rights) by Imam Sajjād (pbuh) in which legal issues related to family members have been discussed separately.³

Observing civility

The Noble Qur’an asks people to observe civility when they enter a house and are situated in the family atmosphere; that is to say, not to enter without asking permission and to salute (to say Salām) at the entrance: *“... So when you enter houses, greet yourselves with a salutation from God, blessed and good.”*⁴

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (2): 229.

2. *Daneshnameh Qur’an va Hadīs*, vol. 4, pp. 81–83 and vol. 3 pp. 501–525.

3. *Risālah al-Ḥuqūq al-Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn* (pbuh); *Ḥuqūq al-Zawj wa al-Zawjah*; *Risālah al-Ḥuqūq li al-Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn* (pbuh); *Ḥuqūq al-Wālidayn wa al-Walad*.

4. *The Holy Qur’an* (24): 61; This point is also mentioned in verse 58 of the Chapter of al-Nūr.



Observing courtesy in dealing with parents, talking to them nobly, and the necessity of avoiding anger toward them are amongst the most important points of civility that the Noble Qur'an emphasizes: "...Should any of them or both reach old age at your side, do not say to them, 'Fie!' And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words. Lower the wing of humility to them, mercifully..."¹

In the viewpoint of the Qur'an, even unbelieving parents have a special status and observing courtesy and kindness toward them is also obligatory; "...Keep their company honourably in this world..."²

Mutual observation of civility in dealing with children, in the viewpoint of the Qur'an, is necessary and recommended for the parents too. Some commentators³ believe that the question of Abraham from his son Ishmael about the divine command of sacrificing him was a kind of courtesy from the father to the child: "When he was old enough to assist in his endeavour, he said, 'My son! I see in dreams that I am sacrificing you. See what you think.' He said, 'Father! Do whatever you have been commanded. If God wishes, you will find me to be patient.'"⁴

Family's affections

The Almighty God firstly introduces compassion and friendship between the husband and wife as a divine sign and secondly outlines it as a cause of tranquillity and consequently a cause of solidarity within the family institute.⁵ Having a close affec-

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (17) :23-24.

2. *Ibid*, (31) :15.

3. *Tafṣīr al-Mīzān*, vol. 6, p. 273.

4. *The Holy Qur'an* (37):102.

5. Verse 21 of the Chapter of al-Rūm, which was mentioned earlier, has stated this very point.



tionate relationship with the children is also one of the qualities that God asks families to work on and make it happen; "...to frequent one another [freely]..."¹

Consulting and pursuing a relationship with each other in the family environment

Consultation of family members about important issues of life is another effective factor in the solidarity of the family. For example, consultation and agreement between the father and the mother over the baby's weaning period before the age of two is one of the examples of counselling in the Qur'an²: "... *And if the couple desire to wean with mutual consent and consultation, there will be no sin upon them. And if you want to have your children wet-nursed, there will be no sin upon you so long as you pay what you give in accordance with honorable norms...*"³

Supplying sexual needs

Not only the cooperation of family members to meet the needs of the home⁴ but also the positive and reciprocal response of couples to each other's sexual needs has an essential role in strengthening their relationships. In order to encourage couples to meet each other's sexual needs, several narrations and traditions have emphasized that permissible sexual pleasure has a spiritual reward too. The Prophet (pbuh & hh) said to Abūdhār, "Have intercourse with your wife, so you will be rewarded." "I will be rewarded for having intercourse with them?" He asked

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (24): 58.

2. q.v. *Rahkarhaye Tahkim Khanevadeh dar Qur'an va Hadis*, Faslnameh Resaneh va Khanevadeh, pp. 41-74; *Farhang Qur'an*, vol. 12, p. 291.

3. *The Holy Qur'an* (2): 233.

4. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 4, pp. 88-91.

surprisingly. The Prophet (pbuh & hh) answered, “If you have intercourse with [your] permitted wives, you will be rewarded, in the same way that if you commit forbidden acts you are a sinner.”¹ Therefore, in Islamic narrations, the husband and wife are recommended to be groomed for each other² and observe the rituals of intercourse.³

Paying attention to providing the family with financial needs

Considering the financial needs of the family such as encouraging men to spend money on the family, recommending them to start doing charitable deeds toward their own family and being generous to them, expressing the rewards of providing for the expenses of the family and advising them to keep a balance between income and expenditure, has been expressed in the narrations of the Household of the Prophet (pbuh), which indicates the significance of this issue in the solidarity of the family institute.⁴

Observance of morality

The rules concerning moral and human values in the family will strengthen relationships between its members and prevent the collapse and disintegration of family foundations. Moral values include the avoidance of jealousy and suspicion toward family

1. *Tahkim Khanevadeh az Negah Qur'an va Sunnat*, p. 318.

2. q.v. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 5, p. 567; *Zan dar Ayeneh Jamal va Jalal*, p. 66.

3. Several traditions have been outlined about the rituals of intercourse such as having strong desire, concealment, foreplay, tarry, remembrance of God, praying, etc. q.v. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 4, pp. 30–50. Also q.v. *Ahkam Ravabet Zan va Shohar, Porsesh va pasokhaye Daneshjuyi*, p. 339.

4. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 3, pp. 525–549.



members¹, having a good behaviour and temperament², showing affection and love for each other³, loving children and kissing them⁴, enjoying the spirit of devotion and forgiveness⁵, mutual respect⁶, kindness and beneficence⁷, teaching proper knowledge to the family⁸, making family members happy, bringing souvenirs on returning from travel, accompanying the family and eating with them, respecting the interests of family members, contentment, and ardour.⁹

Cooperation and participation in domestic affairs

Helping each other with the administration of life affairs is

1. As in the family of Jacob (pbuh), the jealousy of the brothers of Joseph (pbuh) led to the separation of family members from each other, in terms of spatial distance as well as mental and spiritual distance..

2. It is also narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (pbuh), “A man needs to use three qualities, in the management of his house and family, though these qualities may not be found within him: being good tempered, being generous in a measured way, and be zealous to protect the reverence of the family” (Ibid, p. 270; *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 4, p. 80 and vol. 3, pp. 437–441.

3. Concerning the necessity of showing kindness toward wives, Imam Sajjād (pbuh) says, “Your wife’s right is that you should know the mighty and majestic God has placed her as a source of rest and companionship for you and you must know that she is a blessing of God for you. So cherish her and treat her with compassion and tolerance, and though your right on her is greater [than hers], but her right on you is to be kind to her.” *Mīzān al-Hikmah*, vol. 2, p. 1185. ; *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 4, pp. 77–79 and vol. 3, pp. 427–437.

4. Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh & hh) said, “The love for children is a shield against [Hell] fire.” *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. 16, p. 379. It is mentioned in another narration that quotes him as saying: “The believer is a friend of God and their children are God’s gifts. So on whomever God bestowed a child, while he is a believer, should kiss the child so much.”, *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn*, p. 343.

5. In some narrations it is mentioned that the punishment of the grave has been removed from three groups of women and they shall gather with Lady Fāṭimah (pbuh). A group of them are those who patiently endure the bad tempered behaviour of their husbands and forgive them. *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 21, p. 285; *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 4, pp. 93–94.

6. Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh & hh) said, “Anyone who has married a wife should cherish her.” Muḥammadi Reyshahri, *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 4, pp. 91–92 and vol. 3, p. 453.

7. In a tradition of the Prophet of Islam (pbuh & hh), it is mentioned, “The best faith amongst the people, belongs to the one who is kinder to his family.” And also in another narration, he (pbuh & hh) is quoted as saying, “The most beloved people before God are those who show beneficence toward their family.” Ibid, vol. 3, pp. 444–451.

8. Ibid. p. 498.

9. Ibid. vol. 3, pp. 452–482.

amongst the duties of family members that play a shining role in consolidating the foundations of the family. There are different phrases in the narrations of the Household of the Prophet (pbuh & hh) that give a special sanctity to this factor. For example, it is mentioned in a narration that the Prophet (pbuh & hh) said, “O Ali! No one shall serve [his] dependents except the upright or martyrs or a man for whom God wishes well in this world and the Hereafter.”¹

Mutual understanding

Mutual understanding and proper reaction of family members in different situations and incidents can also be effective in fostering solidarity of this institution. For example, it is mentioned that someone came before the Messenger of God (pbuh & hh) and said, “O the Messenger of God! I have a wife who understands my situation perfectly; so whenever I get home, she receives me and when I am going to go out of the house, she sees me off. Whenever she finds me upset, she asks me, ‘What has made you upset? If you are sad because of the expenses of your life, be sure that the other (God) is responsible for it, so do not be upset!’” The Prophet (pbuh & hh) answered, “God has some agents on the Earth, and this woman is one of them. She has half of a martyr’s reward.”²

Supporting and caring for each other

In family life, members need other’s help to meet their needs. Therefore, it is natural that children of tender years, elderly people, and infirm in the family would need each other’s care and support to meet their needs. It is an effective way of being

1. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 104, p. 302; q.v. *Daneshnameh Qur’an va Hadīs*, vol. 3, pp. 456–461.

2. *Wasā’il al-Shī’ah*, vol. 14, p. 17.



together and fostering the solidarity of the family institution, which has not been neglected in the pure religion of Islam. Thus, several references have been made on this topic. For instance, the Noble Prophet of Islam (pbuh & hh) has said, “The man is a guardian of his family and shall be responsible for it. The woman is also a guardian of her husband’s home and children and shall be held accountable for it.”¹

1. *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 6, p. 8. Also in this issue q.v. *Jawāhir al-Kalām*, vol. 31, p. 283.



CHAPTER THREE

FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY INSTITUTION IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Functions of the family institution in Christianity

After examining the position and factors behind the solidarity of the family, in this chapter, the signs, functions, and effects of the family will be examined.

The family is considered as a place for experiencing divine blessings

After the formation of the first family on Earth and following God's command for an increase of offspring¹, God orders Abraham to immigrate so that he, his progeny and consequently all the families on the earth can become blessed². In fact, having children in the home environment is amongst the first blessings of family formation, *"Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him."*³

Also in the age of David, God built a house for him and spread blessings to all families within his house⁴. In the New Testament, since God has promised to grant blessings to human beings and their children, He made the home environment the first and the best place of receiving – material and spiritual – blessings, such as the remembrance of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and a centre

1. q.v. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 1: 27–28.

2. q.v. *Ibid*, Genesis 12: 1–4.

3. *Ibid*, Psalm 127:3.

4. q.v. *Ibid*, II Samuel 7: 11–16



for performing religious teachings.¹

A refuge and fortress for the education and protection of values, and the prevention of corruption

The home environment is the first place where believers become acquainted with values and prepare themselves to enter the community. Values like:

a. Participation in home affairs – The collaboration of girls with their mothers in domestic affairs or in other words learning to do housekeeping², as well as the collaboration and emulation of boys of their father's profession and job; like Christ, who learned the carpenter's profession from his father.³

b. The tendency toward spirituality and performing religious ceremonies and rituals in the home environment – The father of the family was obliged, as a religious figure⁴, to encourage his children and household to practice religious affairs and worship. Hence, in the home environment, some acts of worship like the Feast of the Passover was performed, and monotheism and God-fearingness were taught to the children; *"Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. May you live to see your children's children — peace be on Israel."*⁵

The husband and wife, and consequently all family members, were obliged to encourage all members to attain religious matu-

1. *The Holy Bible*, Apostles 5: 42; 20: 20

2. q.v. Ibid, Matthew 10:35; Luke 12: 53

3. q.v. Ibid, Matthew 13: 55; Mark 6: 3

4. Ibid, Genesis 22: 1-14, 26: 23-25; Exodus 12: 3-11

5. Ibid, Psalm 128:4-6

rity through belief in God and love for the Creator, and manage their life on the basis of divine laws; *“He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children.”*¹

c. Altruism and forgiveness, respect and love for each other and even for neighbors – Both the parents and children have a duty to respect each other. There are several verses in the Bible that admire and encourage respect for family members.²

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”*³

In addition, the Bible also emphasizes love and devotion to one another even to neighbors; *“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.”*⁴

A place to bring up righteous, believing and helpful children for the society

Children who are properly brought up in the family environment can be helpful people for the society in the future. For

1. *The Holy Bible*, Psalm 78:5..

2. Ibid, Proverbs 11: 29, 15: 20; Colossians 3: 13, 20; Romans 12:10; Ephesians 5: 21, 33; Matthew 7:12; 15: 4; 1 Peter 3: 7. See: “Re-writing ‘Household’ in the Early Church.” Ashland Theological Journal.

3. *The Holy Bible*, Ephesians 6: 1–4.

4. Ibid, I John 4:20.



example, Abraham, Lot, and Isaac had sons such as Ishmael¹, Moab², Ben-Ammi³, Midian⁴ and Esau⁵. Each of these descendants were the founders of communities, Ishmaelite, Moabites, Midianites, Ammonites, and Edomite, which later became the neighbors of Israel.

In addition, the first place for the proper upbringing of children is the family environment: *“But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.”*⁶

Functions of the family institution in Islam

The functions of the family institution in Islam, based on the Noble Qur’an and the narrations, are divided into five general categories: sexual, emotional, social, moral, and economic functions that will be discussed respectively:

Sexual function

The Noble Qur’an divides the sexual functions of the family into two general categories:

Reproduction

Humans naturally and instinctively have a desire to survive and they see their survival in the continuation of descendants. Marriage and the formation of a family respond to this human

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 16:16.

2. *Ibid*, 19:37.

3. *Ibid*, 19:38.

4. *Ibid*, 25:2.

5. *Ibid*, 25:25.

6. Also *Ibid*, q.v. I Timothy 5:4; Ephesians 6: 4; I Timothy 3: 4; Solomon Proverbs 2: 6.

need and fulfil it. The Almighty God says, “*God made for you mates from your own selves and appointed for you children and grandchildren from your mates.*”¹

In this verse and other verses², the Glorious God mentions the maintenance and preservation of humanity as one of the goals of marriage and the sexual instinct plays an important role in reaching this goal.

Legitimate satisfaction of sexual instinct

The family is a safe haven for the legitimate satisfaction of the sexual instinct. Islam is opposed to the suppression of sexual desires and has censured it. However, Islam is strongly opposed to free sexual relations in an unrestrained manner. As it is mentioned in verse 223 of the Chapter of al-Baqarah, “*Your women are a tillage for you, so come to your tillage whenever you like.*” The persuasive tone of this verse about the provision of sexual needs through intercourse with the spouse demonstrates the intention behind divine words to prove this function. That is to say, the sexual satisfaction of the husband and wife through each other, in itself, has a determining role in family solidarity.

In several narrations, the fulfilment of the couple’s sexual needs by each other is also considered as a factor contributing to the solidarity and stability of the family. Imam Şādiq (pbuh) said, “The best of your women are those who are chaste and full of desires.”³ In another narration related to him, it is quoted that some of Imam’s companions asked him as to what was the most enjoyable thing? Each one of them mentioned something

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (16): 72.

2. q.v. Ibid, (4): 1; (2): 223; (42): 11.

3. *Wasā’il al-Shī’ah*, vol. 15, p. 14.



until the Imam himself said, “The most enjoyable thing is intercourse.”¹

Islam favours the balance of sexual needs and its legitimate and correct satisfaction. For this purpose, it considers marriage to be the only way to satisfy the sexual instinct and says, *“Marry off those who are single among you, and the upright among your male and female slaves.”*²

And of course, it recommends that those who do not have the necessary means and facilities to marry should remain chaste and conscious of God until their problems are resolved, *“Those who cannot afford marriage should be continent until God enriches them out of His grace.”*³

Based on these verses, if people enter into illegitimate relations to satisfy one’s sexual instinct, though this libido will be satisfied for a short time, by no means will they be able to perform the many functions of the family, but rather it will cause irreparable physical, mental and psychological damages to them. For this reason, Islam has ordained heavy punishments for that. The Holy Qur’an has condemned homosexuality by mentioning the story of the people of Lot, and has described them as ignorant⁴, transgressors⁵, corruptors⁶ and wrongdoers⁷ due to that shameful act.

Therefore, if the sexual functions of the family – legitimate satisfaction of sexual instinct and reproduction – become en-

1. *Wasā’il al-Shī’ah*, vol. 14, p. 10

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (24): 32.

3. *Ibid*, (24): 33.

4. q.v. *Ibid*, (27): 55.

5. q.v. *Ibid*, (7): 81.

6. q.v. *Ibid*, (29): 29–30.

7. q.v. *Ibid*, (29) 31.

dangered, whether the defect is on the part of the man or the woman, the stability and solidarity of the family will be volatile.

Emotional functions

Emotional needs can be regarded as one of the most essential needs that accompany human beings during their lifetime. In all stages of life, human beings see themselves as having a need for the love and affection of others. Therefore, one of the most important factors that encourage a person to marry and form a family is this very need.¹

In the viewpoint of the Qur'an, family is the place of security and peace and quiet: *"And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you."*²

In this verse, God has stated some important points concerning families:

First- According to the Qur'an, the family is 'the place of forgetting problems' and reaching mental relaxation. This is as if leading a single life would always be coupled with apprehension. This calmness and tranquility emanates from the fact that these two sexes complement one another and are the cause of blossoming, mirth, and nurturing of each other; in a way that each one is incomplete without the other.³

Second- The relaxing and emotional function of the family is not something that can appear via a single contract. It is meant

1. "Ruykard Islam be Chahar Karkard", Ma'refat, No. 139.

2. *The Holy Qur'an* (30):21; Verse 189 of the Chapter of al-A'rāf also mentions the very same point.

3. *Tafsir Nemuneh*, p. 391.



for special emotions to be gradually created and developed between two people after they have signed the marriage contract and arranged to live together for a lifetime. Hence, Islam's purpose of ordering the formation of the family is that the couple have a duty to create a relaxed and emotional atmosphere in the family while regarding this duty as an important principle.¹

Third- Since love can save the family from the danger of collapse, to maintain the loving relationship of the couples, God encourages them to show affection and strengthen it through the heavenly rewards. There are references to emotional relationships and loving behavior in the traditions of Infallible Imams (pbut). This was in a way that not only they practiced it, but also they recommended it to others. On this note, the Messenger of God (pbuh & hh) has said, "When a man tells his wife, 'I love you,' it shall never leave her heart."²

Forth- At the first glance, it may seem that according to this verse the *raison d'être* of women's creation is providing men with peacefulness and relaxation and it can suggest to the reader that the whole life revolves around men. Undoubtedly this conjecture does not conform to the meaning of the verse because the Qur'anic verse expresses the need of each sex to the other and the complementary nature of each one of them for the other. The tranquility and the relaxation that emanates from marriage is mutual, in the same way that the friendship and mercy between them is also mutual.

One of the characteristics of family life in the viewpoint of the Noble Qur'an is the honorable behavior toward family mem-

1. "Ruykard Islam be Chahar Karkard", Ma'refat.

2. *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 7, p. 10; q.v. "Sabk Zendegi Khanevadegi Dar Qur'an va Sunnat Pishvayan Ma'sum" (pbut), Pajuhesh Nameh Ma'aref Qur'ani.

bers. The Noble Qur'an orders men to treat women honorably: *"O you who have faith! It is not lawful for you to inherit women forcibly, and do not press them to take away part of what you have given them, unless they commit a gross indecency. Consort with them in an honorable manner; and should you dislike them, maybe you dislike something while God invests it with an abundant good."*¹

In addition, this verse emphasizes that couples must tolerate the imperfections and annoyances of each other to earn God's welfare and blessings. Hence, in Islamic traditions, the least of unkind behaviors or words from either the wife or the husband to the other is not deemed appropriate and is admonished. Jamāl ibn-Darrāj has narrated Imam Ṣādiq (pbuh) as saying, "Any woman who tells her husband: 'I have not seen any goodness in you', her good deeds shall be invalidated." Imam 'Alī (pbuh), as a part of his last will, told his son Abū Ḥanīfah: "Be patient and respectful toward your spouse in all circumstances, so that your life will become pleasant to you."

Social functions

From the perspective of Islam, the family is one of the significant factors in sociability of the members of a society. All religions and schools of thought have advised families about sociability and Islam in particular has laid great emphasis on the process of sociability and its role in forming the characteristics of human beings.²

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (4): 19.

2. "Ruykard Islam be Chahar Karkard", Ma'rafat.



Bearing children

Bearing children and the continuation of the human race through marriage are the first social functions of the family and are amongst the most important philosophies behind the creation of man and woman as couples by God the All-Knowing, All-Wise: *“God made for you mates from your own selves and appointed for you children and grandchildren from your mates....”*¹

Educating the children

The first environment for educating children and enhancing their moral virtues is the family environment. One of the most effective methods of educating children and making them sociable, according to the Holy Qur'an, is explaining the values and norms with compassion and kindness. In the Chapter of Luqmān, it is stated that parents play a very crucial role in the moral, religious, and social upbringing of children: *“When Luqmān said to his son while advising him: ‘O my son! Do not ascribe any partners to God. Polytheism is indeed a great injustice.’ (13) We have enjoined man concerning his parents: His mother carried him through weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years. Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the return. (14) But if they urge you to ascribe to Me as partner that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. Keep their company honorably in this world and follow the way of those who turn to Me penitently. Then to Me will be your return, whereat I will inform you concerning what you used to do. (15) ‘O my son! Even if it should be the weight of a mustard seed, and [even though] it should be in*

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (16): 72; Also see (16): 11.

*a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, God will produce it. Indeed God is All-Attentive, All-Aware. (16) O my son! Maintain the prayer and bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and be patient through whatever may befall you. That is indeed the steadiest of courses. (17) Do not turn your cheek away disdainfully from the people, and do not walk exultantly on the earth. Indeed God does not like any swaggering braggart. (18) Be modest in your bearing, and lower your voice. Indeed the ungainliest of voices is the donkey's voice”*¹

Religious education is a kind of education on the significance of which Islam lays great emphasis. The sixth verse of the Chapter of Al-Taḥrīm in the Noble Qur'an indicates that the right of wives and children is not merely limited to the provision of their sustenance but the more important is feeding their soul and providing a proper religious education for them; since one of the most distinguished instincts and feelings is the religious feeling that exists in the primordial nature of humans from childhood. The family is the environment for flourishing, developing and protecting this feeling.

In Islamic narrations, it is amongst the responsibilities of the head and caretaker of the family to care about the needs and desires of the members of the household². In addition to persuading people to bear children³, Islamic traditions also put emphasis on educating children both mentally and physically. Giving children beautiful names⁴, familiarizing them with the Noble Qur'an⁵ and narrations of Ahl al-Bayt (pbut), teaching them the

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (31): 13–19.

2. *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 15, p. 250.

3. *Ibid*, vol. 14, p. 134.

4. *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 122.

5. *Ibid*, p. 195.



permissible (*ḥalāl*) and the prohibited (*ḥarām*) matters¹, giving them relative freedom until the age of seven, educating them until the age of fourteen, and involving them in activities and decision makings until the age of twenty one² are amongst the advice that Islam gives parents for making children sociable. To make children familiar with useful activities like swimming and archery³ and also familiarizing the females with the Qur'an and skills like spinning are considered as the responsibilities of the head of the family⁴.

Religious education is of such great importance in Islam that the Holy Qur'an states that one of the reasons for sending Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh & hh) was to notify people of the importance of religious education in the family. When Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh & hh) was sent on his prophetic mission, he was commanded to teach his relatives to fear God, meaning that he should begin changing the society by changing his own family first. *"Warn the nearest of your kinsfolk."*⁵

Ethical function

a. Between couples

From the Qur'anic prospective, if couples do not adorn themselves with moral qualities, it will lead the family to having tensions or sometimes even may cause the collapse of the family as stated in the initial five verses of Chapter 66 (Al-Taḥrīm). These verses outline that divulging family secrets and the jealousy among Prophet's wives irritated the Prophet (pbuh & hh)

1. *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 12, p. 247.

2. *Ibid*, vol. 15, p. 195

3. *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 247

4. *Ibid*, vol. 4, p. 839

5. *The Holy Qur'an* (26): 214.



to an extent that the issue was about to end with divorce and separation. These verses indicate that the basis and foundation of the family will become unstable if ethical norms are not observed when interacting with family members. According to the Chapter of Al-Qaṣaṣ, verse 26: *“One of the two women said, ‘Father, hire him. Indeed the best you can hire is a powerful and trustworthy man. (and this man is the one you need)’”*. The prudence and chaste conduct of Moses in his encounter with Shuaib’s daughters caused him to become a member of Shuaib’s family. Therefore, prudence and chastity are considered among the most important elements for strengthening the friendly relationship between a husband and wife, and also developing assurance and more trust between them. On the other hand, man or woman’s immorality and lack of chastity may destroy the strong family ties and ruin the arrangement and order of the family. Several narrations have been quoted from Ahl al-Bayt (phut) about the chastity of couples. For example, Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh & hh) has said, “Be chaste so that your wives would be chaste.”¹

b. Between children and parents

Considering that the most important intra-human relationship is the relationship between the child and the parent and since the existence of children is due to their parents, the Qur’an advises children to be good to them: *Worship God and do not ascribe any partners to Him, and be good to parents...*². This verse and other similar verses³ are manifestations of the necessity of obedience and humility toward parents. On the other hand,

1. *Mustadrak al-Wasā’il wa Mustanbat al-Masā’il*, vol. 15, p. 175.

2. *The Holy Qur’an* (4):36.

3. *Ibid*, (17): 23.



according to the illuminated verses of the Holy Qur'an, parents must also teach their children the virtues of moral qualities and the evilness of unethical deeds so that they may become prosperous.¹

Financial functions

Contrary to the belief that the lack of residence, permanent income and a proper job are excuses for abandoning marriage, the Qur'an deems that marriage is a means for ending poverty and a means of wealth and comfort: *"Marry off those who are single among you, and the upright among your male and female slaves. If they are poor, God will enrich them out of His grace, and God is All-Bounteous, All-Knowing."*². Highlighting the financial function of the family, this holy verse indicates that marriage has an effect on the enrichment of a person. Moreover, this verse also guarantees the fulfillment of financial needs: *"God will enrich them"* and *"God is All-Bounteous"*. It is quoted from Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh & hh) that, "Form a family [through marriage] since it is useful in bringing about your provisions and sustenance." Also, it is narrated that he has said, "Marry off those who are single amongst you as God through marriage makes their behaviour excellent, enriches them, and enhances their humanity and human values."

In a family framework, the husband and the wife inherit [money and property] from each other. This rule indicates that marriage affects the financial circumstances of the husband and wife. They are partners in each other's money or property and had they not been married, their financial conditions would have definitely

1. See *The Holy Qur'an* (31): 13-19 & (66): 6.

2. Ibid, (24): 32.

been different. The Qur'an explains: *"To men belongs a share of what they have earned, and to women a share of what they have earned. And ask God for His bounty...."*¹

Until the husband and wife are alive and together, they would be owners of their wealth and properties. Thus any talk of personal ownership between a husband and wife seems to be inappropriate and discourteous. In the same way that they are partners in each other's life, in both happiness and sadness; they also need to be partners in each other's wealth. On this particular issue, Lady Khadījah (pbuh), Prophet Muḥammad's wife can be regarded as a role model. Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh & hh) was quite poor while she was wealthy. According to historical proofs, Lady Khadījah's (pbuh) wealth was spent by the Prophet (pbuh & hh) on the promotion of Islamic programs. Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh & hh) once said, "I have never benefited from any wealth like that of Khadījah's."²

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (4): 32.

2. *Amālī al-Ṣadīq*, p 468.



CHAPTER FOUR

PATHOLOGY & THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FAMILY'S INSTABILITY IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY



Pathology of the family institution in Christianity

Given the importance of the family institution, investigating the factors that may do harm to the basis of the family seems crucial. Hence, the factors that, according to the Biblical viewpoint, will cause harm to the family have been investigated in this chapter.

Financial Corruption

Unlawful and prohibited money makes the foundation of the family unstable and this point is explicitly mentioned in some verses: “Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household, but he who hates bribes will live.”¹

Sexual relationship before and after marriage

The Bible emphasizes that sexual relations are a blessing from God for couples to enjoy each other, as a result of which they shall achieve happiness and bliss. Therefore, the marital bed should be kept chaste: “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”²

Although all sins are forgivable³ from a biblical perspective, sexual sins cause such serious damages that are very difficult to heal.

1. *The Holy Bible*, Proverbs of Solomon 15:27; Also see Proverbs 13:22 & Luke 12:15.

2. Ibid, Hebrews 13:4.

3. Ibid, Matthew 21:31–32 & Luke 7:36–50 & John 4:1–42; 8:2–11.



Therefore, the Bible asks men and women to avoid unconventional relationships before and after marriage for these reasons:

First, these relationships dishonor the human being and destroy their relationship with God. It turns one's home into a place for the wicked and evil. Moreover, it is possible that through these relationships one would contract sexually transmitted diseases, which have negative consequences for them and their families.

Second, having sexual relations before marriage adversely affects the relationship of the individual with others: 1- it ruins the relationship of the individual with the people around them since it would not be easy to trust these people. 2- It could have a significant negative effect on the [marital] relationships after the marriage. 3- It creates a gap between the individual and other people who are close to them such as parents, spouse, and children.

Third, conventional sex could be the manifestation of the glorification of God and it could complete the image of God in the individual's mind. But sinful relationships could distort it. "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies."¹

Therefore, in the Bible's point of view, any illicit sexual relationship before and after marriage is deemed a sin, including sexual relationships between a man and a woman who intend to marry [each other in the future]. A breach of the rules of marriage, which have been ordained by God, may result in severe punishment, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah who

1. *The Holy Bible*, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

were destroyed because they violated the rules concerning sexual matters¹.

Homosexuality and same-sex marriage

As it is stated in Genesis 2:24, “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Having interest in the opposite sex is considered as the only principle for entering into a marriage because one of the main objectives of marriage is reproduction². Homosexuality is the sexual relationship between two of the same sex and accordingly it does not lead to the human reproduction. Hence, it is deemed as an abnormal action and cannot be considered as a branch of marriage³.

According to the Old Testament, the punishment for the sin of homosexuality is death:

“Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molek, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable. Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion. Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people.”⁴

1. See *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 19:1–22.

2. See *Ibid*, Genesis 1:28

3. “The Bible’s teaching on marriage and family.” Family Research (2016). p. 3.

4. *The Holy Bible*, Leviticus 18:21–25 & 29.



In the New Testament, this sin is the reason for the expulsion from the church, rejection and excommunication. It is an abnormal action and the sign of an individual's impurity, shamelessness, immodesty, debauchery and it is very wicked¹. Paul the Apostle announced that these persons will not inherit the kingdom of God: "Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."²

Adultery

Adultery is tantamount to a breach of the marriage contract with someone who has been legally married to a person. In the Ten Commandments of Moses it is explicitly stated that, "You shall not commit adultery"³. In the Bible, the adultery of David with Bathsheba was regarded as a sin. "But the Lord was displeased with what David had done."⁴ Hence, having loyalty toward the spouse is an important principle and the Bible lays a great emphasis on it. For example, adultery in the Proverbs of Solomon is deemed senseless and dangerous:

"Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. Surely, her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life."⁵

1. See *The Holy Bible*, Romans 1:24–27.

2. Ibid, 1 Corinthians 6:9–10

3. Ibid, Exodus 14:20 & Deuteronomy 5:18

4. See Ibid, 2 Samuel 11: 1–27

5. Ibid, Proverbs 2: 16–19; Also see Proverbs 5:3–22; 7:5–23; 9:13–18; 6:32–33

In the Old Testament, adultery is repeatedly described as an indication of spiritual disloyalty of the People of Israel toward God: “I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. Because Israel’s immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood.”¹

Infertility of women and homes devoid of children

Fertility is the will of the Creator and the result of the union of a man and woman whereby “a body” will be created. From the viewpoint of the Bible, the infertility of a woman originates from personal sin: “Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, for the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelek’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.”²

Another reason for infertility is the human’s decadent nature³. However, God has shown that if people call him with faith and pray for their fertility, He will answer them⁴.

Divorce

Sometimes, marriage breaks down. The reason for this is that people fail to meet God’s standards and criteria of marriage. That is to say, standards that ensure the security of marriage and marital satisfaction. The Bible states that God hates divorce:

1. *The Holy Bible*, Jeremiah 3:8–9; Also see Hosea 11:2; 5:3–4 & Ezekiel 16:32–38.

2. *Ibid*, Genesis 20: 17–18.

3. *Ibid*, See Genesis 11:30; 25:21; 30:1; & 1 Samuel 1:2.

4. *Ibid*, See 1 Samuel 1:9–20; See 1 Samuel 1:9–20.



You ask, “Why?” It is because the Lord is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the One God made you? You belong to Him in body and spirit. And what does the One God seek? Godly offspring. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth. The man who hates and divorces his wife,” says the Lord, the God of Israel, “does violence to the one he should protect, says the LORD Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.”¹

Divorce spoils the continuance and the survival of marriage and it is the destroyer of the family institution. In the Bible, divorce is considered as a spiritual heresy.² The Mosaic Law would permit divorce but the husband had to give the certificate of divorce to his wife so it would prevent unnecessary divorces and also the woman could have a document as a license for her re-marriage: “If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house.”³

Jesus prohibited divorce because from his perspective, divorce was against the will and word of God. He believed that a marriage, which has formed according to the primary design of God, should last until death: “...and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one

1. *The Holy Bible*, Malachi 2:14–16.

2. See *Ibid*, Jeremiah 3:8 & Isaiah 50:1.

3. *Ibid*, Deuteronomy 24:1.



separate.”¹

Paul, also would emphasize the virtues of marriage². He explicitly put emphasis on this command: “To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.”³

Although Paul said that the Christians should not separate from each other, he commanded that the couples should make as much effort as possible to bring peace and reconciliation. Also, if a believer would live with an unbeliever and had decided to separate from them, Paul forbade the believer to begin the process of divorce: “To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): ‘If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances’; God has called us to live in peace. ‘How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?’”⁴

From the standpoint of Jesus Christ, only if one’s spouse betrays them, they will be allowed to divorce: “But I tell you that any-

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 19:5-6; Also see Mark 10:7-9.

2. See *Ibid*, Ephesians 5:21-32.

3. *Ibid*, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.

4. *Ibid*, 7:12-16.



one who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”¹

The only possible occasion for divorce according to Paul’s viewpoint is when the wife or husband would decide [to convert to Christianity and] to believe in Christ while the other one would refuse to live with them: “But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.”²

Therefore, divorce according to Bible is permitted only in the following cases: marital infidelity; the unbeliever’s refusal to live with a believing spouse; if the believer is reluctant to divorce but their unbelieving spouse persists in their refusal to have sexual relations.³

Men and women’s failure to observe moral rules

Through several instructions, the Bible has asked men and women to prevent the instability of the family institution by observing moral standards, otherwise they would be faced with several punishments⁴. For example, in Job 31: 9–12 it is stated about sinful looks that “If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor’s door, then may my wife grind another man’s grain and may other men sleep with her. For that would have been wicked, a sin to be judged. It is a fire that burns to destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest.”

1. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 5:32; 19:9.

2. *Ibid*, 1 Corinthians 7:15.

3. “The Bible’s teaching on marriage and family.” *Family Research*, p. 5. See also: “Synonymous Parallelism in Malachi 2: 16”, *Ashland Theological Journal* 28.

4. *The Holy Bible*, See Deuteronomy 22: 23–29.

Some verses also have referred to the veil and face cover as a covering for women¹. These verses and several other ones² indicate that women also need to observe regulations and norms like men. In addition to the abovementioned instances, some other elements can be considered as the harmful factors for the family institution that have been discussed in previous chapters. Therefore, some of them are listed below in brief:

- Lack of intimacy, love and respect among family members³
- Diminishing the role of God throughout life and neglecting spiritual matters⁴
- Lack of family members' involvement in providing for the household⁵
- Family members' failure to support and protect each other⁶
- Disputes and enmity among family members and lack of forgiveness⁷
- Various financial problems and the family's inability to fulfill financial needs⁸
- Lack of happiness and joy at home and within the family⁹
- The household's failure to observe their duties and responsibilities

1. *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 24:64-65 & 38:15-14

2. Ibid, 1 Corinthians 11:6-10.

3. See Ibid, Colossians 3:21 & Ephesians 6:1-4

4. See Ibid, Deuteronomy 6: 4-7.

5. See Ibid, 1 Timothy 5:8.

6. See Ibid, 1 John 3:16-18.

7. See Ibid, Genesis 50:17.

8. See Ibid, Proverbs 15:27.

9. Ibid, Deuteronomy 26:11.



Pathology of the family institution from the perspective of the Holy Qur'an and traditions

Harmful elements can wreak havoc on the family's stability and may cause various disputes in the family. Therefore, the approach of Islam, especially in the Qur'an, to the family and the factors that would harm it have been investigated in this chapter.

Economic and financial issues

From the Qur'anic perspective, financial problems and poverty will prevent the formation of a family. Hence God, the Almighty and Exalted, inspires those who are worried about financial matters to be continent and patient: *"If they are poor, ... those who cannot afford marriage should be continent until God enriches them out of His grace"*¹. Imposing high amount of dower (marriage portion) is amongst the factors that can spoil the stability of the family. The philosophy of dower is the modification of man and woman's relationships and to unite them in marriage. Therefore, the amount of dower should not be contrary to its *raison d'être*. Dower should be deemed as a gift and present rather than a means of trading or deposit. Consequently, in several traditions, it has been recommended that the amount of dower should be low². This is because heavy dower may arouse the hostility and enmity among household members³ and it may even lead to a wife's disobedience and resentment toward her husband.⁴

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (24): 32-33.

2. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 3, p. 180 & Ibid vol. 4, p. 112-113; *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il wa Mustanbat al-Masā'il*, vol. 15, p. 67.

3. *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il wa Mustanbat al-Masā'il*, vol. 15, p. 67.

4. *Wasā'il al-Shrāh*, vol. 21, p. 252.



Failure to observe divine instructions concerning family rights and marital relationships

If a member of the family fails to observe the rights of other family members, it will harm the stability of the family: *“It is not lawful for you to take back anything from what you have given them, unless the couple fear that they may not maintain God’s bounds; so if you fear they would not maintain God’s bounds, there is no sin upon them in what she may give to secure her own release. These are God’s bounds, so do not transgress them, and whoever transgresses the bounds of God—it is they who are the wrongdoers.”*¹

Family disputes

Family disputes also may ruin the family’s stability. There are various causes for such disputes such as:

The husband’s desertion of his wife

*“If a woman fears from her husband misconduct or desertion, there is no sin upon the couple if they reach a reconciliation between themselves; and reconciliation is better. The souls are prone to greed; but if you are virtuous and God-wary, God is indeed well aware of what you do.”*²

Being miserly and selfish

The other factor that may engender family disputes is the individual’s miserliness that is explained in the Qur’an, like the abovementioned verse and traditions.³

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (2): 229.

2. *Ibid.*, (4): 128.

3. See *Daneshnameh Qur’an va Hadis*, vol. 4, p. 122.



Resorting to unconventional means and instruments

To ruin the family institution, some people resort to unconventional methods such as sorcery and magic: *“And they followed what the devils pursued during Solomon’s reign —and Solomon was not faithless but it was the devils who were faithless—teaching the people magic and what was sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt, who would not teach anyone without telling [him], ‘We are only a test, so do not be faithless.’ But they would learn from those two that with which they would cause a split between man and his wife.”*¹

Disobedience

Disobeying one’s husband or the disregard of spouses for one another’s opinion is another factor that may lead to disputes and, in turn, destabilize the basis of the marriage: *“As for those [wives] whose misconduct you fear, [first] advise them, and [if ineffective] keep away from them in the bed, and [as the last resort] beat them. Then if they obey you, do not seek any course [of action] against them. Indeed God is All-Exalted, All-Great.”*²

Interference in the family

Another factor that would provoke family disputes are relatives’ unnecessary interference, in case they do not fear the split among family members, which can be understood in chapter Al-Nisā’: *“If you fear a split between the two of them, then appoint an arbiter from his relatives and an arbiter from her relatives. If they desire reconciliation, God shall reconcile them. Indeed God*

1. *The Holy Qur’an* (2): 102.

2. *Ibid*, (4): 34.

is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”¹ Besides, there are some other verses that mostly concern the role of individuals from outside the family in threatening and ruining the basis of a family.

Forced marriage

One of the most important conditions of a stable marriage is the consent of both the man and the woman, since forced marriages often break down and there are many narrations in this regard. A person asked Imam Ṣādiq (pbuh), “I want to marry a woman but my parents have chosen another woman for me to marry. What should I do?” Imam Ṣādiq (pbuh) answered, “Marry the woman that you want and leave aside the woman that your parents have chosen.”²

Marrying on the basis of valueless goals

According to Islamic narrations, marrying for the motive of strengthening kinship, ostentation, fame-seeking and taking advantage of the wealth and family statues of a spouse³ is a harmful factor for the family institution and sets the scene for the collapse of the family.

Marring before intellectual maturity

Although Islamic narrations advise families to prepare the conditions for the marriage of their children as they mature, the Ahl al-Bayt (pbuh) consider it inappropriate for children to marry at a tender age. Hence, Imam Ṣādiq (pbuh) in answer to a question about this issue said: “If you make them marry at a tender age,

1. *The Holy Qur'an* (4): 35; Also (4): 128 implies this matter.

2. It does not mean that one should not consult with their parents or others about marriage; it rather means the opposite. A forced marriage may not have a happy ending..

3. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 3, pp. 114, 310, 312.



it is hardly possible that a sense of love and affection can be developed between them.”¹

Marriage with two women at the same time who are relatives

According to some narrations, polygamous marriage with a woman of the relatives of the current wife is harmful for the family life. Regarding this subject, Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H & hh) said, “Do not marry off women [as co-wives) with their relatives because it may sever their relationships”² For the wife it is harder to bear a co-wife who is her relative. Therefore, this kind of marriage is a cause for disputes and the breakdown of a family.

Deviations

There are several kinds of deviations that can possibly exert negative influence on the family institution and consequently endanger the health of a family.

Deviation from moral principles

It is a kind of moral deviation to mock believers within the family. Through this behavior, the family atmosphere will be devoid of ethical values. It also makes the family members bold, especially the children, to disdain and mock other people and even other family members. *“Indeed the guilty used to laugh at the faithful, and when they passed them by, they would wink at each other, and when they returned to their folks they would return amused, and when they saw them they would say, ‘In-*

1. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 4, p. 114.

2. *Ibid.*

deed those are the astray!’’¹.

The second kind of moral deviation is self-satisfaction and arrogance of the deniers of truth within their families, which is a despicable deed from the viewpoint of God and the perpetrators are warned in the Holy Qur'an: "...but denied [them] and turned away, and went back swaggering to his family. So, woe to you! Woe to you! Again, woe to you! Woe to you!"² In addition to these Qur'anic verses, some Islamic narrations also have mentioned that some characteristics and attitudes of the husband may ruin the tranquility and stability of the family and may even cause it to disintegrate. Some of these characteristics are: tormenting the wife³; bad-temper and misconduct⁴; irrationality⁵; promiscuity⁶; applying severe restrictions on the wife⁷; non-leniency⁸; hatred; accusing her of adultery; humiliation; disdaining and mocking the wife⁹.

On the other hand, it would be threatening or even devastating for the family institution if a wife or a mother has the attitudes such as tormenting the husband and angering him¹⁰; being ungrateful¹¹; having unreasonable expectations¹²; reproachfully reminding the husband of the favor she did for him¹³; non-leni-

1. *The Holy Qur'an*, (83): 29-32.

2. *Ibid*, (75): 32-35.

3. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol. 4, pp. 116, 118, 123.

4. *Ibid*, pp.188-120.

5. *Ibid*, p.124.

6. *Ibid*, p.126.

7. *Ibid*, p.128.

8. *Wasā'il al-Shr'ah*, vol. 20; *Ibid*, Chapter of Behaving Towards Women, p. 169.

9. *Kanz al-'Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Af'āl*, vol. 16, p. 371, No. 44943 & Encyclopaedia of Qur'an and Tradition, vol. 4, pp. 122-124.

10. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol 4, pp. 130-132.

11. *Ibid*, p. 132.

12. *Ibid*, p. 134.

13. *Ibid*, p. 136.



ency¹; flaunting her finery for people other than her husband²; being licentious and promiscuous³; and infidelity⁴.

Deviation from religion

Rejecting religion, having no religion, and infidelity of some family members may shatter the unity of the family. From the perspective of the Qur'an, an individual's deviation from religion would pave the way for other family members' deviation. In addition, it is the manifestation of wrong and it will cause permanent punishment and loss for the individual in the Hereafter⁵. For example, in Noah's (pbuh) family, the deviation and the infidelity of the son led to the father's dissatisfaction as well as the oppression and cruelty toward other family members and finally he was drowned by divine chastisement⁶. In the account of the punishment of the people of Lot, the deviation and the infidelity of Lot's wife and her support for oppressors hurt the holiness and unity of the family institution⁷.

Discrimination in the family

If parents show their feeling toward their children differently and unequally, they will arouse the sense of jealousy among family members that would provoke disputes, separation and maybe serious problems. The children of Jacob suffered discrimination in the family.

1. *Daneshnameh Qur'an va Hadis*, vol 4, p 138.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid, p.140.

5. See *The Holy Qur'an*, (42): 45 & (39):15

6. See Ibid, (11): 46-46 & (23) :27.

7. See Ibid, 32 & (15) 59 -60.



[Jacob's] Inequality in showing feelings toward the children had given Jacob's children a sense of discrimination and this sense was a factor that persuaded them to separate Joseph from his father and send him away: *"When they said, 'Surely Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than [the rest of] us, though we are a hardy band. Our father is indeed in manifest error.' 'Kill Joseph or cast him away into some [distant] land, so that your father's attention may be exclusively toward you, and thereafter you may become a righteous lot.'"*¹

Hostility in the family

Some disputes in the family may lead to hostility among family members. In these cases, God has recommended that one should avoid enmity toward family members to prepare the ground for divine mercy and forgiveness². Another Qur'anic advice is to commission arbitrators from the wife's relatives and husband's relatives to resolve the disputes of family institutions. According to the Chapter of Al-Nisā', verse 35, if both parties really seek reconciliation through God's mercy, hostility between the man and his family will fade away.

1. *The Holy Qur'an*, (12): 8-9.

2. See *Ibid*, (64): 14.



Conclusion

The importance and status of the family

In the Bible

Regarding the importance of the family institution, three different perspectives have arisen: Some believe that there is no other word in the Hebrew or Greek language equal to the term “family”. Some believe that *Mishpachah* is a broad term in the Old Testament that implies several concepts. The third group believe that “people”, “tribe”, “clan” and “paternal house” each has a specific meaning.

In addition to these three viewpoints, two main definitions of the family institution have been proposed: (a) The nuclear family is a unit that is to be formed through the marriage of a man and woman and grows in size by the birth of children. (b) Extended family is a family whose population reaches 50 to 100 and includes all the relatives through blood or marriage; domestic servants, guests and so forth.

From the Bible’s perspective, a family is the fundamental constituent unit of the society; since from the beginning, the plan of God was to create, through the union of the man and woman, a society like the People of Israel. In addition, the most appropriate role model provided by God for the human being is the family because the warp and woof of the human society is mixed with marriage, sexual intercourse, and human reproduction, the processes that are necessary for the perpetuation of the human race.

Therefore, the family is a prominent institution from the bibli-

cal perspective in such a way that two of the commandments of the Ten Commandments are explicitly dedicated to the family and its preservation. In the New Testament, also, the family in general is considered as the creator of the human society. The spiritual family, according to the New Testament, is a family that is formed based on the faith in God (Jesus Christ).

In the Qur'an and traditions

According to the teachings of Islam, the family institution is the most important institution of the society and this has been mentioned in several Qur'anic verses such as Al-Furqān, 74. The family institution is formed through the marriage of a man and woman as it is mentioned in the Chapter of Al-Rūm, verse 21: *"The man and woman are similar in creation. In addition, they are the comfort for each other and God the All Mighty has ordained affection and mercy between them."*

Considering that the family in Islam is introduced as the primary environment for the development of human beings, it enjoys a very prominent status in such a way that God has issued several commands regarding the protection and preservation of the family. Furthermore, analogizing the husband and wife to only one "garment" indicates the status of men and women in the Noble Qur'an. To stabilize the position of the family, the Qur'an has raised various legal issues through which it shows the legal status of the family. It is worthy of mention that the Holy Qur'an considers the family as a strong citadel. Protecting this citadel requires special cultural and social rules that the Qur'an does not neglect. The Qur'an pays particular attention to the financial issues related to the family institution. Moreover, the Qur'an is so attentive to the emotional aspects which play a cru-



cial role in forming a family. All these are manifestations of the significance of the family in the Noble Qur'an. Family is the institution that, through the marriage of a man and woman, is built on the basis of chastity and compatibility of beliefs. This is a path that all the Prophets and friends of God have put emphasis on and they themselves led by example. The holiness and sanctity of marriage in Islamic narrations and traditions is described as "the Prophet's way", "the most beloved institution", "a factor for preserving and protecting one's religion", and "criticizes being single".

To highlight the significance of the family institution in Islam, it would suffice to say that the Noble Qur'an commands the believers to do good to parents and respect them immediately after asking the believers to worship God. In other words, the Qur'an considers respect toward parents to be the most important obligation after worshipping God by placing parents second to God Himself.

This point is a testimony to the sanctity of the institution that the parents have participated in its formation. The peace and tranquility that would be created due to marriage brings about some physical, mental, personal and social benefits to couples.

The marriage and forming a family are so rewarding in terms of spiritual growth that can encourage those who evade marriage by making excuses such as financial problems to consider marriage. Marriage is regarded as an important factor in the perpetuation of the human race. Marriage can provide couples with tranquility through controlling behaviors like sexual instinct.

Factors behind family's stability

In the Bible

The stability of the family depends on several factors:

- Family members' participation in providing for the household. Some verses of Mark and Matthew explain the family members' duties toward each other.
 - Conducting religious activities, carrying out the commands and instructions of God as well as giving the children a good upbringing would influence the stability of the family.
 - According to the Bible, a friendly relationship accompanied by love and respect is amongst other factors that would help them build a more stable family.
 - Couples' marital fidelity to the institution that they have created on the basis of marriage vows would highly influence the stability of their relationship. Therefore, the Bible has issued strict regulations on divorce.
 - Family members' support and protection through the altruism of all family members; avoiding disputes and increasing forgiveness are great factors that contribute to the stability of the foundation of the family.
 - Earning a legitimate income and livelihood would not jeopardize the health and happiness of the family.
 - Supporting inter-religion and inter-relative marriage would help the continuation of the family institution over the course of time.
 - The birth of a child would lead to the happiness of the par-



ents and also will bring blessings to the family.

- The Bible advises families to provide a happy atmosphere at home and to teach their children forgiveness, truth, contemplation on divine verses, and helping people.
- It would influence the family's stability, if all family members would perform their tasks and duties properly.

In the Qur'an and tarrations

The stability of the family institution, from the viewpoint of Islamic literature and the Qur'an, depends on several important factors:

- Beneficence and kindness of family members toward one another which would cause a happy atmosphere at home, eradicate moral vices, and please God the Sublime.
- Keeping family secrets does not erode the trust among family members and it does not ruin the family.
- In a family, enjoining right and forbidding wrong through all available means would prevent committing sins and lessen disputes.
- Avoidance of profligate spending as well as living a life of moderation and frugality would help members of the family to manage their expectations and thus it would prevent the disintegration of the family.
- In addition to bringing about God's pleasure, developing the spirit of religiosity in the family environment would reduce the possibility of that family going astray.
- It helps the stability of the family if it is built on the basis of

chastity and homogamy.

- Various spiritual factors such as strengthening the belief in and fear of God, providing for religious needs, having piety, praying for household members, giving particular attention to religious activities especially the prayer are of paramount importance for stabilizing the family foundation.
- If the main concerns of the family members would be taken care of in family disputes and quarrels, the foundations of the family will not be shaken easily.
- Observing civility and rules in the family by both parents and children has a considerable impact on the stability of the family.
- To avoid separation and distance between family members it is required to establish a warm and friendly relationship with them.
- Flexibility and consulting with family members about important personal and family problems would strengthen the family institution.
- Sexual satisfaction in marriage, observing ethical and moral matters, participating in household affairs, mutual understanding and family support and protection are amongst factors that contribute to family stability.

Functions of the family

In the Bible

After recounting the factors behind family stability according to the Bible, it can be perceived that from the Biblical perspective



the functions of the family can be placed into three general categories: (a) A place for experiencing the blessings of God (b) A shelter from sexual and financial corruptions as well as a place for teaching values (c) A place for raising righteous and religious children who would be an asset for their corresponding societies.

In the Qur'an and narrations

Various functions of the family have been mentioned in tradition and narrations.

1. From the Islamic perspective, legitimate sexual satisfaction and human reproduction are the most important functions of the family.
2. In Islam, the family institution is considered as a base for protection, peace, affection, and mercy. The family is a place where people can do away with daily stress; hence, family has several functions.
3. According to Islam, having offspring and educating them are social functions of the family.
4. The manner of interaction between the couple in a family, or sometimes in the presence of children, and also the children's behavior toward parents and vice versa are amongst the most important behavioral and moral roles of the family.

Forming a family has a great effect on increasing the family sustenance and provisions and optimizing their property. In marriage, everything should be done by common consent as the common goal of all family members is seeking the pleasure of God while making each other happy, which is more precious



than all personal material wealth.

Pathology of the family institution

In the Bible

Considering that God has established the family institution, He has also highlighted the issues that would hurt its stability:

Financial corruption and unlawful earnings will destroy the foundations of the family. Illicit sexual relationships, both before and after marriage, would defile the individual and create a distance between them and God. Also, it would spoil the trust between them and the people living around them.

Homosexuality is an abhorrent and repulsive behavior that is against the objectives of procreation. As it is mentioned explicitly in the Ten Commandments, adultery is an obscene deed in the view of God and it is prohibited as it would spoil faithfulness within the family. Not having children is another matter that would hurt family stability. Failure to observe the standards established by God would threaten the continuation and stability of the family. Divorce, as a spiritual heresy, is one of the indications of disobedience toward God's ordinances. Failure to observe the ethical norms would also destroy the family stability.

In the Qur'an and narrations

The stability of the family will be ruined if:

Firstly, there are financial issues like high a dower and the individual fails to form a family.

Secondly, the family members do not observe the rights that



God has established for them.

Thirdly, there are several family disputes, the husband's desertion of his wife and vice versa, stinginess, lack of forgiveness, use of magic and sorcery, disobedience, and interference of other parties.

Fourthly, there are various deviations from religion and ethical norms.

Fifthly, there is discrimination between children.

Sixthly, there is hostility or ongoing disputes among family members.



Arabic transliteration guide

ا	alif	^a ā (long vowel)	ط	ṭā	ṭ/Ṭ
ب	bā	B	ظ	ẓā	ẓ
ت	tā	T	ع	‘ayn	‘
ث	thā	Th	غ	Ghayn	gh
ج	jīm	J	ف	Fā	f
ح	ḥā	ḥ/H	ق	Qāf	q
خ	khā	Kh	ك	Kāf	k
د	dāl	D	ل	Lām	l
ذ	dhāl	Dh	م	Mīm	m
ر	rā	R	ن	Nūn	n
ز	zā	Z	هـ	Hā	h
س	sīn	S	و	Wāw	w (consonantal) ū (long vowel)
ش	shīn	Sh	ي	Yā	y (consonantal) ī (long vowel)
ص	ṣād	Ṣ/ṣ	ء	Hamza	,
ض	ḍād	Ḍ/Ḍ			
Short vowels	fatḥa		— [َ]		= a
	kasra		— [ِ]		= i
	ḍamma		— [ُ]		= u



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