

Tafseer Surah Al-Talaq (الطلاق)

Notes on Nouman Ali Khan's Concise Commentary of the Qur'an
(Additional Sources Used as Well)

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Introduction

- I. According to Ibn Mas'ud, this *surah* was sent down immediately after *Surah al-Baqarah*
 - A. *Surah al-Baqarah* mentioned some rules related to divorce but left some things unanswered so this *surah* answered those questions

Tafseer of the Verses

1. **O Prophet! 'Instruct the believers:' When you 'intend to' divorce women, then divorce them with concern for their waiting period, and count it accurately. And fear Allah, your Lord. Do not force them out of their homes, nor should they leave—unless they commit a blatant misconduct. These are the limits set by Allah. And whoever transgresses Allah's limits has truly wronged his own soul. You never know, perhaps Allah will bring about a change 'of heart' later.**
 - a. There are two opinions as to the reason behind the revelation of this verse [Wahidi]:
 - i. When the Prophet (pbuh) divorced Hafsah
 1. Anas said: "The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) divorced Hafsah and so Allah, exalted is He, revealed this verse. It was said to him (pbuh): 'Take her back, for she is one who fasts often and stands up in night vigil prayer often, and she is one of your wives in the Garden.'"
 - ii. When Ibn Umar divorced his wife
 1. Ibn 'Umar divorced his wife one single divorce while she was still in her menses. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) commanded him to keep her until the period of her menses was over. He had then to wait until she was in her period [again], and if he was still determined to divorce, he had to wait until her period was over, provided that he did not sleep with her before divorcing her. This was the waiting period in which Allah, exalted is He, has ordered that women be divorced
 - b. Allah specifically calling out to the Prophet (pbuh) in the beginning of the verse is a form of honor for him [Sabuni]
 - c. To have 'concern for their waiting period' implies to not divorce them while they are on their menses or when the couple have been sexually intimate during the purity period after the wife's menses cycle completed

- i. There is a debate among the scholars whether a divorce given by the husband during this period counts or not. The majority say it does but consider it a blameworthy act [My comment]
- ii. The proper way to give divorce is with the following guidelines [Sabuni]:
 - 1. The wife is not in a state of menses
 - 2. The couple have not been sexually intimate at all during the purity period after the menses cycle is completed
 - 3. To only give it once
- d. To 'count it accurately' means to wait full three menstrual cycles after giving the divorce [Sabuni]
 - i. It could also mean to keep track of the days [precisely] in case the husband wants to take her back within the permitted period [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
- e. Allah mentions fearing Him (*taqwa*) in the context of divorce because it usually goes out the window when couples are involved in divorce disputes. People in such situations will usually not comply with Allah's commands. It can often cause the individuals to only look out for themselves and be unjust towards their spouse due to rage
- f. Allah said about the wives that it is 'their homes' because the husband's home is their home as long as the divorce is not finalized
 - i. Divorce is finalized when the waiting period is completed after giving the divorce
 - 1. The waiting period is three menstrual cycles. They have the option to reconcile during this period before the divorce is finalized [Sabuni]
 - a. The wives are not to leave the house during this period due to the possibility that it might work out between them again if they are around each other. The possibility of them reconciling is greater if they are around each other rather than being apart
- g. The phrase 'blatant misconduct' implies adultery
 - i. Some scholars also interpret it to mean any indecent or lewd behavior, such as obscene language towards the husband or his family, abusive behavior, etc.
 - 1. If she behaves in this manner, then she drops her right to live in her husband's house [Sabuni]
- h. Ibn Qayyim mentions two reasons as to why Allah dislikes divorce [Sabuni]:
 - i. It dissolves the bonds of marriage
 - ii. It is what Iblees wants and makes him happy
- i. The phrase 'And whoever transgresses Allah's limits' means that whoever does not conform to the stated guidelines mentioned in the verse is exposing himself/herself to the punishment of Allah [Sabuni]
- j. We also learn from this verse that the hearts are in Allah's Hands and He can turn them as He wishes. The same husband who ends up hating his wife and wanting divorce may turn around and begin to love her and reconcile. Allah can do that with his heart [Sabuni]

2. Then when they have 'almost' reached the end of their waiting period, either retain them honourably or separate from them honourably. And call two of your reliable men to

witness 'either way'—and 'let the witnesses' bear true testimony for 'the sake of' Allah. This is enjoined on whoever has faith in Allah and the Last Day. And whoever is mindful of Allah, He will make a way out for them,

- a. Once the divorced woman is close to reaching the end of her waiting period [i.e. three menstrual cycles], then the husband should decide to either take her back and live with her in a good relationship or to let her go respectfully without causing her harm when her waiting period is completed [Sabuni]
 - i. Unfortunately, many men today purposely hurt their wives by neither divorcing them nor living with them in a respectable manner
- b. Two witnesses should be taken when giving divorce or taking the wife back so that neither of the spouses can deny it afterwards in case evidence is needed for the claims. The witnesses should be upright and just and when called to testify should not be biased towards a particular spouse [Sabuni]
- c. We are told that those who believe in Allah and meeting Him on the Day of Judgment will take heed of the points mentioned above and follow them [My comment]

3. and provide for them from sources they could never imagine. And whoever puts their trust in Allah, then He 'alone' is sufficient for them. Certainly Allah achieves His Will. Allah has already set a [decreed] extent for everything.

- a. The 'provision' alluded to in this verse could be a spouse as well and not necessarily financial one
- b. In general, as long as we are mindful of Allah (*taqwa*) in our actions, Allah will make a way out for us from every difficulty and provide us from sources we could not imagine whether it relates to school, job, marriage, or anything else in life
- c. If we do not have reliance on Allah, then our life is going to be full of complaints
 - i. *Taqwa* relates to our past actions and reliance on Allah (*tawakkul*) relates to our hopeful future
- d. The phrase 'Allah achieves His Will' means that Allah will make sure whatever His decisions are, they will be implemented through to the end and nothing can prevent it
- e. Allah having 'set a [decreed] extent for everything' means that whatever we are supposed to get in this life is already decreed. We will neither receive any more nor less than it but exactly that amount
 - i. It also means that whatever hardships, comforts, ease, pain, etc. we face in this life, it has a specific decreed term after which it ends. This is why the believer never despairs nor loses hope in Allah's mercy because he/she realizes that Allah has given everything a specific term. Nothing in this life remains forever [Sabuni and *al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

4. As for your women past the age of menstruation, in case you do not know, their waiting period is three months, and those who have not menstruated as well. As for those who are pregnant, their waiting period ends with delivery. And whoever is mindful of Allah, He will make their matters easy for them.

- a. The women who are 'past the age of menstruation' refers to older women who have reached menopause

- b. The women who ‘have not menstruated’ refers to young women who have not yet started their menses
 - i. It could also refer to those who start their menses late in life
- c. Married women who are of the above types, when divorced, their waiting period is three months
- d. Pregnant women, when divorced or widowed, their waiting period is as soon as they deliver the child
- e. The last part of the verse means that whoever fears Allah through abiding by His commands and abstaining from His prohibitions, Allah will make ease in their affairs [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

5. This is the commandment of Allah, which He has revealed to you. And whoever is mindful of Allah, He will absolve them of their sins and reward them immensely.

- a. Meaning the previous rulings mentioned in relation to divorce, waiting period, and taking the wife back are commands of Allah which He sent down so that we may act in accordance to them [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
- b. Having fear of Allah by abiding to His commands and abstaining from His prohibitions (*taqwa*) leads to Him forgiving our sins and receiving His reward in the afterlife by entering paradise and enjoying its everlasting blessings [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
- c. The discussion of sins is mentioned in the context of divorce laws because sins can pile up between the spouses during hostility. They may say or do forbidden things towards each other because they tend to be less careful during and after divorce, thus, Allah is reminding us to have fear of Him even during such times
 - i. This is also why Allah repeats the notion of *taqwa* (fearing Allah) multiple times in this *surah*. There are many cases where the ex-husband will attribute things towards his ex-wife in order to disgrace her and discourage other suitors from considering her for marriage [Sabuni]

6. Let them live where you live ‘during their waiting period’, according to your means. And do not harass them to make their stay unbearable. If they are pregnant, then maintain them until they deliver. And if they nurse your child, compensate them, and consult together courteously. But if you fail to reach an agreement, then another woman will nurse ‘the child’ for the father.

- a. This verse teaches us to have compassion and sympathy for divorced women [Sabuni]
 - i. This is completely opposite to the attitude, unfortunately, many Muslims have today towards divorced women
- b. The wives remain in the house with their husbands during the waiting period after divorce and the husband is required to continue to financially support her during this time, according to his means, just as he was before
 - i. The wisdom behind this is that there is a greater possibility of reconciliation between them if they remain around each other
- c. Some husbands purposely make life miserable for their wives during the waiting period so that she becomes frustrated and leaves on her own. Allah is telling the men in this verse to not do that

- d. As discussed previously above, the waiting period after a divorce for a pregnant woman is whenever she delivers the child. The husband is financially responsible for her during this whole time because it is his child that she is carrying, thus, he is responsible for it
 - i. In addition, when the wife delivers the child and the divorce is finalized but the ex-wife is breastfeeding the child, the husband must financially compensate her because it is his child that she is nursing. In the verse, they are being asked to mutually negotiate the price for nursing the child in a respectful manner
 - 1. If they are not able to negotiate a mutually agreed upon compensation for nursing the child, then they are being told in the verse to outsource the breastfeeding to a wet nurse
 - a. We also learn from this verse that the child should not become a victim just because the parents cannot work it out [Sabuni]

7. Let the man of wealth provide according to his means. As for the one with limited resources, let him provide according to whatever Allah has given him. Allah does not require of any soul beyond what He has given it. After hardship, Allah will bring about ease.

- a. The husband provides for his wife according to his means and ability, so the rich man according to whatever he can afford and the poor man according to whatever he can afford. There is nothing required of them beyond that [Sabuni]
- b. At the end of the verse, Allah tells us that there is ease after going through hardship
 - i. It is mentioned in the context of divorce because it is a difficult thing to go through, thus, we are being reminded that eventually ease will come after this difficult time
 - ii. There is hope in this verse for the poor in that the doors of provision will [eventually] be opened for them. Many of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) were poor and going through financial hardship but then Allah eventually poured wealth on them and opened for them conquests of other countries [Sabuni]

8. 'Imagine' how many societies rebelled against the commandments of their Lord and His messengers, so We called each 'society' to a severe account and subjected them to a horrible punishment.

- a. Now, Allah gives examples of past nations who rebelled against Him and His messengers in order to warn us from disobeying Him and transgressing His limits. The 'horrible punishment' were various forms of hideous punishments which totally eradicated them [Sabuni]
 - i. Those societies rebelled out of arrogant disobedience so they were destroyed
- b. This is being mentioned after the discussion on divorce because to remind the couple to not be arrogantly disobedient towards His commands during the divorce proceedings

9. So they tasted the evil consequences of their doings, and the outcome of their doings was 'total' loss.

- a. The punishment was only a result of their own evil deeds. In the end, there was only loss for them in this life and the hereafter [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

10. Allah has ‘also’ prepared for them a severe punishment. So fear Allah, O people of reason and faith. Allah has indeed revealed to you a Reminder,

- a. The ‘severe punishment’ is in reference to the perpetual punishment of hellfire for them [Sabuni]
- b. The ‘people of reason and faith’ are those believers who think clearly, ponder, and are of sound intellect
 - i. They are being asked to consider the situation of those punished so that they do not behave like them and remain obedient to His commands [My comment]
- c. The ‘Reminder’ is in reference to the Qur’an because it contains warnings, reminders, and advice [Sabuni]

11. ‘and sent’ a messenger reciting to you Allah’s revelations, making things clear so that He may bring those who believe and do good out of darkness and into light. And whoever believes in Allah and does good, He will admit him into gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein forever. Allah will have indeed granted him an excellent provision.

- a. In the previous verse, Allah said He sent down to us the Qur’an as a reminder and then immediately after in this verse talked about sending the Messenger (pbuh) to make things clear. This shows that the Qur’an and the sunnah are inseparable. The Prophet’s (pbuh) role in all of this must be acknowledged and cannot be denied
- b. The ‘darkness’ in the verse is in reference to disbelief and the ‘light’ is in reference to having faith. This is because evidence of disbelief is darkness, whereas, proofs of belief are clear [Sabuni]
- c. Having belief alone without doing good deeds, as ordained by Allah, is not a good thing. This is why Allah highlights here that the Qur’an and sunnah will bring into light those who believe and do good deeds. If someone only believes but does not follow it up with doing good deeds, then he/she is not considered abiding by Allah’s commands
- d. The plural ‘gardens’ is used because each individual, who believes and does good, will get multiple gardens not just one
- e. In this life, our provisions are restricted but in paradise it is not like that at all because the provisions there never end

12. Allah is the One Who created seven heavens ‘in layers’, and likewise for the earth. The ‘divine’ command descends between them so you may know that Allah is Most Capable of everything and that Allah certainly encompasses all things in ‘His’ knowledge.

- a. Allah ends the *surah* by explaining the effects of His power in that He created the heavens and earth with proficiency and originality [Sabuni]
- b. There are seven earths, just like the seven heavens above us, but this is from the *mutashaabihaat* [elusive] verses so we do not know what it means
 - i. Some said the phrase ‘likewise for the earth’ means that He created the earth with proficiency and originality just like the heavens. Others took it literally and said that the earth is also created in seven layers, however, the difference being that the layers of the heavens have an empty space between them but the layers of the earth do not [Sabuni]

- c. There are two opinions on what the phrase ‘divine’ command’ refers to [Ibn Jawzi]:
 - i. It is in reference to the decree of Allah and destiny over all things. This is the majority view
 - ii. It is in reference to revelation
- d. The verse ends with Allah telling us that He is informing us of the above so we may know that He has power over all things and that nothing is hidden from Him whether in the heavens or on earth [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer* and Ibn Jawzi]