

69135 - Are women included in the verse in which Allaah says: “And give not unto the foolish your property”?

the question

"And give not unto the foolish your property which Allah has made a means of support for you, but feed and clothe them therewith, and speak to them words of kindness and justice." (Surah Nisa, Verse 5) According to Ibn Kathir's tafsir, this verse about not giving money to the "foolish" refers to women and children. I feel that it is saying husbands should not give money to their wives to spend or should not give their income to their wives to spend because they are foolish and unwise. Is this true or have I taken the meaning out of context? Can you please explain the meaning of this verse to me, as it's worrying me a lot.

Detailed answer

Some of the commentators say that the word *sufaha'* (translated here as “foolish”) refers to women, but this is not correct. Rather what is meant by *safeeh* (sing. of *sufaha'*) is one who is not able to dispose of money in a proper way, whether male or female. That includes the insane, young children and adult men or women who not able to dispose of money in a proper way, rather they waste it and spend it on things that do not benefit them.

Some of the *mufasssireen* refuted the view that this refers to women, and regarded it is far-fetched both in linguistic and *shar'i* terms.

With regard to the linguistic aspect, they say that (foolish) women are not described as *sufaha'*, rather the terms used are *safaa'ih* or *safeehaat*.

With regard to the *shar'i* aspect, the *mutawaatir* texts of the Qur'aan and Sunnah clearly show that women may possess wealth and deal with it, buying, selling and renting, whilst husbands are still obliged to give their wives maintenance in order to look after the house. When Abu Sufyaan withheld maintenance from his wife and she complained to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told

her: “Take what is sufficient for you and your child on a reasonable basis.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2097; Muslim, 1714.

Al-Qurtubi said:

The scholars differed concerning who these suhafa’ (the foolish) are. It was narrated that Sa’eed ibn Jubayr said: They are the orphans; do not give them your wealth. Al-Nahhaas said: This is one of the best suggestions concerning this verse. Ismaa’eel ibn Abi Khaalid narrated that Abu Maalik said: They are young children; do not give them your wealth lest they waste it and you are left with nothing. Sufyaan narrated from Humayd al-A’raj that Mujaahid said: They are women. Al-Nahhaas and others said: This view is not valid, rather the Arabs describe (foolish) women as safaa’ih or safeehaat... Abu Moosa al-Ash’ari (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: Sufaha’ here refers to everyone who deserves to be prevented from disposing of his own affairs.

Tafseer al-Qurtubi, 5/28

Ibn Jareer al-Tabari (may Allaah have mercy on him) narrated a number of comments made by the mufasssireen (commentators) concerning this verse, including the view that what is meant is women, then he said:

The correct view concerning the meaning of this verse in our opinion is that the meaning of this phrase, “And give not unto the foolish your property”, is general, and Allaah did not single out any one kind of foolish person. So it is not permissible for anyone to give a foolish person his wealth, whether he is a young boy or an old man, male or female. The foolish person to whom it is not permissible for his guardian to give him his wealth is the one who deserves to be prevented from disposing of his own affairs because his behaviour of wasting his wealth and not handling it properly.

As for the view of those who say that sufaha’ (the foolish) refers specifically to women, he is interpreting the language inappropriately. End quote.

Tafseer al-Tabari, 3/249

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmaan al-Sa’di (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Sufaha’ is the plural of safeeh, and refers to one who does not deal with money properly, either because he is of unsound mind, like one who is insane or feeble-minded, etc, or because he is immature, like a young child. Allaah has forbidden guardians to give these people their wealth lest they spoil it or waste it, because Allaah has made this wealth a means of looking after their spiritual and worldly interests, and these people cannot take good care of it. End quote.

Tafseer al-Sa’di, p. 130, 131

Thus it is clear that there is nothing wrong with a man giving money to his wife to spend on the house, if she is mature and wise and is able to handle the money properly.

And Allaah knows best.