

Primary Source Packet

1. Religious Text, Women Sura

This Sura (or chapter) of the Qur'an, known as *al-Nisa'* or "Women," details a variety of legal rights and restrictions for Muslims in the realm of marriage, inheritance, and other male-female relationships. Containing verses on polygamy, property maintenance, and child custody, it is one of the foundation chapters for the development of *sharia*, or Islamic law, vis-à-vis women's legal rights, behavior, and treatment.

Source: The Noble Qur'an, <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/>

004.003

YUSUFALI: If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, Marry women of your choice, Two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.

PICKTHAL: And if ye fear that ye will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only) or (the captives) that your right hands possess. Thus it is more likely that ye will not do injustice.

SHAKIR: And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one or what your right hands possess; this is more proper, that you may not deviate from the right course.

004.004

YUSUFALI: And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, Take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.

PICKTHAL: And give unto the women (whom ye marry) free gift of their marriage portions; but if they of their own accord remit unto you a part thereof, then ye are welcome to absorb it (in your wealth).

SHAKIR: And give women their dowries as a free gift, but if they of themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment and with wholesome result.

004.011

YUSUFALI: Allah (thus) directs you as regards your Children's (Inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half. For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each, if the deceased left children; if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third; if the deceased Left brothers (or sisters) the mother has a sixth. (The distribution in all cases ('s) after the payment of legacies and debts. Ye know not whether your parents or your children are nearest to you in benefit. These are settled portions ordained by Allah; and Allah is All-

knowing, All-wise.

PICKTHAL: Allah chargeth you concerning (the provision for) your children: to the male the equivalent of the portion of two females, and if there be women more than two, then theirs is two-thirds of the inheritance, and if there be one (only) then the half. And to each of his parents a sixth of the inheritance, if he have a son; and if he have no son and his parents are his heirs, then to his mother appertaineth the third; and if he have brethren, then to his mother appertaineth the sixth, after any legacy he may have bequeathed, or debt (hath been paid). Your parents and your children: Ye know not which of them is nearer unto you in usefulness. It is an injunction from Allah. Lo! Allah is Knower, Wise.

SHAKIR: Allah enjoins you concerning your children: The male shall have the equal of the portion of two females; then if they are more than two females, they shall have two-thirds of what the deceased has left, and if there is one, she shall have the half; and as for his parents, each of them shall have the sixth of what he has left if he has a child, but if he has no child and (only) his two parents inherit him, then his mother shall have the third; but if he has brothers, then his mother shall have the sixth after (the payment of) a bequest he may have bequeathed or a debt; your parents and your children, you know not which of them is the nearer to you in usefulness; this is an ordinance from Allah: Surely Allah is Knowing, Wise.

004.019

YUSUFALI: O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should ye treat them with harshness, that ye may Take away part of the dower ye have given them, except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good.

PICKTHAL: O ye who believe! It is not lawful for you forcibly to inherit the women (of your deceased kinsmen), nor (that) ye should put constraint upon them that ye may take away a part of that which ye have given them, unless they be guilty of flagrant lewdness. But consort with them in kindness, for if ye hate them it may happen that ye hate a thing wherein Allah hath placed much good.

SHAKIR: O you who believe! It is not lawful for you that you should take women as heritage against (their) will, and do not straiten them in order that you may take part of what you have given them, unless they are guilty of manifest indecency, and treat them kindly; then if you hate them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allah has placed abundant good in it.

004.034

YUSUFALI: Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you

all).

PICKTHAL: Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High, Exalted, Great.

SHAKIR: Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great.

2. Religious Text, Confederation Sura

This Sura (or chapter) of the Qur'an, known as *al-Ahzab*, or the "Confederation," is known for its many verses extolling modesty in women, as well as detailing aspects of ideal marriage. Because of its references directly to the wives of the Prophet Muhammad, there has been controversy over whether or not the restrictions it places on women's movement in the public sphere are to be universally applied. At the same time, this sura's assertion in the equality of men and women in the eyes of God makes it one of the most important and appealing chapters of the Qur'an.

Source: The Noble Qur'an, <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/>

033.033

YUSUFALI: And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance; and establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity; and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless.

PICKTHAL: And stay in your houses. Bedizen not yourselves with the bedizenment of the Time of Ignorance. Be regular in prayer, and pay the poor-due, and obey Allah and His messenger. Allah's wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folk of the Household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing.

SHAKIR: And stay in your houses and do not display your finery like the displaying of the ignorance of yore; and keep up prayer, and pay the poor-rate, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying.

033.035

YUSUFALI: For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are

patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in Charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise, for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.

PICKTHAL: Lo! men who surrender unto Allah, and women who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth, and men who persevere (in righteousness) and women who persevere, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard (their modesty), and men who remember Allah much and women who remember—Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward.

SHAKIR: Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women and the humble men and the humble women, and the almsgiving men and the almsgiving women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their private parts and the women who guard, and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember—Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward.

033.036

YUSUFALI: It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path.

PICKTHAL: And it becometh not a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His messenger have decided an affair (for them), that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair; and whoso is rebellious to Allah and His messenger, he verily goeth astray in error manifest.

SHAKIR: And it behoves not a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in their matter when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he surely strays off a manifest straying.

033.059

YUSUFALI: O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

PICKTHAL: O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad). That will be better, so that they may be recognized and not annoyed. Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

SHAKIR: O Prophet! say to your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they let down upon them their over-garments; this will be more proper,

that they may be known, and thus they will not be given trouble; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

3. Religious Text, Marriage Customs

The Hadith, or ways of the Prophet Muhammad, were collected upon his death from those who were close to him in life. Known as the Companions, these people played a key role in filling in the sayings and practices of Muhammad and his behaviors, recording them for future generations. Many of the key Companions to relay Hadith were Muhammad's wives, particularly 'A'isha bint Abu Bakr. In this collection, 'A'isha and other female Companions relay important hadith related to marriage, including the importance of the practice for the maintenance of Islam and the value of modesty in pious wives.

Source: Muhammad, Shaykh, Hisham Kabbani, and Leleh Bakhtiar. *Encyclopedia of Muhammad's Women Companions and the Traditions They Related*. Kazi Publications, 1998.

“Marriage is my way...”

AYISHA RELATED:

The Prophet said, ‘Marriage is my way, and one who does not follow me is not among my followers. It is necessary for my followers to marry, so that I will be proud of my community. It is also necessary for followers who can afford to marry as well as for those who cannot afford to marry to fast, as fasting can suppress sexual desire.’

ADULTERY

AYISHA RELATED:

God’s Messenger said, ‘O followers of Muhammad! There is none who has a greater sense of zeal than God. He has forbidden His male servant to commit illegal sexual intercourse and His female servant to commit illegal sexual intercourse. O followers of Muhammad! If you but knew what I know, you would laugh less and weep more.’

Wife Will Enter Paradise

UMM SALAMA RELATED:

She heard the Prophet say that when a woman died and her husband was happy with her, she would enter paradise.

4. Religious Text, Mosque Customs and Public Behavior

The Hadith, or ways of the Prophet Muhammad, were collected upon his death from those who were close to him in life. Known as the Companions, these people played a key role in filling in the sayings and practices of Muhammad and his behaviors, recording

them for future generations. Many of the Hadith collected from the female companions detailed the Prophet's ways concerning proper public behaviors. Topics such as how to act while attending prayers at the mosque and what women should do in sites of warfare laid out various standards for female behavior. These hadith, transmitted by the female Companions, illustrate the close relationships with women that Muhammad enjoyed during his life as well.

Source: Muhammad, Shaykh, Hisham Kabbani, and Leleh Bakhtiar. *Encyclopedia of Muhammad's Women Companions and the Traditions They Related*. Kazi Publications, 1998.

On the Returning of Women From Prescribed Prayer

UMM SALAMA RELATED:

When God's Messenger gave the salutations, he stayed for awhile. People thought that this meant that the women should leave sooner than the men.

Woman's Jihad

AYISHA RELATED:

She said to the Prophet that Muslims consider *jihad* as the best deed. The Prophet said, 'The best *jihad* for women is the prescribed pilgrimage.'

Struggle in God's Way for Women

AYISHA RELATED:

She asked the Prophet to permit her to participate in the struggle in God's Way. He said, "Your struggle is to perform the prescribed pilgrimage."

Women Participants [in warfare]

RUBAYYI BINT MUAUWIDH RELATED:

They were in the company of the Prophet providing the wounded with water and treating them and taking the martyred to Madinah [from the battlefield].

UMM ATIYA RELATED:

She took part with God's Messenger in seven battles. She would stay behind in the camp of the men, cook their food, treat the wounded and nurse the sick.

How much beauty can a woman display?

AYISHA RELATED:

Asma bint Abu Bakr, wearing thick clothes, arrived where God's Messenger was. God's Messenger turned away from her and said, 'O Asma, when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her that she display parts of her body except this and this,' and he pointed to her face and hands.

Menstruating Woman Should Not Go to the Mosque

UMM SALAMA RELATED:

God's Messenger entered the courtyard of the mosque and exclaimed with a loud voice, 'The mosque is lawful neither for a sexually defiled male nor a menstruating woman.'

5. Travel Narrative, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

In the 18th century, European travelers began to enjoy increased access to international destinations, and the Ottoman Empire was a particular favorite for many. In the travel narrative of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, we see a European woman attempting to reconcile her attraction toward the exotic harem of the Turks with her feelings of increased moral superiority as a Westerner. In narratives such as hers, we see the beginnings of a popular Western trend; the desire to denigrate Muslim institutions, such as the harem, in juxtaposition to Western notions of gender relations.

Source: Tappan, Eva March ed., In *Russia, Austria-Hungary, The Balkan States, and Turkey*, vol. 6 in *The World's Story: A History of the World in Story, Song, and Art*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914.

I was led into a large room, with a sofa the whole length of it, adorned with white marble pillars like a *ruelle*, covered with pale-blue figured velvet on a silver ground, with cushions of the same, where I was desired to repose till the Sultana appeared, who had contrived this manner of reception to avoid rising up at my entrance, though she made me an inclination of her head when I rose up to her. I was very glad to observe a lady that had been distinguished by the favor of an emperor, to whom beauties were every day presented from all parts of the world. But she did not seem to me to have ever been half so beautiful as the fair Fatima I saw at Adrianople; though she had the remains of a fine face, more decayed by sorrow than by time. But her dress was something so surprisingly rich, I cannot forbear describing it to you. She wore a vest called *donalma*, and which differs from a caftan by longer sleeves, and folding over at the bottom. It was of purple cloth, straight to her shape, and thick-set, on each side, down to her feet, and round the sleeves, with pearls of the best water, of the same size as their buttons commonly are. You must not suppose I mean as large as those of my Lord _____, but about the bigness of a pea; and to these buttons large loops of diamonds, in the form of those gold loops so common upon birthday coats. This habit was tied at the waist with two large tassels of smaller pearl, and round the arms embroidered with large diamonds: her shift fastened at the bottom with a great diamond, shaped like a lozenge; her girdle as broad as the broadest English ribbon, entirely covered with diamonds. Round her neck she wore three chains, which reached to her knees: one of large pearl, at the bottom of which hung a fine colored emerald, as big as a turkey-egg; another, consisting of two hundred emeralds, close joined together of the most lively green, perfectly matched, every one as large as a half-crown piece, and as thick as three crown pieces; and another of small emeralds, perfectly round. But her earrings eclipsed all the rest. They were two diamonds, shaped exactly like pears, as large as a big hazelnut. Round her *talpoche* she had four strings of pearl, the whitest and most perfect in the world, at least enough to make four necklaces, every one as large as the Duchess of Marlborough's, and of the same size, fastened with two roses, consisting of a large ruby for the middle stone, and round them twenty drops of clean diamonds to each. Beside this, her headdress was covered with bodkins of emeralds and diamonds. She wore large diamond bracelets, and had five rings on her fingers, all single diamonds,

(except Mr. Pitt's) the largest I ever saw in my life. It is for jewelers to compute the value of these things; but, according to the common estimation of jewels in our part of the world, her whole dress must be worth above a hundred thousand pounds sterling. This I am very sure of, that no European queen has half the quantity; and the Empress' jewels, though very fine, would look very mean near hers.

She gave me a dinner of fifty dishes of meat, which (after their fashion) were placed on the table, but one at a time, and thus extremely tedious. But the magnificence of her table answered very well to that of her dress. The knives were of gold, the hafts set with diamonds but the piece of luxury that gripped my eyes was the tablecloth and napkins, which were all tiffany, embroidered with silks and gold, in the finest manner, in natural flowers. It was with the utmost regret that I made use of these costly napkins, as finely wrought as the finest handkerchiefs that ever came out of this country. You may be sure that they were entirely spoiled before dinner was over. The sherbet (which is the liquor they drink at meals) was served in china bowls; but the covers and salvers were massy gold. After dinner, water was brought in a gold basin, and towels of the same kind as the napkins, which I very unwillingly wiped my hands upon; and coffee was served in china, with gold *sou-coupes*.

The Sultana seemed in very good humor, and talked to me with the utmost civility. I did not omit this opportunity of learning all that I possibly could of the *seraglio*, which is so entirely unknown among us. She never mentioned her husband without tears in her eyes, yet she seemed very fond of the discourse. "My past happiness," said she, "appears a dream to me. Yet I cannot forget that I was beloved by the greatest and most lovely of mankind. I was chosen from all the rest, to make all his campaigns with him; I would not survive him, if I was not passionately fond of my daughter. Yet all my tenderness for her was hardly enough to make me preserve my life. When I lost him, I passed a whole twelvemonth without seeing the light. Time has softened my despair; yet I now pass some days every week in tears, devoted to the memory of my husband."

There was no affectation in these words. It was easy to see she was in a deep melancholy, though her good humor made her willing to divert me. She asked me to walk in her garden, and one of her slaves immediately brought her a *pellice* of rich brocade lined with sables. I waited on her into the garden, which had nothing in it remarkable but the fountains; and from thence she showed me all her apartments. In her bed chamber her toilet was displayed, consisting of two looking-glasses, the frames covered with pearls, and her night talpoclte set with bodkins of jewels, and near it three vests of fine sables, every one of which is, at least, worth a thousand dollars (two hundred pounds English money). I don't doubt these rich habits were purposely placed in sight, but they seemed negligently thrown on the sofa. When I took my leave of her, I was complimented with perfumes, as at the grand vizier's, and presented with a very fine embroidered handkerchief. Her slaves were to the number of thirty, besides ten little ones, the eldest not above seven years old. These were the most beautiful girls I ever saw, all richly dressed; and I observed that the Sultana took a great deal of pleasure in these lovely children, which is a vast

expense; for there is not a handsome girl of that age to be bought under a hundred pounds sterling. They wore little garlands of flowers, and their own hair, braided, which was all their headdress; but their habits all of gold stuffs. These served her coffee, kneeling; brought water when she washed, etc. It is a great part of the business of the older slaves to take care of these girls, to teach them to embroider and serve them as carefully as if they were children of the family.

6. Poem, Abbasid-era

The Abbasid period is known as a time during which women's public roles became more restricted in the Muslim population (*umma*). With the conquest of Sasanian and Byzantine lands, Arabs incorporated ideals of cloistering females and eliminating them from political life, with many ramifications in women's daily lives. Moreover, strong patriarchal urges already ran through Arabian society, as the Qur'anic verses banning female infanticide testify. These verses, composed upon the death of a daughter, demonstrate the bittersweet public position of women in Abbasid society.

Source: Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

To Abu Hassan I offer condolences.
At times of disaster and catastrophe
God multiplies rewards for the patient.
To be patient in misery
Is equivalent to giving thanks for a gift.
Among the blessings of God undoubtedly
Is the preservation of sons
And the death of daughters.

7. Miracle Story, Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya

Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya from Basra was one of the most important founders of the mystical element of Islam, known as Sufism. The stories about her life and teachings illustrate a woman free from many of the traditional constraints placed on women's lives. In miracle stories such as this one, we see an essential element of Sufi thought: do not expect anything from God, but rather, recognize the larger greatness of the deity beyond your small existence.

Source: Helminski, Camille Adams. *Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure*. Boston: Shambala, 2003.

One day Rabi'a and her serving-girl were getting ready to break a fast of several days. The serving-girl needed an onion and was about to go next door and borrow one, but Rabi'a said: "Forty years ago I vowed never to ask for anything from anyone but God—we can do without onions."

Just then a bird flew over, and dropped an onion into Rabi'a's frying pan, peeled and ready to fry.

"Interesting but not convincing," she said. "Am I supposed to believe that God is an onion-vender? I mean, really."

That day they fried their bread without onions."

8. Poem, Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya

In these poetic lines by Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya, one of the most important founders of the mystical element of Islam, known as Sufism, we see an essential element of Sufi thought, the creation of which is often attributed to her: the ideal of divine love. Using the language of romance, Rabi'a's verses elevate the divinity of God, all the while evoking the most intense elements of human love. Moreover, these verses reassert a central Islamic tenant, that is, the unity of one sole deity.

Source: Helminski, Camille Adams. *Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure*. Boston: Shambala, 2003.

O God, Whenever I listen to the voice of anything
You have made—
The rustling of the trees
The trickling of water
The cries of birds
The flickering of shadow
The roar of the wind
The song of the thunder, I hear it saying:
"God is One!
Nothing can be compared with God!"

9. Official Document, Jewish Marriage Contract

Within the context of patriarchal societies, women are dependent upon their male relatives to look out for their best interests. In both Jewish and Muslim marriages, contracts have traditionally been drawn up, illustrating that a marriage is as much a familial contract as a union between two people. In Fatimid Cairo, Jewish families took

great pains to draw up ketubbot, or marriage contracts, that looked out for the financial and emotional interests of women. Many examples of such contracts were found in the Cairo Geniza, a treasure trove of documents that allowed historians, such as Shmuel Goitein, to reconstruct the world of Cairene Jewry living under Shi'a Islamic rule.

Source: Gotein, S.D.. A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967-1993.

I, Hezekiah, the bridegroom, will provide her with clothing, cover and food, supply all her needs, and wishes according to any ability and to the extent I can afford. I will conduct myself toward her with truthfulness and sincerity, with love and affection. I will not grieve nor oppress her and will let her have food, clothing and marital relations to the extent habitual among Jewish men... Sarwa ["Cypress," the bride] heard the words of Hezekiah and agreed to marry him and to be his wife and companion in purity, holiness, and fear of God, to listen to his words, to honor and hold him dear, to be his helper and to do in his house what a virtuous Jewish woman is expected to do, to conduct herself toward him with love and consideration, to be under his rule, and her desire will be toward him.

10. Architecture, Ayyubid and Ottoman

In the Islamic world, women were able to own and control their own property at a time when Christian women in Europe were unable to do so. Many wealthy women endowed public buildings as a mark of their piety. In these examples, we see the way that Ayyubid and Ottoman women used the endowment of public architecture to engage directly in public life. Built in their names and with their money, these buildings demonstrate the prestige some women were able to achieve in the era of the Islamic empires. The first image is of the Madrasa al-Sahiba in Damascus (1233), commissioned by Salah al-Din's sister Rabia Khatun. The second images, the Mausoleum of Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub in Cairo (1250), was commissioned by Salah al-Din's wife Shajarat al-Durr. The third image, the Haseki Hürrem Baths in Istanbul (1557), were commissioned by Hürrem Sultan, the wife of Sultan Suleyman I.



