

Surah 17. Al-Israa

Asad: Hence, do not kill your children for fear of poverty:³⁶ it is We who shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily, killing them is a great sin.

Malik: You shall not kill your children for fear of want, for it is We Who provide sustenance for them as well as for you; surely killing them is a great blunder.

Pickthall: Slay not your children, fearing a fall to poverty, We shall provide for them and for you. Lo! the slaying of them is great sin.

Yusuf Ali: Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you: verily the killing of them is a great sin. ²²¹⁴

Transliteration: Walā taqtuloo awladakum khashyata imlaqin nahnu narzuquhum waiyyakum inna qatlahum kana khiṭan kabeeran

Khattab:

Do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Surely killing them is a heinous sin.

Author Comments

36 - Historically, this may be a reference to the pre-Islamic Arabian custom of burying unwanted female children alive (see note [4] on {81:8-9}, as well as to the occasional - though much rarer - sacrifices of male children to some of their gods (see Zamakhshari's comments on [6:137](#)). Beyond this, however, the above prohibition has a timeless validity inasmuch as it relates also to abortions undertaken "for fear of poverty", i.e., on purely economic grounds.

2214 - The Arabs were addicted to female infanticide. In a society perpetually at war a son was a source of strength whereas a daughter was a source of weakness. Even now infanticide is not unknown in other countries for economic reasons. This crime against children's lives is here characterised as one of the greatest of sins.

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