

Surah 4. An-Nisaa

Asad: O YOU who have attained to faith! It is not lawful for you to [try to] become heirs to your wives [by holding onto them] against their will;¹⁷ and neither shall you keep them under constraint with a view to taking away anything of what you may have given them, unless it be that they have become guilty, in an obvious manner, of immoral conduct.¹⁸ And consort with your wives¹⁹ in a goodly manner; for if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike something which God might yet make a source of²⁰ abundant good.

Malik: O believers! It is not lawful for you consider women as a part of your inheritance and retain them against their will in order that you may force them to give up a part of the dowry you have given them, unless they are guilty of proven fornication. Treat them with kindness even if you dislike them; it is quite possible that you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good.

Pickthall: 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.

Yusuf Ali: 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.⁵²⁷

Transliteration: Ya ayyuha allatheena amanoo la yahillu lakum an tarithoo alInnisaa karhan wala taAAaduloohunna litathhaboo bibaAAadi ma ataytumoohunna illa an yateena bifahishatin mubayyinat in waAAashiroohunna bialmaAAroofi fain karihtumoohunna faAAasa an takrahoo shayan wayajAAala Allahu feehi khayran katheeran

Khatab:

O believers! It is not permissible for you to inherit women against their will¹ or mistreat them to make them return some of the dowry ?as a ransom for divorce?—unless they are found guilty of adultery.² Treat them fairly. If you happen to dislike them, you may hate something which Allah turns into a great blessing.

Author Comments

17 - According to one of the interpretations advanced by Zamakhshari, this refers to a man's forcibly keeping an unloved wife - and thus preventing her from marrying another man - in the hope of inheriting her property under the provisions specified in the first sentence of verse {12} above. Some authorities, however, are of the opinion that the meaning is: "It is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will"-thus expressing a prohibition of the pre-Islamic custom of inheriting the wives of deceased near relatives. But in view of the fact that Islam does not permit the "inheriting" of women under any circumstances (and not only "against their will"), the former interpretation is infinitely more plausible.

18 - In the event that a wife's immoral conduct has been proved by the direct evidence of four witnesses, as stipulated in verse {15} above, the husband has the right, on divorcing her, to demand the return of the whole or of part of the dower which he gave her at the time when the marriage was contracted. If - as is permissible under Islamic Law - the dower has not been actually handed over to the bride at the time of marriage but has taken the form of a legal obligation on the part of the husband, he is absolved of this obligation in the case of proven immoral conduct on the part of his wife

19 - Lit., "with them".

20 - Lit., "and God might place in it".

29010 -

For example, a man would prevent a female relative (such as his sister or mother) from getting married so he can secure her estate for himself.

29011 -

lit., blatant misconduct. If someone's wife has been found guilty of adultery, he has the right to ask for his dowry back.

527 - Among many nations, including Arabs in the Days of Ignorance, a step-son or brother took possession of a dead man's widow or widows along with his goods and chattels. This shameful custom is forbidden. See also iv. 22 below.

528 - Another trick, to detract from the freedom of married women was to treat them badly and force them to sue for a Khul'a divorce (see ii. 229, n. 258) or its equivalent in pre-Islamic custom, when the dower could be claimed back. This is also forbidden. Or the harshness may be exercised in another way: a divorced woman may be prevented by those who have control of her, from remarrying unless she remits her dower. All kinds of harshness are forbidden.

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