

Surah 4. An-Nisaa

Asad: And [forbidden to you are] all married women other than those whom you rightfully possess [through wedlock]:²⁶ this is God's ordinance, binding upon you. But lawful to you are all [women] beyond these, for you to seek out, offering them of your possessions,²⁷ taking them in honest wedlock, and not in fornication. And unto those with whom you desire to enjoy marriage, you shall give the cowers due to them; but you will incur no sin if, after [having agreed upon] this lawful due, you freely agree with one another upon anything [else]:²⁸ behold, God is indeed all-knowing, wise.

Malik: Also forbidden for you are married women, except those who have fallen in your hands as prisoners of war. This is the order of Allah relating to marriage prohibitions. All women other than these are lawful provided you seek them in marriage with gifts from your property (dowry), desiring chastity and not lust. Give them their dowry as an obligation for the benefit you have received from your marriage relationship. However, there is no blame on you if you change the agreement of dowry with mutual consent. Allah is the Knowledgeable, Wise.

Pickthall: And all married women (are forbidden unto you save those (captives) whom your right hands possess. It is a decree of Allah for you. Lawful unto you are all beyond those mentioned, so that ye seek them with your wealth in honest wedlock, not debauchery. And those of whom ye seek content (by marrying them), give unto them their portions as a duty. And there is no sin for you in what ye do by mutual agreement after the duty (hath been done). Lo! Allah is ever Knower, Wise.

Yusuf Ali: Also (prohibited are) women already married except those whom your right hands possess. Thus hath Allah ordained (prohibitions) against you: except for these all others are lawful provided ye seek (them in marriage) with gifts from your property desiring chastity not lust. Seeing that ye derive benefit from them give them their dowers (at least) as prescribed; but if after a dower is prescribed ye agree mutually (to vary it) there is no blame on you and Allah is All-Knowing All-Wise. **537 538 539**

Transliteration: Waalmuhsanatu mina alNnisai illa ma malakat aymanukum kitaba Allahi AAalaykum waohilla lakum ma waraa thalikum an tabtaghoo biamwalikum muhsineena ghayra musafiheena fama istamtaAAtum bihi minhunna faatoohunna ooorahunna fareedatan wala junaha AAalaykum feema taradaytum bihi min baAAadi alfareedati inna Allaha kana AAaleeman hakeeman
Khattab:

Also ?forbidden are? married women—except ?female? captives in your possession.¹ This is Allah's commandment to you. Lawful to you are all beyond these—as long as you seek them with your wealth in a legal marriage, not in fornication. Give those you have consummated marriage with their due dowries. It is permissible to be mutually gracious regarding the set dowry. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

Author Comments

26 - The term muhsanah signifies literally "a woman who is fortified [against unchastity]", and carries three senses: (1) "a married woman", (2) "a chaste woman", and (3) "a free woman". According to almost all the authorities, al-muhsanat denotes in the above context "married women". As for the expression ma malakat aymanukum ("those whom your right hands possess", i.e., "those whom you rightfully possess"), it is often

taken to mean female slaves captured in a war in god's cause (see in this connection [8:67](#), and the corresponding note). The commentators who choose this meaning hold that such slave-girls can be taken in marriage irrespective of whether they have husbands in the country of their origin or not. However, quite apart from the fundamental differences of opinion, even among the Companions of the Prophet, regarding the legality of such a marriage, some of the most outstanding commentators hold the view that *ma malakat aymanukum* denotes here "women whom you rightfully possess through wedlock"; thus Razi in his commentary on this verse, and Tabari in one of his alternative explanations (going back to 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, and others). Razi, in particular, points out that the reference to "all married women" (*al-muhsanat min an-nisa'*), coming as it does after the enumeration of prohibited degrees of relationship, is meant to stress the prohibition of sexual relations with any woman other than one's lawful wife.

27 - Lit., "with your possessions" - i.e., offering them, as the Law demands, an appropriate dower.

28 - Cf. verse {4} of this surah, and the corresponding note.

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A man was not allowed to have a relationship with a bondwoman who he had taken captive in war unless he made sure she was not pregnant. This was verified by her having at least one monthly cycle. See footnote for 4:3.

537 - Whom your right hands possess: i.e., captives.

538 - After defining the prohibited degrees, the verse proceeds to say that women other than those specified may be sought in marriage, but even so, not from motives of lust, but in order to promote chastity between the sexes. Marriage in the original Arabic is here described by a word which suggests a fortress (*hisn*): marriage is, therefore, the fortress of chastity.

539 - As the woman in marriage surrenders her person, so the man also must surrender at least some of his property according to his means. And this gives rise to the law of Dower. A minimum dower is prescribed, but it is not necessary to stick to the minimum, and in the new relationship created, the parties are recommended to act towards each other with the greatest confidence and liberality.

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