

among you. And if they testify,¹⁴⁶ confine them [i.e., the guilty women] to houses until death takes them or Allāh ordains for them [another] way.¹⁴⁷

16. And the two¹⁴⁸ who commit it [i.e., unlawful sexual intercourse] among you – punish [i.e., dishonor] them both. But if they repent and correct themselves, leave them alone. Indeed, Allāh is ever Accepting of repentance and Merciful.
17. The repentance accepted by Allāh is only for those who do wrong in ignorance [or carelessness] and then repent soon after. It is those to whom Allāh will turn in forgiveness, and Allāh is ever Knowing and Wise.
18. But repentance is not [accepted] of those who [continue to] do evil deeds up until, when death comes to one of them, he says, "Indeed, I have repented now," or of those who die while they are disbelievers. For them We have prepared a painful punishment.
19. O you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion.¹⁴⁹ And do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what you gave them¹⁵⁰ unless they commit a clear immorality [i.e., adultery]. And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them – perhaps you dislike a thing and Allāh makes therein much good.
20. But if you want to replace one wife with another and you have given one of them a great amount [in gifts], do not take [back] from it anything. Would you take it in injustice and manifest sin?

¹⁴⁶The witnesses must swear to actually having seen the act taking place.

¹⁴⁷The "other way" (i.e., penalty) was later revealed in 24:2, canceling the ruling in this verse.

¹⁴⁸Scholars differ over whether "the two" refers to two of the same sex (i.e., homosexuals) or those of opposite sexes. In either case, later rulings outlined in the *sunnah* have replaced this one.

¹⁴⁹The deceased man's heirs have no rights of marriage or otherwise over his widow.

¹⁵⁰At the time of marriage as *mahr*.

21. And how could you take it while you have gone in unto each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?
22. And do not marry those [women] whom your fathers married, except what has already occurred.¹⁵¹ Indeed, it was an immorality and hateful [to Allāh] and was evil as a way.
23. Prohibited to you [for marriage] are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your father's sisters, your mother's sisters, your brother's daughters, your sister's daughters, your [milk] mothers who nursed you, your sisters through nursing, your wives' mothers, and your step-daughters under your guardianship [born] of your wives unto whom you have gone in. But if you have not gone in unto them, there is no sin upon you. And [also prohibited are] the wives of your sons who are from your [own] loins, and that you take [in marriage] two sisters simultaneously, except for what has already occurred.¹⁵² Indeed, Allāh is ever Forgiving and Merciful.
24. And [also prohibited to you are all] married women except those your right hands possess.¹⁵³ [This is] the decree of Allāh upon you. And lawful to you are [all others] beyond these, [provided] that you seek them [in marriage] with [gifts from] your property, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse. So for whatever you enjoy [of marriage] from them, give them their due compensation¹⁵⁴ as an obligation. And there is no blame upon you for what you mutually agree to beyond the obligation. Indeed, Allāh is ever Knowing and Wise.
25. And whoever among you cannot [find] the means to marry free, believing women, then [he may marry] from those whom your right hands possess of believing slave girls. And Allāh is most

¹⁵¹Before Islām. After the ruling was revealed by Allāh, men were required to release those women unlawful to them (e.g., a stepmother, one of two sisters, or any wives over the limit of four). The same obligation applies to one once he has accepted Islām.

¹⁵²See previous footnote.

¹⁵³i.e., slaves or war captives who had polytheist husbands.

¹⁵⁴The *mahr*, a specified gift to the bride required of the man upon marriage.