

three days, except for one's spouse. On the authority of Zaynab bt. Umm Salama: Umm Ḥabība (the wife of the Prophet) reported that the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said: "It is not permissible for a Muslim woman believing in Allah and the Hereafter to mourn beyond three days, except for [the death of her] husband, [mourning for whom, as stated in Q 2:234, lasts] four months and ten days" (Bukhārī, Ṭalāq, al-kuḥl lil-ḥadda; Muslim, Ṭalāq, wujūb al-iḥdād fi 'iddat al-wafā');

Probity of reports from the Prophet's wives. For example, Abū Bakr b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān heard that Abū Hurayra (d. ca.60/680), Allah be well-pleased with them both, forbade fasting if one awoke ritually impure (*junub*, see RITUAL PURITY AND IMPURITY) without time to perform the major ritual ablution (*ghusl*) before the fast began. He did so because he had heard a hadith ("Whosoever finds the [time of the] morning prayer (*ḥajr*) in a state of major impurity, let him not observe the fast") which had later been abrogated, without hearing of its abrogation. Abū Bakr b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān narrates that he and his father sought out two wives of the Prophet, 'Ā'isha and Umm Salama, to inquire about the possibility of such a fast, and they both answered that indeed "the Prophet would awaken in the morning ritually impure, not due to a wet dream, and observe the fast..." Abū Hurayra then changed his position (for the full hadith, see Muslim, Ṣiyām, ṣiḥḥat ṣawm man ṭala'a 'alayh al-ḥajr wa huwa junub).

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**See also:** ABLUTION; ABODE; CALL TO PRAYER; FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD; FAMILY OF THE PROPHET; RITUAL PURITY AND IMPURITY; WIVES OF THE PROPHET, ALLAH BE PLEASED WITH THEM ALL.

NAJAH NADI AHMAD

## CHASTITY

'IFFA, IHṢĀN

The entry comprises of the following sections: i. Definitions; ii. Related concepts and themes; iii. Juristic discourse on *iḥṣān*; and iv. Bibliography.

### Definitions

Chastity in this article refers to the two Qur'ānic terms, *'iffa*, *iḥṣān*, respectively derived from the roots *'-f-f* and *ḥ-ṣ-n*. The former conveys the meaning of fortifying, immunity and protection and the latter denotes abstaining from shameful acts and, thus, denoting austerity and chastity. Four verses use the root *'-f-f*, implying the meaning of abstaining from an undesirable act. Seven forms of this root occur in 18 verses of which 14 refer to chastity. Abū al-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr al-Ifrīqī (630-711/1233-1312) says the root signifies a "barrier" and "al-ḥiṣn is every fortified place (*ḥaṣīm*) which is inaccessible, thus *ḥaṣṣantu al-qarya* means, "I fortified the town, when I built [a wall] around it".

In Q 21:91 and 66:12 Form IV of the verb is used for signifying that Maryam, Allah be well-pleased with her, protected her chastity (*aḥṣanat farjahā*). Q

24:33 uses the noun *taḥaṣṣun* for the desire of the slave girls to preserve their chastity: *Compel not your slave girls (fatayātikum) to whoredom in order that you may seek enjoyment of this world's life, if they desire to preserve chastity.* This verse was revealed when some of the slave girls of 'Abdullah b. Ubayy, the leader of the hypocrites in Madīna, complained to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, that their master was compelling them to prostitution (Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, 334-336).

Q 4:25 uses passive voice of Form IV verb for signifying the chastity of concubines: *When they are given protection (fa-idhā 'uḥṣinna), if they commit lewdness, they shall incur half the punishment (prescribed) for free women (muḥṣanāt).* For free women, this verse uses the word *muḥṣanāt*, plural of the passive participle *muḥṣana*, which literally means “the one who is protected”. Al-Rāzī interprets the phrase *fa-idhā 'uḥṣinna* in Q 4:25 to mean “when they become Muslim”. However, the exegetes generally have interpreted it as “when they are married” (Abū Ḥayyān; Ibn al-Jawzī; Qurṭubī). The first part of the verse uses the same noun for free women in contradistinction to slave girls: *And whoever among you is not able to afford to marry free (muḥṣanāt), believing women, let them marry of those believing maidens (fatayāt) whom your right hands own.* This was because freedom was deemed a barrier against indulging in illicit sex (*zinā*) (see ADULTERY AND FORNICATION).

Q 24:4 uses the word *muḥṣanāt* for chaste women, irrespective of whether they are married or not: *Those who accuse chaste women [of fornication] but do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty lashes, and do not admit their testimony ever after; they are indeed rebellious.* In Q 24:23 it is used in the meaning of chaste women: *Those who accuse chaste believing women who are unaware, cursed are they in this world and hereafter. Theirs shall be an awful doom.* Abū al-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Jawzī (510-597/ca.1116-1200) glosses this latter verse in the following words: “*Those who accuse muḥṣanāt (chaste) believing women who are unaware (of lewdness), cursed are they in this world (with the punishment of lashes) and hereafter (with the punishment of fire)*”. Abū Ḥayyān Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Andalusī (d. 745/1344) points out that the word *iḥṣān* is used for the protection given to the character of a woman by freedom, chastity, Islam or marriage (see MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE) and that the various instances of the use of this word in the Qurʾān should be interpreted according to the context in which they appear (*Baḥr*; sub Q 4:24). Al-Rāzī explains that all four aspects commonly share the original literal meaning of *iḥṣān* which is “protection”. Thus, freedom protects a person from

the enforcement of the commands of another person, chastity protects a person from initiating an undesirable act, Islam protects a person from many acts instigated by whims and lust, and a husband and a wife mutually protect each other from various things, including falling into illicit relationships.

Q 4:24 uses the word *muḥṣinīn*, plural of the active participle *muḥṣin*—literally meaning ‘the one who protects’—for men who enter into a marital relationship with a woman for preservation of chastity: *And lawful for you are all women besides those mentioned so that you seek them with your wealth desiring chastity (muḥṣinīn), not lewdness (ghayra musāfilīn).* Q 5:5 adds another phrase: *when you give them their due [dowery] desiring chastity, not lewdness, nor taking them for paramours (muttakhidhī 'akhdān).* Q 4:25 uses a similar construct for women: *Marry them [the slave girls] by permission of their folk and give them their due [dowery] justly, when they desire chastity (muḥṣanāt), not lewdness (ghayra musāfilhāt), nor taking them as paramours (muttakhidhātī 'akhdān).* Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923), the master exegete of the third/ninth century, explains the difference between two kinds of illicit actions: “In Jāhiliyya, *al-zawānī* (women who commit *zinā*) were those who would openly commit *zinā* (*al-mu'lināt bil-zinā*), while *al-muttakhidhāt al-'akhdān* were those who would confine themselves to a friend or paramour secretly, not openly” (sub Q 4:25). He cites the statement of Ibn 'Abbās, Allah be well-pleased with him and his father, to this effect and relates it with the prohibition of open or concealed lewdness: “The people of Jāhiliyya would disdain open *zinā*, but would permit it if it was done secretly, as they would say: ‘it is condemnable if it is done openly, but there is nothing wrong with it if it done secretly.’ And about this, Allah Most High and Blessed revealed: *Come not nigh to lewdness, whether open or secret* [Q 6:151].”

Q 5:5 uses the word *muḥṣanāt* for Muslim women as well as for some of the women from among the People of the Book (*q.v.*): *Chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among the people to whom the Book has been given before you [are permitted for you] when you give them their due (dowery) desiring chastity, not lewdness, nor taking them for paramours.* The context here apparently suggests the meaning of ‘chaste women’ although some of the exegetes prefer the meaning of ‘free women’. Abū Ḥayyān explains this in the following manner:

*Iḥṣān* is by Islam and marriage, but none of