

CHAPTER
10

Section 1

PRIMARY SOURCE *from the Qur'an*

The Qur'an is the holy book of the Muslims. Written in classical Arabic, it is divided into 114 surahs, or chapters. According to Muslim tradition, the Qur'an contains revelations from Allah that were transmitted through the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad. What does the following passage from Surah 4 of the Qur'an tell you about Islamic views on the rights of men and women?

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Give the orphans their property, and do not exchange the corrupt for the good; and devour not their property with your property; surely that is a great crime. . . .

But do not give to fools their property that God has assigned to you to manage; provide for them and clothe them out of it, and speak to them honourable words. Test well orphans, until they reach the age of marrying; then, if you perceive in them right judgment, deliver to them their property; consume it not wastefully and hastily ere they are grown. If any man is rich, let him be abstinent; if poor, let him consume in . . . reason.

And when you deliver to them their property, take witnesses over them; God suffices for a reckoner.

To the men a share of what parents and kinsmen leave, and to the women a share of what parents and kinsman leave, whether it be little or much, a share apportioned; and when the division is attended by kinsmen and orphans and the poor, make provision for them out of it, and speak to them honorable words. . . .

Do not covet that whereby God in bounty has preferred one of you above another. To the men a share from what they have earned, and to the women a share from what they have earned. And ask God of His bounty; God knows everything. . . .

Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that God has preferred in bounty

one of them over another, and for that they have expended of their property. Righteous women are therefore obedient, guarding the secret for God's guarding. . . .

If a woman fear rebelliousness or aversion in her husband, there is no fault in them if the couple set things right between them; right settlement is better; and souls are very prone to avarice. If you do good and are godfearing, surely God is aware of the things you do.

You will not be able to be equitable between your wives, be you ever so eager; yet do not be altogether partial so that you leave her as it were suspended. If you set things right, and are godfearing, God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate. But if they separate, God will enrich each of them of His plenty; God is All-embracing, All-wise.

from Arthur J. Arberry, The Koran Interpreted, Vol. 1 (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1955), 100-106, 119-120. Reprinted in Peter N. Stearns, ed., Documents in World History, Vol. 1 (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 101-106.

Discussion Questions

1. **Recognizing Facts and Details** Imagine you have to raise three orphans and manage their property according to the Qur'an.
 - a. When should you give them their property?
 - b. What should you do if one of them is mentally incompetent—a "fool"?
2. **Making Inferences** What can you infer from this passage about the rights of men and women? Explain your answer.