

Sura 65: Al-Talaq (Divorce)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 12:

1. *Prophet, when any of you intend to divorce women, do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period can properly start, and count (accurately), their prescribed periods. And be conscious of God your Lord. Do not evict them from their houses, nor shall they (themselves) leave, except in case they are guilty of manifest immoral conduct. These are limits set by God; whoever transgresses the limits of God, has indeed wronged himself. You never know, God may afterward bring about a new situation.*
2. *Then, when they have reached their appointed term, take them back in kindness or part from them in kindness, and call to witness two just men among you, and keep your testimony upright for God. Whoso believes in God and the Last Day is exhorted to heed this. God will find a way out for he who remains conscious of Him.*
3. *And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whosoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him. God brings His command to pass. God has set a measure for everything.*
4. *As for those of your women who have reached menopause, if you have any doubts, their term shall be three months – and also for those who have not yet menstruated. As for those who are pregnant, their period shall be till they have delivered. And whosoever remains conscious of God, He will make his course easy for him.*
5. *This is God's command, which He has sent down to you; and whoever remains conscious of God, God will absolve him of his bad deeds and will magnify his reward.*
6. *Lodge them where you dwell, according to your means, and do not harass them in order to oppress them. And if they are pregnant, then spend on them till they give birth. Then, if they breast feed for you, then give them their due payment and consult together in kindness; but if you make difficulties for one another, then let some other woman breast feed for him.*
7. *Let the man of means spend according to his means; and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what God has given him. God does not burden any soul beyond what He has given it. After a difficulty, God will soon bring relief.*
8. *And how many a community revolted against the ordinance of its Lord and His messengers, and We called it to a stern account and punished it with dire torment.*
9. *Then they tasted the bad consequences of their conduct, and the end of their conduct was perdition.*
10. *God has prepared for them a severe torment (in the Hereafter). Therefore, O you are possessors of intellect who have believed be conscious of God. God has indeed sent down to you a reminder.*

11. *A messenger who recites to you the revelations of God, clear and distinct, that He may bring those who believe and do good deeds from darkness into light. And whosoever believes in God and does good deeds, He will bring him into gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to abide forever. God has given him excellent provision.*
12. *God is He who created seven heavens and of the earth the like thereof. The commandment comes down among them slowly, that you may know that God has power over everything, and that God has indeed encompassed all things in knowledge. (65: 1-12)*

In this Sura, rules to be followed during the process of divorce are explained. Some of the rules governing divorce were mentioned in Surat Al-Baqarah (Chapter 2). This Sura also outlines the rights of the divorcees.

“Prophet, when any of you intend to divorce women, do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period can properly start, and count (accurately), their prescribed periods. And be conscious of God your Lord. Do not evict them from their houses, nor shall they (themselves) leave, except in case they are guilty of manifest immoral conduct. These are limits set by God; whoever transgresses the limits of God, has indeed wronged himself. You never know, God may afterward bring about a new situation.” To emphasize the gravity of the matter the command was directed to the Prophet (PBUH), but it also applies to all Muslims. The verse indicates that a man cannot divorce his wife during her monthly period. It has been narrated that ‘Umar (RA) told the Prophet (PBUH) that his son Ibn ‘Umar (RA) divorced his wife while she was menstruating. The Prophet (PBUH) was angry and he commanded ‘Umar (RA) to tell his son to bring her back until she becomes clean. They should wait until she has had her period another time and becomes clean again. If he still wanted a divorce, then he should not touch her before he could have the divorce. This is the meaning of the waiting period. This is an attempt to give a chance for people to think things over; it may be that they change their minds. The parties should keep account of the waiting period so that the woman would not be treated unjustly. During this waiting period women should remain in their homes. Men should not evict them and they should not leave the houses unless it has been proven that the woman has committed an open lewdness. During this period the woman would still live in the house however, there will be no intimate relationship between the couple. The ruling provides an opportunity for the parties to deal with their differences. However, in case a gross and open indecency has occurred then the woman should leave the house. Her presence in the house after such incident will produce an acrimonious atmosphere and will cause the differences to escalate not to abate.

These are the limits set by God. He who transgresses these limits has indeed wronged himself. This is a very stern warning for those who transgress. However, who knows, the situation may change and the couple may be able to reconcile their differences. This is the rationale behind the requirement that the woman should stay at home during the waiting period.

“Then, when they have reached their appointed term, take them back in kindness or part from them in kindness, and call to witness two just men among you, and keep your testimony upright for God. Whoso believes in God and the Last Day is exhorted to heed this. God will find a way out for he who remains conscious of Him.” This is the second stage in the divorce process. If the husband changed his mind before the waiting period has ended, then they can go back and resume their married life together. But once the waiting period has ended then the divorce has taken place. If he changed his mind after that, they can only go back to resume their married life together with a new marriage contract. Whether they go back to resume their married life according to the above mentioned conditions or they continue with the divorce procedure they should do that amicably. In both cases, the decision should be witnessed by two just men so that the decision would be publicly known. This testimony is for God; He is a witness on the transaction. The believers are exhorted to abide by these rules. God will find a way out of the difficulty that faces those who remain conscious of Him. God will also provide for them from wherever they do not expect. This promise provides an incentive to the believers to abide by the rules decreed for the divorce process. It is difficult to ensure the application of the rules decreed by God without exercising God consciousness, *“And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whosoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him. God brings His command to pass. God has set a measure for everything.”* God has set a measure for everything; what happens, when it happens, where it happens, and how it happens? Everything that happens in this universe is well planned. The rules governing the divorce process are part of this well planned universe and should be observed meticulously.

“As for those of your women who have reached menopause, if you have any doubts, their term shall be three months – and also for those who have not yet menstruated. As for those who are pregnant, their period shall be till they have delivered. And whosoever remains conscious of God, He will make his course easy for him. This is God’s command, which He has sent down to you; and whoever remains conscious of God, God will absolve him of his bad deeds and will magnify his reward.” These verses determine the length of the waiting period for the women who have reached menopause and those who have not yet menstruated. Their waiting period is three months. Delivery signals the end of the waiting period for those who are pregnant. Then the verses bring a promise for those who remain conscious of God; God will make their course easy for them. Ease of life is a great blessing from God and it is the ultimate goal for any one. The verses again remind people that these are God’s commands revealed specifically for the believers so that they obey them. Two more promises are made; those who remain God conscious are promised a wide forgiveness for their previous sins and a great reward from God. It is a general statement and a generous offer. Mentioning these promises in connection with the divorce process is an incentive for people to be conscious of God during the whole process.

“Lodge them where you dwell, according to your means, and do not harass them in order to oppress them. And if they are pregnant, then spend on them till they give birth. Then, if they breast feed for you, then give them their due payment and consult together in kindness; but if you make difficulties for one another, then let some other woman breast feed for him.” This is the last rule regarding the dwelling of the divorcees and their financial rights. A man should lodge his divorcee in a home of the same class as the home that he himself lives in, with the caveat that it should be within his means. Men should not lodge their divorcees during the waiting period in inferior dwellings, nor are they allowed to harass them. Although men should provide for their divorcees during the waiting period according to their means but the provisions for the pregnant women are specifically mentioned; indicating that the provision has to continue until delivery has taken place.

Breast feeding is not an obligation on the mother and she should be amply remunerated if she chose to breast feed her baby. They should maintain an amicable atmosphere, otherwise someone else should breast feed the baby. The parents were commanded to consult together regarding the affairs of the baby. The child has been entrusted to their care; they should not let the conflict between them affect the interest of the child.

Men are required to spend according to their means. God does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. He is the Provider so both the man and the woman should be considerate in their requirements, *“Let the man of means spend according to his means; and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what God has given him. God does not burden any soul beyond what He has given it.”* Another ray of hope is shown, *“After a difficulty, God will soon bring relief.”* God has the ultimate power in bringing relief, so people should remain conscious of Him.

The Sura concludes with a lesson from the history of those who committed tyranny against God and His messengers in the past. They neither listened nor did they obey. The verses remind the people of the consequence of tyranny against God. They also remind the believers of the blessings that God bestowed on them in His revelation by detailing the rules that should govern their lives and allows them to lead a decent life, *“And how many a community revolted against the ordinance of its Lord and His messengers, and We called it to a stern account and punished it with dire torment.”* A dire punishment awaits those who revolt against God and His messengers. This is God’s rule that does not change. The consequences are then detailed, *“Then they tasted the bad consequences of their conduct, and the end of their conduct was perdition. God has prepared for them a severe torment (in the Hereafter).”* Let us stop for a moment and reflect on this warning. Every nation that revolted against God and His messenger was seized and received a painful punishment. This warning is mentioned here after the divorce process has been described. This implies that there is a connection between the two. One may conclude that divorce is not a private matter between two individuals, but it is a matter that concerns the whole society. The Muslim nation as a whole is responsible for upholding God’s command regarding

divorce. A nation that does not abide by the rules decreed by God is a nation that has revolted against God. God's commands were decreed to organize the way of life of people. A nation that does not apply these commands is warned by a dire punishment. The nations that were punished in the past received its punishment in this life, but there is more severe punishment that awaits them in the Hereafter.

An address is directed to the people of understanding, those whose understanding guided them to believe in God, *“Therefore, O you are possessors of intellect who have believed be conscious of God. God has indeed sent down to you a reminder.”* God has brought down a reminder. This reminder is being recited to you by His Messenger, *“A messenger who recites to you the revelations of God, clear and distinct, that He may bring those who believe and do good deeds from darkness into light. And whosoever believes in God and does good deeds, He will bring him into gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to abide forever. God has given him excellent provision.”* This reminder was passed to them through the Messenger (PBUH), however the contents of the revelation were delivered intact and did not suffer any distortion through the process of transmission by the Messenger (PBUH). The verse may also imply that the person of the Messenger (PBUH) has been transformed into a form of the remembrance of God. The Messenger (PBUH) was a living example of the revelation. It has been narrated that ‘Aisha (RA) described the Prophet (PBUH) by saying, *“His character was the Quran.”* This reminder brings the blessings of light, guidance, and righteousness, in addition to a great reward in the Hereafter, and a promise of excellent provision. God is the Provider. He will provide in this life as well as in the Hereafter. The provision in the Hereafter is the best of provision.

“God is He who created seven heavens and of the earth the like thereof. The commandment comes down among them slowly, that you may know that God has power over everything, and that God has indeed encompassed all things in knowledge.” We have no way of knowing what is meant by the seven heavens and the seven earths. There is no need to dwell on conjectures regarding these verses. We focus here on the impact of such verses on the process of belief. God decrees His commands from high above to be obeyed. We can glean two lessons from this verse. The first is that God is Omniscient. His knowledge has encompassed everything. He is the one who decrees the rules and set the limits. He knows that these are the best rules to deal with the conflict between a husband and a wife. The second lesson is that the only guarantee that not only the letter but also the spirit of the rules would be implemented is for people to be conscious of God.