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ISLAM & THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE: FAMILY PLANNING

WOMEN IN ISLAM SERIES



MUSLIMS FOR
PROGRESSIVE VALUES



What is Family Planning?

The ability and right of individuals and couples to plan and attain their desired number of children, including the desire to have no children, and the spacing and timing of their births if they chose to have children, and the age at which they wish to have children.

Family Planning includes

Contraception

**Pre Conception
Counseling**

Sex Education

**Infertility
Management**

STI Prevention

**Comprehensive Sex
Education**



Family Planning in the Qur'an

The Qur'an does not specifically mention family planning or the use of birth control. Without the direct mention of a subject, we can therefore make assumptions based on analogies or similarities within the Qur'an.

And we have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parent. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years.

Quran 31:14

Breastfeeding infants as method of birth spacing is mentioned 14 times in the Qur'an, including in verses 31:14, 2:233, and 46:15. The Qur'an's mention of breastfeeding an infant for two years (or 33 months including pregnancy and breast feeding), emphasizes the importance of this period to ensure the health of both the mother and the infant. Emphasis on this measurement of time indicates the approval and acceptability of birth spacing and therefore family planning to ensure the health of both the mother and the infant.



THE ROLE OF GOD'S WILL IN FAMILY PLANNING

In analyzing the Qur'an and the Sunnah, one of the foundations for understanding the permissibility of contraception that the scholars identified was the oneness of God and the power associated with Them. One Hadith demonstrating this states:

"Even if you spill the seed from which a child was meant to be born on a rock, God will bring forth from that rock a child"

This thinking was in direct contrast to the thinking of those in Jewish and Christian circles who saw the "spilling of a seed" as a sinful act. Rather, Muslims believe that the gap between the intention to avoid (or desire for) pregnancy and the actual realization of that intention is the result of God's will.



Family Planning in the Hadith

According to the Hadith, the companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) practiced "azl", nowadays referred to as "the pull out method", as a means of preventing pregnancy.

"We [the Companions of the Prophet saw] used to practise al-azl during the time of the Prophet (SAW) while the Qur'an was being revealed."

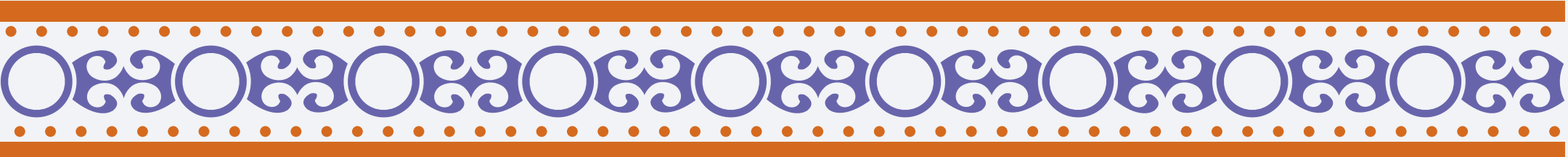
Authenticated by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja and Ibn Hanbal.

When the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) approached him to ask for permission, he did not forbid it nor was a verse revealed from the Qur'an prohibiting this practice. The fact that the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) practice *al-azl* with the knowledge and approval of the Prophet (PBUH), demonstrates to Islamic theologians and scholars that *al-azl* is a permissible practice for the prevention of pregnancy.



DOESN'T THIS MEAN THAT AL-AZL IS THE ONLY PERMITTED FORM OF BIRTH CONTROL?

Because modern forms of birth control didn't exist in the time of the Prophet (PBUH) or the revelations of the Qur'an, we must rely on the use of *qiyas*. *Qiyas*, a tool of Islamic jurisprudence, extends the ruling from an original case to a new case. Using *qiyas*, scholars and theologians have ruled that modern methods of contraception are also allowed as long as they are used with the same intention of *al-azl*, to prevent pregnancy. Additionally, these modern methods of contraception are often safer and more effective than *al-azl*, making them the better choice for safe sexual relations.



Justifiable Reasons for Contraception

Avoid health risks to a breastfeeding child

Inability of responsible parenthood

Avoid health risks to a breastfeeding mother

Avoid health risks to a mother from short birth intervals

Avoid economic hardships of caring for a large family

Allow for the proper education and rearing of children

Avoid pregnancy in an already sick wife

Avoid health risks to the mother from repeated pregnancies

Avoid transmission of disease from parents to children

Avoid health risks to a potential fetus



Quality of Life vs Quantity of Lives

Islamic Jurisprudence, in both the Qur'an and Hadith, consistently elevates the quality of life of an individual over the quantity of individuals in the Muslim community and in a Muslim family. The Qur'an specifically states that God does not wish to burden Muslims with the notion that the size of a Muslim family is more important than the health and wellbeing of the individuals. Likewise, achieving quality of life is one of the main objectives as directed by Islamic jurisprudence. Muslims are called to overcome hardships but also to enhance their life, preserve stability, and strive to honestly and virtuously achieve their hopes and their aspirations as a way to raise the standard of living for themselves and their community.

“No soul should be compelled beyond capacity, neither the mother made to suffer for the child nor the father for his offspring...”

AL-BAQARA 2:233



THE ROLE OF MARRIAGE IN FAMILY PLANNING

In the Muslim world today, far too many scholars cite Qur'an 16:72 to justify procreation as the principal purpose of marriage. However, the Qur'an, and other Islamic teachings, are explicit in declaring that the purpose of marriage is not simply procreation but rather a way to achieve tranquility and act as a source of love and mercy for both partners (Qur'an 7:189, Qur'an 30:21). Moreover, the teachings of the Qur'an states that the purpose of sex is not solely for procreation, but rather it acts as a source of enjoyment that supports the tranquility of both partners.



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