



A DECISION GUIDE

Before You Take the Step

When polygyny is not advisable — an honest decision aid: conditions, intention, ability, the effect on wives and children, red flags, alternatives and counselling

* يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوْمِينَ بِالْإِقْسَاطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ...

Why This Book Was Written

Many men contemplate polygamy. Many wives worry about it. And many families bear the consequences of decisions made too quickly, in secret, or for the wrong reasons.

This book is a decision-making aid. It is not intended to encourage polygamy, nor does it deny its permissibility. It invites you to weigh honestly: are the conditions right for you, is your intention pure, are you truly capable, and what will be the effect on your existing wives and children?

For most people, the honest answer is 'not now' or 'not for me'. That is not a failure—the Qur'an itself mentions that a wife is closer to not being wronged.

This book is also for wives and prospective wives who wish to understand the questions that should be asked. Evidence is drawn from verses and hadith reviewed on the MYPolygyny website; procedures and laws differ between states, and the Syariah Court or the state Islamic religious office can explain them more precisely.

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This book neither encourages nor forbids. It helps you weigh things honestly. Each chapter ends with a **Summary & reflection** page; a decision checklist is in the Appendix. Further reference at mypolygyny.com.

01

CHAPTER 1

Permitted with conditions, not a licence

The verse that permits also contains a warning.

... فَأَنْكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَى وَثُلثَ وَرُبْعَ^ط فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ^ه
أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً... ﴿٣﴾

"...Marry women of your choice, Two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one..."

Surah an-Nisa' 4:3 · tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Reading the verse until the end

The permission for polygyny comes with a firm condition. Allah says: "...then marry those that please you of women: two, three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then (marry) only one..." (Surah an-Nisa' 4:3). The same verse concludes with a reminder that one wife is "nearer to preventing injustice".

This verse also has its context. Aisyah r.a. explained that it concerns a female orphan under the guardianship of a male guardian who wished to marry her without giving a just dowry—so the guardian was instructed to marry another woman (Sahih al-Bukhari 4574; Sahih Muslim, Kitab at-Tafsir). It is about justice for the vulnerable, not a man's desire.

The permissibility of polygyny is not a licence: many scholars state that being content with one wife is preferable if there is no need, and a fear of injustice is enough to prohibit it. It is forbidden for someone who is certain or strongly suspects that they will commit injustice. The ruling for each person is weighed according to their own circumstances; if you are unsure where you stand, a trusted scholar or the state Islamic religious office can help you weigh it.

Ruling according to circumstances

Original ruling

- Permissible (mubah) with the condition of justice and ability
- Weighed according to the individual's circumstances

Preferable to be one

- If there is no clear necessity
- Because one is closer to not committing injustice

Forbidden

- If certain or strongly suspect of committing injustice
- A fear of injustice is enough to restrain oneself

Summary & reflection

The verse that permits polygamy also stipulates justice and mentions that one wife is closer to not committing injustice. It was revealed in the context of justice for orphans, not male desire.

Reflection questions

- Have I ever read verse 4:3 until the end, including its conclusion?
- Is there a "clear necessity" in my situation, or is it just a desire?
- If I fear injustice, am I ready to stop here?

02

CHAPTER 2

Checking Intentions

Reasons that are not reasons.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوِّمِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلّٰهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ﴾

﴿١٣٥﴾ ...

"O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves..."

Surah an-Nisa' 4:135 · tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Being Honest With Oneself

No text sets an official list of reasons, but based on the condition of justice, the prohibition of harm and court practice, the following are not proper grounds: mere lust without the ability and readiness to bear responsibility; showing off or status; financial interest in the prospective wife's assets; and running away from household problems without making an effort to fix them—the problem usually transfers to a second household.

Revenge or punishing a wife is also not a valid reason. Using a new marriage to hurt a current wife contradicts the prohibition of harm (Surah al-Baqarah 2:231: "do not hold them back to harm them"). The Prophet ﷺ said: "There shall be no harm and no reciprocating of harm" (Sunan Ibn Majah 2341).

The opening verse of this chapter asks us to uphold justice and be witnesses for the sake of Allah, even to ourselves. Checking intentions is being an honest witness to oneself—before others bear the consequences.

Intention Questions to Answer

- ☒ If no one knew about this marriage, would I still want to proceed?
- ☒ Am I currently angry or disappointed with my wife?
- ☒ Have I genuinely tried to resolve the problems in my current household?
- ☒ Am I only attracted to the assets, status, or appearance?
- ☒ Do I want to prove something to other people?
- ☒ Am I ready to bear all the obligations, not just enjoy the rights?

Summary & Reflection

Mere lust, revenge, status, assets, and running away from problems are not valid reasons. The prohibition of harm rejects marriages used to cause pain, and intentions need to be checked like an honest witness to oneself.

Reflection Questions

- What is my real reason, if I wrote it without hiding it?
- Who will bear the consequences if my intention is wrong?
- Will I be ashamed if this intention is known by my wife and children?

03

CHAPTER 3

Financial Capacity

Full maintenance for every home — today and ten years from now.

لِيُنْفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ ۖ وَمَن قُدِّرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا ءَاتَاهُ اللَّهُ ۚ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَّا ءَاتَاهَا ۚ سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا ﴿٧﴾

“Let the one who has means spend according to his means; and whoever has his provision restricted, let him spend from what Allah has given him.”

At-Talaq 65:7

Two Homes, One Income

Allah says: "Let the one who has means spend according to his means" (Surah at-Talaq 65:7). In polygyny, this obligation multiplies: each wife and her children are entitled to full maintenance, not a fraction of one wife's maintenance.

If income is enough for only one household, a second marriage shifts the burden onto wives and children — contrary to the purpose of the Shariah. The Prophet ﷺ said: "It is enough for a person to be sinful when he withholds food from those under his care" (Sahih Muslim, Kitab az-Zakah).

Two households are not twice the cost — they are more. Two rents, two sets of bills, two lots of schooling, two unexpected emergencies — and one income. Also consider future responsibilities: new children, ageing parents, and retirement. In Malaysia, the Syariah Court assesses capacity before granting permission; it is wise to assess yourself honestly first, before the court does.

The Honest Financial Audit

1

Write down actual expenses

Current home: rent or mortgage, groceries, utilities, schooling, medical, and savings.

2

Add the second home

Suitable separate accommodation, groceries, utilities, and the needs of the new wife.

3

Add the future

New children, education, emergencies, and retirement.

4

Review debts

If current monthly loan repayments are already burdensome, that is an answer.

5

Compare honestly

If the total exceeds income without reducing the rights of the current home, stop here.

Summary & Reflection

Every wife and child is entitled to full maintenance, not a fraction. If income is only sufficient for one home, a second marriage shifts the burden onto wives and children — and withholding maintenance is a sin.

Reflection Questions

- If I write down the expenses for two homes honestly, is my income sufficient?
- Will the existing family feel deprived?
- Am I relying on the wife's salary to fund this plan?

04

CHAPTER 4

Time, Energy, and Health

Justice requires more than money.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ... ﴿٢٨٦﴾

"Allah does not burden a soul beyond what it can bear..."

Surah al-Baqarah 2:286

Rights that cannot be bought

Justice is not just about financial provision (nafkah). Every wife has the right to turns (giliran), attention, and good treatment. When 'Abdullah bin 'Amr r.a. fasted every day and stayed up all night in prayer (qiyam), the Prophet ﷺ corrected him: "...indeed your body has a right over you... and your wife has a right over you" (Sahih al-Bukhari 5199). If excessive worship is corrected for neglecting one's wife, how much more so are other kinds of busyness.

Self-check: How many nights a week am I actually at home? Have work, travel, and other commitments consumed family time?

The Prophet's ﷺ warning is firm: "Whoever has two wives and inclines towards one of them will come on the Day of Resurrection with one side of his body leaning" (Sunan Abu Dawud 2133; sahih according to al-Albani).

Health must also be assessed: physical health, sleep, stress, and emotional stability. A husband who is already tired and stressed by one household will find it harder to be just to two. Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear—and part of wisdom is knowing one's own limits.

Four capacities besides money



Time

Equal turns and time for every child, without sacrificing work or worship.



Energy

Commuting, managing two sets of household chores, and two sets of children's needs.



Emotion

Patience in facing a wife's jealousy, conflict, and sadness without anger.



Health

A body and mind healthy enough to bear responsibility for years.

Summary & Reflection

Justice requires time, energy, emotional stability, and health, not just money. Wives have rights over their husbands, and inclining towards one wife is severely warned against.

Reflection Questions

- How much quality time am I giving to my wife and children right now?
- How am I managing today's stress, and can I handle more?
- What personal limits do I need to honestly acknowledge?

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CHAPTER 5

Impact on Wives and Children

They are the ones who bear the consequences of your decisions the most.

... وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا
وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾

"...on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good."

Surah an-Nisa' 4:19 · tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

From their perspective

A wife's concerns about injustice, emotions and finances deserve to be taken seriously, and injustice towards wives and children remains forbidden.

Frequently reported effects include stress and feelings of betrayal, especially when polygamy occurs without discussion; children spending less time with their father; and a decline in the standard of living of the existing family.

Allah forbids husbands from leaving wives "hanging" (Surah an-Nisa' 4:129), and commands: "...do not retain them to harm them, so that you transgress" (Surah al-Baqarah 2:231). The existing wife has the right to know, to voice her opinion in court, and to claim her rights. According to classical jurisprudence, her consent is not a condition for the validity of the marriage contract, but the courts in Malaysia take her view into consideration; how they do so can differ between states.

For the children, the best protectors are a present and just father, and a mother not burdened by prolonged conflict. If the existing household is in crisis, polygamy rarely solves it; it usually just moves and multiplies the problem.

Before proceeding, ask yourself

Regarding the wife

- What is her current emotional well-being?
- Will she be safe and respected?
- Will her rights be diminished, even slightly?

Regarding the children

- How old are they, and what are their current needs?
- Who will inform them, and how?
- Will my time with them be reduced?

Regarding the household

- Are there any unresolved conflicts?
- Have we tried counselling?
- Will this solve the problem or add to it?

Summary & Reflection

Wives and children bear the brunt of these decisions. Their concerns deserve to be taken seriously; Allah forbids leaving a wife suspended or holding her to cause harm. A household in crisis is rarely saved by polygamy.

Reflection Questions

- If I were in my wife's shoes, what would I feel?
- How will my children remember this decision ten years from now?
- Are there underlying issues in my household that actually need to be resolved first?

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CHAPTER 6

Warning Signs

If this happens, stop.

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ
كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾

"And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)."

Surah al-Isra' 17:36 · tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Red Flags Not to Ignore

There are situations that are almost certain to lead to injustice. The most common is secrecy. A marriage hidden from the wife, the court, or the registrar is most harmful to the wife and the children—to both wives. A man capable of being just is also capable of being open. The MYPolygyny site does not help anyone keep a marriage secret or evade the court; marrying without permission is an offence in every state in Malaysia.

Another warning sign is the demand to divorce the first wife. The Prophet ﷺ said: "It is not lawful for a woman to ask for her sister (co-wife) to be divorced in order to empty her plate, for she will have what has been decreed for her" (Sahih al-Bukhari 5152).

Be careful also with agents, 'marriage packages' from overseas, and promises of 'marry first, register later.' If you are unsure about any step, consult the Syariah Court or the state Islamic religious office first. The opening verse of this chapter reminds us: do not follow what we do not know about.

Warning Signs — Stop If You See Any

- ✓ Plans to keep the marriage secret from the wife or the court.
- ✓ Suggestions to marry overseas or through an agent to avoid proper procedure.
- ✓ The prospective wife or her family demanding the first wife be divorced.
- ✓ Overwhelming debt, or plans to incur debt to get married.
- ✓ An existing marriage in an unresolved crisis.
- ✓ A history of uncontrolled anger, threats, or violence.
- ✓ Making decisions hastily or when emotional.

Summary & Reflection

Secrecy, evading the court, demands to divorce the first wife, overwhelming debt, unresolved crises, and a history of violence are warning signs. If any of these are present, pause first and seek advice from someone you trust.

Reflection Questions

- Are there any warning signs in this list that I am trying to ignore?
- If my plan needs to be kept secret, what is it that I am hiding?
- Whom can I ask before taking any steps?

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CHAPTER 7

Alternatives

What are you truly looking for?

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ ﴿٩﴾

"Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness,"

Surah ad-Duha 93:9 · tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Finding the right answer

Behind the desire for polygamy, there is often something else being sought: lost affection, appreciation, peace, or a desire to help someone. If that is what you are looking for, there are other paths closer to justice.

If your existing marriage feels bland, start by improving it. Unresolved conflicts often spill over into a second marriage. JAIN family counselling is free; the book **A Home of Tranquillity** in this series describes Sunnah practices that revitalize a home.

If the person you wish to help is a widow or an orphan, helping does not necessarily mean through marriage. The Prophet ﷺ said, "I and the one who cares for orphans will be like this in Paradise" — while showing his two fingers (Sahih al-Bukhari 5304). Charity, zakat, funding education, or supporting a family through a welfare body is true help, without creating new obligations that may be unable to be fulfilled.

If what you are looking for is...



Affection

Rebuild with your wife: quality time together, gentle words, and counselling if necessary.



Appreciation

Discuss your respective needs honestly, rather than seeking them outside the marriage.



Helping widows and orphans

Charity, zakat, scholarships, and support through welfare bodies.



Peace

Worship, rest, maintaining health, and reorganising life priorities.

Summary & Reflection

The desire for polygamy often conceals other needs. Improve your existing marriage, and help widows and orphans through charity and welfare—help that does not create obligations that may be unable to be fulfilled.

Reflection Questions

- What am I truly looking for?
- Is there a way to get it within my existing marriage?
- If my intention is to help, how can I help without marrying?

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CHAPTER 8

Making the Right Decision

Istikharah, advice, open communication, and the court.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ

﴿٦﴾ ...

"O you who believe, if a sinful person brings you news, verify it."

Al-Hujurat 49:6

The Right Steps

Major decisions require knowledge and advice, just as this chapter's opening verse instructs us to investigate before acting. Discuss it with a family counsellor, a trusted scholar, and—most importantly—your own wife, with honesty and without coercion.

Seek guidance from Allah. Istikharah is asking Allah to choose the best for you. Jabir bin Abdullah r.a. said that the Prophet ﷺ taught the companions istikharah for all matters, just as he taught them a surah of the Qur'an (Sahih al-Bukhari 1166). It is appropriate before a husband makes a decision to remarry. Istikharah is not a substitute for careful consideration; it runs alongside it.

In Malaysia, polygyny requires the permission of the Syariah Court, and marrying without permission is an offence. The court considers the necessity, financial capability, ability to be just (adil), and the detriment to the existing wife. The requirements and procedures differ slightly between states; your state Islamic religious office or nearest Syariah Court can explain what applies to you. If your answer after all this is "no," that is also a noble decision.

Five Steps Before Deciding

1

Answer the checklist

Appendix at the end of this book. Be honest, without hiding anything.

2

Counselling

JAIN family counselling unit — free, and can be attended with your wife.

3

Open Communication

Discuss it with your wife before any decision, not after.

4

Istikharah

Pray and make istikharah supplication, alongside careful consideration with your intellect and advice.

5

Follow Procedure

If proceeding: apply for permission from the Syariah Court and ensure proper registration.

Summary & Reflection

Making the right decision requires knowledge, counsellor advice, honest discussion with your wife, istikharah, and proper court procedures. Choosing not to proceed is also a noble decision.

Reflection Questions

- Have I discussed this with my wife before making a decision?
- Who is the knowledgeable person I can consult?
- If my answer is "no," how will I improve my household now?

Decision Checklist

Answer honestly. If there is even one 'No' in the first five rows, pause here and seek counselling before going any further.

Question	Yes / No	Chapter
I am confident I can be just in provision (nafkah), turns (giliran), and treatment	☐ Yes	1
My intention is not lust, revenge, status, or running from problems	☐ Yes	2
My income is sufficient for the full provision for every household, now and ten years from now	☐ Yes	3
I have the time, energy, and health for two households	☐ Yes	4
I am ready to be open with my wife and seek the court's permission	☐ Yes	5, 6
The existing household is not currently in an unresolved crisis	☐ Yes	5
I do not have overwhelming debts	☐ Yes	3
I have considered other alternatives	☐ Yes	7
I have discussed this with a counsellor and sought counsel (istikharah)	☐ Yes	8

Getting help



In danger right now?

Call the Police on 999. Your safety and your children's comes first; everything else can follow.



Talian Kasih 15999 (24 hours)

For urgent cases involving the safety or welfare of a family. Talian HEAL 15555 and Befrienders KL 03-7627 2929 for emotional support.



Family Counselling Unit, state JAIN

Every state Islamic Religious Department has a family counselling unit, and it is free. There is no need to wait until a problem grows — coming early is welcome.



Sulh Officer, Syariah Court

Mediation before a full hearing, also free. Rights, procedures and rules can differ from state to state; the Syariah Court or the state Islamic religious office can explain what applies in your situation.

CLOSING

The Decision You Can Account For

Whatever your decision, it will be questioned. Ensure it is a decision you can account for before Allah, before your wife, and before your children in the hereafter.

May Allah grant us the honesty to see ourselves, and the strength to choose what is furthest from oppression.

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ﴿٧٤﴾

"And those who pray: "Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and our offspring a comfort to our eyes, and make us leaders of those who are mindful of You.""

Surah al-Furqan 25:74

mypolygyny.com · A general reference, not a fatwa and not legal advice. In Malaysia, polygyny requires the permission of the Syariah Court, and its conditions and procedures differ between states. Before deciding, it is wise to talk your situation through with the Syariah Court, the state Islamic religious office (JAIN) or a family counsellor.