

THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN

From Revelation To Recitation & Beyond

ABROGATION OF LAWS IN THE QUR'AN

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ABROGATION OF LAWS IN THE QUR'AN

In the Qur'an, abrogation is when a later verse changes or replaces an earlier verse's ruling. The term is also known as 'Naskh'. The English word 'abrogation' is therefore not always the best translation as the Arabic term could merely signify a minor amendment to an earlier rule.

THE QUR'AN ON NASKH - ABROGATION

The principle of Naskh (abrogation) is referred to in the Qur'an itself and is not a historical development: **“None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar, do you not know that Allah has power over all things?”** (2:106)

In another verse Allah says: **“And when We change a verse (in the Qur'an) in place of another - and Allah knows best what he sends down - they say, “You (O Muhammad) are but a forger. Nay, but most of them are ignorant.”** (16:101)

HOW DOES ABROGATION WORK IN THE QUR'AN?

- A later verse can change or replace an earlier verse's ruling in whole or in part.
- Abrogation is the lifting of a ruling established by a previous verse.
- It can also be understood as the nullification or invalidation of a ruling.

THE ABROGATOR (NASIKH) AND THE ABROGATED (MANSUKH)

The Arabic words 'Nasikh' and 'Mansukh' are both derived from the same root word 'Nasakha' which carries meanings such as 'to abolish, to replace, to withdraw, to abrogate.

The word Nasikh (an active participle) means 'the abrogating' (verse), while Mansukh (passive) means 'the abrogated' (verse). In technical language these terms refer to certain parts of the Qur'anic revelation, which have been 'abrogated' by others.

Nasikh: That verse of the Qur'an which abrogates either recitation or command or both of some other Ayah of the Qur'an.

Mansookh: That verse of the Qur'an which is abrogated.

Enemies of Islam particularly the Jews were raising objections about the Qur'an, that Nabi was a strange person, in that one day he asks Muslims to do one thing and changes the command the next day and gives them a different commandment, so it is not the word of Allah Ta'ala.

It is quite obvious that the Jews did not raise these objections for the sake of arriving at the truth but for the sake of creating confusion. Allah Ta'ala answers them by saying that He is the Sovereign and His powers are unlimited. He can repeal any command of His, but He substitutes in its place, something that serves the same purpose better.

Their argument is superficial and if we ponder, we can see the mistake. "Abrogation" does not mean a change in views, but it implies issuing orders according to the needs of another time. The first order was just and proper for the time it remained in force. But now, a new order is being enforced according to the changed circumstances. He would not be a doctor in the true sense if he uses the same prescription under all the circumstances and for every disease.

GRADUAL DESCENT OF LAWS

When the message of Islam was presented to the Arabs as something new, and different from their way of life, it was introduced in stages. The Qur'an brought important changes to society gradually, to allow the people to adjust to the new prescriptions. Allah, the All-Knowing and All-Powerful, had sent that commandment for that limited time, based on His Wisdom and the need and circumstances.

When the period elapsed and the law was understood and implemented, He later sent another command, abrogating or modifying the earlier command.

This in no way is a defect. An example could be given of a government, when it thinks of enacting a law, it implements that law partwise over the years.

Example: There are three verses in the Qur'an concerning the drinking of wine. Wine drinking was very

widespread in pre-Islamic times and, although a social evil, highly esteemed. The three verses which finally led to the prohibition of intoxicating substances were revealed in stages. The Qur'an first mentioned its evil effects, then asked the Muslims to refrain from wine while going for Salah and finally it was prohibited permanently.

Sources:

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