

THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN

From Revelation To Recitation & Beyond

KNOWLEDGE & CONDITIONS OF ABROGATION

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THE KNOWLEDGE AND CONDITIONS OF ABROGATION

The knowledge of Al-Nasikh Wal Mansukh is important because it concerns the precise application of the laws of Allah Ta'ala. It is specifically related to legal revelations:

- It is one of the important pre-conditions for explanation (Tafsir) of the Qur'an.
- It is one of the important pre-conditions for understanding and application of the Islamic law (Hukm, Shari'ah). Without knowing which verses are abrogated, a person may apply those verses that are not meant to be applied.
- It sheds light on the historical development of the Islamic legal code. Allah revealed the laws of Islam gradually so that it would be easier for people to implement. By knowing the Nasikh and the Mansookh, a Muslim can appreciate the blessings that were given to this Ummah in this gradual revelation.
- It helps to understand the immediate meaning of the verse concerned.
- It is essential for Muslims to understand and appreciate the concept of Naskh, so that they are not deceived by the distortions and misinterpretations of those who seek to defame Islam.
- Tafsir (explanation of the Qur'an) or legal ruling is not acceptable from a person who does not have such knowledge.

ABROGATION OCCURS IN COMMANDS AND PROHIBITIONS

Abrogation occurred in verses related to commands and prohibitions. Abrogation did not take place regarding the belief in Allah, His names and attributes, the Day of Judgement, and other fundamental aspects of belief. Abrogation of commands is of different types:

Firstly, the abrogation of a previous command, that must be followed. An example is the verse: *“O you who believe, when you want to consult the Messenger in private, spend something in charity before your private consultation. That will be better and purer for you. But if you find not any means, then verily Allah is Oft forgiving, Most Merciful.”*

Initially, one had to spend charity before consulting with the Prophet ; but that command was abrogated in the same verse.

Makee bin Abi Talib said: *“And this (naskh) is from Allah, and is meant for the betterment of His worshippers. So, He commands them with a ruling at a specific time, since He knows it will be for their betterment for that particular time, but He already knows that this command will be removed from them at a later time, since at this later time that particular ruling will not be beneficial.”* (An-Nabas)

If the abrogation of a command is such that it replaces it with something lighter, then this is a mercy from Allah. If the replacing commandment is equal or more difficult, then this is a means of testing the believers. This also means that the rewards for that particular deed would be increased. It should be remembered that what might seem apparently difficult to us, may be beneficial for the believers.

Secondly, abrogation of Sacred Law that came before us, such as turning to pray from Jerusalem to the Ka’bah (Qur’an 2:142–145), or the obligation to fast in the month of Ashura changing to being an obligation in the month of Ramadan. (Qur’an 2:183–185)

From the beginning of time, Allah Ta’ala has revealed to mankind a general code of beliefs and set of laws that would guide them. The Qur'an is a witness over the previous scriptures, so that all that conforms with it is accepted, and all that contradicts it is rejected. The Qur'an, therefore, acts as a nasikh over the previous scriptures, which are Mansookh when they conflict with the Qur'an.

This is one of the greatest blessings of the Qur'an, for it demonstrates that it is the most complete book, since no word can abrogate the Qur'an after it; and that it is superior to all previous scriptures since it abrogates all previous books.

THREE TYPES OF ABROGATION OCCUR IN THE QUR'AN

Firstly, those verses whose recitation and ruling were both abrogated together. In other words, neither is the verse present in the Mushaf nor its ruling applied.

Secondly, those verses whose ruling was abrogated, but the recitation remained. When this occurs, the relevant verse is still recited and is present in the Mushaf, but the ruling does not apply. This verse is also a blessing to recite, as each letter gives the reward of ten.

Thirdly, those verses whose recitation was abrogated, but the ruling remained. In this case Allah removed the verse from the Qur'an but left the relevant ruling. One may ask: What is the wisdom behind this? Should not the verses remain with the ruling so we are rewarded by our reciting and acting by them? The answer is: They show how this nation is obedient and quick to obey Allah's commands; and lower their inner selves without delving into unnecessary details, regardless of the issue, just as Ibraheem ؑ was quick to go to sacrifice his son after seeing this in his dream, even though a dream is the lowest type of revelation.

It is also a test of Allah, to see if a believer has faith in the Prophet ﷺ, since the ruling will then come from the Sunnah. Thus, the believer must believe in the Prophet ﷺ and follow the Qur'an and Sunnah.

There are verses, where initially the verses were mentioned generally, and afterwards on some occasion were explained in detail. Therefore, certain scholars called them Naskh, Takhsis or Taqyid, the terms being different, but the general idea being the same. It does not nullify the general ruling.

IDENTIFYING ABROGATED VERSES

The information about Al-Nasikh Wal Mansukh cannot be premised on personal opinion, guesswork or hearsay, but must be based on reliable reports, according to the Ulumul Hadith (knowledge of the sciences) and should be reliably traceable to the Prophet and his companions. We also look at the history of various verses whenever we see an apparent contradiction, in order to see which verse came before and which came after.

There is unequivocal evidence to show that Naskh did take place. There is also consensus amongst the Ulema of Ahl Sunnah Wal Jama'at. The Qur'an will always be held as free from change, since abrogation only took place and was implemented in the time of the Prophet ﷺ. No abrogation took place after his demise and no new rulings from the Qur'an and Sunnah are going to be revealed.

Naskh primarily took place in Madinah, since at this stage the laws of Islam were being finalised.

THE CONDITIONS OF NASKH

There are a number of conditions laid down by the scholars of Hadith and Fiqh in order to substantiate a claim of Naskh. One of the reasons is that Naskh is only accepted as a last resort, since the concept of

Naskh implies replacing one command for another. As long as both verses can be acted upon naskh is not resorted to.

1) Both verses must contradict each other, in such a way that both cannot be acted upon at the same time, and there exists no way to reconcile them.

2) The Nasikh ruling must have been revealed after the Mansookh ruling.

3) Both, the Nasikh and Mansookh rulings must originate from the Qur'an and Sunnah. This is because rationale cannot abrogate a command of Allah or the Prophet ﷺ.

Sources:

'The Sciences of the Qur'an - A study in methodology and approach' by Prof. Dr. 'Abd al-Rahman I. Doi.

'An introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an' by Abu Ammaar Yasir.





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