

Rulings pertaining to An-Naskh (Abrogation)

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2

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فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

**"So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord,
let him work righteousness and associate none
as a partner in the worship of his Lord."**

The Noble Qur.aan - Soorah al-Kahf, Aayah 110

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بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

3

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Before you is a short treatise regarding an-Naskh (abrogation) and some rules pertaining to it. The origin of this short treatise is that it is a reply to a request by a dear friend of mine.

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Rulings pertaining to An-Naskh (Abrogation)

4

Preface

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy. The One who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, to make it superior over all religions even though the disbelievers hate it. They wish to extinguish the light of Allaah with their mouths, but Allaah will not allow except that His Light should be perfected even though the disbelievers hate it. To proceed

Before you is a short treatise regarding an-Naskh (abrogation) and some rules pertaining to it. The origin of this short treatise is that it is a reply to a request by a dear friend of mine. He came across a Christian caller in Leicester (UK) who was trying to create confusion and doubt amongst the Muslims. He would constantly debate with the Muslims regarding the issue of Abrogation. He then challenged the Muslims, saying: 'if you can answer the following questions I will remain silent; these questions were: **What is abrogation? How, when and why is it used? Who decides if it is applicable to a particular situation?**

The brother asked me to answer these questions so that he could then forward the answer to this Christian. The Issue of Abrogation is an important Issue which many people unfortunately are ignorant of. Due to this ignorance, many Christians callers use it to plant the seeds of doubt into the hearts of unaware Muslims, seeking to remove them from the Light of Islam to the Darkness of Disbelief.

The scholars from the time of the Salaf to this age have clarified this important issue and have thoroughly answered the above questions with proof and Insight. So I have not come with anything new, rather this answer has been taken from the books of our noble scholars. I must emphasise the importance of studying such matters that are frequently used by the enemies of Islaam to create doubt and confusion. No doubt this is an obligation upon the students of knowledge and also encouraged for the common Muslims.

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As Muslims we must strive to learn about Islaam and to fortify ourselves with beneficial Knowledge from the Qur'an and the Sunnah upon the understanding of the righteous predecessors.

I ask Allah to protect the Muslims in general and those in the west specifically from the trials and tribulations of doubt and to grant them beneficial knowledge.

All Praise belongs to Allaah, may His peace and blessings be upon our final Prophet Muhammad, his family, his companions and all those who follow his guidance.

Abu Salma Muhammad Ali Hassan
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26th Sha'baan 1432,
corresponding to 28th July. 2011

5

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6

Introduction

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy. Indeed all praise is due to Allaah alone. We praise Him, we seek His help, and forgiveness, and we seek refuge in Him from the evils of our own souls and actions. To proceed:

From the many bounties and blessings of Allaah on His creation is the revelation and message of Islaam. Allaah sent His Messenger Muhammad (sal Allaahu alayhi wa sallam) as a mercy to mankind. He (the Prophet) carried the message of Islaam with dignity and humility He taught his companions everything that was revealed to him by his Lord and Creator. These revelations came down to him in two forms:

1 - **The Qur'an:** It contains the exact words of Allaah (the Almighty). It has been preserved to the letter from the time it was revealed to this day. It is the greatest miracle to be given to the Prophet Muhammad (sal Allaahu alayhi wa sallam).

It is a source of guidance to anyone who contemplates its beautiful meanings and reads it with an open heart and mind. It does not - and cannot - contradict itself. Whoever thinks there is a contradiction in the Qur'an then that is due to his weak understanding or corrupt intention.

2 - **The Sunnah:** This consists of the sayings of the Prophet (sal Allaahu alayhi wa sallam) as well as his teachings and actions. Every word he uttered is considered a revelation from Allaah; similarly every action he performed is also a revelation - even when an action or an event that occurred in the Prophetic city during his lifetime and he affirmed it by not warning the people against such an action, then this action is considered part of his Sunnah.

The different types of Ahkaam (rulings)

All the Ahkaam (rulings) in the Sharee'ah are derived and taken from these two sources: The Qur'an and Sunnah. As Muslims we believe that Allaah has the right to do whatever He pleases, we also believe that Allaah does not oppress anyone and that He is

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always just. We believe that His rulings and revelations contain much wisdom. We may, or may not, necessarily know this wisdom, however we still have to follow and obey these rulings, simply because He is our Lord and Creator; He created us from nothing. He gave us so many bounties and blessings, were we to try and count them we would fail. From the beautiful names of Allaah are: 'the All-Wise' and 'the Just'. From these two names we can derive the following attributes: Wisdom and Justice. So the revelations of Allaah are based upon wisdom and justice. If we know this fact, we come to the clear conclusion that there is absolutely no contradiction between any verse in the Qur'an, any narration in the Sunnah or between the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This is because the One who revealed them is the All-Wise and the All-Knower.

Every ruling in Islaam must be based upon evidence either from the Qur'an or the Sunnah or both. There are five rulings in Islam:

1. **Compulsory:** e.g. praying five times a day
2. **Recommended:** e.g. helping the needy
3. **Permissible:** This is any action or saying that is not the other 4 rulings.
4. **Hated or Disliked:** (although it is still permissible but not recommended): e.g. entering a Masjid with your left foot
5. **Forbidden:** e.g. committing adultery

Every action, word or belief comes under one of these categories. We use the Qur'an and the Sunnah as proof or evidence if we wish to put anything under one of these categories. For example, if one says that praying five times a day is compulsory. This is a ruling, so he must bring proof from the Quran and the Sunnah. The only ruling that does not require proof is the third ruling: that which is Permissible. This is because Allaah mentioned in the Qur'an that He created everything on earth for the luxury and benefit of mankind,

{He it is Who created for you all that is on earth.}¹

The scholars derived from this verse that the origin of everything

7

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So the revelations of Allaah are based upon wisdom and justice. If we know this fact, we come to the clear conclusion that there is absolutely no contradiction between any verse in the Qur'an, any narration in the Sunnah or between the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

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8

that is not worship comes under the ruling of being Permissible, and it is upon the one who says that it is impermissible or forbidden to bring a proof from the Quran or the Sunnah. An example of this, is if one was to say that eating dates is permissible – this is correct because the ruling is based upon the original principle (of permissibility). However if one was to say that drinking alcohol is impermissible then he must bring proof from the Quran or the Sunnah (there are many proofs prohibiting the drinking of alcohol found in the Quran and the Sunnah).

An-Naskh (Abrogation)

After this short introduction I would like to answer (with Allaah's help) the following questions. **What is abrogation? How, when and why is it used? Who decides if it is applicable to a particular situation?**

Meaning of Naskh

Through the ages, the scholars of Islaam have clarified the meaning of abrogation (naskh) and its conditions.

The linguistic definition of abrogation is: suppression and removal.

The Islamic technical definition is: 'The removal of an evidence (from the Quran or the Sunnah) for a particular ruling or it's wording, and this removal is done due to an evidence from the Quran or the Sunnah.'

To clarify the above definition, when we say 'removal' we mean, that the ruling has changed from compulsory for example to recommended or from forbidden to permissible and vice versa. We also understand from this definition that abrogation is the sole right of Allaah and his Messenger. No scholar or angel can abrogate a ruling without evidence from the Quran or the Sunnah.

Before we move on I would like to clarify a very important point. **Abrogation can only happen in the lifetime of the Prophet**

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Muhammad (sal Allaahu alayhi wa sallam). After his death, all the rulings stay the same. This is because Allah mentioned in the Qur'an that He completed for us our religion,

{This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islâm as your religion.}²

The wisdom behind Abrogation

What is the wisdom behind abrogation? Why would Allaah abrogate a particular ruling? The answers are very simple. *Naskh* (abrogation) employs the logic of chronology and progressive revelation. The different situations encountered over the course of the Messenger's life, required new rulings to meet the changing circumstances of the Muslim community. From a more theologically-inflected stand-point, the expiration points of those rulings Allaah intended as temporary all along were reached.

Another important point is that Allaah through His Mercy may want to prohibit a certain action, but because of the fact that the Muslims at that time were accustomed to practicing this particular action, it would come as a shock to them if it was suddenly prohibited. So Allaah through His Mercy sends down verses that discourage Muslims to do this action. Then He may send down another verse telling the Muslims about the damage caused by this action. All this, so that the Muslims are ready for the prohibition of this action.

A classic example of this progressive revelation is the prohibition of drinking alcohol. You will find in the Qur'an verses mentioning that the evils of drinking alcohol far out weigh the benefits. You will find another verse prohibiting it altogether. The person who is ignorant may think there is a contradiction.

We must also understand that abrogation or naskh only occurs

9

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10

in verses conveying commands, positive and negative. Verses cast in the indicative and conveying narrative statements, can be affected by neither *naasikh* [abrogating material] nor *mansookh* [abrogated text]. To further clarify, verses that talk about stories of the prophets, or the names and attributes of Allah cannot be abrogated. Likewise rulings that are a necessity to society and are a benefit to all mankind in every time and place such as the prohibition of adultery and murder etc cannot be abrogated.

Abrogation is applicable to both sources of Islamic law: the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah. A Qur'anic verse may abrogate another Qur'anic verse, and a Prophetic Sunnah may likewise abrogate another Prophetic Sunnah. Abrogation can also happen between these two sources.

The conditions and pre-requirements of Abrogation

Abrogation cannot occur except if these conditions are found:

1 – That it becomes impossible to act upon both evidences. For example if a particular evidence prohibits an action and another evidence makes it permissible, we resort to abrogation. So one of the evidences abrogates the other providing the other conditions are met.

2 – Knowledge of the date of revelation of both evidences is a must, otherwise it is impossible to differentiate between the abrogating (*naasikh*) and the abrogated (*mansookh*). This is only known if the particular evidence contains hints such as the hadeeth 'I used to forbid you from visiting the graves, so visit them' It is clear from the hadeeth that the prohibition preceded the recommendation. The date is also known if a companion informs us.

3 – The *naasikh* (the abrogating text) must be an evidence that is authentic (this only applies to the Sunnah)

All of this is decided by the scholars; they are the only people qualified to say whether a particular ruling is abrogated or not. It is worth remembering that the rulings that have been abrogated are very few in number, so few it is very easy to count them.

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One of the many wisdoms of abrogation is the test it entails. Allaah tests His servants to see whether they will obey the new ruling the same way they obeyed the old one.

Modes of Abrogation

Abrogation has three modes:

- *naskh al-hukm dūna al-tilāwa*: abrogation of the ruling but not the wording, or supersession. A regulation - embodied within either a Qur'anic verse or a hadeeth report- is replaced but its wording remains - in the former case, as text within the mu.shaf.
- *naskh al-hukm wa-'l-tilāwa*: abrogation of both ruling and wording, or suppression/erasure. Applicable only to the Qur'an. A ruling is voided and its text omitted from the mus. haf. Evidence that the verse ever existed is preserved only within the Sunnah.
- *naskh al-tilāwa dūna al-hukm*: abrogation of the wording but not the ruling. Again, applicable only to the Qur'an. The text of a still-functional ruling is omitted from the mushaf. Proof of the verse's existence is preserved within tradition (i.e. through a hadeeth report).

I ask Allah by his lofty names and beautiful attributes to bless this small effort and benefit anyone who reads this text.

References

1. The Qu'ran
2. Al Usool min ilm usool - Sh Muhammad bin Uthaimin

11

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