

Surah 4, al-Nissa [The Women], Medina 92, 4 Hijri

The Quran's Text and Yusuf Ali's Translation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

4: 135. O ye who believe!

... كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ...

stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God,
even as against yourselves, or your parents, or
your kin,

إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا ...

and whether it be (against) rich or poor:

... فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا...

for God can best protect both.

... فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا...

Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye
swerve,

... وَإِنْ تَلُوتُوا أَوْ تَغْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (١٣٥)

and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice,
verily God is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

[Ali's comments: 644. Justice is God's attribute, and stand firm for justice is to be a witness to God, even if it is detrimental to our own interests (as we conceive them) or the interests of those who are near and dear to us. According to the Latin saying, "Let justice be done though heaven should fall." But Islamic justice is something higher than the formal justice of Roman Law or any other human law. It is even more penetrative than the subtler justice in the speculations of

the Greek philosophers. It searches out the innermost motives, because we are to act as in the presence of God, to whom all things, acts, and motives are known.

645. Some people may be inclined to favour the rich, because they expect something from them. Some people may be inclined to favour the poor because they are generally helpless. Partiality in either case is wrong. Be just, without fear of favour. Both the rich and the poor are under God's protection as far as their legitimate interests are concerned, but they cannot expect to be favoured at the expense of others. And He can protect their interests far better than any man.]

Muhammad Asad's Translation

4: 135

O you who have attained to faith! **Be ever steadfast in upholding equity**, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, **even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over [the claims of] either of them.**

Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice: for if you distort [the truth], behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!

[Asad's comments: 150 I.e., "do not allow the fact that a man is rich to prejudice you in his favour or against

him, and do not, out of misplaced compassion, favour the poor man at the expense of the truth".]