

Surah 5 al-Maida [The Repast], Medina 112

The Quran's Text & Yusuf Ali's Translation:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ

up ...

5: 48. To thee We sent the Scripture in truth,
confirming the scripture that came before it, and
guarding it in safety;

... فَأَحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ

...

so judge between them by what God hath revealed,
and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the
truth that hath come to thee.

... لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا...

To each among you have We prescribed a Law and
an Open Way.

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ...

If God had so willed, He would have made you a
single people,

... وَلَكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ...

but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given
you: so strive as in a race in all virtues.

... إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

The goal of you all is to God;

it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.

Transliteration Wa anzalna_ ilaikal kita_ba bil haqqi musaddiqal lima_ baina yadaihi minal kita_bi wa **muhaiminan** 'alaihi fahkum bainahum bima_ anzalalla_hu wa la_ tattabi' ahwa_'ahum 'amma_ ja_'aka minal haqq(i), **li kullin ja'alna_ minkum syir'ataw wa minha_ ja_(n)**, wa lau sya_'alla_hu laja'alakum ummataw wa_hidataw wa la_kil liyabluwakum fi ma_ a_ta_kum fastabiqul khaira_t(i), ilalla_hi marji'ukum jami'an fa yunabbi'ukum bima_ kuntum fihi takhtalifu_n(a).

وَأَن اَحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ ... ٥٩

5: 49. And this (He commands): **Judge** thou between them by **what God hath revealed**, and follow not their vain desires,

... وَاحْذَرُهُمْ أَن يَفْتِنُوكَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ ...

but beware of them lest they beguile thee from any of that (teaching) which God hath sent down to thee.

... فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَن يُصِيبَهُم بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ ...

And if they turn away, be assured that for some of their crimes it is God's purpose to punish them.

... وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

And truly most men are rebellious.

Transliteration Wa anihkum bainahum bima_ anzalalla_hu wa la_ tattabi' ahwa_'ahum wahzarhum ay yaftinu_ka 'an ba'di ma_ anzalalla_hu

ilaik(a), fa in tawallau fa'lam annama_yuridulla_hu ay yusibahum bi ba'di zunu_bihim, wa inna kasiram minan na_si lafa_siqu_n(a).

أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ... ^{up}

5: 50. Do they then seek after a judgment of (the Days of) Ignorance?

... وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

But who, for a people whose faith is assured, can give better judgment than God?

Transliteration Afahukmal ja_hiliyyati yabgu_n(a), wa man ahsanu minalla_hi hukmal li qaumiy yu_qinu_n(a).

Muhammad Asad's Translation

5: 48 And unto the [O Prophet] have **We vouchsafed this divine writ**, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein (note 64). **Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high (note 65)**, and do not follow their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto thee.

Unto every one of you have We appoint a [different] law and way of life (**note 66**). And if God has so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise} in order to test you by means

of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ.

Muhammad Pickthall's Translation

Commented [NA1]:

5:48 And unto thee have We revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and **a watcher over it. So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed**, and follow not their desires away from the truth which hath come unto thee. For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced out way. Had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So vie one with another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differ.

5: 49 **So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires**, but beware of them lest they seduce thee from some part of that which Allah hath revealed unto thee. And if they turn away, then know that Allah's will is to smite them for some sin of theirs. Lo! many of mankind are evil-livers.

5: 50 Is it a judgment of the time of (pagan) ignorance that they are seeking? Who is better than Allah for judgment to a people who have certainty (in their belief)?

Asad's comments:

64 The participle muhaymin is derived from the quadrilateral verb haymana, "he watched [over a thing]" or "controlled [it]", and is used here to describe the Qur'an as the determinant factor in deciding what is genuine and what is false in the earlier scriptures (see Manar VI, 410 ff).

65 Lit., "**judge, then, between them...**", etc. This apparently applies not merely to judicial cases but also to opinions as to **what is right or wrong in the ethical sense** (see note 55 above). As is evident from the mention of the "followers of the Gospel" in the preceding verse, and of the Torah in the earlier passages, the people spoken of here are both the Jews and the Christians.

[**5:42** those who eagerly listen to any falsehood, greedily swallowing all that is evil! 54 Hence, if they come to thee [for judgment], **55** thou mayest either judge between them or leave them alone: for, if thou leave them alone, they cannot harm thee in any way. **But if thou dost judge, judge between them with equity**: 55 verily, God knows those who act equitably. 56

(55 I.e., as to what is right and what is wrong in the sight of God. Most of the commentators assume that this passage refers to a specific judicial case, or cases, which the Jews of Medina brought before the Prophet for decision; **but in view of the inherent Qur'anic principle that every historical reference contained in it has also a general import, I rather believe that the "judgment" alluded to in this verse relates to deciding as to whether any of their beliefs - other than those which the Qur'an explicitly confirms or rejects - is right or wrong.)]**

66: The expression “every one of you” denotes the various communities of which mankind is composed. The term ‘shirah’ signifies, literally, “ the way to a watering-place” (from which men and animals derive the element indispensable to their life), and is used in the Quran to denote a system of law necessary for a community’s social and spiritual welfare. The term ‘minhaj’, on the other hand, denotes an “ open road”, usually in an abstract sense: that is, “ a way of life”, The term ‘shirah’ and ‘minhaj’ are more restricted in their meaning than the term ‘din’, which comprises not merely the laws relating to a particular religion but also **the basic, unchanging spiritual truths which, according to the Quran, have been preached by every one of God’s apostles**, while **the particular body of laws (Shirah or shariah)** promulgated through them, and **the way of life (minhaj)** recommended by them, varied in accordance with the exigencies of the time and of each community’s cultural development.

This “unity in diversity” is frequently stressed in the Quran. Because of the universal applicability and textual incorruptibility of its teachings – as well as of the fact that the Prophet Muhammad is “the seal of all prophets”, i.e., the last of them – the Quran represents the culminating point of all revelation and offers the final, perfect way to spiritual fulfillment.

This uniqueness of the Quranic message does not, however, preclude all adherents of earlier faiths from attaining to God’s grace: for – as the Quran so often points out– those among them who believe uncompromisingly in One God and the Day of Judgment and live righteously “need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve”.

67 I.e., "in order to test, by means of the various religious laws imposed on you, your willingness to surrender yourselves to God and to obey Him" (Zamakhshari, Razi), "and thus to enable

you to grow, spiritually and socially, in accordance with the God-willed law of evolution" (Manar VI, 418 f).

68 Lit., "inform you of that wherein you used to differ" (cf surah 2, note 94). Thus, the Qur'an impresses upon all who believe in God - Muslims and non-Muslims alike - that the differences in their religious practices should make them "vie with one another in doing good works" rather than lose themselves in mutual hostility.

[Ali's comments:

750. Guidance, with reference to conduct, **light**, with reference to insight into the higher realms of the spirit.

751. Rabbaniyyun may, I think, be rightly translated by the Jewish title of Rabbi for their learned men. Jewish learning is identified with Rabbinical literature. **Ahbar** is the plural of hibr or habr, by which we may understand Jewish Doctors of Law. Later, the term was applied to those of other religions. Query:

Is this word connected with the same root as "Hebrew", or "Eber" (Gen. 10:21), the ancestor of the Hebrew race? This seems negative by the fact that the Arabic root connected with the word "Hebrew" is 'Abar, not Habar.

752. They were living witnesses to the truth of Scripture, and could testify that they had made it known to the people: Cf. 2:143, and 4:135.

753. Two charges are made, against the Jews: 1. that even the books which they had, they twisted in meaning, to suit their own purposes, because they feared men rather than

Allah: 2. that what they had was but fragments of the original Law given to Moses, mixed up with a lot of semi-historical and legendary matter, and some fine poetry. The Tawrah mentioned in the Quran is not the Old Testament as we have it: nor is it even the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament, containing the Law embedded in a great deal of semi-historical and legendary narrative). See Appendix II, on the Tawrah (printed at the end of this Surah).

759. After the corruption of the older revelations, the Quran comes with a twofold purpose: 1. to confirm the true and original Message, and 2. to guard it, or act as a check to its interpretation. The Arabic word **Muhaymin** is very comprehensive in meaning. It means one who - safeguards, - watches over, - stands witness, - preserves, and - upholds. The Quran safeguards "the Book", for it has preserved within it the teachings of all the former Books. It watches over these Books in the sense that it will not let their true teachings to be lost. It supports and upholds these Books in the sense that it corroborates the Word of Allah which has remained intact in them. It stands a witness because it bears testimony to the Word of Allah contained in these Books and helps to sort it out from the interpretations and commentaries of the people which were mixed with it: what is confirmed by the Quran is the Word of Allah and what is against it is that of the people. (R).

760. Law: shirat, rules of practical conduct. **Open Way: Minhaj.** **The finer things, which are above the law**, but which are yet available to everyone, like a sort of open highway. The light in verses 44 and 46 though laws and rules may take different forms among different People.

761. By origin mankind were a single people or nation: 4:1, and 2:213. That being so Allah could have kept us all alike, with one language, one kind of disposition, and one set of physical conditions (including climate) to live in. But in His wisdom, He gives us diversity in these things, not only at any given time, but in different periods and ages. This tests our capacity for Unity (Wahdaniyat) still more, and accentuates the need of Unity and Islam.

762. Men are wont to make conflicting claims regarding Allah, the ultimate destiny of man, and other questions of vital importance. No matter how vehement and eloquent the proponents of false doctrines might be, their efforts will prove fruitless and it will be indisputably clear on the Day of Judgment as to who entertained false notions and who cherished the truth. (Eds).

763. The Days of Ignorance were the days of tribalism, feuds and selfish accentuation of differences in man. Those days are really not yet over. It is the mission of Islam to take us away from that false mental attitude, towards the true attitude of Unity. If our Faith is certain (and not merely a matter of words). Allah will guide us to that Unity.