

Surah 5, Maida [The Table Spread], Medina 112

The Quran's text and Yusuf Ali's translation

سَمَاعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ أَكَّالُونَ لِلسُّحْتِ... ^{up}

5; 42. (They are fond of) listening to falsehood, of devouring anything forbidden.

... فَإِنْ جَاؤُوكَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ أَوْ أَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ...

If they do come to thee, either judge between them, or decline to interfere.

... وَإِنْ تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَلَنْ يَضُرُّوكَ شَيْئًا...

If thou decline, they cannot hurt thee in the least.

... وَإِنْ حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (٤٢)

If thou judge, judge in equity between them; for God loveth those who judge in equity.

Transliteration Samma_'u_na lil kazibi akka_lu_na lis suht(i), fa in ja_'u_ka fahkum bainahum au a'rid 'anhum, wa in tu'rida_'anhum falay yadurru_ka syai'a_(n), wa in hakamta fahkum bainahum bil qist(i), innalla_ha yuhibbul muqsitin(a).

[Ali's comments: 747. Devouring anything forbidden: both in a literal and in a figurative sense. In the figurative sense, it would be: - the taking of usury or bribes, or - taking undue advantage of people's weak position or - their own fiduciary powers to add to their own wealth.

748. Where it is merely a trick to catch out the unwary, a just man may honorably decline to interfere in a cause submitted to him, as also in a case where the parties are not honestly desirous of justice, but each hopes that some partiality will be shown to it.]

Muhammad Asad's translation:

(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: 56 verily, God knows those who act equitably. 56

[Asad's comments: 54 The noun suht is derived from the verb sahata, "he utterly destroyed [a thing]", and signifies, primarily, the "doing of anything that leads to destruction" because it is abominable and, therefore, forbidden (Lisan al-'Arab). **Hence, it denotes anything that is evil itself.** In the above context, the intensive expression **akkalun li's-suht may denote "those who greedily devour all that is forbidden" (i.e., illicit gain), or, more probably, "those who greedily swallow all that is evil"** - i.e., every false statement made about the Qur'an by its enemies with a view to destroying its impact.

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.

56 I.e., on the basis of the ethical laws revealed by God, and not personal, arbitrary likes or dislikes.]

Muhammad Pickthall's Translation

5:42 Listeners for the sake of falsehood! Greedy for illicit gain! If then they have recourse unto thee (Muhammad) judge between them or disclaim jurisdiction. If thou disclaimest jurisdiction, then they cannot harm thee at all. But if thou judgest, judge between them with equity. Lo! Allah loveth the equitable.