

## **Abrogation and Destiny**

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**"Allah wipes off what He wills and affirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother Book."**  
(13:39)

According to leading authorities in Tafsir, Sayyidna Sa'id ibn Jubayr (ra), Qatadah (ra), and others, *this verse is related with the obliteration and affirmation of injunctions and religious codes, that is, with the problem of Naskh or abrogation.*

As for the sense of the verse, they say that in the Books which Allah Ta'ala sends to different people through different messengers, and outlined in which are religious laws, obligations and duties, it is not necessary that all injunctions contained therein be eternal and last for ever. In fact, it is in fitness with conditions prevailing among peoples and the change in times that Allah, in His wisdom, abrogates or repeals whichever injunction He wills, and affirms and retains whichever He wills.

Then, the original Book is preserved with Him after all. It is already written there that such and such injunction sent down for such and such people is for a particular period of time, or is based on particular conditions. When that term expires, or those conditions change, this injunction will also change. In this original Book, that term and that appointed time stands recorded with full and authentic determination. Also entered there is the description of the injunction which will replace the one changed.

This eliminates the doubt that Divine injunctions should never be abrogated, because enforcing an injunction and then abrogating it indicates that the enforcer of the injunction did not have the correct perception of conditions, therefore, it was after having seen conditions that it had to be abrogated. And it is obvious that the majesty of Allah Ta'ala is beyond the possibility that something be outside the realm of His knowledge. Since this stipulation tells us that the injunction which is abrogated exists in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ala beforehand, that is, the injunction has been promulgated only for a specified period of time and will be changed later.

This is similar to what a physician does in our world of experience. He examines a patient, looks at the symptoms of what he is ailing from, then prescribes a medicine relevant to the current condition he is in. And he knows the effect the medicine is going to bring forth, and after which, the particular medicine would have to be changed and the patient would have to be given another medicine of another description.

To sum up, it can now be said that, according to this Tafsir, the phenomena of obliteration and affirmation (mahw and ithbat) means the abrogation (naskh) of injunctions, and its affirmation and continuity.

Another Tafsir of this verse (based on the view of Sayyidna 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbas (ra), Sufyan al-Thawri (ra), Waki' (ra), and others) *is that the subject of this verse is concerning destiny.*

And the meaning of the verse has been explained by saying that, according to the explicit statements of the Quran and Hadith, the destinies of the creations of Allah, including the sustenance received by every person during his entire years of life and the comfort and distress faced along the line, and their respective magnitudes are written since 'azal even before the creation of His creatures. Then, at the time of the birth of a child, the angels too are asked to keep it committed to writing. And every year, in the Laylatul-Qadr (The Night of Power), a full roster of what is supposed to happen during the course of that year is handed over to the angels.

In short, the age of every created individual, his or her sustenance, times of movement and periods of rest are all determined, and written. But, from this decree of destiny, Allah Ta'ala wipes off or obliterates what He wills and affirms or retains what He wills. However, the statement: (And with Him is the Mother Book) means that the original Book, according to which, after the process of obliteration and affirmation, ultimate action shall be taken, is with Allah. In this, there can be no change or alteration.

This has been elaborated in many authentic Ahadith which tell us that there are some a'mal (deeds) which cause a person's age and sustenance to increase.

Some make them decrease. It appears in the Sahih of Al-Bukhari that maintaining relations which must be maintained (silah ar-rahim) becomes the cause of increase in one's age. A narration in the Musnad of Ahmad reports that there are occasions when one commits some such sin as leads to his being deprived of sustenance, and by serving and obeying one's parents, years of life increase, and nothing except du'a' (prayer) can avert what is Divinely destined.

What we find out from all these narrations is that the age, the sustenance and things like that which Allah Ta'ala has written into someone's destiny can become more or less because of some deeds - and also because of du'a' (prayer), taqdir (destiny) can be changed.

This is the subject dealt with in this verse. It says that the change or alteration in age or sustenance or hardship or ease in life as written in the Book of Destiny which takes place because of some deed (amal) or prayer (du'a') means that Book of Destiny which is in the hands of the angels, or in their knowledge. There are times when, some decisions of this type of destiny are contingent on some particular condition. When that condition is not found, that decision does not take effect. Then, this condition is sometimes in writing and in the knowledge of angels, but there are times when this is not written - but exists in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ala alone. When that decision changes, everyone is left wondering. A destiny of this nature is called 'conditional' or 'contingent' (mu'allaq) in which, as explicitly stated in this verse, the process of obliteration and assertion keeps operating. But, the last sentence of the verse: , that is, 'with Him is the original Book,' means that above this 'conditional destiny,' (taqdir mu'allaq) there is the 'final and definite destiny' (taqdir mubram) which is with Allah Ta'ala written in the original Book.

And that is the exclusive domain of Divine knowledge. Written there are the decisions, injunctions and commands which issue forth as the final outcome after the conditions of deeds have been fulfilled or du'a' has been answered. Therefore, that is totally free of obliteration and assertion and addition and deletion. (Ibn Kathir) (Ma'ariful Qur'an)

