

Episode 23

Mohamed: *My dear viewers I welcome you once again to a new episode of our program “Questions About Faith”. And we have again our honorable guest Reverend Zakaria Botros. You are most welcome again. We have received so many questions this time, but what we would like to do is to continue answering the question which we concluded with, in the previous episode. Can man ask and inquire saying, "Why, God, have you done such and such?"*

F Zakaria: Definitely. Man can ask God, God, why have you done so? Not out of objection or protest, but to seek knowledge. God created man as an intelligent being and as such, he has the right to know. God would not create the intellect and then suspend it. The mind must think. This is an issue that we encounter. Traditional or closed minded people just take things as they are. It is simply so. Don't argue. God said so. That's it. Don't think, “You are not supposed to ask about things that if they are revealed to you, would offend you.”

Mohamed: *You mean it isn't interdicted or prohibited for man to ask God, to seek knowledge?*

F Zakaria: On the contrary, it is a must. What is the difference then if I may say so, between man and an animal? The proverb says, "A man that is honorable yet does not understand is like the beasts that perish." God gave man intellect so he can use it. It isn't wrong for man to ask, then.

Mohamed: *Here is a bold question that is directed to you personally from a number of readers. What's your business studying these Islamic topics, especially since you personally confess that abrogation is a critical topic as well as a very dangerous one, as you know?*

F Zakaria: That is a rather bold but nice question. And I intend to answer it even more boldly.

Mohamed: *Please, go ahead.*

F Zakaria: As long as I can express my opinion freely. First of all, God granted man an intellect. Man is by nature inquisitive. I go to the marketplace. I have a very strong inclination to reading. I go to the bookstore, I find books there, and I buy them and I study them. Moreover, I'm a priest, so I get asked many questions. Well, someone once asked me, "Why don't you embrace the Islamic religion?" It is his right to suggest so, and it is also my right to answer him. So in order for me to answer him logically... Well, I may choose not to, and say to him: "It is none of your business." But it shows no respect to his intellect. But, since he asked, I must answer him logically and tell him, because of this and that and so on. This is part of what I had studied. I'm a Christian; I grew up in a Christian home. You grew up in a Muslim home. But you thought about your religion, studied it and decided to follow it. I'm a Christian, I grew up, and I found myself confronted with different religions. Which one is the right one, I wondered. Therefore, I had to choose my path; otherwise I would have led an ordinary life. Therefore, I had to study. Moreover, the whole world encourages religious debates

and this requires me to study my own religion and the religions of others and to know all about them.

Mohamed: *There is yet another question. If God is able to make the prophet forget some verses, isn't God able, as well, to make people forget them?*

F Zakaria: This is a problem. Definitely. Because sometimes the narrators who memorized the verses that Mohamed recited,

Mohamed: *The Quran maintainers.*

F Zakaria: The Quran maintainers; they memorized single verses. Then they found that there were other verses totally dissimilar. So they questioned among themselves. Is it this or that? So the idea that was proposed then, that God alters and replaces his words: "If we cancel a verse or cause it to be forgotten, we will reveal another one better or similar to it." But at that time, there were people who still memorized certain Quranic verses. They went and recited them to the prophet, but he said, "No this is last night's version." There are so many examples in the book entitled, "The Abrogating and the Abrogated". All books on the topic of abrogation are full of these examples. Are you following? O.K., you forgot, but the people still remember. Do you see my point? Sometimes they could only remember the beginning of a Surah and they would ask him. One time a group of people went to him and asked him, then he answered them, "This was yesterday's version". He was able to give this answer after a whole hour of waiting. His answer was, "It has been abrogated last night".

Abrogation is a real problem. The reason nobody wants to discuss this problem, but rather hide it, is that there is no answer or solution.

Mohamed: *This makes me personally ask this question. Is this issue about causing the prophet to forget, something from God? And is it conceivable that God would cause him to forget only at certain times, but not all the time?*

Let's move on then, to another question. Through your study, can you explain to us this issue? Did this only happen in one, or a couple of Surahs, or in many?

F Zakaria: What issue do you mean?

Mohamed: *The same issue, the abrogated verses in the Quran.*

F Zakaria: The topic of abrogation in the Quran. Through my studies in it, I have found that it is not an easy one. It is very complicated. A great number of Islamic scholars have divided the abrogating and abrogated Surahs into sections. The Surahs in which they found abrogating verses and the ones containing abrogated ones. They divided them to sections.

Mohamed: *Did this happen in one verse or Surah, or in many?*

F Zakaria: In many Surahs.

Mohamed: *How many? One or two?*

F Zakaria: No, there are about 71 Surahs in which abrogation is mentioned. How did they divide it up? There are six Surahs that contain abrogating verses and no abrogated ones. These are Surah Al Fath, Al Hashr, Al Monafeqoon, Al Taghabon, Al Talak, and Al Aala. These Surahs have abrogating verses, but have no abrogated ones. And there are 25 Surahs in which abrogating and abrogated verses do occur. Some of them are Al Baqara, Al Omran, Al Nesaa, Al Maeda, Al Anfal, Al Tawba, Ibraheem, Al Kahf, Mariam and Al Anbiaa. 25 Surahs have both abrogating and abrogated. And 40 Surahs in which abrogated verses occur, but no abrogating verses. 40 Surahs mention abrogated verses, among which are, Al Anaam, Al Aaraf, Yones, Hood, Al Raad, Al Haj, Al Nahl, Al Esra', Al Kahf. 40 Surahs have abrogated verses and don't have any abrogating ones. The remaining Surahs are void of abrogating and abrogated verses. And their sum is 43 Surahs. How many Surahs are there in total, in the Quran? 114. **114.** Now subtract 43 from 114. You end up with 71 Surahs containing abrogation in the Quran. It's a whole lot. Big portions containing abrogating and abrogated verses. It is a big problem that Islamic thinkers must tackle and find a solution for. And why is that? Because to start with, there is a verse that says "If it had come from any other source than God, they would have found a great deal of contradiction in it."

Mohamed: *Then, you're saying now, that there are many contradictions.*

F Zakaria: In 71 Surahs. Containing abrogation. Some have abrogating verses and not abrogated ones, and some

have abrogated ones and not abrogating, and some have both. 71 Surahs contradicting one another. Isn't this contradiction in the Quran? Islamic scholars must face this problem and issue. They cannot just ignore such a vital issue as this. They have to face it.

Mohamed: *I remember a verse in the Bible, "You will know the truth and the truth shall set you free", and we pose these questions so that their answers would glorify God.*

Another question: Now we know how many Surahs have abrogation. Can you tell us how many verses contain abrogation in the Quran?

F Zakaria: The verses, a lot of course. The Surahs alone are 71, so the verses are more. Here I'm quoting the words of Sheikh Ibrahim El Ibyari in his book, "Ta'reekh el Quran" *Ta'reekh?* The dating of the Quran. On page 168, he writes about verses including abrogation. He says, "Investigators of this issue have counted about 144 locations." The author himself mentioned only 60 of those. For example, I have added up the verses, which he wrote, and I found 20 Surahs in which only one verse has been changed. One verse has been changed in 20 Surahs. And 18 Surahs have 2 verses changed in each. And 6 Surahs have 3 verses changed in each. And 3 Surahs have 4 verses changed in each. And 2 Surahs have 5 verses changed in each. And 2 more Surahs have 6 verses changed in each and 2 more in which 7 verses have been changed in each. And one Surah in which 8 verses have been changed. And one Surah in which 9 verses have been changed.

Mohamed: *Would you please mention the names of these Surahs?*

F Zakaria: Of course. Definitely. It's your right. *Go Ahead.* The Surah in which 8 verses have been changed is Surah of Yones. And The Surah in which 9 verses have been changed is Surah El Ma'eda. And The Surah in which 10 verses have been changed is Surah Al Omran. And there is one more Surah in which 11 verses have been changed and it is Surah Al Towba. And The Surah in which 15 verses have been changed is Surah Al Anaaam. And the Surah in which 24 verses have been changed is that of Nisa'. And the Surah in which 30 verses have been changed in only one Surah is Al Baqara. When you sum them up, they are 229 verses in only 60 locations that Ibrahim El Ibiary mentioned. Yet he said there are 144 similar locations. Can you imagine how much the result will be? You can give an average and sum it all up.

Mohamed: *I cannot help but remember the verse that says, "We ourselves have sent down the reminder, just as we are safeguarding it, or preserving it."*

F Zakaria: Fine speech, but where is this preservation? We ought to think about such verses as well. Because they form an intellectual gap.

Mohamed: *These are serious matters that pose themselves.*

F Zakaria: I believe that those scholars in Azhar should take up their role of explaining and interpreting and

teaching the masses, who want to understand and know, those who respect their intellect. Otherwise, they will be confronted with a whole generation of young men and women who want to understand but who would abandon Islam, because they were not persuaded or made to understand.

Mohamed: *One more question here. Are there several types of abrogation? Or is there only one type?*

F Zakaria: Of course there are.... The scholars of abrogation have divided the verses of abrogation in the Quran to three types; that whose ruling has been abrogated and whose writing still remains, those whose writing has been abrogated yet their ruling still remains in effect, and those whose ruling and writing have both been abrogated.

Mohamed: *What does all that mean?*

F Zakaria: “Those whose writing has been abrogated but whose ruling is still in effect,” means that the writing, the text is not there in the Quran but its ruling is still applied. The text is there but it is not applied. And the second type is the exact opposite; the ruling is applicable but the writing or text is non-existent. But there are verses whose writing and ruling do not exist. It has been abrogated.

Mohamed: *You mean, they do not exist in the Quran now, in the presently circulating copies. Can you please mention examples to prove this?*

F Zakaria: Yes, there are examples for each type. As to the first type, “those verses whose writing has been abrogated yet their ruling is still in effect. By this we mean the writing is not in the Quran anymore, but the ruling is still applicable. *For example?* For example, stoning the adulterer and the adulteress. Ibn El Joozy says in his book "The Abrogating Verses in the Quran", "Nawasekh el Quran", page 35: “Omar Ibn El Khattab said, "God sent Mohamed, may God's prayer be upon him, in truth, and sent down the book upon him, and among the verses sent down upon him, there used to be the verse of the stoning, which read: " The older man and the older woman, if they commit adultery, stone them both to death." Omar continues to say, "We used to read it. And we understood it and we comprehended it. And the messenger of God stoned people and we stoned people after his time." Omar emphasizes, “and for fear that somebody would accuse me of adding to the book of God, I would have written this verse by my own hand." This is mentioned in the book of Ibn El Joozy; “Nawasekh El Quran”, page 35. Also, on the strings of “Imama Ibn Sahl”, that his aunt said "The messenger of God used to make us recite the verse of the stoning – 'the older man and the older woman, if they commit adultery, stone them both to death for the pleasure they committed'. And this is not in the Quran". You find this written in the book by Galal El Deen El Siouty entitled: “Al Etqan Fi Ulum el Quran” volume 2, page 26.

So to this day, the adulterer and the adulteress should be stoned to death. But if you go looking for the text in the Quran, they would tell you it was there, but it has been abrogated in the writing.

Mohamed: *Do you have other examples?*

F Zakaria: Definitely. The examples are numerous. And that's exactly the problem. That's why I say, Islamic scholars, as the magazine says, avoid this topic. O.k. Another example, the breastfeeding or nursing of the adult.

Mohamed: *The nursing of an adult person?*

F Zakaria: Yes. In the "Saheeh Of Muslim", tradition 3670, chapter of "nursing", we read the following: "Aisha said" - there used to be ten well known nursings, which were later abrogated to five well known nursings, and at the time of the death of the messenger of God, those were still being recited in the Quran ". But where are they now? We don't find any. Al Imam Abu Gaafar el Nahhass also emphasizes in his book; "AL Nasekh Wal Mansoukh." Here... I have it here. Page 125. That Aisha still held to her position that the adult can be nursed. Ibn El Joozy tells us this story about the nursing of the adult. What is this business about nursing an adult? In the book "Nawasekh El Quran", page 37, we read the following, "Aisha said- "the verse about the nursing of the adult was in a paper under the bed in my house and when the messenger of God complained, namely of his sickness, we were completely taken up by his sickness and then it got eaten by an animal that we used to raise", a sheep or something. So by the time of the messenger's death, they were still being recited in the Quran. Now what about the nursing of the adult? Abu Gaafar el Nahhass tells us about it, in his book, page 124. He says, "Aisha said- "Sahla, the daughter of Suhayl, came to the

messenger of God , a certain woman came to the messenger and said, “ I see that Abu Hatheefa, (who was her husband.) I see that Abu Hatheefa is displeased when Salem comes into the house. And this Salem was a slave they had adopted. So when the verse that abolished adoption was revealed, and you know it was revealed on account of Zeid Ibn Haretha, everyone who had adopted children, all of a sudden disowned them. But those people grew up in the house and they no longer were children, so Abu Hatheefa started to be jealous over his wife and he started to tell her, “Don't let this guy come into the house, don't let him in.” So she went to the messenger and told him, “My husband is displeased, he doesn't want our adopted son to come into the house. What can I do?” And what was the answer? I'm sorry that I have to say this in front of our viewers. I'm really sorry, but as Muslims say there's no embarrassment in religion. Mohamed said to her, "Nurse him." (talking about Salem, of course.) Why did he tell her that? So that he would become like her son, namely it is unlawful for you to marry him, and this way your husband will not be displeased. She asked, “And how can I nurse him? He is an adult.” The messenger said "Don't I know that he is an adult man?” The story goes on to say that Sohayla returned to the messenger and said to him, "Oh by God, O messenger of God, I no more see anything displeasing in the eyes of Abu Hatheefa, something I hate.” Namely, it did the trick. The nursing of the adult is a big problem. I really don't know. I don't know what to think. When you come to think about it and imagine, you find it is a big problem. That's why they don't want to tackle abrogation in the Quran. And accordingly, Orwa said that Aisha used to command her sister, Um Kalthoom, and

her nieces, to nurse the men she wanted to meet. This is in this book, on page 124, 124... here it is.

Mohamed: *As a matter of fact these are matters that are not even honorable to talk about. That's why I'll move on to the next question, which is about the second type of abrogation.*

F Zakaria: Well, the second type of abrogation has to do with those verses whose ruling has been abrogated, although the writing is still there. Namely, the verse is there in the Quran, but they are not abiding by it anymore. So the verse is annulled, although it is still there in the present Quran. Ibraheem el Ibyari says in his book, "The History of the Quran." page 168, that there are about 144 verses like that. And he mentioned 60 verses of those in detail, in which 229 rulings had been cancelled. Yet they are still written in the Quran.

Mohamed: *Have you got any examples?*

F Zakaria: Of course. The peaceful verses. The verses speaking about peacefulness in the Quran amount to 124 verses. They are still written in the Quran. You can read them but they are not applicable. Why? Because they have been abrogated by a single verse. Such peaceful verses are like the one in Surah (Al Anfal) verse 61: "If they are inclined to peace, incline yourself also to it." Also, Surah 3 (Al Omran) verse 20: "If they turn away from you, all you need to do is just tell them the message". All these and similar verses, have been abrogated by the "verse of the sword," that says: "Fight the associators". In Surah (Al Tawba) verse 5. And in Al

Tawba, verse 29, it also says, "Fight those who do not believe in God, and so on. Who do not believe in the true religion, which is Islam, among those that have been given the Book" That is, the Christians and the Jews. Is it clear?

Mohamed: *Yes.*

F Zakaria: Now listen to what Ibn Al Araby says: " All verses in the Quran that talk about forgiving the infidels, turning away from them and desisting from them have been abrogated by the verse of the sword, which reads: "*when the hallowed months have slipped away then fight associators wherever you find them.*" Listen to what Ibn Al Araby says: "This single verse has abrogated 124 verses." This can also be read in Al Siouty, volume 2, page 24.

Mohamed: *A single verse abrogates 124 verses.*

F Zakaria: 124. This is just one example here. Do you believe it?

Mohamed: *Do you have something to say about contradiction and discrepancy?*

F Zakaria: Of course. In this respect, there are 124 verses talking about peacefulness, and one verse comes up and contradicts them and says "Fight them and kill them." And there are many such verses, with lots of contradictions. And there is still the third and final type. But I think it would require a whole episode to be able to cover it all. To explain the third type: "whose writing and

ruling are non-existent.” Neither this, nor that, is there anymore.

How did we know about them, then? Simply because Mohamed, the prophet of Islam claimed that they have been revealed to him, and that they still exist in the preserved tablet. We can take another time to explain it, if you prefer.

Mohamed: *It is almost time. Could you possibly give us a summary, so we can follow up next time?*

F Zakaria: In the following episode, God willing, we want to talk about the details or the particularization of this type. The verses which are non-existent and whose ruling is also non-existent. Yet the scholars of abrogation maintain that they have been there. So why have they been removed? And that's what we would like to investigate in more detail next time.

Mohamed: Thanks a lot, and my dear viewers, we welcome all of your questions, and we thank God, who made this opportunity available to us to talk freely and openly about such sensitive topics and questions, which bothered even myself, and now we may be able to answer them. Thanks a lot, and until we meet again.

F Zakaria: Thank you, very much.