

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī
Vol. 2
Juz' 2: Sūrat al-Baqarah 142 – 253

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī

The General Judgments of the Qur'an
and Clarification of what it contains
of the Sunnah and *Āyahs* of Discrimination

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translated by
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Table of Transliterations

ء	'	ض	ḍ
ا	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	'
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ		

Long vowel

ا	ā
و	ū
ي	ī
أَوْ	aw
أَيَّ	ay

Short vowel

َ	a [<i>fatḥah</i>]
ُ	u [<i>dammah</i>]
ِ	i [<i>kasrah</i>]

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

There are minor omissions in the text. Some poems have been omitted which the author quotes to illustrate a point of grammatical usage or as an example of orthography or the usage of a word, often a derivative of the root of the word used in the *āyah*, but not the actual word used. Often it is difficult to convey the sense in English. Occasionally the author explores a grammatical matter or a tangential issue, and some of these may have been shortened. English grammatical terms used to translate Arabic grammatical terms do not have exactly the same meaning, sometimes rendering a precise translation of them problematic and often obscure.

The end of a *juz'* may vary by an *āyah* or two in order to preserve relevant passages.

2. SŪRAT AL-BAQARAH – THE COW 142 – 253

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّيْتَهُمْ عَنِ قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا قُلْ لِلَّهِ
الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٤٢﴾

142 The fools among the people will ask, ‘What has made them turn round from the direction they used to face?’ Say, ‘Both East and West belong to Allah. He guides whoever He wills to a straight path.’

The fools among the people will ask,

Allah Almighty is giving advance warning of what some people are going to say about the believers changing the direction they face in prayer from Syria to the Ka‘bah. The word ‘fools’ is qualified by ‘people’ because foolishness is also found in animals. The fools are those who say this. A fool (*safih*) is someone with a poor intellect. A garment which is *safih*, the root from which the word comes, is loosely woven. Quṭrub says that they are ignorant wrongdoers. This refers to the Jews in Madīnah, as Mujāhid says. As-Suddī said that it refers to the hypocrites and az-Zajjāj says that it means the unbelievers of Quraysh when they objected to the change of *qiblah*. They said, ‘Muḥammad yearns for his homeland and will soon revert to your religion.’ The Jews said, ‘He is confused about the business.’ The hypocrites said, ‘What has made them turn around from their *qiblah*?’ to mock the Muslims.

‘What has made them turn round from the direction they used to face?’

The imams report that Ibn ‘Umar said, ‘While people were at Qubā’ performing the *Ṣubḥ* prayer, someone came to them and said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ received Revelation in the night and he has been commanded to face the Ka‘bah.” They were facing Syria and immediately turned right round to face the Ka‘bah.’ Al-Bukhārī transmitted from al-Barā‘ that the Prophet ﷺ was praying towards Jerusalem for sixteen or seventeen months. He wanted his *qiblah* to be towards the Ka‘bah. The first prayer he prayed towards it was *‘Aṣr*

and people prayed it with him. A man who had prayed with the Prophet ﷺ left and passed by the people of another mosque who were in *rukūʿ*. He said, 'I testify by Allah that I prayed with the Prophet ﷺ towards Makkah.' So they turned round so that they were facing the House. There were men who had died while they were facing the old *qiblah* before the change to the House and they did not know what to say about them. So Allah Almighty revealed: *'Allah would never let your faith go to waste.'* (2:143)

This transmission mentions the *ʿAṣr* prayer whereas the transmission of Mālik mentioned the *Ṣubḥ* prayer. It is also said that it was revealed while the Prophet ﷺ was in the mosque of the Banū Salamah performing *Zuḥr* and he changed *qiblah* after two *rakʿahs* of it. For that reason, it was called the Mosque of the Two *Qiblahs*.

In *at-Tamhūd*, Abū ʿUmar mentioned from Nuwaylah bint Aslam, one of the women who gave allegiance: 'We were performing the *Zuḥr* prayer when ʿAbbād ibn Bishr ibn Qayzī came and said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has faced the *qiblah* (or 'the Sacred House'), so the men moved to where the women were and the women moved to where the men were.'" It is also said that the *āyah* was revealed about other than the prayer, and that is more common. *ʿAṣr* was the first prayer towards the *qiblah*. Allah knows best.

It is related that the first to pray towards the Kaʿbah, when the *qiblah* was changed from Jerusalem, was Abū Saʿīd ibn al-Muʿallā. That was when he was passing through the mosque and heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ telling people to change the *qiblah*, reciting this *āyah* while he was on the minbar: *'We have seen you looking up into heaven...'* (2:144) He told his companion, 'Come and let us pray two *rakʿahs* before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ comes down! Then we will be the first to pray and we will be covered in blessings.' They prayed them and then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ descended and led the people in *Zuḥr*.

There is disagreement about the length of time the Prophet ﷺ was in Madīnah before the *qiblah* was changed. It is said that it was changed after sixteen or seventeen months, as we find in al-Bukhārī. Ad-Dāraqṭnī also reported that that al-Barāʿ said, 'We prayed with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ after he came to Madīnah towards Jerusalem for sixteen months. Then Allah informed the Prophet that He was aware of his desire to change *qiblah* and the Revelation came: *"We have seen you looking into the heaven, turning this way and that."* (2:144) It was sixteen months without doubt.' Mālik related from Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd that Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib said that the *qiblah* was changed two months before Badr. Ibrāhīm ibn Iṣḥāq said that was in Rajab, 2 AH. Al-Bustī said, 'The Muslims prayed towards Jerusalem for seventeen months and three days. He came to Madīnah on

Monday, 15 Rabī‘ al-Awwal, and Allah commanded him to face the Ka‘bah on Tuesday, 15 Sha‘bān the following year.’

Scholars are of three different opinions concerning the reason why the Prophet ﷺ faced Jerusalem. Al-Ḥasan said, ‘It was by opinion and *ijtihād*.’ ‘Ikrimah and Abū al-‘Āliyah agreed with that view. The second opinion is that he had a choice between it and the Ka‘bah and chose Jerusalem because he wanted the Jews to believe. Aṭ-Ṭabarī said that. Az-Zajjāj said that it was to test the idolaters because they were used to the Ka‘bah. The third opinion and the one which the majority hold – Ibn ‘Abbās and others – is that he was obliged to face it by the command of Allah and Revelation from Him. Then Allah abrogated that and commanded him to face the Ka‘bah in the prayer. They cite as evidence: *‘We only appointed the direction you used to face in order to distinguish those who follow the Messenger from those who turn round on their heels.’* (2:143)

There is also disagreement about when the prayer was first made obligatory for him at Makkah and whether the qiblah was then towards Jerusalem or the Ka‘bah. There are two positions. One group say that it was towards Jerusalem and remained that way in Madīnah for seventeen months and then Allah changed it to the Ka‘bah. Ibn ‘Abbās said that. Others say that when the prayer was first made obligatory for him he faced towards the Ka‘bah and he continued to pray towards it while he was in Makkah, as Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl had done. When he went to Madīnah he prayed towards Jerusalem for sixteen or seventeen months and then Allah changed the qiblah back to the Ka‘bah. Abū ‘Umar said, ‘I consider this to be the sounder of the two positions.’ Another said, ‘That was because when the Prophet ﷺ came to Madīnah, he wanted to court the Jews and turned to their qiblah so that the Message would be easier for them to accept. When their obstinacy was evident and he despaired of them, he wanted to change back to the Ka‘bah and he looked up at the heavens.’ His love for Makka was because it was the qiblah of Ibrāhīm, as Ibn ‘Abbās said. It is said that it was to call the Arabs to Islam. It is said that it was to be different from the Jews, as Mujāhid said. Abū ‘l-‘Āliyah ar-Riyyāhī said, ‘The mosque and qiblah of Ṣāliḥ was towards the Ka‘bah. Mūsā used to pray towards the Stone which was in the direction of the qiblah and it was the qiblah of all the Prophets p.’

This āyah contains clear evidence that the rulings of Allah and His Book can be both abrogating and abrogated and the Community agree on that, except for the rare exception. Scholars agree that the qiblah was the first ruling to be abrogated in the Book and that it was abrogated twice, according to one of the positions about the matter. It also indicates that it is permissible for the Sunnah

to be abrogated by the Qur'an. That is because the Prophet ﷺ prayed towards Jerusalem and there was no Qur'anic text on that. That was a judgment only from the *Sunnah* and then that was abrogated by the Qur'an.

The *āyah* also contains evidence of the permission to make a ruling based on a single hadith. That was because facing Jerusalem was definite in our Sharī'ah, and then when someone came to the people of Qubā' and told them that the qiblah had been changed to the Sacred Mosque, they accepted that and turned towards it and abandoned the *mutawātir* in favour of the single report they heard. Scholars disagree about whether it is permitted logically and actually. Abū Ḥātim said, 'What is preferred is that that is permitted logically, if it is part of the worship entailed by the Sharī'ah, and actually in the time of the Prophet ﷺ as is shown in the story of Qubā' and also by the evidence that the Prophet ﷺ sent individual governors to the regions and they conveyed both the abrogating and abrogated. However it became forbidden after the death of the Prophet ﷺ by the consensus of the Companions, and the position then was that the Qur'an and the *mutawātir* are well-known and may not be abrogated by a single hadith, and no one believes that to be possible. Those who say that it is forbidden argue by the fact that it would lead what is impossible, namely removing what is definitive in favour of what is supposition. The story of Qubā' and the governors is based on circumstances that convey knowledge either by transmission and realisation, or by probability and implication. This is a question about the fundamental principles of *fiqh*.

It also contains evidence that if the abrogation has not reached a person, then he should worship according to the first ruling. This differs from those who said that the first ruling is removed by the mere existence of the abrogation, not by knowledge of it. The first view is sounder because the people of Qubā' continued to pray towards Jerusalem until someone came and told them about the abrogation and then they turned towards the qiblah. When the abrogation exists, it inevitably removes the prior judgment, but on the proviso that there is knowledge of it, because the abrogation is addressed to people, and if that has not reached someone, he is not addressed by it. The point in this disagreement concerns acts of worship which are performed after the abrogation but before the person performing them has heard about it: should he repeat them or not? This is also the basis for the actions of a deputy after he has been dismissed or the one who appointed him has died before he has learned of that. There are two views.

The same is true of a *qirād* transaction and those appointed by a judge when he dies or is dismissed. What is sound is that the action done by each of those people is carried out and their judgment is not revoked. Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ said, 'There

is no disagreement that the judgments of someone who has been freed, when he does not know that he has been freed, are the judgments of a free man in things involving other people. There is no disagreement that someone who has been freed does not repeat, after he was freed, any prayers he prayed with insufficient covering for a free person, when he did not know he had been freed. They disagree about someone who incurs an obligation which changes a ruling in worship while he is performing it which is analogous to the question of the prayer at Qubā’.

So if someone prays in a certain state which then changes before he finishes the prayer, he should complete the prayer and not break it off. What he has done satisfies the requirement. That is the same as someone who prays naked and then finds a garment while he is praying, or starts his prayer while healthy and then becomes ill, or is ill and then recovers, or sitting and then it able to stand, or the case of a slave-girl who is freed while she is praying: she takes a head covering and builds on what she has done. It is like someone who begins the prayer with *tayammum* and then finds water: he does not stop the prayer as Mālik, ash-Shāfi’ī and others said. Abū Ḥanīfah, however, said that he does stop it.

This contains evidence that a single report is accepted. The Salaf agree on it and there are multiple transmissions about it going back to the Prophet ﷺ sending his governors and messengers singly to all regions to instruct people in their *dīn* and convey to them the Sunnah of their Messenger ﷺ regarding commands and prohibitions. It also makes it very clear that the Qur’an was revealed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ piece by piece and circumstance after circumstance, according to need, until the *dīn* was complete as Allah says: ‘*Today I have perfected you dīn for you.*’ (5:3)

Say: “Both East and West belong to Allah.

Since He owns them both, He is entitled to command any direction He wishes.

He guides whoever He wills to a straight path.’

This indicates Allah’s guidance of this Community to the qiblah of Ibrāhīm and Allah knows best. *Ṣirāṭ* is the Path and ‘straight’ is that in which there are no twists.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ
عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ
الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى
اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ إِيْمَانَكُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرُءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾

143 In this way We have made you a middlemost community, so that you may act as witnesses against mankind and the Messenger as a witness against you. We only appointed the direction you used to face in order to know those who follow the Messenger from those who turn round on their heels. Though in truth it is a very hard thing – except for those Allah has guided. Allah would never let your faith go to waste. Allah is All-Gentle, Most Merciful to mankind.

In this way We have made you a middlemost community

As the Ka'bah is in the middle of the earth, so We made you a middlemost nation, meaning that we made you inferior to the Prophets but superior to other communities. The word '*wasat*' (middlemost) implies being just and balanced. The basis of this is the expression: 'The most praised of things is the middlemost of them.' At-Tirmidhī related from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī from the Prophet ﷺ about this *āyah* that it means 'just'. He said that it is a sound *ḥasan* hadith. We find in the Revelation: '*The best (awsat) of them said.*' It means the best and most just. The middle part of a valley is the best place in it and has the most plants and water. The middle avoids excess and falling short and is praiseworthy, so this community does not go to excess in elevating their Prophet (like the Christians) nor fall short as the Jews do in respect of their Prophets. In a hadith we find, 'The best of matters is the middlemost of them.' Alī said, 'You must take the middle way. The high descend to it and the low rise to it.' Someone who is from the middlemost of his people is one of the best of them.

so that you may act as witnesses against mankind

This is referring to the Gathering, when the Prophets are joined with their nations, as is established in *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* when Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'Nūḥ will be summoned on the Day of Rising and he will say, "At your service and obedience, O Lord!" Allah will say, "Did you convey it?" He will say, "Yes." It will be said to his community, "Did he convey

it to you?” They will say, “No warner came to us.” Allah will ask Nūḥ, “Who will then testify on your behalf?” He will say, “Muḥammad and his community.” They will testify that he conveyed it. That is the meaning of His words: “*In this way We have made you a middlemost community, so that you may act as witnesses against mankind.*” Ibn al-Mubārak mentioned this hadith in full. We find in it: “Those nations will ask, “How will those who did not meet us testify against us?” The Lord will ask them, “How can you testify against those whom you did not meet?” They will answer, “Our Lord, You sent a Messenger to us and sent down Your contract and Book to us and recounted to us that they conveyed it. Therefore we bear witness to what You entrusted to us.” The Lord will say, “You spoke the truth.” That is the import of His words, “*We have made you a middlemost community,*” and “middlemost” is just: “*so that you may act as witnesses against mankind and the Messenger as a witness against you.*” Ibn An’am said, ‘I heard that on that Day the community of Muḥammad ﷺ will bear witness, except for someone who has sympathy in his heart for his brother.’

One group said that the *āyah* means that they will testify against one another after death as is confirmed in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* from Anas that the Prophet ﷺ said when a funeral passed by him and the deceased was spoken well of: ‘It is obliged. It is obliged. It is obliged.’ Then another passed him and deceased was spoken ill of and he said, ‘It is obliged. It is obliged. It is obliged.’ ‘Umar said, ‘May my father and mother be your ransom, a funeral passed by and the deceased was spoken well of and you said, “It is obliged. It is obliged. It is obliged.” Then a funeral passed by and the deceased was spoken ill of and you said, “It is obliged. It is obliged. It is obliged.”’ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The Garden is obliged for the one you spoke well of and the Fire is obliged for the one you spoke ill of. You are the witnesses of Allah on the earth. You are the witnesses of Allah on the earth. You are the witnesses of Allah on the earth.” Al-Bukhārī transmitted a similar report.

Abān and Layth related from Shahr ibn Ḥawshab that ‘Ubādah ibn aṢ-ṣāmit said that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, ‘My Community was given three things which no other Prophets were given. Whenever Allah sent a Prophet, He said to him, “Call on Me and I will answer you.” He said to this Community, “All of you call on Me and I will answer you.” When He sent a Prophet, He said to him, “I have not imposed any hardship on you in the *dīn*.” He said to this Community, “I have not imposed any hardship on any of you in the *dīn*.” When He sent a Prophet, He made him a witness against his people but He made this Community witnesses against the whole of mankind.’ Abū ‘Abdullāh at-Tirmidhī al-Ḥakīm transmitted it in *Nawādir al-uṣūl*.

Our scholars say that, in His Book, our Lord has informed us of the preference He has given us by describing us as just and by entrusting us with the important task of bearing witness against all creation. He has given us the first place even if we are the last in time, as the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘We are the first who came last.’ This is also evidence that only the just may be witnesses, which will be discussed later.

This *āyah* also contains evidence for the soundness of the consensus of the community and the obligation to judge by it because they have been considered just enough to testify against all mankind. Every generation is a witness for those who come after them. The position of the Companions is evidence and testimony for the *Tābi‘ūn* and that of the *Tābi‘ūn* for those after them. Since the Community have been made witnesses, it is mandatory to accept what they say.

and the Messenger as a witness against you.

Meaning about your actions on the Day of Rising. It is also said that this can mean, ‘for you’, bearing witness that you have faith.

We only appointed the direction you used to face in order to know those who follow the Messenger

What is meant here is the first qiblah since He says: ‘*you used to face.*’ It is also said that it was, in fact, the second qiblah. ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālīb said that ‘know’ in this context means ‘see’. The Arabs used knowledge to mean seeing and seeing to mean knowledge. It is also said to mean ‘so that you know that We know.’ The hypocrites had doubts about Allah’s knowledge of things before they took place. It is said that this distinguishes the people of certainty from the people of doubt, as Ibn Fūrak said. Aṭ-Ṭabarī mentioned the same view from Ibn ‘Abbās. It is said that it means: ‘so that the Prophet and his followers will know.’ Allah reports that about Himself. It is said that it means: ‘so that Muḥammad will know.’ The best view is that the meaning is that there is direct witnessing of that which makes repayment mandatory. Allah knows the unseen and the visible and He knows what will come about before it takes place. The circumstances of known things vary but His knowledge does not vary. His knowledge is the same in every instance. ‘*Follow the Messenger*’ here means in respect of the command to change the qiblah to the Ka‘bah.

from those who turn round on their heels

This is referring to those who apostatised from the *dīn*, because when the