

Answer to Question

The Issue of the Sunnah Abrogating the Qur'an

To: Abou Malek Hamdouni

(Translated)

Question:

Our Emir, peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be upon you. May Allah protect you and bless your work.

My question is: Is there a difference of opinion among the mujtahideen or scholars of Islamic legal principles regarding the issue of the Sunnah abrogating (naskh) the Qur'an? And what about Al-Shafi'i's position on the issue of stoning an adulterer, male or female, abrogating the punishment of flogging for those who are married? What are their evidences?

Answer:

And upon you be peace, and the mercy and blessings of Allah.

The answer to your question is explained in detail in *The Islamic Personality*, Volume Three, in the chapter on the abrogation of the Qur'an. I quote it for you here:

[It is permissible for the Qur'an to be abrogated by the Qur'an, because both are equal in the obligation to believe in them and act upon them, and because both the abrogating text and the abrogated text came through revelation, in wording and meaning. Therefore, the Qur'an may be abrogated by the Qur'an.

Examples include the abrogation of the waiting period ('iddah) of one year with a waiting period of four months and ten days; the abrogation of giving charity before privately consulting the Messenger, by the verse beginning with: ﴿أَسْفَقْتُمْ﴾ “**Have you feared...**” [TMQ Al-Mujadilah: 13]; and the abrogation of the ruling that one believer must stand firm against ten, replacing it with the ruling that one believer must stand firm against two, through the saying of Allah, the Exalted: ﴿الْآنَ خَفَّفَ اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ﴾ “**Now Allah has lightened your burden**” [TMQ Al-Anfal: 66]. This demonstrates that abrogation has occurred within the Qur'an. Its actual occurrence in Islamic law is the strongest evidence of its legal permissibility.

One cannot argue that abrogation means invalidating a ruling, and that this is impermissible in relation to the Qur'an because Allah says: ﴿لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ﴾ “**Falsehood cannot approach it from before it or from behind it**” [TMQ Fussilat: 42]. One might argue that if some of the Qur'an were abrogated, falsehood would thereby have entered it. This argument is incorrect because what is impermissible is invalidating the entire Qur'an; it is therefore not possible for the whole Qur'an to be abrogated, whereas some of its rulings may be abrogated.

In other words, no earlier scripture preceded this Book with anything that invalidates it, nor will anything that comes after it invalidate it. The Qur'an as a whole cannot be abrogated, but some of its rulings can. Furthermore, it is impermissible to invalidate the verses themselves by abrogating their recitation. However, it is permissible to remove the rulings contained in some verses—that is, to abrogate certain rulings—as has demonstrably occurred.

Moreover, the verse does not say that invalidation cannot come to it; rather, it says that falsehood cannot come to it. There is a difference between invalidation and falsehood. Invalidation means abrogating a ruling, whereas falsehood is the opposite of truth. Thus, there is no doubt that the Qur'an may be abrogated by the Qur'an.

As for the Qur'an being abrogated by the Sunnah, this is impermissible and has not occurred.

As for why it is impermissible, Allah, the Exalted, says: ﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ﴾ “**And We have sent down to you the Reminder so that you may explain to people what has**

been sent down to them” [TMQ An-Nahl: 44]. Allah thus described the Prophet as one who explains, whereas an abrogating text removes a ruling rather than explaining it. Removal is not the same as explanation.

Allah also says: ﴿مَا نُنسِخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا﴾ **“Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or similar to it”** [TMQ Al-Baqarah: 106]. This indicates that the One who brings something better or similar is Allah, the Exalted, because the pronoun refers to Him. This would only be the case if the abrogating text were from the Qur’an. That is why Allah says: ﴿أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾ **“Do you not know that Allah is capable of all things?”** [TMQ Al-Baqarah: 106]. This suggests that the One who brings something better or similar is the One possessing perfect power. Abrogation therefore cannot occur through the Sunnah, because the one who brings the Sunnah is the Messenger.

Although the Sunnah, like the Qur’an, comes through revelation, as Allah says: ﴿وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۖ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ﴾ **“Nor does he speak from his own desires. It is nothing but revelation revealed”** [TMQ An-Najm: 3-4], the Sunnah is revealed in meaning, is not recited as Qur’an, and its recitation is not an act of worship. The Qur’an, by contrast, is revealed in both wording and meaning, is recited, and its recitation is an act of worship.

Allah also says: ﴿وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَكَانَ آيَةٍ﴾ **“And when We replace one verse with another”** [TMQ An-Nahl: 101]. He thus states that a verse is replaced by another verse, not by the Sunnah.

Allah further says: ﴿قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا إِنَّكَ بَفَرٍّ غَيْرٌ هَذَا أَوْ بَدَّلَهُ فَلَا مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تِلْقَاءِ نَفْسِي إِنْ أَتَيْتُ﴾ **“Those who do not expect to meet Us say, ‘Bring a Qur’an other than this, or change it.’ Say, ‘It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me’”** [TMQ Yunus: 15]. This is evidence that the Qur’an is not abrogated by anything other than the Qur’an.

Further evidence is that when the polytheists saw one verse being replaced by another, they said: ﴿إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُفْتَرٍ﴾ **“You are merely fabricating”** [TMQ An-Nahl: 101]. Allah removed their misconception by saying: ﴿قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ﴾ **“Say, ‘The Holy Spirit has brought it down from your Lord’”** [TMQ An-Nahl: 102]. This indicates that replacement occurs only through what the Holy Spirit brought down, namely the Qur’an: ﴿نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ﴾ **“The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down”** [TMQ Ash-Shu’araa’: 193].

In summary, although both the Qur’an and the Sunnah came through Revelation, the Sunnah is attributed to the Messenger (saw). We say, “The Messenger of Allah said,” whereas we do not say, “Allah said,” except in the case of a hadith qudsi. Thus, the Sunnah is not directly attributed to Allah in the same way as the Qur’an. The Sunnah came from Allah in meaning, while the Qur’an came in both wording and meaning. The Sunnah is not recited as an act of worship, whereas the Qur’an is. All of this means that the Qur’an cannot be abrogated by the Sunnah.

Furthermore, the wording of the two verses concerning abrogation indicates **that a verse is abrogated by another verse. The first says:** ﴿مَا نُنسِخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا﴾ **“Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or similar to it”** [TMQ Al-Baqarah: 106]. This indicates that the abrogating text is a verse, because something similar in this context can only be another verse, not a hadith. The second says: ﴿وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَكَانَ آيَةٍ﴾ **“And when We replace one verse with another”** [TMQ An-Nahl: 101]. This explicitly states that replacement takes place by putting one verse in the place of another. This means that the abrogating text must be a verse. Therefore, only the Qur’an can abrogate the Qur’an. All of this is evidence that the Qur’an cannot be abrogated by the Sunnah, whether the Sunnah is mutawatir (transmitted through numerous independent chains) or based on an individual report (khabar al-ahad).

As for the claim that the Qur’an has not in fact been abrogated by the Sunnah, no ruling has been established that abrogates a ruling of the Qur’an. As for the rulings that some claim were abrogated by the Sunnah, some were abrogated by the Qur’an, while others involve specification rather than abrogation.

For example, they say that the instruction to make a bequest to parents and relatives, mentioned in the saying of Allah: ﴿كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدُكُمْ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةُ لِلْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ﴾ **“It is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, to make a bequest for parents and close relatives in a fair manner—a duty upon the righteous”** [TMQ Al-Baqarah: 180], was abrogated by the saying of the Prophet (saw): ﴿لَا وَصِيَّةَ لِرِثٍ﴾ **“There is no bequest for an heir”** [narrated by Ahmad].

The answer is that this ruling was abrogated by the verses on inheritance, including Allah’s saying: ﴿يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ﴾ **“Allah instructs you concerning your children...”** [TMQ An-Nisaa’: 11] and the following verses.

They also say that the punishment of flogging for adultery, mentioned in Allah’s saying: ﴿الرَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ﴾ **“The woman and the man guilty of adultery—flog each of them one hundred lashes”** [TMQ An-Nur: 2], was abrogated by the punishment of stoning established through the Sunnah.

The answer is that flogging was not abrogated (naskh); it remains in force. Rather, the ruling specifies flogging for those who are unmarried, while stoning applies to those who are married. This is specification, not abrogation.

Specifying the Qur’an through the Sunnah is permissible because it constitutes an explanation and therefore falls under Allah’s words, ﴿لِتُبَيِّنَ﴾ **“so that you may explain”** [TMQ An-Nahl: 44], whereas abrogation removes a ruling and is not explanation.

Moreover, both hadiths—the hadith «لَا وَصِيَّةَ لِرِثٍ» **“There is no bequest for an heir”** and the hadith concerning stoning—are individual reports (akhbar ahad). Even if we were to assume, for the sake of argument, that the Qur’an could be abrogated by the Sunnah, it would not be permissible for it to be abrogated by an individual report. This is because the Qur’an is definitive in its transmission, whereas an individual report is probabilistic in its transmission. What is definitive cannot be abrogated by what is probabilistic, because abrogation involves removing a ruling; a ruling established with certainty cannot be removed by one established only probabilistically.

This also supports the conclusion that the examples cited to prove that such abrogation occurred are incorrect. Since the Qur’an has never been abrogated by the Sunnah, and the absence of such an occurrence is sufficient to indicate its impermissibility, the issue is not whether it is logically possible, but whether it is legally permissible under Islamic law.

Likewise, the Qur’an cannot be abrogated by the consensus of the Companions or by analogy, because both arose after the time of the Messenger (saw). The Companions unanimously agreed that abrogation cannot occur after the Messenger’s time, and there is absolutely no disagreement on this point.]

The answer to both parts of your question is therefore clear:

- 1. The Qur’an is not abrogated by the Sunnah. Those who maintain that this is permissible hold an incorrect opinion.**
- 2. The verse prescribing flogging for the woman and man guilty of adultery is specified as applying to those who are unmarried, male and female, by the hadith of the Messenger of Allah (saw) concerning stoning adulterers. Specifying the Qur’an through the Sunnah is an established practice supported by evidence.**

This is sufficient, and Allah Knows Best and Judges Most Wisely.

Your brother,

Ata bin Khalil Abu al-Rashtah

24 Rabi’ al-Akhar 1448 AH

Corresponding to 6 October 2026 CE

The Link to the Answer from the Ameer’s Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/AtaAboAlrashtah/posts/122155438977129051>