290374 - The reasons for differences in the wording of some abrogated verses

the question

I have read on your website answers to questions having to do with abrogated soorahs of the Holy Qur’an, specifically Soorat at-Turaab. You quoted various hadiths, which you said are saheeh, which mentioned the abrogated verses. What prompted my question is the fact that there is a difference of opinion concerning the texts, so how can the hadiths be saheeh, when they mention texts that differ from the soorah?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

One of the texts which is abrogated and removed from the Mushaf is this verse: “If the son of Adam had two valleys of wealth he would desire a third, but nothing will fill the belly of the son of Adam except dust.”

That is because of the report narrated by Muslim (1050) from Abu Moosa al-Ash‘ari who said: We used to recite a soorah which we likened in its length and strictness to Baraa’ah [Soorat at-Tawbah], then I was caused to forget it, but I remember from it the words: “If the son of Adam had two valleys of wealth he would desire a third, but nothing will fill the belly of the son of Adam except dust.”

We have previously discussed that in the answer to question no. 176972.

Ibn Hazm (may Allah have mercy on him) said, explaining the different types of abrogation:

Abrogation of the text and the ruling: It was narrated that Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) said: We used to recite a soorah that was equal in length to Soorat at-Tawbah; I do not

remember anything of it except this verse: “If the son of Adam had two valleys of gold, he would desire a third, and if he had a third, he would desire a fourth, but nothing will fill the belly of the son of Adam except dust, and Allah turns in mercy to whoever repents.”

End quote from an-Naasikh wa’l-Mansookh by Ibn Hazm (p. 9).

Perhaps the reason for the different wordings narrated for this verse is that when it was abrogated, it was no longer Qur’an, so the narrators were less careful about its wording, and were not so careful about it as they were in the case of the Qur’an or the hadith of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) which they wanted to convey to those who came after them. Do you not see that Abu Moosa al-Ash‘ari (may Allah be pleased with him) said: We used to recite a soorah which we likened in its length and strictness to Baraa’ah [Soorat at-Tawbah], then I was caused to forget it?

The focus of the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) was on preserving and memorizing that which was proven, in order to convey it to the people. As for that which had been abrogated, they were not very concerned with it, so it was sufficient for them and for those who narrated from them to narrate it in general terms, or to narrate the meaning, or to narrate it with less precision in some of the phrases, especially since both the text and the ruling were abrogated. If the ruling remained in effect, they would pay more attention to the wording in order to apply it.

Al-Qaadi ‘Iyaad (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Then think about what the Sahaabah mentioned of the verses which were abrogated; they only mentioned the meaning and some words, not the exact wording as revealed.

The context and style of the Qur’an confirm what they mentioned about that, and what they narrated here is clearly far removed from the style and eloquence of the Qur’an.

End quote from Ikmaal al-Mu‘lim bi Fawaa’id Muslim (3/585).

It may be that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said something along these lines with different wording on different occasions, on the grounds that this is a prophetic hadith,

then these wordings became mixed with the wording of the abrogated verse, because of what we have noted above, or the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) did not focus their attention on memorizing verses of which the text had been abrogated. Hence Anas said: I do not know whether it was something that was revealed to him or something that he said. Narrated by Muslim (1048).

And Allah knows best.