

Surah 5. Al-Maida

Asad: O YOU who have attained to faith! Be true to your covenants!¹ Lawful to you is the [flesh of every] beast that feeds on plants, save what is mentioned to you [hereinafter²]: but you are not allowed to hunt while you are in the state of pilgrimage. Behold, God ordains in accordance with His will.³

Malik: O believers! Fulfil your contract obligations. All four-legged animals from livestock are lawful to you other than those which are hereby announced. However do not violate the prohibition of hunting while you are in Ihram (Hajj dress). Indeed Allah orders whatever He pleases.

Pickthall: O ye who believe! Fulfil your undertakings. The beast of cattle is made lawful unto you (for food) except that which is announced unto you (herein), game being unlawful when ye are on pilgrimage. Lo! Allah ordaineth that which pleaseth Him.

Yusuf Ali: O ye who believe! fulfil (all) obligations. Lawful unto you (for food) are all four-footed animals with the exceptions named: but animals of the chase are forbidden while ye are in the Sacred Precincts or in pilgrim garb: for Allah doth command according to His Will and Plan. 682 683 684 685

Transliteration: Ya ayyuha allatheena amanoo awfoo bialAAuqoodi ohillat lakum baheematu alanAAami illa ma yutla AAalaykum ghayra muhillee alIssaydi waantum hurumun inna Allaha yahkumu ma yureedu
Khattab:

O believers! Honour your obligations. All grazing livestock has been made lawful to you—except what is hereby announced to you and hunting while on pilgrimage. Indeed, Allah commands what He wills.

Author Comments

1 - The term 'aqd ("covenant") denotes a solemn undertaking or engagement involving more than one party. According to Raghīb, the covenants referred to in this verse "are of three kinds: the covenants between God and man [i.e., man's obligations towards God], between man and his own soul, and between the individual and his fellow-men" - thus embracing the entire area of man's moral and social responsibilities.

2 - I.e., in verse {3}. Literally, the expression bahimat al-an'am could be translated as "a beast of the cattle"; but since this would obviously be a needless tautology, many commentators incline to the view that what is meant here is "any beast which resembles [domesticated] cattle insofar as it feeds on plants and is not a beast of prey" (Razi; also Lisan al-'Arab, art. na'ma). I have adopted this convincing interpretation in my rendering of the above phrase.

3 - Lit., "whatever He wills" or "deems fit": i.e., in accordance with a plan of which He alone has full knowledge. Regarding the prohibition of hunting while on pilgrimage, see verses {94-96} of this surah.

682 - This line has been justly admired for its terseness and comprehensiveness. Obligations: 'uqud the Arabic word implies so many things that a whole chapter of Commentary can be written on it. First, there are the divine obligations that arise from our spiritual nature and our relation to Allah. He created us and implanted in us the faculty of knowledge and foresight: besides the intuition and reason which He gave us. He made Nature responsive to our needs, and His Signs in Nature are so many lessons to us in our own inner life; He further sent Messengers and Teachers, for the guidance of our conduct in individual, social, and public life. All these gifts create corresponding obligations which we must fulfil. But in our own human and material life we undertake mutual obligations express and implied. We make a promise: we enter into a commercial or social contract; we enter into a contract of marriage: we must faithfully fulfil all obligations in all these relationships. Our group or our State enters into a treaty; every individual in that group or State is bound to see that as far as lies in his power, such obligations are faithfully discharged. There are tacit obligations; living in civil society, we must respect its tacit conventions unless they are morally wrong, and in that case we must get out of such society. There are tacit obligations in the characters of host and guest, wayfarer of companion, employer or employed, etc., etc., which every man of Faith must discharge conscientiously. The man who deserts those who need him and goes to pray in a desert is a coward who disregards his obligations. All these obligations are inter-connected. Truth and fidelity are parts of religion in all relations of life. This verse is numbered separately from the succeeding verses.

683 - That is, the exceptions named not only in the Qur-an but in the Sunnah as well. See v. 3 below.

684 - Cf. v. 94-96. Hunting and the use of game are forbidden "while ye are hurumun," i.e., while ye are (1) in the Sacred Precincts, or (2) in the special pilgrim garb (ihram), as to which see n. 212, ii. 196. In most cases the two amount to the same thing. The Sacred Precincts are sanctuary both for man and beast.

685 - Allah's commands are not arbitrary. His Will is the perfect Archetype or Plan of the world. Everything He wills has regard to His Plan, in which are reflected His perfect wisdom and goodness.

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