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See also: ABROGATION; ALMSGIVING; BADR; CAPTIVES; COMMUNITY; COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHECY; DISBELIEVER(S); INTERCESSION; JĀHILIYYA; JIHAD; JIZYA; KA‘BA; OBEDIENCE; OCCASIONS OF REVELATION; ORPHANS; PRAYER; RESURRECTION; WIVES OF THE PROPHECY; ZAKĀT.

MUZAFFAR IQBAL AND CSABA OKVATH

BOUNDARIES OF ALLAH

ḤUDŪD ALLĀH

Definitions and Usage

“Boundaries of Allah (*ḥudūd Allah*) are matters of which Allah Almighty has clearly designated limits of permissibility and prohibition and has commanded that these limits not be breached in the least, lest one transgresses to something He has either not sanctioned or has forbidden outright... *Ḥadd* also denotes legal punishment meted out to those who commit a forbidden act” (Azharī, *sub ḥ-d-d*).

Lexically *ḥadd*, from the root *ḥ-d-d* (pl. *ḥudūd*), carries two primary meanings: (i) *al-man‘a*, to prevent or impede and (ii) separation between two things (*al-ḥājiz bayn al-shay‘ayn*) which prevents their intermixing (Azharī, Ibn Manẓūr, Rāghīb). In sacred Law, a legal punishment is called *ḥadd* as it prevents the sinner from committing the sin again (Ibn Fāris).

The phrase appears twelve times (Q 2:187, 229x4, 230x2; 4:13; 9:112; 58:4; 65:1x2) as *ḥudūd Allāh*, once (Q 4:14) as *His boundaries* (*ḥudūdahu*), and once (Q 9:97) as the noun *ḥadūda*. Except for two instances (Q

9:97, 112), all Qurʾānic occurrences of “Boundaries of Allah” are preceded by legal rulings (*aḥkām*): four times (Q 2:229x4) in reference to division of inheritance; four times (Q 2:230x2; 65:1x2) with regard to matters of divorce (*q.v.*); once (Q 58:4) in reference to those who want to retract their *zihār*—a self-declaration forbidding one’s wife to oneself, declaring, *be as my mother’s back* (cf. Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī) (see FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD; GENDER RELATIONS; INHERITANCE AND PATRIMONY; KINDRED; MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE).

The first of the two exceptions (Q 9:97) is in reference to Bedouins (*q.v.*), who are *more likely not to know the boundaries of what Allah has revealed*; and the second (Q 9:112) in the phrase *those who protect the Boundaries of Allah*, in the verse which also mentions *the penitent, the worshippers, those who praise [Allah], the wayfarers, those who bow and prostrate, those who enjoin right and forbid wrong*. Abū al-Faḍl Shihāb al-Dīn al-Sayyid Maḥmūd b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1853) says that the phrase indicates all the laws pertaining to the subject at hand, and is a reminder of the penalty for transgressing those laws (*Rūḥ*, sub Q 2:229); he elsewhere observes that “these rulings are limits that constitute a barrier between Divinity and servanthood: Allah rules, and servants obey; do not then approach these judgments, lest you come thereby to associate [partners with Allah]” (*Rūḥ*, sub Q 2:187).

Glosses

Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Māwardī (364-450/974-1058) cites five meanings for the term “Boundaries of Allah”: (i) obedience to Allah (*ṭāʿat Allāh*), per Ibn ʿAbbās; (ii) conditions set by Allah (*shurūṭ Allāh*), per al-Suddī; (iii) the custom and command of Allah (*sunnat Allāh wa amruhu*); (iv) obligatory deeds (*farāʾid*) Allah has proscribed, which serve as a limit for His servants; and (v) explanations by Allah of the obligatory acts (*tafṣīlāt Allāh li-farāʾidih*) (*Nukat*, sub Q 4:13; cf. al-Ṭabarī, who cites the first four and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, who cites the first three). More generally, “Boundaries of Allah” are obligatory acts, His commands, and what He has declared lawful and unlawful (*q.v.*) (Samarqandī, sub Q 2:229; Ibn ʿAṭīyya, sub Q 4:13). They are “His ordinances, be they commands to follow or prohibitions to avoid” (*Zamakhsharī*, sub Q 2:187). Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) says “Boundaries of Allah” are of two types: (i) those we are commanded to observe by acting upon them (*ḥudūd al-amr bil-imtithāl*), such as the Divine ordinances regarding marriage and divorce; and (ii) those

we are commanded to observe by refraining (*ḥudūd al-nahy bil-ijtināb*), such as the forbidden acts during fasting (*Tafsīr*, sub Q 2:230).

Boundaries of Allah are made known to humanity by both the Qurʾān and the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace. In Q 4:13, the phrase *And those are the boundaries of Allah* is followed by *And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, him will He bring into gardens beneath which rivers flow, therein to abide forever; and that is the supreme success. But whoever rebels against Allah and His Messenger and transgresses His boundaries, him will He commit unto fire, therein to abide forever; a humiliating chastisement awaits him* (Q 4:13-14). According to al-Rāghib (*Tafsīr*), the specification *whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger* signals the obligation to adhere to both the laws proscribed in the Qurʾān and those explained by the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace (cf. Bukhārī, Waṣāyā, an yatrūk warathatah aghniyāʾ khayr min an yatakaffafū al-nās; Muslim, Waṣiyya, al-waṣiyya bil-thuluth; Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Abwāb al-waṣāyā, mā jāʾa Lā waṣiyya li-wārith).

The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said:

Allah strikes a simile of the straight path (*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*): on both sides of the path are walls in which there are wide-open doors with draped curtains, and at the head of the path a crier calls, “O people! Embark together on the Straight Path, and do not be driven apart!” And whenever someone seeks to open any one of those doors, a crier calls from above the path: “Beware! Do not open it—for if you open it, you will enter it.” The path is Islam; the two walls are the Boundaries of Allah; the open doors are what Allah has proscribed; the crier at the head of the path is the Book of Allah; and the crier above the path is the exhorter to Allah (*wāʿizu-Llāh*) [who is] in the heart of every Muslim.

For a slightly variant version of the hadith, see Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Abwāb al-amthāl, mā jāʾa fi mathali-Llāhi li-ʿibādih, hadith classed *ḥasan gharīb*; Aḥmad, Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn, ḥadith Nawwās b. Samʿān al-Kilābī 29:172 §17629. Also cited in Ibn Rajab, *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm wal-ḥikam* 1:104

Al-Zamakhsharī (467-538/ca.1074-1143) uses subtle imagery to explicate the delicate nature of following the commands and avoiding the prohibitions set by Allah Most High:

Whoever is in a state of obedience to Allah and acts according to His laws is acting in the