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See also: ADOPTION; BLOOD RELATIONS; DAY OF JUDGMENT; FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD; INHERITANCE; MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE; MOTHER OF MŪSĀ; MŪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; RIGHTS; VEIL.

MUHAMMAD UMAR

BRIBERY

IDLĀ’, SUḤT, AKL BIL-BĀṬIL, THAMAN QALĪL, ‘ARAD, IGHĪLĀL

This article comprises the following sections: (i) Definitions and usage: *Idlā’*; (ii) *Suḥt*; (iii) *Akl bil-bāṭil*; (iv) *Thaman qalīl*; (v) *‘Arad*; (vi) *Ighlāl*; (vii) *Suḥt* as bribery of judges; (viii) *Suḥt* as “bribery in religion;” (ix) Bribery as a Judeo-Christian sin in the Qur’ān and Sunna; (x) Bribery as damnable consumption and an enormity;

(xi) Bibliography.

The Qur’ān refers to the practice of bribery with six different terms that recur in 23 verses: the verb *tudlū* (send forth, dangle, subst. *idlā’*) in Q 2:188, the noun *suḥt* (ill-gotten goods) in Q 5:42, 62-63, the expression *akl bil-bāṭil* (consuming wrongfully) in Q 2:188; 4:29, 161; 9:34, the expression *thaman qalīl* (a paltry price) in Q 2:41,79,174; 3:77,187,199; 5:44,106 (*thaman*, without *qalīl*), 9:9, 16:95, the noun *‘arad* (fleeting gain) in Q 4:94, 7:169, 8:67, 24:33, and the verb *ghalla*, *yaghull* and *yaghulul* (to cheat, hate, embezzle, subst. *ghill* and *ighlāl*) in Q 3:161. Bribery (*rishwa*, sometimes voweled as *rashwa* or *rushwa*) is defined as “what is remitted to invalidate a right or validate a wrong” (*mā yu‘ṭā li-ibtāl ḥaqq aw li-iḥqāq bāṭil*) (Baghawī, *Sharḥ* 10:88). Bribery is also a sub-category of usury (see ENORMITIES, USURY).

Definitions and usage

Idlā’. Cognates of *d-l-w* occur three times in the Qur’ān: (i) in Q 2:188 metaphorically, in the sense of bribery: *And do not devour one another’s assets by false means, nor dangle them (wa-tudlū bihā) before judges so as to devour a portion of other people’s assets wrongfully and knowingly;* (ii) in Q 7:22 in the sense of pulling and drawing—*He led them on with guile (fa-dallāhumā bi-ghurūr)*; and (iii) in Q 12:19 in the literal sense of lowering a bucket down a well (see next paragraph).

The “false means” are “false testimonies” (*shahādāt al-zūw*) (Ibn Qutayba; Samarqandī, *sub* Q 2:188) while *adlā al-dalwa idlā’an wa-dalāhā dalwan* means “to send a bucket down a well and pull it up” (Baghdādī, *Khizāna* 7:475; cf. Farāhīdī, 8:69; Zajjāj, *sub* Q 2:188) with a rope (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:188) and is thus used, in the literal sense, in the verse *And there came a caravan, and they sent their water-drawer. Then he let down his pail [into the well and brought it up] and he said: What luck! Here is a youth...* (Yūsuf 12:19).

The verbal expression *adlā bi-* can be used figuratively in several senses that range from narrow specificity to broad generality: (i) for “bribing” (*tudlū bihā... ay turshū bihā*) (Naḥḥās, 1:290; cf. Rāghib; Zamakhsharī, Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, Abū Ḥayyān, Qummī, etc., *sub* Q 2:188); (ii) or “disputing” (Naḥḥās, *ibid.*); (iii) or “adducing one’s proof” (*adlā fulān bi-ḥujjatih ay iḥtajja bihā*) (Farāhīdī, 8:69); (iv) or as a metonymy (*majāz*) for “pursuing one’s need” (*dalawtu ḥājati: ṭalabtuḥā*) (Zamakhsharī, *Asās, d-l-w*) (v) and a metaphor (*isti‘āra*) for striving to reach something specific (Rāghib, *sub d-l-w*; Qūnawī, *Ḥāshiya* 5:59), as in the figurative use of “baiting” and “fishing” in English: The late Egyptian exegete Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha‘rāwī