

HIM PEACE; JIBRĪL, UPON HIM PEACE; JINN; KA‘BA;
LIFE; LIGHT; MANIFEST AND HIDDEN; MIKĀ‘IL, UPON
HIM PEACE; MOON; MOUNTAINS; NIGHT AND DAY;
OCEANS; PEN AND WRITING; PLANTS AND VEGETATION;
POLYTHEISM AND POLYTHEISTS; PRAYER; PRESERVED
TABLET; PROPHETHOOD; RABB AND RUBŪBIYYA; RAIN;
RESURRECTION; SATAN(S); SHADE; SKY; STARS AND
PLANETS; SUN; TAWHĪD; THRONE OF ALLAH; TREE;
WATER; WINDS; WOMB.

MUZAFFAR IQBAL AND HASAN SPIKER

CRITERION

FURQĀN

This article comprises the following sections: i. Definitions and Usage; ii. A Name for the Qur’ān; iii. Granted to Believers; iv. A Designation for the Battle of Badr; v. Book, Torah, Light; vi. Exegetical Remarks on Sūrat al-Furqān; vii. Bibliography.

Definitions and Usage

Criterion, defined as a principle or standard by which something is judged or decided, is used here for the Qur’ānic term *furqān*, from the root *f-r-q*, which bears the primary meaning of distinction (*tamyīz*) and separation (*tazyīl*), especially between two strikingly different things—whence *furqān* as a name for dawn (*subḥ*), separating night and day (Ibn Fāris). Related words from the same root (*farq*, *firq*, *firqa*, *fariq*, *faraq*) have similar connotations.

Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (d. 502/ca.1108) says that these terms differ in the mode or degree of distinction, so that *farq* is used for a differentiation through “separation” (*infīṣāl*) and *farq* through “cleaving” (*inshiqāq*); *fariq* is a party that splits from another group; and the verb *faraq* means to differentiate between two things, whether through physical sight (*baṣar*) or noetic insight (*baṣīra*). Al-Rāghib further explains that *furqān* is more emphatic (*ablagh*) than *farq*, because it is reserved for “the separation of truth from falsehood” whereas *farq* can also bear more general usages. Thus, the Qur’ānic appellation “the Day of the Criterion” (*yawm al-furqān*) (Q 8:41) for the Battle of Badr (*q.v.*), is so called because it was a day “when truth and falsehood, the demonstration (*al-ḥujja*) and the doubtful (*al-shubha*), were differentiated.” He explains other Qur’ānic usage:

And in His saying, *O you who believe, if you fear Allah, He will make for you discernment*

(*furqānan*, Q 8:29), [it is] a light and an ability in your heart to differentiate between truth and falsehood, such that the *furqān* here is like tranquility and spirit elsewhere... The Criterion (*al-furqān*) is also the Speech (*kalām*) of Allah the Exalted [that is, Revelation], for it differentiates between truth and falsehood in creed (*al-ḥaqq wal-bāṭil fīl-i‘tiqād*), between truthfulness and lying in speech (*al-ṣidq wal-kadhib fīl-maqāl*), and between righteousness and perfidy in deeds (*al-ṣāliḥ wal-ṭāliḥ fīl-a‘māl*)—and this is so in the Qur’ān, the Torah, and the Injil (*q.v.*).

Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Fayrūzābādī (729-817/1329-1414) emphasizes the polysemous nature of the noun *furqān* as it denotes “succor (*naṣr*), proof (*burhān*), morning (*subḥ*), the Torah, the splitting of the sea, and the Day of Criterion” (*Baṣā‘ir*). Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Askarī (d. 395/1005) specifies three connotations of the word *furqān* in the Qur’ān: (i) assistance (*nuṣra*), as in Q 2:53 (*And when We gave Mūsā the Book and the furqān*) and Q 8:41 (*on the Day of furqān*); (ii) clarifying proof (*bayyina*), as in Q 2:185 when describing the Qur’ān (*a guidance for humankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the furqān*), because it leads one out from obscurity and erring (*dalāla*); and (iii) the Qur’ān itself, as in Q 3:4 (*and He revealed al-furqān*), which is, by exegetical consensus, a name for the Qur’ān (*Wujūh*, bāb 20, al-furqān). Abū-l-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Jawzī (510-597/ca.1116-1200) also says that “the exegetes” (*ahl al-tafsīr*) admit three Qur’ānic meanings for the word *furqān*, but in place of (ii) above (*bayyina*), he notes the meaning of “relief” or “escape” (*makhraj*) from erring, suspicion, and obscurity (*shubha*), as in Q 2:185 (*and clear proofs of guidance and the furqān*), 3:4 (*and He sent down the furqān*), and 8:29 (*if you fear Allah, He will grant you a furqān*) (*Nuzhat*). Other exegetes add two meanings to *furqānan*, the indefinite accusative used in Q 8:29: escape (*makhraj*) and deliverance (*najāt*) (*cf.* Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*) (see below).

The root *f-r-q* occurs 72 times in the Qur’ān (‘Abd al-Bāqī) in fourteen derived forms. The substantive *furqān* appears six times in the definite form (Q 2:53, 185; 3:4; 8:41; 21:48; 25:1) and once in the indefinite accusative form *furqānan* (Q 8:29).

A Name of the Qur’ān

In their respective encyclopedias of the Qur’ān, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Zarkashī (745-794/ca.1344-1392) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (849-911/1445-ca.1505) both list *al-furqān* as a name