

THE GLOBE BEFORE AND AFTER THE ADVENT OF IMAM MAHDI, PART I¹

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ABSTRACT: The “End of Time” is the era described in the eschatologies of the dominant world religions. Indeed, Islamic sources hold a rich account regarding this time period concerning the world’s state of affairs before and after the coming of Imam Mahdi to establish worldwide justice and peace. This series will offer a basic overview of the concept of the ‘End of Times’ from the viewpoint of the dominant world religions, as well as the Islamic perspective using the Qur’an and hadith as sources to envision what lays ahead of us, and with the purpose of increasing our knowledge on the advent of Imam Mahdi (aj), establishing a positive relationship with the Imam, and preparing for his return.

Introduction

In this series of papers, we study the condition of the world before and after the advent of Imam Mahdi. This series will present a picture of the future of humanity regarding the period of time we will refer to as ‘The End of Time’ (*akhir al-zaman*) – derived primarily from Islamic sources. It is hoped that this discussion is beneficial in not only increasing our

¹ This series of papers is based on a series of lectures delivered by the author in Muharram 1428/ January 2007 in London.

knowledge of this subject but also to remember and become closer to Imam Mahdi.

We have hundreds of hadiths in which the end of time has been discussed in which thereafter this subject was linked to Imam Mahdi. It is therefore important to clarify the exact meaning and reference to the phrase 'End of Time'. We will then glance at other religions and their teachings, and finally will focus on the teachings of the Qur'an and hadiths to envision what the future holds, and indeed what may have already begun to transpire. We will refer to the different conditions and outlooks of the human being and the changes and challenges that lay ahead, such as the levels of intellectual understanding and its progress or decline, the levels of morality and religiosity, and so forth.

A human subject

It is unlikely to not have thought about the future, or the future of the human race and what lies ahead for future generations – questions that include what happens after death and what will come of our children. Similarly, we cannot find any religion or school of thought that does not deem this an important aspect in its teachings. Some have detailed accounts and teachings – such as Islam – whilst others are not so detailed, although none have been silent on this matter.

Most of these religions have a very positive view of the future. Their overall picture of the end of humanity is bright one. What seems to be the general pattern in the revealed religions is that they all describe a period of difficulties and calamities before the final outcome. Amongst philosophers, however, we have both pessimists and optimists.

The Islamic view

Islam has a detailed and sophisticated account regarding the end of time. The late Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr, in his discussion on Imam Mahdi, claims that it is difficult to find another subject in Islam that has been discussed to such an extent, and that has been emphasised upon by all Islamic schools of thought. He also claims there are around 400 hadiths on this subject from Prophet Muhammad in Sunni sources.

Another scholar, Ayatullah Lutfullah Safi Gulpaygani, one of the top students of Ayatullah Burujerdi – an expert on Shia and Sunni jurisprudence and hadith – published the scholarly work *Muntakhab al-Athar fi al-Imam al-Thani 'Ashar*, written under Ayatollah Borujerdi's guidance and supervision. In this work, he referred to 6207 hadiths regarding Imam Mahdi narrated from 157 early books of both Shia and Sunni.

In fact, this issue has been attended to well before the time of Imam Mahdi and the period of *ghaybah*, as these discussions began at the time of Prophet Muhammad, and the Imams continued to emphasise on it. For example, Hasan ibn Mahbub, a famous narrator of Shi'a hadiths, in his book *al-Mashikha* on the subject of Imam Mahdi was written more than a century before *ghaybah*.

There is hope, therefore, that we have the opportunity to touch upon commonality between all Muslims. This subject is not only a Shi'a issue; it concerns all Muslims and can bring them closer. I feel that by reading and reflecting on these hadiths we can derive some policies and strategies on how best to prepare for the end of time and how best to serve this cause. Prophet Muhammad said:

نَصَرَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا سَمِعَ مَقَالَتِي فَوَعَاهَا وَبَلَّغَهَا مَنْ لَمْ يَسْمَعْهَا فَرَبَّ حَامِلٍ فِيهِ
إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ أَفْقَهُ

May God make prosperous and happy the one who listens to my hadith, understands it, and conveys it to others. There are people who carry knowledge and pass it onto others who understand it better.²

The end of time

Linguistically, there is an important distinction between the terms *ākhar* ('other') and *ākhir* 'end'). When discussing the end of time, we see many hadiths in which the term 'end of time' is used. It seems that there are two main usages of this term:

1. A period of time in which Islam appeared and started as the last message of God until the Day of Judgement. Hence, even in the times of Prophet Isa and Musa, Prophet Muhammad is introduced and referred to as the Prophet of the end of time.
2. A shorter period of time before the advent of Imam Mahdi, and subsequent to that. This covers the end of *ghaybah* and the continuation of his *imamah*, or divinely appointed leadership.

These are two usages of the term, though they are related to one another because the end portion of each is identical. In one hadith, Prophet Muhammad brought his two index fingers together and said:

The day of Judgement and I are [as close] as these two.³

² *Bihar ul-Anwar*, Vol. 2, Page 148

³ *Al-Amali*, Shaykh Mufid, Page 212. The Arabic text is as follows:

انا و الساعه كهاين

In another hadith Prophet Muhammad calls to his companions near to the time of sunset. He then tells them that their position in the entire time span is like sunset, which is the short amount of time left at the end of the day compared with the entire day that preceded it.

Prophet Musa is quoted to have said:

At the end of time, a prophet will emerge who will be known as Ahmad; he will be the seal of the prophets and there will be no prophet after him. And from his progeny there will be righteous Imams equal to the number of the *asbat* [i.e. twelve].⁴

Shaykh Saduq, in his *Ilal al-Sharayi*, mentions a conversation between Prophet Yusuf and Zulaykha that occurs after the end of all the trials and tribulations on Prophet Yusuf and after the death of the king. Prophet Yusuf asks her:

‘What motivated you to do to me what you did?’ Zulaykha replied: ‘Your handsomeness.’ He retorted: ‘Then how would you react to the prophet who is due to come at the end of time, whose name is Muhammad, and who will be more handsome and better in conduct, as well as being more generous than me?’ Zulaykha: ‘Yes, you are right.’ Prophet Yusuf: ‘How do you know I am right?’ Zulaykha: ‘Because just as you mentioned his name, I felt love for

⁴ *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 32, Page 284

إذا كان آخر الزمان يخرج نبي يقال له " أحمد " خاتم الانبياء لا نبي بعده ، يخرج من صلبه أئمة أبرار عدد الاسباط

him in my heart.' God then revealed to Yusuf that she was being honest.⁵

In addition, we also have numerous references from Prophet Isa (Jesus) with regards to Prophet Muhammad as the prophet of the end of time. This all portrays that there was a clear pattern of referring to the end of time as the period near to the advent of Islam, as well as the era in which humanity will end and before the Day of Judgement will start.

Regarding the second usage – the period of *ghaybah* and beyond – this is where we find that the state of affairs will radically change, and this will precede the reappearance of Imam Mahdi who will establish justice and fair distribution of resources, and be the source of much global improvement.

Hence, these are the two usages of the term 'end of time' and both are correct and refer to end of the lifespan of human beings.

References to 'end of time' in the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad

History narrates an incident from the life of the Prophet in which he encounters a monk on a trade trip whilst still in his young age. The incident is recorded as a conversation the monk has with two others in the trade caravan. The Prophet and the monk had a conversation in private and then after some time he began to kiss Prophet Muhammad on the forehead, and brought something out and gave it to him, the details of which are not known. The monk then spoke with the two others and said:

⁵ *Ilal al-Sharayi*, Vol. 1, Page 55

يا زليخا ما النبي دعاك إلى ما كان؟ قالت: حسن وجهك يا يوسف فقال كيف لو رأيت نبيا يقال له محمد يكون في آخر الزمان أحسن مني وجهها وأحسن مني خلقا وأسمح مني كفا قالت صدقت قال وكيف علمت أنني صدقت قالت لأنك حين ذكرته وقع جبه في قلبي فأوحى الله عز وجل إلى يوسف أنها قد صدقت

This person, by God, is the prophet of the end of time. He will soon be commissioned by God as a prophet and will call to the unity of God; so when you witness him doing this then follow him.⁶

This explains why many Jewish tribes chose to settle in Medina. It seems they knew that there would emerge a prophet of the end of time who will settle in that area, and they wanted to be close to this event so that they could also witness this and enjoy the benefits of being near him. But unfortunately many of them did not believe in him because it was not beneficial for them in a worldly sense. For this reason the Qur'an complains about them, telling them that this man is the same one for whom you were waiting, though now that he has come you are not willing to accept him.

The second usage of the term 'end of time'

As an overview of the second usage of the term 'end of time' – the period around the advent of Imam Mahdi – according to hadiths, this period will contain many problems, especially problems of a moral nature. Those engaged in mischief will increase in both quantity and in the intensity of their mischief. The corruption practiced in this time will be much greater than at any other time. There will be unique sins committed that were never practiced before, or were practiced to a lesser extent. This period will be characterised by the collapse of family relations, respect amongst individuals, and deviations and distortions in faith; this time will witness the army of evil in greater numbers than the people who follow the path of God.

⁶ *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 38, Page 58

هذا والله نبي آخر الزمان ، والله سيخرج إلى قريب يدعو الناس إلى شهادة أن لا إله إلا الله فإذا رأيتم ذلك فاتبعوه

However, there will also exist a group of people of sublime quality of the army of God who are much stronger than the believers of any other time, even more than the people at the time of Prophet Muhammad.

To summarise, according to my understanding, both the armies of good and evil will reach their climax; the army of God will never have seen such a flourishing nature, and likewise the army of Satan will never have experienced this kind of quantity or quality. Ultimately, as we shall describe in this series, the army of God will be victorious solely due to quality.

The end of time in other religions

Among the religions that have referred to the end of time, we will make reference to Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity.

Zoroastrianism⁷

Zoroastrianism believes in three saviours of humanity, the third of whom is the most important and the greatest of the saviours, called Astawat Arata. From their texts, namely the *Jamask⁸ Nāmeḥ*, Jamask speaks about the arrival of this saviour at a time when the world is full of betrayal, when promises will be broken, when dishonesty will be

⁷ There is a discussion amongst Muslim scholars regarding Zoroastrianism. Some hadith refer to Zoroastrianism as a religion with a divine root, and therefore some jurists have regarded them as People of the Book. One famous hadith from Prophet Muhammad (s) states:

ان المجوس كان لهم نبي فقتلوه و كتاب احرقوه

‘They [Zoroastrians] had a prophet whom they killed him, they had a book which they burned.’

Imam Ali is also quoted as saying:

قد انزل الله اليهم كتابا و بعث اليهم نبيا

Truly God revealed to them a book and sent them a prophet.

These suggest that the origin of this religion was based on a divine revelation.

⁸ Jamask was a student and disciple of Zartosht.

rampant, and people will commonly lose interest in religion. People will be far from God, and oppression and mischief will spread. The situation will be ready for the advent of this saviour. Some signs are:

1. Something will appear in the sky that will be visible for people.
2. At the command of the saviour, angels will come from the east and west.
3. Though the people engaged in mischief and corruption will deny him and call him a liar, he will eventually defeat them.

In another book of theirs, *Kitab-e Zand*, they refer to a battle between *Ahriman* (the devil) and *Ahura Mazda* (the Lord). This battle will rage for a long time, and for most of it the army of evil will be winning, but will never be able to terminate the army of goodness. As the situation becomes intensely difficult, God will send the saviour and the battle will continue for an additional 9000 years. The saviour will ultimately defeat them, and then all of humanity will be prosperous, happy, and will live peacefully.

In this sense, the Zoroastrians have the same general principle as other religions, that there will be much difficulty and corruption before prosperity, albeit the specific details differ between the faiths.

Hinduism

Hinduism also holds the concept of the end of time and a saviour – called the age of Kali. Hindus believe that a saviour will come after the destruction of the world, and that he will take control of the entire world and everyone in it. Every believer and unbeliever will know him and he will be granted whatever he asks from God.

Another text states that in the end there will be a just king who would be the leader and ruler of humans as well as angels. This king will have full control over everything on land, in the oceans, and on mountains. He will have the power to inform them about what is happening in the earth and in the heavens, and none greater than him will ever have been born.

Once again, Hinduism shares a similar picture of a tragic worldly situation that ends with a good and peaceful outcome, led by a great man with special powers.

Judaism

In the Old Testament, there are many teachings on the end of time that are similar to Islamic views, although whether they take these passages to mean the same thing as what Muslims conclude is a separate matter. The passages speak of a Messiah, and we believe that this saviour is Jesus.

However, Jews believe this Messiah has not yet come, and they are awaiting his appearance. Moreover, the text includes the coming of others as well. When Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) was asked by people whether he was the Messiah or the Prophet, he replied that he was neither, but told them that a prophet will come after the Messiah.

In the chapter 72 of the Psalms, 19 verses revolve around the establishment of justice by the son of the king who will treat all people – especially the poor – with fairness. Even the mountains will bring peace to the world, and blessings would emanate from every direction. This great man will defeat the unjust people who would fear him, and in the end the glorified name of God will fill the entire earth.

Again in the chapter 37 of the Psalms,⁹ we read that the earth shall be inherited by righteous people. Verse nine says that the people waiting for God will be those who inherit the earth, and thereafter there will be no wicked person remaining.

Christianity

In the New Testament, we find mention of the end of time. For example, in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24 includes a conversation between Jesus and his disciples in which he was asked about the end of the world. The answer is actually very similar to the Islamic perspective, although many Christians interpret it differently.¹⁰ Christians believe

⁹ In fact, the Qur'an mentions 'Certainly we wrote in the Psalms, after the Torah: Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.' (21:105)

¹⁰ The chapter begins in this way:

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

that the whole world will be destroyed, and that the establishment of the kingdom of God will come about after the destruction of the world. There are similar ideas in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Muslims, however, believe that before the destruction and resurrection there will be the establishment of the kingdom of God. The New Testament seems to hold a degree of confusion between resurrection and the events that occur before resurrection.

Common thread across the religions

In any case, there does emerge a common thread in that every religion provides an answer to the question: ‘What will happen to my future?’ Furthermore, it is natural that throughout history, people have asked their prophets regarding what will become of this enduring human struggle. It is a fundamental human need to know one’s destiny and reality.

For believers, it provides them with solace to know that in the end, there will be the establishment of truth and justice, and that all people will obey the religion of God. This gives a feeling of courage and avoids despair and disappointment. Once a person knows of this outcome, they will naturally feel more committed and patient. A hallmark of all religions is that they give their adherents’ hope. And because we believe these religions have the same origin, albeit with some differences, the core and essence must be the same.

This commonality between the religions is one of the factors that will assist Imam Mahdi. Therefore, it is not correct to assume that only

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (continues)

Shi'as will accept him; rather, many people will accept him for two key reasons:

1. They will become extremely frustrated with the global situation. According to Islamic hadiths, Imam Mahdi will reappear when people have tried every other system and solution to their problems, but nothing will have worked. Hence, the people will quickly answer his call.
2. Imam Mahdi will communicate with the people according to their own mentality and understanding. Christians, for example, will find Imam Mahdi speaks with them in a way that makes sense to them. We have a hadith in the book *al-Ghaybah* by Nu'mani, which is one of our earliest sources on Imam Mahdi, that the Imam will judge and rule in a way in which the people of the Torah will find the judgement is exactly in compliance with the Torah, and the Christians will find it is exactly in compliance with the gospel; those that believe in the Psalms will find the same, and those that follow the Qur'an will find the same.¹¹ This seems to mean that he will show people of other divine religions that whatever he does is in compliance with what they believe. This could involve offering a new reading or interpretation of what they already have.

The advent of Jesus

The advent of Jesus with the Imam will also help. Those who believe in Jesus will then believe in Imam Mahdi as well, because they see him with Jesus. Of course, there will be some who refute and claim that it is

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ويحكم بين أهل التوراة بالتوراة وبين أهل الانجيل بالانجيل وبين أهل الزبور بالزبور و بين أهل القرآن بالقرآن

not Jesus, although the sincere will quickly believe in Jesus and the Imam.

It seems to me that this is an important plan of God, and this reemphasises that Muslim-Christian relations must be improved if we are to prepare for the sacred reappearance. Christians constitute one-third of the world's population, and together with Muslims the number would be more than half. If these two groups are close, then this would be an immense move towards preparation for the reappearance and for establishing truth and justice.

It also suggests that it was no accident for Jesus to be kept alive and not crucified, and it was the plan of God for him to return with the Imam for this very purpose of uniting the followers of these two religions. Otherwise, we may ask, why were other prophets not given the distinction of being kept alive? This reveals that Christianity will continue to play a significant role in the world up to the end of time, and that the presence of Jesus will contribute to the mission of Imam Mahdi.

HYPOCRISY AND ITS LEVELS

HAKIMAH BAMOUSIAN

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: A two-faced person whose non-verbal or verbal behaviour contradicts his inner beliefs is deemed a hypocrite. Since hypocrisy is linked to the psychological and mental state, it is mostly dealt with in Islamic ethical discussions as a trait equivalent to insincerity. Hypocrisy as stated and indicated in the Qur'an largely refers to either hypocrisy in one's beliefs or hypocrisy in politics, both resulting from intentional disbelief (*kufi*). Nonetheless, hypocrites are heavily reproached in the Qur'an. Since the dawn of Islam, hypocrites, the internal enemies of Islam, held a deep rancour towards Islam and were harmful obstacles in the advancement of an Islamic society that helped everyone achieve social justice and individual growth. This article expounds on the definition of hypocrisy, its levels, its connotation in the Qur'an and hadith, and the differences between both hypocrisy and falsehood, and hypocrisy and dissimulation (*taqiyyah*).

Most philologists consider the word hypocrisy (*nifaq*) derived from *nafiqa*' because *nafiqa*' implies expressing some belief and hiding another one. "Hypocrisy" means "accepting a religion in some ways and for some reasons and at the same time abandoning it in other ways." The Qur'an uses the word "*nifaq*" to mean a two-faced person whose speech is different from what is in his heart. Hypocrisy is distinct from "falsehood" because falsehood is applied to words and refers to a mismatch between

word content and reality, while hypocrisy is applied to people and refers to the disagreement between outward appearance and inner state as well as expressing what is not in one's heart. Likewise, hypocrisy is different from "dissimulation" (*taqiyyah*) because hypocrisy refers to expressing faith without being a believer; while dissimulation means expressing disbelief while one is a believer. Since in the first place hypocrisy is regarded as a psychological and mental phenomenon, it is mostly dealt with in Islamic ethical discussions and is considered equivalent to insincerity. Nevertheless, the Quranic verses on hypocrisy mostly refer to hypocrisy in belief and political hypocrisy which result from disbelief and indicate it.

Statement of the Problem

As mentioned in the Quran, those who are hypocritical are heavily reproached. From the very beginning, hypocrites – as internal enemies of Islam – were harmful obstacles. Also, hiding their deep rancour toward Islam, they inflicted irreparable harm on it. This blameworthy trait was not specific to that era; rather, it was a plague permanently gripping society. Ayatullah Mutahhari said, "The more modern human life becomes, the more prone man is to becoming a hypocrite; a thousand years ago, human beings were not as one-hundredth hypocrite as today's people; and the more primitive man is, the less of a hypocrite he is. And unlike animals whom usually are not able to be hypocrites, man who has evolved more is actually more capable of insincerity."¹

Therefore, the different aspects of this trait are examined, along with its tangible reflections in society and its adverse consequences to the soul

¹ Motahhari, Mortada, *An Introduction to the Qur'an*, vol. 1 & 2, pp.149-150.

and society by determining the precise literal and technical Qur'anic meanings of this word.

The literal and technical meanings of *nifaq*

Determining the root of the word *nifaq*, Arab philologists referred to two issues. Some regard hypocrisy as derived from the *nafaqa* meaning “a hole in the ground as a way out to another place”; others consider it derived from the word *nafiqa'* meaning a place in the mouse burrow, where the mouse digs a hole in the ground down and then up toward the surface of the earth and close enough to reach it, without puncturing the surface.² The mouse builds its home by making holes in the ground, and it proceeds as far as going back to surface of the earth, making the surface thin, but not removing it. Whenever it is endangered in its burrow, it immediately removes the shell and runs away through it.

In fact, this animal creates two holes in the ground, a manifest hole where it enters the burrow, which Arabs call the *qasi'a*, and a hidden hole where it exits the hole, called *nafiqa'*. *Nafiqa'* is a place in a mouse burrow that is apparently earth, but inside it is hollow, like a hypocrite who speaks of his faith, while there is disbelief in his heart.

Considering this literal meaning, philologists define hypocrisy as “embracing a religion for some reasons and in some ways, and then abandoning that religion.”³ According to them, the hypocrite embraces Islam in some way and abandons it in some other ways, like a mouse which enters its burrow through one hole and exits it through the other.⁴

² Farahidi, Khalil ibn Ahmad, *al-'Ain*, vol.3, p.1825

³ Raghīb Isfahani, *Vocabulary (al-Mufradat) of the Quran*, vol.3, p.387.

⁴ Ibn Mandhur, Muhammad, *Lisan al-Arab*, vol.14, p.327.

Likewise, the hypocrite speaks and acts contrary to what he hides in his heart.⁵

This philological investigation reveals that most philologists consider *nifaq* as derived from *nafiqa* because *nafiqa* implies expressing something while hiding something else in heart. Also, since there is a semantic similarity between *nafiqa* and *nifaq*, that is, revealing something and hiding something else, this seems to be an accurate choice. Thus, there is relation and correlation between the literal and technical meanings of the term since *nifaq* both literally and technically is a disagreement between a person's outward appearance and inner state.

The meaning of hypocrisy in the Quran and hadiths

The Quran first used the word hypocrisy on the basis of its literal meaning, in the sense of the two-faced person. Before the Quran was revealed, there had been no such a term. Thus, the hypocrite – in the Quranic meaning – is the one whose speech is contrary to what is in his heart or mind. In other words, a two-faced person is called a hypocrite because he conceals his inner beliefs and manifests other things.⁶

Hypocrisy has been used in two meanings in the Quran and hadiths:

1 - Pretending to be Muslim while being an infidel at heart, called *hypocrisy in belief*. And almost in all cases, the Quran has used the word “hypocrisy” in this very sense. The first verse of the Chapter *The Hypocrites (al-Munafiqun)* demonstrates this:

When the Hypocrites come to you, they say, ‘We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of Allah.’ Yes,

⁵ Ibn Faris, Ahmad, *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah*, vol. 5, pp. 454-455.

⁶ Sobhani, Jafar: *The Eternal Charter*, vol.4, p.9.

Allah knows that you are indeed His Messenger, and Allah bears witness that the Hypocrites are indeed liars.

In the chapter *The Women (al-Nisa)*, the inner state of the hypocrites is described as follows:

*They but wish that you would reject Faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing [as they are].*⁷

2 - *Ethical hypocrisy*, or a lack of adherence to religious injunctions. Regarding this, Imam Sajjad said, “Verily the hypocrite is the one who prohibits others from doing something while doing so himself, and commands others to do what he does not do...He finishes his day and has no concern but eating dinner while he was not fasting. He gets up in the morning and has no concern but sleeping while he was not awake at night.”⁸

Imam Sadiq quoted the Prophet Muhammad as saying, “In our view, when outward humility is greater than inner humility, there is hypocrisy.”⁹ Accordingly, the religious scholar void of any good deed and an insincere person are among those with personal and ethical hypocrisy.

The difference between hypocrisy and falsehood

Hypocrisy refers to a contradiction between what a person says and what is in his heart. The hypocrite says something but does not believe in it himself, and the one who speaks of a school of thought in which he does not believe. Because of the contradiction between one’s saying and his

⁷ Nisa, 89

⁸ *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p.396.

⁹ *ibid.*

inner belief, this way of speaking is called hypocrisy, and the person is called a hypocrite whether the saying is true or not.

In hypocrisy, the truth of word does not matter; what counts is the disagreement between sayings and beliefs, and this hypocrisy is two-facedness. However, in 'falsehood,' the focus is on conflict between words and reality. That is, what is spoken does not conform to reality and is untruthful, whether the one who utters it pays attention to this aspect or not.

In other words, what hypocrisy and falsehood has in common is a kind of contradiction and disagreement in both, but the conflict in hypocrisy is the contrast between the outward appearance and the inner state. However, the conflict in falsehood refers to disagreement between what was spoken and the truth; that is, the word is not consistent with reality, without any evidence and reference for it.¹⁰

The difference between hypocrisy and dissimulation

The act of the one who dissimulates (*taqiyyah*) may seem to resemble that of a hypocrite; he feigns something in which he does not believe in his heart.

Dissimulation and hypocrisy are substantially different, as they do not fall into one category at all. Moreover, it is not merely the case that these two differ in verdict (i.e., dissimulation is permissible and hypocrisy is prohibited); that is, one is haram, and the other mandatory in some cases. A hypocrite conceals his disbelief and expresses faith, whereas a person who dissimulates expresses disbelief and hides his faith. In the Quran, God said about the believer from among the Pharaoh's tribe:

¹⁰ Sobhani, Jafar, *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp.17-18.

A CONVERSATION WITH ABRAHAM: EXPLORING THE IMAGE OF GOD IN THE BIBLE AND THE QUR'AN, PART II

FATEMAH MEGHJI

ABSTRACT: The patriarch Abraham has a special place as a central figure in all three monotheistic religions. Although essentially the “One” God that all monotheistic religions consider as their Lord, the God of Abraham in the Old Testament, Bible, and the Qur’an are arguably very different Gods. Part I of this series included God’s image and characteristics in both the Old Testament and the Qur’an as compared and contrasted in regards to “seeing” God, His knowledge, His all-hearing quality, and His justice, and how these aspects contribute to an image of Him. This part expounds on the relationship between God and Abraham. Throughout these stories, we get an interesting look into the nature of the relationship between God and Abraham. Although we have touched on this briefly in some of the previously-mentioned characteristics of God, the nature of the relationship between Abraham/Ibrahim and God has not been discussed in detail. Abraham’s relationship with God seems to be defined by two things: 1. His complete submission to God and lowliness in front of Him, and 2. His recognition of God’s power as the ultimate provider.

PART II: The Relationship between God and Abraham

1. Submission to God

An important idea shared in both the Biblical and Qur'anic narratives is Abraham/Ibrahim's complete submission to the will of God, and his acknowledged inferiority before Him. Although this is not a characteristic of God per se, that fact that God deserves or demands this type of submission is an important factor in understanding the image of God in both narratives. This type of required and obligatory submission and loyalty to God can be seen as an extension of his Lordship. The very nature of God requires that His servants be loyal, humble, and submissive to Him.

In the Bible, Abraham approaches God with a humbleness and fear which shows that the God he is dealing with is not one similar to him as a human, but a being far greater than him. Further, even though he questions God, he does not commit an open rebellion either (i.e. with his actions). In the story of the sacrifice of his son, we see unrelenting submission, and in that case, he does not even question the command of God: he submits with no questions asked. In fact, this story is usually used to represent the pinnacle of perfect submission to an all-powerful Lord. Abraham knows that his Lord is just and greater than him. Therefore, he should be able to surrender himself completely to him and obey his every command, which he does:

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." So Abraham rose early

in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him.¹

Another instance in which he unquestioningly submits is when he sends Hagar and his son Ishmael away, obeying the command of God to obey his wife:

The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.” So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away.²

It could be argued that in the Bible, Abraham is not submissive when it comes to the destruction of the people of Lot since he voices his discomfort to God. However, even in his questioning of God with regards to the destruction of Lot’s people, Abraham acknowledges his inferiority before God, describing himself as “but dust and ashes.”³ His appeal is precisely because he cannot fathom for God to do anything unjust: “Far be it from you to do such a thing... Shall not the Judge of

¹ Genesis NRSV, 22:1-3

² Ibid, 21:11-14

³ Ibid, 19:27

all the earth do what is just?”⁴ In this case, it could be argued that Abraham’s problem was not failing to recognize that God is just, but rather, failing to understand justice itself. He did not understand how God’s justice was in line with the destruction of innocent people, but God never destroys anybody innocent. This was after all, just a conversation with God, not an open rebellion against Him. This does not truly negate his submissiveness to Him as there was no type of action required from Abraham. He did not actively rebel; it was simply a dialogue and conversation. After all, in submission to God, Abraham does not fall short: he is prepared to desert his son and ready to kill him.⁵

The attitude of submissiveness and meekness of Abraham in front of the Lord also appears in other instances throughout Genesis:

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; **walk before me, and be blameless.** And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” **Then Abram fell on his face** and God said to him...⁶

When he saw them, **he ran** from the tent entrance to meet them, and **bowed down to the ground.** He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant...”⁷

⁴ Ibid, 18:25

⁵ In the Biblical version of events, Isaac, son of Sarah, is the son who was to be sacrificed. The Qur’an does not name the son who was sacrificed, but it is implied that it was Ismail, son of Hajar, who was to be sacrificed.

⁶ Genesis NRSV, 17:1-3

⁷ Ibid, 18:2-3

In the Qur'an, there is also an overwhelming attitude of submission from Ibrahim and this is what defines his relationship with God. In one interesting verse where Ibrahim's religion is discussed, the Qur'an calls him a Muslim. However, in this case it means that what defined him was not a label, but rather his submission to God, which is the literal meaning of a Muslim in Arabic. Here, it is obvious that the meaning of Muslim does not mean the same label as being a follower of the Prophet Muhammad since the Qur'an rebukes the Christians and Jews for applying this type of logic to Ibrahim. Rather, Ibrahim was a hanif and one who submitted to the will of God, i.e. a Muslim, which was the very nature of any true religion:⁸

*O People of the Book! Why do you argue concerning Abraham? Neither the Torah nor the Evangel were sent down until [long] after him. Do you not apply reason? Ah! You are the very ones who argue about that of which you have knowledge. Why then do you argue about that of which you have no knowledge? And Allah knows and you do not know. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. **Rather he***

⁸ This has been explained by Allamah Tabatabai in Tafsir al-Mizan:

“To say that Ibrahim (a.s.) was a Muslim and not a Jew or a Christian does not imply a claim that he was the follower of the Prophet of Islam, acting according to the Qur'anic SHARI'AH. Nobody should rush to say that as Ibrahim (a.s.) had preceded the revelation of the Torah and the Injil and therefore could not be counted as a Jew or a Christian, so had he preceded the revelation of the Qur'an and the advent of Islam, therefore, in a completely identical manner, he should not be called a Muslim. As a matter of fact, the use of 'Islam' for the Qur'anic SHARI'AH is a terminology which came up after the revelation of the Qur'an, when the fame of the religion brought by Muhammad (s.a.w.) had spread far and wide. The Islam which is attributed to Ibrahim means submission to Allah, humbling oneself before His Lordship.”
(www.al-mizan.org, 3:65-67)

*was a hanif, a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists.*⁹

Although it is true that God corrects Ibrahim's actions in several instances (ex. when Ibrahim prays for his uncle/father who is a polytheist), this does not negate Ibrahim's overall submissiveness once God corrects his actions or orders him to act otherwise. It is difficult perhaps in many instances for Ibrahim to submit, for example in the sacrifice of his son, but he does it regardless. Ibrahim embodies a type of humbleness in front of God and this can be seen in the various passages of the Qur'an that speak of his demeanour in front of God and complete submission in the face of difficult tests.

*'My Lord! Give me [an heir], one of the righteous.' So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son. When he was old enough to assist in his endeavour, he said, 'My son! I see in a dream that I am sacrificing you. See what you think.' He said, 'Father! Do whatever you have been commanded. If Allah wishes, you will find me to be patient.' So when **they had both submitted** [to Allah's will], and he had laid him down on his forehead, We called out to him, 'O Abraham! You have indeed fulfilled the vision! Thus indeed do We reward the virtuous! This was indeed **a manifest test.**' Then We ransomed him with a great sacrifice, and left for him a good name in posterity.*¹⁰

Another instance describing Ibrahim's demeanour with God includes:

⁹ The Qur'an, 3:65-7.

¹⁰ Ibid, 37:100-108.

*Indeed Abraham was among his followers, when he came to his Lord **with a sound heart**. When he said to his father and his people, 'What is it that you are worshiping? Is it a lie, gods other than Allah, that you desire? Then what is your idea about the Lord of all the worlds?'*¹¹

Further, from the prayers of Ibrahim to God, his loyalty and humbleness is clear. One of the effects of his submission is his 'sound heart'. There are several prayers from Ibrahim quoted in the Qur'an, most of which show his humbleness before God, his complete submission to Him, and his relentless campaigning for people to believe in and worship Him, even at the cost of his own life (which will be discussed later).

*There is certainly a good exemplar for you in Abraham and those who were with him, when they said to their own people, 'Indeed we repudiate you and whatever you worship besides Allah. We disavow you, and between you and us there has appeared enmity and hate for ever, unless you come to have faith in Allah alone,' except for Abraham's saying to his father, 'I will surely plead forgiveness for you, though I cannot avail you anything against Allah.'*¹²

In one particularly beautiful conversation of Ibrahim with the polytheists, he describes the way that he has submitted to God, completely turning himself towards Him.

'Indeed I have turned my face toward Him who originated the heavens and the earth, as a Hanif, and I am not one of

¹¹ Ibid, 37:83-87.

¹² Ibid, 60:4

*the polytheists.’ His people argued with him. He said, ‘Do you argue with me concerning Allah, while He has guided me for certain? I do not fear what you ascribe to Him as [His] partners, **excepting anything that my Lord may wish.** My Lord embraces all things in [His] knowledge. Will you not then take admonition? **How could I fear what you ascribe [to Him]** as [His] partners, when you do not fear ascribing to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority to you? So [tell me,] which of the two sides has a greater right to safety, if you know?’¹³*

Abraham enjoined this [creed] upon his children, and [so did] Jacob, [saying], ‘My children! Allah has indeed chosen this religion for you; so never die except as Muslims.’¹⁴

2. God as the Provider for all needs (i.e. the Powerful)

In both the Bible and the Qur’an, it is clear that God has agency and interferes in the lives of His creation. He can, and He does, interfere in the well-being of human beings, especially those that He cares about, including Abraham/Ibrahim. Another factor is that in both texts, Abraham/Ibrahim prays to the Lord, recognizing that God is his provider and that God is all-powerful. Abraham/Ibrahim has complete faith in the power of God and surrenders to Him, relying on Him for his needs and going to Him in prayer. He understands that his and his progeny’s destiny lies in the hands of God.

In the Bible, this is especially clear in a few instances where Abraham’s progeny is clearly in the hands of God:

¹³ The Qur’an, 6:79-81

¹⁴ Ibid, 2:132

“I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”¹⁵

“Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”¹⁶

“I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.”¹⁷

The “I” in these passages is of course, God Himself, and He notes Himself as the agent here, capable of providing for Abraham. Abraham also builds several altars throughout his life in order to call on (i.e. pray to) God: “and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord.”¹⁸

References to him praying at the altar are numerous. In another place, it says he returned *“to the place where he had made an altar at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.”¹⁹*

Similarly, in the Qur’an, Ibrahim constantly goes to God for all of his needs. He realizes that his provision lies solely in the hands of God, and this is his argument against the polytheists. Numerous times in the Qur’an, Ibrahim voices this fact to the disbelievers. Why would they

¹⁵ Genesis NRSV, 12:2-3

¹⁶ Ibid, 15:1

¹⁷ Ibid, 13:16-17

¹⁸ Ibid, 12:18.

¹⁹ Ibid, 13:4

worship things that would be of no benefit to them, when it is only God that can be of any benefit?

And Abraham, when he said to his people, *"Worship Allah and be wary of Him. That is better for you, should you know. In fact, instead of Allah you worship idols, and you invent a lie. Indeed those whom you worship besides Allah have no control over your provision. So seek all [your] provision from Allah, and worship Him and thank Him, and to Him you shall be brought back."*²⁰

Another interesting aspect to Ibrahim's relationship with God is that he is also described as the "friend" of God – the only person in the Qur'an to be named as such:

*Who has a better religion than him who submits his will to Allah, being virtuous, and follows the creed of Abraham, a Hanif? And Allah took Abraham for a dedicated friend.*²¹

The word friend in Arabic is Khalil, which comes from the word *al-khullah*, which means need. Therefore, your friend is the one who asks his needs only from you.²² This is an interesting point brought up with regards to the nature of the word 'friend' in Arabic, which seems to fit the relationship between Ibrahim and God. Ibrahim constantly turns to God for his needs, and in this aspect, is his 'friend'. When rebuking the polytheists for their disbelief in God, Ibrahim explicitly says that this is futile. Only God can cause benefit or harm to a person; He is the only One worth being asked. Thus, Ibrahim only goes to God for his needs

²⁰ The Qur'an, 29:16-7

²¹ Ibid, 4:125

²² This point has been brought up by Allamah Tabatabai in Tafsir al-Mizan (www.al-mizan.org, 4:125)

and this is clear throughout various verses of the Qur'an. Understanding that only God can cause him benefit or harm, Ibrahim submits completely to Him and relies solely on Him, even if his own life and the lives of his family are at risk. Ibrahim's reliance and complete faith in God can be beautifully understood throughout many of the stories of the Qur'an. He understands the power of God such that he asks God for a child even after he has become an old man, and he is granted two.

In one particularly beautiful story, Ibrahim is thrown into a fire because of his claim that the idols of the polytheists were futile to humans:

He said, "Do you then worship, besides Allah, that which cannot cause you any benefit or harm? Fie on you and what you worship besides Allah! Do you not apply reason?" They said, "Burn him, and help your gods, if you are to do anything!" We said, "O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham!"²³

God, the one that Ibrahim has relied on completely for protection and provision, saves him from being burnt alive in a miraculous event. It is Ibrahim who is logical and who has applied reason by believing that only God can provide for him and protect him, and he relies on God for his safety. After all, he fears nothing except God (6:80). He knows that God's power has no bounds, and thus asks for what others might consider impossible.

His faith in God providing for him and his family is so complete that, as mentioned earlier, he is also prepared to leave Hajar and Ismail in a desert in submission to God. Here is his prayer to God in the Qur'an, where he seems to know that the destiny of his family and himself lies

²³ The Qur'an, 21:66-9

only in the hands of God. Understanding God's power, Ibrahim prays to Him:

*When Abraham said, "My Lord! Make this city a sanctuary, and save me and my children from worshiping idols. My Lord! Indeed they have misled many people. So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me, and as for someone who disobeys me, well, You are indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful. Our Lord! I have settled part of my descendants in a barren valley, by Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may maintain the prayer. **So make the hearts** of a part of the people fond of them, and **provide them** with fruits, so that they may give thanks. Our Lord! Indeed You know whatever we hide and whatever we disclose, and nothing is hidden from Allah on the earth or in the sky. **All praise belongs to Allah, who, despite [my] old age, gave me Ishmael and Isaac.** Indeed my Lord hears all supplications. My Lord! Make me a maintainer of the prayer, and my descendants [too]. Our Lord, accept my supplication. Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and all the faithful, on the day when the reckoning is held."²⁴*

His recognition that everything is at the disposal of God is a major aspect in what defines Ibrahim's relationship with Him.

Conclusion

Surveying Abraham in the Bible and the Qur'an is no simple task. God's image in these stories is multifaceted and there are many characteristics of God which manifest themselves in these stories. Here,

²⁴ Ibid, 14:35-41

we have commented on just a few of them: God's visibility/invisibility, omniscience/knowledge, hearing, and justice. Although the Biblical God and Qur'anic God diverge in their characteristics on a few points, they share many characteristics, and the stories of the Bible and the Qur'an can be recognized as referring to one and the same Lord, the maker of the heavens and the earth. Although at first glance, they may seem very different, upon a closer read, they are more similar than not.

The relationship between God and Abraham also proves to be multifaceted. Here, major differences can be recognized between the overall impression of Abraham in the Bible and in the Qur'an. The Biblical rendition of events focuses more on the tangible aspects of Abraham's life. For example, it surveys in detail where he goes, what he does, his children, his covenant, etc. On the other hand, the Qur'anic rendition tends to focus on Ibrahim's understanding of God and his relationship with Him. For example, Ibrahim's prayers are extensively quoted in which he describes God and his faith in Him. Ibrahim's campaign for monotheism is also explored in detail and his arguments against the polytheists make up a large portion of the story. This is unlike the Bible, where Abraham does not share much with regards to the depth of his belief and faith in God or why he believes in Him. Although he does not describe his belief, he does constantly go to God in prayer, building several altars to call on God and ask Him for his needs. Further, his campaign for monotheism does not seem to exist in the Bible. Rather, his submission and love for God is shown through his actions (ex. in his sacrifice and obedience), as opposed to his words or feelings. Nevertheless, in both the Qur'an and the Bible, Abraham's relationship with God is defined by his submission to Him and his recognition of God's power to provide him with his needs.

As the father of monotheism, Abraham is famous for his belief in one God and his relationship with God. Because of his submission, he has become celebrated and legendary amongst monotheists. To understand the monotheistic religions correctly, an understanding their forefather (i.e. Abraham) is essential. There is much to learn from the example of Abraham and how followers of the monotheistic religions are encouraged to emulate him in his submission and in his understanding of God. In fact, it could be argued that understanding Abraham and how he recognized God is indispensable as it is at the very foundation of monotheism and the monotheistic religions. In his relentless submission and obedience, Abraham succeeded in pleasing God and securing himself a position with God—something that followers of all monotheistic religions will strive to achieve throughout their lives. Because of this, Abraham’s conversations with God will remain celebrated and immortal.

ALLAMAH AL-HILLI ON IMAMATE IN HIS *KASHFUL MURAD*, PART III

TRANSLATED BY KARIM AGHILI

ABSTRACT: An Imam who exceeds all people in every virtue whether it be knowledge, bravery, or piety, and who leads fairly leads people and guides them towards morality is a grace of God. The concept of Imamate in Shi'i Islam refers to the necessity of having a divinely-appointed leader who will lead the Islamic nation after the Prophet's death. This series is a list of responses to objections raised against Imamate from prominent scholar Allamah Hilli's *Kashf ul-Murād*, expanded on from Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Tajrid al-I'tiqād* – the first treatise on Shi'i theology. *Kashful Murad* is one of the most widely read of Allamah al-Hilli's publications as it is the first commentary written on Allamah al-Tusi's work. The previous part included discussions on the proofs for the Imamate of Ali, the Imamate of the eleven Imams after him, and rules concerning those opposed to his leadership. This part expands on the proofs for his authority over the companions that qualify him for leadership such as his extraordinary courage, deep insight, matchless asceticism and devotion, and boundless patience.

The Seventh Issue: Ali was superior to all other Companions.

Allamah al-Tusi: Ali is superior because of his participation in numerous battles and the courage displayed in all the battles attended

by the Prophet.¹ No other person achieved his rank in the battles such as Badr, Uhud, Ahzab, Khaybar and Hunayn.

Allamah al-Hilli: ‘Uthman, Ibn ‘Umar, and Abu Huraira, Al-Hasan al-Basri, ‘Amr ibn ‘Ubaid, al-Nazzam and Abu ‘Uthman al-Jahiz disagreed over the superiority of Ali as they claimed Abu Bakr to be the most qualified one.

Among those who held Ali as the superior one: 1) The companions: Al-Zubair, Salman, al-Miqdad, Jabir ibn Abdullah, Ammar, Abu Dharr, and Hudhayfah. 2) The successors to the Companions: (the *Tabi’un*), ‘Ata’, Mujahid, Salamah ibn Kuhail, the Baghdadis, Abu Abd Allah al-Basri, and all the Shi’ites and held the same view.

Those who were undecided: Al-Jubba’iyan (Abu Ali al-Jubba’i and Abu Hashim al-Jubba’i) and Qadi al-Qudat. Ali ibn al-Jubba’i said: “If the tradition (*hadith*) of the roasted bird was authentic, Ali would be superior.”

We say: Certainly the best qualities are either of a spiritual or physical nature, and Ali was more perfect and admirable in both respects than the other companions. This claim is supported by the following proofs by Allamah al-Tusi:

Ali was the most courageous warrior in all the battles attended by the Prophet; no other person was as brave. For example, in the Battle of Badr, the first battle in which the faith of the believers for their being few in number were put to the test against a large number of

¹ *Sharh al-Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn al-Hadid, vol. 1, pp. 7-10; *Hadith al-Ta’ir al-Mashwi* (*Hadith of the roasted bird*), *Tadhkirat al-Khawass*, pp. 44, Beirut; *Fara’id al-Simtayn*, vol. 1, p. 209, nos. 165, 166 and 167.

polytheists, Ali killed al-Walid ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, Shaybah ibn Rabi'ah, al-'As ibn Sa'id ibn al-'As, Hamzah ibn Abi Sufyan, Tuaymah ibn 'Adi, and then Nawf ibn Khuwaylid, a dauntless man. After the Prophet beseeched God to protect Ali against him, Ali was victorious. He continued fighting until he killed half of the pagans; the rest of the Muslims and three thousand marked angels killed the other half and the banner was in the hand of Ali.²

In the battle of Uhud, the Prophet gave Ali both the white flag (*al-Liwa'*) the black banner (*al-Rayah*); the banner of the pagans (*al-Rayah*) was in the hand of Talhah ibn Abi Talhah, the leader of the battalion. When Ali killed him, and another pagan took hold of the banner, and Ali also killed him, and he continued killing one after the other until he killed nine people. When the pagans were defeated, and the Muslims preoccupied themselves with collecting the war booty, Khalid ibn Walid and his companions attacked the Prophet, striking him with swords, spears, and stones until he was overcome by faintness. Out of fear, the Muslims scattered away from the Prophet except Ali. When the Prophet regained consciousness, he looked towards Ali and said: 'Spare me the evil of these men'. Ali then rushed at them and drove them away. In the end, most of the enemies were killed by Ali.³

On the day of the Parties (*al-Ahzab*), Ali killed a large number of the pagans, including 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd, one of the boldest men among the pagans who called out several times: "Is there anyone who will engage in single combat?" and the Muslims avoided fighting him. It was

² *Tarikh* of Ibn 'Asakir, *tarjamt al-imam 'Ali* (the biography of Imam 'Ali, peace be upon him), vol. 1, nos. 206-208; *al-Manaqib* of al_khwarazmi, p. 167. Malik al-Mahmudi (Ed.), *al-Maghazi* of al-Waqidi vol. 1, pp. 19-152.

³ *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 20, p. 137.

only Ali who dared to fight him. Though the Prophet prevented him in order to give the Muslims a chance to fight, they avoided moving forward. The Prophet then permitted Ali. He dressed Ali in his own turban and prayed for him.

Hudhayfah said, “When ‘Amr called out to fight, all the Muslims except Ali kept away from him. He advanced towards him and God killed him with his hands. By Him in Whose hand is the soul of Hudhayfah, Ali’s achievement on that day deserves a far greater reward than the companions of Muhammad on the Day of Resurrection. The victory was achieved in the hands of Ali.”⁴

Regarding the Battle of Khandaq, the Prophet said, “Verily, Ali’s single stroke on the day of Khandaq is better than the worship of all human beings and the jinn up to the Day of Resurrection.”⁵

Allah granted victory to the Muslims through Ali in the Battle of Khaybar. The Prophet besieged their fortress for ten days while the banner was with Ali. When he became afflicted with ophthalmia, and the Prophet handed over the banner to Abu Bakr accompanied by a group of men led by him, but they returned terrified and defeated. The Prophet then gave the banner to ‘Umar on the following day, and he too returned defeated. The Prophet then said, “I shall give the banner to the one whom God and his Messenger love, and he loves God and His Messenger. He attacks and does not retreat. He shall not return until

⁴ *Tarikh* of Ibn ‘Asakir, *tarjamt al-Imam ‘Ali* (The Biography of Imam Ali), vol. 1, pp. 150-155, no. 216 and 217; *al-Mustadrak* of al-Hakim, vol. 3, p. 32; *Kanz al-‘ummal*, vol. 11, p. 623, no. 33035; *Shawahid al-Tanzil*, vol. 2, pp. 7-17, no. 629-636; *al-Tafsir al-kabir* of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, vol. 32, p. 31.

⁵ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 39, p. 2.

God opens Khaybar at his hands.” The next morning, he said, “Call Ali for me.”

When the Prophet was told that Ali was suffering from ophthalmia, he spat some saliva into his hand and rubbed it on Ali’s eye, which eventually healed him. Afterwards, Ali received the banner.

Ali also killed Marhab when his companions ran away. The enemies closed the gates of the stronghold and Ali opened the gate and pulled it off its hinges. He then used it as a bridge across the trench for the Muslim army to cross. They once again were victorious. Afterwards, when the enemies left, Ali took hold of the gate with his right hand and threw it many yards away. Twenty people closed it, and the Muslims could not move it so that seventy men moved it, and Ali, said, “By God, I did not pull the gate of Khaybar off its hinges with my physical power, but I did it by Divine power.”⁶

In the Battle of Hunayn, the Prophet set out with ten thousand Muslim horsemen. The Prophet said, “Today, we will never be defeated as a result of being few in number.” However, when the Muslims met the polytheists, it was not long before they all left except the Prophet and nine people, including Ali, al-Abbas, his son al-Fadl, Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harth, Nawf ibn al-Harth, Rabi‘ah ibn al-Harth, Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, ‘Utbah and Mu` attab, and the sons of Abu Lahab.

When Abu Jarwal came forward to fight, Ali killed him. The pagans then left and the Muslims advanced after the Prophet’s call, and they arrayed themselves against the enemy. When Ali killed forty of them,

⁶ *Tarikh* of Ibn `Asakir, *tarjamt al-imam `Ali* (the biography of Imam `Ali, peace be upon him), vol. 1, pp. 156-225; *al-Manaqib* of al-Khwarazmi, p. 166.

and the others ran away. After the victory, the Muslims gained a large amount of war booty.⁷

The biographers narrated other similar transmitted battles and well-known expeditions in which Ali excelled in all of them. Since he struggled for the cause of God more than the others, he was superior to – and was rewarded more – than his companions.

Allamah al-Tusi: Imam Ali was the most learned due to his power of intuition, his time spent with the Prophet, and because the companions constantly referred to him in most cases after they made mistakes. The Prophet said, “Ali is the best in judgement among you.”⁸ In other words, experts in all disciplines rely on him as an authority.

Allamah al-Hilli:

Ali’s power of intuition:

1. Ali, who was raised by the Prophet, was a very clever person with an extraordinary power of insight. He always accompanied the Prophet and benefited from him, and the Messenger was the most perfect and meritorious of people. Whenever a person’s receptivity (*al-qabul*) is complete and effectiveness of the effector (*al-mu’aththir*) is perfect, the activity (*fi’l*), or state of being active in receiving in full becomes stronger. Ali engaged in the divine sciences from his childhood and according to a proverb, “Surely [The acquisition of] knowledge in childhood is like a drawing on a stone.” This is a causal proof (*burhan limmi*).

⁷ *al-Sirat al-halabiyyah*, vol. 3, p. 67.

⁸ *al-Shafi fi’l-Imamah*, vol. 1, pp. 201-206; *Mustadrak of al-Hakim*, vol. 3, p. 500; *al-Riyaz al-Nazrah*, vol. 2, pp. 160-170 and *Musnad of Ahmad*, vol. 5, p. 26.

2. When the companions hesitated with or were confused regarding religious rulings, with some at times offering wrong legal opinions, they referred to Ali; it has not been reported that he referred to any of them about anything at all.
3. The Prophet said, "Ali is the best in judgment among you, and judgment requires knowledge; therefore, Ali is superior to them."
4. All scholars rely on Ali as an authority. He developed Arabic syntax, the principles of the Divine sciences, and the principles of jurisprudence. Scholars of other sects claim to have learned from Ali, such as Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari, founder of the Ash'arite sect, was a student of Abu Ali al-Jubba'i, well-known Mu'tazilite, and all the Mu'tazilites go back to him. Qur'anic commentators trace back Qur'anic commentary to Ibn Abbas who was Ali's student. Jurists also give credit of their accomplishments to Ali. The Kharijites, in spite of their detachment to Ali, trace to their leaders, who were also Ali's students.
5. Ali declared on many occasions, "Ask me about the paths of the heavens because, indeed, I know the paths of the heavens more than I know the paths of the earth."⁹ "If I had been a ruler, I would have judged the people of the Torah by their Torah, the people of the Psalms by their Psalms, the people of the Gospel by their Gospel, and the people of the Qur'an by their Qur'an."

⁹ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 93, p. 108. no. 13 based on al-Fada'il; *tarjamat al-Imam 'Ali* (The Biography of Imam Ali), vol. 3, pp. 23-25, al-hadith nos. 1043 and 1047; *Fara'id al-simtayn*, vol. 1, p. 340, no. 263; *al-Ghadir*, vol. 6, p. 148.

This indicates his perfect knowledge of all these revealed laws. On the whole, the principles of knowledge (*usul al-'ilm*) narrated from him were not narrated from anyone else, including the companions.

Allamah al-Tusi: “*Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, ‘Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah’s curse upon the liars.’*” (3:61)

Allamah al-Hilli: In the above verse, Qur’anic commentators agree that “*sons*” refer to Hasan and Husayn, ‘*women*’ refers to Lady Fatimah, and ‘*souls*’ refers to Ali. It cannot be said that the souls of the Prophet and of Ali are one and the same [in extra-mental reality without there being any duality]; rather, what is intended by it is that they are equal in terms of spiritual and physical perfections, except for prophethood (*nubuwwah*). There is no doubt that the Prophet is the most estimable of people; thus Ali, who is like the soul of the Prophet, is the same.

Allamah al-Tusi: Imam Ali was the most generous person [among the Companions of the Prophet].¹⁰

Allamah al-Hilli: Ali was the most generous of all after the Prophet. In one renowned occasion, he and his family vowed to fast for three days, and on each day, a needy person asked for food. As they sincerely and generously offered their food, they remained starved for three days until

¹⁰ *al-Riyaz al-Nazrah* of Muhibb al-Din al-Tabari, vol. 2, p. 208, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 41, p. 144; *Sharh al-Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 21; *Fada'il al-Khamsah min al-sihah al-sittah*, vol. 1, pp. 301-305; *Dhakha'ir al-'Uqba* of Muhibb al-Din al-Tabari, p. 102, Maktabat al-Qudsi, Cairo.

God revealed on them the verse: “*They give food, for the love of Him, to the poor, the orphan and the captive*” (76:8). He gave all his wages in charity, and at that time, he possessed only four dirhams. He gave one dirham in charity during the night, one dirham during the day, one dirham secretly, and one dirham openly; and God revealed about him: “*...those who give their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly* (2:274).¹¹ His enemies even acknowledge that he would tie a stone over his stomach because of severe hunger.

Mu’awiyah said, “If Ali possessed a house full of gold and another full of straw, he would spend his gold for the sake of Allah before spending his straw¹² and he would not leave behind anything at all.” Indeed, in one hadith, Ali said, “O yellow [gold] and white [silver], deceive someone other than me.”

He also used to sweep the treasury-house (*bayt al-mal*) and pray in it even though a large part of the world was under his reign.¹³

Allamah al-Tusi: He was the most ascetic (*azhad*) of all people after the Prophet.¹⁴

Allamah al-Hilli: What is widely transmitted about him is that he was the epitome of piety; those on the spiritual path approached him to learn how to travel on the path of asceticism (*zuhd*) and about the hierarchical order of the spiritual states resulting from spiritual practices

¹¹ Quran 2:274; Ssee *Shawahid al-Tanzil* of al-Hakim al-Haskani, vo. 1, p. 140, Iran, Majma’ ihya’ al-Thaqafat al-Islamiyyah; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 41, p. 144; *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah* of Ibn Ab’il-Hadid, vol. 1, pp. 21-22; *al-Riyaz al-Nazrah*, vol. 2, p. 207.

¹² *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 41, p. 144; *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab’il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 22.

¹³ *al-Riyaz al-nazrah* of Muhibb al-Din al-Tabari, vol. 2, pp. 210-211; *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 41, p. 144; *Dhakha’ir al-’uqba*, p. 101.

¹⁴ *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah* of Ibn Ab’il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 26; *Dhakha’ir al-’uqba* of al-Tabari, p. 100; *al-Riyaz al-nazrah*, vol. 2, pp. 210-217.

and the spiritual stations of the gnostics. His conduct displayed ascetic signs: He ate the simplest food and never ate to his full. He also wore the roughest garments and his slippers were made from palm fibers.

He patched his shirt sometimes with a piece of leather and sometimes with some palm fibers. He rarely would have a condiment with bread and when he did it, his additional food was salt, vinegar, or herbs, and at best he added milk. He did not eat much meat as he said “Do not make your stomachs graveyards for animals.” He divorced the world three times.

Ubaydullah ibn Abi Rafi` said, “One day, I called on him and he brought forward a sealed bag that contained dry pieces of barley bread when he opened it, and he ate some of it. I said, “O Commander of the faithful, why did you seal it?” He said, “I fear lest the two sons [Hasan and Husayn] should soften it with oil or cooking butter.” This is that which is specific to Ali. No one has achieved even a small degree of his virtues.

Allamah al-Tusi: Imam Ali was the most devout of them all.¹⁵

Allamah al-Hilli: Ali was the most pious of all people. People learned from him the night prayer and also learned from him the proper order of the recommended (*mustahabb*) prayers and supplications.

There was a dent on his forehead like that of a camel (the prayer mark on his forehead was so deep; no better state than a camel's knees). He observed the recommended prayers to such an extent that a leather mat was spread for him between the two ranks [of the armies] on the Night

¹⁵ *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 27; *Hilyat al-abrar* of al-Sayyid al-Bahrani, vol. 2, p. 179; no. 17; *Irshad al-qulub* of al-Daylami, vol. 2, p. 11, Beirut and Qum, p. 217.

of Clamour (*Jaylat al-harir*) [of the Battle of Siffin], and he performed the recommended prayer while the arrows fell in front of him and at his sides. The arrowheads were removed from his body during prayer due to his deep concentration and attention to God so much so that he was not distracted by anything else.

Allamah al-Tusi: Imam Ali was the most forbearing person.

Allamah al-Hilli: Imam Ali was the most forbearing person after the Prophet. He did not retaliate against anyone for their misdeeds. Among those he forgave were:

-The hostile Marwan ibn al-Hakam on the day of the Battle of the Camel (*jamaʿ*).¹⁶

-ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr who had taken his father a captive, and Zubayr openly swore at him.¹⁷ Ali said, “Zubayr was always a member of our household until ʿAbd Allah ibn Zubayr incited him.”¹⁸

-Saʿid ibn al-ʿAs, who was aggressive towards Ali.¹⁹

-Ali respected ʿAishah and sent her to Medina with twenty women following the battle she waged against him.²⁰

-The people of Basrah in spite of their battle with him. When Muʿwiyah fought against Ali, his followers seized the river earlier and held the army of Imam Ali back from the water.

¹⁶ ¹⁶ *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah* of Ibn Abʿil-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 22.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 22-23.

¹⁸ Translator’s note: According to another version of the above-mentioned hadith, it reads as follows: Ali, said: Zubayr was always a member of our household until ʿAbd Allah [ibn Zubair] became a young man.

¹⁹ Ibid., vol. 1, p 23.

²⁰ Ibid., p 23.

-When Imam Ali's army became thirsty, he attacked and scattered Mu`wiyah's army and seized the river. As soon as his army wished to retaliate, he prohibited them from doing so. He said: "Clear part of the river, because the cutting edges of your swords will render it unnecessary."²¹

²¹ Ibid. pp. 23-24; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 41, p. 146.

UNCLEAR (*MUTASHABIH*) VERSES ACCORDING TO IBN SHAHR ASHUB

MORTEZA KARIMI

ABSTRACT: One of the key topics studied in the field of Qur'anic sciences is the equivocal verses (*mutashabihat*), as opposed to unequivocal verses (*muhkam*) which are fixed and permanent rather than subject to change. Various interpretations on the meaning and philosophy of both equivocal and unequivocal verses have been offered by scholars of Islamic sects. This article offers an account of *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh* by Ibn Shahr Ashub, a Twelver Shi'i poet and exegete of the Qur'an, who composed the work by popular demand of his inquiring students. The work offers both his ideas and notable scholars' ideas and examples to explain the three groups of equivocal verses and the philosophy behind them.

The verses of the Qur'an are divided into two groups: definitive and unclear ones, as seen in verse 3:7:

It is He who has sent down to you the Book. Parts of it are definitive verses, which are the mother of the Book, while others are metaphorical. As for those in whose hearts is deviance, they pursue what is metaphorical in it, courting temptation and courting its interpretation. But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We

*believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.' And none takes
admonition except those who possess intellect.¹*

In English translations, the word *mutashabihat* has been translated into various words, including: metaphorical, allegorical, unclear, obscure, ambiguous, resembling, and similar to each other, of which here I have chosen the word "unclear".

Discussions about definitive and unclear verses have begun from early age of Islam and until now constitutes one of the most important topics in the field of Qur'anic studies. The meaning of definitive and unclear verses, the philosophy of unclear verses, the contradiction between the existence of such verses in the Qur'an on the one hand and its being a light and a clarifying instrument for everything on the other are some of the questions in these discussions. The first work written on unclear verses was by Hamza ibn Habib al-Zayyat Al-Kufi,² a companion of Imam Sadiq, known as 'Imam al-Qurra' or 'leading reciter of the Quran.'³ After him, other scholars who wrote on *mutashabih al-Qur'an* include: Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Harun;⁴ Hasan ibn Hasan ibn Musa Al-Nawbakhti;⁵ Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-'Amidi,⁶ the author of *Tanqih Al-Balagha*; Mulla Sadra,⁷ the famous philosopher. Ibn Shahr

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هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي
قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي
الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

² d. 156 AH

³ Aqa Buzug Tihrani, *Al-Dhari'a 'ila Tafanif Al-Shi'a*, vol. 4 p. 273.

⁴ *Ibid.* vol. 19 p. 455.

⁵ *Ibid.* d. 310 AH

⁶ *Ibid.* d. 433 AH

⁷ *Ibid.* d. 1050 AH

Ashub⁸, a prolific author in various fields of study, wrote three books on Qur'anic studies: *Al-Asbab wa al-Nuzul*; *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*; and *al-Manaqib* in which he gathered the verses regarding the virtues of the progeny of the Prophet. In this article, his book *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh* will be analysed.

Author's biography

Hafiz Abu Ja'far (Abu 'Abdillah) Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Shahr Ashub ibn Abi Nasr ibn Abi al-Jaysh al-Mazandarani, better known as Ibn Shahr Ashub, was born in 489 AH (1096 AD) and passed away in 588 AH (1192 AD) while he was 99 years old. He was also known as Rashid al-Din, 'Izz al-Din, and Shaykh al-Ta'ifah.

An Ithna 'Ashari scholar, Ibn Shahr Ashub was a jurist, theologian, exegete of the Qur'an, a traditionalist, and a poet. He memorized the Qur'an when he was 8 years old, was knowledgeable, and was renowned for his piety and worship. As a Shi'i scholar, he is compared to Khatib al-Baghdadi, the famous Sunni scholar. He travelled to various cities such as Khurasan, Khwarazm, Nishapur, and Sabziwar. At the time of al-Muqtafi, Ibn Shahr Ashub set out for Baghdad and during this journey, he visited the scholars of Ray, Kashan, Isfahan, and Hamadan. After some years of staying in Baghdad, he left for Mosul and thereafter, Hallab was ruled by Al-Hamdani, a Shi'a dynasty. He lived in Hallab until the end of his life, and was buried on the hillside of Mount Jawshan. Among some of his teachers were Ahmad al-Ghazzali, Jar-Allah Zamakhshari, Abu Ali Tabarsi, Abu al-Hasan al-Bayhaqi, Qutb Rawandi, and Abu al-Futuh al-Razi. His students include prominent

⁸ d. 588 AH

scholars such as Sayyid Muhammad ibn Zuhra al-Halabi, Ali bin Shi'ra al-Hilli, Muhammad ibn Idris al-Hilli, ibn Bitriq al-Hilli, and ibn Abi Tayy al-Hilli.⁹

A general outlook of Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh

This book has been published in 2 volumes. The content of the first volume includes 5 sections:

- 1- Monotheism, the principles of the religion, and Divine Attributes
- 2- The creation of the skies, earth, and other creatures
- 3- Happiness, misery, and predestination
- 4- Prophecy and the stories of the prophets
- 5- Various discussions under the title “*Mufradat*”

The 2nd volume contains issues such as:

- 1- Qur'anic verses regarding Prophet Muhammad
- 2- The virtues of the progeny of Prophet Muhammad
- 3- Various subjects, such as repentance and the Day of Judgment
- 4- Qur'anic verses on jurisprudence and its principles
- 5- Abrogated and abrogating verses.

⁹ For a detailed biography, see. *Al-Wafi bi Al-Wafayat*, vol. 4 pp. 118ff.; *Al-Dhari'a*, vol. 20 pp. 175ff.; *Dayerat Al-Ma'arif -i- Buzurg -i- Islami*, vol. 4 pp. 90ff.; *Rayhana Al-'Adab*, vol. 8 pp. 58 ff.

Rather than being a work on the entire interpretation of the Qur'an, it discusses the unclear verses, or those about which there are disagreements among scholars and exegetes.

The introduction of *Mutashabih al-Qur'an*

In his introduction to *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*, Ibn Shahr Ashub clarifies that he has written it as an answer to the request of his students to explain unclear verses and interpretations in which scholars differ. He then describes the difficulty of this field of study: "I swear that such study is a deep sea one of which is rarely found in Shi'i theological works and exegeses."¹⁰

He then adds that some of his points are his own ideas and others are derived from scholars.

The definition of definitive (*muhkam*) and unclear (*mutashabih*) verses is the most important issue in this introduction. Ibn Shahr Ashub begins with his definition of 'unclear verses': "Unclear verses are those that include meanings that may not be understood by their appearance except if accompanied by some evidence that clarify their meaning."¹¹

Ashub then quotes the views of other scholars regarding the definition of these verses:

- Ibn 'Abbas: "Definitive verses are the abrogating ones; unclear verses are the abrogated ones."

¹⁰ *Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*, vol. 1 p.2.

و لعمرى إن لهذا التحقيق بحراً عميقاً ولا يكاد يوجد منه إلا ألفاظ في كتب كبار المتكلمين أو نكت في بعض تفاسير المحققين العدليين

¹¹ *Ibid.*

المتشابه ما لا يعلم المراد بظاهره حتى يقترن به ما يدل على المراد منه لالتباسه

- Mujahid: "Definitive verses are the ones whose meaning is clear; unclear verses are the ones whose meaning is ambiguous."
- Al-Juba'i: "A definitive verse has only one meaning; an unclear verse may have two meanings or more."
- Jabir: "The verses we are able to define their interpretation are the definitive ones, otherwise they are unclear."
- Unknown: "An unclear verse is the one whose meaning does not fit its wordings except if we add, omit, or move some words."¹²

The next section discusses the reason as to why unclear verses have been called "*mutashabih*": Since they resemble the definitive verses (*mutashabih* is derived from شـبـه – meaning 'to resemble');

- Since their real meaning is mixed with their false meaning (in this case, *mutashabih* is derived from اشتباه which means 'mistake').

The three groups of unclear verses

1. The verses that may have two, three, or more meanings in which the most appropriate meaning should be chosen. Examples:

a. 5:64:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُوبَةٌ

The Jews say, 'Allah's hand is tied up'.

b. 5: 13-14:

¹² *Ibid.*

وَحَمَلْنَاهُ عَلَى ذَاتِ الْأَوْحِ وَدُسِّرَتْجَرِي بِأَعْيُنِنَا جَزَاءً لِمَنْ كَانَ كُفِرَ

Then We embarked Noah in the Ark Made of planks and nails; And the Ark was floating under Our Supervision and it was the reward for The one who had been denied [by The disbelievers].

2. Verses in which the apparent meanings contradict each other, such those that which define the period in which the heavens were created:

- a. Two days: 41:12:

فَقَضَيْنَهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ

“Then He divided and shaped the gaseous smoke into seven heavens within two days.”

- b. Four days: 41:10:

وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِّلنَّاسِ لِلْيَوْمِ

He is the One Who placed firm and fixed mountains on the earth to keep it and its inhabitants secure from quakes and trembling; and He Ordained Sustenance for the people according to Their needs, all in four days.

- c. Six days: 7:54:

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ

Indeed your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days.

3. Verses that are definitive while their objective meaning is to clarify unclear verses: 42:11:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

Nothing is like Him.

Ashub then introduces three means by which one may understand the proper meaning of unclear verses:

- a. books of lexicography
- b. reason
- c. religious principles

The philosophy behind unclear verses

Why hasn't Allah sent every verse in a clear way, without ambiguity?

Ashub's responses are as follows:

1. To encourage Muslims to ponder upon the verses, and by means of their intellect and reflection, to come to an understanding of unclear verses. This causes them not to rely only on the narrated sayings. Also, as is proven in theology, the truthfulness of a prophet should be illustrated by reason; otherwise, no one can rely on him, as his words may be wrong.
2. Through such verses, the learned and unlearned people will be distinguished, as verse 3:7 reads:

وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ

But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge.

3. The Qur'an has been revealed in the Arabic language in which the use of different techniques of rhetoric such as metaphors, allegories, allusions, and irony.

After the introduction, Ashub studies the unclear and disagreed-upon verses one by one. In each case, he offers his and occasionally others' viewpoint as the interpretation of those verses. These verses can be listed under various titles in the first volume, some of which are the following:

The creation of the heavens, The Lord of east and west, The creation of Adam, The heart, The angels, Satan, Glorification (*tasbih*), The green tree (*الشجر الاخضر*), Creation of the world, The sun and moon, The story of Korah, Magic, The preserved tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*), The soul, Knowledge, Invitation, Contemplation, Divine knowledge, Divine hearing, The Quran, Divine will, Divine richness, Closeness to Allah, The Divine 'Arsh (throne), Revelation, The face of Allah, The hand of Allah, the Right hand of Allah, The vicinage of Allah, The coming of Allah, Other Divine Attributes, Looking at Allah, The manifestation of Allah, The concept of *liqa' Allah* (meeting Allah), The life of Allah, *Iman* (faith) and Islam, Divine Justice, Predestination, Free will, Light and guidance, Divine providence, Divine Permission, Divine devise (*makr*), Infallibility; and the stories of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Zachariah, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Shu'ayb, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah and Jesus.

Some titles in the 2nd volume include: The story of the Prophet Muhammad, Forgiveness and repentance, Consulting, Mercy, The necessity of the existence of a prophet or an Imam in every age, Imam Ali and his virtues, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn and their virtues, proving the Imamate of the Imams, Caliphate, Love for the Ahlul Bayt, Sustenance, The term of one's life, Death, Return to life (*raj'at*), The experience in the grave, The Day of Judgement, Hell and its punishments, Paradise and its rewards, Intercession, The meaning of

Divine will, Abrogation, Analogy, Purification, The minor ablution (*wudu*), The ritual prayer and its rules, Legal alms (*zakat*), Fasting and its rules, The pilgrimage (*hajj*) and its rules, Jihad and its rules, Marriage and divorce and their rules, Enjoining good and forbidding evil and their rules, hunting and its rules, forbidden foods and drinks, inheritance, and legal punishments (*hudud*). And the end of the book is on Arabic grammar and rhetoric.

Ashub's work finished in 507 AH when he was 81 years old, when his knowledge reached its climax.

The following delves into Ashub's discussion on theology, Arabic grammar, and jurisprudence.

On "coming" of Allah¹³

Ashub mentions five relevant verses:

1. Verse 89:22:

وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا

"...and your Lord comes and the angels in ranks."

"...and your Lord comes" actually means 'the command of your Lord comes.' Therefore, the *mudaf* (annexed to another noun) has been omitted and the *mudaf ilayh* (that to which annexation is made) has replaced it. Omitting in such cases where one cannot hold to the apparent meaning is permissible, as seen in the following verse:

وَاسْأَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا

¹³ See. *Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*, vol. 1 pp. 82-84

While the apparent meaning of this verse is "*Ask the town we were in*"; it actually means "*Ask [the people of] the town we were in*". (12:82)

According to al-Hasan, it means "*and the promise of your lord comes*" and promise means the punishments and rewards.

2. Verse 2:210:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَفُضِي الْأَمْرُ وَ
إِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ

"Do they await anything but that Allah should come to them in the shades of the clouds, with the angels, and the matter be decided? And to Allah all matters are returned."

According to Ibn 'Abbas, the coming of Allah refers to the coming of His punishment. What the disbelievers see are a) punishments in the shape of clouds, and b) the angels of punishment.

3. Verse 16:26:

قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَى اللَّهُ بُنْيَانَهُمْ مِنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ فَحَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِنْ
فَوْقِهِمْ وَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

Those who were before them [had also] schemed. Then Allah razed their edifice from the foundations and the roof collapsed upon them from above and the punishment overtook them whence they were not aware.

In this verse, the word "أتى", translated as "razed" originally means "to come". Here again something has been omitted. The accurate meaning would be phrased as "The command of Allah for demolishing them came." What confirms this claim is the next phrase: "*The roof collapsed upon them from above and the punishment overtook them.*"

4. Verse 23:56:

نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ

We are hastening to them of good things.

The word نُسَارِعُ originally means "to hasten." As soon as the believers worship Allah, He immediately rewards them as a result of His satisfaction and love for them.

5. Verse 17:60:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ

When We said to you, 'Indeed your Lord comprehends all mankind.'

The verb احاط (translated as "comprehends") originally means "to physically surround something". However, in the above verse it refers to the Divine knowledge that comprehends every situation and state; any good or bad deed, and any punishment or reward people deserve are under His control.

On putting in the masculine or feminine gender¹⁴

In Arabic grammar, every noun is either masculine or feminine; and for each, different forms of the verbs, adjectives, and pronouns are used. Thus, the verbs and adjectives are also masculine or feminine. In this section, Ashub points to several verses in which apparently this rule has not been observed. Then in each case, he explains the reason why that specific verb or adjective has been applied:

1. Verse 69:7:

¹⁴ See. *Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*, vol. 2 pp. 234-236.

كَانَتْهُنَّ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ

...as if they were hollow trunks of palm trees.

And verse 54:20 reads:

كَانَتْهُنَّ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُنْفَعِرٍ

...as if they were trunks of uprooted palm trees.

In the first verse, the feminine adjective has been used for palm trees, while in the latter, the masculine has been used. This can either be because a) the adjectives are for the word نخل (palm) which is one of the nouns for which both masculine and feminine adjectives and verbs may be used; or b) they are for the word شجر (tree) which is like نخل. Therefore, both masculine and feminine adjectives and pronouns have been used for شجر as we see the masculine form in verse 36:80:

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَإِذَا أَنْتُمْ مِنْهُ تُوقِدُونَ

...who made for you fire out of the green tree, and, behold, you light fire from it!

And the feminine form in verse 56:52-3:

لَا يَكُونُ مِنْ شَجَرٍ مِنْ زَقُّومٍ فَمِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ

You will surely taste of the Zaqqum Tree; And will fill up your belies with it.

2. Verse 30:34:

بَلَدٌ طَيِّبَةٌ

...a good land.

Here, a feminine adjective has been used for the word بلدة.

While verse 25:49 reads:

لِنُحْيِيَ بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا وَنُسْقِيَهُ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا أَنْعَامًا وَأَنْبِيَ كَثِيرًا

...with which We revive a dead country and provide water to many of the cattle and humans We have created.

Here, masculine adjective has been applied for the same word. The reason for the difference is that in Arabic grammar, the adjective is used either for the apparent word (i.e. بلدة) or the hidden meaning (i.e. مكان (place) – which is masculine). The same is true with the two following verses:

Verse 84:1 reads:

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ

When the sky is split open.

And verse 73:18 reads:

السَّمَاءِ مُنْفَطِرٍ بِهِ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَفْعُولًا

...and wherein the sky will be rent apart? His promise is bound to be fulfilled.

The word السماء is feminine. Thus, the first verse in which a feminine verb has been used is in accordance to the apparent word. In the second verse, however, a masculine adjective has been used. Here, the hidden meaning (i.e. "السقف" (ceiling) – which is masculine) is meant.

3. Verse 34:42:

وَتَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ

...and We shall say to those who did wrong, 'Taste the punishment of the Fire which you used to deny.'

Here, feminine pronoun has been used for "*the punishment of the Fire*" while verse 32:20 reads:

وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ بِهَا تَكْفُرُونَ

...and they will be told: 'Taste the punishment of the Fire which you used to deny.'

Here, masculine pronoun has been used for the same expression. There are two possibilities for the difference between the pronouns:

- a) The feminine pronoun returns to the feminine noun of النار (fire) while the masculine pronoun refers to the masculine noun of عذاب (punishment);
- b) The feminine pronoun returns to the very word of نار while the masculine pronoun refers to the act of fire which is احراق (to burn) – a masculine word.

4. The word "ريح" (wind) has been used in the Qur'an both in masculine and feminine forms:

a) Masculine forms:

-Verse 30:51:

وَلَئِنْ أَرْسَلْنَا رِيحًا فَرَأَوْهُ مُصْفَرًّا لَظَلُّوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ يَكْفُرُونَ

And if We send a wind and they see it turn yellow, they will surely become ungrateful after that.

-Verse 41:16:

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا

So We unleashed upon them an icy gale.

-Verse 51:41:

وَ فِي عَادٍ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ

And in Ad when We unleashed upon them a barren wind.

-Verse 10:22:

رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ

...a tempestuous wind.

b) Feminine forms:

a. Verse 10:22:

"هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَرَينَ بِهِمْ يَرْجِ طَيْبَةً وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ

It is He who carries you across land and sea. When you are in the ships, and they sail with them with a favourable wind, rejoicing in it, there comes upon them a tempestuous wind.

b. Verse 21:81:

وَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا وَ كُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَالِمِينَ

And for Solomon [We disposed] the tempestuous wind which blew by his command toward the land which We have blessed, and We have knowledge of all things.

c. Verse 34:12:

وَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ غَدُوها شَهْرٌ وَ رَواحها شَهْرٌ

And for Solomon [We subjected] the wind: its morning course was a month's journey and its evening course was a month's journey.

Ashub mentions the following reasons for the differences:

- a) The word ریح can be used in both masculine and feminine forms, just as the words سكين (knife) and سبيل (way). The latter has been used in both masculine and feminine forms in the Qur'an: the masculine form is in Verse 7:146:

وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ العَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا

...and if they see the way of rectitude they will not take it as [their] way, and if they see the way of error they will take it as [their] way.

The feminine form has occurred in verse 12:108:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي

Say, 'This is my way.'

1. The wind of punishment is masculine since its purpose is punishment (عذاب – a masculine noun); the wind of mercy is feminine since its consequence is Divine mercy (رحمه – a feminine word).
2. ریح is a feminine word. Wherever a masculine verb, adjective, or pronoun is used for it, it refers to its word (لفظ – masculine). The same is true with verse 6:78:

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسُ بِارِعَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said, " This is my Lord! This is bigger! But when it set, he said, 'O my people, indeed I disown what you take as [His] partners.'

The word شمس is feminine. Therefore the first adjective بازغه and the verb افلت are in feminine forms. However, the demonstrative pronoun هذا and the second adjective اكبر are in masculine form. Here, they refer to the word لفظ of شمس.

On ritual prayer (*salat*)¹⁵

In this chapter, Ashub refers to 28 verses of the Qur'an directly or indirectly related to the issue of prayer. He mentions his and others' ideas regarding the rules deduced from these verses. What follows is a portion of them:

1. Verse 2:238:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ

Be watchful of your prayers.

To be watchful over our prayers is to perform it exactly when the time of each prayer arrives, since a person is not secured from what will happen afterwards. This verse is a command to perform the prayers, and to perform it right at the beginning of the time.

2. The verse "*In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful*" is an independent verse. This is the view of Shafi'i and Sufyan Al-Thawri and all Shi'i scholars.
3. Verse 12:2:

¹⁵ See *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*, vol. 2 pp. 167-173.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an so that you may apply reason.

4. Verse 26:195:

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ

And Qur'an is revealed in a plain Arabic Language.

These verses illustrate that reading translations of the Qur'an is not actually reading the it, just as reading Arabic poems like the poems of Imri' al-Qays in a non-Arabic language is not said to have been reading the poems themselves.

5. Verse 1:6-7:

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Guide us on the straight path; the path of those whom You have blessed such as have not incurred Your wrath, nor are astray.

In their daily prayers, some non-Shi'a Muslims say "Amen" آمين (so be it) after the above-mentioned verses since these verses contain a kind of du'a and request; آمين is an expression by which we ask Allah to grant our request. This is a false argument since:

- a. A du'a is counted only if it is recited with the intention of du'a prayer, while here the intention is recitation, and not du'a;
- b. If it is the case, then the same expression should be used after all du'as in the Quran, such as:

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَ إِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَ تَبَثِّ أَقْدَامَنَا وَ انصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ
الْكَافِرِينَ¹⁶

Our Lord, forgive us our sins, and our excesses in our affairs, and make our feet steady, and help us against the faithless lot.

Or

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَ قِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ¹⁷

Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the Fire.

The word “Amen” is not in the Qur'an and it is not, by itself, an independent and meaningful sentence; therefore, uttering it is similar to uttering any word out of Qur'an and glorification of Allah. The Prophet said: Nothing of human words can be uttered in prayer.¹⁸ And clearly, “Amen” is not a Divine word.

- a- “Amen” is not found among the Divine Names. Allah has not been called out as “Oh Amin!”

6. Verse 11:123:

وَ لَا تَزْكُتُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ وَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ
لَا تُنصَرُونَ

And do not incline toward the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should touch you, and you will not have any friend besides Allah, then you will not be helped.

¹⁶ Chapter 3 Verse 147.

¹⁷ Chapter 2 Verse 201.

¹⁸ Muhaddith Nuri (1254-1320 AH) in his *Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il*, vol. 5 p. 427.

إِنَّ هَذِهِ الصَّلَاةَ لَا يَصْلُحُ فِيهَا شَيْءٌ مِنْ كَلَامِ الْإِنْسَانِ

A prayer leader is to be pious and virtuous. This verse implies that a transgressor cannot be prayer leader since his leadership will draw others towards him.

Important features of Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh

A general review of this book leads us to the following features of this precious work:

1. Ashab not merely an exegete of the Qur'an or a specialist of Qur'anic studies. The chapters on monotheism, prophethood, and Imamate portray a skillful theologian at work. His discussions regarding Arabic Grammar and rhetoric, and jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence testify to his vast knowledge. Although he does not have an independent book on jurisprudence or its principles, his students called him a "faqih" (jurist).¹⁹ As researchers hold, his main discussions on jurisprudence and its principles have been mentioned in the 6th and 7th chapters of the current book in which he discussed *'Ayat al-'Ahkam* (verses related to religious rules). It is widely known that the Qur'an includes more than 500 of such verses i.e. *'Ayat al-'Ahkam*²⁰ of which about 340 verses have been mentioned.
2. The title of the book may bring into mind the incorrect assumption that all, or at least most verses mentioned in this book, are among the unclear verse. The title consists of two words: unclear verses and disagreed-upon verses. Clearly most of the verses mentioned in this book are the disagreed-upon verses. Nonetheless, the content of the

¹⁹ *Dayerat Al-Ma'arifi Buzurgi Islami*, vol. 4 p. 91

²⁰ See. *Munyat Al-Murid*, p. 378

book covers more than what is understood from the title; the name of the book refers to the larger portion of the book, and not the entire work.

3. In the section on jurisprudence, the author adopted the conventional method in the books on interpretations: he first mentions the related verse(s) and then clarifies the subject in question and brings his arguments in favour of his idea. In many cases, he quotes other views as well, though in most cases he does not mention their names. Generally, he refers to the different ideas between Shi'i and Sunni scholars more than he does regarding the differences among Shi'i scholars. In this regard, he sometimes quotes the views of Abu Hanifa, Shafi'i, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and Malik, the founders of the four judicial schools of the Sunni school of thought.
4. The author's citations from both Shi'i and Sunni scholars reveals his knowledge of others' views:
 - a. In theological discussions, he refers to ideas of scholars such as Rummani²¹, Sayyid Murtada²², Juba'I²³, Al-Hasan²⁴, Ibn Al-'Ikshid²⁵, Ibn 'Abbas²⁶, Shaykh Tusi²⁷, Ibn Jurayh²⁸, Qutada²⁹, Ibrahim³⁰, Al-Hakam³¹, Mujahid³², Al-Balkhi³³, Abu Ali³⁴, Ibn

²¹ *Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*, vol. 1 p. 4.

²² Ibid. pp. 4,14.

²³ Ibid. p.6.

²⁴ Ibid. P. 17.

²⁵ Ibid. p.14.

²⁶ Ibid. p.15,17.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 18.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 19.

Ishaq³⁵, Suwayd ibn Abi Kahil³⁶, Umayyah³⁷, Al-'Asamm³⁸, Abu Al-Qasim³⁹, Al-Dahhak⁴⁰, etc.

- b. In discussions on jurisprudence and its principles we see such great names as Abu Hashim,⁴¹ Sayyid Murtada,⁴² Shafi',⁴³ Abu Hanifa,⁴⁴ Ahmad ibn Hanbal,⁴⁵ Qutada,⁴⁶ Muhammad ibn Al-Hasan,⁴⁷ Abu 'Ubayd,⁴⁸ Malik,⁴⁹ Sufyan Al-Thawri,⁵⁰ Abu Bakr ibn Al-Mundhir,⁵¹ Fadl ibn Shadhan,⁵² etc.
- c. When grammatical points are the matters of the discussions, again we are faced with the ideas of great scholars in Arabic literature such as Abu Bakr Al-Anbari,⁵³ Mubarrad,⁵⁴ Al-Farra',⁵⁵

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 21.

³⁶ Ibid. P. 26.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 31.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 40.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, vol. 2 p. 145.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 162.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 163.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 165.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 167.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 169.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. p. 196.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 236.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 239.

Ibn Al-Sikkit,⁵⁶ Abu Ishaq,⁵⁷ Al-'Akhfash,⁵⁸ Al-Khalil,⁵⁹ Al-Zajjaj,⁶⁰ Al-Tha'lab,⁶¹ etc.

5. Many narrations from Sunni collections of hadith have been referred to in this book. Surprisingly, most of them are from Sunni books since, as mentioned earlier, the author mostly refers to differences between Shi'i and Sunni ideologies. What follows is a list of them:

Al-Sahih by Muslim; *Al-Sahih* by Bukhari; *Al-Sunan* by Ibn Maja; *Al-Musnad* by Ahmab ibn Hanbal; *Al-Sunan* by Abu Dawud; *Al-Muwatta'* by Malik; *Al-Musnad* by Abu Hanifa; *Al-Musnad* by Al-Shafi'i; *Al-Jami'* by Tirmidhi; *Al-Musnad* by Abi Ya'la; *Al-Musnad* by Al-Musili; *Al-Sunan* by Qazwini; *Al-Sunan* by Sijistani; *Tarikh Baghdad* by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi; *'Thya' 'Ulum Al-Din* by Ghazali; *Al-Hilyah* by Abi Na'im; *Al-Tafsir* by Tha'labi; *Al-Kashf* by Tha'labi; *Qut Al-Qulub* by Abu Talib Al-Makki and *Ikhtilaf Al-Fuqaha'* by Al-Saji.

6. And finally, there are many poetic verses from which the author has benefitted to prove his ideas, particularly in grammatical points. In most cases, the name of the poet is not mentioned. However, among the poets whose names have been mentioned, one may refer to 'Imri' Al-Qays, Ibn Rumi, Abu Al-Najm, Zuhayr, Kumayt, 'Aws, Al-

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 240.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 244.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 249.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 264.

Ja'di, Lubayd, Al-Khansa', Al-Hadhli, Jarir, 'Udayy ibn Hatam, Abu Dhu'ayb, Al-'A'sha, Al-Ta'i, Al-Nabigha, Al-Tamr, Al-Qutami, and Suwayd.

Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh is a very important, if not unique, book of its kind. However, due attention has not been paid to it. It still remains a duty on Muslims in general and Shi'i teachers and students in particular, especially those who are involved in Qur'anic studies, to deeply study this valuable work.

References

- Sayyid Muhsin Al-Hakim, *'A'yan Al-Shi'a*, Beirut 1406 AH, vol. 1 p 128.
- Shams Al-Din Dhahabi, *Tarikh Al-Islam*, Beirut 1413 AH, vol. 44 p. 294.
- Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Jalali, *Fihris Al-Turath*, Qum 1422 AH, vol. 1 p. 602.
- Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Ma'alim Al-'Ulama'*, Najaf 1380 AH, p. 119.

LEGAL RULINGS DERIVED FROM QUR'ANIC STORIES, PART I

HAMID REZA FAHIMI-TABAR

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Storytelling is universal; it has been a means to preserve and transfer culture, educate and entertain, and deliver a moral message. Much of the Qur'an comprises of stories on specific nations and prophets of God. However, the question then arises: can legal rulings also be derived from Qur'anic stories? Based on narrations from the Ahlul Bayt, legal verses have indeed been derived from them. To demonstrate these rulings, the first part of this article draws on these narrations, using topics such as the permissibility of self-praise and dissimulation (*taqiyya*) and justifying punishment for the disabled and ill wrongdoers. The second part offered in the next issue includes the implications drawn from the Ahlul Bayt's method of interpretation of Qur'anic stories.

Introduction

Storytelling deals with human nature, and in the stories there are facts that are made compatible with the reader or listener's taste and preference. Storytelling is an immortal media that carries any lesson and is universal. It can both quench and increase one's thirst. There is no nation found that is unfamiliar with it, since it is the amassed art transferred from the tongues to the hearts and from the hearts to the

tongues (i.e., is written down).¹ On the basis of this natural principle, the Qur'an conveyed plenty of its messages through stories to such an extent that some leading Qur'anic scholars turned to story-based commentaries in deriving ideas and conclusions from the verses. Among them are Abu Bakr 'Atiq Neishabouri's *Sur-Abadi Commentary*, Rashid al-Din Meybodi's *Kashf-ul-Asrar wa Uddatul Abrar*, and *The Prophets' Stories* by Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Mansur ibn Khalaf Neishabouri.

However, the key question here is: Do Qur'anic stories document actual events, or are they some accounts with particular artistic or expressive elements to deliver some messages? Some scholars – on the grounds that Qur'anic stories are accounts of actual events – have attempted to present historical documents of them in the form of works such as *The Atlas of the Qur'an*,² and archaeology and historical geography of Qur'anic stories.³ In contrast, influenced by the modern artistic definition of story, some Muslims insist that Qur'anic stories are unreal.⁴

Numerous hadiths on Qur'anic commentary indicate that legal rulings have been inferred from Qur'anic stories. That is, the Ahlul Bayt – as the criterion of the truth and the falsehood, the divine measure, and the scale of correct Qur'anic commentary – have derived some legal rulings from Qur'anic verses that tell stories. In the first part of this article, more than twenty interpretative hadiths on Qur'anic stories are dealt with so that we can gather the Ahlul Bayt's interpretative hadiths on them that have a legal and jurisprudential content. In the second part,

¹ Baqqal Laleh, 1379 solar: 18

² Shoqi, 1388 solar: 8

³ Bi-Azar Shirazi, 1380 solar: 4-5

⁴ Ahmad Khalaf-Allah, 1999 A.D.: 73-85, 91-154

some implications of the Ahlul Bayt's method of interpretation will be drawn.

1. Examples of the Ahlul Bayt's legal understanding in interpretative hadiths on Qur'anic Stories

In this paper, the phrase 'Qur'anic stories' refers to those in which the events of past peoples or a part of divine prophets' lives (i.e., those before Prophet Muhammad) are depicted. The Ahlul Bayt inferred legal rulings and injunctions from these verses. Some examples are presented below:

1.1. The permissibility of taking a government position in unjust political systems

According to Shi'i beliefs, all ranks of wilayah emanate from God. Any form of intervening in others' affairs should be permitted by God and carried out on His orders. After Prophet Muhammad, it is only the Imams who are permitted to intervene in the people's political and social affairs.⁵ Any political system that is not ruled by the Infallible Imam or a person who is given permission by him is called Taghut, and the Shi'a are not permitted to collaborate with them. Given that there are instances in which this was seemingly done, such as when Imam Rida accepted to be crown prince of Ma'mun, people who opposed this asked the Imam the reason for his action. Referring to Prophet Joseph's measure, the Imam justified his taking a government post in Ma'mun's government. He also asked them, "Which one is superior, a prophet or a wasi?" The questioner replied, "Of course, the prophet is superior to a

⁵ Iji, 1325 A.H., vol.8:48

wasi.” Then the Imam asked, “Which one is superior, a Muslim or a polytheist?” The man replied, “Of course, a Muslim.” The Imam added, “The Egyptian king was a polytheist and Joseph was a divine prophet. However, Ma’mun is a Muslim, and I am a wasi. Joseph asked the Egyptian king to appoint him to be in charge of national properties, and he called himself a knowledgeable protector, but Ma’mun forced me to be crown prince...”⁶

This way, a justification for accepting to be crown prince of Ma’mun, Imam Rida referred to Prophet Joseph’s word in the verse, “*He said: Place me [in authority] over the treasures of the land, surely I am a good keeper, knowing well*” (Yusuf, 55). In this story, Prophet Joseph asked the Egyptian king to assign him to be in charge of Egyptian properties while the Egyptian king was a polytheist and Prophet Joseph was a divine prophet.

1.2. The admissibility of self-praise

It goes without saying that it is wrong to praise oneself in order to belittle others in a domineering manner.⁷ However, every now and then it is impossible to serve others except through winning public trust, and the goal of building trust cannot be achieved but through demonstrating one’s abilities. Under such circumstances (i.e., when there is no other way for offering services to others but through introducing oneself), man is logically obliged to introduce himself. This verdict is confirmed by religious teachings. For example, Imam Sadiq was asked whether it is permissible to praise oneself. In response, he replied: “When one has no

⁶ Bahrani, no date, vol.2: 256, no. 66

⁷ Naraq, 1367, 170

other choice, it is permissible. Haven't you heard Prophet Joseph's word that "*Place me [in authority] over the treasures of the land, surely I am a good keeper, knowing well,*" (Yusuf, 55). And the word of Prophet Hud who told his people, "I am a faithful adviser to you," (al-Araf, 68).⁸

1.3. The legitimacy of drawing lots in Islam

Imam Sadiq was asked, "A baby is born, and it cannot be identified as either male or female. What is its share of inheritance?" In response, the Imam resorted to drawing lots and justified their actions as follows: "What action is fairer than drawing lots in order to recognize its gender?" As God said, "*Prophet Jonah drew lots [with them] but was of those who are cast off,*" (Al-Saffat: 141).⁹

Undoubtedly, it is rational to draw lots to eliminate bewilderment and perplexity, but reality and truth cannot be revealed through it. Therefore, drawing lots cannot be considered a legal ruling; it is a rational verdict common among people. When Prophet Jonah accepted the verdict based on drawing lots in the sinking ship, when Israelites accepted to draw lots to appoint the guardian of Lady Mary, and when Abdul-Muttalib turned to drawing lots to determine ransom, they were all rationally deliberating to prevent incitement to rebellion.¹⁰ Therefore, in the time of Imam Sadiq, if it had been possible to recognize the gender of baby, he would have not resorted to drawing lots to avoid the deadlock.

1.4. Recommending that a woman who has just borne a baby eat dates

⁸ Aruzi Howaizi, 1373 A.H., vol.2: 433, Bahrani, no date, vol. 2: 256, no. 64

⁹ Bahrani, no date: 37: no. 5 and 6; see Aruzi Howaizi, 1373 A.H., vol. 1: 338, no. 137

¹⁰ Makarim Shirazi, 1411 A. H., vol.1:354

Reported from Imam al-Baqir,¹¹ Imam Ali quoted Prophet Muhammad as saying, “The first thing that a woman who has just given birth to a baby must eat is dates because God told Virgin Mary, “*And shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates,*” (Maryam, 25).¹²

In some commentaries and hadiths on this verse, the positive effects of dates on mother’s health and her milk are mentioned, including nutritionists’ research.¹³ Of course, the verse refers to a miracle: the dead palm tree germinated and bore dates by the touch of a friend of God. From the hadiths, it cannot be concluded that dates should be eaten; rather, it can be deduced that a woman who has just borne a baby needs some foods similar to dates in qualities. However, Imam Ali has drawn a legal ruling from this story on Lady Mary. There is a similar hadith in Sunni sources.

1.5. The permissibility of dissimulation

Dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) – a practice emphasized by the Ahlul Bayt on several occasions – is protecting oneself, one’s family, or innocent people from harm by doing, avoiding, saying something that is not recommended or permissible under normal conditions. Shi’a scholars divide dissimulation into three types: prohibited, mandatory, and permissible. Some permissible conditions whereby it can be practiced are a) saving the life of the believers, b) elevation of man’s status and his perfection, and c) preserving Islamic unity.

In one narration, Abu Basir reported:

¹¹ Tabataba’i, 1363 solar, vol.14: 74

¹² Aruzi Howaizi, 1373 A. H., vol.3, no. 50, 40, 51, 52, 53, 54

¹³ Makarim Shirazi, 1384 solar, vol. 13: 60

According to Imam Sadiq, "Dissimulation is a part of God's religion." I asked him, "God's religion?" He replied, "Yes, by God, it is a part of God's religion. Verily, Prophet Joseph said: '*O [men of the] caravan! You are indeed thieves!*' (12:70) while they have not stolen anything. Also, Prophet Abraham said, '*Indeed I am sick*' (37:89) while he was actually not ill."¹⁴

The verse clearly indicates that Prophet Joseph did not personally call the Canaanite caravan thieves. However, as he approved of the caller's words or ordered him to say so, Imam Baqir called it dissimulation and attributed it to Prophet Joseph. Addressing those who had stolen Joseph before, he said so in order to keep his brother, Benjamin. Thus, it is not considered a lie because Canaanite caravan were called thieves rightly. However, this action was taken for a greater interest under specific circumstances, and it is considered feigning (*tawriya*), which is a type of dissimulation.¹⁵

6.1 Marriage before paying the dowry

Imam Sadiq was asked whether Prophet Moses married Prophet Jethro's daughter before the fulfillment of a condition (i.e., paying dowry) or after he finished working as a hired worker as dowry. He replied, "Before it." He was also asked, "When a man marries a woman provided that he becomes the hired worker of her father, is this

¹⁴ Aruzi Howaizi, 1373 A. H., vol.4: 406, no.45, also see no.46, 47 and Bahrani, vol.4: 25, no.2

In another similar narration, Abu Basir reported, "I heard Imam Baqir saying: 'There is nothing good in the one who does not dissimulate. Prophet Joseph told Canaanites: '*O caravan! You are most surely thieves, while they have not stolen anything.*'" Bahrani, no date, vol.2: 258, no. 9, also see no.10, 11 & p.260, no. 3 & 4

¹⁵ Makarem Shirazi, 1411 A.H., vol. 16: 80

marriage legal?” Imam replied, “Prophet Moses married Prophet Jethro’s daughter while he knew he could fulfill the condition.”¹⁶

From the Qur’anic verses no. 26 and no. 27 of chapter *al-Qasas*: “*Said one of them: O my father! Employ him, surely the best of those that you can employ is the strong man, the faithful one. He said: I desire to marry one of these two daughters of mine to you on condition that you should serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten, it will be of your own free will, and I do not wish to be hard to you; if Allah please, you will find me one of the good*”, it can be deduced that the conversation between Prophet Jethro and Prophet Moses was in the form of convention. That is, it occurred before the marriage which was contingent upon consent of both Prophet Moses and the daughter of Prophet Jethro. Moreover, any valuable thing can be regarded as dowry, and it is not necessary to pay the entire amount immediately or before marriage. The sufficient condition is that man undertakes to pay dowry and the woman is content with it. On the other hand, the women can assign an agent to perform the marriage contract and determine the amount of dowry just as Prophet Jethro was the agent of his daughter in this marriage.¹⁷

1.7. Urging Muslims to be clean when arriving in Mecca

Commenting on the verse no. 125 of chapter *al-Baqarah*, “*And We enjoined Ibrahim and Ismail saying: Purify My House for those who visit [it] and those who abide [in it] for devotion and those who bow down [and] those who prostrate themselves.*”

¹⁶ Bahrani, no date: 225, no.3

¹⁷ Makarim Shirazi, 1384 solar: vol.16: 80

Imam Sadiq said, "It is recommended that one should not enter Mecca but the clean and pure; cleansing himself of the unpleasant smell of sweat and anything else that bothers others."¹⁸

Purification refers to cleansing the Ka'bah of outward and inward filth. If we describe the verdict contingent upon description, there is causality, hence, we can conclude that purity of the Ka'bah means purification of those who circumambulate it and pray. Thus, if a pilgrim does not return home pure, he has not circumambulated the Ka'bah.¹⁹ The outward purification of a pilgrim's body and cleanliness for entering Masjid-al-Haram is what maintains the purity of the Ka'bah. How is it possible that man enters Masjid-al-Haram dirty and does not contaminate it? Hence, from the order to purify the Ka'bah, the Imam inferred that body should be also clean.

1.8. Legitimacy of rent

In response to a question on rent, Imam Kazim said, "Rent is permissible as Prophet Moses accepted to be the hired worker of another person." To prove his words, Imam Kazim cited the words by Prophet Jethro, who said, "I desire to marry one of these two daughters of mine to you on condition that you should serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten, it will be of your own free will."²⁰

From the tone of verse and hadith, it can be concluded the actual duration of rent was eight years, and the two other years were made contingent upon the consent of the hired worker (i.e., Prophet Moses).

¹⁸ Bahrani, no date, vol.1: no. 2, 3, 4, 5

¹⁹ Jawadi Amuli, 1385 solar, vol.6: 546

²⁰ al-Qasas, 27, Bahrani, no date, vol.3:225, no.1

Thus, the rent term is determined through agreement of both sides, namely the hired worker and the hirer.

9.1 Nullifying Imamate of oppressors and the unintelligent

Referring to the verse no. 124 of the Qur'anic verse 124 of chapter *al-Baqarah*, "And when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make you an Imam of men. Ibrahim said: And of my offspring? My covenant does not include the unjust, said He."

Imam Rida said, "God, the Blessed, the Sublime stated, 'My covenant does not include the unjust.'"

This verse nullifies the leadership of any unjust person until the Day of Judgment, and has made it exclusive to the chosen ones.²¹ In another narration, commenting on this verse, Imam Baqir said, "It means the unintelligent cannot be the Imam of the pious."²²

The reason for incompetence of a sinner for leadership has been repeated in the Infallibles' words; for instance, that statement "There is no obedience in the good," by Imam Ali, and "No servant must be obeyed in disobedience to God," by the Prophet.²³ The comments of Imam Rida and Imam Baqir on the verse 124 of the chapter *al-Baqarah* indicate the incompatibility of Imamate with oppression. That is, the verse is a generalization that cannot be made specific to anybody, and the sentence suggests the absolute negation. In other words, if somebody is not meritorious and righteous – whether or not he is a

²¹ Bahrani, no date, vol.4: 30, no. 5, and p. 38, and also see p.38, no. 2

²² Aruzi Howaizi, 1373 A. H., vol.1: 121, no. 42

²³ Jawadi Amuli, 1385 solar, vol. 6: 534

descendant of Prophet Abraham – he cannot be an Imam because Imamate is the fulfillment of the divine plan, including implementation of policies, enforcement of divine legal punishment and injunctions, and administration of justice to train and nurture souls inwardly and outwardly. No person can administer this kind of justice except an Infallible.²⁴

1.10. Knowledge: a mandatory condition to enjoin good and forbid evil

Considering the verse 159 of the chapter *al-Araf*, “*And of Musa’s people was a party who guided [people] with the truth, and thereby did they do justice.*”

Imam Sadiq said, “Only for a capable person whose word is accepted not for all people is it obligatory to enjoin the good and forbid the evil.”²⁵

Here, the Imam considered “of” in the verse above as meaning “some of”. This is why Shi’a jurists say regarding enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, “Knowledge is a condition for its being obligatory,” that is, the one who enjoins the good or forbids the evil should be aware of and have knowledge about good and the evil.²⁶

1.11. Justifying the punishment for disabled or diseased wrongdoers

Sufyan Tawri told me: You are revered by Abu-Abdillah [Imam Sadiq] so ask him about the legal ruling on a man who committed fornication

²⁴ Makarim shirazi, 1384 solar, vol.1:501

²⁵ Aruzi Howaizi, 1373 A.H., vol. 5: 225, no. 94

²⁶ Imam Khomeini, no date, vol.1:465

but is very much diseased, and it is feared that he dies as a result of legal punishment.” I asked the Imam this question to which he replied, “Is it your question or someone else wanted you to ask me this?” I told him, “It is Sufyan Tawri’s question.” Imam Sadiq said, “A sick man who committed fornication with a sick woman was brought to Prophet Muhammad, who ordered a dead date palm branch with about 100 twigs to be taken to him. With it, the Prophet hit both the sick man and sick woman only once. This is what understood from God’s word, *“Take a faggot in your hand and then strike [your wife] with it, but do not break [your] oath”* (Sad, 44).

Regarding this verse, commentators state that while Prophet Job (Ayyoub) was diseased, he swore to punish his wife for her fault, lashing her 100 times. When he recovered from the disease, in return for his loyal wife’s services to him, God ordered him to take 100 thin sticks and hit her with them once, not breaking his oath.²⁷ Referring to this verse, Imam Sadiq gave the legal ruling on mitigating the punishment of the ill male and female fornicator.

On the basis of interpretive narrations on the above verse, the Shi’a jurists ruled that the judge should postpone the legal punishment of sick fornicators until they recover or if for some reasons it is advisable to administer the legal punishment immediately, it should be enforced with thin sticks.²⁸

²⁷ Tusi, 1388, vol. 8: 520

²⁸ Imam Khomeini, no date, 2: 465

1.12. 'A part' refers to one-tenth

Ibn Abi Laili was asked, "A woman willed that her debt to her nephew should be paid by one-third of her property, and 'a part' of it should be given to a certain person. What amount of her property constitutes 'a part' of it?"

He answered, "I see 'a part' as nothing and actually do not know what it means."

Imam Sadiq was asked the same question, and he replied, "Ibn Abi Laili was wrong; 'a part' means one-tenth of one-third of one's property." He also added, "Surely God ordered Prophet Abraham, *"Place on every mountain a part of them,"* (2:261); since there were ten mountains, 'a part' means one-tenth of something.

In the Qur'an, there is no mention of the number of mountains in which Prophet Abraham put the fragments of birds, but Imam Sadiq considered them to be ten. On this basis, it is said that if somebody wills a part of his property to be used for some purposes and does not determine its amount, one-tenth is sufficient, because in the above Qur'anic verse 'a part' means one-tenth.

1.13. The legal ruling on sheep grazing overnight in somebody's field without permission

Verse 78 of the chapter *al-Anbia*, *"And Dawood and Sulayman when they gave judgment concerning the field when the people's sheep pastured therein by night, and We were bearers of witness to their judgment,"* deals with the judgments by Prophet David and Prophet Solomon. The Qur'an does not refer to its details; there is only a

reference to its morals in the following verses. Imam Sadiq was asked about the interpretation of this verse. He said:

“*Nafas*’ (or ‘pasture’) in the above verse refers to sheep grazing at night. The farmer should protect the field during the day, and the shepherd should prevent his herd from trespassing others’ fields. Thus, if the herd of sheep enters somebody’s field, the shepherd is responsible for the damage to the farm. However, if this occurs during the day, he is not accountable. In the above-mentioned incidence, a sheep herd entered somebody’s field and damaged it, so Prophet David ruled that all the sheep should be given to the farmer, and Prophet Solomon decreed that sheep should be accessible to the farmer so that he could use their milk and wool, etc. Also, the farm should be available to the shepherd, and he should endeavour to restore it to its original state.”²⁹

Although the legal ruling by Prophet Solomon was different from the one given by Prophet David, in a legal interpretation of the verse, Imam Sadiq considered both verdicts a compensation for the damage. According to Prophet David, the loss inflicted on the vineyard equalled the price of sheep, so he ruled that all sheep had to be given to the owner of the vineyard because the shepherd was bound to prevent them from trespassing others’ fields at night. Thus, he was responsible for the loss inflicted on the vineyard. On the other hand, according to Prophet Solomon, the loss inflicted on the vineyard equalled the benefits gained from sheep in a year, so he ruled that for one year, sheep had to be given to the farmer so that he could benefit from them. The two

²⁹ Bahrani, no date, vol. 3:66 , no.1-2, & p. 67, no.4, & Aruzi Howaizi, 1373:441, no. 110, 111 & 112

sentences “*and to each one We gave wisdom and knowledge*” and “*So We made Sulaiman to understand it*” (*Anbiya*, 79) indicated that both legal rulings were correct, but Prophet Solomon’s ruling was more practical.³⁰

1.14. Fasting goes beyond refraining from eating and drinking

Considering verse 26 of the chapter *Maryam*, “*Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent Allah*,” Imam Sadiq said, “Fasting does not limit to refraining from eating and drinking; [in the past] it also included speaking.”

The above verse shows that Lady Mary was ordered to keep silent. Also, from her people’s objection about her silence, it can be concluded that silent fasting was known to them at that time. However, it was later made prohibited in Islam. The etiquettes of fasting in Islam, nevertheless, include preventing the tongue from being contaminated by verbal sin and avoiding visual sins. Referring to the etiquettes of fasting in Islam, the Imam based his word on the words of God uttered by Lady Mary.

The abovementioned includes a few examples of the Ahlul Bayt’s legal inferences from Qur’anic stories. In the Ahlul Bayt’s Qur’anic commentaries found in hadith collections, there are other similar cases:

-Imam Baqir’s inferring “the legal ruling of prayers not performed” from the story of Prophet Moses in verses no. 12 and 14 of the chapter *Taha*, “*Surely I am your Lord, therefore put off your shoes; surely you are in the sacred valley, Tuwa, And I have chosen you, so listen to what is*

³⁰ Makarim Shirazi, 1384 solar, vol. 13: 506

*revealed: Surely I am Allah, there is no god but I, therefore serve Me and keep up prayer for My remembrance.*³¹

-Imam Sadiq's inferring "the permissibility of argumentation" from the story of Prophet Abraham,³²

-Imam Ali's deducing the legal ruling of "sexual enjoyment of the spouse" on the basis of the verse, "*And [We sent] Lut when he said to his people: Most surely you are guilty of an indecency which none of the nations has ever done before you,*" (*Ankabut*, 28).³³

-Imam Hadi's deducing the legal ruling that "it is not obligatory to perform حج on a non-Muslim fornicator" from the verse, "*But when they saw Our punishment, they said: We believe in Allah alone and we deny what we used to associate with Him,*" (*Ghafir*, 84)³⁴,

-Imam Baqir's deriving the legal ruling that "it is not obligatory for a woman to make up for prayers not performed during menstruation" using the verse, "*And when she bore her,¹ she said, 'My Lord, I have borne a female [child]' – and Allah knew better what she had borne – 'and the female is not like the male,'*" (*Ale-Imran*, 36).³⁵

-Imam Sadiq's using the verses, "*And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust.'*" (*al-Baqarah*, 124) and

³¹ Bahrani, no date: 34

³² Aruzi Howaizi, 1373 A.H., vol.3, 343

³³ Bahrani, no date, vol.2:25, 228 & 231

³⁴ Hurr Amili, no date, vol.18:407; Tusi, no date, vol.10, no.135, & Atarudi, 1406 A.H., 341

³⁵ Bahrani, no date, vol.1:617, Ayyashi, no date, vol.1:195

“Then he made an observation of the stars and said, ‘Indeed I am sick!’ (Saffat, 88-89).³⁶

The fact that the above-mentioned hadiths could be collected indicates the legal tendency feasibility of legal interpretation of the Qur’anic stories. This tendency holds a unique and defensible status in the Ahlul Bayt’s interpretation doctrine. In the second section, it is tried to raise and examine some questions and ambiguities concerning the stories of prophets and the related Qur’anic topics, using this method of interpretation. This will be done with the aim of finding an appropriate response and solution, using the implications of this legal approach to the Qur’anic commentary.

³⁶ See Bahrani, no date, vol.4: 25

COMMUNITY BUILDING, PART I¹

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: To consider a group of people a successful community involves specific requirements and qualities. Though personal identity is truly important, it is essential for a community to likewise have an identity that is shared by other members of the same group, and to work in a united way for the same causes. Regardless of whether it is on a worldwide or lesser scale, establishing a community is becoming more and more vital in today's day and age. Indeed, apart from possessing the task of purifying the people and educating them on how to create social justice, the prophets established successful communities. Part I of this series illustrates on the importance of community-building in the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's efforts to put it into practice. Prioritized qualities that ensure a dynamic Islamic community will also be expounded on, such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, persistence, and maintaining a healthy balance in working for this world to eventually lead to a blissful hereafter.

¹ This series is based on a nine session course conducted by the author on Community Building at the Islamic Centre of England in London in 2009.

Introduction

The issue on how to establish an Islamic Community has always been of great importance but is especially so for today, whether it is on a general scale in the worldwide Islamic community or on a smaller scale in minority Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries. It is essential for us to know the qualities and characteristics of an Islamic Community and how we can move towards establishing it. It is not simply the case that when we have a number of Muslims living, working or worshipping together that we can finally call it an Islamic community. However, in many cases this is actually what we find: a group of Muslims interacting together is deemed an Islamic community, even though it is not. As we will explain, a community must be a very unified and integrated group of people who behave like one body, and in addition to his or her own personal identity, every individual should have an identity that is shared with other members of the community. All must work together in a united way for the same causes.

This article in this series briefly highlights some of the most important points relating to this issue, which will then be further elaborated on in future parts of the series.

The importance of community in the Qur'an

From an Islamic point of view and in particular from a Qur'anic point of view, the development of community, society, or nation is of utmost importance rather than focusing on individuals.

The Qur'an gives attention to every person as each one is unique in the sight of Allah. Allah does not say that because He has created billions of people, He does not care about them as individuals. Every person

receives attention from Allah as if he or she is the only creature of God. However, relatively speaking, we cannot compare the significance and importance of society and community with that of individuals. We cannot sacrifice the formation or development of a community in the interest of personal gain. We do not want to sacrifice or ignore the needs of the people, though at the same time we must not forget that it is imperative for us to move towards establishing a community. Given the many signs and evidence for this, we shall begin with considering a few notions and then gradually build upon them.

In the Qur'an, Allah addresses human beings collectively:

1. When reading through the Qur'an even once, it is crucial to ask ourselves who exactly Allah is addressing when He talks to us. Of course, sometimes Allah addresses the Prophet himself as "Ya ayyuhar-Rasool" or "Ya ayyuhan-Nabi" and then the Prophet delivers the message of Allah to us.

However, when Allah wants to talk to us, or asks his Prophet to speak to us on His behalf, is He talking to each and every person independently from other people, or is Allah primarily focussing on the community as a whole?

There are approximately 200 cases in the Qur'an where Allah uses the word 'al-nāas' when speaking directly to the people. 'Al -nāas' can mean people, a group of people, a community, a society, humanity, or mankind. In addition to these cases, sometimes Allah says 'Bani Adam', (the children of Adam). It is rare that Allah talks to one individual person. This means that the message of Islam is in large for the masses, societies, communities, or humanity as a whole.

Even the word ‘al-insān’ (human being) in the Qur’an is meant in a general sense because when Allah says “Ya ayyuhal-insān,” He is not referring to any specific person – He is once again addressing the general public. Furthermore, the cases in which Allah talks about ‘al-insān’ are much fewer, about 80, compared to the 200 cases in which ‘al-naas’ is mentioned.

2. Secondly, when it comes to the community of the faithful, many times the Qur’an uses the expression “*O those who believe*” or “*O those who have faith*”. However, as far as I remember, we do not have a case in which Allah says “*O the one who has faith*”. Allah always addresses us in the plural form.
3. Regarding our daily obligatory prayers, Allah commands us to recite the chapter *al-Hamd – The Opening* – in every first and second units (*rak‘at*) of the prayer. In this chapter, we do not say “*I worship only You...*” rather we say “*We worship only You...*” and then we say “*We ask and seek assistance from You*” – in the plural form.

We can make requests from Allah during any part of our daily prayers, whether we are in bowing or prostrating, and especially so in the qunūt; but if we are going to ask for something, it is better to ask in the plural form. For example, in the qunūt we usually begin our prayers with “Rabbana” (Our Lord), such as in the supplication, “*Our Lord. Grant us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and save us from the chastisement of the fire.*” (2:201) When we conclude our prayer we say “Assalaamu ‘alaynā...” (“May Allah’s peace be with *us!*”) not “Peace be with me.” This is the outlook of a person who belongs to a community.

Thus, the Qur'an is clear that although complete respect and full attention are given to people as individuals who are indeed the building bricks that make up the community, the community is the final goal. The most productive conditions for nurturing good people is when we have a good community.

The task of the prophets in the Qur'an

To purify people:

Regarding the task of the prophets, the Qur'an at times refers to individuals and sometimes about the community. The purpose of the prophets and indeed all the Divine Books is to take people out of the darkness into the light. For example, in Surah Maidah, verses 15 and 16, Allah tells the People of the Book:

O People of the Book! Certainly our Apostle has come to you, clarifying for you much of what you used to hide of the Book, and excusing many (an offense of yours). Certainly there has come to you a light from Allah, and a manifest Book. With it Allah guides those who follow (the course of) His pleasure to the ways of peace, and brings them out from darkness into the light by His will, and guides them to a straight path.

Moreover, in verses 2:151, 3:164, and 62:2 Allah speaks of the Prophet's task as purifying the people. Thus, the individual aspect is mentioned, the task of helping each and every person to move towards Allah by purifying themselves and moving from darkness into light.

To guide people to establish social justice:

However at the same time Allah says:

Certainly We sent down Our Apostles with manifest proofs and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice... (57:25)

The prophets were sent to guide so that people can establish social justice and equity. It is noteworthy that Allah does not say He sent His prophets and provided them with the Book and the Balance so that the prophets could establish justice. On the contrary, the prophets have come so that people themselves can establish justice. It is the role of the people with the help of the prophets to establish justice, otherwise people would probably sit back and expect the prophets to establish justice for them, and then they would simply come and enjoy and benefit from it once it was established. However, the Qur'an states: "*Allah would not change our affairs unless we ourselves decide to change (13:11).*"

If we want to develop into good, pious, and prosperous people, we cannot relax and wait, asking and expecting Allah or the Prophet to perform miracles for us to make achievements. They show us the way and approach, and then we are to take action.

To establish communities:

From the beginning of their mission, every prophet had two goals in mind: to help individuals who are willing to become good and move from darkness into the light, and also to establish a community.

No one will succeed in their mission unless they plan to establish a community. Even if we settle and spend decades reforming and training individuals, when we eventually leave that place or even die there, those individuals and the effect they have will gradually disappear. The people may continue to exist in that place although the purpose behind the

movement will not remain. However, if good people are found, and efforts are made to educate and train them, then together we can establish a community, and then there would be lasting results.

This is what the prophets bore in mind. This was the responsibility they were given. Every prophet either came to establish a new community or nation or instead to lead and guide a community or nation that was already established although they were facing difficulties. For example, there were many prophets of the Bani Israel (the Children of Israel), living in the period of time prior to the advent of Prophet Jesus, and it was even the case that sometimes there were dozens of these prophets alive at the same time. These Prophets strove to preserve the community of the Bani Israel by reminding them of the covenant they made with Allah to stop them from deviating and becoming scattered.

Thus, whilst some prophets founded entirely new communities, other prophets tried to preserve, develop, and advance existing ones, they were all concerned with the issue of community.

Prophet Muhammad's efforts to establish a fledgling Islamic community

Like many other prophets, Prophet Muhammad was given two tasks. Of course, either of these two can be divided into sub-tasks but essentially, one task was to educate and train individuals, and the second was to form and establish a community. For example, when the Prophet went to the city of Yathrib, later known as Madinat al-Nabi, he quickly established an Islamic community. Moreover, in a matter of only 10 years, this community spread nearly all over the Arabian Peninsula; and in a matter of a few decades it spread to many parts of the world until today. If the Prophet had not followed this strategy of establishing a

community and merely focussed on individuals, he could not have achieved what he did in forming a new civilisation.

The first task he launched in Medina was a community centre – a masjid. A masjid is the House of Allah and simultaneously the house of the people. No person has the right to prevent people from entering this House. As soon as a building is consecrated as a masjid, it becomes the property of the entire community. Everyone can enter it and benefit from it. When Allah speaks of Masjid al-Harām, He says:

Indeed the first house to be set up for people (nās) is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for all nations.
(3:96)

Upon arrival in Medina, the Prophet laid the foundations of Masjid of Quba as a place for congregational and Friday prayers and a hub for the Muslims in that district. Jum‘ah Prayer is very much related to the community because we believe that it was the Sunnah of the Prophet. It is the teaching of the Ahlul Bayt that Jum‘ah must be held in only one place in every town. Of course, if the town is large with a specific distance between the two places of prayer, then another Jum‘ah Prayer can be held, but Jum‘ah Prayer cannot occur in every district or masjid. People can perform their daily prayers in their local masjid or in the main central masjid, but when it comes to Friday Prayer they should all gather in one place.

Thus, in Islam, the idea of coming together and forming the community is crucial, and the Prophet did this from the beginning by establishing a masjid and leading congregational and Friday Prayers. After arriving in Madinah, he asked each Muslim from Madinah, the Ansar, to be a brother to a Muslim from Mecca, thus forming the covenant of

brotherhood (*al-ukhuwwah*) between them. Although they both were from Mecca, the Prophet remained with Imam Ali and they made the covenant of brotherhood with each other. Following on from this, he made great efforts to establish a close-knit, homogenous, and friendly community.

The need to provide good examples of Islamic communities

Most people would surely be interested in Islam if in addition to having good individual Muslims we were able to show the world that we have two, three, or four full-fledged Muslim communities meeting the Islamic requirements. Unfortunately, it seems that we have not established good enough examples or set high standards to set as a model for other communities. Of course we should not to be too pessimistic because there are many strengths: good individuals, small yet progressive groups, and in some parts of the world there exists some forms of an Islamic nation on a larger scale. However, we are still far claiming to have established a community that is well-pleasing to Allah and His Prophet from a social and communal point of view.

Therefore, as part of a requirement for having a road map, it is essential to be able to identify and clarify the signs of a healthy community. When can we claim that our community is an Islamic community? As said before, it is not a matter of having a few thousand or even a few million Muslims and then claiming it a Muslim community. The same way every person is to wholeheartedly embrace and implement Islam in their lives, so too must every community fully embrace and implement Islam on the shoulders of individuals who have already fully embraced and implemented Islam on a personal basis.

For example, there might be a group of a thousand Muslims living as a minority in a non-Muslim country, or even a million Muslims living in a Muslim country, all believers as individuals yet as a community are like non-believers because they do not uphold Islamic social values. This is the great challenge. Thanks to God, throughout the ages and in every generation we have had good people. However, we have not witnessed the same success regarding establishing full-fledged Islamic communities. The Prophet managed to start establishing an Islamic Community, but the time was too short and there were many challenges externally and internally. Unfortunately, Imam Ali and other Imams also were not given the opportunity to do so. Indeed, throughout the centuries we have very few cases of a community, society, state or nation which we could honestly describe as an Islamic community, nation, or state. Even many Muslim organisations, parties, and movements may not meet the standards that Islam sets up for such communal entities. This has happened not because Islam is negligent regarding the social aspect of life; on the contrary, Islam is clear about this. Unfortunately we Muslims have sadly neglected this important aspect of Islam. On the whole, the most we have generally done has been to take care of our own personal piety and looked after our own families. And throughout the greater part of our history, those in power such as the Bani Umayyad and Bani Abbas were not interested in a comprehensive Islamic system and thus had no interest in establishing a true Islamic community.

Some qualities of a true Islamic community

We are gravely in need of deciding the requirements for an Islamic community, in identifying and clarifying the signs of healthy Muslim

community, that which portrays our community as pleasing Allah on a collective, rather than individual, basis.

Truthfulness and trustworthiness:

There are some signs which indicate that a believer (*mu'min*) is healthy, not just physically but religiously and spiritually healthy. For example, according to the Ahlul Bayt, as stated in our hadiths, if you want to know whether someone is really a believer or not you should test them in two things: Are they truthful (*sidq al-hadith*)? and do they keep their promises (*adā' al-amānah*)? It is our responsibility to care for and return to the owner any item that has been entrusted to us.

These are two fundamental signs of a believer. We cannot recognise a believer by looking at their outward appearance, countless prayers, or pilgrimages. These acts are undoubtedly important, though to really test whether a person is a true believer, what is important – in addition to other signs – is their honesty or truthfulness, and reliability or trustworthiness.²

Persistence:

Let us examine one idea from the life of Prophet Muhammad. Among the many aspects, I would like to draw your attention to this verse where Allah tells the Prophet in the chapter *Hud*: “*So be steadfast, just as you have been commanded – [you] and whoever has turned [to Allah] with you – and do not overstep the bounds. Indeed He sees best what you do.*” (11:112)

² For further discussion on these two qualities, please refer to the series “Indicators of Piety” by the same author in the *Message of Thaqaalayn*.

Allah tells the Prophet to be steadfast and to persevere on the right path, to be persistent, as he is commanded by Allah, and He says that the same thing applies to whoever has returned to Allah with the Prophet. This means that it is the responsibility of the Prophet *and* his followers to remain persistent. In the chapter al-Shura, verse 15, a slightly similar verse is stated:

So summon to this [unity of religion] and be steadfast, just as you have been commanded and do not follow their desires...

The verse from *Hud* is a command for the Prophet and his followers, whereas in Surah Shura it is a command solely for the Prophet.

Regarding this, the Prophet said: “The Chapter *Hud* made my hair turn gray.” It was because of this command to remain persistent along with his followers. Although remaining persistent is also mentioned in the Chapter *al-Shura*, the Prophet referred only to the verse in the Chapter *Hud* as causing his gray hair. Regarding this, the late Imam Khomeini wisely remarked, “It was not a challenge for the Prophet as an individual to remain persistent; rather the challenge was to ensure that the whole community remains loyal.”

This is the challenge of leading a community. Every so often there are good leaders who are not given due attention and are not followed. The Prophet knew that ensuring that he himself as well as the Muslim community do not disperse or move in the wrong direction was a real challenge.

Right direction, right path

In the Qur'an, verse 142 of the Chapter *al-Baqarah* appears in the middle of several verses on the change in the Muslims' direction of prayer, the *qiblah*. In the early days, Muslims faced Jerusalem, Bayt al-Muqaddas, during prayer. However, they were being criticised, blamed, and made a mockery of for not having their own qiblah. Then Allah asked the Prophet while in Masjid Qiblahtayn in Madinah, to change the direction to Mecca.

Related to the change of qiblah, Allah says:

The foolish among the people will say, 'What has turned them away from the qiblahh they were following?' Say, 'To Allah belong the east and the west. He guides whomever He wishes to a straight path'. (2:142)

Those who did not understand asked the Muslims for the reason for the change of direction, and consequently were told by Allah to say that it does not matter which way we face for prayer because both the east and the west, and indeed everything, belongs to Allah.

Immediately after that, Allah states that He guides those with whom He is pleased towards the Right Path. The Right Path is a very important concept. It is not necessarily a physical direction. There are those who are concerned about whether they should face East or West, but Allah says that these are merely physical directions. What is of utmost importance is your direction in life. It is not as important which way your body faces, if your whole purpose in life is misdirected and disorientated. Of course, someone who has correctly orientated themselves spiritually also tries to physically face the direction of the Holy Land. However, there is little or no benefit in being concerned

with the physical direction when the entire soul is deviated from the way of Allah.

Although the Right Path is an important spiritual concept, Allah has, however, also used the metaphor that the Right Path is neither towards East nor towards West, as we also find in that beautiful Verse of Light, in the chapter *The Light (al-Noor)*, where Allah says:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp-the lamp is in a glass-the glass as it were a glittering star-lit from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil almost lights up, though fire should not touch it. Light upon Light... (24:35)

The oil of this lamp is from the olive tree. Light is emitted from this oil because it is so transparent and glistening that even without lighting it, it is shining. One of the qualities of this olive tree is that it leans neither towards the East nor towards the West. It is neither eastern nor western. Again Allah is saying that the East and the West both belong to Him, so we should not be too concerned about them; what is of utmost importance is 'Siratul Mustaqeem' – the Right Path.

Balance, moderation, and the best example

In the Chapter *The Cow*, Allah says: *"Thus We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses to the people and that the Apostle may be a witness to you."*(2:143)

The Arabic word 'wasat' means balanced. Sometimes it also means beautiful but beauty is also related to balance; if there is no balance then

there is no beauty as it becomes exaggerated and unrealistic like a caricature or a cartoon drawing.

The Islamic way of life is made balanced by Allah: it is moderate and does not go to extremes. This is '*al-Sirat al-Mustaqeem*', the Right Path. If we turn in any direction that would be eventually causing our loss of balance and moderation, then we are distancing ourselves from Islam. Allah has made us into a nation that is balanced and moderate.

Furthermore, the Islamic community must endeavour to become a witness and set standards for others. If people want to know how to best look after their elders, we should set the best example. We should become the best example in every aspect for others look up to as a model: how to raise children, care for the poor, create jobs, spend their leisure time, establish social welfare, and have a peaceful life. All they have to do is observe our communities and nations. The Prophet is our example whom we should follow and become examples for other people.

This is different from racism, from saying that we are the chosen people of God and so everyone must serve and worship us. Being better certainly does not mean that your life is more important than others' lives or that your blood is more important than others' blood so that everyone must worship and serve you. Being selected in Islam is for those who have been given the responsibility to benefit others. Being *better* is surpassing others in benefitting and serving people. We will expand on this later when discussing the verse 3:110.

Allah has made us a balanced and moderate nation with the aim of becoming witnesses for other people, while the Prophet is witness over us. We are to follow the example of our Prophet and practically demonstrate his teachings, especially in our community life. It is not

very effective or helpful if we merely keep telling people what our Prophet said regarding care for children, spouses, strangers, the sick, the deprived and oppressed, and so forth. It is not always useful to verbally repeat the teachings of our Prophet. It is through modelling his teachings of looking after the elderly, the deprived, vulnerable and oppressed people that we can exhibit a true Islamic community that we encourage and nurture closeness and intimacy amongst ourselves because this is what our Prophet has taught us.

Balance between this life and the hereafter

Being balanced has various different dimensions. We have to strike a balance between working for worldly affairs (*dunyā*) and working for the hereafter (*ākhirah*), instead of sacrificing one of them for the sake of the other. We cannot merely work for this life for the sake of a healthy and prosperous material life while forgetting about our eternal life. Similarly, it is unacceptable to merely work for our hereafter and overlook the development of this world and, for example, disregard progress in science and technology. A Muslim community must have both. This is mentioned in a well-known hadith narrated from Imam Hasan which begins with: “With respect to your life in this world, be as if you are going to remain here forever.”³

If we believe we will remain in this world for eternity, we would do our utmost to achieve the best in all aspects of life. For example, with respect to the environment, why do people destroy it through wastage and pollution? Perhaps they think that since they are only going to live on this planet for a few years or decades then the environment available

³ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 44, p. 138.

at present is sufficient. We tend to disregard what will happen after we are gone. But if we believed that we will remain in this world forever then we would surely try to implement a sustainable plan.

The hadith of the Imam continues: “And with respect to your eternal life, to the hereafter, imagine as if you are going to die tomorrow.”⁴

If we believe that we may die tomorrow, we would not postpone anything that will benefit us in the hereafter, such striving to be good and repenting to Allah for our wrongdoings.

Whether as individuals or collectively as a community, Muslims must strike a balance between working for development in this world and for happiness in the next life.

Conclusion

From an Islamic point of view each person is very important and unique in the sight of Allah, to such an extent that Allah says if you give life to one person it is as if you have given life to all humankind, and if you kill one person it is as if you have killed all people. However, whilst each and every person is very important, the community and the society are extremely significant. Every Prophet held the task of purifying, educating, and training individuals, while simultaneously working to either establish a community of faithful people or to lead and move forward an already existing community.

⁴ Ibid.