A Critical Analysis of Some Quranic Foundations of Andrew Rippin

Babak Mashhadi[1] / Muhammad Hasan Zamani[2]

Abstract

Research Article

The Quran is the eternal miracle of the Prophet and includes the plan for the guidance and salvation of mankind. Many orientalists, including Rippin, consider this divine book a literary or historical text. This research attempts to analyze some of Andrew Rippin's Quranic foundations with a descriptive-analytical method to highlight their shortcomings compared to the correct Quranic foundations. Some of Rippin's Quranic foundations are as follows: The Quran does not provide a method of exegesis, and Muslims' understanding of the Quran is mainly based on the life of the Prophet. The Quran should be examined as a literary or historical text. The Prophet gradually wrote the Quran. Differences in readings indicate ambiguity in certain Quranic verses. This research shows that the Quran, the hadiths of the Prophet and the *Ahl al-Bayt* provide methods for the tafsir of the Quran. The Quran is an eternal miracle of God which should be interpreted with correct methods, not with opinion-oriented method (*tafsīr bi ra'y*). Not only the meanings and words, but also the arrangement of the verses of the Quran is based on divine revelation, and the Prophet is not the author of the Quran. The difference in readings should be evaluated according to authentic sources to determine the correct reading. As long as Orientalists such as Rippin are not guided to the revelatory aspect of the Quran, they cannot provide a fair and accurate evaluation of the Quran, its structure, and its teachings.

Keywords: Quranic foundations, Andrew Rippin, Orientalists, differences in readings, revelation.

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Introduction

The Quran is a profound and eternal miracle of the Prophet, containing a comprehensive blueprint for the guidance and salvation of humanity. Despite its divine nature, some orientalists, such as Rippin, approach this sacred text merely as a work of literature or history, overlooking its spiritual and revelatory significance.

Andrew Rippin (1950–2016) was born on May 16, 1950, in London. After completing elementary and high school education, he entered the University of Toronto in 1968 and studied religious sciences at this university until 1974. In the same year, he went to McGill University to pursue his master's degree. In this university, Rippin turned to Islamic studies and turned his attention to the Quranic sciences. His main field of study and research is Quranic studies and interpretation (Rippin, 2023).

Some of Rippin's works are as follows: monographs including *The Qurʾan and Its Interpretive Tradition* as well as three special essays on the *Qurʾan*, *Tafsir,* and *Theology* for the Oxford Bibliographies series; edited collections including *The Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾan*; textbooks including *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*; and sourcebooks including *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature* (El-Badawi, 2017).

Background

One of the important theses written about Rippin is "*Naqd-i mabānī wa rawish-i muṭāliʿāti-ye* Andrew Rippin" [Critique of the Foundations and Methods of Rippin's Quranic Studies] (2012) by Parviz Āzādī, which thoroughly critiques Rippin's Quranic foundations. In the article, "*Naqd-i mabānī muṭāliʿāti-ye* Andrew Rippin" [Critique of the Foundations and Methods of Rippin's Quranic Studies] (2020) by Parviz Azadi, in *Muṭāliāt Islāmī dar jahān-i muʿāṣir* [Islamic Studies in the Contemporary World],

Issue 1, some of Rippin's foundations such as the influence of the Bible on the Quran, allegorical words in the Quran, occasions of revelation, different readings (*qirā'at*), and compilation of the Quran two centuries after the Prophet are addressed, and the writer explains Rippin's theories well concerning his various works. In the article, "*Taḥlīl-i intiqādīye maqāli-ye 'Shutur yā Rismān' niwishti-ye* Andrew Rippin" [A Critical Analysis of Andrew Rippin's Article 'Camel or Rope'] (2020) by Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Pour, in the *Qur'ān pajūhī-ye khāwarshināsān* [The Quran from Orientalists' point of view], Issue 28, an attempt has been made to critically examine Rippin's claim while examining the term "Jamal" [camel], the background of its various readings, the authenticity of the famous reading and its conformity with the reading of the Prophet is proven. In the article, "*Naqd-i maqāli-ye 'Abzārhā'ī barāye muṭāliʿi-ye ʿilmī-ye Qur'ān' Andrew Rippin*" [A Critique of Andrew Rippin's Article, 'Tools for the Scholarly Study of the Qur'an'] (2017) by Sayyid Kamāl Keshik-nevis Raḍawī, in the *Qur'ān pajūhī-ye khāwarshināsān* [The Quran from Orientalists' point of view], Issue 22, the author refers to some of the shortcomings of Rippin's article, such as not referring to the Quranic software, books on Quranic sciences, exegetical hadiths, and in general, insufficient research by Rippin. In the article, "A Comparative Analysis of the Quranic Foundations of Imam Khamenei and Andrew Rippin" (2023) by Babak Mashhadi in *The Quran: Contemporary Studies*, Issue 3, the author compares certain Quranic foundations of Andrew Rippin with Imam Khamenei's Quranic views to highlight the correct Quranic foundations expressed by the esteemed Leader as opposed to the deficient and incorrect Quranic views of Rippin.

What distinguishes this article from other research is its attempt to highlight the drawbacks of Rippin's views with a purely Quranic and hadith-based approach. Its goal is to expose the unrealistic portrayal of the Quran and its comprehensive teachings presented in Rippin's works.

The Concept

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Mabānī (Foundations)

As Allamah Muṣṭafawī points out: "The basic principle in this word [*ba-na-ya*] is to combine parts and materials together to create a specific structure, whether material or spiritual" (Muṣṭafawī 2020, 1:371). An example of the material foundation is found in the verse, "Is it you whose creation is more prodigious or the sky which He has built?"[3] (Quran 79:27), and verse, "Is he who founds his building on God wariness"[4] (Quran 9:109) refers to the spiritual foundation and shows that the construction of a program of conduct and the building of one's religion on firm, established principles of piety, righteousness, and contentment is better than a structure built on a weak foundation, on the edge of a steep and precarious cliff (ibid, 1:372).

About the difference between construction (*al-binā'*) and creation (*khalq*), Allamah Muṣṭafawī states that "creation is the act of bringing something into existence, as well as forming it. Construction, on the other hand, is the act of giving shape and combining elements together, after the materials are already present" (ibid). Rāghib Isfahānī says that "*Al-Binā'*" is a noun for what is being built or constructed. God Almighty says: "for them there will be lofty abodes with [other] lofty abodes built above them"[5] (Quran 39:20) (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 147).

"*Mabānī*" (foundations) is derived from the word "*mabnī*," which means a place. This term is used in reference to buildings, structures, foundations, and bases (Dihkhudā 2011, 2:2573; Anwārī 2002, 7:6591&6603). Foundations are the infrastructures and substructures upon

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3 . ﴿ أَ أَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقاً أَم السَّماءُ بَناها﴾ (النازعات/۲۷)

4 . ﴿ أَ فَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيانَهُ عَلى تَقْوى مِنَ اللَّهِ...﴾ (التوبة/۱۰۹)

5 . ﴿... لَهُمْ غُرَفٌ مِنْ فَوْقِها غُرَفٌ مَبْنِيَّةٌ ...﴾ (الزمر/۲۰)

which the issues of a scientific discipline or a subject matter are based (Eskandarlū & ʿAlawī 2020, 10).

Within the scope of the present research, the Quranic foundations pertain to the fundamental viewpoints of the Orientalists regarding the Quran, encompassing its revelatory origins and diverse aspects relating to the Quran itself, including exegetical elements, literary attributes, variant readings, and more.

Among the Quranic foundations that Rippin relies on are the following:

1. Failure of the Quran to Present Exegetical Methods

Rippin believes that the common orientalist approach is to interpret the Quran by following the Muslim community's internal framework; that is, to interpret in terms of the biography and career of Muhammad which works quite well within the limits of its own presuppositions, but getting outside the circle produced by the interaction of the Quran and the *sīra* seems to be impossible (Rippin 1991, 154). Rippin conceives of the Quran as a self-referential work which provides little information to its readers for its interpretative strategies (ibid, 153).

Analysis

One of the exegetical methods is the Quran-by-Quran method, which dates back to the beginning of Islam and the time of the Prophet, and the *Ahl al-Bayt*. For example, when the Prophet was asked about "wrongdoing" (ẓulm) in the verse, "and do not taint their faith with injustice"[6] (Quran 6:82); he replied citing the verse, "Polytheism is indeed a great injustice"[7]

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6 . ﴿وَ لَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ﴾ (الانعام/٨٢)

7 . ﴿إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظيمٌ﴾ (لقمان/١٣)

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(Quran 31:13), that the meaning of injustice in the first verse is "polytheism" (Riḍāʾī Iṣfahānī 2006, 51). Certain exegetes, such as Allamah Ṭabātabāʾī in *al-Mīzān* exegesis, have used this method of tafsir and have extracted valuable knowledge from the Quran. Allamah Ṭabātabāʾī in the introduction to *al-Mīzān* exegesis, referring to the verse, "We have sent down the Book to you as a clarification of all things"[8] (Quran 16:89), states that it is impossible for the Quran to be a clarification of all things but not clarify itself (Ṭabātabāʾī 1996, 1:11).

In addition, in the Quran, some verses are definitive (*muḥkam)*, and some are metaphorical (*mutashābih*). Ayatullah Makārim Shīrāzī states that definitive verses are the basis and root of other verses, and to understand metaphorical and complex verses, one must refer to definitive verses because the meaning of such verses is clear, but the meanings of metaphorical verses are complicated due to various possibilities and one must refer such verses to definitive ones in order to clarify their meaning. Verses such as "Say, He is Allah, the One"[9] (Quran 112:1); "Nothing is like Him"[10] (Quran 42:11), are examples of definitive verses, and verses such as "the hand of Allah is above their hands"[11] (Quran 48:10) which is about God's power, and "Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing"[12] (Quran 2:224), which refers to God's knowledge, are examples of metaphorical verses (Makārim Shīrāzī 1995, 2:431-435). Also, he says about metaphorical verses:

> Another point which exists about the metaphorical [verses] in the Quran and the reports of Ahl al-Bayt confirms is that the existence of

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8 . ﴿نَزَّلْنا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتابَ تِبْياناً لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ﴾ (النحل/٨٩)

9 . ﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ﴾ (الاخلاص/١)

10 . ﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ﴾ (الشورى/١١)

11 . ﴿يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْديهِمْ﴾ (الفتح/١٠)

12 . ﴿وَ اللَّهُ سَميعٌ عَليمٌ﴾ (البقره/٢٢٤)

such verses in the Quran proves people's intense need for divine guides, the Prophet and the Infallibles, and causes people to refer to them due to their scientific needs, and as such to confirm their leadership in practice and to benefit from their other sciences and guidance, and this is similar to the case of certain educational books that the explanation of some parts is left to the teacher, so that the students do not cut off their relation with the teacher and because of this need to get inspiration from his thoughts in everything, and in fact, the Quran is an example of the famous hadith of the Prophet who said: "I leave two precious things among you: the book of God and my Household, and these two will never be separated until they reach me on the Day of Resurrection next to [Kawsar] fountain." (ibid, 2:437)

Therefore, Rippin's remark that the Quran provides little information to its readers for its interpretative strategies does not seem sound, because some Quranic verses interpret some others, and the definitive verses clarify the meanings of the metaphorical ones. In addition, the Infallibles are introduced as the true interpreters of the Quran so that people, by referring to them, quench their thirst for the sublime teachings of the Quran.

It seems that Rippin according to his belief that the Quran does not provide an interpretative strategy, considers the common way to interpret the Quran in the Muslim community to refer to the biography of the Prophet, which works well within the limited scope of the Islamic Ummah. However, the *sīra* of the Prophet is one of the tools to better understand the verses of the Quran, and the Prophet himself has used the Quran-by-Quran method to interpret certain verses.

The *Ahl al-Bayt* and the companions of the Prophet, in addition to the Quran-by-Quran method, have benefited from the hadith-oriented method; that is, using the hadiths of the Prophet in tafsir; moreover, from the second century onwards, the influence of the thoughts and sciences of Greeks and

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Iranians led to the formation of other methods (*rawish*) and approaches (*girāyish*), such as theological approaches; also, the religious differences that began in the first century led to the formation of jurisprudential schools which influenced the interpretation of jurisprudential verses of the Quran (Riḍā'ī-Iṣfahānī 2006, pp. 24-25). Therefore, various exegetical methods such as reason-based (*'ijtihādī*), hadith-oriented (*riwā'ī*), allusive (*ishārī*), scientific (*'ilmī*), and various approaches based on denominations (such as Shii, Ismaili and so on), styles (such as literary, jurisprudential, philosophical and so on), and exegetical orientations (such as educational-spiritual, political and so on) all indicate the great capacity of the Quran in presenting its teachings in different dimensions.

In addition, the concept of *ta'wīl* or *baṭn* in the Quran, according to exegetes such as Ayatollah Maʿrifat, based on the hadiths related to this topic, is a broad, durable, and permanent meaning that is obtained from the content of the verses (Riḍā'ī-Iṣfahānī 2019, 174). Ayatollah Maʿrifat considers the following steps necessary to extract the *baṭn*: 1. Discovering the purpose of the verse, 2. Abolishing the characteristics of time and place and people who are not involved in the actual fulfillment of the purpose of the verse, 3. Inferring a general rule from the verse, 4. Applying the aforementioned general rule to new examples (ibid, 179). For example, in the verse, "Let him go with us tomorrow so that he may eat lots of fruits and play"[13] (Quran 12:12), after performing the above-mentioned steps, the purpose of the verse is extracted as such: Fathers should take care of their children so that cunning people do not separate them from their father with evil plans and under the pretext of eating and playing (ibid, 181). Based on this, *ta'wīl*, which refers to the purpose of the verse, according to some exegetes, is another piece of evidence against Rippin's view that

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13 . ﴿أَرْسِلْهُ مَعَنا غَداً يَرْتَعْ وَ يَلْعَبْ﴾ (يوسف/١٢)

the Quran lacks an interpretative strategy, or the only exegetical method used by the Muslims is to refer to the biography of the Prophet.

2. Examining the Quran as a Literary or Historical Text

Rippin believes that the Quran has an original meaning specific to the Prophet and his hearers and this meaning can be determined or approached through historical analysis. However, he is not satisfied with the historical approach and poses the question of why we should not approach the Quran as a literary text like the Bible and then complains if he makes this suggestion, he is apt to be accused of methodological imperialism. He also writes that the pitfalls of approaching the Quran as literature are due to the researchers' failure to embrace the possibility of a plurality of methods or even a pluralistic attitude towards method (Rippin 1983, pp. 43-44).

Analysis

Although the Quran is a comprehensive book that includes both the history of the prophets and literature, facing the Quran as a mere literary work is a kind of one-sided approach to the Quran, and methodological pluralism not only does not lead to a correct understanding of the Quran but also limits the Quran and distances it from its true spirit. If by pluralistic method or approach, Rippin means facing the Quran with acceptable and logical means of interpretation such as literary, lexical, mystical, hadith-oriented, philosophical, or Quran-by-Quran interpretation, such pluralism is not reprehensible; rather, it depicts different dimensions of the Quran and increases the scientific richness of the audience. However, if, by methodological pluralism, he means interpreting the Quran with a purely literary approach, such an approach is reducing the Quran to a mere literary-historical book and alienating the audience from the broad and comprehensive teachings of the Quran.

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Of course, we should not forget that the Quran and hadiths have specified limits for the interpretation and understanding of the Quran, beyond which it is not permissible. For example, the fifth introduction of *Ṣāfī* exegesis mentions various hadiths concerning the prohibition of interpreting the Quran by opinion (*tafsir bi ra'y*) and its reason. For instance, it is narrated from the Prophet that anyone who interprets the Quran according to his own opinion and it is right, has committed a mistake[14], and in another hadith from the Prophet, the fire awaits the one who interprets the Quran according to his opinion[15] (Fayḍ Kāshānī 1994, 1:35; Ibn Abī Jumhūr 1984, 104:4).

In addition, the hadiths referring to the inseparability of the Quran and the Household of the Prophet[16] (Ṭabrisī 1982, 1:263; Ḥurr ʿĀmulī 2004, 2:134; Majlisī 1982, 2:285) or introducing some verses of the Quran as confirming some others[17] (Majlisī 1982, 2:285) or introducing some verses as interpretations of some others and some verses as evidence for some others[18] (Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 133) all point to a certain kind of exegetical methodology in approaching the Quran. Rippin's main problem, like many orientalists, is to deal with the Quran as an outstanding literary text rather than a divine revelation.

3. Introducing the Prophet as the Author of the Quran

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14 . وَ رُوِيَ عَنْهُ ﷺ أَنَّهُ قَال : «مَنْ فَسَّرَ اَلْقُرْآنَ بِرَأْيِهِ فَأَصَابَ اَلْحَقَّ فَقَدْ أَخْطَأَ».

15 . وَ رُوِيَ عَنْهُ ﷺ أَنَّهُ قَالَ : «مَنْ فَسَّرَ اَلْقُرْآنَ بِرَأْيِهِ فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ اَلنَّارِ».

16 . وَ رُوِيَ عَنْهُ ﷺ أَنَّهُ قَال : «إِنِّى تَارِكٌ فِيكُمُ اَلثَّقَلَيْنِ مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا – كِتَابَ اَللَّهِ وَ عِتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِى وَ إِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ اَلْحَوْضَ».

17 . على ﷺ «وَ فِيهِ تِبْيَانُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ ذَكَرَ أَنَّ الْكِتَابَ يُصَدِّقُ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضاً وَ أَنَّهُ لَا اخْتِلَافَ فِيهِ فَقَالَ سُبْحَانَهُ وَ لَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلافاً كَثِيراً».

18 . على ﷺ : «وَ يَنْطِقُ بَعْضُهُ بِبَعْضٍ وَ يَشْهَدُ بَعْضُهُ عَلَى بَعْضٍ».

In "Reading the Quran with Richard Bell," Rippin writes:

> Abrupt change in rhyme patterns, repetition of rhyme words, rupture in grammatical structure, sudden variation in verse length, and unwarranted shift in personal pronouns all point to revisions undertaken by Muhammad due to a change in purpose sometime during his career. Bell suggests that three periods may be separated in Muhammad's career: the early period in which "signs" and praise of God play the predominant role; next, the Quran period which covers the later Meccan and Medinan era up to the year 2 A.H.; and finally the Book period which is from the year 2 A.H. on. (Rippin 1992, 641)

Richard Bell believes that Prophet Muhammad tried to enforce his message through the threat of punishment, and when he acquired more knowledge of Christianity and Judaism, he substituted for, or combined with this, the eschatological ideas of judgment (ibid). Rippin writes: "If the distinction between the 'J' and the 'E' strands of Genesis suggested, to some people, two literary texts being woven together, then, on the evidence of the Muslim tradition itself, the same could be envisioned for the Quran: a weaving together of a text, involving duplications and abrupt breaks, just as in the Bible" (ibid, 642).

Analysis

Richard Bell's judgment stems from his false view of the nature of the Quran. He does not believe in the revelatory aspect of the Quran, while the Quran is a miracle both in its words and meanings. The Quran emphasises this issue in verses, "Nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him]"[19] (Quran 53:3-4); "Had he faked any sayings in Our name, We would have surely seized him by the right hand

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19 . ﴿وَ ما يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوى * اِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ وَحْيٌ يُوحى﴾ (النجم/۳-۴)

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and then cut off his aorta"[20] (Quran 69:44-46); (So exalted is Allah, the True Sovereign. Do not hasten with the Quran before its revelation is completed for you, and say, My Lord! Increase me in knowledge[21]) (Quran 20:114). It seems that Richard Bell considers the Quran to be a literary or historical text, while the Quran is not a literary text or merely an account of the Prophet's life or goals. If there are similarities between the Quran and the Testaments, it indicates the revelation of the Quran, because, in addition to the similarities, there are also differences between the Quran and the Testaments, and the Quran refers to the signs of the Prophet in the Holy Book:

﴿الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوباً عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْراةِ وَ الْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَ يَنْهاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ يُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّباتِ وَ يُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبائِثَ وَ يَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَ الْأَغْلالَ الَّتِي كانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَ عَزَّرُوهُ وَ نَصَرُوهُ وَ اتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾ (الاعراف/١٥٧)

"*Those who follow the Apostle, the uninstructed prophet, whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Evangel, who bids them to do what is right and forbids them from what is wrong, makes lawful to them all the good things and forbids them from all vicious things, and relieves them of their burdens and the shackles that were upon them those who believe in him, honour him, and help him and follow the light that has been sent down with him, they are the felicitous.*" (Quran 7:157)

About the aforementioned verse, Ayatollah Makārim Shīrāzī believes that in none of the verses of the Quran, there are five reasons for proving the prophethood of the Prophet en bloc, and if we pay attention to the seven

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20 . ﴿وَ لَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنا بَعْضَ الْأَقاوِيلِ * لَأَخَذْنا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ * ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ﴾ (الحاقه/٤٤-٤٦)

21 . ﴿وَ لا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضى إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَ قُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْماً﴾ (طه/١١٤)

attributes that God gave to the Prophet in this verse, we will find five reasons for proving his prophethood: Prophet Muhammad's unlettered (*ummī*) status and the profound impact of the Quran challenge traditional beliefs about the need for formal education to achieve such feats, while prophetic signs in previous scriptures and unique prophecies affirm his truthfulness. His teachings, which advocate for virtuous behavior and denounce evil, are rational and ethical, reflecting compatibility with reason and wisdom, and resonating with innate human nature. Furthermore, his message aligns with principles of equality and brotherhood, as evidenced by his efforts to free humanity from societal chains of ignorance, idolatry, discrimination, and class divisions, providing concrete proof of his divine mission and selfless intentions (Makārim Shīrāzī 1995, 6:399-400).

One of the well-known foundations of the exegetes is that the arrangement of the verses of the Quran is based on wisdom. Contrary to what some orientalists such as Rippin suppose about the Quran to be the work of the Prophet, both the words of the Quran and the arrangement of the verses are Divine revelation. Ayatollah Maʿrifat, referring to the verse, "Indeed We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will preserve it"[22] (Quran 22:9), considers the order of the verses and their arrangement in the sūras in certain numbers to be through Divine decree (*tawqīfī*) and the order of the Prophet[23] (Maʿrifat 2009, 1:278) and points to reasons such as the challenges (*taḥaddī*) and miraculous aspects of the Quran (*iʿjzā-i Quran*) and the consensus of the Islamic Ummah in all historical periods that the existing order of verses was made through divine revelation (ibid, 1:279). Also, he states that the order of the verses of the Sūras is based on the order of their revelation, except for the rare cases that the Prophet, with God's permission, due to the close compatibility of certain verses and

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22 . ﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَ إِنَّا لَهُ لَحافِظُونَ﴾ (الحجر/۹)

23 . نظم الآيات وترتيبها القائم ضمن السور وفي أعدادها الخاصّة، شيء حصل على عهد الرسالة توقيفيّا وبنصّ صاحب الشريعة لم تمسّه يدٌ إطلاقا: ﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَ إِنَّا لَهُ لَحافِظُونَ﴾ (الحجر/۹)

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others that were revealed before, recorded them next to each other (ibid, 1:281). Therefore, not only the verses of the Quran are miracles and divine revelation in their wording and meaning, but also in their arrangement in the sūras.

Rippin's statement that the Quran was written by the Prophet or taken from the Holy Book is not correct, because first of all, as the verses of the Quran indicate, the Quran is divine revelation and the Prophet has only received and communicated its verses; Secondly, the signs of the Prophet have been clearly stated in the Bible; So, how is it possible that the Prophet is the writer of the Quran? Fourthly, the verses of the Quran are not only Divine revelation in their wording and meaning, but also the arrangement of the verses is according to the command of God and based on the Divine wisdom, and the Prophet was only the messenger of revelation and did not interfere in the verses of the Quran.

4. Variant Readings due to Ambiguity in the Verses

In the article "A ban is upon any town," Rippin mentions in the footnote two exegetical views about "*Yarjiʿūn*" in (Quran 21:95) by referring to certain Sunnite Exegeses: 1. Bayḍāwī (4:64); Al-Shawkānī (3:412): it refers to the unbelievers' physical return at the apocalypse; 2. Sufyān al-thūrī (163); Zamakhsharī (3:134-135): it refers to their non-repentance and non-Muslim status from which they do not return (Rippin 1979, 43). He writes: "As will be seen, most of the variant readings on this verse represent what would appear to be conscious attempts to come to grips with an obscure passage by alternative grammatical constructions and lexical variations; it seems unlikely that all the variants represent equally probable original readings" (ibid, 44). He also says: "The use of variants to solve the problems of this verse was not limited to *annahum*/*innahum*; indeed, a mass of variants has come down to us for the word *ḥarām*" (ibid, 48).

Analysis

Rippin does not mention any Shiite exegeses of the above-mentioned verse, while for a comprehensive and fair understanding of Islamic teachings, one should also refer to the Shiite exegeses as well. In *Nimūnih* exegesis, those who wish to return to the world and the pronoun "*Yarjiʿūn*" refers to them, are those who, after witnessing divine punishment or going to the middle world (*barzakh*) and the removal of the veils of ignorance from their eyes, wish to return to the world to make up for their mistakes (Makārim Shīrāzī 1995, 13:502). In *Al-Mīzān* exegesis, the pronoun "*Yarjiʿūn*" returns to the people of such cities who wish to return to the world to do righteous deeds and regain the blessing of life (Ṭabātabāʾī 1996, 14:324).

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* exegesis, three possibilities are stated for the above-mentioned verse: 1. "*Lā*" is superfluous in the verse, and the verse means that it is forbidden for the people of a village that was destroyed due to punishment to return to the world, and in this way, the purpose is to scare the disbelievers of Mecca so that they know that if they are punished for their sins, they will not return to the world. 2. It is forbidden for a village that is going to be destroyed due to sin to accept any action from its people because they do not return to repentance; 3. It is forbidden for them not to return after death, rather they return for punishment (Ṭabrasī 1993, 7:99-100). In *Kanz al-Daqāʾiq* exegesis, the forbidden thing for such people is to return to repentance or life (Qummī Mashhadī 1989, 8:471).

In *Nūr al-Thaqalayn* exegesis, in a hadith from Imam Baqir about the meaning of the aforementioned verse is stated that those who perished due to divine punishment will not return to the world[24]. In another hadith narrated from both Imam Bāqir and Imam Ṣādiq, it is said that every town

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24 . روى محمد بن مسلم عن أبى جعفر ﷺ انه قال: «كل قرية أهلكها الله بعذاب فإنهم لا يرجعون».

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destroyed due to punishment, their people will not return to the world in the Return (*raj'at*), and this verse is one of the greatest signs of the Return [of some of the dead before the Day of Judgment] because none of the Muslims denies that all people, whether they have perished through punishment or not, will return on the Day of Judgment[25]. In another hadith from Imam Ṣādiq, it is mentioned that people who perish due to divine punishment will not return in the Return (*raj'at*); But pure believers and pure disbelievers and people who have not perished due to divine punishment will return[26] ('Arūsī Ḥuwayzī 1994, 3:458). In addition, some scholars of literature such as Darwīsh have suggested that "lā" is superfluous and the meaning of the phrase "*lā yarji'ūn*" is to return to faith in this world after destruction until the Day of Resurrection, when they will return, and if we take "la" as a negating word, the meaning of the phrase is as follows: (*liannahum lā yarji'ūn)* "Because they will not return" (Darwīsh 1994, 6:361-362). Referring to the Arabic grammar book written by Wright, Rippin states that there is a possibility of "la" being superfluous in such sentences where the verb comes with the meaning of prohibition or fear or the like and is followed by "*an*," and mentions the verse ﴿ما منعک الا تسجد﴾: (What prevented you from prostrating) (*Sūra al-Aʿrāf*/12) as an example (Rippin 1979, 45; Wright 1896, 2:304).

Therefore, what the context of the verses points to, and does not distort the meaning of the verse from a literary point of view, and is also confirmed by certain hadiths, is the non-return to the world of people who perished due to divine punishment, whether it is after witnessing divine punishment or death or it is at the time of Return, according to the hadiths

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25 . حدثني أبي عن ابن أبى عمير عن ابن سنان عن أبى بصير عن محمد بن مسلم عن أبى عبد الله و أبى جعفر ﷺ قالا: «كل قرية أهلك الله عز و جل أهلها بالعذاب لا يرجعون في الرجعة، فهذه الاية من أعظم الدلالة في الرجعة لان أحدا من أهل الإسلام لا ينكران الناس كلهم يرجعون الى القيامة، من هلك و من لم يهلك».

26 . و فيه أيضا قال الصادق ﷺ : «كل قرية أهلك الله أهلها بالعذاب لا يرجعون في الرجعة، فاما الى القيامة فيرجعون و محضوا الايمان محضا و غيرهم ممن لم يهلكوا بالعذاب و محضوا الكفر محضا يرجعون».

that consider this verse to be related to Return and as a proof of belief in the Return. Therefore, Rippin's claim that this Quranic phrase is ambiguous and the interpretation of the exegetes, due to different readings, are probably different from the original readings of the Muslims at the time of the Prophet, does not seem correct.

Conclusion

The results of this research are as follows:

1. Contrary to Rippin, who considers the Quran to be a self-referential book and considers the Muslims' original understanding of the Quran apparently limited to the life of the Prophet and considers the Quran to be deficient in providing exegetical methods, the method of interpreting the Quran-by-Quran can be seen in the Quran itself which guides its readers to refer the metaphorical verses to the definitive ones, and the *sīra* of the Prophet also attest to this method. In addition to this, the numerous exegetical methods with various approaches, as well as the method of some exegetes such as Ayatollah Maʿrifat, in extracting the general purpose (*baṭn*) of certain verses, all indicate the dynamism and multiplicity of exegetical methods of the Quran.

2. Rippin's understanding of the Quran as merely a literary text, or confined to the time of the Prophet and his audience, is insufficient in comprehending its eternal divine nature. Proper exegesis requires the use of precise tools and methods, such as analyzing the Quran with the Quran or hadiths. Failure to do so not only impedes true comprehension of the Quran, but also leads to wrong interpretation and consequent misguidance.

3. Rippin considers the Prophet to be the author of the Quran, while the Quran is a revelation not only in its meaning and wording but also in the order and arrangement of its verses; furthermore, the challenge of jinn and

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human to bring a book or even a sūra like the Quran and their inability to meet the challenge is clear proof of the miraculous aspect of the Quran.

4. Rippin takes the difference in the readings of the verse (*Al-Anbīyā'*/95) as evidence of the ambiguity of some verses and believes that it is unlikely that these readings show the original possible reading. However, he does not refer to Imāmīyah sources which provide a clear and logical analysis and interpretation of the variant readings of the verse in question in accordance with the well-known reading of the verse.

5. As long as the orientalists such as Rippin are not guided to the revelatory aspect of the Quran, they are not expected to present a fair and logical understanding of the nature, teachings, and structure of the Quran.

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