

The Criticism of Revelation-order-based Exegesis from the Viewpoint of Bihjatpūr

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Abstract

‘Abdul-Ḥakīm Bihjatpūr is among the contemporary Qur’ān scholars who have turned to revelation-order-based exegesis, publishing a book on its basics, rules, principles and benefits. The current study aimed at the criticism and investigation of the revelation-order-based exegesis from the viewpoint of Bihjatpūr, using library research and the descriptive-analytical method, in order to show that although it has been admirable to integrate these principles and some of them such as verbality of the language of Holy Qur’ān is right, some other suggestions such as the claim that the text of the Qur’ān written by Imām ‘Alī (a) is based on the revelation order are not so strong.

Keywords

Bihjatpūr, Revelation-order-based exegesis, Criticism, Principles of revelation-order-based exegesis.

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Introduction

From the initiation of the Qur'ān revelation, every exegete has interpreted its verses through a specific method. The main method the exegetes have adopted has been the interpretation of the verses based on the current qur'ānic text order (from the beginning to the end of the text). This method still has its own advocates. A new theory which has become popular among the exegetes and Qur'ān scholars in terms of exegesis method is the interpretation based on the revelation order. Some of the advocates of this method such as Nikūnām have only expressed their own viewpoints, and sometimes have interpreted a verse using this method, while only a few of them such as Al-Qāḍī and Darwaza - from among the Sunnī exegetes - have managed to interpret all the sūras based on the revelation method. Among the Shī'a exegetes, in the recent years, only Bihjatpūr has authored the book "Along with Revelation" based on the revelation order, though he has not managed to finish all the sūras yet.

The exegetes interpreting based on the revelation order have considered principles and essentials for it, and have claimed that this exegesis method has some advantages and helps with better understanding of the Holy Qur'ān (Al-Qāḍī, 2003, vol. 1, p. 3; Darwaza, 2004, vol.1, p. 9). Since firstly, Bihjatpūr is the only exegete interpreting based on the revelation order who has compiled the essentials, principles, rules, and advantages of this method. Secondly, his book contains the essentials, principles, rules, and advantages that are attributed by other exegetes to this method. Thirdly, he is successor of the other exegetes who used the revelation-order-based method from the temporal view. The current study has aimed to evaluate and criticize the principles he claims. The question is that to what extent the principles Bihjatpūr has claimed can be acceptable? How useful these principles can be for the revelation-order-based exegesis?

The studies conducted so far by researchers on the criticism of the principles of revelation-order-based exegesis are scarce. Among them, the articles "Exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān based on revelation order", "The principles and preconditions of revelation-order-based exegesis of Holy Qur'ān", and "A new approach in exegesis of Holy Qur'ān based on revelation order" can be named. Each of these has dealt more with the principles of revelation-order-based exegesis, but so far, no independent study has been conducted on the criticism of the principles offered by Bihjatpūr.

The Principles of Revelation-Order-Based Exegesis from the Viewpoint of Bihjatpūr

Bihjatpūr has offered principles for revelation-order-based exegesis which

will be addressed after the lexical and terminological discussion of the word “principles”.

The Lexical Meaning of Principles

“Principles” is the plural form of “principle” form Latin “*principium*”, meaning the “source”, “foundation” and “basis” of something (Ṭurayhī, 1996, vol. 1, pp. 64-65; Muṣṭafawī, 1981, vol. 1, p. 344). It is narrated from Asmā’ī that by the basis, a mat on which the businessmen put their goods is meant (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol.14, p. 97).

The Idiomatic Meaning of Principles

Idiomatically, principles are told to be “a collection of basic beliefs and subjective doctrines which are firm in their place and are rational and determinant” (Saeidi, 2004, p. 390). In the interpretation of the holy Qur’ān, principles are viewed as “a set of presumptions, subjective doctrines, and religious or scientific beliefs, by accepting of which, the exegete interprets the Holy Qur’ān.”

Bihjatpūr, defining the principles, states: “by the term basis, we mean the expression of the assumptions, religious or scientific beliefs, as well as the reasons of the permission and legitimacy on which the theory of exegesis based on revelation-order of the sūras are founded. These cases, although not being overt in structure of the interpretational discussions, give credibility and authenticity to this style of interpretation” (2013, 26).

a) Legitimacy of Revelation-order-based Exegesis:

according to Bihjatpūr, the term “legitimacy of the revelation-order-based legitimacy”, means finding its credential roots in the Holy Qur’ān, narratives, and the Holy Prophet (s) and the Imāms character sketch, i.e. whether the revelation-order-based exegesis is permissible from the viewpoint of the Holy Qur’ān and narratives or not. He firstly provides a brief explanation on this principle and then mentions the evidence for the confirmation of its permission and legitimacy (ibid, p.48).

For application of this method, its legitimacy must be proven. The method Bihjatpūr has taken for proving the legitimacy of the revelation-order-based exegesis is anauthentic one. Definitely, in order to do that, we must refer to the Holy Qur’ān and the narratives before everything else.

Bihjatpūr has provided the following reasons and evidence for the legitimacy of revelation-order-based exegesis.

1. The Educational and communicative Processes of the Holy Prophet (s)

He believes that the Holy Prophet (s), on every occasion of revelation in which some verses were revealed to him, read the verses to people as they were revealed, and prepared them mentally, educating them on the contents of the verses and expressing the points hidden in them (ibid, p. 49). He, after narrating the narratives related to the discussion, concludes that the educational and informing process of the Holy Prophet (s) has been based on the revelation order. He continues: “It is revealed from these narratives that educating the verses and their Ḥalāl (permissible) and Ḥarām (the forbidden) content were done after every instance of revelation. Thus, the educational method of the Holy Qur’ān was applied by the Holy Prophet (s) based on the natural order of verses and sūras revelation” (Bihjatpūr, 2010, 30).

It is rational that the Holy Prophet (s) has educated and read to people whatever revealed to him on every occasion of revelation, not leaving any part of the revealed verse unread and not adding the next revealed parts before educating and explaining the former parts. Definitely, the people of revelation age expected this from the Holy Prophet (s). With this in mind, the educational and informing process of the Holy Prophet (s) cannot be used as a firm reason to prove the permission of the revelation-order-based exegesis.

From his viewpoint, first, the gradual revelation of the Holy Qur’ān took place, and then, it was revealed as a whole and in one time, while, most of the Qur’ān scholars such as Shaykh Tūsī (n.d., vol.9, 224), and Ṭabrisī (1993, vol.2, 497), believe that in the Qadr night every year, a part of Qur’ān which was to be revealed throughout that year, was revealed completely and in one time to Holy Prophet (s), and then, during that same year and on the occasion of the incidents and events that happened, that part of Qur’ān was gradually revealed.

Bihjatpūr, explaining the exegesis based on the revelation order, writes in several occasions, “If the Qur’ān had been revealed completely and in one time; if it was revealed in one time” (Bihjatpūr, 2008, vol.1, 36). Asserting the importance of exegesis based on revelation order, He believes that, “If the hesitation and pause in reading the Holy Qur’ān to people did not have any especial effects on them or even on the Holy Prophet, the Holy Qur’ān would have been revealed completely and in one time” (ibid, 48).

It is deduced from this expression that according to him, the Holy Qur’ān has been only revealed gradually, and there was no need for complete revelation. However, the narratives of Imāms prove to be contrary to it, as they accept both kinds of revelation. This is evident in what is narrated from

Imām Ṣādiq (Qumī, 1983, vol.1, 66; ‘Ayyāshī, 1960, vol.1, 80; Kulaynī, 1980, Vol.2, 629; Ibn Bābwiya, 1997, 62). Most of the Qur’ān scholars also agree with this view. For example, ‘ Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, in several cases, such as the interpretation of the Table Spread chapter (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1990, vol.6, 236) and the Cow chapter (ibid, vol.2, 18) emphasizes this fact.

It can be concluded that the Holy Qur’ān has been revealed in two manners: one is gradual and the other is complete; the complete revelation of the Holy Qur’ān to the pure heart of Holy Prophet has taken place in Ramaḍān month, and at the Qadr night, and its gradual revelation has taken place during 23 years and based on different conditions and requirements (Muṭahharī, 2004, vol.26, 539; Jawādī Āmūlī, 2009, vol.9, 342; Makārim Shīrāzī, 1994, vol.21, 149); Qirā’atī, 2004, vol.8, 250).

Although the educational and informing process of the Holy Prophet has been such that in each period, he read to people the teachings revealed to him and educated them, for the legitimacy of the revelation-order-based exegesis, this reason cannot be as efficient, and it is not convincing.

2. The Structure of the Sūras Order in the Qur’ān Attributed to Imām ‘Alī (a)

He believes that the text of the Qur’ān attributed to Imām ‘Alī (a) is an exegesis based on the teachings of the Prophet (s) to him, and regarding the reports on the attributes of this text, the possibility of the revelation of Qur’ān based on revelation order can be deduced from the acts of Imām ‘Alī (a). He, in the continuance, mentions these attributes among which is the revelation-order-based being of the sūras (Bihjatpūr, 2013, 56).

The most important expression based on which he deduces that Imām ‘Alī’s (a) attributed Qur’ān is based on the revelation order is the expression “So, he wrote it as was revealed by Allāh”, which has been mentioned in several narratives. The likes of this expression confirm the aspects of different meanings, and the preference of a meaning over other meanings is a non-preferable preference, or it does not imply that. Contemplation on the original narrations shows that it cannot be decisively deduced that this text has been based on the revelation order, and in these narrations, no definitive reasons can be found for the verses to be revelation-order-based (Jian, 2012, 69-83).

One of the exegetes writes about the Qur’ān attributed to Imām ‘Alī (a), “ ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (a) compiled the Holy Qur’ān as it was revealed, without distortion and alteration, nothing less, nothing more. The Holy Prophet (s) always informed him of the occasion of revelation of the verses and sūras, and showed him which verse was antecedent and which one succedent”

(Shahristānī, 2007, vol.1, 13). Some other scholars have also mentioned similar narrations (Āmilī, 1998, 123-24).

Some of the Sunni scholars have quoted Ibn Sīrīn on the Qur'ān attributed to Imām 'Alī (a), who believes that Imām wrote both the abrogating and the abrogated in his version of Qur'ān. He states that he has searched for that book, but couldn't find it (Suyūfī, 1994, vol.1, 209; Zarqani, bita, vol.1, 247).

Reflection on these narrations reveals that none of them imply that the Qur'ān attributed to Imām 'Alī (a) has been based on revelation order; rather, in addition to verses, it includes some interpretations, the abrogating and the abrogated, and the names of some people. Thus, trusting these narratives and citing them to prove that this version is based on the revelation order cannot be a solid foundation for concluding that it is based on the revelation order.

Some have analyzed the narratives that take Imām 'Alī's (a) version of the Qur'ān to be based on the revelation order, as follows: "In the narratives, there is no explicitness on the former and latter order. This narrative seems to be fake and fabricated. It seems that the Ḥadīth fabricators wanted to somehow justify Imām's lack of presence in this way, and legitimize the sovereignty as previously planned. However, what have been provided in the Shī'a Ḥadīth resources are not only clear, but also there is evidence that this meaning has not been intended. The meaning is what was provided by us" (Mahdawī Rād, 2004, 100-101).

Therefore, the structure of the order of the sūras in Imām 'Alī's (a) attributed version cannot be a proper reason for permission of interpretation based on the revelation order, since there is no definite views on this order.

3. The Infallibles' Emphasis on Reading and Understanding the Revelation Order

From Bihjatpūr's point of view, the appearance of some of the words in Ahl al-Bayt's narratives, such as "What is the difference if people read the Holy Qur'ān as was sent down by Allāh" points out the legitimacy of the revelation-order-based exegesis (Bihjatpūr, 2013, 60).

From these narratives, the permission of the revelation-order-based exegesis cannot be deduced, since it can be inferred from their appearance that people should read the Holy Qur'ān as revealed, so that there would be no discrepancies. The expression "as revealed", which is used in these narratives, can have several probable interpretations.

One of the Qur'ān scholars criticize this narrative,

This narrative, with the assumption of the authenticity of its chain of transmitters, does not affirm that Holy Prophet's intention is to read the Holy Qur'ān based on the revelation order; rather, the meaning can be that it should be read without loss and reduction, in which case, the intended meaning is the collection of all that is revealed. In addition, this narrative, along with some other narratives, is probably fake, and the fabricators might intended to induce that the current Qur'ān does not include all 'that is revealed'" (Shākir, 2010, 111-112).

Bihjatpūr, explaining Imāms' emphasis on reading and understanding the Qur'ān based on revelation order, mentions a narrative on scholarship, explaining the words of Imām Bāqir (a): "Shaykh Mufīd narrates Jābir, who quoted Imām Bāqir: at the time of Zuhūr (the reappearance of Muḥammad al-Mahdī), Imām Mahdī (a) will educate the Holy Qur'ān to people. Then, the most difficult task would be the order of the Qur'ānic sūras, since the order of his version of the Qur'ān would be different from that of the current one (Mufīd, 1986, p.365). This Ḥadīth implies that the Qur'ān provided by Imām Mahdī (a) has no difference with the current one, except for the order of the verses and surās" (Maarefat, 2003, 164; Bihjatpūr, 2013, 62).

Jābir quoted Imām Bāqir (a): "When MahdiMuḥammad al-Mahdī appears, he will set some tents, and educate the Holy Qur'ān to people as was revealed by Allāh. For those who have learned it by heart, it would be more difficult; because it is to the contrary of compilation" (Mufīd, 1986, vol.2, 386; Majlisī, 1976, vol.52, 339).

This narrative is Mursal (loose narration). Also, no equivalent of the word "order" exists in its text; rather, only the expression "on what Allāh revealed" is mentioned in this narrative, which was previously elaborated. By the way, the mere difference in compilation method is so troublesome? One of the opponents of the revelation-order-based exegesis, criticizing this method, explains this narrative as follows,

"This narrative is not flawless, because:

- a) The narrative is Mursal and Shaykh Mufīd has not specified the narrative means. Thus, the narrative means are unknown.
- b) The opposition to compilation does not necessarily mean the opposition to the order. Sometimes, the opposition to the compilation can also mean the opposition to reading or interpretation" (Jian, 2012, 69-83).

If presumably, the 'compilation' has the same meaning as 'order', still the opposition to compilation is not necessarily the same as opposition to order, since in compilation, besides the order, the content and other aspects are also

considered. Therefore, there are several possibilities here, and no possibility can be preferred, without having a strong reason (ibid).

Thus, the legitimacy of the revelation-order-based exegesis cannot be deduced from the Infallibles' narratives, because there is no words or expressions in them to affirm and prove this exegesis method.

4. The Use of this Exegesis Method by the Infallibles and their Companions

From the viewpoint of Bihjatpūr, among the Imāms and their companions' words, there are cases in which the revelation order of a verse or sūras has been cited to prove a matter. An example is the lack of abrogation of the Nikaāh al-Mut'ah (temporary marriage) verse (Bihjatpūr, 2013, 62). In the narrative, it is mentioned that:

Abū Ḥanīfa asked Mu'min al- Ṭāq "What is your opinion about the Nikāh al-Mut'a? Is it Ḥarām (forbidden) or Ḥalāl (permissible)? He answered: it's Ḥalāl. Abū Ḥanīfa said: O, Abū Ja'far, the verse in sūra al-Ma'ārij is the evidence for Nikaāh al-Mut'ah being forbidden. Also, there is a narrative attributed to the Holy Prophet that abrogates the sentence of Nikāh al-Mut'a being Ḥalāl. Mu'min al- Ṭāq said: O Abū Ḥanīfa, the sūra al-Ma'ārij is a Meccan one, and the Mut'a verse has been revealed in Medina. The narrative you are narrating is irrelevant (Kulaynī, 1980, vol.5, 450; Khusrawī, 1981, 347-8; Bihjatpūr, 2013, 62-6).

Reflection on this narrative shows that its main discussion is to see if the verse is Meccan or Medinan, which is among the means of revelation-order-based exegesis. Therefore, it cannot be used as a reason for using this method, since the mere citation of the revelation order by Imāms cannot prove the revelation-order-based exegesis while interpreting or responding to the audience questions. In other words, this narrative is a proof for the consideration of verses as being Meccan or Medinan for the interpretation purposes, which is, in fact, necessary for any method of exegesis.

He continues: "according to some narratives, Imāms have interpreted the verses based on the revelation order of them" (Bihjatpūr, 2013, 63). Then, he provides this narrative as the proof, "From 'Abd al-Raḥīm, who said: I asked Abī 'Abdullāh (a): "And they ask you what they should spend". He said, "The excess [beyond needs].". Thus Allāh makes clear to you the verses [of revelation] that you might give thought) (Qur'ān 2:219). Then he said: "And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate" (Qur'ān 25:67). He revealed it and then the other" ('Arūsī Ḥuwayzī Howeizi, 1988, vol.4, 28). Explaining it, he asserts, "The Criterion chapter is placed at the 42nd row, based on the tables of revelation order, while the Cow chapter is the chapter number 87,

and the first one revealed in Medina. Imām, answering a questioner who asked about the meaning of ‘الْعَفْوُ’ (al-‘affwa) in the Cow chapter, states that, “Before the revelation of this verse, the excess limit had been revealed in the Criterion chapter, and this word implies a state between being mean and extravagant” (Bihjatpūr, 2013, 63).

Although this narrative is also *mursal*, it is more of a permission of exegesis of the Qur’ān by Qur’ān rather than exegesis based on the revelation order. By the way, if the expression “revealed it, then that” is included in the narrative itself, it implies the time of verses revelation, not that it confirms this exegesis method. But if this expression is added by the narrators, there remain doubts about citing it to prove the claim of the revelation-order-based exegetes, and it cannot be used to prove the legitimacy of this important issue of exegesis.

Comparing the revelation-order-based exegesis and the subject-based exegesis He believes that

Any other ways that can help us better understand and discover the verses is permissible, unless it is somehow forbidden, and undoubtedly, there is no reason for the exclusiveness of understanding the Qur’ān based on the order of the current version of it. If the subject-based method is flawless, the problems of the exegesis based on revelation is less, since this exegesis method was prevalent in the Prophet’s age” (ibid, 66-67).

It is deduced from his words that the revelation-order-based exegesis provides a better understanding of the verses, however, through case study of his exegesis ‘along with revelation’, it is revealed that he has not managed to prove his claim (e.g. exegesis of the Morning Hours chapter; Bihjatpūr, 2008, vol.1, 381-391).

Based on what has been conveyed from the Prophet’s age, cases of exegesis based on the revelation order have not been reported, while Bihjatpūr claims that this method has been prevalent in that time, since exegesis is a very important issue needed by all, and it is impossible that such interpretations from the verses and sūras have been done in that time, without even a small part of it being conveyed to us.

Definitely, everyone seeks a better and more complete understanding of the verses. The Qur’ān exegesis methods have each dealt with some aspects of its understanding. However, what is mentioned by Bihjatpūr on the elaboration of interpretation of the verses based on the revelation order does not provide an understanding superior to other interpretive methods.

Although proving the permission for and the legitimacy of the revelation-order-based exegesis is a necessary task, what has been provided by Bihjatpūr in this regard is not as efficient.

b) The Mirror-like being of the Nature and Religion:

The second basis of the revelation-order-based exegesis from the viewpoint of Bihjatpūr is the mirror-like being of the nature and religion. Based on this principle, the Holy Qur'ān, as the main resource of Islam, is consistent with a principle shared by all people: nature. This agreement means that religion responds to the inherent, unchangeable, pervasive, universal, and perfectionist tendencies of man. Explaining this principle, He, mentions the Qur'ān's emphasis on the agreement between the nature and religion, religion's unity, and the nature being based on monotheism, and concludes that

The principle of the mirror-like being of the nature and religion requires that the human be the audience of the Qur'ān, and the Arabic character and culture of the people of revelation age or their concerns do not keep it within its fences. By this principle, the Holy Prophet set up his tent in the polytheist camp of its contemporary ignorance, and confronted their culture, beliefs, and behaviors, and tried to change them. The method he took for changing the bases of ignorance community with the help of the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān, and also the method he used for reforming the society, and built a moderate Ummah through expanding the monotheism and Islamic Culture camp deals with the depth of human nature and soul. That is why its achievements (except for some cases that the opposite is proven) can be used and adapted in other human societies in terms of content and method" (Bihjatpūr, 2013, 68-76).

He has tried to prove the mirror-like being of the nature and religion as the basis of revelation-order-based exegesis; although, all of us have accepted the innateness of Islam, the role of this basis in the revelation-order-based exegesis is not as clear. In addition, we know that the congenital man well understands the discussions and concepts of the religion and the Qur'ān, which are in line with his nature, and is evolved and guided, no matter what the permissible and legitimate means are for understanding the religion and the Qur'ān.

Regarding the elaboration of Bihjatpūr's stance on this basis, the question can be raised that if a person seeks to understand the Qur'ān and its concepts through exegesis based on revelation order, is he acting against his nature? It should be noted that to reform, evolve, and develop the societies, the

qur'ānic model and the recognition of the stages of evolution in the society contemporary to the revelation age will be required.

c) The Wisdom of the Content and Revelation Order of Holy Qur'ān:

Among the other bases provided by Bihjatpūr for revelation-order-based exegesis is the wisdom of the content and revelation order of the Qur'ān. He believes that,

While the sender of the Holy Qur'ān is wise, and the content of it contains wisdom, the revelation of the verses and the induction of the Qur'ān is also wise and based on maximum stability and firmness. This stability is rooted in God's awareness of the tasks and affairs and the wise objectives existing in the Holy Qur'ān. Thus, the wisdom exists throughout the Holy Qur'ān, including the order existing among the revealed verses, the compatibility between the verses revealed, and the events and the needs of the audience, its deep and reforming contents and meanings, and the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān. Based on this principle, the gradual revelation of Holy Qur'ān was a wise act, and a result of expedience and selection" (Bihjatpūr, 2013, 77-84).

The revelation of the verses based on wisdom and expedience is an acceptable thing, and Bihjatpūr, also, has provided an analysis of the Qur'ān's wisdom. However, he does not exactly mention its relation to the exegesis based on the revelation order. He has explained the relation between the Holy Qur'ān's gradual revelation and the wisdom of its contents and concepts, and since the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān is one of the principles of revelation-order-based exegesis (Akramī & Murtaḍawī, 2012, 112), he might have sought to find a justification for legitimacy of the revelation-order-based exegesis. In fact, the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān is on one hand directly related to its content wisdom, and on the other hand, it has a direct relation with the revelation-order-based exegesis.

d) The Inclusion and Expansion of the Qur'ān's Message:

Another principle Bihjatpūr mentions for revelation-order-based exegesis is the inclusion and expansion of the Qur'ān's message. After explaining some verses from which the generality is deduced and some that have a special revelation cause, Hewrites,

"Since adaptation of the Holy Qur'ān with the new situations requires the recognition of the similarity and conformity of the instances related to the new verses and instances, there is no

choice but to understand the exact meaning of the verses at the time of revelation and the specific features of the instances related to that time, as well as the exact and accurate recognition of the present realities. The revelation-order-based exegesis is evaluated as an effort for better and more accurate understanding of the meaning of the verses and the situation at the time of revelation” (Bihjatpūr, 2013, 84-90).

In response, it should be said that firstly, it is correct that all people are the audience of the Qur’ān and the recognition of its meaning should be universal. However, this principle is not specific to this exegesis method, and it should be taken into consideration while reading the verses and their interpretations. Secondly, studying the exegesis provided by Bihjatpūr to date shows that he has not explained the verses based on their inclusion discussions. Despite his last expression, “The revelation-order-based exegesis, an effort for better understanding of the verses”, he is expected to be committed to the conditions of revelation, and form his understanding of the verses based on them, as well as extracting and mentioning the new concepts which are consistent with today’s society, so as to show that although the revelation conditions have influenced the verses, the miracle of the Qur’ān lays in the fact that its concepts and teachings are universal. Through contemplating the exegesis “along with revelation”, it is revealed that in most cases, the author has provided a simple exegesis, without using the revelation conditions, and without paying the least attention to the basics and means of the revelation-order-based exegesis, and proving a new word about the interpretation of the verses.

e) Qur’ān’s Guidance

Among the other principles of the revelation-order-based exegesis from the viewpoint of Bihjatpūr is the Qur’ān’s guidance. According to him, the correct understanding of the Qur’ān’s meanings helps with the authenticity of exegesis process. The most credited way to reach the objectives of the Qur’ān revelation, and the model of their implementation in the revelation era, is the use of revelation-order-based method (Bihjatpūr, 2013, 90-91). Explaining the reliability of the revelation-order-based exegesis based on this principle, he, writes,

Reaching the major goal of the Qur’ān, organizing the subsidiary and partial objectives, recognition of the models for combining them, and reaching the Qur’ān evolution model are more viable under this exegesis style; it provides the exegete with the approach required to recognize the coherent appearance of the Qur’ān and the sūras, as well as the relation

and coherence between the internal parts of the sūras. This principle on one hand impacts the exegete's understanding and directs it towards the Qur'ānic guidance methods, and on the other hand, helps him discover the existence of efficiencies of the Qur'ān in complex dimensions of guidance, including issues such as comprehensive guidance, and provision of perfection and prosperity, which encourages the exegete to identify the existing but not illusive relationships and ties between the verses and sūras" (ibid, 115-116).

Although he discusses the objectives of revelation of the Qur'ān in detail, and mentions the viewpoints of the scholars of the field, he has not been able to properly explain the relation between these objectives and the revelation-order-based exegesis. In addition, if his use of this principle has intended to show that through the use of revelation-order-based exegesis the guidance objectives of the Qur'an could be better achieved and acted upon by the audience, , , it seems to be a claim that needs to be proven, and it should be realized when interpreting the verses.

By the way, the realization of the Qur'ān revelation objectives is not exclusive to this method of exegesis. For example, the Almighty Allāh, in Qur'ān 36:6 "That you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware" and Qur'ān 12:2 "Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand" (preparing the people for use of wisdom and intellect) mentions the objectives of the revelation of the Qur'ān. Studying Bihjatpūr's interpretation of these verses shows that he has not provided any explanation for the objectives of the Qur'ān revelation with the help of revelation-order-based exegesis. For example, in the interpretation of Qur'ān 12:2, he believes that God intended to say,

We sent down this sūra, readable, understandable, and expressive, so that they would understand it and percept its meanings, and apply their wisdom on it, and you should know that the God who protected Yusuf despite the efforts of his envious brothers and the corrupt and powerful Egyptians and gave him the sovereignty, can keep you from the polytheist and hateful Meccan people despite their efforts, and give you a great position" (Bihjatpūr, 2008, vol.5, 367).

He has dealt with the interpretation and explanation of the term 'people' in interpretation of Qur'ān 36:2, which addresses one of the objectives of the revelation of the Qur'ān, and believes that Holy Prophet's prophetic mission has been public and universal, and it addresses all people around the world. However, the initiation regarded the people of Mecca, and then, the

people of Medina were the group who formed the base of Islamic Ummah (ibid, vol.3, 57-58).

It is obvious that these explanations provided for the verses related to the objectives of revelation of the Qur'ān are less related to the guidance and educational goals of the Qur'ān. It was expected that with the help of the revelation-order-based exegesis, these objectives would be explained better and clearer.

By the way, the exegetes interpreting based on the order of the current version of the Qur'ān have better explained these objectives in these verses. For example, when Jawādī Āmulī explains forewarning people as one of the objectives of revelation, he asserts that although the warning and proclamation have both been used in the Holy Qur'ān, the main element in the guidance and education of people - and the main core of promotion and direction - is the warning. Putting the related verses together with proclamation and warning, and using Islamic narratives, he has provided a comprehensive discussion on warning people to guide and educate them (Qur'ān to Qur'ān, 2009, 243-245).

f) The Verbalty of the Qur'ān's Language

Bihjatpūr has provided the verbalty of the Qur'ān's language (and the public-specific tradition of the language of the Qur'ān), as another principle of the revelation-order-based exegesis. Besides explaining some of the features of the verbalty of expression, and implying some verses related to this subject, He writes, "The verbalty of the verses of the Qur'ān requires that when interpreting the Holy Qur'ān, the interpreter should consider the conditions of the audience, as well as their culture and peripheral characteristics, and simulate the space and atmosphere of the sūra revelation time, as far as possible, so that we could find out the reason behind using some explanations with the help of the style of the sūra, or recognize the meaning of some implications and allusions. In order to be present in the space and atmosphere of the verses and sūras revelation time, the best, most reliable, and most credited way is the observance of the natural order revelation while interpreting the verses" (ibid, 120-132).

He has properly explained the relation between this principle and the revelation-order-based exegesis. Besides, the consideration of this principle is necessary for the revelation-order-based exegesis. However, it would be appropriate that in line with explaining this principle, he provide expressions and allusions from the Qur'ān as the evidence for his words. However, he has failed to do so in his book.

For example, the interpretation of Qur'ān 68:4 by Bihjatpūr in his book "along with revelation", is mentioned in which, after a brief explanation of

the lexical meaning of the word ‘manner’, he interprets it as follows,

Here, the great manner of the Holy Prophet (s) is reminded. The exegetes do not agree on the meaning of the great manner. Some have considered it to be the great religion, and some have defined it as the great social manners and ethics. The Holy Prophet had the patience, social communication, wisdom, trusteeship, and the like, at their best. The late Qumī Mashhadī, in the commentary “Kanz al-Daqā’iq”, writes: “by the great moral character, it is meant that you tolerate problems of your people, that have been never tolerated before, by anyone else”. This interpretation is a more accurate meaning, and is more compatible with the objectives of the sūras, since the Holy Prophet was exposed to the worst accusations and the hardest pressures. A group of people, who had no logic and dignity, targeted him by most intense attacks. In order to relieve the Prophet, reminding the great moral character of him and his patience toward these pressures are so effective. In other words, emphasis on the “great manner” implies the role of this manner in bearing big responsibilities. One who bears the burden of the prophecy of an Ummah, especially an Ummah as large as Islamic Ummah, has to have great moral capacities. Basically, the famous figures of history – regardless of the positivity or negativity of their character – have had a high psychological capacity. Great patience, great policy, high charity and calculation power, and the like, exist in all of them, more or less. However, the divine prophecy is granted to the characters with a combination of greatness and spiritual dignity, i.e. they should have both great manners and merciful and gracious manners. And if such perfections did not exist in the Prophet, he would have not been granted the heavy burden of prophecy” (Bihjatpūr, 2008, vol.1, 134-135).

All his interpretation of Qur’ān 68:4 is comprised of the expressions above. Although comprehensively discussing and organizing the principles and bases of the revelation-order-based exegesis, he has not used them, since the exegesis he has provided is simple and void of the least revelation discussions, and perhaps the exegetes interpreting based on the order of the current version have expressed the same ideas with even higher quality. His commentary has no superiority and advantage over the commentaries based on the current version of the qur’ānic chapters order.

Conclusion

In order to assess the novelty of the revelation-order-based exegesis method, its principles and bases must be clearly explained. Bihjatpūr, a contemporary Qur'ān scholar, has compiled the principles, bases, and rules of this exegesis method, and has discussed its advantages. Evaluating and criticizing the bases of the revelation-order-based exegesis from the viewpoint of him, it is revealed that although organization and division of these bases and providing explanations for them in the framework of a book is a valuable undertaking, most of the principles he claims, such as the inclusion and universality of the message of the Qur'ān, are not exclusive to the revelation-order bases exegesis and they can be found in all exegesis methods. In addition, he has not managed to clearly explain the relation between them and the revelation-order-based exegesis. Also, some of the principles intended by him do not have the authenticity and stability, and it is not proper to use suspicious principles to discover the divine meaning.

Therefore, the principles claimed by Bihjatpūr which are acceptable include the legitimacy of and permission for the revelation-order-based exegesis, and the verblivity of the language of the Qur'ān.

The principles which are not acceptable are the mirror-like being of the nature and religion, the wisdom of the content and revelation order of the Qur'ān, the inclusion and universality of the message of the Qur'ān, and Qur'ān's guidance.

By the unacceptable principles we mean that these principles are correct by themselves, but are not exclusive to the exegesis based on the revelation order. Nonetheless, the following four principles can be named as the principles specific to the revelation-order-based exegesis: considering each sūra's verse order to be revealed to Holy Prophet by Allāh, accepting that most of the sūras in the Qur'ān have been revealed suddenly and at once, the impossibility of the intervening revelation of the sūras (i.e. the revelation of a sūra does not happen unless the revelation of the previous one is complete), and the gradual revelation of the Holy Qur'ān.

In order to strengthen the revelation-order-based exegesis, it is suggested that stronger and firmer principles be considered and while interpreting, it should be tried to apply all correct principles and conditions of the revelation-order-based exegesis and to express the matters using a probabilistic language, because it is based on the narratives on revelation order, whose chains of transmission are not strong enough, and also their texts have discrepancies. Also, it is better to use this method in a subjective form, so that it would have the required efficiency and results.

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