

The Examination of the Absence of the Statement “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful” at the Beginning of the Repentance Chapter

Farīda Amīnī^{1*}, Bibī Sādāt Raḡī Bahābādī²

1. PhD student, Department of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth Sciences, Faculty of Theology, Alzahra University, Tehran

2. Associate Professor, Department of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth Sciences, Faculty of Theology, Alzahra University, Tehran

(Received: June 19, 2020; Revised: October 10, 2019 ; Accepted: October 20, 2019)

Abstract

The Repentance chapter is the only chapter of the Qur'ān that is not started with the Basmala phrase “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.” Different reasons have been suggested for the absence of the Basmala phrase at the beginning of this chapter. After examining every stance in this regard, the study at hand takes into account the external indications affecting the Repentance chapter – such as the atmosphere of the revelation and the conditions of the revelation – to investigate the absence of the Basmala phrase at the beginning of the Repentance chapter. The various behaviors of the Companions of the Prophet (s) at the Expedition of Tabūk (as the main event of the year 9 LH) revealed the existence of various groups of believers and hypocrites. The year 9 LH was a historical turning point in the history of the Arabian Peninsula, and the majority of new conversions to Islam were due to political, security, and economic concerns. These new converts' approach to Islam was defined by their interests, and their behavior was mainly “the disbelief disguised under faith” (i.e. hypocrisy), a conduct the existence of which is confirmed by the Repentance chapter content, too. The mentioning of Basmala by the Glorified God at the beginning of every chapter is an invitation to use His general and specific Grace. The hypocrites have deprived themselves from the Divine Grace because they turn disbelief to an obstacle against the Divine Grace. In other words, the conduct of the hypocrites and their inward urge in a way is breaking ties with God and the Islamic nation. Therefore, God have responded to their conduct with depriving them from His Grace.

Keywords

Basmala, Repentance chapter, the Qur'ān, Disbelief, Hypocrisy.

* Corresponding Author, Email: famini@alzahra.ac.ir

Introduction

The verse “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful” is the first and most recurrent verse of the Qur’ān that is seen at the beginning of all Qur’ānic chapters except for the Repentance chapter. There is a disagreement between the Shī‘a and the Sunnī about the consideration of “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful” as part of the Qur’ānic chapters. The Shī‘as unanimously believe in such an inclusion (Baḥrānī Darāzī, 1985: 105-108), while the Sunnīs have different opinions in this regard.

With regard to the absence of the Basmala at the beginning of the Repentance chapter, three opinions have been suggested by the exegetes.

- The Repentance chapter is the continuation of the Spoils of War chapter, and these two are actually one chapter.
- The sentence “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful” indicates safety and grace, while the Repentance chapter is to nullify safety for certain groups.
- A question was asked by Ibn ‘Abbās’ from ‘Uthmān in this regard. He answered that “The Prophet (s) passed away without making clear for us if the Repentance chapter is part of the Spoils of War chapter or not; therefore, I put them next to each other without putting a Basmala between them” (Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 2: 242; Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 15: 521-522).

The suggested opinions about the absence of Basmala at the beginning of the Repentance chapter have been usually examined in the commentaries as part of the interpretation of the Repentance chapter (Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 2: 242; Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 15: 521; Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 9:166). In addition, some books in the realm of the Qur’ānic sciences and history have adopted a narrative approach to address this issue (Rāmyār, 1984: 430; Khu’ī, 1982: 573). It seems that what can guide us to achieve the true answer is the examination of the historical atmosphere that is referred to by the verses of the Repentance chapter. This study aims at studying the Repentance chapter through the examination of the historical evidences of the revelation era as the external indications and the linguistic context and the authoritative verses as the internal indications in order to investigate the absence of the Basmala verse at its beginning.

An overview of the verse “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful”

“In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful” – which is also called *Tasmiya* and *Basmala* – is the starting sentence of 113 chapters of the Qur’ān. In the Ant chapter, this sentence is given both at the beginning of the

chapter and at the beginning of the Prophet Solomon's letter to the Saba' queen (Qur'ān 27:30). This makes the total number of the appearance of this sentence to 114. That is to say, it is not a sentence that has been revealed only once but has come to be made by the noble Prophet (s) the opening verse of all qur'ānic chapters (Rāmyār, 1984: 553).

The repetitious revelation of Basmala indicates its different meaning and interpretation in every chapter. Although Basmala is literally the same in the whole Qur'ān, its inward and interpretive meaning is different and so, the semantic disagreement and literal similarity of the "In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful" verses is because the Basmala of every chapter is part of that chapter and is compatible with its meaning. Therefore, the meaning of Basmala is different in different chapters, and it expresses a certain degree of the Godhood, Mercifulness, and Compassionateness of the Glorified God every time it appears in the Qur'ān. Consequently, if the content of a chapter is explained well, the interpretation of the Basmala of that chapter will also be clear (Jawādī Āmulī, 2010, vol. 1: 291).

As it was mentioned, there is a disagreement between the Shī'as and the Sunnīs about the question that if Basmala is part of every chapter or not. This disagreement can be discussed in the form of three viewpoints.

- From the viewpoint of the Qur'ān reciters of Mecca and Kufa (Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 1: 1) as well as some Shāfi'īs (Nawawī, n.d., vol. 3: 334), Basmala is the beginning part of all chapters, including the Opening chapter and other ones (this viewpoint is similar to the Shī'a viewpoint).
- Some other Shāfi'īs (Ṭurayhī, 1988, vol. 1: 202) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (Nawawī, n.d., vol. 3: 334) consider Basmala as only a part of the Opening chapter.
- From the viewpoint of the Qur'ān reciters of Medina, Basra, the Levant, as well as the Ḥanafī and Mālikī jurists, Basmala is not part of the Qur'ān and is used at the beginning of the chapters as a sign of blessing and as a way to separate them from each other. This is the generally accepted stance of the Ḥanafīs (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 1: 179; Qurṭabī, 1985, vol. 1: 194) and Mālikīs (Qurṭabī, 1985, vol. 1: 194).

In relation to the second and third viewpoints that are different from the Shī'a stance, it can be said that Basmala has been revealed 114 times and has been set as the beginning verse of the qur'ānic chapters due to the order of the Prophet (s). At the revelation era, the revelation of Basmala as the first verse of the new chapter was a sign of the ending of the previous chapter and the beginning of the revelation of the following chapter. Moreover, in order to reject the stance of those who believe that Basmala has been revealed only

once and the belief that the 114-time revelation of this verse is a repetition, we might say that many verses have been repeated in the Qur'ān. An example is "Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?" that has been repeated 31 times in the Qur'ān 55 (Ḥasanzāda Āmulī, 1993: 36-37).

Examination of the viewpoints about the absence of Basmala at the beginning of the Repentance chapter

There are various stances to the absence of Basmala at the beginning of the Repentance chapter, which are presented and criticized in this section.

1. The first stance is based on a narration from Ibn 'Abbās who asked 'Uthmān "... Why did you put the Repentance chapter as an over-100-verse chapter next to the Spoils of War chapter as an under-100-verse chapter within the seven long chapters of the Qur'ān without putting any Basmala between the two? 'Uthmān said: The method adopted by the Prophet (s) was that when the Qur'ānic verses were revealed to him, he called a scribe of revelation and told him to put those verses within chapter x. The Spoils of War was among the first chapters that was revealed in Medina, and the Repentance chapter was one of the last chapters revealed in that city. As the content of these two chapters were the same, we imagined that the Repentance chapter is the continuation of the Spoils of War chapter. The Prophet (s) himself also did not say anything in this regard until the day he demised. Therefore, we put this chapter within the seven long chapters of the Qur'ān without writing any Basmala between the two" (Ṭabrisī, 1995, vol. 4: 5).

The criticism of the first stance: It is implausible that the Prophet (s) has not expressed the existence of the Repentance chapter after the Spoils of War chapter, because the Qur'ān has been ordered by God and His Prophet in the same way that is transmitted to us. The truth is that he ordered putting the revealed verses of the Repentance chapter after the Spoils of War chapter due to the divine order. Moreover, the Sublime God did not mention Basmala at the beginning of Repentance chapter to warn that Basmala is part of every chapter and so, to prevent people from disputing if Basmala is part of the verses of every chapter or not (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 15: 522-551).

The author of *al-Manār* commentary writes, "Neither the Companions nor the people after them have written Basmala at the beginning of this chapter, because unlike the revelation of this verse with other chapters, it has not been revealed with the Repentance chapter. The reason is that the revelation of this chapter signaled fighting against the disbelievers and ending treaties with them" (Rashīd Riḍā, 2003, vol. 1: 39-40).

To criticize the narration from Ibn ‘Abbās, we might assert that although this tradition has been narrated by the notable Sunnī Ḥadīth transmitters, the later scholars deem it as weak, because there is ‘Awf b. Abī Jamīla – aka Ibn A‘rābī – who transmits it from Yazīd Fārsī that is considered by the rijāl scholars as weak and unknown (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 2000: 76). On the other hand, this narration is a solitary tradition, which is another reason for the weakness of its chain of transmission. In addition to the weakness of the chain of transmission, the foregoing tradition has thematic weakness, because it presents ‘Uthmān as if he has acted based on his own knowledge in the compilation of the Qur’ān. However, according to the Qur’ān 75:17 as well as the unanimous traditions, the order of the qur’ānic chapters is set by the Glorified God and is delivered by the Prophet (s) (Ramyār, 1984: 429-430). Similarly, Ayatullāh Jawādī Āmulī has also introduced the foregoing tradition as non-authoritative (Jawādī Āmulī, 2010, vol. 33: 206-207).

2. Some believe that Repentance chapter has been revealed as the continuation of the Spoils of War chapter and the two comprise one chapter, because the Spoils of War chapter mentions the treaties and the Repentance chapter announces their ending. The basis of this claim for the Sunnīs is a narration that has been transmitted by Ubayy b. Ka‘b (Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 1: 241; Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol 15: 216), while for the Shī‘a the evidence comes from the narration of Sa‘īd b. Musayyib from Imām Ṣādiq (a) (Majlisī, 1983, vol. 89: 277).

To criticize the foregoing stance, we might say that if it is accepted that the Repentance chapter is the continuation of the Spoils of War chapter, then the historical path of this stance could not be deemed as consistent, because the Spoils of War chapter was revealed soon after the Migration to Medina (to be exact, after the Battle of Badr), while the Repentance chapter was revealed in the year 9 LH, toward the end of the Prophet’s (s) lifetime, and there have been revealed some other chapters in between. It is not easy to prove that there have been some years between the revelation of the early and late verses of a chapter, unless a valid narration implies that the Repentance chapter has been set after the Spoils of War chapter due to the order of the Prophet (s) (Jawādī Āmulī, 2010, vol. 33: 205).

The author of *al-Mīzān* deems this viewpoint as the superior one and says: “There is a disagreement among exegetes on the question that if these verses are a separate chapter or part of the Spoils of War chapter. Their disagreement can be traced back to the disagreement that existed among the Companions and the Successors of Companions in this regard. Imāms’ (a)

narrations on this issue are also different, but the ones that mention the Repentance chapter as part of the Spoils of War chapter are more favorable.”

3. Some believe that Basmala means safety and kindness, while the Repentance chapter was revealed to reject the safety, and so, Basmala has not been revealed at the beginning of this verse. This stance has been narrated from Imām ‘Alī (a) (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 15: 216). This stance is among the most important viewpoints in this regard. However, the question that comes to mind is that why the chapters such as the Qur’ān 83, 104, and 111 that start with curses and promises of punishment have Basmala at their beginning. We might respond that the foregoing chapters – which are revealed soon after the appointment of the Prophet (s) in Mecca – present a general decree on reprimanding some blameworthy behavioral qualities. However, the significant quality in the Repentance chapter is hypocrisy, an issue that had been tolerated as much as possible from the early days of Islam up to the time of the revelation of this chapter, and so, no war had been waged against the hypocrites up until then (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 9: 339). However, it seems that when the hypocrites started to damage Islam and the interests of Muslims in every arena (including religion, politics, economy, and defense), a decisive order was needed to be issued against the key figures of hypocrisy.

It seems that the selection of the best choice from among the foregoing ones requires the examination of the themes discussed in the Repentance chapter. Then, by the investigation of the events that happened in the year 9 LH we might come to true conclusions about the reason for the absence of Basmala at the beginning of this chapter.

An overview of the Repentance chapter

The Repentance chapter is the 27th chapter of the Qur’ān and was among the last chapters revealed in Medina in the year 9 LH. In the current order of the Qur’ānic chapters, it is the 9th chapter that appears after the Spoils of War and before the Jonah chapters. There have been suggested many names for this chapter, with the most famous ones being Tawba (repentance) and Birā’a (dispensation) (Ṭabrisī, 1995, vol. 5: 3).

‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī has classified the themes of this chapter into 14 categories based on their similar linguistic contexts (q.v. Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 9: the interpretation of the Repentance chapter), including the dispensation and fight against the disbelievers, the Battle of Ḥunayn and the victory of Muslims, the unlawfulness of fighting during the Prohibited Months, and the People of the

Book and asking them to pay Jizya (legal capitation). The majority of the chapter content is about the different groups of hypocrites, including the Medinan hypocrites as well as the Arab hypocrites and the depth of their disbelief, the story of the Expedition to Tabūk and the plot to murder the Prophet (s), and the story of the Dirār mosque. All in all, it can be said that a review of the Repentance chapter shows that a part of it was revealed before the Expedition to Tabūk, another part at the time the Muslim Army was getting prepared for the Expedition, and still another part after the Muslim army returned from the Expedition (Jawādī Āmuī, 2010, vol. 33: 188).

The cause of revelation of the early verses of the Repentance chapter that were revealed after the Expedition to Tabūk at the end of the year 9 LH is suggested in commentaries as follows. In the year 8 LH, after Mecca was captured by the Muslim army, the polytheists were freed by the Prophet (s). He did not condition their freedom to belief in Islam, and so, they continued their polytheism. They were allowed to take part in Hajj and – therefore – definitely entered the Sacred Mosque. Toward the end of the year 9 LH, when the early verses of the Repentance chapter were revealed (Ibn ‘Āshūr, n.d., vol. 10: 7-8), the first ten verses of this chapter were recited by the Commander of the Faithful (a) for the polytheists and the faultiness of the 4-months safe-conduct treaty was announced to them. Moreover, some blameworthy innovations of the polytheists were also prohibited.

In the following lines, the revelation atmosphere of this chapter and the authoritative verses that exist in it are examined. Then, the absence of Basmala at the beginning of this chapter is discussed again.

The sociocultural conditions of Medina in the year 9 LH

Any text is formed within certain geography, and that geography influences the way its meaning is determined. With regard to the chapter revelation atmosphere, we discuss the interaction and “give and take” between the external conditions and the chapter revelation, i.e. the existing atmosphere necessitates the revelation of the chapter and the revelation of the chapter changes the atmosphere. Therefore, paying attention to the atmosphere in which the verses of a chapter are revealed in and the events that have happened, we might solve the ambiguities that have been attributed to the chapter (Aḥmadzāda, 2010: 84).

The expansion of Islam and the development of the economic and military power of Muslims toward the end of the Prophet’s (s) lifetime made Medina the metropolis of the Islamic world in which different people with different manners lived. These manners originated from their different attitudes and motivations.

As noted above, a part of the Repentance chapter was revealed before the

Expedition to Tabūk, another part at the time the Muslims were getting prepared for the Expedition, and still another part after they returned from the Expedition. It seems that the examination of the different behaviors of the Prophet's (s) Companions in this battle based on their different motivations can help elucidate the revelation atmosphere of the Repentance chapter.

In the year 9 LH, the Prophet (s) received some news on the Romans' preparation for an assault against Medina. Similar to other battles, the Prophet (s) asked Muslims to jihād, and due to the expansion of Islam throughout the Arabian Peninsula, he sent some military couriers to different parts of the Peninsula to ask them to take part in the battle. Unlike other battles, the Prophet (s) announced the destination of his army right from the beginning: Tabūk at the northwest of the Peninsula, near the Levant borders (Balādhurī, 1966, vol. 1: 67).

At the time public mobilization was being made for jihād, it was reported to the Prophet (s) that some hypocrites were holding a meeting in the house of the Judaist Suwaylim and wanted to stop people from going to jihād. The Prophet (s) ordered Ṭalḥa and some other Companions to go there and put the place on fire to make the hypocrites understand they did not have any place in the Islamic society (Ibn Hushām, n.d., vol. 2: 520).

Different responses were made to the call for sending troops for the battle. In a general classification and through a review of the Repentance chapter verses, the way Companions addressed the issue of taking part in the Expedition to Tabūk can be categorized into two groups.

- **The believers (in different levels)**

Those who helped the Prophet (s) with their lives and properties (Qur'ān 9:111);

The believers who made a mistake but resumed the correct decision later (Qur'ān 9:117)

The believers attended Tabūk with a firm belief and without any laxity and doubt in the promises made by the Prophet (s); they took that battle as a good opportunity (Yaqūbī, n.d., vol. 2: 67). Some of them were ready for the battle but did not have the required facilities to take part in it. These missed the chance to go to the battle while they were weeping (Qur'ān 9:92).

- **Hypocrites (in different levels)**

Those who made a mistake and awaited God's verdict about it (Qur'ān 9:102)

Those who doubted if they would want to help Islam or not (Qur'ān 9:45)

Those who fabricated excuses to refuse to take part in the battle (Qur'ān 9:90)

Those who refused to take part in the battle with no excuse (Qur'ān 9:81-83)

The hypocrites – who were known by qualities such as showing lethargy at the time of saying prayers, false oaths, sarcasm, and mockery (Qur'ān 9: 54,

56, 64, 65, 79) – acted against the Prophet (s) in this battle at two levels. The first level was accompanying the Prophet (s) in the battle with the aim of demoralizing Muslims and plotting to murder the Prophet (s) at the time of returning from Tabūk, and the second level was staying in Medina and making a coup against Islam. For instance, a large group of them led by ‘Abdullāh b. Ubayy – whose companions are reported not to be less than those of the Prophet (s) – refused to accompany the Prophet (s) in Thanya al-Widā‘, and returned to Medina with the rumor that the Prophet (s) had been defeated by the Romans (Ibn Hushām, n.d., vol. 3: 519). Moreover, it has been narrated from Ḥudhayfa b. Yamān and others that a group of hypocrites plotted to murder the Prophet of Islam (s) when he was returning from Tabūk. To this end, they wanted to make berserk the camel of the Prophet (s) on one of the defiles of the pass so that the Prophet would fall off into the valley. It is mentioned in many narrations that there were 12 people (eight people from Quraysh and four people from Medinans), but the Sublime God informed the Prophet (s) through Gabriel about their plot. This way, his life was saved in that situation (Wāqidī, 1995, vol. 3: 1004; Ibn Hushām, n.d., vol. 2: 517).

What sent the Prophet (s) and the Muslim army into Tabūk was a plot (i.e. the spread of a false rumor that Romans wanted to attack Muslims) by the hypocrites who wanted the Prophet (s) to leave Medina so they could make a coup against him and Islam, as there happened no war with the Roman empire during the Prophet’s (s) stay in Tabūk. However, the Prophet (s) came to know the hypocrites’ plot and prevented it. First, he moved toward the borders with the Roman Empire and announced his military objective to set the grounds for the hypocrites to reveal what they had in their hearts. This way, people knew their real intentions and the grounds for their a posteriori misguidance¹ were set. Moreover, by installing Imām ‘Alī (a) as his deputy in Medina, he prevented the possibility of a coup against Islam. During the time Imām ‘Alī (a) was in charge of the city in the absence of the Prophet (s), the hypocrites did not stop pursuing their plot and continued to harass Imām verbally, in a way that Imām could not tolerate their spiteful words and joined the Prophet (s) in Juruf and said: “The hypocrites imagine that you left me in Medina because it was difficult for you to take me to this expedition.” In response to Imām ‘Alī (a), the Prophet (s) stated the Manzilat (Status)² tradition (Zawraq, 2009: 421; Ja‘fariyān, 1991: 225).

1. A type of misguidance that occurs as a result of a bad deed (here hypocrisy) rather than before it. In other words, the a posteriori misguidance afflicts the human because of his own actions (Jawādī Āmulī, 2010, vol. 2: 521).

2. A tradition that introduces the status of Imām ‘Alī (a) compared to the Prophet (s) as that of Aaron (a) compared to Moses (a).

What was significant in the Expedition of Tabūk and the events of the year 9 LH was the trick that the hypocrites used to try to destroy Islam, and that was nothing but exploiting “Islam against Islam.” In other words, we might say that hypocrisy is a tactic for the polytheism and disbelief proponents using which they try to subdue their enemy. Viewed from a different angle, hypocrisy can be considered as an instance of polytheism in deeds. For instance, following the presentation of the various qualities of the Medinan hypocrites, different parts of the verses 42 to 96 of the Repentance chapter refer to a type of Arab hypocrites and introduces them as those with the most intense hypocrisy and disbelief, “The Arabs of the desert are the worst in Unbelief and hypocrisy...” (Qur’ān 9:97). The hypocrisy and disbelief of this group is more than others because they have a lowly culture, and they are away from the human virtues such as knowledge and etiquette. As a result, they are prone to being ignorant to the revealed limitations, and the principle knowledge, and the secondary orders such as the ritual obligations and recommendations, the licit, and the illicit (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 9: 371). It frequently happened in the history of Islam that some Arabs who seemingly tended toward Islam went to the Prophet (s) and asked him to send people to them to educate them the Qur’ān and the Islamic orders. In suchlike situations, the Prophet (s) sent the best and the most knowledgeable Companions to them, but those Arabs disclosed their true nature when they kidnapped some of the most loyal Companions of the Prophet (s) and sold them to the polytheists. After forcefully obtaining information from those Muslims, the polytheists cruelly killed them. This happened for the first time after the Battle of Uḥud, but it was repeated later in larger scales (Zawraq, 2009: 423-425).

Another example that was in a way among the biggest moves of the hypocrites in Medina and was done in the absence of the Prophet (s) – when he was at Tabūk – was the establishment of the Ḍirār mosque, with the majority of its builders being from the hypocrites of the Aws tribe (ibid.: 301). Their intention of building this mosque was nothing but the spread of disbelief, the promotion of disunity, and the accommodation of the enemies of Islam and the Prophet (s), “The mosque which some of the hypocrites have established is only to harm people, to spread disbelief, to create discord among the believers, to wait for the one who fought against God and His Messenger...” (Qur’ān 9:107).

The diversity of the behaviors of the Prophet’s (s) Companions in the Expedition of Tabūk indicates the existence of various groups with different beliefs in the year 9 LH. These are classified into two groups and are explained in the following lines.

- **Believers**

This group is comprised of those who devoted their lives to Islam and ignored all their personal interests for the sake of the victory of Islam. This group was mostly made up of the oppressed and the youth.

- **Hypocrites**

- a) The first group of hypocrites was comprised of people who had converted to Islam and accompanied it. When there was no danger, they were standing firmly and courageously, but when there was the shadow of danger, they simply fled¹. This group wanted Islam for their own interest rather than devoting themselves for the cause of Islam. They wanted Islam to be victorious and to develop, because they saw the victory and development of Islam as their own victory and development. They pursued their own interests through their hypocritical approach, and the various parts of the Repentance chapter refer to their conditions.
- b) The second group of hypocrites is made up of conservatives who converted to Islam after the conquest of Mecca. These political figures had opposed and even had fought against Islam but had been defeated. They were pursuing their lost interests. As they did not see any personal interest at that time, they were looking for those benefits in future. They were foresighted, opportunistic, and prudent, and needed the first group of hypocrites to achieve their personal interests (Zawraq, 2009: 522-570).

Taking into account the sociopolitical conditions of the year 9 LH, we might say that the significant problem of Islam at that time was hypocrisy. Although Islam seemingly had spread throughout Arabian Peninsula, what ran within the Muslim society was hypocrisy. It was necessary to root out this negative quality so that it could not pollute all layers of the society. In the following lines, the content of the Repentance chapter is examined so that we can come across a more precise explanation of the reason for the absence of Basmala at the beginning of the Repentance chapter.

A reflection on the content of the Repentance chapter and its authoritative verses

As it was noted, the themes of this chapter can be classified into 14 groups based on the linguistic context. In the following table, these 14 topics are presented, accompanied by a column that is devoted to the key concepts of the topics. It is noteworthy that although the general content of the chapter is the identification of hypocrisy and its signs, the word hypocrisy has not been

1. Examples include their escape at the battles of Uḥūd and Ḥunayn (Ḥusaynī Zanjānī, 2010: 235-237).

directly mentioned in some cases. In suchlike situations, a reflection on the linguistic context of the verses leads to the identification of the concept itself and the extraction of its key concepts. The following table is made to demonstrate the common themes of the 14 groups, which can then function as a guide to achieve the objectives of the chapter and the authoritative verses of the Repentance chapter.

Table 1. Hypocrisy-related themes of the Repentance chapter

	Verses with common linguistic context	Topic	Key concepts
1	1-16	Renunciation and dissociation from the disbelievers	Disbelief, polytheism, hypocrisy (though not directly mentioned), breach of trust, fighting
2	17-24	The endurance of the act done for the sake of God and the annihilation of the act done for the sake of non-God	Disbelief, polytheism, jihād
3	25-28	The events of the Battle of Hunayn	Disbelief, polytheism, victory
4	29-35	Fighting against the People of the Book	Disbelief, polytheism, fighting
5	36-37	The prohibition of fighting during the Prohibited Months	Disbelief, polytheism, fighting
6	38-48	The signs of the hypocrites	Hypocrisy, jihād
7	49-63	Hypocrites' false excuses to refuse going to the battle	Disbelief, hypocrisy
8	64-74	Hypocrites' plot to murder the Prophet (s) when returning from Tabūk	Disbelief, hypocrisy, jihād
9	75-80	Hypocrites who avoided paying the alms tax	Hypocrisy, commitment
10	81-96	The hypocrisy of people who refused to go to the battle	Disbelief, hypocrisy, jihād
11	97-106	The disbelief and hypocrisy among Arabs	Disbelief, hypocrisy
12	107-110	The establishment of the Dirār mosque by hypocrites	Disbelief, hypocrisy, battle
13	111-123	Promising the Paradise to the fighters of the divine cause	Belief, fighting, commitment
14	124-129	Expressing the moods of believers and hypocrites during the time of the revelation of the verses	Disbelief, hypocrisy (though not directly mentioned), belief

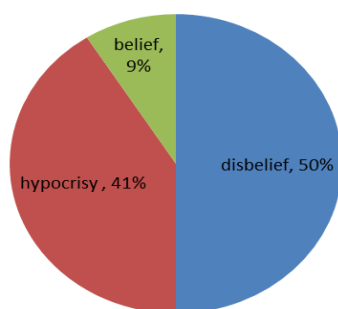


Fig. 1. Percentage of belief, disbelief, and hypocrisy representation in the Repentance chapter

A careful look at the linguistic context of the verses of the Repentance chapter and its key concepts reveals that the verses of this chapter revolve around the introduction of disbelief, hypocrisy, breach of trust, and the way to address these issues, i.e. fighting.

One of the ways to discover the purposefulness of this chapter is the examination of its authoritative verses. Although the Repentance chapter involves different topics, Basmala is not mentioned at its beginning, and does not have a unique goal (from the viewpoint of ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī) (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 9: 146), it seems that the topics of this chapter aim at introducing the moral vices that threaten the foundations of the Islamic society. This issue will be addressed in more details in the following lines along with the examination of the authoritative verses of the chapter.

“Ghurar al-āyāt” (authoritative verses) are those verses of the Qur’ān that function as the basis of other qur’ānic verses and show the way to achieve their themes (Khaḍīr, 1991: 167-170). The summary and gist of the objectives and the detailed messages of every chapter is manifested in its authoritative verses (Jawādī Āmulī, 2010, vol. 13: 32-34). The authoritative verses are usually about the Divine Unity or have a close relationship with it. These verses help the exegetes solve exegetic problems. One of the main criteria for the identification of these verses is the emphasis put on their specialty by the Infallibles (a). Then, exegetes just need to try to find the relationship between the authoritative verses and other qur’ānic verses. According to this stance, the relationship between the authoritative verses and the precise verses is general inclusion.

As it was noted, the authoritative verses of a chapter are those that form the basis for other verses of that chapter and are in a way the summary of the chapter. With regard to the classification of ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī about the topics of the Repentance chapter, we might say that the verse that entails the significant themes of the Repentance chapter is the verse 12, “But if they violate their oaths after their covenant, and taunt you for your Faith,- fight ye the chiefs of Unfaith: for their oaths are nothing to them: that thus they may be restrained” (Qur’ān 9:12). Although this verse is mentioned at the beginning of the chapter within the linguistic context of the fight against disbelievers, a reflection on the verses of this chapter and its revelation atmosphere leads us to assert that the final and practical solution of God and the Prophet (s) for hypocrisy and disbelief is to remove the leaders of this group. Moreover, ‘Allāma Jawādī Āmulī mentions this verse among the authoritative political verses of the Qur’ān (Jawādī Āmulī, 2010, vol. 33: 193).

This verse introduces people who repented after perpetrating sins and transgressions, performed the most robust principles of the religious society (i.e. saying prayers and paying alms tax), and became part of the Muslim

society, but then breached their allegiance with the Muslims' leader. The word "nakatha" literally means breaching an allegiance that must be observed, while "Aymān" means oath, but it is inherently stronger in meaning (Muṣṭafawī, 1982, vol. 12: 223). The juxtaposition of all these cases reveals the importance of the allegiance they have breached. The Qur'ān calls such people "A'imma al-kufr" (the chiefs of Unfaith).

The word "kufr" (unfaith, disbelief) in the Qur'ān 9:12 is used as a noun and this shows that God intends to describe hypocrites with disbelief and to indicate the continual existence of internal disbelief in their hearts. These people have internal disbelief and external faith. Because of this, God introduces them as double-faced, liar (Qur'ān 63:1), wrongdoer and oppressor (Qur'ān 63:6), and those who mislead people from the path of religion while protecting themselves behind their false oaths (Qur'ān 63:2). God asserts that the reason for their deeds is their disbelief (Qur'ān 63:3). He orders believers to fight against them and murder them, because they not only are misled, but also mislead others (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 5: 159).

The original meaning of the word *kufr* is covering (Muṣṭafawī, 1982, vol. 10: 78). This cover is one which prevents understanding the right and the truth, and guides the human to other mistakes such as hypocrisy, disbelief, sin, arrogance, and misguidance.

In the value system of the qur'ānic ethical concepts, cover means one which prevents understanding the right and the truth. It has a close relationship and overlaps with other ethical terms such as polytheism, sin, misguidance, oppression, etc. Disbelief has levels and degrees that are determined by the intensity of the rejection and ignorance of something that is rejected or ignored as well as their role in determining the intensity of that object (ibid., vol. 8: 87-88).

The reason for the creation of the human is his attainment of perfection, and the cause that sets the ground for his achievement of perfection and true guidance is the divine benevolence. Due to the cover a disbeliever puts between himself and the understanding of the right, he in fact prevents himself from receiving the divine benevolence – the benevolence that sets the ground for the human perfection. In other words, it can be said that disbelief makes a cover against understanding the right and the truth that causes the person to perpetrate other mistakes. On the other hand, the cover that has resulted from disbelief in a way prevents the reception of the divine benevolence. This entails the concept of "adhāb" (punishment), because 'adhāb means the natural result of an action, and its description with its accompanying qualities expresses its mode and intensity (ibid.: 81). Out of the 336 times the word "adhāb" is repeated in the qur'ānic chapter, the

Repentance chapter has the most tokens of it (i.e. 25 cases). It seems that this rate is to emphasize the consequences of disbelief.

Terminologically speaking, *nifāq* (hypocrisy) is confessing to faith with tongue but lacking the internal belief in the heart. On the other hand, its literal meaning is a hidden underground path (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1992: 819). *Munāfiq* (hypocrite) is called so because he enters into the Muslim nation under the guise of Islamic beliefs but denounces Islam and Muslims when he needs and leaves Islam. Moreover, the Qurʾān calls hypocrites as *fāsiq* (wrongdoer). The word *fisq* literally means the date's getting out of its peel (ibid: 636). A person who leaves the domain of Islamic Law, even if he still believes in it, is known in the Qurʾānic culture as a wrongdoer. Therefore, the hypocrite and the wrongdoer have one thing in common: getting out of the skin of religion and getting afflicted with corruption. It is clear that the lack of agreement between one's words and actions in the issues related to religious faith is a dimension of sinfulness as the main cornerstone of the meaning of hypocrisy. It cannot be denied that hypocrisy has many common points with disbelief, because hypocrisy is nothing but a kind of faithlessness and lack of belief, as the Qurʾān introduces both the hypocrite and the disbeliever as the enemies of God. The similar consequence (Qurʾān 4:140; 9:68) of the disbelief and hypocrisy indicates that they are the same with regard to the degree and nature of the sin, because both hypocrites and disbelievers will reside in the hell.

As an instance of polytheism, hypocrisy sets the ground for the intensification of polytheism. Faith is not merely accepting God; rather, freedom from various types of polytheism and grasping the robust string of God form the reality of monotheism. Any type of faith that is not accompanied with the rejection of the tyrants is susceptible to dissociation. God's reign in the human society is directly manifested in the prophets or indirectly in the prophets' trustees. Anyone who opposes them is among the major tyrants. In addition, one of the principles of monotheism is the rejection of tyrants. The divine Speech in the Repentance chapter targets the hypocrites and the disbelievers who are introduced by the Qurʾān as polytheists against the Prophet (s) and Islam, even if they seemingly utter the statement of monotheism (Husaynī Zanjānī, 2010: 309-310).

As it was noted, in the Qurʾānic knowledge framework, there are verses that constitute the basis of its knowledge pyramid. These form a good tree whose root is made of monotheism. In the foregoing verse, too, the eradication of disbelief is in a way considered as the establishment of monotheism. Moreover, this verse is among the precise verses of the Qurʾān through which we might come up with the final solution for addressing disbelief and hypocrisy. Furthermore, in line with this key verse, other verses of this chapter introduce

the substantial quality of the leaders of disbelief (i.e. hypocrisy). That is to say, they aim at introducing the attributes of the leaders of disbelief in order to prevent the role played by hypocrisy in the society that finally leads to disbelief.

It seems that what has prevented the mentioning of Basmala at the beginning of this chapter is the hypocrites' activities and their various plots against Islam and their movements for their own personal interests, in such a way that their inward desire was to break ties with God and the Islamic nation (Jawādī Āmulī, 2010, vol. 2: 544). In other words, they breached the divine covenant – i.e. Islam – (ibid., vol. 4: 28), even though they had sworn allegiance to it.

Then again, based on an examination of the word “mercy” in the verse “In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,” we might say that mercy has two key literal meanings: a) manifestation and realization of compassion, sympathy, kindness, blessing, benevolence, and remission in the objective world, and b) a close relationship (as in the word *al-raḥim*) (Muṣṭafawī, 1982, vol. 4: 90-101).

The divine Benevolence that is always bestowed upon all existence is manifested in two forms: the compassionate benevolence that is considered the station of existence extension and the merciful benevolence that is the station of perfection extension. The creation was made through the compassionate benevolence, while the existence gets to its ultimate growth level through the merciful benevolence (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 1: 18). Mentioning Basmala at the beginning of every chapter by the Glorified God is in fact inviting people to use the general and specific benevolence of God, and every chapter recounts a degree of God's divinity, compassion, and mercy (Jawādī Āmulī, 2010, vol. 1: 29). As it was noted, Basmala is part of every chapter and is congruent with its content. Then, it seems that the general and dominant content of the Repentance chapter suggests that the hypocrites themselves (as manifested in their actions) wanted to cover themselves from God's benevolence. Therefore, it can be said that hypocrites have deprived themselves from the benevolence of God by the disbelief-made barrier they have made against the divine benevolence. Following their act, God has deprived them of his benevolence, too. Nonetheless, the way to repent and to return to God is open and God's emphasis on His benevolence is more than His anger. Then, the hypocrites' deprivation of the divine benevolence and the issuance of the order to kill their key figures are due to their own actions and intentions.

Conclusion

We believe that by accepting the conditionality of the order of chapters in the Qur'ān and the consideration of the atmosphere in which the verses of the Repentance chapter have been revealed along with the events happened at that

time, we might assert about the absence of Basmala at the beginning of the Repentance chapter that this chapter has been set as a distinctive chapter after the Spoils of War chapter following the order of the Prophet (s). A part of the Repentance chapter has been revealed before the Expedition of Tabūk, another part at the time of the preparation for the expedition, and still another part after returning from the expedition. The examination of the different behaviors of some companions of the Prophet's (s) in this expedition, including their refusal to go to jihad with unjustifiable reasons and pretexts, disrupting the mobilization of forces and preventing people from going to jihad, plotting to murder the Prophet (s), using the trick of "Islam against Islam" and building the *Ḍirār* mosque, and bothering the Prophet's (s) deputy in Medina in his absence reveals their various motivations. What was clearly opposing Islam at that time was hypocrisy. That is to say, although Islam had seemingly spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula, the new converts' approach to Islam was based on their interests, and what could be observed the most was "disbelief disguised as faith" (i.e. hypocrisy).

The reason for the creation of the human is his attainment of perfection, and the cause that sets the ground for his achievement of perfection and true guidance is the divine benevolence. Due to the cover a disbeliever puts between himself and the understanding of the right, he in fact prevents himself from receiving the divine benevolence – the benevolence that sets the ground for the human perfection. On the other hand, the cover that has resulted from disbelief in a way prevents the reception of the divine benevolence. This entails the concept of "adhāb." Concerning the general and dominant content of the Repentance chapter, the hypocrites themselves (as manifested in their actions) wanted to cover themselves from God's benevolence. Therefore, it can be said that hypocrites have deprived themselves from the benevolence of God by the disbelief-made barrier they have made against the divine benevolence. Following their act, God has deprived them of His benevolence, too. Although the way to repent and to return to God is open and God's benevolence is stronger than His anger, the hypocrites' deprivation of the divine benevolence and the issuance of the order to kill their key figures are due to their own actions and intentions.

References

The noble Qur'ān

- Aḥmadzāda S. M. (2010) "Thematic Unity of the Sūras in Tafsīr-i Tasnīm." *Qur'ānic Researches*, no. 57, 82-109.
- Baḥrānī Darāzī, Y. (1985), *Ḥaqā'iq al-Nāzira fī al-aḥkām al-tāhira*. Qom, Jami'a Mudarrisīn.
- Balādhurī, A. (1996), *Ansāb al-ashraf*. Beirut, Dār al-Fikr.
- Fakhr Rāzī, M. (1999), *Maḥāṣin al-ghayb*. Beirut, Dār al-Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.
- Ḥasanzāda Āmulī, Ḥ. (1993), *The Qur'ān has never been distorted*. Qom, Qiyām Publications.
- Ḥusaynī Zanjānī, A. (2010), *Hikmat Fātimī*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Zanjānī. Qom, Būstān Kitāb.
- Ibn 'Ashūr, M. (n.d.), *Al-Tahrīr wa al-tanwīr*. Beirut, Mu'assisa al-Tārīkh.
- Ibn Hushām, A. (n.d.), *Al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*. Beirut, Dār al-Ma'ārif.
- Ja'fariyān, R. (1991), *Political history of Islam*. Tehran, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.
- Jawādī Āmulī, A. (2010), *Tasnīm*. Qom, Isrā' Publication center.
- Khaḍīr, J. (1991), "Tafsīr al-Qur'ān bil-Qur'ān 'ind al-'Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (Aṭrūḥāt Jāmi'iyya)." *Risāla al-Qur'ān*, no. 1, 38-58.
- Khū'ī, A. (1982), *An expression of the general issues of the Qur'ān*. Translated by Ṣādiq Najmī & Ḥāshim Ḥāshimzāda. Qom, Majma' Dhakhā'ir Islāmī.
- Majlisī, M. (1983), *Biḥār al-anwār li-durar akhbār al-a'imma al-aṭḥār*. Beirut, Dār al-Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.
- Muṣṭafawī, Ḥ. (1982), *Al-Taḥqīq fī kalimāt al-Qur'ān al-karīm*. Tehran, Book Translation and Publication Center.
- Nawawī, M. (n.d.), *Al-Majmū' fī sharḥ al-muhadhdhab*. Beirut, Dār al-Fikr.
- Qurṭabī, M. (1985), *Al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*. Beirut, Dār al-Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.
- Rāghib Iṣfahānī, Ḥ. (1992), *Al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qur'ān*. Beirut, Al-Dār al-'Ilm al-Dār al-Shāmiyya.
- Rāmyār, M. (1984), *Tārīkh Qur'ān*. Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Publications.
- Rashīd Riḍā, M. (2003), *Tafsīr al-manār*. Beirut, Dār al-Fikr.
- Ṭabāṭabā'ī, K. (2000), "The assessment and evaluation of a tradition about Qur'ān." *Islamic Studies Quarterly*, no. 45-46, 61-82.
- Ṭabāṭabā'ī, M. (1996), *Al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Qom, Islamic Publications Office of Jāmi'a Mudarrisīn of Qom Ḥawza.
- Ṭabrisī, A. (1988), *Majma' al-bayān li-'ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Tehran, Nāṣir Khusru Publications.
- Ṭurayḥī, F. (1988), *Majma' al-baḥrayn wa maṭla' al-nayyirayn*. Tehran, n.p.
- Wāqidī, M. (1995), *Al-Maghāzī*. Beirut, Mu'assisa al-A'lamī.
- Ya'qūbī, A. (n.d.), *Tārīkh Yaqūbī*. Beirut, Dār Ṣādir.
- Zamaksharī, M. (1987), *Al-Kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq ghawāmiḥ al-tanzīl*. Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī.
- Zawraq, M. (2009), *The lost city*. Tehran, Islamic Culture Publications.