

The Role of Revelation Atmosphere in the True Understanding and Interpretation of Jihād Verses

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Abstract

Due to the gradual revelation of the qur’ānic verses in line with the events of the prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad (s) era, the reports of the battles of early days of Islam are reflected in some verses, and in some others Jihād and fighting against disbelievers has been emphasized. This has been used as a pretext by some to unintentionally or purposively introduce the Qur’ān as a book that invites to fury and violence. Emphasizing the role of the revelation era atmosphere in the true understanding and interpretation of the verses, the authors of this article first explore the behavior of the enemies of Islam – which was mixed with ignorant stubbornness, harassment, conspiracy, imposition of war, and breach of promise – and then introduce the three stages of the Qur’ān’s response to disbelievers, namely advising the Prophet (s) to patience and resistance, inviting him to do defensive Jihād, and emphasizing the eradication of oppression. Accordingly, they aim at proving this point that despite all the hostilities of the disbelievers, the Qur’ān talks about war against them only as the last solution.

Keywords

Revelation atmosphere, Cause of revelation, Disbelievers’ stubbornness, Muslims’ resistance, Defensive Jihād.

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Introduction

The term “revelation atmosphere” is used to refer to a meaning much larger than the terms “cause of revelation” or “reason of revelation”. The term revelation atmosphere refers to a set of conditions, contexts, and requirements that have brought about the revelation of the parts of the Qur’ān, including a chapter, a set of verses, or a single verse.

Such an interpretation of the revelation atmosphere is greater than the two meanings of the cause/reason of revelation, because we believe that the Qur’ān seeks certain goals in its selection of the content, length, and rhythm strength of the verses, and even the stories of the previous nations narrated within its verses. To put it more clearly, Muslims in the prophetic era were in an atmosphere that necessitated the revelation of suchlike verses.

On the other hand, as the Qur’ān stipulates, its verses were not revealed all at once to the Noble Prophet (s) – just like the Torah and the Bible; rather, they were gradually revealed in line with the prophetic mission. The Qur’ān asserts that the reason for this has been to give heart to the Prophet (s) and to reveal it gradually and slowly to him. This is reflected in Qur’ān 25:32, “Those who reject Faith say: ‘Why is not the Qur’ān revealed to him all at once?’ Thus (is it revealed), that We may strengthen thy heart thereby, and We have rehearsed it to thee in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually”. Based on this verse and the related historical narrations, some parts of the Qur’ān have been revealed following the occurrence of events including good and evil happenings or as responses to the complex questions of the audience. Although these events were related to the revelation era, since they referred to the afflictions of the human society, the Qur’ān has praised, reprimanded, answered, or offered solutions in response to them.

The Qur’ān was like an undoubted divine angel for its revelation era audience because it was revealed from time to time and solved the problems and gave answer to the mysteries, and in addition to praising and giving heart to the faithful, admonished the disbelievers, polytheists, hypocrites, and wrongdoers by reproaching them.

This was so clear to everyone that some hypocrites did not dare to reveal the mysteries in their hearts as they were afraid of the revelation of the Qur’ānic verses, “The Hypocrites are afraid lest a Sura should be sent down about them, showing them what is (really passing) in their hearts” (Qur’ān 9:64).

“According to Suddī, some hypocrites said, ‘By God I prefer to be whipped 100 lashes but nothing is revealed to discredit us’, and Mujāhid said, ‘they talked among themselves. Then they said that they hoped God won’t disclose their mystery’” (Wāḥidī Nayshābūrī, 1982: 168). For instance, when they

insulted Balāl while he was reciting the call to prayer, the verse “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female” was revealed (Qur’ān 49:13; for more information about the cause of revelation of this verse, q.v. Wāḥidī Nayshābūrī, 1982: 168; Suyūṭī, n.d.: 182).

The reason for such revelations was that God used the qur’ānic verses to disclose the covert plots of the enemies and their whispering in the nightly meetings of the hypocrites (Qur’ān 4:118, 181) or the failure of some wives of the Prophet (s) to refrain from revealing the secrets (Qur’ān 66:3). Accordingly, the Qur’ān moved in line with the events that happened to Muslims during its 23 years of revelation and supervised all of them. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the gradual revelation of the Qur’ān – despite the request of the disbelievers that asked why the Qur’ān was not revealed all at once – was that it wanted to accompany the events and happenings and offer solutions for them (Qur’ān 25:32; for more information about the interpretation of this verse, q.v. Ṭūsī, 1993, vol.7: 488; Ṭabāṭabā’ī, n.d., vol.15: 210-211).

The scope of revelation atmosphere

The gradual revelation of the qur’ānic verses, which accompanied the prophetic mission and were generally revealed to answer a question or solve a problem, obliges us to consider revelation atmosphere for all verses and chapters of the Qur’ān. It is noteworthy that some experts such as ‘Abd al-‘Aẓīm Zurqānī (Zurqānī, 1988, vol.1: 137) and Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ (Qaṭṭān, 1988: 10) believe that there is not even one verse in the Qur’ān that has uncaused revelation. Rather, every verse has been revealed due to certain cause.

Of course, there are other experts who oppositely believe that none of the qur’ānic verses has any certain cause of revelation and the existing narrations on the revelation causes are not authoritative.

Despite the existence of such conflicting viewpoints, it should be emphasized that accepting the point that the qur’ānic verses and chapters reflected the conditions and requirements of the revelation era does not necessarily mean that the number of available narrations is enough to support this claim. Rather, it should be acknowledged that we have received narrations which express the cause of revelation of only some verses and chapters. This point can be understood from the comparison and evaluation of what has been said in books such as Nayshābūrī’s *Asbāb al-Nuzūl or Suyūṭī’s Lubāb al-Nuqūl* and the realities of the qur’ānic text.

Verses about some battles of the prophetic mission era

Some qur’ānic verses have been revealed about the various battles that happened during the prophetic mission era. These illustrate divine assistance,

self-sacrifices, or Muslims' failure to do their best. For instance, in the House of 'Imrān chapter, the Qur'ān talks about the divine assistance and his helping of Muslims with three thousand angels (Qur'ān 3:123-124; for more information, q.v. Ibn Hushām Ḥimyarī, 1992, vol.2: 262-263; Ṭūsī, 1993, vol.2: 578-579). This chapter also presents the story of the disobedience of some Muslims in Uḥud battle and their quarrel about the sharing of the spoils of war that led to the martyrdom of some Muslim fighters (Qur'ān 3:153-154).

In the same chapter, the Qur'ān reports that in that battle, some Muslims escaped, went up the mountain, and left the Prophet of Allāh (s) alone (Qur'ān 3:153). It also reports some other details such as the decision of some Muslims to abandon their faith after the rumors were spread about the murder of the Prophet (s) as well as the divine warning to them that the death or murder of the Prophet (s) cannot be an excuse for apostasy (Qur'ān 3:144). The deep grief of some Muslims for the martyred or wounded Muslims and the divine consolation are other aspects of this event (Qur'ān 3:40) that the Qur'ān has reported (for more information about the happenings of Uḥud battle, q.v. Ibn Hushām Ḥimyarī, vol.3: 581-666).

The Battle of the Trench is another battle that the Qur'ān has reported on. Here, the Qur'ān mentions the huge number of the disbelievers, their all-out attack, the fear they afflicted upon Muslims' heart, and the divine assistance (Qur'ān 33:9). In the Repentance chapter, the Qur'ān reminds the Ḥunayn battle in which, despite the greater number of Muslims, they got received losses due to their arrogance about their greater number, and they could prevent their defeat only because of the divine grace and support (Qur'ān 9:25; for more information about the battles fought by the Noble Prophet (s), q.v. Majlisī, 1983, vol.20: 2-287).

On the other hand, one of the objections to and criticisms against Islam in general and against the Qur'ān in particular is that why there is violence in its rules and teachings and why there are verses in which it is ordered to capture, behead, and kill disbelievers and polytheists?

This doubt is specially propagated by orientalist and Christians, because they assert that there is no word about battle and holy struggle in the Bible, and that it only emphasizes peace, reconciliation, kindness, and love!

Goldziher, firez, and bin are among orientalist who have taken Jihād as the essential reason for the expansion of Islam, and have called Islam the religion of sword. David Hume has said in this regard, "Islam started from the very beginning from more severe principles and blood shedding. Although it currently does not rain fire on the followers of all other religions, it does not deprive them from curse and promise of war. Prophet Muḥammad

who established Muslims' religion ordered his followers to conquer the whole world and eradicate all other religions and replace them with Islam ... these Muslims forcibly impose their religion onto people and tell them, 'Convert to Islam or Die!'" (Nazarī, 1992: 203).

Of course, Some Muslims' misinterpretation of verses in which fighting with and killing the disbelievers have been recommended should not be ignored. Having such a false interpretation, they conduct suicide attacks against non-Muslims, even ordinary people, and present a violent image of Islam and the Qur'ān by shedding the blood of many innocent people. Examples include crimes that Taliban and terrorist groups such as ISIS have done in different countries – especially in some Muslim countries such as Iraq – in recent years.

This doubt can be expunged by paying attention to those teachings in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth which are full of love, kindness, and ethical values and have been approved by the kind practices of Imāms and also through the exploration of the atmosphere of those verses in which fighting and Jihād against disbelievers have been emphasized.

When these verses are examined, it can be seen that the invitation to fight against disbelievers, polytheists, hypocrites, and the People of the Book was realized toward the end of the Hijrat (Hejira) era as the last solution only when Muslims had encountered their different harassments, tortures, and plots. Keeping silent in such situations would lead to the obliteration of Muslims and Islam.

Therefore, it is necessary to first examine the way Muslims' enemies treated them.

Examination of the enemies' treatment of Muslims

The examination of the way Muslims' enemies – including polytheists, hypocrites, and the People of the Book – treated them shows that after the invitation of people to Islam by the Prophet (s), they selected five ways to treat Muslims. These include ignorant stubbornness against accepting Islam, endless harassment of Muslims, plotting against Muslims, imposing war on Muslims, and breaching their promises. These will be discussed in detail in the following lines.

Ignorant stubbornness against accepting Islam

Historical facts reveal that the Noble Prophet (s) revealed the truthfulness of his invitation and prophetic mission for those who sought truth during his 13 years of mission in Mecca through the provision of various miracles, especially the Qur'ān as his main miracle. This left no way for any doubt in this regard.

An example for this is the confession of Walīd b. Muḡhayra who is remembered as the wise, Rayḡān al-‘Arab, and the man of information and knowledge. When he heard the initial verses of the Believer chapter (Qur’ān 40), he praised the Qur’ān (Majlisī, 1983, vol.18: 168; Ṭabarī, 1995, vol.29: 195).

Another example regards the words of ‘Utba b. Rabī‘a as one of the nobles of Quraysh who praised the Qur’ān after he heard the initial verses of the Spelled Out chapter (Qur’ān 41) (Ibn ‘Asākir, n.d., vol.38: 245-246).

Despite the clarity of the miracles of the Noble Prophet (s), those who loved this worldly life and saw accepting Islam against their whims of soul started to stubbornly resist his invitation and did not accept Islam. The Qur’ān says in this regard, “And they rejected those Signs in iniquity and arrogance, though their souls were convinced thereof” (Qur’ān 27:14).

Endless harassment of Muslims

In addition to their ignorant stubbornness against accepting Islam, polytheists put Muslims under pressure by different harassments and tortures. As cited in the historical books, in addition to imposing political, economic, and cultural blockade on Muslims, polytheists killed some poor Muslims by torture (Dhahabī, 1989, vol.1: 215-221). The most evident representation of these crackdowns occurred in Shi‘b (i.e. valley of) Abī Ṭālib where the Prophet (s), his family, and his companions were completely boycotted for three years. During those years, there were occasions when they survived through eating one date in several days (ibid: 221). Moreover, it was due to the excessive harassment of Muslims by polytheists that the Prophet of Allāh (s) asked Muslims to immigrate to Ethiopia and live there under the just rule of Najāshī – aka Armah, the king of that country – until the end of the polytheists’ harassment of Muslims.

These harassments and tortures got so intolerable that finally Muslims had to emigrate from Mecca to Medina bare-handedly, when all their property was seized by polytheists.

Plotting against Muslims

Polytheists’ plotting against Muslims was usually done with the help of hypocrites and Jews. Accordingly, the hypocrites, who pretended to be on Muslims’ side despite their hidden animosity toward Muslims, did everything they could to deteriorate the spirits of Muslims and create disunity among them. They always asked Muslims to avoid going to the battles (Qur’ān 33:33), and did not go to battles (Qur’ān 9:42) or made an excuse and left the battle scene (Qur’ān 9:48; 33:12) to disunite Muslims.

In one instance, ‘Abdullāh b. Ubay – the head of hypocrites – insulted the

Prophet (s), cursed some Meccan Emigrants, and asked Medinan Helpers to humiliate and oust them from Medina when they returned there. The following verse is about this incident, “They say, ‘If we return to Medina, surely the more honourable (element) will expel therefrom the meaner’” (Qur’ān 63:8). This started the fire of oppression and disunity among Emigrants and Helpers, which was extinguished by the revelation of the divine verses and the intervention of the Noble Prophet (s).

In a dangerous and disuniting act, the hypocrites followed the recommendation of Abū ‘Āmir – a Roman Monk – and built a mosque that became known as *Ḍarār* mosque due to the damage it inflicted upon the unity of the Muslim society. They then asked the Prophet (s) to inaugurate the mosque by saying prayers in it to give credibility to it so that they could use it as a sacred base against Muslims (for more information on this issue, q.v. Qumī, 1984, vol.1: 305; Ṭabrisī, n.d., vol.5: 125-126; Ṭabarī, 1940, vol.2: 374).

The Qur’ān considered the establishment of this mosque to be harmful and a means for promoting atheism, disuniting Muslims, and fighting against God and the Prophet (s), and asked the Prophet (s) to destruct it, “And there are those who put up a mosque by way of mischief and infidelity - to disunite the Believers – and in preparation for one who warred against God and His Apostle aforetime” (Qur’ān 9:107).

Due to the disuniting acts of hypocrites, the Prophet (s) always kept an eye on them so that their plots could not damage Muslims either when he was present or absent. Similarly, Jews always aligned with hypocrites and sometimes helped them to plot against Muslims and tried to disunite them (Qur’ān 3:72, 99; 5:59).

Imposing war on Muslims

In Medina, Muslims were still under the pressure and threats of the polytheists in a way that during the time the Noble Prophet (s) resided in this city, tens of battles were imposed on him. The Qur’ān reports on numerous animosities and disuniting acts of the polytheists in this regard.

Polytheists’ attack in Uḥud battle and removing liver from the corpse of Ḥamza – the Prophet’s uncle – after his martyrdom, dismembering the bodies of the martyrs of this battle (Ṭabarī, 1940, vol.2: 204), the all-out attack of polytheists with the complicity of Jews and Christians in the Battle of the Trench are some examples of those animosities (Ṭabrisī, n.d., vol.8: 124; Ṭabarī, 1995, vol.2: 462).

Breaching the promise

In cases where polytheists’ had a treaty with the prophet, they breached the

treaty and shed the blood of Muslims. An example of this happened when they breached the Ḥudaybiyya Treaty of Peace. According to historical reports, the Noble Prophet (s) moved to Mecca in 6 AH to perform the rituals of Ḥajj. When the Meccan polytheists found out his destination, they sent a representative to him and signed a treaty of peace with him in Ḥudaybiyya. The two sides agreed to avoid war for ten years. Prophet (s) stayed committed to all articles and conditions of this treaty, but polytheists breached it by attacking a group allied to Muslims. Following this event, Mecca was conquered by Muslims in the year 8 AH (for more information about this, q.v. Ibn Athīr, 1966, vol.2: 200; Ṭabarī, 1995, vol.2: 268; Qurṭabī, 2000, vol.8: 42). Qur'ān mentions the breach of promise by polytheists and the People of the Book in some of its verses, e.g. Qur'ān 2:110, 9:7, and 48:10.

Now that the behavior of the Muslims' enemies is analyzed, we can examine the staged responses to them offered in the Qur'ān to make it clear that despite all animosity and stubbornness of the enemies, the Qur'ān has mentioned war as the last choice.

The stages of response to enemies from the viewpoint of the Qur'ān

The exploration of the qur'ānic verses indicates that in response to the hostile acts of the polytheists, hypocrites, and the People of the Book against Muslims, the Qur'ān asks Muslims to give three types of responses to their enemies. These include recommending Muslims to patience and resistance, inviting them to defensive Jihād, and emphasizing the eradication of oppression.

Recommendation for patience and resistance

Despite all oppositions, stubbornness, and harassments by polytheists, up to the time the Prophet (s) was in Mecca, no verse was revealed for the invitation to Jihād, and all verses of the Meccan era recommend Muslims to show tolerance and patience, in a way that the majority of cases that are considered as the abrogating and abrogated verses come from the verses of this era.

Accordingly, it is asserted that all verses which invite their addressee to peace and reconciliation were revealed in the Meccan era when Muslims did not have considerable armed forces and facilities, and they should be considered as abrogated by the verses in which Muslims were recommended to fighting and active resistance (Zarkishī, 2002, vol.2: 21; Ḥakīm, 1997: 20).

Invitation to defensive Jihād

When Muslims settled in Medina and the opposition to polytheists' harassments and threats was made possible, Muslims were permitted to send

armies to defend against polytheists. This has been reflected in the following verse,

To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged; and verily, God is most powerful for their aid; (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, (for no cause) except that they say, "our Lord is God" (Qur'ān 22:30-40)

Five points can be construed from these two verses:

1. The phrase "permission (to fight)" shows that after many years of being tortured and harassed by polytheists, Muslims expected to be allowed by God or His Prophet to fight back. The historical evidences demonstrate that the issuance of this permission took time, but finally God allowed them to fight back.

2. The phrase "To those against whom war is made" indicates that the fight had started by polytheists, and Muslims have been drawn to war. It is because of this that Muslims were permitted to fight. To put it better, the verse aims at expressing this point that Muslims' fighting has been a defensive war rather than an offensive one. In fact, they are allowed to fight back to defend themselves.

3. With its strong argument, the phrase "because they are wronged" shows that if God has permitted Muslims to defend and fight back, it is because they have been oppressed and the right to self-defense always exists for the oppressed.

4. The clause "(They are) those who have been expelled from their homes" specifies one of the clear oppressions against Muslims to empathize this point that if Muslims are permitted to fight back the polytheists, it is because Muslims have been expelled from their houses without committing any crime. Can any pure conscience and righteous disposition consider the permission to self-defense given to those who have been expelled from their houses to be an act of violence?!

5. The phrase "(for no cause) except that they say, 'our Lord is God'" aims at expressing this fact that the only fault of Muslims was their belief in monotheism. To put it better, they were subjected to those harsh damages only because of their pure beliefs (for more information on the interpretation of this verse, q.v. Ṭūsī, 1993, vol.7: 320; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, n.d., vol.14: 383-384).

This has been presented in another verse with a different diction, "And why should ye not fight in the cause of God and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children, whose cry is: 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors'" (Qur'ān 4:75). This verse refers to the appeals for help by the weak Muslim

men, women, and children who stayed in Mecca after many Muslims were expelled from this city; they continued to be under the harassment and oppression of polytheists. The word “city” in this verse “whose people are oppressors” refers to Mecca. The Qur’ān asks Muslims to fight against polytheists to save feeble Muslims (for more information about the interpretation of this verse, q.v. Qumī, 1984, vol.1: 143; Qumī Mashhadī, 1987, vol.3: 475; Fakhr Rāzī, 2003, vol.10: 181).

Despite the invitation to Jihād, the exploration of the Qur’ānic verses show that God constantly emphasizes the necessity of clarifying the reality of religion to people, and deems it unfavorable to order for the punishment of others or to invite Muslims to conduct offensive fight.

The phrase “until We had sent an apostle” in the verse “nor would We visit with Our Wrath until We had sent an apostle (to give warning)” (Qur’ān 17:15) is an evidence to the impermissibility of punishment without warning. Legal theoreticians have used this verse to prove the legal exemption, and have taken it as evidence to the unfavorableness of punishment without warning (for more information in this regard, q.v. Ṭūsī, 1997, vol.3: 120; Anṣārī, 1999, vol.2: 22-24; Ākhūnd Khurāsānī, n.d.: 339).

The evidence for the second claim – i.e. the unfavorableness of starting a war without clarifying the reality of religion – is the following verse, “If one amongst the Disbelievers ask thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of God; and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge” (Qur’ān 9:6).

According to this verse, if a polytheist asks for hudna (i.e. truce, peace, or temporary reconciliation) during a battle to use the opportunity and get familiar with Islam, in case his request is real and not a trick and plot, Muslims have to stop fighting. It is even more interesting to note that if that polytheist is not convinced by the information given to him by Muslims and their preaching, they should take him sound and safe to his shelter (for more information in this regard q.v. Shahīd Thānī, 1993, vol.2: 345; Qumī Mashhadī, 1987, vol. 1: 380; Zamakhsharī, n.d., vol.1: 235; Ṭabāṭabā’ī, n.d., vol.9: 184-190; Rashīd Riḍā, n.d., vol.10: 140).

On the other hand, in cases when the Qur’ān permits Muslims to fight, it asks them to be fair and just, and if they want to punish polytheists, their response to polytheists’ attack should be at the same level of strength, not more. This stance is most evident in the verse, “If then any one transgresses the prohibition against you, Transgress ye likewise against him. But fear God, and know that God is with those who restrain themselves” (Qur’ān 2:194).

Invitation to fear God at the end of the verse and the emphasis on the

point that God is with the pious show that observing the limits of countering polytheists' attack is a necessary condition for the fear of God and piety. This indicates that in the Qur'ān, invitation to fight and Jihād is always accompanied by observing the divine limits, fear of God, and adherence to moral values.

Based on what has been reported in the historical and narrative resources, when some Muslims were informed on how polytheists had dismembered the ears, nose, and other parts of the martyrs' bodies, they vowed to do the same against polytheists in the possible future battles. In response to this feeling of revenge, the Qur'ān asked Muslims that if they wanted to punish polytheists, their response should be similar and they are only permitted to reciprocate. It even asserted that it is better if they stay patient and do not reciprocate, "And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: But if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient" (Qur'ān 16:126).

It is written in the commentary *Majma' al-bayān* in this regard,

When polytheists in the battle of Uḥud dismembered the martyrs of Uḥud and tore the stomach of Ḥamza and Hind removed his liver and others cut his nose and ears, Muslims said, "If we catch them, we will dismember their live ones, let alone the dead ones." Then this verse was revealed (Ṭabrisi, n.d., vol.6: 211; also q.v. Ṭūsī, 1993, vol.6: 7, 440; Qur'ān 2: 190-193).

Emphasis on the eradication of oppression

In the third stage, the Qur'ān recommends that in case polytheists set out to plot against and oppress Muslims and start a war against them, Muslims should not evade fighting back and they should continue fighting until the oppression is eradicated.

This stance is proved in these verses,

Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have Turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. But if they cease, God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God; but if they cease, Let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression (Qur'ān 2:190-193).

Some points can be extracted from these verses.

1. The phrase “those who fight you” indicates that the divine invitation to fight is only against those who have started a war.
2. The clause “but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors” shows that in line with invitation to fighting, God always emphasizes the importance of observing the moral values and principles, and because of this, He recommends Muslims to observe the limits in their fight with polytheists and avoid transgression.
3. The clause “turn them out from where they have turned you out” is a clear expression of reciprocation. That is to say, it asserts that since polytheists expelled you from your houses, you are permitted to expel them from their houses.
4. The clause “for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter” demonstrates that the reason Muslims are allowed to fight back the polytheists is the latter’s oppression. The Qur’ān stipulates in this verse that the damage caused by oppression is more than murder and slaughtering.
5. The clause “But if they cease, God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful” expresses that if polytheists – despite their oppression and starting of the fight – stop oppression, God will set the grounds for forgiving them. That is to say, Muslims in such conditions should treat them with kindness and stop fighting.
6. The clause “fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression” is again an emphasis on the point that the initial and end limit of fighting with polytheists is their oppression. Accordingly, Muslims’ fight against polytheists should continue up to the time there remains no oppression and when the oppression is over, the fight should immediately stop (for more information about the interpretation of this verse, q.v. Ṭabrisī, n.d., vol.2: 21-22; Ṭabāṭabā’ī, n.d., vol.2: 62-63).

Therefore, the comparison of the verses which have discussed the fight against polytheists can clarify that the invitation to fight has only been done in an atmosphere in which the polytheists have started to harass, torture, expel, oppress, and fight Islam and Muslims.

Thus, there exists no verse in the Qur’ān that orders Muslims to eradicate all religions and their followers and extinguish them. What is expressed in Islam about the manner of treating the followers of divine religions is nothing but peaceful dealing with them. All this shows that Islam has no objection to the social representation and activities of the followers of divine religions if they are not oppressive.

For example, the Qur'ān illustrates the manner of treating this group of non-Muslims in the verse,

God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for God loveth those who are just. God only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong (Qur'ān 60:8-9)

It is stipulated in these two verses that if non-Muslims do not oppress and harass Muslims, interaction based on goodness and justice with them is permissible for Muslims. God's forbidding only regards those non-Muslims who fight Muslims, expel them from their homeland, and cooperate in plotting against them.

Now it should be judged justly that if recommending Muslims to fight back and counter polytheists in such cases means asking for violence and blood shedding? The exploration of suchlike verses reveals that paying attention to the revelation atmosphere can directly influence and improve their analysis.

Conclusion

The discussions presented in this article lead to the extraction of the following results.

1. The revelation atmosphere has a meaning beyond the two titles of "cause of revelation" and "reason of revelation", and is applied to the conditions, contexts, and requirements that have caused the revelation of parts of the Qur'ān including a chapter, a set of verses, or a verse.

2. As the Qur'ān stipulates, its verses were not revealed all at once to the Noble Prophet (s) – just like the Torah and the Bible; rather, they were gradually revealed in line with the prophetic mission. The Qur'ān asserts that the reason for this has been to give heart to the Prophet (s) and to reveal it gradually and slowly to him.

3. Some Qur'ānic verses have been revealed about the various battles that happened during the prophetic mission era. These illustrate divine assistance, self-sacrifices, or Muslims' failure to do their best.

4. One of the objections to and criticisms against Islam in general and against the Qur'ān in particular is that there is violence in its rules and teachings and there are verses in the Qur'ān in which it is ordered to capture, behead, and kill disbelievers and polytheists.

5. This doubt can be expunged through paying attention to those teachings in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth which are full of love, kindness, and ethical values and have been approved by the kind practices of Imāms and also through the exploration of the atmosphere of those verses in which fighting and Jihād against disbelievers have been emphasized.

6. The examination of the behavior of Muslims' enemies shows that after the invitation of people to Islam by the Prophet (s), they selected five ways to treat Muslims. These include ignorant stubbornness against accepting Islam, endless harassment of Muslims, plotting against Muslims, imposing war on Muslims, and breaching their promises.

7. The exploration of the qur'ānic verses indicates that in response to the hostile acts of the polytheists, hypocrites, and the People of the Book against Muslims, the Qur'ān asks Muslims to give three types of responses to their enemies. These include recommending them to have patience and resistance, inviting them to defensive Jihād, and emphasizing the eradication of oppression.

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