



## A Comparative Study of «Aṣḥāb al-Aʿrāf» (Qurʾān 7:46-48) Relying on Relationship of Verses

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7:48).

### ABSTRACT

Various notions have been posited regarding the Aṣḥāb al-Aʿrāf (Fellows of Aʿrāf) (Qurʾān 7: 46-48) in verses 46-48 of Sūra al-Aʿrāf by the interpreters and, disregarding the notions for which no proof has been presented, other ideas can be categorized into four primary sets: the first set introduces the People of Aʿrāf as notable figures such as the prophets and infallible Imāms; the second set presents them as individuals having equal amounts of good and bad deeds; the third set introduces them as men or angels who recognize the Fellows of Heaven and Hell from their faces; and, the fourth set presents the prophet and indigent persons of each tribe as the Fellows of Aʿrāf. This study investigates the notions and proofs of the interpreters regarding the interpretation of the two aforesaid verses and shows how the correct opinion can be extracted according to the relationship of the verses and words in each verse as well as how it can complete the idea of previous interpreters. By paying attention to difference between Fellows of Aʿrāf (Aṣḥāb al-Aʿrāf) and Men of Aʿrāf (Rijāl al-Aʿrāf), it shows that the former include the interceders and the latter are the ones being interceded for.

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## 1. Introduction

In the interpretation of the expressions «on the Heights are men who know them all by their marks» (Qur'ān 7:46) and «the dwellers on the Heights (‘Aṣḥāb al-A‘rāf) call unto men whom they know by their marks» (Qur'ān 7:48) in Sūrat al-A‘rāf, interpreters have proposed scattered and different notions amongst which the interpretation of the People of A‘rāf as infallible Imāms, prophets, His Highness Imām ‘Alī (a), the minions, the fellows of cognizance, the group of people whose good deeds and bad deeds are equal, the group of people who have deeds that can save them from Hell but they enter paradise after everyone else, poor people from Heaven, jurists and scholars, people who went to jihād without their father’s permission, those who can distinguish the people of Hell and Heaven, Ḥamza, ‘Abbās, ‘Alī (a) and J‘afar who know their friends in white and their enemies in black faces, the family of Muḥammad (a) knowing whom and being known by whom will take one into Paradise, the believers among the jinns, disbelievers’ children who have died before reaching the age of performing the religious obligations, the children of the fornicators, and angels who can perceive the reality of the individuals by looking at their face, can be pointed out.

To investigate the set of notions for which proofs have been mentioned, the present study deals with the question that which set of notions is defensible considering the presented proofs? It will also be shown how investigation of the relationship between verses and words would be helpful for an interpreter in his/her interpretation of a verse.

Waladbaygī and Rūhī has explained their ideas about ‘Aṣḥāb al-A‘rāf and Rijāl al-A‘rāf (Rūhī et al., 2018: 5-30; Waladbaygī, 2021: 225-253). Also, about use of investigation of the relationship between verses and words in Qur’ānic interpretation, there are several essays Baroomand et al., 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d).

## 2. Classifying the Interpreters’ Notions

There are discrepancies in the interpretation of the Qur’ān 7:46-49 about the People of A‘rāf:

Between them is a veil. And on the Heights are men who know them all by their marks. And they call unto the dwellers of the Garden: Peace be unto you! They enter it not although they hope (to enter) (46) and when their eyes are turned toward the dwellers of the Fire, they say: Our Lord! Place us not with the wrong-doing folk (47) and the dwellers on the Heights call unto men whom they know by their marks, (saying): What did your multitude and that in which ye took your pride avail you? (48) Are these they of whom ye swore that Allah would not show them mercy? (Unto them it hath been said): Enter the Garden. No fear shall come upon you nor is it ye who will grieve (49).

Many of the interpreters have cited the previous notions or the ideas of the interpreters before them without any criticism and investigation.<sup>1</sup> The other interpreters who have criticized the notions and/or have offered proofs for a given notion can be divided into four sets whose notions will be evaluated below:

### 2.1. Set one: Prophets, infallible Imāms, people with knowledge, theosophists, martyrs and scholars

Based on the ḥadīths presented in this regard, most of the interpreters recognize the People of A‘rāf as being notable figures such as prophets, infallible Imāms, theosophists, martyrs and scholars (Abū Ḥamza Thumālī, 1999:169; ‘Āmilī, 1982, vol. 4: 158; ‘Ayyāshī 1960, vol. 2: 18; Bahrānī 1994, vol. 2: 547; Balāghī 1966, vol. 2: 253; Beyzāwī 1997, vol. 3: 14; Burūjerdī 1988, vol. 2: 409; Dakhīl 2001, 204; Dāvar Panāh 1988, vol. 14: 167; Hāshimī Rafsanjānī, 2008, vol. 6: 14; Ḥaskānī, 1991, vol. 1: 263; Ḥusaynī Hamidanī, 1984, vol. 6: 344; Ḥuwayzī, 1994, vol. 2: 32-36; Ibn Abī Jāmi‘, 1993, vol. 1: 465; Ibn Idrīs, 1989, vol. 1: 319; Istar Ābadī, 1989, 181; Jazāyirī, 2010, vol. 2: 147; Kāshānī, 1990, vol. 1: 394; Kāshifī, n.d. 329; Khafājī, 1996, vol. 4: 286; Kūfī, 1990, 143; Madrasī, 1998, vol. 3: 321; Nahāvandī, 1966, vol. 2: 601; Qāsimī, 1997, vol. 5: 61; Qumī, 1985, vol. 1: 231; Qūnawī, 2001, vol. 8: 388; Riḍāī Iṣfahānī, 2009, vol. 7: 102; Ṣādiqī Tihirānī, 1998, 156; Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīmī, 1985, vol. 4: 74; Sha‘rānī, 2008, vol. 2: 545; Shiybānī, 1993, vol. 2: 337; Shiykh ‘Alavān 1999 vol. 1: 250; Shiykh

1. About 250 exegeses were checked and the ones without any criticism and investigation of this subject were omitted.

Zādiḥ, 1998, vol. 4: 223; Shubbar, 1990, 174; Sulṭān ʿAlī Shāh, 1988, vol. 2: 183; Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 2012, vol. 8: 121–150).

The interpreters of this group have substantiated the text with their most important proofs being focused on verses 48-49 that scornfully address the Fellows of Hell (Qurʾān 7:48-49); these sentences cannot be the state and expressions of the individuals who are in fear and greed for entry to Paradise.

Qumī, Shaybānī, Ibn Idrīs and some other interpreters introduce the People of Aʿrāf as being the infallible Imāms (Baḥrānī 1994, vol. 2: 547; Ḥuwayzī, 1994, vol. 2: 32-36; Ibn Idrīs, 1989, vol. 1: 319; Nahāvandī, 1966, vol. 2: 601; Qumī, 1985: 231; Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīmī, 1985, vol. 4: 74; Shiybānī, 1993, vol. 2: 337; Istar Ābadī, 1989, vol. 1: 181). In justifying this notion, they have relied on a ḥadīth from Imām Jaʿfar Ṣādiq (a) and His Highness Imām ʿAlī (a):

Abū Ḥamza Thumālī quotes Abī Jaʿfar that Ibn al-Kawwāʾ asked **Imām ʿAlī (a)** about «on the Heights are men who know them all by their marks» [Qurʾān 7:46]; his highness answered that: «We are the Fellows of Aʿrāf, for we can realize our assistors by looking at their faces, and we are the Fellows of Aʿrāf because we stand between Heaven and Hell. So, nobody can enter Paradise unless s/he first recognizes us and we recognize him or her and no one enters Hell unless s/he denies us and we deny him or her» (Abū Ḥamza Thumālī 1999:169; ʿAyyāshī 1960, vol. 2: 18; Baḥrānī 1994, vol. 2: 547; Ḥuwayzī, 1994, vol. 2: 32–36; Istar Ābadī, 1989, 181; Kūfī, 1990, 143; Nahāvandī, 1966, vol. 2: 601; Sulṭān ʿAlī Shāh, 1988, vol. 2: 183).

There is also another ḥadīth that realizes Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī (a) as the dispenser of Hell and Heaven:

The Great Messenger of God (a) ordered that «Verily, Imām ʿAlī (a) is the dispenser of Hell and Heaven; he stands between the two and, then, tells the fire ‘This is for you and this is for us’; so, the believers enter Heaven and the disbelievers enter the Fire». (Shiybānī, 1993, vol. 2: 337)

Tustarī, Qushayrī, and Ibn ʿArabī recognize the People of Aʿrāf as the theosophists and the knowledgeable persons who have reached the position of knowing all about the creation and the people and, because of having an insightful light, they can perceive the stances of people and recognize their essence from their faces. (Ibn ʿArabī, 1990, vol. 2:149; Ibn ʿArabī, 1999, vol. 1: 234; Qushayrī, 2000, vol. 1: 536; Rūzbihān Baqlī 2008, vol. 1: 437; Tustarī, 2002: 66)

ʿAllāma believes that some characteristics have been mentioned in these verses for the Fellows of Aʿrāf and that nobody else except those close to God possess these attributes, amongst which the following four can be pointed out. (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 2012, vol. 8: 121–150)

First of all, these individuals reside in a location called Aʿrāf and they are in a position that enables them to understand if the individuals go to Hell or Heaven by looking at their faces. This is surely a lofty rank and position which is specific to them; neither the Fellows of Hell nor the Fellows of Heaven have such a characteristic because the holy Qurʾān states that the Fellows of Hell say, «And they say: What aileth us that we behold not men whom we were wont to count among the wicked?». (Qurʾān 38:62)<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, ʿAllāma believes that in their conversations with the Fellows of Heaven and Hell, the People of Aʿrāf both reproach the Fellows of Hell and salute the Fellows of Heaven while it is known «they speak not, saving him whom the Beneficent alloweth and who speaketh right» (Qurʾān 78:38) that not everyone is allowed to talk on the Judgment Day and only the truthful servants of God can speak.

Thirdly, it is understood based on the style of the next verse that the People of Aʿrāf are in such a lofty position and rank that their salutation to the Fellows of Heaven causes their safety and it is by their command that they are permitted to enter Heaven.

Fourthly, the verses that express the position of these men show no anxiety about them; rather, they order that «so they surely will be haled forth (to the doom) \* Save single-minded slaves of Allah» (Qurʾān 37:127-128) and exclude the honest servants from entanglement and dread. Moreover, this point that their petition to God has been cited and not rejected in the sentence «And when their eyes are turned toward the dwellers of the Fire, they say: Our Lord! Place us not with the wrong-doing

1. Also verses like Qurʾān 41:29; 80:37.

folk.» (Qurʾān 7:47) helps us (as ʿAllāma believes) conceive that the People of Aʿrāf are allowed to say whatever they want and their petitions and entreaties to God are all granted.

This notion's opponents who are largely in the second set posit Qurʾān 7:46, i.e., «They enter it not although they hope (to enter)» as their proof for the rejection of this notion and remind us that the People of Aʿrāf are yet to enter Heaven and they are still longing entry thereto, so their position is not equal to that of the infallible Imāms and the righteous persons and scholars; hence, the notion is refuted.

Some interpreters have answered the criticism of the first set's notion in two ways. Ibn ʿĀdil and Fakhr Rāzī (Fakhr Rāzī 1999, vol. 14: 249; Ibn ʿĀdil, 1998, vol. 9: 126) believe that the reason for «They enter it not» (Qurʾān 7:46) or, as put by some interpreters, the reason for their being the last group entering Heaven, can be this point that they have been busy recognizing and determining the Fellows of Heaven and the Fellows of Hell till the last moment on a high ground named Aʿrāf. Furthermore, to explain «although they hope (to enter)» (Qurʾān 7:46), they state that this longing is a sure greediness such as the longing mentioned about His Highness Ibrāhīm (a) in the verse «And Who, I ardently hope, will forgive me my sin on the Day of Judgment». (Qurʾān 26:82)

In defending the notion presented by the first set, ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī uses the following words to answer to the criticism thereto: the expression «They enter it not although they hope (to enter)» (Qurʾān 7:46) describes the state of the Fellows of Heaven, not the Fellows of Aʿrāf (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 2012, vol. 8: 129). Besides, Faḍl Allāh has also stated this same notion. (Faḍl Allāh 1998, vol. 10: 132)

Meanwhile expressing ʿAllāma's notion, Ḥusaynī Hamidanī relies on some other verses to clarify the meaning of the Fellows/Men/People of Aʿrāf (Ḥusaynī Hamidanī, 1984, 343), including «Men whom neither merchandise nor sale beguileth from remembrance of Allah and constancy in prayer and paying to the poor their due; who fear a day when hearts and eyeballs will be overturned» (Qurʾān 24:37) and verse «Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind...». (Qurʾān 2:143)

**Investigation:** This set of notions is the sum of the ideas by interpreters who realize the People of Aʿrāf (consisting of Fellows of Aʿrāf or Men of Aʿrāf, which is not clarified and separated in the interpretations) as being notable figures such as prophets, infallible Imāms, fellows of cognizance, martyrs and scholars. In short, this group validates ḥadīths and verses 48 and 49 and recognize the People of Aʿrāf as notables that have insights about the states of the creation and people, and present others as described in the verse «whom they know by their marks» (Qurʾān 7:48) and scornfully address the Fellows of Hell as stated in verses 48 and 49. The investigation of ʿAllāma's proofs for defending this notion indicates that these reasons can be revised as follows.

ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī's first reason, which states that these men are in a position that enables them to figure out whether an individual is a Fellow of Heaven or a Fellow of Hell, is rejected according to the verses that have described the appearances of the believers and disbelievers; amongst these verses are: «On the Day when (some) faces will be whitened and (some) faces will be blackened» (Qurʾān 3:106) and: «On that day faces will be bright as dawn \* Laughing, rejoicing at good news; \* And other faces, on that day, with dust upon them, \* Veiled in darkness, \* Those are the disbelievers, the wicked». (Qurʾān 80:38-42)

ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī's second reason and substantiation on the verses that demonstrate that not everyone is allowed to talk on the Judgment Day and only the truthful servants of God can speak is rejected according to the verses that show the discussion between the Fellows of Heaven and the Fellows of Hell: «And the dwellers of the Garden cry unto the dwellers of the Fire: We have found that which our Lord promised us (to be) the Truth. Have ye (too) found that which your Lord promised the Truth? They say: Yea, verily. And a crier in between them crieth: The curse of Allah is on evil-doers». (Qurʾān 7:44)

In rejecting his third proof that the People of Aʿrāf are in such a lofty position that their salutation to the Fellows of Heaven causes their safety and that they can enter Heaven by their command, it has to be stated that there is no evidence in this regard in this verse or the other verses indicating that the reason for safety and entry into paradise is the salutation by the People of Aʿrāf and it is even in contradiction with some verses, including: «And it is cried unto them: This is the Garden. Ye inherit it for what ye used to do» (Qurʾān 7:43), which realizes the entry to Heaven as the outcome of one's deeds.

As for ʿAllāma's fourth proof that the petitions by the People of Aʿrāf are granted and this is indicative of their lofty position, it has to be stated that the acceptance of the petitions by them, i.e., the People of Aʿrāf or the individuals in need of intercession, can be actualized by the intercession of the Fellows of Aʿrāf (the interceders) and this is not necessarily reflective of the high position and rank of the Men of Aʿrāf.

In addition, in responding to this set's opponents who have substantiated on the expression «They enter it not although they hope (to enter)» (Qurʾān 7:46) and believe that this rank is not consistent with that of the prophets, infallible Imāms, theosophists, and righteous persons, the answer given by Fakhr Rāzī is rejected considering the recognition of the reality of the Fellows of Heaven and Hell from their countenances as explicated in the Qurʾān 3:106. ʿAllāma's notion indicating that this is the state of the Fellows of Heaven is not justifiable and he himself has fallen short of presenting a proof. In this verse, the main topic is the Fellows of Aʿrāf. If they are the Fellows of Heaven and in case that their deeds are as good as those of them, why have they not yet entered Heaven and spend time in fear and longing?

## 2.2. Second set: The group whose good and bad deeds are equal

This set of interpreters emphasize some ḥadīths and recognize the People of Aʿrāf as the group of individuals who reside a distance from paradise and Hell for the equality of their good and bad deeds (Abū Zahriḥ, n.d., vol. 6: 2847; Ālighāḍī 2004, vol. 1: 357; Ālūsī, 1994, vol. 4: 363; Baqāī 2006, vol. 3: 36; Ḥaqqī Burūsavī, n.d., vol. 3: 166; Huvārī, 2005, vol. 2: 20; Ibn ʿJibih 1998, vol. 2: 218; Ibn Juwzī, 2001: 111; Jazāyirī, 1995, vol. 2: 175; Jazāyirī, 2010, vol. 2: 147; Karamī, 1982, vol. 3: 295; Khaṭīb, 2003, vol. 4: 404; Khāzan, 1994, vol. 2: 202; Khusrawānī, 2012, vol. 3: 242; Marāghī, n.d., vol. 8: 158; Nahāvandī, 1966, vol. 2: 601; Qūnawī, 2001, vol. 8: 388; Qutb, 2004, vol. 3: 1293; Rasʿanī, 2008, vol. 2: 134; Ridā, 1993, vol. 8: 430; Ṣābūnī, 2000, vol. 1: 415; Shaʿrāvī 1991, vol. 7: 4149; Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 2: 106; Zuḥaylī, 1991, vol. 8: 212). The following are but some of these ḥadīths:

Ṭayyār sasy, «I asked ʿAbī ʿAbd Allāh (a), 'who are the Fellows of Aʿrāf?' His Highness stated that 'those whose good and bad deeds are equal; so, if they enter the Heaven, it is for the mercifulness of God and if they are chastised, they are not treated wrongfully'». (Abū Ḥayyān, 1987, vol. 1: 804; ʿAyyāshī 1960, vol. 2: 18; Ibn ʿArafī 2008, vol. 2: 227; Ibn Jezī, 1995, vol. 1: 289; Maḥillī, 1995: 159; Wāḥidī, 1994, vol. 1: 395)

Ibn ʿĀdil and Fakhr Rāzī defend this notion in the following words: if the opponents state based on the verse 43 of Sūrat al-Aʿrāf «And it is cried unto them: This is the Garden. Ye inherit it for what ye used to do» (Qurʾān 7:43). that paradise can be won only by the doing good deeds and not solely by the mercifulness of God, it can be stated in response that this verse addresses a certain group of people and it is not necessary for all the individuals to enter Heaven in this way as a result of God's benevolence and mercifulness. Additionally, if it is stated that the presence of this set on Aʿrāf is due to their lofty rank and veneration of their position, it has to be stated that it is not certain for us. (Fakhr Rāzī 1999, vol. 14: 247–251; Ibn ʿĀdil, 1998, vol. 9: 124)

ʿAllāma realizes the wronged individuals as examples of this Ḥadīth and, after discussing how it is possible for an individual to have equal good and bad deeds, he proposes that this interpretation is not in accordance with the appearance of the verses on Aʿrāf and, in defending the notions of the first set, he mentions four proofs, the explanations of which were given above.

**Investigation:** The interpreters of this set emphasize the expression «They enter it not although they hope (to enter)» (Qurʾān 7:46) and some ḥadīths, and believe that the People of Aʿrāf deserve neither Hell nor Heaven for the equality of their good and bad deeds. The opponents substantiate on the expression «who know them all by their marks» (Qurʾān 7:46) and mention the scornful addressing of the Fellows of Hell by the People of Aʿrāf as mentioned in verses 48 and 49. They believe that the People of Aʿrāf cannot be individuals awaiting intercession, whereas they themselves scornfully speak with the Fellows of Hell. In rejecting this set's notions and defending the first set's ideas, ʿAllāma introduces four properties for the Fellows of Aʿrāf and the investigation of these features indicated that they cannot be utilized for proving the first set's notions and/or rejecting the second set's ideas.

### **2.3. The third set: The group that recognizes the Fellows of Heaven and Fellows of Hell by looking at their faces**

This set's interpreters recognize the People of A'raf as the group who recognize the Fellows of Hell and the Fellows of Heaven by looking at their visages (Dīnūrī 2003, 262; Ibn Abī Hātam, 1998, 1483; Kāshānī n.d., 34; Mughnīyeh, 2003, 332; Quṭb, 2004, 1293; Shubbar, 1987, 367). In justifying this notion, certain verses from the holy Qur'ān have been employed, such as the verse 106 of Sūrat al-Āli 'imrān: «On the Day when (some) faces will be whitened and (some) faces will be blackened» (Qur'ān 3:106) and verses 38-42 of Sūrat al-'abas: «On that day faces will be bright as dawn \* Laughing, rejoicing at good news; \* And other faces, on that day, with dust upon them, \* Veiled in darkness, \* Those are the disbelievers, the wicked». (Qur'ān 80:38-42)

Some of the interpreters have asserted ideas about these individuals' being either human, jinn, or angel, but no robust proof has been offered for them being either angel or jinn.

**Investigation:** This point that the People of A'raf are individuals who recognize the Fellows of Heaven and Hell by looking at their faces has been explicitly stated in the verse but this vague notion does not reduce the questions raised about the first and second sets' notions, and the proposed issues still persist.

### **2.4. Fourth set: Prophets accompanying the weak of their tribes**

This set of interpreters (Ashkūrī 1995, vol. 2: 36; Fayḍ Kāshānī 1994, vol. 2: 198–202; Fayḍ Kāshānī 1997, vol. 1: 373; Ibn Idrīs, 1989, vol. 1: 319; Khusrawānī, 2012, vol. 3: 242; Makārim Shīrazī, 1939, vol. 6: 191; Nahāvandī, 1966, vol. 2: 601; Qarā'tī, 2010, vol. 3: 70; Qumī, 1985, vol. 1: 231; Sayyid Karīmī Ḥusaynī, 2004: 156; Ṭabrisī, 1992, vol. 1: 438; Ṭabrisī, 1994, vol. 4: 651; Thaqaṭī Tihrahānī, 2020, vol. 2: 428; Zubaydī, 2007, vol. 2: 351) have emphasized this narration from Imām Ṣādiq (a):

Abū 'Abd Allāh Ja'far b. Muḥammad (a) states that «A'raf are the sandy hills between Heaven and Hell and every prophet and every prophet's successor stand thereon at the side of the sinners .... The individuals with good deeds are guided to paradise; thus, the caliph tells the sinners who have stood at his side to look at their good brothers who have been guided to Heaven and the sinners salute them. It is there that God orders 'And they call unto the dwellers of the Garden: Peace be unto you!' [Qur'ān 7:46] (Ṭabrisī 1994, 4:653).

In fact, this group has somewhat resolved the discrepancy between the first and second set's notions and, as stated by Fayḍ Kāshānī in his interpretations, believe that it is not possible to sum up these two set's notions. So, this group believes that:

There is a hill between Heaven and Hell and every prophet and his caliph stands with the sinners of their time thereon in the same way that an army commander stands along with the weak of his army and, in this state, the individuals with good deeds are guided towards Heaven and the prophet or the caliph orders the sinners in his periphery to «see how your brothers with good deeds preempt others in going to paradise» and the sinners salute them while longing to enter paradise, and they will not enter it unless the prophet or the Imām intercedes; these sinners' attention is again directed towards the Fellows of Hell and say, «O God do not gather us around with the wrongdoers, the kāfirs, in one place and do not send us to the Fire». (Khusrawānī, 2012, vol. 3: 242)

**Investigation:** The interpreters of this set's notions are in the minority in contrast to those of the other sets'; however, considering the fact that the two groups gather on the top of A'raf Hill, the fourth set's interpreters have been largely able to resolve the discrepancies between the interpreters of the first and the second sets' notions by attributing expressions in verses 48 to 49, such as «whom they know by their marks» (Qur'ān 7:48), to the prophets and interceders of the nation and the expression «They enter it not although they hope (to enter)» (Qur'ān 7:46) to the weak of the nation as well as the demanders of intercession. Although this set of interpreters have somewhat resolved the differences by the assistance of this ḥadīth, the expression's interpretation is not completely clear and, considering the relationship between the verses and expressions existent in the verse, this meaning can be proved more exactly and only by substantiating on the holy Qur'ān's verses.

### 3. Completing the interpretation of the Qurʾān 7:46-48 according to the relationship between verses and words

The thing that has been neglected by the interpreters is the two expressions about the Men of Aʿrāf (Rijāl al-Aʿrāf) in verse 46 and the Fellows of Aʿrāf (ʿAṣḥāb al-Aʿrāf) in verse 48. (Qurʾān 7:46-49)

It has to be explained that the main issue in verse 44 is there is a conversation between the Fellows of Heaven and the Fellows of Hell as well as a discussion about the actualization of God's promises «And the dwellers of the Garden cry unto the dwellers of the Fire: We have found that which our Lord promised us (to be) the Truth. Have ye (too) found that which your Lord promised the Truth? They say: Yea, verily. And a crier in between them crieth: The curse of Allah is on evil-doers» (Qurʾān 7:44), there is a veil and curtain between these two groups, «Between them is a veil» (Qurʾān 7:46), and they (the People of Aʿrāf) are standing on a high ground named Aʿrāf and, according to verses like «On the Day when (some) faces will be whitened and (some) faces will be blackened» (Qurʾān 3:106), what they have done can be vividly understood from their faces, «And on the Heights are men (Men of Aʿrāf / Rijāl al-Aʿrāf) who know them all by their marks» (Qurʾān 7:46). That is, the Men of Aʿrāf (Rijāl al-Aʿrāf) (who have possibly doing no deed that would indicate they deserve Paradise and no behavior making them deserve Hell) who salute the Fellows of Heaven while they themselves have neither entered paradise nor have they hope in it, «And they call unto the dwellers of the Garden: Peace be unto you! They enter it not although they hope (to enter).» (Qurʾān 7:46) (so salute is not from Fellows of Aʿrāf). Again, in verse 47, the same Men of Aʿrāf (Rijāl al-Aʿrāf), by seeing Fellows of Hell, ask God not to place them amongst the wrongdoers, «And when their eyes are turned toward the dwellers of the Fire, they say: Our Lord! Place us not with the wrong-doing folk». (Qurʾān 7:47)

After this stage, we have the words about the Fellows of Aʿrāf in verses 48 and 49 and they reprimand the Fellows of Hell who can be recognized from their faces, «And the dwellers on the Heights (Fellows of Aʿrāf / ʿAṣḥāb al-Aʿrāf) call unto men (Men of Aʿrāf / Rijāl al-Aʿrāf) whom they know by their marks, (saying): What did your multitude and that in which ye took your pride avail you?» (Qurʾān 7:48). Next, in verse 49, the Fellows of Aʿrāf (ʿAṣḥāb al-Aʿrāf) intercede between God and the Men of Aʿrāf (Rijāl al-Aʿrāf) in front of the Fellows of Hell who had sworn that there is no such a thing as God's mercy, «Are these they of whom ye swore that Allah would not show them mercy?» (Qurʾān 7:49) and this is the end of the fearfulness and longing for the Men of Aʿrāf (Rijāl al-Aʿrāf), «Enter the Garden. No fear shall come upon you nor is it ye who will grieve». (Qurʾān 7:49)

Interestingly, the interpreters of the first set of the notions have substantiated their proofs on a ḥadīth from Imām Jaʿfar Ṣādiq (a) and His Highness Imām ʿAlī (a) who order that «... Naḥnu ʿAṣḥāb al-Aʿrāf Nūqifu Bayn al-Jannah va al-Nār» but his Highness Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī (a) does not use the People of Aʿrāf or the Men of Aʿrāf (Rijāl al-Aʿrāf), rather he introduces the infallible Imāms as the Fellows of Aʿrāf. (ʿAṣḥāb al-Aʿrāf)

Therefore, in an investigation of the relationship between the chapter's verses and the relationship between the words of each verse<sup>1</sup> – without any need for the ḥadīths that need to be evaluated – it can be shown that the Men of Aʿrāf and the Fellows of Aʿrāf who have been introduced as one group of individuals by the interpreters are different and it is in this way that the interpreters' notions can be completed and their discrepancies can be overcome.

### 4. Conclusion

1. In interpreting the Qurʾān 7:46-48 and identifying the People of Aʿrāf, some discrepancies amongst the interpreters are observed. The notions can be categorized into four sets: the first set realizes the People of Aʿrāf as the elders and the immaculate infallible Imāms and base their

1. The relation of verses and coherence of Qurʾān are explained in works such as

- Salwa, M., & S. El-Awa (2006), *Textual Relations in the Qurʾān, Relevance, Coherence and Structure*. London, Routledge, 2006
- Ṣādiqī, B. (2011), «The chronology of the Qurʾān: A stylometric research program». *Arabica*, no. 58, 210–299.
- Robinson, N. (2001), «Hands outstretched: Towards a re-reading of Sūrat al-Māʿida». *Journal of Qurʾānic Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1-19.
- Smith, D. E. (2001), «The structure of al-Baqarah». *The Muslim World*, vol. 91, no. 1-2, 121-136.
- Gheitury, A. (2015), «God and the present voice: An investigation into the dialogical nature of the Qurʾān». *Journal of Shiʿa Islamic Studies*, vol. 8, no.1, 289–306.

proofs on verses 48-49 as well as several ḥadīths. The second set emphasizes the expression «They enter it not although they hope (to enter)» (Qur'ān 7:46) as well as several ḥadīths to oppose the first set's notions and recognize the People of A'raf as the individuals with equal good and bad deeds. The third set of the interpreters who prefer not to enter the discussions posed by the first and second sets only believe that the People of A'raf are the group of individuals who recognize the Fellows of Hell and Heaven by looking at their faces. Finally, the fourth set relies on one ḥadīth and recognize the People of A'raf as the prophets of every tribe along with the weakest of them.

2. The investigation of the relationship between the verses as well as the words in the Qur'ān 7:46-49 shows that the issue that has been neglected by the interpreters and that has caused discrepancies among their notions is considering Fellows of A'raf ('Aṣḥāb al-A'raf) and Men of A'raf (Rijāl al-A'raf) as just one group (the People of A'raf). By separating these two groups, it can be stated that the expression «whom they know by their marks» (Qur'ān 7:48) and verses 48 and 49 pertain to the Fellows of A'raf ('Aṣḥāb al-A'raf) and the expression «They enter it not although they hope (to enter)» (Qur'ān 7:46) and verse 47 of the sūra are pertinent to the Men of A'raf (Rijāl al-A'raf). This way, the Fellows of A'raf ('Aṣḥāb al-A'raf) who have been mentioned in the words of his highness Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (a), i.e., «we are the Fellows of A'raf and we stand between Heaven and Hell,» include the interceders, and the Men of A'raf (Rijāl al-A'raf) are the ones being interceded for.
3. The investigation of the relationship between the sūra's verses in regard to the areas of discrepancy can assist the interpreters in rejecting the incorrect notions and proving the correct notions or supplementing the prior notions.



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