

## Analysis and Critique of Orientalists' Approach to the Structure of Qur'anic Stories

تحلیل و نقد رویکرد خاورشناسان به ساختار قصه‌های قرآن

Received: 14/02/2019

Accepted: 03/02/2020

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### Abstract

*One of the most important documents of orientalists to prove the non-revelatory origin of the Qur'an is the misconception of the difference between the structure of the Qur'anic stories and the Testaments'; the view of these researchers have been analyzed on three axes of "different narrative expression in Makkī and Madanī surahs", "repetition of stories", "ambiguity and incoherence of stories". Important factors such as the dominance of historical and literary approach to the content of Qur'anic stories, neglect of the single divine origin of monotheistic religions, and the perception of revelation as the personal experience of the Prophet (PBUH) have led to mention doubts about the structure of Qur'anic stories. This article criticizes and analyzes the doubts of orientalists in this field with intra-religious citations (Qur'an, commentary, dictionaries, etc.) and extra-religious citations (Testaments, opinions of Orientalists and historical evidence).*

چکیده

یکی از مهم‌ترین مستندات خاورشناسان برای اثبات غیروحیانی و بشری بودن قرآن، شبهه تفاوت ساختار قصه‌های قرآن با عهدین است؛ دیدگاه این محققان پیرامون سه محور «بیان روایی متفاوت در سور مکی و مدنی»، «تکرار داستان‌ها»، «ابهام و عدم انسجام داستان‌ها» تحلیل شده است. عوامل مهمی چون، غلبه رویکرد تاریخی و ادبی نسبت به محتوای داستان‌های قرآن، غفلت از منشأ واحد الهی ادیان توحیدی، تلقی وحی به‌مثابه تجربه شخصی پیامبر(ص) منجر به طرح شبهاتی در حوزه ساختار داستان‌های قرآن شده است. در این مقاله با استنادات درون دینی (اعم از قرآن، تفسیر، کتب لغت و...) و برون دینی (عهدین، آراء خاورشناسان و داده‌های تاریخی) به نقد و تحلیل شبهات خاورشناسان در این حوزه پرداخته شده است.

**Keywords:** Stories, Qur'an, Structure,

Orientalists, Analysis, Criticism

**کلمات کلیدی:** قصص، قرآن، ساختار، خاورشناسان،

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## Introduction

The similarity of the themes of some verses of the Qur'an with the Testament and extra-Testament contents had attracted the attention of the thinkers of the people of the Book from the very first centuries. Hence, the claim that the Qur'an is influenced by Testaments is one of the recurring themes that have been written on the Qur'an from the beginning until now. In his famous work on heresies, Johanne Damascius (749-676 AD) called speech 101 "Ismaili heresy" and said that the Prophet organized his sect by accessing the New and Old Testaments and with the aid of an Aryan monk. Abdul Masih Kennedy in the third century AH to prove the invalidity of the Qur'an considered it influenced by a Christian monk named Sergius. This claim was later repeated by Petrus the Great (1092-1156 AD), William, Ricoldo, Nicholas, and Postel. Even after the beginning of the scientific approach to the Qur'an and the establishment of the field of Islamic studies in Western universities, this claim has not been disappeared yet.

The field of Orientalists' research to prove the influence of the teachings of Christianity and Judaism on the Qur'an mostly focuses on the stories of the Qur'an, which occupy a large part of the Qur'anic content and have many similarities with the Old Testament stories in the Bible. So far, several articles and writings have been written in the field of Qur'anic stories and some works have compared the stories of the Qur'an and the Testaments, but one that specifically examines and critiques the approach of orientalists to the structure of Qur'anic stories has not been compiled yet. This paper examines and analyzes the views of Orientalists on the structure of Qur'anic stories.

## 1. Orientalists' approach to the structure of Quranic stories

The structure of Qur'anic stories, which is mostly related to the physical

structure and characteristics of Qur'anic stories, in addition to the content of the stories, has also been seriously discussed by orientalists.

Orientalists believe that not only the content of the Qur'anic stories is influenced by the Testaments, but even the structure of these stories is completely different from the structure of the stories in the Testaments. The views and opinions of these scholars, which are expressed sporadically and implicitly during Qur'anic or fictional subjects, are analyzed and studied in three general axes of different narrative expression in Makkī and Madanī surahs, repetition and correspondence, ambiguity and incoherence of stories.

### 1-1. Different narrative expression in Makkī and Madanī surahs

Orientalists believe that the Surahs of the late Makkī period, as well as the Madanī surahs show that the readers of the Qur'an were accurately aware of the large number of stories in the Qur'an, which is quite obvious (CF. Neuwirth, 2001a: 2/245).

By examining these stories, they have expressed characteristics for each of which, in addition to being different from each other, they have special, distinctive and unique characteristics that will be analyzed in this section.

### 1-2. Characteristics of stories in Makkī surahs

In the story sections of Makkī surahs, three characteristic features can be seen:

1. The structure of the stories in the surah: In the Makkī surahs, the stories are scattered in several verses and surahs that have different characteristics in each surah in relation to each other:

- The story is the main structure of the surah, such as the story of the elephant, Noah, Joseph, stories (including the story of Moses, Aaron, Haman, Qarun).

- The story has a structure independent of the surah. In this section, some parts of the story seem to be essentially independent units that can be separated from their current position in the surah, such as the surah "Fajr" which refers to the story of 'Ād, Iram, Thamud and Pharaoh. (CF. Gilliot, 2001: 3/518).

- Combined stories are the dominant structure of the surah; this means that the surah is composed entirely of several stories or is formed around a story axis, such as Surah Tā Hā (or Surah Musa), which contains two stories about Moses 7 and Adam 7 (Ibid: 519-521).

- The story is an important part of the surah, even if these parts of the story do not include the main part of the surah; like Surah Dhāriyāt about Abraham and his guests, Moses, Pharaoh, 'Ād, Thamud and Noah.

- In the surah, there is a passing reference to the story, which in some surahs is even limited to a few verses, such as the surah of Hāqqah and Isrā', and some references in the surah of Burūj, Najm and Dukhān (Ibid: 521).

- In some surahs, only cataloged references have been made to fictional characters, such as: Qāf, Šād, Fajr (Ibid: 522).

**2. The focus of the surahs:** The stories in the Makkī Qur'an are formed with the focus on the torment, the prophets of Testament and the history of the previous nations:

- Torment Stories: Orientalists, by examining the content of the stories in Makkī and Madanī sections, believe that most of the stories focusing on divine punishment have taken up more space in the Makkī surahs than the Madanī surahs. (Ibid).

- Prophets of Testament: According to Neuwirth, prominent figures of Testament such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and a number of famous saints have taken a large proportion of

Qur'anic stories. This is confirmed by the phrase "and mention in the book". According to this orientalist, the Qur'an, which introduces itself as an immutable and comprehensive book, in its references to the Bible, is in fact referring to a specific collection of the stories that already existed in a fixed form, and that God sent them in separate sections and, with finesse, organized them into more detailed narrations (CF. Neuwirth, 2001a: 2/245).

In dividing the Makkī surahs of the Qur'an into two parts before and after interregnum, Lammens also believes that the themes and content of the Makkī surahs after the interregnum are related to the biblical Myths, which stem from the mental states and inner revolution of the Holy Prophet at the beginning of his mission, which led to a conflict with the polytheists of Mecca; According to Lammens, in this section, topics such as the history of the past prophets with their nations, the educational life of the prophets and the fate of the deniers are abundant (CF. Lammens, 1943: 60).

- The history of the previous nations: From an external point of view, the Qur'anic history is encoded in the pattern of the previous nations, with the approach that history is the news of the prophets who were sent among their tribes with the aim of inviting them to faith. But in this way, they did not succeed. From this perspective, the Qur'an has replaced the position of the apostles with the coherent pre-Islamic Arabic myths that were the determinant of that culture; the importance of the story of the prophets in their patience and obedience lies in inviting people to accept divine guidance, and every nation is protected from divine punishment by warning. From this point of view, the new Islamic society with the centrality of the Qur'an, which was called a

society with a new cultural system, was able to choose its new cultural system from many of the contents of the era of ignorance centered on mythology (CF. Neuwirth, 2001a: 2/245).

**3.** The originality of the stories: In one view, dreams and revelations are the predominant aspect of revelation in the first stage of Muhammad's Risālat. Therefore, the narrative format in Makkī surahs is derived from revelations and dreams and cannot be a purely historical fact (Ibid). The linguistic feature of these stories is very close to the expression of pre-Islamic priests, which itself is evidence of borrowing and distortion of stories, and destroys its originality of revelatory. (Neuwirth, 2014: 8).

- Characteristics of the stories in Madanī surahs: The content of the stories in Madanī surahs, according to the different conditions of the city of Medina compared to Mecca, is accompanied by different characteristics:

**A.** In Madanī surahs, only a few short stories or a few verses, often referring to stories of torment and relatively short stories expressing the relationship between the believer and the infidel in Medina, are told as a reflection of the new position of Muhammad as military commander in the story of ʿĀlūt and Dāvūd.

**B.** The themes of the Madanī surahs in the basic part, which is the monotheistic rites, are similar to parts of the holy texts (CF. Neuwirth, 2001b: 3/481-482).

Orientalists cite two important reasons for the difference in Qur'anic and fictional material in Makkī and Madanī surahs: one is the changed religious status and the other is the acceptance of Muhammad's authority in

Medina over Mecca, which leads to Prophet Muhammad's focus on the legal issues involved in running a city<sup>1</sup>. That is why practical issues form a major part of the later phase of Prophet Muhammad's mission (CF. Neuwirth, 2001a: 2/245).

### 1-3. Repetition and correspondence

In the structure of the stories of the Qur'an, the repetition throughout the Bible is a tangible and visible thing that has attracted the attention of orientalist. From the perspective of these researchers, the phenomenon of repetition is considered a kind of shortcoming that can be seen as a witness to the gradual emergence of a society and thus to the process of establishing a sacred text; variety of repetitions refers to the the age of constantly changing stories, continuous training of listeners and development of moral values that are evident in the text (CF. Neuwirth, 2001a: 2/245).

This repetition is seen in two forms of phrases and stories, each of which in turn has distinct features:

Repetition of the phrase: There are sections in the verses of the Qur'an that have been repeated many times, and among these can be: introductory phrases, preferences (such as Surah Ar-Rahmān: "So which of the blessings of your Lord do you deny?" Referring to the repeated phrase at the end of verses

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1. This reason exactly refers to one of the characteristics of Madanī surahs: expressing the civil, judicial, social, state laws, and the war and peace laws are considered the most important characteristics of Madanī verses.



and orientalists have considered the reason to be compatible with the oral nature of the Qur'an and as a result of its transformation<sup>1</sup>.

These characteristics in the Qur'an are in harmony with the Psalms, which is very similar to the Qur'an in terms of features, stylistic and thematic forms. The repetition of the phrase has led to a special kind of omission in which the short words repeatedly express the theme in the verse or something new happens in the course of the text. These words that are called "Sign of phrases" are in a list format as follows:

1. "Wa Idh<sup>2</sup>" is the most frequent sign, which is often followed by the past tense, which implies saying. This fact shows the importance of expressing the phrase on the events themselves in the Qur'an.

2. "Alam Tara<sup>3</sup>" (Didn't you see?), which is often used in hymn-like descriptions of prayer.

3. "Hal Atāka<sup>4</sup>" (Has the news, the story ... reached you?),

4. "Kadhdhabat<sup>5</sup>" which is repeated more in the stories of torment.

1. Transformation means changes occurred in the content of verses due to oral quotation and late compliment of Qur'an.

٢. وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰئِكَةِ ... وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ... [كهف/١٦ و ٥٠ و ٦٠]

٣. أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ [فيل/٧].

٤. هَلْ أَتٰنَكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ [بروج/١٧]

وَهَلْ أَتٰنَكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى [طه/٩]

هَلْ أَتٰنَكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرٰهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ [ذاريات/٢٤]

٥. كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَيْهَا [شمس/١٧].

5. The first form of the plural verb in the sermons of God: "Surely we have sent you<sup>6</sup>", "Certainly we have sent you<sup>7</sup>", "When we have sent you<sup>8</sup>"

6. Imperative verbs based on instruction such as: "Recite<sup>9</sup>", "Remember<sup>10</sup>", "Cite an example<sup>11</sup>" and...

7. Special phrases in the form of interrogative sentences with the theme of learning lessons: "Is there anyone willing to receive admonition?<sup>12</sup>" (CF. Gilliot, Ibid, Narratives: 522-523)

- Repetition of the story: The stories are repeated throughout the Qur'an with an effective feature in Makkī surahs in long, medium and short sections or in a concise and pointed format (Ibid). These stories have several characteristic features in which the chronological framework (i.e. the historical sequence and the order of the stories in the order of occurrence in different periods) have been omitted in the pre-Qur'anic historical events, the Qur'anic narrations are constantly repeated, and these fictional events in a repetitive format are arranged in clusters that emphasize the same message.

History in the Qur'an is suddenly changed and a new pattern is adopted, that is, the transfer of the focus of discussion from the Arab deserts to the realm of the apostles belonging to the People of the Book, who form a successive chain of prophets who, considering their activities together, in addition to constructing a scenario

٦. وَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ [مؤمنون/٢٣].

٧. إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ رَسُولًا شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ [مزمل/١٥].

٨. إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا [يس/١٤].

٩. وَآتٰنَا عَلَيْهِمُ نَبَأَ إِبْرٰهِيمَ [شعراء/٦٩].

١٠. وَادْكُرْ عِبْدَنَا دَاوُدَ... [ص/١٧].

١١. وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلًا أَصْحَابِ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ. [يس/١٣٩].

١٢. وَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْءَانَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدْكِرٍ [قمر/١٧].

consisting of historical episodes, they reveal a tendency toward chronology. The activity of these messengers (prophets) provides a framework for the behavior of the Prophet (PBUH) and his Ummah in special times of crisis and their understanding of their destiny, which leads to the modeling of past experiences to understand the present.

According to Neuwirth, the repetition of the historical events of the story of the prophets (which, according to the researcher, is taken from the holy text) has a very important consequence that should not be overlooked, that the Qur'an is completely taken from the Bible. (CF. Neuwirth, 2001b: 483)

## 2. Ambiguity and incoherence of stories

Orientalists have concluded from the scattering and repetition of the stories of the prophets throughout the Qur'an, the discontinuity and incoherence of the stories of the Qur'an; the Qur'an considers the existence of such a feature to be the revelation of the origin of the Qur'an and the worthlessness of the contents of the Bible (Ibid: 477), and since the stories of the Qur'an are devoid of mentioning the details and leafages of the story, they were described ambiguous and incoherent.

According to these scholars, the scattering of the holy text of Muslims, or in other words, the incoherence of stories in the Qur'an, has been due to their instructive nature and themes, so they do not consider these narrations as stories, but introduce the moral and instructive points of the Qur'an. (CF. Gilliot, Ibid, Narratives: 525).

In these stories, not only a coherent and uniform picture of the prophets is not presented, but even their stories are not narrated in a suitable and continuous time

frame in order to show the development of their characters, while these characters (apostles and Prophets) because they are cross-sectionally and sporadically present in completely different contexts, cannot appear as an evolved personality to appear in the form of a hero. (CF. Neuwirth, 2001b: 481)

There are several reasons for the ambiguity of historical stories and events in the Qur'an:

**First:** The stories related to historical events in the Qur'an are told in general and without any details and just explains the essence of the story without any detail, among which we can mention several cases:

- In discussing the story of Adam and teaching names to Adam, it is not mentioned how God taught Adam all the letters and what God offered to the angels is not explicitly mentioned. (CF. Schock, 2001: 1/31)

- Prophet does not specify the duration of the presence of the companions of the cave in the cave and the duration of 309 years is uncertain and accurate information about the true duration of their miraculous sleep should be left to God. (CF. Rosenthal, 2001: 2/435) - Using the word "before" to express the relative history of events and to organize the events according to the sequence of occurrence of the date of divine revelation. It was a good tool for separating the events of the past from the present, which found a clichéd character and sometimes appeared in a place that could go unsaid, such as Surah Hijr, verse 27: "The jinn were created before Adam." Or referring to "before and after": "Noah was before Isaac and Jacob<sup>1</sup>", "Abraham's precedence over the Torah and the Bible". (CF. Alter, 2011: 184)

١. وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ [الانعام/٨٤].

**Second:** The Qur'an assumes its audience to be fully aware of these historical facts, with precise details.

**Third:** This method leaves much material to be ambiguous in terms of personality, motivation, and moral dignity. (Ibid)

**Fourth:** unlike the Bible, which is free from any brevity, generality, and complete awareness of the audience about the essence of the historical event, the Qur'an presents its verses selectively, containing messages that are in a literary form distinct from oral stories. (Hence, this feature causes ambiguity in understanding the Qur'anic narration)

This distinction has a tremendous effect on the style of the Qur'anic stories, which causes the way the story is told to take on an artificial and imposed form (that is, it becomes rhythmic), which in turn is a criterion for distinguishing the Qur'anic narration from the narration of the holy books.

On the other hand, with this narrative style, he induces the message of the Hereafter with a preaching content in the style of a sermon, a style that, unlike the Qur'an, is marginalized in the Bible and does not matter much. The Qur'an, in this unfamiliar style, has sought to infer specific moral or theological conclusions in its discourse, which can be clearly seen at the end of the long verses of the late Makkī period and the long Madanī verses; the last sentence of each verse is a point about its content that indicates the divine confirmation or denial of the reported reality<sup>1</sup> or refers to one of the divine attributes<sup>2</sup>. (CF. Neuwirth, 2001b: 482)

١. يُوسُفُ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ هَذَا وَاسْتَغْفِرِي لِذَنبِكِ إِنَّكِ كُنتِ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ [يوسف/٢٩]

٢. إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ [اسراء/١].

### 3. Critique of the orientalist's approach to the structure of Qur'anic stories

According to the views of Orientalists about the structure of the stories of the Qur'an, which has gone through a different process from the Testaments with its own unique style, in this section, their views are criticized and evaluated.

#### 3-1. Critique of repetition of stories in the Qur'an

Repetition in the stories of the Qur'an has been a tool for orientalists to reject the miracle of the Qur'an and has led them to speculate that the Qur'an was adapted from other texts and that the Prophet's confusion of information can be criticized with several citations:

**First** - in the Qur'an, different forms of the story are repeated but with a single theme, and these repetitive forms complement some others, and all of them together provide a clear, complete and coherent theme. This means that an event is not fully understood so that the various repetitive sayings in the Qur'an can be gathered together as a whole. Each unit is completely independent in itself, like the story of Moses in the three surahs of Taha, Naml, and Qasaṣ (Cf. Khatib, nd: 234).

**Second** - repetition in the Qur'an is undeniable, but when we place this repetitive material in terms of style and purpose in the context in which it is presented, repetition generally loses its color. The repetition of the stories in each section specifies the details or reveals more details, such as the people of Aad, who were mentioned in the first surahs but the name of their prophet was mentioned in the surah A'rāf; in Surah al-Shu'arā, He talks about the situation of their place and business; in Surah Hūd, they are cursed by God, and in

Surah Fuṣṣilat, their attribute of arrogance is mentioned, which, after expressing these attributes, immediately mentions the Quraysh and the Prophet to be a lesson for them (Cf. Al-Jaberi, 2015: 408-412).

**Third** - Naqrat says: The word "repetition" has a negative connotation and what is in the Qur'an is not repetition but "expressing the word"<sup>1</sup> as God Almighty says: "And verily We have displayed for mankind in this Qur'an all manner of similitudes, but man is more than anything contentious" (Kahf: 45)<sup>2</sup>. "Expressing the word" is a Qur'anic term that refers to the expression of an idea and content in various formats, so it may not include the cases that are recited in the same word (Cf. Naqrat, 2002: 1/51).

**Fourth** - the main motivation in repeating the stories of the Qur'an is to complete the images and add to the power of visualization and objectivity by bringing new elements in proportion to the space of narration of each story (Hoseini, 1999: 59). Zarkashī enumerates the benefits of repetition: adding a point to the story, expressing a single word in different ways that indicate eloquence, emphasizing the inability of others to create such works (Zarkashī, 1997: 4/37).

**Fifth** - the repetition in the stories is not really a repetition in the content, but merely a repetition in the structure; although the theme is the same, it is formed each time according to the situation and the subject of discussion, so the status and situation is changed, but the subject is fixed. This rule applies to all duplicate, similar, or seemingly

contradictory stories. If some stories are repeated while they do not contain a new point, but in terms of style and language of the address, there are new points with it, sometimes this repetition emphasizes the narration of the story in the previous chapters with forms and various formats (Cf. Aljaberi, Ibid: 379-392).

**Sixth** - Rashid Reza in Tafsir Al-Manār says that the repetition of a story in several positions of the Qur'an, expresses a special lesson and argument other than other positions that have no conflict with each other (Cf. Rashid Reza, nd: 8/308).

**Seventh** - According to the clear expression of the Qur'an, multiple targets lie in the repetition: in verse 113 Surah Ṭā Hā, the confirmation or establishment of the word has been mentioned: "Thus we have revealed it as a Lecture in Arabic, and have displayed therein certain threats, that peradventure they may keep from evil or that it may cause them to take heed."<sup>3</sup> Thus have We sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, and We have warned people in such a way that they may be frightened or they may receive a new admonition. Confirmation for stopping the greed of audience that we notice in Surah Kāfirūn in the repetition of verses 3 and 5: "Nor worship ye that which I worship"<sup>4</sup>, frightening the audience like Surah Al-Qāri'ah, bowing to the audience like the phrase "The Companions of Yamīn" (Cf. Alkermani, nd: 252).

**Eighth** - the repetitive parts themselves have an independent structure that, even without considering the other components, does not have an incomplete meaning. However, along

١. تصريف قول.

٢. وَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا [كهف/٤٥].

٣. وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا [طه/١١٣].

٤. وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عِبَادُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ [كافرون/٣-٤].



with other parts of the story, they create a complete and expressive image. If we believe it this suspect that the Prophet (PBUH) added duplicate sections to the Qur'an due to forgetfulness or confusion of information, this feature of the independence and harmony of the duplicate sections was never seen in the Qur'an and even irreparably disrupts the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an and it was an obvious defect.

### 3-2. Criticism of ambiguity and incoherence of stories

Orientalists introduce the scattering of narrative sections in the Qur'an, the lack of details and inclusion of complete information about events, places, names of fictional people and characters, as well as the absence of fictional leafages in the Qur'an as a sign of ambiguity and incoherence of the story in the Qur'an, which in turn can be criticized and analyzed.

The first reason - we must first examine whether the method of narration and storytelling of the Qur'an is different from literary and fictional styles and has chosen a new method or whether this issue is a completely literary and correct style in the structural framework of story and narration? And how does this help dispel the ambiguity in the stories of the Qur'an?

The narrative (story) is composed of some elements that together form its structure; these elements have specific and different states in relation to each other and to the whole structure. In a successful narrative work, these elements fit together to convey the author's message and purpose to the reader. These elements are: plot, character, action of the story, style, theme, perspective and dialogue. Action is the movement and progress of the story in the direction of meeting the goals of the story, which

requires careful planning. These actions are a chain of movements or narrative actions that make it possible to change the narrative situation (Cf. Biniaz, 2012: 70).

These actions are divided into two main and sub-categories: main events are those that are necessary for the story and include a series of events that together create the plot; sub-events are those that help the author expand the plot (Cf. Younesi, 2007: 153).

Perspective is another important element through which the story is told. The most common method of narration is the use of the first person and the third person, which is outside the story and reports the actions of the heroes (Cf. Biniaz, Ibid: 102).

The next element is dialogue, which plays an important role in expanding the plot and introducing the characters of the story, through which the underlying and important themes of the story are embodied. The best narration is that in the meantime, a series of consecutive words should be left out and the dialogue of the protagonists should be discussed (Cf. Aloom, 2001: 396).

Another important element is the plot, which is the most characteristic element of narration; the plot is the reasoning network of events in the story that shows the causal relations of events and arranges them in such a way that it seems logical to the reader (Cf. Mirsadeghi, 1998: 57). In a textual structure, the plot is the actual presentation of the story, not the whole text, which is a kind of narrative modeling, and since it arranges components and elements such as narrative events and situations according to regular principles, it is considered as a system (Cf. Bikham, 2012: 28).

The plot has tasks that we will briefly refer to each:

1. Establishing a causal relationship.
2. A shift through which the plot can be distorted or reversed (previous).
3. Time setting: The time setting may be fixed in the narrative (story), that is, in harmony with the calendar hours, or vice versa, which is called Anachronism.

Anachronism is divided into two general types, retrospective and futuristic. In "Retrospective", a kind of regression occurs in relation to a calendar time, that is, a return to the narration of an event in the distant past, in which case an event is narrated after its initial occurrence, and thus the event that has already taken place is later stated and conversely. In "Futurist", a kind of leap forward is made to the calendar time, and the event that has not yet taken place is narrated before its initial occurrence, as if the narrative moves to the future of the story. (Genet, 2013: 48).

4. Selection and composition of events: The plot cuts time in the narration and it is not necessary to narrate all the details, because the principle of aesthetics in the narration does not allow such events to be narrated, whether small or large. The narrator highlights some elements and sections and eliminates others, which is the principle of selection (Cf. Abbasi, 2006: 102).

5. Information management: The plot is responsible for informing the story, that is, by selecting elements and actions, determines how much information about the elements of the story and its events are expressed at each stage of the story.

6. Creating structural unity: One of the special features of the design is a set based on order and goal. The goal is the

result of the whole set, in other words, if the components are coordinated, the goal is achieved, and if a part is not effective in achieving the goal, it can be omitted; so each section must be in place (Cf. Biniaz, Ibid: 19-20). Regarding the above points, it can be said that the stories of the Qur'an have taken a path in line with the correct style of fictional literature, and everything that is presented from the events and information in the stories is not only out of the ordinary, but also completely correct and logical. What is important in this section is the adaptation of the Qur'anic narrative to the correct definition of the story, which helps us to analyze the cause of the ambiguity of the Qur'anic stories:

Given the definition of "action" in which only the necessary information of the story is mentioned, the reason for the ambiguity and brevity of the stories is fully justified; because only the necessary parts and extras of the story that does not help the goals of the story are removed from the story and this issue not only does not cause the ambiguity of the story but also helps the audience to understand the content and learn lessons by its concise and complete expression.

Also, due to the role of the plot, which is "the cause of establishing a causal relationship", only parts of the story that are related to each other are told, so there is no justification for quoting unnecessary details. The principle of "setting the time" also applies to the stories of the Qur'an; where quoting the news of the past, the previous people and prophets or the news of the future such as the defeat of Rome, which sometimes the evolution and historical course is not observed in these stories that is one of the features of

storytelling according to the rule of "Anachronism".

Finally, "information management" does not allow the narrator to tell all events in full detail and according to the purpose of "creating structural unity", the part of the information that does not help the purpose of the story is removed from the story, which certainly does not interfere with the meaning and purpose of the story.

The second reason - one of the techniques of storytelling is "open end in the story" in the sense that the end of the story is free and the author does not finish it so that the audience can think freely about the ending because by challenging the audience, it gives them a deeper understanding of the content of the story. This technique is quite evident in the stories of the Qur'an, such as the story of the cow in Surah al-Baqarah, which does not only refer to the story of how the cow was chosen and does not state where the story ends (Cf. Mirsadeghi, Ibid: 90).

The third reason - according to the technique of "New perceptions and uncertainty", which includes selecting the audience's opinions and involving their opinions in the story and uncertainty in storytelling, such as ambiguity in the number of companions of the cave, justifies the lack of complete details in the stories (Ibid).

Fourth reason - since the stories of the Qur'an focus on their educational and guiding goals, they do not tell the story in detail. In some cases, the subject is left vague so that there is no need for disagreement and the abolition of the Jewish scholars, etc., and the believers know that dealing with these side issues and being happy with them, whether providing the accurate answer or not, is useless; however, it should not be

forgotten that the educational purposes of stories go far beyond being caught up in useless themes and narrative differences (Cf. Hoseini, Ibid: 85).

### **3-3. Criticism of different narrative expressions in Makkī and Madanī surahs**

According to Orientalists, the stories in the Makkī and Madanī sections have a completely different structure and content, which makes this an important factor in the non-revelation of the Qur'an and its adaptation from the Testaments and other pre-Islamic sources. In this section, we will try to make a comparison between the content of the stories in Makkī and Madanī sections and how true this difference is and whether it can be related to the political and cultural conditions of Makkī and Madanī or not? Before answering the questions raised in this regard, we refer to the subject of the story in the pre-Islamic era and why God has told a story in his book, especially in the section of Makkī surahs.

Stories are one of the manifestations of pre-Islamic thought, which is also mentioned in the Qur'an and has been very common among them. The narrator tells the story to his followers, both among the ignorant and among the Muslims. People had a lot of interest in the story, so when the Qur'an was revealed, they said to the Prophet: "We wish you would read a story to us." In response to them, this verse was revealed:

"We narrate to you the best stories through this Qur'an, which We have revealed to you, and you certainly did not know it before!" (Joseph: 3).

In Mecca, there were tribes of storytellers who preached to the people with their stories, especially the Ummah of earlier times. These stories were read

by experienced, skilled people with an influential tone and attractive style, such as the story of "Abu Zayd Al-Hilālī" and the story of "Antara"; among them were stories about journeys impregnated with the element of fantasy (which is interpreted as myth). The stories of the ignorant Arabs consisted of characters who were popular for the ignorant and were derived from myths and superstitions of other nations and superstitious and historical hadiths influenced by the Arabs or their neighbors; these stories had historical origins, such as the story of "Zaba", "Qusayr", "Amr ibn 'Adi", which had been tainted with superstitions over time.

In the meantime, there are tales with ignorant names such as "Days of Poverty and Wealth, King's Partner, Senmar, etc." which are of non-Arabic origin and come from Greek, Persian, Christian or even other nations because of their existence of similarities seen in non-Arabic mythology (A'ājim) and Christian anecdotes. There were many stories in the history of ignorance, the most intelligent of which was "Naḍr ibn Ḥārith-ibn Alqamah ibn Kaldah ibn Abd Manāf" of the Quraysh tribe, for whom He told the story of Rostam and Esfandiar and everything from Fars lands about their news and stories.

Jewish and Christian elders also for guidance and enlightenment of their people narrated reminders, sermons, instruction based on persuasion and intimidation and told myths, stories, anecdotes, wonders, strangeness and stories belonging to animals, as "Tamim Ibn Aws" even after converting to Islam continued his storytelling job in the mosques with the permission of "Umar".

"Tamim" was a Christian, he heard and learned sayings and anecdotes from the synagogue, and he matched what he

heard to Islam. What is assumed is a confusion between Christian stories and Arabic mythology, so the stories of the Qur'an are somewhat familiar to the ignorant and the people of the Arabian Peninsula (Ali, Ibid: 6/373-377).

According to the above-mentioned background, the best way to guide people and invite them to reason has been to narrate stories, which the Qur'an has chosen in accordance with the circumstances of its audience; in the following, we examine the relationship between the stories and the cultural and social conditions of Mecca and Medina.

The period of the presence of the Prophet in Mecca coincides with the stage of the Islamic call<sup>1</sup>. When Makkī verses were revealed, the people of Mecca were ignorant, idolater, denying the Risālat of Prophet Muhammad and denying the day of resurrection: "And they say: There is naught but our life of the world; we die and we live, and naught destroyed us save time; when they have no knowledge whatsoever of (all) that; they do but guess."<sup>2</sup>

The people of Mecca were eloquent and familiar with all the lexical techniques of poetry and prose and they knew wisdom, proverbs and were familiar with the rules of truth and permissibility, brevity and narration, hadith and article. Therefore, in Makkī surahs, intense concepts and themes are definite in calling for divine monotheism and adhering to proofs, and He has spoken in an eloquent Arabic style and in accordance with the circumstances of his audience. Topics discussed in Makkī surahs are:

1. For more information refer to History of Qur'an (Ramyar, 2011: 601-619).

٢. وَ قَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَ نَحْيَا وَ مَا يَهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ وَ مَا لَهُم بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ [جاثية/٢٤]



The controversy of the People of the Book, expressing their misguidance in religious beliefs such as belief in the Trinity, dissolution, children, cross and their invitation to the religion of Islam that their Prophet had said before, expressing their crimes in killing prophets, distorting their holy books, especially preaching the Prophet of Islam and changing some rulings that contradict with their carnal desires, such as: turning the stoning of adultery into a one hit, etc., telling the story of the prophets and their relatives, which is a lesson and sermon for the wise, especially expressing the important point that the invitation of all prophets was the same, which is the call to monotheism, faith in God, the angels, the book and the day of the hereafter; hence, He has repeated many stories to achieve His goals and objectives.

There are several reasons for mentioning such issues in Makkī surahs, including the following:

- To comfort the heart of the Prophet and the believers from the severity of the punishment and insult of pagans and the increase of patience and stability and trust in God to follow the prophets and followers of the faithful:

“Then have patience (O Muhammad) even as the stout of heart among the messengers (of old) had patience, and seek not to hasten on (the doom) for them. On the day when they see that which they are promised (it will seem to them) as though they had tarried but an hour of daylight. A clear message. Shall any be destroyed save evil-living folk?”<sup>1</sup>

“And all that We relate unto thee of the story of the messengers is in order

١. فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَ لَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ كَانَهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرُونَ مَا يُوعَدُونَ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ بَلَاغٌ فَهَلْ يُهْلَكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ [احقاف/٣٥]

that thereby We may make firm thy heart. And herein hath come unto thee the Truth and an exhortation and a reminder for believers.”<sup>2</sup>

- To tolerate intimidation and threat to the destruction of pagans, as it occurred for the people of Noah:

“But they denied him, so We saved him and those with him in the ship, and made them viceroys) in the earth (, while We drowned those who denied Our revelations. See then the nature of the consequence for those who had been warned.”<sup>3</sup>

- The Meccan stories indicate the revelation of the Qur'an from God, because if their revelation was delayed and revealed in Medina, then these drawbacks would be attributed to the Qur'an that it has taken these meanings from the People of the Book in Medina; as God Almighty has pointed it out in the Holy Qur'an: “This is of the tidings of the Unseen which We inspire in thee) Muhammad (. Thou thyself knew it not, nor did thy folk) know it (before this. Then have patience. Lo! the sequel is for those who ward off (evil)” (Abu A'ala, 1986: 40-49).<sup>4</sup>

According to the verses of Surah An-Najm which speak about the Book of Moses: it is understood that this book was so famous that a Meccan person was seldom unaware of it. Therefore, the Qur'anic revelation in the early stages of revelation (in the Meccan section) is a reporter of some well-known religious teachings, not just a

٢. وَ كَلَّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَ جَاءَكَ

فِي هَٰذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَ مَوْعِظَةٌ وَ ذِكْرٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ [هود/١٢٠]

٣. فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ وَمِن مَّعَهُ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَ جَعَلْنَاهُمْ خُلَفَاءَ وَ أَعْرَفْنَا

الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ [يونس/٣٣]

٤. تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْعِيبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَ لَا

قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَٰذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَقِيبَةَ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ [هود/٤٩]

collection of the completely new ideas, because the reaction of Meccan people to these religious ideas was cold and somewhat humiliating (Cf. Bargeneisi, 1996: 104).

Given such a cultural and social situation in Mecca, the Prophet (PBUH) was able to confront the enemies and the infidels with the leadership of the Jews, so stories with the theme of prophets and testament<sup>1</sup> characters such as Adam and Satan, stories of torment, verses related to hell and the miserable story of the tribes oppressive and disobedient to the divine commands are included in this chapter.

The style of Makkī surahs of Qur'an is very strong and full of threatening expressions that affect the audience, but the tone of the narration in this surah is soft, which is expressed with firm, concise and strong expressions; this section of surahs has addressed the goddess of pagans, including Idols, stars, etc. with an intense and humiliating tone: "The likeness of those who choose other patrons than Allah is as the likeness of the spider when she takes unto herself a house, and lo! the frailest of all houses is the spider's house, if they but knew",<sup>2</sup> and constantly compels reason to think and forbids blind imitation and adherence to the profession of predecessors; also disputes with the owners of other religions, such as Christians that consider Jesus as the Son of God, Majūsī and Jewish who consider 'Uzayr the son of God and others: "And the Jews

say: Ezra is the son of Allah, and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allah. That is their saying with their mouths. They imitate the saying of those who disbelieved of old. Allah (Himself) fight against them. How perverse are they!"<sup>3</sup> (Cf. Shelby, 1911: 59).

At the time of the Prophet's presence in Medina, with the formation of the fledgling Islamic society and the time of legislation, the approach was quite peaceful, so the only group that continued to threaten society was the group of hypocrites, whose threatening and blame is located in Madanī surahs; controversy with the people of the previous books is also included in this section.

The Prophet (PBUH) faced two groups after emigrating to Medina; Jews and hypocrites, although polytheists, existed both before and after this time. In the field of conflict with these various enemies, there is a relatively small amount of stories in the Madanī Qur'an. Many of these stories are told in proportion to the cause of revelation and in a complementary way in explaining or retelling stories that are mentioned in the Makkī Qur'an. In the Madanī Qur'an, the story of the non-Torah prophets (Saleh, Hūd, Shu'ayb, etc.) is not mentioned, but only the names of some tribes mentioned by the Meccan stories; in fact, a protest note in order to remind the fate of the mentioned tribes as a result of the denial of their prophets in a way that is repeated in the Meccan Qur'an. Among the prophets of the Book, Abraham, Zechariah, Jesus and Moses are emphasized in the Madanī Qur'an.

1 .The stories that are in the Makkī part of the Qur'an are: The story of Noah, Lūt, Pharaoh, David, Solomon, Queen of Sheba, People of Sheba, Companions of Rass, Abraham, Adam, Iblis, Shu'ayb, Moses

۲. مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْغَنَكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا وَإِنْ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبِيتُ الْغَنَكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ [عنكبوت/۴]

۳. وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ غَزِيرٌ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهَوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ قَتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَمْ يُلْفَكُونَ [توبه/۳۰]

The story of these prophets is often addressed to the Jews as a reminder of blessings which God has given to their fathers; their denial of these blessings and their silence on the good news of the Torah and the Bible has been the appearance of the Ummī Prophet. Contrary to what is mentioned in the Makkī Qur'an, which emphasizes the sufferings of the Israelites in the ups and downs of history, in the Madanī Qur'an, in proportion to the evolution of relations between Muslims and Jews, they are sometimes rebuked and slandered. And sometimes speaks to them in the language of threat and revenge; this change of tone is especially due to the Jewish act of violating the treaties concluded with them (Cf. Al-Jaberi, Ibid: 518-519).

As we can see, the content of the stories of the Qur'an in Makkī and Madanī parts is completely in accordance with the cultural and social characteristics and conditions of the city of Mecca and Medina at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, which is coordinated with these characteristics. The people of Mecca are forced to think and reason when they hear the story of the previous people and prophets, and in Medina, the Christians and Jews are argued.

## CONCLUSION

Orientalists' views on the structure of Qur'anic stories were analyzed around three axes: "different narrative expressions in Makkī and Madanī surahs", "repetition of stories" and "ambiguity and incoherence of stories". In the field of "different narrative expressions in Makkī and Madanī surahs", the researchers emphasize the difference between the content and structure of the stories in Makkī and

Madanī section of the Qur'an, which is the result of not paying attention to:

The audience, the cultural, political and social situation of Mecca and Medina and the correct confrontation to the audience with the greatest impact. In the field of "repetition of stories", which is the most important document of orientalist for the non-revelation of the origin of the Qur'an, they neglected points about the cause of repetition and its benefits, because repetition in different contexts has messages related to the content of the same surah and adjacent verses and has an independent structure.

These repetitions are, in a way, the expression of thought and content in various forms, which express a special and unique lesson and argument; however, in the section of "Ambiguity and incoherence of stories", the appropriateness of Qur'anic stories is proved by examining the constituent elements of fictional style with the subject of plot, character, action, style, theme, point of view and dialogue. And that the stories of the Qur'an follow the common styles of fiction.

An important point in the research of Orientalists is to pay attention to their mental assumptions. Because of their belief in the adaptation of the Qur'an from the Testaments, they compare the structure of the Qur'anic stories with the Testaments and believe that stories should be told in historical evolution and detail, while the Qur'an is rhetorical, eloquent, and rules-based structure, which is itself a sign of the miracle of the Qur'an, has a completely different structure from the Bible and not only confirms the previous books but also because of its universal mission, has been revealed in the same way and with the same purpose and in completing the other books of the prophets.

Orientalists must accept that similarity can not necessarily be a reason for adaptation, and before any prejudice, pay attention to the divine unique origin of these books, their differences, especially in the stories that tell of historical events that Torah has not mentioned them so that the suspicion of the adaptation of Qur'an from the Bible is disappeared from their minds.

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