

نشر به علمی

## قرآن و روشنگری دینی

«مقاله پژوهشی»

# بررسی رابطه هرمنوتیک با روش فهم قرآن در دو حیطه عام و خاص

حسین محمدی فام<sup>۱</sup>، سیدمجید نبوی<sup>۲\*</sup>، زهرا زمانلو<sup>۳</sup>، مرتضی پهلوانی<sup>۴</sup>

### چکیده

امروزه هرمنوتیک و بحث‌های مرتبط با آن در حوزه قرآن بیشتر از گذشته مطرح می‌شود. این نگارش درصدد بررسی رابطه هرمنوتیک با قرآن یا روش فهم قرآن در دو حیطه عام و خاص است و اینکه فهم عام و خاص از قرآن چیست و چه ملاک‌ها و ضوابطی برای فهم خاص از قرآن وجود دارد؟ جمع‌آوری مطالب در این پژوهش به صورت کتابخانه‌ای بوده و روش تحقیق در این پژوهش توصیفی تحلیلی می‌باشد. پس از بررسی‌ها مشخص شد که اینکه در هرمنوتیک فلسفی هر فهم صحیح دانسته می‌شود دارای اشکال است. همچنین قرآن دارای مراتبی در فهم است که در درون مقاله به انواع آن اشاره شد. علاوه بر این فهم خاص از قرآن دارای آداب ظاهری و باطنی است. وضو داشتن و پاک بودن دهان و غیره از آداب ظاهری است و از آداب باطنی می‌توان به کلام خدا دانستن قرآن، تدبر در آن و غیره اشاره کرد. همچنین ضوابط و ملاک‌هایی برای فهم خاص قرآن وجود دارد که می‌توان آن را هرمنوتیک قرآن دانست.

### واژه‌های کلیدی

هرمنوتیک، فهم قرآن، فهم عام، فهم خاص.

۱ دکتری مذاهب اسلامی، جهاد دانشگاهی تهران، تهران، ایران.  
۲ دکتری قرآن و حدیث، دانشگاه اراک، ایران.  
۳ دانشجوی دکتری قرآن و حدیث، دانشگاه اصول‌الدین، تهران، ایران.  
۴ استادیار گروه معارف اسلامی دانشگاه دریانوردی و علوم دریایی چابهار، ایران.

نویسنده مسئول:

حسین محمدی فام

رایانامه: hosseinfam110@gmail.com

استناد به این مقاله:

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# Quran and Religious Enlightenment

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Investigating the Connection between Hermeneutics and the Method of Understanding the Qur'an in two General and Specific Areas

Hossein Mohammadi-Fam<sup>1</sup>, Seyed Majid Nabavi<sup>2\*</sup>, Zahra Zamanlou<sup>3</sup>, Morteza Pahlavani<sup>4</sup>

1 PhD in Islamic Schools, Tehran Jihad University, Tehran, Iran.

2 PhD in Qur'an and Hadith Sciences, Arak University, Iran.

3 PhD Candidate in Qur'an and Hadith Sciences, Usul al-Din Faculty, Tehran, Iran.

4 Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Chabahar University of Maritime and Marine Sciences, Iran.

### Correspondence

Hossein Mohammadi-Fam

Email: [hosseinfam110@gmail.com](mailto:hosseinfam110@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

Today, hermeneutics and its related debates in the field of the Qur'an are discussed more than past. This research tries to investigate the relationship between hermeneutics and the Qur'an or the method of understanding the Qur'an in two general and special areas, and the questions: What is the general and special understanding of the Qur'an and what are the criteria for a specific understanding of the Qur'an? Gathering materials in this research is in the form of a library and the method in this research is descriptive and analytical. After the investigations, it became clear that this is not true to consider every understanding correct in philosophical hermeneutics. Also, the Qur'an has levels of understanding, the types of which were mentioned in the article; moreover, special understanding of the Qur'an has outward and inward manners. Performing ablution and keeping the mouth clean, etc., are outward manners, and the word of God, knowing the Qur'an, thinking about it, etc. are inward manners. Also, there are rules and criteria for a special understanding of the Qur'an, which can be considered the hermeneutics of the Qur'an.

### KEYWORDS

Hermeneutics, Understanding the Qur'an, General Understanding, Specific Understanding

## Introduction

The knowledge of hermeneutics has a Western origin and like many other new theological topics has entered the world of Islam and today it has a special place in theological topics.

Muslim scholars have shown various reactions to hermeneutics and have written many books and articles on this topic. Some scientists analyzed and criticized hermeneutics, while others accepted many of the principles of hermeneutics and explained and promoted them.

Some Western scholars have come to the conclusion based on hermeneutics that there is no correct and final interpretation of any text by any person.

This trend of hermeneutics, which is intended by Gadamer (Introduction to hermeneutics, Ahmad Va'ezi, p. 312), was welcomed by some Islamic intellectuals and they believed that we do not have a definitive reading of the Qur'an and religion and all interpretations of the Qur'an and various readings of religion are doubtful and always the text of the Qur'an is subject to new interpretations, which are all equal. (Philosophical Theology, Mohammad Mohammad Reza'i, 286)

Against this approach, another approach emerged in the Islamic world that rejected hermeneutics from the root and with its various minimal and maximal tendencies, and didn't consider a common point between hermeneutics, which is the knowledge or method of understanding the text, and interpretation, which is responsible for explaining the understanding of the Qur'an.

The third approach, which can be referred to as the committed and fair approach, accepts what is consistent with Islamic teachings and discards what is against it.

This article is not trying to express the points of commonality and difference of hermeneutics with Tafsīr and Ta'wīl, but it is trying to obtain the method of understanding the holy text of the

Qur'an by expressing the common features. In other words, this article seeks to discover the method of understanding the Qur'anic text (Qur'anic hermeneutics). It seems that the Qur'an has two principles of understanding. One is the general understanding and the other is the specific understanding, and in this article, an attempt is made to explain the specific method of understanding the Qur'an in both cases and to express the commonalities and differences of this method of understanding the Qur'an with what is discussed in Western hermeneutics with today's hermeneutic literature.

## 1- Definition of hermeneutics

The Greek word hermeneutics has been used since the time of Plato, but its Latin equivalent (Hermeneutic) became popular from the 17th century onwards. Some believe that in ancient Greece, this word had a semantic connection with "Hermes", the prophet of the gods and as Hermes was the messenger and interpreter of the message of the gods, the interpreter does the work of Hermes, and the word hermeneutics is derived from Hermes. (Hermeneutics, Ja'far Sobhani, p. 7) The word hermeneutics in its current form in the Greek language means "To interpret" and in its divine form it means "Interpretation". In the Latin language, hermeneutics has been defined in the same field of meaning, and it includes topics such as the nature of the text, the purpose of understanding the text, and how understanding is affected by presuppositions and beliefs, etc. (Introduction to hermeneutics, Ahmad Va'ezi, pp. 23-24)

But what is more important is the idiomatic definition of hermeneutics, which is very important in this research, because the first step to finding commonalities and differences between Tafsīr and Ta'wīl is the clear and exact meaning of hermeneutics.

It should be said that hermeneutics, like many terms or titles of science, has been greatly developed and every thinker has presented his definition of it, some of the most important of which are:

A- Johan Martin Chladenius (1710-1759): Hermeneutics is the "Art of Interpretation" and it is possible to achieve complete understanding of spoken and written expressions through it.

B- Friedrich August Wolf: The purpose of hermeneutics is to understand the specific spoken and written thoughts of the author or speaker, exactly according to what he thought.

C- Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1384): Hermeneutics is the "Art of Understanding".

D- Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911): Hermeneutics is the knowledge of "Methodology - Humanities".

E- Bubner (contemporary): Hermeneutics is the "Doctrine of Understanding".

In addition to the above definitions, the definitions of philosophical hermeneutics according to Martin Heidegger and Hans Gadamer are also among the most important definitions of hermeneutics, which will be mentioned below. In short, it should be said that the goal of philosophical hermeneutics is to describe the nature of understanding. Philosophical hermeneutics considers the absolute "Understanding" and tries to analyze the event of understanding and explain the existential conditions of its achievement.

It can be said that the common meaning that can be extracted from the sum of these definitions is that hermeneutics is a science whose main subject is "Understanding" and mostly deals with "Understanding the Texts". Of course, the proper and error-free understanding method, as well as the understanding process, is one of the important topics of hermeneutics.

## **2- The realm of hermeneutics**

In general, hermeneutics should be divided into methodological hermeneutics and philosophical hermeneutics. (Hermeneutics, Ja'far Sobhani, p. 9) Of course, some have also divided it into general and special hermeneutics (Introduction to hermeneutics, Ahmad Va'ezi, p. 33).

### **2-1- Methodological hermeneutics**

In this type of hermeneutics, which Richard Palmer interprets as general hermeneutics, a kind of methodology is proposed. Here, hermeneutics is trying to provide a method of understanding and interpretation, and of course, this is not for specific sciences and covers several branches of interpretative sciences. This trend started in the 18th century and its flag bearer is the German scientist Friedrich Schleiermacher (ibid.). He considered hermeneutics as "A method to prevent the risk of misunderstanding".

After him, Wilhelm Dilthey believed that just as there is a special method to understand the natural sciences (such as experiments, etc.), we must also have a special methodology to understand humanities, which we call hermeneutics (Hermeneutics, Ja'far Sobhani, p. 8).

Dilthey considered the task and mission of hermeneutics to be the organization and revision of principles and rules that can understand and discover their inner life and their intentions from the behavior, speech, or writing of people (An introduction to hermeneutics, Ahmad Va'ezi, p. 34)

In contemporary times, Paul Ricœur is one of the most prominent representatives of this type of hermeneutics. He considers hermeneutics as a science that deals with the way of understanding and the mechanism of interpreting texts. (Hermeneutics, Ja'far Sobhani, p. 8)

It should be noted that this hermeneutic trend is based on the fact that general rules and

principles govern the understanding of any text, and a hermeneutic scientist must revise and adjust these rules and principles and find out the author's intentions with their help (Introduction to Hermeneutics, Ahmad Va'ezi, p. 33).

## 2-2- Philosophical hermeneutics

Ayatollah Sobhani believes that since the era of two Western philosophers named "Martin Heidegger" and "Gadamer", hermeneutics has left the field of methodology and has been placed in the realm of philosophical issues (Hermeneutics, Ja'far Sobhani, p. 9). Philosophical hermeneutics deals with the philosophical reflection on the phenomenon of understanding, and in addition to not presenting the method and stating the principles and rules governing the interpretation of the text; it also criticizes the methodology (Introduction to Hermeneutics, Ahmad Va'ezi, p. 34).

In philosophical hermeneutics, the discussion changed direction from methodology to the truth of understanding, and it went to the point that texts do not have a special message at all, and whatever the interpreter interprets from the text is the criterion, and there is no final interpretation of the text.

Martin Heidegger is the first person who transferred hermeneutics from the level of methodology and epistemology to "Ontology of Understanding" and instead of presenting a method for understanding the text; he investigated the nature and truth of understanding.

He believed that it is not possible to go to a text and interpret it without a presupposition or prior understanding. In any case, before receiving the message of the text, the interpreter goes to the text with his presuppositions and his prior understanding of the issues, and therefore he cannot interpret the text without his prior understanding or presuppositions.

In other words, according to Heidegger,

every interpretation is rooted in what the interpreter has seen in advance, and the act of interpretation, which is "To make a text understandable and imaginable", is made up of the interpreter's pre-knowledge, before the interpretation. (Introduction to Hermeneutics, Ahmad Va'ezi, p. 167)

After Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer expanded the teachings of other hermeneutics and was very influential in promoting philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer surpassed Heidegger in the ontology of understanding, in addition to accepting and emphasizing that "No understanding is free from judgment (ibid., p. 249)", he insisted on the point that the horizon of the interpreter and the horizon of the author of the text have a temporal and historical distance. But for interpreting a text, there is no other choice but to combine the meaning horizon of the interpreter and the author.

At the end of this section, for a better understanding of hermeneutics, important propositions of hermeneutics are mentioned:

- Hermeneutics is nothing but the method of understanding and correctly interpreting a text.
- Hermeneutics is the knowledge of the rules that prevent misunderstanding of a text
- No interpretation is possible without a presupposition.
- The historical distance between the author and the commentator is effective in the interpretation of the commentator.
- Interpretation is the result of combining the semantic horizon of the interpreter and the semantic horizon of the author.
- There is no end to understanding.
- Everyone understands the text differently from others.
- No understanding and interpretation is superior to another understanding and interpretation.
- There is no criterion for choosing a superior

understanding over other understandings.

After the discussion about hermeneutics, the understanding of the Qur'an and its levels and its relationship with hermeneutics will be investigated.

### **3- Understanding the Qur'an and its levels**

The Qur'an is a divine text with words and expressions that are understandable for humans. Just as every text - both sacred and ordinary - is subject to human understanding, the Qur'an, like other texts, is subject to human understanding and interpretation.

To better clarify what understanding the Qur'an is, we divide the discussion into some sub-branches:

#### **3-1- Comprehensibility of the Qur'an**

The first thing about any text is that it is comprehensible. If the text is ambiguous and dumb, the hermeneutic discussions are not true about it at all, and understanding and the method of understanding, interpretation, and comparison between interpretations, etc., are not true about it. The Qur'an presents itself clearly and in this way, it specifies its comprehensibility:

- In plain Arabic speech. (Shu'arā/195); Now hath come unto you light from Allah and plain Scripture (Mā'idah/15) It is also stated in the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) that the one who thinks that the Qur'an is unclear will perish and destroy others: Imam Bāqir (AS) said: "Whoever claims that the Book of God is ambiguous, then he will be perished and perish other people." (Al-Mahāsīn, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid Barqī, vol. 1, p. 270)

#### **3-2- General audience of Qur'an**

The Qur'an considers itself special for all human beings and has not limited its understanding to a specific group. Therefore, in some addresses of the Qur'an, the phrase "O

people..." is mentioned<sup>1</sup>. Since the Qur'an is addressed to the people, as a result, the Qur'an is understandable to the general public, if it is not the case, the opposite is correct and it contradicts the wisdom of God the Wise:

Of course, people have different levels, and therefore the understanding of the Qur'an also has levels, which we will discuss in detail in the following discussions.

#### **3-3- The command to meditate on the Qur'an and understand it**

In various verses, God has emphasized thinking and understanding the Qur'an.

(This is) a Scripture that We have revealed unto thee, full of blessing, that they may ponder its revelations, and that men of understanding may reflect. (Şād/29) and (Anbiyā'/10, An'ām/98, Baqarah/221)

This order of understanding is associated with various expressions and the difference in these interpretations can be a sign of different types of understanding of the Qur'an. The emphasis of the Qur'an is sometimes accompanied by the order of understanding, sometimes with the order of thinking, sometimes with the order of consideration and reminder, etc., of which the following verses are some examples:

#### **3-4- Intellectual understanding and heart understanding in the Qur'an**

Sometimes a person thinks about a problem through his intellect, takes a concept from it and gives an opinion about it. Sometimes the heart, the conscience and the soul understand a problem. Regarding the first part of the Qur'an, He uses the interpretation of "Don't you think?" Regarding the second part, He uses words such as the heart, "Will they then not meditate on the

1. O mankind! Worship your Lord, Who hath created you and those before you, so that ye may ward off (evil). (Baqarah/21)

This is a declaration for mankind, a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off (evil) (Āl 'Imrān/138)

Qur'an, or are there locks on the hearts?" (Muhammad/24) For example, in verse 7 of 'A'rāf, the Qur'an considers deep understanding, which in Arabic is interpreted as fiqh and tafaqquh, to be related to the heart and soul, and He says: "Having hearts wherewith they understand not" ('A'rāf, 7). Therefore, in addition to rational understanding, there is heart understanding, and deep understanding is related to the heart, and this intellectual and heart understanding is two levels different from understanding the text of the Qur'an, which we will discuss further.

### **3-5- Easy and difficult understand of the Qur'an:**

Qur'an is God's book and it has differences with human books. Among these differences is the ease and difficulty in understanding the Qur'an. The Qur'an is easy and simple at a level of understanding where the purpose of understanding is to remember God: "And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition? " if the purpose of studying the Qur'an is to remember God and find remembrance, understanding the Qur'an is very simple and easy.

But in another level of understanding the verses, it is difficult and special for those well-grounded in knowledge. In other words, when the goal is to acquire knowledge and learn the Qur'an and its teachings, understanding the Qur'an faces special difficulties. Verse 7 of Surah Āl 'Imrān clearly mentions the difficulty in understanding the similar verses and introduced its understanding to the exclusiveness of those well-grounded in knowledge.

So, if we differentiate between "Being guided and reminded by the Qur'an" and "Learning and gaining knowledge from the Qur'an", we should also pay attention to the

ease and difficulty of understanding the verses in these two positions.

Ayatollah Ma'refat also believes in the ease and difficulty in understanding the Qur'an and says: "The Qur'an has its own special way of expressing meanings, which is neither as simple as the way of common speech nor as complicated as the expressions of scholars, but rather has chosen a middle ground between these two ways (An easy and difficult method). It is easy to interpret and convey the meanings in such a way that everyone - familiar and unfamiliar - understands it and it is pleasant to the uneducated and knowledgeable. At the same time, it is also difficult regarding high principles and far-reaching goals, and this is because, with a beautiful appearance and a deep interior, it has collected the perfection of the exterior and the interior. (Tafsīr wa Mufasssīrān, Mohammad Hadi Ma'refat, Vol. 1, pp. 97 and 98)

### **3-6- Levels of understanding the Qur'an:**

It seems that the Qur'an, which is a deep sea of noble and profound contents and knowledge, on the other hand, is not human speech, but rather all its content and words are issued from the Holy Essence of God, and it also has a very wide and diverse audience with different levels, it should have different levels of understanding, our reasons are briefly:

#### **A) Deep content**

It is very clear that detailed and deep texts have a multi-layered character of understanding, that is, when a text has depth, the readers and interpreters of the text understand the text according to their knowledge and effort. There is no exception for understanding the Qur'an, but because of its infinite depth, it has assigned itself infinite levels of understanding, and it must be said that this is one of the miracles of the Qur'an. The Messenger of God (PBUH) described this characteristic of the Qur'an and

said: "... its appearance is beautiful and its interior is deep" (Tafsir al-Ayyashi, Muhammad bin Mas'ud Ayyashi, vol. 1, p. 3)

Therefore, according to the different semantic layers of the text, there are also different conceptual layers, and according to the inexhaustibility of the deep meanings of the Qur'an, the understanding of the Qur'an can also be considered inexhaustible.

Of course, this inexhaustibility of understanding is very different from what Gadamer believed. What is discussed in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is the inexhaustibility of understanding, which means that one can have multiple understandings from a text (even if not deep) as many readers have, and all of them are somehow correct. Because there is no criterion, then any interpretation of any text is correct and there is no reason to prefer someone's understanding and interpretation over another. That is, in the multi-layered meaning of the verse, for example, in its inner layers, it is not the case that whatever you understand is correct, it is necessary to mention that the deeper the Qur'an becomes, the more difficult it is to access the correct understanding and the more precise its criteria. Many narrations show that the understanding of the deep layers of the verses is only available to a special few such as the Saints and Infallible Imams (AS).

### **B) The extent and variety of audience levels**

The Qur'an considers itself to be the source of guidance for all people, and people have different intellectual and knowledge levels. Therefore, if the Qur'an does not have levels of meaning and, as a result, levels of understanding, it cannot meet the needs of all its audience. The Qur'an is in such a way that both a new Muslim who is unfamiliar with the religion and a person who has studied religion

for many years can benefit from it in their way and satisfy their needs with it.

### **C) Diversity in expression**

Qur'an has spoken to mankind in various ways. Sometimes the word is completely literary and sometimes completely scientific. Sometimes he tells stories to people as a storyteller, and sometimes he raises intellectual and philosophical issues with a rational expression. In other words, the language of the Qur'an, in addition to being the language of nature, has spoken in various verses with literary, scientific, allegorical, intellectual language, etc. With the number of these different types, different understandings can be attributed to the Qur'an. That is, the scientific understanding of the Qur'an that makes scientific interpretations of the Qur'an and leads to the formation of a scientific interpretation of the Qur'an is one type of understanding of the Qur'an, and the literary understanding of the Qur'an that leads to the formation of a literary interpretation of the Qur'an is another type of understanding. Some make mystical interpretations of the Qur'an, and some rational interpretations and each of these can be correct - of course, provided that they are measured against the existing standards and criteria.

The various understandings that are raised in Western hermeneutics are the result of the lack of criteria for correct and incorrect reading of an interpretation, but in the case of the Qur'an, there are criteria for recognizing the correct understanding of the interpretation at all levels and types of understanding. The important issue is eisegesis and its prohibition is to prevent wrong interpretations of various verses and at various levels.

### **D) The Qur'an as a miracle**

Just as the Qur'an is a miracle and a divine revelation in its eloquence, it is also a miracle in its content and expression of knowledge and



truths, as well as in the way it is spoken, the way it is taught, and the style of expression. Therefore, the Qur'an must also have miracles in making people understand the contents. That is, this text provides concepts to its readers in a different way from other texts (and miraculously). For example, the fact that different types of people with different intellectual levels and different scientific tastes, each of them with a special tendency, go to the Qur'an and all of them come back with hands full of knowledge in different horizontal and vertical layers of understanding of the Qur'an shows the miracle of the Qur'an in inducing the contents. Or the fact that despite the existence of strict rules and criteria, it is possible to have different correct interpretations of a particular verse of the Qur'an shows the miracle of the Qur'an in understanding the content. Also, the fact that today, after 1400 years, many commentaries have been written for the Qur'an and new materials are discovered from it, shows the miracle of the Qur'an in understanding. This miracle makes us believe in a "Special type of understanding" that we will discuss in the following topics of this article.

#### **E) Qur'an is the manifestation of God**

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said in a hadith: "Indeed, God has manifested Himself in His words to His servants, but they do not see." ('Awālī al-La'ālī, Ibn Abī Jumhūr, v. 4, p. 116)

The Qur'an is the manifestation of God and the method of teaching and the type of induction of its contents are also different from human books. Understanding it requires observing the outward and inward rituals of the Qur'an, such as performing ablution, practising piety, etc. The Qur'an has also mentioned some of the essentials of understanding: "...and be careful of (your duty) to Allah, Allah teaches you..." (Baqarah/282) Therefore, the method of understanding the Qur'an is inherently different

from the method of understanding human books. And the Qur'an has a special hermeneutic (method of understanding).

#### **F) Many narrative reasons**

The levels of understanding the Qur'an and even the typology of the understanding of the Qur'an are abundantly seen in the traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the Infallible Imams (AS). A few examples are mentioned:

In a narration, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) considered the Qur'an to have four parts: phrases for the common people, hints for the special people, facetime for the saints, and facts for the prophets (Miṣbāḥ al-Shari'ah / translated by Mustafawi, p. 460)

In another narration, Imam Bāqir (AS) considered the Qur'an to have an interior and an exterior, and its interior also has an interior (Al-Maḥāsin, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi, vol. 2, p. 300). In the narration related to Dhariḥ Muḥāribī, it is also mentioned that the Qur'an has an interior. (Al-Kāfi; Sheikh Kulaynī, vol. 4; p. 549)"

In another narration, God's book is divided into three parts, one part is understood by the scientist and the ignorant, and the other part is understood only by people who have a pure mind and are among the people whom God has opened their hearts to understand Islam. The other part is understood only by those who believe in God and are well-grounded in knowledge. (Nūr al-Thaqalayn, 'Arūsī Ḥuwayzī 'Abd 'Alī Ibn Jum'ah, vol. 1, p. 313)

#### **4- Expressing the levels and types of understanding the Qur'an**

The complete expression of the levels of understanding of the Qur'an should be done by the Infallible Imams (AS) who stand at the pinnacle of knowledge of God's book and have full knowledge of all the levels of the Qur'an. What we are presenting today is a part of the

levels and types of understanding of the Qur'an, which of course has been obtained from the traditions of the infallible Imams (AS). Some of these levels and types of understanding the Qur'an are:

#### **4-1- Understanding the appearances of the Qur'an**

The Qur'an is a source of guidance and has a simple meaning in the field of appearance. By studying this divine book, the person who refers to the Qur'an acquires concepts whose source is the appearances of the Qur'an. Scholars have discussed a lot about the authenticity of the Qur'an's appearances and have proved with much evidence that the appearance of the Qur'an is understandable.

In this regard, it should be said that the Akhbārīyūn believed that the understanding of the Qur'an should be based on the hadiths and that no one except the innocent has the right to infer from the Qur'an, while the 'Uṣūlīyūn consider the presentation of the Qur'an's appearances based on the verses of meditation and the traditions to be valid. (Collection of the works of Shahid Motahari, vol. 20, p. 41)

The appearances of the Qur'an are proof, and there are many rational and narrative proofs for it, and nowadays the authenticity of the appearances cannot be denied.

#### **4-2- Understanding the subtleties, facetiae and hints of the appearance of the Qur'an**

The Qur'an has subtleties, allusions, and facetiae that the general public does not understand, and it is specific to special people, and the general public can understand this indirectly by referring to special people, scholars and possessors of knowledge, especially the infallible Imams. In this regard, the Messenger of God (PBUH) addressed the people in the *Ghadīr Khumm* sermon: "Swear by God, no one will explain to you the hidden

corners of the meanings of the Qur'an, and no one will explain its interpretation to you except this one whose hand I have held (Imam Ali (AS))." (Al-Ihtijāj 'Alā Ahl al-Lijā, Sheikh Ṭabrasī, v. 1, p. 60):

#### **4-3- Understanding the heart and interpreting the verses of the Qur'an**

The Qur'an has some hidden parts that can be understood and interpreted. The interior of the Qur'an is also referred to as "Ta'wīl". The Messenger of God (PBUH) said in a narration: "There is no verse in the Qur'an except that it has an appearance and an inside, and there is no letter except that it has an interpretation" (Kitāb Salīm ibn Qays al-Hilālī, vol. 2, p. 771). Of course, understanding the inside and its interpretation is regulated and there is a difference between interpretation and some hermeneutic viewpoints that do not set criteria for choosing different understandings of the same text, for choosing the right and wrong understanding of the Qur'anic verses.

#### **The first level of Ta'wīl: a truth outside the verse**

The highest level of Ta'wīl is a truth outside of the verse to which the exterior and interior of the verse return. This truth is only in God's knowledge and only the Infallibles (the Fourteen Innocents (AS)) have access to it, and this is the same definition given by Allameh Tabataba'i (RA). (Hassanzadeh, Saleh; Ja'fari, Abdullah, The truth of Ta'wīl in the Qur'an From the point of view of Allameh Tabataba'i (RA), Thought of Allameh Tabataba'i, 2014; 1(1): 33-50) This truth is beyond words, meanings and concepts, and it cannot be extracted from the verse except with its special knowledge, which is in God's presence and has only been given to those who are pure in knowledge. From the words of Allameh Tabataba'i (RA), it appears that this supreme truth may be an external existence and

reality for the verse, but it is certainly not an external concept of the verse. (ibid)

### **The second level of Ta'wīl: the inner meaning of the verse**

In the second level, the interpretation of the verse is the inner meaning of the verse, and many narrations that have mentioned the meaning of inner meaning of the verse, refer to this level of interpretation. (For example, see: Al-Maḥāsīn, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqī, vol. 2, p. 300) At this level, the meaning that is mentioned in the name of Ta'wīl for a verse is a meaning that cannot be obtained from the words of the verse and is beyond the word and appearance of the verse. Therefore, it has meaning, but it is hidden, and because of this reason, it is called Baṭn. Therefore, no one can present it except God and the well-grounded in the knowledge that has been given the knowledge of interpretation.

### **The third level of Ta'wīl: presenting the hidden examples of the verse**

In this case, the hidden examples of the verse are called Ta'wīl of the verse. This order of interpretation is the sharing of Ta'wīl with Taṭbīq. These examples are of two categories:

1- Examples that cannot be understood from the appearance of the verse and are in the field of the inner meaning of the verse. That is they are examples of the concepts and inner meanings of the verses, and since they are in the field of Ta'wīl, the name of Ta'wīl has been given to them in the language of narrations. It seems that if in some narrations, Jary<sup>1</sup> of the Qur'an has been interpreted as Bāṭin, the reason is the existence of these examples, which on the one hand, are subject to the law of Jary and Taṭbīq, and on the other hand, their being an example is an internal matter, so they are in the field of Ta'wīl. (For

example, see: Ḥuwayzī, 1415 AH, vol. 5, p. 606)

2- Some examples that we have given the name of hidden examples are examples that are in the field of the appearance of the Qur'an, but they are far from the human mind and are presented to us by well-grounded knowledge. Narratives that introduce such examples, on the one hand, because they introduce the example, are comparative, and on the other hand, they are interpretive, because these presented examples are hidden, and they cannot be discovered and introduced except by the well-grounded in knowledge. According to many narrations, the explanation of the inner and hidden examples of the verses is only in the ability of the innocents (AS). (For example, see Baḥrānī, 1415 A.H., vol. 3, p. 848)

### **The fourth level of Ta'wīl: the hidden accessories of the verses**

We know that the implication of the word on the meaning has types that are discussed in the science of logic, and the obligatory implication is one of them. In this type of implication, the word implies the necessity of the meaning. These appliances are divided into clear and hidden. Sometimes the meaning of the verse is raised and sometimes the meaning of the verse may be obvious, and it may be hidden and non-obvious.

Of course, it should include the necessary statement of meaning as part of Tafsir, and we have also included the narrations that state the necessity of meaning among the narrations of the field of interpretation; but those accessories that are hidden and in other words non-visible, which are called Ta'wīl.

### **The fifth level of Ta'wīl: the general and broad meaning of the verse**

Presenting a general and broad meaning of the verse, which is obtained after doing a series of works on the words and expressions of the

verse, is the third level of Ta'wīl. It should be said that the definition of Ayatollah Ma'refat (RA) refers to this level. In this level, which is a lower level of Ta'wīl, scholars, commentators, and Islamic jurists can provide interpretation for the verses of the Qur'an by observing certain criteria.

#### **4-4- Complete understanding of the Qur'an**

It was mentioned before that the peak of philosophical hermeneutics is to consider the "Absence of final interpretation and final understanding of the text" regarding the nature of understanding.

This statement is in no way true about the Qur'an, on the contrary, according to Imami Shi'a, the text of the Qur'an has a complete understanding - long and short - which is the sole responsibility of the Messenger of God (PBUH) and the Infallible Imams (AS). That is, the infallible Imam has access to all the verses of the Qur'an and all the outer and inner layers of meaning, and the complete understanding of the entire Qur'an is at his disposal, and therefore the highest criterion and rule for other understandings of the Qur'an is the absence of contradictions with this source of complete understanding.

In Western hermeneutics, this keyword has been proven for many and it is assumed that "The text is silent" and it is the interpreter who makes it clear. Although there has been talk about the correctness of this theory, the truth is that this sentence should be used with some changes in the wording of the Qur'an. The text of the Qur'an is not silent in the area of its appearances and it speaks for people, and people's understanding of it is accompanied by criteria and rules - which are mentioned in the books of Qur'anic sciences - but in the area of inner meaning or deep complete understanding, it is really silent and only an exegete can make it

clear - in this particular area, who is the infallible Imam. So Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (AS) said clearly: This is the Qur'an, make it speak, but it will never speak for you, but I will inform you about it. (Tafsir al-Qomi, Ali ibn Ibrahim Qomi, vol. 1, p. 3) That is, no matter what you ask the Qur'an to speak for you, it is not possible and it will never be clear to you - eternal negation - but I will inform you of its understanding.

#### **4-5- Special understanding of the Qur'an**

What has been proposed so far in the article has already been proposed and proven by many professors, but it seems that the current topic is less discussed and proven scientifically.

It seems that in addition to the various levels of understanding of the Qur'an that have been stated, the Qur'an also has a special (or private) understanding that emerges in the face of different people who have different concerns about the Qur'an. To put it more clearly, sometimes the Qur'an has general messages - both in generalities and in details - which people receive when they face the text of the Qur'an and according to the existing rules and regulations - which are often respected by commentators. But sometimes someone has a specific question or has a certain concern that he wants to get a clear answer by referring to the Qur'an.

Qur'an is a platform for the client to understand his answer from the divine verses and return with full hands. In the following, for a better explanation of the discussion, the public and private guidance of the Qur'an is mentioned:

Although the phrase "The paths to God are as many as the people of the earth" (Al-Wāfī, Fayḍ Kāshānī, vol. 4, p. 59) must be examined and documented, this fact is not hidden from us that people have different talents, strengths and weaknesses, interests, egos, etc. in the path of divine guidance. And it is not possible to give one guide for all people. Although the general way and the straight path are the same and it is



also obvious, and it is clear from the appearance of the Qur'an that "Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him, this is the straight path" (Āl 'Imrān/51) but according to the circumstances of individuals, in addition to the general view, we should also have a special and individual look.

The Ahl al-Bayt (AS) used to give guidance to each person according to his circumstances and therefore ordered someone to recite the Qur'an, another to serve his parents, another to acquire knowledge, etc. Prophets and Ahl al-Bayt (AS) spoke at the level of the audience's intellect (Kulaynī, 1407; Vol. 8; p. 268).

When the Prophets and Ahl al-Bayt (AS) spoke according to the intellect of the people and had something to say to every person at any level, surely the Holy Qur'an also has something to say to everyone (general and special) and people receive topics and materials from the Qur'an based on their understanding and reason.

### **5- A special way to understand the Qur'an and its rules**

The Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) have proposed tools and solutions to reach a special understanding and their version of private guidance from the Qur'an, which, if we refer to the Qur'an according to it, a person will be given a special understanding and a special guidance. Some of them are:

#### **5-1- Observing the outward etiquette of reciting the Qur'an**

For the recitation of the Qur'an, there are formal etiquettes that can bring a person closer to the understanding of the Qur'an. Religion's instructions for reciting the Qur'an are directly related to obtaining guidance, light and understanding from the Qur'an. Of course, these etiquettes may not be considered effective only for receiving specific understanding, but for receiving general understanding or getting rewards from recitation, etc., it is better to

observe the outward etiquettes of recitation. In summary, some of them are:

Having ablution (Wāqī'ah/56 and Wasā'il al-Shi'a, Sheikh Ḥurr Āmulī, vol. 6, p. 196): brushing (ibid., p. 22), reciting in the form of tartīl and reading slowly (Muzammil/4) continuing in recitation<sup>1</sup> (Muzammil/20) reading the Qur'an in a good way (Al-Kāfī, Sheikh Kulaynī, vol. 2, p. 615)

It seems that these instructions are due to the connection between words and meanings in the Qur'an, and the way of recitation is directly related to receiving messages from the Qur'an. That is, reciting the Qur'an in tartīl and with a beautiful yet sad tone makes our understanding of the verses better and deeper and provides the conditions for the revelation of some meanings and concepts in our thoughts and souls.

#### **5-2- Observing the inner rituals of Qur'an recitation**

For a specific understanding of the Qur'an, it is necessary to observe esoteric rituals. Some of them are:

Having faith: the Qur'an has considered itself a source of mercy for the believers and a source of harm for the oppressors (Isra'-82). As a result, faith leads to a better and more understanding of the Qur'an.

Belief in God and the Qur'an and their accessories are among the most important conditions for understanding the Qur'an. The Qur'an presents itself as healing and mercy only to those who believe.

Having piety: Qur'an considers itself a source of guidance for the pious. (Baqarah-2) Piety becomes a source of special guidance and understanding of the Qur'an.

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1. O mankind! Worship your Lord, Who hath created you and those before you, so that ye may ward off (evil). (Baqarah/21)  
This is a declaration for mankind, a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off (evil) (Āl 'Imrān/138)

It should be noted that what we are trying to express now are special methods of understanding the Qur'an. And if we understand hermeneutics as the methodology of interpreting or understanding the text, we are doing a hermeneutic act!

Anṣāt and submission in front of the Qur'an: The Holy Qur'an says that one of the factors of mercy for the believers is Anṣāt and listening when the Qur'an is recited (A'raaf-204). Anṣāt means silence for listening: (Qāmūs Qur'an, Seyyed Ali Akbar Qarashī, vol. 7, p. 70)

In other words, one should go to the Qur'an with a spirit of submission and acceptance and without preconceived notions. One of the conditions of commentators is to go to the Qur'an without preconceptions and not to impose their opinions on the Qur'an (Interpretive methods and trends, Hossein Alavi Mehr, p. 182). Therefore, Anṣāt and submission and going towards the Qur'an without preconceived notions are other conditions for understanding the Qur'an.

Therefore, observing esoteric rituals leads to a special understanding of the Qur'an.

### **5-3- The Qur'an is the word of God and people are its audience**

One of the most important ways to get a special understanding of the Qur'an is to know the word of God. If a person, while studying the Qur'an, understands the text from God and sees God speaking to him, it will cause him to have a better, more accurate and special understanding of the Qur'an.

### **5-4- Consideration in the verses**

The Qur'an considers its revelation to be for thinking and says:

"(It is) a Book We have revealed to you abounding in good that they may ponder over its verses and that those endowed with understanding may be mindful." (Ṣād/29)

It is also mentioned in some narrations:

"There is no good in reciting without contemplation." (Biḥār al-Anwār, Allameh Majlisī, v. 5, p. 75):

According to the verse in question, the reason for the revelation of the verses is contemplation in them. Contemplation often refers to reasoning and thinking in the verses, but the Qur'an considers contemplation to be related to the heart and says: "Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Nay, on the hearts there are locks?" Examining the relationship between mind and heart with contemplation and extracting the correct meaning and method of deliberation requires a separate article. It was only necessary to mention that contemplation should be done with heart and soul.

Paying attention to the verses and thinking about them is another way to understand the Qur'an.

### **5-5- Attention to the 'Idl of the Qur'an**

Another method of special understanding of the Qur'an is to pay attention to the 'Idl of the Qur'an. The Qur'an considers the Messenger of God (PBUH) as the 'Idl and teacher of the Qur'an and says: "and purifying them and teaching them the Book and the wisdom" (Āl 'Imrān/164) to achieve a special understanding of the Qur'an, it is necessary to refer to the 'Idl of the Qur'an and the understanding presented by the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) is an error-free understanding due to their infallibility, and it is necessary to use them.

### **6- Rules and criteria for special understanding of the Qur'an**

In the end, we are looking for an answer to this question: does our special or private understanding of the Qur'an have rules, indicators, and standards, or is whatever everyone understands the same true? And if there are rules, what are those rules?

That whatever everyone understands is true is the same as the content of the philosophical

hermeneutic elders, which removes the Qur'an from being a source of knowledge, and it certainly cannot be accepted that whatever everyone understands and presents from the Qur'an is correct, rather, it should be said that if everyone's understanding is based on criteria, it can be cited for itself, but to induce that understanding to others, it must provide evidence.

Some of the criteria that can be provided for a specific understanding of the Qur'an are as follows:

1- Lack of conflict with the understanding of other verses of the Qur'an

The understanding presented by each person should not conflict other verses. Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (AS) says in Nahj al-Balāghah: "When the verses of the Qur'an acknowledge each other, then, understandings of the Qur'an should not conflict with the appearance of the Qur'an and correct understandings" (Nahj al-Balāghah, Sobhi Saleh (ed.), p. 61)"

2- Lack of conflict with the explanations provided by the infallible Imams (AS)

Ahl al-Bayt (AS) has infallibility and they have been granted complete and flawless understanding. Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (AS) says in this regard: "I have been given the understanding of the book, the knowledge of discourse, and the science of the Qur'an (Bisharat Al-Mustafa for the Shi'a Al-Murtida, Ṭabarī Āmulī, vol. 2, p. 4) So the complete and correct understanding of the Qur'an is with the Infallible (AS). And the understanding of the Qur'an should not be in contradiction with the words of Ahl al-Bayt (AS).

3- Lack of conflict with reason

In addition to the Qur'an and hadiths, the reason is also God's proof so that a non-rational understanding of the verses of the Qur'an cannot be accepted and considered correct.

## Conclusion

Qur'an has different methods and different levels to understand. The complete and correct understanding of the Qur'an verses belongs to the infallible Imams (AS) and others can understand some things from the Qur'an with certain conditions. This understanding is either in the field of the appearances of the verses, the subtleties and hints, or the contents of the Qur'an. In addition to these, everyone can benefit from the Qur'an according to the special instructions given by Ahl al-Bayt (AS). This type of Qur'anic understanding can be defined as special understanding against general understanding and consider as one of the miracles of the Qur'an.

All different methods and levels of understanding the Qur'an have specific standards and criteria. Therefore, if we consider hermeneutics in the sense of the correct understanding of the text, the Qur'an has a clear and specific hermeneutic, but if we consider hermeneutics in its philosophical sense and according to the opinions of Heidegger and Gadamer and their fellow thinkers, then it should be said that there is no relationship between the Qur'an and hermeneutics. By continuing to recite the Qur'an, one can gain a new understanding and learn something new every day.

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