

Sabab `l-Nuzūl Reasons For Revelation

Introduction

The 11th century c.e. is as far back as one can go to find works that dealt exclusively with material said to establish the times, places, and circumstances that prompted the revelation of the Koranic verses. The original *Asbāb* works as they are sometimes called are perhaps no more than four and it is to them that all subsequent independent works or references within other works may be traced.¹ In Andrew Rippin's study of the role of asbab material in early exegesis four major texts are considered prime. These are the *Kitab al-nuzul* of al-Wahidī (d.1075), *Asbāb al-nuzul wa qisas al-Furqaniya* of Muhammad b. As`ad al-Iraqi (d. 1171) *lubab al-Nuqul fī asbab al-Nuzul* of al-Suyut (d. 1501) and a text in the Berlin state library wrongly ascribed to al-Ja`barī.² Al-Wahidī's work restricts itself to some 83 chapters of the Koran and mainly cites asbab material appearing in apostolic traditions with full chains of transmission.

Reasons For Revelation

A group of scholars specialized in this subject, of whom the most senior would be `Alī b. Madīnī, the teacher of Bukhārī. The most famous work on this subject, notwithstanding its brevity, would be that of `l-Wāhidī. Ja`barī further summarized this work by omitting its chain of narrators and adding nothing more to it. Shaikh `l-Islām, Abū `l-Fadl b. Hajr compiled a book in the form of notes on this subject but died before its completion. I have not come across a complete copy thereof. I too have compiled a work on this topic, which I titled *Lubāb `l-Nuqūl fī asbāb `l-nuzūl*, and it is indeed unique in being both comprehensive and brief. Ja`barī has said: "The revelation of the Qur`ān falls into two categories:

i) That which was revealed without precedence.

¹Rippin, Andrew *The Quranic 'Asbab al-Nuzul Material: An Analysis of its Development and use in Exegesis* Ph.D. diss., McGill University (Canada) This work which appears in revised form as: *The Exegetical Genre Asbab al-Nuzul : A Bibliographical and Terminological Survey* Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (London, 1985) is still the primary source in English for the study of *asbab* material and its contribution to Koranic exegesis. Another important work in this regard is the same author's *Approaches to the history of the interpretation of the Quran* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1988);*The Quran : formative interpretation* (Brookfield, VT : Ashgate, 1999);

ii) That which was revealed due to an incident or in response to a question.

Many questions pertain to this subject.

Question One

The merits of determining the reasons for revelation: One scholar claims that it has no merit, seeing that it is so similar to history. He erred. It has in fact several merits, which include the following:

1. Knowing the wisdom that prompted the promulgation of a law
2. Limiting the ambit of a rule, at least for those who subscribe to the principle that meanings should be determined by the revelatory context (and not by the plain text as such).
3. A word with a general meaning is at times rendered specific through evidence. Where the revelatory context is known the meaning will be restricted accordingly to the exclusion of all other scenarios. This is so because context is considered definitive (*qaṭʿī*); in such cases using rational arguments is prohibited. This, as reported by the judge, Abu Bakr in the work *ʿl-Taqrīb* is the consensus of the scholars. No regard must thus be given to those isolated opinions that allow this.
4. Attaining the proper meaning of a word and removing all ambiguity. Wāḥidī has said: “it is impossible to interpret a verse without reference to the story behind it, and its revelation”. Ibn Daqīq ʿl-ʿId has said: “Knowing the revelatory context is a powerful tool to unraveling the meaning of the Qurʿān”. And Ibn Taymiyyah has said: “knowing the revelatory context helps understand the verse, for knowledge of the revelatory context provides knowledge of the cause itself. Marwān b. ʿl-Hakam had difficulty in understanding the verse “*lā taḥsabanna allathīna yafrahūna bimā atou.. .*”³ (3:188). He said: “if every man was punished for rejoicing in what was given to him, and in loving being praised for things he had not done, then we should all be punished, every one of us!”. Ibn ʿAbbās then explained to him that the verse was revealed in regard to People of the Book, who when asked something by the Prophet (s) would hide it from him.; they would instead point him elsewhere, and tell him that they had indeed informed him as he had requested. For this they wanted his commendation. This was reported by Bukhārī and Muslim.

³ “Think not of those who rejoice in what they have done . . .”

It is reported that `Uthmān b. Maẓ`ūn and `Amr b. Ma`dīkarib would cite the verse: “laisa `alā allathīna āmanū wa `amilū `l-ṣāliḥāti junāḥ fīmā ṭa`imū. . .”⁴ (5:93) in their claim that: “Wine is permissible!”, using the verse as a proof. But if they had known the revelatory context of the verse they would not have said that. When wine was declared unlawful people asked: What of those who died in the path of God but drank wine which is impure, as well.?” In response, this verse was revealed. Ahmed, Nasa’ī and others quote this tradition. The same is true for the condition in the verse “wa allā’ī ya’isna min `l-maḥīd’ min nisā’ikum in irtabtum fa `iddatuhunna thalāthatu ash hur. . .”⁵ (65:4) which confused some scholars; and this led to the Zahirites concluding that: “there is no waiting period (*iddah*) menopausal women if they are not irregular”. This however is clarified by the rc: on the authority of Ibn ‘Ubayy, Hākim reports that when the verse in Baqarah pertaining to the waiting period for women was revealed, they said that a number of women, comprising of the aged and the young, are not accounted for in the waiting period verses. In response, the verse in question was revealed. It is clear from this that the verse addresses those who were ignorant of their status with regard to the waiting period: were they bound by the waiting period rules or not? And was their waiting period the same as those mentioned Baqarah or not? Thus the words *in irtabtum* applies if their status confuses you and you know not how they ought to observe their waiting periods? This therefore, is their rule. 1

And in the case of the verse “ fa aynamā tuwallū fa thamma wajhu Allāh”⁶ (2:115), if we confined its meaning to that of the lexicon it would prescribe that the person engaged in the daily prayers (*ṣalāt*) is not required to face Mecca (*qiblah*) whether on journey or at home. But this is contrary to the consensus (*ijmā`*) of the scholars. Having knowledge of the rc however, apprizes one to the fact that this rule applies only to supererogatory prayers whilst traveling, and to that person who erred in determining the direction of prayer and realized that whilst still in prayer. There are however, variant opinions on this rule.

And the literal meaning of the verse “ inna `l-ṣafā wa `l-marwat min sha`ā’ir Allāh. . .

⁴ “Those who believe and do righteous deeds, bear no sin for having eaten. . .”

⁵ “And those of your women who has passed the age of monthly, for them the *iddah* (prescribed period), if you have doubt, is three months. . .”

⁶ “So wherever you turn, there is the Face of God”

.”⁷ (2:185) does not make obligatory running between the two hills (*al-sa`y*), and based on this reading some have ruled that it is indeed not obligatory. Ayesha however objected to `Urwah’s interpretation by citing the *rc*. It was revealed in response to those Companions who considered the *al-sa`y* a sinful relic of the days of ignorance.

5. Discarding the imagination of *al-ha`sr* (restriction). The gist of ‘I-Shāfi`ī’s opinion on the verse: “*qul lā ajidu fī mā ūhiya ilayya muḥarraman. . .*”⁸ (6:145) is that it was revealed in response to the Meccan pagans when they made unlawful what God made lawful, and made lawful what God made unlawful; they thus rebellious and obstinate {unto them ,and they were opposed to and in violation (to God)}. The verse had thus come to oppose their objectives. It is tantamount to Him saying: “Only that which you consider unlawful is in fact lawful, and only that which you consider lawful is in fact unlawful.” It falls in the same category as one who says : “eat no sweets today! To which you reply: : “I will eat nothing but sweets today!” The aim here is to contradict, and not to negate or affirm facts. It is as if the Almighty is saying: “Nothing is unlawful except that which you make lawful; this includes carrion, blood, swine and that which is slaughtered as sacrifice to some other deity. This however, does not imply the lawfulness of things beyond these because the objective is to confirm the unlawful and not the lawful. Imām ‘I-Ḥaramain (‘I-Juwaini) has said: “this is indeed a highly subtle observation, which if ‘I-Shāfi`ī had not preempted we would not have been able to oppose Mālik in his confining the unlawfulness only to those mentioned in the verse.

⁷ “Verily! *as-ṣafā* and *al-Marwah* (two mountains in Mecca) are the symbols of God. . .”

⁸ “Say (O Muḥammad): “I do not find in that which have been revealed to me anything forbidden to be eaten. . .”

6. Knowing the person in whose name the verse was revealed and identifying the ambiguity therein. And with regard to the verse “wa allathī qā la li wālidayhi uff lakumā”⁹ (46:17) Marwān would say that it was revealed in reference to Abd `l-Raḥmān b. Abu Bakr, until Ayesha responded to him by identifying its rc.

Second mas'alah (legal verdict)

Juristic theoreticians differ with regard to the principle: “Wisdom lies in the generality of the words rather than in the specifics of its rc.” We believe that it is former that is most correct. After all, many a verse was revealed in response to some cause, whereas scholars unanimously extended its application to areas beyond such cause. Thus, the verse of *zihār* (a pre-Islamic form of divorce) was revealed in regard to Salamah b.šāhr; the verse of *li`ān* (a sworn allegation of adultery) was revealed in regard to ḥilāl b. Umayyah; and the slander ordinances were revealed in regard to those who slandered `Ayesha, and these were all then extended to apply to others as well. Those who give no credence to the literal word counter that these and other such rules are established by way of other proofs, just as verses are unanimously restricted to their rc where such proof exists. In connection with the chapter *l-Humazat* Zamakhsharī had this to say: “it is quite permissible to consider the cause specific and the rebuke general in order to include those who might engage in the said evil. The cause would then be considered an allusion.

I say: : “Of the proofs that give credence to the view that the literal word is primary is the Companion’s and other’s free and widespread usage of the general meaning of the verses that were revealed in special contexts as argumentation. Ibn Jarīr said: “Muḥammad b. Abū Ma`shar narrated to me that Abū Abū Ma`shar Najīh informed us that he heard Sa`īd `l-Maqburī discuss with Muḥammad b. Ka`b `l-Quraẓī. Sa`īd said: “in parts of the Book of God it says that there are amongst the servants of God, those with tongues sweeter than honey, hearts more bitter than aloe, who wear fine clothes made of sheep skin, and obtain this world by means of the faith”. Muḥammad b. Ka`b said: “this is indeed, in the Book of God, in the verse “wa min `l-nās man yu`jibuka qauluhu fī `l-ḥayāt `l-dunyā. . .”¹⁰ (2:204). Sa`īd said: “do you know for whom it was revealed?”. Muḥammad b. Ka`b said: “indeed! The verse was revealed in regard to some man, but became general thereafter.

⁹ “He who says to his parents: “fie upon you both”

¹⁰ “And of mankind there is he whose speech may please you in this worldly life. . .”

If you were to say: “Here’s Ibn `Abbās however, who did not consider the verse “ *lā taḥsabanna allathīna yafrahūna. . .*”¹¹ (3:188) to be general, but restricted it instead to the story of the People of the Book about which it was revealed. I would say: “My response to that would be: That a word is more generally than the situation which caused its revelation is certainly not unknown to him. He however, was explaining that the objective of the word was indeed restricted . This is similar to the verse: to the Prophet (s) explanation of the word “ *l-ẓulm*” in the verse “*wa lam yalbisū imānahum bi ẓulm*”¹² (6:82) as association (*shirk*) which he deduced from the verse “*inna `l-shirk la ẓulmun `aẓīm*”¹³ (31:13). This, despite the understanding of the Companions that the word *ẓulm* applies generally to all forms of injustice. And there is in fact a report from Ibn `Abbās that confirms him giving credence to the generality argument. He for instance, held this view with regard to the theft verse even though it was first revealed concerning a women who stole. Ibn Abū Hātim said: “Ali b. Husain narrated from Muḥammad b. Abū Hammād, who quotes Abū Thumailah b. Abū Mu’min from Najdah `l-Hanafī who said: “ I asked Ibn `Abbās whether the verse “ *wa `l-sāriq wa `l-sāriqat fa iqta`ū aidihimā*”¹⁴ (5:38) is specific or general? He said that it is general.

Ibn Taymiyyah has said : “Often, words such as “this verse is revealed concerning such and such a person” are used, especially when such a person is mentioned, as in the verse of *ẓihār*, which some say was revealed in regard to the wife of Thābit b. Qays, or the verse of *kalālah* which was revealed in regard to Jābir b. `Abd Allāh, or the verse “*wa an uḥkum baynahum*”¹⁵ (5:49) which was revealed in regard to the Banū Quraiza and the Nadīr. The same is true of verses said to have been revealed in regard to a group of Meccan pagans, or a group of the Jews and Christians, or a group of Muslims. Those making such assertions are not of the opinion that the rule that the verse establishes is restricted to those groups to the exclusion of all others. No Muslim or sane person can ever say that. People, in spite of their different opinions about the generality of a particular word used in a given cause, still ask the question: “should the general word be specified by its cause?” No one says that the

¹¹ “Think not that those who rejoice in what they have done. . .”

¹² “And confuse not their belief with *ẓulm* (wrong) ”

¹³ “Verily joining others in worship with God is a great wrong indeed”

¹⁴ “And the male thief and the female thief, cut off their hands”

¹⁵ “And so judge (O Muhammad) among them by what God. . .”

general word in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah is specific to some person. At most it extends at least to that genre of people who share such attributes. And the general depends not on the word alone. As for that verse which has a rc, if it is a command or prohibition, then it will apply to the individual concerned as well as to those who fall in this category. If however, it consists of praise or dispraise then too it will it will apply to the individual concreded as well as to those who fall in this category.

Note

You know from what was said that words are considered to general. As for that verse which was revealed in regard to a specific person, and whose words are not general, it will be restricted entirely as such. An example is the verse “wa sa yujannabuha `l-Atqā allathī yu'tī mālahu yatazakkā”¹⁶ (92:17 - 18). Scholars are unanimous that it was revealed in regard to Abu Bakr al-šiddīq. And by looking at this verse in conjunction with the verse “inna akramakum `inda Allāh atqākum”¹⁷ (49:13) Fakhr `l-Dīn Rāzī concludes that Abū Bakr is indeed the most virtuous person after the Messenger of God. Those who thinks that the verse is general, applicable to anyone who falls in that category, based on the principle, are wrong: the verse has no general form; the *alif* and the *lām* give a general meaning when it is a relative pronoun or is definite in the plural form. A group of scholars add “or when in single form” on condition that there is no article of *`ahd* (when the article *al* used to distinguish a noun known to hearer). The *lām* in the word “`l-atqā” is not a relative noun because the definite article latter, through common consensus, does not create a relative noun with a noun in the superlative form. The word “`l-atqā” is not plural but singular and the *`ahd* is present, {especially with the distinguish and non-partnership which is attained with the form of *aF`alu* .}{ The view that it is general, is null and void, and definiteness through specification is established and confining the ruling to the person about whom the verse was revealed.}

Third mas'alah (legal verdict)

The Similarities of the Revelatory Cause with the literal word

¹⁶ “And the pious will be far removed from it (hell). He who spends his wealth for increase in self-purification”

¹⁷ “Verily, the most honorable of you by God is he who is pious”

Already mentioned is the fact that the form of the cause is definitely part of the general. Many a verse was revealed due to specific causes and then placed with suitable general verses keeping the systematic approach of the Qur'ān and context in mind. In this way the specification comes close to the form of the cause in being definitively part of the general. Thus has Subukī preferred the view that it is a middle category below the cause and above the causeless. An example would be the verse: “ a lam tara ilā allathīna, ūtū naṣībān yu'minūna bi 'l-jibt wa 'l-ṭāghūt. . .”¹⁸ (4:51) which refers to Ka`b b. 'l-Ashraf and other Jewish scholars who on arrival in Mecca and after witnessing those killed in Badr, urged the pagans to take revenge by doing battle with the Prophet (s). They then asked them : “ who is more guided, Muḥammad and his companions or us? They said: “you are”, even though they knew otherwise through descriptions given in their book that applied to the Prophet (s), and even though they had pledged not to hide this. This was thus, a binding trust which they flouted when, driven by jealousy of the Prophet (s), they told the pagans, “you are more guided”. This verse together with this utterance, carries a threat that serves to prescribe the opposite of it, and incorporates the requirement that trusts must be fulfilled, which in this case happens to be the explication of the Prophet's attributes as being the one described in their book. This is in keeping with the verse: “inna Allāh ya'muru kum an tu'addū'l-amānāt ilā ahlihā”¹⁹ (4:58). This applies generally to all trusts, whereas that is specific to a single trust, the attributes of the Prophet (s) in the manner so described. In writing the general follows the specific even though it was revealed after it. Congruence requires that the object of the specific be included in the general. And this is why This relationship It is appropriate that indication of the specific should be included in the general. Therefore, Ibn 'l-'Arabī in his exegesis that the arrangement is justified because it gives notice of the People of the Book's concealment of the attributes of the Prophet (s) and their assertion: “The pagans are indeed more rightly guided! ”. This was dishonesty on their part, which sort of forced the discussion to include all kinds of trusts.

Some scholars have said: “the delayed revelation of the verse of trusts, some six years afterwards, does not contradict this because time is a factor in establishing rc, and not

¹⁸ “Have you not considered those who were given a portion of the Scripture? They believe in Sorcery and ṭāghūt (anything worshiped other than God). . .”

¹⁹“God, indeed, commands you to return trusts back to its rightful owners.”

relationships. The objective after all, is only to place a verse which is best suited to it. Verses were revealed in accordance with their causes, and the Prophet (s) would instruct that they be inserted in suitable places that he knew through God to be their rightful places.

The fourth mas'alah (legal verdict)

Determining the Revelatory Cause

Wāhidī said: “Opinions about the rc of the Book are not permissible except from those among the witnesses of revelation who happened to have heard such reports and researched its application. Muḥammad b. Sīrīn said: “I asked `Ubaidah about a verse in the Qur’ān”, to which he replied: “Fear the Lord and speak truthfully! Those with knowledge of the circumstances that prompted God to reveal the Qur’an have passed on”.

Another scholar has said: “knowledge of the rc was obtained by the Companions by way of judicial matters. At times some of them not certain would aks: “I think this verse was revealed in regard to such and such person”, as was reported by all six scholars, on the authority of `Abd Allāh b. Zubair who said: “Zubair disputed with a man concerning the flow of water on land at `l-ḥarrah. The Prophet (s) said: “O Zubair, Irrigate (your farm), then send the water to your neighbour”. The Ansārī then said: “O Messenger of God, is this because he is your cousin!”. His face changed colors. . .” Zubair said: “I believe that the verse “falā wa rabbika lā yu’minūn ḥattā yuḥakkimūka fī mā shajara bayna hum”²⁰ (4:65) was revealed only in that context.

In the work *Ulūm `l-ḥadīth* Ḥākīm said: “If a Companion who was witness to the period of revelation provides information about a verse of the Qur’ān as being revealed in some context, then that tradition would be considered a sound tradition (*ḥadīth musnad*). This view is shared by Ibn ‘l-Ṣalāḥ and others who cite the tradition in Muslim narrated on the authority of Jābir in which he says: : “the Jews used to say that the child born of a sexual encounter in which the woman’s vagina is penetrated from the rear will be cross eyed.” As a result God revealed: the verse “nisā’ukum ḥarthun lakum”²¹ (:223”).

Ibn Taymiyyah has said: “Statements such as: “this verse was revealed in such and

²⁰ “But no, by your Lord, they can have no faith, until they make you (O Muḥammad) judge in all disputes between them”

²¹ “Your wives are a tilth unto you”

such context at times refers to the rc and at others to that which was integral to the verse itself without necessarily being the rc. This is like saying “He meant such and such by this verse.” Scholars differ when a Companion says: “this verse was revealed in regard to this”. Will it be considered a musnad tradition as when the rc wherefore the verse came down is mentioned, or will it be considered as commentary from him without having the status of a sound tradition? Bukhārī considers this a sound tradition whereas others do not. Most of Musnad compendia fall into this category, like the Musnad of Ahmad and others. Opposed to this is where the cause that prompted the revelation is mentioned which all of them include in the sound category.

Zarkashī said in the work *ʿl-Burhān* : “it is an established fact from the custom of the Companions and the Successors that one of them says: “this verse was revealed in regard to this”, they meant thereby that this incorporates a certain rule, and not that it is its rc. This falls into the category of adjudicating proofs through the verses, and not of transmitting just the events as such.

I said: “That which is documented about rc includes only those verses revealed during the period of its occurrence. Which would then exclude Wāḥidī’s assertion that the chapter *ʿl-Fīl* was revealed as a result of the Abyssinian’s advent with them That was certainly not the rc of anything! Rather, this belongs to the category of material relating to historical events. Such is the case with the stories relating to Noah’s people as well as those of the *ʿĀd* , the Thamūd, the building of the Ka`bah, etc. Similarly, God’s taking of Abraham as a friend in the verse: “wa ittakhatha Allāh Ibrāhīm khalīl”²² (4:125) is obviously not one of the reasons for the revelation of the Qur’an.

Note

As mentioned previously the statement of a Companion falls into the category of the sound. If it emanates from a Successor then it is also considered sound (*marfūʿ*) and of the *mursal* category but only if its chain of transmitters is authentic. Some scholars of exegesis like Mujāhid , `Ikrimah and Sa`īd b. Jubair accept the reports of the Companions or do so by corroborating these with other *mursal* traditions.

The fifth mas’alah (legal verdict)

²² “And God has taken Abraham as a friend”

The exegete often mentions multiple rc for a single verse in which case the best way of determining the most authentic cause would be to examine the actual expression. If one of them expresses himself by saying: “it was revealed because of such and such” and the other by saying the same but mentioning a different incident, then as mentioned previously, the latter would be considered commentary and not the rc. There would be no contradiction between the two views if the wording accommodates them both. An explanation hereof will appear in the section seventy eight.

If one were to say: “it was revealed in regard to such and such”, whilst some other person asserted a cause that contradicted it, then the latter would be given credence, and the former would be considered deductive thinking. An example of this would be Bukhārī’s tradition quoted on the authority of Ibn `Umar, who said : “the verse “nisā’ukum ḥarthun lakum”²³ (2:223) was revealed in regard to sexual intercourse from the back. But as mentioned previously the report of Jābir clearly contradicts it. Credence would be given to Jābir’s report because it is transmitted from Prophet (s) himself, whereas the view of Ibn `Umar should be considered law making. He caused Ibn `Abbās to have doubts, and he thus mentioned a tradition similar to that of Jābir, as quoted by Abu Dāwūd and Hākim.

If one person mentions a rc and another person mentions something different, then the report having a sound chain of transmitters would be given credence. This is exemplified by a tradition quoted by Bukhārī, Muslim and others on the authority of Jundub, who said that the Prophet (s) complained of illness and did not perform voluntary prayers for one night or two. A woman came to him and said: “O Muḥammad, I see your Satan has abandoned you! Then God revealed the verse “wa `l-Dhuḥā * wa `l-layl ithā saĵā * mā wadda`aka rabbuka wa mā qalā”²⁴ (93:1 - 3).

Tabarānī and Ibn Abū Shaybah quote Hafs b. Maisarah who quotes his mother, who quotes her mother—a servant of the Messenger of God—as saying: “a puppy entered the house of the Prophet (s), crept under the bed, and died. For four days no revelation came to the prophet (s). He then said: “O Khaulah, what’s happening in the house of the Messenger of God? Angel Gabriel has not come to me? I said to myself: “if only you cleaned and swept the house regularly!” I got down with the broom under the bed and removed the puppy .

²³“ your wives are a tilth for you”

²⁴ “By the forenoon . By the night when it darkens. Your Lord has neither forsaken you nor hates you”

Whereupon the Prophet (s) came with his beard trembling; whenever he trembled it was a sure sign that revelation was coming to him. God then revealed the verses “wa `l-Duḥā” until the verse “fatardā”.

In the commentary to the work of Bukhārī Ibn Hajr says: “the story about Gabriel’s delay due to the puppy is well known but it being its rc is however far fetched. In its chain of transmitters is an unknown person, and so the report which would be considered reliable is that which appears in the Sahīih collection.

Another example is the tradition narrated by Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abū Ḥātim, by way of Ibn Abū Hātim, who quotes Ibn `Abbās as saying: “when the Messenger of God migrated to Madīnah, God commanded him to face Jerusalem in prayer. The Jews were ecstatic! He did this for some ten months or more. He however had a preference for the Abrahamic direction of prayer, and would beseech God and look to the skies expectantly. God then revealed: “fa wallū wujūhakum shaṭrah”²⁵ (2:150). This made the Jews suspicious and so they asked: “what turned them from the prayer direction they were on? In response God then revealed the verse “ qul li Allāh `l-mashriq wa `l-maghrib”²⁶ (2: 115) and He said “fa ainamā tuwallū fa thamma wajhu Allāh”²⁷ (2:115).

Ḥākim and others quote Ibn `Umar as saying: “ the verse “ fa ainamā tuwallū fa thamma wajhu Allāh” was revealed to allow facing any direction one’s mount chose during a voluntary prayer.

Tirmidhī quotes a tradition of `Amir b. Rabā`a, one he deemed weak, in which he said: “we were traveling through a dark night and knew not the direction to Mecca. Every man from among us then prayed on his own. On awakening the next day, we mentioned this to the Prophet (s). So the verse was revealed”. Dāruqtunī quotes a similar tradition from Jābir, with a chain of transmitters that is also weak.

Ibn Jarīr quotes Mujāhid as saying: “when the verse “ud`ūnī astajib lakum”²⁸ (40:60) was revealed, people asked: “Where should we turn to? So the verse was revealed. This tradition is *mursal*. And he quotes Qatādah as saying that the Prophet (s) said: “One of your brothers has

²⁵ “And wheresoever you are, turn your face towards it”

²⁶ “And to God belong the east and the west”

²⁷ “So wherever you turn(yourself or your faces) there is the face of God”

²⁸ “Invoke me (ask me for anything) I will respond to your (invocation).”

indeed died, so perform the funera) prayers on him”. They replied: “But he did not face the *qiblah* during prayer. So the verse was revealed. This is a mu`d`al and gharīb tradition.

These then are five rc, of which the weakest would be the last one because of its mu`d`al status. Then, the one prior to it would be considered less weak because of its *mursal* status, followed by the one before it because of its weak narrators. The second report is authentic except that he said: “it was revealed for such and such” without clarifying the rc. The first report’s chain of transmitters is authentic one, and in it the rc is clearly mentioned. This then makes it dependable.

Another example is what Ibn Mardawaih and Ibn Abī hātim report by way of Ibn Ishāq, Muḥammad b. Abū Muḥammad, who quotes `Ikrimah, or Sa`īd, who quotes Ibn `Abbās as saying: “Umayyah b. Khalaf, Abū Jahl and a group of men of the Quraish came to the Prophet (s) and said: “O Muḥammad, come seek the blessings of our idols, and we will then accept your religion. He longed for their conversion to Islam, and so softened to them. Whereupon, God revealed the verse “wa in kādū la yaftinūnaka `an allathī auḥaynā ilayka. . .”²⁹ (17:73).

Ibn Mardawaih, by way of `l-Aufī, quotes Ibn `Abbās as saying that Thaḳīf said to the Prophet (s): “give respite to us for one year so that the (tribe) he be guided to our gods. When we get hold of that person who have been guided to it, we will safeguard it then we accept Islam. So he intended to give them respite, so the verse was revealed.??? This requires the revelation to have taken place in Medina, whereas the first requires it to have taken place in Mecca. Its chain of transmitters places it in the ḥasan category; and with further corroboration in the work of Abū Shaikh by way of Sa`īd b. Jubayr it gets elevated it to the śaḥīḥ category, and is considered dependable.

²⁹ “Verily, they were about to tempt you away from that which We have revealed unto you”

The fourth condition is when the chain of transmitters are equally correct in which case the one transmitted by the narrator who was actually present will be given preference. One example of is the tradition quoted by Bukhārī on the authority of Ibn Mas`ūd who said: “I was walking with the Prophet (s) in Medina—he was doing so reclined on a stick—when he passed by a group of Jews. Some of them said: “Why not ask him! They said: “tell us about the soul”. He stood for a while with his head raised, and I then knew that revelation was coming to him. It came to a stop, and he then said: “qul `l-rūh min amr rabbī wa mā ūfītum min `l-`ilm illā qalīl”³⁰ (17:85).

Tirmidhī quotes a tradition he deemed *ṣaḥīḥ* on the authority of Ibn`Abbās, who said: “The Quraish said to the Jews: “Give us something to ask this man about. They said: “Ask him about the soul.” They did so, and God then revealed the verse: “man yashfa` shafā`atan . . .”³¹) This requires its revelation to have occurred in Mecca, but the first report contradicts this. It is given preference because that which Bukhārī narrates is more authentic than others, and because Ibn Mas`ūd was present at the incident.

The fifth state is for it to be revealed following two rc in the foregoing categories, on condition that the difference not be known, as is the case with the previous verses. So it refers to that??? An example of this is Bukhārī’s report on the authority of `Ikrimah who quotes Ibn `Abbās as saying that in the presence of the Prophet (s) Hilāl b. Ummayyah accused his wife of having an affair with Sharīk b. Saḥmā’. In response the Prophet (s)said : “Produce testimony in support or punishment will be inflicted on your back”. So he said “O Messenger of God! If one of us sees a man with his wife, would he go around seeking testimony!” Whereupon the verse “ wa allathīna yarmūna azwājahum. . . in kāna min `l- śadiqīn” ³² (24:6) was revealed.

Bukhārī and Muslim report Sahl b. Sa`d as saying: “ `Uwaimir came to `āsim b. `Adī and said: “Ask the Messenger of God, if one man finds another with his wife, and kills him, should he then be killed, or what? So `āsim asked the Messenger of God, who censured the questioner. `Āsim then informed `Uwaimir and said: “By God, I will personally approach the Messenger of God to ask him” Which he did, and was told: “With regard to your predicament portions of the

³⁰ “And they ask you concerning the *ruh* (soul/spirit). Say the spirit is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord”

³¹

³² “And for those who accuse their wives.....”

Qur'ān have been revealed. . .” These reports have been reconciled by assuming that though this first occurred with Hilāl, it however, happened to coincide with the coming of `Uwaymir as well. It was thus revealed with regard to both of them. Nawawī inclines to this view but is preceded by `l-Khatīb who said: “Perhaps coincidentally, this occurs to both at the same time”.

Bazzār quotes Huthaifa as saying that the Messenger of God said to Abū Bakr : “if you see a man with Umm Rūmān (his wife), what would you do to him?”. He said: “I will harm him”. He then said: “What would you do, O `Umar?” He said: “I will say “God curse the `l-a`jaz (guilty one) because he is filth. The verse was then revealed. Ibn Hajr said: “Nothing proscribes a multiplicity of rc”

The sixth state, is where this is impossible, in which case it will be ascribed to multiple revelations and repetitions. An example would be the tradition quoted by Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Musayyib who said: “The Messenger of God visited Abu Talib whilst he was on his death bed and with him were Abu Jahl and `Abd Allāh b. Abū Umayyah. So he said: “O uncle, say! There is no deity worthy of worship except God, and I will then intercede on your behalf with God”. Abu Jahl and `Abd Allāh said: “O Abu Talib! Are you renouncing the religion of `Abd `l- Muṭṭalib! They continued speaking to him until he said: “He remains on the religion of `Abd `l-Muṭṭalib”. The Prophet (s) then said: “I will continue to seek forgiveness for you as long as I’m not prevented from doing so.” So the verse : “mā kāna li `l-nabī wa allathīna āmanū an yastaghfirū li `l- mushrikīn . . .”³³ (9:113) was revealed.

Tirmidhī quotes tradition—which he deems *hasan*—with `Alī saying: “ I heard a man ask penance for his parents who were idolaters!” I then said: “ you ask penance for your parents who were idolaters!”, to which he replied: “Abrāhīm also asked penance for his father who was an idolater. So I mentioned this to the Messenger of God, after which the verse was revealed.

Hākīm and others quote Ibn Mas`ūd as saying: “The Prophet (s) once went to the graveyard and sat at a grave side, in supplication, for long. He then wept, and said : “ the grave that I was sitting at belongs to my mother, for whose supplication I asked my Lord’s permission, but He did not do so. The verse “mā kāna li `l-nabī wa allathīna āmanū an yastaghfirū li `l-mushrikīn” was then revealed to me. We reconcile between these traditions as reports of multiple revelations.

Another example also, is the statement of Abū Huraira as quoted by Baihaqī and Bazzār

³³ “It is not proper for the Prophet and those who believe to ask God forgiveness for the idolaters . . .”

that the Prophet (s) stood at the body of Hamza when he was martyred—and he was mutilated in the process—and he said: “I will most certainly mutilate as many as seventy of them instead!” And whilst he was still standing Gabriel came down with these last verses of `l-Nahl: “Wa in `āqabtum fa `āqībū bi mithli mā `ūqibtum bihi . . .”³⁴ (16:126)

Tirmidhī and Hākim quote Ubay b. Ka`b as saying” “At the battle of `Uḥud, sixty- four Helpers (*ansār*) and six Migrants (*muhājirūn*) were slain. Amongst them was Hamza who had been mutilated. As a result, the Helpers said: “If we overcome them someday in this manner we will most certainly we will definitely attack them.???” During the conquest of Mecca however God revealed the verse “wa in `āqabtum . . .” Apparently, the revelation of this verse was delayed till the conquest of Mecca. In the previous tradition however, its revelation took place at Uḥud. Ibn ḥaśṣār said: “To reconcile these traditions one may aver that because it is considered a Meccan revelation, it was first revealed in Mecca before migration, as part of the chapter, then secondly at Uhūd, and then thirdly, at the conquest of Mecca. These multiple revelations were reminders God sent to His servants. To this genre Ibn Kathīr added the verses pertaining to the soul.

Note

³⁴ “And if you punish (your enemy), then punish them with the like of that which you were afflicted”

At times these narrations include the words “then he recited” which the narrator confuses for “then was revealed”. An example of this is the tradition which Tirmidhī reports—and deems *saḥīḥ*—on the authority of Ibn `Abbās authenticated it - who said: “a Jew passed by the Prophet (s) and said: “what will you say O Abū `l-Qāsim to God placing the heavens on this, and the earths on this; the water on this, and the mountains on this; and the entire creation on this?” God then revealed the verse “wa mā qadaru Allāh haqq qadrihī. . .”³⁵ (6:91). The report however, appears in the saḥīih collection with the words: “then the Prophet recited. . .” This is correct for the verse is Meccan.

Another example is the Bukhārī’s report which has Anas saying: “On hearing of the arrival of the Messenger of Allah Abd Allāh b. Salām went to him, and said: “I want to ask you of three things, known to none but an apostle: What is the first sign of the Hour? And what is the first food of the people of Heaven? And who does the child resemble, his father or his mother? He said: “Gabriel just informed me.” He said: “Gabriel?”. He said yes”. He said: “that angel is the enemy of the Jews”. So he read this verse “ man kāna `adūwwan li jibrīl fa innahu nazzalahū `alā qalbika”³⁶ (2:97). Ibn Hajr in the commentary of Bukhārī said: the context indicates that the Prophet (s) simply recited the verse to refute the words of the Jew, which does not necessitate its revelation at that time. He said: “this is most reliable view, for narrations other than those of Ibn Salām are considered authentic in this regard.

Note

Contrary to the previous discussion, where one rc is offered to explain multiple verses it also occurs that multiple verses are revealed in response to a single event. An example of this would be Tirmidhī and Hākim’s report quoting Umm Salamah as saying: “O Messenger of God, I do not hear God mentioning anything about women and the migration!” In God revealed the verse: “fa istajāba lahum rabbuhum annī lā udī u . . .”³⁷ (3:195).

³⁵ “They did not estimate God with an estimation due to Him. . .”

³⁶ “Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel, for indeed he has brought the Qur`ān down to your heart”

³⁷ “ so their Lord accepted of them (their supplication and answered them), never will I allow to be lost the work of any. . .”

Hākīm also quotes her as saying: “O Messenger of God, you speak of men, but not of women!” So the verse “inna `l-muslimāna wa `l-muslimāt”³⁸ (33:35) and the verse “ innī lā udī u `amala `āmil minkum min thakarīn au unthā”(3:195) were revealed. He also quotes her as saying: “Men fight but not women! And we receive no more than half the inheritance! In response God revealed: “wa lā tatamannau mā fad`d`ala Allāh bihī ba`d`ukum `alā ba`d” and “ inna `l-muslimāna wa `l-muslimāt”.

Another example is Bukhārī’s report on the authority of Zaid b. Thābit that the Messenger of God dictated to him: “lā yastawī `l-qā`idūna min `l-mu`minīn. . . wa l-mujāhidūn fī sabīl Allāh”³⁹ (4:95). Ibn Umm Maktūm who was blind then approached him and said: “O Messenger of God, if only I was able to, I would certainly have done battle In response God revealed: “laisa `alā `l-`du`afā’ . . .”⁴⁰ (9:91). And Ibn Abū Hātim quotes Zaid b. Thābit as also saying: “I used to be the scribe for the Messenger of God, and had just put my pen behind my ear when the call for battle was made. The Prophet was still awaiting revelation when a blind came to him and said: “What about me O Messenger of God, seeing that I am blind! Then the verse “laisa `ala `l-`du`afā’ . . .” (Tauba 91)

Another example is the report of Ibn Jarīr quoting Ibn `Abbās as saying: “Whilst seated in the shade of a room the Messenger of God said: “A man will certainly come looking at you with the eyes of the devil.. When a blue man appeared, the Messenger of God called him, and said: “why do you and your companions malign me? The man then left and returned with his companions who swore they said no such thing till he eventually forgave them In response however the verse “ya`hlifūna bi Allāh mā qālū . . .”⁴¹ (9:74) was revealed. Hākīm and Ahmad report this but with the words “and God then revealed” “yaum yab`athuhum Allāh jamī`an fa ya`hlifūna kamā ya`hlifūna lakum. . . .”⁴² (58:18) at the end.

Note

³⁸ “Verily, the muslim men and women”

³⁹ “Not equal are those of the believers who sit at home, except those who are disabled, and those who strive hard and fight in the cause of God”

⁴⁰ “There is no blame on those who are weak”

⁴¹ “They swear by God that they said nothing (bad).....”

⁴²“ on the day when God will resurrect them altogether, then they will swear to Him like how they swear to you.....”

Ponder over that which I have mentioned in this regard and adhere to it, for I remain unsurpassed in compiling and extracting it after much deliberation over the works of the scholars and their disparate views.