Inquiry of the Nature and Foundations of Three-Layer Interpretation Theory

بررسی چیستی و مبانی نظریه تفسیر سه لایه‌ای

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Abstract

The present article studied the nature and foundations of the theory of "Three-layer interpretation of the Holy Qur'an". First, the theory is defined, consisting three layers: historical, trans-historical and modern. The historical layer is considered the same understanding of Hejaz Arab at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) as stated in the verses of the Qur'an. To understand such interpretation, one must refer to the promises of those people, some of which are the appearance and context of the verses, similar verses, the personality of the audience of the Qur'an, the events of that era, the culture and history of those people and the covenants. The trans-historical layer is also considered a knowledge that is common and accepted among all human races, which is achieved by abolishing the characteristics of the age and the revelation of the Qur'an. The modern layer is the adaptation of the problems, that needs and requirements of the present age to the same common and acceptable human knowledge. Some of the most important foundations of this theory that are discussed in this article are customary, spoken, gradual descent, historicity and marginalization on the one hand and the evolution of ethnic requirements and the need to resolve the apparent conflict between the Qur'an and science and modernity.

چکیده

در مقاله حاضر، چیستی و مبانی نظریه «تفسیر سه لایه‌ای قرآن کریم» بررسی شده است. نخست، نظریه تعریف شده و بر سه لایه تایخی، فراتاریخی و عصری مشتمل دانسته شده است. لایه تاریخی همان فهم عرب حجاز عصر پیامبر(ص) از آیات قرآن به شمار آمده و اظهار شده است، برای شناخت چنان فهمی باید به معهودات آن مردم مراجعه کرد که برخی از آنها، ظاهر و سیاق آیات، آیات مشابه، شخصیت مخاطبان قرآن، حوادث آن عصر و مصر، فرهنگ و تاریخ آن مردم و عهدین بر شمرده شده است. لایه فراتاریخی نیز عبارت از یک معرفتی دانسته شده است که میان همه اقوام بشری مشترک و مقبول باشد که با الغای خصوصیات عصر و مصر نزول قرآن به دست می آید. لایه عصری عبارت از تطبیق مسائل و حاجات و مقتضیات عصر حاضر بر همان معرفت مشترک و مقبول بشری حاصل می گردد. برخی از مهم ترین مبانی این نظریه که در این مقاله بدان پرداخته شده، عبارت از عرفی و گفتاری و تدریجی النزول و تاریخمندی و حاشیه بر متن بودن از یک سو و تطور مقتضیات قومی و ضرورت حل تعارض ظاهری میان قرآن و علم و مدرنیته است.

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Introduction

In the field of updating the Qur'anic teachings, various theories have been offered by religious thinkers, one of the most important of which is the theory of three-layer interpretation of the Qur'an. In this theory, it is considered that the Qur'an is a historical text and therefore, in order to make its teachings effective, one must first discover how the Qur'an was understood in the time of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). And then the characteristics that are specific to the era of the revelation of the Qur'an should be removed from the verses of the Qur'an and a general and common meaning is obtained among human races, and then modern cases and issues are applied to that general and common meaning.

This article addresses to answer the questions of what is the nature of the theory of three-layer interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and what is the method of interpretation based on it and what are the foundations of this theory.

1. Research background

The theory of "three-layered interpretation of the Holy Qur'an" has been expressed by Ja'far Nekounam. He officially proposed this theory in cyberspace in 2016. Madhamtan's blog, which belongs to him, contains explanations. This theory has since been reviewed and criticized in several meetings and interviews. The "Specialized Conference on the Three-Layer Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an" is an example of them, which was held in the presence of Qassem Darzi and Mohsen Armin at the "Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies". Among the criticisms made at this meeting is the historical aspect of the Qur'an in this theory and the

precedence of Faḍl al-Rahman's "Two-movement theory" on it. Another critique is the critique of Seyyed Reza Mo'ddab, entitled "The view of a three-layered interpretation of the Qur'an is vague and undocumented" published on the website of the International Qur'an News Agency. He called the theory vague and undocumented, and Nekounam responded to the criticism in detail on his blog. The Chistiha website has, on several occasions, reflected Nekounam's telegram conversations in the field of three-layer interpretation. Nekounam has also explained the basics of his theory in some articles. The articles "The Conventionality of the Language of the Qur'an", "The Language of the Qur'an, Spoken or Written" and "Study of the Theory of the Addressing Language of the Qur'an" are among them. However, no published sources can be found to review and critique this theory, and this article is the first to examine this theory.

2. Expressing the theory

Nekounam is of the opinion that "No verse of the Qur'an has been revealed absolutely and universally to all human beings and societies in every age. Because human needs, issues and requirements are not fixed and the same in all ages and societies (Nekounam, 2001: 12). Therefore, if we want to use the Qur'an for the present age, we have to have a three-layered interpretation. In his view, this theory is in fact capable of bridging the gap between tradition and modernity and transforming the ethnic and historical understanding of the Qur'an into a universal and eternal understanding (Nekounam, The Theory of Three-Layer Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, the Quiddities). This point has

also been emphasized by other modern thinkers, including Mr. Salehpour. He is of the opinion that with the change of social conditions, human beings need to reproduce religious propositions appropriate to the new conditions and in order to strengthen the connection of religious propositions with the social system and increase its functions. Its solution is to seek help from reason and update religious teachings and instructions appropriate to modern conditions (Salehpour, 1996).

Nekounam introduces the process of this interpretation in three historical, trans-historical and modern levels. In the first layer, which is a historical interpretation, it expresses the meaning that the Arabs of Hejaz at the Prophet's time understood from the verses of the Qur'an, and the knowledge of this layer of interpretation is based on the situation and uses of the Arabic language at the time of revelation. The reason is that for the early audience there was no problem in discovering the meanings of the Qur'an, and the meaning was evident for the "Arabs of the Age of Revelation", and in fact interpretation is a temporary matter due to the passage of time and the lack of evidence and the intervention of presuppositions. (Nekounam, "A brief part of the meeting of different readings of the Holy Qur'an", Jam-e-Jam). Some have expressed Nekounam's opinion in this regard that in fact the Qur'an in its essence, does not need to be interpreted and the need for interpretation should be sought in the audience (Rezaei Isfahani, 2009: 30) Nekounam in the second layer entitled trans-historical layer, points out that after the abolition of the ethnic and historical characteristics of the verses of the Qur'an, a general meaning is obtained that is applicable to all times. And in

the third layer, the general meaning derived from the layer of trans-historical interpretation is given to cases and examples of the time when we live in it (Nekounam, "The Three-Layer Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an", the Quiddities).

3. The quiddity of the layers of three-layer interpretation theory

This theory has three stages called three layers: historical layer, trans-historical layer and modern or cultural layer. In the following, we describe the implementation method and steps of each layer.

3-1. Historical layer

According to this theory, the Qur'an is a historical text and its understanding, like any other historical text, depends on studying and reconstructing the evidences and information that existed at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an and that era (Nekounam, Telegram notes). Explaining the historical nature of the text of the Qur'an, Nekounam says: The Qur'an has been instilled in the framework of beliefs and traditions and their reform, and in response to the requirements and questions and events of the period of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In other words, an understanding that is specific to an era is historical, and if in a text, an understanding specific to an era is reflected, that understanding is considered historical. Also, beliefs and traditions that are not present in all ethnic groups in the world and are observed in a particular ethnic group are ethnic; not universal (Nekounam, Theory of Three-Layer Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, Tirdad Philosophical Group). In another article, he says: Historical interpretation is based on

information that existed at the time and place of the induction of the Qur'an, including the appearance and context of Qur'anic verses, and the historical meaning of Qur'anic verses is the same meaning that the Arabs of Hejaz understood in the time of the Prophet. Because the Qur'an was revealed in their language and for their guidance (J. Nekounam, Telegram Notes).

He considers one of the necessities of the historical interpretation of the Qur'an to be that the Qur'an was expressed in the Arabic language of the time of revelation and was based on the ideas of the linguists. For this reason, if we understand the words of the language without considering the ideas of the linguists, we will often make a mistake in understanding the meaning of the text (Nekounam, Theory of Three-Layered Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, Tirdad Philosophical Group). Such a view has been expressed by other thinkers, including Ayatullah Ma'rifat. Referring to the ethnicity of the divine book, he said that the Qur'an was revealed to the Arab people of the time of the revelation and spoke in their language and observed their ways of speaking in order to enable understanding for them. God has raised all the messengers in the language of their people (Ma'rifat, 2008: pp. 148-149).

Nekounam knows the way to understand the intentions that the Arabs of Hejaz in the time of the Prophet (PBUH) understood from the verses of the Qur'an, referring to the same information and their promises, which are: a. Appearance and context of verses, b. Similar verses, c. the personality of the Qur'an audience, d. Events of that era. e_. The culture and history of those people and f. the Bible.

He then mentions that based on this information, this stage of interpretation is done in several steps, which are as follows: a. Recognize the units of descent. b. Extracting the means of revelation of units from the Qur'an itself. c. Matching the narrations according to the appearance and context of the verses. d. Examining the key words and interpretations of the surah and comparing them with similar cases from the Qur'an. e_. Historical translation of the relevant surah (J. Nekounam, Telegram notes).

Nekounam describes the application of this stage of the three-layered interpretation in verses 20 to 22 of Surah Al-Ḥijr as follows: The historical interpretation of the verse in question is the following. We first see its context:

"And we have given unto you livelihoods therein, and unto those for whom ye provide not and there is not a thing but with Us are the stores thereof. And we send it not down save in appointed measure. And We send the winds fertilising, and cause water to descend from the sky, and give it you to drink. It is not ye who are the holders of the store thereof."[1]

The historical interpretation of the verse in question is as follows:

A. Your sustenance is in our hands. We send down water from the sky, and We cause the plants to grow therein, and you make provision for it.

B. We send the winds, which are pregnant, meaning that they have rain;

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١. «وَ جَعَلْنا لَكمْ فيها مَعايِشَ وَ مَنْ لَسْتُمْ لَهُ بِرازِقينَ، وَ إِنْ مِنْ شَیْءٍ إِلاَّ عِنْدَنا خَزائِنُهُ وَ ما نُنَزِّلُهُ إِلاَّ بِقَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ، وَ أَرْسَلْنَا الرِّياحَ لَواقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنا مِنَ السَّماءِ ماءً فَأَسْقَیْناكمُوهُ وَ ما أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخازِنينَ».

then We send down water from the sky so you drink it.

C. The treasures of rain in the sky are in the hands of the angels, and they are the ones who send down a certain amount (ibid.).

3- 2. Trans-historical layer

Nekounam calls the general meaning a trans-historical interpretation that the appearance and context of the verse is an example of that meaning (ibid.) Some, such as Ayazi, pointing to the necessity of trans-historical interpretation, consider the method of obtaining a trans-historical message as the abstraction of temporal characteristics and say: In the trans-historical interpretation, one should try to update the variable rulings by abstracting and removing a specific time from the meaning of the verses and showing fixed criteria for the rulings through principles, regions and criteria. (Ayazi, 2007: 309).

Nekounam considers the necessity of implementing the trans-historical stage as the centrality of reason and nature in the essence of religion and states this issue as follows:

A. The essence of religion is the same as intellect and nature.

B. The essence of religion is cast in historical and ethnic form.

C. The essence of religion is in accordance with reason and nature.

D. The essence of religion has nothing to do with human science. But it is related to ethics.

E. Religious expressions are in many cases contrary to modern human science.

He considers the essence of religion as intellect and nature and considers the Qur'an and hadiths as intellect and nature which have been revealed and issued in a historical and ethnic format in accordance with the requirements of the age and Egypt. Hadith is the apparent science of the time of revelation and issuance (J. Nekounam, Telegram Notes).

At this stage, Nekounam, citing the essence of the Qur'an, has stated that according to some Islamic commentators, such as Ma'rifat, real and general propositions can be extracted from external propositions in the Qur'an by removing their specificity. Ayatollah Ma'rifat has considered the inner concept of the Qur'an as necessary beyond the verses; that is, general concepts that can be reasonably attributed to the verses of the Qur'an. These propositions include examples of every age and ethnicity. One of the examples he has given in this regard is the verse: "So go to houses by the gates thereof."[1]

He explained that this verse carries a foreign proposition and it was addressed to the people of Medina who, when they returned from Ḥajj, instead of entering through the house, they would pierce the back of the house and enter from it. God said to them: "And it is not good for you to enter from behind the houses, but it is good for one to be pious, and to enter the houses through their [entrance], and to fear God, that "You will be prosperous." According to Ayatollah Ma'rifat this verse, by removing a real and general statement, can be interpreted as follows: "Act rationally" (see, Ma'rifat,

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١. «وَ أْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوابِها.»

1416: v. 3, 28). This statement includes both the people of Medina at the time of the revelation of the verse and other people who exist in other ages and times until the Day of Judgment. Other great commentators such as Allameh Tabātabā'ī also used such a method in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an (see, Tabātabā'ī, 2009: 27).

Nekounam considers paying attention to the criteria of the rulings to be beneficial; among other things, it does not make us unaware of the spirit of the law and we will not be stuck in appearances; like ISIS, we do not oppress in the name of Islam and we do not enslave or kill people. He considers the way of discovering general criteria and propositions beyond the verses to be the abstraction of the historical and ethnic coordinates of the verses. In order to be able to extract themes from verses that are not specific to the Arabs of Hejaz at the time of the Prophet (PBUH).

He describes the stages of extracting the criteria in the trans-historical layer as follows: a. Abolition of any feature that is specific to the era of the revelation of the Qur'an, from the verses of the Qur'an. b. Their application to human rational rules, whether practical reason or theoretical reason c. Their adaptation to verses and narrations (J. Nekounam, Telegram Notes).

He distinguishes the trans-historical layer from the historical layer in such a way that if you see a rule in one nation or history, but you do not see it in other races and ages, it is historical and ethnic. Referring to stoning and retribution as an example of ethnic and historical rulings, he states that if there is an understanding in a nation and a history; but not in other races and eras,

we call it a historical and ethnic understanding. Nekounam expresses the trans-historical interpretation of the verses concerning the angels in such a way that it depends on how we define the angel. If we define the angel in a way that can only be seen among the Sami, it is ethnic and historical. But if we define it in such a way that all tribes and ages can understand and discover it, we have given a trans-historical definition of it. He emphasizes that in the trans-historical stage we seek a common understanding. Scientific knowledge is a universal knowledge. We must find an equivalent for the angel that all nations can understand. (Nekounam, Theory of Three-Layer Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, Tirdad Philosophical Group).

3-3. The modern layer of the Qur'an

Nekounam calls the last layer of the three-layer interpretation as modern interpretation, and describes its nature and manner in such a way that we look at cultural or modern interpretation, and translate it to the human discourse in our age and society, and the themes of the Qur'an into the appropriate language today. For example, in the language of the time of the Prophet (PBUH) it was said that the treasury is the rain of the sky and God rains the rain from the sky; but in the language of the present day, it is said that the treasury of rain is the vapors that go from the earth to the sky. In the past, it was considered that there are two sources of water: one is the seas and rivers and springs of the earth and the other is the clouds of the sky. But today it is considered that the water of the clouds is composed of the vapors of the same waters of the earth. This process arises from an unseen power. Man must pay attention to this unseen power and

consciousness and sanctify and praise it. He also emphasizes that the language of modern interpretation is the language of the present age, and this language may in some cases be opposed to the language of the time of the Prophet (PBUH) (Ibid).

He considers the reason for the importance of this layer of theory as the changes of time and the necessity of updating religion and says: religion must always have an evolutionary approach and if it does, it will become obsolete and go down in history. Prejudice in a simple situation or historical and ethnic rulings will not result in anything but ISIS brutality. For this reason, one should welcome the excellence and evolution of religion and do not stagnate in the old rules such as the rules of slavery and taking ransom from the People of the Book. Because stagnation in such rulings results in the apostasy of young people who never reject these old rulings. In addition, religion has been and will be practically renewed throughout history; according to the narrations, when the Imam Mahdi (AS) appears, he brings a new religion. He adds: "We should select verses according to the needs of each age and then provide them to the people of the society with cultural translation (J. Nekounam, Telegram notes)."

Some Islamic thinkers, such as Mr. Ayazi, have pointed to the reality of changing conditions of the time and stressed that if Islam claims immortality and on the other hand speaks of human needs and guidelines for all times and places, it should not rule only for a specific time and place. Because on the one hand, we are always clearly aware of the change of time, place and conditions of any

society, and on the other hand, from a practical point of view, if Islam claims to meet human needs in various capacities, it is not reasonable that biological and social conditions to be change, but accordingly, the rulings should not be changed. (Ayazi, 2001: 283-290).

Nekounam introduces the way of using the Qur'an for the society and its age in such a way that the general criteria and propositions of the verses should be applied to the examples, cases and people of the present age. He describes the process of interpreting the verses of the Qur'an for his modern cases as follows: a. Knowing the issues, needs and requirements of your time; because the changes of the time create new problems every day; b. Applying those issues, needs and requirements to the criteria derived from the verses of the Qur'an; c. Comparison of solutions to problems and needs with the latest human scientific achievements (J. Nekounam, Telegram Notes).

4. Inclusion of theory

Nekounam considers the scope of this theory to be all the verses, including the verses of beliefs and the verses of rulings. For example, he says that the verses that reflect a distinct human-like god are historical and ethnic, and that they were intended to bring to mind the audience of the Qur'an, namely the Arab of Hejaz at the time of the Prophet (PBUH). Some of the ethnic and historical interpretations of God in the Qur'an are as follows: God speaks or sits on a throne and eight angels carry Him. Such a deity can be translated into an indistinguishable deity in trans-historical and transnational interpretation, and it is equivalent to the deity of mystics who

consider Him to be the same universe (Nekounam, "Theory of three-layer interpretation of the Holy Qur'an", Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies). He divides the verses of the Qur'an into two categories to make the scope of the universal application of the three-layer interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an more methodical.

Nekounam emphasizes: In order to know whether all the verses of the Qur'an accept a three-layer interpretation, one must typologically identify them and ask such a question about any one. It seems that the verses of the Qur'an are divided into two categories of news and composition. On the other hand, they are divided into ethnic and global categories. It is also divided into innate and contractual.

4-1. Ethnic and global propositions

According to Nekounam, some propositions are ethnic. These propositions are not a return to universal propositions; thus, verses containing such propositions are beyond the scope of the three-layer interpretation. He considers some subjects to be universal, such as God, prophecy, the end times, heaven, hell, Satan, angels, and the like. That is, they do not belong to the Arab people and the Hijaz region; rather, they belong to all human races. He thinks that if we claim that these issues are not made by the minds of a particular ethnic group such as the Arabs or the Sami, we should introduce examples for them so that the people of the world can realize their reality. Translating such concepts into a universal one is considered a three-layer interpretation (Nekounam, Telegram Notes).

4-2. Natural and conventional propositions

In the second division, Nekounam says that innate or rational propositions are universal and therefore don't need to be interpreted in three layers. But contractual propositions, such as cutting off the thief's hand and the blood money of a hundred camels and half the blood money of a woman and performing prayers and performing Ḥajj, and the like, which are derived from materials and benefits, are considered to be subject to the three-layer interpretation theory. The return of such propositions to the interests from which they originate falls within the realm of three-layered interpretation. Conventional propositions are not inherently valuable, unlike innate propositions; rather, they can be valued in terms of their interests and functions. An innate or rational statement that justice is good, regardless of its function, is considered positive. But a conventional proposition such as Ṭawāf around the Ka'ba is inherently neither positive nor negative; but is evaluated positively in terms of its function. Thus, the three-layer interpretation of contractual propositions is the discovery of the functions or materials and benefits that have been assigned to them. "The propositions of slavery, beatings, floggings, and stoning, among others, are historical, and as man distances himself from the past, he turns away from harsh laws and turns to subtle laws," he says. In the three-layer interpretation, the intentions and criteria are taken into account, in other words, the interests and benefits that go beyond such provisions, and those rules and laws are equated with more appropriate rules and regulations (ibid.).

5. The basics of three-layer interpretation

Some of the most important foundations of the three-layer interpretation observed in the works of the theorist are as follows:

5-1. The conventional language of the Qur'an

The conventionality of language is one of the influential foundations in the design of the theory of three-layer interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. Nekounam says that the language of the revelation of the Qur'an is the same as the common and well-known Arabic language of the age of revelation. Therefore, in order to understand the verses of the Qur'an, one must refer to the information and promises of those people in that historical period. (Nekounam, 2009) He considered the conventionality of the language of the Qur'an to require the following: using the Arabic words of the Hijaz at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), following the grammatical rules of the Arabic language, the rhetorical features of the Arabic language in the Qur'an, the Qur'an as an understandable book for the Arabs of Hejaz at that era, the permission to refer to his words in understanding the purposes of Qur'anic verses and the relevance of Qur'anic themes to the culture of those people (Nekounam, 1999).

Nekounam has mentioned the following reasons for proving the language of the Qur'an to be conventional:

A) Reason: The speakers of the Holy Qur'an, whether God or the Messenger of God, were wise, and the wise person never does bad deeds, and an example of bad deeds is speaking to the addressee, in a language other than his familiar language or using words in a format other than his usual culture (Nekounam, 2012: p. 38).

B) The Qur'an: According to the verses of the Qur'an, no word or sentence in the Qur'an has been expressed other than the tongue of the people of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the culture of that people. The verses of the Qur'an, including verse 103 of Naḥl, are confirming this: "And We know well that they say: Only a man teacheth him. The speech of him at whom they falsely hint is outlandish, and this is clear Arabic speech."[1]

The fact that the language of the Qur'an is not Arabic or non-Arabic does not only mean that the language of the Qur'an is Arabic. It also includes meanings such as intelligibility, ambiguity, eloquence and clarity of the words of the Qur'an. Therefore, the language of the Qur'an in all linguistic dimensions, whether vocabulary or cultural and grammatical appropriateness, is according to the language of the people of the age of revelation.

C) History: As historical documents show, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was sent from among the same people in which he lived his life and spoke in their language. Also, both the holy Prophet and his people, namely the Arabs of Hejaz at his time, were Ummī (i.e. illiterate) according to the Qur'an, and therefore their level of knowledge was the same. Therefore, it does not matter, the language used in the Qur'an was a language other than the language

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١. «وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَرٌ لِسَانُ الَّذِى يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِىٌّ وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِىٌّ مُبِينٌ».

of Prophet and his people. Even when the familiar language of him and his people is used in his book, the Qur'an, there is no reason for the words and interpretations of the Qur'an to be considered unfamiliar and incomprehensible to his people. Of course, this does not contradict the fact that those who are absent from the time and place of the revelation of the Qur'an understand the intentions of all verses of the Qur'an (Nekounam, 2001: 39-40).

5-2. The spoken language of the Qur'an

Nekounam, in expressing the spoken nature of the language of the Qur'an, contradicted it to the written nature; in the sense that the Qur'an does not have a specific writing-style (Nekounam, 2012). He mentions two evidences for the spoken language of the Qur'an: One is that the written language was not popular among the people of the time of revelation. Second, the written word does not have characteristics such as appropriateness and close relationship with the addressee, and the characteristics seen in the speech are said to a large extent based on the moods and requirements of the addressee. For this reason, items such as protest sentences that are uttered due to changes in the audience's moods are considered eloquent in speech. But if a written word is written in this style, it is considered ugly and based on this, it concludes that the verses of the Qur'an, according to this theory, are the units of revelation of Gabriel, which according to different situations and conditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) revealed to him. (Nekounam, 2001: 42).

Here are some of the most important reasons that Nekounam gives about the Qur'an being spoken:

A- The people of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) were Ummī: He states that in order to communicate with any people, it is eloquent to speak to them in the language in which they speak. In the age of revelation, written language was not popular; rather, spoken language was common; therefore, the Qur'an has been inspired by the spoken language that was prevalent among the people of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

B- The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was Ummī: Nekounam, quoting verses from the Holy Qur'an, emphasizes that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) did not know how to read and write; For example: "And thou (O Muhammad) wast not a reader of any scripture before it, nor didst thou write it with thy right hand, for then might those have doubted, who follow falsehood."[1]

According to this verse, He says: How can God speak to a prophet who has neither read a book nor had any contact with the People of the Book?

C- Unwritten origin of the Qur'an: Nekounam states that the Holy Qur'an, unlike the Torah, was not revealed to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in the form of a book and a Ṣaḥīfah. Therefore, the Jews of Medina criticized Muhammad (PBUH) for not writing the Qur'an and asked him to send a book from heaven; as it is stated: "The people of the Scripture ask of thee that thou shouldst cause an (actual) Book to descend upon them from heaven."[2] ('Ankabūt: 153)

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١. «وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذاً لَارْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ».

٢. (يَسْئَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتاباً مِنَ السَّماءِ).

D- The effects of spoken language in the calligraphy of the Qur'an: Nekounam, by presenting examples of spoken structures in the Ottoman Muṣḥaf, has considered it as one of the signs of the revelation of the Qur'an in spoken language; such as words whose written and spoken form are not the same. However, their spoken form has been recorded: like (مثل ايّه المؤمنون) (Nūr, 24:31), (سندع الزبانية)('Alaq, 96: 8), (يمح الله الباطل)(Shawrā, 42:24), (يوم) (يدع الداع)(Qamar, 54: 6).

E- Variety of themes of each surah: He considers the surahs of the Qur'an as sermons that are addressed to the multiple and varied requirements at the time of their revelation. Therefore, in almost every surah, various issues have been discussed at the time and place of their revelation, and it is clear that the sermons that were common at the time of revelation were in the style of speech (Nekounam, 2000).

5-3. The gradual revelation of the Qur'an

Nekounam considers the gradual revelation of the Qur'an as evidence of the close connection between the verses of the Qur'an and the conditions and requirements at the time of revelation, and verses 33 and 34 of Surah Al-Furqān as evidence. It is stated in these verses: "And they bring thee no similitude but We bring thee the Truth (as against it), and better (than their similitude) as argument. Those who will be gathered on their faces unto hell: such are worse in plight and further from the right road."

This verse indicates that the Qur'an is a response to the needs and requirements at the age of revelation

and for this reason, it was revealed gradually over twenty-three years. (Nekounam, 2007).

He enumerates some of the most important wisdoms of the gradual revelation of the Qur'an as follows:

A- Pointing out the weakness and inaccuracy of the superstitious and incorrect ideas of the people of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

B- Blaming the wrong customs and behaviors that were common among the people of the age of revelation.

C- There are questions among Muslims, including war in the sacred month.

D- The hostility of the Jews against the Muslims.

He likens the Holy Qur'an to a rope that is tied to God and His teachings on the one hand, and to the conditions and requirements of the age of revelation on the other hand. Accordingly, he considers a one-sided view to the Qur'an to lead to an incomplete and wrong understanding of its meanings (Nekounam, 2001: 11-12).

The existence of a relationship between the gradual revelation of the Qur'an and the requirements at the age of revelation is also accepted by other scholars. Among other things, Kalantari says: During the gradual revelation of the Qur'an, the verses of the Qur'an have been revealed to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) based on the events, occasions, questions and problems of the Islamic society. But in the present time, these causes of revelations and events have been lost. If the commentator is unwilling or unable to discover the connection between the appearance of the verses and those occasions and does not attempt to take the general meaning of the Qur'anic messages in relation to the present

situation according to the rules, in fact he has removed and killed Qur'an from the modern human life. (Kalantari, 2009).

5-4. Revelation unity of Qur'an units

According to Nekounam, the unit of revelation is any set of verses that was induced to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) each time. He thinks that every unit of revelation of the Qur'an has been revealed to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) once. He has emphasized that this statement does not contradict the annual presentation of the Qur'an to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) by Gabriel, which is mentioned in the narrations. Based on this basis, he has stated that assuming that the revelation is not repeated, each unit of revelation should be dated for a single time (Nekounam, 2011: 49-50; Ibid, 2002: 49).

Non-repetition of revelation is also accepted by other Islamic thinkers; Ālūsī, in his commentary, while rejecting the repetition of the revelation of the verses of the Qur'an, says: "The revelation is the reappearance from the unseen world and the reappearance does not accept the repetition; because it is the result." (Ālūsī, 1405: 34). Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd has considered the motive for constructing the theory of the repetition of revelation as a combination of conflicting narrations and the causes of revelation (Abu Zayd, nd: 162). Dehlavi considers the origin of the theory of multiple revelation to be the numerous testimonies of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his companions to a single verse that they have made in debates or disputes to explain a common subject. But the narrators have thought that they have repeated the reason for the revelation of that verse (Dehlavi, 2003: 96). Zarkashī also stated in Al-Burhān that one of the

common habits of the companions and followers was that when they said that a verse was revealed in an event, in fact they meant that the verse contained the ruling of that event and their purpose was not to mention the cause of the revelation. In other words, these narrations carry the argument on the verse to express the verdict; not mentioning the cause of revelation (Zamakhsharī, 1410: 323).

5-5. The historicity of the Qur'an

According to Nekounam, the most important reason for the historicity of the Qur'an is that the verses of the Qur'an, in general and absolute, have not been revealed to be usable for all times. Because human needs and conditions are different at any time, comparing another time. He also mentions that if the verses of the Qur'an had not been revealed in accordance with the requirements of the time of revelation, he would have disturbed the rhetoric of the Qur'an. Because the condition of rhetoric is to be appropriate to the mood and position of the audience. One of the evidences of the Qur'an's historicity is the themes that are mentioned in the Qur'an regarding the events or questions of the people at the time of revelation. He adds: It is not an exaggeration to say that all verses of the Qur'an were revealed in response to the intellectual and practical needs of the people at the age of revelation, i.e. the polytheists of Mecca and the people of Medina. And all verses of the Qur'an have Sabab-e-Nuzūl i.e. reasons for revelation, whether specific or general revelation; namely the general requirements that existed in that era. It does not mean that the Qur'an is not eternal; because the teachings of the Qur'an can be used in other ages as well. (Nekounam, 2001:

12-13) There are other scientists who agree with this view. Ayazi, for example, while pointing to the immortality of the Qur'an, has stated: In inferring the ruling of a text, one must pay attention to the basic dimensions and important structure of language, including the human nature of language and historicity. Therefore, paying attention to the description of historicity in the text, causes the dynamics of the text and the effort to immortalize its messages, which with a wise look in the text, the truth of a message is extracted and can be used for different times (Ayazi, 2007: 315)

Some other thinkers, such as Abdullah Saeed, consider the Qur'an to be a process that was revealed to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) over a period of twenty-three years. Because it reflected the situation of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the society at the age of revelation in a very tangible way. He considers this point as an important reason that the world located in the revelation of Qur'anic verses has been an important and influential element. Perhaps if there was no connection between revelation and the historical-social context, the Qur'an would have no meaning for the people at the time of revelation (Saeed, 2006). Faḍl al-Rahmān, while confirming the historicity of the Qur'an, explained the consequences of the separation between revelation and socio-historical context: In the following centuries of Islam, the separation between revelation and socio-historical context led to the belief that the socio-legal themes of the Qur'an have no historical limitations (Abbasi, 2017).

5-6. The necessity of historical interpretation of the Qur'an

Nekounam considers the historicity of the Qur'an as the most important reason for the necessity of historical interpretation of the Qur'an. He adds that the revelation of Qur'anic verses is based on the conditions of the time of revelation. And these conditions are considered as evidence of understanding the meaning of Qur'anic verses and understanding the word, without considering the evidence, is definitely incomplete (Nekounam, 2009). He points out the benefits of paying attention to the historical interpretation of the Qur'an as follows:

A- Recognizing the validity of the narrations that are the cause of revelation or the narrations related to subjects such as Makkī and Madanī, and Nāsikh and Mansūkh that are originated from the presentation of the narrations on the Qur'an. Because the Qur'an itself, with its unified context and verses, expresses the divine meaning.

B- Knowing the history and Sīrah of the Prophet, because paying attention to the order of revelation of the surahs clarifies the course of the invitation and the Sīrah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

C- Arranging the various subjects of the surahs using their historical order, which organize the events of the age of revelation in the verses of the Qur'an.

D- This method narrows the way to interpreting the Qur'an according to the opinion and understanding based on one's beliefs and presuppositions.

E- The historical interpretation of the Qur'an provides the ground for a living, up-to-date and adaptable understanding of the Qur'an on new topics and issues.

F- Understanding the Qur'an based on the requirements and relations of the age of revelation eliminates many interpretative misunderstandings.

G. The historical interpretation of the Qur'an guides the interpreter to the general criteria, knowledge, and opinion of the Qur'an, and deepens and develops superficial, and limited understandings.

H- It reveals many secrets of the Qur'an that have been neglected so far due to the erratic and non-historical understanding of the Qur'an (Nekounam, 2001: 47-49).

Some thinkers such as Ayazi also say in the necessity of paying attention to the historical interpretation of the Qur'an: The texts of the Qur'an, like any other text, are subject to the conventions of the linguists. Therefore, the Qur'an has not used any language other than the method of the people to express the meaning and has spoken in the same language of human beings. In addition, it has taken into account the level of understanding and the conditions of the people at the age of revelation. (Ayazi, 2007: 309-310)

5-7. Margin on the text of the Qur'an

Nekounam thinks that the Qur'an is like a margin on the text. He considers the Qur'an as a margin on the culture of the time of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) that has been induced in accordance with their promises and requirements (Nekounam, "Specialized Meeting on the Three-Layer Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an", Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies). In confirming this base, he cites a Hadith from the Prophet (PBUH): "

"O Othman! God did not send me to monasticism; rather, He sent me to the easy and simple religion of Ḥanīf. I fast; I pray and get married. So whoever loves my religion should follow my tradition, and marriage is one of my traditions." (Kulaynī, 1401: v. 5, 494) He witness this hadith, that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not bring a new religion. Rather, it was based on the religion of his ancestors, that is, the religion of Abraham, and therefore his mission was to actually complete that religion. This is the meaning of the Qur'an as a margin to the text. (Nekounam, 2012: 28).

Before Nekounam, some Islamic thinkers such as Faḍl al-Rahmān mentioned the characteristics of the Qur'an. Faḍl al-Rahmān says in this regard: The prophets were not in a position to provide a comprehensive legal system; rather, they have limited or eliminated it only in cases where certain laws have hindered the spiritual development of societies. In other words, legislations have a historical-cultural background; because they did not have the general and comprehensive feature of all times and places. The expression of rulings such as the gradual prohibition of usury, the promotion of women's position and the change of rulings concerning slaves are examples of the dependence of the Qur'anic expression on the social conditions of the age of revelation. In other words, these rulings seek to change ignorant traditions. (Elmi, 2007).

5-8. The necessity of solving the problem of verses contrary to science and modernity

As mentioned before, Nekounam thinks that the Qur'an has been induced in accordance with the requirements of the time of the Prophet Muhammad

(PBUH) and it is obvious that many of those requirements have not been met and different requirements have emerged in the present era. This change in requirements has led to conflicts between the verses of the Qur'an on the one hand and science and modernity on the other, and there are no verses for some of the modern requirements.

Nekounam, while comparing the verses of the Qur'an with the themes of the age of revelation and the present age, states two categories of themes as follows:

a. Topics that existed in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and verses about them were revealed. But today those subjects are gone and the verses related to them are also theoretically or practically obsolete; like the verses related to slavery and elementary jihad and taking ransom from the People of the Book.

B. Subjects that did not exist in the time of Prophet and have arisen today, and therefore there are no verses about them. Such as simulation, sex reassignment therapy, elections, separation of powers and the like. (Nekounam, 2001: 13)

The solution he offers to such issues is a three-layer interpretation. That is, first to understand the verses of the Qur'an in accordance with the requirements of the age of revelation, which is called historical interpretation. And then to induce ethnic and historical characteristics and obtain a general meaning, which is interpreted as a trans-historical interpretation, and finally find an example for the general meaning in the present age.

According to this solution, since some issues such as slavery and elementary jihad and taking ransom from the People of the Book are considered ethnic and historical, the verses related to these issues cannot be used for the present age. Inevitably, modernity must be reconciled and modern methods replaced by ethnic and historical methods; as Muslims have done in the present age. Also, on modern subjects for which there are no verses, one should refer to the general criteria, and rules that have been extracted from religious texts and are in accordance with reason and nature.

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be obtained from the studies conducted on this theory:

1. The theory of three-layer interpretation is implemented in three layers: historical, trans-historical and modern. The historical layer is based on the appearance and context of the verse, and it is usually as understood by the Arabs of Hijaz at the time of the Prophet (PBUH). The trans-historical layer is the general meaning beyond the apparent meaning of the verses of the Qur'an, which is obtained by removing ethnic and historical features. And the thing, which is stated in the apparent meaning of the verses of the Qur'an, is an example of that general meaning obtained by trans-historical interpretation. Contemporary or cultural interpretation is also finding a modern example for the general meaning that is captured in trans-historical interpretation.

2. The theory of three-layered interpretation includes all the verses of the Qur'an, including the verses of beliefs, rulings, stories, and others. In all verses, first, a meaning is sought that was understood from the verses of the Qur'an by the Arabs of Hejaz at the

time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). And also in all verses, their ethnic and historical characteristics are removed and then it corresponds to the understanding of the present age. And a modern example is sought for the verses of the Qur'an.

3. Some of the most important presuppositions of the theory of three-layer interpretation are: the conventionality of the language of the Qur'an, the revelation of the Qur'an in accordance with the needs and requirements of the age of revelation, the marginality of the text of the Qur'an, the need to resolve conflicts between Qur'anic verses and modern sciences through inducing the ethnic and historical characteristics of the verses and grasping the general meanings of the verses and then finding modern equivalents and examples for those general meanings.

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