THE CONCEPT OF "DISTORTION" (SCRIPTURE CHANGE) IN THE HOLY QUR’AN

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Abstract

The Muslim researchers believe that the Torah and Gospel have undoubtedly been changed. On the other hand, the term "change" has been seriously emphasized in the Quran. Referring the scripture, regardless of internal contradictions, one may recognize many contradictory subjects intellectually. Presence of the instances leads us to consider a concept of change which is not apparently in perfect coordination with the Quran terminology. This inconformity is justifiable through studying the narrations and interpretations of the change-related verses.

Field of Research: Change, Scripture, Torah, Gospel, People of the scripture

1. Introduction

Muslim exegetists generally believe that the existing Torah and Gospel are the changed copies. Among the earlier change concept's analyses and interpretations we may point to a great number of the superstition and fable which have been applied as the change interpretation. Muslims believe that they are not compatible with the prophets' position and rank.

The main question of the present paper is: how is the relation between the term change applied in the Quran and that in Moslem interpreters and researchers' approaches, regarding the scripture change; in other words, whether their purpose from the term is the same or not. To answer the question we consider the Quran verses and the narrations referred for interpretation of those verses.

2. A Quran verses

As it was mentioned earlier, the Quran's verses assure that the change has been occurred in the scripture. The related verses would be discussed in four groups:

Group one

The first group consists of the verses based on which the scripture's change has been theorized. These verses are divided in two sections. Section one covers those verses in which the term change is used (Al-Baqara: 75- An-Nisa: 46- Al-Maeda: 13, 41) and in the second section, the verses pointed to the change phenomenon implicitly, such as buying the verses (. Al-Baqara:41,174_Al-E-Imran:187) disbelieving the verses(Al-Baqara:91-Al-E-Imran:7), covering the truth and falsehood (Al-Baqara:42_Al-E-Imran:71), writing down(Al-Baqara:79), concealment(Al-Baqara:174,146_Al-E-Imran:71,178), flinging behind their backs(Al-Baqara:101), changing language(Al-E-Imran:78), hiding(Al-Maeda:15-Al-Anaam:91) and turning away (Al-E-Imran:23).

Variety of the concepts used in the Quran reveals that the change has not necessarily a writing nature. The finding will be clearer when it is noted that some interpretations and conceptualizations are impossible, except through an ultra-textual inference from the Torah and Gospel. The following verse is the best evidence of the claim:
And remember when Allah laid a charge on those who had received the scripture (He side): You are to expound it to mankind and not to hide it. But they flung it behind their backs and bought thereby a little gain. All the terms used in the verse (such as voiding the charge, not expounding, hiding, flinging behind the backs and buying cheap) are compatible with the change's ultra-textual nature.

Applying the word book for referring to the Torah and Gospel in the Quran may not deny the ultra-writing nature of those scriptures and their related change concept. The word book is a very widespread concept with a variety of meaning in the Quran, which has been used two hundred and thirty times among which forty nine cases refer to the Quran and in other cases it has referred to the Torah, Gospel, deed record, written, guarded table etc. A survey on various applications of the word book reveals that the term conotates meanings as: totality, stability, closing, fixing and stating. Since the word has been used as the verb prescribe, in verses such as "and really prescribed in the psalms" and "Fasting is prescribed for you", one may imply the law and rule by the word book.

Generally, what must not be considered as the main meaning of the book, is a written text, i.e. what is written in a notebook or so called "in note book", so that its Quran derivations are just compatible based on this primary principle. Quran phrases such as the "hidden book", "scantling book", the book in writing media etc prove that the book's main meaning is not writing in a book. The phrase reveals that the book is what can be written.

As a result, book in its basic meaning does not refer to a written text. Fundamentally, it is hard to imagine something written in the pre-Islamic are as a written down text. Existence of the written from has been just discussed about the Quran among the divinely scriptures and even considered as one of its miracle aspects.

Group two

The Quran describes the Torah and Gospel as holy books and used phrases such as the "word of God", the "book of God", "brightening book" and the God's to describe them. Many verses use the term descend about the Torah and Gospel as about the Quran itself; it means that the two scriptures have been descended from God. However, the Jews and Christians do not emphasize on the scriptures as God's revelation. Quran's verses dignify the Torah and the Gospel and respect them. The Quran's verses have repeatedly emphasized that it confirms the Torah and Gospel; finally considers itself as dominated over the two other books. On the other hand, one of the real Muslims and believers' characteristics is their belief in the earlier divinely scriptures. In disagreements between the Islam prophet (PBUH) and the Jews, they referred the existing books of the time to solve their problem. Even some verses suggest the prophet to refer earlier scriptures when he faced doubt in some points.

Group three

The Quran criticizes in some cases the beliefs of the scripture people rather than the books themselves, for instance: lack of God's intervention in the universe after creation, deletion of the subjects related to the other world, reduction of the Jews' torment reduction to a few days, stating that Jews have father and son relation with God, assuming Ozair as the God's son, assuming Godly position for the leaders, confirming the usury, assuming the non-Jew's assets are kosher for the Jews, receiving ransom to free the captive, slurring the Jesus' mother.

Instances about the Christians
Assuming the father and son relation for the Christians and God, Assuming that Jesus is God’s son, believing in triad, assuming Godly rank for Jesus and his mother, Jesus’ hanging.

It is apparent that the above mentioned instances just proscribe some of the yews and Christians’ incorrect beliefs without any point to their scriptures. In fact, the holy Quran criticizes some of incorrect and common beliefs of the Jews and Christians with regard to their dominant cultures and at the same time does not consider any specific writing identity as Torah and Gospel as those incorrect beliefs” sources.

**Group four**

The group consists of mostly the historic verses of the Quran which consider similar subjects of the Scripture; however the Quran discussion is so that the addressee does not feel any specific text. If one compares the problem of the change according to the Quran and the Scripture’s superstitions, he or she will find out that the Quran has a specific position toward the subject rather than the Scripture itself. For example, the story of David the prophet is so that it makes possible to have Israeli implications; while they have been proscribed in the Imams’ narrations.

**Narrations**

It was said earlier that the change verses have not clearly determined the change cases strictly. So the narrations may help us in this regard. Such narrations are classified in three groups as follows:

**Group one**

It contains narrations about the change-related verses which are considered as interpretative narrations. Since the Quran verses do not explicitly point to the changes and with regard to the narrations which interpret the verses and explains the vague points; they may play an effective role in explaining the change meaning.

Moreover, in interpretation of the change verses and among interpretative narrations, some examples of changes have been mentioned, including:

- Concealing the enunciation of the Mohammad prophecy and change in his characteristics referred previously in the Torah;
- Concealing the Jesus enunciation to the problem in the Gospel.
- Denying the verdict of stoning the adulteress.

Considering the interpretative narrations of the change verses, one may conclude that the most important and numerous narrations of this group are related to the concealment of the Islam prophets’ (p.b.u.h) name.

They have been mentioned as the interpretation of the change verses.

**Group two**

The problem of concealing the name and characteristic of the prophet (p.b.u.h) is not restricted to the interpretation of the change related verses. The problem is evident in interpretation of those verses that may have not direct relation with the change. Explaining the meaning of purchasing and
saying the divinely verses, Tabari writes: They took food and concealed the name of the prophet, instead.

In explanation of the phrase of, 'mixing the truth and falsehood' it has been asserted that the Jews believed in some parts of the scriptures and disbelieved others, and then denial of the prophet's characteristic has been assumed as an instance of such blasphemy.

Also, it has been pointed in interpretation of the verse" And if you are in doubt concerning that which reveal unto you" that the Torah and Gospel have pointed the name and characteristic of the Islam's prophet and that the Jews had no doubt that he is right.

The results of the studies on the narrations related to the change reveal that the narrations in this regard have been mainly concentrated on the concealment of the prophet's name and there is no evidence of pointing to the contextual defect and superstitions in the scripture.

**Group three**

The group consists of the narrations which consider the Torah, Gospel and the related problems, independently. Concerning the close historical relations between the Islam and the other divinely religions including the Jew and the Christianity, it is expected to face positions relative to their scriptures in the narrations. However, it is obvious that the positions relative to the scripture are clearly frail. There are a few narrations about the scripture both in praising and criticizing them, most of which consider the deviations among the people of the book, which are not necessarily related to the scripture.

The most crucial and perhaps the only valid narration about the scripture is the one which is narrated by the second Caliph of course, with some various versions, such as:

Omar came to the prophet while he had a collection of the Torah and said." Oh prophet, I have a collection of Torah: A brother of mine from the Bani Azraq gave it me; the prophet's face became ablaze. Abdolahibn Zeid cried," don't you watch the prophet's face? Then Omar said," we are so happy that Allah is our God, the Islam is our religion, Mohammad is our prophet and the Quran is our guide. So, the prophet got happy and said", oath to God who gifted me the breathing if the Moses himself was alive here and you obey him know, you would be doubtless in great obliquity. You are my portion among the nations and I am you portion among the prophets.”

There are many ambiguities in this narration including: having the Torah in hand which is not an evil deed; all prophets are honorable, and granted a divinely scripture, but the narration shows that Moses (PBUH) is denounced. In addition if Moses existed in prophet's era, he would obey the prophet too this narration is not among the repeatedly narrated ones, which is a cause for its weakness. In fact there is no other narration in this regard relating to the same problem.

What is common in the two groups of the narration is narrating about the people of the book rather than the Torah. There are narrations that state Omar was studying a book from the Christians but the Torah has not been strictly mentioned. In some narrations, the Torah and Gospel have not been the main purpose the main finding of the survey on the narrations about the scripture change reveals that the above mentioned narration is the only one in which the scripture is denounced; despite of the importance of the problem. Meanwhile, the close and two–directional relations between the Moslems and the people of the book make it necessary that there are too many narrations beside the Quran verses concerning the problem; however there is no such hint even among the interpretative narrations of the related verses.
3. Conclusion

The change phenomenon has been specified in the Quran verses. A survey in verses and the interpretative narration show that there is difference between the meaning of the change in the Quran terms and that of textual defects. The difference is rooted in lack of correct understanding the in dialogue space – rather than Just writing concerning the change phenomenon. Studying the verses shows that the holy Quran has not intended to enter the current prevalent change discussions and the scripture has not been considered as a special writing identity by the Quran and narrations, what the Quran concentrates on which, concerning the problem of the Islam’s prophet legitimacy be upon him and family.

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