



Critical Rethinking of Mythological Vies to the Qur'anic Stories in the School of Neo-I'tizāl with Emphasis on the View of Khalfullāh

Ali Fathi¹; Tahereh Sadeghi²; Abdullah Mir Ahmadi³

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Qur'anic Research, University of Qom, Iran (Corresponding Author)
afathi@rihu.ac.ir

² PhD Student of Rafiah Al-Mustafa, Tehran, Iran
azmts48@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Qur'anic and Hadith Sciences, Khārazmī University, Tehran, Iran
mirahmadi_a@khu.ac.ir

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i3.3624>

Abstract

Some neo-Mu'tazilite scholars, such as Khalfullāh, have rejected the historical truth of some of the Qur'anic stories and have taken a purely artistic and literary look at the story. Despite the different criticisms of Qur'anic scholars, this article, in order to properly reflect this view, based on library documentary sources and with a critical analytical method, has critically rethought the principles and arguments of Khalfullāh and analyzed examples of myths in Qur'anic stories. Influenced by the principles of the neo-I'tizāl school such as rationalism, scientism and secularism, and influenced by the views of Al-Manār writers on some stories of the Qur'an, Khalfullāh has believed in the mythology of some of the stories of the Qur'an. The principles of Khalfullāh include: the novelty of the mythological stories of the Qur'an in the literary life of Mecca, the firmness of their mythological belief and the non-rejection of this belief in the Qur'an. Some of the important reasons for Khalfullāh's mythology are: myth with literary logic, liberation from Isra'iliyyat in interpretive texts, different repetition of similar stories in the Qur'an, and avoidance of undocumented interpretations.

Keywords: *Mythology; Neo-Mu'tazilite; Khalfullāh; Qur'anic Stories; Literary Approach*

1. Introduction

The manner in which commentators deal with the text of the Holy Qur'an has been one of the most important sources of diversity of opinion and one of the main causes of differences of opinion in interpretive schools. In the contemporary period, some orientalist as well as some Muslim modernists have considered a number of Qur'anic stories as myths based on symbolic and imaginative analysis of myths. (Some writers, 2003, vol. 2, p. 626) Deleting the myths and presenting a scientific interpretation of

the Qur'an, by denying the external and historical facts of the mentioned stories, they apply them to some specific theories.

A group of neo-Mu'tazilite followers believe in the mythology of Qur'anic stories. Khalfullāh, one of the modern thinkers attributed to this school, following his teacher Amin Khoulī, proposed this theory in his doctoral dissertation. In his book *Al-Fan Al-Qaṣaṣ*, he has mentioned some mythological evidences of some of the stories of the Qur'an. Qur'anic scholars have criticized this view of Khalfullāh. Some of which are:

A Critique on the Khalfullāh's Argument about the Existence of a Mythical Story in the Qur'an, Seyyed Mahmoud Tayyeb Hosseini 2009;

A Critique on Khalfullāh's opinions in Qur'anic Stories Based on Modern Interpretations, Mohammad Ali Mahdavi Rad, Mohammad Mirzaei, 2012;

And a Critique of Ahmad Khalfullāh's Perspective on Myth in the Qur'an, Hossein Alawi Mehr and Tahereh Abdullahi 2018.

Also some of the works have studied and criticized Khalfullāh's views from different angles, such as the following: Interpretation trends in the fourteenth century by Fahd Al-Rumi (1986); Qur'anic stories in its concept and region by Abdul Karim Khaṭīb (1395 AH); Falsehoods of opponents about Qur'anic stories, Abdul Jawād Al-Hams (nd) and the artistic foundations of Qur'anic stories by Sayyid Abu al-Qasim Husseini Jarfa (2000).

The advantage of this research over the above-mentioned researches is that it does not consider mythology as merely attributed to Khalfullāh and pays special attention to the effects on the expression of this theory. The author believes that due to the prevailing atmosphere in Al-Azhar during the period of Muhammad Abduh and due to Muhammad Abduh's pioneering in this religious modernity, he implicitly laid the groundwork for the mythological thinking of Khalfullāh in the stories of the Qur'an. And although it is clearly evident that has been influenced by Tafsīr Al-Manār in his writings. In previous studies Khalfullāh was often considered the founder of the myth in the stories of the Qur'an and the citations of Khalfullāh to Tafsir al-Manār are due to the misunderstanding of Khalfullāh from the views of the author of Al-Manār. And the effectiveness of Khalfullāh from Tafsir Al-Manār is the missing link in most of the previous researches.

2. Theoretical Concepts

To accurately critically rethink an idea, it is first necessary to do some of the basics of that thought along with introducing that stream of thought.

2.1. Neo-Mu'tazilite

In the fourteenth century, the stream of rationalism emerged in a new form, and its proponents were called the neo-Mu'tazilite. The main characteristic of neo-Mu'tazilite is modern thinking (Shamis, 1980, pp. 10-13-15). This school is an intellectual trend in the present age that is along the theological school of Mu'tazilite. In general, the formation of the neo-Mu'tazilite can be considered as responding to the suspicions raised by Orientalists in order to introduce Islam as the cause of the backwardness of Muslims. In order to answer this doubt, they do not consider Islam as the cause of Muslim backwardness, but as misinterpretations of Islam and ignoring the place of reason in Islam.

Therefore, in order to achieve this goal, they turned to the Qur'an, which is the most important Islamic text, and with the aim of reconciling the Qur'anic worldview with the findings of modern science, they invented and presented different interpretations of the Qur'an. They also added the method of literary interpretation to it and turned to the method of literary attitude in interpreting the Qur'an. They also

specifically raised the same principles in the subject of Qur'anic stories and came to the belief that Qur'anic stories are myths that have been told in order to have a psychological effect on the audience and have only a literary aspect. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 182)

2-2- The New Mu'tazilite's Current of Thought and Their Intellectual Foundations

Proponents of the Neo-I'tizāl trend are contemporary thinkers who strive to base their theories on the Mu'tazilite and to use the rational and philosophical foundations of the Western world. The presentation of their views caused intellectual challenges in the Islamic world. One of the theories of this current of thought is the functionalist view of Qur'anic stories, which is the source of this thinking in the Western world by Braithwaite. Influenced by Wittgenstein, he believes that the function of religious propositions is similar to the function of moral propositions. Braithwaite believes that the stories of the Qur'an lead man to a moral life. And to achieve such a goal, the story does not have to be true or the audience does not have to think it is true. (Hick, 1390, p. 207)

Some adherents of the neo-I'tizāl school, such as Muhammad Khalfullāh, by following the method of Braithwaite on the historical propositions of the Qur'an, believe that some of the Qur'anic stories are merely to provoke emotions and do not observe reality. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 152)

If we consider criteria such as rational approach in interpretation, emphasis on rationality, humanism, human free will and social justice as the characteristics of the neo-I'tizāl school, people like Amin-Khouli and Ahmad Khalfullāh can be considered new Mu'tazilites. Although they themselves have not explicitly given such a name. (Motahhari, 1369, p. 163) Among the most important theoretical foundations of the Mu'tazilite can be mentioned the following:

2-2-1- Scientism: One of the most important intellectual foundations of the neo-Mu'tazilites is the criterion for placing the latest achievements of the humanities in the study of religious teachings. Instead of using Islamic teachings as a criterion for evaluating the findings of the humanities, they turn to the Qur'an and hadiths by standardizing the humanities and its rules, and seek to interpret the propositions contained in the Qur'an and hadiths that are compatible to the humanities. (Wasfi, 2009, p. 18)

2-2-2- Secularism: Another of their foundations is the belief in secularism. By adopting such a basis, they reject the call to Islam, not only in jurisprudence, but also in literature, art, and science in general, and oppose the religiosity of social, political, economic, and scientific issues. (See: Khalfullāh, 2000, p. 65; Soroush, 2001, pp. 111 - 112) In contrast, Islamists seek to offer a reading of Islam that is compatible with modernism.

3. *Mythology of Qur'anic Stories from the Perspective of the Neo-Mu'tazilite*

Myth has been used in different meanings: strange words (Shartuti, 2007, vol. 1, p. 515) irregular quotations (Ibn-Manzūr, 1956, vol. 3, p. 363; Zubaydī, 1414 AH, vol. 6, p. 519); false and unreal news and stories. (See: Jawharī, 1404 AH, vol. 2, p. 684; Zubaydī, 1414 AH, vol. 6, p. 567.) And what is meant by mythical stories in the expression of Khalfullāh are stories that have no external reality and are only used as a tool for other purposes. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 153).

In the school of Neo-I'tizāl, reformist and modernist figures affiliated with the literary school of contemporary interpretation who agreed with this view can be named people such as Taha Hussein, Amin al-Khouli, Khalfullāh and Khalil Abdul Karim. The basis of this theory is a literary approach to the verses of the Qur'an. Amin al-Khouli emphasized that the Qur'an's narration of events and people is an artistic and literary presentation, not a historical and realistic one. (Khaṭīb, 1395 AH, pp. 276 - 280) According to Amin Khouli, the Qur'an is the largest Arabic book and the greatest literary work in this language. For him, literature, like art in general, is first and foremost a way to attract public emotion as a means of guiding them and their decisions. Therefore, he believes that the commentator should try to describe the

psychological effects of the artistic features of the Qur'an, especially in terms of language, on its original audience (Wielandt Rotraud, 2004, No. 85).

Mohammad Ahmad Khalfullāh, due to the use of his professor's approach to literature, began to find tools with which, in his opinion, the stories of the Qur'an can be updated in a unique and effective way. (Wielandt Rotraud, 2005, pp. 139-152)

4. Khalfullāh and His View on the Mythology of Qur'anic Stories

Muhammad Ahmad Khalfullāh is a contemporary Egyptian modernist writer and Qur'anic researcher. He was born in 1916 in southern Egypt. His most famous teachers in Al-Azhar of Egypt, are Taha Hussein and Ahmad Amin-Khouli. Khalfullāh's doctoral dissertation was written under the auspices of Amin Khouli on the subject of literary study of Qur'anic stories. By dividing the stories of the Qur'an into three types: historical, allegorical and mythological, Khalfullāh reminded that the stories of the Qur'an have only a literary function and are only a means of expressing intentions. This theory was strongly opposed and rejected by the scholars of Al-Azhar. In a note, a group of Al-Azhar scholars called Khalfullāh guilty because he had denied that the stories of the Qur'an were entirely historical truths. (Khalfullāh, 1999, pp. 9-11; 18-19; 31-32; 39-40; 365- 366; Khalfullāh, 1984, pp. 5-7; 227)

Mohammad Ahmad Khalfullāh finally succeeded in obtaining his doctorate by submitting another dissertation, but later the same controversial dissertation was published in the form of a book entitled "Storytelling Art in the Noble Qur'an". He died in Cairo in 1988. (Ahmidah Nifar, 1425, p. 164)

According to Khalfullāh, the stories of the Qur'an do not need to correspond exactly with historical facts in order to have a psychological effect. He even pays attention to other devices that are much more appropriate for the purpose, and that is that these stories must relate to the common language - that is, the old narrative concepts and styles - of the listeners. In his view, the story is the result of the storyteller's imagination about events that do not have a real hero, and if he has a hero, the events attributed to him never exist, and if the story is an event, it is arranged and told according to rhetorical technique. That is, the precedence and latency of events and their additions are such that they take the historical character out of the ordinary and change it to an imaginary issue. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 152)

He also defined a story as one of the types of literary stories that aims to arouse feeling, emotion and advice; and true or false has no concept in it. In another statement, while considering all the historical stories of the Qur'an as literary, he considers it possible to understand them as an eloquent miracle in the light of technical and artistic study. (Ibid: pp. 152 - 163)

According to Khalfullāh, because the Qur'an is "Arabī-e-Mubīn", it has literary and artistic methods of the Arabic language as well as relying on the element of imagination (ibid., P. 188). He does not deny the existence of a revelatory myth. (Ibid., P. 205) According to Khalfullāh, since the only historical body of the stories is not meant, if we consider the stories of the Qur'an as myths, they do not harm the Qur'an; because the soul of the myth and its elaboration is not intended. (Ibid. P. 201) From his point of view, the main purpose of the stories of the Qur'an is to convey and inspire. Hence, not only should historical interpretation of stories be avoided, but in the light of the literary view, one should reject historical interpretation of stories and even such an interpretation. (Ibid., P. 74) He suggests that Muslims, instead of being greedy and insisting on understanding the stories of the Qur'an on the basis of history and reality, try to establish their understanding of the Qur'an on the basis of literary and rhetorical technique so that there is no talk of its accuracy or inaccuracy. And close the way to doubt of the opponents of the Qur'an and Risālah. (Ibid. 58)

He believes that the Qur'anic stories about past prophets have largely no historical truth. Although the contemporary Arabs of the Prophet were convinced that these stories were true accounts of events that actually took place, God did not use them primarily as historical facts, but as a means of influencing the

emotions of the listeners. (Khalfullāh, 1999, 50-111) To achieve this goal, God has chosen the subjects of the stories of the Qur'an from among the stories and beliefs with which the former Arabs were familiar. In addition, in order to provide emotional support to the Prophet during his often overwhelming encounter with the pagans of Mecca, God reflected his spirituality in the stories of the previous prophets in the Qur'an by shaping stories according to his own experience. This view explicitly indicates that the content of the Qur'anic stories about the prophets was generally in accordance with the capacity of the Prophet and the main audience of revelation for the divine message. (Wielandt Rotraud, 2004, No. 85)

This adaptation, according to Khalfullāh, is the product of the fact that God, the sole author of the Qur'an, has surprisingly adapted the stories of the Qur'an to the circumstances of Muhammad and his audience. Khalfullāh never doubts that the whole text of the Qur'an has been revealed word for word by God. (Ibid.)

4-1- Principles, Evidences and Examples of Mythology Mentioned by Khalfullāh

According to Khalfullāh, the Qur'an is a literary book. As a result, no distinction should be made between the Qur'an and human literary texts in terms of having literary features. Like the literary text, the words of the Qur'an must be carried in conventional meanings in the age of revelation. In interpreting the stories of the Qur'an as a literary work, it is important for the commentator to pay attention to the aims and objectives of the stories, which are always true, but it is not important that the text and materials of the stories are correct and in accordance with reality. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 31-32) Khalfullāh believes that some commentators have not denied the existence of mythical stories in the Qur'an. (Ibid., P. 209) It should be noted that he believes that all commentators oppose the existence of myth in the Qur'an (even to a small extent). But some commentators, by opening a chapter, have allowed the promise of the existence of myth in the Qur'an and established an important principle for the thought of myth, and that is that the story is composed of two elements including the body and something else. The body of the story is not the purpose of the narrator, but the religious and moral justifications of the story are the purpose of narrator, which have been specified by Fakhr Razī and Mohammad Abduh during literary interpretations.

According to Khalfullāh, Muhammad Abduh thinks that sometimes Qur'anic stories are told in accordance with the superstitions of the pagans. (Ibid., Pp. 77-80)

A. The Foundations of the Mythology of Khalfullāh

After referring to the contents that indicate the existence of myth in the Qur'an, he puts forward the foundations of his theory as follows:

1. The expression of mythological stories in the Qur'an was considered an innovation in the literary life of Mecca and was therefore not accepted by the Arabs of Mecca. But after the emigration of the Prophet, due to the written culture of Medina and the existence of written Jewish texts and the history of quoting myths, the accusation of Qur'anic stories as myths did not continue in Mecca. (Khalfullāh, 1999, pp. 198-205)

2. The speakers of the mentioned accusation have often denied the resurrection.

3. They firmly believed in the mythology of the Qur'an.

4. In none of the accusations does the Qur'an deny the existence of myths in itself, and even in one case: (Furqān / 5-6) it insists that myths are not made by the Prophet, but sent by God.

Khalfullāh also gives reasons for the artistic and literary mythological view of the stories of the Qur'an. These reasons are:

B. Reasons for mythological view to Qur'anic stories by Khalfullāh

1. Myth with literary logic is the only reason to reach the religious, social interpretations and lessons of the Qur'anic stories, which is the existential philosophy of the stories. (Khalfullāh, 1999 :59, 74)

2. The only reason to get rid of the problems caused by the Isra'iliyyat in the interpretive texts and freedom from the disturbed and unsuccessful speeches of the commentators, is to have a literary, artistic and mythological view to the Qur'anic stories (Khalfullāh, 1999, 64 and 74).

3. One of the reasons for his belief in mythological view to the Qur'anic stories is the entry of the Isra'iliyyat in the two stories of 'Uzayr the Prophet and the quality of Iblis entering Paradise to tempt Adam to eat the forbidden tree from Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ (Andulisī, 1420, vol. 1, p. 308 and vol. 2, p. 304) and also useless flaws of Fakhr Rāzī on the inaccuracy of those propositions (Rāzī, nd, vol. 3, pp. 65 and vol. 7, pp. 35-38). (Khalfullāh, 1999: 60-61)

4. The different repetition of the Qur'anic stories and the acceptance of similarities in the stories from the point of view of some commentators are other reasons of Khalfullāh in the literary view to the stories and the denial of their historical truth. Because from a literary point of view, there is no repetition, no difference and no similarity.

5. Avoiding undocumented interpretations and the emergence of unresolved and contradictory issues in the Qur'an, such as the combination of scattered and indivisible elements in one time (See. A'raf / 157), the retelling of a word from others to learn a lesson, how the sun sets in the false spring, the view of Abu Ḥayyān and Nayshābūrī in a story like the companions of the cave and ...,

These cases are a set of reasons that have forced "Khalfullāh" to deny the historical truth of the stories and accept the literary theory. (Khalfullāh, 1999, pp. 64-68; 178-180) In order to prove his claim, he quotes some examples in the stories, some of which are mentioned here:

C. Examples of mythological view to the stories of the Qur'an from the point of view of Khalfullāh

Khalfullāh in his book to prove the claim of mythological view to the Qur'anic stories only gives examples as evidence, but often suffices in quoting the sayings of Muhammad Abduh and Fakhr-e-Rāzī. Some of these stories are:

1. Anointing usurers by Satan

Khalfullāh narrates the story of anointing usurers by Satan in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 275: Those who swallow usury will not stand [On the Day of Resurrection] except like the standing of a person touched By Satan. He quotes this story from the words of the commentator of Al-Manār in confirmation of the mythological theory as follows: This story is not told to tell the history, nor is it based on the belief of the ancients in the details of the news of this story, but only for the sake of preaching and learning to tell about their false and harmful beliefs and customs. In telling this story (anointing usurers by Satan), it is based on the interpretations of the audience of the age of revelation, although it is not correct in itself. Then Khalfullāh writes the following interpretation of this story from the words of Al-Manār: In Arabic and French books, when they talk about Greece and the ancient Egyptians, they talk about the gods of good and evil, who do not believe in them at all. And then Khalfullāh in the interpretation of this verse writes from the words of Muhammad Abduh: Abduh allows the existence of stories based on pagan superstitions but with rhetorical interpretations in the Qur'an. (Khalfullāh, 1999: 199-201)

2. The story of 'Uzayr and the killing of four birds by Ibrahim and the companions of the cave

Khalfullāh believes that these two stories depict the revival and immortality operations that the pagans denied. In his view, some commentators consider these two stories to be untrue. Therefore, he writes: Mohammad Abduh, following the interpretation of the story of 'Uzayr the Prophet, in the end, calls the story an allegory. (Rashid Reza, nd, vol. 37, pp. 51-52) And Fakhr Rāzī has interpreted the story of the killing of four birds by Prophet Ibrahim as an allegory that is not true. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 207). Khalfullāh further believes that by combining these two stories with the commentary of Fakhr Rāzī and

Mohammad Abduh below them with the words of the Orientalists in the story of the Companions of the Cave (Kahf / verses 9-22), considering the myth of these stories as the inability of the deniers of the resurrection to imagine these stories. Khalfullāh believes that the same suspicion that arose for the polytheists in the face of these stories, and they could not imagine the operation of killing the birds by Prophet Ibrahim and the resurrection of 'Uzayr, was also created for some commentators. Because they could not confirm the occurrence of these events, they called these stories a kind of allegory. (Ibid., P. 208)

3. The story of Hārūt and Mārūt

The story in the Qur'an is not that every word that is narrated from the people is true. The Qur'an, in the phrase, "And what was revealed to the two Angels, Hārūt and Mārūt at Babil." (Al-Baqarah / verse 102), quotes the well-known thing among the people at some point in time in order to learn a lesson in a way that it cannot be denied based on any basis and belief. Wisdom in this kind of expression is that God has left the knowledge of these facts of existence to the study and analysis of man in science and knowledge. Because people realize the truths of existence through their own efforts, and if the Qur'an specifies these matters, it will be opposed due to the limited human knowledge, and it will cause people to doubt and deny it. As a result, the interpretation of the scriptures based on suspicious and limited knowledge raises the suspicion that religion is opposed to science. (Rashid Reza, nd, vol. 1, pp. 401-402)

Abduh believes that in the form of stories and anecdotes and customary similes and sermons, there is no need to look at the details of the historical stories of the Qur'an and the propositions and quotations mentioned in the verses in a realistic and realistic way. The Qur'an mentions the true and false beliefs of the past and their right and wrong habits to be a source of preaching and learning a lesson, but the ruling on the correctness and incorrectness of those beliefs requires a comparison between the verses. He views interpretations such as the issue of magic and its effects with this view. (As'adi, 2019, p. 100)

These stories are not the only positions in the Qur'an in which Khalfullāh uses the method of myth in the face of them, and there are other cases in which he has used the form of myth in the Qur'an, which cannot be discussed in detail in this article, such as; The revelation of the heavenly food to the disciples (Mā'idah/112) and ... that Khalfullāh considers them as mythical and implicitly unreal and imaginary stories, because the intellect does not accept the possibility of their occurrence. (Al-Tahami Noqrah, 1394 AH, p. 167)

According to a literary analysis, Khalfullāh believes that the dominance of literature over the story causes the historian to disregard the elements of the story and to occupy it in the depiction of the event and the creation of the characters, so that sometimes it becomes difficult to distinguish actual currents and events that have happened. The extent of this discernment depends on recognizing the degree of freedom of the historian in processing the story. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 77-80)

4-2- Paying attention to the influence and effects of Khalfullāh's mythological theory

By studying the art of stories, the influence of Khalfullāh in this theory cannot be ignored. Although in the introduction of the article, Amin Khouli was mentioned as influencing the theory of mythology, but Khalfullāh, besides Amin Khouli, was also influenced by other cases, which are:

A. Being influenced by new schools of Western mythology

The emergence of Western mythological schools was built in the light of superstitions, on the basis of which they sought to interpret the many unknowns that emerged from the existence and life. (Faḍlullāh, 1419, vol. 17, p. 235)

The inadequacy of religious concepts, the pervasive superstitions of the divine religions such as the Trinity, the incarnation, etc., the weakness of the metaphysics of Western culture, the humanity of the scriptures and their contrast with rational and scientific and historical facts, the empiricism of the new

age, and the effort not to fall behind the caravan of science on the one hand, and the affection of scholars to religion on the other hand, have led Westerners to inevitably consider religious concepts and the wonderful stories of religious texts and the signs of prophets as symbolic expressions that have a trope aspect, unaware that such an attitude destroys the basis and reality of religion. (Saeedi Roshan, 2005, 177 - 284)

B. The influence of Muhammad Abduh and some commentators on Khalfullāh

Khalfullāh, citing the words of Fakhr Rāzī and Mohammad Abduh, has used it as a pretext for a mythical view to the stories of Qur'an. (Khalfullāh, 1999, pp. 199-207-208; 71-72) Abduh repeatedly states that the stories of the Qur'an are for the purpose of preaching and learning a lesson and not for telling history. (Rashid Reza, nd, vol. 1, p. 339) and Rashid Reza has also stated that the story is not necessarily a truth. (Rashid Reza, nd, vol. 2, p. 457)

According to Khalfullāh, 'Abduh prescribes the traces of myths in Qur'anic interpretations (story and non-story), just as he prescribes the Qur'an to base its style on that method and to take pagan superstitions as a means of interpretation. Also, according to Khalfullāh, although 'Abduh was content with this amount and did not refer to any story in order to narrate it on the basis of a literary approach, he allowed others to speak about myth. According to Khalfullāh since the stories of the Qur'an do not mean merely their historical body, if the stories are myths, they do not harm the Qur'an at all. Because the soul of the myth is not considered and the Qur'an has not sought to explain it in detail. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 201)

C. Influenced by the foundations of Orientalists

Instead of responding appropriately to Orientalists doubts and Christian preachers about the non-revelation of the verses, Khalfullāh has resorted to a literary and rhetorical approach, and by placing the Torah and the Bible as criteria, he has accepted the skeptics' foundations (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 58). He thinks that he has tried to reduce criticism and irony, while neglecting the historical reality of the stories of the Qur'an.

In some cases, Khalfullāh considers the truth of the words of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) in predicting the news to the People of the Book, subject to the coordination of the stories of the Qur'an with their writings. (Ibid. 52-53; 174-175) On the other hand, due to the response of some Orientalists to the non-revelation of the Qur'an, he refutes the historical reality of the story and deals with the literary and artistic point of view. Certainly, knowing some similarities of some of the stories of pre-Islamic religions, such as the story of Dhu al-Qarnayn, the Companions of the Cave, etc., is not a reason for knowing all the details of the story to. Moreover, by comparing the sayings of the Qur'an and their written and preserved works, the differences have been clear since that time, and these differences are still present, as history testifies it. So there is no reason to accept the honesty of Prophet by seeing full match of the Qur'an's stories with the written works of the revelation era. And citing the following verse: "Then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee." (Yūnus/94) This verse refers to the revelatory principle of the verses and prophecy of the Holy Prophet of Islam. What the polytheists were skeptical about and the Qur'an recommends that they refer to the People of the Book to ask about its possibility. (Tabataba'i, 1412, vol. 18, p. 105)

5. Examining Khalfullāh's View on the Mythology of Qur'anic Stories

Khalfullāh, in spite of presenting all interpretive arguments, foundations and documents for the mythical view to some stories of the Qur'an, his view has fundamental and methodological challenges, some of which are mentioned:

5-1- Fundamental challenges

Among the challenges based on Khalfullāh's mythological thinking, we can mention:

A. Denial of the historicity of the story due to inability to prove

The rejection of the historical truth of the stories and its contrast with the instruction is due to the failure to respond appropriately to the questions that are raised in the stories of the Qur'an. (Ma'refat, 1423, vol. 447) Because if it means that history is not the purpose, it is not considered a new word and is accepted by many of the Qur'anic scholars. (Tabataba'i, 1422, vol. 2, p. 311; Faḍlullāh, 1419, vol. 17, p. 260; Jawādī Āmulī, 1996, vol. 1, pp. 298-310)

But if the intention of Khalfullāh is that historical stories, such as the stories of the Qur'an that took place abroad, cannot carry a message, it is a mistake that is explicitly against the verses of the Qur'an: There is, in their stories, instruction for men endued with understanding. (Yūsuf/111) Indeed in their story is a lesson for the wise. The commentators also benefited from the advice of the Qur'an, knowing that the stories were true.

B. Distorted basis of view

The basis of Khalfullāh's view, which considers myths to be only some of the stories of the Qur'an and not all of its verses, is distorted; such interpretations are in contradiction with the explicit text of the Qur'an. (Hūd / 120; Mā'idah / 27; Yūsuf / 111) And it has been rejected by the commentators of the Qur'an. Therefore, some commentators of the Qur'an, such as Makarem Shirazi, consider the story of Adam (AS) and Eve as a sensory and objective process that has taken place in the material world, because from his point of view, there are no points in this story that are not compatible with rational standards. So that we give up the apparent meaning and carry on the unreal meaning. (Nasser Makarem et al., 1988, vol. 6, p. 128) and some other commentators such as Allameh Tabataba'i and his students based on other verses of the Qur'an, have considered the story of Adam (AS) and Eve as a truth that has been realized in the purgatory, and God the Almighty has explained it in the language of the material world. (Tabataba'i, 1422, vol. 2, p. 132)

C. No discrepancy between the historicity of the story and its revelation

The historical truth of the story is not an obstacle to revelation: the historical principle and the fact that the story is a proof of myth and its non-revelation mentioned by the opponents is also wrong. Evidence of the history and text of the verses of the Qur'an denies such a claim. Because the well-known myths of the Qur'an such as Naḍr ibn Ḥārith (Ibn Ashur, 1420: vol. 6, p. 65; vol. 9, p. 84; vol. 12, p. 7; vol. 19, p. 16; vol. 30, p. 177) and the function of myth in the age of revelation (Ibn Ashur, 1420: vol. 1, P. 212) shows that not only the Qur'an did not accept the existence of myth, but also that myth had a distasteful meaning in the age of revelation (Ajinah, 1994, vol. 1, p. 11). This accusation was made by the polytheists when they were stunned by the greatness and miracle of the Qur'an and had no way to deny or challenge it. Therefore, due to their stubbornness, they called the stories of the Qur'an mythical and non-revelatory. Therefore, the pagans did not believe in the myth of the Qur'an. (Khaṭīb, 2012, p. 309; Ajinah, 1994, vol. 1, p. 17) The mythical view to the Qur'anic stories is contradictory to the philosophy and wisdom of the Bi'thah of the Prophet (PBUH) and the eternal book that is inviting people to truth and correcting the wrong beliefs and using wrong tools to achieve the goal is not a wise act. (Saedi Roshan, 2005, pp. 288-289)

D. No need to believe in the reflection of some ideas in the Qur'an

Trying to deny the verses of the Qur'an and invalidate them (Shadhli, 1412: 2/1067), blackening the Risālah and Nubuwwah (Faḍlullāh, 1419, vol. 12, p. 32) to disappoint the people and prevent the effect of divine verses on the hearts (Khaṭīb, 2016, p. 318; Ibn Ashur, 1420, vol. 6, p. 60; Shadhli, 1412, vol. 3, p. 1503), and the fear of losing the social positions that provided the ground for their religious

sovereignty is one of the important motives of the leaders of polytheism in the mythology view to the Qur'an. (Khaṭīb, 2017, p. 309) Moreover, the report of the polytheists' mythological view to the Qur'an, as Khalfullāh has considered, if it is a sign of acceptance of this attributes by the Qur'an, other inaccurate attributes to the Prophet and the Qur'an should be accepted. Attributes such as slander (Furqān/4), poetry (Tur / 30; Anbiyā' / 5), lunacy (Qalam / 5; Shu'arā / 27; Hijr / 6), oldness (Hāqqah / 42), magic (Anbiyā' / 5) Human education (Nahl / 103) and... which are reported in the Qur'an. An issue to which not only others but also Khalfullāh himself is not bound. At the same time, the Qur'an has explicitly excluded this aspect from itself and considered itself a revelation and a truth. (We sent down the (Qur'an) in Truth, and in Truth has it descended.) (Isrā' / 105) According to some Qur'anic scholars, some deviants believe that the Qur'an means fiction an art without being true to reality. However, the Qur'an is a book of invitation, law, order, system and ritual of life, not a book of myth, novel and history. (Shadhli, 2008, vol. 1, p. 85)

E. Lack of justifying the means for a transcendent purpose

Any imaginary story that has no external reality, since it has a psychological, educational and enlightening effect, is true according to Khalfullāh. Because it is a means to an end, even if it is not true in terms of events and external personality. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 26) But one must ask whether the purpose justifies the means? In a heavenly book like the Qur'an, can any means be used as an excuse to achieve a goal? Is it also true that lies and falsehoods can sometimes be a means to a good goal? Really, where is the border between the two from the point of view of Khalfullāh? Why, although Romanian myths can also explain the truth, does not Khalfullāh consider them worthy of this position? (Ibid., P. 26)

Khalfullāh's view is in conflict with verses 41-42 of surah Fuṣṣilat:

"Those who reject the Message when it comes to them (are not hidden from Us). And indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: it is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, worthy of all Praise." (Fuṣṣilat/41-42)

F. No sharing in nature, due to common attribute

Khalfullāh believes that stories and parables are both similar because they are the ones who explain and prove the truth. Just as a parable does not have to be a fixed fact and can come from imagination, illusion, and mythology, so is the story. This is while the story of the prophets is mentioned in the Qur'an as parable. (Ibid., P. 22; see: Tahrim / 11; Yā Sīn / 13) Khalfullāh considers the story of the Companions of the Cave as the best reason to prove his claim and by asking the question whether what is the proof of the truth of the Prophet in the story of the Companions of the Cave is the historical truth of this story or what is common among the Jewish and told to the pagans? Why has not God stated the number of them in the Qur'an? (Ibid, p. 24) Khalfullāh has not stated any reason for his claim that the story is similar to the parable except they are common in explaining the truth, and it is very clear that the common attribute is not a proof of a single nature.

G. The notion of the contrast between the historicity of stories and learning a lesson

Another fundamental objection to the notion of myth is the historical (real) inconsistency with the sermon and the instructiveness of stories in the view of Khalfullāh. Citing the words of Abduh, he considers the purpose of mentioning the story in the Qur'an advising and preaching so that the historical concepts are not the purpose of divine book and therefore the time, place and sequence of events have been removed. (Ibid., Pp. 51, 73, 153)

H. Trust in the mythological thinking of the age of revelation

According to Khalfullāh, the belief of the polytheists in the existence of a myth in the Qur'an has been mentioned only in the Makkī surahs and they disagree with the Prophet (PBUH) on the non-revelation of this myth. He considers the expression of these issues in the Qur'an as a reason for the

existence of myth in the Qur'an and believes that something that is in conflict with the text of the divine verses has not been mentioned. (Ibid. 203-207)

I. The incompleteness of the claim of assigning myths to some stories

The mythological claim of some of the stories of the Qur'an and not all of its verses is distorted. Because the main reason for the opposition of the polytheists was the doctrinal principles, monotheistic values and the struggle of the Qur'an with polytheistic and blasphemous beliefs and values, not the stories that do not explicitly deal with these matters. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 309)

J. Unclear position and historical scope of stories

With a little reflection on Khalfullāh's view, it can be concluded that he is in conflict with his belief because:

On the one hand, he believes in the existence of historical stories that show the truth. (Ibid., Pp. 153-152)

On the other hand, he has not stated his position on the historical scope of Qur'anic stories and he believes that the stories should be in accordance with the Torah and the Bible, because they are a sign of the truth of Risālah and Nubuwwah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). He also denies the historical events of the time of the Prophet (PBUH) by quoting Abu Bakr Aṣam weakly and baselessly (Ibid., P. 53, vol. 174-175).

He even considers the unseen help of God by the angels in the battle of Badr (Anfāl / 9) and the battle of Uḥud (Aḥzāb / 9) according to the popular belief of the age of revelation and contrary to Islamic thought and reasoning. Of course, he also acknowledges that perhaps the expression of the Qur'an is based on the perception of the people in order to strengthen the spiritual spirit and stimulate human aspirations. (Ibid., P. 67)

5-2. Methodological challenges

Considering the verses of the Qur'an to be mythological in terms of methodology has its drawbacks, which are:

A. No need for Qur'anic stories to influence the Isra'iliyyats

In order to free himself from the Isra'iliyyats, which has been documented by some commentators such as Ṭabarī, Fakhr al-Rāzī, Baghawī, etc., (Khalfullāh, 1999: 183-185) Khalfullāh turned to the artistic and literary interpretation of the stories of the Qur'an. While the use of advice in the stories of the Qur'an in the literary way of Khalfullāh and the denial of some topics is not limited in the Qur'an. The commentators, without denying the historical truth of the stories and being trapped in Isra'iliyyats, have considered the educational, social, moral, artistic, jurisprudential, etc. benefits since the verses of the divine book have specified to learning a lesson. This has been the method of a group of commentators such as Allameh Tabataba'i, Mohammad Hussein, Faḍlullāh, and Ibn Ashur. Sayyid Quṭb also avoids entering into other inexplicitly stated issues in the Qur'an (Shadhli, 1412, vol. 4, p. 619) and believes that telling a story in the Qur'an, without name, time and place, is wise. (Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 619) On the other hand, he considers history to be unable to correctly explain the events mentioned in the divine book. Because the Qur'an speaks of events of which history has no knowledge; because history is the structure of man. (Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 460.) He considers the issues of the sciences in the Qur'an as Isra'iliyyats. (Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 448) which is useless without a document and examination. (Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 1123)

B. Lack of connection between the repetition of stories and its mythology

The discussion of the repetition of the Qur'anic story that upset Khalfullāh does not exist in the view of a group of commentators, but the explanation of the subject is in different forms (Tabataba'i, 1417, vol. 138, p. 202; Ibn Ashur, 1420: 88) which requires repetition. (Rāzī, nd, vol. 21, p. 475;

Tabataba'i, 1417; vol. 13, p. 202) and each repetition, according to its occasion, reflects a special delicacy in the literature. (Ma'refat, 1423, p. 432) In such a way that with the wisdoms, the messages contained in the stories of the Qur'an and eloquence and rhetoric have taken a miraculous aspect. The main problem in the interpretation of some Sunni commentators is how to explain the verses and baseless citations, not in accepting the historical reality of the Qur'anic stories.

Accordingly, not finding a suitable answer, such as what Khalfullāh has given in the example of Dhu al-Qarnayn or God's dialogue with Moses, (Khalfullāh, p. 65) should not be taken into account as a kind of historical view to the stories of the Qur'an and an irrelevant interpretation. Seyyed Quṭb, Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Faḍlullāh, following several stories of the Qur'an, have emphasized the truth of the stories and their external reality including the story of the children of Adam (AS) (Shadhli, 2009, vol. 2, p. 410), Haḍrat Yūsuf (AS) (Shadhli, 2009, vol. 4, p. 62), Kaḥf (The story of two men) (Shadhli, 2009, vol. 4, p. 434), the story of Haḍrat Ibrahim (AS) and birds (Shadhli, 2009, vol. 4, p. 951), the people of David and the people of Saba' (Shadhli, 2009, vol. 5, p. 241) and ... (1417: 2/281; 5/300; 13/308 and 338; Faḍlullāh, 1419, vol. 14, p. 283; vol. 15, p. 153; vol. 17, p. 261)

5-3. Ultimate Challenges

One of the most obvious consequences of the mythological thought attributed to Khalfullāh can be expressed in the form of ultimate challenges as follows:

A. Invalidity of Qur'anic stories

Khalfullāh's statements about the mythological view to Qur'anic stories can be categorized in two ways: 1. Qur'anic stories do not have the ability to discover the truth and do not indicate historical truth. (Khalfullāh, 1999, p. 172)

2- Some of the stories of the Qur'an do not have the necessary validity due to their conformity with the stories of the People of the Book. The result of this kind of thinking on Qur'anic stories is the discrediting of Qur'anic stories and, consequently, all verses of the Qur'an. (Sajedi, 2015, p. 117)

B. Impressive taste perceptions of Qur'anic stories

Those who agree with the mythology of the Qur'an equate the artistic approach of Qur'an with its unreality, because they believe that literature and art create an element of imagination in the story. According to this view, some believe that the literary nature of the text is considered as imaginative text, and according to such a view, to understand the stories of the Qur'an, there is no need for interpretive principles and rules, and only having an artistic and poetic spirit can understand the interpretation of Qur'anic stories (Shadhli, 1412, vol. 3, p. 1502).

6. Summary and Conclusion

- 1- The mythology of some stories, according to Khalfullāh, means that the stories of the Qur'an, with their literary elements, do not have historical truth, because the stories of the Qur'an are merely a tool for psychological effects on the audience and understanding the stories are only based on literary and rhetorical techniques, not on trying to understand their historical reality.
- 2- Khalfullāh's view on the mythology of the Qur'anic stories is not based on strong and realistic reasoning. One of the reasons for the mythology of some Qur'anic stories by Khalfullāh is the accusation of the Qur'an being mythological by the polytheists to the Prophet and the Qur'an not refuting this accusation. But no Muslim accepts this accusation of the polytheists and not denying this accusation of the polytheists by the Qur'an is not a reason to confirm this accusation.
- 3- In most of the stories that Khalfullāh cites examples as myths, he cites the sayings of commentators such as Fakhr Rāzī and Mohammad Abduh. However, some critics of Khalfullāh's mythology have

called his citations as misconceptions of commentators. But by studying *Tafsīr Al-Manār*, it became clear that Muhammad Abduh himself was the founder of the mythological thought of Khalfullāh.

- 4- Apparently, being influenced by the Western and Orientalist schools and some neo-Mu'tazilites, such as Amin Khouli and Mohammad Abduh, is the most important factor in the expression of the mythological theory of Qur'anic stories by Khalfullāh.
5. Not only is there no evidence to support Khalfullāh's mythical theory, but there is ample evidence to the contrary. Evidences that clearly state that the language of the Qur'an is real in Qur'anic stories; not a myth.
- 6- The basis of the idea of Khalfullāh, who considers myths to be only some of the stories of the Qur'an and not all of its verses, is distorted, and such interpretations contradict the explicit text of the Qur'an. As a result, this view is fundamentally, methodically and ultimately flawed.
7. Most commentators have inferred a negative connotation from mythology. Hence, the mythic view of Khalfullāh has been rejected by most commentators of the Qur'an.

References

The Holy Qur'an

Abu Ḥayyān Andulusī Gharnati, Muhammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Ali ibn Ḥayyān, (1420 AH), *Tafsīr al-Muḥīṭ*, researcher: Jamil, Sidqi Muhammad, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.

Ajinah, Mohammad, (1994 AD), *Encyclopedia of Arab legends about the pre-Islamic era and their implications*, Beirut: Dar al-Fārābī.

Alawi Mehr, Hussein; Abdullahi, Tahereh, (2017 AD), Critique of Ahmad Khalfullāh's view on myth in the Qur'an, *Journal of Oriental Studies (Qur'an and Orientalists)*, two scientific-promotional quarterly journals, the twelfth year of spring and summer, No. 22.

As'adi, Mohammad, (2019), *The stream of social rational interpretation*, Qom: Research Institute and University.

Faḍlullāh, Muhammad Hussein, (1419 AD), *from the revelation of the Qur'an*, Beirut: Dar al-Malāk.

Al-Hams, Abd al-Jawad, (nd), *Falsehood of Opponents about Qur'anic stories*.

Hick, John, (2011 AD), *Philosophy of Religion*, translated by Behzad Saleki, Tehran: Al-Huda International Institute.

Hosseini (Jarfa), Abolghasem, (2000 AD), *Artistic Foundations of Qur'an Stories*, Qom, Nūr al-Thaqalayn.

Ibn Ashur, Muhammad Tahir, (1420 AH), *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr al-Ma'rūf bi Tafsīr Ibn Ashur*, Beirut: Institute of Arab History.

Ibn Manzūr, Mohammad Ibn Mukarram, (1414 AH), *Lisān al-Arab*, researcher / editor: Mirdamadi, Jamal al-Din, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr for printing, publishing and distribution, Dar Sader.

Jawādī Āmulī, Abdullah, (1996), *Thematic Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an*, Tehran: Raja Cultural Publishing Center.

- Jawharī, Isma'īl Ibn Hamad, (1404 AH), *Al-Sihāh, Tāj al-Lughah wa Sihah Al-Arabiya*, researcher /Attar, Ahmad Abdul Ghafūr, Beirut.
- Khalfullāh, Mohammad Ahmad, (1999 AD), *Art of Story in the Holy Qur'an*, Beirut: Sina, for publishing in Arabic.
- Khalfullāh, Muhammad Ahmad, (1984 AD), *Qur'anic concepts*, Kuwait: the world of knowledge.
- Khaṭīb, Abdul Karim, (1395 AH), *Qur'anic stories and its meaning*, Beirut: Dar Al-Ma'rifah.
- Mahdawi Rad, Mohammad Ali; Mirzaei, Mohammad, (2012 AD), *A Critique on the Views of Khalfullāh in Qur'anic Stories Based on Modern Interpretations*, Qur'anic Teachings, Fall and Winter, No. 16.
- Makarem Shirazi and others, Nasser, (1989 AD), *Tafsir Nemooneh*, Qom: School of Imam Amir al-Mu'minin (AS).
- Ma'refat, Mohammad Hadi, (1423 AH), *Doubts about the Holy Qur'an*, Qom: Al-Tamhīd Institute.
- Motahhari, Morteza, (1990 AD), *Introduction to Islamic Sciences (Logic - Philosophy)*, Tehran: Sadra Publications.
- Nifar, Ahmad, (1425 AH), *Religious Text and Islamic Heritage, Critical Reading*, Beirut.
- Rashid Reza, Mohammad, (nd), *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karīm Al-Shahīr bi Tafsīr Al-Manār*, Beirut: Dar Al-Ma'rifah.
- Rāzī, Fakhrudīn Muhammad ibn Umar, (1413 AH), *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Maktab al-A'lām al-Islāmī.
- Rotraud, Wielandt, (2004 AD), *Knowing the stream of Qur'anic interpretations in the contemporary period*, Research Mirror, No. 85.
- Al-Rumi, Fahad, (1986), *The effects of interpretation in the fourteen century*, Beirut, Al-Risālah Institute.
- Saedi Roshan, Mohammad Baqer, (2004 AD), *Analysis of Qur'anic language and methodology of understanding it*, Research Institute of Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran: Publishing Organization.
- Sajedi, Abulfaḍl, (2014 AD), *The Language of the Qur'an with a Look at the Theological Challenges of Interpretation*, Tehran: Samt.
- Sayyid Quṭb, Ibrahim Hussein Al-Shāribī Shadhī, (1412 AH), *Fi Zilāl Al-Qur'an*, Cairo: Dar Al-Shurūq.
- Shamis, Abdul Mun'im, (1980 AD), *Brilliant thoughts and remembrance of its perfume*, Sheikh Amin-Al-Khouli, Al-Jadid.
- Shartuti, Saeed, (2007 AD), *The closest items in the Arabic edition and the tips*, Tehran: Usua.
- Soroush, Abdul Karīm, (2001 AD), *Expansion of Prophetic Experience*, Tehran: Serat Cultural Institute.
- Tabataba'i, Mohammad Hussein, (1422 AH), *Al-Mizān Fi Tafsīr Al-Qur'an*, Qom: Islamic Publications Office affiliated with the Society of Teachers of the Seminary of Qom.

Al-Tahami, Noqrah, (2016), *The Psychology of Story in the Qur'an*, Ph.D. Thesis, Tunisia: Tunisian Company.

Tayyeb Hosseini, Mahmoud, (2009 AD), *A Critique on Khalfullāh's Argument about the Existence of a Mythical Story in the Qur'an*, *Knowledge of the Qur'an*, Second Year, Spring and Summer, No. 3. pp. 141-161.

Zubaydī, Morteza, (1414 AD) *Tāj al-Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.

-----, (1415 AH), *Artistic image in the Holy Qur'an*, Beirut: Dar Al-Shurūq.

-----, (2003 AD), *Encyclopedia of the Holy Qur'an*, Center for Qur'anic Culture and Education, Qom: Book Garden.

-----, (nd), *Introduction to the monotheistic worldview*, Qom: Sadra.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).