

## Intentionality in the discourses of the Holy Qur'an

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### **Abstract:**

Discourses are based on a message conveyed by the sender to the recipient. The message relies on a set of aims and objectives. However, the objectives may be explicit, derived from the language of the text, or implicit, derived from the text and context. When the recipient receives the message, the process of decoding the message is subject to a set of data, enabling them to identify the sender's objectives. According to De Beaugrande and Dressler, this is closely linked to two criteria: cohesion and coherence. Therefore, the author of a text must produce a grammatically and semantically coherent text that can express the objectives they intend to convey to the recipient. There is no doubt that the Qur'anic discourse is at the level of miraculousness with regard to cohesion and coherence. Therefore, in this research, we seek to study intentionality in Qur'anic discourse and the conditions for identifying and attaining it, in light of the mechanisms provided by modern linguistic studies

**Keywords:** Qur'an; discourse; intentionality; cohesion; coherence.

## INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of the Qur'an is based on clarifying the intention of the Qur'anic verses. and the interpreter follows each verse with its explanation and clarification to convey the speaker's intent to the recipient. This makes this interpretive process a process of understanding the intentions contained in God's words. This makes the investigation of intentionality an ancient issue in the Arab heritage, and its concepts and mechanisms of operation predate modern and contemporary studies, despite their lack of a theoretical framework and conceptual system. Therefore, we find abundant research in the heritage on the issues of the reasons for revelation and the general events that shape the context of the revelation of verses and the circumstances of their reception. Hence, we assert that arriving at the meanings of verses does not stop at the meanings of words and sentences, but extends beyond that to understanding the context, all for the sake of understanding God Almighty's intention in His words.

### 1. Values of "intentionality" among interpreters

The Qur'an is a book revealed by God to address humanity. All recipients of His message must strive to understand it and grasp its intent. Therefore, it was revealed in the language of the addressees and according to their way of speaking. God Almighty says: "Do they not then consider the Qur'an carefully Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found within it much discrepancy." (An-Nisa': 82) (أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا) (النساء: 82)

It is necessary to emphasize that dealing with the Qur'an in the Arab heritage is based on the fact that the Qur'an is the fixed word and revelation of God; while interpretations of the word are as varied as the interpreters. Scholars of Qur'anic studies have divided Qur'anic verses into two types: definitive and ambiguous.

## 2. Classification of types of verses in heritage

Several statements have been made regarding the definitive and ambiguous, one of which is: "It has been said about the clear and the ambiguous that one opinion is: the clear is what is understood from its apparent meaning without any accompanying evidence or indication of its intended meaning due to its clarity, such as the saying of Allah: "Worship God and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good". (An-Nisa: 36) ﴿اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا﴾ [النساء: 36]

And similar verses whose meaning and the speaker's intention do not require evidence.

And the ambiguous, what is not understood by its apparent meaning until it is accompanied by what indicates its intended meaning due to its obscurity, such as: Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian. [Al-Hijr: 9] ﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ﴾ [الحجر: 9]

Since the revelation came in the plural form, a group of polytheists went to say that there is a trinity and that God is the third of three, God forbid.

The second: that the decisive is the abrogating, and the ambiguous is the abrogated; and the third: that the decisive is that which does not bear interpretation except in one way, and the ambiguous is that which bears two or more ways.<sup>1</sup>

Some scholars have said: "The decisive is what the scholars know its interpretation and understand its meaning, and the allegorical is what no one knows its interpretation except Allah, such as the news about the time of the emergence of the Antichrist, the descent of

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1 Al-Fadl ibn al-Hasan al-Tabarsi, Mukhtasar Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, Dar al-Ma'rifah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1358 AH, 1/196

Jesus (peace be upon him), the rising of the sun from the west, the Day of Judgment, the end of the world, and its obliteration"<sup>2</sup>

From what was previously mentioned of the scholars' statements regarding the decisive and ambiguous, it can be said in general that the decisive is "those clear and detailed verses whose wording is free from ambiguity and misinterpretation, as if Allah has perfected them and prevented creation from tampering with them due to their clarity and obvious meaning".<sup>3</sup>

Among the examples of the existence of similarities in the Quran: Allah Almighty says: "And indeed, you guide to a straight path." [Ash-Shura: 52]. ﴿وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾ [الشورى: 52]. In the verses there is what suggests the existence of a contradiction, so those who have deviation in their hearts follow it and think that there is a contradiction between them, which is the negation in the first, and the affirmation in the second, so they say that there is a contradiction in the Qur'an. As for those firmly grounded in knowledge, they say that there is no contradiction in the two verses. What is meant by guidance in the first verse is the guidance of success, and this is only possessed by Allah alone, so it is not possessed by the Messenger or anyone else. What is meant by it in the second verse is the guidance of indication, and this is from Allah, and from someone else, so it is from the Messengers and their heirs from the divine scholars<sup>4</sup>.

The ambiguous verses in the Holy Quran are based on the principle of multiple possibilities of meaning intended by the Quranic verse(s). The intent is not clearly evident, but rather remains within the framework of ambiguity and generality, or contradicts the apparent meaning. In interpreting these verses, attempting to understand them, and realizing their intent must be compared to other clear verses. The interpreter finds in these verses clarity and a unified

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2 Al-Thaalabi, Abu Ishaq Ahmad ibn Muhammad, Al-Kashf wa Al-Bayan, Dar Ihya al-Turath Al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1422 AH, 3/10.

3 Khan Siddiq Hassan, Fatah al-Bayan fi Maqasid al-Qur'an. Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1420 AH, 1/424

4 Muhammad ibn Salih al-Uthaymeen, Collection of Fatwas and Letters of al-Uthaymeen, Dar al-Watan and Dar al-Thuraya, Saudi Arabia, 1413 AH, p. 4

meaning, eliminating ambiguity, the possibility of multiple interpretations, and different, and sometimes contradictory, interpretations. Therefore, scholars have called for an interpretation based on an understanding of all Quranic texts and a comprehensive reading, subordinating ambiguous meanings to explicit meanings. They also rely on the reasons for revelation and the context in general for interpretation. This is because the Quran intersects, complements, and explains one another. This is what we can call the cohesion and coherence of the Quranic text, by which we mean the Holy Quran as a whole, and it may extend to all texts of divine revelation, including the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah.

Therefore, many conditions must be met by those who undertake to interpret the Qur'an and understand its objectives, the most important of which are the auxiliary sciences and necessary mechanisms, such as: careful and thoughtful reading of the meanings, mastery of the language and its secrets, knowledge of the customs of the Arabs in their speech, knowledge of the reasons for revelation, the abrogating and abrogated verses, and others... all of this in order to understand the Qur'anic text with a correct understanding, "and understanding, contemplation, and discerning the laws of God in the self and the horizons, the foundations of civilizational witnessing, knowing the commandments and rulings, the types of encouragement and discouragement, the promises and warnings, and so on".<sup>5</sup>

This general principle, which we have emphasized in the interpretation of the Qur'an, is almost unanimously agreed upon among Muslim scholars who specialize in Qur'anic sciences. They have emphasized that the Qur'an is a single text, even if it appears to be a collection of surahs and verses, and that each part reinforces the other. Interpreting any part of it requires a comprehensive understanding of the meanings of all the verses, as they all flow in a single direction, with no discrepancy or contradiction between them. They consider this fact a fundamental component of Qur'anic

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5 Muhammad al-Ghazali, *How Do We Deal with the Qur'anic Text?* 7th ed. Dar Nahdet Misr for Printing and Publishing, Cairo, Egypt, 2005, 7th ed., p. 27

interpretation, and that any fragmented interpretation of some verses of the Qur'an is wrong from the outset.

### **3. Types of intentionality in the Holy Qur'an**

The first step toward interpreting the Holy Quran and understanding the intent of its noble verses is to interpret the Quran by itself, viewing it as a single text based on consistency and coherence, not as fragmented texts. The interpreter then proceeds through careful reading, sound understanding, delving into meanings, and taking into account context and the reasons for revelation. He must connect meanings to the Sunnah, the interpretations of the Companions, and the sayings of scholars, and integrate all of his prior knowledge and everything that falls within what is called the "context of reception" into the process of interpretation. This is because interpreting the Holy Quran cannot be isolated from the circumstances surrounding the recipient, which influence their understanding in one way or another. Nor can it remain separate from the interpreter's own knowledge, convictions, and beliefs, as all of this influences the formulation of the meanings extracted from the Quranic text. Therefore, some have divided the intentions of the Holy Quran into two parts:

#### **3.1 Direct or explicit intentions**

Direct or Explicit intentions these are the objectives that are based on direct indication or a single meaning, and are derived from the language of the text, without resorting to the context to understand the meaning, to the point that agreement is reached between the interpreters or recipients of the text in understanding this meaning or extracting this indication. This is because the meaning is directly related to what is agreed upon by the recipients, which is the direct meanings of the words and verses, and the interpreter does not need the context to understand that meaning. If we consider the entire Qur'an as a single, consistent and harmonious text, then we consider its overall intent clear, and that it is within its scope that the partial intents of the verses and surahs proceed.

Therefore, the secondary objectives cannot deviate from the primary objective and overall goal for which the Quran was revealed. In the view of all scholars, the Quran is a book of guidance, revealed to guide humanity to the truth and lead people from darkness to light. God Almighty says: “Indeed, this Qur’an guides to that which is most upright and gives good tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a great reward. (9) And that those who do not believe in the Hereafter - We have prepared for them a painful punishment”. [Al-Isra’: 9-10] **﴿إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا﴾** (9) **﴿وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا﴾** [الإسراء: 9-10] The Qur’an is a book of guidance, as the verse makes clear. God revealed it to humanity so that they would be guided by His light and guidance, and follow the straight path that He showed them. It informs people that whoever follows the Qur’an and does the righteous deeds that it commands will be guided and will be among the winners on the Day of Resurrection. However, those who deny the Qur’an and do not act in accordance with its method will be among the losers, and that God has prepared for them a painful punishment as a recompense for their denial.

Since the Holy Quran, although it is a single text in its entirety, is composed of several texts, each with its own purpose, we may find the same verse repeated in several places, but in each place it has a specific purpose that differs from the purposes in the rest. An example of this is the repetition of dialogues, news, and stories. Therefore, the Quran always encourages contemplation and deep understanding, because what God intends by mentioning this piece of news in this context is not the same purpose He intends in any other context. This is confirmed by the following verses: God Almighty says: « Do they not then consider the Qur’an carefully, or are there locks upon their hearts ». [Muhammad: 24] **﴿أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا﴾** [محمد: 24]

He also said: « Do they not then consider the Qur’an carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found within it much discrepancy ». [An-Nisa’: 82] **﴿أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا﴾** [النساء: 82]

Text linguists believe that the realization of intention in a text is linked to the presence of two most important textual elements: consistency and coherence. If these two elements are present in any text, the recipient or interpreter of the text will inevitably recognize the sender's intention.<sup>6</sup> There is no doubt that consistency and coherence in the Quranic text are miraculous, something that not all humans can achieve, even if they cooperate with one another. God Almighty says: "Say, 'If mankind and the jinn gathered in order to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it, even if they were to each other assistants and helpers.'" (Al-Isra': 88) ﴿قُلْ لَّيْنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا﴾ [الإسراء: 88]

According to the data and concepts we have gone through, what is meant by intentionality is the desire to convey meaning, or direct the significance to the recipient and achieve his understanding. "intentionality determines the manner of expression and the intended intention. It is the compass that directs the other elements, making them cohere, combine, and move toward a common goal"<sup>7</sup>.

As for the Qur'an, because it is a book of guidance for all people, its texts have multiple objectives, yet at the same time they have a single objective and are directed in one direction, because it takes into account understandings and minds, the change of time and place, and the differences in cultures and inclinations. We find in it the general and the detailed, the definitive and the ambiguous. It carries within it the elements of permanence and continuity, and the ability to absorb changes and transformations, while at the same time including the elements of stability and permanence, so much so that the Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace, described it as being suitable for all times and places, not outdated by frequent repetition, and that it is supreme and nothing is supreme over it.

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6 Robert De Beaugrande, Text Discourse and Procedure, trans : Tamam Hassan, Alam Al-Kutub, Cairo, Egypt, 2004, p. 89-90.

7 Bushra Al-Bustani, and: Wasan Al-Mukhtar, On the Concept of Text and the Textual Standards of the Holy Qur'an: A Theoretical Study, Journal of Research of the College of Basic Education, College of Basic Education, University of Mosul, Iraq, Issue 1, 2011, p. 189

### 3.2 Implicit or indirect intentions

Implicit or indirect or non-explicit intentions these are intentions that cannot be directly understood from the language of the text. The implicit Quranic objectives are esoteric objectives. The words and structures may be the same, but the meaning in the first may differ from the meaning in the second. Every implicit objective in the Quran requires a specific context that directs its meaning. The interpreter must not stop at the mere words and sentences and the information provided by the language, but must explore the general context in which the text was revealed.

Examples of implicit meanings in the Holy Quran: In His Almighty's saying: "And what is that in your right hand, O Moses?" [Ta-Ha: 17], [﴿وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَى﴾ طه: 17], perhaps someone might say: What is the point of Allah asking Moses about what was in his hand? Did he not know that what was in his hand was a staff? He was told: That is not what you meant. Rather, He, the Mighty and Sublime, said that to him when He wanted to transform it into a moving snake, even though it was a piece of wood. So He alerted him to it and confirmed that it was a piece of wood on which he could lean and use to herd his sheep, to make known to him His power over whatever He wishes, the greatness of His authority and the implementation of His command in whatever He loves by transforming it into a moving snake, if He wanted that for him, in order to make that a sign for Moses along with all His signs to Pharaoh and his people<sup>8</sup>.

### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we summarize the most important findings we have reached, as follows:

- Discourse, in general, is not devoid of intentionality, and Qur'anic discourse is the most important discourse based on God's

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8 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ayat al-Qur'an, edited by Abdullah al-Turki, Dar al-Hijr for Printing and Publishing, Cairo, Egypt, 1st ed., 2001, 16/42

Intentionality in addressing people. This intentionality may be clear in the language of the discourse, or it may be implicit or unclear. A communication channel is necessary to connect the speaker to the recipient and achieve intentionality.

- Intentionality is a fundamental concept in pragmatics, as pragmatics is concerned with the study of language during its use, thus revealing the speaker's Intentionality in a specific context.

- One of the basic conditions for identifying intentionality within a text, according to De Beaugrande and Dressler, is that the text exhibits cohesion and coherence.

- One of the manifestations of a text's acceptability is the contextualization of speech, in addition to the connection between the grammatical structure and its adherence to linguistic rules.

- Among the necessary mechanisms for understanding the objectives of the Holy Qur'an are: knowledge of the Arabic language, consideration of the context, knowledge of the reasons for revelation (Asbāb al-Nuzūl) and the context as a whole, and contemplation of the meaning of words, structures, and the text as a whole.

- What helps us better understand the Qur'anic text is: applying the two previous criteria to the Qur'anic text, and examining its eloquence, the coherence of its verses, and the various aesthetics related to them. All of this primarily stems from both linguistic and contextual data, in addition to the material provided by phonetic, morphological, and syntactic elements that guide meaning.

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