



The Importance of Holistic Approach and the Relation of Meaning and Context for Understanding Qur'an

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Abstract

The main subject of Qur'an is human, his guidance and education. It is sent to ensure the happiness of mankind in the world and hereafter. Therefore, Qur'an asks from humans to read it and consider on it in a serious way.

There is no doubt that the holy scripture of Qur'an has been the source of inspiration for all ideologies. Understanding the Qur'an, which is qualified God's promise of protection until the Day of Judgment, is firstly one of the important tasks of those who are in conversation with it. Qur'an considers man as a whole. Because of that, it is a kind of necessity to assess the principles and explanation of Qur'an with a holistic view.

A better understanding of a message that is contained in a verse may be possible by taking into consideration the context of the other verses. It should also be noted that the phenomenon of interpretation by disconnecting the words from their context, causes semantic restriction.

Key Words: Quran, meaning, context, interpretation

Öz

Kur'an'ın Anlaşılmasında Bütüncül Yaklaşımın ve Anlam-Bağlam İlişkisinin Önemi

Kur'an'ın temel konusu insan, onun hidayeti ve eğitimidir. O, insanlığın dünya ve âhiret saadetini temin etmek için gönderilmiştir. Bu yüzden Kur'an, kendisinin okunmasını ve üzerinde ciddi olarak düşünülmesini istemektedir.

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Hiç şüphesiz Kur'ân'ın mukaddes metni, bütün fikir hareketlerinin ilham kaynağıdır. Böyle mükemmel ve kıyâmete kadar Allah tarafından koruma vaadi ile nitelenen Kur'ân'ı anlamak, öncelikle ona muhatap olanların en önemli görevlerinden biridir. Kur'ân, insanı bir bütün olarak ele alır. Bu sebeple Kur'ân'ın açıklamalarının ve ortaya koyduğu ilkelerinin bir bütünlük içerisinde değerlendirilmesinin zarureti ortadadır.

Bir âyetin ihtiva ettiği mesajın daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi, onun diğer âyetlerle olan bağlamı göz önüne alınarak mümkün olabilir. Lafızların bağlamlarından kopararak yorumlanmasının, Kur'ân'ın bütünlüğü içerisinde anlam daralmasına sebep olduğu da unutulmamalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kur'ân, anlam, bağlam, yorum

Introduction

Qur'an, which is a source of guidance and mercy, asks from humankind to recite it and reflect upon it and to give verdicts among them; *"Those to whom We have given the Book recite it with its true recital"*¹, *"Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an?"*², *"[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded."*³, *"Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, or are there locks upon [their] hearts?"*⁴, *"And We have certainly made the Qur'an easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?"*⁵, *"...recite the Qur'an with measured recitation."*⁶ Qur'an in the verses such as the ones that we have mentioned above asks to read and reflect upon it seriously. On the other hand, the people who do not comprehend and understand it are criticized by Qur'an itself.⁷

Qur'an has a feature of involving the all parts of human life. It sees the human life not with an atomist approach but a holistic one. Its principles and rules consist of every pieces of human life. Due to these features, we could find the verses' regarding the human life's every single part.

1 Baqara, 2/121.

2 Nisâ, 4/82.

3 Sâd, 38/29.

4 Muhammed, 47/24.

5 Qamer, 54/17, 22, 32, 40

6 Muzzammil, 73/4.

7 Nisâ, 4/78; A'raf, 7/3; Kahf, 18/57; 'Anbya', 21/50; Sajdah, 32/22; Sâffât, 37/13 ect.



As Celal Kirca have stated that scholar tried to understand Qur'an via either literal, contextual, significant or intuitional method or more than one of them in the history.⁸

In this paper, it will be pointed out the relations of meaning and context between the verses and the importance of holistic approach in understanding the Holy Qur'an. Then to think on both the context of the revelation of the time that was revealed and modern day conditions will have a positive impact to understand Qur'an. Besides, instead of atomistic approach, which is verse based method, the usage and improvement of the holistic one has an important place in understanding and interpretation of Qur'an's scripture. This work has been done according to the thoughts that we have talked on it; with some examples, the article is structured.

1- Holistic and Atomistic Approach in Understanding Qur'an

In the dictionary of the Institution of Turkish Language the word "whole" includes the meaning such as complete, perfect, sum of beings more than one, unity, perfectness and unweathered. The word "holistic" refers to a whole, comprehensive and complete approach.⁹ Atom is the term that implies a part and remnant of a complete thing and separated one from a unity. It is also defined as every single unit of a compound and section.¹⁰ "Atomistic view can be expressed as the approach to grasp the chain of meaning of an event without looking at the whole context of it.

With these definitions, the question whether the holistic approach or atomistic approach will be more beneficial to comprehend the content of Qur'an arises. Both methods have been used since the day of revelation. While a lot of scholars, who were interpreting, analyzing and making the exegesis of Qur'an, were trying to understand a term from Qur'an or giving a verdict from a verse of it by using the atomistic method made many mistakes.¹¹ Ignoring the holistic approach in the Qur'an's exegesis (tafsir), it would not only cause to not see details but also cause the appearance of many meaningless, incoherent and inflicting interpretations of it. In this

⁸ See; Celal, Kirca, , *Kur'an'ı Anlama*, Marifet Yayınları, İstanbul, 2010, p. 16.

⁹ Türkçe Sözlük, *Türk Dil Kurumu*, Ankara, 2009, p. 336.

¹⁰ Türkçe Sözlük, p. 1574.

¹¹ For more information see; Mesut Okumuş, *Kur'an'ın Kronolojik Okunuşu Muhammed İzzet Derveze Örneği*, Araştırma Yayınları, Ankara, 2009, p. 108.



case, every discipline and school would evaluate the Qur'an verses with an atomistic view to advocate the opinions that they think is true and to build the subsets of their ideas.

One of the contemporary author of tafsir, Muhammad Izzet Derveze (1305/1887/1404/1984) echoed the idea of the classification of the chapters and the verses of Qur'an is relevant according to their subject, locution and the revelation sequence and he make an assessment about the subject like the following one: To work on Qur'an verse by verse or part by part will decompose the unity of meaning regarding many subjects and contexts. It will cause to confusion at the point of right thinking and grasping. Because of the same reason the person will go far away from his or her goal. To exemplify and amplify the matter, we should remember the verse "While Allah created you and that which you do?" (Es-Sâffât, 37/96). Due to this verse there were many discussions in Islamic tradition in terms of theological aspects. This verse has been seen as evidence in the discussion related to whether the human is the creator of his or her action or the God is the creator of it and everything. This verse was assessed as an evidence by both Mutazilites, who were the advocate of the human free will, and Asharites, who were the scholars supporting the idea the God is the only creator of human action. Asharites thought this verse was a great response to their Mutazilites opponents.¹² However, the previous and next verses talk about the conversation between Abraham and his people. Abraham told his people that they were doing wrong by worshipping the idols and the God is the only creator of all of them the ones that they were worshipping. There is nothing can be reasoned theological discussion in the verse. Therefore, es-Sâffât 96 should be evaluated with the previous and next verse together to have a better understanding of Qur'an. I think Derveze's interpretation in this point seems correct.

Since the revelation of Qur'an to understand the scripture of the Holy Qur'an there have been made a lot of bids for its interpretations and a lot of books have been written. The more human beings understand Qur'an the more they will see their own positions and make more effort for grasping the relationship between the Creator and creatures. In this framework, some certain methods have been improved.

¹² Muhammed İzzet Derveze, *Kur'ânü'l-Mecîd*, Araçça'dan çeviren, Vahdettin İnce, Ekin Yayınları, İstanbul, 1997, p. 169; Okumuş, Mesut, *ibid*, p. 111.



Qur'an treats human and his or her life with a holistic view. The principles that have been ruled by Qur'an with comprehensive and extensive content could consist of both the world and the world to come. Because of that, to grasp the meaning of Qur'an and interpret it correctly, the holistic approach has an important role.

Halis Albayrak stated that Qur'an's own strong language and its known structure put forward to understand it in its own wholeness and none of the authors and researchers of tafsir can be ignorant to this so-called structure of Qur'an. While Qur'an is read or recited repeatedly, it will be realized that the letters which are the smallest piece of Quran, the words and semi- clauses, sentences and the verses composed of the sentences and the texts which are the compilation of the verses, all of these pieces of Qur'an have their own mission; they all have an important place in the complete meaning of Qur'an.¹³

To Celal Kirca, if we do not have a holistic Qur'an culture, every knowledge or information regarding to Qur'an will be either lack of something or half. That kind of knowledge will not be as much as comprehensive it should be.¹⁴

While Derveze states that the place of the chapters and verses in the Quran is not arbitrary; they all are related with each others and should be studied according to this relationship, he point out the necessity of a holistic approach to see the harmony of the verses with each other and Qur'an itself. According to him, to assess the Holy Qur'an verse by verse or piece by piece, without having the holistic approach will cause so many misunderstanding.¹⁵

Without constructing Qur'an culture and systematic Qur'an understanding, verse centered approaches as a natural consequence of consulting to the Holy Qur'an according to needs push the Qur'an centered pointed of views outside. As a result of this without a holistic view appeared, the piece take place the whole; and minimalist ideas show up. Unfortunately some "tafsir schools" which are shaped by the ideas of

¹³ Halis Albayrak, *Kur'an'ın Bütünlüğü Üzerine*, Şule Yayınları, İstanbul, 1992, p. 12, 21, 22.

¹⁴ Kirca, Celal, *ibid*, p. 45.

¹⁵ Okumuş, Mesut, *ibid*, p. 110.



those sorts of understandings which focuses on mainly subject, images and shapes, become the main reason for misunderstanding of Qur'an and Islam.¹⁶

To have a better understanding of Qur'an, to see the relationship between the pieces and whole text has an important place. There is a circular relationship between the whole text and the pieces of it. The meaning of the whole text can be understood via pieces but the pieces can see their enlightening function under the light of the whole text.¹⁷

According to so called approach, verses and chapters complete Qur'an wholeness and vice versa. Of course, there are some verses that consist of separate judgments and do not need the previous and next verses to be understood. However, the importance and value of that judgment can be clarified with other pieces and verses; they complete and support each other.

Qur'an touches so many subjects; but even one of them is not given at a place properly. Thanks to it, since an event is not given from beginning to the end completely, a subject cannot be found a particular place. The subjects are given piece by piece; but if the all relevant pieces gathered, there would be a complete subject over there, and we could grasp the main idea of the text.¹⁸

Provisional verses can be seen scattered everywhere in Qur'an as it fits with the general structure of the Holy Qur'an. Although it seems they are different, indeed they have a strong wholeness with each others. Like this Qur'an have some parallels with human life. As it is known, the life is not classified under completely different sections. In contrast, belief, ethics, law and emotional subjects are all interacted. In this respect, Quran's position is proper to human life.¹⁹

When we consider the issue in the framework of these explanations, the holistic approach in understanding and interpretations of the

¹⁶ Kırca, Celal, *ibid*, p. 168.

¹⁷ Şevket, Kotan, *Kur'an ve Tarihçelilik*, Beyan Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, İkinci basım, p. 158.

¹⁸ Emîn el-Hûlî, *Kur'ân Tefsirinde Yeni Bir Metod*, Tercüme, Mevlüt Güngör, Bizim Basımevi, Ankara, 2001, p. 78-79.

¹⁹ Mevlüt Güngör, *Fıkhî Tefsir Hareketi ve Fıkhî Tefsir*, Bayrak Matbaası, İstanbul, 1996, p. 24.



Holy Qur'an, the relationship between piece and whole, the previous and next verses of the so called verse²⁰ have a great importance. To have a better understanding of tafsir movements and interpretations of Qur'an with a holistic approach, we should give a couple of examples from the Holy Qur'an.

First Example: Surat'al Ma'un, verses 4- 5

For some scholars, Surat'al Ma'un revealed in Mecca and to some others it revealed in Medina.²¹ According to the idea of majority it is Meccaen. Half of it was revealed regarding Meccaen As b. Vail and the rest of it was revealed about Abdullah b. Ubey who is from Medina.²² First three verses were revealed in Mecca and the rest was revealed in Medina.²³

Muhammed Hamdi Yazır says the word "Ma'un" means alms (zekât) and alms was obligated in Medina. After this he says even though, due to it, this entire chapter looks like revealed in Medina, there are some suggestions and encouragements for giving alms in Meccaen verses as well. He makes this assessment: "Even hypocrites were in Medina, there could be some hypocrites among the Muslim society in Mecca. Because of this as majority thought, this chapter should be Meccaen seems correct than other idea."²⁴

There is a controversy about whom the verse "Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense?" was revealed among the scholars. It was reported that the verse was about As. b. Vail, Valid b. Mughire, Ebu Sufyan, and Ebu Cehil who are all the notables of Mecca or one of the hypocrites.²⁵

Since the people who are caused the revelation of the verse are Meccaen, it is about infidels and was revealed in Mecca, the interlocutor of

²⁰ For more information See.Çimen, Abdullah Emin, *Kur'an'da Ritmik Yapı: Fasıla ve Üslûp Açısından Bir Deneme*, Dini Araştırmalar, sayı, 2, Ankara, 2007, p. 224.

²¹ Kurtubî, Ebû Abdillâh Muhammed b. Ahmed, *el-Camiu li Ahkâmi'l-Kur'an*, Beyrut, 1995, c.X, cz. XX, 187.

²² Elmalılı, Muhammed Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*, Eser Kitapevi, İstanbul, 1971, IX, 6162.

²³ Zemahşerî, Mahmûd b. Ömer, *el-Keşşâfü an Hakâiki Çavâmidi't-Tenzil ve Uyûni'l-Ekâvili fi Vücûhi't-Te'vîl*, Dâru'l-Kitâbi'l-Arabiyyi, Beyrut, tp. IV, 803.

²⁴ Yazır, Muhammed Hamdi, *ibid*, IX, 6162.

²⁵ Kurtubî, *ibid*, X, cz. XX, 187; Yazır, Muhammed Hamdi, *ibid*, IX, 6162.



the verse “So woe to those who pray, [But] who are heedless of their prayer”²⁶ is not hypocrites but the infidels. According to this idea the polytheists of Mecca knew the pray (salat) and was performing it. To this opinion from the verse “And when it is said to them, “Bow [in prayer],” they do not bow” it should not be understood the Arabs did not pray at all because from the verses Surat’al ‘Anfâl 35 and Ma’un 4-5, it is seen that the Arabs knew what the salat worship was clearly. However they did not care as much as they should. In their performance, of course, there was prostration (sejde) but whether the existence of bowing or not is questioned. Because of that it is said that “they do not bow”.²⁷

When we analyze this subject three words help helps. According to the explanations in the books of tafsir and dictionaries “Ma’un” means alms, donations and benevolence anything that human has more or less benefit from it, any instrument than be used between neighbors, ect... Salt, fire, and water also mentioned for the meaning of it.²⁸

“El-haddu” means to encourage and advice. Miser is the one who is able to help the poor people but does not help them and also does not advice to other people to help to the poor. He does not act good deeds and tries to stop the people who are acting in a good manner.²⁹ This is the certain quality of miser and the one who carries these qualities.

In the verse, the verbs “Yedu’u” ve “yehuddu” means dismiss and discourage; these verses in the form of continuous tense which indicate continuity.³⁰

If we study Qur’an with its own wholeness, we could see the qualities of infidels in terms of three words in Surat’al Ma’un. They are misers; they do not care poor people and orphans since they do not have fear from

²⁶ Mâ’ûn, 4-5.

²⁷ See. Süleyman Ateş, *Yüce Kur’ân’ın Çağdaş Tefsiri*, Yeni Ufuk Neşriyat, İstanbul, 1991, X, 277278.

²⁸ See. İbn Manzûr, Ebu’l-Fadl Cemalüddîn Muhammed b. Manzûr, el-Efrikî, *Lisânü’l-Arab*, Darü İhyâüt-Türâsî’l-Arabiyyi, Beyrut, 1999, XIII, 147; Taberî, Muhammed b. Cerîr et-Taberî, *Câmiu’l-Beyân fî Tesîri’l-Kur’ân*, Kahire, 1987, XII, 108, 205-203, 207; Fahrüddîn Râzî, *et-Tefsîru’l-Kebîr*, Dâru’l-Kitâbi’l-İlmiyye, Beyrut, 1990, XXXI, 108; Hâzin, Alâuddîn Ali b. Muhammed b. İbrahim, *Lübâbu’t-Te’vîl fî Meâni’t-Tenzîl*, Beyrut, tp.VI, 579; Kurtubî, *ibid*, X, XX, 190-191; Yazır, Muhammed Hamdi, *ibid*, IX, 6170.

²⁹ See. İbn Manzûr, *ibid*, III, 219; Râzî, *ibid*, XXXI, 106; Kurtubî, *ibid*, X, 188.

³⁰ İbn Manzûr, *ibid*, IV, 354; Kurtubî, *ibid*, X, 188; See. Yazır, Muhammed Hamdi, *ibid*, IX, 6167.



the God. Qur'an explains that since they ignored the verses of the God and were miser, they will go to hell:

*"And no sign comes to them from the signs of their Lord except that they are from it turning away. And when it is said to them, Spend from that which Allah has provided for you," those who disbelieve say to those who believe, "Should we feed one whom, if Allah had willed, He would have fed? You are not but in clear error."*³¹

*"(Allah will say), "Seize him and shackle him... Then into Hellfire drive him. Then into a chain whose length is seventy cubits insert him. Indeed, he did not used to believe in Allah, the Most Great, Nor did he encourage the feeding of the poor"*³²

*"(Who will be) in gardens, questioning each other: About the criminals, (And asking them), "What put you into Saqar?" They will say, "We were not of those who prayed, Nor did we used to feed the poor"."*³³

*"No! But you do not honor the orphan. And you do not encourage one another to feed the poor. And you consume inheritance, devouring [it] altogether, And you love wealth with immense love."*³⁴

The verses that we referenced are connected to the Meccaen chapters. The verses which focus on the certain qualities of infidels also show us the ignorant identity of Meccaen polytheists. If we think in this framework, at the first step Surat'al Ma'un takes Meccaen polytheist as its interlocutor; because of that it could be said that the chapter criticizes the action of them and not praying to the God.

In the case that is accepted this chapter was revealed about Abdullah b. Ubey in Medina the criticized people in the chapter would be the hypocrites of Medina. Therefore, the verses *"So woe to those who pray, [But] who are heedless of their prayer, those who make show [of their deeds]"* talk about the person who prays with an intention of show and careless. In other chapters of Qur'an, there are some verses talks about prays of the hypo-

³¹ Yâsîn, 36/46/-47.

³² Hâkka, 69/30-34.

³³ Müddessir, 74/40-44.

³⁴ Feçr, 89/17-20.



crites as well.³⁵ Hypocrites were praying with believers and they always claimed that they were together with them since they felt weak themselves against the Muslims' powers. They tried to display the acts like this; it was a kind of behavior for them. They pretend to behave like a Muslim. Because of the lack of sincerity in their intention as Qur'an stated, they were praying like Muslims did to reduce reaction of Muslims against them. Therefore, to accept the criticized people in Surat'al Ma'un are the hypocrites and this chapter was revealed in Medina seem correct.

On the other hand at the moment of revealing Qur'an in Mecca, the numbers of Muslims were less and their power could not dissuade the polytheists of Mecca. Polytheists did not fear from Muslims and did not care their power. Otherwise, the closest friends of the prophet would not be harassed, tortured and sacrificed by the polytheist of Mecca because of their belief in what the prophet brought out. If we read this context correctly the stronger one will not fear the weaker one and they did not care the Muslims; there is no reason for them to pretend like a Muslim.

In my humble opinion, in this term to say that denunciation of polytheist because of their pray or to tell "polytheists were praying" is impossible. The questions such as to whom the polytheists were pretending or why they were doing that display us how the claim "polytheist were praying" is false.

We would like to work a little bit more the issue. The verse "*Those who make show [of their deeds]*" is interpreted in different ways by the authors of tafsir. Hamdi Yazir, makes an exegesis and says *they made a mistake in their prays*. He explains like this: "It is remarkable that there is no reprehension because of the mistake in their prays but there is reprehension because of a mistake from their prays. Sometimes to make a mistake in the pray is something that no one can be far away."³⁶ Because of that reported from Hasan Basri (110/728) ve Ata b. Dinar' (d. 126/744) Malik b. Enes (ö. 93/711-12) said thanks the God he reprehended making mistake in the pray, He does order "an salâtihim sâhûn" making mistakes from their prays instead of "fî salâtihim sâhûn" making mistake in their prays. When it is used by the proposition "From", the meaning of the

³⁵ Nisâ, 4/142; Tevbe, 9/54.

³⁶ Yazir, Muhammed Hamdi, *ibid*, IX, 6168.



“mistake” is to quit or not to expect a compliment. When a believer makes a mistake in his or her pray, he or she immediately redress it and complete it with a mistake prostration.³⁷

There are different explanations of *mufessirun* on the meaning of having mistake in the pray. To be careless if it is performed or not and about its time, not to perform on time and not be upset because of not performing it, performing it with a bad intention or for some worldly benefits and aims are all are the act of a hypocrites; they are not in the mistake from the prays.³⁸

Ibn Abbas told the clause “*feveylün l’il-musallîn*” So woe to those who pray!” was about hypocrites since they pray when they are with believers and they quit when they are alone.³⁹ They prays to show the others since they do not expect anything from the God and they do not fear from Him. However, they perform the worship to be ensured from the punishment of Muslims and protect their children from the wrath of them. At the time of the prophet (pbuh), they were hiding their infidelity and trying to prove their belief in Islam and the prophet. The God reported that both they prays to show and did not give the obligated alms. ⁴⁰ These explanations confirm the ideas that tell the word “*Ma’un*” means alms (*zekât*).

In the framework of explanation that I have done above, it is understood that the hypocrites prayed to pretend a Muslim to protect their lives and properties. They do not believe like a sincere Muslim do. Insincerity is the certain quality of the hypocrites. In Surat’al *Ma’un* there is an indication to their insincerity and their careless action towards the pray which is the second most important thing after the credo of Islam.

Not with a verse or chapter based, in another words with an atomist, approach but with a holistic approach, we could say that the “*So woe to those who pray, Those who make show [of their deeds]*” were revealed about the hypocrites. We have indicated that some qualities of hypocrites men-

³⁷ Taberî, *ibid*, XII, cz. XXX, 202. Râzî, *ibid*, XXXI, 107; Hazin, *ibid*, VI, 578; Neseî, *Ebul-Berakât* Abdullah b. Ahmed, *Medârikü’-t-Tenzîl ve Hakâiku’-Te’vîl*, Beyrut, tp. VI, 579.

³⁸ Taberî, *ibid*, c. XII, cz. XXX, 201-202; Râzî, *ibid*, XXXI, 107; Hazin, *ibid*, VI, 578.

³⁹ Taberî, *ibid*, XII, cz. XXX, 201-203.

⁴⁰ Taberî, *ibid*, XII, XXX, 202, 204.



tioned somewhere else in Qur'an. Hypocrites are lazy at praying and the people who are trying to stop good deeds to be done. To have a better understanding relevant to the position of them, I will give some examples from the Holy Qur'an:

*"Indeed, the hypocrites [think to] deceive Allah, but He is deceiving them. And when they stand for prayer, they stand lazily, showing [themselves to] the people and not remembering Allah except a little."*⁴¹

*"And what prevents their expenditures from being accepted from them but that they have disbelieved in Allah and in His Messenger and that they come not to prayer except while they are lazy and that they do not spend except while they are unwilling..."*⁴²

*"Who are stingy and enjoin upon [other] people stinginess and conceal what Allah has given them of His bounty - and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment, And [also] those who spend of their wealth to be seen by the people and believe not in Allah nor in the Last Day. And he to whom Satan is a companion - then evil is he as a companion."*⁴³

*"They are the ones who say, "Do not spend on those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they disband." And to Allah belongs the depositories of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand."*⁴⁴

As it has seen, when Surat'al Ma'un analyzed with a holistic approach, we could say at least after the verse 4, it is about hypocrites, their insincerity and preventing other to do good deeds. The complete of the chapter is about common qualities of infidels and hypocrites. However, it is really hard to say that infidels and hypocrites were praying when we approach to Qur'an with a holistic view.

At the verse 35 of Chapter 'Anfâl 35, the God orders *"And their prayer at the House was not except whistling and handclapping..."* So called verse "salat" means praying. They did not have a salat with prostration and bowing. With Hamdi Yazır's expression, they were get together men

⁴¹ Nisâ, 4/142.

⁴² Tawbe, 9/54.

⁴³ Nisâ, 4/37-38.

⁴⁴ Munafiqun, 63/7.



and women, they hold each others hand. They were whistling and clapping and dancing around Ka'bah. When the prophet came to pray and worship or recite Qur'an there, the polytheists exaggerated what they were doing. They were pretending to pray but the only thing they were doing was dancing and whistling. According to them this was a kind of worship.⁴⁵

As it has seen that the polytheists were not worshipping but they are dancing around Ka'bah as they were in a festival. Sometimes they were doing this naked around the holiest place of the world.⁴⁶ They were doing this to bother the prophet Muhammad and thought these actions were a kind of worship.

Deniers and polytheists did not pray and get close to bow and prostration. There are some verses that show us this; it is ordered "And when it is said to them, "Bow [in prayer]," they do not bow." in the verse Murselat 48, in Qiyamah 31 "And the disbeliever had not believed, nor had he prayed" is said. In Surat'al Bayyinah, it is said that even God ordered them to pray, the people of the book and polytheists do not perform it.⁴⁷

*"The Day the shin will be uncovered and they are invited to prostration but the disbelievers will not be able, their eyes humbled, humiliation will cover them. And they used to be invited to prostration while they were sound".*⁴⁸

According to Taberî's interpretation, they were called for praying in the world, but they did not pray.⁴⁹ According to these verses and explanations infidels and polytheists did not worship or perform salat while they were in the world. If they were praying they would become Muslim. Provided that the verses in Surat'al Ma'un are regarding to polytheist with a chapter or verse centered atomistic approach, that would mean the infidels worship as Muslims do. It would be hard to understand this in the wholeness of Qur'an. In conclusion, we could say the verse "So woe to those who pray" talks about the position of hypocrites.

⁴⁵ Yazır, Muhammed Hamdi, *ibid*, IV, 2400.

⁴⁶ For more information, see. Abdullah Emin Çimen, *Kur'an Karşıtlarının Ekonomik Kaygıları*, Nehir Yayınları, İstanbul, 2008, p. 137-138

⁴⁷ Beyyine, 98/5-6.

⁴⁸ Kalem, 68/42-43.

⁴⁹ Taberî, *ibid*, c. XI, cz. XIX, 27-28.



Second Example: Surat' al 'An' am verse 159 and Roman verses 31-32

Izzet Derveze states that the most concrete and trustful way of understanding of Qur'an's message, orders, advices, its context and the relations of verses with each other is to make exegesis some verses of Qur'an with others, and to put verses in relation with other verses. According to him, the whole Qur'an looks like a chain and there is a strong link between each chapter and verse. The clauses, sentences judgments, parables advise, evidences that Qur'an include naturally explain and support each other. If a person who investigates Qur'an has this kind of understanding, it will prevent him from all hypothesis and predictions.⁵⁰

There is exegesis of Quran by Qur'an at the base of understanding Qur'an with a holistic approach. It is stated that the best way to understand Qur'an is to comprehend it by using it. Ibn Teymiyye (d. 728/1328) and Ibn Kesir (d. 774/1372) explained that one of the best methods for exegesis of Qur'an is making tafsir it by using itself.⁵¹ When we listened to them, we could say that while we are analyzing verses or chapters from the Qur'an, it is better to use holistic approach, in another word, we should consider the whole text of Qur'an together. To clarify the subject we should mention the verses relevant to the matter:

"Indeed, those who have divided their religion and become sects, you, [O Muhammad], are not [associated] with them in anything. Their affair is only [left] to Allah; then He will inform them about what they used to do."⁵²

While mufessirun were interpreting the verse they said the ones who divided their religion and become sects are Jews and Christians, polytheist and all other deniers and the people of innovation. From the generality of the word used in the verse the ones who divided their religion indicate the people of the book, polytheist, and the people of innovation among the society of Islam. Besides they pointed to the tradition "my

⁵⁰ Derveze, İzzet, *Kur'ânü'l-Mecîd*, p. 178.

⁵¹ See. İbn Kesir, *Tefsîru'l-Kur'ân'il-Azîm*, Kahraman Yayınları, İstanbul, 1984, I, 12-13; İbn Teymiyye, *Tefsîr Üzerine*, Pınar Yayınları, İstanbul, 2006, p. 109

⁵² 'An'am, 6/159.



Ummah will be divided into seventy three sects and only one of them will be released."⁵³

Many mufessirun thinks that the verse that we have talked about is regarding with the events that will happen in the future after the Prophet. However, there is another similar verse in the chapter of Romans. It says; *[Or] of those who have divided their religion and become sects, every faction rejoicing in what it has.*⁵⁴ And the previous verse "*[Adhere to it], turning in repentance to Him, and fear Him and establish prayer and do not be of those who associate others with Allah*"⁵⁵ shows us the ones who divided their religions and become sect are clearly polytheists. Therefore, if we take an atomistic approach about Al An' am 159, we could say that this indicates to the event after the prophet died in the Muslim society. However, this claim will be wrong because of the verses and reasons that we have mentioned above.

With the expression of Muhammed İzzet Derzeze if these both verses are considered together and seen the relationship of them with the verse in An'am, we will not need anymore to the ideas that says the verse indicates to the controversies, sects, innovations after the death of the prophet. Even when the verse in An'am is thought with the previous verse 157 and 158, we could easily understand the ones who divided their religions and become sects are the polytheists.⁵⁶

As it is understood from these explanations, to attempt to interpret and comprehend the verse of Qur'an with another verse in the wholeness of Qur'an will cause a better understanding its message.⁵⁷

2- The Relationship between Meaning and Context in Understanding Qur'an

In understanding and interpreting Qur'an correctly, construction of relationship of meaning and context is one of the ways what the sacred

⁵³ See. Zemahşeri, *ibid*, II, 82-83; İbn Kesir, *ibid*, III, 372; Şevkânî, Muhammed b. Ali Muhammed eş-Şevkânî, *Fethu'l-kadîr el-Câmiu beyne Fenneyi'r-rivâyeti min İlmi't-Tefsîr*, Dâru'l-Kitabi'l-Arabiyyi, Beyrut, 1994, II, 232.

⁵⁴ Romans, 30/32.

⁵⁵ Romans, 30/31.

⁵⁶ Derzeze, İzzet, *Kur'ânü'l-Mecîd*, p. 178-179, Okumuş, Mesut, *ibid*, p. 107.

⁵⁷ Albayrak, Halis, *ibid*, p. 43-46.



texts says and what is the true aim of the text. Since it is really hard to understand a text without looking at its relations with its forward and backward; we should pay attention to inner and outer context of that event. Otherwise, an assessment like that narrows the content and turned the text to a simple and easy text. Because of that we always should be careful about the relations of meaning and context.

To have a better understanding about this issue, to work a little bit more on the terms "meaning and context" is necessity.⁵⁸ Meaning is referring thing that a sign, a system of signs, a thing like a sign, a word or an act point it out. According to etymology meaning is the thing what the language unity in the mind transfers, concept, thought and content, ect... To understand: The act of understanding. Understanding is to see, perceive and grasp what a thing is via reasoning, thinking and discerning.⁵⁹

Context is a unit of language that show the value and meaning of it by coming either before or later it.⁶⁰

Celal Kırca expresses that the necessity of a scientific method as a way of understanding Qur'an and makes this evaluation: "it is known even if this understanding method was used in different ways in the past, the application of this method not the whole text of Qur'an but to some verses or chapters unfortunately reasoned to have a better method for comprehension of it. Because of that, we need a holistic approach to grasp the exact meaning of the message. The first of them is grammatical meaning and the second one is contextual understanding. In terms of rightness of the meaning to know the historical conditions is important as much as the language of the text because Qur'an carries the color of the time it was revealed."⁶¹

Context means in Arabic "siyak and sibak". In religious language, siyak and sibak are used instead of the word context. Context shows the reason why the words uttered more than how to be said. This gives more

⁵⁸ For more information about the relationship between meaning and context see. Abdullah Emin Çimen, *Kur'an-ı Kerim'de Helâk Kavramı*, Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul, 2001, p. 16-24.

⁵⁹ İsa Öztürk ve arkadaşları, *Dictionnaire Larousse, Ansiklopedik Türkçe Sözlük*, Milliyet Gazetesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1994, I, 156.

⁶⁰ *Dictionnaire*, I, 266.

⁶¹ Kırca, Celal, *ibid*, p. 158.



effectiveness to the subject in grasping the meaning of the utterance since a word will take its meaning according to its context. The best way to see the exact meaning of a statement is to know the context where it has been uttered and written. It is really important where the words have been talked, under which condition they were uttered and by which aim they have been spoken to understand the text. Connotation meanings get shaped and changes accordingly. Due to that to say "context is determiner of the meaning" would not be an exaggeration.⁶²

According to these explanations, in understanding of a text correctly, the relations of meaning and context play an important role. Is it possible to apply this method to Qur'an as well? While we are struggling to understand the verses and chapter, is *siyak* and *sibak* really important? Or what are their affects on understanding the Holy Qur'an? Of course, this method can be used for Qur'an. To know the revelation of it gradually over 23 years piece by piece not in one time⁶³, the reasons for revelation, and the place where it was revealed and historical condition of revelation is also a necessity to understand it. Thanks to it to know the socio-cultural, socio-economical and socio-political conditions of the time Qur'an was revealed is important as much as to know the language of Qur'an. Likewise correctness of a meaning depends on knowing inner and outer context and the correctness of relations of these contexts.⁶⁴

Halis Albayrak makes an assessment about the importance of meaning and context relation in understanding Qur'an. He also indicates the consequences when this relation is ignored: while Qur'an is tried to be understood with a holistic approach, the most important think that everyone should pay attention is the frame of *siyak* and *sibak*. We called the previous and next statement of the text that we study on it *siyak* and *sibak*. Although Qur'an is not a text that ranged subject by subject, sometimes we could see the verses relevant to the same subject together. Due to that all statements should be taken care of with this method. Picking a verse among the verses will not help us to understand it correct, even it may cause to have a wrong understanding. This kind of approaches can

⁶² Kirca, Celal, *ibid*, p. 160-161.

⁶³ And those who disbelieve say, "Why was the Qur'an not revealed to him all at once?" Thus [it is] that We may strengthen thereby your heart. And We have spaced it distinctly." (Fur-kân, 25/32).

⁶⁴ See. Kirca, Celal, *ibid*, p. 163-164.



cause some problems that Qur'an never means. In fact, the statements such as "this verse or the part of this verse shows we are correct" or "from this word I could have this judgment" are the basic form of the atomistic approach, which ignores siyak and sibak, to Qur'an. According to Albayrak, this kind of assessments can be found a lot in tafsir, theology and jurisprudence books. One of the main reasons for the confusion and controversy is to ignore siyak and sibak.⁶⁵

True meaning of a verse is not the meaning that we have grasped without looking at its similarities with other verses in Qur'an and context of it. Qur'an's passages and verses can be stated only in the context. The lowest limit for correct meaning is this method or at least it should be this one.⁶⁶

Qur'an is not arranged according to the subject; however the subjects are given discursively and piece by piece in different places. The verses relevant to different subject can follow each others. Sometimes, the verses regarding similar subject can be seen in different chapter. Therefore, while studying on Qur'an, we should consider this feature of Qur'an, siyak and sibak of the verses and we should also determine similar verses. Then we can make an assessment about the text we study on it. In contrast, the interpretations and explanations that have been done can contradict with each others.

The method which has been done by taking apart the verses or statements from their siyak and sibak which is context caused not to understand the true meaning of them and the truth would be shaded. In another perspective, it could be perceived as an evidence for the understanding of interpreter.

The fact of interpreting the Qur'an by cutting its tie from its context has existed since the time of revelation; and unfortunately, we still have the same problem today.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Albayrak, Halis, *ibid*, p. 46.

⁶⁶ See. Kırca, Celal, *ibid*, p. 166.

⁶⁷ See. Kırca, Celal, *ibid*, p. 172.



To make our reader understand easily how can sibak ve siyak in other word context is important in terms of understanding Quran, I will give some examples from the Holy Qur'an. These examples will also display us the wrongness of the atomist approach.

First Example: El-'Ahzab, the verse 21

"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often." The explanations and interpretations that have been done for the years regarding this verse are like this: the Prophet is an example and model person for all believers and humans and a guide for the humanity and a leader who has to be followed. He was seen a leader that has to be followed not only in his words but also in his action by using the verse. By the same token, he was seen as the one who was at the highest level of moral and ethics; he lived a model life for humanity. These are all correct and no one can deny these features of the Prophet. However there is another side which was forgotten or ignored about the Prophet. His spirit of jihad, dare, altruism, patient, power and perception are all in the part of that side. This side of the Prophet is known very little, the written sources talks about that side but Muslims usually think about the first side of him. To express shortly, he is the prophet of dare or war if the conditions get together as much as the prophet of mercy.

The prophet armed his weapon if required; he commanded the Muslim army in the battle. He was also a talented commander and soldier. In the battle that he had been, he became a role model by inheriting vital principles of war law, and human rights. It is a necessity for us to accept Jihad as a way of protecting the innocent people, building justice among the people, stopping colonization, violence, terrorism, and it is also a way for the peace and safety of all humanity in our modern day.

The verse 21 of Surat'al Ahzab usually interpreted separately; it is tried to be understood by cutting its ties from the context. It is not assessed in terms of wholeness and context of the text. By this interpretation the only person we have is the one who lived according to some moral manner, advices them to the humans and let the people know what the God asks them. As a result of this, the spirit of jihad gets weakened; Muslims



become silent to pressures, violence and occupancy that occurred either in their society or in the world.

I will present different interpretations of the verse in different tafirs to make the issue clear. In the verse there is a condemnation and critics for the people who do not fight with the prophet for his case. According to this, the meaning of the verse; "there are certainly good pattern for you in the action of the prophet who made the battle his case for Allah's sake in the war of Gutter." Although the verse has a specific reason for its revelation, it contains everything about the prophet's being the best example. We could see his being best model for the humanity in the verses like Surat'al Hashr 7 and 'Ali Imran 31.⁶⁸ To this explanation, the prophet's being a model for human is not only at the battle but in the every dimension of human life. The practices of the prophet are models for all believers.

"The messenger of God personally joined the battle, you shall join it. Whoever engages with the battle with him, accept him a good model for him or herself. Whoever does not join the battle, he or she does not see him as a model for him or herself."⁶⁹

"By the (name of God)! There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern. Follow him by helping the religion of Allah and supporting the case of the prophet. Do not hesitate fighting with him in the battle field. Be patient against whatever occurred as the Prophet is. He was patient when his teeth were broken, he was wounded, his uncle was killed and faced with many tortures. In spite of all of them he made his case and was patient against all of them. You shall act like him and follow his steps."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Şevkânî, *ibid* 1994, IV, 338.

⁶⁹ Ebû Mansur el-Mâtürîdî, *Te'vîlâtü'l-Kur'ân*, Neşre hazırlayanlar, Ali Haydar Ulusoy, İmla Kontrol, Bekir Topaloğlu, Mizan Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2008, XI, 323.

⁷⁰ See. Hâzin, *ibid*, V, 100; Kurtubî, *ibid*, c. VIII, cz. XIV, 143.



"There is a good trait at the messenger of the God for you. Take him as a model by showing your steadiness in the battle and dealing with nuisance."⁷¹

Surat'al Ahzab the verse 21 confirms that the messenger of the God is not the person we should only follow his utterance; but he is also the one everyone is supposed to be like him in action and behavior as the verse "*whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from.*" (Hashr, 59/7) says. It means he was not the one who had some order related to religion and ethics; he also became an example in the subject of every action of human beings. Because of that in his life there are the best examples for humanity.⁷²

"He is the guide and leader who you should adapt himself in your actions and behaviors."⁷³

As it has been seen, the prophet (pbuh) is not a model only in a part of life but he is the best example at all dimensions of life. So called verse has a semantic restriction when its connection is broken off with the context. As we have mentioned before, the assessment of Qur'an with a holistic approach is really important for comprehension of Qur'an.

Nineteen verses (Ahzab, 33/9-27) include the verse "*There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern...*" were revealed about the enemies who wanted to occupy Medina.⁷⁴

It is possible to understand the verse "*There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern ...*" with a general meaning. This explanation and interpretation has been done for many years. We could not say that this understanding is false. Usually his being a role model morally has been put forward in Muslim societies; this dimension is less dangerous side of the matter. The prophet said "I was sent to complete good virtue and ethics." The Holy Qur'an also stresses this side of

⁷¹ Beydavî, Nâsiruddin Ebû Said Abdullah b. Ömer, *Envâru't-Tenzîl ve Esrâru't-Te'vîl*, Beyrut, tp. V, 100; Neseî, Ebul-Berakât Abdullah b. Ahmed, *Medârikü't-Tenzîl ve Hakâiku't-Te'vîl*, Beyrut, tp. V, 100.

⁷² Yazır, Muhammed Hamdi, *ibid*, VI, 3883.

⁷³ Kurtubî, *ibid*, c. VII, cz. XIV, 143.

⁷⁴ Ebu Bekir b. Muhammed b. Abdillâh İbnü'l-Arabî, *Ahkâmü'l-Kur'ân*, Tahkîk, Muhammed Abudulkâdir Ata, Dâru'l-Kitâbi'l-İlmiyye, Beyrut, 1988, III, 549.



him. The verse *“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern...”* can portrait a person who is honest, trustful, good at human relations, a good father, tradesman, merciful to women, children, orphans, and the poor. However, when we examined siyak and sibak, we could see that the prophet is also at battle field. In fact, the verse also indicates his commanding, courage, patient, power and intelligence. There is also some attribution for this side of his character. We should remember he is a soldier as much as the prophet of peace. Without jihad it is almost impossible to settle the justice and the principles of mercy in the world.

When the polytheists came to occupy, the conditions were really hard. The Muslims had so many problems such as lack of food, sleeplessness, restlessness. The messenger of God became the best example under these circumstances. We should think the context of the verse and then we can see how he was the best example for anyone who believes in God and day of Judgment in the battle field. Since Muslims ignore his spirit of Jihad and universal principle of his religion, they lost their power and are under the violence and torture of other nations. Because of this so called verse should be revised by looking at its siyak and sibak. In addition to that, it is a mission for all Muslims to focus on his being a prophet of jihad as well as the prophet of ethics and peace.

Second Example: Mumtehane, the verses 4 and 6

The Holy Qur’an uses the phrase “best example” for Abraham as well. *“There has already been for you an excellent pattern in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, “Indeed, we are disassociated from you and from whatever you worship other than Allah. We have denied you, and there has appeared between us and you animosity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone.”⁷⁵*

At the previous verse from this verse, the God prohibits being friend with infidels and establishing close relation with them. Likewise, the deniers will show their hostility against believers; they will also not refrain from fighting with Muslims and swear to them whenever they find a chance. Despite all of these, if Muslims became friends with them, they

⁷⁵ Mumtahaneh, 60/4



would pay whatever they were done at the Day of Judgment, and their relatives and children would not give any benefit to them.⁷⁶

After touching to these important subjects, the God asks from the believers to accept Abraham and his followers as an example and a guide. Since Abraham and his followers are the best example in terms of believing their case and not worshipping to idols, every Muslim has to imitate Abraham and his followers' courage and patient. As a result of this, Qur'an orders to Muslims "to obey him and accept him as a leader and guide."⁷⁷

The Holy Qur'an presents Abraham's wrestle with his ancestor Azer and polytheists and his declaration of faith and not fearing from the idols which they think as gods as an example of the struggle of the Unity (tawhid) in the history of humanity.⁷⁸

Because of the struggle of Abraham to make the Unity dominant over the polytheism, his courage for his case, he was not burnt in the fire.⁷⁹

As it is stated in the verse "*Indeed, Abraham was a [comprehensive] leader, devoutly obedient to Allah, inclining toward truth, and he was not of those who associate others with Allah*"⁸⁰ he struggled with polytheism alone like an Ummah and became the father of the Unity. As it has expressed clearly in the verse "*Except for He who created me; and indeed, He will guide me. And he made it a word remaining among his descendants that they might return [to it]*"⁸¹ he inherited the word of the Unity to his successors; due to that there has been always someone who believes in one God from his descendant.⁸²

It is hard to grasp the notion by which traits Abraham was the best example for Muslims without looking at siyak and sibak of this verse and the other verses regarding the experience of Abraham. If we attempted to understand his being the best example with a verse centered approach, it makes the meaning restricted or even we might not understand correct

⁷⁶ See. Mumtahane, 60/1-4.

⁷⁷ See. Kurtubî, *ibid*, IX, cz. XVIII, 51.

⁷⁸ See. 'An'âm, 6/74, 80, 81; Hajj, 21/52-68; Saffat, 37/85-96 ect

⁷⁹ See. Anbiyâ, 21/69.

⁸⁰ Nahl, 16/120.

⁸¹ Zuhruf, 43/27-28.

⁸² See. Ali Özek and others, *ibid*, Zuhruf, 28 's explanation..



meaning of it. In this respect, the verses should be explained with a holistic approach rather than an atomistic approach.

At verse 6 of Mumtehanah it is said that *“There has certainly been for you in them an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day.”* It is remarkable that the phrase *“the best pattern for you”* in Surat’al Ahzab’s the verse 21 for the prophet Muhammad and Abraham in Mumtehane the verses 4 -6. This is also notable that one of the descendants of Abraham, Muhammad (pbuh) met with him at the same point which is to wrestle and struggle for the case and sake of the God to establish the Unity in the universe. He was carrying the same ethical traits as his great grand father Abraham.

At Surat’al Mumtehane when Abraham (pbuh) and his believers said *“Indeed, I (we are) am disassociated from that which you worship”* they relied on the Unity. They always acted the Unity centered. Did not Allah created this world and sending human to the earth to make the Unity over the universe?⁸³

One of the certain feature holistic assessment of Qur’an’s verses is to establish general connection among the verses. In the clause of *“There has certainly been for you in the messenger of the God an excellent pattern for you”* there is an indication to his being a model for all humans and the necessity of acting exactly like him. As I have mentioned before, if we evaluated the verse by looking at its context, we will figure out the verse is also about his struggle with the polytheists to establish the Unity in the world. Both the usage of the excellent pattern in Abraham and his followers and the prophet Muhammad is also an important important to see the connection between these two verses. The believers are supposed to take them as models in their campaign against the polythesim and polytheists. The end of all prophet is to make the Unity dominant over the poly theism and infidelism; the struggle between the right and wrong will keep till the end of the world. So when we are talking about the prophet we should not tell his peace and mercy, we should also tell something about how he was brave and fearless against the polytheists and the people who are torturing the others.it will be enough to look at the contemporary situation

⁸³ See. Zâriyât, 51/56.



of human being in the world to see the interpretation of this verse with an atomistic approach will not reach us to our goal which is to comprehend Qur'an correctly.

Third Example: Surat'al Kalem, the verse 4

I would like to give the verse tells us the Prophet's great moral character as another example. Qur'an presents every prophet as the one who has great character, courage and perseverance.⁸⁴ The prophets who were chosen among humans by Allah never lost their courage while they were struggling with their enemies. They did not have any fear or anxiety to announce the orders and prohibitions. Qur'an tells their position like this; *"[Allah praises] those who convey the messages of Allah and fear Him and do not fear anyone but Allah. And sufficient is Allah as Accountant."*⁸⁵

As it is seen prophets who were missioners and announcers of the right case, they did not fear anyone except Allah and never lost their courage during their missions. Qur'an gives a lot of examples to make the scholars, who are the successor of prophets, followed the same way of them.

The Holy Qur'an announces the great character and trait of the prophet Muhammad in the verse *"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."*⁸⁶ The prophet (pbuh) said that "I have been sent only to complete good moral."⁸⁷ In this tradition, he mentioned the goal of his prophecy and explained why he had been sent. The fundamental aim of his prophecy is to generate a clean society whose members are merciful, good, just, keeping their promise. To reach this goal the prophet ordered these:

"Then do not obey the deniers. They wish that you would soften [in your position], so they would soften [toward you]. And do not obey every worthless habitual swearer[And] scorner, going about with malicious gossip-A preventer of

⁸⁴ Ahkâf, 46/35

⁸⁵ Ahzâb, 33/39

⁸⁶ Kalem, 68/ 4.

⁸⁷ Muvatta, Hüsnü'l-Huluk, 8; Ahmed b. Hanbel, II, 381.



good, transgressing and sinful, Cruel, moreover, and an illegitimate pretender. Because he is a possessor of wealth and children...”⁸⁸

When we interpret the “*And indeed, you are of a great moral character*” with an atomistic and verse centered approach, it is almost impossible that the verse tells us the necessity of establishing a clean society and living in it. The verse has been evaluated by a verse-centered view for centuries. As we have talked before, this approach makes the meaning restricted, when we assessed the verse in this term, the verse pushes ethics to a very small part of human life and pacified believers against the attacks of non-ethical situations.

The heir of the prophets who are scholars and the believers of the prophets should take the highest moral of them as examples for themselves and be not afraid of nothing and struggle with the infidels, polytheists, torturers, pressure and violence as them.

Provided that the verse, which shows the highest character of the prophet, “*you are of a great moral character*” examined with *siyak* and *sibak* together, we will see it tells us the courage and struggle of the Prophet against the attractive offer of polytheists. If the context is ignored, it will not tell what it is supposed to say.

Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır interpreted so called verse with a holistic view, instead of making a verse centered exegesis, he considered the relation of meaning and context. He says that this means “do not obey them, and do not try to be seen good by them; this is the first principle of high morality.”⁸⁹

The principles and tenets that will make ethical virtues dominant in the society have been given before. How the ones who are preaching and supporting the truth and fighting against the evil act has already been stated. The struggle between truth and evil is one of the main subjects of human history.

⁸⁸ Kalem, 68/8-14.

⁸⁹ For more info; See. Elmalılı, Muhammed Hamdi Yazır, *ibid*, IX, 5272.



Today, in our society and the world there is a wrestle between good and evil. There are some people who see the evil and sin as the sign of civilization and a prerequisite condition for the modernity. The mind of this kind of people has been shaped under the fight between good and evil. If we do not discuss this disgusting position of modern human, the other will promote us as Yazir says "what a great and intelligent man you are!"⁹⁰ They might even give us presents for being like the one they want.

We all should grasp the message of the chapter of Kalem which is literally speaks to the prophet but its message is for all believers. By the perseverance and courage of the people with a great moral character, humans are able to settle the peace and safe and establish civilization. If we consider the verse "*And indeed, you are of a great moral character*" without looking at its context, the prophet became a person who do not fight against non-ethical situation. Therefore, this will not appropriate what the Holy Qur'an wishes to tell us about him. When an evaluation has been done in the history, the people who have high moral traits never obey to the injustice; they reject the tortures and pressures and fight against the people who sees the violation of right is true. The perfect moral life of the prophet is supposed to be assessed and read in term of this frame.

The evaluation and interpretation of the verses with a holistic approach rather than an atomistic approach will help us to have a better understanding of the message of Qur'an. Besides we can overcome misunderstanding and explanation about the verses and Qur'an.

Conclusion

Qur'an takes human as a whole being. The responsibilities are on the shoulder of that kind of being. Human is assessed as corporal and spiritual sides, in other words as intellectual and natural being. There is a unity in the biological, physiological, and spiritual structure of human. God's perfect harmony can be seen in this small universe as we see it in

⁹⁰ See. Yazir, Muhammed Hamdi, *ibid*, VIII. 5272.



the universe. Because of that, Qur'an judgments are regarding with the wholeness of corporal and spiritual structure of human.

By the important criteria, this principle also has an important share in understanding the Holy Qur'an. It is clear that the explanations, judgments, and principles of Qur'an should be assessed with a holistic view. We think holistic approach will be more helpful than atomistic approach to comprehend the Holy Scripture. Even though there are muhkem verses in Qur'an, we should not forget that to make a complete evaluation about the truths that the verses contain is also important to grasp the meaning of it. On the other hand, to know the conditions and the context of the revelation will help us to reach our goal.

To understand Qur'an as a whole text can be seen as the basic principle of comprehension and interpretation of Qur'an. No text can be understood outside of its context. Therefore, we should see the context between the verses to reach the aim. For this, firstly we should go to the time when Qur'an was revealed; then we should come back to our time. The revelation of Qur'an and construction of Muslim society occurred as a result of socio-cultural improvement in a historical environment. When we think in the frame of these explanations, to study on Qur'an with a holistic approach can be more useful to grasp the meaning of Qur'an.

As long as we do not look at the similarities and context of verses between each others we cannot catch the true meaning of the verse. True meaning is not the meaning we grasp from the verse itself but it is the meaning that is proper to its place and position with the wholeness of Qur'an. Quran's passages and verses can be meaningful only in a context. This is true method of understanding and at least correct understanding should be like this. However, unfortunately we still have the problem of interpretation of Qur'an without looking at the context and historical conditions of the revelation today as well as we used to have in the past.

It should be seriously thought that to comprehend the Holy Qur'an we should put forward holistic, Qur'an centered approach instead of atomistic, verse or chapter centered method. Then, we will be able to see whole picture and prevent us from atomistic and minimalist approach in understanding Qur'an. In addition, the explained verses will be in safe



from narrowing the meanings and this will make Qur'an meanings clear and comprehensible for us. The scholars who study on the Holy Qur'an should be careful about siyak and sibak of the verses; they also should be attentive to evaluate the verses in the wholeness of Qur'an.



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