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AÀĈĊČĀÁÇ

The act of receiving divine revelation holds a central and significant place in religious and heavenly legislations. It represents a sacred communication between the sender (God) and the receiver (the Prophet). In the context of Islam, receiving the Qur'anic revelation elevates its sanctity due to the profound importance of its content—it is the word of God delivered to His servants. From the very beginning, receiving the Qur'anic revelation marked a pivotal phase in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and his companions. This act laid the foundation for a new society governed by sacred principles and values.

The phenomenon of receiving the Qur'anic revelation, characterized by an interaction between two entities of vastly different existential ranks and physical realms, raised questions among the Prophet's followers. They wondered about the nature of this connection with the heavens: How was the Prophet able to receive the Qur'anic revelation? How could the recipient withstand such an extraordinary encounter with the unseen world? How did the Prophet comprehend the messages conveyed by the celestial angel, given the disparity between their realms? Moreover, what physical and psychological effects did this communication impose on the Prophet?

This study aims to explore these phenomena through the lens of transmitted traditions, shedding light on the auditory aspects of receiving revelation as documented in the prophetic heritage.



Introduction

Understanding the phenomenon of receiving the Qur'anic revelation has been a central concern for Muslims. It is one of the primary aspects that every Muslim seeks to comprehend. This is evidenced by the placement of this topic at the beginning of key Islamic texts. For instance, Al-Bukhari (d. 256 AH) started his Sahih with a chapter titled "How the Revelation Began to the Messenger of God" (peace and blessings be upon him and his family).¹ Similarly, Ibn Hibban (d. 354 AH) categorized it under "The Prophet's Description of How Revelation Began"² in his compilation of the Prophet's narrations.

The importance of this phenomenon lies in its role as the starting point of the Islamic message and the divine method of initiating communication with the prophets. As stated in the Qur'an:

"Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. And We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms" (Al-Nisa': 163).

Revelation represents the divine mechanism through which God delivers His words and legislations to His chosen messengers, who then convey them to humanity. In Islam, this process is particularly revered, as it underscores the sanctity of the Qur'anic revelation and the prophetic mission. Although the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) remained human, the unique distinction of being a recipient of divine revelation set him apart. The Qur'an affirms this duality:

"Say, 'I am only a man like you, to whom it has been revealed that your God is one God; so take a straight path toward Him and seek His forgiveness. And woe to the polytheists'" (Fussilat: 6).

The angel tasked with delivering the revelation belongs to the unseen, a metaphys-

1 Al-Bukhari, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail. Sahih al-Bukhari. Undated. Cairo: Vol. 1, Dar al-Fikr.

2 Ibn Hibban, Abu Hatim Muhammad ibn Hibban ibn Ahmad al-Tamimi. Sahih Ibn Hibban, arranged by Ibn Bulban, edited by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut, 2nd ed., Vol. 1, (Maktabat al-Risala), 133.

ical realm inaccessible to humans in their natural state. This required understanding how such an extraordinary connection between two vastly different existential realms—human and angelic—could occur.³

The Prophet's companions were the first to inquire about this divine interaction, asking, "O Messenger of God, how does revelation come to you?"^{4 5 6 7*8} Their question likely sought to clarify various aspects of the process, including the nature of the revelation, the attributes of the angelic messenger, and the communication itself. This inquiry reflected not mere curiosity but devotion and a desire for reassurance of the heart.⁹

The phenomenon of revelation, particularly the physical and psychological effects experienced by the Prophet during this sacred interaction, has intrigued Islamic thought since the advent of the prophetic mission. The companions sought to understand the nature of the linguistic and communicative codes used in this transmission, given the stark differences between the physical and existential realms of angels and humans.¹⁰

This study aims to explore how the Prophet received revelation, the accompanying phenomena, and the challenges associated with this extraordinary process. By addressing these questions, the study seeks to deepen understanding of the pivotal moments of divine communication in Islamic history.

3 Al-Majidi, Abdul Salam Muqbil. *The Reception of the Prophet (PBUH&H) of the Words of the Qur'an*, 1st ed. (Beirut-Lebanon: Maktabat al-Risala), 36.

4 Al-Zuhri, Ibn Sa'd Muhammad ibn Sa'd ibn Mani'. *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, unannotated ed. (Beirut-Lebanon: Dar Sadir, n.d.), 198.

5 Ibn Hanbal, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal. *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, unannotated ed. (Beirut-Lebanon: Dar Sadir), 158-163, 257.

6 Al-Bukhari; Vol. 1/2; Vol. 4/80.

7 Nisaburi, Muslim Abu al-Husayn ibn al-Hajjaj ibn Muslim al-Qushayri; Al-Jami' al-Sahih (Sahih Muslim), ed. (Beirut - Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr), 82.

8 Al-Tabari, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir; Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Quran, edited by: Sadqi Jamil al-Attar, introduction by: Khalil al-Mays, unprinted edition (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr), 111.

9 Ibn Hajar, Shihab al-Din Ahmad ibn Ali al-Asqalani; *Fath al-Bari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, 2nd edition (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Ma'rifa), 17.

10 Al-Majidi, 39.

* It is mentioned in the Quran in its general meaning: see Al-Imran: 19; Al-Ahqaf: 15, and see Islam in its specific and general meanings, Az-Zumar: 11-12.

ÄǺĈÇ: ÇǺǺ ÁÇBÁǺÇÇCǺĈǺǺǺÇÇÇB (ÇAǺqǺǺ)

The Qur'anic revelation itself is an act of *talaqqi*, derived from the concept of delivering speech, as reflected in the verse:

In linguistic usage, the delivery of speech (*ilqa' al-qawl*) often denotes teaching, while *talaqqi* signifies learning and communication. Both are sensory processes that require an engaged and present heart. Reception is not sudden or unprepared; rather, it involves

12 Al-Razi, Ibn Abi Hatim Abdul Rahman bin Abi Hatim Muhammad al-Tamimi al-Hanzali; Tafseer al-Quran al-Azim (Tafseer Ibn Abi Hatim), ed. As'ad Muhammad al-Tayeb, (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr), 2841-2842.

14 Al-Fakhr al-Razi, Muhammad bin Umar bin al-Husayn bin al-Hasan; Al-Tafseer al-Kabeer (Mafatih al-Ghayb) (Tafseer al-Fakhr al-Razi), 1st ed., (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr), 19.

16 Al-Fakhr al-Razi; Vol. 3, p. 19.

18 Al-Majidi; p. 108.

understanding, instruction, and proper comprehension. These meanings are evident in how the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) received the Qur'anic revelation from Gabriel (peace be upon him). This was a tangible process of delivery and reception based on spoken words, as indicated in: "He was taught by one mighty in power" (An-Najm: 5) and: "I deed, We will cast upon you a heavy word" (Al-Muzzammil: 5). The Qur'an also describes the process as talaqqi, as in: "And indeed, you receive the Qur'an from One Wise and Knowing" (An-Naml: 6).

The Qur'an exclusively uses ilqa' and talaqqi to describe sensory actions. Thus, talaqqi is the complementary process to talqin.¹⁹ Revelation is a verbal event, transitioning from sender to receiver, creating a historical moment while maintaining its divine sanctity.²⁰ This transition from revelation and delivery to reception and understanding highlights the connection between heaven and earth through ilqa' and talaqqi. It bridges two existential planes—heaven and earth—and two distinct creations—angels and humans.

The sanctity of this process lies in the fact that it is the Word of Allah that was delivered to His noble Messenger. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) described this process, saying: "Revelation would come to me in two forms: Gabriel would bring it and deliver it to me just as one man speaks to another..."²¹ Hence, revelation was both a reception and a speech delivered by Gabriel to the Prophet, as confirmed in the Qur'anic text.

¹⁹ Al-Majidi; pp. 107–108.

²⁰ Al-Aref, Mustafa; "The Historicity of Religious Texts in Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd: Towards a New Islamic Approach to Interpretation" in *Attempts to Renew Islamic Thought: Critical Approaches*, 1st ed. (Rabat: Muminun Bila Hudud), p. 267.

²¹ Al-Zuhri, Al-Tabqat al-Kubra, pp. 197–198.

ĈĂĂĈVĀ: ĈĂĂ ĀĈVĀĂĈĈCĂĈĂĎĂĀĈĈB (Đ ĂĖ)

Revelation (wahy) is a term well-known in Abrahamic religions and Semitic languages. It appears in Hebrew and Aramaic as Aohu (אוהו), and in Ethiopian as Wahaaya, highlighting its shared Semitic roots.²² In pre-Islamic Arabia, wahy was recognized through the belief that poets and soothsayers received messages from unseen beings. This belief included the idea of communication between the heavens and humans. Thus, when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) received revelation, it was perceived as divine communication, contrasting with pre-Islamic beliefs and critiquing their misconceptions.^{23 24 25} This demonstrates that the concept of heavenly revelation was familiar to the pre-Islamic Arabs even before the advent of Islam.

If pre-Islamic Arab culture had been entirely devoid of such ideas, it would have been culturally incomprehensible for them to accept the notion of an angel descending from the heavens to deliver a message to a human. Such a concept needed intellectual and cultural roots within their worldview. The familiarity with the idea of divine communication shows that revelation was not perceived as unnatural or beyond the laws of reality but was a phenomenon embedded in their cultural understanding.²⁶

This cultural familiarity explains why the Quraysh, influenced by their environment and pre-Islamic traditions, directed accusations at the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household), attempting to explain revelation through frameworks they already knew. They accused him of being:

A soothsayer (kāhin; At-Tur: 29; Al-Haqqah: 42),

A poet (shā'ir; Al-Anbiya: 5; As-Saffat: 36; At-Tur: 30; Al-Haqqah: 41),

22 Ali, Jawad; *The History of the Arabs in Islam [The Prophet's Biography]*, 1st ed., (Beirut, Lebanon: Mū'assasat al-Jamal, 2009), p. 176.

23 Al-Baladhuri, Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir; *Ansab al-Ashraf*, edited by Muhammad Hamidullah, no edition stated, (Egypt: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1959), p. 115.

24 Ibn al-Athir, *Az-Zayn Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Abi al-Karam Muhammad al-Shaybani; Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifat al-Sahabah*, no edition stated, vol. 1 (Beirut - Lebanon: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, no date), p. 19.

25 Ali, Jawad; 176.

26 Abu Zayd, Nasr Hamid; *The Concept of Text: A Study in Quranic Sciences*, 1st ed., (Casablanca: Muminoon Bila Hudood, 2014), 34.

A sorcerer (sāhir; Sad: 4; Adh-Dhariyat: 52),

Mad (majnun; Al-Hijr: 6; As-Saffat: 36; Ad-Dukhan: 14; Adh-Dhariyat: 52; At-Tur: 29; Al-Qalam: 2, 51; At-Takwir: 22),

Possessed (dhū jinnah; Al-A'raf: 184; Al-Mu'minun: 70; Saba: 8, 46).

Sometimes, they combined accusations, such as calling him a “mad poet” (shā'ir majnun; As-Saffat: 36), “mad sorcerer” (sāhir majnun; Adh-Dhariyat: 52), or “mad soothsayer” (kāhin majnun; At-Tur: 29). This variety of allegations, spread across multiple Qur'anic chapters, reflects their rejection of genuine prophethood. They attributed revelation to jinn, devils, or imagined companions (tabi'), or claimed it was a fabrication of the Prophet himself—a product of human origin (Al-Furqan: 4-5).

These accusations confirm that the Arabs were familiar with the idea of communication with the divine or the heavens through supernatural beings. Their rejection of the Prophet's revelation stemmed not from ignorance of the concept but from their unwillingness to accept its truth when proclaimed by him.

Divine words revealed to prophets and saints are referred to as wahy (revelation). Linguistically, wahy means communication in secrecy. It can also refer to gestures, writing, messages, inspiration, and subtle speech. Additionally, it is sometimes used to mean something written or a book.^{27 28} This linguistic meaning of wahy indicates that revelation has various forms.

The concept of wahy encompasses all texts that signify divine communication to humans. It is understood as the divine speech conveyed to prophets and servants of God.²⁹

Regarding the forms of wahy, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) elaborated on its multiple forms mentioned in the Qur'an. These include the wahy of prophecy, inspiration, gesture, command, falsehood, determination, news, and message.³⁰

²⁷ Ibn Manzur; Lisan al-Arab, 379–381.

²⁸ Al-Zabidi, Habib al-Din Abu al-Fayd Sayyid Murtada al-Husayni; Taj al-'Arus fi Jawahir al-Qamus, edited by Ali Shiri, vol. 20, (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr, 1994), 279–282.

²⁹ Abu Zayd, Nasr Hamid; Mafhum al-Nass: Dirasa fi Ulum al-Qur'an, 31.

³⁰ Al-Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir; Bihar al-Anwar al-Jami'a li-Durar Akhbar al-A'imma al-At'har, edited by Ibrahim al-Miyanji and Muhammad Baqir al-Bahbudi, 2nd ed., Vol. 90, (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Wafa, 1983), 16-17.



Prophetic Wahy is exemplified in the verse: “Indeed, We have revealed to you, as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him” (Qur’an, 4:163).

Inspirational Wahy is referenced in the verse: “And your Lord inspired the bee: ‘Take for yourself among the mountains, houses, and [among] the trees and [in] that which they construct’” (Qur’an, 16:68).

Gesture Wahy is mentioned in the verse: “So he came out to his people from the prayer chamber and signaled to them to glorify [God] morning and evening” (Qur’an, 19:11).

Wahy of Determination is seen in the verse: “And He inspired [determined] in each heaven its command” (Qur’an, 41:12).

Command Wahy is stated in the verse: “And [remember] when I inspired the disciples, ‘Believe in Me and in My Messenger’” (Qur’an, 5:111).

Falsehood Wahy is described in the verse: “Devils among mankind and jinn inspire one another with decorative speech” (Qur’an, 6:112).

Wahy of News is highlighted in the verse: “And We made them leaders guiding by Our command and We inspired to them the doing of good deeds” (Qur’an, 21:73).

The Qur’an employs the concept of wahy (revelation) ascribed to entities other than God in three instances (Qur’an 6:93, 112, 121). In these verses, the Qur’an distinguishes between two types of wahy: truthful wahy and false wahy. The latter is associated with sources other than God, making it distinct from the truthful wahy, which is exclusively attributed to God (Glorified and Exalted).

The Qur’an explains the methods of truthful wahy that God delivers to His righteous servants through three modes, as described in the verse: “It is not for any human that God should speak to them except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High, Most Wise” (Qur’an 42:51). These methods illustrate how God’s words are conveyed to His chosen servants, differing based on the recipient.

The discussion of wahy is closely tied to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and the Qur'an.³¹ As Islam is a revealed religion with a sacred scripture, this association adds to the Prophet's sanctity in the Islamic consciousness. The initiation of wahy marks a pivotal moment in the Prophet's life and that of his companions. This event, often referred to as the beginning of revelation (bidayat al-wahy), signifies the dawn of the Islamic message in the Arabian Peninsula. It represents a transformative phase in which the nature of wahy was clarified, and its contents began to unfold.³²

Scholars consider discussing wahy to be of critical importance, as it is integral to Islamic belief and tied to the unseen realm (al-ghayb), which is beyond human comprehension except through what the Qur'an reveals or what eyewitnesses of those moments have transmitted.³³

Some argue that, since the Qur'an does not provide detailed explanations of how the revelation occurred, one must adhere to what is mentioned in the Qur'an and avoid delving into the specifics of this unseen phenomenon that God chose not to disclose. However, the remarkable interaction between two entities of vastly different existential ranks— Gabriel and the Prophet—has intrigued Muslim thinkers since the onset of revelation. This curiosity led people to ask the Prophet directly about the manner of receiving wahy.^{34 35 36 37 38} Such questions persisted even after the Prophet's death, as the nature of the revealed knowledge belongs to the unseen and tran-

31 A. J. Wensinck), Wahy (The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1ed ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1934), V. IV /P.1091.

32 Al-Nawawi, Muhammad; Al-Wahi min Khilal Musannafat al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah Qadiman wa Hadithan, 1st ed., (Rabat: Mu'minin Bila Hudud, 2018), 13-187-188.

33 Al-Nawawi, Muhammad; 40.

34 Al-Zuhri; Al-Tabakat al-Kubra, 198.

35 Ibn Hanbal; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 158, 163, 257.

36 Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, 2.

37 Al-Nisaburi, Sahih al-Muslim (The Authentic Collection of Muslim), vol. 4, p. 80; vol. 7, p. 82.

38 Al-Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an (The Comprehensive Commentary on the Interpretation of the Quran), p. 111.

scends human perception in normal circumstances.^{39 40} * Understanding the means of this connection, which made communication between Gabriel and the Prophet smoother than human-to-human interaction,⁴¹ became a central question for those seeking to comprehend the phenomenon of Qur'anic wahy and its link between heaven and earth.

The scarcity of Qur'anic descriptions about the mechanics of wahy and the Prophet's reluctance to elaborate on it prompted his companions to ask questions about these moments.⁴² The orientalist T. Andrae noted that the Prophet Muhammad was among the most reticent of prophets concerning the specifics of his revelations.⁴³ As this experience was unique to the Prophet, others could only rely on observations of his contemporaries or on his responses to their inquiries. These moments, being beyond ordinary human perception, could only be fully grasped by the one receiving the revelation, making the companions' questions a significant attempt to understand the essence and nature of this extraordinary event.

ÇÃÃ ADÃÃÇÇE ĆÃÃBCÉ ÃBCB AC AB AÁACÉ ĆABÃE ÃBÇ CÃÇÃÃÃÇÇB

Revelation represents a form of communication in which a message is transmitted from the sender (God) to the receiver (the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his Household), and then relayed to the audience (humankind). The process of revelation, characterized by this transition and transmission, is undeniably a historical event.⁴⁴ However, this does not diminish its sacred nature or reduce it to a mere historical text. In Islamic thought, revelation has traditionally been understood as a

³⁹ Al-Zuhri, *Tabaqat al-Kubra*, pp. 425–426.

⁴⁰ Ibn Asakir, *Abu al-Qasim Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn Hibat Allah ibn Abdullah al-Shafi'i*; *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq*, edited by Ali Shiri, vol. 5 (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr, 1981), p. 460.

⁴¹ Al-Majidi; 36.

⁴² Al-Nawawi; 420

⁴³ T. Andrae, *Mahomet Sa Vie et Sa Doctrine*, n.d., p.45.

⁴⁴ Al-Aref; Vol. 1/ 267.

* It has been reported that the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid, while at the pilgrimage season, requested to be brought someone who could explain how Gabriel descended upon the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) and from which direction he would come, as well as the locations of the martyrs' graves.

transcendent, divine process. Islamic scholars describe it as a vertical relationship, originating with God and culminating with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household).⁴⁵

The reception of Qur'anic revelation is a profound, conscious experience, distinguished by complete awareness and comprehension. It originates from an external source, unaffected by the recipient's internal psyche, and surpasses the natural limits of human intellect, as it conveys truths beyond ordinary understanding.⁴⁶ It has been said that the Prophet's auditory perception during revelation was empowered by a divine, sacred capacity, distinct from the ordinary hearing of his followers. In such moments, his human faculties were suspended, and physical manifestations of this extraordinary experience became evident on his blessed body.⁴⁷

A brief study cannot fully capture the complexity of this religious phenomenon, as revelation has diverse and multifaceted dimensions.⁴⁸ The experience of receiving Qur'anic revelation raises several intricate questions, such as the nature of the linguistic code employed in the process and the physical effects of the divine message on the Prophet's body during each instance of revelation. Given that the two parties involved in revelation—Gabriel and Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household)—belong to different existential ranks and distinct physical realms, one central question emerges: how could such an extraordinary connection occur?

Islamic thought has proposed various perspectives to address this question. Understanding the phenomenon of revelation necessitates examining how the Prophet, as the first recipient, experienced and perceived it.⁴⁹ Since revelation is a message, its meaning and significance depend on the act of reception.⁵⁰ Islamic sources have identified several characteristics accompanying the reception of revelation, one of which

45 An-Nawawi; 319.

46 Al-Ghazali, Mushtaq Bashir; *The Quran in the Studies of Orientalists*, 1st ed. (Syria: Dar Al-Nafa'is, 2008), 59.

47 Al-Majidi; 80.

48 Malik, Ibn Nabi; *The Quranic Phenomenon*, translated by Abdul Sabor Shaheen, 4th ed. (Damascus: Dar Al-Fikr, 2000), 85.

49 Al-Aref; vol. 1, p. 250.

50 Al-Nawawi; p. 249.

is the auditory phenomenon.

Islamic traditions mention that a powerful sound was among the accompanying phenomena during the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him and his Household) reception of Qur'anic revelation. When asked about how he received revelation, he explained:

"...Sometimes it comes to me like the ringing of a bell, which is the most intense for me, and when it subsides, I have grasped what was said. At other times, the angel appears to me in the form of a man and speaks to me, and I understand what he says..."^{51 52 53 54 55}

The use of the word "sometimes" in this narration indicates that this intense experience was not constant or associated with every instance of revelation. However, it appears that the bell-like sound was among the most overwhelming experiences for the Prophet, to the extent that he felt as if his soul was being seized during those moments. Ibn Umar*^{56 57} reported asking the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) about the moment of receiving revelation, and he replied:

I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, do you feel the revelation?' He said, 'Yes, I hear a ringing sound, and I remain still in that state. Every time I receive revelation, I feel as though my soul is being taken from me.'⁵⁸

This narration emphasizes that in all instances of receiving revelation, the Prophet experienced a profound intensity, often accompanied by the auditory phenomenon. Specifically, when the revelation came with a sound resembling the ringing of a bell,

⁵¹ Al-Zuhri; vol. 1, p. 198.

⁵² Ibn Hanbal; vol. 6, p. 158.

⁵³ Bukhari; vol. 1, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁴ Nisaburi; vol. 7, p. 82.

⁵⁵ Tabari; vol. 22, p. 111.

⁵⁶ Al-Zuhri; Vol. 4/ 261-268.

⁵⁷ Al-Baladhuri; Vol. 10/ 281.

⁵⁸ Ibn Hanbal; Vol. 2 / 222.

* Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As ibn Wa'il ibn Hashim ibn Sa'id ibn Sahm, and his mother was Rita bint Munabbih ibn al-Hajjaj ibn Amir ibn Hudhayfah ibn Sa'd ibn Sahm. Abdullah ibn Amr embraced Islam before his father. It is said that he used to write down what he heard from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), and he had a book called Al-Sadiqah. He passed away in Sham (Syria) in the year 65 AH, at the age of seventy-two.

the message became deeply ingrained in his heart, leaving no room for forgetfulness. The Prophet himself described this as follows:

Revelation comes to me in two ways. Gabriel conveys it to me as one man speaks to another, and that may slip away from me. Alternatively, it comes with a sound like the ringing of a bell, and that penetrates my heart, so it never slips away from me.⁵⁹

This indicates that the bell-like sound had a physical and psychological impact on the Prophet, causing him to endure the intensity of the experience. It was the most profound manifestation of the auditory phenomenon accompanying revelation.

Al-Halabi (d. 1044 AH) elaborates on one aspect of the revelation slipping from the Prophet's memory, stating:

The revelation would slip away from him in the first instance when Gabriel came in human form and spoke to him, as one man speaks to another. This was because he felt a natural familiarity with the angel's human appearance and comprehensible speech, which caused him to relax and not fully retain the message. In contrast, the second form of revelation, accompanied by the bell-like sound that startled his heart and lacked any visible speaker, compelled him to focus intently, ensuring its retention.⁶⁰

This raises an important question: did some forms of revelation cause the message to slip from the Prophet's memory, particularly in the absence of the auditory phenomenon? Conversely, the bell-like sound appears to have played a crucial role in solidifying the revealed message in his heart, preventing any loss of its content.

The researcher argues that the aforementioned opinion, which suggests that the revealed words might escape the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) in certain instances of revelation, casts doubt on the integrity of other forms of revelation and, by extension, on the entirety of the Prophet's message. This view, however, is contradicted by the Qur'anic assurance that the Prophet was divinely protected in

⁵⁹ Al-Zuhri; Vol. 1 / 197-198.

⁶⁰ Al-Halabi, Ali bin Burhan al-Din al-Shafi'i; *Insan al-'Uyun fi Seerah al-Amin wal-Ma'mun* (Al-Sirah al-Halabiyya), ed. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1980), Vol. 1, p. 414.

preserving what was revealed and recited to him through the angel of revelation. This is evident in the verse:

“We will make you recite, and you will not forget” (Al-A’la: 6).

This divine assurance guarantees the preservation of the revelation, whether accompanied by the auditory phenomenon or not. Furthermore, the Qur’an establishes that had the Prophet spoken anything contrary to what was revealed to him, Allah would sever his lifeline, as stated:

“Had he fabricated some statements against Us, We would have seized him by the right hand; then We would have cut from him the aorta” (Al-Haqqah: 44–46).

The claim that the revealed words might escape the Prophet’s memory in some cases contradicts his own statement that he fully retained all that was revealed to him in both forms of revelation, without any lapses.^{61 62 63 64}

Additionally, the association of sound with the descent of revelation may reflect influences from scriptural traditions where hearing a divine voice was a medium for receiving revelation. This sound, as described, was intense and overwhelming for the recipient, penetrating deeply into the body and bones of the one receiving the revelation, compelling him to utter the name of the Lord.*

What, then, is the ṣalṣalah mentioned in these narrations? It has been described as the sound that caused the recipient of revelation to endure physical and emotional strain during the process. Linguistically, ṣalṣalah refers to the sound of iron when it is moved. The verb ṣalla or ṣalṣala denotes the ringing or clinking of iron. In Arabic, ṣalṣalah is considered more intense than ṣalīl (a lighter ringing sound).⁶⁵

The plural form, ṣalāṣil, is also used, and some sources interpret it as resembling the sound of a bell attached to the neck of a camel. Such bells, known as nāqūs or

61 Al-Zuhri; Vol. 1, p. 198.

62 Ibn Hanbal; Vol. 6, p. 158.

63 Al-Bukhari; Vol. 1, pp. 2–3.

64 Al-Nisaburi; Vol. 7, p. 82.

65 Ibn Manzur; Vol. 11, p. 382.

* The Holy Bible, Old Testament, Book of Job, 37:1-5; Book of Job, 40:9; Book of Amos, 3:8. See also: Book of Habakkuk, 3:16.

small metal vessels with a piece of copper inside, produce a ringing sound when the camel moves, creating the characteristic *ṣalṣalah*.^{66 67}

Thus, the term *ṣalṣalah* in the narrations is understood as a sound akin to the ringing of a bell (*ṣalṣalat al-jaras*), emphasizing its intensity and impact on the recipient during the process of revelation.⁶⁸

A scholar argues that the *ṣalṣala* (ringing sound) is a powerful and awe-inspiring auditory phenomenon that accompanies the reception of divine revelation. It signifies the gravity of the event and the profound impact of the divine message.⁶⁹ This phenomenon, according to the scholar, demands the recipient's full attention, overshadowing all else. However, this interpretation conflicts with earlier reports suggesting that such auditory phenomena did not accompany all instances of receiving revelation. This is evident from the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his Household) statement: "Sometimes it comes to me like the ringing of a bell...".

Based on this latter perspective, it can be argued that the *ṣalṣala* was an experience unique to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) and was not heard by others. Had it been audible to others, his companions would likely have inquired about the nature and source of the sound rather than asking about how the revelation was received. Furthermore, the source and purpose of this sound remain unclear. Was the *ṣalṣala* itself the form of the divine message, comprehensible only to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household)?

Another scholar suggests that the *ṣalṣala* is merely a metaphor used to explain the intensity of the revelation experience to those asking about it. This interpretation presents the sound as a depiction of the overwhelming and instantaneous impact of receiving divine revelation, reflecting the profound nature of the moment. This view aligns with descriptions of the difficulty associated with the process of revelation.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibn Manzur; Vol. 6, p. 36.

⁶⁷ Al-Zabidi; Vol. 8, p. 222.

⁶⁸ Al-Asqalani; Vol. 1, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Al-Majidi; p. 87.

⁷⁰ Al-Nawawi, pp. 426–427.

Sources do not elaborate on whether this sound always caused such a reaction among the celestial beings or whether these are merely unsubstantiated reports. Linguistically, *waḥy* (revelation) refers to a hidden communication known only to the recipient, further complicating claims of this sound being universally audible.

Some accounts suggest that the phenomenon of *ṣalṣala* occurred only during the initial stages of revelation or in extraordinary circumstances. For example, it is said that the celestial beings were alarmed when revelation first descended upon the Prophet's heart.^{73 74} Alternatively, it has been claimed that this sound was associated with significant events occurring at the Divine Throne, heard only at specific moments.^{75 76} However, other narrations indicate that the sound was not restricted to the celestial realm but was also heard by humans.

One such instance is the Battle of Ḥunayn, where some polytheists reportedly heard a sound described as akin to the scraping of iron against a metal bowl, occurring between the heavens and the earth.⁷⁷ This sound is said to have accompanied the descent of angels during a critical moment of the battle (al-Tawbah: 26). Curiously, this sound was heard only by the polytheists and not by the Muslims, as no report from the Prophet's companions mentions hearing such a sound at Ḥunayn. Furthermore, no similar auditory phenomena are recorded in other historical events involving angelic intervention, such as the Battle of Badr (al-Anfal: 9–12), where neither Muslims nor disbelievers reported hearing such a sound.

These inconsistencies raise questions about the authenticity and interpretation of these reports. Was the sound truly universal, or was it selectively perceived, and if so, why?

The auditory phenomena accompanying the descent of revelation were not limited to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) during wakefulness but also

73 Al-Asqalani, Ibn Hajar Shihab al-Din Ahmad bin Ali, *Fath al-Bari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 13, p. 385.

74 Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din Abdul Rahman bin Abi Bakr, *Al-Durr al-Manthoor fi al-Tafseer bil-Mathoor*, Vol. 5, p. 236.

75 Al-Tabari; Vol. 22, p. 110.

76 Ibn Hajar; Vol. 8, pp. 413-414.

77 Al-Zuhri; Vol. 2, p. 156.

extended to his experiences during sleep. In these cases, the sound was described as resembling the whirring of a millstone (duway al-riḥā) or its humming (hazīz al-riḥā). The Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) is reported to have said:

I was asleep where you saw me, and in my sleep, I heard a sound like the whirring of a millstone or a humming like that of a millstone. I was alarmed in my sleep, so I leapt up and proceeded, and Gabriel (peace be upon him) met me and said, 'O Muhammad, God Almighty has sent me to you at this moment...'⁷⁸

This sound, however, was not exclusive to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) during sleep. It was also reported in wakeful states and heard by his companions.⁷⁹ It is notable that this sound sometimes preceded the descent of revelation and was present in both wakefulness and sleep, contradicting earlier descriptions of the sound as resembling the clinking of metal (like a bell).

Further accounts suggest that the sound accompanying the reception of Qur'anic revelation was neither the clinking of metal nor the whirring of a millstone. Instead, it was likened to the buzzing of bees (duway al-naḥl). For example, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb stated: "When the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his Household) received revelation, we would hear a buzzing sound near his face, like the buzzing of bees."^{80 81} This suggests that the sound was audible to others and resembled the humming of bees, contradicting earlier reports describing it as the clinking of a bell or the whirring or humming of a millstone.

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH) attempted to reconcile these conflicting descriptions. He proposed that the buzzing of bees was heard by those present around the Prophet, while the clinking of metal (the bell sound) was specific to the Prophet

78 Al-Tabarani, Abu al-Qasim Suleiman bin Ahmad; Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat, ed. Abu Maaz Tarek bin Awad (Cairo, Egypt: Dar Al-Haramain, 1995), Vol. 2, pp. 104–105.

79 Ibn Hanbal; Vol. 6, p. 23.

80 Ibn Hanbal, Vol. 1, p. 34.

81 Al-Nasa'i, Abu Abd al-Rahman Ahmad ibn Shu'ayb, known as Al-Sunan al-Kubra, ed. Abdul Ghafar Suleiman al-Bandari and Said Kasrawi Hassan, 1st ed. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1991), Vol. 1, p. 450. Al-Nasa'i mentioned that this hadith is considered weak (munkar), and we do not know anyone who narrated it except Yunus ibn Suleim, and we do not know Yunus ibn Suleim. And Allah knows best.

(peace be upon him and his Household) himself.⁸² However, Ibn Hajar did not clarify whether the buzzing of bees conflicted with other auditory phenomena, such as the whirring or humming of a millstone, which the Prophet heard in some instances and his companions in others.

A critical question that arises concerning Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalani's statement is: why was the sound described as resembling the buzzing of bees, which was supposedly heard during the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his Household) reception of revelation, not heard by all those present near him, as Ibn Hajar suggests? Why was it limited to Umar ibn al-Khattab alone? This phenomenon was not reported by anyone else throughout the entirety of the Islamic mission. Furthermore, al-Nasa'i (d. 303 AH) rejected this narration, as it was transmitted solely by an unknown narrator.⁸³ Given that the concept of revelation is inherently defined as a form of hidden communication, how could anyone other than the intended recipient hear it?

It is also reported that Abu Dharr al-Ghifari heard the sound of revelation being received, though the nature of this sound was not specified.⁸⁴ The Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) confirmed Abu Dharr's ability to hear this sound, though it was intelligible to the Prophet while remaining incomprehensible to Abu Dharr. Additionally, it is narrated that Abu Bakr could "hear Gabriel's private conversation with the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) without seeing him."⁸⁵ According to this account, the sound of revelation would be similar to human speech—audible and understandable—but without any visual encounter with the angel. This implies that Abu Bakr heard what the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) heard during the revelation.

It is possible that such narrations were fabricated at a later time, influenced by political agendas surrounding the documentation of traditions and the political conflicts that shaped the creation of certain reports. This may also explain the attempt to parallel a statement attributed to the Prophet about Imam Ali: "You hear what I hear

82 Al-Asqalani, Ibn Hajar Shihab al-Din Ahmad ibn Ali, *Fath al-Bari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 1, p. 18.

83 Al-Nasa'i, *Sunan al-Kubra*, Vol. 1, p. 450.

84 Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 3, pp. 82-83.

85 Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman bin Abu Bakr, *Kifayat al-Talib al-Labib fi Khasa'is al-Habib (al-Khasa'is al-Kubra)*, vol. 1, p. 118.

and see what I see, except that you are not a prophet.”⁸⁶ Historical accounts suggest that the Umayyad authority played a significant role in promoting virtues for certain companions, as reflected in a directive from Mu’awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan to his officials:

The reports about ‘Uthman have become widespread in every region and locality. When my letter reaches you, summon the people to narrate the virtues of the companions and the first caliphs. Do not allow any report narrated about Abu Turab (Ali) to reach you unless you bring forth a contradictory narration about the companions. This is dearer to me, more pleasing to my heart, and more effective in refuting the arguments of Abu Turab’s supporters and his Shi’a, and it is harsher on them than highlighting the virtues of ‘Uthman.”⁸⁷

Moreover, it is noted that Imam Ali (peace be upon him) was said to have heard the sound of Satan’s lamentation rather than the angel’s voice. Therefore, the inquiry in such narrations concerns the sound of Satan’s lamentation rather than the descent of revelation, since revelation, by definition, is a concealed communication audible only to its intended recipient.

Some reports describe the sound accompanying the reception of Qur’anic revelation as a ghatit—a sound akin to the deep breathing of a sleeping person.*^{88 89} This sound was reportedly attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household). For instance, Ya’la ibn Umayyah narrated**^{90 91}: “I saw the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his Household and his Household) as revelation was being

86 Al-Sharif al-Radi, Abu al-Hasan Muhammad bin al-Husayn, Nahj al-Balagha, edited by Subhi al-Salih, 1st ed. (Beirut, Lebanon: No Publisher, 1967), p. 301.

87 Ibn Abi al-Hadid, ‘Izz al-Din Abdul Hamid Ibn Hibat Allah, Sharh Nahj al-Balagha, edited by Muhammad Abu al-Fadl, 1st ed. (No Place of Publication: Dar Ihya’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1959), Vol. 11, p. 45.

88 Ibn Manzur, Vol. 7, p. 362.

89 Al-Zabidi; Vol. 10, p. 400.

90 Al-Zuhri; Vol. 5, p. 456.

91 Ibn Abd al Barr, Abu Omar Yusuf ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad; Al-Isti’ab fi Ma’rifat al-Ashab, ed. Ali Muhammad al-Bajawi, 1st ed. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Jil, 1992), Vol. 4, pp. 1585-1587.

* Al-Ghitit: It refers to the sound of a deep exhalation, like the noise that comes from a sleeping person. It is a repeated sound when there is no proper flow or space for it, resembling vague, indistinct sounds that are not understandable.

** Ya’la ibn Umayyah, sometimes referred to as Ya’la ibn Maniyyah, is sometimes attributed to his father or his mother, and some say he is named after his grandmother, Maniyyah. He is Ya’la ibn Umayyah ibn Abi Ubaidah ibn Hammam ibn al-Harith ibn Bakr ibn Zayd ibn Malik ibn Hanzalah ibn Malik ibn Zayd Manat ibn Tamim al-Tamimi. He embraced Islam during the conquest of Mecca and participated in the battles of Hunayn, Ta’if, and Tabuk. There is some difference in the attribution of his mother’s lineage. Abu Bakr appointed him over the lands of Hulwan during the Ridda wars, and later, Umar appointed him over parts of Yemen. Uthman appointed him as the governor of Sanaa. He held a prominent position under Caliph Uthman. Ya’la ibn Umayyah was killed in the year 38 AH at the Battle of Siffin.

sent down to him, and he emitted a sound like the deep breathing of a camel.”^{92 93 94} The term ghat appears in some accounts in its singular form.^{95 96} However, why was this sound heard exclusively by Ya’la ibn Umayyah, as the narration suggests, and not by others? No other companions are reported to have described hearing this sound during the Prophet’s reception of revelation, despite the presence of other Muslims at the time.

Moreover, there is a notable inconsistency between this description and other accounts of the sounds associated with revelation. None of the Prophet’s companions mentioned hearing similar sounds during the moments of revelation. It is possible that Ya’la ibn Umayyah’s description of the sound was metaphorical, reflecting his personal perception or interpretation. Nevertheless, such auditory phenomena, even if real, could not have been universally experienced by those nearby. As previously noted, revelation is an inherently concealed form of communication—a private exchange between the sender (Allah) and the recipient (the Prophet)—which others cannot access or perceive.

If it is argued that the ghatit sound originated from the Prophet himself rather than being a sound of the revelation, such a claim is difficult to accept. Depicting the process of revelation in this manner could suggest an experience more akin to suffering than the harmonious and enlightening process described in the Qur’an. For example, in Surah Al-Najm (53:1-18), the revelation encounter is portrayed in the most beautiful and serene terms, with no indication of hardship or distress during the meeting with the Angel Gabriel.

Furthermore, all narrations that describe auditory phenomena accompanying Qur’anic revelation cannot be considered as evidence of the nature of revelation itself. This interpretation contradicts the Qur’anic description, which explicitly refers to

92 Al-Suyuti; Vol. 1, p. 119.

93 Al-Bukhari; Vol. 2, p. 202.

94 Ibn Kathir, Abu al-Fida Ismail al-Dimashqi; Al-Bidaya wa’l-Nihaya, ed. Ali Shiri, 1st ed. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-Arabi, 1988), Vol. 3, p. 30.

95 Al-Bukhari; Vol. 2, p. 144; Vol. 5, p. 103; Vol. 6, pp. 97-98.

96 Al-Nisaburi; Vol. 4, p. 4.

revelation as a qawl karim (noble speech):

“Indeed, it is the word of a noble Messenger, possessing strength and secure in position with the Owner of the Throne.” (Al-Takwir: 19-20).

The Qur’an characterizes revelation as a clear and articulate form of speech—a mode of communication understood by both sender and recipient.⁹⁷ Any third-party observer witnessing such an event would neither comprehend the method of communication nor grasp the content of the revelation.⁹⁸ Thus, it is implausible to interpret revelation as involving incomprehensible sounds or phenomena requiring external interpretation.

The Qur’an itself makes no mention of such sounds during the Prophet’s reception of revelation or in the accounts of other prophets receiving divine messages. The Qur’an’s name derives from the root meaning “to read,” as seen in verses such as:

“So when We have recited it [the Qur’an], then follow its recitation.” (Al-Qiyamah:18), and “Recite the Qur’an with measured recitation.” (Al-Muzzammil: 4).

This suggests that the reception of Qur’anic revelation involved recitation, articulation, and repetition of divine speech, not incomprehensible sounds or auditory phenomena.⁹⁹ Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that such narrations likely stem from the imaginations of narrators attempting to comprehend the nature of Qur’anic revelation.

⁹⁷ Jayyit, Hisham; *The Prophet’s Biography (Revelation, the Qur’an, and Prophethood)*, 2nd ed. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr, 1994), p. 38.

⁹⁸ Abu Zayd; p. 32.

⁹⁹ Abu Zayd; p. 52.

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In conclusion, this study on the phenomenon of receiving Quranic revelation and its associated auditory aspects, as conveyed by historical accounts, has led to several key findings:

The understanding of the process of receiving Quranic revelation and divine communication from the heavens aligns closely with the cultural and intellectual roots of pre-Islamic Arabia. It does not diverge from the prevailing notions of how contact with the heavens occurred. These perceptions were deeply rooted in the environment and culture of the time. Hence, the depiction of receiving Quranic revelation was comparable to other forms of communication known in the Arabian Peninsula, such as those of soothsayers and poets, who believed their insights came through intermediaries like spirits or jinn. Consequently, the accusations directed at Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) by the Quraysh centered on claims of soothsaying, poetry, or contact with jinn. These accusations reflected the cultural framework of the era and influenced how the phenomenon of revelation was interpreted in historical narratives.

Historical accounts describing the auditory aspects of revelation vary widely and sometimes contradict one another. Each narrator attempted to explain the phenomenon based on their own understanding and worldview. Revelation was often portrayed as accompanied by a powerful and awe-inspiring sound, reflecting the prevailing beliefs in pre-Islamic Arabia about the taxing nature of communication with the divine. These descriptions likely stemmed from cultural remnants that associated divine contact with strenuous and overwhelming experiences. Additionally, the influence of biblical traditions, which often depict the voice of God as formidable and intimidating, may have shaped these portrayals.

The Quranic depiction of revelation contrasts with these historical accounts. The Quran describes the interaction between Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and Gabriel as harmonious and tranquil, as seen in Surah An-Najm



(verses 1-18). There is no mention of harsh or overpowering sounds during the process of revelation. This depiction aligns with how previous prophets and messengers received divine communication. The Quran does not describe any prophet experiencing intense or distressing auditory sensations during revelation. Thus, the method by which Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) received revelation was consistent with the experiences of earlier prophets.

Certain Quranic verses suggest that the process of revelation involved clear communication and comprehension, characterized by speech, listening, and understanding. This process adhered to familiar modes of interaction between two parties, even if they differed in existential rank. Effective communication requires clarity and mutual intelligibility. Had the revelation occurred through an incomprehensible auditory phenomenon, the Prophet would have needed an intermediary to interpret the message, which would contradict the Quranic portrayal of direct and clear communication.

Revelation is fundamentally defined as a hidden form of communication, a private exchange between two parties, regardless of their differing existential ranks. Claims that others besides the intended recipient heard the sound of revelation lack credibility and are unsupported by authentic sources. The Quran consistently presents revelation as a concealed, exclusive communication between God and His messengers. This characteristic of revelation applies to all prophets and was no exception in the case of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).

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