Rethinking the Word *Faraḍa*: An Inquiry to the Earliest Commentaries and Its Contextual Relevance

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Abstract

Some exegetic comments narrated from early scholars do not relate neither to the Quranic context, nor to lexicographical and linguistic evidences. As a case, such irrelevance can be observed for the verb *faraḍa* in the verse 24:1, as well as the verse 28:85. Regarding methodology, this research used both traditional lexicographical and linguistic etymological inquiries. The result of the research is the fact that both the verses are speaking of the philosophy of the Quranic surahs being revealed gradually in separate parts appropriate to social occasions and the challenges in prophetic era.

**Keywords:** Quranic context, Quranic surahs, causes of revelation, gradual revelation, Semitic etymology.

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1. Introduction

Among the verses of the Holy Qur’an, there are some verses, which seems to have kind of opacity for early commentators; an opacity, which made those verses a subject of debate for a period. Anyway, after taking distance from the early times of Islam and coming to the classic exegeses, everything seems to be clear and nobody cares about early debates.

I am not insisting on any belief that the so-called early commentaries belong to specified known author or written in exactly specified time. Methodologically, my departure point is the fact that we are coming across which some exegetic literature, which are quoted by authors of old creditable exegetic works like Ġāmiʿ al-Bayān of Al-Ṭabarī or resources in other fields of knowledge written in the second half of 3rd /9th century, afterwards. Such early commentaries are sometimes attributed to companions of the Holy Prophet, namely Ibn ˁAbbās, sometimes to the generation after, called Tābiˀīs, and even sometimes to transmitters in further generations until the middle of the 3rd / 9th century.

As case study in this article, I focus on the verb faraḍa in two verses:

the verse 24:1, which says:

سُورَةٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهَا وَ فَرَضْنَاهَا وَ أَنْزَلْنَا فِيهَا آَيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (النور/1)

A surah which we have sent down and which we have ordained in it have we sent down Clear Signs, in order that ye may receive admonition (Yusuf Ali).

As well as the Verse (28: 85) which says:

إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ علَيْكُمُ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَادُّكَ إِلَى مَعَادٍ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَى وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضٍَََََمٍ مُنِينٍ (القصص/85).

Verily He Who ordained the Qur’an for thee, will bring thee back to the place of return. Say: My Lord knows best who it is that brings true guidance, and who is in manifest error (Yusuf Ali).

In spite of clear meaning of this translation, there is apparently a great controversy around the meaning of the verb in question in these two verses, in
both Quranic commentaries and translations. Although the verb *farāḍa* is used in the Holy Qur'ān several times, but my focus is restricted to these two verses, because of a common ambiguity regarding these usages which makes it suitable as a case for conducting the core question of research.

The main question of research is about the fact that the commentators had faced with two choices: Rendering the semantic content of *farāḍa* to meanings not supported by Arabic lexicography or rendering it to the usual terminological meaning, i.e. 'to ordain decrees' which is not supported by grammar. In this research, I want to show that this trouble is caused from forgetting the main language and context of the Holy Qur'ān, even for commentators who are expected to be the earliest.

Regarding methodology, at first the exegetic opinions are classified on the basis of an analytic typology and then, these opinions are criticized using a combination of traditional lexicography, as well as historical linguistics and etymology.

2. The Verse 24:1 in Early Commentaries

Before beginning the investigation of the commentaries, it is worthy to mention that the word *farāḍnāhā* (فرضناها) in the verse is recited in two forms:

- Some recited it with gemination on /r/, as *farraḍnāhā*, which is narrated of Ibn Kaṭīr and Abū ʿAmr ibn ʿAlāʾ, famous reciters of Mecca and Basra, as well as Muğāhid, the famous Tābiʿī of Mecca.
- The recitation without gemination as *farāḍnāhā* is preference of the majority. This majority includes the reminder of the seven reciters (Al-Qurrāʾ Al-Sabʿa) as well as some companions like Ibn Maṣʿūd and ʿĀʾīša, some Tābiʿīs such as Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī, ʿIkrima mawlā Ibn ʿAbbās and some scholars of further generations including Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim, Ibn Ṣihāb Al-Zuhrī, Abū Ǧaʿfar Al-Madānī, Abū Yaʿmur, Sulaimān Al-ʿAʿmaš and Ibn Abī ʿAbla.

A review on the earliest comments concerning the word *faradnāhā* shows that there was a serious ambiguity for them too as reflected in the following two groups of commentaries:

Group A. According to the opinion attributed to the companion Ibn ʿAbbās narrated by Abū ʾṢāliḥ the meaning is such:

\[\text{فاَرَضَنَاهَا (أَي) بَيَّنَاهَا} \]

(Al-Ṭabarī, Ġāmiʿ al-Bayān, vol.18, p.66)

The opinion attributed to the same companion narrated by Muḥāhid also explains the word as following:

\[\text{وَفَرَضَنَاهَا، قَالَ: وَبَيَّنَاهَا} \]

(Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Tafsīr, vol.8, p.2516)

In both the quotations of Ibn ʿAbbās the meaning of the verb *farada* considered equivalent to the well-known verb in Quranic Arabic *Bayyana*; the verb which is normally understood as 'to make clear, to explain.' (Hana, p.51).

For Muḥāhid himself, we know that he recited the word in question with gemination, but we have no evidence to generalize this geminated recitation to his quotation of Ibn ʿAbbās and the parallel quotation in this group. Anyway, some scholars in later centuries announced that such commentary is appropriate to the geminated recitation (Al-Zajjāj, Maʿānī Al-Qurʿān, vol.4, p.27; Al-Azharī, Tahḏīb, vol.12, p.12; Ibn Abī Zamanain, Tafsīr, vol.3, p.217; Al-Ṭaʿlabī, al-Kašf, vol.7, p.63). This meaning which we call afterwards Ibn ʿAbbās’ comment is repeated in narration of Tābīʾīs and their disciples such as Qatāda of Basra [d.118/736] (Al-Naḥḥās, Maʿānī al-Qurʿān, vol.4, p.493) and Muqātil ibn Sulaimān [d.150/767] (Muqāṭīl, Tafsīr, vol.2, p.497).

As a criticism, I should say that there is no evidence for the root √FRḌ to have meaning of 'to become clear' neither in classical Arabic lexicography, nor in modern Semitic etymologies. Anyway this comment is repeated as one of the options by some later scholars without any amendment and justification (Ibn Qutaiba, Taʿwīl, p.364; Abū Ishāq Al-Shīrāzī, Al-Tabṣira, p.95) and was the basis for the very famous Samanid canonical translation of Qur'ān in Persian of 4th/10th century (Tarjome-ye Tafsīr-e Ṭabarī, vol.5, p.1110). Just Ibn Abī Zamanain [d. 399/1008] pointed out that this commentary is appropriate for the recitation of the word with gemination (Ibn Abī Zamanain, Tafsīr, vol.3, p.217).
Some commentators and other scholars from the 3rd/9th century afterwards although using the keyword of Bayyannā borrowed from Ibn ʿAbbās’ comment, but they altered its content to the coming group C (Al-Tustarī, Tafsīr, p.111; Al-Zajjāj, Maʿānī Al-Qurʾān, vol.4, p.27; Al-Azharī, Tahḏīb, vol.12, p.12; Al-Quṣairī, Laṭāʿif, vol.2, p.354).

Group B. According to the opinion attributed to the reciter and scholar of Basra, Abū ʿAmr ibn ʿAlāʾ [d.154/771] the meaning is such:

فَرَّضنَاهَا (أي) فَصَّلنَاهَا


This comment renders the meaning of faraḍa to 'making separation between things'. We definitely know that Abū ʿAmr recited the word in question with gemination. This meaning we call afterwards Abū ʿAmr’s comment. Some scholars in coming centuries stated that this commentary is appropriate to the geminated recitation (Al-Zajjāj, Maʿānī Al-Qurʾān, vol.4, p.27; Al-Azharī, Tahḏīb, vol.12, p.12; Al-Ṭaʿlabī, Al-Kaṣf, vol.7, p.63; Makkī, Al-Hidāya, vol.8, p.5014).

From a critical standpoint, it should be mentioned that the clearest usage of faṣṣala can be detected in the verse (41:44) which shows a strong concern with the issue of language and being the Qurʾān in a clearly understandable Arabic not a foreign language. This meaning does not seem to be relevant to the word in question in the verse 24:1. In practice, this comment is not supported with coming exegetes and in the rare cases of its repeating in further exegetic literature, it just reduced to the word Faṣṣala referring to the content of the group C (For example, see: Al-Zajjāj, Maʿānī Al-Qurʾān, vol.4, p.27; Al-Azharī, Tahḏīb, vol.12, p.12; Ibn Al-Jawzī, Zād al-Maṣūr, vol.3, p.275). Also it is rarely included on some ancient Persian translation as an option besides other groups of comments, as its translation to 'باز گشادیم' in Meybodī’s exegesis (Meybodī, Kaṣf, vol.6, p.479). A blending of Ibn ʿAbbās’ comment and Abū ʿAmr’s comment is traceable in Al-Ṭaʿlabī’s exegesis (Al-Ṭaʿlabī, Al-Kaṣf, vol.7, p.63).

As said in the introduction, besides these two groups of commentaries, there is another line that would be studied in the following parts of the article; line of comments which renders the word in question to the meaning 'to ordain a decree'.

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3. The Verse 28:85 in Early Commentaries

Like what mentioned about the verse 24:1, concerning this verse too we come across with two groups of earliest commentaries:

Group A. According to the opinion attributed to Ibn ˁAbbās narrated by Abū Ṣāliḥ, the verb *farada* here means 'to send down' (*Tanwīr al-Miqbās*, p.416). The serious criticism is based on the fact that there is no basis for such an interpretation from Arabic lexicography and it is just an arbitrary idea of exegetic authorities. Meanwhile, this comment gained the largest agreement among the next resources and is approved by some influential exegetes of the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries (Yahyā ibn Sallām, *Tafsīr*, vol.2, p.613; al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, vol.2, p.33; Abū ʿUbaida, *Majāzāt al-Qurʾān*, vol.2, p.112). From the next century until now, it always saved its place as the next agreed comment, as it is announced by some exegetes. In the 4th/10th century, we see its influence in the Samanid canonical translation in Persian (*Tarjome-ye Tafsīr-e Ṭabarī*, vol.2, p.366) and in the 5th/11th century, al-Ṭaʿlabī announced it as preference of most of the exegetes (al-Ṭaʿlabī, *al-Kašf*, vol.7, p.266).

Group B. According to the opinion attributed to Mujāhid, the Meccan tābiʾī, the word *farada* in this verse means 'to give' (Muḡāhid, *Tafsīr*, vol.2, p.491; al-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmiʿ al-Bayān*, vol.20, p.123; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr*, vol.9, p.3025). Concerning this comment too, I can repeat the same criticism that it is not supported with any lexicographical evidence and it seems to be a rough assimilation between giving portion of heritage to the heirs and giving the Qurʾān to the Holy Prophet. Among further figures, some like al-Ṭabarī who prefer this comment is rare (al-Ṭahāwī, *Ṣarḥ*, vol.14, p.274) and sometimes it is referred to as one in the list of old proposed comments (Māwardī, *al-Nukat*, vol.4, p.274).

As mentioned about the previous verse, here too there is another line narrated from early commentaries, which renders the word to the meaning 'to make a decree'; a line that would be studied in continuation. Although some lexicographers give the equivalents like *Hiba* and *Hadya* for *Farḍ* as a noun (al-Ḥalīl, *al-ʿAyn*, vol.7, p.28; Ibn Duraid, *Jamhara*, vol.2, p.365; Abū ʿUmar al-Zāhid, *al-ʿAṣarāt*, p.112; al-Azharī, *Tahgīb*, vol.12, p.13), but grammatically it should be considered that such a meaning is just approved for noun application
of the root. Further, the reported meaning is restricted to ‘giving a gift’ and there is no evidence in the Holy Qur'an to call the Qur'an as a gift to the Holy Prophet. Finally, there is no etymological evidence supporting such a meaning for the root and the appearance of this meaning in the Arabic lexicography may be linguistically doubted.

Here, it must be added that in the 4th/10th centuries, we come across with two new proposals about the meaning of faraḍa in this verse as an invention which shows no trace in earliest commentaries. The first one is proposal of the Iranian Mystic Ibn ʿAṭāʾ [d. 309/921] which arbitrarily interprets the meaning of faraḍa with the verb 'to move easy' (Yassara) without any support (al-Sulamī, Ḥaqqāʾiq, vol.2, p.112).

The second inventory is that of Ibn Bahr, seemingly Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī [d. 322/934], the famous Mu'tazili exegete. Inspired by Ibn ʿAbbās’ comment on the verse 24:1, i.e. rendering the meaning of faraḍa to the verb bāyana, he proposed the same meaning in the verse 28:85. Previously, I discussed this comment as being out of lexicographical evidence. Anyway, this proposal in not received any acceptance of further exegetes.

As a result, we realize that none of the comments proposed for both verses are not approvable by traditional Arabic lexicography, unless the meaning of 'to make a decree' which will be studied in following section.

4. Farḍ as to Make a Decree

For people familiar with Islamic jurisprudential terms, the first outgoing meaning understood of the root √FRḌ is 'to ordain a decree'. In fact, using this root the divine obligations ordained to the people usually called farīḍa (فریدة). Indeed, it is expectable for commentators of the Qur'an to render the mentioned root in both verses in question to this terminological meaning, although this meaning has rooted in pre-Islamic Arabic and other Semitic language.

Anyway, there are such commentaries for both verses among narrations from the earliest commentators. Beginning with the verse 24:1, we know such interpretation in to the opinion attributed to the TabĪṡ of Mecca Muğāhid [d. 104/722] and ʿAṭāʾ ibn Abī Rabāḥ [d. 114/732] with such a sentence:
قَرَضَنَاهَا (أي) الأمر بالحلال، والنهي عن الحرام

Minimally for Muğāhid, we know that he recited the word in question with gemination, but there is no evidence to generalize this to all the quotations in this group. The proposed meaning is referred to the root √FRḌ and can be compatible with both geminated and non-geminated forms. Anyway, this meaning we call afterwards Meccan Tābiʾīs comment in which the meaning of faraḍa returned to 'allowed and prohibited deeds', i.e. divine decrees or prescriptions known as Sharia (For Muğāhid, see: Muğāhid, Tafsīr, vol.2, p.436; al-Ṭabarī, Ğāmiʿ al-Bayān, vol.18, p.65; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Tafsīr, vol.8, p.2516; For ṭāʾ, see: al-Ṭahāwī, Sharh, vol.14, p.272). A close opinion to this is narrated from Qatāda of Basra, as his alternative opinion as follows:

قَرَضَنَاها (أي) قَرَضَ اللَّهُ فيها فرائضه، وأحل حَلَّه، وحرَّم حرا

(Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Tafsīr, vol.8, p.2516)

Meccan Tābiʾīs comment is supported by the recitation of Sulaimān al-Aʿmaš [d.148/765] of Kūfa who reads the verse with an insertion as follows:

سورة أنزلناها وفرضناها لكم

(Ibn ʿAṭiyya, al-Muḥarrar, vol.4, p.160)

I.e. A sūrah, which we have revealed and prescribed to you.

In addition, we can trace inspiration of this comment in a passage quoted of Ibn Zaid, seemingly ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Zaid [d.182/798] (al-Ṭabarī, Ğāmiʿ al-Bayān, vol.18, p.66) and in al-Kitāb of Sībawaih (vol.1, p.143). In a revised version of Abū Ṣāliḥ’s Tafsīr known under the title Tanwīr al-Miqbās is observed a blending of these two comments as follows:

فَرَضَنَاها، (أي) بيّنّا فيها الحٍم والحرام

(Tanwīr al-Miqbās, p.367)

Also a blending of all three groups is traceable in Meybodi’s translation (compiled in 520/1126) where says:

سورتي است إين كه فرو فرستام آن را و واجب كرديم حكم ها كه در آن است و باز گشاده و بيدا كرديم آن را و فرو فرستام در آن سخن ها و پيغام های پیداى روشن

(Meybodi, Kašf, vol.6, p.479)
Some amendments from the 3rd/9th century and later commentators based on this commentary, is just focused on semantic nuance between recitation with and without gemination (al-Farrāʾ, Maʿānī al-Qurʾān, vol.3, p.127; Abū ʿUbaida, Majāzāt al-Qurʾān, vol.2, p.63; al-Zajjāj, Maʿānī al-Qurʾān, vol.4, p.27).

Shifting to the verse 28:85, a similar position is narrated from early Meccan tābīʾi, ʿĀṭāʾ ibn Abī Rabāḥ who said:

فَرضَ عليک الكتاب، (أي) فرض عليک العمل بالقرآن


In this commentary, ʿĀṭāʾ assumes 'deed according to Qurʾān' as the main object of the verb faraḍa from which al-ʿamal bi- is dropped out in manifest plane of the sentence. Although this interpretation seems more support from a lexicographical viewpoint, but there are serious syntactical troubles. We know that faraḍa in jurisprudential usage means: to make a decree, to decree a thing or rule, to command an observance, to ratify a treaty or contract. Thus, there is meaningless to make the Qurʾān which is none of the expectable objects for this verb as its object. In fact, the existence of such complexity is what led most of the commentators to seek another meaning for faraḍa and escape from the analysis proposed by Meccan Tābīʾīs regarding both verses. The other commentators preferred to go far from Arabic lexicography, rather than rendering the Quranic usage to jurisprudential term, besides an imaginative arbitrary syntactic analysis. Meanwhile the comment of ʿĀṭāʾ on the verse 28:85 has been accepted by some further exegetes, although in a limited extent (Ibn Qutaiba, Taḥṣīr Ǧarīb, p.286; Abū Bakr al-Sijistānī, Nuzha, p.355; Abū Bakr al-Naqqāš, narrated by Māwardī, al-Nukat, vol.4, p.272).

From the 4th/10th century, some scholars consider that this verse is speaking of an obligation referred to the person of the Holy Prophet, not all the believers, leaning on the role of the singular pronoun -ka. According to them, the mandate of the Holy Prophet is to recite the Holy Qurʾān and promote it (Māturīdī, Taʿwilāt, vol.8, p.204; Māwardī, al-Nukat, vol.4, p.272; al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Aḥkām, vol.2, p.145).
5. Linkage between Two Verses

In this section, I focus on an early comment on the verse (24:1) which is based on reference and linkage to the Verse (28: 85), a narration by Hārūn ibn Mūsā from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. In this narration, the commentator used the linked verse directly as commentary for the word in question while says:

(İbn Abî Ḥātim, Tafṣîr, vol.8, p.2516)

فَرَضنَاها (أي) فَرَضَ عليک القرآن

This linkage had been ignored for a long time until the middle of 4th/10th century while it raised a new wave in this concern. In that period, al-Ṭabarānî [d. 360/971] explained that for those who recite the word in question without gemination, it should be understood under the light of the verse (28:85) and the meaning is imposing the decrees of the Qur'an (al-Ṭabarānî, al-Tafṣîr, vol.4, p.392). Among his contemporary exegetes, Abū ˁAlī al-Fārisî [d.377/987] was totally agreed with al-Ṭabarānî (al-Ras'anî, Rumûz, vol.5, p.178), while some scholars were opposites.

On the contrary, in wujūh al-Qurʾan literature, which investigates the polysemy and semantic differences of vocabulary in the Qur'an, it is usually repeated and agreed with İbn ʿAbbâs’ comment regarding both verses. Thus, they insisted on the idea that the root √RD in the verse 24:1 refers to the meaning of 'to make clear', while in the verse 28:85 has the meaning of 'to send down' (Muqātil, al-Wujūh, p.67; Abû Hilâl, Taṣḥîh, p.368; al-Dâmaǧânî, al-Wujûh, vol.2, pp.123-124). Even exactly in the period which al-Ṭabarânî and Abû ʿAlî al-Fârisî tried to link between the meaning of faraḍa in two verses, İbn Ḥâlawaih [d.370/980] supported the position of the authors of wujūh al-Qurʾan literature separating two usages in meaning (Abû ʿUmar al-Zâhid, al-ʾAṣarât, p.112).

In general, we can say that interpretation of the verse (24:1) under the light of the verse (28: 85) did not gain enough support and always was a marginalized commentary in exegetic literature.

6. A Comparative Linguistic Inquiry

From an etymological point of view, the triconsonantal Arabic root √RD plus preformative /F-/ > /P-/ Its historical form is constructed as a common Central
Semitic root √RṢ̂Ṣ̂ meaning 'to break into pieces' (Dolgopolsky, No.1967). The cognates in different Semitic languages are as follows:

**Arabic** رَض (radda)ː to break a thing coarsely, to contuse (Hana, p.247)

**Hebrew** רָצַץ (rāṣa)ː to press, to oppress  
Pi. to crush in pieces (Gesenius, p.954)

**Aramaic** רָצַץ (rāṣa)ː to press, to squeeze, to crush (Jastrow, vol.2, p.1495)

**Aramaic** רָעַע (rāʿa)ː to strike against, to shatter, to impair  
Pi. to shatter, to break (Jastrow, vol.2, p.1488)

**Syr** √R̄̄̄n (etp-raʾ): Pi. to bruise, to bray, to crush

The preformative /F-/ > /P-/ is etymologically a particle meaning 'to dig', rooted in an Afro-Asiatic stem *paʾ-*/*paw-/*pay-, which semantically means 'to dig, to bury' (Orel & Stolbova, No.1910). Now the resultant meaning of combined form of Arabic √FRḌ according to Semitic etymology is 'to break in pieces with digging inside something'. Concerning this triconsonantal root too, it is worthy to point out to existing cognates in Semitic languages as follows:

**Arabic** قَرْض (farada)ː to notch (a wood) (Hana, p.548), to make an incision (Leslau, p.167).

**Akkadian** (parāṣu): to breach (Black, p.266).

**Hebrew** פָרַץ (pāraṣ)ː to break through, to break into, to break out, to break in pieces (Gesenius, p.829)

**Ugaritic** √PRṢ: to breach; opening (Del Olmo & Sanmartín, p.683).

**Aramaic** פָרַץ (pēraṣ)ː to break through, to make a breach, to invade (Jastrow, vol.2, p.1237).

**Syriac** פָּרֶט (prat): to make an incision (Nakhla, p. 198), to break, to divide, to split (Costaz, p.287).

**Mandaic** √PRṢ: to make a breach, to break through (Drower & Macuch, p.380).
Geez ∆አ∆ (faraṣa): to break open, to cut open, to split (Leslau, p.167).

Further, it is important to discuss a parallel root in Semitic languages, which have the same form √RṢṢ, but with a different semantic value. Although these two roots may be derived from a common origin in far times, but in the Semitic languages they occur as just homonyms. The cognate of this second root are as follows:

Arabic فُرَضَ (faraḍa): to impose laws (by God), to prescribe a thing (by man) (Hana, p.548).

Akkadian (parāṣu): to carry out ritual

parṣu: command (Black, p.266; Gesenius, p.823).

Hebrew פָצַר (pāsar): to push, to press (Gesenius, p.823).

Syriac پَرَا (pēra'): Etpe. to be punished, to be revenged, to avenge oneself upon (Costaz, p.290).

cf. Syriac پَرِ ط (pareṭ): to prescribe a thing (Nakhla, p.198).

Geez ∆አ∆ (farada): to discern, to judge

fǝrd: judgement (Leslau, p.165).

Among the old Arabic lexicographers, this is Ibn al-Aʳābī [d. 231/846] who explicitly speaks of the common origin of these two roots and believes that the root √FRḌ (prescribe) is derived from √FRḌ (break) (Abū ʿUmar al-Zāhid, al-ʿAšarāt, p.112; al-Azharī, Tahḏīb, vol.12, p.13). Further this idea is followed by Ibn Fāris [d. 395/1005], a lexicographer who is well-known for his speculations about the origins of the Arabic roots. He too believes that the word fard, meaning 'ordinance (of God)' is derived from √FRḌ which means 'to make an incision' (Ibn Fāris, Maqāyīs, vol.4, p.488).

Recently, we can see Leslau too explaining under one entree for the Geez root √FRD stating that the basic meaning of it is 'to separate, to distinguish'. Then he claims the meaning of 'discern, judge' as a semantics extension of the basic meaning (Leslau, p.165).
There are two evidences which show that these roots are independent from each other in Arabic and sister languages. The first is different ways of developments of the Semitic phonemes /Ṣ̂/ in Syriac and Geez. The second evidence is a metathesis occurred in Hebrew for ⲕ̅ⲧⲱⲧ (prescribe) while there is no metathesis regarding ⲕ̅ⲧⲱⲧ (break). Thus, we can say that even if in far origins there exists any connection between the two roots, the development of those in Semitic languages had been occurred in separate processes. On this basis, for the time of Quranic Arabic, the two roots definitely considered as independent.

As resultant of this discussion and coming back to the main question of the article, we should decide about the two verses in question whether the root applied is ⲕ̅ⲧⲱⲧ (break) or ⲕ̅ⲧⲱⲧ (prescribe).

7. Evaluation of Earliest Commentaries

Among all the earliest commentaries cited for the two verses in question, as discussed before some like Ibn ˁAbbās’ comment on 24:1 (bayyana), his comment of 28:85 (ʾanzala), Meccan Tābiʾīs’ comment on 28:85 (ʾaʾṭā) and mystics’ comment on 28:85 (yassara) were arbitrary without linguistic support. In fact, none of them includes under the two Semitic roots discussed above, Abū ʿAmr’s comment on 24:1 may be semantically relevant to ⲕ̅ⲧⲱⲧ (break), but as discussed before, it is not approvable in comparison to other applications of faṣṣala in Quranic language. The Meccan Tābiʾīs’ comment on 24:1 too is relevant to ⲕ̅ⲧⲱⲧ (prescribe), but as explained is confronted with some grammatical barriers.

Taking in consideration that the surah 24 is a chapter including various topics, some jurisprudential, some theological and some other themes, even if we come down to assume some dropped parts in the sentence, the whole meaning does not come proper with the meaning of the root ⲕ̅ⲧⲱⲧ (prescribe). Then we should concentrate of ⲕ̅ⲧⲱⲧ (break) to understand the meaning of the two verses. Coming to the result that the so-called earliest commentaries do not help to properly understand these verses, we are forced to use just linguistic evidences besides the context, the internal elements in the Quranic text itself.

Inside the text of the surah 24, we learn that minimally some part of the surah in revealed in occasion of the event of ifk, i.e. an attribution to ṭĀʾiša, the wife of the Holy Prophet and announcing her innocence of given attribution. The content
of surah 24 is in the first part focused on the sexual chastity (verses 1-33), in the second part on the influence of serving God to attract His blessing (verses 34-57), the third part on chastity and the principles of family (verses 58-61) and the fourth on the importance of obeying God and His Prophet (verses 62-64).

Taking into consideration such a structure for the surah 24, it seems that the word *faraḍnāhā* connected to *ʾanzalnāhā*, goes to connect the meaning of division and separation to the meaning of revelation. Then the beginning of the surah speaks about the philosophy of revelation being divided and piecemeal because of the fact that the revelation of the Qur'an is context-sensitive. There is a verse (25:32) which speaks of this nature of the Qur'an which was doubtful for addressees, where says:

> وَقَامَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلََ نُزِّمَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَنِّي بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيًٍ (الفرقان/32)

Those who reject Faith say: "Why is not the Qur'an revealed to him all at once?" Thus (is it revealed) that we may strengthen thy heart thereby and we have rehearsed it to thee in slow well-arranged stages gradually (Yusuf Ali).

The verse is in the way to say that such kind of revelation divided, distributed according to situations, gradually and piecemeal is more efficient to affect the Holy Prophet and in his companion all believing people around to be convinced with continuous supervision of God and his protection. We learn from several passages of the Holy Qur'an such an affection and sensation to events and situations too. It is known as a character of the Qur'an and was the basis for the concept of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the causes of the revelation) in tradition of Quranic sciences.

Regarding the themes of surah 28 is also strictly connected with the same kind of affecting the souls of the believers. After a short introduction, the content of surah is in the first part focused on the story of Moses from his birth to victory on Pharaoh (verses 3-46), in the second part on the arguments of infidels against the Prophet (verses 47-84) and the third part on consolation to the Prophet for resistance against the infidels (verses 85-88).

Among the known exegesis, it is only al-Māwardī [d. 450/1058] who has a brief and non-explained point to this understanding of the word *faraḍa* in the verse 28:85. After his citation of five known comments of early commentators,
al-Māwardī added a sixth one, which seems to be his own viewpoint; a comment that has not drawn attention of further exegetes at all. He says in his added sixth comment:

فَرَضَ أي قدّر عليک إنزاله في أوقاته، لأن الفرض التقدير

I.e. farāda means that God divided His revelation to you in measures fitting to the occasions, because farḍ means to divide in measures (al-Māwardī, al-Nukat, vol.4, p.272). Then we can say that the last comment of al-Māwardī is the most appropriate and up the point explanation about the verse, in spite of the fact that he personally did not insist in this comment. Also he did not show any evidence and support for this speculation.

8. Conclusion:

After classifying all the early commentaries on the two verses 24:1 and 28:85, I come to evaluation of them on the basis of lexicographical and etymological evidence. The resultant was the fact that none of the earliest commentaries and the following commentators by classical exegetes is proper to the Quranic application in the two verses in question unless a marginalized and ambiguous comment of al-Māwardī.

The suggestion of this essay in rendering the meaning of farāda in both verses to the root √FRḌ (break), i.e. to the meaning of dividing in separated parts and making a body cut in parts inside. Its meaning about a Quranic surah is revealing that in separated part appropriate to situations to make it more efficient and affecting the souls of the Prophet and the believers. According to the verse 25:32, in contrary for non-believers this manner of revelation was a source of doubts.

As reflected in the introduction of the article, the two verses were just a case study and a wider goal of this essay is to show that sometimes the commentaries attributed to the companions of the Holy Prophet, or Tābiʿīs, their disciples are detached from the context of the Quranic language and context. Then it creates doubts to recognize their relevance to earliest decades of the Islamic era.
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