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

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ABSTRACT: Original Paper

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 (Q.24:1), as well as the verse (Q.28:85). Regarding methodology, this research used both traditional lexicographical and linguistic etymological inquiries. The result of the research is the fact that both 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.

1. Introduction

Certain verses of the Holy Qur'an seem to have a kind of opacity for early commentators; an opacity, which made those verses a subject of debate for a period. Following the early Islamic times to the time of classic exegeses, everything seems to be clear and nobody is concerned about early debates.

The present author is not insisting on any belief that the so-called early commentaries belong to specified known authors or written in some specified time. Methodologically, the departure point of the present

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study is the fact that we approach the time span of exegetic literature quoted by authors of early reliable exegetic works like *Jāmi' al-Bayān* of al-Ṭabarī or resources in other disciplines written from the second half of 3rd /9th century. Such early commentaries are sometimes attributed to companions of the Holy Prophet, namely Ibn 'Abbās, sometimes to the following generation, termed *Tābi'īs*, 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 (Q.24:1), which says,

<div dir="rtl">سُورَةٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهَا وَ فَرَضْنَاهَا وَ أَنْزَلْنَا فِيهَا آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (النور/۱)</div>

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.

The other Verse (Q.28:85) says,

<div dir="rtl">إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَادُّكَ إِلَى مَعَادٍ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَى وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (القصص/85)</div>

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'.

In spite of the clear meaning of this translation, there is apparently a great controversy around the meaning of the verb in question in the two verses in both Qur'anic commentaries and translations. Although the verb *faraḍa* is used in the Holy Qur'an several times, but my focus is restricted to these two verses, since they share an ambiguity regarding these usages, an ambiguity that 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: 1. Rendering the semantic content of *faraḍa* to meanings not supported by Arabic lexicography; 2. 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 the problem arises from forgetting the main language and context of the Holy Qur'an, 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 (Q.24:1) in Early Commentaries

Before beginning the investigation of the commentaries, it is worthy to mention that the word *faraḍnāhā*[1] in the verse is recited in two forms:

- Some recited it with gemination on /r/, as *farraḍnāhā*, which is narrated of Ibn Kathīr and Abū 'Amr ibn 'Alā', famous reciters of Mecca and Basra, as well as Mujāhid, the famous *Tābi'ī* of Mecca.

- The recitation without gemination as *faraḍnāhā* is preferred by the majority. This majority includes the other seven reciters (*al-Qurrā' al-Sab'a*) as well as some companions like Ibn Mas'ūd and 'Ā'isha, some Tābi'īs such as Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī, 'Ikrima Mawlā ibn 'Abbās and some scholars of further generations including Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, Abū Ja'far al-Madanī, Abū Ya'mur, Sulaymān al-A'mash and Ibn Abī 'Abla.

Both forms are attributed to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (Abū Dāwūd, 1950, 4:38; Abū 'Amr al-Dānī, 1930, 161; al-Tha'labī, 2002, 7:63; Ibn al-Jawzī, 1984, 3:27).

A review on the earliest comments concerning the word *faraḍnāhā* 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 'Abbās narrated by Abū Ṣāliḥ the meaning is the following:

<div dir="rtl">

فَرَّضْنَاهَا (أي) بَيَّنَّاها

</div>

(al-Ṭabarī, 1985, 18:66).

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

<div dir="rtl">

وَ فَرَضْنَاهَا، قال: وَ بَيَّنَّاهَا

</div>

(Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1999, 8:2516).

In both quotations of Ibn 'Abbās the meaning of the verb *faraḍa* was considered equivalent to the well-known verb in Qur'anic Arabic *bayyana*; the verb which is normally understood as 'to make clear, to explain' (Hana, 1899, 51).

For Mujāhid 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 'Abbās and the parallel quotation in

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١. فرضناها

this group. Anyway, some scholars in later centuries announced that such commentary is appropriate to the geminated recitation (al-Zajjāj, 1988, 4:27; al-Azharī, 2001, 12:12; Ibn Abī Zamanīn, 2002, 3:217; al-Thaʿlabī, 2002, 7:63). This meaning which we call afterwards Ibn ʿAbbās' comment is repeated in the narrations of *Tābiʿī*s and their disciples such as Qatāda of Basra [d. 118/736] (al-Naḥḥās, 1989, 4:493) and Muqātil ibn Sulaymān [d. 150/767] (Muqātil, 2003, 2:497).

As a criticism, I should say that there is no evidence for the root *f-r-ḍ* to denote 'to become clear' neither in classical Arabic lexicography, nor in modern Semitic etymologies. This comment is repeated as one of the options by some later scholars without any amendment and justification (Ibn Qutayba, 2002, 364; Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, 1983, 95) and was the basis for the very famous Samanid canonical translation of Qur'an in Persian of 4th/10th century (*Tarjuma-yi Tafsīr-i Ṭabarī,* 1977, 5:1110). Just Ibn Abī Zamanīn [d. 399/1008] pointed out that this commentary is appropriate for the recitation of the word with gemination (Ibn Abī Zamanīn, 2002, 3:217).

Some commentators and other scholars from the 3rd/9th century afterwards used the keyword *bayyannā*, borrowed from Ibn ʿAbbās' comment, but its content was altered by group C (al-Tustarī, 2002, 111; al-Zajjāj, 1988, 4:27; al-Azharī, 2001, 12:12; al-Qushayrī, 2000, 2:354).

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

$$\text{فَرَضْنَاهَا (أي) فَصَّلْنَاهَا}$$

(al-Naḥḥās, 1989, 4:493; idem, 1988, 3:127).

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 will be termed below 'Abū ʿAmr's comment.' Some scholars in later centuries stated that this commentary is in agreement with the geminated recitation (al-Zajjāj, 1988, 4:27; al-Azharī, 2001, 12:12; al-Thaʿlabī, 2002, 7:63; Makkī, 2008, 8:5014).

From a critical standpoint, it should be mentioned that the clearest usage of *faṣṣala* can be detected in the verse (Q.41:44) which shows a strong concern with the issue of language and being the Qur'an in a clearly understandable Arabic, rather than a foreign language. This meaning does not seem to be relevant to the word in question in the verse (Q.24:1). In practice, this comment is not supported by later 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, 1988, 4:27; al-Azharī, 2001, 12:12; Ibn al-Jawzī, 1984, 3:275). Also, it is rarely included in some ancient Persian translation as an option besides other groups of comments, as its translation to 'باز گشادیم' in Maybudī's exegesis (1992, 6:479). A blending of Ibn 'Abbās' comment and that of Abū 'Amr is traceable in al-Tha'labī's exegesis (2002, 7:63).

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.'

3. The Verse (Q.28:85) in Early Commentaries

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

Group A. According to the opinion attributed to Ibn 'Abbās narrated by Abū Ṣāliḥ, the verb *faraḍa* here means 'to send down' (*Tanwīr al-Miqbās*, 416). The serious criticism is based on the fact that there is no basis for such an interpretation in Arabic lexicography and it is just an arbitrary idea of exegetic authorities. Meanwhile, this comment gained the largest agreement in later sources and is approved by some influential exegetes of the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries (Yaḥyā ibn Sallām, 2004, 2:613; al-Farrā', 1980, 2:33; Abū 'Ubayda, 1962, 2:112). From the next century to the present, it has always remained as the later agreed upon comment, as it is announced by some exegetes. In the 4th/10th century, we see its influence on the Samanid canonical translation in Persian (*Tarjuma-yi Tafsīr-e Ṭabarī*, 2:366) and in the 5th/11th century, al-Tha'labī announced it as a preference of most of the exegetes (al-Tha'labī, 2002, 7:266).

Group B. According to the opinion attributed to Mujāhid, the Meccan *Tābi'ī*, the word *faraḍa* in this verse means 'to give' (Mujāhid, 1976, 2:491; al-Ṭabarī, 1985, 20:123; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1999, 9:3025). Concerning this comment too, I can repeat the same criticism that it is not supported by any lexicographical evidence and it seems to be a rough assimilation between giving portion of heritage to the heirs and giving the Qur'an to the Holy Prophet. Among further figures, some like al-Ṭabarī who prefer this comment is rare (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 1987, 14:274) and sometimes it is referred to as one in the list of old proposed comments (al-Māwardī, 2007, 4:274).

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 *hadiya* for *farḍ* as a noun (al-Khalīl, 1982, 7:28; Ibn Durayd, 1926, 2:365; Abū ‘Umar al-Zāhid, 1984, 112; al-Azharī, 2001, 12:13), but grammatically it should be considered that such a meaning is just approved for the nominal form 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 century, we come across 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 suggested by the Persian mystic Ibn ‘Aṭā’ [d. 309/921] who arbitrarily interprets the meaning of *faraḍa* with the verb 'to make easy' (*yassara*) without any support (al-Sulamī, 2001, 2:112).

The second inventory is that of Ibn Baḥr, seemingly Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī [d. 322/934], the famous Mu‘tazili exegete. Inspired by Ibn ‘Abbās' comment on the verse (Q.24:1), i.e., rendering the meaning of *faraḍa* to the verb *bayyana*, he proposed the same meaning in the verse (Q.28:85). Previously, I discussed this comment as unattested in lexicographical sources. At any rate, the suggestion has not received any acceptance by other exegetes.

As a result, we realize that none of the comments proposed for both verses may be substantiated by traditional Arabic lexicography other than the meaning of 'to make a decree' which will be studied in following section.

4. *Farḍ Denoting 'Make a Decree'*

For people familiar with Islamic jurisprudential terms, the first outgoing meaning understood of the root *f-r-ḍ* is 'to ordain a decree.' In fact, using this root, the divine obligations ordained to the people are usually called *farīḍa*[1]. Indeed, commentators of the Qur'an expectedly render the mentioned root in both verses in question to this terminological meaning, although this meaning has roots in pre-Islamic Arabic and other Semitic languages.

There are such commentaries for both verses among narrations from the earliest commentators. Beginning with the verse (Q.24:1), we know such interpretation is attributed to the *Tābi‘ī*s of Mecca, Mujāhid [d. 104/722] and ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ [d. 114/732], quoted as saying,

1. فريضة

فَرَضنَاهَا (أي) الأمر بالحلال، والنهي عن الحرام.

We know that Mujāhid 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 *f-r-ḍ* and can be compatible with both geminated and non-geminated forms. This meaning will be mentioned below as the Meccan Tābi'īs' comment in which *faraḍa* denotes 'allowed and prohibited deeds,' i.e., divine decrees or prescriptions known as Sharia (for Mujāhid, see: Mujāhid, 1976, 2:436; al-Ṭabarī, 1985, 18:65; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1999, 8:2516; for 'Aṭā', see: al-Ṭaḥāwī, 1987, 14:272). A similar view is narrated from Qatāda of Basra, as his alternative opinion as follows:

فَرَضنَاها (أي) فَرَضَ اللهُ فيها فرائضه، وأحل حلاله، وحرّم حرامه، وأمر بطاعته، ونهى عن معصيته
(Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1999, 8:2516).

The Meccan *Tābi'īs*' comment is supported by the recitation of Sulaymān al-A'mash [d. 148/765] of Kufa who reads the verse with an insertion as follows:

سورةٍ أنزلناها و فرضناها لكم

(Ibn 'Aṭiyya, 1993, 4:160).

That is, *a surah, which we have revealed and prescribed to you.*

In addition, we can trace the inspiration of this comment in a passage quoted of Ibn Zayd, seemingly 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Zayd [d. 182/798] (al-Ṭabarī, 1985, 18:66) and in *al-Kitāb* of Sībawayh (1966, 1:143). A blending of these two comments is attested in a revised version of Abū Ṣāliḥ's *Tafsīr*, known under the title *Tanwīr al-Miqbās*:

فَرَضنَاها، (أي) بيّنا فيها الحلال والحرام

(*Tanwīr al-Miqbās*, 367).

Also, A blending of all the three groups is traceable in Maybudī's translation (compiled in 520/1126):

سورتی است این که فرو فرستادیم آن را و واجب کردیم حکمها که در آن است و باز

گشادیم و پیدا کردیم آن را و فرو فرستادیم در آن سخنها و پیغامهای پیدای روشن

(Maybudī, 1992, 6:479).

Some additions from the 3rd/9th century and later commentators based on this commentary merely focused on the semantic nuances between recitation with and without gemination (al-Farrāʿ, 1980, 3:127; Abū ʿUbayda, 1962, 2:63; al-Zajjāj, 1988, 4:27).

Shifting to the verse (Q.28:85), a similar position is narrated from the early Meccan *Tābʿī*, ʿAṭāʾ ibn Abī Rabāḥ:

<div dir="rtl">

فَرَضَ عليك الكتاب، (أي) فرض عليك العمل بالقرآن.

</div>

(al-Thaʿlabī, 2002, 7:266; al-Baghawī, 1987, 3:458).

In this commentary, ʿAṭāʾ assumes the meaning of 'deed according to Qur'an' as the main object of the verb *faraḍa* from which *al-ʿamal bi-* is dropped out since it clearly implies the sense in the context. Although this interpretation seems to be mainly supported lexicographically, but there are serious syntactical problems involved here. We know that *faraḍa* in jurisprudential usage denotes 'to make a decree, to decree a thing or rule, to command an observance, to ratify a treaty or contract.' Thus, it would be meaningless to make the Qur'an 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 suggested by the Meccan *Tābiʿīs* regarding both verses. The other commentators preferred to step beyond Arabic lexicography and render the Quranic usage to jurisprudential term, besides an imaginative arbitrary syntactic analysis. Meanwhile the comment of ʿAṭāʾ on the verse (Q.28:85) has been accepted by some further exegetes, although in a limited extent (Ibn Qutayba, 1978, 286; Abū Bakr al-Sijistānī, 1990, 355; Abū Bakr al-Naqqāsh, narrated by al-Māwardī, 2007, 4:272).

From the 4th/10th century, some scholars consider that this verse implies an obligation of the Holy Prophet, not all the believers, leaning on the role of the possessive adjective or determiner *-ka*. According to them, the mandate of the Holy Prophet is to recite the Holy Qur'an and promote it (Māturīdī, 2005, 8:204; al-Māwardī, 2007, 4:272; al-Jaṣṣāṣ, 1985, 2:145).

5. Connection of the Two Verses

In this section, I the focus on an early comment on the verse (Q.24:1) which, based on reference and linkage to the Verse (Q.28:85), is 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 as the following:

<div dir="rtl">
فَرَضنَاها (أي) فَرَضَ عليک القرآن
</div>

(Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 1999, 8:2516).

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-Ṭabarānī [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 (Q.28:85) and the meaning is imposing the decrees of the Qur'an (al-Ṭabarānī, 2008, 4:392). Among his contemporary exegetes, Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī [d. 377/987] totally agreed with al-Ṭabarānī (al-Rasʿanī, 1911, 5:178), while some scholars disagreed.

On the contrary, in *wujūh al-Qur'ān* literature, which investigates the polysemy and semantic differences of the vocabulary in the Qur'an, it is usually repeated and agrees with Ibn ʿAbbās' comment regarding both verses. Thus, they insisted on the idea that the root *f-r-ḍ r-ḍ* in the verse (Q.24:1) denotes 'to make clear', while in the verse (Q.28:85) has the meaning of 'to send down' (Muqātil, 2006, 67; Abū Hilāl, 2007, 368; al-Dāmaghānī, 1996, 2:123-124). Even exactly in the period which al-Ṭabarānī and Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī tried to link the meaning of *faraḍa* in the two verses, Ibn Khālawayh [d. 370/980] supported the position of the authors of *wujūh al-Qur'ān* literature by distinguishing between two usages in meaning (Abū ʿUmar al-Zāhid, 1984, 112).

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

6. A Comparative Linguistic Inquiry

From an etymological point of view, the triconsonantal Arabic root *r-ḍ* plus preformative /F-/ > /P-/. Its historical form is constructed as a common Central Semitic root *R-Ṣ́-Ṣ́* meaning 'to break into pieces' (Dolgopolsky, 2008, No. 1967). The cognates in different Semitic languages are as follows:

Arabic رَضَّ (*raḍḍa*): to break a thing coarsely, to contuse (Hana, 1899, 247);
Hebrew רָצַץ (*rāṣaṣ*): to press, to oppress:
Pi. to crush in pieces (Gesenius, 1955, 954);
Aramaic רְצַץ (*rəṣaṣ*): to press, to squeeze, to crush (Jastrow, 1903, 2:1495);
Aramaic רְעַע (*rəʿaʿ*): to strike against, to shatter, to impair;
Pi. to shatter, to break (Jastrow, 1903, 2:1488);
Syr ܪܥܥ (√Rʿʿ):

Pi. to bruise, to bray, to crush

ܐܬܦܪܥ *(etpᵉraʿ)* Itpe. to destroy (Dolgopolsky, 2008, No.1967)

The preformative /F-/ > /P-/ has etymologically a particle meaning 'to dig,' rooted in an Afro-Asiatic stem *paʿ-/*paw-/*pay-, which denotes 'to dig, to bury' (Orel & Stolbova, 1995, No.1910). Now the resultant meaning of combined form of Arabic *f-r-ḍ* according to Semitic etymology is 'to break into pieces with digging inside something.' Concerning this triconsonantal root too, it is worthy of note to make mention of cognates in Semitic languages as follows:

Arabic فَرَضَ *(faraḍa)*: to notch (a wood) (Hana, 1899, 548), to make an incision (Leslau, 1991, 167);

Akkadian *(parāṣu)*: to breach (Black, 2000, 266);

Hebrew פָּרַץ *(pāraṣ)*: to break through, to break into, to break out, to break in pieces (Gesenius, 1955, 829);

Ugaritic *p-r-ṣ*: to breach; opening (Del Olmo & Sanmartín, 2003, 683);

Aramaic פְּרַץ *(pəraṣ)*: to break through, to make a breach, to invade (Jastrow, 1903, 2:1237);

Syriac ܦܪܛ *(praṭ)*: to make an incision (Nakhla, 1986, 198), to break, to divide, to split (Costaz, 2002, 287);

Mandaic *p-r-ṣ*: to make a breach, to break through (Drower & Macuch, 1963, 380);

Geez ፈረሰ *(farasa)*: to break open, to cut open, to split (Leslau, 1991, 167).

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

Arabic فَرَضَ *(faraḍa)*: to impose laws (by God), to prescribe a thing (by man) (Hana, 1899, 548);

Akkadian *(parāṣu)*: to carry out ritual;

parṣu: command (Black, 2000, 266; Gesenius, 1955, 823);

Hebrew פָּצַר *(pāṣar)*: to push, to press (Gesenius, 1955, 823);

Syriac ܦܪܥ *(pᵉraʿ)*:

ܐܬܦܪܥ *(etpᵉraʿ)* Etpe. to be punished, to be revenged, to avenge oneself upon (Costaz, 2002, 290);

cf. Syriac ܦܪܛ *(pareṭ)*: to prescribe a thing (Nakhla, 1986, 198);

Geez ፈረደ *(farada)*: to discern, to judge, *fərd*: judgement (Leslau, 1991, 165).

Among early Arabic lexicographers, Ibn al-ʿArābī [d. 231/846] explicitly mentioned the common origin of these two roots and believed that the root *f-r-ḍ*(prescribe) is derived from *f-r-ḍ*(break) (Abū ʿUmar al-Zāhid, 1984, 112; al-Azharī, 2001, 12:13). Further, the suggestion is followed by Ibn Fāris [d. 395/1005], a lexicographer who well-known for his speculations about the origins of the Arabic roots. He too believes that the word *farḍ*, meaning 'ordinance (of God)' is derived from *f-r-ḍ* which means 'to make an incision' (Ibn Fāris, 1947, 4:488).

Recently, we can see Leslau also explaining under one entree for the Geez root *f-r-d* stating that the basic meaning of it is 'to separate, to distinguish'. Then he claims that the meaning of 'discern, judge' is a semantics extension of the basic meaning (Leslau, 1991,165).

There are two evidences which show that these roots are independent from each other in Arabic and its sister languages. The first is different ways of developments of the Semitic phonemes /Ṣ́/ in Syriac and Geez. The second evidence is a metathesis occurred in Hebrew for *f-r-ḍ*(prescribe) while there is no metathesis regarding *f-r-ḍ*(break). Thus, we can say that even if in ancient times there existed any connection between the two roots, the development of those in Semitic languages had occurred in separate processes. On this basis, for the time of Qur'anic Arabic, the two roots definitely were 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 *f-r-ḍ*(break) or *f-r-ḍ*(prescribe).

7. Evaluation of Earliest Commentaries

Among all the earliest commentaries cited for the two verses in question, as discussed above, some like Ibn ʿAbbās' comments on 24:1 (*bayyana*) and 28:85 (*ʾanzala*), Meccan Tābiʿīs' comment on 28:85 (*ʾaʿṭā*) and mystics' comments 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 which may be semantically relevant to *f-r-ḍ*(break), but as discussed above, it is not approvable in comparison to other applications of *faṣṣala* in the Qur'anic language. The Meccan *Tābiʿīs*' comment on 24:1 is also relevant to *f-r-ḍ*(prescribe), but as explained above, it is confronted with some grammatical problems.

Taking into consideration that the surah 24 is a chapter including various topics, some jurisprudential, some theological and some other themes, even if assumed some omissions in the sentence, the whole meaning may not be denoted by the root *f-r-ḍ*(prescribe). We then need to concentrate on *f-r-ḍ*(break) to understand the meaning of the two verses. Having concluded that the so-called earliest commentaries do not help to properly understand these verses, we need 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 was revealed on the occasion of the event of *ifk*, i.e., an attribution to 'Ā'isha, the wife of the Holy Prophet and announcing her innocence of the given attribution. The content of surah 24 in the first part focuses on the sexual chastity (verses 1-33), in the second part on the influence of serving God to attract His blessing (verses 34-57), in the third part on chastity and the principles of family (verses 58-61) and in the fourth on the importance of obeying God and His Prophet (verses 62-64).

Taking into consideration such a structure for surah 24, it seems that the word *faraḍnāhā*, connected to *'anzalnāhā*, 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. Verse (Q.25:32) speaks of this nature of the Qur'an which was doubtful for addressees, where it says,

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا (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.

The verse implies that such kind of revelation – divided, distributed according to situations, gradually and piecemeal – is more efficient to encourage the Holy Prophet and his companions and all believers to be convinced with divine perpetual supervision and protection. We learn from several passages of the Holy Qur'an such an affection and sensation to events and situations as well. It is known as a character of the Qur'an and was the basis for the concept of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (causes of the revelation) in Qur'anic sciences.

The themes of surah 28 are also strictly connected to the same kind of affecting the souls of the believers. After a short introduction, the content of the surah, in the first part, is focused on the story of Moses from his

birth to his victory over the Pharaoh (verses 3-46), in the second part on the arguments of infidels against the Prophet (verses 47-84) and, in the third part on encouraging the Prophet to resist the infidels (verses 85-88).

Among the known exegetes, it is only al-Māwardī [d. 450/1058] who briefly mentions his understanding of the word *faraḍa* in verse (Q.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 the attention of further exegetes at all. He says in his added sixth comment,

<div dir="rtl">

فَرَضَ أي قدّر عليك إنزاله في أَوقاته، لأن الفرض التقدير.

</div>

Faraḍa means that God divided His revelation to you in measures fitting to the occasions, because *farḍ* means to divide in measures (al-Māwardī, 2007, 4:272). 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 did not insist on the relevance of his suggestion, nor did he show any evidence or support for it.

8. Conclusion

Having classified the contents of all the early commentaries on verses (Q.24:1) and 28:85, the present author evaluates them on the basis of lexicographical and etymological evidence. The result is that, except for al-Māwardī's marginalized and ambiguous comment, none of the earliest commentators nor their successors produced any proper comment on the two verses.

It is suggested in the present study that *faraḍa* in both verses is derived from the root *f-r-ḍ*(break) and denotes 'to divide; crush.' The form within the context of the Qur'anic surahs implies 'to make more efficient' and 'encourage the Prophet and the believers.' According to the verse (Q.25:32), the gradual revelation of the Qur'an was a source of doubt for non-believers.

As reflected in the introduction to 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 *Tābi'īs*, and their disciples are detached from the context of the Quranic language and context. Then, it creates doubts to recognize their relevance to the earliest decades of the Islamic era.

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