



Dating the Surah Al-Layl

Rasul Mohamad-Jafari*; Ali Hasannia¹; Hossein Mohammadi²

¹Department of Qur'an and Hadith Sciences, Shahed University, Iran

²Department of Qur'an and Hadith Sciences, Arak University, Iran

Email: rasulmohamadjafari@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The verses and the *Sūrahs* of the Qur'an were gradually revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during the 23 years in Mecca and Medina. Information of the time, place, and amount of descendants and verses - especially in cases of conflict - are of the requirements of the Quranic researches. *Sūrah al-Layl* is one of the disputed *Sūrahs*, that in order to achieve the goal, we have to use two types of extra and intra-textual evidences. From this point of view, the present research, in a descriptive-analytical method, seeks to answer the question "how is the dating of *Sūrah al-Layl* based on the extra and intra-textual evidences?" The findings indicated that the extra-textual evidences included: 1- traditions of the order of descend, 2- traditions of the cause of revelation, 3- exegetes' views. Among these indications, the traditions of the cause of revelation tended to be criticized. But the other two extra-textual evidences, as well as intra-textual ones, which were received with deep attention of the verses of the *Sūrah*, proved this *Sūrah* to be Makkī, and based on the totality of the evidences, its descent dates back to about the first year of the Prophet's (PBUH) Mission, at his secret invitation.

Keywords: *Sūrah Al-Layl*; Dating; Extra-Evidences; Intra-Evidences

Introduction

The verses and *Sūrahs* of the Qur'an were gradually revealed to the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) during 23 years. At each turn, a complete *Sūrah* or part of the verses of a *Sūrah* were descended following a special incident or question. One of the important issues in the Qur'anic studies is recognizing the units of the revelation of the Qur'an, which has many benefits, including: to know the stages of the Prophet's mission, the gradual decreeing of the Islamic commandments (*ahkām*), dating Qur'anic *Sūrahs*, and discovering the events of the early Islam.

Scholars agree that the Qur'anic *Sūrahs* are divided into two parts of Makkī and Madanī; many were descended in the Mecca's time and some in the Medina's. However, dating, time and place of the descent of some *Sūrahs* (Makkī or Madanī) were continuously being discussed (Suyūfī, 1421 AH: 1:70), of which *Sūrah al-Layl* is considered. Suyūfī mentions it as one of the disputed *Sūrahs*: "It is famously argued that *Sūrah al-Layl* is Makkī, but some have considered it as Madanī, due to the palm story, which

has led to its descent. Some have also said that it includes both Meccan or Medinan verses (Suyūṭī, 1421 AH: 1:68). Regarding the difference in the time of this *Sūrah*, we need to reach an approximate dating of it. To identify the place and time of descent, we must use two groups of evidences: 1. extra-textual evidences such as Meccan or Medinan narrations, traditions regarding the cause of descent (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), and the true history, 2. Intra-textual evidences such as the context (*sīyāq*) of the verses of this *Sūrah* and others. No independent and comprehensive research has yet been done regarding this topic. The present research, in a descriptive-analytical method, aims to answer this question “according to its extra-textual and intra-textual evidences, what is the dating of *Sūrah al-Layl*”?

1- Extra-Textual Evidences

Extra-textual evidences are those materials beyond the Qur'anic verses which are as follows: 1- traditions related to the order of descent, 2- traditions related to the causes of descent, 3- exegetes' opinions. Having critical study, review, and evaluation of these evidences, someone can reach the date of sending down of this *Sūrah*.

1-1. Traditions Regarding the Order of Descent

According to the traditions of the order of descent, there are narrations in which the order of descending 114 *Sūrahs* has been reported in one place. *Sūrah al-Layl* is Makkī, based on most of these narratives, and Madanī on the basis of few traditions.

1-1-1. Makkī Traditions

In most of the narratives of the order of descent, this *Sūrah* is introduced Makkī, revealed after *Sūrah al-'Alā* and before *Sūrah al-Fajr*, ranked as the ninth revealed *Sūrah* to the Prophet (PBUH):

- 1- Tradition of Ibn Ḍurays on authority of 'Aṭā' from Ibn 'Abbās (Ibn Ḍurays, 1408 AH, 33-34).
- 2- Tradition of 'Amr ibn 'Alā on authority of Mujāhid from Ibn 'Abbās (Ibn Ṣaffār, nd, 252).
- 3- Tradition of Yazīd Naḥwī on authority of 'Ikremah and Hassan Baṣrī (Beiḥaqī, 1405 AH, 7, 142-143 and Suyūṭī 1421 AH, 1, 58).
- 4- Tradition of Qatādah (Suyūṭī, 1421 AH, 1, 60).

1-1-2. Madanī Traditions

In the narrative of Ali ibn 'Abi Ṭalḥa (Harawī, 1426 AH, 221) and a narration from Mujāhid, this *Sūrah* is mentioned as Medinan *Sūrahs*.

1-1-2. Review and Evaluation

Comprising two groups of traditions, it is clear that narratives indicating this *Sūrah* as Makkī are more reliable because, in addition to the multiplicity of chains of transmitters, some of them have been reported through the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), while the others group, including two traditions that introduce this *Sūrah* as Madanī, in addition to their less amount, are quoted and narrated from the Successors, so they would not be considered.

1-2. Traditions Regarding the Cause of Revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl)

In the exegetical and *asbāb al-nuzūl* books, for this *Sūrah* (whole or a part of it), many *asbāb al-nuzūl* traditions have been reported in various ways, which must be carefully examined, for the major reason for the differences in the time and place of the descent of *Sūrah al-Layl* is because of the difference between *asbāb al-nuzūl* traditions, some of which introduce it as Makkī and some as Madanī.

1-2-1. *Asbāb al-Nuzūl Traditions Which Introduce It As Madanī*

Madanī traditions indicate implicitly to the Madanī status of *Sūrah al-Layl*, because these *asbāb al-nuzūl* traditions report that the verses of this *Sūrah* were descended about a person called 'Abū Daḥdāḥ 'Anṣārī or another man from 'Anṣār, which necessitates the descent of the *Sūrah* in Median. These narrations have been cited in three ways: 1. 'Ikremah from Ibn 'Abbās, 2. 'Aṭā' 3. Imam Reza (AS).

1. Ibn Abi Ḥātam narrated from his chain of transmitters from Ibn Abbas: A branch of a palm tree was placed on the top of a poor's house. Whenever the owner of the palm went picking dates on the tree, a few dates fell to the ground and the children of the poor took them. The rich man took the fruit out of the hands of children, and if a child had a date in his/her mouth, he would take the date out of the child's mouth. The poor complained of him before the Prophet (PBUH). The Prophet (PBUH) met the owner of the tree, saying: "Give me the palm tree, in exchange for a palm in Paradise". The man said: "The fruit of this tree is more delicious than other trees", and then went. A man who was observing and hearing this conversation, said to the Prophet (PBUH): "If I take that palm, do you give me what you promised him, as well?" He replied: "Sure!" He found the owner of the tree. The owner said: "You heard Muhammad (PBUH) will give me a palm in Paradise in exchange of this palm, but I did not accept." The man said:

"Do you sell me the palm?" "No, unless you give me forty palms" he replied. The man admitted and took his relatives as witnesses on this deal. Then came to the Prophet (PBUH) fast, saying: "This palm has become my property, now it is yours." The Prophet (PBUH) gave it to the poor man and his family. After this incident, the Lord sent down the *Sūrah al-Layl* (Ibn Abi Ḥātam, 1419 AH: 10:3439; Ṭūsī, nd: 10:759; Wāḥidī: 1411 AH: 477; Ibn Kathīr, 1419 AH: 6:357).

2. Tha'labī (d. 427 AH)(1422 AH: 10:220) and Baqawī (d. 725 AH)(nd: 4:459) also narrate such a story from 'Aṭā'. They have introduced the owner of the garden, a man from 'Anṣār.

3. Ḥimyarī (d. in the 3rd century) also quoted this report from Imam Reza (AS); In this narrative, a man who buys a tree from the owner is mentioned as 'Abu Daḥdāḥ (Ḥimyarī, 1413 AH: 355-356). The summing up of these three narratives is that this *Sūrah* was descended about a man from 'Anṣār, whose name was 'Abu Daḥdāḥ.

1-2-1-1. *Review and Evaluation of Madanī 'Asbāb al-Nuzūl Traditions*

In this section, *Asbāb al-nuzūl* traditions which introduce the *Sūrah* as Madanī are examined, firstly their chain of transmitters (*sanad*) and secondly their texts (*matn*).

1-2-1-1-1. *Review and Evaluation of Sanads*

In the first narrative, 'Ikremah is included in *sanad*, who has been weakened and accused of liar by Rijālī scholars (Mizzī, 1413 AH: 20:277-299). They have said that 'Ikremah's opinions were like Khārījīs', seceders from the ranks of Ali's partisans, (ibid: 279-277). They also said that he was lying to his master, Ibn Abbas (Ibid: 280). Ḥafṣ ibn 'Amr 'Adanī, is another weak narrator of this narrative. The great Sunni traditionists have weakened him with phrases such as "*layyin al-ḥadīth*", "*laytha biḥiqatin*", and "*'āmmatun ḥadīthuhū qayru mahfūḍin*"(Mizzī, 1413 AH: 7:44 and Ibn Ḥajar, 1404 AH: 2:354). In

addition, this narration has been narrated from Abdullah ibn Abbas, while he was 13 or 15 by the Prophet Muhammad's death (Mizzī, 1413 AH: 15:161). Therefore, since the expression of the cause of revelation of the verses is accepted only from traditions and hearing from those who saw themselves the revelation, were aware of its causes, and discussed it consciously, so this tradition is weak and not acceptable (Wāhidī, 1411 AH: 10).

In the second narrative's *sanad*, there is Ishāq ibn Najīh Malaḥī 'Azdī, a man who was unreliable and known for lying and forging hadiths (Mizzī, 1413 AH: 2:485). Great Sunni traditionists weakened him and did not pay attention to him (Ibid: 485-487). Additionally, the narration is reported from 'Aṭā ibn Abi Muslim Khurāsānī who is said to narrate his narratives from the Companions in the form of *mursal* (used to delete some of the transmitters from *sanad*) and, despite his authenticity, suffered from forgetfulness and lack of recording in memory (Ibn Ḥajar, 1404 AH: 7:190-191).

The third narration of Imam Reza (AS) has a sound *sanad* (*ṣaḥīḥ al-sanad*). Ḥimyarī mentions this narrative with a sound *sanad* from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Naṣr Bazanṭī, from Imam Reza (AS)(Ḥimyarī, 1413 AH: 355-356). 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī also refers to the authenticity of *sanad* (Ṭabāṭabāyī, 1417 AH: 20:308).

1-2-1-2. Review and Examination of the Text

The text of these narratives have several drawbacks:

First, according to these narratives, *Sūrah al-Layl* must be descended in Medina, while it is in conflict with the *Asbāb al-nuzūl* traditions that introduces this *Sūrah* among Makkīs. *Sūrah al-Layl* is known as Makkī (Zamakhsharī, 1407 AH: 4:761; Ṭabrisī, 1372 AH: 10:757).

Secondly, this *Sūrah* inside itself - in terms of its composition and structure, the shortness of the *Sūrah* and its verses, and the repetition of the distance – indicates to be Makkī. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī says this *Sūrah* has the characteristics of Makkī *Sūrahs*, because the sections of verses are short, their contents are hot, and mainly on the Resurrection, reward, Divine punishment, its agents and factors (Ṭabāṭabāyī, 1417 AH: 20:302).

Therefore, it cannot be accepted that this *Sūrah* is about Abu Daḥdāh, because at the time of the descent of *Sūrah al-Layl*, Anṣār (helpers) and Muhājirīn (immigrants) did not yet find their idiomatic meaning. Hence, despite the fact that the narration of Imam Reza (AS) is transmitted with the sound *sanad*, it cannot be accepted as a cause of the *Sūrah* and should be considered as the implementation of the incident with *Sūrah*.

1-2-2. *Asbāb al-nuzūl* Traditions Which Introduce It as Makkī

There are narrations which show the descend of the verses of this *Sūrah* about Abu Bakr following his widespread donations. It is clear that such *asbāb al-nuzūl* traditions necessitate the descend of this *Sūrah* in Mecca, for Abu Bakr and other Immigrants, after moving to Median, did not have much financial ability to spend, and even according to verse 59: 9, the Helpers hosted the Immigrants in their homes and were taking them on their own in booty wars. Therefore, these traditions indicate that *Sūrah al-Layl* is Makkī. The traditions have been reported from six chains: 1- Ibn Mas'ūd, 2- Abdullah ibn Zubair, 3- 'Urwat ibn Zubair, 4- Hishām from 'Urwat ibn Zubair, 5- Qatādah, 6- Ibn Abbas.

1. Ibn Mas'ūd says: Abu Bakr bought and released Bilal from 'Umayyah ibn Khalaf instead of a slave and ten *'uqīyyahs* (each *'uqīyyah* is equivalent to 28 grams) of gold; then Allah –The Almighty - revealed the verses 92: 1-4. The word "*sa'y*" in these verses points to 'Abu Bakr's and 'Umayyah's strive

(Samarqandī, nd: 3:564-565; Ibn 'Abi Ḥātam, 1419 AH: 10:3440; Wāḥidī, 1411 AH: 478; Suyūṭī, 1404 AH: 6:358).

Samarqandī (d. 320 AH) quotes this narrative from Ibn Mas'ūd with a relatively different *sanad* (Samarqandī, nd: 3:564-565).

2. Abdullah ibn Zubair narrated: “Abu Quḥāfah said to Abu Bakr: ‘My son, you buy and release helpless slaves. It is better to buy and release powerful and ready men who protect and defend you against enemies’. Abu Bakr replied: ‘I prefer the liberation of helpless slaves’. Subsequently, the verses 92: 5-21 were revealed” (Ṭabarī, 1412 AH: 30:142; Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, 1411 AH: 2:525; Wāḥidī, 1411 AH: 479; Ibn Kathīr, 1419 AH: 8:407; Suyūṭī, 1404 AH: 6:359). Ḥākim Nayshābūrī considers this narrative as correct based on Muslim’s criteria (Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, 1411 AH: 2:525).

Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH) also narrated this narrative from ‘Āmir and eventually from Abdullah ibn Zubair (Ṭabarī, 1412 AH: 30:142).

3. ‘Urwah says: “Abu Bakr used to buy and release helpless slaves. His father told him: ‘I wish you had bought something that tightened your back and was useful for your life,’ said Abu Bakr: ‘I have decided what I have wanted [I am not in need of advocate and support and I have another intention]’. On this occasion, from verse 92: 17 to the final verse of *Sūrah al-Layl* were revealed (Tha‘labī, 1422 AH: 10:219; Wāḥidī, 1411 AH: 480; Suyūṭī, 1404 AH: 6:359).

4. Hishām ibn ‘Urwah quoted from his father: “Bilal, ‘Āmir ibn Fihriyyah, Nahdiyah and his daughter, Zinnīrah, ‘Ummi ‘Amīs, and the bondwoman of Banī Mu’ammal, were always tortured for the sake of Allah, so Abu Bakr bought and released them. Among them was Zinnīrah a Roman bondwoman belonging to the tribe of Banī ‘Abd al-Dār. When she embraced Islam, became blind. The idolaters said: ‘As she became infidels in *Lāt* and *‘Uzzā*, so those two idols blinded her.’ Then God -The Almighty- gave her the sight. Abu Bakr saw her, saying one of Banī ‘Abd al-Dār to her: ‘By God, I will not release you, unless death removes the yoke of slavery from you,’ said Abu Bakr: ‘How much do you sell her?’ He replied: ‘To such and such *‘uqīyyah*’, Abu Bakr said: ‘I bought her, so stand up [and come with me].’ The bondwoman said: ‘wait until grinding ends.’ But he bought Bilal while was buried under the rocks. The polytheists told Bilal: ‘If you were worthy of an *‘uqīyyah*, we would sell you,’ Abu Bakr said: ‘If you sell him a hundred, I will buy.’ Following this story, the seventh verse to the end of *Sūrah al-Layl* were descended about Abu Bakr. When Abu Bakr came into Islam, he had forty thousand *‘uqīyyahs* which he donated them all” (Tha‘labī, 1422 AH: 10:219).

5. Qatādah has been said to report: “the verses 92: 19-20 have been revealed about Abu Bakr, when he released a group without asking for rewards and thanksgivings, consisting of six or seven persons including Bilal and ‘Āmir ibn Fihriyyah (Ṭabarī, 1412 AH: 30:146; Ibn Kathīr, 1419 AH: 8:406; Suyūṭī, 1404 AH: 6:360).

6. ‘Aṭā narrated from Ibn Abbas: “When Abu Bakr bought Bilal being tortured, the polytheists said this was due to the good background of Bilal before Abu Bakr. Afterwards, the verses 92: 19-20 were revealed” (Tha‘labī, 1422 AH: 10:220; Wāḥidī 1411 AH: 480; Qurṭubī, 1405 AH: 20:88).

1-2-2-1. Review and Evaluation of Makkī 'Asbāb Al-Nuzūl Traditions

Here at first the *sands* and secondly the texts of traditions are examined, as well:

1-2-2-1-1. Review and Evaluation of *Sanads*

In the *sand* of the first narrative, Yūnus ibn 'Abi 'Ishāq has been weakened by some of the Rijāl scholars such as Yaḥyā and Ahmed ibn Ḥanbal (Mizzī, 1413 AH: 32:491). In the quotation of Samarqandī's commentary, the narrator of Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd is Yūnus ibn 'Abi 'Ishāq, and in the quotation of Wāḥidī, he is recorded as Yūnus from ibn 'Ishāq, while among the narrators of Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd, who have been numbering more than 100 of them by Mizzī in *Taḥdhīb al-Kamāl*, no one named as Yūnus and ibn 'Ishāq (Ibid: 16:123-126). Probably it is Yūnus ibn 'Abi 'Ishāq from his father 'Abi 'Ishāq Sabī'ī, because Yūnus was a narrator of his father (Ibid: 32:489). If this possibility is accepted, it would have to be said that 'Abu 'Ishāq Sabī'ī was accused of dissembling (*tadlīs*) (Ibid: 22:112). Also he was born in 33 two years before the death of Osman (Ibid: 22:103), while Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd died in 32 AH (Ibid: 16:127). It is concluded that the narrative's *sanad* is discontinuous (*munqaṭi'*).

In the second narrative's *sanad*, Abdullah ibn Zubair is the enemy of Imam Ali (AS), who used to backbite and vilify Imam and insult his holiness's family! (Ibn 'Abi al-Ḥadīd, nd: 4:61). In addition, Muhammad ibn 'Ishāq ibn Yasār, who is in the *sanad* of this narrative, has been weakened and accused of dissembling by some Rijāl scholars such as Malik, Dar-Quṭnī (Mizzī, 1413 AH: 24:428), Yaḥyā ibn Ma'tīn and Nasā'ī (Ibid: 423-424) and others (Ibid: 405-429). Zīyād ibn Abdullah ibn Ṭufayl Bukā'ī 'Āmirī is another weak narrator in this *sanad*. Ibn Ḥibbān writes about him: "Bukā'ī was involved with obvious mistakes and many errors, and he could not be cited, especially when he quotes alone (Ibn Ḥibbān, nd: 1:307). In addition, this narrative is *mursal*, because it has been narrated from Abdullah ibn Zubair who has never been a witness to the descent of these verses.

The third and fourth narratives' *sands* reported from 'Urwah ibn Zubayr are corrupted because 'Urwah was one of those who, according to Mu'āwīyah's command, used to forge narrations (Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, nd: 4:63-64) and such a person would not be reliable to quote narrations. He was also not born at the time of the revelation of the verse, since he was born in 23 or 27 AH (Mizzī, 1413 AH: 20:22). Therefore, he could not testify the release of Bilal by Abu Bakr and the descent of the verse in his dignity! So the narrative is *mursal*. In his second narration, Ḥishām ibn 'Urwah is also mentioned in the *sanad*, who has been accused of dissembling by Ibn Ḥajr (Ibn Ḥajr, 1415 AH: 2:267), and Malik ibn 'Anas has described him as a liar (Mizzī, 1413 AH: 24:415).

The fifth narrative's *sanad* is weak due to the presence of Sa'īd ibn 'Abi 'Arūbah and Mu'ammār ibn Abdullah, as well. Sa'īd ibn 'Abi 'Arūbah suffered an intellectual disorder in the last decade of his life (from 142 or 145) (Ibn 'Adiy, 1409 AH: 3:394; Mizzī, 1413 AH: 11:9), while it is not clear that Muhammad's hearing from Sa'īd ibn 'Abi 'Arūbah has been before this age or after. Mu'ammār ibn Abdullah ibn Tamīmī also suffered from the loss of memory and was undermined and weakened by the title of "*munkir al-hadith*" (Dhahabī, nd: 4:155). Moreover, Qatādah, a Successor, was born in 61 and died in 117 AH (Mizzī, 1413 AH: 23:517). So he could not observe the descend of the Qur'anic verses, and then his narration is interpreted as *mursal*, as well as, Ibn Ḥajar writes: "He is famous for dissembling" (Ibn Ḥajar, nd: 43).

The sixth narrative of Ibn Abbas has been reported without *sanad* and in the form of *mursal*, as well. In addition, this narrative is in conflict with those of which referring to the *Sūrah* as Madanī, narrated by Ibn Abbas with *mursal sanad* and considering the verse about 'Abu Daḥḍāh.

1-2-2-1-2. Review and Evaluation of the Text

First, there is disagreement on which verses are revealed about Abu Bakr for the release of slaves by him. In one of the traditions, verses 1-4, in another, verses 5-21, in two narrations, verses 17-21, and in other two traditions, verses 19-20 of *Sūrah al-Layl* are mentioned. This variant leads to distrust in such narratives.

Secondly, there are also contradictions in the narratives regarding the number of slaves released by Abu Bakr; six and seven (Ṭabarī, 1412 AH: 30:146), nine (Muqātil, 1423 AH: 4:724), and twelve including seven men and five women (Meybudī, 1371 AH: 10:517) are numbers mentioned in these narrations.

Thirdly, in the amount of money paid by Abu Bakr, there is a difference in narratives, as well. Some of these narratives say that Abu Bakr paid a “pound (*raṭl*) of gold” to buy Bilal (Wāhidī, 1411 AH: 478), another one states that “a slave and ten *uqīyyahs* of gold or silver” were given (Ibid: 480), and in another one it is also said that Abu Bakr traded Bilal with an idolatry slave named Niṣṭās (Meybudī, 1992 AH: 10:513).

Fourthly, who has bought Bilal from Abu Bakr? Here also there is contradiction; In a narrative, 'Umayyat ibn Khalaf is the seller, and in another one, an elderly woman is mentioned. Fifthly, the fact that Abu Bakr was rich and used his wealth for Islam is not consistent with historical facts. Sheikh Mufīd (d. 413 AH) writes in this regard:

“Some truthful and well-known traditions reveal Abu Bakr's poverty, helplessness, and his disability in life's expenses, as well as, the men of knowledge have no doubt that he was teacher and tailor in pre-Islam (Ignorance Age). His father was a fisherman and when he lost his sight, Abdullah ibn Jud'ān hired him to feed his guests, paying him a dirham every day” (Mufīd 1414 AH: 177).

Therefore, since none of the Makkī and Madanī '*Asbāb al-Nuzūl* traditions are acceptable, they will not be cited for dating *Sūrah al-Layl*. It should be noted that the reason for the study of these narratives was that some exegetes according to '*Asbāb al-Nuzūl* of this *Sūrah* argued that it was Makkī.

1-3. Exegetes' Views

Another extra-textual evidence for dating of *Sūrah al-Layl* is the viewpoints of earlier and later exegetes.

1-3-1. The Exegetes Who Believe in Being Madanī

None of the exegetes have accepted the opinion of considering this *Sūrah* as Madanī. It shows that the narrations indicating it is Madanī are not valid before exegetes.

1-3-2. The Exegetes Who Believe in Being Makkī

The exegetes who consider the *Sūrah* as Makkī are divided into three groups:

A) Those who rely on Companions' and Successors' reports, among the early scholars, Sheikh Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH), referring to Ibn Abbas and Ḍaḥḥāk, introduces this *Sūrah* as Makkī (Sheikh Ṭūsī, nd: 10:362). Shawkānī (d. 1250 AH) also calls this *Sūrah* Makkī, referring to Ibn Abbas and Zubair's words, and, moreover because of the context of the *Sūrah*, confirms and emphasizes on the words of Ibn Abbas (Shawkānī, 1416 AH: 5:550). Ṭanṭāwī (d. 1432 AH) narrates and accepts the words of Shawkānī, as well (Ṭanṭāwī, nd: 15:418).

B) Those who do not mention any early report and disagreement regarding its being Makkī and Madanī, including many both Shī'a and Sunni exegetes, whether early or later, chronologically are as follow: Qumī (d. the 3rd century AH)(1367 AH: 2:425), Samarqandī (d. 320 AH)(nd: 3:588), Tha'labī (d. 427 AH)(1422 AH: 10:216), Zamakhsharī (d. 538 AH)(1407 AH: 4:761), Ṭabrisī (d. 548 AH)(1372 AH: 10:757), Abu al-Futūḥ Rāzī (d. 554 AH)(1408 AH: 20:229), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH)(1419 AH: 8:402), Bayḍāwī (d. in the 8th century AH)(1418 AH: 5:317), Tha'ālibī (d. 876 AH)(1418 AH: 5:598), Feyḍ Kāshānī (d. 1091 AH)(1415 AH: 5:336), Shubbar (d. 1242 AH)(1412 AH: 560), Qumī Mashhadī (d. in

the 12th century AH)(1368 H.S.: 14:303), Maḍharī (d. 1225 AH)(1412 AH: 10:274), Gonābādī (d. 1327 AH)(1408 AH: 4:258), Sayed Quṭb (Shādhilī)(d. 1387 AH)(1412 AH: 6:3920), Mulla Ḥuwaysh 'Āli Qādī (d. 1398 AH)(1382 AH: 1:138), Darwazah (d. 1400 AH)(1383 AH: 10:525), Tāliqānī (d. 1400 AH)(1362 H.S.: 4:122), Ṭabāṭabāeī (d. 1402 AH)(1417 Ah: 20:301), Sabzevārī (d. 1414 AH)(1419 AH: 1:600), Faḍlullāh (d. 1432 AH)(1419 AH: 24:289), Ṣādiqī Tehrani (d. 1433 AH)(1365 H.S.: 30:337), Makārem (1374 H.S.: 27:25), and Qurashī (1377 H.S.: 12:250).

C) Those who point to the differences in the descending of the *Sūrah* and eventually accept the statement of Makkī. For instance, Ibn 'Aṭīyyah Andalusī (d. 541 AH) attributes the opinion of Madanī to the consensus of commentators, as well as, he believes that the view introducing the *Sūrah al-Layl* as Madanī or including some Madanī verses, is weak. Here he uses the phrase: “it has been said” (*qīla*)(Ibn 'Aṭīyyah Andalusī, 1422 AH: 5:490). Similarly, Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH) writes: “‘*Sūrah al-Layl*’ is Makkī and ‘it has been said’ (*qīla*) that it is Madanī” (Qurṭubī, 1405: 21:80). That is, the quotation “it has been said (*qīla*)” refers to a weak quote among commentators. Abu Ḥayyān Andalusī (d. 745 AH) also calls this *Sūrah* as Makkī and attributes this opinion to Ali ibn Abi Ṭalḥah, mentioning the *Sūrah* consists of Madanī verses with the words “it has been said” (*qīla*) (Abu Ḥayyān Andalusī, 1420 AH: 10:491).

'Ālūsī (d. 1270 AH) says scholars disagree with its being Makkī or Madanī; mostly mention it as Makkī while Ali ibn Abi Ṭalḥah says it is Madanī. He goes on to point out that some say there are both Makkī and Madanī verses inside it, referring to it by the words “it has been said” (*qīla*). He states that this disagreement is because of the cause of descending the *Sūrah* and scholars often believe it has been descended about Abu Bakr ('Ālūsī, 1415 AH: 15:365). Similarly, quoting and accepting Ibn 'Aṭīyyah's view, Ibn 'Āshūr (d. 1393 AH) considers it as the 9th chapter, and believes that this *Sūrah* has descended after the *Sūrah al-'A'lā* and before the *Sūrah al-Fajr* (Ibn 'Āshūr, nd: 30:333).

1-3-2-1. Review and Evaluation

Among the exegetes, not found anyone who believes in being the *Sūrah* Madanī, but on the contrary, all the exegetes have introduced it as Makkī. Shiite commentators, who have accepted the *Sūrah* as Madanī, it was because of the structure and content of the *Sūrah*, but Sunni commentators have apparently considered it as Makkī because they believed in descending it about Abu Bakr, which requires a further examination of the *Sūrah*.

2. Intra-Textual Evidences

In *Sūrah al-Layl*, there are certain criteria and attributes that place it in Makkī *Sūrahs*:

A) The shortness of verses and *Sūrahs* is a feature of Makkī *Sūrahs*. In these *Sūrahs*, addressing the people of Mecca, the method of concise speaking is observed. Such *Sūrahs* are short with short verses. For, Meccan people were men of oratory; their art was rhetoric speech and emphasized on the fluency of speech; therefore, the observance of concise and short statements, and avoidance of long and detail speech are of their words features (Zurqānī, nd: 1:196). *Sūrah al-Layl* has only 21 short verses, written in 8 lines of the Qur'an, according to “Uthmanī calligraphy”, in which almost three verses are written in each row.

B) Multiplicity of emphasis form, such as much oath, as well as metaphor and proverb are of the features of Makkī *Sūrahs* (Hossein Ahmad, 1420 AH: 1:168). In this chapter on many occasions there are such features: three usages of the letter “*wa*” (i.e. oath), three usages of the word “*inna*” (i.e. emphasis), four usages of “*la*” (i.e. emphasis), twice usages of conditional phrases, a prohibition and exception phrase, and a negation and exception phrase.

C) This chapter, in terms of content and meaning, like the other Makkī *Sūrah*s, has a hot content, and mainly refers to the Resurrection, Reward, Divine Punishment, and its agents and causes. At the outset, after mentioning the three oaths, it divides the people into two groups: the virtues charitable ones, and curmudgeons who deny the final Reward. The end of the first group would be happiness, calmness, and comfort, and the second's ending will be difficulty, unfortunate, worry, and misery. In another part of this chapter, after pointing out that the guidance of servants is on Allah-The Almighty- only, it warns every one of the blazing Fire of Hell. And in the last section, those who burn in this fire and the group that are saved from it are introduced by mentioning the attributes (Makārim, 1374 H.S.: 27:66).

D) In Makkī *Sūrah*s, there is talk of ugly habits to eliminate these habits (Zurqānī, nd: 1:203). Among the ugly habits of the people was the lack of charity and acting as curmudgeons. Therefore, in the verses of the *Sūrah*, those who suffer from such behaviors are blamed and threatened of punishment in the Hereafter.

3. *Dating And Estimating The Descending Time Of Sūrah Al-Layl*

According to the above arguments, it is possible to approach the time range of *Sūrah al-Layl*: Based on the study of narratives in the order of descent, it is concluded this *Sūrah* was Makkī, has been descended in the order of first Makkī *Sūrah*s, after *Sūrah al-'A'lā* and before *Sūrah al-Fajr*.

Based on Sunni and Shi'a exegetes' reports, who consensually have accepted the *Sūrah* as Makkī, the view of considering this *Sūrah* as Makkī is being strengthened and, based on the shortness of the *Sūrah* and the repetition of the distance in it, as well as the presence of the letter "wā" (oath), the abundance of the emphasis forms, emphasis words, as well as the content and meaning of its verses, in that the features of Makkī *Sūrah*s are seen, it can be said that this *Sūrah* has been descended in Mecca. Also, regarding to the fact that *Sūrah al-Layl* is the ninth *Sūrah* in the Qur'an, revealed to the Prophet (PBUH), it can thus be said that this *Sūrah* was revealed during the early years of the Prophet (PBUH)'s mission at the time of his secret invitation.

Conclusion

Here in order to date the *Sūrah al-Fajr*, two categories of extra and intra- evidences were used, mostly are extra-evidences including: 1- traditions of the order of descend, 2- '*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*' traditions, 3- Exegetes' Views. The '*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*' traditions introducing it as Madanī were not acceptable due to the non-incompatibility with the sound narrations of the order of descent. Moreover, the '*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*' traditions introducing it as Makkī, are subject to serious critiques, for in addition to the weakness of traditions, the descend of this *Sūrah* about Abu Bakr is not acceptable as well, because Abu Bakr embraced Islam during the public invitation of the Prophet (PBUH) of Islam. Furthermore, based on two other extra-evidences (narratives of the order of descent and exegetes' views), as well as inter-evidences, which were taken into account in the meaning of the verses of *Sūrah*, it was found that *Sūrah al-Layl* is one of the Makkī Quranic *Sūrah*s, and its descend is dating back to about first year of the Mission of the Prophet (PBUH) during his secret invitation. And finally, in the traditions of the order of descent, this *Sūrah* is argued as the ninth one, being descended after *Sūrah al-'A'lā* and before *Sūrah al-Fajr*, which is compatible with the styles and features of Makkī *Sūrah*s. So, it is proved that the *Sūrah al-Layl* is Makkī not Madanī.

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