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Reconsideration of Contemporary Scholars: Concerning Reasons of Revelation of the Qur'ān

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Abstract

This article aims to explore the contribution of an influential modern scholar to the field of *Asbāb Nuzūl al-Qur'ān*. Professor Faḍl 'Abbās (1932-2011) is a prominent figure in modern Qur'ānic scholarship. He devoted great attention to Qur'ānic studies in general and to the discipline of reasons for revelation in particular. Concerning this discipline, Faḍl criticized previous scholars and offered alternative views regarding several theoretical and practical issues. The current paper employs mixed methodologies, namely, the inductive, analytical, comparative, and critical methods to trace the issues at which Faḍl differs from earlier scholars. Later, these modern viewpoints are analyzed, compared with other scholars' views and assessed. The paper shows that Faḍl provides fresh insights covering theoretical dimensions and examples related to the subject. This current study investigates Faḍl's analysis of three narrations of reasons as well as other theoretical issues, mainly giving the Qur'ānic context priority over the authenticity of the narration and the refusal of the possibility of multiple revelations for a single reason. It is concluded that the reconsiderations provided by Faḍl are inconsistent with the discipline of reasons for revelation since it is primarily based on narrations. Additionally, the paper deals with the objections raised by him and shows that they can be adequately addressed and answered.

Keywords: contemporary scholars, Faḍl 'Abbās, reasons for revelation, reconsideration, the Qur'ān

Introduction

The sciences of the Qur'ān encompass many fields, among the most important of which is the study of the reasons for revelation. This discipline has received careful attention from scholars, who devoted independent works to documenting and examining it. Early Muslim scholars were particularly concerned with preserving the reports that explain the circumstances that surround revelation, especially those transmitted by individuals who witnessed the events directly. For this reason, the field is strongly characterized by its dependence on transmitted narrations, a feature that distinguishes it from many other branches of Qur'ānic studies. In modern scholarship, the study of the reasons for revelation continues to attract the interest of specialists in Qur'ānic studies. Among the notable contemporary scholars in this area is Professor Faḍl 'Abbās (1932–2011), whose writings include frequent critiques, corrections, and well-argued views on various issues related to *asbāb al-nuzūl*. His discussions are marked by careful analysis and supported by scholarly evidence, making his contributions valuable to the ongoing study of this important Qur'ānic discipline, especially as many of them include substantive critiques and reconsiderations of earlier scholars on fundamental and essential issues. This research seeks to shed light on the issues in which Faḍl offered critical reconsiderations of earlier scholars in the science of the reasons for revelation, as presented in the relevant section of his book *“Itqān al-Burhān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān.”* These reconsiderations are influential within the discipline, and they merit evaluation and comparison with the views of other

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scholars.

The main inquiry in this paper is to determine what Faḍl's critique of earlier scholars in the subject of *asbāb al-nuzūl* is? This main inquiry unfolds into subsidiary concerns that can be presented in four sub-questions: - What does Faḍl contribute to the manner of determination of the reason? - Why does Faḍl reject some authentic reports in the field? - What is his view on the issue of multiple revelations for a single cause? - What is his position regarding the formulations used in the reports? Together, these questions frame the scope of the present study and clarify its focus on the methodological reconsiderations that distinguish Faḍl's approach from earlier scholarship.

Accordingly, the Objectives of the Study are to examine and clarify the following:

- The value of Qur'ānic context in Faḍl's methodology and its impact on determining, accepting, or rejecting a reported cause of revelation.
- Faḍl's justifications for rejecting a number of authentic and explicit reports concerning the causes of revelation.
- His opinion and argument regarding the issue of multiple revelations occurring for a single cause.
- His approach to the various formulations used in reports of the causes of revelation.
- The validity and scholarly value of Faḍl's critical reconsiderations, and a comparison of them with the views of other scholars.

It is worth noting that the subject of *asbāb al-nuzūl* is among the disciplines of the Qur'ānic sciences that have been addressed by scholars both classical and contemporary.¹ It encompasses numerous discussions, including theoretical aspects that are typically presented in classical works on the Qur'ānic sciences, such as *al-Burhān* by al-Zarkashī (1344-1392) and *al-Itqān* by al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505), as well as in modern works, such as those of Mannā' al-Qaṭṭān (1925–1999) and Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ (1929–1986). It also includes practical aspects, namely the identification and collection of narrations of reasons for revelation for particular Qur'ānic verses. This latter dimension is generally found in works of tafsīr, and it also has dedicated compilations, the most famous of which are al-Wahīdī (1003-1076) *Asbāb Nuzūl al-Qur'ān* and al-Suyūṭī's *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb Al-Nuzūl*. Among the distinguished contemporary studies in this field is the book "*Al-Muḥarrar fī Asbāb Nuzūl al-Qur'ān min Khilāl al-Kutub al-Tis'ah: Dirāsāt al-Asbāb Riwayah wa Dirāyah*" by Dr. Khālid Al-Muzaynī. It is a highly valuable work that contains a theoretical study covering all issues related to the reasons for revelation, as well as a practical applied study in which the reported narrations concerning the reasons for revelation are examined. The author provides valuable discussions though he does not tackle the opinions of Faḍl.

With Regards to Faḍl, studies present and describe generally his opinions and efforts concerning exegesis and Qur'ānic sciences, such as the study of Muḥammad Al-Jūrānī² "Professor Dr. Faḍl Ḥasan and His Efforts in Qur'ānic Exegesis and the Sciences of the Qur'ān" and of Husain³ "Dr.

¹Abdelaziz Idzoubair, "The Role of Asbāb al-Nuzūl (Reasons for Revelation) in Elucidating the Quranic Ambiguities: An Applied Study," *Ma'ālim al-Qur'ān wa-al-Sunnah* 20, no. 2 (2024): 390–409. <https://doi.org/10.33102/jmq.v20i2.500>.

²Muḥammad al-Jūrānī, "Professor Dr. Faḍl Ḥasan and His Efforts in Qur'ānic Exegesis and the Sciences of the Qur'ān," (PhD diss., The World Islamic Sciences and Education University, 2017).

³Husna Husain, "Dr. Fadhl Hasan Abbas' Contribution to Quranic Exegesis Methodology: A Study of Al-Quran Al-Majid," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 9, no. 11 (2025): 4010–4016. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.91100310>.

Fadhl Hasan Abbas' Contribution to Qur'ānic Exegesis Methodology: A Study of Al-Qur'ān Al-Majid." These studies mainly adopt a descriptive approach and aim to highlight the efforts and contributions of Faḍl in the Sciences of the Qur'ān in general. However, this current article aims to provide a critical view on a specific subject of reasons in which Faḍl provides novel guidelines.

It should be noted that this research addresses the reasons for revelation in accordance with the view of the majority of Muslim scholars. Therefore, it does not include an examination of the views of other sects, nor does it engage with the approaches and interpretations of the contemporary modernist school on this subject. This study adopts the inductive method to extract Faḍl's reconsiderations of earlier scholars in the section on the reasons for revelation in his book *Itqān al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, followed by a detailed examination, analysis, critique, and comparison of these reconsiderations with the statements of other scholars to assess their relative strength or weakness.

2. Theoretical Reconsiderations

2.1. Reliance on the Qur'ānic Context

Faḍl places significant emphasis on the Qur'ānic context when considering the reasons for revelation. He identifies it as the third pillar in what he refers to as the "pillars for accepting reasons of revelation."⁴ It seems that Faḍl Abbas prioritizes context even over the authenticity of the narration.⁵ He observes, "Most errors in the study of reasons for revelation arise from neglecting the context."⁶ This emphasis on context prompts questions and invites comparisons with the methodologies of earlier scholars in identifying the reasons for revelation and assessing the role of the Qur'ānic context in their evaluations. This section will illuminate the methods employed by previous scholars to ascertain reasons for revelation and the significance of context in their approaches. Both earlier and later scholars concur that the science of reasons for revelation is a transmitted (narrative) discipline; it can only be understood through narration and transmission. It is part of exegesis founded on transmitted reports, where scholars diligently traced and conveyed the narrations as they were. Al-Wāḥidī states: "It is not permissible to discuss the reasons for the revelation of the Qur'ān except through narration and by hearing from those who witnessed the revelation, were familiar with its causes, researched its knowledge, and endeavored to acquire it."⁷

Therefore, it appears that there is a consensus amongst early and recent scholars that identifying reasons for revelation relies primarily on narrations. Faḍl himself expresses his agreement with this method.⁸ After this crucial step, narrations are in need to be examined for authenticity, according to the criteria of the discipline of ḥadīth. With regard to the formulation, early scholars put a clear rule helping them to distinguish between what is considered an explicit report and what is not. Expressions such as "the verse was revealed regarding so and so" are not taken as a statement of the reason for

⁴Faḍl 'Abbās, *Itqān al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* [Mastering the Proof in the Sciences of the Qur'ān] (Amman: Dār al-Nafā'is, 2021), 1:308.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 1:319.

⁷Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb Nuzūl al-Qur'ān* [Occasions of the Revelation of the Qur'ān] (Al-Dammām: Dār al-Iṣlāḥ, 1992), 8; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Al-'Ujāb fī Bayān al-Asbāb* [The Marvelous Work in Explaining the Occasions] (Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, n.d.), 1:196; Mohammadjavad Azadi and Mohsen Qāsempur, "Occasions of Revelation: From Transmission to Opinion," *Hadith Research* 13, no. 2 (2021): 265–290, <https://doi.org/10.22052/HADITH.2021.242184.1022>.

⁸'Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:333.

revelation.⁹ Overall, there were established rules and methodologies governing acceptance and preference, particularly when multiple narrations presented varying accounts.

Regarding the Qur'ānic context, it should be stated at the outset that context is a fundamental and essential issue that cannot be disregarded in Qur'ānic exegesis, a point on which both earlier and later scholars agree.¹⁰ However, this is not the main focus of the present study. Rather, the focus here is on the role of the Qur'ānic context in accepting or rejecting explicit and authentic narrations regarding the reasons for revelation. In this respect, the scholars' positions can be summarized from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Starting with the theoretical perspective, earlier scholars did not consider context to be a pillar for accepting narrations on reasons for revelation. For example, al-Wāḥidī, Ibn Hajar, and al-Suyūṭī do not mention context when discussing acceptance of reasons. The primary reliance was on the transmitted report itself, as previously noted. This is confirmed by al-Suyūṭī, who, when discussing multiple narrations and methods of preferring one over another, did not reference the Qur'ānic context but rather other criteria.¹¹ Similarly, many contemporary scholars follow this approach.¹²

In fact, one can argue that incompatibility between the context of the Qur'ānic verses and the narrations of reasons for revelation is inconceivable, except in cases of clear issues regarding the authenticity of the narration or when the narration is unrelated to the reason for the verse. In such cases, context does not need to be invoked.

In terms of the practical perspective, earlier scholars and exegetes did pay attention to context when deciding whether to accept a reason for revelation, though this was very limited and occurred only in rare, specific examples. Such cases include: 1) when a verse contains a pronoun referring to a preceding subject different from that mentioned in the narration, 2) when preferring one narration over conflicting ones, or 3) when highlighting the weakness of a particular narration. This can be noticed in several examples mentioned by scholars,¹³ as clearly that shows that there is a room for multiple viewpoints.

Faḍl's focus on the context represents a valuable contribution. However, prioritizing the context over the authenticity of the reports seems inconsistent with the field of reasons which is fundamentally based on narrations. While context can support disputed cases, it should not overshadow the need for authentic sources.

2.2. The Formulation of the Reason of Revelation

Faḍl discusses the method of knowing the reason for the revelation. He highlights that the

⁹Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Halīm Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* [Introduction to the Foundations of Exegesis] (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1980), 16; Muḥammad ibn Bahādur al-Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* [Proof in the Sciences of the Qur'ān] (Edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. 4 vols. Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1957), 1:31–32.

¹⁰M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, "The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 1 (2018): 47–66, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2018.0320>.

¹¹'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* [Mastery in the Sciences of the Qur'ān] (Edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. 4 vols. Cairo: al-Ḥay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1974), 1:117–126.

¹²Muqbil ibn Hādī al-Wādi'ī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad min Asbāb al-Nuzūl* [Authentically Transmitted Reports on the Occasions of Revelation] (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1987), 13.

¹³Khālīd al-Muzaynī, *Al-Muḥarrar fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl min Khilāl al-Kutub al-Tis'ah: Dirāsāt al-Asbāb Riwayah wa-Dirāyah* [The Revised Work on the Occasions of Revelation through the Nine Books: A Study of the Occasions in Transmission and Analysis] (Al-Dammām: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2006), 1:180–5.

expression of a Companion, “the verse was revealed regarding...” (*nazalat fi...*), does not necessarily indicate that the companion is reporting the actual reason for the revelation of the verse in question.¹⁴ Doing so, Faḍl aligns with the consensus of scholars, who classify this phrasing as possible.¹⁵ However, according to Faḍl, even the phrase “Then Allah revealed...” (*fa-anzala Allah...*) does not explicitly indicate the reason for revelation.¹⁶ And this is against the opinions of the majority of scholars. This approach seems to leave much to personal discretion, as Faḍl does not establish clear rules for determining what counts as a reason.

Earlier scholars were careful to distinguish between explicit and possible formulations to establish clear guidelines when dealing with narrations.¹⁷ And their approach is sound, logical, and consistent with both the linguistic structure of Arabic and the textual survey of narrations. For example, the phrase “It was revealed regarding...” differs conceptually from “Such-and-such occurred, then Allah revealed...”. The former can be said when citing a verse and referring to a contemporary issue, for example, while the latter cannot be used in the same way. Such guidelines allow scholars to apply clear principles, especially in cases of competing narratives.¹⁸

Without considering formulation as a guiding criterion, the scope of personal discretion in accepting or rejecting a narration would expand, leading to greater disagreement. This tendency is evident in Faḍl’s approach, where he classifies some explicit narration as reasons for revelation and some others as not. Though he accepts them as interpretive¹⁹ for their verses, i.e., but not as reasons. This means that Faḍl has no issue regarding the contents of these narrations. It is unclear why these were rejected as reasons yet accepted as interpretations. One primary motivation for Faḍl appears to be his desire to minimize the number of reasons for revelation to counter the claim of certain modernist scholars who argue that most Qur’ānic verses were revealed due to specific reasons.²⁰ Nevertheless, such motivation should not lead to equalizing between two different formulations.

2.3. Multiple Revelations for a Single Reason

Faḍl mentions that both earlier and later scholars accept the possibility that multiple Qur’ānic verses may share a single reason for revelation. However, he then states that he does not agree on this concept because, according to him, one unit of revelation must be sufficient, complete, and fully explanatory regarding the incident.²¹ It seems that Faḍl’s argument is not a scientific proof and it is an insufficient ground for rejecting authentic narrations or dismissing what earlier scholars

¹⁴Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:334.

¹⁵Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-‘Irfān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* [Sources of Knowledge in the Sciences of the Qur’ān] (2 vols. Cairo: Maṭba‘at ‘Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Shurakāh, n.d), 1:115; Mannā‘ al-Qaṭṭān, *Mabāhith fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* [Studies in the Sciences of the Qur’ān] (Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif li-l-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, 2000), 85; Heba Majdul Dden Sbahi and Mohammad Khazer Al-Majali, “The Dialectic of the Formulations of the Reasons for Revelation between Imam Al-Zarqani and the Opinions of the Interpreters and Scholars of the Qur’an,” *QURANICA: International Journal of Quranic Research* 16, no. 2 (2024): 145–176, <https://doi.org/10.22452/quranica.vol16no2.6>.

¹⁶Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:339.

¹⁷Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah*, 16; al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān*, 1:31–32.

¹⁸Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 1:117–120.

¹⁹Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:336.

²⁰Ibid., 1:374; Ahmad Abdur Rahman Al-Imam, “The Influence of Modernity on Matn Criticism: A Comparative Study of Traditionist and Reformist Approaches in Ibn Hajar’s Faṭh al-Bārī and Rashid Rida’s Majallat al-Manar on Hadīths of Natural Phenomena,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 16, no. 1 (2026): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.161.01>.

²¹Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:331.

accepted.²² Al-Zurqānī notes that there is no objection to this situation, i.e., multiple verses with one reason, because it does not conflict with wisdom in persuading people, guiding humanity, or clarifying the truth; in fact, it may be more persuasive and affirmative.²³ The foundational principle is that rules and assumptions should follow authentic narrations, not the other way around, as the science of reasons for revelation is primarily based on transmission.

Faḍl continues: “If we study the examples they mention, we will find them unconvincing.”²⁴ Had Faḍl first examined the examples and identified a convincing reason to reject them, the methodology would have been sound. Instead, he rejects the issue theoretically, and therefore, his treatment of the examples afterwards is a mere reflection of that theoretical rejection.

He cites two examples. The first, a well-known example in the literature, involves the narration of Umm Salama when she asked the Prophet: “Why are we not mentioned in the Qur’ān as the men are?”. In response, Allah revealed: 1) [Al-Aḥzāb 33:35], 2) [Aāl-‘Imrān 03:195], and 3) [Al-Nisā’ 04:32].²⁵ It can be noted that other narrations include the question of Umm Salama as: “Why are we not mentioned in the Migration?”²⁶ or “Why do we not engage in battle?”.²⁷

Faḍl’s objection to this narration, and thus his rejection of the case of multiple verses sharing one reason, is based on the assertion that each verse cited in the narration is entirely coherent with its context and topic. He also presents two objections:

- Some Makkan²⁸ mention women, e.g., [Al-Naḥl 16:97] and [Ghāfir 40:40]. He questions, “How can Umm Salama say that women were not mentioned when they were already cited before the Migration?”
- The verses in the narration were revealed at different times.

Regarding the first objection, it is expected that the Qur’ānic verses harmonize despite different times of revelation, and each verse is placed appropriately, regardless of when it was revealed or its reason. Coherence does not imply that all verses were revealed simultaneously or that one cannot be revealed independently of the others.

Regarding the second objection, it would only apply if the narration claimed that Allah did not

²²Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 1:124; Muḥammad ‘Aqīlah, *Al-Ziyādah wa-al-Iḥsān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* [Extension and Enhancement in the Sciences of the Qur’ān] (10 vols. Sharjah: Markaz al-Buḥūth wa-al-Dīrāsāt, Jāmi‘at al-Shāriqah, 2006), 1:309; Subḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāḥith fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* [Studies in the Sciences of the Qur’ān] (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2000), 147; Muḥammad Bakr Ismā‘īl, *Dirāsāt fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* [Studies in the Sciences of the Qur’ān] (n.p.: Dār al-Manār, 1999), 162.

²³Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil*, 1:121.

²⁴Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:332.

²⁵Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:332; Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* [Traditions of al-Tirmidhī] (Edited by Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf. 6 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996), 5:118, ḥadīth no. 3022 and 3023; Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* [Supplement to the Two Ṣaḥīḥ Collections] (Edited by Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1990), 2:328, 335, 451, ḥadīth no. 3174, 3195, and 3560; Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān* [The Complete Explanation of the Interpretation of the Qur’ān] (Edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir. 24 vols. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 2000), 2:486–488. The majority of these narrations are deemed authentic according to the judgments of the editors.

²⁶Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Ujāb*, 2:817.

²⁷Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 1:124–125.

²⁸It indicates verses which were revealed when the Prophet was in the city of Makkah before his immigration to Medina which took place in (622).

mention women at all. However, Umm Salama's question was about comparing the mention of women to that of men.

The third objection is methodologically strong, but Faḍl presents it without evidence, relying instead on general estimation regarding the timing of revelation for the *surahs* involved (Aāl-'Imrān, Al-Nisā', Al-Aḥzāb). It is known that the verses of these *surahs* were revealed at different times, not all at once. The standard practice in Qur'ānic revelation, especially for long *surahs*, is that verses of a single *surah* may be revealed at different times, with verses from other *surahs* revealed simultaneously.²⁹ Therefore, there is no objection to the verses mentioned in the narration being revealed together.

Faḍl also cites another example concerning the verse [Al-Baqara 02:119], to confirm dismissing the case of multiple verses with one reason.³⁰ However, this example does not require analysis since the narration is considered weak and it is rejected by the majority of scholars. Therefore, it cannot be used as evidence to dismiss the possibility of multiple verses with a single reason.

3. Applied Reconsiderations

Faḍl presents a variety of narrations concerning the reasons for revelation, accepting some while dismissing others. Many of the examples he rejects are considered weak by ḥadīth scholars, and several of them lack explicit statements regarding causality. Consequently, it is reasonable to reject such narrations, a stance with which Faḍl aligns himself alongside other scholars. For this study, it is crucial to examine Faḍl's approach to the explicit and authentic narrations found in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.³¹ This analysis will be conducted through the exploration of three examples.

3.1. Verse 93 of Sura Al-Mā'idah

Allah, the Exalted, says: "There is not upon those who believe and do righteousness [any] blame concerning what they have eaten..."³²

Faḍl mentions this verse and cites its reason for revelation, based on the authentic narration widely recorded in ḥadīth collections which is:

Anas said: I was serving the people at the house of Abū Ṭalḥa when the prohibition of alcohol was revealed. A caller announced it, and Abū Ṭalḥa said: 'Go and listen to this announcement.' I went out, and he said: 'Go and pour it out.' So I poured it into the streets of Medina. Some people said: 'They i.e., some of our companions, were killed while it was in their stomachs.' Then Allah revealed: 'There is no blame upon those who believe and do righteous deeds concerning what they have eaten.'"³³

²⁹Muḥammad al-Tāhir ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-al-Tanwīr* [Verification and Enlightenment] (30 vols. Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūniyyah li-l-Nashr, 1984), 3:143–144, 4:411–412, 21:245–246.

³⁰'Abbās, *Iqān*, 1:333.

³¹Abdeljabbar Saeed, "The Role of Reason in Dealing with the Prophetic *Sunna* in Relation to the Chain of Narrators, Text and Indication," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 18, no. 1 (2020): 74–106, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-12340081>.

³²Al-Mā'idah 05:93.

³³Al-Mā'idah 5:93, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* [The Sound Compendium of al-Bukhārī] (Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāh, 2002), 4:54, ḥadīth no. 4620; Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* [The Sound Collection of Muslim] (Edited by Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī. 5 vols. Cairo: Maṭba'at 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 3:1570, ḥadīth no. 1980; al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, 209–10; Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl* [The

Faḍl also notes that most authors in Qur'ānic sciences follow al-Zarkashī in transmitting the story of the two companions, Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn and 'Amr ibn Ma'adikarib, who considered alcohol permissible and justified that by the above verse, which is misunderstood by these two companions mainly because they did not know the reason for the revelation of the verse.³⁴

After noting that, Faḍl comments: "We must pause and reflect on these narrations."³⁵ He clarifies that the person in the narration is actually Qudāmah ibn Maẓ'ūn, not 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn. Faḍl provides historical evidence: 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn was the first of the emigrants to die in Medina, before alcohol was prohibited, and 'Amr ibn Ma'adikarib accepted Islam in the ninth year, after the prohibition of alcohol.³⁶ Indeed, this is a precise and helpful correction. As Faḍl notes, it is clear that Al-Zarkashī erred, and later scholars have followed him, since early sources unanimously mention the name Qudāmah ibn Maẓ'ūn.³⁷

The issue here is that Faḍl appears reluctant to accept the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* narration as the reason for revelation. In reality, there is no strong justification to reject it, as it is authentic and explicit in causality. It seems that Faḍl was influenced by Riḍā³⁸ (1865-1953), who cites an alternative reason: that the verse was revealed concerning those who were stringent regarding food and drink.³⁹ In fact, al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī (-1108) transmits a narration similar to the one mentioned by Riḍā.⁴⁰

It must be noted that relying solely on *Tafsīr al-Manār* is insufficient without knowledge of an earlier source, especially since most classical exegeses do not mention that narration. Indeed, *Tafsīr al-Manār* prefaces the narration with "it is said" and clarifies that it is not the known narration concerning that verse.⁴¹ To support his rejection, Faḍl refers to the Qur'ānic context, stating that the verse is part of a sequence beginning with: "O you who have believed, do not prohibit the good things which Allah has made lawful to you and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors," [Al-Mā'idah 5:87] up to: "The game of the sea is lawful for you."⁴² Faḍl argues: "It is therefore highly probable that this verse in question indicates that the believer bears no sin concerning lawful foods, whether from hunting or otherwise."⁴³ He also notes that upon reflection, the verse is far from

Essence of Transmitted Reports on the Occasions of Revelation] (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 86; al-Wādi'ī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad*, 89.

³⁴Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:322.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī, *Al-Muṣannaḥ* [The Compiled Collection] (Edited by Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī. 11 vols. India: al-Majlis al-'Ilmī, 1983), 9:240; Maṣṣūr ibn Muḥammad al-Sam'ānī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* [Exegesis of the Qur'ān] (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1997), 2:65; Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* [Biographies of the Eminent Nobles] (Edited by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt et al. 25 vols. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1985), 1:161–2.

³⁸Waddah Alkhattab, Ali Ali Gobaili Saged, and Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff, "The Impact of Al-Manār School on the Exegeses of Al-Marāghī and Ibn 'Ashūr in Addressing the Thematic Unity of the Holy Qur'an: An Analytical Comparative Study," *QURANICA: International Journal of Quranic Research* 16, no. 1 (2024): 106–137, <https://doi.org/10.22452/quranica.vol16no1.5>; Khairul Hamim and M. Masykur Abdillah, "Renaissance of Islam: A Content Analysis of Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā's Exegesis," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 2 (2023): 104–119, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.07>.

³⁹Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:323; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 7:59.

⁴⁰Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* [Exegesis of Illumination] (12 vols. Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1990), 5:439.

⁴¹Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 7:59

⁴²Al-Mā'idah 5:96.

⁴³Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:323.

implying the permissibility of alcohol; it is difficult to justify interpreting it as such, especially for some companions.⁴⁴

Clearly, the interpretation suggesting that the verse allows alcohol is erroneous and rejected by all classical exegetes. While one cannot deny that an early companion might have misunderstood it, this misunderstanding does not negate the verse's relevance to alcohol, particularly regarding questions about those who died while drinking it, as mentioned in the narration. It seems that this misinterpretation influenced Faḍl to give the verse a general meaning, unrelated to alcohol consumption. He thus assigned it a broad interpretation, even though the context, he defines from verse 87 to 93, includes the verse prohibiting alcohol and gambling.⁴⁵ (verse 90).

Therefore, the claim that the Qur'ānic context does not support this authentic and explicit narration does not appear methodologically sound. The link between alcohol and permissible food and drink is clear. It can be said that the verse fits perfectly within its context, aligns with the topic of the surrounding verses, and fulfills its purpose at the time of revelation by responding to the inquirers.

3.2. Verse 5 of Sura Hūd

Allah, the Exalted, says: "No doubt! They fold up their breasts ..." [Hūd 11:5]. The reason for the revelation of this verse is reported in a narration recorded by Imām al-Bukhārī (810–870): "Muhammad ibn 'Abbās ibn Ja'far reported that he heard Ibn 'Abbās reciting: "No doubt, They fold up their breasts," [Hūd 11:5] and asked him about its explanation. He said, "Some people used to hide themselves while answering the call of nature in an open space lest they be exposed to the sky, and also when they had sexual relation with their wives in an open space lest they be exposed to the sky, so the above revelation was sent down regarding them."⁴⁶

Faḍl comments that this verse belongs to *surah* Hūd, which is unanimously considered Makkī, and that its context is primarily regarding disbelievers, while the narration is about praising Muslims. This is enough for Faḍl to reject the narration as a reason for revelation.⁴⁷ He then cites a second narration mentioned by al-Wāḥidī from Ibn 'Abbās, stating that the verse was revealed about al-Akhnas ibn Shurayq, a man of eloquence and good manners who would display what pleased the Prophet while concealing in his heart what he disliked, leading to the revelation of the verse [Hūd 11:5].⁴⁸ Faḍl notes that this second narration aligns better with the verse's context.⁴⁹

Faḍl considers the second narration preferable as the reason for revelation, even though he acknowledges the first narration as more authentic. He justifies rejecting the first by claiming that it does not align with the context. This approach parallels the view of Ibn 'Āshūr (1879-1973), who states that the reason reported in al-Bukhārī does not suit the placement of the verse nor the consistency of pronouns.⁵⁰ Al-Muzaynī similarly notes that the verse discusses people deserving criticism, whereas the individuals in the narration were actually praiseworthy.⁵¹

Before evaluating whether the verse's context truly contradicts its authentic reason of revelation, it is important to note that many narrations conveying the same meaning are phrased non-explicitly,

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Al-Mā'idah 5:90.

⁴⁶Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:73, ḥadīth no. 4681.

⁴⁷'Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:351.

⁴⁸Ibid; Al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, 265.

⁴⁹'Abbās, *Itqān*, 1:351.

⁵⁰Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*, 11:322

⁵¹Al-Muzaynī, *al-Muḥarrar*, 1:82

e.g., saying “it was revealed concerning them.”⁵² The two narrations in al-Bukhārī include one explicit and one non-explicit. Therefore, Muḥammad Abū Zayd does not consider this verse as a proper example of *asbāb al-nuzūl* for its non-explicit phrasing.⁵³ It should also be noted that the narration primarily arose from a question to Ibn ‘Abbās about the meaning of the word “*tathnawnī*” (which is a variant reading)⁵⁴ as opposed to the standard “*yathnūna*.” Therefore, the context of the narration is about the verse’s linguistic meaning, not about its reason for revelation.

Regarding the context, it can be said that the beginning of the surah -after the disjointed letters and initial discussion of the Qur’ān- addresses the people in general, saying: “do not worship except Allah... seek forgiveness... repent... He will grant you... give each person their due...” [Hūd 11:1-5]. Such a discourse is typical at the early stages of prophetic mission, aimed particularly at the people of Makkah. The verses include general admonitions and promises. Here, a critical point overlooked by Faḍl and others is that they interpreted the reason of revelation as referring solely to Muslims and as an act of praise. In reality, the authentic narrations indicate “some people were ashamed...,” with no reference to Muslims specifically, and the verse itself does not praise them. The verse highlights contradictions among the people of Makkah and the disbelievers, emphasizing that Allah is aware of all hidden and apparent deeds, encouraging reflection and awareness of divine oversight. It is as noted by al-Shanqīṭī (1907-19073) that this verse indicates that nothing is hidden from Allah.⁵⁵ Al-Qurṭubī (1214-1273) clarifies that the verse addresses some people who were concerned only regarding outward appearances, teaching them that true piety is in the inner belief.⁵⁶ Furthermore, al-Alūsī (1803-1854) confirms that the narration of al-Bukhārī is the most authentic and the problem concerning this narration is when interpreting “some people”, which is stated in the narration, as “some Muslims.”⁵⁷ Hence, by avoiding the interpretation of “some people” in the narration as referring specifically to Muslims and avoiding considering it as commendatory, the narration aligns coherently with the verse’s context, and the authentic reason of revelation remains valid.

3.3. Verse 22 of Sura Fuṣṣilat

Allah, the Exalted, says: “And you were not covering yourselves, lest your hearing testify against you or your sight or your skins, but you assumed that Allah does not know much of what you do.”⁵⁸ Faḍl mentions the well-known reason for the revelation of this verse, namely the narration recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī from Ibn Mas‘ūd. The narration reports: “Two men, one from Quraysh and the other from Thaḳīf, were together in a house. One said to the other: “Do you think Allah hears our conversation?” The other replied: “He hears part of it,” and the first said: “if He hears part, then

⁵²Al-Wādi‘ī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad*, 118.

⁵³Muḥammad Abū Zayd, “Al-Tarjīḥ bayna Dalālat al-Siyāq wa-Sabab al-Nuzūl” [Preference between the Signification of Context and the Occasion of Revelation], *Majallat Jāmi‘at Dimashq li-l-Ādāb wa-al-‘Ulūm al-Insāniyyah* 28, nos. 3–4 (2012): 29.

⁵⁴Uthmān ibn Jinnī, *Al-Muḥtasab fī Tabyīn Wujūh Shawādhidh al-Qirā‘āt wa-al-Īdāḥ ‘Anḥā* [The Considered Work in Explaining and Clarifying Irregular Qur’ānic Readings] (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1998), 1:440.

⁵⁵Muḥammad al-Amin al-Shanqīṭī, *Adwā’ al-Bayān fī Īdāḥ al-Qur’ān bi-l-Qur’ān* [Lights of Explanation in Clarifying the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān] (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr li-l-Ṭibā‘ah wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī’, 1995), 2:170.

⁵⁶Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān* [The Comprehensive Collection of the Legal Rulings of the Qur’ān] (Edited by Aḥmad al-Bardūnī and Ibrāhīm Aṭfīsh. 20 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964), 9:5.

⁵⁷Maḥmūd al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm wa-al-Sab‘ al-Mathānī* [The Spirit of Meanings in the Exegesis of the Great Qur’ān and the Seven Oft-Repeated Verses] (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1995), 6:197.

⁵⁸Fuṣṣilat 41:22.

surely He hears all of it.” Consequently, the verse (And you were not covering yourselves, lest your hearing testify against you...) was revealed.”⁵⁹

A very similar narration is also recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.⁶⁰ Variants of this reason of revelation are reported by al-Wāḥidī,⁶¹ al-Suyūṭī,⁶² al-Wāḍi‘ī,⁶³ and appear in many classical tafsīr works, such as al-Ṭabarī.⁶⁴ After citing the Bukhārī narration, Faḍl comments: “Despite our certainty of the authenticity of the Bukhārī’s narration, we cannot accept it as the reason of revelation, since the context of the verse and preceding verses concern the Hereafter.”⁶⁵

Faḍl’s objection rests on the perceived coherence of the Qur’ānic context, which he argues is disrupted if the verse is linked to the narration. While it is true that the surrounding verses form a coherent discourse, the scholars who accepted the authentic reason for revelation do not consider it leading necessarily to disruption in the context. It is well-established in Islamic thought that the reasons for revelation represent incidents chosen by Allah as occasions for the revelation of certain verses; they do not imply that the Qur’ān itself was transmitted or organized incoherently. The Qur’ān is preserved in its entirety and order before its descent to Earth.

Therefore, the revelation of a verse due to a specific incident does not restrict its broader meaning. Ibn ‘Āshūr (1879-1973) reconciles the context of the verse with the authentic narration.⁶⁶ Similarly, Ibn Juzay (1294-1340) stresses the consistency between the context of the verse and the narration of Ibn Mas‘ūd.⁶⁷ Moreover, al-Muzaynī affirms that the narration is authentic and it is not inconsistent with the Qur’ānic context, therefore it is accepted.⁶⁸ In fact, the verse, in this example, connects worldly behavior with the Hereafter. And the reason for its revelation does not necessarily create a conflict with its meaning.

4. Conclusion

The main result of this paper can be presented in the following points:

- It has been demonstrated that contemporary scholars, most notably Faḍl ‘Abbās, have made significant contributions to Qur’ānic sciences, with particular emphasis on *asbāb al-nuzūl*.
- Faḍl’s work enriches scholarly discussions by presenting fresh insights and a number of reconsiderations that address both theoretical issues and applied examples in the discipline of reasons for revelation.
- Considering the Qur’ānic context in accepting narrations of *asbāb al-nuzūl* can be a supporting factor. However, giving the context priority over the authenticity and explicitness of the

⁵⁹Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:1818, ḥadīth no. 4538.

⁶⁰Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:2141, ḥadīth no. 2275.

⁶¹Al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, 372–3.

⁶²Al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb*, 171.

⁶³Al-Wāḍi‘ī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad*, 177.

⁶⁴Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 21:455; Al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas‘ūd al-Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* [Signs of Revelation in the Exegesis of the Qur’ān] (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2000), 4:130; Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm* [Exegesis of the Great Qur’ān] (Edited by Sāmī ibn Muḥammad Salāmah. 8 vols. Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah li-l-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, 1999), 7:172.

⁶⁵‘Abbās, *Iqān*, 1:354.

⁶⁶Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr*, 24:270.

⁶⁷Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Juzay, *Al-Tashīl li-‘Ulūm al-Tanzīl* [Facilitation of the Sciences of Revelation] (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam, 1996), 2:240.

⁶⁸Al-Muzaynī, *al-Muḥarrar*, 2:855.

narration, as Faḍl maintains, does not seem methodologically convincing.

- The current paper investigates three examples in which Faḍl rejects authentic and explicit reports on the basis of them being incompatible with the Qur'ānic context. And it is shown that his view is not the most accurate.
- Unlike earlier scholars, Faḍl does not give decisive weight to explicit formulation of the reports. Instead, he relies on his personal assessment to determine the acceptance of the narration as a reason or not, without providing clear methodological grounds for that assessment.
- Faḍl's rejection, of the possibility of multiple revelations for a single reason, which is based on the assumption of sufficiency, appears unconvincing and inconsistent with the narration-based discipline of reasons for narration.
- Despite these discussions, Faḍl's critical reflections and reconsiderations remain valuable. They demonstrate that modern scholarship can enrich and refine traditional Qur'ānic studies. They underscore the potential and the challenges involved in rethinking and renewing inherited scholarship.

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