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MAULANA FARAHI'S PRINCIPLES OF UTILIZING DIVINE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR APPLICATION IN QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS: A CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract
This article examines Maulana Hamid al-Din Farahi's methodological principles concerning the use of previous divine scriptures in Qur'anic exegesis and critically evaluates their practical application. It highlights the apparent inconsistency between his theoretical principles and their application, particularly in interpreting the Qur'anic accounts of the miracles and punishments inflicted upon previous nations. Through an analytical examination of the accounts of Prophet Musa, the people of Lut, and the people of Noah (peace be upon them), the study demonstrates how Maulana Farahi interprets various forms of divine punishment, including the splitting of the sea, the shower of stones, and the Flood, primarily in terms of wind. The article argues that such interpretations sometimes conflict with the explicit Qur'anic wording and that Maulana Farahi occasionally departs from his own exegetical principles to maintain his theory of Qur'anic coherence (Nazm al-Qur'an).

Keywords: Maulana Hamid al-Din Farahi; Qur'anic Exegesis; Previous Divine Scriptures; Nazm al-Qur'an; Exegetical Methodology; Divine Punishment; Miracles in the Qur'an; Qur'anic Interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to his Nizam al-Qur'an, entitled Fatihat Nizam al-Qur'an, Maulana Hamid al-Din Farahi discusses in detail the use of previous divine scriptures in the interpretation of the Qur'an. We present a summary of his discussion under the following three points.

First Point

Maulana Farahi regards the earlier scriptures as secondary sources for the interpretation of the Qur'an and considers them a conjectural source of Qur'anic exegesis. This is because, like the majority of Sunni scholars, he also maintains that the followers of previous scriptures introduced textual and interpretive distortions into them. Maulana Farahi writes:

"The errors in the earlier scriptures should be corrected, and their difficult verses should be interpreted in the light of the Qur'an. This is the only way for the People of the Book to ascertain the truth." [1]

According to Maulana Farahi, despite these distortions, the earlier scriptures still contain a valuable repository of divine revelation. Therefore, the teachings of previous scriptures that are corroborated by the Qur'anic text should be accepted. There is no doubt that the teachings of earlier scriptures affirmed by the Qur'an are to be accepted. However, it should be made clear that their acceptance is based on the fact that these teachings are established by the Qur'an itself, and not on the authority or authentication of the previous scriptures.

Second Point

As regards Maulana Farahi's use of previous scriptures in the interpretation of the Qur'an, his position is that where the Qur'an narrates the accounts of previous nations indirectly, allusively, or in a concise manner, the details of those accounts may be accepted from earlier scriptures if they are available therein. However, if a discrepancy arises between the Qur'an and the previous scriptures in the narration of an account, recourse must be made to the Qur'an. Maulana Farahi states:

"Wherever a difference arises in accounts shared by the Noble Qur'an and the earlier scriptures, we shall refer to the Noble Qur'an, because the Qur'an has been preserved." [2]

Third Point

While discussing the use of previous scriptures as a source of guidance in Qur'anic exegesis, Maulana Farahi also identifies an important benefit: on certain occasions, Allah Almighty addresses matters in the Qur'an on the basis of something mentioned in earlier scriptures. Consequently, if a commentator is not familiar with the relevant guidance contained in those scriptures, he may encounter difficulty in understanding the meaning and implications of certain Qur'anic verses. Maulana Farahi writes:

"Many Qur'anic verses can be interpreted once it is understood that they actually allude to the Torah, whereas our commentators regard them as relating to the Qur'an itself. For example, the verse: Ma nansakh min ayatin aw nunsiha na'ti bi-khayrin minha aw mithliha and the verse: Fa-yansakhu Allahu ma yulqi al-shaytan." [3]

An Assessment of Farahi's Principles of Qur'anic Exegesis Concerning Previous Scriptures

At the theoretical and methodological level, no major objection appears to arise against Maulana Farahi's principles concerning previous scriptures when they are examined in the light of the exegetical principles upheld by the majority of scholars. However, when Maulana applies these principles in practice, his errors become quite explicit and evident. On certain occasions, in order to arrive at the conclusions of his preferred interpretation, he even departs from the very principles he has formulated. Consequently, he presents an interpretation with which he appears to have been satisfied even before applying his exegetical principles to it.

Apparently, it seems that Maulana did not formulate these principles primarily to interpret the Qur'an in accordance with them. Rather, the purpose of formulating them, in his view, was to provide justification for his own interpretation. In other words, for Maulana, the interpretation comes first, and the principles are brought in afterwards.

If we briefly turn to the discipline of Islamic legal theory (Usul al-Fiqh), we find a prominent distinction between the methodological approaches of the theologians (Mutakallimun), such as the Shafi'is, and the jurists (Fuqaha'), such as the Hanafis. According to the approach of the theologians, principles are established first, followed by subsidiary rulings. In contrast, the jurists formulate their principles in the light of subsidiary rulings and established legal cases. [4]

The First Example

Although Maulana Farahi did not provide a complete commentary on the entire Qur'an, in whatever portions of the Qur'an he did interpret, he endeavoured, to the greatest extent possible, to demonstrate that his exegesis conformed to his established principles. The account of Prophet Musa (Moses) (peace be upon him) is narrated in the Holy Qur'an at various places, spanning approximately twenty-eight juz', with variations in style, expression, and the inclusion or omission of certain details. At some places, this account is also

presented in considerable detail. One significant event in this narrative is Prophet Musa's departure from Egypt towards Palestine with the Children of Israel, during which they crossed either the Gulf of Suez or the Gulf of Aqaba.

According to the Qur'anic account, when Prophet Musa reached the Gulf of Suez or Aqaba, he struck the water with his staff at Allah's command. Consequently, the water stood on both sides like two massive walls of rock, leaving a dry passage in the middle through which Musa (peace be upon him) crossed the gulf. When Pharaoh and his armies also attempted to cross the gulf through this dry passage, Allah caused the waters to reunite, and Pharaoh, along with his entire army, was drowned. Maulana Farahi explains and interprets this event in the light of the previous scriptures in the following manner:

The account of Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh has been narrated repeatedly, both briefly and in detail, in the Qur'an and the Bible. However, the entire account is not presented in one place in any single surah of the Qur'an. Rather, like a well-known narrative, references to it are made at different places. In the Torah, on the other hand, the complete account is narrated consecutively in one continuous passage. The Torah also provides details of the extraordinary role played by the wind in this event, to which the Qur'an makes only a brief reference. In Exodus 14:21, the nature of the event is described as follows:

"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided."

This east wind continued to blow throughout the night and subsided in the morning. The force of the wind pushed the seawater westwards into the Gulf of Suez, leaving the eastern gulf, the Gulf of Aqaba, completely dry. When the wind subsided, the water spread back to its original position, drowning the army that was pursuing Musa (peace be upon him). This account is also corroborated by the Holy Qur'an. In Surah al-Dukhan, it is stated:

"Then set out with My servants by night; indeed, you will be pursued. And leave the sea as it is, still and calm; indeed, they are an army destined to be drowned."

In the expression Wa-atruk al-bahra rahwan, the word rahwan means stillness or calmness. It is evident that the stillness of the sea results from the cessation of the wind ... The summary of this entire account is that Allah Almighty granted salvation to Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) through a strong wind, while He destroyed Pharaoh and his armies through a gentle wind. Thus, both the manifestations of divine mercy and punishment were brought about through the extraordinary effects of the wind. [5]

While comparing the Qur'an with the Torah, Maulana Farahi has treated the biblical details of this event as the basis of his interpretation and attempted to explain the Qur'anic account through them. However, the Qur'anic and biblical narratives differ in their descriptions of this event. Maulana Farahi's own position was that whenever a difference arose between the Qur'an and previous scriptures, the Qur'anic verdict would prevail.

When the Qur'an narrates this event in detail, it does not mention any such powerful wind that caused the water of one gulf to flow into another. Nor does it state that the water of the Gulf of Aqaba, which Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) had to cross, moved into the other gulf, namely the Gulf of Suez, thereby leaving the Gulf of Aqaba dry and enabling Musa (peace be upon him) to cross it. According to this interpretation, when Pharaoh attempted to cross the Gulf of Aqaba, the wind subsided, causing the water of the Gulf of Aqaba, which had flowed into the Gulf of Suez, to return, as a result of which Pharaoh was drowned. An examination of Maulana Farahi's Israelite-based interpretation in the light of the Qur'an, however, reveals that it contradicts the Qur'anic account.

In this regard, Allah Almighty states:

"When We parted the sea for you, then rescued you and drowned the people of Pharaoh before your very eyes." [6]

In this blessed verse, the word farq is used to describe the opening of a passage through the sea. Even a basic student of the Arabic language knows that the meaning of farq is not to move something to one side, but rather to split or divide it. In Arabic, the word farq, with a fathah on the letter fa' and a sukun on the letter ra', is also used for making a parting in the hair. Wherever a parting is made through the hair, it divides the hair into two sections. Thus, the meaning of farq is to divide something into two parts, rather than to move it entirely to one side. If someone merely combs all his hair towards one side, this would not be described as making a parting.

Similarly, the word firaq, derived from the same root, is used to denote separation, and separation necessarily occurs between two entities. Likewise, faraq, with a fathah on both fa' and ra', is used to refer to the gap

between teeth, which likewise exists between two teeth. The word furqan, derived from the same root, refers to that which distinguishes between truth and falsehood. Similarly, the word fariq is used for a group set in opposition to another group. It is therefore established that the concept of two distinct entities is fundamental to the meaning of farq. Hence, in this context, farq means dividing one entity into two parts, as explained by the lexicographers. [7]

Accordingly, the Qur'anic account establishes that the gulf was divided into two parts: one portion of the water stood on the right and the other on the left, while a dry passage was formed in the middle, which Musa (peace be upon him) crossed. In contrast, according to the biblical account and Maulana Farahi's interpretation, the water of the Gulf of Aqaba, which Musa (peace be upon him) was required to cross, was pushed by the force of the wind into the adjacent Gulf of Suez. Therefore, this interpretation is inconsistent with the wording of the Qur'an.

Allah Almighty further states:

"Indeed, We revealed to Musa: 'Set out with My servants by night, and make for them a dry passage through the sea. You shall neither fear being overtaken nor have any apprehension of drowning.'" [8]

In this verse, the creation of the passage is attributed to Prophet Musa (peace be upon him), not to the winds. Other Qur'anic verses make it clear that Musa (peace be upon him) was instructed to create this passage by striking the water with his staff, whereupon the water would divide into two parts and a passage would emerge in the middle.

In another verse, Allah Almighty states:

"Then We revealed to Musa (Moses) (peace be upon him): 'Strike the sea with your staff.' Thereupon, the sea split apart, and each part became like a huge mountain." [9]

According to the account given in this blessed verse, the sea split into two parts when Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) struck it with his staff; this did not happen as a result of the blowing of the wind. The verse also makes it clear that the water on either side of the sea miraculously stood like a mountain. Maulana Farahi's interpretation is therefore in direct contradiction to this Qur'anic account.

Allah Almighty states elsewhere:

"So set out with My servants by night; indeed, you will be pursued. And leave the sea as it is, still and calm; indeed, they are an army destined to be drowned." [10]

In this verse, Allah Almighty explains that when Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) crossed the sea, he was instructed to leave it in its still and suspended state behind him. In other words, the condition in which Allah Almighty had divided the water into two parts and made it stand like mountains remained unchanged even after Musa (peace be upon him) had crossed. This was so that Pharaoh and his army, upon seeing the sea in that very condition, would also be encouraged to cross it.

The Second Example

In his commentary on Surah al-Dhariyat, Maulana Farahi attempts to bring together the destruction of previous nations and the punishments inflicted upon them under a single concept, namely, the "wind." He goes to such lengths in emphasizing his conception of the coherence and structural unity of the Qur'an that he seeks to weave even the punishments inflicted upon earlier nations into a single unified framework, whose central theme he identifies as the "wind."

Maulana attempts to reshape the Qur'anic and Torah accounts of the punishments inflicted upon the people of Nuh, the people of 'Ad, the people of Thamud, the people of Lut, and the followers of Pharaoh, in order to make them conform to the systematic framework of thought that he has already established in his mind. His exegesis does not appear to follow the direction indicated by the Qur'anic wording or the explanations found in the Torah. Rather, the central issue is that he constructs a particular structure and central theme for his own interpretation, just as he identifies a central theme in the coherence of the Qur'an. He then employs an extensive range of both apparent and esoteric interpretations to establish that structure and central theme. Maulana has made the punishment of the wind the central theme of the punishments inflicted upon previous nations. Consequently, wherever the Qur'an mentions another form of punishment inflicted upon these nations—such as water, earthquakes, a mighty cry or blast, or a shower of stones—he interprets it in such a way that it either becomes a subordinate element of the punishment of the wind or is itself understood to refer to the wind.

We have already discussed above how Maulana interpreted the punishment of water inflicted upon the followers of Pharaoh in terms of the punishment of the wind. We shall now examine his interpretations concerning the punishment sent upon the people of Lut and consider the findings he presents in this regard.

According to the Qur'anic account, three types of punishment were inflicted upon this nation:

1. The punishment of a mighty cry.
2. The overturning of their settlements.
3. A shower of stones from the sky.

Among these, the most prominent punishment was the shower of stones sent down upon them from the sky, which the Qur'an mentions repeatedly.

Allah Almighty states:

"Then the mighty blast seized them at sunrise. Thus, We turned their town upside down and rained down upon them stones of baked clay." [11]

Let us now examine how Maulana interprets this explicit and unequivocal Qur'anic statement in order to bring it into conformity with his own theory concerning the punishment inflicted upon previous nations.

Maulana states:

"The destruction of the people of Lut took place through a dust-laden wind. Allah Almighty sent a dust-laden wind against the people of Lut, which gradually intensified and ultimately became a hasib—a violent wind that hurls pebbles and stones. Initially, a shower of pebbles and stones fell upon them. Subsequently, the wind became so intense that the force of it overturned their houses as well. It is to this very phenomenon that the following statement alludes: 'Against some of them We sent a storm that showered stones upon them.' [12] Likewise, He states: 'Thus, We turned that town upside down and rained down upon it stones of baked clay, layer upon layer.' [13] This means that such violent winds blew that their houses and roofs were levelled with the ground, while pebbles and sand covered them from above." [14]

Maulana's theory that the fundamental punishment inflicted upon every nation was the punishment of the "wind" itself is also contrary to the following Qur'anic verse.

Allah Almighty states:

"So We seized each of them for their sin. Against some of them We sent a storm of stones; some were seized by the mighty blast; some We caused the earth to swallow; and some We drowned." [15]

In this verse, Allah, the Glorified and Exalted, makes it clear that all nations were not destroyed through one and the same form of punishment. Rather, the nature of the punishments inflicted upon different nations varied. The punishment sent upon the people of Lut is also described at several places in the Holy Qur'an. In the following discussion, we shall examine a number of Qur'anic verses to determine what the Qur'an itself states concerning the punishment inflicted upon this nation.

Allah Almighty states:

"And We rained down upon them a particular kind of rain. So observe what was the end of the criminals!" [16]

In the Arabic language, the word matar is used for water descending from the sky, which is what is commonly called rain. Ibn Faris writes:

"The root of matar consists of the letters mim, ta', and ra'. It is a sound root with two fundamental meanings: the first is rain descending from the sky, and the second is a particular kind of flight or escape." [17]

The Qur'anic wording itself makes it clear that this was not a rain of water, but rather a shower of stones.

Allah Almighty states:

"We rained down upon them stones of baked clay." [18]

Maulana Farahi interprets this shower of stones as a reference to an extremely violent wind or storm that carried pebbles along with it. Describing a shower of stones rather than water by the word matar may be regarded as a figurative usage. However, for such a figurative meaning to be intended, there must be some contextual indicator or semantic relationship that justifies it. In this case, the relevant common feature is that both rain and stones descend from the sky. Ibn Manzur al-Ifriqi states:

In the divine statement, "And We rained upon them stones of baked clay" (Qur'an, Surah Al-Hijr 15:74), Allah Almighty has described the stones as rain because they descended from the sky. [19]

It should be noted that two essential elements are involved in the literal meaning of the word matar: first, the descent of water, and second, descent from a height, such as the sky or clouds. The Holy Qur'an has employed a figurative meaning in relation to one aspect of this reality, namely, it refers to a shower of stones instead of water. The contextual indication (qarinah) supporting this figurative interpretation is also quite evident, as explained above. However, the second element of the word's literal meaning, namely, descent from the sky, remains in its literal sense. It is not permissible to interpret it figuratively without valid evidence.

The Holy Qur'an has used the word matar both as a verb and in the form of an absolute object (maf'ul mutlaq), thereby further emphasizing its meaning of descent from the sky. Consequently, no room remains for any further figurative interpretation of this word.

Allah Almighty says:

"So We rained upon them a rain, and how evil was the rain upon those who had been warned." [20]

In this blessed verse, the Holy Qur'an has used the word matar three times to express a single event. What is particularly astonishing is that, despite such explicit wording, Maulana Farahi (may Allah have mercy upon him) still considers it possible to interpret this word as referring to wind rather than rain descending from the sky.

At another place, Allah Almighty says:

"So when Our command came, We turned their cities upside down and rained upon them stones of layered clay, marked by your Lord. And they were not far from the wrongdoers." [21]

This blessed verse also contains clear indications that this rain descended directly from the sky. The word matar is accompanied by the preposition 'ala, which conveys the meaning of something descending upon or over something from above. Similarly, the Qur'an uses the word musawwamah, which means that each stone bore a distinctive mark or designation indicating the person whom it was destined to strike.

The meanings of these Qur'anic expressions become much clearer when understood to mean that a shower of stones descended from the sky upon the people of Lot, and that each stone struck the particular person whom Allah Almighty had decreed it should strike. However, if Maulana Farahi's interpretation is adopted, understanding the meaning of musawwamah becomes difficult. According to that interpretation, one stone would be rising from the ground due to the force of the wind and striking someone, whereas another would be descending from the sky. Therefore, the latter interpretation provides a much more coherent explanation of how the stones struck their precisely designated targets.

The words of the blessed verse, "We turned their cities upside down," also clearly indicate that the entire episode of punishment was miraculous in nature. Through a miraculous act, Allah Almighty overturned the settlements of the people of Lot and rained stones upon them. However, Maulana Farahi's intellectual disposition appears reluctant to acknowledge such miracles.

Perhaps this tendency arose because certain intellectual reservations and doubts associated with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan unconsciously influenced Maulana Farahi through his educational and academic association with Aligarh and his intellectual connection with Maulana Shibli Nu'mani. Evidence for this can also be found in the fact that, throughout his commentary, Maulana frequently attempts to reconcile miracles with rational and logical explanations by offering superficial interpretations of them.

For instance, while discussing the punishment of the people of Pharaoh, he is unwilling to accept the miracle of the waters of the sea standing on both sides. He adopted a similar approach concerning the punishment inflicted upon the people of Lot. Despite the Qur'an's explicit statement that Allah turned the upper part of their settlements into the lower part, Maulana Farahi interprets this to mean that the roofs of their houses became level with the ground.

At this point, Maulana Farahi appears to go even further than Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. He ventures to reinterpret such an explicit Qur'anic statement merely to accommodate his philosophical framework within his theory of Qur'anic coherence (Nazm-e-Qur'an).

Allah Almighty says:

"So We saved Lot and all his family, except an old woman who was among those who remained behind. Then We destroyed the others and rained upon them a rain. How evil was the rain upon those who had been warned." [22]

At another place, Allah Almighty declares:

"Indeed, they pass by the town upon which an evil rain was sent." [23]

The Holy Qur'an repeatedly employs the word matar while describing the punishment inflicted upon the people of Lot. This repetition serves as evidence that the punishment descended upon them in the form of rain from the sky. At certain places, the Qur'an also indicates that raining stones from the sky is one of the forms of divine punishment and that this type of punishment was familiar to the people of Makkah.

While narrating a statement made by the polytheists of Makkah, the Qur'an says:

"When they said: O Allah! If this Qur'an is indeed the truth from You, then rain down upon us stones from the sky or bring upon us a painful punishment." [24]

In this blessed verse, the expression min al-sama' (from the sky) is used to describe the raining of stones, thereby explicitly specifying the direction from which this punishment was to descend.

If the shower of stones inflicted upon the people of Lot had not descended from the sky, how would the people of Makkah have been familiar with this particular form of punishment, namely, that Allah Almighty sends such punishment upon certain nations?

This Qur'anic verse establishes that the people of Makkah were familiar with accounts of the punishments inflicted upon earlier nations in the Hijaz and its surrounding regions. They possessed considerable knowledge of these historical events. This is precisely why the Qur'an repeatedly advises them to learn lessons from the ruins of earlier nations while passing through those regions.

Nevertheless, the Holy Qur'an has used the word hasib at one place to describe the punishment inflicted upon the people of Lot.

Allah Almighty says:

"Indeed, We sent upon them a storm of stones, except the family of Lot, whom We saved before dawn." [25]

In this blessed verse, Allah Almighty has employed the word hasiban. In Arabic, the term hasba' refers to small stones or pebbles, while hasib is an active participle derived from the same root and denotes something associated with stones.

This expression may refer to a place containing stones, as Arabic speakers use the expression makan hasib for a place filled with stones. Alternatively, it may refer to wind carrying stones, that is, a wind laden with stones. [26]

When this verse is examined in conjunction with the previously discussed verses, its meaning becomes clear: Allah Almighty did not merely send stones from the sky; He also sent a powerful wind. Thus, it can be stated that the shower of stones which descended upon the people of Lot was accompanied by wind.

This interpretation has been presented by the majority of Sunni exegetes. However, some eminent commentators, including Imam Ibn Kathir, have translated hasib as stones. According to these exegetes, the punishment of wind was not independently inflicted upon the people of Lot; rather, hasib itself refers to stones. In other words, stones were rained upon them in such tremendous abundance that the scene resembled a violent storm of stones. [27]

In our view, both interpretations successfully reconcile the different Qur'anic verses. In contrast, Maulana Farahi's approach of using the word hasib in this verse as a basis for offering superficial interpretations of other Qur'anic passages is an inappropriate method of Qur'anic exegesis.

Maulana Farahi further maintains that the Qur'anic and Biblical accounts of the punishment inflicted upon the people of Lot are similar, and that the apparent difference between them is merely the result of an inaccurate translation. He writes:

"It is necessary to clarify one point here. Apparently, it seems that the description given in the Torah concerning the substance rained upon the people of Lot differs from the Qur'anic account. However, this is not correct. The apparent difference between the two accounts is merely the result of an inaccurate translation. The translators of the Torah failed to understand properly what had been rained upon the people of Lot. Consequently, they translated it as fire and brimstone. In reality, however, it is quite evident that what the translators described as fire refers to thunder and lightning. The evidence for this is that the Torah frequently uses the word 'fire' to describe thunder and lightning." [28]

At another place, he writes:

"As for the statement in the Torah concerning the destruction of the settlement of Lot, which mentions that Abraham saw smoke rising from a distance, this actually refers to black dust which appeared like smoke when viewed from afar. As for the brimstone mentioned in Genesis 19:24, where it is stated: 'Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the LORD out of the heavens,' the word actually refers to stones. The word translated by the translators as 'brimstone' is, in fact, hasba', which means small stones or pebbles. ... It is therefore evident that Allah Almighty sent upon the people of Lot a storm carrying small stones, which covered them and their dwellings. Furthermore, when the Biblical account is considered alongside this description, it must also be acknowledged that, in addition to the storm of stones, they were subjected to the punishment of lightning and thunder." [29]

The error in the translation of the Torah identified by Maulana Farahi may indeed be valid. However, how should we deal with the explicit statement in the Torah that this brimstone, which he interprets as stones, was rained down from the sky?

According to the very principles established by Maulana Farahi, he should have supplemented the details of the incident of the people of Lot from the Torah. The Qur'an establishes that the people of Lot were punished with stones, and, according to Maulana Farahi himself, the Torah also indicates that stones were sent down upon them. The Torah, however, further specifies that this punishment descended from the sky.

Yet Maulana Farahi refuses to accept this additional detail of the Biblical account simply because doing so would undermine his preconceived philosophical framework.

If Maulana Farahi were to accept the details provided by the Torah at this point, as required by his own principles of Qur'anic exegesis, he would also have to acknowledge that these stones descended miraculously from the sky. This, in turn, would eliminate the very foundation of the rationalistic interpretation through which he seeks to explain this miracle.

Thus, in order to substantiate his predetermined interpretation, Maulana Farahi abandoned his own methodological principle. He not only rejected the additional details provided by the Torah but also resorted to superficial interpretations of the explicit and unambiguous wording of the Holy Qur'an.

The Third Example: The Punishment Inflicted upon the People of Noah

The Qur'an explicitly states that the punishment inflicted upon the people of Noah was, in essence, a punishment by water (the Flood).

Allah Almighty says:

"Until, when Our command came and the oven overflowed, We said: 'Load into the Ark a pair from every kind of living creature, male and female, and your family, except those against whom the decree has already been issued, and those who believe.' But only a few believed with him. Noah said: 'Embark upon it. In the name of Allah will be its sailing and its anchoring. Indeed, my Lord is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful.' And it sailed with them through waves like mountains. Noah called out to his son, who was standing apart: 'O my dear son! Embark with us and do not be among the disbelievers.' He replied: 'I shall take refuge on a mountain which will protect me from the water.' Noah said: 'Today there is no protector from the command of Allah, except for the one upon whom He has mercy.' Then a wave came between them, and he became one of those who were drowned. And it was said: 'O earth! Swallow your water, and O sky! Withhold your rain.' And the water subsided, the matter was concluded, and the Ark came to rest upon Mount Judi. And it was said: 'Away with the wrongdoing people!'" [30]

At another place, Allah Almighty says:

"And remember Noah, when he called upon Us before this. We responded to him and saved him and his family from the great distress. And We helped him against the people who denied Our signs. Indeed, they were an evil people, so We drowned them all." [31]

At another place, Allah, the Most Glorified, says:

"Then We saved him and those who were with him in the laden Ark. Then We drowned the rest of those who remained behind." [32]

Elsewhere, Allah Almighty declares:

"And the people of Noah, when they denied the messengers, We drowned them and made them a sign for mankind." [33]

At another place, He says:

"So We saved Noah and those who were with him in the Ark, and We drowned those who denied Our signs." [34]

Similarly, Allah Almighty states:

"Then they denied Noah, so We saved him and those who were with him in the Ark and made them successors upon the earth, and We drowned those who denied Our signs." [35]

Furthermore, Allah Almighty says:

"So We opened the gates of heaven with pouring water, and We caused the earth to gush forth with springs. Then the waters met for a matter that had already been decreed." [36]

He further says:

"Then, when Our command came and the oven overflowed, We said: 'Load into the Ark a pair of every kind, along with your family, except those against whom the decree had already been issued. And do not plead with Me concerning the wrongdoers; indeed, they are to be drowned.'" [37]

Allah Almighty also declares:

"And We certainly sent Noah to his people, and he remained among them for nine hundred and fifty years. Then the Flood seized them while they were wrongdoers. So We saved him and those who were with him in the Ark, and We made the Ark a sign for all peoples." [38]

However, Maulana Farahi (may Allah have mercy upon him) does not agree with this explicit Qur'anic description. Rather, he maintains that the actual punishment inflicted upon the people of Noah was also, in essence, a punishment through wind.

Maulana Farahi writes:
"The destruction of the people of Noah took place through a violent wind. This Surah does not provide any detailed account of the destruction of Noah's people. It merely states, in general terms, that just as Allah Almighty seized other nations with punishment, He likewise seized the people of Noah. However, upon examining the details of their destruction mentioned in the Qur'an and the Torah, it becomes evident that the primary role in their destruction was also played by the effects and operations of the wind." [39]
While interpreting the Qur'anic expressions, "Then the Flood seized them" and "It sailed with them through waves like mountains," he writes:
"A storm of violent and swirling winds struck the people of Noah, resulting in torrential rainfall. The waters of the nearby seas also surged and overflowed, while waves began rising from every direction. Amidst this storm, Noah's Ark came to rest upon Mount Judi. Here, it is also necessary to point out an error made by the translators of the Torah. Genesis 8:1 states: 'But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.' This indicates that Allah Almighty sent another gentle wind to bring the Flood to an end. However, in our view, this interpretation is not correct." [40]
The Qur'anic words, "And it was said: 'O earth! Swallow your water, and O sky! Withhold your rain.' And the water subsided, the matter was concluded," provide explicit evidence that the punishment inflicted upon the people of Noah was a punishment by water. This is evident from the very words used when Allah Almighty decided to bring this punishment to an end.
Had the punishment been inflicted through wind, the Qur'an would also have mentioned an instruction such as: "O wind! You too, become calm and cease blowing!" However, the Qur'an contains no such statement.
The expression, "So We opened the gates of heaven with pouring water," demonstrates that the sky released its water, while the words, "And the oven overflowed," indicate that the earth also released its water. Furthermore, the Qur'anic expression, "Then the waters met for a matter that had already been decreed," explicitly establishes that the destruction occurred through the enormous accumulation of water from both the sky and the earth.
Maulana Farahi interprets the expression "the oven overflowed" as referring to the boiling and surging of the seas. Here, too, his position amounts to denying the miraculous phenomenon of the earth releasing its water during the destruction of the people of Noah.
This interpretation of Maulana Farahi is so contrary to the explicit wording of the Qur'an that it gives the impression of resembling the esoteric interpretations of the Batiniyyah sect. The Qur'an has also used the expression, "And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs," to describe the release of water from the earth. There is absolutely no room for figurative interpretation in these words.
Another explicit proof that the destruction of the people of Noah occurred through a punishment of water is that Allah Almighty has clearly stated at six different places in the Holy Qur'an that this nation was drowned. Allah Almighty repeatedly declares that He destroyed a particular nation by drowning it in water, whereas Maulana Farahi insists that this nation was destroyed through the punishment of wind.
Maulana Farahi has attempted to derive an argument from the Qur'anic expression, "Then the Flood seized them," claiming that the punishment was caused by wind because, according to his understanding, a tufan (storm) is specifically associated with wind.
The first point to consider is that if this blessed verse is understood within its immediate textual context, it becomes absolutely clear that the word tufan here refers to a flood of water rather than a storm of wind.
Allah Almighty says:
"And We certainly sent Noah to his people, and he remained among them for nine hundred and fifty years. Then the Flood seized them while they were wrongdoers. So We saved him and those who were with him in the Ark, and We made the Ark a sign for all peoples." [41]
In this verse, the mention of the Ark and the salvation of those who were aboard it immediately after the word tufan provides a clear contextual indication that the intended meaning is a flood of water.
For this reason, 'Allamah Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli (d. 864 AH) explains this verse in the following words:
"The abundance of water surrounded them and overwhelmed them, as a result of which they were drowned." [42]
The second point is that even when this blessed verse is examined in the light of other Qur'anic verses relating to the same incident, it becomes evident that tufan refers to a flood of water. This is because, at all other places, the Qur'an explicitly establishes that the punishment inflicted upon the people of Noah was a punishment by water.

The third point is that, from a linguistic perspective, the word tufan is not exclusively associated with wind. Al-Mu'jam al-Wasit states:

"Tufan may occur in relation to anything. It refers to great and immense things or events that overwhelm everything else. It may also refer to an enormous flow or inundation, as in the case of the great flood through which Allah Almighty destroyed the people of Noah." [43]

The root of the word tufan is Ta-Waw-Fa, whose fundamental meaning is to go around or circulate. The word tawaf is also derived from this root.

Thus, this fundamental meaning is applicable not only to floods of water and storms of wind but also to overwhelming phenomena of every kind.

Even in the Urdu language, the word tufan is used to describe the tremendous rise and fall of waves in the sea. It is quite evident that this usage has also been derived from the Arabic language.

CONCLUSION

The study draws the following conclusions:

1. Maulana Hamid al-Din Farahi regards previous divine scriptures as supplementary sources for Qur'anic exegesis. However, he maintains that the Qur'an must remain the ultimate authority whenever a discrepancy arises between its account and the contents of earlier scriptures.
2. Although Farahi's theoretical principles concerning the use of previous scriptures are generally consistent with established exegetical principles, their practical application reveals certain methodological inconsistencies.
3. Farahi's interpretation of the crossing of the sea by Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) demonstrates his tendency to explain extraordinary divine events through the agency of wind, even where the Qur'anic account explicitly describes the splitting of the sea into two parts.
4. In interpreting the punishment of the people of Lut (peace be upon him), Farahi gives particular emphasis to a violent, dust-laden wind carrying stones. However, this interpretation does not adequately account for the Qur'anic descriptions of stones descending from the sky and the use of the expression matar.
5. Farahi interprets the destruction of the people of Noah (peace be upon him) primarily in terms of violent wind and its effects. Nevertheless, the explicit Qur'anic descriptions of rainfall, overflowing springs, mountainous waves, and drowning establish the Flood as the principal means of their destruction.
6. The analysis indicates that Farahi's interpretations of these three accounts are influenced by his preconceived conception of wind as a principal means of divine punishment against previous nations. Consequently, certain explicit Qur'anic descriptions are interpreted in a manner that accommodates this conception.
7. The study establishes that the issue is not simply a difference of exegetical opinion; rather, it concerns the consistency of applying established interpretive principles. At certain points, Farahi's practical interpretations appear to depart from the methodological principles he himself has formulated.
8. The theory of Nazm al-Qur'an is undoubtedly significant for understanding the coherence and interconnectedness of Qur'anic passages. However, it should not be employed in a manner that overrides the apparent meanings and contextual indications of the Qur'anic text.
9. Previous divine scriptures may serve as supplementary sources for understanding Qur'anic allusions and details, but their use must remain subject to the authority and guidance of the Qur'an.
10. Ultimately, sound Qur'anic exegesis requires that interpretive theories and preconceived assumptions remain subordinate to the Qur'anic text. The apparent meanings, contextual indications, and established principles of interpretation must be given due consideration rather than being reinterpreted merely to accommodate a predetermined theoretical framework.

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