

A study of Death Expressions in the Holy Qur'an and Translatability into English Language According to Qur'an's Sciences and Arabic Authentic Exegeses

دراسة تعبيرات الموت في القرآن الكريم وإمكانية ترجمتها إلى اللغة الإنجليزية وفقاً

لعلوم القرآن والتفاسير العربية الموثوقة

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Abstract:

The article studies death expressions in the Holy Qur'an and translatability into English language according to the Qur'an's sciences and Arabic authentic exegeses, it focuses only on two Qur'anic expressions in two chapters and two verses; *جَاثِمِينَ jathimin* in [AL'araf : 91] and *خَامِدُونَ khamidoun* in [Yaseen : 29]. Neglecting the differences between the language of the Holy Qur'an and the other languages, as well as not thinking deeply with the context of the Qur'anic expressions and not reviewing authentic exegeses during translating any expression in the Qur'an creates a major problem in accurately conveying what the Qur'anic terms mean. The accuracy of the English equivalents of the aforementioned Qur'anic expressions is verified; to do so, the meanings of the two Qur'anic expressions are examined together with the meanings of their English

equivalents in five English translations of the Holy Qur'an made by Hilali and Khan, Haleem, M. Sarwar, M. Ali and A. J. Arberry by the aid of Arabic authentic exegeses, Arabic/Arabic dictionaries and English/English dictionaries, then discussing and analyzing them all according to these references to show the extent to which the translators fully reflect their meanings to the English readers. The article concludes that some translators rendered the meanings of the two Qur'anic expressions into English language correctly based on the authentic exegeses whereas the others neglected these exegeses and rendered incorrect translations.

Keywords: Holy Qur'an, Death, Authentic, Exegeses, Accurate.

الملخص:

يدرس المقال تعبيرات الموت في القرآن الكريم وإمكانية ترجمتها إلى اللغة الإنجليزية وفقاً لعلوم القرآن والتفاسير العربية الموثوقة، ويركز المقال على تعبيرين قرآنيين في سورتين وآيتين هما: جاثمين في سورة الأعراف الآية (91) وخامدون في سورة ياسين الآية (29). أي إهمال للاختلافات بين لغة القرآن الكريم واللغات الأخرى بالإضافة إلى عدم التفكير العميق بسياق التعبيرات القرآنية وعدم مراجعة كتب التفسير الموثوقة عند ترجمة أي تعبير في القرآن يخلق مشكلة كبيرة في نقل ما تعنيه التعبيرات القرآنية بدقة. في هذا المقال يتم التحقق من دقة المكافآت الإنجليزية للتعبيرين القرآنيين المذكورين آنفاً، ولإجراء هذا يتم فحص معاني التعبيرين القرآنيين مع معاني مكافأتهما الإنجليزية في خمس ترجمات إنجليزية للقرآن الكريم لكل من الهلالي وخان و عبد الحليم و محمد ساروار و محمد علي وأربيري وذلك بمساعدة كتب التفسير العربية الموثوقة والقواميس العربية/العربية والقواميس الإنجليزية/ الإنجليزية، ومن ثم مناقشتهم وتحليلهم جميعاً وفقاً لهذه المراجع لإظهار إلى أي مدى يعكس المترجمون معانيهما للقارئ الإنجليزي على نحو تام. يخلص المقال إلى أن بعض المترجمين نقلوا معاني هذين التعبيرين القرآنيين إلى اللغة الإنجليزية بطريقة صحيحة بناءً على التفاسير الموثوقة بينما أهمل الآخرون هذه التفاسير فنقلوا ترجمات غير صحيحة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القرآن الكريم، الموت، موثوق، تفاسير، دقيق.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article studies the meanings used by translators as equivalents of two death expressions in two chapters and two verses; *جَائِمِينَ* *jathimin* in [AL'araf: 91] and *خَامِدُونَ* *khamidoun* in [Yaseen : 29], the meanings of these expressions can be reviewed side by side with their equivalents in five English translations of the Qur'an made by Hilali and Khan, Haleem, M. Sarwar, M. Ali and A. J. Arberry by the aid of Arabic authentic exegeses, Arabic/Arabic dictionaries and English/English dictionaries.

Considering the literary value of the Holy Qur'an, the translations have errors arising from the failure to capture stylistic, pragmatic and figurative aspects. Mohammed (2007). As the Holy Qur'an is the Word of Allah and its language is unlike one has its own characteristics that differ from other languages; the translators must think deeply with the context of the Qur'anic expressions and consult the authentic exegeses before translating such a word, neglecting what mentioned creates a great problem in transferring what Qur'anic expressions mean accurately. Some translators in the selected translations conveyed incorrect meanings of the Qur'anic expressions in which the English readers can't elicit what they mean, such translations cannot be conveyed because the meanings differ in the Qur'an's language and target one, the researcher tries to tackle such issue by presenting suggested translations for the chosen verses depending on the authentic references and by the help of Hilali and Khan's translation.

The article depends on the qualitative method, it is descriptive and comparative one where two Qur'anic expressions of death are selected from two chapters and two verses, five English translations of the Holy Qur'an by Hilali and Khan, Haleem, M.

Sarwar, M. Ali and A. J. Arberry are selected too. The meanings of the two Qur'anic expressions and the meanings of their equivalents in the five English translations are investigated based on the Arabic authentic exegeses by Ibn Kathir, Al- Sa'di and Al-Jalalain, the Arabic/Arabic dictionaries and English/English dictionaries, then discussing and analyzing them all to show to what extent the translators reflect their meanings perfectly to the English readers. It is often necessary to explain the verses that precede and follow the verse that includes the expression in question to give an overview of its overall meaning so as to simplify the process of analysis.

It attempts to answer the following two questions: How adequateness the selected translations are? To what extent do the translators reflect the meanings of Qur'anic expressions perfectly to the English readers?

There are lots of Qur'anic expressions that are vague to the reader and are not existed in the English culture, rendering such expressions to the foreign languages without understanding their meanings as they were interpreted in the Authentic exegeses constitutes an obstacle for the foreign readers to elicit what meant by them accurately. The researcher reviewed some English translations to find that some translators had incorrectly translated these expressions into English, at the time no previous study has shed light on these expressions. Therefore, the researcher tries to address what previous studies neglected focusing only on two expressions, due to the difficulty of studying more than that in an article.

2. Analysis of Death Expressions

2.1 The First Expression

[AL'araf : 91] [الأعراف:91] ﴿فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ﴾

- Hilali and Khan:** So the earthquake seized them and they lay (dead), prostrate in their homes.
- Abdel Haleem:** an earthquake seized them: by the next morning they were lying dead in their homes;
- Mohammed Sarwar:** Suddenly, an earthquake struck them and left them motionless in their homes.
- Muhammad Ali:** So the earthquake overtook them, and they were motionless bodies in their abode.
- A. J. Arberry:** So the earthquake seized them, and morning found them in their habitation fallen prostrate.

Books of Exegeses

- Ibn Kathir (n.d., 3, 324) didn't interpret the meaning of *جَاثِمِينَ jathimin* clearly in this position.
- Al-Jalalain (2002,162) mentioned different meanings, *dead* is included.
- Al-Sa'di (2003, 275) interpreted it as" Dead, extinct".

Arabic/Arabic Dictionaries

- Ibn Manzour (n.d.) The torment befell them, so they died, crouching, i.e. getting on their knees.

- Al-Fairouzabadi (n.d.) didn't mention any meaning to this expression.
- Al-Faraheedi (2003) didn't indicate to such expression.

English/English Dictionaries

First: Longman Dictionary

- dead: no longer alive. *Her mother's been dead for two years.*
- motionless: not moving at all.
- prostrate: lying on your front with your face towards the ground.

Second: Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary

- dead: not alive
- motionless: not moving
- prostrate: lying on the ground and facing downwards

Third: Little Oxford Dictionary

- dead: no longer alive.
- motionless: motion; moving, changing positions etc.
- prostrate: lying face downwards.

Discussion

When the people of Madian argued Shuaib the messenger of Allah and denied him; they were tortured with violent earthquake that took them and let them dead

squatting in their homes. As the Qur'anic expression *جَائِمِينَ jathimin* is not existed in English culture, the authentic exegeses should be relied by translators when translating it into foreign languages in order to allow the target readers easily identify its intended meaning, neglecting these exegeses leads the readers to misunderstand what it means.

In Arabic sources; although Ibn Kathir didn't directly mention the meaning of *جَائِمِينَ jathimin* in this position, yet in another position in the same sura in verse 78 (n.d., 3, 319) he mentioned that it means *مَيِّتِينَ mayeteen*, likewise Al-Jalalain, Al-Sa'di and Ibn Manzour stated that while the other two Arabic sources by Al-Fairouzabadi and Al-Faraheedi didn't.

On the other side, in the English dictionaries as shown above the meaning of *dead* indicates explicitly to what the Qur'anic expression *مَيِّتِينَ mayeteen* means due to both words are existed in the two cultures and both refer to " *stop living*", Whereas the meanings of *motionless* and *prostrate* do not refer to *مَيِّتِينَ mayeteen* in anyway, such uses do not indicate to the death of those people and what they mean may be It happens to living people too. So, *dead* must be included in translating this expression into English language.

In the English translations; *dead* is included in the first two translations by Hilali and Khan and Haleem, whereas the other three translations by Sarwar, M. Ali and Arberry is not. Therefore, the translation of Al-Hilali, Khan and Halim are correct translations because they relied on reliable interpretations in conveying the Qur'anic expression that leads the English readers to understand what exactly this expression means., whereas the other three translations by Sarwar, M. Ali and Arberry are not; as their translations do not

include *dead*, this prevents the English readers understand the intended meaning of an expression.

Classification of Translations

The translations will be classified in the table below according to the meanings they included into explicit, less explicit and implicit meanings.

| The translators | Surah name | Surah and ayah no. | Qur'anic expression | The translations | Explicit meaning | Less explicit meaning | Implicit meaning |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Hilali and Khan | الأعراف Al'araf | (7: 91) | جاثمين jathimeen | they lay (dead) prostrate | Explicit meaning | | |
| Abdul Haleem | | | | they were lying dead | Explicit meaning | | |
| Muhammed Sarwar | | | | left them motionless | | | Implicit meaning |
| Muhammed Ali | | | | they were motionless bodies | | | implicit meaning |
| A. J. Arberry | | | | fallen prostrate | | | Implicit meaning |

Suggested Translation

So the earthquake took them and they became dead, crouching (i.e. lying on the ground) in their homes.

2.2 The Second Expression

﴿إِنْ كَأَنْتَ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ خَامِدُونَ﴾ [يس:29] [Yaseen : 29]

Hilali and Khan: It was but one Saihah (shout) and lo! they (all) were still
(silent, dead, destroyed).

Abdel Haleem: there was just one blast, and they fell down lifeless.

Mohammed Sarwar: It was only a single blast which made them extinct (dead).

Muhammad Ali: It was naught but a single cry, and lo! they were still.

A. J. Arberry: It was only one Cry and lo, they were silent and still.

Books of Exegeses

- Ibn Kathir (n.d., 6, 373) the interpretation of خَامِدُونَ *khamidoun* that he provided indicates that the people of Intaqia had died with Al-Saihah of Jibril.
- Al-Jalalain (2002, 442) mentioned that خَامِدُونَ *khamidoun* means "silent and dead".
- Al-Sa'di (2003, 662) stated that they became voiceless , motionless and lifeless.

Arabic/Arabic Dictionaries

- Ibn Manzour (n.d.) mentioned "they were silent had died".

- Al-Fairouzabadi (n.d.) mentioned the meaning of *أُخْمِدَ الْمَرِيضُ* *aukhmedalmareedhu* as: "he was fainted".
- Al-Faraheedi (2003) classified the meaning of *حَمَدَ الْقَوْمُ* *khamadhalqaum* as: If you don't really hear them.

English/English Dictionaries

First: Longman Dictionary

- still: not moving
- silent: not saying anything, without any sound.
- destroy: to damage something very badly.
- fall down: to drop down towards the ground.
- lifeless: dead or seeming to be dead.
- extinct: a type of animal or plant that is extinct no longer exists.

Second: Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary

- still: not moving; calm and quiet
- silent: not speaking
- destroy: to damage sth so badly that it no longer exists, works, etc.
- fall down: to be shown to be not true or not good enough.
- lifeless: dead or appearing to be dead.
- extinct: no longer in existence in society.

Third: Little Oxford Dictionary

- still: no movement or sound; calm etc.
- silent: not speaking or no sound
- destroy: pull or breakdown; kill; make useless etc.
- fall down: it was not be tackled
- lifeless: dead, unconscious, lacking movement or vitality
- extinct: no longer existing

Discussion

The verses that precede this one talk about the disbelievers who denied the messengers and killed the believer man from al-Yaseen because his belief in Allah and his advice to them to obey those messengers, so Allah tortured them by Saihah until they became dead in their homes. The Qur'anic expression *خَامِدُونَ* *khamidoun* included in the presented verse as *جَاثِمِينَ* *jathimin* can't be rendered into English language adequately without consulting the authentic exegeses because it is not existed in the English culture.

As shown above, Al-Jalalain, Al-Sa'di and Ibn Manzoor resources included the derivations of the Arabic word *مَاتَ* *mata* as interpretations of *خَامِدُونَ* *khamidoun*, also Ibn Kathir indicated to that but indirectly, whereas the other two sources by Al-Fairouzabadi and Al-Faraheedi didn't refer to that, they expressed in another way.

The meanings of *dead, lifeless and had died* in the English dictionaries as presented previously are adequate equivalents to the Arabic word *مَاتَ mata* and its derivatives, they have conveyed the meaning of the Qur'anic expression as that in the authentic exegeses. Whereas the meanings of the other uses (*still* and *silent*) don't, such uses never refer to the Arabic word *مَاتَ mata* or its derivatives. The two words *مَاتَ mata* and *die* and their derivatives mean "the cessation of life" in the two languages, for this, *die* or its derivatives must be included in any English translation for the mentioned Qur'anic expression.

It is noticed that the derivatives of *die* are used in three English translations: *dead* is used in two translations by Hilali and Khan and Sarwar and *lifeless* is used in Haleem's translation, whereas the other two translations by M. Ali and Arberry are not. So, the translations by Hilali and Khan, Haleem and Sarwar are accurate and direct ones lead the English readers to the intended meaning of this expression, whereas the other two translations by M. Ali and Arberry are not; they go against the authentic exegeses by using incorrect meanings where the English readers elicit nothing.

Classification of Translations

The five translations will be classified in the table below according to the meanings they included into explicit, less explicit and implicit meanings.

| The translators | Surah name | Surah and ayah no. | Qur'anic expression | The translations | Explicit meaning | Less explicit meaning | Implicit meaning |
|-----------------|------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--|---------------------|
| Hilali and Khan | يس Yaseen | (36:29) | خَامِدُونَ <i>khamidoun</i> | they (all) were still (silent, dead, destroyed) | Explicit meaning | | |
| Abdul Haleem | | | | they fell down lifeless | Explicit meaning | | |
| Mohammed Sarwar | | | | made them extinct (dead) | Explicit meaning | | |
| Mohammed Ali | | | | they were still | | | implicit meaning |
| Arberry | | | | they were silent and still | | | Implicit meaning |

Suggested Translation

It was only one Saihah (Shout) then, they all were dead.

Conclusion and suggestions

As the article studies death expressions in the Holy Qur'an and translatability into English language according to the Qur'an's sciences and Arabic authentic exegeses, it

seems obvious in the translations discussed above that some translators succeeded to render the meanings of the Qur'anic expressions into English correctly, while the others failed. Hilali and Khan and Haleem succeeded in rendering the intended meanings of the two Qur'anic expressions *جَائِمِينَ jathimeen* and *خَامِدُونَ khamidoun* in the two verses as existed in the authentic exegeses, Sarwar succeeded only to render the intended meaning of *خَامِدُونَ khamidoun*, whereas Muhammed Ali and Arberry failed to render the two expressions. The translators who based on the authentic exegeses succeeded to render the meanings of these expressions as they are in the Holy Book where the target readers understand what they mean adequately. Whereas the others who neglected the authentic exegeses failed in rendering their correct meanings where the English readers capture nothing.

To convey the intended meanings of the Qur'anic expressions to English readers, the translators are recommended to:

- Read the Qur'anic expressions many times in the original language and their interpretations in the authentic exegeses to grasp their intended meaning as existed in the original Holy Book.
- Understand that the language of the Qur'an is unlike one has its own characteristics that differ from other languages.
- Be knowledgeable with Arabic and English languages as well as knowledgeable with the cultures of the two languages.

- Think deeply with the context of the Qur'anic expressions before translating any Qur'anic word.
- Focus on the intended meanings as existed in the authentic exegeses and avoid the vague ones that lead to various probabilities of meanings.
- Refer in translations that the perfect Word of Allah is only in the original language and what is rendered is a human words that they may be rendered right or wrong.

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