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İÇİNDEKİLER
(CONTENTS)

Celil KİRAZ
The Prophet Abraham, Resurrection after Death and Parable of Four Birds..... 7
Hz. İbrahim, Ölümden Sonra Diriliş ve Dört Kuş Kıssası

Hasan Tevfik MARULCU
Ehl-i Sünnet Kelâmı Açısından İlâhî İlim ve 'Lealle' – Kelâm-Belâğat İlişkisi Bağlamında Bir Değerlendirme – 33
Divine Knowledge and 'La`Alla' in Terms of Ahl Al-Sunnah Theology –A Review in The Context of Kalam and Rhetoric Relations –

Ramazan KAZAN
Arap Edebiyatında Serbest Şiirin İlk Örneklerinden: Bedr Şâkir es-Seyyâb'ın "Unşûdetu'l-Matar /Yağmurun Türküsü" Adlı Şiiri 47
The First Example of Free Poetry in Arabic Literature: Poem of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab Entitled as "Unshudat al-Matar or Rain's Song"

İlhan TOPUZ
Danışmanlık Görevi Yürüten Din Görevlilerinin Meslekî Algılarına Yönelik Nitel Bir Araştırma 75
A Qualitative Research on Professional Perceptions of Spiritual Counsellors

Rıdvan GÜR
Mahzumoğullarının Mekke İçerisindeki Konumu 95
The Position of Mahzumogullari in Mecca

Fatma Zehra PATTABANOĞLU
16. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Düşüncesinde Felsefe ve Kelâm Bilginleri.....109
Philosophers and Scholars of Kalam of Ottoman Thought in The 16th Century

Ahmed Hazım YAHYA
الاتحاد بين السلب والعموم 139
Selb ve Umumun Birlikte Kullanımı Üzerine Genel Bir Değerlendirme

Yüksel MACİT
Dört Mezhep İmamına Fıkıh Usulünde Aynı Konuda Nispet Edilen Farklı Görüşler Üzerine.....167
On The Different Opinions on The Same Subject in Usul al-Fiqh are Attributed to the Four Sects

Adem EFE, Mücahit AYDEMİR
Yaşlı Kadın Olmak: Psiko-Sosyolojik Kuramlar Çerçevesinde Yaşlılık ve Kadın: Isparta Huzurevi Örneği.....193
Being an Old Woman: Old-age and Women within the Frame of Psycho-sociological Theories: The Example of Isparta Old Age Asylum

Sobhi RAYAN, Çev: Fatmanur CERAN
Gazzâlî'nin Şüphe Metodu 225
Al-Ghazali's Method of Doubt

The Prophet Abraham, Resurrection after Death and Parable of Four Birds

Celil KİRAZ*

Abstract

It is examined in this article the possible reasons why The Prophet Abraham desired to see the nature of the resurrection after death, the meaning of the commandment given him in this verse and the fulfillment of this commandment by him which mentioned in the verse of Baqara 2/258. Topics in this article will be discussed under three headings by benefiting from the views of commentators who have different tendencies. Under the first heading, the possible reasons why The Prophet Abraham himself desired to see the resurrection after death as if he had doubts about it although he was a prophet will be discussed. Under the second heading, a different pronunciation of some words in the verse that tells of the parables of four birds, and thus the details about different understandings of the verse will be given. Under the third heading, whether this commandment which was given to Prophet Abraham is an order that must be fulfilled in real terms or whether it has different meaning will be sought to be revealed.

Key Words: The Prophet Abraham, resurrection after death, parable of four birds (Baqara 2/258), Abu Muslim al-Isfahani, Muhammad Abduh & Rasheed Rida

Hz. İbrahim, Ölümden Sonra Diriliş ve Dört Kuş Kıssası

Öz

Bu makalede, Bakara 2/258. ayette bahsedilen Hz. İbrahim'in, ölümden sonra dirilişin mahiyetini görmek istemesinin sebebi, ayette ona verilen emrin anlamı ve bu emrin onun tarafından yerine getirilip getirilmediği konuları ele alınmaktadır. Makalede bu konular, üç başlık altında, farklı eğilimlere sahip

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müfessirlerin görüşlerinden istifade edilerek incelenmektedir. İlk başlık altında Hz. İbrahim'in, bir peygamber olmasına rağmen, sanki ölümden sonra diriliş hakkında şüphe içerisinde olan bir kişi gibi, bunu bizzat gözleriyle de görmek istemesinin muhtemel sebepleri üzerinde durulacaktır. İkinci başlık altında, dört kuş kıssasının anlatıldığı ayette geçen bazı kelimelerin farklı okunuşları ve buradan hareketle ayetin farklı şekillerde anlaşılmasının detayları verilecektir. Üçüncü başlık altında da, Hz. İbrahim'e verilen bu emrin, gerçek anlamda yerine getirilmesi gereken bir emir mi, yoksa başka bir anlama mı geldiği ortaya konulmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hz. İbrahim, ölümden sonra diriliş, dört kuş kıssası (Bakara 2/258), Ebû Müslim el-Isfehânî, Muhammed Abduh & Reşid Rıza

Introduction

The truth of resurrection after death is one of the issues on which Holy Qur'an mostly puts the emphasis. Because the Arabs, who are the first addressees of the Qur'an, were rejecting the resurrection after death and the truth of the existence of a new life after death, namely the hereafter. Beliefs of the Polytheists of Mecca on this subject are stated in the Qur'an as: "(Said the polytheists that) "Our lives are made up of life of this world. We live and we die; only time will destroy us." Whereas, they do not have any information in this regard and they are just under a doubt." (Jathiya 45/24) As stated in another verse, Polytheists of Mecca said: "Will we be resurrected by a new creation after becoming a pile of bones, being crumbled and passing away?!" (Isra 17/49)[1] Therefore, especially in the Meccan suras, the truth of resurrection after death is mostly emphasized by generally using the concepts of *ba's* and *hashr*.[2]

The emphasis on the subject continues also in Medina period at a certain rate.[3] The verse that we will examine in our study, Baqara 2/258-260 verse group which includes Baqara 2/260 is one of the most obvious examples of this. Meanings of the said verses are as follows:

"258. Have you not considered the one (Nimrod) who argued with Abraham about his Lord because Allah had given him kingship (spoiled and boasting)? When Abraham said, "My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death," he said, "I give life and cause death."(Then) Abraham said, "Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west." So the disbeliever

[1] Denial of Meccan polytheists about the resurrection after death see also: An'am 6/29; Hud 11/7; Nahl 16/38; Isra 17/98; Mu'minun 23/82; Saffat 37/16; Duhan 44/34-35; Kaf 50/3; Vakia 56/47.

[2] See, for example: An'am 6/36; Yunus 10/24-30; Hicr 15/23-38; Maryam 19/66-87; Ta-Ha 20/124-127; Furkan 25/10-34; Ya-Sin 36/48-83; Kaf 50/1-45; Kiyama 75/1-40; Naziat 79/1-46.

[3] See, for example: Baqara 2/201-203; Alu Imran 3/10-12; Nisa 4/ 172-173; Maida 5/96; Anfal 8/36; Mucadele 58/6-9; Tagabun 64/7; Mutaffifin 83/4.

was overwhelmed by astonishment, and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. 259. Or have you seen the one who passed by a township which had fallen into ruin. He said, "How will Allah bring this to life after its death?!" So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him. He said, "How long have you (dead) remained?" The man said, "I have remained a day or part of a day." He said, "Rather, you have remained one hundred years. Look at your food and your drink; it has not changed with time. And look at your donkey, and We will make you a sign for the people. And look at the bone(s) (of this donkey) - how We raise them and then We cover them with flesh?!" And when it became clear to him, he said, "I know that Allah is over all things competent!" 260. And when Abraham said, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." (Allah) said, "Have you not believed?!" He said, "Yes I (believed); but I ask only that my heart may be satisfied." Allah said, "Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then put on each hill a part of them; then call them; they will come flying to you. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise"" (Baqara 2/258-260)

In this verse group, "the truth that Almighty Allah is capable of resurrecting people after death" is emphasized through three parables/examples. As can be seen, the first of these parables is talking about the discussion about godhead between Nimrod who claims his own divinity, and Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham initially points out that Almighty Allah is capable of giving life to living beings and causes them to die. However, when Nimrod answered "I also give life and cause death", and called two people to show this concretely and killed one of them and released the other one, this time, Prophet Abraham said to him that Allah is the Almighty who brings up the sun from the east; offered him to bring up the sun from the east if he was strong enough; Nimrod who has no answer to this, has to shut up in a desperate way.

In the second of these parables, astonishment of one, whose name is not given (according to the Qur'anic interpretations: the Prophet Uzeyr), about that how could Almighty Allah revives/reconstructs the destroyed city (also according to Qur'anic interpretations: Jerusalem) again is mentioned; in response, the truth in question is revealed by making him in person live resurrection after death.

In the third of these parables which is the main subject of our article, is stated that Prophet Abraham desired to see the nature of the resurrection after death; whereupon he took four birds and made them committed to him; then distributed them on the various mountains; afterwards these birds quickly came back to him when he called them. Almighty Allah, through these three parables, informs people that the event of "resurrection after death" will definitely occur and this is within the power of Him.

Appearing on the third parable; commentators have expressed different opinions about the reason why The Prophet Abraham desired to see the nature of the resurrection after death, the meaning of the commandment given him in this verse and the fulfillment of this commandment by him. Topics in this article will be discussed under three headings by benefiting from the views of commentators who have different tendencies. Under the first heading, the possible reasons why The Prophet Abraham himself desired to see the resurrection after death as if he had doubts about it although he was a prophet will be discussed. Under the second heading, a different pronunciation of some words in the verse that tells of the parables of four birds, and thus the details about different understandings of the verse will be given. Under the third heading, whether this commandment which was given to Prophet Abraham is an order that must be fulfilled in real terms or whether it has different meaning will be sought to be revealed.

1. Possible Reasons for The Prophet Abraham's Desire to Learn the Nature of Resurrection After Death

With reference to the parables in the Qur'an, it can be said that The Prophet Abraham has a notably rationalistic approach to religious matters. Then, he particularly followed such method while putting forward the reality of "Almighty Allah's existence and unity".[4] For instance, The Prophet Abraham wanted to show the reality to his tribe that idols are such incapable creatures that they cannot resist against maltreatments made to them by breaking the idols to which his tribe worshipped and eventually hanging the axe on the shoulder of one of them.[5] Again, he made a similar reasoning put forward that heavenly bodies cannot be a god; he stated that creatures that disappear/set at certain times and that undergo changes would never be gods.[6] However, these reasoning were not understood in a way that The Prophet Abraham, who is the prophet, had doubts about oneness and were reviewed as an effort to convince his tribe about it.[7]

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4 Some articles about the rational method of The Prophet Abraham are: Yar, Erkan, "Hz. İbrahim ve Akılcı Metodu", *Kelâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, vol. IV, issue 2, pp. 87-104, 2006; Esen, Muammer, "Hz. İbrahim'in İmanı ve Tevhid Mücadelesi", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. LII, issue 2, pp. 111-128, Ankara, 2011; Pak, Zekeriya, "Hz. İbrahim Yıldız, Ay ve Güneşi Rab Edindi mi? (En'âm 74-83'teki İbrahim Kıssasına Tarihî Gerçeklik Açısından Bir Bakış)", *EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, vol. VII, issue 14, pp. 59-74, Erzurum, 2003.

5 See: Anbiya 21/51-75.

6 See: An'am 6/74-83.

7 az-Zamakhsharee, Abu'l-Kaasem Carullah Mahmud b. Omer b. Muhammad, *al-Kashshaf an Hakaiki Gavamizi't-Tanzil ve Uyuni'l-Akavil fi Vucuhi't-Ta'vil*, I-IV, tashih: Muhammad Abdussalam Shahin, Daru'l-Kutubi'l-Ilmiyye, Beirut, 1416/1995, II, 38; ar-Raazee, Fakhraddeen Muhammad b. Omer b. Huseyn b. Ali al-Kurashee at-Taymee al-Bakree, *Mafatihu'l-Gayb*, I-XXXII, Daru'l-Fikr, Beirut, 1401/1981, XIII, 52-54; an-Nasafee, Abu'l-Barakat Hafizuddeen Abdullah b. Ahmad b. Mahmud, *Medariku't-Tenzil ve Hakaiku't-Te'vil*, tahkik and tahric: Yusuf Ali Budeyvi, Daru Ibn Kaseer, Damascus & Beirut, 1432/2011, I, 516.

Similarly, his trait of "rationality" and "pursuit of more information" reveals itself in the hadith of "desire to see the nature of resurrection after death" which is involved in the third verse:

وإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي المَوْتَى قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قَالَ بَلَى وَلَكِنْ لِيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِنْهُنَّ جُزْءاً ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْياً وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ الله عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ.

“And when Abraham said, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." (Allah) said, "Have you not believed?!" He said, "Yes I (believed); but I ask only that my heart may be satisfied." Allah said, "Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then put on each hill a part of them; then call them; they will come flying to you. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise"” (Baqara 2/260)

Whose meanings are mentioned above. It should not be considered that The Prophet Abraham, who is a prophet, has any doubt in this regard. In fact, he said that he had not any doubt about the resurrection after death by answering "Yes I (believed, my Lord); but I ask only that my heart may be satisfied." to the question of Allah "Have you not believed?!" The Prophet Abraham explicitly mentioned that Almighty Allah is capable of resurrecting people after death and he believed in this by saying "My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death" in discussion with the Nimrod in the above-mentioned Al-Baqara verse 2/258.

Commentators focused on a variety of possibilities for the reason of The Prophet Abraham's desire to see the nature of the resurrection after death. At this point, information will be given about four of the possible reasons.

According to the first of these, The Prophet Abraham saw an animal carcass whose flesh had been eaten by wild animals and birds; he asked to Allah about how these shredded and dispersed flesh could meet up. Thus, the Prophet Abraham wanted to know the fact of "resurrection after death", that he knows in *recognizing by reading/theoretical* knowledge level, in the knowledge level of *recognizing by living/concrete (visible)*.[8]

[8] See: at-Tabaree, Abu Ca’far Muhammad b. Career, *Camiu’l-Beyan an Te’vili Ayi’l-Kur’an*, I-XXVI, tahkik: Abdullah b. Abdulmuhsin at-Turkee, Daru Hicr, Cairo, 1422/2001, IV, 624-626; al-Matureedee, Abu Mansur Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Mansur as-Samarkandee, *Te’vilatu Ehli’s-Sunne*, I-V, tahkik: Fatıma Yusuf al-Haymi, Muessesetu’r-Risale, Beirut, 1425/2004, I, 221; az-Zamahsharee, ibid, I, 304-305; al-Bagavee, Abu Muhammad Muhyi’s-Sunne Huseyn b. Mas’ud, *Maalimu't-Tenzil*, I-IV, Daru’l-Kutubi’l-İlmiyye, Beirut, 1424/2004, I, 186; Raazee, ibid, VII, 41; al-Bayzaavee, Kaadee Nasiruddeen Abu Said Abdullah b. Omer b. Muhammad ash-Sherazee, *Anvaaru’t-Tenzil ve Asraaru’t-Ta’veel*, I-II, Dersaadet Publ., Istanbul, I, 137; Nasafee, ibid, I, 215;nAaluusee, Abu’s-Sana Shehabuddeen Mahmud b. Abdullah b. Mahmud al-Bagdadi, *Ruhu'l-Maanee fi Tafsiri'l-Kur'ani'l-Azim va’s-Sab'i'l-Mesani*, I-XIV, tahkik: Abu Abdirrahman Fuad b. Sirac Abdulgaffar, al-Maktabatu’t-Tawfeekiyye, Egypt, II,

According to the remarks of Islamic scholars, the second possible reason for this request is the discussion he made with Nimrod mentioned in Baqarah 2/258 the meaning of which was cited above. In that discussion, the Prophet Abraham said that Almighty Allah kills creatures and resurrects them, but he could not give a satisfactory answer to the objection of Nimrod who said "I kill and I resurrect".[9] In fact, according to the expressions of some commentators, the Prophet Abraham said "My Lord resurrects and kills" to Nimrod; in response, Nimrod asked to the Prophet Abraham," Did you see this with your eyes?" but he could not give an answer of "Yes". Therefore, the Prophet Abraham personally wanted to see this fact.[10]

The third possible cause of such request is that, upon The Prophet Abraham learned that Almighty Allah became *lover/friend* of him; he wanted to see a concrete sign supporting this, and therefore made such a request.[11]

For the fourth possible reason of this request, commentators mentioned that The Prophet Abraham, with the specter came to his heart for a moment, had a doubt about Almighty Allah's resurrection of the deads.[12] Moreover, commentator Tabaree (d. 310/922) narrates a hadith about the subject in the interpretation of this verse from The Prophet Muhammad in the form of "We are closer to have doubt than the Prophet Abraham."[13] and chooses this commentary as there is a hadith about it.[14] In addition, from the fact that The Prophet Abraham had a doubt about the resurrection after death, it is mentioned that the first generation commentator Ibn Abbas (d. 68/687) describes this verse as "the most promising verses of the Qur'an".[15]

It should be noted immediately that the rational commentators of Qur'an in the late period said that it was impossible for The Prophet Abraham to have

288. Tabaree attributes some commentaries close to this opinion to Katada, Dahhak, Ibn Cureyc and Ibn Zayd.

9 See: Tabaree, ibid, IV, 626; Bagavee, ibid, I, 186; Raazee, ibid, VII, 41; Aaluusee, ibid, II, 288. Tabaree attributes one commentary to Ibn Ishak.

10 Bagavee, ibid, I, 186; Bayzaavee, ibid, I, 137.

11 See: Tabaree, ibid, IV, 626-628; Bagavee, ibid, I, 186-187; Raazee, ibid, VII, 41; Aaluusee, ibid, II, 288. Tabaree attributes one commentary close to this opinion to Suddi and Said b. Cubeyr.

12 See: Tabaree, ibid, IV, 628-630; Bagavee, ibid, I, 187. Tabaree attributes this opinion to the Prophet Muhammad, Ibn Abbas and Ata b. Abee Rabah. This hadith and its commentary attributed to the Prophet will be as follows.

13 See for hadith: Buhaaree, Anbeyaa, 11, Tafsir, 46; Muslim, Iman, 238.

14 See: Tabaree, ibid, IV, 629-630.

15 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 628-629; Ibn Kaseer, Abu'l-Fida Imaduddeen Ismael b. Omer, *Tafsiru'l-Kur'ani'l-Azim*, I-VIII, tahkik: Sami b. Muhammad al-Salama, Daru Tayba, Riyadh, 1999/1420, I, 690.

such a doubt. In addition, they also interpreted the hadith in a different way as will be mentioned below. For instance, Raazee says that this view has been expressed by some ignorant people and it is completely a misstatement. Supposedly, according to these ignorant, The Prophet Abraham had a doubt about both *Mabda'/beginning of the life* and *Maad/end of the life*. His doubt about *Mabda'*, his saying "This is my Lord" about heavenly bodies (stars, moon, and sun)[16]; also his doubt about *Maad* are related to "resurrection after death" we are examining.[17]

First, it should be noted that, according to Raazee and other commentators, The Prophet Abraham's statement "This is my Lord" definitely does not mean that he had a doubt about *Mabda'/beginning of life*. This statement is at the degree of a debater who wants to convince the addressee that these heavenly bodies would never be gods, and means "Let's say that, this is my Lord according to your assertion". Anyway then, The Prophet Abraham clearly reveals that this is a false belief for the addressees.[18]

In addition, as stated by Raazee, if someone does not believe that Almighty Allah is capable of resurrecting after death, he becomes an unbeliever. The person who refers such ignorance for a prophet like The Prophet Abraham, who is innocent from sins, would also have denied him. Again another evidence that this view is wrong is that The Prophet Abraham answers as "Yes I (believed); but I ask only that my heart may be satisfied." to the question "Have you not believed?!" If he was in any doubt about it, he certainly would not give such an answer. According to Raazee, The Prophet Abraham's statement would be the statement of a wise who demanded for certainty. Also, anyone who has a doubt about that Almighty Allah is capable of resurrecting after death should be in doubt about the prophethood. Someone like himself will not be able to know that he is a prophet. So according to Raazee, it is absolutely not true that The Prophet Abraham had a doubt about such an important issue.[19]

As can be seen, Fakhraddeen ar-Raazee himself as a theologian, considering the fact that "innocence of the prophets (innocent from any sins)" which consisted in the science of *kalaam* over time, thought that The Prophet Abraham's doubt was improbable.

In this context, commentators, related to the subject which is narrated from The Prophet Muhammad "We are closer to have doubt than The Prophet Abraham."[20] understood this hadith quite in a different way. Accordingly, The

16 See: An'am 6/76-78.
17 Raazee, ibid, VII, 43.
18 Zamakhsharee, ibid, II, 38; Raazee, ibid, XIII, 52-54; Nasafee, ibid, I, 516.
19 Raazee, ibid, VII, 43.
20 See: Buhaaree, Anbiya, 11, Tafsir, 46; Muslim, Iman, 238.

Prophet Muhammad's hadith means that "We have never had a doubt about resurrection after death; The Prophet Abraham is far away from having doubt about it."[21]

Commentators of the modern era, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida reject these mentioned interpretations about the possible reasons of The Prophet Abraham's desire as they are not based on a citation; also noted that there is no need to them to understand the verse.[22]

According to us from the above-mentioned opinion on the subject, the most reasonable is that The Prophet Abraham wanted to know the fact of "resurrection after death", that he knows in *recognizing by reading/theoretical* knowledge level, in the knowledge level of *recognizing by living/concrete*. As Raazee mentioned, it does not appear to be within the bounds of possibility that Prophet Abraham had a doubt about such an important issue. Moreover, the statement of The Prophet Abraham which is in the verse "Yes I (believed); but I ask only that my heart may be satisfied." clearly depicts this issue.

2. The Pronunciation of صرهن in The Parable of Four Birds and Different Opinions About its Meaning: Cut or Commit?

The correct understanding of the verse about the parable of The Prophet Abraham and four birds depends on the correct understanding of the pronunciation of the word صرهن and of the different meanings that are derived from it. Also, the subject is directly connected to the determination of the opinions of the verse made by the Qur'an commentators of *sahaaba* (the first generation of the Muslims) and *taabeuun* (the second generation of the Muslims), and taking into account of the statements of Qur'an commentators about it in the following period. Therefore, first of all, recitation differences and their meanings will be mentioned; then the comments based on narratives and reason about the verse will be analyzed.

Recitation scholars and Qur'an commentators have expressed different opinions on the pronunciation, origin and meaning of the phrase صرهن in the verse. Most of the recitation scholars read the letter *sad* with *damma*, as صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunne*); but Abu Ca'far, Hamza, and Halaf read the letter *sad* with *kasra*, as صِرْهُنَّ (*sırhunne*).[23]

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21 Bagavee, ibid, I, 187; Aaluusee, ibid, II, 289; Abduh, Muhammad & Rida, Muhammad Rashed, *Tafsiru'l-Kur'ani'l-Hakeem (Tafsiru'l-Manaar)*, I-XII, Daru'l-Manaar, 2. Edition, Cairo, 1366/1947, III, 54.

22 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 53.

23 Ibnu'l-Cazaree, Abu'l-Hayr Shamsaddeen Muhammad b. Muhammad, *an-Nashr fi'l-Kiraati'l-Ashr*, I-II, tahkik: Ali Muhammad Dabba', Daru'l-Kutubi'l-Ilmiyye, Beirut, II, 232; al-Hateeb, Abdullateef, *Mu'cemu'l-Kiraat*, I-XI, Daru Sa'daddeen, Damascus,

According to commentators, when the word of صرهن, which is in the verse of قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِنَ الطَّيْرِ فصرهن إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِنْهُنَّ جُزْءاً is read as صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunna*), it comes from the root of صَارَ يَصُورُ صَوْراً (*saara-yasuuru-savran*) in Arabic and it means "to commit, to train, to educate".[24] According to this, the verse means "Take four birds and commit them to yourself!" But, according to commentators, when based on this pronunciation, we should consider some *taken* (removed from the sentence) words that indicate the meaning of "cut" in the verse. Accordingly, considering the continuation of the verse, its explanation is: فَخُذْ أربعةً من الطيرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ اليك ثم قَطِّعْهُنَّ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِنْهُنَّ جُزْءاً and means "Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then slaughter them and put a portion of them on each hill."[25] Or the explanation of the verse is: أَمِلْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ وقَطِّعْهُنَّ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِنْهُنَّ جُزْءاً and means "commit them to yourself, slaughter them and put a portion of them on each hill".[26]

As can be seen, when the word of صُرْهُنَّ means "commit", commentators think that the underlined phrases in the verse are *secluded* (removed from the sentence) and it is essential to accept this word in the verse to understand the verse correctly.

Moreover, some commentators state that when the word is read as صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunne*), it can mean "cut" without saying that there are *mahzuuf/taken* (removed from the sentence) phrase. But in order to reveal the true meaning, in this case, it should be considered that the word of اليك (ilayk) in the verse should *be presented* (being forged ahead). Accordingly, with the forging ahead of the phrase اليك in the verse, the explanation of the sentence becomes: فَخُذْ أربعةً من الطيرِ اليك فَصُرْهُنَّ and it means "take four birds for you and slaughter them".[27]

1422/2002, I, 377. See also: al-Farraa, Abu Zakariyyaa Yahya b. Ziyad b. Abdullah ad-Daylamee, *Maani'l-Kur'an*, I-III, tahkik: Ahmed Yusuf Nacati & Muhammad Ali an-Naccar, Daru's-Surur, I, 174; Tabaree, ibid, IV, 635; Bagavee, ibid, I, 187; Zamakhsharee, ibid, I, 305; Raazee, ibid, VII, 44; Bayzaavee, ibid, I, 137; Nasafee, ibid, I, 216; Aaluusee, ibid, II, 292-293; Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 52.

24 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 634-635; Bagavee, ibid, I, 187; Zamakhsharee, ibid, I, 305; Raazee, ibid, VII, 44. See that word in the dictionary means like this: al-Cavharee, Abu Nasr Ismael b. Hammad, *as-Sihaah*, I-VI, tahkik: Ahmed Abdulgafur Attar, Daru'l-Ilm li'l-Malayin, Beirut, 1399/1979, I, 717; Ibn Manzur, Abu'l-Fadl Muhammad b. Mukarram b. Ali al-Ansari, *Lisanu'l-Arab*, I-VI, tahkik: Abdullah Ali al-Kabeer & Muhammad Ahmed Hasbullah & Hashim Muhammad ash-Shzalee, Daru'l-Maarif, Cairo, IV, 2524.

25 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 635; Bagavee, ibid, I, 187.

26 Raazee, ibid, VII, 44.

27 al-Ahfash al-Avsat, Abu'l-Hasan Said b. Mas'ada, *Maani'l-Kur'an*, I-II, tahkik: Huda Mahmud Karaa, Maktabatu'l-Hanci, Cairo, 1411/1990, I, 199; Tabaree, ibid, IV, 635-636; Cavharee, ibid, I, 177.

As can be seen in this case, commentators state that the word of صُرْهُنَّ in the verse means "cut"; but at this time, they say that the phrase of اليك in the verse should be *mukaddam/presented* (being forged ahead). Accordingly, in order for the said word to mean "cut", it should be considered that either there are some taken (removed from the sentence) phrases; or there are some phrases that should be *mukaddam/presented* (being forged ahead).

According to commentators, when this word is read as صِرْهُنَّ (*sırhunna*) which is the second recitation, -without saying that there is a taken (removed) phrase- already means "cut".[28]

At this point, Tabaree narrates the information that some Kufa grammarians think that this word does not mean "cut", it means "commit" no matter it is read as صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunne*) or صِرْهُنَّ (*sırhunne*); but it can mean "cut" when this word is read as صِرْهُنَّ through *takleeb* (*transposition of the letters*) and comes from the root of صَرَىٰ يَصْرِى صَرْياً (saraa-yasree-saryan). However, Tabaree states that Basra grammarians understand this word as "cut" at either reading and says that their opinion is more accurate.[29]

When analyzing the works of these commentators, it is clearly seen that Kufa grammarians were Kesaaee (d. 189/804) and Farraa (d. 207/822) to whom Tabaree attributed; and that Basra grammarians were Abu Ubayda (d. 210/825) and Ahfash al-Avsat (d. 215/830).[30]

What could be the reason that prompted Qur'an commentators to understand the phrase of صرهن as a "cut" in any case by envisaging the forces like *hazf* or *takdeem-ta'heer* about the evident of the verse? The answer of this is hidden in the explanations of the commentators of the period of *sahaaba* and *taabeuun* (the first and second generation of the Muslims) that we will analyze now.

Tabaree (d. 310/922) who is forming the summit of narrated commentary, in the interpretation of these verses, after these glossary statements from the point of recitation differences, narrates that this word means "cut" with reference to scholars like *sahaabee* commentator Ibn Abbas (d. 68/688); *taabeuun* and next period commentator Said b. Cubeyr (d. 94/713), Mucahid (d. 103/721), Dahhak (d. 105/723), Ikrime (d. 105/723), Katade (d. 117/735), Suddi (d. 127/745), Abu

28 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 636; Bagavee, ibid, I, 187; Zamakhsharee, ibid, I, 305; Raazee, ibid, VII, 44.

29 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 636-638.

30 See: al-Kesaaee, Abu'l-Hasan Ali b. Hamza b. Abdullah, *Maani'l-Kur'an*, prep. Isa Shahhate Isa Ali, Daru Kuba', Cairo, 1998, p. 94; Farraa, ibid, I, 174; Abu Ubayda, Ma'mar b. Musanna at-Taymee al-Basree, *Macazu'l-Kur'an*, tahkik: Muhammed Fuat Sezgin, Maktabatu'l-Hanci, Cairo, I, 80-81; al-Ahfash al-Avsat, ibid, I, 199.

Malik (d. ?), Rabi' b. Anas (d. 140/758) and Ibn Ishak (d. 151/768), and he also prefer this view.[31]

According to Tabaree's narration, *sahaabee* commentator Ibn Abbas (d. 68/688) is the first one who expressed this view, and this word is in Nabat language because of its origin; he also says that this is a *parable/masal* about resurrection after death.[32] Also, Tabaree cited from Mucahid (d. 103/721), Ibn Cureyc (d. 150/767) and Ibn Zayd (d. 182/799) that these four species were "cock, peacock, crows, and pigeons".[33]

As there is not any narration from The Prophet Muhammad about this phrase's meaning, this interpretation about the word as "cut" was probably first mentioned by Ibn Abbas; it seems to have been adopted by most commentators of *taabeuun* and the following periods.

Then Tabaree quotes that few of the commentators interpreted the phrase of صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunna*) in the verse as "Commit them/accustom!" (ضُمَّهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ); then in this direction, he quotes that this word means "Connect them! (أَوْثِقْهُنَّ)" from Ibn Abbas (d. 68/688); "Commit them/accustom!" (أُضْمُمْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ) from Ata (d. 114/732), and "Collect them! (اِجْمَعْهُنَّ)" from Ibn Zayd (d. 182/799).[34]

If we pay attention, Tabaree attributes to Abbas both the view of the meaning of "cut" and "connect". However, he narrates the first view with three different *sanad/narrating ways* and second view with one *sanad/ narrating way*.[35] So, it can be said that Ibn Abbas's narratives of the expression of "cut" is most common.

At this point, we need to point out a topic. This parable related to The Prophet Abraham who is accepted to have lived about BC XVII-XVIII centuries and this commentary that belongs to Ibn Abbas, as the said case occurred centuries ago, does not depend on historical knowledge but probably on the glossary meanings of the words in the parable. If this is the case, this interpretation of Ibn Abbas about this indefinite/*gaybee* issue, - if he did not hear from The Prophet Muhammad - probably comes into view as an interpretation based on his own linguistic knowledge and opinion. So, it seems that adopting this interpretation of the subsequent period, in general, is based on the fact that it was expressed by a *sahaabee* scholar about Arabic language and Qur'anic commentaries like Ibn Abbas.

31 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 639-642.
32 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 639-640.
33 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 633-634.
34 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 642-643.
35 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 639-643.

In the classical period, there was another commentator who was well known for his different opinions Abu Muslim al-Isfahani (d. 322/934) from Mu'tazilite commentators who interpreted differently from the majority -except for the secondary opinions which was not preferred by Tabaree who narrated from Ibn Abbas, Ata and Ibn Zayd-.

According to Abu Muslim, the word of صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunne*) in the verse does not mean "cut" but "commit".[36] Abu Muslim al-Isfahani interpreted the verse in a completely different way from the majority of the Qur'an commentators. According to him, when The Prophet Abraham demanded Allah to resurrect the deads, Almighty Allah gave him an *example* to better explain the situation to him. The purpose of the phrase فَصُرْهُنَّ اليك (*fasurhunne ilayk*) in the verse is "committing the birds to people and training them to come back to him when they are called". Accordingly, the meaning of the verse is as follows:

"Commit the four birds to yourself in a way they come to you when you call them! When birds are trained in this way, put these four birds on four hills alive!"[37]

According to Abu Muslim, the purpose of this expression in the verse is to give a concrete example to The Prophet Abraham about that spirits can come back to the bodies after death.[38]

In fact, as mentioned above, in line with this interpretation of the Abu Muslim, there is a citation from *taabeuun* commentator Ata (d. 114/732) that the said phrase means "Commit them to yourself! (أُضْمُمْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ)"[39] Thus, his opinion is not completely disconnected from the early traditional interpretation. However, it cannot be said that this interpretation of Ata is a comment that was adopted by the majority in the first period.

It should be noted at this point immediately that the modern era Qur'an commentators of Muhammad Abduh (d. 1323/1905) and Rashid Rida (d. 1354/1935) also give full support to Abu Muslim's opinion related to the subject. According to two commentators who have rational approach, the verse means as follows:

"O Ibrahim, in spite of the long distances between them, if the birds that you made them committed to yourself comes to you when you called them, when

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36 Raazee, ibid, VII, 45. See that word in the dictionary means like this: Cavharee, ibid, I, 717; Ibn Manzur, ibid, IV, 2524.

37 Raazee, ibid, VII, 45; Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 55.

38 Raazee, ibid, VII, 45; Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 55-56.

39 See: Tabaree, ibid, IV, 643.

Almighty Allah wants them to resurrect, also people will accept the call of Him كُونُوا أَحْيَاءً (Kuunuu ahyaan: Resurrect!) and become resurrected."[40]

Referring again to Abu Muslim al-Isfahani; this commentator suggests the following evidences that this verse does not mean that is expressed by the majority, it means as his expression:

1. Related to the word of صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunne*) in the verse, it means "commit" that is well known in the dictionary. Thus in the verse, there is not any word meaning "cut and shred". Giving such a meaning to the verse means that giving a meaning to the verse without evidence, and this is unacceptable.

2. If the meaning of "cut and shred" by the word of صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunna*) in the verse is intended, the phrase of اليك (*ilayk*) as (فَصُرْهُنَّ اليك : *fasurhunna ilayk*) would not take place immediately after this word. Because, when this verb means "cut", will not become transitive with the preposition of الى (*ila*), in other words, it does not take its subject with the preposition of الى (*ila*). This verb, however, will become transitive with the preposition of الى (*ila*) when it means "commit". But there is *takdeem*/passing forward in the verse and the presentation of the verse is فَخُذْ اليك أربعةً من الطير فَصُرْهُنَّ?" if we ask, we say that: "Attributing to pass forward in the meaning of the verse without evidence requires attributing to the reverse meaning of expression of the verse (and this is not true)."

3. The pronoun of هُنَّ (*hunna*) in phrase of ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ (*Summa'd'uhunna*: Then call them!) in the verse does not turn to "the pieces of the birds" but turn to "the birds themselves". In the event that these pieces are separated and dispersed, and putting some of them on the hills, this pronoun would not refer to birds but to the pieces of these birds and this is contrary to the apparent structure of the verse. Similarly, the pronoun of "they" in the phrase of يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْياً (*Ya'teenaka sa'yan*: They come flying to you) does not refer to *the pieces of the birds* but to *the birds* themselves. According to your view, when some pieces of the birds run to the others, the subject pronoun (*hunna*) in the verb of يَأْتِينَكَ (*Ya'teenaka*) refers to the pieces of the birds (and this is not true).[41]

Evidences of Abu Muslim seem really strong at first glance. However, some commentators were not late to find answers to these evidences. In fact, from the point of the commentary from Tabaree as we mentioned above, for the first of the evidence, such an answer can be given: Although Kufa scholars do not accept that this word actually means "cut"; Basra scholars understand the word in this way.[42] Also, as noted above, most of the commentators of *sahaabee*s and *taabeuun* period also understood the word in this way.[43]

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40 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 55.

41 Raazee, ibid, VII, 45; Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 56.

42 See: Kesaaee, ibid, s. 94; Farraa, ibid, I, 174; Abu Ubayda, ibid, I, 80-81; al-Ahfash al-Avsat, ibid, I, 199; Tabaree, ibid, IV, 636-638.

43 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 639-642.

For the second evidence of Abu Muslim, such a commentary can be made: Although it is necessary to understand the verses according to the word orders in their expressions, considering the narratives about the subject which are cited from the first period scholars, it can be said that tending to such misspelling "does not lack evidence" and there is not any obstacle in front of it. Hence, comments that there are some transpositions (*takdeem* or *ta'heer*) in other verses were made by commentators. For instance, if the verse لاَتُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ ولا أَوْلَادُهُمْ اِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الله أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِى الدُّنْيَا "Their -of factious- goods and children should not deceive you; Allah wants to torture them *in the world*." (At-Tawba 9/85) understood like this, it seems problematic. Because Allah does not torture all factious due to their goods and children *in the life of this world*. Because of this, the verse, with changing the place of the words (*takdeem*) by *taabeuun* commentator Katada (d. 117/735), understood as لاَتُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ ولا أَوْلَادُهُمْ فى الحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا اِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الله أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فى الاخِرَةِ "Their goods and children should not deceive you; Allah wants to torture them in *hereafter* because of these".[44] So, commentators can consider changing the place of the words (*takdeem*) when it is needed to get the right meaning. Then, there can be changing the place of the words in the verse we are examining.

As for the Abu Muslim's third evidence; although this opinion may seem reasonable and credible at first glance, we can see that the pronoun هُنَّ (*hunna*) in the verse cannot refer to "to the birds" but "to the pieces of the birds". Indeed, there is not any obstacle in front of the pronoun referring the pieces of the birds in Arabic language. So, when taking into consideration that the word of صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunne*) in the verse means "cut" and accordingly the commandment of putting the portions of the birds on the hills, it is possible that this pronoun refers to the portions of the birds; as a result of this, all portions of the birds come together and come flying to The Prophet Abraham as a whole and live like in the beginning.

Correspondingly to the evidences of Abu Muslim, his well-known opinion, also the scholars who constitute the majority and defend that the word of صُرْهُنَّ (*surhunna*) means "cut", presented these evidences on the accuracy of their own review:

1. All of the Qur'an commentators who lived before Abu Muslim *allied*/reached an agreement (*icmaa*) about the actual occurrence of the cutting and disintegration of these birds. To deny this commentary means denying this allying (which is not true).
2. Abu Muslim's commentary, that he made about giving this example to The Prophet Abraham, in the form of "The purpose of this statement is to give a concrete example to The Prophet Abraham that spirits can easily come back to the bodies" regards the event in question, which is intrinsic to The Prophet

[44] See: Tabaree, ibid, XI, 500; as-Suyuutee, Calaladdeen Abdurrahman, a*l-Itkaan fi Ulumi'l-Kur'an*, I-VII, tahkik: Markazu'd-Dirasati'l-Kur'aniyya, IV, 1399.

Abraham, as *non-miracle* and therefore he does not have any virtue/trait than other people.

3. The Prophet Abraham asked Allah to show him how He resurrects the deads. Expression of the verse shows that his demand was met. According to Abu Muslim's commentary, this demand would not be met in real terms.

4. The phrase of ثمّ اجعل على كلّ جبلٍ منهنّ جزءا (Then, put each of them on the hills!) shows that these birds were disintegrated.[45]

These evidences, which were mentioned and defended by Fakhraddeen ar-Raazee (d. 606/1210) tidily in the classical period, are being tried to be refuted singly by Muhammad Abduh and Rashed Rida, and on the other hand Abu Muslim's opinion is being tried to be proved. These two Qur'an commentators respond to the claim of "there is an *icmaa*/consensus on the meaning that was derived by the majority from the verse" which is the first evidence of the majority by saying that the understanding of a group of scholars cannot constitute evidence against to the others. Moreover, according to Abduh and Rida, the first meaning of the expression of the verse is what Abu Muslim expressed. According to them, the commentary that the previous commentators made about the verse is based on some narratives and commentators have made these narratives dominant to this verse. However "The biggest adjudication authority belongs to the verse itself"." Therefore, according to Abduh and Rida, expression of the verse never denotes to the opinion of the majority.[46]

Also, the claim of "The meaning of the verse that is derived by Abu Muslim is not particular to The Prophet Abraham, and if it is so understood he would not have any virtue/trait than other people", which is expressed by the majority and is the second evidence mentioned above, is being rejected by Abduh and Rida. According to them, in this example related to creation event that Almighty Allah resurrects the deads, there is a limitation relating to the knowledge level that mankind science can access about the secrets of creation and description toward The Prophet Abraham. We don't have any evidence that this information was known by all people previously, so it cannot be said that "The Prophet Abraham does not have any trait on this subject". In fact, he has a virtue/trait in the discussion he made with Nimrod, and in the evidence he put forward against those who worshiped the stars which is in Surat al-An'am. These evidences that Almighty Allah confirmed The Prophet Abraham with himself were later used by some Qur'an commentators like ar-Raazee. However, the fact that these evidences were later used by ar-Raazee and other scholars does not mean that The Prophet Abraham does not have a trait and virtue on this subject. Because, according to Abduh and Rida, The Prophet Abraham has definitely a priority, trait and virtue

45 Raazee, ibid, VII, 45-46; Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 56.

46 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 57.

as he removed people from the darkness of doubt that surrounded them on that period through these evidences.[47]

For the claim of "If we take the opinion of Abu Muslim, The Prophet Abraham's demand to see the nature of the resurrection after death would not meet; this demand can only be met when the commentary of the majority of Islamic scholars (*cumhuur*) is based on", which is the third evidence expressed by the majority of Islamic scholars, Abduh and Rida gave answer as follows:

"The actual situation is quite the opposite. Because, that the birds come back as alive after being disintegrated and put on different hills does not mean to see the nature of the resurrection after death. Because here, there is the situation of seeing the previous state of the birds before disintegrated and separated. Because, the event of resurrection occurred in the distant mountains and therefore The Prophet Abraham could not see it. Imagine that you saw that a man was slaughtered and broken to pieces. Then you saw the same man as alive. Can you say in this case that you saw the nature of the resurrection of this man? Of course not! The opinion of the majority of Islamic scholars (*cumhuur*) stands for this that is never right. The opinion of Abu Muslim refers to the last point that mankind can understand the secrets of creation and resurrection. This is the description of the word كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (When Allah wants, He says "Be!" and it becomes) [48] for the creatures. If Almighty Allah did not indicate this through the parable related to The Prophet Abraham, that some people still have desire to learn the secret of the creation of mankind would be within the bounds of possibility (but it is no longer possible). This answer, in some ways, reminds of the answer given to the Prophet Musa's demand to see Allah[49], and of the answer given to people who asked the Prophet Muhammad the status of crescents[50]. As a result, the verse explains the

47 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 57.

48 See: Baqara 2/117; Alu Imran 3/47; Nahl 16/40; Maryam 19/35; Ya-Sin 36/82; Gafir 40/68.

49 The meaning of the mentioned verse is as follow: "When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him, He said: "O my Lord! Show (yourself) to me that I may look upon Thee." Allah said: "By no means can't you see Me (direct); but look upon the mount; if it abides in its place, then shall you see Me." When his Lord manifested himself to the mount, He made it as dust. And Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he said: "Glory be to you! To you I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe."" (A'raf 7/143) As it appears in the verse, this request of the Prophet Moses is rejected by stating that it is impossible to see the Almighty God.

50 The meaning of the mentioned verse is as follow: "They ask you concerning the New Moons. Say: They are but signs to mark fixed periods of time in (the affairs of) men, and for Pilgrimage. It is no virtue if you enter your houses from the back: It is virtue if you fear Allah. Enter houses through the proper doors: And fear Allah. That you may prosper. (Baqara 2/189) In this verse, it is emphasized that the scientific attention about the growing and shrinking of the crescent -at least at that time- is meaninglessness and that the main thing is, the role played by people in their daily life.

information about the resurrection after death that can be understood; prohibits asking beyond this question. [51]

As can be seen, Abduh and Rida claim that the parable of The Prophet Abraham and four birds means that "the true nature of the resurrection after death cannot be realized by mankind". Although Abu Muslim commented in the way that "Even if such a resurrection had occurred, The Prophet Abraham would not have seen it; because this event of resurrection would have occurred in distant mountains!", some of the early commentators - as will be mentioned under the next heading cited from Katada - says that The Prophet Abraham saw the portions of these birds flying to each other and combining; eventually they combined with their heads that are in the hands of The Prophet Abraham.[52] If these narratives are true, we can say that The Prophet Abraham saw the nature of this event of the resurrection. In fact Aaluusee, who is one of the recent commentators, states that these narratives are accurate; the expression of the verse also supports the opinion of the majority of Islamic scholars (*cumhuur*); therefore Abu Muslim's comment on the subject is not acceptable.[53]

Abu Muslim personally gives answer to the fourth evidence of the majority of commentators; says that with the word of جزء (fascicle/part) in the verse, portions of the birds are not referred but each of these birds are referred.[54] In fact, the word of جزء (fascicle/part) appears totally in three points with the verse we have examined and is being used with the meaning of a part or member of a group.[55] However Raazee, by considering the commentary of Abu Muslim conceivably, states that the expression of the verse is more appropriate for the opinion of the majority; says that the expression of the verse is as فَاجْعَلْ عَلَى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِنْ كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ منهنَّ جُزْءاً أَوْ بَعْضا (Put a piece of each of these birds on each hill!).[56]

As can be seen, the majority of the commentators of the first and next period interpret the verse as "The Prophet Abraham slaughtered and disintegrated four birds after making them committed to himself, put these portions on the hills, then he called them and they followed this call and came back flying to him alive".

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51 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 57.

52 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 644-646.

53 Aaluusee, ibid, II, 294-295.

54 Raazee, ibid, VII, 46; Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 56.

55 See: Baqara 2/260 (the verse we examined); Hicr 15/44; Zuhruf 43/15. The texts and the meanings of two other verses are as follows: لَهَا سَبْعَةُ اَبْوَابٍ لِكُلِّ بَابٍ مِنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَقْسُومٌ : "There are seven gates of hell and they are separated from a group of people for each door." (Hicr 15/44) وَ جَعَلُوا لَهُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ جُزْءاً : "They accepted some of His servants as part of His (godhead)." (Zuhruf 43/15)

56 Raazee, ibid, VII, 46.

Abu Muslim al-Isfahani agrees this commentary in the classical period, and Muhammad Abduh and Rashed Rida also agree this commentary in the modern era; the information of the commandment given to The Prophet Abraham, taking four birds and committing them to himself, then putting them on hills alive, then calling them and the birds following to this call and coming back flying to him is given to The Prophet Abraham. Thus, according to Abu Muslim, The Prophet Abraham clearly learned the information that mankind cannot realize the nature of resurrection after death with limited knowledge; as the birds that are committed to their owners come back to their owner when he calls them; all spirits of all people will be resurrected in after death by the call of Almighty Allah.

3. The Issue of Whether The Prophet Abraham Fulfilled This Commandment

Most of the Qur'an commentators of the first period state that The Prophet Abraham fulfilled this commandment. For instance, according to *sahabee* commentator Ibn Abbas (d. 68/687), The Prophet Abraham tied and slaughtered four birds in accordance with this commandment; then put a portion of them on the hills.[57] Katada (d. 117/735) from *taabeuun* commentators enters into details and gives the following information on the subject:

"Allah's Prophet Abraham was commanded to catch and slaughter four birds, then to mix their fleshes, feathers and bloods and separate them on four mountains. As narrated to us, he tied the wings of these birds and holds their heads in his hand. In front of The Prophet Abraham who is *Haleelullaah* (lover of Allah), bones began to move to bones, feathers began to move to feathers and piece of meats began to move to a piece of meats. Then Prophet Abraham called those birds; they came running toward him on the feet; each bird combined with its own head. This is an example that Almighty Allah showed to Prophet Abraham, through this Allah wanted to say that: As Almighty Allah resurrected and combined these birds, in the same way, He will gather all of the human bodies from everywhere of the earth and resurrect them."[58]

As can be seen, Ibn Abbas and Katada don't have a shadow of a doubt about the occurrence of this event. Besides, Tabaree cited from the first period commentators Mucahid, Ibn Cureyc and Ibn Zayd that the species of these four birds are "cock, peacock, crows, and pigeons".[59] Furthermore, Tabaree cited from the scholars like Rabi' b. Anas, Ibn Zayd, Ibn Curayc, Suddi, Mucahid, Dahhak that The Prophet Abraham distributed the fleshes and feathers of these birds on the top of four or seven mountains or on the top of all mountains near to him.[60]

57 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 644.
58 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 644.
59 Tabaree, ibid, IV, 633-634.
60 See: Tabaree, ibid, IV, 644-648.

Based on this information we can say that, according to most of the first period commentators, Prophet Abraham fulfilled this commandment actually.

Mu'tazili commentator Abu Muslim says that there is not any information about that Prophet Abraham fulfilled this actually in the expression of the verse.[61] Likewise, according to what Abduh and Rida said to clarify this commentary, any command given in everyday language is not meant to actually comply with this command. Because in some sentences that are intended to *inform/instruct*, *command pattern* can be used when it is required in order to make an additional statement. For instance, if someone asks you "How the ink is made? And if you say "Take that, process these through those processing, then ink is created", it means that you describe him how to make ink; it does not mean that you would not make the addressee responsible of actually making ink. In a similar manner, according to Abduh and Rida, there are also *imperative sentences* in the Qur'an with the aim of *informing/instructing*, the verse that we have examined is one of them. Here, the purpose is to give a concrete example to Prophet Abraham about the resurrection after death.[62] Accordingly, the following is meant in verse:

"(O Abraham!) Take four birds and commit and train them in a way that they come back to you when you call them! Because birds are the most favorable animals for this. Then leave each of these birds on each top of the mountains; then call them, whereupon they will come back running/flying to you. That their locations are different and far away from you will not prevent this. Here, what your Lord will do when he wants is parallel to this. Almighty Allah will call them with the command of كُونُوا أَحْيَاء (Kuunuu ahyaaan: Awake!) that is the command of *the new creation*. This situation is similar to that Allah says to celestials and land "Come willingly or unwillingly!" and they respond as "We come willingly (our Lord)!"[63]

According to Abduh and Rida, the purpose of this narration is to give an example to Prophet Abraham that also spirits will easily come back to their bodies with the call of Almighty Allah, in a similar way that birds which are committed to someone follow his call and come back.[64] If not, in the verse, actually giving such a command is not intended, he was asked to do something like this.

According to Abduh and Rida, this commentary of Abu Muslim is the first understood meaning of the expression of the verse. That Almighty Allah resurrects the deads is similar to His creation of the universe in the beginning. This is also revealed in the form of creation command of كُنْ (Kun: Be!) of Allah's will. None of the mankind can get the information about the nature of Allah's will

61 Raazee, ibid, VII, 45; Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 55.
62 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 55.
63 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 55. See for the verse on this subject: Fussilet 41/11.
64 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 55-56.

without getting the state of His interest on creatures and how He talks to the creatures. It is not possible for anyone. According to Abduh and Rida, "The expression of the Qur'an", on which most of the Muslims based, clearly indicates this. The names of Allah are excluded from arbitrariness; it is the true meaning of the issue that the servants cannot realize this.[65] So, according to these commentators, mankind can certainly not realize the nature of first creation and resurrection after death. In this parable, it is to have notified this reality to all believers and Prophet Abraham.

According to Abduh and Rida, another evidence that the expression of the verse supports the opinion of Abu Muslim is the use of the preposition ثمّ (*summa*) that states "time interval and process" in the form of ثمّ اجْعَلْ (*summa'c'al*) in the verse. This preposition was used in the verse to "express the period of time that passed until Prophet Abraham committed the birds to himself". If the verse, as the majority of Islamic scholars (*cumhuur*) say, has the meaning of "cutting", instead of this, the phrase of وَاجْعَلْ (*va'c'al*), that does not require period of time and process, should have been used.[66]

Furthermore, according to these two commentators, that the verse ends with the names of العَزِيز الحَكِيم (*al-Azeez*: Victorious for everything; *al-Hakeem*: Exalted in Might and Wise) that refers to His wisdom instead of the name القَدِير (*al-Kadeer*: Capable of everything) that refers to the might of Allah, is another evidence for the correctness of the opinion of Abu Muslim.[67] Although Abduh and Rida say, yes, the name of al-Hakeem at the end of the verse refers to the name of the Almighty God's wisdom; but he name of *al-Azeez* (victorious for everything) refers to His power and might. Therefore, when we interpret the verse like the majority of Islamic scholars (*cumhuur*), it can be inferred that Almighty Allah has the power to resurrect the birds which were disintegrated by Prophet Abraham.

Finally Abduh and Rida, despite all the apparent and literal evidence put forward by Abu Muslim and themselves, are trying to find an answer to the question of what was the reason that prompted commentators to accept the opinions of the majority of Islamic scholars (*cumhuur*). According to them, the reason that prompted *antecedent/first period scholars (mutakaddemuun)* to accept this opinion is the "*narratives*" of "Prophet Abraham took four birds from those species and slaughtered them, then distributed their fleshes and feathers on different mountains, then upon calling them, the pieces of these birds flew to each other and run towards him after becoming a whole bird" that comes from the *sahaaba* and *taabeoun* (who are the first and second generation after The Prophet

65 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 57-58.
66 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 58.
67 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 58.

Muhammad) commentators. These scholars, even if with a compulsion, tried to adapt this verse to these narratives.[68]

There can be such an objection to *al-Manaar* authors: For scholars who lived in the second-third hegira era, it can be mentioned that the reason that they accepted the opinion of majority of Islamic scholars (*cumhuur*) is the existence of some narratives cited from previous scholars. However, this case cannot explain the reason why *sahaaba* and *taabeoun* commentators like Ibn Abbas, Katada, Mucahid, Dahhak, who expressed the said opinion for the first time, stated this commentary.

According to Abduh and Rida, the reason that prompted *descendent/next period scholars (mutaahheruun)* to this opinion is that "they were in effort to get some traits (*hasais al-anbiya*) for prophets like *miraculous deeds* (miracles)". Whereas the statement here aims to "give information, description and remove people from the darkness" which is the biggest miracle of all. But according to these two commentators, "Termly there are some addictions that are dominant over the mind and understanding of mankind". "The opinion of suggesting Prophet Abraham's miracle as evidence about his being a prophet" affected the scholars of this period and leads them to suggest this opinion.[69]

At this point such a question can be asked to *al-Manaar* authors: I wonder that will the opinion of "Termly there are some addictions that are dominant over the mind and understanding of mankind" apply to these two commentators? Two of the most important movements of thought that marked the 19. and 20. Centuries in which Abduh and Rida lived are Rationalism and Positivism. I wonder whether these two commentators inclined such events that are extraordinary and located in the Qur'an to this commentary of Abu Muslim with the effort of normalization and making reasonable. In fact, there are commentaries of these commentators that bring similar rational and cause-effect relationship into the forefront related to other verses. For instance, in the interpretation of al-Feel Surah, Muhammad Abduh describes the birds that throw stones over the elephant army as *flies*; describes the stones they throw as *smallpox germs* that bother this army.[70] This statement is a comment with obvious effects on the positivist manner. So, it can be expressed as a probability that Abduh and Rida inclined to the said rational comment about the verse due to this tendency.

I wonder why Abu Muslim al-Isfahani, who lived in the classical period turned onto this commentary? The possible reasons are that he belonged to the

68 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 58.
69 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 58.
70 Abduh, Muhammad, *Tafsiru Cuz'i Amma*, Matbaatu Mısr, 3. Edition, 1341, pp. 157-158.

sect of Mu'tazilita which was known as the most rational school in the classical period or did not see the narratives related to the verse or did not take into consideration them. Or else, it is possible that the commentator inclined to the commentary in question as this is the first understood meaning from the expression of the verse.

According to Abduh and Rida, a man trying to understand the Qur'an correctly, must refrain from the meaning and opinions that cannot be got from the expression of the Qur'an. Because Qur'an is the sole authority to judge and that nothing can judge it.[71] So, according to these two commentators, this opinion of the majority of Islamic scholars (*cumhuur*) that cannot be derived from the expression of the verse should also be rejected.

Abduh and Rida conclude their explanations about the verse by praising the commentator saying "Thank you Abu Muslim well said! He has the tact of Qur'an and he commented independently".[72] Indeed, although there is such information from *sahaaba* and *taabeuun* about the verse, it can be seen as distinctness that Abu Muslim interpreted in a different way.

Result

The first of the issues examined in the article is to answer the question of "Why did Prophet Abraham want to see the nature of the resurrection after death?" According to us, the most satisfactory answer to this problem is that Prophet Abraham, who had already a theoretical knowledge about resurrection after death, had the humanistic sense of wonder as he wanted to see this reality with his own "eyes" as practically.

The second issue which was examined was about whether it is understood as "taking four birds and committing them to himself, then disintegrating them and distributing on the mountains" or "after committing these birds to himself, taking each of them and leaving them on the mountain alive." According to the predominant opinion which was based on *sahaabee* commentator Ibn Abbas and later adapted by the majority, the first one is accurate. According to the second commentary which was stated by *taabeuun* commentator Ata in the first period, then chosen by Abu Muslim and in the modern period supported by Abduh and Rida, the second meaning is more accurate.

The third issue related to the second issue is whether Prophet Abraham fulfilled this command or not. According to those who supported the opinions of the majority, Prophet Abraham personally fulfilled this command; took four birds

71 Abduh-Rida, *Manaar*, III, 58.
72 Abduh-Rida, ibid, III, 58.

and committed them to himself; then disintegrated and distributed them on mountains; then upon calling them to him, saw that they came to him flying alive; in this way personally observed the nature of the resurrection after death. In the second issue, according to those who adopted the opinions of Abu Muslim and Abduh-Rida, Prophet Abraham did not fulfill this command; gave up this demand by getting message from the said command that included the reason "Mankind cannot realize the nature of the resurrection after death".

According to us, if there were not narratives about the issue from *sahaabee* commentator Ibn Abbas and *taabeuun* commentators (the second generation of the Muslims) and if the only commentary was made relating to the expression of the verse, Abu Muslim's commentary would be more accurate. Ibn Abbas's commentary about the issue is probably his own personal view and, therefore, there is also a possibility that it is incorrect. Furthermore, different commentaries are also narrated from him. Again, in order to get this commentary, it is necessary to assume that there are substitions (*takdeem* and *ta'heer*) or some removed (*mahzuuf*) phrases in the verse. Under these circumstances, it is unlikely to evaluate his commentary as definitely bounding and right approach. Because when we look at the expression of the verse, Abu Muslim's commentaries seem to be more accurate.

According to this, the verse means "O Abraham and the other people who wonder the nature of the resurrection after death! Like the birds which are committed to their owners followed their owner's call, spirits and the bodies of the people will accept the call of Almighty Allah; Allah will easily perform the resurrection after death when the time comes! Your knowledge about this life of the world is extremely limited. With this limited knowledge, do not attempt to realize the unknown issue like the nature of the resurrection after death!" However, we cannot say that this meaning can be inferred from the verse blazingly and easily. Maybe, through the answer given to Prophet Moses who wanted to see Allah, this result can be reached by making a comparison and making similarity between two parables.

The said discussion is a very good example of how different commentators could take different approaches to the same verse; how much evidence each of these commentators can find for himself and how he could use his quick intelligence to confute the other's opinion.

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