

## A Critical Review of the Interpretation of Verse Three of Surah Al-Tahrim with Emphasis on Quran Chronology

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### Introduction

The process of conspiracy by a group of ill-hearted Muslims against the Prophet (PBUH) has historical roots. The revelation of the third verse of Surah al-Anfal in the second year after Hijra indicates that some Muslims, instead of confronting the Quraysh army, sought to attack their trade caravan. This rebellion, between the fifth and sixth years after Hijra, became an organized movement, with its destructive effects reaching the Prophet's (PBUH) household. Thus, the disclosure of the Prophet's (PBUH) secret by some of his wives under the verse: «وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ إِلَىٰ بَعْضِ أَزْوَاجِهِ حَدِيثًا فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِ وَأَظْهَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَفَ بَعْضُهُمْ وَأَعْرَضَ عَنْ بَعْضٍ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِ قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنْبَأَكَ هَذَا قَالَ نَبَّأَنِيَ الْعَلِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ» "And [remember] when the Prophet confided to one of his wives a statement; and when she informed [another] of it and Allah showed it to him, he made known part of it and ignored a part. And when he informed her about it, she said, 'Who told you this?' He said, 'I was informed by the Knowing, the Aware.'" (al-Tahrim: 3) was not considered a new event. Some of the Prophet's ill-hearted wives, despite the importance of keeping the secret, tried to create new problems for the Prophet (PBUH) and the Islamic government by revealing it.

### Research Method

Some commentators' acceptance of fabricated narratives regarding the context of the third verse of Surah al-Tahrim has led to the disruption of the conceptual and contextual coherence of this Surah. Consequently, the revealed secret has been reduced to female jealousy or, in some sources, the issue of the Prophet's (PBUH) succession. Given the textual and narrative inconsistencies in the reports of the verse's context and the influence of these reports on exegetical sources, arriving at the correct meaning of the third verse and uncovering God's intention seems impossible. Therefore,

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after reviewing and evaluating these narratives, the authors, relying on Quranic chronology and using a descriptive-analytical method, have developed an interpretation that can convey the main concept of the revealed secret to the audience. This approach demonstrates that Quranic chronology, as a historical method, alongside other exegetical approaches, can play an important role in uncovering the central concepts and interpretations of Surah al-Tahrim.

### Research Findings

١. The context described by the reports of the verse's revelation portrays the jealousy of some of the Prophet's (PBUH) wives towards each other. However, the structure of the Surah reveals a dangerous conspiracy against the Prophet (PBUH) and calls for their repentance due to the deviation in their hearts: "If you two [wives] repent to Allah, [it is best], for your hearts have deviated" (cf. [Tabataba'i, 1390 AH, vol. 19, p. 331](#)).

٢. In response to these conspiracies and their continuation by treacherous wives, God promises strong support for the Prophet (PBUH) in the verse: "But if you cooperate against him—then indeed Allah is his protector, and Gabriel and the righteous of the believers and the angels, moreover, are [his] assistants." This promise is the best evidence that, rather than a mere female mistake, a dangerous conspiracy against the Prophet (PBUH) was unfolding (cf. [Askari, 1390, pp. 26-30](#)).

٣. Assuming the revealed secret pertains to the succession of Abu Bakr and Umar, why should such an action be met with such a strong reaction from God in Surah al-Tahrim, and be considered akin to opposing God?

٤. Although based on the evidence of both Sunni and Shia scholars, the referent of "the righteous of the believers" in the fourth verse of Surah al-Tahrim is Ali (AS), it cannot be concluded that the revealed secret pertains to his succession. Firstly, this context of revelation is not mentioned in any of the credible Shia narrations, such as *\*Al-Kafi\**, and Shaykh Mufid's *\*Kitab al-Masā'il al-'Ukbariyya\** is a theological work addressing questions posed by Hajib Abu'l-Yathir ibn Siraj ([Mufid, 1413 AH, p. 25](#)).

Secondly, considering that Tabarsi draws upon both Sunni and Shia sources and numerous exegetical opinions in his commentary, it is unlikely that he would have omitted this narration in his work if it were of sufficient textual and content value.

٥. Based on Quranic chronology, the revealed secret in the third verse of Surah al-Tahrim refers to God's promise of the Prophet's (PBUH) imminent victory over the polytheists. At the time of the revelation of Surah al-Tahrim, the hypocritical faction was focusing all their efforts on learning the Prophet's (PBUH) secrets through his ill-hearted wives. Thus, after the Battle of Ahzab, the Prophet (PBUH) found it necessary to calm the public and offer believers hope by sharing an important and life-giving piece of news. This message promised peace and tranquility in the Arabian

Peninsula. Through this announcement, the Prophet (PBUH) not only reassured the believers of God's promises of Islam's victory over all religions and polytheists but also brought calm to the broader society.

### Conclusion

The third verse of Surah al-Tahrim is one of the most contentious verses, leading commentators, influenced by the narratives of its context, to interpretations that deviate from the temporal and contextual coherence of the Surah. Based on this, the revealed secret in the third verse has been generalized to female jealousy and the successions of Abu Bakr and Ali (AS). However, the approach of Quranic chronology, by considering the sequence of Surah al-Tahrim and drawing upon contemporaneous Surahs such as al-Munafiqun, al-Nur, al-Ahzab, al-Fath, and al-Saff, as well as their time-bound verses, clarifies the concept of the conspiracy mentioned in this verse. As a result of this chronological approach, combined with contextual evidence, the meaning of the revealed secret becomes clear. The revelation of this verse is understood in light of the conditions and events of that time. The revealed secret, as the central concept of the Surah, refers to God's promise of the Prophet's (PBUH) and the believers' inevitable victory over the disbelievers and polytheists with the conquest of Mecca. This victory was meant to remove the shadow of the polytheists' conspiracy over the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers and to instill hope in God's promises of the consolidation and success of the divine religion. Moreover, this approach indicates that the narratives of the context of the revelation of Surah al-Tahrim can be seen as adaptive, as it is evident that the reviewed narrations are not entirely reliable and free from interference, and commentators have applied them to the concept of the secret mentioned in the third verse without them necessarily reflecting the true context of the revelation.

**Keywords:** Surah al-Tahrim, chronology, conspiracy, Prophet's (PBUH) victory, narratives of chronological order

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