

Explaining the Precedence of the Destruction of Qaryah over Divine Punishment (Ba's) in Verse 4 of Surah Al-A'raf; Transition from False Civilizations to the Era of Appearance

Mohsen Fazel Bayesh¹  Mohammad Hadi Mansouri² 

1. PhD Student in Quran and Hadith Studies, University of Islamic Sciences and Teachings, Qom, Iran (Corresponding Author).

2. Assistant Professor, Department of Quran and Hadith, University of Islamic Sciences and Teachings, Qom, Iran.

Corresponding Email: mohsenfazel1373@gmail.com

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Introduction

The Holy Quran, as the most comprehensive divine revelation, contains profound and multi-layered knowledge that requires contemplation of the linguistic structure of its verses, semantic relationships, and the utilization of authentic commentaries for its comprehension. Some verses, despite their apparent conciseness, hold deep meanings. Verse 4 of Surah Al-A'raf, by introducing the concept of *Qaryah* (settlement/community) and the apparent sequence of destruction and divine punishment (*Ba's*), raises questions regarding their causal relationship; logically, the cause (punishment) should precede the effect (destruction). Despite interpretive efforts, a comprehensive explanation for the precedence of the destruction of the *Qaryah* over the divine *Ba's* in this verse has not yet been provided. This research endeavors to fill this gap by analyzing this relationship with a novel approach. The main questions of this research are: What is the precise meaning of "*Qaryah*" in this verse, and is it solely applicable to a geographical unit? How can the precedence of the destruction of "*Qaryah*" over divine "*Ba's*" be explained? According to the narrations of Ahl al-Bayt (AS), what is the meaning of divine "*Ba's*" in this verse, and what is its connection to eschatological transformations? Does this verse indicate the conditions of societies prior to the Advent (Reappearance), and how can these indications be explained?

Methodology

The present research employs a qualitative content analysis method, focusing on semantic analysis and the interpretation of religious texts. The utilized data include Arabic lexicographical sources, verses of the Holy Quran, authentic commentaries, and interpretive narrations. This study analyzes and interprets the collected data through qualitative analysis. This process involves the semantic analysis of the terms *Qaryah* and destruction (*Halakah*) in lexicographical sources and the intra-textual analysis of the applications of *Qaryah* in the Quran for a deeper understanding of the discussed concepts. In this regard, a combination of the "Quran by Quran" interpretation method and hadith analysis has been used. To gain a more precise understanding of key concepts, verses from other Surahs of the Quran where related words or concepts are used were first searched for and analyzed. Then, to complement and deepen this understanding, interpretive narrations under similar verses were consulted and meticulously analyzed. Thus, a comprehensive



meaning obtained through the analysis of similar verses and their related interpretive narrations was used as a contextual clue for understanding the primary verse. Logical and deductive analysis has also been employed to explain the conceptual relationship between the destruction of the *Qaryah* and the *Ba's*.

Findings

The findings of this research indicate that the concept of *Qaryah* in the Holy Quran refers to a structured system with a specific ideology and a claim to provide human felicity. Since the concept of destruction (*Halakah*) signifies the demise of fundamental and essential characteristics of a thing, the destruction of a *Qaryah* means the annihilation of that structured system's claim to provide true human happiness. This destruction is not merely a physical demolition but a collapse of the societal and ethical foundations of a community, leading to the acknowledgment of its injustice and inadequacy. On the other hand, by referencing the narrations of Ahl al-Bayt (AS), the intent of divine *Ba's* is interpreted as the uprising of Hazrat Hujjah (AJ), which necessarily occurs after the complete discredit of all political and cultural groups and schools of thought, and the despair of people from their claims to provide felicity. This interpretation defines *Ba's* not only as divine punishment but as a period of global transformation accompanied by the advent of the promised Savior (AJ). Based on these findings, verse 4 of Surah Al-A'raf indicates the occurrence of the Era of Appearance (Advent) following the discrediting of the false front in its claim to provide human happiness. Therefore, the precedence of the destruction of the *Qaryah* over the descent of divine *Ba's* is a necessary and unavoidable matter, and this precedence signifies a causal and conceptual sequence. Verses 4 and 5 of Surah Al-A'raf point to one of the most significant aspects of the conditions of human societies before the Advent, where all corrupt systems and false claims undergo wavering and collapse, paving the way for the manifestation of divine justice and equity. This process demonstrates the necessity of the precedence of the destruction of the *Qaryah* over divine *Ba's*, and it perfectly aligns with the narrations regarding the conditions prior to the Advent.

Conclusion

This research was conducted with the aim of analyzing and explaining the relationship between the destruction of "*Qaryah*" and the descent of divine "*Ba's*" in verses 4 and 5 of Surah Al-A'raf. The findings, derived from examining the views of various commentators and referencing the verses of the Holy Quran and interpretive narrations, revealed that "*Qaryah*" in this research functions as a society possessing a value, cultural, and political system that claims to provide human happiness. The "destruction of *Qaryah*" was explained as the collapse of its value and social system, leading to the annihilation of the identity and fundamental foundations of the "*Qaryah*", and resulting in the acknowledgment of its injustice and inadequacy. Furthermore, based on the examined interpretive narrations, the intended meaning of "*Ba's*" in the Quranic verses can be the uprising of the Qa'im (AJ). Considering the research findings and referencing narrations that identify the destruction and discrediting of the claims of governments in providing human happiness and the people's despair of them as one of the conditions for the Advent, it can be concluded that the "destruction of *Qaryah*", meaning the annihilation of its inhabitants' claims, must necessarily precede the descent of divine "*Ba's*". This precedence signifies a conceptual and causal sequence; that is, before the advent of the divine era of transformation (*Ba's*), the state of discrediting and collapse of existing systems (*destruction of Qaryah*) emerges in society.

Therefore, the present research indicates that the apparent precedence of destruction over *Ba's* in the fourth verse of Al-A'raf actually represents a conceptual and causal precedence; meaning that the collapse of false systems and the hollow claims of human societies is a necessary prerequisite for the fulfillment of the divine promise and the establishment of the government of justice during the Era of Appearance.

Keywords

Verse 4 of Surah Al-A'raf, *Qaryah*, Destruction (*Halakah*), Divine Punishment (*Ba's*), Era of Appearance (Advent).

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics. The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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