

A Study and Evaluation of the Rule of “Al-‘Ibra” from the Perspective of Contemporary Qur’anic Scholars**

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Abstract

The rule of ***“Al-‘Ibra bi-‘umūm al-lafẓ lā bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab”*** (Consideration is given to the generality of the wording, not the specificity of the occasion) is one of the established pillars of Qur’anic exegesis and juristic derivation, prioritizing the universal implication of the wording over the historical occasion of revelation. This research, employing an analytical-descriptive method with a comparative approach, examines the structure of evidence, foundations, and scope of validity of this rule within the intellectual framework of contemporary exegetes and Qur’anic scholars. Findings indicate that among Imami (Shi‘i) scholars, this rule is accepted as a definitive principle based on four categories of evidence: rational (the universality and wisdom of legislation), transmitted (the practice of the Infallibles in applying the verses), literary (the inherent appearance of general expressions), and consensus (ijmā‘). Philosophical-mystical elaborations (such as the view of Jawādī Āmulī) have further deepened its theoretical foundations. In the Sunni tradition, the rule is also recognized as valid by classical legal theorists and exegetes, although some contemporary intellectual currents—through excessive emphasis on the historicity of the text or ideological readings—in practice restrict or distort its scope of application. Ultimately, this article elucidates the efficacy of this rule as the key to a dynamic, systematic, and trans-historical understanding of the Qur’an, ensuring the perpetual applicability of the Shari‘ah in addressing humanity’s changing issues.

Keywords: Occasions of Revelation (Asbāb al-Nuzūl), Rule of Al-‘Ibra, Generality of Wording (‘Umūm al-Lafẓ), Specificity of Occasion (Khuṣūṣ al-Sabab), Contemporary Qur’anic Scholars.

Statement of the Problem

The Noble Qur'an, as the revelatory text of Islam, on one hand was revealed within the context of concrete events and inquiries of the revelation era (Asbāb al-Nuzūl), and on the other hand, declares its guidance mission addressed to all humans for all time. These two seemingly contradictory characteristics raise a fundamental methodological question in understanding and deriving rulings from the Qur'anic verses: When encountering Qur'anic verses, what relationship should be established between the specificity of the occasion of revelation (al-sabab) and the generality of the verbal formulation used in the verse? The juristic-hermeneutical rule ***"Al- 'Ibra bi- 'umūm al-lafẓ lā bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab"*** provides a systematic answer to this question. By prioritizing the universal implication of the wording, it liberates the Qur'an from historical constraints, transforming it into a living text in dialogue with all eras.

However, in contemporary intellectual discourse, the explanation, consolidation, and application of this rule face new questions and challenges: First, how is the systematic structure of evidence for this rule formulated in the thought of prominent contemporary exegetes, and have novel elaborations (such as philosophical, mystical, or hermeneutical analyses) been presented to consolidate or limit it? Second, how extensive is the scope of validity and application of this rule, and in facing the complex issues of the modern world and diverse readings of the religious text, does it maintain the ability to preserve semantic unity and produce a dynamic understanding aligned with the objectives of the Shari'ah? This article seeks to answer these questions by examining the evidence and foundations of the rule in the works of contemporary Qur'anic scholars and clarifying its position as the axis of a stable and systematic understanding of the Noble Qur'an.

Regarding the background of this discussion, it should be noted that some articles, such as ***"An Inquiry into the Rule of Al- 'Ibra bi- 'umūm al-lafẓ lā bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab"***, have only examined

the existing opinions on the issue and explained various conceivable aspects from a purely jurisprudential (*uṣūlī*) perspective, using a descriptive-analytical method.

Similarly, the article ***“Umūm al-Lafz or Khuṣūṣ al-Sabab?”** presents the four aspects of the relationship between the occasions of revelation and the wording, and states the two famous opposing views regarding the rule of Al-‘Ibra. However, it neither examines these from the perspective of Qur’anic scholars nor extensively presents and evaluates the evidence of the two views.

The article ***“The Scope of Influence of the Narrator’s Question Focusing on the Rule of Al-‘Ibra”** also examines the occasion of revelation and general expressions in jurisprudential narrations solely from a juristic (*fiqhī*) perspective.

In the books ***“Qawā’id al-Tafsīr” by Dr. ‘Alī Akbar Bābā’ī et al.** and ***“Methodology of Qur’an Interpretation” by Dr. ‘Alī Bābā’ī***, the rule of Al-‘Ibra is explained briefly in less than two pages.

This research, while systematically collecting and analyzing all classical and contemporary evidence for the rule (rational, transmitted, literary, consensus-based, mystical, and hermeneutical), examines it with a comparative-critical approach. Its main distinguishing feature is comparing the structure of evidence and foundations of the rule within the two contemporary intellectual traditions of Imami (Shi‘i) and Sunni thought, thereby revealing both shared consensus and specific challenges of each current (such as the influence of the practice of the Infallibles in Imami thought or extreme historicism in some Sunni currents). Furthermore, this study explores the application of the rule in today’s intellectual milieu by analyzing modern philosophical-mystical elaborations (such as Jawādī Āmulī’s view) and diagnosing ideological and takfīrī applications—an aspect that has remained largely cursory or scattered in previous works.

Examining General Wording and Specific Occasion of Revelation from the Perspective of Qur'anic Scholars

One of the noteworthy issues in the discussion of "Occasions of Revelation" (*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*) is the disagreement that has arisen among scholars of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) regarding whether the generality of the wording is the criterion and authority, or the specificity of the occasion of revelation.

In other words: Does the specificity of the occasion and the motive considered as the cause for the revelation of a verse or verses—when the expression of the verse or verses is general—lead to specifying its ruling to the case of revelation? Or is the general expression of the verse the criterion and authority, and consequently its ruling is also general and inclusive of all individuals? Scholars from both schools differ on this issue, holding two opinions:

First Opinion: The Authority of the Generality of the Wording

The authority of the generality of the wording in the rule "**Al-'Ibra bi-'umūm al-lafẓ**" (Consideration is given to the generality of the wording) means that when a wording is used in the Qur'an in a general form, even if it was revealed following a specific event or question, it constitutes valid and authoritative proof for extending the ruling to all similar referents across all times and places. This authority transforms the Qur'an from a mere historical report into a living and eternal charter of guidance. In other words, the generality of the wording is the bridge connecting the specific case of the revelation era with the changing needs of the community throughout history. This principle guarantees that the Qur'anic addresses always speak directly to their audience in every era, and they find themselves addressed by it. Without attributing authority to this generality, the sphere of the Qur'an's influence would be limited to a specific geography and history, and its universal mission and finality would be negated.

The Evidences and Foundations of the Opinion Upholding the Authority of the Generality of the Wording:

1. The Rational Evidence and the Logic of Legislative Address

- **The Wisdom and Perpetuity of the Shari'ah:** The Qur'an is a book for the guidance of humanity until the Day of Judgment. If its rulings and teachings were confined only to the referents and persons of the revelation era, this objective would not be achieved. Therefore, sound reason dictates that Qur'anic addresses, even if revealed in specific cases, carry a universal and eternal semantic weight.
- **The Predominance of the Educational Aspect:** The Qur'an is primarily a book of "education and cultivation." When God is in the position of educating humanity, it is natural to use general wordings so that the ruling is comprehensive. The specificity of the occasion (the circumstance of revelation) is merely a "tangible example" for embodying the general ruling.
- The Noble Qur'an introduces itself as "**a guidance for the worlds,**" "**a reminder for the worlds,**" and "**an explanation of all things.**" These attributes indicate the universality and comprehensiveness of the Qur'an for all people in all eras. Therefore, its addresses, although revealed within a specific temporal context, have content for all times.

Thus, the criterion is the generality of the wording, not the specificity of the case. Otherwise, it would necessarily follow that the Islamic community would be excluded from being an absolute guide to the rulings, and no Muslim says this. The verse "**a guidance for mankind**" includes all people in all eras, and if only the contemporaries of the revelation were intended, it would have been appropriate to say: "a guidance for the contemporaries." (Jawādī Āmulī, 2006: 2/87)

The origin of this rule can be traced to evidences for the eternity of the Qur'an, such as the verse "**We have not neglected anything in the Book**" (Al-An'ām 6:38) or the narration from Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) who said: "**Its apparent meaning is its revelation, and its hidden meaning is its interpretation. Some of it has passed, and some has not yet come to pass. It flows just as the sun and the moon flow.**" (Ḥurr al-Āmilī, 1988: 27/196). In explaining the meaning of this ḥadīth, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes: The Qur'an, in terms of its applicability to referents and its explanation of their states, is expansive. Therefore, a verse is not specific to its occasion of revelation; rather, it applies to any case that shares the same effective cause (*mānaʿ*) as the occasion of revelation,

like proverbs that are not confined to their initial instances of usage but extend to everything appropriate to them, beyond the specific occasion. (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1969: 3/67)

Consequently, Qur'anic scholars and exegetes present this fundamental principle not on a specific page, but as the foundation and governing spirit over the entire interpretation, and they mention it in their books and refer to it in numerous places. (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1969: 1/5-6; Ibid: 1/379; Ibid: 2/71-72; Ma'rifat, 2006: 2/150; Subḥānī, 2000: 1/174; Iyāzī, 2007: 98; Ibid, 2008: 209)

2. The Transmitted Evidence (The Practice of the Infallibles (as) and the Companions)

- **The Practice of the Infallibles (As):** This is a historical-practical evidence (practical *sīrah*) showing that the Infallibles themselves, as the primary explicators and interpreters of the Qur'an, would apply verses—even those revealed with a specific "circumstance of revelation"—to new referents beyond the case of revelation. This practice has legal authority (*ḥujjiyyah shar'īyyah*) and is considered a practical tradition for us.
 - A narration from the Prophet (ṣ) regarding the occasion of revelation of the verse **"And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night. Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds. That is a reminder for those who remember."** (Hūd 11:114), found in books of both schools and explicitly affirming the mentioned rule, is that Abū al-Yasar asked: "Is this verse for me?" The Prophet (ṣ) said: **"For all of my community, all of them."** The Prophet's (ṣ) response to him—"for all of my community"—means that authority lies with the generality of the wording: **"Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds,"** not the specificity of the occasion. (Abū al-Futūḥ Rāzī, 1987: 1/249; Ṭabarī, 1991: 12/80-81)
- **The Practice of the Companions:** Regarding the verse **"As for the thief, male and female, amputate their hands..."** (Al-Mā'idah 5:38), al-Suyūṭī writes: Najdah ibn 'Āmir al-Ḥanafī asked Ibn 'Abbās about this verse: **"Is it specific or general?"** And Ibn 'Abbās said: **"Rather, it is general."** Therefore, al-Suyūṭī believes that among the evidences for the authority of the generality of the wording is: **"The argumentation of the Companions and others who would cite the generality of verses that were revealed in specific cases for various incidents, and this method was widespread among them."** (Al-Suyūṭī, 2000: 1/123-124)

3. Historical Evidence and the Practice of Rational People

In all legal and legislative systems, when a law is enacted following a specific incident, the law itself takes on a general and permanent character and is not confined to that incident. A concrete example for better understanding is to suppose that in a country, due to a specific traffic accident, a law is passed with this content: **"Any driver who speeds shall be sentenced to one year of driving prohibition."** No rational person would say this law is only for that specific driver. Everyone understands that this is a general ruling for all drivers at all times. The Noble Qur'an, as **"the constitution of humanity,"** has used this same method.

Consequently, the evidence of **"the practice of rational people,"** articulated by Imami Qur'anic scholars, shows that the rule **"Al-'Ibra bi-'umūm al-lafẓ"** is rooted in human rationality and

innate disposition (*fiṭrah*), and the Qur'an as a book of guidance is in harmony with this universal rationality. This evidence transforms the rule from a purely technical jurisprudential discussion into a principle accepted in human daily life. (Subḥānī, 2000: 1/177; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1969: 2/71-72; Ma'rīfat, 2006: 2/153; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2009: 150)

4. Mystical and Philosophical Evidence

- **Explanation of the Mystical Evidence:**

1. **The Essence of the Qur'an is a Single Light:** From a mystical perspective, the Qur'an in its essence is a "single light" and a "perfect word" encompassing all truths of existence. This singular reality cannot be confined to a single historical case.
2. **The Occasion of Revelation is Not the Most Perfect Manifestation:** The event or question that was the occasion for the verse's revelation is only one of the possible manifestations and the lowest level of the manifestation of that Qur'anic reality. If we limit the verse to that occasion of revelation, we have essentially reduced the lofty reality of the Qur'an to its lowest level of manifestation.
3. **General Wording is the Outward Form of an Inner Generality:** General wordings like "O mankind" and "O you who have believed," in their outward form, possess generality. This outward generality is, in reality, a sign of the inward generality of the verse. That is, the verse encompasses not only all external human beings but also all existential levels of humanity and all possible referents throughout history.
4. **The Rule of Al-'Ibra is the Key to Understanding the Depths of the Qur'an:** The rule "Al-'Ibra bi-'umūm al-laḥẓ" is not merely a rule for understanding the outward meaning of words; it is the key to entering into an understanding of the inner dimensions (*buṭūn*) of the Qur'an. When you confine the verse to its specific occasion of revelation, you close the door to any correct interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and inner comprehension. But when you apply this rule and understand the verse according to its generality, you in fact allow the luminous, multi-layered reality of the verse to manifest according to the capacity of every person in every time.

Therefore, the Qur'an is a luminous, singular reality that has been revealed in the form of words. The occasion of revelation is the lowest and most limited level of manifestation of that reality. The rule "Al-'Ibra bi-'umūm al-laḥẓ" is a method for "**transcending from the specific manifestation to the universal reality**" and "**going beyond the constraints of the time and place of revelation.**" Thus, adhering to this rule is not merely an interpretive method; it is an "**intellectual spiritual journey**" for reaching the ocean of Qur'anic truths. Whoever stops at the occasion of revelation remains veiled by the outward form and is deprived of the lights of the Qur'an's inner dimensions. (Jawādī Āmulī, 2006: 3/127-130; Ibid, 2007: 1/235-240)

- **Explanation of the Philosophical Evidence:** This argument is a philosophical-jurisprudential proof based on the conceptual distinction between "**occasion (sabab)**" and "**cause ('illah)**." To understand it, these two concepts are first explained:

1. **Occasion of Revelation (*al-munāsabah*):** This is the specific historical event, individual question, or definite incident following which the verse was revealed (e.g., a personal question to the Prophet, the event of Uḥud, the behavior of specific hypocrites, etc.). This occasion is an external, incidental matter. It is the **case** of revelation, not the **cause** of revelation.
2. **Cause of Revelation (*al-‘illah*):** This is the legislative wisdom behind the general divine ruling and the universal guidance that the verse was revealed to express. This cause is an intrinsic, perpetual matter. This cause is manifested in the general wording of the verse. If the "**occasion of revelation**" is merely an external circumstance and the "**cause of revelation**," which is the general ruling, is embedded in the generality of the verse's wording, then: "**Consideration is given to the cause (which is the generality of the wording), not to the circumstance (which is the specificity of the occasion).**"
 - **A Concrete Example from the Qur'an: The Verse of Private Counsel "O you who have believed, when you converse privately with the Messenger, present before your private conversation a charity..." (Al-Mujādilah 58:12)**
 - **Occasion of Revelation (*al-munāsabah*):** The behavior of specific hypocrites who would give charity before meeting the Prophet (ṣ) to gain attention.
 - **Cause of Revelation (*al-‘illah*):** Legislating a general etiquette and universal ruling for the private counsel of all believers with the Prophet (ṣ) in all times, to preserve his sanctity.
 - We must pay attention to the cause of revelation (which is embedded in the general wording "**O you who have believed**" and the ruling "**present a charity**"), not to the occasion of revelation (which was the behavior of those specific hypocrites). Therefore, this etiquette is a general ruling for all believers.

Therefore, the "**occasion of revelation**" is an external, historical circumstance, while the "**cause of revelation**" is a legislative wisdom and a universal ruling. Hence, the criterion in derivation is the cause (the generality of the wording), not the occasion (the specificity of the case of revelation); because if we suffice with the occasion (the specific case), we have stripped the Qur'an of its legislative aspect and its eternal guidance, reducing it to a historical record. (Jawādī Āmulī, 2007: 1/228; Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2007: 2/25)

5. Literary-Linguistic Evidence

This argument has several main pillars:

1. **The Intrinsic Appearance (*Ẓuhūr*) of General Words (Objective Appearance):** Words such as "*man*" (whoever), "*mā*" (whatever), "*ayy*" (whichever), "*kull*" (all), as well as plural nouns with the definite article "**al-**" (like *al-mu'minūn* - the believers) and general grammatical forms, are intrinsically and by linguistic convention created for generality.

2. **The Primary Principle: "Interpreting Speech According to Its Literal Meaning (*Haml al-Kalām'alā al-Ḥaqīqah*)"**

In the philosophy of language, the principle is that every word should be interpreted according to its "literal" and primary meaning. Interpreting a general word according to its generality is "interpretation according to the literal meaning." However, interpreting it as referring to one specific instance (the specific occasion) is "interpretation according to a figurative meaning (*majāz*)." Since "the default principle is the absence of figurative usage," as long as there is no contextual indicator (*qarīnah*) indicating an intention for a figurative meaning (i.e., that specific case), we must act upon the literal meaning (i.e., the generality). (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1969: 2/71)

3. **The Definitive Role of "Contextual Indicators (*Qarā'in*)" in Specification**

The only thing that can break this strong indication of generality is the existence of a "definitive contextual indicator." This indicator must be either "connected" (within the speech itself) or "disconnected" (found in reliable narrations). Merely knowing a historical "occasion of revelation," if it does not reach the level of a "definitive indicator," cannot specify the general wording. (Ma'rifat, 2006: 2/152)

If it is stated within the verse itself or in a reliable narration from an Infallible that "the intended meaning of this general word is only such-and-such a person," then in this case, it becomes specific. However, in the absence of such an indicator, common sense and rational people interpret the general word according to its generality.

4. **The Conventional Mental Reception of the Audience (*Al-Sīrah al-'Uqālā'iyyah*):**

The audience of the Qur'an, who are "native speakers of the language," when encountering an address like "O mankind" or "O you who have believed," their minds automatically and naturally turn towards a collective and general address, not an address to an individual or specific group 1400 years ago. This "mental reception" and "practice of rational people" is itself evidence of the speaker's (God's) intention for generality. (Ma'rifat, 2000: 1/177) Therefore, when the audience (native speakers) encounter general words like "*yā ayyuhā alladhīna āmanū*" (O you who have believed), their minds turn towards a general and comprehensive ruling, not a specific case. This "conventional reception" indicates that the speaker's (God's) intention is also for this generality.

This evidence shows that the rule in question is not merely a "juristic-legal principle," but a universal "linguistic-philosophical rule" rooted in the very functioning of "language." The Qur'an, revealed in this language, has followed these rules.

6. Consensus of Scholars and Exegetes

There is a definitive and widespread consensus among Imami exegetes and legal theorists (and even many Sunni scholars) that the criterion in Qur'anic verses is the generality of the wordings, not the specificity of the occasions of revelation. This consensus exists both theoretically (in books of Qur'anic sciences and legal theory) and practically (in their interpretive methodology). The limited opposition from the Zāhirī school is due to their rejection of rational principles in general and is considered an anomalous opinion with no weight, and it does not invalidate the authority of this established rule.

After the application of the rule in the first and second centuries by the Imams and Companions, Imami and Sunni exegetes also referred to it in their exegetical works. For example: Muqātil ibn Sulaymān in *Tafsīr Muqātil*, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī in *Fiqh al-Qur'ān*, al-Fāḍil al-Miqdād in *Kanz al-'Irfān*, Mullā Faṭḥ Allāh al-Kāshānī in *Manhaj al-Ṣādiqīn*, al-Muqaddas al-Ardabīlī in *Zubdat al-Bayān*, al-Fāḍil Jawād in *Masālik al-Afhām*, al-Ṣādiqī in *Al-Furqān*, and 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in *Al-Mīzān* cited this rule with the expression "**al-mawrid lā yukhaṣṣiṣ**" (the context [of revelation] does not specify [the ruling]). (Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, 2002: 6/128; al-Rāwandī, 1984: 1/157; al-Fāḍil al-Miqdād, 1994:1/96; al-Kāshānī, 1957: 2/458; al-Muqaddas al-Ardabīlī, n.d.: 346; al-Fāḍil Jawād, 1986: 2/317; al-Ṣādiqī, 1985: 6/161; 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1969: 11/55)

Similarly, among Sunni scholars, al-Ṭabarānī in *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī in *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, al-Ṭabarī in *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, al-Zarkashī in *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī in *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fī al-Tafsīr*, al-Suyūṭī in *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, al-Ālūsī in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, Sayyid Quṭb in *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, Āl al-Sa'dī in *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, and al-Ṭantāwī in *Al-Tafsīr al-Wasīṭ* have utilized this rule. (al-Ṭabarānī, 2008: 1/275; al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī, 2001: 3/127; al-Ṭabarī, 1991: 6/148; Fakhr al-Rāzī, 1999: 7/134; al-Zarkashī, 1989: 1/126; Abū Ḥayyān, 1999: 2/54; al-Suyūṭī, 2000: 1/123; al-Ālūsī, 1994: 1/155; Sayyid Quṭb, 2004: 2/642; Āl al-Sa'dī, 1987: 23; al-Ṭantāwī, 1997: 1/434)

Therefore, by examining the opinions of Shi'i and Sunni exegetes and legal theorists, we conclude that this rule is an established principle among all legal theorists and exegetes, with no opposition except from a small number of extremists and hardliners whose opposition carries no weight. (Ma'rifat, 2006: 2/155) Or that only some Zāhirīs have opposed it. (*Mafāhīm al-Qur'ān*, 2000: 1/178)

Second Opinion: The Authority of the Specificity of the Occasion

Some contemporary Qur'anic scholars attributed this theory to the school of Mālik, al-Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad, Abū Thawr, al-Muzanī, and others, stating that a large group of scholars held this view. (Abū 'Aṣī, 2005: 64; Khālīd al-Muzaynī, 2006: 1/134) According to this view, one must adhere to the specificity of the occasion. This means that the wording of the verse is exclusively about the incident concerning which it was revealed, and the ruling for similar cases cannot be derived from the explicit text of the verse unless there is another evidence, such as analogy (*qiyās*) – provided its conditions are met – or another evidence like the saying of the Prophet (ṣ): "**A ruling for one is a ruling for the collective (ḥukmī 'alā al-wāḥid ḥukmī 'alā al-jamā'ah).**" According to this opinion, the verse on false accusation (*qadhf*), which was revealed concerning Hilāl and his wife, is specific only to that case and no other. The ruling for similar cases must be derived based on analogy or by citing the mentioned ḥadīth. (Al-Zarqānī, n.d.: 1/119; Muḥammad Bakr Ismā'īl, 1998: 170; Abū Shuhbah, 2002: 156)

It is worth noting that some Imami exegetes in their commentaries have utilized both the intra-textual rule of *al-'ibrah* (deriving from the general wordings of the verses themselves) and the extra-textual principle of "**a ruling for one is a ruling for the collective,**" which is a type of extra-textual rule. (Al-Fāḍil al-Miqdād, 1994: 2/297; al-Kāshānī, 1957: 6/257)

Based on findings, no prominent contemporary Imami Qur'anic scholar has outright denied the rule "**Al-'Ibra bi-'umūm al-lafẓ lā bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab**" in its entirety. What exists are only more precise explanations, increased scholarly caution, and expert distinctions regarding the *how* and *conditions* for applying this rule. Therefore, it can be claimed that this rule is among the established scholarly consensuses for Qur'anic scholars of both schools.

It must be acknowledged that there are no contemporary Sunni Qur'anic scholars who explicitly and directly oppose the rule "**Al-'Ibra bi-'umūm al-lafẓ.**" This rule enjoys widespread acceptance among traditional Sunni legal theorists and exegetes as well.

However, what exists is not an "explicit opposition," but "methodological challenges" and "excessive emphasis on the role of history" which, in practice, limit the scope of the rule. The following introduces these intellectual currents:

Intellectual Currents in Sunni Thought that Conflict with the Spirit of the Rule "Al-'Ibra bi-'umūm al-lafẓ":

1. **Extremist Literalist Current (Jihadi-Takfīri Salafism):** This group does not directly reject the rule, but by mechanically applying verses to contemporary referents without considering the context of the verses, they effectively disregard both the "specificity of the occasion" and the "generality of the wording." They apply verses revealed concerning specific polytheists or hypocrites of the Prophet's (ṣ) era, without considering any interpretive rules—neither the generality of the wording nor the specificity of the occasion—directly to contemporary Muslims who disagree with them.
 - **Example:** Abū Muṣ'ab al-Zarqāwī (the first leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq) is a proponent of this current. In "**Majmū'at al-Muntakhab min Kalām al-Shaykh Abī Muṣ'ab al-Zarqāwī,**" he repeatedly applies verses like "**And fight the polytheists all together...**" (Al-Tawbah 9:36) or verses concerning hypocrites, without any reflection on their historical occasion of revelation or conventional generality of wording, directly to Shi'a, Arab governments, and even Muslims who do not cooperate with him. He uses general terms (like "*al-mushrikīn*" - the polytheists), but interprets them not based on the conventional meaning of the word, but according to his own constructed and exclusive definition of polytheism (which includes many Muslims). This practice disregards both the specificity of the occasion (the polytheists of the Prophet's era) and the correct method for understanding the generality of wording. (Bāghbānī, 2015: 125-140)
2. **Current of Extreme Historicists:** Dr. Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd and some of his students, by centering the "historicity of the Qur'anic text," practically call into question the possibility of accessing a fixed, generalizable meaning. From their perspective, every verse is only understandable within the framework of the socio-cultural conditions of the revelation era. Therefore, although they may not directly say "**al-'ibrah bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab**" (consideration is for the specificity of the occasion), the logical conclusion of their view is that there is no "generality of wording" that can serve as a criterion, because all wordings are bound to their own history. (Abū Zayd, 1990: 187-190)
3. **Current of Secular Rationalists:** Among the proponents of this theory is Dr. Muḥammad Arkoun (Algerian). By employing modern literary criticism and phenomenological

methods, he attempts to "sift" the concepts of the Qur'an. From his perspective, many of the Qur'an's rulings are responses to the conditions of Arabian society 1400 years ago and cannot be considered as eternal laws for modern humanity. In this view, the "occasion of revelation" (historical conditions) becomes so prominent that it overshadows the "generality of the wording." (Arkoun, 2004: 135)

Therefore, among contemporary Sunni Qur'anic scholars, there is no "organized and explicit opposition" to the rule itself as a legal principle. The reason for this is that the rule "**Al-'Ibra bi-'umūm al-lafẓ**" is an established rational and linguistic principle. Explicitly denying it would mean trampling on the self-evident principles of language comprehension and the rational practice of humanity in legislation and communication. Even those like Ibn Taymiyyah, who sometimes strongly emphasize attention to occasions of revelation, have not explicitly rejected this rule. What exists is the "misuse" of verses by disregarding all rules (by extremist Salafis) or the "practical suspension" of the rule by resorting to the extreme historicity of the text (by historicists).

Evidence for the Opinion Upholding the Authority of the Specificity of the Occasion and Its Evaluation

Proponents of this theory have argued based on the following evidence:

First Evidence: The purpose of this wording is only to state the ruling for the specific occasion; otherwise, delaying the clarification of the ruling (in the present) until the time the event occurs (in the future) would be impossible. If the goal were only to state the ruling for the occasion, the wording must be limited to it.

Three responses have been given to this argument:

1. Regarding the wisdom of stating the ruling after the occasion, it suffices that the general wording states the ruling for the individuals of the mentioned occasion, even if similar individuals also fall within the scope of the general wording. Therefore, the delay in stating the ruling relative to the occasion does not necessitate that the statement be confined solely to the individuals of that occasion. (Al-Zarqānī, n.d.: 1/125)
2. The occurrence of an event at a specific time is a matter dependent on God's wisdom, known exclusively to Him, because a benefit might be lost or the compliance of servants might not be possible if it occurred earlier or later.
3. This argument leads to the conclusion that general rulings revealed concerning specific occasions—like the verses on *ẓihār* (pre-Islamic oath of divorce) and *li'ān* (mutual imprecation)—are specific to their own occasions, because the statement was delayed until the event occurred. This contradicts the consensus. (Al-Muzaynī, 2006: 1/134)

Second Evidence: If a general wording revealed concerning a specific occasion intends generality, then specifying the occasion and excluding it from the generality through independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) would be permissible, just as specifying other instances falling under the generality through *ijtihād* is permissible, because the generality relates equally to all instances included within it.

The response to this point is: There is no necessary connection between the intention of generality in the wording and the permissibility of specifying the occasion through *ijtihād*. This is because the wording came as a statement of the ruling for the occasion and is definitive (*qaṭʿī*) in this regard. Therefore, specifying it through *ijtihād* is prohibited, unlike other instances where there is disagreement over whether the wording expresses a ruling for them or not, and thus its inclusion of them is probabilistic (*ẓannī*). Hence, specifying those other instances through *ijtihād* is permissible. (Ibid: 134-135; Abū Shuhbah, 2002: 160)

Third Evidence: If the ruling were not specific to its occasion, the narrator would not have transmitted the occasion; because transmitting it in that case would be without benefit. However, since narrators transmitted the occasions of rulings and emphasized preserving them, this indicates that the ruling is specific to the occasion. (Ibid: 135; Ibid: 161)

The response to this point is: We do not accept that transmitting the occasion is without benefit; rather, it has benefits, including:

1. Clarifying the specificity of the occasion within the ruling, meaning that the occasion holds a more specific status in the ruling than other instances.
2. Knowing the chronology of the ruling by knowing its occasion, which is beneficial for knowing the abrogating (*nāsikh*) from the abrogated (*mansūkh*).
3. Expanding knowledge of the Shari'ah by knowing rulings through their occasions. (Ibid: 135)

Conclusion:

The examination of the evidence and foundations of the rule "**Al-ʿIbra bi-ʿumūm al-lafẓ lā bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab**" in the thought of contemporary exegetes and Qur'anic scholars clearly shows that this rule is not merely a technical legal principle. Rather, it is the key to a dynamic, systematic, and trans-historical understanding of the Noble Qur'an and the guarantor of the eternity and universality of its message. Accepting this rule means recognizing the divine legislative wisdom that has decreed general rulings, within the framework of general wordings, for the guidance of humanity in all eras. In contrast, any excessive emphasis on the historicity of the text or ideological and exclusive readings that disregard the general implicative nature of the verses not only contradicts the guidance objectives of the Qur'an but ultimately leads to reducing it to a historical document or a tool for justifying sectarian violence. Therefore, adherence to this rule entails both commitment to the scientific principles of interpretation and guarantees constructive dialogue with the contemporary world in the light of the eternal Qur'anic teachings.

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