

47. The Place and Importance of the Preserved Tablet (Levh-i-Mahfuz) in Terms of the Contribution of the Qur'an to the Arabic Language and the Conversion of Sharia Concepts into Verse¹

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Abstract

This article examines the contributions of the Quran to the Arabic language and its role in the poeticization of religious concepts. Additionally, it discusses the place and significance of the Preserved Tablet (Levh-i Mahfûz) in Islamic tradition. It focuses on how the Quran enriched the richness and depth of the Arabic language, how religious concepts were aesthetically transformed, and the contributions of the Preserved Tablet to the belief system. When exploring the influence of the Quran on the Arabic language, it is evident that language transcends being merely a communication tool and acquires symbolic depth. The Quran effectively conveys concepts using the Arabic language, enhancing its aesthetic value. Through an examination of how religious concepts are poetically formed, the importance of the aesthetic dimension of Islamic thought is emphasized. The Preserved Tablet holds a significant place in Islamic belief. In this article, the role and significance of the Preserved Tablet in Islamic tradition are thoroughly discussed. As the contributions of the Preserved Tablet to the belief system are examined, attention is given to understanding its place in Islamic thought. In conclusion, this article aims to present a broader understanding of how the Quran reflects the organic relationship between language and religion and discusses the significance of the Preserved Tablet in Islamic thought.

Keywords: Arabic Language and Literature, Arabic Language and Rhetoric, Sharia Concepts, Poetry, Preserved Tablet.

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Kur'an'ı Kerim'in Arap Diline Katkıları Açısından Şer'i Kavramların Nazıma Dönüşmesinde Levh-i Mahfuz'un Yeri ve Önemi³

Öz

Bu makale, Kuran'ı Kerim'in Arap diline olan katkılarını ve şer'i kavramların nazıma dönüşmesindeki rolünü inceliyor. Ayrıca, İslam geleneğindeki Levh-i Mahfuz'un (Preserved Tablet) yeri ve önemi de ele alınıyor. Kur'an'ın Arap dilinin zenginliğini ve derinliğini nasıl zenginleştirdiği, şer'i kavramların nasıl estetik bir forma dönüştüğü ve Levh-i Mahfuz'un inanç sistemine olan katkıları bu çalışmanın odak noktalarını oluşturuyor. Kuran'ın Arap diline olan etkisi incelendiğinde, dilin sadece iletişim aracı olmanın ötesine geçtiği ve sembolik bir derinlik kazandığı görülür. Kur'an, Arap dilini kullanarak kavramları daha etkili bir şekilde iletiyor ve bu da onun estetik değerini arttırıyor. Şer'i kavramların bu nazım sürecinde nasıl estetik bir forma büründüğü incelenerek, İslam düşüncesinin estetik boyutunun önemi vurgulanıyor. Levh-i Mahfuz ise İslam inancında önemli bir yer tutar. Bu makalede, Levh-i Mahfuz'un İslam geleneğindeki rolü ve önemi detaylı bir şekilde ele alınıyor. Levh-i Mahfuz'un, inanç sistemine olan katkıları incelenirken, bu kavramın İslam düşüncesindeki yerinin anlaşılması üzerinde duruluyor. Sonuç olarak bu makale Kuran'ın dil ve din arasındaki organik ilişkiyi yansıttığını ve Levh-i Mahfuz'un İslam düşüncesindeki önemini tartışarak, bu konuların daha geniş bir anlayışını sunmayı amaçlıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Dili ve Edebiyatı, Arap Dili ve Belagati, Şer'i Kavramlar, Nazım, Levh-i Mahfuz.

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Introduction

The term “levh” encompasses various meanings including shoulder blade, drought, atmosphere, elongated object, to shimmer, to appear, to beware, to destroy, to attack, to gesture from afar, to sear something in fire, to weaken, to change, a broad bone, to imply significant meanings (Humeyrî, 1999, 6135). It has also been used to denote concepts such as to look, to go, to hit, to feel ashamed, to fear, and to trust (İbn Manzûr, 1997, XII, 355). The phrase Preserved Tablet (Levh-i Mahfûz) is actually a compound noun. The second part of the compound, “mahfûz” means preserved or protected. However, some interpret the expression “mahfûz” in the verse as an attribute of the Quran rather than of “levh” (Zemahşerî, 1307, 2, 536). According to Islamic belief, the Preserved Tablet is a divine record or book in which Allah has inscribed the destinies and creations of all beings. This sacred scripture, created by Allah before the universe's inception, meticulously records everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen in detail. In Arabic, “Levh-i Mahfûz” translates to “Preserved Tablet”, “hidden tablet” or “guarded tablet.” Sure, we will refer to “Levh-i Mahfûz” as the “Preserved Tablet” from now on (el-İsbehânî, 2012, 1345).

Allah is viewed as the sole deity who knows and predetermines everything. The “Preserved Tablet” is considered a holy scripture established before the creation of the universe. Every event in human life is believed to be written in the “Preserved Tablet” as predetermined by Allah. References to the “Preserved Tablet” are made several times in the Quran. It is also acknowledged as a source containing information about Allah's predestination. It is stated that the destinies of all individuals and entities are stored in the “Preserved Tablet” also known as the “Mother Book” in the presence of Allah. (Neml: 27/75)

Therefore, the “Preserved Tablet” carries a sacred value, and composing poetry about it requires a great responsibility. When transforming the “Preserved Tablet” into verse, it is important to accurately reflect its content alongside the subtlety of language and expression. The poem should convey the meaning of the “Preserved Tablet” without simplifying or distorting it. Furthermore, the poetry is expected to possess artistic value and provide the reader with an impactful experience. Therefore, meticulous attention must be paid to the artistic elements of the poem, such as rhyme, rhythm, and language usage (Yazır, 2021, 1/93-94).

In this study, we will focus on the significance and place of the “Preserved Tablet” in being transformed into poetry as a Sharia concept, which has been conceptually known throughout human history but not fully understood. By examining Quranic verses, interpretations, hadiths, and literary works, we will attempt to understand it. Additionally, by reviewing relevant verses from other sacred texts, we will explore the meanings and contributions of the “Levh-i Mahfûz” to theoretical and practical life, both positively and negatively.

1. Surah and Reason for Revelation of the Verse of Preserved Tablet (Levh-i Mahfûz) in the Quran

The basic themes of Surah Al-Buruc, in which the verse of the “Preserved Tablet” is mentioned, include constellations, the companions of the trench (People of Uhdud), the fate of Pharaoh and the people of Thamud, and the “Preserved Tablet” itself. The word “Buruc” which gives the surah its name, means constellations, referring to the stars (planets) in the sky. The companions of the trench are a historical group who faced various punishments for their disbelief in their own prophets. One of the punishments inflicted upon the disbelievers who persecuted the believing companions of the trench was throwing

them into a pit of fire and then watching them with composure. Allah informs that those who subjected believers to such torment will be thrown into Hell, while those who believe and do righteous deeds will have gardens beneath which rivers flow. Allah is described as the Most Forgiving, Most Loving, and He is capable of doing whatever He wills. The Qur'an is stated to be a preserved book within the "Preserved Tablet", although the surah does not provide further elaboration on this concept. *"No, that [Qur'an] is a noble Qur'an. In a Register well-protected; The Tablet Preserved (Levh-i Mahfûz)."* (Burûc: 85/21-22)

The Surah Al-Buruc was revealed during the Meccan period. It contains narratives about the power of Allah and the trials of humanity. The surah advises patience and endurance against the injustices faced during the Meccan period (Beydâvî, 1908, 483). In this Surah, while addressing the persecutions and hardships endured by the believers throughout history, there is also an emphasis on the punishment that will be administered by Allah for the wrongdoings committed by the disbelievers (Derveze, 1997, 278).

This surah expresses that the verses of the Quran are contained within the "Preserved Tablet". Gabriel (Jibril) brings the Quranic verses to the Prophet Muhammad from the "Preserved Tablet". While the Quranic verses were revealed gradually, they existed as a whole in the "Preserved Tablet" long before the process of revelation. Therefore, we must acknowledge that the verses descended for a specific reason were already present in the "Preserved Tablet" before the occurrence of that reason.

2. Other verses in the Quran that are similarly interpreted to the verse about the Preserved Tablet (Levh-i Mahfûz) include

In many verses of the Quran, Allah has described the characteristics of the Preserved Tablet. According to this, the "Preserved Tablet" is a comprehensive book where nothing is left out: *"The keys of the unseen are with Him. No one knows them except Him. He knows everything on land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls without His knowledge, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green or dry, but is recorded in a clear book."* This verse emphasizes that Allah's knowledge encompasses everything, even the minutest details, and that everything is meticulously recorded in the "Preserved Tablet". (Enam: 6/59)

It is conveyed in the following verse that all living beings on Earth are recorded in the Preserved Tablet: *"There is no creature on earth or bird that flies with its wings except that they are communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register (Preserved Tablet) a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered."* This verse emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the "Preserved Tablet", where every creature, including humans and birds, is meticulously recorded. It also indicates that all beings will eventually be gathered before their Lord. (Enam: 6/38)

In another verse, it is explained that everything, even the weight of a speck of dust in the entire universe, is in the knowledge of Allah and recorded in the "Preserved Tablet": *"Not in the least, in the earth or in the heaven is hidden from Allah. Nor is there anything smaller or greater than that but is (written) in a clear record."* This verse underscores the comprehensive nature of Allah's knowledge, emphasizing that nothing escapes His awareness, no matter how small or large. Everything is meticulously recorded in a clear book, referring to the "Preserved Tablet". (Yunus: 10/61)

3. Preserved Tablet (Levh-i Mahfûz) in Islamic Sciences

The “Preserved Tablet” is a subject of great importance in Islamic sciences, and there are differing views among Islamic scholars regarding its interpretation in the field of Tafsir (Quranic exegesis). Some scholars believe that the “Preserved Tablet” is a register containing the destiny of individuals, while others consider it as a symbolic expression indicating Allah's omniscience. However, generally in the field of Tafsir, the “Preserved Tablet” is approached in connection with the verses and themes of the Quran. Tafsir scholars have analyzed historical, social, cultural, and religious contexts to understand the verses and meanings of the Quran. These contexts also encompass an understanding of the role of the “Preserved Tablet”. Nevertheless, there is no consensus on this issue, and different scholars hold different interpretations (İbn Manzur, tz, 22).

In the field of Hadith sciences as well, there are varying perspectives among Islamic scholars regarding the Preserved Tablet. Some scholars believe that the “Preserved Tablet” serves as a repository where certain events mentioned in hadiths were pre-recorded, while others interpret it differently, suggesting various explanations regarding the events and statements mentioned in hadiths being pre-recorded in the “Preserved Tablet”. This difference in interpretation reflects the broader diversity within Islamic scholarship and the nuanced approaches taken by scholars to understand complex theological concepts. As with Tafsir, there is no unanimous agreement among scholars in the field of Hadith sciences regarding the nature and function of the “Preserved Tablet”. Each scholar may approach the subject based on their understanding of textual evidence, theological principles, and interpretive methodologies (Süleyman, IV/651).

In the field of Islamic theology (Kelam), the “Preserved Tablet” is often invoked in discussions regarding whether human destiny is predetermined and whether future events are preordained. Islamic theology interprets the “Preserved Tablet” as a sign that Allah possesses complete foreknowledge of all things and that human destiny is determined within this knowledge. However, there are differing interpretations regarding the significance of the “Preserved Tablet” in Islamic theology. Some scholars believe that the “Preserved Tablet” is a symbolic expression and that humans cannot fully comprehend its true meaning. Other scholars believe that the “Preserved Tablet” is a literal entity where everything is recorded, and they argue that these records are in harmony with Allah's infinite wisdom and justice (Yazır, 2021, 7/227).

Islamic philosophers have offered different interpretations from a philosophical perspective. For example, Al-Farabi, viewing the concepts of pen (kalem), tablet (levh), and book (kitab) symbolically, suggests that the Pen takes on meanings in the realm of command and conveys these meanings to the Tablet through a spiritual writing. In this view, destiny (kader) originates from the Pen and predestination (takdir) from the “Preserved Tablet”. (Farâbî, 1345, 16)

In Sufi thought, the “Preserved Tablet” is seen as a guiding source for an individual's spiritual journey and closeness to Allah. It plays a significant role in Sufi philosophy, which believes in the predetermined destiny of individuals. Sufi scholars regard the “Preserved Tablet” as a record of the potentials and destiny that humans possess from their creation. In Sufi science, the Preserved Tablet provides an opportunity for individuals to progress in their spiritual development and draw closer to Allah. During their spiritual journey, individuals strive to surpass their fate and the destiny written in the “Preserved Tablet” to attain higher spiritual levels. However, there may be different interpretations regarding the significance of the “Preserved Tablet” in Sufi thought as well. Some Sufi scholars believe that the

“Preserved Tablet” is a symbolic expression whose true meaning cannot be fully understood by humans. Others argue that the “Preserved Tablet” is a real entity where all of Allah's knowledge is preserved.

These explanations regarding the nature of the “Preserved Tablet” address two different realms. One part pertains to the fate of individuals within the Allah-human relationship, while the other concerns the source and essence of religious laws within the Allah-messenger relationship. Therefore, interpreting Quranic concepts and indications within the cultural and historical codes of their societies may weaken the Quran's self-sufficient linguistic indications and boundaries of meaning. (Aslan, 2009, 30)

4. The View of Other Abrahamic Religions on the Preserved Tablet

In Judaism, the concept of the “Preserved Tablet” is understood as a place where God has knowledge of all beings and where everything is recorded. The contents of these records include information about everyone's destiny and it is believed that God also has knowledge about future events. In Judaism, the concept of the “Preserved Tablet” is particularly found in religious texts such as the Talmud and Midrash. “Preserved Tablet” is primarily depicted as a place where God has knowledge of all beings and where everything is recorded. It is believed that everything in human life, everything in the lives of all beings in the world, and future events are known. In Judaism, since the concept of the “Preserved Tablet” contains information about people's destiny, the relationship between people's destiny and God's will is considered very important in Jewish belief. While human will and choices are important in Judaism, it is also believed that since God is an all-knowing and controlling entity, human destiny is under God's control. (Han, 1989, 11-98)

In Christianity, the concept of the “Preserved Tablet” is not portrayed as a book or tablet as it is in Islam. However, in Christianity, it is acknowledged that all future knowledge is known by God. The equivalent terms for the concept of the “Preserved Tablet” in Christianity are often referred to as the “Book” or the “Book of Life”. These terms are particularly found in some passages of the Bible, indicating that God is a being who knows the lives of individuals, especially their destinies and the consequences after death. In Christianity, instead of recording mechanisms like the “Preserved Tablet”, emphasis is placed on the free will and choices of individuals. People determine their own and others' destinies through the choices and actions they make throughout their lives. Therefore, in Christianity, the consequences individuals will face in God's judgment depend on their own choices and actions. (Wickwire, 1999, 14-20)

5. The Relationship Between Sharia Concepts and the Preserved Tablet

Sharia concepts are terms used in Islamic jurisprudence and are associated with Islamic belief. Among these concepts are terms like “haram” (forbidden), “halal” (permissible), “mashru” (permitted), “mubah” (neutral), and “ghayr-i mashru” (impermissible). According to Islamic belief, these concepts are recorded in the “Preserved Tablet”, and every action in people's lives is evaluated according to these concepts as delineated in the “Preserved Tablet”. For instance, the concept of “haram” signifies actions prohibited in Islamic law. These forbidden actions are already recorded in the “Preserved Tablet”, and abstaining from them implies fulfilling one's responsibilities towards Allah.

Sharia concepts are recorded in the “Preserved Tablet”, and every action in people's lives is evaluated according to these concepts. According to Islamic belief, every action in people's lives unfolds according to the destiny determined by Allah and is recorded in the “Preserved Tablet”. Therefore, Sharia concepts hold significant importance in terms of people's responsibilities and Islamic law. Sharia concepts are

those that are used in Islamic jurisprudence and align with Islamic belief. Among these concepts are justice, rights, law, security, safety, loyalty, sincerity, benevolence, worship, and others.

The relationship between Sharia concepts and the "Preserved Tablet" forms the foundation of Islamic law. The implementation and fulfillment of Sharia concepts serve the realization of the destiny recorded in the "Preserved Tablet". The Sharia concepts used in Islamic law are universal principles ordained by Allah and recorded in the "Preserved Tablet". The source of Sharia concepts is the verses found in the foundational texts of Islam. Sources such as the Qur'an, Sunnah, and consensus (ijma) play a significant role in the formation of Sharia concepts in Islamic law. According to Islamic belief, Sharia concepts are universal and immutable principles. These concepts are crucial for ensuring security, tranquility, and justice in people's lives. For example, the concept of justice is highly significant in Islamic law, and the fulfillment of this concept influences the realization of the destiny recorded in the "Preserved Tablet" (Râzî, 1420, 26/386).

In the literature of Islamic sciences, revelation directly associated with the "Preserved Tablet" is divided into two categories: vahy-i metlûv (revelation meant to be recited in worship) and vahy-i gayr-i metlûv (revelation not meant to be recited in worship). Vahy-i metlûv refers to the Qur'an, while gayr-i metlûv revelation refers to the Hadiths. Both types of revelation, primarily communicated through Gabriel (Jibril) to humanity, enter into the realm of Sharia jurisdiction either in the Preserved Tablet or afterward, through sound, letters, and words, taking on tangible form as we understand it. Indeed, as expressed by Ebu'l-Mu'in en-Nesefi in his work "Bahru'l-Kelâm," the Quran, as Allah's speech attribute, is eternal like all other names and attributes of Allah; it is not created later, nor is it composed of letters, sounds, or principles. The first being to hear, memorize, and comprehend this speech in sound and letter format was Gabriel. Gabriel communicated Allah's speech to the Prophet Muhammad in the form of revelation and prophethood. The Prophet Muhammad recited it, memorized it like Gabriel, and comprehended it. Subsequently, as part of the prophetic duty, the word of Allah was conveyed to the companions, who also memorized it. Just as the Qur'an, the non-recited revelation of Hadiths, which Gabriel communicated through the Prophet Muhammad to mankind, holds similar importance in terms of communication with people and serving as the subject matter of Sharia legislation. Therefore, the "Preserved Tablet" holds a distinct significance in the formation of Sharia terminology in both types of revelation. (Ebu'l-Muin, 1910, 55)

Conclusion

When the concepts found in the Quran are correctly understood, the Quran itself is understood correctly. Therefore, it is important for fundamental concepts to be understood within their own comprehensive framework. Concepts like the "Preserved Tablet", which are used with different meanings, require more specific attention. It is necessary to pay attention to the integrity of the Quran in order to prevent some semantic shifts.

Throughout human history, although conceptually known, it has been difficult to fully understand the significance of the "Preserved Tablet". However, it is crucial for it to be understood as a Sharia concept. In Islamic belief, the "Preserved Tablet" is a sacred place where the creation of the universe and the recording of destiny take place. It is believed that Allah knows and records everything in advance in the "Preserved Tablet", including every event in people's lives, each individual's destiny, and its consequences.

The relationship between Sharia concepts and the “Preserved Tablet” is based on the idea that the concepts determined by Allah, which are the source of law in Islamic jurisprudence, are recorded in the “Preserved Tablet”. The Sharia concepts ordained by Allah are recorded in the “Preserved Tablet”, and the fulfillment and implementation of these concepts are directly related to people's destinies.

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