

OUTLOOK ON MIRACLES IN *TAFSEER AL-MANAR*

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ABSTRACT

In their famous Qur'anic interpretation *Tafseer al-Manar*, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida stated that miracles exist theoretically within possibility and just like other Islamic scholars, they also accepted some miracles based on some evidences such as some statements in Qur'anic verses. However, they did not refrain from glossing some miracles in various forms that are considered as miracles by most of the other commentators of the Qur'an. Thus, they exhibited an ambivalent approach to miracles. The most important reason underlying this is that they were probably affected by philosophical movements such as Rationalism and Positivism, which have become a dominant thought during the period they lived in.

Key Words: Tafseer al-Manar, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, miracle, Rationalism, Positivism.

MENÂR TEFSİRİNDE MUCİZELERE BAKIŞ

ÖZ

Muhammed Abduh ve Reşid Rızâ, *el-Menâr* adlı Kur'ân tefsirlerinde hem teorik olarak mucizenin imkân dâhilinde olduğunu belirtmişler; hem de bazı mucizeleri tıpkı diğer İslam âlimleri gibi zâhirleri üzere/ayetlerde geçtiği gibi kabul etmişlerdir. Fakat öbür taraftan da, diğer müfessirlerin çoğunun bir mucize olarak kabul ettiği birtakım mucizeleri çeşitli şekillerde tevil etmekten de geri durmamışlardır. Böylece mucizelere bakış konusunda ikircikli bir yaklaşım sergilemişlerdir. Bunun arkasında yatan sebeplerden en önemlisi, muhtemelen içinde yaşadıkları dönemde hâkim düşünce haline gelmiş olan Rasyonalizm ve Pozitivizm gibi felsefi akımların etkisinde kalmış olmalarıdır.

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Tefsîru'l-Menâr, Muhammed Abduh, Reşid Rızâ, mucize, Rasyonalizm, Pozitivizm.

INTRODUCTION

The miracles attributed to the prophets in the Qur'an were generally regarded in the classical period as "extraordinary incidents" and accepted to be real occurrences just as mentioned in Qur'anic verses. In this period, it is accepted that Almighty Allah could create some extraordinary incidents by the hands of the prophets he appointed to deliver the divine messages to people, to persuade their collocutors or to help the prophets and those who believed in them. Indeed, descriptions of miracle are usually made accordingly.¹

When the modern period came, an attempt to routinize such miraculousness in some way and to interpret it as "extraordinary incidents" taking place within the cause and effect relationship was made under the effect of some philosophical movements such as Rationalism, Positivism, and Determinism that emerged especially during this period. Two of the most important examples of this approach are undoubtedly Muhammad Abduh (d. 1323/1905) and Rashid Rida (d. 1354/1935). Although it is stated that miracle is theoretically within possibility and some miracles are accepted based on their evidence/as mentioned in Qur'anic verses in *Tafseer al-Manar*, which is the product of the collaborative work of these two commentators, some different interpretations have occasionally been made on this subject.

In this interpretation, Abduh and Rida exhibited two different approaches to miracles sometimes in the form of "accepting miracles based on their evidence (*zahir*)/as mentioned in Qur'anic verses" and sometimes in the form of "interpreting miracles in various forms", like other scholars did. These comments that are included in the relevant interpretation on the miracles of the prophets will be discussed in this study. Since the approach of basing miracles on their evidence is commonly present in other commentators, fewer examples will be given in this respect. However, it is also important to include these examples to show that the commentators made interpretations in this respect. However, the miracles that they glossed in various forms will be mainly emphasized.

¹ See: Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani, *al-Ta'rifat*, p. 219, Daru'l-Kutubi'l-İlmiyah, 3rd Edition, Beirut, 1408/1988; Muhammad Ali at-Tahanavi, *Kashshafu Istilahati'l-Funun*, II, 975-977, Kahraman Publ., İstanbul, 1404/1984; Bekir Topaloğlu & İlyas Çelebi, *Kelâm Terimleri Sözlüğü*, p. 219; İSAM Publ., İstanbul, 2010; Halil İbrahim Bulut, *Kur'ân Işığında Mucize ve Peygamber*, p. 21-24, Rağbet Publ., İstanbul, 2002; Halil İbrahim Bulut, "Mucize", *DİA*, XXX, 350.

Our research mainly emerged as a part of a more comprehensive study carried out by us to determine the original comments in *Tafseer al-Manar*. While carrying out this research, a postgraduate thesis entitled "*Menâr Tefsirinde Mucizelerle İlgili Farklı Yorumlar [Different Comments on Miracles in Tafseer al-Manar]*" prepared by Niyazi Arıcı was also encountered², and this thesis will be also used in our study. In our paper, the general outlook of Abduh and Rida on miracles will firstly be revealed. Afterwards, the fact that these commentators understood some miracles based on their evidence (*zahir*) and interpreted some of them will be examined through a number of examples.

I. GENERAL OUTLOOK ON MIRACLES IN *TAFSEER AL-MANAR*

According to Abduh, there is no obstacle to the emergence of reasonably permissible/possible miracles in the hands of the prophets with the might of Almighty Allah. Therefore, it is necessary to believe in these miracles based on their evidence.³ In other words, the commentator admits that miracle is theoretically within possibility. However, according to him, this belief in miracles does not prevent us from finding the right way regarding Allah's laws about the created ones (*Sunnatullah*) and from believing that these laws are immutable.⁴ This statement of Abduh seems to give a sign that he will interpret some miracles in the future within the frame of "Some existential laws/natural causes that Allah Almighty has placed in the universe" that he called *Sunnatullah*.

According to Rashid Rida, who was the student of Abduh, Almighty Allah gave all prophets miracles in relation to the sciences which were popular in their time. For example, since *natural sciences* and *magic* were at the forefront during the period of the Prophet Moses, the "miracle of staff" that swallowed the snakes of sorcerers⁵ was given to him in this field. Thus, the fact that this miracle of the Prophet Moses was not ordinary magic and that the person who did it was the prophet was shown to these people who were experts in the field of magic. Similarly, "the miracles of resurrecting the dead and healing the sick" were given to the Prophet Jesus, who lived in the period of the

² See: Niyazi Arıcı, *Menâr Tefsirinde Mucizelerle ilgili Farklı Yorumlar*, Unpublished Postgraduate Thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara, 2006.

³ Muhammad Abduh & Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Tafseeru'l-Qur'ani'l-Hakim (Tafseer al-Manar)*, I, 314-315, Daru'l-Manar, 2nd Edition, Cairo, 1366/1947. Here, Muhammad Abduh clearly states that he sees the miracles of the prophet within possibility by quoting from his own work *Risalat'u't-Tawhid*. Compare: Muhammad Abduh, *Risalat'u't-Tawhid*, p. 45-46, Duru'l-Kutubi'l-Ilmiyah, Beirut, 1406/1986.

⁴ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 314-315.

⁵ See: al-A'raf 7/117; an-Naml 27/10; al-Qasas 28/31.

Romans during which *medical science* developed, in this field.⁶ According to Rashid Rida, in analogy to them, the "Miracle of the Qur'an", which constitutes the peak in the field of the Arabic literature was given to the Prophet who was sent to the Arabs who were at the advanced level in the field of *fasahah* (*fluency*) and *balagah* (*eloquence*).⁷

According to Abduh, Almighty Allah draws attention to the reality of *Sunnatullah* in the Qur'an, the last book with which he ended the institution of revelation with himself in the language of the Prophet with whom he ended the prophets.⁸ According to him, "the period of miracles" has ended, and humanity has now entered into the "period of maturity" after this stage. Namely, the miraculous incidents (*miracles*) that dismay people are no longer regarded as the incidents that lead them to belief, Almighty Allah calls on humanity to Allah and to use their *mind* to believe in revelation via the Qur'an, which is the last revelation. In other words, while Almighty Allah was calling on people to believe through *miracles* in the time of old prophets, that we can describe as the "childhood of humanity", He invites humanity, which has now entered the "age of maturity", to believe through *reason* with the Qur'an because, according to Abduh, in order to attract the hearts of communities, whose minds have not yet reached the level of understanding mental evidences, to belief, the fact that we believe in some miracles that Almighty Allah has given to the previous prophets to confirm them is not contrary to the fact that our religion is a religion of wisdom and creation.⁹

Accordingly, Abduh acknowledges that some concrete miracles were shown in the hands of the prophets for inviting previous communities to believe and that the Qur'an has included them, but he says that the period of miracles has come to an end with the last prophet. Therefore, it seems that Abduh expressed the opinion that "The Prophet has no other miracle except the Qur'an", which has become a popular discourse today, on that day.

Furthermore, the effect of the *Positivism* movement that occurred in the modern period is clearly observed in these comments of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida concerning the developmental stages of humanity because the idea

⁶ See: Alu Imran 3/49; al-Maida 5/110.

⁷ According to Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 217-218. According to Rashid Rida, since the missions of previous prophets were limited to their own periods, the miracles given to them were only for the people of their own age. Since the mission of the Prophet will continue until the end of the world, he was given not only an *affective* and *temporary* miracle that was valid for his period but also the miracle of Qur'an, which is a *rational* and *persistent* miracle valid for each period. See: Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 218.

⁸ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 315. See for the sections including the concept of *Sunnatullah* in the Qur'an: al-Isra 17/77; al-Ahzab 33/62; Fatir 35/43; Gafir 40/85; al-Fath; 48/23.

⁹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 315.

that the human mind, human thinking, and society have gone through three stages including *theological*, *metaphysical* and *positive* stages is an opinion expressed by the founder of Positivism, Auguste Comte (1798-1857). According to him, the *theological stage*, the first one of these stages, corresponds to the age of humanity's childhood; at this stage, human being explains the world, his own destiny and incidents in this world with divine or spiritual powers. The second stage, the *metaphysical stage*, corresponds to the youth age of humanity; at this stage, abstract concepts and forces such as "essence", "ultimate and highest cause" and "freedom" take the place of spiritual powers, spirits, and gods. The third stage, the *positive stage*, corresponds to the maturity age of humanity; at this stage, theological or metaphysical explanations of the forces or essences behind the incidents are abandoned. Investigations aimed at finding unperceivable causes are put aside. It is understood that human knowledge is limited and it is accepted that knowledge is only dependent on and relative to the nature of the human species and to the changing social and historical conditions. Hence, absolute descriptions are put aside, and regular relationships or laws between facts are sought.¹⁰

Although Muhammad Abduh does not exactly agree with the opinions of Comte and has reduced the stages of mankind from two to three, he says that humanity has gone through various stages of thought in a manner similar to it. Accordingly, it is stated that people were called to believe by means of *miracles* in the period of previous communities, which was the *childhood period*, and by means of *reasoning* in the period of the last prophet, which was the *age of maturity*. In other words, according to the commentator, humanity developed in terms of thinking and the prophecy (*nubuvvah*) process was shaped almost in parallel to it. Accordingly, as it is mentioned above, while *physical miracles* such as the parting of the Red Sea, the transformation of staff into snake, the resurrection of the dead and the healing of the sick were given to the previous prophets, the *miracle of the Qur'an*, which is described as a *mental* and *literary miracle* was given to the Prophet. Although this opinion seems reasonable at first sight, it has evolved into an idea that "No physical miracle was given to the Prophet, only the *miracle of the Qur'an* was given to him", when it is approached closer to the present. However, as it is known, some affective miracles given to the Prophet are mentioned both in the Qur'an and in authentic hadiths.¹¹

¹⁰ See: Orhan Hançerlioğlu, "Üç Durum Yasası", *Felsefe Ansiklopedisi*, VII, 78, Remzi Publ., 3rd Edition, İstanbul, 2000; Ahmet Cevizci, "Üç Evre Yasası", *Paradigma Felsefe Sözlüğü*, p. 877, Paradigma Publ., İstanbul, 1999. Similarly, for criticisms that the authors of *Tafseer al-Manar* have been highly influenced by the *Enlightenment* philosophy, see: Arıcı, *ibid*, 97-118.

¹¹ For detailed information about the concept and types of miracle, the miracles given to the Prophet and different approaches related to them, see: Halil İbrahim Bulut, *Kur'an*

As it will be seen more clearly in the future, Abduh go into the effort of glossing some of these miracles. Rashid Rida, in addition to the above sayings of his teacher, also states that miracles are understood as "extraordinary incidents" by *kalam* scholars. According to some scholars, these incidents are revealed by Almighty Allah either based on some natural causes that are not known by ordinary people but are known only by the prophets or are performed without basing on any natural cause, which is the common view.¹²

In the proceeding volumes of *Tafseer al-Manar* that were written only by Rashid Rida, for example, in the interpretation of the verse of "Is it a matter of wonderment to men that We have sent Our inspiration to a man from among themselves that he should warn mankind (of their danger), and give the good news to the Believers that they have before their Lord the good actions they have advanced. (But) say the Unbelievers: "This is indeed an evident sorcerer!" (Yunus 10/2), Rashid Rida accepts that many miracles were given to the Prophet in addition to the Qur'an. However, according to him, the purpose of these miracles is not to make people believe in the Prophet Muhammad. Almighty Allah uses the *rational evidence* for this purpose in the Qur'an. Accordingly, Rashid Rida does not accept the idea that no miracle was given to the Prophet Muhammad except for the Qur'an but he emphasizes that the factor that persuades people in the Prophet's prophecy is not *miracles* but the *rational evidence* given to him through the Qur'an.¹³

II. OUTLOOK ON SOME MIRACLES IN TAFSEER AL-MANAR

After briefly presenting the general outlook of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida on the phenomenon of miracle, now an attempt to concretely exemplify how they see the miracles will be made. Firstly, some miracles they have understood like other scholars will be focused, then some miracles they have interpreted in different forms will be mentioned.

A. Some Miracles Understood Based on Their Evidence (*Zahir*) / As Mentioned in Qur'anic Verses

The commentators accept some miracles in the Qur'an based on their evidence (*zahir*) without interpreting them. In this context, the miracles of the parting of the Red Sea as the Prophet Moses hit his staff, the removal of the tricks of sorcerers by his staff and the speaking of the Prophet Jesus, while he was a baby in a cradle, will be discussed.

Işığında Mucize ve Peygamber, Rağbet Publ., İstanbul, 2002; Halil İbrahim Bulut, "Mucize", *DİA*, XXX, 350-352.

¹² Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 315.

¹³ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, XI, 159-161.

1. The Parting of the Red Sea as the Prophet Moses Hit His Staff

Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida stated that they explained the incident of the Israelites crossing the parted Red Sea as Moses hit his staff, which is mentioned in the verse "And remember We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people within your very sight." (al-Baqara 2/50), not as a miracle that Almighty Allah gave to Moses of "some people who dislike miracles", but they explained it by natural causes in the form of the "occurrence of a low tide incident in the Red Sea during that time" and they objected to this interpretation.¹⁴

Although Abduh and Rida do not give the names of these commentators that they describe as "some people who dislike miracles", these are probably some modern-day commentator who gloss the miracles within the frame of cause and effect relationships, like Sayyid Ahmad Han (d. 1316/1898). Indeed, in some studies carried out on Sayyid Ahmad Han, it is stated that such an interpretation of him is available.¹⁵

According to those who made this comment, the Israelites crossed over when the sea ebbed, and when the Pharaoh's army following them came to that area, they drowned completely as a result of the fact that the sea was refilled. According to those mentioning this view, the fact that the incident in question is not a miracle for Moses does not mean that it was not a blessing for the Israelites because Almighty Allah usually gives people many blessings in ways that we are used to.¹⁶

After the commentators have cited the interpretation in question, they object to it and find this interpretation wrong since the sea waters drawn to both sides are likened to a huge mountain in one of the Qur'anic verses related to it in the form of "Then we told Moses by inspiration: "Strike the sea with your rod." So it divided, and each separate part became like the huge, firm mass of a mountain." (ash-Shuara 26/63) because if the incident had been in the form of

¹⁴ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 315.

¹⁵ See: Abdulhamit Birişik, *Hind Alt Kutasi Düşünce ve Tefsir Ekolleri*, p. 337-338, İnsan Publ., İstanbul, 2001. See also: Arıcı, *ibid*, p. 24-28; Mustafa Öz, "Ahmed Han, Seyyid", *DİA*, II, 75. This comment has recently been included in the interpretation of Süleyman Ateş and in the meaning-interpretation of Muhammed Esed. See: Süleyman Ateş, *Yüce Kur'an'ın Çağdaş Tefsiri*, I, 163-164, Yeni Ufuklar Publ., İstanbul, 1997; Muhammed Esed, *Kur'an Mesajı: Meal-Tefsir*, p. 747-748, trans. Ahmet Ertürk & Cahit Koytak, İşaret Publ., İstanbul, 1997/1418.

¹⁶ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 315.

the ebbing of the sea as these commentators said, then it would not be appropriate to liken the sea waters to a huge mountain.¹⁷

According to the citations of the authors, those who made the relevant comment explained it in their way and said that this expression meant that this little amount of water rose like a mountain on both sides of people as a result of the fact that the Israelites hastily jumped into the remaining waters.¹⁸

As far as we can see here, the commentators were not too much engaged in responding to those who had this view, but they implicitly stated that they did not agree with that interpretation. Indeed, according to the citation of Rashid Rida, Abduh was not engaged in responding to them in detail by laying emphasis on these different opinions, he stated that he gave information about the fact that miracle is possible in the general sense in his work entitled *Risalatü't-Tawhid*.¹⁹

As is seen, the commentators clearly state that the incident in question is a miracle for Moses and strongly oppose to the opinions of those glossing it in such a way, beyond resorting to any glossing in relation to it.²⁰

2. The Removal of the Tricks of Sorcerers by the Staff of Moses and the Gushing of Twelve Springs from the Rock as He Hit the Rock with His Staff

Muhammad Abduh understands the incident during which the staff of Moses turned into a snake and removed the things that the sorcerers made by tricking and similar eye-washing ways, which is mentioned in the verse of "We revealed to Moses: "Throw (now) your rod": And behold! It swallows up all the falsehoods which they fake!" (al-A'raf 7/117), based on its evidence (*zahir*) / as mentioned in Qur'anic verses as the commentators of the classical period and accepts this as a miracle that Almighty Allah gave to Moses.²¹

Similarly, Abduh sees the incident when the Israelites asked for water from Moses, thereupon Almighty Allah ordered him to strike the rock, and consequently twelve springs that each of the twelve tribes would drink gushed, which is mentioned in the verse of "And remember Moses prayed for water for his people; We said: "Strike the rock with your staff." Then gushed forth therefrom twelve springs. Each group knew its own place for water. So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do no evil nor mischief on the

¹⁷ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 316.

¹⁸ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 316.

¹⁹ See: Muhammad Abduh, *Risalatü't-Tawhid*, p. 45-46.

²⁰ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 316.

²¹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, IX, 67.

(face of the) earth.” (al-Baqara 2/60), as a miracle like other commentators and does not tend towards any different glossing.²²

3. Speaking of Jesus While He was a Baby in a Cradle

In the interpretation of the verse “He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous.” (Alu Imran 3/46) with regard to the speaking of Jesus while he was a baby in a cradle, Abduh and Rida state that this must be regarded as a *verse/miracle* in any case, based on the fact that when a baby speaks in a way that people can understand is not a normal situation.²³

Similarly, in the interpretation of the verse “Then will Allah say: “O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favor to you and to your mother. Behold! I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit, so that you speak to the people in childhood and in maturity...” (al-Maida 5/110), Rashid Rida states that Jesus spoke in order to justify his mother who was accused of prostitution by the Jews because Jesus came into the world without a father as a miracle.²⁴ As it is seen, while the commentators may tend towards different interpretations in relation to some of the miracles, they have made comments in accordance with the majority's opinion about the speaking of Jesus while he was a baby.

As it is understood from these examples we have given from *Tafseer al-Manar*, Abduh and Rida regard that miracle is theoretically within possibility,

²² Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 326. In the meantime, Abduh draws attention to the similarity of the existential incidents included in the verse of “Thenceforth were your hearts hardened: They became like a rock and even worse in hardness. For among rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth; others there are which when split asunder send forth water; and others which sink for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do.” (al-Baqara 2/74) *in shape* with the miracles that are reported to have been given to Moses in the verse al-Baqara 2/60 because, as it is mentioned above, twelve springs gushed from the rock as he stroke the rock with his staff, in a miracle given to him. However, according to him, the existential incidents in the 74th verse are not a miracle in the common sense but the incident of the rolling of stones from the mountains due to natural causes such as volcanic eruption or stroke of lightning as a sign of divine greatness. Accordingly, the commentator emphasizes that not a miracle but a natural state is mentioned in this verse, unlike the incident of the gushing of water from the rock, which is described in the parable of Moses. See: Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 352.

²³ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 307.

²⁴ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, VII, 244. The words Jesus said in this conversation, as it is stated in another verse of the Qur'an, are as follows "He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah. He had given me revelation and made me a prophet; And He had made me blessed wheresoever I be, and had enjoined on me Prayer (*salat*) and Charity (*zakat*) as long as I live; (He had made me) kind to my mother, and not overbearing or unblest. So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)" (Maryam 19/30-33).

and they also consider some incidents, that are also regarded as miracles by the commentators of the classical period, as a miracle.

B. Miracles Interpreted in Various Forms

Unlike the above-mentioned examples, the commentators have glossed some miracles in various forms in *Tafseer al-Manar*. The reason for this is probably to make issues rational to remove some doubts of those who are engaged in philosophy and natural sciences, as they noted at the beginning of their interpretation.²⁵

Under this heading, different interpretations they made about some miracles such as the birth of Jesus without a father, the fact that he made a bird out of clay and resurrected it, resurrecting the dead, healing the sick, *mann* and *salva* given to the Israelites, the Prophet Abraham and the parable of his four birds, the transformation of the Israelites, who violated the Saturday's ban, into the monkeys, raising the mountain over them will be emphasized.

1. The Birth of Jesus without a Father

In the interpretation of the verse of "She said: "O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man had touched me?" He said: "Even so; Allah creates what He willed: When He decrees a plan, He but says to it, 'Be,' and it is!" (Alu Imran 3/47), Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida indicate that the birth of Jesus occurred differently from the known methods, he was created only from a mother without a father, so his birth was realized by the power of Almighty Allah.²⁶

Furthermore, Rashid Rida regards the birth of Jesus without a father as the incidents occurring contrarily to the general functioning rules of nature, in other words, as a miracle. So far everything seems to be normal. However, at this point, it is observed that the commentator has turned towards a quite different interpretation than the other interpretations. According to him, the good news given by Almighty Allah to Mary through Gabriel regarding the fact that

²⁵ See: Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 10.

²⁶ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 307. According to the commentators, in this verse, considering Almighty Allah, the fact that it is ordered that "When He decrees a plan, he but says to it, 'Be,' and it is!" does not mean that he necessarily says "Be!". In other words, here there is not an *expletive/verbal* order but an *existential/creation-oriented* order. Indeed, similarly, in the incident mentioned in the verse of "Then He turned to the sky, and it had been (as) smoke: He said to it and to the earth: "Come you together, willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We do come (together), in willing obedience." (Fussilat 41/11), there was no verbal dialogue between the heavens and the earth and Almighty Allah, only the fact that the universe is in an absolute obedience to his order is expressed here. See: Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 308.

she would have a baby so strongly influenced her heart and mind that this belief led to the occurrence of fertilization in her womb. Indeed, it can be observed in daily life that a person who strongly believes that he or she has contracted a disease contracts that disease or, on the contrary, a person who strongly believes that he has recovered from a disease is really healed. Here, Mary also so strongly believed in the good news of the Holy Spirit that she would have a baby that the good news in question was actually realized thanks to this strong faith.²⁷

According to the second possibility mentioned by Rashid Rida, this pregnancy may have occurred under the influence of the "blowing of the Holy Spirit to the Virgin Mary", the essence of which is not known. However, the commentator indicates that we do not know whether this blowing delivered a substance to Mary and that only Almighty Allah knows it. At this point, Rashid Rida states that he will touch on the assimilation/incarnation of these spirits, which are called "Angels" in the language of religion in the interpretation of the verse of "She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent her Our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects." (Maryam 19/17) if he lives long enough and continues this interpretation.²⁸

Unfortunately, the commentator did not live long enough for it, could not interpret Surah Maryam and could write his interpretation up to the end of the 12th part of the Qur'an, in other words, up to the 52nd verse of Joseph Surah. Therefore, we do not have any explanation that he promised to make about the subject.

It should be noted here that there is no other example in the daily life of this interpretation of the commentator about "the pregnancy of Mary as a result of her strong belief that she would have a baby". Although it is accepted that high and low morale have positive or negative effects on patients, if a woman, no matter how strongly she believes, is infertile or has not had a sexual intercourse with any man or if there is not fertilization through external ways as it is done nowadays, it is not possible for her to give birth under normal circumstances.

Accordingly, the incident in question can only be realized with the intervention of Almighty Allah who has power over all things, in other words, is an incident that can happen as a *miracle*. Therefore, it is not true to gloss miracles in this way to explain the issues reasonably to today's human being. The appropriate approach here is to explain the incidents with a *miracle*, which means "the intervention of Almighty Allah in natural causes", as other commentators do.

²⁷ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 308-309.

²⁸ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 309-310. See also: Arici, *ibid*, p. 59-64.

2. Resurrecting the Dead and Healing the Sick by Jesus

Rashid Rida also makes some different interpretations about the miracles of resurrecting the dead and healing the sick by Jesus mentioned in the verse of "... And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I bring the dead to life, by Allah's leave; and I declare to you what you eat, and what you store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if you did believe." (Alu Imran 3/49). Here, the commentator states that Jesus brought a newly dead person or a person whose corpse was decayed into life, indeed, it is mentioned in the holy books of Christians that he brought a girl who was not yet buried and newly (four days ago) buried Lazar into life, but it is not mentioned that he brought a completely decayed corpse into life.²⁹

In the interpretation of the verse of "Then will Allah say (in the end of the world): you makes out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My permission, and you breathes into it and it becomes a bird by My permission, and you heals those born blind, and the lepers, by My permission. And behold! You resurrect the dead by My permission" (al-Maida 5/110) which is another verse concerning the miracles of Jesus, Rashid Rida states that it is mentioned that Jesus healed many blind and lepers and brought three dead persons back to life in the New Testament. Then, the commentator lays emphasis on the question of the resurrection of three dead persons by making quotes from the Bibles and states that European deniers said that Lazar, one of the people who was reported to be resurrected, firstly pretended to be dead by making a deal with Jesus and then acted like someone who was resurrected, but this is a false interpretation.³⁰

Finally, regarding the incident of the "resurrection of the dead" in question, Rashid Rida says that Christians do not attribute the act of resurrecting a decayed human under the earth to Jesus.³¹ While saying it, it seems as if Rashid Rida is trying to make the miracle of resurrecting the dead by Jesus a little bit acceptable for today's people. According to this rationale, it is easier to resurrect someone who has just died or has been just buried (not fully decayed) than resurrecting someone who has died, has been buried in the earth, has undergone years and has been thoroughly decayed. However, as it is known, something like that does not come into question because it is not possible under normal circumstances to be able to bring someone who has died biologically and has lost all his vital functions to life even in our day. Furthermore, it would not be possible for Jesus, who lived in a period during which medicine was not as

²⁹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 312. See also: Arıcı, *ibid*, p. 73-76. Compare: Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 7:11-17, 8:40-56; John 11:1-46.

³⁰ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, VII, 246-247.

³¹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, VII, 247.

advanced as it is nowadays, to be able to do this in natural ways. Moreover, medical science has not been able to realize this even in our day. Besides, the word of *al-mawta/dead* is also used in the relevant Qur'anic verses.³² It should not be right to try to understand a word which is generally mentioned without imposing any restriction in this way in the form of *newly dead/non-decayed dead*, based on some statements in the Bible.

Furthermore, it seems that the commentator forgot that the actual actor of these miracles that took place in the hands of Jesus is Almighty Allah while making these comments. As it is known, although Jesus is regarded as the person who has done these things from an external perspective, Almighty Allah is the actual actor here as in all miracles, there is no such a thing which is easy or difficult for Him.

Furthermore, Rashid Rida mentions that Jesus healed some blind and leper patients in the interpretation of the relevant Qur'anic verses and states that the fact that he healed these patients with a spiritual force comes true with a strong belief that the patient will recover and that it is likely to occur in forms that are generally known by people.³³

This interpretation of him is reasonably quite similar to his interpretation regarding Mary's pregnancy with Jesus that the Holy Spirit gave good news to Mary that she would have a baby and she strongly believed in it and became pregnant by this powerful faith.³⁴

Accordingly, a strong psychological belief can even affect a person's biology. This is probably a situation which is partly accepted today. However, it is necessary to see the issue as a miracle that Almighty Allah has realized in his hand rather than explaining it in this way because such a psychological state is not mentioned in the relevant Qur'anic verses.

Moreover, there is also a lot of information in the Bibles that we have regarding the fact that he healed blind, deaf, leprosy, jinn and some other patients, supporting these miracles included in the Qur'an.³⁵ Nevertheless, there is no sense in trying to remove the relevant incident from among the miracles and to make it rational.

³² See: Alu Imran 3/49; al-Maida 5/110.

³³ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 312.

³⁴ See: Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 308-309.

³⁵ See for example: Matthew 4:23-25, 8:14-17, 28-34; Mark 1:21-45, 2:1-12, 3:1-6, 5:1-43; Luke 4:31-44, 5:12-26, 8:26-56, 9:37-44; John 4:43-54, 5:1-18, 9:1-12.

3. Jesus' Making a Bird Out of Clay and Resurrecting It

In the interpretation of the verse of "And (appoint him) as a messenger to the Israelites (with this message): "I have come to you, with a sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's permission..." (Alu Imran 3/49) mentioning the miracles of Jesus, Abduh and Rida, similarly, give place to some interpretations different from those of the commentators in general.³⁶

Abduh says that the verse does not signify that Jesus did actually make a bird out of clay, he said it only in theory, and the verse mentions that he could do it if the society that he invited to Allah's religion asked for such a miracle to prove his prophecy. Accordingly, the commentator indicates that it is not clearly mentioned in the verse that Jesus actually made it, there is not any statement in this regard and something told in the verse should not be regarded as an incident based on some narrations.³⁷

After conveying these statements of his master, Rashid Rida says that Tabari narrated from Ibn Ishak in this direction on the subject. According to this narration, Jesus was sitting with children one day. He said to them "Do I make a bird out of this clay at my hand?" They also asked whether he could really do it, and he said that he could do it with Allah's leave. Then, he made a bird out of clay, he blew at it and called it "Be a bird with Allah's permission!", thereupon the bird flew through his hands.³⁸

After mentioning this narration, Rashid Rida implies that he does not believe in this narration by saying that it seems as if Jesus made a miracle of Allah a game and entertainment for children. Furthermore, he clearly states that there is no accurate narration regarding the fact that Jesus made a bird out of clay, that we have obtained. He also states that these miracles are not included in the acknowledged holy scriptures of Christians and that these statements are only included in the Childhood Bible, which is regarded to be an apocryphal book.³⁹

However, Rashid Rida takes steps backward from this claim after saying these and says that it is mentioned in verse al-Maida 5/110 "And behold! You make out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and you breathes

³⁶ See: Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 310-312.

³⁷ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 311.

³⁸ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 311. Compare: at-Tabari, *Cami al-Bayan an Ta'wili Ayi'l-Qur'an*, V, 419, edition: Abdullah b. Abdulmuhsin at-Turki, Daru Hicr, Cairo, 1422/2001.

³⁹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 311.

into it and it becomes a bird by My permission" that it actually took place, and that the verse is closer to signify it.⁴⁰

As far as we have understood here, the commentators think it cannot be said that Jesus actually made a bird out of clay just based on the verse Alu Imran 3/49. Additionally, Rashid Rida states that Jesus could bring the clay that he put into a bird form, which is an inanimate substance, into life by blowing at it since spirituality was dominant in Jesus because, according to Rashid Rida, the fact that all of the miracles listed in the verse al-Maida 5/110 are primarily mentioned as blessings given to Jesus indicates that all of them actually took place.⁴¹

As it is seen, unlike his master Abduh, Rashid Rida accepts with the indication of the verse al-Maida 5/110 that the fact that Jesus made a bird out of clay and blew at it is a miracle that actually took place with the permission and power of Allah. Indeed, in the interpretation of this verse, Rashid Rida says that he corrected the misinterpretation related to the verse that his master made based on the verse al-Maida 5/110 by referring to the interpretation of the verse Alu Imran 3/49, and that this miracle took place in the hands of Jesus with the permission and help of Almighty Allah.⁴²

Finally, Rashid Rida indicates that the fact that the statement of "My leave (by Allah's leave)" is included in the verse means that this feature was given to Jesus not consistently but temporarily.⁴³ However, it should be stated here that none of the Islamic scholars says that prophets could show miracles "whenever they want", and they indicate that miracles are in the hands of the prophets "when Almighty Allah wills" and are "created by Him", as it was mentioned while making the definition of miracle at the beginning because, as it was mentioned previously, the actual actor of miracles is not the prophets but Almighty Allah.

4. The Prophet Abraham's Desire to See the Nature of Resurrection after Death and the Parable of Four Birds

Abduh and Rida understand the verse related to the Prophet Abraham's desire to see the nature of resurrection after death in the form of "Behold! The Prophet Abraham said: "My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead." He said: "Did you not then believe?" He said: "Yes! But to satisfy my own heart." He said: "Take four birds; tie them (cut them into pieces); then put a portion of

⁴⁰ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 311.

⁴¹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 311-312.

⁴² Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, VII, 245-246. See also: Arıcı, *ibid*, p. 64-67.

⁴³ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, VII, 246.

them on every hill and call to them: They will come to you (flying) with speed. Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.” (al-Baqara 2/260) differently from most of the previous commentators.

Most of the commentators interpret the incident mentioned in the verse as the fact that the Prophet Abraham, who desired to see resurrection after death, cut four birds and cut them into pieces, then he put a portion of them on every hill, and then he called them to himself, and the birds also followed this call and came back to the Prophet Abraham alive again, so the Prophet Abraham saw resurrection after death, and therefore they see it as a miracle given to him.⁴⁴

However, the commentators Abduh and Rida strongly disagree with this interpretation of the majority. According to them, the verse contains a representative narration. Accordingly, this verse means that "O The Prophet Abraham, people will also accept His call in the form of "Raise!" when Almighty Allah wants to resurrect on the day of judgement just as the birds that you have made accustomed to you come to you when you call them even though there are long distances between them, in the same way, and they will become alive again."⁴⁵

According to Abduh and Rida, the purpose of this narration is to give an example to Abraham regarding the fact that the spirits will be able to easily turn back to their bodies with the call of Almighty Allah in the afterlife in a similar way to the fact that the birds that are accustomed to a man follow the call when they are called and come to him. If not, then an order to actually do such a thing is not intended in the verse, in other words, Abraham was not asked to do such a thing.⁴⁶

As it is seen, the commentators express a very different interpretation from the view of the majority. Although this comment that they mentioned in their interpretation and they adopted by mainly narrating from Abu Muslim al-Isfahani is quite different, it seems like a reasonable comment when the evidence of both sides is reciprocally examined.⁴⁷ However, we should point out that this interpretation is different from the view of most of the previous

⁴⁴ See for example: Tabari, *ibid*, IV, 623-650; al-Maturidi, *Ta'wilatu'l-Qur'an*, II, 173-174, edition: Ahmed Vanlioğlu et al, Daru'l-Mizan, İstanbul, 2005-2007; az-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshaf an Hakaiki Gawamizi't-Tanzil wa Uyuni'l-Akawil fi Wucuhi't-Ta'wil*, I, 304-306, correction: Muhammad Abdussalam Shahin, Daru'l-Kutubi'l-Ilmiyah, Beirut, 1416/1995; ar-Razi, *Mafatihul-Gayb*, VII, 40-47, Daru'l-Fikr, Beirut, 1401/1981; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsiru'l-Qur'ani'l-Azim*, I, 689-690, edition: Sami b. Muhammad as-Salamah, Daru Taybah, Riyad, 1999/1420.

⁴⁵ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 55.

⁴⁶ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 55-56.

⁴⁷ See: Razi, *ibid*, VII, 45-46; Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 55-58. See also: Arıcı, *ibid*, p. 52-56.

commentators. Since we have discussed this topic in detail in another study of us on the subject, we are satisfied with this.⁴⁸

5. Transformation of the Israelites, Who Violated the Saturday's Ban, into Apes

Most of the commentators of the early period interpret the incident about those who violated the hunting ban on Saturday among the Israelites, which is mentioned in the Qur'anic verses of "And well you knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath: We said to them: "Be you apes, despised and rejected." And well you knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath: We said to them: "Be you apes, despised and rejected." (al-Baqara 2/65-66), as "the transformation of those who violated this ban into apes in real terms".⁴⁹

The sole exception of this is Mucahid (d. 103/721) from *tabiun commentators* who interpreted the relevant incident as a *representative narration*. According to him, the hearts of the Israelites were transformed into apes, not their bodies. This is just like a byword, a metaphor as in the example of "The similitude of those who were entrusted with the (obligations of) Torah (Mosaic Law), but who subsequently failed in those (obligations), is that of a donkey which carries huge tomes (but understands them not)." (al-Jumua 62/5) that Almighty Allah gave in relation to them.⁵⁰

As far as we can see, Muhammad Abduh adopts this different interpretation of Mucahid, not the opinion of the majority about the verse. Accordingly, there is a simile in the verse, the statement of "Be you apes, despised and rejected!" constitutes an existential command, and it states that the Israelites lost the position of being human with respect to their nature and morality in accordance with the general law of Almighty Allah (Sunnatullah) and became despised monkeys. In this case, the verse means that the fact that the Israelites violated the hunting ban encouraged them to shamelessly commit other sins and evils, so honorable people insulted them and did not regard them as people to live with.⁵¹

Despite these comments of Abduh, Rashid Rida makes some explanations in the direction of both material and spiritual mesh/transformation

⁴⁸ For detailed information, see: Celil Kiraz, "The Prophet Abraham, Resurrection after Death and Parable of Four Birds", *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Year: 2015/1, Issue: 34, p. 7-31, Isparta, 2015.

⁴⁹ See: Tabari, *ibid*, II, 58-75; Zamakhshari, *ibid*, I, 149-150; Razi, *ibid*, III, 117-121; Ibn Kathir, *ibid*, I, 288-293.

⁵⁰ See: Tabari, *ibid*, II, 65-66; Razi, *ibid*, III, 119; Ibn Kathir, *ibid*, I, 289.

⁵¹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 343-344. See also: Arıcı, *ibid*, p. 28-30.

understanding in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses al-Maida 5/60 and al-A'raf 7/165 mentioning the same topic.⁵²

As it is seen, Abduh accepts the incident of physical transformation into apes, which is considered as reality and perceived as a divine punishment by the majority, as a narration that is completely based on representative/simile, just like Mucahid. However, in the last part of the verse, he states that this penalty was imposed to be a warning for those who personally saw the incident and those who were aware of it. In order for such a warning to be formed, it would be more appropriate for the incident to take place physically in a visible way because, if this transformation had been spiritual, it would not have been possible for people to draw a lesson from it since it could not be seen in a concrete way.

Furthermore, material punishments such as "transforming into apes and swines" as well as the spiritual punishments such as "being cursed and wrathful" are also mentioned in the verse al-Maida in the form of "Say: "Shall I point out to you something much worse than this, (as judged) by the treatment it received from Allah? Those who incurred the curse of Allah and His wrath, those of whom some He transformed into apes and swine, those who worshiped evil. These are (many times) worse in rank, and far more astray from the even path!" (al-Maida 5/60). If these two kinds of punishments had the same meaning, then in our opinion, Almighty Allah would not mention them separately in the same verse and would not attribute to each other.

As it is seen, especially Abduh prefers the opinion that those who violated the hunting ban on Saturday underwent a spiritual transformation, not a physical transformation, but Rashid Rida evaluates both interpretations as interpretations with probable accuracy. However, in order for the incident to be a means of warning for the rest of the people, it seems more appropriate to accept it as a physical transformation that takes place in a real sense just as most of the commentators do.

6. The Incident of Resurrection of a Victim from the Israelites by Striking Him with a Piece of a Heifer Cut

In the interpretation of the verse of "Remember you slew a man and fell into a dispute among yourselves as to the crime: But Allah was to bring forth what you did hide. So We said: "Strike the (body) with a piece of the (heifer)." Thus Allah brings the dead to life and shows you His signs: Perchance you may understand." (al-Baqara 2/72-73), Abduh includes a different interpretation than most of the commentators understand because, according to most of the commentators, this incident took places in the way that one of the Israelites was

⁵² Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, VI, 448, IX, 379.

killed, then an order was given to cut a heifer to detect the guilty, and the victim was struck with a piece of this heifer, and then the victim was resuscitated and declared the murderer, so the guilty was detected.⁵³

However, Abduh says that there is not any statement about any of this information in the text of the verse. According to him, these Qur'anic verses are related to the incident of cutting a heifer mentioned in the verses of al-Baqara 2/67-71, the act of cutting the heifer is composed of an order given to the Israelites in the Torah to detect the murderer in the case of inability to detect the murderer and falling into dispute in any incident of murdering someone. Accordingly, if a victim is found near a residential area and the murderer cannot be detected, people living there will be proven innocent by cutting a heifer, washing their hands over it and saying that they have no concern with the job of killing someone.⁵⁴

In this case, according to Abduh, the purpose of the statement of "Raising the dead" which is mentioned in the verse is to prevent killing events thanks to such provisions imposed by Almighty Allah. Indeed, the resurrection here means the prevention of killing incidents due to these provisions as in the verses of "and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people." (al-Maida 5/32) and "In the Law of Equality there is (saving of) Life to you." (al-Baqara 2/179).⁵⁵

As a result, Abduh, unlike the commentators of the classical period, interprets the topic by correlating it with a provision in the Torah and so removing it from being an extraordinary incident. However, in this case, the statements of "So Allah raises the dead and shows His verses/miracles for you to think" at the end of the relevant verses lose their meanings because, as it is seen, in this section of the verse, it is mentioned that the reality of resurrection after death was concretely shown to them and also that Almighty Allah shows people some of His verses/miracles. Now that we have taken Abduh's interpretation as a basis, neither the actual realization of resurrection after death nor the showing a miracle to the answerers comes into question. The commentators, as it is mentioned above, also interpret this as the prevention of killing incidents by the retaliation provision, which does not seem to be a very satisfactory explanation when the context of the verse is taken into account.

7. Mann and Salva Given to the Israelites

⁵³ See for example: Tabari, *ibid*, II, 117-128; Razi, *ibid*, III, 132-136.

⁵⁴ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 350-351. For this provision in the Torah, see: Deuteronomy 21:1-9. We see that this interpretation of Abduh was also repeated by Muhammed Esed by referring to *Tafseer al-Manar*. See: Esed, *ibid*, p. 22.

⁵⁵ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 351. See also: Arici, *ibid*, p. 34-40.

As it is reported in the verse “We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you Manna and quails.” (al-Baqara 2/57), Abduh explains sending down *mann* and *salva* (*quail*) to the Israelites in the desert with natural causes, not as a miracle, as the other commentators do⁵⁶. The author states that *mann* is “a sticky food that is known by people, falling from the sky like dew, falling on stones and tree leaves” and that *salva* is the “quail bird” that we know.⁵⁷

Moreover, Abduh states that the phrase of “sending down” is used in the meaning of “bestowment of these blessings to people” as in the verse “We sent down Iron.” (al-Hadid 57/25).⁵⁸

These interpretations of the commentators seem reasonable at first glance. However, there should be certainly an extraordinary aspect in the bestowment of these blessings to them in the middle of the desert because the presence of enough food to many people in the middle of the desert, and the presence of so many quail birds in the middle of the desert and hunting by them do not appear to be a situation that would occur under normal circumstances.

8. Raising the Mountain over the Israelites

According to Abduh's narration, commentators evaluate the incident of raising the mountain over the Israelites, which is mentioned in the verse “We took your covenant and We raised above you the Mount (Sinai): (Saying): “Hold firmly to what We have given you and bring (ever) to remembrance what is therein: Perchance you may fear Allah.” (al-Baqara 2/63), as an existential miracle in the way that “the mountain was raised over them and remained in the air as if it would fall over them to scare them”.⁵⁹

However, as it is mentioned in the verse “When We raised the Mount over them, as if it had been a canopy, and they thought it was going to fall on them (We said): “Hold firmly to what We have given you, and bring (ever) to remembrance what is therein; perchance you may fear Allah.” (al-A’raf 7/171), Abduh says that the relevant incident may have taken place in the way that the Israelites sitting at the foothill of a high mountain thought that it was going to fall on them or in the way that an earthquake that led to the shaking of the mountain occurred at that moment.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ See for example: Tabari, *ibid*, I, 700-710; Maturidi, *ibid*, I, 133-134; Zamakhshari, *ibid*, I, 144-145; Razi, *ibid*, III, 93; Ibn Kathir, *ibid*, I, 267-273.

⁵⁷ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 323.

⁵⁸ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 323.

⁵⁹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 340-342. Compare: Tabari, *ibid*, II, 49, X, 542-543; Zamakhshari, *ibid*, I, 149, II, 169; Razi, *ibid*, III, 115; Ibn Kathir, *ibid*, I, 287-288.

⁶⁰ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 340.

Indeed, similarly, it is also mentioned in the Torah that smokes started to emerge from the mountain and the mountain was shaken with the manifestation of Almighty Allah on Mount Sinai.⁶¹ This information in the Torah seems to have an effect in Abduh's orientation to the relevant interpretation.

Rashid Rida states that his master Abduh was in favor of the interpretation of those who see this incident as an "existential miracle". However, according to Rida, this verse does not need to be understood in this way since the words in the verse do not indicate the "raising of the mountain by removing it from its place". Accordingly, it can also be said that someone who does not accept that the mountain was held in the air space cannot be deemed to have denied these expressions of the Qur'an.⁶²

As it is seen, here the commentators state that it is necessary not to resort to miraculousness at the first opportunity in understanding the verses and that the relevant incident can be accepted in the way that the mountain was so high and it almost seemed to fall on them, which is not too far from us.

9. The Parable of a Person Who Dropped in a Destroyed City

Most of the commentators mention that a certain historical event that actually took place is mentioned in the verse "Or (take) the similitude of one who passed by a hamlet, all in ruins to its roofs. He said: "Oh! How shall Allah bring it (ever) to life, after (this) its death?" But Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up (again). He said: "How long didst thou tarry (thus)?" He said: (Perhaps) a day or part of a day." He said: "No, you tarried thus a hundred years; but look at your food and your drink; they show no signs of age; and look at your donkey: And that we may make of you a sign unto the people. Look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh." When this was shown clearly to him, he said: "I know that Allah has power over all things." (al-Baqara 2/259). Moreover, within this framework, they give some information about the fact that the person who was mentioned was "Uzayr, Hidir, Jeremiah or Ezekiel" and the city that was mentioned was "The city of Jerusalem, which was destroyed by the king of Babylonia Nabukadnazar".⁶³

However, although the commentators Abduh and Rida regard the actual occurrence of this incident that is mentioned in the verse within possibility, they

⁶¹ See: Exodus 19:16-22

⁶² Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 342-343. See also: Arıcı, *ibid*, p. 30-34.

⁶³ See for example: Tabari, *ibid*, IV, 577-584; Maturidi, *ibid*, II, 167-169; Zamakhshari, *ibid*, I, 301-303; Razi, *ibid*, VII, 31; Ibn Kathir, *ibid*, I, 687-688.

also see it as a *parable* given to put believers into the right way and to remove them from darkness to enlightenment, just as in the case of Abraham's faithless answerer (Nimrod).⁶⁴ They also see that the details suggested about the person and city that are mentioned in the parable are composed of stoning the invisible world and being subject to Israeli knowledge. After describing the parable as a concrete example related to resurrection after death like other commentators, they also make the possibility that this may be a "representative narration" a current issue probably based on the fact that no person or place name was mentioned in the parable.⁶⁵

However, as it is mentioned above, this incident is regarded as a "real parable" rather than a "representative narration" by most of the commentators due to the presence of the parable mentioning the debate between Abraham and Nimrod and then the parable mentioning Abraham, resurrection after death and four birds. It should also be noted that it is essential to understand religious beliefs based on their evidence if there is no obstacle in front of them. After the fact that the relevant incident was "A miracle realized by Almighty Allah" is taken into account, there is no obstacle to assessing it in real meanings. Apparently, the commentators are suspicious whether this incident is a miracle.

10. The Issue of Angels Helping the Prophet and Muslims during the Battles of Badr and Uhud

In the interpretations of the verses "Remember you implored the assistance of your Lord, and He answered you: "I will assist you with a thousand of the angels, ranks on ranks." Allah made it but a message of hope, and an assurance to your hearts: (in any case) there is no help except from Allah: and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise. Remember He covered you with drowsiness, to give you calm as from Himself, and He caused rain to descend on you from heaven, to clean you therewith, to remove from you the stain of Satan, to strengthen your hearts, and to plant your feet firmly therewith. Remember your Lord inspired the angels (with the message): "I am with you: give firmness to the Believers: I will instill terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers: Smite you above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them." (al-Anfal 8/9-12) mentioning the battle of Badr, Abduh and Rashid Rida give information about the fact whether angels helped Muslims during the Battle of Badr and about the nature of this help.⁶⁶

Based on the statement of "Allah made it but a message of hope, and an assurance to your hearts" which is included in the relevant verses, Rashid Rida says that what is understood from the evidence of the Qur'an is that sending of

⁶⁴ See: al-Baqara 2/258.

⁶⁵ See: Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 48-52. See also: Arıcı, *ibid*, p. 48-52.

⁶⁶ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, IX, 607-614.

angels and helping Muslims through them are in the form of a "spiritual help", that angels did not actually fight and that narrations about it are also weak.⁶⁷ The commentator also states that the order of "smite you above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them" mentioned in the verse was an order for warrior Muslims, not for the angels.⁶⁸

Furthermore, Rashid Rida indicates that when those who actually fought in the Battle of Badr were the angels, Muslims who were present there and fought against the polytheists would not have any virtue, whereas there are the Prophet's hadiths about the virtue of those who participated in the Battle of Badr.⁶⁹

On the other hand, in the interpretation of the Qur'anic verses "Allah had helped you at Badr, when you were a contemptible little force; then fear Allah. Thus may you show your gratitude. Remember you said to the faithful: "Is it not enough for you that Allah should help you with three thousand angels (Specially) sent down?" "Yes, if you remain firm, and act aright, even if the enemy should rush here on you in hot haste, your Lord would help you with five thousand angels clearly marked. Allah made it but a message of hope for you, and an assurance to your hearts: (in any case) there is no help except from Allah. The Exalted, the Wise." (Alu Imran 3/123-126) that are related to the Battle of Uhud, the commentators mention that angels helped Muslims in some aspects, such as providing moral support and showing their number higher during the Battle of Badr. However, as it is seen in the above-mentioned verses about the Battle of Uhud, they say that it was stated that believers would be honored by the help of the angels if "they would be patient and determined in the battlefield", but such a help could not be provided because they were determined, therefore believers were defeated.⁷⁰

In the interpretation of the relevant verses, the commentators also convey the opinion of Abu Bakr al-Asam, from the interpretation of Razi, that "An angel was sufficient to destroy the people of Lot in Madain, then why Almighty Allah has sent so many angels to defeat the polytheists?" to support their opinions.⁷¹

As a result, the commentators state that Muslims gained a victory in the Battle of Badr due to their perseverance and the "moral help" of angels, but they

⁶⁷ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, IX, 608, 613.

⁶⁸ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, IX, 612-613. Tabari also says that this order is for believers. See: Tabari, *ibid*, XI, 69-73.

⁶⁹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, IX, 614. See for example: Bukhari, Magazi, 9.

⁷⁰ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, IV, 110-114.

⁷¹ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, IV, 113. Compare: Razi, *ibid*, VIII, 232.

were almost in the process of losing the war as they could not completely show this perseverance in the Battle of Uhud and left their places by being besotted with getting spoils.

As another reason for this defeat, the commentators state that Muslims who won thanks to the help provided by Allah through angels in Badr had the idea that this help would be provided at any time and in any case, whereas Islam is a religion of creation, not a religion of wonders and miracles. Accordingly, as it is stated in the verse “Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies...” (al-Anfal 8/60), Muslims would make all kinds of preparations at the utmost by following Sunnatullah (the general law of God in the universe), would work hard, and then they would seek the help of Almighty Allah. According to the commentators, the way shown by Islam is that’s all.⁷²

As it is seen, the commentators do not accept the idea that angels actually helped Muslims in some battles, which is adopted by some commentators, and they state that this help was just a spiritual help, moral support.⁷³

CONCLUSION

Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida accept that miracle is theoretically within possibility. Moreover, beyond that, as it can be understood from the examples given above, they accept some miracles based on their evidence, just like other commentators.

However, it is not possible to say that this attitude of the commentators is the same for every miracle because they could interpret some miracles in relation to some prophets like Moses and Jesus in different forms. However, they were expected to see these incidents, which are not very different from other narrations, as miracles. However, the commentators could use some free comments in their interpretations to remove the doubts of those engaged in

⁷² Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, IV, 118-120.

⁷³ For different opinions about the issue of angels helping Muslims during wars, see: Tabari, *ibid*, VI, 20-39, XI, 50-59; Maturidi, *ibid*, II, 404-406, VI, 177-179; Zamakhshari, *ibid*, I, 402-404, II, 194-198; Razi, *ibid*, VIII, 227-237, XV, 133-135; Ibn Kathir, *ibid*, II, 109-114, IV, 18-26. For more detailed information on the subject, see also: Arıcı, *ibid*, p. 76-83; İsrail Balçı, *Hız. Peygamber’in Savaşlarında İlahi Yardım*, Ankara Okulu Publ., Ankara, 2014; Ömer Çelik, “Kur’ân-ı Kerim’e Göre Meleklerin Rasulullah’a Yardımı, *Araştırma Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü İlmî Dergisi*, issue: 5-6, p. 5-28, Bishkek, 2008; Mehmet Azimli, “Hz. Peygamber Dönemi Savaşlarında Meleklerin Yardımı Meselesi”, *İslâmî Araştırmalar*, volume: XXI, issue: 3, p. 172-183, Ankara, 2010.

philosophy and natural sciences⁷⁴ as they pointed out at the beginning of *Tafseer al-Manar*, in this context they could gloss some miracles.

In conclusion, it is observed that Abduh and Rida adopted an ambivalent attitude on miracles. On the one hand, they theoretically accept the miracle phenomenon and accordingly accept some miracles based on their evidence (*zahir*) / as mentioned in verses, and they even criticize the people who gloss some miracles without giving names. However, on the other hand, they personally try to make some miracles usual by glossing them in various forms. Thus, they do much the same thing as the people they criticize.

We believe that this approach is not correct because the actual actor of the miracles in question is not the prophet but Almighty Allah, who has the power to create this universe out of nothing. Of course, there is no sense in trying to include the things that are not actually miracles in this category by pushing the expression, but it is necessary not to try to remove the incidents showing that rational and linguistic proofs are miracles from being miracles in a meaningless way.

Finally, let us state that the commentator show the relevant "narrations" from the companions and tabiun commentators as the reason for referring *mutekaddimun/first-period scholars*, who interpreted Abraham and the four birds as a miracle, to this view. Accordingly, previous scholars tried to adapt the relevant verse to this narration, despite by force.⁷⁵

Again, according to them, the reason that referred *muteahhirun/next period scholars* to this opinion is that "they made an effort to extract some features peculiar to prophets (*hasais al-abiya*) from the verse, possible existential wonders (miracles)". However, the word here aims to "give information, explain and remove people from darkness to enlightenment", which is the greatest of miracles. However, according to these two commentators, "there are some addictions that dominate human mind and understanding in each period." Thus, "the idea of providing this miracle of the Prophet Abraham as evidence about his prophecy" also affected the next period scholars and caused them to suggest this idea.⁷⁶

In this case, we think that we have the right to ask such a question to Abduh and Rida: Cannot the idea that "there are some addictions that dominate human mind and understanding in each period" be true also for them? Because

⁷⁴ See: Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, I, 10.

⁷⁵ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 58.

⁷⁶ Abduh-Rida, *ibid*, III, 58.

the two most important movements of thought that left their mark on the 19th and 20th centuries during which Abduh and Rida lived are Rationalism and Positivism. Is it possible that these two commentators may have tended to this interpretation in an effort to make such incidents that are included in the Qur'an and present miraculousness usual and rational? There is no doubt that such a probability is always within possibility. Yes, there are some general laws (Sunnatullah) that Almighty Allah has introduced to rule the universe, but it is one of His laws that He removes these laws when He wants. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate miracles within this framework.

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