

# The Implication of Asbabun Nuzul for Al-Quran Verses Interpretation

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## ABSTRACT

*This article aims to explore the existence of asbabun nuzul for the interpretation of Al Quran verses. The mufassir admits that without asbabun nuzul it will be difficult to understand the verses of the Qur'an. Therefore, this study reveals the implication of asbabun nuzul for interpretation. This article raises the issue of child's lineage to the ones who are the un-biological father. This study is library research by using articles and books as the primary sources. The results of this study show that asbabun nuzul has the primary authority in the interpretation such as clarifying the understanding of the process of legal determination, reviewing the specificity of the law, and rejecting the existence of hasr (legal restrictions) in the verses that contains legal barriers.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Asbabun nuzul illustrates that the verses of the Qur'an have a dialectical relationship with the socio-cultural phenomena of society. Empirically, the Qur'an was revealed in a society that has a deep-rooted culture. It means that historically the Qur'an did not descend without context. As God's message, revelation has a target object, and the target was Arab society in the VII century AD. Thus, releasing revelation from its culture was disregarding history and reality (Munjin, 2019).

In the study of the interpretation of the Qur'an, asbab nuzul has a crucial role because it is very influential on the applicable law. *First*, understanding Asbab an-Nuzul means knowing the general and specific process of forming Shari'a (Tasyri' Islam). By understanding the asbabun nuzul of verses of the Qur'an, people know the purpose of the verse. *Second*, it resolves the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an because it is often found that the verses of the Qur'an are not in line with their real intentions (Munjin, 2019).

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is quantitative, by collecting data related to asbabun nuzul and including the opinions of several experts. Furthermore, the data is analyzed based on books, articles and others.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. The Existence of Asbabun Nuzul

In providing information about asbab an-Nuzul, the Sahabah used two categories of expressions: assertive expressions and expressions containing the meaning of asbab an-Nuzul. It is called asbab an-Nuzul, when a hadith narrator says "this verse was revealed because of..." or "the Prophet was asked about the background of verses. Whereas, the expression that contains the meaning of asbab an-Nuzul is when an incident says "This verse was revealed regarding specific matter" (Karim, 2017).

As-Suyuthi, quoting az-Zarkasyi's opinion, said that the habit of the companions and tabi'in, when one of them said, "This verse was revealed in this case, then what he means is the legal content of the verse, not asbab an-nuzul" (As-Suyuthi, 2008).

The importance of understanding asbab an-nuzul is explained as follows (Karim, 2017):

- a. Al-Wahidi: "It is impossible to understand a verse of the Qur'an without understanding the story and background of the revelation of the verse."
- b. Ibn Daqiq al-'Ayd: "The explanation of asbab an-nuzul is a reliable method in understanding the meaning and intent of the Qur'an."
- c. Ibn Taimiyah: "Recognizing the asbab an-nuzul is very helpful in understanding the verse, because knowledge of cause passes knowledge of effect (musabbab).

As-Suyuthi summarizes the benefits of knowing the asbab an-nuzul as follows (Karim, 2017):

- a. Understanding the history of a legal decree.
- b. Limiting the validity of the provisions contained in the verses. It applies when the legal decree in the verse (al-ibrah) are limited to the history of the revelation of the verse.
- c. Sometimes, the pronunciation used by the Qur'an is general in nature, while the instructions of the Qur'an itself require it to be limited.
- d. Rejecting the description of al-Hasr in the verse in the form of al-Hasr. Imam Shafi'i interprets verse 145 of Surah al-An'am "the disbelievers when they forbid what Allah has made it halal and they make halal what Allah has forbidden. Thus, the verses of the Qur'an are revealed contrary to their intentions. as if Allah's word of God reads: "Halal is what you consider forbid and haram (forbidden) is what you consider halal".
- e. Several verses are located in several surahs, all of which can be applied by law to those not involved in asbab an-nuzul.

In addition, there are several functions of asbabun nuzul (Ahmad, 2018);

- a. Understanding the positive sides (wisdom) that encourage the rule of law, is beneficial for believers and non-believers. As for those who believe, their faith will increase and there will be a strong desire to implement the laws of Allah SWT, and practice the verses of the Qur'an, after it appears to him the benefits and privileges of Islamic law and for this purpose. The Qur'an was revealed. As for the disbelievers, the wisdom contained in the sharia law will lead them to believe when they are aware that Islamic law protects the benefits of human beings, not to plunge them into punishment.
- b. Specifying the law that the text of the Qur'an is based on the cause.

- c. The fact shows that sometimes the pronunciation in the verse of the Qur'an is general but requires specialization that lies in understanding the cause of the revelation of the verse.
- d. Ensuring the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an and eliminating ambiguity in its meaning.
- e. Eliminating confusion from legal restrictions (daf'u tawahhum al-Hashr).
- f. Understanding to whom a verse was revealed; thus, there is no doubt, results in accusations against innocent people and acquits accusations against guilty people.
- g. Making it easy to memorize, understand and solidify the revelation in the minds of everyone who hears it if he knows the cause of its revelation. Because of the relationship between cause and effect, law and event, event and actor, time and place reinforce memory factors.

In determining the asbabun nuzul, the scholars are guided by authentic narrations that are sourced from the Prophet Muhammad or his Sahabat. It is because the notification of the Sahabat regarding to this matter, when the editorial is clear, is not based merely on ijtihad but has the law of marfu' which is based on the Messenger of Allah (Ahmad, 2018).

Asbab nuzul in the sense of the particular causes on the revelation of a verse is not an individual or individual opinion but is a historical event narrated by the narrators of hadith through a strict selection with scientific requirements known in the science of history and hadith (Bakri, 2016). Therefore, the way to find out the reason for the nuzul of one verse cannot be separated from the hadith science approach through authentic sources of history that are narrated, starting from tabi'in, tabi' tabi'in to the hadith narrators who wrote them in a book of hadith. It requires the continuity of the chain, a fair and dhabith reporter, there is no dsaz (confusion), and does not contain illat (defects) (Ahmad, 2018). In reality, not all verses have special causes narrated in a chain from the Prophet to the narrators who wrote them down in a collection of hadiths.

Al-Suyuti stated that what we explain in terms of the sanad comes from sahaba. The narration is musnad, and when it is from tabi'in then it is also judged by the law of marfu,' and the narration is accepted even though it is in a mursal condition. It is the consensus of the scholars, because many tabi'in such as Mujahid, Ikrimah, and Said ibn Jubair received the news directly from the Sahaba (Munjin, 2019).

Al-Hakim in Ma'rifah Ulum al-Hadith said, when sahaba who witnessed the revelation of a verse of the Qur'an informed that the verse was revealed in connection with this", then it is a marfu' hadith.

Ibn Salah and others have the same opinion. The history of asbab al-nuzul compares with the history that explains the personal situation of the Prophet or his taqrir. Was it not narrated by the Prophet directly? when is a history included in the ranks of marfu'? what is the barrier to including the history of asbab al-nuzul as a similar marfu' hadith? (Munjin, 2019).

In the view of al-Wahidy, it is not permissible for a person to have an opinion regarding the asbabun nuzul of al-Qur'an. However, it must be based on history or from people who witnessed the verse's revelation, understand its reasons, and discuss its meaning. Likewise, the statement of Ali as-Shabuni elucidated that knowledge about asbabun nuzul cannot be obtained through reasoning (ra'yi), but must be based on a valid history that is marfu' to the Prophet" (method adopted by the ulama al-salaf al-salih to determine asbabun nuzul) (Zaini, 2014).

Simultaneously, the original source has implications for the number of verses which its causes cannot be discovered. Therefore, salaf scholars are very selective regarding various narrations of asbabun nuzul. The selection made by the salaf scholars focused on the personality of the narrators, the sources of history and the expressions they used, especially regarding the personal narrator who has high credibility who are asked to explain about asbabun nuzul (Zaini, 2014).

Ibn Sirin narrated that when I asked 'Ubaidah about the verse of the Qur'an, she replied "fear of Allah and told the truth, those who know about what the Qur'an was revealed have died." This statement is one of the leading tabi'in that showed their accuracy and caution in accepting the history of asbabun nuzul (Zaini, 2014).

According to Taba'thaba'i, there are a lot of asbab al-nuzul hadiths narrated by Ahlus Sunnah scholars, and perhaps several thousand hadiths, while those narrated by Shia scholars are few, and perhaps only a few hundred. These hadiths should continue until the Prophet SAW. Furthermore, there are also mursal and dhaif. Investigation of these hadiths makes people doubt them for the following reasons (Zaini, 2014).

*First*, most of these hadiths shows that the narrators do not narrate asbab al-nuzul in oral and written form. They narrated a story, then linked the verses of the Qur'an to that story. In essence, Asbabun-nuzul was based only on opinion, not observation and recording. This statement proves that there are many contradictions in these traditions. One verse is given several contradictory statements regarding the cause of its revelation, which cannot be reconciled. In one verse, several reasons were narrated from Ibn Abbas and people like him, for example, who could not be reconciled. There are two

possibilities regarding these conflicting hadiths: 1). Asbab al-nuzul is based on ijtihad or reasoning, not narration. Moreover, each narrator tries to relate a story with a verse that doesn't exist in reality. 2). All of these hadiths, or most of them, are fictitious.

*Second*, in the early days of Islam, the caliph forbade the writing of hadith. All the paper and boards found containing the hadith were burned. This prohibition has a significant effect until the end of the first century Hijra or for approximately ninety years. This prohibition makes the narrators narrate the hadith according to its meaning only so that the hadith changes every time a narrator narrates it to another. As a result, the hadith narrated is not according to the original. It will be very clear if one examines a story that is mentioned in the hadiths narrated through several chains, because there may be two contradicting traditions about a story. The habit of narrating hadith according to its meaning in a dubious way is one of the reasons why the hadiths about asbab al-nuzul cannot be accounted for (Zaini, 2014).

In addition, the asbab nuzul can also be studied through the socio-historical and cultural atmosphere that occurred in the Arabian Peninsula when the verse of the Qur'an was revealed. There are at least three possibilities the cause of several verses of the Qur'an can be identified its asbabun nuzul. Moreover, each of these possibilities is closely related to one another. *First*, not everything related to the process of descending the Qur'an was covered by the friends who directly witnessed the process of the revelation of the Qur'an (Zaini, 2014).

*Second*, the witnesses of Sahabah on the process of the revelation of the Qur'an were not all recorded. Even if recorded later, the recording can be said to be too late. Thus, even though sahabah devoured all processes of decreasing the Qur'an, something was missing from their memory, and gave the delay in recording it.

*Third*, it is wide open that there may be several verses of the Qur'an whose derivation is still considered appropriate with or without being directly related to an event/to identify the cause of the nuzul verse, besides being able to be traced through a number of commentaries, or with questions that preceded it (Zaini, 2014).

The Qur'an was revealed not to be spared from the asbabun nuzul who accompanied it. Asbabun nuzul is sometimes an event or an answer to a question. On the other hand, the editors used by the Qur'an are general and some are specific. Certain editorials will be understood according to the form of the text. While the verses that have general editorial, but for specific reasons, this is the issue that the Usul Fiqh scholars dispute (Rokhmah, 2019).

Is that what makes a general editorial benchmark or a particular cause. If the Qur'an is understood based on its general editorial, this means that the verse is universally applicable without being limited by place and time. On the other hand, when it is understood based on a specific reason, the law applies only to certain people who cause its revelation (Rokhmah, 2019).

The majority of scholars stipulate that the benchmark in understanding the verses that have general editorials, but the specific reason is based on the generality of the pronunciation (Rokhmah, 2019).

Meanwhile, the verses that were revealed for one reason do not conflict with the function of the Qur'an as hudan (guidance) and dustur al-Hayat (laws of life). Even this model of verse derivation provides convenience in the process of transferring and understanding of meaning (Rokhmah, 2019).

The differences among scholars of the Qur'anic sciences are related to various narrations regarding the revelation of a verse. In addressing this issue, the scholars put forward various theories and methods to resolve these narrations. Manna'Khalil al-Qaththan in his book *Mabahits fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* describes the steps at-taufiq wa al-Jam'u (conforming). In summary, these ways can be concluded as follows (Rokhmah, 2019):

- a. If all the narrations are ghairu sharih (not firm), then it is seen as an explanation of the legal content of the verse.
- b. If some of the narrations are ghairu sharih (uncertain) while the other narrations are sharih, then what is taken as the history of asbabun nuzul is sharih.
- c. If all the narrations are authentic, then it is possible that some of the narrations are authentic or all of them are authentic. If some of the narrations are valid and others are not, what is used as a guide is a valid narration.
- d. If all the narrations are valid, then one of the narrations is performed tarjih or compromised.
- e. If the appearance above is impossible, then analyze the verse that has been revealed repeatedly.

Asbabun nuzul is very helpful in understanding the verses of the Qur'an and the its secrets. Therefore, a group of hadith scholars from among the sahabah and tabi'in paid attention to the narrations of asbabun nuzul (Rokhmah, 2019).

Knowledge of asbab al-nuzul occupies a fundamental position in the study of the Qur'an, besides, this concept is an essential tool to have a more precise ta'wil and a correct interpretation of the verses in question. It is due to several factors. *First*, al-Suyuti knows the asbab an-nuzul can clarify the understanding of the process of establishing the law. That is, the legal content designated by a verse will be easier to understand if it begins with an understanding of the asbab al-nuzul verse in question. It shows that asbab al-nuzul functions as a tool in interpreting how to apply the verse in different situations. *Second*, asbab al-nuzul functions in reviewing legal specialties. It is because some legal verses have specific special reasons behind them. It makes asbab al-nuzul necessary to understand a verse's legal intent, especially for commentators who adhere to the rule "the benchmark in understanding the verse is the case that caused its descent, not the general editorial". *Third*, it can be used as a guide in rejecting the existence of *hasr* (legal restrictions) in the verse, which outwardly seems as if there is a *hasr* charge as contained in surah al-An'am: 145 (Rokhmah, 2019).

قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خَنْزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رَجَسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهْلًا لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ ۚ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلْيَنْ رَّبِّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Say, "I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a dead animal or blood spilled out or the flesh of swine – for indeed, it is impure – or it be [that slaughtered in] disobedience, dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], then indeed, your Lord is Forgiving and Merciful."

This verse does not mean to explain that what is forbidden for the Ummah is only carrion, flowing blood, pork, and animals slaughtered not in the name of Allah (Munawir, 2011). There are still many foods and drinks that are forbidden by Allah that cannot be mentioned in this verse. In rejecting the existence of *hashr*, it is necessary to know about its asbab al-nuzul. Without knowing the asbab al-nuzul of this verse, understanding the law will be difficult (Rokhmah, 2019).

*Fourth*, the verses of the Qur'an were gradually revealed. Some are the answers to questions from sahabah or insults by kaum Kafir or social problems of the developing community so that in understanding the relevant verse, one has to understand the asbab-al-nuzul verse in question. This gradual decline model demonstrates the understanding that the recipients of revelation and the society that became the mainstream tradition of Arab society at that time made the simultaneous reduction of verses an impossibility (Rokhmah, 2019).

*Fifth*, according to al-Wahidi as quoted by al-Suyuti, it is impossible to interpret a verse that has asbab al-nuzul without being accompanied by knowledge of the asbab al-nuzul verse in question. Thus, al-Wahidi thought that the science of asbab al-nuzul is essential to interpret the verse. Ibn Daqiq al-Id also expressed the same thing that knowing asbab al-nuzul is the right way to be able to know the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an (Rokhmah, 2019).

### 3.2. Case Example: The Issue of A Child's Lineage to the Unbiological Father

The verse that talks about the ordination of children is in Surah al-Ahzab verse 5.

ادْعُوهُمْ لِآبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَكِنْ مَا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

Call them by [the names of] their fathers; it is more just in the sight of Allah. But if you do not know their fathers – then they are [still] your brothers in religion and those entrusted to you. And there is no blame upon you for that in which you have erred but [only for] what your hearts intended. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.

The revelation of Surah al-Ahzab verse 5 is a response to the Arab Jahiliyah tradition that continues to grow. Asbab al-nuzul illustrates that the verses of the Qur'an have a dialectical relationship with the socio-cultural phenomena of society. Empirically, the Qur'an was revealed in a society that has a deep-rooted culture. It means that historically the Qur'an did not descend in a vacuum without context. As God's message, revelation has a target object, and the target was Arab society in the VII century AD. Thus, releasing revelation from its culture was disregarding history and reality (Ahmad, 2018; Harlina, 2014).

In the interpretation of al-Azhar, Buya Hamka emphasized, "How high is the value of affection and debt of gratitude, but the truth cannot be changed by mouth, even changing the father's name is a lie and an injustice (Hamka, 1988).

Then Buya Hamka also gave an example of a child whose father died when he was very young. Then her mother had another husband and was raised by her stepfather who loved her very much. The child does not hesitate to put his stepfather's name at the end of his name, even though it is only his stepfather, so this does not seem right. So Buya Hamka then provided a solution to this problem. The solution given by Buya Hamka in his interpretation is as follows (Hamka, 1988),

"And if you know their fathers, then they are your brothers and sisters in your religion." This means that people who are not clear who the father is then they are called brothers. In this case, it is interpreted as a protector"

This interpretation is a solution for children whose lineage is unknown. The nasab relationship is very influential on guardianship, inheritance rights, etc. So it is enough that the adoptive father or the affection is shown as protection without changing the child's lineage. Based on this case, it can be seen that asbab nuzul has high authority over interpretation. Asbabun nuzul can change the law that applies in society and replace it with a better law. Thus, to get a proper understanding of an interpretation, one must know the asbab nuzul well.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Sababun nuzul is an event that explains the background that mentions the revelation of the verses of the Qur'an. By knowing the background of events from the revelation of the Qur'an, the interpreters are very helpful in providing an interpretation of a verse in relation to a problem or problem to be solved. Therefore, the scholars say that to know a verse's interpretation properly, it is necessary to first know the story and background of the revelation of the verse. The necessity of knowing the sababun nuzul of a verse before interpreting and concluding its meaning is urgent so that the interpreter does not draw wrong conclusions from information about the teachings of the Qur'an.

Therefore, knowledge of the revelation of a verse leads one to understand the wisdom of the law. By knowing sababun nuzul a commentator can map the specifics of a case that is caused by a particular cause. Knowledge of the revelation of a verse will also provide a more comprehensive horizon and insight into the meaning of a verse. In other words, assumptions or impressions that seem rigid or narrow from the information of a verse can be eliminated or minimized.

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