

A Literary Analysis of Ayah 112 of Surah An-Nahl from the Perspective of Metaphor Typology

Rahim Nobahar¹

Abstract

Ayah 112 of Surah An-Nahl talks about the people of a city who were bestowed on the favors of security, tranquility and economic welfare; but they turned ungrateful to those divine favors. Consequently, Allah chastised them with tasting hunger and fear. The concept of Allah's recompense to those people is mentioned in the form of a metaphorical proposition: Allah made them taste the garment of hunger and fear. This metaphor has attracted the attention of the scholars of Qur'anic studies from the early beginning and has always been considered one of the linguistic beauties of the Qur'an. Recently some scholars have counted this metaphor among a series of evidence proving the idea of assuming the Qur'an not as divine revelation, but as the dreams of Prophet Mohammad. To evaluate this single claim, the present article analyses the content and conceptual order of the ayah mentioned. The article also analyses the main metaphor of the ayah i.e. likening the hunger and fear to garment, and the secondary metaphor i.e. making people tasting the garment of hunger and fear. The article also studies the metaphor from an intertextual point of view and gives some examples from Arabic poems of the pre-Islamic era. Given all the above-mentioned dimensions, the article eventually concludes that, according to the principles and customary usage of old and modern Arabic, the metaphor used in the ayah is absolutely normal, popular, and understandable, invalidating the idea of considering the Holy Qur'an as dreams.

Keywords: Garment of hunger, garment of fear, dream-consideration of the Holy Qur'an, Arabic literature, intertextuality

1. Howzeh Researcher and Associate Professor of the Department of Islamic Law, Faculty of Law, Shahid Beheshti University; email: r-nobahar@sbu.ac.ir