


## Reviewing the Concept of "Doubt" in Verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*

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### Abstract

One of the theological principles discussed among theologians is the impeccability of prophets, including the Prophet of Islam (PBUH). However, the seemingly ambiguous nature of certain Quranic verses, such as verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*, where God attributes doubt to the Prophet (PBUH), appears to contradict this principle. The incorrect interpretation of this verse has led some Christian orientalists to raise doubts about the Prophet's impeccability and the necessity of the testimony of the People of the Book to alleviate his uncertainty. The present study aims to answer the question, 'Who is the addressee of this verse?' using a descriptive-analytical method while also presenting the views of various interpreters. Given the Prophet's impeccability and the fact that divine revelation is a form of direct and certain knowledge, 'How can doubt be reconciled with his impeccability?' 'Why does God attribute doubt to the Prophet (PBUH) in this verse?' Both Sunni and Shia interpreters, based on a negative understanding of the concept of "doubt," have rejected its attribution to the Prophet (PBUH) in verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*. As a result, they have offered various interpretations that diverge from the apparent meaning of the verse. However, by focusing on the word "Doubt," a new reading of this verse can be achieved that goes beyond the different interpretive views discussed in this research. The research findings indicate that the addressee of the

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**How to Cite:** Sobhaninia, M. (2025). Reviewing the Concept of "Doubt" in Verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*, *A Research Journal on Qur'anic Knowledge*, 16(61), 137-158. DOI: 10.22054/rjqk.2025.86432.3134

Accepted: 26/08/2025

Received: 03/07/2025

eISSN: 2538-2012

ISSN: 2008-9252

verse is the Prophet himself, and the doubt mentioned in the verse is an initial, involuntary doubt that arises from a mental fluctuation aimed at seeking the truth. This natural doubt does not carry a negative connotation, so it does not conflict with impeccability, and it can occur to all individuals, including the Prophet.

**Keywords:** Verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*, Doubt, Prophet of Islam, Impeccability.

## Introduction

In eight verses of the Holy Quran,<sup>1</sup> God warns the Prophet (PBUH) against doubt and uncertainty (Barati, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 116). One such instance is verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*, which even calls upon the Prophet to refer to and question the People of the Book to resolve his doubt and uncertainty. The verse states: "So if you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters."

Since revelation to the prophets is a form of direct and intuitive knowledge, and direct knowledge is not subject to doubt, the Prophet is certain that what he receives is from God Almighty. Philosophically, knowledge is of two types: "Direct knowledge and acquired knowledge. "Direct knowledge is knowledge that, unlike acquired knowledge, is gained without the mediation of mental images or concepts. Examples include a person's awareness of themselves and their psychological, emotional, and affective states (Karaji, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 204).

The Holy Quran says about the conditions for choosing a religious leader: "And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and they were certain of Our signs." (al-Sajdah: 24) This noble verse indicates that to attain the position of leadership, whether prophethood or Imamate, two essential conditions are necessary: patience and possessing certainty. It should be noted that certainty has three stages: "Certainty of Knowledge," "Certainty of Sight," and "Certainty of Truth," with the "Certainty of

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<sup>1</sup>. "So if you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters" (Yūnus: 94); "So do not be among the doubters" (al-An'ām: 114); "So do not be in doubt concerning it. Indeed, it is the truth from your Lord" (Hūd: 17); "So do not be in doubt concerning that which these worship" (Hūd: 109); "So do not be in doubt about His meeting" (al-Sajdah: 23); "The truth is from your Lord, so never be among the doubters" (al-Baqarah: 147); "So which of the favors of your Lord will you dispute?" (al-Najm: 55); "The truth is from your Lord, so do not be among the doubters" (Āli 'Imrān: 60).

Truth" being the highest level. The religious leaders, including the Prophet of Islam who is the most superior of messengers, have achieved all stages of certainty, leaving no room for doubt or uncertainty.

However, in this and similar verses, the Prophet is warned against doubt and uncertainty. It is obvious that a prohibition against something at least indicates the possibility of its occurrence, which in this case contradicts the Prophet's impeccability. Therefore, attributing doubt and uncertainty to the Prophet contradicts both his impeccability and the context of the verse, because the continuation of the verse states: "The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord," and when the truth is clear, doubt has no meaning. Furthermore, if the Prophet (PBUH) doubts his prophethood, others are more deserving of this doubt, and the Prophet's doubt would imply the invalidity of the law (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 17, 160-162; Shah Abdolazimi, 1984 AD/1363 SH: 5, 390).

*Yūsuf Durrah al-Ḥaddād*, a Christian priest, has tried to prove that the Quran is an adaptation of the Torah and the Gospel and not a divine revelation. Citing verse 94 of Surah "*Yūnus*," he claims: "The great problem of the Prophet of Islam was that he sometimes suffered from doubt and uncertainty about his original mission and prophethood, or about the authenticity and truth of the revelation. The only way to escape this destructive doubt and achieve inner peace and tranquility was to return to "The Book "and question the scholars of the "People of the Book. "Since the scholars of the People of the Book were more knowledgeable about the teachings of "The Book, "it is obvious that when someone - even the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) - becomes doubtful about "The Book, "the best and most reliable way to get out of the whirlpool of doubt is to refer to the scholars of the People of the Book." (Durrah al-Ḥaddād, 1982: 181-183)

The present study aims to provide a clear answer to this question.

## 1. Background

Sunni and Shia interpreters have discussed the meaning of verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*, and theologians have considered it when addressing

questions about the Prophet's impeccability. The following are some of the related studies:

- Nabi Allah Sadrifar et al. (2016 AD/1396 SH) challenge the view of Yusuf Haddad by using the context of the verse and the narrations mentioned in its interpretation, emphasizing the impeccability of the Prophet and his freedom from doubt (Sadrifar, 2016 AD/1396 SH: 64-87).
- Zeinab Barati (2012 AD/1391 SH) lists several verses in which the Prophet (PBUH) is warned against doubt and, while presenting the views of interpreters and researchers, concludes that they do not conflict with the Prophet's impeccability (Barati, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 115-128).

Studies have also been conducted on the meaning of doubt itself:

- Isma'ilizadeh and Salmannejad (2017 AD/1396 SH) in their article, propose two different uses for "Doubt," basing the difference on whether or not the adjective "*Murīb*" accompanies the word in its Quranic uses. According to the article, one type of "Doubt" is used without any adjective and is involuntary and not blameworthy. The other type is accompanied by the adjective "*Murīb*," which is voluntary and blameworthy. Thus, this article is not specifically focused on verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*.
- Muhammad Raka'i (2017 AD/1396 SH) in his article, considers the cognitive domain of doubt to be the domain of uncertainty, including epistemological and ideological uncertainty.
- The only article directly related to the topic of this discussion is by Shahrbanu Haji Amiri (2007 AD/1386 SH), which addresses the audience of some verses in Surah *Yūnus*. The author considers two points important for audience identification: consistency with the rules of Arabic literature and attention to existing contextual clues. Based on this, she believes that the address in these verses is of the type "I mean you, so listen, O! Neighbor," and the blame and prohibition are directed at others, not the Prophet (PBUH) (Haji Amiri, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 33-51).

The distinguishing feature of the current article from the mentioned research is that the present paper addresses all aspects, including the

conceptual analysis of doubt and its difference from other concepts, as well as audience identification. In this regard, the novelty of the topic can be recognized.

## 2. Audience Identification of the Verse

Based on the linguists' view that doubt means the balance and equality of two contradictory things in a person's mind, accepting the Prophet's doubt would mean that when he received revelation and knowledge from God, he was faced with two contradictory things that caused him to have doubt and uncertainty. However, the Prophet (PBUH) received revelation through direct and intuitive experience. He is the one who was taken to the heavens and was shown Paradise and Hell.

With this description, is there any room for doubt for the Prophet (PBUH), especially when we see in the occasion of the revelation that this address occurred after the event of the ascension (*Mi'rāj*)? (Ṭabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 5, 202) How is it possible for God to leave a prophet, who was sent to guide people, without any sign to save him from doubt and bring him to the shore of certainty? This is far from the dignity of the Almighty and His infinite grace.

Imam Ṣādiq (AS) was asked: "How did the messengers know that they were messengers?" He replied: "The veils were removed from before their eyes." (Barqī, 1951 AD/1371 AH: 2, 328) The Prophet (PBUH), due to his spiritual power and breadth of being, felt such strength within himself that he said: "I fully received and preserved in my heart that entire God said." (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 56, 214)

*Zurārah* asked Imam Ṣādiq (AS): "How was the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) not afraid that what came from God might be suggestions from Satan?" The Imam replied: "When God chooses a servant as a messenger, He sends down tranquility and dignity upon him and what is revealed to him from God Almighty is like what he sees with his own eyes." (ibid: 18, 262)

On the other hand, the existence of doubt in the Prophet contradicts the verse: "The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord" (al-Baqarah: 285) and the noble verse: "Say, "This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight, I and whoever

follows me." (Yūsuf: 108) With this in mind, interpreters have entered the discussion of audience identification concerning the verse, "So if you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down to you," to reach a correct interpretation of the verse. The fundamental question is: Who is the addressee of the verse? If the addressee is the Prophet himself, how can doubt be reconciled with his impeccability?

Interpreters are generally divided into two groups:

### **2.1. The Prophet (PBUH) as the Addressee**

Most Shia and Sunni interpreters consider the Prophet to be the addressee of the verse. Based on this assumption, they have offered various justifications to resolve the issue.

#### **2.1.1. Allusion and Sarcasm toward the Disbelievers**

Some interpreters believe that although the addressee is the Prophet, the real intent is for others. In fact, the purpose of this address is to allude to and be sarcastic toward the disbelievers (Suyūṭī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 2, 25; Abulfutūḥ Rāzī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 10, 203). In some interpretive books, these addresses are considered to be of the type "I mean you, so listen, O neighbor." (Fakh Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 17, 300; Makarem ShiRāzī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 8, 383) This is a proverb in the Arabic language (Ṭurayḥī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 3, 252), almost equivalent to the English proverb "I'm telling you, the door, so the wall can hear."

This means that the verse addresses those who may have doubts about the truth of the Holy Quran, saying: "To remove your doubt and uncertainty, you can refer to the scholars of the People of the Book and inquire about the truthfulness of what the Prophet says, and thus realize its correctness". Therefore, the verse does not in any way indicate that the Prophet had doubt or uncertainty about the divinity of the Quran.

*Fakhr Rāzī* provides three arguments to prove this point:

1. In other verses of the same surah, God explicitly tells the Prophet: "Say, "O! People, if you are in doubt of my religion, then [know that] I do not worship those you worship besides Allah." (Yūnus/104) This

shows that the addressee of verse 94 was also these people, which was stated in a coded manner.

2. If the addressee of the verse is the Prophet himself, then according to the apparent meaning of the verse, the Prophet had doubt about his mission. If we accept this, then others would be more likely and deserving to have doubt about his prophethood, and this doubt would cause the entire law to collapse.

3. Assuming we accept that the Prophet had doubt and uncertainty about his mission, how can this uncertainty be resolved by the news and words of the People of the Book? Especially since most of them are disbelievers, and even if a few are believers, their words and statements are not a valid proof. Moreover, the news found in the Torah and the Gospel among the scholars of the People of the Book has been distorted (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 17, 300).

Since interpreters have regarded the rule "I mean you, so listen, O! Neighbor" as a solution for the proper interpretation of verses of reproach to the Prophet (PBUH), including the verse in question, it is necessary to give this matter more consideration. *Ṭabarī's* interpretation, which is considered a pioneer of *Ijtihadi* interpretations, is one of the first texts to have used this proverb in the interpretation of some verses, although without naming it (*Ṭabarī*, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 2, 17). After *Ṭabarī*, other Sunni interpreters also paid attention to this rule and used it without mentioning its name. *Ibn 'Āshūr* also used this rule extensively to solve Quranic complexities regarding impeccability, due to his "Firm view on the impeccability of the prophets." (*Ibn 'Āshūr*, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 2, 41)

Shia interpreters have also used it in their interpretations under the same title "I mean you". Some interpreters, like *Sayyid Hāshim Baḥrānī*, even opened a chapter under this title in the introduction of their interpretation and introduced this rule as one of their interpretive principles (*Baḥrānī*, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 50).

The most important source for this rule is a narration found in the book *al-Kāfī*. Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) is quoted as saying: "The Quran was revealed in accordance with the proverb: "I am telling the door so that the wall may hear." (*Kulaynī*, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 631) However,



this Hadith has a problem in its chain of transmission. *Majlisī* assessed this narration as unknown (Majlisī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 12, 521).

Another narration is the debate between Imam *Riḍā* (AS) and *Ali ibn Muhammad al-Jahm* and his answers to *al-Jahm*'s questions during a session with *Ma'mūn al-'Abbāsī*. According to this narration, the Imam used the proverb "I mean you" to justify the verses that contain reproach to the Prophet (al-Tawbah: 43; al-Zumar: 65; al-Isrā': 74) (Ibn Bābawayh, 1958 AD/1378 AH: 1, 202).

Many scholars have acknowledged that *Ali ibn al-Jahm* was a *Nāṣibī* (an enemy of the family of the Prophet) and had enmity toward the Ahl al-Bayt, so much so that he would curse and insult his father for naming him Ali (Mas'ūdī, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 4, 91). *Shaykh Ṣadūq* expressed surprise that such a person narrated this Hadith (Ibn Bābawayh, *ibid*: 204). Based on this, interpreters have not widely accepted this narration. Most Imami interpreters have not considered themselves obligated to interpret even the three verses explicitly mentioned in the Hadith based on this narration. Even Ali ibn Ibrahim—who made the most use of this rule in his interpretive work—does not refer to this narration under verses 43 of Surah *al-Tawbah* and 65 of Surah *al-Zumar* (Qummī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 1, 293).

### 2.1.2. Supposition and Assumption of Doubt

Another group of interpreters, mostly from the Sunni tradition (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 17, 301; Zamakhsharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 371; Ālūsī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 6, 178; Abū Ḥayyān, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 6, 106; Ṭayyib, 1949 AD/1369 AH: 6, 455; Bayḍāwī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 3, 124), when identifying the addressee of the verse, use the rules of grammar and consider the phrase "So if you are in doubt" as a conditional clause. They interpret the conditional word "If" in the verse as being for supposition and assumption of doubt, arguing that "Assuming the impossible is not impossible," and the condition does not imply the occurrence of the conditioned, which is doubt, especially in the heart of the Prophet (PBUH). Therefore, the verse does not report the occurrence of doubt in the Prophet (PBUH)

but rather states the obligation to ask in the assumption of doubt.

*Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī* says: "The apparent meaning of the statement is that the conditional 'if' does not necessarily imply the suspension of a thing, but sometimes it requires something impossible." For example, in the verse: "Say, if the Most Gracious had a son, I would be the first of the worshipers." (al-Zukhruf: 81)

Just as it is impossible for God to have a son in the above verse, it is also impossible for the Prophet (PBUH) to be in doubt. He believes that because this meaning was unclear to people, they resorted to the interpretation that the addressee of the verse is the Prophet (PBUH), but the intended meaning is for someone else (*Abū Ḥayyān*, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 6, 106).

*Abul Futūḥ Rāzī*, a renowned Shia interpreter, Hadith scholar, and theologian of the sixth century AH, considered this to be the best of the meanings (*Abul Futūḥ Rāzī*, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 10, 205).

Makarem Shirazi also chose this as his second option, saying: "The mention of a conditional clause is not always an indication of the probability of the condition's existence, but sometimes it is for emphasis on a point or to state a general rule. For example, in the verse, "And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. " And to parents, show kindness. If either of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them "Uff" (al-Isrā': 23), although we know that the Prophet (PBUH) lost his father before his birth and his mother during his childhood, the rule of showing respect to parents is stated as a general rule, even though the apparent addressee is the Prophet." (*Makarem Shirazi*, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 8, 384)

The problem with this view is that the verse implies that the Prophet (PBUH) is subject to doubt. The assumption and supposition of doubt is contrary to the apparent meaning of the verse.

### 2.1.3. Negation of Doubt from the Prophet

*Zajjāj* takes "In" in the phrase "So if you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down to you" to mean "Mā" (not). This would mean: "O! Muhammad, you are not in doubt or uncertainty about what We have revealed to you, but to increase your insight, ask the People

of the Book. "Just as in the story of Abraham (AS), when he asked God: "How do you give life to the dead?" God said: "Do you not believe?" He replied: "Yes, but to reassure my heart." (al-Baqarah: 260) This increase in faith and insight does not invalidate the soundness of the belief (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 17, 301; Abū Ḥayyān, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 6, 106; Ṭabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 5, 201).

*Abul Futūḥ Rāzī* considered this view to be close to the truth (Abul Futūḥ Rāzī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 10, 203). *Suyūṭī* also adopted this view and said that the meaning is the negation of doubt from the Prophet (Suyūṭī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 3, 317).

### Criticism of Sayyid Murtaḍā

Although considering "*In*" in the verse to be negative removes the problem of whether doubt could befall the Prophet (PBUH), this view is still open to criticism. *Sayyid Murtaḍā* said: "There is no doubt that the word "*In*" can mean "*Mā*" (not) in some places, but in this context, it is not appropriate for "*In*" to be negative. This is because it is not permissible for God to say: "You are not in doubt about what We have sent down to you, so ask the People of the Book, "because a knowledgeable person has no need to ask, and only the one who is in doubt needs to ask." (Alam al-Huda, 1998: 2, 382)

#### 2.1.4. Related to the Night of Ascension (*Mi'rāj*)

Some relate this verse to an event that took place on the Night of Ascension. *Ṭabrisī*, in his *Majma' al-Bayān*, narrates this view from *Zuhrī* and claims that their companions also narrated this view from Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) (Ṭabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 5, 202). The Imam is reported to have said: "On the Night of Ascension, God gathered the prophets, and the Prophet (PBUH) questioned them." The prophets (not the People of the Book) were the intended meaning of the verse: "Those who have been reading the Scripture before you." A similar narration is also reported from Imam *Bāqir* (AS) (Kūfī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 182).

Of course, these narrations can be an esoteric interpretation of the

verse, but the discussion is about the apparent meaning of the verse. For this reason, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī believes: "This narration does not clearly and explicitly conform to the wording of the verse." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995 AD/1375 SH: 10, 130) Furthermore, the narration interprets the second part of the verse, which relates to questioning the prophets, but it does not address the Prophet's doubt or its nature.

### 2.1.5. Affirmation and Understanding

Ṭabrisī quotes Farrā' and others as saying that this statement was revealed for affirmation and understanding. For example, when someone says to his servant: "If you are my servant, you will obey me," or to his father: "If you are my father, be kind to me," or to his child: "If you are my son, be good to me," and similar phrases that are meant to emphasize the matter. Sometimes, in an exaggeration, something that is entirely impossible is stated, such as "The sky wept for the death of so-and-so," and the meaning of this phrase is that "If the sky were to weep for anyone's death, it would weep for him". Similarly, the meaning of this verse is: "If you—on the impossible assumption—become one of the doubters and have any doubt or uncertainty, then in that case, ask those who came before you and read the Scripture." (Ṭabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 5, 201)

Fakhr Rāzī also presents this view in his interpretation and considers this verse to be similar to the verse: "And when Allah will say, "O! Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as two gods besides Allah," (al-Mā'idah: 116), and he believes that God's intention was for Jesus to declare his innocence (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 17, 300).

It could be said that the verse in question cannot be compared with verse 116 of Surah *al-Mā'idah* because in the latter, the phrase "He will say, "Glory be to You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right" serves as a context clue to the serious intent. However, in verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*, such a clue does not exist.

### 2.1.6. Metaphor

Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī considers this verse and similar ones to be a form

of metaphor, saying: "The proofs are abundant and follow one another, so much so that there is no need to state more than one. This is a common method in communication and understanding, and rational people use it based on their inherent nature. For example, when they want to prove something, they first argue with whatever proof they have, and then they say to the other party: "If you are in doubt about this, or let's assume it doesn't necessitate the conclusion, there is another proof for it, which is so-and-so, "and "Do not think that our proof was only what we said." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 10, 123)

The criticism of this view is that if a meaning of doubt can be presented that is consistent with its true meaning; there is no need to resort to a metaphor.

#### *2.1.7. Doubt as Hardness of Heart*

Some interpreters, such as *Qurṭubī* (Qurṭubī, 1944 AD/1364 AH: 8, 382) and *Sayyid Quṭb* (Quṭb, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 3, 1820), have altered the meaning of doubt, believing that "doubt" in the noble verse means hardness of heart. The disbelief of some Muslims after the event of the ascension, and the severity of the persecution by the polytheists after the death of *Khadījah* and *Abū Ṭālib*, had caused the Prophet to be sad and grieved. With this emphasis, God wants to relieve him of his sorrow and increase the Prophet's heart's certainty and tranquility. The problem with this view is that doubt in this sense is not mentioned in either linguistics or narrations.

#### *2.1.8. Creating Excitement and Motivation*

Some interpreters believe: "This address is directed at the Prophet, but this divine command, like the verse "So do not be supporters of the disbelievers " (al-Qaṣaṣ: 86), was issued to excite and motivate the Prophet." (Zamakhsharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 371) This view is also contrary to the apparent meaning of the verse.

Given the criticisms raised, it seems that none of the eight views can resolve the problem of attributing doubt to the Prophet.

## 2.2. *The People as the Addressee*

The second view is that the addressee in verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus* is not the Prophet himself but the people. God addresses the doubters and says: If you are in doubt about what the Prophet has brought, then ask the People of the Book. The addressees are not all people in general (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 17, 301). Similar to the verse: "O! Man, what has deceived you concerning your generous Lord, Who created you." (al-Infīṭār: 6) Interpreters have presented both connected and disconnected contextual clues for this view.

A connected clue is found a few verses later in the same surah, where God says: "Say, "O people, if you are in doubt of my religion, then [know that] I do not worship those you worship besides Allah." (Yūnus: 104) In this verse, doubt is negated from the Prophet. A disconnected clue is the verse: "O! Prophet, fear Allah and do not obey the disbelievers and the hypocrites. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise," (al-Aḥzāb: 1) because it is known that God does not obey the disbelievers and hypocrites. A similar matter is seen in the verses about Jesus, where on the Day of Resurrection, when God asks him: "Did you say to the people, take me and my mother as two gods besides Allah?" He explicitly denies this and adds: "If I had said it, You would have known it." (al-Mā'idah: 116)

This view is inconsistent with the apparent meaning of the verse, because the pronoun of address ("You") indicates that the Prophet (PBUH) is in a position of "Doubt." It seems that both Sunni and Shia interpreters, based on a negative understanding of the concept of "Doubt," have been unable to accept its attribution to the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) in verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*. As a result, they have tried to clear the Prophet's status from this situation. They have resorted to various methods to interpret the verse by departing from its apparent meaning. Based on this, it is necessary to give more consideration to the word "Doubt."

## 3. Linguistic Analysis of "Doubt"

"Doubt" is a Quranic word that has been used 15 times in the Holy Quran (Abdolbaqi, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 386). Linguists have

mentioned two meanings for "Doubt":

### 3.1. Indecision

The common and well-known meaning of doubt is hesitation and indecision, which most linguists consider to be the opposite of certainty (Farāhīdī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 5, 270; Ibn Durayd, 1987: 1, 139; Jawharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 4, 1594; Ibn Sīdah, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 6, 638; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 451). This meaning carries a kind of negative value judgment about the "Doubter" and has a negative connotation.

When someone "Doubts" another person, it means that they are somewhat suspicious of them and do not have a good feeling about them. This view is, firstly, widely used in the Quran. The Holy Quran refers to this doubt as "*Rijs*" (impurity) when it says: "Thus does Allah place the impurity upon those who do not believe" (al-An'ām: 125). Imam Ṣādiq (AS) in his interpretation of the above verse said: "The intended meaning of *Rijs* (impurity) in this verse is doubt." ('Ayyāshī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 1, 377) The Holy Quran has criticized people from the nations of Prophet Hūd (Ibrāhīm: 9), Prophet Ṣāliḥ (Hūd: 62), Prophet Mūsā (Hūd: 110), Prophet Yūsuf (Ghāfir: 34), and the Prophet of Islam (Yūnus: 104) for having such doubt. Secondly, it is reflected in many narrations from the Imams; Imam Ṣādiq (AS), in describing the armies of intellect and ignorance, considered doubt to be the opposite of certainty and an army of ignorance (Barqī, 1951 AD/1371 AH: 1, 197). Imam Sajjād (AS) in the Day of 'Arafah supplication, number 47 of *Ṣaḥīfa Sajjādīyyah*, prayed to God: "Remove from me all doubt and uncertainty." Thirdly, many ethicists have also considered doubt to be a satanic instillation and one of the despicable traits (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 5, 620; Khomeini, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 399; Narāqī, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 1, 174).

### 3.2. Intermixing

Another meaning of doubt is the intermixing of one thing with another. Azharī was the first to define doubt as a kind of insertion. He said: "*Shakk* in his weapon means "Inside "it." (Azharī, n.d.: 9, 317)

*Ibn Fāris* also chose this meaning. In the past, when Arabs thrust a spear into someone's body, they would say: "*Shakaktuhū bil Rumh.*" (*Ibn Fāris*, n.d.: 3, 173) This means that two opposing ideas have intermixed. *Rāghib* also said that "Doubt" means the connection of two contradictory matters in a person's mind, where sometimes both are accompanied by an affirming sign, and sometimes neither has an affirming sign (*Rāghib*, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 461). Doubt in its second meaning does not have a negative connotation; it is neutral.

In Hebrew, "*Shakk*" means to put on a weapon (*Mashkūr*, 1977 AD/1357 SH: 1, 466). *Jawharī* mentioned "*Shakkah*" (with a *Kasra*) as a noun meaning weapon (*Jawharī*, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 4, 1594). *Ibn Athīr* also confirmed this meaning and cited its use in a Hadith." (*Ibn Athīr*, 1979 AD/1399 AH: 2, 495) The Prophet (PBUH) refused to ransom him except with his father's "*Shakkah*", "i.e., all of his father's weapons." Muhammad Taqī Ja'fari divided "Doubt" into three types: "Legal or natural doubt (mental fluctuation for investigation); pathological doubt (anti-knowledge); professional doubt (for weak-willed individuals). "He believes that the doubt mentioned and criticized in the Quran is not "Legal" doubt (Ja'fari, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 310).

Legal doubt is involuntary, and for this reason, it is considered neutral and can occur to all individuals, including the Prophet and ordinary people. In the words of Professor Mutahhari, if doubt is a path to achieving truth and leads to more research, it is sacred. Doubt is a good and necessary "passage," but it is a bad "Stopping Point" and destination (*Motahhari*, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 1, 473). *Jawadi Amoli* also believes that logical doubt will lead to the flourishing of knowledge, unlike psychological doubt, which leads to depression and stagnation and makes the doubter static and inert (*Jawadi Amoli*, 2018 AD/1398 SH: 1, 213). Therefore, doubt has two different origins, epistemological and psychological, and each has a separate ruling.

Accordingly, we read in a narration: "*Abū Baṣīr* asked Imam Ṣādiq (AS): "What do you say about a person who doubts God?" He replied: "He is a disbeliever, O! *Abū Muhammad*." He asked: "What about if he doubts the Prophet?" He replied: "He is a disbeliever?"



Then the Imam turned to *Zurārah* and said: "He becomes a disbeliever only when he denies it." (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 399) Therefore, the first point is that narrations that generally condemn doubt should be interpreted as pathological or professional doubt, not legal or initial doubt. The consequence of logical or legal doubt is the search for and attainment of certain knowledge. However, if doubt has a psychological origin, it has harmful consequences. Some researchers suggest that doubt, like certainty, has two types: epistemological (ignorance) and psychological (indecision) (Shaker, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 271).

### 3.3. The Difference between "Shakk" and "Rayb" and "Miryah"

The second point is that the Quran uses three words for uncertainty: "Shakk," "Rayb," and "Miryah," and a distinction must be made between them. In the context of the verse in question, the phrase "So never be among the doubters (*Mumtarīn*)" is mentioned, which indicates that "Shakk" is different from "Miryah." The word "Rayb" and its derivatives are used 36 times in the Quran (Abdolbaqi, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 329). Although many linguists consider "Shakk" to be one of the main meanings of "Rayb," an examination shows that, with the exception of *Fayyūmī* (Fayyūmī, n.d.: 2, 321) none of the other dictionaries mention this meaning.

It seems that there is an absolute general-to-specific relationship between "Shakk" and "Rayb": every "Rayb" is "Shakk," but not every "Shakk" is "Rayb." Paying attention to this point is very helpful in this discussion.

"Rayb" in its Quranic uses refers to suspicion in the revelation of the Quran, such as: "And if you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down to Our servant, then produce a surah like it," (al-Baqarah: 23) or the Day of Judgment and the resurrection of the dead from their graves, such as: "O! People, if you should be in doubt about the Resurrection, then [consider that] indeed, We created you from dust," (al-Ḥajj: 5) and similar instances that are accompanied by accusation. For this reason, *Muṣṭafawī* believes that "*Irṭiyāb*" (feeling "Rayb") is a voluntary act (Muṣṭafawī, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 4, 292). A

negative connotation is seen in all of these uses.

Another word in the Quran that has a common translation with "*Shakk*" is "*Miryah*." In linguistics, "*Marīyy*" means a camel with a lot of milk, and "*Mary*" means touching a camel's udder (Farāhīdī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 8, 294). The connection between "*Shakk*" and "*Doubt*" with "*Mary*" is that in milking, the hand is moved from top to bottom and then back, and this action is repeated several times. This also exists in doubt (Haji Amiri, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 35). However, not every kind of "*Shakk*" and "*Doubt*" is equivalent to "*Miryah*." By placing these two uses ("*Shakk*" and "*Miryah*") side by side in the above verse, one can realize that there is a difference between them. "*Shakk*" is an involuntary state, whereas "*Rayb*" is voluntary. Therefore, a negative "*Shakk*" is equivalent to disbelief and is accompanied by the word "*Murīb*."

According to the verses of the Quran, it can be said that the word "*Miryah*" is used in cases where doubt is accompanied by stubbornness, such as stubborn doubt about monotheism (Hūd: 109), the afterlife (al-Fuṣṣilat: 54), the truth of the Quran (al-An'ām: 114), prophethood (al-Sajdah: 23), and arguments about the number of the People of the Cave (al-Kahf: 22), the doubt of the people of Lot about the occurrence of the punishment (al-Ḥijr: 63), and the doubt of the people of *Thamūd* about the mission of Ṣāliḥ (al-Ghāfir: 34).

Therefore, it can be said that verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus* describes two psychological states for every human being. The first state is "*Shakk*," which refers to a psychological state that is not forbidden and is not inherently problematic. It just requires its possessor to try to safely get out of it so as not to fall into the dangerous state. However, the second state is "*Miryah*," which God warns the addressee against. By placing these two words ("*Shakk*" and "*Miryah*") side by side in one verse, one can realize that "*Shakk*" is an involuntary state, but "*Miryah*" is voluntary. "*Shakk*," if not resolved by relying on a way out, naturally leads to "*Miryah*."

"*Shakk*" is a temporary state, and the doubter, firstly, has a reason for his doubt, and secondly, is sincere and even inherent, because he is in the process of acquiring knowledge, awareness, and certainty. In


contrast, "*Rayb*," which is a persistent state, firstly, the one who has "*Rayb*" has no reason for his doubt, and secondly, it is accompanied by suspicion and accusation and is a kind of heart disease that may lead to disbelief and denial.

### Conclusion

1. In eight verses of the Holy Quran, God Almighty warns the Prophet (PBUH) against doubt and uncertainty, one of which is verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus*. In this regard, interpreters have entered the discussion of audience identification to reach a correct interpretation of the verse. Some interpreters have identified the addressee of the verse as the people, which is contrary to the apparent meaning of the verse.
2. Some interpreters have considered the addressee to be the Prophet himself and have mentioned eight points in response to the question of the contradiction between the Prophet's doubt and his impeccability. The points raised are inconsistent with the apparent meaning of the verse.
3. The solution that can answer that question and is also consistent with the apparent meaning of the verse is a re-examination of the concept of doubt. The findings of the research show that "*Shakk*" by itself does not have a negative or positive connotation. Because it describes a psychological state, it is involuntary and neutral and can occur to all individuals, including the Prophet. However, if doubt is accompanied by the adjective "*Murīb*," it is a voluntary and blameworthy and negative matter. Since "*Shakk*" in verse 94 of Surah *Yūnus* is not accompanied by the adjective "*Murīb*," this doubt does not have a negative connotation, and attributing it to the Prophet does not conflict with his impeccability.

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**How to Cite:** Sobhaninia, M. (2025). Reviewing the Concept of "Doubt" in Verse 94 of Surah Yūnus, *A Research Journal on Qur'anic Knowledge*, 16(61), 137-158. DOI: 10.22054/rjqk.2025.86432.3134



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