



# **The Role of Transforming Meanings in Understanding Narrative Texts; a Case Study of Memorization (Ḥifẓ) and Forgetting (Nisyān)**

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## **Abstract**

In the Imamiyyah and Sunni narrative collections, there are hadiths regarding the themes of "Memorization" and "Forgetting" of the Quran. The former is encouraged while the latter is discouraged. The contemporary understanding of these two terms and their application in understanding these hadiths has led to the prevalence of a specific and recognized meaning for them. The problem with this meaning is the disregard for the intended and commonly understood meanings of them at the time of their issuance, as the meaning transformation is an occurrence that may be imposed on any word over time. The main objective of this research is to find the meaning of these two terms, especially in their application with the Holy Quran, in their original context. The present study, in a library-based manner, explores the lexical sources and uses of these two terms in the earliest religious texts, namely the Holy Quran and primary narrative collections. It also analyzes contextual indicators to

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ascertain the intended meaning of memorization and forgetting of the Holy Quran in the relevant narrations. The result indicated that "Memorization" means to keep and maintain, while "Forgetting" means to abandon and leave behind. These two terms have been used in narrative texts with more specific, mental and practical meanings, and sometimes more general meanings. Regarding their application to the Quran, contextual indicators reinforce the practical meaning for these terms.

**Keywords:** Memorization, Forgetting, Quran Memorization, Narrative Collections, Understanding Hadith, Meaning Transformation.

## Introduction

Some of the narrations found in Imamiyyah and Sunni narrative collections are about the "Memorization" of the Holy Quran. These narrations encourage the audience to preserve the Quran, such as the narration where Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said: "Al-Ḥāfiẓu lil Qurāni al-‘Āmilu bihī ma‘a al-Safarati Kirāmil Bararati." (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1497 AH: 2, 603; Hindī, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 1, 518) The one who memorizes the Quran and acts upon it is accompanied by angels and are honorable and righteous messenger.

In another section of narrations related to the Holy Quran, there are narrations about "Forgetting" the Quran. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Alā wa man Ta‘allamal Qurāna Thumma Nasīyahū laqīyallāhu Yawmal Qiyyāmati Maqhlūlan Yusallitullāha ‘Azza wa Jalla ‘Alayhi bi Kulli Āyatin minhu Ḥayyatan Takūnu Qarīnatahū ilannāri Illā An Yaghfirallāha lahū (Ibn Bābawayh, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 4, 3): Be aware that whoever learns the Quran and then forgets it, on the Day of Judgment, they will meet Allah with tied hands, and for every forgotten verse, a thorny creature will be assigned to accompany

them to the fire of Hell, unless Allah forgives them."

The present study aims to answer the question about the meaning of "Memorization" and "Forgetting" of the Quran in these types of narrations. 'Does their meaning in these narrations correspond to the common contemporary meanings?' Meaning, 'Does "Memorization" mean to entrust to the mind and keep it in memory, and does "Forgetting" mean to forget and erase from memory?' or 'Is there another intended meaning?' a meaning that can be reached through a careful examination of using these terms in language, narrations, and other contextual indicators.

## 1. Background

No independent research has been conducted on the topic of "Memorization of the Quran," but there are four works that have indirectly touched upon aspects of it:

A) The first work is writing by Jafar Khandagh Abadi titled 'How We Can Preserve the Quran from Decay?' (Jāmi'a Ja'farīyah, 1921 AD/1300 SH: 13, 11) In this work, the author considers memorization as preventing destruction and distortion, and sees the efforts of the impeccable Imams (AS) as the only solution for preserving and safeguarding the Quran;

B) The second work is written by Ayatollah Abulḥasan Sha'rānī, titled "Memorization and Compilation of the Quran." (Ma'ārif Islami, 1966 AD/1345 SH: 2, 20) In this work, the author takes "Memorization" to mean safeguarding and protecting from destruction, and discusses the history of the compilation of the Quran;

C) The third work is writing by Muhammad Ihsanifar Langaroudi titled "Insufficiency of Narrations about the Prohibition of Forgetting after Memorizing the Quran." ('Ulūm Hadith, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 52, 39) In this work, "Memorization" is understood as entrusting to the mind, and the author questions the sanctity or condemnation that some have attributed to forgetting after memorization through presenting different perspectives and examining relevant narrations;

D) The last work is written by Hassan Hosseinzadeh Taher, titled "The Position of Quranic Memorization according to the Impeccable and Religious Authorities." (Peyvand, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 388, 12) In this work, the author takes "Memorization" to mean entrusting to the mind and attempts to encourage the readers to engage in this practice by referring to narrations about the memorization of the Quran.

Regarding the "Forgetting" of the Quran, there have been some related researches:

The thesis titled "Semantics of Forgetting in the Holy Quran" by Sara Salehi Taleghani, supervised by Zohre Akhavan Moghaddam. The author concludes in this research that forgetting, among other concepts used in the Holy Quran, is mentioned in 36 verses along with its derivatives. By considering the implicit meaning and emotional connotation of this term, it can be said that it is used in six verses to mean "Unintentional Forgetting," in 11 verses to mean "Forgetting Regarding the Negligence," and in 19 verses to mean "Abandonment."

The research paper titled "Forgetting the Quran after Memorization" (Rey Shahri, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 3, 199-201) examines and evaluates the opinions expressed in this category of narrations,

and concludes that we do not know if severe narrations in this regard, such as the narration from Ṣadūq, refer to common and prevalent forgetting. Instead, these narrations can be regarded as abandonment of the practical application and forgetting of the guiding teachings of the Quran due to neglect and disregard.

A) The article "Insufficiency of Narrations about the Prohibition of Forgetting after Memorizing the Quran" by Mohammad Ihsanifar Lanagroudi, which we discussed earlier, takes "Forgetting" to mean forgetting and considers this prohibition to be non-sanctioned due to its inconsistency with other religious texts.

B) The article "Investigation and Analysis of the Concept of Prophetic Narration: Man Ta'allamal Qur'āna Thumma Nasīyahū Laqīyallāhu Ajdham" by Hassan Zarnoosheh Farahani and Hamid Imandar (Hadith-Pajuhi, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 23, 241) takes "Nisyān" to mean forgetting and regards it as a type of metaphor or analogy due to its inconsistency with other religious data.

C) In the book "The Estrangement of the Holy Quran," by Majdī al-Hilālī (Hilālī, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 118), the author takes "Nisyān" to mean forgetting and does not refer to other meanings of the term.

## 2. Method

The present research, using a library-based and descriptive-analytical method, has attempted to explore the meaning of memorization and forgetting in the primary linguistic sources and the earliest religious texts, namely the Holy Quran and the narrative collection, in order to find answers to its own problem based on these findings.

### 3. General Findings

The general finding of this research is to reveal the meaning of memorization and forgetting in the primary authentic sources, which can greatly contribute to the understanding of narrations (Fiqh al-Hadith) in which these two words are used.

### 4. Discussion

To answer the question of this research, which is the meaning of "Memorization" and "Forgetting" in the hadiths that encourage the memorization of the Quran, it is necessary to first find the meaning of these two words in the lexicon and their Quranic and narrative applications, so that we can then discover the meaning of these two words in such narrations with the help of evidence. Therefore, this research requires the following information:

- The etymology of "Memorization;"
- The etymology of "Forgetting;"
- Evidence that can help us understanding the meaning of "Memorization" and "Forgetting" in the Quran.

#### 4.1. The Etymology of "Memorization"

- Khalīl ibn Aḥmad Farāhīdī (100-175 AH) defines "Memorization" as the opposite of forgetting and means keeping and a little forgetfulness. He uses terms such as "al-Ḥafīz" (guardian), "al-Taḥaffuz" (great care to avoid error in speech or action), and "al-Muḥāfazah" (stability in prayer, knowledge, and the like) for this purpose: *Al-Ḥifzu Naqīdūl Nisyān wa huwa al-Ta‘āhud wa Qillatul Ghaflati* (Farāhīdī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 3, 198).

- Ishāq ibn Marrār Shaybānī (d. 213 AH) writes in his book "al-Jīm" about memorization, quoting from Mudallajī: The phrase "Mā Aḥfaẓa Kitāba Hādhal Muṣḥafi" is used when there is no error in the writing and the script is free of errors (Shaybānī, (n.d.): 1, 34).
- Ismā‘īl ibn Ḥammād Jawharī (d. 393 AH) defines memorization as guarding and protecting in "al-Ṣiḥāḥ." He also lists uses for this term, such as "al-Ḥafazah," the angels who record human deeds, "al-Muḥāfazah," guarding, "al-Ḥafīz," meaning "al-Muḥāfīz," "Iḥtifāz" means keeping and taking care, and "al-Taḥaffuz," vigilance and a little carelessness. I preserved the book means I gradually memorized it (Jawharī, (n.d.): Root Ḥifz).
- Ibn Fāris (d. 393 AH) mentions only one primary meaning for this term, which is taking care of something. He also wrote about the reason for using the word "Ḥafīzah" to express the meaning of anger and rage: Because this state leads to the protection of something (Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: Root Ḥifz).

By carefully examining the mentioned meanings and their example usages, we can identify a central meaning among them, which is the meaning of "care and preservation." There are two other elements alongside this meaning that, when changed, give rise to multiple practical meanings for this word. These two elements are the thing being protected (the object of protection), such as knowledge, and the harm that threatens the object of protection, such as forgetfulness.

The mentioned reports indicate that "Ḥifz" does not have multiple meanings, and its only meaning is the care and preservation of the

object of protection against harm or threat. Therefore, this care and preservation, based on the usages mentioned by lexicographers, can be either conceptual or practical, depending on the determining factors. Otherwise, we would have to accept a generalization in meaning.

#### 4.1.1. The Usage of "Ḥifẓ" in the Sense of Mental Memorization

There are a lot of narrations in which the word "Ḥifẓ" means mental memorization; such as in this narration where Ishāq ibn ‘Ammār tells Imam Ṣādiq (AS):

"Ju'iltu Fidāka Innī Aḥfazul Qurāna ‘Alā Ḍahri Qalbī fa Aqra’ūhu ‘alā Ḍahri Qalbī Afḍalu aw Anẓuru fil Muṣḥaf? Faqāla lī: Bal Aqra’ahū wa Anẓur fil Muṣḥaf fahuwa Afẓalu a mā ‘Alimta anna al-Naẓara fil Muṣḥafī ‘Ibādatun: I offer my life for you! I have memorized the Quran in my heart. Is it better for me to recite it from memory or from the pages?" Ishāq says: "Imam told me: 'No! Recite it from the pages, for its virtue is greater. Do you not know that looking at the Quran is worship?" (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 605)

In this narration, the use of the word "Ḥifẓ" alongside "‘An Ḍahri Qalb" shifts the meaning of memorization towards mental memorization.

#### 4.1.2. The Usage of "Ḥifẓ" in the Sense of Practical Preservation

A) In verse 89 of Surah al-Mā’idah, it is stated: "Wa Aḥfazū Aymānakum: Remain steadfast in your oaths." It is clear that the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" in this part of the verse refers to practical preservation, not mental.



B) In some verses, "Ḥifẓ" is attributed to external objects, such as in this part of the verse: "Wasi'a Kursīyuhu al-Samāwāti wal Arḍ wa lā Ya'uduhū Ḥifẓuhumā wa Huwal 'Alīyyul 'Azīm: His throne of power encompasses the heavens and the earth, and their preservation is not burdensome for Him. He is the exalted and great one." (al-Baqarah: 255) The variable element in this group of verses regarding "Ḥifẓ" is the thing to which "Ḥifẓ" is attributed and the action of "Ḥifẓ" performed on it. The things attributed to "Ḥifẓ" in these verses are:

- The heavens and the earth, as in: "Wasi'a Kursīyuhu al-Samāwāti wal Arḍi wa lā Ya'uduhū Ḥifẓuhumā" (al-Baqarah: 255);
- Actions, as in: "Inna 'alaykum la Ḥāfīẓīn" (al-Infīṭār: 10);
- Human life, as in: "Fa'arsil Ma'anā Akhānā Akhānā Naktal wa Innā lahu Laḥāfīẓūn" (Yūsuf: 63);
- The divine book, as in: "Innā Anzalnā al-Tawrāta fihā Hudan wa Nūrun Yaḥkumu bihā al-Nabīyyūna Alladhīna Aslamū lilladhīna Hādū wa al-Rabbānīyyuna wa al-Aḥbāra bimā Ustuhfīzū min Kitābillāh" (al-Mā'idah: 44);
- Jinns, as in: "Wa minal Shayāṭīna man Yaghūṣūna lahu wa Ya'malūna 'Amalan Dūna Dhālika wa Kunnā lahum Ḥāfīẓīn" (al-Anbīyā': 82);
- Pudendums, as in: "Wa Alladhīna hum li Furūjihim Ḥāfīẓūn" (al-Mu'minūn: 5);
- Lawḥ, as in: "Fī Lawḥin Maḥfūẓ" (al-Burūj: 22);
- Earthly treasures, as in: "Qāla Ij'alnī 'Alā Khazā'inil Arḍi Innī Ḥāfīḍun 'Alīm" (Yūsuf: 55).

The thing on which the action of "Ḥifẓ" is performed is understood

from the connected evidence in each case, corresponding to the nature of "Ḥifẓ." For example, when "Ḥifẓ" is attributed to Pudendum, it refers to the preservation and protection of one's sexual desires from anything that God has forbidden (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 16, 314). And when it is related to the divine book, it means safeguarding it from any distortion or alteration (ibid: 12, 101).

C) There is narrations in which "Ḥifẓ" is accompanied by a recommendation or instruction, and in these narrations, there are indications that the purpose of "Ḥifẓ" is to understand correctly and strive to act upon that recommendation or instruction. For example, there is a narration in which Imam Ṣādiq (AS) conveys the testament of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Imam Ali (AS): *Yā Alī Ulā'ika bi Waṣīyyihī faḥfazhā 'Annī... Innal Yaqīna an lā Tarḍā Aḥadan bi Sakhaṭillāhi... Yā 'Alīyyu Innaka lā Tazālu bi Khayrin mā Ḥafīzat Waṣīyyatī* (Barqī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 1, 16).

O! Ali! I entrust you with a recommendation and ask you to take it from me and safeguard it. Without a doubt, it is certain that by angering God, you will not please anyone ... O! Ali! As long as you preserve my testament, you will continuously be in goodness.

Based on the concluding phrase of the narration that states, "*Innaka lā Tazālu bi Khayrin mā Ḥafīzat Waṣīyyatī*," it is understood that preservation here does not refer to mere remembrance, but rather to acting upon the content of the testament. For "Continuously being in goodness" can only be achieved by acting upon the instructions of the Prophet.

D) Narrations that speak about the preservation of a specific body part from a sin related to that part, such as the narration in which the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Najātul Mu'mini fi Ḥifẓi Lisānihī" (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 114). The salvation of a believer lies in their vigilance in guarding their tongue. To this category of narrations, we can also add narrations about the preservation of Pudendum (ibid: 33), the preservation of the stomach (Ibn Bābawayh, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 1, 25), and similar ones.

E) Narrations in which preservation is mentioned in the sense of observing rights, laws, and etiquette, such as the supplication of Imam Sajjād (AS) where he says: Allāhumma wa man Ra'ā hādhal Shahra Ḥaḡḡa Ri'āyatihī wa Ḥafiḡa Ḥurmatahū Ḥaḡḡa Ḥifẓihā... Awjabat Riḡāka lahū wa 'Aḡafat Raḡmataka 'alayhi (Ṣaḡīfa Sajjādīyyah: Pray 45).

O! Allah! Whoever observes the rights of this month and preserves its sanctity with dignity ... Your satisfaction is necessary for them, and Your mercy descends upon them.

Also, the narration of Ṣafwān, who said to Imam Ṣādiq (AS): "My family is with me, and I intend to perform Hajj. Is it permissible for me to tie my travel expenses in my waist belt?" The Imam replied: "Na'am Inna Abī Kāna Yaḡūlu min Quwwatil Musāfirī Ḥifẓu Nafaḡati (Barḡī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 2, 358; Ibn Bābawayh, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 2, 280): Indeed, my father used to say that one of the factors of a traveler's strength is to preserve his expenses."

#### 4.1.3. The Usage of Memorization in the Meaning of Mujmal (Summary) or ‘Ām (General)

The intended meaning is the usage of "Ḥifẓ" in sources that does not specify either of the two mentioned meanings (mental and practical).

A) Narrations in which memorization are mentioned in contrast to forgetfulness, conveying only the opposite meaning, such as this narration:

Samā‘ah ibn Mihrān says: I was with Imam Ṣādiq (AS) when the discussion of intellect and ignorance came up. The Imam said: Fakāna mim mā A‘ṭā Allāhu al-‘Aqla minal Khamsati wal Sab‘īnal Junda... al-Ḥifẓu wa Ḍiddahū al-Nisyān (Barqī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 1, 196; Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 20).

One of the seventy-five divisions that God has bestowed upon intellect is memorization, which is contrasted with forgetfulness.

The problem with this type of narration regarding the meaning of memorization is the juxtaposition of the word with forgetfulness, as forgetfulness has two meanings: Mental forgetfulness and practical abandonment.

Forgetfulness: Aṣlānun Ṣaḥīḥānun Yadullu Aḥaduhumā ‘alā Ighfāli Shay’ wa al-Thānī ‘alā Tarki Shay’ (Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: Root Nasīya).

This causes memorization in these narrations to encompass both meanings without leaning towards one meaning over the other.

B) Narrations that refer to all levels or types of vigilance and care, such as this narration where Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said: "Man Ḥafīza min

Aḥādīthinā Arba‘īna Ḥadīthan Ba‘athahullāha Yawmal Qīyāmati ‘Āliman Faqīhan (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 49): Whoever memorize forty traditions from our traditions, Allah will raise him as a knowledgeable jurist on the Day of Judgment."

After quoting narrations with similar content to this narration (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 2, 153) in the explanation section, Allamah Majlisī brings various statements regarding the meaning of memorization and then writes: Wal Ḥaqqu an lil Ḥifẓi Marātibun Yakhtalifu al-Thawāba bi Ḥasbihā: Fa Aḥadīhā Ḥifẓun Lafẓuhā Sawā’an Kāna fil Khātiri aw fī al-Dafātiri wa Taṣḥīhi Lafẓihā wa Istijāzatihā wa Ijāzatihā wa Riwayatihā wa Thānīhā Ḥifẓu Ma‘ānīhā wa al-Tafakkuri fī Daqā’iqihā wa Istinbāṭil Ḥukmi wal Ma‘ārifi minhā wa Thālithuhā Ḥifẓu bil ‘Amali bihā wal I’tinā’i bi Sha’nihā wal Itti‘āzi bi Mawdi‘ihā (ibid: 156-158).

The truth is that we can say that the memorization of hadiths has different levels, each with its own specific reward. One of these levels is the memorization of the exact wording of the hadith, whether it is in the mind or on paper. The second level is the memorization of the meanings of these narrations, pondering over their points, deriving commandments and teachings from them. The third level is the memorization of the narrations through acting upon them, paying attention to their position and accepting their guidance.

The same comprehensive meaning of "Ḥifẓ" can be seen in the explanation of Quran memorization pray by the Mullā Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī. In his explanation on Kāfī, he writes about the phrase

"Wa an Tarzuqanī Ḥifẓal Quran" (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 576): "(Wa an Tarzuqanī Ḥifẓal Quran) min Ḍahril Qalbi aw al-A‘ammi minhu wa min Muḥāfazatih bil ‘Amali bi Aḥkāmihī wa Ḥusna Tilāwathihī wa al-Ta’dībī bi Ādābihī wal I’tibāri bi Amthālihī wa Qiṣāṣihī wal Tadbīri fihī wa fī Asrārihī." (Māzandarānī, 2003 AD/1382 SH, 10, 382)

"Ḥifẓ" in this context refers to entrusting it to the mind or encompassing acting upon its commandments, reciting it beautifully, observing its etiquette, accepting its parables and stories, and contemplating its verses and secrets.

#### 4.1.4. Exploration of the Meaning of Ḥifẓ in the Hadiths about Quran Memorization

Since the subject of this research is to attain the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" in the narrations that praise and encourage it, we search for its meaning in narrations that have such characteristics to clarify in which sense "Ḥifẓ" is used in these narrations:

A) It is mentioned in a supplication for reciting the Quran:

"Allāhumma Faḥabbib Ilaynā Ḥusna Tilāwathihī wa Ḥifẓa Āyātihī (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 573): O! Allah! Make the beauty of its recitation and the memorization of its verses beloved to us!"

In another supplication, it is mentioned: "As'aluka ...an Tarzuqanī Ḥifẓal Qurān." (ibid: 567)

"I ask You to provide me with the memorization of the Quran as my sustenance!"

meaning of memorization in terms of it being mental or practical; therefore, its meaning is summary or general.

B) Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said: "Al-Ḥāfīẓ lil Qurāni al-‘Āmilu bihī ma‘a al-Safaratil kirāmi al-bararati." (ibid: 603)

"The preserver of the Quran, who acts upon it, is accompanied by the noble and righteous angels."

In this narration also, the meaning of memorization is Mujmal, and the description of "al-‘Āmilu bihī" sitting alongside "al-Ḥāfīẓu lil Qurān" cannot exclude it from Ijmāl. It is possible that this qualifier is an explanatory qualifier (Qayd Tawḍīḥī), in which case the meaning of memorization becomes practical memorization, and it is also possible that it is a precautionary qualifier (Qayd Iḥtidhārī), in which case the meaning of memorization becomes mental memorization.

C) Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said:

Innalladhī Yu‘ālijul Qurāna wa Yaḥfazuhū bi Mashaqqatin minhu wa Qillati Ḥifẓin lahū Ajrāni (ibid: 606).

"Whoever exerts effort towards the Quran<sup>1</sup> and preserves it despite his lack of memorization, he will have two rewards."

In this narration, there is also no indication to suggest a specific meaning of memorization in terms of it being mental or practical; therefore, the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" is Mujmal.

D) Ya‘qūb Aḥmar expressed to Imam Ṣādiq (AS):

"Inna ‘Alayya Daynan Kathīran wa qad Dakhalanī mā kānal Qurānu Yatafallatu minnī: I have a lot of debt, and my mind is so

1 . "al-Mu‘ālatatul Muzāwalah; engaging in a task and exerting effort towards it." (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 9, 1712)

troubled that the Quran has slipped away from me."

The Imam replied to him: Al-Qurāna al-Qurāna innal Āyata minal Qurāni wal Sūrata latajī'u Yawmal Qīyāmati ḥattā Taş'ada Alfa Darajatin Ya'nī fil Jannati fataqūlu law Ḥafīẓtanī Labalaghtu bika hā hunā (ibid: 608).

Know the value of the Quran. Indeed, a verse of the Quran or a surah from it will come on the Day of Judgment and ascend a thousand degrees in Paradise. Then it will say: If you had preserved me, I would have brought you to this place.

In this narration, memorization cannot mean mental retention, as in Imam's response, it refers to ascending to high ranks in Paradise. Attaining these ranks is the reward for one's actions, as indicated by numerous verses in the religion. For example, the verse "Wa li Kullin Darajātun mimmā 'Amilū." (al-An'ām: 132) Ayatollah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in his interpretation of this verse, considers the degrees to be related to actions and writes: "For each group of jinn and mankind, there are degrees based on their actions, and since actions vary, the difference in actions leads to differences in the degrees of the doers of those actions." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 7, 356)

Furthermore, there are verses that emphasize following the divine prophets and consider it as the criterion for the superiority of humans, such as the verse: "Inna Awlannāsi bi Ibrāhīma lilladhīna Ittaba'ūhu wa hādha al-Nabīyyu wa Alladhīna Āmanū wa Allāhu Walīyyul Mu'minīn." (Āli 'Imrān: 63)

If it is said that the late Kulaynī has mentioned this narration in the chapter "Man Ḥafīẓal Qurāna Thumma Nasīyah," (Kulaynī, 1986



AD/1407 AH, 2, 607) and this context indicates that he understood "Ḥifẓ" to mean entrusting it to the mind or mental retention, we respond that he has also narrated other traditions in the same chapter which undoubtedly refer to practical memorization and, in contrast, abandoning the practical implementation of the Quran. For example, the first narration in this chapter<sup>1</sup> is accompanied by the phrase "Falaw Annaka Tamassakta bī wa Akhadhta bī" and the fourth narration<sup>2</sup> is accompanied by the phrase "lam Ta'mal bī wa Taraktanī" and the sixth narration<sup>3</sup> is accompanied by the phrase "Ana Sūratun Kadhā wa

1. 'an Ya'qūb al-Aḥmar Qāla: Qultu li Abī 'Abdillāhi Ju'iltu Fidāka Innī Kuntu Qara'tal Qurāna Fafalata Minnī fad'ullāha 'Azza wa Jalla an Yu'allimanīhi Qāla faka'annahū Fazi'a lidhālika faqāla 'Allamakallāhu huwa wa Īyyānā Jamī'an Qāla wa Nahnu Nahwu min 'Ashratin Thumma Qāla al-Sūrata Takūnu ma'a al-Rajuli qad Qara'ahā Thumma Tarakahā fata'tīhi Yawmal Qīyāmati fī Aḥsani Šūratin wa Taslīmu 'alayhi fayaqūlu man Anti fataqūlu Ana Sūratu Kadhā wa Kadhā falaw Annaka Tamassakta bī wa Akhadhta bī li Anzaltaka hādhihī al-Darajata fa'alaykum bil Qur'āni Thumma Qāla inna minannāsi man Yaqra' al-Qurāna li Yuqāla Fulānun Qāri' wa minhum man Yaqra' al-Qur'āna li Yatliba bihī al-Dunyā wa lā Khayra fī Dhālika wa minhum man Yaqra' al-Qur'āna li Yantafi'a bihī fī Šalātihī wa Laylati wa Nahārihī.
2. 'an Ibnī Abī Ya'fūr Qāla Samī'tu Abā 'Abdillāhi Yaqūlu Inna al-Rajula Idhā Kāna Ya'lamu al-Sūrata Thumma Nasīyahā aw Tarakahā wa Dakhala al-Jannata Ashrafat 'Alayhi min Fawqi fī Aḥsani Šūratin fataqūlu Ta'rifunī fayaqūlu lā fataqūlu Ana Sūratun Kadhā wa Kadhā lam Ta'mal bī wa Taraktanī amā wallāhi law 'Amilta bī Labalaghtu bika hādhihī al-Darajata wa Ashārat bi Yadihā ilā Fawqihā.
3. 'an Ya'qūbq al-Aḥmar Qāla: Qultu liabī 'Abdillāhi Ju'iltu Fidāka Innahū Aṣābatnī Humūmun wa Ashyā'u lam Yabqa Shay'un minal Khayri Illā wa qad Tafallata minnī minhu Ṭā'ifatun ḥattā al-Qur'ānu laqad Tafallata minnī Ṭā'ifatun minhu Qāla fafazi'a 'inda Dhālika ḥīnun Dhakartul Qur'āna Thumma Qāla inna al-Rajula layansīya al-Surata minal Qur'āni fata'tīhi Yawmal Qīyāmati ḥattā Tushrifā 'alayhi min Darajatin min Ba'ḍin al-Darajatin fataqūlu assalāmu 'alayka →

Kadhā Ḍayya‘tanī wa Taraktanī." Therefore, the presumed context is not effective, and in this narration, there is no explicit context to determine the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" in one of the mentioned senses.

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "'Adadu Darajal Jannati ‘Adadu Āyil Qur’āni fa’idhā Dakhala Ṣāhibul Qur’ānil Jannata Qīla lahū Iqra’ warqa Li Kulli Āyatin Darajatan falā Takūnu Fawqa Ḥafīẓil Qur’āni Darajatun." (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 89, 22)<sup>1</sup>

The number of degrees in Paradise is equal to the number of verses in the Quran. So whenever one of the people of the Quran enters Paradise, they are told: Recite and ascend! For each verse, there is one degree. Therefore, there is no degree higher than the position of a memorizer of the Quran.

In this narration, there are no explicit indications for the interpretation of "Ḥifẓ" as memorization in a mental or practical sense, and its meaning is Mujmal in this context. It also seems that the

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← fayaqūlu wa ‘alayki assalāmu man Anti fataqūlu Ana Sūratu Kadhā wa Kadhā Ḍayya‘tanī wa Taraktanī amā law Tamassakta bī Ballaghtu bika hādhihī al-Darajata Thumma Ashāra bi Iṣba‘ihī Thumma Qāla ‘alaykum bil Qur’āni fata‘lamūhu fa‘inna minannāsi man Yata‘allamul Qur’āna li Yuqāla Fulānun Qāri’un wa minhum man Yata‘allamuhū fa Yaṭlibu bihī al-Ṣawta fa Yuqālu Filānun Ḥasanu al-Ṣawti wa laysa fī Dhālika Khayrun wa minhum man Yata‘allamuhū fa Yaqūmu bihī fī Laylatin wa Nahārihī lā Yubālī man ‘Alima Dhālika wa man lam Ya‘lamhu.

1. It should be noted that Majlisī has quoted this narration from "Kitāb al-Imāmah wa al-Tabṣirah," but upon referring to the available copy of this book, the narration and even a similar one could not be found. Additionally, the current text that has "Irqa" instead of "Iqra'" is incorrect and the authentic text is the one that we have quoted from "Mustadrak al-Wasā'il" in Al-Biḥār (cf. Nūrī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 4, 231).

meaning of "Iqra'" (recite) in such narrations refers to the recitation of the words of the Quran, meaning the act performed by a Quranic reciter in this world. This is because it is known from other narrations that the Day of Judgment is solely a scene of accountability and not action, such as the narration where Imam Ali (AS) said, "Innal Yawma 'Amalun wa lā Ḥisāba wa Ghadan Ḥisābun wa lā 'Amala." (Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 42) This world is a realm of action, and there is no accountability involved, while the hereafter is a realm of accountability, and there is no action involved.

Therefore, in all narrations related to the subject of "Ḥifẓul Qurān" (memorization of the Quran), the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" is Mujmal. If there are no explicit indications for the interpretation of "Ḥifẓ" in a mental or practical sense, its meaning will remain in its Ijmāl usage or in a broader sense. However, there are indications that give an interpretation of practical preservation and prove that in such narrations, what is encouraged is the practical memorization of the Noble Quran. There is no conclusive evidence for the exclusive value of mental memorization alone.

#### **4.1.5. Supportive Evidence in Determining the Meaning of Quran Memorization**

A) The general evidence is that the criterion of value is action, and solely relying on mental memorization is not valuable. That is why it is mentioned in narrations:

"Ḥadīthun Tadrīhi Khayrun min Alfī Ḥadīthin Tarwīhi (Ibn Bābawayh, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 2): A narration that you understand

is more valuable than a thousand narrations that you merely narrate."

"*Alaykum biddarajāti lā bil Riwayāti* (Kurājki, 1410: 2, 31): You should understand, transmission is not enough."

It is quite clear that in many cases, especially at the early Islam, the narration of hadiths required memorization. However, what has been introduced as valuable is the understanding and comprehension of the hadith, because acting upon a hadith is contingent upon understanding it, not just memorizing its words. In other words, the religious leaders (AS) have placed value on action rather than mere memorization of words. Narrations that criticize knowledge without action support this understanding, for example: *Rubba ‘Ālimin qad Qatalahū Jahlahū wa ‘Ilmuhū ma‘ahu lā Yanfa‘uhū* (Nahj al-Balāghah, Hikmat 107).

How many scholars there are who the victims of their own foolishness are and their knowledge does not benefit them! Likewise, this narration illustrates that the criterion for valuing an academic achievement lies in its practical application. The Prophet of God (PBUH) said:

*Al-‘Ulamā’u Rajulāni Rajulun ‘Ālimun Ākhidhun bi ‘Imihī fahādihā Nājin wa ‘Ālimun Tārikun li ‘Imihī fahādihā Hālikun wa Inna Ahlannāri la Yata’dhūna min Rīhil ‘Ālimi al-Tāriki li ‘Ilmihī* (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 44).

Scholars can be divided into two groups: Those who use their knowledge in practice and are successful and those who disregard their knowledge (do not act upon it) and are unfortunate.

Undoubtedly, the people of hell suffer from the smell of the scholarship of those who have abandoned their knowledge. It should be noted that the narrations in this chapter convey the same meaning.

In addition to these, there are also narrations that emphasize the importance of combining knowledge and action, and give value to the linkage between the two. For instance, Imam Ali (AS) said:

Ayyuhannāsu I‘lamū Anna Kamāladdīni Ṭalabul ‘Ilmi wal ‘Amalu bihī (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 30).

O! People! Know that the perfection of religion is the acquisition of knowledge and acting upon it. Based on these narrations, it can be understood that memorizing the Quran (retaining its words in memory) is valuable only when accompanied by action, and its mere retention in memory is not valuable.

B) Another related point is that there is no explicit description or title of Quran memorizer for the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), which indicates that the praiseworthy and recommended action is nothing but retaining the words in memory. If this practice or title were considered as a merit and excellence, the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) should also have been characterized by it. However, no such interpretation was found in the narrations. What exist are the following interpretations: Ḥafazata Dīnillāh<sup>1</sup>, Ḥāfīz li Dīnillāh<sup>2</sup>, al-Ḥāfīzu limā Istawda<sup>1</sup>,

1. Rabbi Ṣalli ‘alā Aṭā’ibi Ahli Baytihiladhīna...Ja‘altahum Khazanata ‘Ilmika wa Ḥafazata Dīnika (Ṣaḥīfa Sajjādīyyah: Prayer 47).

2. Imam Riḍā word in description of Imam: al-Imāmu ‘Ālimun lā Yajhalu...Ḥāfīzun li Dīnillāh (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 202).

Ḥafazata SIRRILLĀH<sup>2</sup>, Tarjumānil Qurān<sup>3</sup>.

Undoubtedly, in all of these narrations, the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" is not limited to mental memorization, but rather refers to the preservation and safeguarding of the divine teachings that have been entrusted to them.

## 5. Forgetting (Nisyān) Terminology

### 5.1. Forgetting in the Word

The word "Nisyān" has a clear meaning for people today, and that is forgetting. However, in the past, this word had another meaning that is no longer used today. Ibn Manzūr wrote in Lisān al-‘Arab:

"Al-Nisyānu" means abandonment, and when God says, "Mā Nansakh min Āyatin aw Nunsihā," (al-Baqarah: 106) it means we order you to abandon it. It is sometimes said, "Ansaytuhū: I have forgotten it," which means I ordered it to be abandoned; and also

1. Imam Ṣādiq word in description of Imam Muntazar: al-Ḥāfiẓu limas Tūdi‘a (Ibn Ṭāwūs, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 2, 600).
2. In the Jāmi‘ah al-Kabīrah quoted from Imam Hādī: Assalāmu ‘Alaykum yā Ahla Bayti Nubuwwah wa Mawḍi‘a al-Risālah... wa Ḥafazati SIRRILLĀHI wa Ḥamalati Kitāballāhi (Ibn Bābawayh, 2002 AD/1413 AH: 2, 610).
3. In the pilgrimage of Imam Kāẓim and Imam Jawād we read: Ashhadu Annaka Walīyullāhi wa Ḥujjatuhū fī Arḍihī wa annaka Janbullāhi wa Khīyaratullāhi wa Mustawda‘u ‘Ilmillāhi wa ‘Ilmil Anbīyā‘i wa Ruknul Īmāni wa Tarjumākul Qur‘āni (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 99, 21); also Imam Ali (AS) said: Innā lam Nuḥakkimi al-Rijāla wa Innamā Ḥakkamnal Qur‘āna hādhal Qur‘ānu Innamā huwa Masṭūrun Baynal Daffatayni lā Yanṭiqu bilisānin wa laā budda lahū min Tarjumānin (Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 1125; also in the pilgrimage of Imam Mahdī (AS) we read: Assalāmun ‘Alayka yā Tālīya Kitābillāhi wa Tarjumānahū (Ṭabarsī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 2, 493).

"Nasītuḥū" means something that is lost or forgotten, as in the verse, "Wa Udhkur Rabbaka Idhā Nasīta." (al-Kahf: 24) (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 15, 321)

### 5.2. The Usage of "Nisyān" in the Sense of Forgetting

The root of (N S Y) is applied 45 times in the Quran that in some cases mean forgetting, such as: "Wa imam Yunsīyannaka al-Shayṭānu falā Taq'ud ba'da al-Dhikrī ma'al Qawmi al-Zālimīn." (al-An'ām: 68) In the context of the chapter "al-Dhikrī," the meaning of forgetfulness is specified.

There are many narrations in which the term "Nasīya" is used to refer to forgetting, such as the narration by Ḥalbī from Imam Ṣādiq (AS):

Idhā Nasīya al-Rajulu an Yaghsila Yamīnahū faghasala Shimālahū wa Masaḥa Ra'sahū wa Rijlayhi wa Dhakara ba'da Dhālika Ghasala Yamīnahū wa Shimālahū wa Masaḥa Ra'sahū wa Rijlayhi wa in kāna innamā Nasīya Shimālahū falyughsil al-Shimāla wa lā Yu'īdu 'alā mā kāna Tawaḍḍa'a (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 3, 34).

In this narration, the expression "Wa Dhakara ba'da Dhālika" serves as a context to understand the term "Nasīya." Since "Dhikr" means mental recalling, therefore, in contrast, the meaning of "Nasīya" in this and similar narrations is forgetfulness.

### 5.3. The Usage of "Nisyān" in the Sense of Abandon

In some verses "Nisyān" means abandon, such as:

- Al-Munāfiqūn wal Munāfiqāt Ba'ḍuhum min Ba'ḍi Ya'murūna bilmunkarī wa Yanhawna 'anil Ma'rūfi wa Yaqbiḍūna Aydihim Nasullāha fanasīyahum innal Munāfiqīna humulfāsiqūn (al-Tawbah: 67);

- Fadhūqū bimā Nasītum liqā'a Yawmikum hādhā innā Nasīnākum wa Dhūqū 'Adhābal Khuldi bimā Kuntum Ta'malūn (al-Sajdah: 14).

The context for this meaning (Assigning the meaning of abandonment to "Nisyān") in the first verse is a rational argument for the purification of God Almighty from forgetting, as well as the verses that indicate that God does not forget anything:

"Mā kāna Rabbuka Nasīyyā." (Maryam: 64)

It should be noted that in most recent translations of the Quran, such as the translations by Asghar Barzi, Ayyati Kazem Arfa, Mahmoud Ashrafi Tabrizi, Mohammad Ibrahim Boroujerdi, Kazem Pourjavadi, Ali Asghar Halabi, Mohammad Ali Rezaei Isfahani, Taheri, Jalal al-Din Farsi, Fouladvand, Kavyanpour, Garmaverdi, Mojtabavi, Mesbahzadeh, Mahmoud Yaseri, and Saffarzadeh, all of which are from the 15th century, the word "Nisyān" is translated as forgetfulness. The reason for this is most likely due to ignoring the original meaning of the word and relying on its current meaning.

The context for this meaning (Assigning the meaning of abandonment to "Nisyān") in the second verse is that forgetfulness is an involuntary act and the punishment for an involuntary act is not just in the eyes of God.

In some narrations, the term "NSY" has been used to convey the meaning of abandoning and leaving behind, such as what has been narrated from the conversation between Ya'qūb Aḥmar and Imam Ṣādiq (AS). Ya'qūb says to the Imam, "May I be sacrificed for you, I have read the Quran, but I have forgotten it. Pray that God may teach it to me again." That honored Imam became unhappy with



what I had said and said:

Inna al-Rajula layansā al-Sūrata minal Qurāni fata'tihi Yawmal Qīyāmati ḥattā Tushrifā 'alayhi min Darajatin min ba'ḍiddarajāti fataqūlu Assalāmu 'alayka fayaqūlu wa 'alaykassalāmu man anti? Fataqūlu ana Sūratu kadhā wa kadhā Ḍayya'tanī wa Taraktanī. Amā law Tamassakta bī Balaghtu bika hādhihiddarajata...thumma Qāla 'alaykum bil Qurāni fata'allamūhu fainna minannāsi man Yata'allamul Qur'āna li Yuqāla Fulānun Qāri'un wa minhum man Yata'allamuhū fayat'luba bihī al-Ṣawta fayuqālu Fulānun Ḥasanul Ṣawti wa laysa fī Dhālika Khayrun wa minhum man Yata'allamuhū fayaqūmu bihī fī Laylati wa Nahārihī lā Yubālī man 'Alima Dhālika wa man lam Ya'lamhu (ibid: 2, 609).

Indeed, a man (person) has abandoned a chapter of the Quran. On the Day of Judgment, that very chapter addresses him from a higher position and greets him. The man says, "Peace be upon you, but who are you?" It replies, "I am such and such chapter of the Quran that you neglected and abandoned. If you had held onto me, I would have elevated you to this position." Imam said, "Therefore, give importance to the Quran and learn it. Some people learn the Quran so that people say, "So and so is a Quran reciter." Some take it up for the sake of beautiful recitation to say, "So and so has a beautiful voice." However, there is no goodness in these two. And some people learn the Quran and continuously act upon it; for them, it does not matter whether anyone knows about their deeds or not."

In this narration and similar ones, the meaning of "Inna al-Rajula Layansā al-Sūrata minal Qur'āni" is not forgetfulness of the words

of the Quran; rather, it refers to abandoning and neglecting the practice of the Quran. The context that guides us to this meaning is the next statement in the narration which says, "Ana Sūratu kadhā wa kadhā Ḍayya‘tanī wa Taraktanī."

#### 5.4. The Usage of "Nisyān" in the Sense of Mujmal (Summary) or ‘Ām (General)

In some verses of the Quran, the use of "Nisyān" (forgetting) is such that it encompasses both meanings mentioned, like in this verse: ‘Ata’murūna al-Nāsa bil Birri wa Tansawna Anfusakum wa Antum Tatlūnal Kitāba afalā Ta‘qilūn?’ (al-Baqarah: 44)

The meaning of "Tansawna Anfusakum" can mean forgetting oneself as well as neglecting and abandoning oneself, by excluding oneself from the circle of addressees.

In some narrations, the root "NSY" can have both meanings, and the context that specifies one of its meanings is not available. For example, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Man Dhukitru ‘indahū fanasīya al-Ṣalāta ‘alayya Khuṭī’a bihī Ṭarīqal Jannati: Whoever mentions my name in his presence and then forgets to send blessings upon me has missed the path to Paradise." (ibid: 495)

In this narration, "Nisyān" can mean forgetfulness and also can mean neglect and abandonment. Although the possibility of the second meaning (abandonment) is more consistent with other religious texts, such as the following narration, it cannot rule out the first possibility (forgetting).

fa'ab'adahullāhu (ibid.): Whoever mentions my name in his presence and then forgets to send blessings upon me, goes to the fire and God will keep him away from His mercy.

The supporting evidence in determining the meaning of "Nisyān" (forgetfulness) in the Quran in this category of narrations:

A) Forgetting is an unintentional act, and punishment for something that is not intentional is not compatible with justice.

B) In the Quran and consequently in the narrations of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), we read that forgetfulness prevents accountability, so even though the forgetful person is not held accountable for an action or the neglect of an action due to forgetfulness, they are exempt from punishment. For example, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) narrated from the Prophet (PBUH):

Rufī'a 'an Ummatī Arba'a Khiṣālin: Khaṭa'ahā wa Nisyānihā wa mā Akrihū 'alayhi wa mā lam Yuṭīqū wa Dhālika Qawlullāhi 'azza wa Jalla: Rabbanā lā Tu'ākhdhnā in Nasīnā aw Akḥṭa'nā Rabbanā wa lā Taḥmil 'alaynā Iṣran kamā Ḥamaltahū 'alalladhīna min Qablinā Rabbanā wa lā Tuḥammilnā mā lā Ṭāqata lanā bihī wa Qawlahū: Illā man Akriha wa Qalbhū Muṭma'innun bil Īmāni (ibid: 462).

Four things have been lifted from my Ummah: Mistakes, forgetfulness, that which they are forced to do, and that which they do not have the ability to do. This is the meaning of the saying of Allah, "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not

with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people." (al-Baqarah: 286)

And also He says, "Except for one who is forced while his heart is secure in faith." (al-Naḥl: 106)

Based on this narration, which is attributed to the famous Hadith of "Raf'i Qalam," what is subject to accountability are the intentional actions of a person, and unintentional actions, such as an action or neglect of an action that happens due to forgetfulness, are not held accountable and are not subject to retribution.

C) Narrations indicating the lack of condemnation for forgetfulness in the Quran, such as the narration from Abū Kahmas. He narrates: "Sa'altu Abā 'Abdallāhi (AS) 'an Rajulin Qara'al Qur'āna thumma Nasīyahū faradadu 'alayhi Thalāthan a 'alayhi fihi Ḥarajun? Qāla: Lā." (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 608)

From Imam Ṣādiq, I asked three times about a man who reads the Quran [and memorizes it] and then forgets it; is there any sin upon him for this forgetfulness? His Holiness said: No.

## Conclusion

The word "Ḥifẓ" solely means care and maintenance, by examining the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" in three areas: Language, the Quran, and narrations. However, in its usage in the verses and narrations, it is used in the sense of mental, practical, and comprehensive preservation. With this information, it becomes clear that the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" in the encouraging narrations to preserve the Quran is not

specific and its meaning is Mujmal. However, there are indications that the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" as an encouraged value refers to the practical memorization of the Quran. There is not only evidence of the abandonment and restriction of the meaning of "Ḥifẓ" in such narrations in the sense of mental preservation, but what is desired and encouraged is the acquisition along with the practice of the teachings of this divine book, and not just the memorization of its words.

Similarly, by examining the meaning of "Nisyān" in the three areas: Language, the Quran, and narrations, it becomes clear that "Nisyān" was used in the past in two senses: Forgetting and abandonment, and both meanings are used in the Quran and hadith.

Based on various indications, it becomes clear that the narrations condemning forgetfulness of the Quran refer to the meaning of abandoning the practice of its teachings, not forgetting its words. However, since "Nisyān" is not used in this sense in the present time and its only usage is in the sense of forgetting, the understanding of these narrations has been mistaken.

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