

## Critical Analysis of the Interpretation of QS. al-Anfal Verse 67: Contextualization of the Meaning of Rebuke to the Prophet

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### Abstract

The concept of infallibility (*'iṣmah*) of the prophets is an important pillar of Islamic belief. However, a number of verses in the Qur'an seem to imply that the prophets were reprimanded for their decisions, as in the stories of the prophets Adam, Yunus, and Muhammad SAW, which has sparked debate among scholars about the limits of *'iṣmah*. Some scholars argue that prophets remain infallible in all aspects, while others acknowledge the possibility of interpretive errors that are immediately corrected by revelation. This study aims to examine Quranic Surah al-Anfal verse 67 as the primary focus in understanding the relationship between infallibility and divine rebuke. This research uses a qualitative approach based on library research, with two main methods of interpretation: classical and contemporary tafsir approaches, as well as analysis of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Thus, this study concludes that reprimands against the Prophet function more as an educational method in conveying the values of Sharia to the ummah. This study contributes to clarifying the theological position of the prophets in classical and modern discourse, emphasizing that revelatory correction of the Prophet's *ijtihād* is a form of divine education (*ta'dīb rabbānī*), not a rebuke for Sharia errors. This correction actually serves as a mechanism for confirming infallibility by demonstrating Allah's direct guidance in prophetic decisions. This finding enriches the framework of contextual interpretation while bridging literal and hermeneutic understandings, in order to present a balanced and non-extreme narrative in interpreting prophetic integrity.

**Keywords:** *Prophetic Ijtihad, Divine Rebuke, ma'sūm, QS. al-Anfal verse 67*

### Abstrak

Konsep kemaksuman (*'iṣmah*) para nabi merupakan pilar penting dalam akidah Islam. Namun, sejumlah ayat al-Qur'an tampak menyiratkan adanya teguran terhadap keputusan para nabi, seperti dalam kisah Nabi Adam, Nabi Yunus, dan Nabi Muhammad SAW, yang memunculkan perdebatan di kalangan ulama tentang batasan *'iṣmah*. Sebagian ulama berpendapat bahwa para nabi tetap *ma'sūm* dalam seluruh aspek, sementara yang lain mengakui kemungkinan kesalahan ijtihadi yang langsung dikoreksi wahyu. Studi ini bertujuan mengkaji QS. al-Anfal ayat 67 sebagai fokus utama dalam memahami relasi antara kemaksuman dan teguran ilahi. Penelitian ini menggunakan Pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka (*library research*), dengan dua metode utama dalam penafsiran: pendekatan tafsir klasik dan kontemporer, serta analisis *asbāb al-nuzūl* dan *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa teguran terhadap nabi lebih berfungsi sebagai metode edukatif dalam menyampaikan nilai-nilai syariat kepada umat. Penelitian ini berkontribusi

dalam memperjelas posisi teologis para nabi di tengah diskursus klasik dan modern, dengan menegaskan bahwa koreksi wahyu terhadap ijtihad nabi merupakan bentuk pendidikan ilahi (*ta'dīb rabbānī*), bukan celaan terhadap kesalahan syar'ī. Koreksi ini justru menjadi mekanisme pengukuhan kemaksuman dengan menunjukkan bimbingan langsung Allah terhadap keputusan profetik. Temuan ini memperkaya kerangka tafsir kontekstual sekaligus menjembatani pemahaman literal dan hermeneutik, guna menghadirkan narasi yang seimbang dan tidak ekstrem dalam menafsirkan integritas kenabian.

**Kata Kunci:** *Ijtihad Nabi, Teguran ilahi, ma'ṣūm, QS. al-Anfal ayat 67*

## Introduction

In the Islamic faith, the prophets are believed to be chosen individuals who are protected from error in conveying revelation (*ma'ṣūm*). Their decisions and actions are, in principle, based on divine guidance and therefore cannot contradict absolute truth.<sup>1</sup> However, when examining certain verses in the Qur'an, it appears as though there are forms of “reprimand” or “correction” toward the decisions made by the prophets, as reflected in the stories of Prophet Adam AS (QS. al-Baqarah: 35-36), Prophet Yunus AS (QS. as-Saffat: 139-142), and Prophet Muhammad SAW (QS. al-Anfal: 67). Externally, this raises an important question: is it possible for prophets to make mistakes in their decisions?<sup>2</sup>

Allah the Almighty has bestowed many blessings upon Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). One of the blessings granted to and inherent in Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the attribute of *'ismah* (infallibility). The Arabic term *'ismah* (infallibility) derives from the root *'asomaya'simu-'asman*, which means to preserve, protect, and safeguard.<sup>3</sup> From a terminological perspective, maksum is a quality bestowed by Allah upon His Prophets and Messengers, through which Allah safeguards them from committing anything that is forbidden. With this quality, Allah also protects them (the Prophets and Messengers) from committing sins, transgressions, and evils. The quality of maksum is an essential attribute of the Prophets and Messengers, which distinguishes them from ordinary humans.<sup>4</sup>

In recent studies, this issue has received greater academic attention. For example, Şentürk (2002) states that the relationship between *adamiyyah* (humanity) and *'iṣmah* is central to the debate in classical Islamic law and influences the concept of the moral responsibility of prophets.<sup>5</sup> Although numerous studies have addressed the issue of rebukes directed at the

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<sup>1</sup> Abu al-Hasan Al-Ash'ari, *Al-Ibanah 'an Usul Al-Dīyanah* (Cairo: Dar al-Ansar, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> M Usman, “Analisis Historis Dan Filosofis Terhadap Pemikiran Kontekstualisasi Hukum Islam,” *Ay-Syir'ab: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah Dan Hukum* 45, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>3</sup> Al-Munawwir, *Kamus Arab-Indonesia* (Surabaya : Pustaka Progressif, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Sriwahyuni, “Kemaksuman Nabi: Kajian Terhadap Ayat-Ayat 'Itab Terhadap Nabi Muhammad SAW,” *Jurnal At-Tibyan* 2 (n.d.): 193.

<sup>5</sup> Recep Şentürk, “Âdamiyyah and 'Ismah: The Contested Relationship between Humanity and Human Rights in Classical Islamic Law,” *Turkish Journal of Islamic Studies* 8 (2002), 39-69.

Prophet in various verses of the Qur'an, such as those conducted by Mukhlis (2022)<sup>6</sup> and Hidayat (2024),<sup>7</sup> their focus remains general and has not yet thoroughly examined QS. al-Anfal: 67 as the primary case study. Additionally, approaches to classical and contemporary exegesis are still examined separately without systematic synthesis. Therefore, this study fills the gap by integrating classical and contemporary tafsir approaches into a single analytical framework, while placing QS. al-Anfal: 67 as a starting point in understanding the relationship between prophetic ijtihad, infallibility, and divine rebuke in the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

This phenomenon has given rise to two main tendencies in understanding the text of the Qur'an. Some scholars believe that the prophets remain infallible in all aspects of prophethood, including worldly decisions, even though there are ijtihadiyyah actions that appear to be corrected, but their essence does not deviate from the truth.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, some other scholars understand that prophets can engage in human ijtihad in certain matters, and Allah then corrects these decisions to perfect them, without diminishing the nobility of prophethood in the slightest.<sup>9</sup> Some classical works, such as *al-Kashshaf* by al-Zamakhshari, emphasize the importance of understanding rebukes to prophets in the context of divine rhetoric and didactic benefits for the ummah.<sup>10</sup> Modern studies also show that the concept of *'iṣmah* has continued to evolve over time, both in Sunni and Shia theology, with varying emphases depending on the approach and era.<sup>11</sup> These differences in interpretation, if not explained proportionally, have the potential to cause confusion among lay readers of the Qur'an and Islamic scholars regarding the concept of prophetic perfection.

The prophets are unanimously considered free from major sins and minor sins committed intentionally, except for al-Jubba'i from the Mu'tazilah school. Minor sins resulting from mistakes are permissible, except for serious sins such as theft. Revelation prohibits prophets and messengers from committing major sins and frequently committing minor sins. If they commit sins, it is forbidden to follow them, even though following them is obligatory. If they commit sins, their testimony is invalid, for if their testimony on worldly matters is rejected, how much more so their testimony on religious matters until the Day of Judgment. The issue is that the dignity of a Messenger will be tarnished, and the faith of the believers will wane if they commit acts contrary to Allah's commands.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Imam Mukhlis, "Makna Ayat-Ayat Teguran Terhadap Nabi Muhammad SAW (Studi Analisis Surat Ali Imran: 128, Al-Anfal: 67, Al-Taubah: 43, Dan Al-Kahfi: 23-24)," *Jurnal Tafsire* 10, no. 2 (2022): 133–53, <https://doi.org/10.24252/jt.v10i2.35564>.

<sup>7</sup> Rakhmat Ali Hidayat, "Kemaksuman Nabi Muhammad (Studi Perbandingan Tafsir Rûh Al-Ma'âni Dan Alkasysyâf)," *Tesis*, PTIQ Jakarta, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Abdul Malik ibn Abdillah Al-Juwayni, *Al-Irshad Ila Qawathi' Al-Adillah* (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Usman, "Analisis Historis Dan Filosofis Terhadap Pemikiran Kontekstualisasi Hukum Islam."

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Umar Al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq Al-Tanzil* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Norah Sonya Elamir, "The Theological Concept of 'Isma from the Early to Modern Period of Islam", *Tesis*, The University of Texas at Austin, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Ali Jum'ah, *Aqidatu Abli As-Sunnah Wa Al-Jamâ'ah*, (Mesir: Al Muqattham, t.th)

One of the figures from the Mu'tazilah school of thought, Qadhi Abd al-Jabbar, argued that prophets are exempt from matters that cause them to be disliked by Allah, whether before or after being appointed as prophets, such as lying, concealing teachings, committing errors, and engaging in actions that lead to rejection and the distancing of the community, to the point of doubting their knowledge. He also stated that prophets are not obligated to be free from minor sins that diminish their status, as there is no evidence prohibiting such actions. According to him, such matters constitute a reduction in reward or are akin to neglecting many voluntary acts of worship or additional deeds. And they diminish the honor of one's position from the rank of prophethood.<sup>13</sup>

An analysis of Quranic verse 67 of Surah Al-Anfal is crucial in this discussion. The verse pertains to the decision of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions regarding the treatment of prisoners from the Battle of Badr, where Allah issued a rebuke because the Prophet and his companions leaned toward releasing the prisoners through ransom rather than imposing the death penalty. This rebuke, in the view of both classical and contemporary exegetes, requires further examination: does it indicate an error in decision-making, or is it a Qur'anic method of guiding the ummah through concrete actions and divine correction?

Therefore, this study aims to reconstruct the understanding of the concept of rebuke against the prophets, particularly a critical analysis of QS. al-Anfal verse 67, within the framework of harmonizing the principle of prophetic infallibility and Qur'anic *tarbiyah* methodology. By analyzing various classical and contemporary interpretations, as well as the approaches of *asbab al-nuzul* and *maqasid al-shari'ah*, this article seeks to demonstrate that the decisions of the prophets, including Prophet Muhammad SAW, remain within the corridor of truth established by Allah, while the rebukes serve as educational tools to teach the principle of balance between justice, mercy, and firmness in sharia.<sup>14</sup> With this approach, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of the educational function of divine revelation will be achieved and the position of the prophets as perfect examples will be clarified, without falling into literalist misunderstandings or disproportionate hyper-criticism.

This research uses qualitative research with a library research approach. Its main focus is a critical study of the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an based on classical and contemporary sources of interpretation. The researcher examines the meaning of QS. al-Anfal verse 67 in the context of the revelation and compares it with various interpretations of mufasssir. The purpose of this approach is to explore the depth of the meaning of the rebuke to the Prophet Muhammad SAW textually and contextually.

The data sources for this study consist of two types: primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from authoritative tafsir books such as *Tafsir al-Tabari*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, and *Tafsir Fakhruddin al-Razi*. Meanwhile, secondary data includes supporting scientific works, such as journal articles, books on Islamic history, and thematic

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<sup>13</sup> Qadhi Abd Al-Jabbar, *Al-Mughni Fi Abwâbi at-Ta'uhîd Wa Al-'Adl* (Kairo: Dâr alMishriyyah li at-Ta'lif wa at-Tarjama, 1965).

<sup>14</sup> Putri Maya Sari, "Libas dalam Tafsir al-Mishbah", *Skripsi*, IAIN Ponorogo, 2022.

writings related to the contextualization of Qur'anic verses. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature review using the documentation method, which involves identifying, reviewing, and recording important parts of relevant references.<sup>15</sup>

The data analysis procedure in this study includes content analysis, which involves examining tafsir texts to understand the original meaning of the verses, followed by analyzing the historical and social dynamics that underlie the revelation of those verses. The researcher compares literal interpretation with modern hermeneutic approaches to uncover the socio-political context underlying the rebuke of the Prophet. The collected data is classified, compared, and synthesized to draw critical and contextual conclusions. This research does not involve human subjects or population sampling techniques, as all data comes from textual sources (documentation). Therefore, the criteria for selecting sources are based on the authenticity and authority of the exegesis used, as well as their relevance to the research theme. The use of classical and modern sources ensures diversity of perspectives, enhances the validity of the analysis results, and strengthens the reliability of the findings.

## **Results and Disucussion**

In Islamic discourse on faith, belief in the infallibility (*'ismah*) of the prophets is an important foundation that distinguishes the prophetic message from ordinary human experience. Prophets are believed to be Allah's chosen servants, protected from error in conveying revelation and from major sins that could compromise the integrity of their prophetic mission.<sup>16</sup> However, an examination of certain verses of the Qur'an, such as the rebuke of Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) in Surah al-Baqarah:36, Prophet Yunus (peace be upon him) in Surah as-Saffat:139–142, and Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) in Surah al-Baqarah:36, suggests that the concept of infallibility may not be absolute. QS. al-Baqarah: 36, Prophet Yunus AS in QS. as-Saffat:139–142, and Prophet Muhammad SAW in QS. al-Anfal: 67, suggests that there may be corrections to their decisions.

This phenomenon has sparked lengthy debates among scholars. Most scholars of kalam and tafsir affirm that the infallibility of the prophets remains intact, while the correction of revelation is understood not as an affirmation of legal error, but as divine education (*tarbiyah rabbaniyyah*) to demonstrate a higher level of moral and spiritual perfection.<sup>17</sup> However, in the modern era, there has been a tendency among some academics to question the absoluteness of this infallibility, using a historical-critical approach to the Qur'anic text.<sup>18</sup> Given the importance of this theme in maintaining Islamic orthodoxy and

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<sup>15</sup> Sri Aliyah, "Ummiyat Arab Dan Ummiyat Nabi", *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, dan Fenomena Agama* 16, no. 1 (2015), 57-67.

<sup>16</sup> Sa'dudin Al-Taftazani, *Sharh Al-Maqasid*, Ed. Muhammad Sa'id Fadhl Allah (Beirut: Alam Al-Kutub, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Al-Juwayni, *Al-Irshad Ila Qawathi' Al-Adillah*.

<sup>18</sup> Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *Al-Khaṭa' Fi Al-Fikr Al-Islami* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1996).

the integrity of prophetic understanding, a critical examination is needed that balances respect for revelation with academic methodology. This study aims to explore the concept of prophetic infallibility based on classical Islamic theological texts, analyze classical interpretations of QS. al-Anfal: 67, and relate it to a harmonious approach in modern exegesis.

### **Asbāb al-Nuzūl of QS. Al-Anfal verse 67**

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يُثْخِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تُرِيدُونَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

*"It is not proper for a prophet to take captives until he has subdued his enemies on earth. You desire the goods of this world, but Allah desires the reward of the Hereafter for you. Allah is Almighty and All-Wise."*<sup>19</sup>

This verse was revealed after the Battle of Badr. In that battle, the Muslims achieved a most joyful victory. Besides killing the enemy and obtaining war booty, the Muslims also succeeded in taking seventy captives from the polytheists. Faced with these captives, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) sought the opinions of his companions regarding the action to be taken against them. In this regard, al-Thabari mentions several accounts describing the Prophet's consultation with his companions.<sup>20</sup> It is mentioned that Abu Bakr suggested that they be released in exchange for a ransom, as they were also close relatives of the Prophet himself. If they were unable to pay, they should be taught to read and write. This was different from what 'Umar ibn al-Khattab RA suggested. He advised that they be killed because they were disbelievers from the Quraysh tribe.<sup>21</sup> After consulting with his companions, the Prophet SAW decided to accept Abū Bakar RA's idea. However, this action was rebuked by Allah SWT.

In *al-Mishbah*, it is mentioned that this verse does not rebuke the Prophet Muhammad, but rather Abu Bakr RA as the proposer. This rebuke is not because he made a big mistake, but rather because it was inappropriate to implement it at that time. This is because the Muslim community at that time was still small in number. Taking Abu Bakr RA's opinion was inappropriate because it was possible that after they were freed, they would return to attack Islam and the Prophet SAW.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the appropriate course of action was to kill them, as proposed by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab RA. By choosing this proposal, it would accelerate the pace of the struggle and the conquest of Islam over the polytheistic nations. It was not a wrong choice when the Prophet SAW accepted Abu Bakr RA's proposal to release the prisoners with the obligation to pay ransom, but considering the weak condition of the Muslim community at that time, Allah SWT reprimanded him because there was a better

<sup>19</sup> Kementrian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Al-Qur'an (Terjemah Kemenag)*, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibnu Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl ay al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Dār Hijr, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> Abu al-Fida' Isma'il ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'an Al-'Azīm* (Riyadh: Dar Tayyibah, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsīr Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002).

option. This also does not undermine the concept of *'ismah* because there was no specific ruling from Allah SWT regarding it, while the Muslim community at that time needed a swift response.<sup>23</sup>

From the previous discussion, an important conclusion can be drawn regarding the excellence of the Prophet's character, especially in addressing issues that affect public interests. One of his prominent moral and leadership aspects was his commitment to the principle of consultation in decision-making. The Prophet Muhammad SAW did not act authoritatively but instead involved his companions in formulating strategic steps for the benefit of the community. A clear example of this attitude is seen in the Battle of Badr, when he sought the opinions of his companions regarding the handling of war prisoners.

The practice of deliberation is not merely an administrative procedure, but a reflection of the values of collectivity, openness, and concern for the aspirations of the people. In the context of modern socio-politics, this principle remains relevant and is greatly needed. Collective decision-making through inclusive dialogue and discussion forums can serve as the foundation for the creation of a just, harmonious, and civilized society. Therefore, the values of consultation exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) should be integrated into contemporary leadership systems as a model of public ethics oriented toward the common good.<sup>24</sup>

### **Theological Basis of Prophetic Infallibility**

In classical and contemporary Islamic thought, the issue of prophetic infallibility (*al-'iṣmah*) in the context of QS. al-Anfal: 67 has been a serious concern for scholars and exegetes. Allah's rebuke of Prophet Muhammad SAW for the *ijtihād* decision made in the case of the prisoners of war at Badr has sparked lengthy discussions about the limits of *'iṣmah* in worldly *ijtihād*. Classical theologians such as al-Taftazani, al-Juwayni, and great exegetes like Fakhruddin al-Razi, al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir contributed to developing an understanding that is not only textual but also systematic and philosophical.

Sa'duddin al-Taftazani in *Sharh al-Maqasid* structured the theory of the Prophet's *'iṣmah*. He divided it into three main dimensions: infallibility from disbelief, from major sins and reprehensible acts, and from errors in the transmission of revelation. Regarding worldly *ijtihād*, al-Taftazani emphasized that prophets retain the freedom to act based on subjective judgment, provided it does not directly pertain to the transmission of revelation.<sup>25</sup> Correction of revelation, as in QS. al-Anfal: 67, is not a rejection of *ijtihād* itself, but rather an affirmation that Allah always guides the prophets toward decisions of higher value. Indeed, this divine correction is a manifestation of infallibility itself.

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<sup>23</sup> Teuku Wildan, "Jurnal At-Tibyan Volume 2 No.2, Desember 2017," *Jurnal At-Tibyan* 2, no. 2 (2017): 193–94, file:///C:/Users/PRETTY/Downloads/393-Article Text-1754-1-10-20181226 (1).pdf.

<sup>24</sup> M. Mufid, *Dan Rasulullah Pun Ditegur*, (Jakarta Selatan: Qultum Media, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> Sa'd al-Din Al-Taftazani, *Sharh Al-Maqasid* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2001).

Imam al-Juwayni, in *al-Irshad ila Qawathi' al-Adillah*, bases the concept of the infallibility of prophets on a combination of rational arguments and textual evidence. According to him, reason dictates that a prophet must be free from sin and grave error in order to serve as an authoritative source for his community.<sup>26</sup> However, he also allows for *ijtihadi* errors in worldly matters as long as they do not contradict revelation or cause confusion in the delivery of the message. In the context of QS. al-Anfal: 67, al-Juwayni views the correction of revelation as a form of *tasdid* (guidance), not reproach. Thus, the integrity of prophethood is maintained, even enhanced, through such corrections.

Meanwhile, Fakhruddin al-Razi in *Tafsir al-Kabir* highlights this verse with a philosophical and theological approach. He emphasizes that the Prophet's decision in choosing the ransom is a form of valid *ijtihad* based on the principle of compassion. However, Allah guided him toward a more strategic policy in accordance with the early phase of the Islamic struggle.<sup>27</sup> According to al-Razi, this rebuke was a form of *ta'dib* (education) and *irshad ila al-afdal* (guidance toward what is better), not a rebuke or correction of a shar'i error.

Al-Qurtubi in *al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an* also supports the view that the Prophet exercised *ijtihad* based on considerations of compassion, while revelatory correction indicates that a strategy of firmness was more appropriate at that time. He emphasizes that prophets are permitted to engage in *ijtihad* in worldly matters, and if there is a correction from Allah, it does not negate their infallibility. This correction even highlights the dynamic relationship between the humanity of the prophet and the educational nature of revelatory guidance.

In a historical-narrative style, Ibn Kathir in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* describes the chronology of the Battle of Badr in considerable detail. He shows that the Prophet consulted with his companions in determining the attitude toward the prisoners. The Prophet's choice of Abu Bakr's opinion was a reflection of his merciful nature.<sup>28</sup> The revelation that came down afterwards was intended to align the Prophet's strategy with the broader divine will, not because of moral error. Ibn Kathir emphasized that the decision remained within the framework of Allah's goodness and forgiveness, showing that the Prophet's actions did not exceed the limits of prophetic dignity.

In modern exegesis, the harmonization approach is a distinctive feature. al-Thahir Ibn 'Ashur in *al-Tabrir wa al-Tamwir* rejects the textualist understanding that considers the rebuke in QS. al-Anfal: 67 as evidence of error. According to him, revelation functions as an instructional mechanism, not as punishment.<sup>29</sup> The Prophet is not at fault, but rather guided to achieve a higher level of wisdom in the process of spiritual advancement. Allah's rebuke

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<sup>26</sup> Al-Juwayni, *Al-Irshad Ila Qawathi' Al-Adillah*.

<sup>27</sup> Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Tafsir Al-Kabir (Mafatih Al-Ghayb)* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azim*.

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn 'Ashur, *Al-Tabrir Wa Al-Tamwir* (Tunisia: Dar Shuhnun li al-Nasyr wa al-Tauzi, 1997).



indicates that prophethood is a dynamic process that is continually perfected by revelation, not a static position immune to development.

In line with this, Yusuf al-Qaradawi in *al-Khaṭa' fī al-Fikr al-Islami* reminds us that extremism in understanding the Prophet must be avoided. Absolutizing the Prophet's perfection in all areas would eliminate their human side, while portraying them as figures who might err in conveying the message would undermine the authority of revelation.<sup>30</sup> Admonitions such as those in QS. al-Anfal: 67 are forms of divine discipline, not reproach, and serve as evidence that the Prophet's decisions remain within the realm of nobility even when corrected for the greater good.

Ali Jum'ah, in his paper titled *Maṣḍar al-'Ismah wa Ḥududuhā 'Inda al-'Ulama'*, provides an in-depth explanation of the boundaries and scope of the concept of infallibility (*al-'iṣmah*) in Islamic theological tradition. He emphasizes that the consensus of the scholars (*ijmā'*) states that the infallibility of the prophets does not mean that they are completely exempt from the process of *ijtihād* in worldly matters. Rather, prophets are permitted to engage in *ijtihād*—that is, decision-making based on rational judgment and experience—as long as it does not contradict established sharia principles. However, the uniqueness of prophets lies in the fact that every *ijtihād* they make is under the direct supervision of divine revelation.<sup>31</sup>

In the context of QS. al-Anfal: 67, Ali Jum'ah highlights Allah's rebuke to the Prophet Muhammad SAW as a concrete example of what is known as *ta'dīb rabbānī* (divine education). This rebuke is not a form of condemnation for legal errors or moral transgressions, but rather a divine process of guidance and refinement of the Prophet's *ijtihād* decisions, so that they align more closely with Allah's strategic will and wisdom. Ali Jum'ah emphasizes that such corrections not only do not diminish the authority of prophethood, but rather strengthen it. The correction demonstrates that the prophetic position is not an authority that operates independently, but rather a spiritual position that is always under the guidance and protection of revelation. This further highlights the Prophet's high spiritual rank before Allah, as all his actions and choices receive direct legitimization and correction from the All-Knowing Being.

Thus, Ali Jum'ah's perspective offers a balanced understanding: that the prophet's infallibility does not negate the human aspect in the form of *ijtihād*, but rather affirms the active involvement of revelation in guiding, directing, and perfecting those prophetic decisions. This also serves as evidence that in Islam, prophetic leadership is a harmonious blend of human rationality and absolute divine guidance.

More systematically, a dissertation at the Islamic University of Madinah entitled *Ismat al-Anbiya' bayn al-'Aqli wa al-Naqli* shows that reason and scripture must be combined to understand the meaning of correction of the prophets. According to the study, revelatory reprimands are a form of *kamal al-tarbiyah* (divine educational perfection), not corrections for

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<sup>30</sup> Al-Qaradawi, *Al-Khaṭa' fī Al-Fikr Al-Islami*.

<sup>31</sup> Ali Jum'ah, "Maṣḍar Al-'Ismah Wa Ḥududuhā 'Inda Al-'Ulama,'" *Universitas Al-Azhar Kairo Mesir*, 2018.

sins or mistakes.<sup>32</sup> Thus, such correction actually reinforces the status of prophethood as a figure directly guided by revelation, not an individual free from guidance.

All these perspectives lead to one conclusion: that the correction in QS. al-Anfal: 67 does not contradict the concept of infallibility but rather supports it. Prophets, as chosen humans, are granted the right to engage in *ijtihad*, but their *ijtihad* is always subject to the corrective oversight of revelation. Such correction is instructive, educational, and strategic, not a form of reproach or punishment. Thus, this verse serves as evidence of the harmonization between the human and divine dimensions within a prophet.

### **Critical Analysis of the Prophets' Infallibility in QS. Al-Anfal verse 67**

An examination of QS. al-Anfal verse 67, both through classical and contemporary interpretations, reveals a major pattern in the concept of prophetic infallibility: that revelation not only guides prophets in conveying the law, but also in shaping their personalities and strategies to become perfect role models for their followers.

The analyses of al-Taftazani and al-Juwayni show that prophets, though human, are protected from fatal errors through constant divine intervention. This means that the prophetic acts of *ijtihad*, if deemed less than optimal, are promptly corrected through divine guidance—not as punishment, but as a process of refinement. Similarly, Fakhruddin al-Razi, al-Qurthubi, and Ibn Kathir interpret QS. al-Anfal: 67 within a very cautious framework—emphasizing that the Prophet Muhammad's SAW choice of mercy was not a moral error but a strategic decision corrected for the sake of a greater strategic interest.

On the other hand, the modern approach proposed by Ibn 'Ashur, Qaradawi, and Ali Jum'ah offers a more inclusive reinterpretation of the dynamic nature of prophethood: that education through rebuke is part of the Qur'anic method of guiding the ummah. Rebuke of the prophet is not only for the prophet himself, but also to establish moral and strategic principles that serve as eternal guidelines for Muslims.

From this synthesis, it can be concluded that the concept of infallibility does not contradict the concept of Qur'anic admonition. On the contrary, infallibility presupposes continuous guidance from Allah so that the prophet always remains on the path most in line with divine wisdom. Revelatory corrections must be understood as manifestations of Allah's love for the prophets and as reflections of the dynamics of divine education that transcend mere legal instruction. Thus, the extreme view that sees prophets as completely passive agents or, conversely, as ordinary humans capable of committing fatal errors, is rejected. Islam offers a balanced position: prophets are special humans who are granted *'ismah* through revelation that actively guides their every step.

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<sup>32</sup> Universitas Islam Madinah, "Ismat Al-Anbiya' Bayn Al-'Aqli Wa Al-Naqli," n.d., 112.

## Conclusion

In the study of QS. al-Anfal verse 67, both classical and contemporary interpretations agree that this verse does not negate the infallibility (*‘iṣmah*) of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. This verse also shows how revelation acts as an educational mechanism that guides the prophet's ijtihad towards policies that are more beneficial and in accordance with the will of God. QS. al-Anfal: 67 is not a flaw in infallibility, but a clear manifestation of the harmonization between the Prophet's human dimension and uninterrupted divine guidance. The rebuke is not a form of rejection, but a means of divine education that clarifies the wisdom of sharia and the prophetic position in Islam.

Classical interpretations tend to emphasize that the Prophet's decisions in worldly matters, such as war strategies, are valid forms of ijtihad. Allah's correction of such decisions is not interpreted as moral or legal error, but as divine education (*ta'dīb rabbānī*) that strengthens the prophetic position. The prophets remain under the protection of infallibility, while revelation acts as an active guide in perfecting their decisions. Contemporary interpretations, however, emphasize the instructive aspect of the verse. They view the rebuke of the Prophet not as a form of censure, but as a means to educate the ummah through the Prophet's actions, which are then redirected by revelation. This shows that prophethood is a dynamic process that develops alongside the guidance of revelation to present a perfect example for Muslims.

Thus, the classical approach emphasizes the systematic and cautious aspects of understanding divine correction, while the contemporary approach highlights the pedagogical value and socio-political context behind the rebuke. Both approaches ultimately converge at one point: that the infallibility of the prophets does not mean the absence of human ijtihad, but rather the divine assurance that every ijtihad they make will always be guided toward the best choice.

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