

# Models of Communication in the Qur'an: Divine–Human Interaction

*M. Zakyi Ibrahim*

## **Abstract**

This study uses models of communication, defined as “structures of symbols and rules designed to correspond to the relevant points of an existing structure or process,”<sup>1</sup> to explain the process of communication between God and human beings. The invisibility of God to human beings, coupled with His difference in nature, appear to make such interaction difficult – but not impossible – to conceive.

A general communication model is constructed in accordance with Qur'an 42:51. Later, specific models are drawn according to the verse's segments. Each model is elaborated by examples from the Qur'an and the Hadith. In each model, I explicate the process of divine–human interaction by identifying the key elements of communication and their relationships.

To devise the models, this study depends heavily on the Qur'an, identifies communication-related verse(s), analyzes the words' semantic components, and reveals the expression's rhetorical implications, all drawn from the primary sources of the classical and modern eras.

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M. Zakyi Ibrahim is assistant professor of Islamic studies at the University of Winnipeg, Canada. He has a B.A. from the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (with a minor degree in mass communication) from the International Islamic University, Malaysia, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University, Quebec, Canada.

## Introduction

The study of communication grew very rapidly during the twentieth century, from simple and modest to more complex forms. However, it has received little attention from Muslim scholars.<sup>2</sup> Communication models, on the other hand, have attracted virtually no attention despite their widespread use in explaining and simplifying complex processes. They can organize scattered information, simplify complicated and ambiguous processes of communication, and help predict outcomes or reveal new facts about certain realities.<sup>3</sup>

The Qur'an outlines three possible ways by which God communicates with human beings: inspiration, from behind a veil, and sending a messenger (Qur'an 42:51).<sup>4</sup> These are complex processes of communication that, without further clarification, may be difficult to understand. Muslim theologians have embarked upon elaborate discussions of the nature of God's speech, of which, essentially, confirm His act of communication.<sup>5</sup> But the process of this divine communication – obviously complex, at least when compared to human communication – was not explained in a detailed manner. Thus, this article pursues the process of divine-human interaction with the goal of making it as comprehensible as possible by using specific examples from the Qur'an and various communication models. This is achieved by identifying, in each example, the basic elements of the communication process, namely, the source,<sup>6</sup> the message, the receiver,<sup>7</sup> the channel (medium),<sup>8</sup> the response (effect),<sup>9</sup> the feedback,<sup>10</sup> and the noise.<sup>11</sup>

## The Functions of Communication Models

Before proceeding, it would be instructive to define communication models. Karl W. Deutsch defines them as “structures of symbols and rules designed to correspond to relevant points of an existing structure or process.”<sup>12</sup> A few decades later, Joseph A. Devito was more concise: They are a “visual or verbal description of processes.”<sup>13</sup> Their main function is to describe a complex process of communication in a simplified fashion by identifying the most important components and key elements, and showing the relationships between those elements.<sup>14</sup>

If information and data about a particular reality are disjointed and disorganized, a model may be constructed to serve as an organizer. Thus, a model brings together relevant information in an organized fashion and identifies similarities and possible ways of reconciliation between seemingly contradictory information. Aptly put, Denis McQuail and Sven Windahl

explain that “a model gives a general picture of a range of different particular circumstances.”<sup>15</sup> This organizing capacity suggests an explanatory feature as well. For instance, when an unfamiliar and complex process of communication is organized by pulling together all of the familiar processes, this explanatory quality becomes apparent. Through a model, predictions may be made and then put through a process of experimentation and testing in the physical sciences, or they may serve as “mere explanation” when they are operationally impossible. Even in the latter scenario, the possibility of new facts being discovered points to a model as having a useful function.<sup>16</sup>

From the above, the classification of models into structural and functional is suggested. Structural models describe particular structures or phenomena, such as a diagram for a radio set and its components. But when systems and processes are described in such a way to show the key elements and relations between them, as well as their influences on one another, the models are referred to as functional.<sup>17</sup> The models constructed in this study are essentially of the latter category, for they are meant to describe the process of communication between God and human beings by taking this ambiguous and complex picture and presenting it in a more comprehensible and simplified fashion.<sup>18</sup>

However, it must be stated that all models have shortcomings. For example, some people argue that models seem to limit the people’s focus to a narrow spectrum, as compared to the actual process being modeled, which, without deeper observation, may be misleading. As McQuail and Windahl observe: “They [models] are inevitably incomplete, oversimplified and involve some concealed assumption.”<sup>19</sup> This is, perhaps, the very reason why models are so receptive to modifications and additions.

Now, given that the Qur’an is a communication from God, an explanation of which models were used could be enormously helpful. More significantly, the Qur’an has outlined three possible ways by which God communicates with human beings: inspirational, from behind a veil, and by sending a messenger (Qur’an 42:51). These are what we designate as modes of “divine–human interaction.” We construe these as ambiguous processes, because God and human beings, according to Qur’an 42:11 and 112:4, have different natures, and because their interaction seems to be a difficult process, at least, of which to conceive. But since communication is not confined to speech alone,<sup>20</sup> other forms of communication could make such an interaction a possibility, despite this difference in nature. God’s invisibility to human beings (Qur’an 6:104), coupled with the difference in nature, make this interaction highly difficult – but not impossible – to understand.

Hence, there is a need for further explanation, one that is viable, with the aid of models.

In addition, Deutsch's insight on the use of models to interpret unusual processes is revealing. He states:

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to both the use of symbols in the process of thinking, and to the problems that arise when symbols are combined into larger configurations or models – particularly – when those are then used as an aid in investigating or forecasting [or explaining] events that occur in the world outside the thinking system.<sup>21</sup>

As to whether or not one can construct models from the Qur'an, some scholars argue that once people begin to deliberately engage in systematic thinking, visualization, discussion, or explanation of a particular process and structure, they are using models, whether or not they realize it.<sup>22</sup> Explaining divine-human interaction according to the Qur'an by using models is, therefore, highly practical, especially given the abundance of traditional exegeses,<sup>23</sup> regardless of whether or not one fully appreciates them.

So, I intend to construct models according the Qur'anic verses in order to enhance understanding of them. I do not claim perfection, as the models will be based on my own understanding of the divine-human communication process, which, in turn, is gained from exegetical sources and the Hadith literature. As McQuail states, "any one is in a position to construct his own model of a given aspect of [the] communication process."<sup>24</sup> On account of this, models are always open to modification and additions, a feature that causes them to develop rapidly.

### **General Divine–Human Communication Model**

The Qur'an states:

It is not fitting for a human being that God should speak to him except by inspiration [revelation], or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal, with His permission, what God wills, for He is Most High, Most Wise. (42:51)

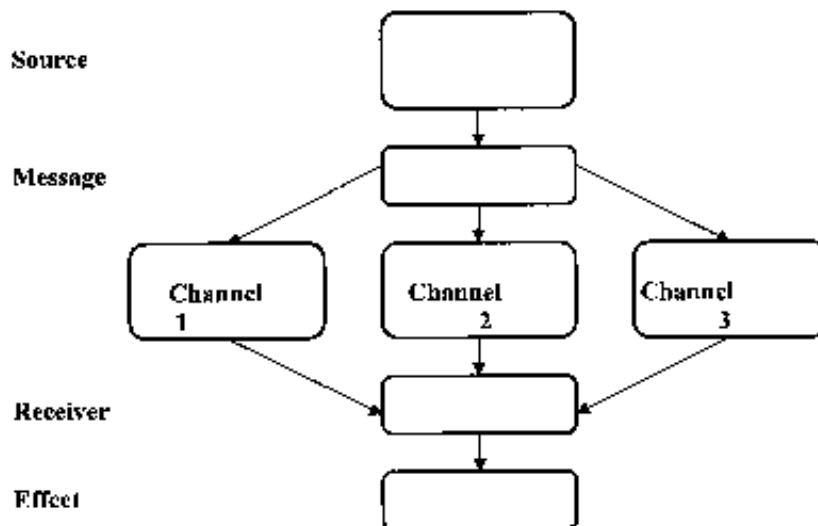
According to the Qur'an, these are the only ways by which God communicates with human beings. In his famous *Asbab al-Nuzul*, al-Wahidi relates what he considers to be the circumstance (*sabab al-nuzul*) of this verse without any chain of transmission: The Jews challenged the Prophet

that if he were really a prophet, then why did he not talk to and see God simultaneously, as Moses did? They also insisted that they would not believe him until he did. “But that,” replied the Prophet, “did not happen to Moses either.” Thereafter, the verse in question was revealed to clarify how God communicates with human beings.<sup>25</sup>

Al-Zamakhshari, the medieval grammarian and commentator of the Qur’an, cited this same tradition in his *Al-Kashshaf*. But Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 1449), the celebrated traditionist and commentator of al-Bukhari, wrote simply: “I have not found it.”<sup>26</sup> This cast doubt on the tradition itself, for it had no reliable source. Without having to rely on the tradition, it should be suggested that the verse was revealed to put the forms of God’s interaction with human beings into perspective, irrespective of the circumstance. For his part, Muhammad al-Tahir ibn `Ashur (d. 1973) points out that this verse was sent down to negate the unbelievers’ conviction that the Qur’an was not from God. The main purpose of the entire *surah*, he reiterates, is to establish that the Qur’an is God’s revelation to His messenger Muhammad.<sup>27</sup>

The Qur’an was not revealed in the way that the unbelievers suggested. However, this does not mean that it is not from God, because God speaks to human beings (e.g., messengers and other people) in only three modes (channels), as identified in figure 1.

Figure 1: Divine-Human Communication: The General Model.



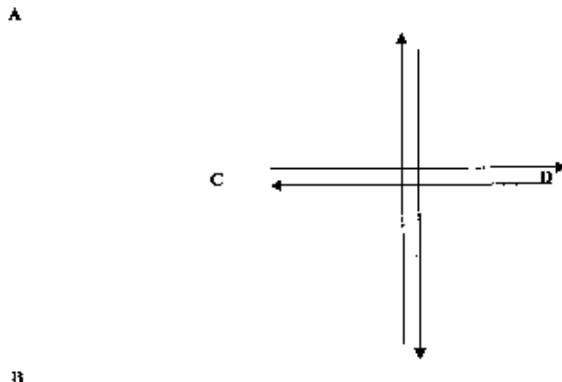
This model shows how God interacts with human beings: God is the source of the messages, and human beings are the receivers. The media (channels) through which the messages pass, however, vary significantly both from each other and from ordinary interpersonal communications. Given that God and human beings are of different natures and that human beings are subordinate to God, the media and the channels of their interaction must reflect a superior–subordinate relationship. Hence, these three modes of communication: inspiration, from behind a veil, and through a messenger. The hierarchical nature of this interaction is also the reason for the vertical shape of this model and subsequent ones.

Additionally, the model indicates the effect of the divine–human communication, which may be either positive or negative. No mechanism for feedback is reflected in this model, for although it is present, it will be considered during the discussion of specific models. Generally, there is nothing like “noise” in divine–human communication, as pointed out by Mohammed Siddiqui.<sup>28</sup> But the way we construe this verse is that with respect to some modes (e.g., the inspirational), there could be noise unless the receiver is a messenger (Qur'an 22:52).

### The Flow of Communication

Unlike Lasswell's horizontal/linear communication model, divine–human communication should be perceived as being vertical, with God at the apex passing down the message to human beings. Generally, the communication process flows either vertically or horizontally. This is symbolized in figure 2.

Figure 2: The Communication Flow Model.



Line *AB* shows a superior communicating with a subordinate. In this case of divine–human interaction, *A* is God and *B* is the human being, either a messenger or a regular person. Therefore, *AB* represents downward communication. In ordinary human communication, *A* may be a parent, a manager, or a teacher, while *B* may be a child, an employee, or a student. The message in any downward communication and, in particular, any divine–human interaction, is to be taken very seriously, as there could be a negative consequence. Line *BA*, on the other hand, describes the case of a subordinate communicating with a superior, an upward communication.

Lines *CD* and *DC* show the interaction between colleagues: a relationship that should be based on mutual respect. Since God has no associate, theologically speaking, the vertical shape of modeling becomes the one and only appropriate choice. Besides being the inexorable choice, the idea of construing a divine–human interaction in a vertical shape may be supported further by the Qur’an’s many suggestions<sup>29</sup> that God is “physically” above human beings: in heaven. In fact, managers enjoy a superior status and produce downward communication, even though they are as human as their employees, because they are placed on top of the organizational structure.<sup>30</sup>

### The Inspirational Model

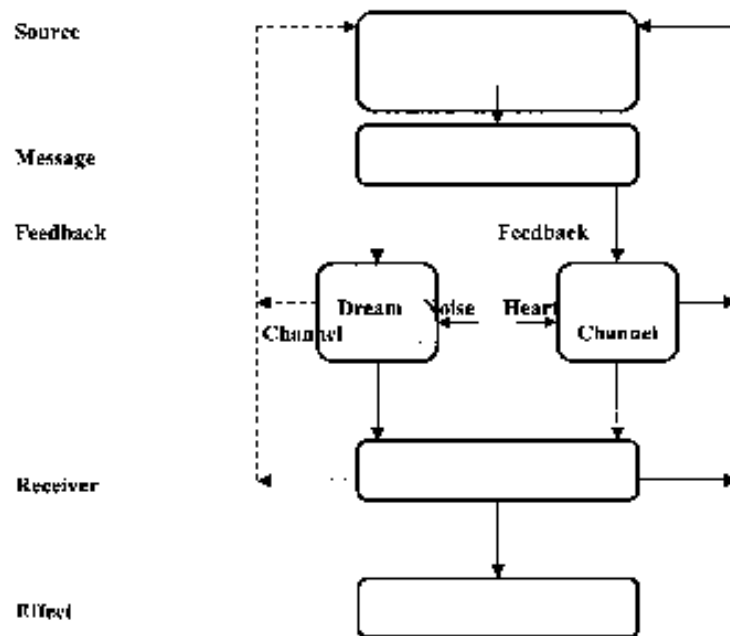
Inspiration is the first mode, channel, and medium through which God communicates with human beings. With its root as *waha* or *awha*, the Arabic term *wahy* has many implications. According to Ibn al-Manzur in his *Lisan al-`Arab*, *wahy* suggests a signal (*al-isharah*), writing, inspiration (*al-ilham*), and hidden speech (*al-kalam al-khafiy*). More generally, it indicates whatever meaning is imparted to someone in a hidden or near-hidden form. All of these definitions support the fact that *wahy* is a form of communication.<sup>31</sup>

The Qur’an also uses this term in a variety of contexts, all of which reveal its communicative implications. In his *Nuzhat al-A`yun al-Nawazir fi `Ilm al-Wujuh wa al-Naza`ir*, Ibn al-Jawzi identifies seven ways in which the Qur’an uses *wahy*: sending a messenger (*al-irsal*, 4:163, 6:19); signal (*al-isharah*, 19:11); inspiration (*al-ilham*, 5:111, 16:68, 28:7); command (*al-amr*, 99:5); speech (*qawl*, 53:10); notification through a dream (*ru`ya*, 42:51); and notification through whispering (*waswasah*, 6:121).<sup>32</sup>

However, *wahy* technically refers to “all heavenly messages given to a selected prophet, either to implement them himself, or to convey them to a group of people.”<sup>33</sup> This definition is generally perceived to include the

Qur'an and the prophetic traditions.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, this definition is not exclusive in the first segment of our verse, Qur'an 42:51; rather, it covers all the rest. But as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi points out, it is specifically used for the first mode of divine-human communication because it is an inspiration to the heart that occurs suddenly (*duf'ah*). Therefore, considering the original meaning of *wahy*, the suggestion here of its specific usages is appropriate.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 3: Divine-Human Communication: The Inspirational Model.



The inspirational model depicts the message from God sent down to human beings through one of two channels: either in a dream or in a waking state. Meanwhile, Ibn al-Jawzi, in his *Zad al-Masir fi 'Ilm al-Tafsir*, opines that the inspirational mode occurs only during a dream.<sup>36</sup> However, al-Razi considers this mode to be semi-direct, because although there is no intermediary between God and a human being, the latter does not hear the former as He speaks.<sup>37</sup>

Specific examples of God's interaction with human beings through inspiration, as illustrated in the Qur'an and identified by exegetes, include God's interaction with the mother of Moses, with Abraham, and with David.

## God's Interaction with Moses' Mother

The Qur'an says:

Behold! We sent to your mother, by inspiration, the message: "Place him into the chest and throw it into the river, and the river will cast him up on the bank ... (20:38-39)

According to Muslim exegetes and historians, these verses are connected with a particular historical event: Pharaoh Ramses II's plot to kill all of the male babies born to the Children of Israel. Due to its importance, this event necessitated God's interaction with Moses' mother.<sup>38</sup>

God's communication with Moses' mother became necessary, and communicate He did: "So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses" (Qur'an 28:7). What was the mode of this divine-human communication? Al-Razi, in his usual speculative style, cites six theories: It may have come through a dream; as a firm and sudden determination in her heart; as inspiration, which, to al-Razi, was equivalent to the second; as information obtained from prophets of her time; as information obtained from previous prophets; and through an angel who appeared to her, as Gabriel did to Mary, the mother of Jesus.<sup>39</sup> Obviously, some of these theories are simply wild speculations that may not agree with the use of *wahy*.

A significant element of this communication was the message that God transmitted to her. Aptly put, this message was delineated in another verse: "Suckle him. But when you fear for him, cast him into the river. But do not fear or grieve, for We shall restore him to you and shall make him one of Our messengers" (Qur'an 28:7). The message, on the other hand, contained several important instructions to ensure its effectiveness. In this single verse are gathered two clear orders, two prohibitions, and two glad tidings.<sup>40</sup>

Notwithstanding al-Razi's theories cited above, this important information had to pass through the channels depicted in the model: either while she was awake or through a dream. In this case, the channel may be vulnerable to noise, even though the message's crucial importance in this particular situation calls for complete accuracy and the lack of noise. Therefore, Siddiqui is perfectly right in his assertion that "the channel is unrestricted – it should be as free from noise as possible."<sup>41</sup>

Yet, this is the only mode through which God continues to communicate with human beings. According to prophetic traditions, God still interacts with ordinary people, especially, but not exclusively, the intensely pious, through what are considered "good dreams" and "inspiration."<sup>42</sup> However,

Ibn Sirin states that these good dreams are not confined to sleep only.<sup>43</sup> What is important here is that these traditions not only support the possibility of divine–human interaction, but, above all, confirm its continuation.

Identifying God as the source of the message received in this channel is difficult, for there is no absolute certainty in the case of non-messengers, as Satan is equally capable of sending messages in this channel (Qur'an 114:5; 6:121). What is said about uncertainty regarding the source is equally true about the message, especially when the notion of noise comes into play, for the message's validity, if fully grasped, depends largely on the source's authenticity. Yet, in the case of Moses' mother, the situation was so crucial that she had to trust both the source and the message. But if so, then why did she entertain so much fear? "It is human to be afraid," replied al-Razi, adding that even Moses himself, who later heard God's command directly to return to Pharaoh, was equally afraid to do so.<sup>44</sup>

The model further indicates that the message received had a positive effect upon her, as evidenced by her full compliance with it. The Qur'an speaks of the consequence of her compliance (Qur'an 28:8-9). Feedback is considered very important in modeling communication processes. Its paucity in Lasswell's basic model, along with Shannon and Weaver's own mathematical model, has been criticized.<sup>45</sup> It is, however, not so important in divine–human communication, although it may be present.

Feedback is an element that also makes the receiver a source and vice versa. In this case, the source may lack and need the feedback in order to expand his or her knowledge of a particular situation. While God is far from being perceived as lacking any information (Qur'an 35:38), He needs no feedback to shape His subsequent communication. However, sometimes He may produce it in the form of responding to a person's supplication and granting his or her wish. But this situation may not discourage people from producing feedback in their communication with God. Hence, our model's provision of the element of feedback, either in a dream or a waking state.

### **God's Interaction with Abraham**

Another example of divine–human interaction through the inspirational mode, as reflected in the Qur'an, is Abraham's dream that inspired him to sacrifice his son:

Then, when [the son] reached [the age of serious] work with him, he [Abraham] said: "O my son. I have seen in a dream that I offer you in sacrifice. What is your view about this?" (Qur'an 37:102)

Muslim theology holds that the dreams of messengers, unlike those of other people, are considered revelations from God.<sup>46</sup> In this example, God (the source) communicates with Abraham (the receiver). In a dream, the message may be either direct or indirect. Abraham's dream might have been direct, or he might have seen something else and have had to interpret it (indirect).<sup>47</sup> The message, in any case, was to sacrifice his son.

In his *Qisas al-Anbiya'*, al-Tha`labi narrates a tradition to the effect that Abraham had vowed to sacrifice his son. Therefore, the message in the dream was "fulfill your pledge" (*awfi bi nadhrik*).<sup>48</sup> This, of course, was interpreted as the sacrifice. Although all sources point to the sacrifice of Abraham's son as being the message, which son was to be sacrificed was far more contentious. According to Reuven Firestone, "one hundred thirty authoritative statements consider Isaac to be the intended victim; one hundred thirty three consider it to have been Ishmael."<sup>49</sup> But that Ishmael was the intended victim has been far more popular among Muslims.

Clearly, the medium of the communication was a dream (Qur'an 37:102). It should be as "free from noise as possible," since the dreams of messengers are considered revelations, particularly when the message needs to be adhered to strictly. Any noise can adversely affect the result, and that, in turn, may vitiate the purpose of the interaction.

Abraham's consultation with his son may beg the assumption that his confidence in the channel and its adequacy was, to say the least, shaky. Some scholars argue that he had the dream several times, a situation that may ensure certitude. It is not improbable, however, that those dreams were somehow supported by a firmer revelation. There could have been several reasons for consulting his son, namely, not to take him unaware, to ease the tension, to involve him in making the decision, and, above all, to set a precedence in consultation.<sup>50</sup>

The effect of the message was undoubtedly positive. Even though Abraham did not, in the end, perform the sacrificial act, Qur'an 37:104-5 declared it fulfilled. God did not really wish to see Abraham sacrifice his son; instead, He wanted to test Abraham's belief (Qur'an 37:106). While there is no evidence of feedback in this God-Abraham interaction, its occurrence cannot be totally discounted. This opinion is reflected in the model.

### **God's Interaction with David**

A third example of the inspirational mode is seen in the following verse: "... and to David We gave the Psalms" (Qur'an 4:163). The example's perti-

nence here is more particularly due to the channel through which the communication took place. According to some exegetes, the Psalms (Zabur) were poured directly into David's heart. In other words, they were not transmitted through an angel or a dream. There is actually not much evidence to this effect. Al-Razi and al-Alusi depend on a tradition, transmitted on Mujahid's authority, for this conclusion, and most of the Muslim historians neither mention this mode of transmission nor discuss the Psalms in any detail.<sup>51</sup>

While it is possible that the Psalms might have been revealed in the fashion suggested above, unlike the Qur'an, it would be expressed in David's own words.<sup>52</sup> This channel's credibility is confirmed by the fact that the Qur'an considers the Psalms to have the same status as other divine scriptures. The Psalms' message consists of religious exhortations and pieces of wisdom, which, when recited by David in his beautiful voice, attracted even the jinn and the animals. This speaks well to its effectiveness.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps.

In his short article on the Psalms, Joseph Horowitz claims that Muslims are indulging in apologetics when they hold that the Psalms, like other scriptures, contain a prophecy about Muhammad as well.<sup>54</sup> What is interesting is the suggestion that Muslims claim that the Psalms contain an additional message, one that foretold Muhammad. In an attempt to substantiate this claim, 'Ali Tabari devoted an entire chapter of his *The Book of Religion and Empire*, to the subject.<sup>55</sup>

It should be reiterated that, as a scripture, the Psalms' message should be free from noise and that what David produced was exactly the same as what God had revealed to him, since He has guaranteed the accuracy of messages sent through any messenger:

Never did We send a messenger or a prophet before you, but, when he framed a desire, Satan threw some (vanity) into his desire. But Allah will cancel anything (vain) that Satan throws in, and will confirm (and establish) His signs, for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. (Qur'an 22:52)

Finally, considering the meaning of *wahyan* in Qur'an 42:51, as illustrated by the above examples, it may be concluded that God still communicates with human beings via inspiration. In other words, ordinary human beings may still receive messages from God, either in a dream or by being directly inspired through their hearts. The message might be highly intangible, since no one, except for a messenger, is infallible<sup>56</sup> or safe from Satan's entrapment. It is believed that when Abraham first had the dream to

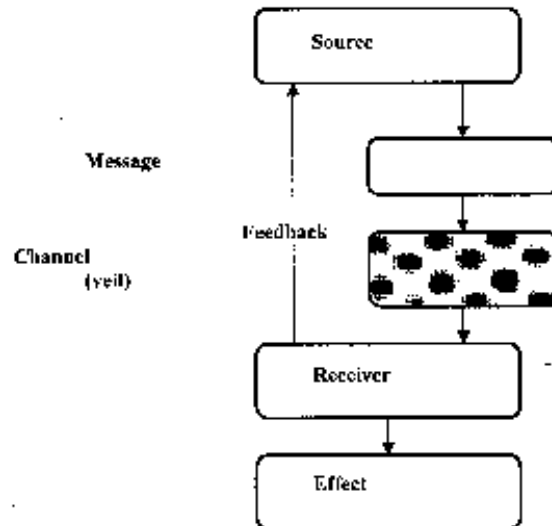
sacrifice his son, he hesitated and did not rule out the possibility that Satan was the source. Only when it was repeated did he accept it as a message from God. The uncertainty of the source, the message, and the channel for ordinary human being does not necessarily preclude present-day divine-human communication.

### The Behind-a-Veil Model

The second mode of divine-human interaction is that from behind a veil, which is referred to in the phrase *aw min wara' hijab* (Qur'an 42:51). This occurs when God speaks to someone while remaining invisible. It is likened to a situation where, in the past, a king would speak to some of his distinguished subjects from behind curtains, so that they could hear but not see him.

Exegetes categorically cite the communication that took place between God and Moses as an example of this type of interaction. Some believe that Muhammad heard and spoke to God in the same manner on the night of his ascension to God's presence (*laylat al-mi'raj*). We will inquire into this second example later on, for it must be considered different from the method of transmission suggested by the phrase "behind a veil."<sup>57</sup> The example to be thoroughly studied here is suggested in the following model.

Figure 4: Divine-Human Communication: The Behind-a-Veil Model.



### God's Interaction with Moses

The story leading to God's interaction with Moses is a long one. Since this section purports to describe the process of this interaction, the whole narration may be superfluous here. According to historians, Moses knew that he was going to communicate with his Lord. The 40 days of fasting (Qur'an 7:142; 2:51) was a preparation for that.<sup>58</sup> When he left his people under the supervision of his brother Aaron and went toward the fire on Mount Sinai, God's call came with suddenness: "O Moses" (Qur'an 20:11). From where did that call come, and who was its source? Although the verb at this point is in the passive form, *nudiya* (he was called), the next verse discloses the source: "Verily, I am your Lord." Other verses are explicit about both the source (God) and the receiver (Moses) (Qur'an 79:16; 19:52).<sup>59</sup>

Consequently, the model depicts both God as the call's source and subject. One need not search far in the Qur'an to be convinced that God actually was the source. It may not have been that simple for Moses, for in his situation, two possibilities may be considered: either through necessary (i.e., unreflected) knowledge (*al-'ilm al-daruri*) or through a miracle. The latter possibility was favored by scholars, who speculated endlessly on its nature.<sup>60</sup> Moses' certainty that God was the source is the most likely possibility.

The message that God willed to impart to Moses followed the call. This included the entire lengthy conversation that took place thereafter. However, the section that was geared toward his prophethood and its attendant responsibilities was, strictly speaking, the core message of this interaction. The repetition of the pronouns suffix *ya* in *inni* and *ana* following the call was intended to introduce and emphasize the source, while eliminating any hesitation.

The message's actual beginning is marked by:

Verily, I am Allah. There is no deity but Me, so worship Me (only) and establish regular prayer for My remembrance. Verily, the hour is coming – and I am almost hiding it – that every person may be rewarded for that for which he [or she] strives. (Qur'an 20:14-15)

Again, the emphasis based on the repetition of pronouns is employed. Exegetes observe that prophethood and its contents are compressed in this verse. First, *tawhid* (monotheism) is established, and then a general order is issued for worship, followed by a specific mention of prayer as an example of worship, and, lastly, in order to indicate that the aforementioned orders have consequences, the exact moment for reward is highlighted: the Day of Judgment.<sup>61</sup>

What is significant for this study, and closely relevant to communication, is the observation that self-introduction between those involved in communication is vital to a sound and smooth interaction. This partly explains why the message began with “Verily, I am your Lord” (Qur’an 20:12) and, more specifically, with “Verily, I am Allah” (Qur’an 20:14). Moses’ self-introduction was superfluous, for God had already called him by name when initiating the communication. Another important message resulting from prophethood is God’s charging of Moses to return to Pharaoh in Egypt (Qur’an 20:24; 79:17). Due to Pharaoh’s claim to be the god of his people (Qur’an 79:24), Moses is told to challenge him on God’s behalf.

How these messages got to Moses, namely, the channel, is one of the intriguing questions in this section. The Qur’an is precise about God’s interaction with Moses: “And, indeed, God spoke to Moses” (Qur’an 4:164). There is, in fact, little room for argument over this matter. However, there is no consensus on the form of this conversation. According to the model, God spoke to him from behind a veil. This is what exegetical books reveal; but whether or not Moses actually saw God is yet another unresolved theological debate, even though Qur’an 7:143 seems to suggest that he did not see Him.

The Mu`tazilites hold that whenever God intends to speak, He creates that speech in something else so that He can be heard from it. In that sense, Moses would have heard His speech from the bush, which would be regarded as the speech of God only metaphorically. Here, the bush would be the channel. However, this explanation was quickly rejected by opponents, who argued that the bush would, in that sense, be the actual speaker (source) declaring its divinity to Moses. Needless to say, such a scenario would be considered absurd and unacceptable.<sup>62</sup>

The Mu`tazilites’ position is possible and would not necessarily lead to anthropomorphism, against which they strove. But hearing the speech from the bush does not make it the speaker. This danger avoided, their opponents’ argument would have lost its force. This conclusion is supported especially by the possibility that Moses heard the speech from all sides and through his own body, a fact that he used to authenticate that the actual source was God. Since he heard it through his body and that did not make him the speaker, hearing it from the bush did not make it the speaker.

The Ash`arites, on the other hand, believe that Moses heard God’s eternal speech, which, in essence, is without letters or a voice, and, adds al-Alusi, “there is no way of understanding how that [works] through the intellect.”<sup>63</sup>

Al-Maturidi is recorded as rejecting this kind of speech and considering it impossible that anyone could hear it. Therefore, what Moses heard was definitely made of letters and a voice. But the Ash`arites' position has been elaborated in the following manner: God creates a consciousness in Moses' hearing, such that he knows God's speech without letters or voice. It is possible that an angel or a messenger may hear God in this form.<sup>64</sup> In such a circumstance, the channel would be difficult to identify. But since it is not impossible, it is exactly as put forth by the Qur'an: from behind a veil.

The Ash`arite's description of God's speech, frankly, may not tally with God's use of *takliman* in the Qur'an. According to one of the best modern exegeses, *Tafsir al-Manar*, it is possible to interpret the speech of God, as in Qur'an 2:253, in any form, since it is open to all possibilities. But, it would be unacceptable to do so when any specification or emphasis is made by using *takliman*.<sup>65</sup> Both the Mu`tazilites and the Ash`arites admit that God communicated with Moses, that the communication was heard, and that it was heard from behind a veil. For the Mu`tazilites, the latter is essentially right because Moses heard it through the bush. For the Ash`arites, it is correct because it occurred neither through letters nor voice. And for both groups, it is correct because Moses did not see God (Qur'an 7:143).

The model shows the feedback (Moses' response) to be direct rather than occurring from behind a veil. This is because God hears and sees him as he speaks. This notion is confirmed, in the course of this God-Moses communication, when Moses and his brother were told to go to Pharaoh (Qur'an 20:46). Consequently, as depicted in the model, the veil only affects the messenger.

The first feedback Moses sent was in response to God's question as to what Moses was holding. Moses replies: "That is my rod, on which I lean. With it, I beat down fodder for my flocks, and in it I find other uses" (Qur'an 20:18). Among the characteristics of an effective feedback are immediateness and informativeness.<sup>66</sup> While Moses' feedback was not in response to what may be perceived as the prime message, nor was it, in the real sense, unknown to God, it was still immediate and informative. As to the wisdom behind the question, scholars suggest that it was meant to produce calmness (*itmi'nan*) and familiarity (*inas*); that after the rod turned into a snake, Moses would not be afraid and the miraculous aspect would become apparent.<sup>67</sup> The lack of real "novel" information in this feedback does not make it any less effective, for the question was not intended to yield any response affecting the subsequent message.

The next feedback was Moses' long prayer (Qur'an 20:25-35). This particular one was unique, because it also solicited another feedback. So, a positive reply followed immediately: "[God] said: 'Your prayer is granted, O Moses'" (Qur'an 20:36). The model illustrates that divine-human communication from behind a veil always has a positive effect. It does not occur with ordinary people, but rather with messengers.<sup>68</sup> All that Moses was asked to do, as part of his prophetic duties and in preparation for his challenge to Pharaoh, received a positive response. He also strictly adhered to all of the instructions that he was given. Any lack of compliance and, for that matter, negative outcome would have been anomalous within the context of interaction from behind a veil.

Another typical (perhaps the only) example alongside the instance of Moses may be that of Muhammad. This may be suggested in the tradition of his night journey and ascension to God's presence.<sup>69</sup> The tradition transmitted on the authority of Ibn `Abbas suggests that God communicated with Muhammad, and that the latter heard and replied to Him.<sup>70</sup> However, this God-Muhammad interaction is not particularly considered to occur from behind a veil, for God addresses Muhammad, stating: "Although I spoke to Moses, I did so from behind a veil on [Mount] Sinai.<sup>71</sup> But I spoke to you on a carpet of nearness (*bisat al-qurb*)."<sup>72</sup> Whether or not the Prophet actually saw God as they were communicating is still debatable.<sup>73</sup>

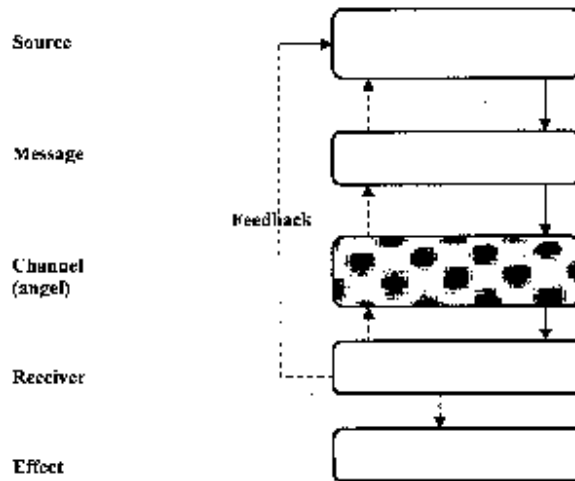
### **The Messenger Model**

Listed last among the possible modes of divine-human interaction is the sending of a messenger. The exegetes interpret the messenger here either as the Angel Gabriel, in particular, or other angels, in general. This means that whenever God wills to convey a message to any human being, He sends it through an angel. This model should be regarded as God's standard way of revealing His message to His messenger. Even though God communicated with Moses from "behind a veil," this does not preclude His sending Gabriel to him at a later time.<sup>74</sup> Standard though the messenger mode may be for prophethood, it is actually not exclusive to messengers, for Mary and Sara (Abraham's wife) both received messages through an angel.<sup>75</sup>

### **God's Interaction with His Messengers**

The model in figure 5, given below, depicts God as the source of the message. Given that God created human beings so that they would worship Him, they needed to be told how to worship Him and, most importantly,

Figure 5: Divine–Human Communication: The Messenger Model.



why they were obliged to worship Him in the first place. This should be viewed as the message.

To this end, special people (messengers) are chosen as intermediaries between God and their people. Given that God does not speak directly to human beings, generally speaking, angels were sent to those people whom He willed to serve as messengers. This is shown in the model as the channel. Therefore, the chosen individual becomes the receiver, and thus the messenger. Feedback is depicted as occurring in two ways: either through the angel or directly to God. And the effect is always positive, because the source, the channel, and the message are considered trustworthy.

Examples of this mode of divine–human communication are numerous, as far as the Qur'an is concerned, for God has sent many messengers,<sup>76</sup> and, in turn, sent angels to all of them. As for the numbers of messengers, the Qur'an offers no information other than: "We did aforetime send messengers before you. Of them there are some whose story We have related to you, and some whose story We have not related to you" (40:78). Although the Qur'an is silent about this matter, it does mention some 25 names.<sup>77</sup>

As shown in the model, the message comes from God, passes through the angel and on to the messenger. Accordingly, it consists of all that is revealed to that person or what is contained in a book sent to him. This implies that the message may vary from one messenger to another. Yet, one

message is common to all of them: establishing monotheism and combating polytheism (Qur'an 16:36; 21:25). Significantly, this is the crux of God's message, the clearest example of which may be found with respect to specific messengers. Strategically, the words "so fear [respect] Allah and obey me [the messenger]" are repeated in the story of several messengers, often with only a few verses between the repetitions.

All messengers came to convey the same general message. It would, however, be incorrect to say this in the case of specifics and details. Clearly, in *Surat al-Shu'ara'*, the messages that follow the common ones express unique concerns. For example, Lot's people, who engaged in sodomy (Qur'an 26:165-68), needed a different message from that of Shu'ayb's people, who had a propensity for commercial dishonesty (Qur'an 26:181-83).

Still, when it comes to describing God's messages to His messengers, the primary scriptures recognized by Islam (the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, and the Qur'an) ought to be considered more carefully. Individual distinctions become more critical when discussing the context of each. As the present study is interested only in showing the different aspects of communication, even a brief survey of these scriptures is unnecessary.

As seen earlier, Angel Gabriel is the standard channel who carries the messages to the messengers. So, how does he convey these messages? Basically, this happens in two ways. Prophet Muhammad, when he was asked about the process of revelation, replied:

Sometimes, he [Gabriel] comes to me like the ring of a bell. That is the toughest one on me. After he relieves me, I would grasp what he had said. And on certain occasions, the angel comes to me in the form of a man and I would grasp what he says to me.<sup>78</sup>

In the first form, which seems to be the most frequent, only the messenger may see the angel. However, other people may see the angel in the second form. No channel could, in fact, be more dependable, for the Qur'an has associated with it (him) all of the necessary qualities required to ensure its credibility, including trustworthiness (*al-amin*). Commenting on Gabriel, one Qur'anic commentary says:

Not only was the bringer of the revelation, Gabriel, an honorable messenger, impeccable of deceit, but he had, in the angelic kingdom, rank and authority before Allah's Throne and could convey an authoritative divine message. He was, like the Holy Prophet, faithful to his trust. Therefore, there could be no question of the message being delivered in any other way than exactly according to the divine will and purpose.<sup>79</sup>

This interesting commentary accurately sums up our point.

There is no room for noise in this type of revelation, for the messages given to the messengers are meant to reach their people while maintaining their accuracy. This would not be possible with noise. But, two causes of noise may be considered. First, Satan is suspected of constantly trying to corrupt God's message to His messengers, which, according to some exegetes, he can actually do. The popular story of the cranes (*gharaniq*) is often used to illustrate this point, as is Qur'an 22:52, which was cited earlier. The story has different renditions, as related by Ibn `Abbas. Most of them, however, have no chains of transmitters, but are attributed to only one Companion. It says that as Muhammad was reciting Qur'an 53:19-20, which mentioned some of the Arabian gods, Satan made him add: "And those are the elevated cranes (*gharaniq al-ula*), and their intercession may be sought." When the polytheists heard this verse, they prostrated along with him.<sup>80</sup>

The majority of exegetes argue that this incident never – and could never have – happened to the Prophet, as described. To begin with, they use the second segment of Qur'an 22:52 to prove that God will not allow this to happen to a messenger. Second, there is the admission that the Muslims, who were right behind the Prophet, never heard what the polytheists, who were a bit further away, had heard. This means that Satan did not corrupt the message by making the Prophet actually utter those words; instead, he (Satan), in all likelihood, made the polytheists hear what he wanted them to hear. This observation was made by al-Baghwi.<sup>81</sup> The other possibility of noise has to do with a messenger making an error while conveying the message. But the Qur'an has put Muhammad at ease from worrying about this happening (Qur'an 75:16-19). As a result of the above analysis, noise is not depicted in the model.

The model shows that feedback may flow either directly from the messenger to God or indirectly through an angel. Ordinary human beings engaging in direct communication with God is highly recommended. It is therefore, needless to assert that its occurrence on the part of a messenger, in the form of feedback, is clearly feasible. Still, the "angelic" channel is possible for feedback.

Potentially, all of the messages sent to the messengers had salutary effects. But their people may not have viewed these effects in quite the same way. However, the messengers carried out their responsibilities, as instructed (Qur'an 11:57; 7:79; 7:93).<sup>82</sup>

### **God's Interaction with Mary**

According to the Qur'anic definition, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was not a messenger, but rather a devout person. Although some scholars, like Ibn Hazm and al-Qurtubi,<sup>83</sup> consider her to be a messenger, this study does not. The Qur'an has provided a complete account of her reception of God's message, which is considered as an example of the divine-human communication through a messenger mode. However, as mentioned earlier, that is unique – but not exclusive – to messengers.

In her youth, Mary received a message from God through angels (Qur'an 3:42-43) of glad tidings and several commands. Other messages were sent later, ones that were intimately related to the birth of her son Jesus (Qur'an 19:19-26). Obviously, the channel was an angel. However, the angel appeared to her in the form of a human being. Unlike a messenger, who may receive revelation through an angel in two forms, a regular person may only experience this in human form.

The channel's authenticity will result in the message's credibility. But how could Mary have been sure regarding the channel, particularly as the angel appeared in the form of a man? The angel's self-introduction (Qur'an 19:19) was not enough to calm her down. So, it was possible that a miracle happened by which she ultimately knew, or that Zechariah might have made her aware of certain signs by which she could identify an angel. Moreover, as a young girl, Mary knew that God could do unusual things (Qur'an 3:37).

With a high degree of certainty, this communication was free from noise. The angel was Gabriel, whose credibility Muslims have established. Regarding the distortion of the messages, while there is little chance of noise occurring in general interpersonal communication, this was typical God-Mary interaction, where noise is least expected in order to produce a positive effect. As for the effect of this communication, her response to the commands was positive. The Qur'an sees Mary as an excellent example of devotion and belief in God's command (Qur'an 66:12). Again, in order to prove her positive response to His commands concerning her pregnancy and its aftermath, the Qur'an, while omitting the rest of the proofs, mentions how she adhered to the last command (Qur'an 19:29).<sup>84</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This study has shown, among other things, that models can be tremendously useful tools in explicating the Qur'an, especially in cases of divine-human interaction. Following the Qur'anic typology of God's communica-

tion with human beings, this study has demonstrated that as God is always the source and the human being is always the receiver, the message in the inspirational mode may be intangible, and its transmittance through either a dream or the heart makes it vulnerable. It is, nonetheless, the only mode through which God continues to communicate with human beings.

In the behind-a-veil mode, God speaks directly to a person, with the latter hearing but not seeing Him. Moses is believed to have had the privilege of conversing with God in this fashion. Some scholars argue that Muhammad also did when he ascended to God's presence. However, based on the tradition of Muhammad's night journey and ascension, this instance of God–Muhammad interaction is excluded from the behind-a-veil mode. Contrary to the inspirational, this mode is possibly free from noise.

The messenger mode portrays Gabriel as the channel. That is the standard, but not exclusive, way in which God interacts with messengers. Even though some exegetes and historians see the possibility of noise here, we have proven otherwise. All divine–human communications have positive effects, as demonstrated above, except, perhaps, in the inspirational mode, where the source, the channel, and the message may be uncertain. Feedback, the paucity of which in some conventional communication models subjects them to criticism, is not overly important in divine–human communication. Although God does not need any feedback to shape His subsequent communication, it may exist in divine–human interaction. Hence, its reflection in the models.

### Endnotes

1. Karl W. Deutsch, "On Communication Models in the Social Sciences," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 16 (1952): 356.
2. Mohammed A. Siddiqui, "Interpersonal Communication: Modeling Interpersonal Relationship, An Islamic Perspective," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (1988): 239.
3. Surendra Singh, "Models of Communication: An Overview," *The Eastern Anthropologist* 37, no. 1 (1984): 16.
4. This study uses *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Medina: King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, 1411 AH).
5. Communication: "The transmission or exchange of information, signal messages or data by any means, such as talk (verbal communication), writing (written communication), telephone, telegraph, radio or other channels within a group or directed to specific individuals or groups." Richard Webster, *Webster's New World Dictionary of Media and Communications* (New York: Webster's New World, 1990), 104.

6. Source: "Any person or thing that creates messages. A source may be an individual speaking, writing, or gesturing or a group of persons formulating an advertising policy, or a computer solving a problem." Joseph A. Devito, *The Communication Handbook* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 302.
7. Receiver: "Any person or thing that takes in messages." Ibid., 255.
8. "A vehicle or medium through which signals [messages] are sent." Ibid., 52.
9. "Any bit of overt or covert behaviour in reaction to some stimulus." Ibid., 267.
10. "Information that is fed back to its source." Ibid., 117.
11. Noise: "Anything that distorts the message intended by the source, anything that interferes with the receiver's receiving the message as the source intended [it] to be received." Ibid., 209.
12. Deutsch, "On Communication Models," 356.
13. Devito, *The Communication*, 203.
14. Denis McQuail, "Models of Communication," *International Encyclopedia of Communication* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3:36.
15. Denis McQuail and Sven Windahl, *Communication Models for the Study of Mass Communication* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1993), 2.
16. Deutsch, *On Communication*, 360-61.
17. McQuail, *Communication*, 2-3.
18. Again, the models presented here may be referred to as diagrammatical or descriptive. Another type is mathematical, which is not part of this study. For reviews of different communication models, see, McQuail, *Communication*.
19. Ibid., 3.
20. I acknowledge that "speak" is the word employed in Qur'an 42:51.
21. Deutsch, *On Communication*, 356.
22. Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard, Jr., *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses in the Mass Media* (New York: Longman, 1991), 36.
23. This study draws heavily on classical and modern exegeses without any discrimination. So, a deliberate attempt is made on many points to consult both classical and modern sources.
24. McQuail, *Communication*, 3-4.
25. `Ali Ahmad al-Wahidi, *Asbab al-Nuzul* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyah, 1982), 214.
26. Mahmud al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashshaf `an Haqa'iq Ghawamid al-Tanzil wa `Uyun al-Aqawil* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-`Arabi, 1947), 4:234.
27. Muhammad al-Tahir ibn `Ashur, *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir* (Tunis: al-Dar al-Tunisiyah, 1984), 25:140.
28. Siddiqui, "Interpersonal," 243.
29. Examples include Qur'an 67:16; 3:55; 35:10; 70:4; 16:45; and 16:50. Obviously, there is a serious debate over the issue of God being "physically" above. Although this is rejected by the medieval commentator al-

Razi, his modern counterpart, al-Alusi, affirms it. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1980), 27:232; Mahmud al-Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1980), 29:15.

30. Richard Ellis and Ann McClintock, *If You Take My Meaning: Theory into Practice in Human Communication* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), 131.
31. Ibn al-Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab al-Muhit* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1988), 6:892.
32. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi, *Nuzhat al-A'yun al-Nawazir fi 'Ilm al-Wujuh wa al-Naza'ir* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1984), 621-22.
33. 'Abd al-Al Salim Mukrim, *Al-Fikr al-Islami bayn al-'Aql wa al-Wahy wa Atharuh fi Mustaqbal al-Islam* (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1982), 18.
34. About the inclusion of tradition in this definition, Muslims use Qur'an 53:3-4 as a justification. See 'Abd al-Majid al-Najjar, *Khilafat al-Insan bayn al-Wahy wa al-'Aql: Bahth fi Jadaliyat al-Nass wa al-'Aql wa al-Waqi'* (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1987), 55.
35. Al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir*, 27:189.
36. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi, *Zad al-Masir fi 'Ilm al-Tafsir* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1984), 7:297.
37. Al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir*, 27:187.
38. For an historical account from a Muslim perspective, see Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1972) 1:387 and al-Hafiz ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1985), 1:223.
39. Al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir*, 22:51-52.
40. Ibn 'Ashur, *Tafsir*, 20:72-75.
41. Siddiqui, "Interpersonal," 243.
42. Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari bi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1980), 12:352; Al-Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Raghib, *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al Ma'rifa, 1961), 516.
43. Muhammad ibn Sirin, *Tafsir al-Ahlam* (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Haya', 1986), 9.
44. Al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir*, 22:52.
45. McQuail, *Communication*, 15-17.
46. Ibn Hajar, *Fath*, 12:354.
47. Al-Alusi, *Ruh*, 23:128.
48. Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tha'labi, *Qisas al-Anbiya' al-Musamma bi al-Ara'is* (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyah, 1347 AH), 65.
49. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolutions of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 135.
50. Ibid.; al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir*, 26:157; al-Alusi, *Ruh*, 23:129.
51. See for instance, Ibn al-Athir's *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, vol. 10 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1987); *Tarikh al-Tabari*; and Ibn Kathir's *Al-Bidayah*.

52. In this sense, it seems to be equivalent to what is termed as *hadith qudsi*.
53. Although the emphasis is laid upon the beauty of his voice as an enchanting element.
54. "Zabur," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1987 ed.
55. 'Ali Tabari, *The Book of Religion and Empire*, trans. A. Mingana (London: Benard Quaritch Ltd., 1922), 88-92.
56. Some Muslims believe that some people who are considered saints may be infallible. For more on the messengers' infallibility, see Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *'Ismat al-Anbiya'* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqafah al-Diniyah, 1986).
57. Divine-angel communication, although outside the scope of this study, is also seen to occur from behind a veil, particularly those with whom God spoke about the creation of Adam. Al-Alusi, *Ruh*, 25:55.
58. 'Abd al-Hamid Mutawi', *Musa Kalim Allah 'alayhi al-Salam* (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1947) 96-97.
59. Despite the fact that pronouns are employed here, the preceding verse clarifies the attribution.
60. For details of these speculations, see al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir*, 22:16-17.
61. Al-Alusi, *Ruh*, 16:171.
62. Ibn 'Ashur, *Tafsir*, 6:37.
63. Al-Alusi, *Ruh*, 16:169.
64. Ibn 'Ashur, *Tafsir*, 6:37.
65. Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Hakim al-Musamma Tafsir al-Manar* (Cairo: al-Hay'at al-Misriyah al-'Ammah, 1972), 6:59. Grammatically, takliman is put in a form identified as an absolute object (*maf'ul mutlaq*) and is usually employed to emphasize an action. So, it would be inappropriate to use it metaphorically.
66. Devito, *The Communication*, 120.
67. Isma'il ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1987), 3:152.
68. It also occurs with angels or Satan. Al-Razi, *Tafsir*, 27:189.
69. Although with slightly different renditions, this may be verified through the traditions gathered in Muslim ibn Hajjaj, *Al-Isra' wa al-Mi'raj kama Warada fi Sahihay Muslim wa al-Bukhari wa al-Imam Ibn 'Abbas Radiya Allah 'anhum* (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabat al-Hayat, 1900).
70. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, *Al-Isra' wa al-Mi'raj* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1983), 30-40.
71. According to this source, it is rendered as *sur siyna'* (the wall of Sinai).
72. Ibn 'Abbas, *Al-Isra'*, 36.
73. With the majority, including Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas and Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Baqir, believing affirmatively. Al-Alusi, *Ruh*, 25:56. The challenging question remains why was the God-Muhammad interaction not included in the Qur'anic typology? The fact that it occurred in heaven might explain why it was excluded from the list.

74. Ibn `Ashur, *Tafsir*, 25:143-44.
75. A minority of scholars, especially Ibn Hazm, argues that the fact that these women received inspiration through the angels makes them prophets (messengers). For a detailed discussion on the debate over prophecy of women in general, see my "Prophecy of Women in the Qur'an with a Special Focus on Ibn Hazm's Theory," (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 2002).
76. As common as the idea of differentiating between prophets and messengers is, there is no strong justification for doing so in the Qur'an. For more on this difference, see al-Qadi `Iyad ibn Musa, *Al-Shifa' bi Ta'rif al-Mustafa* (Beirut: Mu'assasat `Ulum al-Qur'an, 1986), 1: 488-89. For additional sources and my arguments against, see my "Prophecy of Women in the Qur'an."
77. One hadith states that the exact numbers of prophets and messengers as 120,000 and 315, respectively. But this tradition's reliability is questioned.
78. Ahmad `Abd al-Latif al-Zabidi, *Mukhtasar Sahih al-Bukhari al-Musamma al-Tajrid al-Sarikh li Ahadith al-Jami` al-Sahih* (Beirut: Dar al-Nafa'is, 1986), 1-2:21.
79. *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Madinah: King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, 1411 AH), 1990.
80. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, 3:239.
81. *Ibid.*, 3:240.
82. Although it would seem appropriate to discuss the effect of God's message on people in general, I omitted this since the latter were not the immediate receivers. The effects were, therefore, considered limited to the messengers.
83. See my "Prophecy of Women in the Qur'an."
84. Another divine-human interaction that seemed to occur in this mode, as reflected in the Qur'an, was the one between God and `Uzayr (Qur'an 2:259). However, his name does not appear in that verse. For more, see Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidayah*, 2:40-42. In addition, Khidr, whose name also was never mentioned, seemed to have received a communication from God (Qur'an 18:65). While it must have been included in the typology explained in this study, the Qur'an does not expound its process. See Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidayah*, 1:305-06.