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## The Translation and Exegesis of the Religious Texts and the Need for Religious Linguistics

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<b>Keywords:</b>  -linguistics -translation -exegesis - religion	<b>Abstract:</b> Linguistics, the science which studies the humanitarian languages scientifically, tackled from its beginning in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century certain linguistic aspects such as, Phonetics, Syntax, Morphology, and Semantics. In the course of time, this science has witnessed continuous developments so as to include other lingual disciplines and secondary lingual sciences, like Historical Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Contrastive Linguistics, not to mention the other lingual sciences and theories, such as Language Acquisition and Learning, Discourse Analysis, Stylistics and others. In spite of the fact that all these disciplines have come about from General Linguistics, still there is a field which needs a great deal of study and concern, namely the effect of the religious texts or religion in general on language. It is a well-known fact that different religious interpretations and exegeses, especially those dealt with Divine religions, created sectarian outlooks which led to blood sheds in European Christian communities since the middle ages and recently amongst Arab and Muslim peoples. This can be attributed to the lack of understanding languages since they are pregnant with rich heritages of their own, something which requires the need of dedicating a new branch of linguistic study, namely Religious Linguistics. The oriental linguists, whether Muslims, Christians and Jews can contribute greatly in this field of studies since these Jewish, Christian and Islamic holy books were basically written in their Hebrew, Aramaic/Syriac and Arabic respectively, and had different translations and exegeses. Such a new field, then, will lead to revise the holy books, their exegeses, rhetoric, idioms, style and all their lingual aspects scientifically, and to more understating, harmony and rapprochemen between all the followers of these religions.
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### ترجمة النصوص الدينية وتفسيرها والحاجة إلى اللغويات الدينية

**الخلاصة :** الخلاصة: اللغويات ، العلم الذي يدرس اللغات الإنسانية علمياً ، تعاملت منذ بدايتها في القرن التاسع عشر مع بعض الجوانب اللغوية مثل الصوتيات ، التركيب اللغوي ، التشكل ، والدلالات. خلال هذا الوقت ، شهد هذا العلم تطورات مستمرة بحيث تشمل التخصصات اللغوية الأخرى والعلوم اللغوية الثانوية ، مثل اللغويات التاريخية واللغويات النفسية واللغويات المتناقضة ، ناهيك عن العلوم والنظريات اللغوية الأخرى ، مثل اكتساب وتعلم اللغة ، تحليل الخطاب والأسلوبيات وغيرها. على الرغم من حقيقة أن

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كل هذه التخصصات قد نشأت من اللسانيات العامة ، لا يزال هناك مجال يحتاج إلى قدر كبير من الدراسة والقلق ، أي تأثير النصوص الدينية أو الدين بشكل عام على اللغة. إنها حقيقة معروفة أن التفسيرات الدينية المختلفة والتفسيرات ، وخاصة تلك التي تعاملت مع الأديان السماوية ، خلقت وجهات نظر طائفية أدت إلى سفك الدماء في المجتمعات المسيحية الأوروبية منذ العصور الوسطى ومؤخراً بين الشعوب العربية والإسلامية. يمكن أن يعزى ذلك إلى قلة فهم اللغات لأنهم حاملون بتراث ثري خاص بهم ، وهو ما يتطلب الحاجة إلى تكريس فرع جديد للدراسة اللغوية ، وهو اللغويات الدينية. اللغويون الشرقيون ، سواء أكان بإمكان المسلمين والمسيحيين واليهود أن يساهموا بشكل كبير في هذا المجال من الدراسات لأن هذه الكتب المقدسة اليهودية والمسيحية والإسلامية كانت مكتوبة بشكل أساسي باللغات العبرية والآرامية / السريانية والعربية على التوالي ، وكان لها ترجمات ونصوص مختلفة. سيؤدي هذا الحقل الجديد ، إذن ، إلى مراجعة الكتب المقدسة ، وتفسيراتها ، وخطابها ، وتعابيرها ، وأسلوبها وجميع جوانبها اللغوية علمياً ، وإلى مزيد من التفهم والانسجام والتقارب بين جميع أتباع هذه الديانات.

## Introduction

Linguistics, as well known, is the science which studies the humanitarian languages scientifically, regarding their characteristics, structures, and semantics; their differences and similarities etc. In spite of the concerns dedicated by a lot of the researchers who are concerned in the field of language whose date dig back to the years before or after Christ, a great number of the critics believe that the linguist scholar, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857- 1913) as the real founder of this science during the nineteenth century. De Saussure wished to link language to science just like the link undergone by industrialization in Europe. He concluded that language, just like other humanitarian phenomena, is under the effect of numerous factors, whether cultural, scholarly, environmental or others. Two of his disciples collected his lectures and titled them (*A Course in General Linguistics* "French: *Cours de linguistique générale*" (Assuaran, n. d., pp. 300-04).

This science tackled, at its beginnings, certain linguistic aspects, such as, Phonetics, Syntax, Morphology, and Semantics. In the course of time, this science has witnessed continuous developments so as to include other lingual disciplines and secondary lingual sciences, such as, Historical Linguistics, which is concerned with the changes a language undergoes throughout the course of time regarding phonetics, syntax, morphology, and semantics, and to show the factors which effect it; Sociolinguistics which depicts the social aspects with their various appearances, such as,

the culture of society, its effect on language, the role the language plays in a society, and others; Psycholinguistics which is concerned in the psychological effects on language, concluding numerous results concerning the writer or the speaker and his psychological status; Neuro Linguistics, which tackles the role the brain plays in the lingual expression, diagnoses and cures the aphasia, stutter; etc., Contrastive Linguistics, which compares languages historically, structurally, and semantically. It also takes care of the lingual phenomena and the syntactic systems of the languages being examined; Descriptive Linguistics, which cares for language description and analysis as it is used by its native speakers in a certain era; Forensic Linguistics, which differs from the other disciples of linguistics by the use of the lingual knowledge and insight in the judicial (criminal) contexts, particularly within laws, investigative, judicial proceedings, punishments, and concluding lingual evidence which justice and laws may make use of in a scientific and accurate method, not to mention the other lingual sciences and theories, such as, Language Acquisition and Learning, Discourse Analysis, Stylistics, and others.

In spite of the fact that all these disciplines have come out from the General Linguistics, still, there is a field which needs a great deal of study and concern, in order to show the effect of religious texts or religion in general on language, their interpretations and translations, and the need for Religious Linguistics, particularly as Allah has granted our Orient with three Devine religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which accompany a great deal of written religious literature which has left its clear effect on language, maintaining it, and the style of its use in the various fields.

### **Religion in the Three Semitic Languages**

The word (دين: *Deen*: Religion) does exist literally in the three Semitic Languages: Arabic, Hebrew, and / Aramaic/Syriac. The word is derived from the verb (Dana: دَانَ) the meaning of which changes according to the preposition collocated with it, an idiomatic lingual phenomenon known as "Collocation" (Ali, 1997, p. 63). If the verb has been transitive without a preposition to collocate with it, it shall mean judging and calling to account (دَانَ نفسه: *Dana nafsahu*: penalized himself) shall mean accounted

it. This is the case in the Honorific Prophetic Tradition (الكَيْس من دان نفسه): A civil person is the one who penalizes himself). The present participle form has been derived from this verb to mean الحاكم: the governor) as it occurs in Arabic, Aramaic and Hebrew (there's neither justice nor a judge, i.e., lawlessness prevails لا دين ولا ديان: لیت دین ولیت دین (Ibn Shoshan, 1999, p. 323) to refer to chaos and absence of the state. If the verb (*Dana*: دَانَ) collocates with the preposition "ل: Lam", as in "دَانَ لَهُ" (*Dana Lahu*). It then shall mean subjection and obedience, hence, the saying "الدين لله" (*Addin Lillah*) which means submission to Allah's will and His decree. When this verb collocates with the preposition "ب: Ba", "دَانَ ب" (*Dana Bi*) it shall mean adopting or embracing a religion, sect, or a creed in which an individual believes and follows. In this last meaning numerous definitions of the word "Religion" have been stipulated in the Devine Texts and Teachings bestowed by Allah upon humanity through His Passengers. But it occurs even in the positive texts and teachings attended at through the efforts of thinkers and philosophers in order to organize the relation with Allah, God, or Gods and the individual or between the individual and his peers within the society.

### **Religious Literature**

As far as this research is concerned, these Devine religions, but even the positive ones have usually been accompanied with religious literature which is characterized by sanity and calls for certain behaviors being musts for their members and followers, the goal of which is to glorify Allah, and to show complete submission to His Orders. Hence, the texts of this literature include collections of preaches, activities, rituals, feasts, taboos, prayers, fasting, parables, historical stories, proverbs, provisions, rites, worships, moralities, faith, various legislations and others which have occurred by a high eloquence and various rhetoric images and styles. This, as a whole, has left its effect on the followers of these religions, languages, and their styles of expression.

Discussing the effect of religion on Arabic, compared to the languages of the three Devine religions, shows the immense and distinctive effect, especially as the Arabs, to whom the Devine message has been revealed were known, according to the writer S. Goitein (1955, p.138), for their rhetorical speech and elegant expression to such a degree that they had

been described as "the worshipers of language ". In the same concern, too, the historian Philip Hitti (1958, p. 90) has described the Arabs love of elegant expression saying "no people in the world, perhaps, manifest such enthusiastic admiration for literary expression and are so moved by the word spoken or written as the Arabs...". (Ibn Khaldun ,2008, p.745; al-Quraishi, 2011, 4). The aforementioned, has expressed this phenomenon in his "*Muqaddimah*, (Introduction)" saying: "The Arabs are the knights of speech and its masters. Available educated taste within their circles is abundant and sound as much as possible".

This passion for Arabic acquired an immense impetus in the form of sacred holiness the Arabs dedicated to the language being the language of the Qur'an and the Holy Prophetic Tradition. Muslims are committed to recite Qur'an and perform the rituals of prayers in Arabic exclusively:

"الر تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (1) إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (2)" (سورة يوسف: 1-2):

"1. 'Alif Laam – Raa'. Tilka 'Aayaa-tul-kitaabil-Mubiin. 2. 'Innaa 'aanzal-naahu Qur'aanan 'Ara-biyyan-la-'allakum ta'-qiluun: (1. A. L. R. These are the Verses of the Precious Book. 2. We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, in order that you may learn wisdom.)" (Joseph: 1-2),

" وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَكَ عَسَى أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا (79)" (سورة الإسراء: 79):

"79. *Wa minal-layli fatahajjad bihii naafilatan-lak: 'aã yab-athaka Rabbuka Maqaaman-Mahmuudaa:* (And as for the night keep awake a part of it as an additional prayer for thee: soon will thy Lord raises thee to a Station of Praise and Glory.)" (*Al-Isrāa:* 79).

This instinctive passion for Arabic had been adopted, as a great number of foreigners embracing Islam, another form: concern for Standard Arabic increased, especially as the phenomena of intonation and speaking incorrectly had increased on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the appearance of opinions regarding learning and acquiring Arabic which had formed up through long lasting and close co-living with the foreigners who embraced Islam. Their scientific studies of the language of the Glorious Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition led to the richness of Arabic and its sciences which preceded the Western linguists by many centuries for they did not know about those studies as they had not been

translated into foreign languages, and because a great number of our modern linguists are ignorant about their vast Arabic linguistic legacy.

Viewing the numerous linguistic references which have tackled the research in the Qur'anic language, its rhetoric and eloquence, the best part of which were written by non-Arab Muslims reveals the enormous effect of the faith of Islam, the Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition on Arabic and how they enriched it. These references include, for example, but not limited to, "*Al-Khasa'is: (The Properties)*" by Ibn Jinni, "*Ma'ani Al-Qur'an: (The Meanings of the Qur'an)*" and "*Maq'toua' Al-Qur'an wa Mausuluh: (The Long 'a' and '^' in the Qur'an)*", a book on "Recitations", "Syntax in Brief", "The Stories of the Prophets", "The Letters", and others by Al-Kisa'ii, and "The Composition of the Qur'an", "Diction and Eloquence" by Al-Jahiz, and "Al-Sahibi in the Jurisprudence of Language and the Traditions of the Arabs in their Speech" by Ibn Faris, and "Language Jurisprudence and the Secrets of Arabic" by Al-Tha'a'libi", and "Interpretation of the Qur'anic Ambiguities" by Ibn Qutaiba, and "The Witticism in the Wonderful Eloquence of the Qur'an" and "The Comprehensive Grand in the Explanation of the Qur'an" by Ali Al-Rummani, and "Eloquence of the Qur'an" by Hamad bin Salman Al-Khitabi, and "The Two Careers" by Abu Hilal Al-'Askari, and "The Witticism of the Qur'an", and Summarization of Eloquence in the Trope of the Qur'an" by Al-Shareef Al-Radhi, and "Witticism Evidence", "Secrets of Eloquence" by Abdul-Qadir Al-Jirjani, and "Vocabulary of the Qur'anic Unusual" by Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani, and "Mastery at the Sciences of the Qur'an" by Al-Siyouti, and "Eloquence Collector in the Explanation of the Qur'an" by Al-Tabari, and linguistic dictionaries, such as "*Al-Ayn*" by Al-Farahidi, "*Al-Qamous Al-Moheet*" by Al-Fayrouzabadi, "*Lisan Al-'Arab*" by Ibn Manzour and others. Yet, the effect of the Qur'an did not stop at this end, rather, a great number of studies have been conducted during the modern age which discussed the effect of the Qur'an on Arabic, poetry, the Qur'anic context in its stories, the semantic developments, etc. (al-Quraishi, 2013, p.24).

The above-mentioned Arabic studies, as a whole, have been linked to only one Devine scripture, the Qur'an. How if the effects of the other Devine scriptures and their effects on their languages have been taken into consideration? Not to mention the other positive holy scriptures of the other religions. Of course, these divinely and positive scriptures form

altogether only one part of the religious heritage which includes many other aspects tackled by writers and linguists and enriched the languages and their literatures. This means that the establishment of Religious Linguistics shall advantage the field of Comparative Religion Jurisprudence and show the elements which have left their effect on this or that language more than the others, and the extent to which such an effect shall remain under the current conditions of the modern age, its secular philosophies, the elements which affect our age, and other questions which shall be laid by modern science.

Modern European linguists who have developed their theories in the modern age within their environment did not pay attention to the role of religion and its effect on language and literature because they are away from our East, the cradle of the three messages which had reached them through various translations and deprived them from their eloquence value. Therefore they did not know their effects, reflections, and the roles they played in the developments of their languages, not to mention the weakness of some of our modern linguists who have studied only the Western theories; their ignorance about the linguistic references written by Muslim scholars, their lingual schools which have served Arabic because of the holiness of this language being the language of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition, as have been stated previously; moreover, their parrot mimicry of the Western linguist-scholars without probing the Arabic linguist and literary heritage and approaching both. Among the prominent figures in this respect is the social and linguist scholar Ibn Khaldun, whose theories in the discipline of language acquisition and learning have been proved to be set long centuries before those set by Western scholars (al-Quraishi 2011, pp.4-14).

In fact, Islam had changed the Arabs from fighting tribes which invade, loot, and nickname each other; party spirit, revenge, and so on. The word had been their best weapon which was used by them to satire each other. Imam Ali says in this respect: "Tongue beating is more severe than spearhead stabbing". Islam changed this into a society governed by a Devine *Shari'a* which organized their religious and worldly life. It made them a nation which passed the borders of the Arab Peninsula to reach the fringes of France, China, Caucasia, India, etc. Arabic extended alongside the extension of Islam as it represented the language of the Qur'an and

enjoyed a holy halo, and learning it had been compulsory as has been stated.

It goes without saying that by the virtue of the Qur'an, the dialects of the Arab tribes unified in one single dialect, the dialect of Quraish, as the Qur'an had been bestowed in it because of its purity and wide spread compared to the other dialects in the Arab Peninsula. Setting the rules of grammar, language, eloquence, and other lingual sciences by the Arab linguists had depended on the language of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition. The Qur'an has also maintained Arabic lest be lost, so that it remained alive imposing its effects not only on the Arabs, rather, on the non-Arab Muslims who dedicated their concerns and passions, as has been previously mentioned, as well. Thus, the Qur'an has insured immortality and eternity for Arabic keeping it from fading away. It has even effected, thanks to Islamic faith, on the territories of the Arab Homeland where Persian and Turkish overwhelmed for a long period, rather than being affected by these two languages. (Oghli)

### **Effect of Religion on Language**

Showing the effect of religion on language and the need for Religious Linguistics is but a new contribution to the General Linguistics and a branch to be added to its other branches which shall investigate new scientific horizons and limitless researches. It will lead to discover the rhetoric styles of these religious texts and enhance our own styles to the degree which suits their eloquence and the studies based on them. The present paper is but a review of the notion rather than diving deep in the details one finds in the effects such texts have left on the writers, penmen, poets, orators, politicians, and others up to the present day because such a work requires a methodological review of these treasures and including them in the curricula to correct what has been corrupted due to various reasons for a long period.

It is preferable to start with the effects of Islamic Faith on Arabic in brief as this language has witnessed significant developments after the appearance of Islam compared to the other two languages, Hebrew and Aramaic-Syriac, particularly as Muslims regarded this very language through its holiness, as has been stated, being the language of the Glorious Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions. Recitations of the Qur'an



and the various prayers in Arabic are obligatory for everyone who turns to Islam. This holiness became even clearer when foreigners entered into Islam and fear for Arabic and Qur'anic recitation and reading from intonation, especially if one takes into consideration that intonation in the Semitic languages alters the meanings (Moscati, 1964, pp. 3, 71; Rabin, 1973, pp.14-15; Wright, 1890, p.30). Thus, genuine linguistic schools and works appeared centuries before the European theories.

One who examines the effect of Islamic Faith on Arabic, namely through the Glorious Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions will find it very clear in many fields. In literature, for instance, poetry before Islam had been the basic characteristic for the Pre-Islam Arabs. It had been their true record and the mirror of their life, dominated by many topics which reflect their lifestyle, such as, courtship, pride, satire, elegy, etc. This same poetry had acquired new purposes which harmonizes with the Islamic view, such as, urge for *Jihad*, Praise of the Messenger of Allah and his companions, call for good deeds, elegy of the martyrs, pride of victories and chanting them, in addition to the preaches, while other topics, such as, obscene courtship, satire, and description of wine settings had been abated, because such topics contradict with the principles of Islam. Islam had also presented literature by torrents of new lexical items which had not been familiar before, such as, paradise, hell, balance, path, doomsday, resurrection, prayers, *zakat* (alms), the 99 holy names (attributes) of Allah, etc.

Prose had witnessed essential developments, especially as the Qur'an has described poetry and poets as:

"وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ (224) أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ (225) وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ (226) (الشعراء: 224-226)

"224. *Wash-shu-'araaa-'u yattabi'-uhum ul-gaawuun*: 225. "*Alam tara 'annahum fii kulli waadiñ yahiimuun*. 226. *Wa 'annahum yaquuluuna maa laa yaf-'aluun?* : 224. (And the Poets, - it is those straying in Evil, who follow them: 225. Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley? - 226. And that they say what they practice not?). This had become concrete in the religious preaches, such as, the preaches of the two *Eids* (feasts) and Fridays, which were characterized by being effected by the language of the Glorious Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions, keeping away from artificiality, and abandoning lingual fakes. Thus, they had been enriched by the various lingual expression, whether in lexical

items, structure, or in the general linguistic structures. These preach had adopted a special technique which starts by praising Allah and calling for blessings upon the Prophet. As for their content, they had been characterized by calling for good deeds, warning against filthy things, and calling for merci and cooperation.

In addition to creeds, legislations, call for high morality and behavior, stories of the Prophets and previous nations, their lessons and examples, discussing all the worldly and religious topics, they had been stated in an eloquent style which can be easily understood and comprehended. They have been the best source for citations which confirm the right opinions of their users. The eloquence of the Messenger which has been characterized by the variety of purposes, briefness, and elegance of the lexical items, cohesion and coherence has also left their deep effect on the Arabic prose as well as on the interpreters and jurists that depended on it. Thus, Arabic has gained new opinions, notions, and styles which influenced orators and poets.

Hebrew, which the Hebrews had primarily derived from Canaan (Rabin, 1973, 19), had been affected by the Israeli Faith which influenced its development and continuity although it had been paused to be a spoken language for more than three millenniums. It had been the language by which Moses had written the Tablets of the Ten Commitments, and maybe some of the Books of the Torah. Regardless of the attribution of the Hebrew Texts written in the Torah, the language of the Torah has been characterized, in general, by its briefness, paucity of lexical items, opacity of its verb system, and dealing, in general, with religious and historical topics (Segal, 1980, p. 5). But, this language has been enriched during the *Mishna* period (130 B. C. – 600 A. C.) by the Aramaic language, its verb system had developed, its vocabulary increased and its style witnessed expressive richness. The Aramaic effect had been so clear that some linguists had come to call it "Aramaized Hebrew"<sup>iii</sup> (Ibid, pp. 5-6). Yet, this language remained expressing religious aspects lacking study and research. But this had changed during the era of Andalusia when Jewish linguists were under the effect of Arabic terms and expressions (Yellin, 1978, p.1). They borrowed a lot of them to such a degree that Hebrew style became much similar to that of Arabic in writing; hence, it was called Arabized Hebrew (Ben-Or, pt.2, 1967, p.60). This era also witnessed an attempt to set down a grammar of

Hebrew and to restore it in writing and poetry in an effort to imitate Arab and Muslim grammarians. The linguist W. Chomsky (1975, p.117) thinks that the effect of the grammar of Arabic during that era might have been the most prominent contribution of Hebrew. He states "perhaps the greatest literary-scientific contribution of that age was in the field of Hebrew grammar. The study of Hebrew grammar was easily the most widespread pursuit among scholars and students of all fields, and the literary output in this special field had never since been rivaled or equaled either in terms of quantity or in those of quality or originality. Hence that era worth being described as "the golden era of the Hebrew grammar".

While Arabic, in addition to Ladino, remained the language of the everyday affairs, Arabic, at the same time, enriched Hebrew with a lot of new lexical items, whether directly, or through patterns formed by analogy with Arabic, or through metaphoric translations. This had been apparent in the scientific, medical, philosophical fields and in the lingual terms. (Ibid, pp.118-19; 174-75; al- Quraish,2002, p. 254 ).

Hebrew did not witness any development after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, except translating into Hebrew the books which had been written by Jewish authors in Spain in Arabic (Waxman, vol. 2, pp. 179-80). Thus, Hebrew remained a language of religious rituals, the Yiddish and the languages of the European countries where the Jews lived had become the everyday affairs language, but even the literary language.

In spite of the opposition of the European Jews who supported the European Renaissance the use of Hebrew, such as, the German Jew David Friendlier who called to cancel Hebrew from teaching and prayers, regarded it as a poor language which hinders the Jewish-Christian rapprochement (Barzilay, 1959, p. 170), other calls, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century propagandized to rejuvenate Hebrew in Jewish writing and teaching curricula in order to disseminate the Western conceptions among the Jew masses who have gained traditional teaching and knew a little about the Hebrew of the Torah. Language style of these enlightened figures which has been reflected in their newspaper, "*Hameasef*", and the Zionist writers and authors have termed as an artificial style because it has been a mixture of various styles of *Torah*, *Mishna*, and Andalusia, in addition to the growing European effects which have led to the prominence of the European taste on the Semitic flavor of Hebrew (Shakhbiz, 1978, p. 236;

al-Quraishi, 1992, p.38). This effect has taken several forms which cover vocabulary, expressions, phonetics, and the grammatical structure. (Ben-Or, *ibid.*, p. 64)

On the other hand, the disturbances which took place in Russia ever since 1881 and the following years led to the appearance of Zionist activities among a number of the Jews of Russia at the same time during which the interests of Great Britain which called for the immigration to Palestine and adopting Hebrew as their language appeared. The late decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed great efforts of the Jewish settler, Ibn Yehuda, to revive Hebrew in the spoken language and newspapers (Bavli, 1960, p. 919). The artificial style dominated that language in writing and speech, too.

In fact, external European effects on Hebrew language are enormous, due to its poor vocabulary, and the going on movements of immigration to Palestine. Hebrew, thanks to this European effect, had become, according to the linguist Bergstrasser (1928, pp. 131-32), "A European language in Hebrew garment". The linguist Kutscher (1968, p.309) adds that "Modern Hebrew is a new language composed from a variety of elements. It is not a revived ancient language". Therefore it is "an artificial language which lacks originality" (Blanc, 1968, p.237). This is apparent, too, in the statement of the same linguist (*idem*, 1957, pp. 408-9) "a new immigrant to Israel who has already learnt Hebrew from the text books will be shocked as he will find clear change in the denotations of the words which he has learnt, the common lingual mistakes, disappearance of common and familiar lingual forms, and ignorance of some correct lingual uses. The common used term are either borrowed or translated from foreign languages. Thus, a new immigrant has to learn a new language which differs from the one he has already learnt to such a degree that a linguist (Blau, 1981, p. 146) has gave it the name "Israeli Hebrew" due to its new lingual characteristics.

Although modern Hebrew, according to the description of the linguists, is an artificial language, and in spite of the fact that *Torah*, *Mishna*, and *Talmud* expressions and extracts are rarely used in the Hebrew university curricula (Blau, 1981, p.28), it is impossible to oversee the role of the religious factor represented by the *Torah*, *Mishna*, *Talmud*, the Hebrew writings, rituals, prayers, Saturday's rituals, and other religious institutions in the continuity of this language and kept it from fading

away to such a degree that it overcame the calls to exchange it by European languages eventually. Of course this march, according to the linguists (Nir and others), was impossible without the religious texts, holy scriptures, prayers, synagogues, etc. which kept this language, not to mention that there are instructions which oblige the Jews to read certain Torah texts during certain religious occasions in its own language on Saturdays, feasts, and other occasions. In addition to the clear call of the Old Testament (Joshua 1: 8) to read the Torah day and night and to commit to it "the scripture of this Torah may not depart your mouth, rather consider it day and night to memorize it and act according to its written words, then you will adjust your ways and prosper".

Syriac, which represents the main Aramaic dialect that appeared since the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B. C. and became, during the 6<sup>th</sup> century B. C. the spoken and written language in the Fertile Crescent up to the A. C. era, had been given the name "Syriac" during the 4<sup>th</sup> A. C. century alongside with the spread of Christianity in the Middle East. Syriac is the language of many peoples who embraced Christianity in the Levant, such as, the Assyrians, Syrians, and Chaldeans. Its use in writing passed over to other peoples, such as, the Arabs, Persians, Armenians, and Turks. It became the ritual language for many other peoples. It reached India and Mongolia. It is still used as a spoken language in many areas of high density of Syrians, such as, *Ma'lula* and its neighbor villages, Qamishli, Hasaka, Mosul, Duhok, Baghdad, and southern parts of Turkey.

The main reason behind the ebb of Syriac had been the tide of Arabic in the Levant. Arabic became the common language while Syriac remained as a spoken language in limited settings. Yet, the Syrians played a vital role during the Umayyad and Abbasid rules as they changed the Islamic Arab Culture into a reaction one thanks to their translations of the Greek thought, philosophy and sciences into Syriac and Arabic.

In spite of the Arab tide, in addition to other factors, such as, persecution, displacement, religious partition of Christianity itself, the absence of a commitment that a Christian have to read the Gospel in Syriac, as the essence of Christianity has been a call for a moral and fair social life which can be summarized in love in any language. Yet, this language remained alive due to the religious factor. It acquired a special importance as it had been the language of Christ, Church Fathers, and the

heritage written in this language and in Greek, not to mention that some Church rituals use this language daily, particularly the Devine Mass and some other rituals. Syriac poetry has been coincided with Christianity, its morals and expressions; this is especially true as far as it concerns the two eminent poets Afram Al-Siryani and Ya'qub Al-Suruji, and others of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> A. C. centuries who enriched the Syriac literature by their religious poems and hymns. Their poems are still chanted in the Masses of the Syriac churches. If it were not for the holiness the Christians dedicate for this language; the literary production of its clergymen, this language would not have been survived up to our present day (Kamil, 1972, p.8). Of course the case might not have been so if Syriac and its mother, Aramaic were not rich to such a degree that they were the languages of science, arts, and of the Babylonian and Persian Empires for long centuries.

According to what has been stated above, it is believed that it is necessary to establish Religious Linguistics in order to cover what has been missed by the Western linguists and ignored by the majority of modern Arab and Muslim linguists as they are not informed enough about our Eastern lingual heritage, especially if it has been taken into consideration that nationalism which has appeared clearly since the middle of the nineteenth century has been calling to revive the national language, and which might have been calling peoples for National Linguistics, were not to succeed if religious texts did not keep their languages, such as, Arabic, Hebrew, and Syriac. Many colonized countries have adopted foreign languages, other than their national ones, even after their independence, while other languages maintained their characteristics even though they suffered from colonialism for long centuries, like Arabic, for instance:

"إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (سورة الحجر: 9):

"*Innaa' Nahnu nazzal-nazZikra wa 'innaa lahu la-Haafizuun: 9.*" (We have, without doubt sent down the Message; and we will assuredly guard it 'from corruption) (Al-Hijr: 9). On the other hand, Arabs face lot of efforts which try to weaken Arabic, the Semitic most language which has maintained its characteristics and the keeper of its Semitic sister languages, Hebrew and Syriac, and to set it in a marginal place. These efforts try, for instance, to support local dialects and confirm their positions forward standard Arabic; setting rules and curricula to teach and

dedicate them, or to exert efforts to fit standard Arabic with reality in such a way which does not suit its eloquence and standard which it has gained from its honorific history and religious heritage under titles such as, Standard Languages. Such efforts try to separate the present and next generations away from their religious and lingual heritage, submit to the European theories, even though they may be different from the views of our scholars and their real leading role in linguistics, or to mimic the modern European languages which have lost their original characteristics to such a degree that a modern English, for example, cannot read Shakespeare's works without being translated into modern English or by referring to the specialized dictionaries because of the lack of holy religious heritage which may maintain their original lingual characteristics.

## **Conclusions**

The complex nature of language renders the task of conclusions very difficult, especially if we know that we are dealing with religious texts which are characterized by their rhetoric aspects needed to be studied separately from the point of their original languages, literatures, semantic values, historical, social conditions and culture etc. Linguists can make use of Semites, especially Arab and Muslim linguists who dedicated a great amount of their forgotten efforts to the language of the Glorious Qur'an and contributed in clarifying many lingual related aspects, in addition to the efforts done by the modern European linguists. Religious linguistics, then, will be the new born field which contributes to the richness of general linguistics, authenticity and better mutual understanding.

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