The Holy Qur'an is known for its conciseness and, occasionally, the omission of certain words or whole sentence constituents, which are usually clear from the context since it is a high context-sensitive text (Darir, 2012). When this is coupled with the phenomenon of polysemy, another well-attested phenomenon in the Holy Qur'an (Muqătil, d. 150 H.; at-Timridhi, d. 319 H.; Ad-Dāmaghānī, d. 478 H.; Abdus Sattar, 1978; Berg, 2004)⁽¹⁾, this could make the task of interpretation and that of translation a very difficult one. It may even yield contradictory interpretations as in the case the story of Solomon and his horses narrated in the Qur'an (038:031-033). In the latter story, did Solomon caress or slaughter his horses? What hints and tools are available for the translator to opt for one interpretation or another in this and in similar cases? Characteristics of Qur'anic Stories

Irrespective of their length, Qur'anic stories have a number of distinguishing characteristics including their veracity in terms of characters, events and settings (since the narrator is no other than the almighty), their moral goal (for the Qur'an is primarily book of guidance), their use of imagery for esthetic and rhetorical effects, and the repetition of particular sequences of events in various chapters for a particular effect and according to the occasion Berg (2004: 156) quotes Zarkashī saying "The Qur'ān... conveys [many] meanings (nujihh): so impute to it the best of its meanings" and quotes Suyūt ī saying "ā jurisprudent" s [naih] jurisprudence is not comprehensive until he sees many nujih in the Qur'ān". In the Arabic tradition, the phenomenon of polysemy has been investigated under the terms al-nujih or 'ashbāh (polysemes and homonyms) and nuzīkir (symonyms or analogues). 133 in addition to ellipsis and conciseness. Indeed, the Qur'an, as a divine message, does not seek to provide independent artistic fictional works nor does it resemble rough historical reports. Thus, the goal behind narrating a story in the Qur'an determines the ellipsis of certain sentence elements, the omission of complete sentences or whole elements of the context for the sake of conciseness. Usually, this phenomenon of ellipsis and conciseness does not affect the fundamental comprehension of the story. But sometimes it does as in the story of Prophet Solomon (Sulayman, pbuh) and his horses about which many ancient and some modern exegetes of the Qur'an have contrived the most fantastic stories and about which translators have given contradictory interpretations. Goals of Qur'anic Stories Goals of Qur'anic Stories
Qur'anic stories go beyond the mere level of entertainment, artistic
embellishment or historical records. They seek to prove the prophesy of the
Messenger Mohammad (pbuh) by narrating memorable news of the past
nations, of which Mohammad (pbuh) -before revelation- had no previous
knowledge (Qur'an 003:044, 011:049, 012:003, 028:44-46, 038:67-70), to
strengthen people's belief in their creator, enlighten their judgment, cultivate
virtues, develop human brotherhood and built the best nation (Q 003:110). In
this perspective, stories in the Qur'an constitute only one way among others
used in the Qur'an to deliver the same message, which is that of the oneness of
the creator, the unique divine source of all divine Scriptures and man's duty to
revere the one creator. As such, ellipsis is frequent in Qur'anic stories since the
focus is not on details but on drawing moral lessons. Conciseness in the Qur'an Conciseness in the Qur'an

There are many cases of ellipsis and conciseness in Qur'anic stories.

These cases may be justified not only by the goal behind narrating such stories but also by the nature of the Arabic culture. In a paper presented in a previous conference⁽¹⁾ in 2012 Darir argued that without understanding the nature of the Arabic culture as a high-context culture one may fail to understand the message of the Qur'an or appreciate its rhetorical devices for, besides being a divine message, the Holy Qur'an is encoded in the Arabic language, the tongue of the The Third Sucred Text Translation Conference, whose proceedings are published in Translating the Rhetoric of the Holy Qur'an between Source Identity and Target Culture (Irbid – Jordan: Modern Books' World). 134 people to whom the message was immediately delivered. The Holy Qur'an is explicit about this (as stated in Q 014:004).

It is convenient to provide here some examples of Qur'anic stories where ellipsis and conciseness are clear. For example, in the story of Solomon. He Queen of Sheba and the Hoopoe (narrated in Surah An-anan (Chapter 27)), there are a number of events that logically took place between the actions referred to in the Ayah 28 reading: "Go with this letter of mine and deliver it to them; then fraw back from them, and wait [to see what answer] they return" and Ayah 29 reading: "(The queen) said: 'O chiefs! Verily, there has been delivered to me a noble letter (letter worthy of respect)". For instance, it can be assumed the "the "oppoe took the letter, delivered it to the people of Sheba and then draw back, from them. When the queen received the letter, she read it and said what she said. ، بِكِكْتِبِي هَنَدًا فَٱلْقِهُ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ نَوَلُّ عَنْهِمْ فَٱنظُرْ مَاذَا بَرْجِعُونَ ٢ قَالَتْ بَنَأَيُّهَا ٱلْمَلَّوَّا إِنّ أُلِعِيَ إِلَى كِتَنبُ كُرِيمٌ ﴾ [النمل: 2911] Similarly in the Surah known as Mariam (Chapter 19), from the time Zakaria was given the good news of a son (Yahya) as said in Ayah 11, which says "So Zakariya came out to his people from [his] place of worship (Al-Mihrab) and signaled to them to glorify [Allah] in the morning and in the afternoon" to the time the latter (Yahya) is commanded to study and observe the scriptures in Ayah 12, which says: "O Yahya (John)! Take hold of the Book with might (i.e. follow the guidance of the Lord in the Taurat (Torah) with due steadfastness)' and We gave him Wisdom while [yet] a child" obviously the whole life stage of Yahya as a baby and as a child is omitted. a child" ﴿ لِحَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ ، مِنَ ٱلْمِحْرَابِ فَأُوْمَىٰ إِلَهِمْ أَن سَرِّحُوا بُكْرَةً وَعَثِينًا ٢٠ يَنتِحْيَىٰ خُذِ ٱلْكِتَمَ بِفُوِّةً وَمَا نَيْنَهُ ٱلْحُكُمَ صَبِيًّا ﴾ [مريم: 12] In the story of Moses narrated in Surah Taha (Chapter 20), the setting changes suddenly with no introduction from the discourse between Moses and slightly or significantly different details in the http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheba). 135 his Lord (Ayahs 11-48) to that between Moses and the Pharaoh (Ayahs 49-59) his Lord (Ayahs 11-48) to that between Moses and the Pharaoh (Ayahs 49-59) and then to the day of the Festival, their appointed time, for each to prove who will prevail and who shall prosper indeed Ayahs (65-76). Many stories in the Holy Quran use this technique, which is very much like abridged plays.

This phenomenon of ignoring irrelevant or unimportant details can also be observed in Q 012:045-046; 018:020-021, 028:023-024 where elements of the context are only understood. In addition to this, there are various instances in the Qur'an where ellipsis is more of a syntactic than a pragmatic nature as in Q 002:127, 012:018, 091:013, instances which are treated in another article by Darir (2009). The ellipsis referred to above does not normally lead to confusion or misinterpretation. Nonetheless, in some rare cases it does. Case to the Point: Did Solomon Slaughter or Caress his It is true that in some cases the omission of elements of the context o It is true that in some cases the omission of elements of the context or details does result in ambiguity. A case to the point is provided by Surah Saad (Chapter 38), where the story of Solomon and his horses is narrated and where the ambiguity is whether Solomon slaughtered or showed affection to his horses. The relevant Ayahs are the following: ﴿إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِٱلْعَشِيِّ ٱلصَّنفِيَتَ ٱلْجَيَادُ ٢٥ فَقَالَ إِنَّ أَحْبَبْتُ حُبُّ ٱلْخَيْرِ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّي خَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِٱلْحِجَابِ (رُدُوهَا عَلَى اللهُ فَطَيقَ مَسْخًا بِٱلسُّوقِ وَٱلْأَعْنَاقِ ﴾ ص (31-33) 038:031-33 When there were brought before him, in the afternoon, swift coursers of the highest breed, he said: "I did love the good instead of remembering my Lord" till it/they had hidden in the veil. "Bring them back to me." There he began to gently stroke their legs and their necks / Or he set about slashing (their) legs and necks. The story is that fine horses were displayed before Solomon, "till the sun had hidden in the veil of night" (Q 038:032), which distracted him from the middle prayer, at eventide (which is known in Arabic as al-'Asr) (see Ibn Al-Arabi, d. 543 H, 2003, vol 4:66). The next Ayah says he gave orders for the fine horses to be brought back and thereupon, as they were brought back, he started....Now, the term used in Arabic mashan could be interpreted in two ways. Some exegetes claim that he began passing his hand over their legs and 136 their necks. The second interpretation says that Solomon punished the horses for having distracted him from his prayer by passing swords over their necks and legs or that he sacrificed them to show that he likes Allah more than his most favorite belongings (which is more of the extraordinary than the rational, to say the least). nost ravorite belongings (winch is more of the extraordinary than the rational, to say the least).

In Search of Lexical Evidence

There are five lexical items in the Arabic text that need explanation. First, 'al-'ashiyy' is the time from noon to sunset. Second, al-Ṣāfinātu (pl. of Ṣāfin) refers to horses "standing upon three legs and the extremity of the hoof of the fourth leg; standing upon three legs or otherwise" (Farid, 2006) (also in Ibn Mandhur); "standing with one leg bent, standing majestically" (Badawi and Abdel Haleem, 2008). Third, al-jiyādu (pl. of jawād) refers to "horses, chargers; magnificent, the select, well bred" (Badawi and Abdel Haleem, 2008); jawād "a courser; a fleet or swift and excellent horse" (Farid, 2006). Thus, al-Ṣāfinātu al-jiyādu means horses of the nobles threed and swift of foot or by transposition swift of foot horses of the noblest breed and swift of foot or by transposition swift of foot horses of the noblest breed. Fourth, al-khayr, and incidentally its equivalent in English, which is good (when used as a noun) or goodness refer to something that is pleasing, valuable or useful; something that contributes to, or increases, one's well-being. Nonetheless, the most noteworthy item in these Ayahs and the most contentious is mash, a verbal noun from masaha. According to Lissan Al Arab and Lane's Dictionary (vol 7), of which the following extracts are taken, masaha means "He wiped a thing that was wet or dirty, with his hand, or passed his hand over it to remove the wet or dirt that was upon it". Thus, mash means "the passing the hand over a thing that is flowing [with water or the like], or dirtied, soiled, or polluted, to remove the fluid or dirt, or soil or pollution [...] as when one wipes his head with his hand to remove water; and his forehead, to remove sweat [....]. [It often signifies He stroked a thing with his hand; as, for instance, the Black Stone of the Kaabeh...]". masaha can also mean "He cut, or severed: and he struck, or smote: [...] he severed the neck, and the to say the least). In fact the term mash is attested elsewhere in the Quran with the positive meaning in 005:006 " يُخر ومكم والدينية والمستقوا براوسينية المترافق ا (which could be translated as: wash your faces and your hands up to [and including] the elbows, wipe (by passing wet hands over) your heads, and [wash] your feet up to [and including] the ankles). It is also attested in a similar context in 004:043. Everything being equal, both meanings could be understood from the Ayah 038:033, which is the main subject of our discussion of the context of inderstood ission abov Seeking the Help of Exegetes
Sayyid Qutb, in The Shade of the Qur'an (vol 14:298) ascertains that "the references in the story to nobly-bred steeds [...] have been interpreted in a variety of ways. However, I do not feel comfortable with any such interpretation considering them either unfounded reports from Israelite sources or else lacking any supporting evidence. I cannot visualize the two incidents in any satisfactory way so as to explain them to my reader. Nor can I find any authentic report to rely upon in interpreting them."

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūţī (2007: 529) in the tafsir known as Tafsir Al Jalahayn are categorical. When the horses that were displayed were brought back, "he set about slashing, with his sword, [their] legs (al-sūq is the plural of sāq) and necks, in other words, he slaughtered them and cut off their legs as an offering [of atonement] to God, exalted be He, for having been distracted by them from the prayer. He gave all the meat thereof as voluntary alms and so God compensated him what was better and faster that these [horses], and this was the wind, which blew at his command as he wished".

Ibn Kathir in his Tafsie Ibn Kathir Tafsir The (http://www.islamicstudies.info/ibnkathir/ibnkathir.php/sid=2000.the harrates some of the contradictory opinions on the meaning of mash and the consequent interpretation of the Ayah including this term and opts for the narrates some of the contradictory opinions on the meaning of mash and the consequent interpretation of the Ayah including this term and opts for the slashing interpretation:

Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, "He said, 'No, by Allah, you will not keep me from worshipping my Lord again,' then he ordered that they should be slaughtered." This was also the view of Qatadah. As-Suddi said, "Their necks and hamstrings were struck with swords." 'All bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "He began patting the horses' heads and legs out of love for them." This is the view that was favored by Ibn Jarir. He said, "Because he would not punish an animal by cutting its 138 hamstrings or destroy his own wealth for no other reason than that he had been distracted from his prayer by looking at it, and it was not the animals' fault." This view which Ibn Jarir thought more correct is subject to further review, because such action may have been permissible according to their law, especially since he got angry for the sake of Allah for being distracted by these horses until the time for prayer had lapsed. Then, since he dispensed with them for the sake of Allah, Allah compensated him with something better, the wind which blew gently by his order wherever he willed.....

Having discussed the status of an alleged Hadith supporting the slashing interpretation, Mufit Muhammad Shafi in his Ma'ariful Quran (vol 7: 521) commented "But, it generally lends to the doubt that the horses were a gift of Allah and wasting one's property in that manner does not seem to befit the station of a prophet". Weighing the Arguments
Indeed, it simply does not make sense for him to slaughter the horses for distracting him from prayer for a number of reasons. First, how can they be held responsible for something for which they have no stake? Logically, if anyone is to be blamed, it is Solomon who waited for the end of the display of the horses before performing his (set) prayers. Second, these were well trained horses of the highest breed for the Jihad, so can one destroy something for which he is entrusted by Allah almighty?

Some claim that he slaughtered the horses and gave them as food for the poor, but then this would be an unjustified act of mass slaughtering, an abuse and waste given their large number and their usefulness. It also avoids the real issue, which is that he slaughtering them as a way of making sure not to be ever distracted from his payers again.

The number of horses that Solomon possessed vary considerably from hundreds to thousands. According to Arabic exegetes (Ibn Al-Arabi 2003, vol 4:66, Al-Jalalayn 2007:529, among others) Solomon had a thousand such horses, which were for Jihad, i.e. holy fighting in Allah's Cause (Al-Jalalayn 2007:529), which he either inherited from David, won in his wars or was otherwise given (Al-Qurtubi 2003, vol 15:193). According to the Bible "Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen" (1 "Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen" (1 Kings 4:26). In another edition of the bible and in 2 Chronicles 9:25, he had 139 4000 stalls of horses⁽¹⁾. Furthermore, would it not be better to give the well-bred horses to other people that needed them, like the poor and the needy, to be used for travels and other purposes rather than slaughtering them indiscriminately?

It is simply impossible to credit Solomon with two contradictory actions: admiring horses and slaughtering them. Finally, severing the horses' necks and legs seems to me more of a barbarous than pious act even if one assumes that he sacrificed / slaughtered them for the sake of Allah to show that he likes His Lord more than his most favorite belongings. Is cutting their necks not enough? Should he also cut their legs?

On the other hand, the other explanation is perfectly logical. It, indeed, makes sense for a true lover of horses, after having performed his prayers, even after a while, to show affection for his horses by caressing them. The prophet Mohammed (pbuh) is reported to have cleared his horse's sweat with his own dress and said "I was blamed tonight concerning horses" (Ibn Al-Arabi 2003, vol 4:66). his mistake of 'enjoyment' of irst duty A Perfectly Reasonable Explanation or the Missing Link A Perfectly Reasonable Explanation or the Missing Link

It makes more sense to assume that after realizing his mistake of
missing the (set) prayer⁽²⁾ because of his love for the worldly 'enjoyment' of
breeding horses, he repented and recognized and fulfilled his first duty to his
Lord, which is remembering Him, after which he regained his worldly affairs
including caring care of the horses at the display and so he rubbed their legs
and necks to bid farewell. It makes sense to assume that so great was his love
for horses that as soon as he performed his duty to his Lord, i.e. when he
finished worshipping Allah, he gave command for his horses to be brought
back and started gently moving his hand over their legs and their necks to show
love to the horses. love to the horses. Ove to the horses.

This suggested explanation is in harmony with what we said about the Arabic culture and the general characteristics of Qur'anic Stories including conciseness and ellipsis. It also comes natural in the light of other examples of ellipsis and omission referred to above. Thus, it is essential to bear in mind the context and the Qur'anic style of stories based on ellipsis. At the time, one Cf. for example: Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996) and Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testament (Washington: RCK CyberServices, n.d.). In fact, Salia, in Arabic, could refer to remembrance of Allah, prayer in a general sense as well as any set prayer. 140 should be careful not to stretch the argument too far as did Maulana Muhammad Ali (1917: 615) in his translation and commentary on the Qur'an concerning what is usually interpreted as the speech of Jesus in the cradle in the face of accusations of fornication directed towards his mother, Mary, in the Surah known by this name (Chapter 19).

Without assuming this omission of certain consequential events (e.g. realizing his negligence, doing his prayers and then restarting to rub the horses' legs and necks to show love and to bid farewell), the only logical implication would be that the meaning of mash is to cut, sever and hack. But this would not do justice to Solomon, nor make him a model to be imitated.

It is not a question of seeking a politically-correct or horse-friendly interpretation and translation of the meaning of mash. This could only be the case if its lexical meaning did not include caressing, stroking or passing one's hand over. The fact that many exegetes and translators opt for the meaning of cutting, severing and hacking can be explained by the apparent contradiction between Solomon realizing to have been distracted from his set-prayers by the display of horses and him asking for them to be brought back for him to.... This apparent contradiction disappears as soon as the missing / implicit sequences of events are made explicit, e.g. Solomon remembered his Lord, performed his set-prayers and asked for the horses to be brought back. It is sad that sometimes Muslim exegetes, in their search for the extraordinary, do more harm than good to the religion of fislam.

If one asks the question how could Allah almighty use a term that allows two contradictory meanings yielding two different interpretations? The If one asks the question how could Allah almighty use a term that allows two contradictory meanings yielding two different interpretations? The answer is that the Qur'an is a permanent miracle in which different nations at very different times can find reasonable explanations, i.e. explanations that make 'sense' from their own perspective. It made sense for Man in the past to slaughter all one's horses as a way of repentance, of showing that the love of Allah is stronger than one's love for all one's belongings. But this no longer makes sense in the 21st century where people are more nature-friendly. As Joseph A Islam (www.quransmessage.com) observed "If we accidently or intentionally missed our prayer because we were admiring our beautiful kittens, would we call them back and slash them all?" In fact, as Muhammad Asad (1980:889) put it "The story of Solomon's love of beautiful horses is meant to show that all true love of God is bound to be reflected in one's realization of, and reverence for, the beauty created by Him." If there is any cutting, it is in the seq How Did Translators Interpret the Previous Ayahs?

With respect to story referred to above, translations fall into politically correct translations and less politically correct translations, both of which have a basis in classic commentaries. The core of the matter is that the word used to denote Sulayman's reaction after the horses were brought back has been translated into words that belong to two semantic fields as shown by the following two tables. Both meanings are attested in Lisan Al Arab and Lane's Dictionary as explained above. Worthy of mentioning here that both dictionaries are comprehensive and general in nature and are not specifically meant for interpreting the Holy Qur'an. Words in the family of caressing

| Muhammad Asad. Shabbir Ahmed | [Iovingly] stroke | Yusuf Ali. Syed Vickar Ahamed, Muhammad Taqi Usmani, Farook Malik. Bilal Muhammad (2013 Edition), Muhsin Khan & Muhammad al-Hilali Dr. Laleh Bakhira, Ali Quli Quar'i | Wahiduddin Khan, T.B. Irving, Abdel Haleem, Umm Muhammad (Sahih International), Mualana Muhammad Ali. Sher Ali, Amatul Rahman Omar, Arthur John Arberry | [Al-Muntakhab] | Progressive Muslims, Muhammad Sarwar, Rashad Khalifa, Free Minds (2013 Edition) | Striking (Or; slashing) | Striking (Or; slashing) | Tr. Kamal Omar | Striking (Or; slashing) | Striking (Or; slashing) | Tr. Kamal Omar | T striking (Or: slashing) moving his hand (to show love to slation), Ahmed Raza Kha Barelvi), Faridul Haque Maududi mad Ahmed - Samira Words in the family of cutting Al-Fatih Qaribullah Pickthall, Shakir, Abdul Majid Daryabadi, Aisha Bewley, Dr. Munir Munshev Slash, slashir mad Tahir-ul-Qadri, Sale Dr. Mol Cut away, cut off Edward Henry Palmer, John Medows Rodwell 142 In the excellent website http://www.islamawakened.com/, under The Qur'an, one finds 51 translations (as of 6-9-2013), which are classified into 32 translations described as "generally accepted translations of the meaning" of the Holy Qur'an, 10 described as "controversial, deprecated, or status undetermined works", 5 described as "non-Muslim and/or orientalist works" and 3 described as "new and/or partial translations and works in progress". Ignoring the last category and the case of one redundant edition, one can make the following remarks with respect to the interpretation of the term mash.

- Only three translators (Bijan Moeinian, Hamid S. Aziz, Muhammad Mahmoud Ghali) referred to the two possible interpretations of the term mash. The others opted for either the first or the second interpretation of the previous term. term. 22 translations described as generally accepted translations used 'caressed' or one of its synonyms as a translation equivalent of mash. Only 7 such translations used the term 'cut' or one of its synonyms as a translation equivalent of mash. cquivalent of mash.

-only one translation described as controversial, deprecated, or status undetermined works translated mash as 'hack'. The other 9 translations used 'caress' or one of its synonyms.

- only one translation by orientalists translated mash as stroke. The four others used 'sever, hack or cut'. Is it a surprise that all orientalists with the exception of Arberry opted for a 'politically non-correct' interpretation of the term mash? Strategies for Making the Meaning Explicit and Straightforward

Bijan Moeinian resort to parenthetical explanations suggesting: "Then [When he finished worshipping God.] he said: "Bring them back to me [to bid fiarewell] and he rubbed their legs and necks". Hamid S. Aziz and Muhammad Mahmoud Ghali simply provide both interpretations by means of including the two possible terms, respectively: to slash (or stroke) and striking (Or: slashing). An exegetical explanation of the Ayahs which form the core of this paper could read as follows:

038:031-33 When there were brought before him, in the aftermon, swift coursers of the highest breed, he said [having missed the eventide prayer]: "[Alast] I did love the good (i.e. these horses) instead of remembering my Lord (in my set prayer)" till [the time was over and the sun] had hidden in the veil [of night]. [Then, having performed his duty to his Lord, he said:] "Bring them (horses) back to me." There he began to gently stroke their legs and their necks (expressing fondness and affection). Bibliography Abdus Sattar, M. "Wujūh al-Qur'ān. A branch of tafsīr literature", in Islamic Studies 17 (1978), pp. 137-152.

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Ellipsis and Conciseness in Qur'anic Stories Did Solomon Slaughter or Caress his Horses?

Abstract

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Qur'anic Narratives and the **Challenges of Translation**

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145

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