

# What Does God Say in Gaza: Understanding Hermeneutics in the Contemporary Crisis of Gaza

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Accepted and published August, 2024 , DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13314653>

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## Abstract

Hermeneutics, the art and science of interpretation, has evolved significantly from its origins in biblical exegesis to its contemporary application in various fields of humanities and social sciences. This article however tries to analyze the contemporary relevance of hermeneutics in the crisis of Gaza. While it is not acceptable to refer to a living fact as absent or indifferent in the course of human crisis, this work tries to find relevance in the multifaceted hermeneutics of events, cities and even people in the crisis of Palestine. The article also examines the contributions of major figures like Friedrich Schleiermacher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur, offering insights into how hermeneutical methods continue to shape our understanding of texts, meaning, and human experience.

**Keywords:** Hermeneutics, Interpretation, Gaza, Theology, Theosophy

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## Introduction

Hermeneutics, derived from the Greek word \*hermeneuein\*, meaning "to interpret" or "to translate," originally referred to the interpretation of sacred texts, particularly within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Over time, its scope has broadened to include various interpretative activities, influencing fields such as philosophy, theology, law, and the social sciences. This article explores the historical development of hermeneutics, clarifies its core concepts, and examines its contemporary applications.

In our previous work, we elaborated on the concept of the Matrix as a framework for understanding the wisdom of God as an inherently perfect being (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024a). We also concluded that, in the context of Omnipresence and Omniscience, science undergoes significant limitations and introduced the fundamentals of Metaphysics in the presence of infinity (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024b). Additionally, we examined the divergence of science from wisdom and intellect, especially in the context of human tragedies such as those in Gaza (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024c), questioning the authenticity and outcomes of scientific inquiry without pursuit of the Wisdom (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024d).

For some people there is still a question on whether the God exists or not, in this article, we aim to illustrate the Matrix of events in Gaza as a complex network of facts and to clarify a specific string or sentence within the human suffering in Gaza and through this framework. The understanding of God as the fruit of consciousness will add more value to the allegories and narratives in the religious and sacred texts (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024e,f).

### Historical Development of Hermeneutics

The roots of hermeneutics lie in ancient Greece, where philosophers like Plato and Aristotle explored the nature of understanding and interpretation. However, it was during the Reformation that hermeneutics began to take on a more structured form, particularly

through the works of Martin Luther and other reformers who emphasized the importance of personal interpretation of the Bible (Thiselton, 2009).

The modern era of hermeneutics was inaugurated by Friedrich Schleiermacher, who sought to establish a general theory of interpretation. Schleiermacher emphasized the role of the interpreter's psychological understanding, suggesting that to understand a text fully, one must grasp both the intent of the author and the context in which the text was produced (Schleiermacher, 1998). This marked a significant shift from earlier, more rigid approaches to interpretation, laying the groundwork for the development of modern hermeneutics.

## **Key Concepts in Hermeneutics**

### **1. The Hermeneutic Circle**

A central concept in hermeneutics is the hermeneutic circle, which describes the process of understanding as a movement between the whole and the parts of a text. According to this concept, one cannot fully understand a text without understanding its individual components, and vice versa. This idea was further developed by Gadamer, who argued that interpretation is a dialectical process involving the interaction of the interpreter's preconceptions with the text itself (Gadamer, 2004).

### **2. Prejudice and Pre-understanding**

Hans-Georg Gadamer expanded on the idea of the hermeneutic circle by introducing the concepts of prejudice (\*Vorurteil\*) and pre-understanding (*Vorverständnis*). Gadamer contended that our understanding is always influenced by our historical and cultural context, and that these "prejudices" are not necessarily negative but are essential for interpretation. He argued that true understanding occurs when we become aware of our preconceptions and engage

with the text in a way that allows for a fusion of horizons—the merging of the interpreter's perspective with that of the text (Gadamer, 2004).

### 3. The Role of Language

Language plays a crucial role in hermeneutics, as it is both the medium and the object of interpretation. Paul Ricoeur, building on the works of Gadamer, emphasized the importance of language in shaping our understanding of the world. He introduced the concept of narrative identity, suggesting that we interpret our lives and experiences through the stories we tell, which are shaped by the linguistic and cultural frameworks within which we live (Ricoeur, 1981).

## Hermeneutics in Persian and Arabic Languages

Hermeneutics, as the science of interpreting and understanding texts, holds a significant place in Persian and Arabic cultures. In the Islamic world, the science of interpreting the Quran and Hadith has long been a focal point, where hermeneutical approaches have been applied to understand sacred texts.

In Persian culture, thinkers such as Rumi, Suhrawardi, and Mulla Sadra have engaged in the interpretation of religious and philosophical texts. For instance, Mulla Sadra, drawing on the principles of Illuminationist philosophy and Transcendent Theosophy, offered a hermeneutical approach to interpreting the Quran (Nasri, 2011). Additionally, Abdulkarim Soroush, a contemporary Iranian philosopher, has applied hermeneutical methods to reinterpret Islamic thought, emphasizing the dynamic and evolving nature of religious understanding (Soroush, 1999)

In the Arabic context, scholars like Ibn Rushd and Al-Ghazali have also focused on interpretive methods in understanding religious texts. Al-Ghazali, in his book *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), emphasized the importance of esoteric

understanding and the need for interpretation in certain cases (Al-Ghazali, 1982). Furthermore, the modern Egyptian philosopher Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd explored the application of hermeneutics to the Quran, advocating for a contextual and historical understanding of religious texts, which sparked significant debate in the Arab world (Abu Zayd, 1995)

In contemporary studies, hermeneutics has become a method for analyzing literary and religious texts in the Islamic world. Paul Ricoeur, the French philosopher, with his emphasis on the role of language and narrative in understanding, has significantly influenced hermeneutical studies in the Islamic world (Ricoeur, 1981). Additionally, Muhammad Arkoun, an Algerian-French philosopher, contributed to modern Islamic hermeneutics by promoting a critical and historical approach to Islamic texts, challenging traditional interpretations (Arkoun, 1993).

### **Contemporary Relevance of Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics has profound implications for various fields, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. In literary theory, hermeneutical approaches emphasize the importance of context, authorial intent, and the reader's role in creating meaning. This has led to the development of reader-response criticism, which focuses on the reader's experience of the text as a key component of interpretation (Iser, 1978).

In philosophy, hermeneutics challenges the idea of objective knowledge by highlighting the interpretative nature of human understanding. This has significant implications for epistemology and ethics, as it suggests that our knowledge is always situated within a particular historical and cultural context (Gadamer, 2004).

Moreover, hermeneutics has been applied in the social sciences to understand social practices, institutions, and cultural phenomena. Anthropologists and sociologists use hermeneutical methods to interpret cultural artifacts, rituals, and social interactions,

recognizing that these are embedded in complex webs of meaning (Geertz, 1973).

### **Hermeneutics in Gaza**

Nietzsche famously proclaimed that "God is dead," a statement found in his work *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche, 1882/1974). This declaration challenges traditional religious and metaphysical beliefs, suggesting that these concepts no longer hold universal significance in the modern world. When considering that knowledge of God does not necessarily encompass worldly values such as fame and fortune, hermeneutics might offer a valuable perspective for theologians and religious scholars dedicated to understanding the divine. Hermeneutics could illuminate the relevance of metaphysical concepts and their implications for our understanding of an infinite being and its influence on physical reality.

In the context of the Gaza crisis, one of the most severe humanitarian emergencies of the 21st century, the perceived absence of God amid widespread suffering raises profound questions about the righteousness of the conflict and the authenticity of the reported atrocities against civilians, including women and children. However we believe that the God speaks through the higher words and meanings that are considered vital to understand and to take actions to avoid their consequences. For instance, the name "Gaza" (غزة), meaning "food" in both Persian and Arabic, and "Ghazwa" (غزوة), used to describe the battles of the Prophet Muhammad, may offer a symbolic dimension to that the war in Gaza is also considered the war of the Prophete. The use of hunger and famine as military tactics may bear the consequence of deprivation of "Gaza," implying a deeper, symbolic form of suffering for the perpetrator.

Additionally, "Rafah" (رفاه), meaning "comfort," contrasts with the severe deprivation experienced by many in Gaza, while "Jenin" (جنین), meaning "unborn child," underscores the potential impact of the conflict on future generations. Although these hermeneutic interpretations do not fully account for the deliberate actions of individuals or specific events within the complex matrix of the Gaza crisis, they offer insights into how words and names might carry symbolic meanings related to the penalties for the human suffering beyond immediate sensory realities.

## Conclusion

Hermeneutics remains a vital field of inquiry, offering valuable insights into the nature of interpretation and understanding. From its origins in biblical exegesis to its application in contemporary philosophy and social sciences, hermeneutics continues to shape our approach to texts, meaning, and human experience. The contributions of thinkers like Schleiermacher, Gadamer, and Ricoeur have been instrumental in developing a nuanced understanding of interpretation, which remains relevant in addressing the complexities of human understanding in today's world. Hermeneutics may not be an invitation for the people to believe or to change their actions because these strings are not easily acceptable for the public opinion. However such interpretations are crucial for the seekers who wish a deeper understandings of the reality of the events, which we call, true spirituality.

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