

# Advanced Quran Study

Notes Based on Sh. Salman ibn Nasir's Course

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## Session 1

- I. *Usool al-Tafseer* is relatively a modern phenomenon
  - A. It did not exist as a separate genre as it is today in the past and is still developing
    1. This is why it is important to define it and understand what it means
- II. Sh. Tayyar's definition of *usool al-tafseer*: fundamental principles that a *mufassir* returns to while clarifying the meaning of the Quran and judging the differences in *tafseer*
  - A. He basically breaks it down to the bare minimum to whatever suffices to clarify the meaning of the verse
  - B. We need to look at his views because he is one of the most influential people in the field of *usool al-tafseer* in the modern era
  - C. He says the most important issues of this science are the following three:
    1. Sources of *tafseer* and its paths
    2. Differences in *tafseer* among the *mufassirs*
      - a) Discussion includes its reasons and its types
    3. Principles of *tafseer* which can be divided into two types:
      - a) General principles which can be used to make *tafseer*
      - b) General principles which can be used to weigh the different opinions in *tafseer*
  - D. Types of information that comes up in books of *tafseer* according to him:
    1. Direct *tafseer* of the Quran from it that clarifies the meaning
      - a) Ex: a word or expression is clarified by the Quran itself
    2. Information that helps assist in understanding the intended meaning but is not essential. It is supplementary
    3. General deduction - this is anything that is not explicitly mentioned in the verse nor is it essential to understand the verse. It's outside information
      - a) For him this is not part of *tafseer*
      - b) Ex: extracting certain indirect *fiqh* rulings
    4. The subtle points - this is when deeper meanings are derived from the verse that are not mentioned explicitly in the verse
      - a) For him this is not part of *tafseer*
    5. Knowledge based information related to the sciences of *tafseer* - these are the extra details that are mentioned in books of *tafseer* that are not related to the verse
      - a) Ex: one issue of *fiqh* is mentioned in a verse and the *mufassir* uses that as an opportunity to mention many other issues similar to it that have nothing to do with the verse being explained

(1) Other examples: miraculous nature of the Quran, names of the *surahs*, whether something is the smallest *surah* or not, points taken from *balagha*, etc.

b) For him this is not part of *tafseer*

III. Zamakhshari heavily influenced the way how *tafseer* was written after him

- A. He emphasized the knowledge of *balagha* as essential for a *mufassir*, however, Sh. Tayyar disagrees and does not consider it essential for a *mufassir*. He argues that this science is important to explain the miraculous nature and the beauty of the Quran but is not essential for a *mufassir*
- B. He was a *Mu'tazili* but during his time the sect had almost died out
  - 1. The sunni scholars still relied on his *tafseer* a lot for benefit
- C. Ibn 'Ashoor considered him a *mujaddid* due to his contributions to *tafseer*

## Session 2

I. How different *mufassirs* defined *tafseer*:

- A. Abu Hayyan: knowledge of how the words of the Quran are pronounced, meanings of those words, rulings of those words, grammar, *balagha*, and other matters (*haqeeqah, majaaz, asbab nuzul, naskh*, etc.) related to the meanings and understanding of the Quran
  - 1. Sh. Tayyar disagrees with this because he feels there are too many unnecessary things added to the definition. He says these extra things can be used to clarify the deeper meanings but are not part of *tafseer*
- B. Ibn 'Ashur: scholarly knowledge about the meanings of the words of the Quran and whatever else benefits from it in brief or detail
  - 1. Sh. al-Zahrani divided his definition into two levels:
    - a) Brief *tafseer*: when the minimum *tafseer* is provided for words to get the meaning across
    - b) Detailed *tafseer*: when more details are provided from different angles in order to explain the words and verses. Sh. al-Zahrani agreed that these extra details, as opposed to Sh. Tayyar, are also part of *tafseer*
  - 2. Ibn 'Ashur believed that *tafseer* can be called '*ilm*' because it is the origin of all other *shari'* sciences. They are all based on the understanding of the Quran
  - 3. Sciences on which the knowledge of *tafseer* is based according to him are listed below. For him, these are the tools of the *mufassir*.
    - a) Arabic language
      - (1) Includes all of the sciences related to the Arabic language (*nahw, sarf, balagha*, etc.)
    - b) Knowledge of *athaar*
      - (1) Includes both reports from the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions
    - c) History of Arabs
      - (1) Because it provides historical context
    - d) Usool al-Fiqh
    - e) '*Ilm al-kalaam*
    - f) Knowledge of different recitations

II. Confusion over *naskh*

- A. When we hear the *salaf* say certain verses are abrogated, they are intending that certain verses need to be understood in light of others and not that other verses somehow now no longer apply
  - 1. This confusion has caused a lot of misunderstanding and mistakes on how to understand the Quran
- III. Sh. Salman points out that the difference between Sh. Tayyar and Sh. al-Zahrani is semantics
  - A. The former wants to restrict the definition of *tafseer* to just the basic clarification of the meaning but is not opposed to more details, however, he just does not feel it is part of the definition of *tafseer*. The latter disagrees and believes it is all *tafseer* because the objective is to understand the meaning of the Quran through these various methods
    - 1. Sh. Salman leans towards Sh. al-Zahrani's view
- IV. Generally speaking the works of *tafseer* throughout history, whether the brief ones or the larger ones, were built on top of what came before them
- V. A *mufassir* who is a master in the Arabic language will never leave the default meaning of a word except in the case that there is a *nukta* worth mentioning
  - A. This is an example of how important the role of *sarf* is in *tafseer*
- VI. Sh. Tayyar points out that many classic *mufassirs* would develop and lay out their *usool* in the introductions of their work
- VII. The Quran was revealed to be constantly engaged with, to ponder over its meanings, and apply them in our daily lives
  - A. This is a constant development that is relevant to every age
- VIII. Imam Shatibi said that the Arabic language has two levels:
  - A. General indicators that are common among all languages to express meaning
  - B. Specific indicators that are exclusive to the Arabic language
    - 1. By this he means *'ilm al-ma'ani*
      - a) Def: unique grammatical structure of the Arabic language and sentence formations can be used in a way to indicate certain meanings over others
        - (1) Ex: a sentence in the Quran written a certain way over another can give clues to other meanings which would not be apparent if the sentence was constructed in another way even though both may be valid in themselves
      - b) This makes the Quran very layered and rich in its meaning because you can delve deep into so many levels and various meanings
        - (1) This is why some people interpreted the hadith of the Prophet (pbuh), "I have been given comprehensive speech" to refer to the Quran only
        - (2) This does not mean that anyone can interpret it in any way they want. There are established rules for interpretation
          - (a) Ex: understanding the *mutashaabihaat* in light of the *muhkam* verses, it must be in agreement with the *usool* of the *shari'ah*, it must be within the parameters of the Arabic language, etc.
            - (i) Even Allah tells us in the Quran to refer to the specialists and people of knowledge
- IX. Conclusion
  - A. The foundations of *tafseer* are:
    - 1. Arabic language
      - a) Includes all sciences related to its study with a special focus on the language and style of the Quran itself
      - b) Any interpretation that cancels what the verse is saying in the Arabic language cannot be considered

- (1) Meaning if an interpretation violates rules of the Arabic language to bring forth a meaning, then it will be rejected
- (2) There are some words that the *shari'ah* has given them fixed meanings. This is fine and does not violate the rules of the Arabic language, it simply qualifies the linguistic meaning
  - (a) Ex: the word *salah* to mean the specific prayer that we do five times a day
2. The other sources of *tafseer* used among the *mufasssirs*
  - a) Ex: *sunnah, asbab nuzul, ijmaa, principles of shari'ah, etc.*
- B. There is no problem with including in the definition of *tafseer* the use of other developed sciences in order to understand the Quran despite some like Sh. Tayyar being opposed to it
- C. There are some discussions that still need development and more discussion in the field of *tafseer*:
  1. Examples include: *Tafseer of the Quran through the Quran, highlighting the main objectives of a surah, role of isra'eeliyaat in tafseer, etc.*
- D. All of the sciences of *shari'ah* are interconnected. We just need to be clear on how the other sciences play a role when it comes to *tafseer* and also understand which discussions still need development and are currently undefined

## Session 3

- I. When the companions were looking at a *mushaf*, they were looking at verses without any vowel marks
  - A. This means you would first have to figure out how to read it and then interpret it
    1. Ex: determining the difference between a *seen* and *sheen*, where to stop, where a verse ends or begins, etc.
    2. This was done by looking at the *rasm* (written copy), the oral transmission, and then making a selection (*ikhtiyaar*)
  - B. Before Ibn Mujahid's canonization of the seven *qir'aats*, the early reciters for the most part were making selections among the different *qir'aats* that had reached them
    1. Ex: Imam Tabari in his *tafseer* at times refers to different *qir'aats* of a verse and then based on his determination of what the meaning in that particular context should be, he goes on to make a choice as to which *qir'aat* he prefers
    2. This selection process would obviously have an impact on doing *tafseer*
    3. The different *qir'aats* are a *rukhsa* from Allah
    4. Their intention through the selection process was to try and choose that which is best and closest to what the Prophet (pbuh) taught and settled on
    5. There are books written on the *ikhtiyaar* tradition which a person can refer to for more information on the topic
- II. There are different *madhabs* on the methodology of counting the verses and this is why there are different opinions sometimes on how many verses a particular surah contains
- III. The *takhreej* and especially the *hukm* of the reports in *Mawsu'at al-Tafsir al-Ma'thur* is not very reliable so be careful not to believe everything they say
- IV. Muqatil
  - A. He does not quote things with their chains in his *tafseer*
    1. He collected narrations that he had heard and made his own *ijtihaad* to complete his *tafseer*

- B. His *tafseer* is the first complete one to reach us
  - 1. Muhammad bin Sa'd al-Kalbi's *tafseer* was possibly the first complete one written but it has not reached us
- C. However, he is not reliable as a transmitter because he fabricated narrations but his interpretation of verses were praised by scholars like Imam Shafi'
- V. There are books that specifically gather the irregular (*shawaaz*) *qir'aats*. They are useful for research
- VI. Thalabi's *tafseer* is the most encyclopedic among the early *tafseer* works
  - A. In the later period, the most encyclopedic is Al-Alusi's *tafseer*
- VII. Keep in mind that editors (*muhaqqiqeen*) who compile works can make mistakes. Sometimes they are thorough and meticulous and other times not so much
- VIII. Abu Abd al-Rahman Al-Sulami was a big sufi *muhaddith*
  - A. He wrote an early sufi *tafseer* called *Haqaaq al-tafseer*
- IX. Suyyuti compiled a large work of *tafseer* called *Al-Durr Al-Manthur Fi Tafsir Bil-Ma'thur* in which he gathered all narrations related to *tafseer* of the verses without discriminating between the reliable and unreliable ones. His objective was to just compile a reference work on the topic
- X. The Mushaf of Uthman was written to gather people together on a single *harf* (multiple *ahruf* were a *rukhsa*), and it was overseen by a committee of scholars from the Sahaba, at the head of them Zayd, who was not just a scribe of the Qur'an but also one of the few who completely memorised the Qur'an in the life of the Prophet (pbuh). This implies he would have been reading the Qur'an to the Prophet (pbuh) in its final form. Add to this that it was not his own personal work, but the work of a group of scholars. Therefore the text he produced is preferable to any narrations from individuals that go against it
  - A. With the passage of centuries, it is also increasingly difficult to rely on these individual narrations. The well-known qira'at are supported by the rasm of the mushaf which ensures a degree of certainty that is simply not present in non-standard recitations. We will see this with the confusion about how exactly is it that Umar was reciting the start of Surat al-Ikhlās
- XI. Al-Thalabi's *tafseer* is a useful work for research but his student Al-Wahidi's work of *tafseer* called *al-Baseet* is a better work
  - A. Al-Wahidi is also an accomplished grammarian and linguist, therefore, he is more of an analytical *mufassir*
- XII. Generally speaking, all of the classical *mufassireen* made it a point to mention the different *qir'aats* and explain them. Some go into more details of it than others
  - A. In modern times the *qir'aat* of Hafs has become universal, therefore, most modern works of *tafseer*, especially the brief ones, focus on it alone and avoid the others. When it comes to translations, pretty much all stick to the *qir'aat* of Hafs as well. However, sometimes in their translation of certain verses, they seem to be basing it on a different *qir'aat*. This may be due to the fact that they are going to *tafseer* works for clarification and not realizing that the *mufassir* is using a different *qir'aat* to do the *tafseer*
    - 1. The only one that Sh. Salman is aware of that has translated the Quran based on other than Hafs is Aisha Bewley. She based it on the *qir'aat* of Warsh
    - 2. The dominance of the *qir'aat* of Hafs goes back to the printing press. The Ottomans printed it first and distributed it based on the *qir'aat* of Hafs so it became widely spread. There were some pockets of resistance but overall it became widely accepted
- XIII. Tabari does not use the *qir'aat* of Hafs in his *tafseer* at all to explain the verses. Why?
  - A. Probably because he did not consider it very reliable
  - B. Something to note is that among the *muhadditheen* Hafs was not considered a very reliable narrator, which may have also caused an aversion to it for Tabari

## Session 4

- I. Names of surahs
  - A. Some of them are *tawqeefiyah*, meaning the Prophet (pbuh) himself named them for us
    1. We can do *istinbaat* from such type
      - a) Ex: we can try to figure out if there is a link between the name of the surah and the purpose of the surah
  - B. Some of them are *ijtihaadiyyah*, meaning the scholars have given them the names
    1. This is why there may be a difference of opinion and a particular surah may have more than one name among the scholars
    2. Most fall under this category
      - a) Most early transcriptions of the Quran did not contain any names for surahs, this was added later
- II. Ibn Ishaq, the famed author of the seerah book, is an important source for Tabari in his *tafseer*
  - A. This shows us that the knowledge of *seerah* is an important tool to understand the Quran
- III. The word *'imaad* was typically used by the early grammarian Kufans to refer to *dhameer al-fasl*
  - A. The grammar that we have inherited today is mainly the Basri grammar style and not the Kufan
- IV. Tabari also uses a khawarij grammarian to draw linguistic and grammar points in this *tafseer*
- V. Rejecting one of the *qir'aats* is not grounds for *takfeer*
  - A. Also the *qir'aats* are not limited to seven. As long as the conditions for it are met, then it can be considered a valid *qir'aat*
    1. Though it seems we are left with seven to ten today. There is nothing to really be gained by going outside of the ten
- VI. The Quran itself is *mutawaatir* as a whole without a doubt but the individual *qir'aats* cannot be claimed to be *mutawaatir* in all their details
  - A. So it is possible for certain *qir'aats* to not be *mutawaatir*
- VII. There is a difference of opinion whether the order of the surahs is *tawqeefi* or *ijtihaadi*
  - A. Sh. Salman is convinced that it is *tawqeefi*

## Session 5

- I. The *mufassir* Al-Wahidi
  - A. He has three works in *tafseer*
    1. Al-Wajeez
      - a) This is a summarized work intended for beginner level students
      - b) It was used as a reference for Tafseer Jalalayn
    2. Al-Waseet
      - a) This is a summary as well but larger than al-Wajeez
      - b) He actually wrote this one after al-Baseet, therefore, it represents his final views
    3. Al-Baseet
      - a) This is the largest and he spent much of his life on it
  - B. He is also the author of the famous work on *Asbab an-Nuzul*
  - C. He devoted a lot of his time to studying *tafseer*
  - D. He spent the first 20 years of his life learning grammar and other sciences related to Arabic linguistics

- E. He is separated from Tabari about a century and a half
- II. Imam Ibn Mujaahid
  - A. Tabari was one of his teachers
  - B. He wrote a book on the seven *qir'aats*
    - 1. He established the tradition of adhering to the seven *qir'aats*
      - a) The seven that he chose were in fact the most famous in his time as he states in his book
      - b) After Ibn Mujaahid, the practice of sticking to these seven becomes widespread quickly within just one generation
        - (1) The critique of these seven *qir'aats* becomes less and then eventually dies out
        - (2) However, the *mufasssirs* continue to use the other *qir'aats* in the *tafseer* literature
      - c) These seven eventually grow to become 10 after a while
        - (1) This is according to those who extend them to three more
      - d) After a while, the practice of *ikhtiyaar* among the various *qir'aats* dies out
    - 2. His teacher Tabari looked at all the *qir'aats* for his *tafseer* but would only choose the widespread ones to base his *tafseer* on and leave the minority ones even if it was recited by one of the seven
      - a) After restricting himself to the widespread ones, he would analyze them through critique and choose the one he felt was best for the context
    - 3. This book has survived and is in print
  - C. He also wrote a book on the *shaadh qir'aats*
- III. What does it mean when we say that the Quran is *mutawaatir*?
  - A. The general text of the Quran is *mutawaatir*, the places where there is a difference on how to recite the text based on the various *qir'aats* are limited
    - 1. The majority of the text and how we recite it is clear
    - 2. Ibn Jazari says, the different *qir'aats* are not in their entirety *mutawaatir* and that is not required of them
      - a) Others differ with him and say that all of them are *mutawaatir*
  - B. Ibn Mujahid never uses the term *tawaatur* for the seven *qir'aats*
    - 1. In a handful of places, he even critiques these famous reciters
    - 2. So he did not treat them as *mutawaatir* but he did give them a level of authority greater than Tabari
  - C. There is a dispute about what exactly is a *shaadh qir'aat*
    - 1. Some said anything outside of the seven is *shaadh*
- IV. Sometimes one of the seven chosen reciters have multiple narrations and it is not very clear which one was their *ikhtiyaar*
  - A. It is possible that he may have been fine with both types of ways to recite it
  - B. It may also be that the reciter was ok with both but preferred one over the other
- V. Some of the manuscripts of partial Qurans that have been recently discovered dating before the standardization of the *qir'aats* (before Ibn Mujahid's time) suggest that the situation was quite fluid at that time. People were not sticking to one *qir'aat* from beginning to end of a *mushaf* at that time
  - A. Today we stick to one particular *qir'aat* from beginning to end

## Session 6

- I. *Kitaab al-'Ayn* was the first comprehensive dictionary of the Arabic language written by Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi
  - A. Al-Wahidi uses it in his *tafseer*
  - B. It is called *al-'ayn* because he began with the letter 'ayn
  - C. Whenever you see classical Arabic dictionaries saying "And Layth said...", they are referring to this book
    1. Layth was a student of the author of *Kitaab al-'Ayn* and there is a dispute whether the book was actually authored by the student or his teacher
      - a) Al-Wahidi believed that Al-Khalil only started it but Layth finished it
      - b) Sh. Salman believes it was actually Al-Khalil himself
- II. Ibn 'Atiyyah in his *tafseer* tries to summarize what others before him had said
  - A. He tries to be brief and economical with his wording as possible
  - B. His *tafseer* and Zamakhshari's *tafseer* are the two books which influence the development of *tafseer* literature after them. They were both contemporaries
    1. Some were more influenced by one than the other while for others it was both
      - a) Examples:
        - (1) For Qurtubi Ibn 'Atiyyah's *tafseer* was very important
        - (2) For Ibn Juzayy and Abu Hayyan both are very important
        - (3) Baydawi is primarily based on Zamakhshari
        - (4) For al-Razi Zamakhshari is very important
  - C. Ibn 'Atiyyah's influence was more on the western scholars because he was Andalusí
- III. We have conflicting narrations from the *salaf* whether a particular *surah* is Meccan or Medinan
  - A. Sometimes there are conflicting narrations from the same scholar
- IV. *Mulghaa* (ملغى) means that grammatically the word is unnecessary
  - A. Meaning it is not giving any essential function grammatically

## Session 7

### Tafseer Zamakhshari

- I. Zamakhshari says in the introduction of his *tafseer* that only those who master two types of sciences can dive into the depth of the meaning of the Quran:
  - A. 'Ilm al-maa'ani
  - B. 'Ilm al-bayaan
- II. *Balagha* is also very important in order to appreciate Zamakhshari's work. If you don't have it, then much of the subtle points that he is trying to make will go over your head
  - A. The type of words he chooses and the expressions he uses need further elaboration if you are not familiar with linguistic sciences
  - B. Sh. Salman says that he only truly began to understand Zamakhshari's work after Tibbi's explanation of it was published
    1. Other later works explaining his book are also very helpful in reading his *tafseer* and trying to decipher his subtle points. His book of *tafseer* requires its own *tafseer*!
- III. *Mu'tazilah* were generally bad at *hadith* and its sciences

- IV. Later scholars differed on how to understand certain words by Zamakhshari
- V. Whereas Ibn 'Atiyyah was just summarizing what was said before him in his *tafseer*, Zamakhshari was more independent and has his own *ikhtiyar* in *nahw* and *'iraab*
  - A. As mentioned in an earlier session, they were both contemporaries
- VI. Zujaj is a major source for Zamakhshari as well as Saybawehi
- VII. Due to a defense of the *Mu'tazili* creed presented in Zamakhshari's *tafseer*, later 'Ashari scholars came and wrote Sunni versions of it, such as, Baydawi's *tafseer*
  - A. They basically removed the *Mu'tazili* arguments but kept the linguistic analysis
- VIII. Zamakhshari's *tafseer* had a very strong influence after him and it changed the way how *tafseer* was written after him
  - A. It was continued to be taught widely after him throughout the centuries but his *Mu'tazili* arguments were filtered out

## Session 8

### Tafseer of Fakhr-ud-Deen Raazi

- I. Imam Fakhr-ud-Deen Raazi was a *usooli*, *mutakallim*, and philosopher
  - A. He broadened what the *kalaam* books traditionally discussed in their books
  - B. He also created his own sort of school among the 'Asharis
  - C. Ibn Taymiyyah found him very "interesting"
    - 1. Many of his theological responses are directed towards Raazi
    - 2. He famously said that his *tafseer* covers everything except *tafseer* itself
      - a) Because Raazi has a habit of delving into other long tangents and discussions
      - b) Others disagreed with Ibn Taymiyyah and said Raazi's *tafseer* covers everything plus *tafseer*
- II. He quotes a lot of *hadiths* in his *tafseer* but not all of them are reliable so you have to be mindful of that
- III. There are some critiques made against him on his competency of Arabic grammar. He has some errors on grammatical issues in his *tafseer* because of this
- IV. Overall, Raazi's *tafseer* is quite rich and he offers a lot of original and unique discussions plus very interesting reflections
- V. He has a very systematic approach on how he does his *tafseer* and presents information
- VI. Zamakhshari is one of his important sources. He also seems to take from al-Baset by Al-Wahidi
- VII. There is something called *Tafseer Ishaari*
  - A. Def: When someone explains a verse by reflecting on the meaning of the verse, however, it is not something obvious from the verse. The person is reflecting on the meaning of the verse and it is leading him to other meanings
    - 1. So it is not deduced from the verse itself but is the person's own reflection(s) on its meaning, therefore, we cannot say that it is a *tafseer* of the verse
    - 2. If it is in agreement with the *Shariah*, then there is nothing wrong with it
  - B. Raazi does this a lot in his *tafseer*
- VIII. *Tasawwuf* is also a part of his *tafseer*
- IX. Baydawi in his own *tafseer* borrows points of discussion from Raazi as well
  - A. He was quite influenced by Raazi

# Session 9

## Tafseer al-Bahr al-Muheet

- I. It was written by Abu Hayyan
  - A. He was from Andalus but migrated to East in Egypt
  - B. He is most famously known for being a grammarian
    1. He has several books on the topic
    2. There is a heavy focus on grammar in his *tafseer*
- II. Important sources the author used
  - A. Tafseer Ibn 'Atiyah
    1. Probably because its author was also Andalusi
  - B. Tafseer Qurtubi
    1. Probably because its author was also Andalusi
  - C. Tafseer Zamakhshari
    1. Abu Hayyan often times refutes him in the *tafseer* as well when he disagrees with him
  - D. Tafseer of his teacher Jamal al-Deen
- III. Typically, he begins by defining the *mufradaat* of a group of verses before delving into the *tafseer*
- IV. Generally, if the word Abdullah alone is used in *tafseer* literature, it is in reference to Ibn Mas'ud
  - A. Abu Hayyan does this in his *tafseer* as well
- V. There is a dispute whether the order of the *surahs* in the Quran is *tawqeefi* or *ijtihaadi*
  - A. There is no solid evidence for either position but perhaps this is how the Prophet (pbuh) recited at the end of his life and the companions followed it, thus, it is *tawqeefi*. Some deductive evidence is used by those who say that it is *tawqeefi*, such as, the structure of the *surahs*, their relationship to each other, some indirect indicators from the Prophet (pbuh), etc.
    1. This is what Sh. Salman inclines towards as well

## Tafseer Al-Durru al-Masun

- I. It was written by Ahmad ibn Yusuf al-Ma'ruf
  - A. He was a student of Abu Hayyan
- II. His main source was his teacher's, Abu Hayyan, *tafseer*
  - A. But he does not always stick with his teacher's opinion and will point out that Abu Hayyan is not correct on a matter
  - B. His other sources include:
    1. Ibn 'Atiyah
    2. Zamakhshari
      - a) Ahmad does try to evaluate the refutation of his teacher on Zamakhshari's points and try to intermediate between them
- III. He mainly discusses the *i'raab* issues in this *tafseer*
- IV. He also gives his own views on certain issues

# Session 10

## Tafseer ibn Kathir

- I. It was written by Ibn Kathir
  - A. He was a student of Ibn Taymiyyah
- II. He borrows a lot from the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Taymiyyah on *Usool al-Tafseer* in his introduction of the *tafseer*
  - A. However, Ibn Taymiyyah did not give it that title. It was a later Hanbali scholar that reprinted the work who gave it that title
  - B. The reason Ibn Kathir does not mention Ibn Taymiyyah in his introduction is because he was a controversial figure even in his own lifetime, however, it is quite obvious in his introduction that he was influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah a lot
  - C. Ibn Taymiyyah's methodology of *tafseer*:
    - 1. Start with *tafseer* of the Quran through the Quran
    - 2. Then we look into the sunnah
    - 3. Then we looking to the narrations from the *salaf*
      - a) First the companions and then their students (*tabi'een*)
      - b) He inserts '*umoom al-lughah*' into this as well
        - (1) This is a separate discussion that requires more details
- III. Whenever Ibn Kathir finds an opportunity, he will mention similar verses from other parts of the Quran
  - A. This is one of the distinguishing features of his *tafseer*
- IV. He mentions as many hadiths on the topic as he can when explaining the verses
  - A. The hadiths that he cites could be directly related to the subject in the verse(s) or somehow correlate to it
  - B. This is also one of the distinguishing features of his *tafseer*
- V. This *tafseer* is a good reference work because the author mentions things that you may not find in other works
- VI. Ibn Kathir does do *tarjeeh* in his work because he was an accomplished hadith critic and historian as well
- VII. When we come across different versions of a hadith, then this can help us better understand and interpret the hadith
  - A. This is why it is important to gather all the hadiths on a given topic when studying it
- VIII. For *mawqoof* and other statements from the *salaf*, Ibn Khathir does not give the full *isnaad* because that is not his focus in the *tafseer*
- IX. At the end of the lecture, Sh. Salman brought in Sh. Sohaib Saeed to briefly present his PhD thesis on doing *tafseer* of the Quran through the Quran
  - A. He advised everyone to read it and said it is the best thing written on the topic
    - 1. It is [available free online](#) and is in English

## Session 11

### Nazm al-Durar by al-Biq'a'i

- I. This *tafseer* focuses on the idea that everything in the Quran is connected and well structured
  - A. It is this idea of interconnectedness of the Quran
  - B. He argues that not only the verses but chapters are interconnected as well
    - 1. He treats each chapter and verse as a cohesive unit that is in its appropriate place
  - C. Imam al-Raazi also focused on this in his *taseer* among many other things
    - 1. al-Raazi came before al-Biq'a'i

- II. The author also delves into defining themes of every chapter
  - A. This thematic *tafseer* idea has been given more attention now in our times
    - 1. Most notable: Farahi, Islahi, etc.
    - 2. The idea goes back to Imam al-Biq'a'i because he popularized it by writing works by focusing exclusively on this topic
- III. He gives a different explanation of the *Basmalah* for every chapter based on its theme
- IV. He also makes it a point to show that the theme of all the chapters go back to the theme of Surah al-Fatihah
  - A. The al-Fatihah being a comprehensive general look while other chapters showing a detailed look
- V. There have been research papers written on al-Biq'a'i's methodology and this whole approach to the Quran through its interconnectedness
- VI. Some scholars were skeptical of this whole interconnectedness of verses and chapters in the Quran view, thus, they believed there was no such thing
  - A. Sh. Salman is not really convinced of their disagreement

## Session 12

### Irshad al-'Aql al-Salim and Ruh al-Ma'ani

- I. Tafseer of Abu Su'ud (*Irshad al-'Aql*)
  - A. The author was the *Shaykh al-Islam* of the Ottoman empire
  - B. It continues on the tradition of Zamakhshari and Baydawi
  - C. It was the most important book of *tafseer* written in its period
- II. Tafseer *Ruh al-Ma'ani*
  - A. It was written by Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Alusi al-Baghdadi
    - 1. He was a Hanafi as was his family
    - 2. He was from Iraq
  - B. He heavily quotes from numerous other sources but provides his own commentary on it as well
    - 1. He tries to incorporate information from numerous other sources in a way so that they fit together
  - C. His *tafseer* is probably the most encyclopedic
    - 1. There is a lot of information coming from a lot of sources
      - a) He tries to compact them as much as possible
    - 2. Do large compilations have value though?
      - a) It depends
        - (1) In the past, they did not have modern software where you can easily find references and books, therefore, they used to try to add a lot of information in one work so that it is gathered in one place
          - (a) Some like Imam Suyuti did a great service because he gathers a lot from so many diverse sources in his books that some of the references he used are lost to us now
        - (2) If someone did this today, it may not be very useful. However, if someone compiled a large work and collected information not readily available online or through software, then it could add some value
  - D. He also brings up *Tafseer Ishaari* points at the end of a chapter's *tafseer*

### III. Concluding thoughts

- A. It is important to read original pioneering works where ideas are presented the first time. They are usually of higher quality than those that came later just summarizing or explaining the original works. It helps you understand the mind of the original thinker and build your own analytical skills
- B. Sh. Salman is not a fan of *hawaashi* works on *tafseer* especially as primary texts of study
  - 1. They may be useful if you are trying to teach a class on the book but for a student wanting to learn *tafseer*, it could cause him to lose his focus, because the *hawaashi* tend to go into tangents a lot which may not be very useful if you are just trying to focus on understanding the text
- C. Sh. Salman is not familiar with any Urdu tafseers other than what has been translated into English
  - 1. He likes both Mawdudi and Ma'ariful Quran
- D. Sh. Salman does not see much value in *Mukhtasar Ibn Kathir* for serious students of knowledge
  - 1. It may be useful for the masses or the very beginners

## Session 13

### Zilaal al-Quran

- I. It was authored by Sayyid Qutb
  - A. He was an expert in literary criticism from Egypt
  - B. He focused on imagery in the Quran in other articles that he has written
    - 1. He shows how it brings the Quran to life
  - C. He became heavily involved in Islamic political activism in his life
    - 1. This is when he started to write his *tafseer*. He published one *juzz* every two months
    - 2. He was constantly arrested due to his political activism. He finished writing his *tafseer* while in prison
  - D. He was eventually accused by the Egyptian government of some conspiracies and allegations for which he was executed
- II. He argues in it that the Quran appeals to reason and emotion
- III. The topic of political activism comes up a lot in the second half of his *tafseer*
  - A. He later revised the first half to be more in line with his second half on the question of political activism
- IV. He emphasizes the idea of thematic unity in the *surahs*
- V. He has written his *tafseer* in a rich literary style, which is why average Arabic readers connect with it so much
  - A. In the Arab world Qutb's *tafseer* is probably the most widely read among the average masses
- VI. He also uses a lot of emotive style to make his points
- VII. He avoids technical *nahw* language and sticks to just speaking in an eloquent simple manner
- VIII. Much of the criticism against his *tafseer* is exaggerated
  - A. It is either due to sectarianism or political motives
  - B. It has its flaws but overall is a unique and valuable contribution to the field of *tafseer*
- IX. Adil Islahi has translated some of it and it is published

## Tahrir wa al-Tanwir

- I. It was written by Ibn 'Ashoor
  - A. He died in 1973 so was a recent scholar
  - B. He was an extremely prolific author and has done *tahqeeq* of many works
  - C. He was very strongly rooted in tradition but also put forth original insight and ideas
  - D. He was well versed in many classical sciences (*aqeedah, fiqh, usool, tafseer, balagha*, Arabic language, etc.)
    1. He was not as proficient in *hadith*
  - E. He was the greatest scholar of the 20th century
- II. He spent 50 years of his life writing his *tafseer*
- III. It is a phenomenal work and you will hardly come across a verse where he has mentioned some benefit and realize that no one before him has pointed it out
  - A. So he makes very unique observations that are a product of his *istinbaat*
- IV. He discusses the names of *surahs* in considerable details
- V. It is probably the greatest *tafseer* written in our era

## Session 14

### Israiliyyat

- I. Use of *israiliyyat* in *tafseer* has become a very controversial thing in our times
  - A. There was some dispute about it in the past but it was not really controversial
  - B. The first person to have an anti-*israiliyyat* attitude in our times was probably Rashid Rida and then it just became a dominant view among modern scholars
    1. Some even claim that it is some sort of Jewish conspiracy!
    2. In recent years, there has been some pushback particularly from the likes of Sh. Musa'id Tayyar
- II. We find *israiliyyat* being used in *tafseer* since the time of the companions
  - A. You will hardly find a major book of *tafseer* in Muslim history that does not reference it
- III. The reality is that *israiliyyat* do play a role in *tafseer*
  - A. However, there is still need for development in the area of *israiliyyat*
    1. Sh. Musa'id Tayyar has done a good job in his book discussing it and defending its use but it still needs more development
  - B. They are generally used to explain stories in the Quran for which we have no background or detailed information in the Quran and Sunnah
  - C. The Quran constantly interacts with the Jews and Christians and their history
    1. It even challenges them to go back to their books
- IV. Majority of scholars allow using them as a source of *tafseer*
  - A. The *israiliyyat* are not used to seek guidance through them but only in a restricted manner to understand the transmitted stories
  - B. *Israiliyyat* were used even among the companions
- V. Sh. Tayyar suggests the following standards when accepting individual *israiliyyat* reports:
  - A. It agree with the Quran

- B. The *israiliyyat* should not accuse a prophet of doing something sinful because they are considered infallible
  - 1. There is some disagreement about the extent of the infallibility and whether certain actions come under the realm of infallibility or not
    - a) Ex: some *israiliyyat* would be accepted by some scholars because they would not find the action of the prophet mentioned in it as something sinful, whereas, others would reject it because they would find the action as something objectionable and unworthy of a prophet
- C. It should agree with the Arabic language
- D. The report should be accepted among the companions and their students
  - 1. Meaning there is indication of them using it without rejecting it
  - 2. Sh. Salman is skeptical about this one
    - a) It may strengthen the possibility of accepting the particular report but it is not a requirement
- E. It should be from the realm of possibility and not impossibility