Principles of Tafseer

Notes on *Lubaab al-Tahreer fee Usool al-Tafseer*

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Foreword

These are my complete notes on the book *Lubaab al-Tahreer fee Usool al-Tafseer*, which is a summary of a much larger book by Shaykh Musa'id ibn Sulayman al-Tayyar's remarkable work on the topic of principles of *tafseer*. Shaykh Musa'id is considered one of the most influential people in the field of principles of *tafseer* in the modern era.

I first came to learn of Shaykh Musa'id in a course related to various *tafseer* books written throughout the ages and their impact. It was then that I decided to go through the summary of the book and produce English notes based on it for eager students of knowledge who are not yet able to benefit from Arabic books. However, I became busy with some other projects and was not able to dedicate the appropriate time for this very small but useful endeavor.

This is an important and serious topic of study for anyone wanting to delve deeper into *tafseer* literature. The book and the notes expect some level of basic understanding on the topic, therefore, the writing will not be as detailed as someone completely unfamiliar with the topic would want it to be.

I pray the reader is able to benefit from them as much as I did while noting them down and that it serves as a means to draw the reader closer to His perfect book and to connect with the marvelous contributions in *tafseer* made by luminaries of this *ummah*.

If you find any mistakes or would like to make any suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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Definition and History of Principles of Tafseer

Definitions

I. Words to know:
    A. *Tafseer* - Clarification of the meaning of the Qur'an
    B. *Mufassir* - The one who clarifies the meaning of the Qur'an
    C. *Usool al-Tafseer* (Principles of *Tafseer*) - The fundamental principles that a *mufassir* returns to while clarifying the meaning of the Qur'an and judging the differences in *tafseer*
        1. The *mufassir* should know enough to be cautious from making mistakes in understanding, be able to refute weak opinions, and be able to utilize various scientific methods while doing *tafseer*

II. The most important topics related to *tafseer* are three:
    A. Sources of *tafseer*
    B. Differences in *tafseer*
    C. Rules of *tafseer*
        1. They fall into two categories:
            a) General rules
            b) Rules for preferring one opinion over another

III. The purpose of *Usool al-Tafseer* are two:
    A. To know the acceptable correct *tafseer*
    B. To know the invalid or weak *tafseer* and how to refute it

History

Principles of *tafseer* passed through three stages:

I. Principles of *tafseer* in the reports of the Prophet (pbuh) and the early pious predecessors (*salaf*)
    A. It can be sub-categorized into three types:
        1. Reports which are explicitly about specific verses
            a) Ex: if a particular incident is mentioned in a hadith which was the cause for a specific verse to be revealed
        2. Reports which speak about specific verses
            a) Ex: if one of the students of a companion (*tabi'ee*) says that such and such verse means such and such
        3. Reports which deduce issues through principles of *tafseer* after investigation
            a) Ex: when an early authority deduces something after investigation and weighing different opinions as to the meaning behind a particular verse

II. Inclusive recording
    A. This is when discussions related to principles of *tafseer* were incorporated within other works
    B. The books of this stage can be divided into four types:

1. Introductions of *mufassirs* to their books of *tafseer*
   a) They would include discussions related to principles of *tafseer* in the introductions of their *tafseer* books
2. Discussions related to principles of *tafseer* within the middle of the books of *tafseer*
   a) Meaning they would discuss them within various parts of their *tafseer* books
3. Discussions related to principles of *tafseer* in books related to sciences of Qur'an
4. Discussions related to principles of *tafseer* in books of *Usool al-Fiqh*
III. Independent recording
   A. This is when discussions related to principles of *tafseer* were published as independent books by themselves without discussing any other issues in the book
   B. They could be complete studies of the subject or one of its subtopics
   C. Ex: Ibn Taymiyyah's famous book on the topic

Sources of Tafseer

I. These are the first things that a *mufassir* turns to when doing *tafseer* of the Qur'an
II. The *tafseer* of the companions was considered a source for their students (*tabi'een*)
    A. The *tafseer* of the *tabi'een* was considered a source for their students and the latter's *tafseer* was considered a source for their students
        1. Until this point, there was very little *ijtihaad* going on in *tafseer* and it was mostly just transmitting statements of the previous generations about *tafseer* to the next until the arrival of Ibn Jareer al-Tabari

Qur'an

I. This is when the meaning of the Qur'an is clarified by referring to other verses of the Qur'an
    A. It is also known as doing *tafseer* of the Qur'an through the Qur'an
II. This can be divided into two types:
    A. When the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself refers to a specific part of the Qur'an to explain another part of the Qur'an
    B. When a speaker uses his/her intellect to explain one part of the Qur'an with another
III. It is done in various ways:
    A. To clarify the meaning of a word in one part of the Qur'an with how it is used in another part of the Qur'an
    B. To make something stated generally in the Qur'an specific by how it is stated in a specific manner in another part of the Qur'an
    C. To make something absolute in the Qur'an restricted by how it is stated in a restrictive manner in another part of the Qur'an
IV. The authority of such a *tafseer* can be divided into three types:
    A. That in which there is no capacity for difference of opinion arising. It is a kind of consensus
    B. That which is narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
    C. *Tafseer* of the *mufassirs*
        1. This is based on the *mufassirs'* personal *ijtihaad*. It could be right or wrong. Some may accept one *mufassir's tafseer* over another depending on the strength of the argument
            a) Even the people of innovation may do *tafseer* of the Qur'an through the Qur'an to justify their corrupt beliefs but it will not be accepted
        2. The *mufassir* must assure that there is a link between the two verses being compared before doing *ijtihaad*. A link could mean either:
            a) There is an agreement in the occurrence but difference in the expressions of the two verses
                (1) Ex: one verse describes an incident and the other also describes the same incident but uses different wording
            b) The inquired words being used in two separate verses carry the same linguistic meaning

                (1) Ex: one verse uses a word spelled a particular way and another uses a word with the same root letters spelled a different way

V. Those *mufassirs* who utilized this method the most in their *tafseers*:
    A. Muqaatil ibn Sulaymaan
    B. Abdur Rahman ibn Zayd
    C. Ibn Kathir
    D. Al-Ameer al-San'aani
    E. Thanaaullah al-Hindi
    F. Muhammad al-Ameen al-Shanqeeti

VI. Benefits of doing this type of *tafseer*:
    A. Gathering verses with similar meaning in one place
    B. The weight of such a deduction will be heavier
    C. There are other benefits as well

Sunnah

I. We can divide this type of *tafseer* into two types:
    A. When the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) directly does a *tafseer* of a verse
        1. This occurs by him clarifying to us the meaning behind a particular verse or acknowledging a companion's understanding of a verse
        2. It is done in two ways:
            a) The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself initiates the clarification of the meaning
            b) One of the companions asks the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to clarify the meaning behind a particular verse
        3. There are very little reports of this nature in the literature, thus, most of the verses do not have such reports available to explain their meanings
        4. This type of *tafseer* is a proof without any difference of opinion
    B. When a *mufassir* uses hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to explain a verse of the Qur'an
        1. These hadiths are not reported in the context of *tafseer* but the *mufassir* uses them anyway to explain a verse
        2. Is this type of *tafseer* a proof?
            a) If the resulting *tafseer* has hardly any difference over it, then yes it is
            b) If the resulting *tafseer* is an inference to clarify the meaning of a verse and there is a difference of opinion over it, then it is not a proof in an absolute sense. Instead, the hadith is used as a way to give preference and strength to the opinion
        3. This methodology serve different purposes:
            a) To make something stated generally in the Qur'an specific through use of hadiths
            b) To clarify something in the Qur'an mentioned in a vague manner through use of hadiths
            c) There are other purposes as well

4. Benefits of doing this type of *tafseer*:
   a) To mention a corresponding hadith to obtain the meaning of the verse
   b) To mention a hadith in which a specific Qur'anic word is used to obtain its meaning
   c) To rely on the hadith to give preference to the meaning indicated in the hadith over other opinions which do not indicate this meaning
   d) To do *tafseer* by basing it on the interpretation of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
   e) The verse may be pointing to a topic which is clarified further in a hadith
      (1) Ex: we are told to pray in the Qur'an but the *how* is detailed in hadiths

II. Those *mufassirs* who utilized this method the most in their *tafseers*:
   A. Al-Hasan al-Basri
   B. Qatadah
   C. Abdur Razzaq San'aani when he transmits from Qatadah
   D. Ibn Jareer al-Tabari
   E. Ibn Abi Haatim
   F. Baghaawi
   G. Ibn Kathir
   H. Imam Syuti

III. This type of *tafseer* is mostly done to complement a topic and digress within it

Statements of the Pious Predecessors (*Salaf*)

I. The *salaf* are the generation of the companions, the successors (*tabi'een*), and the latter's students

II. A *tafseer* based on this type refers to when the meaning of the Qur'an is clarified based on the statements of these first three generations of Muslims

III. A companion is someone who met the Prophet (pbuh) while he/she was a believer and died as a Muslim
   A. The *mufassirs* among them were those who had opinions in *tafseer* and used to articulate them
      1. There were very few among them who were of this type
      2. The most popular were the following in order of the number of reports:
         a) Ibn Abbas
         b) Ibn Mas'ood
         c) Ali ibn Talib
         d) Umar ibn Khattab
         e) Aisha
   B. Not all of the companions that are mentioned in the books of *tafseer* are necessarily considered *mufassirs*
   C. The companions' *tafseer* is considered a source for a number of reasons:
      1. They witnessed the revelation
      2. They knew the circumstances around which the verses were revealed

3. They knew the circumstances of those about whom the Qur'an was revealed
4. They were the very people in whose language the Qur'an was revealed
5. The goodness of their understanding
6. The integrity of their intentions

IV. The successors and their students
   A. The successor is someone who met a companion(s) while he/she was a believer and died as a Muslim
      1. The *mufassirs* among them were far more in quantity than in the generation of companions
      2. The number of *mufassirs* among them were also more than those in the generation after them
   B. They are considered a source of *tafseer* because:
      1. They were vessels for the *tafseer* of the companions
      2. Their methodology and sources were the same as that of the companions
      3. They lived in the era of linguistic evidence
      4. The scholars who wrote books of *tafseer* relied on their *tafseer*
   C. The student of the successors is someone who met a successor(s) while he/she was a believer and died as a Muslim

V. The *tafseer* of the *salaf* can be divided into two types:
   A. Transmission based *tafseer*
      1. This can be further subdivided into four types:
         a) That which is reported by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
         b) Those verses about which there is explicit mention of the reasons behind their revelation
         c) That which the successors reported from the companions
         d) That which the students of the successors reported from their teachers
   B. Opinion based *tafseer*
      1. This can be further subdivided into three types:
         a) Reports about verses where there is no explicit mention of the reasons behind their revelation
         b) When the *salaf* held multiple views regarding the meaning
         c) When the *salaf* associated a verse to particular stories [from the *seerah*]

VI. *Tafseer* of the *salaf* could have a chain of narrators attached to it or it may not
   A. If it does not have a chain, then it cannot be definitively attributed to the *salaf*
   B. If it does have a chain, then it is either:
      1. An authentic chain
         a) In this case, there is no problem in attributing it to the *salaf*
      2. A weak chain
         a) In this case, the past *mufassirs* and most of the later ones generally accept them anyway, will attribute them to the *salaf,* and will rely on the transmitted meanings of such reports
            (1) Ex: It is established that Dhahhak never met Ibn Abbas, however, you will find many of his statements attributed to Ibn Abbas in Ibn Kathir and Ibn Abi Haatim

           b) As for researchers who look into the science of grading narrators, then they too will transmit such reports unless there is some sort of problem in the meaning, in which case, they will point out the weakness of the chain

           c) There seems to be more leniency allowed when transmitting weak reports related to *tafseer*

           d) Some scholars in modern times have raised an issue over accepting weak reports in *tafseer* and opine that they should be put under the same scrutiny as hadiths related to *halal* and *haram*

               (1) Examples of such scholars: Al-Albaani

    C. Those who put the chain of narrators in their *tafseer*:
1. Abdur Razzaq San'aani
2. Abd ibn Hameed
3. Ibn Jareer al-Tabari
4. Ibn al-Mundhir
5. Ibn Abi Haatim
6. Abu al-Shaykh
7. Ibn Mardawiyh Ahmad ibn Musa ibn Ja'far

    D. Those who did not put the chain of narrators in their *tafseer*:
1. Tha'labi
2. Al-Maawardi
3. Al-Baghaawi
4. Ibn 'Atiyyah
5. Ibn Jawzi
6. Ibn Kathir
7. Syuti

VII. The foundation of *tafseer* is to clarify the meaning to the reader in a suitable fashion. The *mufassir* can take multiple ways to clarify that meaning, such as, through parables, discussing the circumstances behind the revelation of the verse, delving into part of the meaning, focusing on the context, etc. These are all different ways that could be used to arrive at the same meaning

VIII. Occasionally, in some of the *tafseer* of the *salaf* there is refutation of other groups

IX. The specific concerns of the *salaf* in their *tafseer* are noticeable, for example, al-Hasan al-Basri and his student Qatadah focus on advice and guidance, Ibn Ishaaq focuses more on *seerah*, etc.

    A. The concerns in their *tafseer* differ from *mufassir* to *mufassir*

Judeo-Christian Reports (*Isra'iliyaat*)

I. This refers to any report that a *mufassir* takes from the Children of Israel (i.e. Jewish/Christian sources)

II. The purpose of doing *tafseer* using such reports is to benefit from their reports in clarifying some of the reported words in the Qur'an's stories or whatever is related to them

III. It is correct to consider the *isra'iliyaat* as a source from among the sources of *tafseer* because majority of the *salaf* used and permitted them based on certain principles

  A. Some of the *salaf* did prohibit using such reports for clarifying the meaning of a verse

IV. Four ways a *mufassir* can benefit from *isra'iliyaat*

  A. Guidance over a possible meaning for a verse

  B. Defining something vague in a verse

  C. Knowing the reason behind a particular story

  D. Learning details of stories mentioned briefly in the Qur'an

V. The reports from the *isra'iliyaat* are not used by the *mufassir* to take either legal and theological rulings from it. They are only used to clarify something in a verse or to add further details to what is mentioned in a verse

VI. After examining the use and statements of the *salaf*, it appears that they treated the *isra'iliyaat* in the following ways:

  A. Their intention was to clarify a general meaning of a word used in a verse, therefore, the report used by them from the *isra'iliyaat* did not contradict the overall meaning of the word

  B. The details presented in the *isra'iliyaat* are neither believed in nor disbelieved

VII. Imam Tabari's five rules before accepting such a report:

  A. It should be in agreement with the Qur'an

  B. The *isra'ili* report should not oppose a report from the Messenger (pbuh)

  C. It should be in agreement with the Arabic language

  D. It has approval from the companions and their students. Meaning they cited the *isra'ili* report without denying it

  E. It should be something possible and not impossible

VIII. There is hardly a book of tafseer found which does not contain some sort of *isra'iliyaat*. Difference of opinion over the details of a story does not invalidate the basis of a story

  A. Ex: there is a difference of opinion over what type of tree was it that was prohibited to Adam and Hawwa in paradise. This difference does not invalidate the basis of the story that there was some type of tree that was prohibited to them

IX. Some scholars divided the *isra'iliyaat* into three types:

  A. Whatever agrees with our reports in the Qur'an and Sunnah

    1. This type we accept and consider correct

  B. Whatever contradicts with our reports in the Qur'an and Sunnah

    1. This type we reject and consider false

  C. Whatever our sources are silent about and neither confirm nor deny them

    1. We neither believe in such reports nor deny them but permit narrating them

X. The preferred opinion is that it is permitted to use their reports because:

  A. There are explicit verses in the Qur'an which tell us to turn to them for some of their reports and there is nothing which seems to abrogate that

  B. The Prophet (pbuh) himself permitted us to narrate from them

  C. The hadith which prohibits it is referring to seeking religious guidance from them and not merely transmitting their reports

    1. It is possible this is the same reason some of the *salaf* prohibited it or they were referring to those who constantly do so

  D. Majority of the *salaf* made use of them despite knowing some of the problems within them

Arabic Language

I. This refers to clarifying the meaning of the Qur'an in terms of its vocabulary and structure through the Arabic language

II. This is considered a source for *tafseer* because:
   A. There is not a single verse in the Qur'an that is free from the need of knowing Arabic. Most of the time what is needed in *tafseer* is to find out what is meant by a particular Arabic word
   B. The language is an invincible barrier which prevents heretical groups from attributing special terms and symbols into the words of the Qur'an which are not there in order to justify their false beliefs

III. *Tafseer* through language passed through three phases:
   A. Time of the *salaf*
      1. The companions knew the language better than anyone because the Qur'an was revealed in their own tongue
      2. The successors were of two types:
         a) The Arabs who knew the language
         b) The freed slaves who learned from the companions
            (1) It did not effect their *tafseer* despite not being Arabs
      3. The students of the successors were very similar to the successors with regards to their *tafseer*
   B. Time of the linguists
      1. Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi wrote a book in which he clarified many of the vocabulary of the Qur'an
         a) Many compilations were published after this book in this way
      2. The linguists in this period wrote books on the vocabulary of the Qur'an and meaning of the Qur'an including linguistic *tafseer*
      3. The subsequent generations refer back to this era and quote the linguists in the same way they quote the *salaf* in their *tafseer*
   C. After the books of Arabic language were written down
      1. Those of this era relied on and transmitted what was recorded by the linguists before them
      2. Those who came after the previous two eras relied on their works. We can divide them into two cases:
         a) They would give preference to some statements of linguists over others
         b) They would add a new opinion. It would not be accepted if it invalidated the statement of the *salaf*

IV. Statements of the linguists in clarifying the Qur'an's vocabulary in terms of it being considered evidence can be divided into four types:
   A. When it is in agreement with the *tafseer* of the *salaf*
      1. This happens a lot
   B. When it invalidates the linguistic *tafseer* of the *salaf*
      1. This is very rare and is not accepted
   C. Linguistic statements that add variety to the meaning

           1. This is valid as long as there is possibility for it in the verse
      D. Linguistic meaning that does not come from the *salaf* [nor does it contradict them]
           1. This is accepted because linguists are specialists in the field
V. Four points need to be kept in mind:
      A. Choosing or preferring between the various linguistic *tafseer* of the *salaf* does not mean rejecting the linguistic meaning altogether
      B. *Tafseer* of the *salaf* may not correspond to the linguistic meaning, therefore, the person needs to look further into their speech to discover what is required by the Arabic language and its secrets
           1. This could be done in three ways:
                a) Looking into the meaning of a word through the help of linguistic books, books on the vocabulary of the Qur'an, and the statements of *mufassirs* and researchers of language
                b) Research the relationship between the *tafseer* of the word by the *salaf* and its corresponding meaning in the language. This is to clarify the intent of the *salaf* in their *tafseer*
                c) The *tafseer* may be clarifying the intent of the word contextually and not in a linguistic sense
      C. Relying on linguistic books [alone] for *tafseer* raises the possibility of unsound methodology taking place
      D. Knowing the root letters of the word helps to know its meaning and keep it firm in the mind, then it can help discover its connection to the meaning in its context
VI. Those who relied on this type of *tafseer* the most:
      A. Ibn Abbas
      B. Ikrimah
      C. Mujaahid
      D. Ibn Zayd
      E. Al-Faraa'
      F. Abu Ubaydah
      G. Ibn Jareer al-Tabari
      H. Raaghib
      I. Al-Wahidi
      J. Ibn 'Ashoor

How Tafseer is Done

Transmission Style

I. It has two versions:
    A. It is only transmitted without any room for *ijtihaad* in it
        1. Ex: *tafseer* of the Prophet (pbuh) or the *salaf*
    B. It is transmitted but with permissibility of doing *ijtihaad* in it
II. It is done in two ways:
    A. Orally
        1. This is when the *mufassir* relies on his memory to transmit the *tafseer*
    B. Written
        1. This is when the *mufassir* transmits the *tafseer* through a book
            a) He may have heard it, been given it, found it, etc.
III. The *mufassirs* have three techniques when they transmit from other *tafseer* books:
    A. They mention the source of the statement or its author
        1. This is the default
    B. They transmit but leave the source obscure
    C. They just transmit only without pointing to the source or its author

Opinion Style

I. It has two versions:
    A. Praiseworthy
        1. It is based on knowledge or high probability
            a) This type existed among the *salaf*
    B. Blameworthy
        1. It is based on desires or ignorance and is forbidden
        2. It emerged when innovations arose and its people began to deny the apparent meaning because it conflicted with their ways and beliefs
II. It is done in two ways:
    A. Choosing from the opinions of the *salaf* and giving preference to some over others
        1. Ibn Jareer al-Tabari did this
    B. Coming with a new opinion
        1. This happens a lot with the later generations
        2. Sometimes it is correct but the people of innovation often get it wrong
III. Sciences needed for a *mufassir* before doing this type of *tafseer*
    A. Knowing the explicit *tafseer* of the Prophet (pbuh)
    B. Knowing the reasons behind revelation of verses. This also includes knowing stories surrounding the verse which may impact its meaning
    C. Knowing the *tafseer* of the *salaf*
    D. Knowing the vocabulary of the Qur'an
    E. Knowing the legal ruling indicated by the verse
    F. Knowing the abrogated verses

The Differences and Consensus in *Tafseer*

Reasons for the Differences in *Tafseer*

I. The differences occur due to the possibility of multiple meanings
    A. These possible meanings may be accepted or rejected
II. The differences could either:
    A. Go back to one meaning
        1. In this case, the 'differences' just become semantical
    B. Go back to multiple meanings
        1. Some of the reasons for this are the following:
            a) Linguistic homonyms
                (1) This is when the words have the same spelling or pronunciation but different meanings
                (2) These could either:
                    (a) Go back to the same root letters but with different meanings
                    (b) Go back to different root letters with different meanings
            b) There is a disagreement over the pronoun and what it is referring back to
            c) There is disagreement over the various possible descriptions and which specific one is intended in the verse
                (1) Ex: does a particular description mentioned in a verse refer to angels or horses? Because it can be used for both
            d) There is disagreement over the relied upon source of the *tafseer*
                (1) Ex: do we go back to the linguistic meaning to arrive at an understanding of a word or do we rely on a hadith which talks about the topic?
            e) There is disagreement over whether the meaning is abrogated or not
            f) There is disagreement over the sequence of words in the verse and how that impacts the meaning
                (1) Ex: why did Allah bring forward a certain word before another in the verse? Why did Allah delay a certain word after another in the verse?
III. After the generations of the *salaf*, beliefs arose which contradicted the beliefs of the *salaf*, thus, this also led to differences in *tafseer*
IV. The emergence of the *fiqhi* schools also led to differences in understanding of the verses

Types of Differences in *Tafseer*

I. There was very little difference in *tafseer* during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) because the people would just go back to him and ask to clarify whenever they differed
II. After the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) death, some of the companions began to give *tafseer* and would resort to *ijtihaad* if a verse carried multiple possible meanings
    A. Since they varied in their knowledge, they would differ

III. Various scholars have offered different approaches to understanding the basis of the differences in *tafseer* among the *salaf*
    A. Ibn Taymiyyah's approach
        1. He divided their differences into two types:
            a) Contradictory
                (1) This is when their difference are irreconcilable
            b) Complimentary
                (1) This can be further subdivided into two types:
                    (a) When the meaning in one of the statements can be included in another's even though they are expressed differently
                    (b) When the meaning in one of the statements is different from another's but at the same time does not negate it. This can be subdivided into four types:
                        (i) When they all use a phrase which is different than others, thereby, indicating different meanings for the same verse/word
                        (ii) When they all use various forms of a general noun
                        (iii) The word [in a verse] having two possibilities so there is a disagreement which one of the following is intended:
                          (a) It is a homonym
                          (b) In essence, the meanings are in agreement
                        (iv) When their wording about the meaning of a word are close to each other even though they are not synonyms
    B. Ibn Juzayy's approach
        1. He divided the differences into three types:
            a) Difference in expression but agreement in meaning
            b) Difference in representation
            c) Difference in meaning
IV. We can divide the differences in meaning into two types:
    A. When the differences go back to the same meaning. This can be subdivided into four types:
        1. When the different statements are just considered examples for a general word
        2. When they discuss a word through part of its meaning but is not its only meaning
        3. When they discuss a word by what it necessitates
            a) Ex: the word 'loss' could necessitate 'destruction' and other things as well
        4. When they discuss a word by what is close to its meaning
    B. When the differences go back to multiple meanings. This can be subdivided into two types:
        1. When the different meanings are not contradictory
        2. When the different meanings are contradictory and cannot be reconciled
V. The differences should be treated by clarifying the following four items:
    A. Determining whether the difference is contradictory or complimentary

B. Studying to see whether there is a possibility of the verse carrying the different meanings mentioned in different statements
C. Mentioning the reasons for the differences
D. Giving preference to one opinion over another using certain principles if it necessitates it

Consensus in *Tafseer*

I. This means agreement of the Muslim *mufassirs* of an era over the meaning of a verse(s) from the Qur'an
    A. There is very little of this type of agreement among the *salaf*
II. The following *mufassirs* gave attention to mentioning consensus:
    A. Ibn Jareer al-Tabari
    B. Al-Wahidi
    C. Ibn Atiyyah
    D. Others as well
III. The *mufassirs* mention consensus because of the following reasons:
    A. There are multiple possible meanings but one of them has a consensus over it
    B. The *mufassir* wants to resolve the subject of dispute in the verse
    C. The *mufassir* wants to refute those opposing the consensus
    D. The *mufassir* uses it as evidence to give preference to an opinion about a verse
    E. There are other reasons as well
IV. Ibn Jareer al-Tabari would prefer a recitation style of a verse which gave a meaning conforming to the consensus understanding of it
V. If some of the *mufassirs* opposed the consensus in their *tafseer*, then it was because of the following reasons:
    A. They had a weak knowledge of the reports of the *salaf* and their agreements and are relying on an odd (شاذ) opinion
    B. They are relying on an invalid belief by adopting a meaning without taking the consensus of the *salaf* into consideration
    C. They are [solely] using an opinion which emerged after the consensus of the *salaf*
VI. Consensus in *tafseer* is of two types:
    A. Explicit consensus over the words and meaning
    B. Consensus over one meaning
        1. When the *mufassirs* differ in their expressions of it, then it is of two types:
            a) The meaning is expressed in closely related words
            b) They express a general meaning through various examples
VII. Creation of a new opinion in *tafseer* falls into three types:
    A. It fluctuates solely between certain [already existing] opinions
        1. In other words, there is not really any 'new' opinion in place
    B. Creation of a new meaning, using valid *tafseer* methodology, that does not contradict the opinions of the *salaf* in totality
        1. This is permitted
        2. It may include opposing some of their statements over others
    C. Creation of an opinion that contradicts the the opinions of the *salaf* in totality

1. This is not permitted

Rules of Doing Tafseer and Giving Preference to One Opinion Over Another

Rules of Tafseer

I. These are general rulings and standards which are used to arrive at the meanings of the Qur'an through correct knowledge

II. There are 11 linguistic rules mentioned by the author:

    A. It is not permitted to do *tafseer* of the Qur'an's words in a way that the Arabs did not talk about [i.e. it is not part of the language of the Arabs]

        1. This may be done either by:

            a) Inventing a linguistic meaning for a word in a way the Arabs did not talk about

            b) Equate the words of the Qur'an or its language to strange terms

                (1) Ex: giving the word ذرة in the Qur'an the meaning of 'atom' as used by physicists today

    B. The Qur'an only comes with the most eloquent way of expression

        1. This means the Qur'an is free of two things:

            a) Any expression that would not be considered eloquent to the Arabs

            b) An odd (شاذ) way of expression

    C. A nominal sentence indicates constancy

        1. Meaning it is unchanging and continues

    D. A verbal sentence indicates [temporary] occurrence and [constant] renewal

    E. If a future event is discussed using past tense verbs, then this is to ascertain its occurrence

        1. Meaning there is no doubt about it taking place

        2. Ex: some of the verses talk about the Day of Judgment in the past tense

    F. Whatever is left vague in the Qur'an, then there is no benefit in its details

        1. Ex: we are told that Adam and Hawwa ate from a tree but are not told what type of tree. The knowledge of this detail is not useful

    G. Omission of the details related to an action indicates generality in meaning

        1. Ex: we are told to be conscious of Allah (*taqwa*) in numerous verses but there are no details as to in which situations, thus, this entails we should be conscious of Him in all situations

    H. If a word has multiple valid linguistic meanings that are not contradictory, then it is permitted to do *tafseer* of that word with all of its possible meanings

        1. In this case, the multiple meanings would become complementary

    I. When there are multiple possible meanings for a word, then the chosen meaning must be possible in its mentioned context. Choosing a meaning just because it is linguistically valid alone does not suffice

    J. If a word has a linguistic meaning and an Islamically legal meaning, then the latter is given precedence by default

1. Ex: whenever the word *salah* is mentioned in the Qur'an, we will understand it to be the specific type of *salah* mandated on Muslims five times a day and will not understand it to mean supplication, which is its linguistic meaning
2. However, if there is some sort of indication suggesting that the linguistic meaning is the one that is intended, then it will be given precedence

K. Linguistic *tafseer* of the *salaf* is a proof that regulates the linguistic and *tafseer* discussions of others

Rules For Giving Preference to One Opinion Over Another

I. These are rules applied in all or majority of the situations, which a *mufassir* uses to give preference to one opinion over another in order to clarify the meaning of the Qur'an
II. Some of the scholars that wrote about these rules and used them include Ibn Jareer al-Tabari, Ibn Juzayy, and others
III. Some of these rules include:
   A. *Tafseer* of the Prophet (pbuh) is given precedence over all other opinions
   B. The default is to take the text as general and not specific unless there is evidence
      1. This means an opinion that gives a more general interpretation will be given precedence by default
   C. The opinion that is in agreement with the context [of the verse] is given precedence over others
   D. The popular meaning of a word in the language is given precedence over a less popular or odd (شاذ) meaning
      1. This means the opinion that incorporates the popular meaning of the word will be given precedence
   E. An opinion on which there is a consensus or it is the view of the majority will be given precedence over other opinions
   F. The *tafseer* that agrees with the sequence of the words in the verse is given precedence over others
   G. The pronoun, or whatever is in its place, refers to the last mentioned item by default
      1. Ex: if some said, "This is Bilal and this is Ahmad. This is his ball."
         a) The 'his' refers to Ahmad
      2. This means the opinion that points to the last mentioned item will be given precedence
   H. The opinion that makes all of the pronouns refer back to the same thing is given precedence than opinions that make the pronouns refer to different things, thereby, causing disruption
      1. Ex: if a verse has multiple pronouns mentioned within it, then it makes more sense that they are all referring to the same thing than to assume that some are referring to one thing while others are referring to something else