

# INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC STUDIES

## Lesson 4

# THE ABSENCE OF DISTORTION (TAHRIF)

- Prophet recited the Quran, thousands of companions memorized and recorded the Quran.
- No possibility of distortion because Quran became the main source for everyone in society. Every scholar, whether studying, history, literature, jurisprudence, philosophy, would refer to the Quran.
- Quran is mutawatir (widely transmitted in every generation)
  - Any hadith that is not mutawatir cannot stand against mutawatir
- The inimitability feature of the Quran (Ijaz). Any attempt to change, add or remove from its text would immediately cause a disharmony in its perfect eloquence and consistency.

قُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

- The Divine Guarantee of the preservation of the Quran

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

- Reliable narrations about the absolute authority of the Quran (Hadith Thaqaalayn)

# WHAT DOES DISTORTION (TAHRIF) MEAN? – TECHNICAL MEANINGS OF TAHRIF

- Tahrif in the meaning of a word or phrase
  - Has happened throughout Muslim history, reason we have different types of Tafisr..
  - Importance of accurate exegesis- From Ahlulbayt

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخْرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

- Variant readings (Qira'at) 7, 10, 14
  - Ayatollah Khoie states that there is one reading, the way Prophet recited
  - Differences in dialect and pronunciation
  - Substitution of a word. Abdullah ibn Masoud allowed it as long as the meaning did not change. (did exist in some variant copies, hence Uthman burned the variances) زخرف - ذهب

- The distortion that the Quran is protected from according to scholars is addition or removal of verses.
  - We have some narrations that state verses lost (Bukhari and Muslim)
  - Umar- Flogging verse. الشيخ والشيخة
  - Abu Musa al-Ashari- entire chapter as big as Surat alTowbah forgotten, within it the Quran talks about if Son of Adam had two valleys of gold, he would want a third. (hadith Qudsi)
  - Aisha- goat ate part of the Quran
  - Shia narrations as well
  - These narrations do not stand, Quran is Mutawatir, Ahlulbayt recited the Quran in the way it is today.

# ABROGATION (NASKH) IN THE QURAN

- Natural for every society to go through transformation. Our theological principles tell us that Gods knowledge does not change, so why the change in laws?

مَا نَنْسَخُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا

- Knowledge of God does not change, circumstances of society changes, therefore laws need to be changed at times.
- In order for society to grow, laws would come down gradually.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدِمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَجْوَاكُمْ صَدَقَةٌ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَطْهَرٌ فَإِن لَّمْ تَجِدُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ أَأَشْفَقْتُمْ أَن تَقْدُمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَجْوَاكُمْ صَدَقَاتٍ فَإِذْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَتَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

# DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE VERSES IN THE QURAN

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ

- Muhkam- Definite: Not open to dispute, decisive and must be followed
  - Can be understood without external support
  - Single obvious meaning
  - Discuss clear commands and prohibitions
  - Apparent exegesis and inner reality (taw'il) are the same
- Mutashabah-Indefinite: indistinguishable, ambiguous, unclear
  - Describe qualities, attributes, actions of God
  - Parables, metaphors, literal meaning not implied, have multiple meanings, true meaning understood only by God
  - Unconnected letters

## EXAMPLES OF INDEFINITE VERSES:

- Verses that suggest anthropomorphism: Attributing human characteristics to God
  - Eyes, hands, يد الله فوق ايدهم ، ولتصنع على عيني
  - Verses remain indefinite until they are referred to definite verse (شيء )
- Verses that mention the physical presence of God
  - وجاء ربك والملك صفا صفا
  - وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ (22) إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ
  - لا تدركه الابصار (definite)
- Danger of indefinite verses
- Why indefinite verses in the Quran?
  - Caters to vast audience
  - Human has intellect
  - Metaphors necessary to understand realities out of our existence
  - Refer to scholars (Prophet and Ahlulbayt)