

Introduction to Quranic Sciences

Lesson 5

Importance of Tafsir

- Major area of difference regarding the Quran is interpretation- Division after the prophet until today is not about the actual Quran, but rather the interpretation of the Quran.
- exegesis - critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture.
- exegete- an expounder or textual interpreter, especially of scripture. ((مفسر))
- روى النسائي في الخصائص بسنده عن أبي سعيد الخدري قال : كنا جلوسا ننتظر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فخرج إلينا قد انقطع شسع نعله ، فرمى به إلى علي رضي الله عنه ، فقال : إن منكم رجلا يقاتل الناس على تأويل القرآن ، كما قاتلت
- على تنزيله ، قال أبو بكر : أنا ، قال : لا ، قال عمر : أنا ، قال : لا ، ولكن خاصف النعل
- Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (Musnad and فضائل) , AlHakim AlNayshaburi (مستدرک)

What is Tafsir?

- 1- Fasar means explained - Go into detail - Interpret

• ولا يأتونك بمثل الا جئناك بالحق وأحسن تفسيرا

- And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the truth and the best explanation. (Quran 25:33)

- 2- Revealed- اسفر الصبح- سفرة المرأة عن وجهها

• هو العلم الباحث عن تبين دلالات الايات القرانية على مراد الله سبحانه

- The science of studying the Quranic verses to find the intended meaning of the verse-

- (not the meaning we assume or like to give to the verse)

• بدر الدين الزركشي (d.794 Hijri) البرهان في تفسير القرآن (- علم يعرف به فهم كتاب الله تعالى المنزل على نبيه محمد) ص) وبيان معانيه واستخراج احكامه وحكمه

Does the Quran need Tafsir?

- Widely accepted opinion amongst Muslims scholars is that the Quran needs to be interpreted. Cannot be understood without interpretation.

• وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

- And We revealed to you the message that you may **make clear** to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought (16:44) - verse doesn't say recite - there is a need to clarify.
- Perhaps not all of the verses require clarification, some are clear, however some do require it.
- Asbab alNuzul, Gradual revelation, ambiguous verses – All require interpretation

Does the Tafsir of the Quran contradict the clarity of the book?

• وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

- And We have certainly made the Qur'an easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember? (quran 54;22)
- Clarity here does not mean Quran does not require explanation, interpretation- but rather Quran does not use puzzling language like that of the soothsayers- gibbrish- non-sense-
- Quran uses clear Arabic language- easily understood.

Why are there several different Tafsirs?

- In the study of Tafsir, there are 3 major elements regarding the Tafsir of the Quran
- 1- The subject (موضوع)- of the science of Tafsir, Which is the noble Quran
- 2- The aim of the science of Tafsir, which is to explain and interpret the intended meaning of the verses
- 3- The method of Tafsir, which is the procedure selected to discover these concepts and objectives. (This is where we find varieties and differences)
- Tafsir alquran bil Quran
- Tafsir al Quran bil Hadeeth
- Tafsir al Quran bil Aql (theological, allusive)
- Tafsirl al quran bil Ray'

Tafsir al Quran bil Quran

- The first approach that emerged during the life of the Prophet (Exegesis of the Quran by the Quran)
- How can the Quran clarify everything else while it doesn't clarify itself. It is the Nur, it is the Bayan, Tibyan - Light is apparent in itself and it makes other things apparent.
- Prophet would explain verses and meanings of verses to people.

• الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

- Muslims worried, we all have done some type of dhulm (oppression), if not to others, to ourselves we do by sinning. Prophet replied, oppression here does not refer to any sin. It refers to idol worship - Shirk

• وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

- Ahlulbayt and Prophet engaged in this Tafsir (Imam Ali- 6 month minimum pregnancy)

(Narrative Exegesis)

- Referring to the hadith of the Prophet - Sunna of the Prophet.
- Developed over time. genres of Narrative Tafsir from the Sunni school of thought, and group from the Shia school of thought emerged.
- Prophet is first exegete of Quran

• ما اتاكم الرسول فخذوه

ما ينطق عن الهوى ان هو الا وحي ويحي

- Ibn Masud- Whenever we would memorize 10 verses of the Quran, we would not memorize anymore until we have understood the tafsir of those 10 verses.
- Problematic because many fabricated narrations
- -Problem is reliability. Many of the narrative books of Tafsir relied heavily on stories of Ahlulkitab. (Israilieyat)

Exegesis from Personal opinion-

- Exegesis derived from personal and collective opinions while ignoring the need for textual evidence or indicators (قراءن) or parameters ضوابط
- This tafsir is severely condemned, forbidden by RasulAllah and Ahlulbayt

• فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ
• ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ

New Methods of Tafsir

- Second Islamic century/Eighth century CE many greek and persian works were being translated into Arabic and entering the Muslim public sphere. As a result, Muslims were being influenced by new sciences and studies, philosophical views. This gave rise to new methods and approaches towards understanding the Quran.
- Theological Exegesis- In the study of Kalam - Theology- different opinions emerged. Pre-destination vs. Free will.
 - Asharites and the Mutazilites. As a result of different philosophical and theological views. They began to interpret the Quran based on ideologies and beliefs.
- Jurisprudential Exegesis In the study of jurisprudence- Fiqh- same thing happened. Exegesis genres were emerging discussing the legal verses in the Quran. آيات الاحكام.
- Allusive exegesis تفسير بالإشارة - introduced by mystic and gnostic , had their own particular approaches.
- 3rd Islamic century/9th century.
 - Finding hidden meanings in the Quran. Suffi Tafseer - تأويل
 - Ibn Arabi- Ghazali

Important to take Quranic interpretation from authentic sources

- Some of the qualifications of a successful Quranic exegesis scholar include knowing the following: Arabic grammar, vocabulary, Tafsir al-Quran bil Quran, Keeping verses grouped together, occasions of revelation, reference back to correct Hadith.