

An Introduction to the Science of Tafsir (exege- sis)

An Introduction to the Science of Tafsir (exegesis)

- literal meaning of *tafsir*In Arabic language is to open or to **explain**, **interpret** or **comment**.
- Technically, the science of *tafsir* is a **branch of knowledge** in which the **meanings of the Quran** are **explained** and its **injunctions** and **wisdoms** are described openly and clearly (*al-Burhan*).

An Introduction to the Science of Tafsir (exegesis)

Continued

- Addressing the Holy Prophet, the Glorious Quran says:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (النحل ٣٣)

- We revealed the Quran to you so that you **explain** to the **people** what has been **sent down to them** that they ***might give thought***. (16:44)

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (آل عمران 164)

- Certainly did Allah confer [great] favor upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom,

An Introduction to the Science of Tafsir (exegesis)

Continued

- The Prophet ﷺ not only thought the words of Quran but also **explained** it in detail.
- That's why; Some of the companions devoted years in learning a single surah.
- In the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ faced no difficulty in its explanation.
- But after his departure from the world, it became necessary to preserve ***tafseer*** as the ***permanent branch*** of knowledge...

Sources of *Tafseer* (exegesis)

- The sources of *Quranic exegesis* are *six*:

- 1: *The Glorious Quran*:

The first source of the knowledge of *tafsir* is the *Quran* itself.

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

- “Guide us on the straight path, the path of those on whom You have blessed-

Sources of *Tafseer* (exegesis)

Continued

• فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا ط

- And whoever obeys **Allah** and the **Messenger** - those will be with the ones upon whom **Allah has bestowed favor** of the **prophets**, the **steadfast affirmers of truth**, the **martyrs** and the **righteous**. And excellent are those as companions.

Sources of *Tafseer*(exegesis)

Continued

2. Hadith

- The words and the deeds of the Holy Prophet (upon him blessings and peace) are called hadith

3. Reports of the Sahaba:

4. Narrations of the Successors:

5. The Arabic Language:

6. Deliberation and Deduction

The Rules of Reporting

Israelite reports (Judaica) (اسرائیلی روایات)

- Judaica, or *Isra'iliyyat*, are narratives that have reached us through Jewish and Christian tradition.
- Early commentators used to preserve all sorts of narrations which reached them from identifiable sources.
- Some Companions and their Successors first belonged to the religions of the People of the Book.
- Sometimes they would relate the stories or events they would have listened to their books.

Kinds of Israelite

- Israelite is of *three* kinds:
 1. Narrations *the truth of* which is proved from evidences in the **Quran** and **Sunnah**. For example, the drowning of **Pharaoh** and the **ascent of Sayyiduna Musa** (upon him be peace) onto Mount Tur (Sinai).

Kinds of Israelite

continued

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2. Narrations the ***falsity*** of which is proved from ***evidences in the Quran and Sunnah***. For example, it appears in Judaic narrations that ***Sayyiduna Sulayman*** (upon him be peace) had become (God forbid) an apostate in his later years. Its refutation is clearly given in the Quran, where it is said, ***وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمٰنُ وَلٰكِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ كَفَرٰ*** “It was not Sulayman who became an infidel, but the devils did become infidels.” (2:102)
- In Judaic narrations, Sulayman (A.S) is ***blamed to have killed*** his general “Uriah” and then got married with his wife....It is entirely false.

Kinds of Israelite

continued

- 3. Narrations regarding which the **Quran**, the **Sunnah**, and the **Shar'iah** are silent. In regards to such narrations, the prophetic teaching is to observe silence and neither confirm nor falsify.
- **Hafiz Ibn Kathir** has given a decisive ruling that reporting them is permissible but doing so is **useless** because they cannot be taken to be authentic. (*Muqaddamah Tafsir Ibn Kathir*)

Misconceptions about *Tafsir*

- *tafsir* (exegesis or interpretation) of the Quran is an extremely delicate and difficult undertaking.
- *knowledge* of the Arabic language alone is not sufficient.
- Expertise in all related branches of knowledge required.
- An engineer without studying engineering?
- Or a Doctor without study medical?

Misconceptions about *Tafsir*

continued

• ولقد يسرنا القرآن للدكر

- “And surely We have made the Quran easy for the sake of good counsel.”
- Actually the verses of the Quran are of **two kinds**.
 1. verses that offer general good counsel, relate lesson-oriented events, and introduce subjects dealing with taking of warning and acting on sound advice

Misconceptions about *Tafsir*

continued

2. Other kind of verses consists of those which include injunctions, laws, articles of faith, and intellectual topics.
- ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) spent a full eight years memorizing Surat al-Baqarah.
 - Sayyiduna Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), says that “the one amongst us who would learn Surat al-Baqarah and Surat Aal ‘Imran would have his status enormously elevated.”

Misconceptions about *Tafsir*

continued

- من قال في القرآن بغير علم فليتبوأ مقعده من النار

Whoever says anything about the Quran without knowledge, he should make his abode in Hell. (*Abu Dawud*, from *al-Itqan* 2:179)

- من تكلم في القرآن برايه فأصاب فقد اخطأ
- Whoever speaks about the Quran on the basis of his opinion, even if says something true he has still made a mistake. (*Abu Dawud*, *Nasa'i*)

Famous Commentaries of the Holy Quran

- ***Tafsir Ibn Jarir***: The real name of this *tafsir* is *Jami' al-Bayan* and it was compiled by 'Allamah Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (died 310 AH).
- 'Allamah Tabari was a highly rated **commentator**, *muhaddith* (**hadith expert**), and historian. It is said that he continued to write for forty years continuously and would write forty pages every day. (*al-Bidayah wa 'l-Nihayah* 11:145).

Famous Commentaries of the Holy Quran

continued

- ***Tafsir Ibn Kathir***: Hafiz 'Imad al-din Abu 'l-Fida' Isma'il ibn Kathir al-Dimashqi al-Shafi'i (died 774 AH), a distinguished research scholar of the **eighth century**, is the author of this commentary.
- In this commentary, emphasis has been laid on **explanatory hadiths**. A special feature is his criticism as a hadith expert on different narrations, and from this point of view his book holds a distinct place among all books of *tafsir*.

Famous Commentaries of the Holy Quran

continued

- ***Tafsir al-Qurtubi***: Its full name is *al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*. It was written by the famous learned writer and research scholar of Andalusia (Spain), Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Abi Bakr ibn Farah al-Qurtubi (died 671 AH).
- He was a follower of the Maliki school of *fiqh* and was renowned for his worship and piety.
- The basic objective of this book was to deduce juristic injunctions and rulings from the Quran.

Famous Commentaries of the Holy Quran

continued

- ***Al-Tafsir al-Kabir***. This is the work of **Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi** (died 606 AH). Its real name is *Mafatih al-Ghayb* but is popularly known as *al-Tafsir al-Kabir*.
- Therefore, great emphasis has been laid in his *tafsir* on rational and scholastic debates and on the refutation of false sects.
- The truth is that his *tafsir* is a unique key to the Quran. The refreshing manner in which the meanings of the Quran have been clarified and the mutual link of the Quranic verses established is all too praiseworthy.

Famous Commentaries of the Holy Quran

continued

- ***Ruh al-Ma'ani***: The full name of this *tafsir* is *Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim wa 'l-Sab' al-Mathani* and it was written by 'Allamah Mahmud al-Alusi (died 1270 AH), the famous scholar of the last Period of Baghdad.