



Preview Version

ALKAUTHAR
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WEEKEND
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—TAFSEER—
SURAH
TAHA
THE CHRONICLES OF MOSES





—TAFSEER—
**SURAH
TAHA**

The Chronicles of Mūsā ﷺ

Taught by
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Course objectives

1. An appreciation of the science of *tafsīr*.
2. An appreciation of the commentators and their works: Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿaẓīm* and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*.
3. An understanding of *Sūrat ṬāHā*, its general meaning and the lessons contained within it.
4. Importance of understanding, contemplating over and attaching oneself to the Qur'an

What is tafsīr?

Definition	<p>The word <i>tafsīr</i> originates from the root <i>fa-sa-ra</i> meaning ‘to reveal that which is covered or hidden’.</p> <p>Linguistically, <i>tafsīr</i> is ‘to explain or interpret something’.</p> <p>Technically, <i>tafsīr</i> is ‘to explain and interpret the Qur’an’ and a <i>tafsīr</i> of the Qur’an is an exegesis of it.</p>
Ruling	<p>To study <i>tafsīr</i> is obligatory due to the statement of Allah, <i>Will they not then contemplate the Qur’an? Or are there locks upon their hearts?</i> (Q. 47:24)</p> <p>‘Contemplation’ here means to reflect and consider the words of Allah in order to understand their meanings. Allah is criticising those who do not contemplate the Qur’an and says this is due to their hearts having locks upon them.</p> <p>The early Muslims would learn the meaning as well as the wording of the Qur’an and would thus be able to act by the Qur’an in accordance with the intent of Allah.</p> <p>Proof: Abū ‘Ubaydah al-Sulamī said that those who taught him the Qur’an, such as ‘Uthmān and ‘Abd Allah b. Mas‘ūd, told him that when they would learn ten <i>āyāt</i> from the Prophet they would not increase upon these until they had learnt the knowledge and action contained in those <i>āyāt</i>. They said, ‘So we learnt the Qur’an, knowledge and action together.’</p>

? What is the definition of Qur’an?

Abū Hurayrah reported the Prophet said, ‘Never do a group of people gather together in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and pondering over it, except that peace descends upon them, and mercy surrounds them, and the angels encircle them, and Allah remembers them in His gathering’ (Abū Dāwūd).

Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘general custom prevents a person from reading a book in whatever discipline – be it medicine or mathematics etc. – except that he seeks to understand it. Then what of the Speech of Allah upon which depends his salvation and eternal happiness?’

Types of tafsīr

1. *Tafsīr bi’l-ma’thūr* (*tafsīr* based mainly on ‘transmitted sources of Islam’)
2. *Tafsīr bi’l-ra’y* (*tafsīr* based on personal opinion)
3. *Tafsīr al-fuqahā’* (*tafsīr* of the jurists)
4. *Tafsīr al-‘ilmī* (Scientific *tafsīr*)
5. *Tafsīr al-ishārī* (Interpretive *tafsīr*)
6. Modern *tafsīr*.

Sources of tafsīr bi'l-ma'thūr

The Qur'an, Sunnah and statements of the Ṣaḥābah and Ṭābi'ūn:

The science of *tafsīr* is based on well-grounded, systematic principles derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah and statements of the Companions. Al-Suyūṭī summarised them as follows:

The scholars have said: Whoever wishes to interpret the Qur'an, he should first turn to the Qur'an itself. This is because what has been narrated succinctly in one place might be expounded upon in another place, and what is summarised in one place may be explained in another.


If he has done that, then he turns to the Sunnah, for it is the explainer of the Qur'an and a clarifier to it. Imām al-Shāfi'ī said: All that the Prophet said is based on his understanding of the Qur'an.

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنْ
الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ...

Verily, We have revealed to you the Book, in truth, so that you may judge between mankind by that which Allah has shown you (Sūrat al-Mā'idah, 5:48).

And the Prophet said, 'Indeed, I have been given the Qur'an, and something similar to it,' meaning by it 'the Sunnah'.

If he does not find it (the *tafsīr*) in the Sunnah, he turns to the statements of the Companions, for they are the most knowledgeable with regards to it, as they witnessed the circumstances and situations the Qur'an was revealed in, and they were blessed with complete understanding, and true knowledge, and pious actions.

 *Tafsīr* has many sources, the sciences of the Qur'an list the following among them:

1. *tafsīr* of the Qur'an by the Qur'an
2. *tafsīr* via the Sunnah
3. *tafsīr* via statements of the Companions and Ṭābi'ūn
4. *tafsīr* via the linguistic make up of a verse / group of verses.
5. *tafsīr* by pre-Islamic Arab customs
6. *tafsīr* via the *isrā'īliyyāt* (Judaean-Christian narratives)
7. *tafsīr* via subjective opinion (*ra'y*)

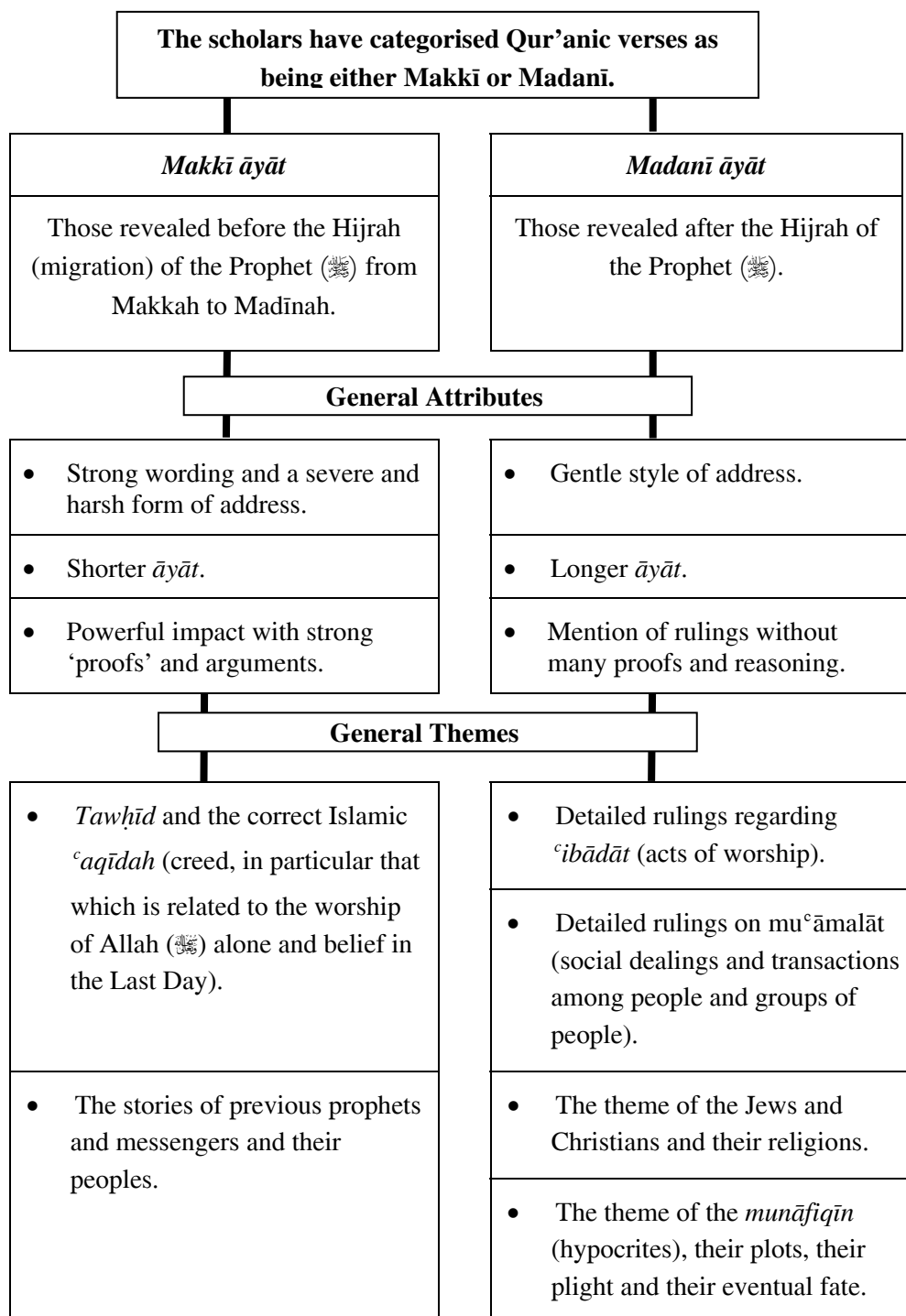
<p>Tafsīr of some part of the Qur'an via another</p>	<p><i>The path of those whom you have favoured... (Q. 1:7). As for those are the 'favoured' ones is understood from Q. 4:69: And whosoever obeys Allah and His messenger will be in the company of those whom Allah has favoured, from amongst the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the pious.</i></p> <p>Also, Q. 10:62: No doubt! Verily, the <i>awliyā'</i> of Allah, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. Allah explains who the <i>awliyā'</i> of Allah are those who have had faith and have fear of Allah (Q. 10:63).</p> <p>And, And what will make you know what <i>al-ṭāriq</i> is in Q. 86:2 is explained in [it is] the star of piercing</p>
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	<i>brightness.</i>
Tafsīr of the Qur'an by the Sunnah	<p>The statements of the Prophet explain the Qur'an that is because he is conveying from Allah and he is the most knowledgeable of Allah's book among mankind.</p> <p><i>For those who have done good is the best [reward] and more (Q. 10:26). The 'best' [reward] is paradise and what is more according to the Prophet refers to the beatific vision of Allah.</i></p> <p><i>And be prepared against them all you can of power (Q. 8:60) which the Prophet explained as an instruction to learn archery.</i></p>
Tafsīr of the Qur'an by the statements of the Ṣaḥābah	<p>The Companions of the Prophet were witnesses to revelation and the Qur'an was revealed in their language [idiom]. Also, after the prophets they are the most truthful of people; in fact the Qur'an tells us <i>Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him.</i></p> <p><i>And if you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you comes home after answering the call of nature, or you have touched women... (Q. 4:43), Ibn ʿAbbās said 'touching' / 'being in contact with' here means 'sexual intimacy'.</i></p>
Tafsīr of the Qur'an via statements of the Tābi'ūn.	<p>The term refers to the second generation of Islam (after the Ṣaḥābah) who followed them in truthfulness and piety. Moreover, the Arabic language witnessed no significant changes in their era.</p> <p>Ibn Taymiyyah said, 'If they [the <i>tābi'ūn</i>] all agree on something, there is no doubt that it acts as evidence. But if they differ, the statement of one of them is not a proof against the statement of the other, nor against the statement of someone at a later time...' He also said, 'whoever turns away from the positions of the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'ūn and their <i>tafsīr</i> has erred.'</p>

Some of the famous Ṣaḥābah renowned for their *tafsīr* included:

- (a) ʿAlī
- (b) ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd
- (c) ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās.

Classification of revelation: Makkī/ Madanī



Source books

Note on Qur'an translations cited:

The course notes offer a slightly adapted version of M.A.S. Abdel Haleem's translation in the main section, Part I, and the *Sahih International* and Muhsin Khan–al-Hilali translations, along with the commentary, in Part II.

M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an – English Translation and Parallel Arabic Text, Translated with an Introduction and Notes by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem*. Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Sahih International Translation. First published in 1997 and translated by Amatullah J. Bantley, Umm Muḥammad, Aminah Assami and Mary M. Kennedy.

The *Noble Qur'an*, also known as 'the Hilali-Khan translation', has been translated by contemporary Pakistani Dr Muḥammad Muhsin Khan and Dr Muḥammad Taqī-ud-Dīn al-Hilali, and was granted a seal of approval from the University of Medina and the Saudi Dar al-Ifta. It was sponsored by the Saudi government and distributed freely and widely, proving popular and is currently the most widely disseminated English translation of the Qur'an in Islamic bookstores and Sunnī mosques throughout the English-speaking world.

Tafsīr: Source books

In this course we will study *Sūrat ṬāHā*, and the story of Mūsā via it, with the help of two works:

1. Darussalam's 'Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr (Abridged)' English translation of Shaykh Safiur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri's abridged edition of Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿaẓīm* published under the title of *al-Miṣbāḥ al-munīr fī-tahdhīb tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 10 volumes (Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers and Distributors, 2000). 'The Tafsīr of Sūrah Ṭā Ha (Chapter 20)', vol. 6, pp. 320–421.
2. Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute of Islamic Thought's English translation of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, translated by Feras Hamza, edited and introduced by Ghazi bin Muḥammad bin Talal (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), electronic Pdf available via http://www.atafsir.com/Books/Al_Jalalain_Eng.pdf.

Note: all cited material has been copy-edited for the purposes of our study.

The commentators

°Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl b. °Umar b. Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-°aẓīm li-Ibn Kathīr*:



Shuhra: 'famously known as'.

Full name	<p>[Imām] Abū'l-Fiḍā° °Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl b. °Umar b. Kathīr al-Buṣrawī al-Dimashqī al-Qurashī.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name: °Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl - Father's name: °Umar - Grandfather's name: Kathīr al-Qurashī - Kunya: Abū'l-Fiḍā° - Shuhra: Ibn Kathīr - Buṣrawī: from Buṣra by birth and origin. - Dimashqī: educated, instructed and resided in Damascus.
Birth/death date	c. 701/1300 – Sha°bān 774/February 1373
Domicile	Damascus, from age five until his death.
Short biographical sketch	<p>He is the respected Imām Ibn Kathīr – Abū'l-Fiḍā° °Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl b. °Umar b. Kathīr al-Qurashī al-Buṣrawī al-Dimashqī – one of the best-known historians and traditionists of Syria during the Baḥrī Mamlūk dynasty.</p> <p>Ibn Kathīr was born in the city of Buṣra in 701/1300. His father was the village <i>khaṭīb</i> (imām and preacher of the congregational Friday prayer), but he died while Ibn Kathīr was only four years old. After his father's demise Ibn Kathīr's brother, Shaykh °Abd al-Wahhāb, undertook his upbringing and education until their move to Damascus in 706/1306 when Ibn Kathīr was five years old.</p> <p>Ibn Kathīr studied <i>fiqh</i>, <i>ḥadīth</i>, <i>tafsīr</i>, <i>°ulūm al-Qur'ān</i> and other branches of the Islamic sciences; he was a renowned jurist and instructor as well as a prolific writer.</p>
Teachers	<p>Ibn Kathīr was one of the most famous scholars of his time, having studied under Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Mizzī among other notable scholars of his time.</p> <p><u><i>Fiqh</i> (Islamic jurisprudence)</u></p> <p>Ibn Kathīr studied <i>fiqh</i> under, the <i>shāfi'ī</i> imām, Burhān</p>

	<p>al-Dīn, Ibrāhīm b. °Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fazārī, known as Ibn al-Firkāh. He was also strongly influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) and his school.</p> <p><u>Hadīth</u></p> <p>Ibn Kathīr heard <i>aḥādīth</i> from °Isā b. al-Mut°im, Ibn al-Shahnah Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭālib, Ibn al-Ḥajar, Bahā° al-Dīn al-Qāsim b. Muẓaffar b. °Asākir, and Ibn al-Shirdzi, °Afīf al-Dīn Ishāq b. Yaḥyā al-Āmmuddi and Muḥammad b. Zarrād. He was son-in-law to Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf b. al-Zakīy al-Dīn al-Mizzī, one of the renowned traditionists of al-Shām.</p> <p>Ibn Kathīr also studied under Shaykh al-Islām Taqiyy al-Dīn Aḥmad b. °Abd al-Ḥalīm b. °Abd al-Salām b. Taymiyyah.</p> <p><u>Tārīkh (history)</u></p> <p>His teachers included Imām Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī, the historian Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. °Uthmān b. Qaymaz al-Dhahabī, Abū Mūsā al-Qarafai, Abū°l-Faṭḥ al-Dabbusi and °Alī b. °Umar al-Suwayni and others, all of whom gave him permission to transmit the knowledge he learned under them in Egypt.</p>
Contemporary accounts	<p>Further, in <i>al-Durar al-kāmina fī a°yān al-mi°a al-thamina</i>, al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajr al-°Asqalānī said, ‘Ibn Kathīr worked on the subject of <i>ḥadīth</i> in the areas of texts and chains of narrators. He had a good memory, his books became popular during his lifetime, and people benefited from them after his death.’</p> <p>Also, the renowned historian Abū°l-Maḥāsin Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Sayf al-Dīn, said in his book, <i>al-Manhal al-Safī</i>, ‘He is the Shaykh, the Imam, the great scholar °Imād al-Dīn Abū°l-Fiḍā°. He learned extensively and was very active in collecting knowledge and writing. He was excellent in the areas of <i>fiqh</i>, <i>tafsīr</i> and <i>ḥadīth</i>. He collected knowledge, authored books, taught, narrated Hadith and wrote. He had immense knowledge in the fields of <i>ḥadīth</i>, <i>tafsīr</i>, <i>fiqh</i>, the Arabic language, and so forth. He gave <i>fatāwā</i> (religious verdicts) and taught until he died, may Allah grant him mercy. He was known for his precision and vast knowledge, and as a scholar of history, <i>ḥadīth</i> and <i>tafsīr</i>.’</p>
Students	<p>Ibn Ḥājji was one of Ibn Kathīr’s students, and he</p>



Of him al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī wrote, in his book *al-Mu°jam al-Mukhtaṣṣ*, that Ibn Kathīr was ‘the Imām’ of jurisprudence, a skilful scholar of *ḥadīth*, a renowned *faqīh* and a *mufasssīr* who authored several beneficial books.’

	<p>described Ibn Kathīr: ‘He had the best memory of the <i>ḥadīth</i> texts. He also had the most knowledge concerning the narrators and authenticity, his contemporaries and teachers admitted to these qualities. Every time I met him I gained some benefit from him.’</p> <p>Also, Ibn al-‘Imād al-Ḥanbalī (1032–89/1623–79) said in his book, <i>Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab</i>, ‘He is the renowned Ḥāfiz ‘Imād al-Dīn, whose memory was excellent, whose forgetfulness was miniscule, whose understanding was adequate, and who had good knowledge in the Arabic language.’</p> <p>Also, Ibn Ḥabīb said about Ibn Kathīr, ‘He heard knowledge and collected it and wrote various books. He comforted ones’ ears with his <i>fatāwā</i> and narrated <i>ḥadīth</i> and brought benefit to other people. The papers that contained his <i>fatāwā</i> were transmitted to the various provinces. Furthermore, he was known for his precision and his encompassing knowledge.’</p>
Works	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One of the greatest books that Ibn Kathīr wrote was his <i>tafsīr</i> (<i>Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm</i>), which is one of the best <i>tafsīr</i> works of the ‘<i>tafsīr bi’l-Qur’ān wa’l-ḥadīth</i>’ category, relying on narrations [of <i>aḥādīth</i>, the <i>tafsīr</i> of the Companions, or the like]. This work has been printed numerous times and many scholars have abridged it. 2. His book on History, <i>al-Bidāyah wa’l-nihāyah</i>, printed in 14 volumes, contains the stories of the prophets and previous nations, the Prophet Muḥammad’s <i>sīrah</i> and Islamic history to his own era. He also authored an additional historical work entitled <i>al-Fitan</i> on the signs of the Last Hour. 3. <i>Al-Takmil fī ma‘rifat al-thiqat wa’l-ḍu‘afah wa’l-majhūl</i> (‘the complete [work] regarding the strong, weak and unknown narrators [of <i>ḥadīth</i>]’) which Ibn Kathīr authored on the basis of the works of his teachers Shaykhs al-Mizzī and al-Dhahabī. He added several benefits regarding the subject of <i>al-jarḥ wa-ta‘dīl</i>. 4. <i>Al-Hādī wa’l-sunan fī aḥādīth al-Masānīd wa’l-Sunan</i>, also known as <i>Jāmil al-masānīd wa’l-sunan al-hādī li-aqwam sunan</i> (‘the comprehensive collection of <i>masānīd</i> and <i>sunan</i>

	<p>which guides to the most precious sunan’). In this book, Ibn Kathīr collected the narrations of Imāms Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Bazzār, Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, Ibn Abī Shaybah and from the six collections of <i>ḥadīth</i>: Ṣaḥīḥayn [al-Bukhārī and Muslim] and the Four Sunan [Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasaʿī and Ibn Mājah]. Ibn Kathīr divided this book according to areas of <i>fiqh</i>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah, which also contains the virtues of Imām al-Shāfiʿī. 6. Ibn Kathīr wrote references for the aḥādīth of <i>Adillat al-tanbīh</i>, from the Shāfiʿī school of <i>fiqh</i>. 7. Ibn Kathīr began an explanation of <i>Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī</i>, but he did not finish it. 8. He started writing a large volume on the Aḥkām (Laws), but finished only up to the Ḥajj rituals. 9. He summarised al-Bayhaqī’s <i>al-Madkhal</i>. 10. He summarised Abū ʿAmr b. al-Ṣalāḥ’s <i>ʿUlūm al-ḥadīth</i> and called it <i>Mukhtaṣar ʿulūm al-ḥadīth</i>. Shaykh Aḥmad Shākir, the Egyptian <i>muḥaddith</i>, printed this book along with his commentary on it and called it <i>al-Baḥth al-ḥadīth fī sharḥ mukhtaṣar ʿulūm al-Ḥadīth</i>. 11. <i>Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah</i>, which is contained in his book <i>al-Bidāyah</i>, and both of these books are in print.
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Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* – Translated by Feras Hamza

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī

Full name	<p>Abū °Alī Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Maḥallī al-Anṣārī al-Shāfi°ī.</p> <p>- Laqab: Jalāl al-Dīn</p> <p>- Name: Muḥammad</p> <p>- Father's name: Aḥmad</p> <p>- Grandfather's name: Muḥammad</p> <p>- Kunya: Abū °Alī</p> <p>- Shuhra: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī</p> <p>- Lineage: al-Anṣārī</p> <p>- al-Shāfi°ī: his <i>madhhab</i>.</p>
Birth/death date	b. 791/1352– d. 864/1459
Domicile	Cairo, Egypt
Short biographical sketch	<p>Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī, an Egyptian scholar, is known above all as co-author of the famous Qur'an commentary <i>Tafsīr al-Jalālayn</i> ('Tafsīr [by the] two Jalāls') with the famous Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, his pupil.</p> <p>Al-Maḥallī, who earned his living as a trader, was said to have an acute intelligence that could 'pierce a diamond' and a morality so strict and rigorous that he condemned abuse of any kind and refused the office of chief <i>qāḍī</i> when it was offered to him.</p> <p>He taught <i>fiqh</i> in the Mu'ayyadiyya and Barqūqiyya <i>madrasas</i> and was well versed in <i>kalām</i>, grammar, logic and <i>uṣūl</i> etc., knowledge that he utilised in numerous works authored by him, including his commentary in <i>Tafsīr al-Jalālayn</i>. Of his works a number have survived in manuscript format – having been successfully received in scholarly circles of his time – <i>Tafsīr al-Jalālayn</i> alone remains extant however.</p>
Works	<p><i>Tafsīr al-Jalālayn</i> – which remains extant to this day.</p> <p>Surviving manuscripts include:</p> <p>- <i>Al-Badr al-ṭālī° fī ḥall jam° al-jawāhir</i> – a commentary on the <i>Jam°</i> of al-Subkī.</p>

✚ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī relates that Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī's commentary covered *Sūrat al-Kahf* (Q. 18) – *Sūrat al-Nās* (Q. 114) as well as *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* (Q. 1) and a few verses of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (Q. 2) (Ch. Pellat, art. 'al-Maḥallī' in EI2 (Brill: online edition).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Baghdād journal <i>al-Mawrid</i>, i/1–3, 212, iii/1, 229, iii/3, 287, v/2, 214; this <i>sharḥ</i> was itself made the subject of glosses by al-Wallālī and al-Laḡānī. - Also his commentary on the <i>Burda</i> of al-Būṣīrī - And a <i>commentary</i> on <i>al-Waraqāt fī uṣūl al-dīn</i> by al-Juwaynī.
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Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī

Full name	<p>Jalāl al-Dīn Abū'l-Faḍl °Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Khuḍayrī al-Suyūṭī.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name: °Abd al-Raḥmān - Father's name: Abū Bakr - Grandfather's name: Muḥammad - Kunya: Abū'l-Faḍl - Shuhra???: Jalāl al-Dīn - Nisbah: 'al-Suyūṭī' referring to the town of Asyut, South of Cairo, and 'al-Khuḍayrī' referring to al-Khuḍayriyya quarter in Baghdad
Birth/death date	b. 849/1445–d. 911/1505
Domicile	Cairo, Egypt
Short biographical sketch	<p>Al-Suyūṭī is one of the most celebrated religious scholars of pre-modern Islam, and definitely the most prolific of them all. He wrote on every conceivable topic, except for philosophy and science – it is said that he authored close to 1,000 works ranging from short pamphlets to multi-volume encyclopaedias – thus making a fundamental contribution to the dissemination and solidification of Sunnī religious thought and worldview.</p> <p>Of Persian origin from his father's side, his family engaged in important religious and administrative duties in Asyūt, where they settled in the Mamlūk period. Al-Suyūṭī was born in Cairo, where his father completed his education and specialised in Islamic law, particularly in Shāfi'ī <i>fiqh</i>, and was adjunct judge and professor of Shāfi'ī law at the Shaykhū mosque and preacher at the Ibn Ṭulūn mosque. His father died in 1451 and al-Suyūṭī was then under the care of a number of guardians, some of whom were his father's former students.</p>

	<p>Al-Suyūṭī commenced his formal education with Qur'an memorisation which he completed by age eight. He then attended seminars on Arabic language, grammar, and literature as well as a variety of religious topics – <i>fiqh</i>, <i>ḥadīth</i>, <i>tafsīr</i>, <i>ʿaqīdah</i>, and so forth – with some of the well-known scholars of his time, including chief judge ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī (d. 1464), Sharaf al-Dīn al-Munāwī (d. 1467) and Ibn Quṭlūbughā al-Ḥanafī (d. 1477). He specialised in <i>ḥadīth</i>, <i>fiqh</i>, <i>tafsīr</i> and grammar.</p> <p>Al-Suyūṭī started his teaching career when he was only 18 being given his deceased father's post as professor of Shāfiʿī fiqh at the Shaykhū mosque. As his fame grew, he received other notable tenses in some major madrasas in Cairo. He was a prolific writer, such that there is no subject relating to history, religion, or language that he did not write on. His literary output granted him celebrity status and his works were popular not only in Egypt but also in North and West Africa, Syria, Arabia and as far east as India.</p>
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Tafāsīr

Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm

Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm* is commonly considered second only to al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr*. As an exegetical reference work it is easier to read than al-Ṭabarī's as Ibn Kathīr summarises the various opinions quoted by the former, usually only offering the strongest opinion. Ibn Kathīr offers commentary on the authenticity of narrations referenced within the work, though he sometimes resorts to providing the full *isnād* without comment. His language is simple and any reference to alternative *qirāʾāt* or Qurʾanic grammar is occasional and brief. As such this work is ideal for 'the beginning student of knowledge since it discusses and interprets the verses in sufficient detail to benefit from, without going into extreme details that might bore the reader. Ibn Kathīr successfully summarises the essence of the various interpretations based on *tafsīr bi'l-maʾthūr*, occasionally incorporating other elements of interpretation into his work.

One of the criticisms of this work is that Ibn Kathīr cites the *isrāʾīliyyāt*, which have no [legal] value. His own justification for including this material is offered as '... and it seems this story is taken from the *Isrāʾīliyyāt*, and therefore it is permitted to cite these, but not to believe in them or reject them. They cannot be relied upon except when they conform with the truth, and Allah knows best.'

Tafsīr al-Jalālayn

Tafsīr al-Jalālayn (lit. 'The *tafsīr* of the two Jalāls', namely the Shāfiʿī Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maḥallī (d. 864 / 1459) and the Egyptian ʿālim and polymath Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 / 1505)) is a fifteenth-century Qurʾan commentary and one of the most popular *tafsīrs* in the Islamic world. It has been printed in numerous different editions and enjoys a well-loved and respected status.

Of the great classical Sunnī 'Orthodox' *tafsīrs*, what might be called the 'unofficial Sunnī canon' of *tafsīr* – namely, the *tafāsīr* of al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Bayḍāwī, Ibn Kathīr and *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* – *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* is by far the shortest and easiest to read and understand. Consequently, it is invariably read as an introduction to classical *tafsīr*, such that for many believers and elementary students of the Qurʾan / Islam it is the only *tafsīr* they gain true familiarity with. Being ubiquitous in print within the Islamic world, and its concise nature and accessibility of language, make it appropriate for habitual instant referencing of the Qurʾan and its vocabulary.

This is primarily of the *tafsīr bi'l-maʾthūr* (*tafsīr* by way of narrations from the Prophet, his companions and the generation succeeding them) category, though it contains elements of linguistic, and Judaeo-Christian exegesis etc. also.

The *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* is primarily of the *tafsīr bi'l-raʾy* (*tafsīr* by way of personal opinions) category though it contains elements of *maʾthūr*, linguistic and Judaeo-Christian exegesis etc. also.

Summary outline of Sūrat TāHā, Q. 20

Sūrat TāHā, Q. 20, divides naturally into the following segments:

Āyāt 1–8	Introduce the <i>sūrah</i> , which commences with the Qur'an, its function and high origin – <i>A revelation from the One who created the earth and the high heavens.</i>
Āyāt 9–48	9–16 Mūsā's 'Divine encounter' in the valley of Ṭuwā and prophet-hood. 17–35 Mūsā's proofs of prophecy, signs and mission 36–44 Reminder of the favours with which he was graced, including the inspiration to his mother which saved his life and allowed him to be brought up in Pharaoh's household, his escape from Pharaoh's army after his killing of a copt, his sojourn in Madyan, his subsequent prophecy and his being granted prophethood for his brother. 45–8 Mūsā and Hārūn's mission to give <i>da'wah</i> to Pharaoh
Āyāt 49–73	49–55 Mūsā and Hārūn's exchange with Pharaoh 56–9 Pharaoh ridicules and challenges Mūsā 60–9 'Duel' between Mūsā and Pharaoh's sorcerers. 70–3 Sorcerers testify their belief in the One God and face Pharaoh's wrath and punishment
Āyāt 74–6	Fate in the afterlife of evildoers vs. righteous
Āyāt 77–9	Mūsā and Banī Isrā'īl's delivery from Pharaoh and Pharaoh's end
Āyāt 80–98	Allah's favour upon the Banī Isrā'īl Banī Isrā'īl's being tested via Sāmiriyy's fashioning of the golden cow Mūsā's return and consequent anger and judgement
Āyāt 99–104	Significance of narratives of past people in the Qur'an and consequences associated with neglect of Allah's revelation
Āyāt 105–	Day of Judgement, fate of humanity, Allah's omniscience and encompassing knowledge; the Qur'an is a warning to act upon
Āyāt 115–23	Ādam and Hawwā's disobedience in heaven, their repentance and Allah's relenting towards them, and their 'fall' from jannah
Āyāt 123–28	Allah's guidance in the Qur'an and the punishment for neglecting it
Āyāt 129–32	Muḥammad is comforted and instructed to enjoin <i>ṣalāt</i> and <i>dhikr</i>
Āyāt 133–35	Disbelievers demand a 'clear sign'



سُورَةُ طه	
Sūra name	Named after opening verse.
Sūra no.	Q. 20
No. of āyāt	135 āyāt excluding basmalah
Place of revelation	Meccan sūra



Sūrat TāHā, Q. 20, is a Makkan *sūrah* which both begins and ends with mention of the Qur'an – *it was not sent to the Prophet Muḥammad to cause him distress but is a clear proof from his Lord.* The example of Mūsā is given as a lengthy account in order to encourage the Prophet and show the end of the disbelievers. Ādam is also mentioned. The destruction of earlier generations is cited as a lesson from which the disbelievers should learn. The Prophet is ordered to be patient and to persevere in his worship.

Tafsīr Sūrat Tā Hā

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Compassionate.

The Basmalah

This ‘formula’ of ‘commencing in the name of God’ is referred to as the *basmalah* in the Arabic language.

Is the *basmallah* an *āyah* like other *āyāt* of the Qur’an?

<p>Consensus of the scholars of Islam (<i>ijmāʿ</i>)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The <i>basmalah</i> is an <i>āyah</i>, like other <i>āyahs</i>, of the Qur’an in <i>Sūrat al-Naml</i>, Q. 27:30. 2. The <i>basmalah</i> is not recited when commencing <i>Sūrat Tawbah</i> (Q. 9, also known as <i>Sūrat al-Barāʾah</i>) and is certainly not an <i>āyah</i> in this <i>sūrah</i> of the Qur’an.
<p>Disagreement of the scholars (<i>ikhtilāf</i>)</p>	<p>The scholars disagreed regarding whether the <i>basmalah</i> is an <i>āyah</i> of the Qur’an in locations other than the above. There are five famous opinions on whether the <i>basmalah</i> is one of the <i>āyāt</i> of the Qur’an or not:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The <i>basmalah</i> is an <i>āyah</i> like other <i>āyāt</i> of the Qur’an. 2. The <i>basmalah</i> is not an <i>āyah</i> at the beginning of each <i>sūrah</i>, rather it is present as a means of earning blessings. 3. The <i>basmalah</i> is only an <i>āyah</i> at the beginning of <i>Sūrat al-Fātiḥah</i>, and in all other places is used only to separate one <i>sūrah</i> from the next. 4. The <i>basmalah</i> is an <i>āyah</i> of the Qur’an according to some <i>qirāʾāt</i> (modes of recitation), and not an <i>āyah</i> according to other <i>qirāʾāt</i>. 5. The <i>basmalah</i> is an independent <i>āyah</i> that exists at the beginning of each <i>sūrah</i> but not as part of that <i>sūrah</i>. <p>The evidence below illustrates that the strongest opinion is opinion 5, and Allah knows best.</p>

Opinion: The *basmalah* is an independent *āyah* that exists at the beginning of each *sūrah* but not as part of that *sūrah*

<p>Supportive theoretical evidences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scholars who hold this view state that the writing of the <i>basmalah</i> in the same Qur’anic font (<i>al-rasm al-‘Uthmāni</i>) is evidence that it is a part of the Qur’an. • Furthermore the <i>basmalah</i> has been placed independently before the <i>sūrahs</i> it precedes, proving it is an entity in its own right and not part of the <i>sūrahs</i>.
<p>Evidence from the Sunnah supporting opinion 5</p>	<p>The Prophet said: ‘Indeed there is a <i>sūrah</i> in the Qur’an which consists of 30 verses. These <i>āyāt</i> will intercede on behalf of its reciter until he is forgiven, and it is <i>Sūrat al-Mulk</i> (Q. 67)’ (<i>Sunan</i> books of <i>ḥadīth</i>, graded <i>ḥasan</i> (sound) by al-Tirmidhī).</p> <p>Also, after waking from unconsciousness the Prophet said: ‘A <i>sūrah</i> was just revealed to me recently’ and recited <i>Sūrat al-Kawthar</i> (Q. 108) [i.e. with the <i>basmalah</i>] (Reported in Muslim’s <i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i>).</p> <p>Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) related that Allah’s Messenger once said that Allah said,</p> <p>‘I have divided up the <i>ṣalāt</i> between My servant and Myself; one half is for him and the other half is for Me, and My servant will get whatever he asks for’ (i.e. the <i>basmalah</i> is not referred to as the first <i>āyah</i>) (Reported in Muslim’s <i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i>).</p> <p>The <i>ḥadīth</i> of Ibn ‘Abbās in which the beginning of <i>waḥī</i> (revelation) is described reports that Jibrīl came to the Prophet and recited <i>Sūrat al-‘Alaq</i>, Q. 96:1–5 (i.e. he did not start with the <i>basmalah</i>).</p> <p>Anas reported that he offered <i>ṣalāt</i> behind the Prophet, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān, and all of them commenced their <i>ṣalāt</i> with ‘<i>al-ḥamdu li’llāhi rabbi’l-‘ālamīn...</i>’ (i.e. they did not recite <i>basmalah</i> aloud as part of the <i>sūrah</i>) (<i>Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim</i>; part of it is found in <i>Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī</i>).</p>

There are no contradictions within our pure Sharī‘ah; the contradiction or inconsistency is always in the reasoning of the researcher.

Does this difference of opinion bear any fruits within the realm of Islamic legislation?

'The disjointed letters' (*ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'āt*)

	
<i>TaHa*</i>	⁽¹⁾ <i>ṬāHā</i>

*There is an opinion that 'Ṭā Hā' are not isolated letters but 'O man!' in the Yemeni dialect of ʿAkk (al-Rāzī).

Commentary and translation

Ṣaḥīḥ International	Ta, Ha.
Muhsin Khan	Ta ha. [These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'an, and none but Allah (Alone) knows their meanings.]
Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr	According to some commentators, the letters 'Ṭā Hā' which introduce this <i>sūrah</i> belong to the group of <i>ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'āt</i> (the 'single [or 'disjointed'] letters') which are prefixed to a number of Qur'anic <i>sūrahs</i> . However, some of the Prophet's ﷺ Companions (e.g. ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbbās) and a number of the Ṭābiʿūn (Saʿīd b. Jubayr, Mujaḥid, Qatādah, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ikrimah, al-Daḥḥāk, al-Kalbī etc.) opined that 'Ṭā Hā' is not just a combination of two Arabic letters but an expression signifying 'O man' (yā rajul) in the Nabataean and Syriac branches of the Arabic language (al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr) as well as in the pure Arabic of the Yemenī tribe of ʿAkk; this is evident from certain fragments of their pre-Islamic poetry (al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī). Al-Ṭabarī, in particular, gives his unqualified support to the rendering of <i>ṭā hā</i> as 'O man'.
Tafsīr al-Jalālayn	Allah is most knowledgeable of what He means by these [letters].

Discussion: foreign vocabulary in the Qur'an

Is the Qur'an made up exclusively of Arabic words or does it also include words of foreign origin within its vocabulary?

The issue of whether or not the Qur'an has foreign vocabulary in it has been one of controversy among the scholars of Islam.

Consensus (<i>ijmā'</i>)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are no non-Arabic sentences in the Qur'an. 2. There are non-Arabic proper nouns in the Qur'an: e.g. 'Īsā (عيسى), Jibrā'il (جبرائيل), Mūsā (موسى), Nūḥ (نوح).
Disagreement (<i>ikhtilāf</i>)	<p>The scholars differed with regards to the presence of single foreign words in the Qur'an, the three main opinions being:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Qur'an is devoid of foreign vocabulary. 2. There are foreign words in the Qur'an. 3. A middle view states that the origin of some words is foreign; however, these words were assimilated into Arabic (i.e. Arabicised), their original letters being replaced with Arabic letters, and were understood to be part of the vocabulary of the Arabic language. Moreover, such words were being used in Arabic poetry and speech prior to the Qur'an's revelation. <p>This (3) is the strongest opinion, and Allah knows best.</p>

What are the 'disjointed letters' (*ḥurūf al-muqatta'āt*)?

Ḥurūf al-muqatta'āt are unique letter combinations that begin certain Qur'anic *sūrah*s. Though written together, as if to make up a word, each letter is pronounced individually. Of the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, exactly one half appear as *muqatta'āt*, either singly or in combinations of two, three, four or five; the 14 *ḥurūf al-muqatta'āt* are:

ي ه ن م ل ك ق ع ط ص س ر ح أ
alif, ḥā, rā, sīn, ṣād, ṭā, 'ayn, qāf, kāf, lām, mīm, nūn, ḥā, yā

📌 The most commonly occurring letter of the *ḥurūf al-muqatta'āt* is the letter 'mīm' (م), which appears in 17 *sūrah*s; the least common are the letters 'nūn' (ن) and 'kāf' (ك).

Do the ‘disjointed letters’ carry a specific significance?

The scholars have differed on this and major opinions include:

They are from the <i>mutashābih</i>	These letters are from the unclear verses of the Qur’an (<i>mutashābih al-Qur’ān</i>), the true meanings of which are known only to Allah. Other <i>āyāt</i> –referred to as <i>mutashābih</i> – are those that refer to Allah and the unseen world, as their full meaning is obscure and unknowable
Function like oaths in the Qur’an	This opinion holds that the <i>hurūf al-muqaṭṭa‘āt</i> function like ‘oaths’ in the Qur’an. However, the <i>mufasssirūn</i> reject this stating that the Arabs were not known to take oaths in this manner, never using ‘single letters’ to indicate an oath being taken.
They represent the names of Allah	The third opinion holds these letters to be from the names of Allah, for example the letter <i>alif</i> stands for Allah, the letter <i>mīm</i> stands for al-Majīd (‘the most Glorious’), the <i>lām</i> stands for al-Laṭīf (‘the most Courteous and Subtle’) and so on.
They have their own specific meaning	This opinion holds that these letter combinations have their own meaning, representing statements. For instance it was a practice of the Arabs to speak at times using letters instead of words. The following couplet of Arabic poetry cited by Ibn Fāris (d. 395 A.H.) illustrates this: ‘Qulnā lahā: qiffī, fa-qālat: qāf’ (‘We said to her stop, and she said “qāf” [short for <i>waqaftu</i> ‘I have stopped’])
Names of <i>sūrah</i>s	They are names of <i>sūrah</i> s; thus it is possible to say <i>Sūrat Yāsīn</i> , <i>Sūrat Qāf</i> , <i>Sūrat ṬāHā</i> , etc.
They represent the Arabic alphabet	They serve as a reference to the other half of the Arabic alphabet, reminding the Arabs of the superior nature of the Qur’an, given that it was revealed using their letters and words, and yet cannot be imitated in its style.

Q. 20:2-8

<p>مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى ۖ إِلَّا تَذِكْرًا لِّمَن يَخْشَى ۚ تَنزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَى ۚ الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى ۚ وَإِن تَجَهَّرْ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ۚ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى ۚ</p>	
<p>²It was not to distress you [Prophet] that We sent down the Qur'an to you, ³but as a reminder for those who hold Allah in awe, ⁴a revelation from the One who created the earth and the high heaven, ⁵the Lord of Mercy, established on the throne. ⁶Everything in the heavens and on earth, everything between them, everything beneath the soil, belongs to Him. ⁷Whatever you may say aloud, He knows what you keep secret and what is even more hidden. ⁸Allah—there is no god [worthy of worship] but Him—the most excellent names belong to Him.</p>	<p>(²) mā anzalnā ‘alayka’l-Qur’āna li-tashqā (³) illā tadhkiratan li-man yakhshā (⁴) tanzīlan mimman khalaqa’l-arḍa wa’l-samāwāti’l-‘ulā (⁵) al-rahmānu ‘alā’l-‘arshi istawā (⁶) la-hu mā fī’l-samāwāti wa-mā fī’l-arḍi wa-mā baynahumā wa-mā taḥta’l-tharā (⁷) wa-in tajhar bi’l-qawli fa-innahu ya‘lamu’l-sirra wa-akhfā (⁸) Allahu lā ilāha illā huwa la-hu’l-asmā’u’l-ḥusnā</p>

Āyah 5 | Important principles regarding the names and attributes of Allah (*tawhīd al-asmā' wa'l-ṣifāt*)

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ۝

The Lord of Mercy, established upon the throne

1st principle

What is obligatory from the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah regarding Allah's names and attributes is to assign literal meanings to them, without changing them.

With regard to the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, it is obligatory concerning Allah's Names and Attributes to leave their proofs and implications upon their literal meanings, without changing them. This is because Allah revealed the Qur'an in a plain Arabic language and the Prophet (ﷺ) used to speak in the Arabic language. Thus, it is obligatory to leave the implications of the words of Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) as they are, in that language. Changing it from its literal meaning is equivalent to speaking about Allah without knowledge and this is forbidden: *Say: 'The things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are the great evil sins, whether committed openly or secretly, sins [of all kinds], unrighteous oppression, joining partners [in worship] with Allah for which He has given no authority, and saying things about Allah of which you have no knowledge'* (Sūrat al-A'raf, 7:33)

An example of this principle is the āyah: *...nay, both His hands are widely outstretched* (Q. 5:64). Indeed, what is literally apparent from this āyah is that Allah has two actual hands. Thus, due to this principle, affirming the existence of His hands is obligatory. If someone were to say that the meaning of 'His hands' (*yadāhu*) is 'power', then this is changing the word from its literal meaning, and is not permissible, as it is [the same as] speaking about Allah without knowledge.

2nd principle

Concerning Allah's attributes

- 1) First subdivision: all of Allah's Attributes are of the highest degree of perfection and praise possible. There is no deficiency of any kind in them.

And to Allah belongs the highest description (Sūrat al-Nahl, 16:60).

Examples of these Attributes are: (His) living, knowledge, ability, hearing, seeing, wisdom, mercy, highness and others.

It is also because He is absolutely perfect; thus His Attributes must be perfect.

If an attribute is deficient and imperfect, then it is restricted for Him, such as death, ignorance, inability, deafness, blindness, and other than that. This is because Allah will punish those who describe Him with deficiencies and He has freed Himself from all defects attributed to Him. Also, it is not possible for a lord (*rabb*) to have defects due to the incompatibility of deficiency with Lordship (*rubūbiyyah*).

If an attribute is perfect in one way and deficient in another, then it is not affirmed for Allah nor is it restricted from Him in the absolute sense. Rather, a distinction between the two cases must be made. Thus, it is affirmed for Allah in the circumstances when it is perfect and it is not possible to affirm it for Him in the condition when it is deficient. Examples of this are planning (*makr*), plotting (*kayd*), deception (*khada'*) and so on.

They [disbelievers] were planning and Allah too was planning [makr]. And Allah is the best of those who plan (Q. 8:30).

Verily, they are but scheming a plot. And I too am scheming a plot [kayd] (Q. 86:15–16)

Verily, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but it is He who deceives [khada'] them (Q. 4:142)

These three attributes are perfect when they are implemented as a response to their equals (being done by an opponent), since they indicate that the One who is doing it is not incapable of encountering His enemy with the same action, and it would be deficient in any other condition. So it is affirmed for Allah in the first condition and not in the second.

So if for instance, if it is said: 'Has Allah attributed plotting to Himself?' Then do not affirm or deny this, instead say: 'He is plotting against those who are deserving of that, and Allah knows best.'

- 2) The second subdivision: the attributes of Allah can be divided into two categories: those that are affirmed (*thubūtiyyah*) and those that are negated (*salbiyyah*).

Thubūtiyyah: consists of the attributes Allah has affirmed for Himself, such as 'living', 'knowledge' and 'ability'. Affirming these for Allah in a manner befitting to Him is obligatory as Allah has affirmed them for Himself and He is the most knowledgeable concerning His Attributes.

Salbiyyah: consists of the attributes that Allah has negated for Himself, such as injustice, and negating these from Allah is obligatory because of this. However, it is obligatory to believe in affirming their most perfect opposites, for Allah, since a negation is not complete until it consists of an affirmation. An example of this is, *and your Lord treats no one with injustice (Q. 18:49)*. It is obligatory to negate injustice from Allah, while affirming (the opposite) – which is justice – for Him, based on its most perfect perspective.

- 3) The third subdivision: the affirmed attributes (*thubūtiyyah*) can further be divided into two categories:

Dhātiyyah (attributes of His Essence): attributes that do not cease nor will ever cease to be descriptive of Him, such as hearing and seeing.

Fi‘liyyah (attributes of His actions): attributes that are connected to His Will (*mashī’ah*). If He wills, He will do it and if He wills He will not do it, such as rising over the Throne and (His) coming.

It is possible that an attribute could be both *dhātiyyah* and *fi‘liyyah*, according to each of the two, such as ‘Speech’. In regards to the origin of the attribute, it is an attribute of His Essence (*dhātiyyah*) because Allah never stopped nor will stop speaking. And in regards to the units of Speech that are put forth, it is an attribute of the action (*fi‘liyyah*), since Speech is connected to His Will. He speaks as He wills, when He wills.

- 4) The fourth subdivision: each attribute of Allah should bring three questions to mind.

The first question: *Is it real (as opposed to figurative) and why?*

The second question: *Is it permissible to say how it is and why?*

The third question: *Is it comparable to the attributes of creation and why?*

The answer to the first question: Yes, it is real, because language intends literalism unless there is evidence to abandon or restrict it.

The second answer: No, it is not permissible to describe how an attribute is: *But they will never encompass anything of His Knowledge* (Q. 20:110).

Also, intellect alone is not able to comprehend the nature of how Allah’s attributes are.

The third answer: It cannot be compared to creation’s attributes: *There is nothing whatsoever like Him* (Q. 42:11)

And also Allah is worthy of the utmost perfection, therefore it is impossible for Him to be compared to creation, since that is something deficient and imperfect.

The difference between *takyīf* (saying how it is) and *tamthīl* (saying it is like such and such) is that *tamthīl* is to describe the manner of an attribute by restricting it to a certain example, whereas *takyīf* is describing the manner of an attribute without restricting it to a certain example.

An example of *tamthīl* is if someone were to say the Hand of Allah is like the hand of a human being.

An example of *takyīf* is to imagine that the Hand of Allah has a specific

📌 The great scholar Ibn al-Qayyim said in *Zād al-Ma‘ād* (2/355): ‘Anyone who curses time is lingering between two states of which there is no doubt that he is from one of them. Either he has cursed Allah Himself or he has ascribed a partner to him (*shirk*). For indeed, if he believes that Allah is the only one that did that and he curses whomsoever did it, then he has cursed Allah.’

nature that has no comparison found in the hands of created beings. This type of imagining is not permissible.

3rd principle

What may be used to refute those who commit *ta'ṭīl* (rejection of Allah's attributes).

The Mu'atṭilah (those who commit *ta'ṭīl*) are the ones who reject from the names and attributes of Allah, distorting the texts from their literal meanings. They are also known as the ones who commit *ta'wīl* (distorted interpretation). The fundamental principle by which we may refute them is to say that their statements ...

1. contradict to what is literally apparent from the texts
2. contradict to the understanding of the Salaf
3. do not have any authentic proof to support them

For some attributes, there may be a fourth perspective, or more than that.

Āyah 8 | Principles concerning Allah's names

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى ﴿٨﴾

⁸Allah—there is no god [worthy of worship] but Him—the most excellent names belong to Him.

I. All of Allah's Names are the best

This means that they all possess the highest extent of goodness. This is since they are comprised of perfect attributes. There are no deficiencies to be found in them in any way whatsoever, *to Him belong the best of names* (Q. 20: 8).

An example of this is Allah's name al-Raḥmān for it demonstrates a magnificent attribute – which is [His] vast mercy.

We know that *al-Dahr* (time) is not one of the Names of Allah, for it does not possess a meaning that reaches the highest extent of goodness. As for the Prophet's (ﷺ) statement: 'Do not curse time, for indeed, Allah is al-Dahr (time)' (Muslim), then its meaning is that He is the 'Owner of time – the One who dispenses it.' This change occurs based on the evidence found in his (ﷺ) statement in the second narration (of this *ḥadīth*), 'In My hand is the Command: I turn [in cycles] the night and the day' (al-Bukhārī).

II. The names of Allah are not confined to a fixed and definite number

This is based on the famous *ḥadīth*: 'I ask You, O Allah, by every one of Your Names by which You have named Yourself or revealed in Your Book. Or [those which You have] taught to one of Your creatures or appropriated for Yourself in the knowledge of the *ghayb* (Unseen) that is with You' (*ṣaḥīḥ* – Imām Aḥmad).

Specifying and grasping whatever Allah has appropriated for Himself in the knowledge of the *ghayb* (Unseen) is impossible to attain.

The way to reconcile this *ḥadīth* and the other authentic *ḥadīth*: 'Verily, to Allah belong ninety-nine names, (by which) whosoever takes account of them [i.e. memorises, learns and supplicates by them], will enter Paradise' (al-Bukhārī) that the meaning of this (latter) *ḥadīth* is: 'Verily, among all the names of Allah are ninety-nine names by which if someone takes account of them, he will enter Paradise.'

It does not mean that Allah's names are restricted to this number [of 99].

The equivalent of this would be if one were to say: 'I have one hundred dollars which I have counted out for the purpose of giving in charity.'

This does not negate that he has other dollars in his possession, which he has counted out for a purpose other than charity.

III. The names of Allah can only be affirmed by Revelation

The names of Allah are derived from Revelation, and as such their affirmation is dependent upon what is reported in the revealed texts concerning them. Nothing can be added to them nor subtracted from them. This is because the intellect is not able in itself to ascertain what names Allah is most deserving of. So it is obligatory to depend upon the revealed texts for determining these. Also, naming Allah with what He does not name Himself or rejecting what He did name Himself with, is a crime against Him and a violation of His right. Thus, abiding by the proper etiquettes with regard to that is obligatory.

IV. The meaning of each of Allah's Names applies to:

- a) Allah Himself**
- b) the attribute that such a name implies, and**
- c) the effect of such and attribute, if it is transitive**

Faith in Allah's names cannot be complete without affirming all of this.

Al-[°]Azīm ('the Most Great') is an example of those names that are not transitive. One's faith is not complete until one believes that it is a name of Allah whose meaning applies to Himself, as well as the attribute that it encompasses, which is His magnificence ([°]*azamah*).

Al-Raḥmān ('the Most Merciful') is an example of a name that is transitive and one's faith is not complete until he believes that it applies to Allah (a) Himself, (b) the attribute that it encompasses, which is his mercy, and (c) what results from that, which is that Allah grants His mercy to whom He wills.

Q. 20:9–16

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى ﴿٩﴾ إِذْ رَأَى نَارًا
فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ
أَوْ أَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَمُوسَى ﴿١١﴾ إِنِّي
أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾ وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ
لِمَا يُوْحَى ﴿١٣﴾ إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا
فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ
أَكَادُ أَخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى ﴿١٥﴾ فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ
عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى ﴿١٦﴾

⁹Has the story of Moses come to you [Prophet]?* ¹⁰He saw a fire and said to his people, ‘Stay here—I can see a fire. Maybe I can bring you a flaming brand from it or find some guidance there.’ ¹¹When he came to the fire, he was called, ‘Moses! ¹²I am your Lord. Take off your shoes: you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. ¹³I have chosen you, so listen to what is being revealed. ¹⁴I am Allah; there is no god [worthy of worship] but Me. So worship Me and keep up the prayer so that you may remember Me. ¹⁵The Hour is coming—though I choose** to keep it hidden—for each soul to be rewarded for its labour. ¹⁶Do not let anyone who does not believe in it and follows his own desires distract you from it, and so bring you to ruin.’

(9) wa-hal atāka ḥadīthu Mūsā
(10) idh ra’ā nāran fa-qāla li-ahlihi ‘mkuthū innī ānastu nāran la‘allī ātikum minhā bi-qabasin aw ajidu ‘alā’l-nāri hudā
(11) fa-lammā atāhā nūdiya yā Mūsā
(12) innī anā rabbuka fa’khla’na‘layka innaka bi’l-wādi’l-muqaddasi Ṭuwā
(13) wa-anā’khtartuka fa’stami‘ li-mā yūḥā
(14) innanī ana’llāhu lā ilāha illā ana fa‘budnī wa-aqimi’l-ṣalāta li-dhikrī
(15) inna’l-sā‘ata ātiyatun akādu ukhfiḥā li-tujzā kullu nafsin bi-mā tas‘ā
(16) fa-lā yaṣuddannaka ‘anhā man lā yu’minu bi-hā wa’ttaba‘a hawāhu fa-tardā

* This construction is an idiom in Arabic implying ‘think well about it’ or ‘take a lesson from this.’

** Abū Muslim interprets akādu as urīdu (‘I wish’ / ‘I choose’) (al-Rāzī).

Benefits of stories in the Qur'an

1. Proof of Muḥammad's ﷺ prophethood
2. Proof of the continuation of the monotheistic message
3. To guide remnants of previous [monotheistic] nations to the truth
4. Establish beliefs in the prophets and miracles given to them
5. Comfort Muḥammad ﷺ and the early community of believers who faced persecution
6. Expound the methodology of da'wah
7. Guide the Muslims to better morals
8. One of the aspects of *i'jāz* (the miraculous nature) of the Qur'an

📌 Narratives pertaining to Mūsā (عليه السلام):
Apart from two short references to Mūsā in earlier *sūrahs* (Q. 53:36 and Q. 87:19), the narrative appearing in *Sūrat ṬāHā*, 20:9–8 is undoubtedly the earliest Qur'anic exposition of the story of Mūsā as such. Its mention at this stage is connected with the reference to revelation at the beginning of this *sūrah* (*āyāt* 2–4) and, generally, emphasises the Qur'anic doctrine of the basic ideological unity of all revealed religions.