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*TAFSĪR AL-QUR'ĀN*, attr. to 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās (d.68/668)

[A commentary on the *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* and *Sūrat al-Baqara*]

Analytical Study and Edition

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Submitted to the University Of Wales in fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Doctor in Philosophy

University of Wales, Lampeter

2008

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## Dedication

This work is dedicated to:

The pure spirit of my late parents who impressed on me the importance of seeking knowledge. Also, to my dear husband who has supported and guided me throughout this work. Finally to all my brothers, sisters, children and to all the Scholars.

## Acknowledgment

All my appreciation and thanks are due, firstly, to Almighty God, who has aided me and granted me success in completing this work; were it not for His help in making me firm and giving me patience it would not have been possible. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor Dr Izzi Dien for his constant guidance, patience and encouragement during the writing of this thesis. Dr Abbas Tawfeeq I thank for his generous advice and assistance. Thanks to my brother Mustapha Sheikh for reading and editing the translation. I would like to express my thanks to the Jordanian University Library and the Library of *Markaz Jum'a al-Mājid*, Dubai, for their assistance in obtaining copies of manuscripts and supporting me with the necessary references. I thank also Dr Kadhem al-Rawi for allowing use of the Library of the European Institute of Human Sciences and finally the secretaries of the Islamic department of the University of Wales. Lampeter.



## Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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This thesis is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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## Transliteration

Arabic	Symbol	Arabic	Symbol
ا	A	ط	Ṭ
ب	B	ظ	Ẓ
ت	T	ع	'
ث	Th	غ	Gh
ج	J	ف	F
ح	Ḥ	ق	Q
خ	Kh	ك	K
د	D	ل	L
ذ	Dh	م	M
ر	R	ن	N
ز	Z	ه	H
س	S	و	W
ش	Sh	ي	Y
ص	Ṣ	ء	'
ض	Ḍ		

### Short Vowels:

ـُ	u
ـَ	a
ـِ	i

### Long Vowels:

و	ū
ا	ā
ي	ī

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## Abstract

This research is an analytical study and an edition of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* and *Sūrat al-Baqara* from a copy of the manuscript that is the *tafsīr* ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās according to the transmission of al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣāliḥ. Historians reckon some ninety-eight copies of this manuscript exist, some complete and others partial commentaries, as mentioned in the *Fahras al-Shāmil*. I have relied upon the main copy extant at *Markaz Juma' al-Mājid*, Dubai, cross-referencing it against three separate manuscripts and the printed *Tanwīr al-Miqbās*.

The study concludes that the text is neither the authorship nor the direct narration of Ibn ‘Abbās but is likely to be the work of al-Kalbī. This is based on a careful and detailed presentation of the life of Ibn ‘Abbās, his knowledge, his scholarship in exegesis, the sources upon which he relied for his exegesis, methodology and the aspects and subjects he treated therein; The aim of this chapter is to ascertain what the probability is of the edited text being the work of Ibn ‘Abbās, the probability that al-Kalbī has transmitted it from him, and if not, then is it correct to posit that al-Kalbī is its author? Also, the life of al-Kalbī, his works in *tafsīr*, his style, methodology and his contributions to the field of exegesis.

Also the study concludes that the printed *Tanwīr al-Miqbās* is the same in transmission, with some differences in words order or commentaries with the other manuscripts, we used in this study.

I have divided the study into two parts: an analytical study of the text and edition. The study includes a biography of Ibn ‘Abbās covering his social and intellectual life in order to ascertain whether there is any truth in the ascription of the manuscript to him. There is also an account of the life of al-Kalbī, the alleged reporter of this *tafsīr*, and the one who ascribes it to Ibn ‘Abbās, covering similar aspects as that for Ibn ‘Abbās, in order to shed some light on whether there is a possibility that he is the author of the manuscript. There is also a comparative study on some aspects that appear in the manuscript with other

books in *tafsīr*. After this I undertake an analytical study of the manuscript to clarify its methodology in *tafsīr* by way of presenting the sources of *tafsīr* it uses and the subjects it covers along with its style. Also included are the characteristics of the manuscript with a conclusion covering the results found.

The second part of this study is an edition of *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara* taken from the manuscript and in Arabic. The edition involved the following: inserting of grammatical inflections to verses of the Qur'ān and numbering, writing of the verses in a font (*Kufic* script) differentiating them from the rest of the text, referencing of *ḥadīth* from their sources, the inserting of grammatical inflections on unusual or unclear words and an explanation of their meanings, correction of typographical errors, indications of variant readings of verses if required, biographies of personalities and the identification of countries, places and tribes.



## Introduction

The primary aim of an exegesis of the Qur'ān should be to serve the Book by way of explaining its meanings, clarifying its obscurities and enabling people of all backgrounds, ages, and ethnicities, to access it. Above and beyond this, Muslim commentators sought to benefit the readers of their works spiritually as well as intellectually; they hoped that their commentaries would be a cause for the reader to draw closer to his Lord, by way their understanding, following and believing in His scripture. They, via the commentary, would come to learn of the books laws, its rhetoric, its wisdoms and parables; this knowledge would lead them to accept all that the book ordered them, and reject all that it forbade them.

The Qur'ān has witnessed what no other scripture or text has ever experienced in the history of mankind in terms of human effort towards it. Studies and sciences have developed around it – *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* at the fore – from the moment its revelation began. This continued over the passage of history, though new sciences evolved and scholars increased in number. It is not only sciences directly related to the Qur'ān which give attention to it; studies in Arabic literature, grammar, thought and history contain much on the Qur'ān also. This research aims towards increasing understanding of the Qur'ān in the same way earlier scholarship has intended, particularly for the English reader, by making available a part of the exegesis scripture for the reader.

Amongst the famous books of *tafsīr* whose fame has spread far and wide, and which has been the focus of much scholarly speculation, ranging from those who criticize to those who affirm its authenticity, is the alleged *tafsīr* of al-Kalbī (d.146 A.H.), about which A. Rippin suspects is a highly dubious ascription, almost as 'absurd' as ascribing it Ibn 'Abbās (d.68 A.H.).<sup>1</sup> This study will focus its attention on this commentary, undertaking a critical edition and study. It will present the commentary's style, methodology and exegetical sources. Thereafter, there shall be a comparison of that with what has been reported from Ibn 'Abbās in the books of exegesis. It will seek to identify whether in fact

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<sup>1</sup> Rippin, Andrew, *Al-Zuhrī, 'Naskh al-Qur'ān and the Problem of Early Tafsīr Texts'* in Bulletin of SOAS (ed (1984) Vol. XLVII, p.23.

the work's original author was Ibn 'Abbās – and if not, then the true author - as well as ascertaining its methodology and style in *tafsīr*. The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* states the following: "Today there exist numerous manuscripts and several editions of a *tafsīr* or *tafsīrs* which are attributed to Ibn 'Abbās (whether rightly or wrongly cannot be said) as no study of this material has yet been made."<sup>1</sup> Such will make for an unprecedented study, one which Ignaz Goldziher was hoping to undertake himself. He stated: "If the opportunity evades me, a research should be undertaken that seeks to establish the relationship between the manuscripts and printed editions of the *tafsīr* ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās, and then compare these between the early works in *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*."<sup>2</sup> Goldziher held the opinion that no one can ascribe with certainty these manuscripts or printed editions *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās* to Ibn 'Abbās until analytical study and comparison between them and the narrations of Ibn 'Abbās with the early works in *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* is undertaken, as will, scholars could not be certain that the original hand-written manuscripts and the printed titles *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās* were one and the same work until a comparative analytical study is undertaken. He then described a methodology that would achieve this end. He was absolutely correct in believing that a comparison between the edited text and the print with narrations of Ibn 'Abbās recorded in the early books of *tafsīr* would achieve this – he shows great insight here. It is exactly this that the author has undertaken with the present research.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that the *tafsīr* has a connection to Ibn 'Abbās, famed for his unparalleled knowledge of the Qur'ān, and the fact that he figures so prominently in the history of Islamic scholarly heritage, one finds references to his work in *tafsīr* in almost all the major subjects of Islam. The importance of this study is further raised by the fact that the work has been ascribed back to the first century after *hijra*;<sup>4</sup> the century which represents

<sup>1</sup> Bosworth .C.E, Dowzel. E. Lewis, Van. B and Pellat .Ch. E.G.(EDs) *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Brill ,ed (1986). Vaglieri. L. Veccia , art. 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās", Vol.1 / p.40

<sup>2</sup> Goldziher. Ignaz, *Islamic Schools of Exegesis*, translated into Arabic by . 'Abd al-Qādir. Ali Hasan .Egypt 1<sup>st</sup> ed.( 1955) p.97.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the chapter on comparison between the print and the edited text in the English study ,p.147,and also the comparison between the opinions of Ibn 'Abbās and the edited text in *tafsīr* in the Arabic edition, where I have made clear what agrees with the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās and what does not.

<sup>4</sup> A. Rippin suggests that the fourth century A.H. is the most appropriate period in which to place the commentary since there is dated to that time a commentary of al-Dīnawarī (d. 308/920) which is identical in every respect to it (*Al-Zuhrī, Naskh al-Qur'ān*, p.23-24), this the author rejects, believing there to be



the pinnacle of Islamic history, one which all succeeding generations have sought to emulate. The ambitions of the author in undertaking this study have certainly been hindered by the many narrative fabrications that have been falsely ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās. The fact that he held such a lofty status amongst the Companions, being one of the closest to the Prophet, and also significantly, that he was regarded as the father of the Abbāsids, have been factors which no doubt led to such unwarranted levels of fabrication in his name. It makes extremely difficult arriving at conclusions on what Ibn ‘Abbās’ true opinions were on matters.

Study of the commentary has been made all the more difficult because of the controversies that have surrounded the two main narrators, al-Kalbī (d.146 A.H) and Abū Ṣāliḥ (d.131 A.H.). Scholars have traditionally differed in opinion regarding them – some have praised them, calling al-Kalbī an exegete and expert on lineage, and that Abū Ṣāliḥ was a teacher of children alongside being an exegete; others have discounted the two altogether, holding them to be liars. Due to this, narrations from al-Kalbī in the major works of *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* are few. Furthermore, the narrations ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās in the books of *tafsīr* are so many in number, it is difficult to enumerate them all. It is thus very difficult to decide which are actually his own statements.

Finally, the fact that there is a dearth of reliable texts in *tafsīr* dating back to the first century A.H. means it is not possible to compare the text we have with them.<sup>1</sup> There are available statements and narrations in *tafsīr* from the earliest times, such as those from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (d. 95 A.H.), Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 103 A.H.) and ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭalḥa (d.120 A.H.), however these are dispersed throughout the major works of *tafsīr* are not often detailed enough to be used in a serious comparison. And as the main aim of this research is to edit the text ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās by the transmission of al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣāliḥ, as well as reach a conclusion on its ascription to Ibn ‘Abbās, we have adopted a methodology of comparison and criticism, of giving preponderance to some opinions

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ample evidence upon which it can be positioned in the first or second century A.H. Details of are found in Chapter 2. and because Muslim Scholars in the second century said about Al –Kalbis tafsir.

<sup>1</sup> In spite of this, A. Azami mentions that in the first century A.H. the exegeses of Ubayy b. Ka‘b and Ibn ‘Abbās were written, most likely by their students. Azami Mohammad Mustafa. (*Studies in Early Hadith Literature*. American Trust Publications, Indiana polis, Indiana .2<sup>nd</sup> ed,(1978), p.7.

over others, and generally utilizing a logical, methodical approach in deciding the soundness of the edited text's ascription; this, it is believed, is the most academic route to gathering precise data and correct conclusions.

The methodology of this study has been devised according to the objectives: Chapter 1 provides details on Ibn 'Abbās' life and knowledge; the opinions of the other Companions and the successors and scholars after him about him and his knowledge is then discussed. His political and social life is treated since these are two aspects which play an important formative role in the life of a scholar. Also, his methodology and exegetical style as preserved within the books of *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*, and the subjects which he treated will be studied. This is then compared to what is contained within the edited text. Connected with this is a discussion on the main features of exegesis during the first century A.H. as well as the question of whether Ibn 'Abbās in particular, and the Companions in general, would only ever report what he had learnt from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) or whether he would indulge in reaching his own conclusions; the degree to which the Prophet himself commentated on the Qur'ān shall also be treated. The aim of this chapter is to ascertain whether the style, methodology, reports and sources used by Ibn 'Abbās are consistent with the edited text in question; this will reveal the degree to which it is likely that he is its author.

Chapter 2 is a study of Al-Kalbī<sup>1</sup>, he is Muhammad b. al-Sā'ib b. Bishr b. 'Amr b. al-Ḥārith b. Banī 'Abdu Wud. His agnomen, Abū al-Naḍr al-Kūfi; prolific exegete and genealogist. Born and raised in Kufa, and passed away there in 146 A.H. His birth date is not mentioned, but W. Atallah mentioned that AL-Kalbī died at the age of at least (80), and he was interested in all contemporary branches of learning: universal history; the history of religions, pre-Islamic Jewish and Christian; poetry, literature and philology; genealogy, tradition and ancient legends. W. Atallah states that it is probable al-Kalbī expressed pro-Alid views and that his courses were written down (Fihrist, 95), but his *tafsīr* is now lost, apart from a few sparse fragments in various works. The question arises what proof does he have for his claim that the *tafsīr* is no longer extant. He gives no reason for his claim. He only suggests why it might have been lost: 'This is perhaps to be

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Atallah.W, art Al-Kalbi, Vol.4/p.495.



explained by his use, direct or indirect, of written sources and chains of tradition (*isnād*) which did not conform to the norms fixed for ḥadīth criticism. And in detail we will discuss his life, knowledge, intellectual inclinations, the opinion of scholars regarding him, the factors which led to a distrust in him, his association with Ibn ‘Abbās and whether he transmitted from him, the opinion of scholars on the *isnād* of al-Kalbī from Ibn ‘Abbās. The factors which led him to write an exegesis and then ascribe it to Ibn ‘Abbās, or if not he, then the scribes and transmitters. The points at which the edited text and the opinions of Ibn ‘Abbās as mentioned in books of *tafsīr* agree and diverge are also treated. Verbatim and paraphrased statements are considered equal for the purposes of this study. The aim of this chapter is to ascertain what the probability is of the edited text being the work of Ibn ‘Abbās, the probability that al-Kalbī has transmitted it from him, and if not, then is it correct to posit that al-Kalbī is its author in the first place.

Chapter 3 is an analytical study of the edited text, looks at the exegetical methodology of the edited text, it deviated to the commentary sources, style of the edited text, and the subjects which it treats; also addressed is how the text has contributed to the general body of knowledge within the science of *tafsīr*, all of this by way of presenting narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās as mentioned in the works of exegesis. As with Ibn ‘Abbās, we shall compare the narrations of al-Kalbī compiled in the major works of *tafsīr*, history and works on *asbāb al-nuzūl* and then compare them to that which is in the edited text in order to reach a conclusion on whether the work can in fact be ascribed to al-Kalbī, if not to Ibn ‘Abbās himself. A presentation of the internal and external evidences which the author believes prove that the text is neither the authorship nor the direct narration of Ibn ‘Abbās are given here; on the basis of the evidence, as discussed in the research conclusion, it is possible to assert there is a strong likelihood that the commentary, though not of Ibn ‘Abbās, was the work of al-Kalbī.

The author has noticed through the undertaking of this study that many Muslim scholars have mistakenly accepted opinions from those before them about al-Kalbī without investigating the veracity of the information, for example his supposed inclinations towards both the Shi’ites and the Murji’ites in spite of the fact that to say so is a contradiction in terms. So too is their acceptance of the claim that Ibn ‘Abbās would

often employ poetry when explaining the meanings of words, again without investigation of the facts. These are some of the areas which are investigated in this study.

A particularly useful source to the author has been the *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabari, which has full listings of the chains of transmission for every report. The ascription of sayings to Ibn ‘Abbās is far easier to falsify with these, although it is rare that he quotes from al-Kalbī, as has been mentioned earlier, and is discussed at length in Chapter 3. Among the works which have been of great utility also, are the *tarājim* (biographies) such as the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Sa’d, and *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta’dīl* of al-Rāzī, and *al-Tahdhīb* of Ibn Ḥajar. Ibn Taymiyya’s introduction to the science of *tafsīr* was a useful reference for this study, as was *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssirūn* of Dr Al-Dhahabī, *al-Burhān* of al-Zarkashī, and *al-Itqān* of al-Suyūṭī. Books in literature and poetry were an aid in our discussions on poetry and its uses in *tafsīr* literature, such as the studies of Ṭāha Ḥusayn and Shawqī Ḍayf. It is worthy of mention, that the most useful references were the studies of students of Islam, such as the editing of Mujāhid’s *Tafsīr* by Aḥmad Nawfal, and the editing of Sa‘īd b. Jubayr by Ibrāhīm al-Najjār. Western studies on *tafsīr* in the first century A.H. and whatever is discussed in them regarding our topic of discussion have been of great value also. ‘Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s translation of the Qur’ān was employed wherever quotes from the Qur’ān are required.

The research has been divided in to two parts: the first is an analytical study of the text and the second is a critical edition.

#### Methodology:

The following is an explanation of the methodology adopted for this analytical study and edition: it will address the four principal themes of the study:



- 1) Identification of the manuscripts.
- 2) Symbols and signs.
- 3) Editing of manuscript.
- 4) Approach taken in editing and verification.

#### Identification of the manuscripts used:

*Al-Fahras al-Shāmil li-al-Turāth al-'Arabī al-Islāmī fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*,<sup>1</sup> states that there exists ninety eight copies of the *tafsīr* ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās, some complete and some partial; it mentions that the oldest surviving copy is found in the Maḥmūdiyya Library in Medina, dating back to 316 A.H. (no.166/288) – this is not in fact correct, since the only copy I have found to exist at the Maḥmūdiyya dates back to 1140 A.H., its folios are 222 in number and holds the title: “A partial *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān by Ibn 'Abbās”.<sup>2</sup>

The last text is dated from 1295 A.H. (13<sup>th</sup> Century A.H.) and exists in the Kabul Museum (no.20/21)<sup>3</sup>. with the title “*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*”. It comprises six-hundred and seventy-four folios.

Sezgin says of all the existing texts that they are all copies from the same text. from al-Kalbī, from Ibn 'Abbās. He himself viewed forty-eight copies.<sup>4</sup> Whilst there are some copies present in the al-Zāhiriyya Library which are ascribed directly to al-Kalbī<sup>5</sup>, there also exist those which have not been so ascribed.

The present research relies upon four texts and the printed *Tamwīr al-Miqbās*:

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Fahras al-Shāmil li-al-Turāth al-'Arabī al-Islāmī fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt, al-Majma' al-Malikī li Buḥūth al-Ḥadāra al-Islāmiyya, the Royal Institute for Research in Islamic Civilisation, Vol.1. pp.3 – 23.

<sup>2</sup> Brockelmann, i.1, S. i. 331, Sezgin, Fuat, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī* (al-Hay'at al-Misriyyah al-'Amma, Cairo. (1971), Vol.1 / p.39, *Al-Fahras al-Shāmil li-al-Turāth al-'Arabī al-Islāmī fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Vol.1 p.3.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Fahras al-Shāmil li-al-Turāth al-'Arabī al-Islāmī fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Vol.1 / p.18.

<sup>4</sup> *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, Vol.1 / p.191.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Fahras al-Shāmil li-al-Turāth al-'Arabī al-Islāmī fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Vol.1 / pp.4 – 19.

The first is the text of *Markaz Jum'a al-Mājid*<sup>1</sup>. It is a copy from the private collection, and has a wonderfully decorated gold painted front with gold painted borders on the first and second pages, and the remaining pages decorated with a frame in red ink. It is written in *naskhī* calligraphy, with black ink. The first few pages are in a poor condition having been affected by damp. There is an instruction on the first page signed in the name of a minister al-Ḥāj Muhammad Pāshā that the manuscript is a *waqf* for students of knowledge (dated 1190 A.H.). It is bound in red-leather, decorated with gold and other colours, and its pages number 270 (14 cm x 25.5 cm) (approximately 35 lines per page, each sentence 11 words, tape no. 1715). The copyist is 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Umar al-Ḥamawī who produced the work in 1181 A.H. he begins with the *basmala*<sup>2</sup> and the *isnād* and ends with the *tafsīr* of *Sūra al-Nās*. On the cover has been written, "Author: Abū al-'Abbās 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib al-Hāshimī (d. 68 A.H)."<sup>3</sup> This copy is the main reference since it is the clearest to read, and has been given the symbol ج.

The second text found in the index "*Fahras al-Makṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya*",<sup>4</sup> housed at the Chester Beatty Library, is titled: "*Tafsīr al-Qurān*, attr. to 'Abd Allāh B. Al-'Abbās (d. 68/668)". It comprises 255 folios (27.4cm x 16cm, approximately 29 lines/page, 15 words/line). The name of the copyist is Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī, the student of Ismā'īl Zuhdī, and was completed between May and June, 1159/1746. The source is Brockelmann (no.i/190 attaché 331/1). I was able to acquire a copy of the manuscript from the University of Jordan library, (tape no.4224). This copy is used to cross-reference information in the primary text and has been given the symbol د.

There is a third copy I acquired from the Jordanian University library, Jordan of the same copyist Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī present also as an original in the Chester Beatty Library – it is given the symbol د – with the difference being that it was written in 1158/1745 and it appears to me that it was intended as a rough draft; this is because it was completed

<sup>1</sup> *Markaz Jum'a al-Mājid li al-Thaqāfa wa al-Turāth*, (Dubai, U.A.E.)

<sup>2</sup> *Basmala* is the statement "In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Munjid, Salāḥ al-Dīn, *Fahras Makṭūṭāt Dār al-Kutub al-zāhiriyya 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān al-Karīm al-Tafsīr*, Damascus (1984), Vol.3 / page no. available from the *Markaz*.

<sup>4</sup> Arberry, Arthur J, *Fahras al-Makṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya*, in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland.



within a year of the start of the text and also because the differences between the two are few, and when they do occur are only in word order; another alternative is that the copy is an original but the scribe copied it to sell, as was the custom of scribes during that time. Its folios number 356 (18.8cm x 11.4cm, 25 lines/page and 12 words/line). It is given the symbol ج.

It is worthy of mention that at the end of each copy (the copy of 1158 A.H. and 1159 A.H.) the copyist says: “Thus is completed the composition of the *tafsīr al-‘Abbāsī* from the beginning of *Sūra Maryam*”, without any indication of who copied the *Sūras* up to *Maryam*.

The fourth text is preserved at the Maḥmūdiyya Library, Medina, titled *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās* (1140 A.H.) no. 166. Its folios are 122 in total. (22cm x 15cm, 17 lines/page and 11 words/line), completed only up until the chapter *Hūd*, it is given the symbol م.

There is also a fifth text, the printed *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*<sup>1</sup> which contains the same *isnād* as the manuscripts symbol (ج، م، د) with only a few other differences in commentary or words order. This is given the symbol ت. There is cause to justify why the author has undertaken a critical edition of part of the text when this printed edition already exists. The primary reason is that the printed version is unedited and comprises no introduction or even basic study: there is no mention of the manuscript or manuscripts used, the name of the scribes or the year of authorship, no referencing of *‘adīth* reports; there is not even given the verse numbers of each *sura* – it is left to the reader to decipher these. Indeed it is nothing more than a commercial enterprise, far from being an academic endeavour. But perhaps the seminal contribution the edition has to offer is to clarify the mistaken ascription of the work to Ibn ‘Abbās in place of a more likely association to al-Kalbī based on the study findings and opinions of the earliest Muslim scholars. Furthermore, the critical edition undertaken for the present research

<sup>1</sup> Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon. This *tafsīr*, a work which at times has borne the name al-Firūzabādī, ‘Abū Tāhir Muhammad ibn Ya‘qūb, *Tanwīr ‘al-miqbās min tafsīr ‘Ibn ‘Abbās*, *Wa-bi-hāmihihi ‘al-kitāb ‘al-musammā, bi-‘al-Maqsid li-talkhīs nā fi ‘al-murshid fī ‘al-waqf wa-‘al-‘ibtidā’ / ta’līf ‘Abī Yahyā Zakariyā ‘al-‘Ansārī*, Būlāq : ‘al-Matba‘ah ‘al-‘Amīrah, ed (1290, 1873). Its pages are: 2, 464; 28cm. in total.

makes mention of all points of agreement and divergence of the text with what is reported from Ibn ‘Abbās in other commentaries. The publisher printed the Holy Qur’ān in the middle of each page with the commentary in the margins; there is no mention of which copy the print is based on.

The conclusion which we reached after the comparison between the text and *Tamwīr al-Miqbās* is that they are the same except some divergence like any other manuscripts used in this study.

### Symbols and signs:

The following symbols and signs are used in the critical edition:

ج : Main copy.

د : Cross-reference 2.

ذ : Cross-reference 3.

م : Cross-reference 4.

ت : Printed *Tamwīr*.

ET: The edited text in Arabic.

أ : First face of the main copy.

ب : Second face of the main copy.

ص : Page.

ح : *Ḥadīth* .

ز : *Ḥadīth* No.

ط : Print (Where available).

س : Year (Where available).

ق : Before either the Hijra or B.C.

{ } : Indicates a verse of the Qur’ān.

[ ] : Indicates a difference between the copy (ج), or an addition of another copy and the deduction of (ج) if there is a need for correction or clarification of meaning.

: indicates a deduction from the copy (ج) which is present in another copy without a need to affirm it or indicate it in the pages of the edited text.

( ) : Indicates a quote from Ibn ‘Abbās.

كنا عنه : As recorded from him (Ibn ‘Abbās).

When mention is made of ‘manuscript’ in this research, this is a reference to the complete original document. ‘Text’ refers to the text of the *tafsīr* ascribed to al-Kalbi, both the edited and unedited parts. ‘Edited text’ is a reference to the critical edition of *al-fātiḥa* and *al-baqara*.

References on the first mention are given with complete information, including name of author, publishing house, place of printing and date. Thereafter, only the title is given, unless two or more titles are similar, in which case the author is provided also.

**Work undertaken in the critical edition:**

- 1) Inserting of grammatical inflections to verses of the Qur'ān and numbering;
- 2) Writing of the verses in a font (*Kufic* script) differentiating them from the rest of the text;
- 3) Referencing of *ḥadīth* from their sources;
- 4) The inserting of grammatical inflections on unusual or unclear words and an explanation of their meanings;
- 5) Correction of typographical errors;
- 6) Indications of variant readings of verses if required;
- 7) Biographies of personalities;
- 8) Identification of countries, places and tribes;



### **Methodology adopted for the critical edition and referencing:**

- 1) I have made the text of the *Markaz Jum'a al-Mājid* as the main reference for the critical edition, its symbol being (ج), whilst using for cross-referencing purposes texts from the Jordanian University library (Chester Beatty Library housing the original), given the symbols (د, ل), a text from the Maḥmūdiyya Library (م) and the printed *Tanwīr al-Miqbās* (ت).
- 2) I followed the text of the copy (ج) wherever possible, indicating in the footnotes the differences between the copies; no recourse was taken to affirming things based in the texts used for cross-referencing except in the following situations:
  - If there was a mistake in the main reference.
  - In the presence of a deduction in the copy (ج) which impairs the meaning, or an addition in another copy which completes the meaning or clarifies it.

In both cases notification is given in the footnotes.

- 3) If there is a common mistake in the copies this is corrected with an indication of the correction in the footnotes.
- 4) Wherever there occurs typographical errors then this is corrected, whether it be a verse of the Qur'ān or the words of the copyist, and this is noted in the footnotes.
- 5) The numbering of verses is done after quoting them, with their references in the footnotes.
- 6) Identification of personalities, countries and tribes is mentioned in the footnotes at their first appearance in the text.
- 7) The referencing of *ḥadīth* narrations are done from their sources and is mentioned in the footnotes at their first appearance.
- 8) The numbering of the pages of the manuscript is done for each face (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b...)
- 9) The referencing of works is done with full information about author, publisher and distributor, date and place of publishing (unless unavailable), followed by page numbers.
- 10) If a reference is mentioned a second time, only the title or author is mentioned followed by page number.

- 11) If an addition is not found or repeated in the main reference this is pointed out in the footnotes.
- 12) If an opinion in the edited text disagrees with either the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās or what is agreed upon by the scholars, this is pointed out in the footnotes.

### Methodology of the Text in *Tafsīr*:

Although this is treated more fully within the research, some prominent points worthy of mention are given here:

- 1) The manuscript's transmitters rely solely on one chain of narration which meets at 'Alī b. Ishāq al-Samarqandī, and this occurs in all copies.
- 2) The text provides commentary on every verse of the Qur'ān without demarcating one verse from another.
- 3) *Suras* are titled so one is distinguished from another, and whether the *sura* is Meccan or Medinian is mentioned together with its number of verses (although this is omitted at times).
- 4) The causes of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) are given once with detail and once in summary.
- 5) The abrogated and abrogating verses are indicated.
- 6) Some variant readings are given.
- 7) Legal rulings are explained and opinions of scholars are given without a particular preference given to one over another.
- 8) There is no particular treatment of aspects of grammar or rhetoric.
- 9) He generally restricts Qur'ānic expressions like "those who have believed" to be a reference to Abū Bakr and his companions, and "those who have disbelieved" to mean Abū Jahl and his comrades.



## Chapter I: Ibn ‘Abbās, his life, works and knowledge.

This chapter shall consider the life and works of Ibn ‘Abbās, the personality to whom our commentary is ascribed. Various dimensions shall be surveyed, including his life (birth, early years, education) and his intellectual and political involvements, in order to ascertain how these factors would have shaped his own exegetical output, thus providing valuable insight into the veracity of the ascription to him.

### 1.1. Biography

#### 1.1.1 His Name & Pedigree

Ibn ‘Abbās is ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim b. ‘Abdu Manāf of the tribe of Quraysh, nicknamed Abū al-Abbās. His mother was Lubāba bt. al-Ḥārith b. Ḥazn al-Hilāliyya<sup>1</sup>, a sister in law of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). He was cousin to both the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and to Khālīd b. al-Walīd<sup>2</sup>, the famous military commander of Islamic history.<sup>3</sup> The youngest among brothers of the same father, al-‘Abbās, from his wife known as ‘Umm al-Faḍl<sup>4</sup>, Ibn ‘Abbās is considered the grand-father of the ‘Abbāsids; his parents were of the nobles and highborn of Quraysh, his father being al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib<sup>5</sup>, the head of the tribe and one of their wise men who famously accepted the task of rebuilding the Ka‘ba during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance alongside his historic responsibility of providing its visitors with water. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) had acknowledged al-‘Abbās’ qualities of leadership saying, “This is al-

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<sup>1</sup> Lubāba bt. al-Ḥārith b. Ḥazn al-Hilāliyya, the wife of al-‘Abbās and the sister of Maymūna the wife of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). She died during the Caliphate of ‘Uthmān. , Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Asqalānī*, Aḥmad b. Shihāb al-Dīn, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Edited by Khalīl Ma‘mūn Shihā, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (2001), p.529.

<sup>2</sup> Khālīd b. al-Walīd is Khālīd b. Walīd b. al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī al-Qurashī, A Companion, he was from the nobility class of Quraysh during the pre-Islamic Jāhīlī period. He participated in numerous battle against the Muslims until his own conversion before the Conquest of Mecca in (7 A.H). He then became a bastion within the Muslim army taking part in many battles before finally passing away in Ḥimṣ, Syria, in 21/642. Zirikli Khair-Aldien, *Al-A‘lām, Dar-Alilm, Lealamayien*- Beirut, 15<sup>th</sup> Ed, Vol.2 / p.300.

<sup>3</sup> B.al-Athīr, ‘Izz al-Dīn Abū’l-Ḥasan, *‘Uṣd al-Ghābah fī Ma‘rifat al-Ṣaḥābah*, , Dar al-Bāz Li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘. Abbās Aḥmad al-Bāz, al-Marwa, Mecca al-Mukarramah, Vol.3/ p.192; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-‘Asqalānī*, Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Ḥajar, *al-‘Iṣābah fī tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah*, Dār al-Fikr Li al-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr, (1409A.H) 1989A.D, Vol.2 / p.330.

<sup>4</sup> B. Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā’ Muhammad b. Ismail, *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, , edited by Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. Dār al-Ḥadīth, Cairo 5<sup>th</sup> ed, (1418A.H- 1998A.D), Vol.8 / p.280.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim Abū al-Faḍl, from the noblemen of Quraysh. He was the uncle of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) converting before the hijra and hid his faith. He remained in Mecca writing to the Prophet news of Quraysh’s plans. He finally migrated to Medina and witnessed thereafter the conquest of Mecca and Hunayn. He died in 32/653. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.3 / p.262.



‘Abbās; he is the most generous individual of Quraysh and the most merciful”<sup>1</sup>. His mother was a woman of nobility, one of the earliest people to embrace Islam; it was said that she was the second woman after Khadījah to convert to Islam<sup>2</sup>.

Such parents undoubtedly had a great influence on his personality; he inherited from them many noble character traits and a highly refined manner. If schools have a significant role in educating and culturing, then a mother, being the first educator of a child, is the first school; her impact on the spirituality of her children is immeasurable; no doubt this period in the life of Ibn ‘Abbās shaped profoundly the individual he would become in later life.

### 1.1.2. His Birth:

Narrators disagree regarding his date of birth, the most accurate being that he was born three years before the Hijra, when the Hashimite family was living shut up in ‘the ravine’ (*al-Shi‘b*)<sup>3</sup>. Al-Wāqidi<sup>4</sup> mentions that there is no conflict between scholars in respect of the place in which he was born, that being ‘the ravine’ during Quraysh’s besieging of the Prophet (p.b.u.h); they agree also upon the fact that he was only thirteen years old when the Prophet died.<sup>5</sup>

It has been related that Ibn ‘Abbās was born five years before the immigration: ‘Abdullāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.<sup>6</sup> narrated from his father, from Ibn

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<sup>1</sup> Salfitī , ‘Abdullāh Muhammad, *Ḥabr al-Ummah ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās wa Madrasatuhu fī al-Tafsīr bi Makka al-Mukarramah*, by, Dar al-Salām Lil Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr, Cairo, 1<sup>st</sup> ed (1407A.H)/1986 A.D, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn. ‘Abd al-Barr, Abū ‘Umar Yusuf, *Al-Istī‘āb fī Ma‘rifat al-Aṣḥāb*, edited by ‘Alī Muhammad Mu‘awwad & ‘Adil ‘Abd al-Mawjūd, Manshūrāt Muhammad Ali Baiḍūn, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Vol.4 / p.461.

<sup>3</sup> The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.1 / p.40, art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”

<sup>4</sup> Al-Wāqidi is Muhammad b. ‘Umar (130/747 – 207/823). *Ḥāfiẓ of ḥadīth*, born in Madyan, he took over the post of *Qāḍi* in Baghdad, remaining so until his death. His most prominent works were in *Sīra, al-A‘lām*, p.311.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Istī‘āb fī Ma‘rifat al-Aṣḥāb* Vol.3 / p.67.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Abdullāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. Scholars gave high regard to his knowledge in *ḥadīth*. He narrated the *Musnad* from his father, as well as the science of *naskh* (abrogation) and history. He was regarded as truthful and reliable by scholars of *ḥadīth*, .Al- Mazzī Jamāl al-Dīn, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā’ al-*

Ishāq<sup>1</sup>, that he said: I have heard from Sa'īd b. Jubayr who quotes Ibn 'Abbās as saying, "When the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) died I was just fifteen years old". 'Abdullāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal comments that his father held this to be the most correct opinion. Moreover, al-Zubayrī<sup>2</sup> narrates from Ibn 'Abbās that he said on the occasion of the last pilgrimage of the Prophet, the *Ḥajjat al-Wadā'* in the ninth year after the hijra: "On that day I entered puberty."<sup>3</sup> This implies that his age was around twelve or thirteen. To support this, according to other narrators, he said: "When the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) died I was thirteen years old." Fifteen years old has been suggested<sup>4</sup> and still others have it that he was born in the very year the migration from Mecca to Medina took place; based on this view his age at the death of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) would have been ten years old. This is a view attributed to Sa'īd b. Jubayr, who quoted Ibn 'Abbās as saying: "I was ten years old when I was circumcised and when the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) died."<sup>5</sup> This last opinion contradicts the fact that Ibn 'Abbās was known to have participated in the battle of Ḥunayn (8 A.H.)<sup>6</sup> and al-Ṭā'f (9 A.H.)<sup>7</sup>, which would necessitate that he had already reached puberty, for it was not the custom of the Prophet to accept minor boys in battle. A possible explanation for the discrepancies in the narrations relating to his age may be that some narrators were content to give a very approximate age, thus may have said he was ten years old knowing that he was actually thirteen.<sup>8</sup>

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*Rijāl*, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1992). Vol.14 / p290 and Al-Rāzī Ibn Abū Ḥātim, *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl* Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed, Vol.5 / p.7.

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Ishāq is Muhammad b. Ishāq b. Yasār al-Madanī, from the oldest of the Arab historians; his most famous work is the *sirah* of the Prophet. He was a *ḥāfiẓ* of *ḥadīth*. He lived in Baghdad and died there in 151/738. *Al-'Ālām*, Vol.6 / 28.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Zubayrī is Mus'ab b. 'Abdullāh b. Zubayr b. al-'Awwām, Abū 'Abdullāh al-Zubayrī al-Madanī, resident in Baghdad, a scholar of genealogy, he passed away in 136/723. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalāni, Aḥmad b. Shihāb al-Dīn, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1326), Vol.10 / p.162.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Isti'āb fī Ma'rifat al-Aṣḥāb* Vol.3/ p.67.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Mohammad b. Ahmad, *Al-Kāshif fī Ma'rifat Man Lahū Riwayah fī al-Kutub al-Sittah*, by al-Imam, edited by 'Izzat 'Alī 'Aṭīyyah, Dar al-Kutub al-Ḥadithah, Egypt, Vol.2 / p.100.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Vol.8 / p.280.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Hishām, Abd-almalek, *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya li Ibn Hishām*, Edited by Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī. 'Abdul-Hafīẓ Shalabī, al-Maktaba al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut. Vol.4 / p.437. Ḥunayn is a valley nearby Mecca. There took place there a battle between the Muslims and the tribe of Thaḳīf in (8 A.H). Al-Ḥamawī Shihāb Abū 'Abdullāh Yāqūt b. 'Abdullāh, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1997), Vol.3 / p.190.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, Vol.4 / p.478. Ṭā'if is a well-known city near Mecca, well-known for its grapevines. the Prophet conquered it (9 A.H). *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Vol.5 / p.241.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Mohammed b. Ahmad, *Siyar A'Ālām al-Nubalā'*, Edited by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, Beirut, Lebanon, 11<sup>th</sup> Ed. (1998), Vol.3 / p.336.



The author has gone to lengths in discussing this topic to make it clear that Ibn ‘Abbās was indeed a young boy during the era of the Prophet, however he was uniquely gifted and thus capable of receiving sacred knowledge and memorizing it. This is one of the reasons I shall mention later relating to the causes for the excelling of Ibn ‘Abbās in subject of *tafsīr*.

### 1.1.3. His death:

Although historical narrators agree upon al-Ṭā’if to be the place of his death, they give different dates of the time of his death. Some refer to the year 68 A.H, others make it 67 A.H., while the majority indicate the year 68 A.H which seems to be the exact date<sup>1</sup>. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī<sup>2</sup> reports that Ibn ‘Abbās had been exiled to al-Ṭā’if at the decision of Ibn al-Zubayr and stayed there until his last moment when he became seventy or seventy one or seventy four. Muhammad b. al-Ḥanafīyyah<sup>3</sup>, a son of ‘Alī, had praised him and performed the funeral prayer for his sake<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-‘Iṣābah* Vol.2 / p.334.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī is Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Kinānī, Abu al-Faḍl Shiḥāb al-Dīn b. Ḥajr al-‘Asqalānī, born in Cairo in 773/1372. A Shafī‘ī Imam and hadith master, he reached the level of Commander of the Faithful in hadith, the rank above that of hadith master. He authored a number of works on hadith, history, biography, Qur’ānic exegesis, poetry and Shafī‘ī jurisprudence, among the most famous of them his fourteen volume *Fath al Barī bi sharḥ Saḥīḥ al-Bukharī* which few serious students of Islamic knowledge can do without. He died in Cairo in 852/1449. Keller, N. *Reliance of the Traveller*, Maryland .Amana Publication, ED (1994) x159 p.1054, Mursi ,Muhammad said, ‘*Uḏamā’ al-Islām*, Iqra , E.D(2003). ‘, p.359.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad b. al-Ḥanafīyyah is Muhammad b. ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib al-Hāshimī. He was born in 21/646 and his mother was Khawlah b. Ja‘far al-Ḥanafīyyah. His birth and death were in Medina, though it has been said by some that his death in 81/700 was in Ṭā’if. *Al-A‘lām* Vol.6 / p.270, *Uḏamā’ al-Islām* ,p.172.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Isti‘āb* Vol.3 / p.66; *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* Vol.8/ p.291.

## 1.2. Ibn ‘Abbās’ Intellectual, Social and Political Life:

### 1.2.1. His Intellectual and Social Position:

Called *al-Hibr*, “the doctor”, or *al-Baḥr*, “the sea”<sup>1</sup>, because of his doctrine, Ibn ‘Abbās is considered one of the greatest scholars, if not the greatest, of the first generation of Muslims. He was the father of Qur’ānic exegesis, “the chief authority on traditional commentaries”<sup>2</sup> at a time when it was necessary to bring the Qur’ān in accord with the new demands of a society which had undergone a profound transformation. He appears to have been extremely skilful in accomplishing his task.

He was brought up in an honorable household under the care of his father. After he immigrated to Medina and came in to association with the Prophet (p.b.u.h) he received his knowledge from him. He accompanied him for about thirty months and clung to him almost continuously. Although the time was quite short but it was as though God had placed His blessing into it making it a very fruitful period for Ibn ‘Abbās so he was able to transmit to mankind very abundant information about the life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). He would frequently visit his aunt, Maymūna b. al-Ḥārith, who was one of the Prophet’s (p.b.u.h.) wives, in the pursuit of knowledge. He narrated that he once came to his aunt and explained to her his desire to stay in her house during that night. She asked him how it was possible considering she had only one mattress; he said I do not need a mattress; I will spread out my loincloth and put my head behind yours on the pillow. Then the Prophet (p.b.u.h) came and Maymūna informed him about this. He said: “This is the *sheikh*, “learned one” of Quraysh”<sup>3</sup>. According to a narration in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad, Ibn ‘Abbās said that he spent a night in his aunt’s home and prepared ablution water for the Prophet (p.b.u.h); At this the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, “O Allāh instruct him with interpretation (of the Qur’ān) and give him knowledge of the religion”<sup>4</sup>. Again in *Musnad* of Aḥmad there is information given by Ibn ‘Abbās showing his position with the Prophet

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<sup>1</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol.1 / p.40, art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”, L. Veccia Vaglieri.

<sup>2</sup> Goldziher Ignaz, *A Short History of Classical Arabic Literature*, Translated by Joseph Desomogyi, OLMS (1966) p.46.

<sup>3</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* Vol3 / p.341.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Hanbal, Aḥmad *Musnad* of, Aḥmad, : Mu’assasit al-Risāla, Beirut, Lebanon 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition,( 1991) Vol.5 pp.159-160, Ḥadith number 3033.



(p.b.u.h.). He said that he stood behind the Prophet in his prayer, but the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) brought him forward and made him stand beside himself. “When he finished he asked me what the matter was. I said: “Is it possible for some one to pray beside *you*, the Messenger of God?” He prayed for me requesting God to augment my knowledge and understanding.”<sup>1</sup>

In a collection of sound *ḥadīth*, it is narrated that the Prophet embraced him and said “O God, teach him wisdom.”<sup>2</sup> In another relation “O God, bless him, make him a cause for the dissemination of knowledge and make him one of Your virtuous servants”. In yet another narration he said: “O Allāh teach him wisdom and interpretation of the (Holy) Book”<sup>3</sup>. Al-Shi‘bi<sup>4</sup> reported that Zayd b Thābit wanted to ride a horse, however, Ibn ‘Abbās grabbed its stirrup to lead it. Zayd exclaimed that it was not befitting for the cousin of the Prophet to do so. Ibn ‘Abbās responded that it was the right of the scholars of the community that they should be treated as such. At this, Zayd kissed his hand and said that it was his right as a member of the family of the Prophet.<sup>5</sup> This event manifests the modesty and humbleness of Ibn ‘Abbās, aside from his deep respect for scholarship and its folk, as well as their reciprocation of this respect towards him.

These narrations, and those documented by Ibn ‘Abbās’ biographers present him as a counselor whom the Companions, and in particular, the Caliphs ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān valued highly<sup>6</sup>. ‘Umar kept him always within his inner-circle of advisors and jurisconsults; this is a reflection of his recognition of Ibn ‘Abbās’ profound knowledge and understanding. There were some who held contentions that he should be afforded such a position in light of his age. To remove any doubts, ‘Umar, on one occasion invited a number of prominent Companions to a gathering in which he asked questions of a

<sup>1</sup> *Musnad* of Aḥmad Vol.5 / p.178, the Ḥadith 3060.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Majā: *Al-Ḥafīz abu Abd- Allah ,Sunan b. Māja*, edited by Muhammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, Dār al-Rayyān Lil-Turāth, merit of Ibn ‘Abbās Vol.1/ p.166.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-‘Isr: 30* Vol.3/ p.67, and see the *Musnad* of Aḥmad Vol.4 / p.244, Ḥadith 2422.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Shi‘bī is ‘Āmir b. Sharāḥīl al-Shi‘bi al-Ḥumayrī (19/640 – 64/721), a Tābi‘ī who spent his days from birth in Kufa. He was specialist in ḥadīth and regarded as a trustworthy narrator. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz appointed him as a judge during his Caliphate. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.3 / p.251.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-‘Isr: 30* Vol.2/ p.332; *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* Vol.2 / p.285.

<sup>6</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol.1 / p.40, art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”.

religious nature; among the questions posed was the understanding of the following verse, ‘When comes the Help Of God, and the Victory’<sup>1</sup> “Some suggested that Allāh is ordering them to praise Him and ask for His forgiveness if He grants victory (i.e. people’s conversion into Islam); most others remained silent. ‘Umar then turned to Ibn ‘Abbās and asked if it is so. To this he replied: “No. Rather it is a forewarning of the time of the Prophet’s death: “and that is a sign of your death, then extol your Lord and ask for his forgiveness, He is the Most Merciful” ‘Umar commented, “I believe it was revealed with the same meaning”<sup>2</sup>.

Al-Wāqidī referred to the high standing of Ibn ‘Abbās with ‘Umar’s by quoting from ‘Āmir b. Sa’d b. Abū Waqqās<sup>3</sup> what his father mentioned in this regard: he stated that he had noticed ‘Umar was quick to call upon Ibn ‘Abbās to solve dilemmas albeit his general preference was to consult the Companions who had taken part in the battle of Badr; he would often adopt the viewpoint of Ibn ‘Abbās over theirs.<sup>4</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās would declare that he likes a ruler for his justice, that he delights for the rain to fall in a place although he has no livestock in it, and that he recites a verse from the Holy Qur’ān which the Muslims are able to comprehend as he does.<sup>5</sup> The real scholar then, does not monopolise knowledge for himself nor does he become haughty in the presence of others, but rather behaves humbly towards them, teaching them as well as taking instruction from them, and wishes good for them as he wishes it for himself; thus Ibn ‘Abbās was an exemplar of truthfulness and a sincerity. For this reason, as teacher of his companions, he would exhort them to learning. ‘Ikrima said about him: ‘Ibn ‘Abbās would tie me up in chains forcing me to learn and not to give up knowledge’.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> XLV11: 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī, ,Shehab- aldin ahmad b. ali, *Fatḥ al-Bārī, Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Dār al-Manār, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1999). Vol.8 / pp.837-838; *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / pp345, 349; *al-Bidāya wa al-Nih āya* Vol.8 p 284.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Āmir b. Sa’d b. Abū Waqqās, a reliable *ḥadīth* narrator, he passed away in 104/691. *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 p.369.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.1 / p.347. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, art. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās’, Vol.1 / p.40.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-’Iṣṣā’a* Vol.2 / p.334.

<sup>6</sup> *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*, Vol.5 / p.14.



Ibn ‘Abbās occupied this rank during the time of both great caliphs ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān. He also often delivered legal opinions in their presence<sup>1</sup>. The *Tabi‘ūn*, “Followers”, and Islamic scholars agreed upon the fact that he was of a wide and comprehensive knowledge not only in respect to religion but also in the Arabic language and literature, legal judgment, history and genealogies<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.2.2. His patience:

Towards the end of his life, Ibn ‘Abbās lost his sight. Far from reducing his faith he would, on the contrary, demonstrate immeasurable patience and exclaim that God had replaced the sight of his eye for the sight of his heart. The question of whether this had any bearing on his ability to teach or retain knowledge deserves considering. ‘Ikrima mentioned that some people of Ṭā’if came to Ibn ‘Abbās carrying his books; they asked him to verify what they had written down with them by recounting from memory. He attempted to do so but found some difficulty. After making mistakes which he attributed to the affliction that had befallen him, he asked for them to read for him what they had already recorded of his knowledge; if a statement got his confirmation, it would be recognition of having the same level of his direct dictation<sup>3</sup>. If this narration is authentic,<sup>4</sup> it would indicate a weakness in his memorisation that had been caused by his old age and blindness.

### 1.2.3. His *Jihād*<sup>5</sup>:

In spite of the fact that Ibn ‘Abbās was engaged with Islamic knowledge and sacrificed his time to teach Islamic tradition, he did not tarry in respect to Jihad. He contributed in a

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* Vol.8 / pp.286-287; *al-‘Isti‘āb* Vol.3 / p.68; *al-‘Iṣāba* Vol 2 / p.333; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol.1/ p.40. , art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”,

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, Vol.3 / p.349; *al-‘Iṣāba* Vol.2 / p.332. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol.1 / p.40. , art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”,.

<sup>3</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / p.355.

<sup>4</sup> The author has not been able to find in any of the books on biography any supporting evidence beside: the one quoted above suggesting Ibn ‘Abbās was inflicted with an eye infection.

<sup>5</sup> Jihād is the fighting of the non-Muslims in order that they have the option, if they wish, to enter Islam; if they so wish they may pay the *jizya* (tax for the Muslim protection of them). God has made it an obligation upon the believers saying, “Prescribed for you is fighting”, II: 216, Ali, Abdullāh Yusuf the Holy Qur’ān, English translation of the meanings and commentary.

lot of holy battles besides his contribution in the invasions led by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) starting from the conquest of Mecca (8/595) and ending with the conquest of Africa (27/614) and Istanbul (50/637). Abū Sa‘īd b. Yūnis related that Ibn ‘Abbās participated in the raid of Africa led by Ibn Abū Sarḥ<sup>1</sup>. During the era of Mu‘āwiyah, the first force had been sent to Istanbul under the command of Yazīd<sup>2</sup> the son of Mu‘āwiyah. Groups of the companions participated in it such as Ibn ‘Umar<sup>3</sup>, Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn al-Zubayr and Abū Ayyūb al-‘Anṣārī in response to the prophetic encouragement that the first invading force to conquer the city of Caesar will be forgiven by God. This army was the first to invade expending huge effort in trying to reach it<sup>4</sup>.

Ibn ‘Abbās was an astute and perspicacious person in respect to political issues. It was narrated that people of Medina invited him to lead pilgrimage groups to Mecca. He transferred this request to ‘Uthmān<sup>5</sup> who invested him with the authority of this function. When he came back, ‘Uthmān was killed and he said to ‘Alī: “If you undertook the responsibility of the Caliphate people would accuse you with this crime until

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Abū Sarḥ is ‘Abdullāh b. Sa‘d b. Abu Sarḥ al-‘Āmari, a brother of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān through nursing, he was the commander of the army which conquered Africa. He entered Islam before the Conquest of Mecca, he was one of the scribes to write down revelation; he became governor of Egypt in 25/612, and died in Palestine in 37/624. *Al-Isti‘āb*, Vol. 3 / p.50 and *al-A‘lām*, Vol.4 / pp.88-89.

<sup>2</sup> Yazīd is Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiyah b. Abu Sufyān he was born in Syria 25/612 and brought up in Damascus. He became Caliph after the death of his father in 60/679. During his reign Al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī was killed (61/680). During his reign, blood was spilt in Medina resulting in the death of many prominent companions in 63/682. Present day Morocco was also conquered in his time. He died in 64/683. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.8 / p189, Al-Ṭabarī, Muhammad b. Jarīr, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wal Mulūk*, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Egypt, (1960), Vol.6/pp.274-275 and Ibn al-Athīr, Izz al-dīn abū al-Ḥasan, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, Edited by Abū al-Fidā’ ‘Abdullāh al-Qādī, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (1998). Vol.3 / p.465.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn ‘Umar is ‘Abdullah b. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Abu ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Adawī, born to one of the noblest families of the Quraysh in Mecca ten years before the Hijra (A.D 613). He was a Companion of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) who emigrated to Medina with his father ‘Umar ibn al- Khaṭṭāb and was raised in Islam. He participated in the Battle of al-Aḥzāb and the conquest of Mecca. One of the most knowledgeable of the Companions, he gave formal legal opinions to Muslims for sixty years and related 2,630 hadiths. He lost his eyesight at the end of his life, and was the last of the Companions to die in Mecca, in 73/692. *Reliance of the Traveller* x179 pp.1060-1061.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* Vol.8 / p32; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol.1 / p.40. Art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Uthmān is ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān b. Abu al-‘Ās b. Umayyah al-Qurashi, born in Mecca forty-seven years before the Hijra (A.D 577). He was the third Caliph of Islam and one of the ten whom the Prophet (P.B.U.H) informed they would enter paradise. He accepted the caliphate after ‘Umar’s death in 23/636. He related 146 hadith from the Prophet (P.B.U.H), who married two of his daughters to him at different times, Ruqayya and Umm Kulthūm, for which reason ‘Uthmān was called He of the Two Lights. He was murdered in 35/656. *Reliance of the Traveller* x360 p.1107.



Doomsday”<sup>1</sup>. At the time when ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib appointed him to be the ruler of the region of Syria, which was controlled by Mu‘āwiyah, he had not had a good opinion of this decision; instead he suggested that ‘Alī give to Mu‘āwiyah a hope but this more accurate suggestion was strongly rejected<sup>2</sup>. If it was implemented, fighting would not break out between them. Similarly, he advised ‘Alī not to choose Abū Mūsā al-‘Ash‘arī as his representative in the arbitration process; for, the representative of Mu‘āwiyah was extremely cautious, a veteran of negotiation. ‘Alī responded what I should do towards the protestation of Al-‘Ash‘ath<sup>3</sup> who says two *Muḍaris* (meaning ‘Alī and Ibn ‘Abbās) must not be involved in this matter. Ibn ‘Abbās remarked that is why I excused him<sup>4</sup>. According to another narration, ‘Alī was aiming to select Ibn ‘Abbās as his representative for this purpose but he was helpless to do so<sup>5</sup>. During the battle of Ṣiffīn against Mu‘āwiyah, Ibn ‘Abbās was the commander of the left wing of ‘Alī’s troops. Later on he was assigned as a governor for Basra<sup>6</sup>.

At the time of ‘Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr, who nominated himself as a Caliph in Ḥijāz, after Ḥusayn’s departure to Basra, Ibn ‘Abbās met Ibn al-Zubayr and invoked lines of poetry that the surroundings had been vacated to call for himself. The reaction of Ibn al-Zubayr was so severe. Angrily he replied that you were the family who thought the leadership to be for them rather than other people. Ibn ‘Abbās said it was the doubtful person who thought so but we are sure to be so; but as for yourself, tell me why did you prefer yourself for this position to all Arabs? Ibn al-Zubayr said for my dignity amongst them! Ibn ‘Abbās commented which dignity? That which was yours or that which you obtained your dignity from? Ibn al-Zubayr said: who I got my nobility from had increased my dignity. Their voices had raised high as much as that some men of Quraysh separated

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / p.349.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Al-‘Ash‘ath is al-‘Ash‘ath b. Qays al-Kindī (23/600 – 40/661), the Amīr of Kindah during the time of pre-Islamic ignorance and Islam. He came to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) during early Islam from Ḥaḍramawt and entered the faith with his people. He took part in the battles of Yarmouk, Ṣiffīn and al-Nahrawān. He returned to Kūfa where he eventually died. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.1 / p.322 and Al-Zuhrī, Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1996). Vol.1 / p.158.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, Vol. 3 / pp.349- 350.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid Vol.3 / p.353. *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, Vol.3 / p.194.

<sup>6</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, Vol.3 / p.353.

them from each other<sup>1</sup>. For this reason and possibly for other reasons too Ibn ‘Abbās refused to pay his acknowledgement to Ibn al-Zubayr when he nominated himself as a Caliph.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the fact that Ibn al-Zubayr threatened him by intending to burn him so that he would be obliged to submit his confession, Ibn ‘Abbās send a messenger to Kūfah asking for aid. Four thousand armed men hastened to protect him; they entered Mecca and exclaimed “Allāh is great”; Ibn al-Zubayr fled away and went to Dār al-Nadwah or clung to Ka‘bah saying that he sought refuge with the House of Allāh; as for the relievers, they took him away to al-Ta’if<sup>3</sup>. This was an evidence for his self-esteem and power in adopting true things. It was also a proof for him not to be yield to wrong questions even though he was threatened with being burned with fire. He narrated that Mu‘āwiyah accused him of being a follower of Alī; Ibn ‘Abbās rejected this accusation and told him that he was not on the denomination of ‘Uthmān nor was he following anyone except the Prophet (p.b.u.h.)<sup>4</sup>. This reflects the positions that are distinguished with liberty in the frame of virtues and collective interests. No one has the right to expropriate another’s freedom or of trespassing it; it is the freedom of speech and opinion which is deeply rooted in the Islamic civilization and enables every one to demonstrate his views in any manner he wishes.

#### 1.2.4. His teachers and students:

It is self-evident that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was Ibn ‘Abbās’ primary teacher. From youth he remained in close contact and adhered to him devotedly. Following the death of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) he clung to the *Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn*, “Rightly-Guided Caliphs”, and

<sup>1</sup> *SiyarA’lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / p.354, . *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.5 / pp.254 – 308.

<sup>2</sup> Other reasons why Ibn ‘Abbās did not swear fealty to Ibn al-Zubayr: Ibn al-Zubayr was viewed as not being capable of governing and of being short-sighted. In spite of the fact that most of the Islamic capitals had sworn fealty to him, and only a small area remained in the hands of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam in Syria, al-Ḥakam began to regain regions controlled by Ibn al-Zubayr because of the latter’s inability to control. Shākir, Mahmūd, *Al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, Beirut, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. (1991), Vol.4 / p.151. Another reason is that Ibn ‘Abbās swore he would not accept a leader until the whole community had accepted him, because of his deep concern that the Muslim community remained one body. Laḥḥām, Mājīd, *A’lām al-Muslimīn: ‘Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr*, Dār al-Qalam, Damascus, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1995), p.159. It may also be that Ibn al-Zubayr’s character did not appeal to Ibn ‘Abbās. Ibid. Pp.208 – 211. Possibly the most important reason was to prevent discord and division, and that would have been inline with the advice of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). *Faṭḥ al-Bārī Kitāb al-Fitan*, Vol.13 / p.35 *Hadīth*, No.7081.

<sup>3</sup> *SiyarA’lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / p.356.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Vol.3 / p.342. , *A’lām al-Muslimīn: ‘Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr*, p.161.



other disciples of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) like, according to his own statement, Ubayy b. Ka'b as well as others from *Anṣār*<sup>1</sup>.

As for his students, enumerating them is difficult. This is due to the fact that tens of students had interest in benefiting from his knowledge. Historians refer to the roads being filled of such students hoping to drink from his fount of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> But his most renowned students are: his servants 'Ikrima<sup>3</sup>, Sa'īd b. Jubayr<sup>4</sup>, Mujāhid b. Jabr<sup>5</sup>, Ṭawūs b. Kaysān al-Yamānī<sup>6</sup>, and 'Atā' b. Abū Rabāḥ<sup>7</sup>, Kurayb b. Abū Muslim<sup>8</sup>, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim<sup>9</sup>, Ibn Abū Mulayka<sup>10</sup>, Abū al-'Āliya<sup>11</sup> and Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol.3 / pp.343 - 344, 345; *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihāya* Vol.8 / p.284.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Vol.3 / p.350-351; *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihāya* Vol.8 / pp.286-287.

<sup>3</sup> 'Ikrima is 'Ikrima b. Abdullāh al-Barbari al-Madani (25/645 – 105/723), the freed-slave of Ibn 'Abbās. He was a Tābi'ī, and one of the foremost in tafsīr of his time. He died in Medina. *Al-'Alām*, Vol. 4 / p.244.

<sup>4</sup> Sā'īd b. Jubayr (45/665 – 95/714) is Sā'īd b. Jubayr al-Asadī al-Kūfī, a Tābi'ī; he was the most knowledgeable of them without exception, he took knowledge from Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn 'Umar. He was killed by Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf. Ibn 'Abbās would say, if Kūfans came to him for legal verdicts, "You come to me whilst Sā'īd is amongst you!" *al-A'lām*, Vol.3 / p.93.

<sup>5</sup> Mujāhid b. Jabr, Abū al-Hajjaj al-Makkī, of Mecca, has born (22/642). A Qur'ānic exegete of the generation who followed that of the Companions, he is referred to by al-Dhahabī as "the Shaykh of Qur'ān reciters and interpreters" and took his knowledge of Qur'ānic exegesis from Ibn 'Abbās, with whom he read the Qur'ān three times, stopping at every verse and asking him how and in reference to what it was revealed. It is said he died while prostrate in prayer, in (104/722). *Reliance of the Traveller*, x267, p1082.

<sup>6</sup> Ṭawūs b. Kaysān al-Yamānī (33/653 – 106/724) is Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ṭawūs b. Kaysān al-Yamānī, a major Tābi'ī who was an erudite jurist and muḥaddith. Known for his fearlessness in the face of the rulers, he finally died at Muzdalifah on Hajj. *Al-A'lām*, Vol. 3 / p.224 and *Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.85

<sup>7</sup> 'Atā' b. Abū Rabāḥ is 'Aṭā b. Aslam b. Ṣafwān (27/647 – 114-723), one of the foremost of the Tābi'ī's in jurisprudence, he was originally a Yemeni slave, born in Yemen but raised in Mecca, where he was finally laid to rest. *Al-A'lām*, Vol. 4 / p.235 and *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.85.

<sup>8</sup> Kurayb is Kurayb b. Abū Muslim the freed-slave of Ibn 'Abbās, a Medinian who narrated from Ibn 'Abbās, Maymūnah and Umm Salamah. 'Amr b. Dīnār and Zuhri related from him. Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn regarded him as trustworthy. He died in (98 A.H). *Taqrib al-Tadhīb*, Vol.2 / p.143 and *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, Vol.7 / p.168.

<sup>9</sup> Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Hilālī, has a *tafsīr* ascribed to him. He was not considered a reliable traditionist though he reports from Ibn 'Abbās. It is said he never met Ibn 'Abbās and Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān said that he was a weak narrator. It is said that he narrated from Sa'īd b. Jubayr, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol.4/pp.598-600.

<sup>10</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Abū Mulayka (d.117), born in the caliphate of 'Alī, he reports from 'A'isha, Asmā' bint Abū Bakr and Ibn 'Abbās. He was a great scholar and traditionist from whom Mujāhid and 'Amr b. Dīnār reported. *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol.5/pp.89-90.

<sup>11</sup> Abū al-'Āliya is al-Barā' b. Nājiya al-Kāhilī al-Kūfī, he narrated from Ibn Mas'ūd, regarded as trustworthy (*thiqah*) in *ḥadīth*. Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī, Shihab al-din Ahmad b. Ali, *Tadhīb al-Tadhīb*, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1913 AD), Vol.1 / p.427.

<sup>12</sup> Ṣāliḥ is Bādhām (also pronounced Bādhān) the freed slave of Umm Hānī bt. Abū Ṭālib, second generation, trustworthy, sound of *ḥadīth* generally, but his narrations are to be regarded as weak if transmitted from al-Kalbī. He taught children and became well-known for Qur'ānic exegesis. It is said of his exegesis that it is no more than a compilation of books which he stumbled across. He supposedly



In *al-Kāshif*<sup>1</sup> there is a reference to another student, namely Abū Jamra al-Ḍuba‘i.<sup>2</sup> It is said that 197 narrators reported from him.<sup>3</sup> They differ in the number of their narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās, and scholars have varying perceptions of each of them.<sup>4</sup>

#### 1.2.5. Ibn ‘Abbās’ Status in *Hadīth* and Jurisprudence:

He occupied a seat of great prominence in the sciences of *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence; he was so prolific in these fields that scholars narrated from him a large corpus of Prophetic Tradition. He was very young at the time of the Prophet’s death hence his narrations directly from the Prophet are small in comparison to what he narrated via other Companions.<sup>5</sup> However, the number of *ḥadīth* he took from the Companions were many in number: Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, for example, “cited one-thousand six-hundred and sixty-six *ḥadīths* from Ibn ‘Abbās’ narrations; in the two authentic books of *ḥadīth*, the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* (al-Bukhārī and Muslim), there are two-hundred and thirty-four *ḥadīths*, seventy-five of which have been accepted by both scholars; al-Bukhārī alone mentioned a further hundred and ten *ḥadīths* while Muslim<sup>6</sup> mentioned forty nine”<sup>7</sup>. In addition, Ibn ‘Abbās was one of seven jurists known for delivering legal opinions (*Fatwā*) after the Prophet’s death (p.b.u.h.). Ibn Ḥazm<sup>8</sup> mentioned that Abū Bakr Muhammad b. Mūsā

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narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās although he never heard from him directly. Ibn al-Madīnī says from al-Qaṭṭān, “I have none from amongst our companions who has left his narrations”. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.8/p.147.

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Kāshif* Vol. 2 p.100.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Jamra al-Ḍuba‘i is Naṣr b. ‘Imrān al-Baṣri, confirmed as a trustworthy narrator, and died in 28/641. *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.6 / p.305 .

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, Vol.3 / p.333.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Dhahabi, Muhammad, Ḥusain, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn, Maktabat wahba*, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed (1421 A.H 2000 A. D) Vol.1 / p.77.

<sup>5</sup> Şiddīqī, Muhammad Z, *Ḥadīth Literature: Its origin, development & special features*, Edited by A.H. Murad, The Islamic Texts Society (1993), p.21.

<sup>6</sup> Muslim is Muslim b. Ḥajjāj b. Muslim, born in Naysābūr, Persia (204/820). A *ḥadīth* master and Imam second only to al-Bukhārī. He died at his birthplace in 261/875. *Reliance of the Traveller*, x273, p1083., *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.7 / p.221, ‘*Uḏamā’ al-Islām*, p.349.

<sup>7</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / p.359. See also *Ḥadīth Literature: Its origin, development & special features*, p.18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Ḥazm is ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. Sa‘īd, Abu Muhammad b. Ḥazm al-Zāhirī, born in Cordova in 384/994. A gifted author, minister in government, poet, and the scholar of Andalusia in his era, he followed Imām Dāwud al-Zāhiri, a student of al-Shāfi‘ī, who accepted only the Qur’ān, *ḥadīth* and scholarly consensus (*ijmā’*) as sources of evidence in Sacred Law. Ibn Ḥazm remains virtually the only written representative of the Zāhiri school. He died in 456/1064. *Reliance of the Traveller*, x161, p.1054. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.4 / 254.

(268/881 – 342/953)<sup>1</sup>, who was one of great Islamic scholars in *ḥadīth*, had compiled Ibn ‘Abbās’s opinions in twenty volumes<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, Ibn ‘Abbās was the person to whom the Companions used to turn to when seeking legal advice. In this connection it has been narrated that Layth b. Abū Aslam<sup>3</sup> had asked Ṭāwūs about the reason that caused him to leave the great Companions favoring over them Ibn ‘Abbās. Ṭāwūs justified it as he had “noticed seventy of Companions yield to his opinion if they disputed with each other”<sup>4</sup>. He would even encourage people to ask him; in this regard, al-Bukhārī<sup>5</sup> relates from Abū al-Sifr<sup>6</sup> that he had heard Ibn ‘Abbās requesting people to listen to him and to state him what they were going to say<sup>7</sup>. As for his way in discussing juristic points, he did not depend upon his own estimation unless he did not find a definite text or a viewpoint of either Abū Bakr or ‘Umar. Abdullāh b Abū Yazīd<sup>8</sup> mentioned that he watched Ibn ‘Abbās while he was asked about any problem “so if he found (its solution) in the Qur’ān he adopted it. If there was nothing about it in the Qur’ān but in the tradition of the Prophet he assumed it. If there was nothing regarding it in the Qur’ān or in the Prophetic tradition but in (the legal views of) Abū Bakr and ‘Umar he professed it. But if there was nothing in the Qur’ān, prophetic tradition, and (views of) Abū Bakr and ‘Umar he presented his

<sup>1</sup> Abū Bakr Muhammad b. Mūsā (268/881 – 342/953), is Abū Bakr Muhammad b. Mūsā b. Ya‘qūb b. al-Khalīfah al-Ma‘mūn, a governor from the Abbāsids. He was a scholar in *ḥadīth* and regarded as a trustworthy narrator. Born in Mecca. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.7 / p.117.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / p.358; Ibn. Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *A‘lām al-Muwaqqi‘īn ‘An Rab al-‘Ālamīn*, Dār al-Fikr Lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr, Beirut, Lebanon, (1420A.H)/ 1999A.D, 1:10.

<sup>3</sup> Layth b. Abū Aslam was regarded as truthful narrator of *ḥadīth* although he was prone to confusion during the latter years of life. He died in 48/661. *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol. 2 / p.148.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Bidāya* Vol.8 / p.286.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Bukhārī is Muhammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mughīra, Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Bukhārī, born in Bukhara (in present-day Uzbekistan in 194/810. Raised as an orphan, he was a Shāfi‘i scholar who learned Sacred Law in Mecca from ‘Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr al-Ḥumaydī, the disciple of Shāfi‘I, and he became the greatest Imam in *ḥadīth* that the world has ever known. He collected some 600,000 prophetic traditions from which he selected approximately 4,400 that compose his *Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ. Reliance of the Traveller*, x107, p.1043. *‘Uḏamā’ al-Islām*, p.347, Al-Mubarakfuri, ‘Abd al-Salām, *Sīrat al-Imām al-Bukhārī*, Idārat al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyya wa al-Da‘wah wal Iftā’, al-Jāmi‘a al-Salafiyya, India. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (1987). pp.39 – 50.

<sup>6</sup> Abū al-Sifr is ‘Abdullāh b. Abu Sifr al-Thawrī al-Kūfī, a trustworthy authority in *ḥadīth*, he passed away during the Caliphate of Marwān b. Muhammad. *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol. 1 / p.397.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Muhammad b. Ismā‘īl, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyya, al-Riyāḍ (1998 AD) : Vol. 4 / p.238, *Kitāb Manāqib al-‘Anṣar*, Ḥadīth No. 3848.

<sup>8</sup> Abdullāh b Abū Yazīd is Abdullāh b Abū Yazīd al-Māzinī, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bāṣrī. He was deemed an acceptable *ḥadīth* narrator. *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol. 1 / p.432.



own view"<sup>1</sup>. He had a unique methodology in jurisprudence; a number of scholars had collected his opinions that he disagreed on with other scholars and that he had individually declared<sup>2</sup>. His opinions about shortening prayer while residing in a town<sup>3</sup>, grandfather's sharing with brothers in inheritance,<sup>4</sup> and rejecting sister's inheritance if the dead person has a daughter<sup>5</sup> are examples of these personal views. In addition to this, he legalised temporary marriage but he retracted his permission towards the end of his life<sup>6</sup>. It seems that his retraction was based upon his certainty of the Prophet's prohibition for it.<sup>7</sup>

#### 1.2.6. Ibn 'Abbās' status in exegesis:

Of the Companions, possibly the ten who were most famous for interpreting the Qur'ān were: the four caliphs, Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ubayy b. Ka'b, Zayd b. Thābit, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, and 'Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr. As for the four caliphs, 'Alī is the one who was most prolific. Narrations from the other three, as has been suggested by some scholars, are very limited due to their early death<sup>8</sup> and their being occupied with matters relating to governance and military expansion; this aside from their being present in a community whose populace was largely scholarly, having expertise in *tafsīr* and its disciplines, i.e. the subtleties of exegesis, its legal aspects, and the fact that they were 'pure' Arabs. These factors meant that there was not such a need to return to them for *tafsīr*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Al-Khann , Muṣṭafā , 'Abdullāh b Abbās, Habr al-Ummah wa Tarjuman al Qur'an, Dar al-Qalam, Damascus. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed , p.77.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; Sayyid, Muhammad Sumayḥī, *Infirādāt Ibn 'Abbās 'an Jumhūr al-Ṣaḥābah fi al-Aḥkām al-Fiqhiyya*. (Doctoral thesis, Sudan, Umm Durmān) Maktabat al-Furqān, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (2000). pp.60-110.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Yamāni ,al-Ṣan'āni, Shaykh al-Imām Muhammad b. Ismā'il al-Amīr, *Subul al-Salām Sharḥ Bulūgh al-Marām Min Jam' Adillat al-Aḥkām*, , introduced by Muhammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mar'ashi, Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed (1997 AD), Vol. 1/ p.57.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abdullah b. 'Abbās, Muṣṭafā al-Khann p.79.

<sup>5</sup> *Fatḥ al-Bārī* Vol.8 /p.299, Chapter 27, *Hadīth no. 4605*.

<sup>6</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol.1 / p.40. , art. "'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās".

It is believed that the issues which Ibn 'Abbās held and were unique to him were not definitive in nature and so were open to different opinions; otherwise, it may be that he simply had not heard of their rulings from the Prophet; this would be why once he heard the Prophet's decision on it he vindicated his position. Another reason for differing opinions is a difference in understanding the source evidences.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Zurqānī. Muhammad Abdul Azīm, *Manāhil al-'Irfān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Dār Ihyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya Vol.2 / p.14.

<sup>9</sup> *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1/ p.49.

The Companions were highly skilled interpreters of the Qur'ān, though Ibn 'Abbās still managed to supersede each one of them; this is why he earned the title of 'the Great Interpreter' of the Qur'ān designated by Ibn Mas'ūd.<sup>1</sup> 'Umar would say about Ibn 'Abbās: "You are the most handsome of us, the most polite and the most knowledgeable regarding the Book of God."<sup>2</sup> Ibn 'Umar would criticize him to begin with, saying that he was 'most daring in his exegesis of the Qur'ān'. After realizing the copiousness of his knowledge, Ibn 'Umar said "Ibn Abbās is the most knowledgeable of the community of Muhammad regarding what was revealed to him".<sup>3</sup> Ibn Abū Mulaykah mentions that he had seen Mujāhid carrying his sheets and asking Ibn 'Abbās to interpret the Qur'ān for him; similarly, Mujāhid himself states that he "had reviewed the Qur'ān with Ibn 'Abbās three times from its beginning to its end and stopped him at each verse and asked him about it".<sup>4</sup> Islamic scholars have announced that he is placed in advance in this domain and that his view is decisive. Al-Ṣuyūṭi states that "in case where there is exegetical conflict in the viewpoints of a group of Companions and there is a possibility to combine between them then that is preferable; otherwise Ibn 'Abbās' opinion is put forward because the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) portended him this".<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, al-Zarkashī<sup>6</sup> inclines to the view that Ibn 'Abbās' commentary was by far the most extensive of the Companions, the majority of his commentary having been taken from 'Alī<sup>7</sup>. There are a lot of evidences that prove Ibn 'Abbās' engagement with interpreting the Qur'ān. "Information and evidences remove all impression of doubt", Sezgin says, "earliest endeavors to interpret the Qur'ān go back to the beginning of the

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Istī'āb* Vol.3 / p.67.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Taṣīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1/ p.50.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Iṣābah* Vol.2 / p.333.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, Muhammad b. Jarīr, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut (1999) Vol.1 p.62: for more information in this regard see the following sources: *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* Vol.3/ p.351; *al-Istī'āb* Vol.3/ p.68; *al-Iṣābah* Vol.2 / p.333.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Suyūṭi, Jalal al-dīn abd-alrahman, *Al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Beirut, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed (1995) Vol.4 / p.193.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Zarkashī is Muhammad b. Bahādir b. 'Abdullāh, Abū 'Abdullāh Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, born in Egypt in 45/1344. Of Turkish origin, he was a scholar of Shāfi'ī jurisprudence, fundamentals of law, ḥadīth, and literature, who wrote many works, among them his three-volume *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, on legal principles. He died in 794/1392. *Reliance of the traveller*, x386, p.1114.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Zarkashī, Badr al-Dīn, *Al-Burhān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr, (1988) Vol.2 p.74: *Ibn 'Abbās wa Madrasatuhu fi al-Taṣīr* p.180.



Islamic era and that the performance of Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās is considered as the first of these endeavors”<sup>1</sup>. Goldziher who admits that Ibn ‘Abbās was the “chief authority on traditional commentaries”<sup>2</sup>, on the other hand, does not adopt such a favourable opinion towards Ibn ‘Abbās. In fact, he indicated in his works a perceivable distrust in him. He has said that Muslims “consider him a ‘miracle in *tafsīr*’, the ‘sea of knowledge’, a ‘great scholar of this nation’, and the ‘guide and interpreter’ of the Qur’ān who has been blessed by the Prophet and Gabriel as well”<sup>3</sup>. He does not quote these phrases to show his belief in them but to raise doubts about them. He comments that “according to the Islamic narration. through his close relation with the Prophet, he himself received aspects of interpretation that are alone trustful. This narration has been easily fabricated, just like similar occasions in which narrations were fabricated, as the utmost age of Ibn ‘Abbās when the Prophet died is 10-13 years”<sup>4</sup>. He arrives at the conclusion that those who were his sources to clear up his doubts about the understanding of the Qur’ān were Abū al-Jald<sup>5</sup>, Ka‘b al-Aḥbār<sup>6</sup>, and Abd Allāh b. Sallām<sup>7</sup>; he then comments that it is not farfetched “to speak about the Jewish traced doctrine of Ibn ‘Abbās”<sup>8</sup>. This point shall be discussed in detail at a later time.

In conclusion, Goldziher’s attack on Ibn ‘Abbās centers around three points: firstly, to cause suspicion about the status that Ibn ‘Abbās has held in the field of exegesis; secondly, he sneers at the veracity of the Islamic narrations which consider Ibn ‘Abbās to have taken a copious portion of exegetical knowledge from the Prophet since, according to him, he was far too young to have managed this and spent only two or three years in

<sup>1</sup> *Tarīkh al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, Vol.1/ p.175.

<sup>2</sup> Goldziher, Ignaz, *A Short History of Classical Arabic Literature, OLMS (1966)* p.46.

<sup>3</sup> *Islamic Schools of Exegesis*, p.83.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* pp.84-85.

<sup>5</sup> Abū al-Jald is Jaylān b. Abū Farwa al-Asadī al-Baṣrī. He is considered a trustworthy reporter. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabari* by Aḥmad Shākir, Maṭba‘at Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Egypt, Vol.1 / p.340, *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta‘dīl*, Vol.2 / p.547.

<sup>6</sup> Ka‘b al-Aḥbār (d. 32/652) is Ka‘b b. Māti‘ al-Ḥumayrī, a Tābi‘ī. Before his conversion he was a distinguished Rabbi in Yemen. He converted to Islam during the reign of Abū Bakr, and came to Medina during the reign of ‘Umar. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.5 / p.228.

<sup>7</sup> Abd Allāh b. Sallām (d. 43/663) is ‘Abd Allāh b. Sallām b. al-Ḥārith al-Isrā‘īlī, a Companion, he converted soon after the Prophet’s arrival in Medina and was a scholar of *Tafsīr*. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.5 / p.228.

<sup>8</sup> *Islamic Schools of Exegesis*, p.87.



his companionship; thirdly, he seeks to prove that Ibn ‘Abbās took knowledge of *tafsīr* from sources other than the Prophet, and that he had no qualms about taking recourse to the People of the Book.

Ibn ‘Abbās occupies a primary position in the history of exegesis. Islamic scholars, as we have noticed earlier, appreciated his knowledge and praised him highly; not in praise of his distinguished character, but rather as a result of his scholarship. L. Vaglieri says: ‘He was proud of his knowledge, which was not based only on memory, but also on large collections of written notes. The Qur’ānic explanations of Ibn ‘Abbās were soon brought together in special collections, of which the *isnāds* go back to one of his immediate pupils.’<sup>1</sup> The pupil possibly intended here is either Ibn Jubayr or Mujāhid or even possibly the narration of *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās* from al-Kalbī.

In response to Goldziher, a question is posed: it may be asked who the person is who interpreted the Qur’ān for the first time. The answer to this question should explain that the *tafsīr* could only have come from Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas‘ūd and other Companions. Al-Ṭabarī quotes a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet is said to have interpreted only some of verses, and only those which he had learned from the Archangel Gabriel.<sup>2</sup> Other Companions were not of the same attitude towards interpreting the Qur’ān. Some of them abstained from delving into it, others were reserved, and a group was cautious. All Companions were excused because the Qur’ān was not revealed on a single occasion. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) used to clarify its ambiguous points and they comprehended its meanings through practicing them in addition to the fact that it had been sent down through the medium of their language. They thus sought to absolve themselves from

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1 p.40, art “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* Vol.1 / p.61. Al-Ṭabarī declares that Ja‘far b. Muhammad al-Zubayrī is in the chain of this *ḥadīth* though is not considered a scholar of *ḥadīth*. He believes that this *ḥadīth* cannot be authentic because it was indeed the Prophet who interpreted the Qur’ān. It should be pointed out, however, that Prophet did not explain, at least not verbally, much of the Qur’ān at all; this is discussed in the issue ‘The Degree to which the Prophet explained the Qur’ān’. R. Marston Speight demonstrates clearly that commentary on Qur’ān was not only done via verbal explication: *tafsīr* of sorts is provided through the subject of *asbāb*, the explanation of obscure words, the life of the Prophet and his physical implementation of the Qur’ān’s injunctions (Rippin, A,( ed.) *The Function of ḥadīth*, in the *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’ān*, Oxford: Clarendon Press ( 1988) p.69-71). Al-Ṭabarī seems to have overlooked this in his zeal to prove that the Prophet explained most of the Scripture.

undertaking interpretation and instead would indulge in Jihad and in the general application of Islam in their lives.

To further allay Goldziher's contentions, Ibn 'Abbās came to the Medina where he settled at least two or three years prior to the death of the Prophet. At that time most of the Qur'ān had been already revealed to the Prophet (p.b.u.h), the number of converting people into Islam had increased, and he was in the prime of his youthfulness living within the Prophetic environment which encouraged him to heed, learn and think about issues. Moreover, he was neither responsible for children nor for expenses; his aunt was the wife of the Prophet and he himself was his cousin and lived with him for sometime. Therefore, his sole interest was to gain knowledge, to learn the Qur'ān and comprehend it masterfully, and to deduce juristic rules. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) would often supplicate to God to grant him knowledge, juristic understanding, and the ability to interpret the Qur'ān;<sup>1</sup> eventually God answered the Prophet's prayers, by blessing Ibn 'Abbās with a powerful memory. As we have reiterated time and again, although Ibn 'Abbās may not have taken all of his knowledge directly from the Prophet, he would certainly have taken it from the Companions, who in turn would have learnt from the Prophet.

Rashād Dār Ghawth mentions that Ibn 'Abbās told his students once "that there are meanings in the Qur'ān which will come to be understood by the passing of time"<sup>2</sup>. This is a comment of a discerning and deeply intellectual scholar. The modern scientific discoveries have proven his sound opinion having shed much light in recent times on many verses previously not fully understood.<sup>3</sup> Take for example his commentary on, "Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before We clove them asunder?"<sup>4</sup> He explained this verse saying, "The two

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<sup>1</sup> *Fatḥ al-Bārī* Vol.7/ p.111 Hadīth No. 3756; Sunan Ibn Mājah, , Faḍl Ibn 'Abbās Vol.1/ p.58 Hadīth No. 166; *Musnad* of Aḥmad Vol.4 / p.244 Hadīth No. 2422.

<sup>2</sup> Dār Ghawth, Rashād, *Ma'āthir al-Şāḥābah: 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās*, Dar al-Nafa'is. Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> ed, 1983, p.18.

<sup>3</sup> From these books which number in the hundreds, are al-Khālidī, Şalāḥ, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān al-Bayānī wa Dalā'il Maşdarihī al-Rabbānī*, Dār 'Ammār, Jordan, 1st Ed (2000) pp.398 – 442, 'Abd al-Şarīad, Muhammad Kāmil, *Al-I'jāz al-'Ilmī fī al-Islām*, , al-Dār al-Miṣriyya al-Lubnāniyya. Cairo, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. (2004), the whole book. Musallam, Muştafā, *Mabāḥith fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Qalam, Damascus, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (2003) pp.165-228.

<sup>4</sup> XXI: 30.



(heavens and earth) were joined together as one, then God caused them to break apart.”<sup>1</sup> This has since been proven by modern science.<sup>2</sup> Also, his commentary of, “Allah is He who raised the heavens without any pillars that ye can see”<sup>3</sup>, for which he said, “He (God) raised the heavens with pillars but you cannot see them.”<sup>4</sup> Now, astronomers have inclined to the position that gravity acts exactly like pillars preventing the collision of planets and stars for each celestial body has its own gravitational energy or pull.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.10 / p.25.

<sup>2</sup> *I'jāz al-Qur'ān al-Bayānī*, pp.401 – 402.

<sup>3</sup> XIII: 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* Vol. 8 / p.122.

<sup>5</sup> *Mabāḥith fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, p.172.



#### 1.2.4. Factors that led to widening his knowledge, particularly in exegesis:

One may argue that the time which Ibn ‘Abbās spent with the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was clearly short, so how was he able within such a limited period to gain such a profuse degree of knowledge, leading to the epithets of *al-baḥr* (the sea) and *al-ḥibr* (the doctor), and the father of Qur’ānic exegesis?:

In response to this inquiry the following causal factors may be mentioned:

1- The fact that he grew up in the house of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.); in particular, he used to stay frequently in the house of his aunt Maymūnah bt. al-Ḥārith who was the wife of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). Besides that he was a distinguished person, not engaged with any thing except accompanying the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and hearing from him. He also accompanied him in all military campaigns after the conquest of Mecca.<sup>1</sup> There exists a manuscript in the Taymūriyya Library titled *Kashf al-bās ‘an mā rawāhū Ibn ‘Abbās mushāfahatan ‘an sayyid al-nās*. Its author says in the introduction that he had read in the biographical dictionary of Ibn Ḥajar a statement within the biography of Ibn ‘Abbās suggesting that he had only heard ten traditions from the Prophet. The author subsequently investigated the claim by pursuing all the narrations contained in al-Bukhārī and Muslim and other books of tradition, only to find at least seventy-five traditions reported by Ibn ‘Abbās from the Prophet.

It is also worth mentioning that the companionship of Ibn ‘Abbās to the Prophet was not that of an ordinary child, but rather one of a discerning student committed to learning everything possible from the greatest teacher. It is reported in al-Bukhārī by Ibn ‘Abbās that he would spend time at the house of the Prophet, and would wait up until the early hours of the morning just to catch a glimpse of how the Prophet would perform his night prayer.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / p.338.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibn ‘Abbās wa madrasatuhu fī al-tafsīr*, p.47.

2- His natural preparations for absorbing in knowledge. This ability may be witnessed in his acumen, intelligence, mental talents and sharp-wittedness. The yardstick by which we may measure the degree of his intelligence is the following: the narrations transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās in the variegated intellectual disciplines one observes – *tafsīr*, philology, political theory and *ḥadīth* – also the turning of ‘Umar towards him for counsel and advice, and his being appointed as a jurisconsult in the Caliphate of ‘Uthmān. Some companions would become jealous of ‘Umar’s frequent reliance on the youth rather than their own children, to which ‘Umar would reply, “True [I do] but he is a young man with a questioning tongue and a discerning intellect”.<sup>1</sup> This demonstrates clearly his eminence over his peers intellectually, the witness of this being ‘Umar. Furthermore, his boldness in giving commentary on the Qur’ān according to his own reasoned efforts (*ijtihād*) when older and more eminent companions, in many ways, would not have dared the same, let alone children of his age.<sup>2</sup> ‘Alī is reported to have said to Ibn ‘Abbās “it is as though you see the invisible from behind a thin veil”<sup>3</sup>. Indeed Ibn ‘Abbās was of the first to dedicate himself to interpreting the Qur’ān. He was a pioneer in this field and possesses what a pioneer usually requires of intelligence, creativeness, sincerity and purity.

3- His age when he first began to acquire knowledge was a time for which the Arabs have a proverb ‘learning in childhood is like etching into stone’. He was not engaged either with anything besides learning. There was nothing to occupy his mind and to drive him away from concentrating upon his goal. He supported his interest in knowledge by recording whatever he heard instead of being satisfied with merely accepting matters and their details. It is said that Ibn ‘Abbās used to come to Abū Rāfi‘<sup>4</sup> in order to ask what the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) had done in any one day. Ibn ‘Abbās was associated with someone whose duty was to record every thing for him.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fath al-bārī*, Vol.8 / p.838, *Siyar al-nubalā*, Vol.3 / p.345.

<sup>2</sup> Examples abound, some mentioned in *Ibn ‘Abbās wa madrasatuhu fī al-tafsīr*, p.100.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Khālidi, Ṣalāh, *Ta’rīf al-Dārisīn bi Manāhij al-Mufasssīrīn*, Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2002. P.237.

<sup>4</sup> Abū Rāfi‘ is Ibrāhīm or Aslam, the freed-slave of the Prophet. He died during the reign of ‘Alī. *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.2 / p.421.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Iṣṣābah* Vol.2/ p.332, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol.2 / p.437.



4- He was habituated to enquiry from a lot of companions for a single issue. It was narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās through Ṭāwūs that he would ask up to thirty companions regarding the same matter; and he used to repeat that a query formed a half of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, Al-Shi‘bī narrated that he was asked how he gained that knowledge. He replied “by a questioning tongue and a comprehending heart.”<sup>2</sup> This outlook was based on the same principle the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) himself taught: “A good question is half of knowledge” and also, “Knowledge is like treasure chest whose key is a question.”<sup>3</sup> This was the same phrase that ‘Umar used when he was told by immigrants to Medina: “why did you not invite our children as you invited Ibn ‘Abbās? He said that was the young of aged people; he had a questioning tongue and a comprehending heart”<sup>4</sup>.

Subsequent to the death of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) he became so overcome with sadness that he burst into tears whenever he remembered the day of the Prophet’s departure. The natural reaction for a young believer in and impressed by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was that he devoted himself for collecting his traditions and to compensate the period which he spent without being a comrade for the Prophet (p.b.u.h.); this is why he would not content himself with simply hearing from Companions but he further pursued the greatest Companions, waiting for long periods for them to learn from them and benefit from their memorizations of the Prophet’s *ḥadīth* which related to all aspects of life<sup>5</sup>. ‘Ikrima, who was one of his students, said that “Ibn ‘Abbās was an inspired person with Qur’ān; and ‘Alī was having more knowledge about its obscure (things). Ishāq b. Rāḥawayh<sup>6</sup> commented that the reason of Ibn ‘Abbās being likewise was that he had received his

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 /p.344, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol.2 / p.435.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Bidāya* , Vol.8/p.284, *Al-Isti‘āb* Vol.3 /p.67, Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.1 / p.40. art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Shak‘ah Muṣṭafā, *Al-Bayān al-Muhammadi*, al-Dār al-Miṣriyya al-Lubnāniyya, Cairo, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1995) p.440.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 /p.345; *Fath al-Bārī* Vol.8/ p.838.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Bidāya* , Vol.8 / p.286; *al-‘Iṣābah* Vol.2 /p.332, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol.2 / p.435, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol.1 / p.40. art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”.

<sup>6</sup> Ishāq b. Rāḥawayh is Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Mukhlid al-Ḥanḍalī b. Rāḥawayh, the greatest scholar of Khurasan in his time. It has been said of him that the sciences of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* and *ḥifẓ* became subservient to him. Born in 161/748 and passed away in 238/825 in Naysābūr. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.1 / p.292.



knowledge from AbūBakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Ubayy b. Ka‘b and other great companions”<sup>1</sup>.

5- His vast knowledge of the Arabic language, its literature, features, stylish characteristics and sciences. We may find in the following narration of ‘Aṭā’ a reference to his sufficiency in this regard. He said that he “did not find a study circle which was nobler than that of Ibn ‘Abbās, more filled with knowledge and more solemn than his. People interested in the Qur’ān approached him for their needs, those in Arabic for theirs, often relating to poetry. All of them drinking from a single satiating fount.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it was narrated<sup>3</sup> that he had cited poetic verses in discussing the one hundred and ninety questions of Nāfi‘ b. al-Azraq<sup>4</sup>, the leader of the *Khawārij*.<sup>5</sup> I will talk about the authenticity of this narration when I deal with his methodology in exegesis.

6- His encyclopedic culture and cogency shaped another aspect of his knowledge. He used to debate with a large number of the companions and to continue in discussing with them until he convinced them with his viewpoint. Ṭāwūs mentioned that he would enter into argument with several companions at a time. If they discussed and disagreed with Ibn ‘Abbās, he would remain in debate with them until they came to agree with him<sup>6</sup> His power to convince was known to all and it is for that reason that ‘Alī dispatched him to the *Khawārij* for negotiations. They initially refused all negotiation with him but were eventually parleyed by him. The result of this task was that four thousand of their men,

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Bidāya*, Vol.8 / p.288, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol.2 / p.434.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Bidāya*, Vol.8 / p.3.01, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol.1 / p.41. art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Itqān*, Vol.2/ p.67.

<sup>4</sup> Nāfi‘ b. al-Azraq b. Qays al-Ḥarūrī, the head of the Azāriqa to who he was linked by lineage. He was the chief of his people as well as their main jurist, from Basra. He accompanied Ibn ‘Abbās and ask many questions from him. He passed away 65/652. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.7 / p.351.

<sup>5</sup> The *Khawārij* or Khārijites, “those who go out”, were an early sect which arose during the Caliphate of ‘Alī. They opposed ‘Alī and in creed regarded works as an integral element in the definition of faith – so much so that in their view anyone guilty of a grave sin was not only a sinner but an unbeliever. Because of the austere aspects of their religious ethic they have been called the puritans of Islam. Goldziher, Ignaz, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, Translated by Andras and Ruth Hamori, Princetown press (1981). pp.170-171.

<sup>6</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / p.351.

including some of those who rejected his mission first, repented and affiliated with ‘Alī’s troops.<sup>1</sup>

7- His abandonment, in general, of political issues. He rarely engaged himself in this role. Most of his time was devoted to the education rather than to desire in posts, leadership, and general authorities. He did not practice such a duty with the exception of a limited period during the era of ‘Alī<sup>2</sup>.

The author believes these to be the most prominent factors which led to Ibn Abbās occupying a prominent position amongst Islamic scholars. But the most important reason was the successfulness that had been granted to him by God. He possibly gained this grace as a fruit of his piety and sincerity. To learn and instruct religious knowledge for the sake of God was the greatest cause for comprehending this domain and controlling it. The Qur’ān says, “So fear God, for it is God that teaches you.”<sup>3</sup> The Prophet said, “If someone applies his knowledge, Allāh will grant him with knowledge of what he was not [previously] acquainted with.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Bidaya*, Vol.7/p.266.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’* Vol.3 / p.354-356; *al-Isabah* Vol.2 / p.334; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol.1 p.40, art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās.

<sup>3</sup> II 282.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muhammad b. Muhammad, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Dār al-Da‘wah, Istanbul (1985) Vol.1/p.77.



### 1.3. The exegetical sources relied upon by Ibn ‘Abbās:

This part of the study sheds important light on the sources which Ibn ‘Abbās relied upon and took from in his *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān. Based on the data, we shall be in a position to compare his *tafsīr* with what is contained within the edited text and the sources which it relies upon. We may also discern whether the commentary is from the period of Ibn ‘Abbās or after it immediately, from the era of the Successors, or otherwise. A discussion of the sources relied on by the edited text shall immediately proceed the analysis of Ibn ‘Abbās.

Ibn ‘Abbās was a prominent exegete of the Qur’ān and enjoyed a unique and distinguished status amongst the Companions of the Prophet both during and after his life. His approach to exegesis was methodical, one which adhered closely to the principles initially laid by the Prophet himself, and by virtue of his immense knowledge of the scripture, regarded as one of the most reliable exegetes of the early generations. It has been narrated on the authority of Ḍaḥḥāk from Ibn ‘Abbās, that he said, “Verily the Qur’ān contains numerous disciplines; it has an outer-shell which conceals an inner core; there is no limit to its wonders, no reaching of its ultimate purpose; whoever approaches the study of it with gentle refinement will succeed (in comprehending it), whilst the one who approaches it with roughness will (ultimately) fail; contained within it are accounts of the past as well as parables, legal ordinances, abrogating verses and those that are abrogated, passages equivocal and others unequivocal, an outer shell, and an internal reality: Its outward is its recital, its inward interpretation (*ta’wīl*); people of understanding keep company with it whilst the foolish refrain from approaching”.<sup>1</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās in this narration outlines the general approach an exegete should adopt when seeking to interpret the Qur’ān, reducing it almost to a human relationship, one whose success is dependent on gentle demeanor, not harsh tyranny. There is to be found in a narration from Sufyān b.

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.4 / p.197.



‘Uyaynah<sup>1</sup> a more detailed outline of the specific exegetic principles employed by Ibn ‘Abbās: He says, “Ibn ‘Abbās would, when asked on a particular matter, give guidance directly from the Qur’ān if available. If he could not find a solution in the Qur’ān, he would seek an answer from the sayings of the Prophet; failing that then he would turn to the judgments of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. Once he had exhausted these sources finding no satisfactory resolution, he would then derive his own opinion based on the sources.”<sup>2</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās’ reliance on exegesis by transmission (*tafsīr bi al- ma’thūr*):

1.3.1. Exegesis of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān (*Tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān*):

Examples are few with respect to his interpretation of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān. From these, he is reported to have said regarding the verse “On no soul doth Allāh place a burden greater than it can bear (*wus*)”<sup>3</sup>, that the soul in question is that of the believer for whom Allāh makes ease in matters of religion. This is substantiated by the verses “He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion”<sup>4</sup>, “Allāh intends every facility for you, He does not want to put you in difficulties”<sup>5</sup> and in LXIV: 16, “Fear Allāh as far as you are able”.<sup>6</sup> Thus does Ibn ‘Abbās interpret the word *wus*’ in the verse above to mean ease and capacity and the removal of hardship, supporting his view with three verses from various places in the Qur’ān. However, the edited text explains this word alone, that is *wus*’, to mean *ṭāqa*, capacity.<sup>7</sup> Here, the author clarifies the meaning of the solitary word without going to other verses for further explication, as is done by Ibn ‘Abbās. Likewise, his interpretation of the verse “Master of the Day of Judgement”<sup>8</sup>, to which he is reported to have said, “No jurisdiction will anyone possess on the day of

<sup>1</sup> Sufyān b. ‘Uyaynah b. Maymūn al-Hilālī, born in Kufa 107/694. He was *ḥadīth* master, reliable in narration. the scholar of *ḥadīth* at Mecca. He had a work in *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*. He passed away in Mecca (198/785). *Al-A’lām*, Vol.3 / p.105.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol.2 / p.434.

<sup>3</sup> II: 286.

<sup>4</sup> XXII: 78.

<sup>5</sup> II: 185.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Rajjāl, Rāshid ‘Abd al-Mun’im, *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās al-Musammā bi Ṣaḥīfat ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa* al-Mu’assasat al-Thaqāfiyya, Beirut, pp.122 – 123.

<sup>7</sup> Edited Text, 22b, *ET*, p.148.

<sup>8</sup> I: 4.

judgment like he may have possessed over his kingdom in the lower world (*dunya*).” He then quoted the verses, “None shall speak (on judgment day) except any who is permitted by The Most Gracious, and he will say what is right”<sup>1</sup>, “And the voices (on judgment day) will be hushed to The Most Gracious”<sup>2</sup>, and in XXI: 28, “They offer no intercession except for those with whom He is well-pleased”.<sup>3</sup> In the edited text, only ‘The Day of Judgment’ is explained by his saying, ‘The day of accounting and judgment’<sup>4</sup>, without presenting other verses for further clarity. A final example of this type of exegesis is Ibn ‘Abbās’ commentary on the verse, “And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled”<sup>5</sup>. Al-Ṭabarī<sup>6</sup> narrates that Ibn ‘Abbās said, “No one has been tried by this religion and then established it after succeeding the trial except Abraham. He was tried with certain commands, which he fulfilled, and thus Allāh recorded for him disavowal, in His saying, LIII: 37, ‘And Abraham who was loyal’”. The edited text again mentions many narrations, not of which are from Ibn ‘Abbās, but does not mention other verses by way of cross-references.<sup>7</sup> But as previously mentioned, this style of exegesis - interpreting the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān - is of rare occurrence in Ibn ‘Abbās, and not mentioned in any capacity by the edited text. The author has not been able to find a single instance of it, for example, in the *ḥadīth* collection of al-Bukhārī, who dedicates an extensive chapter to exegesis. Likewise, there are but rare instances of this approach appearing in the edited text.

### 1.3.2. Exegesis of the Qur’ān by Prophetic Tradition (*sunna*):

By his own testimony, “I have committed to memory the whole of the Prophet’s tradition”<sup>8</sup>, Ibn ‘Abbās was well versed enough in the Hadīth tradition to find explanations of verses not further elaborated on else where in the Qur’ān. To cite

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<sup>1</sup> LXVIII: 38.

<sup>2</sup> XX: 108. ar

<sup>3</sup> All previous interpretations of Ibn ‘Abbās are from *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.98.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, 2a, *ET*, p.5.

<sup>5</sup> II: 124.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* Vol.1 / p.730.

<sup>7</sup> Edited Text, 9b, *ET*, p.20.

<sup>8</sup> *Musnad*. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Vol. 4 / p.112.



example. his discussion of the verse, “Or it be among the Jews - men who will listen to any lie.- will listen even to others who have never so much as come to thee. They change the words from their (right) times and places: they say, “If ye are given this, take it, but if not, beware!”<sup>1</sup> He explained that the verse was revealed regarding a group of Jews who approached the Prophet hopeful that he would give them a dispensation permitting them to show leniency towards a noble woman from amongst them who had committed adultery: the Jewish law, as preserved in the Torah, ordains for any adulterer the punishment of stoning to death. This group, assuming Islamic law to be less harsh in such cases, sought judgment from the Prophet. He responded to them saying, “What does your Torah say about the adulterer?” They found no alternative but to answer with the truth, and so the Prophet ordered her to be stoned.<sup>2</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās here provides us with the occasion of revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*) for the verse, from his knowledge of the Prophet’s tradition. As for our *tafsīr* text, it mentions the same story that Ibn ‘Abbās does, however it is not verbatim; instead, it is divided between the words and sentences of the verses in its typically inter-linear style.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the verse, “There are among men some who serve Allah, as it were, on the verge.”<sup>4</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās said, “I have known men to come to Medina (after accepting Islam) who would, if good befell them such as the birth of a child would say, ‘This is an upright religion’ However, if they reaped no benefit from their conversion and migration, they would say, ‘This religion is useless’”.<sup>5</sup> The text provides the occasion of revelation for this verse, about whom it relates, however without narrating the whole tradition; it divides it across the verse. It gives more detail about the names of the people who the verse refers to than does Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> V: 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol. 4 / pp.322-323.

<sup>3</sup> Text. V: 41.

<sup>4</sup> XXII: 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.8 / p.497 *Ḥadīth* No. 4742.

<sup>6</sup> XXII: 11.



Al-Şanʿānī<sup>1</sup> reports from his chain of transmission to Mujāhid, that the latter entered upon Ibn ʿAbbās seeking an explanation of, “Whether ye show what is in your minds or conceal it, Allāh calleth you to account for it”<sup>2</sup>, after he had recently seen Ibn ʿUmar break down in tears following its recital. Ibn ʿAbbās reassuringly explained, “This verse, when it was revealed, caused the Companions to become stricken by severe grief. They said to the Prophet, ‘O Messenger of God, we are surely destroyed for we have no control over the inclinations of our hearts’. Thereupon the Prophet ordered them to accept the verse until further clarification from the Lord; and thus it was revealed, in II:284, ‘On no soul doth Allāh place a burden greater than it can bear’”<sup>3</sup>. The edited text explains the meanings of individual words in this verse, then presents the occasion of its revelation: which suggests that when the verse came down, it was difficult for the believers to accept that they would be accountable for their thoughts. When the Prophet went on his night journey, he is said to have prostrated to God; God said in praise of him, ‘The Messenger has believed in what has been sent down to him from his Lord’. The only variance between our edited text and the *tafsīr* of Ibn ʿAbbās is the alleged date which this verse was revealed. Thus we observe, by virtue of these examples, how Ibn ʿAbbās relies on the tradition of the Prophet when commentating on a verse, using it to explain the occasions of revelation, the abrogated verses, and so forth.

It is to be noticed, however, that what has reached us from Ibn ʿAbbās narrated by him to the Prophet (narrations termed *marfūʿ* in the terminology of the *ḥadīth* scholars) are few in number. This is in stark contrast to the narrations that terminate at him (termed *mawqūf*). A possible reason for this anomaly is that the Commentators and *ḥadīth* reporters were content to relay narrations which terminated at the Companions rather than finding continuous chains for those same narrations ending at the Prophet. Another possibility is that the narrations terminating at the Prophet are few in number; this is supported by the statement of Aḥmed b. Ḥanbal, who said, “Three types of book have no

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Şanʿānī is ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām b. Nāfiʿ, born in Sana, Yemen in 126/713. He has been praised by the scholars greatly, including Sufyān al-Thawrī. He wrote in *fiqh*, *maghāzī*, *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*. He passed away in 211/798. *Al-Aʿlām*, Vol.3 / p.353.

<sup>2</sup> II: 283.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Şanʿānī, Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām b. Nāfiʿ, *Tafsīr al-Qurʿān*, Edited by Muşţafā Musallam Muhammad, Maktabat al-Rushd, al-Riyāḍ, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1989). Vol. 1 / p.114. See also *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol. 8 / p.229 (chapter 54).

basis: The *Maghāzi* (Campaigns), the *Malāḥim* (Tribulations) and *Tafsīr*".<sup>1</sup> His companions and students, well-acquainted with their teacher's opinion, have explained his statement to refer to the narratives within the three genres that do not have connected, sound chains of transmission, and not to discount all narrations without exception. That would be a sounder understanding of his statement for there are indeed many narrations in the field of exegesis that fulfill the stipulations that Ibn Hanbal had for the acceptance of narrations. Well known are the explanations of the terms *ẓulm* (darkness) in al-Baqarah, *hisāb yasīr* (easy reckoning) in al-Inshiqāq and *ramy* (throwing) in al-Anfāl, as polytheism, the presentation of works, and military strength, respectively.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya explains Ibn Ḥanbal's statement suggesting that the categories of book he mentioned are genres that contain, generally, narrations which do not have complete chains back to their original narrator (narrations termed *mursal*). He goes on to say that where chains for a particular narration are multiple in number, regardless of whether they are connected or not, they are accepted as being definitive because logic dictates that it is impossible for a large number of people from differing places and times would contrive together to fabricate a lie.<sup>3</sup> Thus Ibn Taymiyya appears to agree with Ibn Hanbal in that the narrations to the Prophet relating to the three genres do not, often, have connected chains terminating at the Prophet; however, he differs with respect to attributing to compilers of such traditions as being complicit in fabricating narrations.

The author is in agreement with Ibn Taymiyya on this point: the lack of chains of transmission in *tafsīr* and the *maghāzī* genre does not detract from their value. It is obvious that the Companions were not in great need of a *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān because of their high competency in the language. When they were in need of an explanation, they would approach the Prophet, and for such instances there are chains of transmission preserved by the scholars of *ḥadīth*, chains they consider authentic. As for what is not connected to the Prophet, it is from the exegesis of the Companions by way of their

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<sup>1</sup> *Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Vol.3 / p.14.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 2 / p.174.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn.Taymiyya, Taqi-al-din Ahmed, *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, ( *muqaddima fī usūl al-tafsīr*). *Dar Alwafa' Alryiad*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed (1998 AD) Vol.13 / p.187.



personal reasoning, and remains unconnected to the Prophet. Similarly the *maghāzī* and *malāḥim* literature; they would describe events without mentioning the Prophet. These are still termed *ḥadīth* though they are not connected to the Prophet.

Al-Bukhārī, who has a chapter dedicated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* to narrations from the Prophet relating to exegesis managed to find only fifty-five verses of the two hundred and eighty-six verses of al-Baqara explained by either the Prophet or the Companions.<sup>1</sup> This is also an indication that the narrations considered *marfu'* and *mursal* were few in number. Similarly, the book *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*<sup>2</sup> of al-Tirmidhī mentions in chapter regarding *tafsīr*, three-hundred and ninety-three narrations without repetition which explain the Qur'ān and are originally ascribed to the Prophet. The explanations deal with the obscure words in the verses; at times, the narrations consist of indirect statements from the Prophet regarding the occasions of revelation, abrogation, etc.<sup>3</sup> The author has followed up what is given in *tafsīr* of al-Baqara and found that twenty verses are explained, without repetition. This, when viewed in light of the size of the *sura*, is clearly small in proportion.

Al-Suyūṭī holds the same position as the author, that is, the sound narrations which end at the Prophet are few and far between. These he then lists in the same order of appearance in the Qur'ān, in his work, *al-Itqān*.<sup>4</sup> The author has reviewed what is contained within the *ḥadīth* collection of Muslim<sup>5</sup> in the chapter of exegesis and managed to find only seven reports from Ibn 'Abbās related to *tafsīr*. H. Berg mentions al-Suyūṭī also on this matter, saying

Obviously, a number of Western scholars are extremely skeptical of all that has been attributed to Ibn 'Abbās. Western scholars were not the only, nor even the first to do so. Al-Suyūṭī reports that the famous jurist and champion of the *sunna* al-Shāfi'ī affirmed only about a hundred exegetical *ḥadīths* from

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<sup>1</sup> *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.8 / pp.180-230.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, Abū 'Isā Muhammad, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* (48), pp.183-424.

<sup>3</sup> *The function of ḥadīth*, p.76.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol. 4 / pp.180 – 181.

<sup>5</sup> Muslim al-Naysāburī, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, Dār al-Ma'rifa, Beirut. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (1997). Vol. 18 / Chapter 54.

Ibn ‘Abbās as authentic. In the West, this skepticism goes as far back as Spenger, who states Ibn ‘Abbās was a liar. Of course, the tacit assumption of Sprenger is that those sayings, opinions or accounts attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās are in fact his.<sup>1</sup>

This observation by al-Suyūfī, al-Shāfi‘ī, and then moderns such as Sprenger and Berg, holds true only for *ḥadīth* narrations which are explicitly of the *tafsīr* genre and including in chapters of the books of *ḥadīth* under the same heading. They give no consideration of what R. M. Speight explains are the wider implications of the word *tafsīr al-Qur’ān*:

Probably the most common practice is to link the Qur’ānic text with some event in the Prophet’s life: an encounter, a question from a follower, a difficulty, a triumph, or whatever. By citing the circumstances in which a verse or verses were revealed (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), the *ḥadīth* furnish rudimentary elements for exegesis of the scripture. Beyond the question of the circumstances of revelation, there is the fact that Muhammad is considered to be the first exegete of the scripture, that is, after the Qur’ān itself, which is esteemed to be its own best interpreter. The prophet, by his words and his deeds, as recalled and passed on by his companions (*ṣaḥāba*), elucidated many passages of the revealed text.<sup>2</sup>

Here a question arises: how much of the Qur’ān did the Prophet, his companions and the generation after them actually explain?

### 1.3.3 The Degree to Which the Prophet Commentating on the Qur’ān:

Differences of opinion amongst early Muslim scholars regarding the degree to which the Prophet commentated on the Qur’ān are well documented. Ibn Taymiyya, who dedicated many pages of his magnum opus, the *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwa*, to Qur’ānic hermeneutics, was of the view that the Prophet left no verse in the Qur’ān unexplained<sup>3</sup>. That was, after all,

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<sup>1</sup> Berg, Herbert, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 2005), p.131-132.

<sup>2</sup> *The function of ḥadīth*, p.63-64.

<sup>3</sup> *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwa (muqaddima fi usūl al-tafsīr)*. Vol. 13 / p.177.



the task he was commissioned with as a Messenger of God. He furnished his argument with several verses of the Qur'ān coupled with traditions from the Prophet. Others, such as al-Juwaynī<sup>1</sup> and al-Suyūṭī<sup>2 3</sup>, held altogether differing views. To them, the Prophet expounded on very little of the verses of the Qur'ān. Professor Al-Dhahabī<sup>4</sup> discusses at length the views of these two polarized groups arriving at the conclusion that the truth of the matter lies somewhere in between: That is, that the Prophet expounded upon the vast majority of the Qur'ān's verses – this is obvious to anyone who has viewed the huge corpus of Hadīth literature in which is compiled the Prophet's oral tradition. Many have supported this view, amongst them, Dr Adnān Muhammad Zarzūr<sup>5</sup>, Dr Ṣalāh al-Khālidi<sup>6</sup> and Shaykh Muhammad Abdul Aẓīm al-Zurqānī<sup>7</sup>.

Ibn 'Abbās was one of the earliest to divide *tafsīr* into categories. He considered there to be four main divisions: The first is what is understood by the Arabs intuitively due to the Qur'ān having been revealed in their language; the second, an understanding of the scripture no believer is exonerated from being ignorant of; the third, knowledge that arises by way of scholarship; and lastly, that which God only has knowledge of<sup>8</sup>.

It is self-evident that the Prophet would not have explained to his companions aspects of the Qur'ān in plain, unambiguous Arabic - after all, it was revealed in their mother-tongue. Likewise, he did not interpret verses which were considered to be part of the knowledge of the 'unseen' (*'ilm al ghayb*) such as the time of the Day of Judgment and

<sup>1</sup> Al-Juwaynī is 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abdullāh b. Yusuf al-Juwaynī, Abū al-Ma'ālī Imām al-Ḥaramayn, the most knowledgeable of the late Shāfi'ite jurists. Born in Juwayn (419/1028) he travelled to Baghdad, Mecca and Medina, teaching and issuing legal rulings. He has numerous quthorships in Jurisprudence and Theology. He passed away in 478/1085. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.4 / p.160.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Suyūṭī is Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abū Bakr al-Suyūṭī, Imām, Hāfiẓ, historian and philologist, he mastered all the sacred sciences, grammar, jurisprudence, exegesis and the recitations of the Qur'ān. He authored many works, as well as editing and explaining many others, works numbering 600 in total. Born in Cairo. 849/1436 and passed away in 911/1498. *Uẓamā' al-Islām*, p.344. Also *A'lām*, Vol.3 / p.301.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Itqār*. Vol.2 / p.181.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / pp.41-43.

<sup>5</sup> Zarzūr. 'Adnān Muhammad, *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān: Madkhal 'ilā Tafsīr al-Qur'ān wa Bayān I'jāzihi*, Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (1991) p.404.

<sup>6</sup> *Ta'rif ai-Dārisīn bi Manāhij al-Musasssīrīn*, p.194.

<sup>7</sup> *Manāhil al-'Irfān*, Vol. 1 / p.54.

<sup>8</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* Vol. 1 / p.54.

the true nature of the soul. A few aspects of the unseen that were made known to the Prophet, he did reveal to the Companions, such as the signs before the end of time and descriptions of paradise and hell. And so the majority of that which the Prophet explained is what falls under the third category mentioned above, that is, the sphere of knowledge which is accessible to scholars and is discoverable by *ijtihad*.

Al-Rāfi‘ī puts forward an interesting theory as to why the Prophet would only have explained the meaning of parts of the Qur’ān. He believes that the Prophet left detailed explanation in order that every Muslim generation that follows him till the end of time has the opportunity to interpret the Qur’ān in light of the knowledge they possess. Al-Rāfi‘ī believes that were the Prophet to have explained everything it would have led to a solidification of *tafsīr* as a science leaving no room for others to put forward their own human understanding of the scripture. Effectively, the Prophet was permitting the history of humanity to interpret the scripture of humanity<sup>1</sup>. Dr Muhammad Abū Shuhbah supports the view of al-Rāfi‘ī. He says, “The Qur’ān contains legal injunctions (*ahkām shar‘iyyah*) – these, the Prophet expounded because they are firmly fixed; the intellect has no place in them. It also contains knowledge relating to the origins of the universe and the secrets of existence – these the Prophet did not elucidate because these are constantly developing fields of knowledge which permit human reflection and investigation.”<sup>2</sup>

Dr Al-Dhahabī has said, reinforcing this understanding, “and the fact that the Companions had divergent opinions about many verses of the Qur’ān is evidence that the prophet did not explain every verse. For, had he interpreted each and every verse they would certainly not have been at odds with one another.”<sup>3</sup> The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Islam is in agreement that “in the formative period of Islam, one finds works of *tafsīr* which cover only isolated segments of the text.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>al-Rāfi‘ī. Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq, *I’jāz al-Qur’ān wa al-Balāgha al-Nabawiyya*, Manshūrāt Muhammad ‘Alī Bayḍawūn. Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, (2000), p.10.

<sup>2</sup>Abū. Shuhbah, Muhammad *Al-Isrā’iliāt wa al-Mawḍu‘āt fī Kutub al-Tafsīr*, Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, (1992), p.48.

<sup>3</sup>*Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssirūn*, Vol.1 / p.42.

<sup>4</sup>*The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 10 / p.84,art .*Tafsīr* ,Rippin,A.



To conclude this subject, it appears that the Prophet did explain all of the Qur'ān, nor even most of it. Rather, he would only elucidate problematic verses which the Companions were unable to understand by mere reflection or investigation. As for the commentary of the Companions, this consisted of their reporting what the Prophet has already said in his explanations together with their own *ijtihād* based on their deep understanding of the Arabic language and the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). Their own interpretations would, however, lead them often to differing opinions. This will be the subject of the following discussion. It is thus observable from the formative period of Islam one finds works of *tafsīr* which only cover fragmented parts of the text.

#### 1.3.4. The *tafsīr* of the Companions:

*Tafsīr* during the Prophet's life was a relatively easy matter. This was so for a number of factors: Firstly, the Companions were witnessing the revelation of the Qur'ān, and the circumstances during which it was revealed. They were aware of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* and as such did not need to search for this knowledge as later interpreters would have to. Secondly, the Arabic of the Companions was the Arabic of the Qur'ān, as the Qur'ān was revealed in their dialect. Therefore the language of the Qur'ān was generally understood by them without any difficulties. Lastly, and most importantly, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was alive, and the Qur'ān was still being revealed, so even if there were any difficulties in understanding any verse, they could turn to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) for an explanation.

After the death of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), the science of *tafsīr* took on a more systematic approach. Thus it can be considered that the first true commentators were actually the Companions. The sources that the Companions used for *tafsīr* were the Qur'ān, the statements of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), the principles of Arabic grammar and rhetoric, their own *ijtihād*, and pagan and Judaeo-Christian customs that were prevalent at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān.

The Companions did not leave narrations concerning every single verse in the Qur'ān. This is because the people of their time understood much of what the Qur'ān discussed,

and only where the possibility for misinterpretation or ignorance existed did the Companions give their own interpretation of the relevant verse. Such interpretation typically consisted of explaining a verse in clearer words, or explaining a particular phrase or word with pre-Islamic poetry. Another characteristic of this time is the relatively trivial differences in *tafsīr* as compared to later generations. There were many among the Companions who were well known for their knowledge of the interpretation of the Qur'ān. From them, the 'Rightly Guided' Caliphs, 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd.<sup>1</sup>, 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās. Ubayy b. Ka'b<sup>2</sup>, Zayd b. Thābit<sup>3</sup>, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī<sup>4</sup>, 'Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr<sup>5</sup>. As for the four 'rightly guided' Caliphs, 'Alī b. Abū Ṭālib<sup>6</sup> has the most narrations amongst them; as for the other three, their reports are few and far between, perhaps because they passed away relatively earlier<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Mas'ūd is 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd al-Hudhalī, he converted during the early part of the Prophet's mission. and was the first to recite the Qur'ān openly in Mecca. He emigrated twice, witnessed all the wars with the Prophet; 'Umar sent him to Kufa as a teacher and minister. He died 32/619. *'Uḏamā' al-Islām*, p.115.

<sup>2</sup> Ubayy b. Ka'b is Ubayy b. Ka'b b. Qays from the tribe of al-Najjār from al-Khazraj. He was a Jewish rabbi, well versed in the books of the ancients. He could read and write. When he converted to Islam he became one of the scribes of the Revelation. He also witnessed the battles of Badr, Uḥud and the battle of the Trench during the lifetime of the Prophet (P.B.U.H). He died in 21/642. *Al-A'lām* Vol.1 p.82

<sup>3</sup> 3:343, 344, 345; *al-Bidaya* 8:284.

<sup>3</sup> Zayd b. Thābit is Zayd b. Thābit b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk, Ābū Khārijā, born in Medina eleven years before the Hijra (A.D. 611) and raised in Mecca. Among the great Companions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), he was one of the scribes who recorded the Qur'ān in writing. He narrated ninety-two ḥadīths, and died in 45/665. *Reliance of the Traveller*, x388, p.1114., *Al-A'lām*, Vol.3 / p.57, *Al-'Iṣābah*, Vol.1 / p.61.

<sup>4</sup> Abū Mūsā al-'Ash'ari is 'Abdullāh b. Qays b. Sālim. One of the Companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) who conquered and ruled new lands for Islam. Born in Yemen twenty-one years before the Hijra (A.D. 602), he came to Mecca when Islam appeared and accepted it, and emigrated to Ethiopia, after which the Prophet (P.B.U.H) appointed him to govern Zabid and 'Aden in Yemen. He died in Kufa in 44/665. *Reliance of the Traveller*, x56 p.1032.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn al-Zubayr is 'Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwām al-Qurashī al-Asadī (1/623). He witnessed the conquering of Africa and was offered feility to the Caliphate in 64/683 after the death of Yazīd. The seat of his Caliphate was in Medina until he was finally killed by Al-Ḥajjāj in Mecca in 73/686. *Al-A'lām* Vol.4 / p.87, *Al-Isti'āb* Vol.3/p.39, and *'Uḏamā' al-Islām* p.135.

<sup>6</sup> 'Alī is Imām 'Alī b. Abū Ṭālib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Hāshimī al-Qurashī, the Commander of the Faithful, and fourth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, born of noble lineage in Mecca twenty-three years before the Hijra (A.D. 600) and raised from the age of five by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), who was the son of 'Alī's paternal uncle and later married his own daughter Fāṭimah to him. He was of the ten who were informed that they would enter paradise, and was the first male to accept Islam from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.)...he was assassinated while at prayer by a Khārijite at Kufa in 40/661. *Reliance of the Traveller*, x81, p.1037.

<sup>7</sup> *Manāhil al-'Irfān*, Vol.2 / p.13, Ṣāliḥ, Ṣubḥī, *Mabāhith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Qalam lil Malāyīn, 24<sup>th</sup> Edition. (2000), p.289, *Majmū'at al-Fatāwa*, ( *muqaddima fī usūl al-tafsīr*). Vol.12 / pp.195-196, *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssirūn*, Vol.1 / p.49, and al-Qaṭṭān ,Mannā', *Mabāhith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Mu'assasit al-Risāla. 35<sup>th</sup> Ed, (1998 AD).p.209.



From what has proceeded we may arrive at the opinion that the Companions did not narrate a complete *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān from the Prophet. The reason for this is that he did not explain the whole Qur’ān to them, as we have previously highlighted, but also, as suggested by Muhammad Abū Shahbah, “they understood much of the Qur’ān by virtue of their knowledge of the Arabic language, and their deep knowledge of the *Sharī’ah*. Neither did they, themselves, deem it necessary to explain the whole scriptures to those after them, assuming that others would be equally well-equipped to understand the text. But it was also a matter of restrictions of time, for they were occupied by wars and the conquering of other lands.”<sup>1</sup> Abū al-Sa’ūd provides a further reason for the Companions lack of interpreting the whole text. He suggests that they would have hesitated to interpret the whole scripture out of sheer fear and respect for the Book of God. They would have been, according to his opinion, too worried about falling in to error in interpretation<sup>2</sup>.

There is no doubt that *tafsīr* by narration from the Companions is of great value, particularly to scholars of *Hadīth*. The vast majority of scholars have held that a narration of a Companion is tantamount to a *ḥadīth marfū’*, that is a narration traceable in ascending order of traditionaries to the Prophet. This is because their interpretation consisted mostly of explaining the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), a subject-matter which has no room for opinion. As for interpretation based on a Companion’s opinion, scholars have judged it as being a discontinued narration (*mawqūf*), or, one that does not finally end at the Prophet. Al-Zarkashī stated the following: “Know that *tafsīr* is of types: there is that which has been reported directly from the Prophet; that which has been reported from the Companions; and that from the scholars of the generation after them (*Tābi’ūn*). The first is accepted or rejected based on the soundness of its chain of narration. The second is that which has been explained by a Companion. If he puts forward a linguistic interpretation of the text then this is to be relied upon for the Companions were the masters of the Arabic language. If he gives the occasion of

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Isrā’iliāt wa al-Mawḍu’āt fī Kutub al-Tafsīr*, p.48.

<sup>2</sup> Badr, ‘Abdullāh Abū al-Sa’ūd, *Tafsīr al-Ṣaḥābah*, Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition (2000), p.50.

revelation, then likewise, this is reliable, because they were witnesses to the events surrounding the revelation of the Qur'ān.”<sup>1</sup>

Based on these views we may appreciate the value with which the *tafsīr* of the Companions was held, especially the foremost of them, such as ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās, to whom the manuscript we are investigating is attributed.

### 1.3.5. *Tafsīr* of the Successors (*Tābi‘ūn*):

After the generation of the Companions, the students of the Companions took over the responsibility of explaining the Qur'ān. The Successors used the same sources to interpret the Qur'ān that the Companions did, except that they added to the list of sources the interpretations of the Companions. They understood that an interpretation given by the Companions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) could not be compared to an interpretation of any person after them. Therefore, the sources for interpreting the Qur'ān during this generation were: the Qur'ān, the statements of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) that the Companions had informed them of, the Companions' *ijtihād* of the verse, the Arabic language, their own *ijtihād*, and Judaeo-Christian tradition. From the foremost amongst them in exegesis were Sa'īd b. Jubayr, Mujāhid, Qatāda<sup>2</sup>, Abū al-‘Āliya, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup>. From these personalities in particular we have many narrations reported in the books of exegesis – their commentaries based on opinion and *ijtihād*.

Scholars have differed on the value with which they have held the exegesis of the Successors. A group amongst them has held that their exegesis is not to be relied upon because they were not witnesses to revelation and thus prone to error. The majority, however, believed their exegesis to carry weight due to their status as students of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Burhān*, Vol.1 / pp.188-189.

<sup>2</sup> Qatāda is Qatāda b. Da‘āma al-Sadūsī al-Baṣrī (61/680 – 118/736), exegete, Ḥāfiẓ, philologist, historian and lineologists. He was a Qadarite in creed. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.5 / p189 and *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, p129.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is Ḥasan b. Yasār al-Baṣrī al-Anṣārī, a Successor (Tābi‘ī), trustworthy in *hadīth* narrations. He died in (110 A.H). in Basra. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.2 / p.226, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb* Vol.1 / p.166.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Burhān*, Vol.1 / p.173, *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*, ( *muqaddima fī usūl al-tafsīr*) Vol.13 / p.198, *Ta‘rīf al-Dārisīn bi Manāhij al-Musassirīn*, p.74,



Companions. They went as far as to say if the Successors had unanimity on a point of exegesis then this was to be given precedence over any other opinion<sup>1</sup>. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal<sup>2</sup> has two opinions related from him about this issue: one, that he rejected the exegesis of the Successors, and the other, that of acceptance<sup>3</sup>. One well acquainted with Qur'ānic exegesis will know well that, regardless of the above mentioned opinions, the books of *tafsīr* are filled with commentary from the Successors, especially with their opinions which do not contradict Prophetic narrations (*naql*) or the intellect (*'aql*).

The scholars have divided the *Tābi'ūn* in to three levels or schools<sup>4</sup>: The first are the community of Mecca. They were the most knowledgeable in *tafsīr* after the Companions as has been attested to by the majority of scholars. Ibn Taymiyya has said regarding them, "The most knowledgeable of people are the community of Mecca because they are the companions of Ibn 'Abbās; from them are Mujāhid, 'Aṭā' b. Abū Rabbāh, 'Ikrima, Sa'īd b. Jubayr and Ṭāwūs." According to Ibn Taymiyya, these people acquired their lofty status by virtue of their teacher, Ibn 'Abbās<sup>5</sup>.

Second in rank to the scholars of Mecca come the scholars of Iraq and Kufa<sup>6</sup>. They were the companions of 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd, famous for his inclinations towards *ra'y*. From

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<sup>1</sup> *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, ( *muqaddima fi usūl al-tafsīr* ) Vol.13 / p.198 and *Mabāhith* of Qaṭṭān, pp.310-311.

<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is Aḥmad b. Muhammad b. Hanbal b. Hilāl b. Asad, Abu 'Abdullāh al-Shaybāni, born in 164/780 in Baghdad, where he grew up as an orphan. For sixteen years he travelled in the pursuit of the knowledge of ḥadīth, to Kufa, Basra, Mecca, Medina, Yemen, Damascus, Morocco, Algeria, Persia and Khurasan. memorising one hundred thousand ḥadīths, thirty thousand of which he recorded in his *Musnad*. He died in 241/855. *Reliance of the Traveller*, x72, p.1034.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Burhān*, Vol.1 / p.174, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, ( *muqaddima fi usūl al-tafsīr* ). Vol.13 / p.198.

<sup>4</sup> Nawfal. Aḥmad, (ed.) *Tafsīr of Mujāhid Ibn Jabr: Dirāsāt wa Taḥqīq*, Dār al-Muṣṭafā lil Ṭab' (Doctoral Thesis, Al-Azhar 1978), p.241.

<sup>5</sup> *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, ( *muqaddima fi usūl al-tafsīr* ). Vol.13 / p.186. See also *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssirūn*, Vol.1 / p.77, *Manāhil al-'Irfān*, Vol.2 / p.19, Philips, Abu Ameenah bilal, *Tafsīr Surat al-Ḥujarāt*, Tawheed Publications 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed (1990 AD), p.10, al-Mubarakpuri, Safiur-Rahman, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr fī Tahdhīb Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Saudi Arabia: Charitable Foundation, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed, Vol.1 / p.32.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr of Mujāhid*, p.243.

the foremost of this school were Sa'īd b. Jubayr, Masrūq b. al-Ajda'<sup>1</sup>, Qatādah b. Di'āmah, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, 'Aṭā' b. Abū Muslim al-Khurasānī<sup>2</sup>.

Third in rank are the people of Medina<sup>3</sup>. They were the companions of Ubay' b. Ka'b, and included Zayd b. Aslam<sup>4</sup>, Abū al-'Āliyah and Muhammad b. Ka'b al-Quraṣī<sup>5</sup>. The majority of the Companions of the Prophet remained in Medina, so it was considered the primary centre of learning during the period of the Successors. The school relied primarily on *riwāya* (tradition) in its *tafsīr*<sup>6</sup>.

Other centres of learning during this period included Basra, Syria, Yemen, Egypt and Andalus<sup>7</sup>.

This completes our concise historical overview of the development of the science of *tafsīr* and the phases through which it passed.

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<sup>1</sup> Masrūq is Masrūq b. Ajda' al-Hamadānī al-Kūfī, regarded as trustworthy in *ḥadīth*, a major jurist and well-known for his piety. From Yemen, he came to Medina during the Caliphate of Abū Bakr, then took up residence in Kufa where he was a dispenser of legal rulings. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.7 / p.215, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.2 / p.249.

<sup>2</sup> 'Aṭā is 'Aṭā b. Abū Muslim al-Khurasānī (50/670 – 135/752), major exegete, he lived in Jerusalem. The al-Zāhiriyya Library, Damascus, has some pages of the *tafsīr* he wrote together with pages written on *al-Nāsikh wal Mansūkh*. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.2 / p.35, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.2/ p.26.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr of Mujāhid*, p.243 and *Manāhil al-'Irfān* Vol.2 / p.21.

<sup>4</sup> Zayd b. Aslam is Zayd b. Aslam al-'Adawiyy al-'Umariyy (d.136/753), freed-slave of the family of 'Umar. a jurist and exegete from Medina, he has a work in *tafsīr* reported from him by his son 'Abd al-Rahmān. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.3 / p.57, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.266.

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad b. Ka'b al-Quraṣī, is Muhammad b. Ka'b b. Salīm (40/627 – 120/707), regarded as a trustworthy narrator, a scholar of jurisprudence and exegesis. *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 / p.420 and *al-Jarḥ wa Ta'dīl.*, Vol.9 / p.67.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr of Mujāhid*, p.243.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.241 and also Zaydān, 'Abdul Karīm, *Al-Madkhal li Dirāsāt al-Shari'ah al-Islāmiyya*, Mu'assasit al-Risāla. Beirut, Lebanon, 16<sup>th</sup> Ed. (2003), p.113.



### 1.3.6. The main features of exegesis during the first century after *Hijra*<sup>1</sup>:

1. *Tafsīr* appeared in form like the narrations of the Prophet's tradition: in fact, it was considered a chapter from the chapters of Hadīth
2. The *tafsīr* narratives in early Hadīth literature included reports on the excellence of reciting the Qur'ān with very little on actual commentary. The Companions thus commentated on the remainder, either by scholarly opinion or by what they had heard themselves from the Prophet, explaining the *asbāb al-nuzūl* although even they were not able to encompass every verse.<sup>2</sup>
3. The format of early commentary did not take an orderly fashion, and so commentary was not arranged in the order of chapters and verses of the Qur'ān, for example.
4. It was deemed sufficient to expound on only the general purport of the verses, and not indulge in more detailed analysis, be it grammatical, linguistic, metaphorical, or otherwise.
5. Metaphorical interpretation was sidestepped for more literal inferences.
6. There was little difference of opinion amongst the early generations in contrast to later times when the formation of schools (*madhabs*) was a major factor in creating a spectrum of opinions.
7. Little in the way of deriving legal injunctions was undertaken nor analysis of the legal purports of the scripture.
8. No attention was given to early Christian or Jewish tradition (*Isrā'īlī'āt*).
9. *Tafsīr* was written though not formally, neither was it wholly collected or compiled until the onset of the second century A.H.

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<sup>1</sup> *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.73. See also *Tafsīr of Mujāhid*, p.237 and '*Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Zarzūr p.404.

<sup>2</sup> Neal Robinson, though his remarks should be treated with reservation, says "The traditions concerning the *asbāb al-nuzūl* covers only a fraction of the Qur'ān. Many of them lack *isnāds*, and in a number of instances there are two or more conflicting reports of what occasioned a specific revelation. Although some may be based on genuine reminiscences, it seems likely that others reflect the opinions of early commentators." Robinson, Neal, *Discovering the Qur'ān: A Contemporary Approach to A Veiled Text*, SCM Press Ltd, London, (1996), p.75.

In summary, it would thus appear that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) did not produce a complete *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān, nor did he seek to do so; rather, he would explain to his Companions that of the Qur'ān which appeared obscure to them or abstruse in nature; it was a *tafsīr* according to need. The Companions, likewise, after the death of the Prophet did not interpret the whole of the scripture, but only that which the masses found difficult. The era of *tadhwīn*, or compilation of *tafsīr* did not begin until the second century A.H. The pertinent point here is that the Companions set an important precedent by not relying only on Prophetic Tradition when commentating on the Qur'ān, but would employ all of their knowledge of language and environment to produce explanations that would satisfy the needs of their people; thus the *tafsīr* literature during the time of the Successors began to broaden in scope and quantity until complete *tafsīrs* of the Qur'ān began to be produced – amongst them, the manuscript that is the focus of this study. Azami has it that no fewer than twenty-four complete *tafsīrs* were written during the period of the Successors and the generation after them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Azami. Muhammad Muṣṭafā, *Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, Vol.2 / pp.148 – 318.



### 1.3.7. His reliance on language in explaining obscure (*gharīb*) words in the Qur'ān and whether he would use poetry as evidence:

Ibn 'Abbās is regarded as a pioneer in *tafsīr* for the fact that he devised a methodology or hermeneutical approach for the exegesis of the Qur'ān, and is credited with being a pioneer in the genre of linguistic *tafsīr*.<sup>1</sup> Goldziher held that Ibn 'Abbās was a pioneer in linguistic *tafsīr* or *tafsīr* with a focus on linguistic analysis and commentary.<sup>2</sup> He thus became famous for his *tafsīr* of the obscure words in the Qur'ān – words which to the Arabs were not immediately understood. Al-Suyūṭī has said, “The first source of *tafsīr* for the scholar is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās and his students, for they exhausted the commentary of the *gharīb* words, as long as the chains of narration back to them are sound.”<sup>3</sup> Al-Suyūṭī went as far as to say that Ibn 'Abbās' explanation of the *gharīb* of the Qur'ān encompassed the totality of the scripture, and he thus sought to collate all narrations from Ibn 'Abbās to prove this. He used what is regarded as the soundest chain back to Ibn 'Abbās, through Ibn Abū Ṭalḥa. It is the same chain of transmission that al-Bukhārī relies on in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, when relating traditions from Ibn 'Abbās. Al-Suyūṭī has compiled a large number of the *gharīb* which he gathered from the works of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abū Ḥātim.<sup>4</sup>

The verse, “Allah will throw back their mockery on them, and give them rope in their trespasses (*ṭughyānihim*); so they will wander like blind ones (*ya'mahūn*)”,<sup>5</sup> is an example where Ibn 'Abbās explains two words regarded as *gharīb*. He explains the word *ya'mahūn* to mean wavering and looking left and right in uncertainty.<sup>6</sup> The *Lisān al-'Arab* says that the word *ya'mahūn* is derived from *'amah*, confusion and wavering, and then quotes II: 15. It further explains that *'amah* is a type of spiritual blindness where *'amā* is physical blindness.<sup>7</sup> In the same verse the word *ṭughyān* is interpreted as being

<sup>1</sup> Ḥujjatī. Muhammad Bāqir, *Ibn 'Abbās wa Makānatuhu fī al-Tafsīr wa al-Ma'ārif al-Ukhrā*, (Beirut: Dār al-Rawḍa. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 1990), p.68.

<sup>2</sup> *Islamic Schools of Tafsīr*, p.69.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.2 / pp.56 – 57.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.Vol.2 / pp.6 – 57.

<sup>5</sup> II: 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.197.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn. Manẓūr. Muhammad b. Makram b'Ali, *Lisān al'Arab*, Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabi, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. (1997) Vol.9 / p.408 (entry for *'amah*).

*kufr*, disbelief. The *Lisān al-‘Arab* entry for *ṭughyān*, under the root *ṭaghā*, states that it means ‘to exceed a limit’ (*kullu shay’ jāwaza al-qadr faqad ṭaghā*) and that *ṭughyā*, is *baghy*, or more simply *kufr*, disbelief, as in II:15.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the *ET* explains the same verse, II:15, with the following: ‘Blind (*‘amhatan*) unable to see’.<sup>2</sup> As for *ṭughyān*, it is explained as, “He will leave them wandering astray and in disbelief”.<sup>3</sup>

For the verse, “Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another...nor shall compensation (*‘adl*) be taken from her”<sup>4</sup>, Ibn ‘Abbās said ‘*adl* means *badl*, a substitute, in this case a financial expiation, *fidya*.<sup>5</sup> In the *Lisān al-‘Arab* entry for the word ‘*adl* one finds the word *fidya* as a clarifier, followed by the verse II: 48.<sup>6</sup> In the *ET*, ‘*adl* is explained as *fidā*’, financial compensation.<sup>7</sup>

These examples, of which there are many more, highlight the gift of language that Ibn ‘Abbās possessed, which he fully utilized to explain the *gharīb* of the Qur’ān. It is observed here that the author of the *ET* explains the words in a style that is in close proximity to the style of Ibn ‘Abbās. In short, it is as though he only explains individual words, as does Ibn ‘Abbās.

**Many scholars have asked a pertinent question in regards to Ibn ‘Abbās’ great knowledge of the Arabic language: would he quote from Arabic poetry when explaining *gharīb* words?**

The answer we are accustomed to hearing is in the affirmative. The major exegetical works abound with examples of poetry used in *tafsīr* ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās’ - his exegetical methodology is said to be distinguished for its dependence on poetry as a commentary for obscure words in the Qur’ān; to the point where if an exegete quotes poetry in his commentary, he is labeled as a follower of the school of Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., Vol.8 / p.170, entry for *ṭaghā*.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.3a, *ET*, p.16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> II: 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.383.

<sup>6</sup> *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Vol.4 / p.83, entry for ‘*adl*’.

<sup>7</sup> Edited text, p.4b, *ET*, p.28.

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Burhān*, Vol.1 / p.368, *Al-Itqān*, Vol.2 / p.55, *Ta’rīf al-Dārisīn*, p.243.



Goldziher, in his analysis of al-Ṭabari's hermeneutical methodology describes al-Ṭabari's usage of poetry in exegesis, and his regarding it to be the most reliable method of understanding words whose meanings are doubtful, as closely resembling that of Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Ḥākim<sup>2</sup> relates in his *al-Mustadrak* on the authority of 'Ikrima that Ibn 'Abbās was once asked about the verse, "The Day that the Shin shall be laid bare",<sup>3</sup> to which he said, "If something in the Qur'ān is unclear to you, then search for an explanation in poetry, for it is the *dīwān* of the Arabs. Have you not heard the saying of the poet..."<sup>4</sup> Al-Zarkashī and al-Suyūṭī relate something similar.<sup>5</sup>

Al-Qurṭubī<sup>6</sup>, in the introduction to his exegesis, *Tafsīr al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, quotes Ibn Al-Anbārī, who says Ibn 'Abbās would frequently explain the *gharīb* of the Qur'ān by quoting poetry. He goes on to mention some of the words explained by Ibn 'Abbās in such a way, such as the word *zanīm*, which he said was a bastard child, and *afnān*, said to be shade. Thereafter, he mentions lines of poetry which indicate that.<sup>7</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī quotes Sa'īd b. Jubayr, who said Ibn 'Abbās explained the verse, "And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties (*ḥaraj*) on you in religion; it is the cult of your father Abraham",<sup>8</sup> by saying, "If anything in the Qur'ān should appear foreign to you then look within poetry, because poetry is Arabic." Then he called a bedouin and asked him the meaning of *ḥaraj* to which he replied, "narrowness". Ibn 'Abbās responded, "You have

<sup>1</sup> *Islamic Schools of Tafsīr*, pp.114 – 115.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ḥākim is Muhammad b. 'Abdullāh al-Naysāpūrī, famously known as al-Ḥākim, from the most well known of the *hadīth* memorisers and authors in that field. He was born and died in Nisapur (321/933 – 405/1014). He took from nearly two thousand masters. Amongst his many works are the *al-Mustadrak*, *al-Iklīl* and *al-Madkhal*. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.6 / p.227.

<sup>3</sup> LXVIII: 42.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Ḥākim al-Naysāpūrī, Abū 'Abdullāh, *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* Critical edition by Muṣṭafā 'Aṭā, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1990 AD), Vol.2 / p.542.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Burhān*, Vol.1 / p.369, *al-Itqān*, Vol.2 / p.55.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Qurṭubī is Muhammad b. Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr, born in Cordoba, Andalus, one of the most prolific exegetes the Muslim world has seen, he eventually took up residence in Egypt where he was laid to rest in 671/1273. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.5 / p.322, *Uḡamā' al-Islām*, p.341.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Edited by Muhammad al-Ḥafnāwī. Dār al-Ḥadīth, Cairo, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (1996 AD). Vol.1 / pp.39 – 40.

<sup>8</sup> XXII: 78.

spoken the truth!”<sup>1</sup> Thus the report of ‘Ikrima lays down Ibn ‘Abbās’ methodology whilst the report of Sa‘īd confirms it and expands on it by giving an example of a bedouin asked to explain a word. This is since the Bedouin was considered to have mastered the Arabic tongue to a higher degree than city-folk, having a greater knowledge of pre-Islamic poetry.

Al-Suyūṭī quotes many narrations which reinforce his view that Ibn ‘Abbās would use poetry as a clarifier for unusual and obscure words<sup>2</sup>; it appears however, that he accepts these without question, announcing his conviction that this is the case. He says: “We have reported much from Ibn ‘Abbās regarding that; the majority of what we have narrated are the *masā’il* of Nāfi‘ b. al-Azraq. Ibn al-Anbārī has included them in his work *al-Waqf wa al-Ibtidā’* as did al-Ṭabarānī<sup>3</sup> in *al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*.”<sup>4</sup>

Ibn al-Anbārī<sup>5</sup> reports a story in which Ibn ‘Abbās meets with Nāfi‘ b. al-Azraq to discuss his *masā’il*, adding at the end of it, “This is frequently met with in *ḥadīth* reports from the Companions and the Successors...there is a group, however, who have no knowledge of the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet or of the Arabic language, who have rebuked the grammarians for using poetry to explain the Qur’ān; they claim that in doing so they give precedence to poetry over the Qur’ān. That is simply not the case; all that they (the grammarians) intend by that is to explain the obscure words using the poetry of the Arabs; does not God say, “We have made it a Qur’ān in Arabic that ye may be able to understand”.<sup>6</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās has said that poetry is the *diwān* of the Arabs so if something is unclear then resort to finding an explanation in their *diwān* and search for

<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.10 / p.269.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Itqān*, Vol.2 / p.55.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ṭabarānī is Sulaymān b. Aḥmad b. Ayyūb al-Shāmī Abū al-Qāsim (260/873 – 360/971), a major Muḥaddith. he was originally from Ṭabariyya in Syria. He travelled seeking sacred knowledge and has many books in *ḥadīth and tafsīr*, amongst them the *al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*. He died in Asfahan. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.3 / p.121.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.2 / p.55.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn al-Anbārī is Abū Bakr Muhammad b. al-Qāsim (271 – 328 A.H.), the grammarian and philologist. He has many works in the sciences of the Qur’ān, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* and grammar. *Hadiyat al-‘Ārifīn fī Asmā’ al-Mu‘allifīn wa Athār al-Muṣannifīn*, Ismā‘īl Pasha al-Baghdādī, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, Vol.6 / p.35. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.6 / p.334 Ibn al-Anbārī Kamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Barakāt *Nuzhat al-Albāb fī Ṭabaqāt al-Udabā’*. Edited by Ibrahīm al-Sāmūrā’ī, Maktabat al-Manār, Al-Zarqā’, Jordan 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (1985), p.197

<sup>6</sup> XLIII: 3.



understanding.”<sup>1</sup> As for the number of issues (*masā'il*) he narrates, they total fifty in number.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn al-Anbārī reaffirms the fact that the Companions and the Successors would explain the obscure in the Qur'ān with poetry saying that the narrations to prove this are many. He says that he summarized them for fear of making his work over-lengthy.<sup>3</sup> The question arises: does he mean by 'summarise' that he has shortened the narrations of the *masā'il* themselves, or that he has not made mention of all the narrations from the Companions and the Successors?

The answer to this is important because if it is known it becomes possible to verify the narrations of al-Ṣuyūṭī which total a hundred and ninety questions posed to Ibn 'Abbās, besides the ones which he left out. He says that he left between ten and twenty questions out because of their prominence. Al-Ṣuyūṭī makes no mention of his source. In the *al-Fahras al-Shāmil li al-Turāth al-'Arabī*<sup>4</sup> there is mention of manuscripts which contain the issues (*masā'il*) of Nāfi' b. al-Azraq, from the fourth century A.H., about which there is difference of opinion regarding its size: some say that it is a hundred and nine pages, others that it is a hundred and nineteen. And from the twelfth century A.H. are manuscripts which are fourteen and nineteen pages in length. Many editions of these *masā'il* have been published: that of al-Sāmūrā'ī<sup>5</sup>, Muhammad 'Abd al-Raḥīm and Aḥmad Naṣrullāh,<sup>6</sup> and Muhammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī,<sup>7</sup> all of them containing two-hundred and fifty issues, organised in the same fashion as the manuscript (Muhammad Fu'ād organizes them in alphabetical order).

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn. al-Anbārī, Abū Bakr Muhammad b. al-Qāsim, *Iyḍāḥ al-Waqf wal Ibtidā' fī Kitāb Allāh*, Editor Muḥyī al-dīn Ramaḍān, Damascus (1971), p.76.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp.76 – 96.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.97.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Fahras al-Shāmil li al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, *al-Makhṭūṭ*, present in the Maktabat al-Zāhiriyya, Damascus. Vol.1 / p.24. There is a second copy, 2 / 283 – 284, 14 – 19 pages in length (from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.H.).

<sup>5</sup> Ibrāhīm al-Sāmūrā'ī, (ed.) *Su'ālāt Nāfi' b. al-Azraq*, Maṭba'a al-Ma'ārif, Baghdad (1968).

<sup>6</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥīm, Muhammad, and Aḥmad Naṣrullāh, (eds.) *Gharīb al-Qur'ān fī Shi'r al-'Arab*, *Su'ālāt Nāfi' b. al-Azraq ilā Ibn 'Abbās*, Mu'assasat al-Kitāb al-Thaqāfiyya, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1993).

<sup>7</sup> *Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, p.20.

It may be that all the editions are of the same original manuscript or more; the important thing, however, is that al-Sāmūrā'ī and Muhammad 'Abd al-Raḥīm mention that the manuscript lacks the year in which it was copied, that it is in very attractive *naskhī* calligraphy, and that the *isnād* is one and the same for both editions. It is believed that the edition of Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī is likewise, for if there were any differences, 'Abd al-Raḥīm would have pointed them out.

The narration of al-Suyūṭī is the same as the manuscripts *isnād*: both meet at Ibn al-Ṭussī<sup>1</sup> and then continue to Ibn 'Abbās. The narration of Ibn al-Anbārī has a different *isnād* to al-Suyūṭī's and the manuscript's because he narrates it from Maymūn b. Mahrān, from Ibn 'Abbās, whereas al-Suyūṭī's is from 'Abdullāh b. Abū Bakr b. Muhammad from his father, from Ibn 'Abbās. The *isnād* of al-Ṭabarānī is also at variance for which he removed a part of it from Juwaybir<sup>2</sup>, from al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, from Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>3</sup> Thus we have three chains of narration for these *masā'il*.

The important point here is that these chains all represent a firm evidence that Ibn 'Abbās met with Nāfi' b. al-Azraq and had discussions with him about *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān, in which poetry was used for explication purposes and interpretation. The exact number of issues discussed we cannot be certain of. A second point worthy of note is that all these sources which contain the issues of Nāfi' are later than the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.H. as is pointed out by the *al-Fahras al-Shāmil*; it holds that the oldest manuscript is dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. For this reason the researcher is faced with a lot of uncertainty when seeking to affirm whether the issues are actually from Ibn 'Abbās. The following will seek to investigate whether they are likely to be from him by comparing them to his views, as preserved in earlier sources from the first three centuries A.H.

It should be noted that there is a difference between the number of *masā'il* that are mentioned by al-Suyūṭī (190 issues), al-Samurā'ī (250 issues) although they are both from the same chain of narration. This may have arisen due to the manuscript used by al-

<sup>1</sup> Ibn al-Ṭussī is Abū al-Ḥusayn Abd al-Ṣamad b. 'Alī b. Muhammad Makram, known as Ibn al-Ṭussī, a recitor and *Hāfiẓ*. He had regular sessions in which he related *ḥadīth*. *Footnotes of Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, p.25.

<sup>2</sup> Juwaybir is Ibn Sa'īd al-Asdī, a narrator of *tafsīr*, very weak, he died in (140 A.H). *Al-Taqrīb*, Vol.1 / p.139.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Itqān* Vol.2 / p.88.



Sāmūrā'ī not having a date on it showing when it was copied; he inclined to the view that the manuscript was a later copy because of its clear, beautiful *naskhī* calligraphy.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that the additional issues are by the hand of an unknown copyist (the manuscript had no mention of the name of the copyist) whilst the *isnād* of the *masā'il* of Nāfi' end at 'Abd al-Ṣamad b. 'Alī b. Makram, better known as Ibn al-Ṭussī; he read them to him in 344/931.<sup>2</sup> He says, "Abū Sahl al-Surrī b. Sahl b. Ḥirbān al-Jundīsāpūrī narrated to me at Jund Yasāpūr<sup>3</sup>, and completed his reading in 288/875."<sup>4</sup> Thus those who have mentioned these *masā'il* are al-Suyūṭī, al-Ṭabarānī and Ibn al-Anbārī – al-Suyūṭī mentioned them with a chain from Ibn al-Ṭussī with varying narrations from al-Ṭabarānī and Ibn al-Anbārī – and it was Ibn al-Ṭussī who seems to have collected all the narrations. Does this mean that these *masā'il* were scattered before al-Ṭussī collated them and made for them a single chain of narration? This is certainly possible, and it should be realized that these three chains together cannot possibly have all been fabricated regardless of their differences in the number of their *masā'il*. It is absurd to assume three different individuals would all contrive to create a single chain of narration and then ascribe it to Ibn 'Abbās.

These *masā'il* became known in the fourth century A.H., however, was their appearance sudden, or is there any mention of them in the earlier books of *tafsīr*? These two questions necessitate a return to the primary source in *tafsīr*, the *Jāmi' al-Bayān* of al-Ṭabarī. This work contains narrations together with their chains and relies on poetry as a primary support for the interpretation of obscure (*gharīb*) words in the Qur'ān. This means that a comparison between the *masā'il* of Nāfi' and al-Ṭabarī will save us the arduous task of referencing various books in philology to investigate their authenticity. Al-Sāmūrā'ī points out that al-Ṭabarī in up to ten places uses these *masā'il* as an evidence in his *tafsīr* which is infact the case.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Su'ālāt Nāfi' b. al-Azraq*, p.7, *Gharīb al-Qur'ān fī Shi'r al-'Arab*, p.20.

<sup>2</sup> *Gharīb al-Qur'ān fī Shi'r al-'Arab*, p.23.

<sup>3</sup> Jund Yasāpūr is a city in Khuzistān. It was a citadel containing date-palms, farm-land and water. *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Vol.3 / p.81.

<sup>4</sup> *Gharīb al-Qur'ān fī Shi'r al-'Arab*, p.23.

<sup>5</sup> *Su'ālāt Nāfi' b. al-Azraq*, p.65 onwards.

Unusually, al-Ṭabarī only mentions Ibn ‘Abbās in three of the ten places in which he uses these lines of poetry as evidence – the remaining occasions make no mention whatever of Ibn ‘Abbās. From these is the commentary of the verse, “Do not the believers know [yay’as]. that, had Allah (so) willed, He could have guided all mankind (to the right)?”<sup>1</sup> Al-Ṭabarī says, “Some of the scholars of Basra have said that the word yay’as means ‘to know’, and they quote poetry in support of this.”<sup>2</sup> The poetry quoted has no mention of Ibn ‘Abbās although in the *masā’il* of Nāfi’ they are ascribed to him.<sup>3</sup> Infact, al-Ṭabarī fails to mention anymore than that the poetry is from the scholars of Basra without further detail of a chain of narration – if he had known of any further narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās it is doubtful that he would have let them slip him by. Based on this, it may be affirmed that Ibn ‘Abbās did not use this line of poetry as an evidence, nor the other six lines which have been mentioned by al-Sāmūrā’ī and are found in al-Ṭabarī;<sup>4</sup> there are even some differences in the lines of poetry used as evidence in the narrations of al-Sāmūrā’ī and that recorded by al-Suyūṭī, an example of which is found in the commentary of XIX: 73.<sup>5</sup>

There is agreement about some verses, for example, the saying of God, “So beseech thy Lord for us to produce for us of what the earth growth,- its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, its garlic...”<sup>6</sup> Al-Ṭabarī interprets the verse providing a supporting verse of poetry, saying that it is from ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Maṣṣūr from Nāfi’ b. Abū Nu‘aym who said Ibn ‘Abbās was asked. The poet is said to be Uḥayha b. al-Jallāḥ,<sup>7</sup> and the verse of poetry differs slightly from the words of the verse mentioned by al-Sāmūrā’ī<sup>8</sup> and al-Suyūṭī,<sup>9</sup> aswell as their mentioning a different poet (Abū Maḥjan al-Thaqafī).

Despite the differences within the verses of poetry in the two sources, because they arise

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<sup>1</sup> XIII: 31

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.8 / part 14 / p.200.

<sup>3</sup> *Su’ālāt Nāfi’ b. al-Azraq*, p.10.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.584, Vol.4 / p.256, Vol.4 / part 6 / p.114, Vol.7 / part 12 / p.108 / Vol.9 / part 16 / p.276. Vol.9 / part 14 / p.218.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* Vol.9 / part 16 / p.135 and al-Suyūṭī, Vol.2 / p.58.

<sup>6</sup> II: 61.

<sup>7</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.444.

<sup>8</sup> *Su’ālāt Nāfi’ b. al-Azraq*, p.14.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, Vol.2 / p.61.



within only a few words, they may be overlooked, and the poems assumed to be the same. But it must be stressed that al-Ṭabarī does not say that the poetry was quoted in a meeting between Nāfi' b al-Azraq and Ibn 'Abbās; this is why the *isnād* he quotes bears no resemblance to the *isnāds* of the other three chains that are relied upon by al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn al-Anbārī and Ibn al-Ṭussī. It leads one to doubt the veracity of Ibn al-Ṭussī who has claimed all the poems are evidences from the meeting between Ibn al-Azraq and Ibn 'Abbās. The intellect does not accept either that in one sitting Ibn 'Abbās would answer Nāfi' on more than 250 issues which is what is claimed by both the *al-Su'ālāt*<sup>1</sup> and *al-Itqān*.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps in the second evidence we may find some guidance on the matter. The verse, “And Allah has made for you mates of your own nature, and made for you, out of them, sons and daughters and grandchildren”<sup>3</sup>, is given the following commentary: “Muhammad b. Khālid b Khaddāsh has informed us, from Salīm b. Qutaybah, from Wahb b. Ḥabīb al-Asadī, from Abū Ḥamza, from Ibn 'Abbās, that he said when asked about the saying of God, “...Sons and daughters and grandchildren [*ḥafada*]”, he said, “*ḥafada* refers to he who has aided you; have you not heard the saying of the poet...”<sup>4</sup> without mentioning the name of the poet. The *Su'ālāt* of Nāfi'<sup>5</sup> and *al-Itqān*<sup>6</sup> both record the same line of poetry without mentioning the source, the *isnād* of both works being through Ibn al-Ṭussī and as such differs from the *isnād* of al-Ṭabarī.

The reality of these two evidences is that they do not gain any authenticity because of the meeting between al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Ṭussī, because the chains of narration differ as do the occasions in which they were said; neither do the verses of poetry agree with each other. Thus we become only more doubtful about the meeting between Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn al-Azraq. There are reports in al-Ṭabarī which show meetings took place between the two, however, these show no indications of poetry used as evidence nor of any obscure

<sup>1</sup> *Su'ālāt Nāfi' b. al-Azraq*, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.2 / p.56.

<sup>3</sup> XVI: 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.8 / part 14 / p.190.

<sup>5</sup> *Su'ālāt Nāfi' b. al-Azraq*, p.10.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.57.

(*gharīb*) words being discussed.<sup>1</sup> Other questions arise in al-Ṭabarī<sup>2</sup> of a different sort, in which the questioner seems to be confused by apparently contradictory verses, and in which the questioner is not mentioned by name; Ibn Ḥajar in his *Fatḥ al-Bārī* gives the name of the questioner saying: “This man was Nāfi‘ b. al-Azraq who was to become the head of the *al-Azāriqa*<sup>3</sup> a splinter-group from the *Khawārij*; he would sit with Ibn ‘Abbās at Mecca. asking questions and arguing.”<sup>4</sup>

Amongst the questions Ibn al-Azraq reportedly asked, that which has been narrated by al-Ḥākim in the *al-Mustadrak* from a narration of Dāwud b. Abū Hind, from ‘Ikrima, from Ibn ‘Abbās, who said that Ibn al-Azraq asked him about his understanding of the verses: “That will be a Day when they shall not be able to speak”,<sup>5</sup> “And the voices will be hushed...so that thou hearest not but murmuring”,<sup>6</sup> “They will advance to each other, engaging in mutual enquiry”<sup>7</sup> and, “Then he that will be given his record in his right hand will say: ‘Ah here! Read ye my record!’”<sup>8</sup> to which Ibn ‘Abbās expressed his deep irritation knowing that the questioner sought only discord.<sup>9</sup> The narration of the same conversation in al-Bukhārī differs in the number of verses it quotes (it includes a larger number).<sup>10</sup> There are, then, other questions from Ibn al-Azraq which Ibn ‘Abbās does not answer using poetry, as has been reported by scholars; it may be that the meetings between Nāfi‘ and Ibn ‘Abbās were many.<sup>11</sup>

The concluding remark about this issue is that the narrations contain too many discrepancies which lead us to seriously doubt their authenticity and the soundness of their ascription to Ibn ‘Abbās, but not in their entirety; it is possible still that some are

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, Vol.4 / p.132.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Vol.4 / p.132.

<sup>3</sup> The *Azāriqa* were companions of Nāfi‘ b. al-Azraq, and it is to him that the group is ascribed. They believed ‘Alī was an infidel as well as Ibn ‘Abbās, Ā‘isha, Ṭalḥā and Zubayr, and they also made the one who commits a major sin or stays back from *jihād* an infidel. Al-Shahrastānī, Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm, *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, Manshūrāt Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut. Vol.1 / pp.111 – 115.

<sup>4</sup> *Fatḥ al-Bārī, Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, Vol.8 (65), Chapter 41, *ḥadīth*, No 4531, p.632.

<sup>5</sup> LXXVII: 35.

<sup>6</sup> XX: 108.

<sup>7</sup> LII: 25.

<sup>8</sup> LXIX: 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-ṣaḥīḥayn*, Vol.4 / p.617.

<sup>10</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Tafsīr (65) chapter 41, p.943.

<sup>11</sup> Rippin. A.. Ibn ‘Abbās’s *al-Lughāt fī l-Qur’ān* in *Bulletin of the SOAS*, p.16.’



authentic since scholars are agreed that there was a meeting between Ibn ‘Abbās and Nāfi’. This is reinforced by Rippin: ‘It is worth noting that the ascription of *Masā’il* to Ibn ‘Abbās has generally been accepted by earlier scholarship on grounds which it must be admitted are not totally evident.’<sup>1</sup> From the 250 poetry evidences collated in the later books, al-Ṭabarī includes only three of them from Ibn ‘Abbās. And it is not simply a case of al-Ṭabarī not meeting with al-Ṭussī and al-Ṣuyūṭī on the matter of narrations: there is also the fact that the places where Ibn ‘Abbās is quoted using poetry as evidence occurs only once in the first four volumes of his *tafsīr*, and even in this instance it relates not to a linguistic issue but a point of law.<sup>2</sup> The question arises where all these examples of Ibn ‘Abbās’ usage of poetry exist from the early books in exegesis if they were as famous as is claimed – not forgetting also that al-Ṭabarī wherever possible quotes Ibn ‘Abbās in exegesis.

There is no alternative in seeking a definitive answer on the matter of Ibn ‘Abbās’ usage of poetry in *tafsīr* except to look at the works in exegesis from the first and second centuries A.H.; from these are the *tafsīr* of Ibn Jubayr, Mujāhid, Qatādah, Muqātil<sup>3</sup> and al-San‘ānī. Aḥmad Nawfal addresses the question of poetry in the *tafsīr* of Mujāhid; he finds no examples and says that this is in contrast to “his teacher Ibn ‘Abbās.”<sup>4</sup> The first point he makes is of great importance to this research because it reveals that the greatest of Ibn ‘Abbās’ students made no use of poetry anywhere in this exegesis; his point about Ibn ‘Abbās unfortunately lacks the same academic value and is probably no more than a regurgitation of the widely held view discussed and refuted above. Ibrāhīm al-Najjār, editor of the *Tafsīr* of Sa‘īd b. Jubayr says that the number of places in which he quotes poetry in his exegesis can be counted on the hand.<sup>5</sup> These examples, rare as they are, do not change the quite obvious fact that it was not from the methodology of the students of Ibn ‘Abbās to use poetry in their *tafsīr*. In to the second century A.H. the *tafsīr* of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.16.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.361.

<sup>3</sup> Muqātil b. Sulaymān b. Bashīr al-Asdī, the author of the well-known exegesis. He was praised by some scholars such as al-Shāfi‘ī whilst others rebuked him such as Ibn ‘Uyaynah and al-Bukhārī and Ibn al-Mubārak. He was not evidence in *hadīth*. He died in (150 A.H). *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.28 / p.434, *Al-A‘lām*. Vol.7 / p.281.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, p.329.

<sup>5</sup> al-Najjār. Ibrahim,(ed.) *Tafsīr Sa‘īd b. Jubayr*, Doctoral thesis, Cairo University, (1976) p.46.

Qatādah, which has been edited by ‘Abdullāh Abū al-Sa‘ūd, does not include enough examples of poetry usages for the editor to do deem it worthy of mention in his study of the work<sup>1</sup> though he gives a lot of attention to linguistic aspects of the work, a subject of far less pertinence. ‘Abdullāh Shaḥāta, editor of the *tafsīr* of Muqātil, also ignores the use of poetry in his study of the work, which leads us to conclude again that it simply didn’t figure in the work for it to be worthy of discussion.<sup>2</sup> Finally from the same era, the *tafsīr* of al-San‘ānī which does not include a single example of poetry usage as an evidence in exegesis.<sup>3</sup> This necessitates that the claim that poetry was used by early commentators, Ibn ‘Abbās amongst them, has no scientific or academic basis. Many Western scholars have arrived at the same conclusion, among them Leemhuis, who agrees with Wansbrough, that:

The use of poetry and scripture to explain a word was absent at this stage because it belongs to a later masoretic stage of textual commentary. On the other hand Leemhuis considers variant readings to be very early. The fact that he believes he can justify such a conclusion indicates his leanings away from Wansbrough and towards Sezgin.<sup>4</sup>

Berg further says, based on a statistical analysis which he carried out focusing on al-Ṭabarī’s narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās, and who he transmits them from, and assessing these chains, he speculates that the proportion of *tafsīr* using poetry among the students of Ibn ‘Abbās was negligible.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abū al-Sa‘ūd, ‘Abdullāh,(ed.) *Tafsīr Qatāda* Edition and Study ,Masters Thesis, University of Cairo (1977 ), p.256 onwards.

<sup>2</sup> Shāḥḥāta, ‘Abdullāh, (ed.) *Muqātil b. Sulaymān wa Manhajuhū fī al-Tafsīr ma‘ Taḥqīq Tafsīrihī al-Kabīr* Doctoral thesis, Dār al-‘Ulūm (1967 ) , p.140 onwards.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-San‘ānī.

<sup>4</sup> *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam*, p.104. This is supported by . Leemhuis, Fred, *Origins of the tafsīr Tradition,in Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran*, Edited by Andrew Rippin, Clarendon Press. Oxford, (1988) p.27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.205. Also, see *Origins of the tafsīr Tradition*, p.27.



The author, after attempting to reference the examples quoted by Ibn al-Ṭussi, found only three out of the 250 evidences present within al-Ṭabarī, and even those three had different chains of transmission. That leaves one to believe that most of the examples ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās are fabrications of later authorities from the fourth century A.H. onwards. This is the conclusion of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn who suggests that the fabrications aimed at showing that the Qur’ān agreed with the early language of the Arabs and to prove Ibn ‘Abbās’ eloquence and vast knowledge.<sup>1</sup> He also held that it does not agree with reason that so many questions could have been asked and answered in a single sitting.<sup>2</sup>

Shawqī Ḍayf refutes Ḥusayn’s view. He says: “It is not for the Moderns like Margoliouth and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn to exaggerate and to doubt to the point of rejection what the early scholars have agreed upon. We doubt what they doubted and accept what they agreed upon. There is no place for basing opinions on mere conjecture.”<sup>3</sup> The present study, however, has shown through an academic study that Ibn ‘Abbās did not employ poetry as an evidence in *tafsīr*.<sup>4</sup>

Ghāzī Ṭulaymāt agrees with Ḍayf and goes as far as to say that the early commentators would quote only pre-Islamic *Jahilī* poetry as evidence.<sup>5</sup> Having followed this up, the author has found that the evidences from poetry are not confined to the era of pre-Islamic Arabia; there are also a large number of poems quoted from Companions such as Ḥassān b. Thābit<sup>6</sup>, Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib<sup>7</sup>, ‘Umar b. Abū Rabī‘a<sup>1</sup>, ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Ḥusayn, Ṭāhā, *Al-Adab al-Jāhilī*, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Cairo (1989), pp.108-109.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ḍayf, Shawqī, *Al-‘Aṣr al-Jāhilī*, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Cairo, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1990), p.175.

<sup>4</sup> Reference should be made to *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and al-Ṭabarī.

<sup>5</sup> Ṭulaymāt Ghāzī ‘Irfān al-Asqar, *Al-Adab al-Jāhilī: Qaḍāyāhū, Aghrāḍuhū, A’lāmuhū, Funūnahū*, Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, Beirut 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (2002), p.51.

<sup>6</sup> Ḥassān b. Thābit b. al-Mundhir al-Anṣārī, the poet of the Prophet, from Medina where he finally died in 54/674. *Al-A’lām*, Vol.2 / p.175, *‘Uṣamā al-Islām*, Vol.1 / p.48. His poetry is found in the work *Gharīb al-Qur’ān fī Shi’r al-‘Arab*, p.140.

<sup>7</sup> Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the uncle of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and one of the noblemen of Quraysh both before converting to Islam and afterwards. His conversion was a great boost to the Muslims. He was martyred in ‘Uḥud in the year (2 A.H). *Al-A’lām*, Vol.2 / p.278, *‘Uṣamā al-Islām*, p48. His poetry is found in *Gharīb al-Qur’ān fī Shi’r al-‘Arab*, p.141.

‘Abdullāh b. Rawāḥa.<sup>3</sup> This confirms that not all the poetry used in evidence was from the pre-Islamic ignorance. Ibn al-Azraq once exclaimed “And do the Arabs know that?” meaning by this do they know the Arabs who lived prior to Islam. ‘Abdullāh Abū al-Sa‘ūd says, similarly, that all the conversations between Ibn ‘Abbās and al-Azraq actually took place and mentions the *al-Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim as containing many examples to prove the point. Unfortunately, after a thorough investigation, it is found that the *al-Mustadrak* contains only three examples where Ibn ‘Abbās uses poetry in *tafsīr*. The first is his commentary of a verse in *Maryam*,<sup>4</sup> the second about a verse in *al-Najm*<sup>5</sup> and the third about a verse in *al-Qalam*.<sup>6</sup> Some early scholars have attacked ‘Ikrima, the narrator of nearly all the narrations of Ibn ‘Abbās in which poetry is quoted, as having exaggerated and insinuated that he would fabricate in his narrations.<sup>7</sup> The author does not criticize ‘Ikrima in the same way, however, does believe that there is doubt in the authenticity of the narrations contained in the *Su‘ālāt* of al-Azraq. Many scholars have also defended ‘Ikrima such as al-Shi‘bī<sup>8</sup>, al-Dhahabī,<sup>9</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī<sup>10</sup> and Dr al-Dhahabī<sup>11</sup> whilst countering the criticisms.

Amongst the Orientalists, Goldziher makes mention of this subject. He says that the idea to use poetry to explain the *gharīb* of the Qur’ān occurred to Ibn ‘Abbās late in his life...the same idea which occurred to the Caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb before him.<sup>12</sup> What he means by late in life is not clearly understood for he may even be implying here that

<sup>1</sup> His poetry is found in *Gharīb al-Qur’ān fī Shi‘r al-‘Arab*, p.16.

<sup>2</sup> His poetry is found in *Gharīb al-Qur’ān fī Shi‘r al-‘Arab*, p.136.

<sup>3</sup> His poetry is found *Gharīb al-Qur’ān fī Shi‘r al-‘Arab*, p.204.

<sup>4</sup> XIX: 8. *Al-Mustadrak, Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, Vol.2 / p.404.

<sup>5</sup> LIII: 32. *Al-Mustadrak, Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, Vol.2 / p.510.

<sup>6</sup> LXVIII: 42. *Al-Mustadrak, Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, Vol.3 / p.532.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubra*, Vol.2 / p.444.

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Kāshif* (footnotes), Vol.2 / p.276.

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Kāshif*, Vol.2 / p.276.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Ḥajar has responded to all the incriminations which have been directed at ‘Ikrima, making clear that they are specific to very particular events; they were not permanent incriminations against him, whilst he would say often: “If only those who held me to be a liar behind my back would do so in my presence.” Ibn Ḥajar explains that he would have been able to defend himself of course if they had done so. In fact, they only spoke behind his back since they really did not have any proof. He goes on to mention names of scholars who held ‘Ikrima to be trustworthy, transmitting knowledge from him. *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.8 / p.549-552.

<sup>11</sup> *Al-Tafsīr wal-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / pp.81 – 83.

<sup>12</sup> *Islamic Schools of Exegesis*, p.89.



Ibn ‘Abbās after his death had such poetry usage ascribed to him. The matter become still further unclear when he, in a later point of his work, likens al-Ṭabarī’s usage of poetry in his *tafsīr* to Ibn ‘Abbās’ style of the same.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, it seems that there are those who have looked at this subject objectively, such as Muhammad Abū al-Naṣr. He comments on Ṭāha Ḥusayn’s statement, “Not all of it (the *masā’il*) is true, though some may be sound, and have been recorded for educational purposes.” He comments, “Rather, this is possible, just as it is possible that the chains of narrations for such reports can be authentic. It is possible some is sound and some is fabricated. The important thing here that requires an answer is: what makes you so certain that the report in question is a complete fabrication: is it because it doesn’t make sense or that it contradicts the nature of teaching.”<sup>2</sup> then those who unfortunately have been content to overlook major discrepancies in the historical literature related to this matter. Not to defend Ṭāha Ḥusayn, but he did not deny the possibility of some of the reports being sound and others fabricated for ulterior motives. Likewise, we answer al-Naṣr by saying: the way in which the questions were presented, the fact that they occurred in a single sitting, and in one narration, and in their great number (which seems a little far-fetched) as well as the difference in number of the *masā’il* as recorded in later books, and their becoming famous in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.H. and not before, and the fact that al-Ṭabarī makes no mention of them, and the narrations amongst them from poets post-Islam all lead us to support Ṭāha Ḥusayn. We, however, have shown that the early commentaries from the first and second centuries A.H., particularly those of Ibn ‘Abbās’ students made no use of poetry in their exegeses, and furthermore, al-Ṭabarī, who to all intents and purposes may be regarded as the compiler of Ibn ‘Abbās’ *tafsīr* makes almost no mention of his quoting of poetry.

We have written at length on this subject in order to make manifest the reality of the situation; this is since the narrations are many concerning Ibn ‘Abbās’ usage of poetry in *tafsīr*, in spite of the fact that practical implementation is not to be found in the narrations

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. pp.114-115.

<sup>2</sup> Abū al-Naṣr, , Muhammad Aḥmad, ‘*Abdullāh b. al-‘Abbās Ḥabr al-Umma wa Tarjumān al-Qur’ān*, Dār al-Jil, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1992), p.364.

that are in connection with his commentary. This is in order for us to compare the narrations which have come from Ibn ‘Abbās and the edited text to arrive at a conclusion on the soundness of their ascription to him.

### 1.3.8. Ibn ‘Abbās’ opinion regarding the arabicised words (*al-Mu‘arrabāt*) and the languages (*al-Lughāt*) of the Qur’ān:

The ‘languages’ of the Qur’ān, when this expression is used by the scholars of exegesis, refers to one of two concepts: the first refers to the Arab dialects spoken by the various tribes that were prevalent during the period of revelation other than the *hijāzi* dialect; the second refers to foreign languages, such as Persian, Indo-European and African languages. Al-Suyūṭī in *al-Itqān* dedicates a chapter to words that exist in the Qur’ān that are other than the dialect of Hijaz.<sup>1</sup> He begins the chapter with a narration from Abū ‘Ubayd, from ‘Ikrima, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, that the word *sāmidun* in al-Najm<sup>2</sup> means ‘singing’ and is of Yemeni origin.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Suyūṭī<sup>4</sup> ends with what he terms a *fā’idah* (a deduced benefit): he quotes al-Wāsiṭī<sup>5</sup> as saying that there are no more than three foreign (*gharīb*) words from outside the dialect of Quraysh in the Qur’ān, discernible from the fact that their dialect has a softness and refinement about it in contrast to the harshness of the surrounding dialects: The first is the word *fasayunghiḍūna*<sup>6</sup>, meaning the moving of the head, *muqītā*<sup>7</sup>, meaning able, and *fa Sharrid bihim*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Itqān*, Vol.2 / p.104.

<sup>2</sup> LIII: 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Itqān*, pp.89 – 104.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Itqān*, Vol. 2 / p.104.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Wāsiṭī is Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Wāsiṭī, born in Egypt (717 A.H.) and took up residence in Damascus where he remained till death in 776 A.H. He has many books in history, *tafsīr* and creed. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.6 / p.87.

<sup>6</sup> XVIII: 51.

<sup>7</sup> IV: 85.

<sup>8</sup> VIII: 57.



Al-Suyūfī<sup>1</sup> says scholars have differed on the issue of foreign words in the Qur'ān; most Muslim authorities have held that there are no foreign words in the Qur'ān, this being the position of al-Shāfi'ī<sup>2</sup>, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Abū 'Ubayda<sup>3</sup>, al-Qāḍi Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī<sup>4</sup> and Ibn Fāris<sup>5</sup>. Their basis was the verse, "We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'ān in order that ye may learn wisdom"<sup>6</sup>, and also, "Had We sent this as a Qur'ān (in a language) other than Arabic, they would have said: 'Why are not its verses explained in detail? What! A foreign (tongue) and (a Messenger) an Arab?'"<sup>7</sup> Al-Ṭabarī narrates on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās many statements in which the latter explains the meanings of foreign words in the Qur'ān ascribing them to their source languages. He quotes an instance where Ibn 'Abbās was asked about the word *qaswara* (LXXIV: 51) to which he said it means lion; he further explained that the word for lion is *shār* in Persian, *aryā* in Nabatean and *qaswara* in Ethiopic.<sup>8</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī was of an opinion - regarded by some as rather far-fetched - that words in the Qur'ān present also in Persian, Nabatean, Ethiopic, and others, happened to be identical, by coincidence almost, and had nothing to do with cross-fertilisation of vocabulary, a phenomenon acknowledged by philologists.<sup>9</sup> Of those in disagreement with al-Ṭabarī is Ibn 'Atiyya<sup>10</sup>, who adheres more closely to theories in modern linguistics, that is that the original languages in which words are first coined are the 'source languages', and those languages that later incorporate particular words from the source languages are

<sup>1</sup> Al-Itqān, Vol.1 / p.271.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Shāfi'ī is Muhammad b. Idrīs b. al-Abbās al-Shāfi'ī, the Imam of the World, the *Mujtahid* of his time, born in Syria (150/767). He lived in Mecca, Iraq and then finally moved to Egypt where he died (204/821). *Al-A'lām*, Vol.6 / p.26, 'Uḏamā' al-Islām, p.330, *Reliance*, x324, p.1095.

<sup>3</sup> Abū 'Ubayda Mu'ammār b. Al-Muthannā al-Baṣrī, from the scholars in language, grammar. Born in Basra (110 A.H.) and died in 209. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.7 / p.272.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Qāḍi Abū Bakr Muhammad b. al-Ṭayyib b. al-Bāqillānī, the head of the *Mutakallimūn*, he wrote many books in *tafsīr and uṣūl*. He was born 338 A.H. and passed away (403 A.H.) in Baghdad. Al-Bāqillānī, , Abū Bakr, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, Edited by 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Ṣalāh b. Muhammad b. 'Uwayḍah, Dār al-Kutub, Lebanon, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1996). P3. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.6 / p.176.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Fāris is Aḥmad b. Fāris al-Quzwīnī al-Rāzī, from the scholars of language, he had many works in various fields, but particularly important was his *tafsīr*. He was born in 329 and died in (395 A.H). *Al-A'lām*, Vol.1 / p.193.

<sup>6</sup> XII: 2.

<sup>7</sup> XLI: 44.

<sup>8</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol. 1 / p.20.

<sup>9</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol. 1 / p.21, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol.5 / p.419.art.(Al-KURAN) A.H.Johns.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn 'Atiyya, is al-Qāḍi Abū Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq b. Ghālib . b 'Atiyya, born in (481 A.H). in Andalus. He was a major exegete, jurist and philologer and a poet alongside this. He wrote the *Tafsīr al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*. He died in (542 A.H). *Al-A'lām* Vol.3 / p282 .

‘secondary’ or ‘ancillary languages’.<sup>1</sup> Al-Ṭabarī appears to be at odds with Ibn ‘Abbās on this issue also, for the latter stated in his explanation of II: 260 that the word *faṣurhumna*, to cut into pieces, was of Nabatean origin.<sup>2</sup>

From the above-mentioned it is apparent that Ibn ‘Abbās accepted the existence of arabicised words in the Qur’ān, and did not believe that this negated or contradicted the verses in the scripture describing it as *Qur’ānan ‘Arabiyyan*, an Arabic Recital.<sup>3</sup> Al-Suyūṭī and others have further explained the apparent contradiction of the evidences by suggesting that the presence of an almost insignificant number of words of non-Arab origin does not prevent one from qualifying the Qur’ān with the adjective ‘*arabiyy*, arabic.’<sup>4</sup>

Al-Tha‘ālabī<sup>5</sup> explained in his *Kitāb al-Jawāhir* that these words came in to Arabic through the ancient Arabs’ contact with other languages in foreign travel and commercial affairs, but that they had been thoroughly Arabised by the time of the Prophet.<sup>6</sup>

Al-Khuway’ī proffers a very interesting theory as to why foreign words entered the Arabic language, becoming arabicised. He says that they would be for things that the Arabs imported from other cultures and communities, such as the Persian word *istabraq*, a type of heavy silk brocade. They would simply incorporate into their language the original word used. They would not have a need, basically, to create a new word for such things that they would in any case not have a great use for.<sup>7</sup> Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim combines between the two opinions deeming both to be correct. He says:

What I deem correct is the position which holds the truthfulness of both statements together. That is since these words have their source in non-Arab languages, as

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn ‘Aṭīyya Abū Muhammad ‘Abd al-Haqq b. Ghālib al-Andalusi, *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-‘Azīz*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Lebanon, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (2001), pp.26 – 29

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol. 3 / p.78.

<sup>3</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 5 / p.419. .art.(Al-KURAN) A.H.Johns.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Itqān*, Vol. 2 / pp.106 – 119, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol.5 / p.419. art.(Al-KURAN) A.H.Johns.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Tha‘ālabī is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muhammad b. Makhlūf al-Tha‘ālabī, from the prominent exegetes of Algeria. he was born in (786 A.H). He wrote in *sīra*, *Fiqh*, *ḥadīth* and exegesis. He died in (875 A.H). *Al-A‘lām*, Vol. 3/ p.331.

<sup>6</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 5 / p.419. .art.(Al-KURAN) A.H.Johns.

*Al-Itqān*, Vol.2 / pp.107 – 108.



stated by the jurists, however they have arrived at the Arabs and so they Arabicised them, converted them from their non-Arab structures into Arab structures. Then, the Qur'ān was revealed, after these words had already penetrated the language. So whoever says they are Arab words, is truthful, and whoever says they are non-Arab is truthful.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn Ḥasnūn<sup>2</sup> narrates a book he attributes to Ibn 'Abbās on the subject of the languages in the Qur'ān (this work has been edited by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munjid). He calculates the non-Arab words to be two hundred and sixty-three in number. He then asserts that there may well be more than this amount.<sup>3</sup> Rippin has spoken of this book, arriving at the conclusion that it is not an authorship of Ibn 'Abbās, for various reasons.<sup>4</sup> We will mention these at the discussion on the non-Arab words in the edited text to see the convergence and divergence of it and the positions of Ibn 'Abbās.

### 1.3.9. Ibn 'Abbās' view on Judeo-Christian narrations:

A number of narrations have reached us from Ibn 'Abbās in which he expresses his disdain towards asking the 'People of Book' for clarification on matters of religion with the aim of further understanding the Qur'ān. Al-Bukhārī reports the following saying of Ibn 'Abbās: "O Muslims! How is it that you ask the People of the Book (on matter of religion) whilst you have with you a newly revealed Book. God has informed you that the People of the Book changed the Book of God, with their own hands, saying, "A party of them heard the word of God, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it"<sup>5</sup>. So has He not forbade you from approaching them for questioning, and that you content yourselves with that which you have of knowledge? I have never, by Allāh, seen a single one of them approach you (the Muslims) to ask you about what has been revealed to

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.1 / p.273.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Ḥasnūn is 'Abdullāh b. al-Husayn b. Ḥasnūn, the reference for the reciters during his time. He was a philologist who grew up in Baghdad (b.295 A.H.). He lived in Egypt where he died in (386 A.H). He wrote *al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān*, which he reported with his *isnād* from Ibn 'Abbās. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.4 / p.79.

<sup>3</sup> al-Munjid Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn(ed.) *Kitāb al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān*, Ibn 'Abbās, , Dār al-Kutub al-Jadīd, Beirut. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (1972). P7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibn 'Abbās Al-Lughāt fī'l-Qur'ān*, p.25.

<sup>5</sup> II: 75.

you!”<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal reports in his *Musnad* a narration from Jābir<sup>2</sup> in which ‘Umar approaches the Prophet carrying a book he received from a group amongst the People of the Book and began to read what he had to the Prophet. At this the Prophet rebuked ‘Umar saying, “I have brought to you this law in a pure, unadulterated form, so do not ask them about anything concerning matters of faith. For when they speak, you are unable to differentiate between the truth of what they say and the falsehood. By Him in whose hands depends my life, if Moses were alive today, he would have no choice but to follow me!”<sup>3</sup>

We are able to ascertain from these reports that the Companions were prohibited from asking the People of the Book about religious matters related to their own faith. The rare instances in which either the Jews or Christians were asked to bring forth their scriptures for discussion were a result of the Prophet’s command, “Bring ye the Torah and study it, if ye be men of truth”<sup>4</sup>, and for which Al-Bukhārī wrote the chapter “What is permissible to use in *Tafsīr* from the Torah”.<sup>5</sup> We have already mentioned a narration in which the Jews of Medina sought a judgment from the Prophet about the adulteress. They were disappointed when the Prophet decided to judge from the Jewish scriptures on the matter rather than Islamic law which they had hoped would decree a more lenient sentence.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the methodology of Ibn ‘Abbās in *tafsīr* was not one which depended on Christian and Jewish sources in general. However, as Professor Al-Dhahabī points out, he would refer to their narratives in certain circumstances and where specific conditions were met. He says, “He (Ibn ‘Abbās) would refer to certain narrations of the People of the Book but only if they were in conformity with the Qur’ān, such as those parts of the Qur’ān where general narratives are told and the same narratives the Torah and the Gospels appear with additional details. However, as we have previously stated, his reliance on such narrations remained within the very limited sphere in which those reports were consistent with the

<sup>1</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Shahādāt*, Chapter 39, p.511, Hadith No.2685.

<sup>2</sup> Jābir b. ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Amr b. Ḥirām al-Anṣārī, a Companion who participated in every battle except Badr and Uhud. He is a major narrator who passed away in (78 A.H). *Al-‘Iṣābah*, Vol.1 / p.213.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Maṣṣū‘āt wal Isrā’īliyyāt fī Kutub al-Tafsīr*, p.106.

<sup>4</sup> III: 93.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (97), Chapter 47, p.1328.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd* (86) Chapter 24, p.1299.



Qur'ān. He would not accept narrations disagreeing with either the Qur'ān or Islamic law".<sup>1</sup> This position has been refuted by Dr Abdul Qahhār who mentions the same previously quoted *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī in which Ibn 'Abbās rebukes those who would ask the People of the Book on matters relating to religion, and then challenges Al-Dhahabī to furnish his argument with a single sound narration from Ibn 'Abbās in which he seeks guidance from the People of the Book.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Dhahabī defends Ibn 'Abbās whilst refuting the claims of Ignaz Goldziher, who has claimed that Ibn 'Abbās would frequently take from the People of the Book. He lists the claims that Goldziher makes, the most prominent being that Ibn 'Abbās relied heavily on Ka'b al-Aḥbār, 'Abdullāh b. Salām, and the People of the Book, although he warned others not to approach them. His reliance on them for *tafsīr*, according to Goldziher, extended beyond mere questions relating to biblical issues – he would ask them for their understanding of other more general aspects such as the meaning of *umm al-kitāb* and *marjān*.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Dhahabī rebuts the claims by investigated Ibn 'Abbās' commentary from two perspectives: the first looks as what evidence there actually exists from the statements of Ibn 'Abbās either corroborating or negating Goldziher's claims and the second relates to the actual contact Ibn 'Abbās had with the People of the Book. In reference to the first issue, there exists only two recorded instances where Ibn 'Abbās referred to Abū al-Jald for the meaning of words; the two words were *ra'd* and *barq*. These are to be found in al-Ṭabarī, and although the narrations number seven, they all relate to the same two words.<sup>4</sup> The first place is in II: 19 and the second in XIII: 12. The narrations all of which unite at Abū al-Jald interpret *ra'd* to be angels or wind and *barq* to be water. It should be borne in mind that there are other narrations from Ibn 'Abbās, other than those from Abū al-Jald, which provide further interpretations of these two words.<sup>5</sup> What is reported by 'Alī b. Ṭalḥa from Ibn 'Abbās regarding the *tafsīr* of the words *ra'd* and *barq* is that the

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.54, Ibn 'Ashūr, Muhammad al-Fāḍil, *al-Tafsīr wa Rijālihī*, Dār Saḥnūn. Tunisia (1998), p.25.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ānī. Abdul Qahhār Dāwūd, *Dirāsāt fī al-Tafsīr*, Matba'at Asad, Baghdad (1987) pp.78 – 79.

<sup>3</sup> *Islamic Schools of Exegesis*, p88. See also *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.55.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, , Vol.1 / p.219: narrations: 363, 366, 367, 371, 372, 372.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / pp.218 – 221, Vol.8 / pp.162 – 163.

first refers to frightening and the second is the snatching away of the sight of the hypocrites.<sup>1</sup> The edited text is similar in its account.<sup>2</sup> Both interpret the meanings of the words metaphorically. We have, then, examples of verses which are explained literally as well as metaphorically. In order to clarify the authenticity of the seven reports that occur in al-Ṭabarī a study of their respective chains of transmission is necessary; the narrations 363 and 15375 both have the same chain both narrated by Mūsā b . Sālim Abū Jahdam the freed-slave of Ibn ‘Abbās; this particular narration is termed *munqaṭi*, unconnected, in the terminology of the *Muḥaddithūn*.<sup>3</sup>

The narrations 366 and 371 again have the same chain and which have been described by Aḥmad Shākir as *mushkil*, problematic; two men are unknown in the chain, namely Bishr b. Ismā‘īl and Abū Kathīr. As for the chain for the narrations 367 and 372 which again is one and the same, Shākir judges it to be sound with its only flaw being that Furāt b. Abū ‘Abdul Raḥmān al-Qazzāz<sup>4</sup> who is trustworthy but when he narrates from Ibn ‘Abbās does not do so with a connected chain to him.<sup>5</sup> The chain of the seventh narration (372, in another narration) requires no study for the fact that there is an unknown man in the chain referred to as ‘the man from Basra’; the report thus has no value. It may be concluded from this short study of the chains of these seven narrations that none of them are reported from Ibn ‘Abbās connected from start to end and as such are not to be regarded as reliable and thus Goldziher’s basis for his argument does not hold irrespective of the fact that al-Ṭabarī relays them in his *tafsīr*.

The second point of contention is Goldziher’s accusation that Ibn ‘Abbās sought guidance from Ka‘b al-Aḥbār regarding the meanings of *umm al-kitāb* (III: 7) and *marjān* (XLIII: 4). Upon investigation, it is clear that Goldziher is mistaken in using these two places as evidence: Al-Ṭabarī contains one narration from Ka‘b to Ibn ‘Abbās on these two words. There is present commentary on the word *umm al-kitāb* at verse thirty-nine of *al-Ra’d*. but it reads as follows: “Al-Qāsim reports from al-Ḥusayn, from Mu‘tamar b.

<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.220.

<sup>2</sup> *Edited Text*, p.3a, ET, p.17.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, footnote of Aḥmad Shākir, Vol.1 / p.341.

<sup>4</sup> Furāt b. Abū ‘Abdul Raḥmān al-Qazzāz al-Kūfī, he narrated from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr though he didn’t narrate from Ibn ‘Abbās. Scholars called him trustworthy. *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.8 / p.259.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, footnote of Aḥmad Shākir, Vol.1 / p.341.



Sulaymān, from his father, from Shaybān, from Ibn ‘Abbās, that he asked Ka‘b about “*umm al-kitāb*”. He said, “Allah knew what He was to create...so He said to His knowledge, ‘Become a book!’, and so it took the form of a book.”<sup>1</sup> There are many other narrations also from Ibn ‘Abbās on the meaning of the same word through al-‘Awfī<sup>2</sup>. For the verse, “In it (the Book) are verse basic or fundamental, clear (in meaning); they are the foundation of the Book [*umm al-kitāb*]”, he narrates Ibn ‘Abbās as saying, “Verily the *Muḥkamāt* (clear verses) are the *umm al-kitāb*.”<sup>3</sup> In yet another narration, through ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭalḥā<sup>4</sup>, commenting on the verse, “Allah doth blot out or confirm what he pleaseth: with Him is The Mother of the Book [*umm al-kitāb*]”,<sup>5</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās said, “From that which is in the ‘Mother of the Book’ is (knowledge) of the *nāsikh* and the *mansūkh*.”<sup>6</sup> In other narrations he gives differing interpretations, from them that it means *dhikr*, remembrance.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the *tafsīr* ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās from Ka‘b is merely one view amongst five, and is certainly not the strongest in terms of its chain of transmission; the strongest in authenticity is the narration of Ibn Abū Ṭalḥā.

As for the edited text, regarding the verse, “In it (the Book) are verses basic or fundamental, clear (in meaning); they are the foundation of the Book [*umm al-kitāb*]”, it says that these verses clarify the legal and the illicit, they are unabrogated and are acted upon. They are the source and are given precedence.<sup>8</sup> This is similar to the strongest narration we have reported by ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭalḥā from Ibn ‘Abbās concerning the science of abrogation. Here we find a correlation between the narration of Ibn ‘Abbās and the unedited text, indicating that the text contains much authentic material from Ibn ‘Abbās.

<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.8 / p.224, no.15556.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Aṭīyya b. Sa‘d al-‘Awfī, *ṣadūq*, though he made many mistakes. He was a Shi‘ite who would commit *tadlīs*. He died in (111 A.H). *Al-Taqrīb*, Vol.2 / p.28.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / p.239.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭalḥā, his father is Sālim b. Mukhāriq al-Hāshimī, the freed-slave of al-‘Abbās, he narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās, dropping from his *isnād* Mujāhid b. Jabr. The scholars praised him but some have said of him that he is no more than ordinary in narration. His *tafsīr* was praised by Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Bukhārī quotes from it in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.20 / p.490 and *al-Tafsīr wal Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.59.

<sup>5</sup> XIII: 39.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.8 / p.224.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Text, p.23a.

Similarly, with the interpretation of the word *marjān* which arises in two places in the Qur'ān, both in *al-Raḥmān*, al-Ṭabarī quotes Ibn 'Abbās as saying it means pearls.<sup>1</sup> In another narration from al-Ṭabarī a man asked Ka'b al-Aḥbār the meaning of *marjān*; he answered it means *basdh*, a precious stone more valuable than pearl.<sup>2</sup> The questioner is unknown here and it may well be that he has been mistaken for Ibn 'Abbās; this, however, was not his view; rather, the narration from him makes clear he thought *marjān* was pearl – this leads us to believe that Goldziher was mistaken in his view that Ibn 'Abbās took *tafsīr* from the People of the Book – it appears he was not diligent and precise enough in his investigation and this led to incorrect conclusions. This is since Goldziher has said about Ibn 'Abbās that relied heavily on the People of the Book; the examples he furnishes however are very few. The words explained by such means have no connection, in any case, to creed; they are limited in number and not of far-reaching consequences. This is what Muslim scholars confirm, that is that the Companions would only seek information from the People of the Book in matters which did not relate to creed; those things that they took would normally be related to history, but would never be accepted without some scrutiny.<sup>3</sup> However, in some books of *tafsīr* we find that there are some narrations of Israelite origin; the scholars have considered them inauthentic so did not narrate them in their *ḥadīth* compilations, though they kept their places in the exegetical books. Ibn Kathīr was one who would point out whenever a narration was of Israelite origin. This is what M.J. Kister affirms in his *Legends in Tafsīr*.<sup>4</sup> Also, modern exegetical works sifted through these *ḥadīth* such as *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, *Taḥrīr wa al-Tamwīr* and *al-Manār*. As for the classical exegeses, such as that of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) or 'Abd al-razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/827), Kister says, “the traditions, stories and tales, as well as the assumptions and arguments of the Muslim scholars, add up to no more than a drop in the sea, when compared to the totality of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.27 / p.171.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.56.

<sup>4</sup> Kister, M.J., 'Legends in Tafsīr and Ḥadīth Literature' in *the (Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran)*, p.82.



lore transmitted about Adam in the Islamic sources.”<sup>1</sup> The author, having cross-references *Tafsīr al-Ṣan‘ānī*<sup>2</sup> finds no evidence whatever to support his claim.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Muhammad Abū Shuhba, the narrations of Ibn ‘Abbās from the likes of Ka‘b and ‘Abdullāh b. Salām may well be sound in terms of their transmission, but that is not to say we must accept the authenticity of their content, nor for that matter would Ibn ‘Abbās; rather, they are simply quotes from the books of the Christians and Jews which the converts such as Ka‘b would faithfully convey to some of the Companions, perhaps no more than as a point of interest. As long as they were not corroborated by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) they would have been viewed with a good deal of scrutiny and skepticism.<sup>3</sup>

This subject will be discussed further in the section of the research relating to the edited texts position on Judeo-Christian narrations. Its contents are very similar to that of Ibn ‘Abbās’ output on the matter.

#### 1.3.10. *Tafsīr by Ijtihād and Istinbāṭ:*

There is no doubt amongst Muslim scholars that Ibn ‘Abbās was well-qualified to give commentary of the Qur’ān based on his own reasoning and analytical deductions. Al-Bukhārī relates instances where Ibn ‘Abbās gave commentary based on reason and opinion in the presence of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second Caliph. From these is the following narration from al-Bukhārī: “‘Umar once asked the Companions of the Prophet for their opinion concerning the saying of God, “Does any of you wish that he should have a garden with date-palms and vines and streams flowing underneath, and all kinds of fruit, while he is stricken with old age, and his children are not strong (enough to look after themselves)- that it should be caught in a whirlwind, with fire therein, and be burnt up? Thus doth God make clear to you His signs; that ye may consider.”<sup>4</sup> They replied that God knows best. ‘Umar became angry at this and said, “Either you know or you don’t

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<sup>1</sup> *Legends in Tafsīr and Ḥadīth Literature’ in the (Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran)*, p.114.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-ṣan‘ānī*, Vol.1 / p.43.

<sup>3</sup> *al-Isrā‘īlīyāt wa al-Mawḍū‘āt*, pp.96 – 97.

<sup>4</sup> II: 266.

know!” At this point Ibn ‘Abbās said he had a suggestion and proceeded to explain that it was a metaphor for the deeds of man. ‘Umar expanded on this and said that a man of wealth will spend in the way of God and then a devil will come to him causing him to commit a sin until his good works are drowned”.<sup>1</sup>

The narration of Al-Ṭabarī, from ‘Aṭā b. Abu Rabbāḥ, from Ibn ‘Abbās, proves more revealing: in it ‘Aṭā says that ‘Umar asked a group of people about the same verse however none of them found an explanation whereby Ibn ‘Abbās asked hesitatingly for permission to share his view on it. ‘Umar ordered him to draw closer, and not to demean himself through excessive modesty. Ibn ‘Abbās then explained that the verse is a metaphor: what God is showing is that a person may spend his whole life undertaking acts of righteousness, and then ruins it by committing sins towards the end of his life which cause him to be from the people of the fire.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, al-Bukharī reports the well-known tradition in which ‘Umar permitted the young Ibn ‘Abbās to attend a gathering of elders; during the course of the gathering ‘Umar asked those present if any knew the reason for the revelation of *al-Naṣr* (CX). Many put forward an opinion, and when finally he turned to Ibn ‘Abbās, who regarded it as being an indication that the Prophet’s time is near, ‘Umar responded, “I do not know it to have any other significance!”<sup>3 4</sup>

These narrations and others reveal Ibn ‘Abbās’ readiness to give commentary on the Qur’ān according to his opinion. However, these very narrations also lead us to question in what light he held the *ḥadīth* narrations which he himself reports, in which the Prophet warns against exegesis by opinion, the harshest of them the following: “Whoever

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, (65), Vol.8 / p.858, ḥadīth ,No .4538.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / p.105.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, (65), Vol.8 / p.988, ḥadīth, No. 4970.

<sup>4</sup> Worthy of mention here is a footnote of Ayman Ṣāliḥ on this narration. He says, when explaining the way in which religious knowledge is learnt, that the meaning of any one particular verse of the Qur’ān has an obvious (*wāḍiḥ min al-manṭūq*) element to it and an understood element (*maṣhūm min al-siyāq*), and that *al-Naṣr* was not revealed with the purpose of informing, in the first instance, of the obvious meaning contained within it (i.e. that seeking forgiveness is necessary after witnessing the help of God and the conquest) but rather, to prophecise the imminent death of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.); the evidence for this is that the norm after witnessing a victory is to give thanks to God and not seek His forgiveness; from this ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbās deduced that the help and victory, in fact, related to the passing away of the Prophet. Secondly, the suggestion that many people will enter the religion after the victory – a phenomenon which indicates the end of the Prophet’s mission. Ṣāliḥ, Ayman (ed.) *Islāmiyāt al-Ma’rifah*, Seasonal magazine published by the *Ma’had al-‘Ālamī li al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, Beirut, No.40,( 2005) p.22.



interprets the Qur’ān according to his opinion should prepare to take his seat in the fire”.<sup>1</sup> This narration, incidentally, has been deemed unreliable according to Aḥmad Shākir due to the presence of ‘Abd al-A‘lā b. ‘Āmir al-Tha‘labi in its chain of narrators. Another report from Al-Ṭabarī states, “Whoever talks about the Qur’ān by opinion, let him prepare to take his seat in the fire”.<sup>2</sup> Al-Ṭabarī interprets this report and those like it as being in reference to verses which the human intellect is debarred from cognizing, and which are reliant on the Prophet’s explanation. Al-Zarkashī narrates a saying from the Prophet in which he says, “He who interprets the Qur’ān according to opinion, even if he hits the mark, he has erred”. He goes on to quote al-Bayhaqī, who said of this saying, “even if it is sound, then what is intended by it – and God knows best – is the opinion which is not based on evidence.”<sup>3</sup> Al-Tuhāmī comments on this same narration saying, “If this *hadīth* is sound, then its intent is not that one should not say of the Qur’ān except what he has heard, for the Companions explained the Qur’ān and differed on it; not every explanation of theirs was the transmission of what they heard. The blameworthy thing is for a scholar to hasten to explain the Qur’ān without acknowledging the opinions of early authorities.”<sup>4</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī follows the last discussion with another on the narrations which have been related about the encouragement to seek knowledge of exegesis. In this chapter he quotes the Companions who praised Ibn ‘Abbās for his knowledge in exegesis, and their describing him as being the interpreter of the Qur’ān’.<sup>5</sup>

It is clear to see that Ibn ‘Abbās was a specialist in exegesis and would undertake to give explanations of the Qur’ān whenever requested of him, whether by his students or anyone else. We see that he was the most able to undertake this task by virtue of his great knowledge of the Prophet’s sayings. It is clear also, that Ibn ‘Abbās did not understand the warnings of the Prophet against giving commentary by opinion as being absolute but rather, confined to verses which are simply unintelligible, requiring Prophetic insight, or

<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.54.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.55.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Burhān*, Vol.1 / pp.178 – 179.

<sup>4</sup> Nuqra . al-Tuhāmī,(ed.) *Muḥāḍarāt wa Munāqashāt Multaqā al-Fikr al-Islāmī*,no. 15 (1981) Algeria Vol.4 / p.53.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / pp.61 – 62.

others related to knowledge of the unseen, such as the day of Judgment and heaven and hell. Examples of his ability to reconcile seemingly contradictory verses of the Qur'ān are also plentiful. It has been reported, for example, that a man came to him asking him to explain XXIII: 101, "Then when the trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that day, nor will one ask after another", in light of XXXVII: 27, "Then they will turn to one another and question one another". Ibn 'Abbās removed the apparent difficulty explaining that the first verse is in reference to the initial trumpet blast and the second in reference to the subsequent trumpet blast.<sup>1</sup>

#### Conclusion:

As was the methodology of the Companions in *tafsīr*, Ibn 'Abbās would depend in his commentary on the four primary sources: *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān was always the first recourse; if there was no further intra-scriptural investigation that would provide further explanation, he would then seek guidance from the sayings and actions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) that he had acquired either directly or through other Companions; he would then turn to the exegesis of the Companions and particularly the views of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī; his last resort would be to rely on his own extensive knowledge - of Arabic, of history, of the occasions of revelation, and most importantly that profound scholarly insight which was no doubt a consequence of the Prophet's prayers for him - to reach an informed opinion, examples for which have been presented in abundance. Attention was focused in this part of the research on a subject of much discussion in scholarly circles, that of Ibn 'Abbās' usage of poetry in *tafsīr* and it was shown - after a thorough investigation that delved into the books of *tafsīr* from the first two centuries A.H. as well as what is known from the students of Ibn 'Abbās - that he would not use poetry except rarely to explain the Qur'ān. This result is of significance because scholars are known to have circulated the idea that he did using as an evidence the *Su'ālāt* of Nāfi' b. al-Azraq; these we have proved are not all authentic. Also, the issue of the arabicised words in the Qur'ān and Ibn 'Abbās' position on them, and the

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<sup>1</sup> *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.8 / p.632. Ibn Ḥajar adds that the questioner was Nāfi' b. al-Azraq.



seeking of knowledge on matters from the People of the Book – an issue which has been again shown to contain many inconsistencies and are probably fabrications attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās.

#### 1.4. The style (*uslūb*) of Ibn ‘Abbās as deduced from the Classical Commentaries:

The use of the term *uslūb* (style), linguistically, refers to the ‘clear path’ that the exegete follows in his approach to *tafsīr* – the scholarly, objective, precisely drawn-out, principles that he observes when undertaking an explanation of the Qur’ān<sup>1</sup>. This research will study the exegetical style of Ibn ‘Abbās with the aim of proving thereafter, or negating, the authenticity of the ascription of the *ET* to him, for once this is understood, we may then compare this to the approach of the *ET*.

##### 1.4.1. Did Ibn ‘Abbās interpret the whole Qur’ān?

The relevance this point of discussion has to the research area as a whole is that it behoves us to know whether Ibn ‘Abbās commentated on the Qur’ān verse by verse or whether he undertook to commentate only on those verses which were problematic linguistically to early Muslim generations, in order that we may evaluate the soundness of ascribing authorship of the manuscript at hand to Ibn ‘Abbās. It may be observed that the commentary of the *ET* deals with each and every verse of the Qur’ān without exception, not only explaining the abstruse. Thorough investigation of the narrations passed down to us from Ibn ‘Abbās and which have been collated in the books of commentary will shed light on this issue. The opinion of Ibn Sa‘d<sup>2</sup> is enlightening: that is that Ibn ‘Abbās, when he assumed governorship of Basra, would read *al-Baqarah* and thereupon he would give commentary on it, verse by verse.<sup>3</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, likewise, presents similar reported evidence showing Ibn ‘Abbās to have commentated on *al-Baqarah* and *al-Nūr* in a thorough fashion which ‘if heard by the Romans would have converted them’.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī relates also from Mujāhid that the latter presented a written copy of the Qur’ān to Ibn ‘Abbās on three separate occasions, each time reading from beginning to end

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<sup>1</sup> *Ta’rīf al-Dārisīn bi Minhāj al-Mufasssīrīn*, pp.17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Sa‘d is Muhammad b. Sa‘d b. Manī‘, born in Basra (168 A.H.) where he was raised. He was a historian, reliable narrator and master of *hadīth*, he died in Baghdad in (230 A.H). *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.6 / p.136.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt Alkubra* Vol. 2 / p.435. *Tahqīq ḥawla Ibn ‘Abbās*, p.60.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, , Vol.1 / p.57.



whilst stopping to ask about every verse.<sup>1</sup> Sufyān al-Thawrī<sup>2</sup> is known to have praised greatly the commentary of Mujāhid for this very reason; he is said to have exclaimed, “If you come across *tafsīr* by Mujāhid then it is sufficient for you”.<sup>3</sup> Such reports expressly indicate that Ibn ‘Abbās would give commentary on the whole Qur’ān and in a detailed fashion, but they do not constitute an ample body of evidence upon which certainty may be built – further deliberation is required. We do not see in the books of commentary which have regarded sacrosanct Ibn ‘Abbās’ exegetical views, a commentary of every verse. That which we have of Mujāhid’s exegesis provides only partial coverage of the Qur’ān.<sup>4</sup> The whereabouts of his completed commentary thus remains unknown, if it exists in the first place. The question of whether the text we have allegedly transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās is the only example of its kind demonstrating a detailed and holistic exegesis of the Qur’ān, or whether, infact there are extant other works adopting the same methodology, remain unanswered. Such hanging issues require us to search for further substantiating evidence for us to give a weightier final opinion on whether Ibn ‘Abbās did in fact commentate on each and every verse of the Qur’ān.

Al-Ṭabarī (b. 224/888) perhaps the soundest authority from whom to seek evidence for the matter at hand by virtue of him having personally acquired chains of transmission through his masters of statements made by Ibn ‘Abbās collected in his commentary *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*. It may be seen from careful investigation of the statements reported by al-Ṭabarī from Ibn ‘Abbās, especially of *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara* that the narrations do not include every verse, let alone every word. This would apparently contradict the aforementioned narrations of Ibn Sa‘d.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.62.

<sup>2</sup> Sufyān al-Thawrī is Sufyān b. Sa‘īd b. Masrūq al-Thawrī, the *Amīr al-Mu‘minīn* in *Ḥadīth*. He was a scholar in sacred knowledge and well-known for his piety. He was born in Kufa in (97 A.H). and died in Basra in (161 A.H). *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.3 / p.104, ‘*Uḏamā’ al-Islām*, p.172.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.62.

<sup>4</sup> Azami has mentioned that there exists a *tafsīr* from Mujāhid without stating whether it is complete or partial. *Al-Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, Vol.1 / p.164. ‘Alī Sharrakh says that the manuscript of Mujāhid’s *tafsīr* is available in more than one library and is composed of 98 pages (and isn’t from 9 books as Sezgīn says). His mentioning of it indicates that it is not a complete exegesis because it is only 98 pages. Ishāq. ‘Alī Sharrākh, *Mu‘jam Muṣannafāt al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, Manshūrāt Dār al-Rifā‘ī, al-Riyāḍ, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1984). Vol.2 / p.160.

It appears that the early commentaries of the Qur'ān dating back to the first century A.H. are all incomplete. Most narrations preserved from Ibn 'Abbās were collected by 'Alī b. Abu Ṭalḥa who found them to be no more than one thousand three hundred<sup>1</sup>, the majority of them being unrelated to exegesis. The commentaries of Mujāhid (edited by Aḥmad Nawfal)<sup>2</sup> and Sa'īd b. Jubayr (edited by Ibrahim al-Najjār)<sup>3</sup> are both incomplete, dealing only with parts of the Qur'ān. And so we are left to reconcile this fact with the narrations which tell of Mujāhid asking of Ibn 'Abbās an explanation of every verse in the Qur'ān. It appears to the author that the only feasible reason for this discrepancy is that the narrations of Mujāhid and Ibn Sa'd are exaggerated: they probably meant that Ibn 'Abbās gave commentary on most of the Qur'ān, as is common in the language of the Arabs to refer to the majority as the whole. This issue resembles that of the extensiveness of the Prophet's commentary of the Qur'ān, dealt with earlier<sup>4</sup>, and is reconciled in much the same way, for he too needed only to commentate on problematic words or verses, the people of his time being natural masters of Arabic.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ṣuḥīfat 'Alī bin Abī Ṭalḥa 'an Ibn 'Abbās.*

<sup>2</sup> See *Tafsīr Mujāhid.*

<sup>3</sup> See *Tafsīr Sa'īd b. Jubayr.*

<sup>4</sup> Refer to the first chapter Ibn Abbas, discussion of the degree to which the Prophet explained the Qur'ān (3.3).



#### 1.4.2. Did Ibn ‘Abbās write or dictate a complete *Tafsīr*?

Mention has been made earlier of the fact that the second century A.H. witnessed the official and systemised writing down of *ḥadīth* narrations, amongst these being the exegesis of the Qur’ān. Sezgin supports: “we may even believe that Ibn ‘Abbās, the father of Qur’ānic exegesis, is the author of a *Tafsīr*. The only problem is that it still has to be determined which of the commentaries on the Qur’ān which his pupils transmitted from him, he wrote himself and which were recorded in writing by his pupils in accordance with his lectures.”<sup>1</sup> Sezgin even concludes that ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭalḥa received a book from Ibn al-‘Abbās on *tafsīr* in order to resolve the problem of him transmitting from him without having heard from him.<sup>2</sup> The problem, as explained by Leemhuis is that the fixation in writing of already existing variant versions of a *tafsīr* tradition that took place around 150/767 makes it impossible to reconstruct original works from before that time, because we have no means of deciding to whom the variants are due, if they do not stem from those who fixed them.<sup>3</sup> During the first century knowledge of *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr* and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) was passed down by an oral tradition in the main. There are, however, a few narrations which make mention that Ibn ‘Abbās and his students would write down *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*. This leads us to ask the question: did Ibn ‘Abbās ever write a *tafsīr* or dictate one to his students? If he did so, was it a complete exegesis of the Qur’ān, verse by verse?

Ibn Sa’d narrates that Mujāhid was seen holding a writing board (*lawḥ*) whilst asking Ibn ‘Abbās questions pertaining to exegesis. Ibn ‘Abbās would ask him to write his responses and this continued until they had read the whole Qur’ān together.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it has been reported that Ibn ‘Abbās, after the death of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), dedicated all of his time to the pursuit of religious knowledge. Of these reports, Ibn Sa’d has it that Ibn ‘Abbās would frequent Abū Rafī‘ to ask him what the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) had done on any one particular day, writing down all that Abū Rāfi‘ imparted to him.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Origins of the tafsīr Tradition, in the (Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran )* p.15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.21-22.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.62. *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, p.259, *Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, Vol.1 / p.118.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt Alkubra*, Vol.2 / p.437, *Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, Vol.1 / p.116.

Sa'īd b. Jubayr has said, "I would travel back and forth between Ibn 'Umar and Ibn 'Abbās. hearing from them *ḥadīth* and writing it on the leather of my riding mount".<sup>1</sup>

Ibn Sa'd narrates that Kurayb, the freed slave of Ibn 'Abbās, left with him a camel load in weight of books belonging to Ibn 'Abbās. 'Alī, the son of Ibn 'Abbās, would write to Kurayb requesting particular books on occasion.<sup>2</sup> Also, according to reports recording the last days of Ibn 'Abbās' life, during which he lost his sight, a group from Ṭā'if came seeking sacred knowledge from him, carrying with them books dictated by him. They would read these in his presence and he would acknowledge that, that was indeed what he had dictated.<sup>3</sup> These are evidence enough that Ibn 'Abbās did write down and give permission to his students to write down exegesis and other areas of sacred law.

There are also speculative evidences which reflect Ibn 'Abbās' concern with the writing of sacred knowledge, such as his reported saying from Mujāhid, "Bind knowledge by writing it down".<sup>4</sup> Also he is reported to have said, "The best method of preserving knowledge is through books".<sup>5</sup> Muṣṭafā al-Shak'ah has suggested that the original speaker of these words was the Prophet (p.b.u.h) although the reporter does not ascribe them to him directly in the chain of narration.<sup>6</sup>

Books appeared during the era of Ibn 'Abbās' students, according to Aḥmad Nawfal, written by Mujāhid, 'Ikrima, Makḥūl<sup>7</sup> and Masrūq. Abū al-Nīl reinforces this opinion, stating that Mujāhid authored a book in exegesis filling eight volumes.<sup>8</sup> Books of *siyar*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī b.Thābit , *Taqyīd al-'Ilm*, Edited by Yusuf al-'Ish, Damascus (1949). p.103. *Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, Vol.1 / p.161.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt Alkubra* Vol.5 / p.144, Al-Ṣāliḥ, Subḥī , *Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Muṣṭalaḥihi*, Dār al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn. 22<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (1999), p.31. *Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, Vol.1 / p.117.

<sup>3</sup> *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol.3 / p.355.

<sup>4</sup> *Taqyīd al-'Ilm*, p.92, *Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, Vol.1 / p.117, '*Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Muṣṭalaḥihi*, p.21. al-Ṣāliḥ states that this narration is primarily a *ḥadīth* but it became popular amongst the Companions so much so that some Muḥaddithūn regarded it as *mawqūf*. Al-Suyūṭī says that al-Ḥākim relates it from Anas as a *mawqūf* tradition. '*Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Muṣṭalaḥihi*', Footnote of p.21.

<sup>5</sup> *Taqyīd al-'Ilm*, p.92.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Bayān al-Muḥammadi*, p.29.

<sup>7</sup> Makḥūl is Abū 'Abdullāh al-Shāmī, reliable, a jurist, known for his *irsāl*, he died around (110 A.H). *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.2 / p.278.

<sup>8</sup> Abū al-Nīl., Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām,(ed.) *Tafsīr al-Imām Mujāhid*, Dār al-Fikr al-Islāmi al-Ḥadīth, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1979). p.86. *Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīth*, Vol.1 / p.118.



(life of the Prophet) make mention that the Caliph Abdul Mālik b. Marwān<sup>2</sup> requested from Sa'īd b. Jubayr that he compile a *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān. Again, these are further proofs supporting the view that Ibn 'Abbās and his students produced written accounts of exegesis during their lifetimes; this is certainly the view of the Encyclopaedia of Islam.<sup>3</sup> This is not the whole story, however; there are also many narrations which prohibit the writing down of *tafsīr*. Al-Khaṭīb has compiled these. From these, it is reported from the son of Ṭāwūs that his father said, "Ibn 'Abbās was asked a matter in sacred knowledge by a man from Bajran. The man asked Ibn 'Abbās to give him a written account of his response, however Ibn 'Abbās refused saying, "We do not write sacred knowledge".<sup>4</sup> Narrated by him also is the following, "We were once with Ibn 'Abbās, during which time Sa'īd b. Jubayr was writing. It was mentioned to Ibn 'Abbās that his students were writing things down. He at once stood up in disagreement and were it not for his highly refined manners he would have done more than simply stand".<sup>5</sup> Sa'īd b. Jubayr himself relates that Ibn 'Abbās prohibited his students from writing down describing it as a "sin that has caused communities of old to fall in to misguidance".<sup>6</sup> These reports would appear to contradict those previously mentioned. Before we attempt a reconciliation between the two, we would like to bring to the readers attention a pertinent fact; Ibn 'Abbās was a highly regarded jurist and would frequently issue legal rulings (*fatwa*) to people from all over the Islamic World.<sup>7</sup> What is noticed about his fatwas is that he was very cautious when issuing them; al-Bukhārī, for instance, reports from Abū al-Sifr<sup>8</sup>, that he heard Ibn 'Abbās say: "O people! Listen carefully to what I say to you, then let me

<sup>1</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Ibn Ḥajar, Vol.7 / pp.198 – 199, *Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol. 1 / p.106, Al-Fanān, Sa'ūd 'Abdullāh, *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssīrīn: Asbābuhu wa Āthāruhu*, Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa al-I'lām, Dār Ishbīliyya. al-Riyāḍ, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1997), pp.42 – 43.

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Mālik b. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam al-Umawī al-Qurashī, born in Medina in 26 A.H., from the jurists of the Successors, well known for his piety, he took the Caliphate in( 65 A.H). He died in (86 A.H). '*Uẓamā' al-Islām*. p.420.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.1 p.40, art., "'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās".

<sup>4</sup> *Taqyīd al-'Ilm*, p.42.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43.

<sup>6</sup> *Taqyīd al-'Ilm*, p.43. Azami comments on these narrations after presenting the activity and writing and students of Ibn 'Abbās saying, "If we bear in mind his personal literary activities while he was learning and afterwards when he was teaching we need to explain his discouragement of writing for some other reason than the Prophet's prohibition. He had a copy of the legal judgements of 'Alī and copied it for one of his students." *Studies in Early Hadīth Literature*, Azami, p.41.

<sup>7</sup> What he said would be translated to non-Arabs. Abū Jamra said, "I would translate between Ibn 'Abbās and the people." *Taqyīd al-'Ilm*, p.43.

<sup>8</sup> 'Abdullāh b. abū al-Sifr al-Thawrī al-Kūfī, regarded as trustworthy, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.397.

hear from you what you have understood of what I say: do not leave (my presence) spreading allegations and fabrications saying ‘Ibn ‘Abbas says such and such’”.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that he was very anxious about not being misunderstood when giving fatwas. He was already rather notorious for holding radically different views to many of the other Companions; he is famous for his authorisation of the *mut‘a* marriage, which he later had to vindicate.<sup>2</sup> This was not the only instance in which he revoked a position of his; there are many separate occasions when he did the same. It is thus very likely that prohibiting his students from writing down was specifically related to the writing of fatwas. In this he would not have been alone; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal did not appreciate his fatwas being written in the event that his true opinion was misrepresented – either by the scribes orthographical mistakes, or failing to correct within the books a position that he had revoked.<sup>3</sup>

Attention will now be turned to the format in which Ibn ‘Abbās ordered his exegesis of the Qur’ān to be written. Previously, it was shown that the evidences in support of him not having explained the Qur’ān verse by verse leave no room for doubt, regardless of what may have been narrated by Mujāhid. Likewise, commentaries of his students, such as Mujāhid and Sa‘īd b. Jubayr and the narrations of ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭalḥa do not constitute complete interpretations. Indeed, from the *tafsīrs* we have with us today dating back to the second century after *hijra*, the *tafsīr* of ‘Abd al-Razzaq Al-Ṣan‘āni is a good example of a partative explanation of the Qur’ān; the author found only two verses of *al-Fātiḥa* explained, and an incomplete explanation of *al-Baqara*.<sup>4</sup>

Based on these findings, the author is of the opinion that the exegesis of Ibn ‘Abbās and his students was restricted to the explanation of particular verses such as those containing foreign words, legal injunctions, the occasions of revelation, etc. Before completing this discussion, it is worthy of mention that Ibn ‘Abbās held particular words in the Qur’ān to have general meanings, such that whenever they appeared in a verse, he

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Vol.4 / p.238, *Kitāb Manāqib al-Anṣār, hadīth, No.3848.*

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol.1 / p.40. art. “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās”. ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās, Mustafā al-Khann. p.84.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Al-Jundī, Abd al-Ḥalīm, *Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: Imām Ahl al-Sunna*, (1970), pp.281 – 282.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, al-Ṣan‘āni, Vol. 1 / pp.37 – 114.



would understand them as such; acknowledgement of the approach he took, and these words might represent a foundational support for whoever wants to interpret the Qur'ān completely and then ascribe Ibn 'Abbās, is of importance to anyone who wishes to interpret the Qur'ān fully and then ascribe it to Ibn 'Abbās. Al-Ṣuyūṭī mentions some of the general principles of Ibn 'Abbās in *al-Itqān*. He says: "Every mention of *alīm* in the Qur'ān refers to tortuous pain; every *qūtila* is a curse; every *zajr* is punishment; every *sulṭān* is a proof; every *dīn* is account-taking; every *rayb* is doubt, except in one place in *Ṭūr* where it means 'the pains of death'".<sup>1</sup>

These general exegetical principles are of obvious use to the investigation at hand: the author has made some attempt to pause at every verse which contains one of the aforementioned words to see whether there exists a correlation between the edited text and the principles quoted from Ibn 'Abbās.

The conclusions reached about the fact that Ibn 'Abbās did not produce either in written form or verbally a complete exegesis of the Qur'ān, that is word by word, might imply that the edited text has not been narrated, at least not entirely from, Ibn 'Abbās.

#### 1.4.3. Did Ibn 'Abbās attach importance to verbatim transmissions of Prophetic Narratives in his commentary, or instead, suffice with paraphrasing?

Careful study of Ibn 'Abbās' *tafsīr* style reveals that he would at times present the Prophet's explanations of verses, preferring at other times to make do with either a simple explanation, verbatim, employing synonyms or otherwise offer his personal opinion. We shall clarify this in the following examples. Al-Ṭabarī reports in his commentary of the verse. "Then set not up rivals unto God when ye know (the truth)"<sup>2</sup>, from Ibn 'Abbās that he said. "This verse was revealed in reference to two groups: the unbelievers and the hypocrites. What is meant by it is this: "Do not associate partners in worship with God

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol. 2 / p.136.

<sup>2</sup> II: 22.

that neither benefit you nor harm you, whilst you know that you have no creator nor provider save He. You know also, that which the Prophet invites you to in terms of unified worship of God is the truth, no doubt”.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Shawkānī relates from Ibn ‘Abbās that the word *andād* refers to *shirk* (associating others with the Lord) of a form so subtle it is “like the crawling of an ant on a black rock in the darkness of the night.”<sup>2</sup>

As for al-Bukhārī, he reports the following explanation of the same verse from Ibn ‘Abbās: “I asked the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, what sin is greatest in the sight of God. He replied, “That you associate a partner with Him although He was the one who created you”. I then asked what after that to which he replied, “That you murder your child out of fear that he will consume a share of your provision”. I asked for the greatest after that and he said, “That you commit adultery with your neighbours wife”.<sup>3</sup>

The first two narrations, from al-Ṭabarī and al-Shawkānī, are examples of Ibn ‘Abbās giving linguistic interpretations of the word *nidd*. Al-Bukhārī’s narration is an illustration of Ibn ‘Abbās using a Prophetic narration describing various degrees of sin to explain the same verse without actually putting forward an explanation of any particular word. This example does not indicate either proximity or conflict with the narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās. Rather, at time he explains them linguistically and other times quoting *ḥadīth* to do so. Similarly the *ET* explains the verse linguistically as does Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>4</sup>

And in the commentary of the verse, “And remember We said: “Enter this town, and eat of the plenty therein as ye wish; but enter the gate with humility, in posture and in words, and We shall forgive you your faults and increase (the portion of) those who do good.”<sup>5</sup> al-Ṭabarī relates from Ibn ‘Abbās his explanation verbatim: The gate at which they were to enter by was restrictive, small. The word *sujjadan* means bowing rather than

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.238.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Shawkānī, Muhammad Alī, *Fath al-Qadīr*, Edited by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umayra, Dār al-Wafā’, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (1997 AD), Vol. 1 / p.139.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* (65), p.846, ḥadīth, No. 4477.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.3b, *ET*, p.19.

<sup>5</sup> II: 58.



prostrating. *Ḥiṭṭah* means forgiveness. They entered with their behinds saying *ḥiṭṭa*, wheat, rather than *ḥiṭṭa*, out of jest. So God said about them in II:59, “But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them; so We sent on the transgressors a plague from heaven, for that they infringed (Our command) repeatedly.”<sup>1</sup> Al-Bukhārī narrates similar from Abū Hurayra<sup>2</sup> that the Prophet (pbuh) said, “It was said to the Children of Israel: “Enter the door bowing”. So instead they entered crawling on their behinds saying, “*ḥabba*”, barley, rather than “*ḥiṭṭa*”, forgiveness.<sup>3</sup> The only difference between the narration of al-Ṭabari and al-Bukhārī is that the former does not relay a chain of narration ending at the Prophet, whereas al-Bukhārī does. As for the edited text, it says, “Enter the door prostrating” means bowing and “say *ḥiṭṭa*” forgive us of our sins, “then those who transgressed changed it”, they are the people of *ḥiṭṭa* “to a word which was not said to them” they were commanded and instead said *ḥiṭṭa*. This is approximate to what Ibn ‘Abbās says but without mentioning the story in one complete whole.<sup>4</sup>

This is in fact typical of commentaries of the Qur’ān, that they contain narratives that, for the most part end at the Companions rather than the Prophet. This is supported by Speight who says: ‘In fact, many times in the *ḥadīth* books, companions give their interpretations of the scripture without claiming that they are quoting the prophet or describing one of his actions. These statements are considered to be the same as if they could be traced to Muhammad, especially if they have to do with the circumstances in which certain verses were revealed.’<sup>5</sup> There are other examples in which Ibn ‘Abbās cites Prophetic narrations when interpreting the Qur’ān. In his commentary of the verse, “They say: ‘Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided (To salvation).’ Say thou: ‘Nay! (I would rather) the Religion of Abraham the True, and he joined not gods with Allah’”<sup>6</sup>, Ibn ‘Abbās says, “The Messenger of God was asked: “What form of religion is the most beloved to God?”

<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabari*, Vol.1 / pp.433 – 434.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Hurayra is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ṣakhr, born 21 before hijra, and converted (6 A.H). He did not leave the Prophet’s (p.b.uh.) side from the moment of his conversion. He had a wonderful memory, very intelligent. and reported more *ḥadīth* than any other Companion. He died in Medina in (59 A.H). ‘*Uḏamā’ al-Islām*. p.124.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* (65), p.847, ḥadīth, No. 4479.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.5b, ET, p.31.

<sup>5</sup> *The Function of Ḥadīth, in the (Approach to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran)* pp.64-65.

<sup>6</sup> II: 135.

The Prophet replied, “The true (Islamic) religion.”<sup>1</sup> His commentary of, “And remember Abraham said: ‘My Lord, make this a City of Peace, and feed its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day.’ He said: ‘(Yea), and such as reject Faith, for a while will I grant them their pleasure, but will soon drive them to the torment of Fire, an evil destination (indeed)!’”<sup>2</sup>, includes a quote from the Prophet after the conquest of Mecca. “This place is sacred - God sanctified it the day he created the heavens and earth, the sun and the moon, and He placed the two mountains surrounding Mecca; it was unlawful for all before me and will be for all after me. It was made lawful to me for an hour in a day”.<sup>3</sup> As for the edited text, we do not find it quoting any *ḥadīth*; rather it uses minimal words to explain in a most basic manner, the meaning.<sup>4</sup>

In the commentary of II: 158, “Behold! Safa and Marwa are among the Symbols of Allah. So if those who visit the House in the Season or at other times, should compass them round, it is no sin in them. And if any one obeyeth his own impulse to good, be sure that Allah is He Who recogniseth and knoweth.” Ibn ‘Abbās says, “(Walking between) Mount Safa and Mount Marwa is from the rites of the Lord. He (the Prophet) began at Mount Safa standing on it, then he proceeded to al-Marwa and stood on it, then he circumambulated and ran (*sa’y*)”.<sup>5</sup> Here he interprets the verse by describing the actions of the Prophet. As for the edited text, it mentions the occasion of revelation for this verse, namely, that the believers disliked the circumambulation between *Safa* and Marwa since it was a ritual known of the pre-Islamic Pagans.<sup>6</sup> Thus here again there is no mention of a *ḥadīth*. Even the occasion of revelation that is mentioned is not explicitly stated as such.

Also, that which has been related in commentary of II: 185, “Ramadhān is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur’ān, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey,

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Shawkāni, Vol.1 / p.283 Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma’thūr*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (2000), Vol.1 / p.350.

<sup>2</sup> II: 126.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.753.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.9b, *ET*, p.61.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.69.

<sup>6</sup> Edited text, p.11b, *ET*, p.74.



the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful". Ibn 'Abbās says, "The Messenger of God journeyed to Mecca from Medina during the month of Ramaḍān. When he arrived at 'Usfān<sup>1</sup>, he halted for a while, during which time he called for a vessel raising it up for all those present with him to catch sight, and then proceeded to drink".<sup>2</sup> Based on this narration, Ibn 'Abbās held the legal position that to break one's fast due to travel or illness is a strict order (*'azma*).<sup>3</sup> Again, this is an example of commentary by way of mentioning an action of the Prophet. The actions of the Prophet are given legal consideration and are regarded as much a part of his tradition (*sunna*) as is his verbal commands or prohibitions and his tacit approvals (*taqrīr*).<sup>4</sup> This point is emphasized by Muḥsin 'Abd Al-Ḥamīd who states, "There are those who hold that *tafsīr bil ma'ihūr* comprises only the express statements of the Prophet in relation to verses of the Qur'ān, and is thus limited in scope; this is simply not correct, for the *usūlis* have unanimity on the fact that any action of the Prophet which is undertaken with clear legal implications are equal in weight to an oral instruction. The verse "the thief, male or female, cut off his or her hands" is restricted to cutting up till the wrists as illustrated by the Prophet's implementation of the verse".<sup>5</sup> This is also what Marston has also concluded.<sup>6</sup>

In commentary of the verse "Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth, and ye know not."<sup>7</sup>, Ibn 'Abbās has said, "I was following the Prophet one day when he turned to me and said, 'O son of 'Abbās, be

<sup>1</sup> 'Usfān is a village close to Mecca. *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Vol.6 / p.327.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.202, *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol.4 / p.182, ḥadīth, No. 2350.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Nasafī. Abū al-Barakāt 'Abdullāh b. Aḥmad, *Tafsīr al-Nasafī*, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon (1988). Vol.1 / p.94.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Sibā'ī. Muṣṭafa, *Al-Sunna wa Makānatuhā fī al-Tashrī' al-Islāmī*, Dār al-Warāq, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed.(1998) p.65.

<sup>5</sup> 'Abdul Ḥamīd, Muḥsin, *Dirāsāt fī Usūl Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Baghdad, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, (1980), p.103

<sup>6</sup> *The Function of ḥadīth, in the (Approach to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran)* p.64-72.

<sup>7</sup> II: 216.

pleased with what God has decreed for you even though it is not what you may have desired. for this is what is confirmed in the Book of God', to which I said, 'O Messenger of God. I have read the Book of God but have no recollection of such a meaning'. He then recited the verse."<sup>1</sup>

Thus we have seen from all the aforementioned narrations that Ibn 'Abbās was one who would give priority to reports from the Prophet, whether verbal or action, when giving commentary of verses before resorting to purely linguistic interpretations or personal opinion. As will be revealed in latter parts of this research, this is not an obvious feature of the edited text. It is observed that the narrations from him contained in the chapter of *Tafsīr* in al-Bukhārī (both *marfū'* and *mawṣūl*) from the Prophet number only sixty-six *hadīth* from the one-hundred and one *hadīths* that al-Bukhārī compiled in that chapter.<sup>2</sup> This reinforces what we have already said, that *tafsīr* for the most part was not taken from the Prophet; rather it was mainly from the *ijtihād* of the *Ṣaḥāba* by virtue of their extensive knowledge of language and law.

#### 1.4.4. Did Ibn 'Abbās give importance to explaining stories of the ancients in the Qur'ān?

Any historical event which has a deep association with its causalities and its consequences and is permeated with lessons of those who have passed before is the source of great interest to one who might lend an ear to hear its narration; such historical narrative is also one of the most profound ways of impacting the spirit as it becomes firmly established within the mind with the potential to affect its possessors every mannerism and conduct. For this very reason the Qur'ān dedicates much to the presentation of the histories of past nations, all of which are undoubtedly true, and have the testimony of recorded history to bear witness to them. It is strange that some orientalist claim that these stories are mere folklore and widespread in the East; somehow they reached the Arabs and it is these that the Prophet included in the Qur'ān.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.470.

<sup>2</sup> *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.8 / p.848 (Conclusion).



The Encyclopaedia of Islam says, “There is virtually no historical narrative. Most Qur’ānic narratives are versions of traditional stories found in other Near-Eastern cultures, which have been adapted to confirm to the world-view and teaching of the Qur’ān. Several versions of ancient Near-Eastern myths and many mythic motifs occur”.<sup>1</sup> This statement is incorrect since the *ḥadīth* books of Sunni orthodoxy – al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, etc – do not contain any of these stories or narratives. Kister investigates various stories and narratives included in the books of *tafsīr* and then claims that the volume he treats is but a ‘drop in the sea’ compared to everything transmitted about them; just one Qur’ānic story, that of Adam as preserved in books of *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* he gives as an example.<sup>2</sup> As for the story of Adam in the books of *ḥadīth*, the author has found but rare instances where the vaguest details are given.<sup>3</sup>

Exegetes of the Qur’ān have traditionally been occupied by these stories in the scripture and their explanations, and less frequently the extraction of their lessons and wisdoms; Ibn ‘Abbās likewise falls into this group of scholars. His narrations are far removed from the Israelite tradition as well as being highly succinct in his explanation. He only resorts in rare instances to the Israelite traditions, which the author is inclined to believe are fabrications in any case. The reason for this is that Ibn ‘Abbās explicitly warns his companions not to take from the People of the Book.

The story of Abraham’s trial is a revealing example of the way in which Ibn ‘Abbās would explain Qur’ānic stories: “And remember when Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled.”<sup>4</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās said, “No one has been tried with this religion and successfully upheld it except Abraham. God tried him with certain

<sup>1</sup> Vol.5 p.423, art. “al-Kur’ān”, A.T. Weich.

<sup>2</sup> *Legends in Tafsīr, in the (Approach to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran)* p.114.

<sup>3</sup> See *Faṣṣ al-Bārī*, Vol.6 /pp.391-400, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, p.1500, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Vol.2 / p.346, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Vol.5 / p.188, *Ibn Ḥibbān, Saḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān, bi tartīb Ibn Bilbān*, Edited by Shuayb Arna’ūt Beirut: Ma’assasat al-risāla, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed (1997), Vol.14 / p.29.

<sup>4</sup> II: 124.

commands which he fulfilled and so God recorded for him, to be remembered by all through the annals of time, that he is free from all forms of polytheism: “And Abraham who was loyal”.<sup>1</sup> The edited text contains narrations proximate to the two narrations in al-Ṭabarī from Ibn ‘Abbās, in a succinct form.<sup>2</sup>

In another narration it is said that God tried him with orders, meaning purification: five actions for the head and five for the body: the trimming of the moustache, rinsing of the mouth and blowing up the nose, brushing of the teeth and the combing of the hair for the head, and similar commands for the body.<sup>3</sup> There are also other narrations from him with variances.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is observable that Ibn ‘Abbās explains stories of Qur’ān with some detail, extracting their lessons and wisdoms wherever he sees fit.

Similarly the verse “Didst thou not turn by vision to those who abandoned their homes though they were thousands (in number) for fear of death”,<sup>5</sup> for which he says, “They numbered four thousand, all fleeing from the plague, however, the Lord caused them to die; a prophet then came across their corpses and asked the Lord to give them life once more, so that perhaps they might worship him; the Lord responded to this and granted them life once more.”<sup>6</sup> The edited text gives no detail about the story though it does mention that the verse relates to the warriors of the Children of Israel who had left their homes to fight the enemy, being eight-thousand in number. They became altogether cowardly about the confrontation and so God said to them, “Be dead in your places”.<sup>7</sup>

It may be deduced from these examples that Ibn ‘Abbās gave particular importance to the explanation of Qur’ānic stories; it is observed at times that more than one narration is attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās regarding any one story. It is probable that Ibn ‘Abbās received this information from the Jews and Christians of his time because none of these narrations are recorded as sayings of the Prophet in the books of *ḥadīth*; it should be

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.730.

<sup>2</sup> Edited Text, p.9b, *ET*, p.16.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1/ p.730, al-Baghawī, , Abū Muhammad, al-Husayn b. Mas‘ūd: *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed (1993 ) Vol.1 / p.74.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / pp.731 – 733.

<sup>5</sup> II: 243.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.793.

<sup>7</sup> Edited Text, p.18b, *ET*, p.125.



remembered, however, that he would have only taken from them within limits, some of which have been explained earlier.; and there is no conflict with this and the teachings of the Prophet, for he has said, “Teach what I have taught even if it be a word, and narrate from the People of the Book without feeling uneasy; However, whoever lies against me, then let him prepare to take his seat in the fire.”<sup>1</sup>

It is noticeable in the edited text that it sometimes, similar to Ibn ‘Abbās, gives some details of stories and on other occasions contents itself with the basic meaning giving only concise details. This is what we have observed in reading the examples of Ibn ‘Abbās; more of the same will be presented in the chapter dealing with the question of whether the edited text treats the stories of the Qur’ān in the same manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Tirmizī. , *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, Vol. 5/p.39, Chapter: What relates to the Children of Israel in the *ḥadīth*.

#### 1.4.5. Did Ibn ‘Abbās discuss abrogating and abrogated verses (*al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh*)?

Knowledge of the abrogated and abrogating verses in the Qur’ān is of great value to the exegete and for this reason many scholars of the past authored works dedicated solely to this subject: Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim, al-Naḥḥās<sup>1</sup> and Ibn al-‘Arabī<sup>2</sup> amongst the most prominent. Al-Suyūṭī warned anyone who had not mastered this area of knowledge from embarking on the exegesis of the Qur’ān.<sup>3</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās, despite the difference of opinion amongst scholars as to whether there exists abrogation in the Qur’ān, held the opinion that it very much does – this is obvious from his exegesis. For example the verse “Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could Turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed, from selfish envy, after the Truth hath become Manifest unto them: But forgive and overlook, Till Allah accomplish His purpose; for Allah Hath power over all things”,<sup>4</sup> was regarded by Ibn ‘Abbās to have been abrogated by IX: 5.<sup>5</sup> The edited text mentions the story without mention of whether it was abrogated and is in agreement with other early scholars on this matter.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, II:115, “To Allah belong the east and the West: Whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of Allah. For Allah is all-Pervading, all-Knowing”, for which Ibn ‘Abbās said, “The first thing to be abrogated in the Qur’ān was the direction of prayer.”<sup>7</sup> Here is another instance in which the edited text makes no mention of the verse being abrogated. It does proffer its occasion of revelation, that is was revealed regarding companions who had prayed towards a direction other than Mecca for not having an idea of the direction, and so was revealed, “To God belongs the East and West”.<sup>8</sup> Al-Zuhrī says in conformity with Ibn ‘Abbās that the prayer direction was the first thing to be

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Naḥḥās is Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl. He was an exegete, literary expert, he had a *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān and a work in *Nāsikh wal Mansūkh*. He died in 338/950. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.1 / p.208.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn al-‘Arabī is Muḥammad b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ishbīlī, Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī. He was judge and *ḥafīẓ* in *ḥadīth*. He wrote books in *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and history. He was born in 468/1076 and died in 543/1148. *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.6 / p.203.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.3 / p.59. See also Powers, David, *The Exegetical Genre nāsikh al-Qur’ān wa mansūkhuhu* in the (*Approaches to the History of tafsīr and Ḥadīth Literature*). p.118, p.123.

<sup>4</sup> II: 109.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.684.

<sup>6</sup> See for example, al-Zuhrī, *Naskh al-Qur’ān and the Problem of Early Tafsīr Texts*, pp.30-39.

<sup>7</sup> *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, Al-Suyūṭī, p.32.

<sup>8</sup> Edited Text, p.8b, *ET*, p.56.



abrogated.<sup>1</sup> Also, “It is prescribed, when death approaches any of you, if he leave any goods that he make a bequest to parents and next of kin, according to reasonable usage”<sup>2</sup>, in which those given a legal share of inheritance are abrogated in the verse, however relatives who do not inherit are not abrogated.<sup>3</sup> The edited text disagrees with Ibn ‘Abbās since it says that the verse is abrogated by the verse on *mawārīth*, inheritance.<sup>4</sup> It does not say that particular individuals are abrogated as does Ibn ‘Abbās, but rather that the whole verse is abrogated.

In his commentary of “And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have Turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there”<sup>5</sup>, he held that this verse is *muḥkama*, definitive, not permitting exceptions.<sup>6</sup> In this opinion Ibn ‘Abbās is in conflict with the majority of scholars, who have permitting fighting in all places without exception.<sup>7</sup> Also, this is the opinion of the edited text which explains the verse without mentioning that it is abrogated.<sup>8</sup>

He was of the opinion that abrogation occurred by two ways: the first is the abrogation of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān; the second, the abrogation of the Qur’ān by *ḥadīth*. The edited text is similar to the positions of Ibn ‘Abbās by accepting the occurrence of abrogation; later we shall present more examples of this.

#### 1.4.6. Did Ibn ‘Abbās attach importance to the ‘Occasions of revelation’ (*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*)?

Another important tool for the exegete is knowledge of the occasions of revelation, *asbāb al-nuzūl*. They are the events or occurrences that were the direct cause of revelation of verses in the Qur’ān. Many books have been written specifically on this branch of

<sup>1</sup> *Naskh al-Qur’ān and the Problem of Early Tafsīr Texts*, p.31.

<sup>2</sup> II: 180.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.161.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.13a, *ET*, p.34.

<sup>5</sup> II: 191.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Qurṭubī*, Vol.2 / p.349.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Muḥarrir al-wajīz*, Vol.1 / p.263.

<sup>8</sup> Edited Text, p.14a, *ET*, p.92.

knowledge, the first exclusive work on the topic being authored by ‘Alī al-Madīnī (d.234 A.H.)<sup>1</sup>, the teacher of al-Bukhārī. The classics that are available in this field are the works of al-Wāhidī (d.487 A.H.), entitled *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, and Al-Ṣuyūṭī’s *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. Ibn Ḥajar also authored in this field.

The occasion of revelation is a particular occurrence that took place in the lifetime of the Prophet; there is no room for opinion on the matter, rather, as with any historical event, reliance is given to eye-witness accounts. Sources for such information are the corpuses of *hadīth* and the statements of the Companions. The benefits of such knowledge to the exegete is that it provides him with such details as the proper understanding of the verse, removing any misinterpretations or doubts, he comes to understand the circumstances in which the verse was revealed, he knows how to apply the verses and knows the person who caused the revelation of the verse.<sup>2</sup>

The objective in dealing with this subject is to acquaint ourselves with the style with which the causes of revelation are presenting in the narrations of Ibn ‘Abbās and whether they are in conformity and consistent with the narrations and their style in the edited text. This is in order to arrive at a conclusion on the degree of conformity or divergence between the two aiding the aim of this research, which is to assess the authenticity of the ascription of the commentary to Ibn ‘Abbās.

The following are instances where Ibn ‘Abbās and the author of the edited text explain the *asbāb al-nuzūl*: For the verse, “Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realise (it) not!”<sup>3</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī<sup>4</sup> quotes Ibn ‘Abbās as saying. “‘Abdullāh b. ‘Ubayy, Ma‘tab b. Qushayr and al-Ja‘d b. Qays, when they would meet the Believers would say that they too had believed and witnessed the truthfulness of Muhammad. When they departed, however, they would revoke what they

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Alī b. ‘Abdullāh b. Ja‘far al-Madīnī, Abū al-Ḥasan, a *hadīth* master and historian, he had almost 200 works. He was born in Basra in 161 and he died (234 A.H). *Al-‘Alām*, Vol.4 / p.303.

<sup>2</sup> Qāḍī. Abū ‘Ammār Yāsir, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’ān*, al-Hidayah Publishing & Distribution. U.K. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1999), pp.121 – 122.

<sup>3</sup> II: 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī al-Qurashī, born in Baghdad (508 A.H.) a Ḥanbalī jurist who authored works in each of the major branches of sacred knowledge, works which reached 300 in number. He died in Baghdad in (597 A.H). *‘Uḏamā’ al-Islām*, p.365, *Al-‘Alām*, Vol.3 / p.316.



had said, and so this verse was revealed.”<sup>1</sup> The edited text explains the verse in detail, treating the words in the verse and mentioning the names of the people about whom it was revealed (i.e. hypocrites) and is in conformity with information we have from Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>2</sup> The text does not, however, mention the event which occurred as a result of which the verse was revealed and here is at variance with the style of Ibn ‘Abbās.

With reference to “Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could Turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed, from selfish envy, after the Truth hath become Manifest unto them: But forgive and overlook, Till Allah accomplish His purpose; for Allah Hath power over all things”,<sup>3</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās said, “Rāfi‘ b. Ḥuraymala and Wahb b. Zayd said to the Prophet that he should bring forth a book from the heavens specially for them and should cause rivers to burst from the earth – only then would they follow him; then the verse was revealed.” The edited text states the names of the Jews who wanted to have particular companions returning on their heels – for whom names are also mentioned – but it does not mention then occasion of revelation. It is at variance with Ibn ‘Abbās in both detail of names and the occasion of revelation.<sup>4</sup> For “The Jews say: ‘The Christians have naught (to stand) upon’; and the Christians say: ‘The Jews have naught (to stand) upon.’ Yet they (profess to) study the (same) Book. Like unto their word is what those say who know not; but Allah will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgment”,<sup>5</sup> for which Ibn ‘Abbās said, “When the Christians of Najrān<sup>6</sup> visited the Prophet the Jewish Rabbis also came, and both groups began arguing in the Prophet’s presence. Rāfi‘ said: “You are upon falsehood!” and then uttered disbelief by denying Jesus son of Mary.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the edited text does not mention the cause of revelation like Ibn ‘Abbās does, though it does mention that it relates to the Christians of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn- aljawzī, Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Zād al-Masīr fī ‘Ilm al-Tafsīr*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1994). Vol.1 / p.25.

<sup>2</sup> Edited Text, p.3a, *ET*, pp.13-14.

<sup>3</sup> II: 109.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.8b, *ET*, p.52.

<sup>5</sup> II: 113.

<sup>6</sup> Najrān is a village in Northern Yemen in the direction of Mecca. Its people accepted Christianity many generations before the advent of Islam. The Prophet conquered (10 A.H). *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, Vol.8 / p.372.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, abū al-Qāsim, *Al-Kashāf ‘an Ḥaqā’iq ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl*, , Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut. 1<sup>st</sup>. Ed (1995), Vol.1 / p.179. Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.69.

Najran.<sup>1</sup> The examples are many; in fact, wherever the revelation of a verse was preceded by causal factor then Ibn ‘Abbās makes mention of it. The edited text likewise narrates these, although at times it differs in its presentation to the norm of scholars who write in this field. and also appear at times different to Ibn ‘Abbās’ style. This has been observed regarding all the previous examples we have mentioned.

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<sup>1</sup> Edited Text, 8a, *ET*, p.54.



#### 1.4.7. The variant readings of the Qur'ān and Ibn 'Abbās' *tafsīr* :

The variant readings of the Qur'ān refer to the various ways and manners of reciting the Qur'ān. Each recitation has its own peculiar rules by which it is recited and variations in words and letters, and is named after the recitor who was famous for that particular recitation.

The objective in broaching this topic is to come to know the points of conformity and divergence between what is transmitted from Ibn 'Abbās and the edited text with regards to variant readings. It should be borne in mind that some reports should be viewed with skepticism. such as below, the narration of al-Zamakhsharī.

Ibn 'Abbās had recitations which at times would conflict with the recitation of the majority of recitors. Al-Zamakhsharī<sup>1</sup> says in his commentary that Ibn 'Abbās had a very different reading of II: 124, "And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: 'I will make thee an Imam to the Nations.' He pleaded: 'And also (Imams) from my offspring!'" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers". He claims that Ibn 'Abbās' version has it that Abraham tried the Lord (rather than the Lord trying him, as is held by the majority of scholars)<sup>2</sup> by supplicating to him to see if He would respond.<sup>3</sup> The author has not been able to find any confirmation of this from another source which implies that al-Zamakhsharī may have no sound basis for this report but nevertheless used it to support the Mu'tazilite view that God does not try his creatures. The edited text mentions these readings though with the well-known 'formula of doubt' (*ṣiġhat al-taḍ'īf*) and that is the expression, "it is said"; furthermore, it doesn't explicitly state that it is a variant reading, and only explains the meaning of the verse.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī is Abū al-Qāsim Jārallāh Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī. From the scholars of knowledge, religion, exegesis, language and rhetoric. He has many works to his name and was a Mu'tazilite in creed. He was born in (467 A.H). in Khawarizm, where he also passed away (538 A.H). *Al-A'lām*, Vol.7 p.178.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.730.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Kaṣṣā'*. Vol.1 / p.183.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.9b, *ET*, p.60.

Another example is the recitation of “So if they believe as ye believe, they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism; but Allah will suffice thee as against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing”,<sup>1</sup> which Ibn ‘Abbās reads as. *fa in āmanū bi alladhī āmantum bihī*. Al-Ṭabari explains this variance as actually being Ibn ‘Abbās’ interpretation of the verse, where he substitutes *billadhi* for *bi mithli*. although he does point out that there are some doubts about the authenticity of the chain.<sup>2</sup> It appears here that he was seeking to avoid any possible misinterpretation of this verse, for it may be understood to mean, “If they believe in something similar to what you have believed in”, which in Islam is classified as polytheism – the equalising of others with God. The substitution of *mithl* with *billadhi* removes any possible ambiguity.<sup>3</sup> Whilst the edited text does not record this reading.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise. II: 259, which Ibn ‘Abbās read as *nunshiruhā* (we bring it to life)<sup>5</sup>; the edited text mentions it also after explaining the verse: “If it is read with *r* then it means *kayfa nakhlūquhā* (how We create it).”<sup>6</sup> Al-Qurṭubī says that the recitation of this word with *z* is the recitation of the Kufans and Ibn ‘Āmir<sup>7</sup>, and that the rest recite it with an *r*, including Ibn ‘Abbās and al-Ḥasan.<sup>8</sup>

Thus Ibn ‘Abbās’ treatment of the variant readings of the Qur’ān is observable from the examples provided, although there seems on occasion to be some recitations recorded as being his preferred opinion which are generally held to be *shādh*. What has been observed from the examples is that it has been reported from Ibn ‘Abbās much that is in agreement with what Ibn ‘Abbās held. Also, the edited text does not always report what has been reported from Ibn ‘Abbās in the books of recitation; its style in presenting the recitations differ markedly from Ibn ‘Abbās perhaps because its concern is more towards explaining the meaning of the recitation than the fact that it is a variant.

<sup>1</sup> II: 137.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.730.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.791.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.10a, *ET*, p.65.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, , Vol.3 / p.62.

<sup>6</sup> Edited Text, p.20b, *ET*, p.135.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn ‘Āmir is ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Āmir b. Yazīd al-Muqri’ al-Dimashqī, he read the Qur’ān to al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī. from ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān. He was born in (21 A.H). and died in (118 A.H). *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.15 p.144.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, Vol.3 / p.295.



#### 1.4.8. Ibn ‘Abbās’ treatment of legal issues (*aḥkām fiqhiyya*):

Ibn ‘Abbās’ legal acumen has been discussed in an earlier chapter; so too was the fact that ‘Umar drew him within his inner circle of advisors and jurisconsults in spite of his young age. It is of no surprise to find that Ibn ‘Abbās issued many fatwas (legal verdicts) in his lifetime, sometimes even in conflict with the predominant opinions. Those which he presented within the sphere of *tafsīr* are large in number, some examples of these are presented here and compared to the position of the edited text. Though this comparison will not provide a definitive conclusion even if we can ascertain a degree of conformity between the legal positions of Ibn ‘Abbās and those expressed in the edited text – this is since the possibility of authenticating Ibn ‘Abbās’ actual position on matter is nigh impossible to arrive at since the fabrications are many and frequently contradictory, even the authentic reports divulge variant opinions perhaps as a result of him recanting an opinion<sup>1</sup> – there is still a use to the comparison since it is another angle from which draw similarities and differences that may reinforce previous discussions less controversial.

For the verse “A divorce is only permissible twice; after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness”,<sup>2</sup> he says, “If a man utters divorce to his wife twice he must fear God for the third (and final) time; he should either hold on to her treating her with kindness, or else let her go but without withholding from her any of her rights.”<sup>3</sup> The verse continues, “except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah”, for which he says, “That is the wife not upholding the boundaries set by God and her ridiculing the rights of her husband, such as her showing him bad manners, or refusing to obey him. If she does this then it is for him to take the *fidya* (compensation).”<sup>4</sup> He then explains that there is no

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<sup>1</sup> This topic is dealt with in detail in Ibn ‘Abbās and his status in *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence (2.5).

<sup>2</sup> II: 229.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn. Kathīr, Muhammad b. Ismā‘īl, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, Dār al-Fayḥā’ (Damascus) and Dār al-Salām (al-Riyāḍ) 1st Ed. (1994), Vol.1 / p.366 and al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.152.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.632.

fixed amount for what constitutes the *fidya*.<sup>1</sup> The edited text has commentary almosts identical to the statement with the addition of informing about the occasion of revelation.<sup>2</sup>

There is no verse in the Qur'ān which speaks about a point of law, be it related to ritual worship, marriage, divorce or other, except that Ibn 'Abbās explains the legal implications of it. We conclude this section with a quote from Ibn 'Abbās on the subject of divorce once more, specifically the irrevocable divorce. He says in commentary of "So if a husband divorces his wife (irrevocably), he cannot, after that, re-marry her until after she has married another husband and he has divorced her"<sup>3</sup> - "If she remarries after the first (husband) and he has intercourse with her, then there is nothing preventing her; if the second divorces her or dies, from remarrying the first, for she becomes permissible once more to him."<sup>4</sup> Here he agrees with the opinion of Ibn 'Umar who infact asked the question to the Prophet regarding an irrevocable divorce and whether the two are ever able to remarry.<sup>5</sup> Here, the edited text gives the same commentary with the addition of the occasion of revelation, the names of the associated people, and states that the man wishing to remarry his divorced wife must pay the dowry anew and re-enact the marriage contract.<sup>6</sup>

Ibn 'Abbās is infact basing his fatwa on the way of the Prophet, which was his way so long as there existed a textual evidence from him. There are many more example recorded in the books of *tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbās' fatwas<sup>7</sup> – the preference of selecting fatwas related to divorce in the aforementioned examples was to illustrate the scope of his knowledge.

It noticeable from the examples provided that there is a quasi-conformity between the positions of Ibn 'Abbās and the edited text except in places where the latter provides additional information but it should be borne in mind that these are in issues that no

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p640, Ibn Kathīr, Vol.1 / p.370.

<sup>2</sup> Edited Text, p.17b, *ET*, pp.115-116.

<sup>3</sup> II: 230.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 /p.648.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.2 / p.648.

<sup>6</sup> Edited Text, p.17b, *ET*, p.117.

<sup>7</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / pp.668, 683, 714, 718, 732, Ibn Kathīr, Vol.1 / p.389, Al-Shawkani Vol.1 / p.432.



Muslim scholars would dispute and so there is nothing particularly exciting about this. There may be another reason for the conformity, however, and that is it can be proven that the author of the edited text transmits from one of the students of Ibn ‘Abbās positions that he held. There is something tangible that points to this latter: the spirit of what the edited text contains is in general agreement with the views Ibn ‘Abbās is supposed to have held. Conflicting legal positions between the two sources are presented in the section treating the legal injunctions in the edited text.

#### 1.4.9. Did Ibn ‘Abbās give importance to the explanation of the *I’jāz Balāghī* (Inimitable rhetoric) of the Qur’ān?:

There can be no doubting the fact that the explanation of the rhetorical subtleties and eloquent verses in the Qur’ān was a phenomenon which did not begin until the third century A.H. The question then arises, what the value is in considering Ibn ‘Abbas’ concern for rhetorical devices since he pre-dates the period we have bench-marked? The reason is that the edited text provides instances, though fairly infrequent, in which it points out rhetorical devices though, importantly, not with the nomenclature of the third century on or in anything but the smallest detail. This sort of treatment is not inconceivable for the period pre-dating the third century, of course.

The first systematic analysis of the rhetorical devices in the Qur’ān was initialized by the debates stirred by some of the Mu’tazilites, who were of the opinion that the Qur’ān was not, in terms of its eloquence and superior literary style, inimitable; as a consequence of the Mu’tazilite deviance on this matter and for fear of this affecting the lay, scholars took up the task of analyzing the Qur’ān for its style, unique rhythm and thereby constructing a whole new science designed to study the rhetoric of the Qur’ān. Al-Jāhīz (d. 255 A.H.)<sup>1</sup> was the first to author a work dedicated to this subject-matter titles *Nazm al-Qur’ān*.<sup>2</sup> Al-

<sup>1</sup> Al-Jāhīz is ‘Amr b. Baḥr Abū ‘Uthmān, known as al-Jāhīz, the goggle-eyed; one of the most famed scholars in literature with many books, he was a Mu’tazilite in creed. He was born in Basra in (163 A.H). and died there in (255 A.H) *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.5 / p.74.

<sup>2</sup> *I’jāz al-Qur’ān wa al-Bālagha al-nabawiyya*, al-Rāfi‘ī, p.106. Also Boullata, Isa, ‘I’jāz and related topics’ in *the( Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’ān)* p.141.

Jāḥiẓ argued that the *Qur'ān* was inimitable on the basis of its composition (*Ta'lif*) and its structure or arrangement of words (*Naẓm*)<sup>1</sup>The writing in this area escalated greatly after this point on for there was deemed a need for it, not least because of the expansion of the Islamic lands – much like grammar, there was no need for the early generations from the Companions through to the great early exegetes such as Mujāhid, Ibn Jubayr, al-Ṣan'ānī and al-Ṭabarī to discuss at any great length issues relating to rhetoric which would no doubt have been viewed superfluous for the fact that the masses were acquainted already with the classical language. When such aspects of linguistic style were treated they would be done so without the later coined technical terminology of the science. The following examples illustrate this case. The verse, “Their (the hypocrites) similitude is that of a man who has kindled a fire; when it lighted all around him, Allah took away their light and left them in utter darkness. So they could not see”,<sup>2</sup> is explained by Ibn ‘Abbās as follows: “As for the light (*nūr*), it refers to their (the hypocrite’s) faith which they would prattle about, whilst darkness (*ẓulma*), refers to their misguidance and their disbelief which they would boast about. They are a people who were on guidance and then it was snatched away from them and so they strayed thereafter.”<sup>3</sup> The edited text is dissimilar in this regard, suggesting why the hypocrites would enter Islām; that was to protect themselves and their lives and property.<sup>4</sup>

In a similar narration, Ibn ‘Abbās states almost the same as the edited text above: that the the hypocrite is likened to one who has stoked a fire in order to find his way. This fire represents Islam, by it the possessor protects himself from being harmed and benefits from whatever the Muslims benefit from. His departure from belief to a state of unbelief is likened to one who has had his flame put out after he had begun to benefit from it.<sup>5</sup> This explanation of Ibn ‘Abbās’ no doubt indicates that the verse in question is to be understood metaphorically, although he makes no use of the commonly used terms of *balāgha*.

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<sup>1</sup> McAuliffe. Jane Dammen (General Editor), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, Georgetown University, Brill-Leiden, Boston (2002), Martin.Richard C (Ed),art.Inimitable,Vol .2/p.536,column 2.

<sup>2</sup> II: 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 p.306, Ibn Kathīr, Vol.1 / p.57.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.3a, *ET*, p.16.

<sup>5</sup> *Zād al-masīr*, Vol.1 / p.34.



In *tafsīr* of *al-Fātiḥa*, “Show us the straight way”,<sup>1</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās says the ‘straight way’ (*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) is Islam.<sup>2</sup> Al-Ḍaḥḥāk reports from Ibn ‘Abbās that Gabriel said to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), “O Muhammad! Say: Guide us to the straight path, show us the guiding path which is the religion of God, the one which has no crookedness in it.”<sup>3</sup> The edited text offers the same explanation with the addition of asking to be guided to what is legal and protected from the illicit.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Ḥākim narrates in his *Mustadrak* on the authority of Abū al-‘Āliya, from Ibn ‘Abbās that *ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* is the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and his two companions Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.<sup>5</sup> It is clear here that a metaphorical meaning is given to the verse.

Similarly, “In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease”,<sup>6</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās held that the word disease was doubt (*shakk*) and hypocrisy (*nifāq*).<sup>7</sup> The edited text is analogous once more.<sup>8</sup> II: 19, “But Allah is ever round the rejectors of Faith”. is explained to mean that God’s punishment (*‘adhāb*) is to forever encircle the disbelievers.<sup>9</sup> A final example is II: 18, “Deaf, dumb and blind, they will not return (to the path)”, where he explains that the disbelievers do not hear the guidance (*hudā*), or see it or perceive it in any way.<sup>10</sup> The edited text conforms to both the two previous interpretations, which are metaphorical devices termed in the discipline of rhetoric *isti‘āra taba‘iyya*<sup>11</sup>, of course.<sup>12</sup> In summary, Ibn ‘Abbās interpreted the Qur’ān explaining its use of various rhetorical devices – metaphor, simile, etc – as does the edited text, though as previously, it provides additional information. Neither use terminology coined by philologists of later centuries. This supports the fact that the edited text is older than the first three centuries. Again the spirit of our text is consistent with

<sup>1</sup> I: 6.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.10, Ibn Kathīr, Vol.1 / p.20.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* Vol.1 / p.107.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.2a, *ET*, p.6.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Vol. 2 / p.283.

<sup>6</sup> II: 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.177.

<sup>8</sup> Edited Text, p.3b, *ET*, p.18.

<sup>9</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.277, al-Qurṭubī, Vol.1 / p.239.

<sup>10</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.212.

<sup>11</sup> See al-Maṭ‘anī, ‘Abd al-‘aẓīm, *al-Majāz fī ‘l-lughā wa al-qur’ān bayna al-ijāzat wa al-mana’* Cairo:

Maktabat Wahba, (1985), Vol.1 / p.461

<sup>12</sup> *Edited Text*, p.3b, *ET*, p.18 for the first example. and p.3b and p.18.

that of Ibn ‘Abbās’ reported opinions. This is supported by H. Berg who based on detailed analysis of the chains of transmission through Ibn ‘Abbās’ students, concludes that Ibn ‘Abbās did not indulge in discourse about the rhetorical devices using terminology used later on by philologists.<sup>1</sup>

### Conclusion:

Subsequent to the presentation of Ibn ‘Abbās’ style in *tafsīr* it is apparent that he did not interpret the Qur’ān in the fashion that is commonly understood today, that is verse by verse, rather his exegesis was restricted to what was deemed obscure in meaning or rules of law that required clarification. He would also treat matters relating to *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*. He did not compile a commentary himself although he did encourage his students to do so. However this compilation was during his lifetime was not all-encompassing in that it did not contain all verse of the scripture; it was instead one which treated only general issues bypassing any detailed linguistic analysis as the people of that age were not in any need of that being naturally eloquent and masterful of Arabic.

It appears that Ibn ‘Abbās undertook to explain the stories of the ancients in the Qur’ān for what they contain of wisdom and lessons, though admittedly he would not delve into detailed discussions on matters which the Book had no concern for – information such as statistics and dates, for example. He also explained metaphors and similes in the Qur’ān although it was done so in non-technical fashion having preceded the advent of the science of rhetoric. He did not overlook to explain variant readings of verses also, and seems to infrequently relay recitations which conflicted with authenticated recitations (*shādh*) – as with other reports from him it is inconclusive whether he is the source for

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<sup>1</sup> *The Development of Early Exegesis in Islām*, pp.194-198.



these or whether, indeed, they are posterior ascriptions to him – something the majority of scholars would typically avoid. Such instances where he does so, the author believes are not likely to be his recitations. In view of what we know of the methodology of the early exegetes from amongst the Companions and the Successors, it is clear that Ibn ‘Abbās’ hermeneutical style was totally consistent with theirs and that he observed the same principles and parameters.

Ibn ‘Abbās it appears did not author the exegetical text ascribed to him. This finding is based on the detailed preceding sections revealing the variances existing between the opinions of Ibn ‘Abbās collected by such scholars as al-Ṭabarī and the text which is the focus of this study. Ibn ‘Abbās’ epoch was not familiar with detailed, holistic, verse by verse, systematic exegesis. The text we have is characterized by all of these attributes. Furthermore, the form of *tafsīr* was far more akin to a chapter within a *ḥadīth* compilation, and it was, in fact, most common to find exegesis within that genre of literature. Not until the third century A.H. did *tafsīr* acquire independent status. The next obvious candidate as author of the text is then al-Kalbī, not least because so many scholars have ascribed it to him. The next part of the study shall analyse his contributions to the exegetical literature, and employing the same methodology by which Ibn ‘Abbās has been discounted, the authenticity of this ascription to al-Kalbī shall be interrogated.

## Chapter II: Al-Kalbī: his life, work and knowledge:

### 2.1. Who is al-Kalbī?

Al-Kalbī is Muhammad b. al-Sā'ib b. Bishr b. 'Amr b. al-Ḥārith b. Banī 'Abdu Wud. His agnomen, Abū al-Naḍr al-Kūfī; prolific exegete and genealogist. Born and raised in Kufa, and passed away there in 146 A.H.<sup>1</sup> His birth date is not mentioned.

**His teachers:** He narrated from al-Aṣbagh b. Nabāta<sup>2</sup>, Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām the freed-slave of Umm Hānī, his two brothers, Sufyān and Salama<sup>3</sup>, and 'Āmir al-Sha'bī.

**His students:** Amongst those who narrated<sup>4</sup> from him are Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh<sup>5</sup>, Junāda b. Maslam<sup>6</sup>, al-Ḥakam b. Ḍuhayr<sup>7</sup>, Ḥammād b. Salama<sup>8</sup>, Khārija b. Muṣ'ab<sup>9</sup>, 'Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Sufyān b. 'Uyayna, Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj, 'Abd al-Malik b. Jurayj<sup>10</sup> and his son Hishām and Muhammad b. Marwān al-Ṣaghīr.<sup>11</sup>

The majority of his students were from major scholars in their own right such as al-Thawrī, Ibn 'Uyayna and Ibn al-Mubārak.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 / p.180, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / p.246, and *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, Vol.7 / p.270.

<sup>2</sup> al-Aṣbagh b. Nabāta al-Tamīmī al-Kūfī. Not relied on for *ḥadīth* and was accused of being a *Rāfiḍite*. *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.92.

<sup>3</sup> The author was unable to find biographies for both Sufyān and Salama.

<sup>4</sup> Rather unusually, amongst his students as may be seen from their biographies, some were major scholars widely accepted as trustworthy narrators whilst at the same time some were altogether dismissed as liars. The fact that al-Kalbī had as students some very well known great scholars raises the question of how they would have taken narrations from him if he was truly weak in *ḥadīth*. In some cases, such as that of Sufyān al-Thawrī, the answer seems to lie in the fact that his narrations from al-Kalbī were not intended to be related as reliable tradition – he would only narrate from al-Kalbī, as Ibn Abū Ḥātim has it, out of astonishment for the strange and wonderful things he would narrate. *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, Vol.7 / p.270.

<sup>5</sup> Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh b. Sulaym al-'Ansī, *ṣadūq* in his narrations from his own people, but confuses narrations when from other than them. He died in (180 A.H). *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.84.

<sup>6</sup> Junāda b. Salm b. Khālid b. Jābir al-Kūfī, *ṣadūq*, he had many mistakes in narration. Abū Ḥātim said he was a weak narrator. *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.138.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Ḥakam b. Ḍuhayr al-Fizzārī, *matrūk* and accused of being a Rafidite. He died in (180 A.H). *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*. Vol.1 / p.189.

<sup>8</sup> Ḥammād b. Salama b. Dīnār al-Baṣrī, reliable, a devoted worshipper and narrated many *ḥadīth*. He died in (167 A.H). *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.195.

<sup>9</sup> Khārija b. Mus'ab b. Khārija Abū al-Ḥajjāj, *matrūk*, he used to commit *tadlīs* from liars. *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*. Vol.1 / p.208.

<sup>10</sup> 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Jurayj, reliable, a jurist and nobleman, but used to commit *tadlīs*. He died in (150 A.H). *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.482.

<sup>11</sup> *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, Vol.7 / pp.268 – 270 and *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / p.251.



## 2.2 The opinion of the Muslim scholars concerning him.

The views of the scholars about him differ. The majority seem to doubt his trustworthiness but, as with Abū Ṣāliḥ previously, descriptions of al-Kalbī at times appear rather contradictory. It has been said of him that he is a compulsive liar, a fabricator, a follower of ‘Abdullāh b. Saba’<sup>1</sup> i.e. from those who say that ‘Alī did not die; rather, he will return to this world before the end of time to fill it with justice as it was once filled with oppression; those are the same ones who when they see a cloud say “the Leader of the Faithful rides on it”. A *Murji*<sup>2</sup> who utters disbelief.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Ḥajar<sup>4</sup> reports the following statement from al-Bukhārī about him: “Yaḥyā and Ibn Maḥdī<sup>5</sup> have no regard for him. Al-Bukhārī mentions him at another place saying, “Muhammad b. Bishr heard ‘Amr b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥaḍramī, from Muhammad b. Ishāq, who was al-Kalbī.”<sup>6</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal declared his books prohibited to look at.”<sup>7</sup> Al-Muzzī, after mentioning that Ibn Ḥibbān<sup>8</sup> has declared al-Kalbī amongst those whose characters have been tarnished (*majrūh*), goes on to say that he is the one who al-Thawrī and Muhammad b. Ishāq report from. When they do so. they say, “Abū al-Naḍr has informed us...” in order to conceal al-Kalbī’s true identity. ‘Aṭīyya al-Awfī<sup>9</sup> did much the same.<sup>10</sup>

And thus it appears that some who have taken narrations from al-Kalbī are embarrassed to mention him by name preferring to give him an agnomen so that he remains anonymous. This is truly a contradiction in terms in regards to how they view him.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Abdullāh b. Saba’ was the head of the Sabites. He was a Jew who pretended to accept Islam. He was in fact a disbeliever. Ibn Ḥajar said, “I believe ‘Alī burnt him to death.” *Al-A’lām*, Vol.4 / p.88.

<sup>2</sup> The *Murji*ites were a party who theoretically elaborated the doctrine of toleration. The word means “those who defer”, and the sense of it is that they presume to ascertain the ultimate fate of their fellow men but leave it to God to sit in judgement over them. They took the position that ‘Alī would be judged by God for his actions during his Caliphate. *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, p.74.

<sup>3</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / pp.250 – 252.

<sup>4</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 / p.179.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī b. Ḥassān al-Baṣrī, reliable, a *ḥafiz*, scholar of the names of men and *ḥadīth*, he died in (98 A.H). *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.463.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta’dīl*, Vol.7 / p.271.

<sup>7</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.7 / p.271, Al-Dhahabī, Muhammad b. Aḥmad, *Mīzān al-I’tidāl wa Naqd al-Rijāl* (Egypt 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1963)), Vol.3 / p.558.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Ḥibbān is Muhammad b. Ḥibbān b. Aḥmad al-Tamīmī, a historian, and scholar, geographer, *ḥadīth* master. He was born in Sijistan and died there in (354 A.H) *Al-A’lām*, Vol.6 / p.78.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Aṭīyya b. Sa’d b. Junāda al-‘Awfī, trustworthy but makes many mistakes in narration. He was a Shi’ite and a *muḥallil*. He died in (111 A.H) *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.2 / p.28.

<sup>10</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / p.252.

Al-Tirmizī and Ibn Māja<sup>1</sup> both narrate *tafsīr* from him.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Sājī<sup>3</sup> said of him: “*Hadīth* narrations are not accepted from him (*matrūk*); His narrations are viewed as being very weak due to his inclinations towards extreme Shi’ism.”<sup>4</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar has said of him: “Geneologist, exegete, suspected of lying, accused of Shi’ite inclinations.”<sup>5</sup>

Bashār has said, “I still wonder in amazement how the trustworthy narrators take from him.”<sup>6</sup> Al-Thawrī would narrate from him only out of amazement of him so one listening may think he narrates deeming him trustworthy which was not the case.<sup>7</sup>

Ibn Ma’in who, it must be said, is well known for his severe scrutiny of reporters before accepting them<sup>8</sup>, has said of him, “He is not given any consideration (*laysa bi shay*).”<sup>9</sup>

Wakī<sup>10</sup> said, “Sufyān was not impressed by the likes of those who would give commentary on a chapter of the Qur’ān from its beginning to its end such as al-Kalbī. ‘Alī b. Mashar has said that Abū Ṣāliḥ swore that he never related any commentary to al-Kalbī. Abū ‘Āṣim has said that Sufyān al-Thawrī claimed he heard al-Kalbī say, ‘Whatever I have narrated from Abū Ṣāliḥ as being from Ibn ‘Abbās is a fabrication, so do not relate it’.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Māja is Muhammad b. Yazīd al-Quzwīnī, born in Quzwīn in (209 A.H). He was a scholar with an incredible memory, regarded as reliable in narration. He has a book in *hadīth* and exegesis. He died in (273 A.H) *‘Uṣamā’ al-Islām*, p.353.

<sup>2</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / p.252.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Sājīy is al-Mu’tamin b. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Sājī, a scholar in *hadīth*, he was born in (445 A.H). and died in (507 A.H). *Al-A’lām*, Vol.7. / p.318.

<sup>4</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 / p.180.

<sup>5</sup> *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.2 / p.173.

<sup>6</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / p.250.

<sup>7</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / p.250.

<sup>8</sup> Shāhīn. Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. Aḥmad *Tārīkh Asmā’ al-Ḍu’afā’ wa al-Kadhābīn*, Edited by ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Muhammad Aḥmad al-Qushqarī, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1989), p.8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p.164.

<sup>10</sup> Wakī b. al-Jarrāḥ, a *Hāfiẓ*, he was the *Muḥaddith* of Iraq in his epoch. He has many books to his name including an exegesis. He was born in Kufa in (129 A.H) and died in (197 A.H) *Al-A’lām*, Vol.8 / p.117.

<sup>11</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / p.250.



Abū Aḥmad b. ‘Adī said, “al-Kalbī has to his name more narrations than that which I have related from him – sound narrations, especially from Abū Ṣāliḥ, one who is well known for exegesis; in fact, no one has written a lengthier commentary than he, nor one more widely circulated. After him is Muqātil, except that al-Kalbī is preferred over him because of accusations labeled against him regarding his adherence to various unorthodox schools of thought. And so we find that al-Thawrī accepts his narrations, as does Shu‘ba, Ibn ‘Uyayna, Ḥammād b. Salama and others from amongst those whose trustworthiness is accepted widely. They would happily accept from him reports on exegesis but would not be as swift in taking from him *ḥadīth* reports generally, especially those he narrates from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās.”<sup>1</sup>

Here Ibn ‘Adiyy distinguishes between the narration of Prophetic Tradition (*ḥadīth*) and *tafsīr*. He regards al-Kalbī as acceptable in exegesis, pointing out that other trustworthy narrators have taken narrations from him, and only rejects his *ḥadīth*.

Al-Nasā’ī<sup>2</sup> has said of him, “Trustworthy men have narrated from him satisfied with his exegesis, however, he relates many *ḥadīth* which are fabricated.”<sup>3</sup> This is also the opinion of Ibn Kathīr about him; he said, “*Ḥadīth* narrations are not taken from him.”<sup>4</sup> Thus the scholars of *ḥadīth* clearly differentiated the *ḥadīth* narrations of al-Kalbī from his exegesis. It is probable that this is because he was not in the habit of ascribing *ḥadīth* back to the Prophet, something which the *ḥadīth* scholars stipulate as a condition from acceptance.

He was sometimes accused of heresy, of *rifd*, of *saba’ism*, of *irjā’* and so on, and sometimes of forgery and falsehood. Even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century he has impassioned opponents among the scholars of al-Azhar (Ahmad shākir). Yet he has remained an authority, and even his detractors draw on him as a source.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 / p.180.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Nasā’ī is Ahmad b. Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’ī, trustworthy in narrations, a scholar of *ḥadīth* and *rijāl*, he was born in (215 A.H.) in Khurasan and he died in Mecca in (303 A.H.) ‘*Uḏamā’ al-Islām*, p.351.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-A‘lām*. Vol.6 / p.133.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol.1 / p.65.

<sup>5</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol.4/p.495.W.Atallah, art Al-Kalbī.

### 2.3. Reasons for the accusations leveled against al-Kalbī:

It is to be observed in reference to al-Kalbī that he was accused of being a member of either the Shi'ites, or else the Murji'ites – some even leveled against him apostasy. We here present some reasons why he was attacked in such a way:

Firstly, al-Kalbī was born and raised in Kufa, 'the land where *ḥadīths* are fabricated', the school of opinion (*madrasat al-ra'y*).<sup>1</sup> Since one's environment impresses profoundly on one's personality it is small wonder that the *Muḥaddithīn* (*ḥadīth* scholars) would look at him unfavourably; and it was their statement that ultimately decides whether a narrator is accepted as sound or rejected as a fabricator. Al-Kalbī was amongst the early collators of *Hadīth*, during the early part of the second century A.H., acting upon the orders of the Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz<sup>2</sup>, who a short while before his death (101 A.H.) instructed al-Zuhrī<sup>3</sup> to begin collecting and writing down *ḥadīth*.<sup>4</sup> His order sparked a general surge amongst the scholarly class who regarded it as a signal to begin an all out collation of not just *ḥadīth*, but also history, *tafsīr*, sayings of the Companions, poetry and philosophy.<sup>5</sup> As al-Kalbī became well known for *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr*, it was only natural that he would fall under the scrutiny of the *ḥadīth* scholars of the science of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, whose task it was to either pass or strike off the list *ḥadīth* narrators. Kufa, and more generally Iraq was blacklisted by the *ḥadīth* scholars of the Hijaz. Criticism reached almost incredulous levels: Al-Zuhrī is reported to have said, "*Ḥadīth* is reported by us in the Hijaz a hands span in length, and returns to us after bypassing Iraq an arms length in span!"<sup>6</sup> Even Mālik b. Anas<sup>7</sup>, the greatest jurist of his time in Medina, remarked, "Regard the *ḥadīth* narrations of the people of Iraq as you do the narrations of the People of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: Imām Ahl al-Sunna*, p.202. *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, p.88.

<sup>2</sup> 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, known as the fifth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, from the jurists of the Tābi'ūn. He spread justice throughout his kingdom and ensured none lived in poverty. He was born in Egypt in (61 A.H). and passed away in (101 A.H). *'Uḏamā' al-Islām*, p.425.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Zuhrī is Muhammad b. Muslim al-Zuhrī from Quraysh. He was the first to compile *ḥadīth* and one of the foremost jurists in Islamic history. He was a Tābi'ī from Medina, born in (58 A.H) and died in (124 A.H) *Al-'lām*, Vol.7 / p.97.

<sup>4</sup> *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabi*, Vol.1 / p.228, *Dirāsāt fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, Vol.1 / p.71.

<sup>5</sup> Khalīfa Yūsuf, *Ḥayāt al-Shi'r fī al-Kūfa*, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, Cairo (1968 ), p.282 onwards.

<sup>6</sup> *Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal: Imām Ahl al-Sunna*, p.204.

<sup>7</sup> Mālik b. Anas al-Ḥumayrī, born in Medina in (93 A.H)., he was one of the four greatest jurists to have lived. having a school named after him in law. He died in (179 A.H). *Al-'lām*, Vol.5 / p.257.



Book: neither criticize them nor accept them.”<sup>1</sup> Al-Kalbī was included amongst the people of Iraq, as was the likes of the great Abū Hanīfa<sup>2</sup> and al-Awzā’ī<sup>3</sup>.<sup>4</sup> But criticism of him extended beyond his *ḥadīth* narrations to his opinions in exegesis. Ibn Ḥanbal went as far as to prohibit his students from looking at al-Kalbī’s exegesis.<sup>5</sup> He viewed with disdain al-Kalbī’s over-reliance on the sayings of the Companions in exegesis, and what he saw as his lack of regard for the sayings of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). Ibn Ḥanbal’s criticism did not end at al-Kalbī but was to include all of *tafsīr*, the *malāḥim* and *al-maghāzī*; he described them – as we have mentioned earlier – as having no basis, meaning no supporting chains of transmission to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) as explained by Ibn Taymiyya.<sup>6</sup>

Ibn Ḥanbal probably took this stance because of his immense concern that nothing besides the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* was written down for fear that they would become sidelined. He even refused to allow his own legal rulings to be written down. Hence his campaigning against the writing down of other areas of knowledge would effectively extend to anyone who cared to write about anything other than the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. He would refuse his students to look even at the words of Mālik and al-Shāfi’ī, encouraging them to adhere to the *ḥadīth* which is the basis.<sup>7</sup>

A second reason as to why al-Kalbī was regarded suspiciously may be attributed to some from amongst his students who would exaggerate sayings from him. Ibn Ḥajar gives Muqātil b. Sulaymān as an example. One day he was narrating *ḥadīth* to a gathering of people with chains he was ascribing to al-Kalbī. Al-Kalbī happened to be walking by at that very moment and denied ever having uttered those words to Muqātil. The report has

<sup>1</sup> *Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal: Imām Ahl al-Sunna*, p.204.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Hanīfah al-Nu’mān b. Thābit, the Imam of the school of *ra’y*; one of the four Imams who had schools named after them. He was famous for his scholarship in theology as well as law. He was born in 80 A.H. in Kufa and died in (150 A.H) *‘Uḏamā’ al-Islām*, p.326, Ghawjī, Wahbī Sulaymān, *A’lām al-Muslimīn: Abū Hanīfa al-Nu’mān*, Dār al-Qalam, Damascus, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. (1999), p.47.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Awzā’ī is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Amr al-Awzā’ī, the Imām of the Shāfi’ī lands in *fiqh* and abstinence. He was born in Ba’labak in (88 A.H). and died in( 157 A.H). *Al-A’lām*, Vol. 3 / p.320.

<sup>4</sup> *Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal: Imām Ahl al-Sunna*, p.237.

<sup>5</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.7 / p.271.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to the *Tafsīr* of the Companions, Chapter 1 (5.3).

<sup>7</sup> Abū Zahra. Muhammad, *Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal wa ‘Aṣrihi*, Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī. Egypt (1974), pp.155 – 156 and *Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal: Imām Ahl al-Sunna*, p.281.

it that Muqātil justified his lie by saying, “O Abu Naḍr! Verily *ḥadīth* is adorned by the men in its chain.”<sup>1</sup> Hence al-Kalbī held an esteemed position in scholarship whereby others would boast about having his name appear in their narrations and people would flock to hear narrations in which he appeared. His own son Hishām<sup>2</sup> would also attribute narrations to his father; he, of course, became famous as a liar, moreso than his father.<sup>3</sup>

Another probable cause of the attacks against al-Kalbī may be attributed to the speculative nature of the subjects with which he busied himself; he was a historian of the first degree as well as a memoriser of lineages. No historian, or non-historian for that matter, would expect historical narratives to be recorded with chains of narration to source, nor for those chains to be subsequently verified with the same scrutiny that is required by the science of *ḥadīth*. However, the *ḥadīth* scholars were at variance with this outlook; they attacked al-Kalbī for his inclusion of historical narratives which lacked soundness according to their criteria in his commentary of the Qur’ān.

These are probably not the only reasons for the criticism leveled against al-Kalbī; it may be argued that the likes of Ibn Ḥajar and al-Dhahabī did not look critically at the accusations leveled against al-Kalbī before including them in their works – it would not have required a major investigation to notice the contradictory nature of things said about him and the confusion prevalent in many of the accusations. Some have certainly been absurd: take, for example, what has been said by Abū Juz’: he claims to have heard Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā’ say, “I bear witness that al-Kalbī is an infidel!” After asking him why, he claimed that he heard al-Kalbī say Gabriel had passed on ‘Divine Revelation to ‘Alī rather than to the Prophet one day because the latter had left to fulfill a pressing need. This was denied by Yazīd b. Zuray’ though he said he heard al-Kalbī shout out once that he was a Sabā’ī. It was said that al-Mughīra regarded him as a Murji’ite.<sup>4</sup>

It is not justified that a scholar allows himself to accept a narration, especially one which is as slanderous as the last mentioned, simply on the basis of its chain of narration being

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<sup>1</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Ibn Ḥajar. Vol.10 / p.283.

<sup>2</sup> Hishām b. Muhammad b. al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī Abū al-Mundhir, a historian and genealogist. He had many works. It was said he was a liar. He was born and died (204 A.H.) in Kufa. *Al-A’lām* Vol.8 / p.87.

<sup>3</sup> *Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān*, p.61.

<sup>4</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 / p.179.



‘sound’. There is a responsibility on him to compare and criticize reports, as one would do with *ḥadīth* reports, in order to filter out contradictions and obscurities. With regards to al-Kalbī sadly this has not been the case.

If one is surprised about the opinions of the scholars about al-Kalbī as a *ḥadīth* scholar and exegete for the contradictions apparent within them, then it will be more disturbing to see the views leveled against him and his political inclinations for he was accused of being a Shi’ite, a Sabā’ī, a Murji’ī and even an infidel.

Ibn Ḥajar relates these four opinions regarding al-Kalbī leaving it for the reader to decide which of them he chooses to be the truth.<sup>1</sup> The matter is certainly not to be left to the opinions related by him, for their lack of objectivity is quite apparent. Whether al-Kalbī was a supporter of ‘Abdullāh b. Saba’, or of Murji’ite inclinations may not be concluded without an academic investigation of the issue – opinions do not constitute conclusive evidence. Study of the *tafsīr* ascribed to al-Kalbī is a starting point. His being described as a disbeliever due to his saying Gabriel visited ‘Alī with revelation because the Prophet was unavailable is very dubious – there is not a single statement of the sort in his commentary. In fact, he was very critical of non-believers, pagans, hypocrites and those with shi’ite inclinations. Any attempt to reconcile accusations against him of being a *Saba’ī* and those accusing him of *irjā’* is, as Dr Nu‘mān puts it, futile, because the two terms are antonyms.<sup>2</sup> A *Saba’ī* is one who deifies ‘Alī<sup>3</sup> whereas a Murji’ite neither supports nor criticizes ‘Alī for his actions during his caliphate.<sup>4</sup> It is more probable that al-Kalbī was simply categorized as being of the two sects due to his Kufan origins, Kufa being a hotbed of Shi’ite and *Saba’ī* propaganda. Furthermore, his family had always maintained very close tribal relations with the family of ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib – his forefathers had supported ‘Alī strongly and fought alongside him in the Battle of Jamal<sup>5,6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 / pp.178 – 180, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.28 / p.446.

<sup>2</sup> al-Qāḍī. al-Nu‘mān, *Al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya fī al-Shi’r al-Umawi*, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Cairo (1970), p.269.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, p.140.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya*, p.264.

<sup>5</sup> The Battle of the Camel (*Jamal*) took place between ‘Alī and Ā’isha, Ṭalhā and al-Zubayr in (36 A.H). It was called as such after the camel of Ā’isha. *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, Vol.3 / p.99.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol.6 / p.532.

However, to describe al-Kalbī as a shi'ite or other deviant of sorts based on his family affiliations is unconvincing to the objective observer.

Perhaps an exposition of some of the shi'ite commentary of the Qur'ān will disprove any suspected affiliations between them and al-Kalbī. Some Shi'ites have interpreted the verse, "On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness there is no blame for what they ate (in the past), when they guard themselves from evil and believe"<sup>1</sup> as referring to one who reaches knowledge of the *Imām* and on account of his acknowledgement has all hardships lifted from him thereby reaching a state of perfection.<sup>2</sup> As for al-Kalbī's commentary of the same verse, then it couldn't be a further cry from the Shi'ite understanding. His is as follows: "(It is not upon those who have believed) in Muhammad and the Qur'ān, (and worked righteous deeds) amongst themselves and towards their Lord, (blame) sin, (in what they have consumed) this regards both those alive and dead who have consumed alcohol before its prohibition (as long as they are fearful) of disbelief and ascribing partners with God and abominations of all kinds. A verse revealed in response to a group of men from amongst the *Muhājirūn* and the *Anṣār* who asked the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) if those who have passed away having consumed alcohol in their lifetimes before its prohibition are to be punished in the next life."<sup>3</sup> There is nothing similar at all between the commentary of al-Kalbī and the version according to Shi'ites.

Some Shi'ites have said in regard to the verse, "Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds, with angels (in His train) and the question is (thus) settled? but to Allah do all questions go back (for decision)"<sup>4</sup>, that it refers to 'Alī for it is his voice that is heard during lightning and thunder.<sup>5</sup> Al-Kalbī's version is again very different.<sup>6</sup>

Many more examples of this disparity in opinion are available. The Shi'ites hold that when the verse, "O Apostle! proclaim the (message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission.

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<sup>1</sup> V: 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Vol.1 / p.122.

<sup>3</sup> Text, p.49a, V: 93.

<sup>4</sup> II: 210.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Vol.1 / p.123.

<sup>6</sup> Text, p.15b.



And God will defend thee from men (who mean mischief). For God guideth not those who reject Faith”,<sup>1</sup> was revealed the Prophet had arrived at Ghadir Khum<sup>2</sup>. He said whilst still on his mount, “He to whom I am a master, then to him also is ‘Alī a master; O Lord, be a friend and helper of one who is the same to ‘Alī and be an enemy who is an enemy to him; help whoever helps him and disgrace whoever dishonors him; make the truth follow him wherever he goes. Now be a witness that I have proclaimed the message.”<sup>3</sup> Al-Kalbī’s version makes no such claim; rather, he explains that the verse warns the Prophet against not delivering the message of Islam to others.<sup>4</sup> Thus the Shi’ites have confined the proclamation of ‘the message’ as referring to making known ‘Alī’s station, whereas al-Kalbī understands the message to refer to Islam in general.

The Shi’ites are well known for manipulating certain verses to justify their attacks on Abū Bakr, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, and ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān. Some Shi’ite sects have interpreted, “We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; He was indeed unjust and foolish”<sup>5</sup> - the carrying of the trust - to mean blocking ‘Alī from the Caliphate, an act which the heavens and the earth shunned but ‘Umar persuaded Abū Bakr to undertake. He did so on condition that ‘Umar would be Caliph after him.<sup>6</sup> The edited text account is altogether at variance; the trust (*amāna*) is said to be obedience and worship, which the heavens and earth shunned the responsibility for fear of punishment due to failing the task.<sup>7</sup> Al-Kalbī clearly doesn’t share Shi’ite sentiments in this regard. Indeed, on many an occasion al-Kalbī praises Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.<sup>8</sup>

As for the accusation labeled against al-Kalbī regarding him being a Murji’ite, again the facts are inconclusive. His fathers support for ‘Alī in the battle of al-Jamal and his

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<sup>1</sup> V: 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ghadīr Khum* was a watering place (*ghadīr*) between Mecca and Medina. *Mu’jam al-Buldān*, Vol.6 / p.377.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Vol.1 / p.131.

<sup>4</sup> Text, p.49a, V: 66.

<sup>5</sup> XXXIII: 72.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Vol.1 / p.187.

<sup>7</sup> Text, p.175b, XXXIII: 72.

<sup>8</sup> Edited text, p.2b, 3a, Text.241b, 259a.

participation in battle with Muhammad b. al-Ash'ath<sup>1</sup> at Dayr al-Jamājim<sup>2</sup> against the Umayyads<sup>3</sup> do not confirm Murji'ite inclinations. After the defeat of al-Ash'ath and his subsequent killing the Umayyads embarked on a campaign of revenge, killing large numbers of the *Qurrā'* (Qur'ān recitors) and jurists, al-Kalbī managing to escape with his life.<sup>4</sup> He returned to Kufa after being deeply affixed by his experiences, preferring from thence forth to leave politics once and for all for the pursuit of knowledge.

In conclusion, al-Kalbī could be innocent of the accusations that he was Shii'ite, Murji'ite or Saba'i. Historical evidences point to this, as well as careful examination of his work. The accusations leveled against him are more likely to have political motivations than theological from the perspective of those Sunnī scholars who have taken a negative stance against him: that is not to say that he didn't perhaps incline towards the House of 'Alī in his political views or carried more broadly defined Shi'i inclinations; it would be hard to conclusively discount this since the Shi'ite did not become theologically distinct until perhaps the middle to late third century A.H. when the concept of the Imamate crystallised<sup>5</sup> – for our purposes, and based on the commentary which is the focus of this study, if indeed its author is al-Kalbī, then he reveals no pro-Shi'i sentiments when commenting on verses disputed by Sunnī and Shi'ite authorities.

#### 2.4. Is al-Kalbī one of Ibn 'Abbās' narrators?

It is difficult to enumerate the totality of what has been related from Ibn 'Abbās in *tafsīr*. There are many chains of narration that stem from him, some sound and some weak. The men, also, are have been described by *ḥadīth* scholars in varying degrees, from trustworthy to weak. Many scholars of the *ḥadīth* sciences have studied closely these chains from Ibn 'Abbās categorizing them according to their soundness and explaining

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad b. al-Ash'ath b. Qays al-Kindī. A military leader in the army of Mus'ab b. al-Zubayr. He participated in most of his battles against the Umayyads. He was killed in 67/686. *Al-A'lām*, Vol.6 / p.39.

<sup>2</sup> The Battle of Dayr al-Jamājim between al-Ḥajjāj and Ibn al-Ash'ath took place in (82 A.H). in which al-Ḥajjāj was victorious. Many recitors of the Qur'ān were killed as a result of it. *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, Vol.4 / p.205.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol.6 / p.533.

<sup>4</sup> *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.7 / pp.211 – 313.

<sup>5</sup> Rahman. Fazlur, *Islam*, New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston,( 1966), p.174.



the reasons for their division. We shall not delve into a detailed study here<sup>1</sup>, however, those chains which have been ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās carrying narrations related to *tafsīr* are of relevance to our study. These chains are the subject of this section.

To begin with, in commentary of the *basmalah*, the following chain is reported:

#### Chain One:

“We have been informed by ‘Abdullāh, ‘The Trustworthy’, Ibn al-Ma’mūn al-Harawī<sup>2</sup>, from his father, from Abū ‘Abdullāh<sup>3</sup>, from Abū ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Muhammad al-Rāzī<sup>4</sup>, from ‘Ammār b. ‘Abdul Majīd al-Harawī<sup>5</sup>, from ‘Alī b. Ishāq al-Samarqandī<sup>6</sup>, from Muhammad b. Marwān<sup>7</sup>, from al-Kalbī<sup>8</sup>, from Abū Ṣāliḥ<sup>9</sup>, from Ibn ‘Abbās. This is the same transmission of the manuscripts symbols ( ٣, ٤, ٥ ).

The author has found that the commentary of the beginning of *al-Baqara* that contains this same chain of narration together with another which shares the same named men but then begins with ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubarak<sup>10</sup>, from ‘Alī b. Ishāq, from Muhammad b. Marwān, from al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ‘Abbās. This is the same transmission of the manuscripts symbols ( ٣, ٤, ٥ ).

<sup>1</sup> Refer to *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / pp.59 – 62, *Mabāḥith* of al-Qaṭṭān, pp.230 – 232, *Ta’rīf al-Dārisīn bimanahj al-Mufasssīrīn n*, pp.239 – 251 and *al-Itqān*, Vol.4 / pp.207 – 210 for more details.

<sup>2</sup> The author was unable to find a biography for him.

<sup>3</sup> The author was unable to find a biography for him

<sup>4</sup> The author was unable to find a biography for him

<sup>5</sup> The author was unable to find a biography for him

<sup>6</sup> ‘Alī b. Ishāq al-Hanzalī al-Samarqandī, from the students of Ibn al-Mubārak, he was regarded as an honest narrator; he died in (237 A.H). *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.20 / p.320. *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta’dīl*, Vol.6 / p.175.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad b. Marwān b. ‘Abdullāh al-Suddī al-Ṣaghīr al-Kūfī, he narrated from A’mash, Yaḥyā b. Sa’īd and Muhammad b. Sā’ib al-Kalbī. Many scholars called him a liar, that he wasn’t reliable, weak, a fabricator of *ḥadīth*, to take his reports is impermissible. *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, , Vol.9 / p.436.

<sup>8</sup> For biography refer to detailed study.

<sup>9</sup> For biography refer to detailed study.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak b. al-Dīnawarī. The author could not find him with this ascription so perhaps he is ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak Wāḍiḥ al-Hanzalī. His nick-name was Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and he was called the *Shaykh al-Islām*. He was a master of language, grammar, and *ḥadīth*. He wrote in exegesis, *sunan* and history. He was born in (118 A.H). and died in (181 A.H). *‘Uḏamā’ al-Islām*, p.378.

## Chain Two:

After mentioning the *basmalah*, he said, “We have been informed by Abū ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ja‘far from Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak al-Dīnawarī<sup>1</sup> from al-Ma‘mūn b. Aḥmad and ‘Ammār b. Abdul Majīd who both said: We have been informed by ‘Alī b. Ishāq al-Ḥadramī from Muhammad b. Marwān from al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās, May God be well-pleased with him.” This is the same transmission of the manuscript symbole (ح).

Then, at the beginning of the commentary of *al-Baqara* he says, “And from them, from ‘Alī b. Ishāq, from Muhammad b. Marwān, from al-Kalbī, from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās.” This is the same transmission of the manuscript symbole (ح).

We find, after studying the above chains of transmission that the men in the chains meet at ‘Alī b. Ishāq al-Samarqandī – although admittedly one of the chains refers to him as al-Samarqandī and the other as al-Ḥadramī – who is the fifth man in chain which has at its start Ibn ‘Abbās. It is after ‘Alī b. Ishāq that the chains branch apart, the first chain then including a further four narrators, the second chain a further three.

The chain of transmission from ‘Alī b. Ishāq al-Samarqandī to Ibn ‘Abbās, and the second from ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak, is well known in terms of its people, however,

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<sup>1</sup> Rippin quotes Wansbrough who has studied the text and has shown that it has gone through multiple redactions and that to treat it as the work of al-Kalbī is highly questionable. Rippin says the fact that the text ascribed to al-Kalbī is identical in all respects to that ascribed to al-Dīnawarī with the title of *al-Wāḍiḥ fī tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, something not noted by Sezgin, suggests to him that the fourth century A.H. is a better place to positon the authorship of the text. The style of the *tafsīr* does not work in favor of Rippin’s advice: it does not contain any of the grammatical or rhetorical nuances known of the fourth century and beyond, nor the theological and legal issues that later works indulged in. . This implies that the *tafsīrs* which Rippin is supposed to have viewed at the Aya Sofia and Leiden were both actually of al-Kalbī. See *al-Zuhrī: Naskh al-Qur‘ān and the Problem of Early Tafsīr Texts*, pp.23-24. The man who refered to him Rippin this tafsīr is ‘Abd Allāh b. Muhammad b.Wahb al-Dīnawarī (d. 308 A.H.), exegete, a *ḥafīz* of *ḥadīth*, al-Dhahabī says that he heard much and travelled through the lands; al-Dāraqṭnī says of him that his *ḥadīth* are not to be accepted (*matrūk*). From his works, there is the *al-Wāḍiḥ fī al-Tafsīr* (manuscript) [*al-A‘lām*, Vol.4 / p.119



those who have narrated from al-Samarqandī and Ibn al-Mubāarak are not to be found in the books of *rijāl*. This indicates that they were not known by the scholars, or that the chains were broken at al-Samarqandī and Ibn al-Mubāarak, then reconnected by narrators with names that are not well-known. This shows the weakness of the chain.

Study of the printed copy of this commentary, which bears the title *Tanwīr al-Miqbās Fī Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās* together with its original manuscript reveals that its chain of transmission by which it has been ascribed to its author agrees at five men: ‘Alī b. Ishāq al-Samarqandī from Muhammad b. Marwān al-Suddī from al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās. The chains divide after al-Samarqandī (d.237A.H)<sup>1</sup> which suggests that all the books have been copied from a single original found at al-Samarqandī who would have narrated it. Study of these chains shows that those who took from al-Samarqandī were: ‘Ammār b. ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Harawī and Ma’mūn b. Aḥmad though the sources available for this present study do not mention these two figures as student of al-Samarqandī.<sup>2</sup>

It is noticeable that the additions, known in the science of *ḥadīth* as *ziyādātī*, in all the chains of narration conflict with one another – the men in the chains are often unknown (*majhūl*); in the first chain we find that ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubāarak narrated the *tafsīr* from ‘Alī b. Ishāq al-Samarqandī. After the opening *basmala* at the beginning of the book it is stated that ‘Ammār b. ‘Abd al-Majīd related the *tafsīr* from ‘Alī b. Ishāq; Ibn al-Mubāarak died in 181/768 and was the teacher of al-Samarqandī (d.237/824)<sup>3</sup>. Al-Samarqandī lived after him by fifty-six years which begs the question: how old was he when his teacher, Ibn al-Mubāarak was supposed to have transmitted from him *ḥadīth*?

Yet stranger than this is that the second chain – which we have mentioned – mentions that ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubāarak al-Dīnawarī relates it from the students of al-Samarqandī though unfortunately no record in any of the books of *rijāl* is to be found for him – there is only Ibn al-Mubāarak who passed away in 181/768.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.7 / p.283.

<sup>2</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.7 / p.283, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.30 / p.320, *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta’dīl*, Vol.20 / p.320.

<sup>3</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.5 / p.386 and *al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta’dīl*, Vol.6 / p.175.

To conclude, it would appear that the causes of confusion within the chains is a result of the copyists and scribes who probably were little educated in the science of *rijāl*. It is thus apparent that everything that has been related from Ibn ‘Abbās in this book is from Muhammad b. Marwān al-Suddī al-Ṣaghīr, from Muhammad b. al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī, from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās.

## 2.5. What is the opinion of the scholars regarding this *sanad*?

The Scholars are almost in consensus, of both early and latter times, upon the fact that “this chain is of the most dubious in authenticity narrated of Ibn ‘Abbās, and that it is described as the *silsilat al-kadhib*, ‘chain of lies’, especially if it has been related from Muhammad b. Marwān al-Suddī al-Ṣaghīr”.<sup>1</sup> This is their opinion of the chain of narration. What of their opinion about al-Kalbī and Abū Ṣāliḥ?

Abū Ṣāliḥ is Bādhām (also pronounced Bādhān) the freed slave of Umm Hānī bt. Abū Ṭālib, second generation, trustworthy, sound of *ḥadīth* generally, but his narrations are to be regarded as weak if transmitted from al-Kalbī. He taught children and became well-known for Qur’ānic exegesis. It is said of his exegesis that it is no more than a compilation of books which he stumbled across. He supposedly narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās although he never heard from him directly. Ibn al-Madīnī says from al-Qaṭṭān<sup>2</sup>, “I have none from amongst our companions who has left his narrations”. In another report from the same al-Qaṭṭān he said: “al-Thawrī reports that al-Kalbī warned him, “Abū Ṣāliḥ admitted to me everything he has related to me from Ibn ‘Abbās is a lie don’t narrate it.” Ibn ‘Adiyy<sup>3</sup> says, “Most of what has been narrated from him is in the field of exegesis, of that very little is *musnad*, and much of his exegesis is ignored by the experts in the field,

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Itqān*. vol.4 / p.209, *Mabāḥith*, al-Qaṭṭān, p.331, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.61, *Manāḥij al-Dārisīn*. p.251.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Qaṭṭān is Yaḥyā b. Sa’īd b. Farrūkh al-Qaṭṭān, from the masters of *ḥadīth*, he was a reliable narrator and an evidence. He was born in (120 A.H). and died in (198 A.H). *Al-A’lām*, Vol.8 / p.147.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn ‘Adiyy is ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Adiyy b. ‘Abdullāh al-Jurjānī, a master of *ḥadīth* and its men. He has a complete work in the weak narrators and many other works besides. He was born in( 277 A.H). and died in ( 365 A.H.) *Al-A’lām*, Vol.4 / p.103.



and I know of no one from the early generations who was pleased with him. Al-A‘mash<sup>1</sup> has narrated from him, as has Ismā‘īl al-Suddī, al-Kalbī, Sufyān al-Thawrī and others.”<sup>2</sup>

From Ibn Abū Ḥātim, it is reported that Abū Sāliḥ is from the narrators of ‘Ikrima from the people of Mecca.<sup>3</sup> Also, al-Dhahabī<sup>4</sup> says that Abū Sāliḥ is from the students of Ibn ‘Abbās. Furthermore, he says that al-Kalbī takes from Abū Sāliḥ.<sup>5</sup> In the footnote to this point in the *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, al-Dhahabī says *abū Sāliḥ* he never saw Ibn ‘Abbās or heard a thing from him; also that al-Kalbī did not hear from Abū Sāliḥ except a few words. So what al-Kalbī has reported is not permissible to be quoted in books and a fortiori the taking of it as a proof.

It may be noticed that the statements related by Ibn Ḥajar from Abū Ṣāliḥ that they are contradictory: On one occasion he regards him as trustworthy, and yet on another occasion refers to him as a compulsive liar (*Kadhāb*). Ibn al-Madīnī, too, contradicts himself saying on the one hand that none of his companions left Abū Ṣāliḥ’s narrations, but on the other, quotes al-Kalbī as saying his narrations are lies.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.6. Is the exegesis a work of al-Kalbī?

Attention is now turned to the soundness of the exegesis in terms of its ascription to al-Kalbī. The author does not state conclusively that the work was by the hand of al-Kalbī, but does believe that it is highly probable the ascription to him is correct since that is what the scholars have preponderated, as have the commentators who narrate from him or have spoken about his *tafsīr*. Some scholars have ascribed the *tafsīr* directly to al-Kalbī, others to Ibn ‘Abbās, and other still to al-Fīrūzabādī. H. Berg<sup>7</sup> gives preponderance to the earlier stated position of Rippin, that the text is the same work of al-Dīnawārī, *al-Wāḍiḥ fī*

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<sup>1</sup> Sulaymān b. Mihrān al-Asdī, Abū Muhammad, reliable, a *hāfiẓ*, a scholar in recitation, pious, but he would commit *tadlīs*. Born in 160 and died (147 A.H). *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.319.

<sup>2</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.416.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta‘dīl*, Vol.7 / p.7.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, Vol. 3/p.333.

<sup>5</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’*, Vol .6/p.248.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol.5 / p.138.

<sup>7</sup> *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islām*, p.135.

*tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, and that it is most likely to be a late third century piece. As mentioned above, this conclusion rests on very shaky foundations since the style is definitively pre-third century (see note 10, p.128). This is why we shall not focus attention on whether it can authentically be ascribed to al-Kalbī, asking the question rather than presented a definitive answer.

We have previously discussed Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām and that none of his biographers had made any mention of him having written a work in exegesis.<sup>1</sup> The opinions regarding his exegesis are at variance: Sufyān al-Thawrī (97/714 – 161/778) was not impressed by those such as al-Kalbī who would commentate on the Qur'ān from its beginning to end.<sup>2</sup> From the earliest sources which narrate from al-Kalbī (even if they don't specify whether it is from a single work in *tafsīr* or various narrations) is the *tafsīr* of al-Ṣan'ānī (126/743 – 211/828). Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (164/781 – 241/858) said that his work in exegesis is a fabrication from beginning to end prohibiting anyone from reading it.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Sa'd (168/785 – 230/847) said of him that he had received a work in exegesis which he received from Ibn 'Abbās, which al-Kalbī then in turn related from him.<sup>4</sup> He said also that the *Muḥaddithūn* said of him that he was a very weak narrator in *ḥadīth*.<sup>5</sup> Abū Ṣāliḥ, however, denies ever having read to al-Kalbī anything indirectly denying the presence of any such written work in exegesis in his possession.<sup>6</sup> This when al-Nasā'ī (215/832 – 303/920) says of Abū Ṣāliḥ that trustworthy people have taken narrations from him, content with him in exegesis but not keen on his *ḥadīth* reports which contain many fabrications.<sup>7</sup> Sources give more attention to al-Kalbī, pointing to the fact that he did possess a written exegesis. Here then is a clear testimony to the fact that a book of al-Kalbī did exist. Al-Ṭabarī (224 – 310), who compiled in his exegesis, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, the commentaries that had reached him, appears to report very little from al-Kalbī.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to his limited reporting from al-Kalbī in his exegesis, al-Ṭabarī quotes many

<sup>1</sup> See his biography in *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* Vol.5 / p.138 and *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.416.

<sup>2</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / p.250.

<sup>3</sup> *Mīzān al-Itidāl*, Vol.3 / p.558.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Vol.6 / p.507.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* Vol.6 / pp.542 – 543.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, Vol.7 / p.271.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-A'lām*, Vol.6 / p.133.

<sup>8</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.147, Vol.8 / pp.220 – 221.



narrations from him in his *Tārīkh* (history). Interestingly, he avoids mentioning al-Kalbī by name when quoting narrations from him in the hope that *ḥadīth* experts, who do not accept al-Kalbī's narrations, fail to notice him as being one of the reporters.<sup>1</sup>

In the third century A.H., Ibn Abū Ḥātim<sup>2</sup> (240 – 327) looked over a hand-written exegesis from al-Kalbī, to which he said that Sufyān al-Thawrī did not favor the methodology of those such as al-Kalbī who commentated on the Qur'ān verse by verse.<sup>3</sup> Another evidence then that the exegesis of al-Kalbī was well known and described as being a complete, verse by verse, exegesis of the scripture.

In the fourth century Ibn 'Adiyy (277 – 365) described al-Kalbī as having sound narrations in *ḥadīth* and that he was famous in exegesis, and that no one had a stronger or more widespread *tafsīr* than he.<sup>4</sup>

At the advent of the fifth century A.H., al-Tha'labī<sup>5</sup> (d.427/1035) authored a book in exegesis bearing the title, *al-Kashf wal-Bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, in which he narrates much from al-Kalbī, often praising him for his exegetical work, considering him from amongst the foremost scholars of the early generation alongside Mujāhid and al-Suddi.<sup>6</sup>

In the same century, Ibn al-Nadīm<sup>7</sup> (d.438/1047) mentioned the exegetical work of al-Kalbī in his own work the *Fihrist*.<sup>8</sup> Al-Baghawī (d.510 A.H.)<sup>9</sup> in the introduction to his commentary *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, that he reported from Ibn 'Abbās, the Successors and al-Kalbī, and that he read at Maru to 'Abdullāh al-Marūzay in Ramaḍān (464 A.H.). He has a chain of narrations for al-Kalbī's reports which differ to the chain in the manuscript. He

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<sup>1</sup> *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / pp.107 – 109.

<sup>2</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muhammad Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, born in Ray in (240 A.H.) and died in (327 A.H.). He has works in exegesis and *Al-Jarḥ wa ta'dīl*. *Al-A'lām*, 3:324.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dīl*, Vol.7 / p.270.

<sup>4</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25 / p.251.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Tha'labī is Aḥmad b. Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Tha'labī, from Naysāpūr, an exegete and historian. He died in (427 A.H.) *Al-A'lām*, Vol.1 / p.212.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Al-Dhahabī, who quotes *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān*, Vol.1 / p.164.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm is Muhammad b. Ishāq Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Nadīm, from Baghdad, he was a Mu'tazilite, Shi'ite. His book *al-Fihrist* is the oldest book in biographies and the best. *Al-A'lām* 6:29.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn. al-Nadīm, Muhammad b. Ishāq Abū al-Faraj b. Abū Ya'qūb, *Al-Fihrist*, al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya, Cairo. p.146.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Baghawī is Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, an exegete, and *muḥaddith*, he had many works. He was born in (436 A.H.) and died in (510 A.H.) *Al-A'lām* Vol.2/ p.259.

says “Alī b. Ishāq and Ṣāliḥ b. Muhammad al-Samarqandī both said, “*Haddathanā* Muhammad b. Marwān, from Muhammad b. al-Sā‘ib al-Kalbī, from Abū al-Naḍr, from Abū Ṣāliḥ. *Haddathanā* Dhādhān Mawlā Umm Hāni’ bt. Abū Ṭālib, from Ibn ‘Abbās.”<sup>1</sup> Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī<sup>2</sup> (d.626/1243) makes mention of him also,<sup>3</sup> as does

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ<sup>4</sup> (643/1245 A.H.), describing him as the author of “the well-known commentary”<sup>5</sup>; so too does Ibn al-Murtaḍā al-Yamānī<sup>6</sup> (d.840/1436)<sup>7</sup> and Ibn Ḥajar (d.852/1449)<sup>8</sup>.

Many copies of al-Kalbī’s exegesis exist in manuscript form in various libraries around the world, a recent enumeration totaling them at sixty copies<sup>9</sup>; of those some have been published, and all appear to be authored by him. Brockelmann<sup>10</sup>, al-Zirikī<sup>11</sup>, Kaḥḥāla<sup>12</sup> and Ṭāsh Kubrā<sup>13</sup> have all said that the manuscript of this study is, in fact, the exegesis of Ibn ‘Abbās as narrated by al-Kalbī.

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Baghawī*. Vol.1 / p.5. The chain may contain mistakes. ‘Alī b. Ishāq is Samarqandī but he has mentioned Ṣāliḥ b. Muhammad as being al-Samarqandī (the author has looked extensively for this name and was unable to find it – this means that ‘Alī b. Ishāq is the same person Ṣāliḥ b. Muhammad al-Samarqandī). Then he says Muhammad b. al-Sā‘ib al-Kalbī, from Abū al-Naḍr, when al-Kalbī is Abū al-Naḍr. Then he says from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Dhādhān, who is the same person (or Bādhān as in some books) who is Mawlā Umm Hāni’. This indicates that the chain has much confusion and a lack of precision in it. This is also present within the Manuscript where it errs at the chain of Ibn al-Mubārak who is said to have reported from al-Samarqandī when, in fact, Ibn al-Mubārak was his teacher.

<sup>2</sup> Yāqūt is Yāqūt b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥamawī, a historian and geographer. He was also a linguist. He was born in (574 A.H) and died in (626 A.H). *Al-A‘lām* Vol.8 / p.131.

<sup>3</sup> Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Yāqūt b. ‘Abdullāh, *Irshād al-Arīb ilā Ma‘rifat al-Adīb*, Cairo (1936), Vol.6 / p.400.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ is ‘Uthmān b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, a major exegete and *hadīth* scholar. He was born in (577 A.H) and died (642 A.H). *Al-A‘lām* 4:207.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, Medina, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., p.358.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn al-Murtaḍā al-Yamānī is Muhammad b. Ibrahīm b. al-Murtaḍā al-Yamānī, a Mujtahid and researcher, he has many important works in *ḥadīth* and *uṣūl*. He was born in Yemen in (775 A.H) and died in Sana in (840 A.H). *Al-A‘lām* 5:300.

<sup>7</sup> al-Murtaḍā al-Yamānī, Muhammad b. Ibrahīm, *Iyḥār al-Ḥaq ‘alā al-Khalq*, Sharikat Ṭab‘ al-Kutub al-‘Arabī, Cairo, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1898), p.157.

<sup>8</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 / p.187.

<sup>9</sup> *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, Vol.1 / p.194. Sezgin, under Ibn ‘Abbās lists the printed edition *Tanwīr al-miqbās min tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās* but this, too, is identical to all the manuscripts listed under al-Kalbī. *al-Fahras al-Shāmil* says the number of manuscripts are 98 in number (Vol.1 / pp.3 – 23)

<sup>10</sup> *Tārīkh al-Adab al-‘Arabī*, Vol.10 / p.3.

<sup>11</sup> *Al-A‘lām*, Vol.6 / p.133.

<sup>12</sup> Kaḥḥāla, ‘Umar Riḍa, *Mu‘jam al-Mu‘allifīn*, Maṭba‘a al-Taraqqī, Damascus (1960), Vol.1 / p.15.

<sup>13</sup> Zāda, Ṭāsh Kubrā, *Miftāḥ al-Sa‘āda wa Miṣbāḥ al-Ziyāda*, Hayderabad, India, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., Vol.1 / p.401.



Ḥājī Khalīfa also supports the conclusion reached by this study, that the manuscripts are copies of one single work, that of al-Kalbī; he says, “He is Muhammad b. al-Sā’ib; he has chains of narration leading to him: one from Muhammad b. al-Faḍl, one from Yūnus b. Bilāl and one from Ḥibbān, all of them from Ibn ‘Abbās.”<sup>1</sup> Ismā‘īl Pāshā states too that al-Kalbī has a *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān.<sup>2</sup> Also, ‘Alī Shawwākh Ishāq mentions that the *tafsīr* is a work of al-Kalbī without clarifying if it is a work of Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>3</sup>

With this presentation of the many sources which have made mention of al-Kalbī’s exegesis. it is apparent that his exegesis does exist and that it is one of the earliest comprehensive exegeses of the Qur’ān, dating back to the second century A.H. This historical study tracking and enumerating the mention that al-Kalbī’s exegesis was given over the centuries may be regarded as external evidence pointing to the possibility that the exegesis is al-Kalbī’s work. The next stage of our study is to look critically at the methodology and style of the edited text and compare that with the many narrations that have been recorded in the books of *tafsīr*, history and works in *asbāb al-nuzūl* from al-Kalbī. Such an exercise may be criticized for its futility: what if the reports of al-Kalbī collected in various *tafsīrs* have merely been taken from the same text that is the focus of our study. The response to this is as follows: if indeed this is the case, it would not, the author believes, detract anything from al-Kalbī but rather works in his favor because it would indicate that al-Kalbī was trusted by them and so they reported from him. Furthermore, commentators would not mention always where they had transmitted their reports from; al-Baghawī, for example, says in his introduction (refer to the introduction of this study) that he relies on al-Kalbī without mentioning how this is so. The final point is that there is a difference in the style and in details between the edited text and those reports of al-Kalbi in exegetical literature.

This historical study of al-Kalbī’s life and education, and the investigation of his commentary over the course of history constitutes an external evidence; it forces us to

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<sup>1</sup> Khalīfa. Ḥājī, *Kashf al-Zunūn ‘an Asāmi al-Kutub wa al-Funūn*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut (1992), Vol.1 p.457.

<sup>2</sup> Pāsha. Ismāīl, *Hadiyyat al-‘Ārifīn fī Asmā al-Mu’allifīn wa Āthār al-Muṣannifīn*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. Beirut, Vol.6 / p.7.

<sup>3</sup> *Mu’jam Muṣannafāt al-Qur’ān* Vol. 2/p.166.

admit that the exegesis is in fact Kalbi's, the same conclusion of Brokelmann and others. The present study will attempt to delve deeper in to the issue, in search of more definitive evidences, for it would be far too precarious to base conclusions on such circumstantial evidence; historical phenomena can be misleading to the researcher especially when all reports are in total agreement on it – it is quite possible that the agreement is due to a dependence on one and the same source – if that source then is fabricated or false then that necessitates the falsity of all opinions which stem from it. For this reason we shall delay a definitive judgement on the issue until a more detailed internal investigation is undertaken which will throw up its own conclusions.

## 2.7. Comparison between the text and the reports from al-Kalbī recorded in Tafsīr, history and *asbāb al-nuzūl*.

This study will constitute an internal evidence. Perhaps the most useful source to the investigator in this regard is *Kitāb asbāb al-nuzūl* of al-Wāḥidī<sup>1</sup>. He typically records complete chains of narration in his work revealing to us those chains which have come from al-Kalbī. The *Tārīkh* of al-Ṭabarī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* of al-Baghawī and *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* of al-San'ānī, are likewise, very important contributors to this investigation.

We shall now see examples from Al-Ṭabarī.<sup>2</sup> He quotes Hishām in his *Tārīkh*, from his father, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn 'Abbās:

God sent down rain for forty consecutive days and nights. The wild beasts, birds and cattle all headed towards Noah having been made subservient to him, and from them he took with him pairs as he was ordered, “of each kind two, male and female.”<sup>3</sup> He carried on board with him the corpse of Adam which he used as a partition between the men and women. They boarded the ship in the month of Rajab, and landed ashore on the tenth of Muḥarram; for this reason people keep fast on this day. The water split in two halves as God

<sup>1</sup> Al-Wāḥidī is 'Alī b. Aḥmad Abū al-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī, an exegete and scholar in literature, he wrote much in exegesis and in *asbāb al-nuzūl*. He died in (468/1076). *Al-A'lām*, Vol.4 / p.255.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Tabari*, Muhammad b. Jarir, *Tārīkh al-Rusl wa al-Muluk*, Dar al-fikr, Beirut-Lebanon, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., (1998) Vol.1 pp.119 – 120.

<sup>3</sup> XI: 40.



says. “So We opened the gates of heaven, with water pouring forth”<sup>1</sup> and “And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs”<sup>2</sup>, meaning we rent the earth asunder, “so the waters met (and rose) to the extent decreed”<sup>3</sup> so the water divided in to two halves, a half from the sky and a half from the earth. The water rose above the tallest mountain on land by fifteen arms lengths; they remained on the ship for six months (at the mercy of the waves), circling the Sacred Precinct (the Ka’ba) at one point for a whole week, not entering it however; the Holy House there built by Adam had been lifted above the flooding as was the Black Stone with it and placed on the mountain of Abū Qubays<sup>4</sup>. The ship continued to be sent to and fro until, finally, the flood subsided and it came to rest on the Mount of Jūdī<sup>5</sup>, in Mosul, Iraq. It rested there for a further month to complete seven months after which it was said, “Away with those who do wrong!” Then after it rested on Jūdī and it was said, “O earth! swallow up thy water, and O sky! Withhold (thy rain)!”<sup>6</sup>

This narrative that al-Ṭabarī relates is from Hishām, who quotes his father, Muhammad b. al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī. It includes commentary on *al-Qamar* and *Hūd*. The following extract is a translation of commentary for the same verses contained within the edited text:

“So We opened the gates of heaven’, the pathways of the skies for forty days, ‘with water pouring forth’, heavy rain (sent) from the skies to the earth, ‘And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs’, for forty days, ‘so the waters met’, the waters of the sky and earth, ‘to the extent decreed’, to the extent We decreed; it is also said for as long as it took to destroy the people of Noah.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> LIV: 11.

<sup>2</sup> LIV: 12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Abū Qubays is a mountain which overlooks the Ka’ba in Mecca. It was called al-Amīn before Islam because the *rukṅ* was protected within during the flood. *Mu’jam al-Buldān*, Vol 1 / p.74.

<sup>5</sup> A mountain at the Dijla River in Mosul Iraq. It is said that the ark of Noah rested there. *Mu’jam al-Buldān*, Vol. 3/ p.88.

<sup>6</sup> XI: 44.

<sup>7</sup> Text, p.217a. (LIV: 12)

We find that the exegesis of these two verses from *al-Qamar* agree with the narration of al-Ṭabarī for the words: *munhamir*, *fajjarnā*, and the meeting of the water of the heavens and the earth, but there are differences between al-Ṭabarī and the edited text which are probably a result of the difference in style by which the two sources present their historical accounts – especially the edited text which is very condensed in its presentation. The verse 44 from *Hūd* is completed in the form of a report in al-Ṭabarī whilst in the edited text, the exegesis is as follows:

Then the word went forth: ‘O earth! Swallow up thy water, and O sky! Withhold (thy rain)!’ And the water abated and the matter was ended’ and the destruction of the people of Noah was complete, meaning he was destroyed was destroyed and who was saved was saved ‘The ark rested on Mount Jūdī’ and this is a mountain in Mosul ‘and the word went forth: “Away with those who do wrong!” meaning the pagans and the people of Noah.<sup>1</sup>

The similarity between the two versions is obvious, and but for a difference in wording and some minor details, it is not wrong to accept the claim that both are from al-Kalbī. The slight differences between al-Ṭabarī’s account and that of the edited text suggest that the former did not take from the latter, but rather had an independent source. This adds value to the position that al-Kalbī is the likely author of the edited text.

The *tafsīr* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘āni (d.126/211), an early commentary, presents many of al-Kalbī’s opinions which very closely agree with the commentary of the edited text. It may be adduced from this that al-Ṣan‘āni had in his possession the exegesis of al-Kalbī, or that the latter’s opinions were well known to the narrators even though they may not have been compiled together or written in a book, both of these possibilities being equally valid. The commentary of al-Kalbī on the verse, “And well ye knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath: We said to them: “Be ye apes. despised and rejected”,<sup>2</sup> as recorded in the work of al-San‘āni is as follows: “They (Jews) were prohibited from fishing on the Sabbath. This law they found particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Text .p.96a.

<sup>2</sup> II: 65.



difficult to uphold and so they broke it; their punishment for this was that God turned them into ‘apes, despised and rejected’.”<sup>1</sup> The version in the edited text reads, “And you certainly know what happened (regarding the punishment of) those who transgressed the law of the Sabbath (during the period of David) and We ordered them to become apes, disgraced and low”.<sup>2</sup> Another example, is that which is given in commentary of the verse, “O ye of Faith! Say not (to the Messenger) words of ambiguous import, but words of respect; and hearken (to him): To those without Faith is a grievous punishment”,<sup>3</sup> Al-Şana‘āni has it that according to al-Kalbī, “They (the Jews) would say words of ambiguous import out of mockery and so God ordered them (the Muslims) to use other words which could not be misinterpreted.”<sup>4</sup> The edited text version reads almost identically with the only difference being that the edited text has some additional details.<sup>5</sup>

There are many other examples that exist in the *tafsīr* of al-Şana‘ānī which have a very close resemblance to the edited text. For example the commentary of the verse II: 144.<sup>6</sup>

Al-Wāḥidī records in his *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* in a chain of narration beginning with Muhammad b. Mahrān, from al-Kalbī, from Abū Şāliḥ, from Ibn ‘Abbās, that the verse, II:14 “When they meet those who believe, they say: “We believe;” but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: “We are really with you: We (were) only jesting” was revealed regarding ‘Abdullāh b. Ubayy, who said to his companions once, “Watch how I chase away the fools!” He then proceeded to take the hand of Abū Bakr saying, “Welcome to al-Şiddīq, “The Trusting”, master of Banū Tamīm, the ‘*Şaykh*’ of Islam, the companion in the cave, the one who has exhausted himself and his wealth.” Then he took the hand of ‘Umar saying, “Welcome to the master of Banū ‘Adiyy b. Ka‘b, al-Fārūq. ‘the strong one’ in Islam.” The Muslims then returned to the Prophet to tell him what was said and the verses were subsequently revealed.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Şana‘āni. Vol.1 / p.48.

<sup>2</sup> Edited Text, p.6a, *ET*, p.35

<sup>3</sup> II: 104.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Şana‘āni, Vol.1 / p.54.

<sup>5</sup> Edited Text, p.8a, *ET*, p.50.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Şana‘āni, Vol.1 / p.62. Edited Text, p.10b, *ET*, p.69.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Wāḥidī, p.25.

The edited text version gives the following account: “When they (the hypocrites) meet those who have believed (Abū Bakr and his companions) they say, ‘We too have believed’ (in secret and uphold our oaths as you have done).”<sup>1</sup> The commentary then continues to explain the rest of the verse, mentioning the names of the “devils”. It thus agrees with al-Wāḥidī on the fact that they met the companions of Muhammad, namely, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. It does not give full details of the story as mentioned by al-Wāḥidī, however, but that is simply because the nature of the commentary in the edited text is such that it presents only condensed exegesis.

Another example from al-Wāḥidī is his *tafsīr* of the verse, “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors.”<sup>2</sup> He quotes from al-Kalbī, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ‘Abbās, that the verse was revealed on the occasion of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah. The Prophet and his companions, after having been blocked from visiting the Ka‘ba, proceeded to make the sacrifice of ‘*Umra* at Ḥudaybiyah<sup>3</sup>. The Quraysh agreed terms with them that they could return the following year to circumambulate the Ka‘ba and whatever else they please for a period of three days. The Prophet agreed to the terms. When the following year arrived, and the Prophet and his companions were preparing to go to Mecca, they began to fear that the Quraysh would not fulfill their part of the deal, and may even fight them. The companions did not feel easy about fighting in one of the sacred months, and it was at this time that the verse “Fight those who fight you” was revealed, referring to Quraysh.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Baghawī reports from al-Kalbī, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ‘Abbās that the verse was revealed on the occasion of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah. That was when the Prophet and his companions had left for Mecca to make the lesser pilgrimage, ‘*Umra*. They were a thousand and four hundred in number. The Quraysh blocked them at Ḥudaybiyah, but agreed a treaty permitting them to return the following year.<sup>5</sup> His version continues in the same way as al-Wāḥidī. The version of the edited text gives the following account: “(And

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.3a, *ET*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> II: 190.

<sup>3</sup> Ḥudaybiyah is a town close to Mecca in which the famous treaty between the Prophet and the Quraysh took place in (6 A.H). *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, Vol.3 / p.126.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Wāḥidī, p.58.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / pp.115 – 116.



fight in the way of God) in obedience to God in your *iḥrām* and in the sacred precinct (those who fight you) who begin fighting you in the first instance (and do not transgress) by initiating the fight in the sacred precinct”.<sup>1</sup> The edited text does not mention the occasion of revelation although it agrees with the permissibility of fighting in the sacred precinct and in *iḥrām* on condition that the enemy initiates the fight. To this extent it agrees with the versions of al-Wāḥidī and al-Baghawī, but clearly does not delve in to the same detail.

Another example is the commentary of the verse, “And make not Allah's (name) an excuse in your oaths against doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons; for Allah is One Who heareth and knoweth all things.”<sup>2</sup> Al-Wāḥidī reports from al-Kalbī that the verse was revealed regarding ‘Abdullāh b. Rawāḥa, warning him against estranging his son-in-law Bashīr b. al-Nu‘mān. Rawāḥa had sworn not to visit or speak to him again.<sup>3</sup> The edited text gives the same cause of revelation, with the only difference being that it does not mention the name of the son-in-law.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Baghawī says about the verse, “Didst thou not Turn by vision to those who abandoned their homes, though they were thousands (In number), for fear of death? Allah said to them: "Die": Then He restored them to life. For Allah is full of bounty to mankind, but Most of them are ungrateful”<sup>5</sup>, that al-Kalbī, Muqātil and al-Ḍaḥḥāk have said it refers to them fleeing from battle. A king from the Children of Israel had ordered his people to go out and fight the enemy. They initially prepared themselves for war, but then decided against it from fear of death...God caused them to die and after eight days their stomachs had bloated...” Al-Baghawī says that the three reporters differed amongst themselves as to the number of soldiers who dies: Al-Kalbī held that it was eight thousand.<sup>6</sup> The edited text also records the number of soldiers to die as being eight thousand.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.14a, *ET*,p.91.

<sup>2</sup> II: 224.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Wāḥidī, p.80.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text, p.17a, *ET*,p.113.

<sup>5</sup> II: 243.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / pp.166 – 167.

<sup>7</sup> Edited text, p18b, *ET*,p.125.

Mentioned also in the works of al-Baghawī and al-Wāḥidī on the authority of al-Kalbī, is the commentary of the verse, “It is not required of thee (O Messenger., to set them on the right path. but Allah sets on the right path whom He pleaseth. Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the "Face" of Allah. Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you, and ye shall not Be dealt with unjustly.”<sup>1</sup> Al-Wāḥidī has it, from al-Kalbī, that the Prophet made the lesser-pilgrimage the year of Ḥudaybiyah and with him (amongst others) was Asmā’ bt. Abū Bakr<sup>2</sup>. Her mother and grand-mother approached her asking for charity from her, both of them non-Muslims. She said to them, “I cannot give you anything till I seek the permission of the Prophet for neither of you is of my religion”. After asking the Prophet this verse was revealed and she was ordered to give them charity which she duly did; thereafter, she maintained close family-ties with them. In another narration, al-Wāḥidī reports from al-Kalbī, a second explanation of the verse: There were some Muslims who had blood-relatives, in-laws, and step-brothers from amongst the Jews who were financially dependent on them before they converted. After converting, they became averse to supporting their non-Muslim relatives but, at the same time, were keen for their conversion. They decided to seek council from the Prophet about this, and after doing so this verse was revealed; thereafter they spent on their families.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Baghawī relates the second version given by al-Kalbī above, with the same wording.<sup>4</sup> The edited text account reads as follows: “Then, it became permissible to spend in charity on the poor people from the People of the Book and the *Mushrikūn* by virtue of her (Asmā’ bt. Abū Bakr or bt Abū Basrah) asking: “Is it permissible for us, Prophet of God, to spend in charity on our non-Muslim relatives?” Thus God revealed, “You are not burdened with their guidance” in matters of religion, referring to the poor from the People

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<sup>1</sup> II: 272.

<sup>2</sup> Asmā’ bt Abū Bakr, the wife of al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām, she converted to Islam in its early mission and emigrated to Medina. She died in Mecca in (73 A.H). after the killing of her son ‘Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr. *Al-Isti‘āb*, Vol.4 / p.346.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Wāḥidī, pp.91 – 92.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.195.



of the Book.”<sup>1</sup> Thus the edited text account combines the versions of al-Wāḥidī and al-Baghawī together although it differs in wording and style.

From the many commentaries studied during the course of this research in the hope of finding narrations of al-Kalbī, is the work of al-Ṣuyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr*. This work, unfortunately, contains very few narrations from al-Kalbī, those that do exist being chains through al-Tha‘labī. An example is the commentary of the Arabic term *āmīn*, the traditional ending to *al-Fātiḥa*. The narration, from al-Tha‘labī, from al-Kalbī, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ‘Abbās, reads, “I asked the Prophet about the meaning of *āmīn*. He said (it means) “My Lord, may it be so!”<sup>2</sup> The edited text version has it that the word means, “Thus is the Lord’s safeguarding of His servants”; it is said that it means, “And so shall it be”. There is another report suggesting that it is from the names of God.<sup>3</sup>

Hence the narrations are different in wording although they agree in meaning. And it has been reported from Ibn ‘Abbās, “So shall it be”, and from Mujāhid, “It is from the names of God, Most High.”<sup>4</sup> Thus the edited text has combined both reports from Ibn ‘Abbās and Mujāhid. It may be asked whether the edited text contains all opinions or simply one narration from Ibn ‘Abbās, or whether Ibn ‘Abbās has more than one opinion, or indeed, whether the edited text reports narrations by their meaning and not the exact words of Ibn ‘Abbās. All of these are in fact possible; there is collated whatever has been said from Ibn ‘Abbās reported in a way that agrees with the original meaning of what he said, though not in specific wording, and this phenomenon is acceptable according to the scholars of *ḥadīth*. The author has noticed this occurring on many an occasion, and so shall it be made mention of later in this research.

Another source referred to in search of narrations of al-Kalbī was the *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Dimashq* of Ibn Manẓūr. He relates from al-Kalbī that the meaning of the verse, “O people, enter the holy land”,<sup>5</sup> that the land in question is Damascus and Palestine, lands

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p21b, *ET*, p.141.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma‘thūr*, Vol.1 / p.42.

<sup>3</sup> Edited text, p.2b, *ET*, p.6.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Baghawī*, Vol.1 / p.15.

<sup>5</sup> VII: 21.

which are pure from idolatry and made homes for the prophets.<sup>1</sup> Al-Baghawī relates from al-Kalbī that the holy land includes Damascus, Palestine and some of Jordan.<sup>2</sup> The edited text has it that it is Damascus, Palestine and part of the “pure lands” (*arḍ muṭahhara*).<sup>3</sup> The consistency between the narrations is obvious, excluding the minor difference of the mention of Jordan in one. Such examples are many in al-Wāḥidī’s *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* and the *Tafsīr* of al-Baghawī; all this suggests that they both had at with them the same manuscript as a source, leaving us to believe that the edited text existed before the fifth century A.H. (al-Wāḥidī passed away, 468 A.H. and al-Baghawī, 516 A.H.). This conclusion is a further evidence to support what we anticipate, that is, that the edited text’s ascription to al-Kalbī is sound. And this seems that the scholars deemed him trustworthy, and his narration well and circulated among people, It is, thus, the very same book that Ibn al-Nadīm made mention of and which the earliest sources indicate.

Based on the findings of the investigation – namely, that these reports with their slight variations imply that al-Tabarī and others did not quote directly, verbatim, from the edited text, but instead took from other narrators or books, though these have not reached us (scholars affirm that many books of the first centuries were lost); or it could imply that al-Tabarī and others did take from the edited text, making additions, or paraphrasing in a way that suited their genre of historical literature which focused on the narrative more so than nuances. It is important that attention is turned to the printed version of this *tafsīr*, a work which at times has borne the name al-Fīrūzabādī<sup>4</sup> who collected the *tafsīr* of Ibn ‘Abbās<sup>5</sup> and at other times has simply been called *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*<sup>6</sup>; also it is called *Tafsīr al-Kalbi*, a comparison between it and the edited text will reveal much about how far the two works are similar.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, Muhammad b. Makram b. Ali, *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Dimashq*, Edited by Riyāḍ ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, Dār al-Fikr, Damascus, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (1984), Vol.1 / p.78.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Baghawī, Vol.2 / p.19.

<sup>3</sup> Text, p.48b.

<sup>4</sup> al-Fīrūzabādī is Muhammad b. Ya‘qūb Majd al-Dīn al-Shirāzī al-Fīrūzabādī, a prominent philologist and literary expert, he was born in (729 A.H.) and died in (817 A.H.). To him is ascribed the *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn al-‘Abbās*. *Al-A‘lām* Vol.7 / p.146.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.62.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibn ‘Abbās, Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut.



## 2.8. A comparison between the edited text and the print (*Tanwīr al-Miqbās*):

To begin with, it behoves us to inspect the chains of narrations via which the edited text and the print, *Tanwīr al-Miqbās*, have reached us; the print provides its chain of narration after the *basmala*: “And may God send peace and prayers upon our master Muhammad and his family, all of them. ‘Abdullāh ‘the Trustworthy’ b. al-Ma’mūn al-Ḥarawī has informed us, from his father, from Abū ‘Abdullāh, from Abū ‘Ubayd Allāh Maḥmūd b. Muhammad al-Rāzī, from ‘Ammār b. ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Ḥarawī, from ‘Alī b. Ishāq al-Samarqandī, from Muhammad b. Marwān, from al-Kalbī, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>1</sup>

The print reads, at the commentary of *al-Fātiḥa*, “And with its chain of transmission from Ibn ‘Abbās, God be pleased with him, in reference to His saying, Most High, “All praise is to God”, He means by this, that all thanks are due to God, the one who has showered upon his creation blessings in the form of sustenance, and so they praised Him.”<sup>2</sup> This is identical to the version in the edited text.<sup>3</sup> There is, however, a difference between the print and the edited text in terms of their ordering of the chapters and their composition, as well as the writing of the number of verses and when the *suras* were revealed.

The print begins *al-Baqara* with the following with same chain of transmission as the edited text (manuscripts symbole (م, ل, د) and also the same exegesis. From the end of the Qur’ān, in exegesis of *Sūra al-Nās*, the print and the edited text are perfectly congruent.

This comparison of the printed edition, *Tanwīr*, and the edited text reveal that the two (*Tanwīr* and manuscripts symbole (م, ل, د). are similar on the most of the commentary and transmission, with the only difference being that the print breaks down the number of words and verses of each *sūra* – it is likely that this addition is the work of copyists or publishers. There is also a difference in the number of pages due to difference in format.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Tanwīr al-Miqbās*, p.3. This is the same transmission in manuscripts symbole (م, ل, د).

<sup>2</sup> *Tanwīr al-Miqbās*, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Edited text, p2a, ET, p.7.

<sup>4</sup> The printed *Tanwīr al-Miqbās* is 523 pages whilst the edited text is 256; the latter is shorter due to folio pagination occurring at every second folio. The *Tanwīr* also has the added benefit of the text of the Qur’ān neatly printed in the margins.

But between *Tanwīr* and the manuscript symbol (ج) used in this study, there are some differences in the commentary and in the words order.

#### Conclusion:

Subsequent to the study of the *isnāds* which are widely spread and claim to be from Ibn ‘Abbās, and a study of the *isnād* of the edited text, it becomes clear that they are not consistent and their reports are largely unknown especially where they all agree with five narrators who meet at al-Ṣamarqandī. There are things in which they converge and diverge. The author has been unable to find biographies of them in the major books in the science of *rijāl*. As for the men in the rest of the chain, with the exclusion of ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak and al-Ṣamarqandī, the opinion of the scholars has differed, with some regarding them as weak and others fabricators – they are al-Suddī al-Ṣaghīr, Abū Ṣāliḥ and al-Kalbī. The *isnād* of al-Suddī and al-Kalbī has even been called the *silsilat al-Kadhib*. The author, in spite of the accusations made against al-Kalbī, some claiming he was a Sabā’ī, others that he was a Murji’ite, and yet others that he was an heretic, has found that none of the opinions or commentary in the edited text conflicts with what we known to be ‘orthodox’ Islam, that of the *Sunnī* scholars. It is clear that the edited text is the work of al-Kalbī – this is obvious from the style; furthermore, after comparing the edited text with the printed edition, it is clear that they are one and the same, with only very minor differences which are a result of the minor variances within the edited text s



## Chapter III. Analytical Study of the edited text .

### 3.1 The exegetical methodology of the edited text:

The matter of discussing the edited text is a difficult and rather daunting task although it has been ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās – this assertion we have shown to be false<sup>1</sup> – it appears rather to be a work of al-Kalbī. The conclusion has been arrived at that Ibn ‘Abbās neither wrote nor dictated it.<sup>2</sup> It is from this perspective that defining its methodology becomes difficult. The basis for any study on exegetical methodology necessitates an acquaintance with the author: his education, his time, the factors that affected his writing, the matters which he sought to clarify in his exegesis; to pinpoint all these aspects, at first sight, appears a problematic affair. It would certainly have been an easier matter if the author of the work, according to our research – al-Kalbī – was a person whose methodology has been preserved by historical records. Unfortunately though, al-Kalbī remains little more than a name. Very little remains of his opinions, scattered here and there in exegetical as well as historical works; and how many of those may truly be regarded as untampered is unknown, having passed through the hands of many. Hence, reaching conclusions on al-Kalbī’s methodology is an arduous affair.

The edited text leaves us no information, explicit or implicit, about the methodology al-Kalbī utilized in exegesis, or the sources he took from. All that we do know, is that he narrated what he did from Ibn ‘Abbās. The only remaining way to deduce his exegetical approach is to thoroughly investigate all the major works in exegesis available, extracting his statements, few as they are, and hope to create from them a picture that may shed light on this work at hand.

Despite attempts to sift through exegetical works in search of al-Kalbī’s narrations, it has not been possible to reach a definitive conclusion about the sources from which the edited text, which the author believes is the work of al-Kalbī, benefited; no doubt the fact that it is the earliest comprehensive exegesis is a major reason for this. Furthermore, the fact that the text has been ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās, the “foremost (*ra’s*) of the exegetes” in the

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to conclusion of Ibn ‘Abbās’ style.p.116.

<sup>2</sup>Refer to issue: 2.4 is al-Kalbi one of Ibn ‘Abbās’ narrators?

history of *tafsīr*, it is regarded as a *tafsīr* by tradition (*ma'thūr*). To apply to it the methodology required for a work to be regarded as *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* is not feasible, because it precedes in time the very rules that seek to judge it. Rather, it itself is a yardstick for what may be classified within this genre of exegesis. The study will now seek to outline the major features of the exegetical approach adopted by the author of the text, before entering a more detailed discussion of each.

To begin with, the author of the text makes mention of his chain of transmission, after the traditional *basmala* and praise on the Prophet. A short explanation of the *basmala* precedes the mentioning of the place where *al-Fātiḥa* was revealed. Before delving in to the *tafsīr* of the chapter, he points out the chain of transmission, a feature which occurs before the commentary on every chapter that follows, then he divides the verses in to parts, commentating on each part separately. Sometimes, an explanation is done on a word by word basis, and at other times, he gives various opinions on the explanation of a particular part although this is infrequent, and this is continued throughout. There is, however, additional information provided regarding the places of revelation, the number of verses and letters, and a clarification of which verse are Medinian and which are Meccan, at the start of chapters which are subsequent to *Āl- 'Imrān*.

The author of the edited text makes no mention of the verse numbers nor divides between the verses; the only division proper of the commentary being at the end and beginning of each new chapter. Some verses are given titles highlighting the introduction of a story, or a prominent issue, or a legal injunction, or the occasion of revelation. There is no particular order to these titles, but it is noticeable that are of very infrequent occurrence after the chapters *al-Baqarah* and *Āl- 'Imrān*. The author appears to change his methodology after these first two chapters, continuing with his commentary making mention of the variant readings at times, and the names of people for whom verses were revealed as well as the accompanying stories, mostly done in a condensed form. No verse is left without commentary from the beginning of the Qur'ān until its termination.



### 3.1.1. The commentary sources of the Edited Text:

#### 3.1.1 .1. *Tafsīr* of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān:

We have previously explained that of the main characteristics of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* is the emphasis it lays on the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Tradition (*sunna*); there is a sequence of steps which the Qur'ānic commentator should follow, and the first of those is to let the Qur'ān interpret itself, in other words to undertake *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān. This is because the Qur'ān is viewed by scholars of *tafsīr* as being a unified body of revelation, one part of which can often clarify another. Ibn Kathīr underscores this by noting that, in the Qur'ān, “what is said succinctly in one place is treated in detail in another place.” It is only after such intra-scriptural investigation has been exhausted that recourse may be had to the second step of hermeneutical procedure<sup>1</sup>. If it is not possible to find an explanation of a verse from within the book, then attention is turned to *ḥadīth*, and then in turn to the opinions of the Companions, and finally, to personal opinion within specified parameters.

Close study of the edited text reveals that its author does not always observe the traditional methodology followed for *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*. For example, it is only rare that he explains a verse by quoting from within the Qur'ān itself, and that is only when showing the abrogated and the abrogating. An example in which he does use the Qur'ān as an evidence is the verse, “Say: Will ye dispute with us about Allah, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord; that we are responsible for our doings and ye for yours; and that We are sincere (in our faith) in Him?”<sup>2</sup>, which, after commentating on it, he says, “No! For God has informed us, ‘It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong)’.”<sup>3</sup> In this instance, he provides commentary and then explains through the use of intra-scriptural investigation that Abraham was neither a

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<sup>1</sup> McCauliffe, Jane Dammen, *Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Ṭabari and Ibn Kathīr*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1998), pp.46 – 51.

<sup>2</sup> II: 139.

<sup>3</sup> III: 3 – 4.

Jew nor a Christian.<sup>1</sup> Whilst Ibn ‘Abbās has been reported to have explained the word *tuḥājǰūna* alone in this verse.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the verse, “He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: “We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:” and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.”<sup>3</sup> The exegete here provides the following explanation: “The fundamental verses are those which are to be acted upon; those which are referred to in the saying of God<sup>4</sup>, “Say: ‘Come, I will rehearse what Allah hath (really) prohibited you from.’”<sup>5</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās does not have reported from him an explanation of this verse at all, though al-Ṭabarī explains it is a verse regarding the obligation, penal code and other laws.<sup>6</sup> These examples though are of rare occurrence, and thus consistent with the *tafsīr* of Ibn ‘Abbās. The examples differ with Ibn ‘Abbās in that he does not mention them himself.

### 3.1.1.2. His usage of *tafsīr* according to the Prophetic Tradition (*Sunna*):

A close examination of the edited text reveals that the author in his commentary relied little on *ḥadīth* narrations. Those *ḥadīth* reports which are quoted in the edited text are done so in two ways: the first and most frequent method is to include them as though they are mere historical events charting those who had interactions with the Prophet from the non-Muslims, as well as his inviting them to the new faith, and information about the occasions of revelation; including also issues that were brought to the Prophet which he was asked to solve. The purpose behind the inclusion of such reports as these was to explain the background to those verses revealed in response to such questions or revealed

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.10b. *ET*, p.66.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.795.

<sup>3</sup> III: 7.

<sup>4</sup> VI: 151.

<sup>5</sup> Text, p.67a.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / p.239.



as a result of particular events. The point here is that *ḥadīth* are not reported in the edited text as they are typically recorded in the books of *ḥadīth* – that is word by word.

There are examples to highlight this hermeneutical approach; the first is the commentary of the verse, “...of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray”,<sup>1</sup> to which the author says, “Not the religion of the Jews, with whom He (God) is angry, and Has deserted not protecting their hearts (from misguidance), nor the Christians, who have strayed away from Islam.”<sup>2</sup> Al-Ṭabarī quotes ‘Adiyy b. Ḥātim<sup>3</sup> who heard the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) say, “not of those upon whom is His anger” are the Jews, and “the misguided” are the Christians.”<sup>4</sup> The author of the edited text desisted, it seems, to mention the same *ḥadīth* for the verse, opting in its stead to give the same message with his own expression. A second example is the verse, “They say, “Our hearts are the wrappings (which preserve Allah's Word: we need no more).” Nay, Allah's curse is on them for their blasphemy: Little is it they believe”,<sup>5</sup> to which the edited text says, “(They) the Jews (say), (“Our hearts are wrapped”) O Muhammad, meaning filled with knowledge that leaves no room for the knowledge you bring.”<sup>6</sup> It is reported that Ibn ‘Abbās said the verse means, “Our hearts are filled with knowledge already; we have no need for Muhammad or anyone else.”<sup>7</sup> Neither sources link their narrations back to the Prophet. The commentary of II: 94 is as follows: “(Say, if the home of the afterlife) heaven (with God is solely for you, over all other people) including the Believers (then wish for death) then ask for death (if you are truthful) in what you say (And they will never wish for it) ask for it.”<sup>8</sup>

On the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās who said, “God said to his Messenger (p.b.u.h.) “Say, if the home of the afterlife...” meaning call for death for whichever of the two groups is

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<sup>1</sup> I: 7 .

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.2b, *ET*, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Adiyy b. Ḥātim b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ṭā’ī, he was a Christian king who became a Muslim in (9 A.H). He participated in the conquests in Persia. He died in (68 A.H). in Kufa. *Ḥayāt al-Sahāba*, Vol.1 / p.74. *Al-Isti‘āb*, Vol.3 / p.168.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / 118.

<sup>5</sup> II: 88.

<sup>6</sup> Edited text, p.7a, *ET*, p.43.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Kathīr, Vol.1 / p.173 and al-Shawkānī, Vol.1 / p.203.

<sup>8</sup> Edited text, p.7b, *ET*, p.45.

more deceived.”<sup>1</sup> Here the Edited text gives commentary based on what has come from the Prophet, though it is not related as a verbatim statement from him (p.b.u.h.).

Also, what has been said in commentary of, “O ye of Faith! Say not (to the Messenger. words of ambiguous import, but words of respect; and hearken (to him): To those without Faith is a grievous punishment”,<sup>2</sup> the Edited text says, “...then, he made mention of his forbiddance to the Believers from using the expression of the Jews, so He said, (O you believers!) in Muhammad and the Qur’ān (do not say) to Muhammad (*rā’ina*) your hearing O Prophet of God (rather, say *unẓurnā*) look at us and hear what we say O Prophet of Allāh.”<sup>3</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have said in explanation to the word *rā’ina* that it means “lend us an ear”.<sup>4</sup>

We conclude this issue by restating that the author of the edited text depends very little on *ḥadīth* narrations; he does rely frequently on narrations from the life of the Prophet, *sīrah*, that are related to the verses he is commenting on. Perhaps the cause of this, assuming that the author is al-Kalbī, is that he was not one who had to memory a large number of *ḥadīth*, a result of his association with the school of Kufa, which gave less importance to *ḥadīth* than it did to opinion. Some researchers have claimed that it became fashionable to rely more on statements of the Companions or the Successors for *tafsīr* rather than *ḥadīth*.<sup>5</sup> If this is true, then the edited text would be simply a reflection of the hermeneutical approach of its time. These same researchers believe that the huge work that took place during the same time in the field of *ḥadīth* by the likes of al-Shāfi‘ī, was a direct result of the appearance and subsequent popularity of the school of *ra’y*, or opinion.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.598.

<sup>2</sup> II: 104.

<sup>3</sup> Edited text, p.8a, *ET*, p.50.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.657.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Biltāji, Muhammad al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Salām, *Mawqif al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī min Madrasat al-‘Irāq al-Fiqhiyya*. Maṭba‘at al-Ahrām al-Tijāriyyah (1973), p.138.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139.



### 3.1.1.3 The edited text dependence on poetry and language when commentating on the *gharīb* of the Qur'ān:

Any exegete of the Qur'ān at some point in his exegesis confronts what is termed *gharīb al-Qur'ān*, or foreign words. As Islam spread throughout the regions during the first century after hijra and the early part of the second, and met peoples of various cultures and ethnicities, there became an urgent need to explain the obscure words of the revelation. The edited text thus deals very frequently with the *gharīb*, to the point where it might even be regarded as a “*tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*”, or an exegesis of the obscure in the Qur'ān. Many examples are available, some of *which* we will present now.

For the verse, “Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil: great is the penalty they (incur)”<sup>1</sup>, the author says, ““God hath set a seal on their hearts’ by stamping them ‘and on their hearing and sight is a *ghishāwa*’, a covering.”<sup>2</sup> In the *Lisān al-'Arab*, the word *ghishāwa* is likewise given the meaning *ghitā'*, covering,<sup>3</sup> so here the author has provided no more than the linguistic connotation of a verse. Ibn 'Abbās says that the *ghishāwa* refers to a cover over the eyes though he is not explicit in mentioning a cover as such, it is obviously implied.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding, “Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realise (it) not!”<sup>5</sup> he says, ““They would deceive God’, they ruin that which they have shown of faith by their concealing of disbelief and they disobey God and deny belief in Him when alone.”<sup>6</sup> The *Lisān al-'Arab* entry for the word *khid'a* is, “to show the opposite of what is concealed within”.<sup>7</sup> Once again he provides no more than a lexical interpretation of a verse.

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<sup>1</sup> II: 7.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.2b, *ET*, p.11.

<sup>3</sup> *Lisān al-'Arab*, Vol.1 / p.76, entry *ghashā*, al-Zubaydī, , Muḥib al-Dīn Abū Fayḍ al-Sayyid Muhammad Murtaḍā. *Tāj al-'Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut (1994) .Vol.20 / p.16; entry for *ghashā*

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.166.

<sup>5</sup> II: 9.

<sup>6</sup> Edited text, p.3a, *ET*, p.12.

<sup>7</sup> *Lisān al-'Arab*, Vol.4 / p.38, entry *khad'a*, *al-'Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, Vol.11, p.87; entry for *khada'a*.

For II:15, “Allah will throw back their mockery on them, and give them rope in their trespasses: so they wander like blind ones (to and fro)”, the edited text states, “He leaves them in their misguidance and disbelief ‘blind’, unable to see.”<sup>1</sup> *Lisān al-‘Arab* likewise has it that *ṭughyān* means misguidance and transgression.<sup>2</sup> And in similar fashion the most part of the exegesis contained in the edited text. This approach is very similar to that of Ibn ‘Abbās for he too focused on the *gharīb* of the Qur’ān, but then would often continue with further exegetical clarification; contrastingly the edited text does not for the most part do the same.

The question of whether edited text used poetry as an evidence when explaining the *gharīb* words is an issue worthy of discussion. Close study of the edited text suggests that it does not. Certainly there is no evidence of it quoting poetry in either *al-Fātiḥa* or *al-Baqara*; there are two instances, one in *al-A‘rāf* and the second in *al-Zukhruf*, where poetry is used to explain the meaning of words, but whether the verses of poetry are that of the author is inconclusive; this is because he is known not to have favored the use of poetry to explain the Qur’ān, there is even a narration he relates from Abū Hurayra who said, “That one should fill his inside with puss is better than that he fills it with poetry.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, study of other sources has shown that none make any mention of either al-Kalbī or Ibn ‘Abbās quoting poetry. Thus it is quite possible that the two instances in these two narrations are later interpolations added by scribes. Thus the edited text appears to reinforce what we have previously shown was the case with Ibn ‘Abbās and his desisting using poetry as an evidence.<sup>4</sup>

#### 3.1.1.4. The edited text’s stance on the *mu‘arrabāt* and the *lughāt* of the Qur’ān:

Another important issue related to the *gharīb* words in the Qur’ān is that of the *mu‘arrabāt* and the languages (*lughāt*). We now look at what edited text’s stance is

<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.3a, *ET*, p.16.

<sup>2</sup> *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Vol.8 / p.170, entry *ṭaghā*, *al-‘Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, Vol.19 / p.634; entry for *ṭaghā*.

<sup>3</sup> *Mizān al-‘Itidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, Vol.3 / p.578.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Issue :1. 3.7, Did Ibn ‘Abbās employ poetry as evidence to explain the *gharīb*.



towards these. Firstly, it is worthy of mention that the edited text's author has on occasion used Persian words in his exegesis of Qur'ānic words. For example, "Thou wilt indeed find them. of all people, most greedy of life, even more than the idolaters: Each one of them wishes He could be given a life of a thousand years: But the grant of such life will not save him from (due) punishment. For Allah sees well all that they do"<sup>1</sup>, where he says "he hopes to live a thousand *nayrūz* and *mahrajān*<sup>2</sup>, *nayrūz* being a Persian word for 'celebration'." This is what is reported from Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>3</sup>

In the exegesis of II: 31, the edited text says, "...the names of all his (Adam's offspring; it is said also (that the name's) are of all creatures, and other things besides, even such things as a *qaṣ'a* and a *qaṣī'a* and a *sukrujja*."<sup>4</sup> Reported from Ibn 'Abbās is that God taught Adam the name of *qaṣ'a* and *qaṣī'a*.<sup>5</sup> Regarding III: 14, the text says, "...his remaining therein is like the remaining of household utensils such as the *qadaḥ* and the *sukrurjja*."<sup>6</sup> The *Lisān al-'Arab* defines *sukrujja* as being a small container used to eat from and that it is of Persian origin.<sup>7</sup>

From the aforementioned examples of *tafsīr*, it is apparent that the exegete of the edited text would explain Qur'ānic words with non-Arab words but without always mentioning their source languages, except these words: *firdaws*, *hādhāni*, *fattāḥ*, *mishkāt*, *yaḥūr*, *al-ṭūr*, *sīnīn*, *ṣīnā'*, *ṭāhā*, *wizr*, *ḥaṣb* and *kanūd*. This is unlike Ibn 'Abbās in his approach to such words for as we have shown earlier he would state if the word was Nabatean or Ethiopic or otherwise. A further observation is that the exegete did not make a habit of treating such words in the Qur'ān frequently – in the whole of *al-Baqara* there are only a few occasions where he does so. It is certainly not a feature of his methodology. A discussion of some of these words is to follow in order that a comparison can be made

<sup>1</sup> II; 96.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.7b, *ET*, p.64.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.603.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text, p.4a, *ET*, p.23.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, vol.1 / p.309.

<sup>6</sup> Text. p.23b.

<sup>7</sup> *Lisān al-'Arab*, Vol.6 / p.307, entry *sakaja*.

between the edited text's treatment of these words and that of Ibn 'Abbās as recorded by al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr*, Ibn Ḥasnūn<sup>1</sup> and al-Suyūṭī.<sup>2</sup>

The edited text's exegesis of the verse, "They said 'these two (*hādhānī*) are certainly [expert] magicians"<sup>3</sup>, is an example worthy of mention: it suggests that the word *hādhānī* was originally of the dialect of Banū al-Ḥārith b. Ka'b; it is thus in the nominative here for linguistic reasons rather than grammatical.<sup>4</sup> The word *fattāḥ* is said to mean judge as in the dialect of Oman.<sup>5</sup> Ibn 'Abbās explains the meaning without mentioning which language it originates in.<sup>6</sup> The word *firdaws* in XXIII: 11 is said to mean an orchard in the language of the Romans.<sup>7</sup> Mujāhid says of this the same.<sup>8</sup>

The two examples mentioned above are unique to the text; none of the other verifying sources used in this research contain similar reports. Such a phenomenon steers one to ponder why this is so. Perhaps a look at more examples can shed light on this. A further point worthy of consideration is that the edited text appears to mention both dialects and foreign languages without making any clear distinction between the two – both are simply termed *lughā*.

The text mentions in *tafsīr* of *mishkāṭ* in XXIV: 35 that it means niche and is Ethiopic.<sup>9</sup> Ibn Ḥasanūn agrees with this and although his explanation appears only subtly different it implies a significant philological position; what he does in fact, is suggest that the word *mishkāṭ* is somehow fortuitously the same in both Arabic and Ethiopic<sup>10</sup> – as though he does not accept it was a foreign inclusion to the language. Ibn 'Abbās does not show that its source is another language though he does explain the word.<sup>11</sup> Ibn Ḥasanūn's ascription of the statement about foreign words to Ibn 'Abbās further implies that the

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<sup>1</sup> *Kitāb al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān*.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Itqān*.

<sup>3</sup> XX: 63.

<sup>4</sup> Text, p.132b.

<sup>5</sup> Text, p.177a.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.22 / p.116.

<sup>7</sup> Text, p.143a.

<sup>8</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.18 / p.10.

<sup>9</sup> Text, p.138a.

<sup>10</sup> *Al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān*, p.36.

<sup>11</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.18 / pp.183-187.



latter did not accept the existence of foreign words in the Qur'ān, or more specifically, held that they had become arabicised before its revelation – this is, however, not the case as been shown in an earlier chapter.<sup>1</sup>

Thus there appears to be on occasion consistency between the edited text and other source material; however for the most part the divergence is frequent and obvious; take for example the text's statement about, “Also a tree springing out of Mount Sinai, which produces oil, and relish for those who use it for food.”<sup>2</sup>: here the word *sīnā'* (Sinai) is said to be a mountain with forestation in Ethiopic.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Ḥasanūn takes the opinion it means *al-ḥasan* similar to the same word which exists in Nabatean.<sup>4</sup> The word *ṭāhā* is another example of a word whose meaning the commentators fail to agree on: The text records that it is from the Meccan dialect<sup>5</sup>, al-Ṭabarī from 'Ikrima that it is Nabatean<sup>6</sup>, in another report also from 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbās that it is Syriac<sup>7</sup> and in the *Mustadrak* from 'Ikrima that it is Ethiopic.<sup>8</sup> Ibn 'Abbās says it is Sinai, a mountain in the blessed Levant. Ibn 'Abbās thus conflicts with *al-Lughāt*, a work allegedly of his hand.

A number of points may be observed from the disparity in understanding mentioned above for the word *ṭāhā*: the first is that the three reports which are at odds with the text's view have all been narrated by 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbās, and then they in turn contradict each other. This leads one to question the reliability of the transmissions, and also for the fact that none of them end at Ibn Ḥasanūn because he doesn't narrate any of them in his book. Secondly, for some unknown and rather obscure reason, the text points out words which are of the 'Meccan' dialect – what benefit is to be found in such statements when the Qur'ān in its entirety is in the dialect of the Meccans is far from obvious; it may be an indication that the author is of a very early period, one pre-dating later exegetes who would mention only foreign words and dialects of other than Quraysh. A final point is that the edited text does not embark on an explication of the foreign words until after the

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<sup>1</sup> See Ibn 'Abbās' methodological approach in reference to dialects and arabicised words: 1.3.8.

<sup>2</sup> XXIII: 20.

<sup>3</sup> Text, p.143a. XXIII: 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān*, p.36.

<sup>5</sup> Text, p.131b.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol. 15, p.170.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, Vol.3 / p.410.

fifteenth part (*juz'*) of the Qur'ān indicating clearly that its preoccupation with *tafsīr* was its first priority, or even perhaps that such information is a later interpolation of copyists. This is what Rippin in his study of the *Kitāb al-lughāt* reinforces, namely that the work is not correctly ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās. He concludes:

The point of this extended summary of tendencies in this text is this: all these factors, the nature of the definitions, the technical terminology and to find them all combined in one text is, I would suggest, evidence that we are dealing with a work whose genesis is after each of the individual procedures had become established processes and components within exegetical canon. It is perhaps a not very suprising conclusion to state that this text...although attributed to Ibn 'Abbās, can hardly stem from him..the attribution to Ibn 'Abbās is clearly a fiction designed to give the text more credence by assigning them to an early and prominent figure.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibn 'Abbas's al-Lughāt*, p.25.



### 3.1.1.5. His stance on Judeo-Christian traditions:

The author of the text adopts an exegetical style characterized by brevity, and an almost disinterest in matters of detail; this is obvious from the books of *tafsīr* which preserve his commentary. This feature was extant irrespective of whether the verses related to a historical event, legal injunction or anything else. For this reason, it is of no surprise to find, with rare exceptions, that he does not quote from early Jewish or Christian tradition. Now we shall provide some examples. In the verse, “We said: “O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression”,<sup>1</sup> an instance where he does allude to tradition from the People of the Book, regards the story of Adam. He says. “(God says) do not eat from this tree, the tree of knowledge, meaning wheat...”<sup>2</sup> Al-Ṭabarī relates a number of narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās with suggestions as to the type of tree, then subsequent to these says, “God did not give us knowledge of the exact nature of the tree which he forbade them for that has no bearing on the lesson; rather, the point was not to eat from the tree and thus obey the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah reports on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, that it was the tree of knowledge bearing every type of fruit. He adds that the narration is not authentic.<sup>4</sup> It is said that in the Book of Genesis the tree was kept anonymous but for its description as being the tree by which is recognised good and evil (*shajarat ma‘rifa al-khayr wa al-shar*).<sup>5</sup> Thus it would seem that al-Kalbī took from the People of the Book due to the similarity in opinion.

In the verse, “We said: ‘Get ye down all from here’”,<sup>6</sup> the commentary says the command was directed towards Adam, Hawa (Eve), the snake, the peacock and Satan.<sup>7</sup> Whether this narration which is supposedly from Ibn ‘Abbās as narrated by al-Ṭabarī also, with the

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<sup>1</sup> II: 35.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text.p.4b, *ET*,p.24.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / pp.331 – 333. See also *Zād al-Masīr*, Vol.1 / p.57.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz*, Vol.1 / p.127.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tamwīr*, Vol.1 / p.432.

<sup>6</sup> II: 38.

<sup>7</sup> Edited Text.p.4b, *ET*,p.25.

exception of the peacock,<sup>1</sup> is from the People of the Book or whether this is assumed based on him saying ‘Someone informed me’, this is not conclusive. What is known is that when a narrator does not mention his source, his report is considered weak.

And in the commentary of II: 58 - 59, “And remember We said: “Enter this town, and eat of the plenty therein as ye wish; but enter the gate with humility, in posture and in words, and We shall forgive you your faults and increase (the portion of) those who do good. But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given”, the edited text says, “The ones who changed the word are the people of “*Ḥiṭṭa*” who changed it to *Ḥiṭṭa Sumqānā*”<sup>2</sup>. Al-Baghawī<sup>3</sup>, al-Qurṭubī<sup>4</sup>, and al-Alūsī<sup>5</sup> all give the same commentary in meaning though their wording is slightly at variance. The variants are *Ḥuṭṭan Simhātha*, *Ḥiṭṭan Sumhātha*, *Ḥuṭṭan Sumqātha*. All three commentators say that the words are from Hebrew. It has been reported from Ibn ‘Abbās that he said “their changing was by action: they entered on shifting on their behinds”. In another report from him “They changed to the word *Ḥiṭṭa*”.<sup>6</sup> As we have noticed, scholars have agreed that the interpreting word *Ḥiṭṭa* is not an Arabic one but a Hebrew one. Thus there is a serious question-mark as to whether Ibn ‘Abbās gathered information from the People of the Book, or whether it has been falsely ascribed to him, or indeed whether it is from al-Kalbī.

Examples abound though we shall content ourselves with the aforementioned; the conclusion, however, is that the text contains stories which appear in concise format without any transmissions from the People of the Book for the most part, and then parts which are more detailed and appear as though information has been taken from the People of the Book and this reports have no connection with creed. No reports connected to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) in relation to this exist.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.344 and al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.34.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text.p.5b, *ET*,p.31.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.33.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, vol.1 /p.417.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Alūsī.vol.1/p.422.

<sup>6</sup> *Zād al-Masīr*, Vol.1 / p.75.



## Conclusion:

The study of the edited text's methodology reveals that it did not rely much on *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān* or *bi al-ḥadīth*, except that the former tended to be used for *asbāb al-nuzūl* or *nāsikh wal mansūkh*. It was observed that the stories in the Qur'ān were explained sometimes in length and at other times concisely, and that the use of Judeo-Christian reports were rare. Poetry is not a feature of the Edited Text's *tafsīr* and this is consistent with the narration of Ibn 'Abbās from Abū Hurayrah in which the use of poetry deemed forbidden. The acknowledgement of arabicised word and various languages is the final feature noticed.

### 3.1.2. The Edited Text's style:

The Edited Text's style is characterized by particular features which distinguish from other works in the same genre, especially classical commentaries from the first centuries. These traits may be classified under the following headings:

#### 3.1.2.1. Brevity (*Al-Ījāz*):

The expression of the edited text is distinctly concise for the most part, and remains consistently so except when explaining verses related to legislation, historical accounts or metaphors and similes. As a consequence of the texts brevity in language we find also a brevity in the meaning which it adopts in commentary of the verses; we find that generally, this is of one form.

In fact, at times, the text gives very brief commentary on verses which provide historical information and deserve more lengthy treatment. For example, his treatment of the verse, "Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel-for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe."<sup>1</sup> He mentions only that it was revealed as a consequence of the Jews saying that Gabriel was their enemy.<sup>2</sup> He makes no mention of the many questions that the Jews asked of the Prophet, and the lengthy discussions that followed, and that they did not, after all this, accept Islam, for they had come to know that it was the Arch-angel Gabriel who was the conveyor of revelation; being their sworn-enemy they could not possibly accept revelation brought by him.<sup>3</sup>

For "Would ye question your Messenger as Moses was questioned of old? but whoever changeth from Faith to Unbelief, Hath strayed without doubt from the even way",<sup>4</sup> he says, "'Would ye question your Messenger' in order that he show you your Lord and

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<sup>1</sup> II: 97.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.7b, *ET*,p.46.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.606 and 612 and *al-Baghawī*, Vol.1 / p.61.

<sup>4</sup> II: 108.



have you hear the Lord's speech."<sup>1</sup> Books of exegesis report from Ibn 'Abbās a more detailed commentary of the same verse; that is that Rāfi' b. Ḥarūymila and Wahb b. Zayd both said to the Prophet that he should give them a book to read which he has caused to descend from the heavens and that he should also cause rivers to burst forth; only then would they follow him. It was after this that the verse was revealed.<sup>2</sup>

The saying of God, "The Jews say: 'The Christians have naught (to stand) upon'; and the Christians say: 'The Jews have naught (To stand) upon.' Yet they (Profess to) study the (same) Book. Like unto their word is what those say who know not; but Allah will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgment",<sup>3</sup> is also given rather brief treatment: the Jews, the edited text decides, are the Jews of Medina and the books which the two parties read is not one which either firmly believe in and they say of it what it does not contain to suit their whims<sup>4</sup>; whereas as Ibn 'Abbās had much more to say about it describing such things as the approaching of the Christians of Najrān the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and their disputations with the Jews.<sup>5</sup> Similarly with the verse from *al-Tawbah*, "O Prophet! Strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell,- An evil refuge indeed."<sup>6</sup> The commentary of this verse is particularly brief and is characterized by the use of sometimes a single word to explain a number of words.<sup>7</sup>

There are times when the text gives more detailed explanations also, giving many opinions on a verse, sometimes up to three or so. An example of this is the treatment of the verse. "O ye of faith! Say not (to the Prophet) *rā'inā*, but say *'unẓurnā* and hearken (to him)."<sup>8</sup> The commentary explains that the believers were prohibited from using particular words from the language of the Jews, especially *rā'inā*, meaning to hear, but also a type of curse, and instead to use less ambiguous words such as *unẓurnā*, look at us.

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.8b,ET,p.51.

<sup>2</sup> *Zād al-Masīr*, Vol.1 / p.112 and *al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz*, Vol.1 / p.195.

<sup>3</sup> II: 113.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text. p.8b,ET,p.54.

<sup>5</sup> *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, al-Suyūṭī, p.28 and *al-Kashāf*, Vol.1 / p.18.

<sup>6</sup> IX: 73.

<sup>7</sup> Text, p.84b.

<sup>8</sup> II: 104.

The word *rā'inā* in Hebrew is said to mean, "Listen, and may you not hear!".<sup>1</sup> Al-Suyūṭī narrates the same from Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>2</sup>

There are many other examples of such brevity in style though only several are mentioned for fear of lengthiness; an important deduction from the phenomenon of brevity observed in the text is that the exegete seems to assume that the reader already has background knowledge on all the points and historical events that are mentioned in the commentary and that a simple indication of them is sufficient. He may also have adopted this style for his exegesis to be easier to read so that it would have the general acceptance of the masses.

### 3.1.2.2. Division (*Tajzi'a*):

What is meant by division of the text is the way in which it explains and interprets verses of the Qur'ān. It is distinguished by the fact that each verse is broken up into parts which are then dispersed across any given page with exegesis in between. This is best described with an example to illustrate: The verse, "As to those who reject faith. It is the same whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe",<sup>3</sup> is explained as follows:

'As to those who reject faith' who are firmly on disbelief 'it is the same whether thou warn them' you scare them with the Qur'ān 'or do not warn them' do not scare them 'they will not believe' they do not want to believe; it is said that they do not believe in the knowledge of God.<sup>4</sup>

Thus it is clear from the excerpt that the exegesis breaks up the verse leaving it difficult to delineate where it ends and the next verse begins; there are no verse numbers or headings as such. The exegesis, if it was to stand independently of the body of the verse, would not be coherent. This style is adopted throughout the text and has many examples

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.8a, *ET*, p.50.

<sup>2</sup> *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, al-Suyūṭī, p.21.

<sup>3</sup> II: 6.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text. p.2b, *ET*, p.11.



some of which have already been shown at other places within this research.<sup>1</sup> The text does not, it seem, give any importance to have verses remain in tact, generally, and neither the *suras* as a whole.

### 3.1.2.3. Repetition (*Takrār*):

Another distinguishing feature of the text is its repetition of a particular *tafsīr* whenever a reoccurring verse appears. The Qur’ān is characterized by its repetition of certain verses a feature which is important for admonition and reminding. The text does not seek to give a different *tafsīr* at places such as this perhaps due to the ease of repeating something already mentioned earlier. An illustrative example of this is the verse, “And if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosoever follows my guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”<sup>2</sup> The edited text states that those who follow God’s guidance such are those who will not have to worry about future torment or feel saddened by the thought of permanent punishment. It also provides a second interpretation, that is that they will not be frightened when death comes or feel saddened by the punishment unleashed on the disbelievers.<sup>3</sup> The same words and expression are provided in *tafsīr* of II: 62<sup>4</sup> with the only difference being that he leaves mention of the disbelievers as mentioned at the end of the above example. For the verse “Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness...will have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve”<sup>5</sup>, the edited text mentions only the first part of the commentary, that the people shall not fear when death approaches nor will they grieve when the fire punishes.<sup>6</sup>

The commentary of “Say: ‘O my people! Do whatever ye can: I will do (my part): soon ye will know who it is whose end will be (best) in the Hereafter: Certain it is that the

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<sup>1</sup> See commentary of II: 7, Edited text, p.2b,ET,p.11,and II: 44, Edited text, p.5a, ET,p.27.

<sup>2</sup> II: 38.

<sup>3</sup> Edited text, p.4b,ET,p.25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.5b,ET,p.33.

<sup>5</sup> II: 277.

<sup>6</sup> Edited text, p.21b.ET,p.144.

wrong-doers will not prosper”<sup>1</sup>, the commentary explains that the people of Mecca are being addressed by the Prophet and incited to try their best to plan his destruction from within their houses, likewise he is working to destroy them and time will tell who the victor and who the defeated is to be.<sup>2</sup> The edited text thus believes that God ordered the Prophet to let the Quraysh know that he knows of their plotting within their houses. The commentary of, “And O my people do whatever ye can: I will do (my part): soon ye will know who it is on whom descends the chastisement of ignominy, and who is a liar! And watch ye! For I too am watching with you!”<sup>3</sup> is again very similar to that of the previous verse although the edited text does not restrict itself to exactly the same expression.<sup>4</sup> Another very similar verse in the same *sūra*, XI: 121, is provided the same commentary as the previous two without any additions.<sup>5</sup> The verse, “Say: ‘O my people! Do whatever ye can: I will do (my part): But soon will ye know’”,<sup>6</sup> is the same again but this time with an addition, stating that God is challenging in a threatening way (*wa’īd*) the disbelievers rather than ordering them.<sup>7</sup>

The observation made of the commentaries of the previous four verses is that the exegete of the text makes a conscious attempt not to repeat the detailed meanings of the verses, and where possible seeks to show that they do have their specific individual instances of revelation. The general theme of all the verses, that the disbelievers are being threatened, is the same and so it is inescapable to not repeat some of the meanings more than once.

The previous examples illustrate repetition within whole verses of the Qur’ān; attention is now turned to the repetition of the meaning of individual words: the repetition of this aspect is very common in the text, especially for words which do not affect seriously the general meaning of their verse and which may require a verse-specific commentary. The word *anhār*, rivers, is said to mean rivers of wine, milk, honey and water (in heaven),

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<sup>1</sup> VI: 135.

<sup>2</sup> Text, p.65b.

<sup>3</sup> XI: 93.

<sup>4</sup> Text, p.97b.

<sup>5</sup> Text, p.99b.

<sup>6</sup> XIL: 39.

<sup>7</sup> Text, p.189b.



though not always in the same order.<sup>1</sup> “‘*Adhāb Alīm*” is said to mean a pain so tortuous it reaches the hearts,<sup>2</sup> and “*ya‘mahūn*”, they pass through life blind unable to see,<sup>3</sup> and *ḡālimūn*. those who cause harm, together with any derived forms of the same word.<sup>4</sup>

The repetition of expressions is a feature too of the text, for example, the commentary of “*asāfir al-awwālīn*” is explained as “the stories and historical accounts of the early ones, as well as their lies.”<sup>5</sup> The verse II: 47, “I preferred you to all others”, is said to mean by giving them Islam making them preferred over the people of their time<sup>6</sup> even though the people being addressed are the Jews. Nothing is found from Ibn ‘Abbās regarding this verse. Other commentators suggest it places the Children of Israel in a preferred position over their contemporaries since they were given a revealed scripture.<sup>7</sup>

The exegete of the text, by the fact that there does exist the type of repetition described above, seems to have completed his commentary within a specific time-frame which no doubt made easier for him the repetition process – this is because he does not forget the commentary of a verse if similar to it has previously appeared. It seems he repeats exegesis due to a commitment to explain the whole Qur’ān. His contemporaries did not do this and so were not as repetitive. The likes of al-Tabarī would produce complete exegesis but not repeat information twice – they would sensibly point the reader to the previous places.<sup>8</sup>

#### 3.1.2.4. Confinement (*al-Ḥaṣr wa al-Takḥīṣ*):

This feature is perhaps the most prominent of all the features of the text; it refers to the following: if the exegete believes the verse relates to a particular historical event or happening at the time of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) or some other occasion of revelation, then he will proceed to ensure that the remaining parts of the verse suit the same event even when an obviously general purport is intended by it.

<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.4a, *ET*, p.20. Text, p.24a.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.3a. *ET*, p.13. Edited text, p.8 a, *ET*, p.50. Edited text, p.12b, *ET*, p.80.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.3a. *ET*, p.13.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.5a. *ET*, p.24. Edited text, p.5b, *ET*, p.29.

<sup>5</sup> Text, p.63a (VI: 25) and text p.88a (VIII: 31).

<sup>6</sup> Edited text, p.5a, *ET*, p.28.

<sup>7</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.378.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.. and Vol.18 / p.18.

The commentary of “And believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you”,<sup>1</sup> is: “And believe in what I reveal of the Qur’ān which Gabriel has descended with confirming - in terms of its affirmation of God’s unity and the message of Muhammad –the revelation which is with you and be not the first to reject faith in Muhammad and the Qur’ān, nor sell My signs for a small price – by hiding the characteristics of Muhammad – and fear Me alone with regards to the Prophet.”<sup>2</sup> Thus here the edited text has confined the meanings of the verse to the characteristics of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). Al-Tabarī agrees with him in this.<sup>3</sup> For the saying of God: “And cover not Truth with Falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know (what it is)”,<sup>4</sup> the edited text explains the “Truth” as being the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and “Falsehood” to mean the antichrist (*dajjāl*),<sup>5</sup> even though the verse is obviously more general than this, referring more to an encouragement to the Jews to accept belief over disbelief. Ibn ‘Abbās considers it a general issue without making it specific: “Do not mix truth with falsehood.”<sup>6</sup>

Another example is the verse “Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things, even of a gnat as well as anything above it”<sup>7</sup>; here the commentary states that the Lord is highlighting the Jew’s rejection of His similitudes which are thus a cause of their misguidance.<sup>8</sup> As for Ibn ‘Abbās, he specified them as being hypocrites. Al-Tabarī sees them all as people of disbelief without exception.<sup>9</sup> This is an example again of confinement because it is clearly a verse which includes all people, not just the Jews.

The verse “They were covered with humiliation and misery: they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah. This is because they went on rejecting the signs of Allah and slaying His Messengers without just cause. This because they rebelled and went on transgressing.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> II: 41.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.6a,ET,p.26.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.62.

<sup>4</sup> II: 42.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text, p.6a,ET,p.26.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.363.

<sup>7</sup> II: 26.

<sup>8</sup> Edited text, p.4a,ET,p.21.

<sup>9</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / pp.262-263.

<sup>10</sup> II: 61.



This verse is applied to the Jews of Medina and their rejection of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.)<sup>1</sup> although the context in the Qur'ān is clearly the time of Moses and his people. Al-Tabarī sees it as general since they rejected the proofs of God pointing to his uniqueness and their rejection of the Prophets.<sup>2</sup>

The verse, “And when there came to them a Messenger from Allah, confirming what was with them, a party of the People of the Book threw away the Book of Allah behind their backs as if (it had been something) they did not know!”<sup>3</sup> which is once again said to related to the Jews of Medina in their rejection of the Qur'ān and the obvious characteristics of Muhammad proving beyond doubt that he was the true Prophet and not an imposter.<sup>4</sup>

A second type of confinement is the explanation of certain general words as being in reference to specific individuals, such as the term “O ye who believe” to mean Abū Bakr and his companions.<sup>5</sup> Abū Jahl and his comrades are mentioned in places where the expression “Disbelievers” is used<sup>6</sup> even when the verse may be Medinian and revealed after the death of Abū Jahl by a long time (he was killed at Badr, 2 A.H.). When the “Believers of the People of the Book” are mentioned this refers to ‘Abdullāh b. Sallām and his companions<sup>7</sup>, except for verse II: 150, about the change of prayer direction, when ‘Abdullāh b. Sallām is rebuked together with his companions.<sup>8</sup> The mentioning of the “Disbelievers from the Jews” is said to be Ka‘b b. al-Ashraf and Finḥāṣ.<sup>9</sup>

In reference to the verse, “And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant then produce a *Sūra* like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, if ye are truthful”,<sup>10</sup> the edited text states the

<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.5b,ET,p.33.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.41.

<sup>3</sup> II: 101.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text. p.8a, ET,p.47.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text, p2a, ET,p.9. Edited text, 3a, ET,p.15. Edited text, 6b, ET, p.38. (II: 3, 14, 76).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.2b.ET,p.10. p.8a,ET,p.50. (II: 7, 105).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.2b.ET,p.10. p.3a,ET,p.14. p.8b, ET,p.15. 9a,ET,p.59. (II: 4, 13,121).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.11a.ET,p.71.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.2b.ET,p.11. p.8a,ET,p.50. p.8b,ET,pp.52-53. (II: 7, 105, 109).

<sup>10</sup> II: 23.

challenge is to produce something of the quality of *al-Baqara*.<sup>1</sup> This restriction may be because the verse occurs in *al-Baqara* or perhaps because it is the longest chapter of the Qur'ān. The scholars have held the challenge applies to any part of the Qur'ān, even the smallest such as *al-Kawthar*. Al-Zamakhsharī says that a *sūra* is a group of verses in the Qur'ān at least three in number.<sup>2</sup> The commentators explain that to “produce something like it” is in terms of its unusual explicative style and its high eloquence and rhythm.<sup>3</sup>

As for “And Allah is full of kindness to (His) devotees”,<sup>4</sup> the edited text says that the devotees referred to are those who believed in Mecca and were killed, and that the occasion of its revelation was the parents of ‘Ammār b. Yāsir and Sumayya and others like them killed at Mecca.<sup>5</sup> This explanation is unique to the edited text not to be found in other commentaries – it does not seem at all to agree with the general purport of the verse and is rather poorly expressed.

These few examples will suffice for the purposes of this research. The reader of the text is almost led to believe that all the verses in the Qur'ān, whether promises of eternal salvation or eternal damnation, whether of stories or of general wisdoms, relate to specific individuals. True, it appears the exegete seems to allow the reader to choose at times which explanation he prefers, but a certain fact is that the style he has adopted – one of restriction of verses of the Qur'ān to particular events and personalities – is done without any express attempt to justify it.

### 3.1.2.5. Connection of verses with commentary (*Al-Waṣl*):

This aspect of the text is a particularly distinguishing feature. The verses of the Qur'ān run directly into the commentary without any markings delineating one from another; it is very much like what is termed *al-Qirā'at al-Tafsīriyya*, a feature in commentary known to the Companions – they were the notes that Companions would write on their *muṣḥafs* helping them to understand difficult words, that would often confuse the reader who may

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.4a, *ET*, p.19.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Kashāf*, Vol.1 / p.103.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.240, *al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz*, Vol.1 / p.106.

<sup>4</sup> II: 207.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text, p.15a, *ET*, p.101. II: 207.



deem them part of the verse he is at. They were no more than simple synonyms often. The difference between these and the format of the text is that the latter covered the entire text of the Qur'ān in the same manner. An example is the following excerpt:

“(When it is said to them) to the Jews (believe as the others believe) ‘Abdullāh b. Sallām and his companions (they say shall we believe) in Muhammad and the Qur'ān (as the fools believe?) the ignorant fools (Nay of a surety they are the fools) the ignorant fools (But they do not know) that.”<sup>1</sup>

Here if the brackets are removed the verse would be undistinguishable from the commentary. The commentary is clearly aiming to explain the verses in as concise a manner as possible, and in a fashion that is easy to comprehend for the general masses; it may well have been the predetermined intention of the exegete to do this. The examples are endless of course.

### 3.1.2.6. The placing of headings for some verses as though it is a thematic *tafsīr*:

This is a feature of the edited text. There doesn't appear to be any discernible pattern to the distribution of headings in the text; they seem rather ad-hoc in their presentation. They appear to intend towards different objectives and relate to varying subjects. Take for example the statement, “Then He mentions the generosity and esteem shown towards the believers in heaven...”<sup>2</sup> After this heading the verse is then presented. Another example is, “Then He mentions the Jew's denial of the similitudes of the Qur'ān, so He says...”<sup>3</sup> and, “Then he mentions the story of the angels who were ordered to prostrate to Adam, then said...”<sup>4</sup> and “Then He mentions the story of Adam and Eve, then says...”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.3a,ET,p.15.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.3b,ET,p.19.

<sup>3</sup> Edited text, p.4a,ET,p.20. (II:26)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.4a,ET,p.22. (II:30)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.4b,ET,p.24-25. (II:35)

At times the same heading is repeated for more than one verse<sup>1</sup> which may be the occasion of revelation though it will appear in the form of a heading. The commentary of II: 97, “Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel – for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah’s will”, it says, “Then they felt in their hearts that Gabriel was their enemy.”<sup>2</sup>

It may be noticed that the headings have a very strong connection to the themes of the verses they introduce though they are not headings for general subjects. This style is not carried beyond *al-Baqara* and *Āl-‘Imrān* after which it seems he leaves this style. These headings indicate a new beginning in the science of *tafsīr* which transcends the mere commentary on individual words, and the pointing out of the occasions of revelation, the places of abrogation, and so on. They provide guidance to the reader and indicate places where he can find legal rulings or historical events. The style that this aspect presents in terms of structuring the work is indicative of the intellectual understanding of its author (the historian and genealogist) and is a mere consequence of his personal development in the epoch that he lived.

#### Conclusion:

The study of the Edited Text’s style has revealed many features: the almost over-strained attempt to keep the commentary as brief as possible, the division of verses and chapters, the repetition of commentary, the confining of verses particular individuals, places and events, the thematic *tafsīr* unknown to the first two-centuries A.H.; all of these features differ with what is known of the style of *tafsīr* in the first century A.H.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p.4b.ET,p.26. p.5a,ET,p.28. p.9b,ET,p.59. (II: 40, 47, 122)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.7a.ET,p.46.



### 3.1.3. The exegetical subjects treated by the Edited Text:

The text treats a number of subjects and themes between its covers, some of which are dealt with in detail and others in brief. The following shall look at these:

#### 3.1.3.1. Stories of the Qur'ān (*qaṣaṣ al-qur'ān*):

In approaching the subject matter of the stories of the Qur'ān and how they are treated by the text, we shall divide it into various categories: the first shall include Islamic historical narratives which occurred congruently with the revelation of the Qur'ān, from the descent of the very first verse until the day of the Prophet's passing away. These narrations are the most trustworthy of the divisions of narrative according to the text for they make mention of personalities, places and circumstances which leave no room for error or fabrication. These narratives are many, the most important of them to the subject of *tafsīr* are those called *asbāb al-nuzūl*; the second relates to the life of the Prophet, *sīra*, and the encounters which he had with the Meccans and the other non-Muslims of the Arabian Peninsula amongst the Jews and the Christians. The text presents the historical events and narrations relating to each and every verse. It provides details about the wars fought by the Muslims, documenting their victories and their defeats, and all matters associated the situations the soldiers confronted in life and in death. Thirdly, stories of the Prophets so long as they are verified as historically authentic by their being acknowledged by the Qur'ān. These stories range from lengthy accounts to shorter ones, all aimed at bringing closer to the mind the meanings of the Qur'ān. Fourthly, that which appears to be myths and tales of old, termed *aṣāṭīr*, having no historical basis.

#### The first division: Islamic historical narratives:

This group has a plethora of examples because it mixes historical reports with the occasions of revelation. Commentating on, "Say, "O God! The Master of Sovereignty, you give sovereignty to whom You please, and You seize sovereignty from whom You

please, You honour whom You please, and You abase whom you please, all good is in your hands. indeed You have power over all things”,<sup>1</sup> the edited text quotes a report saying that the verse was revealed regarding ‘Abdullāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl, ‘the hypocrite’, after he questioned how the Arabs would ever conquer the kingdoms of Persia and Rome; it also mentions a second report which holds that the verse is in response to the Quraysh who said, “Caesar sleeps on a bed with silk brocade, so if you (Muhammad) are truly a prophet then where is your wealth?”<sup>2</sup> The first report is from Ibn ‘Abbās,<sup>3</sup> however the second is not to be found in the books of *asbāb al-nuzūl*.

The commentary of “Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth, and ye know not”,<sup>4</sup> reads:

“It is obligatory for you (to fight) when the Prophet departs for battle, though it is hard upon you. ‘Perhaps you dislike something though it is better for you’, for you attain martyrdom and spoils, ‘and perhaps you like something that is bad for you’, such as opting out of battle, in which case you neither attain martyrdom or spoils; ‘God knows’ that war is better (at this time); ‘and you know not’ that sitting during battle is of detriment. It was revealed specifically about Sa’d b. Abū Waqqās and Miqdād b. al-Aswad and their comrades.”<sup>5</sup>

Neither al-Suyūfī or al-Wāḥidī make any mention of the reason for this verse’s revelation; in fact, none of the exegetes does so, with the exception of al-Baghawī<sup>6</sup>, who incorporates this verse with the next saying that they refer to an incident in which the riding-mounts of

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<sup>1</sup> III: 26.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.2 b. *ET*, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Wāḥidī, p.102.

<sup>4</sup> II: 216.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text, p.17a. *ET*, p.107.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.138.



Sa'd b. Abū Waqqās<sup>1</sup> and 'Utba b. Ghazawān<sup>2</sup> strayed resulting in the two falling back from the raiding party of 'Abdullāh b. Jaḥsh<sup>3</sup>.

These examples are ample demonstrations for the time being of the exhaustive nature of the texts exegetical style. A later chapter dedicated to the occasions of revelation will provide a deeper study.

**The second division: Life of the Prophet, *sīra*, and the wars, *ghazawāt*:**

An example of this division is the commentary of, "They ask thee concerning fighting in the Prohibited Month. Say: 'Fighting therein is a grave (offence); but graver is it in the sight of Allah to prevent access to the path of Allah, to deny Him, to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque, and drive out its members'",<sup>4</sup> where the edited text has it that "the verse was revealed about the matter of 'Abdullāh b. Jaḥsh and his comrades who killed Ibn al-Ḥaḍramī, and their asking about the permissibility of killing in the month of Rajab. It relates also to the Pagans censuring them for their act, and it is for this God said, 'They ask you concerning the sacred month'."<sup>5</sup> Details are given here of the event for which the verse was revealed, the questioning that took place, the head of the military troop and the person killed.

Another example is the discussion of the battle of Badr with reference to, "Say to those who reject Faith: "Soon will ye be vanquished and gathered together to Hell,-an evil bed indeed (to lie on)!"There has already been for you a Sign in the two armies that met (in combat): One was fighting in the cause of Allah, the other resisting Allah. these saw with

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<sup>1</sup> Sa'd b. Abū Waqqās is Sa'd b. Abū Waqqās b. Mālik b. Uhayb al-Zuhrī. A Companion who converted when he was still a youth, he witnessed all the battles with the Prophet, led the conquest of Iraq. He died in Medina (55 A.H). *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol.1 / p.62, *'Usd al-Ghāba*, Vol.2 / p.290.

<sup>2</sup> 'Utba b. Ghazwān b. Jābir was the seventh person to accept Islam. He migrated the two hijras and participated in all the battles with the Prophet. He died (17 A.H). *'Usd al-Ghābah*, Vol.3 / p.363.

<sup>3</sup> 'Abdullāh b. Jaḥsh b. Ri'āb al-Asdī, the son of the Prophet's aunt 'Umaymah bt. 'Abd al-Muttalib, he made the two emigrations. He was martyred at Uhud (3 A.H). *Al-A'lām*, Vol.4 / p.76, *Al-Istī'āb*, Vol.3 / p.14.

<sup>4</sup> II: 217.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text, p.16a, *ET*, p.107.

their own eyes Twice their number. But Allah doth support with His aid whom He pleaseth. In this is a warning for such as have eyes to see.”<sup>1</sup>

The exegesis is as follows:

‘Say’ O Muḥammad ‘to those that have disbelieved’ the disbelievers of Mecca ‘you will be conquered’ you will be fought at Badr ‘and raised’ on the day of Judgement ‘to enter the fire, and what a wretched place of rest’. ‘There is for you’ O people of Mecca ‘a sign’ of the prophethood of Muhammad ‘in the two groups’ armies ‘that met’ on the day of Badr ‘a party fighting in the way of God’ out of obedience to God, Muhammad and his companions, numbering three-hundred and thirteen men ‘and another (party) disbelieving’ in God and the Prophet, namely Abū Sufyān and his comrades, who numbered nine-hundred and fifty men ‘they see them’ they see themselves ‘as equal to them’ as equal to the troop of Muhammad in their eyes; it is said that there are other reasons also...”<sup>2</sup>

He says it refers to the Jewish tribes of Qurayṣa and al-Naḍīr. He has addressed here two causes related to one circumstance, namely the battle of Badr. There is a difference of opinion regarding who the addressee is in the verse: one narration has it that it was the people of Mecca, and this is reported by al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ‘Abbās by al-Wāḥidī<sup>3</sup>; another report has it that it was the Jews as reported by Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, from Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>4</sup> This detail indicates the author’s concern for historical accounts related to people and his great ability in the field of history which he subdued for his own purposes when explaining the Qur’ān.

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<sup>1</sup> III: 12 -13.

<sup>2</sup> Text, p.23b.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Wāḥidī, p.100.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. P.101.



### The third division: Stories of the Prophets:

These may be quoted from Israelite sources by the edited text wherever there is perceived to be a pressing need, and sparingly at that due to their being deemed uncorroborable and lacking historical authenticity. The text in its use of the Israelite tradition observes classical exegetical ethic in that it does not mention such sources when the issue at hand is of a doctrinal nature; doctrine does not accept of anything short of definitive evidence in Islam. either the Qur'ān or the *mutawātir* of the *Sunna*.

For the verse, “Or (take) the similitude of one who passed by a hamlet, all in ruins to its roofs. He said: ‘Oh! how shall Allah bring it (ever) to life, after (this) its death?’ but Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up (again). He said: ‘How long didst thou tarry (thus)?’ He said: ‘(Perhaps) a day or part of a day.’ He said: ‘Nay, thou hast tarried thus a hundred years; but look at thy food and thy drink; they show no signs of age; and look at thy donkey: And that We may make of thee a sign unto the people, Look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh.’ When this was shown clearly to him, he said: ‘I know that Allah hath power over all things’”,<sup>1</sup> the commentary makes mention of a story from Jewish tradition relating to ‘Uzayr b. Sharīḥa:

The village was called Dīr Harqal, and the passer-by ‘Uzayr b. Shāriḥa; he came across a crushed village and wondered to himself how God will bring this it back to life after its death. So God caused him to die in the very place he was standing for a hundred years, and then brought him to life at the end of the day, and asked, “How long did you remain [dead]?” ‘Uzayr replied that it did not exceed a day; he then turned to look at the sun and noticed there only remained a short while before it set and said, “Perhaps part of a day.” God said. “Nay rather you have remained for a hundred years!” and then asked him to look at his food, dates and drink, which had not changed at all. He ordered him also to look at his donkey which had become mere bones. All this so that God could make him a sign for people indicating that they will be

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<sup>1</sup> II: 259.

resurrected in the state in which they die. He was a sign for all because he died a youth and was brought back to life a youth. It is said also that his being a sign to people was because he was aged forty when he died, and when he came back to life, his son was a hundred and twenty years old, whilst he was still forty.<sup>1</sup>

In this story many details have been mentioned such as the persons name, age, his food and drink, how many years he was dead for, the lesson from the story though the story obviously has no connection with creed and in fact has been originally reported in books of *Tafsīr* by Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>2</sup>

A similar example is the story of King Soloman and David: “Or do they envy mankind for what God hath given them of his bounty? but We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom”,<sup>3</sup> for which the text quotes, it is assumed, from Jewish tradition that David had a hundred wives, to whom he paid their dowries, and to Soloman seven-hundred, though in secret, and only to three-hundred he paid the dowry.<sup>4</sup> It may be that the figures were arrived at by referring to XXXVIII: 23, “This man is my brother: he has nine and ninety ewes, and I have (but) one”, however the numbers clearly do not relate to women, or else a more plausible explanation is that it was taken from Jewish sources<sup>5</sup>; it is highly unlikely that any other source would have provided such details. Ibn Kathīr narrates this *tafsīr* from al-Tabarī, quoting Ibn ‘Abbās and then judged it to be ‘weak’ (*ḍa‘īf*).<sup>6</sup>

#### The forth division :Myths and Tales of the ancients :

These are often reports which have no historical basis, or chains of transmission, and typically deal with a multitude of subjects; They do not arise at all in *al-Baqara*,

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.20a,ET,p.134.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / p.41, al-Qurṭubī, Vol.3 / p.289 and *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.8 / p.223 chapter 44.

<sup>3</sup> IV: 54.

<sup>4</sup> Text. p.39b.

<sup>5</sup> Quṭb .Sayyid, *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur’ān*, 32nd Ed. (2003), Dār al-Shurūq, Cairo, Vol.5 / p.3018.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Kathīr, Vol.1 / p.41.



however. there are some examples elsewhere: in *al-Ra'd*, for the verse, “Gardens of perpetual bliss: they shall enter there, as well as the righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their offspring”,<sup>1</sup> the edited text has it that each one of them in paradise will have a tent from hollowed pearl, each having four-thousand doors; each door has a leaf, and an angel standing guard.<sup>2</sup> Al-Ṭabarī narrates similar.<sup>3</sup> The question as to what the source of such information is arises here. A similar instance is the explanation of the word, *ṭūbā*, which is said to be a tree in heaven whose trunk is of gold and leaves of copper and having fruits of all colours.<sup>4</sup> Again, al-Ṭabarī relates the same.<sup>5</sup>

The first verse of *al-Qalam* is given equally dubious an explanation: it is said that the oath in the first verse is taken on the *nūn*, which is the whale that carries the earth on its back; this fish is in water which is in turn carried on the back of a bull; under the bull is a rock, under which is dust, and none knows what is beneath that except the Lord.<sup>6</sup> Al-Ṭabarī mentions it in explanation of II: 28-29. This myth again is likely to have been narrated from Jewish tradition since there are no authenticated *ḥadīth* in the well-known canonical works speaking of this story. A reason for the incorporation of such stories and myths into the *tafsīr* literature may be that the exegetes hoped to satiate the thirst of the masses for detail – an attempt almost to capture the attention and imagination of those who read the exegesis. Often, the sources for such tales were Jewish tradition, and sometimes Christian. In conclusion, it is to be seen that the primary characteristic of the text is its dependence on ‘sound and true’ narrations, or at least as is deemed so by the scholars of *ḥadīth*, and it only resorts to less authentic narratives when dealing with subjects such as the nations of the past, and the Prophets of old, and matters related to the unseen which are simply not verifiable.

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<sup>1</sup> XIII: 23.

<sup>2</sup> Text. p.106b.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.13 / p.186.

<sup>4</sup> Text. p.106b.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.13 / pp.193-195.

<sup>6</sup> Text. p.324a.

### 3.1.3.2. Abrogation (*al-Naskh*):

Another important element dealt with by the text is abrogation, *al-naskh*. The author clearly takes the opinion that abrogation is present in the Qur'ān and uses very definitive, categorical expression when pointing out its presence. His word on the matter agrees for the most part with the major works in the field of exegesis and books specifically on the subject of *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh*. From such examples is, “None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?”<sup>1</sup> It is the first instance in the edited text where abrogation is treated; the verses which are abrogated are mentioned as well as those which are not. The verse is said to be “a response to Quraysh who pointed out to the Prophet that he orders the undertaking of something and then forbids that same thing later. So ‘that which we abrogate from our signs’ and are thus not acted upon, ‘or forget’, by leaving unabrogated to be acted upon, ‘We come with better than it’, meaning We send Gabriel with more beneficial than it and easier to undertake, or equal to it in reward and benefit and action, ‘or We forget it’, leaving it unabrogated, to be acted upon.”<sup>2</sup>

In the above example, the edited text mentions the cause of revelation and follows this by stating its view on the matter of abrogation and its occurrence. It also points to the benefit of abrogation as a principle, and that is to ensure ease, *takhfif*. Two variant readings of the verse are also given, one which has the verb *nunsihā*, to cause to be forgotten, and the second, which is the reading of ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbās<sup>3</sup>, holds that the verb is *nunsi’hā*, to delay.<sup>4</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās also explains *nunsihā* to mean ‘We leave it without changing it’.<sup>5</sup> It is reported by Mujāhid that it means ‘We cause its delay’.<sup>6</sup>

Al-Wāhidī<sup>7</sup> relates the following about abrogation in his work, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*:

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<sup>1</sup> II: 106.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.8 a,ET,p.50-51.

<sup>3</sup> *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.9 / p.19.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text, p.8a.ET,p.50-51.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭaharī*, Vol.1 / p.668.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.1 / p.665.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Wāhidī, p.37.



The Commentators have said that the Pagans would say, 'Do you not see that Muhammad orders his companions with an injunction and then forbids them [from the same], ordering them the opposite; he says [something] today, and then backtracks tomorrow; this Qur'ān is none other than the speech of Muhammad, he says it of his own accord, a speech parts of which contradict other parts. At this juncture, God revealed, 'When We substitute one revelation for another - and Allah knows best what He reveals (in stages) - they say, 'Thou art but a forger': but most of them understand not'<sup>1</sup>

And, 'None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?'<sup>2</sup>

The view of the edited text and the report of al-Wāḥidī are thus in agreement as to the occasion of revelation for the verses relating to abrogation, neither of them explicitly mentioning who it is the original narrator of the opinion.

Another instance is the verse, "O ye who believe! the law of equality is prescribed to you in cases of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman. But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain, then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude, this is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord. After this whoever exceeds the limits shall be in grave penalty."<sup>3</sup> The edited text holds that this verse was abrogated by, "And We prescribed for them therein the life for the life, and the eye for the eye, and the nose for the nose"<sup>4</sup>, and was revealed regarding two Arab tribes: the Arabs initially would not kill a woman for a man; rather they would kill a man for a man and a woman for a woman. That was the case until the verse, "a soul for a soul" was revealed, making the law of retribution, *qiṣāṣ*, equal in its application.<sup>5</sup> Al-Ṭabarī also holds the same opinion<sup>1</sup> from 'Alī b. Abū Talḥa from Ibn 'Abbās, as does al-Naḥḥās.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> XVI: 101.

<sup>2</sup> II: 106.

<sup>3</sup> II: 178.

<sup>4</sup> V: 45.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text, p.13a, *ET*, p.28.

The verse. "It is prescribed, when death approaches any of you, if he leave any goods that he make a bequest to parents and next of kin, according to reasonable usage; this is due from the God-fearing",<sup>3</sup> is also said to be abrogated by the "verses of inheritance"<sup>4</sup>. The edited text is possibly referring here to the view that the leaving of a bequest to parents and to relatives ceased to be permissible after the revelation of the verses of inheritance division, and this opinion is the same that al-Ṭabarī supports, for which he narrates a saying from Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>5</sup> Al-Ṭabarī also relates an opinion that holds that bequests to parents are impermissible and not those made to relatives who are not apportioned a specific inheritance; this view is also reported from Ibn 'Abbās through varying chains.<sup>6</sup> Al-Suyūṭī says that the verse is abrogated by the verses of inheritance, and it is also said to be abrogated by the *ḥadīth*, "There is no bequest for the inheritor."<sup>7</sup> He says that there is also a consensus, *Ijmā'*, on this matter.<sup>8</sup> It is observable from the two examples given above that they are both from Ibn 'Abbās. The statement on abrogation in the text is also clear and succinct in its expression, consistent with the feature of brevity we have previously discussed.

Another example is that of, "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint",<sup>9</sup> said to be abrogated by, "Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and ye are their garments. Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them, and seek what Allah Hath ordained for you, and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread; then complete your fast Till the night appears; but do not associate with your wives while ye are in retreat in the mosques. Those are Limits (set by) Allah. Approach not nigh thereto. Thus doth Allah make clear

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.144.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Naḥḥās, Aḥmad b. Muhammad b. Ismā'īl, *Al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Matba'at al-Sa'āda (1323 A.H.), p.16.

<sup>3</sup> II: 180.

<sup>4</sup> Edited Text, p.13a, *ET*, p.84.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.162.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.2 / pp.161-162.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.3 / p.65.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> II: 183.



His Signs to men: that they may learn self-restraint.”<sup>1</sup> The edited text says that the Muslims originally fasted as the Christians and Jews of the time, that is they would fast during the day, and then resume fasting, after eating, drinking and marital relations, once they had gone to sleep. The Qur’ān however, made clear that it was permissible to eat, drink and have relations up until sunrise.<sup>2</sup> Al-Suyūṭī agrees with the edited text detail, and points to the fact that the verse, “It is made lawful for you to go on to your wives on the night of the fast”,<sup>3</sup> abrogated the verse, “O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint” (II:183). This is because the verse objective is to affirm what they were already observing from refraining from eating and sexual relations before sleep. He does not say whether this was the view of Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>4</sup> It conforms with the position of the majority of commentators.<sup>5</sup> Al-Ṭabarī<sup>6</sup> reports from Ibn ‘Abbās that fasting was three days of each month and then was abrogated by the Ramadan fast. He agrees with the edited text that it was the fast of the People of the Book.

The saying of God, “(Fasting) for a fixed number of days...For those who can do it (With hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent”,<sup>7</sup> is a further example, abrogated by, “Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur’an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting.”<sup>8</sup> The author’s view is that the monetary redemption, *fiḍya*, is abrogated and that fasting is obligatory upon the able.<sup>9</sup> Al-Naḥḥās was of this opinion, as in a narration from ‘Atā, from Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>10</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, of an altogether different opinion, held that the original dispensation, *tarkhīṣ*, was for the elderly, and then this was abrogated, because

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<sup>1</sup> II: 187.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.13a, *ET*, p.84-85.

<sup>3</sup> II: 187.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.3 / p.65.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Sāyis. Muhammad ‘Alī, *Tafsīr ayāt al-aḥkām*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Vol.1 / p.81.

<sup>6</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.178.

<sup>7</sup> II: 184.

<sup>8</sup> II: 185.

<sup>9</sup> Edited text, p.13a, *ET*, p.85.

<sup>10</sup> *Al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh*, p.21.

even the elderly are able; it was only then allowed for the incapable to break fast, such as the pregnant and the ill that fear the worsening of their illness.<sup>1</sup>

In yet another narration from Ibn ‘Abbās it is said that the verse is not abrogated at all, rather its legal obligation remains firm and will continue as such until the end of time. It was intended for the aged one who during his youth did observe the fast, and now incapable due to old-age is required to pay the *fiḍya* in compensation.<sup>2</sup> Al-Bukhārī quotes from Ibn ‘Abbās that he read the verse, *yuṭawwiqūnahu*, with the meaning, “those who are unable to fast from the elderly are required to pay the *fiḍya*; there is no abrogation in this verse.”<sup>3</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās read this recitation as has been reported by ‘Aṭā, ‘Ikrima and Mujāhid.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Naḥḥās, although aware of the opinion of the edited text, favors abrogation in this instance, and furnishes his view with the fact that the verse ends, “and whoever amongst you witnesses the [beginning of] the month, then let him fast.”<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, the principle of abrogation is affirmed by the text, with many examples given of its occurrence – not all these have been mentioned here for fear of lengthiness – and for the most part, the source for the reports is Ibn ‘Abbās; there are a few instances where the author uses the expression, *qīla*, it is said, which is known to be a weak expression in the science of *ḥadīth*.

A final observation is that the text appears only to recognize the abrogation of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān – there are no examples where *ḥadīth* has abrogated verses.

### 3.1.3.3. The Recitations (*Qira’āt*) and their usage in *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān:

The text makes use of variant readings of the Qur’ān in its exegesis without making clear whether the reading is of the *mutawātir*<sup>1</sup> type, or *shādhā*<sup>2</sup> - these narrations may be

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p184.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.2 / pp.185 - 187.

<sup>3</sup> *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.8 / p.200 *ḥadīth*, No. 4505.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.186.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh*, p.21.



authentic or not from Ibn ‘Abbās. The verse, “When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their (*‘idda*), do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands”<sup>3</sup> is given the following commentary: “If you divorce women once or twice, and they would like, after their *‘idda* period is complete, to return to their former husbands after remarrying them and a new dowry is paid, then do not prevent them from marrying.” The word for prevent, *ta‘ḍulūhunna* is said to have a variant reading where its middle radical is marked with a *kesra*, in which case its meaning is *ḥabs*, to imprison.<sup>4</sup> Although the author provides no detail as to which recitation contains this reading, Al-Qurṭubī corroborates the fact that the word *‘aḍul* is pronounced *‘aḍil* in some dialects.<sup>5</sup> Ibn ‘Ashūr says that the word *‘aḍul* connotes prevention and imprisonment.<sup>6</sup> Further investigation on the matter has failed to uncover a variant reading of this word with a *kesra* in any of the books of *tafsīr*. *Al-Nashr fī al-Qira’āt al-‘Ashr* makes no mention whatever of its existence.<sup>7</sup> Then, this did not come from Ibn ‘Abbās. Whatever the case may be, the edited text is clearly suggesting that there exists another reading of the word with that particular vowel in at least one of the early dialects. It also points out that the soundest reading of the word is with a *ḍamma* rather than *kesra*.

A second example is the verse, “None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar.”<sup>8</sup> The edited text says that the word *nunsihā* is also read *nunsi’hā* and connotes in this instance, to delay or to leave to be acted upon.<sup>9</sup> *Al-Nashr* has it that the recitations of Ibn Kathīr and Abū ‘Amr contain this reading<sup>10</sup>; al-Bukhārī has it that it was the recitation of ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Mutawātir, a form of *Tawātur*, ‘Succession’. In Islamic Law, the word is used to designate the narration of *ḥadīth* in legal view by a large number of individuals who must have no predetermined intention to fabricate their statement. *Islamic Law from historical foundations to contemporary practice*, Mawil Izzi Dien, Edinburgh University Press (2004), p166. With regards to recitation it is the transmission of a reading with multiple chains.

<sup>2</sup> *Shādh* refers to any recitation is *isnād* is not authentic like the recitation of *Malaka Yawm al-Dīn*. *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, al-Qaṭṭān, p.160.

<sup>3</sup> II: 232.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text, p.17b,ET,p.118.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, Vol.3 / p.160.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tamwīr*, Vol.2 / p.426.

<sup>7</sup> Vol.2 p.165.

<sup>8</sup> II: 106.

<sup>9</sup> Edited text, p.8a,ET,p.51.

<sup>10</sup> Vol.2 p.165.

<sup>11</sup> *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.9 / p.19.

important point to observe is that the edited text makes no mention of which recitation the variation is to be found, but it is nevertheless *mutawātir*.

The verse. “Those of you who die and leave widows should bequeath (*waṣiyya*) for their widows a year’s maintenance”,<sup>1</sup> which contains the word *waṣiyya*, is, according to the edited text, to be read in the nominative (*rafʿ*), with a *ḍamma*. If read in the accusative it gives the meaning, “they give a gift”<sup>2</sup>. Both recitations are read by the famous *Qurrāʾ* in the accusative (*naṣb*), with a *fathḥa* and in the nominative.<sup>3</sup> Al-Tabarī supports the reading in the nominative but does not mention whether Ibn ‘Abbās read with it.<sup>4</sup>

*ʿAsaytum*, in the verse, “Is it not possible, if ye were commanded to fight, that ye will not (*ʿasaytum*) fight”,<sup>5</sup> is said to be read *asaytum*, meaning will you promise me, and if read *ʿasiytum* it implies do you fear<sup>6</sup>; The latter is infact the reading of Nāfiʿ, al-Ḥasan and Ṭalḥā<sup>7</sup>. None of the scholars make mention of the fact that Ibn ‘Abbās read the second recitation; this reinforces the fact that when the text gives various recitations it is not doing so with the aim of making known Ibn ‘Abbās’ recitation. As for the variant reading of the verse, “Look further at the bones, how We bring them together (*nunshizuhā*) and clothe them with flesh”,<sup>8</sup> where the word *nunshizuhā* is also read *nunshiruhā*, Ibn ‘Abbās is known to have recited both variations.<sup>9</sup> The edited text mentions the variation, holding the first to mean ‘raise up’ and the second to connote ‘create’.<sup>10</sup> *Al-Nashr* says that all the recitors except for Ibn ‘Āmir and the Kufans recite it *nunshiruhā*. al-Qurṭubī states that Ibn ‘Abbās read it *nunshiruhā*.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> II: 240.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.18b, *ET*, p.124.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Mujāhid, Ahmad b.Musa, *Kitāb al-Sabaʿa fī al-Qirāʾāt*, Dār al-Maʿārif, Egypt (1972), p184, Edited text, p.18a.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.783.

<sup>5</sup> II: 246.

<sup>6</sup> Edited text, p19a, *ET*, p.126.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn al -Jazri ,abu al-Khayr ,Muhammad b.Muhammad ,*al -Nashr fī al-Qirāʾāt alashr* , Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya .Beirut ,Lebanon (1998 ) .Vol.2 / p.173, Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.169 and al-Qurṭubī, Vol.3 / p.241.

<sup>8</sup> II: 259.

<sup>9</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / p.162.

<sup>10</sup> Edited text, p.20a, *ET*, p.135.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, Vol.3 / p.295.



As previously observed of the exegetical style of the text, wherever a word which has variant readings is repeated in the Qur'ān, the text repeats its earlier exegesis. An example of this is found with the exegesis of *al-Kahf* verse thirty-four and *Luqmān* verse thirty-three.

It is clear from the examples cited with reference to the variant readings that the text makes no attempt to mention the sources of the recitations; its concern is only with the use variant readings have in terms of enlightening the reader about the meanings of the Qur'ān; the text relies on not only the *mutawātir* readings, but also the *mashhūr* and the *shādh*. Observable also is that the text often does not provide details of a recitation of Ibn 'Abbās even when other commentators do though the origin is Ibn 'Abbās, such as in the verse, "He said: 'I know (*a'lamu*) that Allah hath power over all things'."<sup>1</sup> In this example it is stated that Ibn 'Abbās read the word *a'lamu* as *i'lam* the imperative form of the verb *'Alīma* rather than the present indicative.<sup>2</sup> The *Nashr* mentions that Ḥamza and al-Kisā'ī both read the word as the imperative whilst the remaining reciters read it as a present indicative.<sup>3</sup>

At times the text makes no mention of the recitation of Ibn 'Abbās especially if it is of the *shādh* category such as his reading of *yūṭawwaqūnahū* ( II:184) instead of *yūṭiqūnahū*; The *Nashr* makes no mention of it being from the recitations. At other times it presents the recitation in a form that does not indicate it being another recitation but rather, by explaining the word if it is such and such.<sup>4</sup>

A final observation is that the texts treatment of the variant readings is in a style that is concise. and is introduced with the expression, '*in qurī'at*', "if it is read as such and such". This expression is used consistently throughout the text's exegesis.

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<sup>1</sup> II: 259.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / p.65. See also al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.186.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Nashr*. Vol.2 / p.174.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text p.9a,ET,p.58. (II: 119).

#### 3.1.3.4. Occasions of revelation (*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*):

This aspect of *tafsīr* is also given primary importance by the text, no doubt by virtue of its importance in shedding light on the background as to why verses were revealed in their particular historical contexts; a deeper understanding is acquired by such study, and is useful even though many verses are clearly of general purport intended for all times and places. The expression used in the text to introduce one of the many occasions of revelation quite unorthodox. It is not necessarily so, that when the verb *nazala* is used that the cause of revelation is mentioned; it may be simply the introduction to an associated story or legal injunction or historical account. In contrast, many other expressions are used which do introduce a point to be made about the occasion of revelation, such as *bayyana*, clarify, or *waddaha*, explain, or *dalla* indicate. The examples in the texts of such instances are many, some of which will now be shown.

Regarding the verse, “Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realise (it) not!”<sup>1</sup> the edited text says:

They [hypocrites], in their concealing of disbelief, ruin what that they make apparent of faith; it is said [also] that they are daring in front of the Lord, to the point where they think they have deceived Him. They think also that they deceive Abū Bakr and other companions of the Prophet, when, infact, they deceive only themselves, and they do not perceive that God makes known to His prophet that which their hearts conceal.<sup>2</sup>

After completing the commentary of the following verses, the edited text mentions that the hypocrites in question are ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Ubayy, Jadd b. Qays and Mu‘tab b. Qushayr. It is reported from Ibn ‘Abbās, that these three mentioned men, when they would meet the believers, would say, “We have believed too, and we witness that Muhammad is

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<sup>1</sup> II: 9.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p3a,ET,p.12-13.



truthful”: when, however, they were amongst themselves they bragged about their disbelief in him. It was with this that the verses were revealed.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās makes quite apparent that the actions of these men were the cause of revelation: the edited text, however, does not do the same –it merely implies this in its exegesis of the verses, stating that the verse was revealed regarding various people, probably because its primary concern is exegesis rather than documenting of historical accounts.

In commentary of a verse similar to the last, “When they meet those who believe, they say: ‘We believe;’ but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: ‘We are really with you: We (were) only jesting’”,<sup>2</sup> the exegete says, “the hypocrites would, when they met Abū Bakr and his comrades, say, ‘We have believed in secret and have been true to our faith as you have believed in secret and been true [to your faith]’. Then, when they reunited with their devils, their high-priests, who were five in number: Ka‘b b. Al-Ashraf in Medina. Abū Barda al-Aslami from Banū Aslam, Abū Sawdā’ in Syria, ‘Abd Addār in Juhayna and ‘Awf b. Mālik from Banū ‘Āmir...”<sup>3</sup> Al-Ṭabarī narrates from Ibn ‘Abbās that a group of Jews, when they would meet the companions of the Prophet, would say that they are on their religion, but after returning to their own comrades, who were no less than devils, they would say, “We are indeed with you”.<sup>4</sup> The consistency between the narrations is quite apparent.

In commentary of, “It is not required of thee (O Messenger., to set them on the right path, but Allah sets on the right path whom He pleaseth. Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the Face of Allah. Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly”,<sup>5</sup> the edited text begins by saying that giving charity to the People of the Book and the pagans was permitted as a result of Asmā’ bt. Abū Bakr asking if it was permissible to spend in charity on their relatives of another religion. It then continues to give commentary on the

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<sup>1</sup> *Zād al-Masīr*, Vol.1 / p.25.

<sup>2</sup> II: 140.

<sup>3</sup> Edited text, p.3a, ET, p.15.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.188.

<sup>5</sup> II: 272.

legal consequences of the verse.<sup>1</sup> There is no express mention of the cause of revelation, rather the reader is left to deduce that the questioning of the companions was what prompted an answer from the Lord. As for Al-Ṭabarī's version, it is narrated from Sa'īd b. Jubayr, from Ibn 'Abbās, and is exactly the same except that there is no mention of who the questioner was.<sup>2</sup> Al-Wāḥidī's commentary presents four versions of the event<sup>3</sup>: two are similar to the report of Ibn 'Abbās, though they are not from him, and two are from al-Kalbī. The first version has it that the Prophet made *'umrah* accompanied by Asmā' bt. Abū Bakr. Her mother and grandmother both approached her on this trip asking for financial help; saying she was unable to do so because they were not Muslims but that she would seek permission from the Prophet, she asked them to wait for her final response. It was at this point that God revealed the verse, and the Prophet ordered her to give them charity. The second version resembles closely the edited text's version of events.

At times the text makes mention of only the general cause of revelation without giving details such as the commentary of the verse, "Say: 'Whether ye hide what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it all'".<sup>4</sup> It says that the verse was revealed regarding the hypocrites and the Jews.<sup>5</sup> The fact that such a general cause of revelation has been given for this and many other verses also, is very revealing about the era in which the exegete lived; firstly, neither al-Wāḥidī or al-Suyūfī give such general causes of revelation, in fact, they would very likely have considered such facts as outside the area of *asbāb al-nuzūl*; secondly, the text does not follow the methodology of later commentators who place *asbāb al-nuzūl* at the beginning of their commentary of any one *sūra*; instead, it leaves the subject till after detailed *tafsīr* is complete; lastly, the text makes no use of later *tafsīr* terminology – he doesn't even use the term *sabab al-nuzūl* – all of these points make it clear that the edited text predates the later crystallization of *tafsīr* as a branch of the sacred sciences. It also implies, by not mentioning any specific word to introduce the

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.21b, ET, p.141.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / p.130.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Wāḥidī, pp.91 – 92.

<sup>4</sup> III: 29.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text, p.25a.



occasion of revelation, that it is not from Ibn ‘Abbās: his style was to do so as shown above.

### 3.1.3.5. Legal Injunctions (*Aḥkām Shar‘iyya*):

This is another genre of Qur’ānic verse the text treats; it consistently pauses at every verse which expresses a legal injunction or introduces a juristic issue, and explains, mostly in a succinct manner, and not infrequently with more detail, the various consequences and connotations associated with them. The manner in which the text treats these verses is distinctly at variance with many other classical commentaries, something that will become clearer through the following examples.

Regarding the verse, “O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you. And be grateful to Allah, if it is Him ye worship”,<sup>1</sup> the edited text says:

Whoever is forced out of necessity to eat carrion, neither being a disenter (*khārijī*) or regarding it to be permissible, is neither a highway-robber or one intentionally eating it without necessity, then he should feel no anguish in doing so, for God is All-Forgiving for what was unnecessarily eaten of it, beyond subsistence, All-Merciful, for allowing its consumption.<sup>2</sup>

In this short passage the edited text mentions a number of legal issues relating to the eating of carrion, some related from Ibn ‘Abbās, and others from the great jurists of the four legal schools: where it mentions that the one forced to eat carrion out of necessity should not be doing so as a result of being a *khārijī* or a *mustaḥill*, it is, in fact, combining two well-known opinions: one from Mujāhid as reported in al-Ṭabarī, “not being Khārijī, dissenting from the opinions of the leaders with his sword out of rebellion (*baghy*); and

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<sup>1</sup> II: 172.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.12a,ET,p.78.

secondly: the opinion of Ibn ‘Abbās, that is he is not eating it out of covetousness (*baghy*).”<sup>1</sup> So too does it combine two opinions when explaining the word ‘*ādī*, transgressing; the first meaning given is that it is the high-way robber, and this is also the opinion of Mujāhid, “that he (the one eating carrion) should not be raiding against them in war or show enmity and aggression, causing difficulty for them to journey.” The second opinion the edited text presents is that ‘*ādī* refers to one eating carrion intentionally without necessity, and this is what has been reported from Ibn ‘Abbās and Qatādah.<sup>2</sup>

The edited text explains that the eater of carrion should not feel anguish for eating his fill, so long as he does not then take extra stock from it; this was also the opinion of the juriconsult Mālik.<sup>3</sup> As for the opinion of Ibn ‘Abbās, which was he should not eat to his fill, we find that the edited text on one occasion agrees with Ibn ‘Abbās, and on another contradicts him. It is not known what the reason for this is; perhaps a future study in this area will shed further light on the matter.

A further example is the commentary of the verse, “When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their (*’idda*), either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms; but do not take them back to injure them, (or) to take undue advantage; if any one does that; He wrongs his own soul. Do not treat Allah’s Signs as a jest, but solemnly rehearse Allah’s favours on you, and the fact that He sent down to you the Book and Wisdom, for your instruction. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is well-acquainted with all things”,<sup>4</sup> in which the edited text says:

If you divorce women once, and they have almost completed their waiting-period, just before they bathe from their third menstrual cycle, then revoke

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.118.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.2 / p.119.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Baghawī*, Vol.1 / p.98.

<sup>4</sup> II: 231.



the divorce in a way which is amicable and kind-mannered or leave them to be free whilst fulfilling their rights.<sup>1</sup>

The legal view expressed here is that the waiting-period of a divorced woman is three menstrual cycles and ends with her bathing from the third cycle; before her bathing, the husband is free to choose whether to return his wife to himself or to allow the divorce to materialize, resulting in an irrevocable divorce. The opinion is one not unique to the edited text, although it does not mention specifically to whom it belongs - it is possible, that in remaining silent on the scholars that hold this view it is seeking to imply that it was the opinion of Ibn ‘Abbās. Incidentally, an investigation in the books of *tafsīr* has failed to uncover the position of Ibn ‘Abbās on the above-mentioned legal issue.<sup>2</sup> In any case, the point is made in a typically succinct manner whilst still explaining clearly the issue at hand.

Amongst the various ways the edited text presents legal injunctions is the use of headings to introduce a verse: “And if ye divorce them before consummation, but after the fixation of a dower for them, then the half of the dower (Is due to them), unless they remit it or (the man's half) is remitted by him in whose hands is the marriage tie; and the remission (of the man's half) is the nearest to righteousness. And do not forget Liberality between yourselves. For Allah sees well all that ye do”,<sup>3</sup> is a typical example of this, whereby it says,

Then He (God) makes clear the ruling of a woman who has had her dowry pronounced: if such a woman is divorced before consummation, and you have made clear the amount of dowry due to her, then upon you is half of what you have declared, unless she waives her right; or else if the one who possesses the marriage, that is the man, waives his right by giving his wife her full dowry. God then says that to leave your right is closer to piety, meaning that whoever from the husband and wife waives their right then they shall be the

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text ,p.17b, *ET*,p.118.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.652 and al-Qurṭubī, Vol.2 / p.650.

<sup>3</sup> II: 237.

ones closer to piety. He also says that they should not forget to show kindness towards one another, for God is all-aware.<sup>1</sup>

Here, apart from introducing the commentary with a title, the commentary provides only one opinion on who is the “one who possesses the marriage tie”, asserting that it is the husband; there is, however, an opposing view which holds that it is the wife’s guardian. The position given in the edited text is, in fact, the opinion of Ibn ‘Abbās, although there are two reports that have been narrated from him in al-Ṭabarī: the second being that the wife’s guardian is the possessor of the marriage tie; Al-Ṭabarī gives more weight to it being the husband.<sup>2</sup>

Another distinct feature of the texts presentation of legal verses is that it mentions the variant readings of such verses, as well as the occasion of revelation. An example is the commentary of “When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their (*Iddat*), do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands, if they mutually agree on equitable terms”,<sup>3</sup> whereby it says,

If you have divorced your women once or twice, and they have drawn to near to the end of their waiting-period, if they choose to return to their spouses with the pronouncement of a new contract and dowry then do not prevent them. If it (*ta‘ḍulūhunna*) is read with a kesra (*ta‘ḍilūhunna*) then it implies imprisonment; the verse was revealed about Ma‘qal b. Yasār al-Muzni for preventing his sister, Jamīla, from returning to her first husband, ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Āsim, after a new contract and dowry, and so God prohibited him from that.<sup>4</sup>

This is Ibn ‘Abbās’ view also regarding the occasion of revelation, although he, in his report, does not mention the names of the people involved.<sup>5</sup> It is noticeable from the texts commentary of the legal verses that it makes no attempt to furnish its views with

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text. p.18b.ET,p.122.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / pp.740 – 741.

<sup>3</sup> II: 232.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text, p18a,ET,p.118.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.657, *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajiz*, Vol.1 / p.310.



Qur'ānic or *ḥadīth* evidences; rather, in line with the classical works in jurisprudence, presents only its conclusion on the matter, without detailing the intricate steps traversed to arrive at it.

On occasion the text does present several scholarly opinions that have been deduced from the Qur'ān and *Sunna* on a particular legal issue. The verse, “Ramaḍan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful”,<sup>1</sup> is given the following commentary:

Whoever from amongst you is on a journey, then let him fast from other days the equivalent number of days he has missed; that is because God wishes for you that you may have a legal dispensation (*rukhsa*) for breaking fast whilst on a journey; it is said also that God would prefer for people to break fast on a journey; and He does not intend hardship for you by your fasting on a journey.<sup>2</sup>

The edited text makes mention of two well-known positions on the issue of breaking fast whilst on a journey: the first holds that it is a concession, ‘*rukhsah*’, meaning it is preferable to fast, whereas the second regards the breaking of the fast to be a strict rule, ‘*azīmah*’; the former opinion was held by Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>3</sup>

Another observable feature of the exegetical style of the text is that it often confines a verse – even when it relates to law – to a particular thing: an example of this is, “And spend of your substance in the cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to

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<sup>1</sup> II: 185.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.13b,ET,p.87.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.205, 212. See also al-Nasafī, Vol.1 / p.94.

(your) destruction; but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good”,<sup>1</sup> where it says, “spend in the way of God, and out of obedience to Him in order that the ‘*umrah* may be completed, and do not prevent your hands from spending and thus become destroyed. It is said that the meaning of, “Do not throw yourselves in to destruction by your own hands” to mean destroyed, and also that it means, “do not despair from the mercy of God and thus fall in to destruction.”<sup>2</sup> Here, it is confining the spending in the path of God to refer to the lesser-pilgrimage. Furthermore, it makes no explicit statement regarding which of the three opinions is the weightiest; it may be summarised, however, that there is an indication of preference from the ordering of the views, and that the text gives precedence to the first or his saying “it is said”, is to highlight the weakness of the position following it.

There are examples in the text where it treats the meaning of a verse as being confined to a specific particular, such as the saying of God, “They ask thee concerning women’s courses. Say: They are a hurt and a pollution: So keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean. But when they have purified themselves, ye may approach them in any manner, time, or place ordained for you by Allah. For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.”<sup>3</sup> It says in this instance, “the private parts of your wives are a cultivating ground of your offspring, and so come to your cultivating ground however you will...and send forth for yourselves (works of righteousness) such as a pious child, and fear God by not entering the anus or having intercourse during menstruation.”<sup>4</sup> The instances of confinement (*ḥaṣr*) here are the restriction of good works to being a righteous child, and piety as being the avoidance of a particular sexual activity, although *taqwā* has far wider connotations.

Likewise. the text restricts the meanings of particular verses to the individuals for whom they were originally revealed. In commentary of the verse, “If a wife fears cruelty or

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<sup>1</sup> II: 195.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.14b,ET,p.93.

<sup>3</sup> II: 222.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text, p.16b,ET,p.112.



desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves",<sup>1</sup> the word *imra'a*, wife, is said to be 'Umayra who was prevented her right of to conjugal relations by her husband Sa'd b. al-Rabī', an act in Islamic Law termed *nushūz*.<sup>2</sup> Although it does not intend by mentioning the personalities involved that the verse is confined to their story rather than the general principle it intends. it may be supposed as such by the reader.

In conclusion, it has been observed from a close study of the commentary given of legal injunctions in the Qur'ān that the commentary often gives only a single position or opinion related to the legal ruling being explicated, or else it provides more than one opinion but makes no attempt to give preponderance to one over another, or to mention from whom the opinions are taken; the implications of this are pertinent to our dating of the text: it is certainly the habit of later exegetes, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards, to mention whether a legal ruling is the opinion of al-Shāfi'ī or Abū Ḥanīfah or one of the other great jurists; the fact that the text does not do this suggests it preceded all of them. Why it does not then attribute opinions to the companions either, or the successors may further imply that the author is originally Ibn 'Abbās, who, being one of the foremost of the companions, is highly unlikely to have give importance to the sources holding divergent opinions to his own. The fact that some of the opinions mentioned in the text are not those of Ibn 'Abbās as preserved in the great exegesis' of later times is problematic. and leaves us without conclusive proof on the matter of who the exegete of the edited text was. It may be seen from the edited text that its author does not rely on verses of the Qur'ān for his jurisprudence or on traditions of the Prophet. He does not use evidence to support a view other than the contents of a particular verse indicating he probably wasn't an independent jurist, *mujtahid muṭlaq*. The most that can be said about him is that he merely transmitted what was immediately related to a verse such as its cause of revelation or a hadith related specifically to it.

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<sup>1</sup> IV: 128.

<sup>2</sup> Text, p.35a.

### 3.1.3.6. Aspects related to rhetoric (*balāgha*) which the author turns his attention to:

The author of the text does not employ terminologies known of the science of rhetoric that arose from the second century onwards, despite the fact that he does explain aspects of *Anastrophe* (*Al-taqdīm and al-Ta'khīr*), *al-tashbīh* (allegory) and *al-majāz* (figurative expression). We shall look at each of these individually.

#### The first: *Anastrophe* (*Al-taqdīm and al-Ta'khīr*):

Al-Suyūfī divides this subject-matter into two divisions: that whose meaning is problematic and requires syntactic delay and bringing forward (*taqdīm wa ta'khīr*) in order for the required meaning to be clear, and that sentence for which there is no obvious reason for the predicate to be brought before the subject, except that there may be some subtle wisdom.<sup>1</sup> This second category falls under the rubrik of rhetoric, more so than the first division, which is more grammatical in nature. In this section, we shall present instances where the author mentions the concept of *taqdīm* and *ta'khīr* and decide which of the two meanings, grammatical or rhetorical, he chooses.

For example, “None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?”<sup>2</sup> He says after explaining the verse, that there is *taqdīm* and *ta'khīr* however he makes no mention of where it is, how it occurs or why.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, he mentions the same for, “For Hajj are the months well known. If any one undertakes that duty therein, Let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj...And take a provision (With you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct”<sup>4</sup>. The edited text says, “And take provision from the provisions of the world *muqaddam* and *mu'akkhar*”,<sup>5</sup> and, “Take four birds *muqaddam* and *mu'akkhar*”,<sup>6</sup> the order of God to Abraham. In none of the instances mentioned, due to the concise nature of the authors expression, are we

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.3 / pp.31 – 33.

<sup>2</sup> II: 106.

<sup>3</sup> Edited text, p.8a, *ET*, p.51.

<sup>4</sup> II: 197.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text, p.14b, *ET*, p.96.

<sup>6</sup> II: 260. Edited text, p.20b, *ET*, p.136.



able to ascertain whether he intends the syntactical delay to be due to grammar or rhetoric; the author is leaving it for the reader to decipher whatever is the case.

At times, however, he does clarify the place at which there has been *taqdīm* and *ta'khīr*, such as, "But if ye cannot – and of asurety ye cannot – then fear the Fire whose fuel is men and stones prepared for those who reject Faith."<sup>1</sup> He says, "This is *muqaddam* and *mu'akkhar*; "of asurety ye cannot" means you will never be capable of undertaking or of coming with something similar (to the Qur'ān)."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, "Then those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, - soon will He admit them to mercy and grace from Himself, and guide them to Himself by a straight way",<sup>3</sup> for which he says, "*muqaddam* and *mu'akkhar*, meaning He will enter them into his mercy and blessing."<sup>4</sup> He does not, however, explain the underlying wisdom for the *taqdīm*.

We may surmise from these examples that his only concern for mentioning the places of *taqdīm* and *ta'khīr* is for the reader to understand the basic meaning of the verse, rather than a deeper rhetorical explanation. A pertinent point with respect to this research here is that there is no mention in any of the narrations from Ibn 'Abbās in any of the major works of exegesis, that he discussed the issue of *taqdīm* and *ta'khīr*. This an evidence that Ibn 'Abbās was not the source of this exegesis.

#### The second :Simile (al-Tashbīh):

Previously, it has been indicated that the author treats aspects of rhetoric, particularly similes, in his exegesis, being one of the aesthetically effective aspects of language. For the verse, "Their similitude is that of a man who kindled a fire; when it lighted all around him, Allah took away their light and left them in utter darkness. So they could not see",<sup>5</sup> after explaining its meaning, the author says, "the hypocrites also believed in Muhammad and the Qur'ān and so found for themselves, their families, and their wealth safety from slavery and killing. When they die, however, then 'Allah will take away their light', or

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<sup>1</sup> II: 24.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.3b,ET,p.19.

<sup>3</sup> IV: 175.

<sup>4</sup> Text, p.44 b.

<sup>5</sup> II: 17.

the benefit they gained from claiming faith, ‘and leave them in darkness’, or hardship due to disbelief. ‘unable to see.’”<sup>1</sup> Thus here he explains the similitude in the verse without the use of terminologies such as *mushabbah*, *mushabbah bih*, etc, coined no doubt after the author’s time. Ibn ‘Abbās narrates similar.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding, “Or (another similitude) is that of a rain-laden cloud from the sky: In it are zones of darkness, and thunder and lightning: They press their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap, the while they are in terror of death. But Allah is ever round the rejecters of Faith!”<sup>3</sup> the edited text says,

This is another simile: the likeness of the hypocrites and the Jews with the Qur’ān is like a rain cloud or rain which falls from the sky at night upon a people in a desert ‘in it’, the night, ‘is darkness and thunder and lightning’, and so too has the Qur’ān descended from God, in it is darkness, the description of future calamities, and in it is thunder, the warning and awe-inspiring admonitions, and lightning, explanation and help and promise or reward. ‘They put their fingers in their ears due to the bolts’, the thunderbolts, ‘out of fear of death’, misfortunes and death. So too would the hypocrites and the Jews put their fingers in their ears to block out the Qur’ān and its clarification and promises and warnings, fearing death, that is, fearing that their hearts might incline towards it.<sup>4</sup>

Again, the text explains the similitude without the technical terminology usually employed in the science of rhetoric.

The edited text says with regards to the verse, “And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls, is as a garden, high and fertile: heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not Heavy rain, light moisture sufficeth it. Allah seeth well whatever ye do”,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text. p.3a,ET,p.17.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to section on Ibn ‘Abbās and his treatment of rhetoric in the Qur’ān.1.4.9.

<sup>3</sup> II: 19.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text. p.3b,ET,p.17.

<sup>5</sup> II: 265.



that it refers to a heavy rain, 'light moisture sufficeth it', meaning dew, and that this is the similitude of the believer who spends his wealth with sincerity and whose reward for doing so is multiplied just as the fruits of a garden multiply.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, after explaining, "Does any of you wish that he should have a garden with date-palms and vines and streams flowing underneath, and all kinds of fruit, while he is stricken with old age, and his children are not strong (enough to look after themselves) - that it should be caught in a whirlwind, with fire therein, and be burnt up? Thus doth Allah make clear to you (His) Signs; that ye may consider",<sup>2</sup> the edited text says, "This is a similitude referring to an old man. He has no recourse to anything that will return to him his youth."<sup>3</sup> This has also been reported as a saying of Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>4</sup>

"The parable of those who reject Faith is as if one were to shout Like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries: Deaf, dumb, and blind, they are void of wisdom",<sup>5</sup> has been explained to be a simile between one who disbelieves and a camel or sheep, neither understanding nor aware.<sup>6</sup> The same has been reported from Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>7</sup>

### The third : Metaphor (*al-Majāz*):

There are three central views associated with metaphor and its existence within the Qur'ān: a group of scholars have held that it does not exist in language in the first place, let alone in the Qur'ān and *Hadīth*; another has denied its presence in the Qur'ān and *hadīth* without denying its existence in language generally; and the third group has accepted its presence in the Qur'ān and *hadīth*.<sup>8</sup>

Attention is now turned to the view of the author of the text and whether he was of the opinion that figurative speech exists in the Qur'ān. Explaining the verse, "Show us the

<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.21a,ET,p.138.

<sup>2</sup> II: 266.

<sup>3</sup> Edited text, p.21a,ET,p.139.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / pp.105 – 106, *Fath al-Bārī*, Vol.8 / p.225, Chapter 46.

<sup>5</sup> II: 171.

<sup>6</sup> Edited text, p.12a,ET,p.78.

<sup>7</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.2 / p.109, al-Nasafī, Vol.1 / p.88.

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Majāz fī al-Lughā wa al-Qur'ān bayna al-Ijāzati wa al-Man'*, Vol.1 / p.526.

straight way”,<sup>1</sup> he says, “Guide us to upright religion which you are pleased with and that is Islam. It is said ‘make us firm upon it’, and it is said also that it (the straight path) is the Book of God, meaning, ‘Guide us to its permissible and its prohibited, and the explanation of what it contains’.”<sup>2</sup> Thus he clearly accepts the occurrence of *majāz* in the Qur’ān as this type in *al-Fātiḥa* is called *isti’ārah aṣliyyah*, a primary metaphor in the science of rhetoric, as explained ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Mat’anī<sup>3</sup>. Al-Ṭabarī relates the same about this verse.<sup>4</sup>

Also for “How can ye reject the faith in Allah.--seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return”,<sup>5</sup> he says that the interrogative particle *kayfa* is used rhetorically with the meaning of *ta’ajjub*, amazement,<sup>6</sup> which is another example of *majāz*. Al-Ṭabarī says something similar to this.<sup>7</sup>

The verse, “Or (another similitude) is that of a rain-laden cloud from the sky: In it are zones of darkness, and thunder and lightning: They press their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap, the while they are in terror of death. But Allah is ever round (*muḥīt*) the rejecters of Faith!”<sup>8</sup> about which he says that God has knowledge of who they are and will gather them in the fire.<sup>9</sup> Here he suggests that the word *muḥīt*, to encompass, refers to an encompassing in terms of knowledge and his severe dealing with them in the next life, which is metaphorical rather than literal. It is known in the science of rhetoric as *al-isti’ārah al-taba’iyya*, a secondary metaphor.<sup>10</sup> We have already mentioned the same regarding Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I: 6.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.2a,ET,p.6.

<sup>3</sup> *al-Majāz fī al-Luḡa wa al-Qur’ān bayna al-Ijāzati wa al-Man’*, Vol.1 / p.455.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.107.

<sup>5</sup> II: 28.

<sup>6</sup> Edited text, p.4a,ET,p.21.

<sup>7</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.274.

<sup>8</sup> II: 19.

<sup>9</sup> Edited text, p.3b,ET,p.18.

<sup>10</sup> *al-Majāz fī al-Luḡa wa al-Qur’ān bayna al-Ijāzati wa al-Man’*, Vol.1 / p.461.

<sup>11</sup> Refer to Ibn ‘Abbās and his treatment of rhetoric in the Qur’ān:1.4.9.



These examples provide sufficient evidence that the author of the text was accepting of the occurrence of *majāz* in the Qur'ān, but without details in explanation or using the terminology of this subject, and by extension, of course, in Arabic generally.

### 3.1.3.7. The linguistic aspects dealt with by the text:

The text treats certain linguistic aspects of the Qur'ān without categorizing under terminologies that became well known during the third and fourth century as a result of the formulation of language and grammar; instead, a simpler, minimal presentation is given. In some places linguistic and grammatical rules and patterns that are agreed upon by the scholars of language are transgressed. The following are examples:

#### The first: Derivation (*al-Ishtiqaq*):

The author attempts to explain words by coining words himself: he invents words which are of the same derived form as the words he explains, however, these are not always present in the lexicons. In fact, it may be deemed altogether incorrect. He says of the verse, “Those who devour usury will not stand except as stand one whom the Evil one by his touch Hath driven to madness”,<sup>1</sup> that *yatakhabbatuhū*, driving to madness is synonymous with *yatakhabbaluhū*<sup>2</sup>. However, none of the well-known lexicons contain, under the entry *khabala*, the derived form *takhabbalā*.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, “And remember Moses prayed for water for his people; We said: ‘Strike the rock with thy staff.’ Then gushed forth therefrom twelve springs”,<sup>4</sup> where *infajara*, to gush forth, is explained to mean *inkharaja*<sup>5</sup>, another word not to be found in any lexicon.

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<sup>1</sup> II: 275.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.21b,ET,p.142.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Zāwī. al-Ṭāhir Aḥmad, *Tartīb al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol.2 / p.11, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Vol.4 / p.20, *Tāj al-'Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, Vol.14 / p.188; entry for *khabala*

<sup>4</sup> II: 60.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text,p.5b.ET,p.32.

### The second: Plural forms (*al-Jumūʿ*):

The text contains a number of plural forms for which the author has not found any linguistic basis for; for example, “So they will wander like blind ones (*yaʿmahūn*)”,<sup>1</sup> he says they are blind, *ʿamaha*, unable to see.<sup>2</sup> The lexicons, however, do not provide such a plural for the word *ʿamih*, blind. *ʿAmihūn*, *ʿammah*, *ʿumah* and *ʿamhāna* are the only forms one finds.<sup>3</sup> Can it be said that the exegete here has knowledge of a word form that none besides him has? Similarly, “And remember Moses said to his people: ‘(Allah) commands that ye sacrifice a heifer (*baqara*)’”,<sup>4</sup> he gives *buqūr* as a plural form for *baqara*.<sup>5</sup> The lexicons give only *baqar*, *baqarāt* and *abqur*.<sup>6</sup> The verse, “Were ye witnesses when death appeared before Jacob”,<sup>7</sup> for which he says *ḥuḍarāʿ* in place of *shuhadāʿ*<sup>8</sup> is also not to be found in the lexicon *Lisān al-ʿArab*, which provides only *ḥuḍdar* and *ḥuḍūr*.<sup>9</sup> Finally for the purposes of example the verse, “O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him ye worship”,<sup>10</sup> in which *ṭayyibāt* is explained as *ḥalālāt*,<sup>11</sup> a word not found in the lexicons.<sup>12</sup> He is apparently keen to explain words with synonyms of the same derivational form, regardless of whether they actually exist in the language.<sup>13</sup>

### The third: The complement to the oath (*jawāb al-qasam*):

He only provides rare indications of this linguistic structure in his exegesis. An instance where he points out the presence of the complement is his exegesis of the verse, “But they deny the truth when it comes to them: so they are in a confused state.”<sup>14</sup> He says,

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<sup>1</sup> II: 15.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.3a.ET,p.16.

<sup>3</sup> *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Vol.9 / p.408, entry for *ʿa-m-h*.

<sup>4</sup> II: 67.

<sup>5</sup> Edited text, p.6a.ET,p.35.

<sup>6</sup> *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Vol.1 / p.458, entry for *b-q-r*.

<sup>7</sup> II: 133.

<sup>8</sup> Edited text, p.10a.ET,p.64.

<sup>9</sup> *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Vol.3 / p.214, entry for *ḥ-ḍ-r*.

<sup>10</sup> II: 172.

<sup>11</sup> Edited text, p.12a.ET,p.78.

<sup>12</sup> See entry for *ḥ-ll*, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Vol.3 / p.297, and *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, Vol.14 / p.162.

<sup>13</sup> Although al-Baghawī mention *ḥalālāt* (Vol.1 / p.5) in his *tafsīr* he says in his introduction that he is quoting al-Kalbī.

<sup>14</sup> LX: 5.



“Quraysh deemed Muhammad a liar, and denied the Qur’ān when he called them to Islam, and this saying of theirs (in the verse) all constitutes the *jawāb al-qasam*.”<sup>1</sup> The oath he is referring to is that which opens the chapter, “*Qāf*: By the Glorious Qur’ān.”<sup>2</sup> Likewise, he points out that saying of God, “The (Prophet’s) (mind and) heart in no way falsified that which he saw”,<sup>3</sup> is the complement to the oath in the first verse of the *sūra*,<sup>4</sup> “By the Star when it goes down.”<sup>5</sup>

#### The forth: Grammatical attachment (*al-‘Atf*):

He touches upon the conjunctions without giving too much detail or explanation. For the saying of God, “O mankind! Fear your Guardian Lord, who created you from a single person, created it, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- Fear Allah through whom you demand your mutual (rights), and be heedful of the wombs (that bore you): for Allah Ever watches over you”,<sup>6</sup> he says, “The wombs are connected by a conjunctive particle to the Majestic name, but in actuality the sentence beginning *wa al-arḥām* is independent of the sentence *wattaqū allāh*, because the meaning of the verse is, “and fear Allāh, the One whom you ask, and keep the ties of kinship.”<sup>7</sup> The text’s presentation of this subject is very rare, without any details or explanation.

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<sup>1</sup> Text, p.212b.

<sup>2</sup> LX: 1.

<sup>3</sup> LXIII: 11.

<sup>4</sup> Text, p.212b.

<sup>5</sup> LXIII: 1.

<sup>6</sup> IV: 1.

<sup>7</sup> Text, p.35a.

### The fifth: Inquiry (*al-Istifhām*):

He explains that the usage of the interrogative particles *Kayfa* and *Mā*, in the verses, “And how could ye take it when ye have gone in unto each other, and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?”,<sup>1</sup> “What is the Sure Reality?”,<sup>2</sup> and “How can you reject the faith in Allah seeing that ye were without life, then He gave you life?”,<sup>3</sup> are used rhetorically for purposes of *al-ta’ajjub*, amazement, rather than actual inquiry.<sup>4</sup> He does so infrequently and in a very concise manner without employing any particular grammatical terminology known of later generations. This, being common of early exegetical style, would indicate that the text does in fact date back to the first century A.H. for he appears to have no knowledge of grammatical terminology or of the model forms of the lexicons of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and after.

### Conclusion:

The subjects treated by the edited text are many and varied, some of them being the same as those treated by Ibn ‘Abbās; from them are the stories of the Qur’ān, abrogation, the variant readings, the *asbāb al-nuzūl* and the *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*. Interestingly, with regards to legal injunctions, the edited text provides only opinions without ever expressly giving a preference suggesting that its author was not qualified to weigh up the difference of opinion of the great jurists. The results of the investigation of the linguistic aspects of the text were highly revealing also: it would appear from the findings of the linguistic, grammatical and rhetorical perspectives addressed in the text that its author predated the later systemization of each of these sciences – this would leave us in a position to confirm that he was of a much earlier era. He would no doubt have considered himself to be qualified to discuss grammar, language and rhetoric, and to coin terms and word forms himself – neither would he have felt restricted by the later crystallization of the science of grammar and morphology, which delineate a set number of word forms. This opinion of

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<sup>1</sup> IV: 21.

<sup>2</sup> LXIX: 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> II: 28.

<sup>4</sup> Text, p.37a, p.236b.



the author would appear more consistent with his quite obvious degree of scholarship than, say, to assume he was of a later generation but oblivious to the terminology of grammar and rhetoric. Since the text has been dated to the early second century A.H. by historical sources, the first assumption is provided further support.

### 3.2. The characteristics of the text:

After presenting the methodology of the text, it is possible to extract its distinctive characteristics which perhaps make it distinct from other *tafsīrs* of the first and second centuries are encompassed in what follows:

#### 3.2.1. The subject-matter which it treats:

The primary objective of the text is the explanation of the meanings of the Qur'ān and the clarifying of its obscurities; that is of course the self-evident objective of any *tafsīr*; what makes our text particularly interesting is its confrontational stance it takes towards non-Muslims, particularly Pagans and Jews. Even general verses, which do not ostensibly appear to refer to anyone specifically, the reader is surprised to find the text orienteering it towards particular Jews of the Prophet's time or well-known hypocrites, etc. It is as though the text has taken upon itself the task of rebutting and defending the faith and the Qur'ān from all forms of opposition. When dealing with the people of Mecca, the text tends to focus on their generality, but at times also mentions their leaders, such as Abū Jahl, Abū Sufyān and their likes. As a point in case, the verse, "It is never the wish of those without Faith among the People of the Book, nor of the Pagans, that anything good should come down to you from your Lord. But Allah will choose for His special Mercy whom He will - for Allah is Lord of grace abounding",<sup>1</sup> is explained as follows: "Those non-believers from the People of the Book, such as Ka'b b. al-Ashraf and his comrades, and the polytheists such as Abū Jahl, dislike that God sends down Gabriel to your Prophet carrying good."<sup>2</sup> It has combined here the mentioning of the Jews and the Arab polytheists, singling out the leaders of these groups, highlighting their enmity towards Islam and the Muslims. It also interprets the verse within the historical context of Mecca, as though it does not encompass the non-believers of wider reaches – the fact that it connects closely its exegesis with historical realities that occurred at the very time of revelation, rather than the contemporary realities within which the text was written,

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<sup>1</sup> II: 105.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.8a.ET,p.50.



suggests an attempt to persuade the reader that this is in fact the *tafsīr* of Ibn ‘Abbās. This is possibly achieved by the texts almost stubborn focus on early Islamic history, that is, during the era of the Prophet.

Similarly, the commentary of the verse, “Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who were given a portion of the Book? they believe in sorcery (*jibt*) and Evil (*al-ṭāghūt*), and say to the Unbelievers that they are better guided in the (right) way Than the believers!”<sup>1</sup>: “Have you not been informed O Muhammad about those who were given knowledge of the Torah and the verse of stoning and its like, such as Mālik b. al-Sayf and his comrades, numbering seventy men. They believe in the sorcery of Ḥuyayy b. Akḥṭab, and the evil of Ka‘b b. al-Ashraf, and they say to the disbelievers of Mecca, that they are more correct than those who have believed in Muhammad and the Qur’ān...”<sup>2</sup> The commentary of this verse regarding the meaning of *jibt* and *ṭāghūt* is consistent with one of the opinions of Ibn ‘Abbās<sup>3</sup>. He has also held that *jibt* connotes idols and that *ṭāghūt* are those who carry information from the idols in order to misguide people.<sup>4</sup> Hence the edited text chooses the opinion which correlates more closely to the historical occasion related to the verses as mentioned in its *tafsīr*.

In the commentary of the verses which relate to Christians the texts seems to be quite condemning, especially of the Christians of Najrān; it describes the various sects together with their beliefs and the causes of division all suggesting that the exegete had a profound knowledge of Christian theology and inter-sectarian differences. From the sects that are mentioned are the *Nisṭūriyya* of Najrān, the *Mār Ya‘qūbiyya*, the *Marqūsiyya* and the *Malkāniyya*.<sup>5</sup>

There is also an assault on the hypocrites of Medina<sup>6</sup> which exposes them and explains the role they played in seeking the destruction of the community from within. This of

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<sup>1</sup> IV: 51.

<sup>2</sup> Text. p.39b.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.4 / p.185.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.4 / p.182.

<sup>5</sup> Text. p.48b, V: 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p.45b.IV:141.

course is the stance of hypocrites whatever the age they live in, but the exegete seems to overlook the generality of such verses – as is his custom – and prefers to connect them specific people and events. The exegete clearly exerts much effort in attacking non-Muslim sects, to the exclusion of any of the Muslim sects which had begun to appear during his era, as though these did not exist. Perhaps this was done intentionally with the aim of convincing the reader that the source of the work definitely is Ibn ‘Abbās. The few instances when a contemporary sect is mentioned, such ‘Khārijī’ in the verse prohibiting the eating of dead-meat<sup>1</sup> are few and far between.

It seems that the exegete was caught between two difficult options: he had to decide either to adopt a contemporary methodology in *tafsīr* which would have been unknown to the era of Ibn ‘Abbās, or design his work in order that the narrations are more easily recognized as statements of Ibn ‘Abbās; of course to do so the names of sources could not be mentioned nor in any details contemporary issues whether in theology or politics. This second option would no doubt have appealed more to divert the attention of any later critics making claims of interpolations or anachronisms in a work attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās and thus denying its authenticity.

### 3.2.2. The chain of transmission:

The texts *isnād*, chain of transmission, is indicative of its transmitted nature, that is, it is ascribed originally to Ibn ‘Abbās alone. This makes it the oldest historical *tafsīr* available in the genre of *tafsīr bi al-ma‘thūr*, exegesis by tradition; this genre typically relies, after its use of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*, upon the opinions of the Companions and the Successors, and so although the text makes very little use of *ḥadīth* and the opinions of Companions other than Ibn ‘Abbās, it remains firmly within this genre of *tafsīr*.

The text’s chain of transmission is indicative of a distinctive style of authorship well-known during the first two centuries A.H: it is known by the description, “*manhaj al-masānīd*”, a methodology which compiles what any single companion has narrated from

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.12b.ET,p.79.



the Prophet, such that the particular *sanad* incorporates everything that the particular companion related from him regardless of subject-matter. The chains within that *sanad* ending with that companion may well be diverse; the text's approach, however, is not always consistent with the methodology of the *masānīd*. The subject-matter is thus ascribed in totality to Ibn 'Abbās; this *sanad* does not include and chains besides the chain of al-Kalbī, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn 'Abbās. Perhaps the author of the text aimed at asserting the ascription of the book to Ibn 'Abbās primarily, and secondly, to follow the methodology of the *Muḥaddithūn* which had come to dominate the methodologies of all the religious sciences of the era: this dominance arose as a result of the many fabrications which were being ascribed to the Prophet. The fact that the text adopted the methodology of the *Muḥaddithūn* is likely to be the reason for their subsequent attack and scrutinisation of the work, with all its chains of narration; they did not believe for a moment that Ibn 'Abbās had so much to say about the Qur'ān, knowing full well that it was simply not his way to interpret every verse – neither was it the approach of any of the Companions.

It appears that the text's exegetical approach observes the methodology of those exegetes contemporary to it: they aimed at compiling the statements of all the Companions and Successor relating to *tafsīr* and then setting them out in an independent book – that is rather than being presented as a mere chapter in a compilation of *ḥadīth*. The best example of such a *tafsīr*, besides al-Kalbī's, is the work of Muqātil b. Sulaymān, who attempted to compile the statements of thirty men from amongst the *Tābi'ūn*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān wa Manhajuhū fī al-Tafsīr*, p.1 onwards.

### 3.2.3. Clarity of objective:

The text is characterized by its clarity in its objective, its author being fully acquainted and more than qualified to undertake the task he set himself: a complete exegesis of the Qurʾān. verse by verse, word by word; he seeks aid in his task from the exegetical legacy left by Ibn ʿAbbās, repeating when necessary, and dividing it to suit the situations being dealt with by the scripture's verses. He relies also on his own education and scholarly learning: however he may attempt to conceal his own achievements in scholarship, at the very least, rays of his own genius shine frequently through his quoting of others words. He is quite apparently an historian of the first degree, one grounded in the juristic opinions of the Companions, a linguist, whilst also being highly eloquent, able to impart his exegesis in a style coloured with brevity, avoiding unnecessary length. The exegete of the text is apparently content to base his commentary on the views of Ibn ʿAbbās, arriving at the same conclusions as his teacher, indicative of his premeditated and highly focused methodology; he leaves this only infrequently, where on occasion he narrates sayings from personalities such as al-Suddī<sup>1</sup>, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, al-Farrā'<sup>2</sup>. Such examples are found in his exegesis of the verse, "(It is) a Qur'an in Arabic, without any crookedness (therein): in order that they may guard against Evil"<sup>3</sup>: "A recitation which is solely in the Arabic tongue, which does not conflict with the Torah or the Injīl and Zabūr, nor any of the previous books revealed by the Lord. It is said that "*ghayr dhī ʿiwaj*" means it is uncreated, that being the saying of al-Suddī."<sup>4</sup> He has explained the verse here first, then appends to this a varying opinion on the matter, one which has undertones of the well-known theological argument that took place in the Islamic world during the early Abbāsīd

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Suddī is Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abū Karīma al-Suddī. Regarded as a trustworthy (*ṣadūq*) narrator of *ḥadīth* although he was accused of Shiʿite tendencies. He died (127 A.H). *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.83.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Farrā' was the nick-name of a number of Islamic personalities, from them Yaḥyā b. Ziyād, Philologist, who died in (207 A.H). *Aʿlām*, Vol.8 / p.145, and ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Farrā', an Egyptian Historian, died (352 A.H). and al-Husayn b. Masʿūd al-Farrā' al-Baghawī, the well-known Exegete, died (510 A.H). *Al-Aʿlām*, Vol.2 / p.259.

It would appear, considering all of these lived well after al-Kalbī, that the name was interpolated into the manuscript by copyists rather than al-Kalbī, or that al-Kalbī is not the true author, the second possibility being highly unlikely.

<sup>3</sup> XIL: 28.

<sup>4</sup> Text. p.189b.



empire; he makes sure to clarify that the opinion on the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān is al-Suddī's to avoid the reader suspecting the occurrence of an anachronism – that so because Ibn 'Abbās long preceded the debates that took place about the nature of the Qur'ān. It may be that the book the author relies on for his own exegesis, supposedly from Ibn 'Abbās, had been corrupted with interpolations, and so he hastens to point these out wherever he comes across them.

'Alī b. Abū Ṭālib is another name that appears in the text, at the commentary of the verse, "I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me"<sup>1</sup>: "I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me; this is a specific order to the people of obedience. It is said that if He (God) had created them for His worship they would not have disobeyed Him for even a moment. 'Alī said: "I (God) did not create them except to order them and make them legally responsible."<sup>2</sup> Such as has been mentioned by 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd in commentary of "The Day that the Spirit and the angels will stand forth in ranks, none shall speak except any who is permitted by (Allah) Most Gracious, and He will say what is right."<sup>3</sup> The question may arise as to why these names are mentioned at all when the exegesis is supposed from Ibn 'Abbās? – albeit that there is nothing unusual about Ibn 'Abbās narrating opinions from the likes of 'Alī and Ibn Mas'ūd – the answer may lie in the fact that again these are the interpolations made by the hands of later students, or simply that the exegete of the text digressed from the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās at these places, almost from something like a lapse of concentration. Another question is why do these names not appear after the first opinion for the *tafsīr* of the verse?

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<sup>1</sup> LI: 56.

<sup>2</sup> Text. p.215a.

<sup>3</sup> LXXVIII: 38.

#### 3.2.4. The manifestation of various opinions:

The most prominent feature of the text that catches the eye is its presentation of various opinions related to a single topic without showing a preference for one over another, unless the reader is to surmise that the first opinion is that of the text's author. The opinions are set forth with the introductory expression, *yuqālu*, "it is said", or something similar. From the examples which illustrate this is the verse, "And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers."<sup>1</sup> The edited text says, "meaning, 'my covenant and my promise, my enobling and mercy are not within the reach of the oppressors from your offspring'. It is also said it means, 'I will not make an oppressive leader of any of your offspring'."<sup>2</sup> There are times when it presents three opinions or more, depending on the verse in question,<sup>3</sup> such occasions however are too numerous to recount.

Pertinent to this research is the question why the exegete did not give preference to any one opinion? It is possible that his contentment to simply record the prevalent opinions in exegesis that were widespread in his time was a result of the influence of the era in which he lived, often referred to in the history of Islamic scholarship as the era of *tadwīn*, compilation. A further possibility is that he was too concerned with brevity than to present detailed discussions of various opinions, acknowledging perhaps that the task of commentating on the whole Qur'ān is no small feat. A third proposition on the matter is that the exegete may have lacked the confidence and daring to begin to analyse various opinions of Ibn 'Abbās – he would not have been a specialist in the *ḥadīth* sciences capable of giving precedence to one chain of narration over another. Finally, to weigh up opinions would have also made it incorrect to attribute the work to Ibn 'Abbās.

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<sup>1</sup> II: 124.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.9b,ET,p.60.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.10a.ET, p.63. II: 131.



An issue that arises at this juncture is whether, in fact, Ibn ‘Abbās held varying opinions on a single matter – or is it that the author of the text appended the additional opinions to the exegesis, or even perhaps later students? There is no alternative for the scholar but to investigate all the opinions held by Ibn ‘Abbās as recorded in the books of *tafsīr*, and related by his trusted students such as Sa‘īd b. Jubayr and Mujāhid, in order to give a sound judgement on this issue. Investigation has, in fact, revealed that Ibn ‘Abbās would often relay a number of opinions when giving exegesis on a single word or issue, not necessarily contradictory however. To illustrate this is the verse, “Show us the straight way”,<sup>1</sup> for which al-Ṭabarī records three opinions from Ibn ‘Abbās: the first as related narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās by Ḍaḥḥāk, is that it refers to when Gabriel asked Muhammad to say, “guide us to the straight path, that is the religion of God, which has no crookedness”; the second is from Maymūn b. Marwān who said that it (the straight path) is Islam: the third opinion, from Ibn Jurayj, is that *ṣirāṭ* connotes *ṭarīq*, path.<sup>2</sup> Although in these opinions there is slight variation, one would not term this form of difference contradictory, but complementary.

There are instances where the opinions ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās by his students are quite divergent, to the point where it may be considered that some are simply contrived. Before a detailed discussion of this, it is befitting to give an example of commentary from Ibn ‘Abbās in which al-Ṭabarī records several opinions: For the verse, “*A-L-M*”, Al-Ṭabarī quotes al-Suddī who says Ibn ‘Abbās believed it to be the greatest name of God (*al-Isma al-‘Aẓam*). Al-Ṭabarī then quotes ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭalḥā who narrates from Ibn ‘Abbās that the letters are an oath which God has sworn by, and they are from his names; the third opinion is from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr: I am God, the most-Knowledgeable. A fourth, also from Ibn Jubayr: A disjointed name (*ism muqattā‘*).<sup>3</sup> A second example of a verse with which is recorded multiple opinions from Ibn ‘Abbās is that of the saying of God, “Allah will throw back their mockery on them, and give them rope in their trespasses; so they will wander like blind ones (To and fro).”<sup>4</sup> Al-Ṭabarī quotes al-Ḍaḥḥāk: “In their disbelief

<sup>1</sup> I: 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / pp.111 – 112.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / pp.130 – 131.

<sup>4</sup> II: 15.

they waver”; then he quotes Abū Ṣāliḥ: “They sink deeper into their disbelief”; lastly, he quotes Ibn Jurayj: “The *mutaladdid* is he who looks left and right.”<sup>1</sup> Both aforementioned verses are examples which illustrate that Ibn ‘Abbās’ students would narrate from him very similar explanations in terms of meaning, but with a difference in wording; this would simply indicate that they were not concerned with narrating his sayings verbatim.

An example where there are altogether opposing views held by Ibn ‘Abbās is in the commentary of the verse, “Or (another similitude) is that of a rain-laden cloud from the sky: In it are zones of darkness, and thunder and lightning: They press their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap, the while they are in terror of death. But Allah is ever round the rejecters of Faith!”<sup>2</sup>: Al-Ṭabarī mentions two reports from him about this verse: the first is from Abū Ṣāliḥ: “they will not return to Islam”; the second is either from ‘Ikrima or Sa‘īd b. Jubayr: “They will not return to guidance or goodness, and so will never gain salvation as long as they remain upon their state.”<sup>3</sup> Al-Ṭabarī goes on to discount the second-opinion as he regards it to be in conflict with the apparent meaning of the verse: he regards the words of the verse to be categorical, that is, that they will never return to guidance.<sup>4</sup>

And so it is observed that there are often opinions narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās which are variant, mostly complementary, and infrequently, conflicting; in seeking an understanding of this phenomenon, perhaps the following prophetic saying may shed light – it is reported by Ibn ‘Abbās: “The Qur’ān is docile, having a number of significations, so understand it according to the best of its meanings.”<sup>5</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās it seems took this understanding on board making it very much a principle in his hermeneutical methodology. So it is no wonder that he would give several explanations for any one verse. It is possible, with this in mind to reject many of the claims which seek to instill doubt in the minds as to whether the opinions ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās have all been invented; no doubt, we cannot deny the possibility of this occurring, but there would

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.197.

<sup>2</sup> II: 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.213.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.4 / p.184.



have to be an evidence stronger than simply the variance in opinions Ibn ‘Abbās would present.

It may be that the cause of the differences in the narrations stemming from Ibn ‘Abbās were the transmissions of his students – where they narrated by meaning rather than verbatim it would inevitably leave variances. It may even have been that his opinions had developed as a result of his increase in knowledge and expertise.

Difference of opinion with respect to the Qur’ān is also, in more general terms, a natural consequence of the Qur’ānic injunction requiring the human-being to exercise his intellect: it is obvious that any two minds will always produce differing conclusions on the same verse that they are analyzing – far from being unlawful, the effort one exerts to extract meanings from the Qur’ān is encouraged by the scripture itself.

### 3.2.5. The stance taken by the text on the use of Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* in exegesis:

Ibn ‘Abbās made use of the Qur’ān to interpret itself alongside *ḥadīth* in accordance with the methodology of exegetes who undertake *tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr* – this exegetical genre seeks in the first instance to find further explanation for any one verse from within the Qur’ān itself, before turning to *ḥadīth* narrations, and then in turn, the opinion of the Companions; comparison between the edited text and Ibn ‘Abbās along such lines will further shed light on the true nature of its ascription to him.

Some of the conclusions arrived at from a close investigation of the edited text will not be consistent with well-known principles established in the genre of *tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr* – the edited text does not often make use of the Qur’ān to interpret itself except on rare occasions; and when, in instances when it does, it is to serve a single purpose, that is, to answer issues that the verses of the Qur’ān sometimes throw up, and whereby only other verses provide a response. Take for example commentary of the verse, “(Inevitable) cometh (to pass) the Command of Allah. seek ye not then to hasten it: Glory to Him, and

far is He above having the partners they ascribe unto Him!”<sup>1</sup>: “When the word of the Most High, “Never comes (aught) to them of a renewed message from their Lord, but they listen to it as in jest”,<sup>2</sup> was revealed, together with, “The Hour (of Judgment) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder”,<sup>3</sup> the people waited for as long as God intended them to wait without clarifying for them a thing; they said: “O Muhammad, When will what has been promised of punishment come to us?”. Then, God revealed XVI: 1.”<sup>4</sup> Thus the use of other parts of the Qur’ān to explain the verse in this case is purely explanatory and is though it were a *Hadīth* illustrating the occasion of revelation, rather than the observance of the principles of *tafsīr bi al-ma’tūr*. Similarly, “Verily We have granted thee a manifest Victory”<sup>5</sup>. The believers said, “Congratulations O Prophet of God for forgiveness. What will we have though from God?” Then was revealed, “Then give the Glad Tidings to the Believers, that they shall have from Allah a very great Bounty”<sup>6</sup> a great Bounty being heaven.<sup>7</sup>

The dependence of the text on *ḥadīth* as textual evidence is similarly infrequent. *Ḥadīth* are incorporated into the text in two ways: the most common method is their inclusion as historical reports – this is probably the most suitable approach, in fact, for the narrations are often related to an event within the lifetime of the Prophet, quoted for its use as an occasion of revelation, or to illustrate his relations with non-Muslims and his method of calling them to the nascent faith, and such like. Many examples have been presented earlier in this research within the chapter of the occasions of revelation, *ḥaṣr* and *takhṣīṣ*. It is not to say that the text does not have a respect and concern for the prophetic tradition because it does not quote *ḥadīth* with their actual text – it rather is indicative of exegete’s versatility and vast knowledge of *ḥadīth*, a demonstration of his ability to use *ḥadīth* wherever he feels it necessary for explication purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> XVI: 1.

<sup>2</sup> XXI: 2.

<sup>3</sup> LIV: 1.

<sup>4</sup> Text. p.114a.

<sup>5</sup> XLVII: 1.

<sup>6</sup> XXXIII: 47.

<sup>7</sup> Text. p.208b.



Upbringing and environment may also be a factor in this adopted methodology – Kufa was known to have preferred opinion (*ra'y*) to the text of the *ḥadīth*, for example.

### 3.2.6. Use of other historical sources:

This subject has been presented in detail in the chapter “The Stories of the Qur’ān”, and is considered one of the most important features of the text distinguishing it from other works in the genre of exegesis; the aim in using historical sources is to give such information as the names of relevant personalities, tribes, statistics, places and dates – it is aimed at making the understanding of the Qur’ān that much easier to the reader by recreating the historical context within which the scripture was revealed, taking it out of its timeless vacuum.

### 3.2.7. The observance of exegetical principles adopted by Ibn ‘Abbās:

Ibn ‘Abbās’ hermeneutical methodology has been discussed previously; these may be used as a yardstick against which to measure the soundness of the text’s ascription to him, and are certainly more useful to the historian than chains of narration. Al-Suyūfī mentions some of the general principles of Ibn ‘Abbās in *al-Itqān*. He says: “Every mention of *alīm* in the Qur’ān refers to tortuous pain; every *qutila* is a curse; every *rijz* is punishment; every *sultān* is a proof; every *dīn* is account-taking; every *rayb* is doubt, except in one place in *Tūr* where it means happenings.”<sup>1</sup> Al-Baghawī and al-Qurṭubī, in addition, mention that every mention of *tasbīḥ* refers to prayer.<sup>2</sup> Al-Ṭabarī adds from Ibn ‘Abbās also that every instance in which God ascribes the word *khāsir*, loser, to the non-Muslims, then it refers to a loss due to disbelief, and every time it is ascribed to Muslims, then it is a consequence of a sin.<sup>3</sup> Another quote from Ibn ‘Abbās in al-Baghawī is,

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Itqān*. Vol.2 / pp.132 – 139.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.31 and al-Qurṭubī, Vol.1 / p.291.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.1 / p.267.

“Indeed God is Bashful, Generous; whenever he mentions the words *mubāshara*, *mulāmasah*, *ifdā*’, *dukhūl* or *rafath*, then he means by them *jimā*’, intercourse.”<sup>1</sup>

These general exegetical principles are of obvious use to the investigation at hand: the author has made some attempt to pause at every verse which contains one of the aforementioned words to see whether there exists a correlation between the text and the principles quoted from Ibn ‘Abbās. The search has revealed that there is in fact consistency and congruency: the edited text, for example, interprets *alīm*, wherever it appears in the Qur’ān to connote *waj*’, pain,<sup>2</sup> except at one place, “O ye who believe! the law of equality is prescribed to you in cases of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman. But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain, then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude, this is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord. After this whoever exceeds the limits shall be in grave penalty”,<sup>3</sup> where it says *alīm* connotes killing – this does not conflict with the primary connotation the edited text offers, for there is no pain more excruciating than death. Likewise, *rayb* is said to connote *shakk*, doubt<sup>4</sup>, except in *Ṭūr*: 30, where it is said to mean ‘the pains of death.’<sup>5</sup> The fact that the exegete does not blindly adopt Ibn ‘Abbās’ interpretation in each and every instance is testimony to his insight and his own status as an erudite scholar, and not simply a compiler.

### 3.2.8. Use of general knowledge prevalent during the era of Ibn ‘Abbās:

What is referred to here by general knowledge prevalent during the era of Ibn ‘Abbās, is that knowledge which the scholars have agreed upon, including the events of the Prophet’s life, historical accounts of previous nations based on *ḥadīth* primarily or Jewish and Christian records, occasions of revelation particularly those with a strong connection with the legal injunctions of the *Sharī‘a*, such as verses pertaining to the hypocrites, the

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.111.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.3a,ET,p.13. II: 10,Text, p.24a. III: 21.

<sup>3</sup> II: 178.

<sup>4</sup> Edited text, p.2b,ET,p.8. II:2.

<sup>5</sup> Text. p.215b. LII: 30.



people of Mecca, and so forth. These branches of knowledge were considered general knowledge whether Ibn ‘Abbās explicitly said this or not. Their connection to him may not be a lie because he would almost certainly have known them, whether he admitted it explicitly or not. That was the framework within which he lived and taught. The important issue here is whether Ibn ‘Abbās related them personally – the fact that the text relates from him has to be deemed a fabrication and false-testimony. This is because the author of the text did not hear these narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās. For this reason Ibn Ḥanbal rejected the narration of al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās as a total fabrication and prohibited to refer to. The lie is in the fact that it has been ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās. This was the practice of the Muslim scholars of that epoch: for them utmost importance was given to the soundness of a chain of narration, more than even that given to the contents of the chain.<sup>1</sup> Thus there the fabrication does not occur in the information transmitted but rather the chain of transmission.

An important point to note at this juncture relates to the ascription made by the author of the text to Ibn ‘Abbās.

### **3.2.9. The contributions of the text to the general body of knowledge related to *Tafsīr*:**

To conclude this chapter it behooves us to look at what contributions the text made to the general body of knowledge relating to *tafsīr* and also how it played a role in bringing to the fore a science hitherto not regarded with the same importance as some of the other sacred disciplines.

Firstly, the text is one of the earliest known works, dating back to the second century A.H., other than what Azami mentions that there are many *tafsīrs* from Ibn ‘Abbās and his students which sought to interpret the Qur’ān holistically, whilst attributing most

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<sup>1</sup> *Ḥabr al-Umma wa Tarjumān al-Qur’ān*, Muhammad Ahmed Abū al-Naṣr, p.161.

opinions to Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>1</sup> Other commentaries of the same era were little more than compilations of detached sayings and opinions related to the Qur’ān. Perhaps an evidence to support this is the *magnus opus* of al-Ṭabarī. He was able to collate almost all the sayings of the Companions and the Successors relating to exegesis and yet was still not able to produce a complete commentary of the Qur’ān without filling in many a gap. Thus how it is possible that the text presents a complete commentary ascribed to al-Kalbī is beyond comprehension.

Secondly, the text is the first record of an exegesis which was written independently of *ḥadīth*: previously, *tafsīr* existed as *ḥadīth* narrations contained within the major collections of prophetic tradition, and considered a science from the sciences of *Ḥadīth*. The *ṣunan*, or *ḥadīth* collections of al-Bukhārī (194-256 a.h.)<sup>2</sup>, Muslim (204-261 a.h.)<sup>3</sup> and al-Tirmizī (209-279 A.H.)<sup>4</sup> are evidences for this – al-Kalbī (?-146 A.H.) pioneeringly broke that tradition, together with the principle of the *ḥadīth* scholars in their acceptance and rejection of narrations.

Thirdly, the text was a pioneer in mentioning only a single chain of transmission for all the narrations it quotes, whereas the norm amongst works in exegesis was to quote the chains of transmission for each and every narration related; al-Ṭabarī and al-Ṣan‘ānī are evidence for this. Thus all quotes are ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās with a chain passing Abū Ṣāliḥ – there is no analysis of the men in the chain giving judgements of soundness or weakness; this was well within the general philosophy of the school of Kufa. Al-Kalbī, in doing so, was openly challenging the principles and protocols of the *ḥadīth* masters.<sup>5</sup>

Fourthly, the text is an early example of the use of headings for particular verses relating to the subject matter or the information within it. There is no apparent pattern or discernible methodology in the use of headings.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to 1.4.2.

<sup>2</sup> See *Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Tafsīr (68).

<sup>3</sup> See *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Tafsīr (54).

<sup>4</sup> See al-Tirmizī, Kitāb al-Tafsīr (45).

<sup>5</sup> See *Ḥayāt al-Shi‘r fī al-Kūfa*, p.320 onwards.



## Conclusion:

Thus is complete the presentation of the features which characterize the text. We have seen its preoccupation with Meccan *sūras* which address either directly or indirectly the disbelievers and how it associates them unfailingly with characters from the Quraysh. It does much the same for Medinian verses. It has been shown how the text makes no mention of the sources of the opinions it contains except rarely (though even these rare occurrences may be the handiwork of copyists) as though it seeks not to cause suspicion regarding its ascription to Ibn ‘Abbās. Its objective was obviously to produce a complete exegesis of the Qur’ān hence it gives commentary on each and every verse, and almost every word. The fact that so many opinions are expressed in the work without a preference indicated inspires doubt about the authenticity of its ascription to Ibn ‘Abbās – it is only conjectural to believe that preference is indicated by the ordering of opinions or by the use of weak expressions such as *qīla* and *yuqālu*. The variety of opinions from Ibn ‘Abbās on one subject has been explained to be the result of either his students and their different expressions in narration, or that he would change his legal opinions from time to time as one would expect of any jurist. In general it has been found that there are some features which are consistent with early commentaries of the Qur’ān and exegetical style of the first century as well as those which conflict.

## Research Conclusions:

**The *tafsīr* is neither the authorship nor the direct narration of Ibn ‘Abbās for the following reasons:**

After having presented a detailed biography of the life of Ibn ‘Abbās, his profound knowledge, his scholarship in exegesis, the sources upon which he relied for his exegesis, methodology and the aspects and subjects he treated therein; this together with a focus on al-Kalbī, his life and works in exegesis, his style, methodology and his contributions to the field of exegesis; we turn to deal with the most important question of this research: is the *tafsīr* which has been ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās, as narrated by al-Kalbī, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, in actuality written by him? Is it, for that matter, a work recorded from him by a student? Or does he have nothing to do with it whatever?

The author believes that the exegesis in question – in the form in which it has been written. its style and its content – has not been authored by Ibn ‘Abbās; the reasons for this may be summarized in four points:

- 1) Ibn ‘Abbās is not known to have authored or dictated a complete and holistic exegesis of the Qur’ān; this, however, is exactly what we are presented with in the edited text
- 2) The edited text does not transmit reports from Ibn ‘Abbās using a form similar to reports of his students from him
- 3) The edited text is at variance with positions reported of Ibn ‘Abbās some of which have been presented in this study, among them legal opinions, occasions of revelation
- 4) The edited text treats issues related to rhetoric and grammar which Ibn ‘Abbās is not known to have confronted.



This is not to say that the author of the edited text does not present many opinions in agreement with Ibn ‘Abbās’ positions as reported in the classical exegetical works. This implies that he heard or received information from the students of Ibn ‘Abbās. neither is all of it his opinions although for the most part it does agree with what we know of Ibn ‘Abbās’ views. This conclusion is based on various reasons: those which are internally related to the exegesis – these relate to its form and its content; and those external considerations.

## INTERNAL EVIDENCES

Aspects related to the form of the exegesis:

Firstly, the exegete of the text undertook a word by word, complete *tafsīr* of the Qur’ān – this is not what is known of the style of Ibn ‘Abbās as has been demonstrated throughout this research. He did not commentate on the entire Qur’ān – despite some narrations indicated this – though he did encourage this; neither did his students compose such a work.<sup>1</sup> The most he did do was to relate exegesis of the Qur’ān verbally which was so exhaustive and included points of law would have served once compiled in one authorship to represent a completed *tafsīr* which could be ascribed to him. This was discussed at length in the chapter related to Ibn ‘Abbās and his compilation of *tafsīr*.

Secondly, the repetition of commentary for verses with the same words and expressions is not characteristic of the early commentators of the first century A.H., Ibn ‘Abbās included. Al-Ṭabarī’s commentary is evidence of this: he has said in many places in his voluminous work such statements like: “this has been explained earlier with sufficiency relieving us of the need to repeat it here”<sup>2</sup> The same observation is made of the exegesis

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<sup>1</sup> *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, al-Qaṭṭān, p.309.

<sup>2</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / p.219, Vol.15 / p.173.

of al-Ṣanʿānī, his commentary of *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara* highlighting this.<sup>1</sup> We have talked earlier about personalities such as Mujāhid and Saʿīd b. Jubayr and how they only commentated on particular verses from each *sura* without repeating commentary.

Thirdly, the presentation of multifarious opinions throughout the *tafsīr* of the text, with many instance where such expression as *yuqāl*, it is said, are used: if this was indeed the work of Ibn ʿAbbās one would not expect to find such expressions employed.

Fourthly, the exegetical style of interspersing commentary within a verse is not known of the first century exegetes, examples of which may be found in the chapter on division (*tajziʿa*).

Fifthly, the confinement (*ḥaṣr*) and specification of verses to particular personalities together with the mentioning of names: the text, for instance, mentions Abū Jahl as the referum whenever the word Disbelievers arise<sup>2</sup> (even if the *sūra* is Medinan), and the mentioning of ʿAbdullāh b. Salām whenever the People of the Book are discussed, including the verses which suggest the People of the Book became angry at the changing of the *qibla*<sup>3</sup> – something which the author doubts would have angered him.

Regarding content the text is also revealing about its true author:

Firstly, the narration attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās does not quote him verbatim– this becomes apparent when a comparison is made between the narrations of the text from him and the books of *tafsīr*. Some students of Ibn ʿAbbās are known to have transmitted his positions paraphrasing, and this is accepted according to Traditionists. Ibn ʿAbbās would undertake intra-Qurʾānic exegesis and also using *ḥadīth* connected back to the Prophet; where he does this as has been reported from him, we find the edited text does not do the same, adopting a general exegetical style without quoting any verses or *ḥadīth*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, Vol.1 / pp.39 - 114

<sup>2</sup> Abū Jahl died in (2 A.H). at Badr, *Al-Aʿlām*, Vol.5 / p.87.

<sup>3</sup> Edited text, p.11a, *ET*, p.71. II: 150.



Secondly, often the text adopts legal positions which are in conflict with Ibn ‘Abbās’ own: an example is the understanding of the verse, “Remember Allah during the appointed days.”<sup>1</sup> The edited text states that these days are the days of *tashrīq* which number five during and after the Hajj: they are the day of ‘*Arafa*, the day of sacrifice (*naḥr*) and the three days that are subsequent.<sup>2</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās, however, deemed these days to be three in number, excluding from them the day of ‘*Arafa* and *naḥr*.<sup>3</sup> Conflicts arise in other aspects of understanding also: see for example the text’s treatment of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and the variant readings (*qirā’āt Wa aḥkām fiqhiyya*) for many examples of this.

Thirdly, there are some opinions relating to *asbāb al-nuzūl* which are not to be found reported in the great commentaries from either Ibn ‘Abbās or others; it would appear that the text in such instances is unique in holding such views: an example of this is its view that the verse, “Let there be no compulsion in religion”,<sup>4</sup> was revealed regarding Mundhir b. Sāwā al-Tamīmī. Al-Ṭabarī mentions otherwise from Ibn ‘Abbās: he states that the verse was revealed for a man named al-Ḥuṣayn.<sup>5</sup>

Other anomalies which would necessitate the work other than of Ibn ‘Abbās is the language; Ibn ‘Abbās was known for his eloquence and mastery of Arabic – he would not have used much of the harsh almost crude language present at times within the text; there are in places the very sort of language just described: for example, a group amongst the Children of Israel are referred to as riff-raff (*safla*).<sup>6</sup> Another example is the commentary for II: 13, “Will you have us believe as the fools have believed?”, where the ‘fools’ are further explained to be the ‘stupid ignoramuses’<sup>7</sup>. This is repeated in a later verse. The text is noticeably weak in its expression in a number of places: it often falls below even

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<sup>1</sup> II: 203.

<sup>2</sup> Edited text, p.10a, *ET*, p.71. II: 150.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Kathīr, Vol.1 / p.331 and al-Baghawī, Vol.1 / p.129.

<sup>4</sup> II: 256.

<sup>5</sup> *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Vol.3 / p.22.

<sup>6</sup> Edited text, p.3a, *ET*, p.14.

<sup>7</sup> Edited text, p.3a, *ET*, p.15.

modern standards of language expression. Examples occur in *al-Baqara*<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere. Take, for example, II: 67:

*‘And when Moses said’ and Moses said ‘that God commands you to slaughter a heifer (baqara)’ from heifers (buqūr) ‘They said: “Do you mock us?” to mock us? ‘He said’ that is Moses “I seek refuge in God” I take recourse to God ‘lest I become of the ignorant’ from those who mock the Believers.*<sup>2</sup>

It is unlikely that Ibn ‘Abbās would have interpreted the Qur’ān with this sort of unnecessary detail, in piecemeal fashion, to the point where the style is mundane, untidy and generally seems to address feeble-minds.

*‘He said “Our Lord”’ our Lord “accept from us” the construction of Your house “Indeed You are best-able to hear” our prayer “all-knowing” about its response. It is said also “all-knowing” of our construction of you house.*

Then he repeats again:

*‘Our Lord’ our Lord ‘Make us submitters to You’ obedient to You in monotheism and worship ‘and from our progeny a submitting nation’ obedient and sincere to you in monotheism.*<sup>3</sup>

Is it perceivable that such a one as Ibn ‘Abbās, famed for his oratory and literary ability, would interpret the scripture with this degree of simplicity? The interpreter here presents explanation of words any child can understand, underestimating his audiences ability in an almost condescending manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Edited text, p.9b, *ET*, p.62.II: 127 – 128, edited text, p.9b,*ET*,p.35.II: 67,edited text, p.6b,*ET*,p.15. II: 13.

<sup>2</sup> Edited Text, p.9b, *ET*, p.35.

<sup>3</sup> Edited Text, p. 9b, *ET*, p.62.II: 127 – 128.



And also his treatment of some issues which Ibn ‘Abbās did not deal with such as anastrophe.

#### EXTERNAL EVIDENCES:

From the external indications suggesting the text is not the handiwork of Ibn ‘Abbās, are the following observations:

Firstly, the statement of Abū Ṣāliḥ, “I did not read anything to al-Kalbī at all – whatever he claims to have taken from me is a lie.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Ibn Ḥajar quotes from Abū ‘Āṣim that Sufyān al-Thawrī made the claim to him that al-Kalbī said that whatever he has reported from Abū Ṣāliḥ is not to be relayed<sup>2</sup>; it must be said that the second statement, with what it contains of self-abasement, is of highly dubious authenticity.

Secondly, al-Shāfi‘ī said that there are only a hundred *ḥadīth* reports in *tafsīr* which are from Ibn ‘Abbās and that are of acceptable reliability.<sup>3</sup> Does al-Shāfi‘ī mean by this a *ḥadīth* which is *marfū‘* to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) or *mawqūf* as well? If he intended *marfū‘* alone then this does not harm al-Kalbī in any way because al-Kalbī never connects his narrations back to the Prophet; he only goes as far as Ibn ‘Abbās. If what is intended are the *mawqūf* narrations, however, then where did al-Kalbī find all the narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās that he did?<sup>4</sup>

Thirdly, there have been many criticisms leveled against Muhammad b. al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī from the scholars and *Mufasssīrūn* who regard his chain of transmission as being weak; when he reports from Muhammad b. Marwān al-Suddī al-Ṣaghīr, the chain is known as the link of lies (*silsilat al-kadhib*).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 / pp.179 – 180.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Tahqīq hawl Ibn ‘Abbās wa makānatuhū fī al-Tafsīr*, p.190.

<sup>4</sup> Dr al-Dhahabī doubts the soundness of this saying from al-Shāfi‘ī, *Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.62.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.61, *Al-Itqān*, Vol.2 / p.375, *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, al-Qaṭṭān, p.332, *Manāhij al-Mufasssīrīn*, al-Khālīdī, p.251.

These then are the various reasons why the edited text cannot be considered a direct work or transmission of Ibn ‘Abbās in the author’s opinion.

We now turn to address the following issue:

**If the true author of the text is al-Kalbī, as preliminary evidence might suggest, then why would he – or indeed transmitters – ascribe the work to Ibn ‘Abbās?**

Man by nature loves to feel a degree of self-confidence, to hold a lofty status in the eyes of others – for this reason, he often strives to do whatever is necessary to have his name and work valued amongst his people and human civilization in general. With this in mind, we now seek to understand why al-Kalbī might have ascribed his own work to Ibn ‘Abbās: the era in which he lived was the era of *ḥadīth* and its compilation; it is thus possible that al-Kalbī was seeking to increase acceptance of his own work by attributing it to Ibn ‘Abbās for in doing so it would attract the attention and be given the acceptance of the *Muḥaddithūn*, other scholars, and people in general. That value would be lost were he to have ascribed it to himself, for he was no more than a historian and genealogist who indulged in *tafsīr* in the eyes of many. Amongst the factors also is the political climate within which he lived: the period of the Abbāsids was one in which the name of Ibn ‘Abbās was honored more than it had ever known for he was the ‘grandfather’ of the Abbāsids.<sup>1</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās’ status as a member of the household of the Prophet would, for obvious reasons, have also been an attraction to one who wanted his own works fame and esteem.<sup>2</sup> Another possible reason is the magnitude of Ibn ‘Abbās’ knowledge and the many narrations from him, till the point where al-Kalbī may have thought that his own fabrications and ascriptions to Ibn ‘Abbās may be passed unnoticed.<sup>3</sup>

It may even be that al-Kalbī was not the one to ascribe the *tafsīr* to Ibn ‘Abbās; it may be some one later – the evidence for this might be the statement of Sufyān al-Thawri<sup>4</sup> on the

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssirūn*, Vol.1 / p.63.

<sup>2</sup> Especially as some scholars described him as Shi‘ite. *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.9 p.179.

<sup>3</sup> Khalīfa, Ibrāhīm, *Dirāsāt fī Manāhij al-Mufasssirīn*, Matba‘at Dār al-Buḥūth, Egypt, p.98.

<sup>4</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, Vol.25/p.250.



*tafsīr* of al-Kalbī: ‘I am not impressed by those who interpret the Qur’ān from its genesis to its end’. He did not say in this statement about the *tafsīr* of al-Kalbī that his contention with it was that it was ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās. Another factor to support this is the saying of Ibn Ḥanbal: ‘The book of al-Kalbī is impermissible to look at from its beginning to its end’<sup>1</sup>. The question here is Ahmad b. hanbal saying about the chain of transmission or about the text? no information from the scholars. But it is amazing the narration from al-Thawrī<sup>2</sup> reports that al-Kalbī warned him, “Abū Ṣāliḥ admitted to me everything he has related to me from Ibn ‘Abbās is a lie don’t narrate it. Is this proof that al-Kalbī who ascribe *al-Tafsīr* to Ibn ‘Abbās? We do not know, and we do not find from any of these early scholars one who explicitly criticizes the text itself; the focus of their attacks are rather the chain of transmission. Finally, there are narrations<sup>3</sup> in the *tafsīr* from al-Farrā, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and al-Suddī, thus if it is al-Kalbī who ascribed the work to Ibn ‘Abbās, how would it have evaded him to quote from these people? Rippen<sup>4</sup> says that there are works extant which have been reported from Ibn ‘Abbās that are not his authorship .

Having said this, the text appears to contain narrations likely to have their source in Ibn ‘Abbās, and wherever the ascription is unlikely to be to him, it at least agrees with the views held by the Commentators at large (with few exceptions mentioned in the study). The instances where there is a conflict are rare and occurs only at points related to *asbāb al-nuzūl* or a legal-matter; regarding the former it is of no surprise that conflicts has arisen because many of the reports on *asbāb al-nuzūl* lack *isnāds* and are often in conflict with each other. It seems likely that many are merely the opinions of early commentators.<sup>5</sup> Neither do there exist any inclinations towards heterodox groups such as the Shi’ites, or Murji’ites or any other group to which he has been falsely accused of being associated with. The text should be revered and esteemed as a scholarly masterpiece in the field and a text of high historical value, regardless of the criticisms directed towards its author by various scholars. The effort expended in the authorship of such a work is profound and must be respected as such. Neither does the weakness in its

<sup>1</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.7 / p271, *Mizān al-I’tidāl wa Naqd al-Rijāl*, Vol.3 / p558

<sup>2</sup> *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, Vol.1 / p.416.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the research, p.212.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās, *Al-lughāt fī al-Qur’ān*, p.25.

<sup>5</sup> *Discovering the Qur’ān: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, p.75.

chain subtract anything from its value, for regardless of whether the ascription is proved sound or not, the historical importance of the edited text remains.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This conclusion is supported by Amīn, Aḥmad, *Ḍuḥa al-Islām*, Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-ʿIlmiyya al-Miṣriyya. 6<sup>th</sup> Ed., 1977, Vol.2 / p.143 and Dr al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol.1 / p.62.





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**Abbreviations:**

*Al-Ālūsī: Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*

*Al-Baghawī: Tafsīr al-Baghawī al-Mashhūr bi Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl.*

*Al-Bukhārī: Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ.*

*Al-Burhan: Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.*

*Al-Itqān : Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.*

*Al-'Istī'āb :Al-'Istī'āb fī Ma'rifat al-Aṣḥāb.*

*Al-Iṣāba : Al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba .*

*Al-Nasafī : Tafsīr al-Nasafī,.*

*Al-Qurṭubī: Al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*

*Al-Shawkānī: Faḥḥ al-Qadīr.*

*Al-Wāḥidī: Asbāb al-Nuzūl li al- Wāḥidī.*

*Al-Zamakhsharī: Al-Kashāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl wa Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl.*

*Faḥḥ al-Bārī : Faḥḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.*

*Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm.*

*Manāhil al-'Irfān: Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.*

*Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān.*

*Tarikh al-Ṭabarī: Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk.*

*Zād al-Masīr : Zād al-Masīr fī 'Ilm al-Tafsīr.*

*Uṣd al-Ghāba :Uṣd al-Ghāba fī Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥāba.*

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## Glossary

*Asbāb al-Nuzūl* The occasions of revelation.

*'Atf* Grammatical attachment.

*Fiqh Lit.* "Comprehend and understand." Fiqh in Islamic terminology means: to extract religious rulings on practical matters from the main sources of Islam (i.e. Qur'an and Sunnah).

*Ḥadīth* A tradition of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.).

*Ḥadīth Marfu'* An exalted tradition is a saying or an act, related or performed by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) himself and handed down in tradition.

*Ḥadīth Munqati'* an intersected tradition, is a saying or an act related or performed by one of the *Tābi'ūn*.

*Ḥadīth Mursal* (lit. "a tradition let loose"), is a tradition which any collector of traditions, such as al-Bukhārī and others, records with the assertion, "*the Apostle of God said.*"

*Ḥadīth Muṭṭasil* A connected tradition.

*Iḥrām* The garb worn by a pilgrim on either the Hajj or 'Umrah.

*I'jāz* The inimitability of the Qur'ān.

*Ijtihād Lit.* "Exertion." The logical deduction on a legal or theological question by a Mujtahid or learned and enlightened doctor.

*Isnād* A chain which makes mention of every narrator of any particular saying ascribing it back to its original source. This is a tradition unique to Islam, the basis of it being to enable scholars to distinguish trustworthy narrators from those who are not.

*Istifhām* Inquiry.

*Istinbāt* Juridical deduction, deduction of legal rulings.

*Al-Jarḥ wa al- Ta'dīl* The science which seeks to separate 'truthful' narrators from 'unreliable' or 'untrustworthy' reporters.

*Jumū'* (sing. *Jam* ') Plural forms in Arabic morphology.



*Majāz* Figurative expression.

*Mansūkh* An abrogated verse or sentence of the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth*.

*Matrūk* Neglected in *ḥadīth*.

*Mu'arrabāt* (sing. *Mu'arrabah*) Arabicised words.

*Muḥkam* A verbal noun meaning judgement, decision and in technical language refers to all clearly decided verses of the Qur'ān, mostly those concerning legal rulings.

*Mutashābih* "Doubtful." In technical language it refers to those verses of the Qur'ān which are not clear or not completely agreed upon, but open to two or more interpretations.

*Naskhī* A style of Arabic calligraphy.

*Nāsikh* "One who conceals." A term used for a verse or sentence of the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth*, which abrogates a previous one.

*Qasam* An oath.

*Qirā'āt* (sing. *Qirā'at*) *Lit.* "Reading." A term given to the different methods of reading the Qur'ān.

*Qirā'at Mashhūrah* A recitation whose chain of narration is 'sound' but has not reached the degree of a *mutawātirah* recitation.

*Qirā'at Mutawātirah* A recitation which has been transmitted by a group so large it is inconceivable that they would have contrived together to fabricate it, who transmit it a large group, and so on.

*Qirā'at Shādhah* An exceptional reading of the Qur'ān.

*Sahābah* (sing. *Sahābī*) "The Companions." Associates of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). The number of persons entitled to this distinction at the time of the Prophet's (p.b.u.h.) death is said to have been 144,000.

*Sard* Narrative and relation.

*Shar‘u man qablana* The legal systems of the Prophet’s who came before the Prophet Muhammad.

*Tābi‘ūn* (sing. *Tābi‘ī*) “The Successors.” Those who conversed with the Companions of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). The traditions which they related are of high authority and form part of the *sunna* or traditional law.

*Tadlīs* Lit. “Concealing.” It is a term that refers to an *isnād* where a reporter has concealed the identity of his teacher.

*Tafsīr* Lit. “Explaining.” A term used for commentary on any book, but especially for a commentary on the Qur’ān.

*Ta’wīl* Like *tafsīr* it is used to connote “interpretation”.

*Tajzi‘ah* Division.

*Ta’khīr/ Taqdīm* Anastrophe (rhetoric).

*Takrār* Repetition.

*Tashbīh* Allegory.

*‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* The subject matter dealing with the sciences of the Qur’ān such as the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, causes of revelation, the compilation of the Qur’ān, information on the Meccan and Medinian verses, the abrogated verses, and other topics of a related nature.

*‘Umrah* The lesser-pilgrimage.

*Waqf* A trust.

*Waṣl* In regards to the text, it is the merging of the verses of the Qur’ān with commentary.



Manuscript's photos:

The first page of the manuscript from the exegesis of Tafsir Ibn Abbas from Juma'a Almajid centre library in the United Arab Emirates

الصفحة الاولى من مخطوطة لتفسير ابن عباس الموجودة في مكتبة مركز جمعة الماجد في دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة

عن المفسر عليه السلام عن الصادق الذي من غفست عليهم - خذ لهم وله  
 يحفظ قلوبهم حتى يهودوا ولا انصاليين ولا ارباب مساردين  
 ضلوا من الاسلام امين كما في قوله تعالى قل ان الله  
 ويقال امين اسم من سبأ الله من وجب  
 ومن السورة التي يذكر فيها البقرة وهي كتاب مديني وهو ما تاتي دست  
 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 عن محمد بن مروان عن ابي بصير عن ابي صالح عن ابي عبد الله في قوله تعالى  
 الحمد لله الذي هدانا لهذا الذي كنا لنهتدي لولا ان هدانا الله  
 الف الآيات ولا من لطفه وسبحه وتعالى الف الحمد لله الذي هدانا لهذا  
 اسمه لطيف ميمم ابتداء اسمه مجيد ويقال ان الله اسمه ويقال قسم  
 اقسام به ذلك الكتاب اي هذا الكتاب الذي يقرأ عليكم محمد صلى  
 الله عليه وسلم لا ريب فيه لاشك فيه انه من عنده فانا انتم به هديتم  
 وان لم تنووا به عند شك ويقال ذلك الكتاب يعني الفصح المحفوظ  
 ويقال ذلك الكتاب يعني التوراة لا ريب فيه لاشك فيه ان فيها صفة  
 محمد ونفسه هدي للتحقق القرآن بيان فيصدق من الكفر والشرك  
 والمناجاة ويقال كرامة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم ويقال رحمة لا تدرك مسي  
 عليه وسلم الذين يؤمنون بالانجيل يعني بالكتاب منهم من حنة  
 والنبوة الصراط والميزان والشمس والحساب وعلم الله ويتلى ما انزل  
 القرآن وما لم ينزل وقال النبي هو الله ويقرب من عباده يعني بوضوح  
 وركوعها وسجودها وما يجب فيها من مواجبات وما رزقناهم بنعمون  
 وما اعطيناهم مما انزل يتصدقون ويقال بقران بقران وهو ان يقرأ  
 الصديق والاصحاب والذين يؤمنون بما انزلنا من القرآن وما  
 انزلنا من قبله على سائر الانبياء من الكتاب والقرآن هم يوقون  
 وبالنبوة بعد النبوة ونعيم الجنة هم يصدقون وهو عند الله من  
 سلام واصحاب اولئك اهل هذه الصفة من عنده من ربه عز وجل  
 ورحمة وبيات نزل من ربه واولئك هم المقربون الماجدون من اصحاب  
 والعذاب ويقال اولئك الذين ادركوا ما هموا بربوا واطلوا وجنوا  
 من شر ما منه هم يوقون وهم اصحاب محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم ان الذين كفروا  
 شتموا على الكفر سواء عليهم ان انزلنا عليهم كتابنا من السماء  
 لم يخوفهم لا يؤمنون ولا يؤمنون ان يؤمنوا ان يؤمنوا ان يؤمنوا ان يؤمنوا  
 ختم الله على قلوبهم وضع الله على قلوبهم وهم سموا وهم سموا وهم سموا  
 غشاوة غطاء ولهم عذاب عظيم شديد في الآخرة وهم يوقون  
 من الاشراف ويوقون من الاخطاب ويقال من الاخطاب والذين كفروا  
 والذين كفروا ومن الناس من يقول سمعنا الله في امره صدق ما نزلنا  
 يا ايها الذين آمنوا انزلنا من السماء كتابا فيه آيات واضحة

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 حدثنا ابو علي بن الحسين بن محمد بن جعفر قال حدثنا عبد الله بن  
 المبارك الديلمي قال حدثنا المأمون بن احمد وعمار بن عبد المجيد قال  
 حدثنا علي بن اسحق الحضرمي عن محمد بن مروان عن ابي بصير عن ابي صالح عن  
 ابن عباس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال صلى الله عليه وسلم  
 وبركته وبلاوته وابتداء اسمه باثني عشر سبعا وسبعه اي ارتفاعه  
 وابتداء اسمه سبع مائة ومجرب وقتة على عباده الذين هداهم  
 بالايمان واولاده اسم مجيد الله معناه الخلق باليونانية وتاليها  
 اي متفرعون اليه عند المراجحة وقضا الحاجات الرحمن العاطف  
 على البر والمناجاة بالرزق لهم ودفع الأفات عنهم الرحيم خاصة على  
 المؤمنين بالمعزة ودرهم الجنة وفاتحة الكتاب مكية ويقال  
 مدني ومن سورة فاتحة الكتاب سبع آيات  
 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 مروان عن ابي بصير عن ابي صالح عن ابي عبد الله في قوله تعالى الحمد  
 يقول الشكر لله وهو ان سمع الخلق تحمده ويقال الحمد بنحو  
 اسوايق على عباده الذين هداهم بالايمان ويقال الملك والوصفي  
 والالوهية لله لا ولد له ولا شريك ولا معين ربه الصالحين وسب كل ذي  
 روح دابة على وجه الارض ومن اهل السماء ويقال سيد الارض والجن  
 ويقال يخالق الخلق وراحمهم وهو من حال الى حال الرحمن العاطف  
 الرحيم الرفيق مالك يوم الدين وهو يوم الحساب والقضاء ايان  
 تحبته فوجد ويقال يخالق الخلق على عبادته ومكشوف  
 على طاعتك الهدى الصراط المستقيم الهدى الذي انزلنا من السماء  
 وهو الاسلام ويقال ثقتنا عليه ويقال هو كتاب الله يقول الله تعالى  
 حلاله وحرامه وبيات ما فيه صراط الذين انزلناهم على هذا صراط  
 عليهم بالدين وهم اصحاب موسى من قبل ان ينزل عليهم نعم الله بان اطلق  
 عليهم النعام وانزل عليهم القرآن والصلوات على النبي وآله



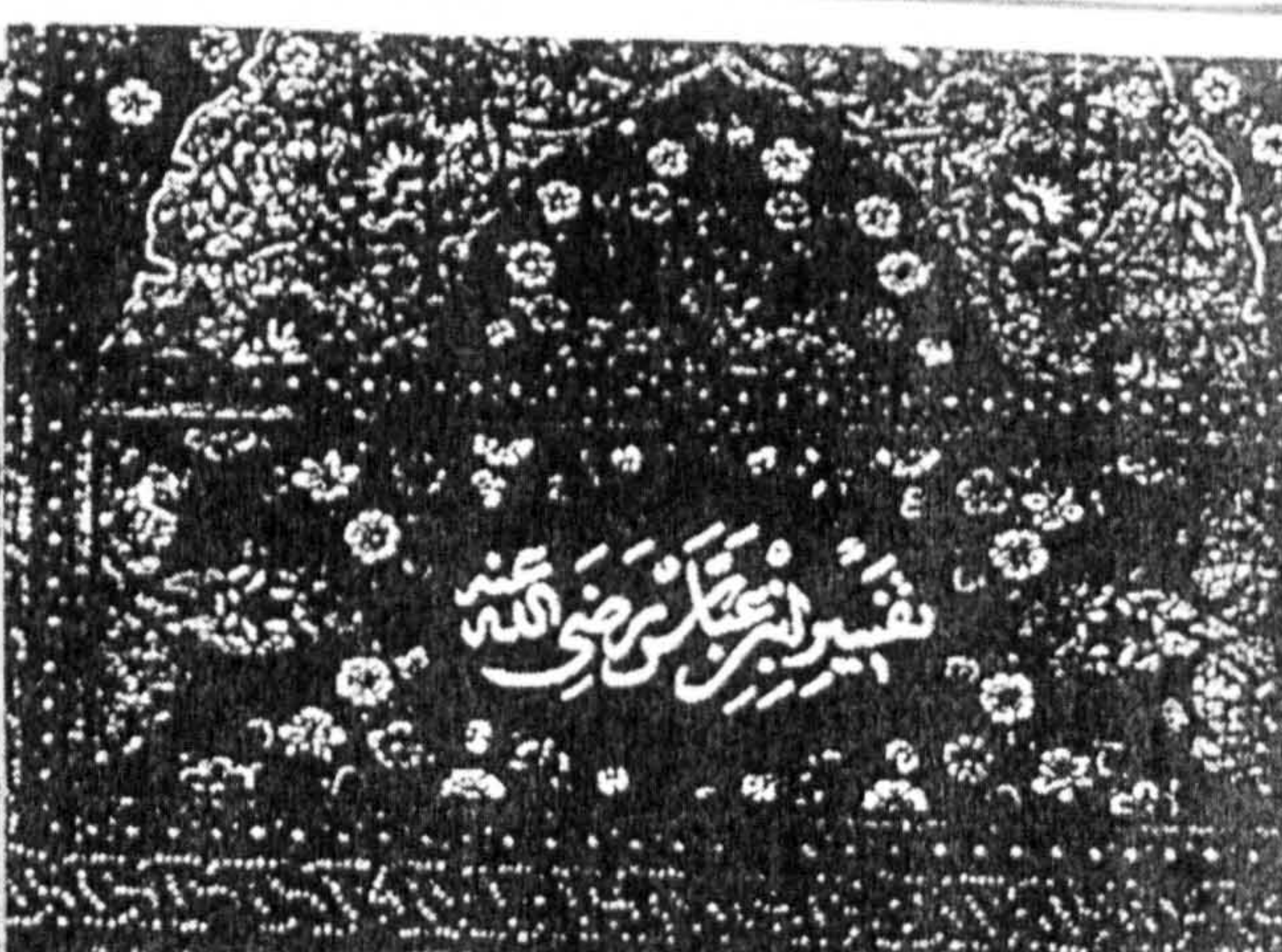
The first page of the manuscript of the exegesis of Ibn Abbas from the University of Jordan library, (1159 AH) symbol D  
 الصفحة الاولى من مخطوطة لتفسير ابن عباس من مكتبة الجامعة الاردنية



على طاعتك اهدانا الصراط المستقيم ارشدنا للذين القانوا الذي ترضاه وهو الا  
 بتنا عليه ويقال هو كتاب الله تعالى يقول اهدنا الى حلاله وحرامه وبيان ما فيه من  
 نعمت عليهم دين الذين مننت عليهم الذين هم اصحاب موسى عليه السلام من قبل  
 نعم الله تعالى بان اطلق عليهم الغمام وانزل عليهم المن والسوى في التبه ويقال هو  
 غير المغشوب عليهم على دين اليهود الذين غضبت عليهم وخذتهم ولم تعفظهم  
 ولا الضالين النصارى الذين سئلوا عن الاسلام امين كذلك تكون امته ويقال

**سورة البقرة ومبائنها ومبائنها ومبائنها**

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 وباسناده عن عبد الله بن المبارك قال حدثنا علي بن اسحاق السمرقندي عن عبد بن  
 عن الكشي عن ابى صالح عن ابن عباس رضى الله تعالى عنه في قوله تعالى وحملوا  
 واللام جبريل عليه السلام وانما محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم ويقال لالت لاق وانما  
 وانتم ملكة ويقال لالت ابتداء اسمه الله الامم ابتداء اسم نبيهم ابتداء اسم  
 الا الله تعالى اعلم ويقال فسما قسمه به ذلك الكتاب ان هذا الكتاب الذي يقرب  
 صلى الله عليه وسلم لا ريب فيه لاشك فيه انه من عندي وان منته به هديكم  
 به عنيتكم ويقال ذلك الكتاب بمعنى التوح المحفوظ ويقال ذلك كتاب الذي وعد  
 به ان اوحيه اليك ويقال ذلك الكتاب يعنى التوراة والانجيل لا ريب فيه لانت  
 صفة عهد صلى الله عليه وسلم توحيته هدى للذين القرب بين المؤمنين المعروف  
 ويقال كرامة للمؤمنين ويقال رحمة لامة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم نبيهم  
 بما عاب عنهم من الجمة والشار والمترامد والميزان والبيت وحساب وغير ذلك  
 الذين يؤمنون بالغيب بما انزل من القرآن وما انزل من قوله ويعتقون  
 الحسن بوضوئها وركوعها وسجودها وما يجب فيها من مراقبتها ومراقبتها  
 وما اعطيتهم من الاموال يتصدقون ويقال يؤدون الزكاة كحق امومتهم  
 رضى الله عنه واصحابه والذين يؤمنون بما انزل اليك من القران وما انزل من قبله  
 صلوات الله تعالى عليهم اجمعين من انكبت وبالآخرتهم بوقوتهم وبتوحيته  
 ونعيم الجنة هم يتصدقون وهو عهد الله من سلام واصحابه اولئك هم الذين  
 هدى من ربه على كرامة ورحمة وبيان قول من ربه اولئك هم الذين  
 الساجدون من السجدة والعباد ويقال اولئك الذين اذكروا طيبوا وتحسين  
 مسربوا وهم اصحاب محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم ان الذين كفروا وتوسعوا على



**بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم**

وَصَلَّى اللهُ عَلَى خِيَةِ يَخْلُقُهُ بِحَمْدِ وَالهِ اَجْمَعِينَ ● اخبرنا عبد الله النقة  
 ابن المأمون الهروي ● قال اخبرنا ابى قال اخبرنا ابو عبد الله قال اخبرنا  
 ابو عبد الله محمود بن عبد الرازى ● قال اخبرنا ابن عبد المجيد  
 الهروي ● قال اخبرنا علي بن اسحق السمرقندي عن محمد بن مروان عن  
 الكلبي عن ابى صالح عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنه قال ابا بهاء الله تعالى  
 وبجنته وبلاوه وبركته ● وابتداء اسمه ما راثنين سلامه وسموه  
 اى ارتفاعه وابتداء اسمه يسمع والمير ملكه ومجوع ومنته على عباده  
 الذين هدىهم الله للايمان ● وابتداء اسمه بحمد الله معناه الخلق باه  
 لمعون ويتأمنون اى يتضرعون اليه عن الخواص وقضاء الحاجات ●  
 الرحمن العاطف على البر والفاجر بالورق له ودفع الاقوات عنهم  
 الرحيم خاصة على المؤمنين بالمعزة ودخول الجنة ابراهيم الرحمن الرحيم

**سورة الفاتحة من كتاب مكة ومبائنها**

وباسناد عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنه في قوله تعالى الحمد لله يقول الشكر  
 لله وموان صنع الخلق مشهورة ويقال انكر الله بعباده السواغ على عباده  
 الذين هدىهم للايمان ويقال الشكر والوحيدانية والامية لله تعالى اولاد  
 له ولا شريك له ولا معين له ولا وزير له رب العالمين رب كل ذى روح  
 رب على وجه الارض ومن اهل السماء ويقال سيد الخي والانس ويقال  
 حاق الخلق ورازقهم وممطرهم من حال الى حال الرحمن الرحيم  
 الرقيق مالك يوم الدين قاضى يوم الدين ومعد يوم الحساب والقضاء  
 فيه بين الخلق اى يوم يردان الناس بافعالهم لا قاضى غيره اياك ابدلك  
 لوحد ولك العباد واياك تسعين بك تسعين على عبادتك ومنك تسعون





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الصفحة الاخيرة من المخطوطة الموجودة في مكتبة الجامعة الاردنية

اليه ويقال لعهد الذي لا يأكل ولا يشرب وليس أجوف ويقال لعهد الدائم ويقال لعهد الباقي  
ويقال لعهد لغتلي بلا عيب ويقال لعهد لكافي ويقال لعهد الذي ليس له مدخل ولا مخرج ويقال  
العهد الذي ليس له مدخل ولا مخرج ويقال لعهد الذي تم ملكه ويقال لعهد الذي لم يلد ولم  
يولد لم ير ولم يولد لم يورث ويقال لم يلد ليس له ولد ميراث ملكه ولم يولد ليس له والديوم  
عنه ملكه ولم يكن له كفو احد يقولون لم يكن له كفو فيعازيه يواريه في الملك  
ويقال لم يلد ولم يولد ليس له ولد ولا ولد ولم يكن له كفو احد ليس له صيد ولا سند

**سورة التين** مكية قريش عشرين آيات

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
وإن ساد عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنه في قوله تعالى قل يا أيها عبود أمتع ويقال مستعبد  
مرتعلق مرتب الحق ويقال تعلق هو تبيع ويقال هو واد في النار من شر ما خلق من شر  
كردى شر خلق ومن شر فاسق إذا وقت ومن شر القيل إذا دخل واد برو من شر الفعانات  
لمحضات لموحدات الشاعرات السالطات في لعهد ومن شر خاسد إذا خسته  
تسبوا عامهم ليهودى فأنسده النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم واحد من عائلته رضي الله

**سورة التين** مكية قريش اثنا عشر آيات

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
وإن ساد عن ابن عباس في قوله تعالى قل يا أيها عبود أمتع يقول استعبد رب  
الناس ليسيل الجن والأنس ملك الناس ملك الجن والأنس له الناس خالق الجن والأنس  
من شر له سوس يعني تسلطان الجناس الذي إذا ذكر الله خسر نفسه وسرها وإذا  
لم يذكره توسوس الذي توسوس في صدور الناس في صدور الخلق من الجنة والناس  
يقول وسوس في صدور الجن كما توسوس في صدور الناس ترك ما تان السوريات

فليسدر من اسم اليهودي الذي الذي تفر لبي عليه السلام  
ففر النبي عليه السلام على صخرة معرج الشمس ذلك

قد وقع التفرغ من تفسيره من قوله عز وجل في شأنه على يد العبد  
الغيبه في شراخ الريح من شراخه في حشره من الأبدان في حشره  
في سبيلك شهر من شهره وسوس في هاتر والفت في شهره جاد في الأوق





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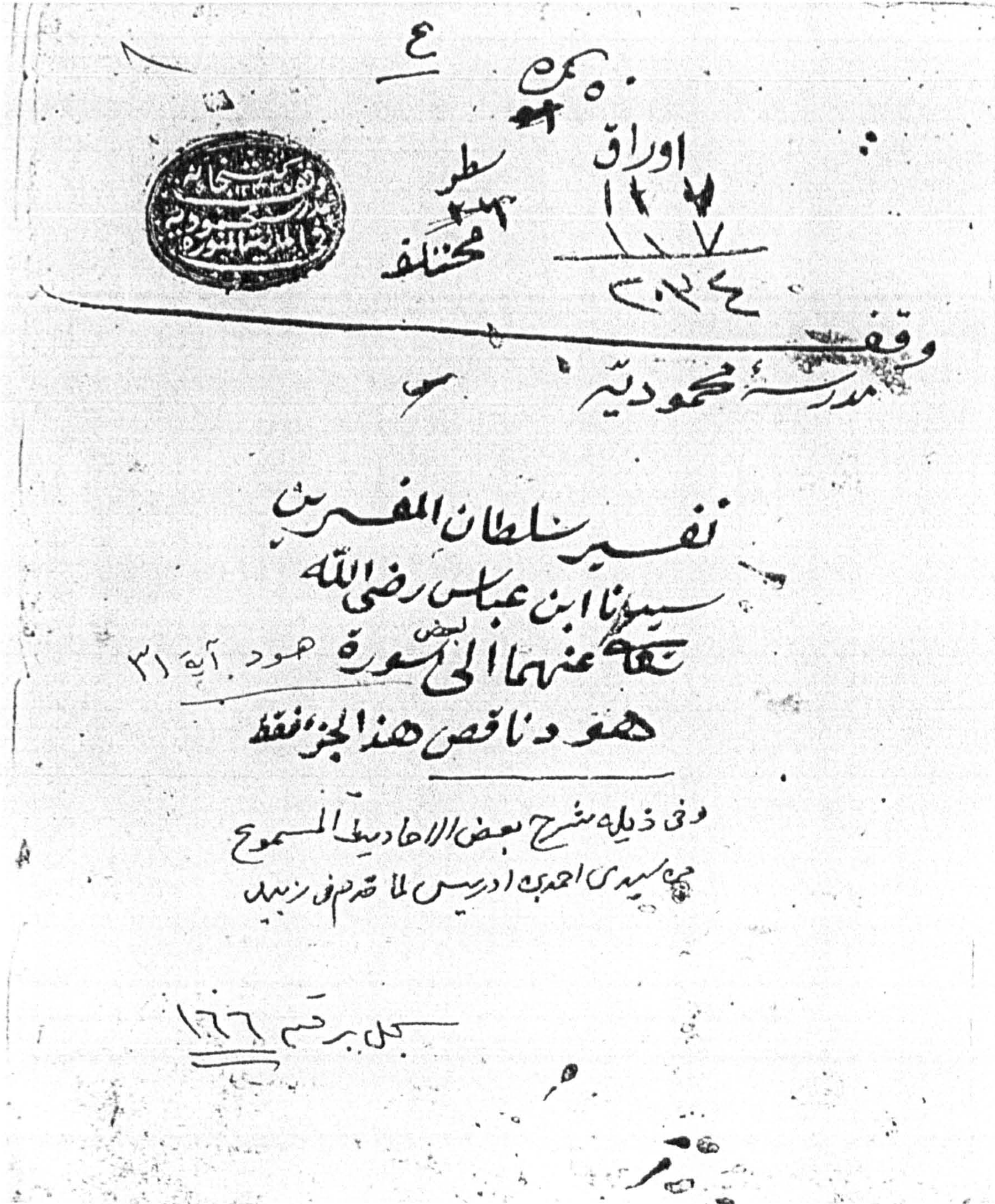
الصفحة الأولى من مخطوطة تفسير ابن عباس من مكتبة الجامعة الأردنية.

صفحة الغلاف لمخطوطة تفسير ابن عباس من مكتبة المحمودية، المدينة المنورة، سنة 1140 هـ.

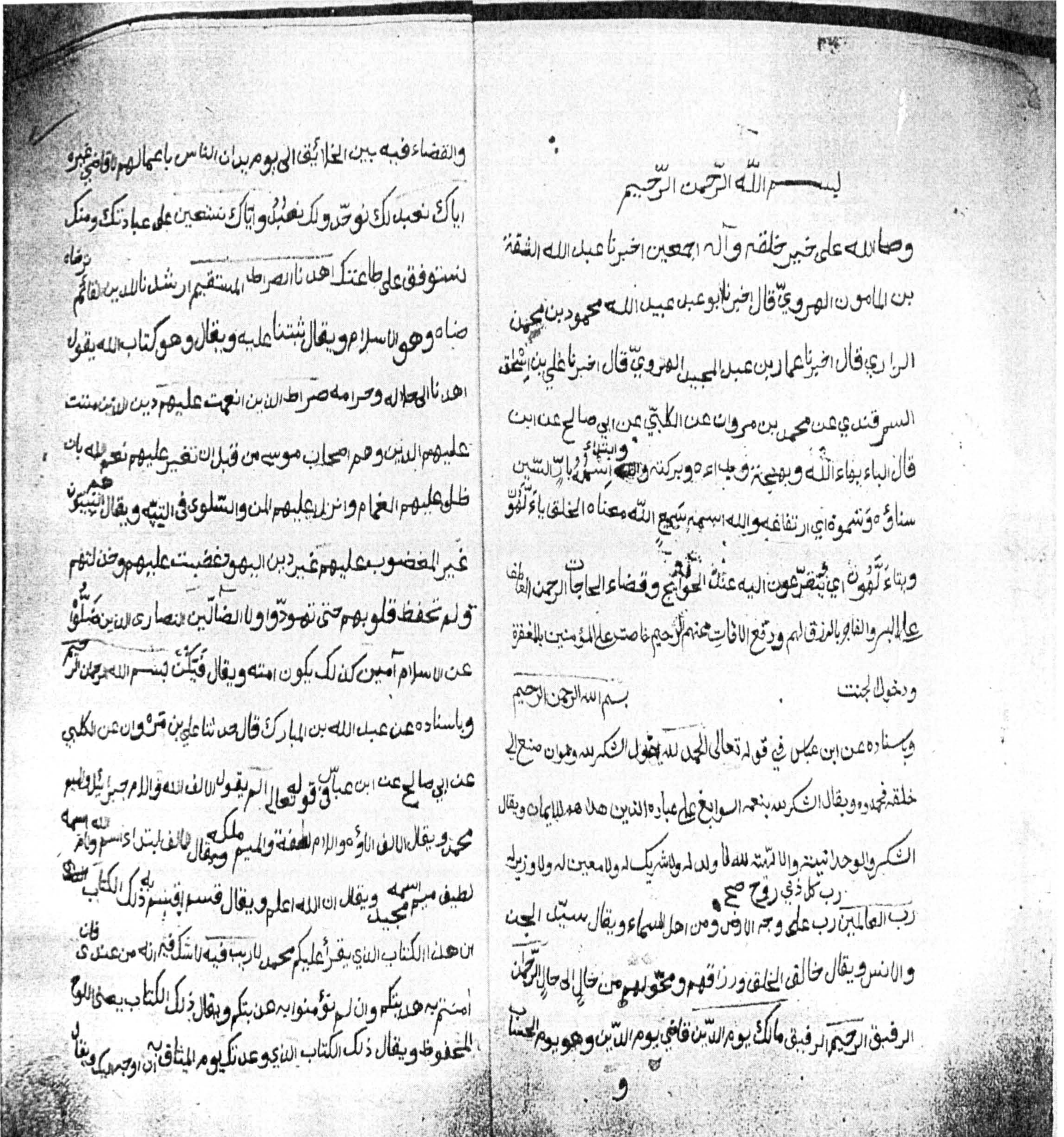




صفحة الغلاف لمخطوطة تفسير ابن عباس من مكتبة المحمودية، المدينة المنورة، سنة 1140 هـ.  
 The cover sheet of the manuscript of the exegesis of Ibn Abbas from the  
 Maḥmūdiyya Library, Medina, (1140 AH), symbol M.







بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وصلى الله على خير خلقه وآله اجمعين اخبرنا عبد الله الشقة  
بن المأمون النهروني قال اخبرنا ابو عبد الله محمد بن محمود بن يحيى  
الزاري قال اخبرنا عماد بن عبد الحميد النهروني قال اخبرنا علي بن اسحاق  
السمرقندي عن محمد بن مروان عن الكلبيني عن ابي صالح عن ابن  
قال الباء بقاء الله وبهجة وجراد وبركة <sup>والتاء</sup> اسم بار السنين  
سناؤه وتنموه اي ارتقاؤه والله اسمه يسبح الله معناه الخلق بقاء لثوب  
وبناء لثوب اي يتصرفون اليه عند الحاجات <sup>التي</sup> وقضاء الحاجات الرحمن العاطف  
على البر والفاور بالرزق لهم ودرع الافات عنهم الرحمن فاسترع المومنين بلغفرة  
ودخول الجنة

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وباسناده عن ابن عباس في قوله تعالى الحمد لله يقول الشكر لله وهو ان صنع الى  
خلقه فحمدوه ويقال الشكر لله بنعمه السواغ على عباده الذين هداهم للإيمان ويقال  
الشكر والوحدانية والائمة لله فالولد له والشريك له ولا معين له ولا وزير له  
رب كل ذي روح <sup>صحيح</sup>  
رب العالمين رب على وجه الارض ومن اهل السماء ويقال سيد الجن  
والانس ويقال خالق الخلق ورزاقهم ومخولهم من خالق الى خالق الرحمن  
الرفيق الرحيم الرفيق مالك يوم الدين قاضي يوم الدين وهو يوم الحساب

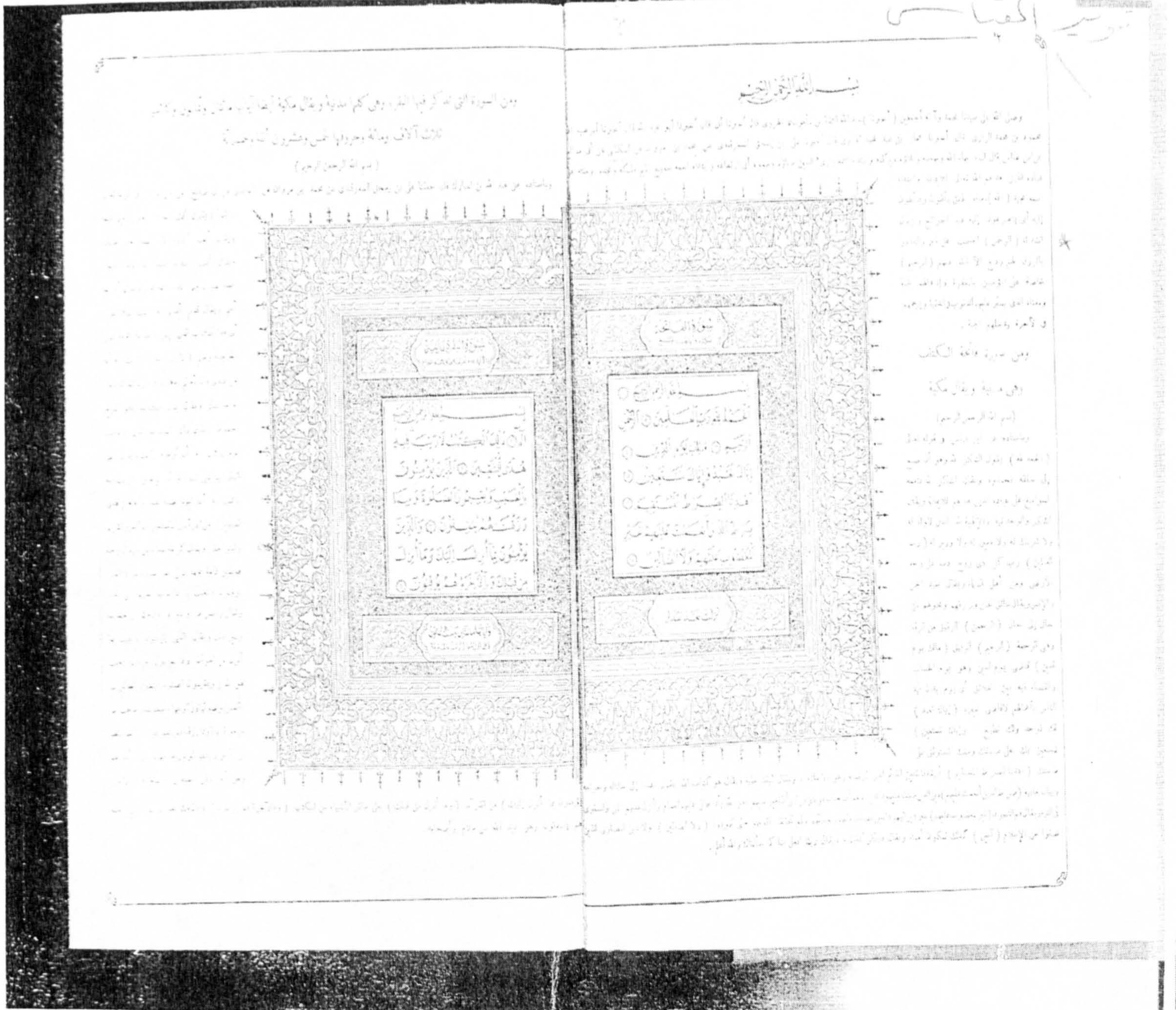
و

والقضاء فيه بين الخرافيق الى يوم يبدان الناس باعمالهم واقاضيهم  
اياك نعبدك لك نوحدهم ولك نعبدك واياك نستعين على عبادتك ومنك  
نستوفى على طاعتك اهدنا الصراط المستقيم ارشدنا للدين القام  
ضاه وهو الاسلام ويقال شتنا عليه ويقال وهو كتاب الله يقول  
اهدنا الصراط وهو صراط الذين انعمت عليهم دين الذين استنت  
عليهم الدين وهم اصحاب موسى من قبل ان تغير عليهم نعم الله بان  
ظلم عليهم الغمام وانزل عليهم المن والسلق في التيه ويقال النبي <sup>صلى</sup>  
غير المغضوب عليهم غير دين اليهود غضبت عليهم وخذلتهم  
ولم تحفظ قلوبهم حتى تهودوا والاضالين انصارى الذين ضلوا  
عن الاسلام امين كذلك يكون امته ويقال فيكثرت بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
وباسناده عن عبد الله بن المبارك قال حدثنا علي بن مروان عن الكلبيني  
عن ابي صالح عن ابن عباس في قوله تعالى الحمد لله يقول الشكر لله وهو ان صنع الى  
خلقه فحمدوه ويقال الشكر لله بنعمه السواغ على عباده الذين هداهم للإيمان ويقال  
الشكر والوحدانية والائمة لله فالولد له والشريك له ولا معين له ولا وزير له  
رب كل ذي روح <sup>صحيح</sup>  
رب العالمين رب على وجه الارض ومن اهل السماء ويقال سيد الجن  
والانس ويقال خالق الخلق ورزاقهم ومخولهم من خالق الى خالق الرحمن  
الرفيق الرحيم الرفيق مالك يوم الدين قاضي يوم الدين وهو يوم الحساب



The first page of the exegesis of Tanwir Al-Miqbas min Tafsir Ibn Abbas

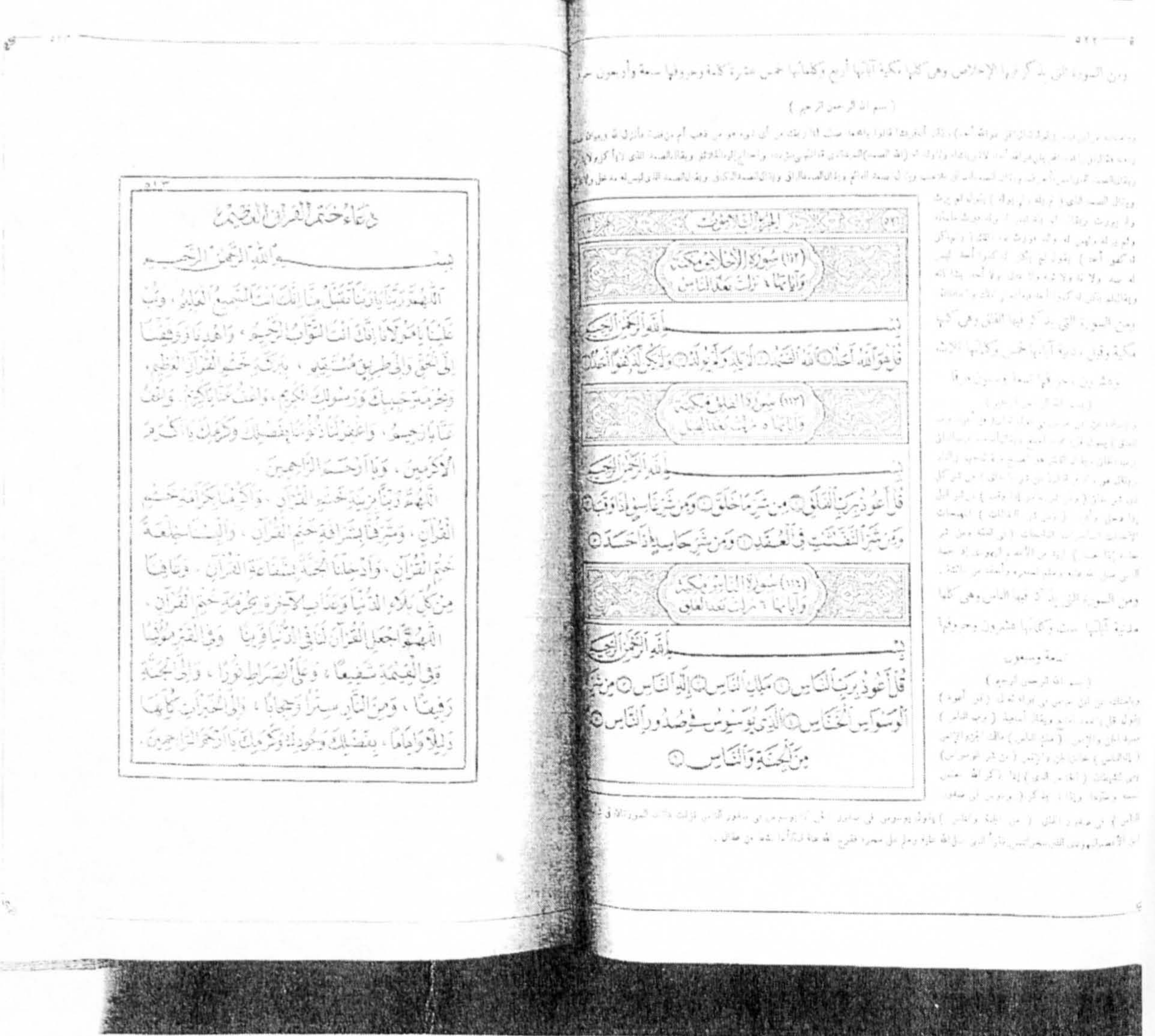
الصفحة الاولى من تفسير تنوير المقباس من تفسير ابن عباس





The Last page from the exegesis of Tanweer Al-Miqbas min Tafsir Ibn Abbas

الصفحة الاخيرة من تفسير تنوير المقباس من تفسير ابن عباس



ومن السورة التي يذكر فيها الإخلاص وهي كتابها تكوينا آياتها أربع وكلماتها خمس عشرة كلمة وحروفها سبعة وأربعون حرفا  
(سم الله الرحمن الرحيم)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 (١١٢) سورة الإخلاص مكية  
 وآياتها ثلاث مائة الف  
 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 قل أعوذ برب الفلق  
 (١١٣) سورة الفلق مكية  
 وآياتها ثمان مائة الف  
 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 قل أعوذ برب الفلق  
 (١١٤) سورة الفلق مكية  
 وآياتها ثمان مائة الف  
 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 قل أعوذ برب الفلق

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 قل أعوذ برب الفلق  
 (١١٤) سورة الفلق مكية  
 وآياتها ثمان مائة الف  
 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 قل أعوذ برب الفلق  
 (١١٤) سورة الفلق مكية  
 وآياتها ثمان مائة الف  
 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 قل أعوذ برب الفلق