

INTRODUCTION

All praise is for Allaah. We praise Him, we seek His aid, and we ask for His forgiveness. We seek Allaah's refuge from the evils of our selves and from the evil consequences of our deeds. Whomever Allaah guides then none can misguide him, and whomever He misguides then none can guide him. I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah, alone, having no partner; and I testify that Muhammad is his Slave and His Messenger.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

[Soorah Aali `Imraan (3): 102]

[Meaning: O you who believe in Allaah and His Messenger! Fear and be dutiful to Allaah, by obeying Him and avoiding disobedience to Him, as He deserves to be feared (Obey Him and do not disobey Him; give thanks to Him and do not show ingratitude; remember Him and do not forget Him); and do not die except as Muslims: obediently submitting to Him, and worshipping Him alone.]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا

وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

[Sooratun-Nisaa (4): 1]

[[Meaning: O Mankind! Fear and be dutiful to your Lord, Who alone created you from a single person (Aadam), and from him He created his mate, and from these two He produced many men and women; and fear and be dutiful to Allaah through Whom you ask each other for your rights, and beware of cutting ties of kinship. Allaah is ever a Watcher over you.]]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ

ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا﴾

[Sooratul-Ahzaab (33): 70-71]

[[Meaning: O you who believe in Allaah and His Messenger! Fear and be dutiful to Allaah and speak with truth and justice, and He will rectify your deeds for you and forgive your sins; and whoever obeys Allaah and His Messenger has attained tremendous success.]]

To proceed: Then the truest speech is the Book of Allaah -the Most High, and the best way is the way of Muḥammad (p); and the worst of affairs are those things which are new introductions (into the Religion) and every new introduction is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance, and all misguidance will be in the Fire.

“The *Ummah* (the Islamic nation) has a great and pressing need to understand the Qur-aan, which is the strong Rope of Allaah, and the wise Reminder; one who follows it will not be led astray by desires, and it will not become confused upon the tongues. It does not become dull through repetition, its wonders never cease, and the scholars can never have enough of it. Whoever speaks in accordance with it will speak the truth, whoever acts in accordance with it will be rewarded; whoever judges by it has judged justly, and whoever calls to it then he invites to the straight path. Whichever tyrant abandons it then Allaah will break him, and whoever seeks guidance in other than it then Allaah will misguide him.

He -the Most High- said:

﴿فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَىٰ وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَىٰ قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَىٰ وَقَد كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَنتَ أَتَيْنَا فَنَسِينَهَا وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ نُنْسِي﴾

[Soorah TaaHaa (20): 123-126]

[[Meaning: Then if guidance comes to you from Me, then whoever follows My Guidance shall not go astray and he shall not be wretched; but whoever turns away from My Reminder then he shall have a bleak and constricted life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him up blind. He will say: ‘O my Lord! Why have you raised me up blind when I used to have sight in the world?’ He will say: ‘Thus it is: Our signs came to you and you

turned away from and abandoned them, and so this Day you shall be abandoned.

And He -the Most High- said:

﴿قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ
الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ
مُبِينٌ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم
مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾

[Sooratul-Maa'idah (5): 15-16]

[[Meaning: There has come to you Our Messenger Muhammad (p), explaining to you much of that which you used to hide from the Scripture, and overlooking much. There has come to you from Allaah a light and a clear Book. By it Allaah guides those who seek His Pleasure to the path which leads to safety and salvation; and He brings them out of darkness into the light, by His Permission, and He guides to the Straight Path.]]

And He -the Most High- said:

﴿الرَّكْتَابُ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ
إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾

[Soorah Ibraaheem (14): 1-2]

[[Meaning: *Alif Laam Raa*. This is a book which We have sent down to you, in order that you might lead mankind out of darkness into light, by the permission of their Lord, to the path of the All-Mighty, the One worthy of all praise: Allaah, to Whom belongs everything that is in the heavens and in the earth.]]

And He -the Most High- said:

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَن نَّشَاءُ مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدَى إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ صِرَاطِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَلَا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَصِيرُ الْأُمُورُ﴾

[Sooratush-Shooraa (42): 52-53]

[[Meaning: And likewise We have revealed this Qur-aan to you, as a mercy, by Our Command. You did not know what the Book is, nor what is Faith. But We have made it a light by which We guide whomever We wish from Our servants. And you certainly guide Our servants towards the Straight Path: the Path of Allaah, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Certainly all affairs shall return to Allaah for judgement.]]

... It is binding that a person should know that the Prophet (p) explained the meaning of the Qur-aan to his Companions, just as he made clear to them its Words.

So His Saying -He the Most High:

﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ﴾

[Sooratun-Nahl (16): 44]

[[Meaning: And We sent down this Qur-aan to you, O Muḥammad (p), as a reminder to them, so that you should then explain clearly to the people what has been sent down to them]¹ includes both this and that [i.e. the Words and the meaning.]]

¹ as-Suyootee quoted in his 'Miftaahul-Jannah fil-I'tisaam bis-Sunnah' (p. 58): "Ibn Mas'ood said, as reported by Ibn Abee Haatim: 'There is nothing except that it has been made clear to us in the Qur-aan, however our understanding falls short of reaching it, so therefore He -the Most High- said:

﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ﴾ [Sooratun-Nahl (16): 44] [[Meaning: So that you, O Muḥammad (p), should then explain clearly to the people what has been sent down to them]].'

And Aboo `Abdir-Rahmaan as-Sulamee said: ‘Those who taught us the recitation of the Qur-aan, such as `Uthmaan ibn `Affaan, `Abdullah ibn Mas`ood, and others, when they had learned ten Aayahs from the Prophet (p), would not go beyond them until they had learned what they contained from knowledge and action. They said: So we learned the Qur-aan, and knowledge, and action, together.’²

Therefore they used to remain for a period of time learning a Soorah, and Anas said: “When a man had learned [Soorah] *al-Baqarah* and [Soorah] *Aali `Imraan* he attained stature in our eyes”³, and Ibn `Umar took some years to learn *al-Baqarah*, it is said that it was eight years; Maalik mentioned it.⁴

And that was because Allaah -the Most High- has said:

﴿ كَتَبْنَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبْرَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ ﴾ [Soorah Saad (38): 29]

[[Meaning: This Qur-aan is a Book which We have sent down to you, full of blessings, so that they may reflect upon its Aayahs.]]

And He said: ﴿ أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ﴾ [Sooratur-Nisaa (4): 82]

[[Meaning: Will they not carefully reflect upon the Qur-aan?]]

And He said: ﴿ أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ ﴾ [Sooratul-Mu-minoon (23): 68]

[[Meaning: Have they not reflected upon the Qur-aan?]]

² as-Suyootee quoted in his ‘Miftaahul-Jannah fil-Itisaam bis-Sunnah’ (2/437): “at-Tabaree reported it in his ‘Tafseer’ (1/60), and as-Samarqandee in his ‘Tafseer’ (1/71) and Ibn Sa`d in ‘at-Tabaqaat’ (6/172), and Ibn Abee Shaybah in ‘al-Musannaf’...6/117, and its chain of narration contains `Aṭaa· ibn as-Saa·ib; *Sadooq* (truthful), whose memory deteriorated; however the narrator from him is Hamaad ibn Zayd, as occurs in ‘as-Siyar’ (4/269), and his narrations from him are good...”

³ Reported by Imaam Ahmad (3/120). Shu`ayb al-Arnawoot said in his checking of the ‘Musnad’ (no. 12236): “Its chain of narration is ‘*saheeh*’ to the standard of the two *Shaikhs*.”

⁴ Imaam Maalik stated in his ‘Muwatta’ (1/205) that it had reached him (*balaaghan*) that `Abdullaah ibn `Umar had remained for eight years learning Sooratul-Baqarah.

And carefully reflecting upon speech is not possible without understanding its meaning.

Likewise He -the Most High- said:

﴿ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴾ [Soorah Yoosuf (12): 2]

[[Meaning: We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur-aan, in order that you may comprehend its meaning]], and comprehending speech includes understanding it.

It is also known that what is intended from all speech is that its meaning be understood, not just its wording, so the Qur-aan has more right to that; and also the normal behaviour of the people prevents them from reading a book in any field of knowledge, be it medicine or mathematics, and then not seeking necessary explanation of it. So how about the Speech of Allaah, which is their essential safeguard, and through which they are to attain salvation and bliss, and by means of which their Religion and their worldly lives are correctly established?!

This is why disagreement amongst the Companions with regard to the tafseer of the Qur-aan was extremely rare; and even though it occurred more amongst the Taabi`een (the Successors of the Companions) than it did amongst the Companions, then still it was little in comparison to what occurred with those who came after them. So the more excellent a time was, then the greater the unity, the harmony, the knowledge, and the clarity of understanding was in it.

So from the Taabi`een there were those who learned the whole tafseer from the Companions, just as Mujaahid said: "I went through the whole *mus-haf* with Ibn `Abbaas, stopping him at every Aayah and asking him about it."⁵

⁵ Fawwaaz Ahmad Zumarlee said in his checking of as-Suyootee's 'al-Itqaan' (2/473): "It was reported in 'al-Hilyah' (3/280)..; and it was reported by at-Tabaree in his 'Tafseer'(1/65), and Aboo Nu`aym in 'al-Hilyah' (3/279-280); and its chain of narration contains Muhammad ibn Ishaq who narrated it with both of them with *`an`anah* (without stating that he had heard it directly from the narrator before him); however it has another chain of narration which supports it, since it was also reported by al-Qasim ibn Sallaam in 'Fadaa-ilul-Qur-aan' (p. 216), and by Ahmad in 'al-Fadaa-il' (no. 1866), and its chain of narration contains Ibn Abee Najeeh, who reported a great amount from Mujaahid; but he

Therefore ath-Thawree said: "If tafseer comes to you from Mujaahid, then it will suffice you."⁶

Therefore his tafseer was relied upon by ash-Shaafi`ee, al-Bukhaaree, and others from the people of knowledge; and likewise Imaam Ahmad, and others who wrote works of tafseer, would repeatedly quote chains of narration from Mujaahid, more so than from others besides him. So what is intended is that the Taabi`een took the tafseer from the Companions, just as they took knowledge of the Sunnah from them....

As for Tafseer, then the people who were most knowledgeable about it were the people of Makkah, since they were the students of Ibn `Abbaas, such as: Mujaahid, `Aṭaa· ibn Abee Rabaah, `Ikrimah-the freed slave of Ibn `Abbaas, and others from the students of Ibn `Abbaas, such as: Taawoos, Abush-Sha`thaa·, Sa`eed ibn Jubayr, and their like.

Likewise the people of al-Koofah, from the students of Ibn Mas`ood, and they had distinction in some of that over others; and the scholars of tafseer from the people of al-Madeenah, such as Zayd ibn Aslam - whom Maalik took tafseer from, and likewise his [i.e. Zayd's] son `Abdur-Rahmaan took it from him (also), and `Abdullaah ibn Wahb took it from `Abdur-Rahmaan...

And in summary, whoever turns away from the positions of the Companions and the Taabi`een, and their tafseer, in favour of something contrary to that, then he is in error in doing that, indeed he is an innovator; unless if he is performing legitimate ijtihaad, in which case his error is forgiven...

So if someone were to say: 'What is the best approach with regard to Tafseer?' Then the answer is that the most correct approach is to explain the Qur·aan with the Qur·aan. So what has been left unspecified at one place will be explained at another place, and what is mentioned briefly at one point will be detailed elsewhere...

And if you become unable to do that, then take hold of the Sunnah, for the Sunnah explains and clarifies the Qur·aan..., and when we do not find the

would narrate from him things that he had not heard directly from him. Refer to 'Ṭabaqaatul-Mudalliseen' (p. 9)."

⁶ Reported by at-Ṭabaree in his 'Tafseer' (1/65).

tafseer in the Qur·aan, nor in the Sunnah, then we refer back for that to the sayings of the Companions, for they knew best about it because of what they actually witnessed relating to the Qur·aan, and because of the circumstances particular to them, and because of their complete understanding, their correct knowledge, and their righteous deeds...

And if you do not find the tafseer in the Qur·aan, nor in the Sunnah, nor do you find it from the Companions, then many of the imaams refer back in that case to the statements of the Taabi`een, such as Mujaahid ibn Jabr... and such as Sa`eed ibn Jubayr, `Ikrimah-the freed slave of Ibn `Abbaas, `Aṭaa-ibn Abee Rabaah, al-Ḥasan al-Basree, Masrooq ibn al-Ajda`, Sa`eed ibn al-Musayyib, Abul-`Aaliyah, ar-Rabee` ibn Anas, Qataadah, ad-Dahhaak ibn Muzaahim, and others from the Taabi`een, and those who succeeded them, and those who came after them.

So their sayings are mentioned with regard to an Aayah, and the wordings which they used may differ, and so one who has no knowledge may think that they are disagreements, when this is not actually the case. So some of them may refer to something by mentioning that which it necessitates, or by mentioning that which corresponds to it, and some of them may state the actual thing itself; and all of these actually have the same meaning, and this occurs in many places, so let the discerning person be alert to this; and Allaah is the One Who guides.”⁷



⁷ Taken from ‘Muqaddimah fee Uṣoolit-Tafseer’ (pp. 43-47, 71-72, 91, 93-94, 96, 100-101) of Shaikhul-Islam Ibn Taimiyyah; and it occurs in ‘Majmoo`ul-Fataawaa’ (13/329-375).