

THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN

From Revelation To Recitation & Beyond

SOURCES OF TAFSEER
THE EXPLANATIONS
OF THE SAHABAH

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SOURCES OF TAFSEER – EXPLANATIONS OF THE SAHABAH ﷺ

THIRD SOURCE: THE EXPLANATIONS OF THE SAHABAH

The third source of Tafseer is the statements of the blessed companions of Rasulullah ﷺ. Since they received their education directly from him ﷺ and had the first-hand knowledge of all the circumstances behind the revelation of the verses of the Qur'an Shareef, they are naturally the most authentic source of knowledge of Tafseer after Rasulullah ﷺ himself. The Companions are a generation that was chosen by Allah Ta'ala to accompany Rasulullah ﷺ and witness his blessed life. If there is consensus of Sahabah ﷺ on the interpretation of a verse, the Mufasssireen (commentators) generally follow that and give it preference over any other interpretation. However, if their interpretations are different, the Mufasssireen prefer one of them according to the principles laid down in the relevant sciences of Usoolul-Tafseer, Usoolul-Fiqh and Usoolul-Hadith. *(Meanings of the Noble Qur'an – Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani)*

It should be noted that the sayings of the companions will only be accepted when there is no explicit commentary of the verses given by the Prophet ﷺ. If there is such an explanation in the authentic traditions, the statements of the companions will be considered to have a supportive role, but if any of their statements conflict with the Prophetic tradition, it shall not be acceptable.

Amongst the Mufasssireen from the Sahaba were: Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah bin Masud, The four khalifas, Ubayy bin Ka'b, Zayd bin Thabit, Abu Musa al-Ashari, Abdullah bin Zubayr ﷺ.

HAZRAT ABDULLAH BIN ABBAS ﷺ

Hazrat Abdullah bin 'Abbas (d. 68) is considered to be the most knowledgeable of the companions in Tafseer. He has been called 'Tarjumanul Qur'an', the interpreter of the Qur'an. The Prophet ﷺ had specifically prayed for proficiency in exegesis for him: "O Allah give him the comprehension of religion and bestow on him the knowledge of exegesis." The Prophet ﷺ also addressed him in the following way: "You are a good interpreter of the Qur'an." Since he was a relative to the Prophet, being his first cousin, and his maternal aunt Hazrat Maimuna (Radiyallahu Anha) being one of the Prophet's wives, he was very close to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and due to this proximity, learnt much about the revelation. Even eminent companions used to turn towards him in matters of exegesis, despite his young age. His opinion was widely accepted.

Hazrat Umar ؓ used to allow Hazrat Ibn Abbas ؓ to enter the gatherings of the senior companions, so some of them complained. “Why is it that you allow him to enter, even though we have sons that are the same age of him whom you don't allow to enter?” Hazrat Umar replied: “Since he is the most knowledgeable of you!”

A time came when a large number of student would gather around him and he taught them the exegesis of the Qur'an. It was for this reason that Hazrat Abdullah bin Abbas ؓ was called 'The leader of commentators'.

In connection with exegesis of the Qur'an, Hazrat Umar ؓ called the companions one day, and he asked them what do you think of this verse: *“When the help of Allah comes and the conquest.”*

Some of them did not reply, while others said: “We have been commanded to thank Allah and ask for forgiveness whenever we are helped and aided in victory.” Hazrat Umar ؓ asked Hazrat Abdullah bin Abbas ؓ: “And do you think the same, O Ibn Abbas?” He answered: “No!” Umar asked: “Then what do you say?” He replied: “This is an indication to the Prophet ﷺ from Allah that his life is about to end.” The verse means, 'When the help of Allah comes and the conquest then this is a sign of your approaching death, therefore: *“Glorify the praises of your Lord and ask for forgiveness for verily he is ever-accepting of forgiveness.”* Umar said: *“I don't know of any other meaning to this except what you said.”*

ALI BIN ABI TALIB ؓ

His eminent position in Tafsir can be understood from the fact that Abu Tufayl says: *“I saw Ali delivering an address in which he said, 'Ask me questions about the Qur'an, because, By Allah! There is no verse of the Qur'an about which I do not know whether it was revealed at night or during the day, on the ground or on the mountain.”*

Since Sayyidina Ali ؓ had settled in Kufa (Iraq), his teachings mostly spread in that area, and most of his narrations have been narrated by the people of Kufa.

HAZRAT ABDULLAH BIN MASUD ﷺ

He is also a companion from whom a large number of exegetic narrations have been narrated from. The famous Tab'i states that Hazrat Abdullah bin Masud ﷺ used to recite a Surah before us and spend most of the day in its interpretation and relating Prophetic traditions related to it.

HAZRAT UBAY BIN KA'B ﷺ

He is well known in the field of Qur'anic commentary and exegesis. There are some reports that indicate that he was the first commentator whose exegesis was compiled in a book form.

These reflect some of the main personalities on Qur'anic commentary.





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