

THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN

From Revelation To Recitation & Beyond

*SOURCES OF TAFSEER
THE ARABIC LANGUAGE,
CONTEMPLATION &
ISRAEELI NARRATIONS*

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THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

Since the Qur'an Shareef was revealed in Arabic, a complete command over this language is necessary for anyone who intends to interpret it. Particularly in the case of the verses in which an explanation is not reported from the primary sources, there is no other means to interpret it except the language itself. Moreover, where two different interpretations are reported, the one more conforming to Arabic grammar and usage is normally preferred. Here again, one needs to have a thorough knowledge of Arabic vocabulary and its grammar, which are frequently used by the Mufasssireen as an important source.

DELIBERATION & REFLECTION

The Qur'an Shareef invites the reader to deliberate over its verses for acquiring guidance from it. The unique Qur'anic style is such that every person can benefit from it according to his or her level of understanding. Besides, the more one gives deep consideration to the expressions to the Glorious text, the 'wider' the scope of the subtle points of wisdom embedded in it. Such discoveries of its miraculous expressions are unending. Therefore, intellect alongside the above-mentioned branches of knowledge can be used. The intellect is a double-edged sword it can take one to heights, if used correctly and be adverse, if not used properly.

Two points are necessary to note.

Firstly, all the necessary articles of Islamic faith and all matters relating to the rulings of Shariah are fully laid down by the Qur'an Shareef and Rasulullah ﷺ making Islam is the perfect religion. The Qur'an Shareef itself says: *"Today, I have perfected your religion for you."* (5:3)

Therefore, no new idea or law will be accepted in the basic articles of Islamic faith or the overall structure of Islamic injunctions established by the sources of Shariah and recognised by the Ummah throughout the centuries.

Secondly, this exercise requires vast knowledge and correct perception. Any incompetent exercise based merely on one's assumptions will be fraught with errors and failure. It is this type of exercise against which Rasulullah ﷺ has warned us in the following words:

“Whoever interprets the Qur'an without proper knowledge should seek his abode in the Fire (of Hell).”

One of the criteria that may distinguish between right and wrong conclusions drawn by independent deliberations is that if the conclusion drawn is against other clear statements of the Qur'an Shareef or the explanations given by the Prophet ﷺ through his words or acts, or against the consensus of the scholars of the Ummah, who have devoted their lives to understand the Glorious Qur'an and the Sunnah in their true perspective, then it will not be considered. However, new points of guidance that are not against the aforementioned principles may well be inferred by competent study of the Glorious Text.

ISRAEELI NARRATIONS

The narratives that reached us by Jewish or Christian sources are called Israeeliyat in Arabic and 'Israelite Traditions' in English. Many narratives of the past prophets ﷺ and communities are common between the Qur'an Shareef and the Biblical or Talmudic sources. But very often the narratives given by the Qur'an Shareef are more brief and concise than the stories given by Israelite Traditions. When the Jews and Christians, who were well aware of these traditions, embraced Islam in the days of Rasulullah ﷺ or after his demise, they narrated Israelite traditions before Muslims, which gave details of the brief stories narrated by the Qur'an Shareef. Thus, the Israelite traditions found their way into the books of Tafseer. The true status of such narrations is that neither all of them are correct, nor are all of them false - they can be used as supporting evidence. Hafiz ibn Kathir (Rahimahullah), the well-known Mufassir, has categorised them into three different kinds:

- There are traditions, the truth of which is confirmed either by the Qur'an Shareef or by authentic Ahadith. Obviously, those are to be believed as true. For example, the drowning of Firoun is authenticated by the Qur'an and Hadith.
- Contrarily, there are some Israelite traditions, the authenticity of which is rejected by the Qur'an Shareef or Sunnah of Rasulullah ﷺ or they are clearly against the basic principles voiced by them. For instance, it is mentioned in the Bible that Sayyiduna Sulayman ﷺ (Solomon) had taken to idolatry in his later years. This description is expressly rejected by the Qur'an Shareef in Surah Al Baqarah (2:102). Similarly, it is mentioned in the Bible that Sayyiduna Nooh ﷺ (Noah) committed adultery with his own daughter, and that Sayyiduna Dawood ﷺ committed adultery with the wife of his general. This is totally against the well-established principle in Islam that the

Prophets of Allah ﷺ are sinless and protected against all prohibitions. Such Israelite traditions have to be rejected and believed as false.

- The third are those traditions about which Islamic resources are silent. Regarding such traditions, Rasulallah ﷺ has directed us to remain silent too. We are neither supposed to reject them nor to hold them as true, it is better to avoid such narratives.

Source: Meanings of the Noble Qur'an – Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani





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