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The Preferences That Reflect al-Zamakhsharī's Mu'tazilite Thought in al-Kashshāf: A Survey in the Context of the Theory of Luṭf

Zemahşeri'nin el-Keşşâf'ında Mu'tezilî Düşüncesini Yansıtan Tercihleri: Lütf Teorisi Bağlamında Bir İnceleme

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Abstract

Luţf, which means delicacy, elegance, and favor in dictionary, as a concept, refers to God's directing his servants to faith and preventing them from committing sins. In general, the theory of luţf, which was founded on the principle of 'adl (justice) and moderation of the theory of aşlah (the optimal), was understood by the Mu'tazilites of Basra as making certain actions obligatory for Allah, and from this aspect, it caused controversies. These discussions were also reflected in the interpretation of the Qur'an, and the verses were interpreted by Mu'tazila to form a basis for the theory of luţf. al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), who is a member of the Basra school of Mu'tazila, defends the theses of his denomination in a scattered manner in *al-Kashshāf*. This situation, which appears between the lines, is known as the general feature of his tafsīr. This knowledge we have about the work in general needs to be confirmed through various examples. This study, prepared for this purpose, reveals how much the Mu'tazilite aspect is reflected in his tafsīr, based on his ideas about luţf in *al-Kashshāf*. As a matter of fact, while interpreting the verses about luţf, he constantly emphasizes Mu'tazilite principles and objects to opposing ideas through Mu'tazilite arguments. In this respect, we can say that he acted like a Mu'tazilite theologian on the subject of luţf. Our study aims to contribute to filling the gap in the literature by revealing this situation. In this regard, our research is limited to reading *al-Kashshāf* through the kalām literature within the framework of the theory of luţf. Therefore, we will not go into the details of other theological issues, and our references to tafsīr works other than *al-Kashshāf* will be limited. Thus, theological background of *al-Kashshāf* will be scrutinized on one subject and this study will constitute a reference point for its denominational aspect.

Key Words: Tafsīr, Kalām, Mu'tazila, Luţf, Aşlah, al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*.

Öz

Sözlükte incelik, zarafet, iyilik gibi anlamlara gelen lütuf, kavram olarak Allah'ın kullarını imana yöneltmesi ve onları günahlardan alıkoymasını ifade etmektedir. Genel anlamda aslah teorisinin yumuşatılması ve adalet prensibi üzerine kurulan lütuf teorisi Basra Mu'tezilesi tarafından Allah'a bazı fiilleri vacip kılınması şeklinde anlaşılmış ve bu yönüyle tartışmalara neden olmuştur. Bu tartışmalar Kur'an yorumuna da yansımış ve ayetler Mu'tezile tarafından lütuf teorisine zemin teşkil edecek şekilde tefsir edilmiştir. İtikâdî olarak Mu'tezile'nin Basra akolüne mensup olan Zemahşerî el-Keşşâf'ta dağınık bir biçimde Mu'tezilî tezleri savunur. Satır aralarında karşımıza çıkan bu durum onun tefsirinin genel özelliği olarak bilinir. Eserin geneli hakkında sahip olduğumuz bu bilginin çeşitli örnekler üzerinden teyit edilmesi gerekmektedir. Bu amaçla hazırlanan bu çalışma Zemahşerî'nin *el-Keşşâf*'taki lütfa dair fikirlerinden hareketle Mu'tezilî yönünün tefsirine ne kadar yansıdığını ortaya koymaktadır. Zira o lütüfla ilgili ayetleri tefsir ederken sürekli Mu'tezilî fikirleri öne çıkarmakta ve karşıt fikirlere Mu'tezilî argümanlarla itiraz etmektedir. Bu yönüyle onun lütuf konusunda bir Mu'tezile kelâmcısı gibi hareket ettiğini söyleyebiliriz. Çalışmamız bu durumu ortaya koyarak literatürdeki boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Diğer taraftan araştırmamız *el-Keşşâf*'ı lütuf teorisi çerçevesinde kelâm literatürü üzerinden okumakla sınırlıdır. Dolayısıyla diğer itikâdî meselelerin ayrıntısına girmeyeceğimiz gibi *el-Keşşâf* dışındaki tefsirlere atıflarımız da sınırlı düzeyde olacaktır. Böylece bu çalışma ile *el-Keşşâf*'ın itikâdî arkaplanı bir konu özelinde derli toplu şekilde incelenmiş ve onun mezhebi yönü ortaya konmuş olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tefsir, Kelâm, Mu'tezile, Lütuf, Aslah, Zemahşerî, *el-Keşşâf*.

Introduction

The science of tafsīr aims to understand and explain the Qur'ān. For this purpose, the exegete must have experience in some disciplines including linguistics and sīra (life of the prophet) since the Qur'ān is an Arabic text based on certain linguistic characteristics and has a dimension of historical narrative. In addition, the Qur'ān contains creedal, juridical, and moral rulings. Therefore, it is necessary for the exegete to have a certain perspective on kalām (theology), fiqh (jurisprudence) and zuhd (asceticism). These disciplines have become quite diversified since the Tābi'ūn (the successors) period, when the first commentary was written.¹ Because different sects were formed in fiqh and kalām, and the science of isnād emerged in ḥadīth. This situation necessitated mufasssīr to deal with the problem from a certain point of view. This point of view has generally been in line with the environment in which the exegete grew up and the orientations of the doctrine that dominates the environment. Thus, the exegetes from different denominations reflected the principles and sensitivities of their own denominations in their works. This situation has led to the emergence of the concept of denominational tafsīr in classical tafsīr historiography.

Denominational tafsīr means interpreting the verses considering the principles of a denomination. In this context, an exegete brings the general opinion of his denomination to the fore in his tafsīr work. He sometimes does this by presenting a statement in a way that supports the view of his denomination, and sometimes by finding evidence against the view of the opponent denominations. Another aspect of denominational affiliation in tafsīr is the distinction between the contents of muḥkam (clear) and mutashābih (ambiguous) verses or, truth and metaphor in the Qur'ān. Accordingly, while the exegete interprets the statements that will support his own sect as muḥkam and truth, he accepts the statements that support the opposing view as mutashābih or metaphorical. Thus, the interpreter has a general reading of the different expressions of the Qur'ān in a way that supports his sect.

The expression of “the denominational tafsīr” refers a pejorative meaning and this denotation has a reductionist character. Because this classification brings along a wrong point of view of generalizing the commentator's attitude of certain situations to the whole work. As a matter of fact, the exegete highlights his ideological interpretations in certain parts of his work, but it does not consist of only ideological interpretations. Therefore, only a part of the tafsīr shows denominational characteristics. However, the expression of “the denominational tafsīr” gives the feeling that the work is based on a group ideology from beginning to end.²

Another problem of “the denominational tafsīr” as a concept is that the scientific interpretations in the work which are called “denominational” are sacrificed to generalization and devalued. Because mufasssīr may have mentioned many other remarkable meanings of a verse and just highlighted the one that is suitable for his denomination. In other words, his work does not have only the denominational reflections but also many other acceptable interpretations.

¹ For the formation process of the science of kalām and its relation with other sciences, See: İlyas Çelebi - Hayrettin N. Güdekli, “Kelām İlminin Teşekkülü ve Diğer İslâmî İlimlerle İlişkisi”, *İslâmî İlimlerde Metodoloji: Usûl Mes'elesi, Temel İslâm İlimlerinin Ortaya Çıkışı ve Birbirleriyle İlişkileri Tartışmalı İlmî İhtisas Toplantısı* (Istanbul, 2014), 389-392. İbrahim Coşkun, “Kelâm İlminin Orjinallığı ve Teşekkülüne Yol Açan İlk Meseleler: Hicri I. Asırda Kelam”, *Hicri Birinci Asırda İslâmî İlimler -II- Hadis, İslâm Hukuku, Kelâm, Mezhepler Tarihi Arap Dili ve Sıyer* (Istanbul: Ensar, 2020), 2/398. For the science of ḥadīth to become a systematic science, See: Ahmet Yücel, “Hadis İlminin Ortaya Çıkışı ve Diğer İslâmî İlimlerle İlişkisi (Rivâyet Dönemi/İlk Üç Asır)”, *İslâmî İlimlerde Metodoloji: Usûl Mes'elesi, Temel İslâm İlimlerinin Ortaya Çıkışı ve Birbirleriyle İlişkileri Tartışmalı İlmî İhtisas Toplantısı* (Istanbul, 2014), 210.

² Mustafa Karagöz, *Tefsir Tarihi Yazımı ve Problemleri* (Ankara: Araştırma Yayınları, 2012), 128-131.

Therefore, we can say that the expression of “the denominational tafsīr” is very superficial and may mislead the reader about the real value of the work. In this context, while accepting that the use of the expression gives an idea about the exegete, it should not be forgotten that it might be an arbitrary statement from the point of the value of the work.

The most well-known among the denominational tafsīr works is likely al-Zamakhsharī's (d. 538/1144) book *al-Kashshāf an haqā'iq gavāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*, which is considered in the category of Mu'tazilite tafsīr. The most important feature of this work is adaptation of Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's (d. 471/1078-79) theory of nazm (the discourse arrangement) into tafsīr with a great success and its being the pinnacle of tafsīr in terms of language and rhetoric.³ On the other hand, the work reflects the Mu'tazilite views of its author in a scattered way. For this reason, the work has come to the fore with its Mu'tazilite identity. Nonetheless, *al-Kashshāf* was considered important not only in Mu'tazilite circles but also by almost all exegetes of the other schools. Many studies such as commentary, gloss, abridgement, and compilation have been made on the work, Mu'tazilite ideas have been discussed and criticized, and even many of his ideas have been purified from traces of al-Mu'tazila and used in Ahl al-Sunna exegeses. In this respect, *al-Kashshāf* has taken its place among the most important works in the history of tafsīr.⁴

Since it constitutes our subject, it would be appropriate to mention the basic features of Mu'tazilite tafsīr in which al-Zamakhsharī is included. Mu'tazilite tafsīr is basically a tafsīr activity based on the five basic principles of Mu'tazila consisting Tawḥīd (Oneness of Allah), 'Adl (His justice), al-Wa'd wa al-Wa'id (His promise and threat), al-Manzilah bayna al-Manzilatayn (a position between the two positions) and al-Amr bi al-Ma'rūf wa al-Nahy an al-Munkar (commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong).⁵ For example, based on the principle of 'adl, which also constitutes our subject, it is emphasized that Allah does not create evil and that the actions of the servant belong to the servant himself, and expressions such as luṭf, hidāya (guidance) and ināyah (the divine assistance) are explained in a way that does not cause jabr (coercion/compulsion).

The school of Mu'tazila used rational and narrative evidence in the interpretation of the verses. However, Mu'tazila, who adopted the principle that religious knowledge can be obtained primarily through reason, prioritized the rational approach in tafsīr.⁶ Accordingly, the narrative evidence used in the interpretation of the verses is subject to rational evidence.⁷ If there is an element contrary to the basic principles in a narration, it is interpreted with various arguments or another meaning of the expression is preferred. If the statement clearly contradicts

³ See: Taha Boyalık, *Dil, Söz ve Fesāhat-Abdülkāhir el-Cürçānī'nin Sözdizimi Nazariyesi* (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2016), 245.

⁴ Mesut Kaya, *Tefsir Geleneğinde el-Keşşāf*, (Istanbul: MÜİF Yayınları, 2019), 27-28; Taha Boyalık, *el-Keşşāf Literatürü-Zemahşerī'nin Tefsir Klasiklerinin Etki Tarihi* (Istanbul: İsam Yayınları, 2019), 29-33.

⁵ For example, in accordance with the principle of tawḥīd, while Allah is the only one kadīm (pre-eternal) in His essence and attributes, the things other than Him are accepted as hādīth (contingent). In this context, the Qur'ān has been considered in the category of creatures and the verses dealing with this subject have been interpreted within this framework. In addition, ru'yat Allāh (the vision of Allah) was rejected based on this principle (tawḥīd), and the verses about it were interpreted accordingly. Mustafa Bilgin, *Tefsirde Mu'tezile Ekolü* (Bursa: Uludağ University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1971), 15-26.

⁶ Mustafa Bilgin, *Tefsirde Mu'tezile Ekolü*, 5; Abū al-Hasan Abd al-Jabbār ibn Ahmad al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharh al-uşūl al-khamsa* (Egypt: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1996), 89.

⁷ Mustafa Öztürk, “Mu'tezile ve Tefsir”, *Marife*, III/3 (2003), 106.

Mu'tazilite principles, a different meaning is assigned by various rational arguments. This point will be better understood when we examine al-Zamakhsharī's interpretations on hidāya and luṭf.

The "five basic principles" of Mu'tazila have been the most important criterion in the distinction between muḥkam and mutashābih verses. The verses whose conformity with these principles are clearly revealed are accepted as muḥkam and the others which has no conformity with the principles are called mutashābih. When a muḥkam and a mutashābih verse meet, muḥkam meaning is preferred and mutashābih is interpreted in accordance with the "muḥkam" one.⁸ As a result, a mutashābih verse that contradicts any of the five basic principles has been interpreted with the principles derived from the muḥkam verses. For instance, Mu'tazilite exegetes, based on the principle of tawḥīd, considered the verses containing al-sifāt al-khabariyyah (the revealed attributes) as mutashābih and interpreted them metaphorically⁹. Although there is a distinction between muḥkam and mutashābih, the fact that this distinction is based on the five principles has confirmed the result that the final meaning is determined according to the five principles. In this context, the five principles were effective in Mu'tazilite tafsīr as well as in Mu'tazilite kalām. In sum, Mu'tazilite tafsīr has entered the literature as the general name of tafsīr that solves general tafsīr problems based on the five principles.

1. al-Zamakhsharī and the Conceptual Framework of Luṭf

Before moving on to the theory of luṭf in *al-Kashshāf*, it would be appropriate to speak of luṭf which is a Mu'tazilite theory and al-Zamakhsharī's ideas about luṭf in general. Luṭf refers to the actions that Mu'tazila of Basra used to base hidāya, tawfīq (divine success), sharī'a (religious law) and nubuwwa (prophethood) and which they considered obligatory to Allah. In this context, luṭf has been defined as "anything that one chooses with which is wājib/obligatory and avoids evil, or that brings one closer to what is obligatory or away from evil".¹⁰ Accordingly, if Allah knows what will require His servants to choose the obligatory or to stay away from evil, He must create it. If he does not do this, he would not act wisely. On the other hand, luṭf is given only to those who will believe. It is not obligatory on Allah to give luṭf to someone who is known to be unbelieving. God's obligation to them is only to create an opportunity for faith. By doing this, he would do His share and remove their excuses of Hereafter. Therefore, Allah does not have to give luṭf to those who will not believe. He bestows guidance only on those whom he knows will believe.¹¹

al-Zamakhsharī is a scholar in the line of al-Bahshamiyya who follows Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (d. 321/933) and of al-Husainiyya, which expresses those who follow Abū al-Husayn al-Basrī (d. 436/1044), both from the Mu'tazila of Basra.¹² As to the line he stands on the subject

⁸ Mustafa Öztürk, "Mu'tezile ve Tefsir", 103-105; Zülfikar Durmuş, "Zemahşerî'nin Muhkem ve Müteşâbih'e Dair Görüşlerinin Analitik İncelemesi", *Marife*, III/3 (2003), 263.

⁹ Mustafa Öztürk, "Mu'tezile ve Tefsir", 97.

¹⁰ al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharh al-uşūl al-khamsa*, 519.

¹¹ Ebū'l-Hasan el-Eş'arī, *Makâlâtü'l-İslâmiyyîn: İlk Dönem İslâm Mezhepleri*, trans. Ömer Aydın – Mehmet Dalkılıç (Istanbul: Yazma Eserler Kurumu, 2019), 362; Abū al-Hasan Abd al-Jabbār ibn Ahmad al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa al-'adl: el-aşlah -istiḥqāq al-dhamm- al-tawba* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Misriyya, 1963), 14/53-54.

¹² This issue has been discussed by various researchers. However, when it comes to luṭf, it will be easily seen in the quotations we will make in the coming pages that al-Zamakhsharī is on the line of al-Bahshamiyya.

of luṭf, he is on the Bahshamiyya line.¹³ One of the most famous names among the representatives of this school is al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadānī (d. 415/1025), who compiled the ideas of the school and completed the systematization. He conveyed the accumulation of Mu‘tazilite thought up to his time in detail in his famous corpus called *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa al-‘adl*. In addition, the literature produced by his contemporaries and students who followed him allows for a comprehensive analysis of the Mu‘tazila of Basra. This will also open a few doors for us to understand al-Zamakhsharī. Because *al-Kashshāf* presents a disorganized appearance to compile the theological ideas included. By presenting these scattered ideas in a systematic way, the Mu‘tazilite literature provides a suitable ground for understanding both al-Zamakhsharī and *al-Kashshāf*. Thus, Kalām literature of Basra will facilitate our work in illuminating the ideas of the school, on the one hand, and will also help us to understand the theological views of al-Zamakhsharī on the other hand.

Although al-Zamakhsharī understands luṭf in *al-Kashshāf* like the Mu‘tazila of Basra, he does not explain the issue in a methodical way. Instead, he talks about the details of luṭf in relevant verses. Thus, by nature of the classical mawzi‘ī tafsīr method, he deals with the issue where the words such as hidāya, tawfīq and ‘iṣma (the immunity from sin) are mentioned. This naturally results in discussing the topic in a disorganized way. This scattered view will be combined within the framework of the problematic of the theory of luṭf.

al-Zamakhsharī does not notice the semantic differences between the near-synonymous words for luṭf such as tawfīq, ‘iṣma, hidāya and maṣlaḥa in his tafsīr although there are notional differences between them. He was even criticized by later scholars because of this attitude.¹⁴ This situation will determine the limits of our expectation from *al-Kashshāf* regarding luṭf. Because we will not look for the differences between the concepts such as hidāya, luṭf and ‘iṣma.

2. The Word of Luṭf and its Meanings in the Qur’ān

The word luṭf does not take place in the Qur’ān, but in one place the verbal form فالتلطف “fa-l-yatalaṭṭaf” from the same root and the word لطيف “laṭīf” in seven places. One of them is mentioned in the context of human relations, and the other six are mentioned as a name of Allah. In the verse associated with certain people, it is used to mean “to keep an act secretly, to

¹³ The difference between al-Bahshamiyya and al-Ḥusainiyya regarding luṭf is whether luṭf is valid in worldly matters. As a matter of fact, while al-Bahshamiyya thinks that luṭf is valid only in religious matters, al-Ḥusainiyya claims that it is valid in all His actions. For the controversy on this issue, See: Orhan Şener Koloğlu, “Mu‘tezile’nin Hüseyiniyye Ekolünün Dünyevî Aslah Konusuna Yaklaşımı”, *İslām Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 39 (2018), 10.

¹⁴ Abū al-Kāsim Mahmūd al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf an haqā’iq al-tanzīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1987), 2/539. The commentator of *al-Kashshāf*, al-Ṭībī (d. 743/1343) cites that Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284) criticized al-Zamakhsharī for falsifying the concept of hidāyah since he turned hidāyah into luṭf. Şaraf al-Dīn al-Husayin al-Ṭībī, *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, (Dubai: Jā’izat al-Dubai al-Dawliyya, 2013), 6/388. In addition, al-Ṭībī quotes a sentence from Najm al-Dīn al-Zāhidī al-Khawārizmī (d. 658/1260) about the difference between these concepts. Accordingly, if luṭf takes place in something that is obligatory, it will be tawfīq. If it is related to abandoning the evil, it will be ‘iṣma. If it brings closer to wājib or abandoning the evil, luṭf becomes al-luṭf al-mukarrab. al-Ṭībī, *Futūḥ al-gahayb*, 2/140.

be careful".¹⁵ In other verses¹⁶, it states that Allah is Laṭīf; He is All-Kind, "He knows everything with its subtleties".¹⁷ In the interpretation of these verses, al-Zamakhsharī usually emphasizes that Allah knows the subtleties of everything implicit-explicit, visible-invisible.¹⁸ Five of the verses mentioned as the name of Allah came with the name al-Khabīr (the All-Aware). The name al-Laṭīf means knowing all the subtleties and being aware them, especially where it comes with the name al-Khabīr. However, al-Zamakhsharī, subject to the theory of luṭf, brought to the fore Allah's knowledge of the conditions and possibilities, that is, luṭf, for his servant's benefits and for him to continue his religious life correctly. For example, in the interpretation of the 34th verse of Sūrat al-Ahzāb, al-Zamakhsharī explained the expressions al-Khabīr and al-Laṭīf together by saying "He knows the things that are beneficial for you and will improve your religious life, and He bestows them to you". "Things that will be beneficial to man and his religious life", which forms the basis of the theory of luṭf, are highlighted here in the names of Allah, al-Laṭīf and al-Khabīr. Again, in the explanation of the 63rd verse of Sūrat al-Hajj¹⁹, he emphasized that Allah's knowledge or grace reaches all the subtleties and that He is aware of the things that will be for the benefit and interest of people. In the two verses, Allah's being gracious and compassionate are mentioned together, and it is emphasized that he does everything in truth and wisdom. In the 103rd verse of Sūrat al-An'ām²⁰, explaining the name al-Laṭīf says, "He sees the subtle beings, penetrates the subtleties and is subtle. He is too subtle for the eyes to perceive Him."²¹ And He is al-Khabīr, that is, aware of all subtleties. Here again the two names are mentioned together.

al-Zamakhsharī's constant emphasis on Allah's knowledge and awareness in the places related to the word luṭf stems from his Mu'tazilite sensitivities. Because, in the Mu'tazilite understanding, there is a very close relationship between luṭf and knowledge of Allah.²² al-Zamakhsharī also makes an explanation that Allah knows the result, emphasizing this relationship in matters such as luṭf and hidāya in the relevant parts of his tafsīr.²³ However, al-Za-

¹⁵ "...So send one of you with these silver coins of yours to the city, and let him find which food is the purest, and then bring you provisions from it. Let him be [exceptionally] cautious, and do not let him give you away." (The Clear Quran, Accessed June 10, 2023, al-Kahf 18/19).

¹⁶ al-An'ām 6/103, Yūsuf 12/100, al-Hajj 22/63, al-Shūrā 42/19, Luqmān 31/16, al-Ahzāb 33/34, al-Mulk 67/13-14.

¹⁷ Luqmān 31/16, al-Mulk 67/13-14. al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 3/538.

¹⁸ In the external meaning of the aforementioned verses, we do not find the meaning that Mu'tazila and al-Zamakhsharī attributed to the conceptualized word "luṭf" at first sight. In fact, in studies on the theory of luṭf, we see that the concept of luṭf used by al-Mu'tazila is criticized by stating that it is not related to the expressions in the Qur'ān. See: Mahsum Aytepe, *İlahi Yardım ve Özgürlük Diyalektiği* (Istanbul: Endülüs Yayınları, 2018), 112. We can say that al-Zamakhsharī remained faithful to the theory in the verses where the word Laṭīf is mentioned. In other words, it would not be correct to say that al-Mu'tazila acted completely independent of the verses while putting forward the theory. However, we cannot say that they formed it a concept completely independent of the meaning in the Qur'ān. Within the framework of their own interpretation of the Qur'ān, the meaning in the Qur'ān and the meaning in the theory are very compatible.

¹⁹ "Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, then the earth becomes green? Surely Allah is Laṭīf and Khabīr." (al-Hajj 22/63).

²⁰ "No vision can encompass Him, but He encompasses all vision. For He is." (al-An'ām 6/103).

²¹ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2/54.

²² al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharh al-uşūl al-khamsa*, 302.

²³ The theory of luṭf occupies a big place in al-Kashshāf as we can see his emphasis on the relevant issues interlines. His definition of hidāyah is the most basic reason of this situation since he takes these two (hidāyah and luṭf) in the same meaning. Therefore, it could be possible to touch the theory of luṭf in many places of his tafsīr

makhsharī does much more than comment on the theory of luṭf in *al-Kashshāf*. While he explains and defends the theory in some places, he raises objections to opponents of different ideas in others. Sometimes, it protects the ground of the theory with various interpretations. Therefore, we can say that the theory of luṭf occupies a big place in *al-Kashshāf*. As we examine the details and their meanings in the following sections, it will be better understood how much space the theory of luṭf occupies in *al-Kashshāf*.

3. The Concept of Luṭf in *al-Kashshāf*

3.1. Luṭf is Obligatory Upon Allah/Wājib alā Allah

Wājib alā Allah is a concept in Mu‘tazila that expresses the responsibility of Allah towards His servants and lays the groundwork for theories such as aṣḥāb and luṭf. Here, the necessity of Allah always creating what is best for His servants or directing them to faith is expressed by wājib alā Allah.²⁴ In this context, although it is not welcomed in Ahl al-Sunna circles²⁵, this concept is frequently used in Mu‘tazilite theses about the actions of Allah.

al-Zamakhsharī thinks that it is obligatory for Allah to give luṭf those whom He knows will believe in Him. He supports this idea with the interpretation of various expressions of the Qur’ān. As a matter of fact, he interpreted the expression *إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَىٰ* in the 12th verse of Sūrat al-Layl as “what is obligatory for us is to provide evidence and guide the truth by revealing the shari‘a”. Therefore, he interpreted the expression “alaynā” as obligation. Interpreting the 38th verse of Sūrat al-Naḥl in the same way, he says that Allah has declared it obligatory for Himself to remain true to his promise here, based on the expression *وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا* “*It is a true promise binding on Him.*” Again, he interprets the “waqa‘a” in the expression *فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ* “*Their reward has already been secured with Allah*” in the 100th verse of Sūrat al-Nisā’²⁶, as “wajaba” (being obligatory). According to him, the creation here is obligatory in accordance with Allah’s promise and it is unthinkable Him not to do this. With these preferences, al-Zamakhsharī would like to show that the idea of “wājib alā Allah” and the necessity of luṭf in this context can be based on the Qur’ān.

al-Zamakhsharī also elaborates on what actions are obligatory for Allah and why they are obligatory. As a matter of fact, when he interprets the expression *وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ* “*This (first creation) is even easier for Him*” in the 27th verse of Sūrat al-Rūm, he also makes a theological explanation of the subject. He states that it is not obligatory for Allah to create for the first time; but the second creation is obligatory. He systematically explains the distinction between what is obligatory and what is not. He says:

“Another interpretation is this: To create for the first time is in the form of tafaddul/iḥsān in which the agent is free between doing and not doing. Recreating is in the form of obligatory, which is necessary since re-creation is to recompense of the deeds. Verbs [i] are either muhāl—which means impossible, out of capacity, never possible to do—[ii] or actions that have a quality that prevents the hakīm (wise) from doing it; -This feature is that the verb is bad. These actions are substitutes for muhāl, and fall into the same category; because, just as being muhāl prevents

-despite being scattered because of the nature of the traditional tafsīr method- as the concept of hidāyah is one of the basic emphases of the Qur’ān itself.

²⁴ al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 14/53.

²⁵ In Ahl al-Sunna, hidāyah is from Allah and it is by His will. And He makes it special to certain people. al-Ṭībī, *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 3/537.

²⁶ *وَمَنْ يَهَاجِرْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُرَاعِمًا كَثِيرًا وَسَعَةً وَمَنْ يَخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا* “*Those who leave their homes and die while emigrating to Allah and His Messenger—their reward has already been secured with Allah. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*” (al-Nisā’ 4/100).

that action from being done, the preventive quality of these actions also prevents it from occurrence- [iii] or they are actions done to be a blessing or a benevolence; -This is a normal situation; the person who will do them has the authority to do or not to do them.- [vi] or they are obligatory actions that must be done and there is no way to abandon them. Now, the actions that are obligatory to do are the actions that are farthest from muhāl and closest to occur. Since it is obligatory to resurrect people (to recompense their deeds), this has been the most distant deed from muhāl; when it was the most distant action from muhāl, it was included in the scope of ta'annī (deliberateness) and convenience in the best way and thus it was counted as one of the easiest actions; When it is one of the easiest actions, it was seen as easier than creating it for the first time.”²⁷

Here, with the expression “ahwanu alayhi”, al-Zamakhsharī says that re-creation is the worthiest deed to be done because it is obligatory, and therefore it is described easy. In other words, easiness stems from obligation. The classification of obligatory-possible-impossible, which he has mentioned here, is based entirely on the Mu'tazilite ground.²⁸ In addition, the idea that the first creation is not obligatory but subsequent creations are obligatory is the most common example used by the Mu'tazila of Basra within the scope of the theories of aṣḥāḥ and luṭf.²⁹ Therefore, al-Zamakhsharī does not only stand on a Mu'tazilite line in his interpretation; He also expresses this within the framework of Mu'tazilite terminology.

3.2. Luṭf is a Consequence of Allah's Wisdom and Mercy

al-Zamakhsharī shows that he stands on a Mu'tazilite ground with his explanations about being the actions of Allah obligatory. In addition, he faces the consequences of his theological choice in his work. In this context, he has to explain to Allah that some actions are obligatory. Because those who oppose the necessity of luṭf generally refer to the limitlessness of Allah's power and that nothing will oblige Him.³⁰ Therefore, the nature of something being obligatory for Allah is a problem that needs to be explained. In this context, al-Nazzām (d. 231/845), one of the early theologians, argues that Allah always created aṣḥāḥ and that there is no better or worse than the one He created within His power. The theologians of Basra oppose this idea and prefer to explain the necessity with Allah's justice, wisdom, and mercy.³¹ al-Zamakhsharī supports this idea and states that the necessity attributed to Allah is the consequence of wisdom and mercy and that some verses in the Qur'ān indicate this. While interpreting the statement *أَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ* “Or [is it because] they possess the treasuries of the mercy of your Lord—the Almighty, al-Wahhāb (the Giver of all bounties)” in the 9th verse of Sūrat Ṣād, he said that these expressions indicate that Allah distributes His treasury in accordance with His wisdom and justice. As for the 40th verse of Sūrat al-Nisā', he reveals his approach to the subject more clearly. It is not because of the inadequacy of the power of Allah's oppression, based on the statement that “Indeed, Allah does not oppress anyone by the tiniest amount”; He says it's because of his wisdom:

²⁷ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 3/477. The related verse: *وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ* “And He is the One Who originates the creation then will resurrect it—which is even easier for Him. To Him belong the finest attributes in the heavens and the earth. And He is the Almighty, All-Wise.” (al-Rūm 30/27).

²⁸ For the classification of Allah's acts as obligatory-possible-impossible in the Mu'tazila of Basra, See: al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 14/53.

²⁹ al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 14/53.

³⁰ al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 13/201.

³¹ el-Eṣ'arī, *Makālātü'l-İslâmiyyîn*, 746.

“In this verse, there is evidence that if Allah reduces the reward or punishes too much, it will be cruelty. And it is not because he has no power; There is evidence that he did not do it because of his wisdom.”³²

al-Zamakhsharī, by emphasizing justice and wisdom, and by expressing clearly, states that the matters that are obligatory for Allah are not related to power; asserts that it is a moral imperative. Thus, he claims that although Allah is able to do so, He shows people the right path and act in this way out of His wisdom and mercy.

3.3. The Scope of Luṭf

What is obligatory for Allah is one of the problems between the theologians of Basra and Baghdād. In fact, there is a debate between them as to whether all the actions of Allah are obligatory. The theologians of Basra said that Allah is only responsible for doing aṣḥāḥ (the best) in matters related to taklīf (imposition of obligation), in other matters, they argue that he may not create what is aṣḥāḥ.³³ However, the theologians of Baghdād think that it is obligatory for Allah to create aṣḥāḥ in all matters. Because, as we mentioned above, the theologians of Baghdād consider all the actions of Allah within the scope of wājib. Thus, according to them, Allah creates the best for His servants in all their religious and worldly situations. Because the rule that applies to some of his actions must also apply to others. However, the theologians of Basra claim that Allah will only create aṣḥāḥ in religious matters. They defend this idea through a critique of the general aṣḥāḥ theory.³⁴ In fact, according to this idea, aṣḥāḥ and luṭf mean the same thing. al-Zamakhsharī continues the line of the Bahshamite school of Basra in this matter as well and argues that Allah will create aṣḥāḥ only in religious matters. The first of the meanings he chose for the expressions إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا “Allah is Laṭīf and Khabīr” in the 34th verse of Sūrat al-Ahzāb is that “He knows your religious interests and benefits and will send it down for you”. The second meaning is that Allah chose what was beneficial for the Messenger of Allah and his family.

al-Zamakhsharī says that it may have been meant in two senses.³⁵ While the first meaning here supports the idea of aṣḥāḥ of the theologians of Basra, the second meaning does not adapt it. There is no expression in external meaning of the verse that will evoke the first meaning above. However, al-Zamakhsharī is very willing to interpret the name of Allah al-Laṭīf with maṣḥāḥa (benefit) in religious matters by first mentioning the (aforementioned) first meaning and then saying that both meanings are valid. On the other hand, al-Zamakhsharī also limits the expression with religious issues. In fact, there is no need for such a thing according to Mu‘tazilite principles. For, Allah's creation of what is beneficial is sufficient for the theories of aṣḥāḥ and luṭf. However, he particularly prefers to limit it to religious matters. Thus, he interprets that statement in line with the preferences of the Mu‘tazila of Basra.

3.4. Luṭf is Given to Those Who Deserve It

Another discussion regarding the scope of luṭf is whether Allah grant luṭf on those who will not believe. The theologians of Baghdād thought that Allah created luṭf for everyone, just as they claimed that He would create aṣḥāḥ in all matters.³⁶ However, the theologians of Basra argued that luṭf will only be given to those who are known to believe and that luṭf will not be

³² al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1/511.

³³ Rukn al-Dīn ibn al-Malāḥimī al-Khawārizmī, *Kitāb al-fā‘iq fī usūl al-dīn* (Tehran: Mu‘assasa-yi Hikmat wa Falsafa-yi Iran, 1966), 291-292.

³⁴ al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 14/56, 62 etc.

³⁵ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 3/58.

³⁶ el-Eṣ‘arī, *Makālātü'l-İslâmiyyîn*, 786.

given to anyone who will not believe.³⁷ For, it is useless to do favors to a person who is known not to believe. Therefore, Allah does not grant luṭf on anyone who will not believe.

al-Zamakhsharī defends this view of the school of Basra in various places. To do this, he interprets the verses that state that hidāya will be given to believers or that unbelievers deserve the situation they are in. As a matter of fact, while he is interpreting the 5th verse of Sūrat al-Baqara, he says that hidāya is given only to those who are known to believe. He says that with the expression هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ “*It is a guide for those mindful of Allah*” in the 2nd verse of Sūrat al-Baqara, the Qur’ān is declared to be a guidance only for those who believe.³⁸ He states that the expressions in the 6th verse of Sūrat al-Baqara, “*Whether you warn the unbelievers or not, they will not believe*” point out that luṭf will not be given to those who are known to not believe.³⁹ Thus, in the interpretation of the verses stating that believers deserve guidance and unbelievers deserve misguidance, he defends the view that luṭf will be given only to believing servants who deserve it. By doing this, he continues the Bahshamite line of Mu’tazila of Basra.

There are verses in the Qur’ān which state that guidance is only for believers, and there are also verses suitable to be interpreted through the divine will of Allah. Because some verses point out more clearly that guidance and misguidance are from Allah. al-Zamakhsharī interprets these verses appropriately in their own context. Thus, in the tafsīr of the 272nd verse of Sūrat al-Baqara “*You are not responsible for people’s guidance [O Prophet]—it is Allah Who guides whoever He wills*”, he says:

“‘It is not your duty to guide them.’ It is not your duty to guide them by making them avoid what they are forbidden to do, such as begging, torture, and spending unclean things for help. Your only duty is to convey the prohibitions. ‘Allah guides whom He wills’ Allah gives luṭf those who will benefit from it and stay away from his prohibitions.”⁴⁰

al-Zamakhsharī here explains hidāya as directing the right action rather than making him believe. Accordingly, it is only Allah who will show the right path. On the other hand, showing the right way does not take place without a reason. Allah will give guidance to anyone who will benefit by following his orders. Afterall, he interprets it as “Allah gives luṭf to those who will benefit from it and stay away from his prohibitions” and says that Allah does this with the knowledge that they will choose the right way. Thus, al-Zamakhsharī attributed the guidance to the knowledge that the servant will be guided because of luṭf, instead of directly attributing it to the will of Allah. Therefore, luṭf is not given to everyone, as the people of Baghdād think, but only to those who deserve it. al-Zamakhsharī opposes Ahl al-Sunna as well as the people of Baghdād on this issue. As a matter of fact, Ahl al-Sunna scholars have understood the same verses more literally by explaining the guidance with the will of Allah and attributes hidāya to Allah in a real sense.⁴¹ Nevertheless al-Zamakhsharī attributes the act of hidāya metaphorically to Allah and literally to people. In this respect, al-Zamakhsharī clearly stands in the position of the Basra Mu’tazila and opposes the rest.

³⁷ Abū al-Hasan Abd al-Jabbār ibn Ahmad al-Qādī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawhīd wa al-‘adl: al-tanabbu’āt wa al-mu’jizāt*, 15/254; al-Khawārizmī, *Kitāb al-fā’iq*, 291.

³⁸ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1/43.

³⁹ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1/46.

⁴⁰ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1/317.

⁴¹ al-Ṭībī says: “According to us, Allah creates hidāyah in whomever He wishes. There is no obstacle for him to give guidance. Because the creatures are subject to the will and the decision of Allah. All his actions are wise and true. Even though the reason of his actions is hidden from us.” al-Ṭībī, *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 7/67.

3.5. Luṭf is Not Jabr (Coercion)

Giving luṭf only to believers brings with it the question of whether it compels the servant to believe. Because, according to the theory, luṭf will lead the person to faith. Allah gives luṭf based on this knowledge. If a person does not believe, Allah will not grant luṭf on him.⁴² This situation has led to questioning whether luṭf is a coercive effect.

According to the Mu‘tazilite principles, Allah has left the servant free in his choice and an effect that would eliminate it would contradict the principle of justice. In this context, luṭf does not force the servant to guidance; it only brings him closer or directs him towards it. As a result, the servant believes with his own will. If there is an effect that compels the servant of luṭf to believe, it means that Allah's mercy is reserved for some of the people. Therefore, luṭf should not be a coercion. al-Zamakhsharī also discusses this issue in his tafsīr and argues that luṭf is not an effect of compulsion. As a matter of fact, he interpreted the expression “*Had your Lord so willed, He would have certainly made humanity one single community*” in his tafsīr of the 118th verse of Sūrat Hūd as a rejection of jabr. He says:

“‘Had your Lord so willed, He would have certainly made humanity one single community’, that is, he did not force them to become one ummah which is the nation of Islam. As in the phrase ‘Indeed, this nation of yours is one nation.’⁴³ These words eliminate compelling (izdirār). Because He did not compel people to unite in the true religion. However, he cautioned them as to be the basis of taklīf. Thus, some of them chose the right and some chose the wrong. This is how they differed. That’s why [Allah] said, ‘They still differ.’ By “except those shown mercy by your Lord”⁴⁴ is meant the people to whom Allah gives luṭf and guides. As a matter of fact, they were united in the true religion without any disagreement. The word ذَلِكْ in the expression وَإِلَٰذِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ ‘And so He created them’ refers to the meaning that the first statement indicates and covers. In other words, He created them for the tamkīn and ikhtiyār, with whom they chose different paths. Thus, he will reward those who choose the right for their good choice and punish those who choose the wrong for their bad choice.”⁴⁵

While al-Zamakhsharī deduces that Allah did not force people to the right path (hidāya) since He did not make a single ummah, he says that those who are exempted from disagreement and mentioned with Allah’s mercy in the other part of the verse are those who are given hidāya and luṭf and fulfill the requirements of this. In other words, those who are given luṭf are those who will prefer to fulfill its requirements. Then, by emphasizing tamkīn and ikhtiyār, he again emphasizes the preference of the servant. In this context, luṭf is not what makes a person believe; but expresses the action that brings him closer to it. Therefore, the servant believes with his own will. If Allah, by His luṭf, would lead His servants to faith instead of bringing them closer to faith, this would be jabr and the reasoning of the unbelievers, “If God had willed, He would have guided us to the right path” would be valid. For this not to happen, luṭf must only be a means to faith. al-Zamakhsharī refers to this situation in the 22nd verse of Sūrat Ibrāhīm. He says:

⁴² el-Eṣ‘arī, *Makālātü’l-İslāmiyyin*, 786. Those who have the strict idea of aṣḥāb do not oppose this view. Because they say that Allah will create the best anyway.

⁴³ al-Anbiyā 21/92.

⁴⁴ Hūd 11/119.

⁴⁵ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2/438. The related verse: وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ إِلَّا مَن رَّجِمَ رَبُّكَ وَإِلَٰذِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لِأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ “Had your Lord so willed, He would have certainly made humanity one single community [of believers], but they will always [choose to] differ except those shown mercy by your Lord—and so He created them [to choose freely]. And so the Word of your Lord will be fulfilled: “I will surely fill up Hell with jinn and humans all together.” (Hūd 11/118-119).

“‘You have come to me when I have called you and led you astray, and for not responding to your Lord ‘So do not blame me; blame yourselves.’ This is evidence that the happiness or misfortune that befalls him is chosen by the person himself. For, from Allah comes tamkīn and from the devil comes tazyīn (embroidering). If it were as al-Mujbira said, [the devil] would have said: Do not blame me or yourselves. Because Allah has prescribed disbelief to you and compelled you to do so.’”⁴⁶

al-Zamakhsharī says that these expressions point to the truth even though they are said in the language of the devil. Therefore, even if luṭf comes from Allah, it is not an effect of force, but a means that shows the way of hidāya. His divine will also does not refer to coercion because the will in al-Zamakhsharī refers to Allah’s acting in accordance wisdom.⁴⁷ If there is an effect of force, the will of the servant will disappear and Allah does not act in accordance with wisdom, which is an unacceptable result according to the basic Mu’tazilite principles.

3.6. Hidhlān/Deprivation of Luṭf

Hidhlān is the opposite of luṭf and expresses Allah's misguidance of His servants. However, the nature of this misguidance differs among the schools. In this context, the Mu’tazila does not understand misdirection of Allah as forcibly leading astray or misdirecting. According to them, misguidance of Allah is lack of luṭf; that is, He does not create what will lead to faith. Here, the problems in the context of deprivation of luṭf are discussed under the title of hidhlān.

al-Zamakhsharī maintains his Mu’tazilite attitude about both misguidance (ḍalāla) of Allah and His guidance (hidāya). According to him, misguidance is not a distraction from the right path, but rather withholding of luṭf from the person and abandoning him. As a matter of fact, when interpreting the expression *إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ* “Allah certainly does not guide whoever persists in lying and disbelief” in the 3rd verse of Sūrat al-Zumar, he says that preventing guidance is deprivation of luṭf.⁴⁸ Again, in the tafsīr of the 4th verse of Sūrat Ibrāhīm, he states that the meaning of misguidance in the expression “Allah leads astray whomever He wills” is to deprive him of hidāya and luṭf.⁴⁹ Accordingly, Allah guides some people to guidance, but does not lead others to misguidance. He only deprives them of luṭf. If he led them to misguidance, the reasoning of the unbelievers that Allah led them astray would be valid.⁵⁰ For this reason, Allah should not abolish the choice of the servant in His ḍalāla as well as in His luṭf.

According to al-Zamakhsharī, the reason why Allah does not grant luṭf to unbelievers is that they will not believe even if they gain luṭf. Since Allah knows this, He does not grant luṭf on them. He says in tafsīr of the 36th verse of Sūrat al-Naḥl:

“‘But some of them were guided by Allah, while others were destined to stray.’ Namely, their abandonment (hidhlān) and their deprivation of luṭf became fixed. Because [Allah] knows that they are determined to disbelieve and that no good will come from them.’”⁵¹

For al-Zamakhsharī, it is a necessity rather than an opportunity for Allah to leave his servants in ḍalāla, whom he knows will not believe. Because, despite this knowledge, if He grants luṭf on them, he will be doing a futile deed. He says in his tafsīr of the 50th verse of Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ:

⁴⁶ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2/550.

⁴⁷ “His will is subject to His wisdom.” al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2/341.

⁴⁸ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4/111.

⁴⁹ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2/539.

⁵⁰ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2/550.

⁵¹ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2/605.

“In his religion, ‘without any guidance from Allah’, that is, deprived of divine blessings/altāf, with his heart sealed, is there anyone who is more astray than the one who only follows his ‘aql’ (reason)!? Allah does not grant luṭf and beneficence to a community whose zulm (wrongdoing) is constant and permanent, in which a person who gives them luṭf and beneficence would be deemed to have engaged in futile! The expression بِعَيْرِ هُدَى is ḥāl (the circumstantial adverb) and means ‘being abandoned, not interfering between him and his ‘aql (reason) with [luṭf]’.”⁵²

According to al-Zamakhsharī, another reason why Allah does not grant luṭf on a person who will not believe is that the punishment of that person would not increase. Because the severity of ingratitude is measured by the size of a blessing which is denied. If Allah gave luṭf to a person who would not believe, it would not have been just absurd; it would also be bad for that person with increase of his unbelief. Therefore, one of the reasons why Allah does not grant luṭf on them is that luṭf will increase unbelief. al-Zamakhsharī mentions this in his commentary on the 13th verse of Sūrat al-Mā’ida:

“But the denial after this support is much more obvious and sinful. Because denial gains severity in proportion to the size of the blessing being ungrateful, and as much as the blessing increases, the badness of ungratefulness/denial increases and deepens.”⁵³

Since al-Zamakhsharī understands hidhlān as the deprivation of luṭf, all his comments on the subject are shaped within the framework of the possibility and necessity of luṭf. He, at this point, agrees with the whole Mu‘tazila, not just of Basra. However, the pioneers of Ahl al-Sunna, whom al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935-6) called “Ahl al-Ithbāt”, defined hidhlān as (I) the potential (istita‘ah) to disbelieve or (II) the creation of unbelief directly in the person.⁵⁴ The first view is the view of al-Ash‘arī; It is said that the second opinion is the opinion of al-Mujbira.⁵⁵ Therefore, they do not understand hidhlān as the deprivation of luṭf. However, al-Zamakhsharī considers luṭf as a result of the actions of the servant rather than a coercion to the believer within the framework of principles of al-Mu‘tazila.

3.7. Nubuwwa in the Context of Luṭf and Hidhlān

Although it is obligatory for Allah to grant luṭf on His servants who will believe, which action is obligatory and why is a matter that needs to be discussed separately. Because while an act is a luṭf for one person, it can be a hidhlān for another. What al-Zamakhsharī mentions about nubuwwa in his tafsīr is a good example of the Mu‘tazilite way of thinking on this issue.

Although nubuwwa is an obligatory luṭf to Allah, it is not the basic condition of belief. Because the basic thing required for the servant to believe is the reason/intellect, and Allah has already given it to people. Even if a prophet is not sent, people have to find the truth with their reasons. In this case, the institution of prophethood may not be necessary. Therefore, it would be meaningless for this institution to be obligatory upon Allah. al-Zamakhsharī deals with this problem in tafsīr of the 15th verse of Sūrat al-Isrā’. After mentioning this problem, he says that prophethood is necessary in that it leads to reasoning and rational evidence.

“No soul burdened with sin will bear the burden of another. And We would never punish until We have sent a Messenger.”

“So, every soul is a carrier of burden. But he carries his own burden, not someone else's. ‘We would never punish.’ It is possible for us to destroy people only after we send a prophet to them

⁵² al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 3/420.

⁵³ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1/615.

⁵⁴ el-Eş‘arī, *Makālâtü'l-İslâmiyyîn*, 386.

⁵⁵ İlyas Çelebi, "Hızlān", TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hizlan> (Accessed June 26, 2023).

and refuting its excuses and evidence against us, in a wise way. If you say, 'The evidence is necessary before a prophet came to them. Because they have reason, thanks to which they know Allah. They neglected reasoning (nazar) even though they had the opportunity, and the reason why they deserve the punishment is because they neglected reasoning and denied it. Otherwise, it is not only because they neglect the sharī'a obtained with tawfīq. Besides, it is possible to act according to the sharī'a after faith.' [As against] I say: Sending a prophet is a type of drawing attention to reasoning and awakening the heedless from their sleep. So that they should not say: 'We were unaware (heedless), but a messenger could have been sent to guide us to reasoning and the proofs of reason'.⁵⁶

While al-Zamakhsharī here states that the prophethood is maṣlaḥa (beneficial) in terms of removing the excuses of the disbelievers, he expands the topic in accordance with Mu'tazila and he says in his tafsīr of the 165th verse of Sūrat al-Nisā'. He says:

“While the prophets conveyed the duty entrusted to them by clearly explaining the matters related to religious subjects, explaining the states of obligation, and teaching the divine rules, as you can see in the scholars of Ahl al-'Adl wa al-Tawḥīd they awaken people from heedlessness and lead them to contemplation based on observation. In this respect, sending prophets is intended to eliminate excuses and to ensure that the evidence binds people. That is, people should not say, 'If you had sent us a messenger, if he had woken us from the sleep of heedlessness, he had drawn attention to the issues that we needed to pay attention to!'”⁵⁷

From the explanations of al-Zamakhsharī, it appears that prophethood is necessary in two ways. The first is that it is beneficial for people, and the second is that its absence causes evil. al-Zamakhsharī expresses these in *al-Minhāj* as maṣlaḥa in two ways. The first of these is the maṣlaḥa that arises from the fulfillment of the responsibilities and the second is to be away from the wrongdoings.⁵⁸ Therefore, prophethood is obligatory not only for being beneficial but also its absence causes evil.

His explanations of the obligatory prophethood indicate how well al-Zamakhsharī was aware of the details of Mu'tazilite accumulation. He not only knows and conveys Mu'tazilite ideas, but also handles them with a great skill in particular problems. In this respect, he seems to leave his identity as a mufassir at some points and act as a theologian. In another word, he handles the verses related to the matters of faith in accordance with the theological purposes and motivations.

Conclusion

In his work, al-Zamakhsharī defends the Mu'tazilite understanding of luṭf in a scattered manner. He handles Mu'tazilite ideas not only on a creedal ground but also at a theological level. In other words, he not only penetrates the creed of the denomination, but also grounds that creed in the context of theological problems and principles. As a matter of fact, the reason why luṭf is obligatory for Allah is a Mu'tazilite -theological- problem and an exegete is not expected to discuss it. However, al-Zamakhsharī mentions the theological problem and tells of its solution in his tafsīr. Again, he solves the problem within the framework of Mu'tazilite/theological principles. Because associating wājib with sharī'a and taklīf is a common method in Mu'tazila. Similarly, his explanation of “wājib” as “being a necessity based on mercy and wisdom” points to the Mu'tazilite background and creedal concern of him. Because wājib alā Allah

⁵⁶ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 2/653.

⁵⁷ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1/591.

⁵⁸ al-Zamakhsharī, *Kitāb al-Minhāj fī usūl al-dīn*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Beirut: Dār al-Arabiyyat al-Ulūm, 2007), 41; Hasan Türkmen, “Nübüvvetin İspatı Bağlamında Zemahşerî'nin Mucizeye Bakışı”, *Dilbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 18/2 (2018), 170.

is an issue on which there is intense criticism against Mu‘tazila. By responding these criticisms, al-Zamakhsharī establishes the Mu‘tazilite ground on wājib. Therefore, al-Zamakhsharī makes his theological interpretations in *al-Kashshāf* by considering Mu‘tazilite principles and problems. In this respect, he reveals his extensive knowledge of Mu‘tazila in *al-Kashshāf*. Although he has not created new theories or doctrinal systems within the sect, he discussed the issues and reflect them in a unique way in his tafsīr.

al-Zamakhsharī bases the theory of luṭf in *al-Kashshāf* on a Mu‘tazilite ground. While doing this, he also tries to stay within the borders of the Mu‘tazila of Basra. In this context, while saying that luṭf is obligatory for Allah, he tries to explain why it is obligatory to non-Mu‘tazilite groups. He follows the same line regarding the scope of luṭf and argues against other Mu‘tazilite groups that luṭf is valid in religious matters. Thus, in his interpretation, he not only stands on the Mu‘tazilite line, but also stands in a more special place which is the line of Bahshamiyya school of the Mu‘tazila of Basra in terms of luṭf.

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