

## A Contribution to the Discussion on “the Beginning Period and the Sources of *Tafsīr*”\*

MEHMET AKİF KOÇ  
DOÇ. DR., ANKARA Ü. İLAHİYAT FAKÜLTESİ  
Mehmet.A.Koc@divinity.ankara.edu.tr

### Abstract

Al-Zarkashī’s and al-Suyūṭī’s approaches to the ‘Interpretation of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān’ and ‘Interpretation of the Qur’ān by the Prophet’s sayings’ are parallel with the data coming from *tafsīr* reports. These reports also reveal that the Successors’ *tafsīr* activities (*maqṭū’ ḥadīths*) tend to dominate all others. Thus *tafsīr* as a discipline started with the Successors. Al-Bukhārī who aimed to collect the *marfū’ ḥadīths* did not present anything conflicting with these approaches. As for Ibn Taymiyya, he presented reactionary methodology (*uṣūl*) suitable for his competitive life against ‘the heretic tendencies’. However, he disregarded whether or not this methodology was confirmed by *tafsīr* reports.

**Keywords:** Exegesis, *Isnād* chain, Tafsīr methodology, Companion, Successor.

### Özet

#### “Tefsirin Başlangıcı ve Kaynakları” Tartışmasına Bir Katkı

Ez-Zerkeşî ve es-Suyūṭî’nin “Kur’an’ın Kur’an ile tefsiri” ve “Kur’an’ın Hz. Peygamber’in hadisleriyle (*marfū’* hadislerle) tefsiri” konusundaki yaklaşımları tefsir rivayetlerinin verileriyle uyum halindedir. Bu rivayetler, Tabiinden gelen tefsir rivayetlerinin (*maqṭū’* hadislerin), diğerlerinden (Hz. Peygamber ve Sahabe’den gelen tefsir rivayetlerinden) çok daha fazla olduğunu göstermektedir. Anlaşılacağı üzere, bir disiplin olarak tefsir, Tabiin dönemiyle başlamıştır. *Merfū’* hadisleri toplamayı hedefleyen el-Buhârî de hadis kitabında bu tespitleri yanlışlayan bir içerik sunmamıştır. İbn Teymiyye’ye gelince, o “sapık fırkalar”la mücadeleye adanmış hayatının etkisiyle tepkisel bir tefsir usulü geliştirmiş, bu usulün tefsir rivayetlerinin gerçekleriyle doğrulanmadığını yeterince dikkate almamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tefsir, Kur’an, Tefsir usulü, Tefsir rivayetleri, İsnad zinciri.

---

\* This article is based on a paper with the same title presented at the Second International Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of Islam held on June 5-7, 2008 at the University of Johann Wolfgang Goethe Frankfurt.

Topics related to the “first stages and sources of *tafsīr*” are a crucial part of *tafsīr* methodology (*uṣūl al-tafsīr*). One of the contemporary leading figures in this field, al-Zurqānī (d.1368/1948), gives three sources for the *al-tafsīr al-manqūl* (Interpretation of the Qurʾān by narrations): 1) Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān, 2) Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Prophet Muḥammad’s sayings, 3) Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the sayings of the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>1</sup> One of the examples which al-Zurqānī presented after this classification is connected with al-Baqara 6:82:

“It is those who believe and confuse not their beliefs with wrong - that are (truly) in security, for they are on (right) guidance.” When this verse was revealed, the Companions became anxious, because they thought that lack of any type of ‘Wrong’ from their belief is impossible. Then, reading the verse Luqmān 31:13, the Prophet interpreted ‘Wrong’ as *shirk* (polytheism), so the Companions became satisfied.<sup>2</sup> Which one of the above mentioned three classes is related to this narration: ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān’ or ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Prophet’s sayings’? Al-Zurqānī put this narration under the ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Prophet’s sayings.’ We agree with this choice of his. But this choice appears to be problematic in terms of his above mentioned classification, because the first and second classes of this classification are mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, this classification was accepted by many contemporary scholars writing on *tafsīr* history—even by Muḥammad Ḥusayn el-Dhahabī (d.1397/1976), who wrote the most famous contemporary relevant book in circulation.

Reference of one verse to another does not usually depend on objective criteria. However, Ibn Taymiyya (d.728/1328) in the classic period<sup>3</sup> and al-Zurqānī in this century claimed that this type of reference is a source for Qurʾānic Interpretation. In fact, this is not a source. This is only a method that everyone can use to comment on the Qurʾān. On the other hand, a few verses naturally refer to and explain the meanings of some other verses.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-ʿirfān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, (Dār ihyaʾ al-kutub al-ʿArabiyya, Cairo n.d.), II, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1982): *al-Tafsīr* 6, *al-Bāb* 3, V, 193; Muslim, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1981): *al-İmān*, *al-Bāb* 56, *ḥadīth* number 197, I, 114-115; al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, (İstanbul Çağrı Yay., 1981): *al-Tafsīr*, *al-Bāb* 7, *ḥadīth* number 3067, V, 262.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*, (Tanta: Dār al-Şaḥāba li al-turāth, 1988), 92-94.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Zurqānī gives some examples, see *Manāhil*, II, 12.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān’ is not a method in general.

For example, Al-Zarkashī (d.794/1392), one of the leading figures in *uṣūl al-tafsīr*, considered ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān’ to be a method.<sup>5</sup> He did not mention this method among what he thought are the *tafsīr*’s sources, where he would be expected to do so. According to him, there are four sources in *tafsīr*: 1. The Prophet’s sayings,<sup>6</sup> 2. The Companion’s sayings,<sup>7</sup> 3. Arabic language,<sup>8</sup> 4. *Muqtaḍā al-ḥāl* (*raʾy*-free opinion).<sup>9</sup> Al-Suyūṭī (d.911/1505) adopted this classification. Al-Suyūṭī did not dwell on ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān’ even as much as al-Zarkashī did.<sup>10</sup> Why is it that al-Zarkashī and al-Suyūṭī were able to reach the right classification? The answer is very simple: They knew *tafsīr*’s narrations in the process of their compilations of narrations: al-Suyūṭī’s renowned book called *al-Durr al-manthūr fī al-tafsīr al-maʾthūr* has survived.<sup>11</sup> We have the information that al-Zarkashī compiled the *tafsīr* book up until the *Sūra* 19.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, after becoming acquainted with the narrations, they developed the appropriate *uṣūl* (methodology) for practical situations.

One of the most important sources in al-Suyūṭī’s *tafsīr* was that of Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d.327/939). This is understood from al-Suyūṭī’s statements<sup>13</sup> and *al-Durr*’s references to Ibn Abī Ḥātim that occur in about every two pages. Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *tafsīr* covers very few examples revealing ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān’.<sup>14</sup> This data can help to explain al-Suyūṭī’s disregard for ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān’.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, (Beirut: Dār al-Maʾrifa, n.d.), II, 174.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, II, 156.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, II, 157.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, II, 160.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, II, 161. Muḥammad Abū al-Zahra (1394/1974) agreed with al-Zarkashī’s classification and explained *Muqtaḍā al-ḥāl* by the current concept *raʾy* (free opinion). See, Muḥammad Abū al-Zahra, *al-Muʿjaza al-kubrā al-Qurʾān*, (Beirut: Dār al-fikr al-ʿArabi, n.d.), 507.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Buḡā, (Damascus: Dār Ibn al-Kathīr, 1987), II, 1197.

<sup>11</sup> Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1990.

<sup>12</sup> Kātib Çelebi, *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub va al-funūn*, (Maṭbaʿat vakālat al-maʾārif, 1360), I, 448.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn*, (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1983), 53.

<sup>14</sup> Mehmet Akif Koç, *İsnad Verileri Çerçevesinde Erken Dönem Tefsir Faaliyetleri-İbn Ebī Ḥātim Tefsiri Örneğinde Bir Literatür İncelemesi*, (Ankara: Kitâbiyât, 2003), 105.

*Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* had the inclination to ‘Interpretation of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān’ more than al-Ṭabarī’s (d.310/922) and Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *tafsīr* books. Al-Rāzī (d.604/1207) easily made connections between the verses in his *al-tafsīr bi al-ra’y* called *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* by using his intelligence and free opinions. Al-Rāzī never needed any sources for these connections as opposed to al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim. If ‘Interpretation of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān’ was even accepted as a source, its use in *al-tafsīr bi al-ra’y* would become more easy and logical than in *al-tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr*.

Concentrating on al-Suyūṭī’s *Itqān* may be of great benefit in respect to ‘Interpretation of the Qur’ān by the Prophet’s sayings’. The Prophet’s explanations are necessary for the right understanding of the Qur’ān, because he and his companions had faced the Qur’ān directly. So they had the understanding of the Qur’ān closest to objectivity. Then, how many reports come from the Prophet in *tafsīr*? This question can be answered through the relevant data found in al-Ṭabarī’s and Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *tafsīr* books. Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *tafsīr* contains about 18283 *isnāds*, only 4 percent of which dates back to the Prophet.<sup>15</sup> As for al-Ṭabarī’s *tafsīr*, it contains about 38000 *isnāds* including the Prophet’s sayings (7.8 %).<sup>16</sup>

Al-Suyūṭī stated that the narrations traced to the Prophet about the interpretation of the Qur’ān were a very small part of *tafsīr* material.<sup>17</sup> Al-Suyūṭī deserves to be praised on this point too. He gives only about 150 relevant narrations at the end of the *Itqān*. Leaving aside the data presented in al-Ṭabarī’s and Ibn Ḥātim’s *tafsīr* books, it suffices to glance at the parts of *tafsīr* in *al-Kutub al-sitta* to have an idea. They are only such parts as *Kitāb al-ṭahāra* and *Kitāb al-buyū’* in this literature. Besides, al-Nasā’ī (D.303/915) was able to collect for his special work only 766 sayings of the Prophet that are connected with the interpretation of the Qur’ān.<sup>18</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya (d.728/1328) conflicted with al-Suyūṭī not only in ‘Interpretation of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān’ but also in ‘Interpretation of the Qur’ān by the Prophet’s sayings’. Ibn Taymiyya’s *tafsīr* theory requires that there should be an enormous amount of *tafsīr* material coming from the Prophet. So he believed that the Prophet interpreted the Qur’ān as a whole to

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *al-Jāmi’ al-bayān ‘an ta’vīl āy al-Qur’ān*, ed. Aḥmad Ibrāhīm, (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1999), XIII, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, II, 1193, 1205.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Nasā’ī, *Tafsīr al-Nasā’ī*, (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-kutub al-thaqāfiyya), 1990, II, 570.

his Companions.<sup>19</sup> He insists that *tafsīr* is inevitable on the one hand,<sup>20</sup> but he minimizes the realm of *raʿy* (opinion) of a *mufasssīr* (commentator) on the other.<sup>21</sup> Then, he had to come up with reasonable, adequate, and undisputed sources. They are, of course, along with the ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān’, the *tafsīr* narrations coming from the Prophet, the Companions, and the Successors.<sup>22</sup> He was striving to offer a theory coherent in itself. He did not pay attention to whether it was corroborated by the *tafsīr* material or not. He fought during his life against ‘the heretic tendencies’ which used ‘reason’ arbitrarily. So his negative attitude to arbitrary use of ‘reason’ is reflected in his *tafsīr* methodology. In brief, his methodology was a reactionary not a realistic one. Unfortunately, many contemporary scholars based *tafsīr*’s sources on Ibn Taymiyya’s methodology instead of al-Zarkashī’s and al-Suyūṭī’s. It is probable that they were most impressed with Ibn Taymiyya’s belligerent life against ‘the heretic tendencies’.

There is a crucial point to consider: Goldziher (d.1337/1921) indicated that al-Suyūṭī (d.911/1505) collected ten thousand exegetical *ḥadīths* going back to the Prophet and to Companions.<sup>23</sup> *Al-Itqān* confirms Goldziher’s quotation from al-Suyūṭī.<sup>24</sup> Then, was there a contradiction in Suyūṭī’s sayings? So, another investigation is needed for ‘Interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Prophet’s sayings’ in order to make this problem clear: If we read the Prophet’s sayings in al-Ṭabarī’s and Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *tafsīr* books, even in the *tafsīr* parts of *al-Kutub al-Sitta*, we will face the fact that they mostly were not expressed by the Prophet as *tafsīr*. On the contrary, after the Prophet, a Companion, a Successor or a *mufasssīr* (commentator) evaluated many of the Prophet’s sayings as *tafsīr* for certain verses. Investigating the *tafsīr* narrations, someone can easily find subjective usages of Prophet’s sayings as *al-tafsīr*. One striking example is connected with al-Aʿrāf 7:128: “Said Moses to his people: "Pray for help from Allah, and (wait) in patience and constancy: for the earth is Allah’s, to give as a heritage to such of His servants as He pleaseth; and the end is (best) for the righteous.”

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 64-66.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 98-102.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 92-94.

<sup>23</sup> Ignaz Goldziher, *Madhāhib al-tafsīr al-Islāmī*, trans, ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār, ([Cairo]: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1955), 82-83.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, II, 1217.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim mentions three narrations to explain the expression *işbirū* (Be patient!) in this verse:<sup>25</sup>

1. The Prophet said: “Fasting is half of the patience.”<sup>26</sup>
2. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d.23/644) said: “There are two kinds of patience: Patience during any disaster is good. Better is to become patient with things God banned.”
3. Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (d.95/714) said: “Patience is the servant’s consent to things coming from God for God’s sake and his/her hope from God for the reward of this patience. Nevertheless, a person sometimes becomes impatient.”

It is clear that these three sayings were not uttered to interpret al-A‘rāf 7:128. However, the second and the third narrations can be related to this verse subjectively. For Moses gives advice the people fleeing from the cruelty of Pharaoh to be patient in this verse, and these two narrations show that patience is a virtue. But there is no relation between the Prophet’s saying (first narration) and this verse. The unique common point is the word *ṣabr* (patience) which is used in both texts. If Ibn Abī Ḥātim used the Prophet’s mentioned saying as the interpretation of al-Baqara 2:183 it could be meaningful; because, the topic of this verse is fasting.

The other example is related to Hūd 11:103:

“In that is a Sign for those who fear the penalty of the Hereafter: that is a Day for which mankind will be gathered together: that will be a Day of Testimony.” Ibn Abī Ḥātim mentions the following narration coming from the Prophet for the interpretation of this verse:<sup>27</sup>

“Send blessings on me (the Prophet) on Fridays mostly. Because, “Friday” is the day which angels witnessed.”<sup>28</sup>

There is a topical difference between this verse and the Prophet’s saying. The only similarity is some words common in both texts.

We inferred all these results relating to the *ḥadīth* narrations mostly from al-Ṭabarī’s and Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s books. It’s important if the famous

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm musnadān ‘an rasūl Allāh va al-ṣaḥāba va al-tābī‘īn*, ed. As‘ad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib, (Mekkah: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1997), V, 1539.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan, al-Da‘avāt, al-Bāb* 87, *ḥadīth* number 3519, V, 536; Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan*, (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1981), *al-Bāb* 44, *ḥadīth* number 1745, I, 555.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr*, VI, 2084.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan, al-Bāb* 65, *ḥadīth* number 1637, I, 524.

*ḥadīth* book such as al-Bukhārī’s work confirms these results. In addition, a comparison of characteristics of al-Bukhārī’s *tafsīr* part with al-Ṭabarī’s and Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *tafsīr* works generally contributes to this essay’s points of emphasis. Al-Bukhārī’s work, the most renowned Sunnite compilation among six *ḥadīth* books, contains 2500 *ḥadīths* excluding the repetitions. Part of *tafsīr* covers 457 *ḥadīths*. Our target is not to focus on al-Bukhārī’s work in respect of its general features. This was made by Marston Speight to some extent.<sup>29</sup> His article is consisting of two main concerns in general. First, it gives some examples presented by contemporary *tafsīr* historians almost with their categories. Second, it makes the six authoritative collections known in general, their parts of *tafsīr* (if available) in particular.

One may find al-Bukhārī’s position in *tafsīr* part strange: As it is known, *ḥadīth* books must be more reliable than others in many aspects. As the most renowned *ḥadīth* book, al-Bukhārī’s, must be the most reliable one at least for the existence of relevant references. Al-Bukhārī includes some narrations by means of anonymous *isnād* moulds such as *yuqālu ...* (is said ...), *qīla...* (was said ...) and *wa qāla ghayruh...* (the other said ...).<sup>30</sup> This type of presentation was tolerated for *tafsīr* books. Thus, they are covered by al-Ṭabarī’s and Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *tafsīr* books. But it is no doubt that al-Bukhārī is questionable on this point.

*Ta’līq* narrations are seen in al-Bukhārī’s book more frequently, which is the narration from any Companion or Successor without *isnād* chain. *Ta’līq* is one of the main methods of al-Bukhārī in *Kitāb al-tafsīr*. He narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās (d.68/687) and Mujāhid b. Jabr (d.103/721) mostly by means of *ta’līq*.<sup>31</sup> ‘Abdallāh b. Mes‘ūd (d.32/652), ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40/660), Sa‘īd b. Juba‘ir (d.95/714), ‘Ikrima (d.105/723), al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (d.105/723), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.110/728), Qatāda b. Dī‘āma (d.117/735), Zeyd b. Aslam (d.136/753), Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (d.198/814) are referred by al-Bukhārī in the same manner of transmission.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> R. Marston Speight, “The Function of *ḥadīth* as Commentary on the Qur’ān, as Seen in the Six Authoritative Collections”, *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, V, 188, 240; VI, 37, 48, 90.

<sup>31</sup> For example, see *ibid.*, V, 158, 165, 184, 186, 188, 198, 220.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see *ibid.*, V, 162, 165, 198, 212, 220, 223, 238, 240, 241.

Al-Bukhārī sometimes makes philological analysis like al-Ṭabarī does.<sup>33</sup> It is seen that al-Bukhārī is familiar with “metaphor” (*majāz*) literature which started to develop just before him. Al-Bukhārī makes references to Abū ‘Ubayda Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā (d.209/824).<sup>34</sup> The writers of these literature used the word *majāz* almost in place of “meaning”. Al-Bukhārī used this word in one place.<sup>35</sup> Besides, he does not hesitate even to present poetic evidence in order to emphasize some word meanings.<sup>36</sup>

The other crucial point concerns the *qirā’āt* narrations (different readings of the Qur’ān). They were transmitted without citing classic *isnād* chains. That is why Ibn Abī Ḥātim did not compile them because of his strict position about *isnād* chains. Unlike Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarī cited this kind of narrations with *ta’līq* way easily. Al-Bukhārī cited some of them in the same way too.<sup>37</sup>

All this shows that al-Bukhārī’s *tafsīr* part almost has a similar form to *tafsīr* books. Now we may come to important questions: When did *tafsīr* begin? And why? Which generation has priority to doing *tafsīr*? Which generation experienced in understanding difficulties about the Qur’ān?

The data coming from the encyclopedic *tafsīr* compilations such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim shows that *tafsīr*, as it is understood today, started during the Successor generation. The former process must be regarded as a simple preparation stage. I wonder if al-Bukhārī’s *tafsīr* part falsifies these approaches. Thus, it will be useful to glance at this part’s content briefly:

The *hadīths* in this part do not generally make Qur’ānic texts any more understandable. They present expanding information on the verses’ meanings. They naturally address to persons who know basic meanings of relevant verses. The *hadīths* consisting of *Asbāb al-nuzūl* (circumstances of revelations) are exception. This kind is composed of a special category. They are inevitable knowledge for the understanding of the Qur’ān. Thus, they are regarded as binding narrations even though the Prophet’s name sometimes is

---

<sup>33</sup> For example, see *ibid.*, V, 182, 229; VI, 22, 24, 73.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 22.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 34.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 213; VI, 14, 34.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 53, 80.



not clearly cited in their *isnād* chains.<sup>38</sup> They inform “persons”, “situations” or “events” that revelation talks about. For example:

When al-Mā’ida 5:90 verse came down, intoxicants were prohibited. After that some Muslims worried about Muslims that passed away before since they had drunk it. Upon this, The following verse was revealed: “On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness there is no blame for what they ate, when they guard themselves from evil, and believe, and do deeds of righteousness,- (or) again, guard themselves from evil and believe,- (or) again, guard themselves from evil and do good. For Allah loveth those who do good” (5/93).<sup>39</sup> There is no doubt that al-Mā’ida 5:93 verse cannot be understood truly without explanation coming from 5:90 verse.

An explanation coming from ‘Ā’isha (d.58/678) relating to the verse al-Baqara 2:158 has important clue for it’s meaning. The translation of the verse is like this: “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”. *Al-Şafā* and *al-Marwa* hills were sacred in the pre-Islamic times. Some Companions wondered if their sacredness would continue. According to ‘Ā’isha, the verse al-Baqara 2:158 came down to answer these Companions.<sup>40</sup>

Apart from *Asbāb al-nuzūl* narrations, most narrations from the Prophet or Companions are only enrichment. Let’s see this verse al-Şaffāt 37:139: “So also was Jonah among those sent (by Us)”. This verse has so clear a meaning that it does not need any additional information to be understood. Nevertheless, Al-Bukhārī cited from the Prophet’s following *ḥadīth*: “whoever said “I am better than Jonah, would lie”.<sup>41</sup> This *ḥadīth* obviously does not target to interpret the above mentioned verse. It is only an additional effort to keep Jonah’s respect.

<sup>38</sup> Ḥākīm, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-ṣaḥīḥayn fī al-ḥadīth*, (Riyad: Maktaba al-ma’ārif, n.d.), II, 345; *Kitāb ma’rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*, (Madīna: al-Maktaba al-‘ilmiyya, 1977), 20; Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-rāvi fī taqrīb al-nabawī*, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-ḥadītha, 1966), 192; *Itmām al-dirāya li Qurra’ al-nuqāya*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.), 31; *al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān, al-Muqaddima fī ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*, ad. ‘Ā’isha ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, (Cairo: Dār al-ma’ārif, 1989), 200.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *al-Şaḥīḥ*, V, 189-190.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, V, 153.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, VI, 31.

The other narration is as follows: ‘Ā’isha said that: The Prophet said: “when any prophet becomes ill, he is given to choose the option between this world and Hereafter”. ‘Ā’isha continued: “The Prophet Muḥammad suffered from illness leading him to die and I heard He was reading the following verse ‘All who obey Allah and the messenger are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah,- of the prophets (who teach), the Sincere (lovers of Truth), the martyrs, and the Righteous (who do good): Ah! How beautiful is there fellowship!’ And I understood he was in an optional position”.<sup>42</sup> This narration of al-Bukḥārī’s does not give any knowledge about the meaning of this verse. It quotes ‘Ā’isha’s feeling. Many similar narrations includes personal observations on the verses and events.

Al-Bukḥārī’s reader sometimes meets startling situation. For example, the verses in the beginning of the *Sūra 77* al-Mursalāt are full of vague statements. There is no explanation about those verses in al-Bukḥārī’s *tafsīr* part. Instead, one can find the knowledge about a particular verse of the same *Sūra* whose meaning is already clear: *Irka’ū : Şallū ; Lā yarka’ūn: Lā yuşallūn*.<sup>43</sup>

## GENERAL EVALUATION

Data coming from the survived *tafsīr* reports must play a primary role in developing a more coherent theory about *tafsīr* history. Moreover, this method can clarify not only different opinions of the *tafsīr* scholars but also their contradicting evaluations. Different milieus, priorities, trainings and qualifications lead them to different conceptions. Al-Suyūṭī’s *tafsīr* methodology based on the scientific approach complies with the above-mentioned *tafsīr* reports unlike Ibn Taymiyya’s.

According to *tafsīr* reports: 1. The Successors were the first to face the problem of understanding of the Qur’ān in exegetical terms. Thus the lack of an urgent need for *tafsīr* before the era of the Successors clearly shows that the Prophet and his Companions fully understood the *Qur’ān*. In fact, the largest part of the *tafsīr* reports dates back only to the Successors generation. 2. “Reference of one verse to another” does not usually depend on objective criteria. “*Tafsīr* of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān” is essentially a method which may be used by any exegete.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, V, 181.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, VI, 77.

The *Ḥadīth* literature does not reveal any concept contrary to what has been said above either. For example, al-Bukhārī’s *tafsīr* part is consistent with the data coming from the abovementioned data. Al-Bukhārī’s genuine contribution to *tafsīr* is his personal explanations consisting of synonyms of obscure words, along with his *ta’līq* narrations going back to the Successors. The rest of the *tafsīr* part in al-Bukhārī, which is full of *marfū’* and *mawqūf ḥadīths*, comprises details that are not essential with respect to the understanding of Qur’ānic verses.

Amongst the generations that have faced problems concerning the understanding of the Qur’ān, the Successors have an undisputed advantage in capturing the true meaning: the generation of the Successors had privilege to live in the nearest period to the time of revelation and its direct addressees and surroundings. Distance from the first listeners of any text is inversely proportionate to the correct understanding of it. Briefly, though *tafsīr* reports are not *marfū’* or *mawqūf ḥadīths*, the correct understanding of the *Qur’ān* can only be acquired through them.

## KAYNAKÇA

- Abū al-Zahra, Muḥammad, *al-Mu’jiza al-Kubrā al-Qur’ān*, Beirut: *Dār al-fikr al-‘Arabī*, n.d.
- Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1982.
- Çelebi, Kâtib, *Kashf al-zunūn ‘an asāmī al-kutub va al-funūn*, İstanbul: Maṭba‘at vakālat al-ma‘ārif, 1360.
- Goldziher, Ignaz, *Madhāhib al-tafsīr al-Islāmī*, trans. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār, Egypt: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1955.
- Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-ṣaḥīḥayn fī al-ḥadīth*, Riyad: Maktaba al-ma‘ārif, n.d.
- , *Kitāb ma‘rifat ulūm al-ḥadīth*, Madīna: al-maktaba al-‘ilmiyya, 1977.
- Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm musnad an rasūl Allāh va al-ṣaḥāba va al-tābi‘īn*, ed. As‘ad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib, Mekka: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1997.
- Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *al-Muqaddima fī ulūm al-ḥadīth*, ad. ‘Ā’isha ‘Abd al-raḥmān, Cairo: Dār al-ma‘ārif, 1989.
- Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan*, İstanbul: Çağrı yayımları, 1981.
- Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*, Tanta: Dār al-Ṣaḥāba li al-turāth, 1988.
- Koç, Mehmet Akif, *İsnad Verileri Çerçevesinde Erken Dönem Tefsir Faaliyetleri-İbn Ebī Ḥātim Tefsiri Örneğinde Bir Literatür İncelemesi*, Ankara: Kitâbiyât, 2003.
- Muslim, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1981.
- Al-Nasā’î, *Tafsīr al-Nasā’î*, Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-kutub al-thaqāfiyya, 1990.
- Speight, R. Marston, “The Function of *ḥadīth* as Commentary on the Qur’ān, as Seen in the Six Authoritative Collections”, *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

- Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1983.
- , *al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, ed. Muşţafā Dīb al-Buġā, Damascus: Dār Ibn al-Kathīr, 1987.
- , *Tadrīb al-rāwī fī taqrīb al-nabawī*, Cairo: Dār al-Kutüb al-ḥadītha, 1966.
- , *al-Itmām al-dirāya li Qur’ā’ al-nuqāya*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, n.d.
- Al-Ṭabarī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an ta’vīl āy al-Qur’ān*, ed. Aḥmad İbrāhīm, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1999.
- Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, İstanbul: Çaġrı Yayınları, İstanbul 1981.
- Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl İbrāhīm, Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, n.d.
- Al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-‘irfān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, Cairo: Dār iḥyā’ al-kutub al-‘arabiyya, n.d.