



ALI 584: Quran Tafāsīr by Shi'i Muslims

Academy for Learning Islam
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Course Description

ALI-584: Quran Tafasir by Shi'a Muslims in English

Having referred to Quran translations in English, we go for an in-depth study of the contents of the Quran to appreciate the Divine Message and implement it in our lives. This course will introduce available Quran tafāsīr in English which can be of use to those who follow the path of the Ahlul Bayt (a). We will also discuss the main features of the tafāsīr by Shi'i Quran exegetes and a brief history of Quran tafāsīr. We plan to look at select passages the Holy Quran and compare how these have been explained by various Mufasssirūn.

Topics for session 2

1. How the Quran explains itself?
2. Sabab nuzūl of verse 9:118 in two tafāsīr

3. Comparing Q 27:29-31 in three tafāsīr
4. Contemporary Shi'a tafāsīr in translation
5. Available Shi'i Muslim Tafāsīr in English.
6. Tips on studying Quran tafāsīr literature

Examples of how the Quran explains itself

We see at <https://www.al-islam.org/introduction-science-tafsir-quran-jafar-subhani> following examples. Verse 26:173 *And We rained down upon them a rain, and evil was the rain on those warned* explained by verse 15:74 *and We rained down upon them stones made from baked clay*. So, the word **hijaratun (stones)** clears up the ambiguity in the first verse. Again 2:210 reads *Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds, with Angels (in His train) and question is (thus) settled? But to Allah do all affairs go back (for decision)*. The verse is ambiguous and gives the impression that God will appear physically. But the sacred essence of Allah (awj) is free from being a physical body. The verse 16:33 clarifies the above: *Do they wait until the Angels come to them, or there comes **the Command of your Lord** (for their doom)? So, did those who went before them (also wait). But Allah wronged them not, no, they wronged their own souls!"*

Sabab Nuzūl of Q 9:117 & 118

لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ {117} وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلَفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَنْ لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ {118}

Certainly, Allah turned (mercifully) to the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Helpers, who followed him in the hour of difficulty, after the hearts of a part of them were about to swerve. Then He turned (mercifully) to them—indeed, He is most kind and merciful to them—and to the three who were left behind. When the earth became narrow for them with [all] its expanse, and their own souls weighed heavily on them, and they knew that there was no refuge from Allah except in Him, then He turned clemently toward them so that they might be penitent. Indeed, Allah is the All-clement, the All-merciful.

The reference is to three *ansar*, named Ka'b ibn Malik, Hilāl ibn Umayyah and Mirara ibn Rabi, who did not accompany the Holy Prophet on the expedition of Tabuk. In view of the verses which condemned such type of persons, they went to the Holy Prophet on his return and asked for his forgiveness but were excluded from the brotherhood of the true believers and the life of the Muslim community. They were asked to wait for Allah's revelation. They wept and prayed for pardon. After 50 days this verse was revealed. (Pūya/Mir Ahmed Ali, www.al-islam.org/quran)

Enlightening Commentary, v 6 on 9:117-18

In the Battle of Tabūk it was hard and difficult for some Muslims, especially there was scorching heat and the time of harvesting fruits was near. The hypocrites did not participate in this Battle, but the true Muslims, in any way they could, participated in the expedition, except those who were really excused. There were three Muslims who were absent from the battle-field. They were Ka‘b-ibn-Mālik, Marārat-ibn-Rabi‘, and Hilāl-ibn-Umayya. They wanted to take part in the Holy Struggle, but they procrastinated until when, at last, the Battle was over. The Prophet of Allah (S) with fellow Muslims returned to Medina. The three absentees immediately presented themselves to the Prophet (S) and, after greeting, they asked about his health. But the Prophet (S) turned his face from them and did not speak with them. Seeing this all the Muslims ceased communication with them and did not reply their questions and, as the Prophet (S) commanded, their wives also got separated from them. Therefore, they felt completely deserted and alone. This social boycott against the three put in a tight straitened circumstance. Due to Prophetic command, they did not speak to each other. It has been said that this news reached the Romans who secretly sent someone to them and invited them to Byzantine and live peacefully under the security of the government. Since they were good Muslims, they rejected the offer. They became very inconvenient and left the city and lived in the wilderness in far away deserts and mountains. They prayed weeping and crying to Allah, pleading His repentance. There passed fifty days in that state and, finally, their tawba was accepted. Allah announced that those three persons, who had disobeyed, were forgiven, and their instructive story became eternal in this verse. This shows that if people of a society are good, no vicious persons have any room in that society. They must improve themselves. 6

Comparing tafāsīr – Q 27:29-31

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ {29} إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ {30} أَلَّا تَعْلَمُوا عَلَيَّ وَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ {31}

She said: O chief! surely an honorable letter has been delivered to me. Surely it is from Sulayman, and surely it is in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful; Saying: exalt not yourselves against me and come to me in submission.

Puya/Mir Ahmed Ali: Solomon invited them to Islam.

Enlightening Commentary: preach kindly and with the holy phrase. Throw it down when the Queen is among her people so no room for forsaking it. Due to content of the letter, she felt the nobility. It was signed and sealed; Not probable that Solomon had written the letter with these very Arabic phrases. It is paraphrased, or a summary. Three sentences: name of Allah & attributes, how to control low desires, and order to submit to truth. <https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-13/section-2-solomon-inherits-david#surah-naml-verses-29-31>

Al-Mīzān on Q 27: 29 - 31

These verses have an implied omission. she informed her chief commanders about the letter, how it reached her, and its contents. She glorified the letter by describing it as *karīm* as it was from Sulayman and had *basmala*. Quotes 27:42 to show Sulayman's great kingdom. idolaters, including sun-worshipers, believed in God as the Lord of the lords, although they did not worship Him. He argues other interpretations. The two verses are saying: "This letter begins with the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful; and its purport is that he [Solomon] prohibits us from being arrogant before him, and commands us to submit to him." This interpretation is free from any problem or contradiction. coming to Solomon and being submissive to him necessitates believing in God

Contemporary Shi'i Tafāsīr

Amuli, Āyatullāh Javadi. *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i karim*. A monumental work of 80 Volumes is unique combination of disciplines – both intellectual (*aqlī*) and transmitted (*naqlī*) combining mysticism, theology, philosophy, logic, grammar, lexicography, Hadiths, history and other disciplines. So far 56 volumes have been published which has reached al-Ambiya.

Shirazi, Āyatullāh Nasir Makārim (Ed). *Tafsīr Namūneh*. Ten scholars worked together for over 15 years to compose 27 volume work. It explains Quranic verses in a simple and fluent language. It is a commentary for common people. It has been translated into Arabic and Urdu.

Tabātabā'ī, Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. *Al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Quran* In 20 volumes in Arabic and 40 volumes in English.

English Shi'i tafāsīr in print

^ Al-Fātiha to Al-A'raf (#1 – 7). *Al-Mīzān – An Exegesis of the Qur'an*, Vols 1 – 16, 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabātabā'ī

^ Al-Isrā to Al-Naml (#17 to 27): *Al-Mīzān – An Exegesis of Q*, Vols 25 - 30, SMH at-Tabātabā'ī

Al-Mulk to Al-Nās (#67 - 114): *Al-Mīzān – An Exegesis of Q*, Vols 39 & 40, SMH at-Tabātabā'ī

Al-Isrā'/Bani Isrā'il (#17). *The Source of Islamic Spirituality*, Āyatullāh Syd. Fadhel Hosseini Milani TāHā (#20), *Secrets of Happiness*, Shaykh Mohammed Al-Hilli

^ Yāsīn (#36). *Heart of Qur'an*– Āyatullāh Sayyid Dastghaib Shirazi

Yāsīn (#36): *The Core (The Soul) of the Qur'an*, Muallim Muhammed Husein Kermali

^ Al-Hujurāt (#49): *The Islamic Moral System*, Āyatullāh Ja'far Subhānī

*^ Al-Jinn (#71): *Sūratul Jinn*, Āyatullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirazi (Ed.)

* Al-Mulk to al-Mursalāt (#67 - 77): *Exegesis of the Qur'an*, Āyatullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirazi

* Al-Dahr (#76), Al-Qadr (#97) & al-Kawthar (#108): *Fountain of Paradise*, Āyt Nāsir Makārim Short Suras, *Spiritual Quest*, Reza Shah-Kazemi, London: 2011

Al-Naba' – al-Nās (#78 – 114): *The Illuminating Lantern, A Commentary of the 30th Part of the Holy Quran*, Sh Habib al-Kadhmi, Sun Behind the Cloud, 2020.

Ayatul Kursi: The Verse of the Throne. M I N Burujerdi, IPH: 2007

*taken from *Tafsir Namūneh* compiled by a group of scholars under the guidance of Āyatullāh Nasir Makārim

^ also available online at www.al-islam.org and www.almizan.org

English Shi'i Tafāsīr online

www.al-islam.org

1) Enlightening Commentary into the Light of the Holy Qur'an
by Sayyid Faqih Imani

2) Abridged commentary by Agha Mehdi Puya and S. V. Mir
Ahmed Ali

3) Commentary on Surat Yāsīn (by Ayt Dastghaib), al-Hujurāt
(by Ayt. Ja'far Subhānī), and al-Jinn (by Ayt Makārim Shirazi)

<https://almizan.org/>

Exegesis of Suras 1- 7, 17 – 27, and 70 – 77 by 'Allamah Sayyid
Muhammad Husayn al-Tabātabā'ī.

Shi'i English tafāsīr lectures online

https://academyofislam.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Tafsir-Sessions_Eng-Jan2021.pdf

Tafsīr sessions conducted by 36 speakers on numerous surahs ranging from simple slides to detailed explanations. These were scattered all over the internet. The links to all these sessions have been gathered on 84-page document that can be downloaded for mu'minīn to listen to Quran tafsir lectures.

Tips on studying tafāsīr

- 1) Take any short sura that you know it with meaning. Read about its commentary by Pūya/Mir Ahmed Ali or any Reflection
- 2) Listen to tafsir lectures on the sura by 2 – 3 speakers
- 3) Read about it in Enlightening commentary. Know that this is wordy and at times sub-standard translation
- 4) Read about the sura in other English tafāsīr
- 5) Listen to advanced lectures on the sura (e.g., Sh Bahmanpour)
- 6) Read the detailed tafsir of the sura in *al-Mīzān*
- 7) Repeat these steps for about 10 suras or passages of the Quran. inshāAllah you will begin to like studying tafāsīr.