

Series of Questions Addressed to Eminent Scholar Ata Bin Khalil Abu Al-Rashtah
Ameer of Hizb ut Tahrir Through His Facebook "Fiqhi" Page

Answer to Question

Sources of Tafsir

To: Saidi Ali

(Translated)

Question:

In the name of Allah, and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, his companions, and those who follow him.

Our esteemed Sheikh, Assalam Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakatuh

I pray to Allah for your success and guidance in all the good you bring to the Muslim Ummah, and I hope that your journey will be crowned with victory and empowerment through the fulfilment of Allah's promise and the glad tidings of His Prophet (saw).

Our esteemed Sheikh: In the book "The Islamic Personality Volume 1" (Arabic edition p. 296) under the section "Sources of Tafsir," the following is stated:

"As for the tafsīr transmitted from the Messenger (saw), even if authentic, it is considered part of the Hadith. It is not considered as tafsīr since it is a legislative text like the Qur'ān; where it is known that the tafsīrs are not considered as legislative text"

What is stated on page 296 considers the Hadith a source of tafsir, but what is stated on page 301 denies that the Hadith is tafsir... It seems as though the two statements are opposites and seem contradictory, this is unclear to me. Please clarify this confusion and explain the matter: Is the Hadith considered tafsir, or does it not fall under that category?

Thank you very much

Your brother, Ali Al-Saidi – Tunisia

Answer:

Wa Alaikum Assalam Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakatuh

My brother, a careful examination of what is mentioned in the book "The Islamic Personality Volume 1", (Arabic p. 360) under the heading "Sources of Tafsir" and what is mentioned in the same book, p. 366, under the heading "The Ummah's need today for Mufasssirin " reveals that there is no contradiction between these two passages. To clarify this, I will explain the following:

First: It was stated in "The Sources of Tafsir": [The word "sources of Tafsīr" does not mean the disciplines the mufasssirun used to rely on when explaining the Qur'ān according to the idea they carried such as tawheed, jurisprudence (fiqh), rhetorics (balaagha), history etc. These are not the sources of tafsīr. Rather, they are matters which had an effect on the mufasssir which led him to lean towards a specific matter in tafsīr. What is intended by 'sources of tafsīr' are the authoritative sources that the mufasssirun quoted. What they quoted they wrote down in their tafsīrs, irrespective of their orientation in tafsīr. If we study the sources of tafsīr we find that they are confined to three:

1- Tafsīr which has been transmitted from the Messenger of Allah (saw) such as the narration that the Messenger (saw) said: «الصَّلَاةُ الْوُسْطَى صَلَاةُ الْعَصْرِ» **"The median prayer (salat al-wusta) is the afternoon prayer (salat al-'asr)"** [Reported By tirmidhi]

2- One of the sources of tafsīr is the opinion (ra'y) or what is termed as Ijtihād in tafsīr. This is because the mufasssir knows the speech of the Arabs and their mannerisms in the

spoken language. He knows the Arabic expressions and their meanings by being acquainted with the same thing in jahili poetry, prose etc. And he familiarises himself with what he finds to be correct from the cause of revelation of a verse. Using these tools ...

3- The israiliyyat. This is because certain Jews and Christians had entered the fold of Islam. Among them were scholars of the Torah and Bible. Amongst them most of the Jews that entered were dishonest because the Jews hated and loathed the Muslims more than the Christians. From the Jews many scholars of Jewish fables infiltrated the Muslims. They entered the tafsīr of the Qur'ān to supplement the explanation of the Qur'ān...] **End Quote**

As you can see, the issue here concerns the sources of interpretation used by the mufasssirin, and there are three sources, as explained above.

Secondly: what was mentioned in "The Islamic Personality Volume 1", page 366, under the heading "The Ummah's need today for Mufasssirin" clarifies the reality of these sources among the mufasssirin in terms of their soundness and error. It explains that the first source, which they call "tafsir transmitted from the Messenger of Allah (saw)" is truly not called tafsir, but rather a collection of Hadiths of the Messenger (saw). This is because tafsir is the Ijtihad of the mufasir, while transmission from the Messenger (saw) is neither tafsir nor Ijtihad, but rather a Hadith of the Messenger (saw), a revelation from Allah Al Aziz Al Hakim. This is clear at the beginning of this chapter, where it states:

[Therefore, the style has to be such that it awakens desire and love in the Muslims first, let alone in anyone else for reading tafaseers as an intellectual book which is deep and enlightened. In addition to that, the path followed by mufasssirin in the age which followed the translation of the books of philosophy and being affected by them and in the age of decline which came after the Crusades led to the presence of tafsīrs for which much effort was expended in giving attention to things which did not constitute tafsīr and had no relationship to the verses of the Qur'ān. Not to mention the israiliyyat that accumulated until it became a third source of tafsīr for the mufasssirin. It is imperative that the tafsīr of the Qur'ān should proceed according to the Sahabah's ways of tafsīr in terms of Ijtihād in understanding the Qur'ān seeking the aid of the tafsīrs of the Sahabah that have been transmitted. As for the tafsīr transmitted from the Messenger (saw), even if authentic, it is considered part of the Hadith. It is not considered as tafsīr since it is a legislative text like the Qur'ān; where it is known that the tafsīrs are not considered as legislative text] **End Quote.**

What is included under this chapter is to clarify the correct understanding on tafsir based on what was followed by the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) in terms of correct Ijtihad in the tafsir of the verses of Allah (swt). As for what has been transmitted from the Messenger of Allah (saw), it should be included under the category of Hadiths, not under the category of ijtiḥād. There is a difference between the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah (saw), which is divinely revealed, and the ijtiḥād of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them), which is the domain of ijtiḥād.

I hope this is sufficient. And Allah Knows Best and is Most Wise.

Your Brother,

Ata Bin Khalil Abu Al-Rashtah

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The Link to the Answer from the Ameer's Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/AtaAboAlrashtah/posts/122152007337129051>