

Article 1: Introduction to the Qur'an and areas of study.

An introduction to the Qur'an

Since the Revelation of the Qur'an, the world has studied this book. Those unconvinced by its claims and those who hang on every word and proclaim it to be the Speech of Allah have spent precious moments of their lives pouring over the contents of the Book, scrutinising every verse, paragraph, surah and sometimes even querying the origin of certain non-Arabic words in the text.

The *Encyclopedia Americana* proclaims, "...there is no other book that has been so studied."¹ Upon the completion of the Qur'an in the year AD 632, study of it by detractors and proponents did not stop, but accelerated.

The most important aspects used by scholars in the study of the Qur'an were five in number:

1) The arrangement of the Qur'an

The Qur'an's revelation was between the years AD 610-632. 86 portions or "surahs" were given in Makkah - a place of persecution and bitterness - while the remaining 28 were in Al-Madinah - the city where Islam became the predominant religion and clandestine efforts for proselytising were well under way.²

Much of the application of the Qur'an is connected to *what* was revealed but also *where* it was revealed. If this beginning principle is not adhered to, the other four principles below are without meaning.

2) The language of the Qur'an

The language of the Qur'an is indeed Arabic.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢﴾

Indeed We sent down a Qur'an in Arabic so that you might think.³

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ
أَوْ يُحَدِّثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١١٣﴾

¹ *Encyclopedia Americana*, pp. 493-494, Editor in Chief Mark Cummings, Oxford University Press, London, 1994

² *Fahris bi Asma' is-Suwar wa Bayan il-Makki wal-Madani Minha*, Cairo, AD 2007

³ Surah Yusuf (12), ayah 2

And likewise We sent down an Arabic Qur'an and explained in detail some warning therein so that they might have fear of Him or that it might cause them to remember.⁴

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾

It is in a clear Arabic tongue.⁵

قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

This is an Arabic Qur'an without any crookedness therein so that they might have fear of Him.⁶

كِتَابٌ فَصَّلْتُمْ آيَاتِهِ، قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾

It is an Arabic Qur'an, in which its verses are explained in detail for a people who know.⁷

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّنُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا
وَنُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ ﴿٧﴾

And likewise We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an so that you might warn the Mother of the Cities and whoever is around it.⁸

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣﴾

We made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you might think.⁹

The fact that the Qur'an was given in Arabic, in particular the dialect of Quraish, is clear to students of Arabic language and linguists alike; however the Arabic language, just like any other, has had absorbed words, concepts and vocabulary from other languages.

It is of the utmost importance that someone reading the Qur'an knows that these loan words bear a different meaning in the host language or are used for purposes other than those intended in the sampled language.¹⁰

There are examples that will be useful to the reader:

⁴ Surah Ta Ha (20), ayah 113

⁵ Surat ush-Shu'ara' (26), ayah 195

⁶ Surat uz-Zumar (39), ayah 28

⁷ Surah Fussilat (41), ayah 3

⁸ Surat ush-Shura (42), ayah 7

⁹ Surat uz-Zukhruf (43), ayah 3

¹⁰ Please see Ibn An-Najjar's *Sharh ul-Kawkab il-Munir: Al-Mukhtar ul-Mubtakar Sharh ul-Mukhtasar fi Usul il-Fiqh*, vol.4, pp. 459-471.

كَذَلِكَ وَزَوَّجْنَاهُمْ بِحُورٍ عِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

So We shall marry them to Hur with wide eyes.¹¹

The word *hur* is not from Arabic but rather Farsi¹² so one will have to read the context of the verse here, all other citations where the same expression is used and statements from the Prophet Muhammad to know what this word entails in its meaning and application.

The Paradise in the Hereafter is referred to often in the Qur'an and also its different layers.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

Those who believe and do righteous deeds shall have for themselves gardens that they shall descend into as a reward.¹³

One of the sections in these gardens in the Paradise is referred to above as *al-firdaws*. The origin of this word is Syriac, which passed to Farsi, then Greek (or Koine) and finally became a loan word in Arabic.¹⁴

The context of this word explained by the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him,

"The gardens of the Paradise are of four divisions in number. There are two gardens that are of gold and all their finery, utensils and jewellery is also gold. The two other gardens are from silver and their finery, utensils and jewellery are all from silver as well. There is no veil between the people and seeing their Lord except the cloak of majesty on His Face in the garden of Eternity."¹⁵

The Arabic of the Qur'an is also studied with regard to how the wording or grammar of certain verses impacts the interpretation of the text.

وَالْمُطَلَقَاتُ يَرَّبَّضْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنُنَّ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبُعُولتهنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٨﴾

¹¹ Surat ud-Dukhan (44), ayah 54

¹² *Zad ul-Masir fi 'Ilm it-Tafsir*, pp. 1291-1292, Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Dar ul-Hazm, Beirut, 2002.

¹³ Surat ul-Kahf (18), ayah 107

¹⁴ *Zad ul-Masir fi 'Ilm it-Tafsir*, pp. 872-873, Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Dar ul-Hazm, Beirut, 2002.

¹⁵ Collected by Al-Bukhari and Muslim cf. *Zad ul-Masir fi 'Ilm it-Tafsir*, pp. 872-873, Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Dar ul-Hazm, Beirut, 2002.

Women that have been divorced shall wait for three periods...¹⁶

The word *quru'* used in the ayah is the singular of the word *qar'*. This word carries a dual meaning, encapsulating both the *menstrual cycle* and the period of time *between* each menstrual cycle.¹⁷

The actual meaning of this word is crucial in establishing when a divorce is complete and a woman is eligible to marry again.

3) The person of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

As the recipient of the Revelation, there is no practical way to separate him from the Qur'an's application.

His third wife, `A'ishah As-Siddiqah, said of him, "His manners and morals were the Qur'an."¹⁸ Knowing this to be the case, his word on the text would take rank over any other statement or opinion.

It then became of the utmost importance for the early Muslims to gather together his commentary on the passages of the Qur'an and his usage of the text to resolve disputes, conclude agreements, enact marriages and annul them and also organise the distribution of wealth.¹⁹

This vast body of literature, referred to as *Sunnah*, was to be utilised as a companion to the Qur'an in aiding understanding, implementation and limitation of verses that might seem general; absolute application of verses that might appear limited and suspension of laws and rules that have been superseded by later verses (known as abrogation).²⁰

4) The early Muslim community's understanding

As discussed above, the Prophet's relation to the Qur'an is crucial and thus one has to have both sources for a proper understanding of the Qur'an and balanced and responsible implementation of it.

In light of this, the same principles that would be used to explain the Qur'an also had to be applied to the Sunnah. These methods are both referred to using the same technical word: *tafsir*.

¹⁶ Surat ul-Baqarah (2), ayah 228

¹⁷ *Tanwir ul-Maqbas min Tafsir Ibn `Abbas*, pp. 39-40, Dar ul-Kitab Al-`Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1421 AH (AD 2000)

¹⁸ *Al-Jami` us-Saghir fi Ahadith il-Bashir in-Nadhir*, vol.2, pp. 353-354 (hadith #6831), Dar ul-Fikr, Beirut, 1428 AH (AD 2008).

¹⁹ Muwaffaq ud-Din Ibn Qudamah in his *Rawdat un-Nazir wa Junnat ul-Munazir*, vol.1, pp. 91-92; 212-223, Mu'assasat ur-Rayyan, Beirut, 1419 AH (AD 1988)

²⁰ Muwaffaq ud-Din Ibn Qudamah in his *Rawdat un-Nazir wa Junnat ul-Munazir*, vol.1, pp. 91-92; 212-223, Mu'assasat ur-Rayyan, Beirut, 1419 AH (AD 1988)

One of the great masters of tafsir, `Abdur-Rahman ibn Al-Jawzi, defined this science by saying, "Tafsir means to bring to light and make clear a matter that had been concealed or unclear."²¹

5) Exhortations and commands

In the Qur'an, believers are commanded to carry out actions declared as compulsory, abstain from certain things prescribed as forbidden and to manage the wider society with the governing laws provided in its verses.²²

2nd Article : Early Tafsir Literature

Early tafsir literature

The earliest tafsir literature can be found among Companions of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, such as `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, Mujahid, `Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl, Ibn `Abbas and `A'ishah As-Siddiqah but only a few survive.

Ibn `Abbas

The first and most prized tafsir is that of `Abdullah ibn Al-Abbas ibn `Abdul Muttalib.²³ Known in short as Ibn `Abbas, he was crowned the 'Commentator on the Qur'an', as he was the first cousin to the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, he had first-hand experience and also exposure to the recipient of the Qur'an.

He prayed with, ate with and grew into maturity in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. At one point, the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, took hold of the then boy Ibn `Abbas and made a prayer, "**Allah! Give him wisdom and teach him the understanding of the Book.**"²⁴

This supplication was accepted and Ibn `Abbas lived out the fulfilment of this prayer for the rest of his life. His commentary is cited by most authorities although his own personal commentary is less known to the Anglosphere.²⁵

²¹ *Zad ul-Masir fi `Ilm it-Tafsir*, pp. 28-29, Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Dar ul-Hazm, Beirut, 2002.

²² `Abdul Qadir ibn Badran Ad-Dumi in *Al-Madkhal ila madhhab Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, pp. 260-264, Mu'assasat ur-Risalah, Beirut, 1405 AH (AD 1985)

²³ d. 68 AH (AD 688)

²⁴ Ahmad ibn Hanbal in *Al-Musnad*, vol.3, pp. 94-95

²⁵ This is a direct result of the continued paucity of literature translated from Arabic into English.

Consisting of one large but pithy volume, his tafsir has been named *Tanwir ul-Maqbas min Tafsir Ibn `Abbas*. The source of this text has come down to us through channels from the first centuries of the Muslims and Ahmad ibn Hanbal made quotations of it from a copy made available to him while in Egypt.²⁶

The quotes given by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his tafsir notes in lectures are identical to those seen in *Tanwir*.²⁷

Sufyan Ath-Thawri

Another piece of tafsir literature is that given by one of the early authorities and students of the Companions, Sufyan Ath-Thawri ibn Sa`id ibn Masruq Al-Kufi.²⁸

This text offers only commentary on what are called the verses of judgement, those citations from the Qur'an that govern society, establish legal precedent and regulate transactions.²⁹

It has been in circulation for centuries and is still extant with copies of the manuscript in libraries throughout the world.

At-Tabari

A mammoth compendium, Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Jarir At-Tabari's³⁰ multi volume *Jami` ul-Bayan `An Ta'wil il-Qur'an* is a combination of history, rulings, grammar notes, Qur'an on Qur'an comparison and also reference to other *tafsirs*, some of which are no longer in circulation or may be lost.³¹

This text comes from what Muslims would call the "third age" of the first three generations or the third century of Islam. It has inspired or acted as the foundation for later *tafsir* books that would be written or compiled.

At-Tabari's method consists of quoting one *ayah* or verse, cataloguing the language, grammar, any variant recitations and discussions.

He then quotes texts establishing the point in time an *ayah* was revealed, the incident that triggered it and the people who witnessed the event. Next come the different discussions and rulings around the *ayah* - both baseless and valid - followed by the end and final process.³²

²⁶ Jalal ud-Din As-Suyuti in *Al-Itqan Fi `Ulum il-Qur'an*, vol. 1, pp. 120-133.

²⁷ Muhammad ibn Muhammad As-Sa`di in *Al-Jawhar ul-Muhassal*, pp.

²⁸ d. 161 AH (AD 778)

²⁹ This is known as *Tafsir Sufyan Athawri*, printed by Dar ul-Kutub il-`Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1402 AH (AD 1983)

³⁰ d. 310 AH (AD 923)

³¹ This has been printed as *Turath ul-Islam: Tafsir ut-Tabari: Jami` ul-Bayan `an Ta'wil il-Qur'an Li-Abi Ja`far Muhammad ibn Jarir At-Tabari*, Maktabah Ibn Taymiyyah, Cairo, 1374 AH.

³² Please see *Turath ul-Islam: Tafsir ut-Tabari: Jami` ul-Bayan `an Ta'wil il-Qur'an Li-Abi Ja`far Muhammad ibn Jarir At-Tabari*, vol.1, pp.1-67, in which At-Tabari discusses much of this at length and begins the process of laying out his methodology before formally starting his commentary's first section.

This process, known as 'sifting,' involves the author meticulously going through and dismissing spurious, weak or untenable statements on the topic and then ending with the most stringent and authentic reports which he will then give a legal ruling upon.

Although a process begun by disciples of Ash-Shafi`ii³³ or his legal school (of which At-Tabari was an adherent), it has come to be the standard in all subsequent endeavours when authors seek to pen *tafsir* literature, albeit with some modifications based on emphasis, legal school and scope of the individual project.³⁴

Article 3: Developments in *tafsir* literature

Development of the *tafsir* genre

These are the following types of *tafsir*:

a. Self Explanatory

The Qur'an is explained by referring only to other verses of the Qur'an with minimal reference to the Sunnah. The point of this is to introduce the student to rare words and grammar of certain *ayat* and rulings.

An example of this would be *Adwa' ul-Bayan fi Idah il-Qur'an bil-Qur'an* (10 vols.) by Muhammad Al-Amin ibn Muhammad Al-Mukhtar Ash-Shanqiti (d. 1393 AH (AD 1971)).

This form of *tafsir* records the language of the Qur'an, how many times a particular word is used, where certain narratives or statements are repeated, expanded or alluded to for the reader to reference.

b. Interlinear

A reader of this will find that the author has gathered not just the verses but all the *ahadith* on the subject. He then sifts through, clarifying the sound from the suspect, the baseless from the trustworthy, the fabricated from the fair and the incidents of recitation.

Included in this will be *asbab un-nuzul* (the reason why an ayah was revealed), *asbab ul-wurud* (the reason for a hadith being said) and *waqi`ah* (incidents where an ayah that was revealed for one purpose might be used to answer more than one question on more than one occasion).

³³ d. 204 AH (AD 820)

³⁴ One can notice this as Ibn Al-Jawzi discusses the preferred methods of commentary in *Zad ul-Masir fi `Ilm it-Tafsir*, pp. 1-29.

Jami` ul-Bayan wat-Ta'wil is one such example as well as *Tafsir ul-Qur'an il-Azim* (4 large vols.) by Imam Abul Fida' Isma`il Ibn Kathir³⁵ and *Lubab ut-Ta'wil fi Ma`alam it-Tanzil* (4 vols.) by Imam Al-Hussain Al-Baghawi.³⁶

c. Prescriptive/Legal

This is a *tafsir* in order to know which certain *ayat* apply in *fiqh*, to one's particular *madhhab* or the discussion of all the *madhhabs*, detailing issues of consensus, preponderant agreement, difference of opinion and the authorities who declared it as such.

Examples of this would be *Ahkam ul-Qur'an* (4 vols.) by Al-Qadi Abu Bakr ibn Al-`Arabi,³⁷ *Al-Muharrar ul-Wajiz fi Tafsir il-Qur'an il-`Aziz* (4 vols) by `Abdul Haqq Ibn `Atiyah³⁸ as well as *Tafsir ul-Qur'an* by `Izz ud-Din `Abdul `Aziz ibn `Abdus-Salam As-Sulami.³⁹

d. Expository

This is a *tafsir* in which the writer gives the commentary of a few sentences along with the reasons for revelation. This is designed to be a desktop reference manual or read along with other commentaries.

Expository examples would include `Ali ibn Ahmad Al-Wahidi's⁴⁰ *Asbab un-Nuzul* and Jalal ud-Din As-Suyuti and Al-Mahali's *Al-Jalalayn*.

Expository *tafsirs* will also give wise counsels, aphorisms and spiritual nuggets for the reader to take away.

If a reader or researcher wanted to study a very detailed issue that had occurred to his or her mind while reading the *Jalalayn*, then the other categories previously mentioned would have to be consulted, based on the subject.

The best expanded commentary on the *Jalalayn* is the *Hashiyah* of Imam Ahmad As-Sawi.⁴¹ The best expository example of the Qur'an and the earliest is *Tanwir ul-Maqbas*.

e. Inclusionist

This joins between all the types of *tafsir* mentioned above and gives the reader a thorough overview of the best of all subjects under each heading.

³⁵ d. 774 AH (AD 1373)

³⁶ d. 516 AH (AD 1122)

³⁷ d. 543 AH (AD 1148)

³⁸ d. 541 AH (AD 1146)

³⁹ d. 660 AH (AD 1264)

⁴⁰ d. 468 AH (AD 1075)

⁴¹ d. 1242 AH (AD 1847)

Examples of this include *Al-Jami`u Li-Ahkam il-Qur'an* (22 vols.) by Imam Abu `Abdullah Al-Qurtubi,⁴² *Al-Lubab fil `Ulum il-Kitab* (20 vols.) Siraj ud-Din `Umar Ibn `Adil,⁴³ *Rumuz ul-Kunuz fi Tafsir il-Kitab il-`Aziz* (9 vols.) by Imam Ibn Rizqullah⁴⁴ and *Zad ul-Masir fi `Ilm it-Tafsir* (4 vols.) by Imam Ibn Al-Jawzi.⁴⁵

⁴² d. 671AH (AD 1275)

⁴³ d. 775 AH (AD 1374)

⁴⁴ d. 661 AH (AD 1265)

⁴⁵ d. 597 AH (AD 1204)

Article 4: The authors of Al-Jalalayn

The authors of Al-Jalalayn

Jalal ud-Din Al-Mahalli

Jalal ud-Din Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn Shihab ud-Din Ahmad ibn Kamal ud-Din Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Ahmad ibn Hashim Al-Abbasi Al-Ansari Al-Mahalli.⁴⁶

Born in the city of Cairo in Egypt, he memorised the Qur'an at an early age and started committing small texts to memory in preparation for entrance into seminary and finishing school in later life.

Al-Mahalli studied from a galaxy of more than 23 world renowned teachers, the most famous stars in some of those constellations being Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani,⁴⁷ Shams ud-Din Muhammad Al-Jazari⁴⁸ and Jalal ud-Din Al-Balqini.⁴⁹

Being in Cairo during this pivotal time, he was part of the aforementioned 'Great Simplification Project' and contributed greatly. The greatest contributions of this scholar were to *hadith*, theology, philosophical studies and *tafsir*. He was also briefly a teacher to Jalal ud-Din As-Suyuti, who would go on to become one of the shining stars on the horizon.

He died in old age after a lifetime of service and teaching and was buried in the city of Cairo.

Jalal ud-Din As-Suyuti

He is Jalal ud-Din `Abdur-Rahman ibn Al-Kamal ibn Muhammad ibn Sabiq ud-Din ibn Al-Fakhr `Uthman ibn Nazir ud-Din Muhammad ibn Saif ud-Din Khidr ibn Najm ud-Din Abus-Salah Ayyub ibn Nasir ud-Din Muhammad ibn Humam ud-Din Al-Khudairi As-Suyuti.⁵⁰

Born in Upper Egypt's famous town of Asyut, he was orphaned not long after and memorised the Qur'an at 8 years of age. He then made his way to Cairo and entered a fast track programme for scholars in the field of math, theology and *hadith* studies. His greatest teacher was Sharaf ud-Din Al-Munawi,⁵¹ the grand commentator, mathematician and *hadith* master.

Upon reaching his twenties, he was now engaged in writing books, teaching and involved in a systemisation movement at the time. Al-Azhar, the chief Sunni institution of North Africa and one

⁴⁶ 791-864 AH (AD 1395-1469)

⁴⁷ 773-852 AH (AD 1355-1457)

⁴⁸ 751-833 AH (AD 1334-1447)

⁴⁹ 763-824 AH (AD 1345-1438)

⁵⁰ 849-911 AH (AD 1454-1516)

⁵¹ 952-1031 AH (AD 1557-1636)

of the top three of the Muslim world, had started a simplification drive in all the sciences and required books to be written that were fit for task.

As-Suyuti and others willingly obliged and his 723 text written legacy lent a great hand to the endeavour.⁵² At one point, As-Suyuti was Shaikh ul-Azhar but stepped away from it to focus more on his writing career.

Most of his written legacy has been published and in the field of *tafsir*, he left a great imprint. The first was a large *tafsir Ad-Durr ul-Manthur* was an inclusive, detailed and powerful addition to inclusionist *tafsir* lovers but he also wrote a simplified, smaller work known as *Al-Jalalayn*.

This was to be part of the great simplification project headed by Al-Azhar and it became popular in its own time. As-Suyuti breathed his last and was buried in Cairo, the city he had adopted that loved him and he loved it.

Their combined work *tafsir Al-Jalalayn* is a very quick, easy desktop reference that is authoritative, easy to grasp and devoid of much of the heavy theological overtones and quotations that preceded it in the *tafsir* literature.

⁵² As enumerated in *Dalil Makhtutat is-Suyuti*, edited by Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Ash-Shaibani and Ahmad Al-Khazindar, Manshurat Markaz Al-Makhtutat, Kuwait, 1995

Article 5: The ruling on pictures and images

The ruling on pictures and images

What is the ruling on photography, taking photos and images?

The answer given by the marja`, Imam `Abdul Qadir ibn Badran Ad-Dumi (d. 1346 AH), is as follows below:

This issue has been spoken about by the scholars, both in the distant past and today. There are authentic ahadith that exist showing the impermissibility of picture making and that has been specified regarding any thing that possesses a soul.

The proof used for that ruling is what was collected by Imam Muslim and narrated from Abu Talhah with an attributed chain to the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, who said, **“The angels do not enter into a house that has in it a house or an image.”**

It was also narrated in the same collection from the chain of transmission of Al-Laith according to the wording, **“The angels don’t enter a home with a dog or picture therein unless it is the markings on a piece of cloth.”**

There is also the hadith of `A’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, where the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said, **“The people to be punished most sternly on the Day of Resurrection in the sight of Allah are those who tried to make semblance with the creation of Allah, the Exalted.”**

In this issue are numerous ahadith in the *Sahih* collections of Imams al-Bukhari and Muslim and also the *Sunan* collections of Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and An-Nasa’ii. All of this shows the impermissibility of pictures of animate life, i.e. humans and animals.

The wisdom in such an injunction of prohibition was that the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was sent to efface all idolatrous images and also stop the worship of idols and the pictures at that point were worshipped and so the way to stop that was to prohibit images and making them out of the fear that they would be venerated by the people.

This type of veneration is a branch of worshipping them in some sense and led the ignorant into the trap of worshipping them. It is this area that most of the scholars have spent a great deal of time on and there are quotes from them that would fill these pages at great length.

The questioner did not ask about pictures in general but was rather asking about a particular branch of it and it is what is referred to in this time as “photography portraits.” So due to the specifics of the question we will speak on the matter requested.

In the case of pictures of animate life, then it is impermissible by decisive texts. In the case of these things being on clothes, bed spreads or things such as that, the scholars differ in making use of these things. Some of the people – and this would include some Shafi’iis – such as

Imam An-Nawawi in his *Commentary on the Collection of Muslim* would declare as impermissible wearing any clothes that had the image of an animal on them.⁵³

Imam Ahmad remarked, “These pictures should not be hung up, used as curtains on the wall or made.”⁵⁴ Some scholars – and this would include some of the Imams of the Hanbalis – held a different opinion.

Imams Ibn `Aqil Al-Baghdadi and Taqi ud-Din Ibn Taymiyyah ruled that it was neither impermissible to have a picture of an animal on clothing and nor was it disliked,⁵⁵ the reason being that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had a cushion that he was reclining on that possessed an image like this on it. This hadith was collected by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* and is authentic.

So when we look at the statement, “**unless it is the markings on a piece of cloth,**” and the fact that he had a cushion that he was reclining on that possessed an image like this on it, these specify and limit the general ruling of the ahadith mentioned above. Photographs are less in severity than these images as they are not made by hand and there is no shadow for them.

The only issue with photographs is that in the end result they are like an exact replica of the one so as to appear as if one is looking in the mirror. This particular type of picture making did not exist in the times gone by so the analogy for it is based on the pictures and images made by hand but the analogy does indeed hold in spite of this difference.

Once you understand that which came before with a careful mind, then you will know that our statement on the permissibility of photographs does come with a clarification and consideration on the matter.

If the photograph is of a man or woman and one or both of them are naked or the genitals are exposed or the picture shows sex acts or perversions that would corrupt people or the picture was taken out of honour, reverence or respect of the one or thing photographed, then there is no doubt in the impermissibility of the picture and the impermissibility of taking such pictures.

One such incident happened when I and a group of brothers entered into the house of a man that claimed to be “Sufi inclined” and was famous among the people for his piety. When the brothers and I entered one of the rooms in the house, I found that there was a picture hanging on the wall.

Every one of the people in the group except me stood to kiss the photo before he sat down as a way of seeking blessings from it. They did this as the picture was reputed to be a photo or image of Muhy ud-Din Ibn Al-`Arabi, the author of *Pearls of Wisdom*.

⁵³ *Sahih Muslim Bi-Sharh in-Nawawi*, vol.6, pp. 304-306, Dar ul-Ma`rifah edition

⁵⁴ Please see Imam Ibn Muflih in his text *Al-Furu`*, vol.1, pp. 348-349; Imam `Ala' ud-Din al-Mardawi in *Al-Insaf*, vol. 1, pp. 472-474.

⁵⁵ Please see Imam Ibn Muflih in his text *Al-Furu`*, vol.1, pp. 348-349; Imam `Ala' ud-Din al-Mardawi in *Al-Insaf*, vol. 1, pp. 472-474.

When I saw this happening I said, “Listen, everyone! Indeed this is the origin of the worship of idols and idolatrous images.” So this action is categorically impermissible with no dispute.

In the case when the picture is taken out of necessity – *such as in our time when every individual travelling has to get permission from his government with documents and that involves his photo being put inside of the documents or photographs being taken of a fugitive or captured criminal so that the one who sees him will know him or photos are taken to remember loved ones, preserve the family tree, landscapes and historical sites in lands faraway that one visited or of ancient artefacts or lands or of boats trips or **other things that have a utility or benefit*** – then this falls under the ruling of permissibility.

It is at this point that the writer of these words has stopped his pen as the research has been completed and Allah is the One that gives success.

This ruling was written by `Abdul Qadir Ibn Ahmad ibn Badran, who praises Allah, prays and is Muslim.

Article 6: Compiler's Introduction

Compiler's Introduction

The body of work undertaken is not meant as a translation but as a contemporary understanding, in simple language, of the thrust of the Qur'an along with accessible, classical scholarly annotations. It is meant for younger viewers and converts, but I hope it will be of use to a wider audience too. I have put this together after years of teaching in secondary schools and colleges with the intention of making the Qur'an more accessible to a generation who I've found do not access the Qur'an much, nor do they understand it when they do. To this effect, what was attempted was making what was *said* in the Qur'an easier on the ear through rhyme and also delivering it through a visual representation to sit alongside the way a lot of young people normally view their education and entertainment, i.e music, film, television, Youtube, Spotify, etc. The rendition you are about to read is a primer for that, not an end in itself. God willing, all of these methods will be a stepping stone for them and others on the way towards a full appreciation and desire to learn the inimitable, mesmeric, Qur'an in Arabic.

One thing I notice often, in our busy lifestyles, is that the pure Qur'an in Arabic is the essence of calm and tranquillity. One really should prepare themselves to approach it with the right frame of mind and intention, but alas for many, and particularly many who are young, this is quite difficult. With their heads transfixed to screens and the world's entertainment rooted into every smartphone, tablet, television and even some e-glasses, the Qur'an, as is, becomes self-distancing. It does not jump and demand your attention in the same sensory grabbing way; and the brain, the cornerstone of every creature, is the ultimate creature of habit. The English versions, and unfortunately even more so the Arabic, become a hurdle for many, even if they do wish to access it. Concentration and tranquillity is not what we are trained to want; distraction and entertainment is.

What the several versions of this rendition aim for is accessibility and rooting in classical understanding. The media forms will hopefully self-explain the prior, but the latter will most likely encourage some debate.

The Qur'an, when I first accessed it, was difficult to follow. I could read the Arabic, but was always corrected for erroneous reading of the diacritical marks. When I got those right, praise would ensue, but at no time did the meaning or my understanding of the meaning seem important.

I came to Islam as a religion of choice in my 20s, after being a self-professed (non-interested) atheist and hating Islam exponentially when it seemed to have turned a loved one mildly demented some five years prior. When I picked up the Qur'an to read where some of the newly demented's views had come from, or the *hadeeth*, I found them right there in plain English. I did not have the time or inclination to look into what many Muslims said was 'context' and milled along 'knowing' that what I had 'read' of the Qur'an was the Qur'an. But, as my Sheikh would say to me many years later, it was more a case of 'the Qur'an has been turned into English, Islam has not'. The Qur'an without context in English or any other language than it's original becomes very much devoid of its full meaning.

When I did turn back to the Qur'an years later, I went armed with the word 'why' and this brought me onto *tafsir* literature. *Tafsir* in its basic meaning becomes 'explanations' and more accurately 'exegesis': opinions of scholars on an issue and a reference to how the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained items, the latter being the most valued source. It turns out it wasn't only me who was slightly unsure of what

was meant. Countless *hadeeth* mention the people hearing the Qur'an (who were Arabs of the time with proficiency, fluency and mastery of that language to varying degrees) would still often ask the Prophet, 'What does that mean?' Again and again, referring to Qur'anic verses and the Prophet (PBUH) would explain each word or verse to them.

What infinitesimal chance then of the English reader, picking up a Qur'an, in English, and expecting to understand it fully? So the *tafsir* inclusion becomes not a luxury, but a necessity, not only for explanation but for adding to a deeper understanding and hopefully instilling an interest in research in the young reader. A question on which *tafsirs* and why would be a book in itself, but I picked Jalalayn due to ease and Ibn Abbas (at least it is attributed to him) due to reverence. They account for nearly 99% of the references included.

As is the case with some people, they will want to know what my 'angle' is and what my 'position' is. I hope it suffices that when the angels in the grave ask me the questions in the grave, I pray with all my heart that Allah allows me to be one of those who responds, 'My Lord is Allah, My religion is Islam and Muhammad (PBUH) is my prophet.' I have only commenced this with permission from the Sheikh I learn from and with. Please be assured this is not a spur of the moment scheme, but a serious endeavor, for the last six years, in preparation of the life to come. I hope all the above information will ease the minds of those who are interested in why this project was undertaken. I care very little for labels in general, and even if I utter the word Muslim from my mouth and use it as a label for myself, it is my heart that I pray that is truly guided to Allah and in sincere pursuit of the truth, and as all should, I can only hope this is the case. Allah knows best.

If there is any good in it Allah is to be praised, for its flaws I am responsible.

And with Allah is every success.

Loay El Hady - 2016 - London

Article 7:

The format of the chapters

Most laymen do not have the time to engage fully in detailed Qur'an study so 'translations' have been deemed the best way to convey the meaning of the Arabic to an English reading audience. In trying to make this clearer and more detailed than other English versions, this rhyming rendition is colour-coded for the reader, to offer a clear understanding of where the information is coming from and what is behind a verse.

Key:

Items written in black are a rendition of the Qur'anic text – this is to say the meaning has been turned into English in what is hopefully easy to read and follow as well as being memorable through rhyme. The rhyme is attempted as a respectful attempt at replicating the way of Islamic teachers of the past, who would sometimes advise and teach rules of Islam through poetry and rhyme, as lessons were better remembered through that style.

Example: This is the Scripture in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for those who keep God in mind
Who believe in the unseen, keep up the prayer, and give of what We've given them in kind.

Explanation: This meaning is conveyed even though it is not literal.

Items in blue are *hadeeth/tafsir* inclusions – this is done in the hope of providing firsthand reference material for a specific verse. The majority of *hadeeth* are used from the direct explanation from Ibn Abaas (R.A) and the *tafsir* of the Jalalayin (R.A). On occasion a *hadeeth* may also be used from Bukhari (R.A) and Muslim (R.A) as it is understood to support the section being rendered.

Example: We have blessed you with plenty
And you'll have a river in Heaven by that name⁵⁶

Explanation: The double meaning of 'Kawthar' (Plenty) is noted by the scholars and an important addition to understanding the favours given by God to his Prophet (PBUH)

Items in red are Qur'anic additions - these are from other parts of the Qur'an that help to explain the meaning or link the meaning from another section. This is very common practice as the Qur'an often revisits topics and material to shed new light on them and to reinforce their importance.

Example: People, worship your Lord, who created you and your forefather, Adam, to be mindful of Me
To submit to My commands, gain proximity and reward from their Lord,⁵⁷ and do so with humility⁵⁸

Explanation: The added section from other parts of the Qur'an encompasses more than the line itself to give the reader a fuller and wider set of information relevant to the verse being read.

⁵⁶Zad ul-Masir fi 'Ilm it-Tafsir, pp. 1596-1601

⁵⁷ Al Qur'an (2:112)

⁵⁸ Al Qur'an (6:42)

Article 8: A summary of translations of the Qur'an into English

A summary of translations of the Qur'an into English

Translation from one language to another is a labour that can be very fulfilling, but also very challenging. Whenever considering such a feat, the translator is presented with the question of how to translate. There are, in general, three ways to translate, from which one can choose when considering how to convey certain meanings and meaningful phrases to an audience in another language, country and time period. We shall briefly summarise the three approaches:

Formal/Literal

This is using formal or literal translation when resorting to translating phrases a word at a time, independent of the whole phrase or sentence.

Academics of every stripe have made it their business to translate the Qur'an literally in an attempt to somehow render each and every word into English, irrespective of the flow of the original language (that being Arabic). There was the 1917 translation of the Qur'an by Ahmadiyyah theologian Muhammad `Ali (AD 1874-1951), which became one of the most popular translations of its time due to its accessible nature and also a large number of notes.

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's (AD 1875-1936) is a literal translation, known as the *English Meanings of the Glorious Qur'an*. A concern with its King James English rendering is the fixation with translating religious items along the same lines as the King James Bible. This presents issues as the King James English, which more rightly should be known as Elizabethan English, was already in decline by the time James I of Stewart commissioned the 1611 Authorised Version.

This "King Jamesing" continued into 1934, when `Abdullah Yusuf `Ali (AD 1872-1953), a Dawoodi Bohra Isma`ili Shi`a from India, released a translation in the same manner but with 6,000 notes to guide the reader along his or her reading.

The first translation to not engage in 'King Jamesing' was that of N.J. Dawood in 1956, published by Penguin under the title, *The Koran*. Many writers still makes reference to this translation to date due to the fact that the translator, an Arab Christian, was more acquainted with the Arabic than any of the aforementioned.

In spite of this fact, Dawood's setbacks were numerous. When unable to find a direct translation of a word in Arabic, he used approximations. This was an attempt to limit the number of notes and eliminate the possibility of any lengthy notes.

A glaring example is the translation of the Arabic expression, *ma malakat aymanukum*. The theological, cultural and jurisprudential significance of this phrase could not be realised without a note and no single English word or set of words could accurately capture what was being expressed.

The end result was that he chose an approximation. The Arabic was thus rendered as "concubines," far from literal or even approximate. This was the most unfortunate point of all. It has a led to a succession of lopsided understandings and utter misuse of the phrase.

Though we will go into the benefits of Brother El Hady's translation in more detail shortly, it is worth mentioning that this phrase is precisely the type of area where his rendition is more fitting, accurate and contextualised. 'Ma malakat aymanukum' becomes the following:

(Men⁵⁹ and women⁶⁰ both had wards regarded as of the 'possession of their right hand'
The ward is due good treatment⁶¹ by a believing woman⁶² or man⁶³)

The relevance of gender of those who fall under 'what right hands possess'; the importance of the responsibility towards them and treating them well, as outlined in the Qur'an; the fact that they came to people through a variety of means and the issue of the status they had through marriage through Arab society at the time, which saw marriage in different levels; all of these together offer a far more accurate picture of the meaning. The commonly rendered 'slaves' and 'concubines' is very short-sighted in its offering of the contextual meaning.

Returning to the issues of literalism, a second and far less weighty slip concerned events and conditions in Paradise. The Arabic expression, *azwaj* – rather than being offered as "spouses" – was given as "maidens," which would have been more accurate if this was being used for the Arabic *fatayat*.

Besides these and perhaps a few other points, Dawood's translation was sound, strong and engaging enough to pull the reader in and have him or her reading attentively.

Interpretive

This method is not as much translating as it is attempting to bring the reader the original flow and cadence of the Arabic.

Arthur Arberry (AD 1905-1969) in 1955 made *The Koran Interpreted*, it was and still remains popular,

We then have the text, *The Message of the Qur'an: Presented in Perspective* (1974) by Hashim `Ali (AD 1903-1987). This has more or less followed the same formula as Arberry and those in between.

Dynamic

This is translating according to what the author intended, while using contemporary speech in the language of the audience being addressed. Rather than translating a sentence word for word, which would render the work Arabish (a composite of Arabic and English that would read mechanically), the translator seeks to bring the thoughts of the writer into contemporary speech that would be understood by English readers.

Many authors favour one of the three ways of translating mentioned above. But in my own translatory work, I use them in combination, always taking careful counsel beforehand. The reason is that the use of

⁵⁹ Al Qur'an (4:36)

⁶⁰ Al Qur'an (33:55)

⁶¹ Al Qur'an (4:36)

⁶² Al Qur'an (33:55)

⁶³ Al Qur'an (4:36)

one in every circumstance will neglect the necessary use of another method. Very few texts translated are completely literal, solely interpretation-based, or entirely in need of dynamic equivalency.

What occurs more often than not is that translated texts are a tapestry with various currents and patterns of speech within them. It must be the translator's duty to bring forward the text in a responsible way, while conveying it to the audience in a fashion that ensures coherence and readability.

This text, *The Qur'an, a rhyming, English rendition*, is a rendering of the translation from the Arabic to the English, relying on both the dynamic and idiomatic forms of expression but most heavily on the dynamic.

El Hady began the task after seeing a need for accessibility amongst young and new Muslims. This came on the back of a discussion that he and myself had regarding the readability, quality and style of the translations of the Qur'an currently in circulation.

It was during these discussions that we came to the conclusion that one of the greatest reasons for English speaking Muslims' alienation from the Qur'an was based around the inability of the readers to relate to archaic translations, excessive prosaic and formulaic notes and a complete lack of contemporary speech. Moreover, reducing the Qur'an in English to a reading exercise, considering the multi-sensory way information and entertainment are normally communicated to young people, was an area El Hady tried to overcome.

El Hady sought to bridge this gap by doing a rendition on the text and making the accompanying sound and image-based representations. A large amount of effort went into just making the endeavour readable and pleasant on the eye when readers gazed upon the finished product. All those who examined the work have come from an English speaking background; they have been able to engage with many parts of the text and have a fulfilling encounter with the Speech of Allah that has been rendered. The rhyming functionality has also allowed for eloquence to support the meaning at times, in a bid to make sections memorable.

We hope the book allows the Qur'an to become accessible to a new generation of Muslims who might not have read it at all while at the same time claiming allegiance to the faith that came out of the text.

Advantages to El Hady's work are plentiful, but we will suffice with five:

- a. The fact that the text is geared towards readers in a contemporary standpoint. The language used in the rendition is simple and straightforward.
- b. There is no attempt being made in the text to force the readers mind towards any group or sect. The well-known understanding of the text and the commentary literature is all that is used.
- c. There is reference to a large number of commentaries, which I undertook such as Al-Qurtubi and otherwise; but El Hady and I both thought it necessary to use some commentators that could be indicated in the text, through hyperlinks, for the interested e-reader, and also Arabic references of classic texts for those with wider knowledge that might want to research further on certain topics.

The expansive commentary that I have depended upon when annotating the text is Imam Ibn Al-Jawzi's (d. 597 AH) *Zad ul-Masir fi `Ilm al-Tafsir*, (Dar ul-Hazm 4 vols. in 1 edition) Beirut (1423 AH/AD 2002). Brother El Hady has used the following *tafsirs*: Tanwir al Miqbas, Jalalayn and on occasion, a handful of times, Ibn Kathir.

Much of the additional ahadith and commentary were easily accessible in this text. I have sought to keep the footnotes very short, only citing the source where these narratives could be found.

- d. Much of the Qur'an has internal commentary, where some verses make reference to others. This 'Qur'an-by-Qur'an' commentary needed special attention. The text chosen to accurately source these matters, along with the understanding used by brother El Hady, was Imam Muhammad Al-Amin Ash-Shanqiti's (d. 1391 AH) seminal work, *Adwa' ul-Bayan fi Aydah al-Qur'ani bil-Qur'an*, (Dar ul-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah 1st edition) Beirut (1417 AH/AD 1996), which is some 11 volumes in number.
- e. The text is free of troublesome notes, unsolicited commentary bias and also obscure details that are often included by other translators. The reader is able to concentrate on digesting the rendered message of the Qur'an and scholars of Qur'an above anything else. This is the greatest and most obvious benefit that has come from the work on this worthy endeavour.

We should always be sincere in prayer in asking for the Help of Allah and His Safety from going astray. When we approach the Qur'an, we should do so in a state of reverence, hoping to understand the revelation at a more spiritual level.

By no means have brother El Hady and I assumed that this will be the only work of its type in the genre to come. Rather, we understand and fully acknowledge that in the years to come, this rendition may no longer be considered contemporary or as useful and may require either an update or a fresh effort to re-engage the minds of readers in a new environment.

This understanding is based upon the fact that languages do indeed undergo change through the course of time and language that was 'everyday' can easily become archaic as new modes of expression come into vogue.

I hope and believe, however, that this rendition will hold up just as long before any new treatment is required by either ourselves (if Allah should bless us with such a long life) or our posterity. I have put my full trust and faith that this rendition is sound and meets the requirements of an accurate representation (within the best efforts at our disposal) of a translation of what Allah revealed to the human race in His Final Book.

May Allah make us of those who truly implement His Word.

Al-Hajj Abu Ja`far Al-Hanbali

Nottingham - 2016