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THE UNIQUE INTERPRETIVE APPROACH OF SUFYAN AL-TSAURI: AN EXAMINATION OF SURAH AL-JATHIYAH

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Abstract

This study analyzes the interpretive practices of Sufyan al-Thawri in his exegesis of Quranic verses, specifically those found in Surah al-Jathiyah. The examination of Sufyan al-Thawri's approach aims to understand the interpretive methods he employed methods that fostered a style of thought accessible to a broad audience. By tracing his interpretations of the Quran, this research seeks to illuminate his process of Quranic exegesis. The study further aims to uncover the specific interpretive practices utilized by Sufyan al-Thawri, encompassing both his methodology and the intellectual framework he applied to understand the Quranic text. The findings indicate that Sufyan al-Thawri's approach is characterized by tafsir bil-ma'thur (exegesis based on transmitted tradition).

INTRODUCTION

The practice of interpretation within the study of the Quran and Tafsir (exegesis) must be understood through a scholarly lens. While not everyone is qualified to interpret the Quran, every reader should, at the very least, be able to grasp the intended meaning of its verses. Tafsir is a vital discipline in Islamic studies; it enables Muslims to gain a profound understanding of the Quran's verses and the messages contained therein. As Islamic thought and scholarship have evolved, various methods and approaches to interpreting the Quran have emerged. This study examines the interpretive practices of Sufyan al-Thawri, specifically exploring how his methodology gave rise to a style of thought that is accessible to a broad audience. By investigating Sufyan al-Thawri's approach to interpreting Quranic verses, this research sheds light on the process of Quranic exegesis. His interpretive work demonstrates an approach capable of addressing the needs of the Muslim community encompassing both theological aspects and Sharia (Islamic law).

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METHODS

The research method employed by the author is a qualitative research method—specifically, library research which focuses on the exploration and examination of existing texts, books, literature, and other scholarly works. Qualitative research produces descriptive data, encompassing statements, writings, or observable behaviors. The primary data source for this study is the *Tafsir* of Sufyan al-Thawri. Furthermore, the author adopts a historical approach and utilizes content analysis as a research method.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Biography of Sufyan Al-Tsauri

His name is Abu Abdullah bin Said bin Masruq al-Tsauri al-Kufi, al-Tsauri is a name derived from the name of one of his ancestors, namely Tsaur bin 'Abd Munah from Madhar's descendants, namely Adnani, the Bani Tsauri in Kufah are very famous for their devotion to worship and knowledge. He was born in Kufa in 97 AH, died during the Mahdi caliphate in Basrah in the month of Sha'ban in 161 AH at the age of 64 years. His father Said bin Masruq al-Tsauri was an expert on Hadith, known as tsiqqah and narrated by the author of the pole al-sittah. His mother was also a pious woman who was tsiqqah, she guided her child to actively study. He once said to his son: O my son, seek knowledge, I will provide for you with all my abilities. Al-Tsauri lived and studied in Kufah, with ulama figures, so he became an expert in the fields of Hadith, tafsir, fiqh, creed and others.

He lived in Kufa until he was more than 50 years old. The 'Abbasid caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur urged and forced him to become a judge. However, he objected, openly rejected the government and stayed away from evil. As a result, the caliph became angry with him and ordered him to be arrested. However, he had first fled from Kufa to Mecca. In 158 AH, the Caliph went on the Hajj while promising and threatening and announcing his intention to go to Mecca to kill al-Tsauri. Therefore, al-Tsauri prayed next to the Kaaba, so that al-Mansur died before entering Mecca, and the Caliph died before the Hajj season came, among the signs of al-Tsauri's karamah.

He was given the title Amir al-Mukminin in the Hadith. There are several writings about his biography, such as Sufyan al-Tsauri Amir al-Mukminin fi al-Hadis by Dr. 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud and Sufyan al-Tsauri Amir al-Mukminin fi al-Hadis by 'Abd al-Ghani al-Daqr, is number 51 in the series of Islamic scholars. Sufyan al-Tsauri became a senior scholar throughout Islamic history and had a great influence in the fields of tafsir, hadith and fiqh. As his life history is a good example for his followers.

B. Sufyan Al-Tsauri's Interpretation Method

Al-Tsauri's interpretation of bil ma'tsur does not depart from the general methods of friends and tabi'in such as Ibn Abbas' interpretation in applying his rules and Hasan al-Bashri's method. Finally, the history of tafsir ends with Sufyan al- In the works of al-Thawri, one finds a wealth of opinions and ma'thur (transmitted) accounts including the interpretations of the Companions (Sahabah) and their successors (Tabi'in) along with his own in-depth analysis and explanations. He possessed profound competence in understanding the Quran, its meanings, its exegesis (tafsir), and its legal rulings. Al-Thawri interpreted the Quran using the Quran itself, the Hadith, the opinions of the Companions and the Tabi'in, the Arabic language, and his own analytical insights.

On one occasion, al-Thawri said to his student, "Ask me about acts of worship and the Quran, for I am highly proficient in these two areas." He then took a copy of the Quran (mushaf) and began interpreting it verse by verse, never moving on to the next verse until he had fully explained the one at hand. Consequently, he authored a comprehensive book on tafsir. This work was transmitted by his close student, Abu Hudhayfah al-Nahdi (Musa ibn Mas'ud al-Nahdi al-Basri) the very person who provided shelter for al-Thawri while he was in hiding in Basra.

Abu Hudhayfah al-Nahdi did not record all of his teacher's interpretations; rather, he captured only a portion. The remainder was transmitted by other students, bringing the total number of these accounts to the thousands. These exegetical narrations from Sufyan al-Thawri can be found in various works of tafsir bi al-ma'thur (exegesis based on transmitted tradition), such as those by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Mardawayh, al-Suyuti, and others.

C. An Example of Exegesis in Surah Al-Jathiyah

Surah Al-Jathiyah is the 45th surah of the Quran. It is classified as a Makki surah (revealed

in Makkah) and consists of 37 verses. The name "Al-Jathiyah" means "the kneeling one," referring to the depiction of human beings on the Day of Judgment, kneeling before Allah to undergo the reckoning (hisab).

سورة الجاثية

– ١٦ : ١ : ٨٨٩

سفيان عن عبد بن عمرو (في) قوله ❁ وسخر لكم ما في السماوات وما في الأرض جميعًا منه ❁ قال: الخلق من خمسة: من ر ونور وظلمة وماء وتراب (١) (الآية ١٣)

(No. 889): From Sufyān, from 'Abdullāh bin 'Amr regarding His words: "And He subjected to you everything that is in the heavens and everything that is on the earth." He said: Creatures were created from five elements: fire, light, darkness, water and earth.
(QS. Al-Jāthiyah: 13). Verse 13 emphasizes Allah's power in creating and subduing nature, while the tafsir history adds perspective on the elements of creation.

– ٢ : ١ : ٨٩٠

سفيان عن جعفر (٢) عن سعيد بن جبير ❁ لَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ ۖ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ ❁ قال: كانوا يعبدون الحجر، فإذا رأوا حجرًا أحسن منه، ألقوه وأخذوا الآخر (٣) (الآية ٢٣)

(No. 890): From Sufyān, from Ja'far, from Sa'īd bin Jubair regarding the words of Allah: "Have you seen anyone who makes his desires his god?" He said: Previously they worshiped stones. If they see another better stone, they leave the first one and take another. (QS. Al-Jāthiyah: 23). Verse 23 criticizes the attitude of following one's desires, which in practice is seen in the worship of idols which change according to human desires, of which the practice of worshiping idols here is an example of stones.

(١) جاء هذا الأثر لأصل في سورة الزخرف رقم ١٦، وقال السيوطي في الدر ٣٤/٦: أخرج عبد الرزاق وعبد بن حميد وابن المنذر، والحاكم في المستدرك ٥٣/٤، وصححه، والبيهقي في الأسماء والصفات ٧٧٩/٢ عن طاوس، قال: جاء رجل إلى عبد بن عمرو بن العاص، فسأله: مم خلق الخلق؟ قال: من الماء والنور والظلمة والريح والتراب، وروى ابن أبي حاتم عن أبيه عن عمرو عن عاصم عن سعيد بن جبير قال: قال رجل لعبد بن عمرو: مم خلق الخلق؟ قال: من النور والنار والظلمة والريح والتراب، قال: رأيت ابن عباس فسألته، فقال: مثل ذلك، قال ابن كثير ١٦٩/٤: هذا أثر غريب، وفيه نكارة، يراجع الشوكاني ٥/٥

This narration originally appeared in Surah Az-Zukhruf verse 16. As-Suyuti said in Ad-Durr 6/34: Narrated by Abd ar-Razzaq, Abd ibn Humayd, Ibnu al-Mundhir, and al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak 4/53 which was agreed upon and by al-Bayhaqi in Al-Asma' wa As-Sifat 779/2. From Tawus, who said: A man came to Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As and asked him, "From what was creation created?" He answered, "From water, light, darkness, wind and dust." Ibn Abi Hatim narrated from his father, from Amr, from Asim, from Saeed ibn Jubayr, who said: A man asked Abdullah ibn Amr, "From what was creation created?" He answered, "From light, fire, darkness, wind and dust." He said, "I saw Ibn Abbas and asked him, and he said the same thing." Ibn Kathir said (4/169): This is a strange narration, and contains something that is questionable. See al-Shawkani (5/5).

(٢) هو ابن أبي إ س كما في المستدرك ٤٥٣/٢، وهو أبو بشر بن أبي وحشية، ثقة. من أثبت الناس في سعيد بن جبير. وضعفه شعبة في حديث سالم ومجاهد. من الخامسة. من رواة الستة تقريبًا.

He was Ibn Abi Iyas, as mentioned in al-Mustadrak 2/453. He is Abu Bishr ibn Abi Wahshiyyat, the trusted one. He is one of the most reliable narrators of the hadith of Sa'id ibn Jubair. Shu'ba considered him weak in the hadith of Salim and Mujahid, and he was approximately the fifth of six narrators

(٣) وروى الطبري ٨٣/٢٥ بسنده عن سعيد، قال: كانت قريش تعبد الحجر، وهو حجر أبيض، حينًا من الدهر، فإذا وجدوا

ما هو أحسن منه، طرحوا الأول وعبدوا الآخر، فأنزل الآية، وأخرج الحاكم بسنده عن جعفر بن إ س عن سعيد بن جبير عن ابن عباس، قال: كان الرجل من العرب يعبد الحجر، فإذا وجد أحسن منه، أخذه وألقى الآخر، فأنزل ، وكذا أخرجه النسائي وابن المنذر وابن مردويه عن ابن عباس كما في الدر ٣٥/٦، وليراجع المعلم ١٢/١٢، وفيه قال عكرمة كما في الطبري ٧٨/٥

Al-Tabari (83/25) narrated with his sanad from Sa'id, who said: "The Quraysh used to worship a stone, a white stone, for a while. If they found something better, they would throw away the first one and worship another. So Allah revealed this verse." Al-Hakim also narrated with his sanad from Ja'far ibn Iyas, from Sa'id ibn Jubair, from Ibn Abbas, who said: "An Arab man used to worship a stone. If he found something better, he would take it and throw away the others. So Allah revealed this verse." An-Nasa'i, Ibn Al-Mundhir, and Ibn Mardawayh also narrated it from Ibn Abbas, as mentioned in Ad-Durr (35/6). See also Al-Mu'allim (12/12), where 'Ikrimah said, as mentioned in At-Tabari (78/5).

CONCLUSION

His name is Abu Abdullah bin Said bin Masruq al-Tsauri al-Kufi, al-Tsauri is a name derived from the name of one of his ancestors, namely Tsaur bin 'Abd Munah from Madhar's descendants, namely Adnani, the Bani Tsauri in Kufah are very famous for their devotion to worship and knowledge. He was given the title Amir al-Mukminin in the Hadith. Al-Tsauri's interpretation of bil ma'tsur does not depart from the general methods of friends and tabi'in such as Ibn Abbas' interpretation in applying his rules and Hasan al-Bashri's method. Finally, the history of tafsir ends with Sufyan al-Tsauri, and you can see in it the majority of Ma'tsur's opinions and narrations in tafsir sahib and tabi'in, their in-depth explanations and explanations. According to Sufyan al-Tsauri's interpretation, creatures were created from five elements: fire, light, darkness, water and earth. Regarding faith, in the past they worshiped stones. If they see another better stone, they leave the first one and take another.

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