The Ibāḍī Approach to the Methodology of Qur'anic Exegesis

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Abstract

In recent times, research on the Ibāḍī tradition by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars has increased, but has not yet shed light on the wider significance of this tradition. While the primary focus of researchers has been on the Ibāḍī tradition as a school of thought, its important contribution to various Islamic disciplines is still neglected. For this reason, there is a serious need for a comprehensive study of the Ibāḍī works on Islam, especially as new manuscripts are continually being discovered. When we look at Ibāḍī Islamic literature in general and compare Ibāḍī jurisprudence and theology, we realise that the poorest and most unexplored field of study consists of the Ibāḍī works on exegesis (*tafsīr*). The once inaccessible and insufficient amount of Ibāḍī sources and materials may have accounted for this lack of interest; however, today, materials related to Ibāḍī exegesis and understanding are becoming available. In this article, we focus on the methodology of Qur'anic exegesis with reference to commentators from the Ibāḍī tradition. As far as we know, this paper is a first in this field of research, and will discuss the primary features of the Ibāḍī method, its similarities to and differences from other exegetical approaches, and its original contributions.

Key words: Exegesis, exegetes, Ibāḍīs, tradition, methodology

1. Introduction

An examination of the major works of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* (methodology of Qur'anic exegesis) recommended for students at the Islamic Studies Institute in Muscat/ Oman, reveals that there is not a single source written by Ibāḍī scholar.[1]

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[1] Six books are listed; they are by Mannāʿ Qaṭṭān, Ghāzī ʿInāyat, Rushdī ʿUlyān, Ibrāhīm Zayd al-Kaylānī, and Suyūṭī (See Salṭanatu ʿUmmān: Maʿhad al-ʿUlūm al-Sharʿiyyati, *al-Nizām al-Akādamī wa al-Khuṭat al-Dirāsiyyat*, al-ʿĀmm al-Dirāsī 1430-1/2009-2010, 86).

This does not mean that Ibāḍī scholars have never dealt with the issues of *uṣūl al-tafsīr*; there are many juristic and theological literatures where Ibāḍīs address these issues in detail and major Ibāḍī exegesis can be considered an important source for this discipline. In brief, in this article we will consider the nature of the Qur'an and revelation, the collection of the Qur'an, some important articles of the *uṣūl al-tafsīr* such as *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasion of revelation), the notion of *isrā'īliyyāt, naskh* (abrogation), and *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*. In doing so, we frequently pay attention to the distinguishing features of Ibāḍī *uṣūl*. It should be noted that although we try to cover both classical and modern Ibāḍī works, we will not include the history of the Ibāḍī school and other secondary discussions.

2. Ibāḍī perceptions of the revelation and the Qur'an

Under this section, we concentrate on the question of how Ibāḍīs understand the nature of the Qur'anic revelation, especially the notion of the created or uncreated state of the Qur'an, its collection and ordering, and the issues of variant readings and the seven letters (*aḥruf al-sab'a*).

2.1. Khalq al-qur'ān

This topic has a strong relationship with the Ibāḍī understanding of the notion of *tanzīh* (God's transcendence), and therefore many Ibāḍī scholars give prime importance to the issue of *khalq al-qur'ān*. 'Alī Yaḥyā Ma'mar, who deals with this issue under the title of *al-qur'ān makhlūqun aw qadīmun*, notes that there was a very hot debate on this topic, some even claiming that the Qur'an written in the *Muṣḥaf* is uncreated,[2] whereas others deny the existence of the attribute of *kalām*. In addition, he says that there are also scholars whose view can be located on a continuum between these two extreme opinions. According to Ma'mar, Ibāḍīs are very close to the Sunni understanding of this issue because they do not deny the attribute of *kalām* and consider it an attribute of God's essence similar to other attributes such as *sam'* (hearing), *baṣar* (seeing), and *'ilm* (knowledge).[3]

Shaqsī narrates that when the early Ibāḍī scholars were asked about this question, their response was to say that 'neither created nor uncreated, the Qur'an is revealed by

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[2] This criticism is directed at Ḥanbalite scholars. See Sa'īd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī, *'Ajwibat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Khalīlī*, Beirut 2011, I.175).

[3] Ma'mar mentions that Khatīb al-Baghdādī, who is transmitting from Abū Yūsuf with various chains of transmitters, holds the view that Abū Ḥanīfa says that the Qur'an is created. Furthermore, he also notes that Imām Māturīdī used the word *muḥdath* instead of *makhlūq*. Interestingly, Ma'mar believes that Abū Ḥanīfa thinks similarly to the Ibāḍīs whereas Abū al-Naḍr al-Ummānī, an Ibāḍī scholar, strongly refuted the views of those who accept that the Qur'an is created. ('Alī Yaḥyā Ma'mar, *al-Ibāḍiyya bayna al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya 'inda Kitāb al-Maqālāt fī al-Qadīm wa al-Ḥadīth*, Ummān: Wuzārat al-Turāth al-Qawmī wa al-Thaqāfī 1992, I.290-1).

God'.[4] Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī, however, draws attention to the nuance in the usage of this expression and says that 'it is permissible to say that the Qur'an is the word of God, which is uncreated' but it is not allowed to say baldly 'the Qur'an is uncreated'.[5] In addition, Shaqsī and Sheikh Aḥmad Khalīlī note that Ibāḍī scholars in Oman during the classical period came together in Sīb (Damā) to prevent people from unforseen quarrelling and decided not to indulge in this discussion.[6] Like many Ibāḍī scholars, Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī and Sheikh Aḥmad Khalīlī think that this dispute does not touch the essence of the religion (*ʾuṣūl*) but is linguistic (*lafẓī*). For them, the reason people are so confused on this issue stems from their mixing the notion of *kalām nafsī* (internal speech) with the Qur'an or putting the Qur'an at the same level as the eternal attributes of God such as *ʿilm* and *kalām*.[7] ʾAṭfayyish (d.1332/1914), followed by Sheikh Khalīlī (b.1943), place great emphasis on not confusing the existence of *kalām nafsī* in the human being with the *kalām nafsī* of God. Both scholars agree that this technical term (*kalām nafsī*) belongs to the ʾAshʿarites and there is no clear evidence for it in the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition.[8]

It is important to note that Ibāḍīs make a distinction between the attributes of *dhāt* (essence),[9] which they consider nominal, *ʾitibārī*, and the actual attributes, *fiʾlī*. According to Ibāḍīs, the misunderstanding of the notion of the uncreatedness of the

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[4] Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Tālibīn wa Balāgh al-Rāghibīn*, (ed) Sālim b. Ḥamd al-Harisī, Ummān: Wuzārat al-Turathi al-Qavmī nd I.204.

[5] Saʾīd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī, *Ajwibat al-Muḥaqqiq*, I.171. For a more detailed discussion see Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Kindī, *Bayān al-Sharʿ*, Ummān: Wuzārat al-Turathi al-Qavmī 1982, I.179-183.

[6] Shaqsī narrates that Imām Muhannā encouraged the people around him to show hardness towards those who say that the Qur'an is created. Shaqsī also brings the notions of *walāyah* and *baraʾāh* (friendship and non-friendship) to discussion of this topic. Briefly, whoever keeps silent about this discussion is treated as being in the circle of *walāyah*, whereas whoever talks without recognising any limits is judged to be in the circle of *baraʾah* (Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Tālibīn*, I.204-5, 215). Sheikh Khalīlī holds the view that this discussion entered the Muslim community later, via hypocrites and some Jews who disguised their faith and pretended to be Muslim, such as Abū Shākir al-Daysānī, and were similar to Ibn Saba' (Aḥmad Khalīlī, *al-Ḥaqq al-Dāmigh*, Masqat: al-Naḥda Pub. h.1409, 106). Outside some Ibāḍī and Shiite sources this man is not known. It is said that he was the leader of the al-Daysānī sect, had very strong *dahrī* tendencies, and was one of the leading persons who spelled out the idea of the eternity or temporarity (*ḥudūth*) of the universe. (al-Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn, *ʾIyānu al-Shīʾa*, I.46; ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥumayd al-Sālimī, *Tuḥfat al-ʿAyān bi-Sīrati Ahl ʿUmmān*, Maktabat al-Istiqama, Muscat, I.128-9; Farhāt Jaʾbirī, *al-Buʿd al-Ḥaḍārī li al-ʿAqīdat al-Ibādiyyah*, Ummān: Jāmiʾat Sultān Qābūs, 351).

[7] Saʾīd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī, *Ajwibat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Khalīlī*, I.171-3; Khalīlī, *al-Ḥaqq al-Dāmigh*, 99-105-119-125; Bayyūḍ Ibrāhīm b. ʿUmar, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurʾān*, al-Qarāra: Maṭbaʾat al-ʾArabiyya 2008, XVII.421-3.

[8] Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Wahbī ʾAṭfayyish, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān: al-Musammā Himyān al-Zād ilā Dār al-Maʿād*, ʿUmmān: Wuzārat al-Turāthi al-Qavmī, 1980, I.232, 447-8, VI.236 (1988); Khalīlī, *al-Ḥaqq al-Dāmigh*, 103.

[9] Ibāḍīs generally use the expression *dhātī ṣifat* to reject *tashbīh* (anthropomorphism) and to establish *tanzīh* (God is distant from all defects); His speech rejects deafness and inability to speak.

Qur'an derives from the ascription of the essential attribute of *kalām* to the Qur'an, while for Ibāḍīs, the Qur'an should be ascribed to the actual attributes, which are the manifestation of God's essential attributes outside His essence. Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī makes it very clear that essential attributes are not subject to change, increase or transformation, but the meaning and inferences (*madlūl*) and work/result (*athar*) of these attributes can accept the change or increase. Thus, all revealed scriptures are not derived from eternal essential attributes (neither from *kalām* nor from *'ilm*) but their *madlūlāt*. Otherwise, Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī argues, despite the presence of many change and distortion, we would have to accept that all other scriptures sent by God are eternal and exist with the essence of God.[10]

In this context we observe that Ibāḍī scholars adduces much evidence from the Qur'an and sunnah to prove the created nature of the Qur'an. A scripture, which consists of letters of the alphabet and is recited by tongues, written on pages, heard by ears, committed to memory, and sent by God via His angel to a chosen servant, can only be a revelation that God brings from nothing to existence. Furthermore, 'Aṭfayyish, Bayyūḍ (1899-1981), Sheikh Khalīlī and many other Ibāḍī scholars consider the Qur'anic expressions *j'al* (to make), *'iḥdāth* (bring to existence from nothing) and *'inzāl* (to send down) as references to the temporal and spatial dimensions of the Qur'an. Inevitably, these references indicate the created nature of the Qur'an.[11] According to Ibāḍīs, if someone calls the Qur'an created it does not mean that they deny the *kalām dhātī* or the eternity of the *'ilm* of God, but they do reject the notion of the existence of a multiplicity of eternals, *ta'addud al-qudamā*. Above all, many Ibāḍī scholars consider the concept of *naskh* (abrogation) in the Qur'an as indisputable evidence of the created nature of the Qur'an. Some go so far as to say that the occurrence of the *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* is proof of it. They also cite the extreme view of Christians about Jesus and warn Muslims not to fall into the same error. Strangely, to support his own view on this issue, Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī mentions some sayings of the Muslim mystics, whose works are not regarded very favourably in the Ibāḍī literatures.[12]

It is also worth mentioning one final piece of evidence which is used frequently by Ibāḍī scholars, namely the essential character of the *lawḥ maḥfūẓ* (protected tablet). If the tablet, where the origin of the Qur'anic revelation is kept and protected, is created, it is also safe to assume that the content of this tablet (the Qur'an) is also created.[13]

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[10] Saʿīd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī, *'Ajwibat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Khalīlī*, I.179.

[11] Some related verses are as follows: 26:5; 21:2; 12:2; 43:6. (For detailed explanation see 'Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, I.447-8; Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qur'ān*, 17.421-423; Khalīlī, *al-Ḥaqq al-Dāmigh*, 166-178).

[12] Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī asserts that there is no difference between the expressions *rūḥ Allāh* and *kalām Allāh* (referring to the Qur'an); if it is said that the Qur'an is uncreated, the mistake is like the one Christians make (Saʿīd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī, *Ajwibat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Khalīlī*, I.176).

[13] Khalīlī, *al-Ḥaqq al-Dāmigh*, 177: Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qur'ān*, 17:421-23.

Although many Ibāḍīs think that this topic is not *uṣūl* (essential part of the faith),[14] they have exerted great efforts to refute arguments for the uncreated nature of the Qur'an. We conclude this section with a quotation from Sheikh Bayyūḍ:

> This issue is a dead topic and it should remain in the depths of the books...It is good to cover up disputed issues; there is no benefit from bringing these topics to discussion as this will dismantle the community...we have to know very well where to stop; if we delve into this bottomless ocean, we will definitely drown...[15]

2.2. Jamʿ al-Qur'ān (collection of the Qur'an)

The Ibāḍī approach to the issue of the collection of the Qur'an begin with analysis of the traditional materials. At the beginning of his *Musnad*, al-Rabīʿ b. Ḥabīb includes many prophetic reports related to this topic.[16] The commentator on the *Musnad*, Sālimī, gives important information about these reports. First, he draws attention to the various meanings of the word *waḥy* (revelation),[17] and how the Prophet received the revelation.[18] However, there is no mention of any idea that the Prophet received the *waḥy* as meaning and put it into words or its current form in the Qur'anic text himself.

There is another report transmitted under the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās which is directly related to the notion of *waḥy* in the *Musnad*. This report deals with the differences between the concepts of *inzāl* (sending down all together) and *tanzīl* (sending down piece by piece). Sālimī states that the scholars of Islam have provided three different views, and the most authentic one is to say that revelation came down from *lawḥ maḥfūẓ* to the closest heaven of the earth on the night of the power, *layla al-qadr*. According to the second view, under the authority of Qurṭubī (d. 672/1272) and Muqātil b. Ḥayyān (d.150h), he says 'the Qur'an is revealed to the heaven on every night of the power, corresponding to the Prophet's years of mission (22 or 23

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[14] Khalīlī, *al-Ḥaqq al-Dāmigh*, 142.

[15] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qur'ān*, XVII.423.

[16] The first hadith of Rabī's *Musnad* is related to 'intention', which is similar to that of Bukhārī. Nevertheless, the hadith mentioned by Rabī is transmitted via the chain of *isnād* (Abū ʿAmr al-Baṣrī-Muslim b. Abū ʿUbayda-Jābir b. Zayd-Ibn ʿAbbās) and says 'the intention of the believer is better than his action'. He continues by saying that there are similar reports and then mentions the hadith of Bukhārī without noting any *isnād*. (Nūr al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥumayd al-Sālimī, *Min Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ Musnad al-Imām al-Rabīʿ b. Ḥabīb b. ʿAmr al-Farāhidī al-Uzdī*, Ummān: Maktaba al-Istiqāma nd., I.9-11).

[17] These are as follows: 'sending/ʾirsāl', 'inspiration/ʾilhām', 'command/ʾamr', 'whispering/waswasa', 'alluding/ʾīmā and indication/ʾishāra', confirmation/ʾiqrār' and finally 'Qur'anic revelation' (Sālimī, *Min Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, I.12).

[18] Sālimī gives another meaning with the formula *qīla* and says that revelation means 'secret talk' (Sālimī, *Min Sharḥ al-Jām ʿ i al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, I.12).

years). The third opinion is that the revelation began on the night of power and continued on other days and nights.[19]

When it comes to the collection of the Qur'an, we find two reports which deal with who memorised the Qur'an during the time of the Prophet and the stages of the collection of the Qur'an. Briefly, in the first report, Sālimī focuses on the meaning of the word *jamʿ* (collection) and says that although the dictionary meaning of the word is *ḍamm* (to add), in this report it refers to the people who memorised the Qur'an during the time of the Prophet.[20] It should be noted that Ibāḍīs believe that the Qur'anic verses and chapters were written (*maktūb*) during the time of the Prophet but were not put into the *muṣḥaf* in their present order. Besides this information which is compatible with the general opinion of Muslims, recent Ibāḍī scholars are also eager to rectify the common Muslim view about the materials on which the Qur'anic passages were written. In short, many contemporary Ibāḍī scholars claim that these materials were far better than as described in the classical sources.[21]

Another important argument adopted by Ibāḍī scholars in relation to this topic is that it is almost impossible to think that the Prophet left behind the Qur'an haphazardly without indicating its proper order.[22] They use both textual and pastoral evidence to prove that the community needed the Qur'an to ensure a strong religious life and therefore the content of the text would have been very well defined before the death of the Prophet. Although some of these arguments are narrowly confessional, the others are very well

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[19] Sālimī also gives some information about the revelations of other scriptures during Ramadan (Sālimī, *Min Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, I.36). Suyūṭī narrates a long report from Jābir b. Zayd, saying that the first revelation at Makkah consists of the verses of chapter ʿAlaq. He also mentions many chapters in order. Because of the existence of variations in the order of the chapters, Suyūṭī criticises Jābir's ordering. (Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fi ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān*, al-Maktaba al-Shāmila, I.27; ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAli b. Sālim, *al-ʿImam Jābir b. Zayd al-Uzdī (93/713) wa Marwiyyātuhū fī al-Tafsīr wa Ulūm al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Jordan: Jāmiʿatu Āl Bayt 2002, 124).

[20] Sālimī mentions six names (four from the Khazraj tribe and two from the Aws) who memorised the Qur'an during the time of the Prophet. He also draws attention to the others who memorised some part of the Qur'an. (Sālimī, *Min Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, I.21; Shaqṣī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.224).

[21] See Sulaymān b. ʿAlī b. ʿAmir Shuʿaylī-Marwa bint ʿAbd Allāh b. Hamdān, 'Jamʿ al-Qur'ān: Dirāsa Muqārana bayn al-ʿUhūd al-Jamʿ al-Thalāthati', 6, 14-15 (unpublished article). The writers of this article note anecdotes such as the letter of *ʾamān* (letter of protection) asked for by Surāqa and written by order of the Prophet during the migration, the charter (*wathīqa*) of Madina and letters to be sent to the political leaders around Arabia. They remind us that out of anger, the Emperor of Persia tore up the letter. If the letters had been made of bone or date palm fibre, he could not have done this. Thus they think that developed writing materials existed during the time of the Prophet. (Shuʿaylī-Marwa bint ʿAbd Allāh, 'Jamʿ al-Qur'ān', 15-16).

[22] Ibn Baraka, *Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ*, (ed.) ʿIsā al-Bārūnī, Ummān: Wuzārat al-Turāthi al-Qavmī, I.59-66; Shaqṣī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.219-226. Shaqṣī says that these issues that we have mentioned refer to the fact that (God knows best) the Qur'an was collected during the time of the Prophet (Shaqṣī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.226).

grounded in Muslim tradition. In the second report, narrated directly from the Prophet by Abū ʿUbayda (*mursal ḥadīth*), Sālimī gives detailed information about the stages of the Qur'anic collection and comments on the order of the verses and chapters. His explanation reflects the general approach of Ibāḍīs. According to Sālimī, the order of the verses and chapters in the Qur'an is *tawqīfī*, in other words made by celestial guidance. Narrating from ʿIkrima, Sālimī says that all people and jinns had come together; they could not have had the power to produce a similar order. Thus the Qur'an is miraculous not only from the perspective of its content and eloquent wording but also from the perspective of the order of its verses and chapters.[23] Sālimī argues that the Qur'anic order in the present *muṣḥaf* was exactly the same during the time of the Prophet. Nevertheless, during the life time of the Prophet this order was held in the memory of the people, whereas during the caliphates of Abū Bakr and Uthmān, this order was put in the *muṣḥaf*. The great Ibāḍī scholar Abū Yaʿqūb al-Warjilānī (d. 570/1174) states that the community of Muslims agreed upon the *muṣḥaf* of Uthmān and that whoever denies the smallest thing in this *muṣḥaf* enters into the realm of unbelief. He goes on to say that in contrast to the Torah and Gospel, God has protected the Qur'an from change, distortion and lampoon.[24] Bayyūḍ demonstratess the Ibāḍī approach in a more polemical way in trying to respond to the criticism of some orientalists. For him, the collection and ordering of the Qur'an was realised by the oral and silent consensus of the community, and therefore even the Prophet himself had no involvement in this process. Because this order comes from God, no one can change the position of a single word or verse in the Qur'an. He believes that many orientalists criticise the order of the Qur'an because of their bad intention; he also severely criticises those who follow a chronological order in their commentary.[25] In relation to the differences between the collections of Abū Bakr and Uthmān, Ibāḍī scholars reiterate classical approaches; however, some of them do not accept the reports which say that a couple of verses were found in the possession of only a one or two Madinan companions during the collection process.[26] The reason for this rejection is obvious: to prevent ordinary people from falling into doubts.

2.3. Seven letters (sabʿat aḥruf) and variant readings

Ibāḍī scholars deal with issues such as the seven letters and variant readings in the context of the *Muṣḥaf* of Abū Bakr and Uthmān. Because there are many reports about these issues, Ibāḍī scholars do not doubt their authenticity. They also provide various explanations for the meaning of these seven letters and their relationship to variant

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[23] Sālimī, *Min Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, I.3; ʾAṭfayyish says that the order of the Qur'an is exactly the same as its order in the guarded tablet, *lawḥ maḥfūz* (ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, VI/1.237).

[24] ʾAbū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf Ibrāhīm al-Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf fī Maʿrifat Uṣūl al-Fiqh wa al-Ikhtilāf*, Ummān: Wuzārat al-Turāthi al-Qavmī 1984, I.141.

[25] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qur'ān*, XI.6-12.

[26] Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.223; Shuʾaylī-Marwa bint ʿAbd Allāh, 'Jamʿ al-Qur'ān', 23.

readings. Nevertheless, they mainly give priority to only three or four opinions.[27] Some hold the view that at that time people called the variants (*qira'āt*) by a letter (*ḥarf*), but this does not mean that each *ḥarf* in the Qur'an can be read in seven different ways. Having established the relationship between the variants and the seven letters, Ibāḍī scholars state that these differences do not harm the meaning of the verses. In fact for them, the difference is not a *taḍād* (contrast) but a *taghāyur* (variation). The recitation of *wa'd-dakara ba'da 'ummatin/'amatin* is a very good illustration of this.[28] While the first reading means *ḥīn* (time) the second reading means *nisyān* (forget).

However, both suit the status of the Prophet Joseph.[29] As an extension of the variants, Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī (d.1287/1870), in response to a question raised in his circle, considers the notions of *faṣl* and *waṣl/waqf* and *'ibtidā* (stopping and beginning of the verses). Similary to their approaches to the order of the Qur'anic verses and chapters, Ibāḍī scholars' thinking on this issue is also very clear. Khalīlī, for example, says that sometimes *waqf* is good while sometimes *'ibtidā* is good. He also discusses where one may and may not stop during recitation under five categories. Although he repeats what the other experts say in this regard, the original aspect of his argument is to present the issue in strongly dogmatic language: 'I found sixteen places in the Qur'an where stopping is not allowed. If one stops at one of these places he will commit a sin and enter *kufr* (unbelief) on the basis of the consensus'.[30] At the end of this part of Rabī's *Musnad*, a report is mentioned in relation to the division between the Makkan and the Madinan chapters. On the basis of this report, Sālimī moves to another topic and says that like the order of chapters and verses, the names of the chapters are also *tawqīfī*. In addition, he gives various explanations about the name of chapters, the number of verses in each chapter, and the place where they were revealed. He also

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[27] These are as follows: seven variant readings; seven dialects belonging to big tribes; seven meanings where the form is different but the meanings are similar, such as *ta'āl* and *ḥalumma*; seven commands, such as *wa'd*, *wa'īd*, *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* (Sa'īd b. Khalfān, *Ajwibat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Khalīlī*, I.306-310; Shu'aylī-Marwa bint 'Abd Allāh, 'Jam' al-Qur'ān', 19).

[28] 12:45 'Now after all that time, of the two (prisoners), the one who had been delivered remembered (what Joseph had asked him to remember), and he said: I will inform you of its meaning, so send me forth!'

[29] Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.230-231. Qurṭubī notes that Jābir b. Zayd read the word *tuqātun* in 3:27 as *taqiyyatun*. Although it is narrated that both Mujāhid and Ḍaḥḥāk read the word like this, because of the existence of the very strong concept of *kitmān* in Ibāḍism, it is not very clear whether this reading is exegetical or theological (Qurṭubī, *al-Tafsīr li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Maktaba Shāmila, IV.57).

[30] It is not very clear what Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī means by saying this with very strong emphasis. Does he use this expression in its theological connotation, or in the context of variant readings meaning that it is a mistake to read like this? Nevertheless, the tone adopted by the writer indicates that this statement is theological. (Sa'īd b. Khalfān, *Ajwibat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Khalīlī*, I.305-321).

considers the verses revealed after the immigration even though they came down in the vicinity of Makka or some other place.[31]

Regarding foreign words in the Qur'an, Ibāḍī scholars believe that these words either had become part of the Arabic language or that Arabic had these words in common with other languages. Put another way, every single word in the Qur'an would have been known to Arabs.[32] Furthermore, some Omani scholars talk about seven or eight words in the Qur'an which can be read in the Omani dialect. It is likely that all the information related to these words derives from Sunni exegetical sources.[33]

3. ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān (disciplines of Qur'anic knowledge)

Under this subheading, we will focus on topics such as *asbāb al-nuzūl*, Qur'anic narratives, *amthāl*, *isrāʾīliyyāt*, *tanāsub*, *naskh* and *muḥkam-mutashābih*.

3.1. Asbāb al-nuzūl (occasions of revelation)

One important discussion in the modern period has concerned the reports of *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Although the literature in both classical and modern times on *asbāb al-nuzūl* is enormous, it is useful to look at the Ibāḍī literature to see how they approach this topic. It is worth noting at the beginning that Ibāḍīs have never discussed the historicity of the Qur'an in relation to *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports. There might be various reasons for this, but the most significant is that many scholars have not been aware of this lively discussion taking place in other parts of the world. Thus it is very hard to find discussion on, for example, the relationship between the text and the historical context; whether or not these reports provide a reason for the existence (*sabab al-wujūd*) of the revelation (if there is no occasion there will be no revelation (*musabbab*) etc.) and whether these reports are really reasons (*asbāb*) or just *iqtirān* (which means: although God sends the verse or passage, because of His divine wisdom His revelation comes down in connection to a particular point and issue in time). Nevertheless, Ibāḍī scholars are not merely passive narrators when faced with these reports. Especially, contemporary Ibāḍī scholars have made great efforts to find a meaningful connection between these reports and history.

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[31] Sālimī, *Min Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, I.37-41.

[32] Aḥmad b. Ḥamad al-Khalīlī, *Jawāhir al-Kur'ān: Anwār min Bayān al-Tanzīl, Tafsīr al-āyat al-Sabʿati min Sūrat āl ʿImrān, Juz Khāṣṣ*, Ummān: Maktaba al-Istiqāma 2004, 61.

[33] See. Sālim b. Ḥamūd b. Sulaymān al-Ḥārithī, *al-ʿUqūd al-Fiḍḍiyya fī Usūl al-Ibāḍiyya*, Ummān: Wuzārat al-Turāth al-Qawmī 1983, 8. Subject matter words are as follows: *al-sāiqa, nafaqān, aʿṣiru khamrān, dār al-bawār, qawmān būrā, ḥaythu aṣāb, suʿūr*. Ṭabarī (d. 310/922), Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/939), Baghawī (d. 516/1122), Rāzī (d. 606/1209), Qurṭubī (d. 672/1272), Ibn Jawzī (d.597/1201), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372), Abū Ḥayyān (d.745/1344) and ʿĀlūsī (d. 1270/1854) mention some of those words in their exegesis and attribute them to the dialect of Oman. In addition, Rāzī notes that Omanis call the grape *khamr*, and then narrates the following statement from Ḍaḥḥāk: 'The Qur'an is revealed in the dialect/language of all Arabs' (Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Maktaba Shamila, IX.39).

The sole representative of early Ibāḍī exegesis, Hūd b. Muḥakkam (d.280/893), touches upon some *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports to shed light on the historical background of the verses. He sometimes mentions different occasions for the revelation of a single verse, or vice versa. From time to time he gives information about when, whom and why these verses were revealed. It can be observed that Hūd sometimes falls into anachronism in his narration of this kind of report. For instance, in the interpretation of verse 9:107,[34] he says that the Prophet went to demolish the mosque of *Ḍirār* (dissension) after his return from the expedition to Tabūk and then built the mosque of *Qubā*.[35] It is generally accepted, however, that the Prophet built the mosque of *Qubā* when he arrived in Madina.

After Hūd, the earliest Ibāḍī exegesis is by Kindī (d. 1207/1792), who also comments on the Qur'an in the light of these reports. Because his exegesis is relatively short and he focuses more on linguistic analysis, his discussion of these reports are infrequent; the first report of *asbāb al-nuzūl* occurs on page 467 of the first volume of his exegesis. Many reports mentioned in other exegetical works in relation to verses such as 3:92[36] or 2:285-6[37] are not included in Kindī's exegesis.[38]

One important dynamic which affirms the universality of the Qur'an is the famous formula 'the specific nature of the *sabab* (occasion) does not hinder the generality of the rule' in Ibāḍī interpretation.[39] Like many other exegetes, Ibāḍī scholars strongly believe that the only way to interpret the limitless series of subsequent events in the light of the limited Qur'anic verses and to convey the message of the Qur'an to each generation is by applying this important hermeneutical rule. For instance, 'Aṭfayyish (d.1332/1914) mentions three reports in relation to the interpretation of the first verse of chapter 49.[40] One of the reports talks about the dispute of Abū Bakr and 'Umar in front of the Prophet on the identity of the messenger whom

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[34] 9.107 'Some among the hypocrites – who have adopted a mosque out of dissension and unbelief, in order to cause division among the believers, and use as an outpost to collaborate with him who before made war on God and His Messenger – will certainly swear: "We mean nothing but good (in building this mosque)," whereas God bears witness that they are surely liars'.

[35] Hūd, *Tafsir Kitabu Allahi al-Aziz*, (ed). Bihaj bin Saeed Shareefi, Dar al-Bsaer, al-Jazaer, 2005, 2/176-68

[36] 3.92 'You will never be able to attain godliness and virtue until you spend of what you love (in God's cause, or to provide sustenance for the needy). Whatever you spend, God has full knowledge of it.' The report says how the companion Abū Ṭalḥa gives his date garden as an alm in relation to this verse.

[37] There is no reference to the events of *isrā* and *mi'rāj* (night journey of the Prophet) in relation to this verse.

[38] Sa'īd b. Aḥmad al-Kindī, *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar*, (ed). Muṣṭafā b. Muḥammad Sharīfī-Muḥammad b. Mūsā Babā'ammī, Qarāra 1998, I.178; I.154.

[39] *al-'ibratu bi-'umūm al-lafẓ lā bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab*.

[40] 49.1 'O you who believe! Do not be forward in the Presence of God and His Messenger. Keep from disobedience to God in piety and reverence for Him, so that you may deserve His protection. Surely God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing'.

they will send to the tribe of Tamīm. The second report is related to some individual who sacrificed their animal on the feast day before the prayer (of sacrifice). The third report narrated by ʾAṭfayyish is related to the people during the time of the Prophet who fasted on the day of *shakk* (the last day of the month of Shʿabān). These reports are mentioned in a famous hadith collection. Having noted these reports ʾAṭfayyish says that the *sabab* (occasion) is specific but the meaning of the verse is general. For example, ʾAṭfayyish comments on verse 4:48:[41] 'this verse is revealed regarding Waḥshī, who killed Khamza, the uncle of the Prophet, and, repenting, asked forgiveness for his crime. Although the occasion of the verse is specific the meaning is general'. From time to time, he narrates many reports as occasions for a single verse without making any critical evaluation; for example, he mentions seven different reports in connection with the interpretation of verse 93:3[42] without questioning their authenticity.[43] He also makes a strong connection between a single report and two different verses, asserting that there is no obstacle to making such a connection.[44]

Ibāḍī scholars sometimes crosscheck the authenticity of the historical data with the *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports. Sālimī's observation about the place where chapters 113 and 114 were revealed is a very good illustration: 'these chapters are Madinan because the *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports narrated regarding the chapters occurred in Madina.'[45] A similar approach can be seen in the interpretation of verse 76:8.[46] ʾAṭfayyish says that when some companions gave charity to the captives of the battle of Badr some Madinan Muslims complained, saying 'we fougth against them for the sake of God and the Prophet, whereas you helped them with your charity'. And then this and the following verses were revealed. ʾAṭfayyish states that the chapter is Makkan whereas the event is Madinan, so we do not have strong evidence to authenticate this report.[47]

Recent Ibāḍī scholars' rejection of some *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports is based not only on historical anachronism but also on some dogmatic associations. If these reports are incompatible with the general outlook of the Ibāḍī creed, these scholars are quick to

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[41] 4.48 'Assuredly, God does not forgive that partners be associated with Him; less than that, He forgives to whomever He wills (whomever He has guided to repentance and righteousness, either out of His pure grace or as a result of the person's choosing repentance and righteousness by his free will). Whoever associates any partner with God has indeed fabricated a most heinous sin'.

[42] 93.3 'Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor has He become displeased with you'.

[43] Muḥammad b.Yūsuf ʾAṭfayyish, *Taysīr al-Tafsīr li al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, Ummān: Wuzārat al-Turāthi al-Qawmī 1989, XV.199-202.

[44] See Baqara 221 or Nur 3. (ʾAṭfayyish, *Taysir al-Tafsir*, 1/335-36, 9/67, 73).

[45] Sālimī, *Min Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, I.41.

[46] 76.8 'They give food, however great be their need for it, with pleasure to the destitute, and to the orphan, and to the captive…'

[47] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, (1991), VI.108-9.

criticise or reject them. Verse 2:119[48] is a very good illustration. Reports on this verse are related to the Prophet's question about the situation of his parents in the hereafter. Nevertheless, 'Aṭfayyish says 'the truth is to say that this verse was revealed about the People of the Book and other non-believers. All hadith metioning the parents of the Prophet are very weak reports.' Interestingly, after this comment, 'Aṭfayyish considers this *ikhbarī* (narrative/non-binding) verse from an *inshāʾī* (binding) perspective and says 'because of the weakness of the reports, if one keeps silent on this credal issue, namely the status of the Prophet's parents in the next world, and does not give a positive or negative view, one is not judged with *barāʾah* or *walāyah*.[49]

Ibāḍī scholars' view on the *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports is not limited to the above-mentioned issues. While they reject some reports on the basis of Arabic grammar,[50] they also engage in theological discussion and respond to their opponents via these reports.[51] Sometimes, they read *ikhbarī* verses in the context of *inshāʾī* and try to derive juristic conclusions from them. It should also be noted that some contemporary Ibāḍī scholars give priority to the textual context (*siyāq*) of the verses to decide the authenticity of these reports.[52]

3.2. Qur'anic narratives, amthāl and isrāʾīliyyāt

Qur'anic narratives consititutes more than one third of the Qur'an and they have attracted the attention of many exegetes. In the modern period there are two important issues concerning Qur'anic narratives: historical truthfulness, and their interpretation in the light of *isrāʾīliyyāt* reports. Regarding the first issue, some people who deny the historicity of these stories, or their meanings are considered to be metaphorical.[53] Ibāḍīs' approaches to the Qur'anic narratives and *amthāl* are not very different from mainstream Muslim tradition. In recent times, Ibāḍī scholars have drawn attention to the repetition of these stories rather than discussing their historical truthfulness. Sheikh Khalīlī concedes that the frequent occurrence of the same story in various chapters in the Qur'an has led many to think that these are mere repetitions; however,

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[48] 2.119' (O Messenger! Let not what they say grieve you.) Assuredly, We have sent you as a Messenger with the truth (with the truth), as a bearer of glad tidings (of prosperity in return for faith and righteousness), and as a warner (against the consequences of straying and transgression). You (carry out your duty truly and perfectly, and therefore) will not be questioned concerning the companions of the Blazing Flame.

[49] 'Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.11.

[50] The topic of *walāyah* mentioned in verse 5:55 is used as a response to Shi'ites. ('Aṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, IV.70-1).

[51] Their discussion with Kharijites regarding the repentance of a person who has committed a major sin in the context of verse 4:31 (or Furqān 68-70) is a good illustration of this. ('Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, Wuzārat al-Turāthi al-Qawmī 1993, 4/510-15, 11/469).

[52] See Sulaymān b. 'Alī b. 'Amir Shu'aylī, 'al-Siyāq wa Atharuhū fī al-Ḥukm 'alā Asbāb al-Nuzūl: Dirāsa Nazariyya wa Taṭbīqiyya, *Joural of Sharia and Islamic Studies*, Kuwait University, 90 (2012) 250-51.

[53] Said Şimşek, *Günümüz Tefsir Problemleri*, Konya: Kitap Dünyası nd., 368-9; J.M.S. Baljon, *Kuran Yorumunda Çağdaş Yönelimler*, (tr.) Şaban Ali Düzgün, Ankara: Fecr Pub. 1994, 53.

closer examination will show that there is no repetition, but each version of the story has a strong relationship to the chapters in which it occurs and clearly serves the main aim of that chapter. In addition, even the style of each narrative changes in accordance with the chapters of which they are part. Thus, for Khalīlī it is almost impossible to say that the occurrences of the same narrative in several chapters constitute repetition.[54] He says that the Qur'anic narrative is not like the stories of storytellers, therefore a sensitive reader should pay careful attention to how these narratives are presented in each chapter and for what purposes the several versions of the same story serve.[55] In brief, he says that although the Qur'anic stories concern the events that are limited by time, space, characters and communities, if one looks at different versions of the same story in different chapters and at their context, and do thorough research to understand the background of each event, the history, geography, politics, and cultural life of the time, one will see that each narrative goes beyond its limitation and says something relevant to the life of people in the modern world. In other words, these narratives have messages for all. Sheikh Bayyūḍ in his interpretation of these stories offers a very enthusiastic discourse and mainly focuses on their guidance rather than on historical details or mere literary eloquence.[56]

Shaqsī deals with this topic under a specific subheading and his general approach is markedly apologetic. Some of his explanation can be summarised as follows:

i. The Prophet sent many companions and messengers to various tribes; if the stories had not been repeated, only a limited number of the Prophets' stories would have reached them. However, the will of God is that every one of the Prophet's stories should be conveyed to these people.

ii. In some repetitions of the stories, it can be seen that the wordings are also the same. The reason for this is very simple: because the Qur'an is revealed in the Arabic language, this kind of style is in harmony with its word and sentence structure.

iii. Qur'anic repetition indicates the importance of the topic and facilitates understanding of the stories.

iv. One of the aims of this repetition is that if someone hears the story once, they cannot grasp its deep meaning, whereas if the story is repeated, they can understand it. It is like a preacher who places emphasis on certain topics by repeating them at different times.[57]

In relation to *amthāl*, Ibāḍī scholars display a similar approach. According to many scholars, *amthāl* allow people to read the narratives as if they are seeing the events with their own eyes. This helps them grasp the reality of the Qur'anic messages. In addition, it

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[54] Khalīlī, *Jawāhir al-Tafsīr*, III.6; Saʿīd b. Khalfān al-Wāʾilī, *al-Buʿd al-Ḥaḍāri li-Tafsīr al-Qurʾān ʿinda al-Ibāḍiyya*, (unpublished Ph.d thesis), Zaytūna University-Uṣūl al-Din Institute, 2008-2009, 233-4.

[55] Khalīlī, *Jawāhir al-Tafsīr*, III.6; Khalfān al-Wāʾilī, *al-Buʿd al-Ḥaḍāri*, 233-4.

[56] See Khalfān al-Wāʾilī, *al-Buʿd al-Ḥaḍāri*, 239.

[57] Shaqsī gives some examples of these articles. See Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.226-9.

instils the meaning easily in the mind. While Ḥuwwārī and Kindī very rarely deal with *amthāl*, ᵓAṭfayyish gives a detailed explanation of this topic in his *Taysīr*. Khalfān al-Wāᵓilī says that the topic of *amthāl* is best presented by Sheikh Bayyūḍ and Khalīlī.[58]

As to the Ibāḍī understanding of the notion of *isrāᵓīliyyāt*, we find that their opinion is not uniform; moreover, recent Ibāḍī scholarship is very cautious on this subject. Similarly to their Sunni counterparts, modern Ibāḍī scholars rely heavily on modern science together with the notion of prophetic immunity from sin, and they also try to avoid commenting on dogmatically problematic *isrāᵓīliyyāt* narratives. Nonetheless, if they think that these reports contribute to the understanding of the verses, they do not completely disregard them but find a way to benefit from their usage. If we summarise in the words of Salīm al-ᶜĀṣimī, we can say that *isrāᵓīliyyāt* cannot be used for *iᶜtiqād* (credal issues) but may be used for *ᵓistishhād* (to support and bring evidence).[59]

Sheikh Khalīlī is very sensitive concerning this kind of report and says that early exegetes who used *isrāᵓīliyyāt* extensively are tolerated today or at least their position is understandable, but today's commentators should not be tolerated if they use *isrāᵓīliyyāt*. His rationale is religiously motivated: ᶜisrāᵓīliyyāt reports should not be tolerated because these reports, which go against the data of modern science, logic, the Qurᵓan and the prophetic tradition, do more damage to Islam than one might expect.[60] In line with Muhammad Abduh, Sheikh Khalīlī here expresses his dissatisfaction with the frequent usage of these reports in exegesis. Elsewhere, he mentions some scholars who are very attached to these reports and says that their works smell of *isrāᵓīliyyāt*, *rāᵓihat al-isrāᵓīliyyāt*. He goes so far as to criticise ᵓAṭfayyish for his excessive usage of these reports in his commentary *Himyān*, although generally Khalīlī has great respect for him.[61]

Bayyūḍ shares Khalīlī's sensitivity on this subject. He says that because these reports come from the Jews, people have thought that they were authentic, but they have only spoiled the vision of Muslims and have transmitted diseases to exegesis. For Bayyūḍ, the only cure for these diseases is to avoid them and leave them to the scholars.[62] Bayyūḍ rejects many reports in his exegesis by labelling them as *ᵓakādhīb al-isrāᵓīliyyāt, al-ḥurāfāt wa al-asāṭīr al-isrāᵓīliyyāt, ḥirāf, bāṭil* and so on. For instance, he severely criticises the narratives about Satan's entrance into paradise in the mouth of a snake,[63] and the existence of some inhabitants on the earth before Adam, because of whom the Angels know that the children of Adam will cause mischief. He also condemns the opinion that the meaning of the word *khalīfa* is not the vicegerent of God but the vicegerent

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[58] Khalfān al-Wāᵓilī, *al-Buᶜd al-Ḥaḍārī*, 255-6; Khalīlī, *Jawāhir al-Tafsīr*, II.371-2.

[59] Salīm b. Saᶜīd b. Salīm al-ᶜĀṣimī, *Tafsīr al-Qurᵓān al-Karīm ᶜinda al-Ibāḍiyya min al-Qarn al-Awwal ḥattā al-Qarn al-Sādis al-Hijrī* (unpublished Ph.D thesis), Jordan: Āl Bayt University 1998, 74.

[60] Khalīlī, *Jawāhir al-Qurᵓān*, I.33.

[61] Khalīlī, *Jawāhir al-Qurᵓān*, I.33, 36.

[62] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurᵓān*, XIV.470.

[63] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurᵓān*, XV.228.

of those who lived on earth before Adam.[64] Bayyūḍ criticises all the reports about the Prophet Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, and the *hudhud* (bird) and *naml* (ant) mentioned in chapter Naml, for their illogical nature and inappropriate description of the status of the prophets. He concludes by saying 'these kinds of narratives do not concern us; God tells this story for the purpose of giving and taking. Thus every single detail outside the Qur'anic narration should be considered non-existent.'[65] From time to time, Bayyūḍ mentions these reports in order to show their nonsensical nature, weirdness and absurdity.[66] He also mentions them in order to rectify the mistakes they contain[67] and, very occasionally, he leaves the decision on the authenticity of these reports to the reader without comment. For instance, Bayyūḍ says that there are many narratives in the Bible about the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam, therefore there is a possibility of truth in these reports that are mentioned in exegesis. For him, as long as readers do not give the issue a dogmatic dimension, they are free to accept or reject the reports.[68]

ʾAṭfayyish adopts an interesting approach to *isrāʾīliyyāt* reports. In contrast to many contemporary Ibāḍī exegetes, he very frequently uses these reports in his exegesis, sometimes accepting them without raising any questions but sometimes criticising them. He is very flexible in presenting various reports about the status of Kaʿba before the creation of the earth, its building after the creation,[69] and the marriage of the Prophet with Zaynab mentioned in chapter Aḥzāb (33:37).[70] However, he is very careful when commenting on the narratives of David and Joseph and is very explicit that he has a serious dogmatic concern in relation to prophetic immunity from sin.[71] He displays a similar approach in the interpretation of verse 5:22;[72] he concludes by stating 'for us, belief in God's great blessing with prosperity and power on this community is enough, there is no need to indulge in superstitions narrated by many exegetical works.'[73] It is likely that his interest in the Qur'anic narrative was strongly influenced by his frequent usage of Thaʿlabī's (d. 427/1035) *ʿArāʾis al-Majālis*, although he calls these narratives *ʿArāʾis al-Qurʾān*. In addition, he gives prime imporance to historical and *siyar* (biography of the Prophet) sources. His five-page explanation of the battle of Badr in the interpretation of chapter ʾAnfāl is a good illustration.[74]

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[64] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurʾān*, XV.210-11.

[65] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurʾān*, VIII.60-3, 90; XV.123-4.

[66] The explanation of verse 18:18 is a very good example. (Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurʾān*, II.107-9).

[67] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurʾān*, XIV.537.

[68] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurʾān*, XV.219-20.

[69] Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Darwīsh, *Manhaj al-Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʾAṭfayyish fī Tafsīrihī Taysīr al-Tafsīr*, Jordan University, (Unpublished MA thesis) 1994, 112.

[70] ʾAṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, X.263-4.

[71] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, XIII.24-5; ʾAṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, VI.110-1, XI.191-92.

[72] 5.22 'They said: "Moses, therein live a people of exceeding strength: we cannot enter it unless they depart from it; so if they depart from it, then we will surely enter it."'

[73] ʾAṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, III.63-4.

[74] ʾAṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, IV.503-508.

In contrast to modern Ibāḍī exegesis, we do not find any critical evaluation of *isrāʾīliyyāt* reports in early Ibāḍī exegesis. For instance, the writer of the earliest Ibāḍī exegesis, Hūd b. Muḥakkam, narrates many reports from Kaʿb al-ʾAḥbār (d. 32/652) and Kalbī, who are very well known for their transmission of this kind of report.[75] Hūd is not merely a transmitter, he is also a commentator who selects from these reports.[76] One of the best examples of this selectivity is Hūd's comment on the identity of the sacrificial son of the Prophet Abraham mentioned in verse 37:107.[77] He says 'after our analysis of the reports, whether he is ʾIsmāʾīl or ʾIsḥāq, our preference is ʾIsmāʾīl'. Other earlier exegetes from whom Hūd narrates are as follows: Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687), ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d. 33/653), ʾAnas b. Mālik (d. 93/712), Saʿīd b. Musayyib (d. 105/723), Mujāhid (d. 104/722), Kalbī (d. 146/763), Ḥasan Baṣrī (d.110/728), Suddī (d. 126/744), ʿAṭā b. Abī Rabāḥ (d. 114/646), and Saʿīd b. Jubayr (d. 95/714). Since some of these names are those of pioneers in the transmission of *isrāʾīliyyāt* reports, one should not be suprised to see this kind of report in his exegesis.

Kindī, however, puts a distance between his work and this kind of report by quoting them under the formula *qīla* (it is said) or *ruwiya* (it is narrated). He sometimes states that these reports are unimportant but this does not always prevent him from narrating them in his exegesis. Details about the tree from which Adam ate or the content of the *tābūt* are two interesting examples of his approach.[78] On the other hand, in the interpretation of verse 7:145 'And We recorded for him on the tablets whatever is necessary as instruction and guidance (to follow the way to God), and as explanation for all matters. . .' Kindī briefly notes that 'these tablets are the Torah. Their features and contents can only be known by God'.[79]

Before concluding our discussion of the Ibāḍī approaches to the *isrāʾīliyyāt* reports, we would like to draw attention to an important matter dealt with by many Ibāḍī scholars in this context, namely the famous report known as *gharānīq*. Ibāḍī scholars refer to it in connection to either verse 22:52[80] or 53:19-20.[81]

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[75] Regarding verse 11:40, he says that the length of Noah's Ark is 200 *dhirāʿ* and its width is 600 *dhirāʿ*.

[76] Some examples of the expression of preferences in the exegesis of Hūd are as follows: *wa hādhā ḥaqīqa al-tafsīr, wa qawl al-ḥasan aḥabbu ilayya, wa hādhā aḥaqq al-taʾwīlayn wa awlāhumā bi al-sawāb, wa huwa al-ʿadl al-maʾkhudu bih, wa hādhā muwāfiq li qawl Mujāhid, wa al-ʿāmmatu ʿalā al-tafsīr al-awwal, wa bihī naʾkhudh wa al-qawl ʿindanā qawlu Ibn ʿAbbās, wa hādhā qawl al-ʿāmma, wa qawl Ibn ʿAbbās aʿjab ilaynā, wa qawl Abi ʿUbayda wa ʿāmmah min fuqahāʾinā.*

[77] 37.107 'And We ransomed him with a sacrifice tremendous in worth'.

[78] Kindī, *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar*, I.46, 134.

[79] Kindī, *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar*, I.451.

[80] 22.52 'Never did We send a messenger or a prophet before you but that when he recited (God's revelations to the people), satan would make insinuations (about these revelations, prompting people to misconstrue them in many wrong senses, rather than the right one). But God abrogates whatever insinuations satan may make, and then He confirms and establishes His revelations. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise'.

[81] 53.19 '(As compared to that) have you considered al-Lāt and al-ʾUzzā?'; 53:20 'And the other, the third (idol), al-Manāt: (what things are these that you concoct)?'

Although 'Aṭfayyish does not approve this anecdote he narrates it in minute detail.[82] Because it is against the fundamentals of Islam, Bayyūḍ is quick to reject this report on both rational and religious grounds. Similarly to the notion of *khalq al-qurʾān*, he is quite confident that this anecdote was introduced into Islam by Abū Shākir al-Daysānī, who wanted to destroy Islam from within. According to Bayyūḍ, the French spy Leon Rush, who pretended to be a Muslim but followed in the footsteps of al-Daysānī, did the same thing in Algeria.[83]

3.3. Tanāsub (thematic and structural unity among chapters and verses)

The order of chapters and verses in the Ibāḍī understanding is summarised above. The natural extension of this approach is reflected in the notion of *tanāsub*. Although we do not find many examples in relation to *tanāsub* in early Ibāḍī exegetical works, it is clear that since the exegesis of Kindī,[84] Ibāḍīs have paid growing attention to this topic. Vivid examples of *tanāsub* can be seen in the exegeses of 'Aṭfayyish, Bayyūḍ and Sheikh Khalīlī. For example, Bayyūḍ, regarding the relationship between the chapters Isrā and Kahf, says that Kahf comes immediately after Isrā and there are many features showing the relationship between the two.[85] Here, Bayyūḍ mentions that chapter Isrā begins with *tasbīḥ* while chapter Kahf begins with *taḥmīd* and thus they complement each other. He also notes the *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports of both chapters and remarks that besides their formal resemblances, chapters' contents are very close to each other. He reminds the reader of the concept of *rūḥ*, the narratives of the people of the cave and *Dhū al-qarnayn*. Bayyūḍ then begins to show the relationships between the two chapters verse by verse. He points out that at the end of chapter Isrā (17:105-109), some attributes and specific features of the Qurʾan are mentioned. These verses have a strong relationship with the verses mentioned at the beginning of chapter Kahf.[86] Very occasionally, he deals with those exegetes who gave information about this issue and criticises them for their failure to see real relationships between verses and chapters. Verse 18:8 from chapter Kahf is a very good illustration of this attitude,[87] Bayyūḍ says that many exegetes, even the *imām al-tafsīr*, Rāzī (d. 606/1209), take an excessively burdensome path to show *tanāsub*, whereas he himself points out very simple and easily understood relationship without indulging in any troublesome meandering.

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[82] 'Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, VIII.438-9, XIII.38.

[83] Bayyūḍ deals with this issue in his comments on chapter Ḥajj. Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurʾān*, IV.519-21.

[84] Kindī, *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar*, III.128.

[85] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurʾān*, II.7-8.

[86] Bayyūḍ, *Fī Riḥāb al-Qurʾān*, II.7-15.

[87] 18.8 'Yet, We surely reduce whatever is on it to a barren dust-heap (and will do so when the term of trial ends)'.

Similarly, Sheikh 'Aṭfayyish refers to many relationships between chapters and verses. For instance, he questions why chapter Yūsuf comes after chapter Hūd which causes, according to the prophetic tradition, bleaching of the hair of the Prophet. In his reply 'Aṭfayyish proposes that chapter Yūsuf gave solace to the Prophet, therefore (he narrates it with the formula *yuqāl*: it is being said) people in paradise will be cheered by chapters Yūsuf and Maryam (Mary).[88] Regarding the relationship between chapters Ṭūr and Najm, 'Aṭfayyish focuses on the ending of chapter Ṭūr and the beginning of chapter Najm and on the many similar words in both chapters to point out their strong formal relationship.[89] He interprets verse 17:9[90] as follows: 'Having mentioned the truths about the Torah and Moses before this verse, God praises the Qur'an for all the news, realities, goodness and law it contains.'[91] Finally, we should point out that the Ibāḍī approaches to the notion of *tanāsub* are not a reaction to Western criticism of the incoherent or disorganised nature of the Qur'an, nor do they stem from a perception that this important subject has been neglected or overlooked by the classical scholars, requiring Ibāḍīs to exert great efforts to compensate for this failure. It is safe to assume that their interest in *tanāsub* is a reflection of their understanding of the notion of the order (*tartīb*) of the chapters and verses in the Qur'an. Nevertheless, the increase of *tanāsub*-related comments in Ibāḍī exegesis in contrast to the classical works, is in tune with the tenets of modern Qur'anic exegesis. Thus one might see a possible influence of modern Qur'anic scholarship on Ibāḍī exegesis. Be that as it may, as is clearly shown in the exegesis of Bayyūḍ, Ibāḍī scholars are not passive receivers but are ready to criticise what they see as burdensome explanations.

3.4. Naskh (abrogation)

In Ibāḍī *uṣūl*, the notion of *naskh* is worth discussing. The reason for this is not merely the existence of various views but also that it is being vigorously debated in Ibāḍī scholarly circles. From the classical period to modern times, Ibāḍī scholars have discussed issues such as: the possibility of the existence of *naskh* and *'insā* (to make someone forget); the framework of its meaning; the contributions of various readings of the words (related to the notion of abrogation) to the meaning; types of *naskh*; the possibility of the abrogation of the Qur'anic verse via the prophetic tradition or vice versa; the notion of *tamakkun*[92] of the abrogated (*mansūkh*) verses; the relationship between

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[88] 'Aṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, VI.67.

[89] 'Aṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, XII.523.

[90] 17.9 'This Qur'ān surely guides (in all matters) to that which is most just and right, and gives the believers who do good, righteous deeds the glad tidings that for them there is a great reward'.

[91] 'Aṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, VII.150, See also verse 9:9 ('Aṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, IV.448); see another interesting example in *Taysīr* of surah Aḥzāb:55-6 ('Aṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, X.305).

[92] What we mean by *tamakkun* is to know whether the ruling on the abrogated verse is put into practice before the process of abrogation or not.

the famous verse of the sword (*sayf*) and many other verses abrogated via this verse; the possibility and impossibility of the *naskh* of the *ikhbārī* verses; the concepts of *takhṣīṣ, istithnā* and *badā* and their relation to the notion of *naskh*; evidence that has been used by those who accept or reject *naskh;* and finally the wisdom and importance of *naskh*. At this juncture it is important to note that recent Ibāḍī scholarship adopts an interesting approach to *naskh*: on the one hand, it makes a strong connection between *naskh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* in order to point out (in philosophical terms) the epistemological dimension of this topic, and on the other it relates the notion of *naskh* directly to the nature of the Qur'an in order to deal with it on a more ontological level. In other words, the possibility of *naskh* in the Qur'an for Ibāḍī scholars is not only a hermeneutical concept or means but also a determining factor in identifying the existential nature of the Qur'an in existence. Thus for many Ibāḍīs, the possibility of *naskh* in the Qur'an is very strong evidence against the uncreated nature of the Qur'an, together with its being a *kalām nafsī*.

Hūd talks about *naskh* in general terms and refers to the verse of *sayf* (9:5)[93] to show how many other verses are abrogated in the light of this verse. He says that, as is mentioned in chapter 87:67, the Prophet, by the will of God, is made to forget some verses (*nussiya*), or some verses are abrogated after being recited.[94] Like Hūd, Kindī deals with this issue; he follows the classical understanding in a very abbreviated form in his exegesis.[95] There is a thorough discussion of *naskh* in Sheikh ʾAṭfayyish's exegesis. In addition, there are many serious discussions on this issue in non-exegetical Ibāḍī works, thus our analysis of this topic is not limited to Ibāḍī exegesis. It is also important to note that although there are many similarities in their approaches to this topic, we also find differences and nuances among if we go deeper into the sources.

Although Ibāḍī scholars accept in principle the possibility of *naskh* in the Qur'an, they state that in fact the overwhelming majority of verses are un-abrogated whereas the number of abrogated verses is small. Ibāḍī exegesis also contains detailed information about those who do not accept the notion of *naskh* in the Qur'an and the reasons why they reject it.[96] As is well known, there are three famous verses which are used by scholars to prove the possibility of *naskh* in the Qur'an: (2:106), (16:101) and (13:39).[97]

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[93] 9.5 'Then, when the (four) sacred months are over, then (declare war on them and) kill them wherever you may come upon them, and seize them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place. Yet if they repent and (mending their ways) establish the prescribed prayer, and pay the prescribed purifying alms, let them go their way. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate'.

[94] Hūd b. Muḥakkam, *Tafsīr Kitāb Allāh al-ʿAzīz*, Beirut: Dār Gharbī al-Islāmī, 1990 I.131.

[95] Kindī, *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar*, I.74, 130, 230.

[96] Warjilānī notes that Jews and people who belong to the school of ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr, one of the senior followers, did not accept *naskh*. (Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.162). ʾAṭfayyish, however, goes into detail and names each group and individual who accepts and does not accept naskh (ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.254).

[97] 2.106 'We do not abrogate any verse or omit it (leaving it to be forgotten) but We bring one better than it or the like of it (more suited to the time and conditions in the course of perfecting the religion and completing Our favor upon you). Do you not know that God has full power over everything?'

In addition, they also bring various pieces of evidence from the prophetic tradition together with some reports which are not known outside Ibāḍī circles.[98] Ibāḍī scholars give the meanings of *naskh* as *izāla, ʾifnā, istinsākh, taḥwīl, taʾkhīr, tabdīl*, and *istiḥfāẓ*.[99] These meanings are familiar to other scholars. The Ibāḍīs' understanding of the variant readings of the words *nansakh* and *nunsihā* in 2:106 is shared by others, although some Ibāḍī scholars treat this issue with same latitude in their exegesis. For instance, Warjilānī says that besides the readings of *nansakh* and *nunsihā*, some, like ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr (d.73/692) read it as *nansāhā*. Furthermore, Warjilānī notes that ʾUbayy b. Kaʿb (d.29/649) and ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d.32/652) read it as *nunsīkahā* (we make you forget).[100] ʾAṭfayyish begins with the reading of Ibn Āmir together with many others (Abū ʿAmr, ʾUbayy, Ibn Masʿūd, Ibn ʿAbbās) and discusses the richness these different readings bring to the meaning of the verse.[101] *Tunsakh, unsakh, nunsīkahā, nunsīkumūhā, nunassīhā*, and *nansihā* can be mentioned among these variants. ʾAṭfayyish, on the basis of the reports transmitted from Ibn ʿAbbās, notes an exegetical variant (*nuʾakhkhiruhā*), which means omission from the heart.[102]

As regards the types of *naskh*, Ibāḍī scholars adopt the general view although they sometimes use different expressions to say the same thing. In short, *naskh* can only have been in operation during the time of the Prophet. The types of *naskh* are as follows: both wording (*lafẓ-tilāwah*) and ruling (*ḥukm*) are abrogated, the wording is abrogated whereas the ruling is not,[103] and the ruling is abrogated whereas the

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16.101 'When We put a revelation in place of another revelation and God knows best what He sends down – they say: "You are but a forger!" No, rather, most of them do not know'.

13.39 'God effaces what He wills, and He confirms and establishes (what He wills): with Him is the mother of the book'.

[98] The narration from Ibn Abbas in *Musnad al-Imām al-Rabīʿ b. Ḥabīb* is a very good illustration of this: 'A man asked the Prophet 'how is the Qurʾan abrogated?' In response, the Prophet said 'disappearing of the people of the Qurʾan, *ahl al-qurʾān…*' (Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.256). In addition, reports on the equal length of chapters 'Aḥzāb and Baqara, milksiblings (suckling at the breast of some other child's mother), stoning etc are mentioned as examples. (Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.169; ʾAṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, I.214-5).

[99] Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.255; ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.222-3.

[100] Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.168.

[101] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.224-5.

[102] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.225.

[103] Some Ibāḍī scholars say that the only example in relation to this classification is *rajm* (stoning). However, it has been observed that there is a clear difference between classical Ibāḍī scholars and modern ones in the interpretation of the reports on *rajm*. While the classical scholars prefer to narrate these reports without any evaluation, contemporary Ibāḍī scholars subject them to serious analysis. For instance, Sheikh ʾAṭfayyish provides detailed information about this issue. He narrates these reports mainly from Sunni scholars and questions them by asking why ʿUmar did not include *rajm* in the Qurʾan. Briefly, for him all these reports are *khabar āhād*. Despite the authenticity of the *ḥukm* (judgment), this stoning verse cannot be from the Qurʾan. He also offers psychological explanation on the basis of Suyūṭī's interpretation: 'because of the heavy expression in the verse, God has mercy upon the

wording is not. Examples of each type of *naskh* are also similar to the instances appearing in the literatures of *'ulūm al-qur'ān*.[104] It should be noted that recent Ibāḍī scholarship insists that the *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* literatures in the classical period exaggerated the occurrences of *naskh* in the Qur'an. For instance, Sheikh 'Aṭfayyish criticises some Ibāḍī scholars by saying 'scholars from Baghdad and our companions in the east (he means some Ibāḍīs in Baṣra and Oman) increased the number of *naskh*.'[105] Thus he reconsiders these so-called abrogated verses (the majority of which are abrogated by the verse of *sayf*)[106] one by one and shows that many of them are not abrogated. His main sources in this regard are Zarkashī and Suyūṭī; however, he also makes frequent references to Ghazzālī, Āmidī and some other scholars. Shaqsī, on the other hand, uses a cautious expression (God knows best) in relation to the abrogation of the verse *al-waṣiyyatu li al-wālidayn wa al-'aqrabīn* (2.180):[107] 'my view is that this verse is not abrogated. The prophetic tradition *lā waṣiyyata li-wārithīn* (there is no designation of inheritance for an heir) is put forward to explain (*bayān*) the ruling (*ḥukm*) of this verse. If one has no heir

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community and He excludes this verse from the Qur'an. ('Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.237-9). Basing his argument on linguistic analysis, Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī states that the expression *wa al-shaykh wa al-shaykhatu idhā zaniyā fa'rjumūhumā albatta* does not fit other Qur'anic verses. For him, *rajm* should be dealt with not in the context of *naskh* but in relation to *insā* (to make forget). Briefly, the literal expression of this verse is forgotten, therefore it is impossible to remember it. (Khalīlī, *Ajwibat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Khalīlī*, I.364-5). Interestingly, 'Aṭfayyish notes that the *rajm* verse used to be in chapter 'Aḥzāb and the verse is related to the report 'if the children of Adam possessed a valley full of wealth, they would want to have another is in chapter Bayyina' ('Aṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, I.214-5).

[104] Examples of the *naskh* type where the ruling is abrogated but the wording is not are as follows: 2:115 'Then, in whatever direction you turn, there is the Face of God' is abrogated by 2:149 'From wherever you go out, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque'; 2:180 'Prescribed for you, when any of you is visited by death, if he leaves behind wealth, is to make testament in favor of his parents and near relatives according to customary good and religiously approvable practice' is abrogated by the verses of inheritance (4:11-12); *najwā* (secret/private talk) in 58:12 is abrogated by following verses. (Warjilānī, *al-'Adl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.168. 'Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.230-1. Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Tālibīn*, I.268). Jābir b. Zayd, however, holds the view that this verse is not abrogated. (See Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'āy al-Qur'ān*, Muassasat al-Risāla 2000, III.387). The examples that wording is abrogated but the ruling is not are as follows: the famous verse of *rajm* and the report about the greediness of the children of Adam. Examples of the abrogation of both the ruling and the wording is the invocation for the martyrs of Bi'ri Mā'ūna and a chapter in which the companions say 'we used to read a chapter like the *musabbaḥāt* chapters (beginning with *sabbaḥa*) but we were made to forget it. 'Aṭfayyish narrates from Baghawī that when the companions did not remember this chapter, they asked the Prophet, and he told them that it was abrogated. ('Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.233).

[105] 'Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.229.

[106] 'Aṭfayyish does not believe that the famous *sayf* verse abrogates many other verses. He thinks that people mix *naskh* and *takhṣīṣ* or *istithnā* and increase the number of *naskh*. ('Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.224-32).

[107] 2.180 'Prescribed for you, when any of you is visited by death, if he leaves behind wealth, is to make testament in favor of his parents and near relatives according to customary good and religiously approvable practice – a duty for the truly God-revering, pious'.

(*wārith*), his designation of inheritance is allowed (*jā'iz*), even necessary (*wājib*)'.[108]

Another classification made by 'Aṭfayyish is as follows: the abrogation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an is *naskh* in the real sense whereas the abrogation of the earlier scriptures or their practices by the Qur'an is *naskh* in the metaphorical sense.[109] This point raises the question of how Ibāḍīs view the abrogation of the Qur'an by non-Qur'anic sources such as the prophetic tradition. This is the subject of lively debate in Ibāḍī sources, but the following are generally accepted: the abrogation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an, and by *mutawātir* or *mustafīḍ* hadith,[110] the abrogation of the hadith by the Qur'an, and by the hadith (*mutawātir* and *āḥād*).[111] Thus, Dhahabī's claim that the Ibāḍīs refused to believe that the prophetic hadith should not abrogate the Qur'an does not reflect the truth.[112] The reason why Ibāḍīs discuss this issue in great detail lies in their understanding of second half of the verse 2.106 '…We do not abrogate any verse or omit it (leaving it to be forgotten) but We bring one better than it or the like of it…' In other words, what matters is the meaning or essential character of 'better' or 'the like of it'. It is important to note that Ibāḍī scholars criticise, in the light of above-mentioned verse, those who say that a Qur'anic verse, can be abrogated only by another Qur'anic verse, and that hadith cannot and should not be 'better' or 'the like' of the Qur'an; moreover, the notion of *i'jāz* belongs to the Qur'an, not the hadith, and finally, the hadith/sunnah's function is to explain the Qur'an, therefore the explanatory tools (*sunnah*) should not abrogate what

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[108] Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.268; 'Aṭfayyish notes that some people think that this verse is abrogated by hadith or *ijmā'* but for him it is not an abrogated verse. Moreover, he talks about *mafhūm al-muwāfaqa*, *qiyās* and *naskh* in detail. ('Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.245-258).

[109] 'Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, XI.226-228

[110] A *mustafīḍ* hadith is less reliable than a *mutawātir* but stronger than an *āḥād* hadith. (Warjilānī, *al-'Adl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.171).

[111] Warjilānī, *al-'Adl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.168. Warjilānī says that the sunnah abrogates the Qur'an and vice versa. This view is also held by the majority of the companions of Abū Ḥanīfa. Examples are the same those which are seen in many exegeses such as the change of the direction from Jerusalem to Makkah and the abrogation of the hadith *lā-wasiyyata li-wārithin* by the Qur'an. (Warjilānī, *al-'Adl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.171). Ibāḍī scholars make great efforts to explain the meaning of *khayr* (better) and *mithl* (similar or same) in the verse. So the level of *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* is determined by these two words. Briefly, they say, sometimes they are equal, as with the change of direction, sometimes *nāsikh* is better and heavier (*athqal*) such as replacing āshūrā fasting with Ramaḍān, and sometimes *nāsikh* becomes easier than *mansūkh*, as in the time of the waiting period, *'iddat*. ('Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.240-1).

[112] Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, Cairo 1976, II.313; Shaqsī says 'I have found the knowledge that the majority of our people (Ibāḍīs) accept the abrogation of the sunnah by the Qur'an whereas some of our people say that the sunnah cannot abrogate the Qur'an. If this is true, most probably these people are those who follow the Baṣran scholars (Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.271). 'Aṭfayyish goes further, discussing in detail the possibility of the abrogation of the *naṣṣ* (religious text) by *qiyās*, which is based on the sunnah and the Qur'an. He also deals with the issue of whether this *qiyās* is clear (*jalī*) and hidden (*khafī*) or whether it is *ẓannī* or *qaṭ'ī*. ('Aṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.245-50).

they explain.[113] In refuting these approaches, Ibāḍī scholars have developed various arguments but generally these are similar to each other. First of all, Ibāḍīs frequently quote verses 53:3-4[114] and 59:7[115] to place extra emphasis on the authority of the Prophet. Moreover, they provide linguistic and rational arguments to elevate the status of the prophetic saying to the level of revelation. For instance, for Ibāḍīs, the meaning of *tabyīn* is *tablīgh*, therefore the function of the sunnah is not only to explain but also to convey its message, which is similar to that of the Qur'an. Regarding the superiority of the Qur'an over the sunnah, Ibāḍī scholars say that this lies not in the *lafẓ* (wording) but in the meaning or ruling.[116] They argue that if the sunnah can explain (*bayān*) and assign (*takhṣīṣ*) the Qur'an, it should be able to abrogate it too. So one should undertand the meaning of 'better' as easiness or expecting more reward rather than superiority in its essence.[117]

In his discussion of this problematic issue of Qur'anic exegesis, ʾAṭfayyish repeats what Suyūṭī argued in the classical period. He gives detailed explanations of *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*, various types of *naskh*, the relationship between *naskh* and *badā*, *takhṣīṣ* and *insā*, abrogation of the Qur'an by the sunnah,[118] and so on. ʾAṭfayyish makes an interesting deduction in relation to *naskh*, aiming to prove that the Qur'an is created,[119] and devoting a lengthy discussion to this topic in *Himyān*. He quotes from Baqillānī (d.402/1013), Ghazzālī (d.505/1111), Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī (d.543/1148), Taftazānī (d.791/1390) and Suyūṭī (d.911/1505) in his manifold analysis and tries to minimise the number of *naskh* generated by the so-called verse of *sayf*.[120]

Ibāḍīs also discuss in great detail the possibility of *naskh* in *akhbār*. Warjilānī says that in fact *naskh* happens in the *inshāʾī* verses which contain command (*ʾamr*) and prohibition (*nahy*), whereas *naskh* cannot be materialised in verses where the necessity of reward or punishment is stated. In addition, *naskh* should not exist in

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[113] Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.172, Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.267, ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.241-4.

[114] 53.3 'He does not speak on his own, out of his own desire'; 53:4 'That (which he conveys to you) is but a Revelation that is revealed to him'.

[115] 59.7 '. . .Whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it willingly; and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it. . .'.

[116] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.242-3.

[117] Having accepted the created nature of the Qur'an, ʾAṭfayyish sees no problem in the different levels of the Qur'anic verses. Citing acceptance of the differences among the prophets, who were created, he says that there can be differences among the created Qur'anic verses. (ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, Maktaba Shamila, I.470).

[118] To see the importance of the sunnah and the practice of predecessors, one should look at the critical evaluation of *mutʿah* (temporary marriage) by Sheikh ʾAṭfayyish. (See ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.212, *Taysīr*, II.301-303).

[119] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, I.232, 447-8; ʾAṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, I.151; ʾAṭfayyish makes a very strong connection between the notion of *iʿjāz* and the created nature of the Qur'an. For him, *iʿjāz* can only be found in created existences. (See, Darwīsh, *Manhaj al-Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʾAṭfayyish*, 151).

[120] To explain this issue more, he quotes a poem from Imām Buṣīrī (d.695/1296) and mentions some variant readings (ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.226).

verses that concern the knowledge of God (*maʿrifat Allāh*), permissibility (*mubāḥ* and *mandūb*) and commands that are addressed to reason (*tafakkur, tadabbur* etc.).[121] Shaqsī adopts very clear approach and rejects the possibility of *naskh* in every *ikhbārī* verse. ʾAṭfayyish says 'because of the fear of *badā* some people accuse those who accept *naskh* in *ikhbārī* verses with *kufr* (unbelief) but I do not attritube *kufr* to them. I believe there can be *naskh* in *ikhbārī* verses where the meaning of *ʾamr* and *nahy* exists'.[122] In addressing this issue he employs legalistic understandings rather than a plain hermeneutic device. He thinks that if there is no indication of a lie when the judgement of an *ikhbārī* verse changes, the ruling (*ḥukm*) of the verse can be abrogated but the wording (*lafẓ*) cannot. He quotes from the famous exegete Bayḍāwī (d.685/1286) and says that the *madlūl* of the *inshāʾī* verses, which might be changed in the future, can be abrogated.[123] To understand this topic better one should take into consideration the relationship between faith (*ʾimān*) and deed (*ʿamal*) in the Ibāḍī tradition, Ibāḍīs tend to read the Qurʾan from begining to end as an *inshāʾī* text. A similar approach can be seen in regard to the issue of *tamakkun*. *Tamakkun/imtithāl* (*jawāz al-naskh qabl al-imtithāl*) is related to the possibility of *naskh* before the practice of *mansūkh*. Many examples provided by Warjilānī and ʾAṭfayyish[124] are *ikhbārī* verses; however, both of them deal with these verses in the context of *naskh*.

Before ending this discussion, it is important to draw attention to an interesting issue which Warjilānī addresses frankly and[125] ʾAṭfayyish develops and makes more sophisticated; namely, the issue of *maṣlaḥat al-ʿibād*, the common good of the people.[126] We also find that Ibāḍī scholars, referring to the changing nature of the times and developments in the history of humanity, comment on *sine qua non* nature of the notion of *naskh*. Although they do not adopt the approaches of modern historical hermeneutics, they give prime importance to the existence of *naskh* both in

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[121] Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.163-5.

[122] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.233.

[123] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.253.

[124] Warjilānī gives as an example the halting of the sacrifice of the son of Abraham: before the prophet could fulfil God's command to sacrifice his son, God sent an animal (Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.166). Besides this example, ʾAṭfayyish gives another, together with a very interesting anecdote. ʾAṭfayyish notes that the number of prayers was reduced (abrogated) from 50 times a day to 5 times during the *miʿrāj* night without putting the 50 into practice. (ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, Maktaba Shamila, I.482, VI.245). The anecdote he mentions is as follows: 'when Abraham was instructed to be circumsised, he immediately did it. But he felt pain for a long time. When he told God about his pain, God replied to him, saying 'O Abraham, why did you not wait for my command to tell you what kind of instrument/device you can use for this task?' In his response to God, Abraham said 'O my Lord, I wanted to carry out your command as quickly as possible/*imtithālan li amrika*'. (ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, Maktaba Shamila, I.473).

[125] Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, 162.

[126] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.238.

Islamic tradition with specific emphasis, and in the relationship of the most perfect religion (Islam) with earlier religious traditions in general terms. Thus, many Ibāḍī scholars overcome the problem of *naskh* by reference to individual verses and their interpretation in the commentaries and by placing them in the broader historical context.[127]

3.5. Muḥkam and mutashābih (clear and ambiguous verses)

It is no exaggeration to say that the notions of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* constitute a decisive dynamic of Ibāḍī exegetical tradition. Because of the strong relationship between the Ibāḍī dogmas of *tanzīh* and *mutashābih*, it is evident that this issue is the main artery of Ibāḍī *ta'wīl*. Thus it is not difficult to find many separate books, from the early period of Ibāḍī history to modern times. For instance, some of Suyūṭī's narrations from Jābir b. Zayd are related to *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, and this should not be regarded as a coincidence.[128] Scholars like Hūd, Ibn Baraka and Warjilānī provide concise information about this topic; however, recent Ibāḍī scholarship takes this issue very seriously and discusses it at great length.

When we look at the Qur'an, we see that it sometimes describes itself as *muḥkam* (11:1) whereas at other times it presents itself as a *mutashābih* text (39:23). There is also another type of verse (3:7) that states that some parts of the text are *muḥkam* and the rest are *mutashābih*. The verse runs as follows:

> It is He who sent down upon thee the Book, wherein are verses clear that are the essence of the Book, and others ambiguous. As for those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow the ambiguous part, desiring dissension, and desiring its interpretation; and none knows its interpretation, save only God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say, "We believe in it; all is from our Lord"; yet none remembers, but men possessed of minds.

In his interpretation of this verse, Hūd b. Muḥakkam is content with giving the meaning of the expressions *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* on the authority of the reports narrated by Kalbī and Ibn ʿAbbās.[129] Warjilānī approaches the topic in a more scholarly fashion and categorises this disputable issue into four groups. Briefly, i. detached letters are

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[127] Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.176; ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, II.257.

[128] Shaybānī, *al-Intāj al-Ibāḍi fī ʿIlm al-Tafsīr-III*, 4. Apart from this, Jaʿd b. Khamīs al-Kharūsī's (d.1237h) *Maqālid al-Tanzīl fi Tafsīr al-Fātiḥa wa Tafsīr āyāt al-Mutāshābih* and Sheikh Abū Isḥāq ʾAṭfayyish's (d.1385h) *Taʾwīl al-Mutashābih* can be mentioned. (Shaybānī, *al-Intāj al-Ibāḍi fī ʿIlm al-Tafsīr*–XIV.1-2).

[129] In relation to verse 7:3, Hūd b. Muḥakkam states that some say that *muḥkam* here means the verse which can be acted upon and the verse of *nāsikh* which informs the readers of what is lawful and unlawful, whereas *mutashābih* applies to the verse which is not acted upon but people should believe. Then he narrates a comment of Kalbi: 'these verses are the detached letters at the beginning of some chapters'. The report narrated from Ibn Abbās says that this verse refers to *taqdīm, taʾkhīr, ʿāmm* and *khāṣṣ* (Hūd b. Muḥakkam, *Tafsîr*, VII.3).

mutashābih[130] whereas the *ikhbārī* verses which contain commands and prohibitions are *muḥkam*; ii. clear expressions are *muḥkam;* whereas some pronouns and allusive expressions that have different possible meanings are *mutashābih;* iii. clear commandments and prohibitions are *muḥkam* while the others are *mutashābih*; iv. the view of the scholars who say that the Qur'an is wholly *muḥkam* and by the same token it is also wholly *mutashābih*.[131] Interestingly, Warjilānī devotes nearly ten pages to this issue in the context of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* (literal and hidden meanings) and criticises the excessive interpretations of some *bāṭinī* groups (Mystics, Shiʿites, and Christians), giving many examples.[132] What we understand from his presentation is that the notion of *mutashābih* is a sensitive issue, for if one misses the point or misunderstands it, this will lead one to immoderate interpretation such as the exegesis of the above-mentioned groups. In Warjilānī's words, this issue is apt to cause 'one's feet to slip', *madhalla al-ʾaqdām*.[133]

Ibn Baraka deals with the distinction between *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* purely as a dynamic of interpretation. Though he does not give a detailed explanation in his *magnum opus*, he devotes an entire chapter to this issue. Having said that *muḥkam* has one meaning and there is no possibility of others, he notes the following examples of *muḥkam* verses and passages: 112:3-4, 42:11, 51:56 and 4:23. Apart from the last verse, these verses are directly related to dogmatic issues, especially the notion of *tanzīh*. As regards *mutashābih*, he says that it cannot be understood in its literal meaning, therefore one needs to read it in the light of *muḥkam*, and then mentions the following examples: 54:14, 38:75, 36:71, 35:8, 9:93 and 37:5. In the understanding of *mutashābih*, as Saʿīd b. Rashīd puts it, he follows the middle way by saying that with the exception of absolute *mutashābih*, all other types of *mutashābih* should be understood in the light of *muḥkam*.[134] Ibn Baraka's evaluation of the wisdom behind *mutashābih* is consistent with his above-mentioned approach.[135]

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[130] Muḥaqqiq Khalīlī gives a detailed explanation of the detached letters. He summarises almost every single view on this issue and concludes that this is the Qur'anic way of challenging those involved in the mystery and secret of the letters (Khalīlī, *Ajwibat al-Muḥaqqiq al-Khalīlī*, I.362-3).

[131] Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.98-100.

[132] Warjilānī, *al-ʿAdl wa al-Inṣāf*, I.101-111.

[133] In his explanation of the expression *umm al-kitāb*, Sheikh Aḥmad Khalīlī says that this issue is slippery ground and easily misunderstood. Clearly, this is not a simple exegetical issue as it is intimately related to theology (Khalīlī, *Tafsīr al-āyat al-Sabʿati*, 128).

[134] Saʿīd b. Rāshid al-Ṣawwāfī, *Manhaj Ibn Baraka fī ʿUlum al-Qurʾān wa al-Tafsīr fī Kitābihi al-Jāmiʿ*, (unpublished Ph.D thesis) Zaytuna University, Tunisia 2005-6, 184-189. There is a strong relationship between Shaqsī's explanations and Ibn Baraka's comments. Shaqsī has probably taken them from Ibn Baraka (Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.234-8).

[135] Ṣawwāfī, *Manhaj Ibn Baraka* 192. Ibn Baraka believes that the existence of *mutashābih* urges believers to use their intellect to learn more from the Qur'an. In addition, *mutashābih* differentiates between the knowlegeable and the ignorant. Thus, it is a test in the Qur'an (Ṣawwāfī, *Manhaj Ibn Baraka*, 192). Similarly, ʾAṭfayyish thinks that if the Qur'an had been a *muḥkam* Book, people would have not exerted any effort to understand it (ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, IV.14).

This topic is best reflected in, among others, the works of Quṭb ʾAṭfayyish and Sheikh Khalīlī. Both provide an immense amount of material about *muḥkam-mutashābih* by referring to the concepts of *tashbīh* and *tanzīh*. Their approaches navigate between theology and jurisprudence. Although there are a great many similarities in their approaches to the Sunni works, the examples they give show both differences and serious dogmatic sensitivities. For instance, ʾAṭfayyish in both his exegetical works (*Himyān* and *Taysīr*) deals with this issue at length, but from time to time gives conflicting information. He describes *muḥkam* as clear verses although there may be the possibility of abrogation, their meanings can be understood easily (*maʿqūl al-maʿnā*); the verses of inheritance, promising and admonishing (*waʿd* and *waʿīd*); meanings which are free from imprecision (*ʾijmāl*), possibility (*ʾiḥtimāl*) and complexity and confusion (*ʾiltibās*). He also discusses the meaning of the expression *ʾumm al-kitāb* (mother of the book). According to ʾAṭfayyish, on the one hand it means that every single verse is *umm al-kitāb;* on the other hand he treats whole Qur'an as a single sentence and says that in this sense the Qur'an is the mother of the book. Regarding *mutashābih*, he says that besides the verses whose meaning is not very clear (*mubayyin* and *sarīḥ*), *mutashābih* verses need interpretation, not because of their *ʾiltibās* and *ʾishkāl* (complexity and confusion) but because of their similarities to each other. As examples of *mutashābih*, he gives *qurūʾ* (both cleanness and period) for its different possible meanings; Qur'anic *amthāl* and narratives; *majāz* (metaphoric expressions); statements whose reason and wisdom are not known (like the number of the ritual prayers), and finally, meanings that can only be known by God.[136]

Furthermore, ʾAṭfayyish mentions the occasions of revelation of verse 3:7[137] and gives a lengthy explanation of the word *zaygh* (those in whose hearts is swerving pursue) and says that it means *mayl* (inclination) to falsehood. Regarding the identity of those people, ʾAṭfayyish mentions four groups, namely Jews, Christians of Najrān, hypocrites, and those who do not believe in resurrection.[138] Clearly, this places almost everyone apart from Muslims in the category of *ahl al-zaygh*. After this explanation he focuses on the expressions *ibtighā al-fitna* and *ibtighā ta'wīl* (seeking (to cause)

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[136] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, IV.15 (ʾAṭfayyish mentions very well-known examples in this context such as the appearance of Dajjāl, Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj etc.). Shaqsī describes *muḥkam* as *mutqināt, mufaṣṣilāt* and *mubayyināt*. Moreover, Shaqsī says that the verses which are believed and acted upon are *muḥkam* whereas the verses that are only believed in are *mutashābih*. (Shaqsī, *Manhaj al-Ṭālibīn*, I.235).

[137] These reports are related to the anecdotes which the Jews, who estimated the life span of the Muslim community on the basis of the letters mentioned at the beginning of chapter Baqara. When they heard the others, they stopped speculating about this issue. There are other reports which encourage a more cautious attitude towards *mutashābih*. For instance, the second caliph, Umar, beat someone who asked about *mutashābih* and then expelled him from Madina (ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, IV.18-9).

[138] Hūd b. Muḥakkam defines the word *zaygh* as *shakk* (doubt). Members of the Jewish community, such as Kaʿb b. al-Ashraf are meant by this word. (Hūd, *Tafsīr*, I.247).

dissension, and seeking to make the text open to arbitrary interpretation). In *Taysīr* he says that seeking to cause dissension is to turn the people away from the religion of the truth. In *Himyān*, similarly to Hūd, he says that *ibtighā al-fitna* is to wish for unbelief and polytheism.[139] The example ʾAṭfayyish provides here is interesting: to interpret the expression *yad Allāh* (the hand of God) literally is polytheism, whereas to comment on this expression as *bi-lā kayf* (i.e. accepting it as it is without questioning its nature, without asking how) is to be *fāsiq* or *fisq* (a person who commits sin openly).[140] *Ibtighā taʾwīl* is also dealt with in the context of *fitna* and considered false exegesis.

For ʾAṭfayyish, a commentator saves himself from misunderstanding by interpreting *mutashābih* in the light of *muḥkam*; this methodology allows him to crosscheck the validity of his explanation. Some of the examples mentioned by ʾAṭfayyish are as follows. *Lā tudrikuhu al-abṣār*[141] is *muḥkam* whereas *ilā rabbihā nāẓirah*[142] is *mutashābih*; since the second verse has two possibilities, one meaning 'to look at God in person' and the second is 'to expect reward from God. ʾAṭfayyish insists on reading this verse in the light of 6:103: 'Eyes comprehend Him not…'.[143] The location of the letter *waw* in 3:7, which is the sole element that can be used to solve the question of whether or not the people who are rooted in knowlege can know *mutashābih*, is a very important topic. ʾAṭfayyish inclines towards two different views in his two exegeses. In *Himyān*, he holds the view that *waw* is *ʾistiʾnāf* (a new beginning), thus these people do not know the meaning of *mutashābih*. To support this view, he transmits a report narrated by Jābir b. Zayd in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's exegesis: '*waw* does not connect the *rāsikhūn* (knowlegeable people) with the *lafẓat Allāh* (the word of Allah).[144] In addition, he also mentions an exegetical variant reading from Ibn Masʿūd and ʿĀisha to authenticate this interpretation. In *Taysīr* ʾAṭfayyish considers the letter *waw* to be an *ʾatf* (conjunction) and states that *rāsikhūn* might know the meaning of *mutashābih*.[145] Both these views are common in

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[139] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, IV.19-20; Hūd comments on the word *fitna* by narrating from Kalbī as *shirk* and from Hasan as *ḍalālat*. Hūd's interpretation of the verse 3:7 depends heavily on Kalbī. (Hūd, *Tafsīr*, I.247).

[140] The literal meaning of the expressions mentioned in other verses such as *ʿayn, janb* and *istiwā* is *shirk*. Saying *bilā kayf* about them is *fisq*.

[141] 6.103. 'Eyes comprehend Him not, but He comprehends all eyes. He is the All-Subtle (penetrating everything no matter how small), the All-Aware'.

[142] 75.23. Looking up toward their Lord.

[143] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, IV.13.

[144] ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, IV.19; Jābir b. Zayd says 'you are connecting this part and the following, but there is a proper stop here' (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsir Ibn Abī Ḥātim*, Maktaba Shamila, II.421).

[145] The reports which support this approach can be seen in the exegesis of ʾAṭfayyish. For instance, Ibn ʿAbbās says 'I am one of those who know *mutashābih*.' The report narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās states that there are three types of *mutashābih*: one is known only by God, another is known by the people who know the language, and some complicated expressions are known by *rāsikhūn* (ʾAṭfayyish, *Himyān*, IV.20-1).

the Ibāḍī understanding and Sālimī gives a detailed explanation of this in his famous work *Ṭalʿat al-Shams*.[146]

Sheikh Aḥmad Khalīlī halts his exegesis and adds a new and special volume which mainly focuses on the interpretation of verse 3:7. Having given various occasions of revelation of the verse, he concentrates on the lexical, technical and other alternative meanings of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*. He also gives detailed information about the Qur'an's being both entirely *muḥkam* and entirely *mutashābih*. Moreover, Khalīlī quotes frequently from many Sunni exegetical works to determine the meaning of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* and directs various criticisms at some classical commentators.[147] At this juncture, it is worth mentioning two of Khalīlī's examples. One is verse 39:53: 'Say: (God gives you hope): O My servants who have been wasteful (of their God-given opportunities and faculties) against (the good of) their own souls! Do not despair of God's Mercy. Surely God forgives all sins. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate'. This verse is *mutashābih*, and it can only be understood in the light of the verse 20:82: 'Yet I am surely All-Forgiving to whoever repents and believes and does good, righteous deeds, and thereafter, keeps himself on the right path'.[148] Clearly, Khalīlī's attitude towards the verse is determined by the dogma that if the committer of a major sin (*murtakibah kabīrah*) dies before repenting, they will remain in hell forever. The second example is related to the comment of Ibn Taymiyya, whom Khalīlī often criticises. Ibn Taymiyya approaches the *mutashābih* verses in the context of *ṣifat Allāh;* Khalīlī, however, states that all verses related to the *ṣifat Allāh* are absolute *muḥkam*, both their meaning and references being definitive (*qaṭʿī*); this statement demonstrates the sensitive and distinctive nature of Ibāḍī exegetical tradition.[149]

It is also safe to assume that Khalīlī does not see the concept of *mutashābih* as a static notion. He mentions the religious, theological, social, ethical, and pedagogical benefits of the existence of the *mutashābih* in the Qur'an, providing a long list. For him, *mutashābih* verses are clear evidence of the universality of the Qur'an, its potentiality to address almost every age and mileu, and finally its gradual pedagogic system in teaching faith-related issues.[150] In brief, *muḥkam* teaches the people to distinguish between right and wrong; *mutashābih* educates them and improves their thinking, reasoning, remembering (*taʾammul, tafakkur, tadhakkur*), and so on. After placing great emphasis on reason (*ʿaql*) and *dirāyah*,[151] Khalīlī also gives a detailed explanation of the position of the

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[146] Sālimī, *Ṭalʿat al-Shams*, Wuzārāt al-Turāth al-Qawmī, 1985, II.173-7.
[147] Khalīlī summarises various meanings mentioned in other exegetical works. For details see Khalīlī, *Tafsīr al-āyat al-Sabʿati*, 12-22).
[148] Khalīlī, *Tafsīr al-āyat al-Sabʿati*, 15.
[149] Khalīlī, *Tafsīr al-āyat al-Sabʿati*, 19.
[150] Khalīlī, *Tafsīr al-āyat al-Sabʿati*, 30-43.
[151] Khalīlī, *Tafsīr al-āyat al-Sabʿati*, 34, 73-4.

letter *waw*. Having summarised the advantages and disadvantages of both views (*ʿatf* and *istiʾnāf*), he prefers the opinion of Ibn ʿAṭiyya, who says that *waw* is both *ʿatf* and *istiʾnāf*. In contrast to ʾAṭfayyish, who says in one exegesis *ʿatf* and in the other *istiʾnāf*, Khalīlī, like Ibn ʿAṭiyya, notes that for each view there is a *wajh* and a *wajīh* (different dimensions).[152] Thus, Khalīlī's position in the interpretation of this verse can be considered a *via media*. According to Khalīlī, the reason why the predecessors (*salaf*) kept silent on the interpretation of the *ṣifat Allāh* lies in their great knowledge of the Qurʾan's language and their familiarity with its meaning. Therefore they did not need any kind of exegesis on this issue.[153] Khalīlī also says much about literalness and metaphor (*ḥaqīqah* and *majāz*) in the context of *mutashābih*. As in the language of the Arabs, there is *ḥaqīqah* and *majāz* in the Qurʾan. Khalīlī uses very harsh language against those who deny the existence of *majāz* in the Qurʾan, and draws on linguistic, historical and religious perspectives to prove his point.[154]

4. Conclusion

In this article we have focused on how Ibāḍīs have approached the methodology of Qurʾanic exegesis. To do so, we began with their understanding of the nature of the Qurʾan and revelation, and the features of the Qurʾanic text. We observed that Ibāḍīs are very sensitive in commenting on the order of Qurʾanic chapters and verses. Regarding the created and uncreated nature of the Qurʾan, despite some differences in details, the Ibāḍīs' view is in tune with the Muʿtazilites'. For Ibāḍīs, besides the notion of *tashbīh*, concepts such as *naskh, muḥkam-mutashābih, lawḥ al-maḥfūz,* and *waḥy* support the arguments for the created nature of the Qurʾan. Although it is possible to find the influence of both classical and modern Qurʾanic exegesis in contemporary Ibāḍī commentaries, Ibāḍī scholars generally do not venture outside the methodological framework drawn by Zarkashī and Suyūṭī. For instance, some are eager to reduce the number of abrogated verses while others raise serious criticisms of *isrāʾīliyyāt* reports. It is evident that Ibāḍī scholars are still not very familiar with the discussions about modern historical (historicity of the Qurʾan) hermeneutics currently being pursued in many Muslim circles and academia; however, on the basis of the notions of *naskh* and *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports, they discuss in detail the issue of the common good of the people (*maṣlaḥa al-ʿibād*). It is safe to assume that they are working very hard to find a way to make the Qurʾanic discourse of contemporary relevance. Nevertheless, it is still too early to see where this discussion will go.

As we have frequently indicated, the main focus of Ibāḍī methodology of Qurʾanic exegesis is *mutashābih*. They approach this topic in the light of *tashbīh* and *tanzīh* and

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[152] Khalīlī, *Tefsiruʾl-Ayetiʾs-Sabiati*, 51-60.
[153] Khalīlī, *Tefsiruʾl-Ayetiʾs-Sabiati*, 63-5.
[154] Khalīlī, *Tefsiruʾl-Ayetiʾs-Sabiati*, 90-130.

explain it within the boundaries of theology and jurisprudence rather than mere exegesis. Interestingly, the view they hold is very similar to the opinions of mainstream Sunni scholars, but the examples they give are very different: their examples serve to explicate Ibāḍī theology rather than elucidate the Qur'anic verses. Furthermore, using the notion of *mutashābih* as evidence for the universality of the Qur'an makes this notion a very active one in Ibāḍī Qur'anic hermeneutics.

It is also worth mentioning that in contrast to classical Ibāḍī exegesis, recent Ibāḍī exegetical works give prime importance to the notion of *munāsabāt* and to Qur'anic narratives, *qiṣaṣ al-qur'ān*. They place great emphasis on the historical reality of the Qur'anic narratives, and so some recent discussions which see these stories as literary texts rather than historical fact are alien to Ibāḍī thinking. Moreover, because of the strong connection between faith and action (*'imān* and *'amal*) in Ibāḍī theology, they attempt to read the Qur'an stories (*ikhbār*) from the perspective of *inshā* (binding) and try to derive a rule or law from them. Be that as it may, their methodology and comments on these issues are not devoid of apologetic explanations.

Lastly, it is worth summarising our view on the question of why Ibāḍīs have produced so little in the area of Qur'anic exegesis. According to Ibāḍī scholars, the reasons inlcude their interest in social development (they have mainly focused on the reform of society, and so they have needed more concrete disciplines such as theology and jurisprudence), political unrest (during the early formation of the Ibāḍī school, they were constantly struggling against opponents, they were under enormous pressure and so did not have time to compose exegesis; and even when they did write exegesis their audience remained small), economic strain (many Ibāḍīs were poor in the classical period and were unable to publish what they had written), and natural disasters (sources were lost in fire, flood and so on). In addition they mention that there is Ḥanafī and Mālikī jurisprudence but there is no Ḥanafī or Mālikī exegesis, thus exegetical works belong to everyone, and so Ibāḍīs have preferred to use others' exegeses instead of wasting effort on duplication.[155] When we addressed the same question to Sheikh Khalīlī, the Grand Mufti of Oman, he replied giving the above-mentioned reasons, but adding that Ibāḍīs in the classical period tended to neglect this discipline. All these explanations, including Sheikh Khalīlī's honest admission are correct, but give a partial explanation; we think it is possible to shed more light on this issue. Our explanation is that in Ibāḍī theology the relationship between *'imān* and *'amal* is very strong, and this can only be achieved through a strong sense of jurisprudence and theology rather than exegesis, although exegesis is an important part of the Islamic intellectual tradition. We would suggest that exegesis does not adequately serve the general purposes of Ibāḍī theology, and consequently the number of works in this area is very limited. Nevertheless, we have observeda rapid increase in Ibāḍī exegetical works and hope to see a methodology of exegesis appear soon.

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[155] Khalfān al-Wā'ilī, *al-Buʿd al-Ḥaḍāri*, 29, 36, 44.