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Lesson 12: The Science of the Tafsir

‘Tafsir’ is the main science of the Qur’an. All other sciences of the Qur’an are in fact parts of the science of the Tafsir of the Qur’an. In this lesson we will learn about the science of the Tafsir and its difference with the ‘Ta’wil’. We will also have glance at the most important books on the Tafsir of the Qur’an. We shall also touch on the rather new science of hermeneutics of the Qur’an, and finally we will bring to your attention some of the gems of the Ayaat of the Qur’an that must be always remembered.

Etymology of Tafsir

Arab philologists have suggested two possible roots for the term ‘Tafsir’:

1) Ibn Manzour says: Tafsir is literally from FASARA which means to make things clear. The Almighty Allah states: **"And no example or similitude do they bring, but We reveal to you the truth, and the better Tafsir (explanation) thereof."** (25:33) FASARA is the action of a physician when diagnosing a disease by looking into urine. TAFSERA is the sample of urine that physicians examine to identify a disease. MOFASSER is the physician who examines the sample. Thus, Tafsir literally means symptomatology.^{[1](#)}

2) Jorjani suggested that Tafsir is from SAFARA which means to disclose and unveil something. Travelling is called ‘Safar’ for it unveils the manners of the travellers. An unveiled woman is called ‘Saaferah’.^{[2](#)}

Whether ‘Tafsir’ is driven from SAFARA or FASARA it means to unveil and reveal the unknown. Thus, the science of Tafsir is defined "to endeavour in understanding the meanings of the Ayaat of the Qur’an as far as possible for man."^{[3](#)} In short Tafsir is the ‘interpretation’ of the Qur’an.

Why does the Qur'an need interpretation?

The Holy Qur’an is the Book of "guidance for all mankind". It is in "plain Arabic" and in the "language of people". The question, however, is why does a book which is presumably in a plain language require

interpretation and explanation?

The holy Qur'an is a Book compiled for mankind and hence contains the linguistic styles known to man. Any human language– and particularly Arabic– contain variety of rhetoric arts such as figure of speech, metaphor, and metonymy, etc. Moreover, the words and the phrases of the Qur'an although they have been clear for the people of the time of its revelation, as people are farther away from the time of its revelation, its true meaning has naturally become more obscure. Thus, the Qur'an as an ancient text like any other old text requires interpretation and explanation.

The forbidden Tafsir: Self-Opinion Interpretation

Many Prophetic narrations denounce the interpretation of the Qur'an based on self-opinion (Tafsir Ber-Ra'y). The followings are two examples of Prophetic prohibition on self-opinion interpretation:

"Whoever talks about the Qur'an without any knowledge, his sit shall be in Fire."

"Much of my concern about my Ummah after myself will be concerning a man who holds the Qur'an and places it (interprets it) in a wrong place."

The scholars have suggested different interpretations to the meaning of self-opinion interpretation. In short, every group condemns any interpretation of the Qur'an suggested by their opponents labelling it as self-opinion interpretation of the Qur'an. Surely every scholar interprets the Qur'an according to his own opinion and understanding. Does it mean no one is allowed to interpret the Qur'an? Surely not.

The prohibited self-opinion interpretation of the Qur'an can mean one of the following types of interpretation:

- 1) An interpretation of the Qur'an without any scholarly support. For instance, if someone interprets the Qur'an without being acquainted with the basic sciences necessary for understanding the Qur'an, he would interpret the Qur'an according to his own assumption.
- 2) An interpretation of the Qur'an which aims at supporting and justifying a wrong doctrine be it jurisprudential, theological, philosophical, mystical etc. A wrong doctrine is the one which is contrary to the basic teachings of Islam.

Ta'wil and its Meaning

Ta'wil is one of the key terms in the Qur'an. It is driven from 'AWALA' which means to return. The term Ta'wil is used seventeen times in the Qur'an. Seven times for the interpretation of the Qur'an– in the story of Prophet Yusuf (a.s)– and twice it is used to mean 'unveiling the wisdom behind the events'– in the story of Moses (a.s) and Khedhr (a.s) in Chapter 18. It is also used three times for the in-depth interpretation of the Qur'an.

Ta'wil according to the ancient scholars was quite synonym to the Tafsir of the Qur'an. Tabari (died in 310 A.H.) for instance called his book on the interpretation of the Qur'an "*Jaame'ul-Bayaan An Ta'wil al-Qur'an.*"

Considering the usage of the term in the Qur'an, one can quite confidently suggest that the Ta'wil of the Qur'an is the exploration of the more in-depth meaning of the Qur'an whereas the Tafsir is understanding the apparent meaning of the Qur'an. The interpretation of dreams is called Ta'wil of the dreams for it unveils a hidden meaning that is not apparent in the dream. For instance, Prophet Yusuf (a.s) in his childhood saw in a dream that eleven stars and the sun and the moon are prostrating themselves to him. More than thirty years later when his parents and brothers prostrated themselves before him in humbleness he said:

"O my father! This is the interpretation (Ta'wil) of my dream aforetime." (12: 100)

There are many examples of Ta'wil of the Qur'an in the Hadiths of Ahlul Bayt (a.s). For instance, the two seas in the Ayah ***"He has let loose the two seas meeting together" (55: 19)*** has been mentioned to mean Imam Ali (a.s) and Fatima (s.a). Also the pearl and coral coming out of them (55:22) is interpreted by Ahlul Bayt (a.s) to mean Imam Hasan (a.s) and Imam Husain (a.s).

Another example is in the Ayah 205 of Surah al-Baqarah: ***"And when he turns away his effort in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle, and Allah likes not mischief." (2:205)***

It is narrated from Ahlul Bayt (a.s) that the above Ayah is about Mo'awiyah.

The mystical interpretation of the Qur'an is also more of the Ta'wil of the Qur'an; an interpretation that does not match with the apparent text of the Qur'an. For instance, in the Tafsir presumably related to Ibn Arabi (died in 638 AH) even the jurisprudential Ayaat of the Qur'an are mystically interpreted. Ayah 6 of Surah al-Ma'idah (ch.5) which teaches the Islamic law of Wudhu and Tayammum is so interpreted: "O you who have scholarly faith! When you wake up from the dream of heedlessness and intend for the presence (of God) and real whispering and attend the Truth (God), then wash the faces of your hearts with the water of useful knowledge which is pure and purifies; the knowledge of jurisprudences, ethics and transactions which removes the obstacles of filth from the soul."

Is Ta'wil the prohibited self-opinion Interpretation of the Qur'an?

There is a profound scholarly debate as whether such hidden interpretations of the Qur'an are permissible or they are the examples of the forbidden self-interpretation of the Qur'an.

Majority of the Sunni scholars denounce such interpretation considering them the most vivid examples of interpretation of the Qur'an based on the persons whim and assumptions.

The Shi'a on the other hand believe that firstly the Ta'wil of the Qur'an –for those firmly grounded in knowledge– based on our understanding of Ayah seven in Surah Al-Imran (ch.3) is permissible. Surely, the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet (S) are the best examples of those firmly grounded in knowledge of the Qur'an and hence if the narration from them is authentic, their Ta'wil is valid and will never be the example of prohibited self-opinion interpretation of the Qur'an.

In fact, the in-depth interpretation (Ta'wil) of Ahul-Bayt (a.s) is either introducing a valid example for an Ayah (such as the application of Ayah 205 of Surah 2 on Mo'awiyah), or it is unveiling the hidden meanings of an Ayah without denying its apparent meaning.

There is a consensus amongst the scholars–be it Shi'a or Sunni– that although many Ayaat of the Qur'an were revealed concerning certain people, their applications are not limited to those people. For instance, the first addressee of 'O you who believe' in the Qur'an were the companions of the Prophet (S), yet surely it is not limited to them. Therefore, Imam Sadiq (a.s) said to Abu-Baseer: "Any Ayah in the Qur'an concerning Heaven and the people of Heaven is about us and our followers. Similarly, any Ayah in the Qur'an describing Hell and the Hell-bound people is for our opponents."

The Prophet (S) is one of the Ahul-Bayt (a.s) and hence the meaning of 'us' is the Prophet and his pure family (a.s). Surely they are the first and the best inhabitants of Heaven and so will be their followers. Thus, this is not the prohibited self-interpretation of the Qur'an.

In general, the permissibility of the Ta'wil of the Qur'an is based on two principles:

Using a term and meaning more than one meaning from it, is possible. As mentioned in the previous lesson we believe it is well possible for a speaker to use a homonym term and mean more than one meaning of it. For instance, it was possible for Romeo to mean both of the meanings of 'grave' in his words: "Tomorrow you shall find me a grave man." The hidden interpretation (Ta'wil) shall not contradict the firmly established Islamic principles.

Examples

1) The Almighty Allah states: ***"Then let man look at his food."* (80:24)**

The first meaning of the Ayah is to look at our food whilst eating. It could also mean to have an Islamic look as whether it is Halal or not. The term 'food' could also include a spiritual food; i.e. knowledge. Imam Sadiq (a.s) with regards to this hidden interpretation of the Ayah said: "It (also) means: let man look at his knowledge from whom he takes it."

2) The Almighty Allah states: ***"If anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or to spread mischief in the land– it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind."* (5:32)**

Imam Sadiq (a.s) on the Ta'wil of the Ayah said: "whoever guides a person it is as if he has brought him to life and whoever misleads a person it is as if he has killed him.

The above interpretations are in fact the permissible Ta'wil of the Qur'an without denying its Tafsir. Thus, when Fodayl Ibn Yasaar presented the above Ta'wil of Ayah 32 of Surah 5 to Imam Baqir (a.s), the Imam said: "This is the best Ta'wil of the Ayah."

The Basic Sciences necessary for the Tafsir of the Qur'an

The science of Tafsir is one of the most sensitive Islamic sciences, for the Mofassir (the interpreter) claims to have understood the meaning of the Words of God. It is for this reason that the ancient scholars would only allow the understanding the Qur'an based on the Prophetic narrations.

Nonetheless, most of the scholars agree with the scholarly interpretation of the Qur'an so far as the interpreter is well acquainted at least with the following fifteen sciences.

1. Philology (Fiqhu-Logha)

Philology is the linguistic science of studying the origin and the meanings of words. The Ayaat of the Qur'an are combination of words. The first science necessary for the interpretation of the Qur'an is the science of the origin and the root and development of Arabic words. For instance, he should be aware of the difference between the term 'Sadda' صد' (with Saad), and Sadda سد' (with Seen) or else he would fall into the common mistake of mixing the two terms.

Sadda صد' (with Saad) in Arabic means to hinder or turn away; to disorder, whereas Sadda سد' (with Seen) means to block. Satan and his followers can never block (Sadd with Seen) the Right Path though they may hinder (Sadd with Saad) the Path. The Almighty Allah states: ***"Verily, those who disbelieve and hinder (Saddu- with Saad) from the Path of Allah; they have certainly strayed far away."*** (4: 167).

2. Syntax (al-Nahw)

Syntax is studying the grammar of the sentence. Syntax plays a grave role in Arabic language. A sign of Fatha (َ) or Kasra (ِ) or Damma (ُ) can completely change the meaning of a sentence. In lesson six we mentioned a story about the significance of Arabic syntax in understanding the meaning of the Qur'an.

3. Morphology (Tasrif)

Morphology is the study of the structure and form of words, including inflection, derivation, and the formation of compounds. For instance, the past tense 'Sadda' صد' (with Saad) has two different present tense; i.e. Yasoddo (to hinder), and Yaseddo (cry aloud). The first is used many times in the Qur'an and the latter is used in Ayah 57 Surah 43.

4. Etymology (Eshteqaq)

Etymology deals with the origin and the historical development of words. For instance, the meaning of the appellation of 'Maseeh' for Prophet Jesus (a.s) would be different depending on whether it is driven from 'Seeyaha' (travelling), or 'Masaha' (to touch).

5,6,7. Rhetoric (al-Ma'ani, al-Bayan and al-Badee')

The Qur'an is the most eloquent Arabic text. To understand the rhetoric of the Qur'an one must be well acquainted with the Arabic science of rhetoric.

8. The Science of Recitations

Although mainly the Sunni scholars have paid a special attention to the science of recitations of the Qur'an, we learned in lesson six that the current recitation of the Qur'an is the only real recitation of the Qur'an. Thus, at least according to the Shi'a the science of recitation is not of much significance in understanding the Qur'an.

9. Principles of Islam

The Holy Qur'an greatly deals with the divine attributes and issues that form the foundation of Islam. The best understanding of those Ayaat depends largely on acquaintance with the principles of Islam.

10. Principles of Jurisprudence

The science of Principles of Jurisprudence is a very useful Islamic science both for understanding the jurisprudential Ayaat of the Qur'an. The semantic issues discussed in the Principles of Jurisprudence are very useful tools for understanding the Qur'an.

11. Jurisprudence (Fiqh)

About five hundred Ayaat of the Qur'an deal with jurisprudential issues. The best understanding of those Ayaat requires a good knowledge of Fiqh.

12. The Science of the context of revelation (Asbabu-Nozoul)

In lesson seven we learned about the significance of this science in understanding the Ayaat of the Qur'an.

13. The Science of Abrogation (Naskh)

The science of abrogation, especially in its ancient meaning which includes the science of clear and unclear, general and specific etc., is another necessary basic science for understanding the Qur'an. In

the previous lessons we learned about their significance.

14. The science of Hadith

Many narrations are narrated on the interpretation of the Ayaat of the Qur'an. In the ancient time, the interpretation of the Qur'an was mainly based on the narrations. Thus, it is imperative for the interpreter of the Qur'an to have a good knowledge of understanding the narrations and the methodology of analysing their meanings and authenticities.

15. A Gifted Knowledge (Elmul-Moheba)

Soyouti in definition of this type of knowledge says: "This is a knowledge that Allah grants to those who practice what they learn." The Qur'an is the book of guidance for the pious people. Thus, to understand the Qur'an one must be pious. Allah the Almighty states: ***"So be pious and Allah teaches you. And Allah is the All-Knower of each and everything."*** (2:282)

In addition to the above basic sciences, natural scientific, historic, and philosophical and many other types of knowledge help better understanding of the Qur'an. Although one must always be careful not to impose his scientific views on the Qur'an.

A Glance at the most important books of Tafsir

a. Narrative Tafsir

Early literatures on interpretations of the Qur'an were mainly based on narrations from the Prophet (S) or the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s) or the companions of the Prophet (S). The followings are some of the most famous narrative interpretation of the Qur'an:

1. Jame'ul-Bayan An Ta'wil(17) al-Qur'an (Complete Explanation on Ta'wil of the Qur'an); known as Tafsir Tabari; written by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (died in 310 A.H).

Tafsir Tabari is one of the most ancient and comprehensive books of Tafsir. It is mainly based on the narrations. Although the book is one of the very important sources on the Tafsir of the Qur'an, it contains many Israeli and fabricated narrations. For instance, on the interpretation of the first Ayah of Surah al-Nisa' (ch.4) Tabari like many other Sunni narrators narrated the Isra'eli narrations indicating that Eve was allegedly created from the left rib of Adam. The narrations of the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet (S), however, have explicitly and without any ambiguity denounce the myth.

Tabari believed in the Ash'ari school in theology. His Tafsir is compiled in thirty volumes in Arabic and some of its volumes are translated into English by brother Yahya (former John) Cooper. Another famous work of Tabari is his book on history.

2. al-Dorrul-Manthour Fil-Tafsir al-Ma'thour (Dispersed Pearls in interpretation of the Qur'an); written by Jalalu-Din Soyouti (died in 911 A.H).

Soyouti is one of the renowned Hanafi scholars. He was from Egypt and his Tafsir is solely based on narrations. This book is published in eight volumes in Arabic.

3. Tafsir Forat al-Koufi; by Forat Ibn Ibrahim Koufi. He was the contemporary of al-Kolayni died in 329 A.H.

Tafsir al-Forat is one of the most ancient Shi'a narrative books of Tafsir. It is published in one volume.

4. al-Borhan Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an (the Proof in interpretation of the Qur'an); by Sayyed Hashim al-Bahrani (died in 1107 A.H)

Al-Borhan is a Shi'a narrative Tafsir. The book is published in nine volumes; the first being an introduction to his Tafsir and the eight volumes his complete Tafsir of the Qur'an.

5. Tafsir Noor al-Thaqalayn (The Light of Two Precious Things); by Abd Ali Ibn Jom'a al-Howayzi al-Shirazi (died in 1112 A.H). This book is published in 5 volumes.

b. Theological Interpretation of the Qur'an

The best example of theological interpretation of the Qur'an is the work of Imam Fakhr al-Razi (died in 606 A.H.). His Tafsir is called "Mafatihul-Ghayb" (the keys of the unseen) or "al-Tafsir al-Kabir" (the Great Tafsir).

Razi strongly adhered to the Ash'ari school in theology and Shafe'i in jurisprudence. He is one of the renowned Sunni theologians and is well known as 'Imamul-Moshakkekin' (the leader of sceptics). His arguments are rather dialectic. Throughout his comprehensive Tafsir he takes advantage of any opportunity to prove the Ash'ari school of determinism. Although his Tafsir is a useful scholarly source, it is not a recommended text for the general public. His Tafsir is published in 32 volumes in Arabic.

c. Rhetorical Tafsir

An example of a rhetoric Tafsir is the works of al-Zamakhshari (died in 538 A.H). Al-Zamakhshari is one of the leading figures in Arabic linguistics. He named his book "al-Kashaaf An Haqaequ-Tanzil Wa Oyounel-Aqawil Fi Vojooh-Ta'wil" (the Guide on the Realities of the Revelation and the Springs of opinions in Aspects of Ta'wil).

Al-Zamakhshari belonged to the school of Mo'tazeli and practiced the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. His Tafsir is one of the best sources on rhetorical interpretation of the Qur'an. This book is published in four volumes in Arabic.

d. Mystical Tafsir

1. Kashful-Asrar (Disclosure of Secretes) by Rashidu-Din Maybodi. (lived in the 6th century).

Kashful-Asrar is one of the most ancient mystical interpretations of the Qur'an in Farsi language. The origin of this text was the work of Khaje Abdullah al-Ansari (died in 481 A.H). Maybodi endeavoured to develop and elaborate on the work of Khaje in the same rhymed prose style. This book is published in 10 volumes in Farsi.

2. Bayanu-Sa'ada Fi Maqamatel-E'bada (Description of Prosperity in the Status of Worshipping); by Soltan Muhammad Janabazi (died in 1327 A.H).

Sultan Muhammad was one of the Shi'a Sufis of Ne'matullahi order. His work is published in four big volumes in Arabic.

e. The Most Important Shi'a Tafsir

We will conclude this discussion with introducing the most important Shi'a books on the interpretation of the Qur'an. The following books are not limited to any particular field and their authors have dealt with the interpretation of the Qur'an from various aspects.

1. **al-Tebyaan Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an (An Explanation on the Interpretation of the Qur'an) by al-Shaikh al-Tousi (died in 460 A.H).**

Al-Tebyan is one of the most ancient complete interpretations of the Qur'an. The author who is one of the most renowned Shi'a scholars explains the meanings of the Ayaat from the linguistic, narrative and theological aspects. Although he benefits from the narrations in his Tafsir, unlike Tabari he analyses the authenticity of the narrations. His Tafsir also contains theological discussions when necessary, although unlike al-Razi does not indulge himself in unnecessary theological arguments. On the interpretation of the ayah 22 of Surah al-Baqarah (ch.2) he clearly disagrees with al-joba'ei and confirms that the earth is not flat.

Al-Tebyan is published in 10 volumes in Arabic.

2. **Majma'ul-Bayan (Confluence of Explanation) by Fadhl Ibn Hasan al-Tabresi.**

Al-tabresi was one of the great Shi'a scholars of the sixth century. His Tafsir is one of the best celebrated books on the interpretations of the Qur'an. The author was well acquainted with all necessary sciences for the interpretation of the Qur'an. He has compiled his work in 10 volumes in a very systematic and well organised order.

Majma'ul-Bayan has been a text book in the Shi'a seminaries for many years. My learned teacher Ayatollah Hasan Zadeh (may God prolong his life for the service of Islam) had studied the entire book

under his teacher the late Ayatollah Sha'rani.

3. al-Mizan (the Scales); by the late Allamah Tabatabai (died in 1402 A.H)

Al-Mizan is one of the most creditable Shi'a interpretations of the Qur'an in the modern time. The late Tabatabai was the most celebrated Muslim philosopher of the 20th century. Although he interpreted the Qur'an from various aspects, the most remarkable style of his work is the interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an. He asserted that he learned this style of interpretation from his teacher the late Allamah Qadhi. The interpretation of an Ayah of the Qur'an by the aid of another Ayah is the methodology of Ahlul Bayt (a.s) in interpretation of the Qur'an. For instance, the Almighty Allah states:

"It is those who believe and confuse not their belief with Zulm, for them (only) there is security and they are the guided." (6:82)

In order for us to understand the meaning of 'Zulm' in the above Ayah we shall refer to another Ayah in which Zulm is defined:

"And when Luqman said to his son when he was advising him: O my son! Join not in worship others with Allah. Verily, joining others in worship with Allah is a great Zulm." (31:13)

Although the late Tabatabai was a great philosopher, he does not indulge his readers in lengthy philosophical discussions. Nonetheless, he deals with theological and philosophical issues when necessary. In many instances he aims at rebuking the dialectic arguments posed by al-Razi. In one occasion, al-Razi puts a theological argument and claims that should the jinn and mankind get together to answer his argument they would not be able to do so.

The late Tabatabai in response to that states: There is no need for the aid of the jinn and the mankind. I can refuse your argument by myself by the Grace of the Almighty.

Al-Mizan is published in 20 volumes in Arabic. So far 12 volumes of the English translation of this work are published.

4. Tafsir Nemoune (The Exemplary Tafsir); under the auspicious supervision of Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi. (May God prolong his life)

Tafsir Nemoune is one of the most commonly read interpretations of the Qur'an. the book is compiled by ten scholars under the supervision of Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi; one of the best celebrated contemporary high jurists. The style of the book is easy to read and understand, and hence it is very useful reference for the general public as well as the scholars. It meets the needs of the modern time and attempts in responding to all the questions posed on the Qur'an.

Tafsir Nemoune is published in 27 volumes and an index in Farsi language. It is translated into Arabic and Urdu. A concise version of the book is also translated into English.

A Word from Imam Khomeini (r.a)

The late Imam Khomeini, in his introduction to his 'Explanation on the Hosts of Intellect and Ignorance', whilst appreciating the efforts of all the scholars on the interpretation of the Qur'an, asserted that the most of the interpreters of the Qur'an strayed from the main purpose of the revelation of the Qur'an. According to his eminence, indulgent in rhetorical, philosophical and historical analysis of the Qur'an will turn the readers away from the main purpose of the Qur'an. He vividly states: "What we mean is that the purpose of the Qur'an and the Hadith is purification of the intellects and the souls to obtain the highest level of monotheism. However, most of the interpreters of the Qur'an and the Hadith have paid any attention to this point, although this is a fundamental principle in the Qur'an and the Hadith."

Hermeneutics of the Qur'an

Hermeneutics is a new approach to the study of the Scriptures. It is originally a Greek name which means to translate and interpret. Peri Mermeneias meaning 'on the interpretation' is the name of one of the chapters of Aristotle's famous book 'Organon'.

The modern Hermeneutics was founded by Friedrich Schleiermacher (died in 1834); a German Protestant theologian.

Hermeneutics is defined as the methodology of interpretation of a scriptural text. Hermeneutics attempts at discovering the principles of understanding a holy text which needs interpretation.

Muslim scholars have discussed some of the issues of hermeneutics in the semantic issues of the principles of jurisprudence. Also, some of the interpreters have discussed it in the introduction of their works under the methods of understanding the Qur'an.

The controversial discussion in the hermeneutics of the Qur'an is whether the text of the Qur'an is silent and hence open to any understanding and interpretation, or the Speaker (Allah) has meant a particular meaning.

Religious pluralists insist that the Qur'an is silent and hence any understanding of the Qur'an could be valid.

There are ample examples in the Qur'an to refute the above claim. We have dealt with this claim in 'Philosophy of Religion' under the heading of 'the Grammar of Religious Language'.

Ten Selected Gems from the Holy Qur'an

To end this lesson I would like to share with you some of the most important Ayaat of the Qur'an. In my humble opinion memorising and practicing these Ayaat are the secrete keys to our prosperity both in here and in the hereafter. Although all the Ayaat of the Qur'an are unique gems, I have called them the

Gems of the Qur'an.

1. Surah al-Hamd

The first chapter of the Qur'an is the best Surah of this Holy Book according to a Prophetic narration. It is a concise version of the entire Qur'an. It is enough for the significance of this Surah that no Salaat can be every recited without it.

2. Surah Touhid (al-Ikhlās)

Chapter 112 of the Qur'an is the article of monotheism in Islam. After Surah al-Hamd, it is the most important Surah of the Qur'an. Many Prophetic narrations asserted that the recitation of this Surah equals the rewards of the recitation of the one third of the entire Qur'an.

3. Bismillah Rahman Raheem

The bismillah is the most honourable and greatest Ayah of the Qur'an. It is closer to the Greatest Name of Allah than the pupil of the eye to its white. It is enough for its significance that any action initiated without it will be defective.

4. Ayatol-Kursi

Ayah 255 of Surah al-Baqarah (ch.2) is known as Ayatul-Kursi (Kursi literally means footstool). Numerous narrations emphasise on its extra significance. The Prophet (S) said to Abu-Thar that it is the best Ayah of the Qur'an. The Greatest Name of Allah is part of this Ayah and its recitation provides miraculous protection.

5. Ayah for Monotheism in Actions

Ayah 78 of Surah al-Nisa (ch.4) specially the phrase "say: All things from Allah" is the most profound Ayah in Monotheism in Actions. Faithful attention to it is the best practical solution to many challenges of life.

6. Ayah for Taqwa

Taqwa means being dutiful and protect the self against whim and desire. Taqwa is one of the fundamental purposes of the revelation of the Qur'an. Although many Ayaat in the Qur'an emphasis on its significance, the most important one– in my opinion– is Ayaat 71 and 72 of Surah Maryam (ch.19). In these two Ayah, the Almighty Allah emphatically declares that all mankind shall pass over the Hell, but He will only save the Mottaqin (those who have gained Taqwa) from the Fire.

7. Ayah for Noble Character

Remembering and practising Ayah 34 and 35 of Surah Fosselat (ch.41) will guarantee and solve most of our family and social conflicts.

8. Ayah for Shame

The Almighty Allah in Ayah 14 of Surah al-Alaq states: ***"Knows he not that Allah does see?!"(96: 14)***

Remembering this Ayah with faith is the best prevention from the sins. It will cause man to be shameful of committing any sin in the presence of God.

9. The key to seeing hell and heaven

"Nay, had you had known with certainty, you would have surely seen the Blazing Fair."(102:5-6)

10. The most hope-giving Ayah of the Qur'an

The Almighty Allah states: ***"And verily, your Lord will give you so that you shall be well-pleased."(93:5).***

The Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s) asserted that the above Ayah is about the right of great intercession that will be granted to the holy Prophet of Islam (S) and hence it is the most hope-giving Ayah of the Qur'an.

May Allah include us in their intercession.

1. Ibn Manzour, Lisanul-Arab, vol. 10, p.261
2. Kashaf Estelahatul-Fonoun, vol.2 p.1115
3. Al-Zarqani, Manahelul-Irfan 1:470, Dezfouli; Qanoon Tafsir, p.46

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