

## AL-SABUNI'S METHODOLOGY IN INTERPRETING LEGAL QUR'ANIC VERSES: A CRITICAL STUDY OF *RAWĀ'I' AL-BAYĀN* *FĪ TAFSĪR ĀYĀT AL-AḤKĀM*

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### ABSTRACT

This research critically explores how Al-Sabuni interprets the legal verses of the Qur'an in his well-known tafsir, *Rawā'i' al-Bayān*. It addresses the challenge of understanding how the scholar integrates classical jurisprudential principles with contemporary legal and social issues in his exegetical approach. Using a qualitative methodology grounded in textual analysis, the study examines his use of linguistic tools, reliance on traditional Islamic jurisprudence, and contextual interpretation of Qur'anic legislative verses. The objective is to evaluate the distinctiveness, strengths, and limitations of the researcher's methodology and its relevance to modern contexts. The findings reveal that the author adopts a thematic and multifaceted approach, balancing two primary methods: interpretation by tradition (*tafsīr bi'l-ma'thūr*) and interpretation by reasoned opinion (*tafsīr bi'l-ra'y*). Moreover, *Rawā'i' al-Bayān* does not adhere to the sequential order of the Qur'an; rather, it selectively focuses on verses related to legal rulings (*Āyāt al-Aḥkām*). This thematic organization enhances the work's specialization, enabling readers to engage deeply with legal topics such as acts of worship, financial transactions, marriage, inheritance, and penal laws.

**Keywords:** Tafseer, Quran Legal Verses, Al-Sabuni, Rawai' Al-Bayan

### INTRODUCTION

The Holy Qur'an<sup>1</sup> stands as the foremost encompassing source of Islamic law, serving as the foundation upon which all other sources of jurisprudence are built. Within its verses lie a multitude of rulings, diverse in nature, addressing most facet of human existence. These rulings are designed to regulate the interrelationships that define a person's life: their bond with the Creator, their interactions with others, their understanding of themselves, and their

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<sup>1</sup> The word of Allah revealed to Prophet Mohammad (Pbuh) recited as a form of worship.

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engagement with the broader aspects of existence.<sup>2</sup> By adhering to the guidance provided in the Qur'an, individuals can achieve harmony in these relationships. However, neglecting or disregarding these divine instructions leads to discord, both on a personal and societal level. The Almighty underscores the consequences of such choices in the Qur'an, stating: *"Whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray nor suffer. But whoever turns away from My message - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind"* (Tāhā 20:123-124). Thus, the Qur'an remains an enduring and comprehensive source of guidance for every aspect of human life. Its rulings are remarkably diverse, covering essential areas such as worship, family relations, financial transactions, constitutional governance, international relations, public finance, and the administration of justice, including crimes and punishments. Together, these provisions form a unified framework that directs humanity toward a life of equity, morality, and justice, while fostering a society deeply rooted in divine principles.

In the realm of understanding and interpreting these legal verses, the author has made a significant contribution. Through his commendable work, *Rawai' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an*, the scholar offers valuable insights into the Qur'an's legal teachings. His exegeses not only highlight the depth of classical Islamic scholarship but also reflects his thoughtful effort to align these timeless principles with the complexities and demands of the modern world. His approach underscores the enduring relevance of the Qur'anic message in addressing contemporary challenges.

This study critically analyzes Al-Sabuni's methodology in *Rawai' al-Bayan*, exploring the principles and tools he employed in interpreting Qur'anic legal texts. It examines the consistency and effectiveness of his approach while evaluating its significance in the context of modern Islamic jurisprudence. His work stands out not only for its academic depth but also for its practical utility, addressing the challenges faced by Muslims in navigating present-day legal and ethical issues.<sup>3</sup>

The research begins by analyzing the researcher intellectual development within the academic environment that shaped his work. It investigates his exegetical methods, including his use of traditional and modern sources, linguistic and rhetorical analysis, and

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<sup>2</sup> The rulings of the Holy Qur'an are generally classified into three main categories: doctrinal, moral, and practical rulings. Doctrinal rulings concern the core beliefs a Muslim must hold, such as faith in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day. Moral rulings address the ethical conduct expected of a Muslim, including virtues like honesty, trustworthiness, and justice, while prohibiting vices such as lying, betrayal, and injustice. Practical rulings encompass a Muslim's words, actions, behaviors, and legal agreements, and are further divided into two subcategories: rulings of worship, which govern a Muslim's relationship with God—such as prayer, fasting, zakat, and pilgrimage—and rulings of transactions, which regulate interpersonal dealings in areas like trade, leasing, marriage, and divorce.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in his commentary on the verse: "Divorce is twice" Al-Sabuni not only explains the classical juristic views on revocable divorce, the number of talaqs, and conditions of reconciliation, but he also addresses contemporary issues such as misuse of divorce rights, emotional manipulation, and the importance of dignity and fairness in family dissolution.

application of *Usul al-Fiqh* (Islamic legal theory). Additionally, the study assesses how Al-Sabuni harmonizes classical scholarly views with his exegeses, thereby balancing tradition with modernity. Through this critical examination, the study seeks to advance the broader discourse on Qur'anic exegeses and its application to current legal and social concerns. It aims to identify the strengths and limitations of the author approach while offering recommendations for future exegetical efforts that aim to integrate classical Islamic knowledge with the evolving needs of modern societies.

Further, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: (i) What interpretive methodologies did Al-Sabuni employ in *Rawai' al-Bayan*? (ii) How does *Rawai' Al-Bayan* differ from other tafsir works in interpreting legal verses? The critical examination of Sheikh Mohammad Ali Al-Sabuni's methodology in interpreting legal Qur'anic verses, as presented in his work *Rawai' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an*, holds considerable significance for both Islamic scholarship and contemporary jurisprudential discourse.<sup>4</sup> The study contributes to the broader field of *Tafsir* (Qur'anic exegeses) by providing an in-depth analysis of the scholar interpretive methods. By critically examining his approach to legal verses, the research sheds light on how classical interpretive principles can be applied to address contemporary issues. This analysis enriches the field by evaluating the adaptability and relevance of traditional exegetical methodologies in the modern era. The findings of this research have practical implications for contemporary Islamic legal scholars, educators, and students. By unpacking the investigator methodology, the study offers a model that can be adapted and refined for interpreting legal verses in various contexts, ensuring that Islamic jurisprudence remains relevant and dynamic.

The research is structured into five parts. In addition to the introduction, Part II provides a historical overview of the development of the science of Qur'anic exegesis and the legislative verses of the Qur'an. Part III outlines the methodology of the study, highlighting the critical examination of the selected scholar's interpretive techniques. A comparative analysis will be conducted, assessing the scholar's approach to legal verses in comparison with other prominent researchers like al-Jasas among others, examining the similarities and differences in their methods, and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the scholar's methodology in addressing legal issues. Part IV will analyze the key outcomes of the writer's work, focusing on how the exegesis contributes to modern Islamic jurisprudence. This section will assess the practical relevance of the methodologies employed, considering their impact on contemporary legal challenges and their alignment with the needs of the Muslim community today. Finally, Part V concludes the study with a summary of the findings and offers recommendations for further developing the exegesis of legal Qur'anic verses. It will provide insights into how scholars and jurists can enhance their approach to

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<sup>4</sup> Some universities consider it one of the teaching materials for undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and some members of the judiciary also use it as a reference.

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legal exegesis, ensuring that their work addresses both traditional principles and contemporary issues within Islamic law.

## Literature Review

(i) Tafsīr during the time of the Prophet and the Companions:

Qur'anic interpretation started in the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) lifetime, since the revelations were sent down gradually to address specific situations and events. The Prophet himself was the foremost interpreter of the Qur'an, elucidating its meanings for his Companions whenever they encountered ambiguity in the divine verses.<sup>5</sup> His exceptional mastery of the Qur'an established him as the primary source for its exegeses. For instance, when explaining the verse: "Indeed, we have granted you, [O Mohammad], al-Kawthar" (Al-Kawthar;108:1), the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) clarified, saying: "It is a river my Lord, the Almighty and Majestic, has promised me."<sup>6</sup>

A number of the Prophet's Companions became highly knowledgeable in the Qur'an due to their close association with him and their clear understanding of his teachings. Among them, sixteen were renowned as key figures in the science of exegeses. A notable example is Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), whose deep understanding of the Qur'an positioned her as a revered authority in its exegeses.<sup>7</sup> However, while some Companions offered limited input, others became prolific contributors to this discipline. Four stood out as leading interpreters:<sup>8</sup> (i) Abdullah ibn Abbas (ii) Abdullah ibn Masoud (iii) Ali ibn Abi Talib (iv) Ubayy ibn Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with them)

As Islam expanded geographically, the Companions carried their knowledge to various regions, establishing centers of exegeses in their respective locales. For example, Ibn Abbas was based in Mecca, Ubayy ibn Ka'b in Medina, and Abdullah ibn Masoud in Kufa. These centers became hubs where the Companions passed their knowledge to the next generation, the Tabi'un (Successors), and from them to subsequent generations. Initially, the preservation of this knowledge relied heavily on oral transmission. Memorization was the primary method for safeguarding exegeses, as written documentation was minimal during this era.<sup>9</sup> The Companions maintained a general consensus on the meanings of Qur'anic verses, with only minor differences in understanding. During the era of the Companions, Qur'anic exegeses emphasized conveying general meanings over detailed debates, with

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<sup>5</sup> Khalaf, Abdujawad, *Madkhal ila Tafsir wa Uluom Al-Qur'an*, (Cairo: Dar Al-Bayan, n.d), p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, Moḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr. *Al-Jami li-Ahkam al-Quran*. (Cairo: Dar Al-Kutoub Al-Misriyah, 2nd edn, 1964), Vol. 20. p. 217.

<sup>7</sup> Qattan, Manna Khalil, *Mabahith fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, (Cairo: Maktab Wahb, 1st edn, 1995), p. 328.

<sup>8</sup> Abduljawad, "Madkhal ila Tafsir wa Uluom Al-Qur'an" pp. 70-75.

<sup>9</sup> Zarqani, Mohammaad Abdulazim, *Manahil al-Irfan fi Ulum al-Quran*, (Egypt: Matba Issa al-Babi Al-Halabi, 3rd edn, n.d), Vol. 1, p. 240.

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minimal sectarian differences due to their unity in approach. Exegeses were transmitted orally through narrated hadiths rather than written records. While occasionally consulting the People of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitāb*) for context, their understanding remained rooted in the Prophet's teachings and their experiences. This foundational approach set a lasting legacy for Islamic scholarship.<sup>10</sup>

(ii) Tafsīr of the Successors (al-Tābi'īn):

As the era of the Companions came to an end, a new phase began: the stage of the Tabi'un (followers of the Companions), marking the second stage in the evolution of Qur'anic exegeses. During this period, the followers of the Companions continued to rely heavily on the Qur'an itself as the primary source for exegeses. They would often interpret one part of the Qur'an in light of another, seeking coherence within the text and deepening their understanding of its message.<sup>11</sup> This stage marked a significant development in the science of exegeses, as the Tabi'un began to systematize and expand upon the interpretative methods established by the Companions, while remaining deeply rooted in the Qur'anic text and the teachings passed down from the Prophet and his companions. Thus, the era of the Companions laid the groundwork for the subsequent scholarly efforts in Qur'anic exegeses, and the era of the Tabi'un ushered in a period of growth and refinement in the science of Tafsir.

Following the era of the Companions, the Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) became a critical source of exegeses for the followers (Tabi'un). This body of knowledge was transmitted through the Companions, who shared the sayings and actions of the Prophet. The teachings of the Prophet, as conveyed by the Companions, provided invaluable context and clarification of the Qur'anic text. In addition to the Sunnah, the Companions' own exegeses played a significant role in shaping the understanding of the Qur'an during this period. Their direct connection to the Prophet's life and teachings allowed them to provide insights into the Qur'anic verses, enriching the interpretative process. In this way, the process of exegeses during the era of the Tabi'un was dynamic and comprehensive, drawing on multiple sources, including the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the exegeses of the Companions, and occasionally, external sources, while allowing room for reasoned opinion when necessary.<sup>12</sup>

During the era of the Tabi'un, the science of Qur'anic exegeses flourished with the establishment of several prominent schools in the newly conquered lands and major cities.

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<sup>10</sup> Bin Suleiman, Muqatil, *Tafsir Muqatil bin Suleiman*, (Beirut: Dar Ihyau Al-Turath, 1st edn. 1423), Vol. 5, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Ad-Dhahabī, Mohammad Hussein, *Tafsir wa Al-Mufasirun*. Vol. 1. (Cairo: Maktab Al-Wahb, 1st edn n.d, p. 76.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Marifah, Mohammad Hadi, *At-Tafsir wa Al-Mufasirun*, (Iran: Jamia Al-Rawdawayah liluluom Al-Islamiyah, 2nd edn, 1426) Vol. 2, p. 805.

These schools became centers of learning, each shaped by the teachings of a leading companion and their students.

The School of Mecca was the first and most renowned of these schools. It was led by the esteemed companion Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him), widely regarded as the "Interpreter of the Qur'an" due to his profound understanding of the text. After him, his students carried forward his legacy, including Saeed ibn Jubair, Ikrimah, Tawus ibn Kaysan, Mujahid, and Ata ibn Abi Rabah.<sup>13</sup> Their efforts made Mecca a pivotal hub for Qur'anic exegeses. The School of Medina was another influential center. It was distinguished by the contributions of prominent interpreters among the followers, such as Abu Al-Aaliyah Rafi ibn Mihran Al-Riyahi, Mohammad ibn Ka'b Al-Qurazi, and Zaid ibn Aslam.<sup>14</sup> This school benefited from Medina's proximity to the Prophet's traditions and the foundational teachings of Islam. In Iraq, the School of Kufah emerged, shaped by the teachings of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him), a companion known for his deep connection to the Qur'an. His students, including Masruq ibn Al-Ajda' Al-Kufi, Qatadah ibn Di'amah Al-Sadosi Al-Basri, Al-Hasan Al-Basri, and Marra Al-Hamadani,<sup>15</sup> further advanced the study of Qur'anic exegeses. This school became known for its rigorous scholarship and analytical approach.

Interpreters during this stage relied heavily on reception and narration, preserving and transmitting the knowledge they had received. Their work was deeply rooted in the teachings of the Companions, with each school reflecting the legacy and methodology of its respective foundational companion. This period marked a critical phase in the evolution of Qur'anic exegeses, characterized by both continuity and specialization.<sup>16</sup>

### (iii) Compilation of Tafsīr:

The era of documenting exegeses of the Qur'an commenced in the early second century AH, aligning with the emergence of systematic documentation of the Noble Hadith. During this period, specialized chapters dedicated to the exegeses of the Qur'an were incorporated within the compilations of Hadith. This phase of documentation was characterized by a meticulous approach, emphasizing the inclusion of the chain of transmission (isnad). Each documented exegeses or narration was accompanied by a detailed chain of narrators, ensuring the authenticity of the Hadiths and the explanatory sayings recorded. This method

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<sup>13</sup> Hassan, Mohammad Ali, *Al-Manar fi Uluom Al-Qur'an*, (Beirut: Muasast Al-Risalah, 1st edn, 2000), p. 225.

<sup>14</sup> Majmuat Al-Asatidah wa Al-Ulama Al-Mutakhasisn. *Al-Mausua' Al-Quraniyah Al-Mutakhasisah*. (Egypt: Al-Majlis Al-Ala lishun Al-Islamiyah, 1st ed, 2000), p. 302.

<sup>15</sup> Bin Mohammad bin Mahmud, Mohammad, *Tafsir Al-Matrudi*, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutuob Al-Ilmiyah, 1st edn, 2005), Vol. 1, p. 251.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Thalabi, Abu Zaid, *Al-Jawahir Al-Hassan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, (Beirut: Dar Ihyau Al-Turath Al-Arabi, 1st edn, 1418), Vol. 1, p. 82.

marked a foundational step in preserving and authenticating Islamic knowledge for future generations.<sup>17</sup>

As the sciences matured and writing and documentation became more widespread, the field of Qur'anic exegeses began to evolve independently from the compilations of Hadith. This independence gave rise to specialized books dedicated solely to tafsir (exegeses), which marked a significant shift in the approach to documenting knowledge. Unlike earlier works, these books often cited explanatory sayings without attributing them to their original sources—a practice known as "abbreviating the chains of transmission." While this development allowed for easier access to interpretive material, it also introduced a notable drawback. The lack of attribution led to the inclusion of numerous fabricated sayings, compromising the authenticity of some exegeses. Furthermore, this period saw an increased reliance on Israelite narratives (Isra'iliyyat), further complicating the integrity of Qur'anic exegeses. These challenges underscore a critical phase in the history of tafsir, where the expansion of knowledge was accompanied by the necessity for greater scrutiny and methodological rigor.<sup>18</sup>

The science of Qur'anic exegeses (tafsir) reached a level of independence during the early centuries of Islamic scholarship, largely due to the contributions of prominent scholars like Ibn Jarir al-Tabari and Ibn Majah. These scholars focused on interpreting the Qur'an primarily through traditional methods, relying on the Hadith and the narrations of early Islamic scholars. Their work was deeply rooted in the chain of transmission and historical context, emphasizing the preservation of established exegeses. However, during the Abbasid era, a shift occurred in the approach to tafsir. Rational exegeses began to take prominence, marking a departure from the strictly traditional method. Scholars started employing personal reasoning, critical thinking, and individual understanding to interpret the Qur'anic text. This new approach incorporated elements from Arabic linguistics, Islamic jurisprudence, and the rational sectarian tendencies of the time. These scholars sought to reconcile the Qur'anic text with contemporary intellectual trends, using logic and reason to address issues that were not easily explained through tradition alone. This period laid the foundation for a more diverse and dynamic exegeses of the Qur'an, blending faith with reason and opening the door for new schools of thought within Islamic scholarship.<sup>19</sup>

#### (iv) Development of Tafsīr Methods:

In the modern era, the field of Qur'anic exegeses (tafsir) underwent a significant transformation, influenced by the spread of printing presses and the rise of active authorship movements within Islamic sciences. As the world changed with new events, facts, and

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<sup>17</sup> Bin Hajj, Malik, *Al-Dhahira Al-Qur'aniyah*, (Damascus: Dar Al-Fikr, 4th edn, 2000), p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> Bin Bakr Ismail, Mohammad, *Dirasat fi Uluom Al-Qur'an*, (Saudi Arabia: Dar Al-Manar, 2nd edn, 1999), p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Bin Sulam, Yahya. *At-Tasarif Litafsir Al-Qur'an*, (Tunisia: Al-Sharika At-Tunisia Litawzi', 1st edn, 1979), p. 64.

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trends, these shifts began to affect the methods of exegeses. One significant methodological shift was the adoption of modern scientific paradigms, including the integration of scientific theories into tafsir. Scholars began to incorporate modern scientific knowledge, seeking to harmonize the Qur'anic text with contemporary discoveries and theories. Modern exegeses were also characterized by a more accessible style of expression, enabling them to reach a broader audience.<sup>20</sup> This period saw the publication of key works such as *Al-Manar* by Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, and other modern exegeses, which broke from the more rigid classical approaches. These works emphasized clarity and simplicity, making the profound meanings of the Qur'an more easily accessible to the general public. The influence of modernism, scientific progress, and a more globalized worldview significantly reshaped tafsir, ensuring that the Qur'anic message remained relevant to contemporary society while still preserving its deep spiritual and moral teachings.<sup>21</sup>

In parallel with these modern developments, the exegeses of Qur'anic juridical texts also saw significant evolution. Qur'anic rulings are verses in the Qur'an that provide guidance on legal and ethical matters, outlining specific rulings or principles of Islamic law (Sharia). These verses may either explicitly state legal rulings or suggest them through inference and deduction.<sup>22</sup> They encompass a wide range of issues, including personal, family, criminal, commercial, and ritual law, serving as the foundational sources for Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh). These verses can be divided into two main categories: (i) Direct Deduction: These are verses where the legal ruling can be derived directly from the text, without the need for additional verses. For example, the prohibition of masturbation can be inferred from Allah's words in Surah Al-Mu'minun (5-7), where it states: "And those who guard their private parts. Except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed. But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors." This verse establishes the prohibition of any sexual activity outside the confines of marriage or what is legally permissible, implying the prohibition of masturbation. (ii) Deduction through Contemplation: involves deriving legal rulings by correlating one verse with another, or by linking a verse to a Prophetic hadith. An example of this approach is the inference made by Ali ibn Abi Talib and Ibn Abbas that the minimum period of pregnancy is six months. This deduction is based on combining the following verses: Allah's statement: "And his gestation and weaning [period] is thirty months" (Al-Ahqaf; 46: 15). Allah's statement:

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<sup>20</sup> Examples of Modern Interpretations of the Qur'an: Tafsīr al-Manār – by Sayyid Muhammad Rashid Rida *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān* (In the Shade of the Qur'an) – by Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li-l-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (The Bayani Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an) – by 'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Rahmān (*Bint al-Shāṭi*'), *Aḍwā' al-Bayān fī Idāh al-Qur'ān bi-l-Qur'ān* – by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shanqīṭī, *Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām* (Interpretation of the Verses of Rulings) – by Shaykh Manā' al-Qaṭṭān, *Ahmadi Interpretations of the Verses of Islamic Law* – by Mullā Jiyūn Al-Iklīl fī Istinbāt al-Tanzīl (The Garland in the Deduction of Revelation) – by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī *Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām* – by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Sayyis

<sup>21</sup> Qaduri, Ghanim, *Muhadharat fī Uluom Al-Qur'an*, (Oman: Dar Omar, 1st edn, 2003), pp. 208–210.

<sup>22</sup> Az-Zarkashī, Badr ad-Dīn Mohammed. *Al-Burhan fī Uluom Al-Qur'an*. (Beirut: Dar Ihyau Al-Turath Al-Arabī, 1st ed, 1957), Vol. 2 p. 4.

“And his weaning is in two years” (Luqman; 31:14). By analyzing these verses together, it is understood that if the weaning period accounts for two years (24 months), the remaining six months must represent the minimum gestation period.<sup>23</sup>

Muslim Scholars have debated whether the verses of the Qur'an that pertain to jurisprudential rulings are finite and restricted to a specific number, or whether their scope is broader. According to this view, the legal verses of rulings in the Qur'an are limited to a specific number. Scholars who hold this opinion differ regarding the exact count: (i) Some scholars assert that there are five hundred such verses. (ii) Others claim the number is only two hundred. (iii) A third group maintains that there are merely one hundred and fifty legal verses. It has been suggested that these numbers likely refer to verses with explicit rulings. Many rulings, however, are inferred from other types of verses, such as those containing stories, parables, and general guidance. Thus, while explicit rulings may be numerically limited, the principles they provide are expansively applicable.<sup>24</sup> The second perspective argues that the verses of rulings in the Qur'an are not limited in number. According to this view, every verse in the Qur'an may potentially carry a specific legal ruling that can be derived from it. This exegeses highlights the dynamic nature of Islamic jurisprudence, where the meanings and implications of the Qur'anic verses are revealed in varying degrees to scholars. The ability to derive legal rulings from the Qur'an depends significantly on the scholar's depth of understanding, intellectual clarity, and spiritual purity. It also requires a strong capacity for reasoning, sharp deductive skills, and a fluid, open mind capable of grasping the diverse and nuanced meanings embedded within the text. Therefore, the number of legal rulings derived from the Qur'an is seen as potentially limitless, evolving with the scholar's insight and the context in which the verses are applied.<sup>25</sup>

Najm al-Din al-Tufi argued that the estimation of a limited number of Qur'anic verses containing rulings is not valid. He asserted that the evidence for Shari'ah rulings is not restricted to a fixed number of verses. In his view, rulings are derived not only from explicit commands and prohibitions but also from stories, sermons, and other forms of discourse found in the Qur'an. Al-Tufi emphasized that there is scarcely a verse in the Qur'an from which some legal ruling cannot be derived. He suggested that those who limit the number to five hundred verses likely focused only on those explicitly explaining the ruling, overlooking other verses from which rulings can also be inferred.<sup>26</sup> To further substantiate his point, he referenced the work *Evidences of Rulings* by Sheikh Izz al-Din ibn Abd al-

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<sup>23</sup> Al-Shawkānī, Moḥammad ibn Ali. *Nayl al-Awtar*, (Egypt: Dar Al-Hadith, 1st edn, 1993), Vol. 6, p. 343.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Shawkānī, Moḥammad bin Ali, *Irshad al-Fuhul ila Tahqiq 'Ilm al-Usul*. (Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabī, 1st edn, 1999), Vol. 2, p. 207.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Amir Haj, Shams Al-Din Moḥammad, *Al-Taqrir wa-al-Tahbir*, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutuob al-Ilmiyah, 2nd edn, 1983), Vol. 3, p. 292.

<sup>26</sup> At-Tufī, Najmdin, *Sharh Mukhtasar Al-Rawdha*, (Beirut: Muasasat Al-Risalah, 1st ed, 1987), Vol. 3, p. 575.

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Salam, encouraging others to explore how rulings are derived from a wide array of Qur'anic verses, not just those intended to directly explain a legal matter.<sup>27</sup>

Qur'anic legal injunctions emerged at a very advanced stage of revelation, forming part of the broader prophetic exegeses. These verses, often referred to as jurisprudential (fiqh) verses, were revealed to the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as part of the legal framework for the Muslim community. The Prophet not only received these revelations but also provided detailed explanations to his companions through his words and actions. A notable example of this interpretive role is the way the Prophet taught his companions how to perform prayers. He would demonstrate and then instruct them: "Pray as you have seen me pray."<sup>28</sup> This directive was not only a command for ritual practice but also served as an explanation of the legal rulings related to prayer, providing a clear, practical example for the community to follow. Thus, the Prophet's actions and sayings helped to contextualize and refine the legal principles contained in the Qur'anic verses.

After the death of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), the Companions undertook the responsibility of deriving legal rulings from Qur'anic verses, particularly on matters they had not directly inquired about during the Prophet's lifetime or for which they lacked clear knowledge. This marked the beginning of *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning) among the Companions as they sought to interpret and apply the teachings of the Qur'an to new situations. An example of this is the statement of Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with him) regarding the matter of *Kalalah* (inheritance involving relatives other than direct descendants or ascendants). He said: "I have expressed an opinion regarding *Kalalah*. If it is correct, then it is solely from Allah, without any partner for Him. But if it is incorrect, then it is from me and Satan, and Allah is free from it. *Kalalah* refers to anyone who has neither a child nor a parent."<sup>29</sup>

Among the Companions who stood out for their efforts in interpreting the verses of rulings were Abdullah ibn Masoud, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Abdullah ibn Abbas. Each of these eminent figures played a significant role in shaping the legal exegeses of their students, influencing subsequent generations of scholars. As a result, distinct schools of thought emerged, each closely tied to their teachings: The Kufi school, founded by the students of Ibn Masoud; the Medinan school, shaped by the students of Ibn Umar; and the Meccan school, influenced by the students of Ibn Abbas. These schools became known for their focus on interpreting the Holy Qur'an, particularly its legal verses.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Al-Ghamidī, Nassor bin Ali, *Juz min Sharh Tanqih Al-Fusul fi 'Ilm Al-Usul*. (Master's dissertation, Ummul Al-Qura University, 2000), Vol. 2. p. 465.

<sup>28</sup> Bin Hibban, Mohammad, *Al-Ihsan bi-Tartib Sahih Ibn Hibban*, (Beirut: Muasasat Al-Risalah, 1st edn. 1988), Vol. 4, p. 543.

<sup>29</sup> Sayais, Mohammad Ali, *Tafsir Ayat Al-Ahkam*, (Cairo: Maktabah Al-Asriyah, 1st ed, 2002), p. 234.

<sup>30</sup> Abduljawad, "Madkhal ila Tafsir wa Uluom Al-Qur'an" p. 58.

The tradition of interpreting Qur'anic rulings continued among the Companions and their students from the Followers (Tabi'un). This scholarly pursuit largely remained within the bounds of academic study and the issuing of fatwas (legal opinions). However, the landscape of Qur'anic legal exegeses experienced a significant shift with the arrival of Imam Muqatil ibn Sulayman al-Khurasani (d. 150 AH). He is credited with writing the first book dedicated specifically to the exegeses of the verses of rulings in the Qur'an. His work was primarily based on the transmitted traditions of the Companions, although Muqatil occasionally applied his own legal reasoning.<sup>31</sup> This marked a pivotal moment in the development of Islamic jurisprudence, as it represented a more systematic and structured approach to interpreting the legal verses of the Qur'an.

Among the mujtahid imams who contributed significantly to the exegeses of Qur'anic rulings was Imam Yahya bin Zakariya bin Sulayman al-Qurashi al-Kufi, a renowned scholar from Kufa (d. 203 AH).<sup>32</sup> He was one of the early figures to engage deeply with this subject, and his work set the stage for subsequent scholars to explore the legal verses of the Qur'an. Following him, several imams from well-known schools of thought, along with their students, began writing extensively on this topic. Notable among these scholars were:

**(i) Imam Abu Abdullah, Mohammad bin Idris al-Shafi'i** (d. 204 AH), who authored a book specifically on the rulings of the Qur'an. His work is considered foundational in Islamic jurisprudence, offering a methodical approach to deriving legal rulings from the Qur'anic text.

**(ii) Imam Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi** (d. 321 AH), who, like the hadith scholars of his time, applied a distinct methodology. His work on the legal verses of the Qur'an reflects the same depth of scholarship but with a unique interpretive approach.

As time progressed, writing on Qur'anic rulings became more widespread, but the nature and intent of the writings began to differ. Scholars increasingly wrote with the goal of supporting the specific school of thought to which they belonged. This reflected both in their intent—to strengthen the legal positions of their respective schools—and in their methodology, which was grounded in the principles and foundations established by the founder of their school. For example, **Imam al-Jassas**, in his famous book *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, dedicated significant effort to supporting the doctrine of Imam Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man (d. 150 AH). His exegeses often leaned toward an application of the Hanafi principles, sometimes involving creative and far-reaching exegeses to align the legal verses with the Hanafi school's views. Similarly, **Imam al-Kia al-Harasi** expressed in his introduction that his aim was to elucidate the evidence used by Imam al-Shafi'i in deriving

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<sup>31</sup> Bin Ali, Ubeid, *Tafsir Khumsumiyah Ayah Fi Al-Qur'an Limuqatil bin Suleiman*, (Master's dissertation, Islamic University, 1988), pp. 66–68.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Umrī, Walid, *Muqadimah fi Ayat Al-Ahkam*, (Saudi Arabia: Tafsir Center for Quranic Studies, 2012), p. 8.

rulings from the Qur'an. He also added his own insights, aligning his approach with the principles and methodology of the Shafi'i school. His work not only clarified al-Shafi'i's reasoning but also expanded on it, incorporating other issues that he felt were aligned with Shafi'i's foundational principles.<sup>33</sup>

The process of composing works on the Qur'anic rulings continued within the framework of the established schools of thought, but the approaches of the authors varied significantly. Some scholars adopted a concise approach, offering a single statement of exegeses and deduction, focusing on clarity and brevity. Others expanded their work, elaborating on the views of different imams, paying particular attention to the differences in opinion and exegeses that emerged within the legal discourse. There were also scholars who took a more detached approach in their reasoning and proofs. These scholars sought to identify the most correct and sound exegeses, prioritizing accuracy over allegiance to any specific school of thought. Their work was more independent, as they did not rely on any one school or imam but instead aimed for an objective assessment of the evidence. In contrast, some scholars confined themselves strictly to the statements of their sheikhs and the doctrines of their respective schools. They did not venture beyond the established teachings of their tradition, presenting legal opinions only as derived from the accepted authorities of their school. This variety of approaches highlights the remarkable aspect of God's creation—the wide-ranging differences in human intellects and perspectives. Each scholar, with their unique intellect and perspective, contributes to the rich tapestry of Islamic jurisprudence. Ultimately, these differences highlight the beauty and complexity of human reasoning, and, as always, it is God alone who is sought for help. There is no Lord but Him.<sup>34</sup>

## Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach to delve into the methodology employed by Al-Sabuni in interpreting legal Quranic verses, with a specific focus on the book *Rawai' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam*. The methodology is structured to provide a interpretive understanding of how these exegeses are developed and applied, and it comprises the following key components: The study aimed to explore the principles and methods used by scholars in interpreting Qur'anic legal verses. This approach facilitates a thorough understanding of the theoretical and practical frameworks embedded within the selected tafsir. To gather information, the research relies primarily on the text *Rawai' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam*, which serves as the central source for examining the interpretative methodology. Supplementary sources include classical and modern works on Quranic exegeses, Islamic jurisprudence, and the principles of jurisprudence. These sources enhance

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<sup>33</sup> Al-Harāsī, Ali bin Mohammad Al-Kaya. *Ahkam Al-Qur'an*. 2nd ed. Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 1405, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Walid, *Muqadimah fi Ayat Al-Ahkam*, p. 12.

the study with additional perspectives and comparative analysis. The analysis unfolds through thematic and comparative techniques. Thematic analysis identifies recurring patterns and methods, such as linguistic analysis, contextual exegeses, and the integration of prophetic traditions (*hadith*). Comparative analysis broadens the scope by juxtaposing the methodologies in *Rawā' al-Bayān* with those in other tafsir works, highlighting unique or shared interpretative elements. A major part of the study looks closely at certain ways of analyzing the topic. For instance, linguistic analysis explores how scholars dissect Quranic language—its syntax, semantics, and rhetorical nuances—to derive legal rulings. Contextual exegeses investigate how historical contexts and occasions of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*) shape the understanding of the verses. Additionally, the study examines the integration of *hadith* and principles of *usul al-fiqh* in refining exegeses and supporting legal arguments. The research focuses specifically on legal verses in *Rawā' al-Bayān*, with occasional comparisons to other tafsir works. It addresses themes like family law, financial transactions, and criminal justice while consciously excluding non-legal Quranic verses or broader theological and mystical exegeses. Recognizing the need for reliability, the study meticulously reviews the selected text and corroborates findings with authoritative sources. Validation is further strengthened by reviewers of the article in Islamic jurisprudence and Qur'anic exegeses (*Āyāt al-Aḥkām*) to ensure an accurate representation of the methodologies discussed. Ethical considerations guide the entire research process. By adhering to academic integrity, the study ensures proper citation of sources and respects intellectual property rights. The exegeses presented are unbiased and faithful to the scholars' original contexts and intentions. The narrative unfolds in thematic sections, each dedicated to a particular methodological aspect. For example, one section delves into linguistic tools, while another examines the reliance on *hadith* and the application of *usul al-fiqh*. Each thematic discussion is supported by examples from *Rawā' al-Bayān*, illustrating the scholars' approach in practice. This structure ensures a coherent and engaging narrative, offering readers a comprehensive insight into the methodology of Al-Sabuni in interpreting legal Quranic verses.

## Discussion

Sheikh Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī, a prominent Syrian scholar and Qur'anic exegete, is widely recognized for his significant contribution to Islamic scholarship, especially through his acclaimed work *Rawā' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām*. Born in 1930 in the city of Aleppo (Halab), Syria,<sup>35</sup> Al-Sabuni pursued a rigorous education in Arabic language and Islamic jurisprudence under esteemed scholars such as Mohammad Said Idlebi, Ahmad Shama', and Mohammad Najib Khayat. His quest for knowledge led him to Al-Azhar

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<sup>35</sup> Sheikh Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī, Ta'rif bi-l-Mu'allif, Official Website: <<https://shamela.ws/author/1318>> accessed July 31, 2025

University in Egypt, where he further honed his expertise in Islamic studies. Upon returning to Syria, Al-Sabuni began his teaching career, serving as an instructor of Islamic culture from 1955 to 1962. Later, he was invited by the Saudi government as a visiting fellow, a role he fulfilled for nearly three decades. During this time, he undertook the monumental task of verifying the manuscript *Ma'ani Al-Qur'an* by Jaafar Al-Nahas. Despite it being a singular handwritten manuscript, He cross-checked the manuscript using classical references in tafsir, linguistics, and hadith. In addition to his academic pursuits, the scholar collaborated with the Muslim World League, serving as an advisor to the Scientific Miracles Authority in the Qur'an and Sunnah. His dedication to Islamic scholarship earned him invitations to numerous international conferences and seminars. In recognition of his lifelong contributions, the Dubai International Holy Quran Award honored him as the Islamic Personality of the Year in 1431 AH. Throughout his career, the scholar authored 33 books,<sup>36</sup> with *Rawai' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam* standing out as a seminal work that delves into the interpretation of Quranic verses related to legal rulings. His prolific writing and teaching greatly enriched the understanding of the Holy Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence. Sheikh Mohammad Ali al-Sabuni passed away in Turkey on the morning of Friday, Shaaban 5, 1442 AH (March 19, 2021), at the age of 91.<sup>37</sup> His enduring legacy continues to inspire and guide students of Islamic knowledge worldwide.

Sheikh Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī is renowned for his exceptional work in Qur'anic exegesis, especially his emphasis on legal verses (*āyāt al-aḥkām*). His works are widely respected for their engaging style and structured presentation, making them valuable to both scholars and non-specialists. Among his many achievements, *Rawai' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam* stands as a pivotal contribution to the field of tafsir. This seminal work delves into the Qur'anic verses that address legal rulings, showcasing Al-Sabuni's profound expertise in both Qur'anic studies and Islamic law. By seamlessly blending traditional exegeses with contemporary considerations, *Rawai' al-Bayan* bridges classical scholarship and modern challenges.

The mid-20th century, during which *Rawai' al-Bayan* was written, was a transformative period in the Muslim world, marked by socio-political and intellectual shifts. This era profoundly influenced Al-Sabuni's scholarship and the reception of his work. As Muslim communities faced the dual pressures of colonization, Westernization, and modernization, there was a resurgence in Islamic scholarship aimed at reasserting religious identity. Scholars like Al-Sabuni sought to remain faithful to classical Islamic traditions while

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<sup>36</sup> Among the books he has authored in the field of Qur'anic exegeses are *Safwat Al-Tafasir*, *Qabs min Noor Al-Qur'an Al-Karim*, *Mukhtasar Tafsir al-Ṭabarī*, *Tafsir Al-Wadīh al-Muyassar*, *Mukhtasar Tafsir ibn Kathir*, *Durat at-Tafasir ala Hamish Al-Mushaf*, *Kashfu Al-Iftiraat fi Risalat At-Tanbihat Hawla Safwat At-Tafasir*, *Injaz Al-Bayan fi Suwar Al-Quran Al-Karim*, *Fathu Al-Rahman bikashfi ma Yaltabis fi Al-Qur'an*, and *Ma'nī Al-Qur'an Li An-Nihas*.

<sup>37</sup> Omar Abso. Al-Sheikh Alim Al-Mufasir Mohammad Ali Al-Sabuni, *Odabasham*. Accessed December 30, 2024. <<https://www.odabasham.net/>الشيخ العالم المفسر محمد علي الصابوني/114200>

addressing the complexities of the contemporary world. Legal exegeses gained renewed significance during this period, as questions of law, governance, and ethics took center stage in Muslim societies. *Rawai' al-Bayan*, published by Maktab Al-Asriyah in Beirut in 2008, is a comprehensive work comprising 1182 pages divided into two volumes. Volume one contains 41 chapters, while volume two includes 30 chapters. The book provides profound insights into Islamic jurisprudence, social ethics, and the rulings of Sharia.<sup>38</sup> The book covers a wide range of topics that are essential to understanding Islamic law and its application in daily life. The two volumes of *Rawai' al-Bayan* offer an extensive exploration of Islamic jurisprudence, ethical teachings, and Sharia rulings. Each volume addresses a wide array of themes, delving into intricate details of religious and social matters.<sup>39</sup>

Through its two volumes, *Rawai' al-Bayan* offers a comprehensive exploration of Islamic legal rulings, ethical principles, and social norms. However, the book does not thoroughly cover all aspects of *Āyāt al-Aḥkām*, particularly topics such as financial transactions, international relations, constitutional governance, public finance, and the administration of justice. Additionally, some topics are repeated; for instance, the subject of divorce is discussed in Volume One (pages 285–295) and revisited in Volume Two (pages 267–279 and 546–562).

In *Rawai' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam*, the author adopts a thematic approach to Qur'anic exegeses, meticulously grouping verses that pertain to legal rulings. His methodology is both systematic and comprehensive, combining linguistic, legal, and

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<sup>38</sup> Mohammad Ali Sabuni, *Rawai' al-Bayan*, (Beirut: Maktab Al-Asriyyah, 1st ed, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> **Volume One** begins with foundational topics such as the interpretation of *Surat Al-Fatihah* and continues to explore various aspects of Islamic law and practice. It covers subjects like magic, the concept of abrogation in the Qur'an, and the rulings on facing the Kaaba. The volume also examines practices like walking between Safa and Marwa, the importance of concealing Islamic knowledge, and the obligation to promote good while forbidding evil. It provides detailed discussions on key issues such as retaliation, fasting, Hajj, jihad, and the permissibility of fighting during sacred months. Additional topics include rulings on personal and family matters, such as menstruation, polygamy, the management of orphans' money, the oath of divorce, and the waiting period after death. The themes extend to societal concerns, such as the prohibition of usury, interactions with non-believers, and the construction of mosques. Legal penalties, such as the punishment for theft and expiation for broken oaths, are also addressed, alongside guidelines for consuming lawful foods and performing ablution. The volume concludes with discussions on acts of worship and rituals, including the division of war spoils and offerings made to draw closer to Allah. **Volume Two** continues with a focus on moral and legal rulings. It addresses sensitive topics such as the punishment for adultery and slandering chaste women, the rulings of *li'an* (cursing between spouses), and the incident of *Al-Iffk* (slander against Aisha, the Prophet's wife). Themes of social etiquette are also explored, including the manners of inquiry and visitation, the verses on the veil, and the encouragement of marriage while preventing illicit practices. Further discussions include rulings on inheritance, the permissibility of eating from relatives' homes, obedience to parents, and the prohibition of touching the Qur'an while in a state of impurity. The volume also delves into issues of warfare, the ethical handling of news, and the prohibition of deceit and trickery in Sharia. It concludes with a reflection on the Prophet's marriages, the Friday prayer, and the recitation of the Qur'an, emphasizing the importance of these practices in a Muslim's daily life. Together, these volumes provide a comprehensive and insightful guide to Islamic law and ethics, blending Qur'anic interpretation with practical applications for individuals and society.

contextual analyses to present a well-rounded understanding of the Qur'anic text. The key elements of his approach include: (i) Verbal Analysis: Al-Sabuni examines the language of the Qur'an in detail, citing the interpretations of renowned commentators and linguists to illuminate the meanings of words and phrases. (ii) Concise Summaries: He provides the general meaning of the verses in a clear and succinct manner, making the content accessible to readers of various backgrounds. (iii) Reasons for Revelation: Where applicable, Al-Sabuni discusses the circumstances or events (asbab al-nuzul) that prompted the revelation of specific verses, offering crucial historical and contextual insights. (iv) Contextual Connections: He explores the relationship between preceding and subsequent verses, demonstrating the coherence and flow of the Qur'anic discourse. (v) Qur'anic Readings: Al-Sabuni delves into the transmitted variations of Qur'anic readings (qira'at), highlighting their implications for interpretation. (vi) Syntax Analysis: Brief but precise discussions of syntax are included to explain the grammatical structure and its impact on meaning. (vii) Subtleties of Interpretation: Al-Sabuni uncovers rhetorical and scientific subtleties, as well as eloquent nuances within the verses, enriching the reader's understanding of the Qur'anic text. (viii) Legal Rulings: A central focus of his work, the author identifies the legal injunctions derived from the verses, evaluates the evidence presented by jurists, and offers reasoned preferences among differing opinions. (ix) Guidance from Verses: He summarizes the moral, ethical, and spiritual guidance offered by the verses in a concise manner. (x) Conclusion and Wisdom of Legislation: Each section concludes with a reflection on the wisdom underlying the legal rulings, providing readers with a deeper appreciation of the divine objectives.<sup>40</sup>

Al-Sabuni has consistently adhered to his established methodology throughout both parts of his book, demonstrating remarkable consistency from the beginning to the end. This commitment is one of the notable strengths of his work. However, there are instances where he deviates slightly by reordering the elements of his approach. At times, he prioritizes discussing the connection between verses over explaining the reasons for revelation or their general meanings. Conversely, in other instances, he delays addressing this connection until after presenting these aspects. Occasionally, the writer omits mentioning the connection between verses altogether, opting instead to emphasize the aspects of Quranic readings over the reasons for revelation. His approach to explanatory subtleties is generally consistent, as he typically discusses them after addressing Quranic readings and grammar. Nonetheless, there are exceptions, such as in Volume 2, where he presents these subtleties earlier than usual. Similarly, while he often concludes each topic by highlighting the wisdom behind the legislative rulings, there are moments where he diverges from this practice.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Sabuni, *Rawai' al-Bayan*, pp. 10-11

<sup>41</sup> Awadh Said Al-Ghafarī, *Manhaj Al-Sabuni fi Kitab Rawai' al-Bayan, Majat Al-Mahra*, Vol 10, No: 1 (2021), p. 31.

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In his book, the author employs a multifaceted approach to interpretation, navigating between two primary methods: interpretation by tradition (*tafsir bi'l-ma'thur*)<sup>42</sup> and interpretation by opinion (*tafsir bi'l-ra'y*).<sup>43</sup> At one point, he draws upon traditional interpretations, relying on established sources and precedents. At another, he shifts to personal interpretation, where he uses his own judgment and reasoning. Throughout the work, he presents the evidence supporting each method and engages in an in-depth discussion of the views held by various scholars. He brings forth the exchanges and debates that have transpired among the learned, offering a balanced presentation of their arguments. The author does not shy away from expressing his own perspective, often guiding the reader toward his conclusions. However, in some instances, he chooses to present these debates and viewpoints without modification, allowing the reader to form their own understanding. His book encompasses a variety of interpretive methods, and examples of these include the following approaches:

(i) Interpreting the Qur'an with the Qur'an refers to the method of explaining certain verses using other verses within the Qur'anic text itself. This approach relies on the internal coherence of the Qur'an, where some verses summarize a concept in one place and expand upon it in another, or briefly address a topic and later provide further clarification elsewhere. Scholars adopting this method aim to provide a comprehensive understanding by linking related verses, even if these verses are found in different parts of the Qur'an.<sup>44</sup> An example of this approach can be seen in the works of the researcher, who, while addressing the issue of the waiting period for divorced women, drew connections between several Qur'anic verses, regardless of their dispersed locations in the text. He meticulously explained and synthesized these verses to present a unified understanding. For instance, the author explains the waiting period for divorced women by referencing the verse: "And divorced women shall wait for three cycles (Al-Baqarah; 2:228)." He clarifies that this applies to women who have consummated their marriage, reached puberty, are not

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<sup>42</sup> The term *Tafsir bi'l-Ma'thur* refers to a method of Qur'anic interpretation that relies on established interpretive sources. These sources include: (i) The Holy Qur'an itself, where verses are explained through the contextual or explicit meanings provided by other verses. (ii) The Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which serves as a practical explanation and elucidation of Qur'anic verses. (iii) The sayings of the Companions (*Sahabah*), who possessed firsthand knowledge of the Qur'an's revelation and its contexts. (iv) The sayings of the Followers (*Tabi'un*), the second generation of Muslims who studied under the Companions, which some scholars also consider part of this interpretive tradition. This approach emphasizes the primacy of authentic sources in understanding the Qur'an, ensuring that interpretations are rooted in the earliest and most reliable Islamic teachings. Scholars who have employed these methods include Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir*, Al-Tabari in his *Tafsir*, Al-Baghawi in his *Ma'alim al-Tanzil*, and others.

<sup>43</sup> *Tafsir bi'l-Ra'y* refers to the interpretation of Qur'anic verses using reason and intellect. This method involves analyzing the evidence and deriving conclusions based on sound reasoning, provided that such reasoning does not contradict authentic transmitted sources (*naql*) and aligns with Islamic principles. Among the most prominent works in this field are: Al-Kashshaf by Al-Zamakhshari, Al-Baydawi, Al-Nasafi, Al-Qurtubi, Al-Razi, Abu Al-Su'ud, and Abu Hayyan, each of which represents significant contributions to the intellectual tradition of Qur'anic exegeses.

<sup>44</sup> Hassan, "*Al-Manar fi Uluom Al-Qur'an*" p. 260

pregnant, and have not reached menopause. He then refers to another verse to explain exceptions: “There is no waiting period for you over them, but rather you have no waiting period for them after you have divorced them (Ahzab; 33:49),” highlighting that no waiting period applies to women who have not consummated their marriage. Similarly, for pregnant women, the waiting period extends until childbirth, as stated in: “And for those who are pregnant, their term is until they give birth (At-Talaq; 65:4).” Furthermore, Al-Sabuni cites the verse concerning women who no longer menstruate: “And those of your women who despair of menstruation—if you doubt, then their waiting period is three months, as well as those who have not menstruated (At-Talaq; 65:4).” Through this method, the author illustrates how the verse in Qur’an 2:228 is specific to a certain category of divorced women—those who have consummated their marriage, are neither too young, pregnant, nor menopausal.<sup>45</sup> This systematic interconnection of verses demonstrates the depth and precision of interpreting the Qur’an with its own content, providing clarity and resolving ambiguities through divine context.

(ii) Interpreting the Qur’an with the Sunnah involves clarifying Qur’anic verses through the words, actions, and teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). This can include instances where the Prophet directly explained verses to his Companions, addressed their questions regarding unclear passages, or provided interpretive guidance through his sayings and practices. Moreover, his adherence to Qur’anic commands in his actions is also regarded as a form of interpretation.<sup>46</sup> In this context, the author addresses the controversial issue of whether the Qur’an can be abrogated by the Sunnah—a matter of scholarly debate. He discusses the perspectives of both camps: those who assert that abrogation by the Sunnah is impermissible and those who argue that it does occur. Al-Sabuni’s presentation of the evidence for each position effectively demonstrates the interpretation of the Qur’an through the Sunnah, whether it involves explaining general verses, specifying rulings, abrogating commands, or introducing restrictions. One example provided by Al-Sabuni highlights the majority view that the Sunnah can abrogate certain Qur’anic rulings. He cites the punishment for adultery mentioned in the Qur’an: “The adulteress and the adulterer—flog each one of them with a hundred lashes” (An-Nur; 24:2). Despite this explicit command, the Prophet (pbuh) ordered stoning as the punishment for a married adulterer. This action by the Prophet is considered an interpretive clarification and practical implementation of the Qur’an, where the punishment of flogging was abrogated for specific cases through the Sunnah. The researcher underscores this as a clear example of interpreting the Qur’an through the Prophetic tradition, illustrating how the two sources complement and elucidate each other in Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>47</sup> From the above, it is evident that the

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<sup>45</sup> Sabuni, “*Rawai’ al-Bayan*” pp. 570-573

<sup>46</sup> Musa’d At-Tayar, *Fusuol fi Usuol at-Tafsir*, (Saudi: Dar ibn Al-Jawzī, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1423), p. 72.

<sup>47</sup> Sabuni, “*Rawai’ al-Bayan*” pp. 97-99

scholar prefers what he considers clear evidence. Even though it may not be explicitly stated, there is implicit support for the idea that the Sunnah can abrogate the Qur'an. This, in turn, represents a form of interpreting the Sunnah through the Qur'an.

(iii) The Companions of the Prophet Mohammad (may God be pleased with them) hold a revered and esteemed position in Islam, a fact well recognized by Muslims. Their direct association with the Prophet—peace and blessings be upon him—grants them unparalleled honor and status. This proximity to the Messenger of God gives their sayings considerable weight, making them an authoritative source in Islamic jurisprudence and Qur'anic interpretation. The Companions were the immediate recipients of revelation and lived in the same context in which the Qur'an was revealed. Their deep knowledge of the Arabic language, the language in which the Qur'an was revealed, further strengthens their understanding and interpretation of the sacred text. Their insights, rooted in their time and experience, are invaluable in clarifying the meanings of the Qur'an, particularly as they were familiar with the customs and conditions of the people around them, including both Arabs and Jews.<sup>48</sup>

In his work, the author often references the sayings of the Companions, demonstrating their importance in Qur'anic exegeses. He frequently cites the interpretations of the Companions as part of his method, especially when discussing legal rulings. These narrations, often found in the works of scholars and jurists from various schools of thought, provide a rich source of knowledge and understanding. They serve to explain and affirm the legal implications of Qur'anic verses. For instance, when addressing the issue of whether a guardian is permitted to consume an orphan's wealth,<sup>49</sup> the scholar cites the words of Omar ibn al-Khattab (may God be pleased with him), who said:

*"I have placed myself in the position of a servant concerning the wealth of God and the wealth of an orphan. If I become wealthy, I abstain; if I become poor, I consume reasonably; and if I become wealthy again, I repay it."<sup>50</sup>*

(iv) Linguistic interpretation involves explaining the meanings of Qur'anic verses based solely on the language of the Arabs, in whose tongue and style the Qur'an was revealed.<sup>51</sup> This form of interpretation specifically excludes all other sources of explanation, such as the Qur'an itself, the Sunnah, reasons for revelation, or any languages other than Arabic. The significance of this approach lies in the fact that the Qur'an is revealed in the Arabic language. As Allah Almighty states, *"Indeed, we have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand"* (Yusuf;12:2), highlighting the essential role of the Arabic language in

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<sup>48</sup> At-Tayar, *"Fusuul fi Usuul at-Tafsir"* pp. 45-75

<sup>49</sup> Sabuni, *"Rawai' al-Bayan"*

<sup>50</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, Moḥammad ibn Aḥmad, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*. (Cairo: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Masriyah, 2nd edn, 1964), Vol. 5, p. 42.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Anzī Abdallah bin Yussuf, *Al-Muqadimat Al-Asasiyah fi Uluom Al-Qur'an*, 1st edn, Britain: Markaz Al-Buhuth Al-Islamiyah. 2001, p. 353

its comprehension. The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the language of his people, in line with the divine practice of sending Messengers in the language of their communities. Allah says, *"And We did not send any messenger except with the language of his people"* (Ibrahim; 14:4), emphasizing that understanding the Qur'an through any language other than Arabic would not align with its intended message. This perspective underscores the importance of Arabic in interpreting and clarifying the words of the Qur'an. For instance, the scholar Al-Sabuni often demonstrates this approach in his works. He uses the Arabic language to explain terms and concepts found in the Qur'an, such as when he interprets the term *"menses"* (hayd) as a state of purity.<sup>52</sup> In his method of interpretation, the scholar typically begins with an analysis of the wording of the verse, then moves to discuss the general meaning, various readings, and the grammatical aspects of the text. This step-by-step linguistic breakdown helps to maintain the integrity and richness of the Qur'anic text as it was revealed.<sup>53</sup>

(v) Integration of Aqli (Logic) and Naqli (Revealed Texts): The interpretation of Qur'anic provisions of law often requires a balance between Aqli (reason) and Naqli (revealed texts). The scholar, a distinguished scholar in Qur'anic exegeses, adeptly combined these two approaches to derive rulings with intellectual rigor while adhering to scriptural fidelity. This methodology is particularly evident in his interpretation of the consequences when one spouse refuses to invoke curses (li'an), a legal procedure in Islamic law for resolving accusations of adultery between spouses. Al-Sabuni begins his analysis by drawing on key textual sources from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The following evidence highlights the prescribed consequences for such situations: Allah's words in Surah An-Nur: *"And those who accuse chaste women and do not bring four witnesses—flog them with eighty stripes and do not accept their testimony ever after. They are truly the rebellious."* (Qur'an 24:4) Allah's command for public witnessing in legal matters: *"And let a group of the believers bear witness to their accusation."* (An-Nur; 24:2) The Prophet Muhammad's words to Khawlah, the wife of Hilal, during a similar case: *"Stoning is easier for you than the wrath of God."*<sup>54</sup> The Hadith that stresses evidentiary requirements: *"Bring evidence or the prescribed punishment will be carried out on your back."*<sup>55</sup> Statements of Jurists (Aqli and Naqli) To provide a comprehensive understanding, Al-Sabuni references the views of various jurists. While the majority uphold the textual evidence requiring the implementation of punishment, Abu Hanifa presents an alternative opinion. He argues that the absence of mutual curses might allow for leniency, reasoning that the procedural obligation must be contextualized within broader principles of justice and practicality.

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<sup>52</sup> Sabuni, *"Rawai' al-Bayan"* p. 307

<sup>53</sup> Sabuni, *"Rawai' al-Bayan"* 296-302

<sup>54</sup> An-Naisaburi, Nidham Ad-Din Al-Hasan, *Gharaib al Qur'an wa Ragha'ib al Furqan*, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 1<sup>st</sup> edn, 1416), Vol 5. P.161.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Beirut: Dār Ṭūq al-Najāt, 1st ed, 1422), Vol. 9, p. 178, Hadith no. 2671.

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After analyzing the Naqli evidence and weighing it against Aqli reasoning presented by jurists, Al-Sabuni concludes:

*"The opinion of Abu Hanifa, although valid, is not as strong as the opinion of the majority due to the clarity of their textual evidence. Therefore, we adopt the majority view, which aligns with the stance of great commentators like Al-Tabari."<sup>56</sup>*

He asserts that if a husband refuses to invoke curses, the punishment for slander (qadhf) must be carried out on him. Similarly, if the wife refuses, the punishment for adultery is imposed. This ruling not only adheres to the scriptural directives but also ensures that justice is upheld in alignment with divine guidance. This case exemplifies how author harmonizes Aqli and Naqli, ensuring that interpretations are both intellectually sound and deeply rooted in the divine framework. His approach underscores the importance of a balanced methodology in addressing complex legal and ethical questions in Islamic jurisprudence.

## Conclusion

In examining the methodology employed by the scholar in interpreting legal Qur'anic verses, particularly in the work *Rawā'ī 'al-Bayān*, this study found that the approach is both comprehensive and systematic. The researcher skillfully combines interpretation by tradition (*tafsīr bi'l-ma'thūr*) and interpretation by reasoned opinion (*tafsīr bi'l-ra'y*). The writer's emphasis on the Arabic language in interpretation aligns with the foundational belief that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic for the understanding of its original audience, and thus, its meanings must be derived directly from the language itself. The scholar also integrates a variety of interpretive methods, such as grammatical analysis, the context of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), and the different readings of the Qur'an, to provide a nuanced and holistic explanation of legal verses. While the methodology is firmly grounded in classical *tafsīr*, the work represents a sophisticated attempt to bridge traditional scholarship with contemporary issues in Islamic legal thought, such as bioethics, Islamic finance, and constitutional matters. By relying on the linguistic and contextual aspects of the Qur'an, the researcher enriches the interpretations, offering deeper insights into the legal rulings derived from the sacred text. However, despite the strengths of this approach, there are areas in the interpretation that could benefit from greater engagement with contemporary legal frameworks such as constitutional law, family legislation, or financial regulations in modern Muslim societies. The study recommends that *Rawā'ī 'al-Bayān* be translated into more languages to increase its accessibility to a wider global audience, especially for non-Arabic-speaking scholars and students interested in Qur'anic legal interpretation.

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<sup>56</sup> Sabuni, "*Rawai' al-Bayan*" p. 89

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