Explanation of the Preface to the Tafsīr of

Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī

d. 327 AH / 938 CE

An Introduction to the Science of Tafsīr and Its Early Narration



دار سبيل السلف

Abu Hamzah ibnu Musafir

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About this Book

The *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī (d. 327 AH) is one of the most important works of Qur'anic exegesis. It is one of the earliest comprehensive *tafsīr* works, and a large part of it has survived to this day.

In a short preface, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim describes his method, thereby giving valuable insight into *tafsīr* based on narrations (*at-tafsīru l-maʾthūr*), which forms the basis of all Qur'anic exegesis. This preface is translated and briefly explained in this book.

In addition, the explanation is preceded by an extensive introduction to the science of *tafsīr* and its narration, which gives an overview of the subject as well as of the work and its author. This introduction is also meant to make it easier for the reader to understand what Ibnu Abī Ḥātim mentions in his preface and to benefit from it as much as possible.

About the Author

Abu Hamzah ibnu Musafir has been studying the Islamic sciences since the mid-nineties, spending several years in the Arab world for that purpose. He studied at various faculties in Cairo as well as in Damascus.

During his studies, he memorized the Qur'an and other Arabic foundational texts, as well as Arabic poems. He published numerous writings in Arabic and other languages in various fields of the Islamic sciences.

His studies focus above all on the foundations of Islamic belief, the analysis and comparison of various religious movements, theoretical and applied *ḥadīth* sciences, the fundamentals of narration, the fundamentals of tafsīr, and comparative religious studies.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Written by
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دَارُ سَبِيلِ السَّلَف

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Foreword

The *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī (d. 327 AH) is one of the most important *tafāsīr* of all. It is one of the earliest comprehensive *tafsīr* works, and a large part of it has survived to this day.

In a short preface, the author describes his method, thereby giving valuable insight into *tafsīr* based on narrations *(at-tafsīru l-maʾthūr)*, which forms the basis of the entire science of *tafsīr*. This preface is translated and briefly explained in the present work.

In addition, the explanation is preceded by an extensive introduction to the science of *tafsīr* and its narration, which gives an overview of the subject as well as of the work and its author. This introduction is also meant to make it easier for the reader to understand what Ibnu Abī Ḥātim mentions in his preface and to benefit from it as much as possible.

Since this is a short work, the aim is not to present a detailed study of the science of *tafsīr*; such a treatise would have to be far more extensive. Rather, this book is intended to give the reader an impression of how the narration and recording of *tafsīr* began, and which aspects in particular need to be considered when dealing with the *tafsīr* of the Qur'an.

This text was originally the written version of a series of lectures from 2021 and 2022 explaining the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī. In that lecture series, after an introduction to the subject, the preface to the *Tafsīr* was discussed first, and then some of the *tafsīr* narrations themselves were explained, including an analysis of their chains of narration.

For a general readership, however, it seemed sensible to limit the book to the parts that can serve as an introduction to the subject and to deliberately leave out the more in-depth discussions. Instead, the

introduction to this work focuses on giving the reader a general understanding of the narrations of *tafsīr* and on pointing out misguided developments in this field.

In this book, Arabic words are transcribed according to a scholarly system common in English-language works.

The long Arabic vowels (ا و ي) are rendered as ā ū ī.

Some letters are marked by special characters to allow an unambiguous reading. These are:

ء (ʾ), ع (ʿ), ح (ḥ), ص (ṣ), ض (ḍ), ط (ṭ) and ظ (ẓ), as well as their capital forms.

Other letters are rendered without special characters: ث (th), ج (j), خ (kh), ذ (dh), ز (z), ش (sh), غ (gh). Doubled consonants are written twice; this also applies to the digraphs (e.g. *mutaʾakhkhirīn*).

All other letters, and the way words are joined, should be clear from the flow of reading.

In principle, this book is suitable both for readers who adhere to Islam and for followers of other religions who wish to learn more about Islam, and in particular about the Qur'an and *tafsīr*, that is, the interpretation (exegesis) of the Qur'an.

To make the text easier to understand, Arabic technical terms are explained in notes, where possible, when they are first mentioned. It is assumed, however, that readers have some prior knowledge of Islam, which is why generally familiar terms are not explained, or not in detail.

To make it easier for the reader to compare the translations with the original texts, the latter are always given first. Throughout the book, the quotations follow the text of the edition found in the digital library *al-Maktabatu sh-Shāmilah*, so that they can easily be searched.

The translations of the quoted source texts in this edition follow the author's own translations from the Arabic and were made in consultation with him.[1]

Above all, thanks are due to Allah ﷻ for all His favours, and in particular for making it possible to write this book. I would then like to thank my family for their support, as well as all those who contributed to this book and without whose efforts it could not have appeared in this form.

[1] That these translations are merely a rendering of the meaning of the original texts into another language, as is often pointed out, goes without saying. Since this in fact applies to every translation, it would not need to be stated explicitly.

About the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī and Its Author

Biography of the Author, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī

Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdu r-Raḥmān ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī was one of the eminent early scholars of Islam. He excelled above all in the sciences of *ḥadīth*[2] and Qur'anic exegesis, that is, *tafsīr*.

The actual name of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim[3] was thus ʿAbdu r-Raḥmān, and his *kunyah*, the name by which he was called as a father, was Abū Muḥammad[4].

As the biographers generally report, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim was born in 240 AH (854 CE) [there are also other, slightly different dates] and died in 327 AH (938 CE). He thus lived to the age of 87 – رَحِمَهُ اللهُ, may Allah have mercy on him.

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[2] A *ḥadīth* is a narration from or about the Prophet ﷺ. Taken together, these narrations are called the Sunnah, which is the second primary source of Islamic law, alongside the Qur'an. (The plural of *ḥadīth* is *aḥādīth*; in this book, as is common in English, the plural *ḥadīths* is used.)

It should be noted that in the early period of Islam it was common to call narrations from the first generations after him *ḥadīth* as well. The distinction between *ḥadīth* for a narration from the Prophet in particular and *athar* (pl. *āthār*) for other narrations only became established later, and it was not adopted by all *ḥadīth* scholars either.

In this sense, it is not wrong to speak in general of *ḥadīth* narration, the science of *ḥadīth* or works on the science of *ḥadīth* with regard to the narrations of the first generations.

[3] In Arabic, the name Ibnu Abī Ḥātim literally means: the son of Abū Ḥātim. This kind of name thus refers to a person's father and was common among the Arabs.

[4] Literally: the father of Muḥammad

Throughout this long life, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim was known for his constant devotion to the Islamic sciences, which also explains how, with the help of Allah, he was able to write several highly important works in different sciences.

One of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's most important works is his comprehensive *Tafsīr*, which undoubtedly played a decisive role in the narration of the *tafsīr* of the *Salaf*[5]. The achievements of this scholar in collecting the various statements of the *Salaf* on *tafsīr* in writing are, in a word, invaluable.

As mentioned, however, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim was above all one of the eminent early *ḥadīth* scholars, and in this field too he wrote several standard works. The following deserve particular mention:

- *Al-Jarḥu wa-t-Taʿdīl*: a book on the biographies and assessments of the narrators of *ḥadīth*. It is undoubtedly one of the most important and authoritative works in the science of the narrators of *ḥadīth*, which is known as *al-jarḥu wa-t-taʿdīl* or *ʿilmu r-rijāl*.

  All later scholars of this field relied on this work, and it is therefore considered indispensable in this science. This underlines Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's great importance for the Islamic sciences.

  Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's father, Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, was himself a scholar of *ḥadīth*, and in particular of *al-jarḥu wa-t-taʿdīl*. He passed this knowledge on to his son, which is why Ibnu Abī Ḥātim refers to his father again and again in this work.

- *Al-ʿIlal* or *ʿIlalu l-Ḥadīth*: this book, too, is an authoritative work in its field, the science of hidden defects *(al-ʿilal)* in *ḥadīths* and their chains of narration.

[5] The predecessors, i.e. the righteous early Muslims, and in particular the eminent scholars of those generations.

Ibnu Abī Ḥātim learned from numerous great scholars, but above all from his father, Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, and from Abū Zurʿah ar-Rāzī, who is likewise regarded as a very great scholar and was a companion of Abū Ḥātim. These two scholars are also known as ar-Rāziyān, "the two Rāzīs". Among the works that go back to them is the short and increasingly well-known treatise *ʿAqīdatu r-Rāziyayn*, "the Creed of the Two Rāzīs". This treatise was written down and narrated by Ibnu Abī Ḥātim.

What follows is a short account of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's two main teachers, since knowing a scholar's teachers makes his own standing clearer. Moreover, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim gathered the knowledge of these two Imams and, over his long life, worked it into his writings with remarkable diligence and perseverance. Knowing these two Imams and their work therefore also sheds light on Ibnu Abī Ḥātim and his works.

Biographies of His Two Most Important Teachers: Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī and Abū Zurʿah ar-Rāzī

In his work *al-Jarḥu wa-t-Taʿdīl*, where he mentions numerous great scholars of the various preceding generations, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim devotes a separate chapter to his father, Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī[6]. He opens this chapter with the following words:

وَمِنَ الْعُلَمَاءِ الْجَهَابِذَةِ النُّقَّادِ مِنَ الطَّبَقَةِ الرَّابِعَةِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الرَّيِّ أَبِي [أَبُو حَاتِمٍ] رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ

بَابُ مَا ذُكِرَ مِنْ مَعْرِفَةِ أَبِي رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ بِصِحَّةِ الْحَدِيثِ وَسَقِيمِهِ

> *And among the eminent scholars of the fourth generation, from among the people of ar-Rayy is my father, Abū Ḥātim, may Allah have mercy on him.*

[6] Abū Ḥātim's name was Muḥammad ibnu Idrīs ibni l-Mundhir al-Ḥanẓalī ar-Rāzī (195–277 AH).

> *Chapter: What has been mentioned about my father's knowledge, may Allah have mercy on him, of the sound and the unsound ḥadīths. …*

As can be seen from these lines, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim then presents his father's biography in several sub-chapters on different topics, which shows how extensive the scholars' praise of Abū Ḥātim was.

It should be noted that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim always traces these statements of other scholars back to them with a chain of narration, in keeping with the practice of the *ḥadīth* scholars even for biographical information. This of course does not apply to what he himself reported directly about his father.

Likewise, in the introduction to his comprehensive work *al-Kāmilu fī Ḍuʿafāʾi r-Rijāl*, Ibnu ʿAdī al-Jurjānī presents the biographies of the outstanding scholars of earlier generations, among them Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī.

These statements, too, confirm that Abū Ḥātim was one of the most eminent scholars of *ḥadīths*, their chains of narration and their narrators.

Ibnu Abī Ḥātim also gives a comprehensive biography of Abū Zurʿah[7] with numerous narrated statements. Some statements about him from various sources are quoted below.

In *Tārīkhu Baghdād*, al-Khaṭību l-Baghdādī narrates with his chain of narration through ʿAbdullāh, the son of Aḥmad, from Aḥmad ibnu Ḥanbal:

> مَا جَاوَزَ الْجِسْرَ أَفْقَهُ مِنْ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ رَاهَوَيْهِ، وَلَا أَحْفَظُ مِنْ أَبِي زُرْعَةَ.

[7] Abū Zurʿah's name was ʿUbaydullāh ibnu ʿAbdi l-Karīm ibni Yazīd ibni Farrūkh ar-Rāzī (200–264 AH).

> *"No one who crossed the bridge had more understanding than Isḥāq ibnu Rāhawayh [or Rāhūyah] or had memorized more than Abū Zurʿah."*

And in the introduction to his work *al-Kāmilu fī Ḍuʿafāʾi r-Rijāl*, Ibnu ʿAdī narrated from Ibnu Abī Shaybah:

مَا رَأَيْتُ أَحَدًا أَحْفَظَ مِنْ أَبِي زُرْعَةَ الرَّازِيِّ.

> *I have not seen anyone with a stronger memory than Abū Zurʿah ar-Rāzī.*

With regard to this statement, it should be borne in mind that Ibnu Abī Shaybah was himself one of the greatest Imams of *ḥadīth*, and that there were very many outstanding *ḥadīth* scholars at that time. Such a statement from someone like Ibnu Abī Shaybah, and in that golden age of *ḥadīth* narration, therefore carries all the more weight.

And from ʿAbdullāh, the son of Aḥmad, al-Khaṭību l-Baghdādī narrates the following statement in *Tārīkhu Baghdād*:

لَمَّا وَرَدَ عَلَيْنَا أَبُو زُرْعَةَ، نَزَلَ عِنْدَنَا، فَقَالَ لِي أَبِي: يَا بُنَيَّ، قَدِ اعْتَضْتُ بِنَوَافِلِي مُذَاكَرَةَ هَذَا الشَّيْخِ.

> *When Abū Zurʿah came to us (to our region), he stayed at our house. My father said to me: "My son, I have given up my nāfilah prayers in exchange for studying with this shaykh."*

That is, Aḥmad set aside the highly recommended Sunnah prayers[8] in order to make use of this opportunity and have more time for studying *ḥadīth* with him.

[8] That is, the recommended prayers that go beyond the five daily obligatory prayers.

In *al-Jarḥu wa-t-Taʿdīl*, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim narrated from Yūnus ibnu ʿAbdi l-Aʿlā:

> يُونُسَ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْأَعْلَى يَقُولُ: مَا رَأَيْتُ أَكْثَرَ تَوَاضُعًا مِنْ أَبِي زُرْعَةَ، هُوَ وَأَبُو حَاتِمٍ إِمَامَا خُرَاسَانَ.

> *I have not seen anyone more humble than Abū Zurʿah. He and Abū Ḥātim are the two Imams of Khurāsān.*

In the introduction to his work *al-Kāmilu fī Ḍuʿafāʾi r-Rijāl*, Ibnu ʿAdī narrated from Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī:

> سَمِعْتُ أَبَا يَعْلَى الْمَوْصِلِيَّ يَقُولُ: مَا سَمِعْنَا بِذِكْرِ أَحَدٍ بِالْحِفْظِ إِلَّا كَانَ اسْمُهُ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ رُؤْيَتِهِ إِلَّا أَبُو زُرْعَةَ الرَّازِيُّ، فَإِنَّ مُشَاهَدَتَهُ كَانَتْ أَعْظَمَ مِن اسْمِهِ، وَكَانَ لَا يَرَى أَحَدًا مَنْ هُوَ دُونَهُ فِي الْحِفْظِ أَنَّهُ أَعْرَفُ مِنْهُ، وَكَانَ قَدْ جَمَعَ حِفْظَ الْأَبْوَابِ وَالشُّيُوخِ وَالتَّفْسِيرِ وَغَيْرِ ذَلِكَ، وَكَتَبْنَا بِانْتِخَابِهِ بِوَاسِطَ سِتَّةَ آلَافٍ

> *Whenever we heard of someone's ḥifẓ [his ability to memorize, and also what he had actually memorized], his name was greater than the sight of him (in person), except for Abū Zurʿah: the sight of him was greater than his name.*
>
> *(Nevertheless,) he did not consider himself more knowledgeable than anyone below him in ḥifẓ. He combined the learning [or memorization] of the chapters [or subject areas], of the shuyūkh [or their biographies], of tafsīr and of other things.*[9] *We wrote down 6,000 ḥadīths from him in Wāsiṭ.*

The people from whom these statements come were themselves eminent *ḥadīth* scholars and Imams of the Sunnah. There were countless such statements about Abū Zurʿah alone, from countless people.

[9] In the sense that he had mastered these fields of knowledge and combined them in what he knew and had memorized.

Information on the Printed Edition and the Manuscripts

The *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim has only been available in print for a relatively short time. It had to be transcribed from a manuscript, which naturally takes a great deal of work and time and involves various difficulties. The older handwriting, for example, is much harder to read, especially since some passages have become illegible with age.

It should be noted that these manuscripts are, of course, not in Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's own hand, but copies of his manuscript or copies of those copies.

The individual narrations were quoted again and again in later works, above all by authors from the eighth and ninth centuries onwards. Two sources deserve particular mention here: the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Kathīr and the compilation *ad-Durru l-Manthūr* by as-Suyūṭī[10]. These quotations of many narrations from the original *Tafsīr* confirm the authenticity of the work, since they agree with the manuscript.

The authenticity of this *Tafsīr* is further confirmed by the fact that the same narrations are often also found in other *tafāsīr*, such as the *Tafsīr* of aṭ-Ṭabarī. Although the two authors narrated the same texts independently of each other, each with his own chains of narration, they generally agree. This clearly shows that these narrations on the interpretation of the Qur'an were widely known and familiar in the Muslim community at that time. They were learned, taught and passed on in writing in the various lands and cities of the Islamic empire.

[10] Where later authors *(mutaʾakhkhirīn)* are mentioned, it should be pointed out that this is, as a matter of principle, no endorsement of those individuals or of all their statements and beliefs.

At this point in the text, for example, the only purpose is to show in which works narrations from Ibnu Abī Ḥātim were frequently cited.

At present, there is an older and a newer printed edition of the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim[11]. The old edition contains several errors that occurred when it was transcribed from the *makhṭūṭah*[12]; in this particular respect the second edition is of higher quality. It is also considerably more extensive than the first, since numerous comments have been added on the chains of narration that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim cites. The commentary, the comprehensive introduction and several indexes take up a large part of this edition.

However, this edition has been sharply criticized on several occasions, because the comments treat the narrations of the *Salaf* in a way that does not correspond to the approach of the early scholars, as will be discussed in more detail later.

It should be mentioned here that the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim in general, and this newer printed edition too, consists of several volumes prepared by different editors, so that certain differences in approach

[11] The two editions are:

- The older edition from 1417 AH / 1997, first edition, published by Maktabatu Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, Makkah / Riyadh
- The newer edition from 1439 AH / 2018, first edition, published by Dār Ibni l-Jawzī, Dammam

This edition by Dār Ibni l-Jawzī was also the one used for the lecture series from which this book arose. In the following description of the printed editions, this edition is meant unless otherwise stated. Including the introduction, which forms a separate volume, the edition has a total of 17 volumes, divided as follows:

- Volumes 1 to 12 are the actual *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim, taken from the manuscript that still exists today.
- Volume 13 contains the narrations that are not found in the surviving *makhṭūṭāt* and were collected from other works and added by the editors.
- Volumes 14 to 16 contain various scholarly indexes.

[12] i.e. the handwritten manuscript, pl. *makhṭūṭāt*

can be seen between the individual volumes. The criticisms mentioned above, however, concern the approach of the work as a whole.

For this newer printed edition, the editors compared the various manuscripts with each other and with narrations quoted in later *tafāsīr*. As already mentioned, the manuscripts available today are not complete. Narrations that are not found in the manuscript available today, but appear as quotations in a later *tafsīr* work, were added by the editors of the printed edition.

The larger missing sections were collected in a separate part of the printed edition, which is why the edition consists of two parts: one part that is found in the existing *makhṭūṭah*[13], and a second part compiled from the quotations in other works. This second part, too, can essentially be regarded as authentic, since those later authors, whatever may be said of them in other respects, were trustworthy in narration, as many of their other narrations show. Comparing them with the original works clearly shows that these authors quoted their sources faithfully.

[13] In the older printed edition, this part is called *aṣīl*, in the sense of "original".

General Introduction to the Science of *tafsīr* and Its Narration

The Early tafsīr Works and the Narration of tafsīr in the First Centuries

The *tafsīr* works of the first centuries of Islamic history form the basis of all Qur'anic exegesis, and thus of the understanding of the Qur'anic text itself.

The writing down of *tafsīr* began very early. There are texts indicating that narrations on *tafsīr* were already being written down in the first century of the Islamic calendar. In this connection, two scholars in particular are mentioned: Mujāhid ibnu Jabr (21–104 AH) and Saʿīd ibnu Jubayr (c. 40–95 AH). Both were students of the *ṣaḥābah* (the Companions of the Prophet) in *tafsīr*, specifically of ʿAbdullāh ibnu ʿAbbās, who taught *tafsīr* in Makkah. These and other students carried on the teaching of Ibnu ʿAbbās, just as the students of other Companions took *tafsīr* from their own teachers and passed it on to the following generation, the *atbāʿu t-tābiʿīn*.

Although these two works have not come down to us in the original form in which they were first written, many narrations from these two scholars were passed on in later *tafsīr* works, and in some cases collections of the narrations of a single scholar were later compiled from them.

Later, in the second century, further works were written, such as those of Sufyān ath-Thawrī (97–161 AH) and ʿAbdu r-Razzāq aṣ-Ṣanʿānī (126–211 AH).

All these early *tafāsīr* had one thing in common: they were collections of narrations to which no further explanations were added. This method continued throughout the entire era of roughly the first three centuries, and the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, who died at the beginning of the fourth century, was also written in this form.

Passing on *tafsīr* by means of narrations is also called *at-tafsīru l-maʾthūr*, and it forms the basis of Qur'anic exegesis. The works mentioned are therefore *tafsīr* works that belong to this category.

At-tafsīru l-maʾthūr can be contrasted with what is called *tafsīru bi-r-raʾy*, that is, *tafsīr* based on one's view or opinion. The latter becomes problematic when one relies on nothing but one's own opinion and ignores the narrated interpretations that were known in the early period.

In this connection, a well-known saying of the Prophet ﷺ has been narrated in various wordings. Aṭ-Ṭabarī, for example, narrates it with his chain of narration from Saʿīd ibnu Jubayr, from Ibnu ʿAbbās, from the Prophet ﷺ, that he said:

... عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ جُبَيْرٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ: «مَنْ قَالَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ بِرَأْيِهِ، فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ»

> *Whoever speaks about the Qur'an on the basis of his own opinion, let him take his place in the Hellfire.*

Aṭ-Ṭabarī mentions this and several other narrations of this saying in a separate chapter in the introduction to his *Tafsīr*, under the heading:

ذِكْرُ بَعْضِ الْأَخْبَارِ الَّتِي رُوِيَتْ بِالنَّهْيِ عَنِ الْقَوْلِ فِي تَأْوِيلِ الْقُرْآنِ بِالرَّأْيِ

> *Mention of some of the reports narrated concerning the prohibition of speaking about the interpretation of the Qur'an on the basis of one's own opinion*

However, the earliest *tafsīr* collections mentioned so far that still exist today are not comprehensive commentaries on the Qur'an; that is, they do not deal with every expression or every *āyah*[14]. Some of these collections consist only of isolated narrations in the order of the

[14] A verse of the Qur'an, pl. *āyāt*

Qur'anic text, and sometimes no narration at all is given for whole sections of the Qur'an[15].

The *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī was thus likewise written in the early period of Islam, even if somewhat later than the earliest *tafāsīr* mentioned at the beginning.

Together with the *Tafsīr* of Abū Jaʿfar ibnu Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī (224–310 AH), the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim is considered one of the most comprehensive *tafsīr* works of all, and in particular one of the *tafsīr* works of which a large part has survived to this day.

Despite this outstanding position, this important *tafsīr* is hardly known to the general public today – even though this has already begun to change in recent decades, during which there has been a growing return to the early scholars worldwide, including in the English-speaking world.

As already mentioned, the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim has not survived in full. This is in contrast to the *Tafsīr* of aṭ-Ṭabarī, a very comprehensive work that has the distinction of still being in circulation in its entirety today.

The *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim also differs from that of aṭ-Ṭabarī in one essential respect: in addition to narrations from the Prophet ﷺ, the *ṣaḥābah* and the two following generations, aṭ-Ṭabarī also added explanations of his own, which makes his *Tafsīr* even more comprehensive. Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's method, by contrast, follows that of the earlier *mufassirīn*[16]. In his work he mentions only narrations and adds no commentary of his own to them.

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[15] As will shortly be made clear, in the early period there was no need to comment on or explain every detail and every single word of the Qur'an.

[16] The *mufassirūn* (sg. *mufassir*), that is, those who interpret the Qur'an, the scholars of *tafsīr*

The *tafāsīr* of the first centuries generally consisted entirely of narrations. One exception, for example, is the *Tafsīr* of Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān (d. 150 AH), which is, by and large, a concise interpretation of the Qur'an in its author's own words – even though these interpretations are basically always guided by the narrations and agree with them in content. The *Tafsīr* of Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān is in fact considered the first *tafsīr* work in Islamic history to have survived complete to this day.

Besides the *tafsīr* works already mentioned, which deal solely with *tafsīr*, *tafsīr* narrations are also found in the early *ḥadīth* books, such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī or the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd. These contain separate sections on *tafsīr*, in which numerous statements on the interpretation of the Qur'an are narrated.

In general, the narrations on *tafsīr* are statements of the Prophet ﷺ, the *ṣaḥābah*, the *tābiʿīn*, the *atbāʿu t-tābiʿīn* and in some cases the fourth generation that came after them. The bulk of them, however, are the interpretations of the *ṣaḥābah* and the *tābiʿīn*. Direct statements of the Prophet ﷺ explaining a specific passage of the Qur'an are comparatively rare.

A Note on tafsīr by Mere Opinion: tadabbur, istinbāṭ and the Linguistic Meaning of the Qur'an

Incidentally, what was said above about interpretation by mere opinion *(at-tafsīru bi-r-raʾy)* does not mean, as many people today assume through a lack of knowledge of the *tafsīr* narrations and the science of *tafsīr*, that it is absolutely impermissible to say anything about an *āyah* of the Qur'an without citing a statement from the *Salaf* on it.

The scholars of the first four generations themselves, and also those after them within the first centuries of the Islamic calendar, repeatedly cited passages of the Qur'an without quoting a statement of a predecessor on them.

Here a distinction is made above all between the terms *tafsīr*, *tadabbur* and *istinbāṭ*. *Tadabbur* refers to reflecting and pondering deeply on a verse of the Qur'an. *Istinbāṭ*, on the other hand, refers to deriving from a passage of the Qur'an a meaning that is not obvious. This includes, for example, rulings derived for new matters *(nawāzil)* that had not yet arisen in that form at the time.

Apart from this, a large part of the Qur'an was clear to the Arabs of that time simply through their understanding of the language, as will be discussed in more detail later. Even today, at least the general meaning of a verse is often clear to an Arab (with a basic education) through his knowledge of the language.

These points show that a person may well quote a verse of the Qur'an and, for example, explain its general and linguistic meaning, without thereby falling into the blameworthy *tafsīr* by mere opinion *(at-tafsīru bi-r-raʾyi l-madhmūm)*.

Rather, what matters in this context is that no one should try to understand the Qur'an through his own opinion alone, without having studied the relevant *tafsīr* narrations, or before having studied them.

Tadabbur and *istinbāṭ* are therefore not wrong or reprehensible in themselves. They are only to be rejected when they take place completely detached from the narrations of the *Salaf*, or are undertaken before one knows these narrations.

Someone who lacks this necessary prior knowledge of the narrations will inevitably contradict them at times. The problem is that most people today follow precisely this wrong method without even being aware of the problem, and this has led to numerous misunderstandings about the Qur'an and *tafsīr*.

The Most Important Schools[17] of tafsīr

As *tafsīr* was passed on from the *ṣaḥābah* ﷺ to the *tābiʿīn* and then to the subsequent generations رَحِمَهُمُ اللهُ – may Allah have mercy on them all – certain routes of narration emerged, which eventually became well-known schools of *tafsīr*.

These schools began to take shape above all when individual scholars among the Companions moved, after the death of the Prophet ﷺ, to other major cities of the Islamic empire, such as Kufa and Basra in Iraq and Damascus in Syria.

Among the important scholars of *tafsīr* are, above all, ʿAbdullāh ibnu ʿAbbās, who founded the Makkan school of *tafsīr*, and ʿAbdullāh ibnu Masʿūd, who was sent to Kufa and passed on the teaching of *tafsīr* there.

Some scholars of the *ṣaḥābah* ﷺ also remained on the Arabian Peninsula, in Makkah and Madinah, and passed on *tafsīr* there. The most important of these schools of *tafsīr* are briefly listed below:

- **Makkah:** Ibnu ʿAbbās
- **Madinah:** Ubayy ibnu Kaʿb and Zayd ibnu Thābit
- **Kufa:** ʿAbdullāh ibnu Masʿūd and ʿAlī ibnu Abī Ṭālib
- **Basra:** Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī
- **Damascus:** Abū d-Dardāʾ

[17] In this context, "schools" does not refer to differing methodologies and approaches; in this respect there was no difference. The schools of *tafsīr* simply refer to how *tafsīr* was passed on in a particular place by certain scholars to their students. So these are not different methods, as is the case, for example, with the schools of law.

How the Prophet Explained the Qur'an and How His Explanation Was Passed On

At this point, attention may be drawn to a question that has been discussed increasingly for some time among authors on the sciences of *tafsīr*, namely whether the Prophet ﷺ interpreted the entire Qur'an.

From what has been said above, it is already clear that direct explanations by the Prophet ﷺ *(at-tafsīru l-mubāshir)* are rare. This is clear enough in itself, since it can be seen very plainly from the number of narrations.

On the other hand, it is just as clear that the Prophet ﷺ exemplified the Qur'an through everything he did. In this sense, there is the following well-known statement of ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها, which Muslim narrates in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. In it, ʿĀ'ishah is answering the question of Saʿd ibnu Hishām ibni ʿĀmir mentioned in the text:

> فَقُلْتُ: يَا أُمَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ! أَنْبِئِينِي عَنْ خُلُقِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. قَالَتْ: أَلَسْتَ تَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ؟ قُلْتُ: بَلَى. قَالَتْ: فَإِنَّ خُلُقَ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ الْقُرْآنَ

> *So I said: "O Mother of the Believers, tell me about the character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ."*
>
> *She said: "Do you not read the Qur'an?"*
>
> *I replied: "Yes, indeed."*
>
> *She said: "The character of the Prophet of Allah was the Qur'an."*

The character and conduct of the Prophet ﷺ were thus the teaching of the Qur'an put into practice. The deeds, statements and approvals narrated from him are therefore an explanation of the Qur'anic text, even if such narrations make no direct reference to a particular *āyah* of the Qur'an.

Particular mention should also be made here of the acts of worship and legal rulings that the Qur'an prescribes in general terms. Things such as prayer and Zakat are commanded in the Qur'an in general wording, but they are not explained there in detail.

The Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ is the detailed explanation of these general texts – in accordance with the verse of the Qur'an in *sura an-Naḥl*, 16:44:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And We revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear[18] to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.

In his *Tafsīr*[19], Ibnu Abī Ḥātim mentions the following interpretation of this *āyah* by the well-known *mufassir* of the *tābiʿīn*, Mujāhid ibnu Jabr:

عَنْ مُجَاهِدِ بْنِ جَبْرٍ، فِي قَوْلِهِ: {لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ}، قَالَ: مَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ، وَمَا حُرِّمَ عَلَيْهِمْ

From Mujāhid ibnu Jabr, concerning the words "that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them", he said[20]: "What was made lawful for them and what was made unlawful for them."

Things of this kind are therefore undoubtedly explanations of the Qur'an, even if the individual text does not explicitly refer to a particular *āyah*. It is clear that everything people need in order to be able to

[18] Or also: "explain", "clarify"

[19] Narrated in the work *ad-Durru l-Manthūr*

[20] That is, Mujāhid ibnu Jabr said the following about the quoted Qur'anic text by way of explanation …

carry out the general commands of the Qur'an at all was explained by the Prophet ﷺ, without exception. After all, this is precisely the real task of a Messenger: to explain Allah's message to people and to convey it to them in such a way that they are able to put it into practice.

This can be seen in concrete terms, for example, in the following *ḥadīth*, which is narrated by al-Bukhārī, among others:

> وَصَلُّوا كَمَا رَأَيْتُمُونِي أُصَلِّي
>
> *… and pray as you have seen me praying.*

So even if the Prophet ﷺ did not comment word for word on every detail of the Qur'an, everything he did and the teaching he exemplified are an explanation of the entire Qur'an. This content of the Sunnah was passed on by the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ to the following generation and then narrated from generation to generation.

An Important Statement of Ibnu ʿAbbās That Gives a Basic Understanding of tafsīr

It has already been pointed out that in the early period there was no need to comment on or explain every detail and every single word of the Qur'an.

The Arabs of that time had a highly developed language, and the general meaning of most of the Qur'anic text was clear to them through their understanding of the language. It would therefore have been superfluous to explain every single word to them. Only with the growing corruption of the language over the centuries, and above all through the mixing of the Arabs with many other peoples, did this need become ever greater.

What has been said about the early period of Islam is shown very clearly by the following well-known statement of the Companion Ibnu ʿAbbās ﷺ:

... قَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ: " التَّفْسِيرُ عَلَى أَرْبَعَةِ أَوْجُهٍ: وَجْهٍ تَعْرِفُهُ الْعَرَبُ مِنْ كَلَامِهَا، وَتَفْسِيرٌ لَا يُعْذَرُ أَحَدٌ بِجَهَالَتِهِ، وَتَفْسِيرٌ يَعْلَمُهُ الْعُلَمَاءُ، وَتَفْسِيرٌ لَا يَعْلَمُهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ "

Ibnu ʿAbbās said: Tafsīr is of four kinds:

***1)** That which the Arabs know from their language*

***2)** tafsīr that no one is excused for being ignorant of*

***3)** tafsīr that the scholars know*

***4)** And tafsīr that no one knows except Allah.*

This saying of Ibnu ʿAbbās became well known among the Muslim scholars and is therefore found in the works written on *tafsīr* and the sciences of the Qur'an. This indicates the importance the scholars attached to this statement of Ibnu ʿAbbās.

The wording given here comes from the work of aṭ-Ṭabarī, who mentions the statement in the comprehensive introduction to his *Tafsīr* and also explains it. But scholars had already quoted this statement considerably earlier in Islamic history.

From this remark of Ibnu ʿAbbās it can thus be clearly understood that a large part of the general meanings of the Qur'an was clear to the Arabs of that time simply through their understanding of the language. There was therefore no need to explain all these things to people in general, since they were already known to them anyway.

Statements of the Early Scholars on Their Approach to the Narration of tafsīr

Like the *sīrah*[21] or the *maghāzī*[22], the narration of *tafsīr* differs greatly from that of *ḥadīths*[23]. These sciences were narrated by their specialists and scholars in a manner of their own. In this connection, a statement of Aḥmad ibnu Ḥanbal is often mentioned, which al-Khaṭību l-Baghdādī, for example, narrates with his chain of narration as follows:

ثَلَاثَةُ كُتُبٍ لَيْسَ لَهَا أُصُولٌ: الْمَغَازِي وَالْمَلَاحِمُ وَالتَّفْسِيرُ

> *Three books have no foundation:*
>
> • *The maghāzī (the military campaigns, their history and chronology)*
>
> • *The malāḥim (the fitan, tribulations, future wars and catastrophes)*
>
> • *Tafsīr.*

Al-Khaṭību l-Baghdādī narrates this statement in his book *al-Jāmiʿu li-Akhlāqi r-Rāwī wa-Ādābi s-Sāmiʿ* and then explains his view that it must be understood as referring to certain works.

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[21] The chronology and biography of the Prophet ﷺ

[22] The military campaigns of the Prophet and of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, including, for example, the battles against the apostates under Abū Bakr.

[23] The term *ḥadīth* does not necessarily refer to a narration from the Prophet ﷺ. In the early period, narrations from later figures, such as the Companions, were also called *ḥadīth*. In later centuries, however, the distinction between *ḥadīth* and *athar* became established, *ḥadīth* meaning a narration from the Prophet ﷺ, as opposed to *athar* (pl. *āthār*).

At this point in the text, however, it is above all the narrations from the Prophet ﷺ that are meant, since they undoubtedly received far more attention and care than the narrations of other figures in Islam – even though the latter are clearly of great importance, as is shown in many places in this book.

Most, however, understand the statement in a general sense, namely that these sciences were narrated with chains that were not very strong, and often also through *marāsīl*. A *mursal* narration (pl. *marāsīl*) is a narration in which the initial part of the *isnād*, that is, its beginning and thus its basis, is not explicitly mentioned. If a *tābiʿī* narrates directly from the Prophet ﷺ without mentioning the Companion from whom he heard the narration, it is called a *ḥadīth mursal*.

The above statement of Aḥmad should therefore by no means be taken to mean that no chains of narration at all were given in these sciences, but rather that, by the specific standards of *ḥadīth* narration, these chains often contain weaknesses.

Aḥmad, of course, knew this very well. After all, hardly anyone knew the whole body of Islamic narrations as well as he did. Moreover, there are indications that Aḥmad himself wrote a comprehensive *tafsīr*, which, however, has not survived. In any case, the books of Aḥmad ibnu Ḥanbal that we have today contain countless such *tafsīr* narrations. There is thus no doubt that he was fully aware of this. For this reason, no scholar of note understood Aḥmad's statement to mean that there were no chains of narration at all in these sciences.

The scholars of the *Salaf* also stated clearly that, with regard to *tafsīr* and other fields of knowledge, they were more lenient about the chains of narration than in the narration of legal rulings.

For example, al-Khaṭību l-Baghdādī[24] narrates the following statement of Aḥmad ibnu Ḥanbal:

> إِذَا رَوَيْنَا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي الْحَلَالِ وَالْحَرَامِ وَالسُّنَنِ وَالْأَحْكَامِ تَشَدَّدْنَا فِي الْأَسَانِيدِ، وَإِذَا رَوَيْنَا عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي فَضَائِلِ الْأَعْمَالِ وَمَا لَا يَضَعُ حُكْمًا وَلَا يَرْفَعُهُ تَسَاهَلْنَا فِي الْأَسَانِيدِ

[24] See: *al-Kifāyah fī ʿIlmi r-Riwāyah*

> *When we narrate from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ concerning the ḥalāl and the ḥarām, the Sunan and the rulings, we are strict about the chains of narration. And when we narrate from the Prophet ﷺ concerning virtuous deeds and matters that neither establish a ruling nor abolish one, we are lenient about the asānīd.*

In his book *al-Jāmiʿu li-Akhlāqi r-Rāwī wa-Ādābi s-Sāmiʿ*, al-Baghdādī also writes:

> وَيَنْبَغِي لِلْمُحَدِّثِ أَنْ يَتَشَدَّدَ فِي أَحَادِيثِ الْأَحْكَامِ الَّتِي يُفْصَلُ بِهَا بَيْنَ الْحَلَالِ وَالْحَرَامِ فَلَا يَرْوِيهَا إِلَّا عَنْ أَهْلِ الْمَعْرِفَةِ وَالْحِفْظِ، وَذَوِي الْإِتْقَانِ وَالضَّبْطِ، وَأَمَّا الْأَحَادِيثُ الَّتِي تَتَعَلَّقُ بِفَضَائِلِ الْأَعْمَالِ وَمَا فِي مَعْنَاهَا فَيُحْتَمَلُ رِوَايَتُهَا عَنْ عَامَّةِ الشُّيُوخِ

> *The muḥaddith must be strict with regard to the ḥadīths on rulings by which the lawful and the unlawful are distinguished. He should narrate them only from people who possess sound knowledge and memory, and who proceed with thoroughness and precision.*
>
> *As for the aḥādīth that relate to virtuous deeds and (other) matters of this kind, (in their case) narration from narrators in general is tolerated.*

Tafsīr, too, was largely treated in this way, since it was a supporting kind of knowledge that often merely clarifies the wording of the Qur'an. Among the scholars of *tafsīr*, these explanations were passed on together with the Qur'an. There are also specific statements about *tafsīr*, such as the following one, which al-Khaṭību l-Baghdādī likewise narrates in the book mentioned above, *al-Jāmiʿ*:

> قَالَ يَحْيَى بْنِ سَعِيدٍ: تَسَاهَلُوا فِي أَخْذِ التَّفْسِيرِ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَا يُوَثِّقُونَهُمْ فِي الْحَدِيثِ

> *Yaḥyā ibnu Saʿīd said: They were lenient in accepting tafsīr from people whom (at the same time) they did not regard as [sufficiently] trustworthy in ḥadīth.*

This statement comes from Yaḥyā ibnu Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān, one of the most eminent scholars of *ḥadīth*, and in particular of the science of assessing narrators, *al-jarḥu wa-t-taʿdīl*. The lack of reliability he refers to here did not necessarily concern trustworthiness as such, but trustworthiness with regard to passing on narrations correctly and accurately in every detail.

Many such scholars were thus certainly, and demonstrably, regarded as completely trustworthy, and they were by no means accused of lying; however, they had weaknesses in knowing and distinguishing narrations, their chains and their narrators.

With people who had become known as liars and as having gone astray, on the other hand, the scholars generally made no exception and clearly pointed out that they were unfit to be narrated from. One example is Muḥammad ibnu s-Sāʾib al-Kalbī, whose narrations most scholars avoided completely, although they were well aware of his extensive knowledge of *tafsīr*.

Reasons Why tafsīr and Other Fields of Knowledge Were Narrated in This Way

There are several reasons why *tafsīr* and some other fields of knowledge were narrated in this way. Some of the important ones are mentioned below:

- One reason is that *tafsīr* was widely known among the *Salaf* through their constant study of and engagement with the Qur'an, since the knowledge of *tafsīr* is closely connected with the Qur'an, which the Muslims diligently read, learned and taught.

  The *tafsīr* scholars specialized in their field and concentrated intensely on learning and passing on the interpretation of the

Qur'an. For the most part, these interpretations were not statements of the Prophet ﷺ himself, but statements of the Companions and of the generations that followed them. In narrating these interpretations, the scholars of *tafsīr* were concerned primarily with the meanings and content, and less with the exact wording.

- The scholars passed these meanings on from one generation to the next. These interpretations and their meanings were known among the scholars throughout the vast Islamic empire of that time. Where there were differing opinions, these too were learned, taught and discussed. In any case, the common opinions were generally widespread and well known.

- As mentioned, the scholars of *tafsīr* were specialists in their field. Because of their focus on *tafsīr*, they were often not necessarily scholars of the science of narration as well. Nevertheless, these sciences, too, are narrated knowledge.

  The same applied to other fields of knowledge, such as the *maghāzī* mentioned earlier and, above all, the *sīrah*. A scholar could be regarded by the *ḥadīth* scholars as "weak" with regard to his narration and his knowledge of chains of narration, while at the same time they attested that he was an Imam, that is, a leading scholar, in his own field. This happens frequently in the fields mentioned. The very same *ḥadīth* scholars thus bore witness to the leading role of such people in their own fields and to the general correctness and authenticity of their statements in those fields.

  Another example of this is the field of Qur'an recitation and its various readings *(al-qirāʾah / al-qirāʾāt)*. Precisely because these scholars specialized in their field, they were often unable to acquire comprehensive knowledge of the chains of narration and the individual narrators. As already mentioned, however, this is not even necessary for passing on their knowledge, since these fields, such as the recitation of the Qur'an, were passed on through practice from one generation of scholars to the next. Chains of

narration do exist in all these areas as well, and they have their benefit and importance, but as a support and corroboration, not as the sole basis on which narration rests.

- Another reason is that the knowledge of *tafsīr* was written down early on. The first comprehensive *tafsīr* that has survived to this day is that of Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān, who died in the middle of the second century, in 150 AH. Muqātil was classed as weak in *ḥadīth* narration, but the content of his *Tafsīr* was praised by some renowned scholars of the *Salaf*, who also made use of it. These scholars knew that Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān's wording agreed with the well-known interpretations and did not contradict them. Muqātil's *Tafsīr* covers the entire Qur'an. As already mentioned, this example shows that the *tafsīr* of the Qur'an was recorded in writing at a very early stage. Its contents were thus widespread, known and accessible among the scholars from very early on.

  The same is true of the *tafsīr* of Mujāhid ibnu Jabr. As already mentioned, Mujāhid's interpretations have likewise largely survived to this day, though not as a single work, but in the books of later *mufassirīn*, such as Ibnu Abī Ḥātim and aṭ-Ṭabarī, who frequently narrate from Mujāhid.

- Much of the content of *tafsīr* was narrated in the same way by several *tafsīr* scholars. The different statements support one another, which is why it would be absurd to reject every single narration outright because it contains moderate weaknesses.

- It should be noted that the weaknesses in chains of narration differ. A weakness can be very serious. On the other hand, there are also narrators with very minor weaknesses, such as occasionally confusing one thing with another. The renowned scholars of *tafsīr* and other fields deliberately did not narrate from people with very pronounced weaknesses. For this reason, these scholars avoided, for example, people who were known as liars or were accused of

lying. Muḥammad ibnu s-Sā'ib al-Kalbī has already been mentioned above as a well-known example of this.

- Another important reason why *tafsīr* was often not narrated with flawless chains of narration is that the interpretation of the Qur'an is often connected with the Arabic language. It has already been made clear that a large part of the meanings of the Qur'an was understood by the early Arabs simply through their understanding of the language. Even where the meaning of a passage could not be fully grasped through the Arabic language alone, it was nevertheless built upon it.

  These linguistic meanings were handed down together with the Qur'an, just as the Arabic language itself was. This shows that not all sciences can be narrated with chains of narration, just as there is no chain of narration for every word of the language. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this is the original Arabic language.

  Especially in our time, one sees a growing tendency to search for weaknesses in early *tafsīr* narrations and then to reject them on that basis. Yet it is absurd for someone to dismiss a linguistic interpretation by a Companion, even one that was narrated with a chain of narration, and then to rely on the explanation in a dictionary that has no chain at all!

  Moreover, such a statement by a Companion was made with specific reference to the particular expression in the Qur'an. Those early scholars' understanding of the language and of the context of the text in question was incomparably better. It is grotesque to dismiss this understanding, then to turn to an explanation in a dictionary that is independent of the Qur'anic text, and then even to apply it to the Qur'an with one's own deficient understanding of language and context!

- Many *tafsīr* narrations were passed on not individually but in written collections known as *nusakhu t-tafsīr*. These writings can be

recognized today by the fact that many narrations are traced back to a scholar with the same *isnād*.

Different standards of authenticity always applied to such written collections, because in passing on a written work the narrator's general integrity must certainly be established, but no ability to reproduce the individual texts from memory is required. The *nusakh* of *tafsīr* were well known among the scholars at that time, and the scholars relied on those collections that they regarded as trustworthy after comparing them with other narrations and collections.

This also strongly corroborates the authenticity of *tafsīr* narrations in general, since the written collections show how well known and widespread the teaching of *tafsīr* was among the scholars of that time. These were by no means isolated narrations that had to be brought to light from obscurity. Quite the opposite: there were well-known schools with numerous renowned scholars who, besides their teachers, could draw on well-known written collections. Clearly, this does not mean that every collection or every single narration must therefore be regarded as beyond doubt. But in general, and especially in the case of written collections that the eminent scholars and specialists regarded as authentic and therefore relied on in their works, this point carries great weight.

The Earlier Approach to Moderate Weaknesses in the Narrations of tafsīr and How It Differs from the Present-Day Approach

The knowledge of *tafsīr* was passed on seamlessly from one generation to the next, just like the Qur'an itself and, for example, Islamic law. When the early scholars agreed on a matter, it is inconceivable that they were all wrong – even if, in passing on the content in question, they relied among other things on a narration whose chain of narration shows certain weaknesses.

These scholars, for example those of Islamic law, the *sīrah* or *tafsīr*, did not rely exclusively on the narration in question, but on the unanimous, shared knowledge of the matter concerned. It would therefore be absurd, in such cases, to reject in hindsight content that was unanimously held at the time because one believes one can detect some weaknesses in a few chains of narration. Yet over the past fifty years or so, precisely this approach has been spreading more and more in Islamic circles around the world.[25]

The beginnings of this development, however, go back a long way. Early on in Islamic history, people increasingly began to detach themselves from the early narrated interpretations and to rely instead on their own understanding of the language and their own views in order to understand the Qur'an. This is why one finds that the vast majority of the *tafāsīr* written in the last thousand years are based almost entirely on the author's own thoughts. In such *tafāsīr* one often finds hardly anything of the statements of the *Salaf*, which should actually form the substance of *tafsīr*.

There were, it is true, occasional attempts to return to the *Salaf*, but even in these *tafāsīr* one repeatedly sees statements of the *Salaf* being rejected on the pretext that they were not soundly narrated. Not infrequently, then as now, the narrations that agree with one's own understanding are judged to be sound, while those that contradict it are rejected as weak.

Frequently, *tafsīr* narrations are also rejected with the claim that they are what is known as *isrāʾīliyyāt*[26]. Just as with the pretext of

[25] It has already been pointed out that the comments in the present-day printed editions of the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim must also be viewed very critically in this respect.

[26] Derived from the term Banū Isrāʾīl, which literally means "the Children of Israel" and refers to the Jews. What is meant here in general are the statements of the Ahlu l-Kitāb, the "People of the Book", that is, the Jews and …--

weaknesses in the chains of narration, the issue of the *isrāʾīliyyāt* is often used to reject *tafsīr* narrations.

It is clear that not every narration can simply be accepted as it is. The early books and collections of narrations themselves also differ in their value. Undoubtedly, there are many narrations in the various books that are rightly to be rejected because of their weakness, and among them there are certainly also various *isrāʾīliyyāt*. However, such things are increasingly being used to reject much of the content of *tafsīr*, the *sīrah* and other sciences on a large scale, including content that was narrated from the *Salaf* in large numbers and in agreement.

In this short introduction, the differences between the earlier and the later approach cannot be discussed in greater detail. There is an extensive contemporary discussion of these questions among present-day authors on the various sciences of *tafsīr*. Undoubtedly, addressing these and similar questions concerning the science of *tafsīr* requires a

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Christians. For the most part, however, these are Jewish narratives.

The *isrāʾīliyyāt* are reports of the Israelites that have not come down with chains of narration and are not considered trustworthy, since over the generations they were to a large extent distorted. The absence of chains of narration over a long period of time alone makes it impossible to verify the authenticity of these statements. The scholars did, however, consider it legitimate to narrate things from the *isrāʾīliyyāt*, relying on a well-known *ḥadīth* of the Prophet ﷺ that permits this in general.

These *isrāʾīliyyāt* are generally divided into three categories, which the Muslim scholars treat as follows:

- Reports that agree with the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and which we therefore know with certainty to be true.
- Others that clearly contradict the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and which we therefore clearly know to have been distorted and to be untrue.
- Narrations that do not contradict the Qur'an and the Sunnah, but for whose confirmation we have no proof either. These may neither be denied nor affirmed as true.

thorough and careful study of the source texts of *tafsīr* and its early sciences. Nevertheless, attention should be drawn here to this problem and its far-reaching consequences.

What has been said in this introduction is meant to give an overview of how *tafsīr* was narrated and which fundamental matters must be borne in mind in the sciences of *tafsīr*. The aim is to make *tafsīr* more accessible to the reader, to point out widespread misunderstandings and, as far as is possible here, to clear them up. In this way, the preceding explanations should also make it easier to understand the following explanation of the preface of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī.

Explanation of the Preface of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ، وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ.

> *In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. There is no might and no power except with Allah, and may the praise of Allah be upon Muḥammad and his family [or also: those who follow him].*[27]

The narrator of the book begins with the *basmalah*[28], as is customary in Islamic practice – just as the suras of the Qur'an begin with the *basmalah*, and just as the Prophet ﷺ began his various letters with the *basmalah*.

The word *"al-ḥawl"* has several meanings in Arabic. Its original meaning is change or movement. Here it is used in the sense of strength, power, ability and the like[29].

The narrator continues with a supplication for the Prophet ﷺ – as is also mentioned and commanded in the Qur'an, in *sura al-Aḥzāb*, 33:56 – and for his family and relatives and, in a wider sense, for all those who follow him. The Arabic word *āl* encompasses these meanings.

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[27] In the printed edition, the part after the *basmalah* is placed in brackets here. This means that it does not exist in one version or manuscript and was added only after comparison with other manuscripts.

There are several passages of this kind in the preface, but they do not lead to any fundamental difference in content, which is why not all such passages are pointed out in this explanation.

[28] The expression *bismillāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm* (In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful) is called the *basmalah*.

[29] *Al-ḥawl* can also mean "the year".

قَالَ الشَّيْخُ الْإِمَامُ [الْحَافِظُ] أَبُو مُحَمَّدٍ عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ ابْنُ الْإِمَامِ [الْحَافِظِ الْكَبِيرِ] أَبِي حَاتِمٍ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ إِدْرِيسَ [الرَّازِيُّ رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ وَرَضِيَ عَنْهُ]:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ خَاتَمِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.

The Shaykh, the Imam, the ḥāfiẓ[30] Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdu r-Raḥmān, the son of the Imam, the great ḥāfiẓ[31] Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad, the son of Idrīs, ar-Rāzī[32], may Allah be pleased with him and have mercy on him, said:

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may the praise of Allah be upon Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets[33], and upon his family[34], all of them.

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[30] In the printed edition, the word *"ḥāfiẓ"* is placed in brackets here. As already mentioned, such passages are not found in all the manuscript copies.

These introductory lines are not Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's own words, but those of the person who narrated the work directly from him or wrote it down at a later stage.

[31] "The great *ḥāfiẓ*" is likewise placed in brackets here in the printed edition.

[32] Ar-Rāzī is a *nisbah* (a name indicating origin) referring to the city of ar-Rayy in present-day Iran, from which many *ḥadīth* scholars came, which is why several of them bore the name ar-Rāzī.

Depending on whether "ar-Rāzī" refers to the father or the son, it would be read here with an i at the end of the word (ar-Rāziyyi) or with a u (ar-Rāziyyu). The meaning is ultimately the same, since father and son were of the same origin and thus bore the same name.

[33] This expression is taken, in a slightly modified form, from the text of the Qur'an, *sura al-Aḥzāb*, 33:40. In the reading of ʿĀṣim ibnu Abī n-Najūd, that passage is read *"khātama n-nabiyyīn"*, whereas in the other accepted readings it is *"khātima n-nabiyyīn"*. Accordingly, it can be read either way here as well.

[34] As mentioned, the Arabic word *āl* in a wider sense also refers to all those …--

سَأَلَنِي جَمَاعَةٌ مِن إِخْوَانِي إِخْرَاجَ تَفْسِيرِ الْقُرْآنِ مُخْتَصَرًا بأصحِّ الأسانيدِ،

A number of my brothers asked me to produce a concise tafsīr of the Qur'an with the soundest chains of narration.

Here we see that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim wrote his *tafsīr* work in response to a request that several Muslims had made to him. They asked him to write a *tafsīr* with *"the soundest chains of narration"*.

Today this statement of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim is often misunderstood, leading to the mistaken idea that it refers to the soundest chains of narration of all. That, however, is not what is meant here. In fact, the expression "the soundest chains of narration" can refer to different things:

1) The soundest chains of narration in the whole of *ḥadīth* narration. Certain chains were regarded by some scholars as the soundest chains in the whole of *ḥadīth* narration. One example is a chain that became known as *"silsilatu dh-dhahab"*, that is, "the golden chain". According to al-Bukhārī, for example, this is the narration of Mālik from Nāfiʿ from ʿAbdullāh ibnu ʿUmar.

2) It also happens that one looks for the soundest chain of narration of a particular narrator.

3) It may also be, however, that a ḥadīth is the soundest on its topic. This does not necessarily mean that the *ḥadīth* is therefore regarded as sound and authentic. It only means that, of the narrations with this content or on this topic, it is the soundest by comparison.

In this context, one quite often reads phrases in the books of *ḥadīth* such as: "This is the soundest there is on this topic." (أَصَحُّ مَا فِي الْبَابِ). So this does not necessarily mean that, in the view of

who follow him in goodness.

the scholar concerned, the narration in question is to be regarded as authentic.

In fact, the chain of narration in such a case may even have clear weaknesses. That in turn does not mean that the scholars would for this reason have rejected the *ḥadīth* entirely and at once, as was already pointed out in the introduction to this book.

It is quite possible that the content of such a narration was well known and was treated accordingly by the jurists. There may even have been a consensus on the content in question.

This, then, is how Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's statement is to be understood. First of all, it is clear that his statement refers to the soundest narrations within the field of *tafsīr* narration, and not to the soundest narrations of all. The expression "the soundest chains of narration" must therefore be seen here in relative terms and cannot be understood in an absolute sense.

Moreover, it seems likely that by "the soundest chains of narration" the author also meant, above all, the soundest chains for the particular content in question – *wallāhu aʿlam*.

What has been said shows how far-fetched the idea is that the author stated here that he would include only *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīths* in his *Tafsīr*. The narrations in the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim – and in the *tafāsīr* of the *Salaf* in general – mostly have weaknesses if one looks only at the chain of narration. The introduction, however, has already explained why the scholars dealt differently with the narrations of *tafsīr*.

This does not mean, then, that the *tafsīr* itself is weak. It is only that weaknesses are found in the individual chains of narration. As a rule, however, these are minor weaknesses that the Muslim scholars regarded as acceptable under the appropriate circumstances.

If, for example, there was a liar or an extremely weak narrator in the chain, he was usually not relied upon in *tafsīr*. For this reason, Ibnu

Abī Ḥātim did not narrate, for example, from Muḥammad ibnu s-Sāʾib al-Kalbī, nor from Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān, although the latter was certainly praised for his understanding of *tafsīr*, and other scholars at least took his statements into consideration. Ibnu Abī Ḥātim, however, was stricter in his criteria, as can now be understood from the statement of his discussed here. He did not narrate from various people because they did not meet his requirements for narration in *tafsīr*.

In general, then, it can be said that, for the field of *tafsīr*, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's chains of narration provide comparatively strong and usable narrations. The author selected the chains and left many narrations out of his *Tafsīr*. It should be stressed in particular that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim was one of the most eminent scholars in the field of chains of narration. This enabled him, unlike many a *mufassir*, to distinguish the narrations according to their strength.

A detailed judgement on individual narrations, however, requires a study of these narrations and, beyond that, of the entire work. The author himself occasionally points out weaknesses, and in places he also narrates differing opinions on passages of the Qur'an.

For the scholars of that time, especially those of the earlier generations, the different statements on a passage of the Qur'an were mostly not real differences of opinion, but different examples of one and the same meaning *(ikhtilāfu t-tanawwuʿ)*.

Where there were real differences in interpretation, however, which is comparatively rare, these may likewise be mentioned in the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim. As already said, a detailed understanding of the author's method in his work requires a thorough examination and discussion, which certainly could not be undertaken in this short work. The aim here is merely to point this out.[35]

[35] In general, the methods of the *mufassirīn (manāhiju l-mufassirīn)* and the principles of *tafsīr (uṣūlu t-tafsīr)* are a subject much discussed today among …--

The preceding remarks have made it clear that the narrations in the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim are, in general, relatively strong and usable narrations. Their weaknesses are moderate, and the scholars certainly tolerated them in the field of *tafsīr*.

It should also be remembered that the individual narrations are supported by the fact that they were narrated by several scholars. This and other reasons for accepting such narrations were already discussed in the introduction.

وحذْفِ الطُّرُقِ والشَّواهدِ والحروفِ والرِّواياتِ، وَتَنْزِيلِ السُّوَرِ،

> *And with the omission of the (various) routes of narration (of the same narration), the shawāhid, the ḥurūf[36], the narrations, and the sending down of the suras.*

Here the author goes on to relate the request made to him to write a *tafsīr* with the characteristics now mentioned. Ibnu Abī Ḥātim fulfilled this request with his *tafsīr* work.

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authors in these sciences.

This work was only meant to point out some important questions, even if they cannot be dealt with in more detail in so brief a space.

[36] In the printed edition, the two points mentioned before this are in brackets, which, as mentioned earlier, indicates that these expressions are not found in all versions.

It may well be that the expressions mentioned in the brackets were not actually worded in exactly this way by Ibnu Abī Ḥātim.

Ultimately, the main point was to omit those routes of narration and additional *ḥadīths* that are not strictly necessary for knowing the actual content of *tafsīr*.

The request was to write a concise *tafsīr* that would dispense with various things which represent additional knowledge and go beyond the actual core of explaining the Qur'an.

Of these things to be omitted, the first mentioned are the various routes of narration *(ṭuruq)* of the *tafsīr* narrations. A narration often has various routes. These are frequently not completely independent of one another; in such cases, the chain splits at some point. In the science of *ḥadīth*, these different routes of one and the same *ḥadīth* are also called *"mutābaʿah"*. Such *mutābaʿāt* can strengthen a *ḥadīth* considerably.

In such cases, then, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim did not cite all the available routes. If the *tafsīr* has already been cited from one person, it is not narrated from several other people as well.

In addition, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim omitted some chains of narration and referred to them in his preface instead. This will become clear at the end of that preface.

Apart from this, the *shawāhid*[37] were also to be dispensed with. These *shawāhid*, too, can strengthen a narration with regard to its content. Each of them is a different, separate and completely independent narration that nevertheless conveys the same meaning, in part or in full, and thereby confirms it.

Ibnu Abī Ḥātim was likewise asked to omit the *ḥurūf*[38]. The word *"ḥurūf"* (pl. of *ḥarf*) has several meanings in Arabic, among them "letters". It also describes the different kinds of a thing, for example the different readings of the Qur'an, which some scholars also referred to

[37] Plural of the Arabic word *"shāhid"*, which is also used in the sense of "witness". It thus refers to a narration that supports, or bears witness to, the content of another narration.

[38] The word *"ḥarf"* has two different plurals: *"ḥurūf"* and *"aḥruf"*. As a rule, the plural *"ḥurūf"* is used for larger numbers and *"aḥruf"* for smaller ones. There are, however, occasional exceptions to this rule.

as *ḥurūf*, among other terms. Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's statement most probably refers to these readings *(qirāʾāt)* here – *wallāhu aʿlam*.[39]

By the *riwāyāt* (pl. of *riwāyah*), which in Arabic simply means narrations, the author possibly means here the different narrations that contain one and the same statement on *tafsīr*. If so, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim is indicating here that he generally contents himself with one narration for each meaning – *wallāhu aʿlam*.

Looking at the preceding points, one sees that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim was aiming for a relatively concise *tafsīr*. If we take a look at the work, we also see that he did in fact make the omissions mentioned. This is, of course, a general approach, which means that he did not necessarily apply it in full in every single place.

That this *Tafsīr* is a relatively concise work, as the author himself describes it in the preface, will no doubt seem puzzling to many at first glance. After all, as already mentioned in the introduction to this book, the printed edition by Dār Ibni l-Jawzī, for example, has 13 volumes[40], not counting a further volume containing the editors' introduction and 3 volumes containing the indexes. So it is indeed a comprehensive *tafsīr* with many narrations, especially when one considers that the parts available to us today are not the complete *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim, and that a not insignificant part has been lost.

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[39] In principle, the word *ḥarf* or *ḥurūf/aḥruf* can also refer to what are known as *"al-aḥrufu s-sabʿah"* (the seven *aḥruf*).

These seven *aḥruf* of the Qur'an are mentioned in a well-known *ḥadīth* from the Prophet ﷺ that is narrated through many routes. The *ḥadīth* states that the Qur'an was sent down in seven ways. However, these are not what are known as the seven or ten *"qirāʾāt mutawātirah"* of the Qur'an, that is, the authentic readings that exist today. This subject cannot be discussed in more detail here.

[40] It should be borne in mind that around half of this material consists of the editors' comments. Even so, the work remains quite large.

But if one now considers everything that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim omitted, one can imagine how large an unabridged *tafsīr* work would have been. The author's first step was to collect all the narrations that were actually available to him. It must be borne in mind that these were narrations for which the author himself also had a continuous chain of narration! This gives an idea of the incredible wealth of information that was available to this scholar, and also of how much information on *tafsīr* and other fields of knowledge was in circulation at that time.

It likewise gives us an impression of the incredible effort the author had to make for this work. It should also be borne in mind that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim wrote further encyclopaedic foundational works of great size in other fields of knowledge. The effort this required, especially at that time and under the circumstances of that time, can hardly be put into words.

From the whole body of narrations available to him, the author thus selected those that met the criteria he described. From what has been said, it can now be understood why the author, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim, regarded his work as relatively concise.

As the last point on which the author made omissions in his work, he mentions *tanzīlu s-suwar*, which literally means "the sending down of the suras". By this he evidently means the investigation of whether a sura, or individual parts of it, are Makkan or Madinan. This classification of the suras, or of individual parts of them, as *makkī* and *madanī* forms a separate science within the field of *tafsīr*. In the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim, suras are briefly described as *makkī* or *madanī*, but the author apparently did not wish to go into detailed discussions in his *Tafsīr*.[41]

[41] The author of the work, then, probably did not mean here the occasions or circumstances of revelation, known as *asbābu n-nuzūl – wallāhu aʿlam*.

وَأَنْ نَقْصِدَ لِإِخْرَاجِ التَّفْسِيرِ مُجَرَّدًا دُونَ غَيْرِهِ، مُتَقَصِّينَ تَفْسِيرَ الْآيِ حَتَّى لَا نَتْرُكَ حَرْفًا مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ يُوجَدُ لَهُ تَفْسِيرٌ إِلَّا أُخْرِجَ ذَلِكَ.

> *And that we[42] make it our aim to extract the tafsīr alone and nothing else (from the narrations), pursuing[43] the explanation of the āyāt, so that we do not leave out a single letter [or also word, expression or āyah] of the Qur'an for which there is a tafsīr without extracting it.*

Ibnu Abī Ḥātim thus points here to his aim of limiting himself to the narrations and adding nothing to them, including explanations of his own. This is unlike other authors such as aṭ-Ṭabarī, who in his *Tafsīr* also adds his own explanations and material, such as explanations of the Arabic language, for which his *Tafsīr* also became known.

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[42] The author speaks of himself in the plural. This is not the royal plural (pluralis majestatis), but a common style among the Arabs, as can also be seen from the fact that the author speaks of himself in the singular elsewhere.

[43] The word *"mutaqaṣṣin"* (here in the plural, *mutaqaṣṣīna*), or in another edition *"mutaqaṣṣiyan"*, means "pursuing" or "following up" and comes from the root *"qaṣā"*. *"Al-qāṣī"* is that which is far away.

"Mutaqaṣṣiyan" means "pursuing" in the sense of following something up until one reaches its end, or has reached what is furthest away, that is, pursuing the matter intensively. This is why one also says *"taqaṣṣā l-mawḍūʿa"*, meaning that someone has examined a subject completely and grasped even its last or furthest point. Here it means that the author concentrated on explaining the *āyāt*.

It should be pointed out in passing that the word *"mutaqaṣṣiyan"* does not derive from the Arabic word *"qaṣaṣ"*, which can also mean "narrative", among other things, even though the word *qaṣaṣ* and the related verb *qaṣṣa* do carry the meaning of "following up" and "pursuing". The word *qaṣaṣ* is used in this meaning in the Qur'an, for example *(sura al-Kahf*, 18:64). In that case, however, the text of the book would have to read *"mutaqaṣṣiṣan"* here, which is not the case.

Ibnu Abī Ḥātim further describes the aim of extracting the narrations for all those passages for which there is *tafsīr*. This could be taken to mean that this does not apply to every single word or every single passage in the Qur'an. The introduction has already pointed out that this is not strictly necessary for understanding the Qur'an either.

It may also be that nothing has been mentioned about a particular *āyah*, but its expressions and words have already been explained elsewhere, since much of the content of the Qur'an is repeated.

فَأَجَبْتُهُمْ إِلَى مُلْتَمَسِهِمْ، وَبِاللَّهِ التَّوْفِيقِ، وَإِيَّاهُ نَسْتَعِينُ، وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

فَتَحَرَّيْتُ إِخْرَاجَ ذَلِكَ بِأَصَحِّ الْأَخْبَارِ إِسْنَادًا، وَأَشْبَهِهَا مَتْنًا، فَإِذَا وَجَدْتُ التَّفْسِيرَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمْ أَذْكُرْ مَعَهُ أَحَدًا مِنَ الصَّحَابَةِ مِمَّنْ أَتَى بِمِثْلِ ذَلِكَ، وَإِذَا وَجَدْتُهُ عَنِ الصَّحَابَةِ فَإِنْ كَانُوا مُتَّفِقِينَ ذَكَرْتُهُ عَنْ أَعْلَاهُمْ دَرَجَةً بِأَصَحِّ الْأَسَانِيدِ، وَسَمَّيْتُ مُوَافِقِيهِمْ بِحَذْفِ الْإِسْنَادِ.

وَإِنْ كَانُوا مُخْتَلِفِينَ ذَكَرْتُ اخْتِلَافَهُمْ وَذَكَرْتُ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ إِسْنَادًا، وَسَمَّيْتُ مُوَافِقِيهِمْ بِحَذْفِ الْإِسْنَادِ،

So I granted their request, and tawfīq (success) is with Allah; Him alone do we ask for help, and there is no might and no power except with Allah.

And I have endeavoured to extract the narrations with the soundest chains of narration and the mutūn[44] that seem most correct[45].

[44] The term *"matn"* is used in the science of *ḥadīth* and denotes the content of a narration, that is, the actual text of the *ḥadīth* without the chain of narration. Here we see an example of these terms already being used in this way very early on.

[45] The editions differ here. Some have *"ashbahihā"* and others *"ashbaʿihā"*, …--

> *If I find a tafsīr from the Prophet ﷺ, I do not mention alongside it any of the ṣaḥābah[46] who narrate the same.*
>
> *And if I find it from the ṣaḥābah and they agree on it, I mention it from the one of highest rank, with the soundest chain of narration, and I mention those who agree with them, omitting the chain of narration.*
>
> *And if they differ, I mention their differences, give a chain of narration for each of them, and mention those who agree with them, omitting the chains of narration.*

Here Ibnu Abī Ḥātim mentions again that he had made it his task to seek out the soundest narrations, which, as already explained, also distinguishes his *Tafsīr* from others, especially since Ibnu Abī Ḥātim was an Imam in the science of *ḥadīth*.

The author also explains here that he gave the narrations different priorities. In first place came the narrations of the Prophet ﷺ. After them came those of the Companions, according to their rank. In this sense, for example, the Rightly Guided Caliphs are generally ranked

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the former evidently being the more correct. What is meant here, then, are those that seem the most correct.

So if a *ḥadīth* had several routes of narration with only slight differences in the text *(matn)*, or with some content missing because it was not passed on further or was lost when it was written down, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim took the more complete narration, or the one that seemed most correct to him.

With the manuscripts of that time, part of a text could easily be lost when it was written down or copied, simply because a part was forgotten or the passage was no longer legible. This could happen through various circumstances and environmental influences, such as damp, which also occurred with the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim, as the editors pointed out. By comparing different manuscripts *(makhṭūṭāt)*, such passages can be identified.

[46] Here we see that the term *"ṣaḥābah"* was known and in use among the early scholars of Islam, which contradicts the claim of some people that it is an invented term.

first, followed by *"al-ʿasharatu l-mubashsharūna bi-l-jannah"*, that is, the ten who were promised Paradise in a single statement, followed by the people of the Battle of Badr, and so on. The *Salaf* certainly did not make this ranking without a sound reason, as can also be seen from Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's approach.

We also see here that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim extracted the soundest chains of narration for *tafsīr* not only in general, but also with regard to the individual persons and narrations. He thus chose the soundest narration on a topic, from the *ṣaḥābī* of the highest rank.

If further statements were narrated and these narrations all agreed, the author merely refers to the further narrations without citing their chains of narration.

If, however, the *ṣaḥābah* differed, he mentioned their different interpretations, each with its chain of narration. In most cases, this does not mean that the individual *tafsīr* statements fundamentally contradict one another, but that they are different explanations that complement each other in interpretation. This was already pointed out in the introduction.

In such a case, he additionally mentioned for each of the different interpretations the further narrations supporting it, but without chains of narration.

فَإِنْ لَمْ أَجِدْ عَنِ الصَّحَابَةِ وَوَجَدْتُهُ عَنِ التَّابِعِينَ عَمِلْتُ فِيمَا أَجِدُ عَنْهُمْ مَا ذَكَرْتُهُ مِنَ الْمِثَالِ فِي الصَّحَابَةِ،

وَكَذَا أَجْعَلُ الْمِثَالَ فِي أَتْبَاعِ التَّابِعِينَ وَأَتْبَاعِهِمْ.

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ لِوَجْهِهِ خَالِصًا، وَنَفَعَ بِهِ.

> *And if I do not find any [tafsīr] from the ṣaḥābah, but [instead] find it from the tābiʿīn, I proceed with what I find from them in the same way as I mentioned for the ṣaḥābah.*
>
> *And I follow the same pattern with regard to the atbāʿu t-tābiʿīn and their followers*[47]*.*
>
> *May Allah make this [that is, our intention in this work] purely for His Face and let it be of benefit.*

So if there was no *tafsīr* from the *ṣaḥābah*, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim applied the procedure just described to the *tābiʿīn*. An example is Saʿīd ibnu Jubayr, who did not meet the Prophet ﷺ himself, when he narrates from the *ṣaḥābī* Ibnu ʿAbbās ﷺ.

Another example is aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibnu Muzāḥim, who was mentioned earlier. Aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk did not narrate *tafsīr* directly from the *ṣaḥābah*, although he counts in principle as a *tābiʿī*, that is, someone who met the *ṣaḥābah* – *wallāhu aʿlam*. Instead, he took the *tafsīr* narrations from another *tābiʿī*, Saʿīd ibnu Jubayr being the one mentioned above all in this connection.

Saʿīd ibnu Jubayr thus has a higher standing than aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibnu Muzāḥim, and better chains of narration. It must not be forgotten, however, that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim considered the chain of narration as a whole. Since the chain continues after the *tābiʿī*, the author undoubtedly also took the narrators after him into account when assessing the *isnād*.

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[47] Here, too, the Arabic text uses the word *atbāʿu*. The word *"tābiʿ"*, however, has several plurals, among them the sound masculine plural *"tābiʿūn"*, as well as the plurals *"tabaʿun"*, *"tubbāʿun"* and the plural *"atbāʿ"* used here.

This following generation is called *"tābiʿū atbāʿi t-tābiʿīn"*, *"tabaʿu atbāʿi t-tābiʿīn"* or *"tubbāʿu atbāʿi t-tābiʿīn"*. One could also say *"al-ākhidhūna min atbāʿi t-tābiʿīn"* instead, that is, those who took from, or narrated from, the *atbāʿu t-tābiʿīn*.

Ibnu Abī Ḥātim applied the same approach to the following generations as well. Thus, besides the *tafsīr* of the Prophet ﷺ, the *ṣaḥābah*, the *tābiʿīn* and the *atbāʿu t-tābiʿīn*, he also mentions, in some cases, the *tafsīr* of the fourth generation. The great majority of the *tafsīr* narrations, however, come from the time of the first three generations, that is, the *ṣaḥābah*, the *tābiʿīn* and the *atbāʿu t-tābiʿīn*.

Finally, the author asks Allah to purify his intention and to let his work be of benefit. For whom exactly this benefit is meant is not stated, as is customary in Arabic usage, to indicate that it includes every conceivable person. The book is thus meant to benefit those who read it, their children, their families, their relatives and descendants, society in general, the rulers and so on.

At this point, we likewise ask Allah to purify the intention of all of us, as well as that of our families and of all those who read this text. *Āmīn*.

Conclusion of the Preface: Examples of Chains of Narration

As already mentioned, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim omitted some chains of narration that are frequently repeated in his work. He points to four such chains at the end of his preface. Why he mentioned these four chains in particular is unclear – for there are certainly other well-known chains of narration that the author repeats many times in his work.

In what follows, these four chains will be mentioned only briefly, to serve as examples of the author's chains of narration[48].

The Chain of Narration from Abū l-ʿĀliyah

فَأَمَّا مَا ذَكَرْنَا عَنْ أَبِي الْعَالِيَةِ فِي سُورَةِ الْبَقَرَةِ بِلَا إِسْنَادٍ فَهُوَ مَا:

حَدَّثَنَا عِصَامُ بْنُ رَوَّادٍ الْعَسْقَلَانِيُّ ثنا آدَمُ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ الرَّازِيِّ عَنِ الرَّبِيعِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ عَنْ أَبِي الْعَالِيَةِ

> *As for what we mention from Abū l-ʿĀliyah in sura al-Baqarah without a chain of narration, it is:*

[48] Since this work is only a short introduction, chains of narration were not really meant to be mentioned or discussed in it.

The chains mentioned here at the end were discussed only briefly because the author mentioned them at the end of his preface.

As already said, they can serve as examples and give the reader an impression of roughly what the chains of narration of *tafsīr* in general, and those of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim in particular, looked like.

In addition, this context allows some brief but useful information to be given on the chains of narration, for example on some well-known narrators and scholars of that time.

> *What ʿIṣām ibnu Rawwād al-ʿAsqalānī narrated to us: Ādam narrated to us from Abū Jaʿfar ar-Rāzī, from ar-Rabīʿ ibnu Anas, from Abū l-ʿĀliyah.*

This *isnād* thus leads to Abū l-ʿĀliyah, who was one of the early and well-known scholars of *tafsīr*. The scholars of *tafsīr* narrated a great deal from him, and so did Ibnu Abī Ḥātim in his *Tafsīr*.

The chain of narration begins with *"ḥaddathanā"*. *"Ḥaddathanā"* and *"akhbaranā"*, which both mean roughly "he reported to us" or "he narrated to us", are the most common forms in the transmission of *ḥadīth*. Both forms count as very strong, since they state that the narrator heard the narration directly from the scholar and narrated it from him.

In this case, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim heard the narration directly from ʿIṣām ibnu Rawwād al-ʿAsqalānī. So, as Ibnu Abī Ḥātim said, this applies to all the narrations that he narrated (presumably in the original work) from Abū l-ʿĀliyah in *sura al-Baqarah* without a chain. The same form is also used for the next person in the *isnād*, although here only *"thanā"* appears, which is a common abbreviation of *"ḥaddathanā"*.

After that, however, the form *"ʿan"* (from) is used, which, from the standpoint of the science of *ḥadīth*, is considerably weaker than the forms already mentioned. For *"ʿan"* does not necessarily state that the narrator heard the statement directly from the person concerned.

This is not a problem if a narrator is known to have narrated directly even in such cases. Some people, however, were known sometimes not to have narrated directly, but merely to have passed on what had been conveyed to them by another person. In such cases, they would use the expression *"ʿan"*.

This practice, known as *"tadlīs"*, therefore introduces a degree of uncertainty into some narrations that were worded with the expression *ʿan*. Because of the importance of this matter, this form of narration

became known as *"ʿanʿanah"*. A person who does this, that is, who leaves out a narrator, came to be called a *"mudallis"*.

In all that has been said here, however, everything said earlier about the particular way in which narrations were assessed in the field of *tafsīr* and other fields of knowledge must be borne in mind. The purpose of these remarks is merely to give the reader an impression of *ḥadīth* narration.

The scholar from whom the author narrates directly, that is, the one who stands at the very beginning of the chain of narration[49], is generally referred to as "his shaykh" with regard to this narration.

The *shuyūkh* of a scholar were thus his teachers, from whom he narrated *ḥadīths* and often acquired other knowledge as well. This becomes especially clear when the scholar narrated frequently from a particular shaykh. Not infrequently, this came about because the scholar accompanied this teacher over a long period.

Here, however, the *nusakh* of *tafsīr* should also be recalled, that is, the written collections that scholars passed on to their students. With these too, however, it is clear that such a scholar passed them on only to someone he trusted and whom he knew well enough. This was by no means, then, an irresponsible handing over of writings to just anyone. Such an assumption would be absurd and would clearly contradict the history of *ḥadīth* narration.

From the wording *"ḥaddathanā"* (he narrated to *us*) it can be understood that the author heard the narration from this shaykh together with other people, that is, in a teaching session. One might object that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim had already spoken of himself in the plural in earlier passages. That, however, cannot be assumed here, since in chains of narration the scholars distinguished very precisely between such wordings in order to avoid errors. This can also be seen from the fact

[49] In this case, that is, ʿIṣām ibnu Rawwād.

that elsewhere Ibnu Abī Ḥātim uses *"ḥaddathanī"* (he narrated to me), which is likewise meant literally.

Just as Ibnu Abī Ḥātim heard the *ḥadīth* directly from his shaykh, ʿIṣām ibnu Rawwād, ʿIṣām in turn transmitted it from his own shaykh, Ādam ibnu Abī Iyās, and he too received these narrations directly and together with others.

Ādam narrated from Abū Jaʿfar ar-Rāzī, and heʿ in turn from ar-Rabīʿ ibnu Anas. Ar-Rabīʿ was himself a scholar from whom Ibnu Abī Ḥātim also narrated his own *tafsīr* statements. This can be seen in the chain after next.

From what has been mentioned here, it can already be seen that the people named, such as Abū l-ʿĀliyah and ar-Rabīʿ ibnu Anas, must surely have been well-known scholars and narrators of *tafsīr*.

We see that there are four people in the chain of narration between Ibnu Abī Ḥātim and Abū l-ʿĀliyah. It is therefore what is known as an *"isnād rubāʿī"*, that is, a chain of narration with four links. This narration thus has a relatively short chain.

The shorter a chain of narration, the higher its quality in general[50]. This does not necessarily say anything about the strength of the narration, however; in an individual case, a *ḥadīth* with a short chain need not be stronger than one with a longer chain. As a general rule, however, it holds true, since shortness generally reduces errors and in some cases can also compensate for certain weaknesses.

A chain of narration with four links is quite short for the author, considering that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim lived relatively late. This is explained by the fact that the narration is not from the Prophet ﷺ directly, but from Abū l-ʿĀliyah, a *tābiʿī*.

[50] This is why, in the sciences of *ḥadīth*, the shortness of a chain of narration is called "elevation" *(ʿuluwwu l-isnād)*.

The Chain of Narration from as-Suddī

وَمَا ذَكَرْنَا فِيهِ عَنِ السُّدِّيِّ بِلَا إِسْنَادٍ فَهُوَ مَا:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو زُرْعَةَ ثنا عَمْرُو بْنُ حَمَّادِ بْنِ طَلْحَةَ ثنا أَسْبَاطٌ عَنِ السُّدِّيِّ.

> *And as for what we mention from as-Suddī without a chain of narration, it is:*
>
> *What Abū Zurʿah narrated to us: ʿAmr ibnu Ḥammād ibni Ṭalḥah reported to us: Asbāṭ narrated to us from as-Suddī.*

Here we see an example of a narration in which Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī narrates from Abū Zurʿah ar-Rāzī. The short biographies at the beginning of this book have already mentioned that Abū Zurʿah was one of the author's most important teachers. In this narration, then, Abū Zurʿah is Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's shaykh, as he is in many other narrations in his *Tafsīr*.

This narration, too, has a short chain. It is an *"isnād thulāthī"*, that is, an *isnād* with three links. Abū Zurʿah, who was himself an Imam and one of the greatest scholars of *"al-jarḥu wa-t-taʿdīl"*, the science of narrators, thus narrates this *ḥadīth* with only two people in the chain before him. The chain is therefore very short.

In this chain of narration, the *tafsīr* is narrated from Ismāʿīl ibnu ʿAbdi r-Raḥmān ibni Abī Karīmah as-Suddī, who also became known as "as-Suddī al-kabīr", the "greater" or "elder" Suddī. This distinguished him from Muḥammad ibnu Marwān al-Kūfī, the "lesser" or "younger" Suddī, who, unlike the greater Suddī, was regarded as weak in narration.

In general, as-Suddī al-kabīr is meant unless something else is specified. The "lesser Suddī" lived later than the "greater" one and is not the one Ibnu Abī Ḥātim means here. If one looks at the lineage of the lesser Suddī, one finds that he was a descendant of the greater Suddī, namely his great-grandson.

The *tafsīr* narrations of as-Suddī lose some of their strength because he passed on a collection of statements on *tafsīr* that contained different chains of narration. As-Suddī mixed these narrations, but for the sake of brevity left out the *isnād* belonging to each individual narration.

Here, however, we see that Ibnu Abī Ḥātim regarded this *isnād* as acceptable enough to mention narrations through this route in his *Tafsīr* – which does not necessarily mean that he would have treated it in the same way in classical *ḥadīth* narration, for example.

As has been mentioned several times, such assessments by the early scholars were based on their comprehensive knowledge. They knew, then, that the narrations from a particular source were generally regarded as trustworthy by the scholars of their own time and of the generations before them, and that the interpretations agreed with the well-known and widespread interpretations.

These remarks should suffice here as a brief insight, since matters of this kind cannot be discussed in detail within the limited scope of this work.

The Chain of Narration from ar-Rabīʿ ibnu Anas

وَمَا ذَكَرْنَا عَنِ الرَّبِيعِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ بِلَا إِسْنَادٍ فَهُوَ مَا:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي ثنا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الدَّشْتَكِيُّ ثنا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنِ الرَّبِيعِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ.

And as for what we have mentioned from ar-Rabīʿ ibnu Anas without a chain of narration, it is:

What my father narrated to us: Aḥmad ibnu ʿAbdi r-Raḥmān ad-Dashtakī[51] narrated to us: ʿAbdullāh ibnu Abī Jaʿfar narrated to us from his father, from ar-Rabīʿ ibnu Anas.

[51] It is sometimes pronounced “ad-Dushtakī”, but the former is probably more correct.

In this chain of narration, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim narrates from ar-Rabīʿ ibnu Anas himself, so ar-Rabīʿ is not merely one of the narrators. In these cases, then, ar-Rabīʿ made the statement on *tafsīr* himself, or at least did not explicitly narrate it from others. The chain also differs from the one mentioned earlier, in which he likewise appears.

In this *isnād*, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim's shaykh is his father, Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad ibnu Idrīs ibni l-Mundhir al-Ḥanẓalī ar-Rāzī, and he heard from him in a session. Abū Ḥātim narrated from ad-Dashtakī, who was himself a Rāzī. Dashtak was a suburb of ar-Rayy.

ʿAbdullāh, the son of Abū Jaʿfar ar-Rāzī, and his father also bear this name. There are thus five Rāzīs in this chain, which is explained by the fact that the scholars customarily passed on knowledge to the people around them. The narrators were therefore known among the people of this region, and of course beyond it as well.

Ar-Rabīʿ ibnu Anas came from Basra, but settled in Khurāsān[52] and was therefore counted among the eminent scholars of that region. The scholars of Khurāsān then passed on knowledge from him. This example also shows well how knowledge travelled from one place to another.

Once again, the chain has four links. It is interesting that in this chain two people narrate from their fathers, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim and ʿAbdullāh ibnu Abī Jaʿfar. This is not insignificant, since a son generally knows his father very well. When weaknesses are discussed in such a narration – as is also the case with this *isnād* – the issue is not people who lied, but people who made mistakes. In such a case, the son, knowing his father, can often distinguish better than other people.

It also happened, however, that scholars narrated from their fathers although the father had to be classed as weak, and even that great

[52] A region that comprised above all parts of present-day Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. The city of ar-Rayy also lay in this region.

Imams classed their own fathers as weak, which shows the great integrity and honesty of the Muslim scholars.

The Chain of Narration from Muqātil ibnu Ḥayyān

وَمَا ذَكَرْنَا فِيهِ عَنْ مُقَاتِلٍ فَهُوَ مَا:

قَرَأْتُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الْفَضْلِ بْنِ مُوسَى، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ شَقِيقٍ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مُزَاحِمٍ، عَنْ بُكَيْرِ بْنِ مَعْرُوفٍ، عن مقاتل

> *And as for what we have mentioned from Muqātil, it is:*
>
> *What I read to Muḥammad ibnu l-Faḍl ibni Mūsā, from Muḥammad ibnu ʿAlī ibni l-Ḥasan ibni Shaqīq, from Muḥammad ibnu Muzāḥim, from Bukayr ibnu Maʿrūf, from Muqātil.*

Here a new narration formula appears, namely "I read to". This means that the narrator, in this case Ibnu Abī Ḥātim, read the text out to his shaykh, here Muḥammad ibnu l-Faḍl ibni Mūsā, who then confirmed it.

The person who gave the *tafsīr* here is not Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān, but Muqātil ibnu Ḥayyān. It has already been mentioned elsewhere[53] that Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān was regarded as weak in narration. Although some early scholars considered the content of his *Tafsīr* good, his narrations were regarded as weak.

It should be mentioned here that Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān (d. 150 AH), in his concise *Tafsīr*, interprets the Qur'an without, as a rule, tracing his interpretation back to earlier people through chains of narration. With regard to narrations with chains, therefore, he is not of great

[53] Earlier in this book and in previous lectures, as well as in a longer footnote on Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān. See footnote 45, page 54, in *The Doctrine of Monotheism* (second edition).

importance, even in the field of *tafsīr*, since he did not know much about chains of narration and concentrated solely on the meaning.

His *Tafsīr* as such is nevertheless important, since it is the very first *tafsīr* to have survived complete. Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān learned the meanings of the Qur'an, as they are interpreted, from a number of scholars of the *tābiʿīn*. As has been said, however, he did not necessarily narrate everything word for word, but according to the meaning, and above all without chains of narration.

Because of the circumstances mentioned, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim did not narrate from Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān. Muqātil here means Muqātil ibnu Ḥayyān, who was himself a *mufassir* and certainly considerably stronger in narration than Muqātil ibnu Sulaymān.

Another person in this chain is Muḥammad ibnu Muzāḥim. The name might suggest a family relationship with aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibnu Muzāḥim, since the latter had two brothers, one of whom was called Muḥammad. The person mentioned here, however, is not the brother of aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibnu Muzāḥim.

Ibnu Abī Ḥātim writes about this in his book *al-Jarḥu wa-t-Taʿdīl*, in the "chapter on the mention of those from whom knowledge was narrated, among those who are called Muḥammad and whose father was named Muzāḥim."

Only two people are listed in this chapter of the book. One of them is "Muḥammad ibnu Muzāḥim, the brother of aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk". Here Ibnu Abī Ḥātim narrates from his own father that this Muḥammad ibnu Muzāḥim was very weak, *"munkaru l-ḥadīth"* or *"matrūku l-ḥadīth"*, which is a very severe criticism and means that, in principle, no *ḥadīths* are taken from him.

So the person in the chain of narration is not this one, but the second one he mentions, Muḥammad ibnu Muzāḥim Abū Wahb, the brother of Sahl ibnu Muzāḥim al-Marwazī. He died around 209 or 211 AH, that is, somewhat more than a hundred years after aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk, who died

around 105 AH. The two people named Muḥammad ibnu Muzāḥim thus lived at quite different times.

This example also gives an insight into the importance of biographies and of distinguishing between names and epithets, which the scholars studied in the science of narrators *(ʿilmu r-rijāl)*.

With this chain of narration, the preface to the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī رَحِمَهُ اللهُ comes to an end.

Conclusion

The discussion presented in this book was intended to show how important and central *tafsīr* and its narration are for an authentic, source-based understanding of Islam. It was likewise meant to illustrate how indispensable and fundamental the *tafsīr* narrations of the first generations *(at-tafsīru l-maʾthūr)* are in achieving this aim.

In particular, the aim of this work was to make clear to a general readership the high standing of the *Tafsīr* of Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī رحمه الله – may Allah have mercy on him – and, by explaining his preface, to give insights into the early narration of *tafsīr*.

In the course of this, the difference between the earlier and the later approach to *tafsīr* was examined, and various problems in this connection were pointed out. This was meant to make Muslims in general, and students of Islamic knowledge in particular, aware of these differences in approach. The question of differing methodology, however, is far broader and must certainly remain a topic of scholarly discussion among Muslims.

Finally, it remains to be hoped that this short work can at least serve as a clear pointer to this important subject and, more generally, contribute to explaining the Islamic sciences in the English-speaking world.

… and regarding all that I have said, let it be noted:

… and Allah knows best

… may Allah have mercy on all the righteous Muslim scholars, whose enormous efforts and astonishing achievements have made a correct understanding of Islam easier for countless generations of Muslims.

Āmīn.

واللَّهُ أعلمُ

ورحم اللَّهُ علماءَ المسلمينَ

وصلّى اللَّهُ على نبيِّنا مُحَمَّدٍ وآلِهِ وصَحْبِهِ ومن والاه

والحمدُ للَّهِ ربِّ العالمينَ

Sources

- Throughout the book, the quotations follow the text of the edition found in the digital library *al-Maktabatu sh-Shāmilah*, so that they can easily be searched. It should be noted that the editions in *al-Maktabatu sh-Shāmilah* have often been revised (for example, by fully vocalizing the texts).
- Since the sources used are Arabic works, and anyone who wishes to look something up in these works will certainly need to know Arabic, a simplified list of sources has been preferred for this edition.

  The publication details of each work can be found in *al-Maktabatu sh-Shāmilah*. This library is openly accessible to everyone, and the works it contains correspond to the printed editions.
- The names are arranged by date of death. The date according to the *hijrah* is given first, followed by the CE date. The best-known name comes first, followed after the comma by the next best-known names. Then comes the work (or works) of the author concerned.

The Qur'an

256/870 **al-Bukhārī**, Muḥammad ibnu Ismāʿīl

Ṣaḥīḥu l-Bukhārī

261/875 **Muslim**, Ibnu l-Ḥajjāj an-Naysābūrī

Ṣaḥīḥu Muslim

310/923 **aṭ-Ṭabarī**, Muḥammad ibnu Jarīr Abū Jaʿfar

Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī

327/938 **Ibnu Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī**, ʿAbdu r-Raḥmān

al-Jarḥu wa-t-Taʿdīl

Tafsīru l-Qurʾāni l-ʿaẓīm

al-ʿIlal

365/976 **Ibnu ʿAdī al-Jurjānī**

al-Kāmilu fī Ḍuʿafāʾi r-Rijāl

463/1071 **al-Khaṭību l-Baghdādī**

al-Jāmiʿu li-Akhlāqi r-Rāwī wa-Ādābi s-Sāmiʿ

al-Kifāyah fī ʿIlmi r-Riwāyah

Tārīkhu Baghdād