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### Imam Al-Baghawi's Exegesis: Integrating the Prophetic Hadith in the Interpretation of the Qur'an

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#### Abstract

This study aims to explore the methodology of Imam Abu Muhammad al-Husayn ibn Mas'ud al-Baghawi (d. 516 AH) in utilising the Prophetic Sunnah for interpreting the Qur'an, with a particular focus on his renowned exegesis, *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*. Al-Baghawi's tafseer is a seminal work in the field of exegesis based on narrations, distinguished by its substantial reliance on authentic hadiths and its cautious approach to ensuring their authenticity, avoiding weak and fabricated reports. The study adopts a qualitative approach, analysing Al-Baghawi's methodology by examining his use of the Sunnah to elucidate the general (mujmal), specify the universal (aam), restrict the absolute (mutlaq), clarify the causes of revelation (asbab al-nuzul), and derive legal rulings. Additionally, the research evaluates his attention to the chains of narration (asanid) and his critical stance toward unreliable hadiths, which significantly contributed to the acceptance of his exegesis among scholars. The findings reveal that Al-Baghawi's method serves as a model for tafseer based on narrations, balancing transmission and reasoning, with the Prophetic Sunnah serving as the cornerstone for understanding the Qur'an, second only to the Qur'an itself. The originality of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of Al-Baghawi's exegesis and its contribution to contemporary studies on tafseer. It recommends further exploration into the comparative study of Al-Baghawi's methodology with other exegetical approaches and encourages further research into his handling of weak narrations to shed light on his scholarly rigour.

**Keywords:** Tafseer, Al-Baghawi, *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*, Interpretation through the Sunnah, Interpretation based on narrations, Hadith science.

#### 1. Introduction

Tafseer (Qur'anic exegesis) is one of the most distinguished and vital sciences in Islam, serving as the key to understanding the Qur'an and its guidance. The central objective of tafseer is to uncover the will of Allah through His divine book, reflecting on its meanings and applying its teachings to everyday life. As Allah (SWT) commands, "Do they not reflect upon the Qur'an?"<sup>1</sup>, this call to reflection underscores the significance of tafseer in grasping divine

<sup>1</sup> Quran 47:24 (trans. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem).

messages. Tafseer holds a prestigious place in Islamic scholarship due to its direct connection to the Qur'an, the primary source of Islamic legislation.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have dedicated their lives to this field, making remarkable contributions, one of the most notable being Imam Al-Baghawi.

Imam Abu Muhammad Al-Husayn ibn Mas'ud al-Baghawi (d. 516 AH) is widely recognised for his exegesis "*Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*," which remains a cornerstone of tafseer. Al-Baghawi's work is esteemed for its rigorous reliance on narrations, particularly those drawn from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the sayings of the early generations of Muslims (Salaf). His exegesis represents a comprehensive method of interpreting the Qur'an by emphasising the role of the Prophetic Sunnah as an essential source of clarification and explanation. This research aims to examine Al-Baghawi's methodology for analysing the Qur'an through the lens of the Prophetic Sunnah, offering a systematic analysis of the principles, characteristics, and practical applications of his approach.

The scientific importance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate the depth and precision of Al-Baghawi's methodology. By examining his approach to using the Sunnah for elucidating the Qur'an, the study aims to enrich tafseer scholarship by offering insights into how Al-Baghawi integrated hadiths into Qur'anic interpretation. Furthermore, this research serves as an essential resource for contemporary scholars and exegetes, providing a valuable model for scrutinising and verifying narrations with scholarly rigour. Al-Baghawi's exegesis is not only a product of his intellectual capacity but also a reflection of his profound respect for the integrity of the Prophetic Sunnah.

The primary focus of this study is to explore the methodologies that Al-Baghawi employed in interpreting the Qur'an with the Sunnah as a central component. While Al-Baghawi's work is widely acknowledged, there remains a need for a focused analysis of his specific approach to the Sunnah and its methodological application in tafsir. The central research question guiding this study is: *What are the distinctive features of Imam Al-Baghawi's methodology in interpreting the Qur'an through the Sunnah?*

This research aims to achieve several objectives. First, it will clarify the status of the Prophetic Sunnah within Al-Baghawi's exegetical framework. Second, it will analyse the practical applications of his methodology in using the Sunnah as a clarifying source for the Qur'an. Third, it will examine Al-Baghawi's scholarly standards in handling hadith narrations, focusing on his approach to attribution, authenticity, and criticism. Lastly, the study aims to highlight the scientific value of Al-Baghawi's exegesis as a pioneering model in tafseer, based on narrations. It illustrates how he balanced both transmission (naql) and reason (aql) in his interpretive approach.

This research is driven by a personal academic interest in understanding how classical exegetes, such as Imam Al-Baghawi, approached the Qur'anic text through the Sunnah and in integrating these approaches into the broader field of tafseer. Given Al-Baghawi's scholarly status and the widespread acceptance of his exegesis, it is essential to examine the reasoning behind his success and its influence on later generations of scholars. By doing so, this study will contribute to the field of Qur'anic exegesis and provide valuable insights that benefit researchers and students of Islamic studies today.

## 2. Literature Review

Imam Al-Baghawi's exegesis, "*Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*", has garnered significant scholarly attention due to its methodological rigour and its emphasis on using narrations to interpret the Qur'an. Several studies have explored various aspects of his tafseer, particularly his use of hadiths and his broader exegetical framework. One of the most comprehensive studies

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<sup>2</sup> Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, "Tafsir Ibn Kathir: Biography of Writer and Specialist in Tafsir," *International Journal of Social, Political and Economic Research* 1, no. 1 (2014): 20-40.

is “*Al-Baghawi and His Method of Interpretation*” by Afaf Abdul Ghafour Hamid. This work offers an extensive examination of Al-Baghawi’s life and intellectual contributions, highlighting his approach to exegesis, language, and jurisprudence.<sup>3</sup> Dr Hamid’s study and Mohammed Hussein Al-Dhahabi’s work on *al-Tafsir wa Mufasssirun* are invaluable in understanding how Al-Baghawi integrated hadith, language, and Islamic jurisprudence to produce a reliable tafseer, underscoring his scholarly stature and the uniqueness of his approach.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to Hamid’s work, several studies have focused on specific aspects of Al-Baghawi’s methodology. For instance, Ahmad Fatoni Al-Mu’ashirah explores his research “The Thought and Methodology of Al-Baghawi in Masabih al-Sunnah: Implications for Contemporary Hadith Studies” on how Al-Baghawi incorporated various Qur’anic recitations (qira’at) into his exegesis. This study reveals how the different readings impacted his interpretation of certain verses, providing further insight into Al-Baghawi’s attention to linguistic nuances.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Mohamed Ibrahim Sharif, focusing on *Al-Baghawi Al-Farra and His Interpretation of The Holy Quran*, emphasises Al-Baghawi’s rigorous approach to ensuring the authenticity of hadiths, as he consistently prioritised sound narrations in his interpretations, a critical aspect of his methodology.<sup>6</sup>

However, what distinguishes this current research is its focused attention on Al-Baghawi’s use of the Prophetic Sunnah as a primary tool for interpreting the Qur’an. While earlier works have addressed Al-Baghawi’s general use of hadiths, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how the Sunnah was employed to clarify, specify, and restrict the meanings of Qur’anic verses. Al-Baghawi’s methodology reflects his conviction that the Prophetic teachings are crucial for comprehending the Qur’an. Drawing on numerous examples from Ma’alim al-Tanzeel, this study aims to demonstrate how Al-Baghawi utilised the Sunnah to elucidate ambiguous verses, provide details on the causes of revelation (asbab al-nuzul), and derive legal rulings based on the Qur’anic text.

Moreover, previous literature has addressed Al-Baghawi’s critical engagement with hadiths. His strict methodology in handling narratives has been highlighted in studies that compare his approach with that of other exegetes. Al-Baghawi was renowned for his meticulous selection of narrations, carefully avoiding weak or fabricated hadiths, particularly in matters of legal rulings and theological discourse. This cautious approach set him apart from other scholars of his time, such as Al-Tha’labi, who was more lenient in citing unreliable narrations. Studies on this aspect of Al-Baghawi’s exegesis reveal the scholarly rigour that underpins his tafseer, demonstrating his commitment to preserving the authenticity of both the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

The contribution of Al-Baghawi’s work to contemporary scholarship is profound. His exegesis offers a valuable model for modern exegetes and researchers, particularly in how he integrated the Sunnah with the Qur’anic text. This study builds upon existing literature by providing a focused exploration of Al-Baghawi’s methodology, specifically his use of the Sunnah to interpret the Qur’an. It is hoped that this research will not only deepen our understanding of Al-Baghawi’s tafseer but also contribute to ongoing discussions in Qur’anic studies, providing a comprehensive framework for scholars to engage with the integration of hadith and Qur’anic interpretation.

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<sup>3</sup> Afaf Abdul Ghafour Hamid, *Al-Baghawi And His Method of Interpretation* (Bagdad: Al Matba ar Rasidiyya, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Mohammed Hussein Al-Dhahabi, *al-Tafsir wa Mufasssirun* (Cairo: Dar Al-Hadith, 2012), Part 1, 127-136.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad Fatoni Al-Mu’ashirah, “The Thought and Methodology of Al-Baghawi in Masabih al-Sunnah: Implications for Contemporary Hadith Studies,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu’ashirah: Media Kajian Al-Qur’an dan Al-Hadits Multi Perspektif* 22, no. 1 (2025): 76-92.

<sup>6</sup> Mohamed Ibrahim Sharif, *Al-Baghawi Al-Farra And His Interpretation of The Holy Quran* (Cairo: Cairo University, 1986).

### 3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach to analyse Imam Al-Baghawi's methodology in interpreting the Qur'an through the Prophetic Sunnah in his exegesis *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*. The primary aim is to explore how Al-Baghawi employs the Sunnah as a clarifying source for understanding the Qur'anic text and to investigate the scientific and scholarly principles underlying his interpretive approach.

To achieve the research objectives, the study will involve a detailed textual analysis of *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*, focusing on Al-Baghawi's use of hadith to explain, specify, and restrict meanings in the Qur'an. The study will identify key instances where the Prophetic teachings illuminate the Qur'anic verses, paying special attention to how the Sunnah complements, clarifies, or provides further elaboration on the divine text. The research will also examine the methodologies Al-Baghawi employed in selecting and verifying hadiths, ensuring the authenticity and integrity of his narrations, as well as his critical engagement with weak or fabricated reports.

Furthermore, the research will compare Al-Baghawi's approach to the Sunnah with other prominent exegetes, such as Al-Tha'labi, to highlight the distinctive features of his methodology. This comparative analysis will provide a broader context for understanding Al-Baghawi's contributions to Qur'anic interpretation and his role in shaping the tradition of tafseer based on narrations.

The study will also draw upon secondary sources, including scholarly articles and books that discuss Al-Baghawi's exegesis, to contextualise his methodology within the broader field of Islamic exegesis and hadith scholarship. By synthesising primary and secondary sources, this research will provide a comprehensive examination of Al-Baghawi's tafseer methodology and its enduring significance in Qur'anic scholarship.

### 4. Imam Al-Baghawi and His Exegesis "Ma'alim al-Tanzeel"

Imam Al-Baghawi, born Abu Muhammad Al-Husayn ibn Mas'ud ibn Muhammad al-Farra' al-Baghawi al-Shafi'i in 436 AH, is widely regarded as one of the most significant scholars in the fields of tafseer, hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence. His scholarly contributions are particularly embodied in his exegesis *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*, which remains an essential source of Qur'anic interpretation to this day.<sup>7</sup> Al-Baghawi was deeply committed to both the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, and his works reflect his dedication to scholarly rigour, integrity, and piety. He was famously known as the "Reviver of the Sunnah" and the "Pillar of the Religion" due to his critical role in preserving the authentic teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Al-Baghawi passed away in 516 AH, leaving behind a legacy that would influence generations of scholars.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.1. Educational Background and Scholarly Influences

Al-Baghawi's intellectual development was shaped by his interactions with prominent scholars of his time. Among his most notable teachers were Judge Hussein ibn Muhammad al-Marwazi, under whom he studied Shafi'i jurisprudence, and Abu Umar Abd al-Wahid al-Milahi, a key figure in the transmission of hadith.<sup>9</sup> These relationships provided Al-Baghawi with a strong foundation in both Islamic law and the study of hadith, which profoundly

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<sup>7</sup> Alkatere, Saeed. "The Jurisprudential Interpretation of Imam Al-Baghawi (d. 516 AH) Surat Al-Noor as a Model: A Descriptive Analytical Study." *Jordan Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 4 (2023): 31-58.

<sup>8</sup> Saeed Alkatere, "The Jurisprudential Interpretation of Imam Al-Baghawi (d. 516 AH) Surat Al-Noor as a Model: A Descriptive Analytical Study," *Jordan Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 4 (2023): 31-58.

<sup>9</sup> M. Lytto Syahrums Arminsa, "Tafsir Al-Baghawi: Metodologi, Kelebihan dan Kekurangan" (2020).

influenced his later work in tafseer. His comprehensive understanding of both the Qur'anic text and the hadith corpus formed the theoretical and intellectual framework for his exegesis.

#### **4.2. Structure and Methodology of *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel***

*Ma'alim al-Tanzeel* is a medium-sized exegesis that occupies a unique position between the extensive works of tafseer, such as those by Al-Tabari, and more concise commentaries. Al-Baghawi's approach in this work is characterised by a balance between thoroughness and brevity, aiming to avoid unnecessary length while still providing detailed interpretations. His methodology in tafseer is deeply rooted in the tradition of *tafseer bi-l-ma'thoor*, which refers to interpretation based on authentic narrations—primarily from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the sayings of the early generations of Muslims (Salaf). By relying on these primary sources, Al-Baghawi sought to provide a clear and accurate understanding of the Qur'anic text that was firmly grounded in the Prophetic tradition.<sup>10</sup>

Al-Baghawi begins his exegesis with a discussion of the virtues of the Qur'an, establishing its unparalleled significance as the ultimate source of divine guidance. He then proceeds to explain each Surah, highlighting its key themes and offering interpretations based on the Qur'anic text, the hadith, and scholarly consensus. His careful selection of sources and his adherence to authentic narrations demonstrate his commitment to maintaining the integrity of his exegesis and avoiding speculation or innovation in his interpretations.<sup>11</sup>

#### **4.3. Scholarly Reception and Influence**

Al-Baghawi's exegesis has been highly praised by many scholars throughout history. Ibn Taymiyyah, a prominent Islamic scholar, described *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel* as a concise version of Al-Tha'labi's work. Still, he noted that Al-Baghawi had "safeguarded his interpretation from fabricated hadiths and heretical opinions." This statement highlights the scholarly integrity of Al-Baghawi's tafseer, emphasising his careful selection of narrations and his avoidance of weak or fabricated sources. Ibn Qayyim further praised Al-Baghawi's exegesis, describing it as "the furthest exegesis from innovation." This recognition highlights the significance of Al-Baghawi's work in upholding the traditional and orthodox interpretation of the Qur'an.

#### **4.4. Sources and Influences in *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel***

The primary source for Al-Baghawi's exegesis was the tafseer of his teacher, Ahmad ibn Ibrahim Al-Tha'labi, specifically *Al-Kashf wa al-Bayan*. Al-Baghawi edited and refined Al-Tha'labi's work, purging it of weak narrations and aligning it more closely with authentic hadith and scholarly consensus. In addition to *Al-Kashf wa al-Bayan*, Al-Baghawi drew extensively from the principal collections of hadith, including *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, both of which are considered the most reliable sources of hadith. He also relied on the four Sunan (Abu Dawood, Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah), as well as the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad and the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik. By incorporating these sources, Al-Baghawi ensured that his exegesis was grounded in the most authoritative and reliable narrations available, reinforcing the credibility and authenticity of his interpretations.

#### **4.5. Al-Baghawi's Contribution to Tafseer**

The significance of *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel* lies not only in its scholarly rigour but also in its role in bridging the gap between the Qur'an and the Sunnah. By relying heavily on hadith to

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<sup>10</sup> Al-Baghawi, Abu Muhammad Al-Husayn ibn Mas'ud. *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*. Edited by Abdul Razzaq Al-Mahdi. Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 1420 AH.

<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Fuad Ikhwansyah, Hamidah Hamidah, and Akhmad Supriadi, "Akhlak dalam Pendidikan Islam Menurut QS Al-Baqarah: 258-260 Prespektif Al-Baghawi," *JIIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 7, no. 3 (2024): 2165-2174.

explain and clarify the Qur'anic text, Al-Baghawi made a significant contribution to the tradition of tafseer based on narrations. His exegesis stands as a model for future scholars in its precise handling of the hadith and its careful avoidance of speculative or unauthorised interpretations.

Through *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*, Al-Baghawi successfully provided a balanced and methodologically sound interpretation of the Qur'an. His work has influenced generations of scholars and remains a key reference in the study of tafseer. By adhering to the principles of *tafsseer bi-l-ma'thoor* and rigorously verifying the authenticity of the narrations he employed, Al-Baghawi ensured that his exegesis would be a reliable and enduring source for understanding the Qur'anic text.<sup>12</sup>

Imam Al-Baghawi's *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel* stands as a pivotal work in the field of Qur'anic exegesis. Through his rigorous methodology, reliance on authentic narrations, and careful attention to scholarly integrity, Al-Baghawi has left an indelible mark on the tradition of tafseer. His contributions continue to be a valuable resource for contemporary scholars and students of Qur'anic studies, providing a model for integrating the Sunnah in the interpretation of the Qur'an. Al-Baghawi's exegesis remains a timeless guide, highlighting the significance of both the Qur'an and the Sunnah in understanding divine revelation.<sup>13</sup>

## 5. Theoretical Foundations of Al-Baghawi's Methodology in Tafseer through the Sunnah

Imam Al-Baghawi's exegesis, *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*, presents a distinct and methodologically rigorous approach to interpreting the Qur'an through the lens of the Prophetic Sunnah. The intellectual and theoretical foundations of his methodology are deeply embedded in his belief in the integral relationship between the Qur'an and the Sunnah as two complementary sources of divine guidance. His methodology is rooted in a comprehensive understanding of Islamic jurisprudence, hadith, and the Qur'anic text, aiming to elucidate the meanings of the Qur'an while preserving its authenticity and relevance.<sup>14</sup>

Al-Baghawi's reliance on the Sunnah is grounded in his scholarly understanding of the Qur'anic command to clarify the meanings of divine revelation. This foundational belief is exemplified in his citation of the Qur'anic verse: "And We have sent down to you the Reminder, that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them".<sup>15</sup> This verse highlights the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) role in explaining the Qur'an to his followers, a responsibility that Al-Baghawi considers a cornerstone in his exegesis. The Sunnah, in this regard, is not merely a supplementary source; it is indispensable for providing clarity and context to the Qur'anic verses, particularly when the text is ambiguous or requires further specification.<sup>16</sup>

Al-Baghawi's reverence for the Sunnah is not only philosophical but is also reflected in his scholarly practice. He earned the title "*Reviver of the Sunnah*", which is a recognition not given lightly but earned through his methodical and consistent use of the Sunnah throughout his scholarly works.<sup>17</sup> This title reflects his dedication to preserving and conveying the authentic

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<sup>12</sup> Fariz Wiradasa Nugrahadi Bhekti, "Study of the Book of Tafsir Ma'alim at Tanzil by Al-Baghawi," *Al-Tadabbur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 8, no. 02 (2023).

<sup>13</sup> Mohsen Goudarzi, "Books on Exegesis (tafsir) and Qur'anic Readings (qirā'āt): Inspiration, Intellect, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Post-Classical Islam," in *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3-1503/4)* (2 vols), 267-308 (Brill, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Idrees, Aziz Ur Rehman Ariyan, and Hafiz Zahid Farooq, "Biography of Imam Baghwi and His Authorship and Compilation Services: An Introductory Study," *Al-Marjān (المرجان)* 3, no. 3 (2025): 126-137.

<sup>15</sup> Quran 16:44.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqi al-Din Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn Abdul Halim. *Introduction to the Principles of Tafseer*.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Qayyim, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr. *Bada'i' al-Fawa'id*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Vol. 2.

teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which he regarded as the primary means of interpreting the Qur'an. Al-Baghawi's methodology, therefore, emerges as a deliberate and thoughtful synthesis of both the Qur'anic text and the Prophetic tradition, with a clear emphasis on the role of the Sunnah in clarifying and complementing the Qur'anic message.<sup>18</sup>

Al-Baghawi's approach to utilising the Sunnah in tafseer is exemplified through his careful selection of hadiths, drawn primarily from authoritative collections. His exegesis indicates a heavy reliance on the two most reliable hadith collections, *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. These two works represent the pinnacle of hadith authenticity and form the bedrock of Al-Baghawi's methodological framework. In addition to these primary sources, Al-Baghawi also incorporates hadiths from the four Sunan (Abu Dawood, Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah), the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad, and the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik, demonstrating his commitment to drawing from a wide range of authentic sources to elucidate Qur'anic meanings.<sup>19</sup>

Al-Baghawi's method of attributing hadiths is noteworthy for its precision and adherence to the standards of hadith scholarship. In his exegesis, he follows the traditional methodology of hadith scholars by including the connected chains of narrations (asanid) in the introduction to his tafseer. This practice ensures that each narration is sourced correctly and linked to its original transmitter, thereby upholding the scholarly integrity of his work. In the main body of his exegesis, Al-Baghawi often abbreviates the attribution of narrations, either by stating "Narrated to us by so-and-so" or by directly mentioning the Companion who transmitted the hadith. This succinctness serves to maintain the flow of the exegesis and to demonstrate his precision and rigour in ensuring the authenticity of the narrations used in his tafsir.<sup>20</sup>

The careful attention Al-Baghawi gives to the authenticity and attribution of hadiths highlights his methodological commitment to preserving the integrity of both the Qur'an and the Sunnah. By adhering to stringent standards of hadith verification, Al-Baghawi distinguishes his exegesis from that of other exegetes who may have been more lenient in their use of weak or fabricated narrations. His methodology in handling hadiths is a key aspect of his scholarly legacy and has contributed to the lasting value and credibility of his tafseer.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, the theoretical foundations of Al-Baghawi's methodology in tafseer through the Sunnah reflect a profound understanding of the relationship between the Qur'an and the Sunnah as two essential sources of divine guidance. Al-Baghawi's method is characterised by his meticulous attention to the authenticity of hadiths, his critical engagement with the Prophetic tradition, and his belief in the indispensable role of the Sunnah in interpreting the Qur'anic text. His exegesis remains a cornerstone in the field of Qur'anic interpretation, offering valuable insights into the integration of hadiths within the broader framework of Islamic scholarship.

## 6. Practical Manifestations of Al-Baghawi's Methodology in Interpreting the Qur'an Through the Sunnah

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<sup>18</sup> Rasheed Qadir Rasheed, "The Effect of the Addition and Its Meanings on the Structure of the Triple Verb in Surat Al-Baqara and Al-Imran, The Increase in Three Letters as a Model (Morphological and Semantic Study)," *Russian Law Journal* 11, no. 11S (2023): 381-394.

<sup>19</sup> Romlah Abubakar Askar and Abdurrahim Yapono, "Uluww al-Isnad dalam Peristiwa Hadis Abu Muhammad al-Husain bin Mas'ud al-Baghawi," *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Pemikiran Islam* 14, no. 1 (2016): 53-80.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Fuad Ikhwanisyah, Hamidah Hamidah, and Akhmad Supriadi, "Akhlak dalam Pendidikan Islam Menurut QS Al-Baqarah: 258-260 Prespektif Al-Baghawi," *JIIIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 7, no. 3 (2024): 2165-2174.

<sup>21</sup> Marouf Ismail, "The Fountain of Springs in Sharh al-Masabeeh by Ali bin Salah al-Din al-Sukhumi (d. 774 AH) Chapter: Virtues of the Promising Ten (Study and Investigation)," *Islamic Sciences Journal* 14, no. 4 (2023): 154-173.

Imam Al-Baghawi's *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel* stands as a clear demonstration of his methodology in integrating the Prophetic Sunnah into Qur'anic exegesis. He regarded the Sunnah as the essential clarifier and interpreter of the Qur'an, acknowledging its central role in explaining, specifying, and elaborating upon the meanings of the Qur'anic verses. Al-Baghawi's use of the Sunnah in tafseer is multifaceted, with practical applications across different aspects of Qur'anic interpretation, including the explanation of the general (mujmal), specifying the universal (aam), restricting the absolute (mutlaq), understanding the causes of revelation (asbab al-nuzul), deriving legal rulings, and clarifying the meanings of specific Qur'anic words and terms.<sup>22</sup>

### 6.1. Explaining the General (Mujmal)

One of the primary ways Al-Baghawi employed the Sunnah in his tafseer was to clarify the general or ambiguous (mujmal) terms in the Qur'anic text. For example, in his interpretation of verses related to acts of worship, such as prayer, zakat, and Hajj, Al-Baghawi integrates both verbal and practical hadiths to explain the precise manner in which these acts should be performed. This is particularly evident when he cites the hadith: "Pray as you have seen me pray".<sup>23</sup> This hadith, narrated by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), serves as a key clarification for understanding the Qur'anic commands regarding prayer and its proper execution. Al-Baghawi used similar hadiths to detail the appropriate methods of performing zakat and Hajj, emphasising that the Sunnah provides essential elaboration on the general instructions found in the Qur'an.<sup>24</sup>

Through this approach, Al-Baghawi emphasises that the Qur'an. At the same time, a comprehensive guide often requires the Sunnah to clarify broader terms and practices, particularly those that were not explicitly detailed in the Qur'an. This methodology demonstrates Al-Baghawi's commitment to a holistic interpretation, where the Qur'an and Sunnah work synergistically to guide the believer.

### 6.2. Specifying the General (Aam)

Another essential aspect of Al-Baghawi's use of the Sunnah was its role in specifying the general (aam) verses. For example, when interpreting the verse in Surah an-Nisa regarding inheritance- "From after a will or debt"<sup>25</sup>-Al-Baghawi refers to the hadith: "Indeed, Allah has given everyone their due, so there is no will for an inheritor." This hadith specifies the general permissibility of making a will, limits its application, and provides additional context necessary for understanding the Qur'anic injunction in its full scope.<sup>26</sup>

Al-Baghawi used similar methods to specify general verses on issues such as inheritance, punishment, and legal rights. By invoking the Prophetic Sunnah, Al-Baghawi clarified and narrowed the broad meanings of such verses, ensuring that the Qur'anic directives were understood in their intended context.

### 6.3. Restricting the Absolute (Mutlaq)

Al-Baghawi also relied on the Sunnah to restrict the absolute (mutlaq) terms found in the Qur'an. For example, in his exegesis of the verse regarding the punishment for theft, "Then

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<sup>22</sup> Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad. *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*. Edited by Shu'aib al-Arna'oot et al. Beirut: Dar al-Risalah.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Tha'labi, Ahmad ibn Ibrahim. *Al-Kashf wa al-Bayan 'An Tafseer al-Qur'an*, edited by Ali Muhammad Ma'wid. Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, Vol. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Mehmet Akif Koç, "A Comparison of the References to Muqātil b. Sulaymān (150/767) in the Exegesis of al-Tha'labi (427/1036) with Muqātil's Own Exegesis," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 53, no. 1 (2008): 69-101.

<sup>25</sup> Qur'an 4:11.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Roumi, Fahd ibn Abdul Rahman. *Trends in Tafseer in the Fourteenth Century*. Beirut: Dar al-Risalah, 1427 AH.

*cut off their hands,*”<sup>27</sup> Al-Baghawi cites hadiths that restrict the punishment of hand-cutting to specific circumstances. The hadiths clarify that the sentence should only apply when the value of the stolen goods exceeds a certain threshold (a quarter of a dinar or more) and that “the hand” refers specifically to the right hand from the wrist.

This approach of using hadiths to restrict the broad or absolute terms in the Qur’an is a hallmark of Al-Baghawi’s methodology. It reflects his careful attention to the nuances of Islamic law and his understanding that the Qur’an, while comprehensive, often requires the Sunnah to provide practical details and limitations.

## **7. The Prophetic Sunnah as a Source for Understanding the Causes of Revelation (Asbab al-Nuzul)**

The Sunnah also played a crucial role in helping Al-Baghawi understand and explain the causes of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*), which are essential for grasping the context in which certain verses were revealed. Al-Baghawi frequently referenced hadiths that detailed the circumstances surrounding specific revelations, which provided critical insight into their meanings and applications.

For instance, in his interpretation of the verse “*And do not kill yourselves*”,<sup>28</sup> Al-Baghawi cites the hadith of ‘Amr ibn al-As, who refrained from using cold water to perform ablution during the Battle of Dhāt al-Salāsel because of his fear for his health. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) approved of his use of dry ablution (*tayammum*) and prayer, thereby linking this incident to the verse in question. This hadith not only clarifies the meaning of the verse but also helps contextualise it within the lived experiences of the early Muslim community.<sup>29</sup>

Al-Baghawi’s use of such narrations demonstrates the essential role that the Sunnah plays in providing the historical and situational context for Qur’anic verses, thereby enriching the understanding of the Qur’an and enhancing its practical application.

### **7.1. The Prophetic Sunnah as a Source for Deriving Legal Rulings**

Al-Baghawi was a Shafi’i jurist, and his *tafseer* reflects his legal training and understanding. He often relied on hadiths to derive legal rulings from the Qur’anic verses, particularly in matters related to ritual purification, inheritance, and other aspects of Islamic law. For example, when interpreting the verse on ablution in Surah al-Ma’idah, Al-Baghawi elaborates on the pillars and recommended actions of ablution, citing both the practical and verbal hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This includes his reference to the hadiths that demonstrate the obligation of following the correct sequence in washing the limbs, a core principle in Shafi’i jurisprudence.<sup>30</sup>

Al-Baghawi’s use of hadiths to derive legal rulings demonstrates his deep understanding of Islamic jurisprudence and his ability to integrate the Qur’an and Sunnah in a comprehensive legal framework. This method underscores the importance of the Sunnah in clarifying the legal implications of Qur’anic verses and ensuring their proper application in Islamic law.

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<sup>27</sup> Qur’an 5:38.

<sup>28</sup> Qur’an 4:29.

<sup>29</sup> Marlinda Marlinda, Hasmulyadi Hasan, and Juswandi Juswandi, “Metodologi Tafsir al-Khazin (Lubab al-Ta’wil fi Ma’ani al-Tanzil),” *TAFASIR: Journal of Quranic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2025): 152-163.

<sup>30</sup> Abdul Basid, Lilik Nur Kholidah, Muhammad Fahmi Hidayatullah, Eka Kurnia Firmansyah, Ahmad Iwan Zunaih, and Reza Ahmad Zahid, “Interfaith Marriage Controversies in Semarang: An Analysis of Qur’anic Legal Exegesis,” *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 12, no. 3 (2024): 762-777.

## 7.2. The Prophetic Sunnah as a Source for Clarifying the Meanings of Qur'anic Words and Terms

Al-Baghawi also relied on the Sunnah to clarify the meanings of specific Qur'anic words and terms, particularly when the Qur'anic text itself is vague or ambiguous. One prominent example is his interpretation of the word “*zulm*” in the verse: “*And they do not mix their faith with injustice*”.<sup>31</sup> Al-Baghawi cites the hadith of Ibn Mas'ud, where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) clarified that *zulm* here refers to “*shirk*” (associating partners with Allah), supporting it with the verse: “*Indeed, shirk is a great injustice*”.<sup>32</sup> This clarification underscores the importance of the Sunnah in providing precise meanings for Qur'anic terms, thereby ensuring that interpretations are accurate and consistent with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).<sup>33</sup>

Al-Baghawi's reliance on the Sunnah to define and explain Qur'anic words and concepts underscores his methodological commitment to ensuring that the Qur'anic text is understood as intended by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This aspect of his exegesis is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the interpretation and for preventing misreadings or misunderstandings of key Islamic terms.

Moreover, Imam Al-Baghawi's *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel* exemplifies his methodological mastery in using the Sunnah to clarify, specify, and restrict the meanings of the Qur'anic verses. His detailed approach to interpreting the Qur'an through the Sunnah not only reflects his scholarly integrity but also underscores the indispensable role of the Prophetic teachings in understanding divine revelation. By drawing on hadiths to explain ambiguous verses, specify generalities, and derive legal rulings, Al-Baghawi's exegesis provides a model for integrating the Qur'an and Sunnah coherently and authentically, ensuring that the Qur'anic message remains relevant and accurately interpreted for generations to come.

## 8. Evaluation of Al-Baghawi's Methodology in Dealing with Hadith

Imam Al-Baghawi's *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel* stands as a pivotal work in Qur'anic exegesis, particularly because of its careful integration of hadiths to interpret the Qur'an. Al-Baghawi's methodology in dealing with hadith narrations is characterised by a meticulous approach to authenticity and a well-defined framework for incorporating them into his exegesis. His careful consideration of hadiths demonstrates both scholarly integrity and a commitment to preserving the accuracy of Islamic teachings. This chapter provides a critical and analytical overview of Al-Baghawi's method for critiquing and verifying hadiths, with a focus on the distinct features of his approach to hadith usage in tafseer.

### 8.1. Safeguarding Exegesis from Fabricated Hadiths

One of the most prominent aspects of Al-Baghawi's methodology is his dedication to safeguarding his exegesis from fabricated or weak hadiths. He was highly selective in his use of hadiths, ensuring that only authentic narrations, especially those from *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, were employed to explain the Qur'anic text. Al-Baghawi's reliance on these two collections, regarded as the most authentic sources of hadith, set a high standard for the reliability of his interpretations. He sought to preserve the sanctity of the Qur'anic exegesis by

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<sup>31</sup> Qur'an 6:82.

<sup>32</sup> Qur'an 31:13.

<sup>33</sup> Abdul Basid, Nur Faizin, Zhafira Qotrunda, and Savira Manzilina, “Kontribusi Doa Nabi Ibrahim Terhadap Perkembangan Perekonomian Arab Pra Islam – Pasca Islam (Studi Pemikiran Tafsir Ma'alim Al-Tanzil Karya Al-Baghawi),” *Al Yasini: Jurnal Keislaman, Sosial, Hukum dan Pendidikan* 7, no. 1 (2022): 85-85.

adhering strictly to verified narrations and avoiding the inclusion of spurious or fabricated reports that could undermine the credibility of his tafseer.<sup>34</sup>

Al-Baghawi's commitment to excluding fabricated hadiths aligns with his broader goal of maintaining the integrity of Islamic scholarship. Given the proliferation of weak and fabricated hadiths in earlier tafseer works, Al-Baghawi's cautious approach represented a conscious effort to protect his exegesis from the influence of unreliable sources. His scholarly rigour is evident in his critical engagement with the narratives he included, ensuring they adhere to established standards of authenticity.

### **8.2. Acknowledging and Using Weak Hadiths**

While Al-Baghawi is often commended for his cautious approach to hadith, he does acknowledge that some weak hadiths appear in his exegesis. However, he clarifies that these weak narrations are generally not of a severely weak nature and are primarily used in matters of virtue, encouragement, and warnings rather than in matters of belief or definitive legal rulings. This distinction is critical to understanding Al-Baghawi's methodology, as it reflects his awareness of the varying degrees of hadith authenticity and his discerning approach to their use.<sup>35</sup>

The inclusion of weak hadiths, particularly in matters related to virtuous acts, was standard during Al-Baghawi's time. Scholars often cited weak hadiths in support of acts of virtue or recommendations that did not carry the weight of definitive legal rulings. Al-Baghawi's methodology in using such hadiths demonstrates his pragmatic approach, balancing scholarly rigour with a desire to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'anic text, including its ethical and spiritual dimensions. By limiting the use of weak hadiths to areas that did not directly impact core doctrinal or legal principles, Al-Baghawi maintained the integrity of his tafseer while still incorporating the richness of the Prophetic tradition.

### **8.3. The Role of Hadith in Explaining the Qur'an**

Al-Baghawi's methodology in using hadith to clarify Qur'anic verses is another crucial aspect of his approach. He viewed hadith as an essential tool for providing context, elaborating on ambiguous verses, and specifying general rulings found in the Qur'an. Al-Baghawi was meticulous in citing hadiths to explain the meanings of certain words or terms in the Qur'an, particularly when those terms could be understood in multiple ways. For example, his interpretation of the term *zulm* in Qur'an 6:82, where he cites the hadith of Ibn Mas'ud, is a clear example of how Al-Baghawi relied on the Sunnah to clarify Qur'anic terms.<sup>36</sup> His approach reflects a broader understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah as complementary sources. For Al-Baghawi, the Qur'an was not an isolated text but a message that required the Sunnah to provide practical and detailed explanations. His methodology of linking the Qur'an

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<sup>34</sup> Marlinda Marlinda, Hasmulyadi Hasan, and Juswandi Juswandi, "Metodologi Tafsir al-Khazin (Lubab al-Ta'wil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil)," *TAFASIR: Journal of Quranic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2025): 152-163.

<sup>35</sup> Mohammad Rohmanan and M. Lytto Syahrur Arminsa, "Metode Tafsir al-Baghawi dalam Kitab Ma'alim al-Tanzi," *Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu al-Qur'an dan al-Hadits* 14, no. 1 (2020): 135-160.

<sup>36</sup> Muhammad Akbar Mawaldi, Andri Nirwana An, and Nazar Fadli, "Analytical Study: The Method of Dakwa in An-Nahl 125-128 in the Testament of Ma'alim Al-Tanzil by Imam Al-Baghawy," *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam* 25, no. 01 (2024): 169-182.

with the hadith through detailed references and clarifications reveals his belief that the Sunnah serves as an indispensable guide to understanding the Qur'anic message in its full context.

#### **8.4. Methodology in Attribution: The Importance of the Chain of Narration (Asanid)**

A hallmark of Al-Baghawi's methodology is his attention to the chain of narration (asanid) for the hadiths he included in his exegesis. Al-Baghawi adhered to the classical tradition of hadith criticism, including the names of transmitters and providing their backgrounds to ensure transparency in the authenticity of the narrations. He typically introduced hadiths with the phrase "Narrated to us by so-and-so," and in some cases, he referred to the Companion directly to maintain clarity and conciseness. This practice demonstrates Al-Baghawi's commitment to scholarly rigour and his desire to provide a reliable interpretation of the Qur'an, grounded in a clear and transparent transmission of knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

Al-Baghawi's methodology in attribution also reflects his scholarly integrity. By including the asanid and citing the sources of his hadiths, Al-Baghawi enabled his readers to verify the authenticity of the narrations themselves, thereby providing a level of accountability and transparency in his tafseer. This practice distinguishes his exegesis from others that may have included narrations without such rigorous attribution.<sup>38</sup>

#### **8.5. Comparative Approach: Al-Baghawi's Methodology vs. Other Exegetes**

When evaluating Al-Baghawi's methodology, it is essential to compare his approach to that of other classical exegetes, such as Al-Tha'labi. While Al-Tha'labi was more lenient in citing weak or unverified hadiths, Al-Baghawi took a more conservative approach, focusing on authentic and verifiable narrations. This distinction highlights Al-Baghawi's scholarly commitment to preserving the integrity of his tafseer, making his work a trusted source for subsequent generations of scholars.

Al-Baghawi's critical stance toward fabricated hadiths and his careful selection of narrations contributed to the lasting value of his exegesis. His approach, grounded in strict adherence to the principles of hadith criticism, ensured that his tafseer remained an authoritative and reliable resource for understanding the Qur'an.<sup>39</sup>

Imam Al-Baghawi's methodology in handling hadith in his exegesis, Ma'alim al-Tanzeel, demonstrates his deep commitment to scholarly rigour and authenticity. His careful selection of hadiths, attention to the chain of narration, and critical approach to weak or fabricated narrations reflect his integrity as an exegete. By balancing the use of authentic hadiths with the pragmatic inclusion of weaker narrations in non-critical matters, Al-Baghawi ensured that his tafseer maintained both scholarly rigour and comprehensiveness. His work

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<sup>37</sup> Sri Mulyati, "Blessings in the Qur'an Back to Basic Virtue in Life," in *International Conference on Qur'an and Hadith Studies (ICQHS 2017)*, 263-270 (Atlantis Press, 2017).

<sup>38</sup> Muhammad Akbar Mawaldi, Andri Nirwana An, and Nazar Fadli, "Analytical Study: The Method of Dakwa in An-Nahl 125-128 in the Testament of Ma'alim Al-Tanzil by Imam Al-Baghawy," *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam* 25, no. 01 (2024): 169-182.

<sup>39</sup> Fariz Wiradasa Nugrahadi Bhekti, "Study of the Book of Tafsir Ma'alim at Tanzil by Al-Baghawi," *Al-Tadabbur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 8, no. 02 (2023).

remains a trusted and influential source for understanding the Qur'an, serving as a model for contemporary scholars in their approach to hadith and Qur'anic interpretation.<sup>40</sup>

## 9. A Comparison Between Al-Baghawi's Methodology and His Teacher Al-Tha'labi's Methodology in Handling Narrations

Imam Al-Baghawi's exegesis, *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel*, reflects a rigorous and precise methodology, particularly in his handling of hadith narrations. His teacher, Imam Al-Tha'labi, was also a prominent exegete. Yet, there are key differences in their approaches to narrations that provide valuable insights into the evolution of tafseer based on narrations. While Al-Tha'labi's approach was more lenient in including a variety of narrations, including weak and Israeli traditions, Al-Baghawi took a more conservative stance, purging his exegesis of weak narrations and rejecting Israeli traditions to maintain the integrity of his tafseer. This section critically compares the methodologies of Al-Baghawi and Al-Tha'labi in handling hadith narrations, with a focus on their treatment of authenticity, Israeli traditions, and the overall structure of their exegeses.

### 9.1. Hadiths: Purification vs. Leniency

One of the most significant distinctions between Al-Baghawi's methodology and that of Al-Tha'labi lies in their handling of hadiths, particularly about weak and fabricated narrations. Al-Baghawi was known for his meticulous approach to selecting hadiths, ensuring that only authentic narrations were included in his exegesis. His reliance on *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, and other authoritative collections demonstrates his commitment to presenting a tafseer grounded in verified hadiths. Al-Baghawi's rigorous scrutiny of hadiths ensured that his exegesis was free from fabricated reports, which would undermine the reliability and integrity of his interpretations.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast, Al-Tha'labi, while a respected scholar in his own right, was more lenient in including hadiths of varying authenticity. He did not consistently apply the same stringent criteria for narrations, and as a result, his exegesis often contained weak or dubious narrations. This methodological difference is critical, as it reflects Al-Baghawi's higher standard of scholarly rigour in comparison to Al-Tha'labi's more inclusive, but less critical, approach. Al-Baghawi's focus on ensuring the authenticity of narrations directly impacted the intellectual credibility of his tafseer, making it a trusted source for future generations of scholars.

### 9.2. Israiliyyat (Israeli Traditions): Reduction vs. Inclusion

Another notable difference between Al-Baghawi and Al-Tha'labi's methodologies is their treatment of Israeli traditions (Israiliyyat). These narratives are sourced from Jewish and Christian traditions, which, while sometimes offering historical context, are not always reliable in Islamic scholarship due to the potential for distortion and bias. Al-Tha'labi often incorporated Jewish traditions into his exegesis, particularly in stories related to previous scriptures, to enrich the narrative or provide context for Qur'anic verses. However, the inclusion of these traditions

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<sup>40</sup> Mohd Sholeh Sheh Yusuff, "Pengaruh Tafsir al-Baghawi dalam Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan: Satu Pendekatan Genetik," *SUSURGALUR* 2, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>41</sup> N. A. Nur Arbai'yah, "Keluarga Sakinah Menurut Al-Qur'an Telaah Penafsiran Imam Al-Baghawi (W. 516 H) dalam Kitab Ma'alim at-Tanzil fi Tafsir al-Quran," PhD diss., UIN SUSKA RIAU, 2022.

without proper scrutiny could potentially compromise the accuracy and integrity of the exegesis.<sup>42</sup>

Al-Baghawi, however, significantly reduced the mention of Israeli traditions in his tafseer. He was highly cautious about their authenticity, and his exegesis reflects a more critical approach to these sources. By limiting the use of Israeli traditions, Al-Baghawi avoided the potential risks of including questionable or fabricated content in his interpretation. This decision aligns with his overall methodological stance of relying on authentic narrations and avoiding weak or unreliable sources, further distinguishing his exegesis from that of Al-Tha'labi.<sup>43</sup>

Al-Baghawi's restraint in incorporating Israeli traditions was not an arbitrary choice but rather a deliberate effort to preserve the purity and authenticity of his exegesis. His focus on the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the primary sources of Islamic law and guidance ensured that his interpretations were firmly rooted in the authentic teachings of Islam, without the complications introduced by foreign traditions.

### 9. 3. Conciseness and Refinement: Structure and Focus

In terms of the overall structure and presentation of their exegeses, Al-Baghawi's work is marked by conciseness and refinement, particularly in his handling of the chains of narration (asanid). Al-Baghawi often condensed long chains of narrations, eliminating excessive detail that might distract from the primary purpose of the exegesis: to provide a clear and accessible explanation of the Qur'anic text. He also avoided unnecessary repetition of narrations, offering a more streamlined and focused interpretation that was easier for readers to engage with.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast, Al-Tha'labi's exegesis is often characterised by longer chains of narration and a more elaborate presentation of sources. While this approach is not inherently flawed, it can at times result in a more cumbersome and less focused exegesis. The inclusion of lengthy asanid and repetitive narrations, though beneficial in specific contexts, can detract from the clarity and accessibility of the tafseer.<sup>45</sup>

Al-Baghawi's concise and focused methodology in presenting hadiths allowed his exegesis to maintain a high level of scholarly integrity while also ensuring that the primary message of the Qur'an was not obscured by excessive detail. This methodological refinement enhanced the accessibility of his work for both scholars and students of the Qur'an, making it a more effective resource for understanding the divine text.

### 9. 4. Conclusion: A Comparative Evaluation

The comparative evaluation of Al-Baghawi and Al-Tha'labi's methodologies reveals a clear distinction in their approaches to handling narrations. Al-Baghawi's methodology is characterised by a careful selection of authentic hadiths, a reduction of Israeli traditions, and a focus on conciseness and clarity in the presentation of narrations. His scholarly rigour and

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<sup>42</sup> Sidra Parveen and Hafiz Falak Sher Jan, "The Intellectual Legacy of Sharh al-Sunnah: Imam Al-Baghawi's Systematic Defense of the Signs of Prophethood," *Al-Irfan* 10, no. 19 (2025): 32-47.

<sup>43</sup> Rima Amelia Puteri, "Kajian Kitab Tafsir Ma'âlim At-Tanzil Karya Al-Baghawi."

<sup>44</sup> Sri Mulyati, "Blessings in the Qur'an Back to Basic Virtue in Life," in *International Conference on Qur'an and Hadith Studies (ICQHS 2017)*, 263-270 (Atlantis Press, 2017).

<sup>45</sup> Muhammad Ammar Farhan Ramlan, Abur Hamdi Usman, and Mohd Faizulamri Mohd Saad, "Metodologi Tawjih Qiraat Oleh Al-Baghawi (W. 561H) Pada Pentafsiran Surah Al-Fatihah," *QIRAAT: Jurnal Al-Quran dan Isu-Isu Kontemporari* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1-9.

commitment to maintaining the authenticity of the Qur'anic exegesis have earned his tafseer a place of high regard among scholars. In contrast, Al-Tha'labi's more lenient approach to weak narrations and his frequent inclusion of Israeli traditions mark his methodology as less stringent but still valuable in specific contexts.<sup>46</sup>

Al-Baghawi's exegesis stands as a model of precision and scholarly integrity, providing a trusted source for Qur'anic interpretation that emphasises the primacy of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. His work offers a more precise and more focused understanding of the Qur'anic message, free from the distractions of weak or fabricated narrations. It reflects a sophisticated methodology that remains relevant for contemporary scholarship. This comparison underscores the importance of maintaining high standards of hadith verification and careful selection of sources in ensuring the reliability and integrity of Qur'anic exegesis.

### Conclusion

Imam Al-Baghawi's *Ma'alim al-Tanzeel* stands as a significant contribution to the field of Qur'anic exegesis, demonstrating his profound expertise in the domains of tafseer, hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence. His scholarly character reflects an encyclopedic knowledge that bridges the understanding of the Qur'an with the teachings of the Prophetic Sunnah. Al-Baghawi's methodology in interpreting the Qur'an through the Sunnah is both original and comprehensive, underpinned by his rigorous attention to detail, accuracy, and commitment to using only authentic and sound hadiths. This methodological precision distinguishes his tafseer from other exegetical works, ensuring a reliable and coherent approach to understanding the Qur'anic text.

A key strength of Al-Baghawi's exegesis is his ability to refine interpretations by carefully excluding weak, fabricated, and Israeli narrations—sources that were often present in earlier tafseer works. His approach, which emphasises the use of the Prophetic Sunnah to clarify and enhance Qur'anic meanings, provides a model for exegetical scholarship that balances traditional sources with scholarly integrity. This “refined” exegesis serves not only as a reliable guide for students and scholars of the Qur'an but also as a tool for contemporary researchers to navigate the complexities of interpreting sacred texts.

Ultimately, the actual value of Al-Baghawi's exegesis lies in its role as a safe and trustworthy bridge that guides readers to a deeper understanding of the Qur'an through the second primary source of Islamic law, the Sunnah. By integrating Prophetic teachings into his tafseer, Al-Baghawi ensures that the Qur'an is interpreted in a manner faithful to the message of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), offering a balanced, comprehensive, and authentic approach to Qur'anic exegesis. This research underscores the enduring relevance of Al-Baghawi's methodology and its continued significance in the field of Islamic studies, offering valuable insights for future scholarly endeavours.

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<sup>46</sup> Muhammad Yousuf and Hafiz Muhammad Sajjad, “Lama'at al-Tanqih Fi Sharh Meškāt al-Mašābīh by Shaykh 'Abd-Al Ḥaqq Dehlavī: An Introductory Study,” *Journal of Semitic Religions* 2, no. 2 (2023).

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