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## ABU BAKR AL-JASSAS'S METHOD OF INTERPRETING THE QUR'AN THROUGH THE QUR'AN

**Abstract.** *This article analyzes the method of the Hanafi exegete Abu Bakr al-Jassas (d. 370/981) of interpreting the Qur'an by means of the Qur'an in his commentary *Aḥkam al-Qur'an*. It distinguishes two categories of this method – deriving the lexical meaning of a word or phrase from other verses, and the thematic (*mawḍūʿī*) gathering of verses related to a single subject – and illustrates each with examples from the commentary. The article argues that, having lived some four centuries before Ibn Kathīr, al-Jassas was among the earliest exegetes to employ this method systematically.*

**Keywords:** *al-Jassas, Aḥkam al-Qur'an, tafsir, interpreting the Qur'an through the Qur'an, thematic interpretation, mawḍūʿī, Hanafi school, Ibn Kathīr.*

### INTRODUCTION

Abu Bakr al-Jassas's (d. 370/981) scholarly conclusions, intellectual perspectives, and academic experience are clearly reflected in his Qur'anic commentary *Aḥkam al-Qur'an*. The work is distinguished by its particular emphasis on the interpretation of legal verses (*ayat al-aḥkam*), the reconciliation and harmonization of related verses, the elucidation of Shari'ah terminology, attention to moral issues within their historical context, and the interpretation of the Qur'an through the Qur'an itself. These features attest to the author's high scholarly standing.

Al-Jassas devoted special attention to interpreting the Qur'an by means of the Qur'an, striving to collect and compare verses that share similar meanings. This method was employed both in the interpretation of legal and juristic verses and in explaining all verses related to a particular theme or concept.

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On this basis, al-Jassas's method of interpreting the Qur'an through the Qur'an may be classified into two categories:

1. Deriving evidence from other Qur'anic verses to establish the lexical meaning of a word or phrase occurring in a verse.
2. Employing a thematic (*mawḍūʿī*) approach by citing other verses related to the subject matter of the verse under discussion.

### MAIN PART

In his commentary, al-Jassas frequently substantiates the lexical meaning of a term by referring to other Qur'anic passages. For example, while interpreting verse 234 of Sūrat al-Baqarah, he explains that the term *yatarabbasna* (يَتَرَبَّصْنَ) denotes "waiting" or "remaining in expectation." To support this interpretation, he cites verses in which the same term is used with a similar meaning, including Sūrat al-Mu'minūn (23:30), Sūrat al-Tawbah (9:98), and Sūrat al-Ṭūr (52:30) (al-Jassas, n.d., 1:105). Likewise, in his commentary on verse 236 of Sūrat al-Baqarah, he notes that the conjunction *aw* (أو), which generally conveys the meaning of "or," may in certain contexts also function in the sense of "and." As evidence, he refers to Sūrat al-Insan (76:24), Sūrat al-Nisa' (4:43), Sūrat al-Saffat (37:147), and Sūrat al-An'am (6:146), explaining that in these verses the particle carries the meaning of "and" rather than "or."

Moreover, al-Jassas often adopts a thematic approach in his interpretation of the Qur'an through the Qur'an. In other words, he gathers and analyzes all verses related to a specific topic. Consequently, bringing together verses associated with a particular theme or concept enables a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of that subject matter.

It is evident that al-Jassas assigned headings to the verses he interpreted based on the legal rulings and implications derived from them. Examples include such titles as "The Chapter on the Prayer of Fear (*Salat al-Khawf*)", "The Chapter on the Prohibition of Concealing Knowledge", "The Chapter on Kindness to Parents" (al-Jassas, n.d., 2:232), "The Chapter on the Obligation of Obedience to the Prophet" (al-Jassas, n.d.:267), and "The Chapter on Reproaching Charity through Reminders of Generosity" (al-Jassas, n.d., 1:553), among others. Whenever there were other verses related to the subject of the verse under discussion, he would cite them within the same section and provide concise explanations of their meanings.

For instance, while commenting on verse 159 of Sūrat al-Baqarah, al-Jassas introduces a separate heading entitled “The Prohibition of Concealing Knowledge,” under which he cites other verses concerning the concealment of knowledge, including verse 174 of Sūrat al-Baqarah and verse 187 of Sūrat Al ‘Imran (al-Jassas, n.d., 1:121-122). Likewise, in his commentary on the verse concerning *qisas* (retaliation), he establishes a section entitled “The Rights Due to the Guardian of a Person Intentionally Killed,” wherein he brings together the relevant verses on retaliation, namely al-Baqarah 2:178 and 2:194, al-Ma’idah 5:45, al-Isra’ 17:33, and al-Nahl 16:126 (al-Jassas, n.d., 1:183). Numerous similar examples can be found throughout the work.

From another perspective, al-Jassas’s exegetical method also contains instances of thematic interpretation in which no explicit heading is provided. A careful reading of the commentary makes it relatively easy to identify such cases and assign appropriate titles on the basis of their thematic content.

For example, in his commentary on verse 28 of Sūrat al-Nisa’, no heading is given. However, considering both the content of the verse and the related verses cited in its explanation, one could appropriately title the section “The Absence of Hardship and Excessive Burden in Religion.” Indeed, the verses cited therein—al-A’raf 7:157, al-Baqarah 2:185, and Al ‘Imran 3:28 – are all connected to this theme (al-Jassas, n.d., 2:215). A similar case appears in his commentary on verse 5 of the same sūrah. Although no heading is provided, the content of the verse and the accompanying citations suggest the title “The Command to Preserve Wealth and the Prohibition of Squandering It.” This conclusion is supported by the verses referenced in the commentary, namely al-Isra’ 17:26, 17:27, and 17:29, al-Furqan 25:67, and Al ‘Imran 3:159, all of which relate to the proper management and preservation of wealth (al-Jassas, n.d.:76).

## CONCLUSION

In general, al-Jassas devoted particular attention to interpreting the Qur’an through the Qur’an. Beyond merely collecting similar verses in one place, he consistently compared and correlated Qur’anic passages with one another, whether they concerned legal rulings and juristic matters or broader exegetical themes.

It is widely recognized among researchers that Ibn Kathīr is regarded as one of the foremost exegetes who extensively employed the method of interpreting the Qur’an

through the Qur'an. While acknowledging the validity of this assessment, it is important to emphasize that Abu Bakr al-Jassas was by no means inferior to Ibn Kathīr in this regard. On the contrary, a close examination of his *Aḥkam al-Qur'an* demonstrates that he made extensive use of this exegetical approach by systematically collecting, correlating, and interpreting related Qur'anic verses.

Furthermore, considering that al-Jassas lived approximately four centuries before Ibn Kathīr, it may reasonably be concluded that he was among the earliest exegetes to employ the method of interpreting the Qur'an through the Qur'an in a systematic and comprehensive manner. His contribution to the development of this exegetical methodology therefore deserves greater scholarly attention and recognition within the history of Qur'anic exegesis.

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