

USUL UT-TAFSIR-THE PRINCIPLES OF HERMENEUTICS

SESSION #5

In our last session, Allah brought us great benefit in learning the passages on Naskh (abrogation), that we might understand what we may and may not use as evidence. Although it was most assuredly difficult and challenging to our minds in looking to understand and interpret revelation as Allah has revealed it, we were pleased and happy with the information that was presented by the scholars quoted.

Our last part in this series is going to focus on four different passages, those being the amr (order), the nahy (prohibition), the `aam (general) and the khaas (the specific or restrictive)

PASSAGES ON AMR

The word **amr** derives from the root, a-ma-ra, which denotes the meaning of '*to command, to denote, to bid or to order.*' If someone should read a passage that is amr in form, this has to do with the stating of an explicit command that someone is to do. This command is unequivocal and there is no doubt in the command being stated.

Imaam al-Khatib al-Baghdaadi RH says about this type of passage,

The amr is the statement that someone uses to command or urge those besides him.

[al-Faqih wal-Mutafaqqih, V. 1, pp. 67-8]

According to Shaikh ul-Islam Muwaffaq ud-Din RH, amr in the Shari`a carries the meaning of,

The action being urged or called upon by with a statement by way of strong emphasis.

[Rawdat un-Naazir wa Junnat ul-Munaaazir, V. 1, pp. 542-43]

Imaam Ibn Badraan al-Hanbali RH defined it as,

The use of a statements such as, 'Do this...' or 'know this...' or 'strike this...' 'leave!' or 'roll' which denotes the imperative.

[al-Madkhal, pp. 223-24]

EXAMPLES OF THE AMR

When we look at the passages of amr, we realise that the scholars of Islam down through the ages have catalogued a large number of them. There are some 11 or more subtypes of the amr. However, as brevity is the point of these lectures, we will mention five of them so that the believer may strengthen his/her faith with the basic and most commonly encountered types.

Wujub

This is an amr passage where the command is of a compulsory nature where obedience of some sort is sought from the one being commanded. Some examples of this would be,

So establish the prayer from mid-day until the darkness of the night...

[Surat ul-Israa' (17), ayah 78]

So establish the prayer...

[Surat ul-Baqarah (2), ayah 43]

Nadab

This is a command that bears upon being praiseworthy and highly recommended. This is something where there is tremendous benefit attached to the command.

...And the slaves you own that seek manumission, give it to them...

[Surat un-Nur (24), ayah 33]

Ihaanah

Ihaanah is where the command bears on humiliation due to disobedience and disloyalty.

So enter the Fire with the other nations from amongst the jinn and the humans that passed away before you...

[Surat ul-A`raaf (7), ayah 38]

So taste the blazing punishment...

[Surat ul-Anfaal (8), ayah 50]

Ibaahah

A command that is permissible to undertake is called ibaahah, where the one called to something has the choice of whether or not they will carry out such an action as commanded.

...**Eat and drink but do not waste...**

[Surat ul-A`raaf (7), ayah 31]

...**And when you finish the ihram, then hunt...**

[Surat ul-Maa'idah (5), ayah 2]

Ikraam

The ikraam is a command of honour, where the one being ordered is receiving some great honour or majestic station in what he is being commanded. It could be something of tremendous value or an honorary station. Please study the following texts,

...**Enter it (the Paradise) in peace and security.**

[Surat ul-Hijr (15), ayah 46]

Enter the Paradise. You will neither have any fear, nor grieve.

[Surat ul-A`raaf (7), ayah 49]

PASSAGES ON NAHY

Nahy focuses on the point of something that has been forbidden or commanded against. The root word, nahaa in the language will inform the reader that its' usage has to do with *'forbiddance, prohibition, restraint and calling away from an action.'*

Imaam Muwaffaq ud-Din ^{RH} stated,

The nahy is something where a command is being given to abstain from something in very strong language, that usually bears on strict prohibition.

[Rawdat un-Naazir, V. 1, pp. 604-612]

Imaam Ibn Badraan ^{RH} describes nahy as,

The word or statement carrying the meaning that one is to abstain from an action by way of emphasis and command. An amr is different, as it is seeking for an action to be done, not for it to be abstained from or called away from at all.

[al-Madkhal, pp. 232-233]

EXAMPLES OF THE NAHY

As with the amr, there are numerous examples of nahy, but for the sake of brevity, we will only give a few so that the believer may understand the most basic type that they will encounter. What follows below are a few examples of nahy, so that the reader may

familiarise her/himself with the general form that they occur in when reading the Qur'an (or even the Sunna).

Tahrim

This is a passage that indicates impermissibility in the prohibition and that punishment will result if the act is done.

Do not take a life that Allah has forbidden except with a right due to it.

[Surat ul-Israa' (17), ayah 33]

And do not marry those whom your fathers married before you.

[Surat un-Nisaa' (4), ayah 22]

And leave off whatever remains of riba (usury).

[Surat ul-Baqarah (2), ayah 278]

Karaahah

Karaahah is an action that is best to be left, although it is permissible. Thus the command to leave it is recommended, rather than bearing on compulsory.

And Allah will not punish you for what is unintentional in your oaths...and protect your oaths.

[Surat ul-Maa'idah (5), ayah 89]

Tahqir

Those being given this order are being told to avoid humiliation as well as destruction.

And do not strain your eyes in longing for the things We have given for enjoyment to the groups of them.

[Surah Taa Haa (20), ayah 131]

Irshaad

A prohibition that is given on the basis of assisting us in guidance is called Irshaad. Here is an example,

And do not ask about things that if they were revealed would harm you.

[Surat ul-Maa'idah (5), ayah 101]

Tasabbur

This is a passage calling for patience and to not lose hope. Here is an example,

And do not mourn and lose hope.

[Surat ut-Tawbah (9), ayah 40]

PASSAGES ON `AAM

When asked about the nature of the `aam, we may say that these are passages that have to do with general texts.

Imaam al-Khatib al-Baghdaadi RH counsels us,

The `aam is the passage that appears in the definite form and appears to have no exception to it.

[al-Faqih wal-Mutafaqqih, V. 1, pp. 70-74]

Imaam Muwaffaq ud-Din RH stated,

This is speech that is general on a subject.

[Rawdat un-Naazir, V. 1, pp. 7-9]

Imaam Ibn Badraan al-Hanbali RH explained,

The `aam is the passage that is absolute and understood in its' absolute sense.

[al-Madkhal, pp. 237-46]

EXAMPLES OF THE `AAM

Consider the following texts given and think of their implications if we take them and bear them on their full sense. Think of what conclusions would result.

And do not marry the idol worshipping women...

[Surat ul-Baqarah (2), ayah 221]

And the male and the female thief cut their hands.

[Surat ul-Maa'idah (5), ayah 38]

And I do not find in that which was revealed to me anything forbidden to eat for the one who desires to eat it...

[Surat ul-An`aam (6), ayah 145]

PASSAGES ON KHAAS

Khaas (specific passages) are called by this designation. These are verses or statements that actually restrict or limit the nature of other passages that would be described as `aam.

Imaam Muwaffaq ud-Din RH, when explaining the khaas, said,

The khaas restricts the `aam (general) wordings.

[Rawdat un-Naazir, V. 2, pp. 61-61]

Imaam Ibn Badraan al-Hanbali RH, when comparing the `aam and the khaas, explained,

The `aam (general) is like mentioning the words, the men and the khaas (specific or restricted) is like mentioning Zaid and `Amru or this man. And the passages that are restricted clarify the intent of a statement or expression.

[al-Madkhal, pp. 246-50]

EXAMPLES OF THE KHAAS

An `aam passage is,

And do not marry the idol worshipping women...

[Surat ul-Baqarah (2), ayah 221]

But consider the following text a few surahs later,

Lawful for you in marriage are the chaste women from those who were given the Book before you.

[Surat ul-Maa'idah (5), ayah 5]

This passage clearly is restricting the one before it, for we know that Christian women do worship idols. But those that are chaste from amongst the women of the People of the Book, excluding all other kaafir and unbelieving women, are permissible to marry.

The second `aam passage quoted above,

And the male and the female thief, cut their hands.

[Surat ul-Maa'idah (5), ayah 38]

But this passage was restricted by the hadith where the Prophet SAW stipulated,

There is no cutting of the hand except in what amounts to a fourth of a dinar.

[Musnad of Ahmad, V. 6, pp. 36, 80, 81 and 104 and classed by the Imaam as sahih]

And we must also recollect the passage that was quoted as a third evidence under the section of `aam passages,

And I do not find in that which was revealed to me anything forbidden to eat for the one who desires to eat it...

[Surat ul-An`aam (6), ayah 145]

But we should also remember that the rest of the verse is restrictive,

...unless it is an animal that died of itself, running blood, meat of the pig...

[Surat ul-An`aam (6), ayah 145]

In addition to this, there is the further **prohibition** against predatory animals as well as birds with fangs as mentioned by the Prophet SAW in sound transmissions.

[Collected by al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

What we should do after thinking and reflecting on all of this is that we should become renewed and invigorated for the sake of Allah. We should praise Allah that we have been able to look at and benefit together from His Words and to understand it from a deeper level.

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