



THE USE OF ONE SABAB AN-NUZUL NARRATIONS FOR ONE VERSE IN “TAWILAT AL-QUR’AN”

Yakhshilikov Abdulaziz Mominovich

Researcher of the Imam Maturidi International Scientific Research Center, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This article is about Imam Maturidi’s work “Ta’wilat al-Qur’an”, in which the narrations of reason used in the interpretation of the verses, in particular, the places where one narration of the reason for a verse is given, are identified and described. Also, the information in it is compared with the works of commentators such as Tabari, Muqatil, Abu al-Laith Samarkandi, and Wahidi.

KEY WORDS: *Maturidi, Ta’wilat, Qur’an, surah, verse, reason of revelation (sabab an-nuzul), narration, lafzan.*

Imam Maturidi’s work “Ta’wilat Ahl as-Sunna” (also called “Ta’wilat al-Maturidiyya”, “Ta’wilat li-Abi Mansur al-Maturidi”) is not only a tafsir, rather, it is considered an important source for all Qur’anic sciences. In this work, it can be seen that the narrations of reason of revelation (sabab an-nuzul) have an important place. In many places of the work, one reason is cited for each verse. Sometimes there are two or more narrations. It should also be mentioned that although in most cases the narrations cover an entire verse, in some places there are also narrations that refer to the revelation of only a part of the verse.

It is known that all the verses in the Holy Qur’an do not have a reason of revelation. Accordingly, in the process of analyzing the verses, Maturidi sometimes did not mention any reason of revelation, and in some cases he mentioned one or more narrations. He often cited a single reason related to the verses. There are few places where two or more narrations are cited for one verse. Maturidi, in “Ta’wilat”, cited one reason of revelation in connection with 168 verses¹. For example, Maturidi gave the following narration about the verse: “Say, ‘O Prophet,’ “**Whether you` donate willingly or unwillingly, it will never be accepted from you, for you have been a rebellious people**”². According to him, some people said that this verse is about jihad, in particular, hypocrites like believers are commanded to Jihad and fight against the infidels. After this order, some of them started jihad. Some of them prepared another one and went back by themselves. Some of them went to jihad unwillingly. Then this verse was revealed³.

Another example is that according to him, the Prophet (pbuh) lived in danger in Makkah for about ten years, calling people to believe in Allah secretly and openly, together with his companions. Then Allah orders to emigrate to Madinah. The Prophet was not free from danger there either, he slept with a weapon at night and woke up with a weapon in the morning. Then one of the Companions said: “O Messenger of Allah, will the day come when we will lay down our weapons without danger?” said. Rasulullah said: “You will stay in this situation for a while longer. One of you will sit with his knees bent and his hands holding his knees in a large congregation without weapon.” Then Allah, the Exalted, revealed the following verse⁴: “**Allah has promised those of you**

¹ Abu Mansur Muhammad ibn Muhammad Maturidi. *Ta’wilat al-Qur’an. – Istanbul: Dar al-Mizan, 2005–2011. I - XVIII vol. Surah Al-Baqarah verses 1, 102, 115, 119, 125, 133, 139, 168, 178, 186, 187, 196, 198, 207, 214, 215, 219, 220, 231, 232, 245, 256, 274; Surah Ali Imran verses 65, 69, 85, 89, 169, 179, 196; Surah al-Nisa verses 11, 23, 24, 32, 34, 37, 58, 60, 77, 80, 81, 84, 92, 93, 94, 95, 105, 113, 115, 123, 128, 164, 166, 176; Surah al-Maida, verses 4, 6, 11, 38, 45, 48, 83, 87, 91, 93, 101, 106; Surah al-An’am, verses 13, 19, 26, 35, 50, 52, 91, 108; Surah al-A’raf verses 175, 180; Surah al-Anfal, verses 19, 26, 35, 36, 67, 68, 70, 72; Surah al-Tawba, verses 17, 37, 53, 107, 113; Surah Hud verses 5, 113, 114; Surah al-Ra’d, verses 30, 43; Surah al-Nahl, verses 92, 110; Surah al-Isra, verses 28, 45, 73, 76, 80, 85; Surah al-Kahf, verses 23-24, 28; Surah Toha, verses 114, 131; Surah al-Anbiyya, verse 101; Surah al-Hajj, verses 19, 37, 60, 75; Surah al-Noor, verses 3, 22, 29, 33, 55; Surah al-Furqan, verses 20, 27; Surah al-Naml, verse 80; Surah al-Qasas, verse 56; Surah al-Ankabut, verses 2,10; Surah al-Rum, verse 1; Surah Luqman, verses 27, 34; Surah al-Sajdah, verse 18; Surah Al-Ahzab, verses 5, 35, 36, 43, 51, 53, 57, 58, 59; Sura Saba’, verse 46; Surah Yasin, verse 12; Surah Saffat, verses 50, 64-65; Surah Fussilat, verse 44; Surah Shuram verses 27, 38; Surah Jasiah, verse 21; Surah al-Fath, verses 4, 5; Surah Hujurat, verse 6; Surah al-Rahman, verse 29; Surah Al-Waqia, verses 39-40; Surah Hadid, verse 24; Surah Mujadala, verses 8, 11, 22; Surah al-Saf verses 4,10; Surah Mumtahanah, verse 10; Surah Munafiqun verses 5, 6; Surah Muddaththir, verse 5; Surah Infitar, verse 6; Surah Inshiqaq, verse 1; Surah Ghashiya, verse 17; Surah al-Lail, verses 1-4; Surah al-Kawthar, verse 3; Surah Kafirun, verse 6; Surah Tabbat, verse 1; Surah al-Falaq, verse 1.*

² Surah al-Tawba, verse 53.

³ Ta’wilat al-Qur’an. - Vol. VI. - P. 376-377.

⁴ Ta’wilat al-Qur’an. - Vol. H. - P. 192; Tabari cited this narration in the same context, with only a few verbal differences from Abul Ali. See: Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari. *Jami’ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wili Ayat al-Qur’an. – Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1415/1995. - Vol.*



who believe and do good that He will certainly make them successors in the land, as He did with those before them; and will surely establish for them their faith which He has chosen for them.”⁵

Maturidi sometimes mentioned one narration of revelation in several places in “Ta’wilat”. But although the content of the narrations is the same, the words are different from each other. For example, the reason of revelation related to the 10th verse of Surah al-Ankabut, he narrated it in two places. He used both narrations in the context of “fitnah” in the verses. One of them comes in the interpretation of the second verse of this surah: **“Do people think once they say, “We believe,” that they will be left without being put to the test?”**. The author gave the following narration about the reason of this verse. According to him, this verse was revealed about a group of people who believed in Allah and His Messenger, but then lost faith and became unbelievers because of various sufferings. Maturidi cited this narration and emphasized that it was the reason for the revelation of the 10th verse of Surah Ankabut, and he repeated it in this verse⁶, although not verbatim, but in very close words⁷.

In the same way, the reason related to the verse of Surah al-Ra’d, **“We have certainly sent messengers before you ‘O Prophet’ and blessed them with wives and offspring”⁸** is also mentioned twice in different places. In his interpretation of this verse, Maturidi narrates the reason as follows. According to him, the Jews criticized the Prophet (pbuh) for having many wives and children and said, “If he had been a prophet as he claimed, he would not have used women or wanted children like others. Prophethood did not allow these things.” Then Allah revealed this verse⁹. Maturidi repeated this narration again in explaining what envy is in the verse **“Or do they envy the people for Allah’s bounties?”¹⁰**. He commented that the Prophet (pbuh) had many wives as an object of envy, but he did not agree with this comment. According to him, the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) had many wives at that time is not a reason for envy, but a reason for condemnation and accusation. Because at that time, anyone could have many wives. To support this point of view, Maturidi quoted the reason of the above verse as follows: “They (Jews) said: “If he was a prophet, prophethood excluded him from women. He married nine to ten women and forbade people to marry more than four women.” In response to them, Allah revealed the verse¹¹: **“We have certainly sent messengers before you ‘O Prophet’ and blessed them with wives and offspring.”**

When Maturidi mentions the same narration for the second time, it is often in a form that attracts attention, that is, he presents only the part related to the topic as a conclusion. He does not follow the path of giving the narrations in the same form. For example, Maturidi gave the reason for verse 79 of Surah Tawba in two different places. He recorded the first of this narration in the interpretation of this verse. According to him, it is mentioned in some stories that Abdurrahman ibn Awwf (r.a.) gave half of his wealth in order to gain God’s approval in Tabuk Ghazat and said, “O Messenger of God! This is half of my wealth, I brought it to you. I left the other half to my family.” Then the Prophet (pbuh) prayed to God to bless both the wealth he brought and the wealth he left behind. The hypocrites accused Abdurrahman and said: “He gave his wealth only to show off.” After him, a poor Muslim brought one sa’ of dates and put them among the zakat dates. The Prophet (pbuh) also prayed for him. Then the hypocrites said: “Allah has no need for one sa’ of dates.” On this incident, Allah revealed the verse¹²: **“There are those who slander ‘some of’ the believers for donating liberally and mock others for giving only the little they can afford. Allah will throw their mockery back at them, and they will suffer a painful punishment.”¹³**

XVIII. - P. 212; Abu al-Laith Samarkandi and Wahidi also gave a similar narration with similar words. See: Abu al-Laith Samarkandi. *Tafsir al-Samarkandi (Bahr al-Ulum)*. - Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1416/1996. - Vol. II. - P. 544; Abul Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad Wahidi. *Asbabu Nuzul al-Qur’an*. - Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1411/1991. - P. 338-339.

⁵ Surah al-Nur, verse 55.

⁶ Ta’wilat al-Qur’an. - Vol. XI. - P. 94.

⁷ Ta’wilat al-Qur’an. - Vol. XI. - P. 100; Tabari narrated similar expressions related to the revelation of this verse from Dahhak. See: Jami’ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wili Ayat al-Qur’an. - Vol. XX. - P. 162. A similar narration was recorded by Ibn al-Jawzi. See: Ibn al-Jawzi. *Zad al-Masir fi Ilm at-Tafsir*. - Beirut: Maktab al-Islami, 1384-1388/1964-1968. - Vol. VI. - P. 259.

⁸ Surah al-Ra’d, verse 38.

⁹ Ta’wilat al-Qur’an. - Vol. VII. - P. 444; This narration is contained in the collection of narrations attributed to Ibn Abbas called “Tanwir al-Miqbas”. See: Abu Tahir Muhammad ibn Yaqub Feruzabadi. *Tanwir al-Miqbas min Tafsir Ibn Abbas*. - Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1412/1992. - P. 267; A similar narration was recorded by Abu al-Laith Samarkandi in a shorter form. See *Tafsir al-Samarkandi (Bahr al-Ulum)*. - Vol. II. - P. 241 (Vol. I - III); Wahidi also narrated from Kalbi a similar reason of the revelation. See: *Asbabu Nuzul al-Qur’an*. - P. 280.

¹⁰ Surah al-Nisa, verse 54.

¹¹ Ta’wilat al-Qur’an. - Vol. III. - B. 267.

¹² Ta’wilat al-Qur’an. - Vol. VI. - P. 418-419; Muqatil narrated this reason in a broader form. See: Muqatil ibn Sulaiman. *Tafsir Muqatil ibn Sulaiman*. - Beirut: Muassat al-Tarikh al-Arabi, 1423/2002. - Vol. II. - P. 185-186; Tabari mentioned it in many ways. See: Jami’ al-Bayan an Ta’wili Ayat al-Qur’an. - Vol. X. - P. 247-252; Also, Abu al-Laith Samarkandi and Wahidi gave place to similar narratives in their works. See *Tafsir al-Samarkandi (Bahr al-Ulum)*. - Vol. II. - B. 78; *Asbabu Nuzul al-Qur’an*. - P. 259-260.

¹³ Surah al-Tawba, verse 79.



Maturidi also repeated a narration similar to the above regarding voluntary donations in verse 103 of this sura and noted the following as a conclusion. According to him, the Prophet (pbuh) called people for help for the ghazat of Tabuk. Then Abdurrahman ibn Awf brought so much, and so and so brought some more, and the Prophet (pbuh) accepted them. As a result, Allah revealed the verse¹⁴ about these people: **“There are those who slander ‘some of’ the believers for donating liberally and mock others for giving only the little they can afford. Allah will throw their mockery back at them, and they will suffer a painful punishment.”** It can be seen that in this second narration, the information is not given in detail as in the first narration. So, Maturidi tried to emphasize the subject of voluntary donations and followed this method.

In conclusion, it can be said that Maturidi recorded 298 different narrations of revelation reasons for 222 verses. He gave one narration for 168 of these verses. The result shows that Maturidi cited one narration of revelation for one verse in many places.

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¹⁴ *Ta'wilat al-Qur'an*. - Vol. III. - P. 445.