

Highest Signs: Translating the Quran Beheld

Lesson 1

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The Once and Future Hermeneutic – Part 1



Introduction

- The Once and Future Hermeneutic
- Hermeneutic:
 - the traditional way of understanding the Quran
- The challenge of learning Arabic and the Quran
- Philosophy
 - Hagel and the Mind - Schools of Fish
- Authoritative Mode of proceeding through a text
 - An interpretive community through living masters

Introduction

- The Living Master
 - Memorized the Quran with the 10 different *qira'aat*
 - Degree in Tafsir of the Quran from University of Jordan
- Three years in Yemen
 - 1.5 years in San'aa
 - 1.5 years in Tarim

The Arabic Language

- Going beyond today's written and spoken Arabic
 - Lexicon of original meanings
 - Tone, nuance, distribution
 - Interactions with parts of speech
 - Shades of meaning
 - Rhetoric
 - Emphatics
 - Morphology
 - Sound – The Insistent Beggar

What this Project Requires

- Native fluency in literary Arabic
- Indomitable energy
- Perseverance
- Thousands of hours of reading and research
- Working familiarity with general and specialized tafsir sources
- Permission from the Author
 - The Dua of the Wali 17 years ago.
- Not a one-man job
- Talaqqi

The Process

- The translator and the teacher:
 - Went over every word, letter, preposition.....from beginning to end for 7 years
 - Questions on ambiguities
 - Return to the greatest Imams of the field of tafsir
 - Works reviewed and compared when considering nuance differing views
 - Entire process repeated again..... for 8 more years
 - Without previous notes
 - *Madad*
 - *Tadarru'*
 - Two years of appendices

Comparing to Previous Works

- Umm Sahl's role
- Six previous translations
 - Beauty of English
 - Comprehension of Arabic
- Missed Points of key areas under *Balagha* (rhetoric)
- Absence of *tallaqi*
- Not random or rare differences: rather ubiquitous and core to the meaning
- Professor Ahmad Khan – Historical study of 135 works
- Findings: seven key areas of Arabic meaning used in the methodology of Quran Beheld not covered in previous works

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

1. *Thumma*: Conjunctive adverb

- Appears in previous translations as ***and*** or ***they***

A) disparity in time (*tarakhi zamani*) تراخي زمني

- E.g (surah name: ayah number)
- Women: 110 { وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا }
- *Thumma* as: *then even at length*

B) disparity in time to express perpetuity (*tarakhi zamani li l-dawam*) تراخي زمني للدوام

- E.g The Dunes: 13 ﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴾
- *Thumma* as: *then follow ever after*
- E.g Cattle: 11 { قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ }
- *Thumma* as: *and however long you take*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

1. *Thumma*: Conjunctive adverb

- Appears in previous translations as *and* or *they*

C) disparity in rank (*tarakhi rutbi*) تراخي رتبي

E.g The Cow: 79 ﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۗ فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ﴾

- *Thumma* as: *and yet more outrageous in enormity*

D) disparity in rank to express incredulity (*tarakhi rutbi li l-istib'ad*) تراخي رتبي للإستبعاد

- E.g Bees: 83 ﴿يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُونَهَا وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

- *Thumma* as: *Yet, incredibly.*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

1. *Thumma*: Conjunctive adverb

- Appears in previous translations as *and* or *they*

E) disparity in rank of importance of the information

(*tarakhi rutbi li irtiqā' al-akhbar*) تراخي رتبي لإرتقاء الأخبار

- E.g Cattle: 2 ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّىٰ عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُونَ﴾
 - *Thumma* as: *And what is more.*

F) disparity in time and rank (*tarakhi zamani wa rutbi*) تراخي زمني ورتبي

- E.g Believers: 15-16 {ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ (15) ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ (16)}
- *Thumma* as: *Then after and more momentous; Then after and greatest in wonder,*

- 338 instances of *thumma* in the Quran – *then* or *and* do not adequately convey meaning

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

2. *Tankir*: The Emphatic Indefinite

- Appears in previous translations as ***an*** or ***a***
- Not known vs. unheard-of
- 6100 instances in the Quran – 56% of the Quran

A) Plentitude (*takthir*) تكثر

- E.g The Resurrection: 22-23 ﴿وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ (22) إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ (23)﴾
 - *wujuhun*: a multitude of faces
- E.g Light: 40 ﴿أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ۗ ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكِدْ يَرَاهَا ۗ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُّورٍ﴾
 - *dhulumatin*: myriad deep shades of darkness
 - *dhulumatun*: of blacknesses a multitude

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

2. *Tankir*: The Emphatic Indefinite

- Appears in previous translations as *an* or *a*

B) Fewness (*taqlil*) تَكْتِير

E.g The Cow: 96 ﴿وَلْتَجِدْنَهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَاةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ

لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُرْحَرَجِهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

- *hayatin*: any last pathetic shred of life

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

2. *Tankir*: The Emphatic Indefinite

- Appears in previous translations as *an* or *a*

C) Might or exaltedness (*ta'dhim wa tafkhim*) تعظيم وتفخيم

- E.g The Ants: 39 ﴿ قَالَ عِفْرِيْتُ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَّقَامِكَ وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ ﴾
 - ‘ifritun: a powerful cunning fiend

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

2. *Tankir*: The Emphatic Indefinite

- Appears in previous translations as *an* or *a*

D) Contempt (*tahqir*) تحقير

- E.g The Ants: 56 ﴿فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوا آلَ لُوطٍ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُونَ﴾
- *unasun*: a miserable handful of “better-folks”
- This example combines two significations of the indefinite (fewness + contempt)

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

2. *Tankir*: The Emphatic Indefinite

- Appears in previous translations as *an* or *a*

E) Being lost to all knowledge (*ghayr mu'ayyan*) غير معيّن

- E.g Joseph: 9 ﴿اقتُلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ﴾
- *ardan*: *hopelessly far lost in the land*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

2. *Tankir*: The Emphatic Indefinite

- Appears in previous translations as *an* or *a*

F) Horror (tahwil) تهويل

- E.g The Slanderer: 8-9 ﴿إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ (8) فِي عَمَدٍ مُمَدَّدَةٍ (9)﴾
- ‘alayhim mu’sadatun: *shut them horrifically in*
- fi ‘amadin mumaddadatun: *locked and barred fast with dreadful hell-bolts, wrought massive in length*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

2. *Tankir*: The Emphatic Indefinite

- Appears in previous translations as *an* or *a*

G) Rarity (nudur) ندور

E.g The Amassing: 18 ﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿۱۸﴾
﴿ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

- *nafsun*: any rare soul that will (rarity)
- *li ghadin*: for an unspeakably dire tomorrow (horror)

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

3. Reversed Masculine and Feminine Forms

- Previously untranslated into English

A) Contempt and deprecation (*tahqir wa dhamm*) تحقير و ذم

- E.g The Walled Rooms: 14 ﴿ قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾

- *qalat* instead of *qala*: *emptily say*

Tremendousness and horror (*ta'dhim wa tahwil*) تعظيم و تهويل

- E.g The Inevitable: 1-3 ﴿ إِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ﴾ ﴿ لَيْسَ لَوْقَعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ ﴾ ﴿ خَافِضَةٌ رَافِعَةٌ ﴾ 1-3
- *waqi'a* instead of *waqi'*: *the Inevitable*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

3. Reversed Masculine and Feminine Forms

- Previously untranslated into English

B) Delicacy, tenderness, and empathy (*lutf wa riqqa wa hanan*) - لطف ورقة وحنان

- E.g Abraham: 11 ﴿قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ نَحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَىٰ مَنْ ۖ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَأْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَعَلَىٰ اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾
- *qalat* instead of *qala*: *calmly told*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

3. Reversed Masculine and Feminine Forms

- Previously untranslated into English

C) Strength and Power (*quwwa wa shidda*) - قوة وشدة

- E.g Joseph: 30 وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتَاهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا إِنَّا لَنَرَاهَا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾
qala instead of *qalat*: spitefully spread about

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

4. Demonstrative Pronouns for Respect or Contempt

- Previously untranslated into English

A) Masculine form of *hadha* (this) هذا; Feminine form of *hadhihi* (this) هذه

- E.g The Prophets: 3 ﴿لَاهِيَةً قُلُوبِهِمْ وَأَسْرُورًا النُّجُومِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا هَلْ هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ أَفَتَأْتُونَ السِّحْرَ ۗ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ﴾

- *hadha* as: *is this wretched soul*

- E.g Qaf: 23 ﴿وَقَالَ قَرِينُهُ هَذَا مَا لَدَيَّ عَتِيدٌ﴾

- *hadha* as: *this pathetic being*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

4. Demonstrative Pronouns for Respect or Contempt

- Previously untranslated into English

A) Masculine form of *hadha* (this) هذا; Feminine form of *hadhihi* (this) هذه

- E.g The House of 'Imran: 117 ﴿مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتَهُ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ﴾

- *hadhihi* as: *the pathetic life of this world*

- E.g The Spider: 64 ﴿وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

- *hadhihi* as: *the pathetic life of this world*

- *la hiya al hayawan*: *it alone is the life that is vibrantly forever alive*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

4. Demonstrative Pronouns for Respect or Contempt

- Previously untranslated into English

B) Masculine form of *dhalika* (that) ذلك; Feminine form of *tilka* (that) تلك

- E.g Women: 69-70 وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ ﴿٦٩﴾
أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا ﴿٧٠﴾ ذَلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ عَلِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾
- *dhalika* as: *all that is the very*
- E.g The Laden Table: 32 مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ ﴿٣٢﴾
النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ بَعَدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾
- *dhalika* as: *the utter villainy of that*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

4. Demonstrative Pronouns for Respect or Contempt

- Previously untranslated into English

B) Masculine form of *dhalika* (that) ذاك; Feminine form of *tilka* (that) تلك

- E.g The Story: 83 ﴿تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

﴿لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

- *tilka* as: *that incomparable*

- E.g The Stars: 21-22 ﴿الْكُفْرَ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْأُنثَى﴾ ﴿تِلْكَ إِذَا قِسْمَةٌ خِيزَى﴾

- *tilka* as: *Then that...!*

Seven Key Areas of Arabic Meaning

4. Demonstrative Pronouns for Respect or Contempt

- Previously untranslated into English

C) Human plural of *this*: *ha'ula'i* (these) هؤلاء and *ula'ika* (those) أولئك

- E.g Women: 109 ﴿ هَا أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ جَادَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَمَنْ يُجَادِلُ اللَّهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَمْ مَنْ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلاً ﴾
- *ha'ula'i* as: *being these fools*
- E.g The Cow: 202 ﴿ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴾
- *ula'ika* as: *Those,.....*