

## RECONSTRUCTING MAQĀSHID AL-QUR'ĀN: AN ANALYSIS OF SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH AL-DIHLAWĪ'S FIVE-SCIENCE HERMENEUTICAL FRAMEWORK IN AL-FAWZ AL-KABĪR

### MEMBINA SEMULA MAQĀSHID AL-QUR'ĀN: ANALISIS KERANGKA HERMENEUTIK LIMA ILMU SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH AL-DIHLAWĪ DALAM AL-FAWZ AL-KABĪR

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#### Abstract

This article reinterprets Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī's al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr as a coherent framework for Maqāshid al-Qur'ān. Through close textual analysis, it reconstructs how al-Dihlawī organizes Qur'anic meaning around five interlocking "sciences": legal rulings, dialectical argumentation, reminding of Allāh's blessings, reminding of Allāh's days, and the Hereafter and argues that these operate not as discrete topical bins, but as higher objectives oriented to the moral refinement of the human soul. The study clarifies the methodological roles of zāhir/bāṭin interpretation and the category of gharā'ib in concentrating and sign posting purposive meanings. It further shows how al-Dihlawī distinguishes blameworthy from praiseworthy *jadāl*, specifies narrative purpose under Ayyām Allāh, and situates al-tadhkīr bi ālā' Allāh between divine beneficence and manifestations of power, thereby integrating law, polemics, narrative, and eschatology within a single teleological horizon. The article concludes that al-Fawz al-Kabīr should be read not merely as a pre-modern primer in 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān but as a foundational contribution to a maqāshid-based hermeneutic that is philologically disciplined, theologically lucid, and pedagogically oriented to transformation. This reframing provides a historically grounded platform for contemporary Qur'anic studies seeking purposive coherence without sacrificing lexical nuance or exegetical rigor.

#### Keywords

Maqāshid al-Qur'ān; Shāh Walī Allāh; al-Fawz al-Kabīr; Qur'anic sciences; Qur'anic objectives

#### Abstrak

Artikel ini menafsirkan semula karya al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr oleh Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī sebagai suatu kerangka yang koheren bagi Maqāshid al-Qur'ān. Melalui analisis tekstual yang mendalam, kajian ini membina semula cara al-Dihlawī menyusun makna al-Qur'ān

berdasarkan lima “ilmu” yang saling berkaitan, yaitu hukum-hakam syariah, perbahasan dialektik (*jadal*), peringatan tentang nikmat-nikmat Allah, peringatan tentang hari-hari Allah (*Ayyām Allāh*), serta Hari Akhirat. Kajian ini berhujah bahawa kelima-lima ilmu tersebut tidak berfungsi sebagai kategori topikal yang terpisah, sebaliknya bertindak sebagai objektif yang lebih tinggi yang berorientasikan penyucian dan pembinaan akhlak-mata manusia. Kajian ini turut menjelaskan peranan metodologi tafsiran *zāhir* dan *bāṭin*, serta kategori *gharāʾib*, dalam memusatkan dan menandakan makna-makna yang bersifat *maqāṣidī*. Selain itu, kajian ini menunjukkan bagaimana al-Dihlawī membezakan antara *jadal* yang terpuji dan yang tercela, menghuraikan tujuan naratif di bawah konsep *Ayyām Allāh*, serta meletakkan al-*tadhkīr bi ʾālaʾ Allāh* di antara dimensi kurniaan Ilahi dan manifestasi kekuasaan-Nya. Keseluruhan kerangka ini mengintegrasikan hukum, polemik, naratif dan eskatologi dalam satu horizon teleologi yang menyeluruh. Artikel ini merumuskan bahawa al-Fawz al-Kabīr tidak seharusnya dibaca semata-mata sebagai pengenal klasik dalam bidang *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, tetapi juga sebagai sumbangan asas kepada hermeneutik berasaskan *maqāṣid* yang berlandaskan disiplin filologi, kejelasan teologi dan orientasi pedagogi yang bersifat transformatif. Pendekatan ini menyediakan landasan sejarah yang kukuh bagi kajian al-Qurʾān kontemporari yang berusaha menampilkan kesatuan tujuan tanpa mengabaikan ketelitian leksikal dan keteguhan metodologi tafsir.

### Kata Kunci

*Maqāṣid al-Qurʾān*; *Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī*; *al-Fawz al-Kabīr*; *Ulum al-Qurʾān*; *Objektif al-Qurʾān*.

## 1. Introduction

The study of *Maqāṣid al-Qurʾān* (the higher objectives of the Qurʾān) has re-emerged in contemporary Qurʾānic scholarship as a critical paradigm for understanding coherence, epistemic aims, and hermeneutics (Islam, 2011). Although classical compendia of *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* (Qurʾānic sciences) never systematized *maqāṣid* as a standalone discipline, they laid the foundations for purpose-oriented readings by cataloguing forms, aims, and rhetorical strategies of the text (al-Suyūṭī, 1996; al-Zarkashī, 1958). Within this pre-modern matrix, Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī’s (1703–1762 CE) occupies a distinctive position through his *al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, in which he articulates a purposive vision of the Qurʾān without employing the explicit term *Maqāṣid al-Qurʾān*. Instead, al-Dihlawī organizes Qurʾānic meaning around five comprehensive sciences: legal rulings, dialectical argumentation, remembrance of Allāh’s blessings, remembrance of Allāh’s historical dealings, and remembrance of death and the Hereafter, which collectively function as higher organizing objectives of revelation (Ashfaq et al., 2019). This framework is further reinforced by his integration of apparent and deeper meanings (*zāhir* and *bāṭin*) and his identification of exemplary Qurʾānic passages (*gharāʾib*) that condense these objectives with exceptional clarity (al-Dihlawī, 2014).

Despite its historical importance, al-Dihlawī’s contribution remains underexamined in modern academic literature, especially in comparison with later *maqāṣid*-based methodologies applied to Islamic law and ethics. Much of the existing scholarship focuses either on his socio-political thought (Anwar, 2021; Bari & Hussain, 2024; Hussain & Hussain, 2024; Khan & Mufti, 2024; Rasheed & Ahmed, 2023; Tabassam, 2024), his synthesis of philosophical and mystical influences (Bodlah & Ahmed, 2025; Chowdury et al., 2023; Junoh & Mat Jusoh, 2019; Lone, 2025), or his

jurisprudential principles (Ahmad & Rehman, 2017; Ali & Ali, 2024; Nadeem, 2022), leaving his Qur'ānic hermeneutics insufficiently analyzed.

The specific research gap addressed in this article concerns the maqāshidic significance of al-Dihlawī's five-science framework. Ashfaq et al., (2019) have already provided an important discussion of *al-Fawz al-Kabīr* as a fivefold thematic analysis of the Qur'ān. However, their study primarily presents the framework as a thematic classification of Qur'ānic contents. The present article differs by reconstructing these five sciences as an implicit theory of *Maqāshid al-Qur'ān* and by examining how they function as higher interpretive objectives. It also extends the discussion beyond topical classification by analysing the methodological roles of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* interpretation, the category of *gharā'ib*, and the unifying meta-objective of moral and spiritual refinement. In this respect, the article does not merely restate al-Dihlawī's categories; it clarifies how they operate as a disciplined hermeneutical framework for reading Qur'ānic meaning purposively.

This study therefore seeks to re-examine al-Dihlawī's theory of Qur'ānic objectives by systematically analysing the structure, rationale, and methodological implications of the five sciences as presented in *al-Fawz al-Kabīr*. By synthesizing close textual analysis of his work with relevant insights from classical Qur'ānic sciences, theology, and contemporary maqāshid discourse, the research aims to clarify al-Dihlawī's contribution to the conceptual foundations of *Maqāshid al-Qur'ān*. In doing so, it situates his thought within broader debates on Qur'ānic coherence, thematic unity, and interpretive methodology, offering a reassessment relevant to both historical scholarship and contemporary Qur'ānic hermeneutics.

## 2. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology grounded in close textual analysis of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī's *al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*. The working edition used for cited English renderings is the 2014 Ta-Ha edition translated by Ṭāhir Maḥmūd Kiānī (al-Dihlawī, 2014). Because the argument depends heavily on technical terminology, the analysis does not rely on translation alone. Key Arabic expressions and categories, including *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, *'Ilm al-Aḥkām*, *'Ilm al-Jadal*, *al-tadhkīr bi-ālā' Allāh*, *al-tadhkīr bi-Ayyām Allāh*, *al-Ma'ād*, *ẓāhir*, *bāṭin*, and *gharā'ib*, are retained in transliteration and checked against the Arabic wording of *al-Fawz al-Kabīr* where terminological precision is necessary. This procedure allows the study to preserve al-Dihlawī's conceptual vocabulary while presenting the argument in accessible academic English.

The descriptive dimension of the study presents al-Dihlawī's classification of the five Qur'ānic sciences, his treatment of apparent and deeper meanings, and his concept of Qur'ānic *gharā'ib*. The analytical dimension reconstructs the implicit maqāshidic framework underlying these discussions by examining how the five sciences function as organizing objectives rather than isolated themes. Textual interpretation was verified through three steps: first, by close reading of the relevant passages in *al-Fawz al-Kabīr*; second, by comparison with classical Qur'ānic sciences and *tafsīr* authorities such as al-

Ṭabarī, al-Zarkashī, al-Suyūṭī, al-Rāzī, and al-Ghazālī; and third, by engagement with selected contemporary studies on *Maqāṣid al-Qurʾān* and al-Dihlawī's intellectual legacy. The study is therefore qualitative, textual, and conceptual in nature, and its aim is not to produce a historical biography alone, but to reconstruct the hermeneutical logic that links al-Dihlawī's five sciences to the higher objectives of Qurʾānic discourse.

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1. Intellectual Biography of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī

Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī (1703–1762 CE), born Qutb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-ʿUmarī al-Dihlawī on February 21, 1703, in Phulat near Muzaffarnagar in the Mughal Empire, emerged as one of the most influential Islamic scholars and reformers in 18th-century India during a period of political decline and social fragmentation following the death of Emperor Aurangzeb. Descended from a lineage tracing back to the second caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, his father, Shāh ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, was a prominent Sufi and jurist who contributed to the compilation of the *Fatāwā al-ʿĀlamgīriyah*, a comprehensive legal code under Aurangzeb, and founded the Madrasah Raḥīmiyyah in Delhi, where Shāh Walī Allāh received his early education. By age seven, he had memorized the Qurʾān, and under his father's tutelage, he mastered disciplines including *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, metaphysics, logic, and Sufism before assuming teaching responsibilities at the madrasah at age 17 (Jalbani, 2010; Khan, 2016).

In 1731–1732 CE, al-Dihlawī undertook the ḥajj pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, where he studied under renowned scholars such as Shaykh Abū Tāhir al-Kūrānī and Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Waḥhāb (though some accounts dispute the latter), immersing himself in advanced *ḥadīth* studies and experiencing profound spiritual visions that shaped his mystical insights. Upon returning to Delhi, he dedicated his life to intellectual revival, authoring over 50 works in Arabic and Persian, including seminal texts like *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* which synthesizes Islamic sciences with rational philosophy, and *al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* focusing on Qurʾānic sciences. His scholarship emphasized reconciling Sufi mysticism with orthodox Sunnī theology, promoting Muslim unity amid sectarian divides, and advocating socio-political reforms to counter Mughal decline, influencing later movements such as the Deobandī school and Indian independence efforts (Baljon, 1986; Rizvi, 1980; Shairani, 2024).

Al-Dihlawī's approach integrated apparent (*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*) interpretations of Islam, viewing the Qurʾān as a tool for soul purification and ethical guidance across diverse communities. He passed away on August 20, 1762, in Delhi, leaving a legacy through his four sons, who continued his teachings, and his enduring impact on Islamic thought in South Asia (Chowdury et al., 2023).

#### 3.2. The Fivefold Structure of *Maqāṣid al-Qurʾān*

Al-Dihlawī presents the *maqāṣid* and thematic contents of the Qurʾān in the opening chapter of his work *al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*. Rather than employing the explicit term *Maqāṣid al-Qurʾān*, he articulates these purposes through the expressions *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* and *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*. He states: “Let it be known that the meanings contained

in the Qur'ān do not extend beyond five sciences.” He then enumerates these five sciences, which, in his conception, constitute the core *maqāṣid* around which the verses and *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān revolve:

1. The Science of Legal Rulings (*'Ilm al-Aḥkām*), encompassing obligations (*wājib*), recommendations (*mandūb*), permissibility (*mubāḥ*), reprehensibility (*makrūh*), and prohibitions (*ḥarām*). These rulings pertain to acts of worship (*'ibādāt*), transactions (*mu'āmalāt*), social relations (*ijtimā'*), and civic governance (*siyāsah madaniyyah*). The detailed exposition and systematic elaboration of this science fall within the domain of the jurist.
2. The Science of Dialectical Argumentation (*'Ilm al-Jadal*), which involves disputation with four misguided groups: Jews, Christians, polytheists, and hypocrites. The clarification and defense of this science belong to the discipline of theology.
3. The Science of Reminding of Allāh's Blessings (*'Ilm al-Tadhkīr bi-Ālā' Allāh*), which centers on affirming oneness of Allāh (*tawḥīd*) through reflection on the creation of the heavens and the earth, the divine bestowal of guidance, and the exposition of Allāh's attributes.
4. The Science of Reminding of Allāh's Days (*'Ilm al-Tadhkīr bi-Ayyām Allāh*), namely historical narratives (*qaṣaṣ*) that recount divine intervention in human history, whether as favor bestowed upon the obedient or retribution inflicted upon the transgressors. This includes the accounts of prophets and the responses of their communities.
5. The Science of Reminding of Death and Hereafter (*'Ilm al-Ma'ād*), encompassing resurrection, gathering, reckoning, the scales, Paradise, and Hell. The detailed exposition of this science, together with the relevant prophetic reports and transmitted traditions, pertains to the vocation of the preacher and moral exhorter.

Al-Dihlawī emphasizes that the overarching aim of these five Qur'ānic *maqāṣid*, as dispersed throughout the Qur'ān's verses, is the refinement and purification of the human soul, without distinction between peoples or social categories, whether Arab or non-Arab, urban or nomadic. Among these objectives, he identifies the most efficacious in moral cultivation as the objective of reminding of Allāh's blessings, from which true knowledge of divine lordship ultimately unfolds.

Al-Dihlawī devotes sustained effort to elucidating these five *maqāṣid* by clarifying their defining features, internal divisions, and operative functions. What follows is a synthesized presentation of his analysis, highlighting the substantive outcomes of his engagement with the objectives and thematic structure of the Qur'ān, thereby revealing the methodological significance of his contribution to the study of *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*.

### 3.3. Systematic Analysis of the Five Maqāṣidic Sciences

#### 3.3.1. The First Objective: The Science of Legal Rulings (*'Ilm al-Aḥkām*)

Al-Dihlawī maintains that the legal rulings of the Muḥammadan Sharī'ah do not differ, in their foundational principles and core prescriptions, from those found in earlier divinely revealed laws granted to previous prophets, except with respect to certain

specifications of general rules, the addition of temporal regulations, the renewal of some legislations, and the correction of what had been distorted or altered therein. Al-Dihlawī further notes that the objective of legal rulings in Islamic law consistently takes into account considerations of benefit (*maṣāliḥ*) and harm (*mafāsīd*), as is well established in the science of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and its governing principles.

Al-Dihlawī also draws attention to the fact that legal rulings were revealed in the Qur'ān in a general form, while their detailed elaboration was entrusted to the Sunnah. The majority of these rulings were revealed in the Medinan *sūrah*s, which are particularly devoted to legal themes such as prayer, almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimage, *jihād*, prescribed punishments, inheritance, and other practical legislative rulings.

He further explains that the legal rulings revealed in the Qur'ān fall into two categories:

1. The first consists of rulings revealed without reference to a specific incident or concrete occurrence.
2. The second comprises rulings revealed in response to particular events and circumstances.

### 3.3.2. The Second Objective: The Science of Argumentation (*ʿIlm al-Jadal*)

By *jadal* in the sciences of the Qur'ān and in *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*, al-Dihlawī refers to the Qur'ān's rational proofs and evidentiary arguments through which it seeks to guide unbelievers, compel obstinate opponents, and establish the objectives and aims it intends to instill in human consciousness across both the foundational principles and subsidiary branches of the Sharī'ah (Haidar, 2006). In this sense, Qur'ānic argumentation functions as a purposive instrument of guidance rather than a merely polemical exercise.

Prior to al-Dihlawī, Qur'ānic argumentation had already been examined by al-Zarkashī in *al-Burhān fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān* and by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān*, both of whom cited the same specialized work on the subject, namely Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī's *ʿAlam al-Jadal fī ʿIlm al-Jadal* (al-Suyūṭī, 1996; al-Zarkashī, 1958).

The term *jadal* and its derivatives occur in the Qur'ān in twenty-nine instances, of which twenty-five are condemnatory (*madhmūm*) and four commendatory (*maḥmūd*). This distribution indicates that argumentation is predominantly blameworthy when it leads to contention and discord, yet praiseworthy when it is pursued sincerely, free from ego, desire for dominance, or self-display, and directed toward the attainment of truth. It is this latter form of argumentation that the Qur'ān employs in its engagement with deviant groups, including Jews, Christians, polytheists, and hypocrites (Al-Ayasrah & Al-Qadiri, 2016).

Through inductive examination of Qur'ānic usage, argumentation may be divided into two categories with respect to permissibility.

1. The first is reprehensible argumentation (*al-jadal al-madhmūm*). This refers to disputation pursued for the sake of dominance, ostentation, or the defense of falsehood, whether conducted without knowledge, in an inappropriate context, or merely for the sake of argument itself. In such cases, argumentation serves no constructive purpose and instead leads to contention and obstruction of truth. The Qur'ān alludes to this form of disputation in the verse: *“And they say, ‘Are our gods better, or is he?’ They raise this only for the sake of argument; indeed, they are a contentious people”* (Qur'ān 43:58), where disputation is undertaken solely for disputation itself. Likewise, the verse *“None dispute the signs of Allāh except those who disbelieve”* (Qur'ān 40:4) indicates obstinate denial, since the argument here concerns self-evident truths. Similarly, the statement *“They disputed by means of falsehood in order to invalidate the truth”* (Qur'ān 40:5) denotes deliberate defense of falsehood with knowledge and intent. This category also includes disputation about Allāh without knowledge, guidance, or illuminating scripture, as stated in Qur'ān 22:8 and 22:3.
2. The second category is commendable argumentation (*al-jadal al-maḥmūd*). This form of disputation is undertaken with the aim of attaining truth, refuting falsehood, and inviting others through wisdom and ethical persuasion. For this reason, Allāh associates it with da'wah, saying: *“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel, and argue with them in the most gracious manner”* (Qur'ān 16:125). Likewise, He commands: *“Do not argue with the People of the Book except in the best manner, except those among them who commit injustice”* (Qur'ān 29:46), since disputation with persistent wrongdoers yields no benefit and may require other means. The Qur'ān further indicates the persistence of prophetic argumentation when it relates the words of the people of Noah: *“They said, ‘O Noah, you have argued with us and prolonged our argument’”* (Qur'ān 11:32), reflecting sustained engagement aimed at guidance rather than mere contention.

Al-Dihlawī further observes that Qur'ānic argumentation revolves around four principal deviant groups: the Jews, the Christians, the polytheists, and the hypocrites. The Qur'ān adopts two primary argumentative strategies in addressing these groups:

1. The first consists in explicitly stating false doctrines while exposing their corruption and irrationality.
2. The second involves identifying specific misconceptions and responding to them through demonstrative proofs.

Given the expansive presence of this argumentative discourse throughout the Qur'ān, al-Dihlawī systematically outlines the distinctive themes and characteristics of Qur'ānic argumentation as applied to each group.

In its engagement with the Jews, the Qur'ān addresses issues such as textual distortion of the Torah, concealment of divine revelation, fabrication of doctrines not sanctioned by Allāh, neglect of revealed law, excessive tribalism, rejection of the Prophet Muḥammad, and moral vices such as greed and miserliness.

In its argumentation with Christians, the Qur'ān confronts their theological confusion regarding the nature of Christ, their doctrine of the Trinity, and their belief in the crucifixion.

With respect to polytheists, Qur'ānic argumentation targets false beliefs, various forms of shirk, idol worship, denial of resurrection and the afterlife, rejection of the Prophet's message, and demands for miracles beyond divine wisdom. These themes recur frequently due to the epistemic condition of the Arab audience, who lacked prior exposure to revealed scriptures.

As for hypocrites, the Qur'ān engages them less through formal argumentation than through exposure of their inner states, intentions, and duplicity, repeatedly warning the believers against their deception. Al-Dihlawī explains that the Qur'ān's extensive treatment of hypocrisy serves a preventive purpose, safeguarding the community from internal subversion.

Al-Dihlawī concludes that the true objective of Qur'ānic argumentation lies not in cataloguing historical incidents or peripheral details, but in elucidating the universal principles and overarching meanings that govern these engagements. He affirms that his analysis provides a sufficient methodological framework for understanding the Qur'ān's argumentative verses, insofar as they are read through their *maqāṣid* and higher purposes rather than through isolated particulars.

### 3.3.3. The Third Objective: Reminding of Allāh's Blessings (The Objective of *Tawhīd*)

Al-Dihlawī designates *reminding of Allāh's Blessings* (*al-tadhkīr bi-ālā' Allāh*) as one of the principal objectives of the Qur'ān. From his discussion under this objective, it becomes evident that it comprises two interrelated dimensions.

1. The first concerns reminding people of Allāh's favors through the exposition of His names and attributes, by which His existence and oneness are affirmed.
2. The second involves reminding them of Allāh's favors manifested in creation, namely His act of creating beings for human benefit and sustaining them through divine bounties.

The expression *al-tadhkīr bi-ālā' Allāh* is not a term coined by al-Dihlawī, but a firmly Qur'ānic concept. The Qur'ān itself employs this terminology, as in Allāh's address to the people of 'Ād through their prophet Hūd: "*And remember when He made you successors after the people of Noah and increased you greatly in stature; so remember the favors of Allāh that you may succeed*" (Qur'ān 7:69). Similarly, Allāh says, "*Then which of the favors of your Lord do you dispute?*" (Qur'ān 53:55), and repeatedly in *Sūrah al-Raḥmān*, "*So which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?*" (Qur'ān 55:13).

Classical exegetes generally interpret *ālā' Allāh* as referring to divine blessings. This interpretation is transmitted from Qatādah, al-Suddī, and Ibn Zayd, as recorded by al-Ṭabarī (al-Ṭabarī, 2000). The term *ālā'* occurs thirty-four times in the Qur'ān: twice in *Sūrah al-A'rāf* (7:69, 74), once in *Sūrah al-Najm* (53:55), and in all remaining instances

in *Sūrah al-Raḥmān*. Linguists and the majority of commentators concur that its dominant meaning is *blessings* (*niʿam*).

However, Imām al-Farāhī challenges this restrictive interpretation, arguing that both the Qurʾān and classical Arabic usage resist confining *ālāʾ* to the meaning of blessings alone. According to him, its more original sense denotes wondrous acts or manifestations of divine power. Since Allāh’s actions predominantly reflect mercy, later usage came to associate *ālāʾ* primarily with blessings, though this represents only one dimension of its semantic scope. In al-Farāhī’s view, *ālāʾ* fundamentally encompasses manifestations of divine kindness, might, and power, with blessing being but one of its expressions (Al-Farāhī, 2002).

He supports his position through Qurʾānic evidence and Arabic linguistic usage. Notably, some early exegetes also perceived that *ālāʾ* does not inherently mean blessings. Al-Ṭabarī narrates from Ibn Zayd that *ālāʾ* signifies *power* (al-Ṭabarī, 2000). Yet, despite citing this interpretation, al-Ṭabarī largely adhered to the meaning of blessings throughout his commentary, except in one instance following Allāh’s statement in *Sūrah al-Raḥmān*: “When the sky is split open and becomes rose-colored like oil, then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?” (Qurʾān 55:37–38). Here, al-Ṭabarī interprets *ālāʾ* as *power*, recognizing that the meaning of blessings does not fit the context of cosmic upheaval (al-Ṭabarī, 2000).

Similarly, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī repeatedly raises the question of how *ālāʾ* should be understood in contexts describing divine power and cosmic wonders, concluding in one explanation that the verse intends to demonstrate Allāh’s power rather than His blessings (al-Rāzī, 1999).

Whether *ālāʾ* is understood as blessings or as manifestations of divine power and wondrous acts, the greatest of Allāh’s favors that humanity is commanded to remember is the favor of *tawḥīd*. This consists in knowing Allāh, obeying Him, and affirming faith in Him, followed by reflection upon other blessings such as creation, sustenance, and the subjugation of the universe for human benefit.

Al-Dihlawī further emphasizes that among Allāh’s favors is His disclosure of His most beautiful names and exalted attributes, through which people come to know Him, affirm these attributes in their hearts, and affirm His absolute oneness. This is grounded in the divine assertion, “There is nothing like unto Him” (Qurʾān 42:11). Al-Dihlawī observes that the Qurʾānic presentation of Allāh’s names and attributes is marked by clarity and accessibility, comprehensible even to those of limited understanding, and free from tendencies toward anthropomorphism, negation, or speculative philosophical abstraction.

### 3.3.4. The Fourth Objective: Reminding of of Allāh's Days (The Objective of *Qaṣaṣ*)

This objective has been referred to by some scholars who discussed the objectives and sciences of the Qurʾān under the designation of *al-qaṣaṣ* (narratives). Al-Dihlawī, however, prefers the Qurʾānic expression *Ayyām Allāh* (the Days of Allāh) rather than *qaṣaṣ*. He derives this terminology directly from the Qurʾān itself, as in the divine address

concerning Moses: *“And We certainly sent Moses with Our signs, saying: Bring your people out of darkness into light, and remind them of the Days of Allāh”* (Qur’ān 14:5). Likewise, Allāh says: *“Say to those who believe that they should forgive those who do not expect the Days of Allāh, so that He may recompense a people for what they used to earn”* (Qur’ān 45:14).

The expression *Ayyām Allāh* refers to the reports and narratives of events that befell the righteous and the wicked among Allāh’s creation, and the manner in which Allāh dealt with them. This understanding is reflected in the interpretation of Ibn Zayd, as transmitted by al-Ṭabarī in his commentary on the verse *“and remind them of the Days of Allāh”* (Qur’ān 14:5). Ibn Zayd explains: *“They are the days on which He exacted retribution from the disobedient among the nations, by which He caused fear and warned others, lest they be afflicted by what befell those before them (al-Ṭabarī, 2000).”*

Al-Dihlawī’s own definition of *Ayyām Allāh* closely corresponds to this interpretation. He defines them as *“those events and occurrences which Allāh brought about as a bestowal of grace upon the obedient and as punishment for the sinful transgressors.”*

In selecting the narratives included in the Qur’ān, Allāh chose from the histories of past nations those accounts that most forcefully addressed the ears of the disbelievers and idolaters. The Qur’ān does not recount obscure or foreign tales, such as those of the Persians or Indians, nor does it reproduce narratives in exhaustive detail. Rather, it presents only those essential elements that serve the purposes of admonition and moral exhortation, deliberately avoiding superfluous particulars and fanciful details so that the primary objective, remembrance and warning, is not obscured.

Regarding the ultimate purpose of this objective, namely the remembrance of the Days of Allāh, al-Dihlawī explains that the aim of relating these narratives in the Qur’ān is not merely to inform readers or listeners of historical particulars. Rather, the true and fundamental purpose is to direct the minds of the audience toward the heinousness of polytheism and disobedience, the consequences of divine punishment, confidence in Allāh’s support and victory, and the manifestation of His grace and favor toward His sincere servants.

### 3.3.5. The Fifth Objective: Remembrance of Death and What Follows It (The Objective of the Hereafter)

Al-Dihlawī clarifies the meaning of this Qur’ānic objective and outlines the themes it encompasses. By remembrance of death and what follows it, or remembrance of the Hereafter, he refers to portraying the human condition at the moment of death, including one’s weakness, helplessness, and submission at that critical and momentous hour. It also includes the presentation of Paradise and Hell after death, the manifestation of the angels of punishment before one’s eyes, and the signs of the Hour, such as the descent of Jesus, the blast of the Trumpet, resurrection, gathering, reckoning, the weighing of deeds, and the crossing of the *Ṣirāṭ*.

This objective further encompasses the receiving of the records of deeds in the right or left hands, the admission of the believers into Paradise, and the herding of the disbelievers into Hell. It also includes the mutual recriminations among the inhabitants of Hell, between followers and leaders, elites and masses, the weak and the powerful, as each group disavows and curses the other. Among its themes is the exclusive bestowal upon the believers of the vision of Allāh, as well as detailed descriptions of the varieties and degrees of punishment, including chains, shackles, scalding fluid, foul excretions, thorny plants, and the tree of *Zaqqūm*.

Conversely, it also comprises vivid depictions of the forms of divine bounty and delight, such as companions, palaces, gardens, flowing rivers, wholesome and delightful foods, elegant garments, fair companions secluded in pavilions, and the refined gatherings and joyful encounters of the people of Paradise. All of these themes are narrated and disseminated throughout the Qurʾān in its various *sūrahs*, each employing its distinctive stylistic mode, at times through brevity and summary, and at other times through detailed and expansive exposition.

### 3.4. *Zāhir* and *Bāṭin* Hermeneutics in Maqāṣidic Contexts

Al-Dihlawī addresses the distinction between apparent (*zāhir*) and deeper (*bāṭin*) interpretation in a manner comparable to earlier scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, (2000), al-Ghazālī, (2015), and Ibn al-ʿArabī, (2003). These two modes of interpretation play a significant role in Qurʾānic *maqāṣidī* inquiry. Al-Ghazālī, (2015), for instance, classified the science of the objectives of the Qurʾān within the category of deeper interpretation, placing it among the “sciences of the kernel” (*ʿulūm al-lubb*), and maintained that all the Qurʾānic objectives he identified fall under this interpretive level. By contrast, apparent interpretation was subsumed by al-Ghazālī under the “sciences of the shell” (*ʿulūm al-qishr*), which occupy a lower epistemic rank.

Al-Dihlawī discusses apparent and deeper interpretation in the fifth chapter of the fourth section of *al-Fawz al-Kabīr*. He cites the well-known prophetic report concerning the existence of outward and inward dimensions of the Qurʾān, as had earlier authorities, and affirms that the objectives of the Qurʾān are accessible through both modes of interpretation. Apparent interpretation, with respect to the five Qurʾānic objectives identified by al-Dihlawī, consists in interpreting verses and *sūrahs* according to their explicit wording and manifest meaning, that is, in light of the lexical and linguistic conventions known to the Arabs in their eloquent speech and established usage.

Al-Dihlawī defines the two interpretive levels as follows: “As for the access point of the outward meaning, it consists in knowledge of the Arabic language and the transmitted reports related to the science of *tafsīr*. As for the access point of the inward meaning, it consists in sharpness and subtlety of intellect, soundness and rectitude of understanding, together with inner illumination and tranquility of the heart. And Allāh knows best.”

Deeper interpretation of the objectives of the Qurʾān, as indicated by al-Dihlawī’s discussion, refers to what lies beyond the immediate linguistic meanings, namely the ends, outcomes, and purposes embedded within these meanings. The form this deeper

dimension takes varies according to each of the *maqāṣidic* themes. Citing the prophetic report, “*The Qur’ān was revealed upon seven modes; for every verse there is an outward and an inward meaning, and for every limit there is a point of access,*” al-Dihlawī explains that the outward dimension of the five sciences corresponds to the manifest meaning and verbal indication of the discourse.

The inward dimension, however, unfolds differently across the objectives: in the objective of reminding of the favors of Allāh, it consists in reflection and contemplation upon His blessings, signs of power, and vigilant awareness of Him; in the reminder of the Days of Allāh, it consists in discerning the grounds of praise and blame, reward and punishment within the narratives, taking admonition from them, and drawing moral lessons; in the reminder of Paradise and Hell, it consists in the emergence of fear and hope and their vivid internalization as though witnessed directly; in the verses of legal rulings, it consists in deriving subtle and implicit rulings through indications, allusions, and inferred meanings; and in the Qur’ānic polemics with deviant groups, it consists in grasping the true nature of the vices and enormities attributed to them and extending these judgments to analogous cases and similar manifestations.

### 3.5. *Gharā’ib al-Qur’ān*: Exemplary Passages and Their Maqāṣidic Role

After stating in the opening chapter of *al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* that the objectives of the Qur’ān are five, al-Dihlawī explains in the concluding chapter of the work that each of these five objectives possesses what he terms *gharā’ib*. By *gharā’ib*, al-Dihlawī refers to verses and *sūrahs* that uniquely and eloquently encapsulate specific Qur’ānic themes and objectives, presenting them in a comprehensive and concise manner that gathers their essential elements within a single textual unit.

Al-Dihlawī’s usage of the term *gharā’ib al-Qur’ān* closely resembles al-Suyūṭī’s notion of *mufradāt al-Qur’ān* as discussed in *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*. Although al-Suyūṭī employed this term independently of al-Zarkashī, the underlying idea can be traced to al-Zarkashī’s discussion of the most excellent and distinguished passages of the Qur’ān. Nevertheless, al-Suyūṭī did not clearly define what he intended by *mufradāt*, unlike his usual practice of providing explicit definitions for technical terms in Qur’ānic studies (al-Suyūṭī, 1996; al-Zarkashī, 1958).

Haidar (2006) has observed that the term *mufradāt* admits multiple usages, and that al-Suyūṭī’s intended meaning appears to be that *mufradāt al-Qur’ān* are verses characterized by a dominant meaning that prevails over them to the extent that it prevents their blending with other meanings. While this definition is helpful, the concept may be more precisely defined as follows: Qur’ānic *mufradāt* or *gharā’ib* are those verses or *sūrahs* that surpass others in presenting a particular theme in a uniquely comprehensive and distinctive manner, such that no other verse or *sūrah* equals them in fulfilling that specific function. For example, although many Qur’ānic passages address *tawhīd* in its various aspects, *Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ* uniquely synthesizes all dimensions of *tawhīd*, rendering it a paradigmatic *gharībah* within the discourse on *tawhīd*. Similarly, *Āyat al-Kursī* serves as a singular verse that fulfills this function, while *Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ* represents the same phenomenon at the level of an entire *sūrah*. The same pattern applies to other Qur’ānic themes, each of which contains a verse or *sūrah* that stands as its distinctive exemplar.

Al-Dihlawī classifies the *gharā'ib* of the Qur'ān into two categories.

The first category consists of *maqāṣid*-oriented *gharā'ib*. Within the objective of legal rulings, there exist verses that comprehensively assemble numerous beneficial rulings. The objective of reminding of the favors of Allāh, which corresponds to *tawhīd*, includes verses and *sūrahs* that uniquely synthesize its themes; al-Dihlawī cites examples such as *Āyat al-Kursī*, *Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ*, the concluding verses of *Sūrah al-Ḥashr*, and the opening of *Sūrah Ghāfir*. The objective of reminding of the Days of Allāh, corresponding to Qur'ānic narratives, likewise contains verses and *sūrahs* distinguished by the clarity and richness of their accounts and the abundance of lessons they convey. The objective of reminding of death and the Hereafter includes *sūrahs* that comprehensively portray eschatological realities, exemplified by *Sūrah al-Takwīr*, *Sūrah al-Infīṭār*, and *Sūrah al-Inshiqāq*, as reported in prophetic tradition. The objective of Qur'ānic polemics likewise contains verses and *sūrahs* marked by striking rhetorical force, in which doubts are decisively refuted, falsehood is dismantled with compelling argumentation, or the condition of a deviant group is illustrated through vivid and concrete examples.

The second category consists of rhetorical *gharā'ib*. Al-Dihlawī explains that Qur'ānic *gharā'ib* are not confined to thematic objectives alone, but may also arise from exceptional eloquence, stylistic beauty, and aesthetic refinement. *Sūrah al-Raḥmān* exemplifies this category and is described in prophetic tradition as “the bride of the Qur'ān.” In other instances, rhetorical distinction manifests in the vivid depiction of felicity and misery and in the powerful portrayal of the contrasting destinies of the blessed and the wretched.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study has shown that al-Dihlawī's *al-Fawz al-Kabīr* offers a uniquely coherent framework for understanding the *maqāṣid* of the Qur'ān through his classification of its contents into five interrelated sciences. Rather than treating legal rulings, theological argumentation, narratives, reminders of Allāh's favors, and eschatological depictions as isolated domains, al-Dihlawī reads them as unified expressions of the Qur'ān's overarching moral and spiritual project, the purification and elevation of the human soul. His integration of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* interpretation further demonstrates that Qur'ānic meaning operates simultaneously at the linguistic-apparent and purposive-inner levels, enabling readers to move from textual detail to ethical and spiritual insight. Through this lens, even the Qur'ān's polemical engagements, historical accounts, and vivid portrayals of the Hereafter serve not as ends in themselves but as instruments of guidance and transformation.

Moreover, the study highlighted al-Dihlawī's concept of *gharā'ib* exemplary verses and *sūrahs* that uniquely crystallize major Qur'ānic themes as an important hermeneutical tool that reveals how the Qur'ān concentrates meaning in rhetorically powerful loci. By synthesizing these elements, the research demonstrates that *al-Fawz al-Kabīr* should be regarded not merely as a pre-modern manual of *tafsīr* principles but as a foundational contribution to the emerging field of *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*. It provides a

structure for reading the Qur'ān purposively, coherently, and holistically one that remains intellectually rigorous and spiritually attuned, and that offers valuable guidance for contemporary Qur'ānic interpretation.

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