

Naskh in the Qur'ān: A Theoretical Review

Kusmana

Pasca Sarjana Universitas Erasmus Rotterdam Belanda
kusmana_k@yahoo.com

Abstraksi: Artikel ini mengemukakan dimensi teoritis naskh, dengan mendiskusikan termnya (dalam seluruh bentuknya) dari sisi penggunaan bahasa, konteks sastra dan kerangka konseptual. Selain itu, artikel ini pun akan membincangkan topik tersebut menurut perspektif tiga sarjana: Ṭabarī, Ṭabarsī dan Zamakhsyarī, melalui rujukan khusus pada Q.s. al-Baqarah/2: 106 dan al-Ḥajj/22: 52 untuk studi kasusnya.

Katakunci: Naskh, Ṭabarī, Ṭabarsī dan Zamakhsyarī

Abstract: This article deals with the theoretical dimension of naskh, discussing the term (in all of its various forms) from the standpoints of linguistic usage, literary context and conceptual framework. In addition, the article will discuss also the subject matter according to three figures: Ṭabarī, Ṭabarsī, and Zamakhsyarī with special reference to Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106 and al-Ḥajj/22: 52 as a case study.

Keywords: Naskh, Ṭabarī, Ṭabarsī and Zamakhsyarī

Opening

In order to set the stage for our discussion, we will first present the Qur'ānic passages which refer to *naskh*, and examine them in the light of three classic works on the occasion of revelation: Wāḥidī's *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*,¹ Wādi'ī's *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad min Asbāb al-Nuzūl*,² and Suyūṭī's *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl*.³ These works will enable us

¹ Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī al-Nīsābūrī (d. 468 A.H./1076 A.D.), *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1986.)

² Muqbil b. Ḥādī al-Wādi'ī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad min Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (Beirut: Dār al-Nūr, 1405/1984.)

³ Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī (849-911 A.H./1445-1505 A.D.), a Shāfi'īte, was a Qur'ānic scholar. He was reluctant to study philosophy, and concerned himself more to Arabic language and textual studies. He claimed himself to have mastered seven fields of Islamic studies: *tafsīr*, *Ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *nahw*, *ma'ānī*, *badī'*, *bayān*. He felt that his knowledge of *fiqh* was not as authoritative as his masters. However, he was sure that his knowledge in the other six fields was superior to his masters'. He was a prolific writer; his works are estimated to amount to three hundreds, others say, four hundreds and fifteen, and still others say, six hundred, in linguistics, *tafsīr*, Qur'ānic studies and *Ḥadīth* and *fiqh*. Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār

to provide a context for the usage of the term and its derivations, and to understand how *naskh* was understood to operate from a very early period in Islamic thought.

Naskh and its Related Terms

There are four verses in the Qur'ān in which the root *n-s-kh* in the first three of these it takes a verbal form (Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106, al-Ḥajj/22: 52, al-Jāthiya/45: 29) while in and the last verse it is used as a noun (Q.s. al-A'rāf/7: 154.)⁴ Of the three verses in which it appears as a verb, the first two feature *n-s-kh*

al-Turāth, 1985), 4-5.

⁴ Hanna E. Kassis, *A Concordance of the Qur'ān* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 849; Mu'jam *Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 2nd ed., v. 2 (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma li al-Ta'līf wa al-Nashr, 1970), 707-8; Naphtali Kimberg, *A Lexicon of Al-Farrā's Terminology in His Qur'ān Commentary with Full Definitions, English Summaries and Extensive Citations* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996), 792; Powers, "The Exegetical Genre *Nāsikh al-Qur'ān wa Mansūkhuhu*," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 118.

in the first form, continuous tense.⁵ In Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106, for instance, it is written *nansakhu*, which is usually translated as ‘we abrogate’ such as in the following version of the complete verse, “Whatever a verse do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring a better one or similar to it.”⁶ Others would have it understood in the sense of ‘modification.’⁷ In the second verse, Q.s. al-Ḥajj/22: 52, where it is given as *yansakhu*, it conveys the meaning of *cancellation*, *annulling* or *suppression*. In our third example, Q.s. al-Jāthiya/45: 29, the verb is used in the tenth form, *nastansikhu*, and has the sense of ‘recording.’ Finally, we find in Q.s. al-A‘rāf/7: 154 the noun form *nuskhat*, which is equivalent in meaning to the verb used in Q.s. al-Jāthiya/45: 29, and thus signifies *inscription* or *record*.

Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106

Verse Q.s. al-Baqara/2:106 uses the verb form *nansakh* (We abrogate) to signify God’s guaranty of His revelation.⁸ This guaranty is asserted in the last part of the verse, “Know You not that Allah is able to do all things.” His superiority over all creatures is confirmed by the preceding verse, “But Allah chooses for His Mercy whom He wills. Allah is the Owner of Great Bounty” (al-Baqara/2:105),⁹ and the verse which follows it, “Know you not that it

is Allah to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth? And besides Allah you have neither any *Walī* (protector or guardian) nor any helper” (al-Baqara/2: 107.)¹⁰

Wāḥidī reports that exegetes generally agreed on the circumstance that preceded the revelation of Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106. They explained that the polytheists (*mushrikūn*) questioned the inconsistencies of the Islamic doctrine brought by the Prophet Muḥammad. And it was at that point that Allah revealed Q.s. al-Baqara /2:106 and al-Naḥl/16: 101.¹¹ Suyūṭī mentions another report from Abū Ḥātim, transmitted by ‘Ikrima from Ibn ‘Abbās, saying “Once the Prophet, peace be upon him, received a revelation in the night, but he forgot it in the day, then Q.a. al-Baqara/ 2: 106 was revealed.”¹² Wāḍi‘ī does not mention any of the reports cited by Wāḥidī and Suyūṭī in his book *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad min Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, concerning the revelation of the verse. He even criticizes Abū Ḥātim for his carelessness in examining his chains of information in support of his interpretation of the Qur’ān. A case in point is the story of Tha‘laba b. Ḥāṭib, which Wāḍi‘ī rejects due to the fact that its transmitters were considered weak.¹³ We refer to their reports in spite of questions as to their authenticity, since they show how scholars handled data in relation to their discussion of *naskh*.

Q.s. al-Ḥajj/22: 52

Verse Q.s. al-Ḥajj/22: 52, on the other hand, uses the phrase *fa-yansakhu Allah*

⁵ I use Muḥammad Taqī-ud-Dīn al-Ḥilālī’s and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān’s Qur’ānic translation, *Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur’ān in the English Language*, Madina: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’ān, 1996 (The name will be mentioned only Ḥilālī from now on.)

⁶ Burton prefers bringing the term *nansakh* in this verse in the sense of modification as it refers to the modification of an earlier, Jewish practice or law by a latter, Islamic one. He supports this assertion with several incidents: *the change of qibla* (Q.s. al-Baqara/2:155,177, 124-51), *pilgrimage rites* (Q.s. al-Baqara/2:158), *dietary laws* (al-Baqara/2:168-74), *talio* (al-Baqara/2: 178-9), *bequest* (al-Baqara/2: 180-2), and *fast* (al-Baqara/2: 183-7), see John Burton, *The Collection of the Qur’ān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 236-7.

⁷ Powers, “The Exegetical Genre,” 118.

⁸ Ḥilālī, *Translation*, 21.

⁹ Ḥilālī, *Translation*, 20.

¹⁰ Ḥilālī, *Translation*, 21.

¹¹ It is reported that they said, “Don’t you see Muḥammad who asks his Companions to do a thing once, then he forbids them to do so, and then asks them to do the reverse on another occasion. Whatever is in the Qur’ān is just Muḥammad’s own sayings, that is, sayings which contradict each other.” Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 19.

¹² Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, 20.

¹³ Wāḍi‘ī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad*, 4-5. Wāḍi‘ī points out Abū Muḥammad b. Ḥazm findings that Mu‘ān b. Rifā‘a, Qāsim b. ‘Abd Raḥmān, ‘Alī b. Yazīd, and Miskīn b. Bakīr are weak.

(But Allah abolishes) to indicate that Allah annuls revelation which has been tampered with by Satan. The verse is preceded by Allah's warning that, whoever tries to strive against His *āya* (revelation), he/she will be condemned to Hell-fire (al-Ḥajj/22: 51.)¹⁴ The verse is followed by another containing His assertion that torment will be inflicted on transgressors, and that Divine direction will be bestowed on believers (al-Ḥajj/22: 53-54.)¹⁵

Wāḥidī and Suyūṭī link the revelation of the verse to a story known as *al-gharānīq al-'ūlā*. Apparently, when the Prophet Muḥammad had recited the verses of Qur'ān al-Najm/53 up to the 19th and 20th *āyāts*, in which the three Arabian goddesses al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā, and al-Manāt are recognized, the story goes that Satan made him pronounce the following sentence, "Verily, they (idols) are the exalted maidens (*gharānīq*) and their intercession is to be hoped for." This was taken by the polytheists as a pronouncement by their own idols. To refute their claim, al-Ḥajj/22: 52 was then revealed,¹⁶ "Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet before you but when he did recite the revelation or narrated or spoke, satan threw (some falsehood) in it. But Allah abolishes that which satan throws in. Then Allah establishes His revelation. And Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise."¹⁷

Q.s. al-Jāthiya/45: 29

Verse Q.s. al-Jāthiya/45: 29 features the verb form *Innā kunnā nastansikhu* (Verily, We were recording) emphasizing that the Holy Book speaks only the truth, and that Allah records all human deeds.¹⁸ The concept of records of human deeds was introduced

the verse previous to this (Q.s. al-Jāthiya/45: 28), while the subsequent one contains information on the consequences faced by those who obeyed or disobeyed the Holy Book (Q.s. al-Jāthiya/45: 30-1.)¹⁹ Neither Wāḥidī, nor Wādi'ī, nor Suyūṭī provides any circumstances that gave rise to this verse.

Q.s. al-A'rāf/7: 154

The last verse Q. 7:154 has the noun form *nuskhat* (inscription), and explains that the inscription brought by the Prophet Mūsā was a Divine guidance and mercy. The previous verse shows the possibility of receiving mercy from Allah extended to those who commit evil deeds but then repent afterwards and believe in Mūsā's God (Q.s. al-A'rāf/7:153.)²⁰ The following verse explains how Mūsā convinces his people of the truth of God's (Q.s. al-A'rāf/7: 155.)²¹ Once again, Wāḥidī, Wādi'ī, and Suyūṭī are all silent on the circumstances behind the revelation of this verse.

Other Terms Related to the Discussion of Naskh

In addition to *naskh*, there are other terms used in the Qur'ān that have a similar meaning. Here, we identify four verses which contain words of the same genre: Q.s. al-Naḥl/16: 101, al-Ra'd/13: 39, al-Nisā'/4: 160, and Ālu 'Imrān/3: 7.

Q.s. al-Naḥl/16: 101

Verse Q.s. al-Naḥl/16: 101²² uses the word *baddalnā*, which in its noun form is *tabdīl*, meaning *change*. The verse itself explains the negligence of disbelievers' in claiming that

¹⁴ Hilālī, *Translation*, 450.

¹⁵ Hilālī, *Translation*, 451.

¹⁶ Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 177-8; Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, 201-2.

¹⁷ Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 177-8; Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, 201-2.

¹⁸ Hilālī, *Translation*, 679.

¹⁹ Hilālī, *Translation*, 679.

²⁰ Hilālī, *Translation*, 222.

²¹ Hilālī, *Translation*, 222.

²² "And when We change a verse (of the Qur'ān) in place of another—and Allah knows best what he sends down—they (the disbelievers) say, 'You (O Muḥammad) are but a *muftarī* (forger/liar.)' Nay, but most of them know not" (Q.s. al-Naḥl/16:101), Hilālī, *Translation*, 362.

the Prophet Muḥammad was a liar. They had accused him of being inconsistent in asserting that for Allah, changing one verse with another is His own prerogative since “He knows best what He sends down” and they (disbelievers) “know not.” Wāḥidī links the circumstances of the revelation of Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106 to those behind Q.s. al-Naḥl/16: 101.²³ By contrast, Suyūṭī and Wādi‘ī do not provide any occasion of revelation for this verse.

The context of Q.s. al-Naḥl/16: 101 demonstrates the impossibility of interpolation into revelation by *satan*. Verses 98-100 of the same *sūra* confirm however that *satan* always strove to make the Prophet (and his followers) forget or say something foreign to the Qur‘ān, an effort that will nevertheless always fail because Allah maintains their integrity of scripture through His servants “who believe and put their trust only in their Lord (Allah.)” Verses Q.s. al-Naḥl/16:102-03, which follow, describe in greater detail how Allah preserves His revelation.

Q.s. al-Ra‘d/13: 39

Another verse that contains a parallel to *naskh* is Q.s. al-Ra‘d/13: 39,²⁴ where the term *yamḥū* (derived from the root *m-ḥ-w*) is used in the sense of *blot out* or *erase*.²⁵ Here, Allah again confirms His sovereignty in deciding whether to establish or erase whatever He wants. The verse is preceded by a reference to God’s maintenance of His prophets, and is followed by God’s assertion to the Prophet Muḥammad that he should do his duty only and not worry about what will happen to him.²⁶ Neither Wāḥidī nor Wādi‘ī provides an occasion for the revelation of this verse, although Wāḥidī comes up with a report from

²³ Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 161.

²⁴ “Allah blots out what He wills and confirms (what He wills.) And with Him is the Mother of the Book” (Q.s. al-Naḥl/13: 39), Hilālī, *Translation*, 327.

²⁵ Rohi Baalbaki, *al-Mawrid: A Modern Arabic-English Dictionary* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1994), 983.

²⁶ Hilālī, *Translation*, 327.

Kalbī for Q.s. al-Ra‘d/13: 38, indicating an accusation made by a Jew that what mattered to the Prophet was only women and marriage.²⁷ According to Suyūṭī, Abū Ḥātim on the other hand recorded a report from Mujāhid, which suggested a relation between Q.s. al-Ra‘d/13: 38 and Q.s. al-Ra‘d/13:39. Thus when the former verse was revealed and the people of Quraysh said that they did not see Muḥammad receiving any help in maintaining His revelation, the latter was revealed to set his critics straight.²⁸

Q.s. al-Nisā’/4: 160

Verse Q. 4: 160 also has a relation to the term *naskh*. Terminologically, this verse is not related to the term *naskh* but contextually as it explains that Allah had changed the law of certain food for Jews for their deviant deeds from the way of Allah.²⁹ However, Wāḥidī, Suyūṭī, and Wādi‘ī do not provide any information regarding the circumstances of the verse’s revelation.

Q.s. Ālu ‘Imrān/3: 7

Finally, verse Q.s. Ālu ‘Imrān/3:7³⁰ uses the term *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*. Powers notes that the Companions, Followers, and Successors of Muḥammad had taken these terms into account when referring to the abrogating and abrogated verses. Quoting al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, he remarks that this opinion is attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn Mas‘ūd, Qatāda, al-Rabī‘, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk.³¹ Suyūṭī and Wādi‘ī do not provide any information on the background to this verse.

²⁷ Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 158.

²⁸ Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, 171.

²⁹ Hilālī, *Translation*, 137; Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ ‘Alī Muṣṭafā, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur‘ān al-Karīm: Maḥmūmuḥ wa Tārīkhuhu wa Da‘āwahu* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1988), 18.

³⁰ “It is He who has sent down to you the Book. In it are verses that are entirely clear—*muḥkamāt*—they are the foundations of the Book, and others not entirely clear—*mutashābihāt*” (italic are mine.) Hilālī, *Translation*, 68.

³¹ Powers, “The Exegetical Genre,” 118.

And though he too neglects to comment on the circumstance behind this verse, Wāḥidī does provide the occasion of revelation for the first 42 percent of all the verses of chapter 3, illustrating a dialogue between the Prophet and the two persons known as Sayyid and 'Āqib, who confessed to have embraced Islam, on whether the Prophet 'Īsā was the son of God or not.³²

In sum, at least, we can understand that the phenomenon of *naskh* in the Qur'ān can be explained in either of two ways: as motivated by God or as stipulated by the Qur'ānic context. According to the first view, God, as the 'owner' of the Qur'ān, is concerned with His revelation. His concern is expressed in his confirmation that He maintains His revelations, as is reflected in the following verses: Q.s. al-Baqara/2:106, al-Ḥajj/22: 52, al-Jāthiya/45: 29, and al-A'rāf/7: 154. On the other hand, from the Qur'ānic context, the previous and following verses of the *naskh*-verses and the circumstances, illustrate a sense of maintenance, modification, correction and annulling/abrogation. This nuance is confirmed by the related terms discussed in Q.s. al-Naḥl/16: 101, al-Ra'd/13: 39, al-Nisā'/4: 160 and Ālu 'Imrān/3: 7.

The Linguistic Significance of the Word *Naskh*

The word *naskh* is derived from its root, *n-s-kh*, *nasakha*, *yansakhu*, *naskhan*, which can convey the sense of *naqala* or 'copy,' *ḥalla maḥallahu* or 'replace,' and *abṭala* or 'abrogate,'³³ These three meanings are all reflected in Arabic usage. Makkī illustrates each meaning with an example: *naskh* as *naql* (transcription or copying) in the phrase *Nasakhtu al-kitāb* (I transcribed or copied the book),³⁴ as *ḥalla maḥallahu* (supersession or replacement) in *Nasakhat al-shams al-ẓilla, idhā azālathu wa ḥallat maḥallahu* (the Sun

took the place of the shadow, when the Sun superseded it and replaced it),³⁵ and as *izāla* or *ibṭāl* (suppression or abrogation),³⁶ in *nasakhat al-rīḥ al-āthāra, idhā azālathu fallam yabqa minhu 'iwaḍun, wa lā ḥallat al-rīḥ maḥalla al-āthār, bal zālā jamī'an* (The wind abrogated the trace, when the wind abrogated it, no substitution for it remained, and the wind did not suppress the site of the trace, rather it disappeared altogether.)

Naskh as *Naql*/Copying

Makkī's identification of the word *naskh* as *naql* is also an interpretation common in other writers. For example, Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. 170 A.H./787 A.D.),³⁷ Zamakhsharī (d. 538 A.H./1143 A.D.),³⁸ Jamāl al-Dīn b. al-Manzūr (d. 711 A.H./1311 A.D.),³⁹ Abū Ja'far al-Naḥḥās,⁴⁰ Abū Ḥātim,⁴¹ and Burhān al-Dīn al-Ja'barī,⁴² all of them employ *naskh* in the sense of *naql*.

Scholars have different views on the relation between *naskh* as *naql* and *naskh* in its abrogator role. Naḥḥās considers the word in the sense of *naql* as being the basic character of *al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*. Makkī disagrees with him, however, saying that "*al-nāsikh* in the Qur'an does not bring the word *mansūkh*, instead it constitutes another word and another ruling." However, Makkī's assessment, according to Muṣṭafā Zayd who bases his view on Ibn Ḥilāl, does not contradict Naḥḥās' opinion, due to the fact that "the

³⁵ Makkī, *al-Īdāh*, 49.

³⁶ Makkī, *al-Īdāh*, 52-3.

³⁷ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1971), 55.

³⁸ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 56.

³⁹ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 56.

⁴⁰ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 57.

⁴¹ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 58-9.

⁴² Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 59.

³² Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 53.

³³ Baalbaki, *al-Mawrid*, 1169.

³⁴ Makkī, *al-Īdāh*, 47.

Qur'ān uses this sense in Q.s. al-Jāthiya/45: 29. The Qur'ān has been transcribed wholly from *Umm al-Kitāb*, that the whole of it was abrogated, it means that it is literally copied.” Muṣṭafā Zayd considers Naḥḥās' view as an *uṣūlist stand*,⁴³ and the same view is held by Abū Ḥātim.⁴⁴

Naskh as Taḥlīl/Replacement

Farāhīdī, Zamakhsharī, and Ibn Salām do not consider *naskh* to mean *taḥlīl*, whereas Aḥmad b. Fāris (d. 395 A.H./1005 A.D.), Ibn Manzūr, Naḥḥās, Abū Ḥātim, and Ja'barī all do in some instances, in conforming with Makkī.⁴⁵ Naḥḥās anchors this meaning—*naskh* as *taḥlīl*, to Q.s. al-Ḥajj/22: 29, which he sees as lending support to this interpretation.

Naskh as Ibtāl or Izāla/Abrogation

Whereas Zamakhsharī and Naḥḥās do not define *naskh* specifically as abrogation, this is the meaning that Farāhīdī, Ibn Manzūr, Abū Ḥātim, Ja'barī and Ibn Salāma assign to it.⁴⁶ According to Muṣṭafā Zayd, most scholars regard Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106 as supporting this interpretation.⁴⁷

Abū Ḥātim believes that, initially, *naskh* has a twofold linguistic sense; first *al-zawāl 'alā jihat al-in 'idām* (coming into an end); and second *al-zawāl 'alā jiha al-intiqāl* (coming into a change.) The first sense is constituted two sub-meanings: the first is *naskh ilā badl* (*naskh* for a change/substitution), which has the sense of *taḥlīl*; while the second one is *naskh ilā ghayr badl* (*naskh* not for a substitution.) The latter requires the abolition and abrogation of a ruling without supplying

any substitution. It establishes *naskh* as *izāla* or *ibtāl*. As for the second original sense, in which *naskh* may be taken to mean *naql*, it contains the inference that *naskh* can result in the abrogation of a ruling, but not the wording.⁴⁸

According to Muṣṭafā Zayd, the discourse on *naskh* deals fundamentally with its natural and allegorical meanings, such that scholars have differed over the question of which meaning is allegorical and which is natural. The first camp, represented by Sarakhsī (d. 490 A.H./1097 A.D.), argues that the three usages of the term (*naql*, *ibtāl*, and *izāla*) are of a *majāz ḥaqīqa* or allegorical nature. The nature of *naql*, *ibtāl*, and *izāla* is to omit the essence of a thing, whereas in *naskh* this is not the case, this characteristic is not apparent. For example, *naql al-kitāb* (the replacement of the book) does not reflect this characteristic, because the replacement of the essence of the book is not manifest from one place to another; what is apparent is the establishment of the like in another place. Like *naql*, both *ibtāl* and *izāla* also bear this meaning.⁴⁹

Another camp represented by al-Ghazālī (d. 505 A.H./1111 A.D.) arguing that *naskh* in the sense of *izāla* and *naql* is natural. Both the terms *izāla* and *naql* are *mushtarak* (common), such as in the sentences *nasakhat al-shams al-ḥilla* (for *izāla*) and *naskh al-kitāb* (for *naql*.) Āmidī (d. 631 A.H./1234 A.D.) does not refute al-Ghazālī's opinion, he merely states that determining which one is a superior is meaningless exercise.⁵⁰ Muṣṭafā Zayd himself offers his opinion, saying that *izāla* is the natural meaning of *naskh*. He supports this point by tracing three phenomena, its usage in Hebrew, its linguistic

⁴³ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 57-8.

⁴⁴ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 59.

⁴⁵ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 55-9.

⁴⁶ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 55-9.

⁴⁷ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 61.

⁴⁸ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 59.

⁴⁹ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 60-1.

⁵⁰ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 61-2.

root, and Qur'ānic use of the term.⁵¹

Naskh, the noun form of the verb *n-s-kh*, in the development of Islamic sciences, has been frequently used to designate certain disciplines, and is often used interchangeably in titles such as *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān*,⁵² *Nawāsikh al-Qur'ān*,⁵³ or *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh fī* or *min al-Qur'ān*.⁵⁴

***Naskh* as a Conceptual Term: As a Phenomenon**

Here, we will discuss two points: the acceptance of *naskh* and its importance. Regarding the first point, early and modern scholars have long argued over whether there truly is *naskh* in the Qur'ān and *Sunna*, with the majority holding that there is.⁵⁵ John

⁵¹ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 62-7.

⁵² For example, Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*.

⁵³ For example, Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh al-Qur'ān*.

⁵⁴ For example, al-Naḥḥās *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: 'Ālam al-Fikr, 1986), or Hibat Allah b. Salāma (d. 410 A.H./1019 A.D.), *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh min al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1310 A.H./1904 A.D.)

⁵⁵ Some of the scholars who rejected *naskh* are Muḥammad b. Baḥr al-Aṣḥānī (d. 322 A.H./934 A.D.), a Mu'tazilī, 'Abd al-Muta'al Muḥammad al-Jaburī, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, a contemporary Muslim thinker from Egypt, and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb, a modern Muslim scholar. Ibn Baḥr al-Aṣḥānī is said to have tried to discuss all verses considered to be included in the *naskh* discussion, and had come up with a different interpretation, i.e., it is different from its literal meanings, demonstrating that there is no contradiction among verses of the Qur'ān. In 1368 A.H. Muḥammad al-Jaburī wrote a book entitled *al-Naskh fī al-Sharī'a al-Islāmiyya kamā Afham*. He assumed that the verses of the Qur'ān do not abrogate one another, and that there is no verse supporting the notion of *naskh*. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb have similar ideas to those of the previous two scholars, and they base their opinion on logic, trying to draw a comparison with the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān. See, Muḥammad

Burton explains that the term *naskh* "refers not to one, but to several quite unrelated phenomena which were gradually brought together under the one rubric, owing to a series of decisions taken in the course of the development of what was to prove a spectacularly 'successful' theory."⁵⁶ He portrays these phenomena, on the one hand, as problems involving contradictions in the textual or revealed sources (the Qur'ān and *Sunna*).⁵⁷ On the other hand, he sees it as a response to the formation of the Islamic sciences, which sought to elaborate the doctrine on the basis of the revealed texts during the first three centuries of the Islamic era.⁵⁸ Based on these arguments, he disagrees with the view that it developed simply as a means to resolve contradictions in the Islamic sources by inference either through *isnād* (attribution) or circumstances. Instead, he holds that it was grounded in the gradual development of the revelations.⁵⁹

Makkī, on the other hand, argues that the phenomenon of *naskh* can be proved on the basis of logic. Taking a hermeneutic approach, therefore, he elaborates on it, first, by portraying the sovereignty of God in knowing everything that has happened, is happening or will happen, second, by supplying a rule that is in accordance with the demands of the age, and third, by explaining that the Qur'ān was revealed in piecemeal fashion.⁶⁰ Though Makkī is acknowledged to have been the first to have put forward this argument, this kind of elaboration is common

Ṣāliḥ al-Mudayfar, "Dhikr liman Ankara Thubūta al-Naskh," in *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh fī al-Qur'ān al-'Azīz wa Mā fīhi min al-Farā'id wa al-Sunan* by Abū Ubayd al-Qāsim al-Ḥarawī (Riyāḍ: Maktaba al-Rushd, 1990), 72-6.

⁵⁶ Burton, *The Sources*, 18.

⁵⁷ Burton, *The Sources*, 1-8.

⁵⁸ Burton, *The Sources*, 18-9.

⁵⁹ Burton, *The Sources*, 20.

⁶⁰ See, Makkī, *al-Īdāh*, 55-9; Burton too is aware of this understanding among Muslim scholars. See, Burton, *The Sources*, 20-1.

among Muslim scholars. Aḥmad Ḥasan Farḥāt, in the introduction to Makki's *al-Īdāh*, explains that, while it was not the first instance of the argument in terms of content, it is the first in terms of its context, i.e., in a chapter titled i.e. *Bāb fīhi Bayān Ma'nā al-Naskh wa Kayfiyyatuhu wa min ayna Jāza dhālika* (The Chapter on the Explanation of the Meanings of *Naskh*, and its Method, and on what Basis it is Permitted) from the *Īdāh*.

In fact, other Muslim scholars commonly affirmed the notion of *naskh* based not only on logic, but on *sam'* and *shar'* as well. *Sam'* literally means *hearing, listening or audition*, but here is meant to illustrate that the acceptance of *naskh* can be traced through what had happened in the past regarding the concept of abrogation. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Raḥmān Fāris, basing his argument on Zarqānī, holds that the data embodied in early Islamic history and in earlier religious traditions such as those of Jews and Christians, including inferences in its doctrines, confirm the acceptance of *naskh*.⁶¹ *Shar'* literally means *direction and jurisdiction*, but here is aimed to denote how religious doctrines, including Islam, illustrate the phenomena of *naskh*.⁶² Substantively both terms, *sam'* and *shar'*, refer to the same thing, i.e., how *naskh* was described in history and religious doctrine.

Regarding the second point—the importance of *naskh*, generally Muslim authorities refer to the story of 'Alī b. Abū Ṭālib's prohibition to teach the Qur'ān without mastering the theory of *naskh*. They also use the story to stimulate those who are concerned with Qur'ānic studies, to study it. The story goes as follows:

It has been related about the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī b. Abū Ṭālib that one day he entered the Friday mosque in Kūfa, where he saw a man known as 'Abd al-

Raḥmān b. Dābb, a follower of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī. The people had gathered around him in order to ask questions, but he was mixing commands with prohibitions, and permissions with restrictions. 'Alī asked him, "Can you distinguish between the abrogating and abrogated verses?" He replied, "No." Then 'Alī said, "You destroy yourself and you destroy others. Of whom are you the father?" He said, "I am the father of Yaḥyā." 'Alī said, "You are only talking in order to increase your reputation!" And he grabbed his ear and twisted it. Then he said, "Do not tell stories in our mosque ever again."⁶³

Theory: Definition

Ibn Šāliḥ al-Mudayfar categorizes the definition of *naskh* into two groups: the first group is the *ahl al-salaf*—the sense of early Muslim scholars—which assigns it a loose definition, while the second group is the *muta'akhhirūn*, later generation which clings to a more restricted definition.⁶⁴ He confirms 'Alī Muṣṭafā's attribution to Shāfi'ī of the credit for first restricting the term.⁶⁵ Al-Faḍālī ascribes the first group as *mufasssirūn/ exegetes* and the second as *uṣūlists*,⁶⁶ saying that the *uṣūlists* define *naskh uṣūlī* "in the sense of 'replacing one legal ruling with another due to the termination of the effective period of the earlier ruling,'" while the

⁶³ Powers, "The Exegetical genre," 124. He quotes the story from Ibn Salāma, al-Naḥḥās and Ibn 'Atā'iqī; Rippin, "al-Zuhrī, Naskh al-Qur'ān and the Problem of Early Tafsīr Texts," in *BSOAS* 47 (1984), 28; Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām al-Ḥarawī, *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh fī al-Qur'ān al-Azīz wa mā fīhi min al-Farā'id wa al-Sunan*, ed. by Muḥammad b. Šāliḥ al-Mudayfar (Riyāḍ: Maktaba al-Rushd, 1990), 4; Kamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-'Atā'iqī al-Ḥulī (known as Ibn al-'Atā'iqī), *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh* ed. by 'Abd al-Hādī al-Fuḍālī (Najaf: Maṭba'a al-Adāb, 1970), 22.

⁶⁴ Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām, *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh fī al-Qur'ān al-Azīz*, 53-4.

⁶⁵ Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām, *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh fī al-Qur'ān al-Azīz*, 55.

⁶⁶ Ibn al-'Atā'iqī, *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh*, 7.

⁶¹ Shu'la, *Ṣafwa al-Rāsikh*, 46-9.

⁶² Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh al-Qur'ān*, 14-5.

exegetes define *naskh tafsiṛī* by extending the *uṣūlists'* conception to embody other measurements. These include “specification, exception, abandoning a legal rule because circumstances have changed, and mutual cancellation.”⁶⁷

Historically speaking, according to Muṣṭafā Zayd, Muslim scholars did not define *naskh* exclusively until the beginning of the fourth century of Muslim calendar. He believes that Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H./921 A.D.) in his *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āyyi al-Qur'ān* was the first to define *naskh* in an exegetical sense.⁶⁸ Abū 'Abd Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ḥazm al-Anṣārī (c. 320 A.H./932 A.D.) mentions three definitions of *naskh* recognized in his time; 1) *bayān intihā' mudda al-'ibāda* (the explanation of the termination of the period of the effectiveness of worship); 2) *bayān inqidā' al-'ibāda allatī zāhara-hā al-dawām* (terminating a worship which its literal word was eternal; and 3) *raf' al-ḥukm ba'da thubūtihi* (eliminating a ruling after its establishment.)⁶⁹ Muṣṭafā Zayd considers these definitions to be insufficiently logical, and as belonging to the exegetes and traditionists.⁷⁰ From the fourth century onwards the definition of *naskh* tended to fall into the scope of the '*uṣūlist* sense.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Powers, “The Exegetical Genre,” 122.

⁶⁸ Ṭabarī defined it as follows, “there is no *nāsikh*/abrogating from any verse of the Qur'ān, and reports from the Prophet except what repudates an established ruling in which worshipers are obliged, without taking its literal and esoteric meanings into account other than that. If it includes other that— from which it is meant as *istithnā'* (exception), or *khuṣūṣ* (particular) and '*umūm* (general), or *mujmal* (summarized) and *mufassir* (interpretation)— those then all included to al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh with segregation. There is no mansūkh except when its ruling has been established.” See, Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh*, 78-9.

⁶⁹ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh*, 79-80.

⁷⁰ Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh*, 78-80

⁷¹ Muṣṭafā Zayd traces this development up to the late of ninth century of the Islamic calendar. Muṣṭafā Zayd, *al-Naskh*, 80-4.

Modes of Naskh

According to Makkī, among the three potential meanings of the term *naskh*, i.e., *abṭala*, *ḥalla maḥallahu*, and *naqala*, the last of these, which is *naql*, is not applicable to the Qur'ān, due to the fact that its verses do not transcribe one another.⁷² Referring to Naḥḥās,⁷³ Makkī argues that no verse is abrogated by a similar verse; *naskh* is only operative in the sense of the first and second meanings (*abrogate* and *replace*) which is confirmed in his statement, *izāla al-ḥukm wa ibqā' al-lafz* (abrogation of the ruling, and continuance of the wording.)⁷⁴ Moreover, this mode of *naskh* is commonly known to other authorities as *naskh al-ḥukm dūna al-tilāwa* (abrogation of the ruling, but not of the wording),⁷⁵ the most common form of abrogation in the discourse of the genre. A case in point: the '*idda*—“waiting period imposed by God upon widows before expiry of which they may not legally contract a valid second marriage,” refers to Q.s. al-Baqara/2:234, which is abrogated by al-Baqara/2: 240.⁷⁶ Two other modes are *naskh al-ḥukm wa al-tilāwa* (abrogation of both ruling and wording),⁷⁷ and *naskh al-tilāwa dūna al-ḥukm* (abrogation of the wording but not of the ruling).⁷⁸ The common example for the former mode is that Anas b. Mālik (d. 92 A.H./720 A.D.) is said to have “related that during the lifetime of Muḥammad, the believers used to recite a *sūra* equal in length to *sūra* al-Tawba/9 ('Repentance'), but that he could only remember one verse from this

⁷² Makkī, *al-Īdāh*, 47.

⁷³ Makkī, *al-Īdāh*, 47.

⁷⁴ Makkī, *al-Īdāh*, 47-8.

⁷⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī defines it as *mā nusikha rasmuhu wa baqiya rasmuhu*. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh*, 38.

⁷⁶ See, Burton, *The Sources*, 56-7.

⁷⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī defines it as *mā nusikha rasmuhu wa ḥukmuhu*. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh*, 33.

⁷⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī defines it as *mā nusikha rasmuhu wa baqiya ḥkmuhu*, Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh*, 35.

sūra, namely, “If the son of Adam had two valleys made of silver.”⁷⁹ The most famous example of the latter mode of abrogation is the ‘stoning verse’, which, according to ‘Umar, read as follows, “The adult male and the adult female, when they fornicate, stone them outright, as an exemplary punishment from God. God is mighty wise.”⁸⁰

Conditions

Ibn al-Jawzī sets five conditions for *naskh* to operate. The first is the ruling in the *al-nāsikh* and the *al-mansūkh* must be contradictory, i.e., that it must be impossible for it to be operative in both. In other words, the ruling of the *nāsikh* has to abrogate the ruling of the *mansūkh*. The second condition is that the ruling of the *mansūkh* must be established before determining the ruling of the *nāsikh*. This condition can be determined by either two of methods: linguistic or historical analysis. The linguistic approach takes as its basis the language of the Qur’ān or the *Sunna*, as in Q.s. al-Anfāl/8: 66 and al-Baqara/2: 187, or the report from Muslim on the saying of the Prophet, “I prohibited you the visit to the grave, but now you can do it.” The other way is by tracing the circumstances of revelation or *Sunna*. Thus, when there are two contradictory rulings which cannot both be applied except by abrogating one of them, we have to establish which is the *nāsikh* and which the *mansūkh* by examining their retardation (*al-ta’akhkhur*.) The third condition is that the ruling of the *mansūkh* has to be *mashrū’*, i.e., obligatory on the basis of the sharī’a, while the fourth condition, is essentially the same, though in reference to the *nāsikh*. The final condition demands that the *nāsikh* be established in a similar or better way than that in which the *mansūkh* was

established.⁸¹

Types of *Naskh*

There are four types of *naskh*. First there is *naskh al-Qur’ān bi al-Qur’ān* (abrogating the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān), as in the verse on *i’tidād* (period of waiting), which is set as *al-hawl*/one year in one place (al-Baqara/2: 240) but is abrogated by a verse on *i’tidād* which specifies four months and ten days (al-Baqara/2: 234).⁸²

Second, there is *naskh al-Qur’ān bi al-Sunna* (abrogating the Qur’ān by the *Sunna*.) This in itself is comprised of two sub-principles: *naskh al-Qur’ān bi al-Sunna al-Āḥādiyya* (abrogating the Qur’ān by a solitary tradition) and *naskh al-Qur’ān bi al-Sunna al-Mutawātir* (abrogating the Qur’ān by a *Sunna* reported on the basis of multiply transmitted reports.) Most of the authorities do not accept the first type because a *Ḥadīth Āḥād* is based not on certainty but is on probability. And abrogating a Qur’ānic ruled by a probable evidence is not valid.⁸³

On the other hand, Muslim authorities have different views regarding the second sub-principle, *naskh al-Qur’ān bi al-Sunna al-Mutawātira*. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm ‘Abd Raḥmān Fāris, the editor of Shu‘la’s *Ṣafwa al-Rāsikh fi ‘Ilm al-Mansūkh wa al-Nāsikh*, mentions that Mālik (d. 179 A.H./795 A.D.), Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150 A.H./765 A.D.) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H./855 A.D.) accepted this principle. As far as I have been able to determine, however, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal did not in fact accept it. On the contrary, Ibn Ḥanbal has two reports quoted by ‘Alī b. ‘Ubayd Allah, the teacher of Ibn al-Jawzī, explaining that Muslim authorities in this case were divided into two camps: the

⁸¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh*, 23-4.

⁸² Shu‘la, *Ṣafwa al-Rāsikh*, 44. Abū ‘Ubayd quotes Ibn ‘Abbās’ report on this information. See, Abū ‘Ubayd, *al-Nāsikh*, 129.

⁸³ Shu‘la, *Ṣafwa al-Rāsikh*, 44; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh*, 27.

⁷⁹ Powers, “The Exegetical Genre,” 125.

⁸⁰ Powers, “The Exegetical Genre,” 125; Burton refers the stoning verses in Q.s. al-Nisā’/4: 15-6. Burton, *The Sources*, 122-3.

first accepted it and the second did not.⁸⁴ Ibn Ḥanbal himself, according to Ibn al-Jawzī, belonged to the second camp, and not the first, as Fāris claims. In this report, Ibn Ḥanbal reports that Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa accepted this principle, arguing that the Prophet is protected by God (Q.s. al-Najm/53: 3-4), and that the task of the Prophet is to explain God's messages (Q.s. al-Nahl/16: 44.)⁸⁵ Naturally, since *naskh* explains the extent to which a *mansūkh* is effective, then a verse can be abrogated by a *Sunna*. A case in point is verse Q.s. al-Baqara/2:180, *al-waṣiyya li al-wālidayn* (the bequest in favor of the parents), which is abrogated by the *Sunna*, *lā waṣiyya li wārith* (the inheritor does not receive a bequest.)⁸⁶

The second camp bases their rejection of this principle on the fact that *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* text should be of equal status or better, as is inferred by Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106.⁸⁷ Moreover, Dāraqutnī (d. 385 A.H./995 A.D.) is said to have quoted a Ḥadīth from Jābir b. 'Abdullah (d. 78 A.H./697 A.D.), that the Prophet said, "My saying does not abrogate the Qur'ān, the verses of the Qur'ān abrogate each other."⁸⁸ In this camp could be numbered Shāfi'ī, Sufyān b. Sa'īd b. Marzūq al-Thawrī (d. 161 A.H./778 A.D.), and Ibn al-Jawzī includes Ibn Ḥanbal into this camp.⁸⁹ Furthermore, Ibn al-Jawzī prefers this group because the explanation of the other group falls under the heading of explanation of the Qur'ān and not *naskh*. He asserts his opinion by quoting a report from Ibn Ḥanbal, "the *Sunna* interprets the Qur'ān, while the Qur'ān does not abrogate except the Qur'ān," and another from Shāfi'ī, saying that "in fact, the Book abrogates the Book, and the *Sunna*

is not the abrogation of it (the Book.)"⁹⁰

The third kind of *naskh*, i.e., *naskh al-Sunna bi al-Qur'ān* (abrogating the *Sunna* by the Qur'ān), was, like the practice of facing *Bayt al-Muqaddas* in prayer, established by *Sunna*. Thus Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 144, abrogated this tradition. Most Muslim authorities accept this kind of *naskh*.⁹¹ Finally, the last kind is *naskh al-Sunna bi al-Sunna* (abrogating the *Sunna* by the *Sunna*). It is constituted of four kinds; *naskh al-mutawātir bi al-mutawātir* (abrogating multiply transmitted reports by multiply transmitted reports), *naskh al-āḥād bi al-āḥād* (abrogating the solitary tradition by the solitary tradition), *naskh āḥād bi al-mutawātir* (abrogating the solitary tradition by a multiply transmitted reports), and *naskh mutawātir bi al-āḥād* (abrogating multiply transmitted reports by a solitary tradition.) Most authorities accept the first three, but disagree over the last.⁹²

Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī and Ṭabarsī on *Naskh* in the Qur'ān

In this part, the discussion focuses on Ṭabarī's⁹³ (Ṭabarī's full name is Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224/5-310/839-923.) He was an Islamic religious scholar and historian. Born in Āmul in Tabaristan, northern Persia, Ṭabarī studied in Baghdad, Syria, Egypt, Āmul, and eventually settled in Baghdad. The scope of his knowledge is reflected in his writings which cover poetry, lexicography, grammar, ethics, mathematics, medicine, law, history and exegesis. Many of his works are lost, except in the fields of history, law and exegesis. It is said that

⁹⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh*, 25-6.

⁹¹ Shu'lah, *Ṣafwa al-Rāsikh*, 44.

⁹² Shu'lah, *Ṣafwat al-Rāsikh*, 44-5.

⁹³ See, Andrew Rippin, "Ṭabarī," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* Vol. 14 (New York: McMillan Publishing Company, 1987), 231; R. Paret, "Al-Ṭabarī," in *E.J. Brill's First Encyclopaedia of Islam 1913-1936* vol. 7 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 578; C.E. Bosworth, "Al-Ṭabarī," in *Encyclopedie de l'Islam*, nouvelle edition, vol. 10 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 11.

⁸⁴ Shu'lah, *Ṣafwa al-Rāsikh*, 25-6.

⁸⁵ Shu'lah, *Ṣafwa al-Rāsikh*, 25-6.

⁸⁶ Shu'lah, *Ṣafwa al-Rāsikh*, 26.

⁸⁷ Shu'lah, *Ṣafwa al-Rāsikh*, 44.

⁸⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh*, 25-6.

⁸⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nawāsikh*, 25-6.

Ṭabarī established his own school of law, but this has not survived. He wrote a world history, entitled *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* (The History of the Prophets and Kings), and a *tafsīr*, called *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān* (the Gathering of the Explanation of the Interpretation of Verses of the Qur'ān.) Zamakhsharī's⁹⁴ and Ṭabarsī's⁹⁵ view on *naskh*, with special reference to verses Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106 and Q.s. al-Ḥajj/22: 52. The discussion is on how they anchor the term *naskh* in these verses of the Qur'ān. These three scholars have been selected for study based on two considerations: first, that they represent the three main intellectual trends in early Islam—the Sunnī,⁹⁶ represented

⁹⁴ Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī (467-538/1075-1144) is a Muslim philologist and Qur'ān exegete. Born in Khwārizm in Northern Persia, Zamakhsharī spent most of his time in his native province. He did travel for several years to Mecca, studying and writing. It is said that he had written about fifty works, thirty of which have survived, most of them in Arabic, and dealing with the Qur'ān and the Arabic language. His monumental work on *tafsīr* is *Al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl* (The Unveiler of the Realities of the Secrets of the Revelation), "a work completed during a two-year stay in Mecca around 1134." See, Andrew Rippin, "Al-Zamakhsharī," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 15 (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987), 554-5.

⁹⁵ A Shī'ī scholar of the sixth century, Amīn al-Dīn or Amīn al-Islām Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī (470/1077-8 –548 or 552/1153 or 1157) left us many of his works, mainly in the field of Qur'ānic studies; *Majma' al-bayān li al-'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* or *fi Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (ten volumes), *Al-Kāf al-Shāf min Kitāb al-Kashshāf* (one volume), *Jawāmi' al-Jāmi'* (four volumes), etc. See, Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Ḥusaynī al-'Amilī, "Tarjama al-Muallif," in *Majma' al-Bayān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Ṭabarsī (Beirut: ār al-Fikr, 1957, 10-6; and E. Kohlberg, "Al-Ṭabarsī (Ṭabarsī)," in *Encyclopedie de l'Islam*, nouvelle edition, vol. 10 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 41-2.

⁹⁶ The term Sunnī is derived from the terminology *ahl al-Sunna wa al-jamā'a* (the People of the Prophet Sunna and Community.) The term Sunnī may be defined as a group of Muslims who gave more scope to textual or revealed sources. This group attempted to preserve 'the status quo,' by criticizing the present rational tendencies in understanding Islamic doctrine and by idealizing the textual sources and practices of early Muslims. See,

by Ṭabarī, the Mu'tazilī,⁹⁷ represented by Zamakhsharī, and the Shī'ī,⁹⁸ represented by Ṭabarsī; and second, that between them they explore virtually every spect of the issue.

Though they offer similar explanations, Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī, and Ṭabarsī discuss verses Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106 and Q.s. al-Ḥajj/22: 55 in slightly different terms. Ṭabarī sets his discussion of a verse within the context of previous and contemporary authorities, presenting the different views and readings of the matter under discussion, and showing where he stands among them. He generally provides detailed information of a linguistic, legal and theological nature. He also tries to convey the spirit of the verses in question. Zamakhsharī, on the other hand, presents "a phrase-by phrase philosophical and philological commentary on the entire text of the Qur'ān, written in a concise, careful, and somewhat difficult style."⁹⁹ Unlike Ṭabarī who places a heavy emphasis on traditions, Zamakhsharī pays less attention to previous reports, and instead, concentrates on "the obvious meaning of a verse and notes other possible interpretation on the basis of grammar and textual variant readings, while

Richard C. Martin and Mark R. Woodward with Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 13-4.

⁹⁷ The Mu'tazila may be defined as a group of Muslims who gave more scope to human reason than they did to textual or revealed sources. Western historians characterize the group "as rationalists and as heterodox theologians." Among its pioneers were al-Ḥasan al-Basrī (d. 728) and Abū al-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbar b. Aḥmad b. Khalīl b. 'Abdullah al-Hamadhānī al-Asadabādī (d. 1024), known as Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbar. Richard C. Martin et al., *Defenders of Reason in Islam*, 10, 25, and 33.

⁹⁸ Shī'a may be defined as "partisans; those who believe Muḥammad passed on his authority to his cousin and son-in-law, 'Alī b. Abū Ṭālib. The three major Shī'ī communities are Imāmī or Ithnā 'Asharī (Twelvers), Ismā'īlī (Sevens), and the Zaydī (Fivers), named for the numbers of Imāms each community believes belonged to the common 'Alīd line." Richard C. Martin et al., *Defenders of Reason in Islam*, 234.

⁹⁹ Rippin, "Al-Zamakhsharī," 555.

always paying full attention to the notion of the rhetorical beauty (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān."¹⁰⁰ Finally, Ṭabarī takes each verse by (or a set of verses) at a time and examines it from all sides of its reading, language, and grammar before interpreting it in great detail based on a number of considerations and in the light of Shī'ī sources like al-Ṭūsī's *Kitāb al-Tibyān*.¹⁰¹

Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106

In discussing this verse, Ṭabarī divides it into four parts: 1. *Mā nansakh min āya*, 2. *aw nunsihā*, 3. *Na'ti bikhayrin minhā*, and 4. *Alam ta'lam anna Allah 'alā kullī shay'in qadīr*.¹⁰² For the first two parts, he explicates various textual readings and meanings. In the case of the word n-s-kh and n-s-y, he consults different readings, taking them from different authorities identified by Burton as the following: Uthmān's muṣḥāf, Abū Ḥudhayfa, Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Abbās, Sa'd b. Abū Waqqāṣ, Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab, Abū 'Āmir, Ḍaḥḥāk; Abū Rajā, 'Alī b. Abū Ṭālib.¹⁰³ Though Burton does not include all authorities quoted by Ṭabarī, they are sufficient to show his approach to *naskh*. Ṭabarī does not supply this verse with any circumstances of revelation; he directly anchors the term in the discourse of *naskh* by referring to linguistic analysis and exposition of other authorities' discussion of and by it, exploring its meanings which include *naql* (copying), *taghyīr* (change), and *tabdīl* (alteration.) He associates the first meaning to an original linguistic meaning which he refers as *naskh al-kitāb*, means *naqalahu min nuskhatin ilā ukhrā ghayrihā* (copying the book with another.)¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, he assimilates the rest into the subject matter of

naskh, equating the term *taghyīr* with *tabdīl*,¹⁰⁵ and based on this, confines the meaning of *naskh* in the verse to *naskh al-ḥukm dūna al-tilāwa* (abrogation of the ruling but not of the wording) and *naskh al-ḥukm wa al-tilāwa* (abrogation of both ruling and wording.) The last two parts of the verse are seen by him as supporting the sense of the first two parts, interpreting the third part as meaning that the abrogating verse is better than the abrogated one in its functions and benefits,¹⁰⁶ whereas the last part is interpreted as God's confirmation to the Prophet Muḥammad that Allah is capable of doing anything included abrogating His own rulings.¹⁰⁷

Zamakhsharī, on the other hand, begins his discussion of the verse by referring to the circumstances of its revelation (without mentioning the transmitter),¹⁰⁸ the details of which we outlined above. He then explains, "that, as the *naskh* of an *āya* means its *izāla* (suppression), effected by the substitution of another *āya* in its place (supersession), its *insakh* would mean commanding another that the *āya* be *naskhed*. God commands Gabriel to declare the *āya mansūkha* by announcing its *naskh* to the Prophet."¹⁰⁹ Burton considers that "the appointment of Gabriel as the agent of *nunsikh* may, perhaps, have been designed to remove the 'forgetting' interpretation even further from God, by ceasing to regard Him as agent."¹¹⁰ Zamakhsharī infers moreover that every verse possesses its own virtue, and that the term *naskh* itself can signify either the abrogation of the ruling and the wording, the ruling but not the wording or the wording but not the ruling.¹¹¹ He differs from Ṭabarī in

¹⁰⁵ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi'*, 472.

¹⁰⁶ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi'*, 481.

¹⁰⁷ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi'*, 484.

¹⁰⁸ Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, vol. I (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, n.d.), 87.

¹⁰⁹ Burton, *The Sources*, 114; Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. I, 87.

¹¹⁰ Burton, *The Sources*, 115.

¹¹¹ Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. I, 87.

¹⁰⁰ Rippin, "Al-Zamakhsharī," 555.

¹⁰¹ E. Kohlberg, "Al-Ṭabrisī," 41.

¹⁰² Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 470-84.

¹⁰³ Burton, *The Sources*, 87.

¹⁰⁴ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi'*, 472.

interpreting *bikhayrin minhā*, in that Ṭabarī sees the phrase as referring to the function and virtue of a verse for Muslims, whereas he interprets it as meaning *thawāb* or reward from God. Accordingly, he interprets *'alā kulli shay'in qadīr* as the ability of God to produce virtue as He Himself is the source of virtue.¹¹²

Ṭabarsī's discussion on the verse is more comprehensive than either Ṭabarī's or Zamakhsharī's. Ṭabarsī discusses the verse under the following headings: the text of the verse, reading and its reason, language, *al-i'rāb*, *al-naẓam*, and *al-ma'nā*.¹¹³ Like Ṭabarī and Zamakhsharī, he applies *naskh* scientifically to the verse Q.s. al-Baqara/2: 106, elaborating it in the light of other authorities and with careful reasoning. This yields not only a clear example for each meaning, but also an eloquent elucidation of the three modes of *naskh*. He goes beyond the other two, in a sense, in demonstrating the mature development of the subject matter, extending the scope of *naskh* to take in the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*. According to him, the *Sunna* can abrogate verses of the Qur'ān, as the Prophet Muḥammad was under His guidance when the *Sunna* was formed.¹¹⁴ It seems that he combines Ṭabarī's and Zamakhsharī's interpretation of *bikhayrin minhā* and *'alā kulli shay'in qadīr*, inferring that these phrases require *manfa'a* (virtue) and *thawāb* (reward) from Allah.¹¹⁵ Finally, he closes the discussion by indicating that the verse shows us that the Qur'ān was created (*muḥdath*).¹¹⁶

Q.s. al-Ḥajj/22: 52

Here, Ṭabarī begins his exegesis of the verse by referring to its occasion of revelation, quoting seven authorities with eight reports in

support.¹¹⁷ Having provided the background of the verse, he goes on to interpret it. As Burton states "with no reference to any other Qur'ānic use of the root, Ṭabarī defines *naskh* in Q.s. al-Ḥajj/22:52 as: 'to remove' (*adhhaba*); 'to bring to nothing' (*abṭala*) or declare to be such."¹¹⁸ Ṭabarī, depending on al-Daḥḥāk, explains,

There is no doubt that by *āyas* is meant here the *āyas* of the revelation. We know that the Devil had insinuated into the revelations precisely what God declares that He has *naskhed*- brought to nought. Then God firmly establishes His own revelations by His *naskh*- by His nullification of the expressions insinuated by the Devil.

The *tafsīr* will be, "We have not sent before you a Messenger or prophet but that, when he recited the Book of God, or repeated it, or discoursed, or spoke, the Devil insinuated false or into his discourse as he spoke. God maintains His revelations by the *naskh* of what the Devil insinuates-God removes what the Devil cast onto the tongue of the prophet, brings it to nothing, and confirms His own *āyas*-God purifies the *āyas* of His own divine Book, ridding it of the vain falsehood which the Devil had insinuated into the speech of his prophet."¹¹⁹

Zamakhsharī also begins by mentioning the circumstance's of the verse's revelation, which accords substantially with Ṭabarī's quotation, but he does not declare its source. He also differs from Ṭabarī, who held that Allah controlled His messenger, Muḥammad, in declaring that it is through various trials sent by God, including the intervention of

¹¹⁷ He quotes al-Qāsim, Ibn 'Abd al-A'lā, Ibn al-Muthanna' (two of his reports are quoted), Ibn Bashār, Muḥammad b. Sa'ad, al-Ḥusayn, and Yūnus. See, Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 9 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1987), 131-3.

¹¹⁸ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 9, 134; Burton, *The Sources*, 107.

¹¹⁹ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 9, 134; Burton, *The Sources*, 107. I use Burton's English translation of the quoted text.

¹¹² Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. I, 87.

¹¹³ Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, vol. I, 404-10.

¹¹⁴ Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, vol. I, 410.

¹¹⁵ Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, vol. I, 410.

¹¹⁶ Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, vol. I, 410.