HERMENEUTICS OF *FATḤ AL-QADĪR:* AL-SHAWKĀNĪ'S ANALYSIS OF THE THEMES OF THE GRAVE AND THE BARZAKH REALM

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine the theory, application, and implications of Al-Shawkani's hermeneutic theory in Tafsir Fatḥ Al-Qadīr of the grave and the barzakh realm's themes as well as the implications of the theory and its application to various categorization models of interpretation studies. Using a qualitative literature methodology, this study earns, first, al-Shawkānī's hermeneutics is built on the principle of convergence between riwāyah and dirāyah. Viewed from the perspective of triadic structures in hermeneutics, "riwāyah" represents the authority of the author, while "dirāyah" represents the authority of the text. The convergence of riwāyah and dirāyah makes al-Shawkānī's interpretation rely on inclusive, egalitarian, and retrospective literalism. Second, al-Shawkānī applies hermeneutical principles consistently to his interpretation of the graves and the barzakh in the Qur'an. Meanwhile, in terms of the history of hermeneutics, what al-Shawkānī does is not far from the discussions that appear in classical hermeneutics, namely in the form of interpretation theory, philological methods, or linguistic understanding methods.*

Keywords: *Hermeneutics; Fatḥ Al-Qadīr; Al-Shawkani; Graves Realm; Barzakh Realm*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji teori, aplikasi, dan implikasi hermeneutika dalam Tafsir Fathkhul Qadir pada tema alam kubur dan alam barakh serta implikasi dari teori dan aplikasi terhadap beragam model kategorisasi studi tafsir. Dengan metodologi kepustakaan kualitatif, ditemukan bahwa hermeneutika Al-Syaukani menghasilkan, pertama, hermeneutika al- Syaukani dibangun di atas prinsip konvergensi antara riwāyah dan dirāyah. Ditinjau dari perspektif struktur triadik dalam hermeneutika, "riwāyah" mewakili otoritas pengarang, sedangkan "dirāyah" mewakili otoritas teks. Konvergensi riwāyah dan dirāyah membuat tafsir al- Syaukani bertumpu pada literalisme yang inklusif, egaliter, dan retrospektif. Kedua, al-Syaukani menerapkan prinsip-prinsip hermeneutisnya secara konsisten pada tafsirnya terhadap alam kubur dan alam barzakh dalam Al-Qur'an. Dari segi sejarah, apa yang dilakukan al- Syaukani tidak jauh dari pembahasan yang muncul dalam hermeneutika klasik, berupa teori tafsir, metode filologis, atau metode pemahaman linguistik.*

Kata Kunci: *Hermeneutika; Tafsīr Fathkhul Qadir; Al-Syaukani; Alam Kubur; Alam Barzakh*

Introduction

Tafsīr (Qur'anic Exegesis) has been carried out since the time of the Prophet Muhammad to understand and explain the meaning of the Qur'an. Therefore, the majority of scholars agree that he is the first exegete (*al-mufassir al-awwal*) of the Qur'an.[1] After his death, interpretation continued to develop periodically, leaving behind an extraordinary diversity in methods, orientations, styles, and tendencies, as well as writing models.

There are various factors behind this diversity. Some of these factors come from the social, political, cultural, ideological, and intellectual conditions when each commentator wrote his work. However, no less important are factors that come from within the interpreter himself, such as motives, interests, the focus of attention, scientific background, and so on. Each commentator deals with the same sacred text and shares the same basic belief, namely that the Qur'an contains universal messages for all mankind without exception. However, at the same time, the commentators are also bound to their own space and time, interpreting the Qur'an with different backgrounds, motives, perspectives, and goals. In short, each interpretation is an attempt to harmonize the text of the Qur'an with the context faced by each commentator. In Rippin's words:

> *Mufassirūn* has different concerns and goals, and this is reflected in the relative weight they place upon elements such as history, grammar, semantics, law, theology, or folklore. All commentators are concerned with the process of analyzing the text in light of the "external world", however, that be defined for the individual author, to resolve any

apparent conflict and make the text "clear.[2]

In that context, Walid Saleh emphasized the importance of the tafsīr tradition being seen as a "genealogical" tradition. This means that each new Qur'anic interpretation always has a certain dialectical relationship with the entire tradition of the previous interpretation. An exegete cannot ignore the previous tradition of interpretation even if he has a different interpretation. When an exegete disagrees with previous interpretations, he is less likely to discard them altogether. What he will do is add his voice to the various interpretations he has inherited.[3]

Thus, when an exegete interprets the Qur'an, he is referring to a set of rules, basic assumptions, procedures, and techniques some of which may differ from one another. These methodological aspects are then, by many researchers, called "hermeneutics", especially in the sense of pre-Heideggerian hermeneutics. In this context, as quoted from Peerwani, hermeneutics is defined as "...a general body of methodological principles that underlie interpretation as well as the epistemological assumptions of understanding".[4] In the last few decades, many studies have positioned the methodological tools of the commentators as part of a hermeneutic study that is specifically applied in the study of the Qur'anic Exegesis.[5]

The problem is that the uniqueness or personal color of each of these exegetes is often obscured by the efforts of categorization or grouping by researchers. On the one hand, it could be because some of these categorizations are built on artificial and ambiguous criteria. Meanwhile, on the other hand, this problem can also arise because of a misunderstanding of the hermeneutic substance built by each of the exegetes.

There is an interesting example that can be given here. During the last century or so, one of the most widely used ways of sorting the exegetical literature is categorization based on its source. This categorization gave birth to the division of works of the Qur'anic exegesis into *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr/bi al-riwāyah* and *tafsīr bi ar-ra'y/bi al-dirāyah*. *Tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* is usually considered to include, at least, three categories, namely the interpretation of verses of the Qur'an with other verses of the Qur'an (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān*) interpretation of the Qur'an with the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Sunnah aw al-Qur'ān bi al-Ḥadīth*), as well as interpretations of the Qur'an with the statements of the Companions, plus one category that is often debated, namely the interpretation of the Qur'an with the opinion of the *Tabi'in*.[6]

Meanwhile, *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* is further divided into two categories: *al-maḥmūd* (the praiseworthy) and *al-madhmūm* (the despicable). These two categories, of course, indicate that there are strict limits on the use

of ratios in interpretation. These limits are usually formulated through three criteria. First, it does not conflict with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Second, it does not conflict with the agreed-upon Islamic doctrines. Third, it must be by the rules of the Arabic language. However, there are also indications that *tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd* is an interpretation that does not conflict with the interpretation of the Salaf generation.[7]

The case of dividing the interpretation into *bi al-ma'thūr/al-riwāyah* and *bi al-ra'y/al-dirāyah* is just one example of the many categorization efforts carried out by researchers and historians dealing with diversity in the field of Qur'anic exegesis. This example is interesting because it is very popular, quoted, and used in many studies, but has recently been met with various criticisms. On the one hand, this categorization has drawn fundamental criticism on its underlying assumptions. The division of works of Qur'anic exegesis into the categories of *bi al-ma'thur* and *bi al-ra'y* is considered to stand on superficial, unclear, and ideologically inclined criteria. Any interpretation literature is usually integrative, combining various elements in it so that the content of the commentary tends to be too complex to be simplified into one category. Therefore, every effort to classify the exegesis literature based on the mapping of its content tends to be partial.[8] Even in the exegesis literature categorized as *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*, there must be rational activity. Just as in the exegesis literature categorized as *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* there must also be a reference to *athar*.[9]

On the other hand, the categories of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *bi al-ra'y* are also criticized at the level of application. An interesting example is the case of *al-Ṭabarī*. For many circles, *Tafsir al-Ṭabarī* is one of the most prominent representations of the *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*. However, this view has been criticized by several others. One of them is *al-Fāḍil* b. *ʿĀshūr*. In his *al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluhū*, he rejects the opinion which states that *Tafsir al-Ṭabarī* is part of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*. He wrote:

> "People who consider *al-Ṭabarī's tafsī* as a *tafsīr atharī* or part of the *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* only limit their views to its outward appearance which is indeed filled with *hadith* and *sanad*. They do not pay attention to the way he is taking and the goals he wants to achieve by including the arranged, organized, and selected *sanad*."[10]

Departing from the problems above, this study intends to examine the hermeneutic principles constructed by an exegete from Yemen named Muḥammad bin ʿAlī bin Muḥammad al-Shawkāni (1172 H.-1250 AH./1834 AD). He is known as a scholar who was born from a reformist and forward-thinking background in the religious tradition in Yemen at the end of the 12th century AH (18th AD) and early 13th century

AH (19th AD).[11] His monumental work in the field of interpretation is entitled *Fatḥ al-Qadīr al-Jāmiʿ Bain Fannay al-Riwāyah wa al-Dirāyah min ʿIlm al-Tafsīr.*

Al-Shawkānī is a challenging figure to research. First, he emphatically stated that he was trying to do something new in the tafsir. He did not want to interpret the Qur'an in the same way as other commentators before him. In the *Muqaddimah* section of his commentary, al-Shawkānī explained that the previous exegetes were divided into two groups, namely the proponents of the *riwāyah* method and the bearers of the *dirāyah* method. He criticized each of these groups for separating two methods that should have been used simultaneously. Then al-Shawkānī emphasized that it was precisely at the convergence effort between the two methods that he would make reforms in tafsir.[12] Therefore, he put the title "*al-jāmiʿ bayna fannay al-riwāyah wa al-dirāyah*" as the title of his Qur'anic commentary.

On the other hand, al-Shawkānī also has problems with the various categorizations formulated by later researchers. First, he is often considered to be affiliated with the Shi'ah Zaidiyah sect. This assumption appears, for example, in the work of al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn.* In his work, al-Dhahabī mentions approximately thirteen works of Qur'anic exegesis from the Shī'ah Imāmiyah group and a work from the Shī'ah Zaidiyah group. The only book in this second category is the work of al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr.*[13] However, this assumption is still considered problematic or even unfounded by some other researchers.

Second, al-Shawkāni is also considered to have an interpretation that is in line with the thoughts of Salafism or Wahhabism. This opinion was expressed for example by al-Ghammārī in his work *al-Imām al-Shawkānī Mufassiran.*[14] However, this view is considered to oversimplify the problem by some other researchers, including Johanna Pink.[15]

Third, in the midst of the debate about who marked the start of the modern era in Qur'anic exegesis, the name al-Shawkānī was also mentioned. Ibrahim Rufaydah mentions *Fatḥ al-Qadīr* as the first modern Qur'anic commentary in history.[16] This opinion differs from the opinion commonly expressed by many historians and researchers who usually trace the roots of modernity in more recent interpretations.[17]

In addition to the three categorizations that put al-Shawkānī in a controversial position, other categorization models can not only be used as a reading tool to dissect but can also be assessed and evaluated based on a search, of al-Shawkānī's hermeneutics.

In this study, al-Shawkānī's hermeneutical principles will be studied

in two aspects at once: the theory and its application. The theory will be explored, especially from the part of the *Muqaddimah* written by al-Shawkānī himself for his *tafsīr*. Although it is quite short, the introductory part of *Fatḥ al-Qadīr* explains quite well the hermeneutic position of al-Shawkānī among the many other exegetes. Meanwhile, the application of this theory will be traced to al-Shawkani's interpretation of the Qur'anic verses on the realm of *barzakh* (*'ālam al-barzakh*)—a part of the eschatological issues in Islam.

In addition to the concept of eschatology in the Qur'an, this study also provides relatively adequate material to elaborate on al-Shawkānī's theory. With dozens of verses and various subthemes and keywords related to the realm of barzakh in the Qur'an, this area serves as one of the best opportunities to assess the consistency and relevance of al-Shawkānī's theory in its application to the interpretation of Qur'anic verses.

This study will present the theory, application, and implications of al-Shawkānī's hermeneutics as outlined in Tafsir Fatḥ al-Qadīr. The study will be both theoretical and applicative, examining methodological principles as well as the content of his exegesis. Eschatological verses in the Qur'an will serve as a lens through which the consistency of al-Shawkānī's hermeneutical theory will be tested. This is necessary because the description of al-Shawkānī's hermeneutical principles, provided in the Muqaddimah section of his exegetical work, is sometimes too brief or overly general, making it difficult to fully comprehend without examining its application in the interpretation of specific Qur'anic verses.

This study is included in qualitative library research. The formal object of the research is the interpretation of the Qur'an and related sciences, while the material object of the research is al-Shawkānī's hermeneutics and its application in the interpretation of eschatological verses. In addition to being critical and analytical, this research is also evaluative. The data to be explored consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data or basic data relates to the things presented by al-Shawkānī, especially related to his hermeneutical principles and the application of these principles in interpretation. Meanwhile, secondary data or complementary data relates to data that complements or becomes an addition or refines the previous basic data.

Evaluation of this research will be carried out on at least two things. First, al-Shawkānī's methodological consistency through tracing the application of his hermeneutical theory in the interpretation of eschatological verses in the Qur'an. Second, the basis of assumptions and distinctions between categories through an analysis of al-Shawkānī's position in several models

of interpretation categorization. Data consisting of primary sources in al-Shawkānī's interpretation works and secondary sources in other works by al-Shawkānī, research results on al-Shawkānī, literature on eschatology, literature of interpretation experts and their relevant works are analyzed using descriptive-argumentative, descriptive-analytical, and interpretative methods.

The Barzakh Realm in al-Shawkānī's Fatḥ al-Qadīr

Eschatological issues in the structure of Islamic theology are part of the realm of sam'iyyāt or ghaybiyyāt. This is one of the main reasons why the realm of barzakh was chosen as the field of study for the application of al-Shawkānī's hermeneutical theory. By elaborating al-Shawkānī's theory in an area where dirāyah usually does not get much space, the convergence method proposed by al-Shawkānī can be tested to its furthest limits. In other words, the eschatological verses in the Qur'an are a challenging field for al-Shawkānī himself to apply the hermeneutical procedure that he proposed as a convergence-based interpretation theory. One of the verses in the Qur'an that is discussed is the concept of the term realm of barzakh.

The word *barzakh* is mentioned several times in the Qur'an, one of which is in surah al-Mu'minūn: 99–100:

حَتّٰى إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُوْنِ ٩٩ لَعَلِّيْ أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيْمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا

اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَّرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ١٠٠

[For such is the state of the disbelievers] until, when death comes to one of them, he says, "My Lord, send me back; that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind." No! It is only a word he is saying; and behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected.

Al-Shawkānī states that the sentence "My Lord, send me back" is stated by someone who is dying as an expression of regret and sadness for what he is about. Even this person said, "*irji'ū*", with a plural pronoun. The use of the plural pronoun, according to al-Shawkānī, is to explain the greatness of the interlocutor. There is also an opinion that this expression means the repetition of the verb so that it sounds as if it reads: *irji'nī, irji'nī, irji'nī*. This repetition shows the seriousness of the incident. To strengthen his opinion, al-Shawkānī quotes al-Muzanī's commentary of the surah Qāf: 24: "*alqiyā fī Jahannam*", when he said that the meaning of this verse is "*alqi, alqi*" (the repetition of the verb "*alqi*").

In addition, al-Shawkānī also quotes several poems (*shi'r*) to prove that plural pronouns are commonly used by Arabs to glorify the interlocutor or to emphasize and express the seriousness of a statement. It is said, "...*wa*

law shi'tu la-ḥarramtu al-nisā' siwākumu," even though the interlocutor is a single person. It is also said, "*...alā fa-rḥamūnī ya Ilāha Muḥammad*", even though there is only one God of Muḥammad.[18]

The unbelievers ask to be returned to the world to do good deeds. Al-Shawkānī said that the meaning of the verse is: "I will believe in God and do good deeds when I am returned to the world." However, he certainly will not do good deeds, so Allah answered his request by saying, "No! It is only a word he is saying". It is a rejection and an expulsion. So the meaning of this verse: if Allah grants him a return to the world then he will not fulfill his promise, as stated by Allah in al-An'ām: 28, "*wa law ruddū la-ʿādū limā nuhū ʿanhu*".

Then al-Shawkānī explains the next part of the verse, "*wa min warā'ihim barzakh ilā yawmi yubʿathūn*". The meaning of the verse is that in front of them or before their eyes there is a barzakh. Al-Shawkānī quotes al-Jauhari's opinion that *barzakh* is a "barrier between two things". However, Al-Shawkānī also narrates other opinions, such as from al-Ḍaḥḥāk, Mujahid, and Ibn Zaid that *barzakh* is a "separator between death and life", or al-Kalbī's view that *barzakh* is "the death between two trumpet blasts which is 40 years apart". Likewise, al-Suddī says that its meaning is "death until the day of resurrection".[19]

Another verse that contains the word barzakh is al-Furqān: 53,

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَّهٰذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَّحِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا ٣٥

> And it is He who has released [simultaneously] the two seas [i.e., bodies of water], one fresh and sweet and one salty and bitter, and He placed between them a barrier and prohibiting partition. (Q. al-Furqān [25]: 53).

The word "*barzakh*" in this verse is interpreted by al-Shakani as follows. *Barzakh* is a barrier that Allah has made with His power between two things to separate one from the other, and prevent the two from mixing. Furthermore, al-Shawkānī said that the word *barzakh* explains the existence of a dividing factor between two objects, as well as hints at the difference between the two. Regarding the "two seas" in the verse, there are those who argue that the first sea is a river that contains fresh water, while the second sea is a real sea with salty water. Great rivers, such as the Nile, Furat, Jihun, and salty seas like the famous seas. *Barzakh* is in between the two to separate them. The water does not mix because of the power of Allah. Al-Shawkānī also cites several narrations in this regard. One of them comes from Ibn Jarīr, that the "two seas" can be mixed, but will not destroy

each other between the fresh and the salty.[20]

Although this verse is not directly related to the realm of *barzakh* in the concept of Islamic eschatology, al-Shawkānī shows the relationship between the two. He states that the oceans are the origin and the rivers are the result. Both are useful for anyone who uses them. So are the two lives. The world will be extinct and the hereafter will be eternal. Both, the world and the hereafter, are good and beneficial for those who will use them. It is the belief in the afterlife that results in beneficial deeds in this world. This means that the afterlife is the source, while a good worldly life is the fruit. Attempts to make an analogy between *barzakh* as "the separator of the two seas in the world" and *barzakh* as "the barrier between the world and the hereafter" as done by al-Shawkānī are not widely practiced by other exegetes. Barzakh in a worldly context is also mentioned in surah al-Raḥmān: 19–20,

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيٰنِ ٩١ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيٰنِ ٠٢

He released the two seas, meeting [one another]; between them is a barrier so neither of them transgresses. (Q. al-Raḥmān [55]: 19-20).

In general, al-Shawkānī's interpretation of the verse in surah al-Raḥmān is not much different from his interpretation of the verse in surah al-Furqān. He begins by quoting many opinions and narrations from previous generations of exegetes, but does not comment much on them.[21] On the matters that are not too concerned with the basic questions in the structure of Islamic religious dogma, al-Shawkānī seems to be trying to cover as much diversity of opinion as possible in the interpretation of the Qur'an without bothering too much to determine which of these opinions is the most valid.

Questions in the Barzakh Realm

In the *barzakh*, people who have died will get some trials. The test takes the form of several questions that determine his fate: happiness or suffering. Who can answer correctly, then he will be happy. Meanwhile, whoever cannot answer, then he will be miserable until the Day of Resurrection.

God says in surah Ibrāhīm: 27,

يُثَبِّتُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ٧٢

Allah keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word,1 in worldly life and in the Hereafter. And Allah sends astray the wrongdoers. And Allah does what He wills.

Al-Shawkānī said that "*al-qawl al-thābit*" means "clear evidence", namely good sentences (*al-kalimāt al-ṭayyibah*). It has been mentioned in *al-Ṣaḥīḥain* that what is meant is the creed that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

Al-Shawkānī further said that this incident occurred when the believers were seated in their graves. The Prophet said that this is what is meant by the word of Allah: "*yuthabbit Allāh al-ladhīna āmanū bi al-qawl al-thābit*". Another opinion says that the believers will be destined to always (*mudāwamah*) say those firm words. What is meant by "*al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*" is that they will continue to say these words throughout their lives in this world.

Other scholars have said that what is meant by life on earth in this verse is "life" in the grave. While the meaning of "*al-ākhirah*" is when they are judged in the hereafter. Al-Shawkānī also cites the opinion that what is meant by "*al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*" is when they are questioned in the grave, while "*al-ākhirah*" is when they are questioned on the Day of Resurrection. That is, when they are asked about their creed and religion, they explain it with firm speech without stuttering, hesitating, or going back and forth, like the words of people who do not receive tawfīq from Allah.[22]

The word "*wa yuḍill Allāh al-ẓālimīn*" means that Allah misled them from saying the sentence of *tawḥīd*. They are not able to pronounce the words of tawḥīd in their graves, nor when they are judged, just as they strayed from the right path when living in this world. Some think that what is meant by wrongdoers here is the infidels (*al-kāfirūn*). Another opinion: all those who have wronged themselves even if they only turned away from clear evidences, clear miracles, then they will not be given the power to say the sentence of *tawḥīd* at the time of slander and they will not be given the guidance.

To interpret the word "*al-qawl al-thābit*" in the verse above, al-Shawkānī quoted the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, narrated by Bukhārī and Muslim and several other muḥaddith through al-Barā' bin 'Āzib. In this *hadith*, al-Barā' said that the Messenger of Allah said that when a Muslim is asked in the grave, he testifys that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. That is the meaning of the verse above.

Another narration is still from al-Baraā' bin 'Āzib regarding the word of Allah, that the steadfastness in this world is when two angels came to a man in his grave, then both of them said: "Man Rabbuka?" He answered: My Lord Allah. "What is your religion?" He answered: my religion is Islam. "Who is your prophet?" He answered: My Prophet Muhammad

SAW. This is what is meant by steadfastness in the world. Al-Shawkānī seems to agree that what is meant by steadfastness in the world is the grave, by providing an answer to the problem of his religion and monotheism.

There is a report from al-Thabrānī, Ibn Mardawaih, from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī in this verse that the afterlife means the grave. In his narration, ʿĀishah said: "The Prophet said that this verse was in the grave". Another narration from ʿĀishah asked the Messenger of Allah, "This nation will be tested in their graves. What about me, a weak woman?" The Prophet answered the question by reciting the verse above. This means that being weak in the world has nothing to do with with questions in the grave. If the faith and good deeds are weak, then there will be problems. Al-Shawkānī at the end of his explanation said that there are many hadiths of the Prophet that report about the questions of the angels in the grave, the answers of the corpses to him, the punishment of the grave and its trials.

From the explanation in above, it can be concluded that questions in the grave are matters that will definitely be given and anyone will be asked about their monotheism and religion. Al-Shawkānī did not specify the type of questions but he limited them to the issue of monotheism and the main points of their religion. In this case, the opinion al-Shawkānī is in line with the opinion of the majority of scholars, including al-Ghazālī, al-Qurthubī, and several other scholars as explained in the previous chapter. Concerning the method of retrieval of sources of interpretation, this section proves al-Shawkānī 's consistency. In a situation where the riwāyah and dirāyah are contradictory, then the highest priority is given to the authentic riwāyah. This is what al-Shawkānī did when he choose to interpret al-hayah al-dunyā with the realm of barzakh, not worldly life, based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Pleasure and Punishment of the Grave

One of the verses that are often used by exegetes as a proof about the punishment of the grave surah Ghāfir: 45–46,

فَوَقٰهُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِ مَا مَكَرُوْا وَحَاقَ بِاٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوْءُ الْعَذَابِ ٤٥ اَلنَّارُ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَّعَشِيًّا وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ اَدْخِلُوْٓا اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ اَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ ٤٦

> So Allah protected him from the evils they plotted, and the people of Pharaoh were enveloped by the worst of punishment; they are exposed to the Fire in their graves morning and evening. And on the Day the Hour will be established it will be said, "Admit Pharaoh's people into the harshest punishment of Hell." (Q. Ghāfir [40]: 45–46).

The part about the punishment of the grave in this verse is "they

are exposed to the Fire morning and evening" (*al-nār yu'raḍūna 'alayhā ghuduwwan wa 'ashiyyan*). The majority of scholars state that the fire is shown in the *barzakh*. There are a small number of other scholars who state otherwise: that this event will take place in the hereafter. Al-Shawkānī chose the first opinion. He quoted the opinion of al-Farrā' who stated that this sentence structure contains *taqdīm wa ta'khīr*. It means: "Enter you, O family of Pharaoh, in the severity of the torment whose fire is shown every morning and evening." There is no return from this torment, because the next part of the verse (*wa yawma taqūm al-sā'ah adkhilū āla Fir'awn ashadda al-'adhāb*) shows a very clear argument that this fire is shown in the *barzakh*.[23]

Al-Shawkānī also narrated several *hadiths* to strengthen his interpretation, such as a narration from al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and others from Ibn 'Umar, that the Messenger of Allah said:

إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ إِذَا مَاتَ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ مَقْعَدُهُ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ،إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ، وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ فَمِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ، يُقَالُ لَهُ هَذَا مَقْعَدُكَ حَتَّى يَبْعَثَكَ اللهُ إِلَيْهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

> Indeed, if one of you dies, he will be shown his seat every morning and evening. If he is from the inhabitants of Paradise, then he will see his place in Paradise. If he is a resident of Hell, he will be shown his place in Hell and it will be said to him, "This is your seat until Allah raises you on the Day of Resurrection."

From the explanation above, we can conclude al-Shawkānī's concept of the favors and punishments of the grave. According to him, people who are dead and have been buried, regardless of what the funeral is like, then he will get some of the pleasures of heaven, such as a comfortable transit place, given all the facilities of a comfortable life in this world. On the other hand, if he is a resident of Hell, then he will get an unpleasant atmosphere such is hot, cramped, squeezed by the ground every morning and evening.

Another verse that describes the existence of torment in the grave is Surah al-An'ām: 93,

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ قَالَ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوْحَ اِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَّمَنْ قَالَ سَاُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَوْ تَرٰى اِذِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ غَمَرٰتِ الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلٰۤىِٕكَةُ بَاسِطُوْٓا اَيْدِيْهِمْ اَخْرِجُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ٣٩

And who is more unjust than one who invents a lie about Allah or says, "It has been inspired to me," while nothing has been inspired to him, and one who says, "I will reveal [something] like what Allah revealed." And if you could but see when the wrongdoers are in the overwhelming pangs of death while the angels extend their hands, [saying], "Discharge your souls! Today you will be awarded the punishment of [extreme] humiliation for what you used to say against Allah other than the truth and [that] you were, toward His verses, being arrogant." (Q. al-An'ām [6]: 93).

Al-Shawkānī explains the word "*al-ẓālimūn*" in the sense of "all those who do wrong", including those who oppose what Allah has revealed to them, those who claim to be prophets, and those who lie in the name of Allah. Al-Shawkānī mentions people such as Musailamah al-Kadhdhāb, al-Aswad al-'Ansī, and Sujakh. Al-Shawkāni also explains the word "*ghamarāt*" as a plural form of the word "ghamrah" which means "great difficulty or pain".

This verse can indeed give the impression that the wrongdoers will only get punishment in the grave. However, it is not. They were tortured from the moment they left the world to barzakh. Regarding the verse "*al-malā'ikah bāsiṭū aydīhim*", al-Shawkānī said that the angels beat them with their hands to take the life of the disbeliever. This verse is in line with the verse 50 in Surah al-Anfāl. Al-Shawkānī also cites several narrations to support his opinion.

In the verse "*al-yawma tujzawna 'adhāb al-hūn*", the meaning is that on the day your life is taken, you will be punished. The beginning of the torment is in the grave. They will have a humiliating torment after they had previously been arrogant and considered themselves the most honorable.[24]

From the explanation above, it is clear that al-Shawkānī believed that the punishment of the grave would be given to the ẓālim. Included in the word ẓālim are people who oppose revelation and people who claim to be prophets, as stated in the sabab nuzul of the verse. In addition, al-Shawkānī also explained that the torment in their graves begins when their souls are separated from their bodies by being beaten by angels with whips made of iron. Furthermore, al-Shawkānī explained that Allah will make them humiliated, weak, suffering, and miserable, as opposed to their life in the world, which is decorated with glory and pride.

Al-Shawkānī gave the commentary of the verse above based on the meaning of the Arabic language and then he strengthened it with narrations that explained the meaning of the verse. So, it can be concluded that, as long as there is no conflict between the sources of interpretation, al-Shawkānī's hermeneutic method is to explain the verse with lexical

meaning and then strengthen it with supporting narrations.

Their Graves Are Tightened

In Surah Ṭāhā: 124, Allah says,

وَمَنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِيْ فَاِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيْشَةً ضَنْكًا وَّنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اَعْمٰى ١٢٤

And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind. (Q. Ṭāhā [20]: 124).

Al-Shawkānī first explains what is meant by "one who turns away from My remembrance". According to him, they are people who turn away from religion, do not read the Qur'an, do not practice its contents, and do not follow Allah's instructions. Then al-Shawkānī explained that Allah will give those who follow His instructions and hold fast to His religion a comfortable life in this world, not a narrow, difficult, and tired one, as stated in Surah al-Naḥl verse 97:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّه حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ٩٧

Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do. (Q. al-Naḥl [16]: 97).

The interesting point in this verse is the part "*ma'ishatan ḍankan*", a depressed life. Al-Shawkānī describes the debate that occurs among scholars regarding the meaning of this verse. Some scholars are of the opinion believe in this world. However, some others argue that the depressed life is in the grave.

Just like al-Qurṭubī and many other exegetes, al-Shawkānī seems to agree with the interpretation that limits the meaning of *ma'īshatan ḍankan* as the punishment of the grave.[25] To strengthen this, al-Shawkāni cites several hadiths of the Prophet in which he asserts that "*ma'īshatan ḍankan*" is the punishment of the grave. These hadiths were narrated by many hadith scholars, including 'Abd al-Razzāq, Ibnu Jarīr, Ibnu al-Mundhir, Ibnu Abī Ḥātim, al-Ḥākim, Ibnu Mardawaih, al-Baihaqī, al-Bazzār, and al-Ṭabrānī.

Al-Shawkānī even quotes a narration that explains the punishment of the grave in more detail. It is narrated by al-Bazzār and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Abū Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah said on the meaning of "*ma'īshatan ḍankan*" that there would be 99 snakes that will continue to

gnaw at his flesh in the grave until the Day of Resurrection. The gap in hell will be opened so that the smoke and heat will cause terrible pain. Around both ears were whipped with iron when they could not answer the angel's question. The soil of his grave will crush him until all his bones are crushed to pieces. The soul is in prison until doomsday.[26]

From this explanation, al-Shawkānī has the concept that there are several types of punishment in the grave, including having their graves narrowed until their bones are piled up on top of each other, being beaten with an iron whip, being stabbed with the fangs and axes of ninety-nine snakes until they are trapped.

Conclusion

Al-Shawkānī's hermeneutics is constructed on a set of principles and methods that are based on efforts to converge between riwāyah and dirāyah. In the hermeneutic triadic structure, riwāyah represents the authority of the author, while dirāyah represents the authority of the Qur'anic text itself. The results of the search and analysis of al-Shawkānī's interpretation of the verses about life in barzakh show that he applies these principles fairly consistently.

Al-Shawkānī at the end of his explanation said that many hadiths of the Prophet preach about the questions of angels in the graves, the answers of the dead to them, the punishment of the graves, and its slander. Based on these hadiths, al-Shawkānī argues that what is meant by steadfastness in the world is steadfastness in the grave, that is when a believer can provide answers to questions on the matters of religion and *tawḥīd* correctly. Al-Shawkānī did not specify the types of questions in the grave.

This section proves the consistency of al-Shawkānī. In a condition where *riwāyah* and *dirāyah* conflict, the highest priority is given to the valid *riwāyah*. This was done by al-Shawkānī when he chose to interpret *al-ḥayāh al-dunyā* with the *barzakh*, not the life of the world, based on the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Meanwhile, Graves Are Tightened's section shows one of the most important principles in the hermeneutical structure established by al-Shawkānī. According to him, the first and main source in the interpretation is the authentic hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. This source has a degree of absolute truth, in the sense that it cannot be undone—but can be supplemented and enriched—by other sources. If there is a diversity of opinion in the interpretation, then the hadith from

the Prophet Muhammad with a valid sanad has the highest priority. Therefore, when al-Shawkānī interprets this verse of Surah Ṭāhā, he emphasizes that the word "ma'īshatan ḍankan" is more accurately interpreted as the punishment of the grave based on the authentic hadith, although the linguistic meaning could be wider.

At first glance, these considerations are not much different from what many other exegetes have put forward. However, theoretically, al-Shawkānī gives a relatively more significant position to the dirāyah or tradition of linguistic meaning in Arabic. Dirāyah does not only function as a complement to riwāyah, but also as a confirmation for invalid narrations or judges amid the confusion of various opinions in interpretation.

Al-Shawkānī's hermeneutics is also a "literal hermeneutics" in its classical sense. He tries to make his interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an as literal as possible. Literalism must be interpreted as a very thorough process of linguistic analysis by taking into account all levels of meaning and all semantic nuances and considering the possibilities of using words or phrases in the Qur'an itself and outside it. To defend the principle of literalism, al-Shawkānī repeatedly rejected the narrations that came from the Companions, or Tābi'īn, or the opinions of other exegetes.

But on the other hand, al-Shawkānī's literalism also tends to be inclusive. It opens the possibility of understanding the verses of the Qur'an in the broadest sense as long as this is possible by the text of the Qur'an itself and as long as there are no arguments that limit it. Because of that, al-Shawkānī's interpretation is encyclopedic by including various opinions in the interpretation.

In the hermeneutical structure of al-Shawkānī, the Prophet Muhammad is the representation of the author. Therefore, the traditions of the Prophet occupy a central position. If the hadith is valid based on the criteria generally applied by the hadith scholars, then it is given top priority. A valid hadith can serve as an explanation of the meaning of a verse, a limiter for the generality of the verse's editorial, or a judge for the diversity of opinions in interpretation. In addition to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. which is valid, none of the other sources are considered conclusive by al-Shawkānī. Included in this principle is the interpretation of the earliest generations of Islamic history. All opinions must be judged based on two criteria, namely their harmony with the

specific meanings desired by the Shari'ah and their conformity with linguistic rules.

Endnotes

1. Sha'ban Muhammad Isma'il, *Al-Madkhal Li Dirasat al-Qur'an Wa al-Sunnah Wa al-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyah*, Dar al-Ansār, n.d., 208.

2. Andrew Rippin, Tafsir, in E. Van Donzel (ed), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000, 10:84.

3. Walid Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsir Tradition: The Qur'an Commentary of al-Tha'labi*, Leiden: Brill, 2004, 14–15.

4. Latimah-Parvin Peerwani, "Translator's Introduction—Mulla Sadra: Foremost Among the Transcendent Philosophers (*Sadr al-Muta'allihin*)", in Mulla Sadra Shirazi, On The Hermeneutics of the Light Verse of the Qur'an (*Tafsīr Ayāt al-Nūr*), London: ICAS Press, 2004, 13.

5. Aliaa Ibrahim Dakroury, "Toward a Philosophical Approach of the Hermeneutics of the Qur'an," *The American Journal of Islamic Studies XXIII* (n.d.): 1; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir in Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an", ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 46–62.

6. According to Musa'id al-Ṭayyār, the division of tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr into these categories was started by al-Zarqānī (d. 1367 H.), followed later by al- Dhahabī (d. 1397 H.), Abu Shahbah, Musṭafā Muslim, and others. See al-Ṭayyār, *Mafhūm at-Tafsīr wa at-Ta'wīl*, 7; Shalah al-Khalidi, *Ta'rīf ad-Dārisīn bi Manāhij al-Mufassirīn*, 147. Cf. *al-Zarqani, Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, II:12; *al-Dzahabi, at-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, I:105; dan Musthafa Muslim, Manāhij al-Mufassirīn, 23.

7. Some scholars even limit the interpretation of *bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd* from later generations to only two things: first, *tarjīḥ* of the interpretations of the first generation, and second, new interpretations which does not contradict the interpretation of the first generation. See al-Ṭayyar, *Mafhūm at-Tafsīr wa at-Ta'wīl*, 13. The same opinion is also implied in Ṭahir Mahmud, *Asbāb al-KhaTa' fī at-Tafsīr: Dirāsah Ta'ṣiliyyah*, 68–74 and Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāḥith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 293–294.

8. Walid A. Saleh, "Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of Tafsir in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies XII* (2010), 20.

9. Andrew Rippin, Tafsir, in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. E. Van Donzel, vol. 10 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), 43–46.

10. Al-Fāḍil b. 'Ashūr, *Al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluhu*, 46–47. Apart from al-Fāḍil, the same opinion was also put forward by al-Ṭayyār and Gilliot. Al-Ṭabarī's choices to load and perform *tarjīḥ* on certain narrations in his commentary, according to al-Ṭayyār, indicate a rational activity in the writing of his work. See al-Ṭayyār, *Mafhūm al-Tafsīr wa al-Ta'wīl*, 45. Meanwhile, according to Claude Gilliot, al-Ṭabarī cannot be considered merely a collector of interpretive hadiths. Al-Ṭabarī is also a theologian-mufassir because he selects the hadiths based on his theological beliefs. See Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam*, 89. Some researchers exclude al-Suyuṭī's al-Durr al-Manthūr as the only book of Qur'anic exegesis that may be fully narrative or *atharī*. See Johanna Pink and Andreas Görke, "Introduction", 7.

11. Al-Shawkani, *Al-Badr al-Tali' Bi Mahasin Man Ba'd al-Qarn al-Sabi'* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 215.

12. Al-Shawkani, *Fath Al-Qadir, al-Jami' Baina Fannay al-Riwayah Wa al-Dirayah Min 'Ilm al-Tafsir* (Riyad: Dâr al-Nadwah al-Alamiyah li al-Nasr wa al-Tauzi', 2005), 47.

13. Muhammad Husain Al-Dhahabi, *Al-Tafsir Wa al-Mufassirun* (Kairo: Dar al-Kutub al-

Hadithah, 1961), II:385, 389, 393, 401, 407, and 411.

14. Muhammad Husain Al-Ghumari, "Al-Imam Al-Shawkani Mufassiran" (Makkah: University of Ummul Qurra', n.d.), 279.

15. ohanna Pink, "Where Does Modernity Begin? Muhammad al-Shawkani and the Tradition of Tafsir," in *Tafsir and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*, ed. Andreas Görke and Johanna Pink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 326.

16. Saleh, *Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of Tafsir in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach*," 14.

17. Rohimin, "Karakteristik Tafsir Al-Qur'an Kontemporer", *Jurnal Nuansa I*, No. 2 (September 2010), 137.

18. Al-Shawkani, Fath Al-Qadir, III:677–678.

19. Al-Shawkānī, Faṭḥ al-Qadīr, III:678.

20. Al-Shawkānī, Faṭḥ al-Qadīr, IV:110.

21. Al-Shawkānī, Faṭḥ al-Qadīr, V:178–179.

22. Al-Shawkānī, Faṭḥ al-Qadīr, III:146.

23. Al-Shawkānī, Faṭḥ al-Qadīr, IV:650–651.

24. Al-Shawkānī, Faṭḥ al-Qadīr, II:197–200.

25. Al-Shawkānī, Faṭḥ al-Qadīr, III:536.

26. Al-Shawkānī, Faṭḥ al-Qadīr, III:537.

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