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The Expression of the Qur’ānic Oaths and Inferences of Imām Qurṭubī (A Specialized Study of Al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān)

Zunaira Moez *

M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Arabic & Islamic Studies, G.C University, Lahore.

Dr. Muhammad Farooq Haider **

Associate Professor, Department of Arabic & Islamic Studies, G.C University, Lahore.

Abstract

An important discussion Of the Qur’ānic Sciences is the Oaths of the Holy Qur’ān which contributes substantially to the linguistic elegance of the Holy Discourse. It is abundant with the ability of effective persuasion. The expression and the intents of the Qur’ānic Oaths are greatly significant in demonstrating the rationale behind them. There are numerous objects (Muqṣam) the Exalted Allāh has taken oaths upon, exhibiting their magnificence and esteem. The Oaths of the Qur’ān serve the purpose of auxiliary emphasis to assure the authenticity of their complements (Muqṣam ‘Alayh). In this research paper, the meaning and components of the Oath, the expression of the Qur’ānic Oaths, their intents, objects, complements and their interpretation in the light of Al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān are highlighted with respect to multiple objects of Oaths. Moreover, this paper accentuates the inferences of Imām al-Qurṭubī in elucidation of the Qur’ānic Oaths through descriptive and analytical method and concludes with the styles of expression and motives behind the Oaths taken by the Omnipotent Allāh in the Qur’ān as interpreted in his exegesis.

Keywords: Qur’ānic Sciences, Exegesis, Qurṭubī, Oaths, Components, Objects, Complements.



Introduction:

The Oaths of the Qur'ān (أقسام القرآن) is an important discussion of the Qur'ānic Sciences. It pertains to the exceptionally optimal phraseology of the Qur'ān. Most of the Qur'ānic Oaths comprise of small rhyming style adding to its splendid rhetorical inimitability. The Arabs were keen on such manner of expression and the Omnipotent Allāh retained their style of parlance in the Qur'ān. The oaths not only have an appealing exhibition but also serve to amplify the emphasis on some significant matter by exaltation in the sanctity and prestige of something as Allāh is the All Mighty to take an oath of whatever He wills to glorify.

Research Questions:

- What is the rationale behind the Qur'ānic Oaths?
- What is the significance of objects of the Qur'ānic Oaths?
- To which important matters the complements of the Qur'ānic Oaths direct?
- What methodology has been used by Imām al-Qurṭubī in explicating the Qur'ānic Oaths?
- How Imām al-Qurṭubī justifies the objectives of the Qur'ānic Oaths?
- How important does Imām Qurṭubī consider the Qur'ānic Oaths as a mode of expression?

Research Objectives:

There are multiple stances of the scholars explaining the rationale behind the Qur'ānic Oaths. Imām Qurṭubī¹ is also one of those exegetes who have discussed various traits of the Qur'ānic Sciences in his exegesis very comprehensively, so does the Oaths of the Qur'ān. In this article, the inferences of Imām Qurṭubī in rendering verses of the Qur'ānic Oaths will be elaborated along with the meaning of “Qasam” and its related terminologies.

Literature Review:

The very first organized volume on the subject matter has been written by Imām Ibn Qayyim as Al-Tibyān fī Aqsām al-Qur'ān, providing exceptionally detailed knowledge about the Qur'ānic Oaths. In Indo-Pak subcontinent, a different approach was adopted by Molānā Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī in his book Im'ān fī Aqsām al-Qur'ān. Many scholars included this subject as an independent trait of the Qur'ānic Sciences in their books like Imām Suyūṭī and Imām Zarkashī.

Methodology:

The methodology adopted in the research paper is predominantly descriptive and analytical which tends to reproduce the opinions of various scholars and analyze them rationally.

Meaning of Qasam:

The word ﴿ قَسَمَ ﴾ is a noun having root letters (ق س م) and its plural is ﴿ أَقْسَام ﴾. It belongs to *Bāb If‘āl* (إِفْعَال) from the category other than Trilateral verbs (*Thulāthī Mazīd fīh* - ثلاثى مزيد فيه) and its composition is: *Aqsama* (أَقْسَمَ) ; *Yuqsimu* (يُقْسِمُ) ; *Iqsāman* (إِقْسَاماً) . It is used in the following meanings:

A)

والْقَسَمُ: اليمين؛ والجمع: أقسام ”وقد أقسم بالله، واستقسمه به“² ﴿ قَالُوا تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ ﴾
﴿ وَتَقَاسَمُ الْقَوْمُ: تحالفوا. وفي تنزيل و الْقَسَامَةُ: الجماعة يقسمون على الشئ أو يشهدون³ ﴾
“ويمين القسامة منسوب إليهم

The word ﴿ قَسَمَ ﴾ means an Oath and its plural is “أقسام”. When someone swears by the Almighty Allāh, he takes an oath of Him; and when people swear, they also take an oath. It is mentioned in the Qur’ān: “**They said: Swear one to another by Allah**”. ﴿ الْقَسَامَةُ ﴾ means a group swearing or witnessing upon something (usually an incident of murder) and that witness used to be attributed to their oath.

B)

“ وَأَقْسَمَ: حلف، وأصله من الْقَسَامَةُ، وهي أيمان تُقَسَمُ على أولياء المقتول، ثم صار اسما لكل حلف”⁴

The word ﴿ أَقْسَمَ ﴾ means an Oath and it is derived from “الْقَسَامَةُ”. ﴿ الْقَسَامَةُ ﴾ are those oaths which were taken from the family members of the assassinated person (to enquire about the murderer). Later on, it was ascribed to an oath generally.

C)

القسم هو أن يريد المتكلم الحلف على شيء فيحلف بما يكون فيه فخر له أو تعظيم لشأنه
:القسم ”أو تنويه لقدره أو ذم لغيره أو جاريا مجرى الغزل والترقق أو خارجا مخرج الموعظة والزهد
كقوله: أقسم سبحانه وتعالى بقسم يوجب الفخر⁵ قَوْرَبِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ مِثْلٍ مَا أَنْتُمْ
تَنْطِقُونَ“⁶ لتضمنه التمدح بأعظم قدرة وأجل عظمة

An oath means: when a speaker intends to swear upon anything, he takes an oath on that thing in which there is an element of pride for him; or there is elevation in the significance of that thing; or promotion of its status; or there is a denunciation for others; or it can replace a marvelous poetry as it is said in the Qur’ān:

“And by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, it is the truth (i.e. what has been promised to you), just as it is the truth that you can speak.”

In this verse, Allāh the Exalted took an oath due to the pride caused by His Greatest Omnipotence and Sublimity.

It can be derived from the above meanings that:

- The word ﴿ قَسَمَ ﴾ means an Oath which a person takes to do something or it is a solemn declaration that something is true or untrue;
- The other words used for Qasam are *Yamīn* and *Halaf*;
- It has been derived from the word ﴿ الْقَسَامَةُ ﴾ which was the oath for witness and afterwards started to be used as an oath for every matter.

Components of an Oath:

There are four (4) components of an oath. They are:

- 1) The verb of an oath ﴿ فعل القسم ﴾
- 2) The letters of an oath ﴿ أحرف القسم ﴾
- 3) The object of an oath ﴿ المُقْسَمُ بِهِ ﴾
- 4) The complement of an oath or the answer to an oath ﴿ المقسم عليه ﴾⁷

Brief Introduction to Related Terminologies:

A succinct introduction to some terminologies related to the science of Qasam is as under:

- The verb by which an oath is taken is called *Fi'l al-Qasam* such as ﴿ أقسم ﴾ or ﴿ أحلف ﴾⁸
- The subject who takes an oath is called *Muqsim*. In the Qur'ān, it is always the Almighty Allāh.⁹ “المُقْسِم: الرجل الحالف”⁹
- The object on which an oath is taken is called *Muqsam bihi*;¹⁰ “المُقْسَمُ: المَوْضِع الذي حلف فيه”¹⁰
- The complement of an oath is *Muqsam 'Alayh*. It is the matter of which affirmation is aimed through an oath as *Imām Ibn Qayyim* stated: “والمقسم عليه يراد بالقسم توكيده وتحقيقه”¹¹
- The letters used for expressing an oath are *Ḥurūf al-Qasam*. They are: Bā'; Tā'; Lām and Wāw;
• “أحرف القسم: الباء والتاء واللام والواو”¹²
- The statement explaining what the oath has to prove or deny is called *Jawāb al-Qasam*.

Oaths in the Qur’ān:

There are more than two hundred oaths in the Qur’ān and among them almost one hundred are categorical and direct.¹⁴ Fifteen Chapters of the Qur’ān incept with the oaths taken by Allāh.¹⁵

Intents of the Oaths in the Qur’ān:

Different scholars have expressed their opinions about the presence of oaths in the Qur’ān. The common aspects in their stances about their presence are:

- *Imām Qurṭubī* states:

مَا الْحِكْمَةُ فِي الْقَسَمِ مِنَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى، وَكَانَ الْقَوْمُ فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ عَلَى صِنْفَيْنِ: مُصَدِّقٌ، وَمُكَذِّبٌ، فَالْمُصَدِّقُ يُصَدِّقُ بغيرِ ”قَسَمٍ“، وَالْمُكَذِّبُ لَا يُصَدِّقُ مَعَ الْقَسَمِ؟ قِيلَ لَهُ: الْقُرْآنُ نَزَلَ بِلُغَةِ الْعَرَبِ، وَالْعَرَبُ إِذَا أَرَادَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَنْ يُؤَكِّدَ كَلَامَهُ أَقْسَمَ “¹⁶ عَلَى كَلَامِهِ، وَاللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَرَادَ أَنْ يُؤَكِّدَ عِلْمَهُمُ الْحَقَّ فَأَقْسَمَ أَنَّ الْقُرْآنَ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ

What is the prudence behind taking an oath by the Almighty Allāh; although there were only two types of people at that time: Acceptors and Deniers; hence, the acceptors used to verify even without an oath and the deniers used to refuse even with an oath. It will be replied to them that the Qur’ān was revealed in the language of Arabs; and the Arabs, when intended to ascertain their words, they used to take an oath. Thus, the Exalted Allāh demonstrated them by taking oaths (and retaining their style) that the Qur’ān was revealed from Him.

- As the Qur’ān was revealed in the language of Arabs who were used to swear commonly, especially when they intend to lay emphasis on a certain matter to give it a special prominence and substantiation; or need to respond to somebody in an assured manner. Hence, to create a familiarity in the genre of accosts for Arabs, Allāh also took oaths at many places in the Qur’ān. This assertion has been supported by *Imām Suyūṭī* who stated:

“¹⁷ الْقُرْآنُ نَزَلَ بِلُغَةِ الْعَرَبِ وَمِنْ عَادَتِهَا الْقَسَمُ إِذَا أَرَادَتْ أَنْ تُؤَكِّدَ أَمْرًا وَأَجَابَ”

The Qur’ān was revealed in the language of Arabs and in their habits was to swear when they intended to affirm some matter.

Therefore, it can be summarized that the intents of oaths are:

- To make a matter more impactful and influential;
- To present something more striking to others;
- To make others believe the authenticity of a certain matter; an example is the oath of the Satan to make Adam and Eve believe his statement which is mentioned in the Qur’ān:

﴿ وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّصِيحِينَ ﴾ “And he swore by Allah to them both (saying): Verily I am one of the sincere well-wishers for you both”

- To aggrandize and elevate the prestige of something, an oath is taken; Imām Qurṭubī states:

“ ١٩ وَإِذَا أَقْسَمَ الرَّبُّ بِشَيْءٍ أَثَبَّتْ لَهُ شَرْفًا ”

- To evidence the greatness of the Omnipotent Lord;
- To affirm the certainty of some matter, either truthfulness or mendacity.

Objects of the Oaths in the Qur'ān: (المُقْسَمُ بِهِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ):

There are many objects on which the oaths have been taken in the Qur'ān. The foremost of them is the oath of Allāh the Omnipotent upon Himself (there are seven instances in the Qur'ān²⁰). The other objects on which oaths have been taken are: The Qur'ān; ²¹ The life of the Prophet (ﷺ); ²² The Angels; ²³ The sacred places; ²⁴ The Time (Day, Night, Dawn etc.); ²⁵ The Celestial Bodies (the Sun, the Moon and the Stars); ²⁶ The other Creatures (the trees, ²⁷ the horses, ²⁸ the earth, the heavens, ²⁹ the stars, ³⁰ the winds, ³¹ the Pen ³² etc.); The Doomsday ³³ etc.

The objects of the oath indicate their sacredness and sublimity. *Imām Ibn Qayyim* specified:

المستلزمة وهو سبحانه يقسم بأمور على أمور وإنما يقسم بنفسه الموصوفة بصفاته وآياته “³⁴ وإقسامه ببعض المخلوقات دليل على أنه من عظيم آياته وصفاته لذاته

The Exalted Allāh takes an oath on some matters through several things and above all, He takes an oath of His Own self which ascribes to His Glorious Attributes; or takes an oath of those signs which entail His Self or His Attributes; and He takes oath of some creatures affirming them among His great signs.

Complements of the Oaths in the Qur'ān: (المُقْسَمُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ):

There are multiple complements of the oaths in the Qur'ān. The foremost are described by *Imām Ibn Qayyim* in the following words:

فهو سبحانه يقسم على أصول الإيمان، التي يجب على الخلق معرفتها، تارة يقسم على التوحيد، وتارة يقسم على أن “³⁵ وتارة على حال الإنسان أن القرآن حق وتارة على أن الرسول حق وتارة على الجزاء والوعد والوعيد

- Principles of Faith which are incumbent on mankind to percept;
- Unity of the Omnipotent Allāh for strengthening the faith;
- Approbation of the Book of Allāh;
- Affirmation of the prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ);

- Assurance of the life hereafter and the matters pertaining to the rewards and punishment;
- Validity of the promises made by the Dignified Lord;
- Restating the warnings to the disobeyers;
- Explaining the conditions and attributes of mankind.

Instances from *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*:

The selection of the instances has been made on the basis of diversity of oaths in the Qur'ān to highlight their assortment. Wherever there is such an instance in the Qur'ān, *Imām Qurṭubī* especially accentuates the aspect of the oath while interpretation and sometimes provides the reason of the subject oath by quoting the Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic Traditions and most prominently the prudent opinions of the Muslim scholars. Some of the examples of the objects of the Oaths in the Qur'ān have been described as follows and their enlightenment in *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*:

Oath by the Almighty Allāh upon Himself:

There are various places in the Qur'ān where the Exalted Allāh took an oath upon Himself with the name ﴿الله﴾ and ﴿الرَّبَّ﴾. The Muslim scholars have variant opinions about the number of times they appear in the Qur'ān. An example will be mentioned here with its elaboration by *Imām Qurṭubī*.

³⁶ فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنَّكُمْ تَنْطِقُونَ
“And by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, it is the truth (i.e. what has been promised to you), just as it is the truth that you can speak.”

In this verse, *Muqsim* and *Muqsam bihī* is the Almighty Allāh Himself, *Muqsam 'Alayh* is the truthfulness of what has been promised to mankind and *Ḥarf al-Qasam* is *Wāw*.

In interpretation of this verse, *Imām Qurṭubī* describes that an oath has been taken by Allāh on Himself to affirm the information in the previous verse about the provisions to the mankind which have been promised to them; among them the ability to speak has been specified. ³⁷ Moreover, he quotes an incident reported by *Aṣma'ī* which is stated as under in a summarized form:

Once *Aṣma'ī* met a Bedouin to whom he told that he belonged to a town where the Book of *Raḥmān* was recited. That Bedouin demanded to recite some words from it and *Aṣma'ī* read *Sūrah Al-Dhāriyāt*. When he recited till the verse ³⁸ ﴿وَفِي السَّمَاءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ﴾, the Bedouin asked him to stop and went away. Once *Aṣma'ī* went to perform *Hajj* where he again met that Bedouin who seemed to be very weak and tired. He told *Aṣma'ī* that he found the promise of the Almighty very truthful and demanded to recite some more verses. *Aṣma'ī*

read the subject verse ﴿ فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ مِثْلٍ ﴾ . After listening to the verse, the Bedouin shouted and said: *Subhān Allāh!* Who made the Almighty so aggressive that He was compelled to take an oath; did they not affirm to what Allāh said? He repeated his words thrice and passed away.³⁹

Oath upon the Qur'ān:

At many places in the Qur'ān, the Almighty Allāh took an oath of His Holy Book with the names ﴿ القرآن ﴾ and ﴿ الكتاب ﴾ . Two examples from *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* will be quoted here:

⁴⁰ ﴿ وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴾ “By the wise Qur'ān”

In the above verse, *Muqṣam bihī* is the Qur'ān, *Muqṣam 'Alayh* is the prophethood of Ḥaḍrat Muḥammad (ﷺ), *Ḥarf al-Qasam* is *Wāw* and *Jawāb al-Qasam* is the next verse ⁴¹ ﴿ إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴾ .

For interpreting this verse, *Imām Qurṭubī* infers from opinions of some Muslim scholars. Out of them, three relevant axioms are quoted as under:

Opinion of Ka'b: The view of *Ka'b* is summarized as follows:

is also an oath that had been taken by Allāh the Gracious two thousand ⁴² ﴿ يَسَّ ﴾ years earlier to the creation of the heavens and the earth to affirm that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was among the Prophets. Then he created two assumptions for its elaboration: ﴿ (If it is considered that *Yāsīn* is one of the names of the Prophet (ﷺ) and also an oath, there becomes an element of veneration in it which is corroborated through another oath ﴿ وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴾ ;

If *Yāsīn* is considered to be an interjection, another oath ﴿ وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴾ confirms the prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his direction towards the Right Path.⁴³

Opinion of Naqqāsh: He proclaimed that the Glorious Allāh took an oath for) which indicates his exaltation ﷻ declaring the prophethood of only Muḥammad (and acclaim.⁴⁴

Opinion of Qushayrī: He inferred from an adage of Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله تعالى عنه) who asserted that the pagans denied the prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ), for answering them, the Magnificent Allāh took an oath for verification that ﷻ () was among the Prophets.⁴⁵ ﷻ Muḥammad (

﴿ 2 ﴾ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ” “By the manifest Book”⁴⁶

In the above verse, *Muqṣam bihī* is the Holy Book Qur'ān, *Muqṣam 'Alayh* is the revelation of the Qur'ān in Arabic language, *Ḥarf al-Qasam* is *Wāw* and *Jawāb al-Qasam* is ⁴⁷ ﴿ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴾ .

﴿ is an oath and ﴾ حَمَّ ﴿ Imām Qurṭubī explains that it has been said that ⁴⁸ is another oath because the Omnipotent Allāh is All ﴿ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿ Mighty to take an oath on anything. The answer to it is He further infers from a saying of *Ibn Anbārī* who asserted: Those who considered in a ﴿ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿ an answer to the oath, paused at ﴿ حَمَّ ﴿ “; and those who وَاللّٰهُ وَجَبَ وَاللّٰهُ similar manner as it is said “ considered ﴿ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ ﴿ an answer to the oath, did not pause at ﴿ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿ ⁵⁰. means all those ﴿ الْكِتَابِ ﴿ Then he elaborates that it is said that in this verse books revealed on the previous Prophets because it is a generic name and an oath has been taken on all the books that the Qur’ān was revealed in Arabic. ⁵¹

Oath upon the life of the Prophet (ﷺ):

) once in ﷺ The Almighty Allāh took an oath of the life of His beloved Prophet () and to elevate his ﷺ the Qur’ān as an expression of His Compassion to him (dignity and prestige in the following verse:

⁵²لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّهُمْ لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ

“Verily, by your life (O Muhammad ﷺ) in their wild intoxication, they were wandering blindly”

In the aforementioned verse, *Muqṣam bihī* is the life of the Prophet (ﷺ), *Muqṣam ‘Alayh* is the people of Quraysh who moved blindly in the frenzy of approaching death and *Ḥarf al-Qasam* is *Lām*.⁵³ Imām Qurṭubī mentions many opinions of the scholars in explanation to this verse. Few of them are mentioned as under:

Qāḍī Abū Bakr b. ‘Arabī said that all the exegetes are agreed on it that Allāh took an oath of the life of His beloved Prophet (ﷺ) which is a manifestation of his glory and sanctity to affirm that the Quraysh were wandering blindly in their wild intoxication. ⁵⁴

Imām Qurṭubī presents the view of **Qāḍī ‘Ayyād** in corroboration of his own point of view who proclaimed that the exegetes have consensus on it that Allāh the Benevolent took an oath of the life duration of the Prophet (ﷺ) which is an exhibition of his (ﷺ) utmost beneficence and grandeur. ⁵⁵

Abū al-Jawzā’ asserted that Allāh the Exalted took an oath of nobody’s life but only the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) because he was the most honorable of all His creatures.

Imām Qurṭubī expounds that the oath on the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) is a parenthesis (جملة معترضة) in the narrative of *Ḥaḍrat Lūṭ* (عليه السلام) (described in the previous verse). ⁵⁶

Oath upon the Creatures:

There are so many instances in the Qur'ān in which oaths have been taken by the Omnipotent on His Creatures. Imām Qurṭubī explains that the mere purpose of the oaths upon the creatures is to exhibit their distinction and supremacy over other creatures. He states:

فَقَدْ أَقْسَمَ تَعَالَى بِالَّتَيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُونِ وَطُورِ سَيْنِينَ، فَمَا فِي هَذَا؟ قِيلَ لَهُ: مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَقْسَمَ اللَّهُ بِهِ إِلَّا⁵⁷ عَلَى فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَا يَدْخُلُ فِي عِدَادِهِ وَذَلِكَ دَلَالَةٌ

Some instances from *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* will be mentioned here to draw attention to the assertion of the exegete.

I. Oath of *Al-Qalam*:

In the Qur'ān, an oath on the *Qalam* has been taken once in the following verse:

ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ⁵⁸ “Nūn. By the pen and what the (angels) write (in the records of men)”

Imām Qurṭubī quotes the following adages in this regard:

It is said that an oath of the Pen has been taken because it is an instrument to elucidate matters just as a tongue is used for the same purpose.⁵⁹

Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله تعالى عنه) elaborated that an oath on that specific *Qalam* has been taken which was the first creation of the Lord; and that is the reason it is greatly prestigious. He said:

هَذَا قَسَمٌ بِالْقَلَمِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُ اللَّهُ، فَأَمَرَهُ فَجَرَى بِكِتَابَةِ جَمِيعِ مَا هُوَ كَائِنٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ. قَالَ: وَهُوَ قَلَمٌ”

مِنْ نُورِ طَوْلُهُ كَمَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ⁶⁰

Imām Qurṭubī mentions a Prophetic Tradition narrated by Imām Tirmidhī in which Walīd b. 'Ubāda b. Ṣāmit reported about the will of his father indicating the *Qalam* to be the first creation of Allāh making it an honoured creature. The relevant portion of the narration is quoted as under:

“Atā' said: 'I met Al- Walīd the son of 'Ubāda b. Ṣāmit the Companion of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and asked him: 'What was your father's admonition when he died?' He said: 'He called me and said: 'O my son! Have *Taqwā* of Allah, and know that you will never have *Taqwā* of Allah until you believe in Allah, and you believe in *Al-Qadar*-all of it-its good and its bad. If you die upon other than this you shall enter the Fire. Indeed I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saying: "Verily

the first of what Allah created was the Pen. So He said: 'Write *Al-Qadar*, what it is, and what shall be, until the end'." ⁶¹ . ⁶²

II. Oath of Angels (*Malā'ika*):

There are several instances in the Qur'ān where Allāh the Glorious took an oath of His sanctified creature Angels. An example will be quoted here with enlightenment from *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*:

وَالصَّفَّتِ صَفًّا (١) فَالزُّجُرَاتِ زَجْرًا (٢) فَالتَّلَاتِيبِ ذِكْرًا (٣) ⁶³

"By those (angels) ranged in ranks (or rows); By those (angels) who drive the cloud in a good way; By those (angels) who bring the Qur'ān from Allāh to mankind"

Imām Qurṭubī enlightens that ﴿وَالصَّفَّتِ﴾ is an oath and the next two verses are the continuation to it. The answer to this oath is ⁶⁴ ﴿إِنَّ إِلَهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ﴾ ⁶⁵; and from *al-Ṣāffāt* till *al-Tāliyāt*, it means angels according to the interpretation of *Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās* (رضى الله تعالى عنه), *Ḥaḍrat Ibn Mas'ūd* (رضى الله تعالى عنه), *'Ikrima*, *Sa'īd b. Jubayr*, *Mujāhid* and *Qatādah*. The angels stand up in rows on the heavens just like the mankind stand on the earth for prayers. ⁶⁶ He further explains that according to *Maqātil*, these verses were revealed in response to the remonstrance of the *Quraysh* who raised the query about the sufficiency of only one God for all the creatures of the Universe. For expressing His Glory and Grandeur, Allāh the Omnipotent took an oath of the angels. ⁶⁷

III. Oath of Sacred Cities:

At numerous places in the Qur'ān, the Almighty Allāh took an oath of the sacred cities. One example will be mentioned here with insight through *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*:

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ ⁶⁸

"I swear by this city (Makkah)"

Imām Qurṭubī expounds that according to *Akhfash*, *Lā* is additional in this verse and it expresses that Allāh definitely takes an oath on the sacred city. On the contrary, *Makkī* narrated that this is a negative statement which means that Allāh will not take an oath on the sacred city after the Prophet (ﷺ) would leave it. ⁶⁹ Further, he elaborated that all the Muslim scholars have consensus upon the meaning of ﴿الْبَلَدِ﴾ which is the holy city of Makkah. The verse means that Allāh takes oath on the holy city in which the Prophet (ﷺ) lived because it is imperative for Him to honour His beloved Prophet (ﷺ). ⁷⁰ He then mentions an axiom of *Wāṣṣī* who interpreted that Allāh takes an oath on the sacred city due to the Prophet (ﷺ). The city was made sacred due to his (ﷺ) stay in it during his lifetime and became blessed even after his death; it means the city of Madinah. ⁷¹

Imām Qurṭubī comments that the first point of view is better (*Al-Balad* means *Makkah*) because all Muslim scholars are agreed that the subject Chapter of the Qur'ān was revealed in *Makkah*.⁷²

IV. Oath of Time:

The Gracious Allāh took an oath of different times in the Qur'ān such as Day, Night, Dawn, Dusk, Time of *Fajr* and '*Aṣr*. Two instances will be mentioned here and their description from *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*.

- 1) The following two verses of the same Chapter designate two oaths, both on time:

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَى ﴿١﴾ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّى ﴿٢﴾⁷³

“By the night as it envelopes; And the day as it appears in brightness”

Imām Qurṭubī explains that an oath of Night has been taken when it enshrouds which covers everything in its darkness and mentions a narration of *Sa'īd* from *Qatādah* that the first thing created by Allāh was Light and Darkness and afterwards He discriminated them from each other. Similarly, the Creator took an oath of the Day when it appears in brightness and distinguishes itself from the darkness of the Night.⁷⁴

- 1) ⁷⁵ وَالْعَصْرِ “By *Al-'Aṣr* (the time)”

Imām Qurṭubī delineates the meaning of *Al-'Aṣr* that according to *Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās* (رضى الله تعالى عنه) and some other scholars, it means ﴿الدَّهْر﴾ which is aeon. Allāh took an oath of aeon because there is admonition to the demeanor and variance of circumstances in it. Moreover, there is evidence of creation in it.⁷⁶ He further mentions three axioms regarding the interpretation of '*Aṣr*:

- a) Allāh took an oath of '*Aṣr* prayer because it is the superior to all other prayers;
- b) Allāh took an oath of the epoch of the Prophet (ﷺ) because the prophethood was restored in his time;
- c) *Al-'Aṣr* means the Lord of '*Aṣr*.⁷⁷

He explains that the answer to this oath is ⁷⁸ ﴿إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ﴾⁷⁹

V. Oath of Celestial Bodies:

There are many instances in the Qur'ān where an oath of various celestial bodies like the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and the Heavens has been taken. Two instances will be quoted here with their elucidation in *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*:

- 1) ⁸⁰ وَالْقَمَرِ “Nay, and by the moon”

Imām Qurṭubī alludes the saying of *Imām Ṭabarī* who said that an oath has been taken to affirm the fact that the pagans and disbelievers would not be able to combat with the guards of the Hell but the reality would be contrary to their expectations.⁸¹

- 2) ⁸² وَالسَّمَاءِ وَالطَّارِقِ “By the heaven and the bright star”

Imām Qurṭubī expounds that there are two oaths in this verse. There are different opinions about the interpretation of الطَّارِقِ. ⁸³ The very next verse shows the elevation in the prestige of *Muqṣam bihī* which is ⁸⁴ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا النَّجْمُ الثَّاقِبُ and the verse next to it is the answer to it ⁸⁵ الطَّارِقُ that it is a star of piercing brightness. He infers from adage of *Ḥaḍrat Ibn ‘Abbās* (رضى الله تعالى عنه) and ‘*Aṭā*’ that *Al-Thāqib* is that star which is thrown on Satins.⁸⁶ The subject oath has been taken to affirm that no human soul but has a guardian over it (*Kirāmun Kātibīn*).

VI. Oath of the Day of Resurrection:

A few times in the Qur’ān an oath of the Day of Resurrection has been taken, out of which one instance is quoted as under:

لَا أَقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ⁸⁷

“I swear by the Day of Resurrection”

Imām Qurṭubī states that the meaning of the above mentioned verse is that I take an oath of the Day of Resurrection; this is what *Ḥaḍrat Ibn ‘Abbās* (رضى الله تعالى عنه), *Ibn Jubayr* and *Abū ‘Ubayd* declared.⁸⁸ يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ is the day when our Creator will gather all mankind and He is Mighty to take an oath of whatever He wills. He took an oath of the Day of Resurrection to describe its importance.⁸⁹

VII. Oath of the Trees:

There are two trees of which the Magnificent Allāh took an oath on. The following verse indicates the oaths:⁹⁰ وَالزَّيْتُونَ “By the fig, and the olive” *Imām Qurṭubī* mentions that *Ḥaḍrat Ibn ‘Abbās* (رضى الله تعالى عنه), *Hassan*, *Mujāhid*, *‘Ikrima*, *Ibrāhīm Nakha’ī*, *‘Aṭā’ b. Rubāḥ*, *Jābir b. Zayd*, *Maqātil* and *Kalbī* asserted that الزَّيْتُونَ is which is eaten and الزَّيْتُونَ is from which oil is extracted.⁹¹

He infers from two Prophetic Traditions for further elucidation of both the words.
For Tīn: قَالَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ: أَهْدَى لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَلْ تَيْنٍ، فَقَالَ: كُلُوا، وَأَكَلْ مِنْهُ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: “لَوْ قُلْتُ إِنَّ فَاكِهَةً

نَزَلْتُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ لَافُتٌ هَذِهِ، لِأَنَّ فَاكِهَةَ الْجَنَّةِ بِلَا عَجَمٍ، فَكُلُّوْهَا فَإِنَّهَا تَقْطَعُ“ 93 . 92
النَّوَاسِيرُ، وَتَنْفَعُ مِنَ الْبَقَرَسِ

The Prophet (ﷺ) said that if he were to claim any fruit to be from Paradise, he would recommend the fig; because in the Paradise, the fruits will be seedless. Then he informed that the fig is beneficial for the treatment of Piles and Arthritis.

Reason of taking an oath of fig: Imām Qurṭubī adduces axioms for explaining the reason of taking an oath on the Fig. His preferred opinion is quoted as follows: Allāh took an oath of the Fig because it was used by Adam (عليه السلام) in the Paradise to cover himself and supports his view through a verse: 94 ﴿يَخْصِفُنِ﴾ i.e. “they began to stick together the leaves of Paradise over themselves” 95

For Zaytūn:

عَنْ مُعَاذٍ أَنَّهُ اسْتَاكَ بِقَضِيبِ زَيْتُونٍ، وَقَالَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: [السَّوَاكُ الزَّيْتُونُ! مِنْ “ 97 . 96 ” وَهِيَ سَوَاكِي وَسَوَاكُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ مِنْ قَبْلِي الشَّجَرَةُ الْمُبَارَكَةُ، يُطَيِّبُ الْفَمَ، وَيَذْهَبُ بِالْحَفَرِ

The Prophet (ﷺ) said that the *Miswāk of Zaytūn* is one of the sacred trees. It purifies the mouth, cleans the teeth and used to be *Miswāk* of the previous Prophets.

Reason of taking an oath of olive: Imām Qurṭubī explains that an oath of olive has been taken because it is used to describe the similitude of *Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm* (عليه السلام). He supports his opinion through a verse: 98 ﴿يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ﴾ i.e. “lit from a blessed tree” 99

VIII. Oath of the Winds:

There are several instances in the Qur’ān in which an oath of the winds has been taken. One instance is mentioned as under:

وَالذَّرِيَّتِ ذَرَوَا 100

“By (the winds) that scatter dust”

Imām Qurṭubī quotes a maxim of *Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī* (رضي الله تعالى عنه) who was asked about the meaning of ﴿الذَّرِيَّتِ﴾ and he told that it means the winds. 101

Imām Qurṭubī explains the reason of taking an oath upon something is for the promotion of its honour and sanctity. 102

IX. Oath of the Horses:

An oath of the horses has also been taken in the Qur’ān in the following verse:

وَالْعَدِيَّتِ ضَبْحًا 103

“By the (steeds) that run with panting (breath)”

Imām Qurṭubī explains that commonly exegetes and linguists consider the meaning of ﴿الْعِدَّتِ﴾ to be the horses that run in the cause of Allāh. He infers from a saying of *Farrā'* that ﴿الضَّبْحِ﴾ is sound of panting when the horses run fast.¹⁰⁴

Further he mentions an adage of *Ibn 'Arabī* who asserted: The Almighty Allāh took an oath of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ); his life and similarly his horses when they pant, when they raise the dust while running and when they strike sparks of fire by their hooves.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion:

- The Oaths of the Qur'ān is one of the most important Qur'ānic Sciences related to linguistic beauty of the Qur'ān.
- The word ﴿أَقْسَامِ﴾ is the plural of (قَسَمَ) which means to swear upon something.
- There are more than one hundred oaths in the Qur'ān on multiple objects.
- The object on which an oath is taken is called *Muqṣam bihī*; the subject who takes an oath is called *Muqṣim* and the complement of an oath is *Muqṣam 'Alayh*.
- The intents of the Qur'ānic Oaths are to make something more influential and exaltation of the honour of *Muqṣam bihī*. There are various objects of the Oaths of the Qur'ān such as Allāh the Exalted Himself, the Qur'ān, the life of the Prophet (ﷺ), the Day of Resurrection, the Time and many Creatures.
- In the exegesis, *Imām Qurṭubī* especially mentions the reason of the subject oath by quoting the allied Qur'ānic verses, the Prophetic Traditions, the poetic verses, linguistic explanations and most prominently the wise opinions of the Muslim scholars.
- He always mentions the narrators of the Prophetic Traditions and deduce them as his final verdict wherever he mentions them.
- He comments on the authenticity of the stances by scholars, and if negates them, provides substantial reasoning.
- He usually mentions his preferred opinion backed up by strong evidentiary testimonials.

Some of the instances in the Qur'ān where the Almighty Allāh took an oath have been described with their insight in *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*.

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- ¹⁰² Ibid
- ¹⁰³ *Al-ʿAdiyāt*, 100:1
- ¹⁰⁴ Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 22: 426
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid