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Abstract

Murat Bahar's *Tafsir Knowledge in the Commentaries on Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* challenges the conventional disciplinary divide between Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsir*) and ḥadīth commentary (*sharḥ*). Bahar argues that *tafsir* is not merely an auxiliary feature but a systematic, integral component of the commentary tradition surrounding *Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Focusing on *Kitāb Bad' al-Wahy* as a strategic case study, the book employs close textual analysis of major commentaries -including those by Ibn Ḥajar and al-'Aynī- to demonstrate how scholars utilized sophisticated exegetical methods to interpret Qur'ānic verses within ḥadīth literature. By shifting the analytical focus from formal genre labels to interpretive practice, Bahar reveals that *sharḥ* works function as significant sites of Qur'ānic interpretation. This study contributes to Islamic intellectual history by validating the fluidity of classical scholarship and establishing that *tafsir* knowledge is essential to the intellectual architecture of ḥadīth commentaries. This study provides an overview of the book mentioned.

Keywords: Tafsir, Ḥadīth Commentary, Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Islamic Intellectual History, Intertextuality.

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1. Introduction: The Disciplinary Divide and the Need for Integration

The relationship between Qur'ānic exegesis (tafsīr) and ḥadīth scholarship occupies a central position in the intellectual formation of Islamic sciences. From the earliest period of Islam, the understanding of revelation emerged through a complex interaction between the Qur'ān, prophetic explanation, and the interpretive efforts of subsequent generations of scholars. This interaction did not unfold within rigid disciplinary boundaries; rather, it produced a shared exegetical culture in which meaning was negotiated across genres, methods, and scholarly authorities (Bahar, 2024, pp. 15-20). Despite this historical reality, academic approaches have often treated tafsīr and ḥadīth as distinct and largely self-contained disciplines (Bahar, 2024a, pp. 325-326). Tafsīr has typically been examined through independent exegetical works, while ḥadīth studies have focused primarily on transmission, authenticity and legal implications.

Such a compartmentalized approach, while methodologically convenient, has led to the marginalization of exegetical activity embedded within ḥadīth literature itself. In particular, the extensive commentary (sharḥ) tradition that developed around canonical ḥadīth collections has rarely been studied as a meaningful site of Qur'ānic interpretation. Sharḥ works are often described as explanatory or technical, aimed merely at clarifying difficult expressions or reconciling variant reports. This perception, however, fails to account for the depth and sophistication of exegetical reasoning found within these texts, especially in relation to Qur'ānic verses cited, interpreted, and contextualized by commentators (Bahar, 2024a, p. 327).

Murat Bahar's *Tafsīr Knowledge in the Commentaries on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* intervenes precisely at this neglected intersection (Bahar, 2024, pp. 5-7). The book advances the argument that tafsīr constitutes a systematic and methodologically coherent dimension of the sharḥ tradition on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Rather than treating Qur'ānic interpretation as a marginal or auxiliary component of ḥadīth commentary, Bahar demonstrates that exegetical engagement with the Qur'ān is integral to the intellectual architecture of these Works (Bahar, 2024a, p. 330). Through a close examination of how Qur'ānic verses are employed, explained, and debated in major commentaries, the study challenges reductive genre classifications and invites a reconsideration of how tafsīr knowledge is produced and transmitted.

The scholarly significance of this study lies not only in its subject matter but also in its methodological orientation. By shifting the analytical focus from formal genre labels to interpretive practice, Bahar aligns his work with broader trends in the study of Islamic intellectual history that emphasize fluidity, intertextuality,

and scholarly interaction. In this respect, the book contributes to ongoing debates about the nature of disciplinary boundaries in classical Islam and the extent to which these boundaries reflect scholarly constructions rather than historical realities.

Another important aspect of the book's contribution is its focus on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, a work that occupies an unparalleled position of authority within Sunni Islam. While Bukhārī's collection has been the subject of extensive scholarly attention, much of this attention has centered on issues of authenticity, methodology, and jurisprudential usage. By contrast, the exegetical dimensions of the commentary tradition surrounding Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī have remained relatively underexplored. Bahar's decision to examine tafsīr knowledge within this context therefore addresses a significant lacuna in the field (Bahar, 2024a, p. 326; 2024b, p. 842).

The introduction also situates the study within existing literature on tafsīr and sharḥ. Bahar engages critically with previous scholarship that has either overlooked or underestimated the exegetical content of ḥadīth commentaries. Without dismissing the value of genre-based analysis, he argues for a more nuanced approach that takes seriously the interpretive labor performed within sharḥ texts. This positioning allows the book to function both as a corrective to earlier assumptions and as a constructive proposal for future research.

In terms of tone and structure, the introductory section successfully balances descriptive exposition with analytical argumentation. The author clearly articulates the research problem, outlines the scope of the study, and explains the rationale behind his methodological choices. While the introduction remains firmly grounded in classical sources, it also gestures toward broader theoretical concerns, such as the relationship between text and interpretation and the dynamics of scholarly authority. These gestures, though not fully theorized, provide an important conceptual backdrop for the detailed analyses that follow.

Overall, the introduction establishes the book's central claim with clarity and scholarly confidence. It prepares the reader for a sustained engagement with the exegetical dimensions of the Bukhārī commentary tradition and underscores the relevance of the study for multiple fields, including tafsīr studies, ḥadīth studies, and the history of Islamic thought.

2. Aim, Scope and Methodological Orientation of the Book

One of the defining strengths of Murat Bahar's *Tafsīr Knowledge in the Commentaries on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* lies in the clarity with which it articulates its aims and delimitations. Rather than advancing broad or loosely defined claims

about the nature of tafsīr within ḥadīth literature, the book adopts a carefully circumscribed research focus. Its central objective is to demonstrate that Qur'ānic interpretation constitutes a systematic, methodologically conscious, and intellectually substantive component of the commentary tradition on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. This objective is pursued not through general assertions, but through sustained textual analysis grounded in classical sources.

At the heart of the study is a shift in perspective: instead of asking whether sharḥ literature belongs to the genre of tafsīr, Bahar asks how tafsīr knowledge actually functions within sharḥ texts. This shift allows the author to move beyond formal classifications and to focus on interpretive practice. In doing so, the book implicitly challenges modern assumptions about disciplinary autonomy and invites readers to reconsider how Islamic scholarly fields were constituted in practice rather than in theory.

The scope of the study is deliberately limited, a choice that reflects methodological caution rather than analytical weakness. Bahar concentrates primarily on *Kitāb Bad' al-Waḥy*, the opening section of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Bahar, 2024, p. 45; Bahar, 2024b, pp. 841-842; Bahar, 2024d, pp. 27-28). This section, which addresses the beginnings of revelation, the nature of divine communication, and the epistemological foundations of prophecy, occupies a unique position within the structure of the collection. Its thematic focus renders it particularly suitable for an investigation of Qur'ānic interpretation, as many of its ḥadīths are closely intertwined with Qur'ānic verses that articulate similar concerns.

By selecting *Bad' al-Waḥy* as a case study, the author avoids the pitfalls of excessive generalization while still engaging with material of foundational importance. The book does not claim that the exegetical patterns identified in this section necessarily apply uniformly to all parts of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Instead, it presents *Bad' al-Waḥy* as a representative and analytically productive locus for examining how tafsīr knowledge operates within the sharḥ tradition. This restrained approach enhances the study's credibility and allows its conclusions to be presented as empirically grounded.

Methodologically, the book combines descriptive mapping with analytical interpretation. Bahar begins by identifying the Qur'ānic verses cited in *Kitāb Bad' al-Waḥy* and classifying them according to their thematic and functional roles. This initial mapping serves as more than a preliminary survey; it establishes the structural framework within which exegetical activity takes place. By showing which verses are cited, how frequently they appear, and in what contexts they are

invoked, the author provides a concrete basis for subsequent analysis (Bahar, 2024, pp. 85-90; Bahar, 2024a, pp. 330-332).

The qualitative dimension of the methodology involves close readings of major commentaries on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Bahar engages extensively with the works of prominent commentators such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-ʿAynī, and al-Qaṣṭallānī (Bahar, 2024b, pp. 844-845). These figures are not treated merely as sources of illustrative quotations, but as intellectual interlocutors whose exegetical strategies, assumptions, and priorities are examined in detail. Through this approach, the book highlights both continuity and diversity within the sharḥ tradition.

A notable feature of the methodological framework is its attention to exegetical techniques. Bahar analyzes how commentators engage with Qurʾānic vocabulary, grammatical structures, rhetorical devices, and contextual indicators (Bahar, 2024, pp. 60-65). He also examines the use of ancillary exegetical materials, such as reports concerning occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) and cross-references to other Qurʾānic passages. This multifaceted analysis underscores the methodological sophistication of sharḥ-based tafsīr and challenges the notion that such interpretation is merely derivative.

At the same time, the study remains largely internal to the classical tradition. Bahar prioritizes close engagement with primary sources and refrains from imposing modern theoretical frameworks onto the material. This choice ensures philological rigor and historical sensitivity, but it also delineates the limits of the book's analytical ambition. While the findings have clear implications for contemporary discussions about genre and interpretation, these implications are not always developed explicitly. Readers interested in broader theoretical synthesis may therefore see the book as a starting point rather than a definitive statement.

Another important aspect of the book's methodology is its comparative orientation. By juxtaposing the approaches of different commentators, Bahar reveals variations in exegetical emphasis and interpretive reasoning (Bahar, 2024b, pp. 850-853; Bahar, 2024c, p. 275). Some commentators prioritize linguistic precision, while others emphasize theological coherence or narrative context. These differences are not presented as inconsistencies, but as reflections of distinct scholarly priorities operating within a shared interpretive framework. This comparative analysis enriches the study and prevents it from collapsing the sharḥ tradition into a monolithic entity.

Overall, the book's aims, scope, and methodology are well aligned. The focused case study, combined with careful source selection and detailed textual analysis, allows Bahar to advance a nuanced and persuasive argument about the place of tafsīr within ḥadīth commentary. While the study does not seek to offer a comprehensive theory of Islamic hermeneutics, it provides a solid empirical foundation upon which such theoretical work could be built.

3. Book Chapters and Content Analysis

The core analytical contribution of *Tafsīr Knowledge in the Commentaries on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* unfolds through its carefully structured chapters, each of which builds progressively upon the book's central argument. Rather than presenting a purely thematic discussion detached from textual organization, Murat Bahar aligns his analysis closely with the internal logic of both Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and its commentary tradition. This structural coherence enables the reader to follow the development of tafsīr knowledge within the sharḥ literature in a cumulative and systematic manner.

Following the introductory and methodological discussions, the first main chapter of the book is devoted to establishing the conceptual relationship between tafsīr and sharḥ (Bahar, 2024, pp. 25-50). Here, Bahar revisits the historical emergence of tafsīr as an interpretive practice rooted in prophetic explanation and early scholarly engagement with the Qur'ān. He emphasizes that tafsīr, from its inception, functioned less as a fixed genre and more as a mode of scholarly activity that could be embedded within diverse textual forms. This point is crucial for the book's overall argument, as it undermines any strict opposition between tafsīr and ḥadīth commentary.

Within this framework, the author examines how sharḥ literature developed in response to the growing authority of canonical texts. In the case of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the emergence of an extensive commentary tradition reflects not only the complexity of the text itself but also the need to negotiate its relationship with the Qur'ān. Bahar shows that commentators consistently engage with Qur'ānic verses in order to contextualize, clarify, and sometimes problematize the meanings of individual ḥadīths. These engagements are not incidental; they form a structured layer of interpretation that operates according to recognizable exegetical principles.

The second major chapter of the book focuses specifically on *Kitāb Bad' al-Waḥy*. This section represents the empirical heart of the study and exemplifies the author's methodological precision. Bahar begins by identifying the Qur'ānic verses cited within this section and categorizing them according to their thematic

relevance (Bahar, 2024, pp. 88-102; Bahar, 2024a, pp. 330-332; Bahar, 2024b, p. 841). Verses related to revelation, divine speech, prophetic consciousness, and epistemological authority receive particular attention. Through this classification, the author demonstrates that Qur'ānic citation within *Bad' al-Wahy* follows discernible patterns rather than occurring sporadically.

Building on this mapping, the chapter proceeds to a detailed examination of how these verses are interpreted in major commentaries. Bahar analyzes the exegetical strategies employed by commentators, paying close attention to linguistic analysis, grammatical explanation, and rhetorical interpretation. He shows that commentators frequently pause to examine the semantic range of Qur'ānic terms, explore their syntactic implications, and relate them to broader Qur'ānic usage. Such analyses closely resemble those found in independent tafsīr works and challenge any notion that sharḥ literature lacks exegetical depth.

In addition to linguistic considerations, the chapter highlights the role of contextual interpretation. Commentators often situate Qur'ānic verses within specific historical or revelatory contexts, drawing on reports concerning occasions of revelation or cross-referencing other passages of the Qur'ān. Bahar demonstrates that these contextual moves serve to align the meaning of the verse with the thematic concerns of the ḥadīth under discussion, thereby producing a coherent interpretive synthesis. This process underscores the integrative function of tafsīr within the sharḥ tradition.

A further dimension of the analysis concerns theological interpretation. Bahar shows that Qur'ānic verses cited in *Bad' al-Wahy* are frequently invoked to address questions related to the nature of revelation, divine speech, and prophetic authority. Commentators draw upon exegetical reasoning to clarify doctrinal issues and to reconcile potential tensions between different scriptural sources. In doing so, they contribute to the formation of a theologically informed tafsīr that operates within the framework of ḥadīth commentary (Bahar, 2024a, p. 330; Bahar, 2024b, p. 842).

The comparative dimension of the book becomes particularly visible in the analysis of individual commentators. By examining figures such as Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, al-'Aynī, and al-Qaṣṭallānī, Bahar reveals both shared assumptions and distinctive interpretive tendencies. Ibn Ḥajar's commentary, for example, is shown to balance linguistic precision with theological sensitivity, while al-'Aynī often places greater emphasis on juridical and doctrinal implications (Bahar, 2024b, pp. 844-845, 850). Al-Qaṣṭallānī, by contrast, tends to integrate narrative coherence and devotional concerns into his exegetical discussions. These

differences illustrate the diversity of tafsīr practices within the sharḥ tradition and prevent the analysis from collapsing into generalization.

The third main chapter of the book extends the discussion beyond *Bad' al-Waḥy* and situates the findings within the broader landscape of Bukhārī commentary literature. Bahar traces how exegetical discussions recur and evolve across different sections of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and across successive generations of commentators (Bahar, 2024c, p. 263; Bahar, 2024d, p. 29). This diachronic perspective highlights the cumulative nature of tafsīr knowledge, showing how later commentators build upon, refine, or occasionally challenge earlier interpretations.

Through this extended analysis, the book demonstrates that sharḥ-based tafsīr is not a static or repetitive phenomenon. Rather, it constitutes an ongoing scholarly conversation in which Qur'ānic interpretation is continually reshaped in response to new questions, contexts, and intellectual priorities. This insight represents one of the book's most significant contributions, as it underscores the dynamic character of tafsīr knowledge within the ḥadīth commentary tradition.

4. Scholarly Contribution, Critical Observations, and Final Assessment

The scholarly contribution of Murat Bahar's *Tafsīr Knowledge in the Commentaries on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* can be evaluated on multiple, interrelated levels. At its most immediate level, the book provides a detailed and methodologically rigorous analysis of Qur'ānic interpretation within the commentary tradition on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Beyond this empirical contribution, however, the study offers important conceptual and methodological insights that carry broader implications for the study of Islamic intellectual history, particularly with regard to disciplinary boundaries and the nature of exegetical activity.

One of the book's most significant contributions lies in its reconfiguration of how tafsīr knowledge is conceptualized. By demonstrating that Qur'ānic interpretation operates systematically within sharḥ literature, Bahar challenges the implicit assumption that tafsīr is confined to works explicitly labeled as such (Bahar, 2024a, pp. 325-327). The book shows convincingly that tafsīr should be understood not merely as a genre, but as an interpretive practice that permeates multiple forms of scholarly writing. This reconceptualization has important consequences for how Islamic sciences are mapped and analyzed in modern scholarship.

Closely related to this point is the book's contribution to the study of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and its commentary tradition. While Bukhārī's collection has long been

recognized as a foundational text, much of the existing literature has focused on questions of authenticity, transmission methodology, and jurisprudential application. Bahar's study shifts attention to a relatively underexplored dimension: the exegetical engagement with the Qur'ān that takes place within the commentaries (Bahar, 2024, pp. 180-185). By foregrounding this dimension, the book enriches our understanding of how Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī was read, interpreted, and integrated into broader theological and exegetical frameworks (Bahar, 2024a, p. 326).

Another notable strength of the book is its careful and sustained engagement with classical sources. Bahar's analysis is firmly grounded in close readings of major commentaries, and his treatment of figures such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-ʿAynī, and al-Qaṣṣallānī reflects both philological competence and historical sensitivity. Rather than treating these commentators as mere transmitters of earlier exegetical material, the book presents them as active interpreters who engage creatively with the Qur'ān and contribute to the ongoing development of tafsīr knowledge (Bahar, 2024b, p. 844; Bahar, 2024c, p. 275).

The comparative dimension of the study further enhances its analytical value. By juxtaposing different commentators and highlighting variations in their exegetical approaches, Bahar avoids homogenizing the sharḥ tradition. Instead, he reveals a spectrum of interpretive priorities, ranging from linguistic precision and grammatical analysis to theological coherence and narrative integration. This nuanced portrayal underscores the intellectual diversity of the tradition and challenges simplistic characterizations of classical Islamic scholarship.

In addition to its strengths, the book also invites certain critical observations. One such observation concerns the scope of the empirical analysis. While the focus on *Kitāb Bad' al-Waḥy* is methodologically justified and analytically productive, it inevitably raises questions about the extent to which the findings can be generalized to the entirety of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Bahar, 2024a, p. 330). Bahar is careful not to overstate his conclusions, yet future studies could build upon his work by examining other sections of the collection or by extending the analysis to different ḥadīth corpora. Such extensions would further test and refine the book's central claims.

A second point of critique relates to the book's engagement with contemporary theoretical frameworks. Although the study gestures toward broader issues of genre, interpretation, and disciplinary formation, these issues are not always explored in explicit dialogue with modern hermeneutical theory. A more sustained engagement with contemporary discussions in the philosophy of interpretation or the sociology of knowledge might have enriched the conceptual

dimension of the analysis. Nevertheless, this relative theoretical restraint can also be seen as a deliberate choice that prioritizes close textual analysis over abstract theorization.

Despite these minor limitations, the overall assessment of the book remains highly positive. *Tafsīr Knowledge in the Commentaries on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* succeeds in opening a new analytical perspective on the relationship between tafsīr and ḥadīth commentary. It demonstrates that sharḥ literature constitutes a vital and intellectually robust site of Qur'ānic interpretation, deserving of greater scholarly attention. In doing so, the book not only fills a significant gap in the existing literature but also provides a model for future research that seeks to move beyond rigid disciplinary boundaries.

From a broader perspective, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to rethink the structure of Islamic intellectual history. By foregrounding interpretive practice over formal classification, Bahar's work aligns with approaches that emphasize continuity, interaction, and scholarly negotiation (Bahar, 2024a, pp. 345-348). This perspective encourages a more integrated understanding of Islamic sciences, one that reflects the lived realities of classical scholarship more accurately than strictly compartmentalized models.

In conclusion, Murat Bahar's book represents a substantial and thoughtful contribution to the fields of Qur'ānic exegesis and ḥadīth studies. Its methodological rigor, careful use of sources, and balanced analytical tone make it a valuable resource for scholars and advanced students alike. While it leaves room for further exploration and theoretical expansion, it succeeds admirably in its primary aim: to demonstrate that tafsīr knowledge is an integral and methodologically coherent component of the commentary tradition on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Bahar, 2024, pp. 215-220; Bahar, 2024a, p. 348; Bahar, 2024b, p. 860; Bahar, 2024c, p. 285; Bahar, 2024d, pp. 45-50). As such, the book stands as an important reference point for future studies at the intersection of tafsīr, sharḥ, and Islamic intellectual history.

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