

Tafseer Al-Baqarah [The Arabic Language]
From the Book, Introduction to the Tafseer of the Quran,
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The Arabic Language

An exhaustive study of the Arabic language as it has been recorded and transmitted, shows us that the sources of the Arab's naming and meanings of their words are four:

Firstly, al-Haqeeqah (the literal meaning الحقيقة) of which there are three:

a) al-haqeeqah al-lughawiyah (the literal meaning in the language الحقيقة اللغوية). It is the given meaning for a word/term (لفظ) when it was originally put down in the Arabic language. Like the term رأس – for the person or animal – which is the highest part of the body (head).

b) al-haqeeqah al-'urfiyyah (the literal in the traditional or customary meaning الحقيقة العرفية). It is meaning for a term transmitted of the Arab's traditional usage, instead of the originally given meaning for it. Like the term ad-daabbah (four legged animals الدابة) traditionally used for everything that goes on all fours, instead of its linguistic use for everything that moves of the earth (دب على الارض). So, the word ad-daabbah is in al-haqeeqah al-'urfiyyah for four legged creatures.

This is called the al-haqeeqah al-'urfiyyah al-'aamah (general traditional meaning الحقيقة العرفية العامة). In other words, the tradition of the general Arabs.

There is also the al-haqeeqah al-'urfiyyah al-khaasah (specific traditional meaning الحقيقة العرفية الخاصة) in the terminology of the people of every specialist field. Like the use of the term faa'il (doer in the nominative case فاعل) for indicating who does the verb according to the grammarians.

c) The Shariah meaning (al-haqeeqah al-shara'iyah الحقيقة الشرعية). It is the transmitted meaning by way of the Islamic Shariah Law, like the term Salah (Shariah prayer الصلاة) for the specific set of sayings and actions, instead of its linguistic use for Dua (supplication).

Secondly, The metaphorical meaning (al-majaaz المجاز).

It passes the real meaning in its usage of the term. In other words, it is the use of the term for other than what it was really put down for, due to a contextualization (القرينة al-qareenah):

a. Which could be preventing using the real meaning (الحقيقة) while a relationship exists:

i) This is known as the al-majaaz al-mursal metonymy (metonymy al-majaaz al-mursal (المجاز المرسل) if the relationship was not similarity, for example (يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ) **“They put their fingers in their ears”** [Al-Baqarah 2:19], so the whole was mentioned, the fingers, and the intended meaning is the ends of the fingers, which is the part. So, with that, the relationship is of wholeness.

ii) It is called majaaz'aqli (intellectual metaphor مجاز عقلي) if the relationship is attributing to other than the reality, such as saying (بَنَى الْأَمِيرُ الْمَدِينَةَ) “the ruler built the city.” So building is attributed to the ruler though the actual builders are other than the ruler.

iii) It is called al-isti'arah (metaphorical simile الاستعارة) if the relationship is similarity, such as (صَعِدْتُ إِلَى رَأْسِ الْجَبَلِ) “I climbed to the head of the mountain.” So “head” (رأس) is used for the top of the mountain in similarity with the real usage of the word head as the top of man's body.

The contextualization (القرينة al-qareenah) in all this prevents the original meaning being intended. The whole fingers do not enter the ears, the ruler does not actually build the city himself, and the mountain does not have a real head.

b. Or the indication contextualization (القرينة al-qareenah) does not prevent the real meaning. This is allusion (al-kinayah الكناية), like (نُؤَمِّمُ الضُّحَى) “the sleeper till mid-morning,” alluding to the pampered girl who is served in her house. Here the indication contextualization (القرينة al-qareenah) does not prevent the intended meaning being the real meaning, as this girl could actually sleep until mid-morning.

Thirdly, etymological derivation (al-Ishtiqaaq الاشتقاق):

If the Arabs used the root of a particular word with a specific meaning, then all of the derivations according to the patterns of the language can be used having a meaning connected to the meaning of the root of the derivation, whether the Arabs actually used this new derivation or not. For example: If the Arabs used the term salima (being secured سَلِمَ) with its well-known meaning, and they used saleem (secure سَلِيم) and saalim (secured سَالِم), but they did not use salmaan (سَلْمَان very secure), then the use of سَلْمَان according to the pattern فعلان as an exaggerated form (seeghatu mubaalagah صيغة مبالغة) of salima سَلِم is an Arabic usage and the word will be an Arabic word, even though the Arabs didn't use it, so long as they used the root of its etymological derivation, and as long as it is derived according to their patterns.

Etymological derivation can be simple "small صغيرا" which is also called "the smaller generality" and it encompasses the ensuing language, as we have shown regarding the derivation of "salima" (being secure) with the common meaning of safety in its derivatives, such as: salima, yaslam, salima, salma, al-salamah, al-saleem, the last of which is sometimes used for the harmed person as an expression of optimism for safety.

Derivation in parts of the language is "large كبيرا" (and is also called "the larger generality"), which is the alteration of the letters of the word with a common meaning.

The root (جبر) has several meanings with alternation of the sequence of the letters, including (رجب), (جرب), (برج), (بجر), and (رجب), all sharing the common meaning of strength and intensity.

- (جَبَر): To mend a bone (جَبَرَتِ الْعَظْم) or strengthen a poor person (جَبَرَتِ الْفَقِير). The word (جَبَر) also refers to a king's power and his ability to strengthen others.

- (جَرَبَ): A tried man (رَجُلٌ مَجْرَبٌ) who has been mended by hardship, meaning he has been strengthened and his resolve reinforced. The word (جَرَبَ) also refers to a pouch, as it is a container for what is held. When something is protected and cared for, it becomes stronger and more powerful.

- (بَرَجَ): This refers to the strength of the tower itself and the strength of what surrounds it.

- (أَجْرَ): From this root comes (أَجْرٌ), meaning obese.

- (رَجَبَ): The man was made great (رَجَّبَتِ الرَّجُلَ) meaning he was made great and his matters were strengthened. The month of Rajab is named for its great sanctity, as fighting was prohibited during it. The word (الرُّجْبَةُ) also refers to a support for a leaning palm tree, allowing it to lean and gain strength.

- (رَبَجَ): From this root comes (الرَّبَاجِي), a man who boasts of more than he has done, meaning he exaggerates his own importance so as to strengthen his position.

This type of etymological derivation is more complex than simple derivation in its approach and scope. It is not found throughout the language, but only in some parts of the language, and only those qualified to do so can extract it from its proper context.

Etymological derivation usually originates from a verb (fi'l) or a verbal noun (masdar), whether simple or complex. For example, from (سَلِمَ) salima, meaning being secure, a verb, or (سَلَمَ) silm, meaning security, a verbal noun and from (جَبَر) jabara, strengthening, a verb, or (جَبَر) jabr, strength, a verbal noun.

However, it sometimes originates from other sources, such as derivation from a noun, like (أَعْرَقَ) a'raqa and (أَجْنَدَ) ajnada, which are respectively from Iraq and Najd, with the meaning he went and entered Iraq and Najd, respectively. For example, (لَا لَيْتَ) "La layt" (no, if only), and (لَوْ لَيْتَ) "Law layt" (if only), meaning (قُلْتُ لَا وَلَوْ) "I said no, even if conditionally." Or, (جَأْأَ الْإِبِلَ دَعَاهَا لِلشُّرْبِ) "Ja'ja'a al-ibil wa d'aa-ha li-shurb" "he summoned the camels, calling them to drink" by saying (جِي جِي) "Ji ji" (come, come). And like (الْفَأْفَءَةُ) "al-fa'fa'ah" (stuttering), which is when someone repeats the letter (الفاء) "fa" excessively in their speech.

Then there are things related to etymological derivation such as compound derivation, sometimes called major derivation (al-ishtiqaaq al-kubbaar الاشتقاق الكُوبَار), such as 'Abshami

(عِشْمِي) from 'Abd Shams (عبد شمس), Basmala (بِسْمِ) from Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ), and Hawqala (هَوَقْلًا) from, "There is no power nor strength except with Allah" (لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ).

The subject of etymological derivations is vast and important. Its importance comes from the fact that all of the derivations are bound together by a general meaning according to the root.

Fourthly, Arabization (التعريب at-Ta'reeb):

Like when the foreigners put a word for something that they have and then the Arabs take that thing and take its name with them, but they make that foreign name fit their words' patterns by changing some of its letters, lengthening or shortening, to make it according to their linguistic patterns.

So, the word becomes Arabic to indicate the same thing that the foreign word used to indicate before. For example: إستبرق and سندس for thick and thin silk respectively. So, when it was Arabized, when the Arabs entered it into their words after changing its letters to fit their patterns, so it then became Arabic in structure and meaning just the same as any words they put down as original meanings, or metaphors or derivatives of a root that they did use.

Arabization, as is well known, does not occur except in the sensed things and not in meanings (conceptual matters), because the Arabs only did so with the names of material things that existed in the foreigners' lands and that were brought to their own lands, after they had changed the letters according to the patterns of their language.

These are the sources of Arabs in their naming.

So, the Arabic word:

- Either indicates its original linguistic meaning, its shariah meaning, or its customary meaning,
- Or it indicates a metaphorical meaning that the Arabs used to use,
- Or it has been derived from a root indicating a meaning that was used by the Arabs,
- Or it was a foreign word entered into the Arabic language after changing its letters to match the Arabic patterns.

These four are all equally Arabic. Other than them is not Arabic, even if its letters were Arabic.

If we use the word (عين) "ayn" to refer to the human eye, it is Arabic because it is used in its literal sense, al-haqeeqah al-lughawee.

Or if we use (عين) to mean (الjasوس) "spy," it is Arabic because we are using it metaphorically (al-majaaz), as the Arabs did.

However, if we use (عين) to mean (البيت) "house," it is not Arabic because it is not used in its literal sense, nor in its metaphorical sense, nor in any of its derivatives, nor is it an Arabized word for "house" according to Arab grammatical patterns. Therefore, the word (عين) "ayn" in this usage is not Arabic, even if its letters are Arabic.

Similarly, if Turkish, Persian, or English words are written using Arabic letters, and the meaning of those words is not used by the Arabs, then those words are not Arabic. If we were to write (READ) as it is pronounced in English but in Arabic script (ريد), pronounced "reed," and use it to mean "read" as in English, then this word (ريد) in this sense "read," even if written in Arabic script, would not be considered Arabic. This is because the word (ريد) is not used in its literal sense—that is, the meaning the Arabs assigned to it—nor in any metaphorical sense they assigned it, nor in the sense of any of its Arabic derivatives, nor is it Arabized according to Arabic grammatical patterns. Arabization only applies to the names of tangible things, not to abstract, intangible concepts like reading.

Therefore, for a word to be considered Arabic, its letters must be Arabic in pronunciation, and its meanings must be Arabic in terms of its usage by the Arabs, whether literal, metaphorical, derivational, or Arabized. Otherwise, the word is not Arabic.

Grasping this of the language of the Arabs is important to understand the Quran as it was understood by the Muslims in the time of Rasool Allah (saw) and the time of his companions after him.

The Quran is Arabic in language, so its verses and words are understood by applying the Arabic language. If I explained a word in it without referring to the shariah, linguistic, or traditional meaning, or without a metaphor nor a derivation or Arabization, then that tafsir and that understanding would not be Arabic, so it follows that it differs from what came in Allah's Book and the sunnah of His Messenger (saw), and it may lead to misguidance or kufr... which we seek refuge in Allah (swt) from.

Why Give Such Importance to the Arabic Language?

Here it is necessary to mention two important matters:

First: Some people say that there is no need for giving this much importance to the Arabic language to understand the Quran, as the Quran explains itself, or by the ahadith of the Prophet (saw). In other words, a verse is explained by another verse or hadith. Hence, depending on the Arabic language to this extent is unnecessary.

Then there appeared, as a consequence of that, some books like تفسیر القرآن بالقرآن “Interpreting the Quran with the Quran,” while they thought that this was correct.

Second: Some other people said that there are no metaphors (majaaz مجاز) in the language or in the Quran. They also thought that this was correct.

As for the first saying: The one who contemplates on it does not find it sound, for the following reasons:

1. Not all verses are explained by another verse or a hadith, rather very few are explained by other verses or hadith, such as His (swt) saying, **إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خَلَقَ هَلُوعًا (19) إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا (20) وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا (21)** **“Verily, man was created very impatient; anxious when evil touches him; And stingy when good touches him”** [Al-Ma’arij 70: 19-21].

Here the verse explained the meaning of His saying هَلُوعًا that it is the one who إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ (20) وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا (21) “anxious when evil touches him; and stingy when good touches him.”

Or His (swt) saying ﴿وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ﴾ “Establish Salah” in Surat Al-Baqarah, was explained by Rasool Allah (saw) with his hadeeth on the meaning of as-Salah. At-Tirmidhi reported from Muhammad bin Amr bin Ata' narrated from Abu Humaid As-Saidi, **«كان رسول الله ﷺ إذا قام إلى الصلاة اعتدل قائما ورفع يديه حتى يحاذي بها منكبيه، ثم يكبر إذا أراد أن يركع رفع يديه حتى يحاذي بها منكبيه، ثم قال الله أكبر، وركع ثم اعتدل فلم يصوب رأسه ولم يقطع ووضعه يديه على ركبتيه، ثم قال سمع الله لمن حمده، ورفع يديه واعتدل حتى يرجع كل عظم في موضعه معتدلا ثم هوى إلى الأرض ساجدا ثم قال الله أكبر، ثم ثنى رجله وقعد عليها واعتدل حتى يرجع كل عظم في موضعه، ثم نهض ثم صنع مع الركعة الثانية مثل ذلك...»** **“When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood for Salah, he would stand upright and raise his hands until they were level with his shoulders. Then, when he wanted to bow, he would raise his hands until they were level with his shoulders, say “Allahu Akbar” (God is the Greatest), and bow. Then he would stand upright, neither lowering his head nor bowing it, and place his hands on his knees. Then he would say, “Sami'a Allahu liman hamidah” (God hears those who praise Him), raise his hands, and stand upright until every bone returned to its place. Then he would prostrate to the ground and say “Allahu Akbar.” Then he would bend his leg and sit on it, standing upright until every bone returned to its place. Then he would stand up and do the same for the second rak’ah (unit of Salah)...”** (until the end of the hadith).

It was narrated on the authority of Ubadah ibn al-Samit that the Prophet (saw) said, «لَا صَلَاةَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ بِأَمِّ الْقُرْآنِ» “There is no Salah for one who does not recite the Opening Chapter of the Book (al-Fatihah).” In the wording of al-Daraqutni, «لَا صَلَاةَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ بِفَاتِحَةِ الْكِتَابِ» “Salah is not valid for one who does not recite the Opening Chapter of the Book (al-Fatihah).” He said, “Its chain of narration is authentic.”

2. Those verses that are explained with other verses and hadith are few. The explanation coming in the other verse or hadith is [itself] not understood except with the Arabic language in which the verse was sent down, or in which the hadith was said.

These two matters, that not all verses are explained by other verses and hadith, and that the verse or hadith that is doing the explaining, is itself in need of the Arabic language to realize the correct understanding. These two matters make the saying of those who say that the Quran is explained by itself or by hadith, and that there is no need for giving this much importance to the Arabic language to understand the Quran correctly; they make this statement incorrectly and it cannot be used as an evidence.

It is worth mentioning that the one who wants to understand the Quran without the language in which it was sent down has suspended understanding the Quran and acting upon it. So, with that he has perpetrated a great sin, as the Quran was sent down in the Arabic language and without it, it is not possible to understanding it correctly.

So, because of that the Islamic jurists were very keen for the Arabic language and its knowledge, not to mention mujtahideen (those who derive rulings from evidences) became firmly established in understanding the Quran and extracting the Shariah rules from it. Much of the misguidance had as its origin the weakness in Arabic and the lack of restricting the verses of Allah (swt) to their meanings according to the implications of this language that Allah specifically limited His Book to. Such that Rasool Allah (saw) said when a man erred in his speech, «أرشدوا أخاكم؛ فقد ضلَّ» **“guide your brother, for he has been misguided.”**

So Rasool Allah (saw) called the linguistic errors misguidance in consideration of what it will lead to, i.e. he mentioned the effect (misguidance) instead of the cause (linguistic errors).

Umar (ra) came across people doing archery poorly, so he rebuked them. They said, إنا قوم متعلمين when it should be إنا قوم متعلمون so he turned away from them saying: “By Allah, your tongue’s mistakes are more severe than your mistakes at archery! I heard Rasool Allah (saw) say, «رَجِمَ اللَّهُ امْرَأً أَصْلَحَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ» **“Allah was merciful with a man whom He perfected his tongue.”**

The Quran is Arabic in language, so cannot be understood except with this language. Whoever wants to straighten their Aqeedah and understand the Shariah rules with knowledge, then he should perfect his language and perfect his Deen, as Rasool Allah (saw) taught his Companions, and as they (ra) went according to his Sunnah. They worshipped Allah (swt) with knowledge and were of the successful ones.

Whoever does not have suitable knowledge of the Arabic language should not plunge into the verses of Allah (swt) trying to explain them without the Arabic language that it was sent down in. He must ask those who have knowledge, learning from them the meaning of the verses of Allah (swt). Truly, statements about Allah’s (swt) verses without knowledge is a grave matter with Allah (swt), bringing Allah’s (swt) anger to the one who does it. We seek refuge in Him the Glorified from His anger and from the fire, and we ask Him the Glorified for His Pleasure (ridha) and al-Jannah.

As for the second statement: The ones who say it are in two groups:

A group that views that there is al-haqeeqah (literal) and al-majaaz (metaphorical) in the language, but there is only al-haqeeqah in the Quran;

A group that views that there is no majaaz in the language or in the Quran. Rather, all that came of the Arabs’ usage of terms and meanings, all of that is haqeeqah in the language and in the Quran the same.

As for the first group, their statement cannot be used as a proof, as the one who establishes that al-majaaz exists in the language, he must also affirm that it is in the Quran, as Allah (swt) said of the Book: ﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا﴾ **“We sent it down as an Arabic Quran”** [TMQ Surah Yousuf 12: 2] and ﴿وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ﴾ **“This is a clear Arabic tongue”** [TMQ Surah An-Nahl 16: 103]. So, it is Arabic in language. As long as the Arabic language contains al-majaaz and it is used in the language of the Arabs, their styles and speech, and

the Quran was sent down in the language of the Arabs, so there is no choice but to affirm that in the Quran is al-majaaz also. That is from one perspective.

From another perspective, the Quran actually does contain majaaz of speech, and none denies that except one who is arrogant or stubborn.

His (swt) statement, **يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ** “**they put their fingers in their ears**” [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah 2:19] is using الأصابع “fingers” for other than what it was originally put down for, rather for just a part of the fingers, which is only their tips, as this is what is put into the ears.

And His (swt) statement, **وَأَسْأَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ** “**and ask the village**” [TMQ Surah Yousuf 12:82] is majaaz, because the walls and buildings of the village is not the one who is asked, rather its people are asked, i.e. “**ask the people of the village.**”

And His (swt) statement, **فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا** “**and the valleys flow according to their measure**” [TMQ Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:17] is majaaz, because that which flow are not the valleys in reality, i.e. not the hollowed-out piece of the earth, rather it is the water that is in it, which is “**and the water that is in the valleys flows.**”

And His statement (swt): **فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ** “**freeing the believing neck**” [TMQ Surah An-Nisaa' 4:92] is majaaz, because freeing is for the believing slave, not only for his neck, so what is intended is not the neck.

And His statement (swt), **إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا** “**I saw myself pressing wine**” [TMQ Surah Yousuf 12:36] is majaaz, because that which are pressed are the grapes. Wine (خمر) was mentioned but grapes were inferred, so what was inferred from the term is not al-haqeeqah.

And there are many more than that, that the one who has awareness and contemplation does not deny.

As for the statement of others, that there is no majaaz (metaphor) in the language nor in the Quran, they claim that with the following:

1. All that the Arabs used of meanings for their words were al-haqeeqah (literal), indistinguishable one from the other. So why do you say that this meaning was put down first, so is al-haqeeqah (literal), then this other meaning is used later bypassing the al-haqeeqah and so being the majaaz (metaphor)? And why is it not said that all of these meanings were put down in the beginning each the same for use with that term for various purposes? Meaning that the term is mushtarak (homonym مشترك) for all of its meanings in literal terms.

They say, for example, about the word ra's (head رأس), that the Arabs used it as was transmitted from them, a. The head that exists on animals and people. b. The head that is the peak of the mountain (رأس الجبل) c. The head that is the origin of the spring (رأس النبع).

So why do you say the head is for people and animals in reality, and is for the mountain and spring metaphorically? How do we decide that this meaning was put down originally for people and used metaphorically for the mountain and spring?

So, they say that all these meanings of head are real meanings, and that the term ra's is a homonym. The meanings are on one level. When we use it or understand it in a text, we present all of these meanings and rely upon the most suitable one for the context. So, they say because of that, it is not correct to first take it as the human head considering this as al-haqeeqah, and if this usage is excluded, then we take the majaaz. Instead, we present all meanings at once, and whatever suits the context, we take. Here there is no 'it is haqeeqah and if it was excluded then there is majaaz.' Instead, all are haqeeqah meanings and there is no priority of one meaning over the other, except with a contextualization (qareenah).

2. They also say that it has not been transmitted from the early generations of Arabs that they divided speech into haqeeqah and majaaz. If there was in language haqeeqah and majaaz, then it would have been transmitted from them in their narrations or writings.

For these two reasons they say that there is no dividing the language into haqeeqah (literal) and majaaz (metaphor), rather all that they used is haqeeqah on one level.

We can discuss this statement:

1. It affirms all of the meanings that the Arabs used for their words and that they are applied on the words of the language and the Quran alike.
2. The lack of dividing these meanings into haqeeqah and majaaz due to the infeasibility of knowing which of these meanings was put down first, and because they are all on one level in terms of usage, so they consider them to be homonyms.
3. There is no prioritization of usage in understanding the text, there is no haqeeqah literal meaning and if it was excluded then majaaz. Instead, they all are haqeeqah literal meanings and there is no priority of one meaning over the other, except with an indication in the context.

Now, we ask is it correct that it is infeasible to know the meaning that the term was put down for originally (الحقيقة) from the meaning that it was later used for due to an indication preventing the use of the original meaning?

And, are the meanings that Arabs used for the words all on one level? i.e. they equally share [their meanings], so the mind does not turn to one of them before another?! ... or does the understanding turn to one not the other upon first hearing the word?

With contemplation on this matter and looking into it deeply, we find the following:

If the term was a homonym in all of these meanings, some of these meanings would not be understood more quickly than others when the word is uttered, considering that they are equal in their indication; yet the matter is not like that.

For example: The Arabs usage of the word *ra's* (head) – as we said – to indicate the head of the body, the head of the mountain, and the head of the stream, except that this word *ra's* head, if it was said without a contextualizing qareenah, then the mind turns immediately to man's head and not to anything else, like the head of the mountain or the stream, except with qareenah.

Also, the Arabs used the word *yad* (hand) for the well-known limb and also for power (يد) (الأمير تطال كل عابث) 'the hand of the ruler reaches every fool', and for generosity and kindness (له عندي يد بيضاء) 'he has a white hand with me'. Except that if we uttered the word *yad* without any qareenah (contextualization), the mind jumps to the well-known hand and not to anything else, except with contextualization.

Similarly, the Arabs used the word *dam* "blood" to refer to the well-known blood, and also to blood money (diya). They would say, "So-and-so ate so-and-so's blood," meaning his blood money. However, if we use the word "blood" without any contextualization, the mind immediately goes to the well-known blood and will not go to anything else unless there is contextualization.

Furthermore, the Arabs used "building" to mean the well-known construction, and they also used it in the context of marriage. They would say, "So-and-so built with so-and-so," meaning he married her and consummated the marriage. This was because the Arabs used to build a new house, a tent or something similar, for the newlywed, where he would consummate the marriage with his wife. However, if we use the word "building" without any contextualization, the mind immediately goes to the well-known construction and will not go to anything else unless there are contextual clues.

And there are a lot more examples like that. It shows us that the like of these meanings is not on one level and that some are original, so the mind turns to them without contextualization (qareenah), while the others need qareenah, so they are used for other than its original meaning with qareenah, due to the existence of a certain relationship. This is what they called al-majaaz (the metaphor) which means it extends past the literal meaning in

its usage of the term, to another meaning due to contextualization and a relationship with the original meaning.

So, because of that, there is haqeeqah and majaaz, and the haqeeqah meaning is taken first, unless it is not possible, then the majaaz is taken.

As for their saying: If there was in the Arab's speech haqeeqah and majaaz, then it would have been transmitted from them in their words or writings. This statement cannot be used as a proof. This is because the Arabs in the early ages, whether jahilyyah, the beginning of Islam and so on, used to use in their speech the haqeeqah and the majaaz, and they knew that this meaning was literal and that was metaphor. They knew the difference between the hand which is a limb and that which is power and generosity, and just like that, between the head for humans, the mountain, and the stream. They knew that this meaning is haqeeqah because it does not require contextualization, and that this meaning is majaaz because it does require a qareenah. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَأَجْعَلْ لِّي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ﴾ **“And grant me a tongue of truthfulness among later generations”** [TMQ Surah Ash-Shuaraa: 84]. This meaning is inherent in the original literal usage, while the other meaning transcends, or extends beyond, this fundamental literal usage due to qareenah evidence.

However, the uloom (bodies of knowledge) of **Arabic, Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, and Usul** were not given their terminology until later, particularly when some weakness began to enter into the Arabs' language, so these uloom were defined to clarify how the Arabs spoke to correct the tongues according to them.

Then the ulema related to the meanings of words were set down, such as the well known terminologies explicit and implied speech (al-mantooq and al-mafhoom المنطوق والمفهوم), the metaphor, the synonym, and the homonym (al-majaaz, wat-taraadif, wal-mushtarak المجاز والترادف والمشارك), and so on. So, the lack of discussion about haqeeqah and majaaz in the early ages is not considered as a proof for the lack of existence of haqeeqah and majaaz in the Arabic language.

This is similar to those who deny the existence of the subject (fa'il), object (maf'ool), adverbial phrase (maf'ool bihi), specification (tamyeez), and other well-known terms of grammar (nahw), arguing that these terms were not transmitted from the pre-Islam Arabs.

The Arabs spoke Arabic in its original form and understood its meanings without codifying rules or terminology; it was their language and their natural disposition. These terms and sciences were developed later, through the study of their speech and styles, to enable later generations to master the language and its styles, and to understand its meanings and uses.

Therefore, the claim that all meanings used by the Arabs for their words are literal and that no metaphorical language exists is untenable.

However, the saying of those who affirm all of the meanings that the Arabs used for their words, and they consider all of them recognized whether in the language or in the Quran, we say that this saying of theirs does not differ with the correct statement, except:

1. In classifying these meanings into haqeeqah and majaaz, rather considering each of them haqeeqah.
2. That there is no prioritization of usage in understanding the text, there is no haqeeqah and if it was excused majaaz. Instead, all are haqeeqah meanings and there is no priority of one meaning over the other, except with an indication in the context.

All of that, **if they applied their words and depended upon them.**

We say, if they gathered all of the meanings that the Arabs used, and depended upon them to understand the text, and called all of it al-haqeeqah, then the difference would be very minor indeed.

However, the problem occurs when they do not depend on anything other than the haqeeqah to understand the Quran. Then they meet with the people of the first statement

who say that there are majaaz in the language, but not in the Quran, rather they recognize only haqeeqah and ignore the other Arabic meanings.

The consequences of denying metaphor

Here the problem is concealed. Ignoring some of the meanings that the Arabs used for their words, meaning majaaz, and depending upon some of the other meanings, meaning al-haqeeqah, in understanding the Quran; this problem causes a problem from two perspectives:

The first: their falling into sin due to not understanding the Quran with the Arabic language that it was sent down in, because their dependence upon a section of the Arabic language and not the other section of meanings that the Arabs used, means not using the Arabic language to understand the Quran. This contradicts the fact that the Quran is Arabic in language.

The second: their falling into contradictions in their understanding of the verses of Allah (swt), because of abandoning part of its meanings.

So, they recite His (swt) saying, ﴿يَا حَسْرَتَا عَلَىٰ مَا فَرَطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ﴾ “**O, woe to me for what I neglected on the side of Allah!**” [TMQ Surah Az-Zumar: 56] and ﴿وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ﴾ “**And the wajh of your lord remains**” [TMQ Surah Ar-Rahman 55:27], and they are satisfied with haqeeqah for the word *wajh* meaning face, but this will create contradictions in understanding, because they will find that the haqeeqah meaning that the Arabs put down for this word is the well-known face.

Allah (swt) is far above and innocent of this haqeeqah that the Arabs put down for this word, because He (swt) is described as, ﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ﴾ “**nothing is like unto Him**” [TMQ Surah Ash-Shura 42:11]. Due to that, they fall into confusion and say of its explanation (وجهه وليس كالوجه) “a face but not like a face”. This is an explanation for these words without the Arabic language:

So, they didn't explain it with al-haqeeqah al-lughawiiyyah (the linguistic literal meaning) that the Arabs put down for the word, **nor** did they explain it with al-Haqiqat ul-Urfiyyah (the traditional literal meaning) that the Arabs became accustomed to, **nor** did they explain it with (tafsir) an explanation that was transmitted from Rasool Allah (saw) i.e. al-Haqiqat ush-Shar'iiyyah (the Shariah meaning) for the word, **nor** did they explain it with al-majaaz (the metaphorical meaning) or al-kinayah (the allusion) in the language of the Arabs.

Instead, they said, “side and not like the side,” “face and not like the face,” meaning that they acknowledge that these words were not used in the Quranic verses in the literal meaning that the Arabs assigned to them, and instead of interpreting them with the metaphorical meaning among the Arabs, you see them assigning to them a meaning that is not in the language of the Arabs.

For example, the word “face” in Arabic was used to refer to the physical face, as we know it in its literal sense. Arabs also used it to refer to the person himself, metaphorically using the word “face” to describe the essence of a person. However, they did not use “face” to mean “a face unlike a face.” The Quran is in Arabic, so its verses and words are interpreted in the Arabic language.

Had they done so and reflected, they would have found that the Arabs used the word “janb” metaphorically. For example, they say, ﴿هَذَا الْأَمْرُ يَصْغُرُ فِي جَنْبِ هَذَا﴾ “This matter is insignificant fee janb (in comparison) to this,” meaning that it is insignificant compared, or in relation, to it. Thus, the verse, ﴿يَا حَسْرَتَا عَلَىٰ مَا فَرَطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ﴾ “**O, my regret for what I neglected concerning the side of Allah!**” [TMQ Surah Az-Zumar 56], means: in relations to what is between me and Allah (swt), when I add my negligence to His commands and prohibitions.

Similarly, there is the hadith of the Messenger of Allah (saw), كُلِّ الصَّيْدِ فِي جَنْبِ الْفَرَا “**All game is fee janb (in the side of) the wild ass,**” or جوف الفراء “**in the belly of the wild ass,**” meaning that all game is insignificant compared to the wild ass when measured against it. Similarly, the Arabs used the word wajh “face” metaphorically to refer to a man's essence,

due to his honor and greatness, saying, “The face of the people has come.” Thus, the verse, **﴿وَيَقْبَىٰ وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ﴾** **“And the wajh of your lord remains”** [TMQ Surah Ar-Rahman 55:27] means His very Essence, may He be glorified.

It cannot be said that this interpretation is far from the meaning. This is because this is an Arabic usage in this sense, and the Arabic language necessitates it, as a word either has a literal or a metaphorical meaning, and since every Muslim believes that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is free from having a side or a face, according to the literal meaning the Arabs used.

In other words, the literal meaning is impossible, so al-majaaz that the Arabs used is taken and explained accordingly, because the Islamic aqeedah is definite that Allah (swt) does not have a face according to al-haqeeqah, like our faces, as Allah (swt) is far above and innocent of any likeness or similarity: **﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ﴾** **“nothing is like Him”** [Ash-Shura 42:11].

So, with that, either:

1. The verse is explained with the Arabic language, so al-majaaz meaning is taken, so for example, it is said that the wajh indicates the Essence of Allah (swt).

2. Or the verse is explained without the Arabic language and we say it means **﴿وجه وليس كالوجه﴾** **“a face but not like a face”**, as if the one saying so is embarrassed to say, **“I don’t know.”**

Thus, those who say that al-majaaz meaning exists in the language, but not in the Quran, and those who say all of the meanings that the Arabs used for a word are haqeeqah meanings, **but when it comes to the usage in the Quran only mention one meaning, and leave the other Arabic meanings**; all of them, despite their contradicting the text of the Quran: **﴿وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ﴾** **“This is a clear Arabic tongue”** [An-Nahl 16:103], **they do not depend upon the Arabic language** for understanding it. **I say, despite all of that**, they busied the Muslims with issues that encouraged their sectarianism, and was about to lead to each sect declaring the other upon kufr, yet they don’t realise.

If they had understood the meanings of the language, then these sects would never have appeared nor would they have quarrelled, and the slaves of Allah (swt) would have remained brothers.

I will end with a word from one of the linguistic experts, the extraordinary ibn Jinny, who says, **﴿وَقَلَّمَا يَخْرُجُ الشَّيْءُ مِنْهَا عَلَى الْحَقِيقَةِ، فَلَمَّا كَانَتْ كَذَلِكَ وَكَانَ الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ خُوطِبُوا بِهَا أَعْرَفَ النَّاسِ بِسَعَةِ مَذَاهِبِهَا وَانْتِشَارِ أَنْحَاثِهَا جَرَى خُطَابُهُمْ بِهَا مَجْرَى مَا يَأْلَفُونَهُ وَيَعْتَادُونَهُ مِنْهَا، وَفَهَمُوا أَغْرَاضَ الْمَخَاطَبِ لَهُمْ بِهَا عَلَى حَسَبِ عَرَفِهِمْ وَعَادَتِهِمْ مِنْ اسْتِعْمَالِهَا﴾** **“this language, most of it yields to al-majaaz, and rarely does a thing come from it with al-haqeeqah alone. So, as that is the case and as the people that were addressed were the most knowledgeable of people about the breadth of its ways and the spread of its manners, so, what they were addressed with took the way that they were accustomed and used to. They understood the objectives of the message for them according to their habits and traditions when using it.”**

So, with that, their aqeedah became correct and their actions sincerely for Allah (swt), so they straightened their matters and purified their situation. They were during the time of Rasool Allah (saw) and the time of his Companions (ra) on a clear path, its night like its day, none would deviate from it except the doomed, and none would avoid it except the misguided.