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ISL2453

Textual Study of al-Qur'an - II

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COMPREHENSIVE STUDY HANDOUT

ISL2453

Textual Study of al-Qur'an - II

Lecture-wise study notes prepared for Virtual University of Pakistan students.

Covers all major topics with objectives, key definitions, summaries and exam pointers. 

10 study units

Table of Contents

Placeholder for table of contents

0

Unit 1: Methodology of Textual Study (Manhaj al-Dirasah al-Nassiyah)

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1:** Explain the method of direct textual study of the Qur'an
- Objective 2:** Distinguish textual study from thematic and analytical tafsir
- Objective 3:** Apply the steps: recitation, vocabulary, context, lessons

Textual study (al-dirasah al-nassiyah) means engaging the Qur'anic text directly, verse by verse: accurate recitation, understanding vocabulary in context, grasping the immediate meaning, relating verses to their occasion of revelation, and deriving guidance. It differs from thematic tafsir (which gathers verses on one topic from across the Qur'an) and analytical tafsir (verse-by-verse commentary drawing on grammar, hadith and jurisprudence). Textual study is the student's direct encounter with the text, building the foundation the other methods presuppose.

The study steps are disciplined. First, recite the passage correctly with tajwid, since meaning follows sound. Second, identify key vocabulary and their root meanings. Third, read the verses in their surah context: what comes before and after. Fourth, consult the asbab al-nuzul (occasions of revelation) where authentically reported. Fifth, extract the theological, legal or moral lessons. Each step checks the others; skipping context is the commonest source of misreading.

This course continues the textual study with selected surahs and passages, emphasizing both understanding and application. Very important: examinations test not memory of translations but the ability to explain a verse's vocabulary, context and derived lessons; practice that three-part explanation on every passage you study.

Key Definitions

Al-dirasah al-nassiyah is defined as the direct verse-by-verse textual study of the Qur'an.

Asbab al-nuzul is defined as the reported occasions or contexts of a verse's revelation.

Tafsir is defined as Qur'anic exegesis; textual, thematic and analytical are its main approaches.

Key Points to Remember

- Textual study = direct verse-by-verse engagement; foundation for thematic/analytical tafsir.
- Steps: recitation -> vocabulary -> surah context -> occasions of revelation -> lessons.
- Meaning follows sound: tajwid first; context prevents misreading.
- Exam skill: explain any verse via vocabulary + context + lessons.

Unit Summary

Textual study encounters the Qur'an verse by verse through recitation, vocabulary, context and occasions of revelation to derive guidance.

Exam Pointer

Very important: for any studied passage, be ready to explain key words, the surah context, and the lessons derived. The three-part explanation is the exam format.

Unit 2: Surah al-Fatihah: The Opening Revisited in Depth

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1:** Analyze the seven verses textually
- Objective 2:** Explain its names, themes and status as umm al-kitab
- Objective 3:** Relate it to the rest of the Qur'an

Surah al-Fatihah, the seven oft-repeated verses, opens the Qur'an and every prayer. Textually: 'Alhamdu lillahi rabbi al-alamin' establishes praise as the human response to the Lord of all worlds; 'al-Rahman al-Rahim' frames divinity in mercy; 'Maliki yawm al-din' adds just accountability; 'iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in' turns theology into exclusive worship and dependence; 'ihdina al-sirata al-mustaqim' petitions guidance; the final verse defines the path by its travelers: the favored, not those who earned anger nor the astray.

Its names reveal its roles: Umm al-Kitab (Mother of the Book) as the summary of the Qur'an; al-Shifa (the Cure); al-Sab' al-Mathani (the Seven Oft-Repeated). Scholars note it contains the whole Qur'an's themes in miniature: creed (verses 1-4), worship (verse 5), and the human quest (verses 6-7). The shift from third person (He) to second person (You) in verse 5 marks the move from description to direct address, a rhetorical intensification.

Its placement teaches method: begin all study with praise, mercy, accountability, commitment and a plea for guidance. Very important: examiners expect precise textual observations like the pronoun shift and the tripartite thematic division, not just general praise of the surah. 

Key Definitions

Umm al-Kitab is defined as Mother of the Book: al-Fatihah as the summary of the Qur'an.

Al-Sab' al-Mathani is defined as the Seven Oft-Repeated verses (al-Fatihah).

Sirat al-mustaqim is defined as the straight path of guidance petitioned in the surah.

Key Points to Remember

- Seven verses: praise, mercy, accountability, exclusive worship, plea for guidance, the path defined.
- Names: Umm al-Kitab, al-Shifa, al-Sab' al-Mathani.
- Themes in miniature: creed, worship, human quest; pronoun shift (He -> You) intensifies address.
- Method lesson: begin study with praise and a plea for guidance.

Unit Summary

Al-Fatihah's seven verses compress the Qur'an's message; textual features like the pronoun shift and thematic tripartition reward close study.

Exam Pointer

Very important: explain the verse-by-verse content and at least two textual features (names, pronoun shift, thematic division).

Unit 3: Surah al-Baqarah: Selected Passages I (Faith and the Covenant)

Learning Objectives

Objective 1: Study verses 1-39 textually: guidance, belief, disbelief, hypocrisy

Objective 2: Explain the Adam narrative (verses 30-39)

Objective 3: Derive lessons on human responsibility

The opening of al-Baqarah classifies humanity's response to guidance: the muttaqin who believe in the unseen, establish prayer and spend (verses 1-5); the disbelievers sealed against warning (verses 6-7); and the hypocrites, dissected over thirteen verses (8-20) as those who deceive, spread corruption while claiming reform, and mock believers. Textual study notes the escalating imagery: the hypocrites' parable of the extinguished fire and the rain-laden darkness captures self-inflicted blindness.

Verses 30-39 narrate Adam's vicegerency: the angels' question, Adam taught the names, the prostration commanded and Iblis's refusal through pride, the lapse in Paradise, repentance accepted, and descent with guidance promised. Key vocabulary: khalifah (vicegerent), asma (the names, i.e. knowledge), istakbara (arrogant refusal). The passage founds human dignity (knowledge and trust) and human fallibility (error, repentance, return).

Lessons: guidance benefits only the receptive; hypocrisy is diagnosed by deeds not claims; knowledge elevates humans above angels in function; pride, not error, is the unforgivable stance, since Adam erred and was forgiven while Iblis refused and was rejected. Very important: contrast Adam and Iblis textually; examiners use this pair to test understanding of repentance versus arrogance.

Key Definitions

Muttaqin is defined as the God-conscious who believe, pray and spend; the Qur'an's guidance benefits them.

Khalifah is defined as vicegerent: humanity's trusteeship role announced in 2:30.

Nifaq is defined as hypocrisy: professing faith while concealing disbelief, dissected in 2:8-20.

Key Points to Remember

- 2:1-20: three human responses: belief, disbelief, hypocrisy (longest treatment).
- Hypocrite parables: extinguished fire, dark rain: self-inflicted blindness.
- 2:30-39: vicegerency, the names, prostration, Iblis's pride, Adam's repentance.
- Adam vs Iblis: error + repentance forgiven; arrogant refusal rejected.

Unit Summary

Al-Baqarah's opening classifies responses to guidance and founds human vicegerency, with the Adam-Iblis contrast teaching repentance over pride.

Exam Pointer

Very important: textually contrast Adam and Iblis, and explain the three categories of 2:1-20 with key vocabulary.

Unit 4: Surah al-Baqarah: Selected Passages II (Law and Worship)

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1:** Study the qiblah passage (2:142-152)
- Objective 2:** Study fasting verses (2:183-187) textually
- Objective 3:** Explain the method of deriving rulings from text

Verses 142-152 address the qiblah change: the foolish will question the turn from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah; the response situates direction within obedience, 'to Allah belong east and west'. The passage declares the ummah 'a middle nation' (ummatahan wasatan), witnesses over mankind, and commands remembrance, gratitude and patience. Textual notes: the change tested allegiance, and the verse 'We did not make the qiblah... except to know who follows the Messenger' reveals trials as diagnostic.

The fasting verses (183-187) legislate with wisdom: fasting prescribed as it was for earlier peoples 'so that you may become God-conscious' (la'allakum tattaqun), easing for the sick and traveler, ransom for the unable, the month of Ramadan as the Qur'an's revelation month, nights' permissions, and the closeness verse (186): 'I am near; I answer the caller's call.' The law is wrapped in purpose, ease and divine nearness.

Method: derive rulings by noting the command form, its stated purpose (taqwa), its exceptions (ease), and its spiritual framing. Very important: Islamic legal reasoning from text always pairs the ruling with its 'illah (rationale) and exceptions; examiners reward answers showing this structure.

Key Definitions

Qiblah is defined as the direction of prayer; changed to the Ka'bah in 2:142-152.

Ummatahan wasatan is defined as a middle, balanced nation: the ummah's described character.

Taqwa is defined as God-consciousness; the stated purpose of fasting.

Key Points to Remember

- Qiblah passage: obedience over direction; the ummah as middle nation and witness.
- Fasting verses: prescription, purpose (taqwa), ease (exceptions), Ramadan, divine nearness (2:186).
- Law wrapped in wisdom: command + rationale + ease + spirituality.
- Derive rulings via command form, purpose, exceptions.

Unit Summary

The qiblah and fasting passages model Qur'anic legislation: commands carrying purposes, eased by exceptions, framed spiritually.

Exam Pointer

Very important: explain 2:186 textually and derive the fasting ruling's structure (command, purpose, ease).

Unit 5: Surah al-Baqarah: Selected Passages III (Finance and Ethics)

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1:** Study the riba verses (2:275-281) textually
- Objective 2:** Study the loan verse (2:282) and its wisdom
- Objective 3:** Explain Qur'anic economic ethics

Verses 275-281 declare war, metaphorically, on riba: trade is permitted but riba forbidden; those who consume it rise like one possessed; Allah destroys riba and grows charity. The passage ends the surah's legal section with eschatological weight: 'fear a Day when you return to Allah.' Vocabulary: riba (unjustified increase), bay' (trade), sadaqah (charity) as the contrasted alternative. The ethic: wealth must circulate productively, not multiply through exploitation.

Verse 282, the longest in the Qur'an, legislates debt documentation: write it down, have a scribe in justice, witnesses (two men or one man and two women), and do not refuse to write. The detail, astonishing for a 7th-century text, protects the weak party and prevents disputes. Exemptions for spot trade show practicality. The verse closes: 'fear Allah; Allah teaches you.'

Economic ethics derived: transparency in transactions, protection of the vulnerable, charity as the alternative to usury, and accountability before God as the enforcement. Very important: examiners expect the riba-trade distinction explained textually and the wisdom of documentation articulated, not slogans.

Key Definitions

- Riba** is defined as unjustified increase on loans; prohibited while trade is permitted.
- Bay'** is defined as trade: the permitted productive exchange contrasted with riba.
- Verse 2:282** is defined as the debt-documentation verse, longest in the Qur'an.

Key Points to Remember

- Riba verses: prohibition, trade-permitted contrast, charity as alternative, eschatological warning.
- 2:282: document debts with scribe and witnesses; protect the weak; spot-trade exemption.
- Ethic: transparency, vulnerability-protection, productive circulation of wealth.
- Accountability to Allah as the enforcement mechanism.

Unit Summary

Qur'anic finance ethics prohibit exploitative increase, mandate transparent documentation, and anchor economic conduct in divine accountability.

Exam Pointer

Very important: explain the riba vs trade distinction textually and the wisdom behind 2:282's documentation requirements. 

Unit 6: Surah Al 'Imran: Selected Passages (Unity and Steadfastness)

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1:** Study 3:102-110 textually: holding to the rope of Allah
- Objective 2:** Study the Uhud passages (3:139-148) on trial and steadfastness
- Objective 3:** Derive lessons on community and resilience

Verses 102-110 command: hold fast together to Allah's rope and do not divide; remember the favor that united hostile hearts; let there be a community calling to good. The 'rope' (habl Allah) is the Qur'an and covenant; unity is a divine command, not a preference. Verse 110 defines the ummah's distinction: enjoining right, forbidding wrong, believing in Allah, conditional on fulfilling that mission.

The Uhud passage (139-148) consoles and instructs after battlefield reversal: 'Do not weaken or grieve; you are superior if you are believers.' Wounds alternate among people by divine design; the trial distinguishes true believers and takes martyrs. The verses diagnose the failure (dispute and disobedience after the Prophet's order) and prescribe steadfastness, consultation and trust in Allah.

Lessons: community strength lies in shared covenant, not numbers; trials are diagnostic and purifying; leadership requires consultation (shura) even after failure, the Prophet is told to consult them despite their disobedience. Very important: the shura-after-Uhud command is a profound leadership text; examiners value its counter-intuitive wisdom.

Key Definitions

- Habl Allah** is defined as the rope of Allah: the Qur'an and divine covenant binding the community.
- Ummah** is defined as the Muslim community, distinguished by enjoining right and forbidding wrong.
- Shura** is defined as consultation: the commanded leadership practice, even after failure at Uhud.

Key Points to Remember

- 3:102-110: unity as command; the rope; the community's mission (enjoin right, forbid wrong).
- Uhud verses: no despair; trials diagnose and purify; wounds alternate by design.
- Failure diagnosed: dispute and disobedience of orders.
- Shura commanded even after failure: profound leadership wisdom.

Unit Summary

Al 'Imran teaches covenantal unity and resilient steadfastness, with consultation as leadership's duty especially after failure.

Exam Pointer

Very important: explain 'habl Allah' and the Uhud lessons textually, especially the shura command's significance.

Unit 7: Surah al-Nisa: Selected Passages (Justice and the Vulnerable)

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1:** Study 4:1 on human unity and taqwa
- Objective 2:** Study justice verses (4:58, 4:135) textually
- Objective 3:** Explain the surah's protection of orphans and women

Verse 1 addresses all mankind: fear your Lord who created you from a single soul, created its mate, and spread many men and women; fear Allah and the wombs (ties of kinship). Human unity is founded in common creation; taqwa and kinship are paired. The surah then legislates orphan property, marriage, and inheritance: the vulnerable are the surah's preoccupation.

Verse 58 commands rendering trusts to their owners and judging with justice; verse 135, the charter verse, commands standing firm for justice as witnesses to Allah 'even against yourselves, parents or kin', rich or poor. The phrasing deliberately overrides every bias: kinship, wealth, status. Justice here is 'adl as divine attribute mirrored in human conduct.

Textual method: note the universal address ('O mankind'), the pairing of commands (trusts + justice), and the preemption of excuses (even against yourselves). Very important: 4:135 is among the most quoted justice verses; examiners expect its structure explained: the command, the witnesses phrase, and the three overridden biases.

Key Definitions

- 'Adl** is defined as justice: rendering what is due, a divine attribute and human duty.
- Amanah** is defined as trust: responsibilities and properties to be rendered faithfully.
- Al-Nisa** is defined as The Women: the surah legislating protection of the vulnerable.

Key Points to Remember

- 4:1: common creation -> human unity; taqwa paired with kinship ties.
- 4:58: render trusts; judge with justice. 4:135: stand for justice even against self, kin, rich, poor.
- Surah's theme: protection of orphans, women, the weak through law.
- Method: universal address, paired commands, preempted excuses.

Unit Summary

Al-Nisa founds human unity in common creation and commands impartial justice overriding kinship, wealth and status, centering the vulnerable.

Exam Pointer

Very important: explain 4:135's structure (command, witness phrase, overridden biases) textually.

Unit 8: Surah al-Ma'idah: Selected Passages (Covenant and Law)

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1:** Study 5:3 on the completion of religion
- Objective 2:** Study 5:8 on justice and 5:32 on the sanctity of life
- Objective 3:** Explain dietary and contractual laws

Verse 3 declares: 'Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor, and approved Islam as your way.' Revealed at the Farewell Pilgrimage, it closes revelation's legislative arc; the verse also details prohibited foods (carrion, blood, pork, dedicated to other than Allah) with the necessity exception. Perfection here means completeness of guidance, not human perfection.

Verse 8 commands: let not hatred of a people prevent justice; 'be just, that is nearer to piety.' Verse 32, revealed regarding the Children of Israel but universal in import: killing one soul unjustly is like killing all mankind; saving one, like saving all. The sanctity of life is quantified absolutely.

The surah opens with 'fulfill contracts' (awfu bi al-'uqud), framing all law as covenant fidelity. Lessons: religion's completeness anchors certainty; justice must survive enmity; life's sanctity is non-negotiable; contracts bind. Very important: 5:32's 'like all mankind' rhetoric is a textual intensification device  examiners love to have identified.

Key Definitions

Al-Ma'idah is defined as The Table: the surah of covenant, law and completion.

Awfu bi al-'uqud is defined as fulfill contracts: the surah's opening covenant command.

Necessity exception is defined as prohibitions lifted under genuine compulsion without desire or excess.

Key Points to Remember

- 5:3: perfection/completion of religion; prohibited foods; necessity exception.
- 5:8: justice even against enemies; hatred never justifies injustice.
- 5:32: one unjust killing = killing all mankind; rhetoric of absolute sanctity.
- Framing: all law as fulfillment of covenant (5:1).

Unit Summary

Al-Ma'idah completes the legislative arc: covenant fidelity, completed guidance, impartial justice, and life's absolute sanctity.

Exam Pointer

Very important: explain 5:3's 'perfection' and 5:32's rhetorical intensification textually.

Unit 9: Muhkam, Mutashabih and Principles of Interpretation

Learning Objectives

Objective 1: Define muhkam and mutashabih verses

Objective 2: Explain 3:7 and the proper stance toward ambiguity

Objective 3: Apply principles: context, language, non-contradiction

Verse 3:7 divides the Book: muhkam verses, clear and foundational ('they are the Mother of the Book'), and mutashabih, ambiguous or multi-meaning. Those with deviation in hearts pursue the ambiguous seeking discord; the firmly grounded in knowledge say 'we believe in it, all is from our Lord.' The verse thus legislates interpretive humility: anchor in the clear, do not build doctrines on the ambiguous.

Classical principles operationalize this. Tafsir of the Qur'an by the Qur'an first (one verse clarifying another), then by authentic Sunnah, then by companions' understanding, then by sound Arabic language. Context (siyaq) governs: preceding and following verses disambiguate. Non-contradiction: no verse truly contradicts another; apparent tension signals misreading. Occasions of revelation specify, not restrict, unless evidence warrants.

For the student, the practical rules: never quote a verse against its context; prefer the plain sense unless necessity dictates otherwise; and when scholars differ legitimately, present the difference honestly. Very important: 3:7 is both content and method; examiners test whether you apply its humility to disputed passages. 

Key Definitions

Muhkam is defined as clear, decisive verses forming the Book's foundation.

Mutashabih is defined as ambiguous or multi-meaning verses, not to be pursued for discord.

Siyaq is defined as context: the surrounding text governing interpretation.

Key Points to Remember

- 3:7: muhkam = foundation; mutashabih = test of humility; deviants chase ambiguity.
- Interpretive order: Qur'an -> Sunnah -> companions -> sound Arabic.
- Principles: context governs, no true contradiction, occasions specify.
- Student rules: no out-of-context quoting; present legitimate differences honestly.

Unit Summary

Sound interpretation anchors in clear verses, follows the Qur'an-Sunnah-language order, respects context, and approaches ambiguity with humility.

Exam Pointer

Very important: explain 3:7 fully and list the interpretive principles in order with a one-line rationale each.

Unit 10: The Qur'an's Moral World: Character Verses

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1:** Study selected character verses textually
- Objective 2:** Explain the Luqman counsels (31:12-19)
- Objective 3:** Connect textual study to personal formation

The Qur'an's moral teaching is textual and concrete. Surah Luqman 12-19 counsels: gratitude to Allah and parents, the weight of even a mustard-seed deed, establishing prayer, enjoining right, patience in adversity, no arrogant strutting, moderation in pace, lowering the voice. Each counsel pairs a deed with its wisdom; textual study notes the progression from creed to worship to social conduct.

Other character texts: 17:23-38 (duties to parents, honesty, humility, the famous 'do not walk exultantly'), 25:63-74 (the servants of the Merciful: humility, night prayer, moderation, chastity, truthfulness), 49:11-12 (no mockery, no suspicion, no backbiting, the 'flesh of the dead brother' image). The imagery is deliberately visceral to deter.

The course's capstone lesson: textual study aims at transformation, not information. The student should leave each passage with one practiced deed. Very important: examiners in this course reward answers that move from text to character: quote precisely, explain briefly, apply personally. 

Key Definitions

Luqman counsels is defined as the wisdom teachings of Luqman to his son in 31:12-19.

'Ibad al-Rahman is defined as the servants of the Merciful: the character portrait of 25:63-74.

Ghibah is defined as backbiting: speaking of another in their absence what they dislike, condemned in 49:12.

Key Points to Remember

- Luqman: gratitude, prayer, enjoining right, patience, humility in conduct and voice.
- 17:23-38 and 25:63-74: comprehensive character portraits.
- 49:11-12: social ethics; visceral imagery deters mockery and backbiting.
- Aim: transformation; each passage should yield one practiced deed.

Unit Summary

The Qur'an teaches character through concrete textual counsels; studying them aims at personal transformation expressed in practiced deeds.

Exam Pointer

Very important: explain three counsels of Luqman textually and one character verse from 49:11-12, each with its wisdom.