



# *Al-'Ibrah Bi 'Umum Al-Lafz La Bi Khusus Al-Sabab: A Contextual and Realistic Analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah 178 from the Perspective of Wahbah Al-Zuhaili*

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**Abstract:** This study examines the exegetical principle of al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz la bi khusus al-sabab, which emphasizes understanding Quranic verses based on the generality of their wording rather than the specificity of the circumstances of revelation. This principle is widely accepted by the majority of Islamic scholars and often serves as a foundation for Quranic interpretation. The research focuses on the application of this principle to Surah Al-Baqarah verse 178 from the perspective of Wahbah al-Zuhaili, a contemporary Quranic exegete, through a contextual and realistic analysis approach. The main objective of the study is to explore how Wahbah al-Zuhaili applies this principle in his exegesis, particularly in Tafsir Al-Munir. This research employs a qualitative method with a library research approach, utilizing descriptive and comparative analysis to understand the characteristics of Wahbah al-Zuhaili's interpretation in comparison to other exegetical perspectives. The findings reveal that Wahbah al-Zuhaili consistently applies the principle of generality of wording to broaden the scope of the verse's meaning, making it relevant to various social and legal contexts beyond the specific reasons for the revelation of the verse. In his exegesis, he connects the verse to contemporary realities while acknowledging the asbabun nuzul as a historical background. This approach underscores the universality of the Quran in addressing diverse contexts of life.

**Keywords:** Principles; Quranic Interpretation; Tafsir Al-Munir; Wahbah al-Zuhaili

## Introduction

The study of the principle al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz la bi khusus al-sabab is one of the essential areas in Quranic exegesis. This principle emphasizes that the rulings contained in Quranic verses apply universally based on their wording, without being limited to the specific circumstances surrounding their revelation. This principle is widely accepted by the majority of scholars and serves as a foundation for understanding the universality of the Quran's message. However, its application often leads to differing interpretations among exegetes, particularly in the context of legal verses such as Surah Al-Baqarah: 178, which discusses the law of qisas (retaliation) (Razali, 2022).

Surah Al-Baqarah: 178 is a verse often referenced in discussions about justice and the application of law in

Islam (Sulaiman, 2018). This verse regulates the implementation of qisas (equitable retaliation) as a form of justice in enforcing criminal law. In this context, the principle al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz becomes relevant to determine whether the ruling on qisas applies only to specific cases at the time of its revelation or encompasses all similar cases across various times and places (Shohib, 2024).

Wahbah al-Zuhaili, a contemporary scholar, is known for his comprehensive and contextual approach to Quranic interpretation. In his work al-Tafsir al-Munir, he tends to apply the principle al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz to broaden the relevance of Quranic verses to various modern situations. This approach contrasts with some classical exegetes, such as Ibn Kathir, who often place greater emphasis on the historical context of the verse's

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revelation (asbabun nuzul) in understanding its meaning and application (Razali, 2022).

This study aims to analyze the application of the principle al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz la bi khusus al-sabab in Surah Al-Baqarah: 178 from the perspective of Wahbah al-Zuhaili. The primary focus is to compare Wahbah al-Zuhaili's views with those of other exegetes, particularly regarding how historical context and social realities influence their interpretations of the verse. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary exegetical methods and their relevance to modern society (Shohib, 2024).

However, this approach is not without criticism. Some scholars argue that overemphasizing the generality of the wording may overlook the historical context of the verse's revelation, which provides important insights into the original intent of the Shariah. Therefore, this study will also explore how Wahbah al-Zuhaili balances the generality of the wording with the specificity of the circumstances in his exegesis.

This research employs a qualitative method with a library research approach. Data are collected from various primary sources, such as Wahbah al-Zuhaili's al-Tafsir al-Munir and other tafsir works, as well as relevant secondary literature. The data analysis method used is comparative analysis to identify the differences and similarities between various exegetical approaches to Surah Al-Baqarah: 178.

This study is expected to provide new insights into how the principle of al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz can be effectively applied in understanding Quranic verses with legal implications. Furthermore, it aims to explore the relevance of Wahbah al-Zuhaili's exegetical method for the development of contemporary Islamic studies, particularly in addressing the challenges of modernization and globalization.

Thus, this research not only contributes to academic discourse on Quranic exegesis but also has practical implications for efforts to build a just and prosperous Islamic society based on the universal teachings of the Quran. This aligns with the vision of Islam as a religion of rahmatan lil 'alamin (a mercy to all creation), capable of providing answers to contemporary challenges.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach is relevant because the focus of the research is an in-depth analysis of the Quranic text, particularly Surah Al-Baqarah verse 178, as well as Wahbah al-Zuhaili's thoughts in his exegesis, Al-Tafsir al-Munir. Wahbah al-Zuhaili is known for combining classical exegesis methods (bi al-ma'tsur and bi al-ra'y) with modern methods such as tahlili (analytic) and mawdhu'i (thematic), which allows

for the exploration of the theme of qisas law within historical and social contexts (Aiman, 2012).

The data collection technique involves documentation of primary sources, namely the book Al-Tafsir al-Munir, as well as secondary literature related to exegesis methodology and Islamic law. Data analysis is conducted descriptively and analytically by examining linguistic aspects, the context of asbabun nuzul (reasons for revelation), and the principle 'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz la bi khusus al-sabab. This study also links Wahbah al-Zuhaili's interpretation to contemporary issues to demonstrate the relevance of the verse in addressing the needs of the Muslim community today. Thus, this methodology contributes to a deeper understanding of the verse's meaning while also being applicable to modern realities (Triana, 2019).

### *The principle of considering the generality of the wording*

The principle al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz la bi khusus al-sabab is a rule in Quranic exegesis that states the ruling contained in a Quranic verse is determined based on the generality of its wording, not on the specific reason for the revelation (sabab an-nuzul). This means that although a verse may have been revealed due to a particular event, the ruling within the verse applies universally to all situations that fall within its scope, not just limited to the specific event or cause of revelation." (Muna, 2020).

For example, if a verse has a general wording but the reason for its revelation is specific, the majority of scholars hold that the ruling in the verse applies generally to all similar cases. This approach supports the universality of Islamic law and ensures that the rulings in the Quran remain relevant across different contexts and times.

In contrast, the principle al-'ibrah bi khusus al-sabab argues that the ruling of a verse only applies to the specific reason for its revelation. In other words, the application of the ruling is limited to the event or case that prompted the revelation of the verse. This approach is held by a minority of scholars such as Imam Malik and some Shafi'i scholars.

### Surah Al-Baqarah Ayat 178: Context and Meaning

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ: الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنثَىٰ بِالْأُنثَىٰ ۚ فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبِعْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ وَأَدَاءُ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ۗ ۚ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۚ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

*O you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution (qisas) in the case of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But whoever is forgiven by his brother, then the one who forgives*

*should follow with fairness, and the one who is forgiven should pay the blood money in a good manner. That is an alleviation and a mercy from your Lord. And whoever transgresses after that will have a painful punishment."* (QS. Al-Baqarah: 178).

This verse was revealed as a response to the practices of the pre-Islamic Arab society in dealing with cases of murder. Before Islam, retaliation was often carried out unjustly, such as killing a free person in retaliation for the death of a slave or killing a man in response to the death of a woman. Inter-tribal conflicts often escalated endlessly due to prolonged feuds.

According to the narration of Ibn Kathir, two Arab groups fought due to a murder and retaliated against each other, involving slaves and women as victims. After they embraced Islam, Allah revealed this verse to establish the just law of qisas and put an end to the practice of disproportionate retaliation (Fikri, 2024).

#### *The Law of Qisas in Islam*

The law of qisas is a form of justice in Islamic Sharia aimed at preserving human life (hifz al-nafs). Qisas means proportional retribution: a life for a life, and a limb for a limb. In the context of this verse, it is stated that the punishment is equivalent between the perpetrator and the victim, for example, a free person is punished for a free person, a slave for a slave, and a woman for a woman (Batubara, 2010). This principle aims to eliminate injustices like those during the Jahiliyyah era, where retribution was often disproportionate.

In addition to qisas, Islam provides an alternative known as diyat (compensation). Diyat is financial or material compensation given by the perpetrator to the victim's family as a substitute for qisas punishment. The payment of diyat must be done in a proper manner, without delay or causing verbal or material harm to the victim's family (Fikri, 2024).

Islam also encourages forgiveness as an act of mercy. The victim's family can choose to forgive the perpetrator without demanding qisas or diyat. This act of forgiveness is considered a noble deed that can improve social relations and prevent prolonged vengeance (Ubab, 2023).

#### *Wahbah al-Zuhaili's Method of Interpretation*

Wahbah al-Zuhaili employs a combination of classical and modern methods, namely tafsir bi al-ma'tsur (narrative-based interpretation) and tafsir bi al-ra'yi (reason-based interpretation) (Qoyyimah & Mu'iz, 2021; Yunus, 2018). He also integrates the tahlili (analytical) method to elaborate on linguistic, literary, and legal aspects, along with the maudhu'i (thematic) method to explain specific themes. His interpretive approach encompasses fiqhi (jurisprudential), adabi ijtimai'i (socio-literary), and, to a limited extent, ilmi

(scientific) aspects. This interpretation aims to address social and contemporary issues while adhering to authentic sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith (Sukron, 2018).

Furthermore, Wahbah ensures the accuracy of his interpretation by avoiding Israiliyat narrations and emphasizing asbabun nuzul (reasons for revelation), balaghah (rhetoric), i'rab (syntax), and the legal rulings contained in Qur'anic verses. The language used is simple and easily understood by modern readers. This exegesis is systematically arranged according to the order of the Uthmani Mushaf to facilitate reader comprehension (Ariyadi, 2017).

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Application of the Principle by Wahbah al-Zuhaili*

Before beginning his interpretation process, Wahbah al-Zuhaili first elaborates on several aspects related to tafsir, such as i'rab (grammatical analysis), balaghah (rhetorical beauty), mufradat lughawiyah (linguistic vocabulary), and the reasons for the revelation of verses (asbabun nuzul). After explaining these aspects, he proceeds with a direct interpretation of the verses. He then complements this with discussions on the fiqh of life or relevant legal rulings. This is the general overview of the tafsir method employed by Wahbah al-Zuhaili.

كانت عقوبة القاتل قبل الإسلام متعددة الأنواع، فعند اليهود القصاص، وعند النصرانية الدية، وعند عرب الجاهلية تشيع عادة الأخذ بالثأر، فيقتل غير القاتل، وقد يقتلون رئيس القبيلة، أو أكثر من واحد من قبيلة القاتل، وربما طلبوا بالواحد عشرة، وبالأثنى ذكراً وبالعبد حرّاً

*"In the pre-Islamic era, various punishments for murder existed. Among the Jewish community, the punishment for murder was qisas (retributive justice). Meanwhile, among the Christian community, it was diyat (compensation). However, among the Arabs of the Jahiliyyah period, a prevalent practice was revenge; they would kill someone other than the perpetrator. They even went so far as to kill the tribal chief or more than one person from the perpetrator's side. Sometimes, even if there was only one victim, they would demand retribution for ten people from the other side. If the victim was a woman, they would demand retribution for a man, and if the victim was a slave, they would seek a free person as retribution."* (Wahbah al-Zuhaili, 2003).

In Wahbah al-Zuhaili's explanation, it is stated that the law of qisas is a form of retributive justice for acts of murder, which was originally applied to the Jewish community. As for the reason behind the revelation of this verse, as previously explained, it pertains to a

dispute between two Arab communities. One group acted excessively toward the other and failed to uphold justice. Therefore, Surah Al-Baqarah verse 178 was revealed to establish the principle of justice through the implementation of the qisas law.

ثم قرر الإسلام أخذاً بالعدل والمساواة عقوبة القصاص، لأفأ تردع الناس عن ارتكاب جريمة القتل، وما تزال هذه العقوبة هي الزاجرة في عصرنا الحاضر، إذ أن السجن لا يردع كثيراً من المجرمين سفاحي الدماء. وتشريع الله هو الأعدل والأحكم والأسد. لأن الله بما يصلح الناس، وما يرى الأمم والشعوب. وأباح الشرع أخذ الدية بدلاً عن القصاص

*"Islam then established the qisas punishment as a form of implementing the principles of justice and equality, as this punishment deters people from committing murder. This punishment remains one of the most effective measures even in modern times, as imprisonment is not particularly effective in deterring those bloodthirsty criminals. The Sharia of Allah SWT is the most just, wise, and appropriate system because Allah SWT knows best what is suitable for all of humanity. Islamic Sharia also permits the acceptance of diyat (compensation) as a substitute for qisas."* (Wahbah al-Zuhaili, 2003).

Wahbah al-Zuhaili interprets this verse through the phrase *أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا* which carries a general meaning. In this context, the term *الذين* indicates generality, implying that the generality of the phrase encompasses the generality of the command. Wahbah al-Zuhaili emphasizes that the command of qisas in this verse applies universally, is not limited to a specific era, and can be implemented in the present or future. According to him, imprisonment alone is not sufficiently effective in deterring criminals, making the law of qisas relevant as a firm form of justice.

Although Wahbah al-Zuhaili interprets the verse using the principle of the generality of the text, he does not disregard the *sabab nuzul* (reason for the revelation of the verse). Before beginning his interpretation, he first explains the *sabab nuzul* of the verse. In his view, applying the principle of the generality of the text still includes the primary actors who were the cause of the verse's revelation but also extends the scope of the law to all individuals as long as the generality of the text allows. This approach differs from the method of Ibn Kathir, who does not explicitly emphasize the universal application of this verse.

Wahbah al-Zuhaili's approach highlights the importance of understanding the Qur'anic text in relation to reality, demonstrating that knowledge of the verse's text, the process of *nuzul al-Qur'an* (the revelation of the Qur'an), and the *asbab al-nuzul* are complementary elements. This understanding

underscores that interpreting Qur'anic verses requires a balance between historical context and the broader legal relevance for extended periods (Yunan, 2020).

Wahbah al-Zuhaili's approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the Qur'anic text in relation to reality, showing that knowledge of the verse's text, *nuzul al-Qur'an* (the process of the Qur'an's revelation), and *asbab al-nuzul* (the reasons for the revelation) are complementary elements. This understanding affirms that the interpretation of Qur'anic verses requires a balance between historical context and the broader legal relevance for extended periods (Yunan, 2020).

#### *Social Context and Relevance of the Law of Qisas*

The Islamic law of *qishash* is a form of punishment that aims to provide justice through the principle of retribution, such as "life for life" in the case of murder. However, it also offers flexibility through alternatives such as the provision of *diyat* (compensation) or forgiveness by the victim's family. In the social context and relevance of its application, *qishash* law has a number of important aspects. The Social Context of *Qishash* Law is as follows.

**Protection of the Right to Life:** *Qishash* protects not only the victim but also the perpetrator by providing opportunities for forgiveness or payment of *diyat*. This creates a balance between justice and humanity (*Qishash Law Suitable for Implementation in Indonesia*); **preventive Effect** The application of *qishash* law has a significant impact in preventing crimes such as murder. The threat of strict punishment can restrain a person from committing similar crimes (Darussamin, 2014); **Restoration of Social Harmony:** With the option of forgiveness and *diyat*, *qishash* contributes to the restoration of social relations damaged by criminal acts, so that society can return to harmony.

Then the most frequent issue and discourse that is often discussed is whether the law of *Qishash* is relevant to be applied in Indonesia. Here is the relevance of *qishash* law in the present: **alignment with Human Rights Principles:** Unlike the general view that *qishash* is cruel, this law protects the right to life of all parties through a restorative justice approach. This philosophy is more advanced than the retributive theory that is still dominant in many modern legal systems. **Suitable for Implementation in Indonesia;** **flexibility of the Law:** *Qishash* allows for negotiation between the victim's family and the perpetrator, thus providing room for a more humane settlement that suits the needs of society.

**Contextual Application in Indonesia:** In Indonesia, although *qishash* law has not been formally applied, its principles are reflected in the Criminal Code, such as Article 340 on premeditated murder. However, its application requires adjustments to the conditions of a

pluralistic society. The main challenge in applying qishash is the readiness of the community and the potential for conflict between religious and cultural groups. Therefore, its application must consider the principle of maslahat and avoid mafsadah (greater harm).

## Conclusion

Wahbah al-Zuhaili, through his method of interpretation, consistently applies the rule of al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz la bi khusus al-sabab. This approach emphasizes the generality of the Qur'anic verse so that the law contained therein has the flexibility to be applied in various social and cultural contexts. In his interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah verse 178, Wahbah al-Zuhaili shows that the law of qishash is not only repressive, but also has preventive and solution dimensions. The law of qishash aims to preserve human life (hifz al-nafs) and create social justice. In addition, Islam provides alternatives in the form of forgiveness and diyat as a form of mercy, which opens space for reconciliation and peace. This approach reflects the values of compassion in Islamic law while maintaining the stability of society. The al-'ibrah bi 'umum al-lafz rule applied by Wahbah al-Zuhaili is relevant to understanding Qur'anic verses in the contemporary context. By considering the values of justice and humanity, this rule ensures that Islamic law remains universal, dynamic, and able to answer the challenges of the times without losing its essence. Wahbah al-Zuhaili's interpretation becomes an important guide in bridging classical texts with modern realities.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest

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