

Thematic Approach to Qur'an Exegesis

Author(s):

Mahmood Namazi [1]

Publisher(s):

Ahlu Bayt World Assembly [4]

Category:

Qur'anic Sciences [5]

Journal:

Vol. 10, no. 4, Winter 2010 [6]

Topic Tags:

Quranic exegesis [7]

Thematic Approach to Qur'an Exegesis

Mahmood Namazi

Introduction

The Qur'an is a book of guidance, enabling man to live a noble life in this world and to enjoy eternal

happiness in the world hereafter.¹ Since the Qur'an is the main source of Islamic beliefs, laws and practices, it provides the norms to which Muslims should try to approximate their beliefs and deeds. Consequently from the earliest times, there have been, among the Muslims, sustained efforts to understand the divine message enshrined in the Qur'anic verses. Tafsir (exegesis), i.e. explaining the meaning of the Qur'anic verse, clarifying its import and determining its significance, was one of the earliest of the Islamic sciences to develop.

According to S. M. H. Tabataba'i, the verse

"Even as we have sent among you, of yourselves, a Messenger, to recite Our signs to you and purify you, and to teach you the Book and the Wisdom, and to teach you that you knew not"
(Surah Baqarah 2: 146)

shows that the interpretation of the Qur'an began with its revelation.² This is because the above mentioned verse clearly indicates two things; the recitation of the Qur'an and its teaching. Ta'lim (teaching) in this verse means explaining the meaning of the Qur'anic verses.

The various interpretations of the Qur'an that are available belong to different stages of the intellectual history of Islam, and reflect in themselves the development of Islamic thought. In this paper I intend to examine briefly the meaning, history and approaches of tafsir, and then to consider analytical and thematic approaches to the interpretations of the Qur'an, explaining briefly their concepts and definitions and elaborating on their merits and demerits.

I will also try to examine the superiority of the thematic approach to Qur'an exegesis. First, however, I would like to provide a glance at the Qur'an, and examine its significance and the conditions necessary for an exegete to understand it.

The Qur'an

No book in history has ever influenced human societies to the extent that the Qur'an has. To understand the significance of the Qur'an one should compare its contents with other books that existed at that time, especially other books of scripture. While the latter discuss only the problem of the existence of God and offer simple moral advice, the Qur'an formulates the tenets of faith and communicates the ideas and views that are essential for society.

It contains the principles of moral, sociological and familial values for man and his society. Given its importance in Islam, the utilization of any other source depends upon a prior knowledge of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the criterion and standard for judging all other sources. According to Shi'a belief in particular, hadith should be judged in the light of the Qur'an. A Shi'a Muslim can accept hadith only when it is in accordance with the teaching of the Qur'an.³

There are three significant distinct characteristics of the Qur'an which distinguish it from other religious

writings. The first is that the Qur'an is all-authentic. The second characteristic of the Qur'an is the quality of its contents; its teachings are original and have not been adapted or plagiarized. The third characteristic of the Qur'an is its divine identity; its teachings have been delivered by God to the Prophet Muhammad (S), and he was only a recipient of this revelation and message.

The first two conditions necessary for understanding the Qur'an are a knowledge of the Arabic language and a knowledge of the history of Islam.⁴ The Qur'an was revealed gradually over a period of twenty-three years of the Prophet's life.

Because of this fact, every verse of the Qur'an is related to a specific historical incident called a sha'n-i nuzul. The sha'n-i nuzul by itself does not restrict the meaning of the verse, but knowledge of the particulars of revelation throws more light on the underlying subject matter. Regarding the suggestive role of the sha'n-i nuzul, Norman Calder states that the text in isolation of its sha'n nuzul is not only unproblematic, it is meaningless.⁵

The text of the Qur'an takes on meaning only when it is systematically juxtaposed to a certain historical structure. I. H. A. Faruqi says that "there are occasions in the Qur'an which could not be easily comprehended merely by the knowledge of Arabic language.

In the Qur'an one finds references to the history of the sons of Israel and other people, the costumes and practice of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Thus for the true understanding of the Qur'an one has to have the knowledge of Judeo-Christian and pre-Islamic Arab history as well as the events which invited any particular revelation, besides, of course a good knowledge of Arabic language."⁶

The third and perhaps most important condition necessary for understanding the Qur'an is having a correct knowledge of Prophet Muhammad (S)'s sayings and realizing that he was the true interpreter.

As the Qur'an says:

"... we have sent down to thee the Remembrance that thou mayest make it clear to mankind what was sent down to them ..."⁷

"It is He who has raised up from the common people a Messenger from them, to recite His signs to them and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom ..."⁸

Therefore according to the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad (S) himself is the foremost exegete of the Qur'an. Whatever has reached us from the Prophet is of great help in our understanding of its text.⁹

Tafsir

The word "tafsir" is derived from the root f-s-r which has the meaning of "opening", or "unveiling".¹⁰ The word tafsir, Husain Dhahabi says,¹¹ in relation to the Qur'an, is understood in the sense of "unveiling" the

will of God hidden in His speech as far as it is possible for human beings. It also contains all the related requirements which help in this effort.

According to Andrew Rippin, tafsir, an Arabic word meaning interpretation, is itself used only once in the Qur'an (Surah 25:33).

However there is much discussion in various Arabic sources concerning the exact meaning of this term and its relationship with other technical words such as ma'ani, ta'wil and shar', all of which denote "interpretation" in some way.¹² The earliest major term used as the title for the works of interpretation is "ma'ani" literally "meanings".

Tafsir and Ta'wil

Ta'wil is another word which, in earlier times, was understood differently from tafsir. While tafsir deals with direct, external and literal understanding of the Qur'an, ta'wil is a human attempt to explain the Qur'an in different ways based on arguments.¹³ With the passage of time (in the third to the tenth century¹⁴) this distinction was forgotten and these two words became almost synonymous and were understood to refer to all types of interpretation.

However, the word ta'wil continued to be used for explaining the meaning of the Qur'an by rational argument, personal opinion, individual research, or expertise. An early exegete, Muqatil ibn Sulayman (d.767), for example, defines tafsir as describing what is known on the human level and ta'wil as what is known to God alone, or tafsir as applying to passages with one interpretation and ta'wil to those with multiple aspects.¹⁵ A further suggestion is that of some Shi'a scholars who use the word ta'wil for the interpretation of the esoteric parts of the Qur'an.¹⁶

Sources of Tafsir

While the Shi'a rely heavily on the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and Imams in order to understand the Qur'an, the Sunnites, according to I. H. A. Faruqi,¹⁷ rely on four basic sources for the interpretation of the Qur'an: the Qur'an itself, Prophetic traditions, the Companions' independent opinions and Judeo-Christian traditions.

In any case, the main source for interpreting the Qur'an is clearly the Qur'an. We should try to understand the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself because the verses of the Qur'an constitute a completely united integral whole, a coherent unified structure. Thus if we single out a verse from the Qur'an and try to understand it in isolation from the rest of the book, we comprehend it, but not in a complete or a profound sense.

This is because certain verses of the Qur'an explain other verses, or as the saying goes: *al-Qur'an yufassiru badhuhu badha*. This method has been affirmed by all great commentators of the Qur'an.

There are many occasions in the Qur'an whereby if a single verse is studied without placing it in its proper context, it gives quite a different meaning than when it is seen in the light of the verses dealing with a similar subject.¹⁸

The Background of Qur'an Exegesis among Muslim Scholars

As was stated before, Tafsir, that is, explaining the meaning of the Qur'anic verse, clarifying its import and finding out its significance, is one of the earliest academic activities in Islam.

S. M. H. Tabatba'i in his Tafsir al-Mizan reports that the first exegetes were a few companions of the prophet, like Ibn 'Abbas, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and others.¹⁹

Exegesis in those days was confined to explanation of the literary aspects of the verse, an account of its background and occasionally an interpretation of it with the help of another verse. If the verse was about a historical event or was related to such topics as genesis or resurrection, etc., then sometimes a few traditions of the Prophet were narrated to make its meaning clear. This was true of the style of the disciples of the companions such as Mujahid, Qutadah, Ibn Layla and others, who lived in the first two centuries after hijrah.

During the same period, when the Islamic Empire was expanding, the Muslims came into contact with many different peoples, and involved themselves in religious discussions with scholars of various other religions and sects.

This gave rise to the theological discourse, known in Islam as 'ilm al-kalam. Moreover, many of the works of the Greek philosophers were translated into Arabic. This created a taste for intellectual and philosophical arguments among the Muslim intelligentsia.

At the same time al-tasawwuf (mysticism) developed a following in society; people were attracted to it as it held out the promise of revealing to them the realities of religion through severe self-discipline and rigorous asceticism, instead of entangling them in verbal polemic and intellectual arguments.

There also emerged at this time a group whose members called themselves people of tradition (ahl-i hadith), and who thought that salvation depended on believing in the apparent meaning of the Qur'an and the tradition, without any scientific inquiry. The most they allowed was research into the textual value of the words.

Thus, before the second century had proceeded very far, Muslim society had broadly split into four groups: the theologians, the philosophers, the Sufis and people of tradition. There was intellectual chaos in the Ummah. There was dispute over the meanings of the names and attributes of Allah as well as about His actions: there was conflict surrounding the reality of the heavens and earth and what is in them. Opinions differed whether man is a helpless tool in divine hands, or is a free agent.

There was controversy about various aspects of reward and punishment and arguments about al-Barzakh (the intervening period between death and the day of Resurrection), Resurrection, paradise and hell. Every group tried to support its own views and opinions by referring to the Qur'an, and exegesis had to serve this purpose.

According to Tabataba'i, the people of tradition explained the Qur'an with the traditions ascribed to the companions and overlooked the rational arguments.²⁰ But Allah has not said in His book that rational proof has no validity. How could He say so when the authenticity of the Book itself depended on rational proof. He has called mankind, rather, to meditate on the Qur'anic verses in order to remove any apparent discrepancy in them.

Allah has revealed the Qur'an as guidance, and has made it a light and an explanation of everything. So why should light seek brightness from others' guidance? Why should **"an explanation of everything"** (**Surah Nahl 16.89**) be explained by other words?

The theologians and the philosophers and the Sufis each clung to the verse that seemed to support their respective beliefs and tried to explain away whatever was apparently against it. Such exegesis should be called adaptation rather than explanation. There are two ways of explaining a verse. The first way seeks to answer the following question: "What does the Qur'an say?"

The second way however seeks to answer: "How can this verse be explained in such a way as to fit my belief?" The difference between the two approaches is quite clear. The former abandons every pre-conceived idea and goes where the Qur'an leads; the latter attempts to tailor the Qur'an to fit a set of pre-conceived beliefs, a method of exegesis which is dubious at best. Obviously the Qur'an was not revealed to guide any one particular group.

If we look at all the above-mentioned ways of exegesis we will find that they all suffer from a most serious defect. They impose the results of academic or philosophic arguments on the Qur'anic meanings; they make the Qur'an conform to an extraneous idea. In this way explanation turn into adaptation, the realities of the Qur'an are explained away as allegories and its manifest meanings are sacrificed for so-called interpretation.

According to Tabataba'i, the Qur'an itself provides the best explanation of its role, defining itself as **"guidance for the world"** (**Surah Ale Imran 3.96**), **"the manifest light"** (**Surah Nisa 4. 174**) and **"the explanation of everything"** (**Surah Nahl 16.89**).²¹ So how is it possible for such a book not to be able to explain its own self?

Also the Qur'an has described itself in these words:

"a guidance for mankind and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between wrong)"
(**Surah Baqarah 2. 185**)

and Allah Himself has also said:

"and we have sent down a manifest light" (Surah Nisa 4. 174).

The Qur'an is accordingly a guidance, an evidence, a means of discrimination between right and wrong and a manifest light for the people, to guide them properly and help them in all their needs.

Therefore, there is only one way to explain a Qur'anic verse, and that is with the help of other relevant verses, meditating on them together and identifying an individual person or thing by its particulars and attributes mentioned in the verse. Tabataba'i insists that this is the only correct method of Qur'an exegesis.

The Legitimizing of Tafsir in the Qur'an

In the view of some Shi'i scholars who lived three or four centuries ago, the Qur'an is far too great a subject to be comprehended by humble human beings. These scholars also known as Akhbaris, believed that it was only the privilege of the Prophet and the Imams to ponder over the verses of the Qur'an. We ordinary human beings only have the right to read and recite the Qur'an.

However the Qur'an itself explicitly refuses this approach, saying

"What, do they not ponder the Qur'an? Or is it that there are locks upon their hearts?" (Surah Muhammad 47:24);

similarly,

***"This is the Book We have revealed to you abounding in good, that they may ponder the verses",
"... that those endowed with understanding may ponder its signs and so remember." (Surah Sad 38:29).***

These verses clearly point out that we have not been sent the Qur'an merely for it to be kissed and embraced, but in order to read it and contemplate its contents.²²

Although tafsir al-ma'thur (hadith-based interpretation) forms the main body of tafsir literature, there are a variety of methods to be found in the history of Qur'an exegesis. Among the most important ones are: narrative interpretation (Muqatil ibn Sulayman- Tafsir al-Qur'an); legal interpretation (Muqatil ibn Sulayman- Tafsir khams mi'ah ayah min al-Qur'an); textual interpretation (al-Farra'-Ma'ani al-Qur'an), rhetorical interpretation (Abu 'Ubaydah d.824-Majaz al-Qur'an), and finally allegorical interpretation, which is clearly represented in Sufi tafsirs such as Sahl al-Tustari's Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Adhim.²³

However it is extremely important to mention again that, opposed all these interpretations which seek to make the Qur'anic text conform with the prior views of a particular school, there is another kind that is unbiased in its own approach and merely seeks to draw from the Qur'an those understandings that the

Qur'an itself wishes to impart, without attempting to make it conform to a single view point.

In seeking the Qur'an's view of itself, there are two fundamental methods of tafsir which developed with the growth of Islamic thought: the analytic approach to exegesis (al-'ittijah al-tajzi'i fi al-tafsir), and the thematic or synthetic approach to exegesis (al-'ittijah al-mawdhū'i fi al-tafsir).²⁴

The Analytic Approach

The analytic approach consists of the exegete dealing with the Qur'an verse by verse, following the Qur'anic text and interpreting it in a piecemeal manner. In this manner the exegete, while taking into consideration the context in which the verse occurs, uses those instruments of exegesis that he believes to be effective such as Arabic grammar, literal meanings, traditions or even other verses that have some word or meaning in common with the verse under study.

This method began during the era of the Companions of the Prophet and the following generation (Tabi'un) at the level of analytic explanation of some difficult words and verses of the Qur'an. By the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth Islamic centuries, it took its final and most extensive form in the works of Ibn Majah, and al-Tabari.

The development of the analytic method continued until it eventually acquired the most evolved form in the shape of encyclopedic exegesis, in which the exegete begins from the first verse of Sura al-Fatiha and concludes with last verse of Sura al-Nas, explaining the text verse by verse.

Although in this method the exegete does not neglect other verses that are relative or even traditions in trying to understand the verse he is working upon, his use of other verses is limited to comprehending the literal meaning of the word of the verse being commented upon. Thus the exegete, without generally exceeding this limit, stops after comprehending the meaning of the certain part of the Qur'anic text. For the aim of the analytic method is to comprehend the meaning of God's words.²⁵

Merits and Demerits of the Analytic Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis

The analytic method of tafsir provides a vast collection of Qur'anic meanings when taken into consideration separately. In other words we become aware of a large number of ideas and teachings of the Qur'an which are disconnected, such that it is not possible for us to identify the relation existing between them or to discover their pattern of arrangement. The analytical method does not aim at giving the Qur'anic view regarding the different ranges of human activity.

Therefore, what we may be left with is a huge variety of facts between which we are unable to determine any connection. The second demerit of this method is that, because the exegete is by nature commenting on the meaning of isolated words by giving a synonym, clarifying unfamiliar terms, or

applying new interpretations to the circumstances of the revelation (asbab al-nuzul), such activities have the potential of compelling the exegete to go beyond lexical meaning and to introduce innovations into the text of the Qur'an.

The Thematic Method

The term "thematic," i.e. relating to a theme, is used to describe the method in which an exegete selects a group of verses related to a single theme. We may also call this method "synthetic" because it does not seek to impose human experience on the Qur'an, rather it seeks to synthesize these verses and their meaning into a single composite view and to unite human experience with the Qur'an. In this method the exegete does not interpret the Qur'an verse by verse; rather the exegete attempts to study the whole Qur'an by taking up a single theme from various doctrinal, social, cosmological and ethical themes dealt with by the Qur'an.

This method seeks to find or to discover the Qur'anic viewpoint concerning a particular issue from amongst the various issues related to life and the universe. For example it can be used to study the Qur'anic approach regarding prophethood, economic theory in the Qur'an and the cosmology of the Qur'an.

However it should be mentioned that the kinds of Qur'anic studies which are occasionally referred to as "thematic exegeses" i.e., the studies of some exegetes concerning some specific topics such as asbab al-nuzul of the verses, the nasikh and mansukh verses, the metaphors used in the Qur'an, etc. are not thematic exegesis.

Such studies are compilations of a number of the problems which are raised in analytic tafsir. According to M. B. Sadr,²⁶ while the prevalence of the thematic study approaches in fiqh has greatly developed Islamic legal thought, the prevalence of the analytic method in Qur'anic studies, which has dominated tafsir literature for several centuries, has impeded the development of Qur'anic thought and resulted in its acquiring a quality of repetitiousness, so much so that we may say that centuries passed after the exegetic works of al-Tabari, al-Razi and al-Shaykh al-Tusi without Islamic thought being able to create anything really new despite the extensive changes brought about over time in the various spheres of human life.

The Differences between the Two Methods

1. While the analytic method impedes the growth of Qur'anic thought, the thematic method, when applied to fiqh, has led to a creative expansion in the field of law.
2. The role of the exegete in the analytic method is generally passive because he starts by taking into consideration a particular Qur'anic verse without formulating any premises or plans beforehand. In this case the exegete is a pure listener.

The exegete's preoccupation is to listen carefully with a clear mind and reach classical Arabic and its cultures and style. Therefore the exegete's role is passive while the Qur'an plays an active role.

3. The role of the exegete who adopts the thematic method is, on the other hand, active because he does not start his interpretation from the text of the Qur'an, but from the reality of life. He concentrates on the particular subject out of the great number of problems affecting humanity in relation to the ideological, social or cosmological aspect of life, and starts a dialogue with the Qur'an; the exegete questions and the Qur'an answers.²⁷

Consequently, the perpetual effort of thematic tafsir is to set the human intellectual heritage and experience as well as the contemporary problematic thoughts. In this task the tafsir does not begin and end with the Qur'an; rather it begins with reality and ends with the Qur'an as a true source.

4. As we know through the Qur'an itself, and through the hadiths, the Qur'an is a perennial, inexhaustible source. The inexhaustible bounty of the Qur'an is discoverable only through the thematic method because the potential of lexical exegesis is limited while the thematic method is developmental.

5. The thematic method goes a step beyond the analytic method. The analytic method tries to explain details while the thematic method seeks to know the relationship between the different verses whose individual details have been discovered by the analytic method. The thematic method is capable of continuous productivity and of replenishing new material provided by human experience.

Conclusion

By looking at the differences between the analytic and thematic methods one can conclude that the thematic method is the superior of the two. But it should be noted that there is no conflict between the two methods, because the thematic method evidently stands in need of the ascertainment by the analytic method of the meanings of the verses under study. Also, analytic tafsir, in the course of its thematic journey, does stumble upon Qur'anic ideas related to major issues of human life.

However the superior quality of the thematic method over the analytic method does not mean that the former should replace the latter. According to S. M. B. Sadr²⁸ what is meant is that we should add the former to the latter, because thematic tafsir is nothing but a step beyond the analytic tafsir. In other words we should unite the two methods because they are mutually supportive.

Bibliography

Books

Amir al-Mu'minin, Ali ibn Abi Talib(A). Nahj al-Balagha. Qum: Dar al-Hijra, 1990.

'Awwsi, Ali. Al-Tabatba'i wa Manhajuhu fi Tafsirih al-Mizan. Tehran: Mu'awiniyyat al-Riyasa lil-'Alaqa al-

Dawliyya, 1985.

Arberry, Arthur J., trans. *The Koran Interpreted*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Dhahabi, Husain. *al-Tafsir wal-Mufasssirun*. Vol. 1. Cairo: Dar al- Kutub al-Hadith, 1961.

Faruqi, I. H. Azad. *The Tarjuman al-Qur'an: A Critical Analysis of Maulana Abu'l-Kalam Azad's Approach to the Understanding of the Qur'an*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982.

Hawting, G. R. and A. Sharif Abdul-Kader, eds. *Approaches to the Qur'an*. London & New York: Routledge, 1993.

Sadr, al-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir. *Muqaddimat fi al-Tafsir al- Mawdhu'i lil-Qur'an*. Bairut: Dar al-Tawjih al-Islami, 1980.

Suyuti, al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an. Vol. 2. Mahmiyah, Egypt: Idara Shaikh 'Uthman `Abd al-Razzaq, 1206 A.H.

Tabataba'i, Sayyed Muhammad Husain. *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al- Qur'an*. 2nd ed. Bairut: Mu'assasat al-A'lami, 1972.

Zarkashi, al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an. Vol. 2. Cairo: Isa al- Babi al-Halabi, 1957.

Articles

Andrew Rippin. "Tafsir." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 14. Ed. Mircea Eliade. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987, pp. 236-244.

Calder, Norman. "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir". In *Approaches to the Qur'an*, ed. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, pp. 101-140. (London: Routledge, 1993).

Mutahhari, Murtadha. "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an." *Al-Tawhid* (1987), pp. 9-25.

Sadr, Muhammad Baqir. "Thematic Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis." *Al-Tawhid* (1988-89), pp. 17- 29.

1. Arthur J. Arberry, trans., *The Koran Interpreted*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

"That is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the godfearing." 2:3

"...There has come to you from God a light, and a Book Manifest whereby God guides whosoever follows His good pleasure in the ways of peace,..."5: 17-8

2. Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Mu'assisat al-A'lami, 1972), p. 1. S. M. H. Tabataba'i (d.1402/1981) is one of the most profoundly original and influential thinkers in recent Islam. His fame rests partly on his various academic works, the most important being his great thematic exegesis of the Qur'an, *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir*

al-Qur'an. It may correctly be said to be the foundation stone of the Shi'i academic prestige which Tabataba'i was accorded in the Muslim world. Al-Mizan is published in Arabic in 20 volumes which present a true picture of the author's academic approach and his way of thinking.

3. Murtadha Mutahhari, "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," Al-Tawhid (1987), pp. 9–10. There are four more books that come after the Qur'an and that are regarded as the most sacred and the most authentic sources by the Shi'a Muslim: Al-Kafi, Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih, Tahdhib al-Ahkam, and al-Istibsar. However these sources and other sacred sources such as Nahj al-Balaghah and Sahifah Sajjadiyyah are as trustworthy as they may be in conformity with the Qur'an, and reliable so far as their words comply with the teaching of the Qur'an and do not conflict with it. According to the Shi'a hadiths, any hadith narrated from the Prophet Muhammad or the twelve infallible Imams should be checked against the Qur'an; if they do not comply with the Qur'an, they should be regarded as false since they have not said anything that can go against the Qur'anic teaching.

4. Mutahhari "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," p. 16.

5. Norman Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir," in Approaches to the Qur'an, ed. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993) p.105.

6. I. H. A. Faruqi, The Tarjuman al-Qur'an, p. 5.

7. A. J. Arberry, The Koran, 16:47.

8. Ibid., 62:2.

9. M. Mutahhari "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," p. 16. It should be noted that according to the Shi'a the Prophet has transmitted everything he obtained from God to his successors i.e. the Imams. Thus, the tradition of the Imams possess the same degree of authenticity as those obtained directly from the Prophet. So these traditions are of great help in understanding the Qur'an.

10. Zarkashi, Al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, vol. 2, (Cairo: 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1957); and Suyuti, al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, vol. 2, (Mahmadiyah, Egypt: Idara Shaikh 'Uthman 'Abd al-Razzaq, 1206 A.H.) p. 179. (quoted in I. H. A. Faruqi, The Tarjuman al-Qur'an.p. 2.)

11. Husain Dhahabi, Al-Tafsir wal-Mufasssirun, vol. 1. (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadith, 1961. (q. I. H. Azad Faruqi, The Tarjuman al-Qur'an. 1982. p. 2.)

12. Andrew Rippin, "Tafsir," in The Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 14, ed. Mircea (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p. 236.

13. Suyuti, al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 179. (q. I. H. A. Faruqi, The Tarjuman al-Qur'an. 1982. p. 2.)

14. A. Rippin, "Tafsir", p. 236.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid

17. I. H. A. Faruqi, The Tarjuman al-Qur'an, p. 5–7.

18. M. Mutahhari "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," p. 17. See also Ali al-Awsi, Al-Tabataba'i wa Manhajuhu fi Tafsirih al-Mizan (Tehran: Mu'awiniyyat al-Riyasa lil 'Alaqa al-Dawliyyah, 1985), p. 125.

19. S. M. H. Tabatabai, al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an. vol. 1. p. 2.

20. S. M. H. Tabataba'i, al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, v.1, p. 5.

21. Ibid.

22. M. Mutahhari "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," p. 23. See also A. Rippin, "Tafsir," p. 238 and A. al-'Aowski, Al-Tabataba'i wa Manhajahu fi Tafsirih al-Mizan, pp. 99.

23. A. Rippin, "Tafsir", p. 238–9; see also I. H. A. Faruqi, The Tarjuman al-Qur'an, p. 12–21. See also A. al-Awsi, Al-Tabatbai wa Manhajahu fi Tafsirih al-Mizan. 1985. p. 99–110.

24. Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, Muqaddimat fi al-Tafsir al-Mawdu'i lil-Qur'an, (Beirut: Dar al-Tawjih al-Islami), 1980. p. 10. Or Muhammad Baqir Sadr, "Thematic Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis" Al-Tawhid, (1988–9) p. 17.

25. S. M. B. Sadr, Muqaddimat fi al-Tafsir al-Mawdu'i lil-Qur'an. p. 10–12; M. B. Sadr, "Thematic Approach". Al-Tawhid, pp. 17–18.

26. S. M. B. Sadr, Muqaddimat fi al-Tafsir al-Mawdu'i lil-Qur'an. pp. 13–18; M. B. Sadr, "Thematic Approach". Al-Tawhid, pp. 19–21.

27. Ali ibn Abi Talib (A), Nahj al-Balagha, (Qum: Dar al-Hijra, 1990), Khutba 158. p. 223. "... That (light) is the Qur'an. Try to make it speak, it will never speak, though I will inform you about it. Indeed, it contains the knowledge of the future and the reports of the past, the cure for your ills and the system of (organizing) your affairs."

28. S. M. B. Sadr, Muqaddimat fi al-Tafsir al-Mawdu'i lil-Qur'an, pp. 29-30; M. B. Sadr, "Thematic Approach". Al-Tawhid, p. 28.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/message-thaqalayn/vol-10-no-4-winter-2010/thematic-approach-quran-exegesis-mahmood-namazi>

Links

[1] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/mahmood-namazi>

[2] <https://www.al-islam.org/user/login?destination=node/40492%23comment-form>

[3] <https://www.al-islam.org/user/register?destination=node/40492%23comment-form>

[4] <https://www.al-islam.org/organization/ahlul-bayt-world-assembly>

[5] <https://www.al-islam.org/library/quranic-sciences>

[6] <https://www.al-islam.org/journals/vol-10-no-4-winter-2010>

[7] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/quranic-exegesis>