

Unclear (Mutashabih) Verses According to Ibn Shahr Ashub



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This article offers an account of *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh* by Ibn Shahr Ashub; the work offers both his ideas and notable scholars' ideas and examples to explain the three groups of equivocal verses and the philosophy behind them.

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Abstract

One of the key topics studied in the field of Qur'anic sciences is the equivocal verses (*mutashabihat*), as opposed to unequivocal verses (*muhkam*) which are fixed and permanent rather than subject to change. Various interpretations on the meaning and philosophy of both equivocal and unequivocal verses have been offered by scholars of Islamic sects.

This article offers an account of *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh* by Ibn Shahr Ashub, a Twelver Shi'i poet and exegete of the Qur'an, who composed the work by popular demand of his inquiring students. The work offers both his ideas and notable scholars' ideas and examples to explain the three groups of equivocal verses and the philosophy behind them.

The verses of the Qur'an are divided into two groups: definitive and unclear ones, as seen in verse:

It is He who has sent down to you the Book. Parts of it are definitive verses, which are the mother of the Book, while others are metaphorical. As for those in whose hearts is deviance, they pursue what is metaphorical in it, courting temptation and courting its interpretation. But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.' And none takes admonition except those who possess intellect. 1(3:7)

In English translations, the word *mutashabihat* has been translated into various words, including: metaphorical, allegorical, unclear, obscure, ambiguous, resembling, and similar to each other, of which here I have chosen the word "unclear".

Discussions about definitive and unclear verses began from the early age of Islam, and until now constitute one of the most important topics in the field of Qur'anic studies. The meaning of definitive and unclear verses, the philosophy of unclear verses, the contradiction between the existence of such verses in the Qur'an on the one hand and its being a light and a clarifying instrument for everything on the other, are some of the questions in these discussions.

The first work written on unclear verses was by Hamza ibn Habib al-Zayyat Al-Kufi,² a companion of Imam Sadiq, known as 'Imam al-Qurra' or 'leading reciter of the Quran.'³ After him, other scholars who wrote on *mutashabih al-Qur'an* include: Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Harun;⁴ Hasan ibn Hasan ibn Musa Al-Nawbakhti;⁵ Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-'Amidi,⁶ the author of *Tanqih Al-Balagha*; Mulla Sadra,⁷ the famous philosopher.

Ibn Shahr Ashub⁸, a prolific author in various fields of study, wrote three books on Qur'anic studies: *Al-Asbab wa al-Nuzul*; *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*; and *al-Manaqib*, in which he gathered the verses regarding the virtues of the progeny of the Prophet. In this article, his book *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh* will be analyzed.

Author's biography

Hafiz Abu Ja'far (Abu 'Abdillah) Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Shahr Ashub ibn Abi Nasr ibn Abi al-Jaysh al-Mazandarani, better known as Ibn Shahr Ashub, was born in 489 AH (1096 AD) and passed away in 588 AH (1192 AD) while he was 99 years old. He was also known as Rashid al-Din, 'Izz al-Din, and Shaykh al-Ta'ifah.

An Ithna 'Ashari scholar, Ibn Shahr Ashub was a jurist, theologian, exegete of the Qur'an, a traditionalist, and a poet. He memorized the Qur'an when he was 8 years old, was knowledgeable, and was renowned for his piety and worship. As a Shi'i scholar, he is compared to Khatib al-Baghdadi, the famous Sunni scholar. He travelled to various cities such as Khurasan, Khwarazm, Nishapur, and Sabziwar. At the time of

al-Muqtafi, ibn Shahr Ashub set out for Baghdad and during this journey, he visited the scholars of Ray, Kashan, Isfahan, and Hamadan. After some years of staying in Baghdad, he left for Musil and thereafter, Hallab was ruled by Al-Hamdan, a Shi'a dynasty. He lived in Hallab until the end of his life, and was buried on the hillside of Mount Jawshan.

Among some of his teachers were Ahmad al-Ghazzali, Jar-Allah Zamakhshari, Abu Ali Tabarsi, Abu al-Hasan al-Bayhaqi, Qutb Rawandi, and Abu al-Futuh al-Razi. His students include prominent scholars such as Sayyid Muhammad ibn Zuhra al-Halabi, Ali bin Shi'ra al-Hilli, Muhammad ibn Idris al-Hilli, ibn Bitriq al-Hilli, and ibn Abi Tayy al-Hilli.⁹

A general outlook of Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh

This book has been published in 2 volumes. The content of the first volume includes 5 sections:

- 1- Monotheism, the principles of the religion, and Divine Attributes
- 2- The creation of the skies, earth, and other creatures
- 3- Happiness, misery, and predestination
- 4- Prophecy and the stories of the prophets
- 5- Various discussions under the title "*Mufradat*"

The 2nd volume contains issues such as:

- 1- Qur'anic verses regarding Prophet Muhammad
- 2- The virtues of the progeny of Prophet Muhammad
- 3- Various subjects, such as repentance and the Day of Judgment
- 4- Qur'anic verses on jurisprudence and its principles
- 5- Abrogated and abrogating verses.

Rather than being a work on the entire interpretation of the Qur'an, it discusses the unclear verses, or those about which there are disagreements among scholars and exegetes.

The introduction of Mutashabih al-Qur'an

In his introduction to *Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*, Ibn Shahr Ashub clarifies that he has written it as an answer to the request of his students to explain unclear verses and interpretations in which scholars differ. He then describes the difficulty of this field of study: "I swear that such study is a deep sea one of which is rarely found in Shi'i theological works and exegeses."¹⁰

He then adds that some of his points are his own ideas and others are derived from scholars.

The definition of definitive (*muḥkam*) and unclear (*mutashabih*) verses is the most important issue in this introduction. Ibn Shahr Ashub begins with his definition of 'unclear verses': "Unclear verses are those that include meanings that may not be understood by their appearance except if accompanied by some evidence that clarify their meaning."¹¹

Ashub then quotes the views of other scholars regarding the definition of these verses:

- Ibn 'Abbas: "Definitive verses are the abrogating ones; unclear verses are the abrogated ones."
- Mujahid: "Definitive verses are the ones whose meaning is clear; unclear verses are the ones whose meaning is ambiguous."
- Al-Jubā'i: "A definitive verse has only one meaning; an unclear verse may have two meanings or more."
- Jabir: "The verses we are able to define their interpretation are the definitive ones, otherwise they are unclear."
- Unknown: "An unclear verse is the one whose meaning does not fit its wordings except if we add, omit, or move some words."¹²

The next section discusses the reason as to why unclear verses have been called "*mutashabih*": Since they resemble the definitive verses (*mutashabih* is derived from ش-ب-ه meaning 'to resemble');

- Since their real meaning is mixed with their false meaning (in this case, *mutashabih* is derived from اشتباه which means 'mistake').

The three groups of unclear verses

1. The verses that may have two, three, or more meanings in which the most appropriate meaning should be chosen. Examples:

a. 5:64:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ

The Jews say, 'Allah's hand is tied up'. (5:64)

b. 54: 13–14:

وَحَمَلْنَاهُ عَلَى ذَاتِ أَلْوَاحٍ وَدُسُرٍ تَجْرِي بِأَعْيُنِنَا جَزَاءً لِمَنْ كَانَ كُفِرَ

Then we embarked Noah in the Ark made of planks and nails; And the Ark was floating under Our Supervision and it was the reward for The one who had been denied [by The disbelievers]. (54: 13–14)

2. Verses in which the apparent meanings contradict each other, such those that which define the period in which the heavens were created:

a. Two days:

فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ

Then He divided and shaped the gaseous smoke into seven heavens within two days. (41: 12)

b. Four days:

وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِّلسَّائِلِينَ

He is the One Who placed firm and fixed mountains on the earth to keep it and its inhabitants secure from quakes and trembling; and He Ordained Sustenance for the people according to Their needs, all in four days. (41: 10)

c. Six days:

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ

Indeed your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days. (7:54)

3. Verses that are definitive while their objective meaning is to clarify unclear verses:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

Nothing is like Him. (42: 11)

Ashub then introduces three means by which one may understand the proper meaning of unclear verses:

- a. books of lexicography
- b. reason
- c. religious principles

The philosophy behind unclear verses

Why hasn't Allah sent every verse in a clear way, without ambiguity? Ashub's responses are as follows:

1. To encourage Muslims to ponder upon the verses, and by means of their intellect and reflection, to come to an understanding of unclear verses. This causes them not to rely only on the narrated sayings. Also, as is proven in theology, the truthfulness of a prophet should be illustrated by reason; otherwise, no one can rely on him, as his words may be wrong.
2. Through such verses, the learned and unlearned people will be distinguished, as verse 3:7 reads:

وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۚ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ

But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge. (3:7)

3. The Qur'an has been revealed in the Arabic language in which the use of different techniques of rhetoric such as metaphors, allegories, allusions, and irony.

After the introduction, Ashub studies the unclear and disagreed-upon verses one by one. In each case, he offers his and occasionally others' viewpoint as the interpretation of those verses. These verses can be listed under various titles in the first volume, some of which are the following:

The creation of the heavens, The Lord of east and west, The creation of Adam, The heart, The angels, Satan, Glorification (*tasbih*), The green tree (الشجر الاخضر), Creation of the world, The sun and moon, The story of Korah, Magic, The preserved tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*), The soul, Knowledge, Invitation, Contemplation, Divine knowledge, Divine hearing, The Quran, Divine will, Divine richness, Closeness to Allah, The Divine 'Arsh (throne), Revelation, The face of Allah, The hand of Allah, the Right hand of

Allah, The vicinage of Allah, The coming of Allah, Other Divine Attributes, Looking at Allah, The manifestation of Allah, The concept of *liqa' Allah* (meeting Allah), The life of Allah, *Iman* (faith) and Islam, Divine Justice, Predestination, Free will, Light and guidance, Divine providence, Divine Permission, Divine devise (*makr*), Infallibility; and the stories of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Zachariah, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Shu'ayb, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah and Jesus.

Some titles in the 2nd volume include: The story of the Prophet Muhammad, Forgiveness and repentance, Consulting, Mercy, The necessity of the existence of a prophet or an Imam in every age, Imam Ali and his virtues, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn and their virtues, proving the Imamate of the Imams, Caliphate, Love for the Ahlul Bayt, Sustenance, The term of one's life, Death, Return to life (*raj'at*), The experience in the grave, The Day of Judgement, Hell and its punishments, Paradise and its rewards, Intercession, The meaning of Divine will, Abrogation, Analogy, Purification, The minor ablution (*wudu'*), The ritual prayer and its rules, Legal alms (*zakat*), Fasting and its rules, The pilgrimage (*hajj*) and its rules, Jihad and its rules, Marriage and divorce and their rules, Enjoining good and forbidding evil and their rules, hunting and its rules, forbidden foods and drinks, inheritance, and legal punishments (*hudud*). And the end of the book is on Arabic grammar and rhetoric.

Ashub's work finished in 507 AH when he was 81 years old, when his knowledge reached its climax.

The following delves into Ashub's discussion on theology, Arabic grammar, and jurisprudence.

On "coming" of Allah

On "coming" of Allah¹³

Ashub mentions five relevant verses:

1. Verse 89:22:

وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا

"...and your Lord comes and the angels in ranks." (89:22)

"...and your Lord comes" actually means 'the command of your Lord comes.' Therefore, the *mudaf* (annexed to another noun) has been omitted and the *mudaf ilayh* (that to which annexation is made) has replaced it. Omitting in such cases where one cannot hold to the apparent meaning is permissible, as seen in the following verse:

وَأَسْأَلُ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا

While the apparent meaning of this verse is "Ask the town we were in"; it actually means **"Ask [the people of] the town we were in". (12:82)**

According to al-Hasan, it means "and the promise of your lord comes" and promise means the punishments and rewards.

2. Verse 2:210:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلُلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ۚ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ

"Do they await anything but that Allah should come to them in the shades of the clouds, with the angels, and the matter be decided? And to Allah all matters are returned." (2:210)

According to Ibn 'Abbas, the coming of Allah refers to the coming of His punishment. What the disbelievers see are a) punishments in the shape of clouds, and b) the angels of punishment.

3. Verse 16:26:

قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَى اللَّهُ بُنْيَانَهُمْ مِنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

Those who were before them [had also] schemed. Then Allah razed their edifice from the foundations and the roof collapsed upon them from above and the punishment overtook them whence they were not aware. (16:26)

In this verse, the word "أَتَى", translated as "razed" originally means "to come". Here again something has been omitted. The accurate meaning would be phrased as "The command of Allah for demolishing them came." What confirms this claim is the next phrase: "The roof collapsed upon them from above and the punishment overtook them."

4. Verse 23:56:

نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ

We are hastening to them of good things. (23:56)

The word originally means "to hasten." As soon as the believers worship Allah, He immediately rewards them as a result of His satisfaction and love for them.

5. Verse 17:60:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ

When We said to you, 'Indeed your Lord comprehends all mankind. (17:60)

The verb أَحَاطَ (translated as "comprehends") originally means "to physically surround something". However, in the above verse it refers to the Divine knowledge that comprehends every situation and state; any good or bad deed, and any punishment or reward people deserve are under His control.

On putting in the masculine or feminine gender

On putting in the masculine or feminine gender¹⁴

In Arabic grammar, every noun is either masculine or feminine; and for each, different forms of the verbs, adjectives, and pronouns are used. Thus, the verbs and adjectives are also masculine or feminine. In this section, Ashub points to several verses in which apparently this rule has not been observed. Then in each case, he explains the reason why that specific verb or adjective has been applied:

1. Verse 69:7:

كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ

...as if they were hollow trunks of palm trees. (69:7)

And verse 54:20 reads:

كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُنْقَعِرٍ

...as if they were trunks of uprooted palm trees. (54:20)

In the first verse, the feminine adjective has been used for palm trees, while in the latter, the masculine has been used. This can either be because a) the adjectives are for the word نخل (palm) which is one of

the nouns for which both masculine and feminine adjectives and verbs may be used; or b) they are for the word شجر (tree) which is like نخل. Therefore, both masculine and feminine adjectives and pronouns have been used for شجر as we see the masculine form in verse:

نَارًا فَإِذَا أَنْتُمْ مِنْهُ تُوقِدُونَ

...who made for you fire out of behold, you light fire from it! (36:80)

And the feminine form in verse:

كَأَنَّهُمْ أَغْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُنْقَعِرٍ فَمَالِئُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ

You will surely taste of the Zaqqum Tree; And will fill up your bellies with it. (56:52-53)

2. Verse 34: 15:

بَلَدَةً طَيِّبَةً

...a good land. (34: 15)

Here, a feminine adjective has been used for the word بلدة.

While verse 25:49 reads:

لِنُحْيِيَ بِهِ بَلَدَةً مَيِّتًا وَنُسْقِيَهُ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا أَنْعَامًا وَأَنْوَاسٍ كَثِيرًا

...with which We revive a dead country and provide water to many of the cattle and humans We have created. (25:49)

Here, masculine adjective has been applied for the same word. The reason for the difference is that in Arabic grammar, the adjective is used either for the apparent word (i.e. بلدة) or the hidden meaning (i.e. مكان (place) – which is masculine). The same is true with the two following verses:

Verse 84: 1 reads:

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْشَقَّتْ

When the sky is split open. (84: 1)

And verse 73: 18 reads:

السَّمَاءُ مُنْفَطِرٌ بِهِ [؟] كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَفْعُولًا

...and wherein the sky will be rent apart? His promise is bound to be fulfilled. (73: 18)

The word السماء is feminine. Thus, the first verse in which a feminine verb has been used is in accordance to the apparent word. In the second verse, however, a masculine adjective has been used. Here, the hidden meaning (i.e. "السقف" (ceiling) – which is masculine) is meant.

3. Verse 34:42:

وَنَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ

...and We shall say to those who did wrong, 'Taste the punishment of the Fire which you used to deny. (34:42)

Here, feminine pronoun has been used for "the punishment of the Fire" while verse 32:20 reads:

وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ

...and they will be told: 'Taste the punishment of the Fire which you used to deny. (32:20)

Here, masculine pronoun has been used for the same expression. There are two possibilities for the difference between the pronouns:

- a) The feminine pronoun returns to the feminine noun of النار (fire) while the masculine pronoun refers to the masculine noun of عذاب (punishment);
- b) The feminine pronoun returns to the very word نار of while the masculine pronoun refers to the act of fire which is احراق (to burn) – a masculine word.

4. The word “ريخ” (wind) has been used in the Qur'an both in masculine and feminine forms:

a) Masculine forms:

–Verse 30:51:

وَلَئِنْ أَرْسَلْنَا رِيحًا فَرَأَوْهُ مُصْفَرًّا لَظَلُّوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ يَكْفُرُونَ

And if We send a wind and they see it turn yellow, they will surely become ungrateful after that. (30:51)

–Verse 41:16:

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا

So We unleashed upon them an icy gale. (41:16)

–Verse 51:41:

وَفِي عَادٍ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ

And in Ad when We unleashed upon them a barren wind. (51:41)

–Verse 10:22:

رِيحٍ عَاصِفٍ

...a tempestuous wind. (10:22)

b) Feminine forms:

a. Verse 10:22:

هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۚ هَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِمْ بِرِيحٍ

طَيِّبَةً وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ

It is He who carries you across land and sea. When you are in the ships, and they sail with them with a favourable wind, rejoicing in it, there comes upon them a tempestuous wind. (10:22)

b. Verse 21:81:

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا ۚ وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَالِمِينَ

And for Solomon [We disposed] the tempestuous wind which blew by his command toward the land which We have blessed, and We have knowledge of all things. (21:81)

c. Verse 34: 12:

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ غُدُوُّهَا شَهْرٌ وَرَوَاحُهَا شَهْرٌ ۚ وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ

And for Solomon [We subjected] the wind: its morning course was a month's journey and its evening course was a month's journey. (34: 12)

Ashub mentions the following reasons for the differences:

a) The word ريح can be used in both masculine and feminine forms, just as the words سكين (knife) and سبيل (way). The latter has been used in both masculine and feminine forms in the Qur'an. The masculine form is in Verse 7: 146:

وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلاًّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا

...and if they see the way of rectitude they will not take it as [their] way, and if they see the way of error they will take it as [their] way.

The feminine form has occurred in verse 12: 108:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي

Say, 'This is my way. (12: 108)

1. The wind of punishment is masculine since its purpose is punishment (عذاب – a masculine noun); the wind of mercy is feminine since its consequence is Divine mercy (رحمه – a feminine word).
2. ريح is a feminine word. Wherever a masculine verb, adjective, or pronoun is used for it, it refers to its word (لفظ – masculine). The same is true with verse:

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسُ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي
بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said, " This is my Lord! This is bigger! But when it set, he said, 'O my people, indeed I disown what you take as [His] partners. '(6:78)

The word شمس is feminine. Therefore the first adjective بازغه and the verb افلت are in feminine forms. However, the demonstrative pronoun هذا and the second adjective اكبر are in masculine form. Here, they refer to the word لفظ of شمس.

On ritual prayer (salat)

On ritual prayer (salat) 15

In this chapter, Ashub refers to 28 verses of the Qur'an directly or indirectly related to the issue of prayer. He mentions his and others' ideas regarding the rules deduced from these verses. What follows is a portion of them:

1. Verse 2:238:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ

Be watchful of your prayers. (2:238)

To be watchful over our prayers is to perform it exactly when the time of each prayer arrives, since a person is not secured from what will happen afterwards. This verse is a command to perform the prayers, and to perform it right at the beginning of the time.

2. The verse **"In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful"** is an independent verse. This is the view of Shafi'i and Sufyan Al-Thawri and all Shi'i scholars.

3. Verse 12:2:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an so that you may apply reason. (12:02)

4. Verse 26:195:

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ

And Qur'an is revealed in a plain Arabic Language. (26:195)

These verses illustrate that reading translations of the Qur'an is not actually reading the it, just as reading Arabic poems like the poems of Imri' al-Qays in a non-Arabic language is not said to have been reading the poems themselves.

5. Verse 1:6-7:

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Guide us on the straight path; the path of those whom You have blessed such as have not incurred Your wrath, nor are astray. (1:6-7)

In their daily prayers, some non-Shi'a Muslims say "Amen" آمين (so be it) after the above-mentioned verses since these verses contain a kind of du'a and request; آمين is an expression by which we ask Allah to grant our request. This is a false argument since:

a. A du'a is counted only if it is recited with the intention of du'a prayer, while here the intention is recitation, and not du'a;

b. If it is the case, then the same expression should be used after all du'as in the Quran, such as:

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ
الْكَافِرِينَ

Our Lord, forgive us our sins, and our excesses in our affairs, and make our feet steady, and help us against the faithless lot. (3: 147)

Or

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the Fire. (2:201)

The word "Amen" is not in the Qur'an and it is not, by itself, an independent and meaningful sentence; therefore, uttering it is similar to uttering any word out of Qur'an and glorification of Allah. The Prophet said: Nothing of human words can be uttered in prayer.¹⁶ And clearly, "Amen" is not a Divine word.

a- "Amen" is not found among the Divine Names. Allah has not been called out as "Oh Amin!"

6. Verse 11:113:

وَلَا تَرْكُنُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا
تُنصَرُونَ

And do not incline toward the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should touch you, and you will not have any friend besides Allah, then you will not be helped. (11: 113)

A prayer leader is to be pious and virtuous. This verse implies that a transgressor cannot be prayer leader since his leadership will draw others towards him.

Important features of Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh

A general review of this book leads us to the following features of this precious work:

1. Ashab is not merely an exegete of the Qur'an or a specialist of Qur'anic studies. The chapters on monotheism, prophethood, and Imamate portray a skillful theologian at work. His discussions regarding

Arabic Grammar and rhetoric, and jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence testify to his vast knowledge. Although he does not have an independent book on jurisprudence or its principles, his students called him a "*faqih*" (jurist).¹⁷

As researchers hold, his main discussions on jurisprudence and its principles have been mentioned in the 6th and 7th chapters of the current book in which he discussed *'Ayat al-Ahkam* (verses related to religious rules). It is widely known that the Qur'an includes more than 500 of such verses i.e. *'Ayat al-Ahkam*¹⁸ of which about 340 verses have been mentioned.

2. The title of the book may bring into mind the incorrect assumption that all, or at least most verses mentioned in this book, are among the unclear verse. The title consists of two words: unclear verses and disagreed-upon verses. Clearly most of the verses mentioned in this book are the disagreed-upon verses. Nonetheless, the content of the book covers more than what is understood from the title; the name of the book refers to the larger portion of the book, and not the entire work.

3. In the section on jurisprudence, the author adopted the conventional method in the books on interpretations: he first mentions the related verse(s) and then clarifies the subject in question and brings his arguments in favour of his idea. In many cases, he quotes other views as well, though in most cases he does not mention their names. Generally, he refers to the different ideas between Shi'i and Sunni scholars more than he does regarding the differences among Shi'i scholars. In this regard, he sometimes quotes the views of Abu Hanifa, Shafi'i, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and Malik, the founders of the four judicial schools of the Sunni school of thought.

4. The author's citations from both Shi'i and Sunni scholars reveals his knowledge of others' views:

a. In theological discussions, he refers to ideas of scholars such as Rummani,¹⁹ Sayyid Murtada,²⁰ Juba'i,²¹ Al-Hasan,²² Ibn Al-'Ikshid,²³ Ibn 'Abbas,²⁴ Shaykh Tusi,²⁵ Ibn Jurayh,²⁶ Qutada,²⁷ Ibrahim,²⁸ Al-Hakam,²⁹ Mujahid,³⁰ Al-Balkhi,³¹ Abu Ali,³² Ibn Ishaq,³³ Suwayd ibn Abi Kahil,³⁴ Umayyah,³⁵ Al-'Asamm,³⁶ Abu Al-Qasim,³⁷ Al-Dahhak,³⁸ etc.

b. In discussions on jurisprudence and its principles we see such great names as Abu Hashim,³⁹ Sayyid Murtada,⁴⁰ Shafi',⁴¹ Abu Hanifa,⁴² Ahmad ibn Hanbal,⁴³ Qutada,⁴⁴ Muhammad ibn Al-Hasan,⁴⁵ Abu 'Ubayd,⁴⁶ Malik,⁴⁷ Sufyan Al-Thawri,⁴⁸ Abu Bakr ibn Al-Mundhir,⁴⁹ Fadl ibn Shadhan,⁵⁰ etc.

c. When grammatical points are the matters of the discussions, again we are faced with the ideas of great scholars in Arabic literature such as Abu Bakr Al-Anbari,⁵¹ Mubarrad,⁵² Al-Farra',⁵³ Ibn Al-Sikkit,⁵⁴ Abu Ishaq,⁵⁵ Al-'Akhfash,⁵⁶ Al-Khalil,⁵⁷ Al-Zajaj,⁵⁸ Al-Tha'lab,⁵⁹ etc.

5. Many narrations from Sunni collections of hadith have been referred to in this book. Surprisingly, most of them are from Sunni books since, as mentioned earlier, the author mostly refers to differences between Shi'i and Sunni ideologies. What follows is a list of them:

Al-Sahih by Muslim; *Al-Sahih* by Bukhari; *Al-Sunan* by Ibn Maja; *Al-Musnad* by Ahmab ibn Hanbal; *Al-Sunan* by Abu Dawud; *Al-Muwatta'* by Malik; *Al-Musnad* by Abu Hanifa; *Al-Musnad* by Al-Shafi'i; *Al-Jami'* by Tirmidhi; *Al-Musnad* by Abi Ya'la; *Al-Musnad* by Al-Musili; *Al-Sunan* by Qazwini; *Al-Sunan* by Sijistani; *Tarikh Baghdad* by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi; *'Ihya' Ulum Al-Din* by Ghazali; *Al-Hilyah* by Abi Na'im; *Al-Tafsir* by Tha'labi; *Al-Kashf* by Tha'labi; *Qut Al-Qulub* by Abu Talib Al-Makki and *Ikhtilaf Al-Fuqaha'* by Al-Saji.

6. And finally, there are many poetic verses from which the author has benefitted to prove his ideas, particularly in grammatical points. In most cases, the name of the poet is not mentioned. However, among the poets whose names have been mentioned, one may refer to 'Imri' Al-Qays, Ibn Rumi, Abu Al-Najm, Zuhayr, Kumayt, 'Aws, Al-Ja'di, Lubayd, Al-Khansa', Al-Hadhli, Jarir, 'Udayy ibn Hatam, Abu Dhu'ayb, Al-'A'sha, Al-Ta'i, Al-Nabigha, Al-Tamr, Al-Qutami, and Suwayd.

Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh is a very important, if not unique, book of its kind. However, due attention has not been paid to it. It still remains a duty on Muslims in general and Shi'i teachers and students in particular, especially those who are involved in Qur'anic studies, to deeply study this valuable work.

References

- Sayyid Muhsin Al-Hakim, *'A'yan Al-Shi'a*, Beirut 1406 AH, vol.1 p 128.
- Shams Al-Din Dhahabi, *Tarikh Al-Islam*, Beirut 1413 AH, vol.44 p. 294.
- Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Jalali, *Fihris Al-Turath*, Qum 1422 AH, vol. 1 p. 602.
- Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Ma'alim Al-'Ulama'*, Najaf 1350 AH, p. 119.

1.

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

2. d. 156 AH

3. Aqa Buzug Tihrani, *Al-Dhari'a 'ila Tafanif Al-Shi'a*, vol. 4 p. 273.

4. Ibid. vol. 19 p. 455.

5. Ibid. d. 310 AH

6. Ibid. d. 433 AH

7. Ibid. d. 1050 AH

8. d. 588 AH

9. For a detailed biography, see. *Al-Wafi bi Al-Wafayat*, vol. 4 pp. 11Sff.; *Al-Dhari'a*, vol. 20 pp. 175ff.; *Dayarat Al-Ma'arif* - i- Buzurg -i- Islami, vol. 4 pp. 90ff.; *Rayhana Al-'Adab*, vol. 5 pp. 5S ff.

10. *Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*, vol. 1 p.2.

ولعمري ان لهذا التحقيق بحرا عميقا ولا يكاد يوجد منه الا الفاظ في كتب كبار المتكلمين أو نكت في بعض تفاسير المحققين العدليين

11. Ibid.

المتشابه ما لا يعلم المراد بظاهره حتى يقترب به ما يدل على المراد منه لالتباسه

12. Ibid.

13. See. *Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh*, vol. 1 pp. 82-84

14. See. Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh, vol. 2 pp. 234–236.
15. See Mutashabih al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh, vol. 2 pp. 167–173.
16. Muhaddith Nuri (1254–1320 AH) in his Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il, vol. 5 p. 427.
ان هذه الصلاة لا يصلح فيها شيء من كلام الأدميين
17. Dayerat Al-Ma'arifi Buzurgi Islami, vol. 4 p. 91
18. See. Munyat Al-Murid, p. 37S
19. Mutashabih Al-Qur'an wa Mukhtalafuh, vol. 1 p. 4.
20. Ibid. pp. 4,14.
21. Ibid. p.6.
22. Ibid. P. 17.
23. Ibid. p.14.
24. Ibid. p.15,17.
25. Ibid. p. 18.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid. p. 19.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid. p. 21.
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39. Ibid, vol. 2 p. 145.
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58. Ibid. p. 249.
59. Ibid. p. 264.

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