

EXEGETIC LOGIC IN AL-MĪZĀN FĪ TAFSĪR AL-QUR'ĀN: GOD'S ATTRIBUTES VERSES AS A MODEL [◊]

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ABSTRACT

Given the classic, exegetic principle that parts of the Qur'ān interpret others and the dynamic role credited to exegetes' rationality in contemporary exegesis, this study has aimed at analyzing the nature of exegete-text interaction in light of the Qur'ān intratextuality. To this end and through descriptive-analytic research, the commentary of a number of verses on God's attributes in *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (The criterion in the interpretation of the Qur'ān) was subjected to description and scrutiny; the exegesis is well acknowledged for taking the Qur'ān as the source of reference in light of the principle. The study begins with a short account of how the Qur'ān appreciates reason and wisdom development in general and while approaching its content, in particular. Then it proceeds to introduce *Al-Mīzān*, its author's exegetic viewpoints and the mechanism of his method. The author's comments on sample verses are then presented along with an analysis of the course of his interaction with the text in those comments. The findings show that both immediate contextual clues indicating semantic interrelationships and clues in germane, remote verses on account of intratextuality in the Qur'ān have been employed by the author to present context-supported meaning and implications through reason application. The outcomes along with those from similar works tackling the process of exegete-text interaction in line with the exegetic principle in focus are expected to enrich our knowledge of Qur'ānic hermeneutics.

Keywords: *Al-Mīzān, Rationality, Contextual Clues, Intratextuality, Qur'ān-By-Qur'ān Exegesis.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through its unique discourse, the Qur'ān categorically echoes the cause of purifying humans and teaching them the 'Book' and the 'Wisdom'² by the prophet on behalf of God and that of self-awareness/development³, reflection and reason application in developing one's world-view⁴, recalling and taking admonition⁵, and abiding by inherent covenants⁶ on the part of humans. This amount of emphasis on transcendent, cognitive involvement encourages any attentive addressee to envisage the course of human life as a spiritual, intellectual journey in the Qur'ānic point of view. The endeavor is apparently outlined in terms of continuous effort for developing theoretical insight regarding existence and life along with promoting and practicing wisdom as to the fulfillment of covenants and self-actualization. Moreover, there seems to be a close relationship between human's affective disposition and materializing of these endeavors given the sense of self-satisfaction one intrinsically experiences whenever one is involved in wisdom development and knowledge enhancement or succeeds in keeping commitments.

Almost at the outset of the Qur'ān, readers are implicitly invited to reflect upon human's optimal potentiality for transcendent growth as they encounter a touchingly dramatic account of how Adam's innate, spiritual/cognitive capability makes it possible for him to leave angels behind in a high-challenging contest. Through four verses (2:30-33) recounting the event, Adam is depicted to be enjoying due qualification to receive God's direct instruction on the 'Names' (the contest subject) and is told to merely inform the angels of his accomplishment. It is implied that the angels are not considered to be of the competency to receive God's instruction on the 'Names', neither Adam's; they are only eligible to get his account of the theme. The description of these developments at the inception of human creation seems to have been symbolically put almost at the beginning of the Qur'ān to outline a perspective of what the ultimate phases of human's growth could be if the divine instruction through God's revelation is candidly welcomed and followed by humans. Such achievement, however, presupposes methodical realization of the message the Initiator of the Qur'ān has intended to be transmitted.

Accordingly, the Qur'ān obviously spells out the type of approach that is deserved to be adopted while one is approaching it when it introduces itself a

² 2:129; 2:151; 3:164; 62:2.

³ 6:104; 13:11; 35:18; 79:40-41; 87:14; 91:9.

⁴ 2:164; 3:191-192; 5:105; 13:4; 16:11-12, 67; 30:24, 28; 45:25; 57:17.

⁵ 7:26, 130; 16:13, 17; 23:85; 28:43, 51; 44:58; 51:49.

⁶ 2:40, 80; 5:1; 6:152; 7:172; 13:20; 16:91; 17:34; 36:60; 57:8.

book of divine revelation with everlasting blessings so that those who are addressed could contemplate its verses and those who enjoy wisdom could take due admonition (38:29). The verse simply refers to a two-phase process starting with an intensive-reading segment along with contemplation resulting in wisdom development that is to be reflected in self-consciousness and admonition taking. The author of *Al-Mizān* holds that through careful examination, one comes across over 300 verses through which the Qur'ān either directly invites people to think, contemplate, and take admonition or teaches the Prophet a way of reasoning to validate a right cause or nullify a wrong one⁷. However, if the path of contemplation in grasping the meaning is not taken for whatever reason, human's heart is metaphorically depicted to have been locked (47:24) by self-imposed cognitive or affective obstacles.

The reason is that reflection and reason application are so much essential in grasping concepts covered by themes such as Qur'ānic monotheism, the essence of the prophetic mission, the Hereafter, the scope of human life journey, and the philosophy behind it. Being extremely far beyond the limits of positivistic paradigm of exploration with its sensitivity to observational scrutiny, these themes are of such a nature that one cannot even think of approaching them without resorting to reason application and rational contemplation. Premised on reliable information and logical propositions, rational thought is accredited to be the key to expansion of knowledge and wisdom. In addition to its fundamental cognitive merits, rational thought provides humans with affective impression by providing a sense of self-confidence in whatever undertaking. That is due to the fact that getting involved in rationality requires drawing upon reliable principles in reasoning and making decisions. Ensuring this cognitive/affective achievement is especially of consequence while one is involved in reading texts of divine revelation focusing on themes requiring extra-sensory perception for appropriate understanding.

Considering a wider perspective, taking admonition out of reason application is apparently suggested by the Qur'ān to associate the **book of revelation** with the **book of creation** in a metaphoric sense. While focused on the pivotal concept of the Creator, this association induces the addressees to develop a divine-based world outlook while getting involved in reading each book. The point is further clarified if implications presented by the verses articulating the key objectives set for the revelation of the Qur'ān⁸ and those dealing with the creation and

⁷ Ṭabāṭabā'ī, S. M. H. (1997). *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. (Vol. 5). Qom: Allāmeḥ Ṭabāṭabā'ī's Scientific and Intellectual Foundation. p. 225.

⁸ 12:2; 21:10; 43:3.

functioning of natural phenomena⁹ are juxtaposed. The climactic point in the course of these verses is that unremitting remembrance of God followed by reasoning and admonition taking leads to recognition of the fact that world creation along with its functioning mechanisms are not fashioned in vain (3:191) and one is to bear full accountability (2:284) for one's world outlook, established thoughts, behaviors and conducts.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Al-Mīzān*

Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān has taken a total period of 20 years to be completed in 20 volumes originally published in Arabic. It has been first translated into Farsi in 40 volumes by a group of scholars followed by renderings in 20 and 23 volumes by different individuals. Valuable efforts have also been made to translate parts of the work into other languages including English, Spanish, Turkish, Indonesian, and Urdu. As for the format, at the beginning of the commentary on each chapter, a brief outline of the predominant objectives of the chapter is succinctly presented. Al through the text body, the commentary is composed of sections presenting analysis and interpretation of thematically interrelated verses. The interpretation of each verse is regularly preceded by some lexical or linguistic inquiry provided that it is of consequence to the meaning of the verse. In case there are controversies among exegetes over a particular verse, the author suggests an interpretation which is shown to be the closest to the apparent meaning and then comments on the divergent ones (without making any reference to relevant authors) by referring to the context and ending up with the conclusion that they are either farfetched regarding the apparent meaning or possible but not justifiable due to lack of support. When the commentary on the selected verses is presented in full, the author goes on with a section on pertinent narratives in which one or two well-documented exegetic narrations are offered to supplement the commentary with additional details. On occasions, relevant theological or philosophical issues are also raised and discussed in length to further enrich the commentary.

2.2. *Validity of Exegesis in Ṭabāṭabā'ī's view*

Any attempt at commenting on the Qur'ān, according to the author, that gives priority to issues other than the text itself or leads to a situation where the

⁹ 2:164; 3:190-191; 7:54; 31:29; 35:13; 36:37-40; 39:5; 57:4.

interpreters' presuppositions overshadow the content is accountable for producing invalid interpretation. In the prologue to his commentary, the author briefly reviewed the course of history in Qur'an exegesis to show how far-reaching the effects of these radical flaws have been. The account begins with reference to early generations after the Prophet when exegesis was first limited to scant guidelines extracted from narratives passed on by his companions and their followers, to the time when different theological orientations took hold. It finally deals with developments in the field when flourishing philosophy and mysticism in the Islamic community imposed their own influence. The author believes that those trends, each in its own way, failed to let the Qur'an speak for itself and present its intended meaning and the result was the production of more 'eisegesis'¹⁰ than exegesis. Easily recognizable extremes in a continuum of different approaches to exegesis are represented by approaches that would either impose unjustifiable restrictions by exclusively relying on existing narratives or set the ground for free application of subjective opinions in Qur'an interpretation.

The author refers to five key events to deal with the factors behind discrepancies among methods of Qur'an interpretation in the history of exegesis¹¹:

- 1) Theological interactions with different nations in the conquered lands,
- 2) Translation of philosophical works from Greek into Arabic in the first century and the prevalence of philosophical dialogs in the Islamic community,
- 3) Appearance of mysticism and Sufism in Islam while philosophical debates were also popular,
- 4) Disagreements among Islamic denominations as to a number of issues resulting in different theological viewpoints as to Qur'an exegesis, and
- 5) Absolute submission to and excessive reliance on exegetic narratives with denial of an active role for reason and rational.

From a technical point of view, Ṭabāṭabā'ī holds that differences in exegesis are not due to the very meaning of words or phrases in verses since they are in clear Arabic. Rather, they stem from attempts to stipulate 'static' referents for 'dynamic' concepts. Simply, the result is that an exegete might designate referents for words or concepts while others do not accept them. To do away with such controversies, according to the author, exegetes should stick to rationality. That

¹⁰ Medoff, L. A. (2007). *Ijtihad and Renewal in Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: An Analysis of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī's al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. (Publication No. 3275516) [Doctoral dissertation, University of California]. ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

¹¹ Ṭabāṭabā'ī, S. M. H. (1997). *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. (Vol. 1). Qom: Allāmeḥ Ṭabāṭabā'ī's Scientific and Intellectual Foundation. p. 8-9.

is, it is inevitable to abide by rationality to keep away from comprehension disagreements in proposing intended meanings for challenging verses.

Longstanding polemics, for example, have been over the contribution of exegetic narratives as compared with that of exegetes' intellectual orientations. This has naturally led to divergences in methods classified by reliance on different sources of reference for interpretation. Traditional (narrative-based) exegesis is characterized by *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* vis-à-vis a debatable measure commonly adopted by those who have practiced it. They are said to have definitely avoided attempting to comment on verses for which no narratives had been communicated. However, according to the author, there is no verse in the Qur'ān beyond the boundaries of our comprehension. Summing up his remarks on traditional exegesis, the author stresses the point that those who have exclusively relied on exegetic narratives in understanding verses without sufficient sensitivity to their authenticity have taken the wrong course. They have overlooked the very fact that the Qur'ān has emphatically invited its addressees to stick to (indispensable tools of) contemplation and reason application in understanding it.

In his review of major trends in Qur'ān exegesis with traditional, theological, philosophical, scientific, and Sufi orientations, the author comes to the conclusion that they are all subject to the same type of validity deficiency. They have imposed presuppositions on the Qur'ān and attempted to adjust its meaning to them; presuppositions which are not shown to have been supported by the Qur'ān and thus open to the question of exegetic validity. Such assumptions, according to the author, might be the outcome of scholarly discussions in fields other than exegesis which is a full-fledged discipline on its own. Such adaptations are also held accountable for establishment of subjective criteria for exegesis resulting in multiple and sometimes contradictory interpretations for the same topic in divine revelation. A metaphoric analogy brought up by the author is that of looking at the content of the Qur'ān through different colored eyeglasses. Individual readers naturally receive the same content in different ways depending on the color of the glasses worn. A prime example for the situation is the case of disagreements among theological denominations in understanding and commenting on the Qur'ān. In fact, one should blame theologians' inclinations to tailor their interpretation to their sectarian views.

The author's criticism with its strong tone leveled against these commentary strands for promoting 'eisegesis' in place of exegesis highlights his emphasis on objectivity in dealing with the text. It reminds readers of the controversy between Classical/Romantic and Philosophical hermeneutics regarding text interpretation. With the former, understanding a text means perceiving its original meaning presumed to be definite and extractable if an understanding relationship between the author and the reader/interpreter is constructed. The

relationship, in the first place, is considered to have been initiated by the author's intention and conscious will in creating meaning via the text.

Hirsch¹², a classical hermeneutist, argues for the notion of author's intention and its reconstruction by the interpreter as the ultimate meaning indexes. He contends that the meaning of a text originated in the author's mind is non-historical, i.e., not subject to changes owing to time passage. What is subject to change, according to him, is the significance of meaning or suitability of a work which are then issues of concern to critics and not interpreters. In his unique interpretative theory, Hirsch concentrates on the significance of author's intention and accuracy of interpretation for ensuring interpretation validity. On the contrary, Philosophical hermeneutics with its focus on the nature and ontology of understanding rather than its methodology, does not recognize issues such as author's intention or original meaning as relevant. Thus, it refrains from passing judgments on understanding quality or its appropriateness. Instead it formulates its basic principle as follows: whenever there is understanding, there is the event of 'truth' in comprehension, no matter how it has been accomplished.

2.3. Authenticity of Exegesis in Ṭabāṭabā'ī's view

According to Rajabī¹³, Ṭabāṭabā'ī defines exegesis by highlighting three major functions including expressing the meaning of words and phrases in individual verses, determining referents, and discovering God's intention by employing those referents. Overall, the goal of exegesis is shown to be nothing other than elucidating meaning and interpreting its import and implications. To pursue the query of how authentic exegesis could be conducted in Ṭabāṭabā'ī's point of view, one should examine the author's hermeneutical vision of exegesis plainly expressed in a separate treatise titled *Qur'ān in Islam*¹⁴. This concise volume, which is translated from Persian into both Arabic and English, is an outstanding guide to the method employed in *Al-Mizān*. In view of the fact that the *Qur'ān* lends itself to interpretation, the author states that there are three paths before an exegete: a) interpreting a verse on its own by means of whatever knowledge at disposal, b) commenting on verses in light of well-documented and reliable narratives related by the prophet's infallible successor, or c) interpreting verses by pondering and contemplating while letting verses speak for themselves and others

¹² Hirsch, E.D. (1967). *Validity in interpretation*. JR Yale University Press.

¹³ Rajabī, M. (2004). *Method of Qur'ān exegesis*. Qom: Research Center of Islamic Seminary and University.

¹⁴ Ṭabāṭabā'ī, S. M. H. (1974). *The Qur'ān in Islam*. Qom: Office for Islamic Publications.

bearing in mind semantic associations among interrelated verses, and employing exegetic narratives whenever possible.

The first path, as stated by the author, is said to end up with 'eisegesis' unless it meets the conditions set for the third one. The second one has traditionally been the most commonly practiced, though with a major defect. The available traditions, even when communicated through trustworthy sources, are quite scant in number and the guidance they provide is relatively insufficient regarding a myriad of points in need of clarification and interpretation. The third way, presenting the author's hermeneutic view is of two dimensions: resorting to what the text has to present and keeping on contemplation while investing in both immediate and remote contexts given the overall Qur'ān intratextuality. Pertaining to the denotation in its Arabic title, *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* represents the fundamental principle of establishing the Qur'ān as the criterion for its interpretation within the framework of Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān commentary. This procedure has long been recognized by exegetes who have worked on portions of the Qur'ān; however, it has never been employed as a full-fledged method for the commentary of the whole text before the compilation of *Al-Mizān*¹⁵.

In order to consolidate the authenticity of his method in view of the Qur'ānic mission, the author raises some rhetoric questions in the following manner: the Qur'ān introduces itself as manifest light (5:18) and firmly states that it is the illuminator of everything (16:89), so how imaginable could it be that it does not shed light on the meaning of its own verses? Furthermore, it introduces itself as the discriminator of right and wrong and guidance for all people (6:90), then how can it be conceivable that it does not provide clear guidance and shining light for exegetes in their endeavor to help others with their most essential need; namely, understanding God's intended meaning in His words. The Qur'ān has given tidings to those who strive in God's cause that He leads them in His 'paths' (29:69), hence, it is certain that God helps them with understanding His words (the most important effort imaginable in His cause) and does not leave them to scientific theories, scholarly inferences, and even mere exegetical narrations.

To reject the idealistic viewpoint that the Qur'ān is so sublime that is far beyond the reach of human's flight of thought, the author draws on verse 4:82 that tacitly blames people for not making use of the faculty of reason to reflect upon the Qur'ān. The verse implies that all human beings can contemplate the Qur'ān and understand its meaning with the corollary that if the Qur'ān were not self-

¹⁵ Azīkīā, G., Bābā'ī, A. K., & Rohānīrād, M. (2001). *Methodology of Qur'ān Exegesis: Principles and Methods of Commentary*. Tehran: Research Center of Islamic Seminary and University.

expressive, its addressees would not have been invited to reflect upon it. With reference to verse 4:82 that encourages readers to contemplate the Qur'ān, the author emphasizes that the Arabic term for the concept of contemplation means sequentially reflecting on interrelated points to come up with some inclusive understanding of a notion in question. As for exegesis, according to him, it recommends drawing on semantically interconnected verses that form a thematic web while making use of suggestive text elements. Accordingly, Ṭabāṭabā'ī states that he has firmly refrained from relying on or making use of any theological, philosophical, or scientific contention or mystical insight while commenting on verses.

Although the author assigns a pivotal function to rational thought in Qur'ān commentary given the aforementioned considerations, practicing reason is not recommended without observing some conditions. Readers are cautioned not to be affected by fancy of imagination and sophistry if application of reason is expected to play its due role. Moreover, they are required to practice logic on the condition of observing the principles of 'essentially correct reasoning'. That is, in case rational thought rejects a proposition for the interpretation of a verse, the proposition should be discarded in commentary. Furthermore, if there are a number of probable interpretations for a certain verse and rational thought excludes all except one, that interpretation should be upheld. Rejection of a probable interpretation should also be considered if it could not be supported by reason. Acquiring this level of qualification in reason application on the part of an exegete, according to Rajabī¹⁶, presupposes mastery of Arabic language in areas such as lexicology (especially that of the time of revelation), verb conjugation, grammar, and delicacies of Arabic rhetoric.

2.4. *Studies on Al-Mizān*

The bulk of research on *Al-Mizān* can be broadly divided into five topic categories regardless of numerous works on sporadic issues. Comparative works have studied it either in light of other exegeses or hermeneutic insights regarding the fundamental tenets of understanding and interpretation. Studies with methodology considerations have focused on key principles of Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān method, the significance of context and exegetic narratives, and outstanding characteristics of the commentary. Since the mechanism of Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān method is detailed at length in the previous sections, a brief account of important works in other research strands is presented in the following.

¹⁶ Rajabī, M. (2004). *Method of Qur'ān exegesis*. Qom: Research Center of Islamic Seminary and University.

2.4.1. Comparative studies

Disagreements in understanding and interpretation regarding the theological topic of ‘determination/freedom’ have been taken by some researchers as points of departure to compare *Al-Mizān* with *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*¹⁷. The authors have elaborated on Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s critiques of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s views with reference to three groups of verses dealing with the issue. Nāseḥ & Esfandīarī¹⁸ have dealt with Qur’ān comprehensibility as another point of divergence in Qur’ān exegesis. They have comparatively studied *Al-Mizān* and *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī* and concluded that Ālūsī, the author of *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī* is sometimes inclined towards either a minimalist approach, a moderate one, or a maximalist stance. However, according to the authors, Ṭabāṭabā’ī consistently takes moderate comprehensibility of the Qur’ān as the only acceptable view and criticizes the other ones on rational grounds or with reference to the Qur’ān itself.

Zamakhsharī’s exegetic views have also been of interest to researchers since there are a considerable number of references to his work in *Al-Mizān*. In cases, Ṭabāṭabā’ī has evaluated his views in comparison with those of other exegetes while expressing concluding remarks in his commentary. Through a descriptive-analytic examination of Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s treatment of Zamakhsharī’s views, Nāserī Karīmvand, A. & Motavarī¹⁹ show that the two exegetes have relatively common understanding despite sporadic disagreements. Further research by Mas’ūdī Hematābādī & Amīn Nāji²⁰ shows that one of the commonalities is the issue of multidimensionality of the language of the Qur’ān. Their findings indicate that both authors have taken multidimensionality for granted and regularly attempted to go beyond the apparent meaning of verses in search of deep semantic layers.

¹⁷ Seidī, M., Mansūrī, E., & Bayāt, M. (2015). A comparative study of determination in *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* and *Al-Mizān*. *Biquarterly Journal of Qom University*, 1(1), p. 75-94.

¹⁸ Nāseḥ, A. A. & Esfandīarī, F. (2015). Comparative analysis of the theory of Qur’ān comprehensibility in *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* and *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī fī Tafsīri-l-Qur’ān-l-‘Azīm*. *Biquarterly Journal of Qom University*, 2(1), p. 33-54.

¹⁹ Nāserī Karīmvand, A. & Motavarī, A. (2020). Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s treatment of Zamakhsharī’s view in *Al-Mizān*. *Biquarterly Journal of Islamic Schools of Thought Rapprochement Studies*, 15, p. 49-63.

²⁰ Mas’ūdī Hematābādī, Z. & Amīn Nāji, M. H. (2022). Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s and Zamakhsharī’s views and methods of exegesis regarding multidimensionality of the language of the Qur’ān. *Exegetic Innovations*, 1(1), p. 1-16.

Razī Bahābādī & Mo‘tamed Langrūdī²¹ have studied redemption in Christianity as it is dealt with in *Al-Manār* (Rashid Riḍā; 1865-1935) and *Al-Mizān* especially regarding the fact that both works have employed a Qur’ān-based method. Through their comparative/analytic study, the researchers have found that the author of *Al-Manār* pays more attention to the concepts of God’s justice and mercy to address the issue while Ṭabāṭabā’ī deals with all the relevant dimensions to be able to clarify the Qur’ānic attitude towards the issue. The two works have also been compared by Mobasherī²² who has focused on the Qur’ānic topic of ‘Estedrāj’ (falling from God’s grace by degrees as a punishment). The findings indicate that the authors share common views regarding the pre-implementation phase of the tradition while they have different understandings of the beginning and operational stages regarding the nature and effects of worldly enjoyments.

2.4.2. Common ground with hermeneutics

Commonalities of fundamentals in hermeneutics and the method adopted in *Al-Mizān* have recently been of much interest to researchers. In this regard, the issues of understanding and interpretation in the manner Ṭabāṭabā’ī has practiced in *Al-Mizān* have been analytically reviewed in light of hermeneutics. Bahrāmī²³ has shown that the theoretical principles underlying the process of exegesis in *Al-Mizān* are mostly similar to those of Classical hermeneutics and mostly different from Philosophical hermeneutics. These results have further been substantiated when Kheirjūy & Alīmardānī²⁴ have more specifically compared Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s theoretical outlooks with the hermeneutic views of well-known representatives of Classical hermeneutics, Schleiermacher and Hirsch. The researchers conclude that since a pivotal role is attributed to ‘author’s intention’ as an index in discovering meaning in Classical hermeneutics, these scholars’ opinions approximate Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s special hermeneutics in understanding the Qur’ān. In light of the findings indicating significant similarities between Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s views and those of Classical hermeneutics, research has been focused on

²¹ Razī Bahābādī, B. & Mo‘tamed Langrūdī, F. (2016). A comparative study of the Christian teaching of redemption in *Al-Mizān* and *Al-Manār*. *Comparative Theology*, 15, p. 47-64.

²² Mobasherī, M. (2020). The educational effects of Estedrāj in *Al-Mizān* and *Al-Manār*. *Education University Journal of Pūyesh*, 20, p. 127-140.

²³ Bahrāmī, M. (2012). Understanding and interpretation in Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s view in comparison with hermeneutics. *Qur’ānic Studies Quarterly*, 3(71), p. 76-101.

²⁴ Kheirjūy, S. & Alīmardānī, M. M. (2016). Theoretical fundamentals of understanding in Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s view in comparison with the opinions of Classical hermeneutists Schleiermacher and Hirsch, *Journal of Religious Thought of Shiraz University*, 16(4), p. 35-52.

comparing the two approaches with concentration on Hirsch's insights. To this end, the four determining factors underlying understanding and interpretation (the primary themes in hermeneutics), namely, the author, the text, the interpreter, and the context are subjected to description and analysis regarding the two scholars' attitudes by a number of researchers²⁵. The findings indicate that their treatments of text realization and interpretation are 'relatively' and not 'maximally' similar regarding the factors in question. The most important common components, based on the study findings, can be listed as follows: implementation of methodical interpretation, focus on the author's intention, employing semantic links and the hermeneutical circle, and promoting comprehensibility and, accordingly, the ability to recreate meaning. There are also points of disagreement including: stability or flexibility of interpretation, the extent to which the interpreter's pre-knowledge, interests, and expectations affect understanding, and historicity of understanding.

2.4.3. *Employing Context*

Taqaviyān²⁶ has examined *Al-Mīzān* and documented a variety of ways of relevant context recognition and applying the resulting implications in the commentary. He stresses that although the Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān method has been more or less employed in old and new exegeses, the extent to which *Al-Mīzān* relies on it in both qualitative and quantitative respects is to a degree that makes it outstanding in exegesis history. He further states that one of the major building blocks in the method is investing in context whose credibility is well-accepted both in modern linguistics and common Arabic. That is why, according to the author, Ṭabāṭabā'ī has taken contemplating context and employing internal and external indications regarding the apparent and inherent meanings as the best way to understand and interpret verses. In the same vein, Pūralamdārī²⁷ refers to the conditions set by Ṭabāṭabā'ī for context formation as follows: continuity, revelation succession, and thematic unity. Apart from the fact that Ṭabāṭabā'ī has extensively invested in context as a determining exegetic index, his study presents and analyzes five major types of interaction between context and exegetic narratives in the course of interpretation clarification. Kalbāsī Esfahānī and

²⁵ Dehghānpūr, J., Abbāsī, M., Abbāsī B., & Ayāzī, M. A. (2022). Interpretation and Hermeneutics: Comparative Study of Ṭabāṭabā'ī's and Hirsch's Views. *Qur'ān and Hadith Studies*, 54(1), p.131-155.

²⁶ Taqaviyān, A. (2009). Typology of context in *Al-Mīzān*: form and function. *Qur'ānic Sciences and Hadith Studies*, 2, p. 127-148.

²⁷ Pūralamdārī, E. N. (2012). Context in interaction with narratives in *Al-Mīzān*. *Biquarterly Journal of Narrating Thought*, 13, p. 70-96.

Mīrsa'īd²⁸ report that Ṭabāṭabā'ī has made use of context 2049 times all through *Al-Mizān* to resolve interpretation ambiguities, ascertain word meanings, comment on a verse based on another verse, recognize Meccan from Medinan verses, and present delicate exegetic points.

2.4.4. Characteristics

Ṭāherī²⁹ singles out exegetic comprehensibility and creativity as the most outstanding features of *Al-Mizān* and documents the former in two respects: content and using references. Regarding content, according to the researcher, Ṭabāṭabā'ī regularly embarks on discussions about narratives and long analyses of historical, social, scientific, ethical, theological, and philosophical issues in relation to the commentary presented. As for reference sources, the author stresses that *Al-Mizān* is significantly notable in paying attention to other exegetes' points of view and providing critical analyses in evaluating them. The study reports on first hand sources and follow-up works as follows: 27 published exegeses, 99 books on narratives, 22 historical sources on Qur'ānic issues and the prophets' stories with their peoples, previous books of revelation and exegeses on them, credited dictionaries, outstanding encyclopedias, and periodicals in Arabic, Farsi, and English.

Moḥammadḥoseinzādeh, A. & Sharīfūr³⁰ have extensively documented and reported on the exegetic characteristics of *Al-Mizān* as listed in the following: making reference to authentic exegeses, careful use of literary sciences, critical evaluation of exegetic narratives, combining sequential and thematic exegeses, avoiding extreme views regarding narratives, methodical application of scientific findings, paying special attention at referring to other exegetes' points of view, and seriousness in critically evaluating those views. Rūstā Āzād³¹ elaborates on the functions of reason in *Al-Mizān* both as a source of understanding religion (with reference to controversial theological issues) and as an instrument in understanding and interpreting the Qur'ān. Concerning the latter function referred to as the significant feature of the commentary, the researcher deals with the ways reason is employed to implement exegetic techniques including: accepting the authenticity of exegetic narratives, recognizing ambiguous verses and referring them to clear ones, resolving apparent contradictions, presenting

²⁸ Kalbāsī Esfahānī, F. (2016). Methodology of Ṭabāṭabā'ī's context employing in *Al-Mizān*. *Biquarterly Journal of Religious Methodology Studies*, 2, p. 66-87.

²⁹ Ṭāherī, S. (2013). Comprehensibility of *Al-Mizān*. *Serāj-e-Mobīn*, 12, p. 149-164.

³⁰ Moḥammadḥoseinzādeh, A. & Sharīfūr, E. (2011). The scientific features of *Al-Mizān*. *Lesān-e-Mobīn Quarterly*, 2(3), p. 192-204.

³¹ Rūstā Āzād, S. (2011). Reason in *Al-Mizān*. *Critique and View*, 2, p. 141-168.

relevant philosophical discussions apart from exegesis, and distinguishing interpretation from adaptation.

3. Method

What is notable in contemporary exegetic practice is the revival of a classical trend characterized by setting the Qur'ān as the reference source while crediting an active role to exegetes' rationality within an interactional process of interpretation. The core principle informing this interaction is that portions of the Qur'ān elucidate others provided that objective inspection of the text by the exegete paves the way for the emergence of hermeneutic circles and thematic interrelationships. Review of the related literature, as elaborated above, shows that the relevant research has commonly been theoretically oriented focusing on issues such as scientific features³², methodology³³, theoretical foundations³⁴, hermeneutics in comparison³⁵, compatible hermeneutic varieties³⁶, and the role of reason in the commentary³⁷. In fact, there has been scant attention paid to minute delicacies of this mechanism in Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegesis. The relevant work in the bulk of research on *Al-Mizān* is limited to studies that have broadly examined context recognizing and employing it in interpretation with little effort to embark on in-depth analysis of the interaction between the author and the text in the process. Similarly, research on reason application has focused on the occasions reason is employed to implement exegetic techniques in general. Naturally, the focus of attention is shifted towards the techniques in question and away from the very process of reason application on the part of the author. Regarding such a background this study has sought to examine how the exegete's rationality functions in interaction with the Qur'ān when it is taken as the source of reference. The intricacies of this mechanism are to be partly elucidated by

³² Moḥammadhoseinzādeh, A. & Sharīf-pūr, E. (2011). The scientific features of *Al-Mizān*. *Lesān-e-Mobīn Quarterly*, 2(3), p. 192-204.

³³ Āriān, H. (2009). Methodology of Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegesis. *Qur'ān Shinākht*, 2, p. 193-225.

³⁴ Īzādī Mobārakeh, K. (2006). Foundations of Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegesis. *Journal of Theology and Law*, 3, p. 25-44.

³⁵ Bahrāmi, M. (2012). Tafsīr in Ṭabāṭabā'ī's view: A comparison with hermeneutics. *Qur'ānic Studies*, 3(71), p. 76-101.

³⁶ Mokhtārī, M. H. (2007). *The exegesis of Ṭabāṭabā'ī and the hermeneutics of Hirsch: a comparative study*. [Master's thesis, Durham University]. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/2569/>

³⁷ Rüstā Āzād, S. (2011). Reason in *Al-Mizān*. *Critique and View*, 2, p. 141-168.

adopting a descriptive-analytic method³⁸ in examining the materials. Studies in this vein, undertaken with various perspectives, seem to be significantly indispensable if our contemporary knowledge of Qur'ānic hermeneutics is to be expanded. Further research concerning traditional and modern exegetic approaches in comparison vis-à-vis exegetes' contribution or interpretation criterion selection are quite necessary to help better understand various dimensions of the topic.

To concentrate on text portions mostly apt to call upon exegetes' interactional involvement, a number of God's attributes in verses 1:255, 57:1-3, 59:22-24, and 112:1-4 were selected through purposive sampling and extensively studied in light of the relevant commentary. While enjoying language brevity, these verses present far-reaching implications for grasping key issues in Qur'ānic monotheism by presenting extremely profound concepts. However, due to the article space limitations and the density of notions expressed in the commentary on the attributes, the range of sampling was judgmentally confined to the first two chapters (1:255 and 57:1-3) so that the commentary could be sufficiently covered by the analysis.

Regarding the materials, the translation authored by Qarā'ī³⁹ was consulted for renderings of the verses in the text body and the samples on a number of grounds. The translator, an academic expert in Qur'ānic studies, has taken advantage of a rich background in Islamic theology and philosophy to complete his work⁴⁰. Although the title of the translation suggests paraphrasing the original into English, careful examination of the work shows that it presents the concepts so well that a critical reader does not need repeated cross-referencing to the source text to make sure that the messages have been conveyed. As for the language, plain and straightforward diction has kept the work away from unjustified modern or archaic tones while preserving the dignity of the text. However, to enhance precision in his study, slight modifications have been occasionally made in the renderings. In view of the study objectives, the commentary translations are followed by the analysis of the author's course of interaction with the text in details.

³⁸ Anderson, W. G. (1971). Descriptive-Analytic Research on Teaching. *Quest*, 15(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.1971.10519695>

³⁹ Qarā'ī, A. Q. (2005). *The Qur'ān with a phrase-by-phrase translation*, (2nd Ed.). London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press.

⁴⁰ Medoff, L. A. (2007). *Ijtihad and Renewal in Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: An Analysis of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī's al-Mizān fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān*. (Publication No. 3275516) [Doctoral dissertation, University of California]. ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

3.1. Sample I

﴿اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ﴾

Allah, there is no god except Him, the Living One, the All-sustainer. Neither slumber overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Who is there that may intercede with Him save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not encompass anything of His knowledge except what He wishes. His thrown embraces the heavens and the earth and He is not wearied by their preservation and He is the All-exalted, the-All-glorious. (2:255)

3.1.1. Commentary

The first attribute ‘*the Living One*’ in the opening clause signifies life stability and durability in view of its Arabic conjugation module. Based on human experience, observable things can be classified in two groups in general: things with no perceptible changes in their existence (inanimate objects) through the passage of time and those with noticeable declining changes in their power and functions (plants, animals, and humans) due to time passage with the course of changes finally ending up with degeneration and decay. This experience, in long term, has led to the insight that members in the second group share the same fundamental epitome beyond their observable, material/physical existence. The essence is identified with life for which the eventual stage of degeneration is known as death; for humans, intellect and emotion are recognized as its key indexes. Recognition of life by humans in this way is also confirmed by God. The Qur’ān states that God continuously revives the earth (with whatever grows in it) after its death (57:17), that the earth which has been barren starts stirring and swelling with the help of the water sent down by God to give life to it (41:39), and that God created from (some sort of) water every motile creature (24:45). On human life, the Qur’ān is more precise and specifies two dimensions for it: ethereal and corporeal, while resolutely reminding addressees that human life essentially flourishes in its ethereal configuration⁴¹. Also, there are verses that

⁴¹ 8:24; 27:80; 35:22; 36:70. The believers are ordered to welcome the Messenger’s call to what gives life to them (8:24). They are reckoned the living among humans

introduce consecutive stages for human life including the worldly life, the Limbo, and the afterlife and in line with its enlightening discourse, the Qur'ān warns those who are satisfied with and trust (merely) in the worldly life (10:7) and do not expect to encounter God (in the Hereafter). Moreover, the unbelievers are quoted as saying (on the Judgment Day) that God has made them die twice and given them life twice (4:11), referring to once dying in the world and passing through the death experience into the Limbo (where one receives a form of life in reward for or as a consequence of the type of life one leads in the world) and once again dying in the Limbo and crossing the threshold into the afterlife on the Resurrection Day.

The worldly life recognized by the Qur'ān as one of the primary stages in the course of human life is reckoned to be 'inferior' and 'insignificant'⁴² (in comparison to its totality). The believers are told not to merely pursue the 'transitory wares' of the worldly life (4:94) which are qualified as nothing but 'play' and 'diversion' (6:32) and the Prophet is prohibited from desiring its 'glitters' (18:28). In contrast to the Hereafter, it is defined as nothing but (trifling) 'enjoyment' (13:26) and the 'wares of delusion', mere 'deviation', 'play', and 'glamour' (57:20). God has identified the worldly life with 'commodity' (13:26) and commodity in any situation is whatever that is not the end but merely a means to it. He has called it 'transitory' (4:94); something which appears for a short period of time and vanishes soon. He has also called it 'ornament' (18:28) and ornament is just beauty supplemented to an object to make it interesting so that people are attracted to it because of some quality that does not really exist. Moreover, He has called it 'frivolity' (6:32) which is the attribute of whatever trivial preventing humans from doing their essential duties. He has also called it 'game' (6:32) and a game is an action directed towards an imaginative objective which is not real (as such). He has also called it 'commodity of deception' (57:20) suggesting it to be like a swindler that plays tricks on humans.

Verse 29:64 puts all these attributes together in a nutshell by emphatically stating that the life of this world is nothing but 'diversion and playing' (if not led in its due course) while that of the Hereafter is life indeed (true and perfect). By implication, the worldly life is denied the truth of life and its perfection while it is proved for the afterlife since life in the Hereafter is secured and not affected by death (44:56) in the first place and those enjoying it will delight in whatever they wish and yet more than what they desire (50:35) while no defect will spoil their pleasures (44:51-55). Safety of life, as the first quality, is unique to the afterlife and inevitable in contrast to the worldly life quality. God has also made it clear

since they can hear the call while those who cannot hear it are dead in graves (35:22) since they turn their backs to it (27:80) and pay no heed to it.

⁴² 4:94; 6:32; 13:26; 18:28; 57:20.

that it is He who has given the truth of life to the Hereafter, i.e., the afterlife is not so by itself, rather it has been endowed with this superiority (11:108).

As regards the syntactic structures of verses 2:255 and 3:1, the attribute '*the Living One*' should be taken as the second predicate for the theme (God), the first predicate being '*there is no god but Him*'. The implication in both verses is that true life is not damaged by death and this is inconceivable unless life is identified with the very nature of the living existent and not transitionally given to it by another agent. In the same vein, the prophet is ordered to put his trust in '*the Living One*' who does not die (25:58). The maxim is that true life exclusively belongs to the Necessary-existent, the One who is also knowledgeable and powerful by nature. Hence, the quintessence of life has been restricted to God (40:65), the One whose life is not mixed with any sort of defect in contrast to other creatures'.

The Arabic equivalent for the second attribute, '*All-sustainer*', carries the concept of magnification in standing over something while covering meaning components including protecting, managing, correcting, educating, taking care of, and having power on it. It is symbolically derived from the notion of continuously being in a standing position with respect to an affair while denoting the above-mentioned range of meanings metaphorically associated to the standing position. God has (specifically) fixed this impression of standing in relation to creatures for Himself (as an all-embracing guardian). In verse 13:33, He (rhetorically) asks whether He who watchfully '*stands*' over every soul as to whatever it earns (is comparable to those partners that idolaters ascribe to Him)? Another verse raises the point through a momentous testament (with reference to the Qur'ānic monotheism):

﴿شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

Allah, who is standing firm on justice, bears witness that there is no god except Him, and [so do] the angels and those who are endued with knowledge; there is no god save Him the Almighty, the All-wise. (3:18)

The suggestion is that God is '*standing*' to provide or withhold so that any creature is done justice to and receives what it deserves according to its potential capacity. Justice in His treatment towards creatures is associated with the attributes '*Almighty*' and '*All-wise*' (at the end of the verse) with the implication that He stands over all creatures (to endow them with justice in providing for their needs) in light of His absolute power and ultimate sagacity, that is, He practices justice in whatever He does (to creatures). He stands over everything and from every aspect in the true sense of the word, i.e., His standing is genuine

and unaffected by failure, infirmity, and flaw. In addition, whoever else that stands in action over others is able to do so exclusively through Him and with His consent.

There are two restrictions in verse 2:255: the determining morpheme in the attribute confines the action of 'standing' to God so that no one else can possibly be in this position and, by the same token, God (His approach towards His creatures) is restricted to 'standing' in that He merely stands over creatures (for protection, supervision, correction, education, taking care of, nourishing, etc. to the extent that all their needs are met). This is (also) suggested by the clause that follows the attribute: 'neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him'. A further insight is that 'All-sustainer' is an overarching attribute covering all those qualities supplemented to God's nature-specific attributes. They include the Creator, the All-lover, the All-compassionate, the Provider, the Beginner of existence, the Restorer of humans to life in the Hereafter, the Life/Death-giver, and the Pardoner, all stemming from God's 'standing' over creatures and His treatment towards them.

3.2. Sample II

﴿سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

Whatever there is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allah and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise. (57:1)

﴿لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾

To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death and He has power over all things. (57:2)

﴿هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ﴾

He is the First and the Last and the Manifest and the Immanent and He has full knowledge of all things. (57:3)

3.2.1. Commentary

The Arabic equivalent for glorification of God denotes sanctifying Him by categorically denying any defect, flaw, need or whatever that is incompatible with His absolute perfection while believing that such deficiencies are out of question regarding God's attributes. The opening clause of the verse states that all creatures in the heavens and the earth, rational or non-rational (animate or inanimate), that is, the whole world in its totality glorifies God given the above-mentioned semantic considerations. This glorification is literal and in the real sense of the

word, i.e., the Qur'ān has not attributed it to creatures in a figurative way with the implication that merely by means of their existence, they are indicative of their Creator's all-perfection beyond any sort of defect. The topic is reiterated in another text portion in such a clear way that cannot be figuratively understood:

﴿تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا﴾

The seven heavens glorify Him, and the earth [too], and whoever is in them and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification. Indeed, He is all-forbearing, all-forgiving. (17:44)

If this glorification were to be figuratively realized, there was no point in explicitly stating that the addressees cannot understand it while grasping glorification by creatures in a figurative way is conceptually feasible for anyone. It simply means that any existent glorifies God by way of its very existence (with its all-inclusive needs and defects in contrast to the perfection of its creator). In fact, our incapability to understand literal glorification on the part of the world of being should not prompt us to hold the idea that inanimate objects do not have (their own) language for glorification. The Qur'ān is unequivocal on the point that inanimate objects are capable of using language (of a type, specifically when it warns the wrongdoers about the time when members of their body bear witness against them in the divine court)⁴³. It even reports on a dispute between God's enemies and their own body skins on the Resurrection Day:

﴿وَقَالُوا جِئُوا بِآيَاتِكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ رَاسِلِينَ قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾

They will say to their skins, 'Why did you bear witness against us?' They will say, 'We were given speech by Allah, who gave speech to all things. He created you the first time, and you are being brought back to Him. (41:21)

At the beginning of the second verse (57:2), the preposition (to) before the predicate indicates restriction of the whole world ownership for God with which the concomitant implication is His absolute ruling. That is, it is only He who issues whatever decree He wishes since He is the Creator of all creatures whose upstanding, existence, and impressions depend on Him. Another implication in the verse is suggested by the use of verbs 'give life' and 'bring death' with the

⁴³ 24:24; 36:65; 41:20-21.

continuous aspect instead of using the equivalent attributes (with the same denotations). The sort of diction has been chosen to cover any variety of life-giving including giving life to angles and embryos for which no death can be conceived before coming to life. Another reason for using the verbs with the continuous aspect is to suggest that God's life giving and taking it back are two ongoing processes. The second verse is closed with a clause on God's absolute '*power over all things*' in relation to the subject of the verse; i.e., life and death giving and especially regarding the revival of the dead (on the resurrection day) whose life traces have (apparently) disappeared. Moreover, the fact that God is capable of doing anything entails the point that He embraces whatever exists with His power on all sides and in any conceivable aspect. That is, if something is supposed to have existed from the beginning (of existence), it has been preceded by God who has been existing before anything else (is given life); namely, God is '*the First*' not whatever is supposed to be so. Similarly, God exists after whatever else that is supposed to be the last in existence since His power encompasses it. Consequently, God is '*the Last*' and not what we might suppose to be so. From another perspective (and with more rationality in understanding), we may consider that something is apparent, while, in reality, God is more apparent than it, since its appearance is incorporated by God's appearance due to His encompassing power. In the same vein, God is more immanent than (and beyond) anything else because His encompassing power embraces everything. Hence, God is '*the Immanent*' and not what we have thought to be so. The fundamental point here is that God's being '*the First*', '*the Last*', '*the Apparent*', and '*the Immanent*' is absolute in nature and by no means constrained to the limits of place and time while if any of these attributes is associated to other things or phenomena, it is merely done on a relative basis. Explicitly, He is not '*the First*' or '*the Last*' within the domain of time; otherwise, He (as its creator) cannot be beyond time (The same is the case with the notion of place regarding God's being '*the Apparent*' and '*the Immanent*'). The (key) point in assigning these attributes to God is that He (as the absolute Creator) encompasses the (whole) world of existence in whatever fashion we may think of. That is why these four epithets might have been derived from the name '*the Encompasser*' which, in turn, stems from His absolute power that embraces anything else by nature. There is also the possibility that the four attributes are subsumed by His encompassing existence rather than His power since His perpetual existence has been fixed and unchanged before anything else comes to existence and will last in the same manner after anything else is deprived of life. In some respect, however, these attributes (can) stem from His encompassing knowledge and accordingly, the verse is concluded with the point that He is fully cognizant of all things.

4. Analysis

Regarding Qur'ānic intratextuality and the method of exegesis adopted in *Al-Mizān*, exegete-text interaction is supposed to have been focused on identifying semantic interrelationships in light of the exegetic principle that parts of the Qur'ān interpret others. To follow the trace of this interaction, issues raised in the commentary on the two sample verses summarized in the previous section regarding God's attributes were subjected to in-depth analysis with the following results.

4.1. The first sample

The first attribute (*the Living One*) in the opening clause has been taken by the author as the second predicate for the 'theme' (God) with the reflection that the definite determiner in the Arabic equivalent taken as a lexical clue signifies specification and restriction of life to God. In relation to this, he briefly and comparatively explores the concept of life, its varieties, and qualities regarding the afterlife and the worldly life to set the background for an analogy apparently intended to clarify the point in restriction of life to God while a form of life is also granted to creatures. Reference is first made to some life taxonomy for differentiating animate and inanimate existents while focusing on humans due to their distinctive characteristics in comparison to other species. Concerning a number of verses on human life, some successive stages including the worldly life, the Limbo, and the Hereafter are specified in the first place and through some interconnected verses assigning devaluating attributes to the worldly life, the author presents a brief assessment of it in contrast to the Hereafter from the Qur'ānic point of view.

It seems that readers are delicately directed to a comparison between the worldly life and the afterlife in view of life transitionality and perpetuity respectively to help them perceive the contrast between God's life and that of creatures more clearly. The juxtaposition is bound to an explicitly stated rational principle that true life is so qualified that it is not possibly affected by decay or death. The author then concludes that the sole situation ensuring such quality is that the very nature of the existent be identified with life itself and this condition is met only in the case of the One who gives life to all others and does not receive it from anyone else.

Regarding the notion of *standing* as the second attribute in the sample, the author tries to formulate his commentary by drawing upon verses in different remote contexts in line with the methodical principle that within an integrated text, some

portions have to be consulted to ensure grasping meaning in others. One of those verses (13:33) focuses on the concept of *standing* with reference to humans and their life issues. With a more general tone, the other one (3:18), deals with the same notion in view of doing justice to all creatures.

To specify and restrict '*standing over creatures*' to God with two elaborated dimensions in the commentary on the first sample, the argument is based on a morphological clue in the Arabic term for the attribute '*All-sustainer*' and the implication suggested in the clause following the verse. That is, to provide support for the exegetic insight in the verse, hints are employed from both Arabic morphology and immediate context.

The second part of the commentary in the first sample is allocated to the issue of universal causality representing the author's exegetic ingenuity in dealing with the concept of '*intercession*'. He refers first to the sentences just preceding the concept (*Neither slumber overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth*) to set the background for his argumentation beginning with the point that God's relationship with all creatures is defined by the notions of absolute sovereignty and ownership along with sustaining as to their existence, nature, attributes, and the system of their impressions or effects.

Accordingly, the causality system is argued to be functioning merely with God's permission while it is subsumed by His supervision in a way that no independent effect could be conceived of in the world of creation unless it is His and from Him (a plain exposition of monotheism in acts while confirming relative individual freedom). The function of universal causality in general and verbal intercession on the Resurrection Day as part of it are then taken as referents of the same concept to show the coverage of the term '*intercession*' in its meaning realization. This interpretation is made possible by resorting to both the root meaning of the term and the contextual clues in the beginning sentences mentioned above. Further remote context support for the interpretation is also provided by making reference to verses 10:3 and 32:4 in which the term '*intercession*' is suggested to be interpreted in the same way.

4.2. *The second sample*

In the commentary on the second sample, specifications of meaning-components for the term '*glorification*' are taken as the point of departure for an argumentation that is finally directed to show how glorification on the part of all creatures should be understood if the Qur'ān is taken as the reference source in commentary. Moreover, the author draws upon two verses from remote contexts (17:44 & 41:21) apparently to suggest that the present life mechanisms that work

under the material world conditions do not provide the requisite potentiality to help humans perceive creatures' glorification (17:44) with the implication that necessary conditions for such perception will be provided for in the life to come (41:21).

The significance of the predicate position at the beginning of the second verse in the sample and the verb aspect type both as contextual clues are put forth as indicators of meaning nuances regarding God's absolute ownership and his non-stop handling of life in the world of creation. Furthermore, the concluding clauses in the second and third verses are employed to organize an argument on a number of God's pivotal attributes shaping key concepts in the Qur'ānic monotheism. Towards the end of the commentary, the notions of God's encompassing existence, knowledge, and, more specifically, His power on whatever created (all extracted from the immediate context)⁴⁴ are used as a combination of focal points in developing the author's philosophical discussion on how He is '*the First*', '*the Last*', '*the Apparent*', and '*the Immanent*'. The argument is that the attributes are all in the absolute sense of the term and not subject to time and place limits; a key notion in arguing for positive theology in the face of negative one in the Islamic philosophy.

5. Conclusion

The process in the development of *al-Mizān*, might be simply defined as a methodical interaction between the author's competencies for reason application and his expertise in the field of exegesis with the latent meaning assets in the text. This interaction reinforced by the author's knowledge of Arabic lexicology, syntax, and semantics as to the Qur'ānic communicative discourse has enabled him to employ immediate and remote contextual clues in view of text integrity and intertextuality.

Extensive use of the text as the reference source in this work especially in the course of involving remote thematic associations in addition to immediate context clues has all been done in line with observing the Qur'ān self-attributed features referred to by the author in support of his approach to exegesis. These features categorically indicate that the Qur'ān is self-expressive and at the same time imply that it should be approached accordingly while being read or commented on. In consequence, objective exegesis from the author's point of view presupposes critical text reading together with systematically juxtaposing interrelated verses in search of the intended meaning while seriously trying to

⁴⁴ The last two are drawn upon from phrases at the end of the second and the third verses.

avoid imposing subjective inferences stemming from beyond the field of Qur'ān exegesis.

The analytic scrutiny of the commentary on the selected verse samples documented two distinguishable and at time cross-reinforcing functions for the author's rational approach to Qur'ān exegesis. One was demonstrated to be at work in the author's attempt to put together germane contextual clues including morphological indications and significance of phrase location along with the significance of meaning in individual clauses to develop context-supported interpretations. In the analysis of the first sample, this function operated in the author's effort to show how an attribute restricts a quality merely to God.

The other function played its role when the Qur'ān as an integrated whole would be explored for semantic clues to develop an argument for a suggested interpretation. This way, the exegete provided documented explanations to further support the insights raised by the first function regarding God's attributes in the first sample. The rationale to justify the suggested interpretation is, therefore, offered via cross-verification with reference to multiple interrelated verses contributing to the commentary through due implications. In the commentary on the second verse sample, the operation of the second function was mapped out through the argument that was advanced for the interpretation of the manner of glorification when the Qur'ān is taken as the reference for understanding creatures' glorification of God. The interpretation on the four attributes at the end of the commentary is largely shaped through the exegete's rational argumentations.

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