

The Process of *Istizhār* (Textual Inference) and Systematic Understanding of the Quran in *Al-Mizān fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān*

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In *Al-Mizān fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān*, 'Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī introduces a novel and systematic approach grounded in the "process of *istizhār*" (deriving meaning from textual indications). The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive and step-by-step analysis of the *istizhār* process in 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's exegetical method, in order to clarify the stages and components involved in a systematic understanding of Quranic verses. Employing a library-based research method and content analysis of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's exegetical approach in *al-Mizān*, this article explicates the structure and stages of the *istizhār* process.

The findings indicate that the *istizhār* process in 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's exegetical method, grounded in principles such as avoiding the imposition of extraneous views and affirming the probative authority of the apparent meanings of the verses, follows a coherent seven-stage structure. These stages include: 1. Lexical analysis based on philology, 2. Examination of the rules of the Arabic language, 3. Attention to the contextual flow of the verses (connected indicators), 4. Utilization of disconnected indicators (such as occasions of revelation). The core of this process is the fifth stage, 5. The interpretation of the Quran by the Quran, which guarantees the semantic interconnectedness of the verses. Finally, the inferred meaning is completed and consolidated through 6. Critical evaluation of earlier exegetical views, and 7. Recourse to reliable hadiths transmitted from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (peace be upon them).

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Introduction

The Holy Quran, as the most important epistemic source and the primary means of divine guidance, endowed with comprehensiveness and authoritative status (Fākīr-Maybudī & Rafī'ī 2019, 8), has always been confronted with fundamental questions concerning the proper methods and foundations for understanding its verses. One of the major challenges in the field of Quranic studies is the existence of multiple and, at times, conflicting interpretations of the verses, a phenomenon rooted in differences among exegetical methodologies. In this context, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, through his composition of *al-Mīzān*, presented a novel and systematic approach to understanding the Quran, one that is grounded in the process of *istizhār*. Nevertheless, despite the prominent status of *al-Mīzān* among contemporary exegetical works, the structure of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's methodology and the precise stages of the *istizhār* process have been less frequently examined in an independent and methodical manner. The main question, therefore, is: What stages constitute the process of *istizhār* in 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's exegetical method? In other words, what intellectual trajectory does 'Allāmah follow in order to arrive at the stage of deriving meaning (*istizhār*) from the Quranic verses?

Examining the exegetical methodology of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī within the framework of the *istizhār* process is significant from both theoretical and practical perspectives. From a theoretical standpoint, this research seeks to reidentify one of the most coherent contemporary models for understanding the Quran and, by relying on *ijtihād*-based, rational, and linguistic foundations, presents an authentic and independent model free from individual opinion-oriented method (*tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*). From a practical perspective, analyzing the stages of the *istizhār* process can provide a foundation for training methodologically grounded exegetes, critically evaluating existing commentaries, and formulating new approaches to Quranic exegesis education. Moreover, the findings of this study contribute to the enhancement of religious education systems, the design of courses in exegetical methodology, and the development of interdisciplinary Quranic research. Accordingly, an analysis of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's

istizhār process plays an effective role in expanding a scholarly and systematic understanding of the Quran in the contemporary world.

Based on this, the main question is how the *istizhār* process is formed in ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s exegetical method in *al-Mīzān*, and which components and stages are involved in the systematic structure of understanding the Quranic verses within this process. Using a library-based research method and an analysis of ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s approach to the *istizhār* process, this article seeks to answer this question.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted on ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s exegetical methodology, each of which has examined certain aspects of his intellectual and methodological framework.

In an article by Ja‘far Tābān entitled “*An Examination of the Exegetical Method of al-Mīzān*” (2007) [in Persian], the Quran-by-Quran method is introduced as the core of ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s exegetical thought. The author explains that ‘Allāmah, by relying on the internal coherence of the verses and verse-by-verse interpretation, makes use of philosophical, theological, and mystical discussions without departing from the centrality of the Quran-by-Quran approach. Although this study clarifies the significance of ‘Allāmah’s Quranic method, it does not systematically analyze the precise structure and stages of the *istizhār* process.

In their study entitled “*The Descriptive Methodology of Tafṣīr al-Mīzān Based on Content Analysis of Sūrat Ghāfir*” (2015) [in Persian], Riḍā Shukrānī and Zahrā Muḥaqqiqiyān examine ‘Allāmah’s approach to interpreting this sūra in terms of the extent to which various exegetical methods are employed. The findings indicate that the Quran-by-Quran method and linguistic analysis are the most frequently applied approaches. However, the focus of this research on a single sūra prevents it from presenting a comprehensive model of ‘Allāmah’s systematic methodology throughout *al-Mīzān*.

Sayyid Muḥammad-Rezā Faqīh Īmānī and ‘Abbās Maṣlā’ī-Pūr, in their article “Interpretive Method of Allamah Tabatabaei in *Al - Bayan*

compared with *Al-Mizan* Interpretation” (2014) [in Persian], examine the historical development of ‘Allāmah’s exegetical method prior to the composition of *al-Mīzān*. The results demonstrate that the idea of interpreting the Quran by the Quran and engaging with hadith was present in his earlier works, but that this approach reached its final stage of coherence and maturity in *al-Mīzān*.

Likewise, in a study by Sumayyih Muntaj entitled “*An Examination of ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s Exegetical Methods with Respect to the Use of Narrations*” (2023) [in Persian], the position and manner of ‘Allāmah’s utilization of hadith in Quranic exegesis are analyzed. The author demonstrates that ‘Allāmah, based on the hadith of *al-Thaqalayn* and his belief in the inseparable connection between the Quran and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), employs hadiths within a framework of harmony with the Quran and reason. At the conclusion of each exegetical section, he presents sound hadiths from the Prophet (s) and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) as tools for elucidating and confirming meaning. While this study highlights the complementary role of narrations in the exegetical method of *al-Mīzān*, it does not structurally examine the systematic relationship of this component with other stages of the *istizhār* process, such as lexical, contextual, and Quranic analysis.

The present study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the *istizhār* process in *al-Mīzān* by explaining all components of ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s exegetical methodology—from lexical and syntactic analysis to the use of context, indicators, and narrations—within a systematic and step-by-step framework. This approach, while addressing the gaps in previous research, leads to a logical and practical reconstruction of ‘Allāmah’s exegetical method in achieving a profound understanding of the Holy Quran. Accordingly, the present research may serve as a methodical model for Quranic scholars and exegetes in the Islamic world, as well as for Orientalists and Western researchers in the field of Quranic studies, in understanding *al-Mīzān* and applying its methodology in interdisciplinary research.

The structure of the study is organized based on ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s *istizhār* process. Accordingly, the first stage addresses the role of lexical meaning analysis and the views of lexicographers,

followed by an examination of the position of Arabic grammatical and syntactic rules in deriving the meanings of Quranic verses from ‘Allāmah’s perspective. The next stage discusses the contextual flow of the verses, after which the role of connected and disconnected indicators in the *istizhār* process is examined. The fifth stage focuses on the interpretation of the Quran by the Quran and its role in ensuring semantic coherence. Finally, attention is given to the role of the views of Shi‘i and Sunni exegetes, as well as reliable hadiths, in completing and definitively clarifying the *istizhār* process in *al-Mizān*.

1. Analysis of Lexical Meanings Based on the Views of Lexicographers and Quranic Parallels

The first stage in ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s intellectual trajectory toward a systematic understanding of the interpretation of Quranic verses is attaining the meaning of a word and determining the scope of its semantic range. Unlike the common approach that relies on mental presupposition and immediate semantic intuition (*tabādur*), ‘Allāmah, in most cases, refers to the statements of lexicographers and derives the precise meaning of a term from authoritative lexical sources. In addition, in order to determine the meaning of a word, he examines similar and parallel usages of that term in other Quranic verses. This approach enables him to explicate the meaning of a word accurately and in a documented manner, within its Quranic context and in relation to other verses. For example, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, drawing on the works of lexicographers such as Rāghib Iṣfahānī, analyzes the lexical meanings of terms such as *thabāt* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 9:94), *nuṣḥ* and *khizy* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 19:335), *fujūr* and *taqwā* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 20:297), *ankāl* and *rajf* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 20:67), and *suḥt* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 5:340). By employing the views of lexicographers, he provides a precise analysis of both the lexical and technical meanings of these terms and attends to their various semantic dimensions.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī does not content himself with merely citing the opinion of a single lexicographer, nor does he interpret Quranic vocabulary solely on the basis of meanings proposed by lexicographers. Rather, the statements

of lexicographers generally constitute the point of departure for ‘Allāmah’s exegetical process in determining meaning. He, then, correlates these meanings by examining the actual usages of the word in the Arabic language, and particularly through its occurrences in other Quranic verses, ultimately arriving at a comprehensive and precise conclusion. A practical manifestation of this method can be observed in his examination of the terms *ḥaqq* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 3:8; 14:262; 11:334) and *bāṭil* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 11:334). This approach reflects ‘Allāmah’s scholarly rigor, as he not only relies on lexical analysis but also, through extensive evaluation within the Quranic context, extracts precise and functionally applicable meanings of words.

2. Attention to Literary Structures and the Rules of the Arabic Language in the Elucidation and Manifestation of Meaning

The next key element in ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s exegetical approach within the *istizhār* process is the utilization of literary structures and the rules of the Arabic language for achieving a deep understanding and precise derivation of meaning from the Quranic verses. Although ‘Allāmah does not approach the Quran as a work that is purely literary or rhetorical in nature, since the divine verses were revealed in accordance with the language and literary conventions of Arabic—*“Indeed We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran so that you may apply reason”*¹ (Quran 12:2), and *“We did not send any apostle except with the language of his people, so that he might make [Our messages] clear to them”*² (Quran 14:4)—he employs these rules as necessary and effective tools in the interpretation of the Quranic text.

To further clarify this point, reference is made below to several instances in which ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī draws upon literary and linguistic rules in his exegetical analysis:

2.1. In his interpretation of the verse, *“Allah has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them*

¹. ﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ﴾ (يوسف / ٢)

². ﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ...﴾ (ابراهيم / ٤)

successors, and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them, and that He will surely change their state to security after their fear, while they worship Me, not ascribing any partners to Me. And whoever is ungrateful after that it is they who are the transgressors”³ (*Quran* 24:55), ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, in addition to the points previously mentioned, presents a precise literary analysis and highlights several important aspects of the verse’s structure.

By analyzing the partitive function of *min* in “those of you who have faith” (*alladhīna āmanū minkum*), together with the rhetorical shift (*iltifāt*) from direct address in “of you”—whose audience includes all Muslims, whether believers or hypocrites, righteous or immoral—to the third-person mode in “they worship Me, not ascribing any partners to Me,” he concludes that the vicegerency (*istikhlāf*) promised in this verse pertains exclusively to those who simultaneously possess both faith and righteous action. That is, it refers to a specific group among Muslims who are neither hypocrites nor transgressors (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 15:151). Furthermore, from the use of the expression “those who were before them successors” (*alladhīna min qablihim*) instead of “messengers before you”—and given that the *Quran* never refers to God’s noble prophets with the phrase “those who were before them,” but rather with expressions such as “messengers before you” (*Quran* 3:184) or “messengers before me” (*Quran* 3:183)—he infers that the intended meaning of *istikhlāf* here is not the granting of divine vicegerency (*khilāfah ilāhiyyah*) in the sense indicated in certain verses concerning Adam, David, and Solomon. Rather, it denotes the act of causing a people to inherit the earth and granting dominion to one community after another, as expressed in verses such as “...The earth indeed belongs to Allah, and He gives its inheritance to whomever He wishes of His servants...”⁴ (*Quran* 7:128) (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 15:154).

³ ﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَ
لَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ
ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾ (النور/ ٥٥)

⁴ ﴿...إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ...﴾ (الاعراف/ ١٢٨)

He further understands the circumstantial clause “*while they worship Me*” (*ya ‘budūnanī*), reinforced by the emphatic statement “*not ascribing any partners to Me,*” together with the use of the indefinite “*anything*” (*shay’an*) in a negative context—which implies the absolute negation of all forms of polytheism, whether essential or practical—as indicating that the divine promise of succession on earth and complete security is realized only under the condition of pure and exclusive servitude to God. Such a wholesome, pure, virtuous, and sanctified community, he argues, has not yet been fully realized in history. Rather, in light of the attributes transmitted in widely recurrent hadiths from the Noble Messenger (s) and the infallible Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), this description applies exclusively to the era of the appearance of Imam Mahdī (a) (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 15:155).

2.2. In his interpretation of the verse, “Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless and merciful amongst themselves... Allah has promised those of them who have faith and do righteous deeds forgiveness and a great reward”⁵ (Quran 48:29), ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī holds that divine forgiveness and God’s great reward for the companions of the Prophet (s) are not absolute or unconditional; rather, they are contingent upon faith and righteous deeds.

By attending to the linguistic and literary structure of this verse, he emphasizes the word “*of them*” (*minhum*) and regards it as an indication of distinction and differentiation among the companions of the Prophet (s). According to ‘Allāmah, this differentiation clearly shows that not all of the Prophet’s Companions and associates are included in the promise of forgiveness and great reward; rather, only those among them who are endowed with true faith and righteous deeds attain this promise. Therefore, forgiveness and the great reward are granted conditionally, on the basis of the emergence and continuity of faith and righteous action (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 18:301-302).

⁵. «مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ... وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا» (الفتح/٢٩)

2.3. In his interpretation of verse 55 of Sūrat al-Nūr—“Allah has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth...”⁶ (Quran 24:55)—‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī considers the same line of reasoning that he had previously employed in the analysis of similar verses to be applicable here as well. Contrary to exegetes such as Zamakhsharī, who understands the referent of the verse to be the Companions of the Messenger of God and the caliphs (Zamakhsharī 1987, 3:251), or Ṭabarsī, who—based on hadiths from the Ahl al-Bayt (a)—holds that the intended referents are the Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (a) and emphasizes that this divine promise will be realized at the time of the appearance of the Imam Mahdi (a)⁷ (Ṭabarsī 1988, 7:239-240), he maintains that the divine promise concerning succession and vicegerency on earth is not absolute or applicable to all Muslims. Rather, it is restricted to a group of believers who, in addition to faith, are characterized by righteous deeds (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 15:151).

2.4. In the verse, “*This is the hell you were promised!*”⁸ (Quran 36:63), God gives the promise of hell to the disbelievers and the followers of Satan. The use of the imperfect verb “*you were promised*” (*tū ‘adūna*), which indicates continuity and repetition, suggests that the promises of hell have not been limited or few; rather, they have been conveyed continuously and repeatedly to people by the divine prophets and messengers (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 17:103).

As has become clear, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, in his interpretation of the Noble Quran, pays special attention to the structure of the Arabic language and its constraints in achieving a systematic understanding of Quranic verses. By employing linguistic subtleties and precise analysis

⁶. ﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ...﴾ (النور/ ٥٥)

⁷. «... يكون المراد بالذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات النبي وأهل بيته صلوات الرحمن عليهم وتضمنت الآية البشارة

لهم بالاستخلاف والتمكن في البلاد وارتفاع الخوف عنهم عند قيام المهدي (ع) منهم...».

The intended referents of “*those who have faith and do righteous deeds*” are the Prophet and his Household, may the Merciful’s blessings be upon them. The verse includes glad tidings for them of succession and establishment in the land, and the removal of fear from them at the rising of the Mahdī (peace be upon him) from among them.

⁸. ﴿هَذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ﴾ (يس/ ٦٣)

of grammatical, rhetorical, and morphological rules, he seeks to uncover and elucidate meanings, demonstrating how these rules play a role in attaining a correct and comprehensive understanding of the verses.

3. The Use of Context (*Siyāq*) in the *Istizhār* Process

The third key element in ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s process of systematic understanding and *istizhār* is the employment of “*siyāq*” (context). ‘Allāmah repeatedly uses *siyāq* as an effective tool for clarifying the meaning of verses and treats it as one of the important pillars of his exegetical method (Faḳīh Īmānī & ‘Abdullāh-Zādiḥ 2024, 192). *Siyāq* means the arrangement of words and sentences and the governing order among them; due to the speaker’s conscious selection and choice, they possess a particular linkage and relationship with one another (Ma‘rifat 2007, 5:239), and it plays an important role in conferring meaning upon the sentence. In the *istizhār* process, *siyāq* is a key tool for the exegete, which—by clarifying the denotation of the verse—provides a more precise understanding of the speaker’s intent (Riḍā’ī Iṣfahānī 2008, 78).

In the introduction to *al-Mizān*, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī criticizes approaches that, instead of focusing on the meaning and context of Quranic verses, impose scientific or philosophical concepts upon them. In his view, such approaches cause Quranic exegesis to be reduced to mere “application” (*taṭbīq*), and external concepts are presented in place of the real meanings of the verses. ‘Allāmah considers this method a serious deficiency, because as a result, the truth of the divine verses is transformed into figurative talk and groundless interpretations, and it becomes distanced from the Quran’s primary intent (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 1:8). For this reason, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī regards one of the fundamental principles of his exegetical foundations to be avoiding the imposition of external theories upon Quranic verses. He believes that interpretation must be carried out on the basis of the Quran itself and within the semantic framework and context of the verses, so that deviation in understanding divine purposes may be prevented (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 1:12). In what follows, we will refer to several examples of ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s use of *siyāq* in interpreting verses:

3.1. ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, in his interpretation of the verse, “*Indeed Satan seeks to cast enmity and hatred among you through wine and gambling, and to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you, then, relinquish?*”⁹ (Quran 5:91), emphasizes that the context (siyāq) of this verse continues the statement “abominations of Satan’s doing” in the preceding verse: “*O you who have faith! Indeed wine, gambling, idols and the divining arrows are abominations of Satan’s doing, so avoid them...*”¹⁰ (Quran 5:90). ‘Allāmah explains that the context of these verses shows that Satan’s primary aim in promoting wine and gambling is nothing other than creating enmity and hostility among human beings and preventing them from the remembrance of God and from prayer. This contextual analysis clearly demonstrates the semantic connection between the verses and clarifies how wine and gambling, as impure acts originating from Satan, function as means for realizing these malicious objectives (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 6:122).

3.2. In his exegesis of the verse “*O you who have faith! Enter into submission, all together, and do not follow in Satan’s steps; he is indeed your manifest enemy*”¹¹ (Quran 2:208), ‘Allāmah undertakes an analysis of the meaning of “*Satan’s steps*” and presents noteworthy points. In particular, from the context of the discourse it is inferred that what is meant by “following in Satan’s steps” is not following Satan in all of his calls toward falsehood. This conclusion is drawn because the prohibition against following the Satan’s steps comes after God’s command to “enter into submission” (al-silm), that is, complete submission to the divine commands. Therefore, the prohibition of following Satan in this verse must be interpreted within the framework of this command. In fact, what is meant here by following in Satan’s steps is following him in calls that appear outwardly religious, but in reality lack true submission and obedience to God. If the person who

⁹ ﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ﴾ (المائدة/ ٩١)

¹⁰ ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ...﴾ (المائدة/ ٩٠)

¹¹ ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ﴾ (البقرة/ ٢٠٨)

follows these steps is a believer, his path is in fact a satanic path within faith. As ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī explicitly notes, “the characteristics of the context of the discourse and its qualifiers indicate this” (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 2:101).

3.3. In his exegesis of the verse, “*Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice...*”¹² (Quran 57:25), ‘Allāmah proposes four different possibilities for the meaning of the term *al-mīzān*: first, “the scale”; second, “religion”; third, “justice”; and fourth, “reason.” Nevertheless, in his view, the second possibility, namely “religion,” is more consistent with the context of the verse. The context addresses the varying states of people with respect to humility, hardness of heart, as well as their seriousness or negligence in matters of religion. Accordingly, understanding “*al-mīzān*” as “religion,” which functions as a criterion for evaluating people’s religious and social conduct, appears more reasonable. Religion serves as a standard through which human beings can implement justice and fairness in their individual and social lives and, as a result, contribute to the realization of “*qiṣṭ*” (social justice). Therefore, this interpretation is more harmonious with the context of the verse and its overarching aims, which point to guiding people toward a just and equitable way of life. As ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī states, “this meaning is more compatible with the context” (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 19:171).

3.4. In his exegesis of the verse, “*Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness and generosity towards relatives, and He forbids indecency, wrong, and aggression. He advises you, so that you may take admonition*”¹³ (Quran 16:90), ‘Allāmah divides justice into two categories: “individual justice” and “social justice.” He maintains that the term “justice” in this verse is stated in an absolute manner and thus encompasses both types of justice. Nevertheless, he explicitly states that the context of the verse places greater emphasis on social justice.

¹² ﴿لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ...﴾ (الحديد/ ٢٥)

¹³ ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾ (النحل / ٩٠)

In his view, “social justice” in this verse means that each individual member of society must be treated in accordance with what he or she deserves and be placed in a position befitting that status. This understanding of justice is derived from the context of the verse, which seeks to reform social relations and societal systems. In this verse, God points to the establishment of a just social order in which individuals are positioned appropriately based on their merits and their rights are duly observed.

Furthermore, ‘Allāmah states that “kindness” (*ihsān*) in this verse means “doing good to others,” rather than merely performing good deeds in general. This implies that acts of goodness must be specifically directed toward the reform and improvement of social relations and toward assisting the needy and deserving individuals. Therefore, in ‘Allāmah’s view, the verse not only emphasizes social justice; rather, like some other exegetes, he believes that it also alludes in a sense to social responsibility and commitment to public welfare (Makārim Shīrāzī 1995, 11:366; Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 12:331).

As a result, the use of context (*siyāq*) plays a very prominent role in ‘Allāmah’s exegetical method (Aḥmadī & Fāker Meybudī 2021, 197). This method enables him to extract the latent meanings of the verses through a precise understanding of context and the semantic relationships among words, and to present a comprehensive *tafsīr* that is aligned with the social and religious objectives of the Quran (Bābā’ī 2002, 280).

4. Connected and Disconnected Contextual Indicators: The Key to Accurate Understanding of Quranic Verses

‘Allāmah believes that God considers Quranic apparent meanings (*zuhūrāt*) and a systematic understanding of the verses to be authoritative, and that in the Noble Quran there is no verse whose intended meaning contradicts its apparent sense. Verses that at first glance may seem to suggest such a contradiction in fact possess meanings that become clear through reference to the definitive (*muḥkam*) verses and careful reflection upon them (Ḥaydarī 2006, 110). On this basis, the Quran, as a comprehensive and internally coherent text, interprets itself and clarifies the meanings of its verses through their mutual interrelation (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 3:38).

Moreover, a meaning inferred from a word by means of connected or disconnected contextual indicators (*qarā'in-i muttaşilah wa munfaşilah*) is always compatible with the apparent meaning of the word itself. This issue is of particular importance with regard to the Noble Quran, whose structure is designed on the basis of semantic coherence. In this text, the various components are interrelated, and some verses function as evidence for the interpretation of others. Through reflection and contemplation upon the verses, any apparent disagreement or contradiction is removed, and the internal harmony of the Quran becomes clearly manifest. For this reason, 'Allāmah and some other leading scholars insist that the apparent meaning of discourse is not confined to a superficial and common understanding limited solely to the sentence under consideration; rather, situational and discursive indicators—both connected and disconnected—play a decisive role in identifying and explicating the apparent meaning of speech (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 6:368; Khu'ī 1997, 262).

Accordingly, after attention is given to lexical analysis, the rules of the Arabic language, and the context of the verses, the next step is careful consideration of contextual indicators, which constitutes one of the key elements in 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's method of *istizhār* and the process of determining the apparent meanings of Quranic verses. This is because the addressee can arrive at the precise meaning and the speaker's intended message only if all the elements present in the textual environment—such as the circumstances of revelation—are taken into account. Neglecting contextual indicators may lead to an incorrect understanding of the verses. For this reason, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī pays particular attention to situational and verbal indicators (*qarā'in-i maqāmī wa lafzī*), whether connected to the discourse or separate from it (Bābā'ī 2002, 244).

'Allāmah further emphasizes that recognizing whether sūras are Meccan or Medinan, as well as their chronological order of revelation, plays a significant role in examining the prophetic mission and analyzing its spiritual, political, and social dimensions during the era of the Prophet Muḥammad (s), and also in understanding and interpreting his blessed conduct (*sīrah*). However, the existing reports in this regard,

due to weaknesses in their chains of transmission and the contradictions among them, lack sufficient credibility and cannot be relied upon as dependable evidence. Therefore, the only reliable method for achieving this objective is reflection upon the context of the Quranic verses and the use of internal and external indicators and pieces of evidence. He then explicitly states that this very method has also been adopted in this book (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 13:235).

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī explicitly declares that his exegetical method in *al-Mizān* is specifically based on two principles: careful attention to the context of the verses, together with special consideration of a set of connected and disconnected indicators and pieces of evidence. He applies this approach not only at the level of theorization, but also repeatedly in practice throughout *al-Mizān*, consistently emphasizing it (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 14:176). As an example, several instances may be mentioned:

4.1. With regard to the divine promise mentioned in this verse, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī holds that it is restricted to certain individuals within the community, not to all of them: “*Allah has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds...*”¹⁴ (*Quran 24:55*). However, there is no evidence—whether textual or rational—that indicates that those intended by this promise are the Companions of the Prophet, the Prophet (s) himself, or the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a). Rather, the possibility of its realization exists for any generation whose members possess these characteristics (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 15:154; Ālūsī 1994, 9:393).

4.2. Contrary to the apparent meaning of the verse, “...*thinking that We would not put him to hardship...*”¹⁵ (*Quran 21:87*)—which may be understood to imply that Prophet Jonah (Yūnus) thought, or perhaps even became convinced, that God was unable to deal with his situation—‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī maintains that this interpretation is incorrect, since such a notion cannot be attributed to Prophet Jonah.

¹⁴. «وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ...» (النور/ ٥٥)

¹⁵. «... فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ...» (الأنبياء/ ٨٧)

This is because the following verse states, “and thus do We deliver the faithful”¹⁶ (*Quran* 21:88), wherein God explicitly includes *Dhū al-Nūn* among the believers. ‘Allāmah regards this statement as a contextual indicator (*qarīnah*) establishing that a believer never doubts God’s power, let alone considers Him incapable or becomes convinced of His inability (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 6:368).

5. Quran-by-Quran *Tafsīr*: ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s Approach to Uncovering the Coherence and Depth of Quranic Meanings

The fifth stage among the principal pillars of ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s exegetical method and his systematic understanding of the Quran is the utilization of other Quranic verses that share lexical or semantic affinity with the verse under consideration. This method, according to Ayatullah Ma‘rifat, constitutes the most reliable source for explicating the Quran (Ma‘rifat 1997, 2:22).

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī maintains that there is no discrepancy whatsoever in the meanings and concepts of the words and sentences of the Quranic verses, and that not a single verse in the Quran can be found that is intrinsically complex in meaning (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 1:9). He emphasizes that even the *mutashābih* (ambiguous) verses are conceptually clear, and that their ambiguity is confined solely to the determination of their ultimate intent. In his view, the primary source of exegetical discrepancy lies either in identifying the referents (*maṣādīq*) of simple and composite concepts of Quranic expressions—each intellectual school interpreting them according to its own perspective—or in differences in understanding their conceptual (*taṣawwuri*) and assent-based (*taṣdīqī*) significations.

To address this challenge, ‘Allāmah underscores the method of interpreting the Quran by the Quran (*tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi-l-Qur’ān*). According to this approach, the meanings of verses must be derived through contemplation and reflection upon similar verses and their parallels (Āzarbāyjānī & Ṣādeq-Zādegān 2023, 284). After arriving at a

16. «...وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ» (الأنبياء / ٨٨)

precise understanding of the meaning, the referents of the verses should then be identified and matched with the characteristics and effects to which the verses point. From ‘Allāmah’s perspective, this method makes it possible to attain a more accurate and profound understanding of the Quran (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 1:11).

‘Allāmah employs the exegetical method of interpreting the Quran by the Quran as one of the foundational principles of his approach, and treats it as a disconnected contextual indicator (*qarīnah munfaṣilah*) in understanding Quranic verses. He makes extensive use of this method to achieve a more precise and comprehensive explanation of the verses (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 6:367). By way of illustration, whereas *Majma’ al-Bayān* refers to only twenty-three Quranic verses in its interpretation of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, *al-Mīzān* cites seventy-nine verses in its interpretation of the same sūra (Bābā’ī 2002, 2:200).

In what follows, several examples of this method will be presented:

5.1. In his interpretation of the verse, “*Is he to whom We have given a good promise, which he will receive*”¹⁷ (Quran 28:61), ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī understands the expression “*a good promise*” (*wa’dan ḥasanan*) to refer to the forgiveness of sins and, consequently, the attainment of Paradise. He supports this interpretation by citing numerous Quranic verses in which believers are promised forgiveness and divine pardon (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 16:63). Among these is the verse: “*Allah has promised those who have faith and do righteous deeds forgiveness and a great reward*”¹⁸ (Quran 5:9).

5.2. In his interpretation of the verse “*Those follow their Lord’s guidance, and it is they who are the felicitous*”¹⁹ (Quran 2:5), which describes the righteous and the God-wary as possessing guidance and attaining success, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī explains that *guidance* (*hudā*) in this verse signifies *expansion of the breast and openness of the heart* (*sharḥ al-ṣadr*). He clarifies this meaning by reference to the verse:

¹⁷. ﴿فَمَنْ وَعَدْنَاهُ وَعْداً حَسَناً فَهُوَ لَاقِيهِ...﴾ (القصص/٦١)

¹⁸. ﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾ (المائدة/٩)

¹⁹. ﴿أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾ (البقرة/٥)

“Whomever Allah desires to guide, He opens his breast to Islam...”²⁰ (Quran 6:125), through which divine guidance manifests as inner capaciousness and receptivity for accepting truths.

According to ‘Allāmah, one who is granted such expansion and openness of heart is freed from narrow-mindedness and miserliness. This point is further corroborated by the verse: “...And those who are saved from their own greed it is they who are the felicitous”²¹ (Quran 59:9), in which success is promised to those who are delivered from the avarice of the soul. Accordingly, ‘Allāmah concludes that the mention of “felicity” (*falāḥ*) following guidance in this verse points to the same meaning and indicates the close and intrinsic relationship between guidance and true success (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1973, 1:46).

5.3. On the basis of numerous Quranic verses, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī maintains that Satan possesses the power to influence and exert influence over all human beings, including the infallible ones (a). To substantiate this view, he refers to various Quranic verses. Among them is the account of Prophet Job (a), in which Satan is presented as the agent behind certain afflictions and sufferings (Quran 21:83). He also points to verses in which certain actions are explicitly attributed to Satan, such as the verse, “O you who have faith! Indeed wine, gambling, idols and the divining arrows are abominations of Satan’s doing...”²² (Quran 5:90), which ascribes wine, gambling, and other reprehensible acts to Satan.

Likewise, he refers to the story of Prophet Moses (a), in which an act of striking and conflict is attributed to Satan: “...This is of Satan’s doing. Indeed he is an enemy, manifestly misguiding”²³ (Quran 28:15). He also cites the account of the journey of Prophet Moses and Joshua (Yūsha‘), where forgetfulness is attributed to Satan: “...indeed I forgot about the fish and none but Satan made me forget to mention it! ...”²⁴ (Quran 18:63). On the basis of these verses, ‘Allāmah concludes that

²⁰ ﴿فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ، يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ...﴾ (الانعام/ ١٢٥)

²¹ ﴿...وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَيْخَ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾ (الحشر/ ٩)

²² ﴿إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ...﴾ (المائدة/ ٩٠)

²³ ﴿...هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُضِلٌّ مُبِينٌ﴾ (القصص/ ١٥)

²⁴ ﴿...فَأَنبِيءُ النَّبِيِّاتِ وَالْحَوَاتِمِ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...﴾ (الكهف/ ٦٣)

the influence, penetration, and even external intervention of Satan are undeniable realities. This influence is not confined to the lives of ordinary people; rather, it has also occurred in the lives of divine prophets, including Adam, Job, and Moses (peace be upon them). He considers these cases as indications for Satan's power to affect behaviors and events, although Satan's influence over the infallible ones is such that it never leads to the commission of sin.

As is evident from 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's exegetical method, attention to other Quranic verses and their role in bearing witness to and overseeing one another plays a profound role in his understanding and interpretation of the Quran. This approach not only reveals the inner coherence and harmony of the Quran, but also greatly assists in extracting more precise and deeper meanings from its verses (Riḍā'ī Iṣfahānī 2008, 65).

6. Examining the Views of Exegetes: Analyzing Verses through Shi'ī and Sunni *Tafsīrs*

In the sixth stage of explicating Quranic verses and the process of systematic understanding of their interpretation, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī pays close attention to the views of both Shi'ī and Sunni exegetes and reflects their diverse opinions in *al-Mizān*. This attention is not limited merely to presenting and reviewing the various semantic possibilities proposed by earlier exegetes; rather, in many instances, 'Allāmah critically evaluates, corrects, or refines these views. By way of example, in certain cases he makes use of *Majma' al-Bayān* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 18:159). He draws upon this *tafsīr* in various respects, including lexical explanations, the narrative sections, and the analytical points offered by Ṭabarsī in his conclusions, and explicitly refers to it. Alongside *Majma' al-Bayān*, he also makes frequent references to *Jawāmi' al-Jāmi'* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 15:117). Moreover, 'Allāmah refers to *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 2:258) and benefits from it in the interpretation of certain verses.

On the other hand, 'Allāmah also makes use of Sunni Quranic exegeses in interpreting the verses of the Quran. Among these are *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 7:262; 8:140), *al-Manār* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973,

6:243; 11:53), *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 14:153; 18:365), and *al-Kashshāf* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 8:177; 18:145). In engaging with these works, 'Allāmah evaluates the views and exegetical possibilities presented therein, subjects them to critique and analysis, and then articulates his own interpretation on the basis of precise reasoning. This process demonstrates 'Allāmah's meticulous care and reflection in drawing upon diverse sources, as well as his effort to assess and correct competing interpretations in order to present a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the Quranic verses.

By way of illustration, the following examples may be mentioned:

6.1. In his interpretation of the verse, "Allah has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors..."²⁵ (Quran 24:55), 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī examines the meaning of the term *istikhlāf* (succession) and presents two principal possibilities based on the views of exegetes.

The first possibility understands *istikhlāf* as the bestowal of divine vicegerency and God-given caliphate (Ālūsī 1994, 9:393). The second possibility interprets *istikhlāf* as granting inheritance of the earth to believers and establishing their dominance and authority over it.

'Allāmah ultimately rejects the first possibility and accepts the second. In his view, *istikhlāf* in this verse more plausibly signifies inheriting the earth and attaining mastery over it, rather than divine vicegerency in a specific sense. This interpretation, he argues, is more consistent with the contextual flow of the verse, which refers to the promise of earthly dominance and the transformation of social and political conditions (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 15:151).

6.2. In his interpretation of the same verse, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī addresses the issue of the occasion of revelation (*sha'n al-nuzūl*) and the purport of the verse, emphasizing that numerous disagreements and conjectural views exist among exegetes concerning this verse. After presenting these divergences, 'Allāmah elaborates in detail upon the

²⁵ «وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ...»

most significant opinions and various exegetical possibilities, and then proceeds to subject them to critical examination and analysis. Following his assessment of the different possibilities, he concludes that the precise and complete realization of the meaning of this verse can only occur in connection with a society that will be established in the future with the appearance of Imam Mahdi (a) (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 15:156).

7. The Role of Hadiths in 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's Exegetical Method in *al-Mīzān*

The final stage in 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's process of understanding and deriving meaning (*istizhār*) in *al-Mīzān* is the use of hadiths, which play a complementary and explanatory role in the understanding of Quranic verses. At the end of each exegetical section, under the heading "hadith-based discussion" (*baḥth-i riwā'ī*), 'Allāmah refers to narrations related to the verses, transmitting and analyzing them from authoritative Shi'ī and Sunni sources (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 2:246). In these analyses, he raises points concerning the content of the narrations and their harmony with the Quran.

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī maintains that exegetical narrations do not, in and of themselves, possess an independent status in the process of understanding the Quranic verses (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, 3:77,85). By this he means that, in the course of deriving meanings from the verses, he rarely encounters a gap or deficiency that would require narrations to fill it (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1973, pp. 64-68). Nevertheless, he transmits most of the narrations related to each subject, and in cases where there is contradiction among them, he presents precise and significant points aimed at resolving these conflicts (Awsī 2002, 23).

'Allāmah adopts a critical approach toward narrations, and his criterion for accepting or rejecting them is their consistency with the definitive principles of the Quran and with rational content (Mu'addab & Shāyiq 2018, 75). This scholarly and analytical perspective on narrations distinguishes 'Allāmah's exegetical method from many other commentaries and systematically incorporates narrations into the interpretive process as an explanatory tool alongside the Quranic text ('Amīd Zanjānī 1988, pp. 294-299).

Conclusion

Al-Mizān, authored by ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, represents a distinguished example of a comprehensive and scholarly *tafsīr* which, grounded in authentic principles and a precise methodology, occupies a prominent position among contemporary Quranic exegeses. From a methodological perspective, ‘Allāmah applies a unique and systematic approach in *al-Mizān*. This understanding, in addition to being systematic, follows a structured process consisting of the following stages.

The first stage involves analyzing the meanings of words with reference to the views of lexicographers while taking other Quranic verses into consideration. The second step in the process of understanding is the utilization of the rules of the Arabic language in determining the meanings of the verses. The use of contextual coherence (*siyāq*) constitutes the third step in the process of *istizhār* and plays a key and effective role in identifying the meanings of the verses. From ‘Allāmah’s perspective, alongside context, attention to the totality of contextual indicators (*qarā’in*) serves as a fundamental pillar in discerning the correct meaning of a verse, and this constitutes the fourth stage of the *istizhār* process.

The fifth step in this process is attention to the pivotal role of interpreting the Quran by the Quran in achieving a precise and profound understanding of the verses. In the subsequent stage, ‘Allāmah makes use of Shi‘i and Sunni exegeses and examines interpretations that are compatible with the apparent meaning of the verse. In the seventh step, which is the final stage, ‘Allāmah examines the narrations cited under each verse in order to complete his understanding in the process of *istizhār*. Attention to reliable narrations enhances the exegetical richness of the work and reveals diverse dimensions of Quranic meanings.

Attention to ‘Allāmah’s exegetical method not only strengthens the thematic coherence and semantic depth of the Quranic verses, but also offers a scholarly and enduring model for Quranic interpretation. By preserving exegetical authenticity and adopting a comprehensive view of Quranic knowledge, *al-Mizān* is recognized as a valuable reference in the field of Quranic studies and is regarded as a guiding model for future exegetical research.

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