Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last Century: ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī *

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī[1]

Abstract

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī can be considered as being amongst the greatest thinkers and exegetes in the Islamic world over the last century. He studied in the cities of Tabriz and Najaf, but it was in the city of Qum where his academic prowess and ability truly flourished and came to the fore, causing him to become one the most distinguished scholars of the Qum Islamic Seminary within the last century. During this period, he presented significant academic services to Islamic culture and society in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis.

The present article aims to analyze the personality and Qur'ānic academic activities of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī from his position of being one of the sages and exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary. The method used in this article is descriptive-analytical.

Reviving Qur'ānic exegesis, propounding the exegetical method of Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān and answering the needs of the time by means of the Glorious Qur'ān are just some of the noteworthy accomplishments that this esteemed scholar of Islam achieved with respect to the Glorious Qur'ān over the last century. In addition, it should be noted that ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī applied many new approaches and methods in his exegesis of the Glorious Qur'ān. These include the expansive use of contextual harmony apparent in the verses, greatly benefitting from multiple verses to explain a verse, interpreting the allegorical verses based on the clear verses, albeit with a different approach to the clear verses, objective-based and monotheism-centered exegesis of the Qur'ānic verses, innovative subject categorization of the verses and paying special attention to the ḥadīth of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

Keywords: ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī; unique exegete; exegetical method; revival of Qur'ānic exegesis; monotheism-centered exegesis; exegetical method of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

---

1 . Associate Professor, Faculty of Qur'ānic Exegesis and Sciences, Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute: Ashrafi@qabas.net (Corresponding author).

Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last Century: 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

Introduction

'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī can be considered one of the greatest scholars and personalities of the Qum Islamic Seminary and the Islamic world. He was a philosopher of the highest order, an erudite jurist, and an esteemed exegete of the Glorious Qur'ān. He was born in the city of Tabriz, Iran, in 1904. His family was renowned for their scholarship and religiosity. His lineage, from his paternal side, reaches Imām Ḥasan al-Mujtabā, while from his maternal side, it reaches Imām Ḥusayn (Ḥusaynī Ṭehrānī 2000, 32-34). When he was just five-years-old, he lost his mother, and then, at the age of nine, his father passed away. A short while after the passing of his father, he began attending *maktab* and then, after a while, began attending primary school. On completing his primary education in 1918, he entered the field of religious studies, studying Arabic grammar, theology, jurisprudence and its principles, logic, and some philosophical texts over a period of seven years. This all occurred in Tabriz. After the completion of this stage of his education, he travelled to Najaf, Iraq. It was here where he completed the advanced levels of his education in various Islamic sciences under the tutelage of some of the foremost scholars and teachers of that era. He studied jurisprudence and its principles, attaining the level of *ijtihad,* under the tutelage of Grand Ayatullāhs Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Gharawī Nā'īnī, Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan Iṣfahānī and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Iṣfahānī, *rijāl* with Āyatullāh Ḥujjat Kuhkamarī and mathematics with Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Khānsārī. In philosophy, he benefitted greatly from the teaching of the famed philosopher of his time, Sayyid Ḥusayn Bādkūbe'ī, who was a student of Ḥakīm Mīrzā Hāshim Ishkawarī, Ḥakīm Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan Jilweh and Āghā 'Alī Ḥakīm (Mudarris Zanūzī). Whereas in *'irfān*, spiritual wayfaring, and Qur'ānic exegesis,[2] he was blessed with learning from a teacher like Sayyid 'Alī Āghā Qāḍī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, who was the most influential person in the development of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's spiritual

---

[2]. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī would constantly say, 'We learned this method of Qur'ānic exegesis from Sayyid Qāḍī.' Ref. Ḥusaynī Ṭehrānī, *Mehr Tābān*, pg. 63.

and Qurʾānic character.

In 1935, having acquired a treasure of knowledge, he returned to his place of birth. It was then, after a period of residence of around ten years, which included the writing of a few scholarly works, that he made his way to the Qum Islamic Seminary in 1946. Thus began a new stage of his life, one that was full of blessings, but not without its trials and difficulties. It was in this period of his life that he began teaching and authoring valuable works in various Islamic disciplines, a period which continued until the last breath of his blessed life.[3]

In this way, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī can be counted as being from amongst the greatest scholars who was deeply concerned with the invaluable heritage of Shiʿism, the foremost in trying to revive Islamic and Qurʾānic thought in the contemporary age and the most prominent exegete within the Islamic seminaries.

For the past two centuries, Islamic nations and the Ummah at large, have been continuously under attack from the West, be it militarily, politically, or culturally. In response to the Western attack on the religious culture of the Islamic nations, a movement for the revival of religious thought came to the fore that pursued a return to the teachings of the Glorious Qurʾān, and which also gave great significance to answering the objections and doubts of atheists and materialists, and to the revival of the Islamic culture and civilization.[4]

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, as a scholar and concerned individual, could not sit idly in the face of these attacks that threatened Islam, the Glorious Qurʾān and Islamic culture. Thus, he, with the awareness and understanding that he possessed of society and the world around him, in addition to the responsibility that he felt towards them as an Islamic scholar, took calculated and firm steps in trying to cement Islamic culture

---

[3]. Ref. Sayyid Hādī Khusrawshāhī, Barrasī hā ye Islāmī, vol. 1, pgs. 18-21

[4]. For more information related to the movement for the revival of religious thought, refer to: Sayyid Ḥasan Islāmī, *Andīsheh Nāmeh ʿAllāmah Balāghī*, pgs 17-32.

and oppose those cultures that threatened it. 'Allāmah fulfilled this task based on the teachings of the Glorious Qur'ān and the *Ahl al-Bayt*. In this way, he provided an invaluable service to the Islamic world, Shiʿism, and the Glorious Qur'ān. Consequently, he can truly be considered as being one of the awakeners of the Muslim lands, reviver of the Glorious Qur'ān, and teachings of the school of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.[5]

The academic and cultural aspects of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī personality had various dimensions. One of the most apparent of these was his Qur'ānic exegetical dimension. This article aims to discuss this aspect of his academic personality and show his position with regard to this discipline over the last century within the Qum Islamic Seminary.

Some of his most significant contributions in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis are listed and discussed below:

1. The Revival of Qur'ānic Exegesis within the Qum Islamic Seminary
By studying the books of Shia scholars that have been written on the subjects of Qur'ānic exegesis and sciences, it becomes clear that they were at the forefront of these disciplines. They wrote very important Qur'ānic exegeses during the early centuries, however this article is not concerned with this topic. Nevertheless, great scholars, such as Āyatullāh Sayyid Ḥasan Ṣadr have made efforts to establish this point.[6]

Similarly, within the Shiʿah tradition of Qur'ānic exegesis writing, a prominent era was witnessed with works such as *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Shaykh Ṭūsī and *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* and *Jawāmiʿ al-Jāmiʿ,* both written by Amīn al-Islām Ṭabarsī. However, over the past centuries, the

---

[5]. The Islamic Revolution of Iran is one of the pertinent culminations of this movement of Islamic awakening. Even though the founder of this revolution was Imām Khomeini, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī can be considered as being one of the academic and cultural architects of the Revolution. Ref: Muḥammad Taqī Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, *Tamāshā ye Farzānagī wa Farūzandagī*, pgs. 41-44.

[6]. Ref: Sayyid Ḥasan Ṣadr, nd., *Ta'sīs al-Shīʿah li ʿUlūm al-Islām*, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIrāqīyyah.

progress in many of the Islamic disciplines, such as Qur'ānic exegesis, has stagnated for various reasons. For example, during the beginning of the period in which 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī lived, the activities of the Islamic seminaries focused mainly on the disciplines of jurisprudence and its principles. But a society that desired to escape the state of stagnation and 'backwardness' and step into a new era required personalities and independent thought and culture to both counter foreign cultures and prove their own worth. So, in addition to the intellectual disciplines, other disciplines were also needed for this. Unfortunately, during that period there was not a single official Qur'ānic exegesis class held in the seminary. On top of that, the seminary was also empty of classes that thought the intellectual disciplines, disciplines that allowed for the defense of Islam and the answering of objectives. Classes on ethics, which were responsible for developing the spiritual side of the seminary students, also were not of an official nature and were held on the peripheries with very few participants.

Hence, the steps that 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī took in establishing and holding official classes in Qur'ānic exegesis, philosophy and ethics can, in their own right, be compared to the steps that Imām Khomeini took concerning political activity. These steps were so significant and difficult that very few individuals would have had the courage to accomplish them. Indeed, they required the courage and wisdom of a person such as 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī to come to fruition.[7]

In the area of Qur'ānic exegesis, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī has authored two important and major works. They are:

A) Tafsīr al-Bayān fī al-Muwāfaqah bayn al-Ḥadīth wa al-Qur'ān

This Qur'ānic exegesis was written before *al-Mīzān* and was done so with the intention of collaborating the ḥadīth of the *Ahl al-Bayt* with the apparent meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān. It was printed by the office for

---

[7]. Ref: Muḥammad Taqī Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, *Tamāshā ye Farzānagī wa Farūzandagī*, pgs. 45-46 & 65-66.

Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last Century: ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

the compilation and publication of the works of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in six volumes in 2004.

B) Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī spent nearly twenty years (1955 - 1972) writing this book (Ḥusaynī Ṭehrānī 2000, 63). This book, in the opinion of many Islamic scholars, is one of the best and most comprehensive Qur'ānic exegeses that has been written from the onset of Islam until now.

It was published for the first time in Tehran in 1956 and thereafter in Beirut by Muassisah al-Aʿlamī li al-Maṭbūʿāt in twenty volumes.[8] It has also been partly or completely translated into other languages, such as Farsi, Urdu, English Turkish, Spanish[9] and Russian[10] and is available in many countries around the world.

This tremendous academic struggle undertaken by ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in teaching and spreading Qur'ānic exegesis within the Qum Islamic Seminary resulted in the training of many esteemed and well-rounded exegetes, such as Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, Āyatullāh Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, Āyatullāh Jaʿfar Subhānī and Āyaṭullāh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī, just to name a few. Each of these individuals, in their own right, by way of their writings and classes, upheld the revival of Qur'ānic exegesis within the Qum Islamic Seminary. It is from the works of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and his students that the beautiful teachings of the Glorious Qur'ān have been spread throughout the Islamic world from the Qum Islamic Seminary, works such as *al-Mīzān*, *Tasnīm* of Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, the series *Maʿārif-i Qur'ān* of Āyatullāh Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, *Manshūr Jāvīd*, *Mafāhim al-Qur'ān* and *tafsīr* of *Munyah al-Ṭālibīn* of Āyatullāh Jaʿfar Subhānī and

---

8 . Subsequently, Muassisah Maṭbūʿātī Ismāʿīlīyyān and Daftar Nashr Islāmī offset printed al-Mīzān from the Beirut edition.

9. Ref: Muḥammad ʿAlī Hāshim Zādah, Kitābshanāsī Tafsīr *al-Mīzān* wa ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Bayyanāt*, No. 34, Summer Issue 8, pg. 190

10 . As of now, five volumes of *al-Mīzān* have been translated into Russian by Tārās Chirnī Yanankā and published by al-Mustafa International University Publications.

Tafsīr-i Nemūneh and *Payām-i Qur'ān* of Āyaṭullāh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī.

2. Promoting the Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān Exegetical Method

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in attempting to clarify and explain the objectives of the Qur'ānic verses, made use of the Qur'ān itself more than any other exegetical source. This method is known by Qur'ānic researchers as the Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegetical method.[11] Furthermore, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī stresses that this method was the exact method that the *Ahl al-Bayt* used for Qur'ānic exegesis (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 1: 12). While *al-Mīzān* was not the first attempt in the Islamic world at adopting the Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegetical method, it is however the most influential and profound. That which separates it from other attempts is the extensiveness of its use of this method and the resolving of manner Qur'ānic exegetical issue by means of it.[12] In his usage of other verses of the Glorious Qur'ān in his exegetical approach, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī has far surpassed his predecessors. He has also introduced many unique and inventive ideas in this field. The most significant of these will be discussed under the section detailing his new approaches towards Qur'ānic exegesis.

3. Answering Contemporary Issues via the Qur'ān

One of the discussions that, from the very onset of Islam, has been given due diligence by Qur'ānic researchers and exegetes within the Islamic seminaries concerns the comprehensive and universal nature of the Glorious Qur'ān and its teachings, such that it must be able to provide answers for issues at any given time. What is meant by its comprehensive nature is that its teachings encompass every facet of human life - individual or social – needed for the attainment of lasting felicity.

In the opinion of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the finality of prophethood

---

[11] . Ref: 'Alī Akbar Bābā'ī, *Makātib Tafsīrī*, vol. 2, pgs. 199-203.

[12] . Ref: Muḥammad 'Alī Mahdawī Rād, Jāyegāh al-Mīzān dar Mayān Tafāsīr, *Shinākhtnāmeh 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, vol. 1, pgs. 102-103.

dictated the necessity of the Glorious Qur'ān's revelation. Moreso, he believes that according to the confirmations of certain verses, such as 16:89 and 4:59 &105, the Glorious Qur'ān was revealed to answer all of man's individual and social needs in order for him to attain felicity in both this world and the Hereafter. Therefore, it is possible for matters such as government, politics, economics, and especially those that deal with individual and social justice, to be found within the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān, as they all play a role in ensuring that man reaches felicity in this world and the next (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 5:20).

Similarly, he opines that the Glorious Qur'ān does not suffice with a mere description of ideals and desired values, but rather it maps out the manner of how they can be achieved. As an example, the divine laws related to wealth have been stipulated by Islam and the Glorious Qur'ān in such a manner that if observed will result in the closing of the gap between the economic classes and create balance and justice within society (ibid, 9:388).

So, in line with his view, he attempted to find solutions for some of the most pressing issues of society at that time from the Glorious Qur'ān. The answers would then be presented within his sequential Qur'ānic exegesis or form an independent discussion within *al-Mīzān*. According to Qur'ānic researchers, it will be rare to find an Islamic doctrine that is needed by society on which *al-Mīzān* has not clarified and elucidated.[13]

By being a scholar who was aware of the times, he was able to identify the most important issues that required answering and then went about doing so within *al-Mīzān*. Therefore, it is not farfetched to consider *al-Mīzān* as a relatively comprehensive encyclopedia regarding the most

---

[13]. ʿAllāmah Ṭehrānī, one of the students of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī has written the following regarding the comprehensiveness of *al-Mīzān*: My friend and classmate, Sayyid Mūsā Ṣadr once told me that the matchless and erudite Lebanese scholar and writer, Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād Mughnīyyah, said, 'Ever since I have received *al-Mīzān*, my library has become dormant. Instead, *al-Mīzān* is always on my desk. Ref: Ḥusaynī Ṭehrāni, Mehr Tābān, pg. 70.

important social issues required for man's guidance. Martyr Muṭahharī has said the following concerning the comprehensiveness of *al-Mīzān*: "Most of the material that I have mentioned in my works and writings can be sourced from ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, specifically al-Mīzān."[14]

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī presented subjects in *al-Mīzān* that were according to the needs of the Islamic World and, because he believed in the expansive nature of the Qurʾānic teachings, discussed these subjects by way of the verses of the Glorious Qurʾān under different headings, such as hadith-based, societal, historical, philosophical, etc. Even though these discussions were done independently, they were nonetheless closely related to the exegetical discussion presented, rather, these philosophical, theological, or sociological elaborations were matters that were attained from the interpretation and exegesis of the Qurʾānic verses. Some of these discussions also intended to answer the objectives and doubts that Western and Eastern schools of thought claim against the Glorious Qurʾān.

From the above, it can be claimed with considerable ease that the book *al-Mīzān* is a relatively comprehensive encyclopedia of Islamic doctrine that includes many subjects of the humanities that are needed by contemporary Muslim society. In fact, this comprehensive book has become the foundation on which numerous researches within the humanities are undertaken.[15]

---

[14]. Ref: Gulīzavāreh, *Jurʿeh hā ye Jānbakhsh*, Shanākhtnāmeh ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, vol. 1, pg. 237.

[15]. An example of this is the research project that has been undertaken by the Qurʾān and Tafsīr faculty of the Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute titled *Taṣnīf Mawḍūʿī al-Mīzān* (A Subject Classification of *al-Mīzān*). It involves over 70 researchers and teachers who are attempting to abstract and categorize the subjects that are discussed within *al-Mīzān*, the humanities being one of them. This project is centered around 36 topics, a number which shows the comprehensiveness and expansiveness of *al-Mīzān* as an academic and sociological exegesis. The 36 topics are: 1. Logic 2. Epistemology 3. Philosophy of Knowledge 4. Philosophical Issues 5. Ontology 6. Philosophy of Religion 7. Theology 8. Prophethood and Imamate 9. Eschatology 10. Religious Denominations 11. Islamic Sects and Schools of Thought 12. Acts of Worship 13. Qurʾānology 14.

Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last
Century: ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

4. New Approaches in the Method to Qur'ānic Exegesis

The method of Qur'ānic exegesis can be defined as to how the sources and principles of exegesis have been utilized in order to render clear the intention of Allah and upon what foundation has the process been done.[16]

Every Qur'ānic exegete will refer to the sources for understanding the Glorious Qur'ān based on the assumptions that they have regarding its nature and how the verses indicate the intention and objective of Allah. Then, by means of logical selection and arrangement, the exegete will utilize the acquired data to remove the ambiguities that may be present within the verses and elucidate their meaning. Therefore, an individual who views the Glorious Qur'ān as a bright and illuminating reality, which explains the intention of Allah at the height of rhetoric and eloquence to its audience, counts the Glorious Qur'ān as being the best source for Qur'ānic exegesis.

In the opinion of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Allah has explained his objective in the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān in an astoundingly eloquent manner, hence, in professing its intended meaning, the phrases used by Glorious Qur'ān are clear and articulate and do not require another source to elaborate them. Additionally, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī believes that the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān have a unique semantical synchronicity, such that they converse with each other. Consequently, according to him, the Glorious Qur'ān is the best source for clarifying the meanings of the verses and that the Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegetical method, which he believes was

---

Ḥadīth Studies 15. Studies in the Principles of Jurisprudence 16. Studies in Jurisprudence – Individual Law 17. Studies in Jurisprudence – Social Law 18. Philosophy of the Humanities 19. Philosophical Anthropology 20. Studies in Universal Values 21. Mysticism 22. Philosophy of Ethics 23. Ethics 24. Education and Development 25. Psychology 26. Philosophy of History 27. History 28. Sociology 29. Philosophy of Jurisprudence and Law 30. Law Issues 31. Politics 32. Economics 33. Management 34. Literature 35. Philosophy of Art 36. Creative Arts.

[16] . For more information regarding the definitions of Qur'ānic exegesis, its principles, and sources, refer to: Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī, *Mabānī Tafsīrī ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī dar al-Mīzān*, pgs. 49-54.

the exegetical method of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, is the best method for Qur'ānic exegesis (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 1:12). Subsequently, *al-Mīzān* was written using this method. In the words of one of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's students, it was Sayyid ʿAlī Qāḍī Ṭabāṭabā'ī who inspired him towards this method of Qur'ānic exegesis.[17]

Even though ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī was not the first scholar to utilize the Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegetical method, nevertheless his approach to utilizing the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān possessed specific characteristics that were not or rarely seen in the exegesis of past scholars. So, it is with attention to these characteristics – that will be mentioned below – that the unique and innovative approaches that ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī brought into the field of Qur'ānic exegesis can be made mention of and which were registered under his name in the Qum Islamic Seminary. And it was from here that they were transferred to other academic circles by means of his students. The most significant new approaches that he brought and utilized in this method can be summarized as follows:

4.1. Expansive and Unmatched Use of Contextual Harmony and Unity

What is meant here by contextual harmony and unity is speech is a type of conformity and connection between the words and sentences of the speaker or writer, such that it can be used to clarify the intention of their statements. The criteria for the validity of the context are that the speaker must be sane and aware of the principles of conversation so that he can use appropriate and connected words in a manner that delivers his desired intention. Accordingly, this conformity and unicity within the Glorious Qur'ān, which is the miraculous word of Allah and is at the peak of rhetoric and eloquence, must be to a level far greater than that of normal conversation. In *al-Mīzān*, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī uses the approach of

---

[17]. Sayyid ʿAlī Qāḍī Ṭabāṭabā'ī had written a Qur'ānic exegesis using this method up to *Sūrat al-Anʿām*. He would also teach this method of Qur'ānic exegesis to his students.

Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last
Century: 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

contextual harmony and unity in an unparalleled manner regarding those
verses which he believes were revealed together. What stresses this point
is that he has used the word contextual harmony (*siyāq*) and its derivatives
2370 times in *al-Mīzān*.[18] In most of these occasions, what he intends by
contextual harmony is the "connected verbal context" (*qarīneh-ye
muttaṣil-i lafḍī*). By paying careful attention to the contextual harmony of
the verses, 'Allāmah was able to derive and present previously unfound
connections and relationships between them.[19]

4.2. Monotheism-centered Qur'ānic Exegesis based upon the Exalted Verses (Ghurar al-Qur'ān)

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, by returning the meaning of all Qur'ānic verses to
the monotheistic verses or the exalted verses as they are known, he,
therefore, believes that the source and objective by which the teachings of
the Qur'ānic verses must be understood in is monotheism. This
understanding coincides with the Islamic doctrine that all affairs
ontologically culminate in monotheism, "…*and to Him all matters are
returned*" (Qur'ān 11:123). As a result of this, he views the objective of
every verse and sūra as being a guidance towards monotheism in some
way or manner. In stressing this point, he writes, "Every verse of the
Glorious Qur'ān rests upon a single reality. And it is this reality that is
primary, while the verses are subsidiary to it. This reality is monotheism,
which is the very foundation of Islam" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 10:135).
Additionally, within his method of Qur'ānic exegesis, he believed that the
verses were gradational in nature, that some of the verses were allegorical
and their meanings were on a 'lower' level, as they were similar to the
meanings and instances that occur in human speech. While other verses

---

[18]. This number has been obtained using the *al-Muʿjam al-Fiqhī* software of Āyatullāh
Gulpāygānī.

[19]. As an example, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī by using this approach was able to elucidate a
connection between verses 105-107 of *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān* that at first glance is not clear.
Ref: *al-Mīzān*, vol. 3., pg. 375.

had a 'higher' and more manifest level of monotheistic meaning, and it was by means of these verses that the allegorical ones found a correct monotheistic meaning. These clear verses are known as the firm verses (*muḥkamāt*). Moreover, these firm verses were also gradational, i.e., some of them were more apparent or expansive and encompassing than others in terms of monotheism. It is these verses that are known as the peak or exalted verses of the Glorious Qur'ān (*Ghurar al-Qur'ān*).

Furthermore, from this monotheistic-gradational view of the verses, where some are seen as being keys for the understanding of others, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī points to the related nature of the phrases and the univocal meaning that is contained within the certain layers of the verses. He, then, uses this internally related nature of certain layers of the verses to form a primary principle of Qur'ānic exegesis that stems from the method of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. Thereafter, he derives two secondary principles of Qur'ānic exegesis from it (ibid, 1:260 & 10:100).

The first of these secondary principles is the gradational apparentness of the phrases that form each verse. The process of this principle aims to, step-by-step, bring out the internal meaning of the verse. It begins with the general meaning and the reality and judgment that is apparent from the verse. Then by adding the relevant specifics and confining conditions, a specific meaning within a particular context is reached.

The second principle is that when a story, the contextual harmony, or the words of two verses are repeated in a similar or exact fashion, it indicates that they have a common source and reference point and that each of them is a descending indication of a part or portion of that one reality. As a result of this, because every verse is a descending and 'lower' form of one reality, it, therefore, holds that every meaningful portion of it refers back to that reality.

So, if two verses or even two parts of one verse, if they are independently meaningful, have a similar meaning, that similitude and meaningful part is indicating towards one reality. Therefore, the sequence of the words in a verse is not merely for the structuring of a sentence, rather

Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last
Century: ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

it is a descended and lowered manifestation of a reality that is single and established. Hence, every meaning phrase is a level and portion of that reality, which, if not opposed by rational or textual evidence, is possible to prove from the phrase itself. So, any similitude – in words or meaning – between two contexts or verses are, in fact, two levels of a descendant form of one reality and universal truth. Each of these levels, which are connected to that reality, can, in some way, remove ambiguities that may exist in the meaning of certain verses. This principle is the bedrock of the Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegetical method. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī upholds that these two principles are from the secrets of the Glorious Qur'ān under which many other secrets are contained.

This principle clearly indicates that the Glorious Qur'ān is a descending manifestation of a higher single reality, one which is completely encompassed by Allah. The repetitions within it were not done because of forgetfulness or inattentiveness, but rather every repetition must be seen as being a 'new' judgment having additional implications and effects. Thus, no verse or phrase within the illuminated essence of the revealed Qur'ān is a repetition (Shahrūdī, et al. 2013, 123-124).

According to this approach of the Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegetical method utilized in *al-Mīzān*, a unique characteristic, that we earlier termed monotheism-centered Qur'ānic exegesis based upon the Exalted Verses (*Ghurar al-Qur'ān*), can be seen. It is this characteristic that significantly distinguishes it from other Qur'ānic exegeses of its genre. To elaborate, an exegete who wished to use the Qur'ān-by-Qur'ān exegetical method would, in order to interpret a verse, use Arabic dictionaries and Qur'ānic lexicons to find similar phrases and words within the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān. Then, by utilizing the different verses that have similar words or phrases, interpret the verse that is under discussion.

One of the clear distinctions of *al-Mīzān* is that it is unrivaled in its pivoting upon the Exalted Verses in the interpretation and exegesis of the Glorious Qur'ān. This method, besides in the tradition of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, has been rarely seen in the exegesis of previous scholars. Nevertheless, it still remains a pioneering approach. In this approach, the exegete does not

rely on synonyms and common phrases, such does dictionaries and lexicons will do the job for him, rather it relies on the foundations of the Qur'ānic teachings, which are represented by the Exalted Verses.[20]

From this discussion, certain questions come to the fore, such as which verses can be considered to be the Exalted Verses? What are the common aspects between them? What is the relationship and connection between them and the other verses of the Glorious Qur'ān? Even though each of these questions will require an extensive and detailed study of *al-Mīzān*,[21] it is possible to provide a brief answer as per the words of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

According to 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the structure of Qur'ānic teachings is monotheism-centered. Hence, he views the Glorious Qur'ān as a pure tree whose roots is monotheism. Therefore, monotheism, like the spirit to the body, is present in every part and particle of the Glorious Qur'ān (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 12:52 & 10:135), and every verse, seemingly independent and disconnected, is brought together by it (ibid, 6:217).

In addition, in his opinion, which he bases upon verse 7 of sūra 3, the firm verses – which pertain to the pillars of the Qur'ānic doctrine – are the source and reference point for the exegesis and interpretation of all other verses (ibid, 3:22). From this, it can be assumed that the Exalted Verses in

---

[20]. Ref: 'Abdullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Sīrah Tafsīrī 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, Shinākhtnāmeh 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, vol. 2, pg. 76.

[21]. Over recent years there have been studies undertaken in this area, of which the following can be made mention of: Zuhreh Ranjbar Tīlakī, *Taḥlīl wa Barrasī Ghurar Āyāt az Didgāh 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī dar Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, Master's Thesis presented to the Faculty of Islamic and Religious Sciences, University of Qum, 2010; Kāwūs Rūḥī Barandaq and Sa'īd Jalīlīyān, *Ghurar al-Āyāt dar Tafsīr al-Mīzān bā Maḥwarīyyat Āyah 56 Sūrah Dhāriyāt*, Ma'rifat, No. 203, 2014, pgs. 33 – 48; 'Alī Ḥājī Khānī, Kāwūs Rūḥī Barandaq and Muḥammad Āsanjaranī, *Naqsh Ghurar Āyāt dar Tafsīr al-Mīzān bā Takīyyah bar Āyāt 82 wa 83 Sūrah Yāsīn,* Ma'rifat, No. 214, 2015, pgs. 55-68; 'Alī Rād, *Mufassirān Ma'āsir Imāmyyah wa Ghurar Qur'ān, Chīstī, Rāyāft hā wa Gūnah hā,* Pajūhish hā ye Qur'ān wa Ḥadīth, No. 12, 2015, pgs. 25 - 48; 'Alī Rād, *Ghurar Qur'ān az Naẓarīyyah tā Tafsīr*, Qum, Muassisah 'Ilmī Farhangī Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2016.

Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last
Century: 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

the opinion of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī are from the monotheistic verses which remove the ambiguity from other verses, and, as a result, play an extremely significant role in the understanding of the Glorious Qur'ān. An example of this is the verse, "*Nothing is like Him,*" (Qur'ān 42:11). This verse nullifies any similarity between Allah and His creation, be it in essence, attribute, or act, and removes any inkling of a resemblance with something else from the thought of the audience. So, according to 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, this is one of the Exalted Verses.

Another example is the verse, "*There is not a thing but that its sources are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure*" (Qur'ān 15:21). This verse explains a reality that, as per the view of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, is more profound and higher than what exegetes usually propose as its explanation. This verse indicates that the origin and source of all creation is based upon Divine ordainment, that to at a stage before their appearance in the material world (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 12:143). According to the understanding that 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī derives from this verse and those similar to it, all creation before they appeared in this material plane of existence, was present in a different plane of existence (the source) in a simple and uncharacterized manner. It was thereafter, at the level of creation by Divine ordainment, that they appeared in the material plane of existence with the traits and qualities that Allah had decreed for them in a compound manner (ibid, 11:338).

Hence, it is through this verse and the like of it, that verses such as "… *We sent down iron…*" (Quran 57:25) (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 1:291), *"...We have certainly sent down to you garments to cover your nakedness, and for adornment…"* (Quran 7:26) (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 8: 68-69), *"... and He has sent down for you eight mates of the cattle...*" (Quran 39:6) (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 18:238) find a truer meaning. Therefore, it can also be claimed that the term 'to send' (*nuzūl*) with regards to creation is not merely figurative or done for no particular purpose, rather Allah, truly and really, has created the phenomena of the material plane from a higher plane of reality and existence. They are, in fact, a descendent form of that higher reality, even the most pristine and glorious of creation of this material plane, i.e. the

Glorious Qur'ān, has a higher and purer reality with Allah. It is only after numerous stages of descent and 'coming down' i.e. revelation, that it appeared in the form of words and statements which enabled normal material man to understand it (ibid, 2:17 & 11:75).

Consequently, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī has used verse (Quran 15:21) on more than forty occasions to elucidate the teachings and knowledge of the Glorious Qur'ān in *al-Mīzān*. Some of the discussions that can be mentioned in this regard are the reality of the names that Allah taught Prophet Adam (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 1:118), destiny according to the Glorious Qur'ān (ibid, 2:217), ordainment of sustenance and provisions (ibid, 10:83), the relationship between the Throne and Seat (*ʿArsh and Kursī),* the relationship between His essential and actual knowledge (ibid, 2: 339-341), the relationship between man's limited knowledge and His infinite knowledge (ibid, 6:201), the attributing of goodness and evil to Allah (ibid, 5:13), the relationship between decree and the manifest Book (*Kitāb Mubīn*) (ibid, 7:124-128) and the relationship between the occurrences of this material plane with the higher planes (ibid, 12:144-145). Because this verse is the clearest concerning the discussion on the unity of divine acts, and thoroughly removes the veil of how a monotheistic system of creation occurred, it is considered by 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī to be one of the Exalted Verses.

From the aforementioned discussion, it can be said that within the structure of the Glorious Qur'ān, the Exalted Verses are those firm verses of the Glorious Qur'ān that firstly, have a deep and established connection with monotheism from various aspects and, secondly, they remove the ambiguities and obscurities that exist in many of the allegorical verses.

Āyatullāh Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, a student of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's school of thought, by using the verse, '*He sends down water from the sky whereat the valleys are flooded to [the extent of] their capacity…*' (Qur'ān 13:17) – a verse which 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī opines as being one of the Exalted Verses – draws a simile between the Qur'ānic teachings and a waterfall that is sourced from the infinite divine grace of Allah. This waterfall, on

Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last Century: 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

its way down, quenches every level with the Divine Presence and, in a vertical and ledge-like manner, flows from one level to the next (Yazdī 2010, 37).

It can be concluded from this that this method adopted for the exegesis of the Glorious Qur'ān is different from that adopted by previous scholars; as in this method, in order to interpret a verse or discuss a specific subject of the Glorious Qur'ān, first the foundational knowledge of that verse must be identified and explained. This is done via the Exalted Verses. Thereafter, by using the previously acquired foundational layers from the systematic nature of the Glorious Qur'ān, remove any ambiguities and obscurities from the verse. For example, in order to elucidate a verse on the level of Qur'ānic ethics, one must first identify the monotheism-centered principles of ethics from the Exalted Verses that are related to monotheistic ethics. Once this is done, the verse under discussion is then explained by pivoting upon these verses. Therefore, all Qur'ānic ethical teachings, be they doctrinal or value-based, are founded on monotheism. So, without the correct understanding of the foundational monotheistic ethical teachings of the Glorious Qur'ān, it will not be possible for this set of Qur'ānic teachings to be elucidated justly.[22] Hence, just like with other Qur'ānic knowledge, Qur'ānic ethics, in the view of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, is a concept founded on monotheism, and in order for it to be understood correctly, one must first refer to the foundations of monotheism within the Glorious Qur'ān. Without this primary understanding of foundational monotheism, errors, and mistakes will surely be made in the interpretation and exegesis of these verses (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 1: 354-360; Ashrafī 2019, 203-211).

This monotheism-centered exegetical approach, which relies upon the

---

[22]. All Islamic doctrinal and value-based knowledge stem from a reality known as monotheism (*tawḥīd*). It creates a struture or structures whose parts are complety harmonious and where meaning is found in the relationships between them. For more information regarding monotheism and the doctrinal and value-based system of Islam, refer to Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, *Tawḥīd dar Niẓām ʿAqīdatī wa Niẓām Arzishī Islām*.

Exalted Verses, is still a relatively new approach. Nevertheless, if this were to become the method used in Qur'ānic exegesis, great changes within this discipline will follow suit. It will also entail greater coherence and solidity in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis.

This has culminated, it seems, to Āyatullāh Miṣbāḥ Yazdī being greatly influenced by the thought of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī. By making monotheism and Allah the central themes of his Qur'ānic series titled *Maʿārif Qur'ān*, he begins by explaining and elucidating the verse that deal with God and theology. He then details ontology and the phenomenon within in it – man being one of them – and their relationship with Allah, as described in the Glorious Qur'ān. Finally, he discusses those verses that are concerned with other Islamic knowledge and teachings, such as laws of economics, law, politics, etc. However, still referring them back to the foundational and fundamental teachings of the Qur'ān. It may be possible to classify such an attempt as a subject-wise monotheism-centered exegesis founded on the Exalted Verses.

4.3. Objective-based Exegesis of the Glorious Qur'ān

By taking an objective-based approach to not only the entire Glorious Qur'ān, but also its parts and words, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī enabled it to be interpreted in a unique fashion, one that showed that this book was revealed for a particular purpose, which was for the guidance of man; for man was created for this very purpose. That he, by worshipping and obeying Allah, will be guided towards the straight path that will result in his felicity both in this world and the Hereafter. Mentioning this point, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī says, "The objective of His book and words is the guidance of His servants" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 1: 16). This is guidance of this servants towards the reality of monotheism. This is because, as was mentioned earlier, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī believes that all the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān point towards a single reality, monotheism (ibid, 10: 153).

This general objective has been expanded upon within the sūras of the Glorious Qur'ān, such that every sūra portrays a part of this general

Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last
Century: 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

objective. In the opinion of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, every sūra has a unique objective that is not present in any other sūra or even in the parts of another sūra, and it is such that until this objective is not met, the sūra will not be ended. Consequently, this is the reason for the difference in verse numbers between the sūras (ibid. 1: 16).

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī based his Qur'ānic exegesis on this objective-based outlook towards the Glorious Qur'ān. Therefore, by deriving the objective of every sūra and determining the correlation between every verse within that sūra with that particular objective, and the general objective, he proceeded to interpret the Glorious Qur'ān. This particular outlook allowed him to find previously unfound correlations and use then as a context to uncover the relationship between the verses and understand each verse in its proper place. For example, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī uses the objective of the first sūra (*Sūrat al-Ḥamd*) to determine the verb that affects the *bā* of the *basmalah* (ibid, 1: 17). He believed that the verses of every sūra were the expansion of the general objective that the said sūra intended to establish. Based on this, even the final verse of a very lengthy sūra can be used to establish the objective of that sūra (ibid, 1: 440-441). In his exegesis of the last two verses of the second sūra (2: 285-286), he used the sūras general objective as a context to interpret them (ibid, 2: 43).

4.4. Paying Special Attention to the Ḥadīth of the *Ahl al-Bayt* in Qur'ānic Exegesis

In his exegesis of the Glorious Qur'ān, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī paid very careful attention to the ḥadīth of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. This allowed him to reach deeper into the Qur'ānic teachings and extract more profound meanings from it that have never or rarely been seen in other exegeses. The unique nature of *al-Mīzān* with regards to the ḥadīth is that they were not merely brought to explain a particular verse that related to them and the reader was necessitated to accept them based on servitude and devotion. Rather, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, after attempting to interpret and derive meaning from a verse or a set of verses by means of contemplation and analysis, brought the ḥadīth at the end of his exegetical discussion under the heading 'Ḥadīth

Discussion' (*al-baḥth al-riwā'ī*). In this discussion, he made efforts to show that his exegesis was in line with the ḥadīth of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. In this way, his exegesis is the only exegesis that is utilized and benefitted from by all Islamic sects and denominations. *Al-Mīzān* was not the first attempt of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī in trying to show the congruence between the apparent meaning of the Glorious Qurʾān and the ḥadīth of the *Ahl al-Bayt* in Qurʾānic exegesis, as was stated earlier, he attempted the same in an earlier exegesis of his titled *Tafsīr al-Bayān fī al-Muwāfaqah bayn al-Ḥadīth wa al-Qurʾān*[23] (see Nāṣirī Karīmvand 2022, pp. 12-15).

His manner of using the ḥadīth of the *Ahl al-Bayt* in Qurʾānic exegesis can be summarized as follows:

A) Learning the method of Qurʾānic exegesis from the Ḥadīth

As was mentioned earlier, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī maintained that the Qurʾān-by-Qurʾān exegetical method was the very exegetical method of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Ṭabāṭabāʾī 1996, 1: 12). He also maintained that before an individual enters the arena of Qurʾānic exegesis, they must acquaint themselves thoroughly with the teaching of the Ahl al-Bayt and contemplate deeply on their ḥadīth. In this regard, he writes, "The only correct method of Qurʾānic exegesis is to derive assistance from the Glorious Qurʾān itself for its understanding and to proceed verse-by-verse. The requirements for this method can only be acquired by deep and extensive contemplation on the words of the Noble Prophet and the *Ahl al-Bayt* and by attaining a mastery over its intricacies" (ibid, 3: 87).

B) Enabling deep Qurʾānic knowledge to be Understood Easily

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī believes the *Ahl al-Bayt* to be expert and well-informed teachers. Therefore, it is only by their guidance that deep Qurʾānic teachings can be unearthed for the reader and protection from

---

[23] . This exegesis discusses from the beginning of the Glorious Qurʾān up until verse 57 of sūra 12 (Yūsuf). It can be considered to be the raw content for *al-Mīzān*; for ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī just structures this same content differently in *al-Mīzān* and discusses them under an independent heading.

Great Qur'ānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last
Century: 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

possible errors in interpretation be attained. He opines that the position of the Noble Prophet and his *Ahl al-Bayt* in Qur'ānic exegesis in that of a teacher. Teaching entails that the teacher, who is well-informed and knowledgeable, guides the mind of the learner to the understanding of difficult matters. Not merely to those understandings that are impossible to attain without a teacher. In reality, teaching entails making the path easy and bringing the destination closer, not creating a path or destination (ibid, 75).

C) Preparing the Mind to Perceive High Qur'ānic Teachings

Another way that 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī believes the ḥadīth of the *Ahl al-Bayt* can be utilized in Qur'ānic exegesis is in preparing the mind of the reader to perceive high Qur'ānic teachings. For example, by pointing to the fact that monotheism and the unicity of Allah in the Glorious Qur'ān goes far beyond just numerical unity, a topic that was discussed by the ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Alexandrian philosophers, and even by Ibn Sina, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes, "The monotheism that the Glorious Qur'ān alludes to is the first step towards the teaching of this reality. However, the exegetes and those from amongst the companions and the companions of the companions, and the Qur'ānic researchers who came after them, who discussed Qur'ānic sciences failed to bring to light this exceptional teaching. It is only the words and ḥadīth of the Ahl al-Bayt that has shone a light upon it, and that too in the most eloquent of manner. It was only then, after a period of over a thousand years, that Muslim philosophers began explaining and diving deeper into this truth, one they fell onto via the words of Imām ʿAlī" (ibid, 6: 104).

D) Expounding on the Particulars and Specifics of the Glorious Qur'ān

Based on verses (Quran 16:44, 59:7, 62:2), 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī maintains that one of the responsibilities of the Noble Prophet and his *Ahl al-Bayt* concerning the Muslim community is to expound and explain the particulars of matters that the Glorious Qur'ān has done so in a general manner. In his opinion, without the explanation of these divine teachers, the details and particulars of Islamic law and doctrine that are encapsulated

within the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān would remain hidden (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 2009, pp. 19-20). Consequently, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, on many occasions, discussed the details concerning Qur'ānic doctrine in the ḥadīth discussion section.[24]

E) The Measure in Understanding Qur'ānic Teachings

Under verse 23 of sūra 42 (*Sūrat al-Shawrā*), which states that the reward for the messengership of the Noble Prophet is the love for his family, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes, "By giving the necessary attention to extensively narrated (*mutawātir*) ḥadīth, such as the 'Two Weighty Things' and the 'Ship of Salvation' and so on, which contain indications for people to refer to the *Ahl al-Bayt* in order to understand the principles and practices of religion, as well as the realities contained within the Glorious Qur'ān, there remains no doubt that this obligation to love the *Ahl al-Bayt* and its being placed as a recompense for the messengership, is a means for people to take them as a point of reference in order to understand the Glorious Qur'ān" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 18: 46). However, what is meant by them being a point of reference in the understanding of the Glorious Qur'ān, is not that people will not understand anything from the Glorious Qur'ān without referring to their ḥadīth, rather, what is meant is that their sayings and words are a measure, criteria and guidance. That they, at times of conflict and difference of opinion or when a person ignores clear proofs, will decide and distinguish the matter. By using this principle, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, on occasions when he was in possession of valid ḥadith from the *Ahl al-Bayt*, preferred their opinion over the opinions of other exegetes.[25]

---

24. For example, under verse (Quran 2:238) (*Be watchful of your prayers, and [especially] the middle prayer, and stand in obedience to Allah*), he writes, "The words of Allah do not specify what is the middle prayer. Subsequently, the explanation of it must be taken from the ḥadīth." Ref*: al-Mīzān*, vol. 2, pg. 246.

25. For example, in contrast to most exegetes, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī interprets *naḥr* in Sūrah Kawthar (108) as raising one's hands while performing *takbīr* of the prayer, basing it on ḥadith from the Noble Prophet, Imām ʿAlī and Imām Ṣādiq. Ref: al-Mīzān, vol. 20, pg. 371.

Great Qurʾānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last Century: ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

Conclusions

1. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī played an enormous role in reviving the Glorious Qurʾān and the culture of returning and referring to it within Iran and the Islamic World. In its own right, this movement can be compared to the movement of Imām Khomeini in initiating the formation of the Islamic Revolution and its influence throughout the world.

2. The efforts taken by ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī in promoting and teaching the Qurʾān-by-Qurʾān exegetical method within the framework of *al-Mīzān* resulted in the training and schooling of numerous worthy exegetes, such as Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, Āyatullāh Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, Āyatullāh Jaʿfar Subhānī, Āyatullāh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī and many more, who each, in their own right, upheld and promoted this method from the Qum Islamic Seminary.

3. By means of *al-Mīzān*, which can be considered as being an encyclopedia, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī answered many of the social needs of his time via the Glorious Qurʾān. He, thus, laid the foundations for the creation and establishment of Islamic culture and civilization.

4. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's approach to Qurʾānic exegesis contained many pioneering aspects that were rarely or altogether unseen in previous works.

5. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, by extensively making use of contextual harmony between the verses, was able to derive many previously unseen meanings from the verses. This was something not done or seen in previous exegetical works. His use of it – qualitatively and quantitively – was unmatched.

6. According to him, the structure of the Qurʾānic teachings is monotheism-centered. This follows from the ontological principle that everything culminates in monotheism, "…*and to Allah all matters are returned…*" *(Quran 3:109).* Furthermore, in his opinion, the Exalted Verses are the keys and represent the most

foundational monotheistic teachings of the Glorious Qur'ān. Therefore, it is by pivoting upon these verses that the ambiguities that are present in some verses are clarified. This model can be the source of great change within the field of Qur'ānic exegesis. In this model, the mere use of lexicons and dictionaries does not suffice, rather, by relying on the Exalted verses, the most primary teachings of the Glorious Qur'ān must first be identified at all levels. Thereafter, it must be used as a firm foundation to understand and interpret the rest of the teachings of the Glorious Qur'ān.

7. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī took an objective-based outlook to Qur'ānic exegesis. In his opinion, every verse of the Glorious Qur'ān contains a common objective, which is to guide man towards pure monotheism in knowledge and action. This objective was the bedrock on which the objectives of the individual sūras were founded. So, even though every sūra had a specific and distinctive objective, they each followed this ultimate objective. This objective-based outlook allowed him to identify the position of every verse and every sūra with respect to that ultimate objective and present a congruent and cohesive Qur'ānic exegesis.

8. According to 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī the Glorious Qur'ān is a comprehensive structure of meaning and contains a harmonious monotheistic system. As a result, he was able to abstract seven topics from the Glorious Qur'ān and study the verses that were related to them. By dividing the subject-matter of the Glorious Qur'ān in an innovative manner, he was able to derive numerous topics from the Glorious Qur'ān and present them, in a systematic manner, to those who desired them.

9. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī paid a great deal of attention to the ḥadīth of the Noble Prophet (s) and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) in his exegesis of the Glorious Qur'ān. By doing so, he was able to extract deep pieces of knowledge from the Qur'ānic verses. In his opinion, the ḥadīths teach the method of Qur'ānic exegesis, they equip and prepare the

Great Qurʾānic Exegetes of the Qum Islamic Seminary over the last
Century: ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī
(P: 149-175)

Amīr Riḍā Ashrafī

جامعة المصطفى العالمية
Al-Mustafa International University
مجتمع آموزش عالی قرآن و حدیث

mind of the exegete to perceive deep Qurʾānic teachings, they expound the specifics of the Qurʾānic teachings and are the measure and criteria for understanding the Glorious Qurʾān.

References

Qarai, Ali Quli. Trans. (2005). *The Quran: With a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation* (2nd ed.). London: ICAS Press.

Ashrafī, Amīr Riḍā (1398Sh/2019). *Mabānī Tafsīrī ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī dar al-Mīzān.* Qum: Inteshārāt Muassisah Āmūzish wa Pajūhishī Imām Khomeini.

Bābāʾī, ʿAlī Akbar (1386Sh/2007). *Makātib Tafsīrī.* Qum: Pajūhishgāh Ḥawzah wa Dānishgāḥ.

Barandaq, Kāwūs Rūḥī and Jalīlīyān, Saʿīd (2014). Ghurar al-Āyāt dar Tafsīr al-Mīzān bā Maḥwarīyyat Āyah 56 Sūrah Dhāriyāt. *Maʿrifat*, (203), 33-48.

Ḍaftar Tanẓīm wa Nashr Majmūʿah Āthār ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī (nd.). *Shanākhtnāmeh ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī.* Qum: Chāpkhāneh Usweh

Islāmī, Sayyid Ḥasan. (1386Sh/2007). *Majmūʿah Muqālāt Fārsī Qurʾānī Kungareh Bayn al-Milalī ʿAllāmah Balāghī.* Qum: Pajūhishgāh ʿUlūm wa Farhang Islamī.

Khānī, ʿAlī Ḥājī, Barandaq, Kāwūs Rūḥī and Āsanjaranī, Muḥammad (1394Sh/2015). Naqsh Ghurar Āyāt dar Tafsīr al-Mīzān bā Takīyyah bar Āyāt 82 wa 83 Sūrah Yāsīn. *Maʿrifat*, (214), 55-68.

Khusrawshāhī, Sayyid Hādī. (1389Sh/2010). *Barrasī hā ye Islāmī*. Qum: Bustān Kitāb.

Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, Muḥammad Taqī. (1375Sh/1996). *Tawḥīd dar Niẓām ʿAqīdatī wa Niẓām Arzishī Islām.* nl.: Inteshārāt Shafaq.

Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, Muḥammad Taqī. (1386Sh/2007). *Tamāshā ye Farzānagī wa Farūzandagī.* Qum: Inteshārāt Muassisah Āmūzish wa Pajūhishī Imām Khomeini.

Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, Muḥammad Taqī. (1389Sh/2010). *Khudāshenāsī.* Qum: Inteshārāt Muassisah Āmūzish wa Pajūhishī Imām Khomeini.

Muḥammadī, Rūḥullāh; Nāṣerī Karīmvand, Amānullāh. (1401Sh/2022). Allamah Tabatabai's Approach to Social Narrations in the Tafsir al-Mīzān. *Applied Research in the Field of Quran and Hadith*, 2(3), 9-31.

Rād, ʿAlī (1394Sh/2015). Mufassirān Maʿāsir Imāmyyah wa Ghurar Qur'ān, Chīstī, Rāyāft hā wa Gūneh hā. *Pajūhish hā ye Qur'ān wa Ḥadīth*, (12), 25-48.

Rād, ʿAlī. (1395Sh/2016). *Ghurar Qur'ān az Naẓarīyyah tā Tafsīr*. Qum: Muassisah ʿIlmī Farhangī Dār al-Ḥadīth.

Ṣadr, Ḥasan (nd.). *Ta'sīs al-Shīʿah li ʿUlūm al-Islām*. Iraq: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIrāqīyyah.

Ṣāliḥī Sharūdī Mīnā'ī, Behrūz and Ashrafī, Amīr Riḍā. (1392Sh/2013). Matankawī Mawdūʿī Rāyāneh ī Qur'ān Karīm barāyeh Kashf Irtabāṭat Maʿnā'ī mayān Āyāt bar Mabnā ye Tafsīr Mīzān. *Qur'ān Shinākht*, (12),117-152.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn. (1417AH/1996). *Al-Mizān fī tafsīr al-Quran* (5th ed.). Qum: Daftar Intishārāt Islāmī.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn. (1388Sh/2009). *Qur'ān dar Islām.* Qum: Bustān Kitāb

Ḥusaynī Ṭehrānī, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn. (1421AH/2000). *Mehr Tābān*. Mashhad: Inteshārāt ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

Tīlakī, Zuhreh Ranjbar (2010). *Taḥlīl wa Barrasī Ghurar Āyāt az Didgāh ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī dar Tafsīr al-Mīzān*. Master's Thesis presented to the Faculty of Islamic and Religious Sciences. University of Qum. Supervisor: Muḥammad ʿAlī Tajrī.