

## On the Dichotomy Between the Muḥkam and Mutashābih

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### 1. Introduction

In Qur'anic studies, the expression (Muḥkam) is the antonym of (Mutashābih). The controversy, however, among Qur'anic exegetes is about the meaning of Mutashābih and the mode of reading or rather the linguistic analysis of Q3:7 and whether Qur'an scholars share with God the knowledge of unravelling the meanings of Mutashābih. The other interesting matter related to Mutashābih is concerned with the translation of this expression as 'ambiguous' while our discussion below illustrates that this word has other meanings and functions. The third matter related to the notion of Mutashābih is the claim made by Orientalists such as Leah Kinberg (2001) that 'the other verses Q11:1 and Q39:23 contradict Q3:7' (ibid:70). The fourth problem is the theological implications posed by Q7:28, Q18:29, and Q76:30, whether they are Muḥkam or Mutashābih, the correlation between the Mutashābih and dissention, and the subsequent controversial issue of free will as opposed to predestination which has been projected through the opposition between Mu'tazili and mainstream exegetes.

In his account of the origins and development of Qur'anic exegesis, Fred Leemhuis (1988:16) refers to the claim made by some Orientalists such as Goldziher with regards to the opposition to certain kinds of tafsīr towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century by companions such as ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Leemhuis refers to the story of Ṣabīgh Ibn ʿIsl who was punished by ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb because Ṣabīgh raised questions about Mutashābihāt. Thus, Ṣabīgh was to be considered as belonging to: ﴿فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْجٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ﴾ (fa amma alladhīna fī qulūbihim zaighun fayattabiʿūna mā tashābaha minhu ibtighā'a al-fitnati – Those in whose hearts is swerving, they

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follow the ambiguous part desiring dissension.) (ibid:18) Thus, ‘Umar suspected him to be a Kharijite based on the ḥadīth: (qad ḥadhdharakum Allāhu fa’idhā ra’aitumuhūm faḥdharūhum – God has warned you. If you see them, be on your guard.)

The present discussion of the distinction between Muḥkam and Mutashābih statements aims to provide a comparative contrastive account of various exegetes who represent different schools of thought and diverse dogmatic and jurisprudential orientation.

## 2. Samples of Muḥkam and Mutashābih Statements

We encounter numerous examples of both Muḥkam and Mutashābih āyahs in the Qur’ān.

Examples of Muḥkamāt are like:

﴿قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ عَلَيْكُمْ .. لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ﴾

Say: ‘Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you... that you may become mindful’, Q6:151-153,

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبِّيَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا﴾

Your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment, Q17:23,

﴿خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً﴾

We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, Q23:14),

﴿وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ﴾

We made from water every living thing, Q21:30),

﴿وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ﴾

He sent down from the sky rain and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you, Q2:22

Among the Mutashābih statements are:

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا﴾ – They ask you (O Muḥammad) about the Hour: when is its arrival?, Q7:187),

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى﴾ – The Most Merciful who is above the Throne established, Q20:5),

﴿كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ﴾ – Everything will be destroyed except His face, Q28:88),

﴿يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ﴾ – The hand of God is over their hands, Q48:10),

﴿وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ﴾ – He is the subjugator over His servants, Q6:18),

﴿وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ﴾ – Your Lord has come, Q89:22),

﴿وَعَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾ – God has become angry with them, Q48:6),

﴿رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ﴾ – God is pleased with them, Q98:8),

﴿فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ﴾ – Follow me so God will love you, Q3:31),

﴿فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَالِيَةٍ .. فِيهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ .. وَزَكَرَاتٍ مُّبْتَوَاتٍ﴾ – In an elevated garden, ... Within it is a flowing spring ... And carpets spread around, Q88:10-16).

### 3. Linguistic Meanings of the Expressions

Semantically, the word (Muḥkam) is a passive participle (*ism mafūl*) from the word (uḥkim) and derived from the verb (ḥakama – to differentiate between the truth and falsehood). It is also semantically related to (al-ḥikmah – wisdom) and to the nominalised noun (iḥkām – excellence, perfection) and thus (Muḥkam – the excellent, the perfected expressions or statements.) The expression (Muḥkam) also designates the meaning of ‘being fortified by their clarity (bayān) and detail (tafṣīl). Therefore, the meaning represented by Q11:1 (﴿كِتَابٌ مُّحْكَمٌ﴾ kitābun uḥkimat ayatuhu) is ‘a Book whose statements are all perfected’. For al-Baiḍāwī (1999, 1:149), however, the expression (uḥkimat) in Q11:1 means ‘ḥuḍūḍ min fasād al-maʿnā wa rakākat al-lafẓ – It has been protected from semantic corruption and weakness of lexical expressions.’ The Muḥkamāt are also described as (umm al-kitāb – the mother of the Book; the foundation for Islamic legal rulings). The reason why we find the singular noun form (umm – mother) rather than the plural (ummaḥāt – mothers) is further evidence to the meaning ‘the Muḥkam āyahs enjoy the same status and function like a single āyah.’ Thus, each āyah functions as

umm al-kitāb.

However, the expression (Mutashābih) is also a passive participle and derived from the verb (yashbah – to look alike, be similar). It is also semantically related to the nominalised noun (tashābuh – similarity between two entities in terms of both being perfect in value, quality, and meaning.) Therefore, the meaning represented by Q39:23 ﴿كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ﴾ kitāban Mutashābihan mathāniya is ‘a book whose statements are all identical in value, logically interrelated to each other, and verifying each other.’ (Mujāhid 2005:36), al-Qurṭubi 1997, 4:14), al-Qaṭṭān 1990:19-20). For modern philosophical and mystical exegetes like the Turkish scholar Elmali’li Muḥammad Ḥamdi Yazır, the (Mutashābih) is described as (al-ma‘lūm al-majhūl – the unknowable that is knowable) by which he means that there are many ways through which one can comprehend the meanings of Mutashābihāt (Albayrak 2003:23).

In order to unravel the exegetical meaning of the expression Muḥkamāt, exegetes (al-Rāzi 1990, 7:150, Ibn ‘Āshūr (n.d.) 3:154) have resorted to analyse its underlying nuances through other related expressions such as the word (umm – ‘mother’) in ﴿آيَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمٌّ﴾ ﴿آيَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمٌّ﴾ – āyātun Muḥkamātun hunna umm al-kitāb – They are āyahs that are precise and are the foundation of the Book, Q3:7). For them, the expression (umm) means (al-aṣl alladhī minhu yakūn al-shai’ – the origin from which something else develops), i.e., everything else belongs to and branches off from the origin. It is like the mother and her children where the mother is the umbrella under which the children take shelter. Rhetorically, therefore, the word (umm) is employed as (tashbīh balīgh – effective simile) meaning (hunna ka’ummin lil-kitāb – they (i.e., the Muḥkamāt) are like the mother to the Book). Thus, we encounter expressions like (umm al-Qur’ān – the mother of the Qur’ān, i.e., sūrat al-fātiḥah), (umm al-qurā – the mother of cities, i.e., Makkah), (umm al-ra’s wahiya al-dimāgh – the brain is the mother of the head), and (al-rāyah hiya al-umm – the flag is the mother, i.e., all the army stand underneath it as an umbrella). Based on this semantic analysis of (umm), the Muḥkamāt are well-understood as they are, and that the Mutashābihāt can be well-understood only

through the Muḥkamāt. Therefore, the Muḥkamāt are likened to the 'umm – mother, origin' for the Mutashābihāt. In other words, the Muḥkamāt act as demisting devices for the Mutashābihāt.

Linguistically, however, the word (umm) in Q3:7 occurs in the singular form. The reason for not occurring in the expected plural form (ummaḥāt) is attributed to the fact that all the Muḥkamāt āyahs account for one single category and they are aṣl al-kitāb (the source of the Qur'ān) (al-Ṭabari 2005, 3:171). This is supported by ﴿وَحَمَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ﴾ – waḥamalnā ibna maryama waummuhū āyah - , Q23:50) where the word (āyah – a sign) is employed in the singular form rather than the expected dual form (āyatain – two signs) (al-Ṭabari 2005, 3:171, al-Rāzi 1990, 7:150, Abu Ḥaiyān 2001, 2:398). It is also worthwhile to note that linguistically, the original form of the word (umm) is (ummaha). For this reason, the plural form of (umm) is (ummaḥāt) but we may also encounter the plural form (umāt).

Kinberg (2001:72) brings to our attention the three categories of Mutashābih put forward by Fairūzābādi in his *Baṣā'ir*: (i) those that cannot be understood, (ii) those that can be examined and understood by anyone, and (iii) those that only (al-rāsikhūna fi al-ʿilm - those firm in knowledge) can comprehend.

#### 4. Dogmatic Cleavages Among Exegetes

The Mutashābih represents one of the most controversial notions in Qur'anic exegesis and has received divergent semantic interpretations by different exegetes. According to Q3:7, the Qur'ān is divided into two sets of discourse: (i) Muḥkam, and (ii) Mutashābih. This āyah marks the beginning of the development of Qur'anic exegetical methodology.

The Qur'ān, however, refers to its discourse as of four distinct categories:

- (i) all Qur'anic discourse is Muḥkam, as in ﴿الرَّ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ﴾ – alif lām rā' tilka āyātu al-kitābi al-ḥakīm – Alif, Lām, Rā'. These are the āyahs of the wise Book, Q10:1) and ﴿الر﴾ – alif lām rā' kitābun uḥkimat āyātuhu - Alif, Lām, Rā'. This is a Book whose āyahs are perfected, Q11:1),

- (ii) all Qur'anic discourse is Mutashābih, as in ﴿ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانًا ﴾ kitāban Mutashābihan mathāni – A consistent Book wherein is reiteration, Q39:23),
- (iii) some of Qur'anic discourse is Muḥkam, as in ﴿ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا ﴾ ﴿ وَتَعْبُدُوا إِلَّآ إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ﴾ – Your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment, Q17:23), and
- (iv) some of Qur'anic discourse is Mutashābih, as in ﴿ سَأَلُونَكَ عَنِ ﴾ ﴿ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسِنُهَا ﴾ – They ask you (O Muḥammad) about the Hour: when is its arrival?, Q7:187).

The controversy about the notions of Muḥkam and Mutashābih marks the distinction between mainstream, i.e., traditional, exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr) and non-mainstream, i.e., personal opinion, exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ra'i). For non-mainstream Mu'tazili exegetes, like al-Zamakhshari, some āyahs like ﴿ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ ﴾ – Whoever wills, let him believe, and whoever wills, let him disbelieve, Q18:29) is a Muḥkam but ﴿ وَمَا نَشَاءُونَ إِلَّآ أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾ – You do not will except that God wills, Lord of the worlds, Q81:29) is a Mutashābih. However, for Sunni mainstream exegetes, Q18:29 is a Mutashābih while Q81:29 is a Muḥkam. Since the Ibāḍī theologians do not recognise the seeing of God (ru'yat Allāh) in the hereafter, their exegetes like al-Wahbi (1994, 4:13) classify Q6:103 ﴿ لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْآبْصَارُ ﴾ – Vision does not perceive Him) as Muḥkam and Q75:22 ﴿ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ ﴾ – Looking at their Lord) as Mutashābih.

The notions of Muḥkam and Mutashābih have also become the battleground for Sunni and non-Sunni exegetes whose commentaries on these notions have been, at times, polemic. For instance, Ibn Kathīr (1993, 1:327) mentions the ḥadīth (qad ḥadhdharakum Allāhu fa'idhā ra'aitumuhūm faḥdharūhum - God has warned you. If you see them, be on your guard) and makes an intertextual link with a section of Q3:7 and then narrates from Imām Aḥmad that the meaning of (fa'ammā alladhīna fī qulūbihim zaighun fayattabi'ūna mā tashābaha minhu – As for those in whose hearts is deviation from truth, they will follow that of it which is unspecific, Q3:7) refers to the Kharijites (al-Khawārij). To substantiate their exegetical points of view, mainstream

exegetes have relied heavily on exegetical ḥadīths. Ibn Kathir (ibid., 1:328) also mentions a ḥadīth (inna al-qur'āna lam yanzil liyukadhdhiba ba'ḍahū ba'ḍan famā 'ariftum minhu fa'malū bihī wamā tashābaha minhu fa'aminū bihī – The Qur'ān was not revealed to contradict itself. Act upon whatever you have learned from it and believe in whatever is unclear to you). McAuliffe (1988:61) claims that 'there is strong reliance on exegetical ḥadīth material by Ibn Kathīr and al-Ṭabarī which is a hallmark of their tafsīr bil-ma'thūr (mainstream exegesis)' as opposed to tafsīr bil-ra'i (personal opinion, non-mainstream, exegesis). This polemic exegesis also applies to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (1992, 1:202), Qatādah, al-Qurṭubī (1997, 4:13, 16), and al-Qinnūjī (1995, 2:180, 184). In a similar vein, al-Rāzī (1990, 7:154) argues that the pause at the word (al-'ilmī – knowledge) is 'counter to Arabic eloquence.' For al-Qaṣṣāb (2003, 1:199), the āyahs 7 and 8 of Q3 constitute conclusive evidence against Mu'tizilism. He (ibid) argues that 'the word (zaigh – deviation from the truth) proves that the category of people known as ﴿الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ﴾ (al-rāsikhūna fī al-'ilm – those firmly established in knowledge) are not those who ﴿الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ﴾ (fī qulūbihim zaighun fayattabi'ūna mā tashābaha minhu ibtighā'a al-fitnati wabtighā'a ta'wīlīhī – Those in whose hearts is deviation from the truth and they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation suitable to them). Thus, God consoles for not allowing them share His exclusive knowledge of the interpretation of the Mutashābih'. However, the Shī'ī exegete al-Ṭabāṭabā'i (1961, 3:27) and the Shī'ī scholar Mir Ali (2005:253) argue that ﴿الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ﴾ (al-rāsikhūna fī al-'ilm) means (ahl al-bait – 'Ali, his family and grandchildren). In his counter-argument, the Ibāḍī exegete al-Ṭafaiyish (1994, 2:9) argues that exegetes who apply the literal meaning to (yadū Allāhī – God's hand, Q48:10), (istawā – God's establishment above the Throne, Q20:5), and the attributes of God as 'fisq – an act of sin' and 'shirk – polytheism'. Also, the Shī'ī exegete al-Ṭabarsī (1997, 2:186) objects to the Sunnī meanings given to āyahs like Q48:10 and Q20:5 and claims 'lā yajūzu 'alaihi subḥānahū – We cannot attribute this to the al-Mighty.' However, for the Mu'tazili, Ibāḍī and Shī'ī, and Sufī exegetes, the āyahs ﴿إِنِّي رَءَاهَا نَاطِرَةً﴾ – Looking at

their Lord, Q75:23), ﴿يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ﴾ – The hand of God is over their hands, Q48:10), and ﴿ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ﴾ – He then established Himself above the throne, Q7:54) are Muḥkam while for Sunni exegetes they are Mutashābih āyahs (al-Ṭafaiyish 1994, 2:8, al-Ṭabāṭabā'i (1961, 3:37, al-Ṭabarsi 1997, 2:186). For the Ibāḍis, the Muḥkam āyahs include the semantically clear ones (wāḍiḥat al-dalālah) even though they may be abrogated (walaw iḥtamalt al-naskh) (al-Ṭafaiyish 1994, 2:8). In his *Jawāhir al-Tafsīr*, the Ibāḍi shaik Aḥmad al-Khalīlī (2004:75) is polemical of the Sunni scholars and describes them with pejorative expressions such as *hashwiyyah* (believers in unworthy matters) and *mujassimah* (corporealists) and that they are not fit to be called 'salafi' scholars (followers of the companions and the successors) because, in his view, Sunni scholars (yaḥmilūna al-āyāt al-Mutashābihāt 'alā ḡawāhir ma'ānīhā – They believe in the exoteric meanings of the Mutashābih āyahs). In the view of al-Khalīlī, esoteric meaning 'is the source of disbelief' (ibid:76).

The exegetical distinction between the Muḥkam and Mutashābih has also been dogmatic and directly linked to belief ('aqīdah). In order to lend support to their theological stance, Mu'tazili exegetes, such as al-Zamakhshari (1995, 1:332), for instance, claim that since the Muḥkam āyahs are the foundation of the Qur'ān, the Mutashābih should be based on them. Therefore, for him, the āyah ﴿لَا تُدْرِكُهُ﴾ – Vision perceives Him not, Q6:103) is a Muḥkam on which the āyah ﴿إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ﴾ – Looking at their Lord, Q75:23) should be based on and should be classified as a Mutashābih. Similarly, the āyahs ﴿لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ﴾ – God does not order immorality, Q7:28) and ﴿مَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ﴾ – Whoever wills, let him believe, and whoever wills, let him disbelieve, Q18:29) are Muḥkam on which the āyahs ﴿أَمْرًا مُّتَرَفِّعِيهَا﴾ – We commanded its affluent, Q17:16) and ﴿وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ﴾ – You do not will except that God wills, Q76:30) should be based on respectively and that both Q17:16 and Q76:30 should be classified as Mutashābih. Thus, taking Q6:103 as a Muḥkam, the Mu'tazilites have managed to substantiate their argument that 'the seeing of God will not take place'. In a similar vein, considering Q7:28 and Q18:29 as Muḥkam, the Mu'tazili view of free will and that 'God is not responsible for our good or bad deeds' are also put forward as a



counter-argument against mainstream Sunni exegetes who argue that Q7:28 and Q18:29 are Mutashābih and Q17:16 and Q76:30 as Muḥkam. Such an interpretation of Q7:28 has political implications. As the Kawārij and the Muʿtazilites are exponents of free will, for them, the Umayyads and their officials are responsible for their misdemeanors and sins (Watt 1962:31). The Khawārij in particular call for revolt against the ruler who does not apply the Sunnah in his administration (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1:115). However, this Muʿtazili approach has been opposed by traditional Sunni exegetes who distinguish between Q6:103 ﴿لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ﴾ – Vision perceives Him not) and Q75:23 ﴿إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ﴾ - Looking at their Lord) on linguistic grounds by providing a semantic distinction between the verbs (adraka) and (raʿā). The verb (adraka) refers to the present life and that no one can 'see' God, a believer or a non-believer, in this life but only the believers will be able to see Him in the hereafter. Also, the (al-abṣāru - vision) occurs in the plural and definite form to signify that a specific category of people, i.e., exclusively the believers, will be able to see Him in the hereafter and not all mankind. In other words, Q6:103 designates the semantically-oriented rhetorical function of partial negation (salb ʿumūm) and not general negation (ʿumūm al-salb). Semantically, the verb (adraka) occurs in ﴿فَالأَصْحَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّا لَمُدْرِكُونَ﴾ -, Q26:61) and ﴿حَتَّىٰ إِذَا دَرَكْتَهُ الْغُرُقُ﴾ - , Q10:90) meaning (to reach or get close to something), and has also the meaning of (to get ripe – yanduj). Thus, the act of (idrāk) signifies 'reaching something or getting very close to it'. Thus, if the thing we want to see has a beginning, an end, and sides, and 'vision has reached it from all its sides as well as its beginning and end' i.e. (adrakahū al-baṣar), then we have achieved the full act of (idrāk). However, if we cannot see some of the thing we are looking at such as one of its sides or its beginning or end, then this is called partial (idrāk) and thus, the (ruʿyā) cannot be called (idrāk). Therefore, we have got two kinds of (idrāk): (i) complete seeing of something with all its sides, beginning and end (ruʿyah min ghair iḥāṭah), and (ii) partial seeing of something (ruʿyah lā maʿa al-iḥāṭah). Therefore, Q6:103 signifies the first meaning: (ruʿyah maʿa al-iḥāṭah - complete seeing of something with all its sides, beginning and end). Thus, the negation of the act of (idrāk)

here signifies the negation of ‘one’ kind of ‘seeing’ and not both (al-Rāzi 1990, 13:104)

### 5. The Controversial Conjunct (wāw)

The controversy over what constitutes a Muḥkam or a Mutashābih begins in Q3:7 which has the connector (wāw) which lends itself to two distinct grammatical analyses that lead to different theological implications whose impact is felt in belief (‘aqidah). There are two grammatically-based different modes of reading to Q3:7 which are:

(1) The mode of reading where pause is at the word (Allāhu – God). This mode of reading is supported by ‘Ā’ishah and major Companion exegetes such as Ibn ‘Abbās of the Makkah school of exegesis, Ubai b. Ka‘b of the Madīnah school of exegesis, and Ibn Mas‘ūd of the Kūfah school of exegesis. This mode of reading suggests that the sentence ends with the word (Allāhu) and a new sentence begins with the expression (al-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilm – the firmly grounded in knowledge). Thus, the (wa – and) is grammatically a resumptive pronoun (adāt isti’nāf), i.e., a resumption connector (wāw al-isti’nāf). Grammatically, therefore, the noun (al-rāsikhūn) occurs in the nominative case due to the fact that it is an inchoative (mubtada’) whose predicate (khabar) is the verb (yaqūlūn – they say). Therefore, the particle (wa) is (wāw al-isti’nāf). According to this grammatical analysis, ‘the firmly grounded in knowledge’ do not share the knowledge of the meanings of the Mutashābihāt with God, i.e., knowing the meanings of the Mutashābihāt is exclusive to God. To achieve this mode of reading, there should be a pause after the noun (Allāhu). Phonetically, therefore, the segment within Q3:7 (wamā ya‘lamu ta’wīlahū illā Allāhu wal-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilmi yaqūlūna amannā bihi kullun min ‘indi rabbīnā – No one knows its true interpretation except God. But those firm in knowledge say: ‘We believe in it. All of it is from our Lord’) should be divided into two semantically oriented units:

- (i) (wamā ya‘lamu ta’wīlahū illā Allāhu - No one knows its true interpretation except God), and
- (ii) (wal-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilmi yaqūlūna amannā bihi kullun min

‘indi rabbinā - But those firm in knowledge say: ‘We believe in it. All of it is from our Lord’).

This grammatically-based exegesis is based on the view expressed by ﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ﴾ - There is nothing like unto Him, Q42:11). It is not surprising, therefore, to find different codices for this segment of Q3:7 in particular in order to substantiate this meaning. For instance, Ibn ‘Abbās and Ubai b. Ka‘b lend their support to this exegetical view. Thus, their codices include additional exegetical words to achieve their end. According to their codices, we find (wamā ya‘lamu ta‘wīlahū illā Allāhu wa {yaqūlu} al-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilmi āmannā bihī - No one knows its true interpretation except God. But those firm in knowledge say: ‘We believe in it’) where they add the word (yaqūlu – to say) before the word (al-rāsikhūna); thus, the conjunct (wa) has the grammatical function of resumption (Ibn Abi Dāwūd 1/334, al-Ḥākim 2/289, al-Farrā’ 1/191). Ibn Mas‘ūd’s codex, however, has gone further with exegetical notes but with a similar meaning where we find (wa {in ḥaḥiqat ta‘wīlahū} illā {‘inda} Allāhi wal-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilmi yaqūlūna āmannā bihī – However, its interpretation is known only to God, and those firm in knowledge say: ‘We believe in it’) where the words (mā ya‘lamu – no one knows its meaning) are dropped and the particle (in) is introduced as well as the word (‘inda) (al-Farrā’ 1/191, al-Ṭabari 3/184); thus, the conjunct (wa) has the grammatical function of resumption. This mode of reading is also supported by other exegetes and linguists like al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, Mālik b. Anas, al-Kisā’i, al-Farrā’, Muqātil, al-Rāzi, Abu Ḥaiyān, al-Qurṭubi, Ibn ‘Aṭiyyah. Some Mu‘tazili scholars like Abu ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī and the Shī‘ī exegete al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī have also supported this mode of reading.

(2) The mode of reading where pause is at the word (al-‘ilm – knowledge). This mode of reading is supported by Mujāhid who was Ibn ‘Abās’s student. Exegetes have expressed divergent views with regards to the grammatical analysis of the expression (al-rāsikhūn – those firmly grounded in knowledge). For some exegetes, (al-rāsikhūn) is a subject noun phrase with the nominative case (marfū‘) because it is co-ordinated to (ma‘ṭūf ‘alā) the first noun (Allāhu). In other words, the conjunctive particle (wa – and) has the grammatical

function of coordination (wāw al-<sup>ʿ</sup>atf) and thus plays a semantic role and makes the two conjoined nouns (Allāhu) and (al-rāsikhūna) of equal importance in terms of knowledge. According to this exegetical grammatical analysis, the noun (al-rāsikhūna) is given the equal weighting to God in terms of knowledge of the meanings of Mutashābihāt. To achieve this mode of reading, there should be no pause after the first noun (Allāhu). This mode of reading is supported by Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazili exegetes like al-Zamakhshari (1995, 1:332), Shi<sup>ʿ</sup>i exegetes like al-Ṭabarsi (1997, 2:187), Ibāḍi exegetes like al-Ṭafayish (1994, 2:10), and Sufi exegetes like al-Ālūsi (2001, 2:81) al-Ḥasani (2002, 1:290) and al-Salami (2001, 1:87). However, al-Rāzi (1990, 7:154), a Sunni Ash<sup>ʿ</sup>ari exegete, argues that this mode of reading is ‘counter to Arabic eloquence’ and that the phrase (kullun min ʿindi Rabbinā - All of it is from our Lord) supports the first mode of reading above and its subsequent meaning. For al-Rāzi (ibid), the phrase (kullun min ʿindi Rabbinā) means that ‘al-rāsikhūna believe in what they know about the Qurʾān and in what they do not know about it.’ However, some mainstream exegetes like al-Naḥḥās (2001, 1:144) and Ibn ʿĀshūr (n.d., 3:164) have also expressed their support for the second mode of reading which considers the particle (wa) as (wāw al-<sup>ʿ</sup>atf).

However, for the philosophical and Sufi exegete, Yazīr, the particle (wāw – and) in Q3:7 constitutes a grammatical Mutashābih. To this end, he argues that Q3:7 can have two different but interrelated and theologically valid interpretations: (i) *wamā yaʿlamu taʿwīla kullihī illā Allāhu* – No one knows its (the Qurʾān’s) comprehensive meaning except God, and (ii) *wamā yaʿlamu taʿwīla kullihī illā Allāhu wa al-rāsikhūna fī al-ʿilm* – No one knows its (the Qurʾān’s) comprehensive meaning except God and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge (Abayrak, 2003:28).

### 5. Exegetical Views on Muḥkam and Mutashābih

Qurʾān exegetes have dealt with the notions of Muḥkam and Mutashābih with varying degrees of interest and detail. Their exegetical views can be listed in the following points which aim to ascertain which Qurʾanic elements the Muḥkam and Mutashābih can be ascribed to. The following details are based on mainstream

exegetes who adopt traditional exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr) and non-mainstream exegetes who adopt personal opinion (hypothetical) exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ra'i). It has been argued:

(i) That all the Qur'ān is Mutashābih. This is based on Q39:23 ﴿اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانًا﴾ – Allāhu nazzala aḥsana al-ḥadīthi kitāban Mutashābihan mathāni – God has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration, Q39:23) which signifies that all the āyahs, throughout the Qur'ān, are identical to each other in terms of:

- (a) theological significance,
- (b) eloquence,
- (c) rhetorical value,
- (d) linguistic and stylistic elevation,
- (e) inimitability, and
- (f) spiritual therapy.

(ii) That all the Qur'ān is Muḥkam. This is based on Q11:1 ﴿كِتَابٌ مُّحْكَمٌ﴾ – kitābun uḥkimat āyātuhu thumma fuṣṣilat – This is a Book whose āyahs are perfected then detailed, Q11:1) which signifies that all the āyahs are:

- (a) inimitable,
- (b) intertextually related, i.e., the Qur'ān interprets itself,
- (c) do not contradict each other, and
- (d) characterised by clarity and detail.

(iii) That the Qur'ān is a blend of both Muḥkam and Mutashābih. This is supported by Q3:7 ﴿وَمِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ﴾ – minhu āyātun Muḥkamātun hunna ummu al-kitābi wa'ukharu Mutashābihāt – in it are āyahs that are precise, they are the foundation of the Book, and others unspecific, Q3:7). This is the āyah from which the controversy over the Muḥkam and Mutashābih has stemmed.

(iv) That the meaning of the Muḥkam is known to both God and Qur'ān scholars while the knowledge of the meanings of Mutashābih is exclusive to God. In other words, the Mutashābih is what is ambiguous to the exegete while the Muḥkam is what is clear and self-

explanatory.

(v) That the Mutashābih represents theological matters whose meanings are exclusive to Allāh. This includes the following notions:

- (a) knowledge of the final hour (qiyām al-sā'ah),
- (b) the coming down of Jesus (nuzūl 'Īsā),
- (c) the coming out of the Cheat, i.e., the Charlatan (khurūj al-dajjal),
- (d) the coming out of Gog and Magog,
- (e) names and attributes of God (asmā' waṣifāt Allāh),
- (f) theologically-sensitive āyahs that involve expressions such as the seeing of Allāh, the rivers in paradise, and the size, taste, and form of fruits in paradise,
- (g) unconnected letters at the beginning of some sūrahs (al-aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'ah or al-muqaṭṭa'āt). This exegetical view is based on Q3:7 ﴿وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ﴾ – No one knows its true interpretation except God, Q3:7). The Muḥkam, however, is what is known to exegetes either through their exoteric meaning or through personal hypothetical opinion.
- (h) the rising of the sun from the west (tulū' al-shams min maghribihā), and
- (i) the seeing of God on the day of judgement (ru'yat Allāh).

(vi) That the Mutashābih is whatever that involves more than one meaning, while the Muḥkam is whatever that has one meaning only.

(vii) That the Mutashābih is semantically non-autonomous, i.e., whose meaning is dependant upon other āyahs for further elaboration, as in ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا﴾ – Indeed, God does not wrong the people at all, Q10:44) which is explained by ﴿لَا يَظْلِمُ وَشَقَّالَ ذَرَّةً﴾ – Indeed, God does not do injustice even as much as an atom, Q4:40). The Muḥkam, however, enjoys semantic autonomy and clarity and does not require reference to other āyahs.

(viii) That, on the textual level, the Mutashābih includes:

- (a) the repeated stories of the Prophets,

- (b) stories of past nations, and
- (c) similitudes (al-amthāl),
- (d) Islamic legal rulings that have different jurisprudential meanings, such as the āyah pertaining the pregnant woman whose husband has died recently, whether the ayah related to the will (al-waṣīyyah) for the inheritors is abrogated or not, and the āyah related to marrying the wife's sister when the first wife dies,
- (e) semantically ambiguous expressions like (lāzib - sticky, Q37:11) and (yanzifūn - to be intoxicated, Q37:47),
- (f) āyahs which involve the hysteron and proteron (al-taqdīm wal-ta'khīr) which lead to structural ambiguity, as in Q18:1-2) where the word (qaiyman - straightforward) occurs at the beginning of the second ayah while we expect it to occur within the first ayah after the word (al-kitāb - the Book) because it is the modifier of the word (al-kitāb). The same applies to Q7:188 and Q10:49,
- (g) āyahs which require special syntactic chucking, i.e., pausing (al-waḳf), at a given word, as in Q3:7. However, for the Shī'ī exegete, al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1961, 3:19), Q3:7 is undoubtedly a Muḥkam (Muḥkamah bilā shakk),
- (h) āyahs where the meaning can only be fully understood through intertextual reference to other āyahs, as in Q25:27 which is explained by other āyahs in Q2:167, Q6:31, Q10:54, and Q34:33,
- (i) āyahs which involve ellipsis (al-ḥadhf) as in Q21:52-53, Q26:70-74,
- (j) sūrah-initial unconnected letters (al-muqatta'āt),
- (k) synonymous expressions that have different shades of meaning like (ḥasrah - regret, Q6:31 and nadāmah - remorse, Q34:33), (abaqa - to run away, Q37:140, farra - escape, Q74:51, nāṣṣ - to escape, Q38:3, and haraba - to escape, Q72:12), and (ajr - reward, Q28:25, thawāb - to reward, Q48:18, and jazā' - recompense, Q9:26),
- (l) polysemous expressions (al-ashbāh wa l-nazā'ir) that have identical orthographic forms but designate distinct

meanings when they occur in different contexts like (al-ḥasanah) which means: (i) victory, booty (Q3:120), (ii) monotheism (Q27:89), (iii) abundance in rain (Q7:131), (iv) consequence (Q13:6), (v) forgiveness (Q28:54), (vi) paradise (Q10:26). Similarly, the expression (al-hudā) has 19 different contextual meanings, and (m) expressions whose meanings are different from their meanings in the hereafter such as (anhār – rivers), (fawākīh – fruits), (khamr – wine).

**(ix)** That, on the textual level, the Mutashābih includes stories of past nations. This involves the following features:

- (1) expressions that have different shades of meaning when they occur in different stories like (radda – to bring back, Q18:36) and (rajaʿa – to return, Q41:50),
- (2) when the same story is narrated elsewhere in the Qurʾān with a different style and word order like Q21:52-53 and Q26:70-74 where in both stories Abraham is talking to his father, and also in Q2:35 and Q7:19 where Allāh is talking to Adam and Eve, and
- (3) expressions that have similar shades of meaning when they occur in different places but belong to the same story, as in (infajarat – to gush forth, Q2:60) and (inbajast – to gush forth, Q7:160).

**(x)** That the Mutashābih includes the abrogated āyahs (al-mansūkh), while the Muḥkam includes the abrogating āyahs (al-nāsikh) and what is legal or illegal (al-ḥalāl wal-ḥarām).

**(xi)** That the Mutashābih includes the āyahs that are linguistically and stylistically similar but are semantically dissimilar, while the Muḥkam āyahs are those which do not enjoy these linguistic and stylistic phenomena. For more details, see section 5 below.

**(xii)** Expressions that designate God's attributes (ṣifāt Allāh) are Muḥkam for Muʿtazili, Shīʿi, Sufi, and Ibāḍī exegetes because they are clear (wāḍih) and therefore can be provided with exegetical details. In other words, an attribute can be given a semantic analysis. However,



for mainstream Sunni exegetes, Allāh's attributes are considered as unclear and therefore are Mutashābih because exegetes do not know about 'the how' (al-kaifiyyah) of each expression. For instance, exegetes know the semantic details of God's attributes such as the attribute of (al-majī' – coming) in ﴿وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا﴾ – And your Lord has come and the angels, rank upon rank, Q89:22), the attribute of (al-istiwā' – establishing Himself above the throne) in ﴿ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ الْعَرْشِ﴾ – and then He established Himself above the Throne, Q7:54, Q10:3, Q13:2, ﴿الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ﴾ – the Most Merciful who is above the Throne established, Q20:5), and the attribute of (yadd – hand) in ﴿يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ﴾ – The hand of God is over their hands, Q48:10). Thus, these attributes are Muḥkam. However, exegetes are unable to unravel (how the coming of God will be like), (how did the istiwā' take place), and (how does the hand of God look like). Therefore, although the Arabic lexicon can provide a semantic definition of an attribute of God, it can be of no assistance to the exegete as to 'how' an attribute actually functions or looks like.

**(xiii)** That the meaning of the Mutashābih can only be derived through hypothetical opinion (al-ra'i) while the meaning of the Muḥkam is directly derived through a given circumstance of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl).

**(xiv)** That the Muḥkam, however, includes:

- (a) obligatory duties (al-farā'id),
- (b) reward and punishment (al-thawāb wal-'iqāb),
- (c) promise and threat (al-wa'd wal-wa'id),
- (d) the allowed and prohibited matters (al-ḥalāl wal-ḥarām),
- (e) command and rebuke (al-amr wal-zajr),
- (f) exhortation and admonition (al-mawā'iz wal-'ibar),
- (g) the abrogating (al-nāsikh),
- (h) that which has one meaning,
- (i) that which refers to monotheism, and
- (j) that which includes detailed ayahs which soundly establish faith (al-īmān) and belief (al-'aqīdah).

**(xv)** That the Mutashābih, for modern philosophical and mystical scholars like Yazīr, is something that can be comprehended and

interpreted although it is semantically or theologically mysterious to others. He, therefore, assigns the Mutashābih the label (al-maʿlūm al-majhūl – the unknowable knowable) (Albayrak 2003:23). Although Yazīr argues that the Mutashābih can only be interpreted in the light of the Muḥkam, he introduces an intertextual link between Q3:6 and Q3:7. This link is based on the attributes of God in Q3:6 (al-ʿazīz al-ḥakīm – the All-Mighty and the All-Wise). Through this intertextual link, Yazīr (ibid) achieves his mystical goal by highlighting the notion of ‘wisdom – ḥikmah’ which he argues is linguistically related to Muḥkam. Thus, for him, one can penetrate the mysterious theological world of the Mutashābihāt through the door of the Muḥkamat. For this reason, ﴿الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ﴾ – people who are firmly rooted in knowledge), Yazīr claims, can have access to the meanings of the Mutashābihāt (ibid:22).

(xv) That what is a Mutashābih for some exegetes is a Muḥkam for others. For instance, Q7:28 ﴿لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ﴾ – God does not order immorality) and Q18:29 ﴿فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ﴾ – Whoever wills, let him believe, and whoever wills, let him disbelieve) are Muḥkam for Muʿtazili, Shīʿi, Ibāḍi, and Sufi exegetes but they are Mutashābih for mainstream Sunni exegetes. In a similar vein, Q17:16 ﴿أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا﴾ – We commanded its affluent) and Q76:30 ﴿وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ﴾ – You do not will except that God wills) are Mutashābih for Muʿtazili, Shīʿi, Ibāḍi, and Sufi exegetes, but they are Muḥkam for mainstream Sunni exegetes.

## 6. Linguistic and Stylistic Features of Mutashābih

Having considered the exegetical views on Mutashābihāt, we can claim that we encounter two categories of Mutashābihāt in Qurʾān discourse. These are: (i) theological Mutashābihāt, and (ii) stylistic Mutashābihāt. Theological Mutashābihāt include all the Mutashābihāt that are accounted in the above discussion, such as the abrogated ayahs, names and attributes of God, etc. Our major concern is to introduce a new category of Mutashābihāt in Qurʾānic studies. This category of Mutashābihāt includes āyahs that are linguistically similar but stylistically dissimilar. These āyahs may occur in the same sūrah or most likely in a different sūrah. Although there is a subtle stylistic

change between one āyah and another, this stylistic shift triggers semantic nuances. Stylistic Mutashābihāt include:

(1) word order change, as in: ﴿وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ﴾ (walā yuqbalu minhā shafā'atun walā yu'khadhu minhā 'adlun – No intercession will be accepted from it, nor compensation will be taken from it, Q248). However, in Q2:123, we encounter a different word order: ﴿وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَعَةٌ﴾ (walā yuqbalu minhā 'adlun walā tanfa'uhā shafā'atun - No compensation will be accepted from it, nor any intercession will benefit it.) Similarly, ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا﴾ (inna alladhīna āmanū walladhīna hādū wal-naṣārā wal-ṣābi'īna . . . – Those who believed and those who were Jews or Christians or Sabeans . . . , Q2:62) and Q5:69 which is introduced in a different word order stylistic pattern: ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّيِّئِينَ﴾ (inna alladhīna āmanū walladhīna hādū wal-ṣābi'īna wal-naṣārā . . . – Those who believed and those who were Jews or Sabeans or Christians.)

(2) morphological change, as in ﴿وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَةً﴾ (waqālū lan tamassanā al-nāru illā aiyāman ma'ūdāh – And they said: 'Never will the fire touch us except for a few numbered days', Q2:80) and Q3:24 ﴿وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ﴾ (waqālū lan tamassanā al-nāru illā aiyāman ma'ūdāt –) which introduces the word (ma'ūdāt – a few numbered days) instead of (ma'ūdāh – a few numbered days). Similarly, we encounter the stylistic Mutashābih between ﴿وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ﴾ (tukhriju al-ḥaiyah min al-maiyiti watukhriju al-maiyita min al-ḥai, Q3:27) and ﴿يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ﴾ (yukhriju al-ḥaiyah min al-maiyiti wamukhriju al-maiyiti min al-ḥai, Q6:95) in terms of morphological forms (tukhriju) vs. (yukhriju) and (tukhriju) vs. (mukhriju).

(3) case ending change, as in ﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾ (wa'ada Allāhu alladhīna āmanū wa'amilū al-ṣāliḥāti lahum maghfiratun wa'ajrun 'aẓīmun – God has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds that for them there is forgiveness and great reward, Q5:9) where the words (maghfiratun wa'ajrun 'aẓīmun - forgiveness and great reward) occur in the nominative case (al-

marfū<sup>6</sup>). However, its counterpart is Q48:29 ﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾ (wa<sup>6</sup>ada Allāhu alladhīna āmanū wa<sup>6</sup>amilū al-ṣāliḥāti minhum maghfiratan wa<sup>6</sup>ajran <sup>6</sup>aẓīman – God has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and great reward) where the words (maghfiratan wa<sup>6</sup>ajran <sup>6</sup>aẓīman - forgiveness and great reward) occur in the accusative case (al-naṣb).

(4) singular and plural change, as in ﴿فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَنِينًا﴾ (fa<sup>6</sup>aṣbaḥū fi dārihim jāthimīn – They became within their home corpses fallen prone, Q7:78, Q29:37) where we have the singular noun (dārihim – their home). However, in its counterpart Q11:67, 94 ﴿فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَنِينًا﴾ (fa<sup>6</sup>aṣbaḥū fi diyārihim jāthimīn - They became within their homes corpses fallen prone.), we encounter a plural noun (diyārihim – their homes)

(5) change from the definite to the indefinite, as in: ﴿وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيَّاتِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ﴾ (yaqtulūna al-nabiyīna biḡhairi al-ḥaqqi – They kill the Prophets without right, Q2:61) where we have a definite noun (al-ḥaqqi – right) but in its counterpart Q3:21 ﴿وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيَّاتِ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ﴾ (yaqtulūna al-nabiyīna biḡhairi ḥaqqin – They kill the Prophets without right), we have an indefinite noun (ḥaqqin - right).

(6) change from the masculine to the feminine noun, as in ﴿ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ﴾ (dhūqū <sup>6</sup>adhāba al-nāri alladhī kuntum bihī tukadhdhibūn – Taste the punishment of the fire which you used to deny, Q32:20) where we have a masculine relative pronoun (alladhī – which). However, in its counterpart Q34:42 ﴿ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ﴾ (dhūqū <sup>6</sup>adhāba al-nāri allatī kuntum bihā tukadhdhibūn – Taste the punishment of the fire which you used to deny), we get a feminine relative pronoun (allatī– which).

(7) change from one pronoun form to another, as in ﴿لَئِنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ﴾ (la<sup>6</sup>in anjānā min hādhīhī lanakūnanna min al-shākirīn – If He should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful, Q6:63) where we have the third person singular pronoun (huwa – he) which is implicit in the verb (anjānā – He saves us) as opposed to the second person singular pronoun (anta – you (singular)) which is

implicit in the verb (anjaitanā – you (singular) save us) in Q10:22 ﴿لَئِنْ﴾  
﴿لَئِنْ أَنجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ﴾ (la'in anjaitanā min hādhihī lanakūnanna  
min al-shākirīn – If You should save us from this, we will surely be  
among the thankful.)

(8) assimilation of a sound versus non-assimilation, as in ﴿وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ﴾  
﴿وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ﴾ (waman yartadid minkum 'an dīnihi – whoever of you  
reverts from his religion, Q2:217) and ﴿مَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ﴾ (waman  
yartadda minkum 'an dīnihi - whoever of you should revert from his  
religion, Q5:54) where we have the letter /d/ repeated in Q2:217 but  
we have assimilation of the /d/ in Q5:54.

(9) a section of an āyah that is repeated elsewhere in a different style  
but with an identical meaning, as in ﴿مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ﴾ (man  
dha alladhī yashfa'u 'indahū illā bi'idhnihi – Who is it that can  
intercede with Him except by His permission, Q2:255), ﴿مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْهُ﴾  
﴿مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْهُ﴾ (ma min shafi'in illā min ba'di idhnihi – There is no  
intercessor except after His permission, Q10:3), and ﴿وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِنْدَهُ﴾  
﴿وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ﴾ (walā tanfa'u al-shafā'atu 'indahū illā liman adhina lahu  
– Intercession does not benefit with Him except for one whom He  
permits, Q34:23). The same applies to the sections of Q2:173,  
Q6:145, and Q16:16 ﴿فَمَنْ أَضْطَرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ.. غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾ (faman aḍṭurra  
ghaira bāghin walā 'ādin . . . ghafūrun raḥīm – But whoever is forced,  
neither desiring nor transgressing, . . . Forgiving and Merciful).

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