

Exegesis of the Qur'an's Ambiguous Verses in the Teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)

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Abstract

The verses under scrutiny are those whose comprehension presents significant difficulty for a novice, necessitating precise lexical, exegetical, and contextual analysis. The research, employing a descriptive-analytical methodology and utilizing library resources, aimed to establish a systematic and valid approach for understanding the problematic verses of the Qur'an, grounded in the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and to propose a model for correct exegesis that avoids erroneous or deviant interpretations. Verse 51 of Surah Qalam addresses the psychological impact of human gaze, which can be a source of harm. Although it does not explicitly mention the evil eye (*'ayn*), it provides a customary framework for connecting this concept with the divine revelation. Regarding verses detailing human creation, such as verse 45 of Surah Nur and others, the variance in interpretations does not imply contradiction but rather signals the multiplicity of creation stages and the manifestation of Divine Wisdom. Similarly, discrepancies in describing the mission of Prophet Moses (as) in verse 32 of Surah Shu'arā and seemingly opposing verses stem from situational multiplicity, variations in descriptive perspectives, and the progressive revelation of divine power during the miraculous process. It appears that the Ahl al-Bayt (as) applied core principles to resolve apparently problematic verses, including: Recourse to established, firm verses (*muḥkamāt*), attention to authentic historical context, reliance on textual context (*siyāq*), adherence to linguistic rules, rational reflection upon the verses, and reference to the Prophetic tradition (*sunnah*).

Keywords: The Status of Narration, Interpretation of Ambiguous Verses, Strategic Principles, The Doctrine of Ahl al-Bayt (as).

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1. Introduction

Given that the Qur'an is an eloquent and profound discourse encompassing multiple semantic levels, certain of its verses may appear ambiguous or problematic, thus necessitating further exegesis and elucidation. These verses, known as *Āyāt al-Mushkilah* (ambiguous verses), have always commanded the attention of Islamic exegetes and scholars, leading to extensive efforts toward their comprehension and clarification. Central to this discourse is the pivotal role of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), recognized as the firmly rooted in knowledge (*Rāsikhūn fī al-'Ilm*) and the true inheritors of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). Possessing *ladunnī* (divinely inspired) knowledge and direct connection to the source of revelation, they have been able to provide correct and comprehensive interpretations of the Qur'anic verses, particularly the *Āyāt al-Mushkilah*.

Problem Formulation: The Strategic Principles of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in resolving verses based on which principles are the exegeses of Surah Qalam, verse 51; Surah Nur, verse 45; and Surah Shu'arā', verse 32 articulated. This present study seeks to identify and explain the strategic principles and foundational rules governing the interpretation of the Qur'an's ambiguous verses, as articulated in the doctrine of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), through an examination and analysis of their interpretative narrations (*riwayāt at-tafsīr*). To address this question, the research proceeds by a rigorous scrutiny of authoritative scholarly sources. With the objective of achieving a systematic and reliable methodology for understanding the *Āyāt al-Mushkilah* based on the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and to propose a model for sound exegesis that avoids erroneous and deviant interpretations, this study employs a descriptive-analytical method, utilizing library resources for data collection and reference within the Qur'an itself.

2. Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that the Ahl al-Bayt (as) have approached the resolution of the Qur'an's ambiguous verses based on established methodological principles and rules.

2-1. Review of Prior Research

2-2. Bibliographic Review

Typology of the exegetical narrations of Imam Riḍā (as) (2020) by Abbas Mossalla'i and Mohsen Dimehkar: In this article, the authors endeavored to elucidate the methodologies employed by Imam Riḍā (as) in Qur'anic interpretation. This included methodologies such as the Qur'an by Qur'an method (i.e., resolving ambiguity via internal cross-reference within the Qur'an itself).



3. Translation (Academic English):

It is assumed that the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) have addressed and resolved the complex verses of the Qur'an based on well-founded methodological principles and rules.

4. Review of Prior Research

1. The article *Typology of Interpretive Narratives of Imam Riḍā (as) (1389)* by Abbas Mosalai - Mohsen Deimekar, the authors in this article have tried to explain the methods that Imam Riḍā (as) used in interpreting verses, such as the Qur'an-to-Qur'an method.

2. The article, *Fundamentals and Method of Razavi Interpretation* by Mehdi Izadi - the author (1392) in this article has tried to explain the method of approach and interpretation of Imam Riḍā (as) in dealing with verses.

3. The article, *Methodology of Similar Verses in Razavi Narratives. (1397)* Authored by: Ali Nasiri, Hamid Karami, Mohammad Riḍā Maleki Disney, the authors in the aforementioned article have studied and identified the types of similar verses.

4. Article, *Ibn Qutayba's Fundamentals and Interpretive Methods in the Book of Interpretation of the Difficulties of the Qur'an (2019)* Authors: Hamid Mohammadi Rad, Hamed Golipour. In this research, the authors examine the literary foundations of Ibn Qutayba, such as rhetorical foundations - metaphor - inverted simile - omission and abbreviation - allusion and expansion - as well as the expression of his interpretive methods such as literary interpretation - interpretation of verses with permissible acceptance in the word - interpretation of verses by presenting metaphor - Qur'anic doubts and criticism of Ibn Qutayba's works - contradiction and difference in verses and different readings.

5. Article, *The Scientific Appearance and Interpretive Presuppositions of Ibn Qutayba's Book of Interpretation of the Qur'an. (2019)* In the *Criticism of Analysis and Authorship*: Mohammad Ali Hekmat, Bakhsh Ali Qanbari, Seddigheh Nasir Oghuli Khiabani. The authors in the aforementioned article, in sections such as: 1. The Scientific Appearance of Ibn Qutayba in the Age of Interpretation; 2. Ibn Qutaybah's interpretive assumptions; 3. The sacredness and divine nature of the text of the Qur'an; 4. The literal inviolability of the Qur'an; 5. The comprehensiveness of the Qur'an; 6. The eternity of the Qur'an's invitation; 7. The interpretability of the Qur'an; 8. The comprehensibility of the Qur'an; 9. The rationality of the language of the Qur'an; 10. The harmony of the Qur'an; 11. The call for reflection in the Qur'an; 12. The permissibility of ijtiḥad in the interpretation of the Qur'an; 13. The interpretability of the Qur'an's parallels; 14. The position of the seven letters in Ibn Qutaybah's



interpretation. The distinction of the current research from the other mentioned sources is as follows. None of the mentioned sources has an approach that matches the title of the current research. Considering the mentioned titles, each of the mentioned sources has specifically examined the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), with regard to the mentioned topics and in a specific way.

What the present research seeks to do is the following: Citing the words of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and applying the opinions of the infallibles (as) in removing the illusion of contradiction between the problematic verses in the form of precise interpretations, governing and codified principles, citing the possibility of adhering to strategic principles such as: 1. Citing rational arguments. 2. Taking advantage of the context of the verses. 3. Referring the problematic verses to the solid verses of the Qur'an. 4. Paying attention to the correct date. 5. Referring to the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) 6. Considering literary rules. Although many scholars have quoted from the viewpoint of the infallibles (as) a study that brings these ways together has not been organized so far. Such an idea and collection has not been formed in any of the codified articles. The research seeks to fill this gap in order to provide a beacon of light to confront various doubts in this field that have long been raised about the Qur'an, and each commentator has responded to those doubts in their own way, according to their own taste.

5. Terms

5-1. Difficult verses, in the terminology of the ancients, are among the verses in which the illusion of contradiction is initially inferred by a beginner. (Sobhani Tabrizi, 1377, 11-19; Suyuti, 1391/1470).

5-2. The governing principles are the basis and foundation for the opinion and belief of some people on the subject under discussion. (Qurashi, 1371, 5/161-162).

6. The Connection Between Surah Qalam (verse 51) and the Evil Eye ('Ayn)

Verse:

«إِنْ يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ...» (سوره قلم: 51)

Related Verses:

«وَقَالَ يَا بَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَادْخُلُوا مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ وَمَا أُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ.» (سوره يوسف: 67)

«وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ.» (سوره فلق: ٥)



The Inquiry

A number of scholars contend that verse 51 of Surah Qalam is related to the Evil Eye ('Ayn). Considering that the eye is one of the human organs, possessing a functional, instrumental role akin to other limbs—a mere instrument for visual perception—how can it be the cause of illness or the destruction (*halāk*) of a person? What is the possible connection between verse 51 of Surah Qalam and the Evil Eye?

Conceptual Analysis (Linguistics) in lexicographical sources, the word *zalaqa*

(زَلَقَ) is defined as slipping or sliding, which has various manifestations depending on the degree of intensity. (Al-Zamakhshari, 1417, 2:91).

The word *baṣar* (بَصَرَ) means sight, and its plural is *abṣār*. A *mustabṣir* is one who possesses insight (Ibid, 1:102). The term *junn* (جُنٌّ) carries meanings such as madness, insanity, foolishness, mental derangement, illness, and distress; and *majnūn* (مَجْنُونٌ) is the passive participle meaning one afflicted by madness (Ismail Sini, 1414, 31). Occasion of Revelation (*sha'n nuzūl*) concerning the occasion of revelation for verse 51 of Surah Qalam, it is narrated: A man among the Banu Asad tribe possessed an extremely envious eye. Therefore, the enemies of the Prophet (pbuh) asked him to stare intently at the Prophet during the recitation of the Qur'an with the intent that the Prophet would perish. At that very moment, God, through the revelation of this verse, informed the Prophet of the enemies' intent (Al-Wahidi, 1411, 1:463). In the narrative exegesis *Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, concerning verse 51 of Surah Al-Qalam, it is stated: O Prophet, when you recite the Qur'an, the disbelievers, due to their hostility, look at you with animosity and are close to making you slip with their eyes and throw you to the ground. Al-Farrā' and Al-Kalbī narrated: The intention is that their eyes will cause the Prophet (pbuh) to slip and fall (Al-Samarqandī, 1416, 3:486-487).

Mohammad ibn al-Abbās related from Husayn ibn Ahmad al-Mālikī, from Mohammad ibn 'Īsā, from Yūnus ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, from 'Abdullāh ibn Sinān, from Husayn al-Jammāl, who said: I accompanied Abu 'Abdillāh (as) from Medina to Mecca. When they reached Ghadir Khumm, he looked at me and said: 'This is the place of the Prophet's (pbuh) footsteps,' when he took the hand of 'Alī (a.s.a.s.) and said: 'Whoever I am his master (*Mawlā*), 'Alī is his master'... and he continued, saying: 'God said to His Messenger:

وَأَنَّ يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُزَلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّهُ لَمَجْنُونٌ وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ
لِّلْعَالَمِينَ



Baḥrānī, 1415, 5:464 under verse 51 of Surah Qalam, stated: The meaning of ‘they heard the message (*sam‘iū al-dhikr*)’ refers to Imam ‘Alī (as) and when the Prophet (pbuh) mentioned the virtues of Imam ‘Alī (as), the disbelievers said: ‘He is mad,’ and God Almighty said: ‘He {Imam ‘Alī (as) is but a reminder to the worlds.’ (Al-Qummī, 1363, 2:383).

What is established in the narrative exegeses of Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, *Al-Burhān*, and the narrative exegesis of Al-Qummī is that when the disbelievers witnessed the virtues and status of the noble Prophet (pbuh), they became envious of him. This envy led to the utterance of frivolous and nonsensical speech, to the extent that they called the Prophet majnūn (mad). Whether this absurdity concerns the noble Prophet (pbuh) or Imam ‘Alī (as) makes no difference. This is because, considering other firm verses, such as verse 59 of Surah Nisā’

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ

and the accompanying narrations, the obedience to the Guardians of God is situated within the obedience to the Messenger and God. In the book *Tartīb Amālī*, regarding the connection between the testament (*waṣiyyah*) and the remembrance of the Guardians of God from the time of Adam (as) until the era of Imam al-Ḥujjah (as), it is mentioned: When Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (as) was asked about ‘and We had certainly given them the Word that perfects [their status]’

«وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ الْكَلِمَةَ مَتَمِّمًا»

he said: ‘The intended meaning is the Imams succeeding one Imam after another,’ and a similar narration is cited in Al-Kāfī (Ibn Bābuwayh, 1430, 3:14-15). Therefore, what is crucial is the connection between verse 51 of Surah Al-Qalam and the Evil Eye. Hence, the effects of the human eye on causing a person to fall, become ill, or perish must be examined.

Setting aside the chain of narration (*sanad*) and the implication of the narrations, regardless of their authenticity or lack thereof, several possibilities can be proposed for verse 51 of Surah Qalam. This verse, by pointing to the power of the gaze and the impact of moral vices such as envy, malice, and negative reactions, can be considered as one of the Qur’anic foundations for the belief in the Evil Eye. This verse demonstrates that a human gaze can carry negative energy and, under specific conditions, possess the capacity to inflict harm. Nevertheless, understanding this issue requires attention to cultural and theological contexts and must be examined with caution and within the framework of religious teachings. It must be noted that the understanding of the Evil Eye phenomenon is rooted in cultural and traditional beliefs. While this verse can serve as a basis for



such beliefs, there is no direct scientific proof for this phenomenon connection of the Verse to the Issue of the Evil Eye.

In this verse, there is an allusion to the influential nature of the gaze and its potential to inflict harm. This concept serves as a groundwork for the belief in the Evil Eye across various cultures and societies. The connection of the verse to the Evil Eye can be examined from several aspects:

The Power of the Gaze: The verse indicates that looking can be influential and even harmful. This reinforces the belief that gazes full of envy and malice possess the capacity to harm individuals and objects. For instance, in verse 67 of Surah Yūsuf, Prophet Ya‘qūb (as) reminded his sons not to enter the city gates of Egypt from a single entrance but to enter through separate gates. It is plausible that Prophet Ya‘qūb (as) had two reasons for his instruction: first, to prevent his sons from being recognized by their lineage at that location; and second, to shield them from being subjected to the Evil Eye of the guards. *Envy (Hasad):* The verse points to the envy and malice of the disbelievers toward the Prophet (pbuh). This envy is considered the primary factor in causing harm through the gaze, from the perspective of the Evil Eye belief. In traditions related to the Evil Eye, envy is regarded as one of the most crucial elements generating this phenomenon.

Negative Reactions: The verse refers to the negative reactions of the disbelievers toward the Prophet (pbuh) and the divine revelation. These reactions can be precursors to psychic and physical harm from the perspective of the Evil Eye. **Traditional Exegesis:** Some commentators of the Qur’an, citing narrations, have interpreted this verse as a confirmation of the existence of the Evil Eye. They maintain that this verse affirms the power and influence of an evil look.

Rhetorical Points: The verse also encompasses rhetorical elements. First, multiple emphasis markers are employed. For instance, إِنَّ is used for emphasis concerning the alleged madness of the Prophet (pbuh), and لَيُرْزِقُنَّكَ utilizes the emphatic lām to signify the imminence of harm inflicted through the eye (Ibn Abī Zamanayn, 1424, 2:441). Ibn Abī Zamanayn further interprets لَيُرْزِقُنَّكَ as they will defeat you. Second, the disbelievers’ gazes are metaphorically likened to arrows that would cause the Prophet’s destruction. Third, there is an element of hyperbole (*mubālaghah*) in the verse; stating that they were about to make you slip with their eyes itself constitutes a form of exaggeration to indicate the intensity of the disbelievers’ envy or wrath. In conclusion, the explanation provided by the Infallible Imam (as) concerning verse 51 of Surah Qalam appears to rely



on principles such as: 1. Attention to literary rules; 2. Reliance on the occasion of revelation of verse 51 of Surah Al-Qalam; 3. Reference to other verses, such as verse 67 of Surah Yūsuf and verse 5 of Surah Falaq, because in these verses, the Almighty God explicitly refers to envy (*hasad*) and envying people, whether that envy is directed toward beauty or perfection, or toward the abundance of children and wealth bestowed by God upon His servants.

7. Strategic Principles in the Interpretation of Verse 45 of Surah Nur Based on the Teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them)

The Creation of the Human Being

«وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى بَطْنِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى رِجْلَيْنِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى أَرْبَعٍ يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.» (سوره نور: ٤٥)

«الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ» (سوره سجد ٧)

«خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ» (سوره الرحمن: ١٤)

«وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ..» (سوره روم: ٢٠)

«وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ.» (سوره حجر: ٢٦)

In verse 45 of Surah Nur, Allah states that every moving creature is created from water; however, in other verses the human being is described as created from clay (*tīn*), dust (*turāb*), black mud (*ḥama' masnūn*), and dried clay like pottery (*ṣalṣāl kal-fakkkhār*). How can this apparent contradiction concerning the creation of human beings be reconciled?

Conceptual Analysis: According to Arabic lexicons, the term *dābbah* refers to any animal or living creature that moves upon the earth (Harawi, 2008, p. 163). The word *mā'* denotes water (Mutarizi, 1979, vol. 2, p. 255). Its root is *mawāh*, and its diminutive is *muwayḥ*, in which the *hā'* has been elided and the *wāw* altered. As the Almighty God states, We made every living thing from water. (Surah Anbiyā: 30); and We sent down from the sky pure water. (Surah Furqān: 48) (Raghib Isfahani, 1412 AH, p. 784). The term *tīn* signifies clay—a substance that gives life and forms the natural constitution, having various types (Azdi, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 842–843). *Turāb*, derived from *taraba*, denotes dusty soil; it is the soil covering the surface of the ground or a grave (Ibn Sīdah, 1412 AH, vol. 9, p. 479). *Ḥama*, the plural of *ḥamā'ah*, means dark, altered mud; and *masnūn* has seven interpretations: (1) putrid, (2) stagnant water, (3) direct object of *khalaqnā* (We created), (4) poured-out liquid, (5) form derived from *sunnah*, (6) referring to a palm tree, or (7) meaning sharpened (Māwardī, n.d., vol. 3, p. 158). As for *ṣalṣāl kal-fakkkhār*, five interpretations are reported: (1)



pottery, (2) clay mixed with sand, (3) sticky mud, (4) dried clay, and (5) hollow, malodorous clay.

In *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān narrates that *ṣalṣāl kal-fakkkhār* refers to fresh rainwater that seeps into the ground and becomes clay like pottery, then hardens (Qurashi Makhzūnī, 1410 AH, p. 416). He further states that *ṣalṣāl* and *ḥīn* both signify clay, while *ḥama’ masnūn* denotes decayed, putrid mud (ibid., p. 636).

The Context of Revelation (Shā’n al-Nuzūl)

According to *al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-‘Azīz*, the phrase created every creature from water refers to the drop of semen (*nutfah*) from which all living beings originate. The continuation of the verse classifies creatures by their modes of locomotion: some crawl (e.g., snakes and whales), some walk on two legs (humans and jinn), and others on four (Wahidi, 1415 AH, vol. 2, p. 767).

Al-Farrā’ explains that attributing walking to all beings, though humans uniquely walk upright, is due to their association with humankind—similar to saying, A man came with his camels, where movement is attributed to both (Farra’, 1980, vol. 2, p. 257). He adds, they come to Him in submission (cf. Surah Naḥl: 87), the meaning is that all creatures obey God freely, not under compulsion (Abu ‘Ubaydah, 1381 AH, vol. 2, p. 68).

Theological Interpretation

Two approaches exist regarding the creation of beings from water: Water as the source of all life — the primary material origin of living organisms. Water as semen (*nutfah*) — the biological seed from which animals and humans are formed. Thus, when Allah says, among them are those who walk on two leg, He highlights rational beings endowed with intellect (Ibn al-Jawzi, 1422 AH, vol. 3, p. 301). Hence, the verse refers to the initial invisible stage of creation (life stemming from water), followed by the visible stage—walking creatures—demonstrating divine wisdom (Rasanī, 1429 AH, vol. 5, p. 271).

In the Shi’a exegeses *al-Ṣāfi* and *Minhāj al-Ṣādiqīn fī Ilzām al-Mukhālifīn*, the word *mā’* is interpreted as *nutfah* (semen), from which all beings were created (Qummi, 1415 AH, vol. 3, p. 441; Kāshānī, 1336 AH, vol. 6, p. 307). In *al-Majma’*, transmitting Imam Mohammad al-Bāqir’s words (as), and in *Tafsīr al-Qummi* quoting Imam al-Ṣādiq (as): Allah, the Exalted, creates whatever He wills according to His divine will. (Qummi, 1415 AH, vol. 3, p. 441).

At first glance, verses such as Nur: 45 (creation from water) and those describing man’s creation from *ḥīn*, *turāb*, *ḥama’ masnūn*, and *ṣalṣāl kal-fakkkhār* (e.g., Hijr: 26; Rahman: 14; Rum:20) may appear



contradictory. However, when analyzed through narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and exegetical sources, this apparent contradiction dissolves.

Sequential Understanding of Creation

Imam al-Şādiq (as), in *Tafsīr al-Qummi*, stated: Allah creates whatever He wills through His divine will. This implies that creation occurs gradually, manifesting God's wisdom. Similarly, in *Majma' al-Bayān*, Imam al-Bāqir (as) explained that *mā'* denotes *nutfah*—the first stage of human genesis. Thus, human creation can be outlined as follows:

Stage 1: Origin from water (*nutfah*).

Stage 2: Formation from clay (*ṭīn*)—a mixture of water and dust.

Stage 3: Emergence from black, altered mud (*ḥama' masnūn*).

Stage 4: Solidification into dried clay like pottery (*ṣalṣāl kal-fakhhār*).

Resolving the Apparent Contradition

The verses describe successive stages of creation, not a single moment. Life begins with water, then proceeds through the combination of water and earth. In narrations, *mā'* is equated with *nutfah*, aligning with other verses: Then He made his progeny from an extract of a humble fluid. (Surah Sajdah: 8) Did We not create you from a contemptible fluid? (Surah Mursalāt: 20) Consequently, based on the *hadiths* of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and classical exegesis: There is no contradiction between the verses; each refers to a distinct stage of creation. The term *mā'* may refer either to *nutfah* (semen) or to primordial water as the source of life. The gradual process of human creation reflects divine wisdom and design. As Imam al-Şādiq (as) emphasized, Allah created man according to His will and through a gradual process. Each verse alludes to a specific part of this wise and deliberate act of creation.

Reconciling Qur'anic Narratives: The Sequential Stages of Creation from Water and Earth

The analysis addresses the apparent contradiction between Qur'anic verses stating that all moving creatures (*dābbah*) were created from water (*mā'*) (Surah Nur: 45) and those detailing human creation from earth elements such as *ṭīn* (clay), *turāb* (dust), *ḥama' masnūn* (altered black mud), and *ṣalṣāl kal-fakhhār* (sounding clay). The Reconciliation via Ahl al-Bayt (as) hermeneutics: The apparent conflict is resolved by interpreting the verses as describing a sequential process of manifestation across creation, where the primordial *mā'* is fundamentally equivalent to the *nutfah* (seminal fluid) from which human life originates, aligning with verses referencing creation from *mā' mahīn* (a humble fluid).



The Eight Stages of Human Creation (Sequential Development)

The document meticulously details the eight sequential stages of human embryological development as cited across various Surahs, linking each to a specific Qur'anic term:

Stage 1 (Earth/Clay): Creation from *sulālah min ṭīn* (extract of clay) (Mu'minun: 12).

Stage 2 (Adhesive Clay): Creation from *ṭīn lāzib* (adhesive clay) (Saffat: 11).

Stage 3 (Altered Mud): Creation from *ṣalṣāl min ḥamā' masnūn* (sounding clay from altered black mud) (Hijr: 28).

Stage 4 (*Nutfah*/Semen): Generation of lineage from *mā' mahīn* (humble fluid) (Sajdah: 8; Mursalāt: 20).

Stage 5 (*Alaqah*/Clot): Transformation of the *Nutfah* into an *Alaqah* (clot/leech-like body) (Mu'minun: 14).

Stage 6 (*Mudghah*/Chewed Lump): Transformation of the *Alaqah* into a *Mudghah* (scientifically notable for its adherence to the uterine wall) (Mu'minun: 14).

Stage 7 (Bones and Flesh): Formation of bones, subsequently clothed with flesh (*Fa-kasawna al-'izām laḥman*) (Mu'minun: 14).

Stage 8 (Inspiration of Spirit): The subsequent creation (*thumma ansha'nāhu khalqan ākhar*) (Mu'minun: 14).

The eight prescribed stages exhibit remarkable concordance with modern scientific embryological findings. Furthermore, the Qur'an emphasizes the individual developmental trajectory from *nutfah* to maturity, not the evolution of species. These detailed descriptions, presented over 1400 years ago, confirm the scientific miracle (*i'jāz 'ilmī*) of the Noble Qur'an when examined through empirical science. It is highly probable that the statements of the Infallible Imams (as) on the formation of beings rely solely on the principle of Qur'anic exegesis by Qur'an (*Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*). Consequently, by relying on transmitted evidence (*naql*) and rational reflection (*ta'aqqul*), no contradiction in the creation narrative is discernible.

8. Guiding Principles in the Exegesis of Surah Ash-Shu'ara, Verse 32, Grounded in the Narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace Be Upon Them)

The Staff of Moses (pbuh)

«فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ» (سوره شعراء: ٣٢)

«وَأَلْقَى عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا...» (سوره قصص: ٣٣)

«فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى» (سوره طه ٢٠)



Inquiry Regarding Apparent Contradiction in the Description of Moses' Staff Transformation

Question: In Surah Shu'arā, verse 32, the Almighty God states that when Prophet Moses (as) cast down his staff, it transformed, by divine permission, into a colossal serpent (dragon). Conversely, Surah Qasas, verse 31, describes that when Moses (as) cast down his staff, it turned into a small serpent that was constantly slithering about. How is this discrepancy reconcilable?

Conceptual Analysis of Lexical Terms in Exegetical Sources

In interpretive resources, the phrase حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى (a serpent that strives/hastens) is understood to denote speed and urgency (al-Husseini al-Shirazi, 1424, 1/3251; Huwaidi, n.d., p. 389). *Hayyah* (حَيَّةٌ) is a common noun for the known animal; its form is fu'lah, with the *fā' al-fi'l* vowelized with a *fathah*, and the *ayn al-fi'l* and *lām al-fi'l* merged (al-Safi, 1418, 16/359)

The term تَهْتَزُّ (tahtazzu) signifies rapid movement and agitation, while وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا (wallā mudbiran) means to turn one's back and retreat (al-Husseini al-Shirazi, 1424, 1/401; Huwaidi, n.d., p. 389): ...when Moses cast down {the staff and suddenly} looked at it, seeing it moving and agitated, he became frightened and turned away.

Lexically, التَّعْبَانُ (al-Thu 'bān) refers to a large, massive serpent, whereas الْجَانُّ (al-Jānn) refers to a small serpent (Sayyid Murtada, 1998, 1/27).

Reconciliation

Based on the lexicographical and exegetical meanings of the terms, it can be argued that the words تَسْعَى (striving/hastening) and تَهْتَزُّ (agitating) emphasize the extraordinary nature of the staff's movement, effectively describing its motion. Both terms vividly convey a sense of intense speed and agitation to the audience. The phrase وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا (turning back) indicates that Prophet Moses (as) was confronting a miraculous and extraordinary phenomenon. In the stage of miracle demonstration, the transformation of the staff into a serpent and its rapid movement serves as a testament to Divine power and a proof of Prophet Moses's prophethood.

Narrative exegeses, such as those cited by al-Tabari and al-Tirmidhi on the authority of al-Saddi, mention: ...the Almighty Lord addressed Moses (as): '...Cast down your staff,' and suddenly the staff transformed into a {well-known} serpent that was slithering everywhere... (al-Tabari, 1412, 20/46; al-Tirmidhi, 1425, 2/590).

Credibility of Al-Tabari's Tafsīr and Content Analysis of the Narration on the Credibility of Al-Tabari's Exegesis

Several points can be noted regarding the credibility of Al-Tabari's Tafsīr. Al-Tabari's commentary is recognized as one of the oldest and most



comprehensive works of *naql* (transmitted/narrative) exegesis within Sunni scholarship. Al-Tabari is known for compiling various narrations from the Companions (*Sahāba*) and Successors (*Tabi'un*), such as al-Saddi, striving to include all reported opinions under the verse. Due to his meticulous attention to the transmission chains (*isnād*) and documentary scrutiny of prophetic traditions, Al-Tabari is highly regarded by many researchers (Alavi Mehr, 1396 SH, p. 195).

Al-Tirmidhi's Tafsi'r, another Sunni narrative exegesis presented in two volumes in Arabic, incorporates narrations cited by al-Tabari. Although the commentator examines some surahs of the Holy Qur'an, the reports transmitted from al-Saddi require further critical examination and reflection due to the potential presence of *Isrā'iliyyāt* (materials originating from Jewish/Christian traditions) within the sayings of the *Tabi'un* and *Sahābah*. However, the content narrated in this specific report does not contradict the firm verses of the Qur'an, sound intellect, or compelling rational evidence. Consequently, regards to the jurisprudential/scholarly evaluation (*rijāl*) and transmission scrutiny must be observed when considering the specifics of al-Saddi's quotations.

Content Analysis of the Foregoing Narration

Several hypotheses can be posited concerning the content analysis of the aforementioned narration. The statement that the staff transformed into a well-known serpent (*ḥayyah ma'rūf*) is highly significant. This implies the staff did not turn into an unknown or imaginary creature but rather a real, identifiable animal possessing inherent characteristics, such as slithering. This emphasis highlights the miraculous aspect of divine power: an inanimate object transforming into a fully real and living being, not merely an illusion or superficial appearance.

The term *تَسْعَى* (*tas'ā*) stresses the serpent's movement and dynamism, which signifies the serpent's complete vitality. This clause effectively explains the meaning of *حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى* because the serpent was not stationary but moved rapidly and with apparent volition. The descriptions of the staff as *التَّعْبَان* (*al-Thu'bān*) and *الجَانَّ* (*al-Jānn*) can both symbolize the majesty and immensity of Divine Will in executing an act, which consequently instilled awe and dread in Prophet Moses (as). It is stated in *the book Amālī* that *التَّعْبَان* is a large, massive serpent, whereas *الجَانَّ* is a small serpent. Surah Shu'arā, verse 32, likens Moses' staff to *التَّعْبَان*, while Surah Qasas, verse 31, describes the staff as a small serpent that was quickly slithering from one side to the other.



Interpretive Views on the Similes of the Staff and Contextual Miracles

The aforementioned similes, viewed from the perspective of religious commentators and scholars, may possess different rationales: Difference in Emphasis: Some scholars hold that the comparison of the staff to الثَّعْبَانِ (*al-thu'bān*) was due to its gigantic size and the grandeur of its creation, while the comparison to الْجَانِّ (*al-jānn*) was due to the activity and swiftness of the serpent.

Partiality in Metaphor: If the Almighty described it as الثَّعْبَانِ (the enormous serpent), it is not obligatory for the object to possess all characteristics of a serpent. Similarly, if the Almighty likened it to الْجَانِّ (the small serpent), it is not necessary for it to possess all characteristics attributed to *al-jānn*.

Psychological Impact: The reason the Almighty did not mention الْجَانِّ in Surah Shu'arā (verse 32) may be because the scene created such intense awe and terror in the hearts of the observers that it manifested in their minds similar to witnessing a Jinn (supernatural being) (Sayyid Murtada, 1998, 1/27).

Chronological Context: Surah Qasas, verse 31, pertains to the period before Moses (as) went to Pharaoh, whereas Surah Shu'arā, verse 32, relates to the time when Moses (as) confronted Pharaoh. Consequently, no contradiction is observed between the verses (Sayyid Murtada, 1998, 1/27). In narrative exegeses by Al-Bahrani and Al-Qummi Mashhadi, citing Imam Riḍā (as), it is narrated: The Almighty God sent Prophet Moses (as) to Pharaoh with a miracle combating sorcery, because sorcery and magic were prevalent among the people at that time, and God sent them something they were incapable of producing. (Al-Qummi Mashhadi, 1386 SH, 1/266; Al-Bahrani, 1416 AH, 1/65).

Implications of the Scientific Analysis of Imam Riḍā's Hadith: An appropriate scientific analysis of the narration from Imam Riḍā (as) can encompass several dimensions: The Hadith demonstrates that the Almighty sends prophets with differentiated miracles based on the specific social and cultural needs and conditions of the people in any given era. While sorcery and magic were widely regarded as a science and an art in many societies, this Hadith clarifies that Divine power transcends all forms of sorcery and magic. By sending His miracles through Prophet Moses (as), God showed the people that this magic could not overcome His power. The Hadith can be interpreted as an intellectual contest between Truth and falsehood. Through the appearance of Prophet Moses (as) and the use of miracles, God redirects the attention of the people towards the Truth and reality, teaching them that sorcery is nullified in the face of the Divine Truth. Ultimately,



the Hadith underscores that God acts in a manner that draws people closer to the divine reality when they are confronted with intellectual and cultural challenges.

Synthesis of Narrations and Scholarly Intent

A synthesis of the transmitted narrations allows for several insightful observations: The narration transmitted from al-Saddi specifically refers to the form or appearance (*hay'at*) of the serpent. In contrast, the narration from Imam Riḍā (as) addresses the miraculous nature (*mu'jizah*) of Prophet Moses (as) without explicitly detailing the serpent's physical form.

What is significant is that both interpretations ultimately point toward the grandeur and power of Moses's miracle. One perspective emphasizes the act of creation (transformation), while the other highlights the victory over sorcery. Such variations in transmission are typically attributable to differences in the chain of transmission (*isnād*), the specific narrators, or an emphasis on varying facets of a single event at different junctures in time. Crucially, none of these narrations inherently contradict reason or the firm verses of the Holy Qur'an. The fact that the Infallible Imam (as) did not elaborate on the serpent's physical appearance in his interpretation warrants contemplation. It appears that the Infallible Imam (as) approached the *ta'wīl* (interpretive explanation) of the verses based on established principles, including focusing on the context of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), and prioritizing the specific historical moment when the verses were revealed, consideration of the Verse's Context (*Siyāq al-Āyāt*).

Conclusion

Based on Qur'anic, interpretive (*tafsīri*), and narrative (*rawāi*) evidence, verse 51 of Surah Qalam indicates a type of psychological and ethical impact of human sight, which, under specific circumstances, can be a source of harm and deviation. Although the Qur'an does not directly refer to the concept of the evil eye (*ḥasad* or *'ayn*), the rhetorical structure of the verse and its occasion of revelation (*sha'n nuzul*) provide a basis for linking this common cultural concept with revealed divine knowledge. From a linguistic perspective, the word *zalq* (زلق) denotes slipping or falling, and its combination with *bi-abṣārihim* (بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ) (with their eyes) in the verse expresses a form of deviation resulting from a hostile and envy-laden gaze. Commentators, relying on exegetical narrations, have interpreted this deviation not merely as physical, but as the result of the negative energy of envy, anger, and enmity—feelings that can exert psychological or even physical effects on the target of the gaze. Similar instances of this perspective are observed in verse 67 of Surah Yusuf and verse 5 of Surah Falaq, where fear of *ḥasad* (حسد - envy) is presented as a harmful agent. Verse 51 of Surah Qalam can be seen as a sign of divine warning regarding



the dangers of envy and a polluted gaze, a gaze rooted in a heart sickness and inner malice within the Qur'anic framework. While the physical confirmation of the evil eye as a supernatural phenomenon is not possible within the framework of empirical sciences, verse 51 of Surah Qalam can be considered a symbol connecting cultural beliefs about the evil eye with the Qur'an's spiritual warning about the effects of envy and malice. This interpretation moves beyond superstitious forms and is subject to analysis and scientific contemplation at various levels. Consequently, it might be suggested that the statement of an infallible Imam (as) regarding the interpretation (*ta'wil*) of verse 51 of Surah Qalam is based on principles such as: Attention to literary rules (*qawa'id adabiyyah*) reliance on the occasion of revelation (*sha'n nuzul*) of verse 51 of Surah Qalam: Reference to other verses, such as verse 67 of Surah Yusuf and verse 5 of Surah Falaq.

The study of verses pertaining to the origin of human creation in the Holy Qur'an, including verse 45 of Surah Nur, alongside other verses such as verse 26 of Surah Hijr and verse 14 of Surah Raḥmān, which speak of *ṭīn* (clay), *turāb* (dust), *ḥama'in masnūn* (moulded clay), and *ṣalṣāl ka'l-fakkkhār* (hardened clay like pottery), may initially appear to present a surface-level contradiction. However, through careful linguistic and exegetical analysis, it becomes clear that this variation in expression signifies the diversity of creation stages and the manifestation of Divine Wisdom in human formation, rather than contradiction. From a lexical and interpretive standpoint, the word *mā'* (water) in the Qur'an is used in various contexts to refer to both natural water and human sperm/seminal fluid (*nutfah*). Commentators, citing narrations from Imam al-Bāqir (as) and Imam al-Ṣādiq (as), have interpreted water in this specific verse as the *nutfah*, which is the primordial source of life and the beginning of the human biological chain. Conversely, *ṭīn* (clay) and *turāb* (dust) are presented as the constituent materials of the human body, which are combinations of water and earth. Therefore, a causal and gradual relationship exists between creation from water and creation from earth.

The Qur'an essentially describes the process of creation, moving from the living liquid stage (*nutfah*) to the solid material stage (earth and clay), and subsequently, the formation of the soul. Authoritative interpretive narrations also state that these stages occurred according to the Divine Will (*mashiyyah*) and through a gradual temporal process. First, living matter was created from water; then, this matter, combined with clay—which possesses the potential for shaping—transformed into the human body and physical form (*jism* and *kālib*).



Following this, the stage of soul implantation (the blowing of the Spirit) took place, which is the distinguishing point of humans from other creatures. From this perspective, there is no contradiction among the verses. A crucial point is that the statements of the infallible Imams (as) regarding the formation and creation of beings may solely rely on two principles: Reference to the explicit text of the Qur'an. Employing the interpretive methodology of Qur'an by Qur'an (*Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*)

Attention to the addressee in the discourse of the interconnection of three key verses: Verses 51 of Surah Qalam, 45 of Surah Nur, and 32 of Surah Shu'ara reflect aspects of Divine Power in creation and miracle. Qalam (51): Discusses the gaze of the disbelievers upon the Prophet (pbuh), mentioning the psychological force of the evil eye as a manifestation of human influential powers, signifying the unseen dimension of Divine power in the cosmic order. Nur (45): Addresses the process of creating living beings from water and illustrates the difference in their mode of locomotion: Then among them are those who walk upon their bellies...

This verse reveals the biological order and Divine Wisdom in the diversity of life's movements and forms. Shu'ara (32): Describes the miracle of Moses' staff (as) which, by God's will, turned into a clear serpent (*thu 'bānin mubīn*)—a symbol of the transformation of material essence and the dominance of Divine power over the laws of nature. The exegetical link among these three verses displays three levels of God's power: spiritual power in the influence of the eye, natural power in the creation of life, and miraculous power in the alteration of matter.

This collection demonstrates that the world and humanity, in every manifestation of creation and miracle, reflect the One Divine Will and His wise, causal system. The term problematic verses (*al-āyāt al-mushkilah*) is applied to those verses whose understanding is initially difficult for a beginner and which require precise linguistic, interpretive, and contextual analysis to resolve ambiguity in language, meaning, or apparent incompatibility between concepts. Based on Qur'anic, interpretive, and narrative evidence, verse 51 of Surah Qalam indicates a type of psychological and ethical impact of human sight that can become a source of harm and deviation under specific conditions.



The rhetorical structure and the occasion of revelation of the verse provide the context for linking this customary concept with revealed divine knowledge. The study of verses concerning the origin of human creation, such as verse 45 of Surah Nur, alongside others like verse 26 of Surah Hġir and verse 14 of Surah Raġmān, may initially suggest a contradiction. However, careful linguistic and interpretive examination reveals that this variation in expression denotes the diversity of creation stages and the manifestation of Divine Wisdom in human formation, not contradiction. Regarding verse 32 of Surah Shu'arā and its seemingly conflicting verses, it is concluded that there is no contradiction; the difference in expressions is due to:

1. The multiplicity of situations and stages in the mission of Prophet Moses (as);
2. The difference in the angle of description, shifting from swift movement to physical magnitude;
3. The progressive manifestation of Divine Power in the process of miracle.

Following a thorough examination of scientific, lexical, and interpretive sources regarding the strategic principles of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in resolving seemingly difficult verses of the Qur'an, the following conclusions have been reached: The Infallibles (as) seem to employ principles such as resorting to firm/unambiguous verses (*al-āyāt al-muġkamah*), considering authentic history, relying on context (*siyāq*), paying attention to literary rules, engaging in intellectual reflection (*ta'aqqul*) on the verses, and referring to the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) when interpreting seemingly difficult verses.

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