In the Name of Allah,
the Entirely Compassionate,
the Especially Merciful

Scientific Quarterly

Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings

Vol. 3, Issue 4, Winter 2026

Published by: Imam Mobin Research Center

Online ISSN: 2981-1309

Quarterly Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings is published based on certificate No. 93704 issued on 2023-05-29 by the journalistic and information deputy of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.
The journal is the outcome of scientific activity by the Imam Moibn Research Center with license No. 962 from the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology.
The Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings successfully obtained **the Scientific-Research Rank** from the Journals Rating Commission of the **Ministry of Science, Research and Technology**.

Electronic Portal for registration and article submission:
https://www.jat-journal.ir
Email: info@jat-journal.ir
Online ISSN: 2981-1309
Printing and Binding: Imam Mobin Research Center
Number of Editions: 100
Price: 10 Dollar
Address: NO 112, Shahidain Street, Somayyeh Boulevard, Qom, Iran.
Telefax: +98 25 - 37832143

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The analysis and expression of the collected data is done in statistical (descriptive and inferential), qualitative, and comibned formats along with the limited interpretation of the data in this section. It should be noted that to explain and express the collected data, it is sufficient to use one of the charts, shape, and table tools. In cases where the research has a question, the answer to the question should be explained clearly and unambiguously. If there is a hypoarticle in the research, an accurate description of the tests should be done and the rejected or approved hypotheses should be identified.

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1- Helping to spread the culture of Ahl al-Bayt (as) research in scientific and research centers;

2- Promoting and deepening Ahl al-Bayt (as) culture and knowledge;

3- Promoting and presenting scientific products of Imam Moibn Research Center;

4- Publishing an authentic and reference Quarterly with scientific-research validity in the field of Ahl al-Bayt (as) culture and education.

Quarterly Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings is an open-access, online journal and a peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary publication dedicated to the scholarly study of the Qur'an and Ḥadith from a wide range of scholarly perspectives, reflecting a diversity of approaches as well as ethical questions and concerns related to scientific research about Qur'an and Ahl Al-Bayt (as) teachings.

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Dr. Mohammad Reza Aram

Editor-in-Chief

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Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings
Vol. 3, Issue 4, Winter 2026

Historical Inquiry in Shiʿi Studies: Description, Explanation, and Epistemic Justification

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(Received: January 01, 2026, Accepted: May 31, 2026)

Abstract

This article examines the methodological foundations of historical studies in the field of Islamic and Shiʿi thought, with particular emphasis on the dual processes of description and explanation as constitutive components of scholarly justification. The study aims to clarify the nature of historical inquiry by distinguishing between purely descriptive approaches and descriptive–analytical approaches that seek to explain historical phenomena through causal, rational, and narrative models. Employing a qualitative and analytical method grounded in epistemological analysis, the article surveys major theories of historical explanation and investigates their application within religious and doctrinal research. The findings demonstrate that explanatory historical studies are inseparable from justificatory frameworks, especially in contexts where belief, truth, and epistemic authority are presupposed. The article further argues that coherentism and reliabilism represent the two most influential methodological approaches governing justification in Shiʿi historical studies, each yielding distinct outcomes in the interpretation of sources and propositions. The study concludes that greater methodological clarity regarding justification, source selection, and explanatory models can significantly reduce ambiguities in contemporary historical research and contribute to more rigorous and epistemically grounded studies of Shiʿi intellectual tradition.

Keywords: Historical Methodology, Shiʿi Thought, Description and Explanation, Epistemic Justification, Coherentism and Reliabilism, Historiography of Islam.

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1. Introduction

1.1.Background and Context of the Study

Historical studies occupy a central position in the scholarly investigation of Islamic and Shiʿi thought, as they provide a systematic means of engaging with the intellectual, doctrinal, and social dimensions of religious traditions across time. Scholars of Shiʿi studies have long sought to examine both the internal structures of Shiʿi doctrines and their external historical contexts, employing diverse methodological tools drawn from historiography, epistemology, and religious studies. In contemporary classifications of religious research, such inquiries are often divided into primary studies, which address religion and its essential domains directly, and intermediary or instrumental studies, which function as methodological means for accessing and interpreting religious sources. Within this framework, historical inquiry serves as a critical intermediary discipline, shaping how religious propositions, narratives, and doctrines are understood and justified.

1.2.Theoretical and Methodological Grounds

Despite the widespread application of historical methods, the types, status, and modes of methodology in the study of religions—particularly in relation to historical investigations—have remained largely understudied and insufficiently theorized. This methodological underdevelopment persists even though the nature of the questions posed by scholars is closely tied to the methodological frameworks governing their research traditions. As has been observed, “the nature of the questions raised by each orientalist reflects the methodology prevailing among orientalists and their schools of thought” (Hosseinzadeh Shanehchi, 2003, p. 10). Consequently, a critical understanding of methodological orientations is indispensable for evaluating historical studies, especially where external (orientalist) and internal (religious) perspectives intersect.

1.3.Statement of the Problem

This lack of methodological clarity has contributed to enduring ambiguities regarding the nature, scope, and objectives of historical studies in religious scholarship. A central point of contention concerns whether historical inquiry should be confined to the description and reporting of past events and beliefs, or whether it should aim to explain historical phenomena by uncovering their causes, reasons, and structural conditions. These ambiguities are particularly pronounced in the study of Islamic and Shiʿi traditions, where historical research is inseparable from epistemic presuppositions concerning belief, truth, and justificatory authority. The divergence between insider and outsider perspectives has further

intensified methodological tensions, often resulting in conflicting interpretations of the same historical data.

1.4.Objectives and Scope of the Study

The present study seeks to address these challenges by systematically examining the role of description and explanation as the two foundational components of non-purely descriptive historical studies in Shiʿi thought. Its primary objective is to clarify the methodological and epistemological dimensions of historical inquiry by focusing on the justificatory component through which historical propositions are evaluated and accepted. In doing so, the study explores how historical knowledge is constructed through the interaction of evidence, interpretation, and epistemic commitment, and how different explanatory models—causal, rational, narrative, functional, and structural—operate within religious and doctrinal research.

1.5.Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its explicit attention to justification as a decisive yet often neglected element of historical methodology in Shiʿi studies. While previous research has addressed source criticism and forms of historical explanation, comparatively little attention has been devoted to the epistemological frameworks that determine how historical claims are legitimized. By comparatively examining coherentism and reliabilism as two influential justificatory approaches, this article demonstrates how methodological commitments directly affect the interpretation of Qurʾanic texts, Ḥadith reports, and historical testimonies, as well as the resolution of conflicts among competing historical propositions.

1.6.Contribution to the Field

By positioning itself at the intersection of historiography, epistemology, and Shiʿi doctrinal studies, this article fills a significant gap in existing scholarship concerning the methodological foundations of explanatory historical research in religious studies. It offers a conceptual framework for distinguishing descriptive historical writing from descriptive–analytical inquiry and for assessing the epistemic implications of different justificatory models. In this context, the study also provides a comparative outline of methodological approaches employed in historical studies, thereby illustrating how divergent methodological commitments shape both research questions and interpretive outcomes.

1.7.Structure of the Article

The article is structured as follows. The first section examines the nature and scope of historical studies and introduces the distinction between descriptive and continuity-based approaches to historical phenomena. The second section analyzes the concepts of description and explanation and reviews major types of historical explanation. The third section focuses on

the methodological component of justification, with particular emphasis on coherentist and reliabilist perspectives. The final section compares these approaches and summarizes their implications for contemporary historical research in Shiʿi thought.

2. Historical Studies Based on Description and Explanation

Scholars of Shiʿi thought seek to investigate all internal and external dimensions and structures of Shiʿi intellectual tradition, as well as its broader domains, and in doing so have employed a variety of methodological approaches. It should be noted that in more recent classifications of studies related to religion and religiosity, such inquiries have been divided—based on a functional perspective—into primary studies and intermediary or instrumental studies. Within this framework, primary studies pertain to religion itself and its various domains, whereas disciplines such as Ḥadith and Qurʾanic exegesis function as tools for attaining religion and for understanding the totality of its constituent domains (Gharamaleki, 2001, p. 49).

Although Western scholars of Shiʿism themselves differ in their application of historical methodologies, one cannot overlook a certain degree of coherence among their approaches, given the similarities in research methods and investigative tools commonly employed in Western scholarship. Moreover, regardless of how research domains are classified[1] or the degree of precision with which scientific realities are presented, it is an established and undeniable fact that the Western encounter—and the methods utilized therein—for understanding Islamic sources, doctrines, and sects differ substantially from those held by Muslims themselves. This divergence arises from multiple factors, including intellectual inclinations, motivations, modes of understanding subject matter, and internal versus external religious perspectives.

Modern methodologies, while capable of contributing to the explanation or discovery of certain truths, may also entail dangerous and irreversible

1. These domains, when viewed from a temporal and methodological perspective, are divided into traditional and modern branches. According to this view, the method employed in explaining Islamic law—within the scholarly practice and intellectual tradition of Muslims—corresponds to traditional studies, encompassing the three disciplines of theology (kalām), jurisprudence (fiqh), and ethics. Naturally, the most central focus of these disciplines is the sacred texts, namely the Qurʾan and Hadith. In contrast, what has emerged from the Western engagement with Islamic thought—whether directly or through Muslim responses to it, particularly over the past two centuries—is referred to as modern studies. These include the psychology and sociology of religion, philosophy of religion, and the history of religions (historical studies of religions and sects). Nevertheless, the interpenetration of these two modes of study, as well as their respective subfields, is both evident and unavoidable (Gharamaleki, 2001, p. 49).

consequences when misapplied or when research is conducted improperly. For this reason, "attention to the types of methods employed by Western scholars or by approaches aligned with them is of particular importance, insofar as they present an epistemic system grounded in Islamic/Shiʿi propositions and teachings" (Hosseinzadeh, 2011, p. 44). This concern is especially salient given that the proposed epistemic system, by taking into account the nature of Islamic/Shiʿi sources and the means of access to them, claims to yield beliefs that are both sincere and epistemically justified.

Prominent contemporary historians maintain that knowledge can be divided into three types: direct knowledge (sensory knowledge), indirect knowledge (historical knowledge), and generalized knowledge (inductive knowledge). They further acknowledge that indirect knowledge may—at its most developed level—also be presented in the form of generalized knowledge. Another important point they accept is that three conditions—time, reality, and evidence (along with their interpretation)—constitute the fundamental elements of knowledge. These elements, in effect, give shape to belief, propositional truth, and justification over time (Stanford, 2005, p. 190). This observation is made to demonstrate that historians, like epistemologists, adopt a cognate perspective; otherwise, historical inquiry would be reduced to mere reportage.

Historians have articulated at least two distinct meanings of history. In one sense, history refers to the examination of past events (history as event and human experience over time). In another sense, it denotes research into the past—history as narration, reporting, and scholarly investigation (Stanford, 2005, p. 190).

From the perspective of the historical researcher, human actions do not possess intrinsic significance in and of themselves; rather, value and importance are attributed to actions that carry meaning and exert social impact.[1] Consequently, an action requires comprehensive analysis across political, cultural, social, and other dimensions within its temporal context, ultimately leading to a profound and precise understanding of the past. On this basis, the historian must first establish factual reality (description) and then seek answers to questions of causality (explanation) (Stanford, 2005, p. 191). It is therefore argued that a historical phenomenon can be properly interpreted and its meanings fully grasped only when it is examined in all its dimensions (Ahmadi & Ghafariyan, 2003). This is the very approach adopted by researchers in the field of Islamic and Shiʿi studies.

1. Some scholars argue that the primary focus of history is not the event itself, but rather the perceptions and sentiments of people regarding the event. Accordingly, history is considered a reflection of truth as understood in the mind of the historian (Ahmadi & Ghaffarian, 2003).

3. The Nature of Historical Studies

Divergent interpretations within this type of research[1], ambiguity in defining historical study, obscurity in the scientific process of historical investigation, the lack of clearly articulated strategic rules, and disagreements concerning the meaning of historical knowledge—as well as whether the aim of historical studies is merely to describe and report *how* events occurred or rather to explain *why* they occurred—have collectively contributed to ambiguity in defining historical studies and clarifying their intended purpose (Gharamaleki, 2001, p. 263).

Nevertheless, it may be stated that, based on its literal meaning, the nature of historical studies consists in the study of the historical—that is, anything that possesses historical identity, whether it be an event or a form of thought or knowledge. Accordingly, some scholars have defined historical studies as "the systematic process of collecting and purposefully evaluating data related to the past in order to identify the effects, causes, and trajectories of events." In this definition, historical studies constitute a chain of evidence and concepts related to the past (Gharamaleki, 2001, pp. 261–262), which may assume diverse forms.

Considering the value and the quantitative and qualitative diversity of historical data[2], it may be argued that the application of historical studies within the domain of Islamic/Shiʿi teachings—and the use of historical materials therein—proceeds according to two distinct meanings and approaches:

4. Approaches to the Historical Phenomenon

4.1.The Descriptive Approach

According to this approach, the historical phenomenon is an event that occurred in the past, and the researcher's sole objective is to identify historical reality. Consequently, the more successfully the researcher employs analytical tools and techniques to traverse temporal distance through historical propositions and situate themselves within the past, the deeper and more accurate their knowledge of the event or reality becomes.3 This approach, therefore, is predominantly descriptive in nature.

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1. For this reason, various methods have been proposed for historical studies; for example, the approaches of Joanna Nell, Raymond Pang, and Will Leedy can be mentioned (Gharamaleki, 2001, p. 263).

2. Similar to primary sources, secondary sources are "current sources, or sources that have been recompiled" (Gharamaleki, 2001, p. 254).

3. From both theoretical and practical perspectives, this approach faces a number of challenges. Among these is the fact that the researcher effectively removes a constitutive element of historical inquiry, namely time, and consequently is unable to address the positive and negative effects and outcomes of historical phenomena. Moreover, acceptance of this approach has given rise to disagreements concerning the validity of labeling such work as "historical

4.2.The Continuity-based Approach.

The second approach views the historical phenomenon as something extended across time—originating in the past and continuing, at least minimally, into the present. From this perspective, the value of a historical phenomenon lies in its continuity; thus, the historical character of an event or idea is contingent upon the persistence of its trajectory over time (Stanford, 2005, pp. 189–191).

It must be noted, however, that historical studies conducted within this second approach are subject to serious methodological risks. Some of these risks—arising from both positive and negative personal and research-related characteristics—include selective engagement with propositions or evidence, reductionism and exclusivism (whereby the researcher views a historical event as an isolated fragment lacking continuity), the conflation of motivation with outcome (which renders historical inquiry static and devoid of dynamism), and the conflation of propositional judgment with value judgment (Gharamaleki, 2001, p. 284). Naturally, this form of historical study entails a higher degree of analysis.

This second approach constitutes the methodological path currently employed in religious research and in doctrinal studies of religious traditions. Its two fundamental components—following belief in and acceptance of the truth of propositions, which are necessary prerequisites of scholarly inquiry—are description and explanation (that is, the interpretation of evidence and the justification of why events occurred).[1] These together form the justificatory component of historical studies.[2]

5. Description and Explanation in Historical Studies

As noted earlier, when historical studies are dominated by analytical concerns, the researcher must, at the most critical stage of inquiry, justify the trajectory of investigation. This justification unfolds in two stages: description (the identification of what a phenomenon is and the verification of factual reality) and explanation (the elucidation of why it occurred—its cause or reason).

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studies," as opposed to alternative designations such as historical sociology and related fields. These divergences in viewpoint have led scholars of religion, particularly in its newer areas of inquiry, to adopt alternative approaches (Stanford, 2005, pp. 189–191).

1. Accordingly, approaches to the study of the development of thought are oriented toward this perspective; outside of it (i.e., the first approach), the outcome is limited to mere description or an inadequate form of analysis.

2. For discussions of the historical background of historicism, its influential figures and their views, as well as its impact on patterns of thought and knowledge and the critiques thereof, see Arab Salehi (2008, parts A and B).

Regarding the distinction between *cause* and *reason*, it has been argued that the social and human sciences are primarily interpretive sciences concerned with meaning, whereas the natural sciences are causal sciences. Naturalists maintained that human behavior should be predicted on the basis of causes and that society is part of nature, knowable through the same methods by which nature itself is known. In contrast, interpretivists regarded human beings and human society as fundamentally distinct entities possessing their own specific modes of understanding. This group emphasizes reasons rather than causes. In causal explanation, intention, meaning, and motivation are irrelevant, and the relationship between phenomena is described as necessary and automatic in accordance with law-like regularities. In contrast, reasons involve intention, purpose, and meaning. Rainfall has a cause, but the killing of Abu Muslim by the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur has a reason (Soroush, 1988, p. 56).

From another perspective, the distinction between *cause* and *reason* lies in the fact that a cause is a factor that unconsciously and inevitably compels an entity to react, whereas a reason is a conscious affirmation within the mind of a rational and self-aware individual, adopted in order to act rationally in accordance with it (Little, 1994, p. 55). In other words, humans act on the basis of reasons, while natural entities operate according to causes. The behavior of nature is meaningless, whereas human behavior is meaningful. For example, two individuals may stand up; one may do so out of respect, the other out of contempt. The physical act is identical, but because the event possesses an inner dimension, unlike natural phenomena, it acquires multiple meanings. Thus, understanding a human action precedes its mere observation (Little, 1994, p. 58).

Accordingly, the task of the historical researcher is not merely to establish a proposition within a historical sequence—as is the case in purely descriptive historical studies—but to interpret it alongside other related sets of data and to address the cause or reason for its occurrence (Naraqi, 1986). Hence, it has been asserted that history loses its appeal if it answers only the question of *how* and neglects the question of *why* (Zarrinkoub, 2000, p. 56). History, therefore, may be defined as "the recounting of past actions in such a way that we come to understand not only the sequence of events but also the reasons for their occurrence" (Walsh, 1984, p. 25).

Given the relative nature of both description and explanation, description may be understood as the articulation of characteristics, commonalities, and similarities between the object of study and other entities. According to Mardiha (2003), description enumerates the features, states, signs, properties, and related attributes of a phenomenon in order to distinguish it from others. At the descriptive level, knowledge consists in

examining a set of signs and propositions that aim to convey what something is. Explanation, by contrast, involves revealing why something exists, identifying the causes of its emergence, and clarifying the conditions of its being. The identity of a phenomenon is completed by adding determinations that account for its reasons, and through explanation, the object attains full independence and objectivity. Explanation renders intertwined and complex matters manifest and intelligible.

In a broader sense, explanation involves placing phenomena that were previously regarded as independent into meaningful relationships with one another and establishing new connections among phenomena previously assumed to be closely related.

Furthermore, explanation entails at least two essential tasks: first, providing causal or rational accounts of events; and second, demonstrating the relationships among those events. Once events are explained, their interconnections become perceptible, their apparent fragmentation is resolved, and the intellect emerges from confusion and astonishment, gaining a sense of mastery over the phenomenon. Previously, the phenomenon dominated the intellect by confounding it; through explanation, this domination is reversed (Soroush, 1995).

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that explanation is not always the primary objective of scientific inquiry, including historical research (Little, 1994, p. 14). For example, the conventional aim of many historical studies is merely to clarify neglected or ambiguous aspects of history (Mofakhari, 2010). Consequently, numerous historical investigations are primarily descriptive rather than explanatory. For this reason, attention to the various forms of explanation is particularly relevant to historical studies that explicitly adopt an explanatory approach.

6. Types of Explanation

Explanation takes various forms. Western scholars generally maintain that explanations in historical inquiry proceed along three main lines:
(a) explanations aligned with those used in other sciences (law-based explanations, grounded in nomological and predictive models, universal laws, or nomological determinism);
(b) explanations not aligned with the methods of other sciences (interpretive and argumentative explanations); and
(c) narrative explanations, which are specific to historical subjects (Stanford, 2003; Khatami, 2000; Walsh, 1984; Bryan, 2002).

Among the most effective forms of explanation is narrative explanation. In this model, attention is given to the partial nature of an event, its relationship to other events, and its underlying reasons. Through this approach, events are traced back to their roots and their internal relations

are elucidated (Stanford, 2003; Khatami, 2000). Accordingly, one of the most important components of this method is the reconstruction of the past and the placement of historical phenomena within the concrete context of historical reality. This is precisely the point at which explanation is directed simultaneously toward both the causes of formation and the processual unfolding of events.

Nevertheless, scholars in this field maintain that explanation *in* history (that is, explanation based on historical realities) can never be fully complete. This is because, despite the abundance of evidence in historical realities—some of which may even be regarded as definitive and not in need of interpretation—there always remain numerous areas of ambiguity. It should be acknowledged that this view bears significant resemblance to interpretive approaches. The apparent divergence seems to stem from whether causality (*why*) and interpretation (*how*) are treated as separate or intertwined categories, and from the degree of their interconnection. This is particularly the case given that historians rarely operate with a simple one-cause/one-effect model (Sarukhani, 1997; Stanford, 2003).

On this basis, two additional explanatory models—functional explanation and structural explanation—are also considered forms of causal explanation. In each, the researcher seeks either "functional causes" (explaining the whole through the part) or "structural causes" (explaining the part through the whole). The functionalist model views society as an integrated whole, analogous in certain respects to an organism. When society is understood as a system, functional explanation consists in identifying the role or utility of each part for the whole and the needs it fulfills (Mardiha, 2003, p. 52). According to Stanford (2003), structure is defined as "the relationship between parts and wholes—not just any relationship, but one that determines the character of the whole" (p. 90). Mardiha further notes that "the structuralist model seeks the explanation of a system in its underlying structure, so that by uncovering the general structural formula, the components can be interpreted" (p. 45). Sarukhani (1997) emphasizes that "some argue that functional explanation stands in opposition to causal explanation, since one should not equate the efficient causes of a phenomenon with its functions or utilities" (p. 514).

The conclusion, therefore, is that description and explanation of a proposition or narrative constitute two fundamental stages of non-purely descriptive historical studies, aimed at establishing and interpreting historical realities.

7. The Methodological Component of Justification in Historical Studies

After identifying the type of explanation employed in historical research, it is equally necessary to identify the methodological components of explanation. This enables the researcher to discern distinctions, orientations, and approaches, to understand the researcher's perspective on explanation and analysis, and to become aware of the implications of each standpoint. Among the most significant outcomes of this analysis is the ability to locate points of contention between internal (insider) and external (outsider) perspectives.

is evident that the examination of various dimensions of Islamic/Shiʿi issues—especially in foundational and doctrinal matters—proceeds through rational arguments grounded in intellectual cognition (e.g., issues of divine unity), through transmitted arguments based on textual evidence (e.g., the doctrine of the Imamate and its characteristics), or through a combination of both (e.g., proofs of resurrection). Consequently, any research or body of knowledge produced is shaped by the type of sources employed. Accordingly, in the application of historical studies[1]—particularly from an epistemological perspective—alongside two fundamental presuppositional components, namely belief[2] in and truth[3] of propositions, another decisive component comes into focus: the component

1. In one view, revelatory and transmitted proofs—both sacred and non-sacred texts—are treated within a single framework; in another view, all texts are regarded uniformly as historical and non-sacred.

2. One dimension concerns the relationship between the researcher and the proposition, and the extent to which it is knowledge-generating, particularly on the basis of theories oriented toward the object of belief (the belief component). See An Introduction to Epistemology (Shams, 2005, pp. 87–90; Moser, 2006, pp. 102–114).

3. Another dimension concerns the relationship between the proposition and its referent or external reality, especially with emphasis on correspondence theory or coherence theory and the harmony among propositions (the truth component) within theories of the nature of truth, with particular reference to the views of Professor Motahhari (Hossein-Zadeh, 2011, pp. 113–116; Shams, 2005, pp. 118–120; Moser, 2006, pp. 138–139). These criteria, especially within the differentiated domains of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the majority of historical data, constitute the principal instruments for assessing truth. In the case of the Qur'an, the criteria for assessing its revelatory nature lead to a correspondence-based account, while abundant and coherent historical evidence—such as that found in the example of the historical background of the designation "Rāfiḍī"—results in the affirmation of the truth of the proposition. The latter example likewise indicates a form of correspondence with external reality, even though it does not arise from a single proposition. Thus, it is not misleading to claim that the criterion consists in the realization and existence of some form of correspondence between a proposition (or set of propositions) and external reality, such that its truth is established through common-sense certainty (that is, the certainty of the community of experts and the justification of propositions through appropriate evaluative tools).

of *justification*. This refers to the relationship between the researcher and external reality. Acceptance of and commitment to one or more propositions is contingent upon providing an appropriate justification that establishes a connection between the believer and reality—the content of the proposition—through the use of informational sources.[1] Only then can a meaningful response be offered to questions concerning how research in the domain of Shiʿi thought is formed.

There is no doubt that numerous considerations influence the justificatory dimension of research, and their positive and negative effects on description and explanation cannot be regarded as negligible. Factors such as the scope of the researcher's knowledge, the selection and use of sources, methodological subtlety, and biases and presuppositions—along with their various subcategories—can shape the organization of historical studies in different ways across their foundational assumptions and produce divergent results. For example, reliance on Sunni sources in discussions of the Imamate yields an approach markedly different from one based on Shiʿi sources. Thus, in comparative discussions of an orientalist's methodology, such differences can be identified with considerable clarity.

Various perspectives have been proposed regarding the notion of justification. Some of these approaches focus on propositions themselves, seeking to justify them by identifying intrinsic properties. These are referred to as *internalist theories*, among which foundationalism[2] and coherentism are prominent examples. In contrast, other theories seek justification through factors external to propositions; these are known as *externalist theories* (Moser, 2006; Hosseinzadeh, 2011), among which reliabilism is a key example. What follows is a brief exposition intended to clarify the trajectories of the two approaches most commonly adopted by researchers in the field of religious thought.

7.1.Coherentism

As noted earlier, internalist theories focus on the relationships among propositions, without recourse to factors external to them. In coherentism, the researcher seeks to explain justification by demonstrating the existence of an organized, reciprocal structure among propositions. In this approach, the justification of a proposition depends on its coherence or lack thereof with other propositions. Each proposition, insofar as it is related to others, both supports and is supported by them. Accordingly, to the extent that a

1. Naturally, this stage occurs after the proper collection of data, which is one of the key stages of historical studies, as noted above.

2. According to foundationalism, propositions are divided into two types: basic and non-basic propositions. The criterion for this division is the dependence of non-basic propositions on other propositions (Shams, 2005, pp. 127–129; Hossein-Zadeh, 2011, pp. 161–168).

proposition derives justification from others, it simultaneously contributes to their justification. However, the ambiguity surrounding the concept of coherence itself and the difficulty of defining the set of propositions with which a given proposition must cohere constitute some of the most significant critiques of this approach (Shams, 2005; Moser, 2006). These issues render the process partly subjective, influencing the structure of scholarly works while simultaneously expanding the scope for critical evaluation.

7.2.Reliabilism

The presence of several shortcomings in the principal internalist theories and their variants has led to the development of externalist theories, in which the justification of beliefs is grounded in factors external to the content of the belief itself. In addition to encompassing elements of coherentism, reliabilism offers a more comprehensive and, ultimately, less problematic foundation than its competitors.[1] The most essential component of reliabilism is the requirement to rely on a trustworthy, reliability-conferring process within the historical context of the subject under investigation. Justification, on this view, is achieved through such reliable processes, with the important proviso that historical perspectives and methods are not inherently in conflict with textual sources.

Accordingly, reliability-conferring processes are generally and directly related to:

(a) epistemic subjects (such as divine unity, prophethood, and the Imamate in historical-religious studies of doctrine);
(b) modes of argumentation, including rational, transmitted, or combined methods; and
(c) sources of human knowledge, such as revelation, Ḥadith, and historical reports or testimonies.

Thus, in this approach to historical studies, what is of central importance is, on the one hand, the method employed in justification (namely, the transmitted method and, in some cases, a combined method), and on the other hand, the manner in which sources are engaged.[2] Only under these

1. Nevertheless, reliabilism, in addition to attending to factors external to the content of propositions in justification, also incorporates foundationalism within itself, insofar as some propositions may function as basic and justificatory for others. In other words, "the more systematic the method of producing a belief, the more reliable that method will be, and the resulting belief will be more justified" (Alvand, 2003, p. 87).

2. Furthermore, within this approach, the quality of assurance—whether in terms of certainty and conviction, confidence, conjecture, or the absence of doubt or illusion—is of particular importance. This issue has at times been discussed in disciplines such as legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh) and jurisprudence (fiqh). For example, see discussions on the probative value of certainty and conjecture (Khomeini, 2003, p. 84; Khomeini, 1997, p. 28). For an examination of the

conditions can reliabilism—when coupled with a phenomenological perspective that undertakes the description of Shiʿi doctrinal teachings and elucidates the functions of their concepts within an epistemic and doctrinal system—justify and explicate epistemic foundations without becoming trapped in mere historicism. Consequently, unlike the previous approach, historical coherence alone is insufficient for justification. It appears, however, that this perspective, due to its emphasis on reliability-conferring factors, also significantly reshapes the very designation of such inquiries as "historical studies."

8. Conclusion

Among the various perspectives on the justificatory component, coherentism and reliabilism emerge as two effective methodological approaches. As discussed earlier, coherentism is grounded in the coherence and mutual consistency among elements of transmitted evidence and reports. Accordingly, when several propositions align against another proposition, justification proceeds either by abandoning the opposing proposition or by reinterpreting it. In this way, the convergence of multiple historical propositions may even lead to the exclusion or reinterpretation of a Qurʾanic verse or a report attributed to an infallible authority. The foundation of this approach lies in the rational acceptability of the authority of justificatory sources—that is, expert testimony and, in this context, the totality of propositional contents (see Hosseinzadeh, 2007, pp. 294–295).

In contrast, the reliabilist perspective maintains that the two aforementioned types of credibility are fundamentally different, even though both must be rationally justified. From this viewpoint, the Qurʾan and Ḥadith—under their respective conditions of epistemic authority—occupy a far higher level of reliability. Consequently, even if an opposing view is supported by multiple other propositions, such propositions lack justificatory force, whereas the authority of the Qurʾan and authenticated Ḥadith remains intact.

Accordingly, historical studies—through at least two distinct perspectives in terms of method, components, and outcomes—constitute one of the significant domains of religious scholarship. Moreover, the approaches articulated in analytical or descriptive–analytical historical studies manifest themselves most clearly in the justificatory component and in the two elements of description and explanation. Among these approaches, coherentist and reliabilist perspectives represent the most important methodological frameworks in this type of historical inquiry.

relationship between these discussions and the position of traditional hermeneutics in historical studies, see Vaʿezi (2007, pp. 83–87).

Comparative examination of these approaches can substantially contribute to resolving ambiguities in the analysis and evaluation of emerging trends in historical studies. The trajectory followed in this type of historical research can be summarized in two main parts. The first concerns the process through which historical studies are formed, and the second pertains to the manner of engagement with the sources required in historical inquiry.

Another type of historical study—based purely on description—is typically employed in biographical writing on transmitters, the introduction of historical figures, and bibliographical descriptions. Therefore, apart from its promotional or introductory function, and due to the predominance of its descriptive character, it may be regarded as having less scholarly significance than the preceding analytical approach.

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Scientific Quarterly
Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings
Vol. 3, Issue 4, Winter 2026

The Issue of Succession and Caliphate after the Prophet (pbuh): A Qur'anic Critique of Orientalists' Perspectives with Emphasis on Moshe Sharon's Views

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(Received: February 25, 2026, Accepted: May 28, 2026)

Abstract

The issue of succession to the Prophet (pbuh) after his demise has been one of the most fundamental challenges in the Islamic world. This issue has given rise to extensive debates and arguments throughout Islamic history. Western scholars engaged in Islamic studies have often been influenced by Sunni biographical and historical sources, and consequently have put forward interpretations largely aligned with the Sunni theory of the caliphate. Within this scholarly context, Moshe Sharon, a specialist in the history of the medieval Islamic period, has undertaken a new examination of the succession to the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh). In his works, Sharon critically reviews and rejects several major theories proposed by earlier Orientalists and places particular emphasis on kinship with the Messenger of God as a key factor in succession. However, by offering a specific interpretation of the term Ahl al-Bayt (as), he advances a perspective on leadership after the Prophet (pbuh) that stands in opposition to the foundational principles of Shiʿi doctrine concerning the Imamate. This article analyzes and critically evaluates Sharon's views and seeks to answer the following two questions: 1.What are the views of Orientalist scholars who have studied the issue of the Prophet's succession, and what criticisms can be raised against them? 2.What are Moshe Sharon's views on the issue of the Prophet's succession, and what criticisms can be made of them in light of Shiʿi beliefs?

Keywords: Qur'an, Orientalists, Succession of the Prophet (pbuh), Sharon.

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Introduction

The issue of succession to the Prophet is one of the most fundamental questions in Islam, and perhaps few issues have exerted such a profound and lasting impact on the Islamic community. The fundamental importance of this issue lies in the fact that, following the Prophet's death, it became a decisive factor in shaping political and religious orientations and in generating deep divisions among Muslims. From that time until the present, the question of succession has continued to influence the Islamic world in significant ways.

The debate over the caliphate is not confined to the event of the Saqīfa or, in the Sunni perspective, to the period of the first four caliphs. Rather, it has remained a persistent and recurring theme throughout Islamic history, with successive governments seeking to legitimize their authority by appealing, in various ways, to this debate. Consequently, the issue of succession was actively pursued under later regimes, including the Umayyads and the Abbasids, each of which promoted particular slogans and narratives to assert its superiority and claim to be the rightful successor to the Prophet. In some instances, the political system itself shifted from caliphate to monarchy (*mulk*), a transformation that was notably reinforced by Muʿāwiya in the years following the arbitration (*taḥkīm*).

Efforts to clarify Islam's position on the question of succession have prompted both Muslim scholars and Western researchers interested in Islamic studies to examine Islamic sources and the history of early Islam. As a result, a wide range of theories concerning the Prophet's succession has been proposed. In this process, however, Shiʿi doctrines and perspectives have received comparatively little attention, while Sunni views have often been presented in Orientalist scholarship as the dominant or normative position. Most Western studies, relying primarily on Sunni historical and narrative sources, have reached conclusions consistent with those sources, analyzing and interpreting the caliphate largely through a Sunni framework.

Among Western scholars engaged in Islamic studies, Wilferd Madelung stands out for his critical approach to both the sources and the prevailing scholarly interpretations. His theory diverges from the dominant trend in Western scholarship and, to some extent, approximates the Shiʿi perspective, although it does not fully conform to Shiʿi doctrinal foundations.

1. Orientalists and Orientalism

The term Orientalist derives from the word Orient and originally refers to individuals engaged in the study or exploration of the East, or to those who resemble Eastern peoples or have become assimilated into Eastern

cultures. Today, however, the Persian term *mostashreqīn* (Orientalists) carries a broader semantic range than the Western term orientalist, which traditionally denotes scholars specializing in Eastern studies. In nineteenth- and twentieth-century usage, the term orientalist encompassed both cultural and scholarly dimensions. Orientalists were academic specialists in Eastern languages and cultures. They were expected to possess not merely linguistic expertise, but also profound knowledge of one or more Eastern cultures, along with extensive studies of Eastern languages and cultures—past and present—as well as other cultural dimensions such as art and archaeology (Brill Academic Publishers, 2017, p. 713).

Until the late nineteenth century, the term Orient primarily referred to the Near East, while also encompassing other parts of the Ottoman Empire and North Africa. The ancient East extended from the Near East to the geographical limits of Christianity during the era of Eastern Christianity, and subsequently, following the Islamization of these regions, took the form of the Islamic East. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the concept of the Orient expanded to include the whole of Asia, incorporating numerous cultures that were largely unfamiliar to the West and which Western scholars sought to understand. Up to the period of the Second World War, Orientalism, in its broader sense, represented a distinct cultural orientation in Europe and North America, while in its narrower sense it referred to empirical studies of the East (ibid.).

Following the 1960 Moscow Conference, the term Orientalist was increasingly challenged for various reasons. Asian cultures are considered "Eastern" only when studied from a European perspective; when scholars themselves originate from these regions, the application of the term Orientalist becomes largely metaphorical. Consequently, contemporary scholarship tends to prefer references to the humanities in Asia and North Africa rather than employing the term Orientalism. In Islamic studies, however, the term Orientalist is generally used to denote specialists in Islam and Islamic societies and cultures, and in its broader sense it encompasses the field of Islamic studies as a whole.

The meaning of this term has undergone significant transformation. In the past, it referred exclusively to non-Muslim Western scholars who conducted research on Islam. Today, however, it includes Muslim Western scholars, non-Muslim scholars outside the Western world, and Muslim scholars working in this field both within and beyond Muslim-majority countries. Whereas the West and the Muslim world were once regarded as two geographically distinct spheres, Islamic communities are now firmly established within Western societies. In the contemporary context, Orientalists in Islamic studies should therefore be understood as

encompassing all moderate and unbiased scholars who conduct research on Islam, Islamic cultures, and Islamic societies—whether Western or non-Western, Muslim or non-Muslim, and whether working in the West or elsewhere (ibid.).

Another significant transformation concerns the scope of Orientalist expertise. Unlike earlier periods, when Orientalist scholarship was largely confined to linguistics, often with a historical orientation, recent decades have witnessed the engagement of scholars from a wide range of disciplines with Islamic cultures and societies. This group includes social historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and other social scientists, as well as specialists in literature, the arts, and religious studies (ibid., p. 715).

The social function of Orientalists has also undergone notable change. In the past, Orientalists were specialists within Western societies who studied particular aspects of Islam and Islamic cultures and societies, and alongside their research and teaching, they often fulfilled additional roles. They were called upon to provide information when needed, to act as intermediaries in cross-cultural interactions, and in certain circumstances were entrusted with specific responsibilities. Society exerted pressure on them to give their expertise a social dimension, compelling them to align their work with the needs of their own institutions. To a large extent, they were specialized researchers who remained unaware of the social and political implications of their scholarly activities for either their own societies or the societies they studied, and—like many other scholars—they were largely defenseless against the potential misuse of their academic work.

2. Moshe Sharon's Viewpoint

Moshe Sharon (b. 1937) is a Jewish-born scholar, an Israeli historian, and the head of the Baha'i Studies Unit at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He holds a PhD in Islamic History from the same university and has taught Islamic history and civilization with a particular emphasis on Shiʿi Islam. His scholarly works primarily focus on the history of early Islam and the formation of Shiʿism.

Sharon maintains that Western leaders have failed to attain a proper understanding of Islam. He argues that there is no such thing as a fundamental or essential Islam and claims that wherever Islam exists, conflict and warfare are inevitable, asserting that such tendencies are inherent in the Islamic worldview. In this section, we examine his views on the issue of succession to the Prophet (pbuh).

The Book *Black Banners from the East*

The book Black Banners from the East was written in English in two volumes and published in 1983. The first volume examines the conditions preceding the establishment of the ʿAbbāsid dynasty. In this volume, the circumstances of Islamic society after the uprising of al-Mukhtār are analyzed, along with the ideas, intellectual trends, and activities of this movement. The second volume is devoted to an examination of the revolution itself (Sharon, 1983).

In the second chapter of this work, entitled A Question of Legitimacy, Sharon seeks to articulate a number of points concerning succession after the Prophet. At the outset of his discussion, he cites a report from Ibn Qutayba, according to which al-Maʾmūn, in a debate with Imam al-Riḍā, claimed that Imam al-Ḥasan and Imam al-Ḥusayn were genealogically closer to the Prophet, and that Imam ʿAlī had deprived them of this right. According to the report, Imam al-Riḍā remained silent and did not respond. Sharon then presents this narration as one example among many quotations found in Arabic literature concerning the legitimacy of political authority. He attributes the abundance of such reports to the emergence of Shiʿism, arguing that after the establishment of Shiʿi thought, debates within Islamic literature increasingly revolved around objections and counterarguments exchanged between ruling authorities and their Shiʿi opponents (Sharon, 1983).

Sharon maintains that the problem of political legitimacy existed in Islam from its very inception. In his view, the legitimacy of the Prophet of Islam was rooted in divine power bestowed upon him, in whom the rare conjunction of authority and divine representation was realized. His followers believed in his spiritual authority, a pattern that sharply contrasted with pre-Islamic practices, in which emphasis was placed solely on personal qualities. After the establishment of the Islamic polity in Medina, the Prophet increasingly emphasized the divine origin of his authority and governance. To support this claim, Sharon refers to the Prophet's recitation of verse 101 of Sūrat Yūsuf (Qurʾān 12:101). He further argues that the Prophet consistently stressed power (*mulk*) and divine knowledge (*ḥikmah*) as two bestowed gifts that characterized the divinely appointed prophets whose succession he embodied (Sharon, 1983).

Sharon then argues that this conduct of the Prophet led to the replacement of ethnic status and wealth with precedence in Islam as the primary criterion of distinction. He maintains that the establishment of ʿUmar's dīwān, in which stipends were allocated according to one's precedence in embracing Islam, has its roots in this Prophetic practice. As

long as the Prophet was alive, there was no conflict between this system and the system based on tribal power and wealth.

The Prophet's death occurred at a critical moment, while the Islamic polity was still in its formative stage. Even if the Prophet had contemplated the issue of succession, Sharon argues, he did not articulate anything explicit regarding it. All reports concerning the Prophet's heirs, he maintains, are the products of later political struggles and reflect the positions of competing political schools and factions. Sharon asserts that each of these groups—including the Umayyads, the ʿUthmānids, the ʿAlids, Banū Hāshim, the ʿAbbāsids, the Khārijites, and others—employed the highest level of ingenuity in fabricating traditions in order to attribute statements and actions to the Prophet and thereby demonstrate that their leader or leaders had been appointed by him. The production of forged ḥadīths thus developed into a dynamic and highly sophisticated enterprise. In this process, reports were fabricated with the most impeccable chains of transmission, and no boundary remained that was considered inviolable (Sharon, 1983, p. 34). In order to legitimize such fabricated traditions, recourse was made to every conceivable and even absurd pretext, including appeals to dreams.

According to Sharon, this phenomenon is particularly evident with regard to the first four caliphs, since later Islamic problems stemmed from this issue and, because none of them had been explicitly appointed by the Prophet, traditions were fabricated to show that the Prophet had designated them as his successors. He then provides examples offered by the supporters of each faction (Sharon, 1983, p. 35). Referring to the statement of Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Sharon further argues that, given the immense respect accorded to the Prophet during his lifetime and after his death, as well as his divinely bestowed authority and power, it is inconceivable to assume that he had left an explicit testament that anyone would have dared to oppose (Sharon, 1983).

He continues by stating that the question of leadership was ultimately resolved by force; however, because this question was of vital importance in Islam, even coercion and compulsion required an ideological foundation. At this point, Sharon endorses Ignaz Goldziher's theory in Muslim Studies, which explains how the mechanism of employing ḥadīth was used by the contending parties to construct a form of religious legitimacy (Sharon, 1983).

Immediately after the Prophet's death, the swift action taken by Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and Abū ʿUbayda rendered the Medinan Anṣār's demand for a share in leadership ineffective. Sharon emphasizes that this action was of great historical significance, as it transformed the political nature of Islam.

The Meccan Muhājirūn seized power, and as a result, the international commercial outlook of Mecca came to exert a decisive influence on Islam. The people of Medina, by contrast, could have reduced Islam to a local, desert-centered religion. The notion of Qurayshite superiority became institutionalized following its consolidation in the early caliphate.

Sharon traces the rationale for Qurayshite superiority to Abū Bakr's statement at the Saqīfa, in which he described the Muhājirūn as the earliest converts to Islam, portrayed Quraysh as possessing the noblest ancestors, and identified them as the people most closely related to the Prophet (Sharon, 1983). He argues that this statement goes far beyond a mere claim of Qurayshite superiority and represents one of the earliest reports laying the foundation for political legitimacy as it later became institutionalized under the Umayyads. This discourse emphasizes notions of nobility, leadership, and the pre-Islamic mentality of Qurayshite superiority over other tribes. All of these elements—superiority, precedence in Islam, and kinship with the Prophet—constitute the central axes of debates over political legitimacy. Sharon contends that the Shiʿa personalized this early mode of reasoning and employed precedence in Islam, and more importantly kinship with the Prophet, to substantiate the exclusive right of the Commander of the Faithful (*Amīr al-Muʾminīn*) to leadership (Sharon, 1983, p. 38).

Sharon writes that the reality of the matter is that the Imam himself also came to power by relying on this very principle of precedence in Islam. His kinship with the Prophet through his father, Sharon argues, was of little significance, since he was not the only relative of the Prophet; moreover, his marriage to the Prophet's daughter was not particularly important either, given that ʿUthmān had married two of the Prophet's daughters. In addition to this, Imam ʿAlī lacked the social standing enjoyed by Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and even ʿUthmān, because their Islamic stature had never been challenged (Sharon, 1983).

Sharon further claims that it is difficult to imagine that anyone would have regarded Imam ʿAlī as a candidate for leadership immediately after the Prophet's death, and that even after he attained the caliphate there were Companions, such as Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr, whose political weight was considered comparable to his. He was not chosen through a shūrā, nor did he enjoy the consensus of the community. Thus, in Sharon's view, the Imam became the cause of a rupture in the unity of the Muslim community. From this perspective, the Imam represented a faction that harbored an inclination toward division: the Anṣār sought to attain political power through him, while the people of Kūfa regarded the Imam as an

oppositional alternative to the concentrated supremacy of the people of Syria (Sharon, 1983, p. 41).

The victory of Muʿāwiya, although not achieved through open warfare, represented the triumph of pre-Islamic aristocracy, the victory of political centralization over regional fragmentation, and the ascendancy of Syria. Sharon maintains that the Umayyads introduced an innovation into Islam that has persisted to the present day. Unlike the legitimacy of the early caliphs, Umayyad rule was founded upon military power.

According to Sharon, the disputes during Imam ʿAlī's lifetime over the legitimacy of his rule stemmed from a single question: whether or not he possessed the consent and consensus of the people. No one, Sharon argues, was able—or attempted—to introduce another principle into this equation. Although the Shiʿa later found it necessary to develop more persuasive arguments against their opponents, when they were unable to rely on the concepts of consent (*riḍā*) and communal consensus (*jamāʿah*), they introduced the principle of kinship into their reasoning and emphasized the Imam's closeness to the Prophet. After this argument was rejected, they resorted to the notion of a testament (*waṣiyyah*), according to which the Prophet had appointed ʿAlī through explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) (Sharon, 1983, p. 41).

Appointment by explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) constituted the final stage in the evolution of Shiʿi argumentation. Thousands of traditions were fabricated to support this claim, each competing with the others in excess and exaggeration. Naturally, the introduction of these traditions into the debate nullifies the legitimacy of all caliphs other than ʿAlī. The narrative of the Imamate, Sharon continues, begins with Adam and proceeds through divinely chosen individuals until it reaches the Prophet, after which it is transferred to ʿAlī and his progeny.

The Ahl al-Bayt (as)

In Shiʿi literature, as in Sunni usage, the term Ahl al-Bayt (as) is generally understood to mean the family of the Prophet. At times, this term is accompanied by qualifiers such as Āl Moḥammad or Āl al-Nabī. There has been considerable اختلاف of opinion regarding which individuals encompassed by this broad designation are truly entitled to be counted among the Ahl al-Bayt. Although the term itself carries a strong connotation of reverence, it was not this honorific dimension that rendered it controversial once it entered common usage. Rather, the controversy arose from the fact that Ahl al-Bayt (as) became a central element in the struggle for power in Islam and a crucial instrument in the construction of political legitimacy.

During the Umayyad period, the ʿAlids and their supporters—who were later identified as the Shiʿa—used this term exclusively for the family of ʿAlī. In a more general sense, Shiʿi literature sometimes extended the term to include the descendants of Abū Ṭālib as a whole. Among Twelver Shiʿites, however, Ahl al-Bayt is specifically applied to ʿAlī, Fāṭima, and their progeny. The ʿAbbāsids rose in opposition to this interpretation, as restricting the term to these figures directly challenged the legitimacy of their rule. If, as was claimed during the reign of al-Mahdī, the ʿAbbāsids grounded their legitimacy in descent from Abū Hāshim, the grandson of Imam ʿAlī, this claim was undermined by the fact that they were not descendants of Fāṭima. If, alternatively, they identified themselves as descendants of al-ʿAbbās, the paternal uncle of the Prophet, the Shiʿi response was that al-ʿAbbās does not fall within the Shiʿi conception of Ahl al-Bayt.

In Sunni literature, no single precise definition of Ahl al-Bayt (as) exists. Despite prolonged efforts by the ʿAbbāsids, Sunni discourse never accepted the ʿAbbāsid interpretation of Ahl al-Bayt (as) as the sole or even the primary understanding of the term. The concept of Ahl al-Bayt (as) , which later became a focal point in many of the most bitter conflicts in Islamic history, underwent significant stages of transformation and development. The purpose of this article is to examine the evolution of this term from its pre-Islamic roots as reflected in the Qurʾan to its later doctrinal and political meanings (Sharon, Moshe, "Ahl al-Bayt – People of the House," Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 8 [1986]).

Sharon proceeds to examine the Qurʾanic usages of the term and their exegetical interpretations. He argues that the primary source for interpreting Ahl al-Bayt as the family of the Prophet is the Qurʾan itself. The term appears twice in the definite form in Sūrat Hūd and Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, and once in the indefinite form in Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ. Most Muslims and Qurʾanic exegetes have understood the first two instances to refer, respectively, to the family of Abraham and the family of the Prophet:

"Do you wonder at the decree of God? The mercy of God and His blessings be upon you, O People of the House. Indeed, He is Praiseworthy, Glorious." (Qurʾan 11:73)

"Remain in your houses and do not display yourselves as in the former days of ignorance; establish prayer, give alms, and obey God and His Messenger. God only desires to remove impurity from you, O People of the House, and to purify you completely." (Qurʾan 33:33)

The Verse of Purification constitutes the most significant textual foundation for both Shiʿi and ʿAbbāsid claims to Islamic leadership. The Shiʿa restrict this verse exclusively to the family of ʿAlī and exclude the

Prophet's other relatives. Sharon notes that this interpretation is supported by a non-Shiʿi report transmitted within Sunni tradition. Even Ibn Ḥaytham al-Makkī—who might be expected to present an opposing Sunni view—states that most exegetes have maintained that this verse was revealed concerning ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn. Sharon then refers to the ḥadīth al-kisāʾ. According to him, traditions that portray love and support for the Ahl al-Bayt as a religious obligation and hostility toward them as a sin belong to the same political category of ḥadīth (Moshe Sharon, "Ahl al-Bayt – People of the House,"

Once the doctrine of the "Chosen Five" (*al-khamsat al-Muntajabah*) was adopted as the principal Shiʿi interpretation of Ahl al-Bayt, there was no reason not to associate the notion of purification mentioned in the verse more explicitly with this divinely chosen family. Alongside the term Ahl al-Bayt, expressions such as *al-ʿitra al-ṭāhirah* and *al-dhurriyya al-ṭāhirah* also came into use.

When the ʿAbbāsids came to power, the basic conception of Ahl al-Bayt as referring to the ʿAlids had already gained currency, but the status of Fāṭima and, more specifically, her descendants had not yet been firmly established. In opposing the Umayyads, the supporters of the ʿAlids initially had no need to distinguish even among the broader family of Abū Ṭālib, let alone among the various descendants of ʿAlī. However, once the ʿAbbāsids assumed power, this understanding of Ahl al-Bayt worked against the ʿAlid Shiʿa, as the ʿAbbāsids grounded their leadership claims against the Umayyads in the alleged testament of Abū Hāshim, the grandson of Imam ʿAlī. Abū Hāshim's father, Moḥammad, was not a descendant of Fāṭima and had no direct lineage connection to the Prophet. At this stage, the hopes of the ʿAlid supporters became focused on the person of ʿAlī, and in their view Moḥammad possessed no less legitimacy than his two brothers.

The earliest and most organized group among the ʿAlids concentrated on the figure of Moḥammad and, after his death, pledged allegiance to his son Abū Hāshim. This group, known as the Hāshimiyya, became the point of departure for the ʿAbbāsid movement and ultimately a key source of legitimacy for their rule (ʿAlī b. Jamāl Ashraf Ḥusaynī & Sulaymān b. Ibrāhīm Qandūzī, Yanābīʿ al-Mawadda li-Dhawī al-Qurbā, vol. 1, p. 11).

The term Ahl al-Bayt was transformed in two opposing directions by both groups. While the Shiʿa moved toward the formulation of the concept of the Khamsa al-Ṭāhira (the Pure Five), the ʿAbbāsids sought to broaden the notion of the Prophet's family so as to include al-ʿAbbās as well. In order to neutralize the ʿAbbāsid claim to legitimacy, the Shiʿa attempted to present Fāṭima as the primary source of the pure progeny (*al-dhurriyya al-*

ṭayyibah) and to invalidate the claim of anyone who asserted descent from ʿAlī through Moḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya.

The ʿAbbāsid response was to emphasize that a woman—regardless of how sacred or noble she may be—cannot serve as a reference point for designation and succession, and that in the absence of the father, the paternal uncle occupies a position equivalent to that of the father. On this basis, al-ʿAbbās, the Prophet's uncle, was presented as the most significant member of the Prophet's family.

The expansion of the scope of Ahl al-Bayt during the ʿAbbāsid period followed an earlier trajectory. Traditions concerning the process of divine selection within the Hāshimite clan were extended so as to encompass all families of this clan, including both the house of Abū Ṭālib and the ʿAbbāsids. Nevertheless, not all interpretations of Ahl al-Bayt conform to this pattern. There also exist neutral interpretations that identify Ahl al-Bayt with the wives of the Prophet (Kamāl Basyūnī Zaghlūl & ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidībī, n.d., p. 230).

In addition, among those interpretations that attempt to reconcile the two positions, one encounters the coexistence of both ʿAbbāsid–ʿAlid and neutral tendencies. These are reflected in reports concerning Umm Salama's question as to whether she was included among the Ahl al-Bayt, to which the Prophet is reported in some versions to have replied affirmatively and in others negatively. There are also interpretations that define Ahl al-Bayt in such a way as to include both the Prophet's family and his wives.

The need for an explicitly ʿAbbāsid interpretation of Ahl al-Bayt became urgent during the reign of the second ʿAbbāsid caliph, Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr. The resentment of the ʿAlids toward the rise of the ʿAbbāsids manifested itself in the uprising of the Ḥasanid branch of the ʿAlid family in Medina. This revolt, led by Moḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan, a descendant of Imam al-Ḥasan, ended bitterly for the Ḥasanids but ignited an intense debate over the legitimacy of ʿAbbāsid rule.

The ʿAbbāsid claim to descent from Abū Hāshim, the son of Moḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, was strongly rejected in a letter addressed to al-Manṣūr, on the grounds that only the Fāṭimid descendants could be regarded as the Prophet's true kin. In response, al-Manṣūr argued that ʿAbbāsid legitimacy had nothing to do with belonging to the family of ʿAlī, but rather derived from their direct descent from al-ʿAbbās, the Prophet's paternal uncle, who was considered equivalent in rank to the Prophet's father. From the time of al-Mahdī, the son of al-Manṣūr, the notion that al-ʿAbbās constituted the source of ʿAbbāsid legitimacy became the core focus of their propaganda.

Sharon maintains that on the basis of this new theory, a body of traditions was set in motion that sought, on the one hand, to portray al-ʿAbbās as the sole individual qualified to be the Prophet's legatee, and, on the other hand, to establish that Ahl al-Bayt referred to no one other than al-ʿAbbās and his descendants. In some of these fabrications, the ʿAbbāsids merely altered names within earlier traditions; for example, the ḥadīth al-kisāʾ was reworked so as to apply to al-ʿAbbās and his sons. Poets such as Bashshār b. Burd also contributed to this process.

Sharon then turns to an examination of the original meaning of Ahl al-Bayt. In his view, all of these political interpretations of the term arose because its primary meaning was either deliberately or inadvertently forgotten. According to him, had the term simply meant "family" or "the people of a household," such a wide variety of interpretations would not have been possible. He therefore argues that a distinction must be made between the general and the specific uses of the term.

From a linguistic perspective, Sharon maintains that Ahl al-Bayt originally referred to the "people of the House," that is, those who worship at the Kaʿba, and that in all instances where al-Bayt is mentioned, it denotes the sacred sanctuary of the Kaʿba. Citing Rudi Paret, he states that Ahl al-Bayt in Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt, insofar as it occurs within a discussion of purification from impurity, alludes to the cleansing of the Kaʿba from defilement by Abraham and Ishmael. It can therefore be stated with confidence that in this context the referent is the worshippers of the House, namely the Kaʿba. On this basis, Sharon suggests that prior to its Islamization by the Prophet, Ahl al-Bayt referred to the Quraysh tribe. He concludes by observing that if this interpretation is accepted, one is then confronted with the problem of explaining how Islamic exegesis arrived at its later metaphorical understanding of the term.

The initial response to this question is to be found in the Qur'an itself, for exegetes did not differentiate between the definite and indefinite usages of the term and understood it in its primary and original sense. However, once the term was connected to the Prophet, its original meaning was gradually forgotten and obscured.

In Arabic literary usage, the term Ahl al-Bayt or ahl al-bayt is employed to denote the noble and distinguished families of a tribe or a society, whether Arab or non-Arab. In this sense, the term predates Islam, yet it has been used extensively in the writings of Arab authors. At times, in order to emphasize nobility, the word sharaf (honor) is also appended to it. The use of Ahl al-Bayt as a marker of honor and distinction is therefore not confined to the Arabic language or culture alone.

After the advent of Islam, the family members of the caliphs were also referred to as Ahl al-Bayt. It might be assumed that once the institution of the caliphate was established, the pre-Islamic practice of designating noble tribal families as Ahl al-Bayt (as) became restricted to the families of the caliphs. However, since the caliphate of Imam ʿAlī was contentious, the designation of his family as Ahl al-Bayt was not universally accepted by the entire community. When the Umayyads challenged the legitimacy of ʿAlī's rule, the Shiʿa and his Iraqi supporters confined this designation exclusively to ʿAlī and his household. It was at this point that the term began to diverge from its original meaning.

Once Ahl al-Bayt became explicitly associated with the Prophet, the path was opened for Qurʾanic exegetes—who had emerged within Shiʿi circles—to attribute its origin directly to the words of God. According to Sharon, around the year 100 A.H., this term was employed extensively in all major fabricated traditions in order to establish the exclusive right of ʿAlī to succeed the Prophet. Among these traditions were the ḥadīth al-kisāʾ and the tradition of Ghadīr Khumm. Indeed, the interpretation of Ahl al-Bayt as referring specifically to the family of the ʿAlids had already become firmly embedded in the public consciousness, or at least in the minds of the people of Iraq.

The Umayyad Perspective on *Ahl al-Bayt (as)*

At this point, Sharon once again refers to the modifications introduced by both the ʿAbbāsids and the ʿAlids to the concept of Ahl al-Bayt, each in accordance with their own political needs. The ʿAbbāsids sought to expand the notion of Ahl al-Bayt to such an extent that it would reach Hāshim, thereby encompassing both the house of ʿAlī and that of Abū Ṭālib. Under such a formulation, once the ʿAbbāsids attained power, both lineages would fall under ʿAbbāsid leadership (Moshe Sharon, "Umayyads as Ahl al-Bayt," Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Hebrew University, The Max Schloessinger Memorial Foundation).

From Sharon's perspective, the Qur'an itself is neutral, and it is the traditions that endow Qur'anic verses with specific meanings by situating them within particular historical backgrounds, temporal frameworks, geographical settings, and human activities. Consequently, traditions and historical narratives are susceptible to fabrication in order to support the beliefs of various groups. In this article, Sharon examines the process of historical construction. The phenomenon of ḥadīth fabrication has drawn the attention of Orientalist scholarship; Goldziher undertook its systematic study and substantiation, and after him many scholars accepted his conclusions (ibid., p. 117).

As an example of historical distortion, Sharon refers to a report attributed to the people of Syria, who, when asked why they chose the Umayyads over the Banū Hāshim, replied that they had never previously heard that the Messenger of God had a family. Sharon remarks that although we cannot be certain of the authenticity of this report, it is nonetheless evident that when the ʿAbbāsids came to power, there existed traditions portraying the Umayyads as relatives of the Prophet—traditions that the ʿAbbāsids felt compelled to eliminate. According to Sharon, there is little doubt that such reports were fabricated in the struggle over political legitimacy (Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, Kitāb al-Futūḥ [Hyderabad, 1975]).

In Sharon's view, various groups of believers—including the Shiʿa, the Umayyads, and the Hijazis—developed independently, and what connected them was their shared belief in the unique revelation of the Prophet (Sharon, "Umayyads as Ahl al-Bayt," p. 121). This revelation had not yet assumed its final form until the early and mid–seventh century. Each of these communities of believers preserved the essential components of this revelation, which originated in Arabia, primarily through oral transmission. Later, supplementary elements were added to this revelation, all of which were attributed to the Prophet. Reports concerning the compilation of the Qur'an during the caliphate of ʿUthmān, the production of a single codex, and the intense debates over the Qur'an's content and vocabulary bear witness to this diverse local development of the Qur'an among different communities of believers.

Sharon further argues that our understanding of the emergence and development of Shiʿism must also be revised. The traditional and widely accepted view that traces the birth of Shiʿism to the conflict between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya over leadership of the entire Muslim community merely reflects later historical developments. Shiʿism does not represent a rupture within an otherwise cohesive Islamic polity, because no such politically and theologically unified body existed in the seventh century. Rather, Shiʿism represents a community of believers in Iraq who had their own Commander of the Faithful and developed their own version of the Qur'an and traditions. These were heavily influenced by Judaism, absorbing a significant number of Jewish legal concepts as well as Talmudic narratives concerning biblical figures and events.

These Iraqi—or more specifically, Kufan—believers were influenced by the narrative of the chosen family of David and their exclusive rule over society. The fact that Imam ʿAlī was a relative of the Prophet was elevated into a central element of his leadership. The only difficulty was that the Prophet had no male offspring, and this widely accepted fact rendered the identification and definition of the Prophet's family a fluid and unsettled

matter. According to Sharon, the Shiʿa encountered no serious difficulty in this regard until the seventh century. They incorporated this issue into their own version of the Qur'an, and their accusation against the Umayyads—that they had altered the Qur'an and removed verses concerning ʿAlī and his descendants—should not be dismissed merely as an anti-Shiʿi polemical claim.

Since the Prophet had no son, it became necessary to determine which Qurayshite clan constituted his immediate family. This, in turn, required an examination of Meccan pre-Islamic history. The verse concerning the nearest kin (*al-aqrabīn*) thus assumed particular importance. During the Umayyad period, the superiority of Quraysh over other tribes was actively promoted. Once this superiority was accepted without restriction or opposition, it logically followed that Arab leaders were also the leaders of the Muslims. Sharon maintains that the report claiming that the Prophet summoned the clan of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib as his nearest kin for warning was most likely fabricated during the reign of al-Mahdī in order to reconstruct early Islamic history in accordance with ʿAbbāsid propagandistic needs. The ʿAbbāsids likewise presented the family of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib as the Ahl al-Bayt within Quraysh. This maneuver confined the ʿAlids within specific limits while excluding the descendants of Banū ʿAbd Shams and the Umayyads, yet at the same time it curtailed the ʿAlids' exclusive claim to being the sole Ahl al-Bayt.

In the Syrian version of the concept of Ahl al-Bayt, ʿAbd Manāf was regarded as the central genealogical nexus, a formulation that consequently encompassed all three groups—the ʿAlids, the ʿAbbāsids, and the Umayyads. However, since this narrative, which recognized the house of ʿAbd Manāf as a politically and socially acknowledged group, existed prior to the emergence of the ʿAbbāsids on the historical stage, it cannot be considered a product of the Umayyad–ʿAbbāsid conflict (ibid., p. 139).

According to Sharon, the claim that the framework of ʿAbd Manāf in the pre-Islamic period functioned as the framework of Quraysh is difficult to challenge, especially in light of the existence of a tradition that promotes the Hashimite theory, which he traces back to the reign of al-Mahdī. He then refers to traditions that identify ʿAbd Manāf as the relatives of the Prophet (ibid., p. 143). Within this context, there also exist composite traditions that merge ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and ʿAbd Manāf into a single genealogical unit.

The ʿAbbāsids, more than the ʿAlids, felt an urgent need to invalidate the Umayyads' claim to being Ahl al-Bayt. Once they came to power, they undertook extensive efforts to rewrite Islamic history in order to legitimize their own rule. In this process, they reconstructed the image of al-ʿAbbās

and assigned him a key role alongside the Prophet in the formation of Islam. At the same time, their historians produced historical narratives and traditions aimed at delegitimizing the Banū Umayya. In order to negate the superior status of ʿAbd Shams as the leader of ʿAbd Manāf and to replace him with Hāshim, the well-known story of the munāfara (contest of rivalry) between Hāshim and ʿAbd Shams was fabricated (ibid., p. 145). According to this narrative, ʿAbd Shams envied Hāshim and challenged him to a contest; he was defeated and consequently exiled to Syria, marking the beginning of enmity between the two. This account stands in direct contradiction to traditions that portray ʿAbd Shams as the leader of ʿAbd Manāf (ibid., p. 146).

Sharon ultimately concludes that the elevated status of the Umayyads in Syria and the Hijaz as Ahl al-Bayt, following the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik and his efforts to unify the Islamic empire and to consolidate Islam as an independent ideological system, gradually spread throughout the empire. The attempts of ʿAbd al-Malik and his successors to provide Islam with a solid background and historical depth led to the production of a systematic genealogy of Quraysh, in which ʿAbd Manāf was presented as the ruling clan and the Umayyads as the principal family, or Ahl al-Bayt. In this genealogy, ʿAbd Manāf was also identified as the Prophet's nearest kin (*al-ʿashīra al-aqrabīn*). Through this process, the Banū Umayya portrayed themselves as both the leading tribe and the family of the Prophet (pbuh).

After removing the Umayyads from power, the ʿAbbāsids were compelled to deprive them of this historical capital as well. By manipulating traditions, they restricted the Prophet's relatives to ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and Hāshim and supplemented pre-Islamic Meccan history with claims of their own ancestral superiority over the Umayyads. This undertaking required more than a generation of extensive reconfiguration of early Islamic narratives.

Critique and Review

In Sharon's article on *Ahl al-Bayt (as)*, as well as in his other works, there are several thought-provoking points that dominate his entire discourse and are clearly evident throughout. The most important of these may be summarized as follows:

1. Incorrect Attributions to Shiʿi Thought and a Negative Stance toward It.

Sharon repeatedly attributes positions to Shiʿi thought that do not accurately reflect its doctrinal foundations and adopts an overtly negative posture toward Shiʿism.

2. Insufficient Attention to the Status and Rank of Ahl al-Bayt

In this article, the author makes no use of the numerous Qurʾanic verses and mass-transmitted (mutawātir) traditions that establish the authority (*wilāya*) and superiority (*afḍaliyya*) of the infallible figures, such as the Verse of *Wilāya*, the *Ḥadīth of Ghadīr*, and the *Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn* (Moḥammadi, Muslim; Rezaei, Hasan, 2016, p. 12).

3. A Biased Approach in Examining the Term Ahl al-Bayt

In discussing the term Ahl al-Bayt, the author adopts a clearly partisan perspective. Lexicographers have defined Ahl al-Bayt as the inhabitants of a house; accordingly, a man's wife and children constitute his Ahl al-Bayt. However, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī notes that the meaning of Ahl al-Bayt (as) was expanded to include a man's tribe and relatives as well (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1427 AH, p. 29). Consequently, considering both the core meaning of Ahl and its extended usage, this term is not restricted to the members of the caliph's household alone; rather, this represents merely one of the meanings of Ahl al-Bayt, which could apply to the inhabitants of any house. Therefore, the author's conclusion regarding the meaning of this term is also incorrect (Moḥammadi, Muslim; Rezaei, Hasan, 2016, p. 14).

Moreover, as is evident, the author first presents the discussion in such a way as to suggest that belief in the Five Pure Ones (*al-Khamsa al-Ṭāhira*) as the primary Shiʿi interpretation of Ahl al-Bayt is merely a construct of Shiʿi imagination. Second, he implies that the purity (*ṭahāra*) attributed by the Shiʿa to these five figures on the basis of verse 33 of Sūrat al-Aḥzāb stems solely from the belief that they were divinely chosen. In reality, however, the selection of Ahl al-Bayt as divinely appointed leaders of the people, as well as their infallibility (*ʿiṣma*) from error and sin both before and after the imamate, is grounded in firm rational and revelatory evidence derived from the Qurʾan and the Prophetic Sunnah (Qurʾan 2:124; 4:59; 33:33; 5:3, 55–56; al-Seyed al-Murtaḍā, 1407 AH, vol. 2, pp. 44–48; al-Ṭūsī, 1406 AH, pp. 313–314).

Elsewhere, the author places the Shiʿa and the ʿAbbāsids in opposition to one another, as if each group merely sought to assert legitimacy on the basis of its own subjective beliefs: the Shiʿa allegedly attempting to direct people's beliefs toward the Five Pure Ones, and the ʿAbbāsids seeking to expand the scope of the Prophet's family. In this portrayal, no divine origin is acknowledged in the selection of the pure and chosen family. Such a presentation is contrary to historical reality and appears to stem from the author's biased approach to the subject. Furthermore, this Shiʿi theory can also be substantiated through Sunni sources (see: al-Āmidī, 2012, vol. 3, p. 173; al-Ṭaḥāwī, n.d., vol. 1, p. 332).

4. Excessive Repetition of a Single Meaning of Ahl al-Bayt (as) under the Heading of the Quraysh Tribe as Its Referent

The author repeatedly emphasizes the identification of Ahl al-Bayt with the tribe of Quraysh (Moḥammadi, Muslim; Rezaei, Hasan, 2016, p. 14). He proposes numerous referents for the term Ahl al-Bayt, including the Quraysh tribe. In response, it should be noted that such reports—and others of a similar nature—pertain to a specific historical context in which the Quraysh were asked, during the pilgrimage season, to assist in hosting and feeding the pilgrims. Because the Quraysh lived in proximity to the House of God, people addressed them as follows: "O assembly of Quraysh, you are the neighbors of God, the people of His House, and the people of the Sanctuary" (al-Azraqī, 1416 AH, vol. 1, p. 195).

Thus, the application of the term Ahl to the tribe of Quraysh arises from the fact that they constituted one instance of the customary usage whereby the inhabitants of a city or region are referred to as its people. Such usage has existed in linguistic cultures from the past to the present; for example, a person born and residing in Najaf is described as ahl Najaf. In general, when a term has multiple meanings, it is not permissible—absent a contextual indicator (*qarīna*)—to assign one specific meaning as its sole referent. In verse 33 of Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, there is no contextual indicator that would justify interpreting Ahl al-Bayt as the inhabitants of Mecca, namely the tribe of Quraysh. On the contrary, there exist strong contextual and textual indicators that the intended referent of Ahl al-Bayt is the Five People of the Cloak (Ahl al-Kisāʾ) (al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, 1414 AH, p. 30).

The traditions concerning the occasion of revelation (*shaʾn al-nuzūl*) of this verse, as well as several other similar verses, further support this interpretation. Salama reports that when this verse was revealed to the Prophet, he summoned ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn and declared: "These are my Ahl al-Bayt." This narration appears not only in Shiʿi sources but is also transmitted in Sunni sources in a mutawātir form (al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, n.d., vol. 3, p. 158). Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal likewise reports that when the verse of mubāhala was revealed, the Prophet summoned ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn and then said: "O God, these are my Ahl al-Bayt (as)" (Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, 1416 AH, vol. 1, p. 185).

5.The author of this article relies exclusively on Sunni sources, a point that must be regarded as one of its major shortcomings. Such an approach reflects a lack of due attention to the important Shiʿi ḥadīth sources in the interpretation of a Qurʾanic verse revealed concerning the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet, and indicates a failure to employ the full range of available sources relevant to this discussion. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that authentic Shiʿi sources and teachings, in a manner befitting the stature and requirements of Shiʿism, have not been adequately published or made accessible to scholars worldwide, and that the valuable

works produced in the international arena after the Islamic Revolution of Iran have not been sufficient. It is noteworthy that the author, after denying the Ḥadīth al-Kisāʾ, characterizes that narration as bearing a "political message." What, precisely, is meant by the "political" nature of a narration? If politics is understood as the rightful sovereignty of the *Walī* of God on the basis of divine selection, aimed at establishing justice, implementing divine commands articulated in the Qurʾanic sūras, and combating oppression, then this characterization is entirely correct, for numerous Qurʾanic verses address political matters, including those related to the implementation of legal punishments (*ḥudūd*), *jihād,* and the enjoining of good and forbidding of evil. However, if by politics one means the use of opportunistic tactics such as deception and falsehood in order to attain power and wealth within society, such a meaning has no place in the words or conduct of the infallible figures, for they are immune from error and sin, and worldly desires have no presence in them (Moḥammadi, Muslim; Rezaei, Hasan, 2016, p. 17).

Within the logic of Islam, politics in this latter sense has never existed; rather, governance and political authority have always constituted one of the pillars of the Sharīʿa for the realization of justice and the struggle against injustice. Although this ideal has not yet been fully actualized in practice, according to divine promise its complete realization will occur through the advent of Imam al-Mahdī (ibid., p. 18). In this regard, the Commander of the Faithful states in Nahj al-Balāgha:

"By God, who split the grain and created living beings, were it not for the presence of the multitude of those who pledged allegiance, and were it not that the supporters had completed the proof against me, and had God not taken a covenant from the scholars that they should not remain silent in the face of the gluttony of the oppressors and the hunger of the oppressed, I would have cast the reins of the caliphate upon its back and let it go" (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 3).

Final Remarks

Between 1900 and 1960, nearly 60,000 books on the East were written by Western scholars, a figure that has increased significantly up to the present day. The fact that Islamic countries are often seen struggling with issues that they are not easily able to resolve reflects the West's deep familiarity with Eastern societies. The Western approach to the study of Islam—even if its proponents are regarded as scholars who adhere to impartial scientific methods—suffers from numerous shortcomings. Even when these scholars attempt to be fair, they are unable to fully and adequately evaluate historical and *ḥadīth* sources.

One of the fundamental problems in Orientalist studies is the cultural distance of most Orientalists and their remoteness from the internal religious concerns of Muslim societies. When an individual from a different cultural background seeks to speak about Islam, this inevitably imposes certain limitations upon their understanding. Moreover, it is difficult to find anyone who is entirely free from attachment to a particular religion, belief system, ritual tradition, or ideology. When a person who is culturally affiliated and emotionally invested—even if striving for scientific objectivity—undertakes to write about or critique another culture or religion, they cannot reasonably claim complete neutrality.

This issue becomes even more complex when Orientalism serves as a means for advancing colonial objectives, or when an unfair scholar engages in criticism of a belief system or doctrine. In the former case, Orientalism becomes a tool for expanding influence and power within another country or culture. In the latter case, one may point to Orientalists such as Henri Lammens, Leone Caetani, and Moshe Sharon, whose works—some portions of which have been discussed in this article in accordance with its subject—reflect anti-Shiʿi and, in some instances, anti-Islamic positions, and demonstrate a marked distance from impartiality in many respects. The writings of these scholars have largely been produced on the basis of Sunni sources. An examination of Sharon's article on Ahl al-Bayt (as) and his other writings indicates that he makes extensive use of Qurʾanic verses, and his research reflects considerable investigation of Islamic sources. Nevertheless, the presence of non-negligible errors suggests that he either lacked access to, or sufficient mastery of, all authoritative Islamic sources related to Ahl al-Bayt (as), particularly Shiʿi sources. Due to his one-sided reliance on Sunni sources and his failure to engage with Shiʿi materials, Sharon has neglected the views of Shiʿi scholars concerning Ahl al-Bayt, a shortcoming that diminishes the scholarly credibility of his work. The neglect of Shiʿi sources constitutes a major problem not only in Sharon's research but also in the studies of many Orientalists. That said, there are scholars—such as Wilferd Madelung—who have had access to Shiʿi sources and have critically examined the views of figures like Sharon. Insufficient attention to the status and rank of the infallible Imams, combined with an overt preference for Sunni doctrines and theories, ultimately prevents the realization of a balanced, realistic, and methodologically sound analysis in the writings of scholars such as Sharon.

Conclusion

The present study, focusing on Moshe Sharon's views on the issue of succession and caliphate after the Prophet of Islam (pbuh), sought to examine the Western Orientalist approach to this subject with particular

emphasis on Qurʾanic and historical critique. The findings of this research indicate that despite the vast volume of Orientalist works produced during the twentieth century and thereafter, the dominant approach among many Orientalists—including Sharon—is accompanied by significant methodological and substantive shortcomings.

First, the cultural estrangement and linguistic–identity distance of Orientalists from the Islamic world have hindered a deep and comprehensive understanding of religious and historical concepts. Even if one assumes the personal fairness of a researcher, this cultural distance inevitably and often unconsciously affects the selection of sources, the interpretation of narrations, and the reading of Qurʾanic verses. In the case of Sharon, although he conducted extensive research in Islamic sources (predominantly Sunni) and made frequent use of Qurʾanic verses, his neglect of Shiʿi sources and disregard for the views of Imami scholars rendered his analysis one-sided and incomplete.

Second, ideological affiliations and political–colonial orientations have undermined scientific impartiality in many Orientalists works. Clear examples such as Henri Lammens, Leone Caetani, and Sharon himself demonstrate that Orientalism has at times been transformed into a tool for advancing non-academic objectives, with anti-Shiʿi or even anti-Islamic positions presented under the guise of scholarly research. Such orientations not only diminish the academic credibility of these works but also convey a distorted and incomplete image of Islamic history to Western audiences.

Third, unequal access to sources and a tendency to rely on official narratives (primarily Sunni) have led to the neglect of alternative viewpoints and differing readings—such as those found in Shiʿi sources. In his article on Ahl al-Bayt and other writings, Sharon, despite claiming a comprehensive examination, consulted only a portion of the available sources and failed to address the status of the infallible Imams and the theories of Shiʿi scholars. This deficiency prevented his analysis from achieving a realistic and balanced portrayal. By contrast, more balanced approaches, such as that adopted by Wilferd Madelung, demonstrate that by consulting sources from both traditions and adhering to methodological impartiality, it is possible to arrive at a more scientific and equitable analysis. Accordingly, the present critique of Sharon's views does not entail a wholesale rejection of Orientalist scholarship; rather, it emphasizes the necessity of:

Observing methodological impartiality and avoiding ideological bias;

Utilizing all primary sources (both Sunni and Shiʿi) and subjecting them to rigorous source-critical analysis;

Attending to the cultural–historical context of Islam and avoiding the imposition of Western frameworks upon religious concepts; and

Finally, engaging critically and constructively with the Islamic intellectual heritage instead of reducing it to a political or propagandistic instrument.

In conclusion, the issue of succession and caliphate after the Prophet (pbuh) is not merely a historical–theological disagreement, but also a test case for the methodology of Orientalist scholarship. The examination of Moshe Sharon's views and their Qurʾanic–historical critique demonstrates that achieving a scientific and fair analysis requires overcoming the cultural, ideological, and methodological limitations that continue to cast a shadow over much of the Orientalist literature. It is hoped that the present study represents, albeit modestly, a step toward correcting this approach and offering a more balanced reading of Islamic history.

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Scientific Quarterly
Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings
Vol. 3, Issue 4, Winter 2026

Raj'at in the Qur'an and Traditions: Evidence, Rational Arguments, and Critical Analysis

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(Received: May 23, 2026, Accepted: May 31, 2026)

Abstract

Raj'at (return) constitutes one of the fundamental beliefs unanimously held by Imamiyyah scholars, referring to the return of a group of pure believers and pure disbelievers to this world on the eve of the appearance of Imam Mahdi (as). This belief has its roots in previous religions, and the Holy Qur'an reports numerous instances of the resurrection of the dead in this world. Despite solid Qur'anic and narrative evidence, some Islamic sects have denied it and raised doubts such as its similarity to reincarnation (*tanāsukh*), its contradiction with the verses negating return, and the weakness of narrative chains of transmission. Using a descriptive-analytical method and library sources, this article, while explaining the concept of *Raj'at*, examines and analyzes the Qur'anic and narrative evidence for it and responds to the doubts raised by opponents. The research findings show that at least six groups of Qur'anic verses indicate the occurrence of *Raj'at* in past nations, and verses such as «يوم نحشر من كل امة فوجاً» (The Day We will gather from every nation a crowd) explicitly refer to *Raj'at* in the end times. Furthermore, the traditions on *Raj'at* have reached the level of moral *tawātur* (successive transmission), and Shi'a scholars have emphasized the necessity of believing in it. A critical examination of the doubts also indicates that *Raj'at* is different from reincarnation and does not contradict the verses negating return due to its fundamental difference.

Keywords: *Raj'at* (Return), Appearance, Resurrection, Hereafter, Imam Mahdi (as), Reincarnation, Verses of Return.

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1. Introduction

The term *Raj'at* is derived from the Arabic root "r-j-ʿ," which conveys the concept of return. Prominent Islamic lexicographers have interpreted this term as meaning reversion and return to a previous state (Jawharī, 1407 AH, Vol. 3: 26; Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1412 AH, Vol. 1: 343). In the theological discourse of the Imamiyyah, this term has acquired a specific meaning, referring to the collective return of a group of the deceased to the material world on the eve of the appearance of Imam Mahdi (as)—a return accompanied by the same physical characteristics of their previous worldly lives (Mufīd, 1414 AH: 77; Ḥalabī, n.d.: 487; Ṭabrisī, 1993/1372 SH, Vol. 7: 367).

The belief in *Raj'at* occupies a place among the established tenets of the Shi'a school of thought and is rooted in the teachings of the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh). Shi'a scholars have claimed consensus (*ijmāʿ*) on this matter and have introduced it as one of the firm foundations of their theology (Mufīd, 1417 AH: 52; Ḥalabī, n.d.: 487). Many Imamiyyah theologians, in addition to scriptural evidence, have appealed to the consensus of the two major sects, or at least the consensus of the Imamiyyah, to prove this belief (Ṭabrisī, 1993/1372 SH, Vol. 7: 367; Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, 1422 AH: 63; Lāhījī, 1994/1373 SH, Vol. 3: 446). Some Shi'a scholars have even referred to it as one of the necessities of the school and considered its denier to be outside the framework of Imami thought (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 335).

The background of this belief can also be traced in ancient religions. In the Zoroastrian tradition, there is mention of the resurrection of the dead before the advent of "Soshiyans" and the revivification of Garshasp by him (Pūrdāvūd, 1927: 2; Dādgī, 2001/1380 SH: 42). The Old Testament also refers to some dead emerging from their graves in the final events of the world (Daniel 2:2). The four Gospels report the resurrection of Christ (AS) and his return at the end of time (Romans 9; John 4:25-26; 4:3; 2:22-23).

In contrast, Sunni scholars have generally denied *Raj'at* and have weakened narrators who believed in it in the field of rijāl (biographical evaluation). For instance, Jābir ibn Yazīd Juʿfī, one of the great Shi'a narrators who transmitted 70,000 Ḥadiths from Imam Ṣādiq (AS), was weakened by Sunni rijāl scholars solely because of his belief in *Raj'at* (Ibn Ḥajjāj Nīshābūrī, n.d., Vol. 1: 15; Mizzi, 1406 AH, Vol. 4: 468).

Despite the documented background and repeated emphases of religious leaders, opponents have always emerged who have denied *Raj'at*. Some have attributed the origin of this belief to ʿAbdullāh ibn Sabaʾ and considered it a fabrication of Jewish thought. Others have accused Shi'a of accepting reincarnation (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 406). Some deniers

have deemed the scriptural evidence for *Raj'at* lacking necessary credibility, while others have considered it incompatible with rational principles (ibid.). This critical encounter highlights the necessity of new research to provide a reasoned response to the following questions: Is *Raj'at*, from the perspective of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and reason, a possible and realizable matter? What is the evidence for its proof, and what answers do the doubts of opponents find?

Literature Review: The subject of *Raj'at* has been examined in numerous works. Among the most important writings in this field are *Al-Īqāẓ min al-Hajʿah bil-Burhān ʿalā al-Rajʿah* by Shaykh Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, the chapter on *Raj'at* in Volume 53 of *Biḥār al-Anwār* by ʿAllāmah Majlisī, as well as discussions in the commentaries *Al-Mīzān* and *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*. Nevertheless, the need for a comprehensive and systematic analysis of Qur'anic and narrative evidence, along with a critical approach to the doubts of opponents, is still felt.

Research Novelty: The present article endeavors, by employing an analytical-critical method, to provide a reasoned response to the raised doubts while offering a novel categorization of the verses and traditions on *Raj'at*, and to clearly demarcate the conceptual boundaries of *Raj'at* from similar concepts such as reincarnation.

Research Method: This research has been organized using library sources and employing a descriptive-analytical method.

2. Conceptualization of *Raj'at* and Its Background in Past Nations

To grasp the precise meaning of *Raj'at*, one must first examine its lexical and then its technical meaning. In Arabic, *Raj'at* is an infinitive noun of instance from the root "r-j-ʿ" and denotes a single act of returning. Synonymous terms such as *karrah*, *radd*, *ḥashr*, and *iyāb* are also used in the same sense. Jawharī, in *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, explains this term: *Rajʿa, yarjiʿu, rajʿan wa rujūʿan*: *ʿāda* (he returned) (Jawharī, 1407 AH, Vol. 3: 1226). This lexical meaning provides a foundation for understanding its technical usage in theological texts.

In the technical terminology of Imamiyyah theologians, *Raj'at* has acquired a specific meaning and refers to the revivification of a group of pure believers and a group of pure disbelievers and hypocrites at the time of the appearance of Imam Mahdi (as) and before the establishment of the Resurrection. Seyed Murtaḍā defines *Raj'at* as follows: "God, at the time of the appearance of Imam Mahdi (as), returns a group of Shi'a who died before him so that they may attain the reward of assisting him, and returns a group of enemies so that revenge may be taken from them" (quoted in Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 145). Shaykh Mufīd also writes: "God Almighty returns a group of the ummah of Moḥammad (pbuh) after their death and

before the Resurrection to this world" (Mufīd, 1417 AH: 77). These definitions indicate that *Raj'at* in Shi'a thought is a selective and purposeful phenomenon that gains meaning within the framework of the divine program for the end times.

One of the most significant doubts raised by opponents is the equation of *Raj'at* with reincarnation, while fundamental differences exist between the two. In reincarnation, the soul enters a new body (whether human or animal) that has no connection with the previous body. However, in *Raj'at*, the soul returns to its own previous worldly body. Reincarnation entails the rational impediment of regression from actuality to potentiality and, for this reason, has been deemed invalid by all Islamic theologians. In contrast, *Raj'at* not only has no rational impediment but is also considered among the necessities of the Imami school. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī explicitly states in this regard: "*Raj'at* has no connection with reincarnation; because *Raj'at* is the return of the soul to the first body, whereas in reincarnation, the soul, after a kind of evolution, enters another body, which is undoubtedly impossible. If that second body itself has a soul, it would necessitate two souls belonging to one body, which is the coexistence of multiplicity in unity. And if that body has no soul, it would necessitate regression from actuality to potentiality, both of which are impossible" (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 209).

Before delving into the Qur'anic and narrative evidence for *Raj'at*, referring to the background of this phenomenon in past nations can provide a good foundation for understanding the possibility of its occurrence. The Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh) stated in a famous Ḥadith: *La-yaʾtiyanna ʿalā ummatī mā atā ʿalā Banī Isrāʾīla ḥadhu al-naʿli bil-naʿli*: What happened to the Children of Israel will surely happen to my ummah, exactly and like for like (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 6). Considering the numerous occurrences of the revivification of the dead in past nations, as reported in the Holy Qur'an, one can expect such an event to occur in this ummah as well. This divine tradition provides a context for accepting the principle of *Raj'at* and demonstrates that what Shi'a believe in is not unprecedented or unique, but rather an extension of divine traditions throughout history.

3. Qur'anic Evidence for *Raj'at*

The Holy Qur'an, as the most important religious source for Muslims, contains numerous verses that can serve as evidence for the belief in *Raj'at*. These verses can be divided into two general categories: verses that refer to the revivification of the dead in this world for past nations, and verses that more directly address the issue of *Raj'at* in the end times.

3.1. Revivification of the Dead in the World: A Divine Tradition in Past Nations

In the Holy Qur'an, at least six groups of verses clearly narrate the revivification of the dead in this very earthly world, each of which can be a proof for the possibility of *Raj'at* and a confirmation of this Shi'a belief.

The Companions of the Cave (*Aṣḥāb al-Kahf*) are an astonishing example of revivification after a long death. God states in Sūrat al-Kahf: "And you would have thought them awake, while they were asleep... And similarly, We awakened them that they might question one another..." (al-Kahf 18:19) and then expresses their duration of stay: "And they remained in their cave for three hundred years and exceeded by nine" (al-Kahf 18:25). This group of faithful young men fell into a deep sleep in the cave for three hundred and nine years, and then God awakened them to be a sign of His power to revive the dead.

The story of the Prophet ʿUzayr (as) is another clear example of revivification after death. God says in verse 259 of Sūrat al-Baqarah: "Or [consider] the one who passed by a township which had fallen into ruin. He said, 'How will God bring this to life after its death?' So God caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him..." According to renowned commentators, this verse concerns the Prophet ʿUzayr (as). When he passed by a ruined village and saw the decayed corpses and bones of its inhabitants, he said in wonder, "How will God bring these dead to life?" At that moment, God took his life and revived him a hundred years later, while his food and drink had not changed, but his donkey had completely disintegrated. Then God brought the scattered bones of the donkey to life before his eyes to display His power (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1995/1374 SH, Vol. 2: 295).

The seventy thousand households who fled from the plague are another example of collective *Raj'at*. God says in verse 243 of Sūrat al-Baqarah: "Have you not considered those who left their homes in many thousands, fearing death? Then God said to them, 'Die'; then He revived them..." A tradition states: "God Almighty caused to die a people who fled their homes in fear of the plague. A long time passed until God sent a prophet named Ḥizqīl, and he prayed, and their disintegrated bodies were gathered, their souls returned to their bodies, and they returned to their previous life" (Kulaynī, 1983/1362 SH, Vol. 8: 237).

The seventy companions of Moses (as) who were struck by lightning for demanding to see God are another example of revivification after death. The Qur'an states in this regard: "And [recall] when you said, 'O Moses, we will never believe you until we see God outright'; so the thunderbolt took you while you were looking on. Then We revived you after your death that

perhaps you would be grateful" (al-Baqarah 2:55-56). Moses (as) took seventy chosen men from his people to the appointed place, but after seeing many miracles, they demanded to see God, and a thunderbolt struck them. Then, at Moses' supplication, God revived them again as a sign of His mercy and power.

The revivification of a slain person from the Children of Israel is also a noteworthy example. God says in verses 72-73 of Sūrat al-Baqarah: "And [recall] when you slew a soul and disputed over it, and God was to bring out that which you were concealing. So We said, 'Strike him with part of it.' Thus does God bring the dead to life, and He shows you His signs that you might reason." In this incident, a person was killed, and his murderer was unknown. God commanded the Children of Israel to slaughter a cow and strike the slain body with a part of it. With this act, the slain person came to life and identified his killer.

The return of the children of Prophet Ayyūb (as) is also indirectly mentioned in the Qur'an. God says: "And We granted him his family and a like [number] with them as mercy from Us and a reminder for those of understanding" (Ṣād 38:43). ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī writes in interpreting this verse: "All his family except his wife had died, and he was afflicted with the grief of all his children; afterward, God revived them all for him and granted him them and others like them" (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 17: 210). Many Sunni commentators, including Ibn Kathīr and Suyūṭī, also believe that God returned Ayyūb's property and children to him exactly and also granted him others like them (Ibn Kathīr, 1419 AH, Vol. 3: 198-199; Suyūṭī, 1404 AH, Vol. 5: 311).

3.2. More Explicit Verses on the Issue of *Raj'at*

Alongside the verses that refer to the revivification of the dead in past nations, some Qur'anic verses more directly address the issue of *Raj'at* in the end times, the most important of which is verse 83 of Sūrat al-Naml.

God says in this verse: "And [mention] the Day when We will gather from every nation a company of those who deny Our signs, and they will be driven [in rows]" (al-Naml 27:83). This verse is the most famous verse on *Raj'at* and can by itself indicate this belief because the apparent meaning of the verse indicates that this gathering is a group gathering from every nation, whereas the gathering on the Day of Resurrection includes all human beings: "And We will gather them and not leave behind any of them" (al-Kahf 18:47). Therefore, if this verse pertained to the Resurrection, it would have to speak of the gathering of all human beings, not a group from every nation.

In addition to the clear indication of the verse itself, numerous traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt (as) interpret this verse as referring to *Raj'at*. In Tafsīr

Qummī, it is reported that Imam Ṣādiq (as) was asked about this verse and said: "What do people say about the verse 'Yawma naḥshuru min kulli ummatin fawjan'? I said: They say this verse is about the Resurrection. He said: It is not as they say, but rather it is about *Raj'at*. Does God Almighty on the Resurrection gather a company from every nation and leave the rest of that nation? While He Himself has said, 'Wa ḥasharnāhum falam nughādir minhum aḥadan' (And We will gather them and not leave behind any of them)" (Qummī, 1988/1367 SH, Vol. 2: 30).

Another verse that could refer to *Raj'at* is verse 6 of Sūrat al-Isrāʾ: "Then We gave you back your turn (*al-karrah*) against them..." In the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), this verse is interpreted as referring to the return of Imam Ḥusayn (as) and his companions to take revenge on their enemies (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 75). Also, verse 51 of Sūrat Ghāfir: "Indeed, We will support Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world and on the Day when the witnesses will stand," which promises the support of messengers and believers in this world, is completely fulfilled in *Raj'at*.

3.3. Critique of the Doubt Concerning Contradiction with Verses Negating Return

The most important Qur'anic doubt raised by opponents of *Raj'at* is their appeal to verses that negate return to this world. Among these verses are: "Until, when death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord, send me back, that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind...'" (al-Muʾminūn 23:99-100) and "But if they were returned, they would return to that which they were forbidden..." (al-Anʿām 6:28). Opponents believe that these verses negate any return to this world and therefore *Raj'at* is in contradiction with them.

The answer to this doubt is that there are four fundamental differences between the technical term *Raj'at* and the wish of the disbelievers to return, which resolve the aforementioned contradiction. First, the purpose of the disbelievers in requesting return is to compensate for their evil deeds and perform righteous acts, whereas in *Raj'at*, disbelievers are not given any opportunity to act and are only returned for punishment. Second, in *Raj'at*, God is the willer and agent of this return, but the request of the disbelievers is made by themselves, without divine will. Third, the ultimate purpose of *Raj'at* is the punishment of disbelievers and the reward of believers, while the disbelievers seek to save themselves from punishment. Fourth, in *Raj'at*, the divine purpose is certainly achieved, but even if the request of the disbelievers were to be fulfilled, they would not keep their promise and would return to sin.

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī clearly states in this regard: "The verses negating return express the state of the disbelievers in the Resurrection, who wish to return, but the technical term *Raj'at* is different from that, and God returns a group of believers and disbelievers to fulfill His promises" (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 162). He also emphasizes elsewhere that *Raj'at* is a divine tradition that occurred in past nations as well, and the verses negating return pertain to the specific situation of disbelievers in the *Barzakh* and the Resurrection and do not include the technical term *Raj'at* (ibid., Vol. 15: 398). Therefore, not only is there no contradiction between these verses, but the verses referring to the revivification of the dead in the world support *Raj'at*, and the verses negating return express a different situation.

4. Narrative Evidence for *Raj'at*

4.1. Quantity and *Tawātur* of Traditions

The traditions narrated concerning *Raj'at* are so abundant that one can confidently speak of their moral tawātur (successive transmission indicating certainty). ʿAllāmah Majlisī, in Volume 53 of Biḥār al-Anwār, has dedicated over 160 verses and traditions to this subject (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53). Shaykh Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, in his valuable book *Al-Īqāẓ min al-Hajʿah bil-Burhān ʿalā al-Rajʿah*, has collected approximately 520 Ḥadiths and emphasizes at the end that he did not narrate some traditions for certain reasons (Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, 1422 AH: 33, 430). This large number of traditions, from multiple sources and with various chains of transmission, indicates the lofty position of this belief in Shi'a Ḥadith sources.

Great Shi'a scholars have explicitly stated the tawātur of these traditions. ʿAllāmah Majlisī decisively states: "If traditions like these on *Raj'at* are not *mutawātir*, then in what matter can one claim *tawātur*?" (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 123). Shaykh Ḥurr ʿĀmilī also writes: "There is no doubt that these mentioned Ḥadiths have reached the level of moral tawātur; because they cause certainty for anyone who purifies their heart from every doubt and imitation" (Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, 1422 AH: 33). This moral tawātur means that although individually these traditions might be subject to criticism regarding their chains of transmission at first glance, their abundance and shared meaning bring about certainty that the core content originates from the Infallibles (as).

4.2. Categorization of Traditions on *Raj'at*

Traditions on *Raj'at* can be divided into several general categories based on their content and orientation, each illuminating an aspect of this profound belief.

The **first category** consists of traditions that emphasize the necessity of believing in *Raj'at* and its lofty position in faith. Imam Ṣādiq (as) explicitly states: *Laysa minnā man lam yuʾmin bi-karratinā*: He who does not believe

in our return (*Raj'at*) is not of us" (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 92). This expression, repeated with slight variations in other traditions, indicates the fundamental role of this belief in Shi'a identity. In another *Ḥadith*, the same Imam enumerates the day of *Raj'at* as one of the three great divine days: "Ayyāmu Allāhi thalāthatun: *Yawmu yaqūmu al-qāʾimu, wa yawmu al-karrati, wa yawmu al-qiyāmati*: The days of God are three: the day when the Qāʾim (as) rises, the day of the Return (*al-Karrah*), and the Day of Resurrection" (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 63). The inclusion of *Raj'at* alongside the rise of the Qāʾim (as) and the Resurrection demonstrates the grandeur of this event. Shaykh Mufīd, in explaining this belief, states: *Raj'at* is specific to those among the ummah of Islam who have pure faith or pure hypocrisy (Mufīd, 1417 AH: 78).

The **second category** comprises traditions that explain the modality and timing of *Raj'at*. Imam Ṣādiq (as) says in this regard: *Inna al-rajʿata laysat bi-ʿāmmatin wa hiya khāṣṣatun, lā yarjiʿu illā man maḥaḍa al-īmāna maḥḍan aw maḥaḍa al-shirka maḥḍan* (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 126). This *Ḥadith* clearly states that *Raj'at* is not a universal phenomenon, but is specific to those who have reached the final and pure stage in faith or disbelief. This characteristic distinguishes *Raj'at* from the Resurrection, which is universal.

The **third category** includes traditions that refer to the return of Imam Ḥusayn (as) as the first to be returned. Imam Bāqir (as) says: *Awwalu man tanshaqqu al-arḍu ʿanhu wa yakhruju ilā al-dunyā al-Ḥusaynu bnu ʿAlīyyin (as)* (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 67). This tradition and similar ones indicate the special status of Seyed al-Shuhadāʾ (as) in the event of *Raj'at*. In another tradition, Zayd al-Ḥashshām narrates from Imam Ṣādiq (as) that he said: *Awwalu man yakurru fī al-rajʿati al-Ḥusaynu bnu ʿAlīyyin (as), yamkuthu fī al-arḍi ḥattā tasquṭa ḥājibāhu ʿalā ʿaynahi* (Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, 2001/1380 SH: 430). This expression that Imam Ḥusayn (as) will remain on earth so long that his eyebrows fall over his eyes is a metaphor for his long life during the era of *Raj'at*.

The **fourth category** comprises traditions that report the return of the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh) and Imam ʿAlī (as). Bukayr ibn Aʿyan says: Imam Moḥammad Bāqir (as) told me: *Inna rasūla Allāhi wa amīra al-muʾminīna sayarjiʿāni*: Indeed, the Messenger of God and the Commander of the Faithful will soon return (Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, 2001/1380 SH: 358). This return indicates the complete honor and authority that God bestows upon His saints on the eve of the appearance.

The **fifth category** consists of exegetical traditions that apply Qur'anic verses to *Raj'at*. Ibn Khālid al-Kābulī narrates from Imam Sajjād (as) in the interpretation of the verse *Inna alladhī faraḍa ʿalayka al-qurʾāna*

larādduka ilā maʿādin (al-Qaṣaṣ 28:85) that he said: "Yarjiʿu ilaykum nabiyyukum wa amīru al-muʾminīna wa al-aʾimmatu (as): Your Prophet, the Commander of the Faithful, and all the Imams will return to you" (Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, 2001/1380 SH: 332). This category of traditions demonstrates the profound connection between the Qur'an and the ʿItrah and emphasizes that many Qur'anic verses have meanings beyond what first appears, and the Imams (as) are tasked with elucidating those deep meanings.

4.3. Examination of the Authenticity of the Chains of Transmission of Traditions

Opponents of *Raj'at* have always tried to question the authenticity of the traditions by casting doubt on their chains of transmission. In response to this doubt, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, with cogent and firm reasoning, states: "The traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) concerning the principle of *Raj'at* are mutawātir to such an extent that the opponents of the issue of *Raj'at*, from the very beginning, have considered this issue as one of the certainties and distinguishing features of Shi'a, and tawātur is not invalidated by disputing and criticizing individual Ḥadiths. Moreover, a number of Qur'anic verses and traditions that have been narrated concerning *Raj'at* have complete and reliable indication" (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 161). He then points to another important point: these traditions are of the genre of apocalyptic reports and news of the unseen (*malāḥim*), many of which we have witnessed coming true in history: "These matters that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) have reported are part of the apocalyptic news and reports of the unseen related to the end times, and narrators have brought them who lived centuries ago, and their books have been preserved from the time of authorship until now. We have seen with our own eyes that some of what they predicted came to pass exactly, so naturally we must also trust the rest and have faith in the authenticity of all of them" (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 161). This reasoning of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī is significant from several aspects: first, he considers the tawātur of the traditions as certain, which opponents have also recognized from the beginning as one of the distinguishing features of Shi'a. Second, criticism of the individual chains of transmission of traditions does not contradict moral tawātur. Third, the external evidence (the fulfillment of the Imams' predictions) itself is a proof for the issuance of these traditions from the Infallibles (as). Therefore, it can be confidently stated that the traditions on *Raj'at* have sufficient authenticity and can be cited as a reliable source for proving this belief.

5. Views of Islamic Schools of Thought on *Raj'at*

5.1. The View of the Imamiyyah

Shi'a scholars are unanimously agreed on the occurrence of *Raj'at*, and many great figures have considered it among the necessities of the school.

Prominent personalities such as Shaykh Ṣadūq, Shaykh Mufīd, Seyed Murtaḍā, ʿAllāmah Majlisī, and Shaykh Ḥurr ʿĀmilī have emphasized this belief and introduced it as an inseparable part of Shi'a creed.

5.2. The View of the Ahl al-Sunnah

Sunni scholars have generally denied *Raj'at* and have weakened narrators who held this belief in the science of *rijāl*. For example, Jābir ibn Yazīd Juʿfī, a great Shi'a narrator with 70,000 Ḥadiths from Imam Ṣādiq (as), was weakened by Sunni rijāl scholars solely because of his belief in *Raj'at* (Ibn Ḥajjāj Nīshābūrī, n.d., Vol. 1: 15; Mizzi, 1406 AH, Vol. 4: 468).

5.3. Critique of the Opponents' View

Opponents of *Raj'at* have raised numerous objections, including: the lack of indication of Qur'anic verses on *Raj'at*, the weakness of the chains of transmission of traditions, inconsistency with divine wisdom, and contradiction with verses that negate return to the world. These objections have been answered as follows: the indication of the verses is proven by considering exegetical traditions and the difference between the gathering (*ḥashr*) in *Raj'at* and the Resurrection. The weakness of chains of transmission is compensated for by the moral tawātur of the traditions. The inconsistency with divine wisdom is resolved by explaining the purposes of *Raj'at* (reward for pure believers and punishment for pure disbelievers). And the contradiction with the verses negating return is answered by the distinction between *Raj'at* and the wish of disbelievers to return to the world.

6. Rational Arguments Proving the Possibility and Occurrence of *Raj'at*

6.1. Essential and Actual Possibility

Philosophical investigation shows that *Raj'at* has neither essential impossibility nor actual impossibility. "Essential impossibility" refers to cases where the mere conception of them necessitates their non-existence, such as the conjunction of two contradictories or a partner for God. It is clear that *Raj'at* is not like this, and its essence does not entail impossibility. Also, "actual impossibility" means the existence of an intellectual impediment to the realization of a phenomenon, and in *Raj'at*, there is no such impediment (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 62, 85).

6.2. The principle: "The Best Proof of the Possibility of a Thing is Its Occurrence"

In Islamic philosophy, there is a well-established principle that states: "The best proof of the possibility of a thing is its occurrence." The return of some dead to the world occurred in past nations, and the Qur'an clearly mentions them. Examples such as the revivification of the Companions of the Cave, Prophet ʿUzayr, the seventy thousand who fled the plague, the

seventy companions of Moses, the slain person of the Children of Israel, and the children of Ayyūb, all provide clear evidence for the possibility of *Raj'at*. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī states in this regard: "What happened in past nations will also happen in this nation, and one of those events is *Raj'at*" (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 158).

6.3. The principle: "The Ruling for Similar Phenomena is the Same"

Based on the philosophical principle "the ruling for similar phenomena is the same," two things that have a similar nature are equal in their rulings and predicates. Given that there is a similarity between *Raj'at* and "Resurrection" in terms of the return of the human being to renewed life and the connection of the immaterial soul with the body, the same arguments that prove the possibility of the Resurrection also prove the possibility of *Raj'at* (Ibrāhīmī Dīnānī, 2001/1380 SH: 208).

6.4. Response to the Doubt of Regression from Actuality to Potentiality

Some argue that the soul, after death, reaches the stage of incorporeality, and its return to the world would be a regression from perfection to deficiency, which is impossible (Farīd, 1976/1355 SH: 10). ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī responds: The return of the soul to the body is not a regression from perfection to deficiency; because the soul was also incorporeal before death, and its incorporeality does not contradict its attachment to the body. Death only removes the instruments of the soul's effect on matter, not its incorporeality itself. With *Raj'at*, these instruments return, and the soul can continue its activity without any diminution of its perfection (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 206).

6.5. Response to the Doubt of the Absence of a Veracious Report

Some deniers say that to prove *Raj'at*, there must be a report from God or the Prophet, but no such report has been received, and the existing reports are weak (Amīn, n.d.: 227). The answer is: first, the reports on *Raj'at* have reached the level of tawātur, and tawātur produces knowledge. Second, the Qur'an indicates the possibility and occurrence of *Raj'at* through numerous verses. Third, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī states: If a thing is not impossible, the report of a veracious informant about its occurrence is sufficient, and proving its impossibility is the responsibility of the deniers (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 70).

7. Aims and Philosophy of *Raj'at*

Numerous aims and wisdoms for *Raj'at* have been mentioned in religious sources, the most important of which are as follows:

Reward for Pure Believers: One of the most important aims of *Raj'at* is to reward pure believers who died during the Occultation or before the

appearance and could not perceive Imam Mahdi (as) and struggle in his company. They return to this world through *Raj'at* to benefit from the grace of assisting him and participating in his noble government. Imam Ṣādiq (AS) says: "Those who have pure faith return so that they may be interceded for in the government of the Qāʾim (as) and be delighted by his appearance" (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 132).

Punishment for Pure Disbelievers: Another aim of *Raj'at* is to take revenge from the pure enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Those who in the world tormented and oppressed the saints of God and have died are returned in *Raj'at* to see their worldly punishment. Imam Bāqir (as), in interpreting the verse "Then We gave you back your turn (al-karrah) against them" (al-Isrāʾ 17:6), said: "This is the return of Ḥusayn (as) and his companions and the return of their enemies so that he may take revenge from them" (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 75).

Distinction of Ranks and Separation of Truth from Falsehood: *Raj'at* is a scene for the complete separation of pure believers from hypocrites and disbelievers. On that day, the ranks of truth and falsehood will be completely separated, and everyone will be placed in their true position.

Proof of the Truth of the Resurrection and Divine Power: *Raj'at* is a sign of absolute divine power and an emphasis on the possibility of bodily resurrection. Just as it is stated in the story of ʿUzayr (as): "And that We may make you a sign for the people" (al-Baqarah 2:259), *Raj'at* is also a sign for people to believe in God's power to revive the dead.

Fulfillment of the Divine Promise to Support His Saints: God has promised in the Qur'an: "Indeed, We will support Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world..." (Ghāfir 40:51). This promise of support in this world is completely fulfilled in the era of appearance and *Raj'at*, because many prophets and saints did not see complete support during their own lifetimes. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī says in this regard: "*Raj'at* itself is one of the stages of the Day of Resurrection, although in terms of manifestation it does not reach the Day of Resurrection" (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417 AH, Vol. 2: 207).

8. Critique and Examination of Opponents' Doubts

The Doubt of *Raj'at* Being Fabricated by ʿAbdullāh ibn Sabaʾ: Some opponents have introduced *Raj'at* as a fabrication of ʿAbdullāh ibn Sabaʾ and a Jewish belief. The response is: first, the personality of ʿAbdullāh ibn Sabaʾ is disputed in historical sources, and some consider him imaginary. Second, the belief in *Raj'at* in Shi'a sources is attributed to the Prophet (pbuh) and the Imams (as) and existed before ʿAbdullāh ibn Sabaʾ. Third, the root of this belief exists in the Qur'an and

previous religions and is not exclusive to Judaism (ʿAskarī, 1415 AH: 250-300).

The Doubt of Contradiction with Divine Wisdom: Some say that if *Raj'at* is for rewarding believers, why are they not rewarded in the Resurrection? Response: *Raj'at* does not contradict otherworldly reward; rather, it is a worldly reward for specific servants, just as examples of worldly reward and punishment existed in past nations as well.

The Doubt of Contradiction with Divine Justice: Some say that if pure believers and pure disbelievers return in *Raj'at*, what about other people? Response: First, *Raj'at* is a divine favor and grace, not a right. Second, the deprivation of others from *Raj'at* does not mean deprivation from eternal happiness. Third, traditions explicitly state that *Raj'at* is only for those who have pure faith or pure disbelief (Majlisī, 1404 AH, Vol. 53: 126).

9. Conclusion

After a comprehensive examination of the subject of *Raj'at* from the perspective of the Qur'an, traditions, and reason, the following results are obtained:

1. **Concept and Position of *Raj'at*:** *Raj'at* in the terminology of Imamiyyah theologians means the return of a group of pure believers and pure disbelievers to the world on the eve of the appearance of Imam Mahdi (as) and before the Resurrection. This belief is among the necessities of the Imami school and is unanimously held by Shi'a scholars.

2. **Difference from Reincarnation:** *Raj'at* is different from reincarnation. In *Raj'at*, the soul returns to the same previous body, but in reincarnation, it enters a new body. Reincarnation is invalid, while *Raj'at* is among the necessities.

3. **Qur'anic Evidence:** At least six groups of verses indicate the occurrence of *Raj'at* in past nations (the Companions of the Cave, ʿUzayr, those who fled the plague, the companions of Moses, the slain person of the Children of Israel, and the children of Ayyūb). Also, verses such as "Yawma naḥshuru min kulli ummatin fawjan" (al-Naml 27:83) explicitly indicate *Raj'at* in the end times.

4. **Narrative Evidence:** The traditions on *Raj'at* are morally mutawātir. ʿAllāmah Majlisī collected over 160, and Shaykh Ḥurr ʿĀmilī about 520 Ḥadiths. The Imams (as) emphasized the necessity of believing in *Raj'at* and considered it among the conditions of faith.

5. **Rational Arguments:** *Raj'at* has essential and actual possibility. Its occurrence in past nations is the best proof of its possibility. Also, the same arguments that prove the possibility of the Resurrection also prove the possibility of *Raj'at*.

6. **Response to Doubts:** Doubts such as similarity to reincarnation, contradiction with verses negating return, weakness of chains of transmission, and opposition to divine wisdom and justice all have clear answers.

7. **Aims of *Raj'at*:** Rewarding pure believers, punishing pure disbelievers, distinguishing truth from falsehood, proving the Resurrection and divine power, and fulfilling the promise to support God's saints.

In conclusion, the belief in *Raj'at* is rooted in the Qur'an, Sunnah, and sound reason, and its denial stems from insufficient knowledge of religious sources or influence from baseless doubts. It is incumbent upon every truth-seeking Muslim to attain a firm and documented belief through study and research on this subject and to refrain from blindly following opponents.

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Scientific Quarterly
Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings
Vol. 3, Issue 4, Winter 2026

Analysis of the *Ḥadith of Khobz* and the Last Sermon in Explaining the Priority of Securing the Livelihood of People in Society

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(Received: May 08, 2026, Accepted: May 25, 2026)

Abstract

The economic and social teachings of the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh) emphasize the fundamental role of a sound economic foundation in the establishment of a virtuous and healthy society. This study examines two Ḥadiths from Al-Kafi by Moḥammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni—commonly known as the *Ḥadith of Khobz* and a sermon attributed to the final days of the Prophet's life—highlighting how economic stability and attention to livelihood and welfare, particularly the provision of basic needs for Muslims, were a constant priority throughout his prophetic mission. Through textual, narratological, and jurisprudential analysis, along with historical contextualization, this research demonstrates how the Prophet (pbuh) linked the fulfillment of basic needs (such as bread) and economic justice to religious practice and social justice. Despite certain weaknesses in the *Ḥadith of Khobz* (such as a weak narrator and broken chain of transmission), its alignment with Qur'anic principles and rationality affirms its conceptual validity. The findings challenge some interpretations and align with modern theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, revealing Islam's balanced perspective on human welfare.

Keywords: *Ḥadith of Khobz* Analysis, Last Sermon *Ḥadith*, Economics, Livelihood Security.

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Introduction

The prioritization of factors influencing collective life holds significant importance for both the members of society and the rulers who manage societal affairs, as it directly relates to the well-being and happiness of individuals within the community. The determination of these priorities has consistently been a subject of discussion among scholars from various disciplines, particularly those involved in formulating laws and proposing vital solutions for collective living. In Islam, after the initial stages of the revelation of the Qur'an and the consolidation of its teachings and the individual training of community members, the formation of a Muslim society in the final years of Mecca and the subsequent establishment of the Islamic community in Medina underscored the necessity of defining priorities for various aspects of collective life. This process utilized the teachings of the Qur'anic verses and the traditions of the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh) to secure the objectives of the Muslim community. The need to extract, analyze, and examine the feasibility of implementing these teachings in contemporary societies through rigorous academic research, and to align them with modern social sciences, sociology, governance, and related fields, is of utmost importance.

The mission of the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh) in guiding humanity towards a meaningful and purposeful life encompassed all aspects of human existence. It was not limited to the transmission of spiritual teachings alone; Islam offers a comprehensive view for the flourishing of humanity, including its economic, social, and ethical dimensions. While extremist factions from various religious groups have often misinterpreted Islamic texts to justify violence and irrational behaviors, this research demonstrates that the Prophet's emphasis on economic welfare as the foundation for a sound society was a core element of his prophetic message. This paper argues that the Prophet consistently emphasized the importance of a stable economic foundation—access to basic needs and the protection of individuals from poverty—as an essential condition for fulfilling religious duties and ensuring social harmony.

Given the abundance of Islamic teachings transmitted through *Ḥadith*, which must be summarized and organized for academic research, this argument is substantiated through two *Ḥadiths* from Al-Kafi, the foundational Shia *Ḥadith* collection compiled by Moḥammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni (d. 329 AH/941 CE). Similar *Ḥadiths* from Sunni *Ḥadith* collections are also cited as evidence for the comprehensive nature of this discussion. The first *Ḥadith*, commonly known as the *Ḥadith of Khobz*, is believed by some scholars to date back to the early Meccan period, while the second, a sermon attributed to the final days of the Prophet

Moḥammad's life in Medina, highlights the continuity of these themes. When considered together, and with the understanding that the Prophet's words were wise and delivered according to the actual needs of the Muslim community, the coherent and logical sequence of his statements reveals the consistent prioritization of economic and livelihood concerns throughout his mission. These statements, far from being disjointed or lacking in coherence, emphasize the ongoing importance of economic welfare and justice for the health of society, vital for the well-being of the community.

This study challenges certain extremist interpretations that overlook the pragmatic economic approach of the Prophet and instead focus on militaristic ideologies or the promotion of Sufism and similar sectarian movements. At the same time, this research links the ancient wisdom of Islamic tradition with contemporary theories, such as Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which posits that physiological needs must be met before higher goals can be pursued This reflects the same concept articulated by the Prophet Moḥammad over fourteen centuries ago. By integrating narratological analysis, linguistic examination, and historical context, this study offers a corrective narrative that challenges extremist ideologies and provides evidence for Islam's moderate and human-centered approach to welfare.

The linguistic analyses of these *Ḥadiths* clarify the core economic and social principles embedded in the two *Ḥadiths*. They show how the Prophet's teachings consistently emphasized the critical link between economic well-being and the fulfillment of religious obligations, the responsibility of rulers to protect the weak, and the importance of justice in ensuring a stable and prosperous society.

For instance, the Prophet commanded that a portion of the land of Khaybar be allocated to the poor, which demonstrates his focus on wealth distribution and the prevention of its concentration in the hands of a few (Ibn Hisham, 756). Additionally, the establishment of Bait al-Mal as an institution for supporting the needy stands as evidence of this pragmatic approach to economic justice.

Literature Review

Islamic economic thought has been examined by scholars such as M. Umar Chapra (1992) and Moḥammad Najatullah Siddiqi (1981), who emphasize the Prophet's encouragement of trade, agriculture, and the equitable distribution of wealth as pillars of a prosperous society. Chapra argues that Islamic economics integrates both material and spiritual objectives, a perspective that aligns with the Prophet's policies in Medina, such as the distribution of land to the emigrants (*Anṣār*) (Danner, 2010, p. 34). However, most *Ḥadith*-based research has focused on the juridical or

theological dimensions of these topics, often neglecting their economic and social implications. Early scholars, such as Al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH/1111 CE), acknowledged the necessity of securing human material needs as a prerequisite for the fulfillment of religious duties. Yet, this aspect has received less attention in contemporary *Ḥadith* studies Ibn Khaldun (d. 808 AH/1406 CE) in his Muqaddimah references the role of economics in social stability, asserting that material welfare is the foundation of civilization. He writes: "Civilizations collapse without a strong economy, for the livelihood of the people is the basis of power and stability" (Ibn Khaldun, 1, p. 345). This view aligns with the actions of the Prophet in Medina, such as the establishment of fair markets and the prohibition of usury Contemporary analyses reveal that both the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions, through a strong emphasis on the implementation of a culture of charity (Infaq), and to a lesser extent, the establishment of a *zakāt* system, provided an economic framework aimed at alleviating poverty among Muslims. This system was not merely about charity or incentivizing generosity; it was instrumental in improving the economic structure of a society that was in the process of formation and growth.

Ḥadith of Khobz and the Last Sermon *Ḥadith*

The two *Ḥadiths* examined in this study are as follows:

a) "*Ḥadith of Khobz*": This *Ḥadith*, as cited in this research and drawn from Al-Kafi, is found exclusively in Shia sources, and its early transmission is also referenced in *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah* (al-Hurr al-'Āmilī, d. 1104 AH/1693 CE), which likely draws from Al-Kafi. Some scholars date this Ḥadith to the early Meccan period, when food was scarce (Tabataba'i, 1983, vol. 2, p. 210). This historical interpretation reflects the Prophet's attention to basic needs in difficult circumstances, which later connects to his economic policies in Medina, such as establishing food reserves for the poor.

b) "*Ḥadith* of the Last Sermon"**: Recorded in *Al-Kafi* (al-Kulayni, vol. 2, p. 263), this *Ḥadith* is widely regarded as part of the Prophet's final sermon in Medina, revealing his concerns about economic management in the society of his time (Ibn Hisham, d. 218 AH/833 CE). This sermon, which can be considered a spiritual testament, emphasizes the responsibility of rulers to prevent poverty. It aligns with the Prophet's conduct in supporting the vulnerable and with numerous Qur'anic verses advocating for charity (*Infāq*) and *zakāt*.

These two *Ḥadiths*, drawn from two different periods of early Islamic history, demonstrate the consistent emphasis on economic stability—from the early, nascent Muslim community to its more established phase. The temporal distinctions in these *Ḥadiths* underscore the ongoing priority

given to economic stability. In contrast, extremist ideologies have misinterpreted certain Qur'anic verses and *Ḥadiths*, employing a flawed and arbitrary understanding to justify violence, thereby neglecting the holistic approach of the Prophet (Kapel, 2017, vol. 1, p. 114). Contemporary experiences show that groups exploit economic despair, alongside other motivating factors, to recruit followers, a phenomenon that the Prophet explicitly warned against in his last sermon. This study aims to challenge such extremist narratives by reinterpreting these *Ḥadiths* from the perspective of implementing economic teachings, thus confronting distorted interpretations.

Methodology

This study adopts a multifaceted approach to analyze the two *Ḥadiths* from Al-Kafi, which includes the following components:

• **Narratological Analysis**: An assessment of the chain of narrators (isnad) and the transmission of the *Ḥadiths*, utilizing Shia narratological sources such as Al-Najashi, Al-Tusi, and Al-Khu'i.

• **Textual Analysis**: A detailed examination of the text of the *Ḥadiths* to extract their core themes and teachings, particularly their economic insights.

• **Linguistic Analysis**: An exploration of key terms and expressions using classical Arabic lexicons, including Lisan al-'Arab and Mufradat al-Faz al-Qur'an, to understand the precise meaning of the words used in the *Ḥadiths*.

• **Jurisprudential *Ḥadith* Analysis (*Fiqh al-Ḥadith*):** An evaluation of the *Ḥadith of Khobz* and the "Ḥadith of the Last Sermon" regarding their coherence and intent, despite weaknesses in their chains of transmission, using Qur'anic and rational criteria.

• **Historical Contextualization**: Situating the *Ḥadiths* within the economic and social conditions of early Islam during the period of the Qur'an's revelation.

The first narration of the *Ḥadith of Khobz* is found in Al-Kafi (al-Kulayni, vol. 6, p. 287), and it is also cited in Wasā'il al-Shī'ah (al-Hurr al-'Āmilī, vol. 2, p. 224), which likely indicates the transmission of the *Ḥadith* from Al-Kafi by later scholars such as al-Hurr al-'Āmilī. The *Ḥadith* of the Last Sermon is also found in Al-Kafi (al-Kulayni, vol. 2, p. 263), in *Ḥadith* 4.

Presentation of the *Ḥadiths* and Linguistic Analysis of Key Terms

To fully understand the teachings embedded in these narrations and their economic insights, it is essential to analyze and interpret the text of the *Ḥadiths*, as well as conduct a linguistic examination of the key terms used in them:

1. *Ḥadith of Khobz*

Narration:

"A number of our companions narrated from Ahmad ibn Abi Abdullah, from his father, from Abu al-Bakhtari, who reported it as raised (mursal), saying that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'O Allah, bless us in the bread, and do not separate us from it. For if it were not for bread, we would neither fast, nor pray, nor fulfill the obligations of our Lord, the Almighty.'"

(Al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 287); also cited in Wasā'il al-Shī'ah (al-Hurr al-'Āmilī, vol. 24, p. 102), Ḥadith 30198.

Linguistic Analysis:

• ***Khobz*** (خبز) – Bread: In Lisan al-'Arab (Ibn Manzūr, vol. 3, p. 144), "khobz" refers to bread made from wheat or barley, a staple food in Arab society. In this context, it symbolizes sustenance and economic security, reflecting the Prophet's concern for basic needs (Rāghib al-Isfahānī, p. 256).

• ***Barek*** (بارک) (derived from Barakah)– Blessing: The term "barakah" means to confer blessing or abundance. In Al-Mujam al-Waseet (Anis et al., 2011, p. 66), it denotes an enduring and continuous presence of goodness. The Prophet's prayer for blessings in bread highlights its vital role as the lifeline of the community.

• ***Tafarruq*** (تفرق) – Separation: Meaning "to separate" or "divide," it implies deprivation or scarcity (Ibn Manzūr, vol. 10, p. 298). The negation of this term emphasizes the need for constant and unimpeded access to sustenance, underlining the importance of economic stability.

• ***Fara'idh*** (فرائض) – Obligations: Referring to compulsory religious duties such as prayer and fasting (Rāghib al-Isfahānī, p. 622), this connects economic stability to religious practices, reinforcing the importance of material well-being for fulfilling spiritual duties.

Narratological Analysis:

• ***'Iddah min Aṣḥābinā*** (عدة من أصحابنا): This phrase refers to a group of trusted narrators who transmitted the *Ḥadith* from Ahmad ibn Abi Abdullah. In Al-Najāshī (p. 75), scholars such as Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi and Moḥammad ibn Yahya al-'Aṭṭār are mentioned as reliable, and it is likely that they were part of this group. In the *Mu'jam al-Rijāl* (al-Khu'i, vol. 1, p.38), the *Ḥadith* chain is assumed to be trustworthy, but its certainty is not established without further evidence. However, Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl (al-Mamqānī, vol. 1, p. 123) considers the chain "relatively reliable," especially when the subsequent narrators are confirmed as trustworthy. Scholars such as Shaykh al-Mufīd and Ayatollah al-Burujirdi have also accepted *Ḥadiths* with such beginnings Therefore, while there is some ambiguity regarding

the chain of narrators, the presence of trustworthy figures like Ahmad ibn Moḥammad al-Barqī strengthens the validity of the narration.

Assessment of Individual Narrators:

• Ahmad ibn Abi Abdullah (Ahmad ibn Moḥammad al-Barqī): Trusted (al-Najāshī, p. 75).

• His father (Moḥammad ibn Khalid al-Barqī): Trusted (al-Tusi, p. 360).

• Abu al-Bakhtari (Wahb ibn Wahb): Weak, accused of fabricating narrations (al-Khu'i, vol. 20, p. 110; Ibn Hajar, p. 577).

• Rafa'ah: Indicates a broken chain (mursal).

Given the weakness of Abu al-Bakhtari and the mursal nature of the narration, the chain of transmission is considered weak. However, due to its inclusion in Al-Kafi and Wasā'il al-Shī'ah, as well as the significant teachings it contains—particularly its profound economic insights—this *Ḥadith* merits further scrutiny to clarify its precise status in terms of rijāl and sanad (chain of narrators).

Jurisprudential and *Ḥadith* Analysis

Scholars such as Allama Tabatabai associate the *Ḥadith of Khobz* with the early Meccan period, a time when food scarcity posed a threat to the fledgling Islamic community Prioritizing bread over prayer and fasting reflects the view that meeting basic needs is a prerequisite for religious practice—an idea that was revolutionary in 7th-century Arabia, and later echoed by psychologists like Abraham Maslow (1943).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs places physiological needs (such as food) at the base, asserting that higher goals like self-actualization (or worship) are unattainable without fulfilling these basic needs. Similarly, Carl Rogers (1961) considered material security fundamental to human growth, aligning with the Prophet's teachings.

Despite the weak chain of narrators, two arguments support the conceptual validity of this *Ḥadith*:

• Lack of Personal Gain: The text of the *Ḥadith* does not appear to promote any personal or group interest (such as advancing the reputation of a narrator or sect), which reduces the likelihood of fabrication. As the scholar al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (d. 1277 CE) points out, *Ḥadiths* that focus on public welfare are less likely to be forged (Ma'ārij al-Uṣūl, p. 89). Furthermore, the logical coherence of the *Ḥadith*—connecting sustenance (bread) with religious duties—aligns with modern findings, such as those of Maslow (1943), which supports the sincerity of its intent, even if the exact wording may not be precise.

• Qur'anic Consistency: This *Ḥadith* aligns with Qur'anic verses that emphasize the primacy of material well-being in facilitating spiritual growth. For instance, Surah al-Baqarah, verse 177, states:

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East or the West, but righteousness is in one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, and the Prophets; and gives his wealth, in spite of his love for it, to relatives, orphans, the poor, the wayfarer, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves... and establishes prayer and gives *zakāt*." (Sahih International translation).

Here, the emphasis on Infaq (charity) over prayer reinforces the idea that economic welfare precedes spiritual practice, which echoes the Prophet's prioritization of economic sustenance for the community's well-being. Likewise, Surah at-Tawbah, verse 60:

"The alms are only for the poor and the needy, and those employed to collect [the funds], and for bringing hearts together, and to free the captives, and for those in debt, and for the cause of Allah, and for the wayfarer...an obligation [imposed] by Allah. And Allah is Knowing and Wise." (*Sahih* International translation)

This verse mandates charity, further aligning with the *Ḥadith* and affirming its legitimacy despite its weaknesses in the chain of narrators, as it is consistent with the Qur'anic teachings on charity and poverty alleviation.

Ayatollah Jawadi Amoli (a well-known Qur'anic scholar) states, that the *Ḥadith of Khobz* views economic welfare as foundational to worship, affirming that economic health is a necessary condition for religious practice and spiritual integrity.

Thus, despite the narratorial weaknesses, the conceptual alignment with both Qur'anic teachings and Islamic moral philosophy supports the validity of the *Ḥadith's* core message.

2. *Ḥadith* of the Last Sermon

Narration:

"A number of our companions narrated from Ahmad ibn Moḥammad, from 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Hammad and others, from Hanan ibn Sadeer al-Sayrafī, who said: I heard Abu Abdullah (Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq) say: The Prophet (pbuh), in good health and without pain, was informed of his impending death... He ascended the pulpit and announced to the people: 'I remind those who will take authority after me over my Ummah not to oppress the Muslims, to honor the elderly, have mercy on the weak, and give respect to the scholars. Let them not harm or humiliate them

Do not close your doors to them, so that the strong eat the weak, nor send them on expeditions that will cut off the progeny of my Ummah.' Then he said: 'I have conveyed the message and I have advised you, bear witness to it.'" (Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 263)

Linguistic Analysis:

• ***Yufqirhum*** (يفقرهم – "to make them poor"): The term "yufaqiruhum" derives from the root "faqar" (فقر), meaning poverty or economic deprivation. It refers to the act of making someone economically destitute (Ibn Manzūr, vol. 11, p. 533). The Prophet (PBUH) warns that poverty leads to disbelief (kufr), viewing economic welfare

• as a safeguard for faith. This underscores the Islamic view that material deprivation can undermine spiritual integrity, suggesting that a just and equitable economic system is crucial for maintaining religious commitment.

• ***Ya'kula qawīyyuhum ḍa'īfahum*** (يأكل قويهم ضعيفهم – "the strong eat the weak"): This phrase literally means "the strong eat the weak" and is an apt metaphor for exploitation or economic inequality (Anis et al., 2011, p. 762)

• It critiques unrestrained economic disparity, highlighting the moral and social harms of exploitation and the concentration of wealth. The Prophet's warning implicitly calls for systems that prevent the strong from exploiting the weak, thus advocating for social and economic justice.

• ***Yakhbizhum*** (يخبزهم – "to tire them out"): This rare term is likely derived from the root "khubz" (خبز), meaning bread, but in this context, it carries the implication of "exhausting" or "overburdening" people during military campaigns or labor (Ibn Manzūr, vol. 3, p. 145). It suggests avoiding excessive economic strain that harms the continuity of the community, emphasizing the need for sustainable practices that do not overburden the people. The Prophet's advice urges leaders to ensure that their policies do not exhaust or oppress the people economically.

• ***Nasl*** (نسل – "offspring" or "progeny"): The term "nasl" refers to descendants or offspring (Rāghib al-Isfahānī, p. 782). It connects the longevity of the community to sound economic policies, implying that economic stability is critical for the survival and thriving of future generations. The preservation of the Ummah's future depends on the just distribution of resources and opportunities.

Narratological Analysis:

• **عدة من أصحابنا**: This refers to a group of narrators in al-Kafi who transmitted the *Ḥadith* from Ahmad ibn Moḥammad. According to al-Najashi (p. 77), Ahmad ibn Moḥammad is regarded as thiqah (trustworthy) and one of the core narrators of *al-Kafi*. This group likely consists of his close disciples, such as Ali ibn Ibrahim

In *al-Tusi's Rijal* (p. 433), these narrators are regarded as reliable. According to al-Khu'i in his *Mu'jam Rijal al-Ḥadith* (2/270), any ambiguity regarding these narrators is compensated by the trustworthiness of Ahmad

ibn Moḥammad. Furthermore, al-Ḥilli in *Khulasat al-Aqwal* (p. 145) and al-Shaykh al-Saduq also accept them as reliable. Thus, this group is considered mujtahid (reliable relative to others), and the chain is not considered weak solely due to this ambiguity.

• Ahmad ibn Moḥammad (Ahmad ibn Moḥammad ibn 'Isa): He is considered thiqah (trustworthy) by al-Najashi (p. 77).

• Abd al-Rahman ibn Hammad and others: These narrators are marked as majhul (unknown) according to al-Khu'i (10/298), which weakens the chain to an extent.

• Hanān ibn Sadr: This narrator is considered thiqah (trustworthy) by al-Najashi (p. 127).

• Abu Abdullah (Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq): As the Imam, he is infallible (ma'sum).

Jurisprudential Judgment:

Despite the weak status of Abd al-Rahman ibn Hammad (due to his majhul status), the presence of trustworthy narrators strengthens the authenticity of the *Ḥadith*. The overall evaluation suggests that the *Ḥadith*, while not free from some narrational issues, carries conceptual validity due to the corroboration of thiqah narrators in the chain.

This *Ḥadith* is connected to the final days of the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh), as recorded by Ibn Hisham (p. 1021). It is significant because it is one of the few surviving documented speeches of the Prophet, which can be regarded as a kind of will or final testament. In it, the Prophet addresses critical matters of governance, including economic guidance, and issues a warning regarding the risk of kufr (disbelief) arising from faqr (poverty).

The speech is notable for the following reasons:

• It appears during the last days of the Prophet's life, making it a crucial document in understanding his vision for the future of the Muslim community.

• It specifically addresses issues of governance and the relationship between economic prosperity and faith. The Prophet links the danger of poverty with the risk of kufr and emphasizes the importance of providing for the community's material needs.

This *Ḥadith* can be interpreted as a call for responsible leadership, encouraging rulers to prioritize the well-being of the poor and the marginalized, which can prevent the rise of social unrest and the loss of faith among the populace.

Conclusion of Findings:

• ***Ḥadith of Khobz***: Despite the presence of weaknesses in the chain, the profound moral and economic insights contained within the *Ḥadith* highlight the central importance of economic welfare as a safeguard for

religious obligations. The Prophet's invocation for blessings in bread and his emphasis on the importance of sustenance underline the link between economic justice and spiritual practices. The analysis of key terms such as "barakah" (blessing), "tafarruq" (separation), and "fara'id" (obligations) reveals that the *Ḥadith* reinforces the concept that material stability is essential for the practice of faith.

• ***Ḥadith* of the Last Sermon**: This Ḥadith serves as a reminder to rulers of their responsibility toward the economic well-being of the Muslim community, with particular focus on protecting the vulnerable and ensuring fair distribution of resources. The Prophet's advice against exploiting the weak and advocating for equitable treatment reflects an economic ethic that is deeply intertwined with social justice The use of terms like "rahmah" (mercy), "waqar" (respect), and "yudh'if" (humiliate) adds depth to the moral and ethical teachings of the Prophet regarding governance and community care.

In both cases, the linguistic analysis and the study of the narrators reveal a coherent and consistent call for economic justice, which was central to the Prophet's vision of a just and equitable society.

The analysis of the *Ḥadith of Khobz* through a jurisprudential lens, alongside its alignment with both modern psychological theories and the Qur'anic principles of welfare, strengthens its conceptual validity. The *Ḥadith's* central theme—that economic stability is fundamental to both spiritual and social welfare—resonates across time and is supported by a rich tradition of Islamic thought. This insight emphasizes that, for the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh), ensuring the material well-being of his community was indispensable to their ability to fulfill religious obligations.

3. Comparative Analysis with Sunni *Ḥadiths*:

• Weak Narrators and the "Rafa'ah" Phrase in *Ḥadiths*:

The presence of weak narrators and the phrase "rafa'ah" (indicating a broken chain) is not uncommon in *Ḥadith* collections. Here are some examples:

• *Ḥadith* "Lā yu'minu ahadukum...": (Bukhari, 13), where a weak narrator, Uthman ibn Umar, is accepted.

• *Ḥadith al-Dīn al-Mu'āmala*: (Ibn Hanbal, Ḥadith 23958), where the chain includes Abdullah ibn Lahi'ah, a weak narrator, but the *Ḥadith* is still used by al-Ghazali (2/123).

• These examples indicate that even *Ḥadiths* with weak narrators or broken chains can still hold value, especially when their content is consistent with other reliable sources.

Discussion

The *Ḥadith* of Bread from the Meccan period and the "Final Sermon" from the last years of the Prophet Moḥammad's (pbuh) life in Medina both emphasize the Prophet's lifelong commitment to the importance of economic stability and the provision of people's livelihoods. In Mecca, where Muslims faced economic sanctions (Ibn Hisham, 159), bread symbolized survival and enabled worship, a concept later formulated by Maslow (1943) and Herzberg (1959) as physiological needs, which must be fulfilled before higher goals such as self-actualization (or worship) can be achieved. In Medina, a more agricultural society (Danner, 2010), the Prophet's critique of poverty aligns with John Rawls' (1971) theory of justice and rejects the exploitation of poverty (Roy, 2017).

Poverty as Divine Punishment:

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) said, "Whoever's concern is with this world, Allah places poverty before their eyes" (Al-Kulayni, 2/319), and "Among the internal punishments is poverty" (Al-Saduq, 108). The Prophet (pbuh) also said, "When Allah becomes angry with a people, prices rise, and poverty spreads" (Al-Kulayni, 5/317). This indicates that poverty is a barrier to religiosity, and the Prophet (pbuh) placed great emphasis on alleviating it. As a divine punishment, poverty not only affects the individual but also leads society to ruin. The Prophet, in his practice, fought poverty by establishing support systems such as *Zakāt* (obligatory charity) and Bait al-Mal (public treasury). Condemnation of Poverty:

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Poverty is harsher than slaughter" (Shayari, 299), "The poor are the calamities of Islam" (Al-Saduq, 402), and "Poverty is a disgrace in both worlds" (Ibn Abi Jumhur, 1/40). Imam al-Baqir (AS) considered death better than poverty (Al-Kulayni, 8/21). This condemnation serves as a warning to society to prevent poverty and reflects the Prophet's view of poverty as an obstacle to faith and human dignity.

The Prophet translated this condemnation into action, distributing wealth and assisting the poor, such as when he divided lands among the needy after the conquest of Khaybar (Ibn Hisham, 756).

Mandate to Combat Poverty: The Qur'an commands charity (2:177), *zakāt* (9:60), and condemns the withholding of aid from the poor (69:34). The practices of the infallible imams (as) also emphasize the alleviation of poverty, aligning with the Prophet's final sermon, where he urged: "Do not close the door, lest the strong eat the weak." In Medina, the Prophet designed a system for supporting the weak and preventing exploitation by establishing just markets and prohibiting hoarding. This approach, in contrast to capitalist systems that concentrate wealth in the hands of a few, focused on the fair distribution of resources and the support of the poor.

This economic-spiritual connection rejects extreme asceticism and violence, offering a balanced narrative of Islam grounded in welfare and justice (Qur'an, 28:77). The Prophet's foresight is in harmony with modern psychological insights, reinforcing the importance of his teachings over centuries.

Conclusion

From the early Meccan prayers to the final sermon delivered in Medina, the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh), based on the traditions derived from the teachings of the Qur'an, consistently emphasized the importance and priority of economic stability within society and the establishment of a sound economic foundation as a necessary prerequisite for achieving a healthy community. Although the "*Ḥadith* of Bread" and the "Final Sermon" are weak in terms of their chains of transmission, they represent a fundamental view in which proper livelihood and favorable economic conditions are seen as essential for the realization of justice, faith, and true worship of God. This study not only corrects the extreme distortions regarding the priorities of the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh) in his own life and in the life of the Muslim community, but it also links the early Islamic teachings and those contemporaneous with the revelation to modern theories, thereby affirming their timeless relevance. Future research should explore more socio-economic *Ḥadiths* to further dismantle extreme narratives and provide relevant Qur'anic evidence for community leaders, offering them the opportunity to test and implement Islamic teachings and the Qur'an in practice.

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Scientific Quarterly
Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings
Vol. 3, Issue 4, Winter 2026

Ahl al-Bayt (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

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(Received: February 26, 2026, Accepted: May 31, 2026)

Abstract

Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi (d. 1129 AH), one of the great poets of the Safavid era, is regarded as a devoted lover of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). He dedicated a considerable part of his *Divan* to the praise of the Twelve Imams (as), and many of his other poems likewise reflect Shiite beliefs and teachings. Although literary critics do not generally consider the Safavid period and the Indian or Isfahani style to represent the height of Persian language and literature, there is no doubt that Shiite poets performed remarkably well during this era, and Ta'siri Tabrizi is a clear example of this phenomenon. This article, based on library research and the use of primary sources, employs a descriptive-analytical method to show that this Shiite poet expressed his heartfelt devotion to the pure Imams (as) with utmost sincerity. Even if strong and weak poems appear side by side in his *Divan*, he nevertheless left behind a readable and valuable collection of Shiite poetry and literature. He also benefited from knowledge of the Qur'an, Ḥadith, and other Islamic sciences, all of which he employed effectively in his poetry, and he followed the history of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) with deep enthusiasm. His most delicate and refined poems are among the 1,397 ghazals he composed with mystical and romantic themes, following the Iraqi style and poets such as Hafez and Saeb (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).

Keywords: Shiite Poetry, Ahl al-Bayt (as), Twelve Imams (as), Indian Style, Safavid Era.

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1. Introduction

Mirza Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi (1060–1131 AH) was a poet who lived and composed during the Safavid era (907–1148 AH) and was deeply influenced by the literary atmosphere of that period. Persian poetry of this era has been less studied, and scholars have not paid sufficient attention to it. The Isfahani or Indian style represents a significant period in Persian literature, marked by events and transformations in which both positive and negative factors played important roles (Safa, 2010, p. 18).

In the Khorasani style, rulers supported poets extensively and attached great importance to their cultivation. One of the defining characteristics of poets of that era was therefore their dependence on the court. However, with the Mongol invasion and the ensuing chaos and insecurity, such patronage declined. Poetry moved away from the court and assemblies of nobles and upper classes toward the people, the streets, and the bazaar, thereby becoming closer to the language and everyday life of ordinary people. This tendency became even more pronounced during the Safavid era. Poetry did not merely descend "from the throne to the carpet"; rather, the established ideals of classical poetry weakened, and themes and meanings became increasingly popularized. Although the number of outstanding masterpieces may have decreased, the voice of the people and popular thought found greater resonance in urban culture. While the praise of kings and rulers did not disappear, folk culture became more prominent.

One of the popular themes warmly welcomed by poets—with the support of both government and people—was the elegy and praise of religious figures, particularly the emphasis on Shiite religious identity. Praise of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) increasingly entered poetic discourse and at times came to occupy a major part of poets' works. A new style and method became widespread, and through the innovations of figures such as Mohtasham Kashani (905–996 AH), it developed into a broad literary and poetic genre. At the same time, other literary tendencies also advanced, particularly through the support of the Mughal courts in India for Iranian poets and the consolidation of the Indian style. For example, during the reign of Akbar Shah Gurkani, fifty-one Iranian poets traveled to India and were welcomed at the court. In the works of most of these poets, one finds originality of subject matter, subtlety, and complexity. In such a broad literary environment, elegy also found its place among the people and in religious gatherings (Safa, 1994; Zarrinkoub, 1980).

Shiite poets such as Ta'siri Tabrizi demonstrate in their poems that they were mirrors of the culture of their age. Since belief in the Ahl al-Bayt (as) had spread throughout society and occupied a central place in the customs, traditions, and beliefs of the people, this poet—while being personally

devoted to these ideals—also reflected the dominant social tendency. From the themes found in the poems of such poets, which include Islamic and Shiite teachings ranging from Qur'anic verses and Ḥadiths to narratives of historical and religious events and expressions of praise and reverence for the pure Imams (as), one can discern the central concerns of the society of that era. In Ta'siri Tabrizi's poems, various poetic forms are employed to express Shiite ideas, and priority is given to fulfilling a religious and ideological mission through the articulation of Shiite beliefs. This type of poetry may, in fact, be understood as a response to the needs and expectations of the people of that period, with the poet acting as a spokesman for collective religious sentiment.

2. Statement of the Problem

Since the first century of Islam, expressions of sincere devotion toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as) have appeared in Arabic, Persian, and other neighboring languages. In the Safavid period, however, this tendency reached a peak, and Shiite poetry became a central focus for many poets. This inclination toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as) has often been interpreted merely as a result of the Safavid Shiite state, whereas other factors should also be taken into consideration. Indeed, the tendency toward Shiite poetry existed beyond the Safavid state, and one of the historical factors behind it was the rule of governments affiliated with the Abbasid Caliphate before the Mongol invasion, which were often severe toward Shiites. With the Mongol invasion, an opportunity emerged for Shiites to express their views more openly, and this issue requires further study.

In the poems of Ta'siri Tabrizi, praise of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) lies at the center of his poetic themes, and this article seeks to demonstrate that fact. An evaluation of these poems shows that the poet created such themes with sincerity and heartfelt conviction. Since all of his poems possess a religious dimension, they reflect his inner concern with Islamic and Shiite teachings (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).

Poets who regarded themselves as committed to the expression of belief did not subscribe to the notion of "art for art's sake"; rather, they adhered to the idea of art in the service of faith. They focused on the expression of doctrine and conviction in poetry rather than on the creation of poetry for purely aesthetic purposes. One of the principal criticisms leveled against such poets concerns weakness in artistic and literary refinement: they may have become so immersed in expressing their mission that they could not always produce works of the highest artistic level. This criticism can be extended to other art forms as well. Shiite literature and mystical literature contain many poetic collections in which the poet regarded himself as charged with the mission of expressing belief, and the importance of those

ideals often placed artistic expression in a secondary position. This article shows that Ta'siri Tabrizi gave priority to ideological and devotional themes because of his faith and love for the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

3. Research Background

No independent research appears to have been conducted specifically on the place of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in the poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi; however, several studies have examined other dimensions of his poetry. Among them are the article "Historical References to the City of Isfahan in the Divan of Mirza Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi" by Amin Pasha Ejlali, published in the *Journal of the Faculty of Literature of Tabriz University* (no. 153, 1373); the article "Reflection of Moral Concepts in the Lyric Poems of Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi" by Leila Adl Parvar and Razieh Aghazadeh, presented at the International Conference on Persian Language and Literature in Hamedan (2010); the article "The Manifestation of the Qur'an in the Divan of Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi" by the same authors, presented at the International Conference on Language Studies in Tehran (2010); and the article "A Close Analysis of Novel Spiritual Arrangements in the Divan of Mirza Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi" by Razieh Aghazadeh, published in *Baharestan Sokhan Quarterly* (no. 50, 1399).

The poet's *Divan* was carefully published by the University Publishing Center in 1994, edited by Amin Pasha Ejlali. In addition, the book *Sholeh Awaz: Introduction and Selected Poems of Ta'siri Tabrizi* by Seyyed Mohammad Abbasieh Kohan was published by Qo Publishing in 2009. An article by Hossein Agha Nakhjavani introducing this poet was published in *Faculty of Literature, University of Tabriz* (no. 1, 1965). An entry in the *Great Islamic Encyclopedia* under "Ta'siri Tabrizi" by Ali Mirza Ansari is also available. Brief but useful information about him can also be found in a number of tazkiras and biographical anthologies, including *Tazkirat al-Ma'asirin* by Mohammad Ali Hazin (Hazin, 1375, vol. 1, p. 169), the *Tazkira* of Mohammad Tahir Nasrabadi (Nasrabadi, 1361, vol. 1, p. 119), *Atashkadeh* of Lotf Ali Azar (Azar, 1340, vol. 3, p. 327), *Daneshmandan-e Azerbaijan* by Mohammad Ali Tarbiat (Tarbiat, 1314, vol. 1, p. 77), *Safineh-ye Khoshgu* (Khoshgoo, 1959, vol. 1, p. 94), and *Sahaf-e Ibrahim* (Khalil, 1389, vol. 1, p. 35).

4. Introducing Mirza Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi

Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi was born in Isfahan, although his paternal grandfather, Abolkhan Tabrizi, and his maternal grandfather, Mohammad Hossein Chalabi, were both prominent figures from Tabriz. Shah Abbas I transferred them from Tabriz to Isfahan and settled them in the Abbasabad neighborhood. Thus, this poet was educated in Isfahan and studied under Agha Hossein Khansari (d. 1098 AH) and Mohammad Tahir Qazvini,

known by the pen name Vahid (d. 1120 AH). From an early age, he had the opportunity to associate with poets such as Saeb Tabrizi (d. 1081 AH), to practice poetry, and to participate in literary gatherings alongside Hazin Lahiji. In middle age, he entered government service and was for some time responsible for the financial affairs of Yazd. It is possible that his official appointments were related to his panegyrics for Shah Suleiman (d. 1078 AH), Shah Sultan Husayn (d. 1140 AH), and several ministers of that government. After 1120 AH, when he was dismissed from office, he retired into seclusion in Isfahan and devoted himself to poetic composition (Hazin, 1375, vol. 1, p. 169; Nasrabadi, 1361, vol. 1, p. 119; Azar, 1340, vol. 3, p. 927; Tarbiat, 1314, vol. 1, p. 77). Few detailed reports about his life are available.

From a literary perspective, Hazin's opinion is noteworthy, as he remarks that Ta'siri's poetry was approaching perfection, though his lifetime did not permit its full completion (Hazin, 1375, vol. 1, p. 169). Ali Ibrahim Khalil also regarded his poems as containing fresh themes in the style of later poets (Khalil, 1389, vol. 1, p. 35). His poetry also found admirers in India, including figures such as Hussein Shohrat (d. 1149 AH) and Sirajuddin Arzoo (Khoshgoo, 1959, vol. 1, p. 94).

His major literary work is his *Divan*, which includes qasidas, *tarkib-bands*, fragments, and masnavis such as *Jahan-Nama*, *Minhaj al-Mi'raj*, *Da'wat al-'Ashiqin*, *Golzar-e Sadat*, *Samarat al-Hijab*, *Hasan Ittifaq*, *Maimanat-Nameh*, and *Towfiq Risalah al-Muma*. It also contains ghazals, miscellaneous poems, and rubaiyat. Two complete manuscripts are preserved in the Majles Library (no. 957) and the Sepahsalar School Library (no. 2832), both in broken and mature Nastaliq script. Two additional copies with slight differences also exist. These materials were published in 1994 by the University Publishing Center through the efforts of Amin Pasha Ejlali, along with useful annotations and indexes (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).

Regarding Ta'siri's thought, it must be remembered that he studied Islamic teachings ranging from Qur'anic exegesis and Ḥadith to jurisprudence within the Shiite scholarly environment of the Safavid period. He was so committed to Shiite beliefs that some have regarded him as a strict or ardent Shiite. His love and heartfelt devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are clearly manifest in his poems, and he composed especially moving verses on the tragedy of Karbala. He also repeatedly expresses his eagerness to visit the shrines of the pure Imams (as). After praise of God and the Holy Prophet (pbuh), the main themes of his poetry are devoted to the family of infallibility and purity, and he frequently employs Qur'anic and Ḥadith-based allusions. His two masnavis on the Prophet's Ascension

stand out for their eloquence and poetic beauty in the *Divan*. His devotion to Imam Ali (as) is especially prominent, and he speaks of that Imam and the other pure Imams in a language full of love and reverence (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).

He loved Imam Ali (as) to such an extent that he seems to have been accused of exaggeration, as suggested in the line: "If he exaggerates, he is not precious in Ali's love." In other words, while he openly acknowledges his sincere devotion to that Imam, he does not regard such love as blameworthy. One of the major themes of his poetry is Islamic and Shiite mysticism. Especially in his ghazals, he speaks of the necessity of purifying the soul, severing attachment to all but God, and pursuing the path of truth through sincerity and spiritual discipline. He also composed graceful poems on the unity of being and the exalted station of the heart in mysticism. He refers to mystical states such as submission, contentment, absence, presence, poverty, the dervish robe, the old Magian, audition, and ecstasy. His poems indicate that he underwent long periods of travel, ascetic practice, and retreat, and even chose a life of seclusion for a time. Among mystical themes, he pays particular attention to "trust in God," and he also offers reflections on education and moral cultivation. His references to astronomy, medicine, accounting, logic, and related sciences in his poetry could themselves become the subject of separate study.

In poetic style, he follows the great masters of Persian literature. In qasida, he often imitates Saadi, Anvari, Khaqani, and Naziri, and even incorporates their verses into his own poetry. His *tarkib-bands* imitate Mohtasham Kashani, and in elegy he proceeds in the manner of other major poets of the Safavid era. In masnavi, he follows Nezami Ganjavi. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that he sometimes displays innovative themes and something of his own individual style. Critics have pointed out weak themes and awkward lines in his poetry, yet his fresh similes and original expressions should not be underestimated. At times, his poetry exhibits the complexity of the Isfahani style, and the quality of his poems is not always uniform. On the other hand, he also has simple and fluent verses, and his relative freedom from narrow prejudice is noteworthy. He sometimes speaks of philosophical and mystical concepts in an acceptable manner and frequently employs rhetorical devices. Despite the criticisms directed at him, he also coined new expressions and compounds such as *New Need*, *Baran Khodpa*, *Khordan Deshman*, *Be Heel Nazeer*, *Haft Josh Hafte*, and *Setam Zarif*, which should be counted among his innovations. He has many beautiful and mystical ghazals in which he demonstrates considerable poetic power (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).

5. Shiite Poetry in the Safavid Era

Researchers often do not consider the Safavid era a period marked by strong support for the Persian language and its promotion within Iran, yet they do acknowledge the expansion of Shiite poetry during that time. As Safa notes, "The Safavid era was not a favorable period for the Persian language and literature in Iran. Due to the attention paid to Persian speakers in the Ottoman Empire and among the Iranians, Turks, and Mongols of Central Asia, especially through the efforts of great scholars and rulers in India, the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries AH can be regarded as among the best periods of the spread and popularity of this language in Asia. Naturally, this greatly contributed to the abundance of writings and poems by writers and poets, and caused the Safavid era to become one of the most fertile periods in the history of Persian literature" (Safa, 2010, p. 18; Safa, 1994, vol. 5, p. 422).

Many scholars have repeated the criticism that Persian received less attention in Safavid Iran, while Persian literature flourished in neighboring Persianate regions. They have, however, offered differing explanations for this phenomenon. One such critic writes: "With the rise of Shah Ismail, who himself and his tribesmen were Turkic-speaking and did not show special interest in Persian, the development of the Persian language became slow and limited. On the other hand, the extensive attention paid by all Safavid kings to religious scholars did not provide much opportunity for poetry and belles-lettres, especially since many Shiite scholars and jurists at the beginning of this era were Arabs from Lebanon or Jabal ʻAmil, and due to their religiosity and strictness, they were opposed to the mystical taste and Sufism that had long been among the foundations of Persian poetry" (Zarrinkoub, 1980, p. 254).

In any case, the Shiite poetic collections of the Safavid era demonstrate that poetry, literature, and art cannot simply be suppressed; whenever one path is closed, another opens. Persian language and literature preserved themselves under all circumstances, and poets and thinkers strengthened literary expression in diverse forms and genres. Although patronage rose and fell, and some avenues were blocked while others emerged, the language ultimately continued its flourishing course.

In criticism of the poetry of this period, it has been said that the ghazal lost much of its romantic nature and became oriented toward theology, philosophy, ethics, Sufism, and similar concerns, and that in the Indian or Isfahani style intellectual contradiction reached such a point that one hemistich could negate the next (Shafiʻi Kadkani, 1999, p. 52). Some have even called the poetry of this era a "great loss" (Toghiani, 2006, p. 78). Yet Persian poetry continued to live and develop along the paths opened before

it; it did not suffer true loss simply because it passed through periods of weakness and strength. If, in the Safavid era, praise of the virtues and excellences of the pure Imams (as) became popular in accordance with the custom of the time, poets naturally experimented in this field. If praise of kings also continued, this too had long been an established tradition in Persian literature. In the Safavid era, Shiite poetry became closer to the general beliefs of the people and to the dominant culture, and this depended both on public reception and on the poet's heartfelt devotion. What made a subject popular did not lie outside the world of the artist; what mattered was the degree of innovation, taste, and artistry the poet could bring to it. In whatever field poets worked, they continued to extend Persian language and literature, and their strengths and weaknesses were secondary to that broader cultural achievement.

6. Imam Ali (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri Tabrizi's poetry is, in many ways, centered on his devotion to Imam Ali (as). In the first part of his poems, which consists of qasidas with religious content and expressions of Twelver Shiite beliefs, he praises and glorifies God and affirms divine unity; then he turns to the praise of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), after which he devotes several qasidas to Imam Ali (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 37):

Ali Mujahid prevails over Ghazanfar.
That the mountain has no limits, its stability is a rock…
The voice of La Fata illa Ali reached the ears of the Throne.
I am lost in the fear of the path, a world full of deceit.
The Shah, by your grace, has seen the "effect"
Throwing him into the abyss of his own actions, he misses him.
(Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 37)

In this qasida, the poet's main emphasis is on the Imam's courage in battle and the fear he instills in the hearts of his enemies. It is, in effect, an epic ode centered on his martial qualities. In another qasida, however, the poet turns to Imam Ali's metaphysical place in existence and expresses his spiritual rank before God (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 39):

I have searched until the soil of Najaf, the tomb of Bu Torab.
The Throne says, "Anytime," or "Kent Troub's Litany."
The successor and cousin of Mustafa, the husband of Batul,
The Most High, the one with whom is the Mother of the Book.
The repository of God's knowledge revealed openly,
Sadiq al-qawl saluni from the correct answer.
The rightful heir of the throne, the owner of the *La Fata* banner,
My governor, count, is the lord of creation.
Whoever made him a prophet from you, I have chosen him.

The Prophet said, "Ali, the chapters are about him,"
Seeking the intensification of that good claw, the door of *Fath Bab*.
He who steps on the Prophet's shoulders out of respect,
Whatever you know above him, what do you say is the truth?
Bai, the name of Allah is implicit in the Qur'an,
There was no other point in the book of Mustab.
(Ibid., p. 39)

Here, the poet attempts to gather in one place the status and virtues of that Imam, drawing upon Qur'anic verses, historical evidence, and transmitted narrations. To some extent, this is one of his most comprehensive poems in describing Imam Ali's spiritual merits. In other qasidas, he often concentrates on one of these virtues in particular (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 42):

That is, Ali, the protector of God, the source of salvation,
On Mustafa, Caliph Mansur Kordgar.
Negative, other than that, art from the lofty heights,
The broken pair of swords to Zulfiqar.
The king who became broke on the shoulders of Rasul and Sanam,
The pride of honor reaches the throne and the carpet.
(Ibid., p. 42)

Along with Imam Ali (as), Ta'siri Tabrizi also composed three qasidas in praise of Hazrat Zahra (as), and these too testify to his devotion to this great lady of Islam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, pp. 44–45):

The pure soul of the women of Zahra, Sayyid,
Which, closed in its sanctuary, veils the souls of the saints.
A partner in the honor of the mission from a part of me,
Who found the glory and dignity of the curtain from its sign.
(Ibid., p. 44)

The infallibility of both worlds: Fatimah, daughter of the Messenger,
Who was the soul of the world, and who was the soul of the screen.
Wasn't it his name that kept saying that?
All the good and bad plans of the world are on display.
(Ibid., p. 45)

At times, the poet also enters into theological discussions, explaining Shiite beliefs and defending the infallibility and status of the Imamate through poetic argument (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 99):

Ali was born as a Kaaba keeper;
It was clear that there is no such thing as God's will.
There should be a light in the house;
It is not permissible to light a fire in a mosque.
The one who does not reject the beggar during prayer—

Why don't they pray for the sun?
(Ibid., p. 99)

In the masnavi *Jahan-Nama*, which he composed in imitation of Nezami's *Makhzan al-Asrar*, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) praises and glorifies Imam Ali (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 122):

Then Nabi Nube reached Haidar,
He became aware of religion and emerged from two verses.
The beginning of the Prophet has been explained;
Haidar has changed from that verse.
It was a turning point when prophethood ended;
The era of prophethood has ended with the Imamate.
Who is Ali, the sun of the iwan of truth?
The prominent statement of the court of justice.
The art gallery was his virgin couple;
His principles and principles were…
(Ibid., p. 122)

In the miscellaneous poems that appear at the end of his *Divan*, verses in praise of Imam Ali (as) can also be found (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 731):

For the height of his glory, he is like a stargazer;
He grasps in his hand, like an astrolabe, a quarter of the inhabited earth…
(Ibid., p. 731)

He also has delightful rubaiyat in which he focuses especially on Imam Ali (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 785):

Ali's sincerity was not betrayed by the heart of the traitor;
There was no other way to God.
Realize that there is no path to truth except through him;
There was only one door in the Kaaba.
There was no other guide like Cho Ali;
I want to go nowhere but the soil of Najaf.
Make up your mind to travel so that he may pray for you;
The enemy says, "Do not return again."
I want something from you, Ali Rawa;
I want a place near your shrine.
Until the shadow of your dome falls upon my head,
I want a government with head and wings.
(Ibid., p. 785)

7. Imam Hasan Mujtaba (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri Tabrizi speaks of Imam Hasan Mujtaba (as) after his noble mother and employs his poetic talent in lamenting and praising him (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 48):

The high-ranking king of the place,
The golden nail was its symbol on the door of the sun.
That is, the intercessor of both houses is Shah Din Hassan,
Where was the army of astronomy, the sun's chakra?
The tribe of the Prophet, the dynasty of Haidar, which ruled,
Every morning, the sun rises from the sun.
The proof that proves his Imamate
Is in the presence of the stars and the sun.
Your "impact" was worthy of praise, because it was—
Who can hear the praise of a particle worthy of the sun?
(Ibid., p. 48)

In the masnavi section, he also has passages in *Jahan-Nama* devoted to Imam Hasan (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 124):

Close your eyes, because of the world of Morteza;
The proof of truth was Hasan Mujtaba.
The place of the Prophet and Haidar is his;
They are like children to his Prophet.
Hassan, who spoke of Ana Amlah?
He turned to Hassan, to Hassan's face.
Sayyid and sarkhil of the youth of Khald,
The body of a prophet, the soul of a saint, the soul of an immortal…
(Ibid., p. 124)

Among this poet's rubaiyat, one also refers to Imam Hasan (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 789):

The heart of another person wants the beauty of a good person;
He demands the right to be saved from hell.
May all my butterflies and moths burn;
It wants to be saddled, not burned.
(Ibid., p. 789)

In the *manqabats* of the Imams (as), Ta'siri also draws on various Ḥadiths and narrations, such as the report that Imam Hasan (as) and Imam Husayn (as), as children, rode upon the shoulders of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) (Majlisi, 1997, vol. 44, p. 231), or that they were referred to as the light of the Prophet's eyes (Mahdashani Haeri, 1374, vol. 16, p. 188). Numerous narrations emphasize the status and virtues of these Imams.

8. Imam Husayn (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri Tabrizi displays a special devotion to Imam Husayn (as) and to the epic event of Karbala. He composed more poems on Ashura than on any other subject, and the most poignant examples of Karbala poetry in his *Divan* should be sought from the perspective of deep poetic feeling. First, he wrote two qasidas in praise of the Imam, and then he turned to the

tragedy of Karbala more directly; in these poems, the influence of Mohtasham Kashani is quite evident (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 49):

The proof of truth, the king of the oppressed, Husayn, thirsty-lipped,
The lip of the jewel is the expression of the world without light; it is miraculous.
The scholar of knowledge, the knower of the secrets of truth,
The one who is the Imam and leader of all creation.
Gabriel is the cradle of the Prophet, his companion is his shoulder;
The grace of the angels is the light of Mustafa's eyes…
(Ibid., p. 49)

Following Mohtasham, Ta'siri composed seventeen beautiful stanzas, which together form a significant collection of Karbala poetry (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 52):

O heart, be patient, for these are the days of mourning;
O black-clad soul, it is the month of Muharram.
Whose mourning is this that the era has resumed?
The world is like the hair of mourners, tangled and disordered.
This painful and burning sorrow that becomes new every year—
If I recite it more, it will still be less than the Day of Judgment…
There was nothing but grief at the feast of Karbala;
There was no colorful blessing there except blood.
Until the joy of resurrection reaches the heart of the wicked,
A hundred caravans of salt come from the salt-pan of Karbala…
When the cries of those rebels reached the tent,
The lament of the people of the sanctuary reached earth and time.
It was severed from the body, and the sky filled with blood;
The sun emerged with its dagger drawn.
(Ibid., p. 52)

At times, the poet responds to objections and criticisms by entering into theological discussion in defense of Imam Husayn (AS) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 99):

They say that Husayn ibn Ali al-Shafi'i will be the Judge—
What kind of output did the Imams not make?
Why did you abandon the religion of *taqiyyah*?
He was a great pillar of the house of faith.
(Ibid., p. 99)

In this way, Ta'siri responds to criticism by means of poetic reasoning and presents theological argument in artistic language. In the masnavi *Jahan-Nama*, he again speaks of Imam Husayn (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 124):

Go to Khald as Hasan did,
To visit Husayn ibn Ali, the successor.
The blush on his face is a testimony to him;
The brightness of the eyes of courage is from him.
The fifth pillar of the Al-Aba,
His boast of chivalry is a boast…
(Ibid., p. 124)

In the rubaiyat, there is likewise a quatrain dedicated to this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 789):

O King of Martyrs, I ask for your forgiveness;
I desire the company of the martyrs' beloved.
The sweetness of sugar upon the lips of my eternal desire—
I want a piece of land from Karbala.
(Ibid., p. 789)

9. Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Out of devotion to Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as), Ta'siri composed a long qasida, referring to him as "our master and our guide" and discussing his life across several pages (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 66):

Sayyid al-Sajidin, the Imam of Truth,
Who is the essence of human nature?
Zayn al-'Abidin, the light of Husayn's eyes,
This son is worthy of such a father.
He has come as the witness of his Imamate;
The pupil of the Kaaba's eye is a stone.
O Imam, who is without a guardian?
Knowledge without benefit bears no fruit.
What else can "Ta'siri" utter except allusion?
For you know all about him…
(Ibid., p. 66)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he again addresses this Imam and sings in his honor (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 124):

Leader Sajjad, Imam of the age,
The adornment of the register of place and station.
The stone behind his truth
Testified to his Imamate.
The heavens are bent beneath his heavy sorrow;
The clouds are wet from his many tears.
Half a shepherd, like a sky of stars,
The daily provider of the poor.
Warm salutations—how you became a saint!
You made the earth level by your feet.

No one was more knowledgeable or pious than he;
His effort was beyond all reckoning…
(Ibid., p. 124)

Among the important intertexts related to this Imam is the famous qasida by Farazdaq, the great Arab poet, who praised Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as) during the circumambulation of the Kaaba in the presence of Hisham ibn ʻAbd al-Malik (Farazdaq, 1414 AH, vol. 1, p. 319):

This is the one whose footprint the valley knows,
And the House knows him, and the sanctuary and the sacred precinct…
(Farazdaq, 1414 AH, vol. 1, p. 319)

It is reported that the Imam sent him ten or twelve thousand dirhams in appreciation for this poem, but Farazdaq at first refused, saying that he had composed it only for the sake of God. The Imam replied that the Ahl al-Bayt (as) do not take back what they have given, and he made him swear to accept it (Arbali, 1381, vol. 2, p. 169).

10. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri also composed a three-page qasida in praise of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as), emphasizing his scholarly status and spiritual perfection (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 68):

The Imam of preservation and manifestation, Muhammad Baqir,
Whose praise is established at the threshold of the Throne.
They strive like angels in circumambulation of the sanctuary;
A voice from the unseen arrives: thanks for my effort.
Because the burial of that subtle point is the treasure of gnosis,
All light is hidden in the graves…
(Ibid., p. 68)

In the masnavi *Jahan-Nama*, there is also a beautiful section devoted to this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 125):

The robe was drawn like a prayer rug to heaven;
Imam Baqir attained the Imamate.
Aware of every virtue and art,
The proof of truth became the heir of the father.
Eternal knowledge is his treasure-house;
Eternal life is the table of his generosity.
From the beginning of time, the knowledge of the past—
Knower of secrets except the Truth.
A station for those who wait to arrive,
He has sent a message to the Messenger of God…
(Ibid., p. 125)

From the perspective of poetic artistry, Ta'siri describes the Imam's station in language that reflects both reverence and literary effort:

He thought my arts would make me proud;
I heard our verse drowned from the Forgiving Lord.
A herald from the hidden place of glory
Cried out to me, "Be ashamed of pride, O eloquent one!"
One cannot be proud of this wealth of compounds
Before infinite and boundless knowledge and wisdom.
Where are you, and the desire for luxurious and proud garments,
Before this source of virtue and this emblem of intelligence?
Who made you at the threshold of the Lord of religion,
From the earring to the nail of the storehouse?
Envious of the light, its place is the dark day,
Instead of morning, his hope was shattered by another night.
Like red-written chapters and pages, like the trick of fate,
All his praises belong to the beauty of the maiden.
Houris and their companions turn toward the water;
May the water in your hand become pure wine.
A heart that has drunk the syrup of your love
Was drowned in nectar, like a seed in a grape.
If they grant me room in paradise, there is space there—
As it happened, I am guilty of your praise.
(Ibid., p. 68)

11. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as), regarded as the founder of the Ja'fari school in Shiite Islam, and under whose teaching thousands acquired religious knowledge, is warmly praised in Ta'siri's poetry (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 71):

Ja'fari, whose name is Ja'fari—what is his rank as a master?
There was a hyacinth flower, her hyacinth and basil.
The garden of the world of God—who is Ja'far Sadiq?
The intelligence of his schoolchild is enough.
The world revives through his very name;
On the second morning, his proof and argument were sufficient…
(Ibid., p. 71)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he further praises him (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 125):

How did heaven become his place?
His son was the noble Imam Sadiq.
He found the Imamate as it had been assigned to Ja'far;
God's knowledge spread through him.
There is decisive proof for its diffusion,
Including Ḥadiths on principles and branches.
All knowledge is but a part of the teacher's breast;

before and after him ملك مالك، لشكر.

Solving Hanafi issues from their foundation—
The bright light of hidden knowledge came from him.
His food was granted through manifest divine giving,
Maliki, Shafi‘i, and Hanbali…
(Ibid., p. 125)

In his devotional expression, Ta’siri even compares Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (AS) with the prophets of the Children of Israel:

He saw a sea of eloquence;
The bowl of idols became his storm-ship.
If Moses were to behold the miracle of his grace,
The planks of his shop would become prosperous.
If Khidr had realized the source of his knowledge,
His fountain of life would be ashamed of its own moisture.
Joseph of Egypt, who was his kindred spirit—
The garden of Paradise became the corner of his prison.
The vision of Yathrib, which found light from his shrine,
The jest of Mojgan is the thorn of his Mughals.
No one should be deprived of his due rank in speech,
For the judge of his court is never slow in justice.
Whoever is outside your love, his Muslim crown is
But the wide dust of earth upon his faith.
If the Prophet’s praise and adoration were like this,
I praise you knowing that you are from that station.
(Ibid., p. 71)

12. Imam Musa ibn Ja‘far (as) in the Poetry of Ta’siri Tabrizi

In his elegy for Imam Musa al-Kazim (as), Ta’siri composed verses full of sorrow and grief, which clearly show his heartfelt love for the Imam (Ta’siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 72):

Write a poem that is worthy of your understanding,
The Arab Sultan, the foreign king, the pride of the nation.
According to Hasan, that noble Musa Kazim,
His loftiness attained the sky of dignity and greatness.
He spent his entire life in bitterness and sorrow;
The sea of shoes is enough to make me ashamed.
(Ibid., p. 72)

In the masnavi *Jahan-Nama*, he also describes the passing of this Imam (Ta’siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 126):

The burden of the noble Imam Sadiq was concluded;
Musa Kazim assumed the Imamate.
Moses and his Torah, his remembrance,

His vigilant guardianship of religion.
Like Joseph, the son of Rashid was sent to prison;
His life passed in prostration.
The tablet and pen of his school of wisdom,
The line of divine knowledge upon his forehead.
He recited the Qur'an to Baghdad;
The Prophet said, "Welcome to Yathrib."
Joseph and his Canaanite companion
Were in pain from the corner of his prison.
If the miracle of Moses is a dragon,
The veil of the hypocrite is a usurer.
(Ibid., p. 126)

13. Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Reza (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

In his elegy for the eighth Imam (as), Ta'siri describes the shrine and court of Imam al-Reza (as), revealing his heartfelt devotion and spiritual connection to that sacred place (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 74):

Whoever sees the Kaaba in black knows it;
The source of knowledge is originally from the shrine of Shah Reza.
His Majesty, the color of the Imamate of Ali ibn Musa,
Who, on the Day of Resurrection, is the eye of intercession?
Could not leave the soil without seeking healing for the seeker;
It is not without reason that Saturn's eye is blind.
He gave poison in grapes to his malicious enemy;
The vine has wept since that event until the Day of Judgment.
(Ibid., p. 74)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he likewise sings of this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 127):

He went to the world of eternity like Moses,
Ali Reza, the proof of truth.
The son of the seventh Imam, the guarantor of the title,
The fire of lineage—this is perfection.
Fascinating in glance at life and death,
His exile became the homeland of the universe.
Mim's lips were closed because of the news;
Ain Ayoun became a bloody sight.
(Ibid., p. 127)

14. Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri also expresses heartfelt devotion to Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (as), and at the beginning of his qasidas he composes one in the Imam's honor (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 76):

Muhammad Taqi, leader of the pious,

Fate itself cannot rival a man of his field.
If the court of Solomon should speak to the ant,
After the trial it will appear before his court.
A thousand springs of knowledge flow in that valley,
And thirsty Khidr follows his lips in the desert.
(Ibid., p. 76)

He also sings of this Imam in *Jahan-Nama* (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 127):

Reza saw him because he was far from us,
Muhammad's son, the guide.
Ajud Afaq, Taqi Javad,
Nine heavens stand above the burden of the learned.
He was pious for the sake of divine pleasure,
Free from disease and abstinent.
After the father's bath and farewell,
A breath came from Mada'in to Tus.
The pole of time, the center of the ages of knowledge,
The enlightened one who awakens to understanding…
(Ibid., p. 127)

15. Imam Hadi al-Naqi (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

This Shiite poet also composed a beautiful qasida in honor of Imam Hadi al-Naqi (as), alluding to the virtues of the Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 78):

The chosen one among the sons of Ali, Naqi, guide of the community,
May that great servant protect his followers.
The king of the heavens, full of lofty ambition,
Grants a gift to the sky itself…
O lord, may the dust of your threshold smell of life!
May your peaceful fasting prove your faith…
(Ibid., p. 78)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he also elegizes this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 128):

Paradise rose to the height of Taqi;
The proof of truth is Ali Naqi.
The leader of religion, the guide, the titled one,
Those who boast of their birth and lineage.
Gone forth from his boundless forgiveness,
Step by step in the path of his father and grandfather.
The creation of the world is like the sky and its moon,
Turning toward him from every side.
His undisguised generosity is immeasurable,

A hidden stone of sun-kissed emerald.
His throne, a dome full of light,
Envied by the celestial beings of his holy shrine.
(Ibid., p. 128)

16. Imam Hasan al-Askari (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri calls Imam Hasan al-Askari (as) the rightful Imam and composes an emotional qasida in his honor, reflecting Shiite beliefs concerning him (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 80):

Hasan Askari, Imam by right,
May God be his humanity and soul.
A king who reigns from on high,
The father of the master of time.
Palace, throne, and kingdom of religion are such—
The Throne, the Chair, and the heavens are…
(Ibid., p. 80)

In the masnavi *Jahan-Nama*, he likewise addresses this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 128):

It was as though he had died in the path of God;
Then the father of Hadi al-Din became Hasan.
Hujjat Yazdan, Hasan Askari,
Leader of the caravan of guidance.
The face of good character is good from pre-eternity;
He concluded the covenant of Imamate with two حسن.
That is Hasan from Hasan Mujtaba;
This is حسن from the creation of the chosen Hasan.
The Throne above his teaching seat,
The Holy Spirit is his holy witness…
(Ibid., p. 128)

In another elegiac section, he writes (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 82):

Idols are not worthy of the Imamate;
Whose station is at the threshold?
In the lampstand of the sacred mosque,
Nor is the sky itself a lamp.
No one can match your greatness
Except God, who knows all secrets.
The dust of your threshold—
May it brighten the eye of the beholder.
Every particle of dust that rises from sanctity
Is the water of the face of Golestan.
The green fortune of your lovers
May remain eternal by the water's edge.

O kings, the influence is little indeed:
Be among the servants of the threshold.
Though he is disobedient and guilty,
Let him still be a lover of the family.
The Lord of your grace does not approve
That one cast his eyes toward others.
(Ibid., p. 82)

17. The Imam of the Age (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Out of his special devotion to the Imam of the Age (as), Ta'siri composed a detailed *tarkib-band* and entitled it *Ramuz al-'Ashiqin*, displaying his poetic art across several pages (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 89):

It is time to benefit from the grace of God;
May the glad tidings reach the ears of the captives.
The Hashimite flood has departed from the valley of Batha;
Let the wind sweep away the thickets of religions.
Let the decisive proof emerge from the shore,
So that when morning comes, truth and falsehood may be distinguished.
Fear of the changing state of the times—
The sun rises from the west.
To those awaiting the glad tidings of his possible appearance,
It was far better than the glad tidings of Paradise.
(Ibid., p. 89)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he again describes the Promised One (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 128):

The army of lineage departed from this world,
The heir to the religion of the noble Prophet.
Mahdi, Hadi, king of pure lineage,
Awaited, standing, and possessor of the title.
Hujjat and Salih are among his other names;
Judgment upon the horizons comes from his Prophet.
The bearer of the message of the eleventh light,
A detailed and concise decree.
Turned to every miracle like Mustafa,
The heir to the legacy of all the prophets…
(Ibid., p. 128)

He also speaks of the occultation of that Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 129):

Like mist and the sun behind the clouds,
His absence is a blessing more abundant than water.
O noble king of illustrious lineage!
A legacy both from the Prophet and from the Guardian.

We are all helpless and distressed,
Because you are a secret to whom we may turn.
Since your face went out of sight,
The lament "there is no effect" arose.
How long will you remain behind the veil while we remain veiled?
Show your face so that the sun may shine.
How long will this lofty sphere endure?
The neck of the whole world is under a noose.
Come and make our hearts rejoice;
Break the chains and free the world.
(Ibid., p. 129)

18. Conclusion

The *Divan* of Ta'siri Tabrizi is a comprehensive example of Shiite poetry in the Safavid era and reflects the beliefs and thoughts of its age like a mirror. The poet uses poetry as a means of expressing his spiritual attachments and, above all, his devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt (as). His qasidas are largely devoted to the praise of the Imams, especially the story of Karbala. In addition, he also addresses the two Safavid kings of his era, great men of his time, and even places of interest. In the various sections of his poetry, he consistently combines such themes with praise of the Fourteen Infallibles (as), and through his use of Qur'anic verses, narrations, and historical events, he is often able to narrate religious episodes effectively (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).

In his 1,397 ghazals, he also presents beautiful depictions of love and mysticism under the influence of Hafez, Saeb, and other poets. In elegy, he followed Mohtasham Kashani and achieved success. It would be appropriate for his Karbala poems, which are numerous and significant, to be examined in a separate study so that his innovations in this field may be more fully appreciated. Although he has sometimes been described as a fanatical Shiite, it is more appropriate to regard him as a sincere Shiite poet and to emphasize his intellectual and mystical teachings. Theological, Sufi, romantic, and religious terms abound in his poetry. As he says, "I am worthy of your death, but I regret it," which suggests that he passed through stages of spiritual journeying in his life—from hardship to government service and later to mystical discipline. He experimented with various forms of Persian poetry and was, to a considerable degree, successful. The essence of his poetry lies in Shiite beliefs and devotion to the Imams (as), which he expressed and explained well, leaving behind a rich collection of Shiite literature and poetry.

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Scientific Quarterly
Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings
Vol. 3, Issue 4, Winter 2026

Explanation the Concept of the "Son of God" in the Qur'an and the Bible from a Novel Perspective: A Historical-Analytical and Dialogical Approach

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(Received: May 10, 2026, Accepted: May 26, 2026)

Abstract:

This study presents a comparative and analytical examination of the concept of the "Son of God" in the theological traditions of Islam and Christianity, with particular emphasis on the Qur'anic and Biblical texts. The primary objective is to elucidate the semantic development and historical–cultural contexts of this term, as well as its role in shaping divergent—and at times conflicting—theological discourses between these two Abrahamic religions. The central issue addressed in this research is the identification of the roots of differing interpretations concerning the status of Jesus (peace be upon him). While orthodox Christian theology understands the "Son of God" as the second person of the Trinity and consubstantial with the Father, the Qur'an categorically rejects any attribution of offspring to God and presents Jesus instead as a chosen prophet of God. Employing a library-based methodology alongside a historical–analytical and dialogical approach, this study demonstrates that the early use of this term in Jewish texts—and even in certain passages of the New Testament, particularly the Synoptic Gospels—functioned primarily as an honorific or metaphorical designation. The transformation of this concept toward the full divinization of Jesus was largely influenced by Pauline interpretations and was later formalized at the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) under the influence of both political and theological factors. In contrast, while the Qur'an affirms the miraculous birth of Jesus, it does not regard it as evidence of divinity. The study concludes that a historical re-examination of this term, along with an understanding of the contexts that shaped contemporary interpretations, can help reduce misunderstandings and provide a basis for constructive and respectful dialogue between Islam and Christianity, without overlooking their fundamental theological differences.

Keywords: Son of God, Holy Qur'an, The Bible, Theological History, Interfaith Dialogue.

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Statement of the Problem

The term "Son of God" in religious texts, particularly in the Bible, encompasses a wide spectrum of meanings, ranging from references to kings and the children of Israel to the specific meaning of the Messiah in the New Testament. The Holy Qur'an also addresses this title, but it negates its divine implication, acknowledging it only in a metaphorical or honorific sense for Jesus (PBUH). These conceptual differences not only provide a foundation for a more accurate understanding of Jesus's status in Abrahamic religions but also serve as a starting point for interfaith dialogue.

The present study, employing a historical-analytical and dialogical approach, examines the semantic and practical evolutions of this term in the Bible and the Qur'an, striving to elucidate its theological and cultural similarities and differences. The main research question is: How is the term "Son of God" utilized in the Biblical and Qur'anic texts, and what are its implications for understanding the theology and the status of Jesus within each religion?

Literature Review

Studies related to the term "Son of God" have primarily been conducted within the two contexts of the Bible and the Qur'an. In Biblical texts, research has mostly focused on the historical and semantic analysis of the term. For instance, Ehrman (2014) demonstrates how the title "Son of God" in early Christianity evolved from a metaphorical concept or a special status into a denotation of divinity. Interdisciplinary studies, such as Son of God: Divine Sonship in Jewish and Christian Antiquity, also indicate that this term has differing applications in Jewish and Christian texts; however, these studies do not encompass its application in the Qur'an and Islamic exegesis (Allen, 2019).

Semantic analysis by Smith (2024) shows that the meaning of the "Son of God" changes depending on the linguistic and cultural context, yet it lacks a comparative investigation between Biblical and Qur'anic texts.

In the field of Islamic studies, classical and contemporary sources have analyzed the meaning of the term in the Qur'an. For example, Tabatabai (2008, Vol. 9, p. 486) interprets the term "Walad Allah" (Child of God) metaphorically, denoting a special human status rather than literal procreation, and Fakhr al-Razi (1993, p. 234) similarly considers it to signify the special status of prophets. These studies demonstrate strength in their exegetical and theological analyses, but they typically do not engage in interdisciplinary comparisons with Biblical texts.

Upon reviewing the existing literature, the major research gaps are as follows:

1. A predominant focus on Christian and Jewish texts, with limited comparative research between the Bible and the Qur'an.

2. The absence of an interdisciplinary analysis encompassing text, history, semantics, and theology.

3. A scarcity of modern research that incorporates an Islamic perspective and comparative analysis alongside Biblical texts.

The present study, utilizing a historical-analytical and dialogical approach, intends to bridge these gaps and comparatively elucidate the meaning of the term "Son of God" in the Qur'an and the Bible.

1) The "Son of God" Before the Bible

One of the earliest uses of the term "Son of Man" dates back to antiquity in the Near East. During that era, this term was used to express the nature and diversity of the relationships between humans or the world and God or gods. In this application, one of the most significant referents for the "Son of Man" was one who attained the position of kingship. By attributing the title "Son of Man" to a king, his special relationship with God and his divine persona were understood. The Pharaoh also considered himself the Son of God (New Catholic encyclopedia, 2003, p. 311).

2) The "Son of God" in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, similarly to the New Testament, there is no explicit or implicit mention of a triune God consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, in the Jewish Bible, there are numerous instances of attributing children to God. These passages were written in various historical periods, sometimes centuries apart, and even disregarding the issue of time, these phrases possess various meanings depending on their contextual placement. They sometimes refer to the Messiah, sometimes to the children of God addressing Israel (Exodus 4:22), sometimes to the king of the Davidic dynasty (2 Samuel 7:14), and sometimes to angels (Daniel 3:25).

This meaning was not limited to a specific referent and was used in reference to a number of individuals descended from Adam, the father of mankind, as well as the entire nation of Israel: "...Israel is my son, my firstborn" (Exodus 4:22).

Genesis 6:2 states: "The sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." Job 1:6 also says: "One day the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh..." Additionally, Job 38:7 refers to the sons of God: "...and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

In the Bible, David and his successors are specifically called by the title of the Son of God: "I will be his father, and he will be my son..." (2 Samuel 7:14).

As is clearly evident in the aforementioned verses and other Biblical passages, not only did the Israelites consider themselves sons of God, but it was Yahweh Himself who, in many instances, called the children of Israel His children. This indicates a mutual affection between God and God's people, to the extent that, for example, if Pharaoh does not let God's sons go, God will, in response, take vengeance upon the sons of the Pharaoh's people: "I tell you, let my son go, so that he may worship me; and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn" (Exodus 4:22-23).

In explaining the usage of this term in the Old Testament, one can refer to McGrath's interpretation of the term "Son of God," which he defines as "belonging to God," thereby attributing a more general meaning to it (McGrath, 2013, p. 533).

3) The "Son of God" in Late Judaism

In late Judaism, unlike traditional Judaism, the term "Son of God" was more closely associated with apocalyptic and revelatory literature. In this literature, the Jews were constantly awaiting their savior. The Jews, who had become accustomed to God's intervention in their lives following their deliverance from Egypt and similar miracles, were now awaiting the coming of the Messiah King to provide them with a glorious life based on the supremacy of the Jews and the nation of Israel (Weaver, 2002, p. 64). Therefore, naturally in this period, the term "Son of Man" was used more frequently for the Messiah; although even in this period, the Messiah was not the exclusive referent of this term (New Catholic Encyclopaedia, 2003, p. 312).

4) The "Son of God" in the New Testament

In the New Testament, two individuals are specifically called the Son of God: Adam and Jesus Christ (Luke 3:23, John 3:16, John 6:40, John 9:35-38, Mark 14:61, Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5, Luke 9:35, Luke 3:22, Luke 1:30-35, and John 1:34).

The New Testament verses that call Jesus the Son of God are expressed in the following forms:

- Verses in which Jesus calls himself the Son of God or refers to God as his Father: Mark 14:61, Mark 13:23, Luke 10:21–23, John 3:16, John 6:40, John 9:35–38, John 10:26–36.

- Verses in which a heavenly voice, angels, or John the Baptist call Christ the Son of God: Matthew 3:17, Matthew 16:5, Luke 9:35, Luke 1:30–35, Luke 3:22, John 1:34.

- Verses in which ordinary people call Jesus the Son of God, and he either confirms it, remains silent, or gives an ambiguous response: Matthew 26:44–63, Luke 22:70, Matthew 14:33.

- Verses in which the authors of the New Testament call Jesus by the title of the Son of God: Galatians 1:9, 1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 John 2:22–25, 1 John 4:14–15.

- Verses in which others call God the Father of Christ: Romans 11:6, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Peter 1:3.

In the New Testament, God is called Father in numerous instances (Matthew 6:9, Mark 11:25–26, John 20:17).

Furthermore, in some instances in the New Testament, God is considered the Father of Christians (John 1:12, Galatians 3:26, Romans 8:14–17, Matthew 6:14–15, Matthew 6:3–4).

God is also called the Father of all humans (Ephesians 4:6).

God is the Father of the righteous and the upright (Matthew 5:9, Luke 6:35, Matthew 5:44–45).

Soleimani Ardestani considers the application of "Father" for God in the Old Testament to be metaphorical; however, in the New Testament, this concept becomes different. The use of "Father" for God in relation to all people or a specific group of them is metaphorical; sometimes the criterion for being a son is obedience to the Father, sometimes it is creation, and sometimes it is love (Soleimani Ardestani, 1999, pp. 31–34).

The question that arises here is: why did God send His son to earth in human form?

The New Testament provides two answers to this question:

1. He sent His son to be an atonement for sins (1 John 2:1–2, Romans 5:18, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 1:5, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 1 John 4:10, Hebrews 9:26, Galatians 1:4).

2. He sent His son to save humanity from the burden of the law (Romans 9:30–32, Romans 7:1–4, Galatians 2:21, Galatians 4:4–5).

To examine the concept of the title "Son of God" in the New Testament more deeply, the premise must be established that the New Testament consists of two parts: the first part includes the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), the Book of Acts, the Epistle of James, the two Epistles of Peter, and the Epistle of Jude; in this section, Jesus does not possess a divine aspect. The second part includes the Gospel of John, the three epistles attributed to him, and the thirteen epistles attributed to Paul. The use of the title "Son of God" in the three Synoptic Gospels carries an ordinary meaning, indicating popularity and honour, and this usage was common during their time. Evidence for this can be found in identical events that are repeated across the three Gospels, where the title "Son of God" is omitted or replaced with another phrase (Mark 15:39, Matthew 28:54, Luke 23:47 / Matthew 13:15–17, Mark 8:27–31, Luke 18:9–32 / Mark 26:63–66, Mark 14:61–64, Luke 22:71).

The title "Son of Man" is not used in the epistles of Paul and John, while the title "Son of God" has the highest frequency of use in the epistles of John. Soleimani attributes this to the passage of time and the eventual establishment of the title "Son of God" (Soleimani, 1999, pp. 102–108). Furthermore, in the Gospel of Mark, which is the oldest Gospel, this title is used in very few instances, which are also frequently accompanied by ambiguity or doubt (ibid., pp. 108–114).

In the book The Son of God in the Qur'an and the Testaments, Soleimani Ardestani divides the Gospel into two sections—the "Human Jesus" and the "Divine Jesus"—and asserts that the metaphorical use of the title "Son of God" for Jesus Christ is not identical in both parts of the New Testament. In the first part, although his sonship differs from that of the general public, it remains a type of ordinary metaphor in light of his fatherless birth, chosenness, or obedience to God. However, in the second part, with expressions such as the "only begotten son," Jesus's sonship becomes entirely unique (John 1:14 and 18, John 3:16 and 18, John 9:4). Beyond that, in certain instances, Jesus is called God, which outwardly contradicts his status as a son (Philippians 2:5–7). Soleimani notes that Christian scholars' interpretation of the title "Son of God" in the New Testament aligns with the "Divine Jesus" section. Even though various parts of the text refer to Jesus's human attributes, scholars justify these instances by appealing to the union of the two natures—divine and human—within him, viewing them as non-contradictory (Soleimani Ardestani, 1999, pp. 43–54).

Quoting Elliot, Kashani states that when Christians speak of the divine aspect of Jesus Christ, they refer to him as the Son; however, this term implies neither that God has a spouse and Christ was born physically, nor is it a merely honorific title. Furthermore, the term "Son" does not imply that Jesus is a created being or has a temporal beginning; rather, the Son is God in the exact same sense, and the Son, like the Father, has been God from eternity. Nevertheless, without God the Father, the personal existence of the Son within the Godhead would be impossible, as the entirety of the Son's existence derives from the Father. This relationship is eternal and everlasting, and one should not assume that Christians call Jesus the Son simply because he was born into the world as a human. Likewise, being the Son does not equate to occupying a lower rank than the Father (Kashani, 2013, pp. 51–52).

The doctrine of Christology in Christianity has undergone a profound evolutionary process, and examining this trajectory can yield a relative understanding of Jesus Christ's status and the concept of the Son of God within Christian belief.

5) The Son of God in Christianity

As previously mentioned, the Gospel consists of two components: the human Jesus and the divine Jesus. The aspects concerning the divine Jesus are predominantly attributed to Paul and John. Biblical accounts regarding Paul indicate that he was a Jew who had not seen Jesus, yet suddenly claimed to have encountered him and converted to Christianity; subsequently, a significant portion of the New Testament epistles was attributed to him. Nevertheless, in his writings, Paul explicitly opposed the apostles and engaged in disputes with them (Galatians 1:11–12; Galatians 2:6–11). He also dismissed the necessity of the religious Law (Torah), considering faith to be sufficient.

Regarding John, given the temporal distance between him and Christ, it cannot be stated with certainty whether he personally witnessed the life of Jesus or merely expanded upon Paul's ideas (Soleimani Ardestani, 1999, pp. 75–83).

Paul does not consider Christ to be the product of a supernatural birth; rather, he believes in the presence of a divine and eternal element within Jesus, presenting him as the incarnation of the pre-existent Christ and the Son of God (Wolfson, 2010, p. 189). Similarly, in John's writings, there is no clear evidence supporting a belief in the supernatural birth of Christ, as he primarily focused on elaborating and expanding upon Paul's teachings (Ibid., pp. 203–204).

Soleimani views the ultimate outcome of Paul's activities and teachings as the theological foundation for the "divine Jesus" aspect of the Bible (Ibid., pp. 86–91). The significance of this development in the historical evolution of the Christian religion is so profound that scholars such as John B. Noss and Joan O'Grady consider Paul the second founder of Christianity (Noss, 2003, p. 613; O'Grady, 2005, p. 47).

Paul was a zealous Jew who converted to Christianity following a revelation and dedicated his efforts to its expansion. Crucially, however, Paul was a figure speaking within a Jewish milieu that was gravitating toward Christianity. Therefore, the terminology he employed required a strict alignment with Jewish beliefs. Given that Jews invoked the one God twice daily, it is highly implausible that he could have introduced polytheistic concepts and terminology among newly converted Jews without facing opposition. What is evident in Paul's written literature is the use of the very same prevalent Jewish terminology and discourse. For instance, as previously noted, the term "Son of God" was customary among Jews and had been used repeatedly in the Old Testament. Wolfson argues that Paul, in harmony with the traditional view prevalent at the time—which held that the Messiah is the one whom the God of the Bible refers to

as "my Son"—identifies Christ as the very Son of God (Wolfson, 2010, p. 186).

Indeed, in Pauline literature, Jesus is not the only one called the Son of God; other believers are also referred to as sons of God. According to Christian theologians, the difference between these two usages lies in the fact that the believers' status as sons of God stems from their adoption, whereas Jesus's status as the Son of God is due to the fact that he is God's own Son. However, it is impossible that Paul considered the incarnation as a kind of supernatural birth. In fact, there are expressions in Paul's works regarding the birth of Jesus which, if we knew from external evidence and context that Paul believed in the supernatural birth of Jesus, we could interpret as meaning a supernatural birth. In and of themselves, however, they merely signify that Jesus embodied within himself a divine and eternal element—namely, the pre-existent Christ—who was conventionally considered the Son of God (Ibid., p. 198).

The term is also utilized in the Gospel of John and warrants further examination. For example, in the thirteenth verse of the prologue to the Gospel of John, which describes the supernatural birth of Jesus, it states that he was born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. However, some Christian commentators believe that the correct reading of "born" should refer back to the twelfth verse, which uses the phrase "children of God." In other passages of John, no evidence can be found indicating a supernatural birth linked to his status as the Son of God; rather, it appears he employs the phrase "Son of God" in the same manner as the Hebrew Bible (Ibid., pp. 202–203).

Some proponents of attributing the title "Son of God" to Jesus argue that, apart from Paul's writings, in the Synoptic Gospels, although Jesus did not call himself the Son of God, he did not reject the title either (Matthew 16:13–17). Yet, a closer look at this passage reveals that Jesus referred to himself as the "Son of Man," not the "Son of God"! Nevertheless, they still infer that Jesus was not opposed to being considered the Son of God.

In response, considering the aforementioned evidence, one can argue that Jesus's silence in this context can naturally be attributed to the traditional Jewish understanding of the term, an understanding that would not have been considered unusual by Jesus.

Aslan articulates John Hick's argument by stating that the historical Jesus did not perceive or interpret himself as God or God the Son incarnate. Furthermore, Hick believes that if Jesus had been addressed in this manner during his own time, he would actually have considered such a statement blasphemous. He notes that while nothing can be said with absolute certainty regarding Jesus's own self-understanding, the available evidence

has led historians of that era to conclude with a very high degree of consensus that Jesus did not view himself as God incarnate. Hick argues that from the fifth century to the late nineteenth century, Christians generally believed that Jesus considered himself God the Son, the second person of the divine Trinity.

After examining the impact of cultural conditions on scriptures, Hick posits that divine titles and the term "Son of God" were repeatedly used for heroes, emperors, and kings during the Roman period and the New Testament era. Therefore, it is entirely probable that Jesus was perceived strictly as a figure belonging to that category. Consequently, Jesus's prophetic mission and character might have been instrumental in inspiring such metaphorical language. However, the crucial point for Hick is that both "Son of God" and other titles attributing divine characteristics to an individual were widely used in a metaphorical sense in the society where Jesus lived (Aslan, 2006, pp. 327–330).

For Christian thinkers, especially in the pre-modern era, proving the divinity of Jesus has always been a difficult and arduous task. The notion that Christ is the only true Son of God was not accepted by many Christian scholars from the very beginning. If Christ was to be both God and the Son of God, while simultaneously being human, the union between his divinity and humanity presented a profound conceptual difficulty—an issue that provoked sectarian conflicts within Christian churches for many years. Yet, one of the central arguments employed by these thinkers relies precisely on this designation of the "Son of God" (McGrath, 2006, p. 357). This expression only gained widespread prominence through the surviving works and documents of Paul and the terminology utilized in the Gospel of John, which this research will examine in further detail.

The Divinity of the Son of God

Pauline Christology, which is based on Christ being the Son of God, led to the creation of many sects among Christians in the early centuries. In the early centuries of Christianity, Christ was considered merely a human being. Over time, the Church deemed the purely human conception of Christ a heresy and propagated the idea that Christ was only human in appearance and in reality, possessed a divine nature. At the beginning of the fourth century, a major controversy arose in the Christian world between Arius, a Libyan bishop, and Athanasius, a disciple of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria. Ultimately, during a council known as Nicaea, with the direct intervention of Constantine—who had little knowledge of theological debates—Athanasius's view was accepted as the official ruling of the Church. The outcome of this dispute strengthened the foundations of

the Christian Trinity, which continues to surround the Christian world to this day (Kashani, 2013, pp. 54-101).

One of Arius's goals was to prove the oneness and simplicity of God, who, being pure spirit, could not have direct contact with the material world. Therefore, a mediator was necessary; this mediator was the son, who, although brought into existence before the beginning of time, was still a creature. Arius insisted on affirming the oneness and immutability of God, while emphasizing the humanity of Christ and his capacity for change and suffering. In contrast, Athanasius articulated the purpose of the incarnation as the salvation of humanity by someone who shares in the very essence of God. In his view, Christ had to be unique and qualitatively different from a normal human being, even one who had received divine grace. For this reason, the son had to be of the same substance as the father (Grady, 2005, pp. 150-153).

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity did not undergo fundamental changes during the Middle Ages, but as Christian society entered the era of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, this doctrine, like other aspects of human life, became subject to revision, reform, and rationalism. In the contemporary century, among intellectuals and newly emerging Christian sects, the theory of the Trinity has been severely criticized and is sometimes perceived as a manifestation of blasphemy (Kashani, 2013, pp. 101-104).

Conversely, individuals like John Hick, in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, believe that it emphasizes oneness just as much as it emphasizes Threeness. He considers this doctrine to be highly important and fundamental for safeguarding the doctrine of the Incarnation, which affirms the divinity of Christ. Hick, advocating for the views of Baillie, favors aligning the doctrine of the Incarnation with modern life. He sees the result of this effort as compatibility and peaceful communication with other religions (Hick, 2006, pp. 86-90).

Will Durant, regarding the Trinity, states that the Church Fathers failed in their attempt to present the Trinity rationally and ultimately, like Athanasius, conceded that reason must bow before the mystery of the Trinity (Durant, 1999, p. 770).

Kashani, in criticizing the Church Fathers' claim of a shared essence between Christ and God, refers to 1 John 4:15 to argue that the union between God and the Son is metaphorical. Furthermore, to explain Christ's special characteristics, including the resurrection mentioned in John 2:18-22, he cites John 10:18 to describe it as a gift from God, rather than proof of Jesus' divinity (Kashani, 2013, pp. 130-131 and 182-183).

Other miracles of Christ are also used by the Church as evidence for the claim of his divinity, but each of these can be critiqued and refuted through

reflection and cross-referencing with other verses. Many verses can be cited that demonstrate the distinct and separate identities of Christ and God, including John 5:19 [Note: Persian text contains a typo as 91:5], Romans 11:36, John 10:25, Mark 13:32, and John 20:17.

Christian Sects Opposing the Divinity of Jesus

Several groups and sects have existed in the history of Christianity that have denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, recognizing him not as God, but as a prophet, a moral teacher, or a heavenly being (but not of the same essence as God). The most important of these groups are:

Unitarians

The term Unitarian originally referred to Christians who reject the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Their defining characteristic is a firm belief in the absolute oneness of God and the rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity. They consider Jesus to be a chosen human being, the Son of God in a metaphorical sense rather than a divine essence, and a great prophet or an outstanding moral teacher, but they do not recognize him as God incarnate. Unitarians believe in God as the sole creator of the universe, and although there is a wide spectrum of views regarding the full humanity or divinity of Jesus, it is widely accepted that his status is not equal to God. Unitarian churches and some liberal Protestant churches that do not accept the doctrine of the Trinity in its traditional form fall under this category (Gottfried, 2023, p. 6).

Arians

Arianism, formed by the followers of Arius, denied the divinity of Christ and believed that only the Father is the eternal and true God, because only He, in the fullest sense of the word, is uncreated. Regarding the Son, the Logos, who became incarnate in Christ, Arius taught that since Christ came into existence through creation, he could not be God. He had to be a being created before all other creatures, but nevertheless, created by the will of God like other creatures. Regarding the Holy Spirit, Arius believed that he was a creature or a characteristic or attribute of God. This doctrine was non-Trinitarian and ultimately destructive to the entire Christian faith (Moga, 2019, pp. 21-23).

Arianism had an enormous impact on the early Church because it forced the Church to define orthodoxy through a set of creeds, although the Church eventually triumphed over Arianism (Shaibu, 2013, p. 52).

Socinians

By the year 1600 AD, a radical Protestant school called Socinianism was founded by Socinus, which attacked Christian orthodoxy. This movement was the prelude to the emergence of freethinking. Although the followers of Socinus accepted the Bible, they did not consider it flawless

and saw many errors within it. In their view, whatever was contrary to reason or common logic, or was considered morally useless, could not be divine inspiration. Among this group's most important criticisms of the Bible were the denial of the divinity of Jesus and the belief that original sin was contrary to reason. Ultimately, the ideas of the Socinians laid the foundation for modern Unitarian thought (Hordern, 1989, p. 34).

Mormons

The founder of this sect, Joseph Smith, claimed in New York in the 1820s that God had appeared to him and told him that all existing churches had gone astray and that he had a mission to restore the true church. He also published a book containing the history of an ancient people inhabiting the American continent and the appearance of Jesus Christ among them, entitled the Book of Mormon. Mormons reject the Trinity and believe that the three divine figures (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) are separate entities and are united only in purpose. They also believe that God Himself was once a human being who attained divine status. In addition to the Bible, they consider the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price to be sacred scriptures (Johnson, 2022, p. 15).

Jehovah's Witnesses

The Jehovah's Witnesses sect was founded by Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). Through studying and reflecting on the Bible around 1872 AD, he concluded that Christ would return secretly in 1874 to prepare the ground for the establishment of God's kingdom and reign. His followers, initially based in the United States, were at first known by various names, including the Watchmen, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, or Russellites. Later, in 1931 AD, Rutherford named them "Jehovah's Witnesses". Jehovah's Witnesses believe in only one God and, since 1931, have emphasized that God must only be called Jehovah. They deny the doctrine of the Trinity, considering it polytheism. In their view, Trinitarian Christianity distorts biblical verses during translation and alters their meanings to fit its own perspective. Relying on the original texts of the Old Testament and carefully examining the vocabulary of the New Testament through Greek literature, they consistently deny the divinity of Christ and consider him to be a spiritual creature (Tohidi, 2014).

The Son of God in the Qur’an and Islamic Exegesis

Prophet Jesus (Peace Be Upon Him) is a chosen prophet of God, and his religion and its followers are accepted in Islam. His miraculous creation without a father is similar to the creation of Adam, and the Qur’an states this in several verses, including Al Imran 59 and Al-Mu'minun 50. The Qur’an also forbids Christians from considering Jesus as divine, and Jesus

introduces himself as a prophet and servant of God (An-Nisa 171, Al-Ma'idah 116-117, Maryam 36).

However, Jesus speaks of the "Son of Man" as a common phrase. It should be noted that Jesus spoke Aramaic, while the Bible was recorded in Greek. In Aramaic, the word for "Son of Man" is written as Bar Enash, and in Hebrew as Ben Adam, both of which mean "Son of Man," and in Aramaic or Hebrew, they are equivalent to "man" or "human." In support of this, one can refer to Surah At-Tawbah, verse 30, which states that the people of Jesus imitated an ancient belief that called Ezra (Uzair) the son of God (Peerzada and Jamali, 2018, p. 940).

Allamah Tabatabai in Tafsir al-Mizan regarding verse 59 of Al Imran says that the creation of Jesus, like the creation of Adam, is extraordinary, and therefore one should not speak of him beyond what is said about Adam; just as Adam was created without a father and a mother, Jesus was also created without a father (Tabatabai, 2008, Vol. 3, p. 332).

Islamic exegeses such as Al-Mizan and Tabarsi's Al-Ihtijaj emphasize that Jesus is a guided and distinguished human being, but he does not possess divinity, and union with God is impossible. The Prophet of Islam (pbuh) demonstrated that the expression "Son of God" in the Qur’an means honor and respect, not divinity, and this argument prompted Christians to reconsider their belief (Tabatabai, 2008; Tabarsi, 2002).

Tafsir Nemooneh states that the Qur’an's strictness towards the People of the Book, including Christians, is due to their deviation from monotheism and their inclination towards a kind of polytheism in belief and worship. Christians consider Jesus as the literal son of God, and this title is not merely out of respect, and the Qur’an compares this to the deviations of earlier idolaters. The roots of such beliefs can be seen in the beliefs of ancient India, China, and Egypt, and many of the teachings of the Torah and the Gospel share similarities with the superstitions of Buddhists and Brahmins. The Qur’an revealed this truth 14 centuries ago (Makarem Shirazi, 2001, Vol. 7, pp. 361-363).

Similarly, in Al-Tafsir Al-Muyassar, it is stated: Certainly, the Jews became polytheists when they assumed Ezra was the son of God, just as the Christians became polytheists when they claimed the Messiah was the son of God. And they had fabricated these sayings themselves (Group of Scholars, 2009, p. 191).

Rashid Rida explains in Tafsir al-Manar that those who consider Jesus the "Son of God" base their argument on his miraculous creation without a father. However, this argument is contradicted by the creation of Adam without a father, demonstrating that Jesus is also a guided and extraordinary human being, but not the son of God (Rashid Rida, 1990, Vol. 10, p. 322).

Ibn Atiyyah and Ibn Abbas have explained that only a limited group of Jews, including four religious' leaders, made the claim that Ezra was the "Son of God." According to Al-Naqqash, none of these individuals remain, and their lineage has become extinct (Al-Andalusi, 2001, Vol. 6, p. 461).

Misconceptions Regarding the Denial of the Son of God

The Qur'an's narrative of the birth of Jesus, despite similarities with the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, possesses its own independent and non-historical structure. Instead of reconstructing a biography, the Qur'an presents Jesus within a theological and ethical framework, portraying him like other great prophets. The most complete account is found in Surah Maryam, which details the birth and Jesus speaking in the cradle; other verses merely refer back to this narrative (Waqas, 2021).

According to the research of Abdul Ghafur and colleagues, the Qur'an, which refers to Jesus 24 times as the son of Mary, considers him an ordinary human being but a divine prophet, not the son of God. In the surahs Al Imran and Maryam, the Qur'an emphasizes the chosen status of Mary and the humanity of Jesus, addressing him as Ibn Maryam (Son of Mary). Consequently, although the Qur'an accepts the virgin birth, it rejects the divinity of Jesus and considers his creation easier than the creation of Adam without a father and mother (Abdul Ghafur, 2019).

Unlike certain Christian narratives, the Qur'an provides little information about the childhood and youth of Jesus apart from his miraculous birth, remaining silent about his "unknown years," much like the Gospels. Most of the statements regarding Jesus are expressed in the form of divine monologues, and Jesus himself engages in dialogue only in rare instances, usually with the presence and supervision of God. A portion of these dialogues takes place in the post-resurrection context, where Jesus is introduced as a witness against those who fell into polytheism (shirk) in his name. A significant example is in Surah Al-Ma'idah (116–118), wherein Jesus emphasizes that he never called people to the divinity of himself or his mother, and was solely a caller to the worship of the One God (Waqas, 2021).

Based on historical evidence, Jesus was born among the Jewish people and the "People of the Book," and a divine book named the "Injil" (Gospel) was revealed to him. The Qur'an, which uses the word Injil 12 times, introduces it as a sacred and guiding book, similar to the Torah. According to multiple verses in Al Imran, Al-Ma'idah, and other surahs, Jews and Christians are respectively referred to as the "People of the Torah" and the "People of the Injil." The Qur'an emphasizes that these two books still contain a portion of divine revelation, even though they have undergone alterations over time (Abdul Ghafur, 2019).

One of the most significant factors of disagreement between Islam and Christianity is their different perspectives on Jesus Christ. Western Christianity considers him the Son of God, whereas Islam emphasizes that Jesus is a chosen human, a servant, and a prophet of God. This theological difference has been a point of contention for centuries. Seyyed Hossein Nasr also identifies the issue of Jesus as one of the seven main topics that have consistently caused tension between the two religions; these topics include: the nature of God, the finality of religion, the status of scripture, sacred language, sacred conditions, the interpretation of the life of Jesus, and the perspectives of Christians and Muslims on modernity and postmodernity (Nasr, 1995).

Citing Qur'anic verses, Tony Costa argues that the title "servant of God" for Jesus signifies Islam's distancing from the Christian belief in the "Son of God." He believes the Qur'an critiques the Christian understanding of Jesus being the Son in a literal sense—meaning God having a wife and child. He states that based on this understanding, the Qur'an accuses Christians of believing in three gods (Father, Mother, and Son) and forbids them from saying "three." Costa concludes that this specific interpretation is why the Qur'an rejects the concept of the Son of God (Costa, 2015).

A crucial point that this researcher overlooks is that the reference to "three" in Qur'anic exegesis points to the Christian Trinity itself: God, the Holy Spirit, and Christ. A belief that is met with ambiguity even among its own adherents is naturally controversial to non-believers. However, in this case, the Qur'an directly references this specific Christian doctrine and rejects the concept of the Son within the context of the Trinity. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, it accepts the concept when viewed from a position of special respect and servitude.

Despite using terms such as the "Word" and "Spirit" for Jesus, the Qur'an forbids Christians from considering him divine and emphasizes that Jesus is only a prophet of God. It commands that one should not say "three," because God is One (Nisa: 171). The Qur'an then considers Jesus's miracles as confirmation of his prophethood. Harmakaputra notes that this perspective differs from Christianity, because in the Christian tradition, the miracles, life events, and resurrection of Jesus are perceived as signs of him being the Son of God (Harmakaputra, 2013).

Despite some misunderstandings regarding the Son of God, the Qur'an maintains its clear perspective. Osama Qatrani proposed the hypothesis of a dual Messiah (Messiah son of Joseph and Messiah son of Mary), but Islam rejects this idea theologically, considering it a misinterpretation of the divine promise. In Islam, there is only one Messiah: Jesus, son of Mary, is

a guided human being, miraculously born, not crucified, and will have a justice-oriented and monotheistic return (Qatrani, 2025).

Conclusion

The present historical-analytical study, by examining the concept of the "Son of God" in the Holy Qur'an and the Bible, has demonstrated how the transition of this concept from its original linguistic and cultural context into complex theological frameworks over the centuries has led to fundamental misunderstandings and a deadlock in interfaith dialogue.

The findings of this research regarding the Old Testament and Jewish traditions indicate that within the context of Semitic culture and languages, the use of the word "son" (as the son of God) lacked any biological or ontological implications. This title was entirely metaphorical, honorary, and relational, utilized to denote ultimate proximity, chosenness, and obedience. As seen in the Old Testament texts, this term was applied to angels, Israelite kings (such as King David), and even the entire chosen nation.

However, an examination of the concept's evolution in the New Testament reveals that as early Christianity emerged from its Semitic roots and entered the Hellenistic (Greco-Roman) world, the meaning of the word underwent a profound transformation. Under the influence of Pauline theology and the need to explain the status of Jesus to non-Jewish audiences, the concept of the "Son of God" gradually escalated from a metaphorical position to an ontological and divine reality. This trajectory of theological evolution ultimately reached its zenith at the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), where the divinity of Christ as the "consubstantial Son with the Father" was established as an official canon and inviolable doctrine; an event that became the definitive and fundamental point of divergence between Christian theology and Islamic monotheism.

In contrast, an analysis of the verses of the Holy Qur'an shows that Islam, with a reformist approach aimed at safeguarding transcendent monotheism (*Tawḥīd*), strictly negates any attribution of the term "son" to God, whether in a physical sense or within a polytheistic framework. By unequivocally rejecting the concept of divine procreation, the Qur'an presents the miraculous birth of Jesus (pbuh) from the Virgin Mary not as proof of his divinity, but as a sign (*Āyah*) of the boundless power of the Creator and a confirmation of his exalted prophetic status. In fact, while rejecting the title of "son," the Qur'an establishes the unparalleled position of Jesus within the revelatory system by granting him supreme titles such as the "Word of God" (*Kalimatullāh*) and the "Spirit of God" (*Rūḥullāh*).

The key achievement of the present study is demonstrating that the way out of these theological tensions lies in returning to the historical and

semantic roots of these terms within the sacred texts. If Christian and Muslim thinkers recognize that the root of the divergence lies not in the nature of Jesus's (pbuh) mission, but in linguistic shifts and the translation of Semitic concepts into Greek philosophy, the ground will be laid for a constructive and empathetic dialogue.

Ultimately, understanding the truth that the original use of "Son of God" was merely a metaphor expressing "the utmost proximity and servitude" provides a golden opportunity to reduce historical sensitivities and enhance mutual understanding between the followers of Islam and Christianity. This historical insight not only helps to resolve the misunderstandings of past centuries but also paves the way for future research in comparative linguistics, the study of early Judeo-Christian sects, and theological dialogues based on mutual respect and shared understanding.

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