

The Ayahs of the Qur'an: The Muḥkam and the Mutashābih

Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds, Who does not resemble the creation. To Allāh belong the endowments and the befitting perfections and commendations. We ask Allāh to raise the rank of Prophet Muḥammad, sallallāhu ^alayhi wa sallam, and to protect his nation from that which he feared for it. Thereafter:

Allāh said in the Qur'an:



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Surat Al-ʿImrān, ayah 7 means: [Allāh is the One Who has sent down to the Prophet the Book that contains muḥkam ayahs, which are the foundation of the Book, and other ayahs which are mutashābih.] So, know firmly that the Qur'an contains two types of ayahs:

1. Muḥkam Ayahs: These are the ayahs (verses) that, according to the rules of the Arabic language, have only one meaning or are those with a clear meaning. Examples of this type of , ayahs are: the saying of Allāh, taʿālā:

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

Surat ash-Shūrā, ayah 11 means: [There is absolutely nothing like Allāh]

His saying:

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Surat al-Ikhlās, ayah 4 means: [Nothing is equal to Him], and His saying:

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

Surat Maryam ayah 65 means: [Do you know of anything which is similar to Him? There is none.]

2. Mutashābih Ayahs: These are the , ayahs that, according to the rules of the Arabic language, can have many meanings. Assigning acceptable meanings to these ayahs requires proper Knowledge of the Arabic Language

They falsely claim that it is prohibited to make *ta'wil*, i.e., to assign specific meanings to the *mutashabih ayahs* and especially to those that pertain to the attributes of *Allah*. Moreover, they innovated a devilish rule which states that assigning specific meanings to the *ayahs* would lead to cancelling these attributes of *Allah*. Their claim leads to interpretations of the , *ayahs* of the *Qur'an* that contradict one another. It leads to interpretations of the *hadiths* of the Prophet that contradict one another and contradict the *ayahs* of the *Qur'an*. Furthermore, their claim accuses the Islamic scholars of the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf* of denying the attributes of *Allah*, which unjustly makes them blasphemers. Such scholars include: *Ibn ^Abbas*, *Sufyan ath-Thawriyy*, *Mujahid*, *Sa^id Ibn Jubayr*, *Malik*, *Ahmad*, *al-Bukhariyy*, *an-Nawawiyy*, *Ibn Rajab al-Hanbaliyy*, *Ibn-ul-Jawziyy*, *Ibn Hajar al-^Asqalaniyy*, *al-Bayhaqiyy*, *Abul-Fadl at-Tamimiyy*, *^Abdul-Qahir al-Baghdadiyy*, the linguist and scholar of *Hadith Murtada az-Zabidiyy*, and others.

Foremost, by their claim the *mushabbihah* are contradicting the Prophet, *sallallahu ^alayhi wa sallam*. *Al-Bukhariyy* related that the Prophet ﷺ made a *du^a'* (a supplication) for *Ibn ^Abbas*. The Prophet said:

" : ﷺ

which means: <<O *Allah*, teach him the Knowledge of *Hadith* and the explanation of the *Qur'an*.>>

In the chapter, *Tafsirul-Qur'an*, (Explanation of the *Qur'an*), *Imam al-Bukhariyy* says that the term *wajhahu* in *Surat al-Qasas*, *ayah* 88, means "His Dominion." However, the *mushabbihah* who liken *Allah* to His creation say: "We do not interpret, but rather we go by the literal meaning," and hence (they say) *wajhahu* means "His face."

Ibn Hajar al-^Asqalaniyy, in his book, *Al-Fath* (an explanation of the meaning of *Sahih al-Bukhariyy*), Volume 6, page 39-40, said: "..... in reference to *al-Bukhariyy's* saying that the attribute of *Allah*, *ad-dahik*, means 'mercy,' it is closer to say that it means 'acceptance of deeds.' Yet, the *mushabbihah* insist on taking the literal meaning, and they say that *Allah* smiles, or laughs.

In *Surat al-Qalam*, *ayah* 42, *Allah* said:

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The scholars of the *Salaf* explained the term *saq* to mean 'hardship,' and the *ayah* to mean 'a day of anguish and hardship.' This explanation is known to have been given by *Ibn ^Abbas*, *Mujahid*, *Ibrahim an-Nakhiyy*, *Qatadah*, *Sa^id Ibn Jubayr*, and a multitude of scholars. Both *Imam al-Fakhr ar-Raziyy* in his Explanation of the *Qur'an*, Volume 30, page 94 and *Imam al-Bayhaqiyy* in his books, *Al-'Asma' was-Sifat*, (page 245) and *Fath-ul-Bari*, (Volume-13, page 428) related this explanation from *Ibn ^Abbas*. *Ibn Qulayb* also related the same about *Sa^id Ibn Jubayr* who took his knowledge from *^Abdullah Ibn*

^Abbas and Ibn ^Umar. Yet, the *mushabbihah* insist on taking the literal meaning and attribute 'the shin' to *Allah*, by saying *sag* literally means 'shin.' Such a mistranslation is given in the so-called "The Noble *Qur'an*" by *M.Khan* and *M. Al-Hilali*. This English translation is full of misinterpretations which are blasphemous, as they amount to likening *Allah* to His creations.

In *Surat -ul-Baqarah*, *ayah* 115, *Allah* said:

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Imam Mujahid, the student of *Ibn ^Abbas*, said that the word *wajh* means 'qiblah,' i.e., the direction of praying during the voluntary prayers while travelling and riding an animal. Yet, the *mushabbihah* insist on taking the literal meaning; they claim the term, *wajh*, means 'face.'

Similarly, if *ayah* 12 in *Surat at-Tahrim*:

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were taken literally, it would mean that *Allah* blew part of His Soul into *^Isa* (Jesus.) However, the scholars said this *ayah* means: [*Allah* ordered *Jibril* to blow into *^Isa* the soul which is honorable to *Allah*.]

Also, if *ayah* 75 in *Surat Sad*:

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were taken literally, it would mean: "What has stopped you from performing *sujud* to what I have created with My hands?" However, the scholars said that the word 'yadayn' in the *ayah* means the 'care' of *Allah*. Yet, the *mushabbihah* insist that *yadayn* means hands.

Likewise, if *ayah* 35 in *Surat an-Nur*:

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were taken literally, it would mean: "*Allah* is the light of the heavens and the Earth." The scholars, such as *al-Bayhaqiyy* and *at-Tabariyy* related that *^Abdullah Ibn ^Abbas* said that this *ayah* means: [*Allah* is the Creator of guidance in the occupants of the heavens and the occupants of the Earth.] However, the *mushabbihah* insist on taking the literal meaning and say that *Allah* is 'light.'

Again, if *ayah* 22 in *Surat al-Fajr* were taken literally:

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it would mean: "Your Lord comes." It was related that *Imam Ahmad Ibn Hambal*, who is among the authorities of the *Salaf*, said that this *ayah* means: [An indication of the Power of *Allah* has come.] In his book, *Manaqib Ahmad, Hafidh Imam al-Bayhaqiyy*, established that the *sanad* (chain) of narrators is *sahih* (authentic). Also, *Ibn al-Jawziyy al-Hambaliyy*, one of the authorities of the school of *Imam Ahmad*, related that *Imam Ahmad* assigned specific, acceptable meanings to the *ayahs* which are *mutashabih*. He also said this was a proof that *Imam Ahmad* did not believe that the *maji'* (a noun for the verb *ja'a*) in the *ayah* refers to movement from one place to another. *Imam Ibn al-Jawziyy* also said: "It is not possible that *Allah* would be ascribed with motion. This is so, because *Allah* is not a body occupying a space." Yet, the *mushabbihah* insist on taking the literal meaning and say that *ja'a Rabbuka* means "Your Lord comes" (i.e., from one place to another.)

The *hadith* of the Prophet ﷺ related by *al-Bukhariyy*:

" ﷺ "

was affirmed and explained by *Imam Malik* as a descent of the mercy of *Allah* and not as a descent of *Allah* Himself. However, the *mushabbihah* insist on taking the literal meaning. They say the *nuzul* in the *hadith* means a descent of movement, i.e., going from one place to another.

Referencing *Imam al-'Ash'ariyy*, *Imam al-Bayhaqiyy*, in his book, *Al-Asma' was-Sifat*, page 488, said: " *Allah*, *ta'ala*, is not in a place. Motion, stillness, and sitting are among the attributes of bodies."

Abul-Fadl al-Tamimiyy reported that *Imam Ahmad Ibn Hambal* said: "The linguists defined the term 'body' as something with width, dimensions, format, and parts. *Allah* is clear of all of that."

As for the word *istawa* in *Surat Taha*, *ayah* 5:

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

The famous linguist *Abu Bakr Ibn 'Arabiyy al-Malikiyy* reported that the word *istiwa'* has 15 meanings in the Arabic language.

Imam Ibn Rajab al-Hambaliyy explained the term *al-istiwa'*, as *al-istila'*, which means subjugating. When *al-istila'* is used to explain this *ayah*, it means that *Allah* subjugated the *Arsh* with a subjugation that is without a beginning, like all the attributes of *Allah*. If the *ayah* is explained in this manner, it means that *Allah* was attributed with subjugating the *Arsh* before the *Arsh* was created in the same way that *Allah* was attributed with being the Creator before He created the world of creations. In this context, the scholars have used the term *al-azal*, which means the status of existing without a beginning. Thus it can be said that *Allah* subjugated the *Arsh* in *al-azal*, meaning that

Allah subjugated the *Arsh* with a subjugation that is without a beginning. Yet the *mushabbihah* insist on taking the literal meaning, to say *istiwa'* means *Allah* 'sits' on the throne and 'firmly establishes' Himself on it.

In his book, *Al-Mu'taqad*, *Imam al-Bayhaqiyy* related, in a chain back to *al-'Awza'iyy*, *Imam Malik*, *Sufyan ath-Thawriyy*, and *al-Layth Ibn Sa'd*, that when they were asked about the *ayahs* and the *hadiths* which are *mutashabih*, they said:

" : "

which means: "Accept them as they came without applying a 'how' to them." This is because if one asked the question 'how?' the answer would be, 'Like this or that.' Everything other than *Allah* is a creation. So to say 'like this or that' would mean 'like this or that created thing' and *Allah* is not like the creation. Anything a person can imagine, *Allah* is different from it. When the scholars said: "...without applying a 'how' to them," they meant that *Allah* is clear of being attributed with sitting, resting, moving, limbs, bodies, and parts. They did not mean that His *istiwa'* of the Throne (*Arsh*) has a 'how' of which we are ignorant. On the contrary, the scholars completely negated that a 'how' could be applied to *Allah*. So the statement of those who say "*Allah* sits on the Throne but we do not know how," is rejected on the basis of what these scholars said.

Anyone with a sound mind knows that sitting, no matter how it is, is an attribute of bodies. Occupying places necessitates a 'how' and applies to bodies. Furthermore, color and touching are attributes of bodies and 'how' applies to them. All of that is impossible to apply to *Allah*.

Similarly, when the Prophet, *sallallahu alayhi wa sallam*, asked the slave woman the question: "*Aynallah?*", the scholars said this meant he was asking her about her belief in the status of *Allah*. She answered: "*Fis-sama*" which has the meaning that *Allah* has the highest status. Furthermore, *Imam Malik* related the same *hadith* with a different wording. In the narration of *Malik*, the Prophet asked the slave woman if she believed in both parts of the *shahadatayn* and she said: "yes" to both. So the Prophet said to set her free. Yet the *mushabbihah* insist on taking the literal meaning saying that the Prophet asked her about the place of *Allah*, and that she said: "In the sky," meaning that the sky is a place for *Allah*.

Likewise, the *hadith* of the Prophet, *sallallahu alayhi wa sallam*, related by *At-Tirmidhiyy*.

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means: <<If you are merciful to those on Earth, the angels, who occupy the heavens, will bring onto you the mercy of *Allah*.>> Yet, the *mushabbihah* insist

unjustifiably, on taking the literal meaning, saying the *ḥadīth* means: "*Allāh*, Who occupies the heavens, will be merciful to you."

So, the *mushabbihah* insist on taking the literal meanings of the *mutashābih āyahs*. They reject assigning specific meanings to them, and refuse to ascribe acceptable meanings to them. By doing this, the *mushabbihah* render the *āyahs* of the *Qurʾān* and the *ḥadīths* contradictory to one another. For example: the famous *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, related by *al-Bukhārīyy* and *Muslim*:

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if taken by the method of the *mushabbihah*, it would mean: "*Allāh* is between the person and the neck of his animal." This is in direct contradiction with their claim that the *ḥadīth* of the slave woman means: "*Allāh* has a place, which is the sky."

Likewise, if *āyah* 4 in *Surat al-Ḥadīd*:

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is taken literally, it would mean: "*Allāh* is with you, wherever you are." However, the scholars established that this *āyah* means: [*Allāh* knows about you, wherever you are.] Similarly, if the saying of *Allāh* in *Surat Fussilat*, *āyah* 54:

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

is taken by its literal meaning, it would mean: "*Allāh* surrounds everything." Furthermore, if the saying of *Allāh*, that *Ibrāhīm* said in *Surat as-Saffat*, *āyah* 99:

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

is taken by its literal meaning, it would mean: "*Allāh* is in the countries of *ash-Shām*⁽¹⁾," as this *āyah* talks about Prophet *Ibrāhīm* moving from Iraq to the countries of *ash-Shām*. If the saying of *Allāh* in *Surat al Baqarah*, *āyah* 125:

¹ *Ash-Shām* refers to the area that includes Palestine, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

is taken by its literal meaning, it would mean: "The *Ka^bah* is the residence of *Allah*." If *ayah* 128 in *Surat an-Nahl* is taken literally, it would mean: "*Allah* is physically with the pious."

It is clear that if these *ayahs* are interpreted based on the literal meanings, this will lead to numerous contradictions. The great scholars of Islam have ascribed proper and acceptable meanings to the *mutashabih ayah* and the *mutashabih hadiths* in accordance with the Religion, the language, and by referring them to the clear *muhkam ayahs*. They said *Surat al-Hadid, ayah* 4,

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means: [*Allah* knows about you wherever you are.] *Surat Fussilat, ayah* 54,

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

means [*Allah* knows everything.] *Surat al-Baqarah, ayah* 125,

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

means: [The *Ka^bah* is a house of a great honor to *Allah*.] *Surat al-An^am, ayah* 61,

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

refers to the *fawqiyyah* (aboveness) of subjugation, meaning: [All are subjugated to *Allah*.] *Surat an-Nahl, ayah* 128,

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

means: [*Allah* supports those who are pious.] *Surat Taha, ayah* 5,

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

means: [*Allah* subjugated the *^Arsh* in *al-azal* with a subjugation that is without a beginning, as are all of the attributes of *Allah*.]

In taking the *mutashabih ayahs* by their literal meanings, the *mushabbihah* contradict the *muhkam ayahs*. An example is *Surat ash-Shura, ayah* 11,

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

which means: [Nothing is like *Allah* in any way]. They try to escape the contradiction by camouflaging it, saying that *Allah* has a 'face' but without

accordance with the Religion and the language. Following this method, one would say: "*Allah's istiwa'* means 'He preserves the throne,' *Allah's yad* means '*Allah's Care*,' and *Allah's wajh* means '*Allah's Self*,' '*Allah's Dominion*,' or '*Allah's Qiblah*.'"

Also know that among the *mutashabih* are matters that only *Allah* knows about, such as the time when the Day of Judgment will occur, the exact day the sun will rise from its setting place, the exact time when the *Dajjal*⁽²⁾ will appear, and the like. This falls under one of the meanings of *Surat Al-Imran, ayah 7*:

﴿ :
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which means: [No one knows the meanings of this kind of *mutashabih* except *Allah*.]

May *Allah* protect us from falling into the trap of likening *Allah* to His creation. *Imam Abu Ja'far at-Tahawiyy*, in his book *Al-Aqidatut-Tahawiyyah*, said:

" :"

which means: "Whoever attributes to *Allah* a human characteristic commits blasphemy."

We ask *Allah* to keep us steadfast on the correct path and creed of the Islamic scholars of the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf*. We seek refuge with *Allah* from falling into the trap of apostasy, because the Prophet, *sallallahu alayhi wa sallam*, said in the *hadith* related by *at-Tirmidhiyy*.

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This means: <<The slave may utter a word which he does not deem harmful, but that will cause him to fall into Hellfire for seventy autumns.>> This is a place that only the blasphemers will reach.

Be extremely observant of what you utter, for *Allah*, *ta'ala* said in *Surat Qaf, ayah 18*:

² The *Dajjal* is a man with one eye who will be given extraordinary powers and will claim himself to be God. It is mentioned in the *sahih hadith* that Prophet *Isa* will descend and kill him.

[] ﴿ ﴾ :

which means: [Every word that a person utters will be written down by the two angels, *Raqib* and *^Atid*.] Also, beware of books that are claimed to be interpretations of the *Qur'an*, or translations of its meanings and in which *Allah*, the Exalted, is likened to His creation, by attributing to Him light, hands, eyes, shins, faces, sitting, directions, places, and the like. *Allah* is clear of all imperfection and of any resemblance to the creation.

Praise be to *Allah* the Lord of the Worlds, the One Who is clear of resembling the creation, all non_befitting attributes, and all which the blasphemers unrightfully say about Him.

***Allah* knows best.**