

Exploring the terminology of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*: A semantic analysis within Quranic discourse

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the concepts of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih" in the Qur'ān, which have been the subject of extensive scholarly research and analysis. It reviews numerous works dedicated to understanding these concepts, and notes that the differing perspectives, and approaches of scholars have led to confusion and disagreement among various schools and sects. To gain a better understanding of these concepts and their terminology in the context of the Qur'ān, the paper first uses semantic analysis to clarify their definition and explores their root meanings as well as their derivatives. The paper then examines the Quranic verses that use the terms "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih," and conducts a comparative semantic analysis highlighting the different interpretations of these terms among various Islamic schools and sects. The paper also argues that the terms should be understood in relation to the Qur'ān's broader message and context, and demonstrates that a closer examination of the Quranic text itself can help resolve some of the confusion surrounding these concepts. The comprehensive terminology this paper provides can be particularly useful for scholars engaged in ongoing research and analysis of the Quranic text, especially in the areas of interpretation, theology, and principles of jurisprudence.

Keywords: *Muḥkam*, *Mutashābih*, Semantic analysis, *Qur'ān*, Lexicon

INTRODUCTION

The concept of "Muḥkam" (clear) and "Mutashābih" (ambiguous) in the Qur'ān has been the subject of extensive scholarly research and analysis. Throughout centuries of Islamic history, countless works have been dedicated to exploring and reaching satisfactory conclusions on this topic. This vast body of literature reflects the importance placed on understanding the nuances and complexities of the Quranic text. Some of the writings dedicated to this topic include "Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān" by Al-Maturīdī, "Mutashābih al-Qur'ān" by Judge Abdul Jabbar, "Durrat al-Tanzīl wa Ghurrat al-Ta'wīl fī Bayān al-Ayāt al-Mutashābihāt fī Kitāb Allah al-Azīz" by Al-Khatīb Al-Iskāfī, "Al-Burhān fī Tawjīh Mutashābih al-Qur'ān li Mā Fīhi Min al-Hujjah wa al-Bayān" by Al-Kirmānī, "Malāk al-Ta'wīl al-Qāṭi' bi Dhawī al-Ilhād wa al-Ta'tīl fī Tawjīh al-Mutashābih al-Lafdh min Āyāt al-Tanzīl" by Ahmad Al-Gharnāṭī, "Al-Iklīl fī al-Mutashābih wa al-Ta'wīl" by Ibn Taymiyyah, and "Aqawīl al-Thiqāt fī Ta'wīl al-Asmā' wa al-Sifāt wa al-Ayāt al-Muḥkamāt wa al-Mutashābihāt" by Al-Maqdisī. Furthermore, scholars in the fields of interpretation (Tafsīr), principles of jurisprudence (Usūl al-Fiqh), and theology have discussed this topic extensively in their works. As a result, there has been a variance in research methodologies and outcomes due to the differing perspectives and approaches of the researchers.

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Through the analysis of this literature, it was evident that there is a significant amount of disagreement among various schools and sects regarding the concepts of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih". Each group interprets verses that support their viewpoint as "Muḥkam," while labelling those that contradict their stance as "Mutashābih." This has led to confusion, as what one group perceives as "Muḥkam" is considered as "Mutashābih" by another. To gain a better understanding of what the Qur'ān meant by using these terms in describing its verses, this paper uses the tools of semantic analysis to revisit the two concepts in the Arabic lexicon and in the context of the Qur'ān itself.

DISCUSSION:

SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF 'AL-MUḤKAM' AND 'AL-MUTASHĀBIH' IN THE ARABIC LEXICON

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the terms "Muḥkam" (clear) and "Mutashābih" (ambiguous), it is necessary to clarify their linguistic definitions. Such clarification can help fully grasp the fundamental connotations associated with each of these words.

Regarding the term "Muḥkam," dictionaries clarify that it is the passive participle of the verb "Aḥkam," and the root (Ḥ K M) refers to "a single origin, which is prevention. The primary sense of (Ḥukm) is the prevention of injustice, (...) and wisdom is similar to this concept because it prevents ignorance." (Ibn Fares, n.d.).

"Ḥakama" and "Aḥkama" both mean preventing something from corruption. Al-Azharī said, "Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī said: 'Ḥakim al-yaṭīm kamā tuḥakkimu waladak' (Rule over the orphan as you would rule over your child,) meaning prevent them from corruption and rectify them, just as you would rectify your child and prevent them from corruption. He said: 'And anyone whom you have prevented from something, you have (Ḥakamtahu wa aḥkamtahu) ruled over them and rectified them.' (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.).

The author of "Mufradāt al-Qur'ān" mentioned that the root of "Ḥukm" is to prevent for the purpose of rectification. From this root, "lijām" (a muzzle) is called the "Ḥukmah" of an animal." (Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, 1998).

Arabs say: "Ḥakamtu wa aḥkamtu wa ḥakkamtu." " meaning "I prevented and turned somebody away from doing something." Based on this meaning, a ruler among people is called a "Ḥākim" because they prevent the unjust from injustice (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.). It is also said: " (Aḥkam) the thing," meaning "He mastered it and made it firm," (Al-Fayrūzabadi, n.d.) and reliable. (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.)

Through these linguistic meanings, it becomes evident that:

- 1 - "Muḥkam" is derived from "Aḥkama" and "Ḥakama."
- 2 - "Ḥakama" and "Aḥkama" carry the meaning of " authenticating," and "mastering," which indicate a positive meaning.
- 3 - "Ḥakama" and "Aḥkama" carry the meaning of "preventing" and "restricting," which convey a negative meaning.

Looking at the term (Aḥkama) from this perspective, the immediate meaning that comes to mind is the positive connotation of precision and reliability. The term refers to making a judgment or ruling in a particular matter. When a judgment is made with precision and accuracy, it is deemed trustworthy. However, it is essential to note that prevention is a crucial element of this positive meaning. Something well-crafted and trustworthy should prevent anything that contradicts it from happening. The term "Mutashābih" is derived from the noun " Tashābuh," which originates from the root (sh.b.h). This root signifies the resemblance and similarity of an object in terms of description. "Shibh," "Shabah," and "Shabīh" all mean "likeness" or "similarity." "Shabh" refers to an entity that is similar to another, while "Shabhah" means that two things are similar. "Shabbaha" means to make something resemble another thing. "Mushtabihāt" are complex matters, and "Mutashābihāt" refers to similar things. "Shabbaha" can also mean to make something complicated or intricate. "Ash-Shubah" refers to

confusion or doubt. "Matters that are doubted" are complicated issues, and "Matters that are similar" are problems that resemble each other. (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.)

Considering these meanings, it is evident that:

- 1 - "Shābaha" and "Ashbaha" mean "similar" or "resembling". Similarly, "Tashābuh" and "Ishtibāh" convey the same idea but with an added nuance, indicating that there is a sense of similarity or resemblance present in both sides in a reciprocal manner.
- 2 - "Shabah" means "likeness" or "similarity," which refers to something external that has an objective existence. However, it can also refer to what sometimes entails forms of confusion and ambiguity, which are subjective characteristics. This second usage specifies the first, where the term is intended to denote a particular type of resemblance that leads to confusion.

Based on these linguistic data, one can arrive at a preliminary understanding of the meanings of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih" in relation to the Holy Qur'ān. The Qur'ān, in terms of being "Muḥkam" is precise and flawless, impervious to corruption. Among its verses, some are "Muḥkam," meaning that their meanings are reliable and free from ambiguity. A "Muḥkam" verse is one whose meaning does not confuse the listener.

On the other hand, the Qur'ān is also "Mutashābih," meaning that its verses resemble each other in terms of precision, accuracy, and the absence of corruption, as well as in terms of consistency and coherence of their structure. Some verses are also categorized as "Mutashābih," which implies that their meanings can be ambiguous due to their similarity to others.

In this latter sense, (Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, 1998) expanded, explaining that the linguistic meaning of shubhah is "that which cannot be distinguished between two things due to their similarity, whether in terms of appearance or meaning." He then built upon this concept, stating that "the mutashābih of the Qur'ān refers to that which is complex and is not easy for exegesis or interpretation due to its resemblance to something else, either in terms of wording or meaning. (...) The mutashābih can be categorized into three types: mutashābih in terms of wording only, mutashābih in terms of meaning only, and mutashābih in both wording and meaning. And the mutashābih in terms of wording can be divided into two types: one that pertains to individual words, and this can be further divided into two subtypes: one due to its uncommonness and unfamiliarity, like al-Abb (...) and the other due to homonymy like the hand and the eye. The second type relates to syntax, and this can be categorized into three types: one for the purpose of summarizing the speech, as in the verse (وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِيهِ) (Qur'an 4:3). Another type is for the purpose of elaboration in speech, as in the verse (لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ) (Qur'an 42:11) because if it were said (Nothing is like Him), it would be clearer to the listener. The third type is for the purpose of organizing speech rhythmically, as in the verse ([All] praise is [due] to Allah, who has sent down upon His Servant the Book and has not made therein any deviance. [He has made it] straight). (...) The mutashābih in terms of meaning includes the attributes of Allah Almighty and the descriptions of the Day of Judgment. These attributes cannot be comprehended by us, as they do not form a mental image unless we have experienced them or they belong to a category we are familiar with. The mutashābih in terms of meaning and wording together can be categorized into five types:

- 1- The first type is related to quantity, such as generality and specificity, as in the verse: (فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ) (Qur'an 9:5).
- 2- The second type is related to manner, such as obligation and recommendation, as in the verse: (فَأَنكِحُوا) (Qur'an 4:3).
- 3- The third type is related to time, such as abrogating and abrogated verses, as in the verse: (أَنقُرُوا اللَّهَ) (Qur'an 3:102).
- 4- The fourth type is related to place and the circumstances in which the revelation occurred, as in the verse (وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا) (Qur'an 2:189). If one is not familiar with the customs in the pre-Islamic period, it becomes difficult for them to understand the interpretation of this verse.
- 5- The fifth type is related to conditions that validate or invalidate an action, such as the conditions for prayer and marriage.

In essence, when considering what commentators have mentioned about interpreting the *mutashābih*, it is clear that it falls within these categories".

It is evident that all of these meanings fall under the category of *mutashābih* as presented in the lexical meaning. In each of these types, there is a form of confusion and ambiguity that makes it difficult to determine the intended meaning without resorting to external context.

SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF 'AL-MUḤKAM' AND 'AL-MUTASHĀBIH' IN THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

After closely analyzing the Holy Qur'ān's verses on "Al-Muḥkam" and "Al-Mutashābih", it becomes clear that these descriptions are sometimes applied to all verses of the Holy Qur'ān, while at other times they are used to describe only specific ones. This suggests that these terms have a general meaning that applies to the entire Qur'ān and a specific meaning that only applies to certain verses. Additionally, it is evident that the contrast between "Al-Muḥkam" and "Al-Mutashābih" only appears in one particular case, while in the other cases, only one of the two terms is used.

These observations and data can be analyzed as follows:

Verse	Description	Type	Meaning	Contrast
الرَّ كُنْتُ أَكْمَتْ ءَايَتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ (خَبِيرٍ). (Qur'an 11:1)	Iḥkām	General	The Qur'ān has been carefully arranged to prevent any contradictions or errors from occurring, (Al-Qurtubi, 1372 H, vol. 4, p. 10; vol. 9, p. 2) making it immune to criticism from those with misguided intentions. This is reinforced by the term "Fussilat" which means "explained in detail", emphasizing the various aspects within the verses such as what is permitted or forbidden, as well as commands and prohibitions. (Al-Tabari, 1984, vol. 11, p. 178).	
وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ ءَايَتَهُ (52) وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (Qur'an 22:52)	Iḥkām	General	Allah removes and lifts away the doubts and delusions cast by Satan through the process of separating what comes from Allah and what does not. This process is known as "Iḥkām," and what comes from Allah is called "Muḥkam." This process also involves distinguishing, differentiating, and specifying, leading to the realization of truth and its perfection. There is no contradiction here between this statement	Muḥkam / what Satan throws in

			and what was mentioned in the linguistic sense, as the essence of these meanings also revolves around prohibition that leads to perfection (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005, vol. 13, p. 274).	
وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَوْلَا نُزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَإِذَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ مُّحْكَمَةٌ وَذِكْرُ فِيهَا الْقِتَالُ رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ نَظَرَ الْمَغْشِيِّ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ فَأُولَئِ (20) لَهُمْ (Qur'an 47:20)	Iḥkām	specific from one aspect, and general from another.	This particular Surah serves as a decisive factor in distinguishing between believers and hypocrites. Its clear and unambiguous command to engage in fighting leaves no room for any other interpretations. The Surah juxtaposes "those who have believed" and "those in whose hearts is disease" on opposing sides, based on their stance towards it.	Those who believe / those in whose hearts is a disease
اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ (كِتَابًا مُّتَشَبِهًا مَّنَاقِبِي) (Qur'an 39:23)	Tashābuh	General	The verses of the Qur'ān resemble each other and verify each other. (Al-Qurtubi, 1372 H, vol. 4, p. 10)	
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ ءَايَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَبِهَاتٌ (Qur'an 3:7)	Iḥkām and tashābuh	Specific	The terms "Iḥkām" and "tashābuh" mentioned here cannot be used to mean "precision" and "prevention from error and contradiction." This is because the verse separates these descriptors, grouping some parts of the scripture as "Muḥkam" and others as "Mutashābih." Until a more detailed study of the terminology is conducted, we can assume that "Muḥkam" refers to something that is protected from possible misinterpretation. On the other hand, "Mutashābih" could refer to something that is challenging due to its similarity to other matters, based on the earlier mentioned lexical meaning.	muḥkamāt / mutashābiḥāt

1. "Al-Muḥkam" and "Al-Mutashābih" in the General Sense:

Based on the analysis conducted, it has been determined that "Iḥkām" and "Tashābuh" hold both general and specific implications. Generally, "Iḥkām" refers to the entirety of the Qur'ān, indicating its precision, completeness, and lack of deficiency or contradiction. Similarly, the general sense of

"Tashābuh" applies to the Qur'ān as a whole, emphasizing its coherence in themes. The previous attributes highlight the similarity of its verses, and their consistency and mutual support.

The term "Iḥkām" in Surah Muhammad can have a dual meaning, both general and specific. Specifically, it refers to this particular Surah in the Qur'ān. However, it can also be applied to the entire Qur'ān as a ruler and separator of conflicting matters. The Qur'ān acts as a judge in disputes, differentiating between truth and falsehood, and distinguishing between beneficial and harmful matters. This notion is supported by various verses, including (Qur'an 27:76) and (Qur'an 4:127), indicating that the Qur'ān provides a verdict. Allah's statement, (Qur'an 17:9) highlights its role as a guide and bearer of good news (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005, vol. 3, p. 60). As this is the meaning of "Al-Iḥkām" in this verse, it can be linked to the general meaning.

Up to this point, our exploration has centred on elucidating the connotations of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih" in their Quranic context. To delve deeper into the intricacies of these terms, it is essential to elucidate their specific application, as articulated in the verse from Surah Aal-i-Imrān: Allah says:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ (7) وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلَةٍ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرُّسُخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَامَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (Qur'an 3:7)

In order to thoroughly comprehend these terms, an independent study of the verse and the various interpretations and explanations related to its meanings is necessary.

2. "Al-Muḥkam" and "Al-Mutashābih" in the Specific Sense:

2.1. Significance of "Al-Muḥkam" and "Al-Mutashābih" in Surah Aal-i-Imrān:

When examining the terms "Al-Muḥkam" and "Al-Mutashābih" in Surah Aal-i-Imrān, researchers are struck by the variety of opinions among scholars and their differing perspectives on the meanings of these terms. By understanding these various opinions and exploring the reasons for their differences, we can better interpret and prioritize some perspectives over others, if necessary. This process can help us comprehend the meanings of "Al-Muḥkam" and "Al-Mutashābih" and prevent confusion when trying to understand the implications of the verse.

The most comprehensive and concise compilation of opinions regarding the meanings of "Al-Muḥkam" and "Al-Mutashābih" can be found in Ibn al-Jawzi's "Zad al-Masīr" (Al-Jawzi, 1404, vol. 1, pp. 350-351). In this work, he presented eight opinions on the meaning of "Al-Muḥkam" and seven on "Al-Mutashābih." Later, Al-Suyūṭī added one opinion each for "Al-Muḥkam" and "Al-Mutashābih", which were not included by Ibn al-Jawzi. This brings the total number of opinions on "Al-Muḥkam" to nine and "Al-Mutashābih" to eight. These opinions can be classified as follows:

	The meanings of al-Mutashābih	The meanings of al-Muḥkam
First Group	1. That which words have been repeated.	1. That which words have not been repeated.
Second Group	1. That which meanings have become unclear and ambiguous.	1. The permissible (ḥalāl) and the prohibited (ḥarām).
	2. The stories and the parables.	2. The command and the prohibition. The promise and the warning.
	3. The abrogated verses.	3.1. The abrogating verses.

		3.2. Which has not been abrogated.
	4. The separate letters.	4. The entire Qur'ān except for the separate letters.
Third Group	1. The abrogated verses.	1.1. The abrogating verses.
		1.2. Which has not been abrogated.
	2. The one that has multiple interpretations / That which is susceptible to multiple interpretations.	2. What stands on its own and doesn't require explanation / What can only be interpreted in one way.
	3. The one that doesn't have a reasonable meaning.	4. The one that has a reasonable meaning.
	4. The one that scholars did not have a way to know, like the Day of Judgment.	5. What scholars have known its interpretation.

The meanings classified in the first group align perfectly with the linguistic meanings of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih". They emphasize on the meanings of similarity and resemblance present in the concept of "Mutashābih" since "Mutashābih" refers to those words that bear similarities through repetition. Based on the contrast presented in the verse between "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih", "Muḥkam" is identified as what does not exhibit that resemblance resulting from repetition. Thus, the meanings of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih" in this context are closely linked to their lexical meaning, which is closer to the general rather than the specific meaning.

The second group of opinions adopts the approach of definition through example where each definition mentions the constituents of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih". In this regard, Ibn 'Atiyyah remarked that these examples are not exclusive, and that the "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih" can be found in other verse types as well (Ibn Atiyah al-Andalusi, 1975-1991, vol. 3, p. 16; Al-Jassas, 1405 H, vol. 2, p. 3). However, while these opinions offer some insights, they lack a comprehensive framework for fully comprehending the concepts of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih", and can be commented on with a set of observations as follows:

- The first opinion, which equates "Muḥkam" with what is clear regarding ḥalāl and ḥarām, and the first opinion, which equates "Mutashābih" with what is ambiguous in meaning, have a corresponding relationship. According to this view, as clarified by (Al-Tabari, 1984, vol. 3, p. 173), what is meant by the phrase " مِنْهُ ءَايَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ " (Qur'an 3:7) in the verse is what pertains to ḥalāl and ḥarām. At the same time, everything else falls under "Mutashābih," which corroborates and clarifies itself. Mujāhid provided examples of the verses that fall under that interpretation of the "Mutashābih". Some of which are: (وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ) (Qur'an 2:26) and (وَالَّذِينَ أَهْنَدُوا رَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَءَاتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ) (Qur'an 6:125) and (كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ) (Qur'an 47:17). This opinion seems to lean towards the general meaning of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih," overlooking some of the specificities mentioned in the verse of Aal-i-Imrān. For this reason, Ibn Taymiyyah criticized this opinion, saying: "They say that the Muḥkamverses of the Qur'ān are those that pertain to the permissible (ḥalāl) and the prohibited (ḥarām), while anything beyond that is the Mutashābih verses that support and explain each other. Based on this viewpoint, the (Mutashābih) refers to the meaning used in the verse (اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا) (مُتَشَبِّهًا مَثَانِي), (Qur'an 39:23) which means that (Allah has sent down the best statement, a Book (this Qur'ān), its parts resembling each other in goodness and truth). Interpreting Al-Mutashābih in this manner implies that the entire Qur'ān is Mutashābih, while the verse in Surah Aal-i-Imrān designates only some of the Qur'ān as Mutashābih. This itself is evidence of the weakness of this opinion. Furthermore, one of the indications of the weakness of this opinion is that the verse in Surah Aal-i-Imrān criticizes those who follow the Mutashābih and characterizes them as: (seeking discord and seeking its interpretation.) If the meaning of

Mutashābih is to support and verify one part of the Qur'ān with another, then following it would not have been criticized, and seeking its interpretation would not have been prevented." (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005, vol. 17, pp. 388-389).

- Following this opinion, two other viewpoints consider "Muḥkam" to refer to commandments, prohibitions, promises, threats, and abrogating verses. In contrast, they consider "Mutashābih" to refer to stories, parables, and abrogated verses. However, this choice has also faced criticism, as what is categorized as "Muḥkam" can sometimes fall under "Mutashābih," and vice versa. For this reason, Judge Abd al-Jabbar responded to those who said: "the 'Mutashābih' refers to the abrogated verses, and the 'Muḥkam' refers to the abrogating verses. (...) and the 'Muḥkam' refers to obligations, promises, threats, and the 'Mutashābih' refers to stories and parables" (Al-Hamadani, 1969, p. 18). He responded to this by saying, "As for considering the abrogating as 'Muḥkam' and the abrogated as 'Mutashābih,' that is unlikely, as the language does not necessitate that. The abrogated may provide clear indications of the intended meaning, making it 'Muḥkam' in its context, even if it is abrogated. The abrogating verse may not be independent in its meaning, making it 'Mutashābih,' even if its meaning is established. Similarly, when it comes to stories, if the intended meaning is clear, then it must be 'Muḥkam.'" (Al-Hamadani, 1969, p. 20).

- The last opinion within this group suggests that the term "Mutashābih" refers to the separate letters (*hurūf al-muqatta'at*), while everything else is considered "Muḥkam." The limitation of this view arises from confining "Mutashābih" exclusively to the separate letters, ignoring that the specificity for which these letters are classified as "Mutashābih" - namely, that their meaning is known solely to Allah and not shared with His creation – also applies to other matters, such as Allah's "istiwā" (ascension), foreexample.

The third group focuses on the semantic aspect and aims to assign a specific meaning to the concepts of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih" based on the context of the Quranic verse. The first opinion interprets "Muḥkam" as abrogating and "Mutashābih" as abrogated. However, the focus of abrogation in this group differs from its focus in the second group where it specifically deals with the abrogation of legal rulings. Abrogation is addressed in the third group according to its terminology used by the early scholars for "Naskh" (abrogation). According to their understanding, "Naskh (abrogation) is a comprehensive term encompassing everything that counters the potential misinterpretation of a verse, even if such an interpretation is not explicitly intended by the verse itself. (...) This is called 'Naskh,' owing to its role in dispelling ambiguity and potential misunderstandings." (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005, vol. 13, pp. 29-30).

Through this approach, it is important to note that the term "al-Mansūkh" refers to the abrogated text, while "al-Nāsikh" refers to the abrogating text. The connection between clarity (*Iḥkām*), similarity (*Tashābuh*), and abrogation (*Naskh*) is illustrated in the following verses:

- The verse (وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ ءَايَتَهُ) (Qur'an 22:52). In this verse "abrogation" is presented in parallel with (*Iḥkām*) precise command.
- The verse (هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ ءَايَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ) (Qur'an 3:7) In this verse (*Muḥkam*) / precise is set in opposition to (*Mutashābih*) / ambiguous.

Undoubtedly, presenting the concept of "al-Muḥkam" at times as the counterpart of "al-Mansūkh" (abrogated) and at other times as the counterpart of "al-Mutashābih" implies that the abrogating could be an explanation for "al-Muḥkam" and the abrogated could be an explanation for "al-Mutashābih". In this context, the latter could refer to the false notions that Satan introduces, and Allah abrogates. However, giving such interpretation to "al-Mutashābih" does not align with what other indications from the verse suggest. Indeed, what Satan throws in is false and nullified by the decisive rulings of the verses. Therefore, there is no need for those with deviant hearts to follow it, nor is there any reason for them to seek to create discord through such following. Furthermore, the fact that it is clearly false and something thrown in by Satan removes it from the realm of "Mutashābih" that Allah has designated as part of the verses of the Book.

The second opinion within this group considers that "al-Muḥkam" cannot be interpreted in more than one way, while "al-Mutashābih" can have multiple interpretations. This standpoint believes that it is possible to understand the interpretations of "al-Mutashābih" in one way or another. Even though "al-Mutashābih" might have multiple interpretations, in the end, it does not deviate from one of them. However, the subsequent viewpoints argue that it is impossible to fully grasp the meaning of "al-Mutashābih" as it falls within Allah's exclusive knowledge.

The interpretation of "al-Mutashābih" has been a topic of discussion among interpreters, particularly in explaining the meaning of the verse in Surah Aal-i-Imrān. Examining differing views allows us to make the following observations:

- The first viewpoint categorizes utterances open to possible interpretations as "Mutashābih", especially if their meaning has not been clarified yet. These may include "al-Mujmal", "al-Zāhir", "al-‘āmm", "al-Muṭ laq", and "al-Mansūkh". Meanwhile, this viewpoint places their opposites ("al-Mubīn", "al-Mu‘awwal", "al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ", "al-Muqayyad", and the rulings that have been established) under the meaning of "Muḥkam". However, this opinion has been criticized based on the fact that there is no real "Tashābuh" in all these types of opposite utterances. For instance, "al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ" (the specified meaning) is implied in "al-‘āmm" (the general word), especially when there is evidence within the context that clarifies and proves the specific intended meaning of the general word. Therefore, no "Tashābuh" exists when the intended meaning has already been elucidated. This principle holds true for all the other opposites. The concept of "Mutashābih" only applies when clarification is absent, which is not the case when we link each type of word from the "Mutashābih" category with its compatible clarifier from the "Muḥkam" category. The confusion only arises when the interpreter of the Qur’ān fails to establish proper connection between the compatible types, which leads to treating the words in need of clarification as "Mutashābih" when they don't truly or legally belong to this category. (Al-Shatibi, 1999, vol. 3, pp. 80, 83).
- It is also noteworthy about this viewpoint that the "Mutashābih" verses in this sense, which includes "al-Mansūkh", "al-Mujmal", "al-‘āmm", "al-Muṭ laq", are numerous due to the abundance of these types in the Qur’ān. However, this does not align with the verse of Surah Aal-i-Imrān which suggests that the "Mutashābih" is few. In this verse, The Qur’ān describes "Muḥkam" as the "Umm al-Kitāb" (the foundation of the Book) and "Mutashābih" as "Ākhar" (others), suggesting that it is rare and scarce. Furthermore, if the "Mutashābih" verses were numerous, there would be a great deal of confusion, which contradicts the characteristics of the Qur’ān as being clear and a source of guidance (138) (هُدًى بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ) (Qur'an 3:138). Considering that the Qur’ān was revealed as a clarification and guidance to resolve disputes and differences that arise among people, and that ambiguity results in uncertainty and confusion rather than clear guidance, it becomes evident that "Mutashābih" verses are not many. Therefore, the types of verses mentioned above, which are numerous and prevalent in the Qur’ān, do not align with this definition of "Mutashābih." (Al-Shatibi, 1999, vol. 3, pp. 80-81).
- The last viewpoint regarding the meanings of "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih" might be the most suitable and in alignment with the intended meaning of the verse of Surah Aal-i-Imrān, especially since it avoids many objections raised against the previous opinions. Moreover, this viewpoint is compatible with the fact that "Mutashābih" is limited in scope. The meaning that this viewpoint attributes to "Mutashābih" is what can be genuinely called "Mutashābih". Nevertheless, this meaning cannot be conclusively determined without a thorough analysis of the verse to assess whether it assists in interpreting "Muḥkam" and "Mutashābih" in this manner.

2.2. Significance of the context of the verse:

The interpreters mention that Surah Aal-i-Imrān, from its beginning up to about eighty verses, revolves around the People of the Book and their arguments with the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarding some issues of the unseen. Some scholars believe that these verses were revealed following the arrival of a Christian delegation from Najran to Medina during the "Year of Delegations." This delegation argued with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), particularly concerning Jesus (peace be upon him). Their arguments were based on the verse: (إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحَ)

مِنَهُ (Qur'an 4:171) Other scholars, however, believe that these verses were revealed concerning a group of Jews who argued with the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the duration of his life and the lifespan of his nation, relying on the separate letters. Some others believe that the verses refer to people of desires and Bida' who deviate from the path that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had established.

Al-Tabari mentioned these narrations and said, "The scholars of interpretation differed about who is referred to in this verse. Some of them said that it refers to the delegation of the Christians of Najran who came to the Prophet Muhammad and engaged in a debate with him using the argument that he claimed that Jesus was the Spirit of Allah and His Word. They used this to dispute with him and accused him of disbelief." Al-Tabari mentioned those who held this view and narrated: "Al-Muthanna reported to me, saying, 'Isaac narrated to us, saying, 'Ibn Abi Ja'far narrated to me from his father, who narrated from Ar-Rabi', who said: 'They confronted - meaning the delegation of Christians from Najran - and disputed with the Prophet. They said: 'Do you not claim that he is the Word of Allah and a Spirit from Him?' He replied: 'Yes.' They said: 'That's sufficient for us.' So, Allah, the Exalted, revealed: 'As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth], they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord.' Then Allah, the Most High, revealed: (إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ) (Qur'an 3:59).

Others said that this verse was revealed regarding Abu Yasir ibn Akhtab, his brother Hayy ibn Akhtab, and those who questioned the Prophet regarding the exact duration of his lifespan and the lifespan of his nation. They sought knowledge of this through the separate letters such as "Alif-Lam-Mim" and "Alif-Lam-Ra." Allah, the Exalted, addressed them in this verse: (فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ) (Qur'an 3:7). This refers to the Jews whose hearts are inclined away from guidance and truth, and they follow the ambiguous meanings of these separate letters, interpreting them in various ways, seeking to sow discord.

Others said that Allah, the Exalted, intended by this verse every Muḥtadi' in his religion who introduces a heretical Bida' contrary to what His Messenger Muhammad was sent with. They interpret it with explanations drawn from some of the Quranic verses that have possible interpretations, even though Allah had provided clear explanations for them either in His Book or through the words of His Messenger (Al-Tabari, 1984, vol. 3, pp. 177-178; Ibn Ali, 1997, vol. 2, pp. 664-665).

A thorough analysis reveals that all these interpretations can be harmonized by stating that the verse pertains to the People of the Book in general, rather than specifically addressing Jews or Christians. It captures their attitudes towards the Qur'ān and their scepticism regarding its message based on their focus on "Mutashābih" verses. This interpretation is further supported by the opening verses of the Surah, which discuss the Qur'ān's affirmation of previous scriptures, including the Torah and the Gospel. Furthermore, the discussions that follow encompass both Jews and Christians, demonstrating a comprehensive approach rather than a narrow focus on a single group. Considering the principle of "the general term rather than the specific context" it is evident that the verse encompasses not only Jews and Christians but also anyone who follows their path, including those who pursue the "Mutashābih" to seek controversy or interpret its meaning according to their desires.

From this analysis, we can conclude that the "Mutashābih" falls within the realm of the unseen that must be believed in without attempting to understand its nature or mechanisms. Such is the case, for example, of the creation of Jesus without a father and the lifespan of the Islamic nation.

2.3. Significance of the context of Muḥkam and Mutashābih in the verse:

2.3.1. The relationship between Muḥkam and Mutashābih:

When the verse juxtaposes the "Muḥkam" and the "Mutashābih", it becomes necessary "to interpret the (Muḥkam) in relation to its counterpart, which is the (Mutashābih). This interpretation is reinforced by the structure of the verse itself, which employs the technique of combination (Jam') and division (Taqsīm). Allah has divided what He combined in the meaning of the Book by stating, (مِنْهُ ءَايَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ) (هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأَخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ). Al-Suyuti attributes this opinion to Al-Tayyibi (See Al-Suyuti, 1415 AH, vol. 2, p. 10).

This juxtaposition indicates that the "Muḥkam" verses are abundant, while the "Mutashābih" verses are few. This understanding is supported by Allah's statement about the "Muḥkam" verses: (هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ), (Qur'an 3:7) which means they are the foundation of the Book. This indicates that these verses are predominant and encompassing. The concept of being the foundation implies that they represent the majority of the text of the Qur'ān (Al-Shatibi, 1999, vol. 3, p. 80). Therefore, since the "Muḥkam" verses are predominant, the remaining category, the "Mutashābih," is the minority.

It can also be inferred from this juxtaposition that the "Muḥkam" is the fundamental aspect of the Qur'ān verses, while the "Mutashābih" is the subsidiary aspect. The term "Umm", as used in the verse, emphasises this distinction. Building on the previous analysis, it becomes evident that the "Mutashābih" does not relate to the overall fundamentals but is limited to specific details. If the "Tashābuh" / ambiguity were to apply to any of the primary fundamentals, it would necessarily extend to all of them, as these fundamentals are interconnected and branch out from one another. In contrast, the verse indicates that the "Muḥkam" is the foundation of the Book, reinforcing the notion that the "Mutashābih" does not pertain to the foundational principles.

Al-Shatibi highlighted this idea when addressing those who claimed that the Mutashābih applies to the fundamental aspects, arguing that deviations from the truth mainly occurred in the fundamentals rather than the details. He stated that: "The intended meaning of 'fundamentals' refers to the overall rules, and in that context, we cannot accept that the Tashābuh applies to them; rather, it applies to their details. The verses that appear to suggest Tashābuh can be seen as branches diverging from the fundamental of Tanzīh, which is one of the rules of divine knowledge, just as the opening verses of Surahs and their Tashābuh occur in certain branches of the sciences of the Qur'ān. Therefore, considering this perspective makes it clear that Tashābuh does not occur in the overall rules or general fundamentals." (Al-Shatibi, 1999, vol. 3, pp. 89-90).

2.3.2. The relationship between (Muḥkam and Mutashābih) and the people with deviant hearts, and those firmly grounded in knowledge:

The nature of the Mutashābih is made clear by the verse, which highlights the traits of those who follow it and attempt to decipher its meanings. The verse specifies that such individuals harbour deviation in their hearts, and their pursuit of these Mutashābih verses is driven by a desire to sow discord (Fitnah). It becomes evident that exploring and interpreting the Mutashābih, as previously discussed, can only result in discord. This is because Mutashābih pertains to the unseen, and knowing its essence has no practical benefits.

The contrast between the Muḥkam and the Mutashābih, along with attributing following the Mutashābih verses to those with deviation in their hearts, and then mentioning the firmly grounded in knowledge, suggests that the latter category is the opposite of the former, and that the firmly grounded in knowledge do not follow the Mutashābih and do not seek its interpretation. Allah states: (وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ) (Qur'an 3:7).

This contrast becomes even more evident when examining the insights provided by scholars like At-Tayyibi. He suggests that (it could have been said: "Those with upright hearts follow the decisive verses". However, Allah chose "firm in knowledge" to emphasize the importance of comprehensive knowledge and extensive effort. The term "Rāsikh" (firm or firmly grounded) indicates a level of understanding that can only be achieved through thorough general knowledge and diligent effort. When the heart is steadfast on the path of guidance and firmly rooted in knowledge, its possessor can confidently speak the truth. The supplication of the firmly grounded in knowledge, (رَبَّنَا لَا تُرِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ أَلْوَهَابُ) (8), (Qur'an 3:8) serves as evidence that the expression "الرَّاسِخُونَ" (Qur'an 3:7).) (Al-Suyuti, 1415 AH, vol. 2, p. 10) is the opposite of "الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ رَيْغٌ" (Qur'an 3:7).

Taking into account these attributes outlined in the Quranic verse about Muḥkam and Mutashābih and people with deviant hearts and those firmly grounded in knowledge, it can be concluded

that the Mutashābih verses are those that should be believed in but not acted upon, and they are contrasted with the Muḥkamverses that can be put into practice.

2.4. Significance of Pause (Waqf) in the Verse:

The location of the pause (Waqf) within the verse enables us to understand the boundaries of knowledge regarding the (Mutashābihāt), and whether it is something that Allah has exclusively reserved knowledge of, or if scholars have the means to understand it. Exegesis books mention two readings in this context (Al-Qurtubi, 1372 H, vol. 4, pp. 15-19): one pauses at the name of (Allah), while the other pauses at (الرَّسُخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ). According to the first recitation commonly adopted by the majority, only Allah knows the interpretation of (Mutashābihāt). This aligns with the previous discussion and with the significance of the term (Ta'wīl) "interpretation" in the terminology of the Qur'ān, which means "the actual outcome of words or action in the realms of the seen or the unseen" (Zumrud, 2001, p. 141). This means an actual realization of things in the external world. In this context, (Al-Hamadani, 1969, p. 15) states: "The proponents of this opinion interpret it as referring to the thing being interpreted (the subject of the verse) because one can be used to indicate the other. Don't you see that He, the Almighty, said: (هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا تَأْوِيلَهُ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلَهُ) (Qur'an 7:53). The intended meaning is the thing being interpreted, and what is known from the context of the thing being interpreted, which is the Day of Judgment, reckoning, and the determined punishments, is that Allah, glorified be He, possesses exclusive knowledge of it and its timing. This is because no one among His creatures knows the detailed specifics of that." Based on this meaning, Allah's exclusive knowledge of the interpretation of the (Mutashābih) verses means that He knows the actual outcome of these verses and the true reality of the (Mutashābih).

As for the second recitation that suggests that the firmly rooted scholars know the interpretation of (Mutashābih) verses, it is considered a matter of Ijtihad (Al-Shatibi, 1999, vol. 3, p. 91) attributed to Mujahid and based on the understanding that the phrase (يَقُولُونَ ءَامَنَّا بِهِ) is connected to what precedes it. Some linguists have argued in favour of this opinion, saying "it means that those who are firmly grounded in knowledge know it and say, 'We believe.' However, most linguists reject and exclude this interpretation." (Al-Qurtubi, 1372, vol. 4, p. 16).

Furthermore, this recitation implies that humans can know the (Mutashābih), and aligns with one of its linguistic meanings. However, this is not the intended meaning of (Mutashābih) in the context of the verse, as previously clarified. This recitation also implies that the term (Ta'wīl) refers to the interpretation of words and clarification of meanings, but this too is not the meaning intended by the verse, as discussed earlier. Based on this evidence, the claim that those firmly rooted in knowledge share with Allah the knowledge of interpreting the (Mutashābih) verses is invalidated.

2.5. Significance of the Prophetic Explanation:

The explanation provided earlier is supported by several Hadiths that clarify the nature of the (Mutashābihāt) and emphasize that these are beliefs to be accepted without attempts to interpret or act upon them. One notable Hadith is narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), in which she reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited the verse from Surah Aal-i-Imrān and then said, "When you see those who follow what is (Mutashābih), they are those whom Allah meant. Therefore, beware of them" (Al-Bukhari, 1987, Hadith 4547). In this Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) warns against following the (Mutashābih) verses. He clarifies that those who do so belong to the category of individuals with deviant hearts and intentions.

Another Hadith is narrated by Amr ibn Shu'ayb, in which he reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "God's Book was sent down only to be consistent; so do not use parts to falsify others. Speak about as much of it as you know, but where you are ignorant entrust it to him who knows" (Ibn Hanbal, 1989, Hadith 6741). The entrusting mentioned in this Hadith is further clarified by the Hadith that says: "Verily, the Qur'ān was not revealed to contradict itself. So, whatever you recognize [as clear in meaning], act upon it, and whatever appears (Mutashābih) to you, have faith in it" (Ibn al-Dhahak, 1991, Hadith 812). These narrations emphasize that the (Mutashābih) verses are to be believed in and not to be acted upon.

This meaning is further emphasized in the Hadith narrated by Imam al-Hakim, from Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him), in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "The first Book was revealed from one gate and on one letter, but the Qur'ān was revealed from seven gates and on seven letters: a deterrent and a commander, ḥalāl and ḥarām, muḥkam and mutashābih and parables. So, make its ḥalāl ḥalāl, and make its ḥarām ḥarām, and do what you are commanded to do, and refrain from what you are forbidden from, and consider its parables, and work with its muḥkam, and believe in its mutashābih, and say: We believe in it, all from our Lord, and none remembers it except those of understanding" (Al-Hakim Al-Nisaburi, 1990, Hadith 3198).

2.6. The Fundamental Significance of the "Muḥkam" and the "Mutashābih" in the Qur'ān:

The verse in Surah Aal-i-Imrān introduces a unique concept of "Muḥkam" (clear) and "Mutashābih" (ambiguous), extending beyond general lexical or terminological boundaries. The cause of "Tashābuh" does not arise from the fact that a term may have various or ambiguous meanings, and the "Following" mentioned in the verse only occurs when the term has a clear linguistic meaning to be adhered to. In this context, following and adhering to any speech does not mean adopting one of its shared meanings; such following and adherence would be a mere following of personal inclination.

Therefore, any term that is characterised as the "Mutashābih" mentioned in Surah Aal-i-Imrān must have the potential for adherence based on its specific linguistic meaning. The "Tashābuh", in this case, results from the confusion in representing the term's denotation and its accurate external manifestations. This confusion arises due to the inability to determine the true image of this specific linguistic meaning.

For instance, the verse (5) (الْزَّكَاةُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى) (Qur'an 20:5) has a specific linguistic meaning that denotes uprightness and equilibrium. This linguistic meaning of (Istawa) is unambiguous and can be followed and adhered to. However, the verse is also ambiguous (Mutashābih) due to the confusion it may cause in determining the actual image of this (Istiwa) and representing its external reality in a manner that befits the Most Merciful, who is incomparable. As a result of this ambiguity, the optimal approach to dealing with it is to accept it and believe in it without delving into it or searching for its external manifestations. Muslims are under no religious obligation to search for such external manifestations of the Mutashābih. In fact, searching for such manifestations only leads to arousing controversies and disputes (Fitnah).

In contrast to (Mutashābih), there is the (Muḥkam) that is characterized by having a definite meaning that can be easily grasped, and its interpretation is often guided by what is opposite to it (Al-Suyuti, 1415 AH, vol. 2, p. 10). For instance, the verse (لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ) (Qur'an 42:11) provides a clear image of the concept it refers to, as it negates any similarity between Allah and human beings, the sky, the earth, or the mountains.

2.7. An Examination of "Mutashābih" in its Specific Sense:

The significance of the example presented in this segment of the study lies in its practical application for comprehending the concept of "Mutashābih" and distinguishing it from "Muḥkam." The Qur'ān references the vision experienced by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) alongside the cursed tree, wherein Allah states: (وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِي أَرَبْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَنُحَوِّفُهُمْ فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا) (Qur'an 17:60).

In his interpretation of this verse, Ahmed Hassan Farhat elucidates that the "vision" refers to the Night Journey (Isrā) that was believed by some and refuted by others. He also explains that the "accursed tree" refers to the tree of Zaqqūm, as mentioned in Surah As-Sāffat. Allah Almighty describes it:

(أَذَلَّكَ خَيْرٌ نُّزُلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّومِ (62) إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِلظَّالِمِينَ (63) إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَبِيمِ (64) طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ (65) فَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَكُلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَا لَوْ أَنَّ الْبُطُونَ (66) ((Qur'an 37:62-66)

According to (Ibn Kathir, 1401, vol. 7, p. 16), Qatadah reported that the cursed tree (Zaqqūm) became a source of temptation for those who had gone astray. They stated that the Prophet informed his companions about a tree in the Hellfire, then prompted scepticism since fire consumes trees. In response, Allah revealed: (64) *إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ* (64)) Mujahid also reported that Abu Jahl claimed that Zaqqūm was nothing but dates and foam, and he would taste it. (Ibn Kathir, 1401, vol. 7, p. 16).

In concluding his study of the verse of Al-Isra and its related matters, Ahmed Hassan Farhat states that it is evident from the preceding verses, along with the reasons for their revelation, and their interpretations, that the polytheists rejected the Prophet's account of the Night Journey and the Quranic description of the cursed tree mentioned therein – the tree of Zaqqūm, which emerges from the depths of Hell and is designated as the food of the sinful on the Day of Resurrection. The polytheists would spread confusion among the people by circulating such news in a manner of amazement and mockery. They were unable to comprehend these events due to their extraordinary nature, and because these accounts contradicted their preconceived notions and familiar experiences in the worldly life. They even attempted to provide alternative explanations, as Abu Jahl did when he said to them: 'Zaqqūm is nothing but dates and foam, consume them, this is what Muhammad is threatening you with'. It is reported that some individuals even apostatized from Islam.

Undoubtedly, this example encapsulates all the characteristics mentioned in the verse about the *Mutashābih*. The polytheists followed these ambiguous verses seeking confusion and attempting to interpret them. The confusion indeed materialized through some people's apostasy from Islam. Abu Jahl also tried to interpret what the verses conveyed. Furthermore, there is no doubt that what these verses conveyed is among the matters that should be believed in but not acted upon. The believers accepted it just as they accepted the *Muḥkam*. The stance of Abu Bakr as-Siddīq, may Allah be pleased with him, regarding the Prophet's Night Journey is well-known. Following that incident, he earned the title of "as-Siddīq" (the Truthful) due to his unwavering belief in the miraculous event (Farhat, 1986, pp. 195-197).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this comprehensive study examines the terms "*Muḥkam*" and "*Mutashābih*" within the Qur'ān, emphasizing their significance in the broader context of Islamic thought. Through a thorough semantic analysis, the research explores the various interpretations that have developed over centuries, showcasing the diverse perspectives of scholars from different Islamic schools and sects. The extensive literature on this topic highlights the enduring importance of these concepts, illustrating how they have played a crucial role in shaping theological discourse, principles of jurisprudence, and interpretations of the Qur'ān.

The investigation into the semantic nuances of "*Muḥkam*" and "*Mutashābih*" in both the Arabic language and the Qur'ān sheds light on the complexities involved in understanding these terms. It becomes evident that differing interpretations often arise from contextual factors, such as the specific verses in which these terms are used and the broader thematic messages of the Qur'ān. Notably, the analysis of Surah Aal-i-Imrān serves as a critical focal point, demonstrating how context, pauses (Waqf), and prophetic explanations can significantly influence the comprehension of these concepts.

Ultimately, this study provides a well-rounded perspective on how understanding these terms—especially in relation to the Qur'ān's overarching message and specific contexts—can help reduce confusion. By emphasizing the importance of both semantic analysis and contextual interpretation, the study illustrates that a more nuanced understanding can enhance comprehension of the Quranic text, making it a valuable resource for scholars in the fields of interpretation, theology, and jurisprudence. Through these insights, this study aims to contribute to ongoing discussions surrounding the concepts of "*Muḥkam*" and "*Mutashābih*," encouraging continued research and facilitating a deeper understanding of the complex layers of the Qur'ān. This paper stands as a significant addition to scholarly discourse, offering a comprehensive framework that addresses the confusion surrounding these pivotal concepts and fostering a greater understanding of the Quranic text and its teachings.

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