## Methods of Interpretation in Ahl al-Bayt Hadiths

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**Introduction**

At the time of *shiah* Imams, a few of their students gathered together the *hadiths* of *Ahl al-bayt* concerning the interpretation of the Quran into specific collections and named them, "*Kitab al-tafsir*". Among them are such scholars as *Aban ibn Taghlib*, *Abu Hamzah al-Thumali*, *Abu al-Jarud* and *Jabir ibn yazid al-Ju'fi*. Also, at the beginning of the fourth century AH, some Shiite scholars such as *Furat ibn Ibrahim al-Kufi*, *Muhammad al-Ayyashi* and *Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi* compiled many traditions regarding the interpretation of the Quran and named them "*Kitāb al-tafsir*". After the fifth century, for various reasons, *Shiite* scholars did not take proper care of exegetical hadiths; therefore, some of the *Shiite* works on tafsir became untraceable and some lost their historical validity. At the end of the eleventh century, with the "*akhbāri*" movement, scholars such as *al-Huwayzi* and *al-Bahrani* collected almost all exegetical hadiths within numerous *Shiite* books and created two large collections of tafsir. Therefore, today *Nur al-thaqalayn* including more than 13500 *Hadiths,* and *al-Burhan* including nearly 12000 *Haiths,* are available.

Amongst the hadiths of ahl al-bayt concerning the Quran we find the both exoteric and esoteric interpretation of the Quran.

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Before examining the methods of interpretation in ahl al-bayt hadiths, it is necessary to have a brief look at some key words in this respect such as "tanzil", "ta'wil", "tafsir", "zahir" and "batin".

1. The semantics of "tanzil, tafsir and ta'wil in hadiths
1. 1. "*Tanzil*" in *hadiths*
In many traditions, such as the following, the word *ta'wil* is used in contrast with the word *tanzil*:

*Imam Sadiq* said: "God sent down the *tanzil* and *ta'wil* of the Quran upon the Prophet and taught them to him."[1]

The question that arises here is: What was meant by *tanzil* and *ta'wil*? A close look in the traditions in which the *ta'wil* is used in contrast with *tanzil* shows that the *tanzil* is used in different meanings as classified below:

In Islamic works sometimes the holy Quran is called '*tanzil*' as same as it is called '*furqan*', '*zikr*' and '*kitab*'.[2] Likewise, the term *tanzil* in some other traditions is applied to 'words of the Quran'.[3]

In some traditions, such as the following, *tanzil* is used as the immediate, literal meaning of the words--the meaning that immediately comes to the mind of the reader. It is possible that such a meaning was intended by the writer / speaker or not.

* *Imam 'Ali* regarding the explicit verses (*Muhkamat)* said: "the explicit verses (*Muhkamat*) are the verses whose *ta'wil* are synonymous with *tanzil*. For instance, the Quran says: "O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; Rub your heads (with water); and your feet to the ankles" (Q.5: 6). The *ta'wil* of this verse is what is understood from its *tanzil* (literal meaning)".[4]

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[1] - Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Kulayni, *al-Kafi* (Beirut, Dar Sa'b, 1401 A.H.), vol.1, p.23.

[2] - See: *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon.26; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol18, p.22; *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon.150,; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.51, p.117; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.43, p.156; Ibid., vol.32, p.429; vol.33, p.74.

[3] - See: Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, vol.10, p.125., vol.89, p.107, vol.42, p.128. For more information about the second use of *tanzil* in the traditions see, Muhammad ibn Mas'ud 'Ayyashi, *Kitab al-Tafsir* (Tehran, Intisharat 'Ilmiyya Islamiyya), vol.2, p.251; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.24, pp.117-8; vol.25, p.97; vol.89, pp.40, 59.

[4] - Muhamma ibn Hasan al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, vol.1, p.280. 'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qomi, *Tafsir al-Qomi*, vol.1, p.96.

This tradition indicates that the immediate, apparent meaning of the above mentioned verse is intended by God, and no other meaning should be considered as the *ta'wil*.

* In another tradition, *Imam 'Ali* said: "There are many verses of the Quran whose *ta'wil* are different from their *tanzil*, such as the meaning of '*Inzal* = to send down' in these verses: "And he sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs" (Q.39:6), "And We sent down Iron, in which is (material for) mighty war, as well as many benefits for mankind," (Q.57:25). In these verses the expression 'to send down' means 'to create', or like the word of Abraham: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me!" (Q.37:99) that 'going towards God' means 'to pay due attention to the worship of God', or like "Nay, they deny the Meeting with their Lord." (Q.32:10), that the Quran describes 'reviving in the hereafter' as 'meeting God', or like "Who suppose (know) that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him." (Q.2:46), that the word '*zann = to suppose*' is used in meaning of 'certainty'. Therefore, behold that the *ta'wil* of these verses are distinctly different than their *tanzil*".[1]

According to the above traditions, *ta'wil* is the original intended meaning that sometimes is comprehended from the apparent meaning of Quranic words and sometimes it does not accord to the apparent meaning and grasping its intended meaning requires much more meditation.

### 1. 2. ta'wil *in Hadiths*

In traditions, the word *ta'wil* is used in diverse usages, although the main meaning of *ta'wil* is to be found in all of them. In traditions, *ta'wil* is used in connection with 'speech' and 'dream'. In traditions, as will be shown, some times ta'wil is applied to 'literal meaning' of words, where as in some occasions is applied to 'hidden meaning' and in the third application is used in external exemplars (*masadiq*) of words. Here we shall present the various applications of ta'wil of speech.

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[1] - Muhamma Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.62, p.138; Sayyid Hashim Bahrani, *al-Burhan fi tafsir al-Quran*; Ibn Jum'a Huwayzi, *Tafsir Nur al-thaqalayn*.

### 1. 2. 1. The literal meaning

In some *hadiths*, such as the following, *ta'wil* is applied to the speaker's intent.

\* *Huzayfat ibn Yaman* said: on the day of *Ghadir -e- Khum[1]* when the Prophet announced "For whomever I am the *mawla*, *'Ali* is his *mawla*", a man said: O apostle of God! What is the *ta'wil* of your statement? He answered: "I meant "For whomsoever I am the prophet, *'Ali* is his commander".[2]

As the Arabic word "*mawla*" literally has two current meanings; (i) friend, (ii) leader, the man asked the Prophet to clarify his factual intent from the word "*mawla*". Therefore, in this tradition *ta'wil* was applied to "what is intended".

\* It is narrated that one day *Mu'awiyah* in a debate with *'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas* told him: Avoid from relating the qualities of *'Ali* and his household! *Ibn 'Abba*s responded: Do you want to forbid us from reading the Quran!? He answered: No! *Ibn 'Abbas* said: Subsequently, do you want to prohibit us from *ta'wil* of the Quran?! He said: yes! *Ibn 'Abbas* added: then, you let us recite the Quran, but do not let us talk about "what God intended" from the Quran.[3] As can be seen, the term *ta'wil* in this tradition is correspondent to "what God intended".

In some *hadiths*, such as the following, *ta'wil* is used in 'literal meaning' of a word or a statement, whether the meaning is the direct meaning of the word (indication) or the indirect meaning (implication).

\* *Imam Baqir* said: "When *Noah*'s boat was placed upon the mountain of Judi, suddenly he became afraid and said: "*rahman atqin*". The *ta'wil* (meaning) of his word is, 'O my Lord! Help us".[4]

\* Somebody asked *Imam Baqir* about the name of the day "*al-Jumu'ah,* Friday*"*, he answered: "*ta'wil* of *al-Jumuah* is that God gathers all His creatures including humans and Jinn on this day."[5]

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[1] - *Ghadir –e- Khom* originally is the name of a place located between Mecca and Medina, where the Prophet *Muhammad* in his last pilgrimage appointed *'Ali* as his immediate successor. This event was took place on 18th of the month *Dhilqa'dah* (!0 A.H.).

[2] - Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.37, p.194.

[3] - Ibid., vol.25, p.375.

[4] - Ibid., vol.11, p.239.

[5] - Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, vol.24, p.399.

* Imam 'Ali said: "*Ta'wil* of the verse "To God We belong, and to Him is our return" (Q, 2: 156), is that: God is our master and we depart from this world".[1]

As can be seen, *ta'wil* in the above traditions was applied to the literal meaning of the words and sentences.

1. 2. 2. The subject of a word (*misdaq*)

In some traditions, such as the following, *ta'wil* is used in the exemplars (*masadiq*) of quranic words, rather than to their concepts (literal meanings):

* Once *Harun al-rashid*, the *'Abbasid caliph*, asked *Imam Kazim*: Why do you describe yourselves as 'the children of the Prophet', whereas you are truly the children of *'Ali*?! *Imam Kazim* responded: "All Muslims say that In the event of *mubahilah*[2], none save 'Ali, Fatima, *Hasan* and *Husayn* were with the Prophet. Therefore, in the verse of *mobahilah*[3] the *ta'wil* of "*abna'ana*, our children" is *Imam Hasan* and *Imam Husayn*, and the *ta'wil* of "*nisa'ana*, our women" is Fatima, and the *ta'wil* of "*anfusana*, ourselves" is Imam 'Ali."[4]

* *Imam Baqir* said: "the *ta'wil* of '*ahl al-bayt*' in the verse saying "And God only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless".(Q.33:33), are *'Ali*, *Fatima*, *Hasan* and *Husayn*"[5]

It is obvious that the word "*abna'ana*" literally means our children, but considering the context, its subjects (*masadiq*) are Imam *Hasan* and Imam *Husayn*, and the word "*ahl al-bayt*" literally means 'the people of the house', but it is possible that the subjects are *'Ali*, *Fatima*, *Hasan* and *Husayn*.

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[1] Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Kulayni, *al-Kafi fi al-hadith* (Beirut, Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1401 A.H.), vol.3, p.261.

[2] *Mubahilah* literally means "invoking curse for those who were false in their claim. Referring the *Najran Christians*, God ordered that if they did not accept after so many arguments and clear facts, they should be invited for a '*mubahilah*'. The practical form of *mubahilah* was so devised that both the contending parties should gather at an appointed place with themselves and their children and humbly pray that God's curse should be laid on those who were liars.

[3] This verse is known as "*mubahila*": "If any one disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge Hath come to thee, say: "Come! let us gather together,- our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of God on those who lie!" (Q.3:61)

[4] Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, vol.93, p.241.

[5] Ibid., vol35, p.211.

### 1. 2. 3. The necessary logical implication of a statement

In some traditions, such as the following, *ta'wil* is understood as accompanied logical implications of a statement.

* *Fuzayl ibn yasar* said: I asked *Imam Baqir* about the verse "if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people."(Q.5:32), He answered: It means "if any one saved whomsoever from burning or drowning". I asked: Does not the verse include whoever saves the other person from going astray and guide him to the right way? He said: "this is indeed its higher *ta'wil*".[1] A similar *hadith* was related from *Imam Sadiq*.[2]

What is considered as *ta'wil* in the above tradition is the result of a logical argument, and that is when the verse includes the one who saves the body of a man from burning in this mortal world, certainly it also includes the one who saves the spirit of a man from burning in the fire of Hell in the immortal world. What is of particular interest to us in this *hadith* is that *Imam Sadiq* considered the logical implication of the verse as the *ta'wil*. Therefore, all the non-literal meanings of the Quran, which are   results of the logical arguments based on some Quranic materials, can be considered (counted) as the *ta'wil* of the Quran.

### 1. 2. 4. Wisdom (*hikmat*)

In some traditions, *ta'wil* is applied to 'wisdom' (*hikmat*). 'Wisdom' (*hikmat*) in this occasion means the broad idea that many religious teachings and principles based on. For instance, God enacted fasting, but announced in the Quran that the aim of this religious act is piety.[3] Therefore, it can be said that piety is *ta'wil* (*hikmat*, wisdom) of fasting.

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[1] Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi fi al-usul* (Beirut, Dar Sa 'b, 1401 A.H.), vol.2, p.210; 'Ayyashi, *Kitab al-tafsir*, vol.1, p.312; Ibn Jum'ah Huwayzi, *Nur al-thaqalayn*, vol.1, p.617. It should be noted that in another *hadith* was related that "the higher *ta'wil* of the verse is that you invite him *to the right way and he responds positively." 'Ayyashi, Kitab al-tafsir, vol.1, p.312; Ibn* Jum'ah Huwayzi, *Nur al-thaqalayn*, vol.1  p.617. Likewise, *'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi* related that the verse includes the one who saves a person from poverty. 'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi, *Tafsir al-Qummi*, vol.1 p.167.

[2] 'Ayyashi, *Kitab al-tafsir,*  vol.1, p.312; Ibn Jum'ah Huwayzi, *Nur al-thaqalayn*, vol.1, p.617; Mirza Husayn Nuri, *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, (Qom, Mu'ssisat –u-Ali Bayt, 1407), vol.12, p.238.

[3] - See, Q.2:183.

The following *hadiths* refer to this application of *ta'wil*:

* One day when *Imam 'Ali* was passing in front of *Ka'ba*, he saw a man who was praying. He was pleased with his prayer and said: Do you know what the *ta'wil* of your prayer is. The man answered: is there anymore *ta'wil* for prayer except devoutness? *Imam 'Ali* answered: Behold, O' man! God has given the Prophet nothing except that it possesses *ta'wil* and *tanzil*, and both of them are based on devoutness. Therefore, whosoever does not know the *ta'wil* of his prayer; it would be imperfect and worthless".[1]

*Ta'wil* in this *hadith* applied to the wisdoms behind the religious precepts that in fact they are the causes for enactment of those precepts.

* The *Shiite* and Sunni traditions have related that the Prophet made a prayer for *Ibn 'Abbas*, "O God, make him learned in the religion and teach him *ta'wil*".[2]

Alternatively, according to another narration, the Prophet said: "O God, make him learned in the religion and teach him wisdom (*hikmah*)[3].

Thus, probably *ta'wil* in this occurrence has no meaning except 'wisdom' (*hikmat*). On this basis, the prophet would have wished that *Ibn 'Abbas* attained the position that he could infer the religious precepts from the revelation and was able to comprehend their reasons and causes. This point of view can be supported by a *Hadith* from *Ibn 'Abbs* that he interpreted '*hikmat*' to "proper understanding of the Quran".

### 1.2. 5. The hidden meaning

In some *hadiths*, such as following, *ta'wil* is applied to the hidden meaning.* *Abu 'ubaydah* said: Once I asked *Imam Baqir* from the verses, "A. L. M. The Roman The Romans has been defeated-In a land close by… (Q.30:1-3)", *Imam Baqir* said: "these verses possess a *ta'wil* that none save God and those who are versed in knowledge

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[1] Ibn Jum'ah al-Huwayzi, *Nur al-thaqalayn*, vol.1, p.314. (the main source: *'Ilal al-shara'I'*)

[2] See, Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Quran al-'azim*; Qurtubi, *al-Jami' li ahkam al-Quran*; Ibn Hayyan, *al-Bahr al-muhit*.

[3] See, Muhammad ibn 'Isa Tirmizi, *Sunan al-Tirmizi*,(Istanbul, Dar al-Da'wah, 1407), *Kitab al-manaqib*, No.3823-4; Fayz Kashani, *al-Mahajjat al-bayza'* (Qom, Intisharat –e- Islami), vol.2, p.253.

know".[1] It is obvious that the verses are clear; therefore, Imam's intent refers to the hidden meaning of the verses.

The Sunni sources have narrated that *Ibn 'Abbas* said:

"Verily the Quran possesses branches and sciences, outward meanings and inward meanings; so its outward meaning is *tanzil*, and its inward meaning is *ta'wil*".[2]

### 1. 2. 6. Fulfilment of a speech

In some traditions, such as the following, *ta'wil* is applied to fulfilment of the Quranic verses.

* In a tradition related from the Prophet that refers to the verse "He hath power to send calamities on you" (Q.6:65), he said: Verily it will be fulfilled, but its *ta'wil* has not yet come".[3]

* *'Ayishah*, the Prophet's wife, referring to the Prophet's attitude in prayer said: He frequently repeated in his genuflexion and prostration this sentence: "Glory be to Thee, O God, O our Lord, and Thine is the praise! O God, Forgive me! 'Ayishah added: He was fulfilling the Quranic message (*yata'awwal al-Quran*)[4]

It is obvious that *'Ayisha's* purpose behind the above comment is to show that the Prophet wanted to fulfil the command of God in the Chapter *Nasr*.[5]

* *Abu Basir* related concerning this verse "It is He Who hath sent His Apostle with guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion" (Q.9:33), *Imam Sadiq* said: "By God, it has not yet come its *ta'wil* and it will not come its *ta'wil* until Qa'im (the hidden Imam)comes".[6]

It is clear that *ta'wi*l in the above *hadiths* means fulfilment of the above mentioned verses.

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[1] Ibn Jum'ah Huwayzi, *Nur al-thaqalayn*, vol.1, p.314.

[2] Jalal al-din Suyuti, *al-Durr al-manthur*, vol.2, p.10 (the main source: *tafsir -e- Ibn abi Hatam*); *al-Itqan*, chapter no.77; Sayyid Mahmud Alusi, *Ruh al-ma'ani fi tafsir al-Quran*, vol.1, p.28.

[3] Muhammad ibn 'Isa Tirmizi, *al-Jami' al-Sahih; Sunan e-Tirmizi* (Beirut, Dar al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1407 A.H.)vol.5, p.244, No.3066.

[4] Muhammad ibn Isma'il Bukhari, *Sahih e-Bukhari* (Beirut, Dar Ihya' al-turath al-'arabi), vol.6, p.200; Muslim ibn Hajjaj Nayshaburi, *Sahih e-Muslim* (Beirut, Dar Ihya' al-turath al-'arabi), vol.1, p.350, kitab al-salat, No.217.

[5] *"Celebrate the praises of thy Lord, and pray for His Forgiveness."(Q.110:3)*

[6] 'Abd 'Ali ibn Jum'a al-Huwayzi, *Tafsir -e- Nur al-thaqalayn*, vol.2, p.211. (the main source: *Kamal al-din wa Tamam al-ni'ma* from *Shaykh -e- Saduq*).

It should be remembered that *ta'wil*, more or less, used in traditions in connection with dream, which means interpretation of a dream or fulfilment a dream.[1]

### 1. 3. Tafsir in Hadiths

We should answer to two questions which arise here: (i) Is the terms *ta'wil* and *tafsir* used interchangeably in traditions? (ii) Has the term *ta'wil* in the Chapter of *Al 'Imran* been used in meaning of *tafsir* or not?

A brief look at traditions shows that both the questions might be answered positively.

The following traditions indicate that the term *ta'wil* is used in meaning of *tafsir*.

\* As previously mentioned, *Imam 'Ali* in responding to the one who had declared that the Quran contains the contradictory materials said: "Avoid from interpreting (*tafsir*) the Quran based on your personal opinion-For although the *tanzil* of the Quran is similar to human made word, but its *ta'wil* will sometimes be incomparable with human's".[2]

Nevertheless, other traditions, such as the following, imply that the *tafsir* and *ta'wil* are two distinctive things.

\* Imam 'Ali said: "no verse was revealed upon the messenger of God but he taught me its *tafsir* and its *ta'wil*, its *nasikh* and *mansukh*, its *muhkam* and *mutashbih*".[3]

The following traditions indicate that the term *ta'wil* in the Chapter *Al 'Imran* used in meaning of *tafsir*.[4]

\* narrated from messenger of God in the sermon of *Ghadir*: "O' people! Keep thinking on the Quran, understand its verses, look at its explicit verses (*muhkamat*), do not follow its ambiguous verses (*mutashabihat*), by God, none save *'Ali* is able to tell you its tafsir."[5]

\* Likewise, referring to the seventh verse of *Al 'Imran*, 'Ali said:

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[1] - See, Muhammad ibn Isma'il Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, vol.9, pp.110-115
[2] - Ibid., vol.89, p.107.
[3] - Nur al-thaqalayn, vol.1, p.314.
[4] - in next chapter we shall explain that some eminent scholars of Sunni and *Shi'a*, such as *Ibn Taymiyyah* and *Tabataba'I*, maintain that the term *ta'wil* in the Chapter *Al 'Imran* does not refer to *tafsir*.
[5] - *Nur al-thaqalayn*, vol.1, p.314. (Main source: al-'Ihtijaj, Tabarsi)

Leave to God that knowledge which Satan has prompted you to seek and which neither the Quran enjoins you to seek nor is there any trace of it in the actions or sayings of the Prophet and other leaders (*A`immah*) of guidance. This is the extreme limit of God's claim upon you. Know that firm in knowledge are those who refrain from opening the curtains that lie against the unknown, and their acknowledgement of ignorance about the details of the hidden unknown prevents them from further probe. God praises them for their admission that they are unable to get knowledge not allowed to them. They do not go deep into the discussion of what is not enjoined upon them about knowing Him and they call it firmness.[1]

As can be seen, *Imam 'Ali* use the word *tafsir* instead of the word *ta'wil* when he is talking about the seventh verse of *Al 'Imran* that whose subject is *ta'wil*.

\* *Ibn 'Abbas* said: "the *tafsir* of the Quran is divided into four divisions: (i) that which all can understand. (ii) that which the Arab can understand. (iii) that which only the learned men can understand. (iv) that which no one knows except God".[2]

It is clear that the forth type of *tafsir* in this *hadith* refers to the seventh verse of *Al 'Imran*.

## 2. The semantics of *'zahir'* and *'batin'* in hadiths

A number of hadiths from the imams of the Prophet's family indicate that there are the various levels of meanings in the holy Quran.

\* "In truth the Qur'an possesses an inner and outer".[3]

\* "In truth the Qur'an possesses an inner and outer, and its inner possesses another inner up to seven inners".[4]

\* None verse is in the Quran but it possesses outer and inner, and none letter (*harf*) is in the Quran but it possesses the limited meaning (*hadd*) and the highest meaning (*matla'* ).[5]

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[1] - *Nahj al-balaghah*, Sermon.90; Muhammad ibn Mas'ud 'Ayyashi, *Kitab al-tafsir*, vol.1, p.162; Fayz Kashani, *Tafsir al-safi*, vol.1, p.294 (narrated from *al-Tawhid* of *Shaykh Saduq*)

[2] - Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Quran al-'azim*.

[3] - *Kolayni*, Ibid., vol.4, p.549; *al- Saduq*, **'ilal al-sharaye'**, (Dar 'ihya al-turath al-'arabi, Beirut), p.606. The *hadith* related from Imam *Sadiq*.

[4] - *Sayyed haydar 'amoli*, **Jami-u al-asrar**, (Shirkat intisharat 'ilmi farhangi, Tehran,1989), p.530. The *hadith* related from the Prophet.

[5] - al-'Ayyashi, **Kitab al-tafsir**, ('intesharat 'ilmiya islamiya, Tehran),vol.1, p.11); Saffar, Ibid., p.216;
    *Majlisi*, **Bihar al-anwar**, (al-Wafaa, Beirut, 1983), vol.33, p.155.

\* None verse is in the Quran but it possesses four meanings: outer (*zahir*), inner (*batin*), limited (*hadd*) and highest (*matla'*).[1]

Likewise, there are the other traditions from the Prophet and his offspring related through *Shiite* and *Sunni*. They can be summarized in the following statements.

1-The Quran possesses outer (*zahir*), inner (*batin*), limited (*hadd*) and highest meaning.

2-Each verse (ayah) of the Quran possesses the outer, inner, limited and highest meaning.

3-Each letter (*harf*) of the Quran possesses the outer, inner, limited and highest meaning.

We can explain the above sentences in this plan. (Note: A = ayah; H = harf; Q = Quran)
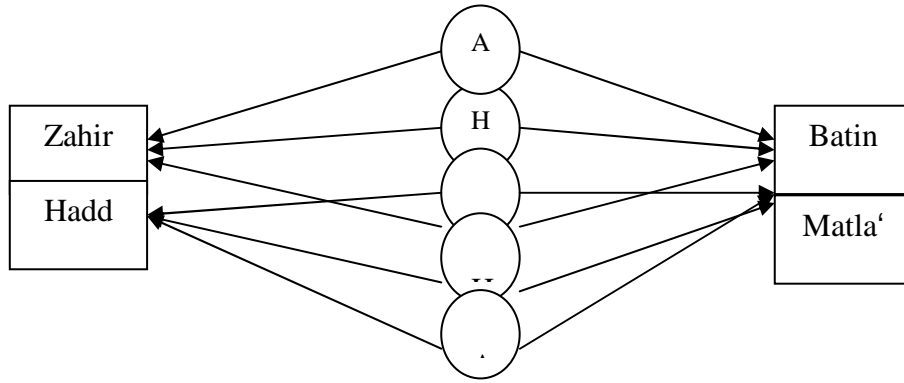


Note: A = 'Ayah, H = Harf, Q = Quran

We can clearly understand what is intended by the terms "Quran" and "verse", but other terms such as "*zahir*", "*batin*", "*hadd*", "*matla* " and "*harf*" need clarification. We shall attempt to present the intended meaning of them through of the traditions themselves.

### 2. 1. The meaning of "harf"
*"Letter", it is likely that one of these two meanings was intended: 1) a letter of the alphabet, 2) a type of expression.*

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[1] - *Fayz Kashani*, **Tafsir al-Safi**, (Dar al-Mortiza, Mashhad), vol.1, p.28. The *hadith* narrated from

Although a number of traditions indicate the first meaning,[1] the second one is more reasonable. The following traditions verify that the meaning of the word "*harf*, letter" in the *ahadith* of "*zahir & batin*" is a type of expression, not a letter of the alphabet.

* The Prophet said: the Quran descends by seven letters (*sab'at-e ahruf*); command, forbidding, persuasion [towards heaven], frightening [from hell], argument, story and proverb.[2]

* Imam Ali said: Verily, God has sent down the Quran in seven styles, each style per se is complete; command, forbidding, persuasion [towards heaven], frightening [from hell], argument, story and proverb.[3]

As can be seen, both traditions concern the same subject matter, but in the first the word "*sab'at ahrof*, seven letters" and in the second the word "*sab'a aqsam*, seven types" are used. This replacement indicates that the word "*harf*, letter" used in some traditions, has the meaning of "a type of expression".

Through this interpretation of the word "*harf*", we can explain the intended meaning of the statement "each *harf* of the Quran possesses outer, inner, limited and higher meaning" to be that on reading the Quran one may find in it various features; sometimes it appears to be a story book, sometimes it seems to be book of ethics, sometimes it sounds like a law book, etc. It should be understood that each feature of the Quran possesses a deep meaning in addition to the outward meaning. In other words, the theory of "*Zahir & batin*" applies not only to certain features of the Quran such as proverbs for example, but also includes all features, even Quranic law. This theory contrasts to the theory whereby Islamic law is explained by literal language and we should therefore, understand it only by literalistic interpretation.

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[1] - *'Abdullah ibn Sinan who has said the following:*

*"I asked abu 'Abdullah (a.s.) about the interpretation of the verse of the holy Quran, 'In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.' The Imam replied, "The first letter B in the Arabic version signifies Baha 'Ullah and means beauty of Allah. The second letter S' signifies Sana 'Ullah and means radiance of Allah. The third letter M signifies Majdullah and means the Grandeur of Allah or according to some other narrators, Mujdullah means Kingdom of Allah. Allah means; Lord of all things. And al-Rahman means the Beneficent to all of His creatures in general. Al-Rahim means the Most Merciful to believers in particular."*

[2] - *Fayz Kashani*, Ibid., vol.1, p.52.

[3] - Ibid.

### 2. 2.  The meaning of the words "*zahir & batin*"

In some traditions, the structural form of Quranic passages is intended by the word "*zahir*", not the outward meaning of the Quran. In these traditions, "*batin*" means "meaning", including all levels of meanings from a surface (external) meaning to a deep one. In fact, these traditions note that both the structure and the meaning of the Quran are remarkable. The rhythmic letters, words and statements in the Quran are so brilliant, and furthermore, it also possesses deep meanings. The following traditions imply (to) this application of the words "*zahir & batin*".

* Imam Ali said: Certainly the outside of the Qur'an is wonderful and its inside is deep (in meaning). Its wonders will never disappear, its amazements will never pass away.[1]

   * The outside of the Quran is reciting and its inside is understanding.[2]

* The outside of the Quran is reciting and its inside is "*ta'wil*, hermeneutics"[3]

It is clear that it is the words of the Quran that are recited, not the meaning of them! Therefore, the term "*zahir*" in this group of traditions refers only to the words of the Quran and their extraordinary structure.

There are traditions which interpret "*zahir*" as the literal meaning and "*batin*" as the wider meaning of text including all levels of non-literal meaning.

* *Imam Baqir* said: The outside of the Quran is the meaning that includes only the persons about whom the verses of the Quran were sent down, and its inside is the meaning that includes other people—those who are similar to the first group throughout history.[4]

* The Prophet said: The outside of the Quran is God's law and its inside is His knowledge.[5]

* *Imam Sadiq* said: The outside of the Quran is "*tanzil*, revelation", and its inside is "*ta'wil*, hermeneutics".[6]

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[1] - **Nahj al-blagha**, Sermon No.18.
[2] - *Fayz Kashani*, Ibid., vol.1, p.29.
[3] - *'Alusi*, **Ruh al-ma   ani**,( Dar 'ihya al-turath al-'arabi, Beirut, 1980), vol.1, p.7.
[4] - *Fayz Kashani*, Ibid., vol.1, p.27.
[5] - *Majlisi, Ibid., vol.74, p.136.*
[6] - *Saffar, Ibid., p.216.*

From the above traditions it can be inferred that the Quran has the meanings other than its literal meanings.

### 2. 3. The meaning of "*hadd*" and "*matla*'"

On one hand, it seems likely, the terms *"hadd & matl*a'*"* have the same meaning as "*zahir & batin*" but expressed in the other words. On the other hand, some traditions assert that there are four level of meaning for the Quran; "zahir", batin", "hadd" an "matla'". Thus, As to the literal conception of the words (*hadd & matla*'), it could be said that "*hadd*" is the limited meaning that can be understood literally and grammatically and historically regarding the context in which a text occurs, and *"matla'"* is the broadest meaning that can be supposed to have been intended by God with His word. For the word "*hadd*", literally means "limit", and therefore, a limited meaning is the intended meaning, but it is limited by several things; it depends on who uses the word, the context in which it is used, whom was indicated by the word, and the time period and the place spoken of. The term "*matl*'" literally means 'the place from which the sun rises", and in this case it means the ultimate meaning that was intended by God. For the position from which the meanings of the Quran have originated is the position of God's will and knowledge. Moreover, the juxtaposition of "*hadd*" and "*matla*'" implies that the "*matla*'" is the unlimited meaning.

This could be illustrated by the following example: Suppose a teacher were to advise his student; be careful never to throw your wastepaper onto the floor of the classroom! The literal meaning of this statement is very clear in so far as children in primary school easily understand it, but this advice originates from a much higher and broader idea in the teacher's mind, i. e, cleanliness is a value. If the student understands the "*matla*'" of his teacher's statement, he realises that the statement can be taken metaphorically and includes many cases other than its literal meaning. Therefore, he realises that he should not make his environment dirty, whether it is his classroom, or a street, whether he sullies his environment with wastepaper or other things.

We can conclude that "*hadd*" is the limit of "*zahir*, outer meaning (literal)", and *"matla'"* is the highest (ultimate) degree of "*batin*, inner meaning (non-literal)". The relationship between all of the conceptions in this respect could be shown in the following plan.
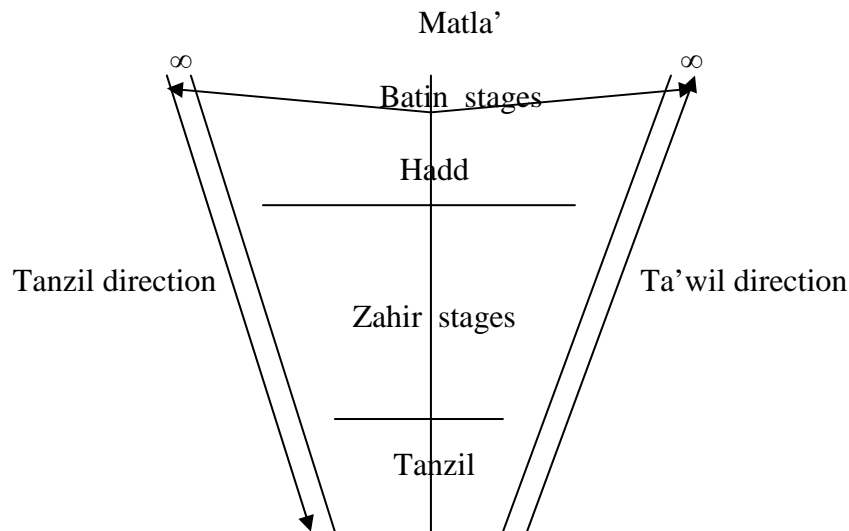
Since each man has a different capacity of understanding and since the expounding of subtle knowledge is not without danger of misinterpretation, the Qur'an directs its teachings primarily at the level of the common man. In this manner, the subtlest of meanings can be explained and multiple meanings and ideas expressed, to the ordinary person, by co-relating them to concrete sensory meanings. The Qur'an reveals itself in a way so that each benefits according to his own capacity. God emphasizes this idea:

Truly We have appointed it a lecture in Arabic so that you may perhaps understand and indeed in the source of the Book, which We possess, it is sublime, decisive. (Q.43: 3-4)

God describes the different capacities of man's comprehension in the following metaphor.

He sends down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure. (Q.13: 17) and the Prophet, in a famous tradition says: "We prophets talk to the people according to the capacity of their intellects." [1]

We can conclude that the meaning of the Qur'an has various grades. They are however placed vertically one behind the other. They are not ranked side by side.

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[1] - See Tabatabai, **the Quran in Islam**,(Dar al-kutub al-Islamyya, Tehran, 1971) pp.22-24.

3. The exegetical hadiths and its various categories of

As earlier mentioned Ther are nearly 14000 exegetical hadiths in interpretive collections of *shiah*. These hadiths include what have been narrated from the Prophet, *shi'ah* Imams and some companions of the Prophet as will be shown their statistical account in the following list.

1- *Imam Sadiq, the sixth Imam*; 47%
2- The Prophet; 13/5 %
3- *Imam Baqir*, the fifth Imam; 13 %
4- *Imam 'Al,i, the first Imam*; 7/4 %
5- *Imam Rida, the eighth Imam*; 3/2 %
6- *Imam Kazim, the seventh Imam*; 2/4 %
7- *Imam Husayn, the third Imam*; 1/1 %
8- *Imam Sajjad, the forth Imam*; 1 %
9- *Ibn 'Abbas*; 1 %
10- The other *Imams,* companions and the followers; 5/9 %
11- Unknown persons; 4/5 %

Although the aim of all exegetical *hadiths* is the explanation of what God has intended, they cannot all be put in the same category. A closer look at the hadiths shows that we can divide the exegetical hadiths into four categories as shown below:

The above diagram can also be seen below:
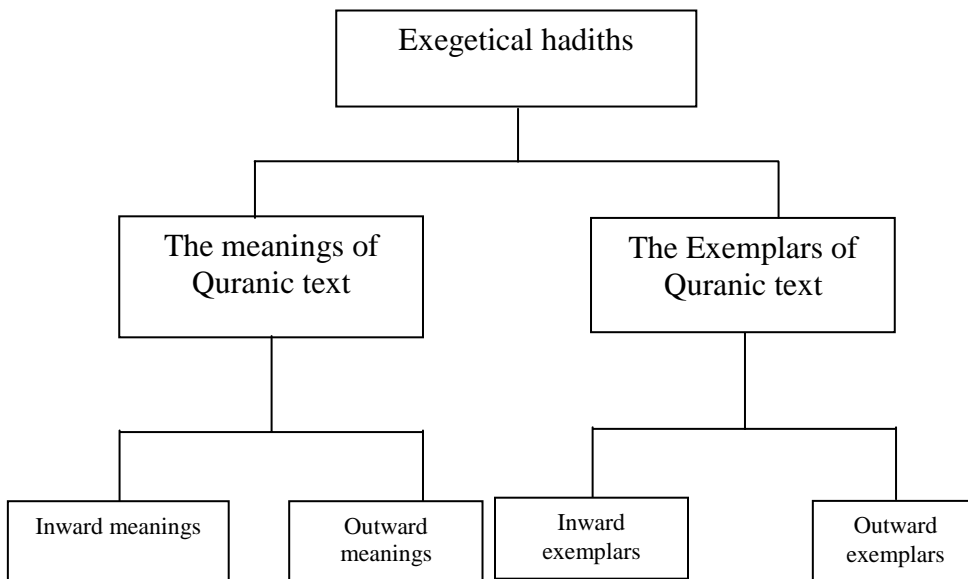
Now, according to the first diagram, we explain each kind of hadiths concerning the Quran interpretation.

3. 1.  Outward Interpretation

The traditions of the outward interpretation are those which explain some of the ambiguities of Quranic passages or introduce Exemplars which included in the apparent meaning of Quranic words. Therefore, these traditions can be divided into two groups as follow.

### 3. 1. 1. Traditions explaining outward meanings

Before explaining about these traditions, we should clarify our consideration of the word "*ma'na* = meaning". Our intent of "*ma'na*" is the purpose of author of the context. Sometimes a proper understanding of a Quranic passage depends on resolving some ambiguities in the passage concerning the true, literal meaning of the words or grammatical structure. Many traditions help us solve such problems. The following is an example of this kind of exegetical *hadiths*:

Referring the burglary and its punishment, the Quran says: " As to the thief, Male or female, cut off his or her hands: a punishment by way of example, from Allah, for their crime: and Allah is Exalted in power. " (Q, 5: 38)

There are some ambiguities concerning the intended meaning of some words in this verse that can be summarized in two questions: (1) Does the word "thief" includes any one who steals something from someone in anyway? (2) What is the intended meaning of "hand" in this verse? Is that the whole hand or a part of it? In the case of the first question, some restrictions have been indicated for punishment of burglary in the received traditions of *Ahl al-bayt*. For instance, some Islamic jurisprudent, by using traditions, have declared eight conditions for the proof of punishment of burglary such as, maturity, mind, jurisdiction, unnecessity, … .[1] In the case of second question, it has brought in the *Ahl al-bayt* commentary that the consideration of "*Yad* = hand" is four fingers in the burglary verse. We can say that, in conforming indication, "*Yad* = hand" is applied to a part of body that stars from the tip of the fingers and ends in the palm of the hand. But, in conforming indication, it is also applied to its parts. For example, someone who has only injured his finger, says: My hand has been

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[1] - Imam Khumayni, ***Tahrir al-Wasilah***, *Vol. 2, p. 612.*

injured! Thus, all parts of hand can be the purport of "*Yad*", whether conforming context or implication context. Now, when we doubt that which one is the purport of "*Yad*" in this verse, the traditions interpret it to four fingers of hand. Therefore, such traditions explain the apparent intended meaning of the Quran.

### 3. 1. 2. Traditions explaining Outward exemplars

There are many hadiths, which illustrate the exemplars of apparent meaning of Quranic words, rather than their literal meanings. For instance, the literal meaning of the word "*ahl al-bayt*" in the 33th verse of the Chapter *Al-Ahzab* is 'the people of house', therefore, there is no problem in this respect, but the question that arises is: Who are meant by the word in this verse? Is the word includes the wives of the Prophet or not? Some Shiite traditions introduce '*Ali*, *Fatimah*, *Hasan* and *Husayn* as the intended persons by the word *ahl al-bayt* in the Quran.

### 3. 2. Inward interpretation

Some exegetical *hadiths* present a meaning or exemplar for a Quranic passage that it cannot be understood as the literal meaning or normal ('*urfi*) exemplars of the words in the Arabic language. In fact, inward meaning is the meaning that can be named as "developed meaning" deducted from "apparent interpretation".

*Allamah Tabataba'i* brings the following Quranic sample for the inner meaning of the Quran. This example indicxate that how we can deduce the inward interpretation from the apparent meaning of the Quran:

God says, "And serve God and ascribe nothing as a partner to Him" (Q.4: 36).The verse prohibits pre-Islamic Arabs from their worship of idols, just as another verse asserts: "shun the filth of idols, and shun lying speech" (Q.22: 30). On reflection it becomes clear that an idol may exist in any form; therefore, idol-worship is forbidden because it involves submission to an entity other than God. In other place the Quran considers the Satan as an idol when He says: "Did I did not charge you, O you sons of Adam, that you do not worship the Satan" (Q.36: 60). It also becomes clear that another form of idol-worship is submission to one's desires or to the will of others, over and above the will of God. In this respect the Quran says: "Have you then considered him who makes his desire his God" (Q.45: 23). Thus it

becomes clear that one should turn to none other for help than God Himself and not forget Him in any circumstances, since to do otherwise would be to direct one's attention away from God. To submit to others is to belittle Him and this is the very essence of idol-worship. Thus, regarding those who refused to worship Him, the Quran says: "Already We have urged into hell many of the jinn and humankind, ... These are the neglectful." (Q.7: 179). The phrase, "ascribe nothing to Him", clearly forbids worships of idols; that is to say, man may not, without God's permission, submit himself to others including his own desires, since any such submission would render him neglectful of God.

In this way, the simple, apparent text of the verse unfolds multiple meanings and exemplifies a feature to be found throughout the Quran.[1]

3. 2. 1.  Traditions explaining Inward meanings

Amongst the exegetical *hadiths*, some reveal inner meanings of Quranic words; the meanings that are not limited to the context in which the Quranic passage occurs. For instance, the Quran says: "It is no virtue if ye enter your houses from the back: It is virtue if ye fear God. Enter houses through the proper doors: And fear God: That ye may prosper". (Q.2: 189) the cause of revelation of this verse reveals the exoteric meaning of the verse. According to traditions, it was a custom of the Time of Ignorance that if a man, who would have gone out of the house for *Hajj* putting on the *Ehram*, would feel the necessity of going back to his house he did not re-enter through the door of the house but climbed on the roof and then went down, or broke into the house from its backside; and they thought this absurd action as an act of virtue. God declared it wrong and ordered to enter the house through its door.[2] Nevertheless, referring to the meaning of the verse, *Imam Baqir* said: "It means that every task should be done through reasonable way."[3] It can be seen that *Imam Baqir* has not expressed the apparent meaning of the verse that previously was pointed out to, but he revealed the inward meaning of the verse which the apparent meaning also has originated from it.

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[1] - Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, The Quran in Islam (Tehran, Dar al-kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1350 A.H.), pp.20-22.

[2] - See, Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, *Tafseer –E- Usmani*, English translated by *Mohammad Ashfaq Ahmad* (New Delhi, A Centre of Islamic Books, 1992), vol.1, p.97.

[3] - Muhammad ibn Mas'ud 'Ayyashi, *Kitab al-tafsir*.

### 3. 2. 2. Traditions explaining Inward exemplars

Some exegetical traditions refer to the exemplars, which the inward meaning of a quranic passage includes. The distinctive character of such an exemplar is that it is not the convintional (*'urfi*) exemplar of Quranic words, namely the apparent meaning of the words do not include it. For instance, referring to the previous verse, "Enter houses through the proper doors" (Q.2:189), *Imam Sadiq* said: "Imams of the Prophet's family are the door of divine guidance which everybody should be directed towards".[1]

When we consider the inward meaning of the verse that was expressed by *Imam Baqir*, i.e. "every task should be done through a reasonable way", we would realize that an Imam of the Prophet's family is the reasonable way for obtaining guidance in religious affairs.

### 4. Another classification of exegetical *hadiths*

Some Quran commentators believe that only those kinds of traditions which explain meaning of Quranic verses are called the exegetical ones. Muhammad Husayn Tabatabyi, the author of *Almizan*, has stipulated to this point in many cases of his commentary on the Quran. He introduced a new classification of *Ahl al-bayt hadiths* concerning the explanation of the Quran. He repeatedly used some sentences, such as, "the hadith is of *Jary*, not *tafsir*", "this *hadith* is of *batin*, not *tafsir*", " this *hadith* is of *Jary* or *Batin*, not *tafsir*". These phrases imply that according to *Tabatabyi,* all *hadiths* regarding the explanation of the Quran can be divided into three categories: interpretive *hadiths* (*tafsir*), exemplary *hadiths* (*Jary*) and esoteric *hadiths* (*batin*).

Now, we explain and exemplify these categories.

### 4. 1. *Hadiths* explaining intended meaning

In *Tabatabyi* perspective, interpretive hadiths are traditions that explain the whole purpose of God and do not explain only some exemplars and contingent adaptable cases of Quranic verses. For example, sometimes a Quranic verse is used in allegorical sense and a *hadith* clarify its real intended meaning. This kind of *hadith* is called

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[1] - See, 'Ayyashi, *Kitab al-tafsir*, vol.1, p.85.

interpretive *hadith*. It should be mentioned that this kind of *hadiths* are much more than two other kinds among *Ahl al-bayt hadiths*.

4. 2. Hadiths explaining some applications

Traditions which do not indicate the whole purpose of Quranic verses, instead, by them, the verses are adapted to some applications and adaptable cases out of circumstances of their revelation (*asbab –e nuzul*), are called "*Hadiths* of *Jary* or *Tatbiq*". As for these traditions, *Tabatabaii* holds that it is the method of the imams of *Ahl al-bayt* that they apply a Qur'ānic verse to all things it may be applied to. And this method was correct and reasonable, because the Qur'ān was revealed as"guidance to the worlds"; it guides the mankind to correct belief, correct ethics and correct action. The matter of belief that it has explained is eternal truth; it is not limited to a certain time or certain place. The virtue or vice and the rules laid down for them are not confined to one person or one period - they are general and applicable to all relevant persons and times. The traditions explaining the background of revelation of a certain verse - when, why and about whom or what was it revealed - do not affect its general idea. The rule is not restricted to that particular person or event; otherwise, it would cease to be valid in other similar conditions, and would die with the death of that person. Qur'ānic declaration is general; if it praises some persons, or condemns others, it is because of the presence of good or evil characteristics in them. And wherever those good or evil characteristics are found, even in later generations, the verse will in all truth be applied to them. The Qur'ān itself proves it, as *Allāh* says: With it (i.e., the Qur'ān) Allāh guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety . . . (Q.5: 16).[1]

The two following *hadiths* are of this kind of hadiths concerning tafsir:

Imam *Sadiq*, the sixth Imam of *Shiah* referring to the verse " Those to whom We have sent the Book study it as it should be studied: They are the ones that believe therein" (Q, 2:121) says: "We are those who has been described in this verse." Regarding the *hadith*, *Tabatabayi* says: the *hadith* is based on applying the verse to an all-qualified exemplar.[2] In some other *hadiths*, the verse " Then he that

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[1] - *Tabatabai*, **al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Quran,** *(al-a'lami, Beirut, 1973), vol.1, p.42.*
[2] - Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 362.

will be given his Record in his right hand will say: "Ah here! Read ye my Record! " (Q, 69:19), was applied to Imam Ali and his adherents. Referring to these *hadiths*, *Tabatabayi* says: they are explaining some exemplars of the verse, rather than the intended meaning (*tafsir*) of the verse.[1]

### 4. 3. Hadiths explaining esoteric meaning

Traditions in which there is a meaning or exemplar that are not included in the superficial and general concept of the word concerned, are called "interior traditions". The difference between "Hadiths explaining some applications" and "Hadiths explaining esoteric meaning" is that the first only includes application of word as their superficial and general meaning. But, in some cases, there are words in traditions that Quranic words do not have such a clear indication to them. The following examples are about this:

According to *Al-Durr Al-mansur*, *Ibn –e Abbas* referring to the verse "Out of them come Pearls and Coral" (Q, 55: 22) said: Pearls and Coral are Ali  and Fatemeh.[2] In some other traditions, they are applied to Imam *Hasan* and Imam *Hosayn*.[3] Regarding these traditions, *Tabatabayi* says: this is of interior.[4]

### 5. The hadiths of "flow" (*jary*)

Nearly 2500 exegetical traditions, in which the various verses of the Qur'ān have been applied to the Prophet and imams of his family or to their opponents scattered in *Shi'i* books. Some contemporary commentators such as *'Allama Syyed Mohammad Hosein Tabatabai* have called these traditions as "traditions of "flow, *jary*", because according to some other traditions, " *ta'wil*" of the Quran is similar to the sun and the moon which flows in history".[5]

Indeed, these hadiths explain that *ahl al-bayt* and their opponents are examplars for a large number of Quranic verses, whether they are the outward examplars or the inward examplars, whether they are the exclusive examplars or not.

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[1] - Ibid, Vol. 20, P. ?

[2] - Jalal al-din Al-Suyuti, **Al-Durr Al-Mansur Fi al-Tafsir Al-Ma'sur**, *Beirut, Dar al-fikr, 1993. Vol. 7, p. 697.*

[3] - Ibid., Vol. 7, P. 697.

[4] - Tabatabayi, **Al-Mizan Fi Tafsir al-Quran**, *Vol. 19, p. 103.*

[5] - Majlisi, Ibid. , vol.23, p.79.

5. 1. The quantity of the traditions of 'flow'

Nearly one in six of the Shiite exegetical traditions are the traditions of '*Jary*, flow'. A comprehensive survey on sources of Shiite traditions showed that the number of these traditions reach 2130 hadiths. The following list shows the individuals to whom these traditions are attributed.

1- *Imam Sadiq*; 820
2- *Imam Baqir*; 713
3- The Prophet; 190
4- *Imam 'Ali*; 136
5- *Imam Reza*; 92
6- *Imam Kazim*; 69
7- *Imam Sajjad*;40
8- *Imam Hasan* 'Askari;34
9- *Imam Hasan Mujtaba*; 21
10-*Imam Husayn*; 6
11-*Imam Jawad*; 4
12-*Imam Mahdi*; 3
13-*Imam Hadi*; 2

### 5. 2. Samples of traditions of Jary

5. 2. 1. Interpreting the verses as a symbol for the Prophet

Some words or verses of the Quran such as the following have been applied to the Prophet.

"al-sama'" (Q.85: 1)[1], "al-mashriqayn" (Q.55:17)[2], "'aynayn" (Q.90: 8)[3] and "al-najm al-thaqib" (Q.86: 3)[4].

5. 2. 2. Interpreting the verses as a symbol for 'Ali

The following are examples of applying the verses to *Imam Ali*.

"al-sirat" (Q.1: 6)[5]"al-sama'" (Q.86: 1)[6], "al-naba' al-'azim" (Q.78: 2)[7], "ba'uza" (Q.2: 26)[8] and "al-insan" (Q.99:3)[9].

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[1] - *al-Bahrani*, **al-Burhan fi tafsir al-Quran,** *(Isma'ilyan, Qom), vol.4.*
[2] - Ibid. , vol.4, p.265.
[3] - Ibid. , p.17.
[4] - *'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qommi*, **Tafsir al-qommi**, vol.2.
[5] - *al-Bahrani*, Ibid. ,vol.1, p.47.
[6] - Ibid.
[7] - *Kolayni*, Ibid. , vol.3, p.207, 418.
[8] - *al-Qommi*, Ibid. , vol.1.
[9] - *al-Bahrani*, Ibid. , vol.4, p.493-494.

### 5. 2. 3. Interpreting the verses as a symbol for "*Fatima*"

Some verses of the Quran such as the following have been interpreted as a symbol for "*Fatima*", the Prophet's daughter.

"al-ruh" (Q.97: 4)[1] and "din al-qayyema" (Q.98: 5)[2],

### 5. 2. 4. Interpreting the Quran as a symbol for imams of Ahl al-bayt

Many Quranic words and concepts have been applied to the imams of the Prophet's family. The following are some examples:

"al-abrar" (Q.82: 13)[3], "ma'" (Q.67: 30)[4], "ithna 'ashara shahran" (Q.9: 36)[5], "al-nur" (Q.64: 8)[6] and "layalin 'ashr" (Q.69: 2)[7]. Likewise, some Quranic words have been interpreted as a symbol for a particular imam, such as *Imam Hasan* and *Imam Hossayn.* [8]

### 5. 2. 5. Interpreting the verses as a symbol for opponents of the Prophet's family

Some Quranic words and concepts have been applied to opponents of the imams of the Prophet's descendent. The following are the examples:

"al-fujjar" (Q.84: 14)[9], "al-insan" (Q.100: 6)[10] and (Q.95: 4)[11]

### 5. 2. 6. A critical look at the humanistic application method

It would be possible that on basis of principle of "flow", many exegetical traditions were issued from the Prophet or the imams of the *Shi'a*, but absolutely, numerous traditions in this respect have been fabricated. That is for the following reasons:

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[1] - *Ibid. , vol.4.*
[2] - *Ibid. ,vol.4, p.498.*
[3] - *Ibid. , vol.4, p.436.*
[4] - *Ibid. ,vol.4, p436.*
[5] - *Majlisi, Ibid. , vol.24, p.240.*
[6] - *al-Bahrani, Ibid. , vol.4, p.341-2.*
[7] - *Ibid. ,vol.4, p.457.*
[8] - *For examples, "al-maghribayn" (Q.55: 17), "shafatayn" (Q.90: 9), "tin" and "zaytun" (Q.95: 1) and "al-ghayb" (Q.2: 3) See al-Bahrani, Ibid. , vol.4, p.265, 17; Ibid. , vol.1.*
[9] - *Ibid. ,vol.4, p.436.*
[10] - *Ibid. ,vol.4, p.498.*
[11] - *Ibid. , p.478.*

1) Many of these traditions do not possess an authentic chain of relaters. A survey has showed that nearly half of these traditions are without an authentic chain.

2) Some of them are more similar to trite phrases, rather than interpretation of the holy Quran! like applying "insan" (Q.99: 3) and "ba'uza" (Q.2: 26) to *Imam Ali*.

3) There are some traditions from the imams of the *Shi'a* that they have denied some applications of the verses to themselves.[1]

Conclusions
The following points have been clarified in this essay:

1) *Tanzil* in traditions is used as opposite of *ta'wil*. It is applied to: (i) The Quran as a whole; (ii) The words of the Quran; (iii) The apparent meaning of the Quran.

2) The term *ta'wil* is used in traditions with the same meaning as is used in the Quran. When *ta'wil* is used in connection with the Quran (i.e. *ta'wil* of the Quran), two meanings might be meant; (i) the intended meaning of the Quran, (ii) fulfilment of Quranic verses. Concerning the first meaning, *ta'wil* is applied to all levels of meaning, from a simple, literal meaning to the hidden meaning.

3) In the exegetical traditions, *ta'wil* is mostly applied to the hidden meanings and esoteric exemplars of Quranic words.

4) The idea of "*zahir* and *batin*" is related from the Prophet Muhammad through the *Shiah* and the Sunni schools.

5) Nearly 14000 exegetical traditions are in some interpretive collections of the Shiite such as al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Quran and Nur al-Thaqalayn. Nearly one fifth of these traditions are dealing with esoteric interpretation.

6) In the *Shiite* exegetical traditions many Quranic words applied to the Prophet and his household or to their opponents. These traditions can be classed as esoteric exemplars of Quranic words. Thus the humanistic application--applying the verses of the Quran to the Prophet's descendent and their opponents --is a particular characteristic of exegetical traditions of *Shiite*. This method is called the method of "flow"(*jary*).

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[1] - See Ibid. , vol.1, p.23; *Majlisi*, Ibid. , vol.25, p.315.

7) Many of these traditions do not possess an authentic chain of relaters. A survey has showed that nearly half of these traditions are without an authentic chain.

8) Likewise many of these hadiths were fabricated and attributed to shiah Imams.

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