A Critical Analysis of the *Baṭn* (Esoteric Meaning) Theory in *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, with Regard to *Tafsīr al-Furqān*

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**Abstract**

The commentators and traditionists have long focused on the theory that Qur’ān has multiple *Buṭūn* (esoteric meanings). Most of the commentators believe that the *Baṭn* can be revealed by the exegetical narrations. Therefore, in interpreting Qur’ān, they have referred to narrations to express these *Buṭūn*. In their commentaries on some of the Qur’ānic verses, the contemporary Shiite commentators have referred to the *Buṭūn* of the verses based on the available narrations and have mentioned different types of *Buṭūn* and *Ta’wīl* (Hermeneutic Interpretation). There were some fundamental and practical disagreements among commentators about these narrations as well. This study investigates the *Baṭn* theory in *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* with regard to *Tafsīr al-Furqān*.

**Keywords:** *Buṭūn; Ta’wīl; Tafsīr al-Mīzān; Tafsīr al-Furqān*

**Introduction**

One of the important factors for understanding a *ḥadīth* is to extract its general truth, i.e., the general and final views about the *ḥadīth*, which help the reader to gain a correct understanding. In exegetical narrations, sometimes the focus of *ḥadīth* is on the general meaning and implication of a verse which limits the meaning of the verse into one single case and makes the audience think that the *ḥadīth* has specifically restricted the meaning of the verse. However, whilst accepting and confirming the *ḥadīth*, the narrator determines its general truth and *manāṭ* (the underlying reason) by such principles and criteria as examples, *Jāriyyah* (denotation) and *Taḥqīq* (collation), *Ta’wil* and considering *Istihbāb* (Highly recommended), *Ibāḥah* (permission), and *Taqiyyah* (prudence) and presents a better understanding.

This problem results from the fact that the Holy Qur’ān has layered deep meanings and that everyone understands it based on his own understanding capacity. According to the famous expression "multidimensional nature of the Quran"\(^1\), the Infallibles provide different interpretations for the Qur’ānic verse based on the requirements of the context. Thus, reading these *ḥadīths* may result in incorrect judgment and misunderstanding about the truth of the verse. Therefore, by developing and explaining

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some _manāṭ_ and principles, the Infallibles and, consequently, the narrators and commentators have organized these _tafsīrs_ (interpretations) and put them into a specific framework. The differences in understanding the verses and the importance of the interpretive _ḥadīths_ originate from the narrations which assign exoteric aspect and esoteric aspect to Qur’ān, each of which is based on some _Usūl_ (principles) and _Furūʿ_ (sub-principles). For example, Imam 'Alī (AS) states, “No verse is in the Qur’ān but it possesses four meanings: _zāhir_ (exoteric), _bāṭin_ (esoteric), _ḥadd_ (limited), and _matla’_ (highest).”

In another narration, Imam Kazim (AS) about the verse "اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكَ الْفَواحِشَ الْأَمَامَ وَمَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ _الْبَاطِنُ_" (Say, ‘My Lord has only forbidden indecencies, the outward among them and the esoteric ones’) states that Qur’ān has _zāhir_ and _bāṭin_. Whatever that is deemed forbidden in Qur’ān is _zāhir_ and its _bāṭin_ is the oppressive leader. Whatever is considered lawful in Qur’ān is _zāhir_ and its _bāṭin_ is the right leader.  

There are plenty of such narrations which have explicitly stated that Qur’ān has _bāṭin_. Some of them, including the above-mentioned _ḥadīth_, give an example of this _bāṭin_.

Allāmah Ṭabātabā’ī as one of the contemporary theorists and developers of the _bāṭin_ theory in exegetical narrations has focused on this theory in his _Tafsīr_. Despite its importance and appropriate processing, His approach is not free of shortcomings and weaknesses which need to be investigated and discussed. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to criticize Allāmah Ṭabātabā’ī’ point of view through content analysis and comparative study.

### _Bāṭin_ from Sunni Commentators’ Viewpoint

Shiite commentators and narrators take the _bāṭin_ of Qur’ān for granted, but what about the Sunni narrators? Is there any reference to the _bāṭin_ of Qur’ān in Sunni narrations?

Quoting from Ibn Mas’oud, Ibn ‘Asākir stated, "'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib holds the knowledge of _zāhir_ and its _bāṭin_.”

Similarly, in his interpretation, Ṭabarī frequently acknowledges the _bāṭin_ by offering firm reasons, arguments, and proofs and rejects any _bāṭin_ interpretation which, in his view, is not based on a firm Qur’ānic or narrative reason and proof. This indicates that Ṭabarī believes in the _bāṭin_ of Qur’ān, based of course on specific criteria.

Moreover, quoting Ibn ‘Abbas, Suyūṭī says, "_zāhir_ of the Qur’ān is its recitation, while _bāṭin_ of Qur’ān is its _ta’wil_.”

Ghazālī explicitly considers the _bāṭin_ of Qur’ān as certain and argues, "Anyone who thinks that there is no other meaning for Qur’ān than the exoteric meaning, which is the meaning of the words, demonstrates his limited knowledge since it is mentioned in the narrations and the [Islamic] works that Qur’ān has a wide range of meanings which can only be understood by the wise ones”.  

However, there are some Sunni scholars who deny the _bāṭin_ of Qur’ān and attribute it to the Shiites. For example, al-Dhahabi states, "the _bāṭin_ to that the Holy Prophet refers and commentators have accepted, is the same _ta’wil_ which the words of Qur’ān don't show directly, rather refer to it indirectly.

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However, the "baṭn in which the Shiʿas believe is based on their own virtues and ideas, and that the zāḥir of the words don't imply them. Discussing this issue and its criticism is beyond the scope of the present study. Here, suffice it to say that most of the narrations focusing on the zāḥir and baṭn of the Qurʾān (whether in terms of proving it or listing its numerous cases) are generally Shiʿite narrations. This is because only the pure and specific ones, the obvious example of whom are Ahl al-Bayt, can understand the baṭn of the Qurʾān. Therefore, because of these Infallible Ones, Shiites have the opportunity to understand the baṭn of Qurʾānic verses. The other reason is the existence of various narrations which are considered as examples of the baṭn of the Qurʾān, and their contents apply to Ahl al-Bayt, Shiites, and their opponents. Therefore, it is very difficult to mention and accept these narrations in the Sunni narrative and exegetical sources.

The Terms Related to the Baṭn

Regarding the zāḥir and baṭn of the Qurʾān, there are other terms which are almost consistent with these two terms, including tanzīl (Revelation), taʾwīl (Hermeneutic Interpretation), miṣdāq (example), jary (denotation) and taṭbīq (collation). The words tanzīl and taʾwīl, like zāḥir and baṭn, are used widely in the Shiʿite and Sunni narrations, but miṣdāq, jary and taṭbīq are widely used in the exegetes. Have these terms been sorted out correctly and their meanings specified precisely, or have their meanings been confused in Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's al-Mizān and other contemporary commentaries, particularly al-Furqān? In general, what manāṭ (the underlying reasons) have been presented by the commentators in this regard?

Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's Viewpoint on the Baṭn

Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, one of the most prominent influential teachers of the author of al-Furqān, argues that at first glance, it seems that there is a difference between "jary and taṭbīq" and "baṭn and taʾwīl". This is concluded from his comments on some of the narrations, for example, "و هو من قبل الجري أو من باب الباطن أو التأويل"10 (this narration is about the jary or in terms of the baṭn of the verse).

In this statement, Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī differentiates between jary, baṭn, and taʾwīl. However, he believes that jary and taṭbīq are the same as miṣdāq since in various cases, he states that "من باب المصداق والجري، من باب الجري و بين المصداق و الجري، من باب البراء وبين المصداق"11 (as a matter of miṣdāq and jary, as a matter of jary and expressing the miṣdāq).

Seemingly, Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī uses them interchangeably or where he assigns different meanings to them, he does not express himself explicitly. For example, in his commentary on "يا أيها الذين أنتموا إلEAROALLAH"12 (O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and seek the means of recourse to Him), after quoting a number of narrations which state that "the means of recourse to God" is Imam, Allāmah argues that this verse indicates that by following Imam, one can achieve the recourse to recourse to God. This statement is an example of jary and taṭbīq.13 Then, he quotes two narrations from Imam ʿAlī, which show that "means" in this verse refers to Imam ʿAlī. He finally says, "و يمكن أن يكون الروايتان من قبل التأويل. فتَأويل. وكن فيهما " (these two narrations can be considered a taʾwīl. Therefore, ponder about them.)14

These two narrations which have similar themes have been first considered as examples of jary and taṭbīq and then, as examples of taʾwīl. In one place, Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī considers taʾwīl the same conventional tasfīr known among early and contemporary commentators. After presenting his

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11 Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Al-Mizān, V. I, pp. 86, 124, 153.
12 Qurʾān, 5:35.
13 Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Al-Mizān, V. 5, p. 191.
14 Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Al-Mizān, V. XIII, p. 159.
commentary on the verse "وَلا تَعْلَمُونَ" (And do not obey him whose heart We have made oblivious to Our remembrance), Allāmah states, "وَلا حَاجةٌ إِلَى تَفْكِيرٍ كَثِيرٍ مِن قَالِ إنَّ المرَادَ بِقُولِهِ: "وَلا تَعْلَمُونَ" (there is no need to ta’wil the verse and, like some, to say that the phrase "Ighfālān qālāhānu" means "'Ardinah qālāhālu lil-ghāfilahān". Which means "expose his heart to the negligence", or say, "it means "sādiqānā ghāfilān"...we met him while he was negligent."

It can be seen that by ta’wil, Allāmah means neither jary and taṭbiq and Miṣdāq nor ṣaṭn since in the quoted view which he has criticized, there is no ṣaṭn, rather only a taḥṣīr and understanding different from that of Allāmah’s is presented, criticized, and rejected.

In other cases, in his commentary, "ta’wil" is used to mean taḥṣīr. Even in some cases, this word can only mean taḥṣīr and exoteric understanding of the verses. In discussing the merits of torment and suspicions about it, Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī explains the way Qur’ān addresses the public and says the way Qur’ān talks to the public is such that explicitly state the issue of Resurrection Day is much bigger than people can imagine. Therefore, Almighty God lowers the level of His speech to the level of understanding of the people so that they can understand ta’wil of this Holy Book to the extent that God intends. As God says, "وَ لَلْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْءَاناً عَرَبِیًّا لَّعَلَّكمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (By the Manifest Book. We have made it an Arabic Qur’ān so that you may apply reason)."

Additionally, Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī considers ta’wil and ṣaṭn to be the same, saying:

In his commentary on Muḥammad Ibn Muslim, Qomi quotes this narration from him. Similarly, in al-Kāfī, Zayd ibn Abī ‘Abdullah narrates the same narration. The issue of guardianship is mentioned in these narrations either to show that the guardianship of the prophets is like other Sharāʾī or most of the Sharāʾī, or to perform ta’wil and refer to the ṣaṭn.

Of course, Allāmah briefly explains ta’wil (but not taḥṣīr) in his commentary on Āl-i ‘Imrān, verse 7. It can be understood from his explanation that by ta’wil he means the ṣaṭn. In brief, Allāmah argues that ta’wil means the truth of the event based on which the Qur’ānic statements, including the rulings, sermons, or wisdom, are documented. This applies to all Qur’ānic verses, whether Muḥkam (Precise) or Mutashabeh (Ambiguous), and it is not like the concepts which the words imply.

In explaining ṣaṭn, he specifies that ṣaṭn is not taḥṣīr of the verse. Yet, he uses ṣaṭn and ta’wil in another place as opposed to tanzil and zāhir (considering ṣaṭn and ta’wil the same) and states that "ta’wil is not the meaning".

According to the use of ṣaṭn, ta’wil, jary, taṭbiq, and Miṣdāq in taḥṣīr al-Mīzān, it is concluded that he considers jary, taṭbiq, and Miṣdāq the same and does not differentiate them (jary and taṭbiq = Miṣdāq). However, regarding the relationship between jary and taṭbiq and ta’wil, he sometimes views them the same and uses them together and assigns them the same meaning (jary and taṭbiq = ta’wil), while sometimes differentiates them and assigns them different meanings (jary and taṭbiq ≠ ta’wil). Moreover, under the entry of ta’wil, he sometimes presents ta’wil as the conventional taḥṣīr (ta’wil=taḥṣīr) and sometimes as ṣaṭn (ta’wil=ṣaṭn). Furthermore, in his view, jary and taṭbiq and ṣaṭn are two distinctive concepts (jary and taṭbiq ≠ ṣaṭn).

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16 Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Al-Mīzān, V. XIII, p. 159.
17 Qur’ān, 43:2-3.
18 Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Al-Mīzān, V. II, p. 100.
19 Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Al-Mīzān, V. VI, p. 315.
20 Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Al-Mīzān, V. V, p. 333.
22 Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Al-Mīzān, V. I, p. 3.
23 Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Al-Mīzān, V. XIX, p. 257.
It is said that in cases in which Allāmah considers jary and taḥbīq identical to taʿwīl, by taʿwīl, he refers to baṭn. However, this is in contrast with the cases in which he views jary and taḥbīq different from taʿwīl.

From Allāmah's ideas in Tafsīr al-Mīzān, it follows that in determining and explaining the scope and meaning of the given terms some of which he himself, inspired by the narrations, initiatively coined (for example jary and taḥbīq), Allāmah confuses them and sometimes considers them distinctive and independent of each other, while occasionally views them interwoven and identical. Since Allāmah does not directly discuss these terms in detail, except in very rare cases, it is not possible to correctly and convincingly say what he means by his comments on the exegetical narrations.

**Ṣādiqī Tehrānī’s Viewpoint on the Baṭn**

In Tafsīr al-Furqān, following the style of his teacher, Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Ṣādiqī Tehrānī uses Qur’ān by Qur’ān method and the Pure Sunnah. He, further, follows his teacher in dealing with the exegetical narrations. He frequently makes use of the terms used in al-Mīzān, including jary, taḥbīq, Miṣdāq, taʿwīl, and baṭn. In this section, his employment of the above terms and his understanding and perception of them will be discussed and his views will be critically evaluated, if necessary.

**Ẓāhir and Baṭn in Tafsīr al-Furqān**

According to al-Furqān, meaning is in accordance with the word and is inferred based on the law of words. However, baṭn is based on three principles: 1. Ishārāt (allusions), 2. Ṭaṭāʾif (subtleties) and 3. Ḥaqāʾiq (Truths). These principles have been adapted from Imam ’Alī’s (AS) hadīth, which is as follows:

كتاب الله على أربعة آيات: على العبارة والإشارة واللطائف والحقائق \( \text{La} \) ṭāʾīf, ṭāʾīf, Ḥaqāʾiq (Truths). ‘Ibārāt is for the general public, Ishārāt are for the elites, Ṭaṭāʾif are for ’Aulia Allah (the friends of God), and Ḥaqāʾiq are for the prophets’. 24

The author considers Ḥaqāʾiq as taʿwīl (sources and results) and ‘Ibārāt as the exoteric meaning. After the exoteric meaning, it comes to the Ishārāt which prepare the elites to understand the Ṭaṭāʾif which, in turn, guide one to the truths. The last stage is specific to the men of revelation, Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Therefore, the esoteric meanings are a set of the Ishārāt, then, Ṭaṭāʾif, and, then, Ḥaqāʾiq all of which emanate from the exoteric meanings. However, they are understood only by those whom God has expanded their hearts (ṣarḥ al-ṣadr), whose heart has lived with the Qurʾān and, thus their hearts are the house of the Qurʾān, and who are companions of the Qurʾān. Thus, Ishārāt are nothing but the broad semantic signs for those whose hearts have been expanded by God. Similarly, Ṭaṭāʾif are nothing but what are achieved through the Ishārāt; they are like steps of a ladder which the person ascends step by step using foresight, reflection, and expanded heart. Therefore, the first baṭn of the verse is to consider it apart from the cause of its revelation. The second baṭn is to separate the verse from the limited meanings to which the minds are accustomed. The third baṭn is to expand and explain the verse by referring to similar verses. The fourth baṭn is to separate the verse from its context and other side-issues. Seemingly, it applies to the other Bāṭūn (pl. of Baṭn), i.e., considering the literal meaning as a basis and then, at the same time, focusing on the other Qurʾānic arguments and reasons. 25

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25 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. I, p. 51.
A Critical Analysis of the Baṭn (Esoteric Meaning) Theory in Taṣfīr al-Mizān, with Regard to Taṣfīr al-Furqān

1. Ḥaqqāʾiq are the Buṭūn of Qurʾān.

2. ẓāḥīr, Ḥaqqāʾiq, and Laṭāʾif are like the steps of a ladder each of which facilitates ascending to the next step.

3. Ordinary people can understand the ẓāḥīr of the verses, but the Baṭn of Qurʾān can only be understood by the elites who have a hierarchy.

4. The elites can understand the Baṭn of Qurʾān only when they acquire a certain level of sensual and spiritual development.

5. Ḥaqqāʾiq, the highest stage of the Baṭn of Qurʾān, which belong to the Prophets are what is meant by ta’wīl.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Qurʾān has ẓāḥīr and Baṭn and that the Baṭn of the Qurʾān is ta’wīl. Şadiqī Tehrānī argues that knowledge of the Baṭn plays an important role in taṣfīr to the extent that if, in addition to the Qurʾānic sciences, the person is not aware of the Baṭn of the Qurʾān, he cannot be considered as the Qurʾān scholar.26

Here, the knowledge of the Baṭn means the knowledge of the revelatory narratives and ḥadīths from the Pure Ḳirt (Immediate Family of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)). In their categorization, the first stage of the Baṭn is Ḳir and Laṭāʾif, since Ḥaqqāʾiq are exclusive to the Infallibles who are Ahl al-Bayt.27 Of course, this exclusiveness is considered as a kind of gnosis of God (maʿrifat Allah) in the discussion of ta’wīl and, in some cases, ta’wīl of the Muḥkam or Mutashabeh verses.28 Parts of ta’wīl are only known for those firmly grounded in knowledge, i.e., the Holy Prophet, his Infallible Ahl al-Bayt, and then ‘Auliya Allah (the friends of God). On the other hand, parts of ta’wīl are only known for God and no one even the Holy Prophet is aware of it. Those firmly grounded in knowledge just say, “أَمْنَةُ بَيْنِيَّ مَنْ أَمَّنَتْ رَبَّنَا” (We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord). In fact, the virtue of those firmly grounded in knowledge is that God has taught them some parts of the ta’wīl, such as the rulings, the Origin, and the Resurrection. However, they are ignorant of ta’wīl which is only known by God. In interpreting the rulings, those firmly grounded in knowledge have inferences which are not explicitly mentioned in the text of the Qurʾān, rather have inferred them from the verses. Accordingly, ta’wīl is exclusive to the Infallibles. Therefore, those firmly grounded in knowledge neither know ta’wīl of the whole verses nor are they completely deprived of ta’wīl of Qurʾān; rather, they have the middle ground. They know ta’wīl of the verses which God has considered it is necessary for them to know and has taught them. However, they are ignorant of ta’wīl of the verses that the knowledge of which belongs merely to God.29

Characteristics of Baṭn in al-Furqān

So far, it can be inferred that the Qurʾān basically has ẓāḥīr and Baṭn. There are seven Buṭūn in Baṭn of the Qurʾān, including Ḳirāʾāt, Laṭāʾif, and Ḥaqqāʾiq.30 Ḥaqqāʾiq are considered as ta’wīl of the verses. Furthermore, by focusing on the verse apart from its cause of revelation, its limited meaning known to the mind, and by deepening its meaning and separating it from its context, one can discover the Baṭn of each verse, each of which has its own miṣdāq, jary, and taṭbīq.

26 Şadiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. I, p. 20.
27 Şadiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. I, p. 51.
28 Şadiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. V, p. 34.
29 Qurʾān, 3:7.
30 Şadiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. V, p. 38
31 Şadiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. V, p. 38
When ḏātn explains the truth, approves the opposite of the established zawāḥīr (pl. of ᾱzāhīr), abstracts the verse from its characteristics and accords it with other maṣādīq (pl. of miṣādīq) to increase its manāṭ, then it is considered as ta'wīl.32

When the verse is separated from its cause of revelation and context, it is viewed as miṣādīq.33 When the verse is expanded and deepened and its reason is generalized, it is referred to as jary and taṭbīq.34 In fact, ḏātn basically includes ta'wīl, miṣādīq, and jary and taṭbīq, which form three Buṭūn of the seven Buṭūn identified for the Qur’ān.35 Moreover, Ḣāfiẓ Damirud in his book titled Asbāb al-ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth argues that ta'wīl includes ḏātn and that ḏātn is one of the aspects of ta'wīl. However, not everyone possesses the knowledge and understanding of ḏātn and ta'wīl, in particular, which are the regression of the word to the truth, and parts of them are only known by God and will not be revealed until the Day of Judgment. Some parts of ḏātn and ta'wīl have been revealed for special companions of Qur’ān through revelation and inspiration. Needless to say that this understanding resulted from God's teachings. The third type of knowledge of the ḏātn belongs exclusively to God and will eternally be in His absolute possession.36

Ṣādiqī Tehrānī considers the existence of ta'wīl, for both muḥkam and mutashabeh verses, not in conflict with the existence of other Buṭūn (i.e., miṣādīq, and jary and taṭbīq). A verse can have one or two ta'wīls, which are exclusively known by God or the elites, and, at the same time, other Buṭūn, as well since Mutashabeh verses have two ta’wīls, while Muḥkam verses have only one. Moreover, each of them may have various Buṭūn.37

**ṇ in the Shi‘ite Narrative Texts**

According to the above-mentioned explanations, it seems that Ṣādiqī Tehrānī’s view is supported by the Shi‘ite narrative texts. In Shi‘ite, and even Sunni, narrative texts, ḏātn means ta’wīl, and all the commentators and narrators have confirmed those narrations. For example, Ḥarmān Ibn e- ‘A’yan quotes from Imam Bāqir (AS), saying, “(... the ḏātn of Qur’ān are those about whom Qur’ān was revealed and ḏātn of Qur’ān are those who act upon it).38

The following narration is an example of using ta’wīl. The Messenger of God told about Imam ‘Alī, (among you there is one who fights based on ta’wīl of Qur’ān just I fight according to the revelation of Qur’ān).39 In this ḥadīth, ta’wīl means to apply the verse to other examples without considering the cause of its revelation. The Holy Prophet fights against the polytheists or infidels or the Ahl al-kitāb (People of the Book) based on the revelation of the verses, whilst the ta’wīl of the verse occurred in Imam ‘Alī’s (AS) time.40 It is what is meant by “(... the ḏātn of Qur’ān is its ta’wīl. Parts of ta’wīl have been realized and some parts have not been taken place. The Qur’ān, just like the sun and the moon, is constantly flowing (...).41 In this narration, there is explicitly an

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33 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. VII, p. 51.
34 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. VII, pp. 162.
36 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. III, p. 33.
37 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. III, p. 41.
40 Fath Allah Najājī Zadeḵān, Comparative Analysis of the basics of Tafsīr of Qurān from Shi‘ite and Sunnī’s view point (Qom: hawzah and Dānishgah research Center, 2009), p. 8.
equal relationship between baṭn and ta'wīl. According to this narration, along with other narrations, it can be inferred that ta’wīl is an aspect of baṭn. The phrase "تَجْرِی الْشَّمْسِ وَ الْقَمْرِ", refers to jary, and taṭbīq which are used by the contemporary scholars and are considered as another aspect of baṭn.

In another narration, ‘Abd al-Rahmān states, "I asked Imam Ṣadīq (AS) about the verse of Tathīr (purification)"42, he said," this verse is about the Prophet, 'Abī, Ḥassan, Ḥusayn, and Fatimah. When the Messenger of God, Ḩamān, Ḥusayn, and Ḥusayn passed away, the ta’wīl of the verse "ثَمَّ لْیَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَ لْیُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَ لْیَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَیْتِ الْعَتیقِ"43 (The blood relatives are more entitled to inherit from one another in the Book of Allah) applied to ‘Abī Ibn Ḥusayn (AS) and, then, his successions. So obeying them is like obeying God, and transgressing their orders is as if one has transgressed God's orders.44 In this narration, the ta’wīl of the verse is explained by its obvious miṣdāq, i.e., ‘Abī Ibn Ḥusayn and, then, by its jary, and taṭbīq, i.e., his successions.

In determining the miṣdāq of baṭn of the verses, one may also refer to a ḥadīth from Imam Ṣadīq (AS) about the verse "ثَمَّ لْیَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَ لْیُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَ لْیَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَیْتِ الْعَتیقِ"45 (Then let them do away with their undidines, and fulfill their vows, and go around the Ancient House). ‘Abdullah Ibn Sanān asked Imam about the meaning of "ثَمَّ لْیَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ". Imam Ṣadīq (AS) replied, "It means to trim mustache, cut the nails and the like". While surprised, ‘Abdullah Ibn Sanān asked, "Dhariḥ is right, and you are also right. Indeed, the Qurʾān has Ḻāhir and bāṭin. Who can understand what Dharīḥ understands (from the bāṭin of Qurʾān)?"46

Moreover, 'Abī Ḥamzah states, "I asked Imam Bāqir (AS) about the verse "وَكَانَ أَلْکَافَرُ عَلَی زَیْهَا (and the faithless one is ever an abettor against his Lord). Imam replied: "I will refer you to the Qurʾān, and then, by its ta’wīl, "ثَمَّ لْیَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَ لْیُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَ لْیَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَیْتِ الْعَتیقِ" (Bāṭin of this verse refers to 'Abī. He is the Lord in Guardianship, but the (Absolute) Lord is the Creator who cannot be described).47 In this ḥadīth, Imam Bāqir (AS) explains and identifies the baṭn with its prim miṣdāq, i.e., Imam ‘Abī (AS).

In another narration, Salama ibn al-Mustanīr asks Imam Bāqir (AS) about the verse "وَأَعْدِلْ الْقَارِئِ الْفَاقِرَ الْمُحْذِرِ اِلَّا لَا تَبْلَغُوا صَدَقاتَكُمْ الْمَنّ وَ الْمُنْفَعَاتِ (You who have faith! Do not render your charities void by reproaches and affronts...), saying, "is this verse considered ta’wīl for Muhammad and his households?" Imam replies: "this verse was revealed about Uthmān". Therefore, in this ḥadīth, Uthmān, one miṣdāq of the verse, is presented as the owner of the ta’wīl.48

**Evaluation of Allāmah Ṣabāṭābā’ī and Şadeqi Tehrānī’s Theories Based on the Narrative Texts**

The fact is that the content of Tafsīr al-Furqān is theoretically more supportable than that of al-Mizān. Allāmah Ṣabāṭābā’ī has not presented his own ideas in al-Mizān. Therefore, we have focused on his practical conduct and his approach to the exegetical narrations in general and narrations about baṭn, miṣdāq, jary, taṭbīq, and ta’wīl in particular. In addition, we found that he had used fallacy and that he didn't have a specific principle or a fixed strategy in dealing with the narrations. In the next section, we will discuss Şadeqi Tehrānī’s approach and practical conduct regarding the narrations about baṭn, miṣdāq, jary, taṭbīq, and ta’wīl in Tafsīr al-Furqān to understand his viewpoints and strategies.

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42 Qurʾān, 33:33.
43 Qurʾān, 33:6.
45 Qurʾān, 22:29
47 Qurʾān, 25:55.
49 Qurʾān, 2:264.
Combining the Terms Used with the Baṭn in Tafsīr al-Furqān

A careful analysis of the content of Tafsīr al-Furqān showed that Šādeqī Tehrānī's has used these terms in different combinations which are as follows:

1. ta’wīl and misdāq
2. ta’wīl and jary
3. ta’wīl and baṭn
4. misdāq and jary
5. jary, ta’wīl, and baṭn
6. ta’wīl, jary, and misdāq

Šādeqī Tehrānī has employed all the possible combinations of baṭn, misdāq, jary, taṭbīq, and ta’wīl. This confirms what was mentioned at the beginning of the section, that is "in the first place, the Qur’ān has zāhir and baṭn and that in the baṭn of the Qur’ān, there are seven other Buṭūn, including Ishārāt, Latā’if, and Ḥaqā’iq. Ḥaqā’iq are considered as ta’wīl of the verses. Every baṭn can be discovered by parting the verse from the cause of its revelation, its limited conventional meaning and its context and expanding and deepening its meaning, each of which has its own misdāq, jary, and taṭbīq.

When Baṭn explains the truth, approves to be the opposite of the established zāhir, abstracts the verse from its characteristics and accords it with other maṣādīq, then it is called ta’wīl. When the verse is separated from its cause of revelation and context, it is viewed as misdāq. When the verse is expanded and deepened and its reason is generalized, it is referred to as jary and taṭbīq.

Since these are Buṭūn of the verses and that a verse can have seven Buṭūn, and according to some narrations, up to seventy Buṭūn, every exegetical narration which has been presented for a special case can express one baṭn of its Buṭūn, of course in another aspect.

The first combination, i.e., ta’wīl and misdāq, has been used numerously in Tafsīr al-Furqān. After his commentary on the verse "لَوْ لَ دَفْعُ اللِّلَّ النّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ اْلَْرْضُ وَ لَوْ لَ دَفْعُ اللِّلَّ النّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ اْلَْرْضُ" (Certainly, it has been revealed to you and to those [who have been] before you: ‘If you ascribe a partner to Allah your works shall fail and you shall surely be among the losers) and removing the ambiguities of the zāhir of the verse, Šādeqī Tehrānī states, "ascribing a partner to Allah is deemed to failure". He, further, adds that ascribing a partner to the Messenger of God and the Infallibles are ta’wīl of the verse and its hidden Maṣādīq.52 Here, Šādeqī Tehrānī refers to a ḫadīth from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) about ascribing a partner in Guardianship.

In his commentary on the verse "وَ لَوْ لَ دَفْعُ اللِّلَّ النّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ اْلَْرْضُ "53 (Were it not for Allah’s repelling the people by means of one another, the earth would surely have been corrupted), Šādeqī Tehrānī quotes a ḫadīth from Imam Ṣādiq (AS), saying "وَ هِيَ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ "لَوْ لَ دَفْعُ اللِّلَّ النّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ (And this is the saying of God Almighty: “Were it not for Allah’s repelling the people by means of one another, the earth would surely have been corrupted” I swear by God, this verse has revealed about no one but you, and no one is meant but you) and adds, 'by you', which God means all the righteous in all the periods of the prophecy of the Prophets, is interpreted

52 Šādeqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. XXII, p. 380.
53 Qur’ān, 2:251.
as the Shiite righteous' in Imam Imam Ṣādiq's (AS) hadith since 'the Shiite righteous' are considered as the best miṣdāq.54

In these two narrations and others which he has quoted in his commentary, the author has considered miṣdāq a sub-set of ta'wil.55

The same holds true about the second combination, i.e., ta'wil and jary. In his commentary on the verses (it is indeed the speech of a noble apostle, powerful and eminent with the Lord of the Throne), after narrating several hadith showing that the given verses are about Gabriel or the Holy Prophet, Ṣādiqī Tehrānī concludes that "it is not necessary to relate the narrations which interpret the verses which are about Gabriel. We think they are about ta'wil and jary. The verse is about the Messenger of God, and whoever has carried it –i.e., the verse- down is aware of it, the first of whom is Gabriel.57

Another example is the verses (Said He, 'you are indeed among the reprieved. until the day of the known time'. In his commentary on ' the day of the known time", Ṣādiqī Tehrānī states the saying that at the time of his advent, Imam Mahdī (AS) will behead the Satan is ta'wil and jary.59 He, further, explains that Satan has two kinds of deadlines, the first one is the end of his life, just like other creatures, and the second one is when his freedom and reign come to an end by the advent of Imam Imam Mahdī (AS). He explains that at the time of his advent, Imam Mahdī (AS) deprives Satan of his freedom and power.

In the second narration, Ṣādiqī Tehrānī explains the narration by discussing the quality of jary and generalizing its cause and, accordingly, changes it as a tafsīr of the žāhir of Qur’ān- into ta'wil which is considered as one the Buṭūn of Qur’ān. Of course, he has implicitly done the same in the first narration too.

Regarding the third and the fifth combinations, i.e., ta'wil and baṭn and jary, ta'wil, and baṭn, the most obvious example is the hadith quoted in the commentary on the verse (Indeed We have warned you of a punishment near at hand—the day when a person will observe what his hands have sent ahead and the faithless one will say, 'I wish I were dust!'). According to the hadith, the last part of the verse refers to the "Shiites who follow Imam 'Ali (AS)". In the end, the commentator says "this is jary, ta'wil, and baṭn, not tafsīr. This narration is an example for Muslims to attach the Guardianship of Imam 'Ali, just as they do regarding the Holy Prophet. Ṣādiqī Tehrānī adds Sharaf al-Din Najafī presents the hadith "the baṭn of the verse refers to Ahl al-Bayt" as evidence confirming this ta'wil.61

In this narration, the commentator confirms Sharaf al-Din Najafī's idea and, based on his own knowledge, concludes that in this jary and taṭbīq verse, there is a taṭbīqo ta'wil which shows it is esoterically about Ahl al-Bayt. In fact, he considers jary and taṭbīq, ta'wil, and baṭn identical.

Regarding the fourth combination, i.e., miṣdāq and jary, which is used far more widely than the other combinations, presenting two examples would suffice. In his commentary on the verse "...وَ يَقْتُلُونَ...الْمُنْظَرِينَ*إِلى يَوْمَ الْمَتَّى المَغْنِيَّةِ..."62 (…and kill the prophets unjustly...), Ṣādiqī Tehrānī quotes a narration from Imam Ṣādiq (AS). According to the narration, Children of Israel did not kill the prophets, rather they heard and transmitted their hadiths, but the enemies heard the hadiths and killed the prophets. Therefore, there were

54 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. II, p. 179.
55 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. XX, p. 302.
56 Qur’ān, 15:37-38.
57 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. XXX, p. 168).
58 Qur’ān, 81:19-20.
59 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. XXX, p. 168).
60 Qur’ān, 15:37-38.
61 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. XVI, p. 183; see also V. I, p. 267.
62 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. XX, p. 63.
63 Qur’ān, 2:61.
murder, assault, and sin". Finally, he remarks, "..." (this is about *taḥbīq* and expression of hidden *miṣdāq* ...)."63

Moreover, in his commentary on the verse "وَلَّا تَفْتَرُوا بِاللَّهِ..." (This indeed is my straight path, so follow it ...), Ṣādiqī Tehrānī first narrates some *ḥadīth* which indicate that the straight path is the path of Ahl al-Bayt and Imam 'Alī (AS), then states, "there are many similar narrations which indicate that *jārī* and *taḥbīq* correspond to the second *miṣdāq* of the path. In addition, this verse also applies to the scholars who fully know the Holy Book and the Messenger's tradition."65

The sixth combination is *ta'wīl*, *jārī*, and *miṣdāq*. This combination is not widely used since its components are frequently used in other aspects, i.e., *miṣdāq*-jārī, *jārī*-ta'wīl, and ta'wīl and *miṣdāq*. However, because we sought to evaluate all the independent aspects of *baṭn* and since there was an example of this type of combination in *Tafsīr al-Furqān*, we thus briefly discuss it. In his commentary on the verse "وَلَّا تَفْتَرُوا بِاللَّهِ..." (They swear by Allah with solemn oaths that Allah will not resurrect those who die. Yes indeed [He will], it is a promise binding upon Him, but most people do not know), Ṣādiqī Tehrānī states, "along with the denial of the Day of Judgment, they deny the regression at the time of Imam Mahdi's (AS) advent. This is confirmed according to the *jārī*-based ta'wīl by an 'adnā (lower-level) *miṣdāq*. Both of the denials are the same, only their types are different; the infidels deny the Day of Judgment, while some of the Muslims deny the issue of regression."66 Another example refers to the commentary of the verse "وَمَن النَّاسِ مَن يَجْعَلُ مَن ذُو نَفْسِهِ أَنَّا مُحَيِّي مَنْ ۚ بَلَىٰ وَعْدًا عَلَیْهِ حَقًّا وَلَٰكِنَّ أَنَّ هَذَى الصَّرَاطُ الْمُتَّقِينَ" (Among the people are those who set up compeers besides Allah, loving them as if they were Allah. They deny the Day of Judgment, while some of the Muslims deny the issue of regression)..."67 (Among the people are those who set up compeers besides Allah, loving them as if loving Allah...). Here, the commentator quotes a *ḥadīth* from al-Kāfī which introduces some people as the *tafsīr* of the verse and considers them and their followers as the oppressive leader and concludes that this is based on *jārī* and ta'wīl and an 'adnā *miṣdāq*.69

In addition to the theoretical area which was discussed in detail, Ṣādiqī Tehrānī seems to have also met his criteria in practice and has avoided fallacy and deviation from his theoretical framework. An important point regarding the combination of the terms is the widespread use of the term "*miṣdāq*". The commentator uses this term in various combinations each of which has a specific connotation, for example, hidden *miṣdāq*"68, *tafsīr* for the second *miṣdāq"69, *Azhar* (the most obvious) al-*maṣādīq*"70, *akmal* (the most perfect) al-*maṣādīq*"71, *Afdal* (the best) al-*maṣādīq*"72, *Ba'd* (some) al-*maṣādīq*"73, *Aḥad al-maṣādīq al-ba'ī* (an unlikely *miṣdāq")74, *Ba'd al-maṣādīq* zāhirâ (some exotic *maṣādīq")75, *Aḥam* (important) al-*maṣādīq*"76, al-*mīṣdāq* al-Aham wal-Atam (important and perfect)"77, expressing its different *maṣādīq*"78. Aḥārî maṣādīq wa *ʿulā* wa *ʿalā* wa *aqwā* (the first, the best, and the strongest)"79, *miṣdāq* al-ajlī (instantaneous)"80.

It is worth mentioning two points about ta'wīl. The exegetical narrations which are based on ta'wīl are mostly about the virtues of Ahl al-Bayt or their enemies and this is because most of these

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64 Qurʾān, 6:153.
66 Qurʾān, 16:38.
68 Qurʾān, 2:165.
70 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, *Al-Furqān*, V. I, p. 175.
74 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, *Al-Furqān*, V. XXVII, p. 73.
75 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, *Al-Furqān*, V. XXX, p. 163.
76 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, *Al-Furqān*, V. I, p. 175.
80 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, *Al-Furqān* V. VIII, p. 78.
narrations are about this area. The second point refers to the fact that various phrases are used to describe ta’wil, as it is the case for miṣdāq. Sometimes the focus is on the ta’wil-based revelation of the narration for the verse, not its exoteric meaning. Here the author uses "قد يعني نزول التأويل دون التنزيل" (the verse was revealed as ta’wil and its zāhir was not meant). Of course, he presents this explanation for the narrations which use the phrase "كما نزلت" (it has been revealed so).

Ṣādiqī Tehrānī sometimes uses phrases such as ta’wil al-Laṣīf (allusive) and ta’wil al-’Alīl (imperfect) and, accordingly, evaluates the narration. In jary discussion, he uses the phrase "يجري بصورة" (it denotes slightly) which may indicate that he did not fully and certainly accept the narration.

Another point about ta’wil is that Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, unlike other commentators, needs a reason to accept ta’wil and bāṭin-based tafsīr and considers those who perform ta’wil without reason and knowledge as the miṣdāq of "ذِي قَلْبٍ" (the one whose heart is deviance), and, accordingly, thinks, "فهو مخصوص بمن يحيط علماً بمبادئ القرآن ونتائجه" (they are specific to those who have complete hold of the principles of Qur’ān and its results). Therefore, Ṣādiqī Tehrānī argues that "كما أن تأويل القرآن - ككل - مختص، بما أن القرآن الذي يعلم من التأويل من هو أهله كالناسخين في العلم بخلاف درجاتهم" (ta’wil of the whole Qur’ān only belongs to God and that God has taught ta’wil to those firmly grounded in knowledge according to their levels through either revelation or inspiration).

He draws a square for ta’wil, one side of which is specific to those firmly grounded in knowledge who should engage in ta’wil, its second side belongs to the Holy Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt who learn ta’wil through revelation and inspiration. The third side is for ta’wil which will be revealed on the Day of Judgment. The last side which will never be revealed is known only by God. Then he provides Qur’ānic evidence for them. Needless to say, ta’wil discussed in this paper is not limited to the ta’wil of the words of Qur’ān since in Qur’ān, ta’wil is not just specific to the words, rather it is also used in practice. In commenting on the verses, sometimes Ṣādiqī Tehrānī refers to their ta’wil while observing the principles and manāṣ of ta’wil and even jary and taḥbīq. For example, consider his commentary on the verse (13:21) "وَلَاتَّلِذينَ يَسْتَقِيمُونَ مَا أَمَرَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَهُ بِعَذْبٍ إِنَّكَ یُؤْصِلُ" (and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined). After narrating a hadith from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) about the revelation of the verse about maintaining social and civil relationships with the family of Muhammad (PBUH), Ṣādiqī Tehrānī states, "all the relationships which we are to maintain in the religion of God (whether the main or subsidiary, doctrinal or scientific) … include the relationship with the Prophet and the Infallibles, and then, the ’Ulama and the believers and distant relatives".

Cases of this kind, although limited, are found in this commentary.

Conclusion

Al-Mīzān fi Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān and Tafsīr al-Furqān as two contemporary Shiite Tafsīrs that have many similarities and differences in terms of dealing with ta’wil and baṭn. The most important similarity between them is their widespread use of ta’wil and baṭn. However, the ways they use them and related ta’wil, baṭn, jary and taḥbīq, and miṣdāq differ.

In Tafsīr al-mīzān, Allāmah Ṭabāṭaba’ī considers jary and taḥbīq and miṣdāq the same (jary and taḥbīq= miṣdāq). However, regarding the relationship between jary and taḥbīq and ta’wil, he sometimes

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83 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. III, p. 104.
84 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. XXX, p. 306.
85 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. I, p. 451; V. V, p. 31.
86 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. IX, p. 231.
87 Qur’ān, 3:7.
88 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. IX, p. 231V. III, p. 32.
89 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. III, p. 32.
91 Ṣādiqī Tehrānī, Al-Furqān, V. XII, p. 309.
considers them alike and assigns similar meaning to them (jary and taṭbīq = taʾwīl) and sometimes argues they are distinct concepts and have different meanings (jary and taṭbīq ≠ taʾwīl). Of course, under the entry of taʾwīl, he sometimes views taʾwīl as the conventional tafsīr (taʾwīl=tafsīr) and sometimes as baṭn (taʾwīl=baṭn). Furthermore, in his view, jary and taṭbīq and baṭn are two distinctive concepts (jary and taṭbīq ≠ baṭn).

In Tafsīr al-Furqān, Ṣādiqī Tehrānī' argues that Qurʾān basically has zāhir and baṭn. There are seven Buṭūn in Baṭn of Qurʾān, including Ishārāt, Latāʾif, and Ḥaqāʾiq. Ḥaqāʾiq are considered as taʾwīl of the verses. Moreover, he believes every baṭn can be discovered by parting the verse from the cause of its revelation, its limited conventional meaning and its context and expanding and deepening its meaning, each of which has its own miṣdāq, jary, and taṭbīq.

When baṭn explains the truth, approves to be the opposite of the established zawāhir, abstracts the verse from its characteristics and accords it with other maṣādīq, it is called taʾwīl. When the verse is separated from its cause of revelation and context, it is viewed as miṣdāq. When the verse is expanded and deepened and its reason is generalized, it is referred to as jary and taṭbīq.

Since these are Buṭūn of the verses and that a verse can have seven Buṭūn, and according to some narrations, up to seventy Buṭūn, every exegetical narration which has been presented for a special case can express one baṭn of its Buṭūn, of course in another aspect.

In addition to evaluating the ways Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī makes use of the exegetical narrations about baṭn in his Tafsīr, the present study has shed some light on the logical methods of dealing with and applying the exegetical narrations and the verses with esoteric meaning, which are approved by the Ahl al-Bayt.

Finally, it is suggested to the future researchers to replicate the present study's approach in studying various Shiite and Sunni Tafsīrs of Qurʾān to gain a complete understanding of the application of the exegetical narrations about Baṭn in interpreting the Qurʾānic verses.

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A Critical Analysis of the Baṭn (Esoteric Meaning) Theory in Tafsīr al-Mīzān, with Regard to Tafsīr al-Furqān

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