

Thematic Unity and its Impact on the Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an: an Applied Study on the Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an by Mahmoud Shaltout

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Abstract

This study examines one of the central principles of the Madrasah al-'Aqliyyah al-Hadithah (modern rationalist school), namely the concept of thematic unity (al-wahdah al-mawḍū'iyah) as articulated in Mahmoud Shaltout's Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim. It aims to explore both the application of this principle and its implications for Shaltut's methodology of Qur'anic interpretation. Employing a descriptive-analytical approach, the study collects, describes, and critically analyzes data derived from Shaltut's exegesis. The findings demonstrate that the paradigm of thematic unity plays a significant role in Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim, as reflected in its profound exploration of the central themes of each surah and its precise analysis of Qur'anic diction. At the level of uṣūl al-tafsīr, this paradigm entails a reconceptualization of asbāb al-nuzūl, which are no longer treated in a fragmentary manner, and reaffirms the role of the Prophetic Sunnah as an interpretive source that must remain consistent with the overarching thematic framework of the surah.

Keywords: theme unity, madrasah aqliyah hadithah, tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji salah satu prinsip penting dalam aliran Madrasah al-'Aqliyyah al-Haditsah, yaitu konsep kesatuan tema (al-wahdah al-mawḍū'iyah) dalam Kitab Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim karya Mahmud Shaltut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyingkap aplikasi serta dampak dari prinsip kesatuan tema tersebut terhadap metodologi penafsiran al-Qur'an yang digunakan oleh Syaltut. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif-analitis, data penelitian yang bersumber dari kitab tafsir tersebut dihimpun, dideskripsikan, lalu dianalisis secara kritis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa paradigma kesatuan tema memiliki dampak signifikan dalam Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim, yang terlihat pada kedalaman penggalian tema-tema utama serta ketepatan analisis diksi al-Qur'an. Dalam tataran Ushul al-Tafsir, paradigma ini

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Article History: Submitted: 01-06-2026; Revised: 15-07-2026; Accepted 29-07-2026.

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berimplikasi pada reposisi Sabab al-Nuzul yang tidak lagi dipandang secara parsial, serta penegasan posisi Hadis sebagai penjelas yang harus selaras dengan poros utama tema surah.

Kata Kunci: kesatuan tema, madrasah aqliyah hadithah, tafseer al-qur'an al-kareem

Introduction

The Qur'an was revealed progressively to Prophet Muhammad over a span of approximately 23 years. Interestingly, the Qur'an was codified in a textual structure that differs from its chronological order of revelation. According to the consensus of Islamic scholars, the arrangement of verses within each surah is *tauqīfī* guided directly by divine revelation and the Prophet's instruction.¹ This phenomenon reinforces the premise that the Qur'an was designed from the outset as a cohesive whole (*al-wahdah al-kāmilah*). Even though certain themes are repeated across various surahs as a communicative strategy tailored to the *mutakhatab*, such repetitions fundamentally revolve around an integrated axis of meaning.²

However, throughout the historical trajectory of exegesis, the approaches and tendencies of *mufāssir* have undergone diverse shifts. While this diversity reflects the dynamism of Qur'an sciences, it has also generated problematic methodological consequences. During the medieval period (3rd–9th AH / 9th–15th CE), The prevailing exegesis leaned heavily toward a partial (*tajzī'i*), atomistic, verse-by-verse reading, with many exegetes weaponizing verses to legitimize their respective theological or jurisprudential schools.³

Furthermore, commentaries of this era often became showcases for extraneous sciences rather than the core text, prompting the famous critique of Fakhruddin al-Razi's *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*: "*fīhi kullu shay'in illā al-tafsīr*" (in it is everything except exegesis).⁴

In response to medieval exegesis's stagnation and sectarian biases, Muhammad Abduh pioneered a new modern paradigm: the *Madrasah al-Aqliyyah al-Hadīthah*. This school sought to restore the Qur'an as practical guidance (*hudan li al-nās*) for contemporary challenges, rather than a battleground for scholarly debates.⁵ To minimize bias, this school offered a methodological breakthrough by maintaining independence from specific

¹ Muhammad Mahmud Hijazi, *Al-Wahdah al-Mawdu'iyah Fi al-Qur'an* (Kairo: Matba'ah al-Madafy, 1970), 9.

² Muhammad Irfan Helmy, "Kesatuan Tema Dalam Al-Qur'an (Telaah Historis-Metodologis Tafsir Maudhu'iy)," "169-184," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 2 (December 2020): 169–84, <https://doi.org/10.18592/jiiu.v%25vi%25i.3589>.

³ Abdul Mustaqim, *Dinamika Sejarah Tafsir Al-Qur'an; Studi Aliran-Aliran Tafsir Dari Periode Klasik, Pertengahan Hingga Modern-Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2025), 109.

⁴ Muhammad Husain al-Dhahabi, *Al-Tafsir Wa al-Mufasssirun*, 1 vol. (Kairo: Maktabah Mus'ab ibn 'Umair 2004, 2004), 210.

⁵ M. Quraish Shihab, *Rasionalitas Al-Qur'an; Studi Kritis Tafsir al-Manar* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2008), 31.

sectarian affiliations. This orientation shifted the reading of the Qur'anic text from a partial-atomistic view to a holistic-structural approach, reaffirming the thematic unity of the surah.⁶

Essentially, the *Madrasah al-Aqliyyah al-Hadīthah* employs a distinct exegetical methodology characterized by minimalist reliance on *hadīth*, a prioritization of rational inquiry over tradition during textual contradictions, and a strong emphasis on socio-communal relevance. Central to this approach is the principle of thematic unity, which treats the Qur'an as a cohesive whole. By elevating reason over traditional reports, this school actively counters rigid literalism to adapt Islamic thought to modern contexts⁷.

In *Ittijāhāt al-Tafsīr fī al-Qarn al-Rahīn*, Abd al-Mujīb Abd al-Salām al-Muhtasib categorizes the *Madrasah 'Aqliyyah Ḥadīthah* under the title *Ittijāh 'Aqli wa Taufiqi Bayn al-Islām wa Bayn al-Ḥadārah al-Gharbiyyah*. He notes that a defining characteristic of this school is *Wiḥdatul Qur'ān* the principle of thematic unity whereby a mufasssīr seeks deep, harmonious relationships and *munasabah* between Qur'anic themes⁸.

The *Madrasah al-Aqliyyah al-Hadīthah* was also driven by external factors, particularly the urgent need to address challenges posed by modern Western secular rationality, which had turned the Qur'an into a highly problematic subject of study among orientalists⁹. Orientalists like Richard Bell argued that the Qur'an requires intense scrutiny due to its complex structural composition. Earlier studies by Thomas Carlyle and Theodor Nöldeke exhibited even stronger biases, claiming the text lacked coherence, was highly fragmented, and completely ignored logical chronology.¹⁰

This Western skepticism, however, sparked a revitalization of the discourse surrounding thematic unity (*al-wahdah al-maudū'iyyah*) in the 20th century a concept originally initiated by several classical scholars but later obscured by the dominance of the partial approach.¹¹ This discourse splits modern scholarship into two opposing camps: skeptics (mainly classical orientalists) who allege textual disarray, and defenders of Qur'anic coherence including modern Muslim scholars (Abduh, Qutb, Syaltut) and contemporary Western academics (Farrin,

⁶ Andieni Putri Olivia Arifin et al., "The Socio-Political Dimension of Da'wah in the Qur'an: Thematic Analysis of The Relationship Between Da'wah and Power," *Studia Quranika* 10, no. 2 (March 2026): 283–300, <https://doi.org/10.21111/studiaquranika.v10i2.128>.

⁷ Johannes Marinus Simon Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation (1880-1960)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), 52-55.

⁸ Abd al-Mujīb Abd al-Salam al-Muhtasib, *Ittijahat Al-Tafsir Fi al-Asr al-Rahin* ('Amman: Jam'iyah 'umm al-tabi al-ta'a>wuniyah, 1982), 130.

⁹ Ahmidah al-Nafir, *Al-Insan Wa al-Qur'an Wajhan Li Wajhin* (Damaskus: Dār al-Fikr, 2000), 59.

¹⁰ Siti Mulazamah, "Konsep Kesatuan Tema Al-Qur'an Menurut Sayyid Qutb," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 3, no. 2 (December 2014): 203–34, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v3i2.1156>.

¹¹ Fahd Abd Rahman al-Rumi, *Manhaj Al-Madrasah al-'Aqliyyah al-Hadithah* (Riyadh: Muassasah Al-Risalah, 1983), 231.

El-Awa) who argue for its structural unity.¹²

As part of this second camp, Mahmoud Shaltout operationalized Muhammad Abduh's theoretical foundations by systematically applying thematic unity across all surahs in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*, treating each surah as an architectural whole bound by a single thematic axis.

The urgency of this research is further highlighted by Syaltut's internationally acclaimed academic reputation, both within Al-Azhar and in global legal forums, such as the International Law Congress in The Hague.¹³ Muhammad al-Bahi (Director of Al-Azhar's Islamic Culture Institute) endorsed Syaltut's methodology, praising his ability to filter classical heritage and free exegesis from sectarian fanaticism. This highly applicable framework serves as the primary impetus for this study to investigate how Syaltut operationalizes thematic unity in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*.¹⁴

Consequently, this study critically examines how the principle of thematic unity in Mahmoud Shaltout's *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* reshapes and impacts his overall exegetical methodology.

While scholarship on thematic unity is well-established, the discourse remains highly relevant. For instance, Wildan Hidayat (2022), in his *Jurnal Hermeneutik* article, "Tekstur Baru Tafsir Modern: Mahmud Shaltut dan Nalar Tematis non Sektarian dalam Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," explores Shaltut's thematic method and its connection to a non-sectarian exegetical paradigm.

Hidayat's primary finding demonstrates that Shaltut positively influenced modern exegesis through thematic unity. However, he highlights a critical limitation: Shaltut's structural analysis is disproportionate, offering extensive detail on Surah al-Fatihah but lacking comparable depth in Surah al-Baqarah.¹⁵

Similarly, Muhammad Irfan Helmy (2020), in his *Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* article, "Kesatuan Tema dalam Al-Qur'an," traces the historical origins of thematic exegesis, highlighting how early modern awareness of Qur'anic coherence catalyzed this methodology. He presents *tafsir mawdu'i* as an ideal modern alternative with significant potential for future expansion.¹⁶

Furthermore, Asrul Amir et al. (2020), in their *Jurnal Hunafa* article,

¹² Mulazamah, "Konsep Kesatuan Tema Al-Qur'an Menurut Sayyid Qutb," December 2014.

¹³ Wildan Hidayat, "Tekstur Baru Tafsir Modern: Mahmud Shaltut Dan Nalar Tematis Non Sektarian Dalam Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," *HERMENEUTIK* 16, no. 1 (June 2022): 125, <https://doi.org/10.21043/hermeneutik.v16i1.12759>.

¹⁴ Wildan Hidayat, "Tekstur Baru Tafsir Modern: Mahmud Shaltut Dan Nalar Tematis Non Sektarian Dalam Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," *HERMENEUTIK* 16, no. 1 (June 2022): 125, <https://doi.org/10.21043/hermeneutik.v16i1.12759>.

¹⁵ Wildan Hidayat, "Tekstur Baru Tafsir Modern: Mahmud Shaltut Dan Nalar Tematis Non Sektarian Dalam Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," *HERMENEUTIK* 16, no. 1 (June 2022): 125, <https://doi.org/10.21043/hermeneutik.v16i1.12759>.

¹⁶ Muhammad Irfan Helmy, "Kesatuan Tema Dalam Al-Qur'an (Telaah Historis-Metodologis Tafsir Maudhu'iy)," "169-184," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 2 (December 2020): 169–84, <https://doi.org/10.18592/jiiu.v%25vi%25i.3589>.

"Classification of Tafsir Maudhu'i Mahmud Shaltut," describe Shaltut's thematic methodology and reinforce its viability. They particularly highlight Shaltut's sharp critique of sectarian biases, emphasizing his stance that such tendencies obscure the Qur'an's original function as guidance for humanity (*hudā li al-nās*).¹⁷

Unlike previous studies, this paper shifts the analytical focus to how the theory of thematic unity actively shapes Mahmoud Shaltout's exegetical outcomes. Rather than merely describing his method, it critically evaluates both the constructive and restrictive impacts of this approach within *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. Specifically, this investigation assesses whether this framework generates novel interpretive insights, identifies classical methodological principles Shaltut abandons for thematic coherence, and synthesizes his contributions to modern hermeneutics.

This study employs a descriptive-analytical method, selecting verse samples directly from the themes outlined in Mahmūd Shaltūt's *tafsīr*. After presenting the data, the paper analyzes how the principle of thematic unity impacts the interpretation of Qur'anic linguistic style. Furthermore, these findings are contextualized to reinforce existing scholarship on the significance of this principle within the modern rationalist school of exegesis.

The Biography of Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout and his interpretation method

Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout (1893–1963) was an eminent Egyptian Islamic scholar and reformer. Born on April 23, 1893, in Buhaira, Egypt, into a devout agrarian family, Shaltout demonstrated exceptional academic aptitude from an early age, memorizing the Qur'an by age thirteen.¹⁸ He pursued his higher education at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, graduating in 1918.¹⁹

Shaltout's career was defined by academic and institutional reform. Expelled from Al-Azhar in 1931 for aligning with the modernizing reformist school of Muhammad Abduh and Al-Maraghi, he practiced law and advocated for progress through media channels. Following his reinstatement in 1935, Shaltout ascended administrative ranks, culminating in his 1958 appointment as Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, where he successfully modernized the university's curriculum and restructured its language institutions.²⁰

Intellectually, Shaltut operated during an epoch of intense Western cultural infiltration, adopting a synthesist approach that integrated democratic and civic

¹⁷ Asrul Amir, Rudy Arianto, and Adriyan Misbahuddin, "Classification of Tafsir Maudhu'i Mahmud Shaltut," *Hunafa: Jurnal Studia Islamika* 20, no. 2 (December 2023): 289–301, <https://doi.org/10.24239/jsi.v20i2.712>.

¹⁸ Ali Ahmady, *Mahmud Shaltut: Ayah al-Shuja'a* (Teheran: al-Majma' al-'Alamy li al-Taqrīb bayn al-madāhib, 2007), 14.

¹⁹ Khayr al-Din al-Zirkily, *Al-A'lām*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-A'lām li al-malāyīn, 2002), 173.

²⁰ Fadhl Hasan 'Abbās, *Al-Tafsīr Wa al-Mufasssīrūn Fi 'Asr al-Hadīth*, 2 vols. (Amman: Dār al-Nafāis, 2015), 281.

principles while rejecting ideologies contravening Islamic law. As a prolific reformer who passed away in 1963, he championed Islamic economics over capitalism and communism, advocated for women's rights and social solidarity, and left a lasting legacy of theological and institutional reform.²¹

Shaltout's scholarly contributions possess profound academic rigor, leading to the translation of his works into numerous languages. Among his most seminal publications are²² *Al-Islām: Aqīdah wa Sharī'ah, Min Tawjīhāt al-Islām* (From the Guidance of Islam), *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, Ilā al-Qur'an al-Karīm, Al-Fatāwā, Al-Islām wa al-Wujūd al-Duwalī lil-Muslimīn, Muqāranah al-Madāhib, Al-Qur'an wa al-Qitāl, Al-Qur'ān wa al-Mar'ah, Manhaj al-Qur'an fi Binā' al-Mujtama'.* Sheikh Shaltout interpreted the first ten parts of the Holy Qur'an and died before completing his interpretation of the remaining parts.

Shaltut departed from traditional lexical and verse-by-verse commentary. Rather than parsing vocabulary first, he focused on the overarching objectives (*maqāsid*) of each surah, clarifying its central social, jurisprudential, and theological themes.²³ Fadl Hassan Abbas said in that Sheikh Shaltut combines both objective and analytical methods, even if the first is the one that dominates his interpretation.²⁴

In the same work, Fadl Hassan Abbas clarifies his analytical and explanatory approach, stating:

فهو حيناً يعرض للسورة من القرآن يذكر سبب تسميتها، والظرف الذي نزلت فيه، مقارنة بينها وبين غيرها من السور الشبيهة بها من حيث الموضوع أو من حيث البدء ثم يذكر أهم موضوعات السور عقديّة أو قصصية أو تشريعية وهو مع ذلك كله يبدي رأيه في كل مسألة من مسائل الخلاف بعد أن ينقل أقوال سابقه ثم يفسر بعض الآيات تفسيراً تحليلياً²⁵

"At times, he presents a surah from the Qur'an, mentioning the reason for its name, and the circumstance in which it was revealed, comparing it with other surahs similar to it in terms of subject matter." Or in terms of the beginning, then he mentions the most important topics of the surahs, doctrinal, anecdotal, or legislative, and despite all that, he expresses his opinion on every issue of disagreement after quoting the saying of his predecessors, then he explains some of the verses in an analytical manner.

Fadl identifies five core methodological features in Shaltut's exegesis, which include explaining the reason behind each surah's name, contextualizing the

²¹ Agus Miswanto, "Konsep Kenegaraan Dalam Perspektif Syaikh Mahmud Syaltut," "129-155," *Cakrawala: Jurnal Studi Islam* 10, no. 2 (December 2015): 129-55, <https://doi.org/https://journal.unimma.ac.id/cakrawala/id/article/view/80>.

²² Adnan Abd al-Hady Sarhan al-Khalidy and Mahmoud Shaltout, "Juhūd al-Islahīyah Wa Athar al-Fikriyyah," *Majallah Kulliyat Al-Imam al-Kadzim*, 2022.

²³ Fahd Abd al-Rahman al-Rumi, *Manhaj Al-Madrasah al-'Aqliyyah al-Hadīthah* (Riyad: Muassasah Al-Risalah, 1983), 237.

²⁴ 'Abbas, *Al-Tafsīr Wa al-Mufasssīrūn Fi 'Asr al-Hadīth*. 278

²⁵ 'Abbas, *Al-Tafsīr Wa al-Mufasssīrūn Fi 'Asr al-Hadīth*. 279

circumstances surrounding its revelation, outlining the primary themes of the verses, drawing thematic comparisons between similar verses, and offering decisive opinions on controversial issues.²⁶ Also, as the writer of said that the Sheikh showed the purposes of the suras.²⁷

Regarding the context of Surah al-Baqarah, Shaltut highlights two pivotal developments in the early Madinan period: first, the Prophet's construction of the mosque as a center for worship, education, and governance, alongside the establishment of fraternity (*mu'ākhāh*) between the Muhajireen and Ansar to form a unified front; and second, the transition of the Muslim community to living alongside the People of the Book in Madinah after leaving behind the hostile polytheists of Makkah.²⁸

Shaltut's methodology prioritizes outlining the primary doctrinal, narrative, and legislative themes of each surah. When interpreting doctrinal verses, he critiques both historical and contemporary theological trends. Similarly, in addressing jurisprudential verses, he avoids merely repeating classical legal opinions; instead, he critically evaluates traditional rulings while actively confronting modern contentions, such as challenges regarding the permissibility of usury and the failures of capitalist systems.

Thematic Unity in the Qur'an and Its Treatment in Modern Exegesis

One of the foundations of the modern rationalist school of thought in exegesis is thematic unity in the Qur'an, which aims to prove the consistency and interconnection between its verses. Regarding this concept, a researcher stated: "It is the only axis or basis that combines multiple topics in the entire Quran, or in a number of suras that share a particular matter, or in a sura."²⁹ "There is a definition in other words: Tightness, proportionality, consistency, harmony, harmony and integration in the Holy Quran."³⁰

Shamila Heng, in *Modern Trends in Tafsir*, notes that modern exegesis establishes thematic unity as a hermeneutical principle of *I'jāz al-Qur'ān* by grouping verses into meaningful units and connecting different surahs. She highlights that even when written in a traditional, verse-by-verse format, its innovation fundamentally spans from structure to substance.³¹

The thematic unity of the Qur'an, revitalized by Muhammad Abduh's modern school, roots itself in classical scholarship. Abu Bakar al-Naisaburi

²⁶ 'Abbas, *Al-Tafsīr Wa al-Mufasssīrūn Fi 'Asr al-Hadīth*.279

²⁷ al-Rumi, *Manhaj Al-Madrasah al-'Aqliyyah al-Hadithah*.199

²⁸ Mah}mud Shaltut, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Kairo: Dar al-Saffwah, 2004), 32.

²⁹ Khalud bint Khalid, *Al-Wihdah al-Mauddhu'iyah Bayn al-Muayidin Wa al-Muaridhin* (Mekkah: Um al-Qura University, 2015), 31.

³⁰ Muhammad ibn Mahmud Khaujah, *Al-Wahdah al-Qur'aniyah* (Riyadh: Dar Kunuz Ishbiliya, 2010), 27.

³¹ Shamila Heng, *Modern Trens in Tafsir* (International Islamic University of Malaysia: Departement of Qur'an and Sunnah, 2019), 15.

pioneered this framework through the theory of *munāsabah* (inter-textual correlation), which al-Shāṭibī later applied to Surah al-Mu'minūn, and al-Biqā'ī extensively executed in his monumental *Nazm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*.³²

While classical *munāsabah* focused on linear, micro-level connections between individual verses or chapters, it methodologically evolved into the theory of thematic unity (*al-wahdah al-mawḍū'īyyah*), which presents the Qur'an as a macro-level, structurally unified edifice under a singular, overarching theme. Within this theoretical reconstruction, Mahmoud Shaltut played a pivotal role by successfully demonstrating the empirical validity of this framework through his practical exegetical methodology, consistently formulating and applying thematic unity within the macro-structure of the Qur'anic chapters.

Siti Mulazamah underscores that while operationalizing thematic unity requires an appropriate methodology, a standardized framework has yet to be established. This methodological absence presented a unique epistemological challenge for Mahmoud Shaltut, compelling him to independently navigate and formulate his own structural approach.³³ Consequently, Shaltut's reconstruction of thematic unity represents a contemporary form of *ijtihād* and a product of profound contemplation (*tadabbur*) on the structural unity of the Qur'anic chapters.

The thematic unity actualized by the *Madrasah al-'Aqliyyah al-Ḥadīthah* and advanced by Shaltut significantly influenced subsequent exegetes, most notably Sayyid Qutb. In his *magnum opus*, Qutb posits that each surah's diverse subthemes are hierarchically subordinate to its single central theme (*miḥwar*).³⁴ He conceptualized the term *miḥwar* as the thematic axis of a surah, and *hādaf* as the universal, holistic objective of the Qur'an.³⁵ However, similar to Shaltut, Qutb did not explicitly elaborate on the methodological indicators for identifying a surah's *miḥwar*. This shared absence of a formalized framework for determining the central theme constitutes the definitive epistemological common ground between their methodologies.

Despite these similarities, a significant methodological divergence exists between the two scholars: Shaltut's commentary is highly selective and emphasizes contemporary hermeneutical actualization to address modern predicaments, whereas Qutb implements a textually exhaustive exegesis that immerses the reader in the socio-historical context of the revelation.

Concurrently, while the modern epistemological paradigm shift in Islamic studies spurred contemporary thematic works such as Abbas Mahmoud al-

³² M. Quraish Shihab, *Rasionalitas Al-Qur'an: Studi Kritis Atas Tafsir al-Manar* (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2006), 27-28.

³³ Siti Mulazamah, "Konsep Kesatuan Tema Al-Qur'an Menurut Sayyid Qutb," *Journal of Qur'an And Hadith Studies* 3, no. 2 (December 2014): 203-34, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v3i2.1156>.

³⁴ Mulazamah, "Konsep Kesatuan Tema Al-Qur'an Menurut Sayyid Qutb," December 2014.

³⁵ Mulazamah, "Konsep Kesatuan Tema Al-Qur'an Menurut Sayyid Qutb," December 2014.

Aqqad's *Al-Insān fī al-Qur'ān* and Abul A'lā al-Maududī's *Al-Ribā fī al-Qur'ān* these early literatures remain thematic studies organized around external social issues rather than methodologically proper works of exegesis.³⁶

Subsequently, the study of thematic unity achieved its methodological maturity as a rigorous exegetical discipline under Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmawī in his seminal text, *Al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*.³⁷ Al-Farmawī transformed thematic unity from a purely ontological discourse into an applicable methodology by outlining the structural rules of *tafsīr mawḍū'ī*, which he classified into two primary categories:

First, The first is *al-tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī li al-suwar al-Qur'āniyyah* (surah-based thematic exegesis), which interprets the Qur'an by identifying a specific surah's central theme, categorizing its constituent verses into coherent subthemes, and synthesizing them into a unified whole.

Second, *al-mawḍū'ī lil mawḍū'at al-Qur'āniyyah* (topic-based thematic exegesis), which involves gathering various verses from disparate surahs that address a single, specific issue or topic to be analyzed comprehensively.³⁸

Within this broader methodological development, Shaltut's exegetical project represents a crucial proto-evolutionary phase that laid the structural foundation for the emergence of this first model (*al-mawḍū'ī li al-suwar*) within modern thematic exegesis discourse.

The Contribution and Benefits of This Foundation in Interpretation

Thematic unity has exerted a transformative impact on exegesis, driving a significant paradigm shift in how the text is interpreted. The consistent application of this framework by modern scholars stands as a primary reason why their interpretations diverge fundamentally from both classical scholarship and conventional public understandings.

Consequently, one major effect of this foundation is that scholars of this school critique traditional *asbāb al-nuzūl* (causes of descent) narrations. Sheikh Rashīd Riḍā argued that such reports fragment the harmonious integrity of divine speech by disassembling verses, isolating sentences within a single verse, and reducing interconnected textual units into independent, isolated reasons for revelation.³⁹ The Shaykh emphasizes that over-reliance on traditional causes of descent bifurcates the Qur'anic text into fragmented segments. Interpreting verses through this isolated lens ultimately compromises the thematic unity and holistic structural integrity of the Qur'an.

³⁶ Helmy, "Kesatuan Tema Dalam Al-Qur'an (Telaah Historis-Metodologis Tafsir Mawḍū'iy)."

³⁷ Helmy, "Kesatuan Tema Dalam Al-Qur'an (Telaah Historis-Metodologis Tafsir Mawḍū'iy)."

³⁸ Abdul Hayy Husayn al-Farmāwī, *Al-Bidāyat Fi Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī (Dirāsāt Manhajīyyat Mawḍū'īyyat)* (Kairo: Jamī'ah al-Azhar, 2005), 40-41.

³⁹ Muhammad Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā, 2 vols. (Kairo: Dar al-Manār, 1947), 11.

Another significant effect is that scholars of this school challenge restrictive traditional interpretations to assert their own frameworks. For instance, Sheikh Muḥammad ‘Abduh rejected limiting "the dawn and the ten nights" to the first ten days of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, despite classical consensus. He argued that such constraints violate established Qur'anic patterns; when the text intends a specific time, it names it explicitly, whereas an unrestricted phrase must maintain its generalized, macro-level meaning.⁴⁰

Similarly, Sheikh Muḥammad ‘Abduh rejected the conventional view that the verse concerning the erasure or banishment of a "verse" (*āyah*) refers to textual abrogation (*naskh*), interpreting it instead as a reference to prophetic miracles. He argued that the textual context specifically the invocation of divine ability rather than divine knowledge and wisdom does not align with the concept of abrogating legal rulings; thus, contextually, the term *āyah* denotes the evidence supporting prophethood, referring to the signs or miracles removed from one prophet to be replaced by another.⁴¹

Thematic unity offers profound hermeneutical and socio-practical benefits: it enhances the accurate comprehension of divine speech, counters intellectual objections against the text, and provides a Qur'anic framework for social, economic, and political development. By systematically linking intra-surah issues and conducting rigorous contextual analysis, this approach guides researchers to uncover the broader objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the Qur'an, ultimately empowering them to formulate solutions for contemporary individual and cosmic challenges facing Muslims today.

Reading the Qur'an as a Whole: Thematic Unity in Shaltūt's Tafsīr

Sheikh Maḥmūd Shaltūt explicitly affirms his commitment to this foundational framework. As a prominent leader of this school, he firmly argues that the entire Qur'an regardless of its diverse textual contexts, chapters, and rulings constitutes an inseparable, integrated unity that cannot be compartmentalized in practice or interpreted through isolated parts without reference to the whole.⁴² This is a clear indication that the Shaykh holds this view.

This paper investigates the practical application of Sheikh Maḥmūd Shaltūt's principle of thematic unity. Specifically, it examines whether Shaltūt operationalizes this framework through critiquing traditional *asbāb al-nuzūl* and challenging restrictive classical interpretations in the manner of his predecessor, Muḥammad ‘Abduh. Additionally, it evaluates whether Shaltūt's exegetical output realizes the structural and contemporary hermeneutical benefits theoretically attributed to this paradigm.

⁴⁰ Fahd Abd al-Rahman al-Rūmy, *Ittijāhāt Al-Tafsīr Fi al-Qarn al-Rābi' Ashr al-Hijry*, 1 vol. (Beirut: Muassasah Al-Risālah, 1997), 721.

⁴¹ Muhammad ‘Abduh and Muhammad Rasyid bin Aly Ridha, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Hakīm; Tafsir al-Manār*, 1 vol. (Kairo: Dār al-Manār, 1947), 416.

⁴² al-Rūmi, *Manhaj Al-Madrasah al-'Aqliyyah al-Hadīthah*.237

Finding the Core: Identifying the Surah's Central Theme

In practice, Shaltūt operationalizes this approach by identifying the overarching theme of a surah before initiating its textual commentary, as demonstrated in his analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah. Crucially, his method departs from traditional linear exegesis; rather than commenting on every verse sequentially, he selectively extracts specific verses and rearranges them into a thematic hierarchy, prioritizing topical relevance over their structural order within the surah to establish a unified conceptual narrative. A table will appear about it:

No	Name of Sura	Themes of Surah
1	Surah Al-Baqarah	The story of cow slaughter and the human approach to understanding the story. Introduction to the objectives of the surah. Community Approach to Guidance (hidayah). Religious foundations with Allah. The essence of this surah ((verse of truth)).
2	Surah Al-Imran	The two main purposes of this surah. The issue of the deity and merits of Jesus. Lessons from victory at Badr and defeat at Uhud. Divine call to the community of believers. Prohibition of usury, whether small or large. Lessons from victory at Badr and defeat at Uhud. Divine Call to the Community of Believers. Prohibition of usury, both small and large.
3	Surah al-Nisa	Surah al-Nisa deals with laying the foundations for internal stability and external stability. Money and inheritance rules. Sources of legislation as outlined in this surah. The colours of rebellion against the law. Basis for external stability. Warfare in Islam and its purpose. Divine Call in Surahs (<i>Ya ayyuha al-nas, Ya ahl al-kitab, ya ayyuha al-ladhina amanu</i>).
4	Surah al-Ma'idah	The story of al-Ma'idah and the opinions expressed on its revelation. Divine Calls in the Epistle. Covenants, the breadth of their meaning and the obligation to fulfil them. Rituals that Allah commanded to be honoured and their wisdom. Food of the People of the Book and marry their women.

		Purity in prayer and its rulings and implications Taimum and its legal secrets. God's covenants with man.
5	Surah al-An'am	Comparison between Surah Al-An'am and the civil suras that preceded it. Comparison between Surah Al-An'am and Surah Al-A'raf. This letter addresses the main issues that have preoccupied the mind Godhead, Revelation, Resurrection. Analysing and prohibiting is Allah's business alone A detailed scientific analysis of the Ten Commandments.
6	Surah Al-A'raaf	The purpose of Surah Al-A'raaf and its methods of invitation. Four Calls in a Letter (Ya Bani Adam). The words of the mufasssirs about the veil, customs, and people of customs, as well as the opinion we have chosen. A call between the dwellers of heaven and the dwellers of hell. The position of the disbelievers and their fate in the world.
7	Surah Al-Anfal	Surah (Badr) This surah resolves the problems of the believers after the Battle of Badr. The principles of warfare laid down in this surah. Two doubts of the opponents of Islam and the obligation to answer them. (They ask you) in the Quran. Guiding principles and rulings derived from the exploration of question-and-answer verses in the Qur'an. The attributes of the believers and the wisdom of their placement in the chapters of the Qur'an Divine appeals to the believers.
8	Surah al-Tawbah	The two original purposes of this Letter Its historical mission with Surah al-Anfal The final liquidation of polytheism in the Arabian Peninsula. Laying the foundation for the treatment of People of the Book. A general call to jihad in the cause of Allah.

A word about the meaning ((the way of Allah))
 Unmasking hypocrites and the methods and
 colours of hypocrisy.
 The covenant between Allah and the believers.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Qur'anic Chapters in Shaltūt's Tafsīr

In formulating these structural frameworks, Shaltūt maps each surah by delineating its overarching objective, uncovering the conceptual correlation between its name and textual content, and integrating interconnected verse blocks into coherent subthemes. Crucially, his exegesis operationalizes text and contemporary reality as dynamic interpretive variables, thereby shifting the analysis from isolated textual fragments to a living discourse capable of addressing modern socio-philosophical challenges.

Nevertheless, Shaltūt's methodology exhibits two distinct limitations. First, his selective approach leaves significant portions of the surah uninterpreted. Second, his analytical depth remains highly disproportionate; the profound, extensive analysis dedicated to Surah Al-Fātiḥah stands in stark contrast to his highly generalized, macro-level commentary on Surah Al-Baqarah.

Recognition of the purpose and intent of the suras

Shaltūt explicitly applies the principle of thematic unity by establishing the overarching intent and purpose (*maqāṣid*) of each surah prior to its textual commentary. In his analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah, this approach materializes as a foundational summary designed to guide the reader through the surah's structural complexity. Here, Shaltūt maps the early Medinan socio-political landscape as a central thematic pillar, highlighting the Prophet's dual institutionalization of the mosque as a sanctuary for prayer, jurisprudence, and strategic consultation and the establishment of brotherhood between the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* to unify the community amid a new pluralistic environment populated by both polytheists and the People of the Book.⁴³

By delineating the overarching purpose of revelation (*maqāṣid al-tanzīl*), Shaltūt provides a macro-level framework that directly counters critics who claim the Qur'an lacks thematic unity. This method demonstrates that the text operates within a deliberate, structural order akin to systematic chapters. In the case of Surah Al-Baqarah, Shaltūt isolates two primary objectives, the first of which focuses on delivering a direct invitation to the Children of Israel (*Banū Isrā'īl*) while systematically dismantling their theological skepticism toward the Prophet's message; this is achieved by contextually invoking historical divine favors and exposing the historical patterns of stubbornness, disbelief, and defiance exhibited by their ancestors,

⁴³ Mahmud Shaltut, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Kairo: Dar al-Shawwaf, 2004), 64.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا اِسْرَآءِیْل اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتِی الَّتِیْ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَیْكُمْ وَاَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِیْ اَوْفٍ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَاِیَّایْ فَارْهَبُوْا

"O children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favor which I bestowed upon you and fulfil your covenant with Me as I fulfil My covenant with you and fear none but Me."

The second: This is a law necessitated by the fact that Muslims are a group that differs from others in terms of their worship, transactions, and customs.⁴⁴

Shaltūt maintains this methodology in Surah Āli 'Imrān by anchoring its thematic purpose to a specific Medinan socio-historical trajectory. Instead of treating military milestones such as Badr and Uḥud and theological debates with the People of the Book as fragmented historical reports, he integrates these diverse contextual events into a singular, cohesive thematic axis.⁴⁵

Shaltūt summarizes the purpose of this surah into two main themes: establishing the truth of divine revelation and scriptures, and calling humanity to hold fast to that truth. By doing so, he provides a clear framework showing that the surah revolves around the nature of true religion and humanity's journey toward it.⁴⁶

Shaltūt's Perspective on Asbāb al-Nuzūl

The occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) are a foundational discipline in Qur'ānic scholarship. As Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd notes, these contexts are a powerful tool for unlocking textual meanings. Consequently, mastering this knowledge is an indispensable requirement for every exegete.⁴⁷

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah also says that knowing the reason for the revelation (*sabab nuzul*) helps in understanding the verse, as knowledge of the cause leads to knowledge of the effect.⁴⁸ Al-Wahidi said: "It is not possible to know the interpretation of a verse without knowing its story and the reason for its revelation."⁴⁹ For example, in understanding Allah's words:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعُمُوا إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَآمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَآمَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَأَحْسَنُوا يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْمُحْسِنُونَ ٥٠

"On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness there is no blame for what they ate (in the past) when they guard themselves from evil and believe and do deeds of righteousness

⁴⁴ Shaltut, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karīm*.45

⁴⁵ Shaltut, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karīm*.77

⁴⁶ Shaltut, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karīm*.78

⁴⁷ Jalal al-Din Abdurrahman al-Suyūti, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 1 vol. (Saudi Arabia: MOIA, n.d.), 82.

⁴⁸ Taqiyyuddin Abu al-Abbas Ahmad bin Abdul Halim bin Abdus Salam bin Abdullah bin Muhammad bin al-Khadhir bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Taimiyah, *Muqaddimah Fi Usūl Al-Tafsir* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 1972), 47.

⁴⁹ Ali bin Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Mattuyah al-Wāhidi, *Asbāb Nuzūl Al-Qur'ān* (Dammam: Dār al-Salah, 1992), 8.

⁵⁰ Surah al-Maida, 93.

(or) again guard themselves from evil and do good. For God loveth those who do good."

Recognizing this vital role in exegesis, classical scholars deeply investigated the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), leading a dedicated group of them to systematically compile these historical contexts into specialized works⁵¹ Prominent classical scholars systematically compiled these contexts, notably Al-Madīnī, Al-Wāḥidī, Al-Ja'barī, and Al-Suyūṭī in his *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*. Rigorous knowledge of *asbāb al-nuzūl* yields critical interpretive benefits, such as illuminating the wisdom behind revelation, clarifying textual ambiguities, identifying historical figures, and rectifying misinterpretations of exclusivity. However, proponents of the thematic unity school criticize an over-reliance on these accounts, arguing that fragmenting the text into isolated historical occasions transforms the Qur'an into detached units, thereby undermining the cohesive thematic unity of its surahs.

To evaluate Shaltūt's actual stance on *asbāb al-nuzūl*, it is essential to examine his practical exegesis of verses traditionally tied to specific historical contexts. The critical inquiry here is whether Shaltūt actively incorporates these occasions of revelation into his commentary, or if he deliberately bypasses them to maintain textual continuity.

First verse

The Shaykh came to the topic "The shifting of the Qiblah and the controversy that arose around it" in the verse

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّهُمْ عَنِ قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا⁵²

The fools among the people will say: "What hath turned them from the Qiblah to which they were used?" for wisdom and affairs inspired by His words:

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ...⁵³

"We appointed the Qiblah to which thou wast used only to test those who followed the Apostle from those who would turn on their heels (from the faith).

The Muslims turned to the Shaltūt posits that the relocation of the *Qiblah* provoked an intense intellectual and socio-religious crisis among Muslims and the People of the Book, nearly obscuring the ultimate divine truth. Consequently, this verse served to caution the Prophet and his companions that the resulting theological opposition was driven by obstinacy and defiance, rather than a genuine pursuit of truth.⁵⁴

Second verse

In his *tafsīr* under the heading "The Third Group (hypocrites) He said: "They

⁵¹ Manna' Khalil al-Qathtān, *Al-Mabāhith Fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2000), 71.

⁵² Surah al-Baqara, 142.

⁵³ Sura al-Baqara, 143.

⁵⁴ Shaltut, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karim*.⁶⁴

are the hypocrites for whom Allah has reserved for them what He wills of everlasting punishment and placed them at the bottom of hell, they claim to be the source of goodness and truth, while they are the source of evil and corruption.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ⁵⁵

When it is said to them: "Believe as the others believe" they say: "Shall we believe as the fools believe?" nay of a surety they are the fools but they do not know

They make two faces for themselves, one and the other... They make two faces for themselves, one face and another face...⁵⁶

وَإِذَا لُفُّوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا ۖ وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ⁵⁷

(When it is said to them: "Believe as the others believe" they say: "Shall we believe as the fools believe?" nay of a surety they are the fools but they do not know.)

Third verse

Under the thematic section "Guidance for the Community of Believers" in Surah Āli 'Imrān, Shaltūt explains that the chapter directly addresses a community united by divine truth and rooted in compassion. He argues that the surah serves as a warning against the deceptive schemes, skepticism, and material distractions posed by the disobedient. Instead, it urges the faithful to hold fast to the rope of Allah and preserve the profound brotherhood that binds them. The surah then explains to them what they should do in their relations with the disbelievers, what is permissible and what is not permissible:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا بِطَانَةٍ مِّنْ دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْتُونُكُم بَأَلًا وَهُمْ مَا وَعِثُمْ قَدْ بِدَّتِ الْبُغْضَاءُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۖ وَمَا تُخْفِي صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ ۚ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ⁵⁸

(O ye who believe! take not into your intimacy those outside your ranks; they will not fail to corrupt you. They only desire your ruin: rank hatred has already appeared from their mouths; what their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made plain to you the Signs if ye have wisdom.)

Fourth verse

In interpreting Surah al-Maidah

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ أَن يَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ⁵⁹

(O ye who believe! call in remembrance the favor of God unto you when certain men formed

⁵⁵ Sura al-Baqara, 13

⁵⁶ Shaltut, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karim*.59

⁵⁷ Sura al-Baqara, 14.

⁵⁸ Surah Ali Imran; 118.

⁵⁹ Sura al-Maida, 11.

the design to stretch out their hands against you but (God) held back their hands from you: so fear God. And on God let believers put (all) their trust)

The commentators tried to make this verse a reference to a particular incident, some of them said: This verse relates to a historical incident where an armed assailant attempted to assassinate the Prophet. Standing over him, the assailant demanded to know who could protect him, to which the Prophet replied, "Allah." Consequently, the sword slipped from the assailant's hand. Upon seizing the weapon, the Prophet offered him clemency after the man pledged to cease hostilities and refrain from aiding enemies, returning to his tribe to declare the Prophet as the best of mankind.

An analysis of the first four verses reveals that Shaltūt consistently omits their historical occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), despite the well-documented contexts associated with each. The following section examines these instances verse by verse to evaluate this methodological omission.

In the first verse (al-Baqarah: 142), Shaltūt omits the *asbāb al-nuzūl* documented in al-Suyūṭī's *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*. Although he briefly acknowledges the historical shift from Jerusalem to the Kaaba, he prioritizes interpreting the verse based strictly on its thematic content.

Regarding the second verse (al-Baqarah: 14), Shaltūt again omits its *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Al-Suyūṭī documents that this verse was revealed concerning the hypocrisy of 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy and his companions during their deceptive encounter with Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Alī. Rather than referencing this historical incident, Shaltūt focuses solely on the thematic textual meaning.⁶⁰

He does the same in the third and fourth verses. In the third verse, the Shaykh wants to give an example of those whom Allah has prevented from the truth. Then in the fourth verse, the Shaykh wanted to show what a Muslim should not do to a disbeliever.

However, Shaltūt does include the *asbāb al-nuzūl* for the fifth verse. This rare occurrence suggests he does not entirely reject these historical accounts, but rather utilizes them selectively only when strictly necessary for his thematic interpretation.

Exegesis Beyond the Hadith: Reinterpreting "Those with Anger" and "The Astray"

It is known to us that the scholars have interpreted the words (neither the forgiven nor the misguided)⁶¹ in Surat al-Fitnah as Jews and Christians. This is the interpretation of the Prophet's words. It is known that the Prophet's commentary is one of the best commentaries after the Qur'an. It is not right for anyone to interpret this verse based on opinion. We will quote the words of the

⁶⁰ Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sābiq al-Dīn al-Khuḍayri al-Suyuthi, *Lubāb Al-Nuqūl Fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Kutub al-Thaqafiyyah, 2002), 11-12.

⁶¹ Sura al-Fatiha, 7.

scholars in interpreting this verse.

Shaykh 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī confirms this traditional view, identifying "those who earned wrath" as the Jews and "those who went astray" as the Christians, drawing directly on parallel Qur'anic verses to substantiate these specific corporate identities.⁶²

However, there are opinions from some commentators who interpret (the misguided and misleading) to mean other than Jews and Christians. They say that what is meant by the disobedient is all those who sin in outward deeds and are immoral. And by misguided is meant all those who are wrong in their beliefs, because the term is general and its restriction is contrary to the original⁶³. This statement is rejected because the interpretation of "the wrongdoers and the misguided" as (Jews and Christians) is mentioned in a saheeh hadith, as stated by Al-Alusi. Abu Hayyan said: "If this is true of the Messenger of Allah, then it is obligatory to follow him."⁶⁴

The hadeeth in question is the hadeeth of Uday bin Hatim. He said: I asked the Messenger of Allah - may Allah bless him and grant him peace - about Allah's words, "Those who are not wronged," he said, "They are the Jews," and "Those who go astray," he said, "The Christians are those who go astray"⁶⁵.

Shaltūt excludes these hadith narrations to preserve the text's thematic unity, arguing that mankind's response to divine guidance naturally falls into three timeless categories mirrored at the beginning of Surah al-Baqarah. The first category comprises the believers, who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, spend from their sustenance, and attain ultimate success. The second consists of the disbelievers, whose hearts are sealed against guidance, rendering warnings ineffective and leading to severe punishment. The third category encompasses the hypocrites, who waver in confusion between outward faith and inward disbelief, falsely aligning with believers while remaining loyal to their deceptive associates⁶⁶.

This statement shows us that the Shaykh used this basis until he abandoned the hadith in interpreting this verse and the Shaykh set the topic of this verse (neither the persecuted nor the misguided) under the title "The sects of men before men".

Exploring and uncovering the Qur'an's linguistic style

This approach illuminates the stylistic, legislative, and rhetorical nuances of the Qur'an. Accordingly, Shaltūt structures his exegesis to uncover the

⁶² Muhammad 'Aly al-Ṣābūnī, *Rawāi' al-Bayān Fi Tafsīr Ayāt al-Ahkām*, 1 vol. (Damaskus: Maktabah Al-Ghazaly, 1980), 24.

⁶³ al-Sabuni, *Rawai' al-Bayān Fi Tafsīr Ayāt al-Ahkām*.25

⁶⁴ al-Ṣābūnī, *Rawāi' al-Bayān Fi Tafsīr Ayāt al-Ahkām*.25

⁶⁵ Ismail bin Umar bin Katsir bin Dhaw' bin Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al'Adhīm*, 1 vol. (Riyadh: Dār al-T{abiyah, 1999), 142.

⁶⁶ Shaltūt, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'an al-Karīm*.32

underlying linguistic secrets behind specific Qur'anic expressions.

نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ

We provide for you and them, and

نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ

We provide for them and you.

And this is what he did in Surah Al-An'am where he said: "This Divine guarantee for children comes in two different forms in the verses of Al-An'am and Al-Isra':... Poverty, which makes them kill their childrenPoverty, which makes them kill their children, is the remedy for the first case in the first verse

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ

and you shall not kill your children for poverty) and the remedy for the second case in the second verse

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ

and you shall not kill your children for fear of poverty

and given that the first case is where the parents are responsible for endeavouring and spending, it is fitting that the remedy is (We will provide for you and for them), the parents' maintenance is presented to show that they are the ones responsible and working, and it is with their maintenance that the children's maintenance is provided, and given the second condition, this condition underscores that children bear the financial responsibility for parents unable to work. By phrasing the verse this way, Shaltūt highlights a broader cosmic and legal principle: divine sustenance is tied directly to human labor. Provision without effort contradicts both natural law (*ṣunnatullāh*) and Shariah commands.⁶⁷ " (Quran). In this section, one example of Shaykh's extraction of the Qur'anic style on this basis will suffice.

Accurate understanding of verses that have similarities

There is no doubt that one of the benefits of this method, as mentioned earlier, is the accuracy in understanding verses that have similarities with other verses. This can be found in al-Shihab's interpretation if we look closely at his interpretation. He compares the call to mankind with the description ((Bani Adam)) in Surah al-A'raf. He says, "The second position concerns the four divine calls, which are the only calls to all people in the Qur'an with the description of Adam's prophethood, and these calls come after the story of Adam and Iblis." The Shaykh then mentioned the verses in question. They consist of four verses.

⁶⁷ Shaltūt, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karīm*.322

يَبْنِيَّ آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ، يَبْنِيَّ آدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ آبَايَكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْآتِهِمَا، يَبْنِيَّ آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ، يَبْنِيَّ آدَمَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي فَمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ.

O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment Upon you to cover Your shame, as well as To be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness, That is the best. Such are among the Signs Of God, that they May receive admonition!), (O ye Children of Adam ! Let not Satan seduce you, In the same manner as He got your parents out Of the Garden, stripping them Of their raiment), (O Children of Adam ! Wear your beautiful apparel At every time and place Of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, For God loveth not the wasters), (O ye children of Adam! whenever there come to you apostles from amongst you rehearsing my signs unto you those who are righteous and mend (their lives) on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve."

He then explained the secret of the call and its implications: "... the call instils in the souls of men that no matter how diverse their races, languages and regions, they are the children of one man, all of whom flow in his body and then beget children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren until the Day of Judgement, and this womb should be recognised, thanked and cherished through sympathy and affection, and not through quarrels and wars. The door of evil opens for people and their misery worsens only when they turn a blind eye to this human unity, which brings them back to one origin and subjugates them to one idol that pits the strong against the weak, the rich against the poor, the knowledgeable against the unknowledgeable..."⁶⁸.

In other instances, he saw that this foundation led to an accurate understanding of the verses, for example in his interpretation of the meaning of truth in Surat al-Baqarah. He said: "... the believers should make it the basis of truth for their ummah, nation, and society in their crimes and worship, in their relations with those who differ from them in religion, in the family system, in social solidarity, in the means they should employ in civil rights, and in purifying their society from the evils of financial tyranny. "

Then he mentioned the meaning of the word "truth" and its connotations where he said: "Righteousness is mentioned in several places, including this verse

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُولُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ....) ومنها(وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ اتَّقَى) ومنها(لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ) وقوله تعالى (وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى..)

(It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces toward East or West; but it is righteousness

⁶⁸ Shaltūt, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karīm*.364

to believe in God) and (It is no virtue if ye enter your houses from the back; it is virtue if ye fear God) and (By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love) and the word of Allah (Help ye one another in righteousness and piety...)

From this it is clear that (virtue) for a servant is the totality of goodness, which includes psychological meanings, good manners, and good deeds that arise from it, by which a servant draws closer to his Lord, and for Allah, it is divine reward, satisfaction, and love.⁶⁹ " The shaykh then begins to divide truth into three parts: truth in belief, truth in action, and truth in creation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Sheikh Shaltut's interpretation of the first ten sections of the Qur'an masterfully combines thematic and analytical methods by mapping core theological, narrative, and legislative themes through a framework firmly rooted in thematic unity (*wahdah al-maudhu'iyyah*).

We argue that while this modern rationalist approach enhances verse comprehension and clarifies the Qur'an's distinct linguistic styles, its structural reliance on thematic cohesion inherently minimizes traditional *asbab al-nuzul* narratives and selectively omits certain hadiths—such as those concerning the non-unjust and non-misguided.

However, a key limitation of this study is its exclusive focus on the initial sections of the text, which may not fully reflect the Shaykh's broader hermeneutical consistency. Therefore, future research should expand this inquiry to his later commentaries and conduct a comparative analysis of his methodology against other prominent rationalist scholars of his era.

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⁶⁹ Shaltūt, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karīm*. 67

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