



## Analyzing and Assessing the Stand of the Book *the Study Qur'ān* Toward the Verses About Imāmat and Guardianship of Ahl al-Bayt

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### Abstract

*The Study Qur'ān* is a noteworthy work for the global audience. This interpretation of Qur'ān attempts to mention the traditional viewpoints as to the interpretation of Qur'ān from the selected exegetical and narrative sources, to use Qur'ān by Qur'ān method of interpretation, and to fulfill its duty in delivering the guidance of Qur'ān to the addressee. Employing critical analysis method, the present study deals with compatibility of these strategies with the interpretation of verses about the Imāmat and guardianship of Ahl al-Bayt – at the level of exoteric meaning of Qur'ānic words (Qur'ān 2:124; 4:59; 5:3, 55, 56, 67); it also probes the stand of this book about the mentioned verses as individuals cases. However, *The Study Qur'ān* is not fully successful to match these strategies. For example, this book has overlooked the traditional viewpoints in authentic sources, key narrations as to these verses, and the logical system overriding these verses by the use of Qur'ān by Qur'ān method of interpretation. Also in dealing with the interpretation of these verses, this book contains not only weaknesses but also mistakes like partial transmission of viewpoints and narrations, semantic comparison of verses based on homonymy, and improper perception of Shī'a interpretation of these verses.

**Keywords:** *The Study Qur'ān*, Sayyid Ḥusayn Naṣr, Verses of Imāmat and guardianship, Ahl al-Bayt.

### Introduction

The book *The study Qur'ān* is the work of Sayyid Ḥusayn Naṣr and some of his colleagues which is compiled based on the request of HarperOne. It has been published in eight volumes and another volume, as an appendix, has been designated for queries. So far, two volumes of this book have been translated and published in Persian by the Ṣūfiyā Publications (Naṣr, 2020: *The Study Qur'ān*). In the introduction of this book, Naṣr tries to introduce this interpretation, the summary of which is as follows: this book is the first independent interpretation of noble Qur'ān that attempts to interpret the verses of revelation by using authentic interpretations of Sunnis and Shī'as and Qur'ān by Qur'ān method of interpretation, with a traditional approach along with some innovations. It tries to discard this misunderstanding that Muslims have a prejudiced and narrow-minded perception of the text of Qur'ān. It wants to be a source for those who strive to know noble Qur'ān as a whole or some of its specific topics (Ibid, vol. 1: 75-77).

Zaynab Ṭayyibī (2021) holds that despite the efforts of authors for producing a work based on the classical Islamic tradition for familiarizing the readers with the various methods of understanding and interpreting Qur'ān by Muslims, the narrations of Sunnis and Shī'as as to

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mentioning the virtues of Ahl al-Bayt have been passed over – when interpreting some of the verses. She continues that the interpretive narrations by Ahl al-Bayt have not been used as much as the narrations by the other Companions and Followers. Therefore, this interpretation can be introduced as an amalgamation of traditional interpretations by Sunnis such as Ṭabarī, Fakhr Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr, Tha‘ālibī, and Qurṭubī. Although there are some innovations in it, *The Study Qur’ān* has failed to cover the manifestation of Ahl al-Bayt in Qur’ān and to mention their narrations and viewpoints.

In this manner, the view of Ṭayyibī can be deemed holistic as to the manifestation of Ahl al-Bayt in Qur’ān, the extent of using their narrations and views in comparison with the sources of Sunnis, and the extent of the narrations of the Companions and Followers. However, the present article deals with the strategies of *the Study Qur’ān* and the compatibility of these strategies with the interpretation of verses of Ahl al-Bayt’s Imāmat and guardianship. It also, case by case, explores the interpretation of six verses of Qur’ān on this matter using these strategies.

### Statement of the problem

The content and structure of *The Study Qur’ān* should not be unnoticed. Also this work which has a global audience should not be assessed regarding the atmosphere of Islamic audience, and should not be criticized for its perception of verses of Ahl al-Bayt’s guardianship with reference to the Shī‘a atmosphere.

Nonetheless, it is worthy to think how much this work has been realistic in interpreting the verses of Ahl al-Bayt’s Imāmat and guardianship and that how much it has used the selected strategies for the interpretation of these verses.

### Peripheral shortages

Some of the peripheral shortages which are directly related to the topic of the present article<sup>1</sup> are as follows:

1. Selection of interpretation sources is not fair; in this book there are 37 Sunni sources and only 5 Shī‘a sources (*Al-Tibyān* by Shaykh Ṭūsī, *Tafsīr* by Ṣadrā, *Al-Ṣāfi* by Fayḍ, and *Al-Mīzān* by Allāma Ṭabāṭabā‘ī). This is whereas the number of Shī‘a interpretations is almost equal to the number of Sunni interpretations.
2. It was appropriate to use *Nūr al-Thaqalyn* by Ḥuwayzī (who was Shī‘a) in parallel with choosing *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* by Suyūṭī (who was Sunni) because *Al-Ṣāfi* – like the interpretation by Ibn Kathīr – is a narrative and scholarly interpretation.
3. Choosing interpretations is something decent per se, especially regarding a great many Shī‘a and Sunni interpretive books. However, what matters here is the yardstick in choosing these interpretations. If the yardstick for selection is interpretations with various approaches (styles and methods), then this has not been observed for Shī‘a

1. Some of the shortages that can be seen in this work and are related to this article are as follows:

It says that the essence of the revered Prophet (s) was Qur’ān (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 1: 37). This is whereas the temperament of his Holiness was Qur’ān (based on a tradition by ‘Āyisha, q.v. Ibn Ḥanbal, 1995, vol. 6: 163). It seems this is due to a mistake in translation.

Also, it states, “Polemical accounts in some apocryphal sources state that the Quran written down by ‘Alī possessed certain sūrahs that were deleted in the ‘Uthmānic text, but this view is not accepted by mainstream Shiism or Sunnism...” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 1: 56). To our knowledge, there is no talk of specific chapters in the copy of Qur’ān by Imām ‘Alī. The difference of the copy of Qur’ān by Imām ‘Alī with the extant copy is not related to this issue (for more information, q.v. Najjārzādigān, 2000: 23-44).

books because the interpretations by Shaykh Ṭūsī, Mullā Ṣadrā, and even Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī are more theological.

4. Naṣr in *The Study Qur'ān* says, “We selected the most authoritative and widely read and accepted traditional commentaries as well as specialized commentaries that offered important information not always available in those commentaries that are more widely read” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 1: 27). This is whereas the selected Shī'a interpretations are by Shaykh Ṭūsī, Mullā Ṣadrā, Fayḍ, and Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī. Among those who study interpretations, *Tafsīr* by Mullā Ṣadrā has no status and cannot be considered as the most accepted interpretation with the highest readership; Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī has not even referred to it once. On the other hand, the selected Sunni interpretations have a grand status among those Sunnis who study interpretations.
5. In the list of Shī'a sources of traditions selected for this work, there is only *Biḥār al-Anwār* which is comprehensive. All the other sources of traditions are Sunni. It could have, or, better, must have included comprehensive books (as *Biḥār*) such as *Jāmi' al-Jawāmi'* by Suyūṭī or *Subal al-Rashād* by Ṣāliḥī Damishqī which are in line with Shī'a. Or, at least, it could have directly chosen some important books of Shī'a traditions like *Kāfi* and *Tafsīr 'Ayyāshī*.
6. With this unfair attitude toward Shī'a interpretive and narrative sources, this book has failed to employ the selected interpretations to interpret the verses of guardianship properly. It was necessary to use, at least, *Al-Ṣāfi* (as an interpretation of Qur'ān by tradition) and *Al-Mizān* (as an interpretation of Qur'ān by Qur'ān). In these two books of interpretation, the verses of guardianship (5:55-56), perfection (5:3), those in authority (4:59), and preaching (5:67) have been interpreted in a cohesive and systematic way, containing useful and noteworthy points which will be discussed later.

Taking these into consideration, if one reads the interpretation of *The Study Qur'ān* on the verses of guardianship, he may conclude that this interpretation is Sunni and the author of the book has mentioned one or two instances of the view of Shī'a just to pacify them.

#### *Interpretive strategies of The Study Qur'ān and their matching with the verses of Imāmat and guardianship of Ahl al-Bayt*

It ought to be, first, pointed out that every person who studies interpretations should clarify his stand toward the role of Ahl al-Bayt in Qur'ān, as it is necessary to make clear his stand toward the tradition of Thaḳalayn, wherein the Prophet of God says, “I leave Two Weighty Things among you, the book of God and my household. If you resort to them, you won't go awry” (for more information about the chain of transmission and content of this tradition, q.v. Balāghī Najafī, 2007, vol. 1: 98-103; 'Idda min al-Muḥaqqiqīn, 2009, vol. 4:64-124). These stands influence the way of interpreting Qur'ān significantly, a matter that can never be discounted easily.

There are four key point for understanding the manifestation and status of Ahl al-Bayt in Qur'ān: **a)** the manifestation of Ahl al-Bayt both on the exterior and interior — i.e. conventional and ultra-conventional non-manifests — parts of Qur'ān; **b)** the manifestation of Ahl al-Bayt in Qur'ān with different names; **c)** classification of verses of Qur'ān based on the virtues and rights of Ahl al-Bayt; and **d)** the rights of Ahl al-Bayt equal to the right of God and the Grand Prophet of Islam (for more information with documents as to this issue, q.v. Najjārzādīgān, 2014: 19-29).

Overall, *the study Qur'ān* has adopted some strategies in interpretation which are entirely correct and factual, though these strategies have been implemented partially as to the verses of guardianship; even some of the verses have been passed over in this arena.

1. Theoretically, *The Study Qur'ān* deems Qur'ān by Qur'ān as its approach for interpretation (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 1: 78). To the Shī'a and Sunni interpreters, this is the most valid and efficient approach in interpreting Qur'ān (q.v. Ma'rifat, 1998, vo. 2: 22; Qurṭubī, 1967, vol. 1: 2; Suyūfī, 1999, vol. 4: 168). This is true if its foundations are well recognized and its problems are hindered. *The Study Qur'ān* tries to employ this approach in every part of its interpretation. To interpret the verses, it refers to other verses.
2. This book sees Ahl al-Bayt as the “equivalent to Qur'ān” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 1: 37) and points to the forgoing, strategic tradition of Thaḳalayn.<sup>1</sup> The editor-in-chief of this book is Dr. Naṣr who is Shī'a and his books concerning the studies of Shī'a, particularly his translation of the book *Shī'a in Islam*, are renowned.
3. *The Study Qur'ān* regards Qur'ān a book for guidance, and not just a scientific book trying to make others content (ibid: 73). Moreover, Naṣr writes, “Our commentary, while based on the traditional commentaries, is not simply a collage of selections drawn from these books [which he called them sources], but a new work. Our text has required making choices about both inclusion and exclusion of earlier texts in addition to providing in some places our own commentary [of the verses], which is not found, at least in the same way, in the earlier sources” (Ibid: 75).

If *The Study Qur'ān* had strived to interpret the verses of guardianship based on these strategies, it at least could have paid attention to this and similar key traditions – which have a proper chain of transmission – and, based on these traditions, could have reported the interpretation of these verses from *Al-Mizān* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1999, vol. 6: 16) and *Al-Ṣāfi* (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 2000, vol. 2: 52) – two books which are selected to be in *The Study Qur'ān* and in fact are the viewpoint of Ahl al-Bayt.

This tradition is narrated by some of the close Companions of Imām Bāqir (a) whose names are Zurāra, Fuḳayl b. Yasār, Bukayr b. A'yan, Muḥammad b. Muslim, Burayd b. Mu'āwiya, and Abī al-Jārūd, all saying:

God commanded His Prophet on the guardianship of 'Alī (a), and revealed to him saying, “Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the Zakat while bowing down.\*Whoever takes for his guardians Allah, His Apostle and the faithful [should know that] the confederates of Allah are indeed the victorious” (Qur'ān 5:55-56). Also, God made it an obligation to obey the guardianship of those with authority, “O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you” (Qur'ān 4:59). They [the Companions of the Prophet of God] did not know the real meaning of this guardianship. Therefore, God commanded Muḥammad (s) that he interpret guardianship for them, as he had interpreted [the rules of] prayer, Zakāt, fasting, and ḥajj. When this command was issued, his Holiness became upset and was distressed that the people may turn away from their religion and deny him. With this state of sadness, his Holiness turned to his God [and asked for

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1. Tradition of Thaḳalayn is not only a strategic tradition in the guidance and blissfulness of this nation, but also it is considered a strategic tradition for the way of interpreting Qur'ān. It is impossible for the Prophet of God to say these words not based on wisdom or even revelation – interpretive or inspirational revelation. Thus, it should be taken seriously. Certainly those who are the pivot of Qur'ān are located in the text of divine knowledge. So the way of their manifestation should be recognized, a frame should be defined for it, and the verses related to their virtues and rights should be interpreted based on that frame. It also seems narrations forbidding the subjective interpretation are in line with this concept. It contradicts the opinion of those who assume Qur'ān is silent about the successors or has a few messages about it, those who see themselves needless of Ahl al-Bayt as the real heirs and interpreters of Qur'ān.

a solution]. Then, God revealed to him saying, “O Apostle, Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people...” (Qur’ān 5:67). Thus, the Messenger of God made the guardianship clear due to the command of God and introduced [made public] the guardianship of ‘Alī (a) in the day of Ghadīr Khumm. Then, he publicly ordered the present people to communicate the message of guardianship to the absent people. [Later on] Imām Bāqir (a) said, “Obligations revealed one after the other and guardianship was the last one. Hence, the Almighty and Glorious God said, ‘Today I perfected your religions for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you’” (Qur’ān 5:3). [Later] Imām Bāqir (a) [for the interpretation of this verse] says, “God is saying that after the obligation of guardianship, He does not reveal any other obligation because He has completed the obligations.”

In this sense, there are other narrations which are provided by Fayḍ in *Al-Ṣāfi* (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 2000, vol. 2: 51-53).

In this narration, the mentioned strategies can be found clearly. First, the verses 3, 55, 56, and 67 of chapter 5 and the verse 59 of chapter 4 have been interpreted using Qur’ān by Qur’ān method of interpretation. Second, this interpretation is stated by Imām Bāqir (a) who is one of the Ahl al-Bayt and a Weight equal to Qur’ān. Third, it has clarified the guidance and mission of Qur’ān as to the manifestation of Ahl al-Bayt in the Book of God. Although this interpretation is traditional, it has always been deemed as a new work in this arena. In addition, it teaches us Qur’ān by Qur’ān method of interpretation in these critical and important verses.

It is necessary to mention this point that – as far as we know – the Infallible Ahl al-Bayt who are “equivalent to Qur’ān” have not been discreet in interpreting Qur’ān, particularly about those verses which mention their guiding position on the subject of their rights and virtues. It seems the reason behind this is the recognition of Ahl al-Bayt, who are one of the guiding pillars of Qur’ān (for more information, q.v. Najjārzādīgān, 2014: 85-94), so that those who ask for guidance can resort to Qur’ān as well as them to attain prosperity. What is considered the big weakness of Sunnis in interpreting the mentioned verses is the lack of implementing the Qur’ān by Qur’ān method of interpretation for perceiving the content of these verses, leading to fastidiousness and discontinuousness. Accordingly, Sunnis entangle with many arguments and various possibilities to interpret each one of these verses and cannot, if not want, to find out and explicate the logical system overriding these verses. *The study Qur’ān* also mentions various arguments and sometimes contradictory arguments of Sunnis. This deprives the reader of the guidance of Qur’ān and leaves him wondering among the arguments.

#### *Case-based weaknesses and mistakes in interpreting each of the mentioned verses*

Specific shortages in interpreting each of the verses of Imamate and guardianship of Ahl al-Bayt — Qur’ān 2:124, 4:59, 5:3, 55, 56, 67— in *The Study Qur’ān* are as follows, respectively:

- A) The verse of Imāmat:** And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers" (Qur’ān 2:124).

1. The expression “Abraham stood the test” or “withstood the test” is not correct in Persian translation. Rather, Abraham was tested or tried. Perhaps the mistake is made by the translator.
2. It was appropriate to mention this point that the “words” in Shī‘a and Sunni narrative and non-narrative sources can be categorized into verbal expressions and concrete events. Examples of verbal expressions include prayers of Abraham (a) by which his Holiness calls God, or those sentences and expressions by which God talks to Abraham (a) (q.v. Majlisī, 1977, vol. 11: 177; Ṣadūq, 1984, vol. 2: 358; Ṭabarī, 1987, vol. 1: 527; Ṭabrisī, 1998, vol. 1: 76) and instances of concrete events are sacrificing Ismael and so on (q.v. ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī, 1990, vol. 1: 76; Suyūfī, 1983, vol. 1: 273; Ṭabarī, 1987, vol. 1: 154).
3. Agreed by all the Sunni and Shī‘a scholars who study Qur’ān, these “words,” in whatever sense they are (whether verbal prayers or concrete events), belong to the prophethood station of Abraham (a) and even maybe to the aged years of his Holiness (for more information, q.v. Najjārzādigān, 2011: 75). This should have been pointed out since it has a huge impact on the semantic meaning of “Imām” in this verse. Particularly in the views of Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and Rāzī – those who are referred by *The Study Qur’ān* (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 1: 270) – this is extremely obvious that these sufferings have been at the time of the prophethood of Abraham (a).
4. Based on the Qur’ān by Qur’ān method of interpretation and *Al-Mīzān* as a source (Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, 1999, vol. 1: 272), this verse should have been interpreted by the verse 24 of chapter 32 and verse 73 of chapter 21; it should have pointed out the continuation of Imāmat in the non-oppressing offspring of Abraham (a) and that the Messenger of Islam (a) and his Infallible Ahl al-Bayt are the offspring of Abraham (a) through Ismael. Therefore, they were not evil-doers and had the condition of attaining the station of Imāmat.
5. *The Study Qur’ān* considers the meaning of “Imām” in this verse (2:124) similar to the meaning of “Imām” in verse 74 of chapter 25, though there is no similarity between these two. As far as we know, even Shī‘a and Sunni interpreters have not offered such a similarity. This is because Abraham (a) was a prophet before reaching the station of Imāmat and had already been the leader of the society; they say that Abraham (a) was the leader of the society in monotheism and ethics. The Imāmat of Abraham (a) and being an Imām in prayer (which is mentioned in page 271 of *The Study Qur’ān*) is just a homonym, which these two cannot be compared with each other. This is because this Imāmat is an exclusive Qur’ānic expression and is a station superior to prophethood.
6. Basically, never should this strategic verse in the issue of Imāmat be used for insignificant and unsystematic matters.
7. What is stated about the idiomatic meaning of “Imām” in the footnote of Persian version of the book is necessary but not enough.

**B) The verse of those in authority:** O ye who believe! Obey God, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you ... (4:59).

This verse is one of the important and key verses on the guardianship right of the Infallibles and the obedience to them.

1. It was better for *The Study Qur’ān* to discuss this verse as follows: first, narrations by the Companions and Followers and the arguments by Sunnis in interpreting “those in authority” are so many and so varied that sometimes they are in contradiction with each other and even refute each other (q.v. Ālūsī, 1996, vol. 4: 94; Ibn Kathīr, 1981, vol. 1: 516-517; Qurṭubī, 1967, vo. 5: 260; Suyūfī, 1983, vol. 4: 575; Ṭabarī, 1987, vol. 4:

148). On the contrary, there is a unanimous view among Shī‘a and, based on recurrent narrations, they see only the Infallibles as “those in authority” (q.v. Barāzish, 2015, vol. 3: 238-268). Second, Shī‘as see the Messenger of God – as the teacher of revelation – responsible for the interpretation of “those in authority,” based on the forgoing traditions with sound chain of transmission (also q.v. ‘Ayyāshī, n.d., vol. 1: 411; Kulaynī, 2009, vol. 1: 286; Ṣadūq, 1984, vol. 1: 276). Third, what is transmitted from the Messenger of God by Shī‘a about the interpretation of “those in authority” is that they are only the Infallibles of Ahl al-Bayt. This meaning is in line with Qur’ān and also the context of the verse in which the command of absolute obedience to “those in authority” is equal to the command of absolute obedience to the revered Prophet (s). This is because absolute obedience belongs only to the Infallible.

2. Again it was appropriate for *The Study Qur’ān* to point out that some Sunnis like Fakhr Rāzī also see Ahl al-Bayt infallible on account of the command of absolute obedience to “those in authority” in the verse in question and says, “They are the experts of the society. Whenever they reach a consensus in a matter, their consensus is unailing and binding” (Fakhr Rāzī, 1990, vol. 10: 144).
3. *The Study Qur’ān* holds that the expression of Ṭabrisī is deficient and, in fact, dismisses the reason of Ṭabrisī for the infallibility of “those in authority” that originates from the absolute obedience to them. Ṭabrisī writes, “Our Companions have narrated from Imām Bāqir (a) and Imām Ṣādiq (a) that those in authority are only rulers from the offspring of Muḥammad because God has mandated absolute obedience to them as He has mandated absolute obedience to Himself and His Messenger. And it is not admissible that God mandates the absolute obedience to someone lest his infallibility is proven and that he is not vulnerable to mistakes” (Ṭabrisī, 1985, vo. 2: 64).

**Three: the verse of perfection:** ...Today I perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion... (Qur’ān 5:3).

It should be initially noted that this verse is extremely important and is decisive for the nation.

1. Mentioning the view of Shī‘a almost elaborately in *The Study Qur’ān* (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 277) – in comparison with the other viewpoints – under this verse is a positive point. Of course, it is a plus because this view is safe from diversity and inconsistency and also is an objective view, and not because it belongs to Shī‘a interpretation. This is whereas the views of Sunnis contain extreme diversity and inconsistency regarding the meaning of “al-Yum” (a specific day or an era); “perfection of religion” and “completion of blessing”; the end of Qur’ānic revelation and the end of commands with this verse or the continuation of revelation and descent of other commands after this verse; the cause of revelation of this verse; and so on. This is to that extent that these inconsistencies are not solvable for the Sunnis themselves. For an instance, *The Study Qur’ān* mentions the view of Sunnis as to the perfection and completion stating, “The ‘perfection’ of the religion and the ‘completion’ of blessing are widely understood as referring either to the fact that the Prophet’s pilgrimage to Makkah established the rites and procedures for the final Muslim ritual obligation, the *ḥajj*, or to the completion of the Quranic revelation, although not all agree that this was the last verse to be revealed.[The dominant doctrine and even the consensus of Sunnis is almost that this verse was revealed in the day of ‘Arafa]” (Ibid: 277-278). The reason for this inconsistency is that ‘Arafa is in the middle of *ḥajj*, and not at the end of it so that one can conclude that the religion is perfected by the rituals of *ḥajj* and the blessing is completed thereof. Accordingly, to some Sunnis, other verses and obligations were

- revealed after this verse (q.v. Ibn ‘Aṭīyya Andalusī, 1992, vol. 2: 152; Qurṭubī, 1967, vol. 6: 62).
2. *The Study Qur’ān* could have pointed out that there are two points in all the narrations transmitted by the Companions — who were witness to the revelation of the verse — as to the cause of revelation of this verse: in a narration by Ibn ‘Abbās, its cause was cited to be the outcast of polytheists from Bayt al-Ḥarām and Muslims’ Pilgrimage to Mecca without the attendance of polytheists, after the revelation of chapter 9 (Repentance) (Ṭabarī, 1987, vol. 4: 81). Second, it is related to the guardianship of Imām ‘Alī (a) which is narrated by some of the Companions like Imām ‘Alī (a), Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī, Abū Hurayra, and particularly Ibn ‘Abbās himself (q.v. Suyūṭī, 1983, vol. 3: 16-17; Wāhidī Nayshābūrī, 1990: 135). Of course, the revelation of chapter 9, the outcast of polytheists from Bayt al-Ḥarām, and the ritual of *ḥajj* pertinent to the conquest of Mecca all happen in the eighth year of Hegira which is about two years before the last Pilgrimage of Prophet (Ṭabarī, 1987, vol. 2: 342), challenging the tradition of Ibn ‘Abbās seriously. Also, Ibn ‘Abbās might have wanted to indicate one of the instances of blessing; consequently, it was not necessary for *The Study Qur’ān* to mention the aforesaid view about this verse, “The “perfection of religion” and “completion of blessing” may also refer to the victory over the idolaters and idolatry and their decisive banishment from the pilgrimage (Zamakhsharī, Ṭabarī)” (Ibid: 279). This is because we earlier said that this conquering and preventing is related to the conquest of Mecca, and not the day of ‘Arafā — which is the ninth day of Dhi al-ḥajja in the tenth year of Hegira wherein the verse of perfection is revealed, based on the dominant doctrine and more probably the consensus of Sunnis.
  3. After mentioning the view of Shī‘a about the cause of revelation of this verse in Ghadīr and direct appointment of Imām ‘Alī (a) in the position of leadership, *The Study Qur’ān* writes, “Some Shiite traditions, however, place both the Prophet’s statement regarding ‘Alī and this verse at the time of the Prophet’s Farewell Sermon at ‘Arafah, rather than at the site of Ghadīr Khumm ...” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 278-279).
  4. *The Study Qur’ān* has mentioned these narrations partially; moreover, their chains of transmission are also invalid because only two narrations in *Kāfī* (q.v. Kulaynī, 2009, vol. 1: 290) which have invalid chains (q.v. Majlisī, 1994, vol. 3: 259) and also one narration in ‘Ayyāshī’s *Tafsīr* (‘Ayyāshī, n.d., vol. 2: 9) from Ja‘far b. Muḥammad al-Khazā‘ī who is anonymous (q.v. Khū‘ī, 1983, vol. 4: 126) have been mentioned as to this issue. Furthermore, the contents of these have been explored by Allāma Ṭabāṭabā‘ī in *Al-Mīzān* (Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, 1999, vol. 5: 296). Based on the text of these three narrations in which it is asserted that this verse is about the guardianship of Imām ‘Alī (a), *The Study Qur’ān* should have written, “However, based on some [invalid] Shī‘a narrations, the speech of the Prophet (s) about the Imāmat of ‘Alī (a) was in ‘Arafah, causing the revelation of this verse, though the formal interpretation of this verse by the Prophet (s) was done in Ghadīr.”
  5. The meaning of “Islam” in the expression “I have approved Islam as your religion” that *The Study Qur’ān* discusses in the verse in question (i.e., a general meaning of submission) (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 279-280) and then its comparison with other verses is not correct. This is because this verse by common consent is deemed as the last or one of the last revealed verses (q.v. Ma‘rifat, 2011, vol. 1: 161; Zarkishī, 1989, vol. 1: 164). The word “Islam” in this verse indicates the idiomatic meaning of Islam at that time. It should be noted that the general meaning of heartfelt submission is for all prophets’ religions, and this general meaning for Islam was known at the outset of invitation of



the revered Prophet (s). Accordingly, the reference of *The Study Qur'ān* (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 280) to the argument of Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī for the word “Islam” in this verse (i.e., complete submission of heart to monotheism) is not a good reason because the topic of this verse is not monotheism.

**Four: verses of guardianship:** Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the Zakat while bowing down. Whoever takes for his guardians Allah, His Apostle and the faithful [should know that] the confederates of Allah are indeed the victorious. (Qur'ān 5:55-56)

These two verses are important because, as you saw, the verse of announcement (Qur'ān 5:67) and the verse of perfection (Qur'ān 5:3) are related to these two verses. In fact, they are interpreted in the light of these two verses (i.e. 55-56) and the view of Shī'a is also this.

1. *The Study Qur'ān* writes about the verse 55 of chapter 5, “This verse continues the discussion of *protectors* begun in v. 51, reiterating that the believers should take only *God, and His Messenger, and those who believe* as protectors (*awliyā*)” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 370), though this is not true. Some Sunnis have attempted to consider the verse 55 as the continuation of verse 51 – which is said to be revealed about ‘Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit – and make them related; however, they are in disagreement as to this very relation. For example, to prove this point, *The Study Qur'ān* says, “Some consider this verse to be an endorsement of ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit ... Others consider it to be a response to some Companions of the Prophet who complained about being socially ostracized by the Jewish clans Banū Qurayzah and Banū Naḍīr” (Ibid). If this verse were a confirmation for ‘Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit, then the relation of this verse with verse 51 would be justifiable, though Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī and some others do not see this relation definite (Ṭabarī, 1987, vol. 6: 178). However, if it is about the complaint of some of the Prophet’s (s) Companions, i.e., ‘Abdullāh b. Salām and some others, about the behavior of Jews with them – for whom the verses 55 and 56 were revealed (q.v. Baghawī, 1986, vol. 2: 63; Fakhr Rāzī, 1990, vol. 12: 22) – then this relation is not justifiable. Moreover, both series of narrations in Sunni sources – let alone Shī'a sources – face weakness in chain of transmission and also the ambiguity and incoherence in text.
2. *The study Qur'ān* writes, “However, it is widely reported in both Shiite and Sunni commentaries that many early authorities, including the influential early commentators Ibn ‘Abbās and Mujāhid, considered this to be a specific reference to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib...” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 371). This is a realistic viewpoint because in Sunni sources – without considering Shī'a sources – the revelation of this verse about Imām ‘Alī (a) is transmitted by 41 Companions and 25 Followers. By removing the common narrators, there would remain 15 transmitters from the Companions and 7 transmitters from the Followers, reaching 22 transmitters in total (q.v. ‘Idda min al-Muḥaqqiqīn, 2009, vol. 1: 187-216).
3. *The Study Qur'ān* writes, “A number of Sunni authors nonetheless ... argue that traditions defending this thesis are not entirely sound (IK) or that they do not bear out the legitimist interpretations for ‘Alī that the Shiites attribute to them. Al-Rāzī, for example, denies that *wilāyah/walāyah* means anything other than friendship or mutual support here, ... and noting that ‘Alī did not reportedly adduce this verse in favor of his own right to the caliphate during a council (*shawrā*)...” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 372).
4. It was better for *The Study Qur'ān* not to mention this part or at least to point out this fact that, first, the invalidity of these narrations that support this theory began from the time of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 758 LH) in eighth century of Hegira. Shockingly, he denies the existence of narrations about the revelation cause of this verse to be about Imām

‘Alī (a) in the interpretation books of Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Baghawī, Ibn Abī Ḥātam and the transmission of ‘Abd al-Razzāq (Ibn Taymiyya, 1994, vol. 4: 4), though these sources have transmitted this cause of revelation (q.v. Baghawī, 1986, vol. 2: 116; Suyūṭī, 1983, vol. 3: 105; he transmits this cause of revelation from ‘Abd al-Razzāq; Ṭabarī, 1987, vol. 6: 186). Before Ibn Taymiyya, as far as we know, none of the Sunni interpreters and revelation cause scribes has deemed these narrations invalid or factitious. It seems Ibn Kathīr, to whom *The Study Qur’ān* refer, has been influenced by Ibn Taymiyya; after Ibn Kathīr, no Sunni interpreter has deemed these narrations contrived and false, including the interpreters chosen by *The Study Qur’ān*.

5. Second, the controversy raised by Al-Rāzī as to the meaning of *wilāyah/walāyah* has also been answered in *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1999, vol. 6: 6) as one of the Shī‘a interpretation sources used in *The Study Qur’ān*. Based on Sunni chains of transmission, in addition to Shī‘a ones, Imām ‘Alī (a) has referred to these verses in the council. *The Study Qur’ān* should at least have pointed out these two points and should not have left the reader wondering as to these very important verses.

**Five: the verse of announcement:** O Apostle, Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people. Indeed Allah does not guide the faithless lot (Qur’ān 5:67).

As to its meaning, this verse is related to the foregoing verses of 3, 55, and 56 of chapter 5, which is made through the expression “that which has been sent down,” and is considered as one of the important verses of Qur’ān in the view of both Sunnis and Shī‘as.

1. *The Study Qur’ān* writes, “Some connect this verse to the injunction to the Prophet in the previous verse to convey that which has been sent down to him, indicating that this message to the People of the Book to follow their own scriptures as well as the Quran was what the Prophet had hesitated or feared to convey” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 389). Of course, this idea has not been stated by any of the Companions who were witness to the revelation of Qur’ān; from the Followers, only Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150 LH) has stated this point which is his own inference (Muqātil b. Sulaymān, 2002: 492). Furthermore, this idea has been transmitted by some others and then been negated (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1999, vol. 6: 45). It was better for *The Study Qur’ān* to refer, at least, to *Al-Mīzān* by Ṭabāṭabā’ī and also to stipulate that this idea was not transmitted by the Companions.
2. *The Study Qur’ān* links this verse to the time when the Prophet was in Mecca (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 390). Although it admits that this verse in chapter 5 is a Medinan verse and that everybody says chapter five was the last chapter or the penultimate one considering the time order of revelation (q.v. Ma‘rifat, 2011, vol. 1: 170; Zarkishī, 1989, vol. 1: 110), the statement of *The Study Qur’ān* is wrong when it attributes the revelation of this verse to a Bedouin who attempted to kill the Prophet (s) by stating, “A similar story is told in relation to the revelation of v. 11” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 390). This is because this story has no relation with the announcement of the Prophet (s), that very announcement about which *The Study Qur’ān* says, “[H]e feared the reaction among some of his Companions” (Ibid), particularly if it sees it as an announcement of a message about the People of the Book. In view of that, it has no connection to the Bedouin ‘Arab. Therefore, it was not necessary to mention these two weak possibilities; even if stated so, it could have mentioned at least the weakness of this view.
3. This suggestion is to clarify the content of the verse and not to leave the reader wondering about propounded possibilities, thus helping the reader use the guidance of Qur’ān, particularly of these important verses.

4. *The Study Qur'ān* says, “A small number of Sunni commentators also link this verse to Prophetic statements relating to the spiritual merits of ‘Alī, including the statement, ‘For whomever I am his master, ‘Alī is [also] his master,’ or to Ghadīr Khumm, specifically. Other Sunni commentators connect this verse to the announcements the Prophet made during his sermon during the Farewell Pilgrimage, which preceded the Ghadīr Khumm event by a matter of days” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 391).
5. First, the inconsistency among Sunnis in which some see this verse related to the time of Mecca, some to the war of Banī Anmār (namely the story of that Bedouin who tried to kill the Prophet in Medina), some to the People of the Book, and some to Ghadīr or before Ghadīr indicate the lack of a firm foundation for the revelation of this verse among Sunnis. Moreover, it sheds light on the internal contradictions in these possibilities. Second, although there is a talk about a few Sunni interpreters, the number of Companions who reported the revelation of this verse in the occasion of Imām ‘Alī’s (a) guardianship is significant, including Zayd b. Arqam, Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī, ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās, ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd, Jābir b. ‘Abdullāh, Abū Hurayra, ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Awfī, Burā’ b. ‘Āzib, Ḥudhayfā b. Yamān, and also five of the Followers (q.v. ‘Idda min al-Muḥaqqiqīn, 2009, vol. 1:217-226). Third, the connection of this verse with the farewell address before the occasion of Ghadīr is something related to the guardianship of Imām ‘Alī (a), regarding the transmissions and evidences including the part 3 of the present article about the perfection verse and also the diction of the verse of announcement (which talks about announcing what is revealed).
6. *The Study Qur'ān* says, “The Shiite commentaries suggest that the Prophet was hesitant to make this announcement [formal announcement of Imām ‘Alī’s (a) guardianship], which Imāmī Shiites consider to be a matter of Divine inspiration, although it is not in the Qur’ān...” (Naṣr, 2020, vol. 2: 391).
7. This statement of *The Study Qur'ān* is incorrect. Imām ‘Alī’s (a) guardianship is not out of divine inspiration, but rather the issue of guardianship was revealed in verses 56 and 57 of chapter 5 (which was discussed earlier). After the revelation of verse of announcement (Qur’ān 5:67), the Prophet of God (s) was obligated to interpret and teach it to all people publicly. Thus in fact, the word “balligh” – as you saw it in a narration with a sound chain of transmission from Imām bāqir (a) – means “interpret and teach” because one of the states of the Prophet of God is teaching the Book (Qur’ān 62:2).
8. Accordingly, as we said, the foregoing narration is strategic. In addition to teaching the Qur’ān by Qur’ān method of interpretation, particularly in these important verses, *The Study Qur'ān* offers meanings for the Qur’ānic words in line with the diction of the verses and negates the other possibilities.

## Conclusion

*The Study Qur'ān* is notable in its content and structure. To compile the content, it has strategies which are correct and realistic including the use of traditional views of Shī‘a and Sunni interpreters in interpreting the verses innovatively, correct understanding of the status of Qur’ān by Qur’ān interpretation and an effort for its implementation, and consideration of Qur’ān as a book of guidance. Of the positive points in the structure of the book for a better use by the readers is its organization in four independent levels or steps. Although this book (regarding its global audience) should not be assessed based on the atmosphere of readers of Islamic world, its peripheral and principal shortages cannot be overlooked, if one considers the mission it has adopted for itself. Examples of this are shortage in the quality and quantity

of chosen Shī‘a sources and also the lack of employment of these strategies in interpreting the verses of Imāmat and guardianship of Ahl al-Bayt on the esoteric level of the words of Qur’ān (Qur’ān 2:124, 4:59, 5:3, 55, 56, 67), leading to grave weaknesses and mistakes.

Through case by case study of this book, one encounters shortages and mistakes that cannot be unnoticed, including the verse of Imāmat (Qur’ān 2:124) about which there is a lack of citing the interpreters’ consensus as to the tests of Abraham (a) at his aged years (with a conclusion that Imāmat is superior to prophethood) as well as the comparison of this verse with the other verses which only contain homonyms of the word Imām. Additionally, these shortages can be seen in dealing with the verse of “those in authority” (Qur’ān 4:59) in which there is a partial transmission of the expression of Ṭabrisī; the lack of stating the diversity of Sunni narrations and views as to the semantic meaning of “those in authority”; the unity of Shī‘a view based on recurrent narrations and the diction of the verse; the lack of mentioning the diversity of Sunni narrations and views about the interpretation of verses 3, 55, 56, and 67 of chapter 5; and the partial transmission of Shī‘a expressions and narrations.

Concerning these verses together, the shortages include mentioning the rare views of some Sunnis; not paying attention to and not stipulating the quality of Companions’ arguments – who were witness to the revelation of Qur’ān – about the cause of revelation of these verses concerning the guardianship of Imām ‘Alī (a); not making the readers notice, at least, the answers of *Al-Mizān* – as one of the chosen and important interpretation sources of Shī‘a in *The Study Qur’ān* – to the critical views of Sunnis regarding the perception of Shī‘a of these verses; and finally having an improper understanding of the interpretation of these verses from the view of Ahl al-Bayt and Shī‘a interpreters.

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