THE ROLE OF INTERTEXTUAL POLYSEMY IN QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS

Abdulla Galadari

ABSTRACT

Although there are various methods of Qur'anic interpretation with various rules laid down by Qur'anic interpreters (*mufassirīn*), there is only one approach that the Qur'an sanctions, which is a linguistic approach. Since the Arabic language is rich in polysemy, this study introduces the method of intertextual polysemy in Qur'anic hermeneutics, which is independent of traditional approaches of exegesis, such as interpretation by precedence and circumstances of revelation. It analyzes the root meanings of the Arabic terms used in the Qur'an and relating to how the Qur'an uses different morphologies of the same root in different verses. When connecting the terms in the Qur'an it brings forth a different perspective of how to interpret the text. The study illustrates three different examples to understand the extent of intertextual polysemy in exegesis by i) relating the Qur'anic text with itself, ii) relating the phonetic expression of the Qur'an with the text, and iii) relating ritual with the text. In all cases, we find a unique understanding for Qur'anic interpretation, which would not be seen through classical approaches. This sheds light on the various possibilities for the role of intertextual polysemy in understanding deeper meanings of the Qur'an.

Key words: *Polysemy, Qur'an, Exegesis, interpreters.*

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, the Qur'an has been studied to derive its meanings. Many schools of Qur'anic exegesis have developed over the history ranging from literal interpretation to symbolic, from exoteric to esoteric, and from legalistic to metaphoric (Abdul-Raof 2010, Abdul-Raof 2012). However, some of these methods are not necessarily mutually exclusive from others. For example, a literal interpretation of the Qur'an does not necessarily mean that it disregards symbolism. Looking at it from a linguistic perspective, language holds vast meanings. The words themselves are symbols, which we derive meaning from. They are not themselves the realities. For example, the word "apple" is just a symbol of what an apple actually is. Language is a symbolic form of communication. Therefore, even if we are taking a literal interpretation of words, but since words of a language are themselves symbols, then we can only understand them symbolically. Aristotelian understanding of language is defined by, "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words" (Derrida 1974, p. 130). Aristotle implies arbitrariness in the relationship between the linguistic symbol and the mental image formed by it. Saussure, in "Nature of the Linguistic Sign," states that a linguistic sign does not truly give a relationship between a thing and its name, but between a concept and its acoustic image (Weber 1976, p. 919).

Identifying a word (symbol) with a specific meaning is not usually an easy task. In linguistics, a word in isolation usually has no specific meaning unless it is used within a specific context. However, in lexical semantics, words are defined independent of their context. The purpose of lexicons and dictionaries is to identify all the meanings that a word can be defined by regardless of its context. However, even when having a specific context, this does not imply that a word cannot have multiple meanings even within that context. These concepts of understanding how to derive meaning from language and lexical semantics are extremely important when analyzing any literature, including the Qur'an.

In short, this paper represents a humble attempt to explore and analyze Qur'anic interpretation through the use of intertextual polysemy, which can provide us with certain perspectives for hermeneutics. After defining what intertextual polysemy might be construed as, I will use it in three different examples, i) intertextual polysemy between the Qur'an and itself purely from a textual perspective, ii) intertextual polysemy between Qur'anic recitation (*tajwīd*) and the text by relating the phonetic expression with the text, and iii) intertextual polysemy between ritual and

Qur'anic text. These three different examples may shed some light on what roles intertextualpolysemy have in Qur'anic exegesis.

Qur'anic Exegesis

There are various criteria adopted in Qur'anic sciences for exegesis. MuḥammadṢāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn (2001, pp. 97-104), a prominent late scholar of Saudi Arabia, described the qualifications of a Muslim scholar (*mujtahid*), which are similar qualifications seen in al-Namlah (1999, p. 1810). Al-'Uthaymīn summarizes the qualification of an exegete to be competent in understanding the Arabic vocabulary, terminology, literature, and philology in order to distinguish the different morphologies of the same word, circumstances of Qur'anic revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), abrogating (*nāsikh*) and abrogated (*mansūkh*) verses, general ('*ām*) and specific (*khāṣ*) verses, comprehensive (*mujmal*) and explicit (*mubayyan*) verses, along with clear (*muḥkam*) and vague (*mutashābih*) verses. Besides Qur'anic sciences, an exegete also needs to possess sufficient knowledge of Prophetic tradition or sciences of ḥadīth ('*ilm al-ḥadīth*) from understanding the chain of narration (*isnād*) and text (*matn*). He states that an exegete needs to have adequate knowledge of sources based on consensus (*ijmā'*), particularization (*takhṣīṣ*) and restriction (*taqyīd*) of legal rulings, and proper methods of extracting rulings from evidence (*takhrīj*).

The above may seem intriguingly excessive, but according to the Qur'an, there are two main criteria to understand the Qur'an, and only one of them is tangible. The first criterion is that it is God who teaches the Qur'an [Qur'an 55:1-2], and this criterion is not necessarily very tangible. The second criterion is repeated several times in the Qur'an signifying the importance of understanding the Arabic language of the Qur'an [Qur'an 12:2, 13:37, 20:113, 26:195, 39:28, 41:3, 43:3, 46:12].

Many early methods of interpretation are heavily influenced by tradition, whether the sayings of the Prophet, his companions, or other early individuals whom the author of the commentary deemed to have some knowledge of Qur'anic meanings. This study finds the traditional methods alone are not enough in understanding the deeper meanings of the Qur'an. Most traditional commentaries of the Qur'an use historic accounts for the circumstances or reasons of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) as part of understanding the context of the verses. However, that method restricts the Qur'an to a historic event. Although traditional commentators of the Qur'an use history to understand the social and textual context of the Qur'an, traditional scholars of the Qur'an do not consider the Qur'an as a history book (Abu Zahrah, n.d., pp. 8: 4105-4106, 9: 4491, 9: 4877; al-Ḥijāzi 1993, pp. 2: 168, 355, 814), but a religious book with history

(Al-Sha'rāwi, 1997, p. 12: 7688; Al-Khālidi, 2007, p. 166; Al-Rūmi, 1986, p. 3: 971).

Al-Ṭabari was an early Qur'anic exegete who used circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) as a method of Qur'anic exegesis. Since al-Ṭabari was himself a historian, it was very natural for him to view the Qur'an in a historic lens. John Wansbrough (2004) has argued that the Qur'an is not a reliable historic account, but that of literature dogma. He suggests that circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) are mainly used by Muslim jurists to expound on juristic issues. Andrew Rippin (1988) attempts to shed light on the usage of the Qur'anic historic context according to traditional scholars, where he argues one of the fundamental usages of the circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) is not solely for juristic purposes. It is essential for jurists to understand the circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) in order to know the criteria for implementing Sharī'ah law. Some early scholars of the Qur'an, such as Muqātil bin Sulaymān (d. 767), al-Wāḥidi (d. 1076),and al-Suyūṭi (d. 1505)have written some detailed accounts of the circumstances of revelation in their Qur'anic exegesis. This has provided an understanding of the role of historic and social context in interpreting the Qur'an.

Traditional methods of Qur'anic exegesis, known as *tafsīrbil-ma'thūr*, is the most common method of interpretation. It usually depends on a related prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) or sayings of companions for the interpretation of the Qur'an (Abdul-Raof, 2012, pp. 10-27). Although the traditional exegesis is considered mainstream, it still faces certain challenges, as in the following:

1. The Qur'an may hold meanings that are not obvious. The Qur'an describes itself as a veiled book (*kitābinmaknūn*) [Qur'an 56:78] and states that unbelievers do not comprehend it [Qur'an 6:25, 17:46, 18:57]. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the Prophet explained the vague parts of the Qur'an and any parts unexplained are to be considered evident. Nonetheless, the main use of prophetic interpretation is for juristic purposes of Islamic Sharī'ah. The prophetic traditions used for Qur'anic interpretation do not always refer to a specific Qur'anic verse, but usually expounds on the theme of rituals or legal rulings, such as the method of prayer, almsgiving, marriage and divorce, etc.

2. The Qur'an numerously asks people to ponder upon its meanings. If the interpretation of the Qur'an is readily available, then it defeats the purpose of trying to contemplate the meanings of the Qur'an [Qur'an 4:82, 47:24]. Since the Qur'an plentiful times states that people

should try to understand it using reason, it opens the doors to plural interpretation that may not always be obvious.

3. Interpretation through traditional narration assumes the interpreters are knowledgeable of the parts of the Qur'an that they are explaining. Ibn 'Abbās, for example, is a widely celebrated companion who interpreted the Qur'an. However, it must be important to recognize that the interpretation of the prophet's companions or early successors may still be viewed as their own personal opinions, and should not necessarily have any specific authoritative tone. Al-Bāqillāni (d. 1013) has shown that even the first two Caliphs, Abu Bakr and 'Umar, have disagreed with each other in many instances, as noted by al-Bāqillāni (d. 1013) in his *Tamhīd* (1987, pp. 515-516). As such, it is important to understand that the companions never considered the things they say as anything beyond their own mere opinions that can be very much fallible. Although some Muslims may claim that the prophet's companions had firsthand knowledge of the Qur'an from Muḥammad, and therefore, perhaps understood the Qur'an better than any other, such a claim is unfounded. Though it may be true that they had firsthand knowledge, they still disagreed with each other plentiful times, proving that whatever opinions they had are just that, opinions. They cannot be taken for granted as "the interpretation" of the Qur'an, but only an opinion of what they thought the interpretation is. Accordingly, their interpretation can be as fallible as any other scholar.

4. The reliability of the narration is also brought into question in Qur'anic exegesis, in terms of the reliability of the chain (*sanad*) and the narrative (*riwāyah*), as argued by Al-Dhahabi (d. 1348) (1961, pp. 140-144).

5. Although the Ashʿari and Muʿtazili theological schools of thought argued whether the Qur'an is created or eternal, they both agree that the Qur'an, in its entirety, existed in heaven in the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz*) before its revelation piecewise to the prophet. If that is the case, it brings into question whether the circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) is even an integral part of the Qur'an. However, it can always be argued that God in His foreseeing knowledge of the future already knew the circumstances of which the Qur'an would be revealed and integrated it as part of the Qur'an. Nonetheless, equally possible that the circumstances of revelation are not an integral part of the Qur'an and therefore not absolutely necessary for its interpretation.

6. One of the tenets of Muslim belief regarding the Qur'an is that it is for all times and places (*likullizamānwamakān*). If it is for all times, then it cannot be confined within a specific temporal context, and if it

is for all places, then it cannot be confined within a specific social context.

Other methods of Qur'anic exegesis include Qur'anic self-interpretation (*tafsīr al-Qur'an bil-Qur'an*), symbolic interpretation (*tafsīrbil-ishārah*), interpretation by opinion (*tafsīrbil-ra'i*), and thematic interpretation, to name a few (Jullandari 1968, Fudah 1986, Abdul-Raof 2010, Abdul-Raof 2012). Due to the challenges facing traditional interpretation, several schools of Qur'anic exegesis emerged beyond the mainstream method, known as rational approaches, which would include esoteric, linguistic, and scientific approaches (Abdul-Raof, 2012, pp. 28-29). This paper investigates a linguistic approach, which as discussed earlier is the only method that is clearly sanctioned by the Qur'an several times. Nonetheless, although its approach is linguistic, it is also in many ways part of Qur'anic self-interpretation, due to the intertextuality used. Accordingly, it introduces a method of Qur'anic exegesis that is dependent on lexical semantics and polysemy.

Understanding Polysemy

Polysemy exists when a word has multiple meanings that are related to each other. Polysemy is important in Semitic languages, since these languages are based on root-based morphology (*mushtaqqāt*). This means that words have roots, which are typically three- or four-lettered, in which morphologies of various meanings and understandings would spring out from (Prunet 2006, Kaye 2007).

For example, the word to write is from the root "*k t b.*" Different morphologies of this root would hold various meanings. A writer is called "*kātib*," a book is called "*kitāb*," a letter is called "*maktūb*," which literally means something written, dictating is called "*istaktaba*," a library is "*maktabah*," and an office is "*maktab*." However, defining those terms are not always semantically obvious, as it may sometimes be dependent on the context to understand what the term specifically refers to. For example, "*kitāb*" which semantically means "book," could be a reference to a book or sometimes even a contract, especially a marriage contract, and a "*kātib 'adl*" would refer to a notary public. Those are just few definitions of the term and its morphologies. Understanding etymology is also important to comprehend the root meanings. For example, the term "*katībah*" is a reference to an army battalion, sharing the same root as writing. Although it may not be apparently obvious to the reader the relationship between the root "*k t b*" with the meanings to write and an army battalion, there is actually a strong relationship between both. The root of the term "*k t b*" actually means to join together in a group. It is

because of this root meaning, it has taken the definition of writing, because writing is joining letters and words together in a group. Similarly, an army battalion is also a group of people (or in the past horses) that is joined together. Hence, sharing the same root between the terms for writing and army battalion makes perfect sense, once we understand its semantics and etymology.

Muqātil bin Sulaymān (d. 150/767) was one of the prominent scholars who dealt with the topic of polysemy in the Qur'an in his books, *Kitāb al-Wujūhwal-Naẓ ā'ir* and *Al-Ashbāhwal-Naẓ ā'ir*. Another early scholar dealing with polysemy is Abu al-ʿAbbās al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898) in his book, *Ma IttafaqaLafẓ uhuwaIkhtalafaMaʿnāhu min al-Qur'an al-Majīd*. These early works on polysemy usually tackle the issue of multiple meanings by defining them through their context. Once a word is defined through context, it loses its lexical semantics.

Understanding Intertextuality

An author of a literary piece may intentionally use polysemy as part of its rhetoric style. We can assume that the Qur'an might use polysemy as an intentional portrayal of its rhetoric. Although the role of polysemy in early Qur'anic scholarship are well studied by various exegetes and linguists, especially between the different grammar schools of al-Kūfah and al-Baṣ rah, there is another form of exegesis that is required besides understanding the lexical polysemy of Qur'anic text. Twice when the Qur'an emphasizes its Arabic language, it uses the term "*taʿqilūn*," as in the following verses. "We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, in order that you may learn wisdom (*taʿqilūn*)." [Qur'an 12:2] "We have made it a Qur'an in Arabic, that you may be able to understand (and learn wisdom) (*taʿqilūn*)." [Qur'an 43:3]

As seen in the translation, the term "*taʿqilūn*" is assumed to mean understand or learn wisdom. However, this term is also polysemous. The root of the term is "*ʿa q l*," which holds various meanings. The term "*ʿaql*" is the brain or mind, "*iʿtaqal*" is to arrest someone, "*muʿtaqal*" is an arrested person or a prison, "*iqāl*" is the black ring worn as part of a traditional man's headdress in modern Arab cultures, "*ʿuqlah*" is a knot, and "*ʿuqunqulah*" is a rope. Although it appears those various meanings are distinct, it again comes back down to understanding the lexical semantics and etymology of the root term "*ʿa q l*." The root meaning is to tie, such as tying a knot. Since the "*iqāl*" is twisted and tied, it gets its name from that. The same goes with a rope. In addition, when arresting someone, they are usually tied or locked in prison, and hence, the same morphologies of the root "*ʿa q l*" are used. Because the brain is capable of connecting things together to make sense of them and understand them, it

is also called "*'aql,*" as connecting is like tying things together. When we read the word "apple," our mind connects the word with the actual fruit. Hence, it ties the word with the mental image, and as such we understand the meaning once they are tied together or connected. Now that we know the lexical semantic of the root term for "*'aql,*" we may have a different understanding of the term "*ta'qilūn*" used in those two verses. It could be understood as a commandment that the Arabic Qur'an requires us to tie and to connect the Arabic words together. "We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, in order that you may connect (*ta'qilūn*)." [Qur'an 12:2] "We have made it a Qur'an in Arabic, that you may connect (*ta'qilūn*)." [Qur'an 43:3]

From the context, this definition might be possible, as the context does not always provide us with an exclusive definition for a term. Nonetheless, it is also possible that due to the rhetoric style of the Qur'an that a word may contain several meanings and that several or all of those meanings are intentional. If we connect the Arabic words with what we think they mean, we would be able to understand and comprehend them, and thence also learn wisdom. However, it is also possible to understand that connecting the Arabic words together may also mean some sort of intertextuality. Hence, those two verses might be considered as a commandment that we use some sort of intertextuality, in order that we may be able to understand and learn wisdom.

Intertextuality is a broad term and could mean different things to different people. Personally, I hesitate to define it, because by doing so, I may inadvertently confine it and restrict it to a specific notion. With few examples that will be seen in the later sections, a better understanding of the extent of intertextuality and its role in Qur'anic exegesis may be realized.

To keep it in the reader's mind, I must be clear that I do not necessarily argue in favour of an etymological supremacy. More specifically, the main core of the methodology I utilize is not necessarily etymology, but intertextual polysemy, although etymology is still an important factor that needs to be analysed. Several scholars have issues against the usage of certain methods of a linguistic approach. Most notably, James Barr (1961) argues against the use of certain semantic methods for theological interpretation of Scriptures that he believes distorts the state of the intended meaning of the word. Zaborski (2004) and Saleh (2010) also argue against the extant of the use of etymology in Qur'anic interpretation, although not by completely ignoring it. This should not be a case in which we would generalize that etymology is not the best way

of understanding Scriptures, if we understand the polysemous nature of root terms and their morphologies.

The Qur'an portrays that its audience, even at the time of its revelation, did not fully comprehend its language and meaning. The Qur'an shows that though it is in Arabic and revealed to Arabs, they still had difficulty in understanding it. This means that the mainstream understanding of the words in the Qur'an may not necessarily be a full and correct understanding of the Qur'an, and a good example of this is the use of the disjoined letters (*muqaṭ ṭ a'āt*) in the beginning of some Qur'anic chapters. In many instances, Barr suggests that current speakers of a language when using a word are usually unaware and care less of its etymological meaning in the past. However, if Scriptures are believed to have a divine author, then could we also fairly assume that a divine author is not aware or cared less of the etymological meanings of words? Even if we are to assume Scriptures to be literature without any divine significance, Fishbane (2004) illustrates plentiful examples of how Biblical authors had a great deal of awareness of previous Biblical literature, while using words selectively showing their full awareness to form what is known as inner-biblical exegesis.

The method may be seen to follow in similar footsteps as that adopted by Greek Stoics and even more importantly by Philo of Alexandria, who have used etymology for allegorical interpretations of Scriptures or ancient Greek epics, in the case of the Stoics. The following would be examples of the role of intertextual polysemy in Qur'anic exegesis and I would let the reader decide if such a method could hold some validity.

The Throne of God

In this example, I will analyze intertextual polysemy by relating Qur'anic text with itself. The subject of God establishing (*istiwā'*) on His Throne in Islamic literature dates back to early Muslim scholarship, especially in the dialogue of the anthropomorphic descriptions of God. According to Ḥanbali school of Islamic law, asking the question how is not required for understanding theology, and it has become known as the "without how" (*bilākayfa*) doctrine (Abrahamov 1995). This concept traces itself back to Mālik bin Anas (d. 795). IbnTaymiyya (d. 1328) in his *Sharḥ* (1977, p. 32) relates that when Mālik was asked about God sitting on His Throne, Mālik responded, "The sitting is known (*al-istiwā' ma'lūm*), the method is unknown (*al-kayfamajhūl*), the belief in it is obligatory (*al-īmānbihiwājib*), and the inquiry about it is an innovation (*al-su'āl 'anhubid'a*)."

Although the doctrine of "without how" (*bilākayfa*) may be considered convenient, I personally find it in contradiction to the Qur'an. According to the Qur'an, it is necessary to deeply contemplate its meanings. "Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up by them?" [Qur'an 47:24]

There may be an alternative understanding to the concept of God establishing (*istiwā'*) on His Throne. The term "*istiwā'*" comes from the root "*s w y*." The term has a polysemous nature, in which "*sāwa*" is to be equal, "*sawwa*" means to form, and "*sawiyya*" means upright. The Qur'an has almost used those various meanings in different verses. It is used to mean that people are to be made one (or equal) with the earth, as a metaphor of dying as if placed in a grave [Qur'an 4:42, 91:14]. It is also used to mean to be made equal (*yastawi / nusawwīkum / yastawūn*) [Qur'an 4:95, 5:100, 6:50, 9:29 11:24, 13:16, 16:75-76, 26:98, 32:18, 35:12, 35:19, 35:22, 39:9, 39:29, 40:58, 41:34, 57:10, 59:20]. It is also used to mean a place of equality or equal chances (*suwa*) [Qur'an 20:58]. It is also used to refer to resting or sitting, even besides God sitting on the Throne. The term "*istawat*" is used to mean Noah's ark resting on a mountain after the flood [Qur'an 11:44] and "*istawayt*" is also used to mean the people resting on or mounting Noah's ark or on the back of animals [Qur'an 23:28, 43:13]. The term is also used to mean to form or to be made upright (*sawwaytuhu / sawwāk / sawwāhu / sawwa*) [Qur'an 15:29, 18:37, 32:9, 38:72, 75:4, 75:38, 79:28, 82:7, 87:2, 91:7]. It is also used to mean filling (*sāwa*), as when Dhul-Qarnayn filled between the two steep mountains [Qur'an 18:96]. It is also used to mean upright (*sawiyyā*) [Qur'an 19:17, 19:43, 67:22].

The above are various morphologies of the term "*sāwa*" that are used in the Qur'an with its various meanings. The term "*istawa*" is used often by the Qur'an for God establishing or sitting on His Throne [Qur'an 7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4, 57:4]. However, the same term and even the same morphology is also used to mean forming, as in forming the heavens [Qur'an 2:29] or when Moses was established in life [Qur'an 28:14]. It is also used for establishing in strength [Qur'an 53:6]. Although Mālik bin Anas has portrayed the ambiguity of God's establishment (*istiwā'*) on the throne, there is yet another ambiguous verse, which states that God established (*istawa*) to the heaven [Qur'an 41:11]. The interesting part is that when the Qur'an uses the term for God establishing on His Throne, the predicate "*'ala*" is used, meaning "on." Whereas the Qur'an portrays that God established to the heaven using the predicate "*ila*," meaning "to."

To analyze the terminology closely, I will attempt to use an intertextual analysis of the term. According to the Qur'an, God informs the angels that He will create flesh and once He forms it (*sawwaytuhu*) and breathes into it from His Spirit, they are to bow down before it. "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) (***sawwaytuhu***) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall you down in obeisance unto him." [Qur'an 15:29, 38:72]

There is a possibility to understand the term "*sawwaytuhu*" to mean have made him equal. Even though it would appear as if the Qur'an is portraying flesh being equal to God, it does not necessarily have to be understood in a literal sense. The Qur'an states that God planned to create a human as His vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth [Qur'an 2:30]. To be a vicegerent, it would mean that the human would be as if he is equal to God in terms of taking care of the earth, without really being a god. It is understood that the human would assume the responsibilities of taking care of the earth on behalf of God. Nonetheless, whether the understanding is taken metaphorically or not, the term "*sawwaytuhu*" could easily be understood as to have made him equal.

Al-Ṭabari (d. 923) did not delve much into the meaning of this verse (p. 17: 100). He might have assumed that the meaning is obvious and required no interpretation. On the other hand, he might have assumed that the meaning is vague that he could not find any relevant interpretation for it. Otherwise, he might have considered this a theological issue that he wanted to avoid. Al-Rāzi (d. 1209) divided this verse into main pieces (pp. 19: 139-140). Firstly, he attempts to answer the question what the meaning of flesh (*bashar*) is, where he concludes that it is the physical bodily form that has skin (flesh). For the term "*sawwaytuhu*," he provides two possible definitions. One definition is the meaning "formed his image." The other definition is the meaning "made his body upright." On the breathing of God's Spirit unto Adam, he also suggests that there are various possibilities, although he only provides with one. He says that a possible meaning by analyzing this verse exoterically is that the Spirit of God (*al-rūḥ*) is like the wind (*al-rīḥ*) that would get into the cavities of another body. It is also important to note that the terms for Spirit (*al-rūḥ*) and wind (*al-rīḥ*) in Arabic actually share the same root, and therefore are related polysemous terms. As to meaning of prostration, al-Rāzi suggests two possibilities. One meaning is that the prostration was to Adam himself not to be worshipped, but for having a greater rank than the angels, while the second meaning is that Adam is like a Qiblah, similar to the Ka'bah in Makkah. This means that the angels are not really worshipping Adam, but are worshipping God through Adam, as if he were just a physical Qiblah. However, al-Rāzi also suggests that it is more probable that the prostration is not as if Adam is a Qiblah, because

it would not necessarily show his higher rank (pp. 2: 427-448, 19: 139-140). Even though the Ka'bah is portrayed as a Qiblah, it seems to carry along with it the allusion of its higher rank than other places of worship. Nonetheless, according to prophetic tradition, the prophet had said, "The blood of a believer is more sacred than you (the Ka'bah)." Hence, al-Rāzi's suggestion that a Qiblah is not necessarily a place of higher rank is valid, but not necessarily an exclusive understanding. There is still a possibility that the flesh is of a higher rank than the angels because it is considered a Qiblah.

Al-Ṭabrisi's (d. 1153) interpretation of "*sawwaytuhu*" is also similar to that of al-Rāzi, in which it would refer to the formation of the human flesh (p. 7: 421). Similarly, the breathing of God's Spirit into the flesh is also portrayed as wind going through the body. He also suggests that the Spirit of God was joined with Adam, as an honour.

We can attempt to use intertextuality for understanding the meaning of "*sawwaytuhu*." Firstly, we should analyze the possible definition of forming. The term "*istawa*" is used in the Qur'an for Moses having grown unto adulthood [Qur'an 28:14]. It is not used necessarily for Moses being formed. Hence, there could be different meanings for the term "*sawwaytuhu*." It is possible to understand that it does not necessarily mean forming an image. Al-Ṭabari (p. 19: 535) shows variation of what people thought the age of "*istiwā*'" is, as some suggested thirty, others thirty three, and some others forty. Al-Rāzi (p. 24: 583) suggests that "*al-istiwā*'" of Moses is the completion of his strength and bodily uprightness. He suggests that the human body is born in weakness, then grown to strength. He also suggests that after the human body has grown in strength for some time, it starts to wane again at old age. Hence, he assumes that "*istiwā*'" would be some time when the bodily strength is completed. However, there is a possibility to understand the term "*sawwaytuhu*" from a different perspective. When reading the following verses, the terms for God establishing (*istawa*) on the Throne and the formation of human flesh are found within a close contextual proximity. "It is Allah Who has created the heavens and the earth, and all between them, in six Days, and is firmly established (*istawa*) on the Throne (of Authority): you have none, besides Him, to protect or intercede (for you): will you not then receive admonition? [Qur'an 32:4] He rules (all) affairs from the heavens to the earth: in the end will (all affairs) go up to Him, on a Day, the space whereof will be (as) a thousand years of your reckoning. [Qur'an 32:5] Such is He, the Knower of all things, hidden and open, the Exalted (in power), the Merciful; [Qur'an 32:6] He Who has made everything which He has created most good: He began the creation of man with (nothing more

than) clay, [Qur'an 32:7] And made his progeny from a quintessence of the nature of a fluid despised: [Qur'an 32:8] But then He fashioned him in due proportion (***sawwāhu***), and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding): little thanks do you give! [Qur'an 32:9]

In the above verses it is important to note as if it appears that the Qur'an is first stating how God established (*istawa*) on His Throne and then started to talk about the creation of the human flesh in a way similar to that in Qur'an 15:28-29 and Qur'an 38:71-72, in which the human flesh is created from mud (clay) and then is formed (*sawwaytuhu*) and was breathed into it from God's Spirit. Although the Qur'an does not usually have any special chronological order in its text, it still is strikingly strange in the above verses to show that God first created the human from mud (clay), and then made his progeny from fluid (sperm), and only then he fashioned him and breathed into him from His Spirit. The Qur'an uses the term "then" (*thumma*) in these verses, as if implying some sort of chronology. The creation from clay and perhaps the formation from clay is not "*istiwā'*." Being created from sperm also is not "*istiwā'*." It seems that only afterwards the term "*sawwāhu*" and the breathing from God's Spirit occur. This actually also resembles Qur'an 7:11, which also seems to bring a strange chronology that is implied by the term "then" (*thumma*). It appears as if the Qur'an shows that people were created and given shape, and only then were the angels commanded to bow down before Adam. Here again, it shows the creation of the human and its progeny, and then the commandment was given to the angels to bow down before Adam. This is similar to the chronology seen in Qur'an 32:7-9, which also shows the creation of the human and its progeny, and then the "*istiwā'*" of human flesh and breathing of God's Spirit occurs, implying the time when the angels were commanded to bow down. Therefore, it may not be obvious whether the human progeny have already been created before the angels even bowed down before Adam.

Another point of intertextuality that is important to note are the usage of the terms creation (*khalq*) and command (*amr*) in the verses that describe the establishment (*istawa*) on the Throne [Qur'an 7:54, 9:3, 25:59-60, 32:4-5, 57:4-5]. One verse uses the term command (*amr*), but without creation (*khalq*), though it is implied by using the term lifted (*rafaʿ*) [Qur'an 13:2]. In another passage, the Qur'an uses the term creation (*khalaq*), but without command (*amr*), when discussing the establishment (*istawa*) on the Throne [Qur'an 20:4-5]. Nonetheless, the conjoining of the terms creation (*khalq*) and command (*amr*) in the verses describing the establishment (*istawa*) on the Throne resembles that of the verses on the creation of human flesh, which uses the terms create (*khāliq*) and

"*sawwaytuhu*" [Qur'an 15:28-29, 38:71-72]. The significance of the term command (*amr*) in the passages concerning the establishment (*istawa*) on the Throne in this form of intertextuality is its relationship with the term, "My Spirit" (*rūḥī*) in the passages concerning the forming (*sawwaytuhu*) of flesh. When the Qur'an attempts to define the Spirit (*al-rūḥ*), it defines the Spirit to be from the command (*amr*) of God [Qur'an 17:85].

Using intertextuality, the verses that discuss the establishment (*istawa*) on the Throne and the creation of human flesh share the terms "creation" (*khāliq*), "*istawa*" or "*sawwaytuhu*," and God's Spirit that is related to God's command (*amr*). It can be understood that according to the Qur'an, God fashioned the human flesh (*sawwaytuhu*) in the same way that He has established (*istawa*) on His Throne. If we keep in mind the classical suggestion that the bowing down to human flesh could be as if the human flesh is similar to a Qiblah, even though exegetes such as al-Rāzi did not like such an understanding, and if we understand the notion that a Qiblah is a House of God, then there could be a completely different understanding that we can obtain using intertextual polysemy.

Since the human flesh is formed (*sawwaytuhu*) in the same way that God established (*istawa*) on His Throne, then perhaps the human flesh may be understood as the Throne of God. When the Spirit of God is breathed into the human flesh, then It establishes (*istawa*) Itself inside the flesh, which becomes the Throne of God (*sawwaytuhu*). Because the Spirit of God resides within the flesh, the flesh becomes as if it is the House of God, where His Throne is, and therefore, the Qiblah. As such, the angels might have been commanded (*amr*) to bow down to the human flesh, not because the human flesh is to be worshipped, but because the human flesh has been honoured to house the Spirit of God, which is His command (*amr*). Nonetheless, the human flesh is still even more honoured than the Ka'bah, as previously seen in the prophetic tradition, and the reason might be because the Ka'bah is a House of God built with stones made by human hands, whereas the human is a House of God made by the hands of God, and therefore, is even more honoured.

This is a simple working example of using intertextual polysemy for Qur'anic interpretation. It does not necessarily provide a single authoritative interpretation of the Qur'an, but it can provide a different perspective of how to look at Qur'anic exegesis. The following example also utilizes intertextual polysemy for understanding one of the rules in Qur'anic recitation (*tajwīd*).

Elongation and *Hamza* in *Tajwīd*

In this example, I will analyze intertextual polysemy between the phonetic expression of the Qur'an (*tajwīd*) with the text. One of the rules of Qur'anic recitation (*tajwīd*) is the elongation (*madd*) of the letters "*alif*," "*wāw*," and "*yā'*" whenever they precede a "*hamza*." The degree of elongation varies depending on whether the conjunction is within the same word or between two words. According to the science of Qur'anic recitation, the reason behind this elongation is because it is a recitation that has been handed down through tradition from various prominent traditional reciters, who trace their recitation back to the companions, to the prophet, and therefore, to the angel Gabriel. Although this answers the question how such rules have been handed down to us, it does not answer the question why such rules even exist.

In my opinion, interpretation through intertextual polysemy may provide us with a different perspective and understanding. To understand the rule, we need to understand its lexical semantics. The term "*hamza*" is rooted in "*h m z*," which means to press or to bite, "*mihmāz*" is a lantern, "*mihmiza*" is a stick, "*hamaza*" is a sound like the sound of a wind or whispers like the whispers of Satan (*hamazāt al-shayṭān*), and "*hammāz*" or "*humaza*" is the one who makes fun of people or a backbiter. The relationship between the letter "*hamza*" and its root meaning, which is to press, is because the "*hamza*" is a guttural sound in which the throat is pressed to make it.

The Qur'an uses two morphologies of the root "*hmz*" to mean someone who makes fun of people or a backbiter [Qur'an 68:11, 104:1]. There is a chapter called Sūrah al-Humaza, as the topic of the chapter is about those who make fun of people and backbiters [Qur'an 104]. "Woe to every (kind of) scandal-monger and-backbiter (***humazatinlumaza***)." [Qur'an 104:1]

IbnKathīr (p. 8: 457) relates from Ibn 'Abbās that "*al-humaza*" is the one who makes fun of people in front of them while "*al-lumaza*" is the backbiter, who makes fun of them behind their backs. Al-Ṭabari (pp. 24: 595-598) also includes the meaning of eating people's flesh, according to various narrators. This meaning is also found in *Tāj al-'Arūs* and *Lisān al-'Arab* lexicons, but it is not taken literally. It is still meant for backbiters and those who make fun of people. This metaphoric definition is likely to have come from Qur'an 49:12.

Al-Ṭabari relates that "*al-humaza*" is the one who bullies people with his hand, while "*al-lumaza*" is the one who bullies them with their tongue. Al-Ṭabrisi (pp. 10: 438-439) also relates the meaning of making fun of

people to the original root meaning of pressing and breaking. He suggests that since making fun of people is like stabbing them, then it is as if those words would metaphorically press on someone or break them (*yahmiz*) by hurting their feelings. Possibly, the letter "*hamza*," which is suggested by *Tāj al-ʿArūs* and *Lisān al-ʿArab* to have come from pressing the throat to make its guttural sound, also includes the meaning of breaking, which is suggested by al-Ṭabrisi. The letter "*hamza*" blocks the air while pressing on the throat to make its sound, and therefore acts like a natural break in air flow during speech.

According to the Qur'an, at the end of every scandal-monger and backbiter (*humazatinlumaza*), they are outstretched in columns, as seen in the last verse in the chapter, Sūrah al-Humaza. In columns outstretched (*fī ʿamadinmumaddada*). [Qur'an 104:9]

The term for outstretched (*mumaddada*) is the same for elongation (*madd*). With the use of intertextual polysemy between the words "*hamza*" and "*humaza*," we identify a unique understanding of the purpose for the rule of elongation of the long vowels "*alif*," "*wāw*", and "*yāʾ*" whenever they precede a "*hamza*." Perhaps the purpose of this rule in Qur'anic recitation (*tajwīd*) is to remind the reciter and listener to what happens at the end of every scandal-monger and backbiter (*humazatinlumaza*), according to the Qur'an. They are outstretched (*mumaddada*).

Shaving or Cutting the Hair during Ḥajj and ʿUmrah

In this example, I will analyze intertextual polysemy between a ritual and the Qur'anic text. One of the rituals performed during Ḥajj and ʿUmrah is the shaving or cutting the hair, when leaving the state of "*iḥrām*." This rule is implied from the verses Qur'an 2:196 and 48:27.

The rituals of the Ḥajj and ʿUmrah are sometimes viewed as a soul's journey from death to resurrection (Al-Lehaibi 2012, p. 10:31). When the pilgrim enters the state of sacredness (*iḥrām*), he wears two pieces of white cloth that resembles a funeral shroud signifying his death, as noted by al-Nawawi (d. 1278) (1972, p. 8: 74). Hence, when a pilgrim removes the "*iḥrām*," known as "*taḥlīl*," then it would signify resurrection. However, in order for the pilgrim to leave the state of "*iḥrām*" (death), according to the rituals, the pilgrim needs to first shave or cut the hair short.

The rite of shaving or cutting the hair short is the last ritual before one can leave the state of "*iḥrām*." Even if a pilgrim could not continue the performance of the rituals, the pilgrim would still need to shave or cut the

hair short. This is based on the tradition of the events during the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya. The treaty included a clause that the Muslims could not complete the 'Umrah that year and may do so the following year. Although the Muslims' journey was mainly to perform the 'Umrah, and have already entered the state of sacredness (*iḥrām*) when the treaty was signed, the Prophet nonetheless agreed to the terms of the treaty. To show the acceptance of the terms, the Prophet left the state of "*iḥrām*" by first shaving his head. Hence, even though the Prophet was unable to complete the performance of the rituals of the 'Umrah at the time, he still performed the ritual of shaving the hair to denote exiting the state of "*iḥrām*," known as "*taḥlīl*."

In this example, we realize that the line that divides the metaphoric ritual acts between death and resurrection is shaving or cutting the hair. Though this act may seem somewhat arbitrary, we may perhaps have further insight through intertextual polysemy, as will be seen. To look at it linguistically through lexical semantics, we need to understand the definitions of the term for hair (*sh'r*). The root word means feeling (*shu'ūr*), perception (*shu'ūr*), understanding, knowledge, hair (*sha'r*), sign (*shi'ār*), symbol (*shi'ār*), flag (*shi'ār*), banner (*shi'ār*), poem (*shi'r*), garden full of trees, type of grass, rites (*sha'ā'ir*), rituals (*sha'ā'ir*), and barley (*sha'īr*). In many verses, the Qur'an has used the same root to mean sense, feeling, understanding, and perception [Qur'an 2:9, 2:12, 16:21, 16:26, 16:45, 26:202], as well as poet [Qur'an 69:41]. Since a poet speaks of feelings, the same root word is used for both. The Qur'an also uses the same root to mean hair [Qur'an 16:80].

The same root word is used by the Qur'an for the rituals of the Ḥajj [Qur'an 5:2, 22:32]. The ritual of passing through the hills of Ṣafa and Marwah also uses the same root in the Qur'an [Qur'an 2:158], as well as the rite of sacrifice [Qur'an 22:36]. The area of *Muzdalifah*, which also is part of the Ḥajj rituals, is called *al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām* in the Qur'an, also using the same root word [Qur'an 2:198]. Since the root of the word "*sh'r*" means sign or symbol, the rituals of the Ḥajj are called accordingly, as they are symbolizing spiritual things, and therefore the Signs of G-d (*āyat Allah* or *sha'ā'ir Allah*).

Since it has been established that Ḥajj and 'Umra are symbolizing death and resurrection, the word for perception using the root word "*sh'r*" in connection to death and resurrection is deeply embedded within the Qur'an, as can be seen in the following verses. "And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah, "They are dead." Nay, they are living, though you perceive (it) (***tash'urūn***) not." [Qur'an 2:154] "(They are

things) dead, lifeless: nor do they perceive (***yash'urūn***) when they will be raised up."[Qur'an 16:21]

As it is seen in the above verses, the Qur'an uses a root of the term "*sh'r*," when discussing the difference between life and death. However, in this context, the definition is usually understood to mean "perceive." The first verse above discusses that martyrs, who appear to be dead to people, are actually alive, but people do not perceive it (*tash'urūn*). In the second verse above, it discusses people who do not believe in the message, who appear to be alive, are actually dead (albeit spiritually dead) and they do not perceive (*yash'urūn*) when they will be resurrected. In my opinion, the second verse above states that people, who seem to be alive, are actually dead, although this is not necessarily the traditional interpretation. Al-Ṭabari (p. 17: 188) refers to idols as the ones that are dead, but also shows that it could be the unbelievers who are referred as the ones dead. In my opinion, I do not find the second part of the verse to make sense if it is the idols that do not perceive being resurrected. There is no concept of idols resurrecting, but it would be the people who would get resurrected. If the second part refers to people, then there is no reason to assume that the first part refers to any other than the people as well. Although al-Rāzi (pp. 20: 192-196) also refers to idols as the ones that are dead, he recognizes that the second part of the verse might be referring to the people instead. Actually, al-Rāzi also refers to Ibn 'Abbās who suggests that idols would actually be resurrected, and therefore, conforming to a traditional interpretation. Al-Ṭabrisi (p. 6: 147), on the other hand, suggests that it is very much possible that it is the people, and not necessarily the idols, that are dead, which seems more rational for the reasons already given. Consequently, it would be understood that people are spiritually dead.

An interesting issue that can be noticed in the two verses above is the question, who are exactly the ones not perceiving (*yash'urūn*)? In the first verse above, it appears that people, not the martyrs, who do not perceive. It might be assumed that if the martyrs are the ones who are alive, then the people are the ones who are dead, albeit spiritually, and perhaps because they are dead, they do not have perception. In the second verse above, it appears that people, who are spiritually dead, do not perceive when they will be resurrected.

The word used for perceiving is rooted in the word "*sh'r*," which also means hair. Hence, before pilgrims remove their funeral shrouds (*iḥrām*) symbolizing resurrection, they shave or cut their hair (*sh'r*). They do this because shaving or cutting the hair (*sh'r*) is symbolizing the pilgrims, who are still dead, not perceiving (*māyash'urūn*) when they will be raised

up, in accordance to the description provided by the above verse. If we use intertextual polysemy to understand what would have appeared an arbitrary act by understanding the root meanings of the lexical semantics of the Arabic language and relating it to how the Qur'an uses different morphologies of the same root, then we can understand it using a different perspective than that can be obtained from traditional methods and approaches.

Conclusion

There are various methods of Qur'anic exegesis that had been developed over many centuries, including the understanding of textual polysemy. However, when we attempt to fuse intertextuality with polysemy, it may provide us with a unique linguistic approach. Intertextual polysemy may not necessarily be the only method for Qur'anic interpretation, but it does provide us with a different perspective for textual analysis and for understanding the deeper message that the Qur'an might have, or to the very least, its literary rhetoric.In this paper, I have looked at the role of intertextual polysemy in three different examples. The first example was to analyze the relationship between the text of the Qur'an and itself. The second example was to analyze the relationship between the phonetic expression of the Qur'an and the Qur'anic text. The third example was to analyze an Islamic ritual with the Qur'anic text. In all those three examples, we find a unique perspective for understanding possible interpretations of the Qur'an, its method of recitation, or its ritualistic rules. This provides us with knowledge that the role of intertextual polysemy could be very broad in understanding the meaning of the text. Therefore, there could be further possibilities and frameworks of how intertextual polysemy may be approached. Hence, more research needs to be done to further understand the role of intertextual polysemy in Qur'anic exegesis.

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About the Author:

Abdulla Galadari is a visiting scholar at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Email: galadari@mit.edu.