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Khabarī Attributes in Tabarī's Works

Taberī'de Haberī Sıfatlar

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Abstract*

Tabarī, who produced works in almost all branches of religious sciences of Islam, possesses the quality of being a versatile scholar. He makes one feel that he has a say in the field of kalām by communicating also his own opinions after he communicates all body of knowledge and narrations in Islamic theology, especially in booklets of tafsīr and aqāid. While he advocates acceptance of the narrations from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah as they are in doing this, he quite frequently makes emphasis on obedience on Salaf in an appropriate manner to this. Because the fields of divinity of the religious science of kalām in particular encompasses the theme of speculating about Allah, it is a field where extreme caution must be exerted. Issues regarding the essence (*dhāt*) and attributes of God are the special and inviolable field of Tabarī in a manner of speaking and he is definitely opposed to any other thing than narration being insinuated into this field. Because of the fact that humans also possess the traits attributed to Allah in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth such as hands, feet, eyes, face, fingers, laughing, sitting, coming, going and that besides, there is a danger of resorting to antropomorphism about Allah. Salaf preferred to remain quiet in such issues and vehemently opposed ta'wīl, which means allegorical interpretation. Although Tabarī was also dependent on Salaf in understanding the khabarī attributes and was opposed to ta'wīl, he also tried to elaborate on these attributes within the framework of the rules of syntax-language, a situation also aided by him being a linguist and tafsīr scholar. While he only communicated the notions related to that attribute when it came to some khabarī attributes and made no comment about these and said nothing, he criticized some points if there were any in his thinking after he communicated his notions about some attributes and he clearly specified it if there was any point he felt he needed to advocate. And this is important in demonstrating his way of approaching the khabarī attributes and in us understanding his method. In this study, we will have a piece of knowledge on Tabarī's manner of approaching and comprehending the khabarī attributes, will scrutinize what his standpoint is in this issue and will try to reach a conclusion.

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Keywords: Allah, Essence, Attributes, Khabarî Attributes, Tabarî.

Öz

İslami ilimlerin hemen hemen hepsinde eserler veren Taberî çok yönlü bir alim özelliğini haizdir. Kelâm konularında özellikle tefsiri ve akaid risalelerinde konu hakkındaki bütün bilgi ve rivayetleri verdikten sonra varsa kendi görüşünü de aktarmak suretiyle kelim alanında söz sahibi olduğunu hissettirmektedir. Bunu yaparken Kur'an ve Sünnetten gelen haberlerin olduğu gibi kabul edilmesini savunurken, buna uygun olarak selefe ittiba vurgusunu oldukça sık yapmaktadır. Kelam ilminin özellikle uluhiyyet konuları Allah hakkında konuşma temasını içermesinden dolayı dikkat edilmesi gereken bir alandır. Allah'ın zatı ve sıfatlarına dair konular tabir caizse Taberî'nin özel ve dokunulmaz alanıdır ve kendisi bu alana rivayet dışında bir şeyin sokulmasına kesinlikle karşıdır. El, ayak, göz, yüz, parmak, gülmek, oturmak, gelmek, gitmek gibi Kur'an ve hadislerde Allah'a izafe edilen bu tür sıfatların insanlarda da olması; öte yandan bu konuda Allah hakkında bir antropomorfizme düşme tehlikesinden dolayı selef özellikle bu konularda susmayı tercih etmiş, te'vile şiddetle karşı çıkmıştır. Taberî de haberî sıfatları anlamada selefe tabi olmakla ve te'vile karşı çıkmakla beraber tefsirci ve dilci olmasını verdiği yetkinlikle de bu sıfatları nahiv-dil kuralları çerçevesinde açıklamaya da çalışmıştır. Bazı haberî sıfatlar hakkında sadece o sıfatla alakalı görüşleri aktarıp, bunlar hakkında bir yorum yapmayıp bir şey söylemezken bazı sıfatlar hakkındaki görüşleri aktardıktan sonra eleştireceği bir yer varsa eleştirmiş, savunacağı bir yer varsa da bunu açıkça belirtmiştir. Bu da haberî sıfatları ele alış tarzını göstermesi ve onun metodunu anlamamız açısından önemlidir. Bu çalışmamızda Taberî'nin haberî sıfatları ele alış ve anlama tarzı hakkında bir malumat sahibi olup onun bu konuda nasıl bir tutum içerisinde olduğu irdelenecek ve bir sonuca varmaya çalışılacaktır.

Introduction

Ibn Jarîr al-Tabarî,¹ having a say in almost all branches of religious sciences of Islam, is a versatile scholar having written a lot of works in fields

¹ Al-Tabarî, whose full name is Abû Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarîr b. Yazîd, was born in the city of Amol in Tabarîstan in Hijri 224, died in Baghdad in Hijri 310 when he was eighty-seven. For his life See: Abû 'Abdullâh Shams al-dîn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabî, *Siyar a'lâm al-*

such as history, syntax, tafsīr, poetry, lexicography, the ḥadīth. In addition to the fact that he incorporates narrations and thoughts put forward before him in the works he wrote,² he also reveals and justifies his original ideas comprehensively.

Tabarī carried on this practice also while elaborating on the issues of aqāid. He presents a body of knowledge mostly constituting narrations in his booklets called *al-Tabṣīr fī ma'ālim al-dīn* and *Ṣarīḥ al-Sunna*. He advocates³ acceptance of narrations from the Qur'ān and the sunnah as they are within this framework; he definitely does not accept ta'wīl or tashbīh in issues about which there is a Qur'ānic verse or a piece of the ḥadīth.⁴

Tabarī, emphasizing the aqīdah of the Salaf in issues of faith, does not accept ta'wīl that is contrarian to the notions of the Salaf. Tabarī refers to the scholars before him by the phrase "Salaf", companions of the Prophet Muhammad and those who had a chance to get to know the above-mentioned companions of the Prophet Muhammad in particular. Hence, there is no relation between the concept of Salaf Tabarī refers to and Salafism, which became a religious sect later on.⁵

nubalā, ed. Shu'ayb 'Arnavūt (Beirut: Muassasa al-Risāla, 1983), 14: 267; Abū al-'Abbās Shams al-dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. Iḥsān Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādr, nd.), 4: 191; Abū al-Qāsim Ali b. Hasan b. Hibatullāh Ibn Asākir, *Tārīḥ Madīna Dimashq*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), 52: 195; Muhammed Yuşa Yaşar, *Taberī'nin Temel İtikadî Görüşleri= Tabarī 's views on creedal issues* (Master's Thesis, Istanbul University, 2012), 7-11.

² When Tabarī's life and works are calculated and compared with each other, it is asserted that he wrote forty laminae of work each day. (Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā*, 14: 272). Books of exegesis and history named *Jāmi al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīli āy al-Qur'ān* and *Tārīḥ al-umam wa al-mulūk* are the most leading and famous ones among his works. Tabarī, whose works titled *Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā* (Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā*, tsh. Frederic Kern (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyya, nd.) and *Tahzīb al-āthār* are at the forefront in the field of fiqh, has a lot of works reaching and not reaching our age in addition to these.

³ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tabṣīr fī ma'ālim al-dīn*, ed. 'Ali b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Ali al-Shiblī (Riyād: Dār al-'Āsima, 1996), 146.

⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 140.

⁵ Atik Aydın, *İbn Cerīr et-Taberī'nin Kur'an Anlayışı ve Te'vil Tercihleri=Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's Understanding of the Qur'ān and His Preferences in Ta'wīl* (Doctorate Thesis, Ankara University, 2004), 20.

In this study of ours, we are going to dwell on Tabarī's approach and interpretation of the khabarī attributes. We are going to try to explore his method of interpretation of the khabarī attributes, are going to try to delineate a framework about his outlook on these attributes by expounding on how he approaches these attributes. At this juncture, it is also important how much he incorporates reason and narration, how much he puts emphasis on these. Indeed, the fact that Tabarī attempts to implement intellectual analyses while criticizing religious sects such as the Jahmiyya, the Mu'tazilah, the Murji'ah, the Khārijite Islam and the Shīa Islam reveals the fact that he is a Sunni scholar, one that attaches importance to reason.⁶ Tabarī, vehemently criticizing the ta'wīl of Mu'tazilah in particular, opposed all particularities the sect in question objected to and tried to reveal the fallacy of their notions.⁷ In our article, we are going to include the schools in question when the occasion arises and criticism by Tabarī of the Mu'tazilah in particular.

First of all, it would be appropriate to make the reader retrieve some basic information about the attributes of Allah. The attributes of Allah are divided into three, being the essence attributes (*ṣifāt al-dhātī*), the positive attributes and the khabarī attributes. The essence attributes are attributes belonging to the Allah's own self or traits attributed to him. These are the absolute existence (*wujūd*), eternity (*qidam*), everlastingness (*baqā*), oneness (*waḥdāniyyah*), non-resemblance to the creation (*mukhālafah al-ḥawādith*), non-neediness of others (*qiyām bi-nafsihī*). Positive attributes, made up of life (*ḥayāh*), knowledge ('ilm), speech (*kalām*), power (*qudrah*), hearing (*sam'*), sight (*baṣar*), will (*irādah*), creativity (*takwīn*) are also approached in the category of the essence attributes. The positive attributes are defined as attributes encompassing the relation of Allah with the created such as the act of creation (*khalq*), the act of bestowing the created with sustenance (*rizq*), the act of condemnation to punishment ('*azāb*) and as traits attributed to Allah through negative forms of such actions.⁸

⁶ Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Taberī-İtikâdî Görüşleri=Tabarī-Creedal Views", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Publications, 2010), 39: 318.

⁷ Abū Abdullāh Shihāb al-dīn Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-udabā* (Egypt: nd.), 18: 82.

⁸ İlyas Çelebi, "Sıfat=Attribute", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Publications, 2009), 37: 105.

The khabarī attributes are concepts examined within the framework of the essence attributes due to the fact that they bear traits belonging to the created; regarded as among divine attributes because of the fact that they are attributed to Allah in fixed and explicit divine statements known as *naṣṣ*, though. One division of the attributes such as hand (*yadd*), face (*wajh*), eyes (*'ayn*), being established (*istiwā*), descension (*nuzūl*), God's coming (*ityān*), fingers (*iṣbā'*), feet (*qadam*), smiling (*dihk*) are within the *ayāh*, one division of them is in *āhād ḥadīth*. While most *kalām* scholars regard it as religiously permissible to implement *ta'wīl* of the khabarī attributes in the light of linguistic sciences and rational information, Salaf scholars advocate that the khabarī attributes have significance specific to Allah, that only Allah knows the nature of these, that, for this reason, these attributes must be acknowledged through their lexical meanings without being subjected to any kind of *ta'wīl*.⁹ On the basis of this information, we can start to examine the comprehension method of Tabarī of the khabarī attributes together with his outlook on divinity.

1. Divinity and Attributes in Tabarī

Tabarī attaches special importance to the issue of existence and attributes of Allah. His sensitivity on this issue can be easily understood through him emphasizing unyieldingly that existence and oneness of Allah is an issue that needs to be known by everybody that has reached puberty. He states that the fact that someone having reached the age of religious obligation has no knowledge of Allah's names and attributes cannot be excused in any way, which is in a way, an answer to *Mu'tazilah* that denies the concept of eternal (*qadīm*) attributes. In his opinion, it is imperative for a pubescent person having reached the age of religious obligation to know Allah's attributes. The expression "Allah is All-Knowing (*'Ālim*), He holds knowledge (*'ilm*); He is All-Powerful (*Qādir*), He holds power (*qudrah*); He is the Wise Orator (*Mutakallim*), He has the *kalām*, He is Dignified (*'Azīz*), He has dignity (*'izzah*)" reveals this clearly.¹⁰

⁹ Çelebi, "Sifat=Attribute", 37: 105.

¹⁰ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 149.

Tabarī takes on a very harsh attitude by saying¹¹ “Those that do not know that Allah is existent and he is the only creator God, that do not know Allah's names and attributes although they have reached puberty are infidels (*kāfir*), shedding their blood and confiscating their commodities are *ḥalāl*.” That Tabarī expresses that a person regarded as under religious obligation has an absolute religious duty to know through reason existence and oneness of Allah from the moment he/she has reached puberty and that, what is more, Allah needs to be known together with his “names and attributes” is a significant issue that really needs drawing attention to.

Tabarī, emphasizing that a person regarded as under religious obligation not knowing Allah and his attributes is a situation that directly leads to blasphemy (*kufır*), puts forward the same judgement also in his discussion about whether the Qur’ān is an entity (*makhlūq*) or not. He utters these very words: “There is no doubt about the blasphemy of those that say “Allah is not All-Knowing, He does not have the attribute of kalām; hence, His kalām (Qur’ān) has been created. Those who believe in this way are fundamentally infidels, they are not believers (*mu’min*).”¹² We observe that Tabarī, acting very sensitively about Allah's names (*esmā*) and attributes, also act very harshly in his judgements about those who deny these attributes. Tabarī, giving off the impression that he was on the same line as that of Ḥanbalī doctrine through his notions he expressed against Mu’tazilah, does not attach importance to the notions of extreme Ḥanbalī followers that believe that the paper and the ink with which the Qur’ān was written, the casing into which the Qur’ān is put are not entities. We can state at this juncture that he assesses the situations that directly lead to blasphemy regarding Allah's names and attributes separately in and on themselves. That is to say: That he clearly states “I swear that those who say when the kalām of Allah is chanted (*tilāwah*), memorized or written down, it becomes ḥādith and an entity are true infidels”¹³ not only shows that he doesn't fall into overstatement or

¹¹ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 123.

¹² Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 149; Id, *Şarih al-Sunna*, ed. Badr b. Yūsuf al-Ma’tūq (Quwait: Maktaba al-āsār, 2005), 24.

¹³ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 150.

understatement on this issue but also shows that he does not zealously stick to one school or one form of thought.

According to Tabarī, a person that falls into doubt (*shakk*) by believing Allah's names and attributes will refer to something other than the meanings they belong to at the moment they are pronounced or written down has already become an infidel, for it is not religiously permissible to alter Allah's names. Likewise, the judgement of blasphemy also applies to those that do not believe Allah has had these names and attributes since preeternity (*azal*) and that doubt truthfulness of this.¹⁴

In what way must these names and attributes be comprehended according to Tabarī, who we see is quite sensitive on such issues? According to him, it suffices to refer to the *Book* (Qur'ān) and the *Sunnah* on this issue. Nobody can present evidence contrary to the *āyāt* revealed in the Qur'ān and the narrations (*riwāyah*) transmitted from the Prophet Muhammad about the names and attributes. This issue is fixed on the basis of the Book and the Sunnah and information from these two sources is absolute and beyond dispute.¹⁵

Tabarī is very clearly observed to attach importance to narrations and the words by Salaf on this issue. According to him, "some of Allah's attributes are in the Qur'ān and some of them are revealed by Prophet Muhammad. The truest notion about these attributes is to accept them as they are in the *āyāt* and the *ḥadīth* and not to resort to *tashbīh*." It is observed that Tabarī, making a special emphasis on fixed and explicit divine statements called *naṣṣ* and on adherence-following to/of Salaf (obedience-*ittibā'*), tries to prevent falling into *tashbīh* and objectification/anthropomorphization (*tejsīm*) by stating here that no attribute of Allah is similar to those of any created entity.¹⁶

For these names and attributes are the ones with which Allah defines his own self, with which the Prophet Muhammad defines Allah. For this reason, Tabarī is absolutely opposed to the ta'wīl of names and attributes just as Ashāb al-Ḥadīth, Ahl al-Athar, Ḥanbalī followers, Salaf are. And he explains

¹⁴ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 150.

¹⁵ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 132.

¹⁶ Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā*, 14: 280; Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 140.

his own opinion in such a way: “our notion about the attributes is this: We accept the existence of these attributes. Nonetheless, we implement no ta’wīl on these attributes in any way; we even do not hint at the slightest opportunity for *tashbīh* on them.¹⁷ Allah has sublated (exiled-*naḥy*) himself from everything that is outside him as specified in the āyāh “There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing (*al-Samī’*), the Seeing (*al-Baṣīr*).” (*al-Shūrā* 42/11).

In fact, it is not that Tabarī completely excluded reason and closed his eyes completely to ta’wīl. Tabarī, stating that just as Allah's own entity expresses His existence, His names demonstrate the existence of His attributes, states that the names and attributes can be known also through reason. According to him “one group of the attributes attributed to Allah in the clear and explicit divine statements known as *naṣṣ*, but seeming impossible to be attributed to Him by way of reason must be subjected to ta’wīl through meanings appropriate for divinity; those that cannot be subjected to ta’wīl must be embraced by complete refrainment from *tashbīh*.”¹⁸

According to Tabarī, the attributes present in the Book and in the Sunnah cannot be attained through an in-depth manner of thinking or through reasoning. Therefore, people that do not know these attributes cannot be declared infidels due to their ignorance on this issue, for ignorance on this issue is excused because of the fact that knowledge of these names and attributes can only be attained through transmittal-narration. However, if the person ignores and disregards these names and attributes after transmittal and narrations on this issue reach him/her, he/she is not excused in any way and is declared an infidel.

At this juncture, such things may come to mind: Absolute evidence is required in order to be able to tell if someone is a believer (*mu’min*) or an infidel (*kāfir*). This is also the case with regard to the names and attributes of Allah. Tabarī explains the criteria on this issue in such a way: “If the transmittal present about the attributes is such precise evidence that it is

¹⁷ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 140.

¹⁸ Yavuz, “Taberī-İtikâdî Görüşleri=Tabarī-Creedal Views”, 318.

authentic and can be implemented into action, acceptance and adoption of this transmittal is necessary. Such pieces of information convey absolute knowledge as if they were seen by eyes and heard by ears. Qur'ān āyāt and mutawātir transmittal can be expressed to be examples of this."¹⁹

From the standpoint of these statements by Tabarī, information on these attributes is absolute as if it was observed in person. If transmittal of these attributes is not as precisely absolute as the Qur'ān and mutawātir transmittal, this must be taken into account: If the person that communicates that piece of information (*rāwī*) bears the conditions of honesty (*ṣidq*) and fairness (*'adl*), the person hearing the transmittal by him has to authenticate (*taṣdīq*) that piece of transmittal. Although this piece of information, regarded as a piece of āhād narration, does not constitute absoluteness, according to Tabarī, action must be taken obeying this piece of information.²⁰

Notions on the Attributes of Schools of Kalām

Also what schools of kalām think regarding the issue of attributes Tabarī dwells on with so much painstakingness as mentioned above constitutes significance for our topic to be comprehended, for Allah's names and attributes are among issues disputed most so far among schools.

It is acknowledged by all schools that Allah is unique and sublime in everything because of the fact that he is the One and preeternal entity (*qadīm*). From the standpoint of schools, not only can any thing or trait belonging to the created not be attributed to Allah, but also any attribution or trait belonging to Allah cannot be attributed to the created, for Allah does not resemble the created. In this regard, all schools are in alliance.

When kalām books are examined, it is observed that the conflict among schools arises not only due to Allah's essence (*dhātī*) and positive (*thubūtī*) attributes but also due to whether he also has the khabarī attributes mentioned in the Qur'ān and in the ḥadīth. Regarding this, many opposing views have been put forward particularly between Ahl al-Sunnah and Mu'tazilah.

¹⁹ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 132, 139.

²⁰ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 140.

According to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/936), the founder of Ash'arī school of kalām, Muslims had an agreement on the notion that Allah had preeternal knowledge and he was All-Knowing due to this preeternal knowledge and they didn't put forward any notion to contradict this before the emergence of the sects of Jahmiyya and Mu'tazilah. al-Ash'arī states that Mu'tazilah followers embrace the notion "Allah is All-Knowing, but he does not hold knowledge" and that they are wrongful in this notion of theirs. al-Ash'arī argues that a conflict arises when Allah does not have the actions of speaking (*kalām*), ordering (*amr*) and proscription (*nahy*) while he is Speaking (*Mutakallim*), Orderer (*Āmir*), Proscriptive (*Nāhi*), for He is All-Knowing with His knowledge, He is a Judge and a Prohibitor through actions of ordering and prohibition and there is a lot of transmitted evidence to support this.²¹

According to Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), "it is fixed by narration and rational evidence to describe Allah as All-Powerful (*Qādir*), All-Knowing (*Ālim*), Dignified, Generous (*Karīm*) and name him in this way."²² According to what he himself narrates, attribution of some names and traits to Allah creates a resemblance between Allah and other entities bearing the same attributes from the standpoint of some schools (such as Mu'tazilah). Thus, from the standpoint of those thinking in this manner, the names and attributes in question must not be used for others than Allah. However, according to al-Māturīdī, when nomenclature regarding Allah is rejected, a resemblance also occurs between the Divine Self and things not falling under the umbrella of any nomenclature. If it is not religiously permissible to name Allah through the naming manner of the created, that is, the names of entities, a resemblance is envisaged between Allah and all that does not exist in this instance when Allah is not named after anything, which means that the notion of the other party is inconsistent in both situations. From the standpoint of all these, al-Māturīdī states that Allah is actually named through names after which He

²¹ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *al-Ibāna 'an uṣūl al-diyāna*, ed. Bashīr Muḥammad 'Uyūn (Dımashq: s.n. 1990), 114.

²² Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu, Muhammed Aruçi (Ankara: Isam Publications, 2005), 70.

names himself, that He is qualified through the attributes through which He characterizes Himself.²³

According to Mu'tazilah school, the names and attributes of Allah are separate and other things from/than Allah Himself. Allah is extant by His own self, He is a preeternal and eternal entity. Nothing outside Allah is preeternal and eternal. This also applies to the names and attributes of Allah. The attributes of Allah are things that are separate from His own self and they are not eternal. In the same manner, from the standpoint of this school, it is not religiously permissible to attribute the traits derived through/from the names of Allah to Allah. For example, Allah can be said to be All-Knowing, but this does not mean that He holds knowledge. He does not have a separate attribute of preeternal knowledge. Tabarī tried to reveal the wrongfulness of these ideas of Mu'tazilah, advocating the same notions also for other attributes, by putting forward some rational evidence. According to Tabarī, just as Allah's Self acts as evidence to His existence, His names act as evidence to His attributes.²⁴ For example, when it is said that Allah is *Samī'* and *Baṣīr*, He is comprehended to have the attributes of hearing and seeing. The very attributes of hearing and seeing are comprehended through the names of *Samī'* and *Baṣīr* not only through dictionaries, but also through reason and through their current use among people.²⁵

2. The Comprehension Method of The Khabarī Attributes According to Tabarī

It constitutes significance to provide some examples regarding how Tabarī interprets the khabarī attributes after examining his attitude and outlook towards/on his manner of comprehension of these attributes, towards/on those denying these attributes or those subjecting them to ta'wīl. It will be beneficial to examine some khabarī attributes present in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth for the purpose of comprehending his general standpoint.

²³ Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 70.

²⁴ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 129.

²⁵ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 140.

2.1 Yad

The concept of “yad”, literally meaning “hand”, is one of the attributes specific to Allah, that is present in the Qur’ān. Of course, the meaning that Allah has two hands just as humans do cannot be derived from the expression “Allah’s hands (yadullah)”. According to Tabarī, approaching the word *yadayn* (two hands) in the āyāh “And the Jews say, “The hand of Allah is chained.” Chained are their hands and cursed are they for what they say. Rather, both His hands are extended; He spends however He wills.” (al-Mā’idah 5/64), the attribute of *yadayn*, specific to Allah, exists. Tabarī himself acknowledges that Allah has a “hand”; he states that His hand is not an organ like the one in humans. Here, he does not provide slightest explanation regarding what Allah’s hand is like and what it is made up of. Tabarī, not implementing any ta’wīl on this issue, tries to explain what Allah does via His this “hand”, the nature of which humans cannot know. According to this, both hands of Allah are not closed regarding granting benefaction to His subjects; they are completely open and Allah provides His subjects with alms via these “both hands”.²⁶

Tabarī explains the phrase *yad* in the āyāh “The hand of Allah is over their hands.” (al-Fath 48/10) revealed when Muslims paid homage to the Prophet Muhammad on the day of Hudaibiyyah under the tree in two meanings: According to the first, when Muslims paid homage to the Prophet, Allah’s hand was also actually on them, protecting and blessing them. According to the other, it is that Allah’s power was higher than the power of Muslims regarding helping the Prophet and Muslims had already paid homage to the Prophet with the aim of helping him.²⁷ When these two meanings are examined, we observe that Tabarī reasoned on what the phrase *yadullah* might mean on this issue; that, however, he did not provide slightest opinion about the nature and manner of this as we mentioned above.

²⁶ Aḥmad Muḥammad el-Ḥavfī, *al-Ṭabarī* (Mısır: Maktabah al-Iskandariyyah, 2003), 164; Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 142.

²⁷ Abū Ja’far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīli ‘āy al-Qur’ān*, ed. Abdullah b. Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Qahira: Dār al-Ḥicr, 2001), 21: 254-255.

According to Tabarī, Ahl al-Jadal²⁸ and some other schools tried to subject the *yad* attribute to ta'wīl. According to one group of them, "both hands" in the āyāh refers to "alms". From this standpoint, the phrase "Allah's both hands" in the āyāh signifies the alms by Allah to His subjects. While, according to one other notion, *yad* in the āyāh means "power", it means "possession-authority" according to one other.²⁹

Despite the fact that Salaf scholars accept the existence of Allah's hands while explaining the word "hand" in the āyāt, they say that they don't know what it signifies and they leave its meaning to Allah, they definitely oppose ta'wīl on this issue.³⁰ They even express their sensitivity on this issue by stating that saying "subjecting the āyāt whose apparent meanings convey concrete existence to brief ta'wīl, that is saying Allah's hand is His attribute without any additional characteristics"³¹ is necessary.

Tabarī also mentions the existence of a notion that accepts the word as "hand" itself by saying that *yad* is one of the attributes of Allah. Nonetheless, from the standpoint of those holding this notion, Allah's hand is not an organ similar to human organs and it cannot be likened to them.³² These persons tried to reveal that the notions of the persons subjecting *yad* to ta'wīl into different meanings are wrong. According to them, Allah created all His subjects through his power and will. According to the āyāh, He also created Adam with his own hands.³³ According to this āyāh, there is a difference in the creation of Adam and other humans. This difference is that Allah created Adam with his both hands, that he has opted for the creation of other humans through his power and will. Allah creating with his "both hands" is something only specific to Adam. Hence, under these circumstances, it is not

²⁸ What Tabarī means by Ahl al-Jadal is kalām scholars. See. Ḥavfī, *al-Ṭabarī*, 163.

²⁹ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 8: 555.

³⁰ Emrullah Yüksel, *Sistemik Kelâm=Sistematic Theology* (Istanbul: İz Publications, 2005), 57.

³¹ Ömer Aydın, "Haberî Sıfatları Anlama Yolları=Methods of Understanding Narrated Attributes of Allah", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (1999): 136.

³² Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 8: 555-556.

³³ See. (Şād 38/75) "[Allah] said, 'O Iblees, what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My hands? Were you arrogant [then], or were you [already] among the haughty?'"

accurate to attribute the real purpose to other significance and to attribute *yad* to meanings of power, alms, possession.³⁴

2.2 Yamīn

Yamīn, literally meaning the right hand, is an attribute specific to Allah just as the attribute of *yad* is. The word *yamīn* was attributed to Allah by revelation of “They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal, while the earth entirely will be [within] His grip on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be folded in His right hand. Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him.” (al-Zumar 39/67) in the Qur’ān. According to Tabarī, Allah has an attribute of *yamīn* as revealed in the āyāh.³⁵ This attribute must be approached as it is without being subjected to any kind of ta’wīl. According to him, Allah has a right hand, but this is not in the form of an organ similar to that of humans.³⁶ According to Tabarī, Basra School of Mu’tazilah subjected the phrase *yemin* in the āyāh to ta’wīl and they put forward the notion that the meaning here is not Allah’s right hand; that, conversely, it should be thought within the context of the meaning of power (*qudrah*).³⁷ Tabarī, stating that these notions of them and the meaning they attributed to the word is religiously superstitious and that there are a lot of pieces of narration contrary to this transmitted from the Prophet and his

³⁴ Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 8: 556. From the standpoint of those holding this notion, from another perspective, Allah’s hand cannot mean alms. If the word *yad* in the āyāh “Jews said ‘Allah’s hands are chained’.” (al-Māidah 5/64) means alms, then “conversely, His hands are extended” must have been said in the continuation of the āyāh. On the other hand, “conversely, His both hands are extended” is said in the āyāh. Besides, when the meaning of alms is appointed, “His two hands” in the ayah means His alms in two pieces. However, alms by Allah are too many to be counted in numbers. Hence, appointing the meaning of alms to the word is not accurate. For detailed information, See. Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 8: 556; Abū al-Ḥasan Sayf al-dīn ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Sālīm al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Mahdī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa al-Wathāik al-Qawmiyya, 2004), 1: 454.

³⁵ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 133.

³⁶ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 142.

³⁷ Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 20: 253.

companions, specified each piece of narration related to the issue one by one as evidence.³⁸

For example, according to Abd Allah b. Abbās, Allah has grasped the skies and the earth into His right hand altogether, there is nothing in his left hand and this is so easy for Allah that it is similar to a human grasping something the size of a speckle into his hand. Tabarī also incorporated a piece of narration transmitted from Abd Allah b. 'Omar. According to this: "The Prophet was delivering khutbah (sermon) on the minbar. When it came to the āyāh: 'They couldn't appreciate the value of Allah as it should have been done. The Earth is completely in His hands on the day of judgment' He said: "Allah grasps the skies and the earth in seven layers, puts them inside His hands and He says: 'I am Allah that is the One, I am Allah that is Glorious.' just as a child utters these in one go." Ibn 'Omar tells of the situation of the Prophet at that moment in this way: "While the Prophet was saying these, he was in such a state that he almost fell from the minbar."³⁹

2.3 Nuzūl (Descension), Ityān and Majī (God's coming)

The word *nuzūl*, literally meaning descension, tending downwards, is one of the attributes of Allah according to Tabarī.⁴⁰ The Prophet says Allah descends to the firmament of the earth every night: "Allah descends to the firmament (*samā al-dunyā*) of the earth in the final one-third of the night and calls out "Is there anyone praying to me, I will accept his prayers, is there anyone wishing anything, I will grant it, is there anyone repenting for their sins, I will forgive them."⁴¹

Salaf state that descension here is not like what happens in humans, that it is a kind of descension that is motionless and without transition. There are also those that say it signifies blessing (*luṭf*) and mercy (*raḥmah*).⁴² According to Tabarī, *nuzūl* here must be handled in the form of an apparent meaning, for

³⁸ See Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 20: 246-252.

³⁹ Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 20: 246-247; Ibn Mājah, "Muqaddimah", 13.

⁴⁰ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 136.

⁴¹ Bukhārī, "Tahajjud", 14; Muslim, "Ṣalāt al-Musāfirin", 28.

⁴² Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1: 464.

the apparent form of the transmittal demonstrates this, it absolutely cannot be subjected to ta'wīl and there is no other way than surrendering to this.⁴³

The concepts of ityān and majī, meaning the act of coming, are used with regard to Allah. One group of the āyāt as regards this are as follows: "And your Lord has come and the angels, rank upon rank." (al-Fajr 89/22). "Do they await but that Allah should come to them in covers of clouds and the angels [as well] and the matter is [then] decided? And to Allah [all] matters are returned." (al-Baqara 2/210). "Do they [then] wait for anything except that the angels should come to them or your Lord should come or that there come some of the signs of your Lord?" (al-An'ām 6/158).

Salaf scholars accept the coming of Allah by taking the apparent form of the āyāt as basis, but they say that this act of coming does not resemble the act of coming by humans. From their standpoint, the manner of this and how it will happen cannot be known through reason. Among kalām scholars, al-Māturīdī, for instance, said that the āyāh must be comprehended in the way of "Allah's order has reached" while interpreting the āyāh "And your Lord has come and the angels, rank upon rank" he stated that the āyāh must not be comprehended in its apparent form.⁴⁴ With regard to Mu'tazilah followers, it is observed that they do not accept ityān and majī as they do not regarding other attributes, that they emphasize traits belonging to the created cannot be attributed to Allah.

According to Tabarī, Allah will come to His subjects on the day of judgment⁴⁵ inside cloud shades. Tabarī, not subjecting this to ta'wīl in any way, also specified the notions of those attributing different meanings to ityān and majī. While it is not religiously permissible to implement ta'wīl on this issue by taking on a rational initiative according to one group of them, there were also those who implemented ta'wīl by stating that these attributes

⁴³ Ṭāhā Muḥammad Najjār Ramadān, *Uṣūl al-dīn 'inda al-Imām al-Ṭabarī* (Riyād: Dār al-Kayyān, 2005/1426), 291.

⁴⁴ Ömer Aydın, "Kur'an'da Geçen Belli Başlı Haberî Sıfatların Te'vili=Interpretation of Narrated Divine Attributes in the Qur'an", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 2 (2000): 165.

⁴⁵ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 10: 12.

signify transition of Allah from one place to another, Allah's orders and judgements, credit, punishment and being called to account by Allah.⁴⁶

Tabarī, directing his harshest criticism on this issue to Mu'tazilah, exhibited a harsh attitude with questions and answers in a way against this school, who absolutely do not accept the attributes of ityān and majī and claim that these signify other things. Tabarī, stating that they implement the principle of non-ta'wīl to the letter by accepting naṣṣ regarding the attributes as they are, wants to know whether the addressee accept these āyāt by specifying three āyāt⁴⁷ we mentioned above to them.⁴⁸ He asks: "If you say you do not accept them, that you falsify these āyāt, the debate on this issue between you and me ends here (for you are denying these āyāt). If you are saying that you accept these āyāt, that you do not falsify them, then why do you deny and not accept the piece of the ḥadīth "Allah descends to the firmament of the earth."⁴⁹ transmitted from the Prophet?"⁵⁰

Tabarī, also communicating the notions of those subjecting the attributes to ta'wīl to us, tries to debunk the notion of the addressee in the form of cross questioning and responses. From the standpoint of ta'wīl supporters, the actions such as coming-going, descending signify transition from one place to another. However, it is unlikely for Allah to go from one place to another and this notion is not religiously permissible, for attributes such as these only pertain to the created. Since Allah is independent from the concept of locality,⁵¹ he cannot have attributes that are specific to the created.

At this juncture, when Tabarī asked the owner of the opposing notion how they comprehended this āyāh, what is meant by majī here by specifying the āyāh⁵² with regard to majī, the addressee specified that this notion is absolutely not religiously permissible regarding Allah, that the āyāh must be comprehended in the meaning "Allah's order has reached". There is no

⁴⁶ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 3: 605, 610-611.

⁴⁷ See (al-Fajr 90/22); (al-Baqara 2/210); (al-An'ām 6/158).

⁴⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 142.

⁴⁹ Bukhārī, "Tahajjud", 14; Muslim, "Ṣalāt al-Musāfirīn", 28.

⁵⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 143.

⁵¹ Ṭabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 144.

⁵² (al-Fajr 89/22).

apparent meaning of “has come” in the āyāh; hence, this cannot be attributed to Allah as an attribute.

Tabarī opposes this piece of ta’wīl and states that what the āyāh reads is “Allah and angels come”, that the meaning that angels also do not “come” as Allah does, but their “order” has come emerges according to this piece of ta’wīl in the same way considering the fact that the addressee says within the ta’wīl that Allah Himself does not come, but His order reaches. From his standpoint, if Allah Himself does not come, but His order reaches, it means that angels themselves do not come, but their orders reach since they are partakers in the action in the āyāh. Tabarī, questioning how they have reached this conclusion, receives such a reply: Significance of majī in the meaning of “order” is only for Allah. The word cannot be used in the meaning of “order” for angels.

At this juncture, Tabarī states that Allah and angels are specified together; that the narration in the āyāh is in a single piece; that, hence, there must be a basis, a piece of evidence in order to attach different meanings to the action; that, however, those implementing the above ta’wīl concoct two separate meanings for Allah and angels and asks what is the difference between. Ta’wīl supporters responded to this question in this way: “Angels are each created entities; hence, annihilation (*zawāl*) and transition (*intiqāl*) are religiously permissible (*jāiz*) for them. Nevertheless, this notion cannot be religiously permissible for Allah, the creator of everything.”⁵³

In fact, all in all, the basic principle of those subjecting the attributes to ta’wīl in the history of kalām is the principle of non-attribution of the traits specific to humans and all the created to Allah. For instance, the existence of Allah (*wujūd*) does not resemble the existence of the created, His knowledge does not resemble that of the created. On such issues, the general naṣṣ and narrations can be accepted and applied provided that they comply with rational principles. If they do not comply with reason and rationalism, they must absolutely be subjected to ta’wīl. Hence, this attribute is only specific to the created in the meaning of “transition from one place to another” from the standpoint of this school interpreting majī on the basis of this mentality. For

⁵³ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 144-145.

this reason, the notion of such an attribute is not religiously permissible for Allah according to them.⁵⁴

At this juncture, we see Tabarī ask these questions: How do you conclude that majī and nuzūl mean transition? How do Mu'tazilah, finding the notion of these actions not religiously permissible for Allah on the basis of the notion that Allah is independent from the concept of locality, produce such a meaning, what is their evidence regarding this issue?

How can it not be religiously permissible for the meanings of majī and nuzūl not to communicate anything other than "transition" with regard to Allah? This is because of the fact that for Mu'tazilah, any expression used with regard to Allah means another thing than that in the normal parlance. To illustrate, the names of Allah, All-Knowing and All-Powerful, mean something other than that in the normal parlance; it is concluded on the basis of this that He is All-Knowing, but does not hold knowledge, that He is All-Powerful, but does not have power. On the other hand, there is no conclusion in the usage regarding all the created outside Allah in the way of "scholar without knowledge, powerful without any power". Tabarī repeats his general notion about the names and attributes to the addressee, who ask "How do you produce such meanings?" to him that asks the addressee "Then why don't you accept the majī and nuzūl of Allah?" And he states that they produce this on the basis of the apparency of the narration, for it is obligatory to surrender to narrations on this issue and to have faith in them.

On the basis of all these things stated, for Tabarī, the truest notion with regard to Allah's names and attributes is in the form that it is present in narrations and meanings within the ambit of this issue do not fall outside the manner. Hence, in his opinion: "Allah and angels lined up in rows will come on the day of judgment. Allah descends into the firmament of the earth every night and we don't say here "Allah does not descend, but His order does.". On the contrary, His orders reach at each moment, at each hour as long as all

⁵⁴ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 145. See Footnote 1.

the created exist. There is no hour when there is no order by Him, no moment when His order does not reach.⁵⁵

2.4 Istiwā (Ascension, Being Established)

Established , meaning ascent, the act of ascension, are specified in a few lines in the Qur'ān in the form of *istiwā to the throne ('arsh) and to the firmament*. Allah is declared to ascend to the peak of heavens and to the firmament in āyāt such as “It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the heaven, [His being above all creation], and made them seven heavens, and He is Knowing of all things.” (al-Baqara 2/29); “The Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established” (Ṭāhā 20/5).⁵⁶ These āyāt have been interpreted in various manners. While there are those attributing the meaning of “going towards somewhere” to *istiwā*, there are also those that think it means “being at the same level.” There are also those that attribute the meaning of “Ascension, getting upwards, erection”⁵⁷ to it.

İstiwā has been interpreted in different meanings also within the schools of kalām. While sects such as Mushabbiha and Karrāmiyya state that Allah has a place above and touches the peak of heavens and thus, take the apparent meaning into account, Mu'tazilah have completely rejected *istiwā* in its apparent meaning and comprehended *istiwā* in the meaning of “winning”.⁵⁸

Salaf took on a harsh attitude on this issue, did not accept ta'wīl and objectification/anthropomorphization in any way and did not express any notion on this issue. When Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) was asked the meaning of *istiwā*, he said: “İstiwā is known, its nature is unknown. Believing in it is necessary (*wājib*), asking questions on this issue is profane innovation (*bid'ah*).”⁵⁹ And determined⁶⁰ the attitude to be taken on by Salaf especially about the manner of comprehending the attributes.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 145-147.

⁵⁶ For other āyāt see. al-A'rāf 7/54; Yūnūs 10/3; al-Rā'd 13/2; al-Furqān 25/59; al-Sajdah 32/4; al-Hadīd 57/4.

⁵⁷ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 1: 454-456.

⁵⁸ Aydın, “Haberī Sıfatların Te'vili=Interpretation of Narrated Divine Attributes”, 144-145.

⁵⁹ Abū al-Mu'in Maymūn b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīra al-adilla*, ed. Hüseyin Atay (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Publications, 1993), 1: 173.

Tabarī does not think in the same way as Salaf do on the issue of *istiwā*; he does not take *istiwā* literally. When Ḥanbalī followers asked him about *istiwā* to the peak of heavens on a Friday in a mosque, he said that *istiwā* to the peak of heavens is impossible to do; he voiced his opinion by reciting a couplet which read “how venerable Allah is, who has no counterpart, there is also no settlement on His throne (*‘arsh*) in the heavens”. According to one piece of narration, Ḥanbalī followers and ḥadīth collectors even stoned Tabarī's house when they heard this. It is rumoured that even a small hillock formed in front of his door due to these stones.⁶²

From Tabarī's standpoint, the most accurate meaning of *istiwā* in the *āyāt* is that Allah goes up and ascends over the firmament and creates the heavens in seven layers through his power.⁶³ Tabarī attributing the meaning of “ascent” to *istiwā* is not that he sees this as an emotive ascent, but that he sees it as spiritual ascent.⁶⁴ On the basis of this, there are also those finding it strange that *istiwā* has the meaning of ascent and not agreeing to comprehend it in this manner. They voice the notion that if *istiwā* is regarded as having the meaning of “ascent”, a meaning will come out implying Allah is going up over something He is already under and that this will be wrongful. Tabarī regarded the state of those making such an interpretation as “utterly odd”; he stated that the most accurate and truest notion on this issue was in the way that he expressed it.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ For comprehension manners of Salaf of the attributes, see Muhammed Yuşa Yaşar, “Selefiyye=Salafiyya”, *Kelam Tarihi=History of Kalām*, ed. Ramazan Yıldırım (Istanbul: İşaret Publications, 2019), 200-209.

⁶¹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal also has a statement similar to this. He said this on this issue: “We believe that Allah is over the peak of the heavens by His own will without any restriction and without any characterization by anybody on how this happens.” See Abdullāh b. Sulaymān b. Sālīm el-Ahmedī, *al-Masāil wa al-Rasāil al-Marwiyya ‘an al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal fī al-Aqāida* (Riyād: Dār Tayba, 1991), 1: 342.

⁶² Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-udabā*, 18: 57-58.

⁶³ Taha Muhammed, *Uṣūl al-dīn ‘inda al-Imām al-Ṭabarī*, 279.

⁶⁴ Ḥusām b. Hasan Şarşūr, *Ayāt al-sifāt wa Manhaju Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī fī tafsīri maāniha muqārānan bi ārāi ghayrihī min al-ulamā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1424/2004), 379-380.

⁶⁵ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 1: 457-458.

2.5 Wajh (God's Face)

Another attribute specific to Allah is God's face (*wajh*), literally meaning "face, countenance". In the explanation of the word *wajh* in the āyāt "Everything will be destroyed except His face." (al-Qaṣaṣ 28/88) and "And there will remain the Face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honor." (al-Raḥmān 55/27). It has been generally accepted that what is meant is Allah's self (*dhāt*). That is, what is meant by *wajh* is the *dhāt*.

While Mushabbiha followers take *wajh* literally and state that Allah has a face just like a human face, Salaf accept the existence of *wajh* without any further interpretation and say that they only accept on this issue what Allah says and what was transmitted by the Prophet. Mu'tazilah followers regard *wajh* as "Allah's own Self" and accept in no way that it might mean an actual organ.⁶⁶

Tabarī also states on this issue that it has separate meanings specified above; he does not give place to any ta'wīl regarding this issue, he accepts *wajh* as it is.⁶⁷ According to him, Allah has a *wajh*; however, His *wajh* is not an organ made up of flesh and harbouring blood circulation inside like that of humans.⁶⁸

2.6 Qadam (Feet)

One of the attributes specific to Allah is *qadam*, literally meaning "feet". From Salaf's standpoint, it is unlikely for this to mean an organ with regard to Allah,⁶⁹ for this attribute is "an attribute specific to Allah, but it is not something similar to human feet."⁷⁰

At this juncture, Tabarī accepts the existence of one *qadam* of Allah by providing a piece of the ḥadīth on the issue.⁷¹ Narrated by Anas b. Mālik, the Prophet said this: "The Hell (while sinners are being put into it on the day of

⁶⁶ Aydın, "Haberî Sıfatların Te'vili=Interpretation of Narrated Divine Attributes", 151-152.

⁶⁷ Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 18: 353.

⁶⁸ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 134, 142.

⁶⁹ Yüksel, *Sistematiik Kelâm=Sistematic Theology*, 60.

⁷⁰ Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1: 470.

⁷¹ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 134.

judgment) will want the number of persons going into it to increase by saying 'Isn't there more, isn't there more?' Upon this, Allah the Glorious will put his feet on it. Upon this, the Hell will say: 'It is enough, my God, I swear on your glory ('izzah)'."⁷²

Tabarī states that there are two different notions, one of them being that the Hell said this after Allah put His feet on it, the other being that Allah put His feet after the Hell wanted the number of those going into it to increase, about the āyāh "On the Day We will say to Hell, 'Have you been filled?', and it will say, 'Are there some more?'" (Qāf 50/30). He states that the accurate one is the second one in his opinion, he shows the narration transmitted from the Prophet as evidence of this and says that the narration must be relied on.⁷³

2.7 Diḥk (Smiling)

Diḥk means smiling. According to Tabarī, Allah will smile at his subjects that are believers. Allah will smile at the subjects that became martyrs for His sake when they are summoned before Him. Tabarī, not providing any explanation about this act of smiling, also did not mention the notions of those interpreting the word in different manners. According to him, Allah will smile at whoever he wants to among his subjects. This act of smiling does not absolutely resemble the sight of teeth after the mouth has been opened or another kind of smiling specific to humans.⁷⁴

2.8 Nūr (Light)

The word "nūr", meaning light or luminescence, is also used in the Qur'ān by being attributed to Allah. "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth". (al-Nūr 24/35) It is said that nūr not only means Allah illuminating the earth and the skies, but also *Hādī*, the one leading who is on the earth and in the skies.⁷⁵

Tabarī has stated that the phrase *nūr* here means *Hādī-the one leading to the true path, the one leading the way*. According to him, people find the true path

⁷² Bukhārī, "Aymān", 12; Muslim, "Jannah", 14.

⁷³ Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 21: 443-449.

⁷⁴ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 134, 142; Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1: 471.

⁷⁵ Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1: 459.

via Allah's *nūr* and they are also protected from deviation by heresy via His *nūr*. Tabarī also includes other explanations on the issue. For instance, from one standpoint, the word here means “the one who gives discipline”. According to another notion, *nūr* means light in the *āyāh*.⁷⁶

2.9 *Işbā'* (Finger), '*Ayn* (Eyes)

Işbā' literally means a finger. Its plural form is *eşābī'*. According to Tabarī, Allah has fingers. However, he does not resort to *tashbīh* about the nature of this by saying that what is meant by fingers here cannot be interpreted as the notion of Allah having organs similar to those of humans.⁷⁷ On this issue, he showed this narration transmitted from the Prophet as evidence:⁷⁸ “There is no heart that is not between two fingers of the Compassionate. If He wills, He will lead it to the true path; if he wills, He will deviate it from the true path. The Prophet used to pray in this way: 'Hey, my Allah that makes hearts fixed. Make also my heart fixed on your religion.’”⁷⁹

'*Ayn*, literally meaning “eyes”, is one of the traits attributed to Allah in the Qur'ān. Allah has attributed eyes to Himself in the *āyāt* “Sailing under Our observation as reward for he who had been denied.” (al-Qamar 54/14) and “And I bestowed upon you love from Me that you would be brought up under my eye.” (Tāhā 20/39).

While Mushabbiha followers claim that Allah has eyes based on these *āyāt*, it is impossible to attribute organs to Allah according to Ahl al-Sunnah; thus, the phrase “eye” in the *āyāh* does not refer to any organ. According to al-Ash'arī, '*ayn* is not only an essence attribute of Allah, but also it means “the act of seeing”.⁸⁰ Salaf are of the opinion “Allah's book attributes eyes to Him, but Allah's eyes are not special organs, it is a special attribute.”⁸¹

⁷⁶ Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 17: 295-296.

⁷⁷ Tabarī, *Tabṣīr*, 138, 142.

⁷⁸ Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 5: 231.

⁷⁹ Ibn Mājah, “Muqaddimah”, 13.

⁸⁰ Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1: 456.

⁸¹ Aydin, “Haberī Sifatların Te'vili=Interpretation of Narrated Divine Attributes”, 160.

According to Tabarī, *'ayn* in the āyāt means observance. The phrase bearing the meaning “under our observance” also means “under our command” in a piece of narration communicated by Tabarī.⁸²

Evaluation

One of the two basic notions in comprehending the khabarī attributes is the notion of Salaf/the ḥadīth collectors. From this standpoint, attributes such as these are accepted as they are and no interpretation is made on them. They are accepted as how they have been transmitted through pieces of naṣṣ. The Mu'tazilah school, at a complete contrariness to this notion, Ahl al-Jadal in the words of Tabarī, claim that acceptance of the khabarī attributes as they are will lead to tashbīh and objectification/anthropomorphization and they say that they must be subjected to rational ta'wīl by observance of linguistic and rational criteria provided that pieces of naṣṣ are not ignored.

While Tabarī profoundly adopts the method of Salaf and advocates the notions of Salaf against Mu'tazilah followers, he has tried to explain these attributes within the framework of syntax rules, especially in his book of exegesis. While we do not wish to make a complete generalization, we would like to specify an issue that has caught our attention. While he put forward notions closer to Salaf standpoint on the khabarī attributes in the texts he wrote with regard to aqāid, we can assert that he subjected these attributes to exegetical analysis linguistically in his book of exegesis, most probably because of the fact that his linguistical aspect took some precedence. Let us state again that saying this does not mean that Tabarī did not subject the attributes to ta'wīl in aqāid booklets, but he did so in his book of exegesis. We just would like to point out that it may be said he made interpretations in a more relaxed manner in his book of exegesis than in his works of aqāid.

All in all, Tabarī tried to stick to Salaf aqāidah as a method in comprehending the khabarī attributes, he accepted these attributes as they are, he did not make any inferences about their nature. He only tried to explain these attributes within the scope of literal meaning within the framework of linguistic rules; he made rational interpretations while doing

⁸² Tabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān*, 22: 126.

this only to the extent that linguistic rules allowed. Apart from this, he only took the āyāt, the pieces of the ḥadīth, narrations by the companions of the Prophet and by those who had an opportunity to see the Prophet's companions into account; he tried not to specify his own notion on these attributes in any way.

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