



IMAM SADIQ peace be upon him  
ONLINE SEMINARY

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

## Summary of Quranic Sciences

### Lesson 23: Definite and Indefinite Verses

(المحكم و المتشابه)

Quranic verses are divided into *muhkam* and *mutashabih*.

**Muhkam:** Determined/explicit/clear

**Mutashabih:** Undetermined/implicit/unclear/ambiguous

The literal meaning of **Muhkam** derives from the root **إحكام**, which carries three meanings:

1. Consistency and steadfastness.
2. Absence of turbulence and ambiguity.
3. To prevent someone from doing something.

#### **Mutashabih's literal meaning:**

1. Verses of the Quran are similar to each other in beauty, profound meanings, etc. (مشابهة)
2. Obscurity and ambiguity (التباس).

**Verse 3:7** provides a solution: return the indefinite (*Mutashabih*) verses to the definite (*Muhkam*) ones.

The terms *muhkam* and *mutashabih* in the Quran:

1. 11:1

«الر كِتَابٌ أُحْكِمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ»

*Alif, Lam Ra. [This is] a Book, whose signs have been made definitive and then elaborated.*



2. 39:23

«اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِي تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ»

*Allah has sent down the best of discourses, a scripture [composed] of similar motifs, whereat shiver the skins of those who fear their Lord,*

3. 47:20

«فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْتُ سُورَةً مُحْكَمَةً وَذُكِرَ فِيهَا الْقِتَالُ رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ ...»

*But when a conclusive surah is sent down and war is mentioned in it, you see those in whose hearts is a sickness looking upon you with the look of someone fainting at death*

4. 3:7

«هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ»

*It is He who has sent down to you the Book. Parts of it are definitive verses, which are the mother of the Book, while others are metaphorical. As for those in whose hearts is deviance, they pursue what is metaphorical in it, courting temptation, and seeking its interpretation.*

*But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.' And none takes admonition except those who possess intellect.*

**Instances of *mutashabih* according to Quran 39:23 (اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا ) (مُتَشَابِهًا):**

All verses are similar to each other:

- In **advice**.
- In **proofs**.



- In containing **injunctions**.
- In containing **teachings of Islam**.

**Tabatabaei:** All the verses are similar to one another in the method they follow (their order, guidance, wisdom, etc.).

**Opinions on Muḥkam and Mutashabih:**

1. **Muḥkam** means *mubayyan* (explained) and **Mutashabih** means *mujmal* (brief).
2. **Muḥkam:** Abrogating verses, and **Mutashabih:** Abrogated verses.
3. **Muḥkam:** Verses for which there are clear reasons for their meanings, and **Mutashabih:** Verses for which there are no clear reasons.
4. **Muḥkam:** Verses where the literal meaning is intended, and **Mutashabih:** Verses where the deeper meaning is intended.
5. **Mutashabih:** Verses whose meanings cannot be understood immediately upon hearing them, and **Muḥkam:** Verses whose meanings are immediately clear.