Textual Integrity and Coherence in the Qur'an: Repetition and Narrative Structure in Surat al-Baqara

by

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Abstract

This study addresses the riddle of al-Baqara’s internal organization, utilizing new insights from literary theory and Biblical Studies to identify the sura’s structure and unifying themes. It also explores the possible added value in approaching al-Baqara as a whole compositional unit, as opposed to a conglomeration of isolated verse-groups.

The dissertation begins with a historical overview of coherence-related approaches, commencing with the classical naẓm- and munāsaba-discourses as observed in the writings of Jāḥiz, Bāqillānī, Biqāʿî and others, and extending to the modern period and the work of scholars such as Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, ’Abd al-Mutaʿāl al-Ṣaʿīḍi, and Matthias Zahniser. This overview is followed by a discussion of methodology, locating this study within the reader-oriented, synchronic, intertextual approaches, and showing methodological parallels with Biblical Studies. A new reading framework for the sura is developed, utilizing in part some of the theories of the Russian literary theorist and philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin.
The sura’s structure is identified by means of analyzing its distinctive repetitions, a known structuring device in oral texts. Incremental inclusions, alternations and chiasms delineate al-Baqara’s compositional subunits. The overall structure of the sura emerges as chiastic, following the pattern ABC/B’C’A’/C”B”A”, where A is a section having the character of a test, B a section containing instructions and C a story portraying primeval origins. The repetitions are of increasing length, the general escalating character of the devices focusing attention on the last panel (C”B”A”).

In a first reading, the central theme is identified by means of the sura’s Leitwort, a leading keyword distinguished by its special location, high concentration and even distribution within the sura. Reading the sura for what it reveals about the deity, the Leitwort, ‘guidance’, indicates a common theme of ‘God as guide’. In a second reading, the sura is read for its pedagogical content and the central theme becomes ‘first lesson in the new religion’. The added value in approaching the sura as a whole, as a totality, is in seeing how each theme is progressively developed and elaborated by every one of the sura’s various panels and how these themes hold the sura together as a unit.
Acknowledgments

It has been very rewarding to work with Surat al-Baqara, and to experience the pleasure of uncovering some of the mysteries of its magnificent organization. I would like to express my profound appreciation for my many teachers and my wonderful family, who have contributed to the successful completion of this dissertation. Foremost among these is my supervisor, Professor Todd Lawson, who has offered me excellent advice and academic guidance at every stage of my work. He has also shared with me his expertise on the Qur’an and on Islamic thought during my years of graduate studies. His work on duality and opposition has helped shape my understanding of the Qur’an’s distinctive style, in addition to developing my approach to reading this scripture.

I owe a special thanks to my committee members, Professors Sebastian Günther, Walid Saleh and R. Theodore Lutz, for their painstaking review of my dissertation, and for having been such excellent teachers over the years. Professor Günther has shared with me some of his extensive knowledge of the classical Arabic sources of Islamic thought, particularly those related to education. Professor Walid Saleh has taught me how to approach the classical tafsir commentaries and has brought me to an appreciation of the breadth and sophistication of this tradition. In addition, Professor Linda Northrup has been one of my first teachers in graduate studies and I have learned much from her about the history of Islam and the biographical sources. The late Professor Michael Marmura has introduced me to the richness of the Islamic philosophical tradition among others. I am also grateful to my external examiner, Prof. Angelika Neuwirth, for her valuable insights, particularly in relation to the diachronic approaches.

On the biblical side of my education, I am deeply indebted to Professor Lutz, for having taught me almost everything I know about the Biblical Hebrew language and how to analyze its poetry. It was during my study of the Psalms that I first came across
inclusios and realized their importance for the study of Surat al-Baqara. Professor Timothy Harrison has introduced me to the archaeology of the ancient Near East and has impressed upon me the importance of the material record. It was in Professor Paul Dion’s course on ancient Israel that I first developed a desire to study the Bible, which opened my eyes to different approaches to the study of scripture.

I would also like to express my appreciation of Anna Sousa, Jennie Jones, and Maria Leonor Vivona, for having taken such good care of the administrative aspect of my graduate experience.

This dissertation has been made possible by a University of Toronto doctoral fellowship. I am also indebted to my school in Egypt, the Deutsche Evangelische Oberschule, where I learned the German language at an early age, without which I would not have had access to some of the groundbreaking scholarship that I have used in this dissertation.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my mother, Zeinab Aboul Fetouh, and my sister, Jehan Reda, for their unwavering support of me and of my children, and my brother, Omar Reda, and my late father, Ismail Reda, for their encouragement and belief in me. My sister and my brother have also been instrumental in finding some of the hard to get Egyptian secondary scholarship, which has proved so useful in my dissertation. Last but not least, I owe a very special thank you to my husband, Yehia El-Tahry, for his constant support and many sacrifices, and my daughters, Naila, Malak, Lenah and Jasmin Zeinab, for foregoing many precious hours of family time and motherly care. This dissertation is dedicated to them.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the last decades, the field of Qur’anic studies has made significant gains, enriched by cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural developments in western and traditional Muslim lands. Whereas the West has provided insights from the fields of literary criticism, biblical studies, and other disciplines, twentieth century scholarship in traditional Muslim lands has contributed a developing interest in the integrity and coherence of the suras. In the newly emerging approaches suras are treated as whole literary units, as opposed to previous, atomistic, verse-by-verse treatments.¹

Some suras were relatively easy to treat as a whole, particularly the smaller Meccan ones, which are associated with the first years of the prophet’s mission, when he was based in the city of Mecca. The work of scholars in the field, such as Angelika Neuwirth, on their structure and composition,² has lead to the widely promulgated notion that these suras form coherent units. However, this is not the case for the longer Medinan suras, which are associated with the later years of the prophet’s mission, when he lived in the city of Medina. These suras can often appear confusing

and disjointed, due to their considerable length and multiple topics. Scholars are not in agreement as to whether they display a tangible, identifiable structure, or whether they are a disorganized jumble of verses, without rhyme or reason.

There are many challenges associated with approaching the long Medinan suras as whole, cohesive units, not the least of which are length and disparity of contents. Their difficulties are exacerbated by the Qur’an’s history, since it emerged in a piecemeal fashion and not as a single unit. Thus, while some of its passages are associated with certain events, the tradition often relates others to different sets of events, even within the same sura, thereby strengthening the case for the longer suras being ‘collection baskets of isolated verse-groups’. There is also no consensus among scholars as to who compiled the Qur'an or when it took its final form; while some attribute it to Muḥammad (d. 9/632), others locate it in the time of the third caliph ’Uthmān (d. 34/656) and still others relate it to the late second, early third century of Islam. Last but not least is the problem of chronology; the Qur’an’s organization in its present-day form differs from the order of revelation, so that it is not possible to assume a historically chronological schema of composition in its final form.

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Surat al-Baqara is the longest of the Medinan suras, and is, in fact the longest sura in the Qur’an; it spans 286 verses and comprises more than two of the thirty parts into which contemporary Qur’an editions are divided. Its size is commensurate with the number of topics it treats, so that it epitomizes the textual and literary challenges of the Medinan suras. Moreover, it has a foremost position in the canon: it is the first sura a reader or listener is faced with after the short, simple, seven-verse al-Fātiḥa. Surat al-Baqara thereby almost invites readers to take up its challenges first, and to bridge this hurdle before attempting to proceed further into the Qur’an.

In spite of the challenges, one thing about Surat al-Baqara—and indeed the entire Qur’an—remains clear: at some point in early Islamic history it took its final shape and position in the canon: recent manuscript evidence from al-Jāmiʿ al-Kabīr in Ṣanʿā’ has pointed to a terminus ante quem of 715 C.E. It has remained more or less unchanged ever since and has functioned in Muslim life and liturgy in this form. Thus, either a single author or multiple redactors compiled the Qur’an and gave it its final form. The question becomes: if there were multiple compilers involved, did they lay out some sort of compositional schema for the sura while working? If there was only one author, did they compose it according to a preconceived plan? In other words, irrespective of who or when, can we identify some kind of structure and a unifying factor indicating that al-Baqara is a coherent composition?

This study will attempt to answer the question using insights gained from literary theory and from the study of the Bible, particularly the notion of orality. It is the contention of this thesis that approaching the sura as an oral text, paying attention to its aural structural markers, can help provide answers. While we are now used to reading texts visually, using seen forms of typesetting to highlight and organize texts, in pre-Islamic Arabia and the early centuries of Islam there was a stronger focus on

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orality.⁹ Even today, the Qur’an is recited orally in the liturgy and elsewhere and has not lost its aural appeal, while it has acquired a substantial visual dimension. To begin to comprehend the oral dimension of this text, it requires a shift in thinking, transposing ourselves into an oral mind frame, where oral methods of organizing text are dominant.

The notion of orality—and also the related aurality—is not new in the study of the Qur’an; for example, Michael Sells has pointed to aural intertextuality as a feature of some of the hymnic suras.¹⁰ However, the topic of orality is one that is still in need of further research, and addressing it in full is beyond the scope of this study.¹¹ Rather, this dissertation’s contribution to this study is in its concern with specific oral structural markers and exploring how they systematically identify al-Baqara’s compositional subunits and contribute to our understanding of the sura.

Some of the concepts and terminology employed here are more commonly used in the study of the Bible, terms such as divine self-revelation, Leitwort, inclusio, synchronic and diachronic. The deployment of such terms is not unknown in quranic studies; for example, Wansbrough has previously used terms such as ‘Haggadic’, ‘Halakhic’, and ‘Masoretic’ to describe qur’anic exegetical works,¹² terms which do not always adequately reflect the Islamic tradition.¹³ Therefore, concepts and terms borrowed from biblical scholarship will need to be qualified for their qur’anic context, and the subtle differences of their meaning in the various discourses clarified, whether these discourses are Muslim, Christian or Jewish. This will not only serve the interests of

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¹⁰ Michael Sells has also addressed some of the aural aspects of the Qur’an, specifically aural intertextuality. See, for example, Michael Sells, ‘A Literary Approach to the Hymnic Sūras of the Qur’ān: Spirit, Gender and Aural Intertextuality’ in Issa Boullata (ed.), Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur’ān (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).
¹¹ For more on the topic of orality, see for example, Neuwirth, ‘Structural, linguistic and literary features’, p. 101.
¹² Wansbrough, Qur’anic Studies, p. 119.
of clarity, but will also highlight the connections between the discourses. It will thereby anchor this study within the larger context of the Abrahamic scriptural heritage and will also be a way of situating the Qur’ân within its ‘biblical’ literary tradition, as previously advocated by Andrew Rippin.\textsuperscript{14}

For example, in biblical studies both synchronic and diachronic approaches are used to study the biblical text, each very different, and yet the contributions of each approach are well-recognized within the discipline. In qur’anic studies, diachronic approaches have a history, but have so far failed to solve the riddle of al-Baqara’s structure. Here, a synchronic approach will be used when positing answers to this riddle. While it does not deny the valuable contributions diachronic approaches have made, some questions are best answered using a synchronic approach, which can provide different and equally valuable insights. Viewing the two approaches together within the broader ‘biblical’ context will show the history and significance of both kinds of approaches and how both can enrich the discipline.

The intellectual straddling of both qur’anic and biblical fields of study is not unusual, but has a long-standing history in the West; particularly in the early burgeoning of Islamic scholarship, some of the foremost scholars of Islam have also been prominent biblical scholars, and have worthy publications in both fields, as can be noted in the works of Abraham Geiger (d.1874),\textsuperscript{15} Julius Wellhausen (d.1918)\textsuperscript{16} and


\textsuperscript{16}See, for example, Julius Wellhausen, \textit{Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israel’s}, 5th edn (Berlin: Reimer, 1899). It was first published in 1878 and enlarged in 1883; \textit{Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams} (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1899); \textit{Das arabische Reich und seinen Sturz} (Berlin: Reimer, 1902).
Theodor Nöldeke (d.1930). Today, even though the growth of scholarship has made it increasingly difficult to combine expertise in both fields, there is a growing interest among academics to engage the reading traditions of the two scriptures together. This interest can be noted in a number of recent articles, such as Sebastian Günther’s ‘O People of the Scripture! Come to a Word Common to You and Us (Q. 3:64): The Ten Commandments and the Qur’an’, and Angelika Neuwirth’s ‘Oral Scriptures’ in Contact: The Qur’anic Story of the Golden Calf and its Biblical Subtext between Narrative, Cult and Inter-communal Debate. It can also be observed in other avenues of inter-academic communication, such as the emerging practice of Scriptural Reasoning.

With this introduction, this study will have a total of eight chapters. Chapter 2 will explore the historical background of coherence-related approaches and the factors

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17 See, for example, Theodor Nöldeke, Die Alttestamentliche Literatur in einer Reihe von Aufsätzen dargestellt (Leipzig: 1868); Geschichte des Qorans, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1909-38); Compendious Syriac grammar, with a table of characters by Julius Euting, translated (with the sanction of the author) from the second and improved German edition by James A. Crichton (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904).


which contributed to their recent proliferation. It will trace the first known occurrences of coherence concerns, examining some of the early sectarian dynamics which affected their promulgation. Modern approaches will be introduced by sketching the changing intellectual environment of the late nineteenth century, which paved the way for their emergence and spread in the twentieth century. Relevant biblical parallels will also be addressed to help illustrate the broad, general characteristics of the different trends. This chapter will also clarify the distinctions between terms such as author- and reader-oriented, synchronic and diachronic, and coherence and holism.

Recent developments in literary theory have opened up new possibilities for reading texts, perhaps as many possibilities as there are readers. The question of how to read scripture is intricately tied to a reader’s expectations and what a person is looking for when they are reading scripture. It is also linked to the question of the literary intent of scripture and what characteristics make it distinct from any other genre of literature. Different readers may have different expectations, e.g. a reader concerned with feminist theory may look for issues related to women, while a reader with a Marxist outlook may search for economic issues. Readers may subsequently critique scripture according to a particular set of principles, such as gender equality, economic justice or a host of other possibilities.

Chapter 3 will outline how Surat al-Baqara will be read in this study and also the theoretical background for these readings. While feminist and Marxist readings are worthy pursuits, here some other expectations will be posited. It will be assumed that the distinctive content a reader is searching for in scripture and which makes it different from any other genre of literature is an experience of the divine and direction on how to live one’s life. The proposed readings will therefore be centred on these two ideas. The first will be called a divine self-revelatory reading. It will posit the deity at the focal point, and the text will be read to determine what it reveals about the deity. The second will be called a pedagogical reading and will place the human being at the centre, focusing on the pedagogical content a person will receive. While in a feminist or Marxist critique preconceived principles or ideas, such as gender equality or economic justice, can act as a kind of measuring-stick for the text, here there is no
predetermined image of the deity or pedagogy against which to compare and evaluate the results. Rather, the intent is to let the text speak for itself and to explore the resulting image and pedagogy, searching for patterns and central themes. This exercise can therefore be classified as a ‘reading’ and not as a ‘critique’ of scripture. It does not preclude the possibility of performing such a critique outside the confines of this study, once such a theoretical basis has been further established.

The chapter will locate these readings within the literary approaches, in conversation with the works of scholars such as Wansbrough, Rippin, Bint al-Shāṭi’ (d. 1998) and Neuwirth. It will shed light on concepts such as intertextuality, dialogism and dialectic. Relevant approaches to the Bible will also be explored, such as the work of Barbara Green, who is in conversation with the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin (d. 1975), the influential Russian philosopher and literary theorist.

In biblical scholarship, the notion of orality is intricately tied to the study of repetition, since it is one of the few available means of organizing and structuring oral texts. Repetitions can function both as cohesive elements tying a text together, and as structural dividers, indicating compositional subunits. In addition, they can also emphasize certain segments of a text, often through a broken or uneven pattern. Chapter 4 will present a brief overview of the relevant types of repetition known from the study of the Bible and elsewhere, repetitions such as inclusio, *Leitwort*, progression, chiasm, alternation and *iqtisāṣ*. It will explore al-Baqara’s distinctive devices, showing how they partition the sura into consecutive sections, how they highlight a single, unifying idea, and otherwise indicate structure of some kind.

Chapter 5 will explore Surat al-Fātiḥa, a very short sura immediately preceding al-Baqara, which acts as an introduction to it, and, as it happens, the entire Qur’an. It is helpful in showing certain stylistic features and patterns which are subsequently continued in al-Baqara. This chapter will also contain a reading of al-Fātiḥa in divine self-revelatory mode and another in pedagogical mode. The latter will help in the identification of al-Baqara’s pedagogical central theme in Chapter 7.
In Chapter 6, a divine self-revelatory reading of al-Baqara will be offered. Its central theme will be identified as ‘God as Guide’ by means of a repeated keyword ‘guidance’, noted for its special position, prolificacy and distribution within the sura. The chapter will show how the sura’s various sections progressively develop this theme, modifying and elaborating it in three different contexts. When viewed as a totality, its various passages thereby contribute to an overall, general picture. The emerging image of the deity becomes that of a universal, transcendent, systematic guide, a sender of prophets with substantive guidance, who ultimately guides to success or failure.

Chapter 7 will consist of a pedagogical reading of the same sura. It will explore its various compositional subunits from a pedagogical perspective, noting patterns and how these patterns contribute to the overall picture. One of these patterns is that of a repetitive threefold composition: each of the sura’s three sections contains an election component, an instruction component and a test component, thereby indicating a pedagogy of election, instruction and test. Another emerging pattern is that of progression, where instructional content is repeated and expanded from section to section, in analogy with known pedagogical techniques. The last of al-Baqara’s three sections is the broadest, encompassing the basic beliefs, rituals and social regulations of the new faith tradition. This chapter will show that when viewed as a totality, the sura has a central pedagogical theme and function, namely as the ‘first lesson in the new religion’.

The final chapter is a conclusion and will briefly summarize the most important points of this study. It will end by relating the sura’s pedagogical central theme and reading to its divine self-revelatory one.

**Notes on Translation**

All translations from the Arabic and the German are my own, unless otherwise stated. Qur’anic passages are translated in consultation with the work of ‘Abdullah
Yūsuf ᾿Ali\textsuperscript{21} and Laleh Bakhtiar.\textsuperscript{22} I have followed Bakhtiar’s translation of derivatives of the root \(k-f-r\) as ‘to be ungrateful’ rather than ‘to disbelieve’ or ‘to be an infidel’.\textsuperscript{23}

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Transliteration Chart

I have used no transliteration for words such as Qur’an, sura, Sufi, Sunni and Shiite, which have become prevalent enough in the English language to be included in

\textsuperscript{22} Laleh Bakhtiar, \textit{The Sublime Qur’an} (Chicago: Kazi Publications, islamicworld.com, 2007).
\textsuperscript{23} Bakhtiar, \textit{Sublime Quran}, p. xliiv
the Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary. For the rest of the Arabic words, I have used the above transliteration.

CHAPTER 2

Historical Background

Coherence in the Qurʾan has been the subject of two previous Ph.D. dissertations, in addition to other classical and modern studies which have addressed it in some form or other. The most recent of these dissertations is Salwa El-Awa’s *Textual Relations in the Qurʾan: Relevance, Coherence, Structure*, presented to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and published in 2006.\(^{25}\) El-Awa relies on relevance theory, which is used in linguistics to investigate issues of coherence, and explores the contextual impact of each passage on preceding and subsequent passages.\(^{26}\) She has applied her method to two suras, dividing them into sections and investigating the relationships between the various passages. El-Awa’s is the most recent in a group of modern and classical approaches, which share a focus on the textual relations of the various parts to each other, as opposed to their relationship to an abstract notion, such as a central theme.

The second work is Mustansir Mir’s *Coherence in the Qurʾan: A Study of İslāḥī’s Concept of Naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qurʾān*, presented to the University of Michigan as the author’s Ph.D. dissertation in 1983 and published in 1986.\(^{27}\) Mir does not develop his own theory, but analyzes the work of Amīn ʿAḥsan İslāḥī (d. 1997), bringing it to the attention of a wide scholarly audience. Similar to El-Awa, İslāḥī also divides suras into sections and links these various sections to each other. However, he identifies a central theme for each sura, and explores relationships between suras and sura

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\(^{26}\) El-Awa, *Textual Relations*, pp. 38 ff.

groupings, organizing them into pairs. Thus, Iṣlaḥi went a step beyond El-Awa, the central theme lending a certain quality to the analysis, a quality which Mir has described as ‘holistic’. It is this special quality, which will be of particular interest in this study.

While the term ‘holistic’ is well-known in biblical studies, linguistics and philosophy, it is relatively new in qur’anic studies and therefore needs some clarification. In addition to Mir, it has briefly occurred in the work of another scholar, Asma Barlas, both scholars providing brief explanations. Mir is well-known for bringing several works which treat suras as unities to the attention of a wider scholarly audience, using the expression ‘sura as a unity’. He does not equate the two terms, explaining ‘holistic’ as ‘predicated on the assumption that the Qur’an is a well-integrated book and ought to be studied as such’. Barlas offers a similar explanation, using the words of Paul Ricoeur, ‘a whole, a totality’, in connection with reading the Qur’an as ‘a cumulative, holistic process’.

Linguistically, ‘holistic’ is related to holism, and is used in various disciplines to denote the idea that the properties of a given system—in this case the Qur’an—cannot be fully determined or explained by the sum of its component parts alone—in this case...

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28 Mir, Coherence, pp. 32, 35, 75-98.
29 See Mir, Coherence, p. 99.
31 See Mir, Coherence, p. 99.
32 Barlas, Believing Women, p. 18; cf Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, edited, translated and introduced by John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 212-13. Ricoeur was not discussing the Qur’an specifically, but was referring to text in general, although his work is of great significance for the study of the Bible. He states: ‘A text is a whole, a totality. The relation between whole and parts—as in a work of art or in an animal—requires a specific kind of “judgment”... . For all these reasons there is a problem of interpretation not so much because of the incommunicability of the psychic experience of the author, but because of the very nature of the verbal intention of the text. This intention is something other than the sum of the individual meanings of the individual sentences. A text is more than a linear succession of sentences. It is a cumulative holistic process’. Ricoeur, Hermeneutics, p. 211-212. The original article appeared as Paul Ricoeur, ‘The model of the text: meaningful action considered as a text’, Social Research 38 (1971), pp. 529-62, p. 548-49.
the individual verses. It assumes that there is an added value gained in viewing all its components together and is concerned with uncovering this added value.

There is a distinction between coherence and holism. For coherence it is sufficient to establish the connection and contextual impact of each passage to those immediately preceding or following it. To establish coherence, it is not necessary to identify a central theme. On the other hand, a holistic approach looks beyond those immediate connections and is concerned with an extra value gained by looking at all the sura’s passages together, as a whole, as a totality. This added value generally takes the form of a central theme or idea that holds the sura together as a unit, and to which all the sura’s passages contribute or relate.

Thus, the term ‘holistic’ is useful in describing and referring to this special quality which moves beyond coherence and the passages’s immediate, linear connections and contextual impact. It can be defined as referring to analytic or exegetical approaches, which are concerned with coherence, and consistently move beyond the boundaries of a verse or its immediate vicinity to treating suras as a whole or beyond, treating the entire Qur’ān as a whole. In effect, suras are divided into sections or pericopes, and the relationships between the various parts are studied and viewed together as a totality, with the intent of finding a central idea, to which the entire sura’s contents relate and which ties the sura together as a unit.

It is noteworthy that ‘holistic’ is sometimes linked to New Age spirituality, which may explain the reluctance of some scholars to use it. Due to its association with this contemporary cluster of variegated heterogeneous phenomena, it may be initially less confusing to only use Mir’s ‘as a unity’ and entirely avoid any reference to ‘holistic’. However, ‘as a unity’ does not necessarily indicate examining how a sura’s contents relate to a central theme—not all the exegetes whose approach Mir has described as reading ‘as a unity’ have been successful in identifying a central theme for al-Baqara. In addition, the term is not prevalent in biblical studies, while ‘holistic’ is quite well-

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established, and incorporating this term builds common methodological ground between the two disciplines. The related expression, ‘as a whole’, is also quite popular in biblical studies. In this dissertation, the term ‘holistic’ will only refer to the word’s literary, text-based sense, and not the experiential, spiritual dimension it acquires in connection with New Age religion.\(^{34}\)

An advantage of including this term is that it facilitates clarifying the distinction between two sets of approaches: on the one hand the linear approaches, such as El-Awa’s approach above and the linear-atomistic approaches below, and on the other hand, approaches which search for a central theme and address general structure, investigating how the central theme relates to the sura’s contents. While there is a distinction between these two approaches, there is much in common: ‘holistic’ approaches also address coherence and may be subsumed under investigations into coherence. Coherence-related approaches, whether linear or holistic, contrast with the traditional ‘atomistic’ methods,\(^{35}\) which generally approach the Qur’an on a verse-by-verse basis, treating each verse virtually independently of its literary context.\(^{36}\)

This chapter will briefly present the historical background of coherence-related approaches, exploring their relationship to the intellectual environment which produced them. The importance of exploring such connections has been previously pointed out, for example, in the work of the Russian literary theorist and philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin (d. 1975), who has explored the dialogic relationships of utterances in great depth.\(^{37}\) This study will not be restricted to the sequential, often atomistic, verse-by-

\(^{34}\) For the use of ‘holistic’ in the New Age spiritual sense, see, for example, Roderick Main, ‘Secularization and the ‘Holistic Milieu’: Social and Psychological Perspectives’, Religion Compass 2 (2008), pp. 1-20.

\(^{35}\) Linguistically, atomism is the opposite of holism; see Pearsall, Oxford Dictionary, p. 678.


verse, running commentaries or *tafsīrs*, but will encompass commentaries which divide the Qur’ānic text into larger units, and even works which are limited to certain thematic aspects of the Qur’ān, such as the theory of imitability. The chapter will be divided into three parts. The first will trace the first known coherence-related approaches in medieval times, indicating how they were affected by some of the sectarian dynamics. The second part will explore some of the modern approaches, beginning with the nineteenth century up to the present, and will include the work of scholars both east and west, such as the valuable contributions of Angelika Neuwirth. The third will investigate relevant parallels in biblical studies, where the term ‘holistic’ has an established history, and is associated with the literary, text-based approaches to the Bible. It will clarify the differences between approaches which are synchronic and diachronic, author- and reader-oriented, and will briefly trace the history of biblical criticism and pointing out parallels with the Qur’ānic coherence-related approaches.

**History of Coherence-Related Approaches to the Qurʾān**

The history of the study of the Qurʾān’s textual coherence known as *munāsabah* (literally, ‘suitability, correlation, connection’) or *nazm* (literally, ‘order, arrangement, organization’) in medieval times has interested a few contemporary scholars, although no monograph solely dedicated to that subject exists to date. Among these, Mir is probably the most significant, in particular his afore-mentioned article, ‘The sura as a unity’, which contains a brief historical background, and ‘Coherence in the Qurʾān’, which contains a short history of the idea of *nazm.* Three other articles in the

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39 So also Mir, *Coherence*, p. 3.

40 Mir, *Coherence*, ‘The Qurʾān as literature’, is less useful, but contains some insights into the atomistic approach, which for the purposes of this study represents the conceptual opposite of the holistic approaches; see Mir, ‘The Qurʾān as Literature’, pp. 49-64. As for his articles in *EQ*, they sum up his previous works and do not include significant new material, and are therefore, not as important for this
Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an (EQ) also contain helpful insights, Claude Gilliot and Pierre Larcher’s ‘Language and Style of the Qur’an’, Issa Boullata’s ‘Literary Structures in the Qur’an’, and Richard C. Martin’s ‘Inimitability’. Moreover, Claude-France Audebert’s al-Ḫaṭṭābī et l’inimitabilité du Coran, provides a list of books dealing with nazm, thereby showing that it was an established genre. More recently, El-Awa sketched a history, exploring some new avenues, such as the work of Biqā’ī (d. 885/1480). Useful also is the modern Egyptian scholarship on nazm, in particular some monographs dedicated to the idea in the work of some medieval writers, such as Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), jurjānī (d. 471/1078), and Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), whose works are extant, and Jāḥiz (d. 255/868 or 9), whose work has been lost, but reconstructed to some extent from the author’s existing works. Less useful is Ḥaddād’s Naẓm al-Qur’ān wa’l-kitāb, which sums up the work of some previous writers. One should perhaps also mention Munir Sulṭān’s analysis of five medieval approaches to nazm, which he classifies as linguistic (lughawi), theological (kalāmī), mystical (Ṣūfī), juridical (fiqhī), and literary (adabī), choosing Zajjāj (d. 311/923), Bāqillānī, Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), al-‘Izzānī’s study. Mustansir Mir, ‘Unity of the Text of the Qur’ān’ in EQ, vol. 5, pp. 405-406. Wadad Kadi (al-Qādī) and Mustansir Mir, ‘Language and the Qur’ān’ in EQ, vol. 3, pp. 205-227.


43 El-Awa, Textual Relations.


48 Yūsuf Durra Haddād, Naẓm al-Qurʾān wa’l-kitāb ([Bayrūt?: s.n., 196-?])


ibn ῾Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1252)\textsuperscript{52} and Ibn Abī al-῾Iṣba῾ al-Miṣrī (d. 654/1256)\textsuperscript{53} respectively to represent these five approaches. However, in none of these categories can naẓm be equated to a coherence-related concern.

Of the medieval secondary literature, two sources on the qur’anic sciences are particularly noteworthy, Zarkashī’s (d. 794/1391) \textit{al-Burhān fi ῾ulūm al-Qur’ān} and Suyūṭī’s (d. 911/1505) \textit{al-Itqān fī ῾ulūm al-Qur’ān}.\textsuperscript{54} Both contain a chapter on munāsaba and discuss naẓm in their chapters on \textit{i῾jāz} inimitability. Suyūṭī’s book is heavily dependent on Zarkashī’s, and has even been described as an abridgment and revision of the latter.\textsuperscript{55} However, Suyūṭī’s work does contain some independent material, and since Suyūṭī postdated Zarkashī by more than a century, he is invaluable in pointing out intermediate developments. In addition, the introduction of Biqā῾ī’s \textit{Naẓm al-durar} provides an important overview of munāsaba, and contains information which is not mentioned by either Suyūṭī or Zarkashī.\textsuperscript{56}

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\textsuperscript{53} ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn ῾Abd al-Salām, \textit{al-Iṣba῾ fi al-qiyās fi ba’d anwā῾ al-majāz} (İstanbul, 1313 A.H.).


\textsuperscript{56} Mir, ‘The Sūra as a Unity’, p. 211.

**Naẓm:**

Of the two terms used to denote intra-textual coherence, naẓm is the older, and seems to predate munāsaba by decades, if not centuries. The earliest known work on naẓm is the well-attested, ninth-century Jāḥiẓ’s *Naẓm al-Qur‘ān*, while Zarkashī attributes the first occurrence of munāsaba to the chief tenth-century Shāfi‘ite jurist, citing a somewhat obscure source for this information. Zarkashī makes no mention of Jāḥiẓ or of naẓm in his section on munāsaba, but takes care to ground munāsaba in his own madhhab, the Shāfi‘ite school of jurisprudence. Suyūṭī, also Shāfi‘ite in orientation, follows Zarkashī in citing the obscure source, and similarly does not mention Jāḥiẓ or the idea of naẓm in his section on munāsaba, although he quotes a lengthy passage in the introduction to the section on i‘jāz. The disassociation between munāsaba and naẓm, in spite of the semantic and functional overlap between the two terms, may make sense in light of the sectarian dynamics of the time.

Jāḥiẓ’s surviving epistles offer a glimpse into his motivation for writing the book and the intellectual environment of his age, including the sectarian dynamics surrounding the idea of naẓm. Jāḥiẓ explains:

I have written a book for you, in which I have exerted myself, and in which I have accomplished the utmost someone like me can accomplish in arguing for the Qur‘ān, and in responding to every contest. I have not left out any question for a Rāfiḍite, or a traditionalist, or a vulgariste, or

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57 Saleh has mentioned another, early work, *Kitāb al-Nazm*, by a contemporary of Jāḥiẓ, al-Ḥasan ibn Naṣr al-Jurjānī (d. 263/876). Although this work is now lost, parts of it have been preserved in Tha‘labī’s commentary. See Saleh, *Formation*, pp. 136-37, 250. Not much is known about this important work; for example, it is not mentioned in Gilliot and Larcher’s recent article in *EQ* ‘Language and Style’, or in Audebert’s relatively older *al-Ḥaṭṭābi et l’inimitabilité du Coran*.


60 Translation of *hashwi* as ‘vulgariste’ by A. S. Halkin. See A. S. Halkin, ‘Hashwiyya’ *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 54, no.1 (1934), pp. 1-28, p. 2. Jāḥiẓ distinguishes between *ḥadīthi* (traditionist or traditionalist) and *hashwi*, the latter is a particularly derogatory term derived from
an overt unbeliever, or a careless hypocrite, or al-Nazzām’s (died between 220/835 and 230/845) associates, or those who have appeared after al-Nazzām who claim that the Qur’an was created, but that its composition is not an authoritative argument (ḥuṣja), and that it is a revelation, but that it is neither compelling proof (burhān) nor convincing, logical proof (dalāla).61

From the above, we can surmise that he wrote his book to defend the Qur’an against several groups. The nature of the dispute is clearer for some groups than others, since the book has not survived in its entirety, and neither have Jāḥiẓ’s other works or the works of his opponents. However, what remains provides some insights, gained by exploring the dialectical relationship between Jāḥiẓ’s naẓm and the discourses of the other groups. With traditionalists, the main point of contention seems to have been the doctrine of khalq (createdness) of the Qur’an, since they claimed it was uncreated, while Jāḥiẓ used the idea of naẓm to underline the Qur’an’s physical, created qualities. He portrays the Qur’an as follows:

The Qur’an ... is a body and a voice, has composition, arrangement (naẓm), performance, divisions, and a created, self-sufficient existence, independent of others, heard in the air, seen on paper, detailed and connected, [characterized by] assembly and dispersion, can be added to or

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ḥashwat al-nās, meaning the lowest or most uncritical of people, which may be directed at Hanbalites in particular or traditionalists. Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr ibn Bahr al-Jāḥiẓ, Rasāʾīl al-Jāḥiẓ, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muhammad Hārūn (2 vols. Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Imiyya, 2000), vol. 2, part 3, p. 218, n. 5 and p. 219, n. 13. See also Jāḥiẓ’s criticism of Ahmad ibn Hanbal in Jāḥiẓ, Rasāʾīl vol. 2, part 3, pp. 222-225. Ibn Hanbal responds to the term quite vehemently, identifies the source of the appellation as the aṣḥāb al-raʿy, and claims that they are lying and that they themselves are the ḥashwiyya. Al-Qāḍī ibn al-Ḥusayn Muhammad ibn Abī Ya’lā, Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī (2 vols. al-Qāhirah: Muṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1952), vol. 1, p. 36. For the distinction between traditionists and traditionalists, see note 81 below.
diminished, can cease to exist or remain in existence: [it can do]
everything that a physical body is capable of doing, or that describes a
body. Everything which is thus characterized is physically created, not
metaphorically so or [created] according to the extension of linguists.\(^{62}\)

Thus, Jāḥiẓ used \(nazm\) to indicate an aspect which the Qurʾan shared with
created bodies, and may therefore have caused some negative reaction from adherents
of the doctrine of uncreatedness. Ḥaddād reiterates sarcastic additions made by some
of Jāḥiẓ’s opponents: ‘A body which has the option of changing shape into a man, or
into an animal or female’.\(^{63}\)

Jāḥiẓ was a Muʿtazilite, a group known for their adherence to the doctrine of
createdness, a group to which Naẓẓām also belonged.\(^{64}\) While Jāḥiẓ shared this
doctrine with Naẓẓām, he rejected his \(ṣarfa\), a theory which entails that the Qurʾan is
not inimitable in and of itself, but that God turns away any who attempt to emulate it.
Both Naẓẓām and Jāḥiẓ’s ideas arose in the context of discussions on the Muʿtazilite
doctrine of inimitability.\(^{65}\) Although both scholars adhered to the doctrine, they
differed in its interpretation. Thus, Jāḥiẓ’s exposition of the Qurʾan’s \(nazm\) argues for
its compositional inimitability and against \(ṣarfa\).\(^ {66}\)

\(^{62}\) Jāḥiẓ, \(Nazm\), p. 58; \(Rasāʾil\) vol. 2, part 3, p. 221.

\(^{63}\) Ḥaddād, \(Nazm\), p. 4.

\(^{64}\) For Sunni anti-Muʿtazilite polemics see Taqī al-Dīn Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-Halīm ibn Taymiyya (d.
728/1328), \(Muqaddima fi ʾusūl al-tafsīr\) (al-Kuwayt: Dār al-Qurʾān al-Kari̇m, 1971), pp. 79-86; Suyūṭī,
\(Iqtān\), vol. 4, p. 213.

\(^{65}\) Van Ess also notes that this doctrine was brought up by the Muʿtazilites. Joseph Van Ess, ‘Verbal
Inspiration?’ in Stefan Wild (ed.), \(The Qurʾan as Text\), Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science: Texts
and Studies 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 177-194, p. 189. For more on inimitability, see Richard C.
Martin, ‘Inimitability’ in \(EQ\), vol. 2, pp. 526-536.

\(^{66}\) It is noteworthy that Muhammad has pointed out that Jāḥiẓ accepts some aspects of \(ṣarfa\), but that
his views differ substantially from those of Naẓẓām. Muhammad, \(Nazm\), p. 9 (jīm); Others have been
less objective in their criticism; for example Haddād describes Naẓẓām as the ‘Satan’ of the dialectical
teologians, and alleges that Jāḥiẓ was ‘disturbed’ in his views of \(ṣarfa\). Thus, even among proponents
of \(nazm\), Muʿtazilites and some of their ideas have elicited some hostilities.
Similar to Jāḥiz, many later Sunnis adhered to the doctrine of inimitability, but rejected ṣarfa.\textsuperscript{67} In particular, Bāqillānī’s I’jāz al-Qur’ān went a long way to promoting the theory, as can be noted in the way both Suyūṭi and Zarkashī praise the book.\textsuperscript{68} However, as Yāsīn has pointed out, Bāqillānī does not give sufficient credit to his Muʿtazilite predecessors, but—as is often the case when sectarian rivalries come into play—attempts to belittle their accomplishments, even when he is copying from them.\textsuperscript{69} Thus, nazm found an entrée into Sunnism through the doorway of polemics about the inimitability of the Qur’ān.

The particular Rāfiḍite views with which Jāḥiz was in conversation are harder to gage. The term rāfiḍī was applied to early Imāmī Shia,\textsuperscript{70} and Jāḥiz has a letter on the topic,\textsuperscript{71} but does not mention views on the Qur’ān which could be constructed as offensive. However, in his letter on the createdness of the Qur’ān (fi khalq al-Qur’ān), he mentions the Rāfiḍites in the context of persons who restricted the doctrine to createdness in an allegoric sense, as opposed to the physical reality.\textsuperscript{72} This may have formed some of his motivation.

More substantial insights may be gained from early Imāmī exegesis; Meir Bar-Asher has analyzed the work of several pre-Buwayhid exegetes, all of whom were active after Jāḥiz, but who may reflect the views of certain Imāmīs current at his time.\textsuperscript{73} This correlation is all the more credible due to the traditionalist character of their interpretations, since they generally relied exclusively on the transmitted traditions of their predecessors, and were not comfortable voicing their own opinions unless bolstered by a transmitted tradition.\textsuperscript{74} This method of interpretation, called

\textsuperscript{67} Ṣarfa was not limited to some Muʿtazilites, but can also be found among Shiʿis and Sunnis, as Navid Kermānī has noted in Gott ist schön: Das ästhetische Erleben des Korans (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1999), pp. 246-247.
\textsuperscript{68}Suyūṭi, Itqān, vol. 4, p. 3; Zarkashī, Burhān, vol. 2, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{69}Yāsīn, Bāqillānī, pp. 71-72.
\textsuperscript{73}Meir Bar-Asher, Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism (Leiden: Brill, 1999).
\textsuperscript{74}Bar-Asher, Scripture, pp. 73-79.
tafsīr bi’l-maʾthūr, may itself have been the bone of contention. It resembles the methods of traditionalists \( \text{ahl al-ḥadīth} \), while it is diametrically opposed to those of rationalists \( \text{ahl al-raʾ} \),\(^{75} \) among whom Jāḥiẓ may be ranked.\(^{76} \) It places the transmitted traditions in a dominant position over the qur’anic text, thereby subordinating its meaning to that of the traditions. \( \text{Tafsīr bi’l-maʾthūr} \) prevailed within Sunnism as well, especially after Ṭabarī’s (d. 310/923) monumental \( \text{Jāmiʿ al-Bayān} \).\(^{77} \) Thus, the dynamic between Jāḥiẓ’s \( \text{naẓm} \) discourse and Rāfiḍite \( \text{tafsīr bi’l-maʾthūr} \) may also have existed in connection with Sunni \( \text{tafsīr bi’l-maʾthūr} \), such as the work of ’Abd Allāh ibn Wahb al-Miṣrī (d. 197/812).\(^{78} \) However, prior to Ṭabarī, the preoccupation with chains of transmission does not seem to have been as dominant a feature of Sunni exegesis.\(^{79} \)

The controversy between \( \text{ahl al-ḥadīth} \) and \( \text{ahl al-raʾ} \) is perhaps primarily a legal one, and it is in this context that the rivalry between the two methods and their privileged texts becomes the more visible.\(^{80} \) Here it takes on the character of a power struggle between traditionalists, who relied on traditions for authority, and rationalists, who gave precedence to the Qurʾān and had no qualms refuting a tradition if it conflicted with the Qurʾān—no matter how strongly traditionists\(^{81} \) bolstered it with

\(^{75} \) Bar-Asher, \textit{Scripture}, p.73.

\(^{76} \) In the legal context, the term \( \text{ahl al-raʾ} \) refers primarily to the Ḥanafī school of jurisprudence, a school to which most Muʿtazilites belonged. A notable exception to this rule is ’Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), mentioned below, who was a Shāfīʾite.

\(^{77} \) For the differences between pre-Buwayhid Imāmī exegesis and Ṭabarī’s approach see Bar-Asher, \textit{Scripture}, p. 74.


\(^{79} \) Bar-Asher has pointed out that although there are some similarities between mainstream Sunni exegesis and pre-Buwayhid Imāmī exegesis, other early Sunni exegetical works reveal a divergence, since they are characterized by the author writing in the first person, indicating his own opinion, and are also not restricted to the literary form of hadīth. Bar-Asher, \textit{Scripture}, p. 74-75.

\(^{80} \) Nyazee has pointed out the dominant position in the history of Islamic law occupied by the confrontation between the \( \text{ahl al-ḥadīth} \) and the \( \text{ahl al-raʾ} \). The \textit{ahl al-ḥadīth} managed to successfully propagate their views on the eminence of Sunna and dominate subsequent legal theory. Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee, \textit{Theories of Islamic Law: The Methodology of Ijtihād} (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2002), pp. 148-150. See also, Wael Hallaq, \textit{The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 74-76.

\(^{81} \) Wael Hallaq distinguishes between traditionists and traditionalists; whereas traditionists are actively engaged in the study, transmission, collection or production of \textit{ḥadith}, traditionalists are in support of their work, and are of the opinion that the law must rest squarely on it. See Hallaq, \textit{Origins}, p. 74.
chains of transmission going all the way back to the prophet. In this context, Jāḥīz’s *naẓm* discourse takes on a new dimension, since it implicitly argues for the Qur’an’s superiority vis-à-vis the Sunna. A clear, well-organized Qur’an, in which verses relate to one another providing context and contributing to meaning is more difficult to manipulate than an ambiguous, atomistic one, in which verses are independent of one another, and which relies on the traditions provided by the traditionists for meaning.\(^82\) The last group Jāḥīz mentioned here, those who consider the Qur’an a revelation, but neither a compelling proof nor a convincing logical proof, carries hints of this controversy, since the words *burhān*, *dalāla* and even *ḥujja* carry legal connotations.\(^83\)

One group which is conspicuously absent is the Christians, against whom Jāḥīz has written an epistle.\(^84\) A text attributed to the ninth-century ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī portrays discourses which could have formed strong motivation. It states as follows:

> You [here, the so-called al-Kindī addresses his adversary, the so-called al-Hāshimī] are, after all, well-versed in our [i.e. the Christians’] books [Scriptures] and are certainly familiar with the harmony existing between all the pieces of information they contain, whereas your book is replete with confusion. This attests irrefutably to the fact that your book was treated by many hands, as well as to the dispute concerning the text, the additions and the omissions which occurred in it...\(^85\)

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\(^82\) Polyvalency also works against pinpointing the meaning of the qur’anic text, thereby diluting it. For more, see Norman Calder, ‘The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy’ in Farhad Daftary (ed.), *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2000), pp. 66-85, pp. 76-77.

\(^83\) These words also have philosophical nuances.

\(^84\) See Jāḥīz, *Rasāʾil* vol. 2, part 3, pp. 265-64.

However, the dating of this text is disputed, and also the authorship—it may have been composed after Jāḥiz’s time. There are no parallels between the above passage and the Christian discourses portrayed in Jāḥiz’s letter—Christians seemed to have criticized some of the Qur’an’s narrative content which diverged from that of the Bible, and they are not portrayed criticizing issues of style and organization. However, later texts shed light on the dialectical relationship between the above discourse and i῾jāz discourse. For example, Sadan has pointed out that the preoccupation with the quality and superiority of the Arabic language, particularly that of the Qur’an, implied the inferiority of the Hebrew language, which motivated the Spanish Jew, Ya’aqov ben El’azar (d.1233), to respond with a polemical text. He has also pointed out, that the afore-mentioned Kindī epistle formed the basis for Jewish polemics in Spain.

Although there is a dialectical relationship between Jāḥiz’s Naẓm and the Kindī discourse it is hard to surmise which came first. Since it does not seem possible to conclusively date the Kindī text to the time of Jāḥiz or before, it is more likely that the idea of i῾jāz, (including naẓm) arose first, and the Kindī discourse evolved later, in response to it. However, since both discourses were long-lived, even surviving to our present day, the Kindī arguments may have helped fuel and sustain subsequent naẓm discourse.

Kraus has drawn attention to the similarities between passages from the Kindī epistle and the work of another author known for propagating heretical ideas: Ibn al-


87 See Sadan, ‘Identity’.

88 Kermani also reaches the conclusion that i῾jāz-discourse, including naẓm, arose in context of discourses internal to the Muslim community, and were not directed at Jews and Christians. He bases his conclusion on a careful study of the classical works on I῾jāz, the direction of their polemics and the construction of their arguments, particularly the works of Bāqillānī and Jurjānī; Kermani, Gott ist schön, pp. 291-92. See also note 93 below.
Rāwandī (d. 250/864), who was a contemporary of Jāḥiẓ. This author also was active within Muʿtazilite circles, but became estranged from them in his later years. He was known for writing works and their refutations, and for needling the sensibilities of his coreligionists. Due to his habit of refuting his own work, it is difficult to gage his own opinions; however, he seems to have engaged Manichaean and other ‘heretical’ ideas, bringing their discourses and some of his own critiques of religious ideas to the attention of Muslim scholars. In this respect his work is similar to Kindī’s, both were in the form of a dialogue and both posed substantial challenges to accepted religious norms.

89 Kraus, *Alchemie*, pp. 146-152.
92 In the latter respect he is not unlike Jāḥiẓ, who similarly offended the sensibilities of some of his readers, as for example in his portrayal of the dialogue between a sodomite (lūṭī) and a fornicator (zānī), each arguing for his preference. Jāḥiẓ’s modern editor was so taken aback that he published the book separately, and did not include it with his edition of Jāḥiẓ’s other works. See Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb muḥākharāt al-jawārī wa'l-ghilmān*, ed. Charles Pellat (Bayrūt: Dār al-Makshūf, 1957), pp. 5-7. As in Kindī’s epistle and Ibn al-Rāwandī’s *Kitāb al-Zumurrud*, the dialogue form may have been particularly suitable for exploring sensitive ideas, and it may also reflect a popular practice of the time.
93 Based on the similarities between Ibn al-Rāwandī’s work and the Kindī epistle, the possibility that Ibn al-Rāwandī may have been its author is in need of further investigation. Other than the Kindī epistle, there is no real evidence that a person by the name of ῾Abd al-Masiḥ ibn Ishāq al-Kindī existed, a person with the necessary skill, knowledge and inclination to compose it. The typological (and fictitious) character of the participants in the depicted dialogue has been recognized before; Sadan mentions a personal conversation, in which S. Griffith suggests that both names are fictitious: ῾Abd al-Masiḥ (worshipper of Jesus, a typical Christian name), Ibn Ishāq (i.e. son of Biblical Isaac the son of Abraham and the father of the Hebrews), al-Kindī (i.e. of a Southern Arab tribe), and, on the other hand, just the contrary: ῾Abdallāh (a typical Muslim name, the name of the prophet’s father), Ibn Ismā’il (i.e., son of Biblical Ishmael, Isaac’s brother and the father of the Ishmaelites—the Arabs), al-Hāšīm (i.e. of the Banū Hāšim, the Prophet’s family, belonging to Qurayš, a Northern Arab tribe). See Sadan, ‘Identity’, p. 337, note 37. ‘Servant’ is a more accurate translation for ῾Abd than Sadan/Griffith’s ‘worshipper’. To Griffith’s suggestions, I would like to add that the choice of Kindi as the provenance of Kindi is also indicative, since the most famous pre-Islamic poet, Imru ‘l-Qays, who is perhaps the epitome of the poetic craft and mastery over the Arabic language, was also from that tribe. It gives more weight to Kindi’s arguments against the superior quality of the Qur’ān’s language, and underlines the fictitious character of the name. Furthermore, Ibn al-Rāwandī was known to have written a refutation of the Qur’ān, *Kitāb al-Dāmīgh*, now lost, but what has survived of it in other works bears strong resemblance to the arguments used by medieval Spanish Jews against the Qur’ān, recalling Spanish Jewish use of the Kindī epistle. For more on *Kitāb al-Dāmīgh* and its use in Spain, see Stroumsa, *Freethinkers*, pp. 73, 198-213, 233.
However, the passages which have trickled down to us from Ibn al-Rāwandī’s *Kitāb al-Zumurrud* containing criticism of the Qur’an seem highly abbreviated and do not address issues of style and organization, but they do address the related issue of *faṣāḥa*, the pure, classical quality of the language. The book criticized the argument that the quality of the Qur’an’s language was superior, claiming that even if it convinced Arabs, it did not hold for non-Arabs. The arguments are in a dialectical relationship to Jāḥiẓ’s *Naẓm* and may reflect some of the discourses that Jāḥiẓ was in conversation with, perhaps falling into the ‘overt unbeliever’ category of Jāḥiẓ’s epistle.

Thus Jāḥiẓ’s *naẓm* engaged several other discourses within his intellectual environment, and the term subsequently made its way into the medieval literature. Although the occurrences of ‘*naẓm*’ are profuse, the term is somewhat opaque, since it seems to have had multiple meanings. Based on the work of Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998), Bāqillānī, Jurjānī and Zamakhsharī, Mir has argued that it initially referred to word-meaning relationships. However, other modern scholars have shown that some of these scholars had a more broad-ranging understanding of the word. For example, Jindī discusses the work of five leading scholars, which include three of the scholars discussed by Mir: Bāqillānī, Jurjānī and Zamakhsharī, portraying the semantic nuances.

Beginning with Jāḥiẓ, Jindī shows that he used *naẓm* to refer to two aspects: composition and general style, contrasting the latter with the known types of poetry and prose and placing the Qur’an into a category of its own, distinct from the other categories. Quoting from Bāqillānī’s own work, Jindī points out that he understood *naẓm* similarly to Jāḥiẓ, and explained it as the arrangement of the letters into words

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96 Mir, *Coherence*, pp. 11-16.
98 *ta ʾllَ* literally, the act of composing, the way a text is put together; Jindī, Zamakhsharī, pp. 7-8.
and expressions, flowing continuously and incessantly.\textsuperscript{100} Yāsīn, in his monograph, also indicates that Bāqillānī’s understanding of \textit{naẓm} went beyond word-meaning relationships, encompassing verses and even suras.\textsuperscript{101} Jindī refers to Bāqillānī’s analysis of two suras in particular, \textit{Ghāfir} and \textit{Fuṣṣilat}, pointing out the connections between their meanings and indicating a central theme.\textsuperscript{102} In both cases, the central theme is ‘the necessity of the Qur’ān being a proof, and the indication of its miracle’.\textsuperscript{103} Bāqillānī indicates clearly that it is a central theme, stating that these suras from the beginning to the end are based on it.\textsuperscript{104} Thus, Bāqillānī did not limit himself to word-meaning relationships, but has produced what seem to be the earliest extant examples of treating suras as whole units.

Bāqillānī is not the only medieval scholar whose understanding of \textit{naẓm} went beyond word-meaning relationships, but a broader understanding seems to be presupposed in the work of subsequent scholars. Jindī has shown that the Mu‘tazilite ‘Abd al-Jabbār disagreed that \textit{i‘jāz} was to be found in the Qur’ān’s general style (\textit{naẓm}), but rather in the meanings and the word-meaning relationships, for which he used the term \textit{faṣāḥa}. Thus, ‘Abd al-Jabbār seems to have understood \textit{naẓm} to refer to Jāḥiẓ’s second meaning ‘general style,’ but did not consider that aspect inimitable. However, he pointed out that \textit{faṣāḥa} cannot be in disjointed speech, but only in composition, recalling Jāḥiẓ’s first meaning.\textsuperscript{105} Jindī points out that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s ideas were taken up by Jurjānī, who connected \textit{balāgha} (rhetoric) and \textit{naẓm} in the sense of composition, again recalling Jāḥiẓ’s first sense for the word.\textsuperscript{106} In turn, Jurjānī’s work seems to have been influential in the writings of another prominent Mu‘tazilite, Zamakhsharī, whose understanding of \textit{naẓm} seems to have been primarily

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{100} Jindī, \textit{Zamakhsharī}, pp. 8-9.
\item \textsuperscript{101} Yāsīn, \textit{Bāqillānī}, pp. 91.
\item \textsuperscript{103} \textit{Luzūm hujjat al-Qur’ān wa al-tanbih ‘alā mu‘jizâtih}, Bāqillānī, \textit{I‘jāz}, p. 9.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Bāqillānī, \textit{I‘jāz}, p. 9.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Jindī, \textit{Zamakhsharī}, pp. 9-11. For more on Jurānī’s theory, see also Kermānī, \textit{Gott ist schön}, pp. 253-284.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Jindī, \textit{Zamakhsharī}, pp. 11-12.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
focused on rhetorical art, even though he did include examples of linear connections.

In light of the above, medieval scholars understood ‘naẓm’ to refer to various aspects of the Qur’an’s composition and general style, concerns which seem to be evident from the time of Jāḥiẓ. Some of these aspects, such as word-meaning relationships may not be equated with a concern for the sura as a whole, but others, such as the work of Bāqillānī on Ghāfir and Fuṣṣilat, may. Thus, ‘naẓm’ was used in connection with treatments of suras as whole units at least since the time of Bāqillānī.

The idea of naẓm initially arose in connection with Mu’tazilite theories of khalq and i’jāz. However, whereas the i’jāz theory was absorbed into Sunnism and had many proponents, the theory of createdness elicited hefty opposition and became a hallmark of the Mu’tazilites. Consequently, in medieval and some contemporary Sunni literature, discussions of naẓm seem to invariably appear in the context of i’jāz.

**Munāsaba:**

The earliest known monograph on munāsaba is al-Burhān fī munāsabat tartīb Āy al-Qur’an of Ibn al-Zubayr (d.708/1308). This work is mentioned by Zarkashī, Suyūṭī, and Biqāʾī, and is the only known monograph on the topic prior to Zarkashī. Thus, the first monograph on munāsaba seems to postdate the one on naẓm by approximately four and a half centuries.

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107 Jindī, Zamakhsharī, pp. 20-200.
108 Jindī has a whole section citing examples of linear connections outside the confines of a sentence. Although many of those examples remain within the confines of a single verse, some exceed the limits of a verse. Jindī, Zamakhsharī, pp. 201-222.
However, Zarkashi indicates that it was recognized as a Qur’anic science prior to that monograph, attributing its origins to the famous Shafi’ite, Nisaburi (d.324/936), albeit via the obscure Abu al-Hasan al-Shahrabani. He quotes:

He [Nisaburi] used to say while sitting on the chair, when a verse was recited to him: “Why was this verse placed beside this one? What is the wisdom in placing this sura next to that sura?” He used to rebuke the scholars of Baghdad for their lack of the science of munāsaba.

However, despite Nisaburi’s presumed interest in munāsaba, he has no known book on the subject; the only known monograph prior to Zarkashi is that of Ibn al-Zubayr. Bika’i does not mention this incident at all, perhaps because he considered it historically unreliable. It may indicate more about sectarian rivalries and the attempt to establish a Shafi’ite pedigree for the science, rather than acknowledge actual historical origins.

It is unclear whether munāsaba was recognized as the name of an independent Qur’anic science prior to Zarkashi, even though he mentions that the well-known Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 607/1210) took a decided interest in it. In addition to munāsaba, Razi used the term nazm as can be noted in his statement, reiterated by both Bika’i and Suyuti in order to indicate the importance he gave to munāsaba. The term also does not appear in the quotation Zarkashi attributes to Razi, but he uses the words

110 Abū Bakr ’Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Ziyād al-Nisābūrī. Also al-Naysabūrī.
111 Zarkashi, Burhān, vol. 1, p. 36.
112 Zarkashi, Burhān, vol. 1, p. 36.
114 The reference contains two occurrences of nazm, but no occurrences of munāsaba. Suyūṭī, Itqān, vol. 3, p. 323; Bika’i, Nazm, vol. 1, pp. 6-7. For occurrences of ‘nazm’ in Razi’s tafsir, see Lagarde, Index, no. 2564.
'tartībāt’ and ‘rawābiṭ’ instead.115 Thus, munāsaba gained its technical sense and the status of an independent science mainly through the efforts of Zarkashī. He placed it in a category of its own, a distinction he did not accord to nazm, despite nazm similarly having a monograph to set it apart, in fact several monographs indicating that it was an established genre.116 He thereby not only privileged munāsaba, but he also disassociates munāsaba from nazm, mentioning the latter only within the text of his section on i῾jāz. Perhaps, nazm had become too broad a concern, covering rhetorical aspects as well, so that he needed a narrower term? Or perhaps sectarian rivalries came into play? It is difficult to know the exact answer, and both or some other may have been contributing factors.

Using primarily Zarkashī, Mir has shown that the study of munāsaba, due to its ‘difficult’ nature, was cultivated by few medieval scholars, among whom Rāzī is the most prominent.117 However, Mir has also pointed out that Rāzī’s method is best described as linear-atomistic, since he only consistently links each verse to the subsequent one.118 Thus, Rāzī does not approach suras as a whole per se, even though he does display an interest in coherence. Biqā῾ī, who studied Ibn al-Zubayr’s

115 Zarkashī, Burhān, vol. 1, p. 36. The word ‘nazm’ is conspicuously absent in Zarkashī’s discussion on munāsaba, even in his choice of words attributed to Rāzī.
116 For the names of some of them see Audebert, al-Ḫaṭṭābī', pp. 58-64; Saleh, Formation, pp. 136-37, 250.
117 Mir, ‘Sūra’, pp. 211-212. ‘Subtle, precise, or delicate nature’, may be more accurate translations for ‘diqqa’, than the ‘difficult nature’, used by Mir. It is unclear why it should be more difficult or demanding than some of the other Qur’anic sciences—or some of the challenging avenues which were avidly explored by scholars, such as law, theology, philosophy, rhetoric and grammar. The descriptions of ‘difficult’ or ‘precise’ may have an apologetic dimension. They recall Ibn Taymiyya’s apologetics for using tafsīr bi῾l-ma῾thūr, in spite of his classification of tafsīr al-Qur῾ān bi῾l-Qur῾ān as superior. Ibn Taymiyya, followed by others, directs the exegete to use tafsīr bi῾l-ma῾thūr, if tafsīr al-Qur῾ān bi῾l-Qur῾ān proves too tiresome (fa in a yāk(h) dhāliik). See Ibn Taymiyya, Muqaddima, pp. 93-105. Compare also Zarkashī, Burhān, vol. 2, pp. 175-76; Suyūṭī, Itqān, vol. 4, p. 174. See also notes 138-139 below. Thus, there are nuances in the words of these scholars which imply that finding internal connections within the Qur’an is an arduous or difficult task, necessitating the use of the ma῾thūr-traditions. However, Ibn Taymiyya and his followers are not alone in regarding the Qur’an as tiresome; Carlyle also finds the Qur’an a ‘toilsome’ read. See below p. 41 and notes 176 and 177. On the other hand, the modern Dhahabi, when repeating the same idea based on Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), omits the word a yāk(h). Muhammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabi, al-Tafsīr wa῾l-mufassirūn, 8th edn (3 vols. al-Qāhira: Maktabat Wahba, 2003), vol. 1, p. 72. For more on this source, see Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ‘The Tasks and Traditions of Interpretation’ in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 181-209, p. 189-190.
work, specifies that it deals only with the connections between suras, and not with
connections between verses.\textsuperscript{119} It too does not approach suras as a whole. Therefore,
of the pre-Zarkashî exegetes, it is unclear whether one can equate \textit{munāsaba} with a
holistic concern.

However, after Zarkashî, the evidence changes; Suyūṭî mentions an exhaustive
work which treats suras as whole units: Biqā’î’s \textit{Naẓm al-durar}. This multi-volume
compendium was influential enough to have caused Suyūṭî to summarize the topic
under a very similar-sounding title, \textit{Tanāsuq al-durar fi tanāsub al-suwar}.\textsuperscript{120} Biqā’î’s
work also had antecedents, most importantly the work of Bijā’î (d. 865/1459),\textsuperscript{121} whose
method Biqā’î emulates, and which may be translated as follows:

\begin{quote}
The whole, beneficial matter of determining the verse connections
(\textit{munāsabāt}) for the entire Qur’an is that you look for the sura’s objective
(\textit{gharaḍ}), look for the preliminaries this objective needs, and ascertain the
degrees by which these preliminaries come close to the required goal.
When the words flow in the preliminaries, followed by the listener’s
attunement to the laws and related requirements in need of eloquence,
look for the healing which alleviates the trouble of studying it. This is the
whole matter governing the determining of connections between all the
Qur’an’s parts. If you do this, God willing, you will ascertain the
arrangement method (\textit{naẓm}) in detail, between each of the verses and
each of the suras.\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{119} Biqā’î is quite accurate in his observation; compare Ibn al-Zubayr, \textit{Burhān}.
\textsuperscript{120} Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭî, \textit{Tanāsuq al-durar fi tanāsub al-suwar}, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Muhammad al-Darwish, 2\textsuperscript{nd}
\textsuperscript{121} Abū al-Faḍl, Muhammad ibn Muḥammad al-Maghribī, a Mālikite scholar.
\textsuperscript{122}Biqā’î, \textit{Naẓm}, vol. 1, p.11. Şa’i’dî repeats Bijā’î’s words as the ‘rule’ for finding verse connections, but
does not attribute them to Bijā’î. Şa’i’dî, \textit{Naẓm}, p. 31.
From the above, Bijā’ī’s method revolves around identifying a central idea, various preliminary components and the relationship between them. Whereas Bijā’ī describes the central idea as an objective (gharaḍ), Biqā’ī uses a different term with a similar meaning, maqṣūd, and expands his predecessor’s method, by pointing out that the objective of every sura is contained in its name.\textsuperscript{123} The methods of both may very well be termed ‘holistic’, since they move beyond the connections between one verse and the next, and investigate the connections between larger groupings, identifying a central theme.

In spite of the occurrence of nazm in the title, and in Bijā’ī’s exposition, the Shāfi’ite Biqā’ī takes care to ground his work in the science of munāsaba, and does not classify it as an investigation into nazm. He mentions Ibn al-Zubayr’s book, in addition to Zarkashī’s and the work of other prominent Sunni scholars, mentioning their favourable evaluation of the qur’anic science. He thereby positions himself well within the scholarship of his own school and sect.\textsuperscript{124}

Vestiges of the ancient rivalry can be detected in the measures Biqā’ī takes to defend his work from criticism. He mentions his most daunting obstacles, and subsequently neutralizes them. The first is a tradition attributed to the famous Ibn ‘Abbās, via Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, which classifies exegesis into four categories, ‘a kind known to the scholars, a kind known to the Arabs, a kind no one is excused from being ignorant of it, and a kind which is known only to God: whosoever claims to know it is lying’.\textsuperscript{125} The second is a statement by a prominent scholar prohibiting (ḥaram) Qur’an interpretation without knowledge or talking about its meanings, except for qualified

\textsuperscript{123} Biqā’ī, Nazm, vol. 1, p. 12. For more on sura names, see Angelika Neuwirth, ‘Sūra(s)’, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{124} Biqā’ī, Nazm, vol. 1, pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{125} Biqā’ī, Nazm, vol. 1, p. 4. The mention of Ṭabarī as the source of his tradition is noteworthy. The same tradition with Ṭabarī as the source is also to be found in Ibn Taymiyya, Muqaddima, pp. 115. Biqā’ī does not mention Ibn Taymiyya in his introduction, but he mentions Zarkashī; however, even though Zarkashī uses this tradition, he connects it to a different source, not Tabari; Zarkashī, Burhān, vol. 2, pp. 164-170. Biqā’ī does not mention Zarkashī’s source. Perhaps, Biqā’ī expected his biggest critics to come from the proponents of Tabari’s method of interpretation. For Tabari’s method of interpretation, see below. Suyūṭī, who came after Biqā’ī, also mentions the same tradition, attributing it to Ṭabarī, but indicating that there are other sources for it as well; Suyūṭī, Itqān, vol. 4, pp. 188-193.
scholars, a statement which he considers to carry the authority of consensus. \(^{126}\) Biqā῾ī declaws them by positioning his work in the ‘scholars’ category, which he classifies as ‘good’ according to the consensus.\(^{127}\) Thus, rather than function as obstacles, these traditions bolster his authority to interpret.

In addition to these measures, Biqā῾ī links his book to the work of a famous Shāfi῾ite jurist and exegete Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286),\(^{128}\) making it a successor to it.\(^{129}\) Bayḍāwī is known to have relied heavily on another Mu‘tazilite author, Zamakhsharī.\(^{130}\) This connection seems to indicate that Biqā῾ī realized that his work had Mu‘tazilite elements and was not ashamed of it, but wished to set a precedent—one that was widely accepted and well-respected within his own school. He also describes a dream he had when he was ten years old, a dream in which he saw the angel Gabriel and the prophet Muḥammad riding two horses, and suggests that his work was facilitated by the blessings of this dream.\(^{131}\) Innovative content would thereby not be considered ‘lying’, but carries divine sanction.

In light of the above, the terms *naẓm* and *munāsaba* were both used in connection with treating suras as whole units, but not exclusively so. They were also used to designate linear-atomistic relationships, and *naẓm* was used for word-meaning relationships as well. The concern attracted few scholars, perhaps because of sectarian sensitivities. The oldest known surviving treatment of this type is Bāqillānī’s work on Suras *Ghāfir* and *Fuṣṣilat*, but the most exhaustive and significant of the medieval works of this genre is Biqā῾ī’s *Naẓm al-durar*.

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\(^{126}\) Biqā῾ī, *Naẓm*, vol. 1, pp. 4-5.

\(^{127}\) Biqā῾ī, *Naẓm*, vol. 1, p. 5.

\(^{128}\) Or d. 716/1316.

\(^{129}\) Biqā῾ī, *Naẓm*, vol. 1, p. 5.


\(^{131}\) Biqā῾ī, *Naẓm*, vol. 1, p. 5.
Modern Approaches

Even though there is evidence that Qur’anic suras were treated as whole, coherent units relatively early in Islamic history, the approach only experienced widespread dissemination more recently. The modern treatments can be located within the nineteenth and twentieth-century reform movement within Muslim societies. In general, reformers called for new Qur’anic interpretations better suited to the changing needs of their time and promoted a disentanglement of Qur’anic interpretation from tradition. They thereby opened the door for new hermeneutical methods, creating an intellectual environment more conducive for sensitive new—or in this case not so new—approaches.

Perhaps some notes on the atomistic approaches are in order. Many of them fall under the previously-mentioned type of exegesis called *tafsīr bi’l-maṭhūr* (exegesis by transmission). It is generally restricted to the transmitted interpretations of recognized, first and early second century authorities, such as ‘Ā’ishah (d. 58/678), Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687), and Suddī (d. 127/746). Ṭabarī’s work is foundational for this genre, and is generally organized in a verse-by-verse, seriatim manner. For each verse, he provides a number of different interpretations, replete with chains of transmission, going back to early authorities. The interpretations are not always congruent with each other, and can conflict. They also do not always fit the literal meaning of the text, nor the literary context, which can necessitate harmonizing between the text and the interpretation. Ṭabarī, in his introduction, makes no claim that these traditions go back to the prophet, but bases the authority of these early interpreters on their presumed superior understanding of the Arabic language.

133 Ṭabarī, *Jāmi῾ al-bayān*. For the privileged position accorded to Ṭabarī’s work, see Suyūṭi’s praise for it in ṣuyūṭī, *Itqān*, vol. 4, pp. 212-214. However, Saleh has pointed out that at a certain point in time, Tha῾labī’s commentary was more influential. Saleh, *Formation*, pp. 4-5; 205-221.
135 Ṭabarī, *Jāmi῾*, vol. 1, pp. 8-12. Interestingly, philology doesn’t seem to have a place in Ibn Taymiyya’s hierarchical classification of *tafsīr*, even though Ibn Taymiyya played a crucial role in the status accorded Ṭabarī’s *tafsīr*. See Saleh, *Formation*, pp. 215-221.
These traditions are therefore technically not classified as ḥadīth—which would imply that the chain of transmission goes back to the prophet—but as athar, from which the term maʿthūr derives. This type of transmission is often contrasted with tafsīr biʿl-raʾ (exegesis using personal opinion), often undermining the latter. Over the centuries, other commentators have added and discussed other relevant aspects of the verses, such as legal issues, but usually, the verse-by-verse sequential organization has been adhered to.

Several factors, both internal and external, may have contributed to the reemergence and proliferation of the present-day approaches to suras as whole, coherent units. Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd has sketched the intellectual environment of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the contributions of some of the major intellectual figures of the time. For the nineteenth century, two names stand out:

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136 ḥadīth (sing. ḥadīth) are traditions, which are attributed to the prophet and contain a chain of transmission going all the way back to the prophet.

137 ḍhār (lit. footprints, traces; sing. athar) are traditions, which are attributed to one of the companions of the prophet or one of the subsequent generation of successors and contain a chain of transmission going all the way back to that companion or successor.

138 Ahmad von Denffer and Abdullah Saeed classify tafsīr al-Qurʿān biʿl-Qurʿān as a form of tafsīr biʿl-maʿthūr, even though the Qurʾān is distinct from the ḍhār literature. See Ahmad von Denffer, 'Ulūm al-Qurʿān: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qurʾān, (United Kingdom: The Islamic Foundation, 2000), p. 124; Abdullah Saeed, Interpreting the Qurʾān: Towards a Contemporary Approach (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 42-49. This approach seems to be an attempt to harmonize between tafsīr al-Qurʿān biʿl-Qurʿān and the tafsīr biʿl-maʿthūr/tafsīr biʿl-raʾ dichotomy, where Qurʾān-based exegesis, such as that conducted by the Kharjītis, would fall under tafsīr biʿl-raʾ. The position of tafsīr al-Qurʿān biʿl-Qurʿān within Sunni literature is ambiguous: whereas in theory it is accorded a privileged position, in practice it is not so clear. Qurʾān-based exegetes such as the Kharjītis, are heavily criticized for rejecting the principle that the sunna can abrogate the Qurʾān and the principle of ijmāʿ. See, for example, Dahabī, al-Tafsīr waʿl-mufassirūn, vol. 2, p. 231.

139 For tafsīr biʿl-raʾ, see Zarkashi, Burhān, vol. 2, p. 161; Suyūṭī, Itqān, vol. 4, pp. 181-192; Von Denffer, 'Ulūm, p. 130-132; Ibn Taymiyya, Muqaddima, pp. 105-115. For the dynamic between the two approaches, see Saleh, Formation, pp. 16-17. Compare also Dahabī, who distinguishes between two kinds of tafsīr biʿl-raʾ: an acceptable one (jāʿ iʿā), and an unacceptable one (madhmūm). He includes Rāzī's Mafātīḥ al-ghayb and Bayḍāwī's Anwār al-tanzīl among the former, in addition to Tafsīr al-Jalālayn, of which Suyūṭī is a co-author. The Muʿtazilite tafsīrs have a primary place among the madhmūm kind. Dahabī, al-Tafsīr waʿl-mufassirūn, vol. 1, pp. 183-341.

140 Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272), for example, is known for his concern with law-related issues. See Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurṭubī, al-Jāmiʿ il-aḥkām al-Qurʾān. (20 vols. al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1960-64). Qurṭubī used Thaʿlabī; see Saleh, Formation, pp. 214-215.

141 Abū Zayd, Reformation, pp. 21-81.
Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d.1898)\textsuperscript{142} in India and Muḥammad ῾Abduh (d.1905) in Egypt. Both took a critical approach to the *ḥadīth* tradition, detaching the interpretation of the Qur’ān from its restrictions, and took an interest in modern science.\textsuperscript{143} They also advocated the use of reason, and were not averse to looking towards the rationalist heritage of the Mu῾tazilites.\textsuperscript{144} For example, Muḥammad ῾Abduh used the work of the Mu῾tazilite Zamakhsharī, when writing his own commentary.\textsuperscript{145} While Zamakhsharī had an interest in philology, ῾Abduh emphasized the Qur’ān’s textual character and contextualized it within its Arabian historical environment.\textsuperscript{146} He advocated ‘interpreting the Qur’ān by means of the Qur’ān’ (*tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi’l-Qur’ān*),\textsuperscript{147} thereby paving the way for the modern Qur’ān-centred, exegetical approaches.

While these reforms created the conditions in which the new approaches could thrive, it was nevertheless the efforts of individual exegetes which saw to their materialization in the twentieth century. Mir has pointed to six exegetes, from various parts of the Muslim world: Thanavī (d. 1943),\textsuperscript{148} Farāḥī (d. 1930)\textsuperscript{149} and Iṣlāḥī (d. 1997)\textsuperscript{150} of the Indian subcontinent, Quṭb (d. 1966)\textsuperscript{151} and Darwaza (d. 1964)\textsuperscript{152} of

\textsuperscript{142} For more on Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, see Bruce Lawrence, *The Qur’ān: A Biography* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 2006), pp. 143-150.

\textsuperscript{143} Abū Zayd, *Reformation*, pp. 27-34.


\textsuperscript{145} For more on Zamakhsharī, see Andrew Lane, ‘Working within Structure: Al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144): A Late Mu῾tazilite Quran Commentator at Work’ in Sebastian Günther (ed.), *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), pp. 347-374; *A Traditional Mu῾tazilite Qurʾān Commentary*.

\textsuperscript{146} Abū Zayd, *Reformation*, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{147} See Janssen, *Interpretation*, p. 33. Janssen sums up ‘Abduh’s method as follows: ‘The nucleus of Abduh’s exegetical system—if the word “system” may properly be used in this respect—is his hesitation in accepting material from outside the Koran itself as meaningful towards its interpretation’, Janssen, *Interpretation*, p. 25. Compare also Zarkashi, *Burḥān*, vol. 2, pp. 175-76. In his hierarchy of *tafsīr*, he ranges *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi’l-Qur’ān* as the superior method, followed by interpretations of the prophet, his companions and their immediate successors. Zarkashi does not state his source, but his wording recalls Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, pp. 93-105. Suyūṭī also uses similar wording; see Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, vol. 4, p. 174.


Egypt, and Ṣaʿīdī (d. 1958) of Iran. All six share a broadly similar, analytical approach, since they divide suras into sections, and then establish links between those sections. While Quṭb uses the term ‘miḥwar’ (literally, ‘axis, pivot’) to refer to the central idea, Farāḥī and Iṣlāḥī use the term ‘ʿamūd’ (literally, ‘column, pillar’) and Ṣaʿīdī uses ‘gharaḍ,’ recalling Bijāʾī and Biqāʾī.\textsuperscript{154}

Mir has chosen only six authors, but there are others who are worthy of mention. These include Ṣaʿīdī (b. 1894), who relied heavily on Biqāʾī, and also used naẓm in the title of his book,\textsuperscript{155} and Muḥammad Fārūq al-Zayn, author of \textit{Bayān al-naẓm fi al-Qurʾān al-karīm}.\textsuperscript{156} Similar to Bijāʾī, whose words he repeats, Ṣaʿīdī also used the word ‘gharaḍ’ when referring to the central theme, while Zayn prefers ‘miḥwar,’ similar to Quṭb. Zayn’s is a much larger work than Ṣaʿīdī’s, since in addition to addressing the central theme of a sura, he briefly explains each individual verse, tying his explanation to the preceding verses.

A small one-volume work which contains a treatment of Surat al-Baqara as a whole is that of Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh (d. 1958).\textsuperscript{157} Drāz has advocated for approaching suras as whole units and has pointed out that studying linear connections is insufficient to understand the sura, using the term \textit{munāsaba} for linear connections.\textsuperscript{158} He uses \textit{maqsad} to refer to the objectives of the sura and has identified five objectives for Surat al-Baqara, which describe the sura’s thematic flow.\textsuperscript{159} He does not identify an overarching central theme and does not apply his ideas on any suras other than al-Baqara.

\textsuperscript{153}Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabaṭabāʾī, \textit{al-Mīzān fi tafsīr al-Qurʾān} (Bayrūt: al-Matbaʿa al-Tujāriyya, n.d.).
\textsuperscript{154}Mir, ‘Ṣūra’, p. 217.
\textsuperscript{155}`Abd al-Mutaʿal al-Ṣaʿīdī, \textit{al-Naẓm al-fanni fi al-Qurʾān} (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 196-?).
\textsuperscript{158}Drāz, \textit{Nabaʾ}, p. 192-193.
\textsuperscript{159}Drāz, \textit{Nabaʾ}, p. 196-197.
Also noteworthy is Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1996), who uses the word ‘thematic’ (mawḍūʿ) to describe his approach, broadly addressing themes within each sura.\(^{160}\) Although he uses ‘thematic’, this approach differs substantially from other thematic approaches, such as Ḥassan Ḥanafī’s, which cut across the boundaries of a sura.\(^{161}\) Whereas Ghazālī treats each sura as a whole, Ḥanafī looks at each theme in isolation, following it throughout the Qur’an. However, Ghazālī does mention the other type of ‘thematic’ approach, addressing it in some of his other works,\(^{162}\) in which he tries to align the various topics in the Qur’an around five central axes.\(^{163}\) This latter approach is also related to coherence.

‘Ā’isha Ḥabib’s commentary is also a valuable contribution, even though it only covers smaller Meccan suras towards the end of the Qur’an.\(^{164}\) She adopted the literary method of her teacher, Amīn al-Khūlī (d. 1967),\(^{165}\) and treated each sura as a literary unit, taking an interest in internal structure and the relationship of various pericopes to each other.\(^{166}\) Arguing that the Qur’an is the most significant Arabic literary achievement and should be studied as such,\(^{167}\) her analysis is primarily literary in character, giving precedence to the literary context over inherited traditions.\(^{168}\)

The above authors look primarily within the boundaries of a sura for coherence, usually centred on a central theme; however, El-Awa has indicated some authors who

\(^{161}\) Ḥassan Ḥanafī, ‘Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qur’an’ in Stefan Wild (ed.), The Qur’an as Text, Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science: Texts and Studies 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 195-211.
\(^{162}\) Ghazālī, Naḥwa tafsīr mawḍūʿī, back cover (signed).
\(^{166}\) See Janssen, Interpretation, pp. 74-75.
\(^{167}\) ’Abd al-Raḥmān, al-Tafsīr al-bayānī, p. 13.
\(^{168}\) See Janssen, Interpretation, pp. 68-72.
have a different approach. These authors are convinced that a sura’s multiple topics may not necessarily be related as themes, but share more general, overarching characteristics unifying them. They include the physical and spiritual unity of their general form, as expressed in the rhythms and rhymes, in addition to their message, which exemplifies the teachings of Islam to humankind. These authors include Muṣṭafā Şādiq al-Rāfī’ī (d. 1937), Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) and Muḥammad Rajab Bayyūmī. Together with these authors, one should mention the work of Muḥammad Shaḥrūr, who has attempted to find a comprehensive compositional schema for the Qur’an. However, his approach differs from the others, due to his division of the Qur’an as we know it into four separate compositions: al-Qur’an, al-Sab’ al-Mathānī, Tafṣīl al-Kitāb and Umm al-Kitāb.

All of the above authors represent an indigenous trend, as Mir has previously mentioned in connection with his six authors. Mir has also indicated that a case could be made for indirect external influence. This is particularly true for Şa’iḍi, who explains that his book is a response to some European scholars, who faulted the Qur’an’s organization and considered it disjointed. He mentions Carlyle (d.1881) and Dozy (d.1883) by name, but does not cite specific references or give further information about them. Carlyle’s dictum on the Qur’an is well-known, and has been reiterated by several scholars:

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174 For more on Dozy, see Dr. Inayatullah (Lahore), ‘Reinhart Dozy 1820-1883’, *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 8 (1960), pp. 19-24.
I must say, it is as toilsome reading as I ever undertook. A wearisome confused jumble, crude, incondite; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement; most crude, incondite;—insupportable stupidity, in short! Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran. 176

Carlyle was not unsympathetic to Islam or to Muḥammad, which makes this evaluation so particularly severe. It is also not the only such unflattering assessment, 177 and it is conceivable that they could have functioned as strong motivation for investigations into coherence. Ṣaʿīdī was also unsatisfied with some of the existing responses, which claimed that a divine book need not follow the patterns of human compositions, and saw the need for a more compelling argument. 178 Thus, in the case of Ṣaʿīdī at least, orientalist critique formed a powerful incentive. 179 Zayn also mentions orientalist critique as a motivation, but not exclusively so, pointing out that some Muslims also have difficulties understanding the Qurʾan’s internal connections, and putting the blame partly on a preoccupation with certain traditions. 180


177 See, for example, R. A. Nicholson’s (d. 1945) quoted in Arberry, *The Holy Koran*, pp. 36-37. Reynold Alleyn Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs*, (London: Cambridge U.P., 1969), p. 161. (First edition 1907) ‘The preposterous arrangement of the Koran, to which I have already adverted, is mainly responsible for the opinion almost unanimously held by European readers that it is obscure, tiresome, uninteresting; a farrago of long-winded narratives and prosaic exhortations, quite unworthy to be named in the same breath with the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament’. See also p. 143.

178 Ṣaʿīdī, *Naẓm*, p. 3.

179 Not all orientalist critique of the Qurʾan’s internal organization is as crude as Carlyle’s; some is expressed in a more nuanced and factual way. For example, Gilliot and Larcher comment as follows: ‘The lack of narrative thread and the repetitions in the Qurʾan, when they do not provoke a negative reaction, compel the specialist to search for another organizational schema of the text, beyond that which is immediately apparent’. Gilliot and Larcher, ‘Language’, p. 127.

180 He mentions the ‘occasion of revelation material’ at some length, and repeats Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s (d. 505/1111) four factors which prevent understanding the Qurʾan: A preoccupation with accurate pronunciation, an attachment to a particular school of jurisprudence, some major sin or wrongdoing, and the restriction of the meaning of the Qurʾan to the ma thūr traditions, considering anything else to be sinful ’raʾy (personal opinion). See Zayn, *Bayān al-naẓm*, vol. 1, pp. 15-17.
In general, there is a dialogic relationship between orientalist critique and coherence discourses; the latter are in an apologetic relationship to the former, while the former respond to claims of inimitability and linguistic superiority.

In connection with orientalist response, one should also mention the work of John Wansbrough, which has had a considerable amount of scholarly attention. Similar to the ‘atomistic’ approaches, his theory also has a fragmenting character and is also in a dialogic relationship to the coherence-related approaches; he places the final composition and compilation of the Qur’an from individual fragments within the late second or early third century of Islam. He noted that the Qur’an:

... is characterized by variant traditions, but also in passages of exclusively paraenetic or eschatological content, ellipsis and repetition are such as to suggest not the carefully executed project of one or of many men, but rather the product of an organic development from originally independent traditions during a long period of transmission.

Wansbrough’s theory has been heavily criticized; for example by the historian Fred Donner, who pointed out some of the shortcomings of transposing the conclusions of biblical criticism onto the Qur’an. However, the most decisive evidence against Wansbrough’s theory is the early manuscripts dating to the first two centuries of Islam. Foremost among these is Codex Šan‘ā’ 20-33.1, a complete Qur’an manuscript from al-Jāmi‘ al-Kabīr in Šan‘ā’, which has been dated on the basis of C$^{14}$ testing and Umayyad artistic motifs to originate well within the first Islamic century.

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182 Wansbrough, Qur‘ānic Studies, p. 47.
184 The exact date is somewhat unclear, C$^{14}$ testing showing it to originate between 657 and 690 C.E. Graf von Bothmer prefers a later date of 710-715 C.E. on the basis of some illustrations, explaining that it can take years to finish writing and illustrating a manuscript. Bothmer, ‘Neue Wege’, p. 45. See also Grohmann, ‘Dating Early Qur’ans’ Der Islam (1958), pp. 213-231.
Although this information may not have been available to Wansbrough, A῾ẓamī has pointed to several dozen first-century manuscripts in various libraries around the world.\textsuperscript{185}

Mir has also suggested a more significant factor than orientalist critique for the rising interest into coherence: the need to develop new hermeneutical approaches, which are based on the Qur’an itself.\textsuperscript{186} Although the intellectual environment and the activities of the reformers played a significant role in the creation of this need, the Qur’an itself may also have contributed; there is support for this principle from within the scripture, and it may have provided an impetus for approaching suras as whole units across the ages. Zarkashī, for example, mentions verse Q. 11: 1 in support of munāsaba, which describes the Qur’an as ‘a book of which the verses are judiciously expressed and then expounded from one who is wise and an expert on all things’. Also suggestive is a verse, hostile to fragmentation, which both Mir and Barlas quote.\textsuperscript{187} Mir translates it in the beginning of his book as ‘Those who tore the Qur’an into pieces’ (Q. 15: 9).\textsuperscript{188} The immediate literary context may shed more light on the hostile dimension of the verse: ‘Say: “I am indeed one who warns clearly and without ambiguity,”—(Of just such wrath) have we revealed concerning the ones who fragment—those who have turned the Qur’an into bite-sized pieces. Therefore, by your Lord, we shall call them to account for their deeds’ (Q. 15: 89-93). The verses deliver a powerful warning against dividing the Qur’an into smaller units for consumption. The same group of verses is also quoted by Barlas, when presenting her own feminist approach, which has some intertextuality-, coherence-related features.

In the case of Bint al-Shāṭi’, a significant factor was the appearance of ‘literature’ as an academic discipline studied within modern universities, thereby creating the space for studying the Qur’an as ‘literature’. This approach has advocates outside of

\textsuperscript{185}A῾ẓamī, \textit{The History of the Qur’ānic Text}, pp. 315-18. Motzki has pointed out that the early dating of some of these manuscripts has not been generally acknowledged. Motzki, ‘The Collection of the Qur’ān’, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{186}Mir, \textit{Sūra}, pp. 218-219.

\textsuperscript{187}Barlas, \textit{Believing Women}, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{188}Mir, \textit{Coherence}, p. vii.
the Egyptian academic milieu in which it first appeared, advocates such as Mir and A. J.
Johns who seem to have arrived at it independently of each other and of Amin al-
Khuli.\footnote{Mir, ‘Literature’; A. H. Johns, ‘In search of common ground: the Qur’an as literature?’, \textit{Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations} 4 (1993), pp. 191-209.} Johns has pointed to its potential as ‘common grounds’, since it can provide a joint framework for scholars from various cultural backgrounds and faith orientations. Perhaps, this potential can be noted in the parallels between the work of 'Abd al-
Rahman and Neuwirth, which share a similar treatment of oaths in the Meccan suras.\footnote{Lamia Kandil, ‘Die Schwure in den Mekkanischen Suren’ in Stefan Wild (ed.), \textit{The Qur’an as Text}, Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science: Texts and Studies 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 41-57, p. 48. See also Angelika Neuwirth, ‘Images and metaphors in the introductory sections of the Makkani sūras’ in G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (eds), \textit{Approaches to the Qur’an} (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 3-36. Compare also Soraya M. Hajjaji-Jarrah, ‘The Enchantment of Reading: Sound Meaning, and Expression in Sūrat al-ʿĀdiyāt’ in Issa J. Boullata (ed.), \textit{Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur’an} (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), pp. 228-251. In none of these articles, is the term ‘holistic’ (or its German cognate) used to describe the author’s approach. Rather, they locate themselves within the general, broader area of the literary approaches to the Qur’an.}

Neuwirth’s work on the form and structure of the Qur’an stands out, in particular on the sura as a unity and as a genre.\footnote{Angelika Neuwirth, ‘Some Remarks on the Special Linguistic and Literary Character of the Qur’an’ in Andrew Rippin (ed.), \textit{The Qur’an: Style and Contents}, Lawrence I. Conrad (ed.), Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 24 (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2001), pp. viii, 253-257; translated by Gwendolin Goldbloom from ‘Einige Bemerkungen zum besonderen sprachlichen und literartischen (sic) Character des Koran’ \textit{Deutscher Orientalistentag 1975} (Stuttgart, 1977); Angelika Neuwirth, ‘Form and Structure of the Qur’an’ in \textit{EQ}, vol.2, pp. 245-266; ‘Sūra(s)’; ‘Structural, Linguistic and Literary Features’.} Her work is significant not only for its assessment of the current state of the scholarship, but also for its profound contribution to the field. She briefly sketches European scholarship leading up to her approach, particularly the work of Theodor Nöldeke (d. 1936).\footnote{Neuwirth, \textit{Some Remarks}, p. 255.} The impact of the latter’s work was far-reaching, and is even used by Amin al-Khuli.\footnote{Khulli, \textit{Manāhij tajdīd}, p. 308; Nöldeke, \textit{Geschichte des Qorans}.} Thus there are two established scholarly traditions of approaching the Qur’an as literature and suras as whole literary unities: an oriental and an occidental, which have a meeting point in his work. However, Nöldeke did not go beyond discussing various stylistic aspects and approaching the sura as a whole when constructing his relative chronology. A closer early parallel to Neuwirth’s approach is to be found in the work of Jacques Jomier, who


While Neuwirth approached Meccan suras as whole literary units,\footnote{See, for example, Angelika Neuwirth, ‘Referentiality and Textuality in \textit{Sūrat al-Ḥijr}: Some observations on the Qur’ānic “Canonical Process” and the Emergence of a Community’ in Issa J. Boullata (ed.), \textit{Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qurān}\ (Richmond: Curzon, 2000). Her work on Sūrat al-Rahmān also stands out, for example, ‘Qur’ānic Readings of the Psalms’. See also Neuwirth, \textit{Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren}.} for the long Medinan suras, such as al-Baqara, she suggests that they ‘cease to be neatly structured compositions, but appear to be the result of a process of collection that we cannot yet reconstruct’.\footnote{Neuwirth, ‘Sūra(s)’, p. 174.} On the other hand, scholars such as Robinson\footnote{Neal Robinson, \textit{Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text} (London: SCM Press, 1996). See also El-Awa’s overview of his work in El-Awa, \textit{Textual Relations}, pp. 22-24.} and Zahniser\footnote{Zahniser, ‘Major Transitions’.} treat al-Baqara as a whole, coherent unit, and will be discussed in connection with the sura in Chapters 3 and 5 below.

While some treatments are preoccupied with central themes, others are not. For example, El-Awa has demonstrated that a central theme is not necessary to show coherence of long suras, since each passage can have a contextual impact on preceding and subsequent passages, adding to the recipient’s understanding of the whole.\footnote{El-Awa, \textit{Textual Relations}, pp. 38ff.} She has applied her ideas to two suras, al-Aḥzāb and al-Qiyāma, subdividing them into sections and investigating the relationships between the various passages. Navid Kermani also does not look for a central theme, but focuses on the artistic quality of the text in its received form, using among others, ideas from Russian formalism.\footnote{Kermani, \textit{Gott ist schön}, pp. 149-165.} Undoubtedly, these works have made a valuable contribution; however, the positing of a central theme may still provide useful insights into coherence and the Qur’ān’s organization.
**Biblical Approaches**

In all the above works, the term ‘holistic’ appears rarely, and the bulk of these authors do not use it in connection with their work. However, in biblical studies, the term is quite well established. Moshe Greenberg was one of the earliest to use it, and has even placed it in the title of his article, ‘Ezekiel 17: A Holistic Interpretation’.  

It appears in other studies as well, such as J. Hoftijzer’s ‘Holistic or Compositional Approach?: Linguistic Remarks to the Problem’. However, some authors seem reluctant to use it, such as Rolf Rendtorff, who uses ‘as a whole’ instead, as for example, in his chapter title ‘The Pentateuch as a Whole’. Interestingly, ‘holistic’ is applied to Rendtorff’s chapter by John L. McLaughlin, who wrote the abstract of Rendtorff’s article for *Old Testament Abstracts*. The term is also applied to one of two broad general approaches to the Bible, as in the work of Aulikki Nahkola, who contrasts between ‘holistic’ approaches and those that stress the heterogeneous nature of the biblical texts.

In order to gain some idea of these approaches, a brief look at their history and development may prove useful. Both trends can be located within the broad, general area of the literary approaches to the Bible. Non-holistic approaches generally fall under the term ‘biblical criticism’ and have taken on a historical character. Nahkola has pointed out, that biblical criticism was centred on the double narratives phenomenon in the Hebrew Scriptures, and has explored the connection between the work of each scholar and the intellectual environment in which it was conceived.

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204 OTA21-1998-JUN-717, issued by ATLA 20050715, OTA0000021766.
206 More specifically ‘how biblical criticism is indebted to conceptual models and its intellectual context’, Nahkola, *Double Narratives*, p. 4. See also his entire introduction, pp. 1-5.
One of the earliest names associated with the rise of biblical criticism is Benedict Spinoza (d.1677), who is sometimes accorded the epithet ‘father of biblical criticism’. He commented on the occurrence of double narratives, explaining their inconsistencies as the result of collation from different sources, thereby challenging the traditional claims of Mosaic authorship and the integrity of the Bible. Spinoza’s observations clashed with existing ideas of scriptural authority and dogmatic exegesis, since he saw reason as the only proper foundation for human religion. Nahkola has pointed out that Spinoza lived in the intellectual environment of the late Renaissance or early Enlightenment, with the epoch’s preoccupation with reason and scientific methodology. His approach does not differ much from that of a natural scientist, observing and documenting the repetitions as if they were natural phenomena, and the Bible a profane text.

Countering Spinoza, Richard Simon and Jean Astruc attempted to preserve the authority of scripture, while explaining the double narrative phenomenon. Whereas Astruc hypothesized that Moses used documents in his compilation of Genesis, Simon proposed that it was put together by inspired editors, who used Moses’s own work in addition to other documents from the Israelite archives for the creation of the Pentateuch. Although these two writers regained some measure of authority for the

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207 Spinoza is also known as Baruch Spinoza, the name he was given when he was born. After his herem (excommunication from the Jewish community), he took the name Benedictus (Benedict).


209 Nahkola, Double Narratives, pp. 6, 89. For Spinoza’s original works, see Benedictus de Spinoza, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus: Continens Dissertationes aliquot, quibus ostenditur Libertatem Philosophandi non tantum salva Piate, & Reipublicae Pace posse conced; sed eandum nisi cum Pace Reipublicae, ipsaque Piate tolle non posse (Hamburgi: Apud Henricum Künraht, 1670).


211 Nahkola, Double Narratives, p. 86.

212 In biblical studies, ‘profane’ is regularly used as the opposite of ‘divine,’ ‘sacred’ or ‘holy,’ and means ‘not connected to religion, the divine, or sacred rituals’. It does not have negative connotations in this context.

213 Nahkola, Double Narratives, p. 91.

214 Nahkola, Double Narratives, p. 92. For the original works, see Richard Simon, Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1685; first published in Paris in 1678); Jean Astruc,
biblical text, they similarly attributed double narratives to the book’s composition from multiple sources, thereby contributing to the perception of the biblical text as fragmented or incoherent with regard to composition.

Subsequent scholarship further strengthened the connection between parallel narratives and multiple sources, particularly through the work of Julius Wellhausen, who presented a full treatment of doublets and a coherent theory for their presence in the Hebrew Scriptures.215 Whereas Wellhausen stressed the written nature of the documents, Hermann Gunkel focused on the oral character of composition, explaining the double narratives as the result of permutations due to oral intervention.216 His approach was elaborated by many subsequent scholars, some of whom used folklore studies to explain the repetitions.217 These two approaches have become important features of biblical scholarship today, and underline the composite nature of the biblical text.

Patricia Tull has pointed out relevant aspects of the intellectual environment from the second half of the eighteenth century up to the early twentieth century, in particular, the preoccupation with the notion of originality sometimes referred to as ‘influence theory’.218 Critics considered ‘originality’ as the true indicator of an author’s genius, and texts were searched for ‘influences’, privileging the earlier ‘influencing’ texts. Tull connects this concern with the Enlightenment spirit of independence and

Conjectures sur les Mémoires originaux dont il paroit que Moyse s’est servi pour composer le Livre de la Genèse (Bruxelles: Fricx, 1753).

215 This general theory is commonly known as the Documentary Hypothesis. Nahkola, Double Narratives, pp. 12-16. Wellhausen, Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels. Wellhausen also worked on a similar, source-critical approach to the hadith and akhbār narrative material on early Islamic origins, but this theory has not experienced the success of the Documentary hypothesis; the trend seems to be more in the direction of a tradition-critical approach, such as in the work of Harald Motzki. For more on the source-critical, tradition-critical and other approaches to early Islamic origins, see Donner, Narratives of Islamic Origins, pp. 1-31. See also Wellhausen, Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams; Das arabische Reich und seinen Sturz.

216 See Hermann Gunkel, Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit (Göttingen, 1895).

217 Nahkola, Double Narratives, pp. 23-54.

the associated distrust of tradition common to this era. This separation from human tradition and institutions is applied to the classical biblical prophets, whom Wellhausen romantically portrays as solitary individuals acting as God’s mouthpieces, in his attempt to isolate their ‘original’ sayings from subsequent scribal accretions.

‘Influence theory’ falls in the general category of author-oriented approaches, which are concerned with uncovering the meaning that an author intended for a text. Today, there is a stronger emphasis on the role of the reader in the creation of meaning, so that the reader is now considered an active participant in the process. This change is sometimes expressed by the catchy phrase ‘death of the author’, which was originally the title of an article by the literary theorist and philosopher, Roland Barthes. The shift from author- to reader-oriented approaches is also reflected in the modern holistic approaches, which treat the Bible as a whole text, independent of origins. They are also known as synchronic approaches, since they are largely ahistorical in nature, and are contrasted with the historical, diachronic approaches, which emphasize the Bible’s collation from multiple sources and its development through time.

Nahkola has pointed to the diversity of the ‘holistic’ approaches, loosely identifying two groups. The first is represented by Umberto Cassuto, Samuel Sandmel, Moses Hirsch Segal and Roger Norman Whybray, who rejected Wellhausen’s theory and emphasized authorial intent. The second group includes Robert Alter and David Damrosch, who exemplify the new literary criticism. This

trend has emerged as a major force in the study of the Hebrew Scriptures in the last decades, partly due to the efforts of Alter, whose work has been described as the ‘watershed’ of the literary approaches to the Bible; whereas prior to the publication of his book there were some sporadic attempts at literary investigations, afterwards there was a marked increase, suggesting a movement.\textsuperscript{228} It is perhaps the strength of this latter trend that had caused some authors to suggest a paradigm shift more than a decade ago;\textsuperscript{229} however, few would go so far today.\textsuperscript{230}

The biblical and the Qur’anic holistic approaches share some commonalities; both are predicated on the notion that there is more to the text when studied as a whole than there is when looking at its component parts. They also share an exuberance and enthusiastic appreciation of each text’s literary qualities. While Robert Alter has done much to bring attention to the Bible’s literary artistry; for the Qur’an, the work of Sayyid Qutb is a prime example of similar accomplishment.\textsuperscript{231}

The holistic approaches are also not devoid of interaction with their intellectual environment, but are in conversation with the fragmenting approaches and have an apologetic dimension, functioning as a defense against the undermining of the integrity and authority of scripture. While they can display a criticism of the ‘fragmenting’ ones, the nature and degree of criticism can vary. The Qur’anic coherence-related approaches are often accommodating of the fragmented ones, for example, the modern Ghazālī even claiming that his interpretation ‘does not replace atomistic interpretation; rather it completes it, and is to be considered an effort to be joined to

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the [previous] appreciable efforts’.

On the other hand, Mir and Iṣlāḥī seem to take a more critical stance, the former even quoting a qur’ānic verse hostile to fragmentation. The biblical literary approaches can be disapproving of the fragmenting ones, some even disparagingly terming them ‘excavative’ scholarship. On the other hand, scholars such as Robert Cohn are more accommodating, and have pointed out that the literary approaches do not stand alone, but are supported by the other critical methods.

In addition to anchoring the qur’ānic approaches within the broader context of the Abrahamic scriptural tradition, the above-mentioned insights into the history of biblical criticism may also shed light on Wansbrough’s ideas. His theories are perhaps best understood within the conceptual framework of biblical criticism, in which repetitions signify multiple sources and a protracted editorial process. Although his late second or early third century date is no longer tenable, his work has contributed much to the enlivenment of qur’ānic studies and establishes a dialogical connection between qur’ānic and biblical studies. For the purposes of this study, Wansbrough’s most significant contribution is the word ‘organic’, which he applies to the historical process of Qur’ān compilation from originally independent traditions. In this study, ‘organic’ will be similarly used to describe the Qur’ān, however, in connection with its literary style, in particular its distinctive, non-linear organization of ideas.

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233 Q. 15: 9; see also p. 43 and note 188 above.


Conclusion:

In light of the above, coherence is a known concern in the study of the Qur’ān, as can be noted in the use and promulgation of several terms. The term ‘holistic’ is one that has recently made its debut into the field of Qur’ānic studies, but has yet to be established. Mir, who brought the coherence-related approaches to the attention of western scholarship, was the first to use this term, but did so only in passing, preferring to use the expression ‘as a unity’ instead. A second scholar, Asma Barlas has also used it in her work, which has a feminist character. While ‘holistic’ is not widely used within Qur’ānic studies, it is well-established in the study of the Bible. Some biblical scholars display a similar reluctance to use the term; however it does not seem to have affected its proliferation.

In the Muslim tradition, two terms were used in connection with these concerns: ṇazm and munāsaba, and there is some evidence of sophisticated treatments in medieval times, particularly Biqā’i’s Naẓm al-durar. However, the approach only seems to have experienced wide-spread diffusion in the twentieth century, due to a variety of factors. These include changes in the general intellectual environment which encouraged the appearance of new hermeneutical methods centred on the Qur’ān, provocative orientalist critique, the establishment of literature as an academic discipline in modern universities, in addition to the emergence of feminist approaches to the Qur’ān, as in the work of Barlas.

Contemporary coherence-related approaches can be quite diverse, engaging scholars from various geographic locations, cultural backgrounds and faith orientations. Some are strongly connected to tradition, as can be noted in their focus on using the term ‘naẓm’, while others locate themselves within the modern field of literary studies. Then again, some identify a central theme, while others are more concerned with thematic sub-units. However, they all share one characteristic: a preoccupation with exploring how the various parts of the text connect and fit together. All the holistic approaches are predicated on an assumption that there is an added value in examining
the text as a whole, as opposed to when it is restricted to its component units, and they are all concerned with discovering this added value.

Like any discourse, studies into coherence are not devoid of interaction with other discourses, but are in communication with other approaches within their intellectual environment, including the atomistic ones. In turn, this conversation can vary; while some writers see atomistic and coherence-related approaches complementing each other, others seem conscious of a sense of rivalry, using various means to defend their preferred approach. Thus, Bīqā῾ī, for example, takes measures to shield his work from criticism: not from rival factions, but from within his own Sunni sect. The main critics that he fears seem to be proponents of the traditional, atomistic, transmission method of interpretation (tafsīr bi’l-maʿthūr), who generally display anti-Muʿtazilite sentiments. The idea of naẓm initially arose in Muʿtazilite circles, which may have discouraged it within some Sunni circles.

Biqā῾ī’s defensive tactics were largely successful, and his work was well-received within the Sunni faction of the scholarly community, as can be noted in Suyūṭī’s praise for it, and his appropriation and rewriting of the work in his own separate composition. Conversely, Suyūṭī also praises Ṭabarī’s atomistic commentary very highly, considering it ‘the most sublime and the greatest of exegetical works’. He also disparages Rāzī’s commentary, reiterating ‘it contains everything but exegeses’, and then uses him to argue for the excellence of munāsaba.

Perhaps an answer for this eclecticism can be found in what Saleh has so aptly termed the genealogical nature of the exegetical tradition: a dialogic relationship between each author and the tradition as a whole, so that no exegete embarking on a project similar to Suyūṭī’s could ignore any major component in it. Calder had earlier commented on this characteristic as follows:

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237 Ajall al-tafsīr wa aʾzamuhā; Suyūṭī , Itqān, vol. 4, p. 212.
238 Fīh kull shayʾ illā al-tafsīr; Suyūṭī , Itqān, vol. 4, p. 213.
239 Saleh, Formation, pp. 14-23.
'The process of citing authorities and providing multiple readings is in part a declaration of loyalty: it defines the tradition within which one works. It is also a means to establish the individuality or the artistry of a given *mufassir:* the selection, presentation and organization of citations constitute always a process that is unique to one writer. Finally, it is, of itself, one element in a theological message: the possibility of a community and the text to contain multiplicity while remaining one community and one text is thereby asserted'\textsuperscript{240}

It is perhaps this characteristic which permitted the existence of a variety of exegetical approaches side by side, and allowed the absorption and promulgation of the contemporary investigations into coherence and approaches to suras as whole units. Thus, we see the proliferation of commentaries such as that of Quṭb, while the propagation of *tafsīr bi’l-maṭḥūr* can be noted in the popularity of the commentary of Ibn Taymiyya’s student, Ibn Kathīr, which has been summarized by no less than three modern authors.\textsuperscript{241}

There are some parallels between the biblical and qur’anic holistic and coherence-related approaches. Both can often be located under the literary umbrella, even though more authors in the biblical field identify their approach as literary, while fewer in the qur’anic ones do. They also both occasion some tension with the fragmenting approaches within their intellectual environment. While the fragmented, ‘atomistic’ approaches to the Qur’an were predominantly those of a religious orthodoxy or orientalists, the fragmenting approaches to the Bible were not generally religious in

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nature and were often conducted by historians or biblical critics. However, practitioners of both Qur’anic and biblical holistic and coherence-related approaches were successful in negotiating an intellectual environment inclined towards fragmentation, gaining recognition and establishing their methods within it.
CHAPTER 3

Methodological Observations: On Intertextuality, Divine Self-Revelatory and Pedagogical Readings

The previous chapter presented a brief overview of coherence-related approaches to the Qur’an, indicating that they can often be located within the general category of literary approaches. This chapter will be more concerned with the reading undertaken in this study, locating it within, and in conversation with, other literary approaches. It will also propose a new reading framework—the divine self-revelatory and pedagogical readings—within which to explore Surat al-Baqara in subsequent chapters, connecting these readings and previously established scholarship.

Literary investigations into the Qur’an have a long history; they include many of the medieval works mentioned in the previous chapter, such as those of Jāḥiẓ, Bāqillānī, Jurjānī, and Zamakhsharī. However, they differ from literary investigations today, in the sense that there is little consciousness of literature as an independent academic discipline; it was rather a preoccupation with the Qur’an that stimulated literary discoveries and lead to the development of Arabic literary theory. On the other hand, in modern universities today, literature has lost its umbilical connection to religious doctrine, developing profane tools and methods with which to study any

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242 See Kadi and Mir, ‘Literature and the Qur’an’, p. 206. Andrew Rippin states: ‘Arabic Literary Theory—and there has been an extensive history of it—appears to have evolved out of a dogmatic need to prove the superlative literary merits of the Qur’an.’ Rippin, ‘Qur’an as Literature’, 39. A preoccupation with the Qur’an may have provided the impetus for other disciplines as well. John Burton states: ‘Exegesis aspiring to become history, gave us sīra, and in exactly the same sort of way, exegesis aspiring to be law, gave us fiqh.’ John Burton, ‘Law and Exegesis: The Penalty for Adultery in Islam’ in G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (eds), Approaches to the Qur’an (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 269-284, p. 271. See also Saleh on the seminal role of Qur’anic commentary for Islamic thought. Saleh, Formation, p. 2.

243 See Chapter 2, note 212.
text. It is this characteristic which gives them a special significance in today’s intellectual environment; even though they are not necessarily devoid of religious undertones, their conscious application of profane treatments makes them imminently suitable as common ground for scholars of various faith orientations.\footnote{See A. H. Johns, ‘In search of common ground: the Qur’an as literature?’, \textit{Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations} 4 (1993), pp. 191-209. This optimistic view is not shared by all scholars; for example, Andrew Rippin sees ‘little middle ground for genuine intellectual interchange’. Rippin, ‘Qur’an as Literature’, p. 41. However, for Rippin, the literary approaches are exemplified in the methodologies of John Wansbrough, which have been highly criticized, and not only in the Muslim world, which may explain his pessimism. (See Chapter 2)} It is therefore an appropriate choice for this study, which engages a variety of discourses, not only from the domain of Qur’anic studies, but also from biblical scholarship.

The literary aspects of the Qur’an have also received an increasing amount of scholarly attention in recent years, particularly aspects such as literary structures and poetic devices. For example, Wadad Kadi (al-Qāḍī) and Mustansir Mir have pointed to a number of literary features and devices, such as metaphors, chiasmus and repetitions.\footnote{Kadi and Mir, ‘Literature and the Qur’an’, pp. 205-213. The inclusio and the \textit{Leitwort}, the repetitions which are central to this study, are not discussed in that article.} Issa Boullata has similarly discussed literary structures in the Qur’an, and has noted the connection between the transtextual character of the Qur’an and its repetitions, since repetitions can evoke echoes from other Qur’anic passages, either from within the same sura or from other suras.\footnote{Issa J. Boullata, ‘Literary Structures of the Qur’an’ in \textit{EQ}, vol. 3, pp. 192-205, pp. 199-201.} The approach undertaken in this study bears some similarity to such approaches, since certain repetitive devices will be studied in detail here, lending it some of its literary character. However, other than these repetitions, the study of artistic features and poetic devices will not be a focal point. Rather, the literary character of this study stems mainly from its methodological and theoretical framework, incorporating insights from the domain of literary theory, as distinct from the technical details of literary devices and structures.

The connection between the Qur’an and literary theory is not new—Andrew Rippin advocated reception theory as early as 1983.\footnote{Rippin, ‘Qur’an as Literature’.} Moreover, Neuwirth has engaged Rippin’s proposals, developing her own well-argued methods in several recent
articles. Also recently, Peter Wright used a comparable approach, exploring some Qur’anic-biblical allusions. These authors have shown an interest in examining the connections between the Bible and the Qur’an and have some familiarity with biblical studies, where literary theory is reasonably well-established. However, in general, the use of literary theory in the study of the Qur’an is still in its embryonic stages, except when it comes to the use of intertextuality, as can be noted in the term’s proliferation in recent years.

Contemporary literary theory has provided new methods for reading texts, and viewing their relationships to other texts and other readings. One of these developments, the distinction between author- and reader-oriented approaches, has been mentioned before in Chapter 2. Here, they will be revisited, but in conversation with the work of other scholars with the purpose of clarifying the method used in this study. These works include ‘Ā’isha ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s al-Tafsīr al-bayānī, in which she applies the methodology of her teacher, Amīn al-Khūlī, probably the earliest of the modern, consciously literary approaches. They also include two articles by Andrew Rippin: ‘The Qur’an as literature’, in which he introduces reception theory, and ‘The Methodologies of John Wansbrough’, in which he expounds Wansbrough’s unusual literary approach. Last, but not least is Angelika Neuwirth’s ‘Referentiality and Textuality in Surat al-Ḥidjr’ and ‘Oral Scriptures’ in Contact: The Qur’anic Story of the Golden Calf and its Biblical Subtext between Narrative, Cult and Inter-Communal Debate’. Her approach is difficult to classify either as reader- or author-oriented, since she investigates the listener’s to the Qur’an, albeit not the present-day one, but rather the initial seventh-century, community response.

250 For example, Kadi and Mir do not address literary theory in the EQ article ‘Literature and the Qur’an’, which could indicate the dearth of studies applying ideas from contemporary literary theory in connection with the Qur’an.
Bint al-Shāṭi’ sums up her, or rather Khūlí’s, method in four points, some of which are congruent with the approach used here, while others are not. In common with Bint al-Shāṭi’, this study will give precedence to the literary context when determining meaning, and will discard traditional ‘bi’l-ma’thūr interpretations when they do not fit the literal meaning of the text. Bint al-Shāṭi’ also qualifies the qur’ānic words as Arabic, and when determining their meaning, gives precedence to the ‘intertextual’ meaning, deduced by examining the word’s various occurrences in the Qur’an. On the few occasions that problematic words will be investigated in this study, it will follow this method.

The main difference is in Bint al-Shāṭi’’s diachronic approach to the verses, since she stresses the importance of chronology and connecting the verses to the historical setting in which they emerged. On the other hand, here a reader-oriented approach will be used, and the focus will be on the text as we have it today, so that its initial historical circumstances become less important, and its chronological organization even less so. She describes a thematic approach (mawḍūʿ), in which all the verses on a given topic are gathered and studied together, disregarding their placement within the sura. Oddly, she does not actually apply it in her own commentary, but organizes her book on a sura basis in the traditional manner. The approach taken here is also sura-centric, and is not thematic in the sense that it does not gather all the qur’ānic material on given topics, so that it does not cut across the boundaries of a sura, except when attempting to explain certain problematic words or concepts.

Using the ideas of Hans Robert Jauss, Rippin has advocated situating the Qur’an within a twentieth century reader-response theory (reception theory) which is a preoccupation with the reader’s response to a text, not only in terms of negotiating the text’s meaning, but also with the history of its reception. Like other previously-mentioned reader-oriented approaches, the reader is thereby not merely a passive

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253 By historical circumstances, Bint al-Shāṭi’ clarifies that she does not mean the ‘occasion of revelation’ literature (asbāb al-nuzūl), but prefers the general sense of the words over the transmitted traditions (al-‘ibra fīh bi-‘umūm al-lafẓ, lā bi-khuṣūs al-sābab). ‘Abd al-Rahmān, al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī, pp. 10-11.
254 Compare also Khūlí, Manāhij tajdid, pp. 231-233.
listener, but an active co-creator of its meaning. Although he acknowledges the value of studies which attempt to uncover the author’s intention, or how the Qur’an’s earliest audience understood it, for Rippin the focus should be on the current, twentieth-century response—or rather, in this case, the twenty-first century response.\textsuperscript{255}

The approach in this study is similar to that advocated by Rippin; it should be viewed in terms of a twenty-first century response to the Qur’an. It is thereby a reader-oriented approach, in which the reader is to be located within the twenty-first century, as opposed to the Qur’an’s initial, seventh-century audience. However, it differs substantially from the only clear example Rippin gives for approaching the Qur’an as literature: the methodologies of John Wansbrough.\textsuperscript{256}

Wansbrough’s approach is difficult to classify as ‘reader-oriented’, just as it is difficult to similarly classify the parallel biblical diachronic approaches. Both are preoccupied with sources, original authors or redactors, and the genesis of the texts, and are more fittingly described as author-oriented. In the biblical diachronic approaches, there is no clear consensus on the division, dating and authorship of the text’s compositional sub-units, just as Wansbrough, the only significant scholar to put forward a similarly ‘biblical’ diachronic theory for the Qur’an, did not come up with a concrete scheme identifying such details. In general, reader-oriented approaches, particularly if the reader is located in the twenty-first century, receive the text ‘as is’, and do not delve into redaction criticism or other methods of how the text came to be put together. Even though Rippin’s proposal of using reception theory is compelling and Wansbrough’s theories are not without interest, the relationship between the two methodologies is not entirely clear. Whereas there are some parallels between the methodology of this study and Rippin’s proposal, Wansbrough’s theory serves more as a contrast to help clarify the distinction between reader- and author-oriented approaches.

\textsuperscript{255} Rippin, ‘The Qur’an as literature’, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{256} Rippin does not mention the work of Amin al-Khuli or his students, even though their work was brought to the attention of the western scholarly community by Janssen, \textit{Interpretation}. 
While Wansbrough is the only significant scholar to propose a theory which spreads the genesis of the Qur’an over several centuries, Angelika Neuwirth also approaches the Qur’an diachronically, but limits the time-line of her investigations to the Meccan and Medinan periods. Among the literary approaches to the Qur’an, her work stands out, not only in terms of scope, but also for its meticulous scholarship and attention to detail. Her method resembles that of Bint al-Shāṭi’—as has previously been recognized—even though there is no indication of any dependency between them. However, when viewed together, if one could consider Bint al-Shāṭi’ as laying out the initial foundation, then in Neuwirth’s work the approach has reached a highly-developed, mature zenith.

Both scholars stress the importance of chronology and the historical context in determining meaning, Neuwirth using the term ‘listener-response’ and contrasts it with Rippin’s ‘reader-response’. By replacing ‘reader’ with ‘listener’, she not only brings in nuances of orality and a conversational dimension, but she also ties the listening experience to that of the early communities of the Meccan and Medinan periods, and the variety of religious identities that these communities entail. For Neuwirth, chronology takes on a special significance in relation to what she has explained as the intertextual nature of the qur’anic texts, where thematically related passages are in a dialogic relationship with each other, functioning as a type of commentary or ‘exegetical’ method. Her approach is vertical, in the sense that the chronologically later texts function as a kind of commentary on the earlier ones.

The method used in this study similarly presupposes a high degree of intertextuality, but in a synchronic sense. As opposed to a vertical direction of exegesis,

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257 See, for example, their similar treatment of oaths in Meccan sūras. Kandil, ‘Die Schwure’, p. 48.
259 Neuwirth uses the terms hypertext and hypotext, indicating that the earlier parts become ‘hypotexts’ of the later ones, while the later parts become ‘hypertexts’ commenting upon them. Neuwirth, ‘Oral Scriptures’, p. 72. ‘Hypertext’ was coined in the 1960s, and is generally used in connection with computers, referring to text which links electronically to other text(s) or images, and could potentially provide the user with fast and easy access to a veritable network of information. See George P. Landow, Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp. 2–6. While ‘hypertext’ is well-known, ‘hypotext’ is not, and may have been coined as an opposite to hypertext.
it will assume a horizontal one, in which texts located in a sequentially later position function as commentaries on former texts. Not only will the known ordering of the Qur’anic verses and suras not need to be changed, but we will be dealing with the Qur’an in its universally recognized, acknowledged form: the form it reached at the end of the composition process, and which could even be considered an integral part of this process. Thus, verses located sequentially later in the final composition will expound, elaborate and explain verses in an earlier position, while verses located in a sequentially earlier position will introduce later verses.

Since the term intertextuality is relatively new, and is of some relevance to this study, perhaps some observations on its use and scope are in order. It was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966, in connection with her work on the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin.\textsuperscript{260} The term has come to encompass a variety of meanings and definitions, and can refer to almost any relation between two texts, such as allusion, parody and quotation.\textsuperscript{261} Today, some intertextual theorists exclude some forms of textual echoing—precisely influence, sources and plagiarism.\textsuperscript{262} Of these three terms, influence theory is often used as a contrast to intertextuality, particularly in biblical studies, where ‘intertextuality’ is well-established.\textsuperscript{263} In the field of Qur’anic studies, the term is much more recent, and is generally used to refer to two different kinds of textual relations: either the internal relations between passages located within the Qur’an, or the external relations between the Qur’an and other texts, such as the Bible, the prophetic ḥadīth, or the isrā ’īlīyāt material.

Perhaps to distinguish between these two different kinds of textual relations, some authors have come to use other, similar terms: ‘transtextuality’ and

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\textsuperscript{262} Hutcheon, ‘Intertextuality’, p. 349.

\textsuperscript{263} For more on influence theory in biblical fields of study, see Tull, ‘Intertextuality’, pp. 66-68.
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‘intratextuality’. These terms are neither as wide-spread nor as central to the history of literary theory as ‘intertextuality’, and could perhaps be considered nuances which stress the external or the internal aspect respectively. Usually, an author will stick to one or other of the three terms throughout a single work to refer to the same kind of textual relation, and an alternative term for the other textual relation. For example, Jane Dammen McAuliffe uses ‘intra-textuality’ to refer to relations within the Qur’an, and ‘transtextuality’ for relations between the Qur’an and other texts, but notes that the latter is closer to the way she had been using ‘intertextuality’. Other authors who use or have used the intertextual terminology, whether nuanced or otherwise, include Abdel Haleem, Barlas, Boullata (above), Reuven Firestone, Ingrid Mattson, Neuwirth (above), John Reeves, and Michael Sells. In this study, ‘intertextuality’ will be similarly used, in its internal sense, while the Qur’an’s external


266 Muhammad Abdel Haleem, Understanding the Qur’an: Themes and Style (London: I. B. Taurus, 1999), p. 158.

267 Barlas uses ‘intra-textuality’ to refer to the Qur’an’s internal connections, and ‘intertextuality’ for its relationship to the hadith and other material. See, for example, Barlas, Believing Women, p. 18, 63.

268 Firestone does not distinguish between influence theory and intertextuality, but claims that the basic approach of intertextual studies acknowledges influence from other sources. Reuven Firestone, Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis (Albany: State University of New York Press, c1990), pp. 18-19. Some authors do include influence among the various forms of intertextuality. For example, Allen considers Harold Bloom’s The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) to be an intertextual approach. Allen, Intertextuality, 133-141. On the other hand Bernardelli does not. Bernardelli, ‘Introduction’, pp. 11-12. Literary theorist, Linda Hutcheon explains the difference between intertextuality and influence very clearly; she ties influence to the author-oriented approaches, and intertextuality to the reader-oriented approaches, and provides an excellent example to illustrate the difference. While in influence theory, it is always the older text which influences the newer one, in intertextuality it is the reader’s reading history that comes into play, not the author’s. If the reader has read the more recent text first, it will shape the meaning of the other. Hutcheon, ‘Intertextuality’, pp. 349-351.


270 John Reeves (ed.), Bible and Qur’an: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). Although the term is in the title, it rarely makes an appearance in the articles within the book.

271 Sells uses the term to refer to the internal, aural relations in the Qur’an. Sells, ‘A Literary Approach to the Hymnic Sūras of the Qur’an’, pp. 3-25.
textual relations with other texts such as the Bible, the ḥadīth or the Isrāʾ īlyyāt material will not be a focus of investigation.  

While the ‘intertextual’ terminology stems from literary theory, the Qurʾan’s internal relationships have been referred to in other ways; in the previous chapter, the well-established, classical ‘interpreting the Qurʾan by means of the Qurʾan’ (tafsīr al-Qurʾān biʾl-Qurʾān) was briefly discussed. Abdel Haleem presents further insights from classical Qurʾan scholarship, such as the well-established dictum: al-Qurʾān yufassir baʿduh baʿdan (the Qurʾan explains itself),  

and others, such as muṭābaqat al-kalām li-muqtadā al-ḥāl (the conformity of the utterance to the requirements of the situation), maqām (context), maqāl (speech), and iqtiṣāṣ (expansion of a single word in another verse). More recently, the intertextual quality of the Qurʾan has been referred to by the term ‘self-referentiality’, which was also used by Abdel Haleem and has been the object of some scholarly attention. Many of these terms are not without relevance for this study, particularly iqtiṣāṣ, which will be used extensively.

Having established the method used here as synchronic, reader-oriented and intertextual, we will now turn to outlining some of its more distinctive features. Today, scholars in the field of literary theory and elsewhere have come to recognize that it is possible to read the same text in multiple ways, so that, for example, a feminist

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272 Elsewhere, I have used ‘intertextuality’ in the external sense, when exploring the intertextual space located between the Qurʾān and the Bible. See Nevin Reda, ‘The Qurʾanic Tālūt and the Rise of the Ancient Israelite Monarchy: An Intertextual Reading’ in Todd Lawson (ed.), American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 25, no. 3 (2008), pp. 31-51.

273 Bint al-Shāṭi’ also uses that same ancient dictum, but points out that although the ancients expressed it, they did not achieve a great deal with it. Abd al-Raḥmān, al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī, p. 18.

274 Translations of these expressions by Abdel Haleem.

275 Gilliot and Larcher seem to translate iqtiṣāṣ as ‘refrain’, see Gilliot and Larcher, ‘Language and Style’, p. 127, while Abdel Haleem understands it to refer to the explanation or expansion of a single word in another verse. Abdel Haleem, Understanding the Qurʾān, p. 161.

276 Abdel Haleem, Understanding the Qurʾān, pp. 158-183.

277 See Abdel Haleem, Understanding the Qurʾān, p. 161. A recent volume with many articles dealing with various aspects of this term is Stefan Wild (ed.), Self-Referentiality in the Qurʾān, Diskurse der Arabistik, herausgegeben von Hartmut Bobzin and Angelika Neuwirth, Band 11 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006).
reading\textsuperscript{278} would differ from a Marxist reading.\textsuperscript{279} Whereas a feminist reading would focus on issues related to women, a Marxist reading would be concerned with economic issues. In contrast, the new readings proposed here will be more attuned to the distinctive character of scripture, which differs from other literature in its portrayal of the divine and its delineation of certain expectations for humanity. The readings will consist of the two previously-mentioned complementary modes: the divine self-revelatory mode and the pedagogical mode. The first mode will place God at the focal point, and the text will be read to determine what it reveals about the deity. The concern is not to investigate the claim of divine authorship, but to take it as a literary depiction, since the text portrays God as its composer. The pedagogical reading will situate the general category of human being at the centre, focusing on the pedagogical content the human being will receive.

Although in theory, reader-oriented approaches may enable one to read a text in any number of ways, in practice a reader is usually inspired by certain ideas in their environment, and the resulting reading may therefore be a process of negotiating or coordinating the text together with these ideas. The ideas may be external to the text, such as feminism or Marxism, or they may come from within the text itself—however, as in any reading, there is a subjective factor in the choice of ideas with which a text is navigated. Since the readings undertaken here have no well-established precedents, their historical and theoretical foundations are unknown and require some clarification. Therefore I will first explore their theoretical foundation in conversation with existing scholarship, and will subsequently locate the starting point from which the idea for a divine self-revelatory reading and a pedagogical reading evolved. The delineating of the starting point of my investigation will shed some light on the subjective factor.

\textsuperscript{278} For more on feminist literary criticism, see for example, Peter Barry, \textit{Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 121-138.  
\textsuperscript{279} For more on Marxist literary criticism, see Barry, \textit{Beginning Theory}, pp.156-171.
**Divine Self-Revelatory Reading:**

Similar to feminism and Marxism, the idea of divine self-revelation has received some scholarly attention and is not without some kind of theoretical basis, even though it is not a well-established reading method like other readings. The scope of a divine self-revelatory reading is also substantially less than other readings, since it would be most fruitful on texts which portray the divine as a tangible protagonist with a distinct voice, a feature which is relatively uncommon except in texts of a scriptural nature. Theoretical precursors or affinities for the reading stem from several fields, mainly Islamic and biblical scholarship, in addition to literary theory.

The idea of divine self-revelation recalls the qur anic ‘beautiful names of God’, which are central to the Muslim conception of the deity\(^{280}\) and have been a focal point of contemporary piety, as well as classical Muslim theology, philosophy and mysticism.\(^{281}\) These numerous and often repeated attributes, systematically describe the Islamic deity and are therefore a major qur’anic form of divine self-revelation. They are often mentioned among the themes and topics of the Qur’an; Daniel Madigan, for example, has organized the themes and topics around some of these central names, which include Creator, Merciful and Guide.\(^{282}\) He states:

God could be said to be the subject of the Qur’an in a double sense: first in that God is the speaker—the Qur’an’s ‘I’ or ‘We’—and second that in many respects God is the centre of the text’s attention. For this reason it would be inaccurate

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\(^{280}\) Compare Q. 7:180; 17:110; 20:8; 59:24. See also Hamid Molla-Djafari, *Gott hat die schönsten Namen* .... ...


to speak of God as one theme among the many treated by the revelation; each of its themes revolves around the divine nature and the divine initiative.\textsuperscript{283}

However, not all scholars present God or the divine names in the same way; some portray God and his attributes as one theme among many, while others do not even present them among the major themes. For example, Fazlur Rahman lists ‘God’ as the first major theme, as does Faruq Sherif, while Jaques Jomier and Mohammad Abdel Haleem do not include God or his attributes in their major sub-headings.\textsuperscript{284}

It should be noted that the term divine ‘self-revelation’ is not commonly used in connection with the deity’s attributes; ‘self-disclosure’ is much more wide-spread, often a translation for the Arabic mukāshafa or even tajallī, although the latter is more usually translated as ‘manifestation’.\textsuperscript{285} The term is quite central to Sufism and therefore has mystical and experiential connotations, where the focus is on the transformational aspect of these attributes within people’s lives, as opposed to the literary delineation of the Qur’an’s central protagonist. The divine self-revelatory reading undertaken here is not intended as a spiritual exercise, and should therefore not be classified as a transformational reading; rather the aims are much less profound and are confined to the literary, descriptive sphere. Therefore, even though the term ‘self-disclosure’ is well-established and very close in meaning, it will generally be avoided. Also, ‘self-revelation’ is more suitable for a literary context, since ‘revelation’ incorporates nuances of ‘book’—the Qur’an depicts itself as a ‘revelation’—while ‘self-

\textsuperscript{283} Daniel Madigan, ‘Themes and Topics’, pp. 79-80.
\textsuperscript{284} Fazlur Rahman, \textit{Major Themes of the Qur’an}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1994); Faruq Sherif, \textit{A Guide to the Contents of the Qur’an} (Reading, U.K.: Garnet, 1995); Jomier, \textit{The Great Themes of the Qur’an}, Abdel Haleem, \textit{Understanding the Qur’an}.
disclosure’ is not book-oriented, but carries nuances of direct communication between the deity and the mystical practitioner.

The divine names are traditionally portrayed as ninety-nine, but that figure seems to have topos-like qualities, signifying a large number that is yet incomplete. They are occasionally sorted into groups—in particular within Sufi orders—each group containing names with shared characteristics. For example, Bakhtiar divides them into three, the ‘Names and Qualities by which God Self-discloses to Self, to creation and to humanity’. In a lengthy sura, such as al-Baqara, the number and occurrences of divine names is particularly large. The reading undertaken in this study will not address all these occurrences, but will focus on one particular name, noted for its special position within the sura’s distinctive repetitive devices—as will be explained in the following chapter. It is the contention of this reading that this particular name is central within the sura, providing it with a unifying theme and imbuing it with a distinctive character. It is this feature which ties the sura together as a unit and imparts a ‘holistic’ quality to the reading.

Divine self-revelation has been recognized as a major theme of the Bible and the term is well-established in biblical studies. However, there is a difference between Jewish and Christian discourses, each often associating divine self-revelation with a central figure within their respective tradition. In Christian discourses, divine self-revelation often takes the form of Jesus Christ and occasionally takes on a theological character—the Christian theologian Karl Barth (d. 1968), for example, has

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286 The designation of their number as ninety-nine is in a hadith, brought into circulation by Abū Hurayra, one of the most productive of Traditionists. For more on the divine names, see L. Gardet, ‘al-Asmāʾ al-Husnāʾ in EI2, vol. 1, p. 714a. See also Gerhard Böwering, ‘God and his Attributes’ in EQ, vol. 2, pp. 316-331. Mawdūdī lists one hundred and two names, while Bakhtiar considers them to be infinite. See Abū al-Aʿlā Sayyid Mawdūdī, al-Asmāʾ al-Husnāʾ (Nāʾī Dihlī: Islamic Buk Fā’un-Deshan, 1990); Laleh Bakhtiar, Moral Healing through the Most Beautiful Names: The Practice of Spiritual Chivalry, God’s Will Be Done (3 vols. Chicago: The Institute of Traditional Psychoethics and Guidance, 1994), vol. 3, p. vii.
287 Bakhtiar, Moral Healing, p. viii.
288 See, for example, W.C. Placher, ‘If God has found us’, Dialog 37, no. 2 (1998), pp. 111-115.
examined the idea of divine self-revelation in great depth. In these discourses, this central event is sometimes foreshadowed by divine self-revelation through ancient Israelite history as portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures. This view has been criticized in Jewish discourses, which do not generally utilize the New Testament, but draw on Midrashic and Rabbinic texts. Events which have been connected to divine self-revelation often feature Moses, such as the burning bush theophany (Exodus 3:6-15) and YHWH’s self-revelation on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:6-8). These events have engaged not only students of the Bible, but also have some Qur’anic parallels.

Although divine self-revelation through historical events is a noteworthy notion, other approaches are perhaps more relevant to this study and the Qur’anic divine names. For example, Mary Mills investigates God’s image in each of the books of the Bible, pointing out how each book presents a different aspect of this multi-faceted deity. They include descriptions such as ‘God of the fathers’ (Genesis), ‘God of Law and Covenant’ (Exodus), the ‘king’ (Psalms), the ‘loving’ and the ‘wrathful’ (Deuteronomy), and the ‘First’ and the ‘Last’ (Isaiah). Many of these names occur

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293 For example, compare Q. 20:12-16; 27:8-9; 7:143; 2:84.
298 Mills, Images of God, pp. 44-55. For ‘loving’, compare the names al-rahmān, al-raḥim in the basmallah at the beginning of suras, such as Q. 1:1, and al-wādūd in Q. 11:90; 85:14. Compare also God ‘loves’ (yuḥibb) the kind, the charitable, the ones who repent, the ones who purify themselves, the God-conscious, the patient, the ones who depend on him, the just, the ones who fight in his way, etc. in Q. 2:195, 222; 3:76, 134, 146, 148, 159; 5:13, 42, 93; 9:4, 7, 108; 60:8, 61:4, respectively. For
practically verbatim in the Qur’an, such as the ‘king’, the ‘First’ and the ‘Last’. Some gender-inclusive approaches are similar, using the multiple attributes or titles, such as the idea of ‘wisdom’, to re-imagine the deity as having female characteristics. The Qur’anic divine names are thereby not generally alien to Jewish and Christian conceptions of the deity, but have many parallels. Many of these parallels have been recognized and systematically pointed out in Rev. David Bentley’s *The 99 Beautiful Names for all the People of the Book.* Thus, the theme of divine self-revelation is common to all three Abrahamic scriptures and has been explored in various ways, even in connection with divine names, titles or attributes.

The new readings proposed here may become clearer in conversation with ideas from literary theory, specifically Bakhtian dialogism—or at least, the application of some of his ideas on the Hebrew Scriptures. The legacy of Mikhail Bakhtin is quite remarkable; this conversation is not meant to exhaust the possibilities of connecting between his ideas and this study. Rather, the purpose is to merely shed some light on the proposed divine self-revelatory and pedagogical modes of reading, and the


302 It is noteworthy that the orthodox Bakhtin wrote in an Eastern, soviet environment and wrote mainly in the context of Russian novels. The legitimacy of appropriating his ideas in a Western, biblical environment has been questioned, as has the interpretation of his ideas on the nature of the dialogic—even the interpretations of some of the leading Bakhtinian scholars. For a brief overview of some of these critiques, see Barbara Green, *How are the Mighty Fallen: A Dialogical Study of King Saul in I Samuel*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 365 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), pp. 28-29. The work of Bakhtin has not really been used in the study of the Qur’an; however, his ideas have been discussed in connection to Scriptural Reasoning, a practice that bridges the Bible and the Qur’an. See Ben Quash, ‘Heavenly Semantics: Some Literary-Critical Approaches to Scriptural Reasoning’ *Modern Theology* 22, no. 3 (2006), pp. 403-420.
dialogical relationship between them. Bakhtinian dialogism is formally defined as follows:

Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole—there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance. This dialogic imperative, mandated by the pre-existence of the language world relative to any of its current inhabitants, insures that there can be no actual monologue.303

Thus, no text is created in a vacuum, it is in a dialogic relationship to other discourses within its surroundings, conditioning their meaning and being condition by them. It is thereby more broad-ranging than intertextuality, which is confined to the relations between texts. It should be noted that dialogical interactions are not limited to the external relations of the text to the outside world, but can also apply to the characters within a text, the interplay between them shaping the meaning of their utterances.

Barbara Green is one of the foremost scholars to apply the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin to the study of the Bible.304 She has used his theories in several publications, mainly in connection with the story of King Saul in the book of I Samuel of the Hebrew Scriptures.305 In *King Saul’s Asking* she presents the various protagonists of I Samuel,

305 See, for example, Barbara Green, *How are the Mighty Fallen; King Saul’s Asking, Interfaces* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003); ‘Enacting Imaginatively the Unthinkable: Samuel 25
portraying each voice in a separate strand. One of these protagonists is YHWH, whose voice recalls the proposed reading in this study. In a way, the divine self-revelatory reading is the voice of the Qur’anic YHWH in the Qur’anic text, describing and defining this character.

In the Qur’an, God is portrayed as a central protagonist, occasionally presented by speech in the first person, but also addressed in the second person, and even described in the third person. His pervasiveness is underlined by the prolific doxologies, refrain-like statements often occurring at the end of verses or passages, outlining some attributes of the deity. However, a genuine dialogic relationship requires two or more protagonists, each with a distinct voice, set of experiences, and placement in the world. In this study, the dialogic counterpart will be posited as the general category of ‘human being’, which appears in various forms throughout the text, also in speech in the first, second and third persons. While God is the central protagonist in the divine self-revelatory reading, in the pedagogical reading the human being takes centre stage and forms another party in the dialogic relationship.


306 Barbara Green, King Saul’s Asking, pp. 2-11.
307 Barbara Green, King Saul’s Asking, pp. 9-11. Barbara Green does not only portray YHWH, but also Elqanah (Samuel’s father), Eli (the high priest), Peninnah (Elqanah’s first wife) and Hannah (Samuel’s mother), showing the interaction and disjunction between these characters. See Barbara Green, King Saul’s Asking, pp. 2-9. Although Surat al-Baqara does not mention the last four persons, it does have a passage that portrays other characters from the Saul story, primarily Samuel, Saul, David and Goliath. However, these characters are not a suitable dialogic counterpart for the permeating character of ‘God’, since they appear only in a small passage, and they do not form strands which flow throughout the sūra.


308 Barbara Green, How are the Mighty Fallen, pp. 25-26.
Having shed light on the divine self-revelatory reading’s theoretical foundation, I will now locate the starting point of my investigation. The idea for a divine self-revelatory reading evolved before the idea for a pedagogical reading and it arose initially from personal observations on other suras, such as Yāsīn and al-Naml. These suras are substantially smaller than al-Baqara, but also contain multiple topics, which seemed to be held together by a common theme composed of a divine name, raising the question of whether the same may not also apply to Surat al-Baqara. This observation coincided with the discovery of the sura’s inclusions and Leitwort, devices known to me from analyzing biblical Hebrew poetry and studying biblical repetitions. In all the occurrences of the Leitwort—in this case it was ‘guidance’(hudā)—it was connected with the deity, which strengthened the case for a divine self-revelatory reading.

**Pedagogical Reading:**

The idea of a ‘pedagogical reading of the Qur’an’ is not entirely new, but has at least one antecedent—the self-identified approach of Nimat Hafez Barazangi. She has written one of the most recent books in a series of feminist writings on the Qur’an, *Woman’s Identity and the Qur’an: A New Reading*, in which the expression occurs as the title of the first chapter. Speaking as an educator (murabbiya), Barazangi seeks to empower women to read the Qur’an autonomously, as opposed to through the lens of tradition, and to attain ‘Islamic higher learning’, by which she means the entire range of early qur’anic sciences. She links this autonomy to the basic monotheistic tenet ‘lā ilāh illā allāh’, arguing that to accept the authority of traditional interpreters as binding is to veer away from this tenet.

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310 Barazangi, *Woman’s Identity*, pp. 22-36. The first of these books was Amina Wadud, *Qur’an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective*, 2nd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), followed by the previously mentioned Barlas, *Believing Women*. However, Barazangi explains that her approach differs from ‘conventional discourses, including feminist discourses that try to free women from cultural constructions of gender’. Barazangi, *Woman’s Identity*, p. x.


312 Barazangi, *Woman’s Identity*, pp. 3-4
There are similarities and differences between Barazangi’s approach and the pedagogical reading undertaken here. The similarities are very general, and include the focus on pedagogy and ‘autonomous’ thinking, not bound by traditional ‘tafsīr bi’l-
ma ’thūf. In addition, tafsīr bi’l-ma’thūr serves as a foil for both readings; however, while Barazangi’s main critique is of the patriarchal aspect of traditional interpretations, in this study it is of atomism. There is also a difference in scope: whereas Barzangi addresses dispersed verses with woman-relevant content scattered throughout the Qur’an, this reading will be generally restricted to Surat al-Baqara, and does not directly address women’s issues. Rather, the focus here will be on the pedagogical function of repetitions, and how they shed light on the structure and organization of al-Baqara.

It is hard to find a reading of the Bible which is identified as a ‘pedagogical reading’, although there are many studies which address the pedagogical value of the Bible. For example, Scott C. Jones examines pedagogical aspects of Proverbs 7 in ‘Wisdom’s Pedagogy: A comparison of Proverb’s VII and 4Q184’, while the essays in Die Sintflut: Zwischen Keilschrift und Kinderbuch: Das neue Interesse an der alten Erzählung als religionspädagogische Herausforderung examine the flood story from several perspectives, one of them pedagogical. However, the most relevant ‘pedagogical’ approach for this study is probably that of Umberto Cassuto (d. 1951), who criticized Wellhausen’s documentary hypothesis, refuting his views on repetitions. Cassuto proposed that the answer to that dilemma comes from understanding the pedagogical purpose of the Torah, indicating that repetitions were for religious and ethical instruction, and thereby identified the pedagogical function of repetitions.

Cassuto’s discussion of the Torah’s purpose recalls Bijā‘ī and Biqā‘ī’s unifying agent for each sura, the idea of gharāḍ or maqṣūd, both of which refer to the sura’s

purpose. It could also be argued that the two readings used in this study, the divine self-revelatory and the pedagogical, are also purpose-oriented, and are thereby investigations into *gharaḍ* or *maqṣūd*, since pedagogy and divine self-revelation can be perceived as the purpose of scripture. However, discussions of the purpose of scripture are theological and not strictly literary and are therefore not the focus of this study. Therefore, this reading will be occupied with the pedagogical *function* of the repetitions, as opposed to the theological *purpose* of scripture. It is noteworthy that the two terms, *gharaḍ* and *maqṣūd*, have slightly different nuances: *gharaḍ* is more clearly ‘purpose’ or ‘objective’, while *maqṣūd* can also refer to the ‘intended meaning’. Thus, the former is more theological, while Biqā‘ī’s term can also have literary nuances.

Like the divine self-revelatory reading, the pedagogical reading may also be termed holistic, due to an assumption that each sura constitutes a didactic unit set within the qur’ānic pedagogical curriculum. This reading will therefore broadly analyze the instructional content of the sura and its location within the qur’ānic codex in an effort to shed light on al-Baqara’s distinctive genre. This assumption is thereby in conversation with the work of Neuwirth, who does not see a logical order in the organization of the suras.\(^\text{317}\)

Although each of the two readings, the divine self-revelatory and the pedagogical, may be described as holistic on its own, viewing them together also lends them a holistic character. This quality is perhaps best explained by Bakhtinian dialogism, which has also been described as ‘holistic’, since Bakhtin sought to attain a better understanding of the ‘whole’ through the dialogue of the various parts. Bakhtin was keen on the life sciences of his day, which have been used to clarify this aspect of his thinking; for example by showing that a living organism or even an ecosystem has

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\(^\text{317}\) Neuwirth states: ‘The compositional sequence of the qur’ānic sūras does not follow any logical, let alone theological, guideline and betrays both a conservative and a theologically disinterested attitude on the part of the redactors. It suggests that the redaction was carried out without extensive planning, perhaps in a hurry, at a stage of development prior to the emergence of the elaborate conceptions of prophetology that underly the *sīra*, the biography of the prophet that was fixed about a century and a half after his death’. Neuwirth, ‘Structural, Linguistic and Literary Features’, p. 98.
‘a high degree of complexity, a systematic, ramifying interconnectedness. The whole is in a most pragmatic way more than the sum of the parts’. 318 Thus, the ‘other’ forms a part of the whole, and is necessary for the survival and self-identification of the situated subject.

Dialogism is often contrasted with dialectic. 319 While in a dialectical relationship, the ‘other’ is often an opponent, dialogism is non-confrontational and the ‘other’ serves the important function of self-identification and is vital for the construction of our own consciousness. Dialogism is also open-ended, an activity which does not come to an end with the finding of a solution, but rather is a continuous process of ‘experimentation on the part of the situated subject’. 320 On the other hand, with dialectic there is an end in sight, since one is arguing with one’s opponent in order to reach some kind of solution to a distinct problem. While dialectic has parallels with dialectical theology (kalām), a practice which flourished in the early centuries of Islam and in which the Mu’tazilites particularly excelled, dialogism recalls Sufi ideas, such as the universalism of Ibn al-’Arabī (d. 638/1240) and the modern Seyyed Hossein Nasr; 321 both Sufi universalism and dialogism are non-confrontational and look at the self and the ‘other’ as part of a whole, as can be noted in Ibn al-’Arabī ‘s concept of ‘oneness of being’ (waḥdat al-wujūd). 322

The idea for the pedagogical reading arose from a personal observation, also internal to the Qur’ān: that certain opposites seem to be balanced, such as day and

318 Green, How are the Mighty Fallen, p. 26.
319 Bakhtinian dialogism is contrasted with Hegelian dialectics in particular, so called after the influential philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (d. 1831). Green, How are the Mighty Fallen, p. 25, cf Michael Holquist, Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World (London: Routledge, 1990), Chapter 2.
321 Reza Shah-Kazemi has explored some of these thinkers’ ideas in The Other in the Light of the One: The Universality of the Qur’ān and Interfaith Dialogue (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2006).
night, heaven and hell, and male and female. This feature has been recognized quite early in Islamic history, and also how opposition forms connections between verses, passages and even suras.\textsuperscript{323} They were thereby identified as an aspect of \textit{nazm/munāsaba}, previously discussed in Chapter 2. In contemporary scholarship, Todd Lawson has explored this phenomenon in great depth, and has identified many other types of duality and opposition, such as narrative and anti-narrative, and even a duality of dualities, where these dualities form a literary contrast to the one who is one.\textsuperscript{324} He has used the term ‘enantiodromia’ in connection with this phenomenon, a term used in the literary domain, but which was most recently made current by the psychiatrist Carl Jung (d. 1961).\textsuperscript{325} In psychology, it is used in connection with extreme feelings or attitudes turning to their opposites and thereby achieving some kind of psychic balance. In the literary field, Lawson has shown that these dualities are distinct from dualism, but are a striking feature of the Qur’an’s general style, lending it a unifying character.\textsuperscript{326} The new readings are thereby in conversation with the work of Lawson, and can perhaps be qualified as ‘enantiodromatic’ or oppositional readings—not in the sense of ‘extreme’ or ‘confrontational’, but in the sense of forming contrasting or counterbalancing literary foci.

In light of the above, the reading undertaken in this study will be reader-oriented, synchronic and intertextual. It is composed of two complementary modes: a divine self-revelatory and a pedagogical mode. These modes will have counterbalancing literary foci, on the one hand ‘God’ as the text’s central protagonist, and on the other, the general category of ‘human being’.

\textsuperscript{323} See, for example, Zarkashi, \textit{Burhān}, vol. 1, pp. 40, 49.
\textsuperscript{326} Lawson, ‘Duality and Opposition’.
CHAPTER 4

Oral Typesetting: Repetition and Structure

The previous chapter introduced the divine self-revelatory and pedagogical readings, briefly indicating that the study of al-Baqara’s distinctive repetitions is a focal point of this study. This chapter will explore these repetitions more fully, showing on the one hand, how they divide the sura into subsections, and on the other, how they link the sura together and indicate a unifying theme. The chapter will not address all types of repetition, but only those relevant to the Surat al-Baqara’s structure and the proposed readings: inclusio, *Leitwort*, *iqtiṣās*, progression, concatenation, chiasm and alternation. The inclusio’s relevance is in the way it divides the sura into multiple, consecutive sections, thereby paving the way for understanding its compositional structure and for reading it section by section in Chapters 6 and 7. The *Leitwort* is at the core of Chapter 6’s divine self-revelatory reading, since its unifying theme is indicated by this device. On the other hand, *iqtiṣās* is relevant for the pedagogical reading of Chapter 7, tying the sura’s instructional content together. The instances of *iqtiṣās* studied in Chapter 7 resemble another rhetorical device: progression. Both these devices will be addressed, pointing out the differences between them. Also resembling *iqtiṣās*, concatenation is a transitional device and will similarly be discussed. While the *Leitwort*, *iqtiṣās*, progression and concatenation are unifying devices and tie the text together, chiasm and alternation are segmenting devices and point to the sura’s compositional subunits, similar to the inclusio. While chiasm describes the general layout of the sura, alternation is relevant for the last section, lending it a character of its own and setting off its subunits.
An inclusio is a rhetorical device which consists of a repeated word or phrase located close to the beginning and end of a text, forming a frame for the enclosed unit, the ‘includitur’. It is similar to a known classical device, the epanadiplosis, more commonly known as epanalepsis in English. However, the latter usually denotes a more immediate repetition—a word or more occurring both at the beginning and end of a sentence or phrase—while inclusios frame longer passages. They are more commonly known from the study of biblical Hebrew texts, the burgeoning interest in the study of the Bible’s literary aspects providing an impetus. Richard G. Moulton, who drew attention to them as early as 1895, called them ‘envelope’ figures; however they should not be confused with contemporary ‘envelopes’. Whereas inclusios are simple repetitions, the latter are chiastic structures, which generally take the form (AB BA), A and B signifying repetitions of similar words or phrases. Thus, today’s envelopes have an added, inverted repetition within the outer, framing one.

While Moulton used the term ‘envelopes’, his continental contemporary, David Müller, used ‘inclusio’ to describe the same device. It is this term which has survived. It is noteworthy that Müller did not restrict himself to identifying inclusios in the Bible alone, but attempted to establish commonalities with other Semitic literatures, such as the Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions and the Qur’an: he identified several inclusios in some of the Meccan suras and also noted their function in framing


sections, for which he has used the term strophes (German: *Strophe*).\(^{331}\) He pointed out that inclusios form the borders between sections, close them off and highlight their individual character.\(^{332}\)

While inclusios are best known from the study of the Bible and have been identified in other Semitic texts, including the Qur’an, they also occur in other literatures as well. They are characterized by their long and effective history, ranging from as early as Middle Egyptian compositions up to the present. For example, Gary A. Rendsburg, also a biblical scholar, identified an inclusio in *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, a well-known ancient Egyptian text which dates to the Middle Kingdom, roughly 2040-1640 B.C.E.\(^{333}\) Rendsburg has explained how this inclusio serves to ‘heighten the sense of cyclic completion’.\(^{334}\) The device is still used in contemporary compositions.

In addition to this sense of completion, inclusios can affect the text in other ways. Parunak has discussed some of their functions in ‘Oral Typesetting: some uses of Biblical Structure’, showing how ancient composers working in a primarily oral environment used non-visual means to organize and unify their material.\(^{335}\) He defines an inclusio as a ‘three-membered (A B A) chiasm whose outer members are short, compared with the centre member’.\(^{336}\) He has confirmed the device’s segmenting function—previously identified by Müller and other biblical scholars—and has pointed out the difference between internal and external inclusios.\(^{337}\) While the internal ones are an integral part of the delimited material, external inclusios set off segments of text as secondary or peripheral to the main course of the argument.\(^{338}\)

Parunak’s contribution is of value for this study, since inclusios have a segmenting function here as well. However, there is a significant difference between

\(^{331}\) See Müller, *Propheten*, pp. 205-207.

\(^{332}\) See Müller, *Propheten*, pp. 200.


\(^{336}\) Parunak, ‘Oral Typesetting’, p. 158.


the al-Baqara inclusios and the biblical ones discussed by Parunak: in al-Baqara, they are not chiastic, but rather incremental, as will be shown below.

Here as well, internal and external inclusios will be discussed. However, both types are an integral part of the enclosed material and would therefore be considered ‘internal’ according to Parunak’s classification. In al-Baqara, internal inclusios have an inner segmenting function, further subdividing a text that has already been set off and framed by an outer inclusio.

However, segmentation is not their only function; Parunak has shown that chiastic structures can also have unifying and emphasizing functions.\(^{339}\) On the other hand, Kessler sums up four purposes: bracketing a ‘unit’, stabilizing the enclosed material, emphasizing by means of repetition, and rhetorical effect by forming the pattern (A B A).\(^{340}\)

The ‘emphasizing’ function in Kessler’s summary above is a feature of repetitions in general, one that classical Muslim scholars have noted in their discussions of repetition (\(tikrār\)). For example, Tha῾labī has offered a catalogue of such occurrences in the Qur’an, and has explained their linguistic function as follows:

\[
\text{A majority of the people of rhetoric (\textit{ahl al-ma῾ānī}) is of the opinion that the language of the Arabs and according to their linguistic habits of discourse (\textit{khiṭāb}). One of their habits is repetition of words in order to emphasize and elucidate—just as brevity is one of their habits for a more streamlined prose.}^{341}\]

However, other than general discussions of repetitions, these scholars did not recognize inclusios as independent rhetorical devices, nor assign them a distinctive

\(^{341}\) Translation by Saleh; see Saleh, \textit{Formation}, pp. 134-135 note 125.
name. Thus, inclusios as distinctive rhetorical figures are often known to us from the study of biblical Hebrew texts. While they are not Arabic, they too arose within the general Semitic milieu of the region and have an oral dimension.

Inclusios can exhibit variations in form. While some are verbatim repetitions, in others the repeated components may change, for artistic purposes, such as guarding against monotony and introducing an element of surprise.  

The ancient Hebrew writers used literary conventions creatively; though they seem always to have been aware of them, they felt quite free to modify, to transform, or even to turn them upside down. The biblical student must therefore allow the literature to speak for itself; each literary piece must be permitted to set forth its own characteristic features.

Thus, while the general framing characteristic of inclusios will be used as a starting point in this study, the literature—in this case al-Baqara—will be allowed to speak for itself. As we will see below, the sura is characterized by multiple consecutive inclusios which subdivide it into three successive sections, and then further into subsections. They feature an additional repetition within the framed unit, and will be termed ‘incremental inclusios’, since the repeated components are increased at the end. Rather than follow a chiastic structure of (A B A), they display a pattern of (A B AA’ C AA’), A and A’ representing short repeated units of text and B and C representing the long, enclosed includitur. The repetition of this incremental pattern gives a sense of heightened expectation, layered over that of cyclic completion.

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344 Kessler provides an example in an endnote, Kessler, ‘Inclusio’, p. 49, n. 7.
It should be noted that using the term ‘incremental’ in connection with inclusios is not widely known. Then again, it does appear in connection with repetitions—repetitions which are similarly augmented have been termed ‘incremental repetitions’, particularly in connection with oral poetry. Therefore, in order to bring out the distinctive, intricate quality of these inclusios and distinguish them from simpler devices, in this study inclusios which are augmented in this fashion will be considered to be ‘incremental inclusios’.

**Identifying al-Baqara Inclusios:**

Only one of al-Baqara’s inclusios has been recognized and described as such. It frames the sura’s second section vv. 40-123 (hereinafter: §2) and is incidentally composed of the longest repetition, comprising two full verses at the end. Ţabāṭabā’ī notes in his commentary on the latter verses: ‘The two verses return the conclusion of this speech to its starting point, and its end to its beginning. A section of the discourses of the Children of Israel is thereby concluded.’ Ţabāṭabā’ī’s description recalls the words of his contemporary, Dahood (1922-1982), one of the first biblical scholars to work on the inclusio; he defined it as that ‘rhetorical device also called “cyclic composition,” in which the author returns to the point where he began.’ Thus Ţabāṭabā’ī seems to have recognized the function of these repetitions, and to have considered the section a distinct unit, even if he did not identify the repetitions as a separate rhetorical figure.

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346 Zahniser, ‘Major Transitions’, p. 32.
347 Ţabāṭabā’ī, Mizān, p. 266.
Two other medieval scholars also seem to have recognized that verses encompassed by these repetitions form a unit. Biqā῾ī quotes Ḥarālī as follows:

‘Because of the distance between the beginning of this speech and its end, may He be Exalted [God] has repeated it, thereby joining the end of this speech to its beginning, so that this articulation and teaching may have a foundation from the rest of the Qur’an to which it can be brought back; it is as if the speech, when it concludes to a final objective, the heart must observe the starting point of this objective, so it recites it, so that in its recitation both ends of the structure are joined, and in its comprehension, the meanings located at both ends of the meaning are joined.’

Thus, Ţabāṭabā῾ī and others recognized the function of this particular inclusio, even if they did not classify it as a separate device. However, there is one scholar who did, Matthias Zahniser, who recently referred to it by its technical name. But even though he did, he grouped the last two verses with the subsequent section, as opposed to the unit they frame. Thus, while Ţabāṭabā῾ī and others recognized the function but not the name, Zahniser acknowledged the name, but not the full function.

Zahniser relied largely on thematic analysis when subdividing the sura into clearly demarcated sections, although he also considered rhetorical features such as the above-mentioned inclusio. He is not the first to use such methods, but was preceded by other scholars, of whom the most relevant are Neal Robinson and Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī—the latter writing in Urdu, but whose section demarcations are known to Western scholarship through the work of Mustansir Mir.

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Although there is some degree of congruity, the borders that these scholars proposed for sura sections do not always agree with one another or with this study. Such divergences will be examined in this chapter. In order to do so, some thematic aspects will be considered, since the analysis of these scholars is primarily thematic in nature. While this chapter will therefore address some thematic aspects, it will rely primarily on the inclusios to indicate section borders, and the method is thereby rhetorical in nature and not thematic. It will show how these rhetorical demarcations coincide with thematic borders and assist in the understanding of the sura’s thematic structure and coherence. While the main concern here is to outline section borders, Chapters 6 and 7 of this study will address sura themes in greater detail.

**I1: The inclusio framing section 1 (vv. 1-39)**

While the inclusio framing §2 has been recognized, the inclusio framing §1 (hereinafter: I1) has not. Perhaps the reason is that the second inclusio is very striking—the repeated component encompasses two whole verses—while the first inclusio is formed by a single word. However, Section 1 is incidentally marked by the framing of the subsequent section—to similarly bracket it would be redundant. Accordingly, once having recognized the second section and its bracketing device, it becomes of interest to investigate the first section in search of a similar pattern. This pattern occurs in the repetition of the word *hudā*, ‘guidance’. It occurs near the beginning in v. 2, since v. 1 is composed of only three letters. It also appears near the end in v. 38.

However, vv. 38-39 form a single unit, since v. 39 is the antithesis of v. 38. Together these two verses form a contrasting pair and should be considered a unit, similar to a merismus. While v. 30 outlines the fate of those who follow God’s guidance, v. 39 contrasts it with the fate of those who reject it, both verses together giving a sense of completeness by delineating the fate of humanity as a whole.
Antithesis is a well-known figure from various types of literature, including biblical Hebrew poetry, where antithetical parallelism is quite common.\footnote{For more on antithesis, see T.V. F. Brogan and Albert W. Halsall, ‘Antithesis’ in Alex Preminger and T.V. F. Brogan (eds), The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 79-80. Zahniser uses the term ‘positive/negative verse ’ for similar structures. See Zahniser, ‘Major Transitions’, p. 32.} Such figures occur quite frequently in the Qur’an, often concluding compositional subunits. Thus, §1 is framed by the repetition of ‘guidance’, located near the beginning and end of the section.

It should be noted that ‘guidance’ appears twice in v. 38, a pattern that we will see repeated in all the al-Baqara inclusios: the lateral bracketing effect is always stronger than the beginning. With multiple consecutive inclusios it is not as important to mark the beginning of a section, since the end of the preceding one automatically signals the beginning of the next.

\begin{quote}
Alif Lām Mīm.

That book, in which there is no doubt,

is \textit{guidance} for the God-conscious.

\ldots

\ldots

\ldots

We said: “Descend from it all of you,

it may be that you shall receive \textit{guidance} from me:

whosoever shall follow my \textit{guidance},
\end{quote}
there shall be no fear for them nor shall they grieve.

As for those who are ungrateful and belie our signs,

ey shall be the associates of the fire:

ey shall abide therein forever.”

Another distinctive feature of the al-Baqara inclusios is the additional repetition in the middle of the section. In I1, the word ‘guidance’ is repeated in vv. 5, 16 each one of those verses also capping off internal thematic units, and once more in v. 26 (Table 4.3). V. 5 ‘These are the ones who are on guidance from their lord and they are the successful ones’ wraps up a thematic sub-unit dealing with the God-conscious. On the other hand, v. 16 ‘These are the ones who have purchased going astray with guidance so that their trade does not profit and they were not guided’ wraps up the description of those gone astray, prior to a lengthy similitude. Thus, I1 has both an outer and an inner bracketing function.

Similar to v. 38, v. 16 also features a second repetition, albeit in a different grammatical form: In addition to the substantive ‘guidance’ (huda), it also has the participle ‘guided’ (muhtadin). This incremental feature is similarly distinctive of the al-Baqara inclusios: the repeated components in the middle and end repetitions are longer. The lateral bracketing effect is thereby stronger at the end of the section.

It is noteworthy that framing is not the only function of the word ‘guidance’ in this section. As we shall see below, it is also the Leitwort, a leading keyword which is repeated throughout the sura. This feature is unique to this particular repetition and is not characteristic for the repeated components of the rest of the al-Baqara inclusios. Compared to I2, which has three repetitions, the middle and last one increased, I1 features two additional single repetitions in between. This feature further indicates its function as the Leitwort. Thus, while this repetition is relatively small, it sets the tone for the whole sura and is highly significant.
Similar to I1, I2 also features a middle repetition, which may be observed when looking at §2 in further detail. It begins with the phrase ‘O Children of Israel remember the blessings with which I have blessed you’ in v. 40, repeated again in vv. 47 and 122 (Table 4.3). However, in the last two repetitions, the repeated component is extended, covering two entire verses: ‘O Children of Israel remember the blessings with which I have blessed you and that I have privileged you over all the peoples of the world. And safeguard yourselves against a day when no person shall avail another, nor interception be accepted nor justice taken nor shall they be aided.’ (vv. 47-48) These verses are repeated verbatim in vv. 122-123, except for the switching of the two last verbs: nor interception be taken nor justice accepted (vv. 122-123). The bracketing effect is thereby increased in the latter part of the inclusio.

While Mir, Işlăhi, Robinson and Zahniser’s analysis parallel the findings of this study in their delineation of the borders for §1, there is a two-verse difference in the border of §2. Zahniser, along with the other scholars, counts vv. 122-123 as part of §3 and not §2. However, since he has clearly identified the inclusio which would entail their placement in §2 and not §3, he explains in detail why he has gone along with his predecessors in excluding the verses from §2 and placing them in §3. He gives two
main reasons. First he argues that the preceding vv. 119-121 form what he calls a 'wrap-up unit', capping off the section. He explains: ‘Wrap-up units reinforce the content of the passages they cap off, act as motivational support for them, or reinforce the world-view of the Qur’an in general. He points to the inna construction, which begins v. 119 not preceded by a conjunction, thereby functioning as an attention-grabber, in addition to the positive/negative v. 120.

Zahniser’s arguments that vv. 119-121 from a wrap-up unit do have some validity—as noted above, a similar positive/negative verse concluded §1, although it was termed ‘antithesis’ above. The lack of a preliminary conjunction also characterizes v. 38, similarly functioning as an attention-grabber. On the other hand, §1 was bracketed by an inclusio, in addition to the antithesis and the lack of a preliminary conjunction. It is therefore in keeping with the established pattern in §1 to have both Zahniser’s features and an inclusio capping off a section. This pattern indicates that the ‘wrap-up’ unit should encompass both of Zahniser’s verses and the concluding inclusio-verses for a total of four verses. Thus, while Zahniser’s vv. 119-121 begin the wrap-up, vv. 122-123 end it. The length of this longer ‘wrap-up’ unit is also not unusual given that §2 is much longer than §1, as are its framing repetitions. The use of several devices simultaneously for the same function—in this case wrapping up—is also known from the study of the Bible and has been termed ‘concurrence’. §2 would thereby end with the inclusio-forming vv.122-123.

Another factor that makes Zahniser’s observations insufficient as a concluding device for the section is the occurrence of other antithetical verses within the section while not concluding it. For example, vv. 61-62, 81-82 also juxtaposition the positive with the negative, but do not end §2. Instances of verses which do not begin with a conjunction and also do not begin a wrap-up unit include vv. 62, 70, 71, 98, 105, 106,

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355 Compare qulnā in the beginning of v. 38 with waqulnā in v. 35.
109, also within the same section. Accordingly, the mere occurrence of these features seems insufficient to cap off a section, increasing the need for the inclusio.

Zahniser has provided a second reason for counting vv. 122-123 as part of §3; he points to the clear connection between the Children of Israel and Abraham, who is the subject of the beginning of §3 (See Table 4.1). However, the Children of Israel are the subject of §2, while they are not mentioned specifically in the beginning pages of §3, even though they are also related to Abraham. Therefore, vv. 122-123 are thematically more closely connected to §2 than §3, which deals with Abraham and his Ishmaelite offspring. Consequently, from a thematic perspective vv. 122-123 should be considered part of §2. However, the connection between the Children of Israel and Abraham indicates the general connectedness of the discourse.

I3: The inclusio framing Subsection 3.1 (vv. 123-151)

The rest of Surat al-Baqara is characterized by an interplay of internal and external inclusios, since some of the units framed by the devices are themselves further subdivided by internal inclusios. The entire remaining part of the sura can be considered one section, with internal inclusios dividing it further into three subsections, or it can be considered three individual sections framed by independent inclusios. Here it will be considered one section and will be referred to as Section 3 (§3), while the first of its three subdivisions will be referred to as Subsection 3.1 (§3.1), the second, Subsection 3.2 (§3.2), and the third, Subsection 3.3 (§3.3) (Table 4.1). In the following analysis, each of these three subsections will be discussed in turn. Differences between Zahniser, Robinson, and Iṣlāḥī’s section borders will also be discussed. Subsequently, factors in favour of considering the three subsections one unit will be examined.

Subsection 3.1 contains one overarching inclusio (I3), enveloping the entire section (vv.124-151), and two smaller ones, dividing it internally into two thematic subunits. The overarching inclusio consists of Abraham and Ishmael’s prayer near the beginning of the section and its realization at the end (vv. 129, 151).\(^{358}\) The prayer is for God to send a messenger to their offspring, who shall rehearse to them God’s signs, instruct them in scripture and wisdom, and sanctify them (Table 4.3).

The two smaller inclusios divide §3.1 into two compositional subunits (vv. 124-141 and vv. 142-151) (Table 4.3). The first of these inclusios (hereinafter: I3A) contains a whole repeated verse, occurring in the middle (v. 134) and the end (v. 141). Similar to previous middle occurrences, this one also rounds off the preceding verses, further dividing the subunit into two parts. Whereas the first part lays the claim that Abraham and his immediate descendants were Muslim (vv. 124-134), the second argues against the claim that they were either Jewish or Christian (vv. 135-141).\(^{359}\) This idea is further underlined by the repeated verses (vv. 141/134), which disassociate the patriarchs from the activities of their contemporary offspring.\(^{360}\) Although Abraham has passed away, the implication is that he has left behind a tangible sanctuary for performing his religion’s rituals.

After portraying the origins of the sanctuary, it is established as the new prayer orientation, to which the prophet and Muslims are required to turn (vv. 142-151).\(^{361}\) As has been the established pattern so far, the beginning of the inclusio framing this subunit is less defined than the end, since it contains a single repeated word ‘\textit{wallāhum}', from the root \textit{wly}. It also features a middle, lengthier repetition in v. 144, which is repeated twice at the end, providing a strong sense of closure to this subsection. The repetition consists of the injunction to turn towards the Meccan sanctuary, making it into the new prayer orientation or \textit{qibla}.

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\(^{358}\) Robinson also noted a connection between vv. 129 and 151. Robinson, \textit{Discovering the Qur’an}, 210-211.

\(^{359}\) Compare also ‘The most deserving of Abraham are his followers, this prophet and the believers...’ (Q. 3: 68).

\(^{360}\) Compare \textit{Ṭabātabā’i}, \textit{Mizān}, vol. 1, p. 314, who attributes the repetition to excessive arguing concerning the patriarchs, perhaps thereby necessitating repeated disassociation?

\(^{361}\) \textit{Juz’} 2, the second of the Qur’an’s thirty parts, begins with verse 142.
The I3B repetitions are so striking that they have also caught the eye of commentators of old, even though they did not recognize the recurrent pattern of incremental inclusios and sought other means to account for them. For example, Biqā῾ī has explained the first as the good news, the second as the realization and the third as the proliferation of Muḥammad’s nation. On the other hand, Ṭabāṭabā῾ī speculates that the repetition may indicate its legal application under any circumstances. Although the repetitions may have legal or other functions, for the purposes of this study their main function is thematic closure.

I4: The inclusio framing Subsection 3.2 (vv. 152-242)

This subsection begins with ‘so remember me, that I may remember you’, and is followed by another command to seek help in patience and prayer (vv. 152-153). The two components, ‘remember’ and ‘prayers’, are repeated near the end of the section (vv. 238-239), forming part of a complex inclusio (Table 4.3).

The verses containing the two words stand out due to their placement in between seemingly unrelated material pertaining to widows and divorcees. This placement has long puzzled commentators, such as al-Andalusi, al-Alūsī, Quṭb, and Ṭanṭāwī, who have sometimes suggested linking them through the positive effect of prayers in divorce situations or by elevating alimony and the other instructions to the level of worship. However, from a structural perspective, the placement of these verses points to the end of the section.

363 Ṭabāṭabā῾ī, *Mizān*, vol. 1, p. 328. His explanation is supported by the differences in wording; whereas the first injunction was associated with ‘wherever you are’, the second and third injunctions are associated with ‘from where you have come’, perhaps indicating Mecca.
The inclusio’s bracketing effect is heightened with the repetition of widows and divorcees in the subsequent two verses (vv. 240-241.). In the case of widows, a whole phrase is repeated, ‘Those of you who die and leave widows’ (vv. 234, 240), whereas in the case of divorcees, the repeated words are ‘divorced women’ and ‘monetary endowment’ (matā῾) (vv. 228, 236, 241). The oddly placed verses on prayer and remembrance are thereby sandwiched in between the material on widows and divorcees. Thus, structural demarcation explains the odd placement of the verses. One more repetition closes off the inclusio, the repetition of ‘signs’ (Âyāt) and the idea of ‘having sense’ (ya῾qilūn/ta῾qilūn) (vv. 164, 242). This inclusio differs somewhat from the above inclusios in the way it is formed by several, interwoven, repeated elements. This interweaving prefigures the final inclusio and the end of the sura, of which the last three verses carry multiple echoes from within the entire sura as we shall see below.

Similar to the border between §2 and §3, there is some disagreement over the demarcating line between §3.1 and §3.2 (Table 4.2). Zahniser and Robinson end §3.1 with v. 152, while Iṣlāḥī suggests v.162. Thus, there is a difference of one verse between Robinson’s analysis and the present one. He ends it with v. 152, incidentally providing a rhetorical argument for the connection between vv. 151-152 in his thematic analysis. He points to the use of the first person for the deity in both verses, which tie in with the theme of the deity conferring favour upon the emerging Muslim nation and status that was previously enjoyed by the Children of Israel.368

However the first person for the deity does not stop with v. 152, but continues well into §4: Zahniser has shown that it begins in the story of Adam vv. 30-39 and continues until v. 160.369 There is also the additional use of the second person for the community of believers throughout these verses, which does not stop at v. 152, but continues well into the subsequent section. Thus, the use of the same grammatical person is not sufficient indication.

368 Robinson, Discovering the Qur’an, 210-211.
On the other hand, in favour of considering v. 151 to be the suggested end border is the inclusio (I4) which begins in v. 152. The recurrence of this rhetorical pattern and its consistence—as we shall continue to see below—strengthens the case for this demarcation. There is also thematic evidence. V. 152 is better connected to §3.2, than §3.1, since it sums up and introduces §3.2. The verse states: ‘So remember me, that I may remember you, and thank me and do not be ungrateful towards me.’ As we shall see below, §3.2 outlines in detail how the emerging Muslim community is to accomplish this task.

Then again, §3.1 establishes their status as a chosen nation, distinct from the Children of Israel. As a result of their new status, they must remember God and have gratitude as expounded and elaborated in §3.2. This teleological relationship is further strengthened by the use of the conjunction ‘f—sometimes called ‘Fāʾ al-taʿlīliyya—which has a congruent grammatical function, indicating that the second action follows upon the first action, the first action functioning as a cause or reason for the second one. Thus, §3.2 follows upon §3.1, and its brief form, v. 152, also follows upon §3.1. Although the sections and thereby the verses are therefore not unconnected, v. 152’s bond to §3.2 is stronger. Therefore, v. 152 should be counted as part of §3.2 and not §3.1, even though the entire discourse exhibits connectedness.

While Robinson ended §3.1 with v. 152, Iṣlāḥī caps it with v. 162 (Table 4.2). Zahniser support’s Robinson’s demarcation, pointing out that the disputed territory forms a transitional hinge. Since there is some disagreement on the end border of this section, it behooves us to take a closer look at it. First, I will present the disputed section, vv. 152-162 in translation. Then I will discuss some of the thematic discontinuities in conversation with Zahniser’s analysis, since he has identified and grappled with these problems, providing some insightful, well-reasoned solutions. I


371 See Zahniser, ‘Major Transitions’, pp. 33-34. He suggests that the disputed territory is itself a transition, pointing to the statement of H. Van Dyke Parunak: ‘Disagreement on where verses belong is often a sign that they are transitional’. Parunak, ‘Transitional Techniques’, p. 539.
will show how some of these problems are solved by considering v. 152 the beginning of the section, since it joins the disparate elements together. I will argue that in addition to the rhetorical link, there are strong thematic ties holding v. 152 to §3.2 and making it part of that subsection.

152 So remember me,

that I may remember you,

and thank me

and do not be ungrateful towards me.

153 O ye who have believed, seek help in patience and in prayer;

God is with those who are patient.

154 Say not of those who may be killed in the way of God, "Dead";

But alive, only you are not aware.

155 We shall try you with something of fear and hunger

And a lack of wealth, persons and fruits

So give good tidings to those who are patient

156 Those who when hit by a calamity

Say: "We belong to God and unto him we shall return."

157 Upon those are blessings from their lord and mercy

And those are the guided ones.

158 Ṣafā and Marwa are among the rituals of God
Whosoever performs the pilgrimage to the house or the ‘umra
Is not at fault for making a circuit around them;
Whosoever volunteers good:
God is grateful, all-knowing.\(^{372}\)

While it is easy to see the thematic connections between vv. 153-157—vv. 154-157 elaborate on the idea of patience in v. 153—it is more difficult to see the connection with v. 158, since it deals with a ritual aspect: the circumambulations around the two hills Ṣafā and Marwa. Zahniser has noted the connection of this verse to §3.1 and the Ka‘ba, both major components of the pilgrimage.\(^{373}\) He has also noted its link to v. 152, since it contains the idea of thanking which appears verbally in both verses.\(^{374}\) While v. 152 enjoins thanking God, v. 158 portrays God as the one doing the thanking. In addition to this verbal link, there is also a thematic one, since the circumambulation ritual is a form of remembering and thanking God. Vv. 153-157 also portray ways of remembrance, thanking God and not being ungrateful—while prayer is a physical act of remembrance, patience is a proactive means of resisting ingratitude, even in the face of the loss of a loved one. Consequently, v. 152 connects the seemingly disparate v. 158 with vv. 153-157. Therefore, counting v. 152 as part of §3.2 solves the inconsistency associated with v. 158.

Similar to the above, vv. 158-162 are also connected to the preceding verses through v. 152. They warn against suppressing scripture, described as a form of ingratitude in v. 161. This description ties the verses to the last words in v. 152 which also warn against ingratitude. Thus, vv. 153-162 can all be considered an elaboration on v.152, which is thereby of some importance for the coherence of this passage.

\(^{372}\) Translation mine, in consultation with Zahniser’s translation in ‘Major Transitions’, p. 35.
\(^{373}\) Zahniser, ‘Major Transitions’, pp. 35-36.
\(^{374}\) Zahniser, ‘Major Transitions’, p. 36.
Zahniser has pointed out a number of interesting phenomena occurring in vv. 158-162, all of which point back to §3.1 and §2, thereby linking these verses to the preceding part of the sura. For example, in addition to the above-mentioned thematic and verbal links between v. 158 and §3.1, the idea of suppressing scripture points backwards to the Children of Israel, the topic of §2. Zahniser and Robinson have also both pointed out how the repeated doxology with the divine names ‘the Oft-Relenting the All-Merciful’ tie this passage and §3.1 together, since they occur in both vv. 128 and 160. These verses thereby look backwards into the sura. On the other hand, Zahniser has also shown how vv. 153-157 have a forward-looking character thereby forming what he has described as an ‘inverted hinge’. This transition will be further discussed in Chapter 7, since it forms a kind of introduction to §3.2.

In light of the above, v.152 displays thematic ties to the following verses, linking them together. Although there are features tying the following verses to the preceding verses of the sura, v. 152 forms a much closer connection. The rest of this subsection is also connected to v. 152, since it has a general legalistic character with different injunctions and prohibitions joined together by this verse.

**I5: The inclusio framing Subsection 3.3 (vv. 243-286)**

Similar to the above, a verbatim repetition ends this subsection, initially part of an Israelite prayer under their prophet-king Ṭālūt (v. 250), which is taught to Muslims at the conclusion of the sura (v. 286) (Table 4.3). Once more, the prayer does not occur at the beginning of the subsection, but provides closure only for the end, forming the concluding sentence of the last verse. While in many of the previous inclusios the beginning was also marked by a small repetition, in this inclusio the beginning is only marked by the end of the preceding one: there is no repeated word or phrase in the first verse. This lack of initial border definition is to be found in two other preceding

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376 Robinson, Discovering the Qur’an, 212.
inclusios: I3, the inclusio overarching §3.1, which incidentally also happens to be a prayer, and I3A, the first of the two internal inclusios of §3.1. However, in all these cases, the incremental, bracketing pattern is still in evidence, the final repetition closing the section and the sura.

It should be noted that the last three verses carry multiple echoes from within the section, in fact, from the entire sura. Robinson has convincingly shown that the first of these, v. 284, carries echoes of vv. 20, 29, 33, 77, 106, 107, 109, 116, 117, 148, 164, 255, 259, 271, whereas the second, v. 285, recalls vv. 2, 4, 21, 22, 30, 31, 34, 53, 58, 83, 87, 93, 98, 101, 105, 109, 113, 121, 126, 136, 144, 145, 146, 161, 163, 173, 177, 182, 192, 199, 210, 214, 218, 225, 226, 235, 248, 252, 253, 255 and the last verse, v. 286, draws on vv. 44, 79, 134, 141, 202, 225, 233, 237, 249, 250, 281. Although there is only one, strongly defined, verbatim repetition, ‘grant us victory over the ungrateful ones’ (vv. 250, 286), the multiple echoes function in much the same way as an inclusio: emphasizing and providing closure for the whole sura.

The special character of these last three verses has led Robinson to allot them a section of their own, terming them the epilogue, along with Mir and Zahniser (Table 4.2). Here, on the other hand, they are included in §3.3. Thus there is a three-verse difference between the end demarcation of this study and that of previous scholars, this study combining the last two sections into one. On the other hand, there is no difference in demarcating the beginning of the section, all previously-mentioned scholars beginning it with v. 243.

In light of the above, section borders delineated by the inclusios are largely congruent with those identified by means of thematic analysis, with differences ranging between one to three verses for Zahniser and Robinson’s demarcations, and an additional eleven-verse difference for the border between §3.1 and §3.2 for Işlâhi’s analysis (Table 4.2). In each of these cases, I have shown that the disputed territory is thematically better suited to the sections delineated by the inclusios than the ones proposed by Zahniser, Robinson and Işlâhi. It follows that the borders marked by the inclusios:

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378 Robinson, Discovering the Qur’an, pp. 221-23.
379 Mir has termed it ‘Conclusion’; see Mir, ‘The sura as a unity’, p. 216.
inclusios are actually the boundaries of thematic units, and the inclusios help identify and bracket these thematic units. The existence of these devices removes the thematic partitioning process from the purely heuristic, subjective domain to more tangible, rhetorical grounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disputed verses</th>
<th>Islāhī</th>
<th>Robinson</th>
<th>Zahniser</th>
<th>Reda</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>122-123</td>
<td>§3</td>
<td>§3</td>
<td>§3</td>
<td>§2</td>
<td>Verses are a closer thematic fit for §2, which deals with the Children of Israel, than §3, which deals with Abraham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>§3</td>
<td>§3</td>
<td>§3</td>
<td>§3.2</td>
<td>Verse is a closer thematic fit to §4, since it sums up and introduces §4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153-162</td>
<td>§3</td>
<td>§4</td>
<td>§4</td>
<td>§3.2</td>
<td>Verses fit thematically to §4, which elaborates on v.152, and are joined to it through v. 152.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>284-286</td>
<td>§6</td>
<td>§6</td>
<td>§6</td>
<td>§3.3</td>
<td>Verses round off §3.3 and the entire sura.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2

The congruence between the inclusios and thematic borders is not the only indication that the devices serve to outline the sura’s structure; the neat, consecutive pattern of the inclusios also strengthens the case for a structural purpose, since they each follow one after the other. Thus, I1 follows immediately after I2, I2 follows immediately after I3, I3 follows immediately after I4, and I4 follows immediately after
I5. This immediate quality is also highlighted by some of the beginning repetitions tail-ending the concluding repetitions of their respective, preceding inclusio. Thus, the beginning of I2 follows immediately upon the end of I1, while the beginning of I4 follows immediately upon the end of I3. The borders are thereby doubly defined: through a long final repetition of the former section and a small one for the lateral section. The sura’s two internal inclusios, I3A and I3B, which subdivided the middle section into two parts, also feature this immediate quality; the beginning of I3B follows immediately upon the end of I3A. I3’s concluding repetition (v. 151) also follows immediately upon I3B’s concluding repetitions (v. 149-150), fitting neatly into the pattern. The repetitions thereby clearly define the thematic borders.

In summary, al-Baqara displays a recurrent rhetorical pattern which has structural implications. This pattern was termed ‘incremental inclusio’, due to its bracket-like form and the increasing of repeated components at the end. Seven of these figures occurred in the sura, five of them subdividing the sura into five consecutive thematic units. The two remaining inclusios subdivided the middle section, §3.1, into two parts. The occurrence of these internal inclusios signals a departure from the purely consecutive pattern; thus an inner and an outer structural layering begins with this thematic unit. The internal layering occurs with I3A and I3B, while the external layering occurs with the grouping together of §3.1, §3.2, and §3.3 to form a unit.

Although there does not seem to be an inclusio framing §3.1, §3.2, and §3.3 altogether, there are reasons for considering them to be a single section as opposed to three. The first of these is rhetorical: while I2 was so clearly defined and featured lengthy repetitions, I3, I4, and I5 are shorter, indicating that although the borders for these units exist, they are not as strong. Thus, I2 implicitly divides the sura into three sections by bracketing the middle section. The rhetorical structure is also reflected in the thematic composition. While §3.1, §3.2, and §3.3 all have their individual theme, they are centred on the topic of the emerging Muslim nation (See Table 4.1). In contrast, §2 was concerned with the Children of Israel, and §1 dealt with humanity as a whole, using the formula of address ‘O humankind’ and featuring the story of Adam.
and Eve, the progenitors of all humanity. Therefore, these three units will be subsequently treated together as one, particularly in Chapters 6 and 7, which deal with thematic issues in greater depth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Repeated Element</th>
<th>No. Vv.</th>
<th>Internal Inclusions: Repeated Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘guidance’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>‘guidance’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>‘guidance’, ‘guided’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>‘he guides’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>‘guidance’, ‘my guidance’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>‘O Children of Israel, remember the blessings with which I have blessed you’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47-48</td>
<td>‘O Children of Israel remember the blessings with which I have blessed you and that I have privileged you over all the peoples of the world. And safeguard yourselves against a day when no person shall avail another, nor interception be accepted nor justice taken nor shall they be aided.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘O Children of Israel remember the blessings with which I have blessed you and that I have privileged you over all the peoples of the world. And safeguard yourselves against a day when no person shall avail another, nor justice be accepted nor intercession taken nor shall they be aided.’

‘Our lord, send them a prophet of their own, who shall recite to them your verses, teach them the book and wisdom, and sanctify them, for you are the mighty, the wise’

‘This is a nation that has passed away; they shall have what they have earned and you shall have what you have earned and you shall not be questioned about their deeds’

‘This is a nation that has
passed away; they shall have what they have earned and you shall have what you have earned and you shall not be questioned about their deeds’

I3B 142 ‘turned them away’

144 ‘... , so we shall turn you towards a prayer direction with which you shall be content. So turn your face towards the forbidden mosque and wheresoever you may be turn your faces towards it.’

149 Whencesoever you go forth, turn your face towards the forbidden mosque ...

150 Whencesoever you go forth, turn your face towards the forbidden mosque and wheresoever you may be turn your faces towards it...

151 ‘Even as we have sent you a prophet of your
own, who has recited to you our verses, sanctified you and taught you the book and wisdom, and has taught you what you knew not.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I4</th>
<th>152-</th>
<th>‘remember’, ‘prayer’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>153</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>164</td>
<td>‘signs’, ‘have sense’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>228</td>
<td>‘divorced women’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>234</td>
<td>‘and those of you who die and leave widows’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>236</td>
<td>‘monetary endowment’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>238-</td>
<td>‘remember’, ‘prayer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>240</td>
<td>‘and those of you who die and leave widows’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>241</td>
<td>‘divorced women’, ‘monetary endowment’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>242</td>
<td>‘signs’, ‘have sense’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I5</th>
<th>250</th>
<th>‘give us victory over the ungrateful ones’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>286</td>
<td>‘give us victory over the ungrateful ones’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.3**

**The Leitwort**

Similar to the inclusio, the *Leitwort* is also known from the study of the Bible, but its identification is more recent and it is not as well known. Martin Buber (d. 1965)
discussed it in connection with the Pentateuch in ‘Leitwortstil in der Erzählung des Pentateuchs’. The term was subsequently picked up by Robert Alter in *The Art of Biblical Narrative*.

A *Leitwort* is a leading keyword which occurs throughout a text and imbues it with a unifying character or even—in the case of al-Baqara—with a central theme. It often appears in various grammatical forms, since allowances can be made for case endings, gender, number and other grammatical differences. It is similar to a *Leitmotif*; however, whereas *Leitwort* refers to a repeated word, *Leitmotif* refers to a repeated motif or theme in a leading or central position.

In al-Baqara, the profusion and relatively even distribution of the word ‘guidance’, in addition to its tone-setting position in the sura’s first inclusio, make it a good candidate for a *Leitwort*. It appears a total of seven times in §1: four as a non-suffixed noun (vv. 2, 5, 16, 38), once as a suffixed noun (v. 38), and two more times in alternate grammatical forms (vv. 16, 26). In addition to the expected beginning, incremental middle and end occurrences (vv. 2, 16, 38)—the word appears twice in vv. 16, 38—there are two more occurrences in between. Thus, it also appears in between the beginning and middle repetitions in v. 5 and in between the middle and end repetitions in v. 26, thereby veering away from the usual pattern in al-Baqara. The two additional occurrences point to its distinctive character as a keyword.

Furthermore, ‘guidance’ occurs twenty-seven more times throughout the rest of the sura, in vv. 53, 70, 97, 120, 135, 137, 142, 143, 150, 157, 159, 170, 175, 185, 196, 198, 213, 258, 264, and 272. Thus, there are a total of thirty-four occurrences in twenty-five verses, occasionally more than once in the same verse. This number is the largest in all the suras; for example, among the rest of the seven large suras it appears in Ālī 'Imrān (Sura 3) ten times, in al-Nisā’ (Sura 4) nine times, in al-Mā’ida (Sura 5)

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382 Kessler has also noted the relationship between ‘inclusio’ and Buber’s ‘Leitwortstil’. Kessler, ‘inclusio’, p. 44.
ten times, in al-An‘ām (Sura 6) twenty-six times, in al-A‘rāf (Sura 7) eighteen times and none at all in al-Anfāl (Sura 8). It appears 316 times throughout the entire Qur’an. The concentration of this word in Surat al-Baqara is higher than the average concentration in the Qur’an.

While in al-An‘ām the number of occurrences is relatively high compared to the longer al-Baqara, the bulk of these are clustered in between vv. 71-97, a passage which recounts the story of Abraham and related discourse. The word occurs seventeen times in this passage (vv. 71, 77, 80, 82, 84, 87, 88, 90, 91, 97), while it occurs only twice before it (vv. 35, 56) and seven times after it (vv. 117, 125, 140, 144, 149, 154, 157). Therefore, apart from this passage, it appears only nine times—which is more in keeping with the relatively low number of occurrences in the other suras. On the other hand, in al-Baqara, the occurrences are more evenly distributed from the very beginning of the sura till the end, thereby further indicating its character as a Leitwort for the sura (vv. 2, 5, 16, 26, 38, 53, 70, 97, 120, 135, 137, 142, 143, 150, 157, 159, 170, 175, 185, 196, 198, 213, 258, 264, 272).

While the inclusio was mainly used to divide al-Baqara into sections in order to facilitate the readings, the Leitwort on the other hand ties the text together and functions linguistically towards cohesion. It should be noted that linguists agree that there is a difference between cohesion and coherence, even though they do not always see eye to eye on what this difference actually is. In general, however, cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical elements connecting a text, while coherence has the reader at its focal point, and comes as the outcome a dialogue between the reader and the text. Thus, when the reader is taken out of the picture and the focus of attention

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383 While the word does not appear in al-Anfāl, it appears eight times in al-Tawba. Since the basmala is not repeated in the beginning of al-Tawba and it functions as the structural marker at the beginning of suras, it is possible to consider al-Anfāl and al-Tawba a single sura. Even then, the number of occurrences is still much lower than al-Baqara’s.

384 $316/30 = 10.53$; thus, the average occurrence per juz’ part is 10.53 occurrences. Al-Baqara covers less than 2.5 parts, yet it has more than the average number of occurrences in three parts.


is only on the lexical repetitions connecting a text, it is an investigation of cohesion. However, in Chapter 5, which similarly deals with the Leitwort, the reader is brought into the picture, and it thereby becomes an investigation of coherence.

While cohesion is an important function of the Leitwort, it is not its only function; similar to the inclusio and any other form of repetition, it also has an emphasizing function, as has been previously identified by the medieval commentators mentioned above.

**Iqtiṣāṣ**

The semantic range of the terms, *iqtiṣāṣ* and ‘progression’, is not identical. The Arabic term derives from the root *q*-ṣ-*ṣ*, from which the words *qiṣṣa* (story), *qiṣāṣ* (like for like retaliation) and *maqas* (scissors) derive. It is tempting to associate *iqtiṣāṣ* with ‘story’; however, *iqtiṣāṣ* is a grammatical Form VIII (of the pattern *iftiʿāl*), actually its *maṣdar*, a verbal noun often referred to as the Arabic infinitive, but more accurately as a gerund. Form VIII has the meaning ‘following in someone’s tracks’, ‘to relate exactly’, ‘to retaliate’, and even ‘to take a clipping from something’, while on the other hand, ‘story’ is usually associated with Form I, which has the meaning ‘to narrate, tell a story’ among others.³⁸⁷

*Iqtiṣāṣ* is most commonly known through Suyūṭī’s *Itqān*, in which he devotes a few paragraphs to describing the device. He defines it as follows: ‘It is that the speech is taken (*muqtaṣṣ*) from speech in another sura or in the same sura.’³⁸⁸ He provides four examples, in which he uses *muqtaṣṣ* and *maʿkhūdh* (taken) interchangeably. In his first example, he describes Q. 29: 27 as *muqtaṣṣ* from Q. 20:


75. The relationship between the two verses seems to be an explanatory one, since Q. 20: 75 explains the concept of ṣāliḥīn in Q. 29: 27. However, semantically the words muqtass/ma' khūdḥ imply that an expression or concept in the first verse is ‘taken’ from the second verse, implying that the latter is the ‘origin’ of the former, and in a ‘donor’ relationship to it.

There seem to be two possibilities for the etymology of iqtisāṣ, either cutting or trailing: Ibn Manẓūr associates the etymology of qiṣāṣ (Form VIII) with the idea of ‘cutting’, while Zabīdī associates it with the idea of tracking or trailing someone or something. However, iqtassa connoting tracking or trailing takes a direct object in the Arabic language, while Form VIII of the idea of ‘cutting’ takes a preposition ‘min’ (from), which is what Suyūṭī has. Thus, the use of the preposition ‘min’ indicates that the etymology of iqtisāṣ is best explained as coming from the idea of cutting or taking a snippet from something. It should be noted that if the meaning of ‘cutting’ alone were intended, it would have been possible to use the passive participle of Form I, maqṣūṣ min. Using the passive participle of a Form VIII (muqtaṣṣ min) instead layers the idea of cutting with the idea of following a trail to its origins.

Suyūṭī’s other examples also show an explanatory relationship between the verses. In his second example, Q. 34: 36 is used to explain the idea of ‘muḥḍarīn’ in Q. 37: 57, in his third Q. 50: 21, Q. 4: 41, Q. 2: 143 and Q. 24: 24 to explain the idea of ‘ashhād’ in Q. 40: 32, and in his fourth, Q. 7: 44 and Q. 80: 34 to explain two variant readings of ‘yawm al-tanād(d)’ in Q. 40: 32.

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389 The extract Suyūṭī mentions from Q. 29: 27 is somewhat longer than his other examples, making it more difficult to identify which part(s) of it he connects to Q. 20: 75. However, Suyūṭī’s brief statement that the afterlife is supposed to be an abode of reward and no work, in addition to the content of Q. 20: 75, point to the word ‘ṣāliḥīn’ being the point of contention.
390 Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-‘arab, vol. 7, p. 73a,b. In addition to his discussion of the origin of qiṣāṣ and its connection to ‘cutting/qat’ on p. 73b, Ibn Manẓūr also begins his exposition of words with the root q-ṣ-ṣ with the idea of cutting.
391 Zabīdī, Tāj al-‘arūs, vol. 9, pp. 334b-335a, 338b. In contrast to Ibn Manẓūr, Zabīdī begins his exposition of words with the root q-ṣ-ṣ with the idea of tracking or trailing someone, intimating that the etymology of these words derives from this concept.
392 See, for example, iqtassa atharahu in Zabīdī, Tāj al-‘arūs, vol. 9, p. 338b.
In all these examples, there is a word from a certain verse or verses which is ‘taken’ and used in another verse, bringing with it certain nuances and layers of meaning from its ‘original’ context to the new one. Thus, it is not only the word that is ‘cut’ out of a certain context, but also its associated meanings, and brought over to the new verse. These meanings explain the otherwise ambiguous word. In all these examples what seems to determine which verse is identified as the ‘donor’ and which as the ‘taken’ is the relationship between the verses: those that are portrayed as ‘donors’ explain or add meaning to the other verse. Thus, the obscure ashhād (witnesses) in Q. 40: 32 gains meaning through four verses portrayed as ‘donors’: Q. 50: 21 which describes every person on the Day of Judgment as coming with a driver and a witness, Q. 4: 41 which portrays the prophet as one such witness, Q. 2: 143 which portrays the emerging Muslim nation as being ‘witnesses’, and Q. 24: 24 which portrays peoples tongues as witnesses against them.

There does not seem to be any organizational or chronological order behind which verses are described as muqtass/mākhūd and which are described as the ‘donor’ verses. For example, both a verse from Q. 50 and a verse from Q. 4 are used in connection with Q. 40, whereas one precedes it and the other follows upon it. In the same example, the verse from a Meccan sura is described as ‘taken’ from Q. 2, a later Medinese sura. Thus, the term iqtiṣāṣ seems to have a truly synchronic, intertextual sense, disregarding chronological origins and organizational placement.

Noteworthy is Suyūṭī’s listing of iqtiṣāṣ together with other genres of rhetorical devices cited under the heading Fi badī’ al-Qur’ān. In the beginning of this section, he cites the monograph of Ibn Abī ‘l-Iṣba’ al-Miṣri, listing about a hundred different kinds of rhetorical figures and devices, which include simile, metaphors, allegory, repetition, assonance, antithesis, oaths, and others, but not iqtiṣāṣ. While Suyūṭī incorporates these devices into his own book, he does not restrict himself to them, but expands his own section on badī’ with other devices which he has found in the course

of his own investigations, which include *iqtiṣāṣ*.\(^{395}\) Thus, Suyūṭī’s classification clearly identifies *iqtiṣāṣ* as a rhetorical device.

Recently Abdel Haleem has defined *iqtiṣāṣ* as the expansion and clarification of a single word in another verse,\(^{396}\) as a kind of intra-scriptural gloss. Suyūṭī’s four examples tend to fall in with Abdel Haleem’s definition, since they all explain a single word more or less, *ṣāliḥīn*, *muḥḍarīn*, *ashhād*, and *tanād(d)*. However, the same examples can also be understood to explain whole expressions as opposed to just single words, e.g. *yawm yaqūm al-ashhād* or *yawm al-tanād(d)*. This expansion is supported by Suyūṭī’s own definition, which leaves room for more than just one word, since he uses the word ‘*kalām*’ (speech) to refer to the part that is ‘taken’ from another sura. Thus, *iqtiṣāṣ* can be used to refer to more than just the expansion and clarification of a single word in another verse.

While Abdel Haleem has defined the meaning of *iqtiṣāṣ*, he does not provide a direct translation, but uses the word in its Arabic form, thereby introducing it to English-speakers. ‘Intertextuality’ is perhaps a possible translation for *iqtiṣāṣ*; however, while the two are similar in meaning, they are not identical. The etymology and associated root meanings are different: whereas *iqtiṣāṣ* stresses the borrowed nuances and the relationship between the texts, ‘intertextuality’ emphasizes the space between the two texts. *Iqtisāṣ* is also not the modern Arabic equivalent for ‘intertextuality,’ but rather *tanāṣ*,\(^{397}\) which stems from the root *n*-ṣ-ṣ, the same root as *naṣṣ* (text). It may be that the modern theorists who coined ‘*tanāṣ*’ were unaware that some of their predecessors had observed a similar phenomenon—occurrences of *iqtiṣāṣ* are rather rare in the medieval literature. Or perhaps they associated *iqtiṣāṣ* with its juridical meaning and wished to coin a term that derived from the Arabic word for


\(^{396}\) Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur’ān*, p. 161.

text.’ Either way, *iqtiṣāṣ* is not a technical term for ‘intertextuality,’ but conveys its own precise meaning and is therefore best used in its Arabic form.

Gilliot and Larcher seem to translate *iqtiṣāṣ* as ‘refrain’. While all four ‘taken’ words in Suyūṭī’s examples are located at the end of their respective verses, in the bulk of his examples, they usually do not occur at the end of the ‘donor’ verses. For example, in the ‘donor’ verse of ‘yawm al-*tanād*’ (Q. 40: 32), the corresponding word ‘*nādā*’ occurs in the beginning of the verse (Q. 7: 44), far removed from a refrain. Out of the eight ‘donor’ verses Suyūṭī cites, only three have the relevant word at the end. Therefore, the idea of *iqtiṣāṣ* meaning ‘refrain’ is not sufficiently supported by the evidence.

Resuming the topic of repetitions, Suyūṭī’s examples more often than not contain verbal repetitions of the same word albeit sometimes in alternate grammatical forms, so that *iqtiṣāṣ* can be a form of verbal repetition. However, in Suyūṭī’s last example, he brings a synonym ‘*yafirrū*’ for the geminate ‘*tanādd*’, both indicating ‘fleeing’. Thus *iqtiṣāṣ* can also involve synonyms and the repetition of concepts as opposed to only verbal repetitions. Therefore *iqtiṣāṣ* can be defined as the taking of a word, expression or idea from a certain context and repeating it in a different one, thereby carrying over nuances and layers of meaning into the new context.

*Progression*

Ideas similar to *iqtiṣāṣ* have also been noted in the Bible; for example, Meir Steinberg has commented that biblical repetitions can have an ‘expansion or addition’

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398 Gilliot and Larcher seem to translate *iqtiṣāṣ* as ‘refrain’, see Gilliot and Larcher, ‘Language and Style’, p. 127, while Abdel Haleem understands it to refer to the explanation or expansion of a single word in another verse. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur‘ān*, p. 161.

399 Q. 7: 44 explains ‘*tanād*’ of the root *n-d-w*, while Q. 80: 34 explains ‘*tanādd*’ of the root *n-d-d*. 
form or function, recalling the device. However, the closest equivalent for *iqtiṣāṣ* is probably ‘progression’, which Yairah Amit has used to refer to progressive rhetorical structures in the Bible, explaining their function as follows:

The progressive structure serves not only to make order in the data sequence, but also to organize it so that, as well as having an esthetic value, the text is given added meaning. Sometimes the progression serves to shed added light on the protagonists, and sometimes it reveals the writer’s conceptual world. In every case it also addresses the reader. Moreover, its discovery, like other artistic devices, heightens the awareness of the text’s crafting and styling. This is why searching for it and finding it enhances and enriches the reading.

Amit’s description of progression recalls *iqtiṣāṣ*, since both are classified as rhetorical devices and both involve repetitions of some kind or other with added meaning. The main difference between the two devices is in the implied forward movement of the progressive structure. On the other hand, *iqtiṣāṣ* can also move backwards into the text as in Suyūṭī’s third example, where both an extract from Q. 50 and another from Q. 4 form the rhetorical device with Q. 40.

The synchronically intertextual character of *iqtiṣāṣ* goes hand in hand with the practice of reading the Qur’an over and over again. Thus, a text that is sequentially in a later position can also function as the intertext of a text that is in a former position, since a reader performing a second reading would already have read it. *Iqtiṣāṣ* thereby casts a somewhat wider net than ‘progression’ and while it is not the same

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400 There is less resemblance between this study and Sternberg’s treatment of repetitions, although the function of some of the Qur’anic repetitions studied below recalls his ‘expansion or addition’ form or function. See Sternberg, *Poetics*, pp. 390-391.

concept, in very broad terms the latter can perhaps be viewed as a subgenre or subcategory of the former in the context of this study.

Here, examples for this rhetorical device will be explored further in the pedagogical reading of Chapter 7. Both terms—*iqtiṣāṣ* and progression—will be equally applicable, since the reading will follow certain ideas from one section to the next in a linear fashion, moving forwards into the text. For example, the idea of prayer will be tracked from its initial occurrence in §1, where it is mentioned in v. 3, to §2, where it is expanded with the idea of prostration (v. 43), and further to §3, where further details are added such as prayer in a context of fear (vv. 238-239). The progressive structure thereby works in conjunction with the inclusio to organize the material and adds layers of meaning, in addition to its esthetic value.

**Concatenation**

Concatenation is yet another term more commonly known from the study of the Bible, even though it has also been identified in the Qur’an. It denotes the recurrence of a keyword at the end of a strophe or other structural unit and the beginning of the next, and has the effect of transition and unification.\(^{402}\) It was discovered by Müller, who also identified the inclusio and compares the two as follows:

The inclusio forms in a certain sense the opposite of the concatenatio.\(^{403}\) While the concatenatio conveys the connection between two strophes, the inclusio forms the border, the blocking off of the adjacent entity. While the concatenatio raises the individual character of two strophic organisms; the

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\(^{403}\) In English, the device is referred to as ‘concatenation’. I have kept Müller’s ‘concatenatio’, which is derived from the Latin, because he used it as a technical term, similar to ‘inclusio’. While inclusio has made it into the English language without modification, concatenatio has been anglicized.
inclusio closes off and borders the being of a strophe and highlights its individual character.\textsuperscript{404}

Parunak has used the term ‘link’ and the formula Ac/cB to describe concatenation, where A and B represent successive units of text, and c the linking keyword or other element.\textsuperscript{405} He has also pointed to a similar device, the linked keyword, which differs from the link in its distribution: while the link is concentrated at the end of a unit and the beginning of the next, a keyword can be dispersed throughout one of the units and be concentrated only at the adjacent end of the other.\textsuperscript{406}

Parunak has also distinguished between balanced and unbalanced patterns. For the balanced linked keyword, he has used the formula Ab/aB, the uppercase letters representing successive units of text and the lowercase the corresponding transitional element. Unbalanced linked keywords have the pattern A/aB or Ab/B respectively.\textsuperscript{407}

From the above, ‘concatenation’ can be considered a special case of iqṭiṣāṣ or more precisely: it is the occurrence of iqṭiṣāṣ in a transitional context. In the Qur’ān, these kinds of keywords generally move beyond transitions, as we shall see in Surat al-Fāṭiḥa below, so that the more broad-ranging terms iqṭiṣāṣ and ‘progression’ are better suited to describing the phenomenon.\textsuperscript{408}

\textsuperscript{404} See Müller, Propheten, p. 200.
\textsuperscript{408} See Chapter 5, p. 124-125.
Chiasm

In addition to the inclusio, two more devices stand out for their oral ‘structuring’ function in the Bible: chiasm, also known as ‘chiasmus’, and alternation. Chiasm is similar to the inclusio, except that it features an additional inverted repetition, following the pattern ABBA. While ABBA is a common pattern for a chiasm, Parunak has delineated a rather more elaborate one for the biblical chiasms: ABC/C’B’A’, using the standard term ‘panel’ to refer to the unit ABC or CBA in this structure. This usage of ‘panel’ will also be followed here. Chiastic patterns can occasionally be more elaborate than this three-fold pattern, e.g. Parunak has pointed out a pattern of ABCDED’C’B’A’ for Ezekiel 26:15-18.

Chiasms not only provide structure for a text or a segment thereof, but they also divide texts by offsetting their compositional elements, and unify texts through the imposition of a pattern. Chiasms can also provide emphasis to certain elements within a text. For example, the central unrepeated element ‘D’ in a chiasm with the pattern of ABCDA’B’C’ is in a unique position, highlighted by the surrounding repetitions. The chiasm thereby provides emphasis for this element. Parunak has also pointed out that a broken pattern, where certain repetitions deviate from the expected, also provides emphasis.

Like the al-Baqara inclusio, which were incremental and featured an additional repetition, the al-Baqara chiasm also deviates from the usual pattern and is somewhat prolonged. Instead of having two panels following the ABBA pattern, it has three panels, of increasing length, similar to the chiasms Parunak has identified in the Bible. As we shall observe in the following chapters, al-Baqara’s panels are thematic and cover the entire sura, following a pattern of ABC/B’C’A’/C”B”A”. Thus, instead of two

413 For more, see Chapter 6, pp. 144-150.
repeated elements, each occurring twice, al-Baqara’s structure features three repeated elements, each of them occurring three times. Surat al-Baqara’s entire structure can thereby be described as chiastic (Table 4.4).

In addition to the overall chiastic structure of the sura, there are two more internal chiasms within the sura. The ‘C’ element of the large, external chiasm ABC/C"B"A" features an additional internal chiasm, since the repeated elements ABC are again repeated and inverted as we shall see in Chapter 7 below.\footnote{See Chapter 7, pp. 161-162, 166.} Panel 3, section 3.2 contains an overarching internal chiasm, as we shall also see below.\footnote{See below p. 117-118 and Chapter 7, pp. 171-173.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>§1</th>
<th>§2</th>
<th>§3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Panel Order</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large External Chiasm</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Internal Chiasm</td>
<td></td>
<td>cba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4

While the sura’s general structure is chiastic, it is not the central panel which receives the most emphasis; rather it is the last. The increasing length and the general incremental structure of the al-Baqara repetitive devices contribute to a sense of anticipation, which finds its realization at the end of the sura. As we shall see in the following chapters, the last panel of the chiasm (C"B"A") takes up more space than the first two panels combined. They thereby function as a kind of introduction to it.
Similar to a broken chiasm, the imbalance in the structure and the devices focuses attention on the last panel, so that it becomes the most emphasized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternation between Belief and Practice</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Incremental Topical Chiasm</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C'</td>
<td>B'</td>
<td>A'</td>
<td>B''</td>
<td>A''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics</td>
<td>Prayer, Death/Fighting, Pilgrimage</td>
<td>Monotheism, Withholding Scripture</td>
<td>Dietary Regulations</td>
<td>Following Scripture/Ancestors</td>
<td>Monotheism, Groups 2: the ungrateful; Spending, Fasting</td>
<td>Dietary Regulations</td>
<td>Withholding Scripture</td>
<td>Prayer, Death/Fighting, Pilgrimage, Spending</td>
<td>Monotheism, Sincerity in Belief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5

**Alternation**

Alternation is another device which has been extensively identified and studied in the Bible. It is similar to the chiasm, except that it follows the pattern ABC/A'B'C'. Like the chiasm, it also segments and unifies text, broken or unequal patterns providing emphasis.

The most visible instance of alternation is an interlacing of 'practice' (A) and 'belief' (B) running throughout subsections §3.2 and §3.3 (Tables 4.5 and 4.6). In

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§3.2, practice and belief alternate a total of nine times, panels broadly increasing in length towards the end, so that this alternation is also incremental in nature (Table 4.5). It is again somewhat different than the ABC/A'B'C' sequence identified by Parunak, since it follows a pattern of ABA'B'A"B"A'"B''.

There is also a broad chiasm in the arrangement of the alternating topics: while the material in each individual passage is not repeated, the general topic is. For example, the idea of diet occurs in vv. 168-169 and also in vv. 172-173. However, while vv. 168-169 are general, inviting humanity to eat from what is in the earth and not to follow in the footsteps of Satan, vv. 172-173 are more specific and outline certain dietary restrictions. This alternating, chiastic pattern covers the entire section, but is broken towards the end, following the pattern ABCDC'B'A'B''A'' (Table 4.5). Similar to the general trend in the sura, the emphasis is thereby located towards the end of §3.2.

The alternation between belief and practice continues an additional six times into §3.3 for a total of fifteen times altogether for both subsections; however, both belief and practice take on a different character in §3.3. Here the deity is portrayed as master over life and death, and belief becomes strongly associated with fighting and putting one’s life in the hands of God. The idea alternates with spending, so that the first general alternation which began in §3.2 is thereby overlaid with a second alternation (Table 4.6). It gives §3.3 a special character, setting it off and blanketing the entire subsection, except for the last three verses of the epilogue. The alternation is also incremental in character, since the length of each segment increases with the progression of the section.417

God as master over life and death is illustrated by means of stories, which occur in three passages, v. 243, vv. 246-253, and vv. 258-260 (Table 4.6). These passages alternate in turn with other passages, overlaying the section with a third alternation. Thus there are three alternations woven into this section.

417 See Table 7.3
In light of the above, there are a number of repetitions which function as structural markers for Surat al-Baqara. All these repetitions emphasize certain elements and tie the text together, thereby contributing to the integrity and cohesion of the text. Repetitions which functioned primarily for cohesion and emphasis included the Leitwort, *iqtiṣāṣ*, progression and concatenation.
Some repetitions also segment the text and indicate its compositional subunits. The segmenting repetitions are mainly the inclusio, although the chasms and alternations also have a segmenting function by imposing certain patterns on the text and highlighting specific subsections as distinct units.

It is the segmenting repetitions which are the most significant for identifying al-Baqara’s internal structure. The sura’s most pronounced inclusio, I2, divided it into three sections: §1, §2 and §3. I1, al-Baqara’s first inclusio, framed §1. Three more inclusios divided §3 into three subsections: §3.1, §3.2, and §3.3, while two more subdivided §3.1 further into two units: §3.11 and §3.12.

In terms of size, §2 and §3.2 are the longest and are of similar length, while §1, §3.1 and §3.3 are also of similar length, but smaller, and §3.11 and §3.12 are even smaller. The inclusios thereby segment the text in a roughly symmetrical form.418

The above inclusios are all verbatim repetitions; however, thematic repetitions are also of structural significance. Thematic alternations serve to highlight the individual character of §3.2 and §3.3. They thereby work in conjunction with the inclusios, enveloping their respective sections to set off the two subsections and mark them as distinct subunits.

Thematically, the overall structure of the sura is chiastic, and consists of three panels. They are of increasing size so that the first two panels introduce the last one, and emphasis is relayed to the last panel. The alternations are similarly incremental, since there is a rough increase in the size of their repeated elements, the broken pattern again relaying emphasis to the end. The sense of progression and increase can also be observed in the inclusios, which are similarly incremental in nature. The special incremental character of the al-Baqara repetitive devices and the delayed emphasis layers the sura with a sense of heightened expectation.

418For a visual representation, see Table 8.2.
CHAPTER 5

Al-Fātiḥa

Al-Fātiḥa is relevant to the study of al-Baqara for several reasons; although quite short—only seven verses—it introduces the longer sura, as well as the entire Qur’an, and establishes certain patterns and stylistic features. These pre-established figures are of some significance to understanding the structure of al-Baqara and its pedagogical reading in particular. They become clearer when viewing the two suras together, but are not as easily discernable when looking at each sura in isolation. The identification of the initial components of these figures, as they appear in al-Fātiḥa, will be the primary concern here.

The chapter will begin with a verse by verse analysis of al-Fātiḥa. Of relevance is the second repetition, which is more strongly defined than the first, as we shall see below. This feature was identified in the last chapter in connection with al-Baqara, where the second inclusio was decidedly more pronounced than the first. Not only is the second repetition longer than the first, it is the most noticeable of all al-Fātiḥa’s repetitions, again soliciting some explanation from medieval commentators. Also of relevance is how transitions are affected, a topic that was also touched upon in the last chapter. Here, vv. 2-4 form such a transition, tying v. 1 to the rest of the sura. This chapter will show the special character of the transitional structure, which forms an integral part of the text, containing an assortment of new material. As we shall see in Chapter 6, al-Baqara begins with a similar transition.

The concentration of new ideas is not only a characteristic of al-Fātiḥa’s transition, but of the entire sura, and is also significant for al-Baqara. Therefore, this special style will be further explored here. In order to clarify its distinctive nature, al-Fātiḥa’s organization of ideas will be compared to the beginning of Genesis, which is
arranged on a sequential, chronological basis. This style contrasts with the organic, priority-based method of organization which is characteristic of al-นคริ and al-Baqara as we shall see below and further in Chapter 7.

Last but not least are a divine self-revelatory and a pedagogical reading. The latter is crucial for understanding the pedagogical reading of al-Baqara, since it builds on and develops from al-นคริ’s pedagogical reading, as we shall see in Chapter 7. While al-นคริ affirms previously established foundations common to various faith traditions, al-Baqara builds on these foundations, affecting change in a piecemeal fashion and thereby assembling a basic outline for the emerging Islamic faith and practice.

**Analysis of al-นคริ**

Al-นคริ is the first sura in the Qur’an, immediately preceding al-Baqara, usually translated as the ‘Opening’. Mahmoud Ayoub has analyzed this sura, identifying it as a prayer.[^1] It begins with ‘In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful’, a verse often referred to as the *basmala*. Since it is repeated at the start of every sura,[^2] classical commentators were divided on whether it should be considered part of every sura, or an independent verse acting as a divider.[^3] Thus, the structural function and independent character of this particular repetition were recognized quite early in the history of Qur’anic commentary. It is this feature which also indicates the beginning of al-Baqara and marks it as a separate unit. While today there are other, visual methods of designating the beginning of suras in the printed editions, in a

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[^2]: The only exception is *al-Tawba* (Q. 9), which does not begin with the *basmala*.

primarily oral environment or in a liturgical setting, the basmala functions as a signal for the commencement of a new sura.  

V. 2 consists of a short statement of praise to God, who is further identified as the educator of everyone in the world. The repetition of ‘God’ serves as a verbal and ideational link between the two verses, with which the central activity of praise is introduced. It indicates a special technique of composition, in which the repeated word forms a nucleus around which the new material is constructed. It is possible to use the iqtiṣāṣ terminology in connection with it—the repeated word is ‘taken’ from the preceding verse and placed in the new one. Cohesion is a by-product, since the repetition of words is a well-known method of achieving lexical cohesion. It is also possible to use Wansbrough’s term ‘organic’ in connection with this form of textual growth. However, while he applied it to the historic compilation of the text, here it is used in a literary, compositional sense. As we shall see below, it is also possible to use the term ‘concatenation’ or ‘link’ in connection with this repetition.

Similar to al-Baqara, where the second inclusio was more pronounced than the first, here too, the second repetition is longer than the first, thereby establishing a pattern. The second repetition, ‘the most beneficent, the most merciful’ (v. 3) is composed of two words and has subsequently not gone unnoticed among scholars.

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422 For more on oral typesetting, see Parunak, ‘Oral Typesetting’.
423 The word rabb/educator can also be translated as nurturer, cherisher, master, chief, leader, owner, teacher or religious authority. It occurs in several Semitic languages such as Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic.
424 Ālamīn, translated here as ‘everyone in the world’, is more often translated as ‘worlds’ or even ‘realms’. Although both ‘realms’ and ‘worlds’ are good translations, ‘everyone in the world’ is chosen here, because the other Qurʾānic occurrences seem to refer only to people, not to the contents of the entire universe. Compare Q. 2:47, 131, 251; 3: 33, 42, 96, 97, 108; 5: 20, 28, 115; 6: 45, 71, 86, 90, 162; 7: 54, 61, 67, 80, 104, 121, 140; 10: 10, 37, 104; 15: 70; 21: 71, 91, 107; 25: 1; 26: 16, 23, 47, 77, 98, 109, 127, 145, 164, 165, 180, 192; 27: 8, 44; 28: 30; 39: 9, 43; 43: 46; 44: 32; 45:16, 36; 56: 80; 59: 16; 68: 52; 69: 43; 81: 27, 29; 83: 6.
For example, Andalusī (d. 754/1353)\textsuperscript{427} and Ṭabarsī (or Ṭabrīsī) (d. 548/1154)\textsuperscript{428} associate it with emphasis,\textsuperscript{429} while Ṭanṭāwī suggests that it mitigates any harshness accompanying ‘educator’in the previous verse.\textsuperscript{430}

While the mitigation effect establishes a connection with ‘educator’, it also links the verse with the following ‘master of the day of judgment’ (v. 4), since this day can evoke images of hell and a vindictive God. Looking at v. 4 in conjunction with vv. 2-3, a string of divine attributes becomes evident, all of which are grammatically in apposition: God, educator of everyone in the world (v. 1), the most beneficent, the most merciful (v. 3), master of the day of judgment (v. 4). Thus the three attributes forming the latter part of v. 1 became expanded with two additional ones: while ‘God’ was expanded with ‘educator of everyone in the world’,\textsuperscript{431} ‘the most beneficent, the most merciful’ was coupled with ‘master of the day of judgment’. These three verses form a transition between the \textit{basmala} and the subsequent three verses, a transition which could be termed concatenation, while forming an integral part of the text.\textsuperscript{432}

Using Parunak’s formulae, al-Fātiḥa follows the unbalanced linked keyword pattern A/aB, the lowercase ‘a’ representing our repeated keywords: God, the beneficent, the merciful. It is noteworthy that it is not one keyword linking the \textit{basmala} to the rest of al-Fātiḥa, but three. As we shall see in Chapter 5, the same transitional pattern is again used to join al-Fātiḥa to al-Baqara.

While ‘concatenation’ is quite apt in describing the function of al-Fātiḥa’s three above-mentioned keywords, the phenomenon of taking ideas or expressions from previous passages in order to build and link new passages is much more widespread and integral to the structure of al-Baqara than the mere linking of passages. For

\textsuperscript{427} Andalusī, \textit{al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ}, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{428} Ṭabarsī, \textit{Majma῾ al-bayān}, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{429} El-Awa has pointed out, that Arabic grammar and rhetoric generally assigns repetitions the functions of \textit{tawkīd} (emphasis) and/or \textit{iṭnāb} (positive verbosity). El-Awa, ‘Repetition’, p. 577, note 3.

\textsuperscript{430} Ṭanṭāwī, \textit{al-Tafsīr al-wasīṭ}, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{431} ‘Educator of everyone in the world’ can also be translated as ‘master of the realms’. See notes 422 and 423 above.

\textsuperscript{432} See Chapter 4, pp. 113-114.
example, the words ‘God’ (Allāh), the beneficent (al-rahāmān), and the merciful (al-rahīm) frequently appear elsewhere in the Qur’an, such as at the beginning of every sura but one. The more broad-ranging terms, iqtiṣāṣ and ‘progression’ are therefore more suited to describing this phenomenon and will be used more often in this study. The term will not be used in the subsequent chapters, since iqtiṣāṣ is more apt in the context of al-Baqara, where the keywords move beyond transitions.

V. 5 contains the repetition of ‘only you’, which also happens to be the first occurrence of iltifāṭ, a poetic device composed of a change of person when referring to the same entity.\(^{433}\) In this case, the entity is God, who is now directly addressed, as opposed to spoken about in the third person.\(^{434}\) The repetition emphasizes the iltifāṭ, which in this instant also functions as a structural demarcation between the first part of the sura, in which God is spoken about in the third person, and the second part, in which God is directly addressed and supplicated.

The repetition of ‘only you’ also comes with an expansion: the first occurrence of the word it is joined to ‘do we worship’, while the second time it is repeated and elaborated with ‘do we ask for help’. The ‘right way’ of v. 6 is also expanded in v. 7, identifying it as ‘the way of those whom God has blessed, not those upon whom is anger, nor those who go astray’. Thus in the second part of al-Fātiḥa, the two repetitions follow successively upon one another, each separated by a single Arabic word: the two occurrences of ‘only you’ (iyyāka) are separated by ‘do we worship’ (na῾bud), while the two occurrences of ‘way’ (ṣirāṭ) are separated by ‘right’ (mustaqīm). This change in pattern in conjunction to the iltifāṭ set off these verses, signaling a subunit of text.

There is some similarity between the basic structure of al-Fātiḥa and that of al-Baqara: al-Fātiḥa’s structure is also tripartite and of increasing length: the basmala forms the first part, vv. 2-4, in which the deity is addressed in the third person forms


\(^{434}\) Andalusī commented on this repetition, proposing that its purpose is to construct individual sentences out of both worship and the request for help. Andalusī, al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ, p. 44.
the second, and vv. 5-7, in which the deity is addressed in the second person forms the third. There are also other similarities: al-Fāṭiḥa’s first repeated element is composed of a single word, God/Allāh, similar to al-Baqara’s I1 and §1, while al-Fāṭiḥa’s next repeated element is a longer repetition, the most beneficient the most merciful/al-rahmān al-raḥīm, similar to al-Baqara’s I2 and §2. Moreover, al-Fāṭiḥa’s last three verses exhibit a change in pattern, the prayer forming a kind of climax, similar to al-Baqara’s §3, which has a threefold division with internal inclusios, the emerging Muslim nation forming a zenith for humanity’s past history as presented in §1 and §2.

From the above, there are four repetitions in al-Fāṭiḥa: ‘God’, ‘the beneficent, the merciful’, ‘only you’, and ‘way’. These words are central within their repeated context, so that removing them and their immediate attachments would reduce the text to little more than the initial basmala. Therefore, these repetitions do not lend themselves easily to redaction analysis, such as conducted in biblical criticism for example. Rather, the reiteration is a technique of literary growth and has a special cohesive function, special because of the diverse nature of the verses they are linking. Although they number only seven, the verses cover a variety of fundamental Qur’anic concepts, thereby contributing to a high density of ideas. Consequently, from the very beginning of the Qur’an, repetitions appear as a stylistic feature linking compact verses.

Comparison with Genesis

To further clarify the compactness of this distinctive style and the diverse nature of the verses, I will situate the Qur’an within its biblical literary tradition, comparing it with the beginning of the Genesis narrative. This comparison, however unlikely it might otherwise appear, will show the linear progression of biblical narrative with respect to time and events, and contrast it with the ‘organic’ progression of the Qur’an, with its characteristic density of pedagogical content.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis</th>
<th>al-Fāṭiḥa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,</td>
<td>In the name of God, the most beneficent, the most merciful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.</td>
<td>Praise be to God, educator of everyone in the world,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Then God said: &quot;Let there be light&quot;; and there was light.</td>
<td>the most beneficent, the most merciful,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.</td>
<td>master of the day of judgment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.</td>
<td>only you do we worship, only you do we ask for help:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-And God said, &quot;Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.&quot;</td>
<td>guide us to the right way,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so.</td>
<td>the way of those, whom you have blessed, not those upon whom is anger, nor those who go astray.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

It is noteworthy that narrative is not the only type of discourse in the Bible; the twentieth-century interest in the Bible’s literary aspects has led to the development of

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a typology of canonical discourse. Ricoeur, in particular stands out in this respect; he has pointed to five different types in the Hebrew Scriptures alone: prophetic, narrative, prescriptive, wisdom and hymnic, and has added three more in the New Testament: biographical-historiography, epistle, and apocalyptic.\textsuperscript{436} Vernon K. Robbins and Gordon D. Newby have provided a brief synopsis of this classification, indicating that the Qur‘an represents a substantive reconfiguration of these types of discourse.\textsuperscript{437} In addition, they have pointed to the contributions of social rhetorics to the classification of New Testament discourse, so that a further six modes are interwoven into the discursive landscape: wisdom, miracle, prophetic, suffering-death, apocalyptic, and precreation.\textsuperscript{438} It is these last categories that have substantive parallels in the Qur‘an.\textsuperscript{439}

Similar to Robbins and Newby, Todd Lawson has also shown the parallels between the Qur‘an and apocalyptic literature, pointing out the contrast between its narrative passages and passages that defy the classification of ‘narrative’, terming them ‘anti-narrative’.\textsuperscript{440} Thus, narrative discourse is not the closest biblical parallel; apocalyptic discourse is arguably closer. From the Hebrew Scriptures, hymnic discourse or even prophetic discourse may also be closer. For example, the basmala is similar to the formulaic koh amar adonai meaning ‘thus said the Lord’ introducing prophetic speech in the Bible, in which the prophet is speaking in the name of YHWH.\textsuperscript{441} Then again, what follows the basmala is not in the form of direct speech from the deity, but is closer to hymnic discourse, in which people praise God and direct their supplications for guidance towards him. In addition, the Qur‘an’s rhymed

\textsuperscript{438} See Robbins and Newby, ‘Relation’, pp. 29-32.
\textsuperscript{439} See Robbins and Newby, ‘Relation’, pp. 32-42.
\textsuperscript{440} Lawson, ‘Duality and Opposition in the Qur‘ān’.
prose\textsuperscript{442} is closer to the poetry of Psalms than it is to the non-rhymed prose of Genesis.\textsuperscript{443}

While the narrative discourse in the beginning of Genesis may not be the closest biblical parallel to al-Fātiḥa, it occurs at the very beginning, just like al-Fātiḥa, and since this location is crucial to the present analysis, it is more relevant to compare beginning to beginning. In addition, the non-linear character of al-Fātiḥa—and subsequently al-Baqara—becomes clearer when contrasted to the linear growth of narrative, as opposed to hymns, which is often non-linear. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, a comparison with Genesis is more fruitful. This does not preclude that there may be other hymn-like passages or biblical prayers that have similar stylistic characteristics to al-Fātiḥa.

The first verse of Genesis (Table 5) teaches that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth, thereby identifying the deity in a way that is unmistakable. The word ‘in the beginning’ underlines the general linear organization of the Bible with respect to time.\textsuperscript{444}

In contrast, God as the creator appears for the first time in al-Baqara 2: 21 in the first direct address of God to humankind: ‘O humankind! Worship your Lord, who created you and the ones before you so that you may safeguard yourselves’. In the verse, God is identified as the one ‘who created you’. The stress here is on relevance to the recipient, rather than God’s creation in general. That God created humankind does not appear until the second chapter of Genesis.

\textsuperscript{443} See also Neuwirth, ‘Die Psalmen – im Koran neu gelesen (Ps 104 und 137)’
\textsuperscript{444} There are four proposed syntaxes for this verse, which differ slightly in meaning. See Gordon J. Wenham, Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 11 ff.
The basmala identifies who the text is from (God) and that it is sent in the spirit of loving-kindness (rahma).\textsuperscript{445} The Bible does not start with a claim that it is from God, but it is understood by the faithful. However, God’s loving-kindness is a major biblical theme, in particular in the New Testament. For example, in John 3: 16-17, God is portrayed as loving the world to the point of giving his only son as a savior. The deity’s loving-kindness can also be read as a central theme in the Hebrew Scriptures, since ‘loving-kindness’ is a modern rendering of hesed, the glue that binds both parties of the God-Israel covenant together.\textsuperscript{446} In addition, the Hebrew cognate of the Arabic rahma appears in the Hebrew Scriptures, e.g. in the book of Hosea.\textsuperscript{447}

The second verse of Genesis presents us with a description of the condition of the earth in the initial stage of creation, while in al-Fātiḥa a reader praises God and learns that he is the rabb of everyone in the world. In the Judeo-Christian milieu of the revelation, rabb was used to denote the Jewish rabbis or similar persons, an elite highly educated in religious law. In this verse, God takes over the function of the rabbi, which may include educative, legislative and authoritative aspects.\textsuperscript{448}

The third and fourth verses of Genesis present a major creation event: God created light, whereas previously darkness covered the earth. God also approved of the light and separated it from the darkness. In al-Fātiḥa, God reasserts his loving-kindness and we learn that God is master of the Day of Judgment. No details are as yet provided; there is no mention of an afterlife, Hell and the Garden only appearing in al-Baqara 2: 24-25. The concept of a day of judgment appears in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the prophetic books, beginning with Amos, but its accompanying afterlife

\textsuperscript{445} According to Zabidi, the word has two aspects: a giving aspect and a tenderness aspect. Since ‘loving-kindness’ brings out both admirably, it makes an excellent translation. See Zabidi, Tāj al-῾arūs, vol. 16, p. 274.


\textsuperscript{447} See, for example, Hosea 1: 6-7.

\textsuperscript{448} For more, see Chapter 6.
in Heaven or Hell is not present.\textsuperscript{449} However, the concept survived in Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism and formed part of the cultural milieu of Islam. Its importance lies in epitomizing life’s inescapable goal, for which individuals need to be prepared for ultimate success or failure.

From the fifth to seventh verses of Genesis we learn more details about the creation process and events of the second day. God named the light ‘day’ and the darkness ‘night’, subsequently turning his attention to the waters and working on them. In the account, progression is linear and in chronological order; events do not happen simultaneously, but one after the other. On the other hand, the fifth and sixth verses of al-Fātiḥa impart ideas of a distinctive monotheism, the worship of one God and reliance on him alone for help and guidance. Although monotheism may not be clearly stated in Genesis, it is strongly implied,\textsuperscript{450} and forms the first of the Ten Commandments (Dt 6: 4, Ex. 20: 1 ff). The last verse of al-Fātiḥa outlines three different ways. As we shall see below, these ways are expounded in the beginning of al-Baqara.

In light of the above, the Genesis narrative starts at the very beginning of the creation process and progresses linearly in time according to the unfolding of events. For Ricoeur, these events have a special transcendent quality in relation to the normal course of history, thereby qualifying biblical narrative discourse.\textsuperscript{451} Their transcendence manifests itself especially in their foundational and instituting role for the faith of Israel and the early church. YHWH has a central role in them, since he is the supreme actant.\textsuperscript{452} Distinctive for biblical narrative is the profusion of details and the attention paid to chronology, which is the primary factor in verse organization. More or less smooth, linear, continuous flow is characteristic of this style.

\textsuperscript{449} For example, Amos 5: 18 ff. mentions the Day of YHWH, a day in which transgressors will be punished, but does not mention resurrection or an afterlife, perhaps indicating that retribution will occur in this life.
\textsuperscript{450} That God creates everything implicitly denies the existence of other gods. That the sun and moon are called greater and lesser lights even denies the presence of the name of these gods in this text.
\textsuperscript{451}Ricoeur, \textit{Essays}, pp. 77-81.
\textsuperscript{452}Ricoeur, \textit{Essays}, pp. 77-81. Technically, the Tetragrammaton does not appear until Gen 2: 4.
Whereas the focus of Genesis is the events of creation and the identification of YHWH as the creator, al-Fātīḥa provides the individual with the most important information he or she needs to know in their religious education. Thus, rather than identifying God as the creator in the distant past, al-Fātīḥa focuses on his current relationship to humanity, informs the individual of the judgment to come and directs him or her onto the right path. If this were everything the individual managed to read or hear, and were to suddenly die, the contents of al-Fātīḥa provide the rubrics for his or her entrée into the hereafter. Whereas Genesis is characterized by a single story line in the form of a series of chronologically ordered events, al-Fātīḥa is characterized by a concentrated assortment of fundamental ideas.

Conversely, in Genesis, the pedagogical process is more gradual. Pages and pages of details of the creation process add little information for the uninitiated person wanting to learn the faith, necessitating the help of a teacher to pick the most relevant passages from each of the well-ordered books of the Bible. For the expert, the Bible can serve as an excellent reference source, the linear organization making its contents easily accessible. On the other hand, the information in the Qurʾan is already organized in a pedagogic manner—there is less immediate need for a specialist to lay down a curriculum. The reader/listener has direct access to the most important information they need to know, relying more on the text than on the specialist for this information. This changed reliance echoes the distinctive monotheism of ‘only you do we worship; only you do we ask for help: Guide us to the right way’ and the designation of the deity as the ‘rabbi’/rabʾ of humankind.\(^{453}\) Therefore, the deity taking over the role of educator shows itself in the very organization of the sura and is consistent with the Qurʾan’s literary style.

\(^{453}\) For more on the pedagogical aspect, see Chapter 7.
**Divine Self-Revelatory Reading**

Reading al-Fātiḥa in divine self-revelatory mode, God surfaces as the central subject of the prayer, which is indicated in the repetitions of ‘God’ and ‘the beneficent, the merciful’. The transition from third person to directly addressing God establishes the connection between the person and God, underlined by the repetition of ‘only you’. God does not yet emerge as the supreme guide, since the intricacies of the right way are not yet outlined. Rather, the deity teaches humankind to reach an awareness of his existence, to depend on him and to turn to him for guidance to the right way. The sura thereby establishes a relationship and opens up a communication channel between humanity and the deity. Thus, God emerges as being there for humanity.

**Pedagogical Reading**

In a pedagogical reading, al-Fātiḥa prepares human beings to receive guidance, repetitions functioning as didactic tools, stressing the need to depend on the loving and kind God, and on him alone, so that the individual may find the right track. In addition, repetitions have a special, cohesive function, knitting together a text, characterized by a concentrated assortment of fundamental ideas. This stylistic feature reflects a distinctive monotheism, in which the deity takes over the educational role of human religious authorities. The pedagogical content of the sura, when viewed as a whole, consists of the basic rubrics of faith in general, presented to the reader/listener in a succinct, easily accessible form. In addition, the brevity of al-Fātihā helps individuals achieve focus and underlines the prayer’s preparatory role for receiving instruction on the different ways.

At the collective level, the opening prayer affirms concepts common to all three Abrahamic faiths. Taking the repetitions as keywords, the common concepts include monotheism, loving-kindness as the relationship between God and humankind, dependence on the deity, and the need to be on the right track. Al-Fātihā does not contain any ideas that may be unacceptable to most Jews or Christians, but serves to
assemble members of the cultural milieu of Islam around the most fundamental of shared principles: at the collective level, the sura is concerned with establishing common grounds.

**Conclusion**

In light of the above, al-Fātiḥa is the opening sura of the Qur’an and comes in the form of a prayer. It establishes certain patterns that are relevant to understanding Surat al-Baqara, which follows immediately upon al-Fātiḥa. The first pattern that it establishes is the *basmala*, a short phrase containing three names of God and which signals the start of Surat al-Baqara—in fact, it signals the start of every sura but one in the Qur’an. The second pattern that it establishes is its three-fold incremental structure, which broadly parallels that of al-Baqara. The third pattern is that of *iqtiṣāṣ*: a stylistic feature which permits the knitting together of highly disparate contents into a coherent composition. This pattern was observed in the repetition of God, the most beneficent the most merciful, which ties vv. 2-4 to the initial *basmala* (v.1). The *iltifāt* centered on God connects vv. 5-7 to the preceding verses, while at the same time signaling the beginning of a new passage. The *iqtiṣāṣ* feature also ties al-Fātiḥa to al-Baqara, since the supplication and three different ways of al-Fāiha’s last two verse are taken and built up to become vv. 1-20 of al-Baqara.

The divine self-revelatory reading of al-Fātiḥa indicates its theme and function of opening up the communication channel between God and humanity and establishing the deity as being there for humankind. On the other hand, the pedagogical reading shows how the sura’s instructional content consists of the fundamental basics of faith in general, assembling humanity on shared principles. The prayer thereby prepares the reader/listener for what is to come, leaving them with a sense of heightened expectation.
CHAPTER 6

**Divine Self-Revelatory Reading**

The focus of this chapter is to read Surat al-Baqara in divine self-revelatory mode, identifying its central theme and showing how the sura’s various sections relate to it and develop it together. The theoretical basis for this reading has been previously outlined in Chapter 3, so there is no need to repeat it here. This chapter will begin by reviewing central themes proposed by leading scholars in the field. It will then identify the central theme of this study’s divine self-revelatory reading by means of further examining the Leitwort ‘guidance’, leading to a central theme of ‘God as Guide’. Section analysis will follow the sura structure outlined in Chapter 4, and will typically begin with exploring connections, such as the transition between al-Fātiḥa and al-Baqara noted in Chapter 5. After outlining the broad structure of each section, it will be read in divine self-revelatory mode, exploring how the various sections develop and elaborate the idea of ‘God as Guide’ within the sura. Finally, this chapter will show how al-Baqara’s structure resembles that of al-Fātiḥa in very broad terms, pointing out further parallels which have not been identified in the previous chapter.  

**Central Themes for al-Baqara**

While many scholars have failed to discern a central theme for al-Baqara, those that have made the attempt have not always reached the same conclusions. Many scholars have failed to discern a comprehensive compositional schema, or even a unifying factor. For example, Angelika Neuwirth, who has contributed greatly to the study of coherence in Meccan suras, views al-Baqara as a collection basket of isolated verse groups. See Angelika Neuwirth,
medieval Biqāʿī, who looks to the sura names to identify each sura’s purpose, describes al-Baqara’s intent in a two-fold manner: the first by means of the eponymic heifer and the second through another sura name: ‘al-Zahrā’, ‘the luminous’. When relating the sura’s intent to the story of the heifer, he writes:

Its intent is to establish proof that the book constitutes guidance to be followed in everything it says. The greatest of what it guides to is belief in the Unseen, and its sum is belief in the hereafter: It deals with belief in resurrection, articulated by the story of the heifer, which deals with belief in the Unseen. This is why the sura was called after it ...

When relating al-Zahrā’ to the sura’s intent, he states:

It was called ‘the luminous’, because it lights up the path of guidance and sufficiency in this world and the next and because it confirms the lighting up of faces on the day of accounting ...

Thus, while Biqāʿī’s central theme is elaborately expressed, it contains the idea of guidance, and therefore carries hints of the central theme of this chapter. On the other hand, Saʿīdī, Quṭb, İslāḥī and Robinson do not specify ‘guidance’ in connection with their central themes. Their ideas share some common characteristics with each other and are more focused on the nascent Muslim community. Saʿīdī, who relies on Biqāʿī, has conversely deemed it a response to the questions of the Jewish scribes and the

‘Vom Rezitationstext über die Liturgie zum Kanon’, p. 98. See also Chapter 2, p. 45.
hypocrites of Medina and a delineation of the rules and regulations of Muslim worship and practice. His central theme resembles that of Quṭb, who suggests a central double axis dealing on the one hand with ‘the position of the Children of Israel regarding the Islamic missionary activity in Medina, their reception of it and their opposition to its messenger and the nascent Muslim community …’ and on the other hand with ‘the position of the nascent Muslim community, preparing to bear the responsibility of missionary activity and vicegerency on earth’.456

Ṣaʿīdī and Quṭb’s two-fold central theme differs from those of Robinson and Işlâhî, whose proposals are more compact and focused on a single idea. Robinson looks at the numerical centre of the sura with its reference to Muslims as a ‘middle nation’, considering it a guide to its contents.457 His proposal recalls Quṭb’s second theme, since both point to the position of the nascent Muslim community. On the other hand, Zahniser deduces Mir’s unifying theme as ‘preparation for liberating the Ka’ba’,458 which also bears some resemblance to Quṭb’s second theme, since they both fall under the emerging role and activity of the Muslim community. These themes are therefore more community-centric, as opposed to deity-centric.

One should perhaps mention Drāz’s treatment of Surat al-Baqara: he outlines its thematic flow (khaṭṭ sayr), in order to show the unified quality of its organization.459 He has identified four objectives for the sura, in the form of a structural outline as follows:

Introduction (vv. 1-20)

First objective: Invitation to all humankind to convert to Islam (vv. 21-39)

Second objective: Specific invitation to the People of the Book to leave their wrong-doing and to enter this true religion (vv. 40-162)

456 Quṭb, Zīlāl, p. 28.
457 Robinson, Discovering the Qur’an, p. 203.
459 Drāz, Naba’, pp. 191-284.
Third objective: Exposition of the laws of this religion in detail (vv. 163-283)

Fourth objective: Mention of the religious impulse which motivates one to adhere to these laws and which prohibits diverging from them (v. 284)

Conclusion (285-286)

While Drāz does not identify a central theme, he has roughly sketched the sura’s thematic flow. His sketch has some broad similarities with the tripartite structure outlined here. His first objective is centred on humanity as a whole, similar to Panel 1 of this study, while his second identifies the Children of Israel, similar to Panel 2 of this study. His third objective identifies the rules and regulations character of the section, similar to Section 2 of Panel 3 of this study. However, none of the section demarcations he has specified coincide with the borders identified here, other than the beginning of Panel 2 (v. 40).

**Divine Self-Revelatory Central Theme**

The central theme in divine self-revelatory mode is relatively easy to identify, since it is indicated by the numerous occurrences of the *Leitwort*. In all those occurrences ‘God’ is either directly or indirectly portrayed as the supplier of the guidance (Table 6.1). Examples for direct guidance include v. 38, in which the deity speaks in the first person, identifying the guidance as ‘from me’ and ‘my’ guidance. V. 120 describes it in a similar fashion in ‘it is God’s guidance which is guidance’.

Examples for the term coming through a vehicle of sorts include v. 2, in which the book is described as ‘guidance for the God-conscious’. The same group is described as being ‘on guidance from their Lord’, implying that the book constitutes God’s guidance (v. 5). The ‘book’ is again portrayed as a means of guidance in vv. 159, 175, in connection with the ones who suppress it.
While in the last two verses, the ‘book’ may be a reference to other scriptures, such as the Torah, in v. 2 it points to the Qur’an specifically, since it specifies ‘this book’. In v. 185, the Qur’an is mentioned explicitly, with the instruction to glorify God for this guidance. Other vehicles of God’s guidance include Moses (v. 53), and Gabriel (v. 97), who convey guidance to others, such as the Israelites in the case of Moses, or Muhammad, as in the case of Gabriel. The deity is also portrayed withholding guidance from certain groups, such as the unjust ones and the ungrateful ones (vv. 258, 264).

In all the occurrences of the *Leitwort* in this sura, it is always in connection with God, i.e. God is the ultimate guide, whether he is portrayed directly as such or whether he functions through an intermediary of sorts, such as the prophets, angels or scriptures (Table 6.1). Thus, when placing God at the focal point and reading the text in divine-self-revelatory mode, the *Leitwort* becomes ‘God as guide’, similar to a *Leitmotif* running throughout the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Verses in translation</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>This is the book in which there is no doubt, a guidance for the God-conscious.</td>
<td>God via ‘book’</td>
<td>The believers described as God-conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>These are the ones who are on guidance from their lord and it is these who will prosper.</td>
<td>God, described as <em>rabb</em></td>
<td>Believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>These are the ones who have purchased going astray with guidance, so that their trade has not prospered nor were they guided.</td>
<td>God by giving examples</td>
<td>Many people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>... he thereby guides many ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>We said: “Descend from it. It may be that you receive guidance from me, so that whosoever</td>
<td>God</td>
<td>Humanity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
follows my guidance, there is no need to fear for them nor need they grieve.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>And when We gave Moses the book and the criterion⁴⁶⁰, so that perhaps you may be guided. God, via Moses Ancient Israelites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>... we shall—God willing—be guided. God Ancient Israelites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>... Gabriel ... a guidance and good news for the believers. God, via Gabriel Believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>... Say: “It is God’s guidance which is guidance” ... God Jews and Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>Say: Become Jews or Christians that you may be guided ... God Jews and Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>If they believe in what you believe, then they have been guided ... God Jews and Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>... He guides who he wills to a straight path. God Unspecified persons guided by God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>... those whom God has guided ... God Unspecified persons guided by God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>... it may be that you become guided. God Emerging Muslim nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>... these are the guided ones. God Persons from among the emerging Muslim nation who</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴⁶⁰ The word *furqān* is most often interpreted as the criterion between right and wrong; however, Walid Saleh has made an excellent case for it meaning something in the nature of ‘piece-meal revelation’. Walid Saleh, unpublished paper.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td><strong>Those who hide the evidence and guidance we have sent down, after we have clarified it to the people in the book ...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td><strong>... even if their fathers did not think rationally, nor were guided.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td><strong>These are the ones who have purchased going astray with guidance ...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185</td>
<td><strong>The month of Ramadan in which the Qur’an was sent down as a guidance to humankind and evidence of guidance and the criterion ... and that you shall glorify God for he has guided you ...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td><strong>..., so remember him as he has guided you ...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213</td>
<td><strong>... So God guided the believers to the truth in which they differ, with his permission, and God guides whom he wills to a straight path.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258</td>
<td><strong>... God does not guide the unjust ones.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>264</td>
<td><strong>... God does not guide those who are ungrateful.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>272</td>
<td><strong>It is not up to you to guide them, but it is God who guides whom he wills ...</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1
§1- General Introduction (vv. 1-39)

Al-Baqara, indeed the entire Qur’an, comes in the form of a response to the request for guidance in the latter section of al-Fāṭiha, as can be noted in the first two verses of al-Baqara, which designate this book (the Qur’an) as a doubt-free source of guidance (vv. 1-2). This connection has been previously identified, for example, by the medieval Suyūṭī and Biqā‘ī, in addition to the modern Ṭanṭāwī. The supplication in al-Fāṭiha ends in designating three different paths, which in turn provide the nucleus around which the first twenty verses of al-Baqara are constructed. These verses repeat and expand the ideas of al-Fāṭiha’s last verse, thereby establishing the connection between the two suras and indicating another instant of ‘organic’ progression or iqtiṣāṣ. The strong link between the end of al-Fāṭiha and the beginning of al-Baqara, in addition to the progression and elaboration of ideas, indicate that this is a special case of iqtiṣāṣ: a transition which is yet an integral part of the sura, similar to the beginning of al-Fāṭiha.

Many medieval and modern exegetes do not connect al-Fāṭiha’s three paths to the three groups in the beginning of al-Baqara, but rather identify the last group as the ‘hypocrites’, a group so named in subsequent suras of the Qur’an. For example, Rāzī, Ṭabātabā‘ī, Ṭūsī and Alūsī identify this group as the insincere Medinan Muslims at the time of the prophet. Some modern commentators, such as ’Abduh and Quṭb, expand this group to include modern-day insincere Muslims.

However, the connection between al-Fāṭiha’s ḍālīn, ‘the ones who go astray’ (v. 7) and al-Baqara’s last group is clearly established by a reiterated term: v. 16 describes them as ‘the ones who purchased ḍalāla (going astray) with guidance’, repeating the same root in a different grammatical form. This repetition indicates that

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461 Suyuṭī, Tanāсуq, p. 40-41; Biqā‘ī, Nazm, vol. 1, p. 32; Ṭanṭāwī, al-Tafsīr al-wasīt, p. 27.
it is indeed the same group.\footnote{Wang classifies repetitions into exact repetition (e.g. sees $\rightarrow$ sees), reiteration (sees $\rightarrow$ sights) and relexicalization (sees $\rightarrow$ glimpses). See Shih-ping Wang, ‘Corpus-based approaches and discourse analysis in relation to reduplication and repetition’, \textit{Journal of Pragmatics} 37 (2005), pp. 505-540, p. 515. Károly proposes a more intricate taxonomy of repetitions. See Krisztina Károly, \textit{Lexical Repetition in Text} (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 104. She suggests that lexical cohesion as a whole may be viewed as various forms of lexical repetition. Károly, \textit{Lexical Repetition}, pp. 118, 198.} As expounded later in the Qur’an, the ḍālīn seem to be a large umbrella group, which includes the hypocrites and some members of the ‘peoples of the book’, among others.\footnote{See, for example, Q. 4:44, 88; 7:179.}

Biqā‘ī and Suyūṭi are some of only a few who have commented significantly on the link between al-Fāṭiḥa and al-Baqara, tying al-Baqara’s third group to the ḍālīn. Biqā‘ī writes:

The classification of people at the end of al-Fāṭiḥa into three categories, guided, rebellious and those gone astray, is like their classification at the beginning of al-Baqara: God-conscious, manifest ungrateful ones—these are the rebellious—and those gone astray—these are the hypocrites. Their concision in al-Fāṭiḥa and their elaboration here (in al-Baqara) is of a marvelous style; it is the pattern of the great Qur’an: concision and then elaboration.\footnote{Biqā‘ī, \textit{Nazm}, p. 40.}

Biqā‘ī’s words recall \textit{iqtisāṣ}, which is similarly used when a concise word, expression or idea is elaborated elsewhere. Suyūṭi does not use the term \textit{iqtisāṣ} in this context, even though he was instrumental in disseminating it. Rather, he uses words designating concision (\textit{ijmāl}; \textit{iyyāz}) and elaboration (\textit{tafṣīl}), tying al-Fāṭiḥa in its entirety to verses in al-Baqara.\footnote{Suyūṭi, \textit{Tanāṣuq}, p. 41-45.} While Suyūṭi’s exposition recalls Biqā‘ī’s, he does not mention him by name, even though he does quote and name another, lesser known scholar.\footnote{Suyūṭi, \textit{Tanāṣuq}, p. 40-41.}

That Suyūṭi was well aware of Biqā‘ī’s work has previously been noted in Chapter 2, as
well as the resemblance between the titles of both works: Biqā῾ī’s book was sufficiently significant for Suyūṭī to use a similar-sounding title.\(^\text{469}\) Thus, Suyūṭī does not seem to have been ashamed of associating his work with that of Biqā῾ī’s, but underlined the connection. That he saw no need to mention Biqā῾ī’s name hints at how well entrenched in the tradition Biqā῾ī’s work was for this particular genre of literature. This deep entrenchment can also be inferred in the action of the editor of Suyūṭī’s manuscript: he saw fit to supply Biqā῾ī’s name in a footnote.\(^\text{470}\) Suyūṭī’s curious lack of using ‘iqtiṣāṣ’ can be explained by the fact that it was unknown to Biqā῾ī; the latter did not use the term, and his work seems to have been influential in determining the associated terminology. Furthermore, the ideas of concision and elaboration imply a kind of linear progression, a nuance which is not necessarily present in ‘iqtiṣāṣ’. It also recalls the idea of progression, previously identified in Chapter 4.\(^\text{471}\)

Whereas the first twenty verses of al-Baqara are an elaboration of al-Fāṭiḥa’s three paths, the al-Baqara verses are in turn elaborated in subsequent passages, such as the ones mentioning the hypocrites.\(^\text{472}\) Therefore, the al-Baqara verses can function as both elaboration and concision, depending on which passages they are compared to. This feature will be further developed in the pedagogical reading, using the iqtisāṣ terminology.

While section 1 begins with a transition (vv. 1-20), it can be further divided thematically into two more subsections: vv. 21-29 and vv. 30-39 (Table 6.2). Vv. 21-29 begin with another form of oral typesetting, a change of addressee: speech now veers towards the second person plural. The subsection contains the direct address of the deity to humankind, instructing them to worship their rabb (chief, educator, lord, rabbi or other authority with a religio-legislative role),\(^\text{473}\) who is identified as their

\(^{469}\) A similar phenomenon can be observed in the names of Tha῾labī’s al-Kashf and Zamakhshāri’s al-Kāshshāf. See Saleh, Formation, p. 209-214.
\(^{470}\) Suyuṭī, Tanāṣuq, p. 40, note 15.
\(^{471}\) See Chapter 4, pp. 111-113.
\(^{472}\) See p. 142 above.
\(^{473}\) See note 423 and pp. 160-161.
creator. Vv. 30-39 also begin with a change of addressee: now the prophet is directly spoken to and invited to consider the story of Adam and Eve. Here the story of Adam and Eve, not only portrays the primordial origins of the human species, but also a divine promise of future guidance. As we shall see below, each of al-Baqara’s three sections contains a story narrating primeval origins of guidance, a subsection with substantive guidance in the form of instructions, and a third portraying a test of some kind. In §1, divine guidance in the form of ‘this book’ functions as the test, upon which humanity is classified into three categories, depending on how they perform in relation to it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§1.1</td>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>Classification of humanity into three groups</td>
<td>Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§1.2</td>
<td>21-29</td>
<td>Direct address to humankind</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§1.3</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Story of Adam and Eve</td>
<td>Story</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2

Since §1 is framed by the *Leitwort* ‘guidance’, the theme of God as guide is particularly noticeable here. It is established in the very beginning, where this book (the Qur’an) is identified as a doubt-free source of guidance (v. 2). God is not only portrayed as the book’s sender, but he is also the transcendent guide, who has provided past and present guidance (v. 4). Having the ability to place a seal over the minds, eyes and ears of individuals, he can prevent them from perceiving it, thereby emerging in ultimate control of guidance (vv. 6-7). In addition, he can remove the guiding light from those who rely on others to guide them (v. 17). He thereby becomes the guide *par excellence*: no others may fulfill this role.

The deity’s active guiding role in the present moment is outlined in his direct address to humankind (vv. 21-25). He is referred to as *rabbakum*, recalling his

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474 For more, see note 485.
description in al-Fātiḥa, and is identified as the creator of humankind, the heavens and the earth. His creations are another aspect of his guiding function, since even a mosquito, can serve as a similitude, having the purpose of either to guide or to lead astray (v. 26). In the distant past, God becomes the primordial guide, providing guidance for angels and the first human couple and promises to send future guidance (vv. 30-39).

§2 - The Children of Israel (vv. 40-123)

This section is enveloped by the most clearly defined inclusio, beginning with ‘O Children of Israel remember the blessings with which I have blessed you’ and ending with ‘O Children of Israel remember the blessings with which I have blessed you and that I have privileged you over all the peoples of the world. And safeguard yourselves against a day when no person shall avail another, nor interception be taken nor justice accepted nor shall they be aided’ (vv. 122-123). The long, noticeable middle repetition (vv. 47-48) borders the first of this section’s thematic sub-units, while a change in addressee from the Children of Israel to Muslims indicates the border of the third subsection (Table 6.3). Thus, this sections also has a tripartite structure, similar to §1 above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§2.1</td>
<td>40-48</td>
<td>Present Instructions for the Children of Israel</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§2.2</td>
<td>49-74</td>
<td>Past Interactions between them and the Deity</td>
<td>Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§2.3</td>
<td>75-123</td>
<td>Present Interaction with the Muslim Community</td>
<td>Test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3

In this section, God blesses the Children of Israel with guidance in the form of the Covenant (v. 40), which is a central idea here. The concept occurs in several verses dispersed throughout the section, and multiple terms are used to refer to it. In v. 40, it appears as ‘ahd, as is highlighted by the word ‘awfū/ ‘be loyal’. Loyalty,
‘ḥesed’ in Hebrew, is foundational for it: it is the glue that binds both parties of the covenant to it. ‘Ahd can also be translated as ‘testament’: the Hebrew Scriptures, which have also been known as the Old Testament, are called al-‘ahd al-qadīm in Arabic, while the New Testament is known as al-‘ahd al-jadīd.  Mīthāq is another term for the Covenant and occurs several times in this section (vv. 63, 83-84, 93), and the two terms even occur together (v. 27). Yet another reference to the Covenant is v. 51, which refers to ‘appointing Moses forty nights’.  

Related to this ancient Covenant is the expectation to fulfill a specified set of instructions, which include believing in the new prophet, charity and the performance of communal prayers with the followers of the new faith (vv. 41-47). The deity thereby provides the Children of Israel with substantive guidance for the present moment. In the distant past, he provided Moses with guidance in the form of the book (v. 53), after he saved the Israelites from Pharaoh’s abuses (vv. 49-50) and split the sea (v. 50), and also supplied them with food and water in the wilderness (vv. 57-60). The section also shows how the deity dealt with their repeated transgressions, punishing the wrongdoers and providing restitution (vv. 51-74). God thereby fulfills his part of the Covenant, guiding Israel in the present as he has in the past.

While in §2.2 the actions of the Children of Israel have a general, idyllic quality, in §2.3 the tone changes, the location of the keywords underlining this change. Thus in §2.2 they occur in v. 53 in connection with God giving Moses the book and in v. 70 in connection with the Israelites’s ultimate wish to be guided, and their eventual success in spite of their stumbles. On the other hand, in §2.3 the keywords occur in connection with God sending Gabriel to Muhammad (v. 97), thereby moving the prophetic privilege from the Israelites to their Ishmaelite cousins, and also in connection with the Israelite’s failure to realize that guidance is God’s and that they have no monopoly over it (v. 120). Thus, the location of the keywords underlines the change in Israel’s fortunes.

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475 This idea is further elaborated in Q. 7: 142-5. For more on ‘covenant’ and the Ten Commandments, see Günther, ‘O People of the Scripture!’.
In §2.3, the deity criticizes some of the Children of Israel’s contemporaneous activities, providing the nascent Muslim community with guidance on these issues (vv.75-123). He directs his reprimands towards the falsification of scripture (vv. 75-79), the attacking, taking captive and ransoming of fellow Jews (vv. 84-86), and the refusal to follow the new scripture and prophet (vv. 87-91, 99-101). In addition, he spells out serious consequences for those who commit these offenses, which include humiliation in this world, torment in the next, and cursing (vv. 80-81, 85-86, and 88-90). The deity also instructs the prophet how to respond verbally (vv. 80-82; 91-98) and directs the Muslim community not to copy some of the Jews’s past and present actions (vv. 104, 108), to pardon and forgive them (v. 109), and to establish regular prayer and charity (v. 110). This section thereby brings the Muslim community into the conversation about Israel’s past and present, in preparation for the upcoming section, and brings the Children of Israel back into the present and their current situation. It thereby establishes the continuity of God’s guiding actions by portraying his role in the past and in the present: God is affirmed as the transcendent guide.

§3-The Emerging Muslim Nation

§2’s outstanding inclusio frames it as a distinct unit, thereby automatically marking the previous and the following text as separate units. There is a broad chronological progression in the order of the three sections, since §1 deals with humanity in general and tells the story of their primordial origins, while §2 addresses the Children of Israel and portrays their story in ancient times and §3 establishes the emerging Muslim community as a distinct nation. The idea of ‘vicegerent’ (khalīfa) (v. 30) may be of some relevance in this arrangement, since the story in vv. 30-39 explains the origins of Adam’s vicegerency (khilāfa), while §2 and the idea of Covenant accomplishes the same for the Children of Israel, and §3 establishes the burgeoning role of the Muslim community. While khilāfa does not occur verbatim in connection

\footnote{476 Muslims are instructed not to address the prophet with \textit{`}ra ’inā\textit{', which means ‘our shepherd’ in Arabic, but ‘our most evil one’ in Hebrew.}
with the Children of Israel (§2) or the Emerging Muslim community (§3), the related idea of election is present.

Biqāʿī has also noted a connection between §2 and §3, tying §2 to the story of Abraham in the beginning of §3 and to the emerging role of the Muslim community in the rest of the section. He writes:

With this aim, the discourse veers away from them [the Children of Israel], specifying what they had been given of the scripture, which would have made it incumbent upon them religiously to accept what came verifying what they have. But they capriciously took up a religion, which their whims had fabricated. So may He be exalted⁴⁷⁷ [God] thereby arranged the narrative of the one whose religion He approves [Abraham], opening with the start of his affair, his test, so that both arguments are gathered against them: the preceding one, according to the monotheistic Abrahamic religion, and the subsequent one, according to the Mohammedan religion.⁴⁷⁸

There is also a broad parallel between this section and the two previous ones: as noted earlier, each of their three subdivisions has the general character of a test, instructions for human beings, or a story relating primeval origins of guidance. Thus, in §1.1 the book acts as a kind of test upon which humanity is classified into the three different groups. While §1.2 contains instructions for all humankind, §1.3 tells the story humankind’s primeval origins and vicegerency on earth, portraying a divine promise to send guidance. In broad terms, §1 thereby follows the sequence test-instructions-story.

⁴⁷⁷ ‘May He be exalted’ is a reference to God. The meaning of this phrase is ‘So God thereby arranged …’.
On the other hand, §2.1 begins with the instructions, while §2.2 recounts the history of the Children of Israel and their special position and §2.3 conveys how they perform in various kinds of current test situations. The sequence here differs from §1 and follows the pattern instructions-story-test.

Then again §3 begins with the story of Abraham and Ishmael and the construction of the ancient sanctuary. It is enveloped by the promise to send a prophet in their progeny, thereby portraying the primeval origins of the Islamic scripture and source of guidance (§3.1). The subsection is followed by §3.2, containing legislation for the new nation and ends with the testing of faith in §3.3. It thereby has the sequence story-instructions-test: the reverse of §1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§3.1 124-151</td>
<td>Abrahamic Origins</td>
<td>Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§3.2 152-242</td>
<td>Legislation for the New Nation</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§3.3 243-286</td>
<td>Testing of Faith</td>
<td>Test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4

Thus, each section forms a panel of three segments ABC/B′C′A′/C′B″A″. No two segments of the same type border one another. In addition, the ABC sequence is upheld by the beginning element of each panel (AB′C″). The inverted sequence of the outer panels, in addition to the order of the middle panel points to a general chiastic structure for the sura. Thus while there are broad parallels in the composition of each section and in the general character of the three subsections, there is also a chiasm holding them together (Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). The repetition of the three components underlines the repetitive nature of the deity’s guidance.

Section 3 begins with Abraham receiving commands, which he fulfills and following which God appoints him a religious leader for humankind, indicating the universality of his role (v. 124). These words constitute guidance from the deity and
recall Adam similarly receiving words (v. 37). Central is Abraham’s and Ishmael’s prayer for a prophet to recite God’s verses to their offspring, to purify and teach them the book and wisdom (v. 129). It underlines the deity’s responsiveness to requests for guidance (v. 151); God becomes the active sender of prophets with scriptures, the vehicles of his guidance, and the universal guide.

In this section, the deity also responds to Muhammad’s wish to change the prayer orientation (vv. 144, 148-49), an action which sets his followers apart from the Children of Israel and establishes them as a distinct nation (vv. 143). Incumbent upon this status are certain prescriptions and prohibitions (§3.2), the relationship between subsections 3.1 and 3.2 thereby paralleling the relationship between v. 40 and vv. 41ff: while the Covenant established the Children of Israel as a distinct nation (v. 40), the new prophet and the distinct prayer orientation accomplished the same for Muslims (§3.1), and since the Children of Israel had certain obligations associated with their status (vv. 41ff.), Muslims are also given injunctions here (§3.2).

Noteworthy is the set of instructions given to the Israelites in §2, many of which are repeated and elaborated in §3, such as belief, prayer and the giving of alms (e.g. in vv. 40-48, 136, 150-153, 261-274). Robinson has also noted parallels in the sequence of events connected with the Children of Israel and some of the legislations contained in this section. He writes:

... In vv. 178f., legislation is laid down for dealing with cases of manslaughter. This seems out of connection with the previous material until one recognizes that the sequence of topics in the address to the believers bears some relation to the sequence in the address to the Children of Israel. The Children of Israel were commanded to revere the One God (cf. v. 40), but they fell into idolatry and worshipped the calf (cf. vv. 51-54). Their idolatry led them in turn to be discontent with the food
with which God provided them (cf. v. 61) and to commit manslaughter (cf. v. 72).  

The command to revere the one God is paralleled in vv. 163-167, whereas the dietary restrictions occur in vv. 168-172. The legislation for dealing with cases of manslaughter (vv. 178-179), are followed by legislation dealing with the occurrence of death in general: the will of the deceased (vv. 180-182). We can thereby observe a similar pattern between the section addressing the Children of Israel (vv. 40-73) and vv. 124-182 of this section. The deity thereby seems to have systematically given a similar set of instructions to both Israelites and Muslims. Therefore, God emerges as a consistent, systematic, and methodical guide.

Again, the location of the Leitwort underlines the move away from the Children of Israel and the establishment of the nascent Muslim community as a distinct nation. It appears in v. 137, which designates the guided ones as those who believe as Muslims believe, and those that turn away as in dispute. It then appears three times in change-of-qibla related verses, the middle one of which designates Muslims as a middle nation (umma wasaṭ) (vv. 142-143, 150). The status of ‘being guided’ thereby moves along with the addressees, from the Children of Israel to the Muslim community.

In §3.2-3, the Leitwort occurs in a variety of locations, associated with seemingly disparate topics, such as catastrophe and death (v. 157), suppressing scripture (v. 159), true belief (vv. 170, 175), fasting (v. 185), pilgrimage (v. 198), nations and book (v. 213), Abraham (v. 258), and charity (vv. 264, 272). The topics covered in the two subsections are also very broad and include practical topics, such as fasting, war regulations, pilgrimage, women, charity, trade and usury, alternating with ideas of monotheism, scripture and belief. Many of these topics appear twice in what

479 Robinson, Discovering the Qur’an, p. 213.
has previously been identified as a roughly alternating, broken chiasm,\(^\text{480}\) topics such as pilgrimage (vv. 158, 196-203), dietary laws (vv. 168, 172-173) and withholding truth (vv. 159-162, 174-176). Since there do not seem to be any precisely repeated phrases, other than in the inclusios, this doubling does not suggest any further major structural demarcation, but rather a plurality of individual, intertwining themes that are equally emphasized. These disparate and intertwining elements underline the broad, interrelated and substantive nature of the deity’s guidance. Accordingly, God counsels remembrance and patience in moments of distress (vv. 152-157), the disclosure of scripture (vv. 160-163, 174-176) and monotheism (vv. 164-171). He prescribes dietary restrictions (vv. 172-173), regulations related to death and dying (vv. 178-182), and how and when to fast (vv. 183-187). In addition, he outlines rules for war (vv. 190-195, 216-218), delineates pilgrim rituals and rules for marriage, divorce and menstruation (vv. 158, 196-203; 221-242), and warns against insincerity, and the consumption of alcohol and gambling (vv. 204-214; 219). The deity is thereby concerned not only with the broad outlines of guidance, but even with some of its minute details. God is thereby portrayed as a thorough, meticulous and careful guide.

In the last sub-section, God appears as the provider of concrete guidance in the form of the monetary and fighting injunctions. Not only can he ordain death, but he can also revive the dead (vv. 243, 258, 259, 260). The section contains another Israelite exemplar, Ṭālūt, divinely chosen to rule the Israelites. Those who followed their prophet-king into battle became ultimately victorious. God thereby surfaces as guiding those who put their lives and wealth in his hands to ultimate success.

The idea of testing emerges clearly in the last subsection: putting one’s life and wealth on the line for God becomes a kind of test of people’s sincerity and commitment to the new faith; just as the Israelites were tested under Ṭālūt when they first appointed a king and emerged as a political force, so too will Muslims be tested. While the deity’s test takes the form of the charity and fighting injunctions in this subsection, it is overlaid with other kinds of tests from elsewhere in the sura. In §1.1, the

\(^{480}\) See Chapter 4, p. 117-118 and also Chapter 7 pp. 171-173.
requested book becomes the first and general test for humanity as a whole, portrayed as God’s response to the supplication in al-Fātiḥa. It is in this book that the injunctions occur, so that the idea of the book as a test continues to be operative here as well. Hence, there is a broad connection between the ‘test’ subsections of §3 and §1. However, the connection does not stop there, but is also present in the ‘test’ subsection of §2. The idea of the book as a test also overshadows §2.3: the deity’s present-day test for the Children of Israel takes the form of the new book and the new prophet (cf vv. 87-91, 99-101).

Furthermore, the idea of testing is also present in each of the story subsections, tying together the concepts of instruction and test. Thus, in the story of Adam (§1.3), God’s command to the angels becomes a trial, which most of the angels pass, but Iblīs fails. His prohibition against eating from the tree becomes a test for Adam and Eve, which they in turn fail. Similarly, in §2.2, the history of the ancient Israelites is interlaced with trials. They include Pharaoh’s oppression (v. 49), the calf (v. 51), the deity’s command to kill themselves to make up for the worship of the calf (v. 54), his command to enter the village in humility (v. 58), the food he provides (vv. 57, 61), his Covenant (v. 63), the Sabbath (v. 65), and ending with the episode of the heifer and God’s command to slaughter it (vv. 67-73). The story of the ancient sanctuary in §3.1 is also replete with commands and trials. It begins with the deity trying Abraham, upon which he makes him a leader of humankind (v. 124). God’s command to change the prayer direction also becomes a test to distinguish between those who follow the prophet and those who don’t (v. 142-150). Thus, the ‘story’ subsections provide exemplars of command and test situations. The deity’s guidance is thereby interlaced with real-life test situations for which it is incumbent.

In conclusion, each of al-Baqara’s sections develops the deity’s guiding role in a variety of situations. For example, §1 portrays God as the ultimate master of guidance for humanity in general, §2 underlines the transcendence of his guidance in the context of the Children of Israel and §3 its substantive nature in connection with the emerging Muslims nation. In turn, each of the sections contains three parts: Story, instructions and test. The stories portray a promise of guidance, which foreshadows certain
expectation associated with the coming of this guidance. These expectations take the form of clearly delineated instructions, which exemplify substantive guidance. They are needed for the ensuing tests which carry momentous consequences.

In light of the above, Surat al-Baqara has a general tripartite structure, each of its sections in turn consisting again of three parts. This structure broadly resembles al-Fātiḥa’s: the *basmala* is equivalent to §1, vv. 2-4 to §2 and vv. 5-7 to §3. The threefold pattern is also to be found in the number of verses in the second and third sections of al-Fātiḥa, while its first and last verse each mention three names of God and classify human ways into three respectively. The structure of al-Fātiḥa thereby may be read as prefiguring that of al-Baqara in a very simplified form.
Pedagogical Reading

In Chapter 6, the divine self-revelatory central theme was relatively easy to determine, since it was indicated by the *Leitwort* ‘guidance’. Thus, it was identified first, and the sura’s contents were then related to it, showing how they developed and elaborated it section by section. Here the central theme is not as easy to discover, and the chapter will therefore proceed in a different direction: section analysis will precede the identification of the central theme. The analysis will be concerned with pedagogical content, and seeing how the sura’s compositional units together point to its pedagogical central theme. While pedagogical content can generally be found in the ‘instructions’ subsection of each section, the ‘story’ and ‘test’ subsections also serve pedagogical purposes and will also be examined.

In this analysis, attention will be paid to repetitions, since they are known to be an important pedagogical and didactic tool,\(^{481}\) reinforcing learning, facilitating retention and avoiding ambiguity.\(^{482}\) The main types of repetition that will be addressed here are *iqtiṣāṣ*, inclusio, chiasm and alternation. In addition to the above pedagogical functions, each of these repetitions serves other pedagogical purposes. Inclusios sum up main ideas within their respective sections and emphasize them, while chiasms and alternations organize the material, enabling the reader/listener to better grasp its contents. *Iqtiṣāṣ* allows for the recycling of instructional ideas from one section to the next, developing the material and linking the sura’s contents together.

\(^{481}\) See also Sebastian Günther, ‘Teaching’, *EQ*, vol. 5, p. 204.

\(^{482}\) Compare also how repetitions can be used to avoid ambiguity in legal writing by using one word for one notion in Bryan Garner, *Elements of Legal Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 215-217.
In addition to the above pedagogical functions, repetitions also serve cohesive purposes, particularly *iqtiṣāš*, knitting together the disparate elements of al-Baqara’s diverse contents. It thereby continues the compositional style and pattern previously established by al-Fāṭiḥa. This compositional diversity carries pedagogical undertones, conveying a distinctive monotheism also previously observed in al-Fāṭiḥa. It will be further explored here, as well as its relationship to the breadth and organization of the sura’s contents.

I will begin with the first section, exploring first the ‘test’ subsection (§1.1), followed by the ‘instruction’ subsection (§1.2), and lastly the ‘story’ (§1.3). This section has one main pedagogical message, monotheism, which will be scrutinized for its distinctive character.

I will then examine §2, beginning with §2.1, the ‘instruction’ subsection of §2, seeing how its contents develop from §1. §2.2 contains the ‘story’ and §2.3 is the ‘test’ subsection, both of which will also be examined for how the idea of instruction and test is portrayed and intertwined in the context of the Children of Israel.

§3 is the longest of the sections and has the most varied instructional content. It will be examined last, also covering all three of its subsections, pointing out connections to previous material. Moreover, it will be examined for patterns in the sequence of instructions in order to better examine its pedagogical thrust. These patterns are also of structural relevance, since they serve to unify and characterize segments of text, as noted earlier in Chapter 4.

The above exposition leads to the conclusion, in which the sura’s pedagogical central theme will be identified and the sura’s general pedagogical character. Finally, I will present two other treatments of al-Baqara’s general structure, Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s and Biqā’ī’s, pointing out broad parallels with the conclusions of this study.

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483 See note 385.
§1- General Introduction (vv. 1-39)

As noted before, this section of al-Baqara consists of three parts. The first part, §1.1, classifies humanity into three groups, depending on their reception of the text, thereby portraying its own reader-response expectations (vv.1-20). Only the first group is portrayed positively, responding with belief, establishing prayer and practising charity, the latter two activities suggesting concrete tasks an individual can perform (v. 3). However, belief also receives a concrete character, where belief in ‘what was sent down to you and what was sent down before you’ and the ‘hereafter’ is specified (v. 4). The last verse contains the Leitwort, framing this unit and signaling closure.

The second group of individuals, the ungrateful (kāfirūn), is portrayed having a cover over their eyes, ears and minds, thereby rendering any attempts to instruct them futile (v. 6-7). The word khatama, ‘to seal’ and its association with the deity carry undertones of finality with regards to their situation (v. 7). Its hopelessness underlines the pedagogical significance of the sensory and mental capacities.

The third group, those gone astray (ḍālīn), has connections with the two preceding groups, since they claim to believe in God and the Day of Judgment (v. 8), thereby resembling the first group (vv. 3-4). However, when they are required to believe ‘as the people believe’ they decline, considering themselves above those whom they deem ‘fools’ (v. 13). ‘As the people believe’ refers back to the belief of the first group; thus they reject some or all scripture, sharing the fate of the ungrateful. The description of the two groups is rounded off by a double occurrence of the Leitwort, signaling closure of a unit. Its location here, before the subsequent similitude, hints that these two groups are somehow one large assemblage.

Those gone astray are also connected to the ungrateful in the seeing, hearing and thinking metaphor. Whereas the ungrateful are incapable of perceiving guidance (v. 7), those gone astray possess their faculties, but seem unwilling to use them (v.

484 This classification recalls reception theory and Rippin’s suggestion of ‘situating the Qur‘ān at the focal point of a reader-response study’. Rippin, ‘The Qur‘ān as Literature’, pp. 46.
17), thereby running the risk of having their hearing and sight permanently removed from them (v. 20). By means of a similitude, they are portrayed as relying on others to guide them: as opposed to actively lighting a fire, they ask others to do so for them (v. 17). *Istawqada*, the word used in connection with lighting, is a grammatical Form X which gives the action passive undertones, transferring agency to someone else (v. 17).\(^{485}\) It can also mean trying or pretending to light a fire, while not actively and sincerely lighting it. As a result, God takes away their light, leaving them in darkness: deaf, dumb and blind (v. 18).

The second similitude similarly relies on the likeness of light, seeing and hearing. Those gone astray are portrayed in the middle of a rainstorm, placing their fingers in their ears for fear of death (v. 19). Lightning almost blinds them; when it lights up, they walk, but when it gets dark they stop walking (v. 20). Biqā‘ī explains the rainstorm as the Qur‘an,\(^ {486}\) since both the rainstorm and the Qur‘an can function as tools of enlivenment: whereas the rainstorm can enliven the earth, sending forth vegetation,\(^ {487}\) the Qur‘an can enliven human beings, stimulating perceptions and minds.\(^ {488}\) Biqā‘ī explains that whenever the Qur‘an agrees with the notions of those gone astray, they are careful to follow it, but whenever it does not, they stand still, not having developed their faculty of perception (*baṣīra*).\(^ {489}\) Although Biqā‘ī has noted the life metaphor, he has not commented on the death metaphor, which can indicate ungratefulness (*kufr*).\(^ {490}\) Thus, fear of ungratefulness may motivate their mental and sensory inactivity.

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\(^{485}\) The first form (Form I), *waqada*, means to take fire, ignite, burn. *Istawqada*, the Arabic word used in v. 17, occurs in the tenth form (Form X), which indicates a passive action where an individual relies on others to perform the lighting. It has a different meaning than the fourth form, *awqada*, which gives a causative meaning to the word and indicates the causative action of purposefully lighting the fire themselves. Compare also Biqā‘ī, *Nazm al-durar*, p. 118, who explains *istawqada* as one who asked for a fire to be lit for him. It should be noted that Biqā‘ī makes the distinction between *nūr* and *diyā‘*.


\(^{488}\) See, for example, Q. 2:164.

\(^{489}\) Compare Q. 6:122; 8:20-24.


\(^{490}\) Compare Q. 6:122.
The portrayals of the three groups of §1.1 teach the importance of using eyes, ears and mind in engaging scripture, and discourage sitting passively back and depending on others to perform this task. The passages’s strong monotheistic flavour is echoed in §1.2, the beginning of which is signaled by a change in person.\(^491\) The deity now directly addresses humankind, instructing them to worship him, so that they may safeguard themselves (v. 21). This instruction dominates §1.2: humankind is invited to worship God and God alone, who is identified as the creator, and referred to as ‘your rabbi’ (\textit{rabbakum}), recalling his description in al-Fātiḥa. Within the Jewish and Christian milieu of the revelation, this term has legal implications: a rabbi is a specialist in religious law and is trained to outline what is religiously allowed and what is forbidden to the people.\(^492\) This association is underlined intertextually in other verses in the Qur’an:

3:64 Say: “O People of the Book, let us come to a common word between us and you: that we worship none but God, that we do not associate anything with him, and that we do not take each other up as rabbis (\textit{arbāb}) besides God.” If they turn away, then say: “Bear witness that we are Muslims.”

9:31 They took up their scribes and monks as rabbis besides God, and Christ the son of Mary, while they were commanded to worship one God – there is no God but him—may He be exalted from what they associate with Him.\(^493\)

\(^{491}\) The connection between §1.2 and §1.1 is established by means of repetition, in particular the reiteration of terms indicating the three central groups ((\textit{alladhīna}) \textit{yu’minūn} /\textit{āmanū} (vv. 3, 4, 9, 14, 25, 26), \textit{muttaqīn/ tattaqūn/ ittaqū} (vv. 2, 21, 24); (\textit{alladhīna}) \textit{kafarū/ kāfirīn} (vv. 6, 19, 24, 26, 33, 39); \textit{yuḍill/ḍalāla} (vv. 16, 26)).

\(^{492}\) See Leah Bornstein et al., ‘Rabbi, Rabbinate’ in Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (eds), \textit{Encyclopaedia Judaica}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn (22 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), vol. 17, pp. 11-19.

\(^{493}\) The word \textit{rabb} appears in the singular in various grammatical forms, both suffixed and unsuffixed, a total of 971 times. In 923 of those instances the word \textit{rabb} refers to God, while in one instance the
From the above verses we can deduce that the monotheism delineated here does not include the taking up of rabbis besides God, which indicates the deity’s guiding function and ultimate authority to decree religious instruction. When reading §1.1 and §1.2 together, this particular brand of monotheism encourages studying scripture directly, using the eyes, ears and mind, and not exclusively relying on rabbi-like figures to perform these activities. This instruction is reinforced by the painful consequences associated with failing to comply: a fire fuelled by human beings and stones (v. 24). Its importance is further bolstered by its dominance of §1.2, which is the ‘instruction’ subsection of §1.

As noted in Chapter 5, while §1.1 has a ‘test’ character and §1.2 has an ‘instruction’ character, §1.3 contains the story of the first two human beings, presented in ten succinct verses. The story portrays the origins of the human Adam and his election as a kind of vicegerent (khalīfa) on earth. The story is thereby a story of election and the section’s pattern of ‘story-instruction-test’ is thereby inherently also a

reference could either be to God or to the important Egyptian man who raised Joseph (v. 12:23), and in 8 instances it refers to an alternate deity: the planet (6:76), the moon (6:77), the sun (6:78), the king of Egypt (12: 41, 42 (twice)), and Pharaoh (79:24). The word appears in the plural as arbāb 4 times (3:64, 80; 9:31; 12:39), in each of those instances it refers to deities other than God.

In contemporary religious discourses, two verses are often used to argue for the religious authority of a scholarly elite and the exclusive right to issue religious rulings: Q. 16:43/ 21:7 and Q. 4:59. The first reference occurs in two verses, containing an identical sentence, except for the addition of a preposition min in the first one. This addition does not affect the general meaning: ‘We have only sent men before you, giving revelations to them; so ask the people of remembrance, if you do not know’. This verse refers to asking the people of remembrance—Jews and Christians in the context of 7th century Arabia—about their historical memory: whether previous messengers were also inspired men. It does not specifically indicate that Muslims should ask a scholarly elite, whether Jew, Christian or otherwise, for religious instruction into what is permitted and what is prohibited. In an intertextual method of interpretation, one would need to take into consideration other Qur’anic verses, such as Q. 3:64, 9:31. The second verse is ‘O you who believe! Obey God and obey the messenger and the ones who have the command (amr) among you. If you differ among yourselves in something, then refer it back to God and the messenger ...’. ‘The ones who have the command’ uli al-amr is sometimes interpreted to refer to clergy-like figures. However, ‘Ashmawi has argued convincingly that it refers to government authorities and that the Qur’anic term for government is ‘amr’ and not ‘hukm’ (judgment). For more, see Muhammad Sa’id al-‘Ashmawi, al-Islām al-siyasi, 3rd edn (al-Qāhirah: Sinā lil-Nashr, 1992), particularly pp. 45-47.
pattern of ‘election-instruction-test’. This pattern incidentally recurs again within the actual story: after being elected, Adam is instructed and tested. The story exemplifies the inevitable connection of the three elements: humanity cannot escape being elected, instructed and tested.

In effect, humanity is elected through the very creation of Adam (v. 30). He is taught the names of all things, meriting the angels’s obeisance (vv. 31-34). He and Eve are instructed to refrain from eating from the tree and both fail the test (vv. 35-36). They are thereby doomed to earth, for which they were originally created (vv. 30, 36). Noteworthy are the words of repentance which Adam receives, which have the character of both instruction and test, thereby receiving a second chance (v. 37). The ultimate test becomes the one with eternal consequences: those who follow the deity’s guidance need have no fear nor grieve and those who don’t will have a sorry fate (vv. 38-39). Pedagogically, this subsection illustrates the importance of knowledge and following instructions, repentance from error, and the consequences of success or failure, providing a primeval example.

§2- The Children of Israel (vv. 40-123)

For the purposes of the pedagogical reading, the ideas in the beginning of al-Baqara (vv. 2-5) are recycled and expounded in the form of instructions addressed to the Children of Israel (vv. 40-46). Prayers and charity (v. 3) are repeated and developed by mentioning the action of bowing down (vv. 43, 45). Belief in ‘what was sent down to you’ (v. 4) is expanded with the idea that it verifies or is verified by what the Children of Israel already have (v. 41), whereas belief in ‘what was sent down

495 The term ‘recycling’ is sometimes used to describe repetition in changing contexts, for example, when teaching language. For more, see Steven Brown, ‘Slow Down! The Importance of Repetition, Planning and Recycling in Language Teaching’, paper presented at the Meeting of the Ohio Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages (Columbus, 27 October 2000), pp. 1-13, p.8, ERIC, ED448594. See also Tony Lynch and Joan Maclean, ‘Exploring the Benefits of Task Repetition and Recycling for Classroom Language Learning’, Language Teaching Research 4: 3 (2000), pp. 221-50.
before you’ (v. 4) is illustrated by the Covenant (v. 40). The Day of Judgment (v. 4) is again elaborated in v. 46. Thus a clear pattern of \textit{iqti\text{s}\text{"a}s} can be discerned.

Similar to §1, the middle repetition (vv. 47-48) provides a sense of closure to the preceding verses, rounding off the ‘instruction’ subsection of §2. While it provides current instructions directly to the Children of Israel, §2.2 is the ‘story’ subsection, which contains the pattern ‘election-instruction-test’ (vv. 49-75), similar to §1.3. The Children of Israel were elected when they were led out of Egypt, given the covenant, and blessed with guidance in the form of the book (vv. 49-53). The motifs of instruction and test are intertwined into the entire narrative, so that they are also present in the ‘election’ verses. For example, Pharaoh’s killing of the Children of Israel’s sons is portrayed as a severe trial or ordeal of some kind (v. 49), as is the taking up of the calf (v. 51).

Instruction is implied in the book and in Moses’s command for the Israelites to kill some of their own after they took up the calf, which also functions as a kind of test (vv. 53, 54). It is also present in the command to enter the settlement in humility and to ask for forgiveness when entering (v. 58). Moses also receives commands, when he is directed to hit the rock with his rod and when receiving the Covenant, in which the entire nation of Israel is implicated (vv. 51-53, 60, 63). The instruction motif is also present in the story of the heifer, which the Israelites are charged with sacrificing, and then striking a corpse with its pieces (vv. 67-73).

Similar to the story of Adam and Eve (§1.3), the trials of the Children of Israel are interlaced with the motifs of error, punishment and forgiveness. The primordial precedent set by the first couple is continued in their children: just as Adam and Eve disobeyed their instruction, were chastised, and were saved through repentance, the Israelites too flouted the rules, were punished and eventually forgiven. There are a total of six consecutive stories in this narrative which elaborate the idea. They include the story of the calf (vv. 51-54), the request to behold God (vv. 55-56), entry into the city (vv. 58-59), food and drink in the wilderness (vv. 57, 60-61), the Covenant and the violation of the Sabbath (vv. 63-66), and the story of the heifer, which does not
contain outright disobedience, but hesitancy and argument in obeying instruction (vv. 67-73). These narratives dominate §2.2, the consecutive incidents of instruction and testing establishing a pattern.

While the tone of §2.2 is generally positive—the Israelites eventually succeeded—the tone changes in §2.3 (vv. 76-123). Again a change in addressee signals a new passage; now it is the Muslim community which is addressed and thereby brought into the conversation (v. 75). Whereas the interlocutors in §2.2 were the deity, the Israelites and Moses, here they have been expanded to include Muhammad and the early Muslims. In this subsection, there is less of a focus on repentance and forgiveness, and more of a sense of remonstration, warning and response. The deity reproaches the Children of Israel for violating the Covenant and for disregarding subsequent scripture (vv. 83-90), intertwined with reprimands for disregarding messengers (vv. 91-103). They are warned with severe punishment if they fail to comply and encouraged with recompense if they succeed (vv. 79-82, 85-86, 89-90, 97-98, 102-103). The passages that contain these remonstrations and warnings vary between directly addressing the Children of Israel, explaining their behaviour in the third person to the early Muslims, and instructing Muhammad on how to interact with them. They contain five instances in which the prophet is directly addressed with ‘say’ (qul) and instructed in what to say to them (vv. 80, 91, 93, 94, 97) and then again in v. 111.

On the other hand, beginning with v. 104, the speech veers to the Muslim community (vv. 104-110), and then again to the prophet (vv. 111-120). While in the preceding verses, the focus was on the Children of Israel, now it is expanded to include the People of the Book in general (v. 105, 109), and the terms ‘Jews’ (yahūd/hūd) and ‘Christians’ (Nazarenes/naṣārā) occur for the first time (vv. 111, 113, 120). The Muslim community is taught what to say and what not to say and how to respond and position itself with respect to the People of the Book (vv. 104-110). The prophet is similarly trained in how to respond to the Jews and Christians and taught some insights into their discourses (vv. 111-120). The section ends on a positive note, mentioning those who believe in their scriptures, but also those who don’t (v. 121). The repeated verses
of the inclusio sum up the pedagogical message of the section: to remember God’s kindnesses and safeguard themselves against the consequences of their own actions for the upcoming Day of Judgment (vv. 122-123).

§3- The Emerging Muslim Nation

This section begins with the ‘story’ subsection, portraying the sanctuary and the accompanying pilgrimage as an Abrahamic legacy. It elaborates on the prayer motif developed in previous sections by establishing the Meccan sanctuary as the new direction, thereby distinguishing Muslims as a nation apart from the Children of Israel and anyone who did not follow the prophet. The central prayer, repeated near the end, emphasizes the election of the new nation to receive divine revelation through their prophet (vv. 124-151).

Similar to the above sections, in §3.1 repetitions underline key pedagogical ideas within their respective thematic subunits. These include the disassociation of Abraham’s distant offspring from his accomplishments (vv. 134, 141), establishing Muslims as a distinct nation with a separate prayer orientation (vv. 142, 144, 149, 150) and depicting the prophet Muḥammad as the fulfillment of a patriarchal promise (vv. 129, 151). The three elements of ‘election-instruction-test’ noted above are also reiterated here: in the very first verse Abraham is tested with instructions, which he completed, whereupon he was elected as a leader (imām) for humankind (v. 124).

The middle repetitions of the two internal inclusios, I3A and I3B, also have an internal structural demarcation function. I3A’s initial repetition caps a passage identifying the patriarchs as ‘Muslim’ (v. 134), while I3A’s final repetition closes off a passage arguing against identifying the patriarchs as either Jewish or Christian (v. 141). I3B’s middle repetition sets off v. 143 which describes the Muslim community as a ‘middle’ nation and incidentally happens to be the numeric centre of the sura. It is
this same verse which Robinson looks to as a guide to the sura’s contents.\footnote{Robinson, \textit{Discovering the Qur'an}, p. 203.} On the other hand, I3B’s final repetitions round off a passage reinforcing the changing of the prayer direction and arguing against those who oppose it (vv. 149, 150). Therefore, the inclusios’s highlighting function supports Robinson’s argument that the establishment and election of the Muslim community as a ‘middle’ nation by means of the new prayer orientation seems to be a central idea of the sura.

As noted earlier, the pattern of election-instruction-test is again present in the story subsection of §3: God is portrayed as testing Abraham with words/instructions. Once he has completed them, he becomes appointed as an Imam for humankind (v. 124). The order in which these words/ideas appear in the verse are test-instruction-election, the inverted order of their appearance in the Adam story (§1.3), while in the story of the Children of Israel (§2.2), the elements appear intertwined. Thus, there is another internal chiasm in the order of their appearance in the story subsections.

§3.2 contains a number of new instructions for the emerging Muslim community. There is a threefold progression in the unfolding of these instructions, since their basic nucleus, including belief, prayers and charity, was initially introduced in §1, incremented in §2, and is again recycled and developed in this section, indicating a three-fold \textit{iqtisāṣ} and incremental reiteration of ideas. This feature dominates this subsection, calling for a closer inspection.

The beginning of §3.2 (vv. 152-162) is reiterated and expanded from the first passage in §2 (vv. 40-46). The first verse of §3.2, ‘remember me, so I may remember you’ (v. 152), parallels ‘be loyal to my covenant, so I may be loyal to your covenant’ of §2 (v. 40). It is followed by the instruction to seek help in patient perseverance and prayer (v. 153), recalling the wording of a similar instruction to the Children of Israel (v. 45). This idea is expanded with the loss of loved ones ‘in the cause of God’, a situation when prayers and patience are notably needed (vv. 154-157). The prayer ritual is then expanded with mention of some pilgrimage rituals (v. 158). The concept
of withholding truth (v. 42) is the nucleus around which vv. 159-162 are constructed. Thus, the ideas of vv. 152-162 are all linked to §2.1 and develop out of it, while in turn, §2.1 developed out of §1, so that this passage is linked to both §1 and §2 (Table 7.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Repeated Element</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>152-153</td>
<td>‘remember’, ‘prayer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>(Your God is one God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>‘signs’, ‘have sense’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>228</td>
<td>‘divorced women’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
<td>‘and those of you who die and leave widows’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>236</td>
<td>‘monetary endowment’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238-239</td>
<td>‘remember’, ‘prayer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240</td>
<td>‘and those of you who die and leave widows’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>241</td>
<td>‘divorced women’, ‘monetary endowment’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242</td>
<td>‘signs’, ‘have sense’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1
The above verses, vv. 152-162, coincide with the disputed verses which Zahniser had identified as a transitional hinge (Table 4.2). One of I4’s middle repetitions sets these verses off (v. 164), hinting that they form a subdivision of their own (Table 7.1), since middle repetitions can function as internal structural markers. This hint is strengthened by v. 163, which seems to round off the verses by mentioning the deity, thereby repeating an idea from v. 152. Since it is not a verbatim repetition, it is much weaker than an inclusio; however it does add undertones of closure to v. 164. The enclosed verses function as a kind introduction for §3.2, recycling and developing the ideas of §2.1.

The next passage, vv. 163-167, resumes again with a strong monotheistic message, which ties it to v. 40 among others, similar to the first verse of §3.2 (Table 7.2). It is followed by a group of verses dealing on the one hand with food and dietary restrictions, and on the other hand with scripture, warning against rejecting or withholding it (vv. 168-176). Again, these verses take up ideas from §1 and §2, and develop them with the new material (Table 7.2). The way the ideas are phrased clearly draws on the previous sections, such as the connection of Satan with food regulations in ‘do not follow in the footsteps of Satan’ (v. 168), which recalls the story of Adam and Eve, whom Satan caused to slip by eating from the forbidden tree (vv. 35-36). Birr (piety) mentioned in §2.1 (v. 44) is also taken up and expanded with other legislation, such as the laws concerning manslaughter, fasting, war and pilgrimage (vv. 177-203). Vv. 204-207 clearly elaborate on vv. 11-12 (§1), dealing with those who pretend to do good, but in reality spread corruption. The verses tie in with v. 60 (§2) to a lesser extent, since the word ‘corruption’ occurs there in an alternate grammatical form.

The iqtiṣāṣ pattern is again very evident in the subsequent verses, which again mention ‘do not follow in the footsteps of Satan’ (v. 208); however, this time it is in connection with entering into silm, which usually means peace or wholeness, but in this context also refers to the religion of Islam and monotheism in general. The word

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497 See p. 94.
zalaltum (slip) (v. 209) recalls Satan causing Adam and Eve to slip (fa ’azallahumā) (v. 36) and ‘shade of clouds’ (zulalin min al-ghamām) (v. 210) evokes v. 57, ‘we shaded you with clouds’ (zallnā ’alaykum al-ghamām) in connection with clouds shading the Children of Israel in the wilderness.

The above passage with the verbal connection to previous passages has a strong monotheistic thrust (vv. 208-214), and is subsequently expanded with legal material coming in the form of answers to questions (vv. 215-242). The questions are directed to the prophet asking him on a number of topics and are responded to in turn, thereby providing answers and elaborating these topics, namely the giving of alms, war, alcohol consumption, gambling, orphans, marriage, menstruation and divorce laws. The subsection ends with the inclusio repetitions, which develop prayer in times of fear and elaborate some divorcee and widow maintenance ordinances (Table 7.2). Thus, in vv. 208-214, the iqtiṣāṣ pattern serves to introduce a number of diverging social and ritual regulations, tying them to previous material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Iqtiṣāṣ</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>§1</td>
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<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>God: remembrance/covenant</td>
<td>1-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>153-158</td>
<td>Patience and prayer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ pilgrim rituals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159-162</td>
<td>Withholding scripture</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163-167</td>
<td>God: signs, monotheism</td>
<td>8-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168-176</td>
<td>food (Satan)</td>
<td>35-36</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rejecting and withholding scripture</td>
<td>(Adam, food, Satan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(scripture)</td>
<td>(scripture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177-203</td>
<td>Piety (bīrī)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While *iqtiṣāṣ* is of major pedagogical significance in §3.2, it is not the only significant repetition here: as noted earlier, alternation and chiasm also serve pedagogical purposes. As noted in Chapter 4, a broad alternation covers §3.2 and §3.3 (Table 7.3), interweaving ideas of belief and concrete, tangible practices.\textsuperscript{498} This interweaving recalls a similar combination in the very beginning of al-Baqara (vv. 3-4), which described the first of the three groups into which humanity was classified, the believers. Here too, the verses began with listing belief, followed by the more concrete activities of prayer and spending (v. 3). The verse was followed by another, mentioning of scripture and the notion of a hereafter (v. 4). This pattern of alternating belief with practice is continued nine times in §3.2, so that belief occurs four times and

\textsuperscript{498} See also Tables 4.5 and 4.6.
practice five. In every occurrence of belief, scripture is invariably mentioned (Table 7.3). The connection between belief and scripture is thereby strongly emphasized, reiterating the pedagogical message of previous passages: that the expected belief is invariably intertwined with scripture. The alternation of belief and practice sends another pedagogical message: that belief must be accompanied by practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Alternation</th>
<th>Chiasm</th>
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<td>151-158</td>
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<td>Practice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Patience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dealing with the death of those fallen in battle/Fighting</td>
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<tr>
<td>159-167</td>
<td>Withholding scripture</td>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>168-169</td>
<td>Instruction to eat with qualifications</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prohibition against following in the footsteps of Satan</td>
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<td>170-171</td>
<td>Response to scripture</td>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>172-174</td>
<td>Instruction to eat with qualifications</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>C'</td>
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<td>Prohibition against following in the footsteps of Satan</td>
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<td>Dietary restrictions</td>
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<td>174-177</td>
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<td>Components of belief: God, Last Day, angels, scripture and prophets</td>
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<tr>
<td>177-203</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monotheism</td>
<td>Sincerity in belief</td>
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<td>Expansion on components of belief</td>
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<td>204-214</td>
<td>Spending</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fighting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>215-242</td>
<td>Alcohol and gambling prohibitions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expansion with women-related topics</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>243</td>
<td>Narrative exposition on God as master over life and death</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244-245</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spending</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>246-253</td>
<td>Narrative exposition on fighting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254</td>
<td>Spending</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>255-260</td>
<td>Throne verse and freedom of religion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative Exposition on God as master over life and death</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>261-283</td>
<td>Spending</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expansion on charity, usury, loans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>284-286</td>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>Belief/Practice</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3
The broad chiasm covering §3.2, also previously identified in Chapter 4, has additional pedagogical functions.\textsuperscript{499} The middle element in the chiasm (D; vv. 170-171), flanked by the two passages with the dietary prescriptions, is given emphasis due to its location (Table 7.3). Thus, the idea of following scripture as opposed to ancestral traditions stands out, as does the negative portrayal of those who blindly follow their ancestors: they are pictured as someone who calls out what he does not hear (or they do not hear), except for unintelligible calling: deaf, dumb and blind (vv. 170-171). The word \textit{yanʿiq} in v. 171 is a hapex legomenon, and is usually used in the Arabic language to refer to a shepherd calling his flock.\textsuperscript{500} The similitude is thereby that of a shepherd calling out to his flock what he cannot hear, other than unintelligible calling. Similar to the two similitudes in §1 (vv. 17-20), here too, the pedagogical significance of using the sensory and mental capacities in the study of scripture is underlined.

Other than the two passages on dietary matters which flank vv. 170-171, the rest of the ‘practice’ elements all contain similar ideas, such as prayer, dealing with death/fighting, and pilgrimage, keeping in mind that there is a general trend of incremental increase towards the end, since the passages tend to increase in size (Table 7.3). This feature, in addition to the recurrence of the A" and B" elements, render it a broken chiasm, with the chiasmic emphasis towards the end. However, the centering of the chiasm around vv. 170-171 balances this emphasis out, so that there is now a double emphasis: one on vv. 170-171 and another towards the end.

In this section, attention is focused on the final inclusio repetition by means of the previously-mentioned oddly placed verses dealing with remembrance and prayer in the midst of material pertaining to women (vv. 238-239).\textsuperscript{501} Otherwise, the profusion of alternating material could have shifted attention away from it. The inclusio’s

\textsuperscript{499} See Table 4.4.  
\textsuperscript{501} See Chapter 4, p. 92.
interweaving of women-related legislation with the ideas of remembrance, prayers and God’s signs is in keeping with the general alternating character of this section, since the section consists of nine alternations between the practice- and belief-related topics. It also underlines these ideas through repetition and paves the way for the epilogue, which interweaves material from throughout the sura.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Alternation</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>243-244</td>
<td>God as master over life and death, injunction to fight</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245</td>
<td>Spending</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246-253</td>
<td>God decrees fighting in the context of Ṭālūt</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>F'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254</td>
<td>Spending</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>S'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>255-260</td>
<td>Exaltation of God (throne verse), God as master over life and death</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>F&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261-283</td>
<td>Spending, usury, loans</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>S&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>284-286</td>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4

§3.3 continues the pattern of *iqtiṣāṣ*; Robinson has convincingly demonstrated that the first three verses (vv. 243-245) carry multiple echoes of earlier passages of the sura. Robinson, *Discovering the Qur’an*, pp. 216-17.
The deity’s mastery over life and death is intricately tied to the injunction to fight (v. 244), since it involves placing a person’s life in God’s hands. This idea is followed by an encouragement to give charity (v. 245), evoking the metaphor of the bad business transaction and the good loan (vv. 16).

In section §3.3, belief and practice take on a markedly different character: no longer is scripture regularly mentioned, but belief becomes geared towards God’s mastery over life and death. The section contains three passages dealing with belief, vv. 243, vv. 246-253, and vv. 255-260 (See Table 4. 6). The ‘practice’ sections also change, exclusively centering on fighting and spending-related topics, with the exception of the epilogue. Thus, vv. 244-245 enjoin fighting and spending, and v. 254 and vv. 261-283 also deal with spending. This alternation between belief and practice is a continuation from the previous section; however, there are some distinctive features in this section which further set it apart: in addition to belief and practice taking on a different character, the section is overlaid with two more alternations.

The first of these additional alternations overshadowing the section is an alternation of two motifs, life and wealth, or rather, putting one’s life and wealth in God’s hands. These two motifs alternate throughout the subsection, thereby overlaying the previous alternation of belief and practice from §3.2 (Table 7.3) with another alternation distinctive of §3.3 (Table 7.4), as mentioned previously in Chapter 4. 503 The section begins with an episode illustrating God’s mastery over life and death followed by an injunction to fight and then another to spend. The idea of fighting and thereby putting one’s life in the hands of God is illustrated in the story of Ṭālūt (vv. 246-252), followed again by an injunction to spend (v. 254). The deity who does not doze or sleep is exalted in three quite renowned verses (vv. 255-257), followed by three brief episodes which again demonstrate control over life and death and God’s ability to revive the dead (vv. 258-60). Spending and the giving of alms is detailed and further expanded with the prohibition against usury, and regulations for the taking of loans (vv. 261-283). The topics of life and wealth thus alternate a total of six times,

503 See pp. 117-118.
following a pattern of FSF'S"S", where F represents a life-related topic and S a wealth-related topic (Table 7.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Alternation</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>243</td>
<td>Story illustrating God’s mastery over life and death</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244-245</td>
<td>Injunctions to fight and spend</td>
<td>Injunction</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246-253</td>
<td>Story illustrating God’s mastery over life and death</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>H'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254-257</td>
<td>Injunction to spend and exaltation of God</td>
<td>Injunction</td>
<td>I'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258-260</td>
<td>Stories illustrating God’s mastery over life and death</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>H''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261-283</td>
<td>Spending, usury, loans</td>
<td>Injunction</td>
<td>I''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>284-286</td>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Table 7.5

The third alternation in this section, which overshadows the other two, is an alternation of stories with other material. Again the number of alternating passages is six: three stories and three injunction passages (Table 7.5). The section begins with a story illustrating God’s mastery over life and death, followed by injunctions to fight and spend. The story of Ṭālūt (vv. 246-253) is followed by an injunction to spend and the throne verse passage (vv. 254-257). The latter passage functions as an encouragement to spend, while the story of Ṭālūt also shows God’s mastery over life
and death. This same divine characteristic is again illustrated in three subsequent short stories (vv. 258-260), followed by a lengthy passage on wealth-related topics (261-283). Thus, there is a third alternation overlaying the other two.

The three short ‘story’ excerpts that form this alternation briefly recall the three longer story sections of the sura: the story of Adam in §3 of Panel 1, the story of the ancient Israelites in §2 of Panel 2, and the story of Abraham and Ishmael in §1 of Panel 3. The first short story of the alternation (v. 243) has thousands of general, unidentified human beings as the protagonists, similar to the story of Adam in §1.3, where the central protagonist is shared between all of humanity and is not exclusively identified with any one group in particular. The second short story of the alternation, the story of Ṭālūt, the first king of Israel (vv. 246-253), has ancient Israelites as the protagonists, just like §2.2. The third short story excerpt of the alternation (vv. 258-260) has Abraham as the central protagonist, who is also the central protagonist in §3.1. Thus, the same pattern reappears here, reinforcing the sense of progression from humanity in general to the ancient Israelites and then to Abraham and the emerging Muslim nation. While the idea of election was central to the three long stories of §1.3, §2.2 and §3.1, here in §3.3 the ideas of testing is central. The sura ends in the three-verse epilogue, which draws it all together.

In light of the above, this section is set apart from the previous one by the different character of the alternating belief and practice sections: the belief section no longer contains a mention of scripture, and the practice sections deal exclusively with injunctions to spend and to fight. Two additional alternations overshadow the previous one, thereby further separating this section from the previous one. The interweaving of fighting- and spending-related ideas in a threefold alternating manner implies a close connection between the concepts: after having laid the groundwork for establishing the Muslim community and instructing them in the new religion in the previous sections, their ultimate test will be to trust the deity with their lives and wealth. The inclusio repetition at the very end of the sura underlines the hope that the deity will extend support to them in these endeavours.
In conclusion, the sura displays a pedagogy of election, instruction and test, elements which occur in all three of its sections. While in §1 they occur in the order test-instruction-election, in §2 they occur in the order instruction-election-test, and in §3 election-instruction-test. Each ‘election’ subsection comes in the form of a story, providing examples for this pedagogy. Thus, Adam is elected as the deity’s vicegerent on earth and is subsequently instructed and tested (§1.3). The Children of Israel are also elected, receive the Covenant and other instructions and are repeatedly tested (§2.2). Abraham is similarly instructed, tested and elected by becoming a leader for humankind, prefiguring the election of the Muslim community (§3.1).

While all three elements are present in each section, the instructional thrust differs from section to section. In the first, it is basic, encompassing humanity as a whole, and delivering one main instruction, a distinctive monotheism intricately related to scripture, while briefly introducing ideas of belief, prayer and charity. The second section is longer, developing these ideas in the context of the Children of Israel, while at the same time keeping a connection with §1 by means of ʿiqtiṣāṣ. The third section is even larger and has the most strongly developed ‘instruction’ subsection of all, covering a broad range of teachings, which include belief, prayer, fasting, charity, warfare, pilgrimage, orphans, marriage divorce, menstruation and dietary restrictions. ʿIqtīṣāṣ is again integral to the structure of the section; it provides a method of including and tying these highly disparate topics together: they seem to grow organically from the previous material and branch off into the various directions. This pattern was previously identified in al-Fāṭiḥa, the ideas of which seem to grow out of the basmala by means of repetition and expansion. Thus, there is a pedagogical progression of instructional content from one section to the next, instruction taking on a circular and increasing character, where ideas are recycled and developed in a threefold manner.
Similar to al-Fātiḥa, here too the circular, repetitive nature of instruction sends out a strong monotheistic message: it portrays the deity taking an active educational role. This feature ties in with the distinctive monotheism expounded in the sura, where the scripture becomes the main tool of guidance and the faithful are encouraged to use their faculties, instead of relying on others to do their thinking for them. It also ties in to the portrayal of the deity as guide, thereby connecting to the divine self-revelatory reading. Thus the divine self-revelatory reading and the pedagogical reading are connected by means of this strong monotheistic thrust: On the one hand, God is portrayed as the supreme guide, and on the other hand, humanity is instructed to rely on him alone for religious guidance. The instructional content, which was central to the pedagogical reading, thereby becomes a substantive expression of God’s guidance.

In size and style, al-Fātiḥa fits in well before al-Baqara; al-Fātiḥa’s character as a prayer and al-Baqara’s character as the response to it highlights how well these two suras fit together. There is a progression in size and both have the iqtiṣāṣ feature; it even cuts across the boundaries of both suras: al-Fātiḥa’s last verse is elaborated in the beginning of al-Baqara, so that al-Baqara builds on the material in al-Fātiḥa. The question becomes, what makes al-Baqara so different from al-Fātiḥa that it is considered a sura apart and the two suras were not joined into one? Is it merely the character of al-Fātiḥa as a prayer and al-Baqara as a response, or is there more? What is al-Baqara’s defining pedagogical character that makes it so distinct? This question is intricately tied to the question of al-Baqara’s central theme in pedagogical mode. To answer it, we need to recall the general pedagogical character of al-Fātiḥa from Chapter 5; al-Fātiḥa covered the rubrics of faith in general and reinforced fundamentals established by older faith traditions. On the other hand, al-Baqara’s contents are not only characterized by the breadth and range of topics covered, but also by moving away from what is shared into what is distinctly Islamic, such as the prayer orientation, pilgrimage, fasting and divorce regulations. While al-Fātiḥa established common grounds, al-Baqara lays out the broad outlines and fundamentals of the Islamic tradition as distinct from previous faith traditions. This contrast is what indicates al-
Baqara’s central theme in pedagogical mode. Therefore, in this mode, I will propose a central theme of ‘first lesson in the new religion’ for al-Baqara.

In light of this theme, §1 and §2 function as a kind of prelude or introduction to the sura, §1 portraying the election of humankind in general and §2 establishing the immediate context or precedent with the story of the Children of Israel, thereby paving the way for the election of the Muslim community. The sections also function as a kind of prelude and introduction to the instructional content and the idea of testing, which are developed at length in §3, prioritizing and highlighting certain fundamentals through repetition. The sura thereby launches the basic outlines of the Islamic religion and teaches the Muslim community its first encompassing lesson.

Comparison with Ṭabāṭabā’ī and Biqā’ī’s Approaches:

Finally, to get a sense of some other approaches to the structure and organization of this sura, I will present two works which stand out in the tradition: one by a Sunni and another by a Shi‘i exegete. I have chosen Biqā’ī and Ṭabāṭabā’ī because of their exceptional contributions in approaching suras as whole units. Both have achieved prominence and may even be considered representatives of their traditions and what it has accomplished in this regard. These excerpts will therefore provide a general idea of the tradition and also a contrast, showing how much the present analysis differs from it. I will also point out any parallels between their treatments and the present analysis.

Biqā’ī’s exposition is located at the end of his analysis of al-Baqara and comes in the form of a summary or wrap-up of the sura. He writes:

The secret of the pinnacle\textsuperscript{504} sura’s arrangement in this sequence is that may He be glorified and exalted\textsuperscript{505} commenced with the classification of

\textsuperscript{504} sanām: lit. hump of a dromedary, regarded as the topmost and best part of it. Biqā’ī refers to al-Baqara as the ‘hump’ of suras.
people who carry the faith, just as the foundations carry the pinnacle. Then initial intent was established by means of mentioning the closest part of the pinnacle to the minds of the practitioners. So he said, addressing all the types of people with which he had commenced: “O humankind! Worship your lord...” [al-Baqara 21]. He then continued until the matter was clearly established. So he mentioned His benevolence, may He be glorified, to the people who are commanded to worship: the blessing of having created for them everything that is in existence, a blessing with which He had honoured their forefather Adam, may prayers and peace be with him. Then he specified Arabs and their followers, pointing out His benevolence towards them during the discussion and censuring of the Children of Israel. Every little while, may He be glorified and exalted confirms the matter of His lordship and worship of Him alone without mentioning any ordinances except for what the Children of Israel have deviated from. He mentioned it as an act of benevolence towards the Arabs and a censuring of the Children of Israel for leaving it, but not because He intended it for itself. Once they were purified, rose higher and became ready for the various kinds of knowledge, He spoke to them, elevating them by changing the vantage point from that of lordship to that of divinity: “Your god is one god, there is no god but He ... ” [al-Baqara 163]. When they received this high honour, He instructed them in the purifying religious observances and cleansed them with their clarifying spirit. So He mentioned the primary devotional activities, both fundamental and subsidiary, the five pillars and the associated activities, and what follows of the dietary, drink and marriage restrictions and other matters of interest. They thereby became prepared—for these are the noble deeds which draw one closer to the majestic one. So He said to them, elevating

505 ‘May he be glorified and exalted’ is a reference to God.
them to the mystery of His exalted presence, mentioning the one named by all the names: “There is no God but He, the Alive, the Care-Giver” [al-Baqara 255]. However, since according to the people, whoever reaches the highest station of freedom must return to the level of servitude, He mentioned some suitable activities for them. So He urged them to perform things, which mostly revolve on beneficence, which is the station of those who acknowledge. Then He mentioned the example of spending, which is one of the building blocks of the sura, after He mentioned the station of reassurance, implying that this is the situation of the reassured one. He encouraged it, pointing that there is no hope in arriving at the goal except through renouncing all worldly things. He repeatedly urged goodness in food, without which there is no survival in any case. He forbade usury in very strong terms, indicating that one should be satisfied with the least provision, and forbade absolute increase for the elite and everything that is unlawful for the general public. He guided to religious behaviours, which necessitate trusting in God, entail sincere confidence, and result in support from God, may He be glorified and exalted, and which lead to it. The prophet (pbuh) passed away while he was garbed in it. May He be glorified and exalted structured it in a threefold manner, basing it on an introduction to establish His matter and ending it with a warning against taking it lightly. He added the third part, because it is the last and carries the blessing of finality for having conclusively reinforced believing in everything within the sura. He finished with pointing out that the foundation of this is the effort against transgressors and stubborn ones. Dependency in this should be on the sovereign lord and king of humanity. This is the way of the ones who have wisdom, guidance, and behave appropriately, while God, may He be glorified and exalted, is the one who leads to success and the right answers.506

Biqā῾ī’s treatment of Surat al-Baqara differs widely from the analysis of this study: he does not clearly demarcate the sura’s structure by identifying sections or explore how the sura’s various parts develop its central theme. He also does not set out to perform a divine self-revelatory reading or a pedagogical reading. While there are substantial differences, there are also some similarities. For example, his words indicate a tripartite structure and a sense of progression; however, the progression takes on a mystical character. He points to three verses, the first of which mentions ‘lord/legislator’ (rabb), the second ‘God/divinity’ (ilāh), and the third some divine names. He thereby indicates a mystical progression in knowing God: first as lord, second as divinity, and third by knowing his attributes. This concept hints at the idea of divine self-revelation; however, a progressive one, and not a single dominant theme such as ‘God as Guide’ in the above. Biqā῾ī also identifies a pattern of introduction, warning and reinforcement, which carries hints of pedagogy. Thus, while Biqā῾ī’s treatment of Surat al-Baqara is markedly different, it contains hints of divine self-revelation and pedagogy.

Ṭabāṭabā῾ī writes:

Since the sura descended in a piecemeal fashion, no single purpose unites it, except that most of it informs about one collective aim: clarifying that what is owed the worship of God, may He be glorified, is that His servant believes everything He has sent down through the words of His prophets, without differentiating between revelation and revelation, messengers and messenger, or otherwise. Then comes the censuring of the ungrateful and hypocrites and reproaching the people of the book for inventing divisions in the religion of God and the differentiation between his prophets. It concludes with the clarification of several ordinances, such as the changing
of the prayer direction, the pilgrimage, inheritance and fasting ordinances, and otherwise.\textsuperscript{507}

While _Tabâtabâ’ì’s_ treatment is also markedly different from the above analysis, there are also some broad parallels. He begins with the idea of belief, which recalls the main monotheistic message identified in §1 above. He proceeds with the idea of censure, which seems to be a reference to §2, where the Children of Israel are reproached, and he concludes with the ordinances, which dominate §3. Thus, the tripartite character of _Tabâtabâ’ì’s_ description seems to link with the tripartite structure identified for the sura here.

From the above, the analysis of Surat al-Baqara in this study differs substantially from traditional treatments, particularly in identifying clearly demarcated compositional subunits and rhetorical devices with a segmenting function and in the reader-oriented approach with the dual readings. However, there are also two broad similarities. The first is in the identification of al-Baqara’s tripartite structure and the second is in the sense of tripartite progression throughout the sura.

\textsuperscript{507} _Tabâtabâ’ì, Mīzân, vol. 1, p. 43.
CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

In the above, we addressed the riddle of al-Baqara’s internal organization. The question posited was whether a structure, unifying theme and compositional schema could be identified for this sura, irrespective of who put the text together. The study can thereby be described as an investigation into coherence, which treats the sura as a whole literary composition, and is concerned with the possible added value gained from looking at the sura as a totality, rather than as a conglomeration of component units and the immediate linear connections between them.

Methodology:

Several methodological premises have been posited, thereby outlining the theoretical foundation upon which this study stands. The connections between these premises and those of other contemporary approaches were explored, as well as the connections with the history of Qur’anic studies and with the broader context of the Abrahamic scriptural heritage. The approach taken here was identified as literary, synchronic, reader-oriented and intertextual.

The approach is literary from two perspectives: the use of literary theory and its preoccupation with certain repetitive devices which pertained to the sura’s structure. Using insights from literary theory, it explored the difference between author- and reader-oriented approaches, synchronic and diachronic, and influence theory and intertextuality. Rather than explore the Qur’an’s history and the chronology of composition, this study began with the text ‘as is’, positioning the text within the third millennium and examining it through twenty-first century eyes. The study’s synchronic quality derives from approaching the text ‘as is’, in the contemporary time-frame,
instead of tracing its component units and locating them historically in time. The 'time' factor is a feature of the diachronic approaches, which are generally preoccupied with examining the text's circumstances, intent and reception over the ages. The value of the diachronic approaches is not denied here; rather, the synchronic approach was used because it is best suited for the question with which this study is concerned. It is also an approach that has yet to receive a fair share of scholarly attention.

Instead of approaching the text through the authorial lens and searching for what the author originally intended it to mean, this study is based on the premise that meaning lies with the reader, who co-creates it according to their reading history and other factors. This difference between author- and reader-oriented approaches is what literary theorists have used to explain the difference between influence theory and intertextuality. While influence theory privileges older texts as more 'original' and as exercising influence over more recent texts, intertextuality in the present understanding is concerned with meanings derived from reading between the texts, not privileging one text over the other. In this study, the order of revelation was irrelevant: it did not matter when Surat al-Baqara was revealed and which parts of it were revealed first. Rather, it is the order of the Qur'an's final organization that counts; it is assumed that the reader would begin by reading it in a consecutive manner, so that previously read passages would determine how passages located in a lateral position are read. This assumption did not preclude the possibility that in a second reading, the allusive connection may go in the opposite direction: the reader may remember texts they read before in a later position within the sura and use them when creating meaning. It is these premises that lend this study its' reader-oriented and intertextual quality, and also its originality.

Using a reader-oriented approach has made it possible to experiment with new reading methods: the divine self-revelatory and the pedagogical readings, which have counter-balancing literary foci. While the divine self-revelatory reading had God at the focal point, reading the text for what it reveals about the deity, the pedagogical reading had the general category of human being at the focal point, reading the text for its pedagogical content for the human being. The two literary foci were located as
distinct characters in the unfolding drama of the text, each with an independent ‘voice’ and in a dialogic relationship to the other, similar to the way some of Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas have been used in biblical scholarship. The two readings recall the work of Todd Lawson, who has investigated the ideas of duality and opposition in relation to the Qur’an: the center points of the two readings form yet another duality. It is these new readings which have paved the way for gaining an overall perspective on the sura, identifying the central themes and how the various parts of the sura relate to and develop these themes.

The second feature which lent this study its literary character is its focus on certain repetitive devices: paying attention to the sura’s distinctive repetitions has made it possible to identify al-Baqara’s structure. In this study, five devices were essential: the inclusio, the Leitwort, iqtiṣāṣ, chiasm and alternation.

The inclusio is a bracketing device, consisting of a repeated word, phrase or verse located close to the beginning and end of a text, forming a frame for the enclosed unit. The al-Baqara inclusios are consecutive and incremental in nature, featuring a middle repetition, and are more strongly defined at the end than at the beginning. In this study, inclusios were used to identify thematic subdivisions within the text and to indicate the sura’s general structure.

The Leitwort is a unifying device, a leading keyword repeated verbatim throughout a text, often in various grammatical forms, imbuing a text with a distinctive character. This device is distinguished from the inclusio by its profusion and its dispersion throughout the text. In this study, the Leitwort was identified as ‘guidance’ and was used to read the sura in divine self-revelatory mode.

Iqtiṣāṣ is a compositional device which ties together disparate elements of a text. It entails the taking of a word, expression or idea from a certain context and repeating it in another, thereby carrying over nuances and layers of meaning intertextually. It is this intertextual quality that distinguishes it from the Leitwort, in addition to the generally fewer number of occurrences. In this study, it was used in the pedagogical reading to show the progression of ideas from one section to the next.
Chiasm is also a structuring device and consists of repetitions in an inverted order. The chiasms identified here were not verbal chiasms, but thematic ones, where topics were repeatedly addressed in an inverted order. This study showed that the general structure of the sura is chiastic and also that of al-Baqara vv. 152-242, referred to as §3.2 above.

Alternation is also a structuring device, organizing the material in the last two sections of al-Baqara, §3.2 (vv. 152-242) and §3.3 (vv. 243-286). These too are thematic repetitions as opposed to verbal ones. While chiasms repeated themes in an inverted order, alternations repeat them in the same order, alternating between one idea and another over and over again. In this study, alternations set off the sura’s last two sections as distinct units.

**Structure:**

There are seven inclusios that clearly indicate thematic borders in al-Baqara, five of which follow one after the other and divide the sura into five consecutive units. The first, middle and last are of relatively similar length, while the second and fourth are also of similar length, but longer (Table 8.2). The other two inclusios are internal, and divide the central unit into two consecutive parts. The sura thereby has a more or less overall symmetrical structure.

The last two sections of al-Baqara, which are bordered by Inclusios 4 and 5 respectively, are in the form of a broad, extended alternation between the themes of belief and practice (Table 8.2). While in vv. 152-242 this alternation is layered with a broken chiasm, in vv. 243-286 it is layered with another alternation between the topic of spending on the one hand, and fighting-related ideas on the other. The alternation and broken chiasm set off these subsections and underline their distinct character.

Of the seven inclusios, the second is significantly more strongly pronounced. It divides the sura into three panels of increasing length (Table 8.1). Each of these panels is composed of three segments, having the general character of story,
instruction or test. The story segments revolved around the idea of election and portrayed the primeval origins of guidance, and were therefore referred to as ‘election’ segments in the pedagogical reading. In the first panel, the segments followed the order test-instruction-story, while in the second it is instruction-story-test and in the last, story-instruction-test. The sequence in the first and last panel is inverted and the sura has a general chiastic structure (Table 8.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Table 8.1</th>
<th>Table 8.2</th>
<th>Table 8.3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>Inclusio1</td>
<td>§1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>§1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>Inclusio 2</td>
<td>§1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>§2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusio 3A</td>
<td>§2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusio 3</td>
<td>§2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusio 3B</td>
<td>§3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td>Inclusio 4</td>
<td>§3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242</td>
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<td>§3.3</td>
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<td>243</td>
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<tr>
<td>286</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The length of the three panels increases from one panel to the other. The last panel is by far the longest and covers more than the length of the first two panels combined, so that they function as a kind of introduction to it. The increasing length of
the panels is also reflected in their components, so that the chiasm also has an uneven, increasing structure. This feature is also reflected in the rest of the sura’s structuring devices, layering the sura with a sense of heightened expectation and fulfillment, like a narrative version of a musical crescendo. Accordingly, its inclusios are all incremental and its final alternation is also of increasing length. The sura thereby has a general escalating structure.

**Divine Self-Revelatory Reading:**

In this reading, the deity was placed at the focal point and the text was read for its depiction of the deity. The approach used was reader-oriented, synchronic, and intertextual; the concern was not to investigate the genesis of the text, but to explore the deity’s image or ‘voice’ as one of the protagonists portrayed within it.

In this study, the Leitwort indicated the divine self-revelatory central theme of ‘God as Guide’, since in each and every single one of the numerous and more or less evenly distributed occurrences of ‘guidance’ it was associated with the deity. The sura’s contents relate to this central theme, modifying it, and portraying aspects of the deity’s guiding character. Each section has one general addressee and illustrates the guidance theme from three aspects: narrative, substantive and practical. The narrative aspect takes the form of a story depicting the primeval origins of the guidance. In the first panel, which addresses humanity in general, the story presents Adam and Eve, the progenitors of humanity, and the divine promise to send guidance to their descendents. In the second panel, which begins with an address to the Children of Israel, the story portrays their origins as a people and the Covenant with which the deity has blessed them. In §3, which focuses on the emerging Muslim community, the story depicts their Abrahamic and Ishmaelite origins, and the divine promise to send guidance in their progeny. While these stories depict the deity’s guiding function in the distant past, his guidance stretches to the present moment as is illustrated by substantive, current instructions, and the practical application of tests. The picture which finally emerges of the deity is that of a transcendent, universal,
consistent guide, a sender of prophets with substantive directions, who ultimately
guides to success or failure. It is illustrated in three contexts: humanity as a whole,
the Children of Israel, and the emerging Muslim community.

The divine self-revelatory reading in this study is ‘holistic’, because it is centred
on one dominant divine quality or attribute, which imbues the sura with a unifying
theme. The various parts of the sura together serve to illustrate the bigger picture of
the deity as guide. The reading thereby moves a step beyond coherence and
investigating how each individual verse or passage connects to the next.

**Pedagogical Reading:**

The pedagogical reading is related to the divine self-revelatory reading in an
antithetical or enantiodromatic way, since it forms a contrasting or counterbalancing
literary focus. Now the human being is placed at the centre, and the text is read for its
pedagogical content for the individual.

The text displays a pedagogy of election, instruction and test, each of the three
components recurring in each section, and again in the ‘story’ subsections. There is a
broad chronological progression in the election theme, beginning with the election of
humanity in general, progressing to the Children of Israel, and ending with the election
of the emerging Muslim community. While the ‘story’ subsections educate through
establishing precedents and examples from the distant past, the ‘instruction’ and ‘test’
subsections are firmly rooted in the present, the ‘tests’ functioning as an evaluation of
the performance of instructions.

Instructional content also displays progression, since ideas are repeated and
expanded with new material from one section to the next. Its broad range is a
distinctive feature of this sura, since it encompasses the Islamic religion’s basic tenets,
rituals and social regulations. When contrasted with al-Fātiḥa, another feature
emerges: while al-Fātiḥa is very general and sums up the rubrics of faith for a broad
range of faith tradition, al-Baqara’s content is specific for the Muslim community and
serves to establish it as a nation apart. These features were identified when viewing the various passages of al-Baqara together, as a totality, and indicate the central theme in pedagogical mode: ‘first lesson in the new religion’.

Al-Baqara’s disparate topics are not only held together by the central theme, but when one views the sura as a whole, another pattern emerges. This pattern was referred to as *iqtiṣās* and entailed the recycling and growth of pedagogical content from one section to the next. Simple, rudimentary instructions in the first panel were repeated and expanded in the second and then substantially increased in the last panel. These repetitions have a pedagogical function: they serve to emphasize important material and reinforce learning. This pedagogy ties in with the divine self-revelatory central theme: the ultimate guide also functions as supreme educator, controlling which material is taught first, how content is added, and what is emphasized by the circular, repetitive nature of instruction. The depiction of the deity as supreme guide and educator is thereby conveyed in how the sura’s contents are structured: it is expressed in the very composition and organization of the text.

On its own, the pedagogical reading can also be classified as ‘holistic’, because its central theme was identified by means of viewing the sura as a whole, as a totality. However, when viewed together with the divine self-revelatory reading and its oppositional literary focus, the two readings together form yet another whole.

**Value:**

While the new readings and their common themes make a contribution to the understanding of Surat al-Baqara, the value of this approach moves beyond the strict confines of qur’anic studies and into the interdisciplinary realm. Its inter-disciplinary contribution can be noted in the way it builds bridges between qur’anic and biblical studies and the methodologies used within these disciplines, such as the synchronic and diachronic approaches. It has also demonstrated common methodological ground between qur’anic studies and literary theory, examining terms such as author- and
reader-oriented, intertextuality, and reception theory and exploring their application within Qur’anic studies.

This study has also connected methods of scholarship both East and West, old and new. It has examined the history of the Qur’anic coherence-related approaches and the factors which have affected their proliferation across the ages and in the present time. It has also explored relevant features of the work of some contemporary scholars, such as Angelika Neuwirth, John Wansbrough, Andrew Rippin, Bint al-Shāṭi, Mustansir Mir, Matthias Zahniser, Neal Robinson, Muhammad ‘Abdullāh Drāz and many others, thereby presenting a brief overview and a critique of contemporary Qur’an scholarship on coherence-related issues.

While this overview maps out existing parallels in scholarship today, the two new readings may have a future in Qur’an scholarship: it is possible to apply the divine self-revelatory and the pedagogical readings to other suras, which may provide useful insights. However, while these factors have value, the biggest contribution made here is in how all these insights have been brought together in order to answer the question posed in the beginning: it has identified the structure, compositional schema and unifying themes of al-Baqara, the first of the long Medinan suras in the Qur’an.
Alternation: a rhetorical device which consists of the repetition of words, ideas or themes in the same order.

Chiasm (chiasmus): a rhetorical device which consists of the repetition of words, ideas or themes in an inverted order.

Coherence: quality which makes a text semantically meaningful for the reader. It is often concerned with linear connections between passages.

Diachronic: a quality which denotes a preoccupation with how a text or its interpretation changes over time.

Divine self-revelatory reading: a reading in which God or another divine being is placed at the focal point and the text is read for what it reveals about the deity.

Includitur: unit of text enclosed by an inclusio.

Inclusio: a bracketing device, consisting of a repeated word, phrase or verse located close to the beginning and end of a text, forming a frame for the enclosed unit.

Influence theory: Preoccupation with the notion of originality often associated with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but which is still current today. Earlier texts were privileged as the older, original and ‘influencing’ texts.

Intertextuality: relationship of texts to one another which contribute to shaping the texts’s meanings.

Iqtiṣās: a compositional device which ties together disparate elements of a text. It entails the taking of a word, expression or idea from a certain context and repeating it in another, thereby carrying over nuances and layers of meaning intertextually. It is this intertextual quality that distinguishes it from the Leitwort and the inclusio.

Holism: the view that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. When applied to the Qur’an, it supposes that there is an added value when viewing a sura as a whole than when looking at it in a linear-atomistic verse-by-verse fashion. This added value can take the form of a central theme.
**Leitwort**: a leading keyword repeated verbatim throughout a text, often in various grammatical forms, imbuing a text with a distinctive character. This device is distinguished from the inclusio by its profusion and its dispersion throughout the text.

**Oral Type-Setting**: The use of oral techniques, such as repetition and the vocative, to segment, unify, highlight and otherwise organize text.

**Pedagogical reading**: a reading in which human beings are placed at the focal point and the text is read for its pedagogical content.

**Progression**: rhetorical structure denoting a progressing sequence within a text.

**Synchronic**: a quality which denotes a preoccupation with a text or its interpretation at a certain time without reference to their historical context or changes that occur over time.
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