

A Methodical Application of Identifying Surah Objectives in the Quran for Approaching Verse Coherence

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Abstract

The Holy Quran is a sign of the *I'jāz* and truthfulness of the final Prophet's (PBUH) claim of prophethood. It initially challenged opponents to produce something similar, and throughout history, it has become a platform for the endless and comprehensive efforts of scholars of literature, religious studies, and exegesis in accessing the essence of divine revelation. Recognizing and understanding the coherence of verses within the Quranic Surahs is one of the manifestations of these efforts. This importance motivated the present library research to compare the identification of Surah objectives with verse coherence using a descriptive-analytical method. This approach aims to investigate the reciprocal relationship between correctly identifying the objective of each Surah and understanding the coherence of its verses. The current research found that although knowing the manner of verse coherence in each Surah, due to its gradual revelation and thematic diversity, is difficult, a sign of the Quran's miraculous nature, and sometimes beyond human capability, subjective evaluation and unprincipled analysis of Surah objectives and verse relationships can hinder access to the consistency and harmony of the Word of God. Therefore, sincere contemplation,

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preliminary knowledge of the context of revelation and virtues of the Surah, awareness of the general objectives of the Quran, consideration of the Surah's name, utilization of interpretive narrations, attention to the beginning and ending of the Surah, a comprehensive view of all the Surah's themes, and reflection on the Surah's word choice and the significance of frequently repeated words and verses are eight criteria for understanding the harmony and coherence of each Surah's verses. All of these ultimately return to the role of Surah objectives in approaching verse coherence, factors that eliminate initial anxiety and dispersion and reveal the unity, continuity, and consistency of the verses.

Keywords: *I'jāz* of Quran, Order, Surah Objectives, Verse Coherence, *I'jāz*.



Introduction

Empowering Quranic researchers to accurately understand the Word of God and correctly comprehend its message is considered the most important achievement of Quranic sciences (Rahmati and Haji Akbari, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 11). Meanwhile, recognizing the gradual revelation of the Word of God and the issue of verse coherence and the connection between the Surahs of the Holy Quran are among the topics that have a history as long as the communication and reception of the Seal of Prophethood's miracle (al-Furqān: 32; al-Isrā':106).

This matter, although having historically provoked the taunts and objections of disbelievers towards the Holy Quran, provides a continuous source of peace for believers and is indicative of the precise order of divine speech (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 15, 210). Addressing this issue in the present era has become a significant concern for Quranic scholars and a recognized characteristic of Muslim commentators' exegesis due to the spread and propagation of doubts such as the lack of connection between the verses and chapters of the Quran, thematic dispersion, and the absence of a unified and orderly context. This is a subject that, according to some, has a history as old as the interpretation of the Quran itself (Hemami, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 10) and involves a spectrum of extremes. Some deniers consider the Quran a disjointed collection, while others, taking a maximalist approach, seek the issue of coherence and continuity of divine revelation beyond each chapter, even in the arrangement of the chapters of the Holy Quran and the connection between the ending verses of the previous chapter and the beginning verses of the next (Sharqāwī, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 66-68). Nevertheless, the guiding role of the perspective of coherence, especially in the area of the coherence of the verses of each chapter, cannot be ignored. This is a subject inextricably linked to the eloquent *I'jāz* of the Holy Quran. Disregarding this approach, in addition to leading to neglecting the philosophy of separating the chapters into one hundred and fourteen semantic units, confronts the accurate understanding of divine speech by fragmenting the verses of the Quran, and more than anything, is

unbecoming of the Quran's beauty (Bi Azar Shirazi, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 1, 438), causing deprivation from accessing the depths of God's word and sometimes creating the ground for falling into incorrect interpretations and spreading false beliefs attributed to the Quran (Fayed, 1973: 147).

In any case, whether we consider the belief in the coherence of verses and thematic unity in the chapters of the Quran as the result of an active approach in responding to Orientalists and opponents, or we consider it as emanating from a divine illumination on the minds of some commentators (Hosseini, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 212-215), a comprehensive and consistent view of the chapters of the Holy Quran and the effort to discover the direction of the verses of each chapter as an instance of God Almighty's challenge and rivalry to the truth of the Seal of Prophethood's miracle (al-Baqarah: 23; Yūnus: 38) requires a precise and systematic mechanism.

If the boundaries and characteristics of an organized and transferable system are not specified, the result will only be fruitless disagreements and conflicts. The reading of some works by Muslim critics, focusing on the denial of the thematic unity of the Quranic Surahs, reveals this truth. As they see it, identifying the purpose of the Surahs and discovering the coherence of the verses leads to the acceptance of the principle that each topic is only addressed in one Surah of the Quran. However, a little familiarity with the literature of the Holy Quran and the nature of revelation reveals the falsity of this belief, and none of the theorists and proponents of the coherence and distinctiveness of the Quranic Surahs have made such a claim (Khomeini, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 21). Identifying the purpose of the Quranic Surahs and understanding the relationships governing the verses of divine revelation can be seen, on the one hand, as a meaningful approach and action against reductionism and traditional exegesis of the Quran in the direction of attention to the macro and broad themes of the Book of Guidance, and on the other hand, as an active reaction against those who accuse the Quran of repetition, contradiction, and disorder (Aghaei, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 89-90).

Therefore, the present study, considering the importance of the issue of verse coherence and its role in the structured understanding of the Holy Quran, aims to, with a brief overview of the recognized criteria in strengthening the theory of coherence, emphasize more than anything the issue of the purposes of the Quranic Surahs and reveal the role of this factor further; an approach that eliminates the initial anxiety and dispersion among the verses and reveals their unity and consistency. Therefore, in the following, after mentioning the background of the research, we will explain the two central concepts of the research, namely verse coherence and Surah purposes. Then, we will purposefully review the factors affecting the recognition of Surah purposes and evaluate and analyze the role of understanding it in the realization of the theory of verse coherence.

1. Research Background

The research background on the topic of verse coherence in the Holy Quran can be placed in several categories. The first category is research that, with a comprehensive historical and conceptual approach, addresses the background and scope of the issue of verse coherence. An example of this method of research is "The History of the Knowledge of Verse Coherence." (Mahdavi Rad et al., 2018 AD/1398 SH: 135-154)

This research, by tracing the theological origins of the theory of coherence (*Tanāsub*), focusing on the theme of order and its connection to the *I'jāz* of the Quran, introduces the creedal and argumentative sources of this theory. This is an issue that has developed over time and, through its intermingling with Quranic literature, has found its way into interpretive sources and Quranic sciences. Following *Bāqillānī*'s literary and theological exploration in the fourth century AH, its clear traces can be found in the works of commentators such as *Shaykh Ṭūsī*, *Fakhr Rāzī*, *Zamakhsharī*, and *Ṭabrisī*, and scholars of Quranic sciences such as *Buqā'ī* and *Suyūṭī*. On the other hand, studies conducted in the field of coherence of verses are those that, assuming the acceptance of the coherence of

verses, attempt to apply it practically with several chapters of the Holy Quran or to harmonize and accompany it with new methods. Efforts such as "An Introduction to the Science of Coherence of Verses with Emphasis on Surah *al-Jumu'ah*" (Hemami, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 173-186) and "Examining the Coherence of Verses and its Axes in Surah *Tāhā*" (Hojjati, Haji Mohammad Ali, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 57-76) are among the efforts of the first section, based on the known context in Quranic sciences and exegesis. "Mapping the Network of Themes and the Coherence of the Verses of Surah *al-Ankabūt* Using the Method of Thematic Analysis" (Etratdoost and Amiri Fard, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 169-191) and "Re-reading the Coherence of the Verses of Surah *al-Mujādalah* with Emphasis on Sami's Rhetoric and Michel Cuypers' Theory of Symmetrical Order" (Azimi and Fattahi zade, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 117-138) are also considered examples that have pursued the issue of coherence of verses with the help of new methods. In any case, a review and analysis of the mentioned works shows that the authors and researchers of these works, each according to their scientific and research approach, have only sufficed with research on a specific and case-by-case topic and have studied and researched from their own perspective. Therefore, the angle of discussion in the present research is to avoid falling into disputes that only seek to reject or prove teleology for the chapters (*Suwar*) and the relationships between verses. Furthermore, this study does not only focus on the theological and historical aspect, but also seeks to reveal, with a theoretical, conceptual, and efficient approach, the role of the purposes of the chapters in casting a sustainable design of the coherence of verses.

The present research, however, does not solely aim to express the necessity of addressing the issue of coherence (*Tanāsub*) of verses and the conceptualization of the objectives of the Quranic Surahs. Rather, it strives to present a novel approach in the systematic application of identifying the objectives of Quranic Surahs in approaching the coherence of verses, by providing its own eight criteria, and to offer comprehensive and practical solutions that pave the way for a more

accurate and profound understanding of the Quranic verses. These are methods that are not limited to specific aspects of divine revelation, but rather, with a coherent and integrated perspective, reveal the harmony of the verses and the purposefulness of the divine word more than ever before.

2. Conceptual Understanding of Verse Coherence and Surah Objectives

"Verse Coherence" and "Surah Objectives" are the two main keywords of the present research, the understanding of each being a prerequisite for correctly grasping how they relate to each other. Therefore, before comparing and explaining the dependence of these two concepts, it is necessary to define each.

2.1. Verse Coherence

The basic meaning of the root (*N S B*) is connection (Ibn Fāris, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 1025). Similarity, proximity between two things and the uniformity resulting from it are also referred to as "Coherence" and "Appropriateness," and "Relation" is a word used to express the existence of a close relationship (Ḥusaynī Zabīdī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 2, 430). The technical meaning of coherence in speech also reverts to the same lexical meaning, because in technical terms, it refers to the result of considering the various connections in speech; appropriateness is applied to it (Suyūṭī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 2, 218). Therefore, appropriateness in the verses of the Quran is the knowledge of the meaningful connection and relationship between two or more verses (Buqā'ī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 5), the benefit of which is to create harmony and the formation of a strong relationship between the verses (Zarkashī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 1, 61). Quranic scholars have paid great attention to the issue of verse coherence and have examined it from internal and external aspects in the Surahs of the Holy Quran. Their intention of internal coherence is the connection of the verses of a surah and special attention to adjacent verses, the beginning and end of each surah, and the intervals between verses. External appropriateness also refers to the aspect of connection and attachment

to the surah before and after it. There is another type of coherence that may not fit into either the internal or external division, and that is the coherence of a specific topic in one surah with other Surahs, or the coherence of a specific section of one surah with other parts of it (Bazmul, 2002 AD/1423 AH: 28-29).

2.2. Purposes of Surahs

In the semantics of the word "Purposes," one must first trace the lexical meaning of "Intention." This root encompasses the meanings of seeking, aim, and turning towards, and when entering the derivative structure of "*Maqsid*," it signifies the place or location of intention (Ibn Manzūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 3, 353; Ṭurayhī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 3, 128). The purpose of a surah, in technical terminology, is the central theme, objective, and aim that led to its revelation. This is the axis and basis for understanding the verses, and due to its close connection with the semantic coherence of the verses of each surah, it leads to the placement of the verses in a specific and meaningful order alongside each other (Shahhāta, 1946 AD/1366 SH: 27). In the view of commentators who believe in identifying the purposes of the Surahs of the Holy Quran, there is a logical correlation between understanding a surah and discovering its purpose, and methodical purpose identification facilitates a better understanding of the coherence between the verses of each surah (Qoja'i Khameneh and Sadeghi, 2014 AD/1394 SH: 10). This is what is referred to as the independent spirit and unique personality of each surah, which distinguishes each surah from other Surahs with shared themes (Sayyid Quṭb, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 3, 1753). Therefore, there is a clear difference between the purpose and the topics discussed in each surah. Topics include all the matters that the surah encompasses, but the purpose is the ultimate goal that each surah aims for, and all the topics of the surah return to it and find meaning around it. It is a general and transcendent goal, beyond time and space that will only be achieved through contemplation and exhaustive understanding of the word, and like a life-giving spirit, it is mostly hidden. This is while the apparent

meaning of the word expresses its topics (Farahi, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 16; Ghazali, 1992: 231). Investigating the texts of Quranic sciences and exegesis reveals that numerous titles, such as "Context of the surah, aim of the surah, thematic unity, contextual unity, general subject of the surah, goal of the surah, axis of the surah, content of the surah, basis of the surah, atmosphere of the surah, pillar of the surah, 'Imārat al-Surah, structural unity, spirit and personality of the surah" are used in similar meaning to the purposes of the Surahs. These titles all indicate the importance and special status of the purpose's guiding and comprehensive nature (Rabī'a, 2011 AD/1432 AH: 9; Rif'at Fawzī, 1986: 14; Darāz, 1985: 143).

3. Methods of Determining the Purpose of a Quranic Surah

One characteristic of the Holy Quran is that each of its Surahs does not speak solely on one topic. Rather, a single surah usually addresses multiple subjects, and from several angles. This approach aligns with the Quran's purpose of guidance, as the aim of revealing the divine book is to show the path to happiness and guide humanity in all aspects of life. This goal necessitates the interweaving and juxtaposition of beliefs, rulings, ethics, stories, admonitions, parables, and descriptions. Therefore, discovering and understanding the purpose of the Quranic Surahs requires effort and careful consideration. This endeavor relies heavily on mental aptitude, sound judgment, knowledge of the language of revelation, and comprehension of its encompassing meanings (Ibn Khaldūn, 1234: 439-440; Farahi, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 14-16).

Consequently, before explaining the impact of the purposes of the Surahs on understanding the relationships between the verses of the Quran within each surah, it is necessary to point out the methodical ways of achieving these purposes. This is because an incorrect approach to identifying the surah's objective and central theme results in an incomplete understanding and leads to inability or deviation in correctly representing the coherence of the verses. Conceptual understanding of the purpose and awareness of its points of distinction

from concepts such as subject and objective, which were mentioned in the previous section, is the first step in achieving the purposes of the Quranic Surahs. This is because knowledge of the reality of things and awareness of their meanings is an essential introduction to the correct perception and analysis of concepts and rulings based on them. As such, the Holy Quran, and following it, Islamic scholars, have always paid significant attention to attaining the precise meanings of religious terms, scrutinizing the Lawgiver's intent behind them, and recognizing the unique role of the Arabic language in this process. A significant portion of the misguidance of innovators can also be attributed to failing to truly grasp the indication of words upon meanings and incorrectly applying this incomplete indication to the word of God (Rahmati, 2023 AD/1402 AH: 11). In the following, we will recall the most important factors influencing the attainment and discovery of the purposes of the Quranic Surahs. However, before mentioning these factors, it should be remembered that each of the following means alone cannot lead to recognition of the surah's purpose. Rather, considering all of these factors together can guide one to achieving the surah's purpose and, consequently, understanding the coherence of its verses.

3.1. Reflection and Sincere Effort

The first step, and indeed the enduring spirit governing the destination-finding of Quranic verses and chapters, is contemplation, sincere effort, and utilizing the Quran as a way of life. This entails steadfast and purposeful persistence, returning to the recognition of the high status of the Holy Quran and the value of spending one's time understanding it. It is as if the Holy Quran withholds its treasures from those who do not live in its spirit (Quṭb, 1979: 15). A spirit emanating from knowledge and inviting action, as *Zuhrī* mentioned when asked Imam *Sajjād* (AS) about the best of deeds, and *Zayn al-Ābidīn* (AS) replied (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 605): "I said to *Alī ibn al-Husayn* (AS), 'What is the best deed?' He said: "The deed of the one who begins and completes (the Quran). "I said: "What is the one who

begins and completes? "He said" :He begins reading the Quran and finishes it, and whenever he starts from the beginning of the Quran until he reaches the end, "he says: "He (AS) said that the Messenger of God (PBUH) said": "Whoever God gives the Quran to, and he thinks that someone else has been given something better than him, then he has indeed belittled what is great and magnified what is small."

Therefore, the commentators who have had remarkable achievements in destination-finding within the Quranic chapters have consistently made remarkable efforts in finding God's intention; an endeavor that, according to their testimony, has sometimes taken months and years (Buqā'ī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 14; Khālidī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 246). This significance is not achieved through imitation but is the result of seeking help from God Almighty and contemplating His words (al-Baqarah: 32).

3.2. Preliminary Knowledge of the Context of Revelation and the Virtues of the Surah

Understanding the purpose of a chapter is strongly connected to the conditions and circumstances surrounding each chapter. These circumstances can be found in reports based on whether the chapter is Meccan or Medinan, the reason(s) for revelation, the context of revelation, and the specific characteristics of the chapter and its verses. Among these, the reasons for revelation are of high importance, so much so that from the earliest efforts of Quranic scholars, independent research was conducted on them. Consequently, some commentators, by connecting the topic of the reason for revelation to the rhetorical necessity of understanding the requirements of speech in understanding the words, have introduced access to the correct reason for revelation as a source of vivid imagery and a manifestation of the status of speech (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984: 1, 47).

Furthermore, the influence of understanding whether a Surah is Meccan or Medinan is undeniable in comprehending the purposes of the Surahs. This is because each of the Meccan and Medinan Surahs possesses unique characteristics that inherently demand a specific

purpose (Daghamin, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 102; Muslim, 1989: 42-43). In *Fī Zilāl al-Quran*, while interpreting Surah *Ibrāhīm*, Sayyid Quṭb, relying on the characteristics of Meccan Surahs and utilizing the specific features of this Surah, considers Surah *Ibrāhīm* to be Meccan. He believes that the central theme of Surah Ibrahim, like other Meccan Surahs of its kind, revolves around beliefs. The distinguishing point is that this Surah adopts a different approach and method in expressing the truth of revelation and prophethood, monotheism, resurrection, and reckoning (Quṭb, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 4, 2077). Alongside Meccan and Medinan classification and *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), recognizing the virtues of the Surahs is a helpful means in identifying their purposes. This is because the virtues and characteristics narrated for each Surah can have a meaningful connection with the purpose of that Surah. An example of this is the narrations that emphasize the recitation of Surah *al-Ikhlāṣ* in the Morning Prayer, and its recitation is considered equivalent to reciting one-third of the Holy Quran (Makarem Shirazi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 27, 429-430). Reflection on these narrations leads the reader to the understanding that this Surah encompasses a purpose that necessitates belief and attention at the beginning of the morning endeavor. Similarly, narrations that refer to the countless virtues of Surah *al-Fātiḥa*, and call it the "Mother of the Quran" and the "Greatest Surah of the Quran," indicate that this Surah contains the essence of the extensive knowledge of the Holy Quran, and it seems that the rest of the Quran is an explanation and elaboration of the purposes of this unique Surah (Jawadi Amoli, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 1, 258).

3.3. Awareness of the General Purposes of the Quran

Although some verses of the Holy Quran are more explicit than others in expressing the general purposes (al-Dhāriyāt: 56; al-Ḥadīd: 25; al-Baqarah: 183), it must be acknowledged that the purposes of the Quran do not solely originate from a specific Surah or Surahs, but rather, it is like a spirit that flows within the final law and its eternal miracle. This is a matter of concern for Muslim scholars, who have

categorized and examined it from several perspectives (Ghazali, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 1, 416; Shāṭibī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 2, 8-11; Makkī (Shahīd Awwal), 1980: 1, 38; Motahhari, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 9, 27).

Undoubtedly, recognizing the main and overall purposes of the Seal of Prophethood's miracle (the Quran) and considering each of them when encountering any surah is an effective method for finding the purposes of the Quranic Surahs. This is because the purpose of each surah is entirely related to the purposes of the Quran's revelation and the benefit of its audience. Paying attention to these purposes, each of which seeks to attract benefits and repel minor and major harms (Naghibi, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 223), organizes the direction of understanding the purpose of each surah. This prevents the interpreter from falling into the trap of interpreting based on personal opinion and presenting purposes contrary to the principles and ultimate goals governing the Holy Quran.

3.4. Reflecting on the Name or Names of the Surah

The relationship between a name and what it signifies is a logical matter that wise individuals consider when naming their human achievements. A name is a sign and symbol (Khomeini, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 95), a brand placed on something that recalls a history from the past and an indication of the starting point. The names of the Surahs of the Holy Quran are no exception to this rule, and it is necessary to reflect on the name before reading each surah and to consider how the name of the surah relates to its content (Biqā'ī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 12). Among these, what is most worthy of attention and brings the reader closer to the purpose of the surah understands the source of the surah's name based on the themes discussed within it. In such a way that if the name of the surah is influenced by a story or event mentioned in that surah, that story or event becomes central to understanding the purpose of the surah. The Surahs of the Quran are not uniform in this regard. The names of some Surahs clearly bring the reader closer to their main purpose, while the names of others, despite being mentioned in the text of the surah, do not clearly define

the surah's purpose; such as the name of Surah *al-Ikhlāṣ*, which, although its keyword does not appear in the surah, most of all indicates the purpose of the surah. Also, naming the two Surahs *al-Nās* and *al-Falaq* with the common name *al-Mu'awwadhatayn* is a guide towards the truth that the common purpose of these two Surahs, despite the specific differences of each, is the essential meaning of seeking refuge and protection in God, the Protector, and the Self-Sufficient.

This is while the naming of Surah *al-Baqarah*, although influenced by the story of the Cow of the Children of Israel in verses 67 to 74 of this Surah, does not easily lend itself to establishing a direct connection between the name and the Surah's objective. Therefore, as stated in the introduction, in navigating towards the objective of each Surah, one must utilize all assisting factors and avoid insisting on a single factor, lest the researcher falls into artificiality and presents arguments divorced from the general aims of the Quran and the specific objective of each Surah.

3.5. Utilizing Interpretive Narrations

An issue that has perhaps been most overlooked in interpretive narrations is the interpretive method of the religious authorities in processing the meaning of Quranic verses. This is while the final product of their interpretation in explaining and clarifying a verse or verses of the Quran has always been the focus of attention. Narrations, sometimes with a brief and fleeting allusion, act as shortcuts that shorten the path to reaching the Surah's objective. Among these narrations are the hadiths from the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) that, in explaining the core words "*Aḥad*," "*Ṣamad*," and "*Kufuw*" in Surah *al-Ikhlāṣ*, emphasized the concept of *Tawḥīd* (Oneness of God) as the Surah's main objective, and proceeded to elucidate the verses accordingly (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2011 AD/1391 SH: 20, 390-392). In these narrations, although the audience inquired about the three mentioned words, the Imams (AS), by emphasizing the main objective of the Surah, not only mentioned the meanings of these words but also

conveyed the method of deriving their meaning. Another example in this regard is a narration from Ibn Abbas regarding Surah *al-Layl*. He says concisely: "This Surah was revealed concerning generosity and miserliness," (Siddiq Hassan Khan, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 7, 474) thereby introducing the main direction of the Surah as generosity and miserliness.

3.6. Paying Attention to the Beginning and End of Each Surah

The Holy Quran, in its expression, adheres to the structure of standard language, and one of these well-known conventions in Arabic discourse is the auspicious opening of speech with sentences and phrases that, more than anything else, direct the reader or listener towards the writer's or speaker's main goal (Suyūṭī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 2, 108). This is what is referred to as "*Barā'at al-Istihlāl*" (excellence of the opening) and has been analyzed by rhetoricians (Khaṭīb Qazwīnī, 2004: 1, 395). Therefore, the opening verses of a surah play an influential role throughout the entire surah and in navigating the path of the verses towards achieving its ultimate goal. These opening verses seemingly introduce the most important events that the surah seeks to resolve and address. The opening of the Quranic Surahs with disconnected letters, glorification, praise, questioning, oaths, specific address to the Prophet, honoring believers, reprimanding and threatening disbelievers, mentioning a specific event, exalting the Holy Quran, and other themes all indicate the exclusive orientation of each surah. This reflects the peak of eloquence in divine revelation, not only limited to the beginning of the surah but also casting its shadow over the entire surah, and is most related to its ending verses (Darrāz, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 119). An example for a good opening is the first verse of Surah *al-Ra'd*: "*Alif, Lām, Mīm, Rā'*". These are the verses of the Book; and what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, but most of the people do not believe. "(al-Ra'd: 1) This verse points to the essential purpose of the surah and refers to the three main elements governing it: "The true message," "The truthful messenger," and "The unbelieving audience."

This indication is elaborated upon in other verses of the surah, such that some verses provide evidence for the truthfulness of this message, while others, by acknowledging the truthful prophet, depict the audience's disbelief in him and explain the Prophet's (PBUH) methods in reforming them (Meydani, 2009 AD/1430 AH: 32).

In many Quranic Surahs, after the first verse or verses reveal the central theme of the surah, the text then addresses secondary themes. However, in conclusion, with a purposeful and effective return, the text refers back to the initial purpose. This reference, by reminding and emphasizing the main purpose again, deepens the main goal of the surah, which indicates the importance of the role of the ending verses alongside the opening verses in determining the surah's purpose; so much so that a Quranic scholar like *Suyūṭī* dedicated attention to it by writing the book "*Marāṣid al-Maṭāi' fī Tanāsub al-Maqāṭi' wal Maṭāli'*." A notable example in this regard is *Abū Ḥayyān*'s statement in explaining the ending verses of Surah *al-Baqarah* and expressing its connection with the beginning of the surah. He argues that the final two verses of Surah *al-Baqarah* are another indication of the qualities of the righteous: "Those who are mentioned in the opening verses of Surah *al-Baqarah* as benefiting from the guidance of the Quran." He adds that after researching the long Surahs of the Holy Quran, he has come to the truth that there is a wonderful harmony between the good beginning and good ending of the verses in expressing the main purpose of each surah (*Abū Ḥayyān Andalusī*, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 2, 755).

3.7. A Comprehensive Look at All the Axes of the Surah

For a more accurate understanding of the general purpose of the surah, one must look at all the basic topics raised in the surah and the order and relationship between them. Understanding the relationships between seemingly distinct topics, awareness of the narratives and how they connect to other parts of the surah, the fate of the righteous and the wicked and the common contrast between them, and the axes of the surah are among the most important things that eliminate the

apparent confusion of the verses and, by guiding towards the main purpose of the surah, make it possible to understand its purpose. Each surah, despite having a main purpose, has several sections. Each section, despite its independence in creating meaning, acts as a part in reflecting the main purpose of the surah. In the meantime, although some verbal elements and grammatical structures can create the context for understanding the difference of each section, what is most effective in recognizing the mentioned sections is the meanings and concepts mentioned in each section (Ḥawwā, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 3, 1567). It should be noted that although each of the mentioned sections expresses a point or points, they should not be considered the main axis, and one should not deviate from the path in understanding the main purpose of the surah. For example, a major part of the verses of Surah *al-Kahf* is devoted to the story of the People of the Cave, the story of the owner of the two gardens, the story of Moses and the Righteous Servant (*Khiḍr*), the story of *Dhul Qarnayn*, and a reference to the story of Adam and Iblis. In such a way that perhaps other verses of this surah can be considered a follow-up to these stories. However, it should be known that the purpose of reporting these stories is not merely storytelling and remembering the past peoples and their lives, but rather the purpose is to correct belief, the method of thinking, and evaluation commensurate with it (Qutb, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 4, 2256).

3.8. Contemplation on the Word Choice of the Surah and the Significance of Repeated Words and Verses

Paying attention to the individual words of each surah and understanding the meaning of the root of the basic words and how they are used in the context governing the verses is another helpful factor in achieving the purpose of the surah.

A word may be capable of multiple meanings from a linguistic standpoint, but its collocation with other words reveals the ultimate purpose behind it, showcasing a facet of the organization of Quranic vocabulary and the *ʿIjāz* of the Word of God. Contemplation of Quranic words, whether nouns, verbs, or particles, and the syntactic

function and morphological structure of each in the position and context where they are used, indicates a deliberate and pre-determined choice, aimed at maximum appropriateness and the achievement of a specific objective (Rāfi'ī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 259). A noteworthy example in this regard is the use of the central word "*al-Ṣamad*" in Surah *al-Ikhlāṣ* (Ṭabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 10, 861). A word that signifies the inevitable return and recourse of all creation to God in the fulfillment of needs and the resolution of problems; the same meaning that is considered the main purpose of the surah in the comprehensive realization of *Tawhīd* (Oneness of God) in the world. Another example is the beginning of Surah *al-Duḥā* with two interconnected oaths: "By the morning brightness (1) And [by] the night when it covers with darkness (2)" (*al-Duḥā*), oaths, one of which indicates disclosure and the vanishing of darkness, and the other expressing peace and tranquility (Zamakhsharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 4, 765). A perfect correspondence with the main purpose of the surah, which is to shed light and respond to the darkness-spreading of the polytheists and to refute their accusations against the Prophet (PBUH), followed by bringing joy and soothing the soul of the Messenger of God (PBUH).

Analyzing and scrutinizing frequently repeated words or verses in the Surahs of the Holy Quran is another manifestation of the importance of linguistic and literary studies that assist the Quran's audience in understanding the implications and purposes of God's Word. A case in point for repeated words is the frequent use of the attribute "*al-Raḥmān*" (The Most Gracious) in Surah *Maryam*; an application that has a complete connection with the comprehensiveness and vastness of God's mercy as the main goal and purpose of this surah. A surah that begins with mentioning God's mercy to Prophet Zechariah (*Maryam*: 2), ends with the love-generating effect of faith and righteous deeds (*Maryam*: 96), and includes attributes connected and consistent with divine mercy.

However, noteworthy examples of verses include the frequently repeated phrases: "So which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" (Repeated 31 times in Surah *al-Raḥmān*), "Woe that Day to the

deniers," (repeated 10 times in Surah al-Mursalāt) and "And We have certainly made the Quran easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?" (4 times in Surah al-Qamar)

These are sections that should not be easily overlooked; at each point in the discourse, in addition to assessing their relationship to the context, their connection to the surah's objective should be considered.

Therefore, when faced with these verses, commentators have focused more on the role these verses play. However, few commentators can be found who have examined the place of the frequently used expressions in guiding the surah towards its intended goal. A noteworthy example in this section is the analysis of the contemporary researcher Dr. *Muhammad Ghazālī* on the oft-repeated verse "Woe that Day to the deniers "in Surah *al-Mursalāt*. He, going beyond other commentators, believes that the ten-fold repetition of this expression is an indication of its ultimate purpose, which is to warn those who deny the truth and frighten the enemies (*Ghazālī*, 1992: 495).

4. The Role of Surah Objectives in the Approach to the Coherence of Verses

Understanding the coherence and objectives of the Quranic verses and using it as a criterion, frees the process of interpretation and hermeneutics from falling into error and deviation, and provides an understanding in line with the guiding spirit of the Quran. The hermeneutics of any text, in order to confirm its results, faces various aspects such as the context of writing, the manner of expression, and the worldview of the compiler (Wadūd, 1979 AD/1400 AH: 120). In the meantime, the gradual revelation and completion of the verses and Surahs of the Holy Quran is not an obstacle to the continuity of words and semantic coherence; because the Surahs of the Quran, although completed in a period of time in proportion to the gradual revelation of the verses, pursued a specific goal. It is as if the structure of each surah is like the structure of a building whose bricks are gradually placed in their place, but after placement and stabilization, it has

gained such stability and harmony that it stands firm on its pillars like a solid mountain (Darāz, 1985: 194). In the view of some scholars, the connection and interdependence of the verses and Surahs of the Quran is such that, despite the independence of the personality and purposefulness of each surah, Surah *al-Fātiḥa* can be considered comprehensive of all the purposes and meanings of the Quran (Suyūṭī, 1986 AD/1406 AH: 61; Kashani, 1956 AD/1336 SH: 1, 20). Therefore, avoiding the objectives of the Surahs and the coherence of the verses prevents reflection as a general call of the Quran in understanding the final miracle (Shāṭibī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 3, 383). And this is the word of God in rebuking peoples who have been reproached with verses such as: "They said: "O! *Shu'ayb*, we do not understand much of what you say." (Hūd: 91)

Undoubtedly, these communities were aware of the literal meaning of the prophets' words in their own time, but what made them deserving of divine censure was their turning away from the intent and purpose of the prophets. Now, the central question in the final part of this research is which of the two important events, "Finding coherence between verses" and "Determining the purpose of Surahs," is more important, and which of these two precedes the other in the path of understanding the divine word? The title of the present research is a clear answer to this question. An answer that can be found hinted at in the views of the diligent pioneers in the field of determining the purpose of Quranic Surahs; in such a way that the purpose of each surah is dominant over all the connections that exist between its verses. This issue, when considered carefully, saves the reader of the divine word from being scattered-minded within the surah and reveals the order governing the Holy Quran in expressing knowledge (Buqā'ī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 1, 142; Suyūṭī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 3, 376; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 3, 86).

There is a dynamic and subtle relationship between coherence and purposes, according to which, knowing the intent and purpose of each surah is a desirable goal that serves as the basis for finding coherence between the verses of that surah. The author of the unique

encyclopedia *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Quran*, when translating and explaining the word "Surah," points to the fact that placing a set of verses within the framework of a surah leads to their distinct connection compared to the verses of other Surahs, and this is a reminder of the unparalleled role of agreement and shared purpose of verses under the umbrella of a single surah (Zarkashī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 1, 204). The Quran's challenge to produce a surah instead of individual verses is another indication of this claim; because in all three verses of the challenge, the solidity of the concept of the surah is evident in the arena of bringing forth something similar. Sometimes a single surah, sometimes ten, and sometimes a collection of Quranic Surahs have been the battleground for those who deny the word of truth. The Holy Quran has never stated that you should bring forth something like the Quran to the extent of the number of verses in a surah. Rather, with a known intent, it has insisted on the use of the term "Surah." A usage that, alongside the challenge to the entirety of the Quran, or the similarity to the whole "Then produce a surah like it," (al-Baqarah: 23) expresses the unique position of the purpose and aim of each surah (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984: 1, 337).

Therefore, the destination (or ultimate aim) of a Surah should not be considered merely the result of the coherence of its verses; rather, it is the Surah's aim that governs its coherence and directs it. Another manifestation of the priority and importance of determining the aim in approaching coherence is the issue of verbal similarities. Scholars of Quranic sciences and exegesis have, in numerous instances in their works, referred to the issue of coherence when explaining the differences between similar verses in the Holy Quran. However, this coherence itself finds meaning within the context of the Surah's fundamental aim and purpose. An illustrative example of this claim is the reason for the difference between the similar verses: "Indeed, this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me (92). And they divided their affair among themselves, [but] all will return to Us (93)" (al-Anbīyā') and "And indeed this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so fear Me (52). But they have cut up

their affair among themselves into sects, each faction rejoicing in what it has." (al-Mu'minūn) The application of the accusative noun "Zuburan" (sects) in the verses of Surah *al-Mu'minūn*, and its absence in Surah *al-Anbīyā'*, serves as a case in point. This difference is attributed to the distinct aim of Surah *al-Anbīyā'*, and consequently, to the prevailing atmosphere within the Surah and the coherence among its verses. Indeed, in Surah *al-Anbīyā'*, God Almighty recounts the stories of more than ten prophets, and the overall aim of the verses is to strengthen the Prophet (PBUH) in his mission and to bring him peace in the face of adversity. Therefore, mentioning the word "Zuburan," which implies division and dispersion, would disrupt the meaning and contradict the Surah's purpose. In contrast, the context governing the verses of Surah *al-Mu'minūn* is one of warning and intimidation for those who have arrayed themselves against truth and reality in various ways. Therefore, the word "Zuburan" is more reflective of their state and destiny (Ghirnāṭī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 2, 356). It is clear that this justification for two sets of similar verses is not solely based on a comparison of the two aforementioned passages and their respective contexts; rather, it is the overall context of the Surah, or the Surah's aim, that provides the capacity for differentiation.

Another indication of the special significance of aim-determination in understanding the coherence of verses lies in revisiting how the relationships between verses are recognized. Researchers in Quranic sciences and rhetoric have divided the coherence between verses into two types: "Explicit coherence and implicit coherence."

In the apparent symmetry, the verbal and syntactic relationships governing sentences function as a clear indication of relevant connections.

Relationships such as conjunction, answer and question, emphasis, interpretation and explanation, objection, reasoning, and exemplification are among the most well-known of these connections. However, the second type of relationship is subtle and hidden. This is

where the connection between verses goes beyond lexical relationships and requires contemplation and deciphering of the meaning governing the collection of verses (Zarkashī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 1, 40; Jurjānī, 1991: 224-225; Qazwīnī, 2004: 147). This can be referred to as the overall purpose of the Surah. It is a coherence-creating factor that, beyond superficial relationships, unifies the verses and guides them towards a similar path and shared objective. An example of this is the existence of parenthetical clauses within the verses of the Holy Quran and the supra-compositional role of the Surah's purpose in expressing the coherence of the verses and the connection of the verse containing the parenthetical clause with what precedes and follows it. One such instance is the parenthetical verse "Or do they say, "He has invented it?" Say: "If I have invented it, upon me is [the consequence of] my crime; but I am clear of what [crimes] you commit" (Hūd: 35) within verses 32 to 36 of Surah *Hūd*. The mentioned verses are about the disbelievers' disputation with Noah and their hastening the coming of the punishment. Therefore, verse thirty-five, which is about the final Prophet (PBUH) and the false accusations against him regarding the Holy Quran, appears inconsistent. Resolving this issue depends solely on revealing the Surah's purpose. The mentioned verse in Surah *Hūd* is most consistent with the thirteenth verse of the same Surah. This is the verse in which the Prophet (PBUH) is commissioned to challenge the polytheists to produce ten Surahs like the Quran. Therefore, verse thirty-six is presented to remind the main purpose of the Surah, which is the authenticity of the Prophet's (PBUH) call and the truth of the final miracle, and to reiterate the overall objective of the Surah's revelation, so that, on the one hand, the main purpose is not forgotten amidst the ups and downs of Noah's dispute with the deniers of prophethood, and on the other hand, to justify the mention of Noah's story (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984: 12, 36-37; Buqā'ī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 3, 529; Makarem Shirazi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 9, 86-87).

A final example is the comparison of two sets of verses: "And We said: "O! Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat

therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers." (al-Baqarah: 35) and "And O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers." (al-A'rāf: 19) These verses, although both report God's blessing of Adam and his wife in Paradise, differ in the use of the conjunction between the two. The reason for this distinction should be sought in the overall purpose of these two Surahs and the surrounding context of their verses. The verses mentioned in Surah *al-Baqarah* are only intended to inform the final Messenger (PBUH) of the past events that befell Adam and his wife. Therefore, the chronological order of events and the statement of the beginning and end of each event were not considered by the Holy Quran, and this necessitates the use of the conjunction "*Wa*" (and). This is while the verses of Surah *al-A'rāf* are in the position of enumerating the blessings of the Lord upon Adam and his descendants until the end. This issue is most evident in God's favor upon mankind "And We have certainly established you upon the earth and made for you therein means of livelihood. Little are you grateful." (al-A'rāf: 10) and the rebuke of Iblis and his promised punishment "[Allah] said, "Get out of it, disgraced and banished. Whoever of them follows you - I will surely fill Hell with you all." (al-A'rāf: 18), which necessitates order and the use of the conjunction "*Fā*" (then/so).

Conclusion

The Holy Quran is a lasting treasure and an eternal miracle from whose guiding depths people benefit according to their capacity and success. The present research, in this regard, pursued the topic of "Systematic Application of Identifying the Purposes of the Surahs of the Holy Quran in Approaching the Coherence of Verses" and reached the following conclusions:

1) Awareness of the knowledge of purposes and understanding the relationships between the Surahs and verses of the Quran, as a manifestation of the purposefulness and eternity of the final miracle,

has a clear impact on the recognition and explanation of the coherence of the word of revelation in each surah. This, on the one hand, introduces the unique character of each surah and its exclusive mission from God Almighty, and on the other hand, reveals the greater unity of the seemingly diverse and different axes of the Quranic Surahs from each other.

2) Considering the place of the objectives of the Quranic chapters (Surahs) and correctly assessing its relationship with the issue of the coherence of verses is a matter of importance and precision. This is because the objective of each Surah should not be considered the result of the coherence of its verses; rather, it is the objective of each Surah that governs its interrelationships and directs them.

3) Incorrectly traversing the path to achieving the objectives of the Holy Quran's Surahs leads to an incomplete plan and results in the inability or deviation in correctly representing the coherence of verses. Therefore, understanding the conceptual meaning of "Objective" and paying attention to its distinguishing aspects from similar concepts such as "Topic" and "Purpose" is the first step in achieving the objectives of the Quranic Surahs. This is an endeavor that is completed by achieving correct and systematic methods for understanding the objectives of the Quran, guiding readers of the revelation further towards comparing and harmonizing the verses of the Quran and the purposefulness of the Quranic Surahs. This is demonstrated in the eight strategies of this article, which, by linking connected and disconnected evidence, on the one hand, explored the relationship of the elements of the Surah with each other, and on the other hand, sought to establish a connection between the Surah and its general objectives and external propositions, and through this, proposed a comprehensive model for achieving the coherence of verses with a focus on identifying the objectives of the Quranic Surahs.

4) Finally, it should be added that the application of the knowledge of the objectives of the Quran is not limited to understanding Quranic relationships, but also the justification of verses with similar wording

is possible through benefiting from the objectives of each Surah. This is a desirable outcome that has a significant literary background and origin in rhetoric, and its theorization and operationalization at the level of each Quranic Surah is expected. This is an effort that has been undertaken by Muslim scholars in the past, and its further development depends on the efforts of contemporaries and new research.

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