

Textual Relations in the Qur'ān

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of Ph.D. Degree
At the University of London

By
SALWA MOHAMED SELIM EL-AWA

**School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London**



ProQuest Number: 10731712

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10731712

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Abstract

This is a study of textual relations in the Qur'ān which explores the possibility of looking differently at the relations holding between the variety of topics that are usually encountered in the long Qur'anic *sūras*. It adopts principles from linguistic and pragmatic theory, and attempts to explain textual relations in accordance with those principles. The main argument of the thesis is that the study of textual relations may be based on a search not necessarily for unity of theme, but rather for whatever types of relations do exist, how they work, and what linguistic tools can be used in directing the reader towards understanding them.

The study is divided into an introduction and five chapters.

In the first chapter I discuss the development of the view of textual relations in the field of Qur'anic studies and suggest the need for a new methodology that is more systematic and more theoretically guided. In the second chapter I explain the theoretical framework adopted and its implications for the study of the Qur'ān, with particular focus on the role of context in understanding text and textual relations. The third and fourth chapters are devoted to analyzing two sample *sūras* from the Qur'ān and discussion of their problematic textual relations in the light of the linguistics and pragmatics of their texts. The discussion of the two sample *sūras* covers many aspects of textual relations that are encountered elsewhere in the Qur'ān, and the findings of the analysis are used to propose a generalized solution of the problem and a methodology and guiding mechanisms for further applications. The fifth and final chapter draws conclusions from the study and considers the implications of this research for *tafsīr* in general and in understanding the structure of information and textual relations in the Qur'ān in particular.

Table of Contents

Abstract

Table of contents

Acknowledgment

Introduction

7-17

Chapter 1: Literature Review

18-43

Chapter 2: Textual Relations in Linguistic/Pragmatic Theory

44-68

Chapter 3: Textual Relations in *Sūra* 33, (*al-Aḥzāb*)

69-156

Chapter 4: Textual Relations in *Sūra* 75, (*al-Qiyāmah*)

157-247

Conclusions

248-253

Bibliography

Tables:

A. Chapter 3:

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Passages of <i>Sūra</i> 33 and their Main Content | 77 |
| 2. Subject-Switch Markers in <i>Sūra</i> 33 | 84-86 |
| 3. A Sample of Pronoun Turn-Taking in <i>Sūra</i> 33 | 91-92 |
| 4. The Pronoun Turn in Passage 2, Indicates Division between the Passages | 104-105 |
| 5. The Relation between Distribution of Information over the Passages and the Concepts Developed in the <i>Sūra</i> | 132-134 |

B. Chapter 4:

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Divisions of the <i>Sūra</i> by Different Commentators | 166-167 |
|---|---------|

Acknowledgement

Writing one's PhD thesis is one of the most difficult experiences in one's life. Those who contributed to my experience of writing my PhD know a lot about the difficulties involved, and have done a lot to make the process easier for me. I cannot mention them all by name, but I am deeply indebted to all of them.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor M. A. S. Abdel-Haleem, Director of the Centre of Islamic Studies at SOAS. Professor Abdel-Haleem offered me the best academic guidance and the warmest fatherly support at every stage of this work. The time he gave to discussion of my work and the appreciation he showed to my changing circumstances made the completion of this thesis possible.

I would also like to thank the Yamani Cultural and Charitable Foundation for making this research possible and for their generous support to me throughout the different stages of it. I am especially indebted to Thorunn Lonsdale for she has gone beyond her duties in supporting and encouraging me in the worst, as well as the best of times. Without her support I do not think this research could have reached so far.

I owe special thanks to Billy Clark, who acted as a co-supervisor for one year, and then continued further to read my drafts, for so many useful insights into my linguistic analysis as well as my academic writing.

I am indebted to professors, Neal Robinson and el-Sa'id Badawy, who have given time and effort to reading some of the draft chapters and commenting on them.

I am also indebted to a number of linguists who have contributed to with their ideas this work: Ruth Kempson who introduced me to pragmatics when this research was only a question, Deirdre Wilson who has discussed with me the first plan, and on whose ideas this research is based, Diane Blakemore, Nigel Fabb and Regina Blass whose ideas have largely influenced my understanding of many central issues, and to all the staff of the Department of Linguistics at SOAS, all of whom have been of great help during my first year.

I am grateful to Professors Mustafa al-Shak'a, Salah Fadl, Ibrahim 'Abdul-Rahman, 'Iffat al-Sharqawy and to all my colleagues in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Ain Shams for the encouragement and support they provided me with when I was taking my first tentative steps in the study of Modern Linguistics abroad.

I deeply regret that I can no longer convey my appreciation to my teachers, Professors 'Aisha 'Abdul-Rahman, (Bint al-Shati'), Lutfy 'Abdul-Badi' and Ramadan 'Abdul-Tawwab, who first introduced me to the study of linguistics and encouraged me to apply my work to the Qur'anic text.

I am also deeply indebted to Alison Barty, Nahed Baba, Rahmah Osman and Nagwa el-Ashmawy for their continuous moral support without which it would have been possible to carry on, and to Maureen O' Rourke and Carol Bebawy for the hard effort they put into editing my chapters, always at a short notice.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to a great family with which I am blessed. My mother, Asmahan Bakir, the thought of whose life in London when she gave birth to me, and the memory of the last years of her life when she was writing her PhD thesis, were a continuous source of inspiration. My father, Mohamed El-Awa and his wife Amany el-Ashmawy for continuing to be there for me when no one else could help, and my husband Ilir Hida for so much tolerance and understanding at moments I myself thought could not be tolerated. Our son Mohammad Arben, has added to our life much more love and joy than he had to miss out on when I was too busy working on my thesis.

Such contributions cannot be described in words.

Introduction

The analysis of textual relations in the Qur'ān, usually regarded as coming under the category of the study of *Munāsabah* or the *organic unity* of the Qur'ān, is an intersection between *tafsīr* and linguistics. There is considerable debate in the field of Qur'anic Studies as to whether or not the Qur'anic *sūra* exhibits an organic unity. Scholars in the Muslim tradition are divided on this question, in spite of their general agreement on the principal theological and historical issues relating to it: the inimitability of the Qur'ān and the authenticity of its text and order as instructed by the Prophet Muḥammad. Some, like Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfi'y, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, and more recently Muḥammad Rajab al-Bayyūmy, are convinced that although the Qur'anic *sūra* may contain a wide variety of topics which are not necessarily related as themes they are unified by the fact that they all serve in conveying the preaching of Islam to mankind, in addition to the physical and spiritual unity that may be expressed in terms of the rhythms and rhymes dominating any particular *sūra*.

Other scholars argue that the text of each individual *sūra* does indeed have one central idea to which the whole *sūra* is devoted, and that the variety of topics/themes within the *sūra* are employed to elaborate on this one central idea. Among these are Sayyid Quṭb and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, and more recently Muḥammad Abdullah-Drāz and Neal Robinson¹. Using the modern methodology of textual analysis to establish their view, the latter two scholars have analyzed the text of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, the longest in the Qur'ān, and have succeeded in identifying a number of major points which they claim are the central ideas around which all the themes in the *sūra* revolve.

Scholars from non-Muslim traditions, on the other hand, influenced by the huge loss of style and even meaning as the Qur'ān is translated into European languages, approach the problem differently. Their main claim is that the Qur'anic text is generally incoherent, which is a phenomenon difficult to isolate from the doubts raised about the history of the writing down of the Qur'ān².

¹ Although Robinson's work does not come from an orthodox Muslim writers' tradition (see chapter 1), it has made a major contribution to the corpus of Muslim literature on the topic.

² This is a problem which I do not intend to engage in discussing, since it is of a historical nature, which does not accord with the textual approach adopted in this work. An interesting remark in this

Aims and Assumptions

This thesis aims to discuss the problem of textual relations in the Qur'ān from a linguistic point of view, and examine, according to principles derived from modern pragmatic theory, the type of textual relations in the Qur'ān and the way in which verses of one *sūra* relate to each other and to the wider context of the total message of the Qur'ān.

On a broader level, the thesis aims to open the way to the development of a more theory-guided approach to *tafsīr*, and, hopefully, by showing how pragmatic principles explain a number of problematic aspects of the meaning of the Qur'anic text, quite as well as they do in any other text, bridge the gulf between Qur'anic studies, which are, after all, studies of a communicative text, and pragmatic textual analysis, which is the scientific study of text.

One of the main assumptions from which the present research starts, is that the outcome of a work that is based on the contribution of principles derived from a general theory of textual meaning together with a specific and specialized knowledge of the Qur'ān and its linguistic and non-linguistic context, is likely to yield a more systematic and enlightened understanding of this underdeveloped aspect of Qur'anic studies.

The reason why I consider that the study of textual relations is underdeveloped will be explained in the first chapter of this thesis.

The study looks at textual relations, their meanings, the linguistic devices used to indicate them, the division of the text and information structures that are determined by those relations, the way they are recovered by recipients of the Qur'ān and finally the role they play in conveying the overall meaning of the text.

Finally, application of the analysis to a complete *sūra* aims at providing an example of how the analysis of long Qur'anic texts within the framework adopted in this study, might yield very interesting results and offer answers to the holistic question: Do

context is that made by 'Abdullah Sa'id ('Rethinking "Revelation" as a Precondition for Reinterpreting the Qur'ān: A Qur'anic Perspective', *JQS* 1:1, 1999, pp. 101-114), that a study of the origin of the Qur'ān is not absolutely necessary as a pre-requisite for interpreting the Qur'ān. However, good references on the matter are: W. Montgomery Watt and Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'ān*, Edinburgh University Press, 1970; Ibrāhīm al-Ibyāry, *Ta'rikh al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, Beirut, 1982; and recently a co-authored work published by Isesco, *The Holy Qur'an*, Morocco, 1997; as well as Neal Robinson's brief account in his recent work: *Islam, a concise introduction*, Curzon, Richmond, 1999.

Qur'anic *sūras* possess coherence, or organic unity and is this at all necessary as a quality of the text or is it not?

Description of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter I give a brief description of the position of the study of textual relations in the Qur'ān when this study commenced. I do so through a historical overview and critical discussion of previous works and the growing interest in the subject in recent years.

In the second chapter I outline the theoretical framework adopted in the study. This is *Relevance Theory*, which discusses textual relations from a pragmatic/linguistic viewpoint. The chapter focuses on the role of context in understanding textual relations and sheds light on the applications and implications of the pragmatic principles used in the analysis and explanation of problematic aspects of the meaning of the Qur'ān.

In the third chapter, I apply the assumptions and principles mapped out in the first chapter to one of the medium length *sūras*, whose textual relations are considered highly problematic, showing that there are a number of linguistic items which indicate textual relations within the *sūra*, and that the structure of information is explicable in the light of the contribution of those items to the meanings of the information conveyed by various verses.

In the Fourth chapter too I also analyze a Qur'anic *sūra*, this time a shorter one. The discussion of the *sūra*'s meaning is focused on other aspects of textual relations, but is still governed by the same principles. It reveals a different linguistic phenomenon. and widens our view of the role of the elements discussed in Chapter Two in determining not only textual relations but also the meanings that are indicated to recipients by constraining them to view relations in one particular way rather than other possible ways.

The final chapter is a concluding chapter, in which I round off the findings of the analysis, and highlight the impact of this approach both on further research in Qur'anic textual relations and on the study of *tafsīr* in general.

Notes on Terminology

By the expression 'textual relations' I refer to relations that hold together the variety of topics within one *sūra*, in most cases raising the major question as to why those topics are parts of one particular unit of the Qur'ān, which, as will be seen in the theoretical background, are to do with the pragmatics rather than the linguistics form of the text. Another relevant question is that of the relations existing between the different *sūras*, but this does not fall within the range of the present study. My only concern in this research is relations between different and seemingly unrelated topics that occur in the one *sūra*³.

There are a number of linguistic terms frequently used throughout the text but not all of them are familiar to the field of Qur'anic studies or *tafsīr*.

The terms 'text' and 'discourse' are used interchangeably throughout the text, although the latter may have some non-linguistic connotations with reference to social and political contexts. I use the terms 'utterance' and 'sentence' interchangeably as well. However, unlike the term 'sentence', an 'utterance' may consist of one or more grammatical sentences and may be a verse that consists of a number of grammatical sentences. I therefore use the term 'grammatical sentence' when the emphasis is strictly on the linguistic unit known in grammar as the 'sentence'. The term 'the proposition expressed' does not mean the actual sentence that has been uttered but the explicit meaning of it. The term 'information' refers to the content of an utterance regardless of the type of content i.e. whether it is a fact or an assumption by the speaker, whereas the 'meaning conveyed' may include both the explicit and implicit meaning that has been, or is to be recovered from an utterance and is more relevant on the side of the recipient. The term 'assumptions' is used in the same sense in which it is used in the theoretical framework adopted in this study, that is 'thoughts treated by recipients as representations of the actual world', and can be an input or an output of the communication process.

The term 'communication' does not necessarily imply a non-literary form of communication; it is used in the general sense in reference to exchange of thoughts. An assumption could be communicated through any linguistic form, whether literary

³ Notice that this phenomenon is observed in the overwhelming majority of the Qur'anic *sūras* to such an extent that there has been much debate among Western and Muslim scholars as to whether or not all the verses of one *sūra* are rightly parts of it. I will shed light on this debate in a later section.

or ordinary day-to-day talk. Generally, I have used communication with reference to verbal communication, unless otherwise indicated.

Finally the Islamic terms 'verse' and '*sūra*' are used in their usual sense, although other divisions, such as section, subsection and paragraph are used in their conventional English sense, and the reasons for the divisions are discussed in depth wherever relevant.

Other than these general terms, a number of technical terms are used in the analysis, but only after they have been theoretically defined in terms of their implications on understanding textual relations in the Qur'ān. Hence there appears to be no particular need to introduce them here.

Choice of Examples

Choice of examples in this research is random and representative. In the second chapter where I discuss the theoretical framework, I demonstrate particular points by using examples from the ordinary use of spoken language to stress the general occurrence of a phenomenon, and from literature to show that the same principles used in explaining the meaning of ordinary day-to-day language are capable of explaining the communicative aspects of literary language. I finally use examples chosen randomly from across the Qur'anic text to show how the application of the theory offers a convincing explanation of many Qur'anic verses, and, moreover, remove the general confusion involving textual relations in the text.

In the third and fourth chapters, I take two complete *sūras* that are also chosen randomly but were representative of the long multiple-theme Qur'anic texts. The two chosen *sūras* represent a majority of the long *sūras* in many aspects. The first, *al-Aḥzāb* (33), represents the Madinan *sūras*, most of which are long, containing various topics and posing many complicated problems of textual relations. The second is *al-Qiyāmah* (75), a Meccan *sūra*, representing the group of relatively long *sūras* among the generally shorter Meccan revelations, which pose fewer coherence problems since they contain fewer topics, although even within its limited variety of topics, a fine relation could be detected or interpreted. However, within both *sūras*, we often find a verse or more whose relation to the general theme of the *sūra* is problematic. Generally speaking, the two *sūras* are of manageable size, but at the same time

represent their groups, as well as covering the most central and controversial topics dealt with at the periods during which they were revealed (i.e. the relation between the debating parties in Medina and their struggle over spiritual and political power, in the case of *al-Aḥzāb* and the central issue of faith and resurrection, as well as the authenticity of the revelations, in the case of *al-Qiyāmah*).

The choice of the two *sūras* not only aims to represent the various textual problems relating to Meccan and Madinan *sūras*, but more importantly, to cover a variety of phenomena related to textual relations and examine how the text varies in the expression of those relations.

Source of Qur'anic Text and Translation

Quotations from the Qur'ān and verse numbering are from the Egyptian edition. Muḥammad Asad's translation is the main source for English translation of the text. However, I have made some changes where I believe his translation is not the most appropriate to the meaning of the Arabic text. I have also, in many cases, removed his additions of words, mostly cohesive ties, which he often uses between square brackets, because firstly, they reflect his own understanding of what is being implied, and secondly, because the particular purpose of this study requires seeing the text as it is and discussing the way in which relations are expressed, both implicitly and explicitly, and maintaining his clarifications would have prevented proper analysis of the phenomenon in question.

When, for the purpose of the discussion, I have relied on any other translation of the Qur'ān (to discuss different understandings of the meaning, for example), I have clearly indicated the reference either in the text or the footnotes.

Relevant and Irrelevant Discussions

The complexity of the topic and the sensitivity of the text studied, brings to the field of the discussion a number of related issues, which, although I acknowledge that they are relevant to the topic, I refrain from discussing as part of this thesis, since they do not fall within the domain of the question that the thesis is investigating. Following is a brief list of the most relevant among these issues, and where this work stands in regard to them.

1. The Origin and History of the Qur'anic Text

In both Western and Islamic scholarship, a vast literature has been written on the origin of the Qur'anic text and the history of its documentation. The main problematic issue is whether or not the Qur'ān as known to us nowadays has been preserved exactly as it was first revealed. Muslims have a detailed account of the history of the writing down of the text, which establishes that it is the case that the Qur'ān has been preserved in its very first form. Reliability of this account, however, is a questionable matter to non-Muslim scholars who often consider that the Qur'anic text is to a large extent incoherent and that this lack of coherence must be a result of differences between its first oral form and its later documented one. Most literature on Qur'anic history, language or style devotes sections to discussing this issue, which is considered a key issue to authors' general approaches to the text.

As far as this study is concerned this issue is of very little relevance. The study focuses on the text of the Qur'ān as it exists regardless of what its origin is. The main reason for this choice is the fact that regardless of whatever problems the history of the development of the text involves, it does not change the fact that the text, as it stands, is the text that has been practiced, accepted, related and recited by Muslims across the world since the seventh century, from which Muslims derive their legal system and the vast majority of their customs and traditions, and on which their worship and spirituality are based. This is also the text that has been translated into Latin and European languages since as early as the 12th century, and which, since then, has been subject to Western textual and religious studies, and to criticism on the basis not only of its history, but also of its content and style.

If the studies of the Qur'ān in English language divide into two major streams, historical and textual studies, the present work belongs to the second. Its approach to the text is pragmatic in the sense that it prefers to deal with those aspects of our understanding of the text that could be changed and whose change can have an influence on both Muslim and non-Muslim awareness of the text.

Hence, the question of this research is not one that relates to the history of the text, which cannot be changed anyhow, but rather to the present and future understanding of it. It relates to the present because it tries to understand the system governing textual relations of the Qur'ān and explore new aspects of those relations that have not previously been uncovered, and it relates to the future because in achieving the above

task, its ambition is to provide a more systematic and reliable tool for further investigation within this system of relations, and for future interpretation that would be based on that new understanding.

Perhaps the findings of such a study may have implications for the historical issue, since they may provide new data relating to the old assumption that the Qur'anic text is incoherent and the conclusion drawn by some, that it is clumsily edited. However, even if it does so this is not its main aim. Its aim, as I have mentioned above, is to propose and explore a more enlightened understanding of the system of relations holding between the various topics of the multiple-theme *sūras*.

This is thus a study in the language of the text and the way in which it is used to express textual relations. It is, however, not a rhetorical or literary study or a study of *i'jāz*. It looks at the language from a communicative viewpoint and deals with the text mainly as an act of verbal communication.

In taking this stand, it does not imply that the literary aspects of the Qur'ān are of less significance, but it delimits the scale of the research.

The implication this has on the approach, however, is that literary style, figures of speech etc. are dealt with from a pragmatic rather than a rhetorical or esthetic point of view, which means that the literary value of the Qur'anic expression is deliberately overlooked in favour of the communicative value of what is being expressed. Therefore, an expression like '*wa iltaffat al-sāqu bi al-sāq*' (Q. 75:29) is not discussed with regard to the art of the metaphor that it consists of, but rather with regard to the meaning of the metaphor and the way the expression contributes to the message of the paragraph and the *sūra* in which it occurs.

Consequently, such an approach does not aim at reaching a value-based judgment of the text, but tries instead to explain how linguistic expressions are used in the production of meaning. When an expression is ambiguous but the matter of its ambiguity is irrelevant to the discussion of textual relations, I choose what I think is the most appropriate explanation from *tafsīr* and take that for granted, in order to keep the discussion focused on the major points. The same method is followed when an expression is implicit but does not affect the aspect of relations being discussed. Reference to this method is made where appropriate, in order to avoid confusion.

2. The Role of Orality in the Text's Style and Structure

It has become commonly recognized in modern Qur'anic studies that the Qur'ān is basically an oral text, a fact which is well established through the history of the text as well as recent studies of its style and the nature of the acts of worship in which it is used.

It is also generally agreed that, in spite of many common characteristics, oral texts differ from written texts in many ways. For the study of Qur'anic textual relations this will mean that perhaps a major part of the phenomenon is due to the fact that those relations hold between parts of a text that is used orally. This is another fact that I would like to recognize in the beginning of this research, and to make clear that the focus of this research does not include any orality-literacy study. The fact that the text is originally an oral one and that the text's language is part of a generally oral text culture may have caused, or played a part in causing, textual relations to be expressed in a certain way rather than other possible ways. However, given that the focus of this study is the state of the language in the text, reasons are left for further research, and all the discussion is devoted to the how rather than the why⁴.

3. Application of Modern Linguistic Theory to the Divine Text

Application of modern linguistics to literary texts from different languages is not new in the field of the humanities. Stylists and structuralists have been making use of linguistic theory in descriptive studies of literature for decades. But when a study attempts to apply a modern and foreign theory to explain a divine text such as the Qur'ān, to many it is another matter. The question that rises persistently in this context, especially on the Muslim side of the discussion, is whether or not such an exercise is appropriate and necessary?

The necessity of the exercise is self-evident because of the nature of the problem. Since the Qur'ān is a text that mainly aims at communicating a certain message to humanity, and expresses this message in a verbal form, it is a text that needs every possible effort to explain it. Any method used to achieve a better understanding of the text should be legitimate, as long as it adheres to the principles of scientific research. On that basis, the present study is not novel, since there have been innumerable

attempts throughout the history of Islam to explain the meaning of the Qur'ān from a new viewpoint, many of which leaned towards a linguistic approach (for example, many *tafsīrs* relied on the findings of Arabic grammar, both of Kūfa and of Baṣra, in explaining the complexity of some unusual grammatical constructions in the Qur'ān)⁵.

A methodology that is based on the findings of the theory of verbal communication is most appropriate in this context, since the subject is a text that is communicated to humans, and hence it is only reasonable to apply principles of human communication in explaining it. The objection that Western methodology is, after all, a non-Muslim methodology, which is a point brought to my personal attention by a number of figures in modern Islamic thought, is completely invalid. The Qur'ān was revealed among non-Muslims, and never claimed it was 'only for Muslims'. A non-Muslim theory examining the Qur'ān is no different from a Muslim one, as long as they both analyze utterance the way early Muslim commentators did when they applied rhetoric and grammar and even used 'non-Muslim' poetry in explaining certain Qur'anic words (e.g. it is very well-known that Ibn 'Abbās used to explain ambiguous Qur'anic vocabulary by reference to pre-Islamic poetry)⁶. Finally, and for my particular purpose, the use of modern linguistics in understanding the text's meaning, inherently means that I am not attempting to arrive at a value-based judgment as to whether or not the text is adequate. If anything, it is rather challenging the view that the text has to be coherent in the conventional sense in order to possess textuality or to achieve successful communication.

⁴ A useful reading on oral nature of the Qur'ān is the article entitled: 'Qur'an as a spoken word: an Islamic contribution to the understanding of scripture' by William A. Graham in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. Richard C. Martin, Oneworld, Oxford, 1985, 2001.

⁵ An example of such commentaries is: *al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyyah bi Tawdīḥ Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, by Sulaymān ibn 'Umar al-Jamāl, and *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* by Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusy.

⁶ See for example, 'A'isha 'Abdul -Raḥmān, *Sharḥ Masā'il ibn al-Azraq*, Dār al- Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1986.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Introduction

Although much literature has been produced during the twentieth century, partly in response to modern linguistic theories, the study of text relations in the Qur'ān actually dates back to a relatively early stage in the history of Qur'anic studies. The earliest published exegesis (*tafsīr*) known to have paid special attention to this aspect of the meaning of the Qur'anic text is the *tafsīr* of al-Fakhr al-Rāzī (d.604h).

A reference definition of the early exegetes' understanding of these relations attributes the relation between two successive verses to:

A meaning that links them together, which could be general or specific, intellectual, sensuous or imaginative, or other types of relationship. It could be that two things are mentally associated such as cause and effect, reason and consequence or analogous and opposite entities. Or, it could be a propositional concomitance such as that connecting subject to predicates.¹

This definition encompasses physical and non-physical relations, and it covers both inter-verse and inter-sentence relations.

In the present research, only the relations between verses, when they represent separate sentences, concern us. These types of relations are part of the study of linguistic coherence and cohesion, as defined by Halliday and Hassan in their pioneering study of linguistic cohesion². This excludes grammatical relations within single sentences, which fall into a different domain of research.

Scholars whose view of text relations in the Qur'ān is summarized by the definition above, agree that a great deal of the meaning of the Qur'ān lies in the arrangement of verses, i.e. meaning is expressed through this particular order of verses.

¹ Al-Zarkashy, Badr al-Dīn. *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Dār al-Turāth, Cairo, n.d., vol. 1, pp. 39-52.

² M. A. K. Halliday & Ruqaiya Hassan, *Cohesion in English*, Longman, London, 1976.

However, not all Qur'anic exegetes agreed that relations should be sought between Qur'anic verses, not even between successive verses within one *sūra*.

The main argument use by those who held this view is that:

Coherence should only be expected in a unified text whose beginning connects to the end. Otherwise, if it [the text] has more than one purpose, coherence is not a necessity. In the case of the Qur'ān this is impossible as it was revealed over more than twenty years touching upon various matters for various reasons. Such a text could not possibly possess coherence.³

But it seems difficult to find many scholars, in that period of Islamic scholarship, who support this view. The main ground for the rejection of this argument was that, although the Qur'ān was revealed piecemeal, it was meant to be in the form of *sūras* each of which is arranged in accordance with the Prophet's instructions, and that it was the Prophet's will to arrange the verses the way they are and not according to chronological considerations. This is a strongly founded argument based on historical evidence. Hence it was concluded that this form and order of the text expresses the intended meaning of the Qur'ān, regardless of the times and occasions of revelation.

The current chapter is a brief historical introduction, in which I intend to examine the most influential works previously done on coherence of the Qur'ān, and discuss what text relations in the Qur'ān meant to the writers of those works, and their methods of analysis. There are three different types of works on the subject:

1. Theoretical works in the Qur'anic studies literature, which describe the way interpreters and commentators deal with the issue.
2. Qur'anic commentaries which enumerate relations between verses as part of their explanation of meanings.
3. Modern works, which are, to a certain extent, a production of a

³ This argument was quoted by al-Zarkashy (d. 794h) expressing the view of al-'Izz ibn 'Abd al-Salām (d. 660h).

different culture and hence differ from the first two types in some major points.

The first of these three types actually come at a later historical stage than the second because of the nature of Islamic scholarship which was established through works aiming to increase understanding of the Qur'ān and to make it more accessible to its recipients. Scholars began to comment on the Qur'ān as part of teaching it to their students and so various fields of Qur'anic studies commenced from explanations and discussions in study circles. After a few centuries of interpretation and commentary on the Qur'ān with discussions of controversial issues, among which were the history of how it was written down and its coherence, scholars attempted to describe theoretically the works of former Qur'anic scholars towards the 8th century AH. The first of these books was *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* by Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashy, whose method subsequently became a model for Qur'anic studies text books. Accordingly, it could be said that applied works in Islamic studies in many cases preceded the theoretical ones.

In this review, I shall start by examining what the theoretical approach provides us with and follow with the applications of *tafsīr* literature selecting two master commentaries on the Qur'ān as representatives of the text relations approach in *tafsīr*. Following the discussion of the contributions of those earlier works, I shall speak of modern writers and the change they made to the study of coherence, or text relations in the Qur'ān, which will leave us at the point where the present research begins.

1.The notion of Textual Relations in Qur'anic Studies Text Books

In this section I shall take the work of Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashy as representative of the view of the majority of scholars regarding relations between verses within a *sūra*. Zarkashy's work is known for the authenticity and comprehensive coverage of the subject and is therefore a prime source with

wide authority in the field of Qur'anic studies. Hence my choice of his chapter on verse relationships to represent early Muslim scholars' view of the subject.

1.1 Definition and Classification by Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashy

The definition and domain of the notion of coherence in the Qur'ān could be sought under the title: *al-Munāsabah bayna Āy al- Qur'ān* or *Munāsabāt al-Āy* in the text books of Qur'anic studies (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*), such as *al-Burhān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by al-Zarkashy and the like. This title is based on the term used by Qur'anic scholars to refer to the relations that connect verses of the Qur'ān. Scholars seek those relations at two main levels: first, an inter-verse level i.e. between verses of each *sūra* and secondly, an inter-*sūra* level, i.e. between consecutive *sūras* and throughout the Qur'ān as a book. In the present research, I am only concerned with the first.

The term *munāsabah* is taken from the Arabic homonymic word for occasion, relation, concordance or relevance. Zarkashy introduces the concept of text relations in the Qur'ān and highlights the important role of understanding them in understanding meanings of the text:

He distinguishes two different types of relations:

(a) when coherence and cohesion are “clear enough, since parts of the speech are tied to one another so that the meaning cannot be considered complete from the first part only”. When this is the case, relations are “obvious” and so need not be discussed.

(b) when “connectedness is not apparent, and it seems that, superficially, each sentence is independent of the following one”. Zarkashy devotes his chapter on text relations in the Qur'ān to the analysis of the second type, from a grammatical/meaning point of view, and does not mention the first type any further. Thus, it could be concluded, that the study of relations between verses at that historical stage was directed towards the discussion of ambiguous and controversial relations rather than the analysis of clear and explicit ones.

However, this is not to say that only the underlying coherence relations were within the scope of the research. A skim through Zarkashy's examples of type

(b) shows that he discussed both coherence and cohesion relations, without introducing a clear-cut definition of the difference between the two notions. Under the same type of relations Zarkashy studied numerous cases each of which he considered to be a separate category, probably because of their widely spread occurrence throughout the Qur'ān. These categories were:

1. Sentences connected by the conjunction *and* (*wāw*):

(a) Sentences connected by virtue of the ambiguous conjunction *and* (*wāw*) whose relations could be explained in terms of elaboration, affirmation, contrast or “subjects which tend to follow each other, as a speech habit, of this particular text.”⁴ Notably, the first three explanations are of a different kind from the last one. The earlier are explanatory analytical relations whereas the latter is of a descriptive nature, which does not explain the relation but is content to make observations of the textual preferences of the book under question.

(b) Sentences connected by virtue of the ambiguous connective *and* (*wāw*) whose “relations are still puzzling and hence need to be explained.”⁵ In his explanation of these types of relations, Zarkashy relies mainly on providing contextual information which somehow fills in the gaps of what is not made explicit in the text i.e. by answering relevant questions which the verse analysed does not answer, because it is concerned with another point, he meets the reader’s need for particular information which is necessary for the process of comprehension.

However, he does not make clear the sources of his contextual additions or the rules governing his choice and his use of this contextual information. On many occasions, the explanations he makes depend merely on his intuitive assumptions of what the relation could be, and so he provides contextual *interpretations*, albeit based on his knowledge of Islamic fundamentals, rather

⁴ Zarkashy, *Burhān*, vol. 1, p. 40.

⁵ *Ibid.*

than *information*⁶.

In addition to contextual assumptions which are provided to fill in the comprehension gaps, Zarkashy assigns stylistic and rhetorical functions to verses whose relations are hard to explain at the explicit level. He may assume that a verse or even a section functions as a parenthesis or a parable or even an intended subject-shift, *takhalluṣ*⁷.

2. Sentences which are not connected by a conjunction but where there is some kind of “support or evidence” indicating continuity of the speech. In such cases the relation is “abstract or implicit”. This type, Zarkashy remarks, is complementary to the first type, where the connection is physical. He points out three situations in which the connection is to be implied.

(a) when the intention is to draw the recipient’s attention to the similarity of some apparently different situations, persons or human actions⁸.

(b) when the intention is to highlight a case of contrast between some, seemingly, unrelated persons or things. Or, if it is meant to bring up the contrast between a subject and another one in order to enhance the recipient’s understanding of the earlier. (e.g. patterns of behaviour of non-believers as opposed to that of believers, the fate of each of these two groups. etc.)

(c) parenthesis, which often occurs in long Arabic texts, in order to raise a sub-point that is not central to the major subject but is of equal importance.

In the course of discussing his examples, Zarkashy relies essentially on the method of providing contextual assumptions as a basis for his interpretation. Such assumptions may be derived or concluded from verses occurring in different places of the Qur’ān, or may be based on historical events or

⁶ For instance see his use of contextual information in interpreting the ambiguous relation of sentences of verse 2:189, *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

⁷ For instance, see his interpretation of v. 189 *sūra* 2, *Ibid.*

⁸ For instance, see his interpretation of the relation of vv. 4 -5 *sūra* 7, *Ibid.*, p. 47.

principles of Islam or the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad.

Finally, Zarkashy draws a link between this study of linguistic and non-linguistic connectedness, and another phenomenon, which relates to both grammar and stylistics i.e. when explicit linguistic connectives seem to link some parts of the text that are actually unrelated. It is then, according to Zarkashy, a question of grammatical order and reference to determine the meaning and the appropriateness of that interpretation⁹.

In sum, Zarkashy classifies text relations within the Qur'anic *sūras*, and provides detailed discussion of numerous examples. However, it does not seem that he is concerned with providing any further theoretical definitions, or with referring to philosophical backgrounds of his analysis.

In this, Zarkashy's work does not differ from the early *tafsīr* literature in general since those works were devoted to providing explanations and clarifications for the puzzling parts of the Qur'ān, without raising any theoretical debates regarding methodology. In that historical period, *tafsīr* was, in the first place, an applied field of Qur'anic studies, as a result of which the question of methodology was left unanswered until later times, when Qur'anic scholars attempted to study the early *tafsīr* literature, discuss its features and detect the underlying theoretical conventions of the first exegetes.

In the case of the present research, the unanswered question is that of the principles and mechanisms adopted in analysing coherence and cohesion relations in the way that Zarkashy did. Nevertheless, there are a number of sources which seem to have contributed to his work. It is apparent that the tools he used in analysing his examples were derived from three theoretical fields of study in his time. Firstly, Arabic grammar that provides a large number of articulated rules for explicitness and implicitness of particles and connectives and their impact on the production of meaning. Secondly, the study of meaning, *‘ilm al-ma‘āny*, which is a branch of Arabic rhetoric. This provided Zarkashy with the main source for his explanation of both his linguistic and non-

⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

linguistic relations in terms of categorical relations such as elaboration, affirmation, contrast, etc. Finally, and most importantly, some *tafsīr* principles which emphasise that the role of different parts of the Qur'ān is to support the understanding of the meaning of one another. Accordingly, contextual information should be sought first within the text, and then within its complementary text i.e. *Sunnah* literature.¹⁰

Throughout his work, Zarkashy aimed at showing how important understanding the inter-verse relations is to understanding the Qur'anic meaning. However, for the purpose of the book in question, he did not attempt to deal with one complete *sūra* to show its relations. He relied on selected examples whose analysis helped in illustrating his main point, that is, in highlighting both the general importance of inter-verse relations as a vital aspect of the meaning and in classifying those relations grammatically in terms of explicitness and implicitness of connectives.

Other scholars, however, attempted the production of complete *munāsabah*-based exegeses of the Qur'ān. In the following section of this historical review, I shall examine the contribution of two major *tafsīrs* known to have adopted the search for text relations as a principle framework. These are, *tafsīr Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb* by al-Fakhr al-Rāzy (d.604h) and *al-Burhān fī Munāsabāt al-Qur'ān* by Burhān al-Dīn ibn 'Umar al-Biqā'y (d.885h).

2. *Munāsabah* throughout the Qur'ān in Early *Tafsīr* Literature

2.1 *Tafsīr Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb* by al-Fakhr al-Rāzy¹¹

In an earlier stage of the history of *tafsīr* literature, al-Fakhr al-Rāzy produced his monumental comprehensive *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān, in which he carefully counted relations between successive verses of the Qur'ān. Although his long introduction accounts for a whole volume out of the 32 volumes of his book, it

¹⁰ For a detailed study of the explanatory context of the Qur'ān, see: El-Awa S., *al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir fī al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Shurūq, Cairo, 1998, pp. 62-93.

¹¹ Al-Rāzy, Fakhr al-Dīn, *Tafsīr Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb*, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 1981.

does not contain a clear definition of Rāzy's view of *munāsabah* nor does it introduce the theoretical grounds for his analysis of verses with regard to their relations or their order. If the absence of such grounds could be considered as an indication of any kind, it does indicate the fact that until the time of Rāzy the approach of Qur'anic exegetes to the linguistic aspect of *munāsabah* was still in the development stage as shown by their intuitive employment of the idea rather than following a clear framework which guided their analysis. One reason for this could be that, at the time, the study of text relations was part of grammar and rhetoric, and although both disciplines were utilised by the exegetes as part of their work in illustrating the meanings of the Qur'ān there was no intention of developing either of the tools to be part of an independent systematic framework for the study of text relations in Qur'anic *sūras*. Adding to this the earlier observation on the development of the theoretical study of the Qur'anic meaning at a later stage than the applied aspect of it, it becomes possible to conclude that the theoretical side of the issue of textual relations was only dealt with later when scholars like Zarkashy embarked on establishing the study of the essential tools of exegesis, '*ulūm al-Qur'ān*', based on re-reading the works of exegetes.

Nevertheless, one can make a number of observations on Rāzy's approach to text relations by reading through the lines of his rich and consistent observations on *munāsabāt*. Firstly, the *munāsabah* of each verse to the following is sought independently of his explanation of the previous verses. As a result, one ends up having a string of linear relations many of which do not explain the relation of the verse to the whole *sūra* but merely to the preceding verse. Perhaps, this result led Mustansir Mir¹² to conclude that the term *munāsabah* refers to something different from *naẓm* and that where the former expresses a linear connection between verses the latter refers to coherence

¹² See: Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān*, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, 1986, p.17.

relations in particular¹³. In fact, the term *munāsabah* was the closest available to our modern concept of coherence, whereas *naẓm* denotes a completely different concept, that is a rhetorical concept of the well-formedness of a grammatical sentence with regard to the meaning it expresses.

Thus, it seems that the dominating understanding of text relations, at the time, was a linear one, where attention was not paid to the fact that parts of the whole text cohere to form an integrated structure, but rather was directed towards the explanation of reasons why each verse is placed where it is in relation to the following and the preceding verse only. Coherence as we understand it in our modern context does not seem to have been in question at the time. Secondly, Rāzy used various terms to refer to those relations. Words like *munāsabah*, *ta'alluq* (connection, dependence or relationship) and *wajhu al-naẓm* (the recommended explanation of the sequence), all of which refer to the general concept of relationship between two things, with different connotations. In other cases he would not introduce his interpretation with any of these terms, but with more generalised introductions of the type: "the reason why this follows that is.." or "indicating that", etc. Rāzy, thus, does not seem to have been very keen on consistency in the use of particular terms. Perhaps, fixed terms had not yet been established, and these were only intuitive interpretations based on understanding the language and the cultural context of the text. This seems to confirm the conclusion drawn above, that the establishment of theoretical concepts was achieved at a later time than the sixth century when Rāzy lived. This will be further confirmed by the study of al-Bīqa'y's *tafsīr* which came out in the ninth century.

On the other hand, Rāzy was conscientious in highlighting these relations

¹³ It is worth maintaining a reservation on this conclusion by Mir. That is, *naẓm* was a term used in Arabic rhetoric to refer to the relation of meanings to their propositional expressions, in single sentences not in whole texts. The term implied a judgmental approach to appropriateness and the aesthetics of literature. The notion of coherence in linguistics, however, does not necessarily imply this sort of judgement and it deals with relations of parts of a text to one another rather than judging the appropriateness of an expressed proposition to the meaning it conveys.

although that was not the main object of his *tafsīr*. This shows that, to Rāzy, understanding the relationships of successive parts of the text was an essential part of the whole comprehension process so that he included it in his explanation of almost every verse, paying special attention to the occurrence of major subject switches.

Finally, although Rāzy's discussion and explanations of relationships were apparently less sophisticated than Zarkashy's we encounter the rhetorical and grammatical tools again, along with additions of contextual information in order to derive conclusions about the placement of verses and the subject switches that they express. He explains verse relationships in terms of grammatical connectives, if present, along with categorical rhetorical relations such as elaboration, affirmation, etc. and his explanations are often supported by the provision of contextual assumptions which are usually based on inferences that are made possible only by virtue of referring to other Qur'anic contexts or to Islamic knowledge.

Among the various reasons for which Rāzy's work was appreciated by Qur'anic scholars, were his remarkable explanations of concordance between verses. Consequently, many scholars followed his footsteps and contributed to his views of this aspect of the Qur'anic meanings, with further development and refinement of the same method.

In the following section, I shall discuss the contribution of one of those scholars, whose *tafsīr* was the first written *tafsīr* based only on the search for *munāsabah*.

2.2 Ibrahim al-Biqā'y (d. 885h)¹⁴

As indicated in the title *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-'Ayāt wa al-Suwar* is a *tafsīr* which is entirely devoted to explaining the meanings of the Qur'ān only

¹⁴ Al-Biqā'y, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn 'Umar, *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-'Ayāt wa al-Suwar* ed. 'Abd al-Rāziq al-Mahdy, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1995.

according to what the verse relations tell about those meanings. This 11-volume commentary comes two hundred and fifty years after Rāzy's *tafsīr*, and was also mentioned by the editor of *al-Burhan* by al-Zarkashy as one of the major sources of the study of *munāsabah*. The theory on which this work is based could be simply summarised in its author's argument that meanings of the Qur'ān could not possibly be recovered without understanding the relationships of verses. This itself gives the work special significance among Qur'anic exegeses, as it was the first *tafsīr* to declare this hypothesis to be its adopted approach. Hence, it is committed to consistency in explaining the relationship of each single verse to the following with any exegetical addition to that being an extension of the meaning of that relationship. Notably, in the context of this work, the work of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzy, discussed above, appears to be merely a commentary which keeps track of verse relationships whenever there seems to be difficulty in understanding them e.g. when subject switches suddenly occur, whereas Biqā'y in his *tafsīr* sets out to clarify these relationships.

In the brief introduction to his *tafsīr*, al-Biqā'y makes clear that the reason for studying accordance of successive verses is, in the first place, understanding the order of verses without which it would be impossible to appreciate the "glorious and fabulous meanings that the Qur'ān expresses"¹⁵

Explaining why it is highly important for recipients of the Qur'ān to achieve this kind of understanding of it Biqā'y says, "If one reflects on the connection of each sentence to what it follows, and to what succeeds it but fails to uncover the implicit connections, one will see the text as no more than unconnected discrete themes". However, if one continues to reflect thoroughly and consistently on the meanings and implications, one will eventually be able to appreciate the beauty of them, which is particularly realised by the specific order in which verses are arranged.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.7.

However, surprisingly enough, the author does not guide the reader through his method of analysis with more than the few brief sentences quoted above. Biqā'iy holds the view that no part of the Qur'ān is definitely disconnected or discrete, "not even the final *sūra* of the book, for it has, indeed, a tight relationship to the beginning of the first *sūra*". It is because of this that Biqā'iy takes on the burden of re-interpreting the whole Qur'ān following up the meanings indicated by the order of verses and by what text relations add to other aspects of the meaning.

Despite the limited explanation of methodological grounds, a very similar method to that of al-Rāzy is encountered in reading through this *tafsīr*, that is, relying on contextual information provided elsewhere in the Qur'ān or from its Islamic theological and historical backgrounds, and sometimes it is merely the writer's personal understanding of the verses and their subjects that leads to the interpretation of the textual relations.

Sometimes, both writers come up with almost identical interpretations of the same verse¹⁷ when they bring into the interpretation the same contextual assumptions. However, this is not always the case, obviously due to the different backgrounds and frames of minds of different people, and more particularly, because Rāzy's emphasis on this kind of relation occurs more often at points of subject switches, whereas Biqā'iy puts more or less equal emphasis on every verse.

Given that, and the fact that neither of the commentators provide us with enough theoretical background for the way they work out relationships (*munāsabāt*) it seems that we are brought back to where we left Zarkashy's classifications of the various possible types of relationships between verses. That is, the problem of insufficient explanation of the methodological grounds of the earlier studies of coherence. In the following section, I shall examine a

¹⁷ See for instance their interpretation of the occurrence of the second passage of *sūra* 34, Biqā'iy, *Nazm*, vol. 6, p. 67, Rāzy, *Tafsīr*, vol. 24, pp. 197-198.

number of modern works on the issue, discussing their methods of analysis and their contribution to the problems of this field of study.

3. The Study of Qur'anic Textual Relations in the 20th Century

Introduction

For a number of various reasons, the question of coherence of the Qur'anic chapters had not been addressed until the last century. Many Western, as well as Muslim, scholars contributed to a modern debate around the issue of whether or not the Qur'ān exhibits a coherent structure. For the purposes of the present research this discussion will focus on the most influential works among modern Qur'anic studies literature, especially in terms of their contributions to the theoretical side of the debate. Thus, I intend to take R. Bell's translation of the Qur'ān (1932) and his commentary on it (published in the nineteen eighties) as representative of the traditional Western approach which supported the view that the Qur'ān lacks coherence and hence suggested an alternative order. After examining Bell's method of analysing the Qur'anic *sūras* I will consider Muslim scholars who took a strong stance against this view and whose works were widely known to have altered the dominant approach which had changed little until these works appeared. These are the works of Sayyid Quṭb (d.1966) and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (b.1906)¹⁸. Finally, I will examine the latest Western work on the issue by Neal Robinson and his additions to Iṣlāḥī's account, which in total represents a radical change in the approach to Qur'anic studies that had become dominant by the beginning of the 20th century.

After discussing these works I shall conclude ~~by~~ explaining why I think that there remains a vast gap in this area of study, and hence the need for the present research.

3.1 Richard Bell's Translation of the Qur'ān

The difficulties facing translators of the Qur'ān in the 19th and the 20th centuries have provoked a number of criticisms as well as suggestions for new theories to resolve these difficulties. A number of Western scholars suggested re-ordering the Qur'ān according to various criteria such as chronological order or chronological order within subject¹⁹.

In the introduction to his commentary on the Qur'ān Bell sheds light on these difficulties and the way in which trying to solve them led eventually to the formation of his theory that misplacements occurred during the process of editing the text. Therefore, Bell suggests a reconstruction of the text as a way to mend the so-called mistakes of the editors. He says:

I set myself ...to work through the book, making a translation and keeping notes of difficulties and any tentative solutions at which I arrived..

I aimed always at an independent interpretation, I aimed further at dividing the *Suras* into their component parts; for I was convinced that they consisted of short pieces, and that verses were not to be assumed to be connected simply because they happened to be placed together.²⁰

The "tentative solutions", mentioned in Bell's introduction were built up into a whole theory based on the assumption, which he found very convincing, that alterations and misplacements took place during the process of editing the Qur'ān (in the first century AH) and resulted in what Barth²¹ calls "grammatical unevenness and interruptions of sense" in the Qur'ān. Eventually, and by the time Bell's work reached an end, he considered that the theory of misplacements and the tenet of dividing each *sūra* into small pieces had

¹⁸ Iṣlāḥī's work is not available in English, Therefore I rely on the recently published study of his work by Mustansir Mir.

¹⁹ An example of the chronological order is the famous and most widely accepted, in the western world, Noldeke's re-order of the Qur'ān according to historical data. On the other hand, Bell's approach was a combination of that and unity of subject.

²⁰ R. Bell, *Commentary on the Qur'ān*, Manchester, 1991, vol. 1, p. xix.

²¹ Quoted by Bell, *Ibid.*, p. xx

provided a successful explanation of passages “which had formerly seemed difficult and complicated.”²²

In doing this, Bell has simply ignored the documented history of the writing down of the Qur’ān at a very early stage, immediately after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, in a project whose carefulness and accuracy was studied in detail and documented in the authentic traditions of al-Bukhāry²³. He, also, ignores the major and well-established historical accounts of the completion of the Qur’ān during the Prophet Muḥammad’s life and the comprehensive instructions that he gave to his companions regarding the ordering of the text. The Qur’ān was used regularly in Muslim prayers and rituals in accordance with these instructions for a number of years before the death of the Prophet. All this historical data indicates that the so-called pieces did not “happen to be placed together” according to Bell’s preconception when he attempted the production of his critical arrangement of the Qur’ān. They were, rather, intentionally placed the way they are, composing the complete text of each *sūra*, which is, in turn, a unit of language and meaning as taught and then used by the Prophet Muḥammad who delivered them. In the light of this information, it becomes rather difficult to accept Bell’s preconception as a basis for analysing a text with this history.

Moreover, Bell’s work itself fails to show the merit of his theory. In fact, the number of time he uses the expressions ‘uncertain’ or ‘probably’ in reference to his rearrangements shows that he could not establish any convincing evidence for his suggestions and the work has, finally, received many criticisms from both Western and Muslim scholars.

However, a study of his actual translation raises a methodological problem with which I intend to deal, from a linguistic point of view, in a later chapter of this

²² Ibid.

²³ In his Introduction to *The Qur’ān* (Edinburgh, 1939) Bell criticizes this tradition, a criticism which has been rejected by later research. See: al-Ibyāry, *Ta’rikh al-Qur’ān*. and Isesco, *The Holy Qur’ān*.

study. That is, the division of the text of each *sūra* into parts, assigning a topic to each part and judging the appropriateness of its placement where it stands according to these hypothetical topics. In my discussion of text relations I shall argue that the topic-based method of analysis can be seriously misleading.

One weakness in his argument is that different readers can assign the same passage different topics according to differences in their points of view. Hence, if rearrangements are to follow assigned topics, an infinite number of new versions of the same book could theoretically be produced. Obviously, this has the potential to result in a huge loss of the intended meaning. Secondly, there is more to the meaning indicated by text relations and passages' contents than could be represented by a single topic. This issue will be investigated in further detail in the theoretical linguistic chapter of this research. But for the mere purpose of the current review it is enough to note that, in his re-ordering of the verses of each *sūra*, Bell relied mainly on two hypotheses:

(a) that *sūras* consist of a number of pieces which “happened” to be placed together, a claim which does not stand up against much strong historical evidence.

(b) that these so-called pieces could possibly be moved around in accordance with topics assigned by the translator, a method which I argue to be potentially misleading since a given topic does not appear to be a sufficient determiner of the text's meaning, especially when each passage is taken in isolation from the whole of the text where it belongs.

Therefore, despite the obvious effort that has been put into Bell's “critical re-arrangement” of the *sūras*, it fails to add much to the development of understanding of the text but rather, unfortunately, leads to a deconstruction of its intended linguistic form, an important element of which is the variety of subjects wherever they occur and whose meaning can only be recovered by means of analysing that actual form.

3.2 Sayyid Quṭb and Amīn Iṣlāḥī's Contemporary *Tafsīrs*

As a result of the remarkable increase of emphasis on the issue of coherence in Qur'anic studies, modern exegetes have started in their turn to place more emphasis on inter-verse relationships. In this section, I shall examine the contribution of two of the major Qur'anic scholars of the 20th century each of whom wrote his own *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān in which he added a new perspective to the issue i.e. structural and thematic coherence.

In the work of both writers we can see traces of Mawdūdī's modern Islamic thought and his discussion of the structure and language of the Qur'ān²⁴ as a book of worship, highlighting the difference between this 'genre' and the requirements of other genres, arguing that it should not be expected that the Qur'ān should be written in the same style and structure in which a legal code or a doctoral thesis would be written. Both writers rejected the earlier assumption that the Qur'ān should be arranged in the form of single-subject chapters. Now the reader of the Qur'an can deal with the text as it is, since he need no longer be pre-occupied with the search for details of the same subject in various chapters. Both Quṭb and Iṣlāḥī started their *tafsīr* and their study of verse relations on these grounds. They shared the conviction that each chapter has a "main subject" at its heart and that the various passages or sections of that chapter might touch upon other major themes in order to enhance the reader's understanding of this "main subject". Sayyid Quṭb focussed more on the interpretation itself and hence provided us with less theoretical discussion of what he called *miḥwar*, whereas, Iṣlāḥī, on the other hand, was concerned with establishing a theory that covers not only the *sūras* as separate units, but also the relations between the different *sūras* in pairs and groups.²⁵ In a recent study of Iṣlāḥī's work and the origins of his theory in the thought of his teacher,

²⁴ See: al-Mawdūdī, Abū al-A'la, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān*, ed. Zafar Iṣḥāq Anṣārī, The Islamic Foundation, London, 1988, vol. 1, pp. 7-31.

²⁵ In this research I only look at his suggestions for relations within the one *sūra*.

Ḥamid ad-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Farahi, Mustansir Mir sheds light on the six exegetical principles subscribed to by Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī as the most essential tools for Qur’anic exegetes. Those principles stress the concept of *niḏāam* which is used by Farāhī to refer to the system of coherence in the Qur’ān. He devotes his *tafsīr* to proving that this exists in the way he illustrates throughout the *sūras*. He also introduces the concept of parallels with which he refers to the various fields of Islamic sources for the context of Qur’ān, including *Sunnah* literature, authentic occasions of revelations, as well as the well-documented history of Islam. Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī emphasise that exegetes should make use of these sources to support and enrich understanding of the Qur’anic meaning. Although they explain in detail the importance of the information provided by these sources to understanding the nature and the language of the Qur’ān, they do not seem to have a guideline for the way in which it could be systematically exploited in clarification of meanings. Iṣlāḥī adopts Farāhī’s exegetical principles as grounding to his theory, which is something that Quṭb’s work is not concerned with.

Despite this difference in their approach, i.e. that Quṭb’s main aim is to produce an interpretation of the Qur’ān, although he shows great interest in the relations between verses, whereas Iṣlāḥī is mainly concerned with the establishment of a suggested system of coherence in the Qur’ān, there remain a number of similarities between the works of these two scholars.

In the following, I shall highlight these similarities and show how they eventually led to a real development in the general understanding of text relations in the Qur’ān:

- (a) they both reject the view that the Qur’ān lacks coherence.
- (b) they both conceive of the *sūra* as a unified text whose parts hinge together within a unique structure. This structure has to be studied thoroughly before one could say that the meaning of any particular *sūra*

is completely unfolded.

(c) they both believe that each *sūra* has some sort of a bedrock which underlies its surface and holds together all its constituent passages.

(d) therefore they both direct their readings of each *sūra* towards the discovery of this bedrock phrasing its meaning in various forms.

(e) this phrase could be a sentence or more describing what the interpreter thinks is the main theme of the *sūra* its *miḥwar*, axis, as Quṭb refers to it, or *‘amūd*, pillar, as Iṣlāḥī calls it. Although their phrases differs in many places, they sometimes tend to establish the same theme but with a variety in the level of conciseness as well as applicability.

(f) they both divide each *sūra* into sections/passages of various length which may contain sub-sections.

(g) their analysis of the components and underlying thematic structure of *sūras* covers the entire Qur’ān, for the first time in the history of Qur’anic studies.

But as Mir remarks in his comparison of the two works²⁶, in many places Iṣlāḥī’s *‘amūds* are more concise than Quṭb’s themes and Iṣlāḥī’s work as I mentioned before is concerned with the theoretical aspects of analysing verse relations. Although these two works offer the first systematic analysis in their field of a sequence of relations within parts of a *sūra*, they both leave their readers with a puzzling methodological question i.e. at the stage of deciding the *‘amūd* or underlying theme of a *sūra*, what is the tool used for discovering that theme? In fact, apart from the six exegetical principles, which do not cover this question, the only suggested method for determining the *miḥwar* or *‘amūd* of a *sūra* is “reading thoroughly”, “deep reflection” and “several thoughtful readings”. Again, this leaves us with a countless number of possible suggestions for as long as new attempts are made. There certainly would be

common elements, such as the content of the *sūras* themselves, but this is not enough for complete understanding especially when the relation between two passages is ambiguous, as seen in Zarkashy's categories.

In sum, the significance of the works of Quṭb and Iṣlāḥī on inter-verse relationships lies in their introduction of a plausible solution for the problem, which is based on a theory developed through studying the text's content and structure. However, the lack of technical explanation of their methods of analysis suggests that there still is a great need for further theoretical work in order to establish a framework for working out verse relationships, without leaving the interpretation to the intuitive understanding and personal knowledge and experience of the interpreter.

3.3 Discovering the Qur'ān by Neal Robinson²⁷

This book is the latest study of coherence in the Qur'ān. It was published in 1996, and covers a number of the most controversial issues in Qur'anic studies, among which the issue of inter-verse relations has, naturally, occupied a great deal of space. Robinson's study of text relations in the Qur'ān adds to the field a number of modern aspects which have not been part of any of the previous major works. His study of the dynamics of Qur'anic discourse, the system of pronoun reference in it and the sound/meaning relations has added the perspective of modern structuralistic analysis of literature to the traditional aspects of thematic coherence demonstrated above. The actual study of coherence within the unit of the *sūra* comes as a part of his study of the structure of the Meccan and then Medinan *sūras*. This division into Meccan and Medinan *sūras*, although it belongs to the historical approach to the study of Qur'anic issues, is, as reflected in Robinson's work, a result of his observations on the difference in structure between the two types of *sūras*. He

²⁶ Mir, *Coherence*, p. 64.

²⁷ N. Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'ān*, SCM, London, 1996.

analyses the differences between the structural characteristics of both groups, showing mainly that the Medinan *sūras* are more complex in structure than the Meccan, and provides analytical descriptions of their coherence as part of his study of their structure.

Without having to go through the details of the differences between the two kinds of *sūras*, which is not the concern of this review, I shall examine the main features of Robinson's analysis in order to establish his general view of coherence in the Qur'ān and point out the most important aspects of the method which his work contributes to the development of the study of inter-verse relations.

In his study of the structure of both Meccan and Medinan *sūras*, Robinson effectively exploits the linguistic term 'register', which he introduces by its linguistic definition for the first time in Qur'anic studies. He says:

In attempting to give an account of the overall structure of the *sūra*'s I shall make use of the term register... it is employed by linguists to refer to context-dependent linguistic characteristics – either spoken or written, and encompassing any set of choices which are made according to a conscious or unconscious notion of appropriateness to context (vocabulary, syntax, grammar, sound, pitch and so on)²⁸.

Not only does Robinson use the term register in dividing *sūras* into a number of separate registers where the choice of language varies according to each different register, he also carefully studies these variations in their relation to the change of subject content. As part of this, he makes a number of especially useful and detailed observations of discourse connectives and cohesive ties in discussing the role that they play in the production of the integrated unit of a *sūra* within his description of the thematic coherence relations of the parts of various *sūras*²⁹.

In the latter, he adopts Iṣlāḥī's account as a general framework, especially with

²⁸ Ibid., p. 125.

respect to Medinan *sūras*, but uses his own critical division of the *sūras* whenever his observations of the discourse connectives or his use of contextual information indicates otherwise. He thus combines the descriptive and analytical approaches. For example, he suggests a complete alternative structure for the section division of *sūra* 2, despite his general acceptance of Iṣlāḥī's principles but, within the suggested alternative to Iṣlāḥī's division, he seems to agree with the *'amūd* theory as a basis for understanding the relations between the number of registers contained in the *sūra*. The most important contribution of this work is that he adds to Islahi's reflections whose mechanism is completely ambiguous to the reader, a clear and comprehensible analysis of the indications of grammatical and lexical connectives. This detailed study of coherence and cohesion covers the differences between the use of registers in the Meccan and Medinan *sūras* and uses the names of *sūras* and their relations to the contents of the *sūra* as a label rather than a topic. He pays special attention to the employment of "refrain verse endings" (*fawāṣil al-ʿāy*) to connect various parts of the text, whether consecutive or otherwise, as well as their contribution to the sound coherence of the whole *sūra*. He assigns these a coherence function not only at the musical level or at the verse level, as was done in the traditional *tafsīrs*, but he explains the role they play in dividing sections or in indicating the connectedness or unconnectedness of sections and sub-sections.

In his analysis of the largest *sūra* in the Qur'ān, Robinson enriches Iṣlāḥī's *'amūd* explanation of the unity of the *sūra*'s structure by a large number of linguistic observations of speech connectives indicating relations within and across sections. In this respect, he considers lexical cohesion in its various types, logical as well as categorical relations e.g. contrast, what naturally follows, etc. In the latter, he converges with almost all the previous interpreters who adopted this type of description of relations among their most common

²⁹ See: Ibid., p. 136.

explanations. Also in line with previous works, Robinson adopts the addition of contextual information as a major indicator and explanatory tool for the ambiguous sides of the relations he studies, but he places more emphasis on physical connectivity.

The work of Neal Robinson, as described above, represents a major development in the history of this field of study. Firstly, he considers aspects of coherence and cohesion, which have never before been so effectively and intensively employed in the study of *sūra*'s meanings and verse relations and secondly, and most significantly, he employs a structural/linguistic approach to the Qur'anic text, which has never before been studied using these tools in a work of this size.

He provides a comprehensive study of the Qur'anic use of several formal phenomena such as the mechanisms governing pronoun reference, which solves many of the problems formerly encountered by translators of the Qur'ān.

The explanation of the relations between the sections of the *sūras*, however vague and intuitive it may sometimes be, is always supported by contextual evidence.

He also provides a number of remarks and explanations of some previously problematic Qur'anic phenomena such as titles of *sūras*, references, and the refrains at the ends of verses, which I shall make use of during my analysis of verse relations.

4. The Present Research - Conclusions

In the above discussion of the most influential works among the previous literature on the issue of relations between verses within Qur'anic *sūras* a number of important pointers to the present research were made, and I shall conclude with the following:

1. There is a general agreement among the previous writers that the issue of verse relations in the *sūra* should be addressed by the use of contextual information provided in various Islamic sources. There have been various trials

employing this tool, which sometimes led to the same and sometimes to different conclusions regarding meaning and relations.

2. None of the previous writers, although successfully using this effective tool, has provided us with enough theoretical grounds for its choice or the mechanisms of its employment.

3. It was only recently, in the 20th century, that Qur'anic scholars and exegetes changed the approach to text relations in the Qur'ān from a simple explanation of linear connectivity and logical dependency of verses upon one another, into a more complicated analysis of structural unity.

4. The 20th century exegetes explained the structure of Qur'anic *sūras* in terms of sections and sub-sections which all participate in the establishment of one master idea.

In the light of these conclusions the present research proposes the necessity of a further study targeting the following two tasks and aiming to develop a clearer and more systematic theory for the study of text relations in the Qur'ān, building on the achievements of the previous studies.

4.1 Suggesting and establishing the employment of a more technically defined explanation of the role played by contextual information in explaining text relations, and the way in which it could be employed to achieve this explanation.

4.2 Clarifying the role played by cohesive ties (physical connectives as opposed to implicit relations) as indicators of certain text relations, and examining the Qur'anic exploitation of this linguistic tool.

By following this approach, both in theoretical discussion and in applying the method of analysis to two Qur'anic *sūras* as representative examples, it is hoped to achieve a clearer understanding of the expression of textual relations and their meanings in the Qur'ān.

Chapter 2: Textual Relations in Linguistic/Pragmatic Theory

1.1 Introduction

The field of linguistic studies has two main approaches to the study of text relations. One is known as Coherence Theory and the other as Relevance Theory. The two approaches are pragmatic in that they do not explain text according to its linguistic form alone, but consider also pragmatic (non-linguistic) factors that govern our understanding of the meaning.

A study of coherence relations would be concerned with the formal relations between parts of a text as major and important components of its textuality. In such an approach, the search is for cohesive ties and it is held that they and their employment in the text to a large extent determine its meaning. In contrast to this view, relevance theoreticians see coherence relations and cohesive ties as merely a superficial symptom of something deeper i.e. relevance relations. One major difference between relevance theory and coherence theory is that, as R. Blass points out:

While coherence is a relation between linguistic units (utterances, elements of text), relevance is a relation which is defined not only for utterances, but also for assumptions, i.e. units of information or thought.¹

Coherence relations in the Qur'ān are very ambiguous and have been in question by interpreters from various backgrounds for quite a long time in the history of Qur'anic studies. However, they are not what determines the meaning, nor do they make parts of the discourse related. Cohesive ties do connect parts of the text grammatically, but grammatical connectives have a very limited role in forming the meaning conveyed. In fact it is relevance relations that contribute to one's choice of the interpretation one assigns to relations between utterances. In the following outline of some notions that are central to the two approaches, I will show why this is so.

1.2 Coherence Relations

For Halliday and Hassan, whose book *Cohesion in English* is a landmark in the field,

The concept of cohesion counts for the essential semantic relations whereby any passage of speech or writing is enabled to function as a text.²

That is, for them, the physical expression of the relation between linguistic items is what the analyst is looking for in order to establish textuality as well as the meaning of the text. They take the existence of cohesive ties as a criterion for distinguishing text from non-text. However, the notion of coherence in their work is quite vague and uncertain, and most of their book is devoted to classifying different types of cohesive ties and explaining how they connect segments of discourse together. According to them, categories of cohesion relations are: references to elements inside and outside the text; ellipsis; substitution; conjunction and lexical cohesion (including repetitions). All these categories focus on the existence of linguistic items such as pronouns, substitutes, conjunctions and connectives. It is claimed that without the existence of some of these elements in the text the intended meaning can never be recovered. This account of cohesion succeeds in describing syntactically the role played by cohesive ties in forming the unity of text as a large grammatical unit consisting of physically or grammatically “connected sentences”.

However, many texts that do contain these connecting elements are still ambiguous in terms of what is meant by them, whereas on the other hand there are texts which show a serious lack of such cohesive expressions and yet still make sense to their recipients. For the first case I shall take the Qur’ān as one general example. Anyone who has a fair level of familiarity with this text knows that it cannot be described as lacking cohesive ties. For instance take verse 6 of *sūra* 33, (*al-Aḥzāb*), which has been claimed to lack

¹ R. Blass, *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 72

² Halliday & Hassan, *Cohesion*, p. 13.

coherence with the preceding verses³. The verse contains 4 items of lexical cohesion, 9 reference items, 2 sentence conjunctions and 1 sentence connective, and yet its relation to preceding verses was not clear to some researchers.

An example of the insufficiency of the search for cohesive ties and coherence relations is an utterance often quoted by relevance researchers:

* Trespassers will be prosecuted.

This is a single utterance that is not preceded or followed by any other text and hence there is no co-text with which cohesive ties, if present, would connect. However wherever we see this text we have no difficulty in understanding it, and we do not trespass! This is another kind of text which coherence-based approaches fail to explain.

One can compose a whole list of Qur'anic examples which the coherence-based approach does not explain although they make perfect sense to their readers. Among this list I would include all types of Qur'anic repetitions and the use of the conjunction *wāw* (and) at the beginning of many utterances which appear to be unrelated in content to what precedes them. In the application of principles derived from relevance theory, which I carried out in this study, I have managed to explain some of these examples and uncover the relations of parts of the text and the role they play in indicating these relations. However, this is not to say that a description of cohesive ties is totally unnecessary for text and discourse analysis. Indeed it is ^{not} What the above examples suggest is that merely describing the connectives in a text, although it indicates many aspects of the meaning, is not the only way the meaning can be explained. Cohesive ties direct our understanding of the relations between parts of the text, but do not determine what we understand from the linguistic form that we receive. However, pure observation of those ties can better serve an explanation of the grammatical relations in text than it can the pragmatic ones.

The use of cohesive ties in the Qur'ān has not been described, nor have the relations between different passages within one *sūra* been explained. In the analysis carried out in this work, I make observations of particles/words that

³ See Bell, *The Qur'ān*, vol.1, p. 409.

are acting as cohesive ties but in accordance with the relevance-based explanation of their role as indicators of textual relations rather than carriers of them.

But before I go further into the Qur'anic textual relations, I will outline some of the basic ideas fundamental to Relevance Theory which have particularly influenced my present analysis of the meaning and textual relations within the Qur'anic *sūra*.

1.3 The Meaning of Relevance

Relevance theory suggests that instead of the notion of coherence being the main relation holding parts of text together, what is needed for comprehension is relevance relations. This is defined in terms of contextual effect.

1.3.1 Context and Comprehension

An utterance makes sense to its hearer if, and only if, it has a contextual effect in a context to which the hearer has access. Contextual effect is achieved if the utterance has one or more of the following impacts on the hearer's previously existing contextual assumptions⁴:

- (a) it leads to a contextual implication i.e. interacts with an existing contextual assumption to yield a new assumption/item of information.
- (b) it contradicts an existing contextual assumption and hence weakens or totally negates that assumption.
- (c) it confirms an existing contextual assumption and hence strengthens a belief which is held by the hearer.

In short, a new item of information is relevant if it improves the cognitive environment of its recipients, and the more contextual effects an utterance has the more relevant it is. Those types of contextual effects are called 'contextual implications'.

⁴ As humans, we have cognitive environments in which all types of information are stored. These include lexical information, encyclopedic entries, knowledge of the world around us, etc.. Contextual assumptions are items of information that exist within one's cognitive environment.

Naturally, recipients have millions of assumptions in their cognitive environments from which they pick the assumptions that interact with the new information. But which assumption, out of those millions, is the one needed to achieve some contextual implications and hence relevance?

1.3.2 Choice of Context

The choice of context is constrained by many factors, among which is the accessibility of assumptions, and hence the recipients' search for relevance. By accessibility of assumptions, Sperber & Wilson⁵ mean that recipients need, as a precondition for successful communication, to have access to the assumptions that are needed for processing utterances. In other words, the assumption needed for processing an utterance must exist somewhere within the recipient's cognitive environment. When something is uttered, the recipient is able to construct a context in which the utterance could possibly be understood, by accessing one particular assumption in his/her cognitive environment.

Consider the following exchange adapted from Sperber & Wilson:

Mary and John are looking out of their living room window when Mary points at a building and says:

* Mary: That church is very beautiful.

John (after thinking for a second): Yes, indeed.

It is very possible that John did not realize before that the building was a church. But because the assumption was immediately accessible to him when Mary pointed at the building, and perhaps because it was the only "very beautiful" building that he could see from the window he was able to infer that the building was a church, and thus he could respond positively to Mary's utterance.

But, imagine another scenario where John and Mary look out of the window and are able to see three beautiful buildings, none of which looks particularly like a church. In this case John's response would be different:

* Mary: That church is beautiful.

John: Which church?



Mary: That red brick building in the middle.

John: Oh, yes, I never realized it was a church.

Since there were three big old buildings, and they were standing at such a distance that one could not recognize details very clearly, and since John did not know that there was a church, the assumption needed for successful comprehension of Mary's intended meaning (i.e. that it is the middle building that she was referring to) was NOT accessible to John. Whereas, in the first case, because there was only one building in view although it was far away and John did not previously know that it was a church, therefore he was able to construct the following assumption:

* That building there must be a church.

hence processing Mary's utterance successfully.

However, there are other factors which can make an assumption inaccessible, apart from the existence of too many objects in the scope of attention. The recipient might not have the information needed in his/her encyclopedic entries, or his/her attention might be pre-occupied with other assumptions which are more relevant to him at the time of receiving the utterance.

However, people assume that what they communicate is relevant, provided that they try to make their utterances comprehensible and hence they only speak when they think their recipients have access to the right contextual assumptions needed for processing the utterance being produced.

1.3.3 Balance of Cost and Gain

Now, within the domain of accessible assumptions, there still can be many assumptions related to what is said, any of which can be used. So, which of these will the recipient select?

According to Sperber & Wilson (1986, 1995) hearers pick the contextual assumption whose processing costs them the least possible time and effort. That is, recipients are not willing to put too much effort into processing utterances which do not interact with their cognitive environment, in any of the ways pointed out above, to yield some contextual effect i.e. improve

⁵ Dan Sperber & Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: communication and cognition*, Oxford, 1986.

their representations of the world. Neither are they prepared to spend too much time processing an utterance whose effect on their pre-existing assumptions would not be worth the time spent on processing it, i.e. yield too little contextual effect.

People in general, according to Sperber & Wilson, try to maximize the effect they gain from any information they acquire, but on the other hand they try to minimize the cost in terms of both time and effort. So if two assumptions are available as one is trying to process an utterance, one would naturally try to select the optimum combination of contextual effect and cost. Hearers always try to balance costs and benefit. Thus a person may spend more time processing an item of information if he believes it will have more implications in a context more relevant to him, and vice versa.

On the other side of communication, that is the speaker's side, if communicators wish their communicated thoughts to be processed and their messages understood, they have to produce only relevant utterances (i.e. utterances which will have enough contextual effect given the cost of processing).

1.3.4 Rules of Communication: The Principle of Relevance

As a result of this view, Sperber & Wilson introduce two notions essential for communication, the first of which is optimal relevance. They say that any act of communication is optimally relevant if it "achieves an adequate range of contextual effects for the minimum justifiable processing effort"⁶. According to the concept of optimal relevance they then introduce what they call the *Principle of Relevance* that is:

*Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance.*⁷

Participants in the communication process, according to this view, communicate on the common ground of this principle. For example, ideally, as a communicator, I should produce only the utterances that I think are relevant to my recipients. My recipients in turn assume that I am being

⁶ See: R. Blass, *Relevance Relations*, p. 61.

⁷ Sperber & Wilson, *Relevance*, p. 158.

relevant in everything I say. Therefore, they would safely pick up the contextual assumptions that cost them the minimum of time and effort, considering the amount of contextual effect achieved, and hence would be able to successfully work out the intended meaning. Such an explanation of the process of communication presumes that comprehension is an inferential rather than a decoding process, as Sperber & Wilson emphasize:

No assumption is simply decoded and recovery of any assumption requires an element of inference.⁸

This means that understanding the speaker's intended meaning is not a matter of knowing the semantics and grammar of the sentence uttered, but adding to these the pragmatic elements of context, contextual effect and relevance i.e. inferential processes⁹.

However, sometimes recipients fail to recover the intended meaning for reasons outside the inferential process explained above. One possible reason is that the speaker might not know what the hearer knows, as we have seen earlier when Mary pointed at the church without knowing that John did realize that it was a church. In other situations hearers fail to construct the right context for processing the utterance perhaps because there is information missing from their encyclopedic entries (where many of the contextual assumptions are stored) or the communicator thought something was relevant whereas something else was more relevant to the hearer in the particular circumstances of the exchange. One can find interesting examples of misinterpretations in *tafsīr*, which are the result of the interpreter's lack of access to the contextual information needed for understanding certain verses, or because the more relevant contextual assumptions were less relevant to the interpreter.

1.3.5 Constraints on Relevance and Multiplicity of Interpretation

⁸ Ibid., p. 182.

⁹ In the field of *tafsīr*, if we look at the work of commentators we would easily be able to identify the fact that most of the work is based on inference of the meanings, and relations in the case of the study of *munāṣabah*, by addition of contextual elements. The problem is, that this addition is only done in an intuitive way which depends very much on the cognitive and background sources of the commentator.

But the above are not the only ways through which the communication process can pass. Utterances sometimes have more than one possible meaning and more than one relevant interpretation. Here, there is likely to be ambiguity which would stop recipients from going forward in selecting one of the possible interpretations because they have no criterion according to which they can make their decision in selection. In this case, it is the communicator who has to supply his recipients with constraints on the relevance of his utterance to guide them through their selection from the context. Constraints can be linguistic, either cohesive ties or some other mechanism, or non-linguistic, such as pointing at an object, but in written texts they can only be linguistic. If communicators do not impose constraints, the intended meaning will remain puzzling and each different recipient will be absolutely free in deciding which of the possible interpretations to go for. Because recipients can be so different, the variety of meanings attributed to such unconstrained discourse can, in some cases, be unlimited. Again, different interpretations of the same Qur'anic item can be attributed, in many cases where there are less or no constraints, to the fact that interpreters vary in what is relevant to each one of them.

Cohesive ties are one kind of constraint, as I have just mentioned. For Relevance Theory, this linguistic tool is merely a constraint which indicates to the recipient which way to go in the interpretation. For Coherence Theory, cohesive ties determine the meaning, as they govern coherence relations. But we have seen that this is not the only factor.

However, both types of relations (i.e. coherence and relevance relations) do exist in texts and do influence what we understand from them. Whereas coherence relations do not determine the meaning, cohesive ties do indicate it. On the other hand, relevance relations do govern the inferential process which leads to recovering the meaning of the proposition expressed and they are extremely necessary for achieving the communicator's message.

In the following section, I will touch upon other cases where multiplicity of meaning results from other phenomena than lack of constraints, but where the mechanisms of interpretation would be similar to those employed in interpreting unconstrained utterance and would yield similar results.

1.3.6 Explicature and Implicature

Within this framework, communication of assumptions or information can be either implicit or explicit.

If the explicit content of an utterance has a contextual impact on the recipient's cognitive environment, the effect is called an explicature. (Explicature is the meaning recovered by 'fleshing out' the semantic representations of the utterance i.e. by filling in the gap between the linguistic meaning and the proposition expressed.¹⁰)

If it is the implicit content that has a contextual impact, then it is said that the utterance has an implicature. (Implicature is the meaning recovered from an utterance but which is not achievable until the semantic representations are fleshed out)

In recovering both the explicature and the implicature of an utterance, contextual information is employed and pragmatic principles are applied.

Two utterances can have the same explicature while one of them is more explicit than the other. Consider for example the following two utterances which have the same explicature:¹¹

* It is in this room.

* The meeting is in room 307.

The second utterance is said to be more explicit because less contextually inferred material is relied on in its interpretation.

Thus there are two ways in which an utterance can contribute to the context of another utterance, a) by adding to the explicatures of the previous utterance or b) by adding to the implicatures of the previous utterance.

A paragraph or a section of the long text, may have an explicature that is relevant in the context of other information given in the text, and may have an implicature that is also relevant in that context.

One of the main tasks of the analysis, then, would be to recover the explicatures and implicatures of each section of the text or the propositions

¹⁰ The proposition expressed being what the utterance is taken to mean, after the employment of contextually inferred information.

¹¹ From Diane Blakemore, *Understanding Utterance*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, p. 60.

expressed by a section and their contextual implications for what has been or might be expressed.

In several instances, the text does not provide us with easily accessible implicatures. This can be due to a lack of constraints on the relevance of the item in question, or to the lack of accessible contextual assumptions which the recipient could use as a basis for the inferential process through which he might hope to work out the implicature of the utterance. But what if all the assumptions and the premises available do not provide any affirmation as to what the implicature of an utterance is? In addressing such situations, Sperber and Wilson say:

The indeterminacy of implicatures present no particular formal problem...An utterance with a small range of strongly implicated premises or conclusions strongly encourages the hearer to use some subset of these premises or conclusions, and to regard some subset of them...part of the speaker's beliefs.

An utterance with a wide range of implicated premises or conclusions again encourages the hearer to use some subset of assumptions, and to regard some subset of them...as part of the speaker's beliefs. Clearly, the weaker the implicatures, the less confidence the speaker can have that the particular premises or conclusions he supplies will reflect the speaker's thoughts, and this is where indeterminacy lies.¹²

The immediate result of this case would be a multiplicity of interpretations, either because one recipient could not be sure which of the many possible conclusions to favour and saw a number of them as equally possible, or because different recipients reach different conclusions in their assumptions about the speaker's beliefs.

However, as mentioned before, when a speaker intends to leave no possibility for indeterminacy, he/she constrains the implicatures of the utterance, clearly using discourse connectives etc., in order to ensure that the hearer, and all hearers, reach the same implicatures by using the same contextual assumptions in their interpretation.

An interesting example of this is legal language. The language used in legislation can be so loose that it actually leaves the judgment of a case to individual consideration, but on the other hand, can be so strict that there would be no margin of doubt left for any variety in interpretation. We often hear expressions like reasonable, sensible, etc. in contexts like 'reasonable damage', 'sensible manner', and 'reasonable doubt'. But what is reasonable or sensible and what is unreasonable or insensible? This is the kind of language that is deliberately left unconstrained so that every situation can be judged on its own merit¹³.

We encounter the same type of difference in the level of determinacy of implicature in the language of the Qur'ān. In many contexts where certain details presumably have no impact on the message of the text, or when not making them manifest might yield more effect, they are often overlooked and a loose type of language is used. Sometimes, I would say that this is done so that certain legislation would be applicable in all kinds of circumstances and with any available means¹⁴.

¹² Sperber & Wilson, *Relevance*, p. 200.

¹³ Perhaps the same rules of language choice could be observed in a comparison between the language used in written constitutions and in lower legislation. Whereas the wording of the former is the more flexible because it covers very broad rules, the latter is made more specific because it is restricted to descriptions of very specific situations.

In this respect, the use of language in Qur'anic legislation is mostly like the use of language in forming constitutional law (e.g. political and social laws are generally constitutional as in, for example: (and whose affairs are a matter of counsel) وأمرهم شورى بينهم (Q. 42:38) in reference to the governmental and political system in a state, which leaves the choice open for any type of government whatsoever, as long as it fulfills the broad rule that it has to be based on 'counsel'). In other cases the language is made for lower laws (e.g. family laws such as marriage, divorce and inheritance).

¹⁴ The corresponding Islamic jurisprudential rule for this difference in the use of language is known as (generalizing what is changeable and detailing/restricting what is unchangeable)

إجمال ما يتغير وتفصيل ما لا يتغير

Compare for example the legislation regarding the Islamic way of dress for women with legislation regarding punishment for theft. The expression *jilbāb* that is used for 'gown'

In this respect, explanation of the textual relations between parts of a *sūra* is no different: some parts of *sūras* have weak implicatures and consequently their relation to their immediate linguistic context could very well be uncertain and open to a variety of interpretations. After all, “The aim of communication in general is to increase the mutuality of cognitive environment rather than guarantee an impossible duplication of thoughts”¹⁵.

1.4 Relevance and Textual Relations

In the section above, I have explained a number of pragmatic principles that, according to Relevance Theory, govern the process of understanding between communicators. The examples I gave applied to ordinary day-to-day communicative language. However, this is not the only type of language that this theory is meant to explain since it also has considerable implications for understanding text and literary language.

Out of the large number of works that have been written on Relevance Theory since the first book on the subject was published in 1986¹⁶, only a few works are devoted to the application of this theory to literature¹⁷, and even fewer focus on long texts¹⁸.

This has little to do with the theory itself. In fact the authors of *Relevance* stress the fact that the pragmatic principles used in the interpretation of ordinary language are the same as those used in the interpretation of literary

does not specify the shape, colour or type but only the function, whereas the terms used for the punishment of theft are very restricted and bear no second interpretation.

For further details see: Maḥmūd Shaltūt, *al-Islām ‘Aqīdah wa Sharī‘ah*, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Cairo, 1967, and: Mohamed Selim El-Awa, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ al-Jina‘iyyah*, Dār ‘Ukāz, Riyāḍ, 1980.

¹⁵ Sperber & Wilson, *Relevance*, p. 200.

¹⁶ For a bibliographical survey of the literature on relevance theory, see: Francisco Yus, ‘Relevance: a thematic bibliographical list’, *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 11, 1998, pp. 261-285. And, *Journal of Pragmatics* vol. 30...?? details.

¹⁷ Among those are: Nigel Fabb, *Linguistics and Literature*, Blackwell, Oxford and Massachusetts, 1997 pp. 250-273, and: Seiji Uchida, ‘Text and Relevance’, in Robyn Carston & Seiji Uchida (eds), *Relevance Theory: applications and implications*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia, 1997.

¹⁸ Apart from this thesis, the only work I know of, which is entirely devoted to the application of Relevance to a long literary text is a recent PhD thesis by David Keeble entitled: *Interpretive Representation in Thomas Carlyle’s Chartism: a relevance theoretic analysis*, Lancaster University, 2002.

language, and they have a great deal to say about some rhetorical tools such as irony and metaphor.

In this section, I discuss the possibility of analyzing textual relations in a long text such as the Qur'ān using relevance theory, and the reasons why the same principles of interpretation apply in spite of the difference in nature and function of the text from simple day to day conversations as discussed above. I will show how these principles apply to text as well as to utterance and perform an important role in the establishment of textual relations. Finally, I will outline the plan put forward in this thesis according to which I will be discussing relations of the various topics/themes occurring in two long *sūras* of the Qur'ān.

1.4.1 Literature and Communication¹⁹

Although the main function of literature is arguably aesthetic, it does nevertheless have a communicative aspect to its language. That is to say that while literary language has a different form from that of ordinary language, one of many common elements between the two types of language is the fact that they both communicate messages to the reader/hearer. The fact that the main objective of ordinary language is communication and that this might not be the case in literary language is irrelevant when it comes to analyzing the message conveyed. A message that is transmitted orally and recovered by hearers is still processed inferentially and that process is governed by pragmatic principles. The processes involved in achieving an aesthetic effect may be governed by considerations and principles other than the pragmatic ones involved in interpretation of the communicative effect. However, those which are involved in the latter do not change because of the existence of the former. In other words, a text needs not be either communication or literature since the two effects can take place simultaneously. In fact, while communication may often take place without any accompanying literary effects the vast majority of our linguistic productions (verbal acts) have a content that is communicated, even though communication of this content might not be the primary function of the

¹⁹ The views expressed in this section are partially dependant on Nigel Fabb's explanation of the relation between the study of linguistics and literature in *Linguistics and Literature*.

verbal act, and regardless of any other function it may have. Nigel Fabb elaborates on communication as one of the possible functions of literature, saying:

The production of verbal art or literature can in principle serve any of a wide range of functions, including but not restricted to communication.²⁰

However, it is arguable that communication of meaning, even though it may not be intended, is a necessary outcome of the use of language. Consider for instance the following example from Arabic poetry:

شكالي جملي طول السرى صبر جميل
فكلانا مبتلى

My camel has protested at the length of the journey
“Wait patiently, we are both being tested”

Although the lines contain a metaphor and produce a number of aesthetic effects by means of rhyme and rhythm etc., they still have a meaning that is conveyed by means of linguistic and non-linguistic elements. For example, they inform us that the poet has been traveling for a long time, and that he is tired of this long journey. This is part of the proposition expressed by the lines, although it is not made explicit from the linguistic content of the words.

The linguistic elements of meaning lie in the lexicon and grammar, but the non-linguistic are contextual, and are used in recovering the meaning of the lines. The lines do not say anything about the length of time, but from our knowledge of the world a long journey by camel takes a long time. The poet does not say that he was tired either, but, again, it is in our encyclopedic entry that a camel is an animal and that animals do not talk. It is also by means of inference that we recover the fact that the proposition expressed is mainly about the poet's feelings

rather than his camel's, although the linguistic form of the lines tells us otherwise.

The point of this example, then, is that, along with other functions, literature communicates meaning, and that meaning is recovered according to pragmatic principles. Fabb goes further than simply acknowledging this fact, but explicitly states that the general processes involved in working out literary meaning are more or less the same as those involved in processing any type of verbal behaviour. He remarks:

There is no fundamental difference between the workings of this text [a literary text] and the workings of any kind of verbal behaviour, since most kinds of verbal behaviour are loose in exactly this sense that the literal meaning of the text constitutes partial but not complete evidence for the informative intentions²¹ of the speaker or writer.²²

By looseness Fabb refers to the fact that the linguistic form does not 'strictly' say all that is understood as the proposition expressed, but only provides a part of the evidence used in achieving that proposition while the rest is derived from the context, in accordance with the principle of relevance explained above.

Now, the question that remains is that of the Qur'anic text: is the Qur'ān a communicative text or a literary text? According to the discussion above, whatever the answer to the question, it does not affect the claim that the same pragmatic principles can apply to the interpretation of this text, just as well as to any other text. However, more interestingly, it is

²⁰ Fabb, *Linguistics and Literature*, p. 6.

²¹ '*Informative intentions*' is a term used in Relevance Theory to refer to the speaker's intended meaning. Communicators, according to the theory, have two types of intentions: communicative and informative, the communicative being the intention to communicate something to someone, and the informative having to do with the message that is being communicated. The linguistic form of any utterance is used as evidence of the speaker's informative intention, but it is only part of the evidence actually used by the recipient to recover the message intended (or the 'proposition expressed'), the rest are contextual and are constructed by the recipient according to the pragmatic principle of relevance.

arguable that in spite of its highly literary use of language, the primary function of this text is communicative. It is a text that has been revealed to guide humanity to what the Qur'ān describes as 'the right path', and does so by instructing them thoroughly and repeatedly in the social, moral and legal systems of Islam.

It is primarily a message to mankind, and this function has been emphasized both explicitly and implicitly in a large number of Qur'anic verses (see for example: Q. 2:2).

Thus, in contrast to most other works of literature, the Qur'ān is a communicative text but it has a literary function which itself supports the challenge posed by the Qur'ān to the Arabs of the time, that they should produce something at a similar level of eloquence

"وإن كنتم في ريب مما نزلنا على عبدنا فأتوا بسورة من مثله وادعوا شهداءكم من دون الله إن كنتم صادقين"

(And if you are in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto Our servant [Muḥammad], then produce a *sūra* of the like thereof, and call your witnesses besides God if you were truthful) (Q. 2:23)

This challenge was one way of making the message of the Qur'ān acceptable to many Arabs who would have rejected it if it were in any ordinary form, but would have been more likely to accept it if they realised that it was unique and unlike any classical work of literature even by their greatest poets.

So, let us look at the way in which contextual information is used in interpreting even some of the simplest and least controversial verses of the Qur'ān, part of the Qur'anic story of Moses:

"وقالت لأخته قصيه فبصرت به عن جنب وهم لا يشعرون،
وحررنا عليه المراضع من قبل فقالت هل أدلكم على أهل بيت يكفلونه لكم وهم له ناصحون،
فرددناه إلى أمه كي تقر عينها ولا تحزن.."

(And she said unto his sister: Trace him, so she observed him from afar, and they perceived not.

²² Fabb, *Linguistics and Literature*, p. 252.

And We had forbidden foster mothers for him before, so she said: Shall I show you a family who will rear him for you and take care of him?

So We restored him to his mother that she might be comforted and not grieved...)(Q. 28:11-13)²³

There are many elements that we understand about the story, but not from what has been included in its linguistics. Take for example the pronouns, ('she' in 'she said unto his sister', and 'she' in 'she said shall I show you a family ..') the assignment of reference in these two incidences is an inferential and not a decoding process. Nothing, apart from the assumption that the speaker is being relevant, and the immediate accessibility of the reference to the mother in the first and to the sister in the second, tells us that those are the correct references of the pronouns.

The relation between the last verse, (so We 'restored' him to his mother ...) and the preceding (so she said: shall I show you a family), lies in the fact that the 'family' referred to is Moses' real family but nothing in the text tells us explicitly that this is so. This is a contextual information that we have inferred by going through several other contextual assumptions until we conclude that the family must be his own mother's family, and hence the reference in the following verse to his return to his mother.

In fact, this is an example in which very little contextual information is used to interpret a meaning that otherwise would sound incoherent. As the analysis of further Qur'anic examples in this study will show, a large number of inferential steps may sometimes need to be gone through before a full recovery of the intended meaning is achieved.

1.4.2 Relevance and Coherence of Long Discourse

It remains now to show how these inferential methods apply in highlighting and explaining textual relations in a long text.

²³ Translation modified from Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, American Library and Mentor Books, New York, (n.d.).

The appropriateness of an utterance in discourse depends on the possibility of establishing a connection between it and the preceding utterance only in the sense that the interpretation of the latter yields assumptions that are used in the interpretation of the former.²⁴

As we see in the above citation, the connection, which we call coherence, between the different parts of discourse is established with reference to contextual effect. It is the influence of each idea, or item of information in the recipient's understanding of the whole, that matters in judging the relatedness of parts of an utterance.

The key factor, then, is contextual effect. If every item has a contextual impact on the preceding and/or following items, then together all parts of the text are seen to contribute to its overall coherence. The coherence of a passage then depends on working out the propositions expressed, their implicatures, and on each of these either forming a context for understanding the following information, or providing access to contextual assumptions that would help in doing so.

The following citation describes the final form of textual relations resulting from these contextual dynamic contributions from all parts of the text:

The picture of discourse that emerges from the relevance-based framework...is one in which the interpretation of an utterance (that is its propositional content and its contextual effects) contributes towards the contexts for interpreting subsequent utterances.

That is, as discourse proceeds, the hearer is provided with a gradually changing

background against which new information is processed.²⁵

This description is very true for long literary text such as narrative, for example. In a novel, the writer introduces a character by providing some information about him/her. This information may be left for a while in the reader's contextual background before this character appears again in the novel, sometimes a few chapters later. However, when the character does appear again, the first instinct of the reader is to recall all the information that was previously provided, and is currently stored as part of his contextual environment, and have it ready to help in understanding the new information given about the same character. The newly introduced information, which will by this stage have been processed, may not be used again until later in the novel, to act as contextual information for understanding more about the character's behaviour. On the other hand, some parts of the older information, which may not have been completely clear at the time they were introduced, may now be clearer because of the fact that the new information provides us with contextual assumptions that add to our previous knowledge and help us to make more sense of it.

This continuous change in the contextual background, and the contribution made by each new item of information are the elements of the text's coherence.

Context, in terms of both new and old information, plays the most vital role in shaping the coherent structure of the text. It affects our understanding of what is coming, but also keeps changing all the time as new information interacts with it to yield further contextual impact.

It is a process, from the reader's point of view, somewhat similar to the process we go through when first writing: we keep writing new sentences, and the new sentences sometimes make us decide to re-write some of the older ones because our ideas on what we have written have

²⁴ Diane Blakemore. *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, p. 112.

gradually developed the more we write. Sometimes the new developments make us decide to completely delete some parts of what we have written. We then continue writing new sentences and so on and so forth. Blakemore views the role of context, described as such, from two perspectives:

On the one hand, it may be regarded as the set of assumptions used in establishing the relevance of a new item of information, while on the other, it may be seen as the set of assumptions that is modified or affected by the presentation of a new item of information.²⁶

This view of textual relations could have a great influence on our understanding of the structure of Qur'anic discourse. It would free us from the traditional question of what could be the 'central idea' holding together all the different topics within one *sūra*, because there would be no need to justify the variety of topics in this way, if every item of information has a contribution to make to the context of the Qur'ān in two ways: a) the new information adds to our understanding of the previous information by clarifying, confirming or altering the picture of that theme and b) previous information helps in understanding the new information by providing a contextual background in which the reader of the Qur'ān will have access to contextual assumptions for processing the new items (by filling in the gap between the linguistic content and the propositional content).

1.4.3 Method of Analysis:

In analyzing textual relations in the Qur'anic *sūra* I will be looking for these two types of contributions.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 122.

²⁶ Ibid.

I will divide the text into parts, establish the propositional content of each part, and then look for the contribution of this part towards the context of the Qur'ān as a whole on one hand, and the immediate context of the *sūra* itself on the other.

In dividing *sūras* into parts, I will consider two units smaller than the *sūra*: one is the section, and the other is the paragraph.

In analyzing the two *sūras* I studied for this research, and by careful examination of the whole text of the Qur'ān I noticed that there are certain indicators that can be used in making these divisions. There are also indicators that direct the reader's interpretation of the relations between those parts. I introduce the analysis of each *sūra* with a theoretical discussion of the paragraph and section division indicators, and their constraints on relevance in respect of their use in the *sūra* subject to analysis. Notably, although the principles of the analysis may be the same, the linguistic tools in each *sūra* are different.

The discussion however has many general implications and applications throughout the Qur'ān. I conclude the analysis of each *sūra* by shedding light on the way the outcome of the analysis can serve towards a wider understanding of the entire Qur'ān.

But before I proceed to the analysis itself, I will end this discussion of the role of context in the interpretation of textual relations, by a final remark on the context of the Qur'ān and the way it has been perceived in *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* and *tafsīr* literature.

1.5 The Context of the Qur'ān²⁷

Although not very rigorous theoretically, many aspects of *tafsīr* emphasize the fact that the Qur'ān could *not* be fully understood unless the contexts of verses are taken in consideration. The sources for that context were often discussed in relative detail, and the role of context was appreciated.

²⁷ I have studied the context of the Qur'an extensively in my book on the role of context is explaining and choosing the meanings assigned to the Qur'anic words with multiple-meaning: el-Awa, S. 1998.

(1) **Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 h)** in *Badā'i' al-Fawā'id* argues that:

Context is one of the most important indications of the meaning intended by the speaker. Overlooking context is likely to lead to misunderstanding and false argumentation.²⁸

He classifies six main functions that context has in explaining the meaning of text. The most important among these are disambiguation and explanation of the metaphorical use of language.

(2) **Al-Amīn al-Jakny al-Shinqīṭy**²⁹ produces a complete commentary based on the idea that contextual explanation of Qur'anic verses should be sought within the Qur'ān itself, a notion that is better known as *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bil-Qur'ān* 'explaining the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān' or *al-Qur'ān yufassiru ba'ḍuhu ba'ḍan* 'parts of the Qur'ān explain each other'.³⁰

(3) Following earlier scholars of the Qur'ān, **Amīn Ahsan Islāhī**, in the 20th century, with the aim of establishing more theoretically defined methods of *tafsīr*, specifies a number of sources of contextual information that should be used in explaining the meanings of verses. These are: **Sunnah literature**, **authentic occasions of revelations (*asbāb al-nuzūl*)**, and **the documented history of Islam**.

²⁸ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Badā'i' al-Fawā'id*, ed. Bashīr Muḥammad 'Uyūn, Dār al-Bayān, Beirut, 1994, vol. 2, p. 103.

²⁹ I failed to trace any biography of him, but his name as on the published work is Muḥammad al-Amīn Muḥammad al-Mukhtār al-Jakny al-Shinqīṭy: *Aḍwā' al-bayān fī ṭiqāḥ al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān*, 'Ālam al-Kutub, Beirut, n.d.

³⁰ For further details on this, see: M. A. S. Abdel-Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: themes and style*, I. B. Tauris, London, 1999.

In all these works, and many others, the absence of theoretical definitions and technical explanations of how context is actually employed in understanding the intended meaning have not hindered the effective use of the notion from yielding interesting insights into meanings of verses.

In my analysis of textual relations in this study, I rely a great deal on contextual information from all these sources. But one needs to remember that when there is more than one contextual item of information available, the most accessible one, at a minimum cost of time and effort, is the one that is consistent with the principle of relevance and is the one likely to be used in the recovery of the speaker's intended meaning. But again, speakers aim to be understood, and hence they intend to be relevant in the information they include in their utterance, the degree of explicitness or implicitness, and the contextual information they assume that the recipients would have access to, and hence the principle of Relevance Theory "every utterance comes with a guarantee of its own relevance".

Chapter 3: Textual Relations in *Sūra* 33, (*al-Aḥzāb*)

I. Indicators of Sections Division and Textual Relations in the *Sūra*

In the last chapter I outlined the main theoretical principles of the theoretical approach adopted in this study and its implications for understanding the Qur'anic textual relations.

In this chapter I intend to describe my method of applying the theoretical framework outlined above to the material presented in *sūrat al-Aḥzāb*.

I shall also show how the notion of relevance and observation of cohesive ties contributed to my explanation of the way in which the *sūra* is structured in terms of content division, passage relations and information distribution. Finally, I will carry out a detailed analysis of textual relations in the *sūra* and their linguistic and non-linguistic expressions.

1.1 The *Sūra* as a Large Utterance

As the subject of this analysis is “a *sūra*”, I shall first define the type of discourse.

Being a part of the Qur'ān, a book which is meant to convey God's message to people (according to the Qur'anic self-reference 2:2), the *sūra* is therefore a part of a message. It is a large linguistic unit, which consists of utterances (sentences) which are meant to communicate “something” to its recipients. In accordance with our theoretical framework, communicators communicate assumptions i.e. thoughts and units of information. A newly introduced utterance leads to inference of new assumptions or ideas which are the message communicated. In ideal circumstances communication succeeds, and recipients manage to construct some context in which the utterance received is relevant to them and they process it in the hope of achieving development in their view of the world.

In the case of *sūras*, recipients have a series of utterances each of which is expected to yield some contextual effect which will share in improving the readers' understanding of the world, as represented in the Qur'anic view. In this way, each new utterance (sentence), whether a verse or part of a verse, has a share in the improvement aimed at. Readers of *sūras* aim, by the end of their reading, to reach some improvement in their understanding of the

Qur'anic message i.e. the way in which the Qur'ān describes the world. Each *sūra* conveys part of this message. It is a large utterance, whose constituents are smaller units of the same kind. The role played by contextual assumptions is the same in the cases of both small and large utterances. That is, utterances are all ostensive acts of communication which communicate their relevance and the messages that their communicators have meant recipients to recover because they are relevant to them, in one way or another. If the *sūra* is an act of communication, and hence expected to be relevant to its recipients, each of its constituents is supposed to be so. Smaller utterances in the *sūra* are guaranteed by the principle of relevance, to be relevant enough to merit their recipients' attention i.e. they will yield some contextual effect in a particular context, which is accessible to the reader. Only on that basis is the effort put into processing each small unit of utterance in the *sūra* justifiable. That is to say, as a reader I expect each utterance within the *sūra* to yield some contextual effect in a context which is relevant to me. I also expect a combination of the effects of all the smaller utterances to result in a large improvement in my previous assumptions. I expect the verses to gradually add to each other's meanings so that I am able to arrive at a final message which is a total of a number of smaller messages whose recovery is a result of my relevance-based processing of each utterance given as a part of the *sūra* (the large utterance).

Thus the message of the *sūra* is not necessarily a single message, since one small utterance can have more than one contextual effect, so an utterance which consists of so many small utterances should, if consistent with the Principle of Relevance, have many contextual effects. The message of a *sūra* may, then, be a development of a whole concept or a number of concepts related to the Islamic fundamentals conveyed by the Qur'ān.

1.2 Passage as an Arbitrary Unit of the *Sūra*

To analyze the message of such a large utterance one needs a hypothetical conception of units from which this large utterance is constructed. In the

above presentation of the concepts of the *sūra* and the contextual effect, I used the terms: verses, sentences or utterances and units of utterance. I argued that smaller units of utterance co-operate together to produce a final message, or to form some concepts as a final message of the *sūra*. The division of text into sentences or of discourse into utterances is quite a familiar one in the field of linguistic analysis. The concept of verse is, however, a Qur'anic concept. Each *sūra* is divided into a number of verses (73 in the case of *sūrat al-Aḥzāb*). A verse is not a grammatical unit, but a Qur'anic term that refers to a part of the *sūra* which might contain one or more grammatical sentences or sometimes less than one. When interpreters of the Qur'ān speak about a *sūra*, or divide it for interpretation they refer to verse numbers. So the term is used for index purposes as well. The end of a verse is not necessarily the end of a grammatical sentence, and there are several possible cases. Sometimes the mark of the end of a verse appears before the main meaning of a sentence is completed, and the sentence then continues in the following verse. A new grammatical sentence may follow in the next verse, but in most cases it is connected to the preceding verse by a conjunction or otherwise. In other cases the sentence finishes but restrictions on its content follow in the following verse, and the connective in this case might be a particle or merely abstract grammatical relations (such as adjectival or adverbial sentences, etc.)

On the other hand, not all verses are so explicitly connected. As a matter of fact, the occurrence of inter-sentential connectives and speech markers in Arabic literary style is much less frequent than in English. In long Arabic text-tradition it is considered to be good style when sentences are proverbial, because that makes them quotable and easy to remember and to integrate in other contexts. One means of achieving this stylistic feature is to limit one's use of speech connectives. That is the less connectives there are, the less restricted the text is to its particular context, and the more likely it is to apply to other situations without needing to modify its language or paraphrase it. Another means of achieving proverbiality of language is the use of homonyms and grammatical structures, which allow for multiplicity

of meaning. The Qur'anic utterance being a classical literary text reflects these features extensively. The impact of this on the Qur'anic sentences is that they contain a minimum of inter-sentence connectives and their meanings are layered and very generalized and can in many cases be applied to an unlimited number of situations. However, the continuity or discontinuity of the flow of the speech is often expressed in various forms of speech markers, which I will discuss later.

Meanwhile, I will return to my description of the way information is divided over the utterances in the *sūra*.

Each *sūra* contains a number of different subjects and the relation between these subjects is sometimes not made clear through the use of the markers or sentence connectives. It is only in the very short *sūras* that there is one clear subject to which one can refer as the "subject of this *sūra*". These *sūras* are likely to be communicating one message. The others, which constitute a higher proportion of the whole Qur'ān, have a variety of subjects, distributed over a larger number of verses, and carry more than a single message.

Clearly, the larger the *sūra* is, the more complex the linguistic structure and hence the more difficult it becomes to work out the intended message. Perhaps the reason is that the contextual effect, in the case of the longer *sūras*, is achieved through a far more complicated process than that involved in inferring messages of shorter *sūras*.

Linguistic complexity was referred to in Relevance Theory as one means of reducing the contextual effect, as it increases processing effort. However, as this study is searching for contextual effects of so many small utterances of such a complex unit of discourse there appears to be a need for another division over medium-length units in order to limit the task of the analyst. If a division of this kind is available then one can work out the message of each of these medium-length units as independent utterances on the one hand, and as relevant to a context consisting of the messages of the other units, on the other hand. The total message communicated by combination and interaction between those messages, will be the meaning of the *sūra*

and hence its relevance to the Qur'ān as a larger context. Another reason behind the suggestion of such divisions is that the initial goal of this research is to discover the relationship between the various contents of the long *sūras*, and to search for a method of explaining their positioning.

It has been suggested that the relation is relevance relation as defined above. This is not to deny coherence relations completely, but to limit their role to superficial indications of deeper relations in terms of which the meaning is recovered. Although I shall continue to look for cohesive ties and paragraph markers this is only in order to consider their contribution to the production of contextual effect, and since my target is subjects rather than single utterances, I shall suggest the passage, with one subject of content and perhaps with a number of sub-sections, as an arbitrary unit of meaning in the *sūra*.

Consistently, I shall search for the contribution of a passage, and its sub-sections, to the message of the *sūra* i.e. the messages of the other passages in the *sūra*. The context of the *sūra* is considered within a wider context of Islamic knowledge introduced by the Qur'ān in general. Thus, the Qur'ān and its supplementary and explanatory text of traditions and history is the source for contextual assumptions¹.

To sum up, I suggest the passage as an alternative to sentence or utterance whose contextual effect will determine its relevance, and I will search for relations between passages. However, one cannot avoid analyzing contextual effects of verses and smaller utterances completely as they contribute to the effect of their passages, and sometimes are central to it.

A passage may contain sub-sections or may only contain one verse, as the main factor in determining the division is the radical changes of content.

In the following section on the subject division, I shall shed more light on the passages of the *sūrat al-Aḥzāb*.

¹ For further details, see: el-Awa, al- *Wujūh*.

1.3 Passage Division in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, and the Linguistic Form

In the previous section I suggested the passage as a unit of utterance, and it is this with which I shall be mainly concerned in this study of the explicit and implicit relations between the utterances of the *sūra*. In the current section I shall describe the subject division into passages of the 73 verses of which the *sūra* consists.

I shall also point out some observations on paragraph markers and some cohesive ties in their relation to the content of each passage on the one hand, and the role they play in separating the passage from the rest of the *sūra* on the other. These are speech markers and pronoun shifts which appear to accompany each significant turn of subject, from the smallest ones within a single verse to the most radical ones when a passage ends and another starts.

1.3.1 Passages of the *Sūra*

I have divided the 73 verses, mostly containing long sentences, of which the *sūra* consists, into 10 passages. The content of each passage varies from a large number of information units over a number of sub-sections to a single unit of information in one verse. In addition to content changes, the division proposed was, to a large extent, guided by the occurrence of major subject switch markers. These are grammatical complexes, which operate in the *sūra* as paragraph markers occurring at the beginning of each new passage. However, there are a small number of exceptions, which I shall explain as they occur during the analysis. The sub-sections in some of the passages were marked with another type of paragraph marker, which is simpler in structure and meaning. The diagram below shows the main divisions of the 10 passages, the verses contained in each passage and the basic contents.

Diagram - 1

Passages of *Sūra* 33 and their Main Content

Passage	Number of verses	Verses	Main contents
1	8	1-8	Introduction to the <i>sūra</i> ; legislation of social relations; prophets' missions and the fate of their peoples
2	19	9-27	The Day of Trench: different stands of different groups, mainly the hypocrites
3	13	28-40	Rules for the Prophet's wives; the Prophet's marriage with <i>Zaynab</i> ; more on the prophets' missions
4	4	41-44	Heart softening from God to the believers
5	4	45-48	The Prophet's mission and a repetition of the first command of the <i>sūra</i>
6	1	49	General regulation for one type of divorce
7	3	50-52	Restrictions on the Prophet's marriages
8	6	53-58	Restrictions on the social life of the Prophet's family
9	1	59	General regulation for women's style of dress
10	14	60-73	Round off all the contents of the <i>sūra</i>

The first passage shown in the diagram above starts with an introduction which functions as an introduction both to the *sūra* and to the information in its own passage. As will be shown in the analysis of the relations, this introduction plays a greater role than merely introducing a passage of the *sūra*, since it provides contextual assumptions which are essential for understanding the information in several passages. It could be considered a

separate passage in another hypothetical division since it carries a key concept for understanding the total message of the *sūra*.

In this study two formal phenomena were observed which helped in arriving at the division above (besides the criterion of content mentioned earlier). First, that every radical change in the content is introduced with a paragraph marker indicating a major switch of subject, with only one exception where the marker was replaced by other linguistic device which retained the function of the marker. I shall speak of the role played by these markers in detail in a later section of this study. For now, I make the observation merely as an indicator that although vv.1-3 are somehow introducing the whole *sūra*, they still provide the necessary basic assumptions for understanding vv.4-8, and so can be considered as part of this first passage. Secondly, I do not find it contradictory to have one assumption (that is that conveyed by vv.1-3) influential in the inference of the message of more than one passage, but rather regard this phenomenon as a positive sign of high contextual effect. That makes these verses more relevant to the *sūra* as a whole.

The same remark can be made about vv.7-8, which do not connect explicitly with either the passage or the content of vv.4-6, but will later prove to be an essential part of the context in which several utterances in the *sūra* are to be processed. The occurrence of some other verses, which echo the meaning of vv.7-8 even sometimes repeating their words, I took as evidence of their importance, in terms of contextual effect, to the total message of the *sūra*. Interestingly enough, those verses that echo vv.7-8 tend to occur in similar positions within their passages to that of vv.7-8 within passage 1, i.e. at or near the end of the passage.

The 10 passages cover a variety of content with the two exceptions of vv.49 and 59, in passages 6 and 9 respectively, which contain only a single subject and a single item of information. The contents of a passage are not always organized in the form of introduction, main subject and conclusion or final paragraph, although this is sometimes the case. The *sūra* itself has an introduction, although this is shared with the first group of contents as

previously pointed out. The introduction is followed by the passages, each of which is concerned mainly with one item of information or more. The information flow continues throughout passages 1-9 until the final passage 10 rounds off the whole text with a number of comments related to almost all the main concepts which have been developed by the time this final passage is reached. Evaluating comments on the information content often occur in the passages as final sentences in verses or otherwise, but never as intensively as in passage 10 all of whose utterances can be described as commentary or as raising a comparison which also implies a judgmental position.

There are two other features which distinguish passage 10 from the others. First, it does not start with the usual subject-switch marker as do the rest of the passages, but rather is characterized by a sudden change of the tone of speech, the choice of grammatical structures and the vocabulary used in referring to people, and a noticeable reduction in the length of verses. Moreover it is not introduced by any kind of introductory particles. The content of the passage, as I mentioned earlier, is different from that of the other passages in that it contains no historical material, legislation or commands related to social behaviour. It merely rounds off all that has preceded it from a superior power's point of view, where God, the speaker, no longer addresses people kindly, but speaks about fate and warns the wrong doers, and even when addressing the believers does so more firmly than earlier in the *sūra*. Here, evaluative comments of a very generalized nature take place. Finally, this passage contains two verses that are each introduced with the major subject switch marker (vv.69-70) although this does not mark any radical change of content as in the other passages. They merely mark the switch from speaking of the fate of unbelievers to addressing the believers. This change in the use of the marker will be discussed in the coming section. Further study of the differences between the passages will follow during the analysis of relations. But, for the purpose of the current section these main remarks suffice as they belong to the superficial formal phenomena rather than the pragmatic.

In the following two sections I shall discuss the interaction between the use of the paragraph markers and the pronoun shifts with the meaning, and then will proceed to Part III where I shall analyze the relations in the *sūra* in detail.

1.3.2 Paragraph Markers of Subject Switches

Arabic Grammar does not deal with the concept of speech or paragraph markers as such. In fact, paragraphing and punctuation is quite new to Arabic writing. However, the role played by such elements was achieved through other linguistic means. Some of these means are sentence initials, introductory particles, reopening particles and vocatives.

In *sūrat al-Aḥzāb* the content division was sharply marked by the *intensive form of vocation* which I shall call the *major subject-switch marker*. Smaller shifts in content were indicated in many cases with other vocative particles, less effective than the intensive one, and other means such as the speech initial *inna* (verily, indeed) the emphatic particle which has no translation value, the re-opening particle *wāw*, which is in many cases translated as *and* or attributed different meanings according to the interpretation, and other particles.

Major subject switches were marked with يا أيها *yā 'ayyuhā* the intensive form of vocation. This introduced new paragraphs which contained significantly different material from that in the preceding.

Yā 'ayyuhā is known in Arabic Grammar as one of four possible methods of vocation, the others are يا *yā*, ا *'a*, or no-particle vocation. When the vocative is not referred to by name, it is likely that the *yā 'ayyuhā* structure will be used, though it is not the only one that can be used in this case. However, this is a grammatical structure whose use is highly related to a semantic purpose. That is, calling people by words other than their names gives the speaker freedom to address them using nouns referring to occupations, relations, adjectives, etc. This use allows the semantic content of the word used as a vocative to replace the name. Names are merely codes

and cannot be charged with any semantic or pragmatic meaning (in the case of vocation), unless intonation and stress are used in a certain way. Yet, the meaning of intonation is determined by cultural conventions rather than linguistic considerations. For instance, calling one's brother by the word brother would recall connotations of the social privileges and commitments implicit in the relationship referred to.

By the same token, when people in the Qur'ān are called by words referring to the kind of belief they hold, this distinguishes them in a way which could not be achieved by calling them by name. Clearly, *Aḥmad* or *Muḥammad* do not sound much different from *Yāsir* and *Khālīd*, but replacing the first two with "O Prophet" and the second two with "O believers" marks a huge difference in the expectations and intentions of the speaker. The use of *yā 'ayyuhā*, the intensive form of vocation, allows this kind of distinction, which is pragmatic rather than semantic, to take place, since it implies that the nouns or adjectives used reflect how those people are considered by the speaker. This reflects immediately the speaker's classification of those people, which plays a part in increasing the contextual effect of what is said. The particle *ī* can also introduce this type of vocation but its use is limited to nouns defined by means of *iḍāfah* (similar to possessive forms), which does not allow as much flexibility in the use of adjectives as *yā 'ayyuha*. The no-particle type of vocation, which is very informal, also allows other types of vocatives, but it is rarely used and does not have the emphatic sense implied in *yā 'ayyuhā*.

The emphatic vocative tool is a complex of a noun and grammatical particles, which is, according to Arab Grammarians, an emphatic/intensive method of vocation: *yā*, the regular vocative particle, *'ayy*, an indefinite noun meaning any/all, and *hā* an attention-drawing particle which has no actual translation value.

The Qur'anic commentators considered the use of this intensive form of vocation a means of drawing attention to something of great importance that is about to be said. It is also said that it not only stimulates one receiver, if

the text is spoken in a group of people, but keeps all those present curious and anxious to find out what information will follow because it includes any/all in its structure². Indeed, introducing information in the form of vocation is more effective than putting it forward without specifying a recipient for it. On the one hand it addresses people and thus is more personal yet, in the case of the intensive form of vocation, it is generalized to all individuals who may be qualified by the adjective following the vocative tool.

From the relevance point of view, it is an addition to the utterance and is likely to yield some contextual effects in the context. This will be shown later in the application when I analyze this aspect of text relations.

The use of vocation also involves introducing information with conversational markers which add the power of interactive dialogue to both narrative and commands, i.e. the most common types of speech in the *sūra*. These types of speech are usually introduced as a one-way monologue where a person speaks, tells stories or directs commands to person(s) present in the contextual environment but not in the text itself. Calling the audience at the beginning of every major change in the content, and specifying a particular group of this audience with every new passage adds the qualities of conversation as a speech genre to the qualities of the genre of the initial speech.

In short, this repeatedly used method of introducing information increases the effect of what it introduces and by means of the description attributed to the recipients assigns them a responsibility which they hope to be able to meet, although regrettably, most of them fail to do so (Q. 33: 72).

Finally, the use of this type of vocation as a marker of the different passages justifies, in a way, the information included in the passage it introduces, whether it is narrative or requests and commands, etc. For instance, the new legislation in passage 1 is justified by means of recalling that Muḥammad is the Prophet and has to beware of God. The narrative in passage 2 is not a mere report of history, but rather a recollection of certain facts of which

² See Rāzy, *Tafsīr*, vol. 25, p. 190.

awareness is important for the particular audience addressed by a vocative at the beginning of the passage, and so on. The pragmatic effect of the social and semantic contents of these nouns will be explained in further detail in the course of the analysis of the *sūra*.

Meanwhile I shall shed some light on the second type of markers in the *sūra* and their use and meanings. These are markers of the less radical changes in content. The majority of the sub-sections within a passage are marked by smaller markers, which I shall call *minor subject-switch markers*. These markers are smaller than the major subject-switch markers in terms of both their semantic content and the grammatical complexity of their structures, and they also mark changes in the content smaller than those marked by the major ones. However some sub-sections are not marked at all. The smaller paragraph markers, some vocative, others emphatic or re-opening particles, were used in a less regular manner, and have different functions and effects on the sub-sections they introduced.

When sub-sections directly represent God's views or contain evaluative comments made by Him, they are introduced by emphatic particles, which have a double function. On the one hand they disconnect for they may be sentence initials such as *إن* 'inna which introduces new nominal sentences and *لقد* laqad, which is an emphatic particle normally used to introduce new verbal sentences. This disconnection function suggests that there are two different levels of speaking: one is that of God addressing others in a one-way dialogue, and the other is when God speaks from His superior position of majesty giving His own views and comments. Thus, any comments that are attributed to Him are grammatically separated from other contexts where He communicates a message directed explicitly to people. In addition, the same types of particles increase the strength of what is said, as a result of their semantic and rhetorical meanings.

The following diagram shows the distribution of all markers over the passages and the sub-sections and the changes of content that they mark.

Diagram 2

Paragraph Markers in *sūra* 33

Section no.	Verses	Major marker	Minor marker	Main content
Passage 1				
1	1-3	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	—	Introduction of the <i>sūra</i> and the passage
2	4-6	—	—	New legislation for lawful and unlawful social relations
3	7-8	—	وإذ <i>wa 'idh</i>	Prophets make pledge to God.
Passage 2				
1	9-11	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	—	Introduction: the implications of the Day of the Trench
2	12-20	—	وإذ <i>wa 'idh</i>	The hypocrites
3	21-24	—	لقد <i>la qad</i>	The believers
4	25-28	—	و <i>wa</i>	Final section
Passage 3				
1	28-29	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	—	The wives' lives
2	30-31	—	يا	Special judgement

			<i>yā</i>	
3	32-34	–	يا <i>yā</i>	Restrictions on behaviour and justification
4	35-36	-	إن <i>'inna</i>	Generalization
5	37	-	وإذ <i>wa 'idh</i>	The Prophet's marriage with <i>Zayd</i> 's divorcee
6	38-40	-	-	Prophets
Passage 4				
1	41-44	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	–	The believers relation to God
Passage 5				
1	45-48	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	–	The Prophet
Passage 6				
1	49	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	–	A rule for divorce
Passage 7				
1	50-52	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	–	Rules for the Prophet's marriage
Passage 8				
1	53-55	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	–	Social mixing, the prohibition of disturbance
2	56-58	إن <i>'inna</i>	–	Believers' social relations

Passage 9				
1	59	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	-	Restrictions on women's appearance
Passage 10				
1	60-62	-	-	The hypocrites-warning
2	63	-	-	The Day of Judgement
3	64-68	-	إن <i>'inna</i>	The unbelievers-fate
4	69- 71	-	يا أيها <i>yā 'ayyuhā</i>	The believers-reward
5	72-73	-	إن <i>'inna</i>	Man's responsibility: commencement and fate

1.3.3 Pronoun Shifts and Turn-taking

The last formal characteristic which I shall explain in detail before moving on to the actual analysis of the *sūra* is the employment of pronoun shifts and turns for pragmatic purposes³.

³ Linguists differentiate between three levels of meaning: Semantic meaning i.e. the meaning of the content of words as such; Grammatical meaning i.e. the meaning with consideration of the grammatical functions of words i.e. a word in a sentence means its lexical meaning plus the meaning of its relation to the surrounding words, being subject, object or predicate, etc. and finally, the Pragmatic meaning i.e. the meaning understood from utterances without making explicit the words referring to it. The pragmatic meaning can be achieved mainly by observation of the context (non-linguistic factor) and contextual implications. The scope of this study is the pragmatic meaning; the study of other elements or levels of meaning comes to serve the explanation of the pragmatic meaning, i.e. what is understood from the text without being explicitly said. Thus, the meaning of connections between sentences in their explicit forms is looked at only from the point of view at their pragmatic meanings.

It has been noticed that this is a frequently used technique, which accompanies the content changes within and between passages throughout the *sūra*.

The pronoun shifts that I speak of here are not always of the type known as *iltifāt* in Arabic rhetoric, though sometimes they are, and when this is the case, the shift has a pragmatic function alongside the rhetorical. So, what is this pronoun turning technique? Let us take passage 1 as an example from the *sūra* to see the phenomenon before trying to define it theoretically. The *sūra* starts by addressing the Prophet, calling him *ya 'ayyuhā al-nabiyy*, so the emphasis here is on the fact that he is a Prophet. The second noun to occur in this passage is God, then the unbelievers and the hypocrites and then God again. Everybody is referred to in the third person, which is implied in the use of nouns to refer to people who are theoretically absent from the conversation, apart from “the Prophet” who is present as an addressee. Nouns and not pronouns are consistently used to refer to characters with the exception of the addressee, who is referred to in the second person in all verbs and possessive structures in vv.1-3. In v.4 the sequence of pronouns continues with the addition of some new characters. Those new characters have to do with the introduction of new legislation regarding adoption and other social relations. But the addressee of the passage changes without any foundation to prepare the reader for this change. That is, in the first verse we had *al-nabiyy* (the Prophet) as an addressee newly introduced to the speech, and a number of second person pronouns were used to refer to the same addressee. It would normally be expected that the sequence would continue and that every new item of information would be directed to the same addressee but this was not the case. The second person pronoun for plural addressees suddenly occurred and the speech was directed to a group of people who had not previously been named, or even mentioned in the passage. This kind of pronoun turn is a typical case of the third type of rhetorical pronoun shift classified by M.

Abdel-Haleem in his study of this stylistic feature of the Arabic language⁴. The function of this shift is rhetorical as Abdel-Haleem states: “Although *iltifāt* of this kind has its real lexical meaning, it has, in addition rhetorical effect since a second group of addressees can see that he is [sic] connected with what has been requested of the first addressee, be it favorable or otherwise.”⁵ In addition to this rhetorical effect, and since the main concern of the current study is pragmatic effects, I shall suggest another function of *iltifāt* here. That is, indicating or announcing a change of the content of the subject. In the case of verse 4 the change is from ordering the Prophet to be conscious of God, and justifications for this request, to directing a number of commands, which concern all Muslims, in order to put forward new legislation. Interestingly, the new sequence of pronouns lasts as long as sentences continue detailing the legislation with no disruption until v.5 starts justifying the legislation and explaining its consequences in the social and financial aspects of the relations between members of the Muslim community (the matter of inheritance). Then a pronoun for a new person occurs, referring to the Prophet, who is now spoken of and not addressed as he was in the beginning of the passage. Simultaneously, members of the Muslim community are no longer addressees but rather spoken of. A rhetorical function of this is perhaps to give the front position to someone who is more important in the particular context than the addressees of the former context. But a pragmatic message is implied here, that is a change of the centre of attention as the content changes slightly. However, within the course of the same verse, an exception to the general rule is introduced with *لا* *'illā* (grammatical particle for exclusion) and this exclusion is accompanied with another incidence of *iltifāt* from the third person referring to the believers/Muslim community members to the second person plural pronoun addressing the same group of people. That is, as an exception to a

⁴ M. A. S. Abdel-Haleem, ‘Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: *iltifāt* and related features in the Qur’ān, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 55:3, 1992, p. 420.

social rule means negating the rule for special circumstances it represents a change of content and however small that change of content there is still a formal indicator to mark it, i.e. the pronoun shift. It would be very interesting to follow the occurrence of *iltifāt*, or moving new persons to the front or the back position every time a change of content takes place in the *sūra*.

Sometimes, the change of pronoun does not particularly qualify for the condition of *iltifāt*, the rhetorical style, as defined by Abdel-Haleem⁶, in which case, there is simply a pronoun turn-taking process where the focus moves from some persons to allow others to occupy the centre of the recipients' attention in accordance with the pragmatic requirements of the new content.

This, in fact, applies to the very example given by Abdel-Haleem of the case that is not considered as *iltifāt*, that is: *إنا أعطيناك الكوثر، فصل لربك وانحر* (we ^{and sacrifice} have given you abundance, therefore pray to *your* Lord) (Q. 108:1-2). Here, although this is not an instance of *iltifāt*, there is still a change in the focus of the speech as the pronoun referring to God as a speaker moves out of the central, i.e. subject, position allowing the addressee *you*, in the imperative verb, to occupy the front position. Then the addressee steps back as a noun referring to God takes over, but soon goes back again to focus on the Prophet represented by his suffix pronoun in *your Lord* and then in the last verb. The turn-taking here proceeds in the following direction, (from left to right):

God - Prophet - God - Prophet

To sum up, whether the pronoun shift is a case of *iltifāt* or just a movement for turn-taking⁷ it affects the pragmatic meaning, since what it indicates is:

⁵ Ibid., p. 421.

⁶ Ibid., p. 411.

⁷ In a further study of the phenomenon, *iltifāt* can be seen as one of several possible types of pronoun turn-taking.

Person 1 is no longer concerned; Person 2 is now the most important. In other words, it reflects fundamental change in the point of view and the positions of the persons involved, which, in turn, indicates different levels of involvement.

It would be useful to follow the consistency of the pronoun turn-taking process in accordance with changes of content as a further formal/semantic tool, which plays a significant role in the production of pragmatic meanings. More light will be shed on the effect of these pronoun turn-takings in the course of the analysis of the *sūra*. Meanwhile, the diagram below provides a sample from the first passage to demonstrate the phenomenon with reference to both of its aspects: general turn-taking and *iltifāt* in particular.

Diagram 3

A Sample of the Pronoun Turn-Taking in *sūra 33*⁸

Position	1 st person: speaker	2 nd person: addressee	3 rd person: spoken of	Description of the Turn
Sub-section1	-	The Prophet	God, others	-
Sub-section2	-	The believers	God, others	Turn from addressing the Prophet to addressing the believers.
Same	-	-	The believers, the Prophet,	<i>Illtifāt</i> : from addressing the believers to speaking of them
Same	-	The believers	Others	<i>Illtifāt</i> : from speaking of the believers to addressing them
Sub-section3	God (pl. of majesty)	-	The Prophets	Turn from speaking to the believers to speaking to no one and of the Prophets
Same	same	The Prophet Muḥammad	Four Prophets	Turn from speaking of the all Prophets to addressing Muhammad, and

⁸ The diagram represents the presence or absence of the explicit use of nouns and pronouns, apart from the fact that God is the presumed speaker of the entire Qur'ān. This fact does **not** have any special impact on this part of the study, for the study of pronoun turn-taking is mainly about the appearance of explicit references to the persons involved, which has been observed to have various indications concerning the importance of the roles of these persons in the event expressed, in addition to implications in the pragmatic meanings of the text.

				from no speaker to God speaking
Same	-	-	God, others	<i>Illifāt</i> from God as a speaker to third person, and disappearance of all the persons previously involved

II. Relevance-Based Analysis of Textual Relations in the Sūra

1. Overview:

The *sūra* starts with a 3-verse introduction which introduces both the whole *sūra* and passage 1 as well as relating effectively to many of the later passages.

The end of the *sūra* is a long concluding passage vv.60-73 (14 verses), most of which represents God's own comments on many issues raised in the course of the other passages and rounds off all the concepts developed throughout the *sūra*. The last verse of this concluding passage partly echoes the first verse of the introduction to the *sūra*, which emphasizes the extended effect of that first verse over the whole text. The verse draws a final line of distinction between the types of people spoken of in the course of the *sūra*, which heightens the relevance of all the details included in the various subjects for the additions they make to the development of recipients' understanding of the message about these types of people and this also justifies the concluding function of the verse. The connection of this verse to the *sūra* being understood in this way explains why its central verb is introduced with the causative connective *li*: لام التعليل, which not only connects the verse to the immediately preceding verse but also connects the final concluding passage to the whole text. It answers the question 'why?' following from all the requests, commands etc. given in the *sūra*. The reason why, from the beginning, Muḥammad did not follow the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and remained aware of God (the content of v.1) is that God will punish them and forgive and reward Muḥammad and those who believed the messages of all the Prophets.

Between these two major concepts (i.e. the way in which Muḥammad, and hence his followers, should behave and the fate of the different kinds of people depending on their responses to God's messages since the beginning of humanity, specified in the first and last verses) requests, commands, explanatory and supporting facts and events build up gradually forming

certain concepts which provide the recipients with a comprehensive understanding of and rationale for the main message in the *sūra*.

In short, the message of the *sūra* is established through the development of a number of concepts built up gradually as the messages of the 10 passages are revealed. I will analyze the messages of each of the ten passages, searching for their contextual effect on the process of building up the concepts with which the *sūra* is mainly concerned. In the analysis I adopt the basic hypothesis that each item of information given by a part of the *sūra*, however long or short it is, provides some necessary contextual assumptions for the comprehension of an item of information given in a following or preceding part of the *sūra*.

Passage (1)⁹: vv.1-8

1- O PROPHET!¹⁰ Remain conscious of God, and defer not to the deniers of the truth (the unbelievers) and the hypocrites: for God is truly all knowing, wise.

2- And follow [but]¹¹ that which comes unto thee through revelations from thy Sustainer: for God is truly aware of all that you¹² do, [O men].

3- And place thy trust in God [alone]: for none is as worthy of trust as God.

*** 4- Never has God endowed any man with two hearts in one body: and [just as] He has never made your wives whom you may have declared to be “as unlawful to you as your mothers’ bodies” [truly] your mothers,**

⁹ I have marked each sub-section with the symbol (*) before the number of its first verse. Wherever needed, I have added another suggested translation between brackets (so).

¹⁰ Asad expresses the effect of intensive and emphatic phrases and particles in terms of the exclamation mark (!), capital letters and sometimes adds to the text words like [truly] in square brackets.

¹¹ In many cases, Asad adds to his translated text particles, connectives, adverbs, phrases etc., which do not exist in the original text of the Qur’ān. Mostly, he indicates this by square brackets. This sometimes slightly changes the Arabic meaning and of course does not reflect the way the sentences are structured in Arabic. However, I do not rely on these additions and all my analysis is made with reference to the Arabic structure, not to its translation.

¹² Second person pronouns in Arabic vary according to the number and the gender of the addressee(s). To maintain the differences, Asad uses (you) for the second person plural, and for the singular, in its different grammatical cases (nominative, accusative or genitive) he uses the old English forms thou and thee.

so, too has he never made your adopted sons [truly] your sons: these are but [figures of] speech uttered by your mouths-whereas God speaks the [absolute] truth: and it is He alone who can show [you] the right path.

5- [As for your adopted children,] call them by their [real] fathers names: this is more equitable in the sight of God; and if you know not who their fathers were, [call them] your brethren in faith and your friends. However, you will incur no sin if you err in this respect: [what really matters is] but what your hearts intend-for God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace!

6- The Prophet has a higher claim on the believers than [they have on] their own selves, [seeing that he is as a father to them] and his wives are their mothers: and they who are [thus] closely related (relatives) have, in accordance with God's decree, a higher claim upon one another than [was even the case between] the believers [of Yathrib] and those who had migrated [there for the sake of God]. None the less, you are to act with utmost goodness towards your [other] close friends as well: this [too] is written down in God's decree.

* 7- And Lo! We did accept a solemn pledge from all the Prophets – from thee, [O Muhammad,] as well as from Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary-: for We accepted a most weighty, solemn pledge from [all of] them, 8- so that [at the end of time] He might ask those men of truth as to [what response] their truthfulness [had received on earth]. And grievous suffering has He readied for all who deny the truth!

The passage contains three sub-sections the first of which is the introduction of the whole *sūra* as mentioned before. This first sub-section vv.1-3 contains the first item of information given in the *sūra*, that is:

(1) ¹³ Muḥammad should not follow the unbelievers or the hypocrites.

This information is given in the form of a command from God to Muḥammad, the Prophet. The introduction of the command by the emphatic

¹³ This sequence of numbers continues throughout the study before each assumption or item of information.

form of vocation, which allows people to be referred to by words other than their names, allows reference to the addressee Muḥammad in his role as a Prophet of God.

This reference continues as the main object of the text until the reader reaches v.7, where more information is being added to the recipients' knowledge of what the word means in an Islamic perspective. However, so far the encyclopaedic entry of this word theoretically contains only its semantic contents, which raises the question of the meaning of the command: it is a strange thing to say to a Prophet since consciousness of God is part of the meaning of that word. Many Muslim commentators have raised this question and a number of unsatisfactory answers have been suggested¹⁴. However, the question itself is fairly reasonable provided that the person who is starting to read the *sūra* has so far read only this verse. From the relevance point of view, the question is reasonable for there is no contextual information available at the start of the reading apart from the lexical meaning of the word Prophet.

Following this command, are a number of primary justifications for it, such as:

- (2) God is truly all knowing, wise.
- (3) God is truly aware of all that people do.
- (4) None is as worthy of trust as God.

Within the course of these justifications are some details and explanations of the first command in the form of other commands, smaller in terms of their effect on the hearers (considering the critical circumstances of the Islamic state led by Muḥammad the Prophet, during the time when the *sūra* was revealed).¹⁵

¹⁴ See, -Rāzy, *Tafsīr* where he discusses the implications of this question in detail.

¹⁵ *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* was revealed sometime between the years 5-7AH. At this time life for Muslims in Medina was surrounded by political troubles caused by people inside and outside the city where the first Islamic state was gradually moving towards achieving social settlement and political power. From inside, there were the Jews and the hypocrites. Both of these two groups refused the new religion. The Prophet had treaties with the former, which gave them the right to stay peacefully in the state, but the hypocrites remained a serious source of problems as they never admitted their refusal of the religion of the state, yet kept harassing the Prophet and the other Muslims on every possible occasion as will be

The smaller commands are:

- (5) Only follow what is revealed to you from God. (do not follow anyone else)
- (6) Place your trust in God. (do not worry about the others)

In the three verses the speaker is God Himself, as is the case throughout the Qur'ān. However, pronoun turn-takings of several forms can put the speech into the mouths of others. God speaks for Himself in the first person singular pronoun or in the first person royal plural pronoun and refers to Himself with the word God and its third person pronoun. In the vast majority of the verse endings in the Qur'ān, which are generalized evaluative comments made by God and known as *fawāṣil* (verse separators), God is referred to by the word God and its third person pronoun. This is also the case in the first three verses of this *sūra*, as well as almost all its *fawāṣil*. However, although the Prophet is addressed in the first verse, and referred to in the second person in all the other imperatives in this sub-section, another addressee occurs in the ending comment of the second verse: "God well knows all that you (plural addressee) do", which generalizes the immediately preceding command to all the addressees of the Qur'ān rather than merely the Prophet (the addressee of the imperative verb which carries the command).

The second sub-section provides the reader with information on regulations of the social practice of adoption of other peoples' children. The section consists of first, an introductory analogy: "never has God endowed any man with two hearts in his body" v.4, which comes before the main utterance that carries the message of the section. That is "[just as] he has never made your wives whom you may have declared to be 'as unlawful to you as your mothers' bodies, [Truly] your mothers so too has he never made your

mentioned a number of times in the *sūra*. The outside danger was from Mecca, the city of those who refused Muḥammad's message and resisted his proclamation of the new religion so strongly that he had to migrate to Medina (Yathrib) in order to be able to deliver his message in peace. From time to time, battles would take place between the tribes of Mecca and the small forces of the newly established government in Medina.

adopted sons [truly] your sons..” This main part of the information starts at v.4 and ends with v.6. Each of the verses is concluded with one or more evaluative comments. Verse 4 ends with 2 evaluative comments, one of which focuses on the prohibited practice describing it as merely “words” said by men’s mouths (figures of speech in Asad’s translation) i.e. having no value in the actual reality of things¹⁶. This comment contrasts with the second commentary statement in the sub-section which is “and God says only the truth and shows the way”¹⁷ God’s telling the truth is contrasted with people saying untruthful things such as claiming fatherhood of those who are not their real children.

Verse 5 puts forward an alternative which follows naturally to replace the condemned practice, and thus the legislation is completed. Furthermore, the verse details the exclusion of any mistake that might have occurred as a result of innocent intentions, emphasizing the fact that what counts is only the true intentions. The verse is ended, as usual, by a generalized comment re-emphasizing that God is “much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace”(v.5). The last verse in the section is an explanation of the hierarchy of relations between individuals in Muslim society. The connection between v, 6 and the rest of the passages in which it belongs, was quite confusing to Richard Bell in his translation of the Qur’ān¹⁸. He finds it difficult to accept the position of the verse where it is, pointing out that “6 can hardly have followed immediately upon such a definite condemnation of artificial relationships as stands in vv.4-5; for though its main object is to annul the artificial brotherhood between the *Muhājirīn* and the *Anṣār*¹⁹, it retains a

New pieces of the Qur’ān were revealed, among which were several messages setting new regulations for the Muslim community in Medina as well as some that shed some light on the way Muslims should respond to current issues.

¹⁶ The expression ‘evaluative comment’ here is used in its linguistic sense. From a juristic point of view there are other arguments which are not related to this research.

¹⁷ Notice that the translator has expressed the pragmatic meaning of ‘and’ by translating it into “whereas”.

¹⁸ Bell, *The Qur’ān*.

¹⁹ At the time of the *sūra*, the social life in Medina was based on a special relationship between the immigrants (*Muhājirūn*) and the old habitants of the city (*Anṣār*).

When Muḥammad and his companions migrated from Mecca because of their persecution by the powerful tribes of that city, they went to Medina leaving behind all their businesses,

special relationship to the believers for the Prophet and his wives.” It is true that the verse touches upon all those relationships which Bell mentioned, but it does so in order to set the final accepted form of relations between Muslims, in the light of the previously introduced condemnation. As new regulations take effect in re-forming older practice, it is necessary to point out the place of other relationships, especially those that share being ‘artificial’ with the annulled one, i.e. adoption, since the reason given for the cancellation may be interpreted as being this very characteristic of the relation, i.e. being artificial: ‘these are but [figures of] speech uttered by your mouth, whereas God speaks the [absolute] truth’. But, since there were financial and social rights and responsibilities consequent on any such relation, it is necessary to make this clear in the context of instructions about relations from which such responsibilities follow. Thus, inheritance of wealth and property, and lawfulness of marriage are some major consequences of being a brother, adopted son or mother by adoption, etc. Hence the necessity for mentioning other types of relationships, practised at the time, which might be described as being as false as the adoption relationship, and these are the *Muhājirūn-Anṣār* brotherhood and the relations between the companions and the Prophet’s wives which are described in v.6.

The reasons why I consider it highly relevant to mention these relations in this particular context may be explained in terms of the following sequence of inference analysis:

From vv.4-5 one concludes

(7) Adoption is prohibited.

property and even money and families. This situation was capable of causing a social crisis to both the immigrants, as they had no home in Medina, and to the Medinan people who had to support the newcomers until they had settled down. A special relationship between both peoples solved the problem so they managed to start their own businesses and build a new life in Medina. That relationship is known as *Muhājirūn-Anṣār* brotherhood, which was based on the rule that each one of the *Anṣār* had to accommodate one of the *Muhājirūn* and to give him part of his money and property as well as other social rights. Inheritance would also follow from this relation in the case of the death of either of the two so-called brothers. The *sūra* deals with this matter as part of its reprioritizing of social and financial rights in relationships.

Accessing the encyclopaedic entry of adoption would naturally provide a contextual assumption (8):

(8) Adoption is an artificial relationship.

And hence, (9) will be inferred by combining (7) and (8) because of the natural tendency to generalize:

(9) Artificial relationships are prohibited.

Here the necessity of the restriction in v.6 arises in order to restrict a possible chain of inferences which might lead to undesirable conclusions about relationships. Now, the encyclopaedic entry of artificial relationships contains a list of relationships among which is brotherhood in faith, the *Muhājirūn-Anṣār* brotherhood, and may even include friendship (if someone's definition of artificial relations includes all relations which are not caused by kinship or governed by law). Verse 6 posits the information in (10) in order to constrain the condemnation in vv.4-5:

(10) Brotherhood in faith is lawful.

However, consequences such as inheritance followed from the *Muhājirūn-Anṣār* brotherhood, and this accounts for the mention of it in v.6 as well as the intention of highlighting the priorities in that respect. Thus, v.6 is effective in terms of its additions to the context in which it occurs and so it becomes difficult to agree with Bell in his judgement about the appropriateness of its position.

With regard to priorities, in v.6 priority is given to the Prophet: "The Prophet has a higher claim on the believers than [they have on] their own selves." This gives the Prophet some kind of authority over other Muslims' property. Moreover, his wives' relation to Muslims is a mother-like relationship "and his wives are their mothers", and hence marriage is not considered a lawful type of relation between them and male members of the Muslim society, although they are not real mothers to those men.

Second to the priority accorded to the Prophet is the priority of kinship: "and they who are [thus] closely related (reference to kinship relations) have a higher claim upon one another than [was even the case between] believers [of Yathrib] and those who had migrated". So this is the order of priorities, regardless of what Muslims might call their relationships, whether

brotherhood or otherwise. It has already been stated above that brotherhood among Muslims is a relation 'in faith', so, no legal rights, such as those that follow from kinship, can follow from it, neither do such rights follow from any other kind of social relation Muslims may have among themselves. So, no relationship can result in legal rights apart from those named in vv.4- 5. Verse 6 stands as a completion of the new legislation without which understanding of the rights following from artificial relationships would have remained ambiguous and open to mistaken assumptions as shown above.

Before the usual concluding comment, an exception to the general rule introduced by the legislation is stated. That is, making clear how to bequeath part of one's money/property to someone unconnected by any of the relations specified in the verses which entail inheritance by right. The exception in "Nonetheless, you are to act with utmost goodness towards your [other] close friends as well" can be described as relevant in the context, as it adds information necessary for recipients to answer all the questions which might arise from a possible variety of situations in which the rules in the verses could be applied. In the light of contextual information item (11) conclusion (12) can be drawn, as follows:

- (11) Closely related people (relatives) have a higher claim on one another than any other member of the community.
- (12) Friendship and brotherhood in faith are not relations from which inheritance automatically follows.

But as this conclusion might deter many people from perhaps making donations from their own property to a needy person among their friends, the information in (13) in the form of exclusion from the convention that might otherwise be inferred from the verse is relevant:

- (13) You can donate to your friends.

Significantly, the word used for friends in the verse is '*awliyā*' the plural of *waliyy*, a homonymic which is used in Arabic to refer to those to whom one is connected with strong social ties, whether friendship, alliance or otherwise.

In sum, the second sub-section of passage 1, follows the introduction to the *sūra*, and consists of three relatively long verses, which cover legislation concerned with social relationships between members of the Muslim community, including the believers' relations to the Prophet and his wives. The sub-section starts with a short introductory analogy and includes regulations, evaluative comments by the narrator, and restrictions on the stated regulations. It ends with the justifying sentence: "This is written down in God's decree". This justification introduces the following two verses by means of its ambiguous reference to "the book". Commentators have long been puzzled about what this term refers to. Is it God's decree as interpreted by the translator, i.e., according to Muslim beliefs, the source of all God's religions, and His revelations to the various Prophets, or does it refer to God's eternal knowledge "اللوح المحفوظ".

To accord with the context of the following two verses I would suggest that what is meant by 'the book' is the origin of all the heavenly messages. So what is the context of these two following verses which constitute the final sub-section of passage 1?

According to the passage division above, passage 1 ends with v.8 but for some, vv.7-8 seem to have no connection with the preceding sub-section²⁰. In fact, from a topic-oriented point of view, this may appear to be right since, on a superficial level, the two verses may well seem unrelated to vv.4-6, the immediately preceding sub-section. Let us have a look at what the verses say:

7- "And Lo! We accepted a solemn pledge from all the Prophets - from thee, [O Muḥammad,] as well as from Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary-: for We accepted most weighty, solemn pledge from [all of] them, 8- so that [at the end of time] He might ask those men of truth as to [what response] their truthfulness [had received on earth]. And grievous suffering has He readied for all who deny the truth!"

²⁰ See Bell, *The Qur'ān*, vol.2, p. 409.

Although the topic of this section may be interpreted as “Prophets make pledge to God” which is obviously unrelated to the topic of vv.4-6, which may plausibly be expressed as: “Restrictions on social relations in the Muslim community”, there is some linguistic evidence from within the *sūra* itself that topic is not the determining factor in explaining the relation between these two parts of the text. First of all, the general system of subject division in the *sūra* explained above, is speech-marker-dependent. That is to say, in every instance of a change of subject there is a particle, or subject-switch marker, which indicates the switch from one group of contents to another. In the case of major movements to a totally new subject, the first verse of the passage is introduced with *yā 'ayyuhā*, the emphatic form of vocation i.e. the major subject switch marker of the *sūra*, whereas when changes are within a passage, the markers used are lesser in terms of their emphatic semantic content, and even in their level of syntactic complexity. These minor subject switch markers indicate smaller movements within the contents of a passage. In this *sūra*, the minor subject-switch markers are the re-opening *wāw* (and), *laqad* (indeed), the nominal-sentences-emphatic-introductory-particle *'inna* (verily/indeed) or *'idh* (when). Any of the latter particles may be preceded by the re-opening *and*, or may simply stand alone²¹. Verses 7-8 are introduced by *and when* *إِذْ*, and not by a major subject-switch marker, which suggests that they do not begin a new passage but belong to passage 1. Secondly, the use of the pronoun turn-taking technique supports this view. Let us look at the pronouns of speakers, addressees and third persons throughout the sub-sections of passage 1 and the beginning of passage 2.

Diagram 4

²¹ For the places and frequency of occurrence of these markers see pp. 33-34 of this study.

The Pronoun Turn in Passage 2 Indicates the Division between the Passages

Passage-Sub-section	Speaker	Addressee	3rd person
1-Sub-sect.1	-	The Prophet	-
Sub-sect.2	-	Muslims, -, Muslims	Sons, wives, The Prophet, believers
Sub-sect.3	-	The Prophet	Prophets, people
2-Sub-sect.1	-, God	Believers	Confederates' forces

The table above shows that a change of addressee accompanies the introduction of each passage, and also each sub-section of passage 1. This indicates that vv.7-8 belong to a different sub-section from v.9, though it does not necessarily follow that the verses in question belong to passage 1 as they might constitute a separate passage. However, the Prophet being a vocative of v.1, the first verse in passage 1, and then being addressed by his personal addressee pronoun in v.7 makes v. 7 a continuation of the speech started in v. 1. Now, since this completes the sequence of pronoun turn-taking of passage 1, vv.7-8 are not introduced with a major subject switch marker, and do not fit anywhere within the structure of the contents of passage 2 or the type of information given in it, one is entitled, if only from a formal point of view, to consider the two verses a sub-section of passage 1. From the relevance point of view, the verses also prove to be part of passage 1. A lexical repetition of the word *al-nabiyy* (the Prophet), in its plural form ties v.1 and v.7 together in a way which can be seen as more convincing than the assertion that the verses are misplaced as suggested by those who deny the connection between these verses and the passage.

According to Relevance Theory “the appropriateness of an utterance in discourse depends on the possibility of establishing a connection between it

and the preceding utterance only in the sense that the interpretation of the latter yields assumptions that are used in the interpretation of the former.”²²

As a result, discourse relations can be thought of as mutual influences between items of information. When utterance (x) provides a context for understanding utterance (y), utterance (y) affects the understanding of utterance (x) in virtue of the contextual implications that it yields, and so on. This dialectic process of influence on interpretation can continue endlessly in long discourses. That is, former and latter utterances will continue influencing the interpretation of each other not only over relatively short passages, but across passages as well.

In the case of the verses in question, let us consider the following sequence of assumptions, based on the information provided by v.1, and therefore previously existing in the recipient’s short-term-memory (one source of accessible contextual assumptions). In our sequence, (14) is the contextual assumption provided by v.1, and (15) is the new item of information recently introduced to this context:

(14) God orders the Prophet Muhammad to be aware of Him.

(15) All Prophets have made a binding pledge to God.

The addition of information item (15) above, will lead the recipients to an immediate assumption (16) provided by the lexical knowledge of the word pledge.

(16) If someone has made a binding pledge to another, he is likely to (follow his instructions).

By combining (16) with (14) recipients arrive at the implication (17):

(17) Muḥammad shall be aware of God.

Now, providing that a series of commands has separated v.1 from v.7, after reaching the latter and arriving at conclusion (17), by applying the same inference each time a new command is introduced, recipients of the text will include all those commands in a list of the commands which Muḥammad will carry out, being one of the addressees of all commands occurring between v.1 and v.7. Furthermore, each time Muḥammad is addressed by

²² Blakemore, *Semantic Constraints*, p. 112.

the expression ‘O Prophet’, the same inference method will be applied as a result of combining the new information with assumption (15).

Thus, Muḥammad shall not follow the unbelievers and the hypocrites (combining v.1), and shall follow only God’s revelations, he shall not adopt sons, or allow this in the state which he rules (combining v.4), he shall not undertake or recognize any incidence of *ḡihār* (the prohibited fashion of divorce in v.4), and so on. The inclusion of each of these commands in the list is a contextual effect of the information provided by v.7 as shown. In this case, and in accordance with the idea that contextual effect is one major factor in determining relevance, v.7 is highly relevant because of the large number of contextual effects it has in understanding v.1 and the following verses of passage 1, but also all verses introduced with the marker ‘O Prophet’ in the rest of the *sūra*. The repetition of this marker is relevant, as it allows the re-activation of the assumption provided by v.7 each time it is repeated.

By the same notion, v.8 has a high contextual effect on vv.1-6, for it is concerned with all the believers, including the prophets, and anyone else among the community addressed by the verses, who claims to be one of the “men of truth”. Including the prophets does not add to the contextual effects only of v.8, but also of the generalization of “those men of truth” over all the believers across the history of humanity being addressed by God’s prophets. However, the contextual effect of v.7 reaches out to another part of the context of v.1, that is it emphasizes the controversy between the Prophet on one side and the unbelievers and the hypocrites on the opposite side. This is an effect which reaches its peak by the addition of more information presented in v.21 when the believers’ relation to the Prophet is defined in terms of “a good example”, a description whose effect influences the understanding of all the utterances that are concerned with the Prophet’s behaviour. Hence, understanding (19) will be widened by looking at it in the light of (18), where (18) is the information given in v.8 and (19) is that given in v.21:

(18) The honest will be forgiven, and the unbelievers will not.

(19) The honest should follow the good example of the Prophet’s behaviour.

In order to connect finally with (20), one of the implications derived earlier from v.1 and v.7, to derive the conclusion (21):

(20) The Prophet shall be aware of God and hence not follow the unbelievers or the hypocrites.

(21) The honest (men of truth) shall be aware of God and hence not follow the unbelievers or the hypocrites.

Now as the contextual effects of the information contained in vv. 7-8 on the passage to which they belong have become clear, I shall end this section of the study by indicating other references to that information in later passages. These are respectively: v.24 of the concluding sub-section of passage 2, vv.38-40 of the concluding sub-section of passage3, vv.45-48 i.e the whole of passage 4 and vv.62, 63, 66, 71 and 73 of the final passage. In each of these references, the information in vv.7-8 is repeated in a different way so that it contains further details regarding the same main information that is (18) above:

(18) The honest will be forgiven and the unbelievers will not.

In passage 1, I have explained the effect of vv.7-8, However, the information (18) contained in them seems to control the whole *sūra*. That is, details of the verses (i.e. prophets' missions with emphasis on Muḥammad's, and the fate of peoples depending on their positions regarding the messages brought to them by the Prophets) appear to be central to the *sūra*. Their almost consistent occurrence in the concluding parts of many passages gradually establishes a concept that is essential for understanding the total message of the *sūra*. Later, as I go further in my analysis of the passages, I shall shed more light on the vital and effective role played by those repeated assumptions in understanding *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* and forming its message.

Passage 2: vv.9-27

This passage extends over 19 verses, which makes it the longest passage in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*. The move from the previous passage to this one is marked, as usual, with the intensive form of vocation. However, the vocative changes this time to the believers. Believers are reminded in this section of

God's gift in supporting them on the Day of Trench²³. The battle is described from an unexpectedly non-historical point of view. That is, it does not form a linear narrative of a number of significant events that took place during the battle but on the contrary, merely refers to the different roles played by the different groups who were involved in the battle and the preparation for it (i.e. the confederates)²⁴. Let us read the verses before going any further in explaining their meanings and relations.

9- O YOU who have attained²⁵ to faith! Call to mind (remember) the blessings which God bestowed on you [at the time] when [enemy] hosts came down upon you, whereupon We let loose against them a stormwind and [heavenly] hosts that you could not see: yet God saw (knows) all that you did²⁶.

10- [Remember what you felt] When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when [your] eyes became dim and [your]

²³ 'The Day of the Trench' is the name of one of the battles where the Muslims of the Medina community stood against the unbelievers. The battle ended with victory for the Muslims, but it revealed many problems within their community such as the problem of the hypocrites. The latter is a Qur'anic term for those who used to claim to profess Islam but when matters became serious would withdraw, letting down their Muslim community. In the vulnerable stage of the Islamic State at that time, this group of people was capable of causing undesirable disruptions and annoyance to the Prophet and his followers.

²⁴ The title of the *sūra* is taken from this passage. However, that does not imply that the content of this particular passage is the main topic of the *sūra*. The concept of titled texts in old Arabic literature is quite different from that in other languages. A title of a long text or discourse was only set for the limited purpose of marking it, to be an available reference to the text. It might be taken from the mention of something significant or an unusually used word occurring during the course of the text. The meaning of one *sūra*'s title can be summarized in 'The *sūra* where such and such is mentioned'. Where "such" stands for a part of the contents whose mention distinguishes the *sūra* from other *sūras*.

²⁵ The translator represents the implication of the Arabic active participle used as a vocative in terms of the phrase "those who have attained". However the active participle in the Arabic verses is merely a vocative noun whose morphological form implies the meaning of intentionally conducting the action expressed in the verb from which the nominal morphological form known as active participle is derived. The form is used as a noun or an adjective in different grammatical contexts.

²⁶ All the evaluative comments of this kind are connected to their preceding sentences in virtue of the Arabic inter-sentential conjunction *and*, which, apparently, was assigned more weight than the conjunction means as such. This can be good material for analysis of the consequential and temporal *and* in Arabic and the wide variety of meanings assigned to them by interpreters. Asad translates them differently in each context in accordance with his understanding of the relation of the comment to the verse. In fact, the relevance of evaluative comments in the *sūra* is another very promising aspect for the study of

hearts came up to [your] throats, and [when] most conflicting thoughts about God passed through your minds: 11- [for] there and then were the believers tried (tested) and shaken with a shock severe.

*12- And [remember how it was] when the hypocrites and those with hearts diseased said [to one another], ‘God and His Apostle have promised us nothing but delusions!’ 13- and when some of them said ‘O you people of Yathrib! You cannot withstand [the enemy] here: hence, go back [to your homes]!’ whereupon a party from among them asked leave of the Prophet, saying, ‘Behold, our houses are exposed [to attack]!’ the while they were not [really] exposed: they wanted nothing but to flee.

14- Now if their town had been stormed, and they had been asked [by the enemy] to commit apostasy, [the hypocrites] would have done so without much delay.15- although ere that they had vowed before God that they would never turn their backs [on His message]: and a vow made to God must surely be answered for!

16- Say: ‘Whether you flee from [natural] death or from being slain [in a battle], flight will not profit you- for, however you fare, you are not [allowed] to enjoy life for more than a little while!’

17- Say: ‘Who is there that could keep you away from God if it be his will to harm you, or if it be his will to show you mercy?’ For, [do they not know that] besides God they can find none to protect them, and none to bring them succour?

18- God is indeed aware of those of you who would divert others [from fighting in His cause], as well as of those who say to their brethren, ‘come hither to us [and face the enemy]!’- the while they [themselves] join battle but seldom, 19- begrudging you all help. But then, when danger threatens, thou canst see them looking to thee [for help, O Prophet], their eyes rolling [in terror] like [the eyes of] one who is overshadowed by death: yet as soon as the danger has passed, they will

relevance, which is not treated in this study, since its main target is the relation between passages and not relations within verses.

assail you [believers] with sharp tongues, begrudging you all that is good!

[people like] these have never known faith – and therefore God will cause all their works to come to nought: for this is indeed easy for God.

20- They think that the Confederates have not [really] withdrawn; and should the confederates return, these [hypocrites] would prefer to be in the desert, among the bedouin, asking for news about you, [O believers, from far away;] and even were they to find themselves in your midst, they would but make pretence at fighting [by your side].

*21- VERILY, in the Apostle of God you have a good example for anyone who looks forward [with hope and awe] to God and the Last Day, and remembers God unceasingly.

22- and [so] when the believers saw the confederates [advancing against them] they said ‘This is what God and His Apostle have promised us!’- and ‘Truly spoke God and His Apostle!’- and all this but increased their faith and their readiness to surrender themselves unto God.

23- Among the believers are men who have [always] been true to what they have vowed before God; and among them are such as have [already] redeemed their pledge by death, and such as yet await [its fulfilment] without having changed [their resolve] in the least.

24- [Such trials are imposed upon men] for God may reward the truthful for having been true to their word, and cause the hypocrites to suffer- if that be His will- or [if they repent,] accept their repentance: for, verily, God is indeed much –forgiving, a dispenser of grace!

*25- Thus, for all their fury, God repulsed those who were bent on denying the truth; no advantage did they gain, since God was enough to [protect] the believers in battle- seeing that God is most powerful, almighty-; 26 and He brought down from their strongholds those of the followers of earlier revelation who had aided the aggressors, and cast terror into their hearts: some you slew, and some you made captive; 27- and he made you heirs to their lands, and their houses, and their goods- and [promised you] lands on which you had never yet set foot: for God has indeed the power to will anything.

The first group of people of which the verses speak is the believers, who are the addressees of vv.9-10 in the introductory sub-section, and those whom the speech will turn to address later in vv.25-26 of the concluding sub-section. The same type of turn occurred in the previous passage, where the addressee of the introductory sub-section was turned to again in the final sub-section, after a number of turns to other addressees during the two middle sub-sections. The fact that the first and the last verses of a passage are both directed to the same person(s) indicates a special relation between them.

In the 2-verse introduction the focus of the speech is the believers invoked in the vocative of the marker, as they are the referent of the addressee pronouns. Later in the passage, different groups of people take priority in the narrative as the focus moves from addressing the believers to emphasizing the position of other groups during the battle, i.e. the hypocrites who denied the promise they made earlier before God and his Apostle v.12, and lied to the latter, making up excuses not to take their share in the fighting. This move of focus is achieved by means of a number of pronoun turn-takings and incidences of *iltifāt* from the pronoun of one group to the pronoun of another, and from addressing people, to speaking of them to move up and down the positions they take in the narrative. The same sequence of pronouns lasts until almost the middle of sub-section 2, and then a sudden shift of addressee indicates a shift of focus stressing in the following two verses the likelihood that the hypocrites would abandon the state. Following this comes a series of pronoun shifts where the level of intensity of language varies and faster moves between focuses take place. These moves also allow the commentary sentences made by the narrative voice to occur every now and then as well as at the end of verses as usual. The quick shifts of focus, addressees and pronouns over a sequence of short sentences, together produce a high level of intensity and draws the hearer's attention by means of the consecutive stimulating interruptions of the ordinarily linear narrative. This mechanism reaches a peak of intensity in v.19 but after a short return to the regular narrative pronouns in v.20, another sudden pronoun shift takes place in v.21 to accompany the

introduction of a new sub-section, where the believers return to being the centre of attention with narration of their reaction to seeing the confederates, which lasts over verses 21-23 until the beginning of the final sub-section of the passage, v.24; “[Such trials are imposed upon men] so that God may reward the truthful for having been true to their word, and cause the hypocrites to suffer- if that be His will...”

Verse 24 explains the reason, introduced by the causal particle *li* لـ , in the same structure that we have come across before in v.8. This verse introduces the final sub-section concerned with the position of other groups with regard to the fight, namely the unbelievers and the people of the book in vv.25 and 26 respectively.

The section ends with a description of God’s grace upon the believers at the end of the battle, and here they become addressees of the verses again, but a pronoun shift at the end of v. 27 indicates the imminent subject switch. In sum, passage 2 consists of introductory, main and short concluding sub-sections, and is concluded by a generalized comment made by the narrator.

An explanatory sentence, appearing a few sentences before the final sub-section, gives rise to the relevance of the story in its context. This is v.24, being introduced with the causative particle لـ (therefore), which echoes v.8. Verse 8, in turn is grammatically connected to v.7 by virtue of the structure. The 3 verses 7, 8, 24 as well as all of passage 2, connect with the previous passage by several means. Firstly, in passage 2, the believers are put in opposition to the hypocrites and the unbelievers as main characters of the narrative, which is also the case in vv.7-8 as explained above. Secondly, in v.1 we see the Prophet in opposition to the same two groups, i.e. the hypocrites and the unbelievers. Bearing in mind the information provided by v.21, we can infer that: the believers, guided by their Prophet, refuse to belong to these groups of opponents. This connects passages 1 and 2 as a result of this interaction between information provided in their verses, as explained. Moreover, following their Prophet, believers disobey the unbelievers and the hypocrites (v.1), hold on to their belief and follow God’s revelations (v.2) in order to be rewarded in the end as promised by

God in v.22 and many other verses in several places in the *sūra*. Accordingly, believers also carry out several commands which will follow later in the *sūra*, directed to both themselves and the Prophet.

A further insight to the relevance of this passage lies in the fact that it is mostly concerned with distinguishing the believers from the unbelievers and the hypocrites. The distinction is achieved by virtue of the remembrance of the Day of the Trench from another perspective. Notably, the whole passage begins by asking the believers to remember God's blessing upon them during that day. The narrative in the passage emphasizes the betrayal of the hypocrites, their lies and their hatred towards the believers. It would be rather redundant to think that the story is brought into the *sūra* to narrate history to those who were present during the actual events, i.e. the believers who shared in the fight. In fact, the narrative does not record the story as such, but rather the fact that the hypocrites took an entirely opposite and undesirable stand from Muslims when the situation between Muslims and the unbelievers became so complicated that it led to a battle where real fighting would have distinguished the truthful, in their promises to God and his Apostle, from those who were not. Does this reminder, then, add something to the context of the *sūra*? The passage adds to the believers' knowledge the information that hypocrites, as described in the passage through the events surrounding the battle, are an enemy of the Muslim community, and hence it clarifies the reason for the command in vv.1-2, that is not to trust any but God, and to disobey those who take the stand of the enemy, and not to listen to their claims.

Passage 3: vv.28-40

28- O PROPHET! Say unto thy wives: 'If you desire [but] the life of this world and its charm-well, then, I shall provide for you and release you in a becoming manner; 29- but if you desire God and His Apostle, and [thus the good of] the life in the hereafter, then [know that], verily, for doers of good among you God has readied a mighty reward!'

***30- O wives of the Prophet! If any of you were to become guilty of manifestly immoral conduct, double [that of other sinners] would be her suffering [in the hereafter]: for that is indeed easy for God. 31- But if any of you devoutly obeys God and His Apostle and does good deeds, on her shall we bestow her reward twice-over: for We shall have readied for her a most excellent sustenance [in the life to come].**

***32- O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any of the [other] women, provided that you remain [truly] conscious of God. Hence, be not over-soft in your speech, lest any whose heart is diseased should be moved to desire [you]: but, withal, speak in a kindly way. 33- And abide quietly in your homes, and do not flaunt your charms as they used to flaunt them in the old days of pagan ignorance; and be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle: for God only wants to remove from you all that might be loathsome, O you members of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you to utmost purity.**

34- And bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of God's messages and [His] wisdom: for God is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware.

***35- VERILY, for all men and woman who have surrendered themselves unto God, and all believing men and women, and all truly devout men and truly devout women, and all men and women who are true to their word, and all men and women who are patient in adversity, and all men and women who humble themselves [before God], and all men and women who give in charity, and all self-denying men and women, and all men and women who are mindful of their chastity, and all men and women who remember God unceasingly: for [all of] them has God readied forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward.**

36- Now²⁷ whenever God and His Apostle have decided a matter, it is not for a believing man or a believing woman to claim freedom of choice insofar as they themselves are concerned: for he who [thus]

²⁷ The Arabic text of this verse does not start with 'now' but this is the translator's interpretation of the re-opening *and* in this context.

rebels against God and His Apostle has already, most obviously gone astray.

***37- AND LO, [O Muhammad,] thou didst say unto the one to whom God has shown favour and to whom thou hadst shown favour, ‘hold on to thy wife, and remain conscious of God!’ And [thus] wouldst thou hide within thyself something that God was about to bring to light - for thou didst stand in awe of [what] people [might think], whereas it was God alone of whom thou shouldst have stood in awe! [But] then, when *Zayd* had come to the end of his union with her, We gave her to thee in marriage, so that [in future] no blame should attach to the believers for [marrying] the spouses of their adopted children when the latter have come to the end of their union with them. And [thus] God’s will was done.**

ˆ38-[Hence] no blame whatever attaches to the Prophet(s)²⁸ [having done] what God has ordained for him (them). [Indeed, such was] God’s way with those that have passed away aforetime – and [remember that] God’s will is always destiny absolute-; 39- [and such will always be his way with] those who convey God’s messages [to the world], and stand in awe for him, and hold none but God in awe: for none can take count [of man’s doings] as God does!

40- [And know, O believers, that] Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is God’s Apostle and the Seal of all Prophets. And God has indeed full knowledge of everything.

The passage is remarkably different from the previous one in terms of both content and information structure. The organization of the sub-sections in relation to one another is also quite unusual, in the sense that it does not maintain the normal pattern: introduction - main subject - conclusion. However, the beginning of the passage is marked with the same paragraph marker, *yā 'ayyuhā*, but the addressee of the passage changes from the believers, in the preceding passage, to the Prophet. Changing the vocative

²⁸ See the discussion of the meaning of the definite article here, later in the discussion of v.38.

introduces another change of the matters of concern in the passage to those related to the Prophet.

Moreover, the repetition of the word Prophet recalls all the information about him that has been given since the beginning of the *sūra*. The passage consists of 4 sub-sections, the second of which starts with the emphatic particle for a nominal sentence (a sentence which describes a state of affairs), the third with the re-opening *and* followed by *when*, and the last with no marker at all. However the first sentence of this last sub-section is in an emphatic form of negation. Only the first and the second sub-section contain similar material in terms of content. Verse 36 in the middle of the passage allows the move from the second sub-section to the following one, and vv.38-40 close the passage with material related to the Prophet Muḥammad and his position among other prophets as well as among his contemporaries.

In the first sub-section, the tone of speech varies from softer with promises to those who do good (v.31), and firmer as verses contain warnings or commands to their addressees accompanied with justifications in vv.30 and 32-34.

It is difficult, however, by superficial consideration to see the relation between ‘*Harem regulations*’, if we would adopt the title given by Bell to this part of the passage, and a *sūra* mainly concerned with the hypocrites. But, one can argue that this difficulty is only at a superficial level for a number of reasons, as there are several indications of the connectivity of this sub-section with other passages of the *sūra*, despite its being concerned with the Prophet’s family, and the use of the word *al-nabiyy* here is a starting point in clarifying this link. A second point is the organization of information included in the sub-section. In the first verse, the Prophet is addressed with a request: “O Prophet, say unto your wives..” followed by a number of instructions to the wives, which is where the information of the sub-section is actually provided. The beginning of the sub-section is addressed to the Prophet although the “actual” (the one who is addressed with the information) addressee is not the Prophet but rather his wives.

However, later in the following sentence, a pronoun turn-taking can be seen, as the speech now reports the Prophet speaking to his wives: “If you desire the life of this world and its charms, then I shall provide for you and release you in a becoming way”, so that the addressee of the passage has changed as well as the speaker. Changing the pronoun in this way also functions as an alternative to the brackets of the direct speech report, which are not used in Arabic script. The pronoun turn-taking goes in the following sequence:

1- God – The Prophet

2- The Prophet – The wives

And later in vv.30–34, reference is made to both God and the Prophet in the third person, which confuses or rather unifies their voices, focusing on the contents of the instructions themselves rather than their source, and the only explicit pronoun is the addressees.

The sequence shown in 1, 2 replaces the normally expected sequence where God would address people directly. There are instances, in this *sūra*, of God addressing people other than the Prophet, and He addresses the wives themselves in the same sub-section, if we consider it His voice, in vv.30-34. Let us have a look at the contents of these verses, where God addresses the wives directly, as perhaps a comparison between the two types of information can shed some light on the answer to our question, why is this unusual form of addressing the wives used in these verses? In v.30 God turns to the wives saying: “O’ wives of the Prophet! If any of you were to become guilty of manifestly immoral conduct, double [that of other sinners] would be her suffering [in the hereafter]; for that is indeed easy for God.” The verb (to make the suffering double) in the sentence is in its passive form and God is not attributing it to Himself, unlike many other verses that contain warnings throughout the Qur’ān.

The second verse where God addresses the wives in direct vocation is v.32: “O wives of the Prophet you are not like any of the [other] women, provided that you remain [truly] conscious of God. Hence, be not over-soft in your speech, lest any whose heart is diseased should be moved to desire [you]: but, withal, speak in a kindly way.” Verses then continue addressing the wives in the same voice, where it is not quite clear whether it is God’s voice

or the Prophet's or both. However, it is likely to be God, for there is no explicit sign to the contrary, and since He is the initial speaker of the whole Qur'ān we can assume it is His voice, without fear of changing the meaning. In this group of verses, God addresses the wives with His commands, warnings and promises and finishes with justifying the commands, addressing them directly and making an explicit reference to Himself by the name God: "...and be consistent in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle: for God only wants to remove from you all that might be loathsome, O you members of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you to utmost purity. And bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of God's messages and [His] wisdom: for God in unfathomable [in his wisdom], all-aware." (vv.33-34).

Thus, the second group of verses where God addresses the wives directly is when he directs his commands followed by their justifications, which clarifies to the receivers of the commands the reasons behind them. Now, it is clear that God addresses the wives with warnings, commands, and their justifications. Then, why does He address them indirectly? But, does He, indeed, address them indirectly or does He address the Prophet? In fact, since the vocative is to the Prophet, the speech is, then, addressed to him asking him to convey a certain message to his wives: "If you desire ... then I shall.. and release you in a becoming way.."(v.28) Now let us rephrase our question in terms of relevance.

What is the contextual effect of attributing the verb in this verse (the verb of divorce) to the Prophet and putting the speech on his lips although it is a command coming from God?

By recalling the entry of divorce in Islamic law one can provide the following assumption:

(22) Divorce is men's responsibility in the first place²⁹.

So, if a marriage relation is to be broken then it will, at the official level, be broken by the male side of the relation since he bears all the legal

²⁹ A possible source for such an assumption is *sūra* 2, vv.236-237.

consequences, officially, financially, and socially, if there are any³⁰. That is expressed in assumption (23) following from (22) above:

(23) If a man divorces his wife, he has to bear all the legal and social consequences.

By application of (23) to the case in the verses, one can conclude (24):

(24) If the Prophet's marriage is to be broken, he will divorce the wife and will have to bear all the responsibilities.

By addition of the contextual assumption (25) provided from one's knowledge of the social norm, it becomes naturally accepted that the Prophet, being the one who will actually undertake the action of divorce should himself inform his wives of any related issues, as a part of his responsibility:

(25) One who takes the responsibility for things should speak for himself.

But regulations in Islam come from only one source, i.e. God, through revelations, hence his introducing the matter via the Prophet, as a member of the Muslim community whose life has to be guided by instructions from God. However, Muḥammad is not an ordinary member of the Muslim community, but the Apostle whose main stand should be to be conscious of God and whose life is the example which should be followed by the other members of the community. Therefore, the regulations on his social life are more stringent than those on other Muslims' lives which explains why he is the particular addressee of this piece of regulation and why it is not later generalized to all Muslims, as is the case with other regulations introduced in the *sūra*. However, many other verses in the *sūra* are concerned with regulations for Muḥammad and his family, some of which are generalized in virtue of later changes of addressees or other forms of pronoun turn-takings, while some remain limited to the Prophet and his household. In both cases, the Prophet remains the addressee of the instructions as he is the

³⁰ This is the general case, although there are many exceptions in which the wife bears that responsibility, fully or partly. However, the general rule remains the most regular one, especially in accordance with the special circumstances in which the *sūra* was revealed. There was no possibility that any of the special cases would apply for the question was of the Prophet divorcing his wives not of one of them asking for divorce. Also, the situation

messenger and the one who delivers them for he was sent to be: “a witness, herald of glad tidings and a warner, and as one who summons [all men] to God by His leave, and as a light-giving beacon.” vv.45-46.

Now I shall go back to the earlier discussion of the relevance of this sub-section as such. The word Prophet connects with the word prophets in verse 7, as well as with a later occurrence in verse 30 of the passage currently being analyzed. Each repetition of the word *al-nabiyy* (the Prophet) gives access to all the information provided about the same word in all the other contexts where it was previously used. If the message of these sub-sections is the one in (26) then the information conveyed by v. 1 and v. 7 about *al-nabiyy* provides the assumption in (27) which explains why (26) would take place. It is easy to understand (26) in the light of (27) if one has an access to the assumption (28) from knowledge of theology in the Qur’ān. Consider the context of these three assumptions as follows:

(26) The Prophet’s wives have to follow special regulations in their social life. (v.36-38).

(27) The Prophet is someone who has made a pledge to God and who is especially conscious of Him.

(28) Prophets have more restrictions on their lives than normal people and their reward is, in turn, greater.

The Prophet’s wives are addressed not as ordinary individuals in Muslim society, but as people who are closely related and committed to someone who is defined in (27) above. The contextual effect of passage 3, then, is increased by adding the information in v.1 and v.7 and at the same time the context of the latter is being developed gradually as more information is added to it whilst the text proceeds. This view is confirmed by additional information from the context given in v.34: “And bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of God’s messages and wisdom”, a verse that introduces a privilege of being part of the family of this particular person (the Prophet) and is, moreover, part of the justification of the preceding commands to the wives.

described in the verse in question is in accordance with the general rule, for it is about the Prophet taking the initiative and not vice versa.

To conclude, passage 3 is not merely about the regulation of the *harem* as suggested by Bell quoted above, but increases the recipients' knowledge of the character of *al-nabiyy* by virtue of detailing what regulations should govern his family's social life, and at the same time, draws the lines of the social model for Muslim women to follow from the Prophet's own life. There are still further regulations to come in the *sūra*. The choice that the wives make (vv.28-29) will determine their acceptance or refutation of those further regulations. In this way, vv.28-29 in this passage provide a context for later regulations from v.53 onwards. This choice restricts the group of the wives concerned with any further regulations, as the permitted option of divorce excludes those who take it from whatever is directed to the Prophet's household only. All the regulations and their justifications form a final picture of the social life of the Prophet Muḥammad and his household. The lexical repetition of "Great reward" at the end of vv. 29 and 35, links those who do good amongst the wives to those who do good amongst all Muslims by virtue of attributing to all of them a great reward.

In v.35 a slightly different subject is introduced with a new pronoun shift, i.e. as the scope of the commands is enlarged to cover the righteous of all kinds not merely among the Prophet's wives, but among the whole society, as the addressee pronouns disappear and all Muslims become spoken-of.

In this verse, a promise of a great reward and mercy is made and immediately followed in the next verse by a generalized rule that no believer, whether male or female (notice the separation between the two genders continues in verse 36 although it is not the usual form of speaking about a third person for the masculine is always a general form understood to include both males and females), has the right to disagree or to freely make a personal choice when God and His apostle have decided a matter. The verse states that whoever does otherwise has "gone astray". At the beginning of verse 36, the structure of the verbal sentence "decided a matter" is ambiguous. It might imply that a certain matter had been subject to debate and had finally been sorted out as the use of the perfect form of the verb 'decided' *قضی* indicates, or it could be taken as a reference to the

problematic issue of the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab, the divorced wife of Zayd who had been adopted by the Prophet before the prohibition of adoption in vv.4-5 of the *sūra*, which is also the subject of the immediately following verse (v.37).

The ending of v.37 suggests the latter interpretation as it finishes the summary of this issue by the final comment: "and God's will was done" وكان أمر الله مفعولا using for 'will' the same indefinite object أمر as the preceding verse. Moreover, the use of the possessive *idāfah* in أمر الله which can mean 'God's will', or 'God's decision', supports the idea that أمر الله refers to the decision referred to in the earlier verse, which makes the interpretation: 'that أمر of His was/is done'. However the absence of any demonstrative that would have solved the problem by making the reference of the second repetition explicit retains the proverbial characteristic of the final comments in all verses and leaves the meaning of the earlier verse as a general rule in Islam applicable to any possible situation. Nevertheless, this interpretation is not quite consistent with observation of the pronoun shifts. The subjects of vv.35–36 remain constant and are spoken of rather than addressed, but a new shift takes place in v.37 where the Prophet becomes the addressee. However, the final judgmental statement is generalized, has no addressee and retains the regular narrative tone. Not only do the pronoun shifts not help in resolving the problem of connection between vv.36 and 37, but neither does the subject-switch marker. Verse 37 is introduced by a minor subject switch-marker which indicates that it is a sub-section of a passage, unless we reconsider the role of *وَإِذْ* and *when* as a marker whose use is limited to the minor switches of subjects, which is not supported by any other instance in the *sūra*.

Verse 37 is connected to v.4 although it is placed in another passage. This connection is expressed in terms of the content of the two verses: the prohibition of adoption in v.4 diminishes Muḥammad's relation to Zayd as a father, and hence v.37 makes Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab lawful. The addition of the information that Zayd had been adopted by the Prophet

Muḥammad when the *sūra* was revealed leads to the result that Muḥammad's adoption of Zayd no longer exists as a result of enforcing the new legislation in v.4. The verses do not mention that Zayd is not Muḥammad's son, but the inference of this result is considered natural. Now, I shall explain the process through which hearers arrive at this conclusion.

(29) Adoption is no longer lawful for Muslims. (v.4)

(29) is information given in v.4 which was revealed among people who had or had access to the contextual information in (30) because of their mixing with a society in which it was known as a fact.

(30) Zayd is Muḥammad's son by adoption.

But Muḥammad, being previously addressed in v.1 as one who is conscious of God, will follow what is instructed to him in God's revelations (reference to the Qur'ān). Now, having inferred (30), the recipients of the Qur'ān are entitled to infer (31) and consequently conclude (32):

(31) Muḥammad is going to immediately enforce the new legislation.

(32) Zayd is not Muḥammad's son.

All recipients now know that the diminished social relation was merely uttered speech and has no grounds in the reality of things.

In short, passage 1, specifically vv.4-5, puts forward new legislation which acts as a source for contextual information to help in understanding the legitimate nature of the Prophet's relation to Zaynab, which is declared later in the *sūra* in v.37. The message in the latter is then completed by a final confirmation in v.40, whose understanding is also made accessible by information from vv.4-5. It is also worth mentioning that v. 37 is central to the message of the *sūra*, as it participates in informing the recipients about the Prophet's social and personal life, which is one of a number of main concepts that the information given throughout the *sūra* develops. However, v.40 is central to understanding one of the main pillars of Islamic theology phrased in the Qur'ān, that is Muḥammad's role in the history of God's

prophets, which is another concept whose development is accomplished through understanding this *sūra*.

Verse 40 is the last verse of the final sub-section of passage 3, that is vv.38-40.

***38-[Hence] no blame whatever attaches to the Prophet(s)³¹ [having done] what God has ordained for him (them). [Indeed, such was] God's way with those that have passed away aforetime – and [remember that] God's will is always destiny absolute;- 39- [and such will always be his way with] those who convey God's messages [to the world], and stand in awe for him, and hold none but God in awe: for none can take count [of man's doings] as God does!**

40- [And know, O believers, that] Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is God's Apostle and the Seal of all Prophets. And God has indeed full knowledge of everything.

The verses raise a number of issues related to our discussion of relations. In the first verse (38) the translation of the grammatical subject of the sentence may differ according to the double semantic meaning of the Arabic definite article *al*. If *al* is *عهدية* i.e. refers to the same person of whom the text has been speaking recently, then the translation of the subject will be 'the Prophet' and the referent of it will be understood as Muḥammad. In this case the connection of the verse will be mainly to the immediately preceding verse (37): **37- AND LO, [O Muhammad,] thou didst say unto the one whom God has shown favour and to whom thou hadst shown favour, 'Hold on to thy wife, and remain conscious of God!' And [thus] wouldst thou hide within thyself something that God was about to bring to light - for thou didst stand in awe of [what] people [might think], whereas it was God alone of whom thou shouldst have stood in awe! [But] then, when *Zayd* had come to the end of his union with her, We gave her to thee in marriage, so that [in future] no blame should attach to the believers for [marrying] the spouses of their adopted children**

³¹ See the discussion of the meaning of the definite article here, later in the analysis of this section.

when the latter have come to the end of their union with them. And [thus] God's will was done.

Hence, the contextual effect of the word 'the Prophet' will be limited to the context of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab, and hence the domain of effect of the whole verse following the scope of its grammatical subject. The implication of v.38 in this case will be (34), by the addition of (32) information that is in the verse, to (33) an assumption provided by the previous verse, as follows:

(32) No blame will be attached to Muḥammad for doing what God facilitated him to.

(33) God has allowed Muḥammad to marry Zaynab.

(34) No blame will be attached to Muḥammad for his marriage with Zaynab.

The implication (34) fits well in its context, but does not maximize the contextual effect of the verse especially since it would be difficult to understand the rest of the verse in the light of (34). Hence, I suggest another understanding of the meaning of the definite article, which is its second meaning when *al* is جنسية i.e. it refers to all and any individuals of the kind.

In this case *al* equals the English 'a', hence the translation will be: 'a prophet'. This suggests the inclusion of all prophets, and hence considerably increases the contextual effect of the word.

It is still possible to conclude (34) above since Muḥammad is one of the prophets, but also allows for the use of assumption (35) in developing the information included under the entry of "prophets" firstly introduced by assumption (36) taken from v.7 above, and hence yields the improved picture (37):

(35) No blame can be attached to prophets for using what God facilitated them to.

(36) Prophets are people who have made a pledge to God.

(37) Prophets are people who have made a pledge to God and to whom He has given certain facilities of which they can freely make use.

This meaning also allows understanding of the following utterance in the verse: “that is God’s way with those who have passed away aforetimes”, where “those” will be understood as reference to “the prophets”, and أمر الله (God’s will/decision/order) the possessive *idāfah* discussed earlier will have a wider range of meaning and therefore becomes more effective in its context, rather than being limited to the reference to God’s will in Muḥammad’s marriage. Assigning *al* its second meaning is more consistent with the principle of relevance and hence will be our chosen interpretation.

Thus, the relative pronoun that starts v.39 will be taken as a reference to the prophets who have passed away and the sentence will be a continuation of that in v.38, and will add new information to the picture/concept of the prophets, explaining the pledge that they have paid to God as being: to deliver God’s messages and fear no one but Him. Notably, this new item of information has implications not only on the context of v.7 (where the pledge is mentioned) but also on vv.1-3 and the other verses where the theme of vv.2-3 is repeated.

Consider the following sequence which explains these implications:

A. The entry of the prophets so far contains the following information:

1. Prophets are people who have made a pledge to God
2. Among God’s prophets are Noah; Moses; Jesus the son of Mary; and Muḥammad.
3. God has facilitated these people to certain things.
4. No blame will be attached to them if they use their facilities.
5. Prophets convey God’s messages.
6. Prophets fear no one but God.

B. The entry of Muḥammad so far contains the following information:

1. Muḥammad is one of God’s prophets.
2. Muḥammad should not follow anyone but only revelations from God.
3. Muḥammad has made a pledge to God.
4. Muḥammad is not Zayd’s father.

C. By combining information from A & B one arrives at the following conclusions:

1. Muḥammad does not fear anyone but God.
2. Muḥammad does not fear unbelievers and hypocrites.
3. Muḥammad will not obey/follow unbelievers and hypocrites out of fear.
(by adding the assumption that one might obey people out of fear, provided from one's knowledge of the world)
4. Muḥammad will use what God has facilitated him to without fear of blame from anyone.

Verse 40 adds information to these entries which are gradually developing as shown above.

Firstly, the description of Muḥammad as no one's father but the seal (final one) of the prophets confirms a number of assumptions achieved earlier;

1. Muḥammad is not Zayd's father. (if he is not the father of any of their men, and Zayd is one of their men then he cannot be Zayd's father)
2. Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab is certainly lawful (re-emphasizing this information by means of confirming the assumption above, which leads to deriving it)
3. Muḥammad is one of the prophets (again emphasizing the attribution of all that is said about the prophets to Muḥammad).
4. Muḥammad is the last prophet (adding one more item of information to the entry of the prophets i.e. Muḥammad is the final prophet).

By the time the recipients reach this stage of their inference of information about Muḥammad, the prophets, and social events in Medina during the time of the *sūra*, they are obviously starting to establish a detailed picture of these issues and to log them into the encyclopaedic entries in their cognitive environment.

The development of these concepts, and the enrichment of the entries including them continues throughout the *sūra*, and in fact, at a more complex level, throughout the entire Qur'ān. In the remaining part of this

study, I shall shed more light on these concepts and their gradual development through the relations between the various passages of the *sūra*. So far, it has been established that the *sūra* consists of 10 passages, each of which contains information on an aspect of the life of Muḥammad and the Medina community. At a formal level, it has been shown that each passage begins with a major subject-switch marker and has minor-subject switch markers at the beginning of most of its sub-sections. The use of pronouns throughout the text was to a large extent related to the changes in content within passages, sub-sections and even verses. The use and distribution of these linguistic tools was a guide in explaining the contextual relations between verses in many cases. Content of the passages varies, as well as their length, and hence the number of verses and grammatical sentences and consequently the number of contextual effects, i.e. the information in each passage that adds details to a number of contexts which, in turn, form parts of the overall context that the recipients of the Qur'ān already have in their minds. The information in each passage aims to add to or to modify these contexts in order to gradually establish certain concepts and reform some existing ones in accordance with the total goal of the Qur'anic text. These concepts are developed as a result of the process of continuous modification as more verses occur. This, in fact, applies to both the Qur'ān and the individual *sūra*. Through the process of reading the Qur'ān during Islamic worship rituals, and as an independent act of worship that Muslims practise, the inference process continues and concepts are all the time both filtered and developed. Simultaneously, the contextual effects between earlier and later information interact as the border lines between them somehow become vague and hardly recognizable, and what remains of the text is the concepts and their influences on Muslims' lives and thought.

In this *sūra* the following concepts have been developed so far:

1. The Prophet Muḥammad:

Muḥammad is one of God's prophets, who has made a pledge to God and hence has to follow His revelations out of faithfulness to that pledge. He also has to disobey the hypocrites and the unbelievers, as they are the

enemies of the Muslim community whose leader he is. At a social and personal level, Muḥammad has no son and has a higher claim on his followers' property.

He also has the right to marry women from the Muslim community, but all these rights are ruled by regulations revealed to him in the Qur'ān. However, his wives in turn have to meet some harder requirements and make harder choices in order to qualify for their high social position as mothers of all the believers. Muḥammad's mission is limited to being the final prophet, a mission which will soon be more specifically defined in the *sūra* in terms of what he has to do and what he should not do because of the nature of his position.

2. Prophets of God and their Messages:

Prophets of God are people who have pledged to God that they would convey his messages faithfully and fear no one but Him. Muḥammad is the last of the prophets. And they are all sent to people to inform them of God's commands and to warn them that God will question the faithful and the unfaithful as to their deeds in this life, and the Day of Judgement.

3. Relations between Members of the Muslim Community:

Muslims are related to one another by means of brotherhood in faith which is a lawful type of artificial relation between people in their community. On the other hand, they are allowed to practise other kinds of relations that are specified in the *sūra*, and prohibited from others. One lawful relation is kinship from which rights of inheritance follow. Adoption is not a lawful type of relation, for people are sons and daughters only of those who are their real parents and hence no inheritance can follow from adoption. Other artificial relations are, however, lawful, such as the Prophet's wives' motherhood towards Muslims. This is peculiar type of relation from which no inheritance may follow but only the social commitment of mutual respect and prohibition of marriage. On the other hand, brotherhood in faith may cause neither restrictions on marriage nor rights of inheritance. Only kinship can give rise these two consequences. Finally, one relation is given priority above all other relations, whether artificial or natural. That is the relation

between the Prophet and the believers, i.e. his followers. The Prophet has a higher claim on their property and their adherence. However, there is no mention of any rights of his over their wives, which means that this goes under the basic rules of relations between believers in respect of each other's wives, which are mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'ān.

Later in this *sūra*, further details concerning women lawful to believers for marriage and the believers' relation to the Prophet and his family will be given.

4. Hypocrites and Unbelievers as Opposed to the Believers:

This concept applies to life in the society of Medina and in the hereafter. There were two types of people who had taken an opposing stand to the growing Muslim community in Medina (between 5 and 7AH when the *sūra* was revealed). Their opposition was not of an intellectual nature but rather practical in the form of several attempts to destroy the community on a number of occasions, in battles and otherwise. (This is information from the historical context). However, the hypocrites did not express their opposition in an explicit manner, and hence many verses in several places of the Medinan Qur'ān were concerned with warning Muslims of their attitude on the basis of evidence from their behaviour on various occasions. In this *sūra*, the evidence was taken from the way they acted during the Day of the Trench, and references are also made later in the *sūra* to other disruptions they caused to the settlement of the Muslim community. Verses also explain the positions of other groups in the same battle in order to establish distinctions between those who belong to the Muslim community, those who oppose it and those who somehow stay neutral. The Prophet is ordered not to follow the opponents, a command which is established later through the clarification of the above distinction.

As a result of this distinction, and the different attitudes of the groups towards the truth, believers throughout the history of humanity and religions, will be generously rewarded in contrast to the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites, who will suffer as a punishment for their dishonesty expressed in their rejection of God's messages. This latter part of the

concept is developed in a number of other places in the Qur'ān to which the information in this *sūra* adds details and confirmation.

5. Relations between the Prophet Muḥammad and the Believers:

This is a special case of the relations between the believers, which takes place when one of the persons involved in the relation is the Prophet and not an ordinary individual. The Prophet Muḥammad is a good example for the believers, and so they are expected to follow his practice throughout their lives. More details will also be added to this concept later in the *sūra*.

These are the main concepts established in the first 3 passages of the *sūra*. It will be seen that the following 6 passages all add details (in the form of commands, justifications, rules and restrictions, or facts and evaluative comments made by the narrator) extensively and persistently, or reform existing mental concepts of practical applications related to aspects demonstrated earlier. In addition, the contexts of all the items of information which I have included in the summary above, are enriched with historical or traditional information involving certain events and assumptions from elsewhere in the Qur'ān. The final passage rounds off all the concepts and closes the discussion.

In the following part of the study, I shall explain further aspects of the relations between the passages, in the light of their contribution to the development of the concepts previously dealt with. The following diagram summarizes the role of each passage in regard to information distribution as explained above.

Diagram 5

**The Relation between Distribution of Information over the Passages
and the Concepts Developed in the *sūra***

Introducing and	establishing new	concepts
Passage 1	1-8	New concepts 1: Muslims versus the hypocrites and the unbelievers, social relations in the Muslim

		society, the prophets' roles and the fate of their peoples.
Passage2	9-27	New concepts 2: The hypocrites' hostile towards Muslims.
Passage3	28-40	New concepts 3: the truth of the Prophet Muḥammad's family life issues and regulations for it.
New information	Detailing and confirming	the new concepts
Passage4	41-44	Rewards to the believers among the prophets' peoples.
Passage5	45-48	The Prophet's role
Passage6	49	Further regulations of marriage: divorce
Passage7	50-52	More regulations for the Prophet's marriage relations (clarifying the truth in the rumours spread by the Hypocrites)
Passage8	53-58	Limits of social mixing and relation between the Prophet and the believers & declaring harm and disturbance, of any kind, as a prohibited attitude in the relations between people in the Muslim society.

Passage9	59	Details of special social behavior of women, to avoid being exposed to any harm.
Passage10	60-73	Rounds off all the above concepts

A comparison between the diagram above and diagram 1, reflects the impact of the difference in the methods of understanding the relations between passages of the *sūra*. The first is a topic-based method which limits the meaning to the topic of each passage and results in separate topics whose interrelations one fails to see. The second, which is the method suggested in this study, focuses on a deeper level of relations between the passages as explained above. It explains the relations of each passage after the first in terms of its contribution to the understanding of information provided by preceding passages and nothing in the text is redundant unless the interpreter fails to access the necessary assumptions for the recovery of its effect on the context.

Here, it is the interpreter's responsibility to find the missing assumption because the utterance itself is guaranteed to be relevant since it is part of an act of ostensive communication.

In the following, I shall briefly explain the relations of the other passages of the *sūra* to the previously introduced concepts.

Passage 4: vv.41-44

41- O you who have attained faith! Remember God with unceasing remembrance,

42- and extol His limitless glory from morn to evening.

43- He it is who bestows his blessings upon you, with His angels [echoing Him], so that He takes you out of the depths of darkness into the light.

And indeed, a dispenser of grace is He unto the believers.

44- On the day when they meet Him, they will be welcomed with the greeting “Peace”; and He will have readied for them a most excellent reward (readied for them an honoring/generous reward).

The passage returns to the believers as the vocative of the paragraph marker. The believers are addressed in the passage with information about their duties towards God. These duties are consequences of the belief which they have deliberately chosen. Their deliberate choice of their belief is implied in the use of the verb “believed” which was translated into “attained belief” as a part of the vocative structure that marks the paragraph. Use of the verbal form requires a subject who is the doer of the verb. People take responsibility for what they do, and hence the use of the verbal form of the word instead of a possible noun phrase alternative.

The religious duties described in the passage are of a spiritual nature, such as the continuous remembrance of God, and they are followed by the rewards occurring to the believers as a result of their fulfilling these ritual duties.

The verses construct a new aspect of the concept of the God/believers dialectic relation. Where Muslims remember God and glorify Him day and night (in various forms: spiritual; ritual; and practical as provided by the extended illumination of these types of worship in several places in the Qur’ān) God, in return, blesses them, and so do His angels. He guides them from darkness to light (a frequently used Qur’anic analogy where darkness stands for atheism or ignorance of the truth of God and light stands for the right understanding and belief in God’s unity.)

This aspect of the relation between believers and God, in its position in the *sūra*, provides the context for new items of information which, according to our understanding of the textual relations, must be providing assumptions for understanding some following utterances. However, the passage also relates to the preceding concepts by means of its addition to one’s knowledge about the believers (as opposed to unbelievers and hypocrites), and as a part of a wider context which is the total of the entry for believers in the Qur’ān.

The last verse of the passage especially connects with v.8 where the fate of both the believers and the unbelievers is touched upon, and all the other verses with elements of the same entry e.g. 21; 24; 35. Moreover, v.41 echoes v.21 where the Prophet is said to be the good example for whoever believes in God and the Day of Judgement, and remembers God unceasingly. The unceasing remembrance of God is in the form of a command to believers in v.41 and a description of those who follow the example of Muḥammad in v.21. What does that add to the context? Let us consider the following sequence where the information provided by v.21 interacts with that provided in v. 41, and the result of their interaction is assumption (40) which increases the recipients' knowledge about the believers. It also explains how the contexts of v.21 and the v.41 relate together not simply because of the repetition, but because the repetition adds to the recipients' assumptions about the concepts developed in the *sūra*:

(38) Those who remember God unceasingly follow the good example of Muḥammad. (from v.21)

(39) Believers should remember God unceasingly. (from v. 41)

(40) Believers follow the good example of Muḥammad.

The conclusion (40) confirms an assumption which was previously developed, from v.21, that it is part of Muḥammad's relation to the believers that they follow his way in life.

Verse 21 then provides an assumption for understanding v.41. On the other hand, the conclusion derived from the combination of v.21 and v.41 confirms another assumption previously derived from v.21. This is the way in which the passage interacts with other passages in the *sūra*. There are, however, more effects which it has in understanding further verses in the *sūra*, and these will gradually be realized as I use assumptions from the passage in explaining some later verses.

Passage 5: vv.45-48

- 45- O Prophet- behold³², We have sent thee as a witness [to the truth],
and as a herald of glad tidings and a warner,**
- 46- and as one who summons [all men] to God by his leave, and as a
light giving beacon.**
- 47- And [so] convey the believers the glad tiding that a great bounty
from God awaits them;**
- 48- And defer not to [the likes and dislikes of] the deniers of the truth
(the unbelievers) and hypocrites, and disregard their hurtful talk
(let go any harm), and place thy trust in God: for none is as worthy
of trust as God.**

The passage turns to addressing the Prophet Muḥammad as a vocative of the major subject marker. The speaker's pronoun is made explicit in *'innā*: the combination of the grammatical subject of the sentence and the emphatic speech initial particle. God refers to Himself in the royal first person plural attached to the emphatic *'inna*.

The passage consists of 4 verses, the information in the first 2 verses concerns the mission of Muḥammad and refers to it in a more definite manner than earlier in the *sūra* e.g. vv.7, 21 where understanding the role of Muḥammad was by inference and not through the explicit proposition in the verse. The verses assign a number of definitions to Muḥammad's mission: witness, herald of glad tidings, warner, one who summons to God and a light-giving beacon, and the meaning of the verses is made explicit by the use of the active participle form of the noun, a morphological form used for the noun of the doer (a form in which the one whose responsibility it is to do so is invoked). The third verse commands Muḥammad to promise the believers a great bounty from God, a command that relates to the second part of the definition of his mission above, that is 'herald of glad tidings', and the command is made using the same root of the active participle of this verb which is used in the description. Thus a repetition of the root indicates

³² The translator starts this verse with the addition [And as for thee] which represents his understanding of this passage to be part of the previous one. However this does not accord

the derivation of this command from that particular part of his mission. This relation can also be explained as a relevance relation if one considers the mental process used for recovering the meaning of the repetition as in the following sequence: Where (42) is information given in v.45, (41) is a contextual assumption from the encyclopaedic knowledge of the meaning of the word *مبشر* *mubashshir* (herald of glad tidings) and its morphological form (noun of the doer, from the root for one who conveys good promises or news):

(42) Muḥammad is a *mubashshir* – a herald of glad tidings.

(41) A *Mubashshir* is someone who brings good news.

This triggers the question: what news does he bring? Here, verse 47 comes to provide the answer for this question with the information in (43):

(43) Muḥammad promises the believers great bounty from God.

Since the verse answers a question raised by a preceding verse, then it is relevant in the context of that verse, but the other aspects of his mission raise similar questions which are not being answered in the following verses of the passage. However, they are answered by assumptions provided in other verses and the answers can be inferred from them as they occur, e.g. the later warning to the hypocrites in v.60 is part of the warning and so are verses on the suffering in store for the unfaithful. Part of the effect of these verses can be explained in terms of their relations with vv.45, 46 such as the relation of v.47 explained above.

Such answers to the questions raised by the words in vv.45, 46 may sound natural to someone who has a good knowledge of the Qur'ān, and the Islamic concepts of prophethood, but that is a result of familiarity with the completed text of the Qur'ān which we have now but which was not available for the first receivers of it before the death of the Prophet. What I claim in this study is that the way in which any recipient processes an utterance for comprehension for the first time is based on inference of relations of the type explained in this study, and that their understanding of these relations is what makes them able to form the concepts whose

with the observation on the markers made in this study, therefore I have left this part out.

development is the matter of concern in the *sūra*. Thus, the explanation of relations does not aim to answer the questions in the first place, but to show how the initial recipients processed the language units to recover these answers.

However, the answer to the question raised by the metaphor 'light-giving beacon' *سراجا منيرا* can be achieved by a combination of v.46 where the metaphor is used and v.43 where a similar metaphor is introduced earlier 'so that He might take you out of the depths of darkness into the light'. Consider the following sequence where (44) is the information in v.46, and (45) the contextual assumption provided earlier by v.43 which the hearer can combine with (46) the information about Muḥammad in the beginning of v.46 and arrive at (47) as an answer for the question about the light-giving beacon:

(44) Muḥammad is a light-giving beacon

(45) God guides people from the darkness of atheism to the light of knowledge and belief.

(46) Muḥammad is sent by God to summon people to God.

(47) Muḥammad guides people to knowledge and belief.

Verse 43 has provided a contextual assumption that helps in understanding v.46, i.e. that Muḥammad is the carrier of God's message which will guide people from darkness to light. But two more questions are still unanswered, that of the warning and that of being a witness. The former we discussed earlier, that is the implications of warning people in several places in the *sūra*, but the latter has to do with aspects of the Islamic concept of prophethood which are not particularly emphasized in this *sūra*. A reader who wishes to learn more about this, or any other Islamic concept through the Qur'ān, needs to be aware of the nature of information distribution in this book. Each *sūra* is concerned with the development of some main concepts which are central to Islam. To achieve comprehensively that goal it touches upon other concepts and raises some assumptions which are of relevance to what the *sūra* is saying as well as to other contexts where other

sides of that concept are revealed for the purpose of developing the concepts, even though they mostly concern this particular *sūra*. Thus themes often recur providing more information about aspects which were not fully clarified in the contexts where they previously occurred merely because they were not as relevant in developing the concepts with which those contexts were mostly concerned. Therefore, assumptions which are necessary for the understanding of some of the minor details in one place, can be supplied from other contexts where the same theme occurs. However, one does not expect to have to search outside a *sūra* for the important assumptions for the main concepts with which this *sūra* is particularly concerned. Take for example the word ‘witness’ which is mentioned in *sūrat al-Aḥzāb* as a part of the Prophet’s mission. None of the information in this *sūra* adds any clarification to this aspect of his mission, whereas many verses illuminate other aspects of it such as warner and light-giving beacon. But in other places in the Qur’ān, this aspect is clarified such as in *sūras* 4 and 16 where this issue is more relevant to the concepts developed in both of these *sūras* ³³.

The occurrence of such items, whose comprehension cannot be completed without referring to further parts of the Qur’anic text connects sides of the context in which they briefly occur to the other contexts where they are thoroughly expanded.

In the case of ‘witness’ one can see the connection it makes with the rest of the Qur’ān by recalling vv. 7 & 8 **“7- And Lo! We did accept a solemn pledge from all the prophets – from thee, [O Muḥammad,] as well as from Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary-: for We accepted a most weighty, solemn pledge from [all of] them, 8- so that [at the end of time] He might ask those men of truth as to [what response] their truthfulness [had received on earth]. And grievous suffering has He readied for all who deny the truth!”** as well as the other verses in the *sūra* where reference is made to the Day of Judgement. This

³³ See Q. 4:195 and Q. 16:84, 89.

context of *al-Aḥzāb* can now be enriched with information from elsewhere in the Qur'ān, such as v.41 of *sūra* 4: (How then if We brought from each people a witness, and We brought thee as a witness against these People!) “فكيف إذا جئنا من كل أمة بشهيد وجئنا بك على هؤلاء شهيدا”. But the way in which it was enriched was based in a one-word-cue i.e. Muḥammad as a ‘witness’. Furthermore, recalling vv.7 and 8 above in the context of defining Muḥammad’s role adds to one’s information about that scenario, that giving witness is part of the reason why Muḥammad and by generalization, the other prophets were commissioned in the first place. That is, giving testimony on the believers and the unbelievers among their peoples is not an additional part over and above what they were sent to do, but, on the contrary, it is crucial to the heart of their mission since it is related (in vv.7-8) to the pledge they made and the questioning of the members of the community about their deeds.

By the same token, many things can be added to the context of ‘warner’ from elsewhere in the Qur'ān where more emphasis is placed on this aspect of Muḥammad’s Prophethood.

The passage ends with v.48 which I shall repeat below to compare with vv.1, 3 also repeated:³⁴

48- And defer not to the deniers of the truth (the unbelievers) and hypocrites, and disregard their hurtful talk (let go any harm), and place thy trust in God: for none is as worthy of trust as God.

1- ..and defer not to the deniers of the truth (the unbelievers) and the hypocrites..

3- And place thy trust in God [alone]: for none is as worthy of trust as God.

³⁴ The re-opening *and* at the beginning of this verse would be a good material for the study of relevance as it has many implications for the pragmatic meanings of this semantic constraint, discussed in the English language by Blackmore *Semantic Constraints* and Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*. However, not enough work has been done in the study of the way in which this consequential *and* operates to convey what it means.

Verse 48 as shown echoes the two other verses only with the addition of **ودع**

أذاهم (let go any harm or disturbance), and the omission of the generalized

comment at the end of v.1. The addition of this command can be seen in view of the repetition of the context of vv.1, 3 as an enhancement of the earlier information resulting from the simultaneous development of the concept of the prophet and his role in the society. This role as explained so

far, justifies the order of the *sūra*, which explains how

the information about the prophet's role in his society justified ordering him not to follow anyone but God, especially not those who take an opposite stand to God's message i.e. the hypocrites and the unbelievers. Now, one is entitled to see the addition of the latter command as resulting from the nearest part of the context of this role, which determines what the prophet should do and what he should not do. Therefore, as his mission is limited to what is described above, it does not include causing harm to his opponents or getting involved in mutual disturbance. For none of the descriptions attributed to this mission can imply causing harm to others.

Hence the command comes as a confirmation of the logic above, and also draws one more line in the features of Muḥammad's role, which is gradually developed by information in this *sūra*. The prohibition of harm will be given an extended context by the introduction of passage 8 and avoiding causing harm will be recommended in passage 9, two passages that will establish this concept as one part of the main message of the *sūra*.

Passages 6 and 9: v.49 - v.59

Passages 6 and 9 are the two shortest passages in the *sūra* each consisting of a single verse:

49- O you who have attained faith! If you marry believing women and then divorce them ere you have touched them, you have no reason to expect and to calculate any waiting-period on their part: hence, make at once provision for them, and release them in a becoming manner.

and:

59- O Prophet tell thy wives and thy daughters, as well as [other] believing women (Tell your women and the women of the believers)³⁵ that they should draw over (cover) themselves some of their outer garments [when in public]: this will be more conducive to their being recognized [as decent women] and not annoyed. But [withal] God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

There are common features between the two passages and hence I shall discuss them together. Both of the verses deliver new legislation related to wives and family affairs.

Passage 6 is concerned with divorce under special circumstances.

During the time when the *sūra* was revealed the Prophet's family was passing through a number of delicate issues. Some were caused by rumours spread by the hypocrites about the Prophet's marriages, as dealt with earlier, and others were because of events within the family itself or relating to the family and those who mixed with it socially. Verse 49 deals with one of the internal problems of the family whereas v.59 deals with the means of avoiding trouble caused by social mixing. The problem mentioned in v.49, I assume has to do with the sole incidence of divorce provided in the biographical material of the Prophet's life, i.e. he once married a woman but wished to divorce her before the marriage was actually consummated, and did so, although the history is not very clear about the date of the incident, which leaves room for doubt on this interpretation of the reason why the verse is here. However, inference based on some hints in the following passage about satisfaction and contentedness of the other wives added to some vague traditions about a feeling of dissatisfaction among two of the existing wives when that marriage took place, can be combined to support the assumption that this verse intends to deal with that particular incident. However, the vocative of the marker being the believers, rather than the Prophet himself, indicates that this rule is for all Muslims and that the connection between the verse and that incident is merely coincidental and does not limit the application of the rule to the Prophet's family, whereas

³⁵ The translation of this verse represents the translator's understanding only. I have added a

when an item of legislation is meant to be for the Prophet or his family only, the vocative is “the Prophet” as is the case in the following passage where the order is explicitly limited to the Prophet’s wives.

Verse 59 also carries a regulation for the Prophet’s wives but the same regulation is being explicitly generalized to include all the women of the believers: “Tell your women” refers to all women in the Prophet’s household, and “the believers’ women” refers to all women in the households of the believers.

This indirect form of releasing legislation, by telling the Prophet to tell the person concerned, was discussed earlier in relation to the Prophet’s wives’ choice between continuing in marriage and divorce, where it was argued that this was due to the fact that although the wives would be more affected by the contents of the verse, the Prophet, being the male part, would have to bear social and financial responsibilities. However, in this verse this is not the case, as the only one directly affected by a manner of dressing is the person herself, and which leaves us with an unanswered question about the reason for this form of introducing the legislation. It can be suggested that dressing in the prescribed way has the potential of keeping women from any harm, as it distinguishes them with a specially decent appearance but it also identifies them as belonging to Muslim families. So it is possible that since the Islamic special garment for women is a matter that concerns families as much as individuals, women are mentioned through their being part of a family rather than individuals, which would be the case if they were addressed simply by the adjective “Muslim” or “believer”. However, this interpretation cannot be finally assured unless on the basis of assumptions provided from other contexts in the Qur’ān where this legislation is mentioned.

In the current context it appears to be branching from the various means in which “causing harm and disturbance of others” is totally rejected in Islam, which is introduced in passage 8, and is cued in the repetition of the theme of avoiding harm as well as the lexical repetition in the root. This relation

translation of what the Arabic text says between brackets.

can also be explained in terms of relevance, by taking assumptions about refusal of the attitude of causing harm to others from the context of passage 8 and employing them in explaining how v.59 relates to that passage.

In conclusion, v.49 is part of the details of the Prophet's family regulations and has been generalized to cover a wider range of applications. The passage is followed by a passage where rules are specifically given for the Prophet's life, which is therefore introduced by addressing him in the vocative. But each time a rule is generalized over the whole society, this is made clear by the use of linguistic indicators of the change of content, as will soon be shown in the discussion of passage 7.

Similarly, passage 9 concerns the Prophet's family and is generalized for other Muslim families. It follows passage 8, which has very similar content, although the legislation in passage 8 affects the Prophet's family in particular, and it is made clear when it is generalized as well. Additions to the concepts developed in the *sūra* can be defined in terms of clarifying facts about the Prophet's family life, and detailing regulations for what is lawful and what is not in social relations between Muslims of both the same and the opposite sex.

Passage 7: vv.50–52

50 - O PROPHET! Behold, we have made lawful to thee thy wives unto whom thou hast paid their dowers, as well as those whom thy right hand has come to possess from among the captives of war whom God has bestowed upon thee. And [We have made lawful to thee] the daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and the daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts, who have migrated with thee [to Yathrib]; and any believing woman who offers herself (in marriage) freely to the Prophet and whom the Prophet might be willing to wed: [this latter being but] a privilege for thee, and not for other believers-[seeing that] We (know)³⁶ what We have enjoined upon

³⁶ The translator confuses the *‘ālimnā* (we knew) in the verse with *‘allamnā* (made known or taught) which changes the entire meaning of the comment and its implications for the

them with regard to their wives and those whom thy right hand may possess.

[And] in order that thou be not burdened with [undue] anxiety – for God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. 51- [know that] thou mayest put off for a time whichever of them thou pleasest, and mayest take unto thee whichever thou pleasest; and [that,] if thou seek out any from whom thou hast kept away [for a time], thou wilt incur no sin [thereby]: this will make it more likely that their eyes are gladdened [whenever they see thee], and that do not grieve [whenever they are overlooked], and that all of them may find contentment in whatever thou hast to give them: for God [alone] knows what is in your hearts-and God is indeed all-knowing, forbearing.

52- No [other] women shall henceforth be lawful to thee- nor art thou [allowed] to supplant [any of] them by other wives, even though their beauty should please you greatly-: [none shall be lawful to thee] beyond those whom thou [already] hast come to possess. And God keeps watch over everything.

The speech turns to addressing the Prophet Muḥammad in this passage with regulations concerning women whom it is lawful or unlawful for him to marry, and follows by generalizing the rule for all Muslims by virtue of pronoun shifts³⁷.

The first v.50, makes an intensive use of pronoun turn-takings from addressing the Prophet with the regulation, throughout one long sentence to speaking of the believers *قد علمنا ما فرضنا عليهم في أزواجهم* (**We have enjoined upon them with regard to their wives**), a comment made by the speaker aiming to generalize the regulation over all the community because the comment covers the preceding sentence which was directed only to the

meaning of the verse, so I have corrected the translation by deleting the translator's "we have already made known" and adding the correct meaning between brackets.

³⁷The verse does not make explicit the word marriage, but since lawfulness of women in Islam, as a general rule, has to be based on marriage, that sense of lawfulness is the only one consistent with the text. Any other reason for lawfulness, outside marriage, has to be explicitly stated, and the verse reflects that when speaking of captives.

Prophet. But since the regulation is not meant as a special one for him the pronoun shift from a singular addressee to a plural third person indicates this change in the domain of the application of the rule.

Another turn to addressing the Prophet in *لكي لا يكون عليك حرج* (**in order that thou be not burdened with [undue] anxiety**) echoing parts of vv.37, 38 where the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab was discussed, again limits the comment to the Prophet, after a regulation that was generalized to all. Although the regulation is for all, the negation of any blame reconnects with the Prophet's personal issue (that of Zaynab) and the only indication of that difference in the meaning is the pronoun turns.

Other than that, the verses express a completion of marriage regulations in a comprehensive list of women that are lawful to one for marriage. Within the list there is a case which applies to Zaynab, and the list is a natural part of the context of a debate arising around the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab, to finalize the distinction between who is and is not lawful for marriage. From another perspective this can be seen as a completion of the group of content where lines for relations in Muslim society are drawn which began in passage 1, sub-section 2.

Now the issue of it being lawful for the Prophet to marry Zaynab is finally settled and a few final details of the rules governing his relations to his wives follow in the remaining verses of this passage and this is where the debate between the wives is hinted at in (**and that all of them may find contentment in whatever thou hast to give them**) probably an indication of their position in regard to his marriage with the wife whom he divorced, with who v.49 is assumed to have been concerned. The section is then ended by stating that no woman beyond this legislation is allowed to the Prophet thereafter. Notably, the Prophet is addressed in all the verses where the rule introduced applies only to him so that he is the only addressee of verse 52, that is the prohibition on establishing any further marriage relation is only limited to the case of the Prophet as expanded in the *sūra*.

Finally it should be noticed that the passage contributes to the *sūra* in terms of its additions to both contexts of marriage mentioned in it: the general

regulations for all Muslims and those which are particular to the Prophet, i.e. the issue of his marriage to Zaynab and his family matters.

Passage 8: vv.53-58

53-O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not enter the Prophet's dwellings unless you are given leave; [and when invited] to a meal, do not come [so early as] to wait for it to be readied: but whenever you are invited, enter [at the proper time]; and when you have partaken of the meal, disperse without lingering for the sake of mere talk: that, behold, might (used to) give offence to the Prophet, and yet he might feel shy of [asking] you [to leave]: but God is not shy of [teaching you] what is right.

And [as for the Prophet's wives,] whenever you ask them for anything that you need, ask them from behind a screen: this will but deepen the purity of your hearts and theirs. Moreover, it does not behove you to give offence to God's apostle-just as it would behove you never to marry his widows after he has passed away: that, verily, would be an enormity in the sight of God.

54-Whether you do anything openly or in secret, [remember that,] verily, God has full knowledge of everything.

55-[however,] it is no sin for them [to appear freely] before their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their women folk, or such [male slaves] as their right hands may possess.

But [always, O wives of the Prophet] remain conscious of God- for, behold, God is witness unto everything.

***56-Verily, God and his angels bless the Prophet: [hence] O you have attained faith, bless him and give yourselves up [to his guidance] in utter self-surrender!**

57- Verily, as for those who [knowingly] affront God and His Apostle- God will reject them in this world and in the life to come; and shameful suffering He will ready for them.

58- And as for those who malign believing men and believing women without their having done any wrong-they surely burden themselves with the guilt of calumny, and [thus] with a flagrant sin!

This theme was established earlier in the *sūra* as the Prophet was ordered to دع أذاهم (let go any harm) in v.48. From v.53 onwards the matter of other believers causing harm to the Prophet (translated in the English version in many different ways: “might give offence” in v.53, “affront” in v.57, “malign” in v.58 “annoyed” in v.59 and “give offence” in v.69) is demonstrated in a variety of instances. Firstly, the believers are addressed and prohibited from certain types of social mixing with the Prophet’s wives. In the course of this prohibition, for which the reasons were fully clarified: **that, behold, might (used to) give offence to the Prophet** إن ذلك كان يؤذي **and this will but deepen the purity of your hearts and theirs** ذلكم أظهر **and this will but deepen the purity of your hearts and theirs** ذلكم أظهر **and this will but deepen the purity of your hearts and theirs** ذلكم أظهر . لقلوبكم .

The border line between what is allowed and what is not is drawn and a new legislation for the Prophet’s wives is introduced for the same reason in v.55: **[however,] it is no sin for them [to appear freely] before their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their brother’s sons, or their sister’s sons, or their women folk, or such [male slaves] as their right hands may possess.**

But [always, O wives of the Prophet] remain conscious of God- for, behold, God is witness unto everything.

Notably, this legislation stands in this passage as one of the Prophet’s life-related matters and is not generalized to all Muslim women and hence, it is treated as a part of this passage only, in contrast with the legislation in passage 9 which concerns all Muslim women and hence is not made a part of the a passage that deals with the Prophet’s household particularly.

Verse 56 puts more emphasis on the fact that only one model of behavior is accepted from believers towards the wives, while vv.57 and 58 generalize that behaviour across all believers’ relations and even the believers-unbelievers relations.

The generalization is achieved via the relative pronoun الذين “those who” in:

57- Verily, as for those who [knowingly] affront God and His Apostle- God will reject them in this world and in the life to come; and shameful suffering He will ready for them.

58- And as for those who malign believing men and believing women without their having done any wrong-they surely burden themselves with the Guilt of calumny, and [thus] with a flagrant sin!

the verses in which lies the relevance of the whole passage to the total context of Islam and not merely the Prophet’s life, as is the case in the beginning of the passage. That is, the passage starts with prohibiting harm to the Prophet, continues with invention of means (regulations) to prevent acts which are likely to cause harm to various people, and ends with cursing anyone who causes harm to the Prophet, and God (by harming His apostle) and then rounds off with making clear that such an attitude is totally unacceptable in Islam.

Passage 10: vv.60-73

60 – THUS IT IS: if the hypocrites, and they in whose hearts is disease, and thee who by spreading false rumours, would cause disturbance in the City [of the Prophet] desist not [from their hostile doings], We shall indeed give thee mastery over them, [O Muhammad]- and then they will not remain thy neighbours in this [city] for more than a little while: 61- bereft of God’s grace, they shall be seized wherever they may be found, and slain one and all.

62- Such has been God’s way with those who [sinned in like manner and] passed away aforetime - and never wilt thou find any change in God’s way.

***63- PEOPLE will ask thee about the Last Hour. Say: “Knowledge therefore rests with God alone; yet for all thou knowest, the Last Hour may well be near!”**

***64- Verily! God has rejected the deniers of the truth, and has readied for them a blazing fire, 65- therein to abide beyond the count of time: no protector will they find, and none to bring them succour.**

66- On the day when their faces shall be tossed about the fire, they will exclaim, "Oh, would that we had paid heed unto God, and paid heed unto the Apostle!"

67- And they will say: "O our Sustainer! Behold, we paid heed unto our leaders and our great men, and it is they who have led us astray from the right path!"

68- O our Sustainer! Give them double suffering, and banish them utterly from thy grace!"

*69- O YOU who have attained to faith! Be not like those [children of Israel] who gave offence to Moses, and [remember that] God showed him to be innocent of whatever they alleged [against him or demanded of him]: for of great honour was he in the sight of God.

70- O you who have attained to faith! Remain conscious of God, and [always] speak with a will to bring out [only] what is just and true –

71- [Whereupon] He will cause your deeds to be virtuous, and will forgive you your sins. And [know that] whoever pays heed unto God and His Apostle has already attained to a mighty triumph (deserve a great support by God).

*72- Verily we did offer the trust (responsibility) [of reason and volition] to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains: but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up – for, verily, he has always been prone to be most wicked, most foolish.

73- [and so it is] that God imposes suffering on the hypocrites, both men and women, as well as on the men and women who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him. And [so, too, it is] that God turns in his mercy unto the believing men and believing women: for God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

After v.59, no major subject-switch markers occur in the beginnings of passages, and one has to consider changes of contents as markers of beginnings and ends of themes until the end of the *sūra*³⁸.

³⁸ In v.69 the phrase *yā 'ayyuhā* يا أيها occurs twice, but, interestingly, it is very difficult to assign to it the function of the usual major markers used throughout the *sūra*. It introduces a group of verses in which the end of the believers is described in a form that rounds off all

The 14 remaining verses cover three distinctive subjects and provide a final conclusion. The first subject contains information about the hypocrites and those who cause troubles in the society of Medina because of their ill hearts. They are warned in three verses they will be outcasts and will be cursed and killed wherever they go. This section is ended with a confirmation of that fate by a generalized historical reference to God's way with those who lived before.

The following two sections are concerned with the fate of the other groups of people mentioned in the *sūra*, the unbelievers and the believers. This part of the *sūra* can be considered as an expansion of preceding verses on the same matter, such as v.8. An introductory verse about the Day of Judgement, which people always wonder about, introduces the division to the two types of the life hereafter. The fate of the unbelievers is cursed as well and they are involved in regret and suffering, whereas the believers' is qualified with the condition that they do not behave as those who harmed Moses. This is a brief reference to the People of the Book who abused Moses' message, implying in the repetition of the word 'harm' what was mentioned before in passage 8 about people disturbing their Prophet. It also summarizes the general attitude of the *sūra*, which clarifies the truth about the rumours and confusion which started at the beginning of the *sūra*, where people tried to raise doubts about the Prophet practising unlawful marriages in the same way in which God clarified the truth and helped Moses out of the troubles caused by his people. They are also ordered to be conscious of God and beware that what they say should be only the truth. Therefore, it is

the discussions involving them in the *sūra*. This comes as a natural part of the division of this final passage: the end of the hypocrites, the unbelievers and then the believers followed by a general comment on the beginning of man's life on earth. The verses which detail the fate of the believers do not express a major change of content as has been indicated by this marker throughout the *sūra*. However, it introduces the part of the sub-section which specifies the conditions under which Muslims would deserve the great reward that they were promised. The existence of the phrase in this position accords with the function assigned to it by Arab commentators as an attention-drawing device (see p. 31 of this study). The importance of this condition as a qualifier of all the promises of great rewards in previous verses is indicated by the irregular, for this *sūra*, use of the marker here as a minor switch marker.

only under this condition that those who obey God and his apostle should deserve their great rewards, promised many times throughout the *sūra* and repeated in this conclusion.

As the *sūra* divides all people in the present events of Medina and in the past lives of different nations into those three kinds: the believers, the unbelievers and the hypocrites, the last two verses speak again not only of the fate of humanity but also of the origin of this division, when God offered responsibility to certain creations but they all refused, except for man who did not refuse because he has always been unjust and foolish. Then the reason why all these events take place again arises in a context very similar to that of vv.7-8, being introduced by the causative particle and following the theme of man being exposed to the truth from God, so that God may rightly punish the dishonest and forgive and reward the believers.

These 4 sections constitute a concluding passage of the *sūra* since they touch upon all the major themes discussed during the course of *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* and round off all the issues opened in it. The language used in this passage is more assertive than that in the rest of the *sūra* and the most significant evidence of this is the absence of the introductory marker and the detailed bitterness of the unbelievers, and even the rebuke of man as he fails in bearing rightly and justly the responsibility of the truth that he has accepted. To remind man of that responsibility is the pledge that prophets made to God, and the fate of humans is in accordance with the acts which they deliberately commit.

The information conveyed in the passage mainly contributes to previous passages as conclusions and also ties together the very different issues dealt with in the *sūra* as part of one context about man, i.e. the options of following the prophets and doing good or of denying the truth and causing harm to others and the fate determined by either choice.

The repetition of this special minor marker in v.70 does not introduce a change of content but rather a continuation of the condition. Hence it is not likely to be a marker of a new sub-section but merely a regular repetition for rhetorical emphasis.

This conclusion is somehow inconsistent with the old impression of the *sūra*, that it dealt with several separate issues. This view is corrected by the additions of this passage which demonstrates that although the *sūra* deals with separate issues, these are details of evidence to enhance or develop several concepts that are vital to Islam. Thus, it resolves all of the differences between the details at the end, to produce a single context consisting of all the information involved in order to elucidate the major question of religions, that is, man's deeds and fate.

Conclusions

The study of the relations between the various contents of *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* in this chapter was based on three main hypotheses about text and text relations.

The first of them is derived from the relevance-based approach to text relations, which states that explicit linguistic devices do not determine textual relations in the first place, but rather that utterances relate to one another by means of the contextual effect they have in a certain cognitive context which is relevant to the recipients.

The second important claim drawn from the same theoretical framework is that communicators communicate thoughts and items of information rather than language itself.

In this analysis, the verses of the *sūra* have been viewed through the information they communicate, and their relations have been analyzed in terms of the contribution of each item of information to the context of the *sūra* or to other plausible contexts in the historical background of the *sūra*.

The third tenet on which I have relied in my analysis is the concept that speech connectives or markers are indicators of meaning and not carriers of it. Accordingly, I have traced the divisions in the content and the changes taking place from time to time according to these indicators and relied on the interpretation of their contribution to the context in my interpretation of the message of the *sūra* recovered through explaining the relations between items of content.

I have realized that the *sūra* is concerned with developing a number of concepts that are vital to the Islamic message and that these concepts contribute to other contexts in the Qur'ān on the one hand, and form their own final message on the other.

The concepts developed in the *sūra* were: believers as followers of the Prophet, believers and the Prophet as opposed to the unbelievers and the deniers of the truth, the clarification of the truth about the lawfulness of the Prophet's social and personal behavior and finally information regarding the prophets sent to people by God and that the fate of all peoples is according to their stands with regard to the truth.

Each of these concepts has been developed simultaneously and not separately in a tight texture of relevance relations between several passages where the contexts were introduced and then gradually expanded and enhanced, which makes it fairly difficult to see the distinction and the border lines between them.

Throughout the analysis I have referred to several linguistic means which share in forming the information structure and the distribution of roles among the various characters in the *sūra*. The main linguistic indicators of subject turns and changes of content were an intensive vocation style operating as a paragraph marker, and pronoun shifts and turn-taking as an indicator of fine changes in the focus or the persons concerned with the utterance. Repetitions in the *sūra* were significantly and extensively employed to indicate relations between the passages at a superficial level and between the concepts at a deeper level of relevance.

For the limited purpose of this pilot study, relevance relations were not studied in all possible cases. However, I have added notes regarding the potential for the study of relevance both in the *sūra* as well as Arabic linguistics and grammar.

The study suggests a method of looking at text relation and a new definition of coherence which is a Qur'anic issue that has been studied without a proper definition for a long time. This is an approach based on the effect of each item of information on the context of other items within a *sūra*.

Each verse can be interpreted as an item of information or as a generator of an assumption, and can be evaluated in terms of what it adds to the context whether by interaction with or by contradicting or confirming a previous item or assumption.

The study suggests a pattern of division of the *sūra* into passages, a study of potential paragraph markers as indicators of subject change, and considering subject changes as a constructive addition to the context of some plausible concepts developing throughout, and whilst the research continues concepts continue to develop and perhaps to change.

Each introduction of a new item of information should be studied with an eye to its contribution on the basis adapted from the principle of relevance: that communicators intend to be relevant as they mean to be understood. On the other hand, the details of each passage, by means of their contributions to the context, are the main factor in determining the major concepts developed, and the latter, in turn, determine the final message of the *sūra*, which can be interpreted in terms of its contribution to the context of the message of the whole Qur'ān.

The contribution of each new item produces a change in the recipients'/the analyst's understanding of the concepts that the *sūra* is trying to build up.

Therefore it is only at the end of the analysis that the analyst can be assertive about his/her claims about the concepts and what the *sūra* really says about them.

Chapter 4: Textual Relations in *Sūra 75*, (*al-Qiyāmah*)

The Text of *Sūra 75 (al-Qiyāmah)*¹

1. I swear not by the day of resurrection.
2. and I swear not by the continuously self-reproaching soul.
3. Does man reckon that We shall not gather his bones?
4. Yes indeed, We are capable of forming his very finger-tips.
5. But, man wishes to deny what lies ahead of him
6. asking [derisively] ‘when is the day of resurrection?’
7. So when the eyesight is [by fear] confounded,
8. and the moon sinks away,
9. and the sun and moon are brought together,
10. on that day, man will say ‘where is the place to flee?’
11. No indeed, not a refuge.
12. Before your Lord, on that day, the recourse will be.
13. Man will be told, on that day, of what he has done and what he has left undone.
14. But man shall be a witness upon himself.
15. Even though he might tender his excuses.
16. Move not thy tongue to hasten with it.
17. Verily, upon Us is its gathering and its recitation.
18. Thus, when We recite it follow thou its recitation.
19. And then, verily, it will be upon Us to clarify it.
20. No indeed. But ye love the world that hastens away
21. and ye forsake the hereafter.
22. Faces will on that day be radiant,
23. gazing to their Lord.
24. And faces will on that day be scowling,
25. knowing that a backbreaking is about to befall them
26. No indeed! when it reaches the collar bones,
27. and they say ‘where is the wizard?’

¹ This translation is a modified version of Neal Robinson’s translation in: “The Qur’ān as the Word of God”, *Heaven and Earth: Essex Essays in Theology and Ethics*, ed. A. Linzey and P. Wexler, Churchman, Worthington, 1986, pp. 38-54

28. and he knows it is the parting,
29. and leg is entwined with leg,
30. to thy Lord on that day is the drive.
31. For he did not give credence and he did not pray.
32. But, he denied and he turned away.
33. Then he went to his household arrogantly.
34. Woe be you,
35. and woe be you.
36. Does man reckon that he will be left futilely/ frivolously?
37. Was he not a drop of a sperm that had been emitted?
38. And then he became a clot and He created and He formed,
39. And fashioned out of it the two sexes male and female?
40. Is not That One capable of bringing the dead back to life?

Introduction

Sūrat al-Qiyāmah is one of the early Meccan *sūras* which generally feature a more limited number of topics than the Medinan *sūras*. The content of the *sūra* is mainly concerned with resurrection and contains a number of eschatological scenes used to support the Qur'anic argument for the inevitability of the return to God and judgment in accordance with one's deeds in this life. Muslim scholars generally take the *sūra* to be one of those which present lesser coherence problems, whereas western scholars tend to think it lacks coherence and to find both its topics and pronoun references somewhat confusing and disjointed. One section of the *sūra* which includes instructions on the reception and recitation of the Qur'ān has, however, raised a number of questions as to its relation to the material of the *sūra* and its dominant topic, and has been equally confusing to both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars.²

In this chapter I aim to explore textual relations in the *sūra*, explaining those which are clear to the reader of the Arabic text, and discussing those which are confusing to both Muslim and non-Muslim readers.

1.1.1 The Unit of Paragraph

In order to do so, I divide the *sūra* into 7 paragraphs which are marked by a number of linguistic features, and also by major changes of subject matter. The division helps in understanding the structure of the information in the *sūra* and its linguistic virtues. Viewing the text in its component paragraphs highlights the relation between each part of it and the others, which is, according to the relevance framework adopted in this study, explained in terms of the contribution of each part to the relevance of the others, and *vice versa*. But a part of the text can be as small as a word and as large as a chapter. So, what part of the text do I deal with in this study? I mainly deal with the part that is larger than a sentence and smaller than a chapter. Since

² See Bell, *The Qur'ān*, pp. 620-622; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, p. 139.

the main focus of this study is textual relations within the *sūra*, the units of meaning I discuss are parts of the *sūra*. However, the sentence or verse, as a unit of the *sūra*, is not a sufficient unit for this study since my study is focused on the aspect of relations that has to do with the variety of subject matter within the *sūra*. Each different topic within the *sūra* is covered in a number of consecutive verses which last until a new topic begins, where a noticeable turn of the subject matter can be quite clearly defined, although its role as to the main message of the *sūra* is in many cases less clearly identified.

Thus, I divide *sūras* into paragraphs that begin where I detect a clear change of subject matter, at which point I am usually able to identify a number of linguistic elements that support this change.

Although it is still questionable as to whether or not the term 'paragraph' refers to a unit of written text that is identifiable, definite and invariable, it can still be vaguely decided that at some point a paragraph ends and a new one begins. Generally, different readers divide a given text differently, an example of which can be found in the different translations of *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*, for example, where one finds that the view of its division varies remarkably from one interpreter to another³, showing the extent to which the unit of the paragraph is determined by an individual's understanding of the text. As I have said, one of the determining factors is the change of subject matter. In the case of the Qur'ān I observe that changes of subject matter are accompanied by a number of linguistic elements such as abrupt change of the dominant pronoun and sentence structure, and the use of paragraph markers in an initial position in the sentence.

However, paragraphs of one *sūra* are not necessarily of the same length: they may be one verse or ten verses long. The essential factor is not length, but the contribution to the development of the message of the *sūra*.

If, from the relevance point of view, each part of a text that features relevance makes a contribution to the assumptions meant to be conveyed by

³ See diagram 1.

the whole, then each topic in the whole should also make a contribution that can be explained in terms of implicature. I discuss the paragraphs of the *sūra* in order to define their implicature and hence shed light on their contribution to the implicatures of the whole *sūra*. Where a part of the texts, with its smaller linguistic components, can lead to the inference of assumptions relevant to the overall message of the text, I consider it to be a unit of discourse. In addition to being marked by the linguistic elements I indicated above, the move to a new unit can be identified where a new set of implicatures is produced, related to a different matter. In support of this view, I quote Nigel Fabb in saying that⁴:

I have no doubt that paragraphing is a matter of implicature rather than being a coded fact of the text, unlike sentences, which have coded boundaries set by the syntactic rules.

By this he means that the borders of paragraphs are not determined by grammatical considerations, since the paragraph is not a unit that is described by grammar. Rather, it is left to the pragmatic consideration of the hearer/reader to decide through inferential processes that a group of sentences/assumptions interact closely enough to build up a larger assumption that makes a contribution to the text as a whole, i.e. if a group of sentences function together in forming one propositional meaning that has one implicature, then this suggests that the group forms a paragraph.

This contribution is what is referred to as ‘implicature’ in the citation above, and it is the determination of this contribution, by each individual’s own inference, that determines where a paragraph should begin and where, presumably, it ends.

Thus, I have divided the *sūra* into seven paragraphs each of which, I will argue, makes a contribution to the message of the *sūra*, within a particular context that I will discuss later, and hence I explain the relevance of each of

⁴ Nigel Fabb, personal communication, 26 June, 2001.

its topics, and the role played by certain linguistic elements in indicating the relevance of those topics.

The use of paragraph markers to indicate the relations between the paragraphs is remarkable in this particular *sūra*. In the following section, I discuss the role of paragraph markers from the point of view of the relevance framework. Following that, I identify two particles which I suggest are used in the *sūra* as markers. I discuss their meanings and functions in Arabic and in the Qur'ān in particular, and their use in this *sūra*, and show how they do or do not have a role in constraining the relevance of the implicatures derived by processing the paragraphs they introduce and hence define their role as paragraph markers.

Finally, I suggest that there is one dominant marker in this *sūra*, and accordingly discuss its contribution, and the contribution of the different paragraphs to the message of the *sūra*. In the course of the concluding section, I compare the findings of this study with previous work, highlighting the contribution of this new approach to the explanation of problematic textual relations in this *sūra*, as well as the role of some specific linguistic virtues in indicating textual relations.

1.1.2 Discourse Markers

The term *discourse marker* is used in linguistics to refer to expressions which communicators use as part of natural languages to facilitate and to guide the process of interpreting textual relations between a particular unit of discourse and other surrounding units and/or aspects of the communicative situation. As such, the category of discourse markers includes members of a number of different word classes, e.g. adverbs, connectors, parenthetical expressions, and particles.⁵

⁵ This definition is adapted from: Rodie Risselada and Wilbert Spooren in 'Introduction: discourse markers and coherence relations', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 30, 1998. The change I make from the original definition is that instead of 'textual relations' the authors use the term 'coherence relations', which reflects a viewpoint of a framework different from that of the present study. However, I hold the view that various frameworks in linguistics, although diverse, attempt to explain different aspects of textual relations according, in each case, to considerations from various viewpoints each of which attempts to provide explanations of a

In the present study, the units of discourse whose relations are marked, facilitated and guided towards interpretation by these particles are, as explained above, paragraphs. I will therefore use the term 'paragraph marker' instead, in my argument relating to *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*.

In the following I discuss the role of those particles as emphasized by the various linguistic approaches to textual relations

'Discourse markers have a role in accomplishing the integration needed for coherence',⁶ but this is not the only way in which the contribution of discourse markers to our understanding of a text could be explained. In a relevance-based account of text relations, discourse markers are seen as constraints on the relevance of the parts of text they introduce, that guide the recipient's understanding of the text by suggesting that specific parts of it are relevant in particular ways.⁷

To show how this works I start with the following simple example:

John was late. Mary missed her bus.

The example consists of two independent utterances that can be understood as parts of one context or as two unrelated contexts.

A possible relation that one can draw between the two utterances is a causal one. One can take it that Mary missed the bus because John was meeting her and hence the relevance of the first part of the utterance lies in that it is the explanation of why Mary missed her bus.

It can, however be understood as two different items of information whose relevance does not depend one each other. It can be understood as a report of the fact that John was late and that Mary missed her bus and that they are relevant in two separate ways.

wider range of language phenomena. From the viewpoint of the present research, coherence relations are not the only or the most efficient explanation of textual relations and hence this change in the wording of the definition. Additionally, the role of discourse markers as defined above is 'facilitating the interpretation' whereas it is described in slightly different terms in the framework adopted in this study.

⁶ Dborah Schiffrin, *Discourse Markers*, Cambridge, 1987, p. 31.

⁷ Blakemore, *Semantic Constraints*.

The use of a discourse marker in this case will indicate to the recipient what the relevance of each part is, as in the following:

Because John was late, Mary missed her bus.

In this case, the role of *because* here is to constrain the recipient's assumptions about the relevance of the first part, or in other words, to eliminate the possibility of any non-causal assumptions.

On the other hand, the use of a different marker/constraint on relevance will indicate a different type of relation between the two parts of the utterance given different contextual assumptions. Consider the following for example:

John was late and Mary missed her bus.

The use of *and* here, allows the causal relation to be inferred but it also allows for other inferences, depending on the different contextual information available at the time of the utterance. If the speaker was reporting other events for instance, or was complaining about everyone being late, etc., understanding the relation in terms of a number of events added to each other would be more relevant, whereas if the speaker was complaining about John's bad time management the second part of the utterance would be understood in terms of supporting that complaint. The same would happen if the utterance were free of constraints.

In the case of marking the utterance with *because*, the second possibility will arise, which will necessitate less effort in working out the relevance of the proposition 'John was late'.

So discourse markers are necessary for explaining the integration of different parts of the text since they direct the reader towards the types of relations that exist between those parts.

In my study of textual relations within *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* I have come across a number of particles that are usually used as sentence connectives, but which are not used in this way in the *sūra*. I have noticed that in *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* they often occupy the initial position in a sentence, and that

many of the sentences they introduce mark a shift in subject matter. Moreover, those sentences can be seen as part of larger units of discourse, which I call paragraphs. As indicated above, it is generally very difficult to determine where one paragraph ends and where another starts, especially with a text like the Qur'ān, where verses follow each other in a flow that does not stop until the end of each *sūra* and which does not contain any conventional punctuation marks, only end of verse numbers and sometimes symbols⁸ for places where a pause or continuation in recitation is thought to be improper, preferable or compulsory. Bearing all of this in mind, as well as the difficulty experienced by previous text analysts in defining paragraph markers in relation to a well articulated unit of discourse,⁹ I decided to set my own criteria for isolating the phenomenon in order to be able to analyze it in isolation from the many factors that might influence the process of analysis and make definitions almost impossible. The phenomenon that I aim to isolate is the unit of meaning that is marked by a paragraph marker. There are a number of identifiable shifts of meaning but it is always hard to define why people consider them shifts of meaning. The following table shows how different are the divisions of the *sūra* made by each of the different interpreters in their works on *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*.

Diagram 1
Different Section Divisions of Sūra 75

	R. Bell	P. de Caprona	M. Asad	N. Robinson
Section 1	vv. 1-6	vv. 1-19	vv. 1-15	vv. 1-6
Section 2	vv. [7-15] 7-12, 13-15	vv. 20-40	vv. 16-19	vv. [7-15] 7-9, 10-15
Section 3	vv.16-19		20-25	16-19

⁸ Most of these symbols, vary in the various printed editions of the Qur'ān, and do not have exactly the same function as the punctuation marks known to us in modern writing.

⁹ See Schriffrin, *Discourse Markers*, 31-48.

Section 4	20-25		26-34	20-21
Section 5	26-30		36-40	[22-33] 22- 25, 26-30, 31-33
Section 6	31-33			34-35
Section 7	34-35			36-40
Section 8	36-40			

There are several reasons for the variations in the ways in which people see the content division of a text. For example, several different things can be unified under one 'topic' by one reader, but yet be seen by others as completely discrete issues. Also, different people make different assumptions about every item of content as to its relations with the surrounding text, and they follow these assumptions in their inference of certain other assumptions, part of which are those regarding textual relations. In the case of the Qur'anic text especially, the rhyme element has also divided interpreters' views as to where passages end and new ones begin. Thus, as I attempt to produce an interpretation of textual relations in this *sūra*, which represents my explanation of the relations between the parts of the text that contribute towards the inference of one assumption, I use a hypothetical division of the paragraphs as a starting point, then examine the ideational contents of those paragraphs and their inter-grammatical and pragmatic relations in order to see whether or not the assumptions I started with could be well established, and if they could, in which way the relations between those discourse units could best be explained.

The study of paragraph markers, here, is part of the examination of my hypothetical units.

In this study I consider only those paragraph markers that are in the initial position in a sentence. The reason that I restrict my analysis to this type of marker, is that markers which have an initial position operate in a different way from those in the middle of sentences and those that appear at the end,

a way that is dependent on inter-sentential relations which are not of concern to this study. Moreover, the paragraph markers encountered in *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* are mainly in the initial position.

I will show that relations between parts of the *sūra* are shaped and controlled by a number of paragraph markers. These particular markers are not explained in terms of this function in Arabic grammar but rather as inter-sentential connectives or speech initials, even according to some grammarians whose works are specifically based on the Qur'ān.¹⁰ The speech initial function, however, has not been precisely defined nor have the differences in meaning of the various sentence initials been thoroughly explained.

However, as I will show in the course of this chapter, one is faced in many *sūras* by various connectives or speech initial markers whose scope seems to be expanded beyond the one sentence they introduce and which appear to have a role in shaping textual relations between paragraphs.

They do indicate beginnings of paragraphs, and mark them with the implications of their own meanings in a way that makes me suggest that they are markers, and that by considering their additions to the meanings of the paragraphs they introduce, one may be able to draw a somewhat clearer picture of the relations holding between consecutive parts of the text.

In *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*, I test this observation by discussing two frequently occurring connectives/ speech initials. These are the conjunction *bal*, which is often translated 'but', and which usually occurs after negative sentences, and the stronger negation particle *kallā* often translated 'no indeed/indeed not'.

These connectives occur at the beginning of the first of a group of sentences, which can be seen as a paragraph since it forms one ideational unit whose implications for the message of the text can be explained in terms of the inference of one implicature. In this position, I suggest that

¹⁰ E.g. Abd Allāh ibn Yūsuf Ibn Hishām, *Mughny al-Labīb 'an Kutub al-A'ārib*, Dār al-Fikr; Damascus, 1969; 'Uḡaymah, 'Abd al-Khāliq, *Dirāsāt li-Uslūb al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Dār al-Ḥadīth, Cairo, 1972.

these sentence initials behave in a way very similar to paragraph markers/speech markers. This suggestion is based on Schiffrin's discussion of discourse markers¹¹ in which she makes the point that they:

precede discourse units (e.g. sentences), but they are independent of them. Removal of a marker from its sentence initial position leaves the sentence structure intact.¹²

In a number of particular contexts, the connectives I discuss in this chapter do not connect sentences as they usually do elsewhere. Rather, their scope and contextual effects extend over a number of sentences following the ones they preface.

One main indicator that these connectives and negative markers behave as paragraph markers in this text is that they do not occur with any grammatical connection with the preceding sentences.

Normally, negations like *bal* and *kallā* are used to indicate the incorrectness of a preceding proposition/sentence, and they may or may not be followed by statements of opposite propositional content.

However, in the text analyzed here, these negations consistently preface sentences/paragraphs and do not, in most cases, negate a preceding linguistic unit of the text but occur between two grammatically independent, and always semantically integral, linguistic units.

The use of these negations, as described here, indicates that they are not used as sentence connectives but rather as indicators of relations between the paragraphs they introduce on the one hand and, on the other, of some assumptions that are indicated, or assumed to have been inferred, by processing the previous paragraphs whose relations with the following are not those of grammatical dependence. The sentences or paragraphs introduced by those connectives/markers are neither grammatically dependent on them nor do they propose an opposite statement (in the case of *kallā*) to that of the sentences preceding them.

¹¹ Schiffrin, *Discourse Markers*, pp. 31-48.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

So what is the meaning that is indicated by these devices and in terms of which their pragmatic function can be explained? That is a question that I aim to explore by discussion of the conjunction *bal*, 'but', in a negative context, and the emphatic negation *kallā* 'no indeed/indeed not' in section 2 of this chapter.

In order to do so, I begin in section 1.2 by analyzing the use of the two particles and their grammatical and semantic relations to the sentences that they preface. In section 2, I discuss their meanings in relation to the paragraphs they mark showing how they connect those paragraphs with previous ones by means of negating pragmatic meanings (i.e. meanings achieved by inference through employment of contextual assumptions) rather than semantic meanings. Finally, in section 3, I look at the inference of particular relations between the paragraphs that precede and follow them and the implications of those relations for an explanation of text relations within the *sūra* as a whole, and I conclude with a discussion of the achievement of this approach in the light of previous works on the *sūra*.

1.2 Analyzing the Grammatical and Semantic Relations between the Particles and Sentences They Preface

In this section I examine whether or not a particle/connective is functioning as a paragraph marker in a particular text according to two factors: (a) that it is in the initial position of the sentence and does not have any effect on the sentence structure or on its semantic meaning and (b) that its meaning encompasses a larger unit of discourse than the one sentence it precedes, i.e. the scope of the sentence initial particle is extended over a number of sentences.

In this section I am only concerned with identifying those particles that occur in initial positions and drawing a distinction between those which are parts of grammatical sentences and those which are not. In other words, I am carrying out a process of elimination, as an introduction to the next stage of the analysis where I discuss the meanings of these items in relation to their immediate contexts.

1.2.1 *Bal* 'but', in a Negative Context

A typical example of the use of *bal* as a sentence connective is in the following sentence where *bal* could be translated *but*:

(7) That is not Muḥammad but Aḥmad

Dhālika *laysa* Muḥammad(an) *bal* Aḥmad.

In a basic grammatical analysis *bal* in the sentence above would be a conjunction that links two sentences the first of which is a simple nominative sentence negated by *laysa* (the nominative sentence negation), whereas grammatical ellipsis takes place in the second which is understood as following:

(7') That is not Muḥammad but it is Aḥmad.

Dhālika *laysa* Muḥammad(an) *bal* dhālika Aḥmad.

There are other typical examples of the use of *bal* as a sentence conjunction, in some conjoining two verbal sentences and in others conjoining noun phrases. But the common element in all the possible uses of the conjunction is that the first conjunct is negated, either explicitly or implicitly, and *bal* 'but' is an assertion of the second¹³. On this meaning of *bal* Ibn Hishām says:

Bal is a restriction particle. When it is followed by a sentence, the restriction is for negation as it is in 'and they say God has taken a son, *subḥānahu*, *bal* (but) honoured servants', or otherwise to allow the shift from one topic to another. Additionally, *lā* (negation particle) may precede *bal* to confirm the negation of a positive

¹³ See: 'Uḍaymah, '*Uṣṭūb al-Qur'ān*, part 1, vol. 2, p. 62.

preceding sentence and to emphasize the following positive statement, as in 'your face is the moon, no, but /*bal* it is the sun'.¹⁴

In addition to negation of the preceding statement and approval of a following one, many interpreters remark that *bal*, when it prefaces a complete grammatical sentence, could be used as a speech initial particle that indicates a major shift in the preceding subject matter to move onto a new topic, which is probably what is meant by Ibn Hishām's remark above, that the restriction can be 'for the shift from one topic to another', and what 'Uḏaymah calls: '*idrāb intiqāly*'. The first function, where it is seen as a sentence conjunction is consistent with its conventional grammatical role, whereas the second use, as a speech initial particle is inexplicable within the limits of the description of that grammatical role, which only relates to the unit of the sentence and does not consider further textual constructions or units.

Moreover, the distinction made between the two uses of *bal* is not based on an explanation of differences in meaning. In fact, the meaning of *bal* in the second use is not clearly distinguished from the first. It is generally recognised that *bal* sometimes functions as a speech initial particle (*ḥarf ibtida'*) that marks the beginning of new subject matter as seen in the quotation above, but that recognition lacks any explanation of the reason for choosing this particular initial particle to mark a particular change of content in the text on the basis of its meaning. When he asserts that *bal* when followed by a sentence is 'rightly, a speech initial particle, not a conjunction', Ibn Hishām¹⁵ does not provide further explanation for his view. Other grammarians however, like Abū Ḥayyān in his grammar-based commentary '*al-Baḥr al Muḥīṭ*', prefer the explanation based on its conjunctive function whether followed by a sentence or a noun phrase¹⁶.

¹⁴ Ibn Hishām, *al-Mughny*, pp. 112-113.

¹⁵ Quoted by: 'Uḏaymah, *Uṣlūb al-Qir'ān*, part: 1, vol. 2, p. 59.

¹⁶ See: Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusy, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Beirut, 1983, vol. 1, p. 324.

This presents us with the question: What is the type of relation between the preceding and following elements that dictates the choice of *bal*, whose main role is defined in terms of restriction on the correctness of the preceding group of contents, as introduction to a new group of contents in replacement of the preceding negated proposition, and is the relation in question necessarily inconsistent with the grammatical function of the particle as a sentence conjunction, as indicated by the emphasis Ibn Hishām places on the fact that it is in this case ‘rightly a speech initial’ rather than a conjunction? This is a question that needs further investigation.

Now let us consider the use of *bal* in *Sūrat al-Qiyāmah* in the light of the above discussion. *Bal* occurs in three verses of the *sūra*, i.e. vv.5, 14 and 20. In the first two occurrences it precedes a sentence, and in the last it precedes a sentence but is not in the initial position because it is itself preceded by another particle. In all three cases, however, it falls on the boundaries between two complete sentences, and is not part of the grammatical or semantic structure of its sentence. In other words, there is no grammatical dependency on *bal* in any of these three instances, nor does it make a major contribution to the semantic content of the sentence, since the proposition expressed would not change in its absence.

Let us consider the three instances. In verse 5, *bal* prefaces a verbal sentence which describes a state of affairs as translated in (9) below. It also follows another statement of affairs that is expressed in the full nominative sentence forming (8), the proposition expressed by v.4.

(8) Yes indeed, we are capable of forming his fingertips.

Balā qādirīna ‘alā ’an nusawwiya banānah

Yes capable [we are] that we form fingertip his

(9) But, man wishes to deny what lies ahead of him.

Bal yurīdu al-insānu li-yafjura amāmah

But wishes man to deny ahead of him

If *bal* is removed from (9) both the proposition expressed and the sentence structure remain intact. (10) shows the proposition (9) after the removal of *bal*:

(10) Man wishes to deny what lies ahead of him.

Although the meaning and the grammatical structure remain unchanged with and without *bal*, the sequence of (8) followed by (9) sounds more comprehensible than that of (8) followed by (10). Let us compare the two sequences:

(8+9) Yes indeed, we are capable of forming his fingertips. But man wishes to deny what lies ahead of him.

(8+10) Yes indeed, we are capable of forming his fingertips. Man wishes to deny what lies ahead of him.

It is easier to understand the contribution of (9) to the meaning of (8) than it is to understand its relation to (10). That is, the meaning of *bal* directs the reader to a particular relation between the two sentences. I will discuss this relation and the way *bal* functions later in the chapter. Meanwhile, it should suffice to show that the contribution of *bal* is not to the meaning of the sentence it introduces or follows, but rather to another aspect of the textual meaning, one that is beyond the one sentence meaning, that is, understanding the relations that bring these two sentences together.

Likewise, in v. 14, *bal* does not constitute part of the propositional meaning nor does it influence or contribute to the syntax of the sentence where it occurs. Consider the proposition expressed in vv.13-14:

(11) Man shall be told on that day what he has done and what he has left undone.

(12) *Bal* (But) man shall be a witness against himself.

Bal al-insān ʿalā nafsihi baṣīrah.

Should *bal* be removed, the sequence will be as following:

(11+12) Man shall be told on that day what he has done and what he has left undone. Man shall be a witness against himself.

Again, the removal of *bal* does not affect either of the sentences but the understanding of their relation as parts of one sequence, which I shall explain thoroughly in section 2.3 below.

It is worth noticing, however, that the typical and most common grammatical context in which *bal* usually occurs, i.e. following negation, is absent in both instances.

In v. 20, the situation changes. In addition to the fact that *bal* does not occupy the initial position in the sentence, although it still precedes a complete grammatical sentence, it follows the strong negation *kallā*. Let us consider verse 20:

20. No indeed, but ye love the world that hastens away

Kalla bal tuhibbūna al-ʿājilah

No indeed but ye love the hastening

21. and ye forsake the hereafter.

wa tadharūna al-ʿākhirah

and ye forsake the hereafter

Here we have a semi-typical use of *bal*. It is typical because it is preceded by a negation, but that negation does not negate a preceding sentence, since I suggest that *kallā* is a paragraph marker and not a sentence negation. In this case, I would not consider *bal* to be a paragraph marker, according to the definition adopted above, since it is not in an initial position and also

because it is grammatically explicable by one of the possible functions of *bal*, that is it can be a conjunction of two sentences the first of which, albeit implicitly, is negated¹⁷.

In this case, the implied sentence would have to be composed by the analyst and would have to be some proposition of opposite content to the proposition after *bal*, in order to match the imagined construction with a typical use of *bal*. This could possibly be:

Kallā, You will not be a witness against yourself.

However, this understanding should be constrained by considering vv.16-19, which is a problematic paragraph due to the inexplicitness of its relation to the immediate context in which it occurs. That is, if vv.16-19 are considered a parenthetical paragraph, then the proposition negated before *bal* relates to vv.14-15. But if vv.16-19 were not considered to be parenthetical, *bal* would be connecting v.20 to the immediately preceding verse, v.19 and the sentence introduced by *kallā* would then be seen as a rebuke to the Prophet on his hastening in the recitation.

Kallā, you will not follow its recitation.

In both cases, *bal* would be bearing a new meaning that is one of explanation and 'ye love the world that hastens away' will be providing an explanation of the state of affairs in the sentence beginning with *kallā*.

However, in a comprehensive account of the use of *bal* in the Qur'ān, 'Uḍaymah, following a number of classical grammarians, claims that this particular verse, along with 6 other verses where the same expression (*kallā bal*) occurs, is a case of the so-called (*idrāb intiqāly*) where the conjunction

¹⁷ Many grammatical constructions in Arabic are explained in terms of ellipsis, and the implied sentence here is a typical case of ellipsis where consistency with a general syntactic rule dictates the suggestion that there is an implied part of the sentence (the general syntactic rule in this case being that conjunctions have to conjoin units of the same type or equal grammatical units, i.e. noun with noun or sentence with sentence ...etc.).

serves two functions simultaneously (a) contradicting the content of a preceding sentence, and (b) marking a shift in subject matter.¹⁸ If we follow this explanation of the function of *bal* here we might be obliged to consider the possibility of *bal* being a second paragraph marker, i.e. the paragraph composed of vv.20-25 is marked by two markers first *kallā* and then *bal*.

This explanation might indeed be applied to the instance under analysis in two ways:

(a) It could be combined with the explanation above: *bal* could be indicating the abandonment of the content of an implied sentence that is negated by *kallā*, and introducing the shift to the new group of topics, i.e. vv.20-25. In this case *bal* will remain a sentence conjunction whose conjuncts are two linguistic units that vary in length and in grammatical construction, i.e. a sentence (the implied sentence) and a paragraph (vv.20-25). Obviously, this is not a possible explanation since it necessitates a violation of the general grammatical rule for conjunctions, that they link linguistic units of the same type. Another objection to the theory, is that it does not optimise the relevance of the particle *bal* or that of the preceding paragraphs (vv.16-19 or vv.11-15) in relation to the following (vv.20-25). This objection, however, will be explained in the following section of this chapter where I discuss the meanings of the particles as paragraph markers.

(b) *Bal* could have the '*iḍrāb intiqāly*' function and be marking the following paragraph in relation to the preceding ones. In this case, the conjunction will add to the recipient's understanding of the restriction on the relation between two paragraphs so that the contribution of the following could be understood only within the brackets imposed by *bal*. Here it can be seen as a second marker where *kallā* is the first.

To sum up, *bal* in this *sūra* contributes as a speech initial particle or a paragraph marker in two types of constructions. In the first it prefaces a paragraph where it does not affect the meaning or the grammatical construction of the sentence that it precedes. In this construction, it is not preceded by a negative sentence. Secondly, it appears as a second paragraph

¹⁸ Uḍaymah, *Uṣlūb al-Qur'ān*, Part 1, vol. 2, p. 62.

marker, after a negation. This use poses many questions regarding the role of *bal*. The explanation I incline towards is one that maintains the conjunctive function of *bal*, but also adds to it the role of a paragraph marker as if it were the particle whose meaning constrains the inference of the assumptions regarding the relation between paragraphs.

1.2.2 *Kallā* ‘No Indeed’

In this *sūra*, *kallā* occurs in verses 11, 20 and 26. In the first of these incidences, v. 11, it occurs before a negative sentence where it could be seen as a confirmation of the negation in that sentence, but, whether *kallā*’s scope is merely this sentence or more than that, is a question that I address in the following section of this chapter. Meanwhile, I will look, in isolation, at the relation between *kallā* and the sentence it introduces.

Kallā as used in v. 11, is not part of the grammatical sentence nor does it contribute to its semantics:

No indeed! Not a refuge.
Kallā *lā* *wazar*
No indeed no refuge

‘No refuge’ is the proposition expressed by the verse, which is not affected by the removal of *kallā*, and the grammatical structure of the sentence is not affected either. Without *kallā*, the sentence is read and understood completely with not much change from the verse as it occurs in (13). But, since the particle is a negation that has a meaning and adds, in fact, to the all in all semantic content of the verse, or rather to a number of verses as will be shown, it must have a function of a type different from that of the other words forming the sentence, that is, its pragmatic function, which has to do with its negative sense and the disapproval it implies, which will be further explored in section 2.

The second use of *kallā* in the *sūra* is in v. 20:

20. No indeed, but ye love the world which hastens away.

Kallā bal tuḥibbūna al-ʿājilah

Generally speaking, negation occurs to disapprove of a proposition previously expressed, either explicitly or implicitly. Thus, one would normally expect *kallā* to have the same function, if it is followed by another sentence, and that the second sentence would oppose the one negated by *kallā*, which is also indicated by many linguists in their explanation of the particle¹⁹. But considering the immediate context encompassing *kallā* this does not seem to be the case at an explicit level.

Now, considering the possibility that v.19, the immediately preceding verse, may or may not be the last in a parenthetical which interrupts the flow of the discourse between v.15 and v.20, there are two possible explanations. The first is to understand vv.16-19 as a parenthetical paragraph. Verse 20 is then connected to vv.14-15 and the sequence will be as follows:

14-15. But man shall be against himself a witness, even though he tenders his excuses.

20. No indeed, but ye love the world which hastens away.

What is it, then, in verses 14-15 that could be negated by *kallā*? And does the sentence following *kallā* express a proposition of disapproval of what has been expressed by vv.14-15? It is not explicit that there is contrast between the two propositions and a process of inference is necessary in order to work out the reason why they are positioned in a way that suggests the existence of contrast, i.e. linked by a particle of disapproval.

¹⁹ On that meaning says Ibn Fāris, for example: '*Kallā* is a response by disapproval and negation of a claim put forward by someone'. So, he presumes that prior to the use of *Kallā*, there must be a proposition made by someone other than the speaker and a proposition starting with *kallā* would be an expression of the disapproval of that previous proposition/claim. Ibn Fāris, *al-Ṣāḥibīy fī fiqh al-lughah wa Sunan al-ʿArab fī Kalāmihim*, ed. Mustafā al-Shuwaymy, Mu'assasat Badrān, Beirut, 1963, p.162.

Let us now look at the second possibility, where vv.16-19 are not seen as a parenthetical paragraph, and assess whether their sequence with v.20 presents a more straightforward relation:

16-19 Move not thy tongue to hasten with it. Verily, upon Us is its gathering and its recitation. Thus, when we recite it follow thou its recitation. And then, verily, it will be upon us to clarify it.

20. No indeed. But ye love the world that hastens away.

In this sequence, the sentence immediately preceding *kallā* is in the form of a confirmation made by God that it is his responsibility to make the Prophet remember the Qur'ān and understand it, in explanation of the condemnation of hastening with its recitation as it is being revealed to him²⁰. If *kallā*, according to its conventional use explained above, is to negate the statement made by God that it is for Him to make the Prophet comprehend what is being revealed to him, then the text will be self-contradictory. Moreover, the sentence following *kallā* will not make any clear sense in relation to the negated sentence (presumably v.19, if we adopt this analysis) since the rest of v.20 'but ye love the world that hastens away' will not be opposing v.19 'verily, it will be upon us to clarify it'.

Therefore, neither of the two hypothetical explanations above offers a satisfactory answer as to what is negated by *kallā*.

This leads me to suppose that *kallā* is not there to link the two sentences that it falls between, but that in these two contexts, as well in v.11, it is an indicator of a more complex relation than that of two consecutive sentences. If the explanation of *kallā* as an inter-sentential connective leaves us with this difficulty as to what is being negated, could the answer possibly be that what is being negated is something beyond the unit of the sentence?

I will investigate this question further in the following section. Meanwhile it should be sufficient to bear in mind the conclusion that the use of *kallā* in

²⁰ For the meaning of those four verses see: Razy, *Tafsīr*, vol. 30, p. 223.

these two sentences does not exhibit any grammatical or semantic relationship with either the sentence it introduces or the one that it follows, which is one indication that the particle, in this particular use, has the potential of being a paragraph marker.

Likewise, the third use of *kallā* in the *sūra*, is one in which *kallā* does not bear part of the grammatical or the semantic structure of the sentence. Consider the verse it introduces:

26. No indeed! When it (the soul) reaches the collarbones.

Kallā 'idhā balaghat al-tarāqy

No indeed if/when it reached the collarbones

Not only does *kallā* introduce new subject matter here, but it also marks a change in the time of the events described before and after it. The sentence before *kallā* is part of a relatively long description of people on the day of resurrection when some will have faces brightened by their good deeds and others will have faces darkened with fear, whereas the sentence prefaced by *kallā* is part of a flashback description of the moment of death. It is again difficult to see what it is that is negated by *kallā* and what is opposed. Let us consider the immediate context, preceding and following *kallā*:

24-25 And faces will on that day be scowling, knowing that a backbreaking is about to befall them. No indeed! When it reaches the collarbones, and they say 'where is the wizard?'

It is especially difficult to view *kallā* here as a mere inter-sentential negation because those sentences it links compose a chain of short sentences conjoined by 'and' to form one long sentence on both sides of *kallā*.

But the vagueness of any relation between the two sentences that could be assumed to be established by *kallā* is not the only indicator that the particle might be linking more than two sentences, since, the construction of both

the sentence in which *kallā* occurs and the preceding sentence do not suggest any kind of grammatical dependency between the particle and either of the sentences. Consider the structure of (14) which represents the two grammatical sentences in vv.24-26 as they stand in the *sūra*:

(14) And faces will on that day be scowling, knowing that a backbreaking is about to befall them. No indeed! When it reaches the collarbones, and they say ‘where is the wizard?’...

The grammatical structure of the two sentences would remain intact in (15) if *kallā* were to be omitted:

(15) And faces will on that day be scowling, knowing that a backbreaking is about to befall them. When it reaches the collarbones, and they say ‘where is the wizard?’...

The absence of grammatical dependency between *kallā* and the sentences it links gives further support to the assumption that it is better explained as a paragraph marker than as a sentence connective.

2. The Meanings of the Markers in Relation to their Preceding Paragraphs and the Context of the *Sūra*

In the previous section I have shown that a number of sentence connectives occur at the beginning of sentences without being part of the grammatical structure or bearing part of the semantic meaning and, in many cases, not even grammatically linking those sentences to previous ones.

I suggest that since those connectives do not appear to be connecting grammatical sentences, and since their scopes do not apply to any particular grammatical sentences within the text, then perhaps they do have another function. I assume that those connectives, which occupy the initial position in the sentence in all the cases discussed above, do connect larger units of discourse, i.e. paragraphs each of which contains one item of ideational

content and relates to the preceding paragraph by means of a marker that prefaces its first sentence. In this section I discuss the relation between the markers and their preceding paragraphs. The two particles (potential markers) that I discuss here are either negations or conventionally have negative implications for the immediately preceding linguistic units. Therefore discussion of what is being negated is crucial to understanding their functions as markers of the textual relations. I will show that these negative paragraph markers do not, in fact, negate sentences but rather, draw recipients' attention to units of inferential meaning derived by processing preceding groups of sentences or giving access to previous units of discourse whose meanings would have an impact at the level of understanding the overall message of the text. It is important, before I embark on explaining the inference process, to mention that the assumption that negations negate previous propositions is based on maintaining their conventional meanings, i.e. I do not question the lexical content of the particle but, rather, suggest a new scope for those meanings, and in the case of *bal*, suggest a new explanation of its role, within a framework of understanding their pragmatic functions.

In order to discuss, and identify, inferential meanings that I assume are negated by the markers, we need to look at their immediate contexts, i.e. the sets of assumptions encompassing those markers.

2.1 The Contextual Environment of the Sūra

The source of the contextual assumptions used in interpreting the meanings of this *sūra* is, as is to be expected, the set of main assumptions put forward by the Qur'ān and especially the particular argument proposed by this particular *sūra*.

So, what is the main argument propounded by *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*? By means of strong polemical language, *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* warns the unbelieving man that he will be resurrected and that every deed he has committed during this life will be considered and accounted for in the hereafter. Man lives in denial of the fact of the day of resurrection that lies before him when he will

have to face up to every evil, or good, action of his life and then encounter what he has long denied: God and the truth of resurrection.

The two major argumentative subjects of the *sūra* are: the power of God that proves He is capable of resurrecting humans after their bodies have turned into dust and bones, and the truth of resurrection, versus man's denial of it. Man's opposing argument, as presented in this *sūra*, is based on the impossibility of bringing the dead back to life. It is part of the 'dust and bones' theme that occupies many of the polemic *sūras* of the Qur'ān. God's argument, on the other hand, is based on the various affirmations of His power starting from the very creation of man from a clot of blood.

In understanding the meanings of what is being said, provided the recipient is familiar with Qur'anic material, the mention of a word like 'bones', for instance, provides immediate access to all the 'dust and bones' verses in the Qur'ān, and although the famous statement always spoken by man (e.g. Q. 23:82) 'When we die and become dust and bones could we really be raised again?', is absent, the mention of the 'عظامه' 'his bones' evokes the whole context of that argument, and the reader immediately expects the same type of argument to be of relevance in the *sūra*. But understanding the messages conveyed by parts of a text is not only a matter of anticipating the theme of the text, rather it is the building up of thoughts and inference of assumptions from what is said by means of adding information (in the form of other assumptions) from the wider context of that theme to what is currently under consideration, and *vice versa*. The recipients' process of understanding what is being communicated is explained in terms of trying to work out the relevance of one part of the text and enhancing that relevance, once established, by trying to obtain further contextual effect from what has been received. When new items derived from the contextual environment support, confirm or contradict previously existing items their contextual effect is increased and the recipient satisfies his natural cognitive need to optimize the relevance of the linguistic intake, according to the Relevance framework, in justification of the effort put into processing that linguistic intake. Now, if we apply this principle to processing new Qur'anic material

for comprehension, it explains why verses often recall others with the same thematic or lexical content. This is because the verses being processed at any given time always give access to previously memorized ones in the search for more contextual effect, i.e. for further understanding of the message conveyed by the entire book.

Now, having clarified the theme of *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* in terms of the argument between God and the unbelieving man with regard to the truth of resurrection, let us consider the actual paragraphs to see how the information could be processed in order to lead to understanding the meanings of the various parts of the text and the contribution of each of them towards this context.

In the following section I will analyze the use of *bal* in the Arabic language and the Qur'ān and discuss its role as a paragraph/speech marker, before I proceed to analyse its use in the *sūra*.

2.2. A General Account of the Use of *Bal* in the Arabic Language and the Qur'ān

In the following two sections I give an account of *bal*'s function in Arabic, by discussing material provided by Arab grammarians who attempt to explain the conjunctive function of this particle. I show that *bal* is associated with negating propositions even when it is preceded by positive sentences, and that this is an aspect of its intrinsic/default meaning regardless of the grammatical construction which encompasses it.

Firstly, I discuss the grammarians' account of *bal* as a sentence conjunction, and then I classify the Qur'anic usage of *bal* in a number of representative verses, examining the extent to which it is consistent with the grammarians' approach.

2.2.1 The Non-Qur'anic Use and Meaning of *bal*

In a typical conjunctive phrase, *bal* is usually preceded by a negative linguistic unit and followed by a positive one asserting a state of affairs opposite to that in the preceding unit. Consider the following typical example adapted from Ibn Hishām:

ما جاء زيد بل عمرو

Zayd did not come but °Amr

Mā *jā'a* *Zayd bal °Amr*

Did not come Zayd but °Amr

In this example *bal* is considered a conjunction that joins *Zayd* the subject of the verb, as a first conjunct, to °Amr, the second conjunct, who is the actual doer of the verb, as indicated by the use of this particular conjunction. The propositional meaning being:

It is not Zayd who came, but °Amr.

In explanation of this function of *bal*, I quote the following from Ibn Hishām's grammar, *Shudhūr al-Dhahab*²¹

Bal functions as a conjunction after negation or interrogation; it then means: affirming the preceding conjunct as it is (in the sentence), and the affirmation of the opposite for the following conjunct.

According to this explanation of *bal*'s role in the sentence, the example above conveys the message that *Zayd*, who is the grammatical subject of the verb and the first conjunct which is also the preceding linguistic unit, was not the actual doer of the verb, rather it was °Amr, the second conjunct and the one following *bal*.

Being a special type of negative, interdiction also can precede *bal*. The conjunction, in this case, has the same meaning and function that it has in sentences like the one above. In the following example, *Zayd*, the grammatical subject, is forbidden from acting in a certain way described by the verb, whereas °Amr, the second conjunct, is ordered to do that act:

²¹ °Abdullāh ibn Yūsuf ibn Hishām, *Sharḥ Shudhūr al-Dhahab*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyy al-Dīn °Abdul-Hamīd, Al-Maktaba al-°Aṣriyya, Beirut. 1997, p. 450.

لا يقم زيد بل عمرو

Zayd is not to stand, but ʿAmr is.

Lā yaqum Zayd bal ʿAmr

Do not stand Zayd but ʿAmr

Here, as a result of using the conjunction *bal*, the verb in the sentence is not attributed to its grammatical subject, but rather to the second conjunct.

But, conjoining a negative sentence or phrase with a positive one is not the only use of *bal*. It is generally agreed that *bal* can also be preceded by positive sentences and phrases or imperatives, in which case grammarians explain its function in terms of the so-called ‘*transition*’ of whatever is attributed to the preceding subject, which is the first conjunct, into the second conjunct. This construction is actually an unusual linguistic form of saying things. Consider the following example:

جاء أحمد بل محمد

Aḥmad came, *but* Muḥammad

In this example, according to the theory of ‘transmission of the subject’, the meaning of the sentence will be understood so that Muḥammad, *bal*’s second conjunct will be the doer of the verb ‘came’ because the use of *bal* has resulted in the transmission of the verb from the grammatical subject into the second conjunct.

In other words, the sentence is understood to convey the message that:

It is *not* Aḥmad who came, but Muḥammad.

It seems that this is the same proposition that has been conveyed by the utterance discussed above, where the preceding phrase contains an explicit negation. So, how does it happen that two different utterances are taken to convey exactly the same proposition?

As I said before, this use of *bal* presents us with an unusual linguistic form, which needs explanation. It is unusual because the speaker of such an utterance is actually contradicting himself by saying that 'Aḥmad came' and at the same time, in the same sentence, using a conjunction that implies that 'Aḥmad did not come' because this conjunction indicates the attribution of the verb to the second rather than first conjunct. Grammarians attempt to explain the superficial contradiction in such constructions by considering it a grammatical form that is used in the case of forgetfulness and slips of the tongue.

According to the majority of standard Arabic grammars, this kind of sentence would be uttered if the speaker, after saying the first part 'Aḥmad came' realizes that he has made a mistake and that he meant Muḥammad, and so, as a way of correcting one's slip-of-tongue, one would say '*bal* Muḥammad', meaning '*I mean* Muḥammad'.

So the sentence, as part of a conversational sequence, would translate into:

Aḥmad came, I mean, Moḥammad.

In this utterance, the grammatical subject of the verb is Aḥmad, but the actual doer is Muḥammad. This is similar to the construction above in that the actual doer is not the grammatical subject. However, it is different too, in that there is no explicit linguistic device (i.e. negation) that indicates this situation. It is due to the absence of a device that would perform this negation function that grammarians say there is a 'transition of attribution'. The meaning of the sentence could be paraphrased in the following sentence:

I did not mean Aḥmad, but I meant Muḥammad came.

The insertion of '*I mean*' has 'transferred' the attribution of the verb from Ahmad, its grammatical subject, to Muḥammad, who is the second conjunct of *bal* in the Arabic version of the sentence.

In fact, what grammarians refer to as 'transition', in justification of the interpretation of the sentence, can be simply explained in terms of the acknowledgement of a negative aspect of *bal*'s meaning as part of its default meaning. The use of *bal* does, indeed, have a negative impact on the preceding sentence or phrase and a positive impact on the following one. It negates the first part of the sentence or the correctness of the first part of the utterance and asserts the correctness of the following part instead, and that is how utterances like the one above are understood so that the second conjunct, not the first, is the doer of the verb i.e. so that the grammatical subject does not refer to the one who has actually performed the action of the verb.

Such negation is achieved only by means of using *bal* or '*I mean*', without which the utterance will possibly suffer from ungrammaticality, unless *bal/I mean*, or another device that also has a negative impact on the content of the preceding part of the utterance, is inserted.

Consider the same utterance without *bal/ I mean*:

جاء أحمد، محمد.

Aḥmad came, Muḥammad.

The utterance as it stands now, is either incorrect or incomplete. However, recipients tend to fill in the gaps by assuming that there is an implied device such as *bal* or *I mean*, especially when, in spoken utterance, a marker like '*err..*' or a gesture of hesitation on the part of the speaker takes place between the utterance of the two nouns, indicating the mistake.

The utterance without such a device is free of the restriction, imposed by *bal* in the first example, that makes recipients realize that the propositional content of the preceding is not the case or is incorrect, but the following is. Using *bal*, or *I mean*, saves recipients the effort of working out whether or

not a slip of a tongue has taken place, or, in other words, working out the relation between the two parts of the conjunctive construction.

In fact, the lexical content of *bal* has the aspect of imposing a negative restriction on the preceding part of the utterance, and hence, it is sometimes called the 'restriction conjunction'.²²

Alternatively, it is possible for the same construction to occur in a conversational form where the speaker of the first part of the conjunctive construction differs from the speaker of the second. In this case there is no self-contradiction that needs to be justified by considering that the utterance is a slip of the tongue. Consider the following exchange:

أ: الصلاة تحين في الخامسة.

A: The prayer is due at five.

ب: بل في السادسة.

B: But (*bal*) at six.

In this exchange, B's utterance comes as a way of correction of A's. The speaker B objects to the statement in A's utterance, and this objection is expressed by the use of *bal*. What B states is that what A says is *not* the case *and* that the case is as following *bal*.

However, B does not refute A's speech by means of saying 'No, it is not at five, it is at six'. He simply puts forward a statement that cannot be correct at the same time as A's utterance is correct, because the prayer cannot be due at two different times in the same city. The use of *bal* by B leads the hearer to infer a negation of what A has said, in order to give affirmation to the correctness of B's interdiction.

A similar conversation can take place, with *bal* used to eliminate the possibility of a positive answer to a yes/no question, as a way to give a negative answer to that question, without actually saying 'no' but rather by

²² See: al-Mubarrid, quoted by Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1956, vol. 7, p. 236 and Muḥammad al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdy, *Tāj al-Arūs*, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1966, vol. 11, p. 69.

stating a state of affairs opposed to that in the question. Consider the following exchange:

أ: أتحنين الصلاة في الخامسة؟

A: Is the prayer due at five?

ب: بل في السادسة.

B: But (*bal*) at six.

Here, the use of *bal* by speaker B indicates the incorrectness of the assumption made in the question by A, and immediately offers a different statement in replacement. Once again, the impossibility of the two statements being true in the same place gives rise to the inference of a negative answer to A's question.

Now, if the above analysis shows that *bal* has a negative aspect to its meaning, how does this negative aspect affect the examples where it is preceded by a negative? There are two general rules regarding the double negative in Arabic (a) when two negatives influence one grammatical unit they cancel each other out, *the negation of a negative proposition produces a positive one*, and hence a sentence like the following is not considered semantically negative but positive:

Aḥmad is *not* not here.

The negation of the fact that Aḥmad is here is itself negated. That means that Aḥmad is here.

But we have seen from the analysis of examples with *bal* above, that this is not the meaning of a sentence encompassing a negative and *bal*. This is because *bal* is a conjunction, after all. It implies the meaning of *and*, i.e. the assertion that the preceding is conjoined with the following. In the case of *bal*, it simultaneously asserts that the following is the case *and* that the preceding is not the case. Because this is part of *bal*'s lexical meaning, the negative sense in the preceding is inferred from the sentences where *bal* is not preceded by negatives, as explained above.

Could this possibly allow for the assumption that when the preceding is negative, the role of *bal* is to confirm that negation and assert that the case is otherwise? I am tempted to believe this is so, especially since it is consistent with the second general rule for the double negative, i.e. (b) when two negatives follow each other in a sentence the second confirms the first, as is the case in the following example:

No, Aḥmad is not here.

In this sentence, *not here* is not negated by the first negative, rather, it confirms the answer *no* at the beginning of the sentence. In other words, it restricts the influence of the first negative to Aḥmad's presence at the moment of the utterance, which is negated in the second part of the sentence, by eliminating the possibility of *no* referring to any other accessible proposition in the context.

In a *bal* example, a negative sentence occurs in the first part of the utterance which is the first conjunct, and then there is a following part of the utterance, which is the second conjunct. It has been established that the second conjunct is being asserted by *bal* as opposed to the first. But, if the first conjunct contains a negative we have a construction equal in its semantic value to the one just discussed: 'No, Ahmad is not here', which consists of a negative linguistic unit followed by a confirmation of it in the form of another linguistic unit containing another negative. This is exactly what we have in the *bal* conjunctive construction that is preceded by a negative. Consider the following example:

ليس أحمد هنا بل محمد.

Aḥmad is not here, but Muḥammad is.

Laysa Aḥmad hunā *bal* Muḥammad

Is not Aḥmad here but Muḥammad

Hence, I conclude that when it is preceded by a negative, *bal*, by means of the negative aspect of its meaning, confirms the preceding negative and asserts that the following is the case. In other words, it indicates that '1 is *not* the case, *and* 2 is', where 1 is the first conjunct and 2 is the second.

I suggest that this is the default negative meaning of *bal*, when it conjoins negative to positive, serving as a confirmation of the negative in its first conjunct, and the result of such a construction is the expression of an emphatic proposition. On the other hand, when it conjoins two positive conjuncts, it directs the hearer towards the incorrectness of the first conjunct while asserting that the second is the case.

By discussing further examples in the following section, I will show that in the light of this understanding of *bal*'s function and meaning one can explain every use of *bal*, including those incidences where it conjoins two sentences, or two longer linguistic units, as well as when it is preceded by the interrogative.

2.2.2 The Qur'anic use of *bal*

The Qur'anic use of *bal* includes a wider variety of situations, most significantly those where it is preceded by yes/no questions. Many of the examples are more complicated than those in the simple ones designed by grammarians to explain the meaning and function of a particle, like those above. As a result of the variety and complexity of the Qur'anic examples, especially given their divine context, Qur'anic grammarians have proposed various views on *bal*'s meaning and semantic role, in their attempts to explain the meanings of verses. Almost consistently, they interpret the relation between the two conjuncts of *bal* in terms of an implied sentence. The inference of the implied sentence, however, depends on each interpreter's use of the contextual information surrounding the verse where *bal* occurs or that which is made available by accessing the broad topic of the verse.

Nevertheless, I have noticed that these implied sentences/propositions, although not always made clear by the interpreter, always imply the

attribution of a negative sense to the first conjunct and, simultaneously, assertion of the second.

In the following, I will classify the Qur'anic incidences of *bal* into three main groups and discuss its negative implication on the preceding sentence(s), in order to show that the above function of *bal* applies and is indeed sufficient to explain all the different uses of *bal* in the Qur'ān. I will also argue that other theoretical explanations of its functions not only generate more complexity, which can be avoided by the one simple explanation proposed here, but are also vague and rather intuitive.

Three major categories can be discerned in the Qur'anic usage of *bal*:

(a) When it conjoins two nouns as part of a noun phrase, i.e. when it is not in the initial position of the sentence and is not grammatically and/or semantically independent of the sentence structure and meaning, and hence cannot be considered as relevant to the study of paragraph markers.

This category is covered by grammarians in the study of *bal* as a sentence conjunction, as discussed above. It differs from the following two categories in that it does not join sentences but functions within the unit of the sentence. However, this should not change the lexical meaning of *bal* although it obviously influences the syntactic discussion of the constructions in which it occurs.

I have shown above that whether or not this conjunction is preceded by a negative, it has negative implications as part of its lexical default meaning, which influences the semantics of the sentence.

(b) When *bal* links sentences, it might be relevant to this study of paragraph markers, as paragraphs usually start with sentences, but, in this position *bal* could merely be an inter-sentential conjunction and the two sentences the two parts of one long sentence conjoined by *bal*, and not necessarily initiating a paragraph.

(c) When *bal* occurs at the beginning of a verse which is also the beginning of a grammatical sentence. I will examine the utterance unit produced by this type of construction, and discuss how this unit is likely to be of more value to the conveyance of the message intended than one sentence.

In the previous section I discussed examples of the first type and although these were not Qur'anic, they served in establishing an initial understanding of the meaning of *bal*. In the following discussion, I will deal with examples of the second and third categories, which are of greater relevance to the discussion of the larger linguistic units with which this chapter is concerned. First, let us consider examples from category (b) above. I will classify these examples into three classes according to the proposition expressed by the first conjunct/sentence i.e. whether it is negative, positive or interrogative. In all the examples, *bal* functions as an inter-sentential connective linking two sentences which are, in turn, parts of a complex grammatical unit, that is, one conjunctive sentence.

1. The 1st class of examples represents the use of *bal* where it is preceded by negative statements:

1.a وما نرى لكم علينا من فضل بل نظنكم كاذبين (11:27)

11:27 'and we do not see that you could be in any way superior to us: on the contrary we think that you are liars'.

1.b إن الذين جاءوا بالإفك عصبة منكم، لا تحسبوه شرا لكم بل هو خير لكم. (24:11)

24:11 'Verily, numerous among you are those who brought forth the lie: deem it not a bad thing for you, on the contrary: it is good for you'.

2. In the 2nd class of examples *bal* is preceded by a positive sentence:

2.a وقالوا قلوبنا غلف، بل لعنهم الله بكفرهم (2:88)

2:88 'And they said: 'our hearts are sealed, but God has rejected them because of their denial of the truth'.

2.b وقالوا اتخذ الرحمن ولدا، سبحانه بل عباد مكرمون (21:26)

21:26 'And some say: the most gracious has taken unto himself a son, limitless is he in his glory, But only honoured servants'.

3. In the final class, a rhetorical yes/no question precedes *bal*:

3.a أم يقولون افتراه، بل هو الحق من ربك (32:3)

32:3 'Or do they say: 'he (Muḥammad) has invented it'? But it is the truth from thy Sustainer'.

Each class of examples above represents a large number of occurrences where *bal* is used in an almost identical grammatical context. There are some more complex examples, for instance where *bal* is preceded by a yes/no question part of which is a negative statement or phrase where I would regard it as a member of class 3, or where it is preceded by a double negative which semantically equals a positive sentence where I would consider it a member of class 2²³.

In the first class of examples, *bal* conjoins two sentences, the first of them, in both incidences, is negative and the second is not.

Looking at these Qur'anic examples, it can be seen that some of them feature a development of the social or other contextual aspects of the content although this type of development is not clearly demonstrable in the simple examples that grammarians use in elaborating the syntactic roles of words, and others feature controversy. I will discuss these differences in implications in two separate groups.

(a) Examples containing a development in contextual implications

It will be seen in the Qur'anic examples I discuss here that the second conjunct of *bal* always expresses a development or a contrast in the social implications of the two conjuncts.

Consider the proposition expressed by example (1.a) above:

We don't see that you could be in any way superior to us, but we think you are liars
mā narā lakum 'alaynā min faḍlin, bal nazunnukum kādhibīn

²³ Notice that in all the examples given here *bal* occurs at the beginning of a sentence but not at the beginning of a verse, which indicates that the reader is not supposed to pause between the two sentences unless otherwise indicated by additional punctuation marks e.g. وقف أو الوقف أولى etc...

Do not we see for you upon us any good, but we think you liars

This incidence shows a complex verbal sentence, where there are two verbs conjoined by *bal*, each of which composes a sentence in its own right. However the message conveyed by the sentence hinges on the effect of *bal* on the meaning of the combined sentences. In order to understand what *bal*'s contribution to the meanings of these two sentences is, let us look at each of the sentences in isolation and then combined in a sequence that is not linked by *bal*:

We do not see you are in any way superior to us.

Grammatically and semantically the sentence forms a complete unit of a negative sentence where a group of speakers deny the fact that the people of the second group are better than them.

In the second sentence, the first group of people are saying to the second group that they think they are liars:

We think you are liars.

The common elements of the two sentences, the speakers and the addressees, and the fact that the two sentences are formed with the same type of grammatical construction suggest that they could be linked by *and*, since there is a doer that is, grammatically, responsible for the two verbs (seeing and thinking). But, the fact that this doer is actually 'not doing' the negated first verb and doing the second verb, is what makes *bal* the optimal conjunction rather than *and*. In fact if *and* were to be used instead of *bal*, one would be led to infer *bal* as one of the possibly implied meanings, consider this:

We don't think you are any superior to us, and we think you are liars.

The first part of the sentence suggests that the addressees are not superior to the speakers, although the denial of superiority in itself does not necessarily convey any kind of moral or social judgement against the addressees. This part of the utterance could be seen as having neutral implications in terms of social and moral categorisation. However, the second part of the conjunction suggests that the addressees are liars. It makes a moral judgment on them as it attributes to them morally unacceptable behaviour. This difference in the import of the two verbs could be seen as some kind of development in the message conveyed if we consider the change of meaning as moving one step further on the line of moral judgment. It is a development in the sense that the second verb is neither totally unrelated nor equal in its moral value to the first. It expresses something that is actually *more* than the social value expressed through the first verb. The fact that the second sentence expresses a development in the implications, partially based on the semantic content of the two conjuncts, is made explicit by the use of *bal*.

(b) Examples containing a contradiction between the assumptions made accessible by the two conjuncts:

The contradiction between the second and the first conjuncts could easily be associated with the negative aspect of *bal*'s meaning. We have seen earlier that conjoining with *bal* basically means that the first part of the sentence is *not* the case and the second *is*, which implies that the contrast between *is* and *is not* would be part of the meaning of any sentence that contains *bal*. So it is in a simple example like the one I discussed earlier:

Aḥmad is not here *bal* Muḥammad is.

Since, there is no controversy over the presence of both Aḥmad and Muḥammad, or the presence of one of them and not the other, the following sentence does not contain any contradiction:

Aḥmad is not here and Muḥammad is.

However, in a sentence where the conjunction is *bal* there is an implied contradiction, not between the two conjuncts themselves but between the assumption that the hearer has in mind and the content of the second conjunct. What *bal* suggests is that the hearer should not think ‘the first’ and instead should think ‘the second’. *Bal*, in this case, negates a contextual assumption rather than the actual proposition expressed by the first conjunct. Hence I would say that there is an element of contradiction between the assumption that Ahmad is *not* here and the statement made by using the *bal* conjunctive construction: that Muhammad *is* here. The contradiction is based on the assumption made accessible by the use of *bal*, that the hearer thinks Ahmad is here. So, *bal* contradicts an assumption in the hearer’s mind which is how it gives rise to the relevance of the proposition expressed by the second conjunct, i.e. by eliminating an existing assumption, and also by bringing to notice the fact that the hearer or addressee has that ‘incorrect’ assumption in his contextual environment. This can itself be part of the intended message, as we shall soon see in a more complex Qur’anic example. This is in addition to the confirmation of the fact that it is not Ahmad who is here, which I highlighted in the previous section.

Let us now consider the second Qur’anic example:

Do not deem it bad for you, *but* it is good for you.

Lā taḥsabūhu sharran lakum, *bal* huwa khayrun lakum

Do not you deem it bad for you, but it good for you

In addition to giving rise to the contradiction between the existing and the new assumptions discussed above, which we can see here as in other incidences of *bal*, the contrast between the two conjuncts in this example is made directly and explicitly by the use of two predicates that are the lexical opposites of each other: *khayr* (good) and *sharr* (bad). It is interesting to

notice that the explicit contrast led the interpreter to translate *bal* here as ‘on the contrary’, since it is not always made so explicit where it is merely a case of contradiction between an existing assumption and a new one (the one imposed by the use of the *bal* construction).

The interdiction particle *lā* however makes the main use of the second conjunct a confirmation of the first, since the interdiction already states that ‘it’ should not be thought of as bad, a form of negation which actually makes explicit the assumption that was implicit in the previous example, i.e. what the addressee thinks. *Bal*, and the rest of the conjunction construction, then confirms the fact that ‘it’ is not as neutral as the phrase ‘not bad’ might imply, but is even ‘good’. ‘Good’ here can also be seen as a development of the social content of the sentence. If we imagine a line whose two ends are the bad and the good, then the ‘not bad’ and the ‘not good’ would be the middle point. On that line, if we take the ‘not bad’ as a starting point, which is where the sentence begins, ‘the bad’ would be a further point or a development on one side and ‘the good’ would be a further step or a development on the other side. Hence I would argue that the second conjunct in this sentence not only contradicts the first conjunct but also expresses a development in the social judgment of the situation explained by the verse, which is perhaps what made the interpreter emphasise the contrast by the use of the expression/constraint ‘on the contrary’ to give rise to that aspect of the proposition expressed by the verse.

All examples of this class, have *bal* preceded by a negative, and express, either explicitly or implicitly, controversy and/or development in the social content of the verse.

In the second class of examples, we have sentences where *bal* conjoins two positive sentences, so the second conjunct does not serve as a ‘confirmation of the contrary’ as it does when the first conjunct is explicitly negated, nor do we encounter the same development of content that we have seen with examples of the first class. Look at the proposition expressed by the first example, 2.a:

And they said: 'Our hearts are closed', but God has rejected them because of their denial of the truth.

In this example, we do not see the same clear contrast between the two conjuncts. Nevertheless, *bal* maintains its function, which is to eliminate the hearer's assumption that the proposition expressed by the first conjunct is true. The contrast here is between the assumption that the first statement is true and the fact that it is not, which is the implication recovered by taking the meaning of *bal* into consideration. It is the use of *bal* that directs the reader towards its recovery. The fact that someone might say that their hearts are sealed, does not contradict the assertion that God has rejected them. It might imply, though, that they do not wish or are unable to see something in a certain way, and that is why they think their hearts are closed against acceptance of that thing.

Notice also that, unlike examples of the first class, the speaker of the first part of the sentence, the first conjunct, is not the speaker of the second, and the arguments of the two conjuncts are different and not related through opposition to one another.

The verse comes in the context of the dispute about the truth of God. On the one hand, there are the unbelievers who claim that they are unable to see the truth of God because their hearts are sealed against it and who therefore persistently refuse to accept the truth offered by the Prophet because they cannot, or will not, appreciate it.

On the other hand there is God, who speaks against their argument asserting that He has rejected them because of their insistence on the denial of His truth.

So what is the relation between the two arguments/sentences? If we remove *bal* from the sentence, we see the two separate arguments but we cannot define the relation that brings the two sentences together. Consider the following sentence:

And they said: 'our hearts are sealed'. God has rejected them because of their denial of the truth.

Various types of relations could be inferred here. The second sentence could be an explanation to as why their hearts are closed and hence a confirmation of this as a fact. It can also be a beginning of a new paragraph, a consequence of the first one and so on. It could be that their hearts are covered because God has rejected them or that they have sealed hearts and therefore God has decided to reject them as a punishment. Or it could be that God has rejected them because they *said* what they said, i.e. 'our hearts are sealed'.

But, with *bal* conjoining the two sentences, and with our previous knowledge of *bal* as a restriction conjunction, we can now rule out all the different possibilities of interpretation and apply the meaning of *bal*, i.e. that 1 is not the case and that 2 is the case.

In this sentence, 1 is 'our hearts are sealed' and 2 is 'God has rejected them because of their denial of the truth'.

So, the use of *bal* here gives rise to the contrast between the two assumptions raised by the two conjuncts as to be the relation. In other words, the relation between the two conjuncts can be translated into an instruction from the speaker of the utterance to believe that: 1 *is not* the case *and* that 2 *is*. Accordingly, the suggested interpretation of this verse is:

It is not that their hearts are sealed but it is that God has rejected them because of their denial of the truth.

The second example in this class, presents us with a very similar situation. Consider the proposition expressed by 2.b:

وقالوا اتخذ الرحمن ولداً، سبحانه بل عباد مكرمون

And they said 'God has taken a son', but only honoured servants.

The verse comes in another polemical context where some say that God has a son, which is against the Islamic belief proposed by the Qur'ān, where God does not have any sons or relatives or equals of any kind. The sentence

does not exhibit any explicit contrast between its two conjuncts by means of lexical opposition or negations. There is no contradiction between having a son and having 'honoured servants' because one could have both. However, the use of *bal* imposes the meaning of contradiction between the two arguments in this context, since it means that the first is not true and the second is. So the use of *bal* here implies the incorrectness of the assumption that God has taken a son as opposed to what *is* the case, that the prophets are not sons but honoured servants.

Additionally the glorification phrase '*subḥānahu*', in the context of Islamic belief, supports the opposition of the first conjunct by glorifying Him just before the second sentence suggesting that the following argument is opposite to the first. It introduces the information in the following and confirms its content. Therefore the message conveyed is understood as:

God has not taken upon Himself a son, limitless is he in his glory, but he has taken honoured servants.

Similarly, in all examples featuring the same construction, as a result of the addition of *bal* with its negative connotations, the implications raised by the first argument are negated and opposed by the following argument in the second conjunct.

In the third class of examples, *bal* is preceded by an interrogative. This difference does not, however, present us with a totally different use of *bal*, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the fact that the precedent is a question does not have an impact on the default meaning of *bal*. Secondly and more significantly, questions in Arabic are regular sentences introduced with question words, which do not in themselves have any impact on the sentence structure. A positive sentence can be preceded by a question word as in the following example:

هو أحمد

He is Aḥmad

Huwa Aḥmad

He Aḥmad

To enquire about someone's identity, the same sentence structure is used, but it is introduced by an appropriate question word²⁴, as follows:

هل هو أحمد؟

Is he Aḥmad?

Hal huwa Aḥmad?

(Question word) he Aḥmad?

A negative question would be constructed in the same way. The sentence above is negated by the insertion of the negation particle in its appropriate position²⁵, as follows:

ليس هو أحمد

He is not Aḥmad

Laysa huwa Aḥmad

Not he Aḥmad

And to enquire about the statement above, in a negative question, an appropriate question word would be inserted at the beginning of the sentence, as follows:

أليس هو أحمد

Is he not Aḥmad?

'Alaysa huwa Aḥmad?

²⁴ Appropriateness of question word is determined by the type of the sentence used to form the question. Although positive sentences can be enquired about by either 'hal' or 'A', negative sentences cannot be introduced by the question word 'hal', instead the prefix 'A', which is linked to the beginning of the negation, should be used, with no change as to the sentence construction.

²⁵ Appropriateness of a negation is determined by the type and tense of sentence. Nominal sentences must be negated by 'laysa' whereas verbal sentences in the past tense have to be negated by 'mā' and those in the present tense by 'lā', and so on.

(question suffix)+not he Ahmad?

In a number of Qur'anic incidences, positive questions are followed by sentences encompassing *bal*²⁶ and in many of these cases the conjuncts are not easily identified. Some of the incidences, like the following example, contain questions whose answers are composed of two sentences. The truth of the first sentence is usually negated by the second, which contains a contradictory item of information, and the contradiction between the two sentences is indicated by the use of *bal*. Consider this verse:

قال كم لبثت قال لبثت يوما أو بعض يوم قال بل لبثت مائة عام (٢:٢٥٩)

He said: 'How long have you remained like that?' He said: 'A day or a part of a day.' He said: 'But (*bal*) you have remained for a hundred years.'

It is interesting to see that this example occurs in a conversational sequence, which is taking place between God and a man. God asks him how long he thinks he has been unconscious and he says it was a day or less, whereas God asserts that it was a hundred years!

The sequence is similar to the examples we discussed in section 2.2.1 above, where *bal* occurs in conversations and its two conjuncts are both positive sentences and where it is impossible for the information in the two conjuncts to be true at the same time. However, the use of *bal* indicates the incorrectness of the first and asserts that the second is true. In this case, *bal* conjoins sentences uttered by two different speakers, one of whom is correcting an item of information that is uttered by the other, and the contradiction is inferred, by applying *bal*'s meaning, although there is no explicit expression that refers to the incorrectness of the first. However, since it would be impossible to accept the content of both conjuncts as true at the same time, and given the meaning of the conjunction, we interpret the meaning of the sentence as being that the first is not the case, and the second is.

²⁶ Negative questions precede *bal* only in a few Qur'anic incidences but they are all at the beginning of a verse so they belong to category (c) which I will discuss later in the chapter.

To explain this construction, traditional grammarians assume that there is a curtailed sentence that contains an explicit negation to the statement made by the speaker of the answer (one day or a part of a day). The first conjunct of *bal*, according to that view, would be that curtailed sentence and the second is the one following *bal* (a hundred years), so that the sequence would be, as following:

He said: 'How long have you remained?' He said: 'One day or part of a day.' He said: 'No, you have not remained a day, but (*bal*) you remained a hundred years.'

However, in the majority of incidences interrogative sentences precede *bal* without being followed by an answer, and they are mostly yes-or-no questions. In these cases, the inference of a sentence, or the assumption of the first conjunct being a curtailed sentence is a more necessary explanation. Let us discuss the example in class 3 above:

Or, do they say he invented it? But it is the truth from your sustainer.

'Am yaqūlūna iftarāhu, *bal* huwa al-ḥaqqu
min rabbik.

(Or in a question form) they say he invented it, but it the truth
from your sustainer.

The question comes in a polemical context where God asks the Prophet, rhetorically, whether the unbelievers say that Muḥammad invented the Qur'ān. The following sentence, introduced by *bal*, has a contradictory piece of information. It asserts that the Qur'ān is the truth from God. However, the contradiction is not an explicit one: the sentence following the question does not say; 'no, he has not invented it', but it nevertheless leads the recipient to infer it, using the sentence starting with the conjunction *bal*, and no part of the linguistic form of that sentence behaves as a first conjunct.

In order to complete the normal requirement of a conjunctive construction one would need to infer a first conjunct which is, in the case of the conjunction *bal*, expected to consist of a negative sentence, in consistency with the meaning of *bal*, that is – ‘not 1, and 2’. But, 1, that is negated, is not given explicitly and the recipient will have to infer it as a proposition that has opposite content to that in the proposition following *bal*, i.e one whose propositional content cannot be true if the content of the second conjunct is.

It will also have to be a proposition that has some relevance. Probably, the most relevant proposition that follows a question is the one that answers the question and thus makes the question itself relevant to the text. Since the question is a yes-or-no question, the inferred first conjunct will contain one of the two phrases. If one goes for the *yes* answer the second conjunct will be irrelevant, and the rhetorical question itself will be so, given its polemical context. Accordingly, the only answer to the question that is consistent with the relevance expectations of the recipient is the *no* answer, which will also give *bal* the effect of confirming the implied negative answer and so increasing the relevance of the second conjunct.

So the message conveyed by the whole verse would be understood as:

Or do they say he invented it? *No, he didn't*, but it is the truth from God.

In translation, the emphatic negative effect of *bal* on the preceding negative should be represented in the form of an appropriate confirmation phrase such as ‘no *indeed*’ or the like.

Now, I look at some examples where *bal* occurs at the beginning of verses. The examples of *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* belong to this type. But before examining these particular examples, let us look, generally and exclusively at the other Qur’anic occurrences of this conjunction at beginnings of verses.

In the entire Qur’ān, *bal* occurs 37 times at the beginning of verses. In 19 (more than 51%) of them it follows a question and it corresponds to the answer to that question directly in 18 of those 19 instances. In the rest of the

37 verses, it occurs after negative or positive sentences, and in three of these it follows the ritual oaths at beginning of *sūras*. Interestingly enough, *bal* has an explicit first conjunction in only one of the 37 verses. But there is always an inferential relation connecting the sentences marked by *bal* to the preceding sentence. It is also noticeable that, in almost all of the 37 incidences, in addition to that inferential relation between *bal* and the preceding sentence(s) there appears also to be a relation holding between the sentence preceded by *bal* and the following few verses/sentences. In this study I will not cover all these examples, but will content myself by looking at the examples in *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*, bearing in mind these observations. I will show how *bal* has an inferential relation with the preceding sentence(s), and will discuss its relation with the following few sentences. I will also show that it is not the case that both conjuncts are explicit, and that the relation between the linguistic units conjoined by *bal* is inferential and explicable in terms of the phrase ‘not the first and the second’. However, this relation, although it holds in many cases between linguistic units larger than sentences, does not necessarily mark a beginning of a new paragraph. In *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* as the discussion reveals, *bal* marks the concluding statement of a number of paragraphs, but it does not mark beginnings of new relatively independent units of meaning, i.e. it does not restrict the inference of new implicatures.

2. 3 Bal in Sūrat al-Qiyāmah:

2.3.1 The First Incidence:

After the ritual oath with which *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* begins, comes the question ‘Does man think we will not gather his bones?’ followed by the sentence ‘Yes, we are able to form his very fingertip.’ However, ‘yes’ in this sentence does not seem to be the answer to the preceding question, because grammatically the term ‘*balā*’ that is used in the sense of *yes* here, is the positive answer to a negative question. The question in v.3 is a positive one, which starts with ‘does’ not with ‘does not’, so ‘*balā*’ would not normally be the answer to this question. Moreover, if we take v.4 to be

the answer to the question in v.3, the sentence in the former will be inconsistent with the fact that the question in the latter is a rhetorical one and a contradiction between the implications of the answer 'yes' and the rest of that sentence that indicates that 'no, man's assumptions is not right'. Consider the sequence:

أيحسب الإنسان أن نجمع عظامه؟

Does man think we will not gather his bones?

There are two possible logical answers to this question

بلى، يحسب الإنسان أن نجمع عظامه.

Yes, man thinks we will not gather his bones (Which implies a contradiction to the part of v.4. following *balā/ yes*).

Or:

كلا، لا يحسب الإنسان أن نجمع عظامه (الإنسان يحسب أن سنجمع عظامه).

No, man does not think we will not gather his bones
i.e. man reckons we will gather his bones. (Which contradicts the content of the question)

Assuming that the speaker is being relevant, he cannot mean to confuse the recipients by giving out conflicting messages, because then the effort of resolving conflicts might not balance the contextual effect achieved.

Therefore, I assume that the speaker, meaning to achieve as much relevance as possible, in order to succeed in conveying the intended message to the opponents, will provide one of the two most easily accessible answers, the two above, rather than one which implies an argument opposite to that of the whole *sūra* and which also undermines the relevance of the question and its role in the argument.

However, the verse following the question is not any of the most two logical answers suggested above. The answer that is made explicit by v.4 is:

Yes, we are able to form his very fingertip.

The answer offered by that proposition shifts the focus from man being the subject of the question, in v.3 to God being the subject of the answer in v.4. A shift in the dominant pronoun indicates a change of the discourse priorities from being an explicit discussion of man's beliefs to a statement of God's position in the argument, which, in the following two verses (5 and 6), discredits the genuineness of man's argument and also introduces the point of view from which the text of the *sūra* will argue against that claim of man, i.e. the truth of resurrection.

The way this effect is achieved can be explained by considering a relation that exist between the second part of the question 'we will not gather his bones' and v.4, but only without the *balā/yes* part of the answer. Gathering the bones corresponds to 'forming the fingertips', in that forming the fingertips is part of or a stage in the process of 'gathering the bones'. However, the Qur'ān, in these verses, does not try at this stage of the polemical discourse of the *sūra* to prove that God is capable of this. It only 'states' that He is so.

So, if we leave '*balā*' aside for the time being, we can see the sequence as follows:

3. Does man think We will not gather his bones?
4. We are capable of forming his fingertips.

In this case, the statement made in v.4 contains an immediate response from God's point of view to what the question asks, whether or not man thinks it to be true. This immediate response provides us with God's main statement of the argument that will take place in further detail later in the *sūra*. Thus, so far, the main argument of each party is represented in one sentence: God's by v.4 and Man's by v.3. In the following verse, as argumentation commences, the delayed answer to the question takes place. But before

discussing the answer, I first recall that in previously discussed examples we have seen that *bal* may conjoin two sentences, the first of which is not explicit, but is understood from the meaning of *bal*, i.e. the preceding is not the case and the following is. Now, let us consider v.5:

But (*bal*) man wishes to deny what lies before him.

Since *bal* requires a first conjunct, and the question in v.3 remains unanswered, because of the interdiction of the counter argument which presents God's view as opposed to what man claims. Guided by the search for relevance, and since the relevance of an item can be explained in terms of its contribution to the preceding and the following²⁷, and since it is the nearest possible answer, which makes it easily accessible, and gives rise to the relevance of the proposition expressed by v.5, the conjunctive construction can be explained in terms of the answer to the question in v.3, as follows:

No, Man does not think we will not gather his bones, but (*bal*) he wishes to deny what lies before him.

In this way, *bal* highlights the relation between this sentence and the preceding, not only superficially by providing a fulfillment of the question's requirement of an answer, but also at a deeper level because it connects the various parts of the argument: It explains to recipients why man rejects belief in the resurrection by bringing to the context the fact that he wishes to deny what lies before him. It provides a motive for a position which man has long been taking in the various Qur'anic 'dust and bones' polemical verses, which is the denial he prefers to the acceptance of the truth. It also provides a support to God's counter argument. since it implies that man's claim is not based on a genuine belief but rather the mere tendency to deny fate because it does not suit the immediate interests in which he prefers to be engaged, as v.20 later states.

²⁷ See: Blass, *Relevance Relations*, pp. 78-79.

Returning to the use of *balā* in v.4, I notice that it corresponds both grammatically and semantically to another rhetorical question that is proposed in the very last verse of the *sūra*, that is:

40. 'Is not That capable of resurrecting the dead?' (with 'That' referring to God)

The question begins with the negative 'is not' and that matches with the usual use of *balā* as a positive answer. However, the rest of the construction and the semantic contents of the words do correspond indirectly to v.4. The propositional content of the question in v.40 gives access to that in v.4: One who is capable of forming man's very fingertip, is capable of resurrecting the dead, and *vice versa*. In sum, the first word of the question in the verse corresponds by grammatical means to the first part of God's argument represented in v.4, the content of the former rounds off the *sūra* by giving access to the arguments raised in the opening/topic statements of the text. This effect is made easily accessible by the question in v.40 echoing v.4 through the use of the same lexical item, once in the singular and once in the plural but in both cases referring to the same entity, i.e. God, referred to in v.4 in 'capable' (*qādir*). In the light of this interpretation, we can view the first 4 verses as a topic paragraph that flashes the main arguments to be discussed in the *sūra*: Man, on the one hand, denying that God will gather his bones, and God, on the other hand affirming that he can gather even the fingertips of the human body.

The argumentation then proceeds by showing that man's claim is actually derivative rather than genuine, because he does not actually believe so; he only wishes to deny the facts of his own future. This first item of the argumentation is linked to the topic paragraph by means of the conjunctive *bal*, which gives rise to an element of contrast between two of man's deeds: on the one hand his disbelief in the possibility of resurrection and on the other his wish to live in denial of the truth of resurrection, which implies that he knows of the possibility of resurrection.

The argument, from God's side, continues by explaining what is meant by man's tendency to live in denial:

6. Asking when is the day of resurrection.

The verb 'asking' actually constitutes a grammatical link to the preceding verse by forming, with its complements, an adverbial sentence that qualifies the verb 'deny' in v.4.

From there, the argument moves on towards providing a description of some astonishing eschatological phenomena that will take place on that day (vv.8-9), the day denied by man. But man is never absent from the scene: astonished by the events (v.7), trying unsuccessfully to find himself a refuge, for there is none, not on that day when everyone's recourse is to their God, to be told of the good and bad of their earlier deeds (vv.10-13). But, actually man does not need to be told, because he had been aware of what he was doing, although he might tender his excuses for doing this and not doing that (vv.14-15).

2.3.2 The Second Use of *Bal* in the *Sūra*

The second use of *bal* in the *sūra* occurs between vv.13 and 14:

13. Man shall be told on that day of what he has done and what he has left undone.

14. But (*bal*) man is a witness upon himself. 15. even though he might tender his excuses.

In this case *bal* appears to be linking two units of speech, the first of which is in positive mode, which means that the second conjunct will be stated in opposition to the first. An opposite statement to that in the first conjunct will therefore be inferred from the overall structure of the two sentences forming the first conjunct, as follows:

Man shall be told, on that day, of what he has done and what he has left undone.

And the use of *bal* leads to the inference of a statement opposite this one:

No, he will not be told ...

This is not to say that the negation in the implied proposition means that the statement in v.13 is actually incorrect, but rather it comes as a way of negating the content of the verb 'told' and its possible implications. The verb (*yunabba'*) which is the Arabic for 'telling news', implies the fact that what is being told is new as part of its default meaning. However, man himself has been actually committing the actions referred to in v.13 as 'what he has done and what he has left undone', so he need not be 'told' about them as if he did not possess any previous knowledge of them. Hence, the use of conjunction *bal* to negate any doubt regarding man's awareness of what he has committed in his past life, and to assert that he has in fact been a witness against himself while in this life, which is the justification of the account on the day of judgment.

In this position *bal* serves as an indicator of the relation between the following two sentences and the preceding one, whereas the preceding sentence, that is the first conjunct, is part of the proceedings of the current description of various events on the day of judgment and at the same time is a comment on the answer to man's question as to where to flee from the horror of that day. What *bal* does not do here is actually mark a beginning of a new subject matter or even a minor change in topic. It merely indicates the relation that holds together parts of a verbal exchange, which might, all together, form a paragraph. It provides, by the addition of its meaning to the meanings of the two conjuncts, a justification for the position of the following sentence (composed of vv.14 and 15) by virtue of indicating the distinction between being told of something new to one and subsequently not having to be held responsible for it, and being a witness to one's own deeds so that no excuses in justification of one's wickedness are acceptable.

2.3.3 The Third Use of *Bal* in the *Sūra*

The third and final use of *bal* in the *sūra* occurs in v.20, where it is preceded by the emphatic negation ‘*kallā*’. There is a serious difficulty in saying that *bal* is a paragraph marker here since, according to the definition adopted in the first section, paragraph markers occupy sentence initial positions. However, let us discuss what *bal* negates and what it connects, as it stands in this verse, in order to account for all its uses in this *sūra*, and also to try to draw a distinction between connectives/particles that mark paragraphs and those that do not. Notably, so far in the *sūra*, it has been proved that *bal* does not mark paragraphs, but rather plays a role in shaping the relations between sentences within paragraphs.

Verse 20 occurs at the beginning of what is arguably a shift in subject matter. However, it is questionable as to who is included in the general plural addressee of the rebuke in this verse and the following. The verse comes after four verses addressed to the Prophet Muḥammad commanding him not to hasten in reciting the revelations. Let us consider this immediate context of v.20:

16. Move not thy tongue to hasten with it.
17. Verily, upon Us its gathering and its recitation.
18. Thus, when we recite it, follow thou its recitation.
19. And then, verily, it will be upon us to clarify it.

20. No indeed. But ye love the world that hastens away
21. and ye forsake the hereafter.

Verses 16-19 are addressed directly to the Prophet in singular masculine vocative pronouns, and as in all the Qur’anic verses with this type of addressee they are thought to be addressed to the Prophet as a first and direct recipient of the text, and to individual believers who are to follow the Prophet’s behavior as indicated to them in numerous occasions in the

Qur'ān and Sunnah (e.g. Q. 33:21). The object of the verses is to discourage hastening with the recitation, probably in fear of forgetfulness, asserting that the onus is upon God to preserve the whole of the text and to clarify it.

This group of verses has no explicit connection with the preceding context. However it is possible to infer a relation between it and v.15 where man is denied his excuses for what he has done and left undone in this life, since hastening with the reading might be justified by being keen on maintaining the whole of the text. In this case the link between the two verses could be explained in terms of the assumption that vv.16-19 provide an example for the earlier general hint about making up excuses for unjustifiable actions²⁸. Other commentators however, tend to see the verses in the realistic interactive context of the Prophet's receiving the verses of *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* and hastening with their recitation, so that the flow of the verses is interrupted by this four-verse parenthetical paragraph of instructions, after which the main context of the *sūra* continues. However the verses are not completely parenthetical since they reinforce the idea of man's tendency to hasten with things by blaming him for his love of the world that hastens away and for forsaking the hereafter.

Either way, however, v.20 marks a clear movement between two discrete topics within the *sūra*, but with some lexical repetitions, which indicate to some extent the integration and general unity of the text.

So, does *bal* indicate some type of connection between the consecutive parts of the *sūra*? And if so, how does it do this? In order to investigate this question, I refer to my former question: what does *bal* conjoin and what are its two conjuncts?

Let us look at v.20:

كلا بل تحبون العاجلة وتذرون الآخرة

No, indeed! But ye love the world that hastens away.

Kallā *bal* tuḥibbūna al-[°]ājilah

No indeed but ye love the hastening away

²⁸ For further details see: Rāzy, *Tafsīr*, vol. 30, p. 223.

In this verse, *bal* is preceded by a negative, which raises the assumption that its function in this particular position is one of confirming the preceding negative while asserting the following as an alternative. The following, the second conjunct, is clear as in almost all the examples discussed above, i.e. 'ye love the world that hastens away'. It, then, indicates that the negated first conjunct, which would be at the same time the scope of the negation, has to do with man's acceptance of the day of resurrection versus this life, which hastens away, since it is expected to be of an opposite nature to 'loving' or being very keen on 'this life'.

Man's acceptance of the day of resurrection dictates many consequences. Fundamentally, such acceptance would mean that one would have to surrender to God and abandon pride and temporary pleasures, unless they support one's progress towards a better position on the Day of Judgment. But man, on the contrary, does not: some of the evidence of clinging to his pride and the pleasures of this life is attested later in the *sūra* (vv.31-34).

The scope of the negative can, accordingly, be any proposition, explicit or implicit, from which similar implications could be derived.

One possibility is that the verse is a continuation of the command in vv.16-19, as explained above. But, there are other equally valid alternatives that can be considered: It could be argued that the negation denies that man has been a witness against himself because he loves the hastening world too much to keep track of the accordance of his every deed with the instructions of the book, in which case *kallā* and *bal* would be connecting vv.20-21 and the following related verses, to the paragraph containing vv.14-5. In searching for a more assertive interpretation, it could be argued, from the relevance-based point of view adopted in this research, that the explanation of the connection, which yields more contextual effect and gives access to more contextual information that participates in uncovering the message of the *sūra*, should be optimized over the other possibilities. It seems to me, that there is a considerable degree of difficulty in determining the first conjunct for this particular verse since we have here a case of a number of weak implicatures where it would be up to each recipient's background

knowledge to decide what the connective indicates as to the relations between the verses in question and other parts of the *sūra*. However, in any case, the contrast between what precedes *bal*, the scope of ‘*kallā*’, and the second conjunct is established by the occurrence of *bal*, together with the propositional content of the second conjunct.

Finally, *bal* in all its occurrences discussed above, does not prove to be restricting the relevance of paragraphs following it, but rather it occurs in introductions to sentences that are themselves parts of paragraphs (introducing, in the case of the first and second occurrences, the concluding sentences of paragraphs). On the other hand, the units of meaning that are defined as paragraphs in the *sūra*, are to be observed in the following section and their relations to one another will be explained as part of the study of the particle *kallā* whose role appears to be the dominant paragraph marker in this *sūra*.

2.4. *Kallā*

2.4.1 Introduction to the Use of *Kallā* in the Qur’ān

As with many particles, determination of the exact meaning of *kallā* in each instance is to a large extent context-dependent. However, it is generally agreed that it is an emphatic negative particle used to indicate disapproval and may have the connotations of rebuke, and rejection of what has been said (*radʿ*, *zajr* and *tanbīh*).²⁹

In the Qur’anic examples and in other literary uses, *kallā* has a range of uses in addition to representing a reaction to a disapproved proposition by a second speaker. The various ways in which it can be used do not, however, conflict with the fact that it maintains its principal meaning, i.e. disapproval. In terms of its rhetorical function, *kallā* is usually used as an ‘opening particle’ to introduce new topics.³⁰

²⁹ ʿUḍaymah, *ʿUṣlūb al-Qur’ān*, part 1, vol. 2; Ibn Hishām, *Mughny*, vol. 1, pp. 188-190.

³⁰ see: Ibn Hishām, *Mughny*, vol. 1, p. 160.

Kallā occurs 33 times in the Qur’ān, mostly in Meccan *sūras* of a strong polemical nature and in the context of extensive debate between the fundamental arguments of Islam and atheism. In 29 of these occurrences it is at the beginning of verses, and in two of them it occurs at the beginning of reported or conjoined utterances immediately following the verb ‘said’ in ‘*qāla kallā fa-idhhabā bi-’āyātinā.*’ (Said He: ‘No indeed! Go forth with our messages) (26: 15) and the conjunction ‘and then’ in ‘*thumma kallā sayalāmūn*’ (and no indeed they will come to know) (78:5). It precedes *bal* in 5 of the 29 instances where it is at the beginnings of verses and in one of the two verses where it is not ‘*kallā bal huwa Allāhu al-‘azīzu al-ḥakīm*’ (No indeed! But He is the all mighty and the Wise) (34: 27).

In the following sections I examine *kallā*’s occurrences in *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* and its relation to preceding and following paragraphs. I will show that the negative in *kallā* is not always directed solely towards negating the content of preceding sentences but that it that could be negating beyond that, and that the negated proposition is sometimes implicit. Furthermore, the proposition(s) following *kallā* consist of a group of sentences comprising one unit of meaning that forms a specific and identifiable part of the message of the *sūra* and a unit of utterance independent of the following units, so I assume they could be forming a paragraph marked by *kallā*, where the particle is a constraint on the inference of the relation between this unit of meaning and the preceding proposition by way of expressing disapproval of it.

2.4.2 The First Usage of *Kallā* in *Sūrat al-Qiyāmah*

The first use of *kallā* in the *sūra* is in verse 11. Let us consider its immediate context:

10. On that day Man will say ‘Where is the place to flee?’

11. No indeed, not a refuge.

Kallā lā wazar

No indeed no refuge

The utterance to which *kallā* is the response is made by man on the day of resurrection. Confounded by astonishment and fear at the scene of the eschatological phenomena that are changing nature as previously known to him, man asks: 'Where is the place to flee?' The question of course implies the assumption that there is a place to flee to, otherwise one would not ask 'where' because asking for the whereabouts of something means that we know or, at least assume, that it already exists: things do not have locations before they exist.

On the basis of this implied assumption, the response from God, the other party in the dialogue, comes not to answer the question by giving the whereabouts of the sought refuge, but to eliminate, by means of contradiction, the underlying assumption that there is any refuge, and hence its relevance to the question. So although questions normally call for answers, the response can sometimes be to eliminate the argument on whose grounds the questions are asked. In this way, the response '*kallā, lā wazar*' (no indeed, not a refuge) not only corresponds to the explicit enquiry made by man at the scene of the physical evidence that the world is indeed coming to an end, but also corresponds to his grounds for assuming that there is a way of escaping that end. What are these grounds? They are his initial argument that was made explicit earlier in the *sūra*: the denial of resurrection. It is from his denial of resurrection that man comes to assume it could be avoided. because, according to the *sūra*, he prefers to believe resurrection will never happen and, therefore, if some evidence of change in his natural world occurs, it must be avoidable, in some way or other, so that it is not inevitable.

But, the other side of the argument, the Qur'anic position, for which the *sūra* intends to give evidence, is that resurrection is indeed inevitable, so 'there is no refuge'. The statement that there is no refuge is made emphatic by the use of *kallā*, since it is the particle of strong disapproval, and an

additional negative that confirms the following negative sentence ‘no refuge’.

‘No refuge’ as a statement on its own would answer the question, again by contradicting the assumption underlying the question (that there is a refuge because the event is not inevitable), but it does not have the sense of the other party’s disapproval of that assumption, which is achieved by the addition of *kallā*.

But this is not the end of the argument. We have already inferred that the question that is made with reference to man’s denial of the inevitability of the day of resurrection, and its response, both lead to the counter argument that it is definitely going to happen. The following few verses (12-15) provide further information based on the latter argument: They explain why there is no refuge, and by the consistent and repeated use of the time adverbial (*yawma ‘idhin*: on that day) they show that it is when (*‘idh*) the eschatological phenomena described above (vv.8-7) take place that man will ask for a refuge *and* it is *on that same day* that man will have recourse to his Sustainer *and* that it is *on that day* that man will be told, or rather reminded, of what he has committed during his earlier life. The use of this type of information as part of the argument is on the basis that it can be taken for granted that the day of resurrection will happen, so the text leaves the argument aside for a while, and proceeds by being informative on the subject matter of the argument itself. One can actually argue that something is true by virtue of giving more details about it that show that the speaker knows what he is talking about and that he is certain that it needs no further confirmation. And this is how the argument in this part of the text is made relevant: by telling man that the day of resurrection is not only possible and inevitable, but even that it is known to God what is going to happen then, on that day, when nature will change its course, and man will be confounded with fear and astonishment, and when he will be brought before his Sustainer to be told of what he has, knowingly, done in this life.

To a large extent, it is because of the occurrence of *kallā* in the middle of this context that parts of the argument hold together in the way I have just explained. On the one hand, it expresses God’s disapproval of man’s

attitude by virtue of bracketing the negative answer by *kallā*, and places emphasis on the fact that there is no possibility of escape, which is how it links God's following argument against the assumptions underlying the argument that man makes by uttering his question, and on the other hand, it establishes the contents of the sentence introduced by *kallā* and the following related sentence in opposition to man's argument by virtue of providing further information about the subject of debate from God's perspective.

In order to evaluate the effect achieved by the use of *kallā* in this context, let us consider the same text in the absence of *kallā*:

7. So, when the eyesight is [by fear] confounded, 8. and the moon sinks away, 9. and the sun and moon are brought together. 10. On that day, man will say 'Where is the place to flee?' 11. Not a refuge. 12. Before your Lord, on that day, you will recourse. 13. Man will be told, on that day, of what he has done and what he has left undone. 14. But man shall be a witness upon himself. 15. Even though he might tender his excuses.

In the absence of *kallā*, the argument of the text does not change much. The effect of eliminating *kallā*, however, has to do with understanding the relation between the group of verses that ends with man asking for a refuge (vv.7-10) and the following group of verses where God puts forward a response based on His opposition to man's argument, and by doing so introduces a whole new aspect of His argument to prove the inevitability of resurrection. *Kallā* in fact gives rise to two implied aspects of the message of this text, and it helps to recover these by standing as it does at the beginning of v.11. They are: (a) the fact that the segment of discourse following *kallā* is an argument disproving what has been previously said, and gives rise to the relevance of the following part of the discourse and (b) the continuation of the discourse from where the question about a refuge was made, to a replacement of the ground assumption on which the question was based: it is replaced by the assertion that there is another

course that man will go through. In other words, the reason why there cannot be a refuge is because of the inevitability of being brought before God. This also gives rise to the relevance of the following few verses (vv.12-15) in terms of their role in the argumentation *against* the underlying argument of the preceding questions (i.e. denial of resurrection).

Moreover, the use of *kallā* indicates that the disapproval is coming from a different side of the argument, and that indication is immediately supported by the pronoun reversal that occurs in v.13 when man becomes the addressee rather than the speaker, as he was in v.10.

If we are to adopt the view that a following segment of discourse is made relevant by its contribution to the relevance of a preceding segment, and that conversely, a preceding segment is relevant if it contributes towards understanding a following one, then the explanation above shows how the meaning of *kallā* in this particular part of the text leads to the realisation of this type of interactive relation between the preceding and following utterance.

This relation between the two parts of the text, which is achieved by the use of *kallā*, suggests to me that the function of the particle in this context is not merely to place emphasis on a negative response to some question in the course of an argument, but also actually to direct recipients towards a particular understanding of the relation between the two segments of the argument, which are not two short utterances but are represented by a sequence of grammatical sentences that can be grouped as two highly effective units in the dialectic relation between the two opposing arguments debated throughout the text.

In the concluding section I will show where these two segments of the text fall within a full map of its paragraphs. But meanwhile, I move on to an investigation of the role *kallā* plays in its following two occurrences in this *sūra*.

2.4.3 The Second Usage of *Kallā* in the *Sūra*

The second occurrence, in v.20, presents us with a further complicated problem for the interpreter, which is the lack of certainty as to what is the object, in the text or its contextual medium, of the disapproval expressed by *kalla*. In its previous usage, I have established that uttering *kallā* was a way of objecting to the underlying argument that resulted in the utterance of the question in the immediately preceding verse. *Kallā* in that context seemed to bracket an alternative answer with an opposite underlying argument that is immediately confirmed by a chain of verses detailing it.

However, in the second incidence there is no argument that is physically close to the sentence introduced by *kallā* and can be seen as being opposed by the sentence *kallā* introduces, pointing to some relatively straightforward relation between the two parts of the text. On the contrary, the preceding group of sentences itself has no clear relation to the general context of argumentation that is taking place in the *sūra*. Let us look at the textbeginning with v.16 after a variety of eschatological material that ends by warning man that he is a witness against himself and that no excuses could be enough to help him avoid the consequences of his actions (vv.7-15).

16. Move not thy tongue to hasten with it. 17. Verily, upon Us its gathering and its recitation. 18. Thus, when we recite it follow thou its recitation. 19. And then, verily, it will be upon us to clarify it.

20. No indeed (*kallā*)! But ye love the world that hastens away 21. and ye forsake the hereafter. 22. Faces will on that day be radiant, 23. gazing to their Lord. 24. And faces will on that day be scowling, 25. knowing that a backbreaking is about to befall them.

Kallā occurs at the beginning of v.20 as shown in this translation. It is the beginning of another eschatological scene, a continuation, probably, of what has been touched upon earlier of man's reaction to the difficulty of the

experience at the first signs of the day of resurrection, and his inevitable confrontation with what he has done and not done. It is introduced by another rebuke to man that he loves the world that hastens away and forsakes the hereafter, then it proceeds by describing how people will look on that day, when some faces will be beaming in anticipation of their reward from their Sustainer, and others will be darkened by fear of what is lies ahead of them, obviously as a result of their being told of what they have done and not done in the first life, and their knowing that their excuses were not of much help to them.

The preceding group of verses is addressed to the singular masculine, and like most Qur'anic verses with this type of addressee, they are taken to be addressed to the Prophet himself and, subsequently, to every individual Muslim who follows his doctrines. The verses have some implications for the revealed nature of the Qur'ān, i.e. that it is the true word of God. It is important at this point to give a short overview of the background (contextual environment) of this type of discourse in the Qur'ān, in the light of which those four verses may possibly be understood.

During the Meccan period of the Qur'anic revelations two issues dominated the debate between the Prophet Muḥammad and his followers on one side, and the powerful pagan tribes of Mecca on the other. These are, (a) the unity of the one absolute god, i.e. God as expressed in the testimony: 'I bear witness that there is no god but God', the most fundamental concept of Islamic belief and one which was, obviously, rejected by the opposing pagans who used to worship numerous gods and goddesses around which their political powers and financial interests were shaped (b) the truth of the Qur'ān as the word of God, brought down to the Prophet Muḥammad for him to convey to mankind, which is what makes him God's messenger. This is the basis of the second term of the testimony of whoever accepts Islam as a religion; 'and I bear witness that Muḥammad is God's messenger'.

The contents of the Qur'anic passages revealed in this period consequently focused on these two fundamental concepts and because of the strength of the opposition, most revelations were of a polemical nature. Even non-

polemical passages were still part of the dialogue between the messenger representing God and the non-believers representing their pagan beliefs, and so may be seen as implicitly polemical, since they were meant to elaborate and shed light on aspects of the debated matters, and give facts and lessons from the history of the unbelieving nations, etc. which would support the Qur'anic argument for these two major issues, i.e. the unity of God and its consequences in His greater powers over the universe and the present and hereafter lives of mankind, and the fact that the Qur'ān is the message of God carried by the Prophet Muḥammad to mankind. The dialogue and the struggle over spiritual and political power between the two parties were verbalised in the Qur'ān, which was at that stage mainly a political and, some times, religious discourse. It was a mirror of life in Mecca at the time and much of it was revealed in order to support the Prophet and the believers in their intellectual and political fight to spread the religion of the one God *tawḥīd* as stated in the Qur'ān “كذلك لنثبت به فؤادك” (so that we consolidate your heart with it) (Q. 25:32). It is no surprise then that many of the superficially non-polemical verses, such as those that contain historical or eschatological material, occur in juxtaposition to polemical material. This probably explains the apparently superficial variety of 'topic' and subject matter found in many of these Meccan *sūras*.

It is also notable that it seems that the Meccan parts of the Qur'ān seem to try to draw a consistent relation between the three themes: man on the day of resurrection, proof that the revelations are from God, and the assertion that the Prophet is only a messenger, since they often occur in close conjunction in Meccan *sūras*.

A large number of verses revealed during this period addressed directly or indirectly the debate regarding the divine nature of the revelations. Some of these were in the form of complete *sūras* devoted to the subject of the authenticity and status of the revelations as the word of God (e.g. *sūra* 97), whereas others were scattered, singly or in small groups, within various *sūras*. Some were explicitly directed towards proving that the Qur'ān is the

true word of God and not an invention of Muḥammad or a form of hallucination as the Meccan pagans used to say, and others were rather inexplicit so one would need to rely on a wider knowledge of Qur'anic themes and history in order to work out the way in which these verses relate to their context e.g. *sūras*: 81:19-27, 76:23, 74: 16-25, etc.).

I suggest that vv.16-19 of *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* belong to the latter group, i.e. implicit revelation verses that come as parts of *sūras*.

Let us look at the contents of those four verses:

16. Move not thy tongue to hasten with it. 17. Verily, upon Us is its gathering and its recitation. 18. Thus, when We recite it follow thou its recitation. 19. And then, verily, it will be upon Us to clarify it.

The proposition explicitly expressed by the verses is discouraging the reciter of the Qur'ān from hastening with the recitation. 'Move not thy tongue to hasten with it.' This command is justified by the assurance that putting the pieces of the Qur'ān together and maintaining its proper recitation is guaranteed because God takes that responsibility upon Himself. The verse defines the role of the recipient as following the recitation of what is being revealed to him, and waiting for clarification from God. So what is the relation between these revelations-related instructions and the argument of the *sūra*?

At a superficial level, there are a number of lexical connections between the four verses and other verses throughout the *sūra*, which might well be indicators of some sort of indirect connectivity between their contents. However, it would be hard to say that the repetition of some verbs or the use of words from the same root constitutes in itself a meaningful relation between seemingly different contexts. The verb *jama'a* (to put together) occurs three times in the *sūra*, in v.17 'upon Us its gathering and its recitation', in v.3 in the first paragraph of the *sūra* 'Does man reckon We will not gather his bones?' as part of the topic argument, and again in v.9,

part of the second paragraph, where it is used in its passive form for the gathering of the sun and the moon when the day of resurrection begins. In his later study of this *sūra*, Robinson points out that the repetition of this verb is part of several 'verbal links' between the examined section and other sections of the *sūra*.³¹ He does not, however, explain what the significance of those links is with regard to the meaning relations within the *sūra*. The mere observation of physical similarities is not enough to argue against the fact that the section is apparently unconnected to the *sūra* in terms of content. The existence of some verb in various verses of the text does not in itself mean that the meanings of those verses are connected, because one might see it as a coincidence, and, moreover, that same verb might be used in various *sūras* in the Qur'ān, or even in different texts, and one would not necessarily assume connections between them unless there were elements of the contents of those parts that gave access to common aspects of their meanings. As Blass remarks:

Just setting up those types (of discourses) does not say anything about the function of these discourses nor why they have the particular structure they do. This approach is like comparing different games such as football, cricket and polo just by their outward appearances and forgetting that players are actively involved in achieving particular goals, the goals being different in each case.³²

Although Blass derives this analogy in the context of criticising approaches to discourse in general, the same concept applies to the study of the elements of discourse and their role in forming its continuity and coherent relations. In the light of this view, the value of lexical repetitions to textual relations can only be explained if one can highlight the relations between

³¹ Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'ān*, p. 137.

³² Blass, *Relevance Relations*, p. 80.

assumptions made accessible by each repetition. This is not to deny any connection between the section and the rest of the *sūra*, but is only to say that the explanation of this connection does not hinge on the repetition of some particular words *per se*. In this sense of understanding the role of the repetitions, I would point out that the work of al-Fakhr al-Rāzy acknowledges the idea that there must be a role, but his six suggestions, based on the work of earlier commentators on the Qur'ān, for possible connections between this section and the rest of the *sūra* demonstrate that he did not content himself with superficial observation but tried to establish some interpretation of this role. Nevertheless, it was not an easy task, especially in the light of the complete diversity of the contents of the section, and his six interpretations do not lead him to the affirmation of any of them to be the relation in question. And if one is to derive any conclusion from his work it would be that the implicatures of those verses are all very weak and, apart from the lexical repetitions, there are no physical restrictions on the relevance of that part of the *sūra*. However, later in this section I will highlight some inferential assumptions that are likely to provide an explanation of the problematic existence of this section.

Another repetition that Robinson has noted is the use of the root *'ajal* (hasten) which occurs twice in the *sūra*, once in its verbal form, in v.16 'move not thy tongue to hasten with it', and again in v.20 where it is used metaphorically in a nominal form, at the beginning of a new section: 'No indeed, but you love the world that hastens away'. The latter occurrence has actually given rise to the idea of a direct connection with vv.16-19 in earlier commentaries on the Qur'ān, but with different explanations from those given by Robinson. Two of the six possibilities that al-Rāzy discusses, regarding the way in which the four verses relate to the message of this *sūra* and, more broadly to the message of the Qur'ān, are based on drawing a connection between the occurrences of the root *'ajal* (hasten), but only one of these accounts for the repetition of that root within *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*, whereas the second is only supported by the occurrence of the same theme

(i.e. discouraging of hastening with the Qur'ān) elsewhere in the text, that is- v.114 of *sūra* 20 *ولا تعجل بالقرآن من قبل أن يلقى إليك وحيه، وقل رب زدني علما* (and do not hasten with the Qur'ān before its revelation is complete, and say: My God, increase my Knowledge). In explaining the relation between three parts of the *sūra*, based on the principle that an attitude towards life in general that is based on loving the hastening away of treasures of this life is, generally speaking, a non-Muslim attitude, al-Rāzy says:

God has attributed the love of fast-fleeing happiness by saying that man wishes to deny what lies before him (v.5), and then He points out that hastening is absolutely unacceptable, from an Islamic point of view, even in religion related matters, and hence said 'do not move thy tongue to hasten with it' and then, at the end of the section He said 'but you love the world that hastens away'.³³

According to this explanation by Rāzy, the four verses would not be seen as a parenthetical paragraph, but rather as a section on its own, whose focus is providing further evidence for a continuous theme of the argument in the *sūra*, i.e. rejection of any hasty behaviour since it underlies an attitude that leads to man's denial of the life hereafter.

The majority of the commentators, however, lean towards the explanation that is based on the tradition that the Prophet used to rush with the recitation of the Qur'ān as it was revealed to him³⁴, and for this reason the paragraph occurs, as a parenthetical section in the *sūra*. The problem with this explanation lies in the fact that it does not postulate any relation between the section and the content of the *sūra*, nor does it state why a recipient of

³³ Rāzy, *Tafsīr*, vol. 30, p. 223.

³⁴ This tradition is related in Bukhāry, and Qurṭuby has quoted it in his commentary on the verses. See: Abū 'Abd 'Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-'Anṣāry al-Qurṭuby, *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, Cairo, 1979, vol. 9, p. 106.

the Qur'ān, centuries after its revelation, needs to know this about the reception of the text. In other words, what is the contribution of these four verses to the message of the Qur'ān, and why are they relevant? Here, one can think of various results, depending on the assumptions made accessible to each different individual reading the verse at any particular time. For instance, if at some time, a recipient has easy access to the context of the debate about the authenticity of the Qur'ān mentioned above he/she could think something on the lines of: 'Here is a Prophet who receives instructions as to how to receive and recite the text' which will lead to further assumptions regarding the source of the text being outside the Prophet himself, which will in turn be combined with existing assumptions in the context of the debate regarding the revelations and so on and so forth. The one certainty about those verses, is that although they make accessible that particular context, their implicatures are so weak they have generated a variety of interpretations as to what their contribution to the meaning of the *sūra* is.

However, for the purpose of the discussion of the meaning of *kallā* and the way in which it marks the relations between paragraphs, it should suffice to have seen that the section vv.16-19 has an explicitly very different theme from its immediate context (co-text) and that, although explicit and inferential connections between the section and other sections of the *sūra* could be drawn, it would still stand as an independent section, since no part of the contents of that section could possibly be the utterance to which *kallā* is a direct response.

Now let us discuss v.20 from the perspective of another relation. The combination of *kallā* and *bal* is an interesting one. As explained earlier, in addition to its conjunctive function, *bal* comes to confirm a preceding negation if one exists. So, it could be said that the overall meaning of the conjunctive construction that contains *bal* cannot be defined without identifying the scope of the preceding negative that would be opposing the statement following *bal*. As seen in the preceding sections, no part of the contents of vv.16-19, and vv.11-15 can be assigned as the scope of *kallā*

opposing the statement 'you love the world that flees away and forsake the hereafter', which is the proposition expressed by vv.20-21, and it was also seen that the relevant assumptions made accessible by various parts of those three sections are only weak implicatures.

I suggest that the relation between sections in this case is an inferential one. One can draw different conclusions from each section. Let us consider a sequence of four propositions: two are expressed by the topic sentences of the previous paragraphs, one by vv.20-21 the subject of the present discussion, and one by vv.26-30 of the following paragraph:

vv.11-12:

No indeed, no refuge. To your Sustainer on that day the recourse will be.

vv.16-19:

You should not hasten with the recitation because it is upon God to gather the Qur'ān and clarify it.

vv.20-21

No indeed, but you love the world that hastens away and forsake the hereafter.

vv.26-30

No, indeed, if it reaches the collarbones... to your God on that day will be the drive.

Excluding for the time being, the revelations section, I suggest that an inferential relation holds between the first and last two of these sections. I am guided in my interpretation of this relation by the observation of the fact that each of these three sections is introduced by *kallā*, whose repetition, as I mentioned above, provides access to the context in which the same item is elsewhere repeated in the text which is presumably contained, or at least easily accessible, in the recipient's cognitive environment, and by other common elements between the three sections, some of which are lexical and

some of which are in the propositional content of the sections. The revelations section is excluded because of the absence from it of these common propositional elements, which suggests to me that the relation between this particular section and the *sūra*, although an inferential one, is nevertheless of a different type from that holding between the other three sections.

The first indication of the existence of a relation between the three sections is not the repetition of *kallā* in itself, but rather the fact that the content of this negation introduces three different sections of the *sūra*, which indicates to me that those three paragraphs share one element of their meaning. This element can be explained in terms of the fact that their contents are intended, as indicated by the use of *kallā*, to strongly contrast with a preceding element of content.

In the discussion above, I have shown that the scope of the negation *kallā* in v.11 is the assumption that there could be any escape from facing God on the Day of Judgment. However, there is a considerable difficulty in allocating any explicit linguistic scope to this negation in the case of vv.20-21.

I shall now show that this is also the case with the occurrence of *kallā* at the beginning of the section starting at v.26. Following that, I will return to discussing the relation between the three paragraphs and the common elements of their contents, in the light of the absence of an explicit scope of the negation.

Let us consider two consecutive paragraphs:

vv.20-25

20. No indeed. But ye love the world that hastens away 21. and ye forsake the hereafter. 22. Faces will on that day be radiant, 23. gazing to their Lord. 24. And faces will on that day be scowling, 25. knowing that a backbreaking is about to befall them

vv.26-35

26. No indeed! when it reaches the collar bones, 27. and they say 'Where is the wizard?' 28. and he knows it is the parting, 29. and leg is entwined with leg, 30. to they Lord on that day is the drive.

31. For he did not give credence and he did not pray. 32. But, he denied and he turned away. 33. Then he went to his household arrogantly. 34. Woe be you 35. and woe be you.

In the first group of verses, v.25 concludes a section where man's reaction at the confrontation between him and the truth of the Day of Judgment, which he has long denied, or believed in, is described. The same section is introduced by two verses of rebuke to man for his denial of that truth, which are introduced by the emphatic negation *kallā*.

The following group of verses, which is also introduced by *kallā*, describes the moment of death which is, according to the Qur'ān, the moment that marks the departure from the fast-fleeing world to the life hereafter, the latter being denied by the unbelieving. Following the description of the inevitable end is a flashback looking at that man's practice in his life, where he was arrogant and neglectful of what he should have done, as directed by Islamic morals and doctrines, that is belief, prayer and giving credence. The paragraph concludes with two verses of woe to that man, which brings the flashback to an end echoing the meaning of the last verse in the preceding paragraph v.25, i.e. warning the unbelievers of the punishment awaiting them.

The contents of these two paragraphs are delivered in the form of 'fact-telling'. The authoritative tone in the woe, and also the promise to the believers (vv.22-23) and the rebuke (vv.20-21) are all confirmations of the fact-telling approach in the verses. Additionally, the use of declarative sentences supports the implication that the 'speaker' is well informed and certain of what is detailed in the verses. The details of the two paragraphs come from one consistent point of view: the point of view of God, and no element of contrast can be traced between any two parts of the two sections. This makes the occurrence of a negative particle between the two

paragraphs surprising and inconsistent if we were to seek the scope of the negative within these same two paragraphs.

This takes us back to the initial question, what is it, then, that is negated by *kallā* in the beginning of the paragraph (vv.26-35)? In order to discuss the remaining possibilities, I repeat below the propositions expressed by the three sections introduced by *kallā* and then shed light on the common elements of their meanings and constructions.

vv.11-12:

No indeed, no refuge. To your sustainer on that day the recourse will be.

vv.20-21

No indeed, but you love the world that hastens away and forsake the hereafter.

vv.26-30

No, indeed, if it reaches the collarbones... to your God on that day will be the drive.

I have earlier highlighted the implication of the repetition of *kallā* at the beginning of each section. A negative at the beginning of a sentence suggests that the following is of an opposite content to a previous proposition. We have seen that vv.12-35 all express a single point of view, that is God's, and none of them exhibits any incidence of inconsistency with that view. I would also emphasize that the sentences introduced by *kallā* in the three sections are all uttered from the same point of view and by the same speaker, i.e. God, the addressee of two of them being man (vv.11, 20), and reference is made to man's soul in the third (v.26).

Considering that the overall structure of the *sūra* is based on the argumentation between, on the one hand, the human denying the truth of resurrection and, on the other hand, God rejecting man's denial and arguing

against it, one would expect the points of view of the two argumentative parties to be always opposing each other.

Consequently, where God addresses man, or refers to him, with sentences introduced by the emphatic negation *kallā*, one expects these negatives to be contradicting an equally strong opposite point of view from man's side.

We recall from the earlier discussion of the first occurrence of *kallā* that the opposing point of view was one that had assumed, on the basis of unbelief, that it is possible to avoid the Day of Judgment and its consequences determined by what man has done in the present life. The three following paragraphs are introduced by sentences that start with *kallā* and, although not explicitly saying so in all three cases, they contain material stressing and justifying the inevitability of the Day of Judgment presented from the authoritative point of view of God.

Interestingly enough, in the first and last of the sentences introduced by *kallā* we encounter the phrase 'to thy sustainer on that day is the recourse' with a slight variation in the word used for 'recourse' in each, as follows:

v.12 To thy sustainer on that day is the recourse.

v.30 To thy sustainer on that day is the drive.

The repetition of the phrase not only indicates a relation between the two sections but more importantly, it makes explicit the point of the two arguments of the *sūra*, as well as that of the two sections: it brings the argument back repetitively and continuously to the main element of God's point of view expressed by the *sūra*, that is, man will return to God on the Day of Judgment. Therefore, the repetition of the phrase is crucial to the coherence of the argument of the *sūra* which is spread over its various paragraphs.

Similarly, repetition of the phrase 'on that day', with the repeated definite reference by the demonstrative 'that' in each of the three sections, emphasizes that the situation described in each section relates to the same

definite day. With the observation of the importance placed on the virtue of repetition in highlighting the relations between parts of the *sūra*, as seen several times throughout the *sūra*, I suggest that the repetition of *kallā* has a very similar function. In fact, I suggest that *kallā* does not have a different scope in each of its three occurrences, but rather it is the scope of the first occurrence in all cases, i.e. the assumption that there may be a way to avoid the inevitable.

This is to say that *kallā* in each subsequent incidence provides immediate access to what it confirms in its first occurrence, i.e. the proposition ‘no refuge’. Therefore, the inference of the implied proposition that holds the relations between the sections becomes simple and straightforward, as follows:

In v.20: No indeed, no refuge, but you love the fast-fleeing world and forsake the hereafter. (and hence you ask for a refuge or and hence you deny the truth of that day)

In v.26: No indeed, no refuge when it reaches the collarbones.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed the notions of the paragraph and paragraph markers and their implications for understanding texts from the Qur’ān. I have shown that the Qur’anic unit the ‘*sūra*’ can be explained as a composition of a number of paragraphs. There are markers that restrict the relations between these paragraphs and direct recipients towards a clearer understanding of the relevance each paragraph has towards conveying the overall message of the text. But markers do not only occur in the beginnings of main paragraphs, they can also mark smaller units of utterance within one paragraph, and maintain the same function, i.e. indicating the type of relation existing between the unit they mark and the preceding or following units of utterance.

The significance of a paragraph division can be understood within a framework that considers that relations between parts of the text can be explained in terms of the contribution of each part to the others. According to the Relevance framework I introduced in the first chapter, such contributions can take the form of contradiction or confirmation of an existing assumption, or addition of a new item of information that adds to the recipient's existing knowledge of the topic. In this context, each paragraph of the text, in order to cohere with the entire text in terms of relevance, has to be contributing to the overall meaning of the text in one of those ways. The role of the paragraph marker is thus to restrict the recipient's assumptions about the way in which a paragraph is relevant. When the role of these markers is ignored or when they do not exist, there are less restrictions on the textual relations, i.e. the recipient will have more freedom to make assumptions about the reason why a paragraph, or a unit of utterance exists where it does, and hence he/she, on the one hand, might mistake the intended meaning of the text but on the other hand will be able to assign relevance to the linguistic units according to the type of contextual information he/she has access to, so that the item can be relevant in different ways to different recipients. When, in a text like the Qur'ān, paragraphs deal with legislation, the more restrictions they have the more clearly the legislation is likely to be defined for its interpreter. However, in many cases restrictions are absent or are themselves open to different interpretations and that is why interpreters of the Qur'ān have different views of the Qur'anic position in relation to the subject matter under discussion, as is the case of vv.16-19 with this *sūra*.

In the case of *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*, the issue of the roles of paragraphs and their markers in forming the textual relations within the *sūra*, concerns something more abstract than the inference of what is meant by parts of the text detailing an item of legislation, since it concerns the way in which the text is structured in order to convey its intended message.

In my discussion I showed that the text has a number of paragraphs whose borders can be defined in terms of the change of sentence structure,

pronouns' turn-taking and, above all, the introduction of a new unit of content that has a newly identified relation to other parts of the text.

Although there is no clear-cut definition of the unit of a 'paragraph', the Qur'anic paragraphs can be defined with the help of the dynamic change of pronouns or addressees, the change of rhyme, the time and place in which events take place, and, in some cases, the existence of a significant paragraph marker that helps to identify a new relation between the preceding sequence of paragraphs and the following parts of the text, in addition to major shifts in subject matter.

Accordingly, I propose a division of paragraphs in this text as follows:

Paragraph Division of *Sūra 75 (al-Qiyāmah)*

Paragraph 1 (vv.1-6)

I swear not by **the day** of resurrection, and I swear not by the continuously self-reproaching soul. **Does man reckon** that We shall not **gather** his bones? Yes indeed, We are **capable** of forming his very fingertips. But, man wishes to deny what lies ahead of him, asking [derisively] 'When is the day of resurrection?'

Paragraph 2 (vv.7-10)

So, when the eyesight is [by fear] confounded, and the moon sinks away, and the sun and moon are brought **together, on that day**, man will say 'Where is the place to flee?'

Paragraph 3 (vv.11-15)

No indeed, not a refuge. Before your Lord, **on that day**, the recourse will be. Man will be told, on that day, of what he has done and what he has left undone. But man shall be a witness upon himself. Even though he might tender his excuses.

Paragraph 4 (vv.16-19)

Move not thy tongue to hasten with it. Verily, upon Us is its **gathering** and its recitation. Thus, when We recite it follow thou its recitation. And then, verily, it will be upon Us to clarify it.

Paragraph 5 (vv.20-25)

No indeed! But ye love the world that hastens away, and ye forsake the hereafter. Faces will **on that day** be radiant, gazing to their Lord. And faces will **on that day** be scowling, knowing that a backbreaking is about to befall them.

Paragraph 6 (vv.26-35)

No indeed! When it reaches the collarbones, and they say ‘Where is the wizard?’, and he knows it is the parting, and leg is entwined with leg, to thy Lord **on that day** is the drive. For he did not give credence and he did not pray, but, he denied and he turned away, then he went to his household arrogantly. Woe be you, and woe be you

Paragraph 7 (vv.36-40)

Does man reckon that he will be left futilely/ frivolously? Was he not a drop of a sperm that had been emitted? And then he became a clot and He created and He formed, and fashioned out of it the two sexes male and female? Is not That One **capable** of bringing the dead back to life?

In the studies of this *sūra* that I have come across, paragraph division and the difference that it can make to understanding the text and meaning of the *sūra*, were not discussed with any particular interest in the role distinct parts of the text have in forming textual relations.

However, one can discuss interpreters’ divisions of the text in their translations of the *sūra*, which, although they do not aim at providing a paragraph division as such, do reflect the ways different recipients understand the same text.

The one work that aims to discuss the division of the text from an analytical point of view is Neal Robinson's work on the structure of the Meccan *sūras*.³⁵ In this study, Robinson explains *sūras* in terms of their constituent registers. He borrows from linguistics the expression 'register' which he defines in terms of:

Context-dependent linguistic characteristics- either spoken or written, and encompassing any set of choices which are made according to conscious or unconscious notion of appropriateness to context (vocabulary, syntax, grammar, sound, pitch and so on).³⁶

Robinson identifies six principal topics that dominate the early Meccan *sūras*: polemic, eschatology, God's personal communication with the Messenger, the signs of God's power and beneficence, lessons from history, and the status of authenticity of the revelations. He divides each of the *sūras* into a number of those registers and analyses the use of various registers in the Qur'anic treatment of them. Accordingly, he divides *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*³⁷ into four registers which appear in alternation. Each register, to him, constitutes a section within which different topics are discussed. In addition to the register division and the internal topic based section division, he makes a number of observations on the physical evidence for both the division and connectivity of the sections. He mainly considers the rhyme ends of the verses as evidence for division, in addition to change of register or topic. As evidence for connectivity he refers to the two 'dominant motifs' in the *sūra*: the human soul and the Day of Resurrection, and discusses the position of vv.16-19 'the revelations section' asserting that there is a definite verbal connectivity between the section and the *sūra* because of the repetition of some lexical items.

³⁵ Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'ān*, p. 2.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 125.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 139.

The problem with Robinson's approach is that it is more of a descriptive approach than an explanatory one. It does not show in which way the different registers within the *sūra* relate to each other, although he analyses the structure of the *sūra* in terms of the number, length and position of its registers and makes interesting remarks on the physical evidence for the existence of connections between the various parts of the *sūra* and common elements between occurrences of the same register in more than one *sūra*. But no part of this work explains why these registers exist where they do, what contribution they make to the context of the Meccan *sūras* or the way in which they relate to each other within the one *sūra*.

The advantage of the paragraph division in the present study is that it is made in accordance with a particular understanding of units of meaning and their role in forming the intended message of the *sūra*. Within such a framework, the repeated linguistic items and the occurrences of particles are explained in terms of the contribution made by those items to the overall meaning of the *sūra* and to the formation of the expression of that meaning.

In cases like vv.16-19 of *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*, in addition to other possible elements, the absence of any restriction imposed by a paragraph marker makes it significantly difficult to explain the relevance. However by accessing other Qur'anic material with the same type of content, as I showed earlier in this chapter (i.e. revelation material) one can make some weak assumptions on its relevance, because of the weakness of its implicatures. Observation of the use of the same items of vocabulary and the same theme, which exist in other *sūras* elsewhere in the Qur'ān provides the interpreter with a number of contextual assumptions as to what the relevance of the section is. However, knowledge of the way in which Qur'anic paragraphs are divided and the role played by abrupt changes of linguistic form, especially the dominant sentence form as well as consistent alteration of rhyme, gives rise to the assumption that this particular paragraph can be part of a text that is dominated by a different topic. Moreover, a paragraph that conveys this type of content, i.e. implications

regarding the authenticity of revelations, which in turn has implications for recipients' acceptance of the argument put forward by the *sūra*, can possibly be relevant in a way that is not necessarily consistent with the narrow concept that a coherent text has to contain material similar in content. In fact, understanding the roles of the parts of text in the way explained by the Relevance framework shows that the subject matter *per se* is not the most important element of a text's coherence and can even be irrelevant if an item, although it may have the same topic, does not contribute effectively to the recipient's knowledge of the subject of the text, i.e. if it is not relevant in the contextual environment to which recipients have access.

For the explanation of textual relations and the way in which recipients work them out, it is insufficient to observe that the *sūra* is composed of a number of *n* registers unless a reason for relating each register to the context is explained. Also the connections between registers need to be technically explained: it is imperative to see what contextual information or assumptions a unit of discourse gives access to in order to help the recipient work out the meaning/relevance of a following or a preceding paragraph. Take for example the problematic paragraph (vv.16-19). This is a revelations register which has caused much discussion as to what its relation is to the *sūra*. Rāzy discusses six different possibilities but does not conclusively decide on any one of them. Bell simply asserts that the section is here as the result of an editor's mistake and that it should not have been part of this text in the first place. Robinson sees it as one of the various revelation sections that are common in the early Meccan *sūras* and that it has a physical connection with the *sūra*: the use of the verbal noun (*jam*) which occurs in two other places in the *sūra*. He also observes that it is marked by the explicit mention of part of the human body, which would give rise to the possibility that the section is there as part of the assertion that God has power over all bodily functions from the earliest stages of life to resurrection. However, it remains difficult to infer this from the explicit

meaning of the section, moreover repetition of the root (*jama'a*) cannot be seen to be of any significance unless the role of this repetition is explained.

I suggest that this paragraph of *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* gives access to other revelation verses in the Qur'ān, which vary in their levels of explicitness but can all be best explained in the light of the cognitive environment of life in Mecca at the time.

Meccan *sūras*, as well as carrying the initial principles of Islamic belief, also had to argue and provide evidence for the fact that the Qur'ān is the word of God, which gives rise to the absolute credibility of the message it puts forward. Awareness of this contextual environment makes it clear why revelation verses, in general, exist in the Meccan parts of the Qur'ān. They were as relevant as the message itself, for without them there was no evidence in those *sūras* that Muḥammad had the right to speak on God's behalf or to claim that he was God's messenger and ask people to follow his doctrines. The belief that Muḥammad is God's messenger is part of the most crucial statement of Islamic belief, which affirms firstly, the universality and inviolability of God as the one and only God, and secondly, Muḥammad's role as His messenger. The Meccan parts of the Qur'ān, having been revealed during the period of Muḥammad's struggle to convince people of the truth of Islam, had to address the two major issues of the unity and truth of God and the truth of the Qur'ān as his word revealed to His Prophet Muḥammad.

Therefore, revelation verses occur frequently in the Meccan *sūras* with different levels of explicitness, as appropriate to the context of each *sūra*, but all confirming that, regardless of the main theme of the *sūra*, it is true beyond any doubt, because it is from God.

One way of achieving this contextual effect is to give instructions to the Prophet as to how to receive revelations, to trust that they are reserved by the will and power of God and to wait for clarification to come from Him. The contextual effect that these four verses yield can be worked out in terms of their interaction with contextual assumptions of the type: if Muḥammad

receives instructions regarding his reception of the Qur'ān then he cannot be inventing it, which leads to processing further assumptions about the original source of the message.

The implicature, however, is not a very strong one, because the relation between the verses which lead up to it and other verses in the immediate context is not constrained by any linguistic means that can direct the reader towards the inference of this particular implicature.

According to the Relevance framework, weak implicatures can be interpreted in far more ways than strong ones. An example of a strong implicature in this context would be verses that propound the same message, that the Qur'ān is the word of God, more explicitly. The paragraph in question does give access to other verses that have stronger implicatures, using the same type of argument, for example: vv.113-114 of *sūrat Ṭaha* (Q. 20):

وكذلك أنزلناه قرآنا عربيا وصرفنا فيه من الوعيد لعلهم يتقون،
فتعالى الله الملك الحق، ولا تعجل بالقرآن من قبل أن يفضى إليك وحيه، وقل رب زدني علما.

(Thus **have We sent it down**, an Arabic Qur'ān, and explained therein in detail some of the warnings in order that they may be aware of Allah, or that it may remind them.

Glorify God, the King, the Truth, and **do not hasten with the Qurān before its revelation to you is completed**, and say: 'O' Lord, increase me in knowledge)³⁸

These two verses explicitly state that the Qur'ān is the word of God sent down to Muḥammad and also explicitly attribute to God absolute truth, in contradiction to those who deny it. Verse 113 contains the same instruction to the Prophet not to hasten with the Qur'ān (although not particularly with

³⁸ Translation is modified from: *The Holy Qur'an*, ed. The Presidency of Islamic Research, Ifta, Call and Guidance, Medina, (n. d.)

the recitation) and directs him towards the best approach, as in *sūrat al-Qiyāmah*, which is to believe in God and ask Him for knowledge.

In reading either of the two paragraphs, one has access to the other and this is another way in which the verses are made relevant, i.e. by means of confirming an existing assumption within the text of the Qur'ān.

Another context that gives access to, and is given access by paragraph 4 of *al-Qiyāmah* is vv.23-27 of the immediately following *sūra*, *sūrat al-Insān* (Q. 76), which in general has a reciprocal relation with *sūra* 75 since each *sūra* confirms and adds details to assumptions in the other. Consider the similarity in content and the use of lexical repetitions between this paragraph and paragraph 4 in *sūra* 75, and also the way in which these verses interact with other contextual assumptions in the Qur'ān by means of providing access through those repetitions:

- ٢٣- إنا نحن نزلنا عليك القرآن تنزيلا،
٢٤- فاصبر لحكم ربك ولا تطع منهم أثما ولا كفورا،
٢٥- واذكر اسم ربك بكرة وأصيلا،
٢٦- ومن الليل فاسجد له وسبحه ليلا طويلا،
٢٧- إن هؤلاء يحبون العاجلة ويذرون وراءهم يوما ثقيلا.

Verily, it is **We who have bestowed from on high this Qur'ān upon you.**

Await, then, **in all patience** your Sustainer's judgment, and pay no heed to any of them who is a willful sinner or an ingrate.

And bear in mind your Sustainer's name at morn and evening

and during some of the night, and prostrate yourself before Him and extol His limitless glory throughout the long night.

Behold, **they love the hastening world** and leave behind them a grief-laden Day. (Q. 76:23-27)

Finally, instructions to believe in what is revealed and to wait for the realization of God's promise can hardly be more relevant, not only because they support the assumption that if Muḥammad speaks of resurrection, then resurrection must be true since every part of the Qur'ān is from God Who sent it down and reserved the right to gather and maintain its parts, but also because it gives rise to an assumption that is very similar to another which can be inferred from the over all message of *sūrat al-Qiyāmāh*: the idea that believers are required to believe in what is revealed to them and wait for its realization.

This is at the heart of the philosophy of Islamic thought, i.e. to believe in the life hereafter, do what a believer should do, and wait for the judgment and the reward from God when He wills that this world should come to an end.

Thus, although the implicatures of paragraph four of *sūrat al-Qiyāmāh* are all weak implicatures, which results in the ambiguity of their relation to their context, they still confirm a number of assumptions that are important to both their immediate context and the broader context of the entire Qur'ān.

Conclusion

There are two approaches to the modern study of textual relations in the Qur'ān: One, which is based on commentators' search for thematic unity, is gaining increasing popularity in the field of *tafsīr* and Qur'anic studies, and the other, which is more common in the linguistic study of text, involves a pragmatic analysis of relations between utterances or segments of the text.

Pioneers of the first approach are Sayyid Quṭb and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī in their theories of *miḥwar* (axis) and *'amūd* (pillar) where the *sūras* are thought to consist of various themes all of which serve in establishing one theological idea which is the axis or pillar of the *sūra*. The method of analysis in both cases is the commentator/recipient's own evaluation of the text, and the outcome of their extended *tafsīrs* was some very different views as to what the main theme (axis or pillar) of each *sūra* is.

The pragmatic approach, on the other hand, is a well-developed theory of text and textual relations, with clearer definitions of what textual relations are and the way they are formed. Plenty of material on methods and techniques of analysis is available, but very little that tackles long literary text.

Therefore, I chose to adopt the second approach to the study of text in order to investigate the possibility that the technical tools of the linguistic/pragmatic theory might provide clearer methodological explanations of textual relations in the Qur'ān, which will hopefully work as an alternative approach to that based on the commentators' individual insights and intuitions.

The main tenets I rely on in the analysis are derived from Relevance Theory of communication, which deals, among other linguistic problems, with the role of context in interpretation of relations between utterances. According to this theory textuality is measured by the notion of 'relevance'. Theoretically, a segment of text is relevant if it contributes towards one's understanding of the text in one or more of three specified ways. Each relevant segment of discourse/text acts as a context in which understanding

other segments is possible. And, finally, communicators communicate thoughts that they think are of some relevance to each other (i.e. will enrich the others' cognitive environment).

This last tenet has implications for what the analyst looks at in a text and the way he or she looks at it. Instead of looking at the grammatical structure of the text or at the cohesive devices joining sentences together, one looks at the information expressed in each item of the text. An item can be a word, a sentence or a paragraph.

An item may provide relevant information and hence be considered relevant. It may also indicate relations between larger items, as is the case in the role of connectives in indicating relations between sentences or paragraphs.

Looking at textual relations in the Qur'ān from this viewpoint is capable of changing the way we think of structures of *sūras* and enables us to analyze them systematically.

In order to examine this assumption, I applied these principles to two medium length *sūras* from the Qur'ān, one Meccan and another Medinan. Both *sūras* represent the stylistic features and the thematic complexity of their groups. They also exhibit a number of textual problems that have been puzzling both Arab and non-Arab commentators.

The first issue to arise from the choice of longer *sūras* is the division of text into smaller fragments. Traditionally 'the verse' was considered the only unit of the *sūra*. Commentators, especially those who paid special attention to textual relations, have always dealt with a linear of verses regardless of topic. Some would approach the text in passages, but still comment on the relations holding between verses rather than the information encompassed in each passage as a unit.

Modern authors, on the other hand, have suggested that *sūras* be divided into passages according to topics. The two problems facing their attempts are: firstly, that each division differs according to the author's understanding of the relations between the topics, and between verses, and, secondly, that

there are often verses that are difficult to relate to a previous or following topic, or even to group together under a specific topic.

In dealing with this problem, I have suggested, following authors on Relevance Theoretical analysis, first that the topic itself should not be taken as a sign of connectivity, but rather as a contributor to the context of information within the text. Second, I have argued that at the beginning of sections, and also at the beginning of paragraphs there are often indicators of the division. Many grammatical particles behave as paragraph markers at the beginnings of sections and subsections. These are clearly noticeable at the turns of subjects within the *sūra*, and have a highly effective role in communicating the message of the sections they introduce in terms of their relations to the previous sections.

This argument was examined thoroughly in the detailed analysis of *sūrat al-Aḥzāb* (Q. 33), with a discussion of the meanings and contextual information provided by these markers.

In addition to the particle markers there are other indicators of the shifts of subject matters, such as abrupt grammatical changes, pronoun shifts and turn-takings, or rhythm and rhyme changes. The study has not dealt with the latter, however, because it has limited significance to the pragmatic analysis carried out here.

I concluded this chapter with a new presentation of information structure in the *sūra* based on both the proposed section division and the study of the role of each section in enriching the reader's cognitive environment.

In the fourth chapter, I advanced in the study of section divisions and analyzing potential paragraph markers by analyzing textual relations in the second sample, *sūrat al-Qiyāmah* (Q. 75). I have argued that the *sūra* should be divided into an identifiable number of paragraphs and that the particle *kallā* is primarily a paragraph marker and that this marker dominates textual relations in the *sūra*.

I concluded the discussion with a proposed explanation of a structure of information in the *sūra* and a number of plausible explanations of the relation between the problematic section and the *sūra* and its role in the

Qur'anic discourse in general. Finally I argued that the Qur'anic texts should be understood in the light of paragraph divisions of the chapters that will allow clear segmentation of the long whole, and will also clarify what the core of the study of textual relations is: that is, the relations between the information given in each paragraph and the preceding paragraph, on the one hand and between each and the general Qur'anic discourse on the other. The study of meanings and structures of relations within the two sample *sūras* shows that, with the contributions of discourse markers, along with other indicators both pragmatic and non-pragmatic, paragraph division of *sūras* is possible and is highly useful in explaining textual relations in the Qur'ān.

It also shows that although according to the relevance-based framework, the rules governing the role played by each segment of the text are always consistent, the analysis can show that the structure of information, in each *sūra* is different. And, since the Qur'ān is a revealed book of religion rather than any other form of a book, it is expected and acceptable that its chapters should not follow any previous conviction about how books should be structured.

It is therefore possible that the structure of information in long *sūras* is changeable too, but this should not be of much significance for how the relations between paragraphs, themes or topics can be understood, for this follows the rules governing how contextual information contributes reciprocally to understanding.

The explanation this thesis provides for the relations within the two sample *sūras*, as well as the analysis of the problematic sections in each of the *sūras* , show that textual relations are not best explained in terms of the topics of thematic unity but rather in terms of contextual contributions of verses, which may, or may not, be related to a single theme.

After succeeding in proposing an explanation of the relations throughout the *sūras* and across the Qur'ān, there remains, however, an unanswered question, which is, Why is the order of topics as it is in the Qur'ān, or in other words, what is the relevance of the order itself? The answer to this

question needs to be investigated by a study of implicatures across the entire text, which may lead to observations of certain consistencies, which may, in turn, lead to suggestions of possible answers. Until this is done, this area of the study of textual relations remains gray.

Nevertheless, the method of analysis used in this thesis, along with the outcome of the study suggests that the study of textual relations in the Qur'ān can benefit significantly from a well developed systematic analysis based on the roles of the different sections of *sūras* in enriching the cognitive environment of both the message of the *sūras* and that of the Qur'ān as a whole. Such analysis will not only explain the long-lasting problem of textual relations in the Qur'ān, but also enrich *tafsīr* by highlighting a whole new aspect of understanding, which is embedded in the meanings of textual relations (i.e. the message recovered by explaining the relation between two apparently unrelated passages), *Wa allāhu 'alim*.

Bibliography

- Abdel-Haleem, M. A. S., 'Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: iltifāt and related features in the Qur'ān', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 55:3, 1992, 407-432.
- _____, *Understanding the Qur'an: themes and style*, I. B. Tauris, London, 1999.
- °Abdul-Raḥmān, °A'ishah, *Sharḥ Masā'il ibn al-Azraq*, Dār al Ma°ārif, Cairo, 1986.
- Andalusy al-, Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Dār al-Fikr li al-Ṭibā°ah wa al-Nashr, Beirut, 1983.
- Asad, Muḥammad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980.
- Awa el-, Mohamed Selim, *Tafsīr al-Nuṣuṣ al-Jinā'iyah*, Dār °Ukaz, Riyad, 1980.
- Awa el-, Salwa, *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazā'ir fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Dār al-Shurūq, Cairo, 1998.
- _____, 'Iktishāf al-Qur'ān: Qaḍāyā al-Qur'ān al-Mu°āṣirah fi Kitāb Jadīd', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 3:1, Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS, London, 2000, pp.161-183.
- Bayyūmy al-, Muḥammad Rajab, *al-Bayān al-Qur'āny*, al-Dār al-Miṣriyyah al-Lubnāniyyah, Cairo, 2000.
- Bell, Richard, *The Qur'ān*, Edinburgh, 1939.
- _____, *A commentary on the Qur'ān*, Manchester, 1991.
- Biqā°y al-, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn °Umar, *Naẓm al-Durar fi Tanāsub al-'Ayāt wa al-Ṣuwar*, ed. °Abd al-Rāziq al-Mahdy, Dār al-Kutub al-°Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1995.
- Blakemore, Diane, *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987.
- _____, *Understanding Utterance*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992.
- Blass, Regina, *Relevance Relations in Discourse*, Cambridge, 1990.

- Bukhāry al-, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, Fath al-Bāry bi, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāry*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqy and 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Bāz, Riyad, (n.d.).
- Drāz, Muḥammad Abdulla, *Introduction to the Qur'ān*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2000.
- Fabb, Nigel, *Linguistics and Literature*, Blackwell, Oxford and Massachusetts, 1997.
- Fāris ibn al-Qazwīny, Aḥmad, *al-Ṣāḥibiy fī Fiqh al-Lughah wa Sunan al-'Arab fī Kalāmihim*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Shuwaymy, Mu'assasat Badrān, Beirut, 1963.
- Graham, William A., 'Qur'an as a Spoken Word: an Islamic contribution to the understanding of scripture' *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. Richard C. Martin, Oneworld, Oxford, 1985, 2001
- Halliday, M. A. K., and Hassan, Ruqaiya, *Cohesion in English*, Longman, London, 1976.
- Hishām ibn-, 'Abd Allah ibn Yūsuf, *Mughny al-Labīb 'an Kutub al-A'arīb*, Dār al-Fikr, Dimashq, 1969.
- _____, *Sharḥ Shudhūr al-Dhahab*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyiy al-Dīn, al-Maktabah al-'Aṣriyyah, Beirut, 1997.
- Ibyāry al-, Ibrāhīm, *Ta'rīkh al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, Beirut, 1982.
- Isesco, *The Holy Qur'ān*, Morocco, 1997.
- Jamāl, Sulayman ibn 'Umar, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyyah bi Tawḍīḥ Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1996.
- Keeble, D., *Interpretive Representations in Thomas Carlyle's Chartism: a Relevance Theoretic analysis*, PhD thesis, Lancaster University, 2002.
- Manẓūr ibn, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1966.
- Mawdūdy al-, Abū al-A'lā, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān*, ed. Zafar Ishāq Anṣāry, The Islamic Foundation, London, 1988.

- Mir, Mustansir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān*, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, 1986.
- Pickthall, Mohammed Marmaduke, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, American Library and Mentor Books, New York, (n.d.).
- The Presidency of Islamic Research, Ifta, Call and Guidance, *The Holy Qur'an*, Medina, (n.d.)
- Qayyim al-Jawziyyah ibn-, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *Badāi' al-Fawā'id*, ed. Bashīr Muḥammad 'Uyūn, Dār al-Bayān, Beirut, 1994.
- Qurṭuby al-, Abu 'Abdullah Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣāry, *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, Cairo, 1979.
- Quṭb, Sayyid, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, Beirut, 1967.
- Rāzy al-, al-Fakhr, *Tafsīr Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb*, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 1981.
- Robinson, Neal, *Discovering the Qur'ān*, SCM Press LTD, London, 1996.
- _____, 'The Qur'an as the Word of God', *Heaven and Earth; Essex Essays in Theology and Ethics*, ed. A. Linzey and P. Wexler, Churchman, Worthington, 1986, pp. 38-54.
- _____, 'Hands Outstretched: towards a re-reading of *Sūrat al-Mā'idah*', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 3:1, 2000, pp. 1-19.
- _____, *Islam: a Concise Introduction*, Curzon, Surrey, 1999.
- Rodi, Risselada and Spoorn, Wilbert, 'Introduction: Discourse Markers and Coherence Relations', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 30, 1998, pp. 131-133.
- Sa'īd, 'Abdullah, 'Rethinking 'Revelation' as a Precondition for Reinterpreting the Qur'ān: a Qur'anic perspective' *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 1:1, London, 1999.
- Schiffrin, Diborah, *Discourse Markers*, Cambridge, 1987.
- Shaltūt, Maḥmūd, *al-Islām 'Aqīdah wa Sharī'ah*, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1967.
- Shinqīṭy, Muḥammad al-Amīn ibn Muḥammad al-Mukhtār al-Jakny, *Aḍwā' al-Bayān fī Iḍāḥ al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān*. 'Alam al-Kutub, Beirut, (n.d.)

- Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford, 1986/1995.
- Uchida, Seiji, 'Text and Relevance', *Relevance Theory: applications and implications*, ed. Robyn Carston and Uchida Seiji, John Benjamin Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 1997.
- °Uḍaymah, 'Abd al-Khāliq, *Dirāsāt li-'Uṣlūb al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Dār al-Ḥadīth, Cairo, 1972,
- Watt, Montgomery and Bell, Richard, *Introduction to the Qur'ān*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1970.
- Yus, Fransisco, 'Relevance Thematic Bibliographical List', *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 11, 1998, pp. 261-285.
- Zabīdy al-, Muḥammad al-Murtaḍā ibn Muḥammad, *Tāj al-'Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1966.
- Zarkashy al-, Badr al-Dīn, *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Dār al-Turāth, Cairo, n.d.
- °Uḍaymah, Muḥammad °Abd al-Khāliq, *Dirāsāt li 'Uslūb al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Dār al-Hadīth, Cairo, 1972.

