"Surat Al Qamar: A Textual Reading of the Text's Focus and Its Sections"

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Abstract

This study considers the text as an integrated linguistic unit, assuming the existence of a focusto which all sections of the text relate and belong, by means of several formal elements in the text such as: reference, coordination, and repetition, as well as, semantic elements that connect the text's sectionsto its focus.

To test the hypothesis, the researchers have chosen the Holy Quran, for its text fully invests linguistic capacities, and varies in presentation methods. More specifically, they zoom in on Surat Al-Qamar due to the fact that it contains many Quranic narratives, andattempts to highlight the similarities and the analogies between these narratives and the focus of the surah, as well asthe extent of relation between the surah's closure and its focus.

The study concludes that there is a focus from which other sectionsof the surah originate and to which they relate back, by means of formal and semantic links distributed throughout the surah.

Introduction

Textual studies are concerned with the study of the text as an interrelated linguistic structure, the ending of which relates to the beginning, through a set of elements that are distributed throughout the text; any text.A textualanalyst can highlight these elements and judge the text in terms of cohesion or fragmentation, observe the degree of coherencein the text and the extent to which it invests the linguistic capacitiesresulting in its textuality; and making it a consistent unit.

That is a matter of human texts. As for the text of the Quran; the miraculous word of God, no scholar can judge it, not in a biased manner, but because it is a text that has invested the capacities of language to the fullest extent and wholly employed it creatively. If we studythe text of the Quran from beginning to end, we would be astounded by its eloquence, impressed by itsform and charmedby itsdiction; because of the interconnectedness of its verses, the coherence of itssections, through a series of linguistic links that makes it whole.

The reader of the Quran should be able to highlight the aspects of these coherent connections in it, and to refer to the textual elements that contribute in making the text this consistent; as it is an interconnected structure where its end relates to itsbeginning.

Due to the fact that theQuran is considered a fabric in and of itself, this fabric has a starting point; a focus, to which the circles of the text relates and belongs, that serves the main aimthat a Quranic surah centers around and addresses.

As a complete text of the Quran, there isn't a surah that lacks a focus that all its verses meet to serve.We are not making any biased claims here, but many studies have shown that the text of the Quran is not only the most remarkable text, but it is inimitable, which leads us tothe assume that there is a focus in every surah.

In this study, we have a hypothesis that we will seek to clarify, namely that the text has a focus around which its sectionsform a coherent fabric through a set of formal and semantic elements. To test this hypothesis, we chose Surat Al-Qamar from the Quran, because it contains a number of short narratives of the prophets,as we will attempt to reveal the relationship between thesesurah's narratives, and its sections, as well as the surah's focus and how it relates to its ending. However, we will refrain from analyzing the text at all levels in this study, in order to highlight the specific levels that reveal to us its textuality and itsconnection type.

The aim of this study is not discussing modern theoretical introductions,as this has been the topic of a large number of previous researches Instead, we will refer to and address some of these theories briefly, so that the field of study will remain focused on the application.

About Surat Al-Qamar

Surat al-Qamar, or "The Hour has come near" surah, is Meccan and consists of fifty-five verses (see: 1994, p: 236). It beginsby mentioning one of God's cosmic signs; the splitting of the moon, showing His ability to demonstrate a tangible miracle. Then it discusses the disbelievers of Mecca, namelythe stubbornness and arrogance that they have shown towards Muhammad's message to Islam, and their false accusationstowards thesincerest human beings (PBUH)of lying and practicing magic.The surah then narrates a series of tales about previous prophets and their people. After that the surahcircles back to talking about the disbelieversof Mecca and their punishment if they continue with their stubbornness and arrogance.

The Focus of the Surah

The focus of the text is its starting point, as it carries the most prominent idea in the text to which all sectionsof the text are linked. Ahmed Moutaouakil referred to it as (1985, p:28) "the component that carries the most important or most prominent information in the sentence," whether it is on a of a sentence or a text as a whole. As for the text (2008, p: 262) "with related phrases and purpose, it is a text in which the ending of one chapter relates to the beginning of the following chapter, from a purpose and phrase perspectives." These chapters are based on a prominent focus in the text, around which they are organized and seek toillustrate.

We do not claim that the focus of a Quranic surah is always clear and easy to identify in, however, the reader should search for it through a close reading of the whole surah, and should try to identify the main issues addressed in all its sections, by looking at the topics of the surah, and identifying its formal elements and semantic links.

Usually,the focus in Quranic surahstends to be in the beginning.This is a hypothesis that that can be tested in studying some Quranic surahs such as: Al-Isra, Taha, Ash-Shu'ara, and Hud. This study also hypothesizes the focus of surat Al-Qamar can also be found towards its beginning; for one cannot determine what the focus of a certain surah is due to the possibility of there being countless interpretations of a certain surah, as it is ultimately The Word of God; the inimitable text. It is also known that "most of the Quran subtleties lie in its arrangement and interconnectedness." (1981, p: 145)

In order to break out of the theoretical stage, we will present the introduction of the surah, attempting to reveal its focus, and then follow it with an analysis that shows the network of referral elements within it, demonstrating the type of connection in the introduction because it contains the focus of the text.

Almighty God has said:

> The Hour has come near, and the moon has split [in two] (1) And if they see a miracle, they turn away and say, "Passing magic" (2) And they denied and followed their inclinations. But for every matter is a [time of] settlement (3) And there has already come to them of information that in which there is deterrence - (4) Extensive wisdom - but warning does not avail [them] (5) So turn away, [O Muhammad] from them. The Day the Caller calls to something forbidding (6) Their eyes humbled, they will emerge from the graves as if they were locusts spreading (7) Racing ahead toward the Caller. The disbelievers will say, "This is a difficult Day" (see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54).

The surah begins by mentioning the Hour, and by indicating a sign of its approach, namely the splitting of the moon. In *Nathm Durar Fi Tanasub Alayat Wa Suwar*, Burhanuddin Al-Baqaihas pointed out that the main message behind suratAl-Qamaris to demonstrate the Hour.(see: 1984, p: 86) However, perhaps what he has pointed out as the focus of the surahis only part of the focus. As the denial of splitting of the moon by the disbelievers of Mecca, is just another form of their denial of the Prophet (PBUH), as they are denying atangible cosmic sign.It is also known that the disbelievers of Meccaalso denied the Quran and all its verses that indicate the prophecy of Muhammad (PBUH), and have not only denied the splitting of the moon or the Hour.

Hence, we assume that the focus of surat Al-Qamar isthe disbelievers' denial of the Muhammadian message, and not only their denial of the Hour (see: 1984, p: 86). This assumption can be proved by the fact that the surah's message was highlightedin the disbelievers'stubbornness and their denial of Muhammad's(PBUH) prophecy.The first manifestation of this obstinacy was demonstrated in their aversion to the signs of the prophecy, theiraccusations of witchcraft towards theProphet, and their denial of all the evidence that proves

the truth of his prophecy (PBUH): "And there has already come to them of information that in which there is deterrence." (see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) They denied them to follow their urges and to pleasurethemselves.

And evidenced of the surah's focus is the similarities between thenarratives of the previous prophets to the state of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), for the previous peoples' denial of the prophets camein general, by showing stubbornness and arrogance to their message, and not a specific denial of the Hour. All of these narratives were presented to Prophet Muhammadas consolation, due to his people's obstinacy and denial.

The narratives in the surah are brief, and they inform the Arab proponents and others that these people asked for tangible miracles from their prophets and then they denied them, so they are punished.This is a great lesson for the nation of Muhammad (PBUH), as straying fromhis message is aberrance. So, God has made the destruction of these people after asking for tangible signs and miraclesand then denying them, a fixed rule and an example to the final nation.

Textual Cohesionin the Surah's Introduction

A combination of textual elements in the first section of the surah hascontributed to making the introduction a coherent text in which each verse relates to the previous verse and paves the way to the following verse. This is represented by a number of formal and semantic elements; namely reference and coordination.

Reference has two main sections; the first: endophoric reference, which is "the referral to the linguistic elements mentioned in the expression," (1993, p: 118) and the second: exophoric reference: "the referral in which the speaker refers to something that is not in the text, and can be called referral for non-mentioned." (1980, p: 301)

The referrals in the surah's introduction along with their references are shown in the following table:

Verse number	Referral element	Referral type	Referral reference
2	they see	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca

	they turn away	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
	and say	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
3	they denied	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
	and followed	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
	their inclinations	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
4	come to them	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
6	So turn away	Exophoric	Prophet Muhammad
	from them	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
7	Their eyes	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
	they will emerge	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
	as if they were	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca
8	Racing ahead	Exophoric	The disbelievers of Mecca

The introduction of the surah appears in a coherent fabric in terms of referral elements, as it belongs to the exophoric referral, to link the text with the exophora.Moreover, the role of the referral is highlighted in the reference of these pronouns, as they referred to Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) and the disbelievers of Mecca.

Almost all of the verses are related to the exophora, as if they were one piecewhich bounced back to one referral element. These references indicate the focus of the text; as it never departs from the supposed focus, for the emergence of pronouns referring to the disbelievers of Mecca so much makes them a fixed section of the focus that we cannot overlook.

All of the verses in the surah's introduction are formally related to one piece; the word (miracle) in the second verse "And if they see a miracle, they turn away,"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) relates to the first verse"The Hour has come near, and the moon has split [in two];"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) for what is meant by the (miracle) is the splitting of the moon and other miracles that indicate prophecy, which the disbelievers of Mecca have denied.

The third verse also relates to the second verse through coordination, making the verses interconnect as one piece, and then the word (information) in the fourth verse was linked to the second verse, where the deterrentinformation refers to the warning mentioned in the second verse, which is represented by the word (miracle). Furthermore, the fifth verse connects to the fourth verse through apposition, the word (wisdom) instead of (in which) in the verse before it.

Then, the referral elements continue to link the verses through the unity of reference, which isthe disbelievers of Mecca, while adding another reference that establishesfollowing referrals, represented by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

With this analysis, we find that the surah's introduction is a fabric that is very closely related, where each verse in it refers to the focus in formal or semantic referral, through a number of links deployed in it.

The Narrative'sCohesionwith the Focus; Noah's Narrative

The Quranic narrative is one of the aspects ofQuranic demonstration in presenting arguments and proofs of not only the superiority of this text, but also of its uniqueness. The great Quranis not only limited to presenting information and laws to narration alone, it also diversifies in method to reach the depths of the recipients' soul, as they vary in their degrees of understanding.

Perhaps, while talking about the Quranic narrative, we should refer to its detachmentfrom any other fictional or semi-fictional story. All that is mentioned in the Quranic narrative, in all its multiplicity of its narrations and the diversity of its diction, is an inescapable truth,and a historical fact formulated by the Quran in its style, and presented through thenarrative template,in order to further influence readers, and a more eloquent example in the hearts of

Arabs who try to delve deeper into the Quran in search of a flaw, in order to confirm their heresy.

The cohesion of narratives in the Quran and its link to the focus supports what thisstudy aims to unveil. We will go beyond discussing the cohesion within the narrative itself, to discuss the coherence between the section and the focus, and we will consider this section as a representative model of the narrativesmentioned in the surah, to avoid repetition.

Almighty God has said:

> The people of Noah denied before them, and they denied Our servant and said, "A madman," and he was repelled (9) So he invoked his Lord, "Indeed, I am overpowered, so help" (10) Then We opened the gates of the heaven with rain pouring down (11) And caused the earth to burst with springs, and the waters met for a matter already predestined (12) And We carried him on a [construction of] planks and nails (13) Sailing under Our observation as reward for he who had been denied (14) And We left it as a sign, so is there any who will remember? (15) And how [severe] were My punishment and warning (16) And We have certainly made the Quran easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember? (17) (see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54)

Noah's narrative with his people begins with the word (denied), which is the main element in the surah, as it represents the focus of the text (the disbelievers' denial of the Prophet Muhammad), and the repetition of this verb at the beginning of the narrativebrings us to the beginning of the surah to remind us of its focus;for Noah's people's denial of their prophet is similar to the denial of Mecca's disbelievers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The same verb was stated in the third verse, as Almighty God has said: "And they denied and followed their inclinations,"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) as a lexical coherence, represented by repetition, which is one of the most important elements of coherence among the surah's narratives.

Thus,the verses of Noah's narrative are coherent with the surah's focusin a referralmanner that is represented in the word (before them) in the verse: "The people of Noah

denied before them, and they denied Our servant and said, "A madman," and he was repelled (9)."(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) The pronoun (them) exophorically refers to the same referral element that all the pronouns of surah's focus have referred to; the disbelievers of Mecca. This contributes to the creation of a network of referral elements deployed in the sectionsof the surah, in order to make the subsequent linked to the former and originating fromit, and to tell us that this is the case of the prophets with their people.

The verses of Noah's narrativeare coherent with the surah's focus by means of juxtaposition, represented in the mention of (moon) at the beginning of the surah, and the mention of (heaven) in the verse: "Then We opened the gates of the heaven with rain pouring down,"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) linking the branch (moon) to the origin (heaven).

By taking a quick look at the surah's narratives, we note that other narrativesdid not contain additional exophoric referrals to that in the first narrative; as other references to Prophet Muhammad's(PBUH) people are evident and apparent in the narratives; as in every narrative Almighty God has said: "And We have certainly made the Qur'an easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54). These verses link us to the message of the surah, which includes the taking lesson from previous people through the clarity of the Quranic text and the emergence of the call to the recipient.

Almighty God has said:

> 'Aad denied; and how [severe] were My punishment and warning (18) Indeed, We sent upon them a screaming wind on a day of continuous misfortune (19) Extracting the people as if they were trunks of palm trees uprooted (20) And how [severe] were My punishment and warning (21) And We have certainly made the Quran easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember? (22) Thamud denied the warning (23) And said, "Is it one human being among us that we should follow? Indeed, we would then be in error and madness (24) Has the message been sent down upon him from among us? Rather, he is an insolent liar" (25) They will know tomorrow who is the insolent liar (26) Indeed, We are sending the she-camel as trial for them, so watch them and be patient (27) And inform them that the water is shared between them, each [day of] drink attended

[by turn] (28) But they called their companion, and he dared and hamstrung [her] (29) And how [severe] were My punishment and warning (30) Indeed, We sent upon them one blast from the sky, and they became like the dry twig fragments of an [animal] pen (31) And We have certainly made the Quran easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember? (32) The people of Lot denied the warning (33) Indeed, We sent upon them a storm of stones, except the family of Lot - We saved them before dawn (34) As favor from us. Thus do We reward he who is grateful (35) And he had already warned them of Our assault, but they disputed the warning (36) And they had demanded from him his guests, but We obliterated their eyes, [saying], "Taste My punishment and warning" (37) And there came upon them by morning an abiding punishment (38) So taste My punishment and warning (39) And We have certainly made the Quran easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember? (40) And there certainly came to the people of Pharaoh warning (41) They denied Our signs, all of them, so We seized them with a seizure of one Exalted in Might and Perfect in Ability (42) (see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54)

Coherence of the Surah's Conclusion andIts Focus

Almighty God has said:

Are your disbelievers better than those [former ones], or have you immunity in the scripture? (43) Or do they say, "We are an assembly supporting [each other]"? (44) [Their] assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs [in retreat] (45) But the Hour is their appointment [for due punishment], and the Hour is more disastrous and more bitter (46) Indeed, the criminals are in error and madness (47) The Day they are dragged into the Fire on their faces [it will be said], "Taste the touch of Saqar" (48) Indeed, all things We created with predestination (49) And Our command is but one, like a glance of the eye (50) And We have already destroyed your kinds, so is there any who will remember? (51) And everything they did is in written records (52) And every small and great

[thing] is inscribed (53) Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and rivers (54) In a seat of honor near a Sovereign, Perfect in Ability (55). (see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54)

The idea of the focus is very clear in the surah's conclusion and the extent of its connection to it, and in surat Al-Qamar, they are highly connected on many levels, which we summarize in the following:

- Referral cohesion: The surah's conclusion beginsby addressing the people of Mecca and asking them about the state of their disbelievers in relation to the state of former nations' disbelievers. This is a direct contact between the surah's focus and its starting point, and what is significant here is that the conclusion contained a pronounthat anaphorically refers to the most prominentexophora in the surah's introduction;the disbelievers of Mecca. Then these pronouns referring to the disbelievers of Mecca continue, alternating between second-person pronouns and third-person pronouns, to take us back to the first discourse in the surah, an example of the stubbornness of the disbelievers of Mecca and their denial of Muhammadianmessage, in addition to the conclusion link to the other narratives in the surah, by discussing previous people represented by the pronoun (those) in (those former ones) in the verse:"Are your disbelievers better than those [former ones], or have you immunity in the scripture?"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54)
- Lexicalcohesion: The surahcircled back to talk "the Hour" near the end, as it has been mentioned at the beginning of the surah.This is an example of lexical repetition, which fortifies the text and strengthens its interconnectedness. The Hour which was mentioned at the beginning of the surah and denied by the disbelievers of Mecca, is mentioned again at the end of the surahas a threat; for anyone who denies it and does not follow the message of Prophet Muhammad, will receive their promised punishment on the Day of Resurrection.

Manifestations of Text Cohesion at the Surah Level

The surah beginsin the disbelievers'denial of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and then the other narratives came to console him in his suffering from his people's harm andtheir fight

against him and his message. Therefore, the narratives relate to the focus of the text through a series of manifestations, we simplify some of them in the following:

First, the similarity of the previous peoples' attitudes towards their prophets, in terms of stubbornness and arrogance, and the repetition of the words that indicate this. The disbelievers' denial of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and their arrogance was mentioned at the beginning of the text, and thenthe other narratives in the surah were kinked to its beginning through repetition, for all the people in the surah denied their prophets, starting with the people of Noah:"The people of Noah denied before them, and they denied Our servant and said, "A madman," and he was repelled (9),"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) then the people of 'Aad: "'Aad denied; and how [severe] were My punishment and warning (18),"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) then the people of Thamud: "Thamud denied the warning (23),"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) then the people of Lot: "The people of Lot denied the warning (33),"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) and then Pharaoh and his people:"And there certainly came to the people of Pharaoh warning (41) They denied Our signs."(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54)

Perhaps this repetition is the most significant element in the cohesion of these anecdotal sectionswith the focus of the surah through the unity of attitude among all the people, in the denial of their prophets, the repetition of the words that indicate it, and their link to the focus of the surah.

Second: the descent of the agony on all the previous people, starting with the people of Noah:"And We left it as a sign, so is there any who will remember? (15),"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) then the people of 'Aad: "Indeed, We sent upon them a screaming wind on a day of continuous misfortune (19) Extracting the people as if they were trunks of palm trees uprooted (20),"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) then the people of Thamud: "Indeed, We sent upon them one blast from the sky, and they became like the dry twig fragments of an [animal] pen (31),"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) then the people of Lot: "And there came upon them by morning an abiding punishment (38),"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) and then the people of Pharaoh: "They denied Our signs, all of them, so We seized them with a seizure of one Exalted in Might and Perfect in Ability (42)."(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) The surah ended with the fate of the deniers of Muhammad (PBUH):"Indeed, the

criminals are in error and madness (47), Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and rivers (54), In a seat of honor near a Sovereign, Perfect in Ability (55)."(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54) However, the disbelievers among Muhammad's(PBUH) people were not punished; as they are the final nation, and the Prophet (PBUH) did not respond to their tangible demands, because if they deny it then they will be punished, and this is an example of God's mercy. Thus, all the narratives in the surah are similar in terms of the descent of punishment, as the unity of fate that all the narratives share, is a considered to bean element of cohesion within the text.

Third: The surah's narratives are free from references to the attitudes of other people with their prophets in other surahs.This is because the aim and message of this surah is to show the polytheists' denial of Muhammad's (PBUH) message. Therefore, the narratives in the surah indicate the previous peoples'denial of their prophets only, and not other incidents, as they were mentioned in other surahs for different purposes.

Fourth: The beginning of the incidentswith the disbelievers of Mecca claiming that Muhammad (PBUH) is a magicianand has used magic to split of the moon, and the ending of the narratives with the story of Pharaoh with the magicians, for this narrative's link to thesurah's focus in termsof similarity in attitudes, is clear.

Fifth: The similaritiesbetween the sentences' structures and the repetition of these structures in each narrative, is whatlinks the ending of the narrative linked to the narrative before it and what paves the way to the narrative after it, for there are fixed syndromes that were never broken by the narratives of the people of Noah, 'Aad, Thamud and Lot, and that is as Almighty God has said:"and how [severe] were My punishment and warning" / "Taste My punishment and warning" and "And We have certainly made the Quran easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?"(see: Surah Al-Qamar, surah's number: 54)

Conclusion

The Quranic surah is a complete text, all sections of which belong to one center through a set of formal and semantic links scattered throughout the text. After a surface reading of Surat Al-Qamar, we assumed a focus and we indicated it after a textual reading of the surah, and we found that all the surah'ssectionsbelong to this focus and indicate it. Not surprisingly, we did not find many narratives of prophets that are mentioned in other surahs,in surat Al-Qamar, such as

the narrative of Job, Solomon and David (PBUT) because they do not intersect with the focus of this surah and its purpose. This is the case with all the Quranic surahs, so this precise composition tells us that we are studying a miraculous and divine text that no human can imitate.

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