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## Investigating the Relationship Between the Verses of Sūrat al-A‘rāf

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### ABSTRACT

The study of the relationship between the verses of various Surahs for interpretation has drawn the attention of commentators for centuries. In recent times, these relationships have been investigated more thoroughly, as their usefulness is better recognized. Examining the relationship between the verses of a surah will gain a more accurate understanding of the meanings of each verse as well as the overall meaning of the surah. Extracting the primary topics posited in *Sūrat al-A‘rāf* and classifying them, the present study shows the relationship between every one of the verses so that their coherence and relationships can be practically showcased. The verses were firstly divided into different sets. Subsequently, the relationships between the verses of every set and, next, the relationship between the sets of verses in the Surah were demonstrated. Therefore, the study indicated that all the subjects in the Surah are interrelated and constitute a unit whole titled as *Sūrat al-A‘rāf*.

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## 1. Introduction

The investigation of the relationship between the verses of a Surah is highly effective for the interpretation. Understanding this relationship helps readers understand the Surah and reduces the numerosity of the notions presented by the commentators based on their different perspectives. Moreover, it assists later commentators to better clarify their perspectives. The initial exegeses often engaged in the interpretation of each verse separately, concentrating on the singularities of the verses; however, the importance of knowing the relationship between the verses has been made clearer to the commentators with the passage of time during the recent centuries, and they have considered this issue to some extent in their interpretations. Among the researchers who have made efforts to exhibit the relationships between the verses of the holy Qur'ān, Sayyid Quṭb (2004), Ḥawwā (2003), Fiḥrīzādīh (1995), Humāmī (1996), and Bāzargān (1996) can be mentioned.

This issue also holds true about the orientalist, even though most of them, including Nöldeke,<sup>1</sup> Bell<sup>2</sup> (1953), Schuon<sup>3</sup> (1998), and Du Ryer<sup>4</sup> (1734), have emphasized the incoherence of the holy Qur'ān's verses in their research.

However, many efforts have been made during recent years by researchers to show the relationship between the verses of a Surah and even the coherence of them (Abdel Haleem, 2017; Cuypers, 2011; Johns Anthony, 2016; Robinson, 2001; Sadeghi, 2011; Salwa, 2006; Smith, 2017).

Although the significance of the relationship between the verses of a Surah has increased, a coherent investigation has not been performed so far regarding all verses and subjects of the *Sūrat al-A'raf*.<sup>5</sup> This research will show how all the verses in *Sūrat al-A'raf* are interrelated, and it will also be proved that there is still a robust and coherent relationship between the verse sets even when the subject is completely changed and the thread of the verses seems broken.

## 2. Method

In this research, first, the relationship lines in each of the verses of the surah have been extracted, and then, the relationship between the verses has been explained based on these lines. Every relationship line is a specific topic in the surah, connecting the verses in which that topic is discussed. In order to extract the relationship lines, all the issues raised in each verse have been extracted and presented in a table.

By extracting, organizing and categorizing the subjects of each verse of *Sūrat al-A'raf*, nine main lines of communication can be found: Allah and properties of Allah (109 verses), guidance (172 verses), prophets (115 verses), divine traditions, examination and divine covenant (41 verses), death and resurrection (32 verses), gifts (God's blessings) (36 verses), creatures with freewill and creatures with determinism (75 verses), faith and its outcome (95 verses), and the line of blasphemy and its outcome (118 verses).

In the second stage, all of the extracted subjects are classified and organized in the order of the secondary subjects (secondary lines) under the primary subjects (primary lines). Similarly, more secondary subjects are organized under the secondary ones, and so forth. In the end, nine primary lines and approximately 500 secondary lines are extracted from *Sūrat al-A'raf*. These relationship lines have been analyzed in the article.

1. Except for the shortest sūrahs that are positioned toward the end of the Qur'ān, almost all others consist of a succession of paragraph-like sections between which there are frequent and often seemingly abrupt topic shifts." (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Quran#toc487666main>) (Sinai, N., & Ringgren, H. (2020). *The Qur'an*. Encyclopedia Britannica)

2. 'Short Pieces-interpreted in this way, Mueller's contention brings out a real characteristic of Qur'an style. It is disjointed. Only very seldom do we find it evidence of sustained unified.' (Bell, 1953, P. 72)

3. 'Seen from the outside, however, this book appears (apart from approximately the last quarter, the form of which is highly poetic, though it is not poetry) to be a collection of sayings and stories that is more or less incoherent and sometimes incomprehensible at first glance.' (Schuon, 1998, P. 40 -41)

4. 'He divided it into many signs, or verses, that contain his ordinances and fables, without regard to either the consequence or connection of the discourse. This is the reason that thou shalt find in this book, a multitude of incongruous pieces, and diverse repetition of the same things.' (Du Ryer. 1734, P. 1)

5. A similar work has been conducted regarding the relationship between the verses of *Suraht al-An'am* (Baroomand et al., 2022).

### 3. The Relationship Between the Verses in Sūrat al-A'raf

After clarifying all the subjects and lines posited in the Surah and preparing the subjects of each of the verses, the relationship between the sura's verses can be investigated by showing the line titles in each verse using the tables. One should note that the relationship between the verses' sets with single subjects (such as verses related to the tribes of each of the prophets) is evident amongst the verses of a Surah. Therefore, the explanations do not include the evident topics herein and the main concentration of the work is on the clarification of the relationship between verses, which are left untold in the prior interpretations.

#### 3-1. Verses One to Ten: Warning as the Goal of the Holy Qur'ān and Losses on the Day of Resurrection as a Result of Oppression of Divine Signs

The surah begins with *hurūfi Moqatta'ih*. In the second verse and with reference to the revealing of the holy Qur'ān, the soothing of the great messenger of Islam has been addressed, and it has been stated that if the holy Qur'ān was a book other than this and/or it had been revealed by anyone other than God, the last prophet should have been afflicted with stricture and loneliness; therefore, his highness must not be worried and he has to engage in warning and reminding the believers. The verse, thus, indicates that the goal of the holy Qur'ān's revelation has been warning mankind. The relationship between the second verse and the third is such that the latter practically warns the believers and urges them to accept the guardianship of God while disapproving of the guardianship of non-divine figures. This indicates that a command has been presented to remind human beings of monotheism as the most important pillar. Ultimately, He reprimands them for how little they notice. Therefore, in the third verse, obedience to God is presented as the opposite of polytheism and the rejection of God's guardianship. Subsequently, the fourth and fifth verses continue the previous subject and address the worldly consequences of polytheism and the obedience to figures other than God, namely, perishing. At the end of the fifth verse, their confession on Judgment Day has been pointed out, and it is in this way that the fifth verse establishes communication with verses 6-9, which express the investigation of the accounts on Judgment Day. In verses 6-8, the otherworldly outcomes of polytheism have been mentioned, and the ninth verse points to the idea that the loss on Judgment Day is due to the wrong treatment (*ẓulm*) of the divine signs.

After discussion about the wrong treatment (*ẓulm*) of the divine signs in the ninth verse, the tenth verse points to one of the examples of the divine signs, i.e., the very gifts provided by God for the sustenance of the individuals on earth. The tenth verse is related to the third verse in terms of expressing the low number of the remaining individuals.

Verses 11-25 are the detailed descriptions of the brief idea introduced in the tenth verse about the divine blessings, implying that the angels have prostrated before the human being and this humans' nobility is the greatest gift, the thankfulness for which is compulsory for all human beings.

#### 3-2. Verses 11-25: Expressing Examples of Divine Signs and Wrong Treatment of the Signs, Including the Story of Adam

The story of the prostration of the angels to Adam and the disobedience of the devil as an example of those who have wronged the divine signs,<sup>1</sup> makes a connection between the twelfth and the ninth verses, considering the loss on Judgment Day a result of the wrong treatment of the divine signs.

Verses 13-16 argues Satan's loss and his being driven out as a figure wrongly treating the divine signs, as well as about his asking for a respite and his having certain unthankful followers for himself in the future.

The relationship between verse 17 and verse 10 is such that Satan's followers exemplify the individuals about whom it has been said, "small are the thanks that ye give!" (Qur'ān 7:10). This means that obedience to Satan represents a form of ingratitude since these individuals prefer to obey Satan despite all the gifts and nobility bestowed upon them by God, as well as God's demand for the angels and Satan to prostrate to human beings. This serves as a vivid illustration of ingratitude.

Verse 18 addresses the outcomes and consequences of this ingratitude, identifying the following of Satan as the factor that led to the entry to hell. The story of Adam's temptation and his exit from

1. A more complete explanation of verse 11 and its relationship to the verses before and after is presented in another article.

heaven that has been pointed out in verses 20-25 is also another example of obedience to Satan.

Therefore, the relationship between this set of verses and the prior set is such that the ninth verse realizes the wrong treatment of the divine signs as the cause of losses; the tenth verse realizes a gift like the creation of humans as the noblest of the creatures, as well as the command for prostration as one of the examples of the divine signs and blessings. The following of Satan is amongst the examples of wrongdoing and ingratitude (verses 10-17), and Adam's being deceived and his following of Satan is also another example of wrongdoing and ingratitude (verses 19-25).

### **3-3. Verses 26-46: Relationships Between the Story of Adam and the Ingratitude and Wrongdoings of His Offspring and their Warning by Pointing to the Outcomes of the Actions**

From verse 26 to verse 35, human beings have been addressed four times by the use of the expression, "*Yā Banī Ādam!*" (Qur'ān 7: 26, 27, 31, 35). Moreover, addressing human beings by mentioning the name of their father points to the very story of the creation, and it is a reminder of a special gift granted by God to human beings, as well as their identification as the noblest of the creatures. Each time, God expresses some of the verdicts. Obedience to these verdicts is necessary, and failure to fulfill them is actually obedience to Satan and the cause of deviation and wrongdoing. Therefore, at the end of these four addresses, it is pointed out that the result of fulfilling these verdicts is paradise (verses 42-45), and the outcome of wrongdoing and following Satan is hell (verses 36-41).

Verse 26 continues to address the outcome of Adam's primary sin which took place following the temptation by Satan, leading to eating from the forbidden tree (verses 20-21). As a result of this sin, Adam is required to put on clothing (verse 22); after this sin (or wrongdoing) and repentance to the divine court of God (verse 23), God points in verse 26 to the gift of clothing to conceal the effects of sin, and orders practicing piety in the continuation (verse 26).

In verse 27, Adam's offspring are informed about Satan's insurgence and the consequences it has had for their father. Additionally, the practice of piety is once again commanded. After warning Adam's offspring about Satan's mutinies, he is identified as the leader of the disbelievers. Verse 28 relates to the previous verses in that it presents the same discussion based on two excuses, among others, articulated by the disbelievers: they claim that their fathers have been doing so: "We found our fathers doing so" (Qur'ān 7:28) and/or assert that it has been ordered by God: "Allah commanded us thus" (Qur'ān 7:28). At the end of this verse, these actions are termed depravities.

This verse's relationship with verse 29 is such that, in contrast to the depravities pointed out in verse 28, verse 29 addresses exercising justice and acting fairly; then, in comparison to two examples of depravities that are mentioned in the previous verse, verse 29, along with presenting examples of the divine verdicts, also included in verse 30, addresses the criterion-based nature of guidance and deviation. In verse 31, non-practicing of prodigality is commanded. Verse 32 highlights the permissibility of the ornamentations and clean things as one verdict for guidance, as compared to deviation and depravity.

Again, verse 33, such as verse 28, points to depravities and presents an example of depravities in the divine verdicts, including transgression, injustice, polytheism, and attribution of false things to God.

Verse 34, such as verse 25, discusses the worldly life and death and the respite that is given to the nations in this world. It is related to verse 128 in that it argues that the earth is inherited by the nation that observes these verdicts.

After addressing them three times, verse 35 again addresses the offspring of Isrā'īl. The previous verses present the verdicts and, having placed depravities against fairness and justice, highlight examples of wrong and right verdicts. This last address refers to the dispatching of the messengers as an ultimatum for the offspring of Isrā'īl, informing Adam's offspring of these verdicts so that they cannot claim, "We did not know what is right and what is wrong."

Regarding the dispatch of the messengers and ultimatums, the nations are divided into two groups: the first group has chosen the path of refutation, and verses 36-41 express the outcomes of their actions and elucidate their states in hell. The second group includes the pious individuals who have adhered to the verdicts to the best of their abilities; the outcomes of their actions and the descriptions of their states in heaven are presented in verses 42-45.

In addition to the refuters of the truth and Satan's followers, who will be cast into hell, and the second group that exercises piety and deserves heaven, there is a third group referred to in verses 46-

52 as “the men of A'raf.” This group possesses neither good deeds to merit heaven nor enmity to warrant hell. Their fate is mentioned in the fourth section of the verses.

### 3-4. Verses 46-52: Expression of the States of the Fellows of Heaven and Fellows of Hell Upon Bearing Witness to the Outcomes of Their Actions

After expressing the states of the fellows of heaven and fellows of hell and the conversation that takes place between them (verse 44), verse 46 points to a third set of individuals that are neither the fellows of hell nor the fellows of heaven. This verse seminally points to the veil that is between heaven and hell as well as a place named *A'raf*, which, as mentioned in the interpretations and lexicons, is a high ground between hell and heaven. Then, reference is made to men standing on *A'raf* and saluting the fellows of heaven, but they have not yet entered heaven even with the craving they have for it. Verse 47 depicts another side of *A'raf*'s wall and states that the fellows of *A'raf* can see it from where they are standing, and they ask God not to make them gather around in one place with the wrongdoing tribes. As it has been stated, these individuals have committed actions that made them deserving of neither heaven nor hell. Thus, they await intercession by the elders. Verse 48 speaks of fellows of *A'raf* (*Aṣḥāb al-a'Arāf*) who are all elders, and by the intercession of them, the men of *A'raf* (*Rijāl al-a'Arāf*) can be freed of fire. Fellows of *A'raf*, who are standing on this high ground along with the men of *A'raf* (*Rijāl al-a'Arāf*), address the fellows of hell scornfully about their behaviors (verse 48)<sup>1</sup>. They also address the fellows of heaven admiring them (Qur'ān 7:49). Subsequently, a conversation between the fellows of heaven and hell is what is presented from here to the end of verse 51. All commentators, regardless of the relationship between the verses of the Surah, have equated men of *A'raf* (*Rijāl al-a'Arāf*) and fellows of *A'raf* (*Aṣḥāb al-a'Arāf*), and because of that, they have difficulty in interpreting these few verses, the full explanation of which will be presented in another article (A comparative study of the opinions of about 250 commentators in this field). Here, it suffices to pay attention to the relationship between the verses of the surah.

### 3-5. Verses 52-58: The Relationship Between the Holy Qur'ān's Purposes: Warning, Believers' Guidance, and Disbelievers' Deviation

Verse 52 of *surat al-A'raf* realizes the holy Qur'ān as being a means of guidance and mercifulness only for the believers, implying that the holy Qur'ān is a sign presented to all mankind but only enjoyed by the believers. *Kāffirs* cannot take any advantage thereof due to their own defaults. In explaining why the *Kāffirs* cannot take advantage of the holy Qur'ān's verses, verse 53 makes it clear that the disbelievers seek to paraphrase the holy Qur'ān and demand the actualization of its promises while disregarding the loss of opportunity to enjoy the divine signs when the time comes for the fulfillment of the promises.

Verse 54 underscores monotheism and God's magnificence so as to invite mankind to practice humbleness and stay away from corruption in the world. Verse 57 again presents an example of divine signs, presenting the issue of resurrection in these examples.

By expressing the power of God in the world and mentioning some points about the resurrection of the dead on Judgment Day, verses 54-57 shows the verses that the unbelievers sought to interpret. In fact, these signs have been presented and the believers have perceived and enjoyed them, but *Kāffirs* have not perceived them due to their own negligence and their looking for other signs and meanings.

Verse 58 again expresses the same concept of verse 52. In other words, the holy Qur'ān's guidance and signs pour down on all the lands like a merciful rain but the clean lands, i.e., the believers, grow the plant of knowledge, leaving impure lands devoid of product and fruit.

### 3-6. Verses 59-93: Examples of Believers' Guidance and Disbelievers' Deviation in Different Tribes

After clarifying that divine guidance is effective for the believers and as useless as rain on salty land for the disbelievers, examples of the descent of divine guidance to various tribes through the prophets are presented. The destinies of the tribe of Noah (verses 46-59) and the tribe of Hūd (verses 65-72) are discussed, along with the stories of His Highness Ṣālīh and the tribe of Thamūd (verses 73-79), His

1. Complete explanation in: Baroomand, M. H., Joudavi, A., & Shahbazi, S. (2024). A Comparative Study of «Aṣḥāb al-a'Arāf» (Qur'ān 7: 46-48), Relying on the Relationship between Verses. *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Studies*, 6(1), 27-37.

Highness Lot (verses 80-84), and His Highness Shu'aib (verses 85-93), respectively. Since the relationship among these verses is clear, only the connections between this set of verses and the other verses of the Surah are addressed.

### **3-7. Verses 94-102: Holy Qur'an's Descent, Warning, Believers' Guidance, Kaffirs' Deviation, and Sending of the Messengers, All in Line with the Goal of Creation**

After expressing examples of prophets in verses 59-93, verse 94 addresses the tradition of the messengers' mission as a divine rule. Verse 95 points to the tradition of replacement (*Sunnati 'istibdāl*), implying that these tribes are not chastised before sending messengers based on such a tradition as the dispatching of the messengers; however, after being given an ultimatum and divine signs, the tradition of replacement (*Sunnati 'istibdāl*) is operationalized about them with the refutation of the verses, and they will be afflicted with a destructive chastisement so that another tribe can take their position. Again, and in continuation, verse 96 explains that blessings would have been sent from the heavens and the earth to them if they had become faithful. Verses 97-99 reproach the opponents of God, demanding them not to think that they can be free from this divine chastisement; therefore, their relationship with the prior verses is well-evident.

Such as verse 95, verse 100 points to the tradition of replacement (*Sunnati 'istibdāl*), highlighting that this tradition (*Sunnati 'istibdāl*) would eventually lead to the selection of the ones inheriting the earth. In other words, the various tribes continuously come, and guided by the prophets, they will be replaced by new tribes in case of refutation. This goes on until the real inheritors of earth emerge. Verse 101, as an outcome of the *Kaffirs'* actions, states that their hearts are sealed due to a failure to keep their promises after the messengers were dispatched (verse 102).

### **3-8. Verses 103-167: Examples of the Dispatched Prophets and Kaffirs' Refutation**

Following the description of the tradition of the messengers' dispatching (in verse 94) and explaining the states of five various tribes to which messengers have been sent for guidance but were refuted by them (verses 59-93), and the presentation of a summary of this tradition (verses 94-102), verses 103-167 present an explanation of the story of his highness Moses<sup>1</sup> and Pharaoh, the offspring of *Isrā'īl*, and the relationship between this set of verses.

### **3-9. Verses 168-188: Guidance and Deviation as Outcomes of Acting in Accordance with or Contrary to Human Nature (*Fiṭrat*)**

After explaining the story of Pharaoh and the offspring of *Isrā'īl*, verse 168 points to some examinations of the *Banī Isrā'īl* Tribe, as well as to their eventual division into two sets of the righteous and non-righteous ones. Then, verse 169 discusses the way the non-righteous group of *Isrā'īl's* offspring treats the heavenly book. After inheriting the Torah from their ancestors, the unrighteous sons neglected the covenant of the scriptures, which emphasizes the importance of speaking only the truth about God. In exchange for abandoning this covenant, they opted for the inferior material possessions of this world, all the while hoping to receive forgiveness from God. The conclusion of the verse highlights their inability to reflect on whether the spiritual realm is superior and more valuable than the tangible commodities of the physical world. Since contemplation involves thinking and reflecting based on human nature (*fiṭrat*), it is evident that this group of the sons of *Isrā'īl* has deviated from their true nature (*fiṭrat*) by engaging in actions that contradict it. The scornful tone in verse 169, along with the gloominess of the heart that prevents them from perceiving divine signs, indicates that they have exchanged these signs for earthly commodities. These behaviors are direct consequences of their actions against nature (*fiṭrat*). Furthermore, verse 171 pertains to this same group and states that they have been compelled to adhere to the contents of certain verses.

Verse 170 addresses the second group of *Banī Isrā'īl*, who have turned to the book of God, perform prayers, and are among the righteous. This verse is connected to verse 196, which asserts that God is

1. A more complete explanation of verse 143 and a review of the phrase "*Lan Tarānī*" by referring to the relationship between the verses is presented in the following article: Baroomand, M. H., Joudavi, A., & Shahbazi, S. (2022). Comparative Study of Interpreters' Ideas about "Qāla Rabbi 'Arinī 'Unzur Ilayk Qāla Lan Tarānī" (Q.7:143), Relying on the Relationship between Verses. *Quran and Religious Enlightenment*, 2(2), 23-39.

the guardian of the righteous. By articulating the book's covenant, verse 169 is related to verse 172, which expresses the treaty of nature (*fiṭrat*). Verses 171 and 172 are interconnected in that the sons of Isrā'īl are required to accept the heavenly book in verse 171 after they were placed under the shade of the mountain. A promise is extracted from them in verse 172 through another requirement, which is the covenant of nature (*fiṭrat*), regarded as a form of general coercion. It is important to clarify that the covenant of nature (*fiṭrat*) and the associated promise are obligatory for all human beings, as indicated by the prophetic narration: "*Kulla Mawlūdun Yūlidu 'Alā al-Fiṭrah*" (all human beings are born according to God's nature). The rationale for compelling all human beings to enter into this covenant of nature (*Mithāqī Fiṭrat*) is provided subsequently: "(This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: 'Of this, we were never mindful'" (Qur'ān 7:172). Furthermore, verse 173 continues to elaborate on this rationale by stating that it was their forefathers who worshipped false gods.

After articulating the covenant of nature (*fiṭrat*) in verse 172 and its rationale in verses 173-174, verse 175 addresses an adversary of God, identified in the narrations as Bal'am Ba'ūr. This verse is related to the preceding verses in that they discuss the promise of nature (*fiṭrat*), while Bal'am Ba'ūr exemplifies those who have acted contrary to it. Specifically, when he acted in accordance with his nature (*fiṭrat*), God granted him His signs. However, when he acted against his nature (*fiṭrat*), he became one of the misguided.

The crucial point here is that possessing a nature (*fiṭrat*) is essential for all human beings, as it is this nature that illuminates the path like a light. However, acting in accordance with the nature (*fiṭrat*) is completely voluntary. Additionally, an individual's decision to choose a path and be guided by the light of the nature and/or act against the nature, depends on their choices, for human beings are creatures with free will. In the continuation of this same discussion, in verse 176, God states that we could have taken him (*Bal'am Ba'ūr*) up if we wanted to act forcibly but nobody is forced to act based on the nature (*Fiṭrat*), and they can choose to follow Satan if they wish.

Verses 176 and 179 are related as both maintain two examples of individuals who act against their nature; one is compared with a dog and the other is compared with animals (*'An'ām*).

Additionally, verse 178 points to the criterion-based nature (*fiṭrat*) of the divine guidance and determinism about the guidance of the individuals who act in accordance with or contrary to the nature (*fiṭrat*). It also argues that, to enjoy guidance, individuals should voluntarily act in accordance with their nature (*fiṭrat*), and those who voluntarily act against their nature, "such are the persons who perish" (Qur'ān 7: 178).

Again, verse 179 points to the outcome of acting against the nature (*fiṭrat*). Additionally, it states that the individuals who act against the nature (*fiṭrat*) would be deprived in their hearts and ears from understanding and perception, eventually receiving its otherworldly outcome, which is hell.

Verse 180 as well as the prior ones are related since verses 173-179, which were mentioned above, address the individuals who have acted against their nature (*fiṭrat*). Here, in verse 180, reference is made to the God's most beautiful names. Although the verse is apparently about the divine names, reference to a narration from Imām Sādiq (PBUH), stating, "I swear to God that we (Imāms) are the most beautiful divine names and God does not accept any action from His servants unless through the recognition of us" (Huwayzī, 1994, P. 103), makes it clear that this verse points to the individuals who have acted in accordance with their nature (*fiṭrat*), as compared to those who have acted against it, as mentioned in verses 173-179.

Verses 181-182 are connected to the preceding verses because, after dividing the Jewish nation into two groups—the righteous and the non-righteous—in verse 168, the subsequent verses describe their conditions and explain the actions of those who have violated the covenant of nature (*Mithāqī Fiṭrat*) (verses 172-179) as well as those who align with their nature (*fiṭrat*) (verse 180). In verse 181, a reference is made to the Islamic nation, which is similarly composed of two segments.

Verse 159 alludes to the righteous individuals of the nation of Moses (PBUH), while verse 181 highlights the righteous among the nation of Muhammad (PBUH). Subsequently, verse 182 addresses those who refute Islam, stating that God exercises gradualism concerning them, allowing them time to accumulate their sins. This approach reflects God's strategy towards them, as noted in verse 183.

Verses 184-185 have been interlaced with the prior verses since God challenges them by asking of proofs from the refuters of Islam (verse 184), and asks them if they not know that the prophet had not been bewitched and he is a vivid warner. In verse 185, God directs their attention to the kingdom of

the heavens and earth and their creation, symbolizing the creation of everything considering the holy Qur'ān's norms. At the end of verse 185, they are frightened of the consequences of refuting God and His prophet, and it is stated that "your death is close."

Verse 186 presents proofs for verses 184-185. It also states that the reason for the *Kaffirs'* not believing in God's verses and His prophet is that God has deviated them, and this deviation is the product of God's determinism, with its primary reason being the behaviors exhibited by the polytheists based on free will.

Verse 187 is related to verse 185 in this way that the *Kaffirs* are frightened of the outcomes of their actions and closeness of their death, and a question strikes their minds as to "when would the time of this close death be?" (verse 187). In the response, God states, "tell them that only the God knows it." It implies that the prerequisite for prophetic mission is not just having a knowledge of the unseen and the time of the resurrection's occurrence, and that the prophet is just an annunciator of the good news and warner of the punishments (verse 188). Verse 188 is continued with the presentation of proof to this claim that the prophet does not know about the unseen. It is stated that, "tell them that if I had knowledge of the unseen, I could have collected a lot of profits for myself, and nothing could harm me." Finally, certain signs of the resurrection are just stated in response to the *Kaffirs*.

### **3-10. Verses 189-206: Relationship Between the Beginning and Ending Parts of the Sura: Expressing the Divine Gifts and Human Beings' Ingratitude, and Following of Satan**

Verses 189-198 have been presented in direct relationship with the beginning verses of the surah. The second verse deals with both the holy Qur'ān's descent and the divine signs for the warning and guidance of the creatures. The third verse proposes things about polytheism and nonacceptance of God's guardianship, which is per se a sort of ingratitude and an example of the wrong treatment of the divine signs. Verses 11-25 posit points about the disobedience and ingratitude of Satan and his deception of Adam and Adam's following of him. Subsequently, verses 26-35 warn the offspring of Adam four times against following Satan and exercising ingratitude towards God.

This same order also holds true for verses 189-198, in which the creation from a single soul is first proposed (verse 189); Subsequently, the human beings' demand for having righteous children is mentioned along with the humans vow to stay thankful in exchange for it (verse 189). However, after receiving this gift, the issue becomes pertinent to human beings' polytheism and ingratitude (verse 190). In explaining this issue, verses 191-198 point to the inabilities of everything that is worshipped instead of the One God (verse 191-198). Verse 196 points to the descending of the book and the revelation of the divine signs for the guidance of human beings, and their rescue from polytheism, as well as God's guardianship and the inability of the partners the human beings wrongfully take equal to God out of ingratitude.

Verse 199 realizes this approach of the human beings (ingratitude) as having been adopted out of ignorance (verse 199). In verse 200, following Satan has been introduced as the reason for such ingratitude. In verses 200-201, seeking refuge in God and exercising piety have been proposed as two ways of escaping from Satan.

Verse 203 continues with the discussion about the book's descent, the revelation of divine signs, and God's guardianship for the righteous individuals which has been also mentioned in verse 196. It has been presented in response to the great messenger's opponents who claim that these verses are made by himself, not God. It is ordered to the prophet that, "tell them what I say is the revelation from God and a divine sign, and I only obey them."

After expressing the divine nature of these verses, verse 204 asks the listeners to keep silent during the reading of the holy Qur'ān as a sort of respect to the reader of these sacred words. Verse 205 demands God's remembrance and not remaining ignorant of Him. In verse 206, God's remembrance and praising God and prostration to Him are realized as actions by the individuals who, unlike Satan's temptations, do not practice haughtiness before God and who do not exercise wrongdoing and ingratitude before the divine signs. Therefore, the last verses of the surah again point to the subject that has been posited at the beginning, i.e., wrongdoing and ingratitude of human beings towards the divine signs and guidance.



#### **4. Conclusion**

The investigation of the relationship between the verses in *Sūrat al-A‘rāf* indicates that, unlike what is believed by some orientalist, there is a coherent relationship between the verses of *Sūrat al-A‘rāf*. The coherent relationships of the sura’s verses are discovered by the identification of the lines of the subjects posited in the Surah.

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