

Methodology of Structural Research in the Qur'ān; Case Study: Surah Nās, Falaq and 'Aşr

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Abstract

Studying and researching the structural aspects of the Holy Quran, despite its extraordinary value and importance, has always faced challenges and obstacles. The defining and appropriate position has been reconsidered as it deserves in the field of Surah studies. The researcher does not encounter the Quran as a multi-page book with structural divisions rather than content-based parts and chapters, but rather sees the Quran as a collection consisting of one hundred and fourteen small and large Surahs and five hundred and fifty-five sub-Surahs or thematic units, which are studied, contemplated, and utilized Surah by Surah and unit by unit. The position, goals, and purposes of each Surah of the Holy Quran are recognized; the thematic axis or axes of each Surah are discovered, examined, and activated, and the characteristics of each Surah become apparent. The Surah researcher quickly realizes that contrary to the common perception of Muslim Quranic scholars and some non-Muslim Quranic scholars, the Surahs of the Quran are not just pieces of a book that has taken the name of the Quran, but rather the Surahs of the Quran are diverse facets of the noble Quran and various manifestations of the noble Quran, which the owner of the Quran has spread out before the wide-ranging servants and made available to them, so that gradually, they may find their way to the sea of knowledge and depths of truths of the noble Quran. Surah studies, which is essentially “Quranic studies Surah by Surah,” is one

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of the most necessary and dignified areas of modern Quranic studies. Understanding the relationship between the verses within a Surah and investigating the structure of that Surah is a new approach that, although detailed in previous interpretations, has not received serious attention from Quranic scholars. According to the “Surah recognition,” each Surah has its own specific goal and thematic axis, so that all the verses of the Surah revolve around that axis, and in this way, a meaningful relationship between the verses is recognized.

In the present study, the structure of Surah ‘Aṣr has been examined based on the method of Surah studies. Therefore, in this Surah, an attempt has been made to scientifically answer the important question of ‘Why Allah Almighty, after swearing by the short and heavy time of human life, directly states that indeed, man is in loss?’ ‘Which aspect of human life is at a loss?’ The results indicated that the second verse clearly indicates that all of human life is actually a real trade, and the commodity in this deal is the lifespan of the individual. In this business and in this trade of life, at every moment, humans sell a limited and specific amount of their limited lifespan to purchase their physical and spiritual needs. The term “Khusr” with emphasis usually indicates continuous loss in any kind of daily trade where humans give up a significant portion of their life for the cheapest worldly goods. As observed in this Surah, only those who believe, perform righteous deeds, and advice each other to truth and patience are far from loss.

In another section, the structural analysis of Surah al-Nās has been addressed, and we have attempted to reflect on this Surah by raising some very essential questions. The most important questions raised in this Surah are about the linguistic and semantic relationship between the three phrases: “Lord (Rabb) of mankind,” “King (Malik) of mankind,” and “God (Ilāh) of mankind,” and if there is a relationship between these words, ‘What meaningful relationship exists between the order of these words?’ ‘Why does Allah Almighty refer to the whisperer in the chests and hearts of humans?’ And finally, ‘What is the relationship between this Surah and Surah al-Falaq that Allah Almighty in both Surahs has commanded the Prophet (PBUH) and his community to seek refuge with Him continuously?’ In conclusion, the close relationship of this Surah with Surah al-Falaq

is evaluated and analyzed, and the connections and mutual interaction of the two Surahs, al-Nās and al-Falaq, are examined as a case study.

Therefore, the present study discusses two main axes: methodological research in Quranic structural studies; topics such as stages and foundations of structural research, thematic units (Rukū'āts), gradual revelation of the Quran, relationship and connection between the Surahs, thematic axis or main theme of the Surahs, structural analysis differences, and interpretation. In the final section, special attention is paid to the concept and structural analysis of Surah al-Nās and Surah al-Falaq, and ultimately, based on this research, the precise semantic relationship between Surah al-Nās and al-Falaq is extracted, and then, through contemplation, the verses of Surah al-‘Aṣr are understood. As a result, it became evident that Surah al-‘Aṣr, despite its small size, is the most comprehensive and complete Surah of the Quran containing divine teachings and life-giving Quranic lessons.

Keywords: Contemplation, Structural Research, Surah al-Nās, Surah al-Falaq, Surah al-‘Aṣr.

Introduction

In the introduction, there is two very important points that we should mention. The first point is that the study and research plays an important and significant role in understanding of the Qur'ān, yet because of some obstacles, it has not found its appropriate position and its specific status. The expert researcher in recognition of surahs, very soon find that contrary to the prevalent idea of Muslim scholars and some of none-Muslim orientalist, surahs of the Qur'ān are not small or large pieces of a book entitled the Qur'ān, rather surahs of the Qur'ān are multiple faces and numerous effects of the Qur'ān, which it's "Almighty Owner" has spread it in front of human beings in His boundless Book, so that, taking each individual, group or nation choose a surah among the surahs, each of them as a whole Qur'ān, and through it, find gradually their way to the ocean of divine teachings of the Qur'ān.

The second point is related to the background of the research. In this regard, it should be mentioned that since this article seeks to understand the Qur'anic concepts from the two surahs of Nās and 'Aṣr by the method of "Deliberation" and "Surah Recognition", therefore the method used in this article is based on deliberation in the Qur'an, and therefore, the subtle and important points that have been obtained through deliberation are sometimes not seen in the interpretations; accordingly, this research is considered a new idea and an innovative research in which the method and type of material processing is different from previous researches; and for this reason, this work can be considered an innovative research work.

Structural Study and Research

Muslim or Non-Muslim scholar, or researcher enters step by step or subject by subject into Infinite Ocean of Divine Teachings of Qur'ān, and the Qur'ān somehow will be manifested for him. Now another extensive and wide ground for pondering and research in the Qur'ān, is presented; an effective factor in creating and increasing familiarity with Qur'ān, known as "Surah Cognition".

Surah recognition is the same Qur'ān recognition, surah by surah;

one of the most essential types of Qur'ānic Sciences, and also one of the most deserving areas of modern Qur'ānic Studies.

In the context of surah recognition studies, a researcher does not deal with the Qur'ān as a book of several hundred pages with casted and not content divisions of sections and parts. For him/her the Qur'ān is a complete system including 114 small and large surahs and 555 thematic units, every one of them as a subsystem co-working with the others. These varied units are studied, deliberated and pondered surah by surah and unit by unit; the position, objectives and purposes of each surah, even each subsurah/subjective unit, are recognized; the basic subject or subjects of each surah are explored and activated; and then features of each one of surahs are revealed .

Part One: Stages and Principles

1. Selecting Surah

Contrary to what is in training stages in Qur'an teaching, which starts from -even shortest- surahs beginning with Nās and ending with Qāf, we hold the textbook for teaching/learning of the Qur'an, indicated and defined by the Prophet (PBUH), as an alternative, but here, in our structural study and research, that we are not in the position of teaching and learning and there is not any obligatory to select our surah even from the *Ḥizb al-Mufaṣṣal* (Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 34), We can choose every surah from everywhere of the Qur'ān we desire and put it into our structural study or research. (Qurṭubī, p. 173; Ibn Kathīr, Bāb T'allum al-Ṣibyān al-Qur'an, 225/1)

1-1. Short Surahs and Long Extended Ones

In the position of teaching and learning, short or long surahs are the main relevant subjects. The process of teaching/learning should be started from Nās to Qāf, but in this position, being short or long is not decisive in selecting surahs. In structural research, to think that a short surah apparently is easier than a long one, is not the purpose.

In fact, all surahs in the Qur'ān have an equal size, and being short or long for a surah is only superficial. The smaller surahs are more compressed and more summarized, while the longer surahs

which are massive and voluminous, are greater in explanation and description. So, in this field you are strongly recommended that you'd better choose surahs with average volumes.

1-2. Can a Surah be Superior to the others?

According to Islamic teachings, we cannot find any case in which the longer surahs - for example - are preferred to the others. It is important and so emphasized to recite and ponder on the Qur'ān, this surah and that surah. Every surah is a source of blessing, spiritual growth, knowledge, insight and wisdom by itself. (Ibn Kathīr, Vol. 4, Pp. 606 and 607; Suyūṭī, vol. 8, Pp. 678 and 680)

The structural research is merely an excuse for us to intimate to the surahs, however, it makes no difference with which surah we start; each surah we choose and start with, will bring us to the Qur'ān. The purpose of structural study or research is, to understand the Qur'ān which is achieved through being familiar with each one of surahs more and more.

Any movement in the Qur'ān, from anywhere begins, finally will make us reach to the same destination. This mobility apparently begins from different parts of the Qur'ān, but afterwards, all of them will end to a specific final destination. This is one of miraculous aspects and particular features of the Qur'ān that has many and variable starting points.

1-3. You'd better select a medium surah

To begin with structural research or study, you'd better choose a surah with an average volume. All surahs of the Qur'ān, according to their source and content, are the same, but in compact surahs, the notes and the messages are not so clear and obvious, because of their small size, so the opportunity for pondering on their structure for study or research is very compact, and finding the similarities and evaluation of their beginning and end, compared to the medium and long surahs, are somehow difficult, and needs more skill.

On the other hand, the long surahs, due to their volume, may initially cause tiredness and reduce our motivation, and even, might

dissuade us from continuing our studies.

1-4. You must have a Current Surah

To achieve the purpose of communication and to accustom with the Qur'ān, at any stage, instead of facing only with one option, actually, Allah's will is to pave the way for us to deal with at least 114 different options. Method and life history of our religion leaders demonstrate that everyone can choose every surah he or she likes it to read and ponder on it continuously. The surah which we choose for this purpose is called "Current Surah" in this study. It means that the surah flows in our life and we constantly recite it and live with it. Our "Current Surah" is a surah which we have a special attachment to it. We recite it, at least once a day and benefit from its points and messages. Naturally, after a while, according to our circumstances, we move from that surah to another and choose a new one as our current surah. Thus, each one of the current surahs, after a while, gives way to another new current surah, and so on.

1-5- Mind the Continuous and Unceasing Recitation

In the hadiths concerning the reward of recitation and the virtues of the Qur'ān, there are two types of expressions: "Continuous Recitation (*Mudāwamat*)" and "Unceasing Recitation (*Idmān*)". (Majlisī, 44/219; Ṣadūq, p. 115; Suyūṭī, 5/257)

Mudāwamat, in reading Qur'ān, is continuous Qur'ān recitation. It means, at least, the surah is recited once a day. In *Idmān* (unceasing recitation), we have the factor of "Repetition and Durability" yet, but not in comparison to the level of *Mudāwamat* (continuance). In fact, *Idmān* is non-interrupted recitation. Thus, *Idmān* means that, one recites the surah, from time to time, and do not cut his/her connection with it.

2. Preparing the Board of the Surahs

One of the worthy works that should be considered significant is, preparing the board of our current surah. Although this stage is not considered as a requisite for the structural research, but it is very impressive and efficient and has tremendous virtues and benefits.

(Rajabi, p 96, 1389)

The role and position of writing or preparing the board of surah, in the process of structural research, is very basic and important. Otherwise, the process of structural research will be done slowly and consequently, even many of Qur'ānic teachings related to that surah.

The purpose of writing the Qur'ān, in the structural research, is not writing a scripture, it is in fact, the preparation of current surah in one single page, on its mirror we can find the true reality of the surah and understand its structure merely. Through this surah's mirror, we can consider its beginning and end; and we will be able to evaluate the fitness and relevance of its verses and passages with each other.

Here are some of the effects, benefits and efficiencies of the Surah Boards:

- Watching the full landscape of surah;
- The permission of inserting notes in the board of surah;
- The blessing of looking at the Qur'ān face to face; (Ḥurr al-Āmilī, 4/854; Nūrī, 4/268; Majlisī, 89/202, Kulaynī, 4/418; Muttaqī Hindi, 1/536)
- Paving the way for continuation of the recitation of surah more and more;
- Finding the presence of surahs of the Qur'ān in the daily life.

3. Recitation and Repeating the Surah

The first step in structural research or study, after preparing the board and before it, is the recitation of surah repeatedly and often. The structural research is considered as a kind of pondering on the Qur'ān; in fact, without its recitation, deliberation in the Qur'ān is not possible properly, and the readability of the Qur'ān and its nature of reading should not be neglected. The Qur'ān, as it appears from its name and description, (Ibn Manẓūr, 1/128) as long as it has not been targeted for reading, its original and true nature, will not be discovered. So, the field of pondering on it will not be prepared properly. Recitation causes listening, and listening is the only way of contemplation.

4. Naming the Surahs

One of the notable issues in the field of structural research is the name and naming the surahs. Some may think that addressing such issues in the surahs is useless and ineffective and on the contrary, they are more willing to pay attention to the content discussions, but it should be noticed that the recognition of names of surahs can be associated with these issues and ignoring their significance is not acceptable.

5- Descending Order of the Surahs

At this stage of structural research, it is important to refer to the historical books, Qur'ānic sciences, interpretations and other sources, to obtain the information related to the time and place of revelation and descending order of the surah, in order to complete the historical identity of our current surah. It is noteworthy that, data on descending order of the surahs, cannot be a reasonable identifier for the surahs and they are not so able to help us to achieve the goals, objectives and messages of the surahs. They should be placed in their appropriate place, otherwise, from the outset; they will disrupt the active process of recognition of the surah. (Majlisī, 2/280: Abī Baṣīr narrates from Imam Ṣādiq (AS))

6. Causes of Descending (*Asbāb al- Nuzūl*)

Paying attention to causes of descending may help us in some stages of cognition of our current surah. Of course, these narrations as well as virtues of the surahs (*Faḍā'il al-Suwar*) and features of the surahs (*Khawāṣṣ al-Suwar*) and reports related to the surahs as Mekan or Medinan should be considered regarding to their types of observation and their particular positions. Otherwise, if we want to enter the issues of surahs through their narrow channel and limited history and take them as introduction to understanding and recognizing the surahs of the Qur'ān, then actually, the process of structural research will be disrupted and consequently we do not achieve main goals and basic purposes of the surah.

On the other hand, the science of *Asbāb al- Nuzūl*, despite of its reputation in Qur'ānic Sciences, it does not have any root and basis in

the prophetic teachings, and there is no even one single hadith from the prophet that he expresses that, for example, this verse has been sent down for that very issue or for that person (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, p. 118). All of these expressions and descriptions, that later became known as causes of descending, are attributed to the era after passing away of the prophet, when some group of companions (*Ṣahābah*) and their successors felt that it is necessary to trace the events and occurrences of revelation era in order to retrieve fields and causes of descending of Qur'ānic surahs and verses. The Prophet not only had no interest in recording descending causes, but also he somehow prohibited writing and publishing these issues (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Koran da Eslam*, p. 173; Ma'rifat and Lessani Fesharaki, *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, under the entry of *Asbāb al- Nuzūl*, vol. 8, p. 127).

7. Thematic units (*Rukū'āt*)

One of the very mysterious divisions in the Qur'ān, that later were ignored and neglected, and many modern Muslims somehow are unaware of it, is the division of the Qur'ān into 555 thematic subject units that were done under supervision and teaching of the Prophet (PBUH), and it has long been renowned as Qur'ānic *Rukū'āt*. These are known as *Rukū'āt* because the Prophet (PBUH) used to recite one of them after Surah Ḥamd in the prayers before bow (*Rukū'*). This division had been marked in Qur'ān copies by the letter “ع” from the ancient time. This letter is the border of a *Rukū'* (Lessani Fesharaki, *Sure Shenasi*, Introduction).

Thematic Units (*Rukū'āt*) and Gradual Revelation of the Qur'ān

One of the prophetic certain method and teachings that he used to do was, reciting part of the verses which were revealed recently after Surah Ḥamd in daily prayers, and was doing this with perfect order and complete accuracy. For example, whenever he wanted to recite the first part of Surah Naba', surely he was reciting the verses 1 to 30, so that the limits of these thematic units (*Rukū'āt*) were recorded in the memory of people, and thus, everyone were learning that from the first verse till the thirtieth verse as a unit (*Rukū'*) from that surah, and

from thirty-first verse till the end of surah, as the second unit (*Rukū'*) of that surah. (To read more, refer to: Lessani Fesharaki, *Ravesh Tahghigh Mawzouie dar Kuran*)

The issue of Qur'ānic thematic units is one of those teachings that companions of the Prophet (PBUH) have precisely and carefully recorded, and have conveyed and transferred their exact places and positions to the next generations. Hence, as they were attempting to record the limits of surahs of the Qur'ān, with the same accuracy and discipline, they were careful in preserving and transferring the limits of the *Rukū'āt*, so that this heavenly divisions, during various periods of Islamic history, was abundantly and successively in the hands of the Muslims, as well as division of the Qur'ān into surahs, was totally well known to them. It means that, they had no need of any document or hadith to prove the authenticity of *Rukū'āt*. (Ḥurr al-Āmilī, 6/50-52)

8. Linkage and Connection between the Surahs

Al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm has naturally a designed system which is quite wise; and different parts of it, while each of them has the same independence and perfect existence, in the perfect precision and wisdom, linked with each other. Recognition of these links, certainly will help us in the way of cognition of the surah, and will provide the fields of more and better recognition of our surah. This view is essentially based on quite wise school of the Prophet (PBUH) in understanding the Qur'ān that in which many surahs of the Qur'ān that are based on the same starting point, were grouped, and each group has taken a common name like *Ḥawāmīm*, *Muṣabbaḥāt* and *Ḥāmidāt*, or companion and neighboring surahs, two by two, have considered couple with each other, and they have allocated double categories like *Zahrāwayn*, *Mu'awwadhatayn* and *Qarīnatayn* to themselves.

At this stage, we try to know that whether our current surah is interacting with the other surahs or not? In the grouping system of surahs, our surah places in which group? What are the common goals and objectives of this Surah Group? What purpose does our current

surah follow as a member of this group? What is the common thematic axis of these surahs and, what is the distinctive aspect of each of them? How does each surah of the same group describe and define our current surah? What verbal and conceptual similarities are between the members of this group, and how is the connection and coherence among them? What are the brief and detailed points in each of these surahs?

Meanwhile, each surah has a separate entity and it alone is a complete Qur'ān; therefore, each surah has all the qualities and abilities of the Qur'ān and can lead mankind to true happiness. Based on the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) and the impeccable Imams (AS), we realized that surahs of the Qur'ān, in spite of their separate entity, in a perfect wise system, have a reciprocal interaction and exchange with each other; and each surah, in spite of its unique features and characteristics, also has other familiarity and kinship with some of other surahs as well (Lessani Feharaki, *Daneshnāme-ye Jahān Eslām*, vol. 11).

9. Thematic Axis or Basic Subject of Surahs

One of the theoretical significant issues in the recognition of surah and also one of the most important practical aspects in structural research is the attempt to achieve the basic subject of the surah. "Thematic Axis" is usually one of the topics that have been proposed in the surah and it can have a central role in the connection with other topics, so that the whole surah and all of the topics and issues raised in it could rotate around that axis.

To recognize the thematic axis, we should recite the surah repeatedly and then specify its main topics; and with more accuracy and frequent recitation of surah, we can identify one or two issues that can cover other topics, and so we will go forward to finally find a topic that can be the axis for all topics of the surah.

We should never assume that necessarily, every surah in the Qur'an has only one subject-centered and everyone must achieve that specific axis. Because with each axis we move on, the surah has its guidance that provides for us. A surah, as rotates around the proposed

axis, it will rotate around the proposed axis of any other Qur'ānic researcher as well. The function of thematic axis is to pave the way of pondering based on a guidance and educative mechanism of the Qur'ān. Every verse or point that can provide this context is the Thematic Axis (To read more, cf. Lessani Fesharaki, *Sure Shenasi*, Introduction).

10. Virtues of the Surahs

Narrations that have considered virtues or properties for the recitation or continuous reading of some surahs have long been known as the virtues of surahs or properties of surahs (Suyūfī, 2/113).

These narrations concerning two sciences of the collection of Qur'ānic Sciences have well-known position in the references of Qur'ānic sciences and traditional interpretations. The view of Islamic scholars for these series of narrations and traditions often had associated with extreme and negligence. Sometimes they have considered all of these narrations weak and invalid, and sometimes they have looked at these narrations as authentic hadiths and as a result, they have not been critically reviewed. The moderate approach to these traditions is, instead of absolute denial or absolute acceptance, put them investigated.

Every surah of the Qur'ān has a separate and perfect entity, and in its turn, is a complete Qur'ān, and includes all the names and attributes of the Qur'ān. Therefore, when a virtue or property or specific performance is attributed to a surah, it does not mean that other surahs are lacking of that virtue and property, rather, these hadiths are explaining functions or obvious characteristics of that surah. Virtues or properties of the surahs, when are placed in front of the Qur'ān, are recessive, not dominant. Therefore, the main and basic criterion for the recognition of a surah is the surah itself, not what is said or narrated about it.

11. Summarizing and Expanding the Surah

To intimate with a surah, one of theoretical and practical steps is to summarize or to expand it. If someone, in the position of recognition

of the surah, can expand the volume of short surahs and bring them to the size of longer surahs, or summarize the longer surahs as their size become the same as short surahs, in this case, he has achieved the effective and efficient stage of intimacy with the Qur'ān.

Shortness and length of surahs are a matter of appearance. Allah the Almighty has sent down all surahs of the Qur'ān, so all of them are great and long, and even are infinite. Therefore, amidst the verses of short surahs, we should be able to read many other verses from other surahs could be placed in the context of that short surah, but, according to Divine Wisdom, they have not been placed there. On the other hand, we should be able to recognize the details of long surahs from the main policy of their expression, and to consider each long surah compactly the same size as short surahs (Kulaynī, 2/621).

Summarizing the long surahs gives the researcher possibility to look at the whole surah at a quick glance, to achieve the main frame of surah, and to identify position of each one of the verses and components of surah, and their relevance to each other. Expanding the short surahs of the Qur'ān, compared to the summarizing the long surahs, is easier. To do this, we can use the other surahs, and extract the similar verses to our current surah from all over the Qur'ān, and then embed that verses amidst the verses of surah which we want to expand it (Alawai, vol. 13, p. 135).

12. Difference between Structural Research and Interpretation

In the process of recognition of the surah, we should regard, at least, not to enter the commentary spheres. For this purpose, it is necessary to become familiar with some of the most important differences between structural research and interpretation, and also with some of their features (For more information cf. Lessani Fesharaki, *Ravesh Tahghigh Mawzouie dar Kuran*, Introduction).

Here, for further information, let us to present the structural research of the two surahs al- Nās and 'Aṣr as two cases of study:

Structural Research on Surah Nās

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah the Entirely Compassionate, the Especially Merciful

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ﴿١﴾

Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind. (1)

مَلِكِ النَّاسِ ﴿٢﴾

The Sovereign of mankind. (2)

إِلَهِ النَّاسِ ﴿٣﴾

The God of mankind. (3)

مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ ﴿٤﴾

From the evil of the undercover whisperer. (4)

الَّذِي يُوسَّسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ ﴿٥﴾

Who whispers into the breasts of mankind. (5)

مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ﴿٦﴾

From among jinn and mankind. (6)

Main Questions: 1- What is the relationship between the three words *Rabbi al-Nās*, *Maliki al-Nās* and *Ilāhi al-Nās*? And if so, what is the meaningful connection between the arrangements of these words? 2- Why does Allah refer to the whispering of the whisperer into the breasts and hearts of mankind? 3- And finally what is the relationship between this Surah and Surah Falaq in which Allah commanded the Prophet (PBUH) and his community in both Surahs to constantly seek refuge in Allah?

Important Points

1- *Rabb* in the first verse indicates of the emotional and close connection between the created servant and Allah Who is the creator, nurtured and provided their sustenance and reared them. In this case, the nearest refuge who can support us in the terms of danger and harmful adverse, which threatens our health and safety is the One who is the nearest one to our entity and that is *Rabb*. Therefore, in the interior issues and individual matters in our daily life we have a safe sheltered and nearest and intimate refuge who can protect us in every common perils of our lives, in which we live under coverage of His protection and in every kind of usual events we seek of His Refuge

Who is the sustainer of us, and then we feel comfortable from being in His merciful protection.

2- In according to the second attributes of Allah which mentioned respectively after *Rabb*, which is *Malik*, it seems that our problem is so big and social related that can only be solved by the help of the Sovereign of the worlds Who has the perfect control and sovereignty of everything and habitants of the worlds, and moderate and regulate every issue of His realm. When our problem becomes so crucial and big, in this case, in the second verse, another aspect of Allah's attribute is being subjected to be taken as refuge.

3- Here, in the mentioned Surah, the first and the second attributes of Allah, *Rabb* and *Malik* respectively are called to be seek as refuge in the interior and social matters which the both includes material disturbances of servants. But when it comes to the mental disturbances of servants, the comprehensive attribute of Allah has been mentioned in the third verse of the Surah and that is "*Ilāh*" who has the entire majestic and splendid attributes of Allah in just one single Essence, namely Allah.

4- In the third verse, according to the seeking of refuge in *Ilāh*, another facet of mankind's need mentioned, which is related to man's spiritual demands of his nature which was rooted in his inherent. Here, mankind needs to seek refuge in Allah who knows well every facet of his being, both physically and spiritually, and can protect him/her from any big or tiny menace. The mutual love and emotional connection can be easily found in the third verse between Allah and mankind.

5- As it is obvious from the arrangement of *Rabb*, *Malik* and *Ilāh* in the Surah al-Nās, each of these cited attributes can covered different disturbances of mankind in any level from interior one to the exterior and governmental and social ones; from the small problems and obstacles to the massive one, but when it reaches to the turn of *Ilāh al-Nās*, Allah as a perfect Shelter and refuge who is not only the sustainer and sovereign of the mankind, but also accumulates every majestic attributes who meets any type of mankind needs in every

level both mentally and physically. *Ilāh al-Nās* who is beloved one of every being, protects mankind from any type of dangerous events which threatens him/her, according to the reciprocal love between Him and human being (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, vol. 20, p. 395).

6- Here, in the order of the third verses from mentioning *Rabb* to *Ilāh*, there is another important point that should be taken into serious consideration. Every particle of our lives from any issue of our creation, growing up, providing the sustenance and provision, rearing physically and mentally, form any type of level from private aspect of our lives to the social and communicational ones, are under the sovereignty of Allah who is *Rabb al-Nās*, *Malik al-Nās*, and Who is the Knower of our intention and actions both inwardly and outwardly.

7- Mentioning the attributes of *Rabb* and *Malik* without “*Wāw*”, which means “and”, has a significant message, and that is the separation and independence of these two attributes of Allah in acting as perfect safe refuges in repulsing and removing any kind of evil from mankind disturbances.

8- In Surah Zumar, verse 6:

ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَانِي تَقْصِرُ قُنُونِ

(He is Allah, your Lord; sovereignty (and absolute rule) belongs only to Him; there is no god but Him; so how and from where you are turned away (from the truth)? The two mentioned attributes of Allah, *Rabb* and *Malik* have been mentioned and then the two reached, the Comprehensive Name of Him, which is Allah that has gathered every beautiful names and attributes.

9- The verse 4 and 5 indicated that the undercover whisperer usually targets the breast and heart of mankind as the central part of body, which has fundamental role in regulation and moderation of mankind life, thereby destroying the tranquility of the man's heart, leads him go astray.

10- The undercover whisperers were not limited to just one type of creation, rather two main type of creation from among jinn and humankind can do whisper inside the hearts in order to deviate the human being from the pure path of Allah. Therefore, mankind should observe his heart from any harmful whispering of hatred, aversion,

hostility, avarice, jealousy and every kind of cruel intention.

11- The heart is the root of every good or evil thoughts and action, and that is why its protection from the effect of evil is recommended so much. According to the Surah Nūr, verse 36 which Allah the Almighty says:

فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ (٣٦)

(This bright light) is in the houses that Allah has allowed their dignity to be honored and His name to be mentioned in them; in those houses, they glorify Him every morning and evening).

Here, in the mentioned verse, according to the authentic hadith, which was related from the infallible Imam, بُيُوتٍ (*Buyūt*) means the true believer hearts, which the brightening light of Allah and that is the love of Ahl al-Bayt (AS) is therein. These hearts are the houses that Allah permitted them to glorify and sanctify the beautiful names and attributes of Allah, which were totally manifested in the essence of impeccable Imams from among the purified household of the Prophet (PBUH). In contrast with the faithful heart, the evil-doers' hearts are filled with the darkness of ignorance and impure whisper of devils, which mislead the owner of heart from Allah's clear path far away. Allah the Exalted in description of this kind of hearts has said in Surah A'rāf, verse 179:

لَقَدْ دَرَأْنَا لَجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا

(And in fact, we have created many of the Jinns and humans for Hell, because they have hearts with which they do not understand.)

According to what we have said before, that is the reason for tempting and whispering of undercover whisperer into the breasts and hearts of mankind.

Relationship between the two Surahs Nās and Falaq Surah Falaq

Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Dawn. (1) From the evil of what (He) has created. (2) And from the evil of darkness when it settles. (3) And from the evil of blowers in knots. (4) And from the evil of an envier when he envies. (5)

1- The two surahs Nās and Falaq as twin surahs, has a close and intimate relationship, as if they complete their meanings with the help of each other! (cf. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, vol. 20, p. 395)

2- The Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his followers were commanded in Surah Nās to seek refuge in the lord, the sustainer, the breeder, the provider, and sovereign of the worlds from the interior evil of undercover whisperers who whisper in the breast of humankind. As it is obvious from the structure of Surah Nās, the evil is something, which mislead the people from inside of their hearts, in contrast with the Surah Falaq, in which the Prophet (PBUH) and his community were commanded to seek refuge in the Lord of Falaq from the evil of wicked people whose evil is exterior and outward of chest. The two Surahs were revealed to teach the humankind how to protect himself by seeking refuge in Allah from the inside and outside evil, which blows and whisper the mankind to destroy the safety and equanimity of his life. That's why the two Surahs were recommended to be recited together and considered as twin Surahs. (cf. Javadi Amuli, "Tafsīr Surah Nās", included in the Isrā Foundation website)

Structural Research on Surah 'Aṣr

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah the Entirely Compassionate, the Especially Merciful

وَالْعَصْرِ ﴿١﴾

By the time. (1)

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِفِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾

That verily, man is subject to loss. (2)

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَ تَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَ تَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ﴿٣﴾

Except those who have believed and have done righteous deeds and have advised one another to truth and advised one another to patience.

(3)

Important Points

1- 'Aṣr originally indicates to the condensed time in the end of day before the coming of the darkness of night, which is a very short

moment and it is about to over (Qāmūs Qur'an, vol. 5, p. 6). 'Aṣr in the common use of the Arabic literature denotes to things that like a fruit, which has been pressed and its water has been extracted as a juice (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, vol. 17, p. 281). In fact, 'Aṣr is abstract and summarized consequences of a specific period of time. Probably, it can resemble the last time of a dying person at the time of death, and only in this status, just a person who is about to die can absolutely comprehend the worth and real value of time, as if the sun of his lifetime is going to go down like the very short and intensive time of the end of day, which wants to give way to the darkness of the night and go out forever! (Makarem Shirazi, vol. 27, p. 317)

2- In comparison of eternal life of human being in the Hereafter with the evanescent and transient lifetime of mankind in the world, it can be concluded that 'Aṣr in this verse simulates the shortness of man's life in the worldly life. According to the given meaning of 'Aṣr in our first point, now it is time to understand why Allah the Exalted swears to the 'Aṣr. Moreover, why Allah, the Almighty revealed the second verse إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ instantly after swearing to the 'Aṣr.

3- Our important question here is that, why Allah the Exalted after swearing to the short and intensive time of human life, directly says that verily man is subject to loss. Which aspect of humankind's life is subject to loss?

4- Just with a simple pondering on the verses 1 and 2, it becomes clear that there are no more precious and valuable things in man's life than time that is why there is a parable saying "Time is Gold". Since "the loss" attributed to the whole facets of man, so it can be deduced that only one single matter which encompass the entire life of mankind is human's determined time, which is running fast, and as if, all humankind is in a competition to reach to their final destination and destiny!

5- The verse إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ obviously demonstrates that the entire life of man is in fact a real trade in which man's merchandise and commodity is his lifetime. In this business in every moment, mankind sales of his limited and specific amount of his time to buy his physical

and spiritual needs. The word خُسْرٍ with *tanwīn* of *nakirah* usually demonstrates the continuous loss of man in every type of his daily trade in which he loses a great deal of his life in the face of the world's cheapest goods. That is why Allah Almighty says: Man is in loss and damages at every moment: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ.

6- It should be mentioned that some Shi'i scholars, according to some hadith related from infallible Imams (AS), believe that the word 'Aṣr indicates the time of triumph of truth over falsehood, which is the time of reappearance of Imam Mahdi (AS). In fact, Surah 'Aṣr also makes reference to certain events in the future and to the end of time, which is the victory of truth over falsehood in the world, and the coming to power of the Righteous over their oppressors. ('Arūsī Huwayzī, vol. 2, p. 666, hadith no. 5)

7- The verse 3 says: إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ: (Except those who have believed and have done righteous deeds and have advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience).

The last verse of Surah 'Aṣr talks about those who were exempted from losing. According to this verse, great loss of worldly life just belongs to those who spend their precious assets, which is their mortal lifetime, in following their lusts and mundane desires. The great prosperity in the worldly trade belongs to those who truly believe in Allah and do righteous deeds. However, sincere faith and righteous deeds are not enough, but in addition to this faith and righteous deeds, the believer's social responsibilities are also considered in this verse. (Tafsir Majma' al-Bayān, vol. 27, p. 260)

8- As you see, the verse 6 clarifies the significance of caring the others' guidance, saying that the pure belief in Allah and then doing good action when will be perfect that it leads to the sincere advice of each other to the truth and to the patience as well. According to the verse 30, Surah Fuṣṣilat:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا
وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ

(Indeed, those who said: "Our Lord is Allah, and, further, stands straight and steadfast"; the angels constantly descend on them, saying:

Fear not, nor grieve! And be happy for the glad tidings of the Garden (of Bliss), which you had been promised before).

9- According to the famous hadith related from the Holy Prophet (PBUH) concerning Imam Ali (AS), in which he said: *عَلِيٌّ مَعَ الْحَقِّ وَ الْحَقُّ مَعَ عَلِيٍّ* (Ali is with truth and truth is with Ali, the truth revolves wherever he turns) (Ṣadūq, Amālī, p. 89; Ṭūsī, p. 548; Tirmidī, vol. 5, p. 633; Ḥakīm al-Niṣhābūrī, vol. 3, p. 135), the verse *إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَ تَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَ تَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ* clearly proves the position of *wilāyat* and authority of Amir al-Muminin (Commander of the faithful) Imam Ali (AS), in which Allah the Exalted strongly commands the faithful to constantly advise each other to the “Truth”, which is Ali and his *wilāyat*, and then advise and recommend one another to be patient, resistant and loyal to their pledge with the *wilāyat* of Imam Ali (AS) without any deviation from his truth. (Qumī, vol. 2, p. 441; Suyūfī, al-Durr al-Manthūr, vol. 6, p. 392)

10- Finally, according to what we have said in the interpretation of this Surah, it can be concluded that the great loss belongs to those whose faith is incomplete and think that their outward belief and actions is sufficient to be excepted from the losers, indeed they are no way considered as true believers unless they sincerely confess to the truth of the *wilāyat* of Amir al-Muminin Imam Ali (AS) and then stand straight and steadfast to their covenant with Allah on the authority of Ahl al-Bayt (AS). In fact, man is subject to loss except those who believe truly in Allah and accordingly do righteous deeds, which rooted in the heart faith in the *wilāyat* of Imam Ali (AS).

Conclusion

The recognition of the Surah knowledge and its structural research is the same as Quranic studies, which is one of the most necessary and important types of Quranic sciences and one of the most deserving and necessary fields of new Quranic sciences. The present study, after discussing the methodology of structural research in the Quran and explaining the stages and foundations of structural research, aims to explain the importance of thematic units (Rukū‘āts) and their role in

understanding the Surah, and then accurately draw the connections and relationships. Accordingly, the interaction and mutual relationship between the verses within the Surahs are presented, and in this way, the method of finding the thematic axis or main theme of the Surahs is discussed and examined. In the final section, the result of contemplation and structural analysis of Surah al-Nās and al-‘Aṣr is discussed. Considering the important points of Surah al-Nās, the community of the Prophet (PBUH) was commissioned to seek refuge with the Lord and the ruler of the worlds from the hidden whisperers who whisper in the hearts and souls of people to mislead them. Unlike Surah al-Falaq, where the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions are advised to seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak from the evil of those who cause corruption that is apparent. The final section of the article also examines the conceptual structure of the blessed Surah al-‘Aṣr. In fact, Surah al-‘Aṣr talks about the losing human, except for those who believe sincerely in God and perform righteous deeds rooted in their heartfelt belief in the guardianship of Ali (AS).

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