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Ihwan Amalih, Muhammad Masruri, Mohammad Fattah

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الإسراء والمعراج في الشعر العربي (دراسة موازنة بين البوصيري وأحمد شوقي)



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Nazm al-Qur'an: Islahi's Methodology and Its Implications for Tafsir

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Abstract

This research examines Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī's Tafsir: Selections from the Tadabbur al-Qur'an, which emphasizes the virtues of nazm (coherence) in the Qur'an. Iṣlāḥī's work provides deep insights into how the Qur'an is not merely a collection of isolated verses but rather a structured system with intricate relationships between verses, chapters, and the meanings they convey. The primary aim of this research is to explore how the Qur'an can be understood as an interconnected whole, where each part complements and reinforces the intended message. The research employs a qualitative library research method, utilizing written texts—primarily Selections from the Tadabbur al-Qur'an in English—as well as supplementary sources such as thesis, dissertations, books, and relevant academic journals. The findings of this research indicate that the Qur'an can be viewed as a cohesive system, where its verses and chapters are intricately linked, forming an inseparable unity. This research seeks to offer a novel perspective by underscoring the importance of understanding the nazm al-Qur'an, an aspect often overlooked in conventional tafsir. By incorporating data in the form of sentences, diagrams, and illustrations, this research aspires to provide a fresh



understanding of the interconnections within the Qur'an, ultimately enriching our appreciation of this divine revelation.

Keyword: Manuscripts; Tafsir; The Tadabbur al-Qur'an

الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في كتاب "مختارات من تفسير تدبر القرآن" لأمين أحسن إصلاحي، الذي يسلط الضوء على فضل الترابط في القرآن الكريم. ويقدم هذا النص نظرة عميقة في كيف أن القرآن ليس مجرد مجموعة من الآيات المتفرقة، بل هو نظام محكم له علاقات وثيقة بين الآيات والسور والمعاني الواردة فيه. إن التركيز الرئيسي لهذا البحث هو الكشف عن الكيفية التي يمكن من خلالها فهم القرآن كوحدة لا تتجزأ، حيث يترابط كل جزء منها ويعزز المعنى المراد إيصاله. والمنهج المتبع في هذا البحث هو البحث المكتبي ذو المنهج الكيفي، حيث إن البيانات المستخدمة هي النصوص المكتوبة وخاصة المختارات من تدبر القرآن المكتوبة باللغة الإنجليزية، بالإضافة إلى المصادر الأخرى الداعمة مثل الرسائل والأطروحات والرسائل الجامعية والرسائل العلمية والكتب والمجلات ذات الصلة. وتظهر نتائج هذه الدراسة أن القرآن ينظر إليه كنظام بمعنى أن أجزاء القرآن سواء كانت آيات أو حروفاً لها علاقة مع بعضها البعض باعتبارها كلاً لا يتجزأ. ويحاول هذا البحث تقديم الجديد من خلال تسليط الضوء على أهمية فهم نظم القرآن الذي كثيراً ما أهمل في التفسير التقليدي. ومن المتوقع أن يقدم هذا البحث فهماً جديداً للعلاقة بين أجزاء القرآن الكريم من خلال استخدام بيانات في شكل جمل ومخططات وصور، وكيف أن ذلك يثري فهمنا لهذا الوحي الإلهي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مخطوط، تفسير، تدبر القرآن

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji Naskah Kitab *Tafsir Selections From The Tadabbur al-Qur'an* karya Amin Ahsan Islāhī yang menyoroti keutamaan nazm (koherensi) dalam al-Qur'an. Naskah ini memberikan wawasan mendalam tentang bagaimana al-Qur'an bukan hanya sekadar kumpulan ayat-ayat yang

terpisah, melainkan sebuah sistem yang terstruktur dengan hubungan yang erat antara ayat, surah, dan makna yang terkandung di dalamnya. Fokus utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap bagaimana al-Qur'an dapat dipahami sebagai suatu kesatuan yang tidak terpisahkan, di mana setiap bagian saling terkait dan memperkuat makna yang ingin disampaikan. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian kepustakaan (library research) dengan pendekatan kualitatif, di mana data yang digunakan adalah naskah tertulis, khususnya *Selections From The Tadabbur al-Qur'an* yang ditulis dalam bahasa Inggris, serta sumber-sumber pendukung lainnya seperti skripsi, tesis, disertasi, buku, dan jurnal yang relevan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa al-Qur'an dipandang sebagai satu sistem dalam arti bagian-bagian dari al-Qur'an baik ayat atau pun surah, satu sama lain mempunyai hubungan sebagai satu kesatuan yang tak terpisahkan. Penelitian ini berusaha memperkenalkan kebaruan dengan menyoroti pentingnya pemahaman terhadap nazm al-Qur'an, yang selama ini sering terabaikan dalam tafsir konvensional. Dengan menggunakan data dalam bentuk kalimat, skema, dan gambar, penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan pemahaman baru tentang hubungan antar bagian dalam al-Qur'an dan bagaimana hal ini memperkaya pemahaman kita terhadap wahyu Ilahi ini.

Kata kunci: Manuskrip; Tafsir; Tadabbur al-Qur'an

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A. Introduction

The Tafsir manuscript of *Selections from the Tadabbur al-Qur'an* is a monumental interpretation of the Qur'an authored by Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī (d. 1997). Spanning more than nine volumes and totaling over 6,000 pages, this remarkable masterpiece took twenty-two years to complete. "*Observe the truth, even if your shadow leaves you,*" reads one of his comments—a statement that encapsulates Iṣlāḥī's lifelong motto. Anyone who has studied these commentaries closely would agree that Iṣlāḥī dedicated himself fully to embodying this principle. He made a sincere effort to delve deeply into the meanings and intentions of the Qur'an's passages. Moreover, he candidly acknowledges instances where he feels he cannot do justice to the text, especially when interpreting only a few verses in isolation.¹

Hamid Uddin Farahi, a renowned Qur'anic scholar who passed away in 1930, served as a key mentor and advisor to Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī, particularly in shaping his understanding of the Qur'an. Farahi's approach to the Qur'an was grounded in the

¹Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī, *Selections From The Tadabbur Al-Qur'an*, Edition. I. (Pakistan; al-Mawrid, Institute of Islamic Sciences: Shirkat Printing Press, 2004), p. 4

belief that it possesses a structural and thematic coherence, or *nazm*—the idea that its verses and chapters are purposefully interconnected rather than randomly arranged. Iṣlāḥī upheld this perspective in his own work, emphasizing *nazm* as a fundamental principle for comprehending the Qur'an's composition.

Iṣlāḥī's understanding of *nazm* can be summarized in several key points:² a) He classifies the *surahs* of the Qur'an into seven distinct groups, each centered on a specific theme. Within each group, there are *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah surahs*, with a *Makkiyah surah* always preceding its *Madaniyah* counterpart. Iṣlāḥī likens the relationship between these two types of *surahs* to that of a tree's roots and branches: the *Makkiyah surah* serves as the source, while the *Madaniyah surah* acts as its offshoot, expanding upon the theme introduced by the former. b) Iṣlāḥī identifies that each group of *surahs* outlines various stages of the Prophet Muhammad's mission, detailing different phases and aspects of his prophethood. The progression from one *surah* to the next reflects the unfolding of this mission. c) He observes that each pair of *surahs* within these groups complements one another, with one *surah* supporting and elaborating on the themes or ideas introduced by the other. The only exception to this pattern is *Surah Al-Fatihah*, which serves as both an introduction to the entire Qur'an and a self-contained group. In this sense, *Al-Fatihah* is unique, setting the tone for the entire Qur'anic discourse while corresponding to the themes explored throughout the rest of the Qur'an. d) Each *surah* in the Qur'an is designed to convey a central theme, with various subsections pointing to specific details or subtle shifts in the overall message. These subsections act as markers of thematic transitions, preserving the structural coherence of the Qur'anic text.

However, when applying the theory of *nazm* to the real-world study of the Qur'an, one may encounter complexities that challenge this neat conceptual framework. For instance, while Iṣlāḥī's categorization into groups and thematic pairs provides a coherent approach, the varying historical contexts of revelation, the diverse styles of speech in the *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah surahs*, and the intricate intertextual relationships between the *surahs* complicate any rigid, systematic classification. Despite these challenges, Iṣlāḥī's emphasis on the overarching *nazm* remains a valuable tool for navigating the Qur'an's intricate structure and purpose.

This research is classified as library research because all the primary data is derived from written sources, particularly *the Tafsir Selections From The Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, written in English. This book serves as the principal and most critical source for this research, as it is directly related to the field of Qur'anic interpretation. To ensure accuracy and completeness, additional sources deemed representative and

²Kamran Bashir, 'Revisiting Modern "Nazm" Approaches to the Qur'an: Iṣlāḥī's Interpretation of Q. 107 and Q. 108 in his "Tadabbur-i Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2015), pp. 47-74 (28 pages), Published By: Edinburgh University Press, <https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/jqs.2015.0195>

relevant to the study are also incorporated. These include research outputs in the form of theses, dissertations, books, and other relevant materials. The methodology employed in this research relies entirely on qualitative techniques, with data presented in the form of textual analysis, schematics, and images.

B. Literature Review

Several previous studies have been conducted on themes related to the subject that this research addresses. As indicated by the title, this literature review is divided into several variables: studies discussing the thematic unity in the surahs of the Qur'an, and those examining the character and thoughts of Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī. The first variable pertains to thematic unity within the surahs of the Qur'an, including the study of coherence between its parts (*munāsabah*). One notable book dedicated to this topic is *The Unity of al-Qur'an* by Amir Faishol Fath. This work is a translation of the original text, *Naẓariyah al-Wiḥdah al-Qur'āniyah 'inda 'Ulamā' al-Muslimīn wa Dawruhā fī Fikri al-Islām*. In his analysis, Amir Faishol explores the evidence for the Qur'an's unity and examines how both classical and contemporary scholars approach this subject. In the introduction, Amir Faishol emphasizes the significance of this theme, noting that many Muslims approach the Qur'an in a fragmented manner. They interpret its verses from a partialistic perspective, focusing on isolated passages without considering their context within the surrounding verses. This approach often leads to conclusions that conflict with the overarching message and spirit of the Qur'an.

Meanwhile, there is a research work titled *Exordium to Coherence in the Qur'an*, which serves as the introduction by Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī on the principle of *nazm* in the Qur'an, translated into English by Tariq Mahmood Hashmi. Although it is merely an introductory text, its scope of discussion is quite extensive. In addition to addressing coherence in the Qur'an, it explores sources and methods of interpretation, including history, linguistics, events of revelation, modes of revelation, major teachings in the Qur'an, the names of *surahs* and their main themes, the structure of the Qur'an, and more. This work aims to provide methodologies for interpreting the Qur'an based on the principle of coherence, offering a structured approach to understanding its interconnectedness.

The book titled *Textual Relations in the Qur'an* by Salwa M.S. El-Awa introduces a new methodology for reading and studying the texts of the Qur'an. It employs the theory of relevance in linguistics to analyze the complex relationships within the surahs of the Qur'an. This work covers several key discussions, including a brief history of previous scholarship addressing the coherence of the Qur'an, an introduction to the linguistic theory utilized in the analysis, and an in-depth study of two specific *surahs* in the Qur'an.

The next work is the concept of *munāsabah* in the *Tafsir Al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr: A Study of the Thoughts of Munāsabah* by Sa'īd Hawwa, a study conducted by

Rahman Abdika. This research examines the concept of *munāsabah* as presented by Sa'īd Hawwa, exploring how classical scholars have understood this concept and reviewing the application of *munāsabah* theory in Sa'īd Hawwa's tafsir. According to Hawwa, in addition to revealing connections between verses, there is a thematic unity within the Qur'an. He demonstrates this unity by classifying the surahs of the Qur'an based on the categories introduced by earlier scholars, such as al-sab' al-ṭiwāl, al-mi'ūn, al-mathānī, and al-mufaṣṣal. Apart from the aforementioned works, the study of the Qur'an's unity and the coherence between its parts is also discussed in seminal books on Ulūm al-Qur'ān, including *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by al-Zarkashī, *Mabāḥith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by Manna' Khalil al-Qattān, *'Ulūmul Qur'an* by Abdul Djalal, and others.

Meanwhile, regarding the study of the character and thoughts of Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, research in this area has primarily been conducted by scholars based in Pakistan. This is understandable, as Iṣlāḥī's works, especially his commentary *Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān*, were written predominantly in Urdu. Among the scholars—both Muslim and non-Muslim—who have studied Iṣlāḥī's thoughts are Mustansir Mir, with his work *Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* and Al-Ḥāfiẓ Iftikhār Aḥmad, with his dissertation *Al-Shaykh Amīn Aḥsan al-Iṣlāḥī wa Manhajuhu fī Tafṣīrihi: Tadabbur-i Qur'ān at al-Jāmi'ah al-Islāmiyyah Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan*. Mir's book, based on his dissertation at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1983, aims to introduce Western scholars to a major Urdu-language work of the 20th century, which represents a significant departure from traditional methods of interpretation. In this study, Mustansir Mir traces the history of *nazm* (coherence) from classical to modern scholarship, while analyzing the perspectives of Iṣlāḥī and his teacher, Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī. He also examines the innovative concepts they developed regarding the coherence of the Qur'an. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Iftikhār Aḥmad's work focuses on the methods employed by Iṣlāḥī in his tafsir *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*. The research takes a descriptive approach, detailing Iṣlāḥī's life, education, works, and the interpretive methodologies and patterns evident in *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*.

After reviewing several pieces of literature on interpretation, most discussions focus on Iṣlāḥī's thoughts regarding thematic unity in the *suras* of the Qur'an. However, this research aims to highlight selected manuscripts of interpretation from *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*. Additionally, research on the figure of Iṣlāḥī remains rare in the Indonesian academic sphere. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to better understand Iṣlāḥī's contributions to contemporary Qur'anic interpretation.

C. Research Methods

This research falls into the category of library research, which relies on written data sources, particularly those related to the manuscript of *the Tafsir Selections From The Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, written in English. This *Tafsir* book serves

as the primary source for this research, as it directly addresses the interpretation presented within the text. To enhance the depth of analysis and provide a broader perspective, the research also incorporates various supplementary sources, including theses, dissertations, books, journals, and other relevant materials that support the research topic. The approach employed in this research is qualitative, focusing on the collection and analysis of texts, sentences, schemes, and images to gain a comprehensive understanding of the *Tafsir's* content. Data collection was conducted through a detailed examination of the *Tafsir* text as well as other pertinent supporting documents. Furthermore, qualitative data analysis techniques were applied to interpret the meaning, context, and messages within the *Tafsir* text, linking them to the perspectives of scholars and researchers engaged in similar studies. By employing this method, the research aims to deepen the understanding of the *Tafsir Selections From The Tadabbur al-Qur'an* and highlight its contribution to contextual and relevant interpretations of *Tafsir* in the evolving field of religious studies today.

D. Results and Discussion

Traditionally, the *Nazm al-Qur'an* has been understood as a beautifully organized arrangement of *verses*, illustrating not only the depth of knowledge but also the oratorical and rhetorical power of divine revelation. However, in modern discourse, there has been a tendency to view it more as a literary composition with profound linguistic dimensions. This shift corresponds to a contemporary perspective that favors a more scientific interpretation, rooted in logical and historical exegesis, while still preserving the rich spiritual essence of the text.

In the book *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, Işlāhī presents *Nazm* as evidence of the Qur'an's miraculous nature, which *cannot* be fully understood through a linguistic approach alone. He emphasizes the necessity of a more comprehensive interpretation, one that combines contextual analysis with an understanding of the social and psychological characteristics of humanity today. Işlāhī's approach, therefore, differs from interpretations that focus solely on literal meanings or freeform interpretation.³

The traditional view of the *Nazm al-Qur'an* often limits itself to linguistic or grammatical analysis, neglecting the deeper thematic relationships between verses. In many scholarly circles, the Qur'an has been treated as a text to be understood through literal and historical methods, without fully exploring the intricate internal connections that contribute to its broader meaning.

One of the key contributions of Işlāhī's *Tadabbur al-Qur'an* is its attempt to integrate an understanding of the Qur'anic *nazm* with the idea that each verse, while carrying a specific meaning, cannot be fully understood in isolation from the broader

³ Ahsan Islahi, *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, Vol. 1 (Lahore: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 1986), hal. 30-40.

context of revelation.⁴ Iṣlāḥī emphasizes the importance of *tadabbur*—deep contemplation of Qur'anic verses—in uncovering the moral messages embedded in the Qur'an's overall structure. Traditional approaches to the Qur'anic *nazm* often focus narrowly on linguistic and grammatical analyses, frequently overlooking the internal interrelationships and overarching purpose of revelation. Iṣlāḥī, in *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, critiques this limited perspective and encourages readers to consider the coherence and continuity inherent in the Qur'anic text. For him, the Qur'an is not merely a collection of discrete revelations, but a meticulously structured and meaningful text that can only be fully understood when its parts are examined within an interconnected framework.

1. Biography

Iṣlāḥī was born in 1904⁵ in the Indian town of Bamhur, located in the Azamgarh region. He attended two local schools in the village for his early education. His father, Hafiz Muhammad Murtada, was a modest landowner in the area. In 1915, Iṣlāḥī was admitted to Madrasah al-Islah in the third grade. This madrasa was situated in a small settlement called Sara'i al-Mir, near Bamhur. During this time, Hamid Uddin Farahi, who had been chosen as Iṣlāḥī's advisor and mentor, was publicly introduced in a speech at the Madrasah's first-batch calling ceremony for students. Maulana 'Abdu' al-Rahman Nigrami, a multi-talented scholar, was the most influential instructor at the Madrasah during Iṣlāḥī's time there. Under Maulana Nigrami's guidance, Iṣlāḥī developed a deep appreciation for Arabic literature. After graduating from the Madrasah in 1922, Iṣlāḥī entered the field of journalism. He became affiliated with *Sach*, a newspaper edited by Maulana 'Abdu al-Majid Daryabadi, and also worked as the editor of the Medina newspaper in Bijnawr at that time. When Farahi invited Iṣlāḥī to come and study the Qur'an with him in 1925, Iṣlāḥī resigned from his journalistic profession without hesitation for the opportunity to benefit from the guidance of this noble scholar.⁶ He believed this was his chance to improve his situation. As he had anticipated, Iṣlāḥī spent five years with Farahi until his death in 1930. During this time, Iṣlāḥī was shaping his life, deepening his understanding of the Qur'an, and learning from al-Marhum Farahi about the concept of direct engagement with Allah's Book (the Qur'an).⁷

⁴ Saleem, Shehzad, *Selections from Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, (London: Dar al-Hekma, 2015), hal. 12-15.

⁵ Abdul Rauf, 'Life and Works of Mawlana Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904-1997)', *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol.XXX, No.1, 2009, p. 184 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233868404_Life_and_Works_of_Mawlana_Amin_Ahsan_Islahi_1904-1997

⁶ Muhammad Thamsir Rizani, 'HERMENEUTIKA AL-QUR'AN AL-FARAHI DAN ISLAHI,' *Jurnal Tafseer* 8, no. 1 (2020). <https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/tafsere/issue/view/125>

⁷ Islahi, *Selections From The Tadabbur Al-Qur'an*, p. 7.

Aside from *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, Işlāhī wrote several Urdu books on various Islamic topics. Among them are the following:

Table. 1. List of works by Işlāhī (abridged)⁸

No	Title	
	Urdu	English
1	تزکیہ نفس	Tazkiyah al-Nafs: Purification of the Soul
2	حقیقت شرک و توحید	(Haqiqat al-Sirk wa al-Tauhid: The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism)
3	دعوت دین اورس کا طریقہ کار	(Da'wah al-Din aur us ka Tariqah al-Kar: Islamic Message and the Mode of its Preaching)
4	اسلامی قانون کی تدوین	(Islami Qanun Ki Tadwin: Codification of Islamic Law)
5	اسلامی ریاست	(Islami Riyasat: The Islami State)
6	حقیقت نماز	(Haqiqat al-Namaz: The Essence of the Prayer)
7	حقیقت تقوی	(Haqiqat al-Taqwa: The Essence of Godliness)
8	اسلامی ریاست میں فقہی اختلافات کا حل	(Islami Riyasat mayn Fiqli Ikhtilafat ka Hal: Solution of Juristic Differences in an Islamic State)
9	مبادی تدبر قرآن	(Mabadi Tadabbur al-Qur'an: Principles of Understanding the Qur'an)
10	مبادی تدبر حدیث	(Mabadi Tadabbur al-Hadis: Principles of Understanding the Hadith)
11	تنقیدات	(Tanqidat: A Collection of Critical Essays)
12	توضیحات	(Taudhihat: A Collection of General Explanatory Essays)
13	مقالات اصلاحی	(Maqalat al-Işlāhī: A Miscellaneous Collection of Articles)
14	تفہیم دین	(Aqsamu al-Qur'an: Oaths of the Qur'an)

Apart from the works mentioned above, Işlāhī also translated Farahi's remarks on fourteen *Surahs* of the Qur'an, as well as his books from Arabic. These include:

⁸Islahi, *Selections From The Tadabbur Al-Qur'an*, p. ix

Table. 2 List of works translated by Iṣlāḥī (abridged)⁹

No	Title	
	Urdu	English
1	في من هو الذبيح	(Fi man hua al-Zabih: Which of Abraham's son was Sacrificed?)
2	اقسام القرآن	(Aqsamu al-Qur'an: Oaths of the Qur'an)

2. Manuscript Description of the Tafsir Book

- Group I: *Surah al-Fatihah* (1) to *Surah al-Ma'idah* (5). Main Theme: Islamic Law.
- Group II: *Surah al-An'am* (6) to *Surah al-Tawbah* (9). Main Theme: The consequences of rejecting the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for the polytheists of Mecca.
- Group III: *Surah Yunus* (10) to *Surah al-Nur* (24). Main Theme: The good news of the Prophet Muhammad's dominance in Arabia.
- Group IV: *Surah al-Furqan* (25) to *Surah al-Ahzab* (33). Main Theme: Arguments in favor of Muhammad's Prophethood and the requirements of faith in him.
- Group V: *Surah Saba* (34) to *Surah al-Hujurat* (49). Main Theme: Arguments in favor of belief in Tawhid and the conditions of faith in this belief.
- Group VI: *Surah Qaf* (50) to *Surah al-Tahrim* (66). Main Theme: Arguments in favor of belief in the Akhirah and the conditions of faith in this belief.
- Group VII: *Surah al-Mulk* (67) to *Surah al-Nas* (114).¹⁰ Main Theme: Warning (إنذار /indhar) to the Quraysh about their destiny in this world and the Hereafter if they deny the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).¹¹

3. Tafsir and Translation Manuscripts

Following knowledge of the form of the description of the manuscript of the Iṣlāḥī commentary, the next discussion is to directly review the form of the manuscript of Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī's *Selections from the Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, in which case the author raises one of the themes, namely *The Bismillah Verse*, as shown below:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

⁹ Islahi, *Selections From The Tadabbur Al-Qur'an*, p.x

¹⁰ Israr Ahmad Khan, Amin Ahsan Islahi: 'An Introduction to His Tafsir Methodology', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 25(4), 2008. <https://www.ajis.org/index.php/ajiss/article/view/410>

¹¹ Israr Ahmad Khan, Amin Ahsan Islahi: 'An Introduction...', p. 26–27.

Translation:

*"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful"*¹².

a. Historical Status of Verse

A study of the Qur'an demonstrates that the notion addressed by this verse has been mentioned in the revealed scriptures in some form or another since ancient times. Perhaps this is the first time this concept has been expressed in such grandiose terms as used in the Qur'an, yet what they represent is very close to human nature, which is strongly understood by the Almighty, who also felt the need to express it at the outset. Prophet Nuh (as) stated something similar when his disciples boarded the ark, as recorded in QS Hud/11:41.

وَقَالَ أَرْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرِبَهَا وَمُرسَهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Translation:

*"And [Noah] said, "Embark therein; in the name of Allah is its course and its anchorage. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful."*¹³

Likewise, Prophet Sulayman AS. begins his *surah*, addressed to the Queen of Sheeba, with these blessed words, as quoted by QS al-Naml/27:30

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Translation:

*"Indeed, it is from Solomon, and indeed, it reads: 'In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.'"*¹⁴

b. The Prayer Nature of Verse

The verse, like *Surah al-Fatihah*, is a prayer rather than an instructive statement. It is a voice that comes from every righteous person's heart. It's difficult to conceive a more perfect articulation of feeling in language so close to human nature. When one deliberately recites this prayer before any part of a job or routine, they are reminded that what they are about to accomplish must not go against the will of the Almighty; rather, it must conform to the way of life that He has established. Also, based on this prayer, they seek help from the two great attributes of God: *الرَّحْمَنُ* (Ar-Rahman) and *الرَّحِيمُ* (Ar-Rahim). These two qualities bring blessings and assistance

¹²Kementerian Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya* (Jakarta: Sinergi Pustaka Indonesia, 2012), p.10.

¹³Kementerian Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya...*, p. 303.

¹⁴Kementerian Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya...*, p.379

from the Almighty: they are protected from the negative influences of wrongdoing and receive strength and courage to complete their task. They are protected from Satan's attacks, and their work benefits them in this world and pleases the Almighty in the hereafter. Whatever is done in the absence of this prayer will undoubtedly fail to harvest all of these advantages, as the Prophet is believed to have remarked.

The blessings of this verse manifest themselves in every routine it begins. However, reciting this verse before reciting the Qur'an has other important aspects that must be kept in mind.

First, when someone says بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ before reciting the Qur'an, they are adhering to the instructions revealed in the first revelation in QS al-'Alaq/96:1.

أَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

Translation:

*"Recite in the name of your Lord who created."*¹⁵

Second, these blessed words remind people that the greatest favor of the Almighty upon them is that He has endowed them with the ability to speak, through which they have become beneficiaries of this book. Rahman's trait, described in the verse, speaks to this event. It is mentioned again in the Qur'an that it is an attribute of the Almighty that caused Him to create man, give him the ability to speak, and, in doing so, teach him the Qur'an:

الرَّحْمَنُ ۙ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ ۚ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ۚ

Translation:

*"(Allah) The Most Merciful. Who has taught the Qur'an? He created humans and teach them how to speak."*¹⁶

Third, Third, this verse proves the truth of the predictions in the holy books that came before this one, which foretold that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) would come. According to this prediction, he would teach and instruct people in the name of Allah: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; I will place My words in his mouth, and he will tell them all that I command him." If someone does not heed the prophet's words in My name, I will personally hold him accountable. (Deuteronomy / Ulangan 18:18)¹⁷

¹⁵Kementerian Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya...*, p. 904.

¹⁶Kementerian Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya...*, p. 773.

¹⁷John Doe, *Exploring the Old Testament Prophecies* (New York: Academic Press, 2012) p.

Fourth, just as the Qur'an is a manifestation of the attribute of mercy from the Almighty, it is this attribute that helps one understand it. Difficult verses and passages reveal their meaning to a reciter if he seeks the help of this quality. Additionally, he will be protected through these words from the attacks of Satan while expounding the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an and safeguarded from the evil suggestions of his soul.

a. The Attributes of the Almighty in Verse

Three attributes of the Almighty are mentioned in the verse: **اللَّهُ** (*Allah*), **الرَّحْمَنُ** (*Rahman*), and **الرَّحِيمُ** (*Rahim*). I will describe them briefly: **اللَّهُ** (*Allah*): The word "*Allah*" is prefixed with the article "*alif-lam*" for the word "*ilah*." This name has always been used for the Almighty, specifically as the Creator of the Universe and all living things. The connotation of this word existed in pre-Islamic Arabic as well. The Arabs practiced polytheism, but they never equated their gods with the Almighty. They always acknowledged Him as the one and only Creator of the universe. They worshiped other gods because they mistakenly believed these gods were close to God and could intercede on their behalf. Their understanding is stated in detail in QS al-Zumar/39:3. Three attributes of the Almighty are mentioned in the verse: **اللَّهُ** *Allah*, **الرَّحْمَنُ** *rahman* and **الرَّحِيمُ** *rahim*. I will describe them briefly, **اللَّهُ** *Allah*: The word Allah is prefixed with the *surah alif-lam* for the word *ilah*. This name has always been used for the Almighty, specifically as the Creator of the Universe and all living things. This word's connotation existed in pre-Islamic Arabic as well. The Arabs practiced polytheism, but they never equated their gods with the Almighty. They always acknowledged Him as the one and only Creator of the universe. They worshiped other gods because they mistakenly believed these gods were close to God and could intercede on their behalf.

Their understanding are stated in detail in QS al-Zumar/39: 3

...مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَى...

Translation:

... "we only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position"..."¹⁸

Furthermore, QS al-'Ankabut / 29: 61-63

¹⁸Kementerian Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya...*, p. 658.

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لِيَقُولَنَّ اللهُ فَاَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ۝۶۱ اللهُ
 يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ اِنْ اَللهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ۝۶۲ وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ تَزَلَّ مِنْ
 السَّمٰوٰتِ مَاءً فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُولَنَّ اللهُ فُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ۝۶۳

Translation:

"If you asked them, "Who created the heavens and earth and subjected the sun and the moon?" they would surely say, "Allah." Then how are they deluded? Allah extends provision for whom He wills His servants and restricts for him. Indeed, Allah is, of all things, knowing. And if you asked them, "Who sends down rain from the sky and gives life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness?" they would surely say "Allah." Say, "Praise to Allah "; but most of them do not reason."¹⁹

Next, in the QS Yunus/10: 31, Allah says:

قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اَمَّنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَرَ وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ
 الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ فَسَيَقُولُوْنَ اللهُ فَقُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ

Translation:

"Say (Muhammad), "Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? Or who controls hearing and sight and who brings the living out of the dead and brings the dead out of the living, and who arranges [every] matter?" They will say, "Allah," so say, "Then will you not fear Him?"²⁰

الرَّحْمٰنِ (Rahman) and الرَّحِيْمِ (Rahim): The noun رَحْمٰن (Rahman) is in the intensive form of فَعْلَان (Fa'lan), such as سَكْرٰن (Sakran) and غَضَبٰن (Ghadban), while the noun of رَحِيْم (Rahim) is the adjective form of فَعِيْل (Fa'il), such as عَلِيْم ('Alim) and كَرِيْم (Karim). The use of Arabic demonstrates that the form فَعْلَان (Fa'lan) expresses strong passion and fervor, while the form of فَعِيْل (Fa'il) expresses steadiness and continuity. In other words, the first portrays strength, while the second describes steadfastness in God's mercy. A little thought reveals that the Almighty's mercy on His creation possesses both of these attributes. Timelessness complements enthusiasm and kindness. It is not that His رَحْمٰن (Rahman) compels Him to create and then forgets to nourish and preserve His creation. He takes good care of them and cares for them because He is also the رَحِيْم (Rahim). He hears their call and acknowledges their pleas whenever someone seeks His assistance. His blessings are also not restricted to this world. Those who live their lives according to the path prescribed by Him will be

¹⁹ Kementerian Agama RI, *Al- Qur'an dan Terjemahannya...*, p. 568.

²⁰ Kementerian Agama RI, *Al- Qur'an dan Terjemahannya...*, p. 285.

blessed with eternal life and joy. It must be recognized that all these aspects cannot be understood without an integrated understanding of these attributes.²¹

b. The Placement of this Verse in the Qur'an

The actual position of this verse in the Qur'an is a significant question. This question arises because, despite being written at the beginning of each *surah* (except Surah al-Tawbah/9) as an independent, stand-alone verse, it appears that nothing from the *surah* is contained in the text of the *surah* except for Surah al-Naml/27. As a result, scholars debate whether it is part of a specific *surah* or whether it was placed at the beginning of the *surah* simply to invoke the Almighty's blessings. The readers (*Qurra'*) and jurists of Medina, Basrah, and Damascus believe that it is not part of any *surah*, including *Surah al-Fatihah*, and that it is merely used to earn Allah's pleasure and to divide the various *surahs* of the Qur'an. As a result, it distinguishes between the numerous *surahs* of the Qur'an, and a reciter gains Allah's favor and blessings by repeating it before reciting a specific *surah*. Imam Abu Hanifah shared this viewpoint. Meccan and Kufan jurists, on the other hand, believe it is included in every chapter of the Qur'an, including Surah al-Fatiha/1. Imam al-Shafi'i shares this viewpoint.²²

This verse, according to Iṣlāḥī's tutor, Imam Farahi, is part of Surah al-Fatihah/1 and the beginning of other *surahs* of the Qur'an. I lean toward the viewpoint of the Medina qari' regarding Iṣlāḥī. The explanation for this Islamic choice is that it was the Prophet Muhammad himself who ordered the arrangement of the Qur'an in accordance with the Almighty's direction. As a result, this verse has likewise been divinely placed by the Almighty. In the order of the Qur'an, no distinction is made in the writing of this verse, whether it is in Surah al-Fatiha/1 or any other *surah*. In each case, it stands apart in each *surah* as an independent verse.²³

4. Approach Analysis e.g. Semiotics, Hermeneutics or Semantics (example refers to the text)

a. Method

1) Subjective and Objective Approach

In the author's study, it can be seen that before writing *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, he was motivated and influenced by the thoughts of his teacher, Hamid al-Din Farahi (d. 1930), an al-Qur'an scholar who held the view that the Qur'an has structural and thematic *nazm*.²⁴

²¹ Iṣlāḥī, *Selections From The Tadabbur Al-Qur'an.*, p. 14–15.

²² Rosihon Anwar, *Ulumul Qur'an* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2000).

²³ Iṣlāḥī, *Selections From The Tadabbur Al-Qur'an*, p. 15–16.

²⁴ Shaza Khalid, *Qur'anic Exegesis and Thematic Coherence: Comparing the Approaches of Amr Khālīd and Amīn Iṣlāḥī*, A Thesis Submitted to the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David In Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Master Degree, 2013

Trisna Hafifuddin²⁵, in his research entitled *Kesatuan Tematik dalam Surat-Surat al-Qur'an; Analisis atas Pemikiran Amin Ahsan Iṣlāhī dalam Kitab Tadabbur al-Qur'an* (Thematic Unity in the Surahs of the Qur'an; Analysis of Amin Ahsan Iṣlāhī's Thoughts in the Book of Tadabbur al-Qur'an), quoted Mustansir Mir²⁶ from his dissertation work entitled *Coherence in the Qur'an; A Study of Iṣlāhī's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, stating in his introduction that Iṣlāhī's book *Tadabbur al-Qur'an* is an attempt to introduce Western scholars to a major work of the 20th century, namely an Urdu-language exegesis that marks a radical study of exegesis, diverging from various traditional interpretations.²⁷

2) Direct and Indirect Approach

The point of the direct approach here is the Qur'anic approach.²⁸ The writer finds that Iṣlāhī, when searching for the meaning of the contents of the Qur'an, directly examines the object of his research, namely the verses of the Qur'an. On the other hand, the indirect approach involves studying the Qur'an in thorough translations or through the works of existing scholars. To see an example of this approach, readers can return to the discussion of the *Bismillah Verse* (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ), specifically the 4th placement of this verse in the Qur'an:

The actual position of this verse in the Qur'an is a significant question. This question arises because, despite being written at the beginning of each *surah* (except Surah al-Taubah/9) as an independent/stand-alone verse, it appears that nothing from the *surah* is contained in the text of the *surah*, except in Surah al-Naml/27. As a result, academics debate whether it is part of a specific *surah* or whether it was written at the beginning of the *surah* solely to ask for the Almighty's blessings. The readers and jurists of Medina, Basrah, and Damascus believe that it is not part of any *surah*, including Surah al-Fatihah, and that it is simply used to earn Allah's pleasure and to separate the various *surahs* of the Qur'an. As a result, it distinguishes between the numerous *surahs* of the Qur'an, and a reciter gains Allah's favor and blessings by repeating it before reciting a specific *surah*. Imam Abu Hanifah shared this viewpoint.

²⁵Trisna Hafifuddin was a female student of al-Qur'an and Tafsir Study Program at State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, she wrote an undergraduate thesis in 2013.

²⁶Mustansir Mir was a Student of Michigan University, Ann Arbor who wrote dissertation in 1983.

²⁷Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an; A Study of Islahi's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur al-Qur'an* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986), p. 11.

²⁸Aqilah Binti Samsudin, Shohanah Binte Mohammed Firdaus, Nur Syuhadah Aliah Binti Ali Hassan, "Amin Ahsan Islahi and Sayyid Qutb on Sūrah as an Integrated Whole: A Brief Methodological Comparison on the Tafsir of al-Aḥzāb, al-Ghāfir and al-Ṭūr," *Al-Burhān: Journal Of Qur'ān And Sunnah Studies*, 3(2), (2019) pp. 52-64 <https://journals.iium.edu.my/al-burhan/index.php/al-burhan/article/view/157/65>

Meccan and Kufan jurists, on the other hand, believe it is included in every chapter of the Qur'an, including Surah al-Fatihah. Imam al-Shafi'i shares this viewpoint. This verse, according to Iṣlāḥī's tutor, Imam Farahi, is part of Surah al-Fatihah/1 and the beginning of other *surahs* of the Qur'an. I prefer/incline to the Medina *qari'* viewpoint on Iṣlāḥī. The explanation for the Islamic choice is that it was the Prophet Muhammad himself who ordered the Qur'an in light of the Almighty's direction. As a result, this verse has likewise been divinely placed (by the Almighty). In the order of arrangement of the Qur'an, no distinction has been made in writing this verse, whether it is the case of Surah al-Fatihah/1 or any other *surah*. In each case, it stands apart in each *surah* as an independent verse.

From the preceding example, it can be concluded that Iṣlāḥī, after delivering meaning, directly presents the object of discussion, namely the verse of *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ*. He then attempts to convey the differences of opinion among experts, both in terms of law (such as the Imam Abu Hanifah school and the Imam al-Shafi'i school) and great readings (such as Medina, Basrah, Damascus, Mecca, and Kufah). Only then does Iṣlāḥī conduct a critical and comparative analysis of the above opinions before selecting one that matches his thoughts.

3) Holistic Approach

Before moving forward, the important point that the author wishes to convey in this section is related to the existence of the Al-Qur'an among orientalist, who believe that the Al-Qur'an is a book in which the descriptions in each *surah* are chaotic, there are frequent repetitions, and even contradictions. Thus, as a contemporary commentator, Iṣlāḥī strives to persuade them that the Qur'an is a book whose portions are interconnected and complement one another. In this example, al-Qur'an scholars attempt to define a concept concerning the theme of the unity of the Qur'an, one of which is the thematic unity in the Qur'an's *surahs*.²⁹

The author then recognizes its relationship with a holistic approach, defined as one that discusses the object of inquiry as a whole. Furthermore, the Al-Qur'an is viewed as a system in the sense that the portions of the Al-Qur'an, including verses and *surahs*, have an inseparable relationship with one another.

In particular, Iṣlāḥī introduces the concept of '*amud*, *surah* pairs, and the classification of *surahs* in the Qur'an. According to the idea of '*amud*, each *surah* contains a primary theme that connects the many *shayat*. Iṣlāḥī thinks that each *surah* has a counterpart or twin that is directly next to it, based on the concept of *surah* pairings. Iṣlāḥī also classifies the *surahs* in the Qur'an into seven groups based on the composition of the *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah surahs*. Each group has an '*amud* as in each *surah*.

²⁹Salwa M. S El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an*, New York (New York: Routledge, 2006).

There is also Iṣlāhī's main foundation in strengthening his hypothesis regarding the pair of *surahs* and the classification of the *surahs* into the seven groups by arguing in QS al-Hijr/15: 87;

وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْءَانَ الْعَظِيمَ

Translation:

“And We have certainly given you, [O Muhammad], seven of the often repeated [verses] and the great Qur'an.”³⁰

The meaning of the verses that are read repeatedly is found in Surah al-Fatihah, which consists of seven verses. Some commentators say that the seven *surahs* are long, namely al-Baqarah (2), ali-'Imran (3), al-Ma'idah (5), al-Nisa' (4), al-A'raf (7), al-An'am (6), and al-Anfal (8) or al-Taubah (9). As for the Islamic interpretation, it is indeed stated that we have given you seven groups of *surahs* that are formed in pairs, namely the great Qur'an.³¹

5. Interpretation Method Analysis (example refers to the text)

M. Quraish Shihab reveals the dilemma of the process of interpretation in The Rules of Interpretation. He describes interpretation as an explanation of God's intentions in His word according to human ability. The term "explanation" implies that something is being offered as an explanation, as well as how to present that explanation. Meanwhile, statements based on human ability suggest a diversity of explanations and approaches, along with indications regarding depth, breadth, shallowness, and limitations.

Commentators acknowledge that current or developed methods of interpretation have both benefits and drawbacks. Each method can be used according to the desired outcomes. From this point, the author examines Iṣlāhī's approach to interpretation in his book Tafsir Selections from the Tadabbur al-Qur'an, which can be seen as follows:

a. Method of Tahlily/Analysis

In this case, Iṣlāhī tries to explain the content of the verses of the Qur'an from several aspects, following his views, tendencies, and desires to present them coherently according to the order of the verses in the Mushaf: (1) explaining the general meaning of the verse's vocabulary, (2) discussing the munasabah or the relationship between the verse and the previous verse, (3) presenting *Sabab al-Nuzul* (if any), (4) explaining the general content of the paragraph, (5) determining the legal

³⁰Kementerian Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya*, p. 361–362.

³¹Trisna Hafifuddin, *Kesatuan Tematik Dalam Surah-Surah al-Qur'an; Analisis Atas Pemikiran Amin Ahsan Iṣlāhī Dalam Kitab Tadabbur al-Qur'an* (Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2013), p. XV.

ruling that can be derived, in which case Iṣlāhī presents the various opinions of the scholars of the madhhab, (6) describing the various qira'at (readings), (7) sometimes displaying the i'rab of the verses discussed, and (8) revealing the peculiarity of the wording.

b. The Maudhu'i/Thematic Method

In his Tafsir Selections from the Tadabbur al-Qur'an, Iṣlāhī presents an interpretation of the Qur'an that is directed at a particular theme. In this case, he reveals that the existence of verses and *surahs* in the Qur'an have interrelated meanings, as revealed by Imam Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Musa al-Syathiby (720–790 H). This scholar reminded us that a *surah* is a unified whole, where the ending is related to the beginning, and vice versa, even though at first glance, the verses appear to be talking about different things.³²

6. Critical Analysis or Comparison of Manuscripts

The researchers attempt to offer numerous works of interpretation in this area, which are also arranged based on thematic unity in the *surahs* of the Qur'an or are related to the study of coherence between parts of the Qur'an, known as the notion of *munasabah*. Among the books that expressly address this subject are the following:

- a. Amir Faishol Fath, the author of *The Unity of al-Qur'an*, presents a collection of translations from Nazariyah *al-Wihdah al-Qur'aniyah 'inda 'Ulama' al-Muslimin wa Dawruha fi Fikri al-Islam*. In this book, the author explores the evidence for the unity of the Qur'an before highlighting the viewpoints of ancient and modern scholars on the subject. Amir Faishol noted in his prologue that one of the reasons this issue is so significant is that many Muslims still treat the Qur'an partially, reading its verses from a limited perspective without considering the content of the verses preceding and following them. As a result, the conclusions reached tend to run counter to the spirit of the Qur'an in general.³³
- b. Hamid al-Din Farahi, the author of *Exordium to Coherence in the Qur'an*, presents his preamble on the principle of *nazm* in the Qur'an. This book is a series of translations into English by Tariq Mahmood Hashmi. Although it is a preamble, the content discussed is quite dense. In addition to explaining coherence in the Qur'an, it also addresses sources and methods of interpretation, such as history, linguistics, events of revelation, ways of revelation, the main teachings in the Qur'an, the names of *surahs* and their main themes, the structure of the Qur'an, and

³² M. Quraish Shihab, *Kaidah Tafsir; Syarat, Ketentuan, dan Aturan Yang Patut Anda Ketahui Dalam Memahami Ayat-Ayat al-Qur'an*, 3rd Edition. (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2015), p. 387.

³³ Amir Faishol Fath, *The Unity of Al-Qur'an*, Terj. Nasiruddin Abbas (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2010), p. 2.

so on. In other words, this research seeks to offer methods of interpreting the Qur'an using the principle of coherence.³⁴

- c. Salwa M. S. el-Awa, the author of *Textual Relations in the Qur'an*, introduces a new approach to reading and analyzing the Qur'an's texts. Specifically, by applying linguistic theory to the theory of relevance and analyzing intricate relationships within the Qur'an's *surahs*. This work discusses numerous themes, including a brief history of previous attempts to address the coherence of the Qur'an, as well as an introduction to the linguistic theory used in analyzing the Qur'an.³⁵
- d. Rahman Abdika compiled a thesis on *Konsep Munasabah dalam Tafsir al-Asas fi al-Tafsir; Studi atas Pemikiran Munasabah Sa'id Hawwa* (The Munasabah Concept in Tafsir al-Asas fi al-Tafsir; A Study of the Thoughts of Munasabah Sa'id Hawwa).

The reasoning in the thesis emphasises Sa'id Hawwa's concept of *munasabah*. This thesis discusses Sa'id Hawwa and his book *al-Asas fi al-Tafsir*, the notion of *munasabah* from the perspective of ancient scholars, and an outline of the theory of *munasabah* applied by Sa'id Hawwa in his work.

In this research, Rahman Abdika explains that in addition to disclosing *munasabah*, Sa'id Hawwa also presents the principle of thematic unity in the Qur'an. Sa'id Hawwa then demonstrated and explained this unity by classifying the *surahs* in the Qur'an according to the classifications presented by previous scholars: *al-sab' al-tiwal*, *al-mi'un*, *al-masani*, and *al-mufassal*.³⁶

Apart from the references mentioned above, the study of the unity of the Qur'an, or coherence between parts of the Qur'an, is also discussed in the books of 'Ulum al-Qur'an, such as *al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Imam al-Suyuthi), *al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (al-Zarqasyi), *Mabahis fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Manna' al-Qattan), and *Ulumul Qur'an* (Abdul Djalal).

Furthermore, it is vital to understand that this is related to the study of Amin Ahsan Işlāhī's character and thoughts. According to a statement, these investigations were carried out by scholars based in Pakistan because Işlāhī's writings, in general, particularly his commentary *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, were written in Urdu. From here, one can view the work of Pakistani intellectuals who have studied Işlāhī's thinking, both Muslim and non-Muslim:

³⁴Hamid al-Din Farahi, *Exordium to Coherence in the Qur'an*, Terj. Tariq Mahmood Hashmi (Lahore: al-Mawrid, 2008).

³⁵El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an*, New York, p. i.

³⁶Rahman Abdika, *Konsep Munasabah Dalam Tafsir Al-Asas Fi al-Tafsir: Study on The Thought of Munasabah Sa'id Hawwa* (Undergraduate Thesis of Ushuluddin Faculty, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2006).

Furthermore, it is vital to understand that it is related to the study of Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī's character and thoughts. According to a statement, these investigations were carried out by scholars based in Pakistan because Iṣlāḥī's writings in general, particularly his commentary book *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, were written in Urdu. From here, one can view the work of Pakistani intellectuals who have studied Iṣlāḥī thinking, both Muslim and non-Muslim:³⁷

- a. Mustansir Mir, wrote *Coherence in the Qur'an: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur al-Qur'an*

Mustansir Mir wrote *Coherence in the Qur'an: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur al-Qur'an* as part of his dissertation series at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1983. He stated in his preface that this work was Iṣlāḥī's attempt to introduce Western scholars to an important work of the twentieth century, namely an Urdu interpretation, which signifies a radical reinterpretation of numerous conventional interpretations.³⁸ Mustansir Mir began his discussion by explaining the history of *nazm* through the perspectives of Iṣlāḥī and his teacher, Farahi, and then analyzing some of the concepts they developed.³⁹

- b. Al-Hafiz Iftikhar Ahmad, wrote *Al-Syaikh Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī wa Manhajuhu fi Tafsihi: Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, Punjab, Pakistan.⁴⁰

This essay examines the method utilized by Iṣlāḥī in his commentary, *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*. The study is more descriptive in nature, focusing on Iṣlāḥī's life history, education, works, and the methods and patterns found in *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*.

The study of unity and coherence in the Qur'an, as discussed in the works above, offers a new perspective on understanding the relationship between parts of the Qur'an, not only thematically *but* also structurally and linguistically. The emphasis on the principle of *nazm* promoted by figures such as Hamid al-Din Farahi, Sa'id Hawwa, and Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī opens up space for a deeper understanding of how the Qur'an is structured to create harmony of meaning between its *surahs*. This approach not only leads to a more holistic interpretation but also contributes to a theory of tafsir based on textual relevance and thematic unity. Further studies that combine linguistic analysis and coherence theory in tafsir can serve as important references for future research, especially in the context of a more contextual and dynamic understanding of the Qur'an in the modern world.

³⁷A. Mukti Ali, *Alam Pikiran Islam Modern di India dan Pakistan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996).

³⁸Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an; A Study of Islahi's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur al-Qur'an*, p. xi.

³⁹Abdika, *Konsep Munasabah Dalam Tafsir Al-Asas Fi al-Tafsir.*, p. 12.

⁴⁰Al-Hafiz Iftikhar Ahmad, *Al-Syaikh Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī Wa Manhajuhu Fi Tafsihi: Tadabbur al-Qur'an* (Disertasi Qism Dirasat al-Islamiyah Baharlafur, 1996).

E. Conclusion

Iṣlāḥī's concept of thematic unity in the Qur'an emphasizes the interconnection of each *surah's* verses, where every letter, except for *Surah al-Fātiḥah* and certain letters, has a partner or twin. For example, *Surah al-Falaq* and *Surah al-Nās*, both seeking protection from Allah, are paired. Iṣlāḥī classifies the Qur'anic *surahs* into seven distinct groups, deviating from previous classifications that divided them into four. This grouping, based on *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah surahs*, connects each *surah's* main theme with its individual verses, allowing a deeper understanding of their relationships. Iṣlāḥī draws this classification from Qur'anic verses, such as *Surah al-Ḥijr* (15:87), and the observation that the universe itself is composed of pairs, reflecting divine balance. To uncover the themes within the Qur'an, one must first analyze the smaller themes of each *surah*. After carefully scrutinizing each verse, the main theme can be derived. Once the main theme of a *surah* is established, it becomes easier to understand how the *surahs* in a group share related aspects that converge to form a unified theme. Iṣlāḥī's approach also involves considering the interaction with the *mukhāṭab* (audience) to comprehend how the themes within each *surah* are linked. This process enables a coherent understanding of the thematic connections across the Qur'an's diverse *surahs*.

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Appendix

The following figures were directly captured by the author through screenshots from Selections from the *Tadabbur al-Qur'an* by Amin Ahsan Iṣlāḥī, translated into English by Shehzad Saleem, specifically from pages 11 to 16 of the text.

The *Bismillāh* Verse

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful

Historical Status of the Verse

A study of the *Qur'ān* reveals that since ancient times there has always been a mention of the meanings encompassed by this verse in revealed scriptures in one form or another. It may be the first time that these meanings are framed in such a sublime diction in the *Qur'ān*, yet what they convey is so close to human nature that one strongly feels that the Almighty must also have revealed them in the very beginning. The Prophet Noah (sws), when his followers were boarding the ark, said something quite similar, as is mentioned in the *Qur'ān*:

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَعًا وَمُرْسًا إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ لَعَنُورًا رَحِيمًا (٤١:١١)

And he said: Embark therein! In the name of Allah will it sail and cast anchor. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful. (11:41)

Similarly, the Prophet Solomon (sws) began his letter, addressed to the Queen of Sheeba, with these blessed words, as is quoted by the *Qur'ān*:

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (٣٠:٢٧)

It is from Solomon and it [begins] in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful. (27:30)

The Bismillah Verse

12

Prayer Nature of the Verse

The verse is not an informative statement, and, like *Sūrah Fātihah*, is actually a prayer. It is a voice which emanates from the heart of every upright person. A more beautiful expression of emotions in words so akin to human nature could not have been imagined. If a person consciously utters this prayer before any piece of work or routine, it makes him aware that what he is about to undertake must not be against the Almighty's liking; on the contrary, it must be in accordance with the way of life prescribed by Him. Also, by virtue of this prayer, he seeks help from two great attributes of God – 'رَحْمَان' (*Rahmān*) and 'رَحِيم' (*Rahīm*). Both these attributes secure him the blessings and help of the Almighty: he is protected from the ill-effects of his undertaking and receives strength and courage to carry out his task to completion; he is shielded from the onslaughts of Satan, and his work becomes beneficial for him in this world and a means to please the Almighty in the Hereafter. Anything done without this prayer certainly fails to reap all these blessings, as the Prophet (sws) himself is reported to have said.

These blessings of the verse manifest themselves for every routine that is initiated with it. However, reading it before reciting the *Qur'ān* has certain other aspects also, which should remain in mind.

Firstly, when a person says 'بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ' before reciting the *Qur'ān*, he actually obeys the directive revealed in the first revelation in the words:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١:٩٦)

Read in the name of your Lord. (96:1)

Secondly, these blessed words remind man of the reality that the greatest favour of the Almighty on human beings is that He has blessed them with the faculty of speech because of which they became the recipients of this Book. The attribute *Rahmān* mentioned in the verse alludes to this fact. At another place in the *Qur'ān*, it is specified that it is this attribute of the Almighty which made Him create man, grant him the ability to speak and, as a result, teach him the *Qur'ān*:

The Bismillāh Verse

13

الرَّحْمَانُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ (٥٥: ١-٤)

It is the Most Gracious who has taught the *Qur'an* [because] He created man and taught him speech. (55:1-4)

Thirdly, this verse testifies to the veracity of a prediction that was made about the Prophet Muhammad (sww) found in previous scriptures. According to this prediction, he would teach and instruct people in the name of Allah:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to My words that the prophet speaks in My name, I myself will call him to account. (Deuteronomy, 18:18)

Fourthly, just as the *Qur'an* is the manifestation of the attribute *Rahmān* of the Almighty, it is this very attribute which helps a person in understanding it. Difficult verses and passages unfold their meaning to a reciter if he seeks help from this attribute. Also, he would be protected through these words from the incursions of Satan while deciphering the meanings of the *Qur'ānic* verses and be shielded from various evil suggestions of his own soul.

Attributes of the Almighty in the Verse

Three attributes of the Almighty are mentioned in the verse: 'الله' (*Allāh*), 'رَحْمَان' (*Rahmān*) and 'رَحِيم' (*Rahīm*). I shall briefly explain them.

'الله' (*Allāh*): The word Allah is made by prefixing the article *alif-lām* to the word 'إله' (*Ilāh*). From the earliest times, this name has always been used for the Almighty specifically as the Creator of the Universe and of every living being. This connotation of the word also existed in pre-Islamic times in Arabia. The people of Arabia practiced polytheism, yet they never equated any of their deities with the Almighty. They always acknowledged Him as the sole Creator of this world. They worshipped other deities only because they wrongly believed that these deities were close to God and could intercede

for them. Their views are stated in detail in the *Qur'an*:

مَا تَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ (٣:٣٩)

We worship them only that they may bring us nearer to God. (39:3)

وَلَقَدْ سَأَلْتَهُم مِّنْ خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُمْ جِوَابًا إِلَّا قَالُوا اللَّهُ يَخْتَصُ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُقَدِّرْ لَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ وَلَقَدْ سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ (٢٩: ٦١-٣)

And if you ask them: Who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon [to His law]? They will reply: Allah. How are they then deluded away [from the truth]. It is Allah who gives abundantly to whom He pleases and gives sparingly [to whom He pleases]. Allah has knowledge of all things. If you ask them: Who is it that sent down-rain from the clouds and therewith revived the earth after it became dead. They will say: Allah. (29:61-3)

قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَمْ مَنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُدِيرُ الْأُمُورَ فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ فَقُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (٣١:١٠)

Ask them: Who is it that sustains you from the sky and the earth, or who is it that has power over your hearing and sight and who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living and who directs all affairs? They will say: Allah. Then ask: Are you not afraid of Him? (10:31)

'رَحْمَانٌ' (*Rahmān*) and 'رَحِيمٌ' (*Rahīm*): The noun 'رَحْمَانٌ' (*Rahmān*) is in the intensive form of 'فَعْلَانٌ' (*fa' lān*) (eg: 'سَكْرَانٌ' (*Sakrān*) and 'غَضَبَانٌ' (*Ḡaḍbān*)), while the noun 'رَحِيمٌ' (*Rahīm*): is an adjective of the form 'فَعِيلٌ' (*fa' īl*) (eg: 'عَلِيمٌ' (*'Alīm*) and 'كَرِيمٌ' (*karīm*)). A look at the usage of the Arabic language shows

The Bismillāh Verse

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that the form 'فَتْلَان' (*fa' lān*) expresses great fervency and enthusiasm, while the form 'فَتِيل' (*fa' īl*) expresses steadiness and perpetuity. In other words, the first depicts vigour and the second constancy in God's mercy. A little deliberation shows that the Almighty's mercy on His creation possesses both these characteristics. The enthusiasm and warmth is complemented by permanence. It is not that His attribute of 'رَحْمَان' (*Rahmān*) induced Him to create, and He later forgot to foster and sustain His creation. Indeed, He is nourishing and taking proper care of them because He is 'رَحِيم' (*Rahīm*) as well. Whenever a person invokes His help, He hears his calls and accepts his prayers. Also, His blessings are not confined to this world only. Those who lead their lives according to the path prescribed by Him, shall be blessed with eternal life and joy. It must be conceded that all these aspects cannot be comprehended without an integrated understanding of these attributes.

Placement of this Verse in the *Qur'ān*

An important question which arises regarding this verse is its real place in the *Qur'ān*. This question arises because of the fact that though it is written in the beginning of every *sūrah* (except *Sūrah Tawbah*) as an independent verse, yet apparently in none of the *sūrahs* except *Sūrah Naml* is it included in the text of the *sūrah*. For this very reason, there is a difference of opinion among scholars on whether it is part of some particular *sūrah* or whether it is written at the beginning of a *sūrah* merely to invoke the blessings of the Almighty. The opinion of the readers (*Qurrā'*) and jurists of *Madīnah*, *Basrah* and *Damascus* is that it is not part of any *sūrah* including *Sūrah Fātiḥah* and it is merely a means to obtain the blessings of Allah and serves to separate the various *sūrahs* of the *Qur'ān*. As such, it differentiates between various *sūrahs* of the *Qur'ān* and a reciter earns the favours and blessings of Allah by reading it before reciting a particular *sūrah*. Imam *Abū Hanīfah* also holds this view.

On the other hand, the *Makkan* and *Kufan* jurists believe that it is part of every *sūrah* of the *Qur'ān* including *Sūrah Fātiḥah*. Imam *Shāfi'ī* also subscribes to this view.

In the opinion of my mentor, Imam *Farāhī*, this verse is part

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Example in footnotes:

¹Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 8 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), h. 18.

²Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: One World Publications, 1991), h. 190.

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6. Article in book

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