Life, Death, Resurrection, And The Afterlife: A Comparitive Study Of Contexts Of Eschatological Verses In *Surat Al-Hajj* And A Sample Of Other Suras Of The Quran [*]

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to explore contexts of eschatological verses in the Quran, using a comparative study of nineteen eschatological verses in *Surat al-Hajj* and a stratified systematic sample of twenty-four verses from twenty-one suras of the Quran. For in-depth interpretations, we also compare eschatological verses in two cohorts of Surat al-Hajj, namely *Surat al-Zumar* and *Surat Ghaffir*. A qualitative *content analysis* of semantics of individual verses and a *context analysis* of several passages provides the basis of our interpretations. One of the findings of this study is that there is a close association between eschatological verses and certain elements of tawhid in such verses. Another significant finding is that a binary choice of belief or lack of belief in tawhid and resurrection provides a theoretical/pedagogical context for several eschatological verses. Although these theoretical concepts are repeated in each sample sura, Surat al-Hajj differs from its two cohorts in its unique structural characteristics. Whereas it begins its preamble with eschatological verses, its second section is devoted to Hajj and its third section segues into a broader discourse on tawhid. In contrast, Surat al-Zumar describes both tawhid and eschatological messages in its entire text, displaying only weakly differentiated sections. Like Surat al-Hajj, Surat Ghaffir contains similar frequencies of eschatological verses, but its preamble is dominated by tawhid messages, whereas Surat al-Hajj starts with a stark warning of an apocalyptic end of this world.

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Theoretical contexts

Eschatology is the branch of theology concerned with last things, e.g., death, resurrection, judgment, Paradise, and Hell.[2] Belief in the doctrine of Resurrection of the dead is a corollary of the Islamic belief in the Creationist doctrine. The Holy Quran links them as a continuum of Allah's power of Creation (e.g., birth of a person), the cessation of life in this world (death), and resurrection (revival) of the dead from their graves on the Day of Judgment for His deliberations of individual actions by each human being. A new phase of eternal life, often characterized in the Quran as *Akhira*, meaning the *Afterlife* or the *Hereafter*, will begin for each revived soul, either in the Paradise (*Jannah*) or in the Hell (epitomised by the *Jahannam*), depending on individual actions in this world (*Duniya*). Thus, belief in the Afterlife, the core concept of the Resurrection doctrine, is an essential article of Islamic faith, based on the doctrine of *Tawhid* (Absolute Monotheism) and is a demarcation line between a believer and a disbeliever. Without such a belief in the life after death, "it is questionable whether we would have any need for religion at all."[3] Some of these topics related to death, resurrection and the Afterlife are often incorporated in eschatological verses, by repeating certain keywords or phrases, or sometimes by describing an eschatological concept in a longer part of a verse. These are the subject matters of eschatological topics in the Quran and are also the focus of our study.

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[2]   Canadian Oxford Dictionary. (2005). Eschatology. In *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2nd ed) [published online 2005]. Doi: 10.1093/acref/9780195418163.001.0001

[3]   Yusuf, H. (2015). Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran. In *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, edited by S.H. Nasr (and others), pp. 1819-1856. New York: Harper Collins and Harper One. https://www.harperacademic.com/book/9780061125874/the-study-quran/

1.2   Objectives of this study

For exploring some of the eschatological topics in the Quran we begin with a case study of *Surat al-Hajj* for several reasons. First, measured by its length (78 verses), it belongs to the borderline of the first and the second quartiles of 114 suras of the Quran, i.e., one of the suras of intermediate lengths. Second, its preamble stands out for its description of an apocalyptic scenario of the Last Day of this world or the beginning of the Day of Judgment following resurrection of the dead. Third, although this sura is named after *Hajj* (Pilgrimage)—one of the five obligatory tenets of Islam—its discourse on rituals and spirituality of pilgrimage is limited to a relatively short mid-section (22:26-38), which segues (transitions) smoothly into a broader discourse on the doctrines of *Tawhid* and Resurrection.

Since resurrection is a corollary of the doctrine of tawhid, one of our goals in this manuscript is to assess if tawhid messages provide a recurrent context for most eschatological verses of the Quran. To test this assumption, we conduct a comparative study of varied contexts of eschatological verses in Surat al-Hajj and a sample of comparable numbers of verses drawn from large numbers of the suras of the Quran. The objectives of this study are two-fold:

- First, to interpret if and how eschatological verses in Surat al-Hajj and sample verses from other suras include certain elements of tawhid as a recurrent context? Are there significant differences in such contexts between Surat al-Hajj verses and sample verses?

- Second, to assess if structural characteristics of Surat al-Hajj are unique or typical, compared to some of its cohorts, such as suras of similar lengths? Like Surat al-Hajj, is there any other preamble of a sample sura which focuses on resurrection or any other specific article of Islamic faith, derived from the doctrine of tawhid?

Content analysis of individual eschatological verses and context analysis of passages of several successive verses provide the basis for exploring the above questions.

2.   RESEARCH METHODS

2.1   Literature review

Modern English language literature on eschatological topics in the Quran include expert analyses by some of the leading authorities on this topic. Some of these contributions have appeared as book chapters in edited volumes on comparative theology, such as *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*[4] and *The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife*.[5] Islamic belief in the Day of Judgment or a denial of this belief has been presented as a binary choice in a progress review series.[6] Focusing specifically on Quranic perspectives on resurrection, eschatology in the Quran is a chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*,[7] a massive volume on the sacred text of Islam. Perhaps, the most comprehensive authority on Islamic eschatology and concepts of the Afterlife in Islam is an edited volume, entitled *Road to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*.[8]

Besides these edited volumes, a synthesis of Islamic eschatology appears as a review essay in *The Study Quran*,[9] another massive volume of English translations and commentaries (exegeses/*tafsir)* of the Quran, the sacred text of Islam. Earlier, a Ph.D. thesis on *Barzakh*, an imaginary spiritual barrier between

[4]   Chittick, W.C. (2009). Muslim Eschatology (Chapter 7). In *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, edited by J.L. Walls, pp. 132-150, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.003.8

[5]   Dastmalchian, A. (2017). The Afterlife in Islam. In *The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife*, edited by Y. Nagasawa and B. Matheson, pp. 153-173. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/978-1-137-48609-7

[6]   Zakzouk, M. (2002). Islamic doctrine of the eschatological completion of the history and eternal life. In *Progress, Apocalypse, and Completion of History and Life after Death of Human Person in the World Religion*, edited by P. Koslowski, pp. 89-100. Kluwer Academic Publishers. DOI:10.1007/978-94-017-2791-4

[7]   Gunther, S. 2020. Eschatology in the Quran (Chapter 30). In *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies,* edited by M. Shah and M. Abdel Haleem, pp. 472-487. Oxford Handbook Series: doi.org/0199698646.013.11

[8]   Gunther, S. and Lawson, T. (eds). (2017). *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*: Volumes 1 and 2. Leiden, The Netherlands and Boston, MA: Brill. DOI: 10.1163/97890004333154

[9]   Yusuf, Ibid.

the grave and the Hereafter, is a significant contribution to the literature on this unique eschatological topic in Islam.[10]

It appears from the preceding references that major advances in the English language literature on Quranic eschatology occurred largely in the first two decades of the 21st century. In comparison, scholarly publications on Islamic eschatology (in the English language) have been much more limited in the 20th century.[11,12] More recently, as expected, Internet sources (blogs) on eschatological topics are highly selective in both contents and depth of analysis. For a review of internet sources on Islamic eschatology, at least one blog stands out for its breadth, if not depth.[13] Our goal in this manuscript is to make an in-depth scholarly contribution to the literature on Islamic eschatology, based on interpretations of significant numbers of eschatological verses in the Quran.

2.2   Sample verses

This manuscript is based on a comparative study of 19 eschatological verses in Surat al-Hajj (or 24 verses with overlap of some themes) and a stratified systematic sample of 24 verses from 21 suras of the Quran. We retrieved these sample verses from the *Quran SmartSearch* database of the islamicity.org website. Initially, we retrieved 515 verses, by using selected eschatological keywords in Surat al-Hajj, listed in the first column of Table 1. Next, we employed a *stratified systematic sampling* procedure to obtain all sample verses in column 2 of Table 1. In this procedure, our goal is to match the numbers of eschatological verses in

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[10]   Yarrington, M.D. (2010). *Lived Islam in Bangladesh: Contemporary Religious Discourse Between Ahli-Hadith, Hanafis and Authoritative Texts with Special References to Al-Barzakh.* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis). Edinburgh, UK: University of Edinburgh, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies.

[11]   Tritton, A.S. (1947). Review of: Eklund, R. (1941). *Life between Death and Resurrection According to Islam. The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No.2, p. 242. DOI: 10.1017/S0035869x0010156x

[12]   Taylor, J.B. (1968). Some aspects of Islamic eschatology. *Religious Studies*, 4 (1), 57-76. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412500003395

[13]   Cameron, C. (2017). Islamic Eschatology: Research Notes (compiled by Charles Cameron).   https://www.wrldrels.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Islamic-Eschatology.pdf/.

Surat al-Hajj (column 1 of Table 1) with that of sample verses (column 2). For example, at least nine verses in Surat al-Hajj contain the keywords *as-sā'ati* (The Hour) or *yawma* (The Day). Since these keywords are repeated in at least 180 verses in 21 suras (column 2), we have divided 180 by 9 (180/9= 20) to sample every 20th verse as our comparative verses, totalling nine sample verses. Prior to systematic sampling,[14] we sorted all (180) verses in descending alpha-numeric orders, starting from the beginning of the Quran to its end. In our sample, verse 6:22 ranks first by its alpha-numeric number: its first digit refers to the chapter number (Chapter 6. *Surat al-Anam*) and its second digit is the 22nd verse of the sura. Verse 101:4 ranks as the last sample since it occurs near the end of the Quran in Chapter 101 (*Surat al-Qariah*). This method is called *stratified sampling* because we have stratified or classified the categories of data by using different keywords. Further, it is called *systematic sampling* because we have chosen our samples blindly by selecting every 20th verse (in this example of row 2). This is a convenient and practical method and is a type of blind or random sampling.[15]

2.3 Content analysis and context analysis

For analyzing data generated from systematic sampling (described above) we have used two well-known social science methods*: content analysis* and *context analysis*. Content analysis is a study of "the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material [such as a book or an article] through a classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning …"[16] We have applied methods of content analysis for interpreting samples of eschatological verses, based on an assumption that all eschatological verses are essentially corollaries of the doctrine of tawhid. Therefore, one of our goals in this context is to explore if one or more of the following types of tawhid or tawhid-related concepts appear simultaneously in some of the eschatological

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[14] Hassan, M. (2023). Systematic sampling—Types, method and examples. Blog: https://researchmethod.net/systematic sampling/

[15] Mostafa, S.A. and Ahmad, A. (2016). Recent development in systematic sampling: A review. *Journal of Statistical Theory and Practice*, 12, 290-310.

[16] Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Content analysis. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved August 26, 2024, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/content analysis

verses: (a) TAR: *Tawhid al-Ruboobiyyah* (belief that Allah alone is the *Rubb* [Lord] who is the Creator, the Provider, and the Protector, (b) TAI: *Tawhid al-Ibadah*, also called *Tawhid al-Uloohiyah* (belief that Allah alone is the One worthy of worship), and (c) TAS: *Tawhid al-Asma was-Sifat* (affirmation of all divine names and attributes of Allah).[17] For computing frequencies and percentages of one or more of the above types of tawhid or tawhid-related concepts in retrieved verses we have used an Excel spreadsheet. However, we have not used any other statistical analysis. Instead, our goal is to sample verses blindly, as objectively as possible.

Context analysis may be defined as: An analysis of "the parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage and can throw light on its meaning."[18] We have applied the methods of context analysis mainly by focusing on interpretations of longer passages, such as those consisting of three

or more consecutive verses. For meanings of each sample verse, initially we reviewed several web-based English translations of the Quran (at least eleven such translations), by using the *Quran SmartSearch* program of the islamicity.org website. Then, we compared and verified these meanings with another authoritative word-by-word translation of the Quran, retrieved from a web-based *Quranic Arabic Corpus* (QAC)[19]. In addition, we have consulted translations and *tafsir* in *The Study Quran*[20] for further verifications of meanings and interpretations of each of the retrieved verses and suras. For analyzing specific contexts of each sample passage, we have used the technique of intra-Quranic *hermeneutic context analysis* in two successive steps. First, our initial goal is to

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[17]   Murad, M.R. (n.d.). *The Meaning of the articles of faith*. Jeddah, SA: Dar al-Khair. https://archive.org/download/FP0538/0538.pdf

[18]   Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Context. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved August 26, 2024, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/context

[19]   Quranic Arabic Corpus. (n.d.). *The Quranic Arabic Corpus—Word by Word Grammar, Syntax and Morphology*. [Copyright: K. Dukes]. www.corpus.quran.com/wordbyword.jsp

[20]   Nasr, S.H., Dagli, C.K., Dakake, M.M., Lumbard, J.E.B. and Rustom, M., eds. (2015). *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*. New York: Harper Collins and Harper One. https://www.harperacademic.com/boook/9780061125874/the-study-quran/

interpret the central theme/s in a passage, by analyzing semantics of each word in the passage. Next, we have compared this theme with a similar theme in a passage in other sample suras.

3.0   RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

3.1   A binary choice of belief or lack of belief in tawhid and resurrection

Overall, all comparative verses in Table 1 are recursive in nature, appearing repeatedly in both Surat al-Hajj and sample verses. Although the Quran states it repeatedly that belief or faith is a personal choice, it warns that choices have consequences. While Allah promises believers the ultimate reward of a Garden of Paradise (*Jannah*) in the Afterlife for adhering to the doctrine of tawhid, many verses condemn disbelievers for making wrong choices, especially for associating Allah with others in worship. For a broad generalization, we may conceptualise a binary structure by using the following symbolic formulations in which the number (1) stands for a positive choice or a positive outcome of a choice, and (0) implies the obverse, i.e., a lack of belief or the outcome of such a lack of belief:

- To believe or not to believe in tawhid and resurrection → (1) = Believe or (0) = Disbelieve
- Outcome of the above choice → (1) = Reward for believers or (0) = Punishment for disbelievers

3.2   Allah's Promise of Paradise for believers

Perhaps, the most cherished outcome of belief in Tawhid is Allah's promise of Paradise for the believers (outcome 1 above in symbolic formulations). Such a promise is delivered in 22:19-23, a Surat al-Hajj passage displaying a binary structure of Allah's punishment versus His rewards. Whereas vv. 19-22 describe some of the severe punishments for disbelievers (outcome = 0), divine

Table 1. Frequencies of Eschatological Verses in Surat al-Hajj and in Sample Suras

Surat al-Hajj: Frequencies of eschatological verses: n = Number of verses	*Sample verses:* Frequencies of eschatological verses: N_x = Total subpopulation of verses N_{1-5} = Subpopulation of verses n = *sample verses*, based on systematic sample of every x^{th} verse containing a specific keyword(s) indicated below
Verses containing eschatological keywords: *as-sā'ati* (The Hour) or *yawma* (The Day): n = 9. vv. (verses): 1, 2, 7, 9, 17, 47, 55, 56, 69 (include overlap with some verses in rows 2 and 4)	Verses containing eschatological keywords: *as-sā'ati* (The Hour) or *yawma* (The Day): N_1 (subpopulation₁) = 180 n = 9 (every 20th verse of 180 verses) vv. 6:22, 16:25, 23:100, 30:14, 40:27, 46:35, 66:7, 78:18, 101:4
Eschatological keywords: *al-Ba'th* or *al-Qiyamah* (Resurrection): n = 5 vv. 5, 7, 9, 17, 69	Eschatological keywords: *al-Ba'as* or *al-Qiyamah* (Resurrection): N_2 = 70 n = 5 (every 14th verse of 70 verses) vv. 4:159, 16:27, 25:69, 39:31, 75:6
Eschatological keywords: *al-Akhira* (The Eternity): n = 2 vv. 11, 15	Eschatological keywords: *al-Akhira* (The Eternity): N_3 = 112 n = 2 (every 56th verse of 112 verses) vv. 16:122, 93:4
Eschatological keywords: *Jannah* (The Paradise): n = 3 vv. 14, 23, 56	Eschatological keywords: *Jannah* (The Paradise): N_4 = 72 n = 3 (every 21st verse of 72 verses) vv. 18:31, 48:5, 98:8
Varied expressions for Allah's punishment: n = 5 (without overlap) *adhābis sa'ir:* 22:4 *adhābal hariq:* 22:22	Varied expressions for Allah's punishment: N_5 = 81; n = 5 (varied distribution) *adhābis sa'ir:* 31:21 (First of three verses, chosen for relevance)

adhabin alim: 22:25 *ashabal jahim:* 22:51 *adhabum muhin:* 22:57	*adhābal hariq:* 8:50 (2nd or median verse of three verses) *adhabin alim:* 14:22 (30th or median verse of 59 verses) *ashabal jahim:* 5:86 (3rd or median verse of five verses) *adhabum muhin:* 4:151 (6th or median verse of eleven verses)
Total sample size (n): 19 verses (without overlap) or 24 verses (with overlap)	**Total sample size (n): 24 verses** (without overlap) **Sampling Sub-Population (N$_x$).** i.e., total numbers of verses previewed in 21 suras: **515 verses**

Source: Original table prepared by the author.

discourse in 22:23 is highly pleasing and reassuring for believers who adhere to the doctrine of tawhid and perform righteous deeds (22:23):

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّـٰلِحَـٰتِ جَنَّـٰتٍ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَـٰرُ ۖ
يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِن ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا ۖ وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ

> *But Allah will surely admit those who believe and do good into Gardens, under which rivers flow, where they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls, and their clothing will be silk.*[21]

Among three sample verses promising a Garden of Paradise for believers a similar discourse is evident in 18:31. It follows 18:30, another eschatological verse warning of punishments for disbelievers. The binary structure of verse 18:31 (Outcome 1 is the result of Choice 1):

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[21]   In this article, all English translations of Quran's Arabic verses are by Dr Mustafa Khattab (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.islamicity.org/Quran Search/

أُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّـٰتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهِمُ ٱلْأَنْهَـٰرُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِن ذَهَبٍ وَيَلْبَسُونَ ثِيَابًا خُضْرًا مِّن سُندُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُّتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى ٱلْأَرَآئِكِ نِعْمَ ٱلثَّوَابُ وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا

It is they who will have the Gardens of Eternity, with rivers flowing under their feet. There they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and wear green garments of fine silk and rich brocade, reclining there on canopied couches. What a marvellous reward! And what a fabulous place to rest!

3.3   Allah's promise of Hellfire for disbelievers

Data on comparative verses dealing with Allah's punishment for disbelievers emphasize Allah's promise of Hellfire for them. Among these, five Surat al-Hajj verses and five sample verses share identical keywords describing how disbelievers will face severe punishments on the Day of Resurrection/Judgment. More specifically, three verses describe the torment of the Hellfire, using one of the following composite keywords: 22:4: *adhābis sa'ir* (punishment of the Blaze), 22:22: *adhābal hariq* (Punishment of the Burning Fire), and 22:51: *ashabal jahim* (Companions of the Hellfire). Comparative sample verses that repeat these keywords (in the same order) are: 31:21 (*adhābis sa'ir*), 8:50 (*adhābal hariq*), 5:86 (*ashabal jahim*). These six verses are typical examples of their binary structure: disbelievers have chosen not to believe in tawhid and resurrection (Choice = 0). Consequently, they are destined to face the torment of Hellfire (Outcome = 0).

The 22nd verse of Surat al-Hajj (22:22) describes the torment of the Burning Fire. It is a continuation of different forms of punishments in the Hereafter described in three preceding verses: 22:19-21. This verse (22:22) describes a scenario in which sinners are trying to escape the Hellfire. Whenever they try to escape, they will be driven back into it to taste the suffering of the Burning Fire (22:22):

كُلَّمَآ أَرَادُوٓا۟ أَن يَخْرُجُوا۟ مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ أُعِيدُوا۟ فِيهَا وَذُوقُوا۟ عَذَابَ ٱلْحَرِيقِ

22:22: *Whenever they try to escape from Hell—out of anguish—they will be forced back into it, and will be told, "Taste the torment of burning!"*

Among sample verses in other suras, 8:50 is similar in discourse and contexts. Its messages are a continuation of condemnation of disbelievers and hypocrites, described in the previous verse (8:49). Thus, 8:50 describes the torment of burning for disbelievers and hypocrites:

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ يَتَوَفَّى ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ ٱلْمَلَٰئِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَٰرَهُمْ وَذُوقُوا۟ عَذَابَ ٱلْحَرِيقِ

If only you could see when the angels take the souls of the disbelievers, beating their faces and backs, saying, "Taste the torment of burning!

3.4   Barzakh: a unique word in the Quran

Another significant sample verse in row 2 (in Table 1) is 23:100 (in *Surat al-Mu'minun*) in which the word *Barzakh* appears in an eschatological context (23:100):

لَعَلِّىٓ أَعْمَلُ صَٰلِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّآ إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَآئِلُهَا وَمِن وَرَآئِهِم بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

So that I may do good in that which I have left behind! No! It is but a word that he speaks, and behind them is Barzakh (a barrier) until the Day when they will be resurrected.

In this verse, a sinner is petitioning Allah if he could return from his grave to the past (world) so that he could make up for the good deed he had neglected. Allah responds firmly by warning "No!" stressing that there is a barrier behind them, called *Barzakh*. The term *Barzakh* may be defined as a "Transitional state of each soul in a space between (and including) grave and a

spiritual barrier."[22] This definition is consistent with a classical reference to death as the "Day of Lesser Judgment" leading to a transitional state called *Barzakh*."[23] The word *Barzakh* is a significant eschatological concept since it refers to a transitional state between this world and the Afterlife *(Akhira)*. It is also a unique word in the Quran since 23:100 is the only verse in which it appears in an eschatological context. There are two other verses in the Quran in which the word *Barzakh* appears as a barrier between saltwater and freshwater (25:53 and 55:20).

3.5   The question of time

Another significant observation of this study is that several sample verses include references to the timing of resurrection, by using the keywords *yawma* (the Day [of Resurrection]) or *as-sa'ati* (the Hour [of Resurrection]). Only Allah knows when the Resurrection of the dead will occur. However, the repeated use of two such keywords raise a question about the meanings and implications of these words. The Quran treats time as both finite (day and night) and infinite (such as endless time

of Eternity). Classical philosophers faced major challenges in drawing any "indivisible temporal boundary."[24] The Quran, on the other hand, provides extensive insights into different dimensions of time. In *Surat al-A'raf* (Chapter 7, The Heights) verse 7:54 introduces astronomical time (day and night due to alteration of the sun and the moon within a fixed period of twenty-four hours) in a broader context of the cosmic time of the Creationist doctrine (7:54):

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ فِى سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ ٱسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ

يُغْشِى ٱلَّيْلَ ٱلنَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَٱلشَّمْسَ وَٱلْقَمَرَ وَٱلنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَٰتٍۢ بِأَمْرِهِۦٓ أَلَا

لَهُ ٱلْخَلْقُ وَٱلْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ ٱللَّهُ رَبُّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ

Indeed, your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth
in six Days, then established Himself on the Throne. He makes the
day and night overlap in rapid succession. He created the sun, the

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22   Yarrington, Ibid.

23   Ali, Y. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, verse 23:100, tafsir #5822. Retrieved from www.islamicity.org/QuranSearch/

24   Strobach, N. (2017). Indivisible temporal boundaries from Aristophanes until today. *Vivarium* 55 (1/3), 9-21. DOI:10.1163/15685349-12341341

moon, and the stars—all subjected by His command. The creation and the command belong to Him alone. Blessed is Allah—Lord of all worlds!

Although most of the exegetes have translated the Arabic expression "*fi sittati ayyāmin*" (in 7:54) as six Days, it is translated as *six epochs* in a word-by-word corpus, based on its triliteral root (*yā wāw mīm*).[25] No one knows the precise definition of the Quranic term *ayyāmin,* but there are examples of other definitions which provide insights into a much longer period than a 24-hour day. For example, in 22:47 "a day with your Lord is indeed *like* a thousand years by your counting." A much longer time is implied in 70:4 for the Day of Judgment which will be 50,000 years of our time. Compared to such longer cosmological time, in other verses of the Quran there are references to much shorter eschatological time. For example, 8:25 refers to the "Sleepers of the Caves" who slept there for three hundred nine years. Faced with infinite time of the Afterlife, some sinners realize that their life in this world lasted for a short period, perhaps equivalent to a day or more (20:103-104). Similarly, when several sinners were asked: "How many years did you remain on earth?" their answers were ambiguous, such as "a little while," or "a day or part of a day" (23:112-114).

3.6   Boundary moments of Resurrection

Instead of focusing on numerical time, the cyclical time of human life provides more plausible explanations of eschatological verses in this study. Postulating three distinct phases of human life, i.e., a temporal life in this world (*Duniya*), a transitional spiritual life (i.e., *ruh*/soul) in the *Barzakh,* and the final Afterlife in the Eternity (*Akhira*), we posit a transcendental time between the life in this world and the beginning of the Afterlife following the Day of Resurrection and Judgment. The transition from life in this world to the next constitutes a *boundary moment of Resurrection,* which may be defined as: "*a moment of change from the physical state of this world (Duniya) to a new form of*

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[25]   Quranic Arabic Corpus (n.d.) Ibid.

physical/spiritual state in the Hereafter or the Afterlife (Akhira)" (our definition). Based

on this definition, we have identified three such boundary moments in this study: (a) *as-sa'ati* (the Hour) of Resurrection, (b) *yawma* (the Day) of Resurrection or Judgment, and (c) the *moment* of beginning of the Day of Resurrection, starting with sounding of the eschatological trumpet (*yunfakhu fis-suri*).

Content analysis of semantics of all verses in row 2 (Table 1) indicate a dominance of the word *Yawma*. It has been used as a Day of Resurrection, giving a vivid description of the horror of severe shaking of a transitional earthquake, marking the end of this world (The Last Hour). This message has been reinforced by introducing the certainty of the Last Hour (*as-Sa'ati*), which amounts to a boundary moment of the beginning of the end of this world (22:7):

<div dir="rtl">

وَأَنَّ ٱلسَّاعَةَ ءَاتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهَا وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ مَن فِى ٱلْقُبُورِ

</div>

And certainly, the Hour is coming, there is no doubt about it. And Allah will surely resurrect those in the graves.

For believers adhering to the doctrines of tawhid and resurrection, verse 22:7 is an assurance of the Day of Resurrection, while it is a warning for disbelievers reinforcing the certainty of the Last Hour. Overall, discourse on the Day of Judgment is presented mostly in the contexts of tawhid, both in Surat al-Hajj verses and sample verses. Among the latter, 30:14 in *Surat ar-Rum* stands out for its convergence of both the Hour and the Day of Resurrection (30:14):

<div dir="rtl">

وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ ٱلسَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَفَرَّقُونَ

</div>

And on the Day the Hour will arrive, the people will then be split into two groups.

Based on their choice of faith in tawhid and their good deeds in this world, the righteous will be separated from disbelievers following the Last Hour and the beginning of the Day of Judgment.

Finally, verse 78:18 (in *Surat an-Naba*: The Great News) is the only verse in this study that introduces the *moment* when the eschatological trumpet (*Suri*) will be sounded marking the beginning of raising of the dead and their assemblage for Allah's deliberations. The sound of the trumpet is the sharpest boundary moment of resurrection (78:18):

يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِى ٱلصُّورِ فَتَأْتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا

> *It is the Day the Trumpet will be blown, and you will all come forth in crowds.*

3.7   A comparative study of contexts of eschatological verses: Surat al-Hajj, Surat al-Zumar, and Surat Ghaffir

A question of structure of a sura. The structure of a sura is a broad term related to the purpose of using such a term. Quranic scholars have employed a diverse approach for studying structures

of suras with the goal of interpreting their "inner dynamic."[26] In this article, we define the structure of a sura as its organization of themes or contents in individual verses, passages, and sections. In particular, we are interested in thematic grouping and revelation contexts (https://sabilalquran.com/how-is-the-quran-organized/#2_Thematic_Grouping). Both objectives of this study are relevant to the structural characteristics of Surat al-Hajj. This raises a question if structural characteristics of Surat al-Hajj are unique or typical, compared to some of its cohorts, such as suras of similar lengths? Following preliminary evaluations of structures of twenty-one suras, it appears that *Surat al-Zumar* (Chapter 39: The Groups) and *Surat Ghaffir* (Chapter 40. The Forgiver) are comparable to *Surat al-Hajj* in their relative lengths. Like Surat al-Hajj, these suras are also rich in eschatological topics. Therefore, we consider them as cohorts of Surat al-Hajj.

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[26]   Mir, M. (2020). The structure of the Qur'an: The inner dynamic of the sura (Chapter 22). In *The Oxford Handbook of the Qur'anic Studies*, edited by M. Shah, and M. Abdel Haleem, pp. 362-373. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. https:// doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/ /9780199698646.013.17

Coming back to the question if the structure of Surat al-Hajj is unique or typical, compared to that of *Surat al-Zumar* and *Surat Ghaffir,* the answer is a mixed one. As data in Table 2 indicate, assessed in terms of thematic groupings, there are remarkable similarities in associations of eschatological themes with different elements of tawhid in large numbers of verses. In contrast, revelation contexts of Surat al-Hajj have a profound impact on three distinct sections in Surat al-Hajj. No such schemes of textual organization appear either in *Surat al-Zumar* or in *Surat Ghaffir.*

Thematic Couplings of tawhid messages with eschatological verses (Table 2). Regarding tawhid messages in general, especially TAR, data in Table 2 indicate that they appear in at least two-thirds of 78 verses in Surat al-Hajj (row 1). Comparative data are 59% in Surat al-Zumar and 66% in Surat Ghaffir. Clearly, there are no significant differences among three suras. This is consistent with a broader generalization that tawhid messages are pervasive elements of the Quran's text. Similarly, there are no significant differences in percentages of eschatological verses among these suras, justifying their cohort status: 41% in Surat al-Hajj, 49% in Surat al-Zumar, and 46% in Surat Ghaffir. Regarding the binary structure of Allah's rewards for believers versus retributions for disbelievers, there are significant differences among these suras: 47% of eschatological verses in Surat al-Hajj and 62% in Surat Ghaffir emphasize retributions, whereas only 14% in Surat al-Zumar mention it. Because of the limitation of space and contexts, no further comparative analyses are relevant here.

Probable impacts of historical contexts on the preamble of Surat al-Hajj. As it has already been suggested earlier, Surat al-Hajj stands out for its description of an apocalyptic scenario of the Last Day of this world or the beginning of the Day of Judgment following resurrection of the dead. This is a unique preamble of a sura. It raises a question why a relatively short mid-section introducing some of the important (but not all) rituals of Hajj is preceded by a stark warning of an apocalyptic end of this world? We posit that the periods of revelation may provide a potential context. From the nature of its contents, it seems that the bulk of the sura was revealed in Medinah.

Table 2. Thematic Couplings of Tawhid messages with Eschatological Verses in Surat al-Hajj, Surat al-Zumar and Surat Ghaffir

Sura: Number, name, meaning (number of verses)	Classification of semantics of verses containing messages on tawhid and resurrection
22. Surat al-Hajj: The Pilgrimage (78)	**Row 1. Tawhid messages:** TAR: 53 out of 78 verses (68% of Surat al-Hajj verses): vv. 1, 2, **6-9**, **14-18**, 23, 24, **26-38**, **39-42**, 49, 50, 52, 54, 56, **58-70**, 72, **75-78** TAI: 16 out of 78 verses (22%): vv. 18, **26-31**, **33-37**, 40, 41, 77, 78 TAS: 22 out of 78 verses (28%): vv. 6, 10, 14, 18, **38-41**, 52, 54, **58-65**, 67, 74, 75, 78
Surat al-Hajj (Continued)	**Row 2. Eschatological verses:** 32 out of 78 verses (41% of Surat al-Hajj verses): vv. 1, 2, **4-7**, **9-11**, 14, 15, 17, **19-25**, 47, 48, 50, 51, **55-59**, 66, 69, 72, 76
Surat al-Hajj (Continued)	**Row 3. Tawhid messages in eschatological verses** promising Allah's Rewards for believers: 8 out of 32 eschatological verses (25% of eschatological verses): vv. 14, 15, 23, 24, 50, 56, 58, 59
Surat al-Hajj (Continued)	**Row 4. Tawhid messages in eschatological verses** warning Allah's retributions for disbelievers: 15 out of 32 eschatological verses (47% of eschatological verses): vv. 4, 9, 10, **19-22**, 25, 47, 48, 51, 55, 57, 69, 72
39. Surat al-Zumar: The Groups (75)	**Row 1. Tawhid messages:** TAR: 44 out of 75 verses (59% of Surat al-Zumar verses). vv. **1-14**, 16, 18, 20, **22-24**, **27-29**, **34-39**, 41, **44-46**, **52-55**, 61, 62, 66, 67 TAI: 13 out of 75 verses (17%): vv. 2, **8-15**, 17, 49, 54, 66 TAS: 9 out of 75 verses (12%): vv. 1, 4, 5, 20, 37, 53, 62, 67, 70
Surat al-Zumar (continued)	**Row 2. Eschatological verses:** 37 out of 75 verses (49% of Surat al-Zumar verses). vv. **7-9**, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, **24-26**, **30-32**, 34, 35, 40, 42, **44-48**, 55, **58-61**, **67-75**

Surat al-Zumar (continued)	***Row 3. Tawhid messages in eschatological verses:*** promising Allah's Rewards for believers: 8 out of 37 eschatological verses (22% of eschatological verses): vv. 9, 20, 34, 35, 61, **73-75**
Surat al-Zumar (continued)	***Row 4. Tawhid messages in eschatological verses:*** warning Allah's retributions for disbelievers: 5 out of 37 eschatological verses (14% of eschatological verses): 7, 8, 13, 16, 24
40. *Surat Ghaffir*: The Forgiver God (85)	***Row 1. Tawhid messages:*** TAR: 56 out of 85 verses (66% of Surat Ghaffir verses). vv. **1-9, 12-28,** 30, **32-35, 38-42,** 44, 45, 51, **53-55, 58-62, 65-68**, 70, 77, 78, 81, 83 TAI: 9 out of 85 verses (11%): vv. **7-9**, 14, 55, 60, 62, 65, 66 TAS: 19 out of 85 verses (22%): vv. 2, 3, 7, 8, 12, 16, 17, 20, 22, 27, 28, 31, 35, 42, 44, 56, **64-66**
Surat Ghaffir (continued)	***Row 2. Eschatological verses:*** 39 out of 85 verses (46% of Surat Ghaffir verses). vv. 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, **14-18**, 22, 27, **32-34, 39-41**, 43, **46-50**, 52, 59, 60, 68, **71-78**, 84, 85
Surat Ghaffir (continued)	***Row 3. Tawhid messages in eschatological verses*** promising Allah's Rewards for believers: 3 out of 39 eschatological verses (8% of eschatological verses): vv. 39, 40, 51
Surat Ghaffir (continued)	***Row 4. Tawhid messages in eschatological verses*** warning Allah's retributions for disbelievers: 24 out of 39 eschatological verses (62% of eschatological verses): vv. 6, 7, 11, 12, 18, 22, 33, 34, 41, 43, **46-50**, 52, **71-76**, 84, 85

Source: Original table prepared by the author. **Bold** indicates passages.

On the other hand, some of its verses have been ascribed to the late Makkan period (vv. 52-55). Overall, there is an agreement that this sura is a mix of

Makkan and Madinan verses.[27, 28] Based on the periods of revelation, we further posit that some of its eschatological verses were revealed in the context of ongoing persecutions of the Prophet (SAWS) and his followers during the transitional period of the Prophet's involuntary emigration (*Hijra*) from Makkah to Madinah. This assumption is based on the historical contexts of the late Makkan and early Madinan periods when Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and his followers had been experiencing persistent persecutions by the Makkan Quraish.

Persecutions did not end with the Hijra. Even during the early Madinan period, persecutions of the new/emerging Muslim community continued in different forms of threat, including the threat of waging war and killing the Prophet of Islam (SAWS). Among the nature of persecutions by Arab polytheists, their obstruction to the Prophet (SAWS) and his followers to visit the Kaba and Masjid al-Haram for performing Hajj (pilgrimage) seems to be one of the contexts of Surat al-Hajj. Divine response to such persecutions accuses the disbelievers directly in 22:25:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ

Indeed, those who persist in disbelief and hinder others from the Way of Allah and from the Sacred Mosque …

Victims of persecution are identified as those who emigrated to Madinah in the way of Allah, in 22:58:

وَٱلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُواْ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوٓاْ أَوْ مَاتُواْ لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ ٱللَّهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَهُ
وَ خَيْرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ

As for those who emigrate in the cause of Allah and then are martyred or die, Allah will indeed grant them a good provision. Surely Allah is the Best Provider …

27   Pickthall, M.M. (1977). Preamble of Surat al-Hajj. In *The Glorious Quran: Text and explanatory translation*, p. 337. Mecca-Al-Mukarramah: Muslim World League—Rabita, Mecca.

28   Nasr, S.H. (and others) (2015). Ibid, p. 830

In short, divine response to victims of persecution seems to be the historical context of an eschatological preamble in Surat al-Hajj. In comparison, Surat al-Zumar does not display significant differences in messages in its three tentative sections. This is because major themes of Surat al-Zumar seem to flow from its preamble to its conclusion as one unit of theoretical discourse on divine revelation of the Quran as a guidance for pure religious practice. Surat Ghaffir, on the other hand, begins with a message on the revelation of the Quran. Consistent with the meaning of *Ghaffir*, i.e., the title of the sura, its preamble proclaims repeatedly that Allah is the Forgiver of sins.

4.0   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This manuscript is a contribution on the Islamic doctrine of Resurrection and the Afterlife as a corollary of the doctrine of Absolute Monotheism (*Tawhid*). During our initial search for eschatological verses in the Quran we were intrigued by the dominance of such verses in the preamble of Surat al-Hajj, appearing simultaneously with certain elements of tawhid. Subsequent review of remaining sections of this sura led us to formulate several assumptions related to its structures, especially in the contexts of relationships between eschatological verses and the doctrine of tawhid. To test these assumptions, we have conducted a comparative study of 19 eschatological verses in Surat al-Hajj (or 24 verses with some overlap of themes) and a stratified systematic sample of 24 verses from twenty-one suras. The main findings of our comparative study are as follows.

First, there are no significant differences in discourse style of eschatological verses in Surat al-Hajj and other sample verses (from 21suras). Most of them contain certain elements (types) of tawhid. This proves our first assumption that the Resurrection doctrine is a corollary of the doctrine of tawhid.

Second, our findings about the uniqueness of structural characteristics of Surat al-Hajj are mixed. As in Surat al-Hajj, both Surat al-Zumar and Surat Ghaffir share similar couplings of tawhid messages in eschatological verses, but they differ from Surat al-Hajj in their textual structures. Surat al-Hajj demonstrates a unique discourse style, beginning with eschatological verses but segueing smoothly into the next section focusing on some (but not all) of the

rituals and spirituality of Hajj. In comparison, Surat al-Zumar displays minimum differences among its three tentative sections (differentiated by us), focusing largely on revelation of the Quran as a guidance for practicing the pure religion of Islam. Surat Ghaffir, on the other hand, demonstrates greater differences among its three sections (compared to Surat al-Zumar), but its preamble focuses more on tawhid than on resurrection. In short, Surat al-Hajj stands out for its unique structural characteristics since each of its sections focuses on different topics: (a) eschatological topics in the preamble, (b) Hajj (pilgrimage) in the second section, and (c) tawhid messages in the third section. This proves our second assumption that Surat al-Hajj is unique in its structural characteristics. We present a historical context of revelation of this sura attributing persecution of the Prophet (SAWS) as a plausible explanation of a stark warning for Arab polytheists.

Third, another significant finding of the comparative study is that many eschatological verses or passages (of several verses) include a binary choice of belief or lack of belief in tawhid and resurrection as a theoretical/pedagogical context for such verses. This is an elegant theoretical framework which relates Allah's rewards for believers and His retributions of Hellfire and other forms of punishment for disbelievers, both in this world (Duniya) and, more emphatically, in the Afterlife (Akhira). This finding is a confirmation of one of the core themes of Islamic doctrine of Resurrection which promises Allah's rewards for believers and retributions for disbelievers in countless verses throughout the Quran.

Finally, another significant finding of this study is that one of its sample verses (23:100) includes the rare word Barzakh. It is a unique word in the sense that Barzakh is a classical concept of a transitional station of a soul between (and including) the grave and the more permanent Afterlife (Akhira). Regarding the rarity of this word, 23:100 seems to be the only such eschatological verse in the Quran (as far as we could ascertain).

The existing literature on Islamic eschatology is extensive. It provides in-depth analyses of some of our theoretical findings, such as a close association between resurrection and the doctrine of tawhid. Besides reconfirmation of this association, this study makes two original contributions. As explained above at

some length, the first is related to the unique structural characteristics of Surat al-Hajj. The second is methodological. By employing a stratified systematic sampling procedure, we have demonstrated how this method could be employed for sampling large numbers of verses of the Quran for different types of interpretations.

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