

ALLAH'S ATTRIBUTES IN SURAT AL-BAQARA: EXPLORING TAWHID EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE QURAN [♠]

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this article is to explore *tawhid epistemology* (knowledge of Absolute Monotheism) of the Quran, by interpreting meanings and contexts of samples of Allah's attributes in Surat al-Baqara. Research methods include: (a) *content analysis* (mostly frequency counts) of original Arabic words dealing with different types of tawhid, especially different iterations of Allah's attributes as a component of tawhid, and (b) *context analysis* of major themes in which Allah's attributes are embedded in sample passages (consecutive verses). The results show that although Allah's attributes account for only 6% of the total words in Surat al-Baqara, nearly one-third of 286 verses of the sura end with one or more of twenty-one attributes of Allah (out of more than 100 such attributes in the Quran). The most frequent attribute in Surat al-Baqara may be approximated as "*Allah knows everything*" (with varied iterations of this expression in Arabic), which appears in 33 verses (n = 33), compared to its frequency of at least 95 in the entire Quran. Other frequent attributes include "*Allah's Capability of doing anything*" (n = 13) and "*Allah as the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful*" (n = 12). The study supports our assumption that most often Allah's attributes appear at the end of a verse reinforcing a divine message/s in the verse or complementing a broader message (narrative) in a longer passage. Out of at least seventeen such passages in Surat al-Baqara, the Creationist doctrine, attributing origin of the universe and human life to Allah's Creation, appears to be a continuing theme in several other suras of the Quran.

Keywords: *Tawhid, Epistemology, Allah's Attributes, Content Analysis, Context Analysis; Creationist Doctrine*

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1.0 1. INTRODUCTION THEORETICAL CONTEXTS

1.1 *Meaning of Islamic Doctrine of Tawhid*

The doctrine of *Tawhid*, meaning God's absolute unity, serves as the primary article of faith on which the Islamic religion is founded. Often characterized as the doctrine of Absolute Monotheism, Islamic doctrine of tawhid differs from other monotheistic religions in its emphasis on the Absolute Oneness of Allah without allowing His association with any other deities or spirits.

Although as a doctrine tawhid or absolute monotheism may seem to be a succinct concept, in its application it is intricately intertwined within large parts of the Quran's text, laying the foundation of several related articles of Islamic faith. Interpretations of some of the components of this doctrine witnessed vigorous scholarly debates among competing medieval intellectual elitists (schools of Islamic thoughts), notably the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites (early 10th century CE)². In contrast, the "traditionalist" (mainstream) interpretations of the tawhid doctrine are based strictly on "scriptural sources," i.e., interpretations of the Quranic text and Prophetic sunnah (*hadith*). Based on this approach, the nature of tawhid-related text in the Quran may be classified into three categories³:

- *Tawhid al-Rububiyya* (TAR), meaning the Unity of Lordship, which includes a set of articles of Islamic faith.
- *Tawhid al-Uluhiya*, meaning the Unity of Worship, which predicates that God is the sole creator of the Universe and the only deity worthy of worship. It may also be expressed alternately as the *Tawhid al-Ibadah* (TAI).
- *Tawhid al-Asmaa was-Siffat* (TAS), meaning the Unity of Allah's names and Attributes.

The text of the Quran is particularly rich in messages related to *Tawhid al-Rububiyya* (TAR) and their implications for the entire Islamic belief systems. Thus, many verses of the Quran contain certain amounts of TAR-related text. Messages related to *Tawhid al-Ibadah* (TAI) contain fewer words than TAR but they are focused on divine mandate and guidance for worshipping Allah by adhering to the tenets of Islam. In contrast, verses containing certain words

² Robinson, N. (1998). Ash'ariyya and Mu'tazila.

<http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ip/rep/HO52>

³ Philips, A.A.B. (2006). *The Fundamentals of Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism)*.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabadcompound/84/84575EAC059788C5E8DF A51FEEF117E4A The%20Fundamentals%20of%20Tawhid.pdf>

describing Allah's attributes (TAS) differ significantly from both TAR and TAI messages in their semantic style. In particular, certain repetitive words describing some of the attributes of Allah appear almost invariably at the end of a (sample) verse, as a shorter segment of a longer verse, creating a distinct linguistic motif throughout the Quran.

1.2 Allah's Attributes as a part of Tawhid Epistemology

Epistemology may be defined as "the theory of knowledge, especially dealing with the methods and validation of such knowledge"⁴. Modern literature on epistemology is extensive⁵. In Islamic epistemology, the Quran is considered as "containing the roots of all knowledge" emanating from revelation⁶. Containing 6,238 verses, the Quran is a vast and complex document that contains both theoretical and empirical knowledge. As an example of empirical knowledge, stories of past prophets and Prophet Muhammad's struggles with Arab polytheists provide historical contexts of many verses. References to social issues and Allah's guidance for ethical human behaviour constitute both theoretical and empirical knowledge. Verses urging the recipients of revelation to believe in Allah's Absolute Oneness (*tawhid* or Absolute Monotheism) and to follow His other commandments are examples of some of the basic theoretical knowledge of the Quran. As indicated above, belief in Allah's attributes is a part of tawhid. Interpretations of contents and contexts in which some of these attributes appear in large numbers of verses in Surat al-Baqara (and in the entire Quran) constitute an important method of exploring knowledge of tawhid. Application of this method in this article is our contribution to the study of the *tawhid epistemology of the Quran*.

1.3. Rationale for belief in Allah's attributes

In Islam, the belief in Allah is based on a rationale that "Everything must have a Creator" and that "a Creator must necessarily exist to account for the existence

⁴ Canadian Oxford Dictionary. (2005). Epistemology. In *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2nd ed.). DOI: 10.1093/acref/9780195418163,001.0001

⁵ Norris, C. (2005). *Epistemology: Key Concepts in Philosophy*. Continuum Publishing. www.continuum books.com.

⁶ Dhaleen, A. (2003). *Islamic Law, Epistemology and Modernity: Legal Philosophy in Contemporary Iran*. Taylor and Francis Group, p. 55-76. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203504239>,

of creation”⁷. The Creationist doctrine, related to this concept, states in many verses of the Quran that Allah has created the Universe, including the Solar System, the heavens and the earth and all forms of life in the earth, including the humans. Further, it emphasizes that Allah has created humans and Jinn for the “exclusive purpose of worshipping Him”⁸. Adherence to five tenets of Islam (*Shahada*, *Salat*, *Zakat*, *Sawm* and *Hajj*) are the obligatory forms of worship of Allah. In addition, remembering Allah’s names and attributes, including chanting (*dhikr*) of His names, constitutes a form of voluntary worship of Allah, seeking proximity to Him. Said Nursi, a Turkish theologian of the first half of the 20th century, suggests that the way to get close to Allah “is to be aware of God’s closeness through manifestation of His names and attributes.”⁹ Similarly, Al-Ghazali, a prominent medieval Muslim philosopher and theologian suggests: “meditation upon the revealed names of God lies at the heart of the Prophetic tradition urging the believer to enumerate the names [of Allah]: the tradition has it that such activity will finally grant the servant of God entrance to Paradise”¹⁰. An authentic Bukhari hadith confirms this saying: Sahih Al-Bukhari cites Abu Huraira, who narrated one of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS)¹¹: “Allah has ninety-nine names, one-hundred less one; and he who memorized them all by heart will enter paradise.”¹² It has further been suggested in another hadith that learning and memorizing the names of Allah will help the believer in identifying the correct way to believe in Him¹³.

1.4 Objectives of this study

As the title of this article implies, the central goal of this study is to explore how Allah’s attributes, appearing repeatedly at the end of large numbers of verses

⁷ Khan, M.A. (2020). *On the Attributes of Allah*. Enter the Sunnah: Living Islam in North America. <https://www.enterthesunnah.com/>

⁸ Hashemi, A.I.S. (Trans./Ed.) & Mawdudi, A.A. (2015) *Worship in Islam: An In-Depth Study of Ibadah, Salah and Sawm*. The Islamic Foundation. islamic-foundation.org.uk

⁹ Ozalp, M. (2016). *God and tawhid in classical Islamic theology and Said Nursi’s Resale-I-Nur*. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis). University of Sydney, Department of Studies in Religion.

¹⁰ Kukkonen, T. (2010). Al-Ghazali on the Significance of Names. *Vivarium* 48 (1/2). 57-74. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41963856>

¹¹ SWAS: Sallallahu alayhi wa salaam: “May Allah’s prayers and peace be with him.”

¹² Sahih Al Bukhari (n.d.). Allah has One Hundred Names Less One (Ninety-Nine): Hadith 7392 of The Book of Tauhid (Islamic Monotheism). Hadith #7392. www.islamicfinder.com/hadith/bukhari/tauhid-islamic-monotheism/7392/

¹³ Hadith of the day.com99-names-of-Allah-swt/ ... retrieved 11 November 2020.

throughout *Surat al-Baqara* (and throughout the entire Quran), provide a linguistic motif for reinforcing some of the tawhid-related messages (themes) embedded in selected (sample) verses of the sura. Among such themes, the Creationist doctrine appears near the beginning of *Surat al-Baqara* in 2:21-2:22 and subsequently in the story of Adam and Eve (in 2:30-2:39), confirming the latter by several attributes of Allah. Since *Surat al-Baqara* is often characterized as a microcosm of the Quran, such as “the Quran in little,”¹⁴ one of our follow-up objectives is to explore how the Creationist doctrine has been employed in other suras of the Quran, relating Allah’s creations to His unique attribute that “He is Capable of doing anything.” Thus, based on meanings and interpretations of each of the (6,000+) words in *Surat al-Baqara*, specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- First, to identify tawhid-related words and classify them into one of the three types of tawhid distinguished above (i.e., TAR, TAI, and TAS).
- Second, to classify Allah’s attributes (TAS: *Tawhid al-Asmaa was-Siffat*) in *Surat al-Baqara* into different categories and to interpret how each of these attributes has been employed in different verses to reinforce some of the major divine messages in the sura.
- Third, to explore how Allah’s attribute that “He is Capable of doing anything” appears in the context of the Creationist doctrine in samples of other suras of the Quran, expanding on some of these concepts introduced in *Surat al-Baqara*.

2.0 METHODS AND DATA

2.1 Literature on *Surat al-Baqara*

Modern English language literature on *Surat al-Baqara* is extensive. Neal Robinson’s classic work on the “veiled text” of the Quran includes a structural classification of the text of *Surat al-Baqara* into six chronological sections.¹⁵ As a follow-up of structural characteristics of the sura, David Smith suggests that the Quran’s thematic repetition has a higher spiritual purpose, i.e., “the Allah-Quran-Muhammad authority structure” provides the point of departure to

¹⁴ Pickthall, M.M. (1977). *The Glorious Quran: Text and explanatory translation*. Muslim World League—Rabita, Mecca, p. 4.

¹⁵ Robinson, N. (1996). *Discovering the Quran: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (1st ed.). SCM Press, pp. 332.

which the text continuously returns in a cyclical manner.¹⁶ Using a similar line of argument, more recently Raymond Farrin presents an innovative “ring structure” of *Surat al-Baqara*.¹⁷ Again, as a follow-up of thematic repetition in this sura, another recent study (a Ph.D. thesis by Nevin Reda El-Tahry) analyzes its narrative structure, focusing on the thesis of textual integrity and coherence in the Qur'an.¹⁸

Whereas the above studies analyze structural characteristics of the entire text of *Surat al-Baqara*, some of the more specialized studies interpret selected themes in the sura, using samples of relevant verses. Thus, using a theoretical assumption of a “singular pillar or axis,” characterized as “the lens of the Adam Narrative,” Klar interprets the structure and coherence of several themes in *Surat al-Baqara*.¹⁹ Using a sample of twenty-seven verses (2:254-281), another study by Abdel Haleem provides an in-depth analysis of “giving in charity” and “lending without usury.”²⁰

2.2 Our Methods: Content Analysis and Context Analysis

Compared to the specialist approaches above, our research is more holistic, both thematically and methodologically. Thematically, our basic assumption is that Allah's attributes in *Surat al-Baqara* (and in the entire Quran) constitute a recurring reminder of these elements of the tawhid doctrine, providing perhaps the most coherent continuum throughout the text of the Quran. Methodologically, we focus on the semantics of divine messages, analyzing how different iterations of such messages in Arabic are embedded in some cases in single verses and, often, in longer passages. To operationalize this approach, we have adopted the familiar social science methods of *content analysis* and *context*

¹⁶ Smith, D.E. (2007). The structure of al-Baqara. *The Muslim World*, 9 (12), 121-126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2001.tb03710.x>

¹⁷ Farrin, R.K. (2010). *Surat al-Baqara: A structural analysis*. *The Muslim World* 100 (1), 17-32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2009.01299.x>

¹⁸ El-Tahry, N.R. (2010). *Textual integrity and coherence in the Qur'an: Repetition and narrative structure in Surat al-Baqara*. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis). University of Toronto, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, pp. 224.

¹⁹ Klar, M.O. (2015). Through the lens of the Adam Narrative: A reconsideration of *Sūrat al-Baqara*.” *Journal of Quranic Studies* 17 (2), 24-46. <https://doi.org/10.3366/JQS.2015.0194>

²⁰ Haleem, M.A.S. (2017). Threefold debt security in the Quran: *āyat al-dayn*. *Journal of Quranic Studies*, 19 (1), 137-142. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2017.0273>

analysis. *Content analysis* is “an extensively used research method or technique for the quantitative and qualitative study of communication messages in various formats including text, audio, and visual. It allows researchers to determine the frequency with which words, concepts, and phrases are used as well as the meanings, narratives, and themes of a message.”²¹ As an application of this method, Rane²¹ has conducted an exhaustive analysis of higher objectives of covenants in Islam by using a qualitative content analysis of the text of the Quran. In contrast, some of the quantitative content analyses of the Quran have used advanced statistical methods for studying certain specific topics, such as “information ethics in Quran.”²² In our study, we have used more elementary statistics, such as frequency, sum and percentages, for estimating quantities of some of the key concepts, such as the numbers of words devoted to different types of tawhid and Allah's attributes.

The bulk of the literature on *context analysis* relate to the educational theory of learning. Therefore, most of the studies on this topic are theoretical, pedagogical, and experimental.^{23, 24} For interpreting contexts of divine messages in the Quran, we have adopted the meaning of context as a broader message of “the parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage and can throw light on its meaning.”²⁵ We have operationalized this definition by considering context analysis as an essential part of *discourse analysis*, which may be defined as: “a method of analyzing the structure of texts or utterances longer than one sentence; taking into account both their linguistic content and their sociolinguistic

²¹ Rane, H. (2023). Higher objectives (*maqāsid*) of covenants in Islam: A content analysis of *ahd* and *mīthāq* in the Quran. *Religions*, 14 (4), 514: <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040514>

²² Mehrandasht, A., Familrouhany, S.A.A., Moghaddam, A.I. & Ghods, A. (2015). Surveying information ethics in Quran: A quantitative content analysis. *Health, Spirituality and Medical Ethics*, 2 (1), 18-25. <https://doaj.org/article/9fe4ca9d7bbe47ce984e81f956a0a484#>

²³ Tarpey, T. and Delprete, D. (2019). Text and context: The role of context in discourse analysis. *Columbia Academic Commons*. doi/10.7916/d8-1tfq-qj66

²⁴ Kwon, E.S., Nyilasy, G., King, K.W. & Reid, L.N. (2021). Putting things into context: A meta-analysis of media context effects on attitudinal outcomes. *Journal of advertising*, 50 (3), 330-347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2021.1895920>

²⁵ Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Context. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved June 18, 2023, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/context>

contexts.”²⁶ In our interpretations, whenever some of the attributes of Allah seem to relate to a broader message conveyed through a coherent passage, consisting of several consecutive verses, we have focussed more on discourse analysis of major themes than on the semantics of individual verses. We characterize this type of interpretation as context analysis.

2.3 Nature of data collection

Data on tawhid. This study is based mainly on primary data generated from interpretations of the entire text of Surat al-Baqara. We have generated data on three types of tawhid by reviewing and classifying each of the 6,000+ words in 286 verses in Surat al-Baqara (Table 1). For meanings of each of the verses, initially we reviewed several web-based English translations of the Quran (cited throughout this manuscript). For maintaining consistency in coding, in the final analysis we have used Arabic word counts of a web-based Quranic Corpus²⁷, recording frequency of each key word or a concept expressed in several words. We entered these composite data (i.e., number of words for each of the components of tawhid, i.e., TAR, TAI and TAS in an Excel spreadsheet for calculating some of the elementary statistics, such as frequency, sum and percentages (presented in Table 1).

Data on Allah's attributes. Allah's attributes refer to one or more of His unique characteristics. Allah's names are also unique to Him. However, they differ from one another in their relative lengths. Whereas, most of Allah's names consist of one word (for example: *Al-Qadir: The Able*), His attributes are expressed throughout the Quran in longer statements (for example, 24:5: *Innal-laha alā kulli shayin Qadīr: "Surely Allah is Most Capable of Everything"*)²⁸. Very few of Allah's names contain more than one word. Exceptions include: 3:26: *Mālikal-Mulk (Lord over all authorities)*²⁹ and in 55:78: *Dhīl-Jalāli wal-Ik'rām (Lord, Full of Majesty and Honour)*.³⁰ Another difference between Allah's names

²⁶ [Canadian Oxford Dictionary. \(2005\). Discourse analysis. In The Canadian Oxford Dictionary \(2nd ed\). DOI: 10.1093/acref/9780195418163.001.0001](#)

²⁷ Quranic Arabic Corpus. (n.d.). *The Quranic Arabic Corpus – Word by Word Grammar, Syntax and Morphology*. www.corpus.quran.com/wordbyword.jsp

²⁸ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

and His attributes is that the total numbers of His attributes exceed ninety-nine names of Allah.³¹ Substantively, both of them are closely interrelated because each of Allah's ninety-nine names constitutes a part of His Attributes. For our purpose, we have collected data only on Allah's attributes, irrespective of their length. Most often they consist of more than one word.

At the initial stage of interpretation, studying Allah's attributes is essentially a semantic and syntactical analysis of individual verses. While most of the attributes appearing at the end of a verse act as a conclusion of the verse, *Ayat al-Kursi* (2:255) opens the verse with one of the attributes of Allah and includes several other attributes throughout this relatively long verse (consisting of 50 words), concluding the verse with another attribute. Our preliminary review indicates that, although this style is not repeated exactly in this form in any other verses of the Quran, there are several other verses throughout the Quran in which Allah's attributes are embedded somewhere inside the verses other than at the end. To minimize complexities of data collection, we have retrieved Allah's attributes that appear only at the end of sample verses. The resulting frequency data, with some details of data organization, are presented in Table 2.

3.0 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

3.1 Types of tawhid messages in *Surat al-Baqara* (Table 1)

As indicated above, we have studied Allah's attributes in *Surat al-Baqara* in successive steps. Since our basic assumption is that Allah's attributes constitute an essential component of tawhid, initially

Table 1: *Tawhid-related Messages in Surat al-Baqara*

Tawhid-related messages	TAR: Number of verses (number of words)	TAI: Number of verses (number of words)	TAS: Number of verses (number of words)	Tawhid-related verses (number of
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³¹ Lawrence, B. B. (1996). Book review: Burrell, D.B. & Daher, N. (1992, transl.). Al-Ghazali: The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of the God. Islamic Text Society. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 55 (3), 238-239. <https://journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/373855>

				words: % of the sura)
Section 1. Introduction of three types of tawhid Verses 1-39 (39 verses): 587 words (9.6% of 6116 words)	20 (199)	3 (18)	7 (28)	30 verses (245 words: 4% of 6116 words)
Section 2. Invitation to Children of Israel to accept Islamic tawhid and Allah's Guidance Verses 40-121 (82 verses): 1540 words (25.18% 6116 words)	54 (482)	4 (28)	12 (54)	70 verses (564 words: 9.2% of 6116 words)
Section 3. Focus on the Worship of Allah Verses 122-152 (31 verses): 609 words (10% of 6116 words)	15 (173)	16 (200)	9 (42)	40 verses (415 words: 6.79% of 6116 words)
Section 4. Divine Guidance for new Muslims Verses 153-242 (90 verses): 2044 words (33.44% of 6116 words)	55 (749)	11 (146)	39 (162)	105 verses (1057 words: 17.2% of 6116 words)
Section 5. Climax of messages on tawhid Verses 243-283 (41 verses): 1232 words (20.14% of 6116 words)	40 (918)	3 (17)	23 (93)	66 (1028 words: 16.81% of 6116 words)
Section 6. Final invocation proclaiming Allah's Mastery of the Universe and seeking His forgiveness	3 (58)	2 (41)	1 (5)	6 (104 words: 1.7% of 6116 words)

Verses: 284-286 (3 verses): 104 words (1.7% of 6116 words)				
Grand total: 286 Verses 6116 words in 286 verses	187 verses (65% of 286 verses) 2579 words (42% of 6116 words)	39 verses (14% of 286 verses) 450 words (7% of 6116 words)	91 verses (32% of 286 verses) 384 words (6% of 6116 words)	Number of Verses exceed 286* 3413 words (56% of 6116 words)

TAR: *Tawhid al-Rububiyya*; TAI: *Tawhid al-’Ibadah*; TAS: *Tawhid al-’Asmaa was-Siffat*

*Total numbers of verses in column 5 exceed 286 because of overlap of multiple concepts.

Source: Original table prepared by the author.

we have identified different types of tawhid messages in certain verses of the sura, following an exhaustive assessment of the semantics (in Arabic) of each of its 286 verses. The findings of this assessment are presented in Table 1. Surat al-Baqara is the longest chapter (sura) of the Quran containing a wide range of narratives in different sections of the sura. To assess variations in frequencies of tawhid-related messages from one section of the sura to another, we have classified the entire text in Table 1 into six different sections, based mainly on Neal Robinson’s structural classification of the sura,¹⁵ but our focus is more on tawhid-related messages.

Our main finding on tawhid-related messages indicates that such messages are a dominant theme in the entire sura. From a historical perspective, this makes sense because Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) received divine revelations emphasizing the doctrine of Absolute Monotheism, i.e., the doctrine of Tawhid (Oneness of Allah) at a time when polytheism and worship of idols were the prevalent religious practices in the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere. At the same time, original monotheistic religions of Prophets Abraham, Moses and Jesus had also been corrupted by many of their followers by including certain elements of multiple gods, such as the “three heads” or the Trinity of Christianity. In Surat al-Baqara, there are frequent references to the Children of Israel (Jews) who had

been adhering to such distortions of original monotheism. Consequently, many verses in this sura condemn polytheism, worship of idols, and distortions of original monotheistic faiths.

Results of our frequency counts indicate significant differences in the amounts of texts devoted to different types of tawhid. First, nearly two-thirds of 286 verses contain messages of *Tawhid al-Rububiyya* (TAR), accounting for 42% of 6,116 words in the sura (Table 1, last row). One of the reasons for the dominance of TAR-related messages is that this type of tawhid includes several articles of Islamic faith, the very foundation of Islam. For example, beliefs in divine revelation (such as the Quran) and the Creationist and the Resurrection doctrines are among the essential articles of Islamic faith. These have been repeated several times throughout *Surat al-Baqara*, such as in 2:4:

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

*“[and] who believe in the Book We have sent down to you (i.e., the Quran) and the Books sent down before you, and firmly believe in the Hereafter”*³²

Second, the numbers of verses and words dealing with different forms of worship of Allah (TAI) are much more limited: only 39 verses (14% of 286 verses) containing even fewer percentages of words (7% of the total) convey TAI messages in sharp and short divine commandments to worship Allah alone, often repeating prayer (*Salat*) and charity (*Zakat*) as the forms of worship. Verse 2:110 is an example:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِن خَيْرٍ نَّحْدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

*“Establish the Salat and pay the Zakat. You will find with Allah whatever good you send forward for your future. Allah is watching everything you do.”*³³

Among the six sections of this sura, section 3 has the highest frequency of words on worship of Allah, containing 200 words (3% of 6116 words) in 16 verses. Here, a major component of some of the verses relates to Prophet Abraham's (Ibrahim's) historic prayers to Allah. Verse 2:128 typifies such a prayer:

³² Maududi, A.A. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from [www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...](http://www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch...)

³³ Ibid.

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيمُ

“Our Lord! Make us both fully submit to you and from our descendants a nation that will submit to you. Show us our rituals, and turn to us in grace (TAI). You are truly the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful” (TAS).³⁴

Finally, data on Allah’s attributes (TAS) indicate that (at least) 89 out of 286 verses, i.e., nearly one in three verses, include elements of TAS though the numbers of words (384 words) describing different attributes of Allah account for only 6% of the total words of the sura (Table 1, last row). The reason for such brevity of expressions for Allah’s attributes is that most often they appear as a shorter segment of a longer verse near the end of each of the verses. Regarding the sectional distribution of the TAS data, sections 4 and 5, i.e., the second half of the sura contain greater frequencies of Allah’s attributes.

3.2 Frequencies of Allah’s Attributes (TAS) in *Surat al-Baqara* (Table 2)

In the second step of the study our focus is on Allah’s attributes. Broadly speaking, Allah’s attributes may be divided into two categories: (a) Essential attributes (*Sifat dhatiyah*) or Divine Essence, and (b) Positive attributes (*Sifat subutiyah*).^{35,36,37} The Positive attributes may further be classified into eight categories:

- Allah is alive (*Hayah*)
- Allah knows everything pre-eternally (*Ilm*)
- Allah is free to do anything He wishes (*Irada*)
- Allah has power over everything (*Qudrah*)

³⁴ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Questions on Islam. (n.d.). What are Allah’s Attributes? How many groups are they divided into? <https://questionsonislam.com/article/what-are-allahs-attributes-how-many-groups-are-they-divided> ... retrieved 14 February 2023.

³⁶ Zahid, M.A. (2022). 8 Ways of understanding the Attributes of Allah.” www.themuslimvibe.com/faith-islam/8-ways-of-understanding-the-attributes-of-allah/ ... retrieved 15 February 2023.

³⁷ Khan, M.A. (2020). On the Attributes of Allah. Enter the Sunnah: Living Islam in North America. www.enterthesunnah.com/ ... retrieved in February 2023.

- Allah hears everything (*Sam`*)
- Allah sees everything (*Basar*)
- Allah speaks without needing any organs or voice (*Kalam*)
- Allah creates out of nothing (*Takwin*)

The results of our frequency counts indicate that there are *at least* 89 verses in *Surat al-Baqara* that contain *at least* 21 attributes of Allah (out of more than 100 attributes of Allah in the Quran) (Table 2). The frequency data in Table 2 are highly significant when these are compared to *Surat al-Baqara*'s share of the total numbers of verses in the Quran. Although this is the longest sura of the Quran, it contains only about 5% of 6,238 verses of the Quran (286 verses/6,238 verses*100 = 4.6%). Whereas, nearly one in three verses contains one of the attributes of Allah (286/89 = 1 in 3.2 verses). This amounts to one of the highest frequencies of Allah's attributes in all of the longer suras of the Quran. More substantively, at least 21 attributes of Allah described in 89 verses represent a comprehensive data base. Among the 21 attributes, three most frequent attributes that appear in *Surat al-Baqara* are also among some of the most repeated attributes throughout the Quran. In particular, Allah's attribute that "*He Knows Everything*" (n = 33) is also the most repeated attribute in the Quran, which appears in at least 95 verses, if not more, depending on inclusions of some of the other similar attributes.³⁸ The second most frequent attribute in *Surat al-Baqara*, i.e., "*Allah is Capable of Everything*" (n = 13) is directly related to the Creationist doctrine, which is introduced for the first time at the beginning of this sura. The third most frequent attribute (n = 12) indicates *Allah's Mercy and His Acceptance of Repentance*, which is again repeated extensively throughout the Quran (n = 92).

3.3. *Examples of independent themes in single verses (ITS)*

Very few of the attributes of Allah appear exclusively in single verses without relating these attributes to other verses. Some of them may be related to a preceding verse or to a subsequent verse or to a broader concept elsewhere in the sura. There are at least three different varieties of ITS verses. First, some of the ITS verses are relatively short, often containing divine guidance on a specific topic, which is further confirmed by one of Allah's attributes. Verse 2:244 is an example:

³⁸ IslamiCity.org (n.d.). Topics: Allah's Attributes, retrieved from: <https://www.islamicity.org/QuranSearch/index.php?q=topics>

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“Fight in the cause of Allah, and know that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing”³⁹

In this verse, five of its nine words describe one of the attributes of Allah independently without relating its message to either the preceding or the subsequent verse.

Table 2: Frequencies of Allah’s Attributes in *Surat al-Baqara*

Attribute (Approximate English translation):	List of verses (in order of frequencies)
“Allah Knows Everything” (or similar): Sample verses interpreted in the text: 2:244, 2:282	33 verses (n = 33): 29, 30, 32, 33, 74, 77, 85, 95, 115, 127, 137, 140, 144, 149, 158, 181, 215, 216, 224, 227, 231, 232, 234, 244, 246, 247, 256, 261, 268, 271, 273, 282, 283
“Allah is Capable of Everything” (or similar)	13 verses (n = 13): 19, 20, 106, 109, 129, 148, 209, 220, 228, 240, 259, 260, 284
“Allah is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful” (or similar)	12 verses (n = 12): 37, 54, 128, 160, 173, 182, 192, 199, 218, 225, 226, 235
“Allah is All-Seeing of what you do” (or similar)	5 verses (n = 5): 96, 110, 233, 237, 265
“Allah is the Lord of Infinite Bounty” (or similar)	3 verses (n = 3): 105, 243, 251
“Allah is Severe in punishment”	3 verses (n = 3): 196, 202, 211
“Allah does not Guide the people who are wrong-doers”	3 verses (n = 3): 258, 264, 276
“Allah is Most Compassionate toward mankind”	2 verses (n = 2): 143, 207
“Allah is always with the steadfast”	2 verses (n = 2): 153, 249

³⁹ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

“Allah is Self-Sufficient, Most Forbearing”	2 verses (n = 2): 263, 267
“Allah is certainly the enemy of disbelievers:”	1 verse: 98
“Allah is the Most Beneficent, Most Merciful”	1 verse: 163
“Allah does not like the transgressors”	1 verse: 190
“Allah is with those who fear Him”	1 verse: 194
“Allah certainly loves the good-doers”	1 verse: 195
“Allah is swift in reckoning”	1 verse: 202
“Allah does not like corruption”	1 verse: 205
“Allah’s help is always near”	1 verse: 214
“Allah knows and you do not know”	1 verse: 216
“Allah does what He wills”	1 verse: 253
“He is the Most High, Most Great” Sample verse interpreted in the text: 2:255	1 verse: 255
TOTAL	89 verses

Source: Original table prepared by the author

Second, whereas many ITS verses are relatively short, some of the longer verses are self-contained without the need for referring to either the preceding or the subsequent verses. Containing 50 words, *Ayat al-Kursi* (2:255) is a classic example of such an independent verse in which Allah has revealed several of His essential attributes, for which this verse is often considered as the heart of the Quran. *Ayat al-Kursi* starts with two of Allah’s conjoint attributes, which are: *al-Hayu* (the Ever-Living) and *al-Qayūm* (the Sustainer of all that exists). The entire text of the verse contains several other attributes of Allah. One such attribute appears exclusively in *Ayat al-Kursi*: “Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him.”⁴⁰ In two other semiotic expressions, *Ayat al-Kursi* also includes one of Allah’s positive attributes related to the Creationist doctrine: “To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth” and “His Seat (*Kursi*) extends over the heavens and the earth.”⁴¹ Further, the verse alludes to the Resurrection doctrine: “He knows what happens to them (humans) in this world,

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

and what will happen to them in the Hereafter.”⁴² As the verse starts with two of Allah's attributes, it also concludes with two of His conjoint attributes:

وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

“And He is the Most High, the Most Great”⁴³

Third, some of the exceedingly long verses are self-contained without the need for referring to either a preceding or a subsequent verse/s. Containing 128 words, 2:282 is the longest verse of the Quran. It provides elaborate guidelines for writing a contract for taking and returning monetary loans. The verse specifies the procedure for appointing a man and two women as witnesses for taking such loan, implying the importance of returning the loan amount at a specific time or at agreed terms. To emphasize that Allah knows everything, implying the contents of a written contract, 2:282 concludes with one of the pedagogical attributes of Allah:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

“So be afraid of Allah; and Allah teaches you. And Allah has perfect knowledge of all things”:⁴⁴

3.4 Major themes in selected passages (MTP) (Table 3)

We define here a passage that has at least three consecutive verses. Each of these passages consists of a distinct theme that incorporates at least one of the attributes of Allah. The beginning and the end of a passage are distinguishable from both the previous and subsequent verses. Data in Table 3 indicate that we have identified at least seventeen such passages in *Surat al-Baqara*, consisting of a total of 105 verses. In all, there are 42 verses (in 17 passages), each containing one of the attributes of Allah. It should be stressed here that these attributes constitute parts of total numbers of attributes listed in Table 2 (i.e., these are overlaps).

⁴² Khan, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

Consequently, the most frequent attribute in seventeen passages deals with Allah's knowledge of everything, consistent with this

Table 3: Allah's Attributes in Selected Passages (Themes) of *Surat al-Baqara*

Selected passages (consecutive verses): General concepts (in English)	Examples of Allah's attributes in sample verses (English and Arabic)
2:15-20: Allah's power of taking away sinners' sights	2:20: Most surely Allah has power over everything. إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
2:21-29: Creationist and Resurrectionist doctrines	2:29: And He has perfect knowledge of all things. وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ
2:30-39: Adam Narrative	2:30: "I know what you do not know." إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 2:32: You are truly the All-Knowing, All-Wise. إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ 2:37: Surely He is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful. إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ
2:67-74: Naming of this sura	2:74: And Allah is never unaware of what you do. وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ
2:109-115: Focus on your religion, i.e., Islam	2:109: Surely Allah is Most Capable of Everything. إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ 2:110: Surely Allah is All-Seeing of what you do. إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ 2:115: Surely Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing. إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَسِعَ عَلَيْهِمُ
2:124-133: Abraham's prayer	2:127: You are indeed the All-Hearing, All-Knowing. إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

	<p>2:128: You are truly the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ</p> <p>2:129: Indeed, You alone are the Almighty, All-Wise.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ</p>
<p>2:142-150: Change of the Qibla</p>	<p>2:142: He guides whoever He wills to the Straight Path.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ</p> <p>2:144: And Allah is never unaware of what they do.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفْلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ</p> <p>2:148: Surely Allah is Most Capable of everything.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ</p> <p>2:149: And Allah is never unaware of what you all do.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفْلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ</p>
<p>2:159-162: Allah's acceptance of Repentance</p>	<p>2:160: [for] I am the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ</p>
<p>2:180-182: Last Will before death</p>	<p>2:181: Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ</p> <p>2:182: Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ</p>
<p>2:190-194: Fight in the cause of Allah in self-defence</p>	<p>2:190: Allah does not like transgressors.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ</p> <p>2:192: then surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ</p> <p>2:194: and know that Allah is with those who are mindful of Him.</p>

	<p>وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ</p>
<p>2:196-199: Perform Hajj and Umrah</p>	<p>2:196: and know that Allah is severe in punishment.</p> <p>وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ</p> <p>2:199: Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.</p> <p>إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ</p>
<p>2:201-205: Allah's rewards and retributions.</p>	<p>2:202: Surely Allah is swift in reckoning.</p> <p>وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ</p> <p>2:203: and know that to Him you will all be gathered.</p> <p>وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ</p> <p>2:205: Allah does not like mischief.</p> <p>وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ</p>
<p>2:216-218: Justification for fighting in the Sacred month</p>	<p>2:216: Allah knows and you do not know.</p> <p>وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ</p> <p>2:218: And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.</p> <p>وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ</p>
<p>2:226-237: Marital matters, especially dealing with divorce</p>	<p>2:226: Then Allah is certainly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.</p> <p>فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ</p> <p>2:227: Then Allah is indeed All-Hearing, All-Knowing.</p> <p>فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ</p> <p>2:228: And Allah is Almighty, All-Wise.</p> <p>وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ</p> <p>2:231: And know that Allah has perfect knowledge of all things.</p> <p>أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ</p> <p>2:232: And Allah knows, whereas you do not know.</p> <p>وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ</p>

	<p>2:233: And know that Allah is All-Seeing of what you do.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ</p> <p>2:234: And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ</p> <p>2:235: And know that Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ</p>
2:249-251: David and Goliath story	<p>2:249: For Allah is with those who are patient in adversity.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ</p> <p>2:251: Allah is limitless in His bounty unto all the worlds.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">اللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ</p>
2:271-274: Right way of charity	<p>2:271: And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ</p>
	<p>2:273: [Whatever charity you give], Allah is aware of it.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ</p>
2:284-286: Final Invocation	<p>2:284: And Allah is Most Capable of everything.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ</p>

Source: Original table prepared by the author. **Bold** indicates passages interpreted in the text. All of the sample verses listed in this table are parts of total numbers of verses listed in Table 2.

Table 2. This is followed by Allah's acceptance of repentance (very similar to the data in Table 2). Out of the seventeen MTPs in Table 3, we interpret (below) divine discourse in only six passages, which share a common theme that Allah has created humans as a part of His Grand Design of Creation of the Universe and life on the earth for the purpose of worshipping Him alone.⁴⁵ Thus, each of

⁴⁵ Verse 2:21: see tafsir #40 relating to the Creationist doctrine, in Ali, Y. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

the six passages deals either with the Creationist doctrine directly or with the worship of Allah.

(i) *Creationist doctrine and the Resurrection doctrine: Passage 2:21-2:29*

Containing only 192 words in nine verses, this passage near the very beginning of the sura includes several fundamental articles of Islamic faith. In a sharp and short divine command, 2:21 introduces the Creationist doctrine suggesting it as a rationale for humans to worship Him:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O people! Adore (worship) your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that you may have the chance to learn righteous.”⁴⁶

The Creationist doctrine is expanded in 2:22 which states that not only Allah has created the earth and the heavens (sky), He also regulates environmental operations of the earth sending rainfall from the sky, resulting in growth of trees and fruits as human sustenance. The Resurrection doctrine, a corollary of the Creationist doctrine, is implied in 2:24 where Allah warns unbelievers of Hellfire (following death and resurrection). Belief in divine revelations (such as the Quran) is another basic article of Islamic faith. This passage devotes two of its verses (2:23 and 2:24) on this topic, challenging disbelievers to produce a verse similar to the one (anyone) revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). The passage comes back to the Resurrection doctrine by introducing the concept of Paradise, a Garden under which rivers/springs flow and in which abundant fruits and “pure spouses” are available for perpetual enjoyment (2:25). Invoking Allah’s knowledge of creation of everything in the earth and in the heavens (“seven heavens),” the passage concludes in verse 2:29 with “His Knowledge of everything,” which is the most frequent attribute of Allah in the Quran:

وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

“And He has perfect knowledge of all things.”⁴⁷

(ii) *Adam Narrative: Passage 2:30-2:39*

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

Continuing with the broader theme of the Creationist doctrine, this passage refers for the first time to the story of Adam and Eve, when angels obeyed Allah's command to prostrate to Adam, whereas Iblis (Satan) refused to do so because of his claim of superiority owing to his origin from fire, compared to Adam's composition of clay. In this context, Allah's rejection of this claim by Iblis is emphasized by His most striking reference to Adam as a "*Khalifa* (a vicegerent), establishing human supremacy on earth, which is most suitably rendered by the expression: ... he shall inherit the earth."⁴⁸ Characterized as the "Adam narrative,"⁴⁹ cited earlier, this story also refers to the downfall of Adam and Eve from the Paradise (Garden) due to their forbidden temptation.

The passage is particularly rich in Allah's attributes. Thus, when the angels asked Allah if placing Adam and his descendants on the earth would cause corruption and bloodshed, Allah responded (in 2:30): "*I know what you do not know.*" The angels agreed spontaneously displaying their allegiance to Allah by declaring (in 2:32): "*It is you who are the Knowledgeable and wise.*" When Adam succeeded in responding to Allah's command by recounting some of the requested names, Allah confirmed that (in 2:33): "*I know the secrets of the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you reveal and what you conceal.*" Further, when Adam received words from his Lord [of His forgiveness of him], verse 2:37 invokes Allah's attribute:

إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

*"Surely He is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful."*⁵⁰

Although this story introduces Adam as the first human on the earth, some of the details of his creation by Allah from an inanimate object (clay) to an animate body (i.e., a full-fledged living human being), are explained in large numbers of verses throughout different suras of the Quran.

(iii) Naming of *Surat al-Baqara*: Passage 2:67-2:74

This passage is related to the naming of this sura as *al-Baqara* (the Heifer). In an earlier event (described in 2:67-2:71), the Jews were asked by Prophet Moses

⁴⁸ Verse 2:30: see tafsir #22 in Asad, M. (n.d.), English translation of the Quran, retrieved from: www.islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

⁴⁹ Klar, M.O. (2015). Through the lens of the Adam Narrative: A reconsideration of *Sūrat al-Baqara*." *Journal of Quranic Studies* 17 (2), 24-46. <https://doi.org/10.3366/JQS.2015.0194>

⁵⁰ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

(Musa AAS)⁵¹ at the command of Allah to sacrifice a heifer for absolving of their sins of worshipping a “golden calf.” While some of the believers adhered to this divine command and slaughtered a cow, most of the children of Israel did not obey this command. On the contrary, they demanded proofs of Allah as a condition of their faith in the new religion (Islam). In the meantime, when someone among them murdered a relative but cast the blame for this crime to one another, 2:72 says: *“This is when a man was killed and you disputed who the killer was, but Allah revealed what you concealed.”*⁵² To solve the murder mystery, Allah then instructed them (in 2:73) to: *“Strike the dead body with a piece of the [slaughtered] cow.”* It was a miracle of Allah that the dead man was (momentarily) revived to identify the real murderer. Invoking the Resurrection doctrine (a corollary of the Creationist doctrine), the second part of 2:73 says: *“This is how easily Allah brings the dead to life, showing you His signs.”* Despite this miraculous event, many misguided Jews continued to deviate from Allah’s truth (monotheism). Referring to this deviation from truth, 2:74 uses a parable of rock for the hardened human heart of disbelievers.⁵³ While some of them submitted to the awe of Allah, the rest did not reveal what was in their heart. In this context, 2:74 concludes with one of Allah’s attributes: *“And Allah is never unaware of what you do.”*⁵⁴

(iv) *Abraham’s Prayer: Passage 2:124-2:133*

The Kaba as the House of Allah is the focus of this passage. It has a long history of construction and reconstruction, purification (i.e., removal of idols from inside it by Prophets Abraham (Ibrahim AAS) and Ishmael (Ismail AAS), and a place of meditation and prayer in the form of bowing, prostrating, and circumambulating around it (2:125). This is where Ibrahim (AAS) prayed to Allah to make Makkah as a city of peace (2:126). Further, when Ibrahim (AAS) and Ismail (AAS) raised the foundation of the Kaba both of them prayed to Allah citing one of His attributes (in 2:127): *“Our Lord! Accept this from us. You are indeed the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”*⁵⁵

⁵¹ AAS or AS: *Alayhi wa salaam*: “Upon him be peace”.

⁵² Verse 41:11: see tafsir #4475 and #4476 in Ali, Y. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran (and commentaries), retrieved from: [www.islamicity.org/Quran/Search ...](http://www.islamicity.org/Quran/Search...)

⁵³ Verse 2:74: see tafsir #82 for Yusuf Ali’s interpretation of the parable of rock similar to the hardened human hearts of sinners. In Ali, Y. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from: [www.islamicity.org/Quran/Search ...](http://www.islamicity.org/Quran/Search...)

⁵⁴ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from [www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...](http://www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch...)

⁵⁵ Ibid.

This passage, consisting of ten consecutive verses, presents the meaning of Islam as “an act of submission to Allah.” Defined in this way, all prophets of Allah were/are Muslims since all of them believed in the doctrine of tawhid and consequently submitted to Him fully. Among them, Prophet Ibrahim (AAS) is considered as an original Muslim, who submitted to Allah and prayed to Him for showing correct rituals of prayers. This passage has also a special place in the history of emergence of Islam (practiced by Prophet Muhammad, SAWS). It includes a reference to Prophet Ibrahim’s prescient prayers appealing to Allah for the emergence of a new nation (renewed Muslims) who would submit to Him in prayers (2:128): “*Our Lord! Make us both fully submit to you and from our descendants a nation that will submit to you. Show us our rituals, and turn to us in grace. You are truly the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.*”⁵⁶ Furthermore, in 2:129, there is a more specific reference to a new prophet, i.e., Prophet Muhammad (SAWS): “*Our Lord! Raise from among them a messenger who will recite to them Your Revelations, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Indeed, You alone are the Almighty, All-Wise.*”⁵⁷

This passage also provides rich data on each of the three types of tawhid. An act of submission to Allah (definition of Islam) is a fundamental article of Islamic faith (TAR). The bulk of the passage deals with the worship of Allah (TAI). As indicated in the preceding examples, divine messages in some of the verses of this passage are confirmed by some of the attributes of Allah (TAS). In other words, the nature of divine discourse in this passage supports one of the working assumptions of our research that interpreting Allah’s attributes is a fruitful methodology for exploring tawhid epistemology of the Quran.

(v) *Qibla: the new direction of prayer for Muslims: Passage 2:142-2:150*

This passage marks the beginning of the second *juz* [chapter]) and addresses the issues associated with the *Qibla*, the direction of prayer. As verse 2:125 confirms, the Kaba—the “Sacred House”—became the place of worship of Allah for the Muslims in the tradition of Prophet Ibrahim (AAS). Consequently, it also became the *Qibla* for the Muslims, i.e., the new direction of prayer for Muslims. This was not always the case. Following Prophet’s emigration (*Hijra*) to Madinah, Muslims used to face towards Jerusalem for their daily prayers (*Salat*)

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

for about sixteen months.⁵⁸ A new revelation (2:143) states clearly: “We assigned your former direction of prayer (i.e., towards the Sacred Mosque adjacent to the Kaba) to distinguish those who would remain faithful to the Messenger (Prophet Muhammad, SAWS) from those who would lose faith.”⁵⁹ Referring specifically to the people of the Book, 2:144 concludes that they knew it well that this commandment came from Allah, although they might not acknowledge it openly. Allah’s attribute at the end of the verse implies this message: “And Allah is never unaware of what they do.”⁶⁰

(vi) *Final Invocation to Allah: passage 2:284-2:286*

It has been suggested that *Surat al-Baqara* is Allah’s response to the prayer for guidance, which is sought by believers directly in the last two verses of *Surat al-Fatiha*, the opening chapter of the Quran:

1:6: أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

“Guide us along the straight path” (TAI)⁶¹

1:7: صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

“the Path of those You have blessed—not those You are displeased with, nor those who are astray” (TAI)⁶²

It appears from these verses that the end of *Surat al-Fatiha* is linked to the beginning of *Surat al-Baqara* in 2:2:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

“This is the Book! There is no doubt about it—a guide for those who are mindful of Allah” (TAR)⁶³

⁵⁸ Verse 2:142: see tafsir # 38 in Khattab, M. (n.d.), tafsir #116 in Asad, M. (n.d.), and tafsir #141 in Ali, Y. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran (and commentaries), retrieved from: www.islamicity.org/Quran/Search...

⁵⁹ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch...

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

The last passage of *Surat al-Baqara* (2:284-2:286), like *Surat al-Fatiha*, ends with the final invocation to Allah. It starts with a prelude to the Creationist doctrine in 2:284, acknowledging that Allah has created everything in the heavens and the earth and linking this theme to the Creationist doctrine at the beginning of the sura (2:21-2:22). Further, the Resurrection doctrine, a corollary of the Creationist doctrine, is implied in parts of 2:284: “*Whether you reveal what is in your hearts or conceal it, Allah will call you to account for it.*”⁶⁴ The verse concludes with one of the attributes of Allah implying His power of doing anything [including Resurrection]:

وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“*Allah has complete power over everything.*”⁶⁵

As a concluding lesson of the sura, some of the articles of Islamic faith (related to TAR) are listed in 2:285: (a) Belief in Allah, (b) Belief in His angels, (c) Belief in His Books (Quran and other scriptures), and (d) Belief in His Messengers (Prophets). Regarding the latter, a major lesson of 2:285 is that “*We make no distinction between any of Allah’s Messengers.*” These concluding themes are again linked to some of the other fundamental articles of Islamic faith, which have been stated at the very beginning of the sura.

2:3: الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

“*who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and donate from what We have provided for them*”⁶⁶

2:4: وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

“*and who believe in what has been revealed to you [O Prophet] and what was revealed before you, and have sure faith in the Hereafter*”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The concluding prayer of the sura (2:286) seeks Allah's mercy and forgiveness for any unintentional mistakes in "our resolve to uphold Allah's truth against all Unbelief."⁶⁸

3.5 *Creationist Doctrine in other Suras*

In the preceding interpretations of six selected passages from Surat al-Baqara, we have been guided by verses 2:21-2:22, which link the Creationist doctrine to the worship of Allah: "O humanity!

Worship your Lord, Who has created you and those before you, so that you may become mindful of Him."⁶⁹ We have used this link as an integrated theme that Allah has created the heavens and the earth and placed humans on the earth (TAR) for the exclusive worship of Him (TAI). Allah's attribute that He is capable of doing everything, especially His Power of Creation out of nothing—a positive attribute called *Takwin*—figures out prominently in the Creationist doctrine. To interpret the *Takwin* attribute, Al-Ghazali, the prominent medieval Muslim scholar and theologian, uses an analogy of a building construction. Such a project requires an architect, a builder and a decorator. In case of Allah, "He Himself is planner and originator and decorator—since He is the Creator, the Producer and the Fashioner."⁷⁰ Although the Creationist doctrine appears in several verses of Surat al-Baqara, most of them provide only brief references to Allah's creations of the heavens and the earth and all forms of life on earth, including humans. Greater clues to these divine creations are embedded in other suras and verses. Because of space limitation, we review below a small sample of verses.

(i) *Creation of the Universe*

Regarding the creation of the universe, verse 41:11 provides a significant insight into the origin of the solar system:

⁶⁸ Verse 2:286: see tafsir # 341 in Ali, Y. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran (and commentaries), retrieved from: [www.islamicity.org/Quran/Search ...](http://www.islamicity.org/Quran/Search...)

⁶⁹ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from [www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...](http://www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch...)

⁷⁰ Lawrence, B. B. (1996). Book review: Burrell, D.B. & Daher, N. (1992, transl.). Al-Ghazali: The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of the God. Islamic Text Society. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 55 (3), 238-239. <https://journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/373855>

ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ

“Then He turned towards the heaven when it was still like smoke, saying to it and to the earth, ‘Submit willingly or unwillingly. They both responded, ‘We submit willingly’⁷¹

This seems to be eerily similar to the Big Bang theory, according to which the earth and the heavens above, including the sun, the moon, stars, planets, galaxies, etc. have been formed from the same ‘smoke’ (the primordial matter). From this we may infer that at one time the earth and the heavens were one connected entity. Then out of this homogenous ‘smoke,’ they formed and separated from each other.⁷² This is further confirmed in verse 21:30: *“Do the disbelievers not realize that the heavens and the earth were once one mass, then We split them apart? And We created from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?”* The theory on the formation of the solar system is completed by verse 41:12 (a continuation of 41:11), which is confirmed by one of the attributes of Allah: *“So He formed the heaven into seven heavens in two days (eons), assigning to each its mandate. And We adorned the lowest heaven (the skies nearest to the earth with lights (stars), and made them secure. That is the design of the Almighty, All-Knowing.”⁷³* The spiritual meanings of “two days (eons)” and “seven heavens” are different from their literal meanings and, therefore, would require cosmological interpretations.⁷⁴

The preceding verses beg a central question: How did Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), who was unlettered, come up with such a deep scientific theory some 1400+ years ago? No one at that time had known about such a theory. A German geologist who has expertise in the origin of the universe, commented on this issue: *“Thinking where Muhammad [SAWS] came from ... I think that it is almost impossible that he could have known about the common origin of the universe, because scientists have only found out within the last few [decades], with very*

⁷¹ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

⁷² Ibrahim, I.A. (1997). *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam* (2nd ed.). Darussalam, Houston. https://archive.org/details/a-brief-illustrated-guide-to-understanding-islam_202105

⁷³ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

⁷⁴ Verse 41:11: see tafsir #4475 and #4476 in Ali, Y. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran (and commentaries), retrieved from: www.islamicity.org/Quran/Search ...

complicated and advanced technological methods, that this is the case.”⁷⁵ The only plausible explanation is that the verses of the Quran are words of God (Allah).

In one respect, the Quran's explanation of the creation of the universe differs from the Big Bang theory. Despite tremendous scientific advances in understanding the Big Bang theory, scientists fail to explain the origin of the primordial matter, the so-called “original smoke” which had been floating in the space before the big bang. Who created it? The Quran provides a plausible explanation that Allah is Capable of creating [something] out of nothing just by uttering His command “Be!” There are several verses in the Quran with this command, notably in *Surat Yasin* in 36:82:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“All it takes, when He wills something to be, is simply to say to it: “Be!” And it is”⁷⁶

This is perhaps one of the most consequential attributes of Allah, since He has created almost everything in this universe at His Will—the solar system, planets and galaxies, life on earth, especially humans—and almost anything imaginable. The Muslim Orthodox Quranic school, popularly known as the Maturidi School of Thought has characterized this unique attribute of Allah as *Takween*.⁷⁷

(ii) *Creation of Adam and other humans*

As postulated above, Allah's awesome power of creation is implied in His positive attribute *Takwin*, i.e., He is Capable of creating something out of nothing. Allah Himself has stated this attribute directly in several suras:

In *Sūrat Maryam*, in 19:67:

أَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِمَّا يَلِكُ شَيْئًا

⁷⁵ Ibrahim, I.A. (1997). *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam* (2nd ed.). Darussalam, Houston. https://archive.org/details/a-brief-illustrated-guide-to-understanding-islam_202105

⁷⁶ Khattab, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

⁷⁷ Questions on Islam. (n.d.). What are Allah's Attributes? How many groups are they divided into? <https://questionsonislam.com/article/what-are-allahs-attributes-how-many-groups-are-they-divided> ... retrieved 14 February 2023.

*“Does man not remember that We created him before when he was nothing?”*⁷⁸

In Surat Suad, in 38:71: When Allah was about to create Adam, He said to the angels:

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰئِكَةِ اِنِّيْ خَلِقُ بَشَرًا مِّنْ طِيْنٍ

*“Remember, when your Lord said to the angel: Truly, I am going to create man from clay.”*⁷⁹

In Surat Suad, in 38:72:

فَاِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِيْ فَقَعُوْا لَهٗ سٰجِدِيْنَ

*“So when I fashioned him and breathed into him (his) soul created by Me, then fall (you) down prostrating yourselves unto him.”*⁸⁰

In Surat Al-Hijr (The Rocky Tract), in 15:33: All of the angels prostrated, except Iblis who protested: *“I am not the one to prostrate myself to a human being, whom You created from sounding clay of altered black smooth mud.”*⁸¹

Besides the creation of Adam, some of the progressions of humans from inanimate to animate stages are described in several suras, such as the creation of humans out of water (25:54), out of dust (22:5 and 30:20), and then finally out of sounding clay (23:12, 30:20, 32:7 and others). Besides the creation of the first human being (Adam AAS), the Quran also describes the origin and evolution of a child in the womb of a mother in stunning details in *Sūrat al-Mu’Minun* (Chapter 23: The Believers), concluding the passage with Allah’s Creationist attribute:

23:13: *“then [We] placed each human as a sperm drop in a secure place.”*⁸²

23:14: *“then We developed the drop into a clinging clot of blood, then developed the clot into a lump of flesh, then developed the lump into bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, then We brought it into a being as a new creation. So Blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators.”*⁸³

⁷⁸ Khan, M. (n.d.). English translation of the Quran, retrieved from www.Islamicity.org/QuranSearch ...

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

Some of the western scientists with expertise in embryology have commented that Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) could not have possibly known such details of embryonic evolution of a child in a mother's womb some 1400+ years ago, simply because no one had such a knowledge at that time (7th century, CE). The most logical conclusion is that these verses were revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) through Angel Gabriel.⁸⁴

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As the title of this article implies, the main purpose of this study is to explore knowledge of tawhid (tawhid epistemology) in the Quran by interpreting Allah's attributes in *Surat al-Baqara* and in a sample of relevant verses in some other suras. This approach has proven to be highly fruitful as we are able to generate a rich set of data and concepts. We have three major findings.

First, focusing on the semantics of each of the verses of *Surat al-Baqara* (6,000+ words in 286 verses) we have classified the entire text of the sura into three categories of tawhid, i.e., *Tawhid al-Rububiyya* (TAR), *Tawhid al-Ibadah* (TAI), and *Tawhid al-Asmaa was-Siffat* (TAS). Frequency data for original Arabic words indicate that TAR-related words dominate the text of this sura, accounting for 42% of its words. Expressed in terms of the numbers of verses, TAR-related words are even more dominant throughout the entire sura, appearing in nearly two-thirds of its 286 verses. Words relating to the worship (*Ibadah*) of Allah (TAI) are much more limited, accounting for only 7% of the words of the sura. Total numbers of words devoted to the attributes of Allah (TAS) are even fewer (6%), mainly because these constitute only small segments of verses near their ends. Despite such brevity of expressions describing Allah's attributes, nearly one in three verses (i.e., in 89 out of 286 verses) contain one or more of Allah's attributes. This amounts to one of the higher frequencies of Allah's attributes among the longer suras of the Quran.

The total numbers of Allah's attributes exceed 100 throughout the Quran, appearing in more than 1100 verses.⁸⁵ As in other suras, some of the attributes are repeated in multiple verses of *Sūrat al Baqara*. Thus, a total of 89 verses contains only 21 attributes. Among them, the most frequent attribute of Allah in *Surat al-Baqara*, as well as in the entire Quran, is: "*Allah Knows everything*" or similar attributes (n = 33). Other leading attributes in this sura include: "*Allah*

⁸⁴ Ibrahim, I.A. (1997). *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam* (2nd ed.). Darussalam, Houston. https://archive.org/details/a-brief-illustrated-guide-to-understanding-islam_202105

⁸⁵ IslamiCity.org (n.d.). Topics: Allah's Attributes, retrieved from: <https://www.islamicity.org/QuranSearch/index.php?q=topics>

is Capable of everything" (n = 13) and "Allah is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful" (n = 12).

Second, by using either *content analysis* or *context analysis* (whichever is relevant) of each of the verses of Surat al-Baqara, our next objective is to assess if Allah's attributes, most often appearing at the end of a verse, reinforce or complement the central message in a verse. The results indicate that some of the longer verses contain adequate messages which are reinforced by one or more of Allah's attributes. We have characterized the contents of such verses as "Independent themes in single verses [ITS]." In contrast, some of the shorter verses are dominated by Allah's attributes without a complete message, implying that these verses contain themes which are carried from one verse to another. In this context, one of our findings is that large numbers of divine messages (themes) are conveyed through multiple verses, characterized as *passages*, defined in this study as at least three continuous verses. We have interpreted six such passages for their relevance to our working assumption that Allah has created this universe and has placed humans on the earth for the purpose of worshipping Him alone. We have characterized the contents of such passages as "Major themes in multiple verses (passages)" [MTP]."

Third, another finding of our study is that, among all divine messages, the Creationist doctrine seems to be one of the most recurring themes of the Quran, emphasizing that Allah has created the heavens and the earth and all forms of life on earth, including humans. For this reason, we have conducted a brief review of the application of this doctrine based on a comparative study of relevant verses of some of the other suras the Quran. The Creationist doctrine is supported by one of the unique attributes of Allah, known as *Takwin* which asserts that Allah has the power of creating something out of nothing. This attribute explains how Allah has created this universe, consisting of galaxies, the solar systems, and all other planets and the earth, just by uttering His command "Be!" to a mass of dense smoky material (primordial material) floating in the space, which was a part of Allah's pre-eternity creation. Although this theme seems to be similar to the Big Bang theory, scientists fail to explain the origin of the primordial material. The *Takwin* attribute also explains how Allah "breathed life" into the inanimate body of Adam (AAS) (formed out of clay), creating the first human being on the earth.

Modern English language literature on Surat al-Baqara is rich. The leading contributions deal with thematic, structural and semantic characteristics of the sura. A major focus is on thematic repetitions and textual coherence. Our contributions are both thematic and methodological. Focusing on the semantics of Allah's attributes, we have applied methods of both content analysis and context analysis, to demonstrate that Allah's attributes in Surat al-Baqara

constitute one of the most recurrent themes in the entire sura, providing perhaps a constant reminder of these attributes as one of the important elements of the doctrine of tawhid.

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