

The Oracle of Gog and Magog: A Social-Rhetorical Interpretation of The Prophetic Discourse in Al-Kahf 83-101

Oleh: Mowafg Abraham Masuwd

Inter-Religious Studies Program, UGM Graduate School

Sahiron Syamsuddin

State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga

Robert Setio

Duta Wacana Christian University

Abstract

As a prophetic narrative, Gog and Magog oracle has a strong influence over many Islamic sects and groups. The analysis and interpretation of God's message within this oracle is a necessity to understand the social, cultural and literary influence of the narrative on religious and non-religious communities. By applying the socio-rhetorical interpretation (intertexture texture), readers can gain more awareness the prophetic discourse which is a part of Allah message to humanity. The main focus of the analysis is the inner texture.

Keywords: *Prophetic, Inner Texture, Eschatology, Gog and Magog*

A. Introduction

Among the common narratives in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and the Qur'an is the narration of Yajuj (Gog) and Majuj (Magog). Moreover, the narrative appears in many other texts, which include the Talmud, Hadith etc. Through ages,

Gog and Magog narrative played an essential role during the time of peace and war as it has the ability to survive and grow up socially and politically. For example, the Islamic State (ISIS) which the most rising and powerful religious group in the Middle East use this oracle in relation to their long-term objectives. The name of ISIS's monthly magazine which distributed in English is (*Dabiq* دابق). It is the name of a village in Syria which mentioned in the hadith as a place of the final battle between the Messiah and the Imam Al Mahdi from one side and the false Messiah and Gog and Magog from the other. The rising of the Islamic state and the return of *Khilafa* is a necessity to the signs of the last days.

B. Research Method: Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation

Over the past, interpreters of Biblical and Qur'anic texts have developed many methods to understand the meaning of these texts. However, a recent trend, especially in biblical scholarship, to merge these methods has emerged and developed by many scholars. One reason for this trend is the modern understanding of texts as being multi-dimensional in nature. Elna Mouton argues that "a growing awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of textual communication during the second half of the twentieth century stimulated the urge for some kind of an integrating, organizing, comprehensive, all-encompassing approach toward the biblical documents"¹ Since then, scholars combine two or more methods to deal with different layers within the text.

The field of Qur'anic studies witnessed the same interest during the early twentieth century. This school dealt with the text from literary, rhetorical and social approaches. The leading figures of this school were Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida and Mustafa al-Maraghi.² Thus,

1 Elna Mouton, *Reading a New Testament Document Ethically* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 25.

2 Muhammad Az-Zahabi, *At-Tafsir wa al-Mufasirun*, vol 2 (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba,

those scholars reopen the doors of *ijtihad* to interpret various layers within Qur'anic text.

Socio-rhetorical interpretation (SRI) is one of these multi-dimensional methods rooted in New Testament's interpretation. It is used to analyze and interpret sacred and non-sacred texts. The field of sacred scriptures has the privilege to use and manipulate this method to examine various texts from various cultural backgrounds. David Aune provides two reasons for this wide range of interest. He argues that socio-rhetorical interpretation features "a constellation of interests that naturally moves an interpreter into programmatic analysis and interpretation of literatures of various kinds in various cultures, both on their own terms and in their own contexts."³ The method overcomes the fallacy of using one's own culture or context to examine texts from foreign origin and nature. For the second reason, he says, "interpreters from various areas of specialty began to apply socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation in their own fields of study."⁴

Robbins defines socio-rhetorical interpretation as "a textually-based method that uses programmatic strategies to invite social, cultural, historical, psychological, aesthetic, ideological and theological information into a context of minute exegetical activity."⁵ The interpreter can use a variety of tools from different areas of knowledge to analyses certain texts.

In addition, he points out that the prefix (socio-) refers to "the rich resources of modern anthropology and sociology that socio-rhetorical interpretation brings to the interpretation of a text."⁶ On the other hand,

2000), 401.

3 Vernon Robbins, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David Aune, 192-219 (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 195.

4 Robbins, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," 195.

5 Vernon Robbins, "Socio-Rhetorical Criticism: Mary, Elizabeth, and the Magnificat as a Test Case," in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, ed. Edgar V. McKnight and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1994), 164.

6 Vernon Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation*

the suffix (rhetorical) refers “to the way language in a text is a means of communication among people.”⁷ Thus, he integrated effectively many research tools, which used in anthropology and sociology, literature and rhetoric in his methodology. The method interacts with many other disciplines such as, “literary criticism, social-scientific criticism, rhetorical criticism, postmodern criticism and theological criticism.”⁸

An important feature of SRI is its ability to accommodate various texts not just the biblical literature.⁹ Thus, interpreters have a new tool to read and interpret certain discourses in the scriptures. Robbins and Newby suggest six socio-rhetorical modes of discourse in early Christian texts, which are wisdom, miracle, prophetic, suffering-death, apocalyptic, and precreation discourse.¹⁰ Each type of discourse is called a rhetorolect. The rhetorolect is “a form of language variety or discourse identifiable on the basis of a distinctive configuration of themes, topics, reasonings, and argumentations.”¹¹ The Qur’an has four kinds of discourse: miracle, wisdom, prophetic, and apocalyptic.¹² The Qur’an emphasizes certain prophetic and apocalyptic aspects in many *suras* (chapters).

Gordon D. Newby paved the way for the extensive use of SRI in Qur’anic studies. He claims “I adduce these examples not to take us through a full socio-rhetorical interpretation of the Quran, or even to begin to exhaust the category of ‘inner texture’ in Robbins’s method, but to show that it is not only possible to apply his systematic method

(Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1.

7 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 1.

8 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 2.

9 Vernon Robbins, “Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation,” 195.

10 Vernon K. Robbins and Gordon D. Newby, “A Prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qur’aan and the Bible,” in *The Bible and Qur’aan: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. John C. Reeves, 23-42 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 31.

11 Vernon K. Robbins, “The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse,” *Scriptura* 59 (1996): 353–62; 356.

12 Vernon K. Robbins and Gordon D. Newby. “A Prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qur’aan and the Bible.” 2003. 31.

to texts outside of the New Testament circle, but one can do so with good effect.”¹³ Among the four discourses in the Qur’an, the prophetic discourses have strong appearance in many chapters. Prophetic figures, themes and narrations are common in the Qura’an and Hadith. Some chapters are dedicated to tell the readers details, which could be studied in parallel with the Hebrew Bible. In fact, almost all the prophets mentioned in the Qur’an were mentioned before in the Hebrew Bible.

C. Inner Texture Analysis of Al Kahf 83-101

The inner texture focuses on “words, word patterns, voices, structures, devices, and modes in the text, which are the context for meanings and meaning-effects that an interpreter analyzes with the other readings of the text.”¹⁴ It guides the whole process of interpretation. It looks for the first meaning or the main meaning of the word. By doing so, Robbins believes the inner texture can yield the “real interpretation of the text.”¹⁵ He suggests six types of inner texture in which researchers can use to understand the internal structure and meaning of a text: repetitive texture, progressive texture, opening-middle-closing texture, narrational texture, argumentative texture and sensory-aesthetic texture.¹⁶

1. Repetitive Texture

Repetitive texture occurs when words or phrases were repeated more than once in a text and in the “multiple occurrences of many different kinds of grammatical, syntactical, verbal, or topical phenomena.”¹⁷ Robbins, also, adds, “Patterns of repetition appear most

13 Newby, G. D. “Quranic Texture: A Review of Vernon Robbins’ *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse and Exploring the Texture of Texts*.” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 70(1998), 93 – 100 . 97

14 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 7.

15 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 30

16 Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* 46.

17 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 8.

clearly when the interpreter first marks the repeated words somehow in the text itself, then exhibits them in some kind of systematic diagram.”¹⁸ Moreover, the repetition of a word or phrase provides the listeners or readers with glimpses into the overall rhetorical movements in the discourse.¹⁹ The result of this repetition affects the perception of the audience and raises the attention to the rhetorical and rhythmic aspects of the language.

Badruddin al-Zarkashi argues that the repetition (*tekrar*) in the Qur’an means “repeating a part of speech either identically or synonymously for the purpose of emphasis.”²⁰ It is one of the rhetorical aspects of the Qur’an which fits the Arabic communities which live in the desert. Al-Suyooti sees repetition as “more eloquent than merely emphasizing and it is reflective of good style, contrary to what some people think.”²¹

Word	Occurrence	Verses
Say	قال	96x2-98-95-94-88-87-86-83
Make	جعل	90-94x2-95-96-98
Lord	رب	98x2-95-87
Way	سبب	92-89-85-84
Found	وجد	86x2-90-93
Reach	بلغ	93-90-86
Punish	تعذب	87x2-86
Dhul-Qarnayn	ذي القرنين	83-86-94
People	قوم	86-90-93
Sun	الشمس	86-90
That day	يومئذ	99-100
Promise	وعد	98x2
Able	استطاعوا ... استطاعوا	97x2
Collect	جمعناهم جمعاً	99x2
Present	عرضنا ... عرضنا	100x2

18 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 8.

19 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 8.

20 al-Zarkashi, Badruddin Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah, al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an [Tahqiq: Muhammad Abu Fadl Ibrahim] (Cairo: Matba' 'Isa al-Bani al-Halabi, 1972) iii, 10.

21 Al-Suyooti, *Al-Itqaan fi 'Uloom al-Qur'aan*, (Mu'sasat al-Nada' edition), 3/280.

The word (*say* قال) is the most repeated word. It appeared nine times in Gog and Magog narrative in Surat Al Kahf. God spoke to Dhul-Qarnayn to give him instructions and directions, in other cases, Dhul-Qarnayn and the people which he met to guide them or help them. Gog and Magog did not speak in the Qur'anic oracle. God's presence through his speech is very strong. Even when Dhul-Qarnayn says something, it is a reported speech. This repetition emphasizes the prophetic and divine nature of Dhul-Qarnayn's journey to the East and West as it was planned and guided by Allah.

The word (*make* جعل) is repeated six times. It is connected to the actions of Allah and Dhul-Qarnayn. The word is repeated in story of building the dam between Gog and Magog from one side the people whom Dhul-Qarnayn met. So, the repetition, here, fits the context of building the dam and then its destruction by Allah.

The repetition of the word (*Lord* رب) in the narrative shows the God's intervention in Dhul-Qarnayn trip to the east and west. Dhul-Qarnayn attributes all his actions to God. He is guided and ordered by God to do what he had done through revelation. Actually the repetition of the word (*Lord* رب) fits the prophetic mission of Dhul-Qarnayn and put him as one of God's agents. It gives him more power and influence.

The word (*way* سبب) is repeated four times in sequence if I consider some translations which translate the word to 'direction / road'. This repetition introduces the directions which Dhul-Qarnayn had traveled. But my translation to the word is 'knowledge' which fits the context. He used knowledge to reach to the East and West.

The repetition of the word (*found* وجد) shows that when Dhul-Qarnayn started his journey, he has no goal. He did not have intention to go to a certain place. It is a journey; it looks like a religious rituals or religious preaching trip. He works as an agent of Allah 'a prophet and king' who change what he find in his journey to fits Allah's commandment.

The word (reach بلغ) is repeated three times in accordance to the directions which Dhul-Qarnayn had reached. Interestingly, the word always refers to the ultimate distance. In regard to the three directions, they refer to the last lands which Dhul-Qarnayn and his army can reach.

The repetition of the word (*punish* تعذب) three times indicates the goal of Dhul-Qarnayn. He had the option of punishing the unbelievers. This repetition indicates that he was a king who has the ability to fight not just his people but also the other nations surrounding them.

The name (*Dhul-Qarnayn* ذي القرنين) appeared three times to refer to the figure that travels east and west. According to *Asbābun Nuzūl*, the Jewish rabbis asked about a man who traveled to these directions. The Qura'nic response did not mention him by name rather by attributes. The repetition of the word (*age/horn* قرن) adds to this figure more strength and power.

The word (*people* قوم) is also repeated three times to refer to the nations which Dhul-Qarnayn has met. They did not mention by name or the exact location. The word is repeated in relation to the people he meet in the east, west, and in the middle or north, but not to Gog and Magog.

The noun (*sun* الشمس) is repeated two times in relation to the directions of Dhul-Qarnayn's trip. One time when he went to the west and saw the sun sets in a 'hot water sprig.' The second time is when he reaches the East where the sun rises.

Two important words refer to the prophetic discourse in the narration. The first one is (*promise* وعد) which is mentioned two times in v. 98. The first one state that the promise of the lord will come and the second assures that the promise of the lord is true. The second word is (*that day* يومئذ) which indicates a future time.

The end of the narrative has three words which repeated twice in each line. The word (*able* استطاعوا ... استطاعوا) is repeated twice in v. 97

with a slight variation in pronunciation. The second is (جمعناهم جمعا) in v. 99 which indicates the gathering of Gog and Magog and the rest of nation in the Day of Judgment. The final repetition is the word (*present* عرضنا ... عرضا) which comes after the gathering of the nations. God will show hell for a while to people.

2. Progressive Texture

The repetition of certain words and patterns creates a progression forward. Robbins points out that the focus on progression within repetition adds more dimension to the analysis, in that: “first, it may lead to observations about progressive texture in the entire work. Second, it may exhibit phenomena that function as stepping stones to other phenomena in the text. Third, it may exhibit a sequence of subunits throughout a span of text.”²² The progressive texture emerges out of repetition of certain words and phrases. It identifies the “sequences of words and phrases throughout the unit,” and “sequence of sub-units”²³ throughout the text.

The progression in the narration is linear in time and space. God gave the permission (Revelation) to his prophet to answer the question about the man who travels east and west. The prophetic answer is introduced by the word (*say* قال). Then the story goes on by introducing the two main directions in which Dhul-Qarnayn had reached using certain ways or knowledge.

The repetition of the two words (*reach* جعل) and (*found* وجد) introduces the second progressive theme. The voice of Dhul-Qarnayn is dominating this stage. It is a narration of his personal journey. When he reaches certain place, he tells his story with the people he found there. Dhul-Qarnayn had the option of punishing the unbeliever or forgiving them. This option leads to the third progressive unite in the narration.

²² Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 10.

²³ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 9-10

The story of Gog and Magog is the core progressive unit in Dhul-Qarnayn's trip. His name is repeated in relation to God's speech as He gave him the power to execute punishment. In this unit, Dhul-Qarnayn did not face those nations behind the mountain (Gog and Magog) like before. He closed the way between them, so, they cannot interact with the people Dhul-Qarnayn has met.

The final progressive unit lies in the repetition of these four words:

1. Promise (وعد)
2. That day (يومئذ)
3. Collect (جمعناهم جمعا)
4. Present (عرضا ... عرضنا)

These repeated words close the progression of the narrative. They put it in the prophetic setting. Dhul-Qarnayn, no longer has a power at the after building the dam. God, again, is in control of the events directly. The word (*promise* وعد) indicates a progression in time. The word (*that day* يومئذ) also adds distance in time for the progression. The two words (*collect* جمعناهم جمعا) and (*present* عرضا ... عرضنا) show the judgment scene which is the second progressive judgment in the narrative. The first one is executed by Dhul-Qarnayn on earth and the final one is executed by God in the doomsday.

83	Say (قال)			Dul Qarnin (ذي القرنين)					
84									
85									
86	Say (قال)	Found (وجد) x2	Reach (بلغ)	Dul Qarnin (ذي القرنين)	people (قوم)				
87	Say (قال)								
88	Say (قال)								
89									
90		Found (وجد)	Reach (بلغ)		people (قوم)				

91									
92									
93		Found (وجد)	Reach (بلغ)		people (قوم)				
94	Say (قال)			Dul Qarnin (ذي القرنين)					
95	Say (قال)								
96	Say (قال)								
97									
98	Say (قال)					Promise (وعد) x2			
99							That day (يومئذ)	Collect (جمعناهم جمعنا)	
100							That day (يومئذ)		Present (عرضنا ... عرضنا)
101									

3. Opening-Middle-Closing Texture

The opening-middle-closing texture refers to the “beginning, body and conclusion”²⁴ of a certain unit of a text. Variations of opening-middle-closing texture and pattern, may occur because the “openings, middles, and closings may have different kinds of textures” and “some endings are simply new beginnings.”²⁵ David Lodge argues that for Aristotle “a beginning is what requires nothing to precede it, an end is what requires nothing to follow it, and a middle needs something both before and after it.”²⁶

24 Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 50.

25 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 19.

26 David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (London: Vintage Books, 2011), 216.

The interpreter should inter-relate the analysis of subunits with analysis of the overall structure to define their function in relation to one another. Robbins sees that “the goal is to discern the persuasive effect of the pans, how they work together, in relation to the persuasive nature of the entire text.”²⁷ Thus, the close analysis of repetitive and progressive textures and opening-middle-closing texture will “be the initial steps in close reading that prepare the interpreter for detailed analysis of narrational, argumentative and aesthetic texture.”²⁸ The opening is in v 83 and the closing is located in vv 99-101. The middle textures could be found in vv 93-94.

Opening

83	And they ask you about the Dhul-Qarnayn. Say: I will tell you some of his news.	وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنْ ذِي الْقَرْنَيْنِ قُلْ سَأَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا
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The opening verse is v. 83. The key is in the second part of the verse, the word (news) the narrative will be about Dhul-Qarnayn’s adventure. The next lines introduce some episodes where Dhul-Qarnayn acts as the divine hero. He punishes the unbelievers, building a wall to keep Gog and Magog behind.

Middle Texture

93	Till he reached a (land) between two mountains, he found a nation whom, barley can make their speech legible.	حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا
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27 Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 50-51.

28 Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 53.

94	They said: O Dhul-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog making corrupting the land, may we pay you a tribute, so, you erect a barrier between us and them?	<p>قَالُوا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِنَّ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا</p>
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The middle lines in the narrative are 93-94 when he met the indigenous people. Those people live without interaction with other nations. Their story is the middle episode before Dhul-Qarnayn change the discourse from what he is doing to what God will do.

Closing Texture

99	And on that day, we let them live together; and the trumpet of the judgment will be blown, and we will gather all of them.	<p>وَتَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا</p>
100	On that day, we shall show Hell to the disbelievers; a quick view.	<p>وَعَرَضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَرَضًا</p>
101	Those who have turned a blind eye to my news and a deaf ear to my warning.	<p>الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غَطَاءٍ عَنِ ذِكْرِي وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ سَمْعًا</p>

Vv. 99-101 ends Dhul-Qarnayn's news by emphasizing the fact that God is behind the journey and the events happened to Dhul-Qarnayn. Two aspects in this closing texture should be noticed. The first is introduced through the picture of Gog and Magog with the rest of nations were mixing with each other like the sea waves, then the horn of the gathering will be blown. The second picture is a quick view of hell and the punishment inside it. This closing texture reflects the opening one which the answer of the question.

4. Narrational Texture

Narrational texture “resides in the voices (often not identified with a specific character) through which the words in texts speak.”²⁹ Robbins believes that the opening words usually presuppose the narrator who speaking the words. He argues that the narrator “may begin and continue simply with “narration”; the narrator may introduce people (characters) who act (the narrator describes their action); the narrator may introduce people who speak (they themselves become “narrators) or “speaking actors”)” the narrator may introduce “written texts” that speak (like Old Testament scripture).³⁰

The narrational texture reveals the “pattern that moves the discourse programmatically forward.”³¹ The occurrence of a particular kind of speech, like a question or a command, creates a “narrational pattern in the discourse.”³² Thus, the repetitive, progressive and Open-Middle – Close textures produce subunits or scenes which depend on linguistic features, such as direct and indirect speech, a question or a command, which constitutes these narrational patterns. For the purpose of my analysis, I will introduce the various scenes in the three oracles depending on the subunits which they create within the overall structure of the oracle.

Dul Qarnyn is the protagonist of the narrative. He is a dynamic character deals with every situation from a different prospective. He had unlimited power and mighty army: “Verily We did make him mighty in the earth, and We granted him the means (of access) to everything” (18:84). He reached the setting-place and the rising-place of the sun. Allah told him “O’ Dhul-Qarnayn! Either you chastise them or you take a way of kindness among them?”(18:86). Also, he

29 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 15.

30 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 15.

31 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 15.

32 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 15.

went to another direction in which he met “a people scarcely able to understand a saying” (18:93). This time, they asked him to build a barrier between them and Gog and Magog. He wanted their help to establish this barrier! Thus, Gog and Magog were not able to scale it nor could they make a hole in it.

The readers are easily empathizing with the personality of Dhul-Qarnayn. He is strong roaming the earth with his army. He fights with some tribes, which refuse God’s call. He helped the weak “people scarcely able to understand a saying” (18:93). However, as a protagonist of the narrative, he does not engage in any direct act with Gog and Magog. Unlike the previous people which he meet in the east and west, Dhul-Qarnayn preferred to follow the advice of those who asked him to build the barrier rather than engaging in a war with Gog and Magog.

Gog and Magog in this narrative are passive static characters who do not have a voice. They “make mischief in the earth” (18:94). So that, their neighbours asked Dhul-Qarnayn to build a barrier between them and Gog and Magog “were not able to scale it nor could they make a hole in it.” (18:97).

Interestingly, in this narrative, there is a reference to Gog and Magog’s neighbours as a people scarcely able to understand a saying. Those people are indigenous who live a simple life. Dhul-Qarnayn had a different prospective in dealing with them. He did not ask them to believe in God rather they asked him for help. Dhul-Qarnayn and his army travel to the East, the West and the North or South. The kernel event in the narrative is the building of the barrier after he refused their tribute. The barrier was described in details: “Bring me pieces of iron. Until, when he had leveled up (the gap) between the two cliffs, he said: Blow! Until, when he had made it (as) fire, he said: Bring me molten copper to pour thereon.” “So they (Gog and Magog) were not able to scale it nor could they make a hole in it.” (18: 96) The dam will not last forever. Dhul-Qarnayn said, “This is mercy from my Lord.

But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it level (with the ground), and the promise of my Lord is ever true” (18:98). Then, Gog and Magog will be free again, mingle with people until the End of Times.

5. Argumentative Texture

Argumentative texture concerns itself with the persuasive arguments of the text’s author based on results from the previous textures examined. It “appears when interpreters use rhetorical resources of analysis in the context of repetitive-progressive, opening-middle-closing and narrational texture.”³³ One of the most obvious forms of argumentative texture is logical or syllogistic reasoning. Logical reasoning is found “in contexts where narrators attribute speech or action to specific people.”³⁴ Robbins indicates that “the discourse presents assertions and supports them with reasons, clarifies them through opposites and contraries, and possibly presents short or elaborate counterarguments. Other reasoning may be described as qualitative. This occurs when the quality of the images and descriptions encourages the reader to accept the portrayal as true and real.”³⁵ Also, he argues that “One of the most characteristic aspects of logical argumentation is the function of unstated premises in the discourse. Identifying and articulating these premises reveals aspects of the argumentative texture in its social and cultural environment that the narrator may never state.”³⁶ I will follow this scheme in examining the texts. First, I will start with the analysis of the major premises then the minor premise and finally to draw a conclusion from the two previous premises.

Major premise	God gave Dhul-Qarnayn power to reward and punish
Minor premise	Dhul-Qarnayn punished according to God’s command
Conclusion	God executed his judgment on people using Dhul-Qarnayn as an agent

33 Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 58-59.

34 Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 59.

35 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 21.

36 Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 59.

The argument in Dhul-Qarnayn narrative depends on the power in which Dhul-Qarnayn has. He is a prophet since he divinely communicates with God and receives orders from Him. The major premise is God endowment of power to Dhul-Qarnayn in v 83. Then it followed by God's decision to let Dhul-Qarnayn choose among the two options which stated in v 85. Therefore, God judges people before they die using Dhul-Qarnayn as an agent of His power.

6. Sensory-Aesthetic Texture

Robbins believes that, the sensory-aesthetic texture “moves beyond inner reasoning into the evocative power of all the senses available to human life and imagination. The very images the discourse selects to communicate its meanings stimulate dimensions of the body that transcend explanation and understanding.”³⁷ It looks for “the range of senses the text evokes or embodies (thought, emotion, sight, sound, touch, smell) and the manner in which the text evokes or embodies them (reason, intuition, imagination, humor, etc.).”³⁸ To examine this texture, researchers can identify and group all aspects of the text that refer to the body organs and their actions.³⁹ Also, Robbins suggests another way to examine the sensory-aesthetic texture by identifying the ‘body zones’ in the rhetorical unit of discourse. He says that “a human being is endowed with a heart for thinking, along with eyes that fill the heart with data; and hands and feet for acting.”⁴⁰

Bruce J. Malina notices that “these three zones comprise the nonintrospective makeup of human beings and are used to describe human behavior throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.”⁴¹

37 Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 92.

38 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 29-30.

39 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 30.

40 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 30.

41 Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 68.

Robbins suggests a list with the key words (nouns and adjectives) associated with this texture:

Zone of emotion-fused thought: eyes, heart, eyelids, pupils, and the activities of these organs – to see, know, understand, think, remember, choose, feel, consider, look at. The following representative nouns and adjectives pertain to this zone as well: thought, intelligence, mind wisdom, folly, intention, plan, will, affection, love, hate, sight, regard, blindness, look; intelligent, loving, wise, foolish, hateful, joyous, sad and the like.

Zone of self-expressive speech: mouth, ears, tongue, lips, throat, teeth, jaws, and the activities of these organs – to speak, hear, say, call, cry, question, sing, recount, tell, instruct, praise, listen to, blame, curse, swear, disobey, turn a deaf ear to. The following nouns and adjectives pertain to this zone as well: speech, voice, call, cry, clamor, song, sound, hearing; eloquent, dumb, talkative, silent, attraction, distractive, and the like.

Zone of purposeful action: hands, feet, arms, fingers, legs, and the activities of these organs – to do, act, accomplish, execute, intervene, touch, come, go, march, walk, stand, sit, along with specific activities such as to steal, kidnap, commit adultery, build, and the like. The following representative nouns and adjectives pertain to this zone: action, gesture, work, activity, behavior, step, walking, way, course, and any specific activity; active, capable, quick, slow, and so forth.⁴²

This texture emphasizes the relation between the language which we speak, the mental process or the way we think and our actions which come as a final result of the previous process. Bruce J. Malina argues “human beings are perceived as fitting into their rightful place in their environments, physical and social, and acting in a way that is typically human by means of their inmost reactions (eyes-heart) as expressed in language (mouth-ears) and/or outwardly realize in activity (hands-feet).⁴³ I will use the science from the narrational texture to analyze the ways in which the sensory-aesthetic texture works within the various scenes appeared in the biblical and Qur’anic text.

⁴² Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 30-31.

⁴³ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 68.

Emotion fused-thought

Verse	English	Arabic
86	Kindness	حُسْنًا
100	Show	وَعَرَضْنَا ... عَرَضًا
88	Believe	آمَنَ
88	Easy	يُسْرًا
91	We knew all about him	أَحْطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا
93	Understand	يَفْقَهُونَ
98	Mercy	رَحْمَةً
101	Eyes	أَعْيُنَهُمْ

The first word witch related to emotion appeared in v 86. Allah gave the options to Dhul-Qarnayn to punish people or show kindness. The word (*kindness* حُسْنًا) refers to kindness and also to beauty. The second word is show. It repeated twice to assure that the unbelievers could see it clearly. The word raises certain fear emotion especially the showing of Hell is happened before the judgment. Those who expect themselves inside it will be punished twice. Before entering when they see it and later when they enter it.

In verse 100, Allah uses the word (*show* عَرَضًا ... وَعَرَضْنَا) to threaten the unbelievers whom will see it before the judgment day. This scene is supposed to be after the opening of the barrier. At that moment, Gog and Magog will mingle with people for a while. Then, the process of judging people start with the blow from one of the angels followed by this quick view of Hell.

The word (*believe* آمَنَ) in verse 88 divides the people into two groups: believes and unbelievers. Dhul-Qarnayn will judge people according to their belief. The word (*easy* يُسْرًا) is among the words which show one positive sides of Dhul-Qarnayn. As a military leader, he achieves Allah's goals in this journey. As a result, he shows mercy

and easiness towards people who believe and follow him. The word (*mercy* رَحْمَةً) appears in v 98 in relation to the dam. The dam will be a mercy from Allah to those people to protect them.

The word *know* which appear in v 91 (*We knew all about him* حَظَّنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا) shows that Allah knows everything in Dhul-Qarnayn journey especially when he met the people between the two mountains where he build the dam to stop Gog and Magog from attacking them. The word (*understand* يَفْقَهُونَ) in v 93 shows the status of those people. They did not have any kind of communication with foreigners before. Thus, they cannot understand a word. In another reading, they could not make their language understandable to others. The last word is *eyes* which one of the five senses. The concluding verse 101 “those whose eyes were blind to My signs, those who were unable to hear.” Although, the unbelievers including Gog and Magog have eyes but they were not able to see the signs of God. So that, they deserve punishment.

Self-expressive speech

Verse	English	Arabic
83	Ask	يَسْأَلُونَكَ
83-86-87-88-94-95-96-98	Say	قُلْ / قُلْنَا / قَالَ / قَالُوا / سَنَقُولُ
83	Recite	سَاءَتْلُو
96-99	Blow	نُفِخَ
101	Hear	سَمِعَا

The first word appears under this category is (*ask* يَسْأَلُونَكَ). In v 83 we read this discourse between Allah, and his messenger. The narration of Dhul-Qarnayn journey is an answer for this question. The answer

is dominated by the group of variation of the root word (قَالَ *say*). This kind of speech is common in prophetic language. Moreover, in v. 83 the word (سَأْتُلُو *recite*) is marking the beginning of the answer. It expresses the divine authority over the answer. The word is used to read the Quran (Quranic recitation: *Telawa*). The word (نُفِّحَ *blow*) in 96 and 99 expresses the active status of the characters participated in building the barrier (v 96) and the angles during the judgement day (v. 99). Finally, the word (سَمِعًا *hearing*) expresses the ability of people to understand what is going on during the Day of Judgment. Although, here, the word comes to show that the unbelievers could not hear the orders of Allah when they were alive, but during the judgment day, they can hear and understand what is happening.

Purposeful actions

Verse	English	Arabic
84-95	<i>Established</i>	مَكَّنَّا
84	Give	وَأَتَيْنَاهُ
85	Travelled on	فَأَتَّبِعَ / أَتَّبِعَ
86/87 x2	Punish	تُعَذِّبُ / نَعَذِّبُهُ / فَيُعَذِّبُهُ
88	Did (act)	وَعَمِلَ
94	Ruining this land (corrupted)	مُفْسِدُونَ
94	Pay you Build (make)	نَجْعَلُ / تَجْعَلُ
95	Strength	بِقُوَّةٍ
96	Bring	أَتُونِي X ٢
96	Fill	سَاوَى
97	Could not (not able)	اسْتَطَاعُوا / اسْتَطَاعُوا
99	Surge like waves	يَجُوحُ
99	Gather	فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا

Since the narrative of Dhul Qarnin has the episode of building the barrier, the purposeful-action words dominates the narration. He first word is (*established* مَكَّنًا) which indicates that Dhul-Qarnayn's power is from Allah. The second word is (*give* وَأَتَيْنَاهُ) where Allah affirms the source of Dhul-Qarnayn's power. Allah assures that He gave Dhul-Qarnayn the means of knowledge to recognize the good and evil. Thus, he can punish or reward.

The most important action in the narrative is the journey to the corners of earth which Dhul-Qarnayn accomplished. The word (*travelled on* أَتَبَعَ) is an indication that the journey is planned by Allah for certain reasons. The readers can see this when they did not know what happened in the two main directions. On the other hand, the third direction (the North) has the core episode when Dhul-Qarnayn build the barrier.

Dhul-Qarnayn acted as an agent of Allah when he reward and punish the unbelievers. The word (*punish* تُعَذِّبُ) is used to show the act of Dhul-Qarnayn. No word is mention in regard to the rewarding of the believers rather than: "those who believed and did good deeds will have the best of rewards." (88) The key in Dhul-Qarnayn understands of reward and punishment system is the word "act or did وَعَمِلَ". It is the action of people which brings the reaction of Dhul-Qarnayn towards them. Thus, in Gog and Magog episode, it is their actions which lead Dhul-Qarnayn to build the barrier to prevent them from communication with the other nations. The use of the word (*ruining this land* مُفْسِدُونَ) shows the action of Gog and Magog before Dhul-Qarnayn arrives to their territory.

As soon as Dhul-Qarnayn met the indigenous nation, they tried to understand each other for a reason. They told him about what Gog and Magog had done. In their language, they use (*pay you, build (make)* نَجْعَلُ) to motivate Dhul-Qarnayn to make a reaction. They offered to pay him a tribute and he builds a barrier. The answer of Dhul-Qarnayn comes

quickly refusing their offer politely and suggests another alternative. He asked them to help him with (*strength* بِقُوَّةٍ), so he can react to Gog and Magog corruption. Three words related to his purposeful action appeared in the text while he is building the barrier: (*Bring* أَتُونِي), (*Fill* سَاوَى) and (*able* اسْتَطَاعُوا). This cluster illustrates the way Dhul-Qarnayn built the barrier and the results of it. Finally, the discourse moves to the prophetic revelation when Dhul-Qarnayn claims that in future, the barrier will be destroyed by Allah and Gog and Magog will be free again (*Surge like waves* بِمَوْجٍ). The nations and Gog and Magog will be gathered in that day. Thus, Allah uses the cluster (*gather* فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا) to affirm this reality.

D. Conclusion

The study of the prophetic discourse in surat Al Kahf using the socio-rhetorical interpretation shows the importance of using multi-disciplinary methods in the field of Qur'anic interpretation. Allah, through communication with certain people as Dhul-Qarnayn, revealed some of His divine knowledge to humanity. To understand the message, the interpreters should look at the text from different sides.

The analysis of the inner texture reveals some aspects of the divine speech such as the repetition of certain words, the progressive patterns, and the structure of the narrative, the narrational techniques, the argumentative flow of language and the sensory-aesthetic aspects. The Qur'anic narration in surat Al Kahf shows the importance of Allah's guidelines to Dhul-Qarnayn as an agent for the divine well. The progressive unite in Al Kahf 83-10 starts from the word of Allah (say) then to the dialogue between Allah, Dhul-Qarnayn and the nation which he met during his journey. The concluding progressive texture is the prophetic proclamation of Dhul-Qarnayn that Gog and Magog will be released one day in the future.

The open–middle – closing texture in the three narrative focuses on how the audience would understand the progressive texture. The native in surt Al Kahf comes with a question/ answer scheme. The beginning is an inquiry about a certain figure and events. The middle texture is the encountering of the corrupted people, i. e. Gog and Magog. The closing texture comes at the end of the narrative where Gog and Magog will be released and the final judgment plan will be started. The previous inner texture reveals some narrational techniques which used by the characters within the three narratives. God narrates the events of Dhul-Qarnayn journey to the east and west. Dhul-Qarnayn has a short dialogue with Allah, and with the people he met.

The argumentative texture in the three narratives shows different understanding of the oracle. Finlay in Dhul-Qarnayn narrative, readers will see the power of Dhul-Qarnayn through his ability to reward and punish. This power is given to him by God. So that, he use according to God's instructions. By doing so, readers can understand that it is God who uses the power rather than Dhul-Qarnayn himself.

The last inner texture which was examined the sensory-aesthetic texture. The narrators emphasize on using certain words related to the five senses to help the readers understand the divine message. The use of the five senses in the divine communication adds another dimension to the message which related to the human ways of understanding and imaging things around them.

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