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A Stylistic Study of Epiphany in the Holy Quran: A Moment PP(1138./1156)

A Stylistic Study of Epiphany in the Holy Quran: A Moment of Truth

Dr. Mega Afaf^(*)

Assistant Professor at Hama Lakhdar University of Eloued.

Email: afaf-mega@univ-eloued.dz

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Abstrac:	The moment of epiphany is considered one of the linguistic features that expresses the user's transition from one state to another, distinguished by a new awareness and comprehension of the variables of life
Keywords:	Epiphany; human; Quran; Truth.

1.Introduction

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. Epiphany has been used since ancient times in all aspects of human life. What caught our attention is its frequent presence in the Holy Quran. Therefore we asked the following questions: What are the manifestations of epiphany in the Quran and what are its implications?. Accordingly, this unprecedented study aims to shed light on this feature in the Quran and to show its different uses and meanings. By using literary stylistics and statistical stylistics approaches, we were able to depict 42 cases of epiphany divided equally between its appearance in this life and that of the hereafter. We found that the former is characterized by mercy and return to God, while the latter is characterized by heartbreak and regret when the unbeliever sees the torment. We were also able to explore new types of epiphany namely, direct and indirect, in addition to false epiphany.

2.Etymology and Original Word Usage

The word 'epiphany' originated from Greek. It carried the meaning of manifestation or appearance. In classical Greek it had other significances: the appearance of dawn; of an enemy in war; and especially the revelation of a deity to a worshiper¹. Indeed in the Old Testament, it referred to Christ's first or second coming².

Hence epiphany existed from early ages. It manifested in initiation rites and mystery religion. By initiation rites it is meant in ancient times entering a group or society; a formal admission to adulthood; or the case when the subject is 'reborn' into a new role³

3.Definitions of Epiphany

In www.dictionary.com/browse/epiphany (2022), epiphany carries a variety of meanings:

- 1- A Christian festival, observed on January 6th, commemorating the manifestaion of Christ to the gentiles in the persons of the Magi; Twelfth-day.
- 2- An appearance or manifestation, especially of a deity.

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- 3- A sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into the reality or essential meaning of something.
- 4- A literary work or section of a work presenting usually symbolically such a moment of revelation and insight.

4.Types of Epiphany

McDonalds (2005) presents four types of epiphany as determined by Denzin (1990) :

- 1- The major epiphany: shatters a person's life and makes it never the same again.
- 2- The cumulative epiphany: occurs as the result of a series of events that have built up in the person's life.
- 3- The minor or illuminative epiphany: underlying tensions and problems in a situation or relation are revealed.
- 4- The relived epiphany: a person relives, or goes through again a major turning moment in his/her life.

5. Epiphany in People's Life

In Christian religion, epiphany is referred to as 'religious epiphany'. It is connected to faith. It occurs when someone believes that when an event happens it is caused by a deity.⁴ Furthermore, epiphany is connected to the realization that Christ is the son of God. It also connotes a revelation or disclosing of some form of truth or knowledge through communication with a deity or other supernatural entity. In Christian doctrine and the Gospel of Mathew they had the belief that Jesus was visited by the Three Magi after his birth⁵. Related to this, is the belief in the incarnation. It is the belief that Jesus the Christ was made flesh by being conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary. The doctrine of the incarnation, then, presupposes that Christ is fully God and fully human. For this the commemoration of the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6th⁶.

In literature, particularly in modern times, James Joyce takes the lead in his usage of epiphany. It is used in many of his

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works: *Dubliners, Protagonists, Stephen Hero*. Joyce's epiphany is defined as: " a sudden spiritual manifestation whether from some object, scene, or memorable phase of mind"⁷.

Countless moments of epiphany feature science; to illustrate, two famous epiphanies are very common in science. The first is Archimede's discovery of a method to determine the volume of an irregular object, and the second, is Isaac Newton's realization that a falling apple and the orbiting earth are both pulled by the same force (ibid). Within the same vein, in education, epiphany occurs when the student comes at a new insight or understanding⁸.

Finally, epiphany is noticed in everyday life like among the patients who report their illness stories. Indeed, studies in pathographies highlight a change in the conduct and opinion of patients due to their illness (Frank, 1995, Hawkins, 1999 in: Nesby: 2022).

6. Literature Review

The research field in epiphany is wide. It is constantly active in the literary field. Therefore, the focus of our literature review is in the field of literature.

M. H. Abrahams refers to the origins of epiphany in literature to Wordsworth's "Spot of time". Others credit it to Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Baudelaire and Rimbaud. These romantic poets viewed that being identified as one with nature was the catalyst for the experience of epiphany (Nesby, 2022).

Scholars like Drexel and Hill (2019) claimed that the romantic epiphany was particular and different from modernist epiphany. As opposed to romantic writings, modernism was featured by experimentation. It depicts the emotional reactions to external events rather than the events themselves" (LIU, 1993: 114, in: cscanada.net (2011). In this regard, epiphany strongly

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A Stylistic Study of Epiphany in the Holy Quran: A Moment PP(1138./1156) features modernist fiction with Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, Katherine Mansfield and James Joyce (Nesby, 2022).

Cuddon (1998) points to epiphany in the poems of George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and Gerard Manley Hopkins, William Wordsworth and Shelley. In fact, epiphany has attracted the attention of many scholars to examine it and delve into its nature like Nichols (1987), Johnson (1992), Beja (1993), Bidney (1997), Haymen (1998), Coen (2000), Bidney (2004) (McDonald, 2005). For example, Drexel and Hill (2019) have examined the occurrences of epiphanies in modernist and contemporary poetry through T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Denis Levertot and Donald Revell. The author has noted that the kind of epiphanies used by these writers are different from the romantic and religious ones because they express a mode of perception rather than expressing a sudden illumination.

While with modern novels, McDonald (2005) states that Beja (1993) has examined epiphany in James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Wolf and William Faulkner. He came up with the conclusion that epiphany as a term is used differently among these novelists.

Hayman (1998) in his part also examined the use of epiphany with the writings of James Joyce. In addition, Bidney (1997) explored the use of epiphanies in nineteenth century authors including William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoyvsky, Walter Pater and Barret Browning (McDonalds, 2005:23). We have noticed throughout the studies of epiphany that James Joyce has taken the biggest focus and analysis. This is due to the fact that epiphany is tremendously used in Joyce's works as: *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* (Cuddon, 1998).

Ms. Rokeya and Ahammed (2017) have thoughtroughly analyzed epiphany in Joyce's *Araby* as it was experienced by an adolescent boy. The boy lived in a bleak city featured by its dreary houses and people. He thought he found his only way to find happiness was a love of a girl Maugan sister. As the story unfolds, the author displays the many experiences the boy had and their impact on him leading him to his shattering epiphany by the end of the novel. His epiphany indicated his maturation through his gaining insights about life and reality.

Leah (2019) examined epiphany in Joyce's *The Dead* and figured out its significance. Besides, the author was able to depict a lot of moments of similarity between the personal life of Joyce and the events in the novel. As a result, the author was able to sort out Joyce's ideals about religion.

Finally, we end our literature review with an example from postmodern fiction in Toni Morrison's novel *A Mercy* (2008). Epiphany is exhibited through the main character Florens. As she was in her journey to meet her supposed love, i.e, the Blacksmith, she built all her life/world in marrying him. However, the confrontation she had with him had mirrored to her the ugly truth which she was not aware of, i.e, an ignorant black slave woman. Though this truth was painful to her it led her to be stronger looking to herself and the world differently.

7. Epiphany in the Holy Quran

7.1. Introduction

The Holy Quran, the word revealed from Almighty God to His Messenger Muhammad - Peace be Upon Him-, is still attesting to the linguistic miracles until the present time. In this section, I want to shed light on the manifestations of epiphany in the Holy Quran. In this unprecedented research, I followed the methodology of statistical stylistics and literary stylistics. I was

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able to depict 42 moments of epiphany in the Quran, twenty one of which are in the afterlife and twenty one in the life in this world. As for the new thing, it is the discovery of new types of epiphany that have not been dealt with before, namely, direct and indirect epiphany, and the false epiphany. Furthermore, epiphany is expressed through the use of the past tense, and this indicates the completion of the action of epiphany. In this part, I will review the images of epiphany, their meanings, their locations in the Holy Quran in addition to their types.

7.2. Images of Epiphany in life

7.2.1. Miracles of God: a Way to Epiphany

7.2.1.1. Surat Al-Alaq: The Dawn of Islam

The first surat revealed to our master Muhammad – Peace be Upon Him - is Surat Al-Alaq. It is a great moment in the life of Muhammad - PBUH - and the life of all humanity as well. It is the moment when our master Muhammad - PBUH- realized the truth of the Creator and the great message entrusted to him. This illiterate Messenger was transferred by the power of Almighty God from an ignorant person to a reciter of the Quran that was revealed to him, so in sourat Al-Alaq Almighty God taught him that He is the Creator and that man was created from a clot, i.e. from a lump of thick and moist blood, and that God, the Majestic and Exalted, is vast in benevolence and generosity. We also read in Al-Alaq that God the exalted is the one who taught His creation to write with a pen, and that He, the Most High, brought man out of his mother's womb knowing nothing, so God made for him hearing, sight, and heart and facilitated for him the means of knowledge (explanation from:imadislam.com2022, ar.islamway.net 2022). On this basis, Surat Al-Alaq can be called the Surat of greatest epiphany, from which the master of creation launched his eternal message to all humanity. Indeed, the message of God in this first surat departs from three basic principles,

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namely, Almighty God is the only creator and Has the right to be worshiped in addition to the importance of knowledge.

7.2.1.2. The Ability to Revive the Dead

The aesthetics of the Quranic narratives are not only in the lessons that we draw from them but also they demonstrate images and proof about the features of Almighty God. The story of the man in sourat Al-Baqara, verse (259) is no exception. This man passed by a village that was empty of its thrones, he asked himself how would God revive this village after its death, so God made him die for a hundred year, then resurrected him to show him that God, the most capable, is able to revive the dead and that He is powerful over everything as we read we read the words of God Almighty: "*and when it became clear to him, he said: I know that God is powerful over everything (259)*". That was a moment of his realization that Almighty God is capable of reviving the dead.

The significance of this story lies beyond showing the capacity of reviving the dead, it has the effect of clearing doubts about the power of God in resurrecting the life of the dead in the Other Day; that there is another life after one's death.

7.2.1.3. Knowledge of the Unseen:

As in Surat Sabaa, God the Almighty challenged the misguidance of the Jinn in their claim to know the unseen and to look at the unseen things. In this way, they deceived people. Our master Solomon – Peace be Upon Him – ordered the Jinn to work and construct every building, so they continued working all the time. At the meantime, God decreed death for Solomon - Peace be upon him - so he leaned on his stick, which was his anchor, and whenever the Jinn passed by him while he was leaning on it, they thought he was alive and feared him. so they continued their work

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in the same way for a whole year, until an animal from earth came to his stick, and grazed it which led to its perish and ultimately fell, so Solomon - peace be upon him - fell on the ground and the devils dispersed. At this particular moment, the Jinn became clear that if they had known his death they would have not stayed in the torment of nonstop construction, as in the Almighty's saying:

" Then, when We decreed death for him, nothing indicated his death except an earthworm eating at his staff. Then, when he fell down, it became clear to the sprites that, had they known the unseen, they would not have remained in the demeaning torment (14)" (Tafsir Al-Saadi www.suraquran.com2022). Thus, this moment of epiphany not only pertains to Jinn but to mankind also; that only the Almighty God knows the unseen.

7.2.1.4.The Miracle of the Crow

In surat AL-Maidah, we read the story of the two sons of Adam Kabil and Habil who had presented an oblation. However, as Habil's sacrifice was accepted, Kabil's was rejected. The latter's jealousy and envy pushed him to kill his brother. However, when he saw how a crow covered his brother's genitals, only then he realized the guilt he had committed against himself and his brother. God the Almighty describes him: *"Then God sent a raven digging the ground, to show him how to cover his brother's corpse. He said, "Woe to me! I was unable to be like this raven, and bury my brother's corpse." So he became full of regrets"* (31).

7.2.2. Contemplating about God's Kingdom of Heavens and Earth

Contemplating about the kingdom of Almighty God sometimes results into reaching the truth that He is the only creator of this universe. In this context, we remember our master Ibrahim - peace be upon him - who was contemplating the

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kingdom of Almighty God in stars, moon and sun. However, when they disappeared, he realized, then, the existence of a greater Creator who created the heavens, the earth, the moon and the sun disavowing the polytheism. And here we recount His saying, the Most High our God:

" When the night fell over him, he saw a planet. He said, "This is my lord". But when it set, he said, "I do not love those that set"(76) Then when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my lord". But when it set, he said, " If my Lord does not guide me, I will be one of the erring people (77). Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said, "This is my Lord, this is bigger". But when it set, he said, "O my people, I am innocent of your idolatry (78). I have directed my attention towards Him Who created heavens and the earth- a monotheist- and I am not among the idolaters (79)"

In meditating on the story of the faith of our master Ibrahim one finds that God, the Mighty and Majestic, has endowed him with a light in his heart that guided him to the truth like in the story of our master Yusuf -Peace Be Upon Him-.

7.2.3. The Light of God in the Heart of His People

This light is a distinguishing feature that Almighty God endowed His Messengers with which He protected them from polytheism and from impurity, as what happened to our master Yusuf - peace be upon him -. When the king's wife persuaded him about himself, and they were about to each other, but suddenly the light of truth in his heart protected him from error and turned him away from sin, so he retreated from immorality. The Almighty said: *" She desired him, and he desired her, had he not seen the proof of his Lord. It was thus that We diverted evil and indecency away from him. He was one of Our loyal servants (24)"*- Surat Yusuf-. Therefore, this light inside his heart saved him from sin. It is the light of righteousness.

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In fact, The Moments of epiphany are high in surat Yusuf compared to other surats in the Quran, such as the very moment when the women of Medina were surprised and taken by the beauty and splendor of our master Yusuf - peace be upon him- ; and thus, they cut their hands.

7.2.4. Miracles of our Master Moses –PBUH- Lead to Faith

Similar to the story of our master Yusuf, the story of our master Moses - peace be upon him – also included many moments of epiphany in surats of Al-A'raf, Yunus, and shouaraa. God endowed Moses with miracles and sent him to Pharaoh in order to call him to believe in God. However, seeing the miracles of Moses, Pharaoh had organized a challenge between Moses- Peace be Upon Him- and the magicians. In the confrontation day, when the magicians saw the stick of Moses grasping their deceiving sticks, they directly prostrated to God, the Lord of the worlds. Indeed, out of the miracles of Moses, the magicians believed in God, as in the words of Almighty God in Surat Al-A'raf:

" He said you throw! And when they threw, they beguiled the eyes of the people, and intimidated them, and produced a mighty magic¹¹⁶ And We inspired Moses: " Throw your staff". And at once, it swallowed what they were faking¹¹⁷ So the truth came to pass, and what they were producing came to nothing¹¹⁸ And the magicians fell to their knees (120) They said, "We have believed in the Lord of the Worlds (121) "The Lord of Moses and Aaron(122)".

7.2.5. Epiphany of Faith Confirmation

Believers also had their moment of confirmation of faith. In the dialogue of our master Moses - peace be upon him - with

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Almighty God, Moses asked to see Him, but Almighty God said to him that he would not see Him but He asked him to look at the mountain and if it settles in its place he would see Him; however, when God manifested to the mountain the latter crumbled so at this particular moment our master Moses- peace be upon him- prostrated to God affirming his faith. This is one of the most beautiful images in the Quran when our Almighty God listen and dialogue with His messengers.

7.2.6. From Disbelief to Belief

The moment of transition from disbelief to belief in this life is the strongest state of epiphany, when a person emerges from the misguidance of polytheism to the light of monotheism. It is a moment of light. We find these moments in the story of the faith of our master Lott - Peace Be Upon Him - and the story of the faith of Balqis. Our master Solomon - Upon Him be Peace - sent her a letter inviting her to Islam, and when she did not respond to that, instead she sent him a gift. Thus, Solomon - Upon Him be Peace – ordered to bring her throne to him. And when he brought her to him, she saw the great edifice built by our master Solomon - peace be upon him - which was too high and smooth made of glass. At that time, she recognized God's command and power and knew that he was a noble prophet and submitted to Islam. (Quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura27-aya44.html. 2022). In Surat Al-Naml we read her moment of epiphany: ***"She said, my Lord, I have done wrong to myself, and I have submitted with Solomon, to God, Lord of the Worlds (44)"***.

As for Surat Al-Jinn, we read many spots of this kind of epiphany, i.e, shift from ignorance to light. The moment they listened to the Quran, in which they found guidance, they believed in it and in God. After this great moment of faith, the Jinn enter into a continuous flow of epiphanies, through which they expressed their realization of many facts about unseen things including the fact that God is one; He has no partner; no

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companion; and has no son; and that the resurrection is true; and that the sky is filled with strong guards; and whoever listens from them now " **finds a projectile in wait for him (9)**". In addition, the Jinn knew that among them are the righteous; and others are less than that; and that no one can escape from God: and whoever believes in God does not fear loss or oppression; and whoever among them embraces Islam has sought guidance; and others are firewood to Hell; and whoever turns away from remembering, God will punish him with severe punishment; and the mosques belong to God, so supplicate God with no partner.

7.2.7. God's Punishment Leads to Epiphany

In some situations, we notice that the moment of epiphany springs from a punishment by Almighty God to His servants in order to return then to the path of righteousness. Here we recall, in Surat Al-Kahf, the story of the man who disbelieved in the resurrection day. He also was deceived by his money and his gardens seeing himself better than his companion. Thus, God destroyed his garden to show him his power. Only then, the man got remorse for associating with God:

" And ruin closed in on his crops, and so he began wringing his hands over what he had invested in it, as it lays fallen upon its trellises. And he was saying, "I wish I never associated anyone with my Lord (42)".

In the same vein, in Surat Al-Qalam the story of the owners of farms and orchards whom their stinginess and greed urged them to decide to pick their fruits early in the morning so that the poor would not see them, and they would not be forced to give them from it. But Almighty God destroyed their fruits with fire. Only then did the farmers realize they were astray, so they acknowledged their oppression and guilt, so they repented and turned to Almighty God (nabulsi.com2022 Tafsir Al-Nabulsi). In the following is their story in the Quran:

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" Go early to your plantation, if you are going to harvest (22). So off they went, murmuring to one another (23) No poor person is to enter it upon you today (24) And early they went, resolved in intent (25). But when they saw it, they said, " We were wrong (26) We are now deprived (27) The most reasonable of them said, "Did I not say to you, 'if only you would glorify? (28) They said, "Glory to our Lord- We were indeed in the wrong (29)"

This is a positive moment of epiphany. With this affliction, people of the orchards returned remorseful and aspiring for God's forgiveness. In general, most forms of epiphany in life contain mercy and deliverance.

7. 3. Images of Epiphany in the Afterlife

7.3.1. Truth After Death

Most of the forms of epiphany in the Holy Quran which happen in the Hereafter show us how the truth about God and faith, is realized by the unbelievers only after their death when they see the punishment by the eye, so they feel regret and heartbreak; in addition, both the ploytheist followers and the followed disavow each other as we read in the words of the Almighty God in Surat Al-Baqara. ***"Those who followed will say, "if only we can have another chance, we will disown them, as they disowned us". Thus God will show them their deeds, as regrets to them, and they will not come out of the fire (167)"***.

While, in some scenes the polytheist followers ask Almighty God, to multiply the torture of the followed polytheists for they were a cause of their painful torment, as in the following image in the Almighty's words in Surat Al Aaraf:

" He will say: "Join the crowds of Jinn and humans who have gone into the fire before you". Everytime a crowd enters, it will curse its sister-crowd. Until, when they are all in it, the last of them will say to the first of them, " Our Lord, these are the ones

A Stylistic Study of Epiphany in the Holy Quran: A Moment PP(1138./1156) *who misled us, so inflict on them a double punishment in the fire". He will, " Each will have a double, but you do not know (39)".*

In general, all forms of epiphany on the Last Day show the remorse and heartbreak of the unbelievers when they know that God is true, that the Book is true, and that the Messengers are true.

" The idolaters say, " Had God willed, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him, neither us, nor our ancestors, nor would we have prohibited anything besides His prohibitions."Those before them did likewise. Are the messengers responsible for anything but clear communication?"(35)".

7.4. Types of Epiphany in the Holy Quran

In my reading of the images of epiphany in the Holy Quran, I am able to depict different types of epiphany. In addition to direct epiphany, I find indirect epiphany and false epiphany.

7.4.1. Direct Epiphany: An epiphany that is expressed in direct language at the moment of awakening and the moment of realization of a certain fact. As in Surat Al-A'raf in the Almighty's saying:

"Are they waiting for anything but its fulfillment? The Day its fulfillment comes true, those who disregarded it before will say, " The messengers of our Lord did come with the truth. Have we any intercessors to intercede for us? Or, could we be sent back, to behave differently from the way we behaved before? They ruined their souls, and what they used to invent has failed them (53)".

7.4.2. Indirect Epiphany: It is evident in its results from a change in behavior or in opinion, as in Surat Al-Nisa, for in His saying, Glory and Exalted be He:

" Oh on that Day, those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish that the earth were leveled over them. They will conceal nothing from God (42)". Here God is describing them.

7.4.3. False Epiphany: It is the type of epiphany that does not stem from the mind or the heart, but is only intended to save the one who says it from the torment or dilemma he is in as in the story of Pharaoh who followed Moses –peace be upon him- in the sea in order to kill him, but when he saw he was about to drown only then he commits to belief, but it was late. We read in surat Yunus:

"And we delivered the Children of Israel across the sea. Pharaoh and his troops pursued them, defiantly and aggressively. Until, when he was about to drown, he said, " I believe that there is no god except the One the Children of Israel believe in, and I am those who submit (90)".

8. Conclusion

In my review about epiphany, I found that it is part of human life in all fields whether in science, in education, in daily life, in literature, and even in religious texts, whether Christian or Islamic. It has taken several forms and meanings, but the general common meaning of epiphany centers on the expression of a sudden awareness about a truth that results in a change in the individual's path, whether intellectual or physical.

Indeed, the language of the Holy Quran is not devoid of images of epiphany, and in order to study this literary device, the statistical method was adopted in addition to the literary stylistics approach. The study concluded that the Holy Quran presents images of epiphany in this worldly life, as well as in the afterlife. And each of them differs from the other. We found out that

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epiphany in life comes out of a light that the Almighty God ejaculates in the heart of the individual, or when God the Exalted shows to His servant His ability to revive the dead and His uniqueness in the knowledge of the unseen. Also the moment of transition from polytheism to the light of monotheism is one of the strongest moments of epiphany in the Holy Quran. As for Surat Al-Alaq, being the first sourat in the Quran, it is the greatest surat that embodies epiphany, it marks the historical moment that changed the course of all humanity. And in other forms, we found that epiphany comes up as a result of the punishment that God afflicts His servants in order to make them pay attention to their misguidance, so that they do not persist in it, and that they have the opportunity to repent as long as they are in this worldly life.

Furthermore, while the forms of epiphany in this worldly life contain mercy and goodness, the forms of epiphany in the afterlife show that they pertain to the category of unbelievers who deny religion but realize the truth of God, the truth of faith and the truth of the Messengers only after they see the painful torture on the Judgment Day when neither remorse nor heartbreak will benefit.

In addition to that, I am able to discover three new types of epiphany, which are direct and indirect epiphany, and false epiphany which I discovered in the Holy Quran for the first time.

Finally, I conclude by saying that this study is nothing but a small window to the aesthetics of the Quranic narratives that may clear the ground to future incursion into the secrets and miracles that the Holy Quran is full of.

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- ⁴ en.wikipedia.org/Epiphany_(feeling) (2022).
- ⁵ En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revelation(2022).
- ⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarnation_Christianity)2022.
- ⁷ en.wikipedia.org/Epiphany_(feeling) (2022).
- ⁸ en.wikipedia.org/Epiphany_(feeling) (2022).