

## Resistance to Economic Oligarchy in the Al-Quran through the Lens of Tafsir Nuzuli

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**Abstract:** This article aims to examine the Quran's resistance to economic oligarchy by referencing the interpretations of Surah Al-Humazah and Al-Hashr: 7. Employing the tafsir Nuzuli approach from the perspective of Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, the article delves into two main issues: Firstly, the review of the tafsir Nuzuli concerning economic principles in Surah Al-Humazah and al-Hashr verse 7. Secondly, the correlation between these verses and their contextualization in relation to economic oligarchy. The study adopts a literature review using a descriptive-analytical method. Based on an analysis of interpretation aspects, sabab nuzul, and the historical context of pre-Islamic Arabia, the study concludes that the verses articulate the Quran's opposition to economic oligarchy. The interpretation of Surah Al-Humazah condemns the propaganda of economic oligarchy perpetrators, specifically a group of pagan Quraisy elites. The interpretation of al-Hashr verse 7 reveals the wealth distribution policy implemented during the Prophet's leadership in Medina based on *maslahah*, ensuring the avoidance of concentrating wealth exclusively among a select few affluent individuals. The sabab nuzul of these verses, associated with the conditions of pre-Islamic Arabia, elucidates the Quranic vision of economic justice, allowing for its contextualization in the present era.

**Keywords:** *Al-Quran, Economic Oligarchy, Tafsir Nuzuli*

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini mengulas tentang resistensi Al-Quran terhadap oligarki ekonomi dengan mengacu kepada tafsir QS. Al-Humazah dan QS. Al-Hasyr: 7. Melalui pendekatan tafsir Nuzuli perspektif Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, artikel ini berangkat dari dua persoalan: *Pertama*, bagaimana tinjauan tafsir Nuzuli atas prinsip ekonomi dalam surah Al-Humazah dan Al-Hasyr ayat 7. *Kedua*, bagaimana korelasi ayat-ayat tersebut berikut kontekstualisasinya berkaitan dengan oligarki ekonomi. Kajian yang digunakan adalah kajian pustaka dengan metode deskriptif-analitis. Hasilnya, berdasarkan tinjauan pada aspek tafsir ayat-ayat tersebut, sabab nuzul, serta konteks historis Arab pada masa itu atau kebiasaan yang berlaku pra Islam, kajian ini menyimpulkan bahwa ayat-ayat tersebut mengandung perlawanan Al-Quran terhadap oligarki ekonomi. Tafsir surah Al-Humazah berisi kecaman terhadap propaganda pelaku oligarki ekonomi, yaitu sekelompok elite kafir Quraisy. Tafsir Al-Hasyr ayat 7 menunjukkan kebijakan distribusi harta ketika Rasulullah telah memimpin Madinah berdasarkan *maslahah*, yaitu dengan tidak melanggengkan peredaran kekayaan hanya pada segelintir orang kaya saja. Sabab nuzul dari ayat-ayat tersebut dikaitkan dengan kondisi Arab pra Islam akan menampilkan visi keadilan ekonomi Al-Quran sehingga spirit ini bisa dikontekstualisasikan pada era sekarang.

**Kata kunci:** *Al-Quran, Oligarki Ekonomi, Tafsir Nuzuli.*

## Introduction

Economic inequality is a contemporary concern frequently underscored today and often linked to the inherent shortcomings of capitalism. This phenomenon manifests itself through pronounced disparities in the distribution of income, wealth, and access to economic resources among different societal groups. The concentration of wealth within the elite echelons results in the subjugation of other segments to lower economic conditions. In the context of Indonesia, empirical data indicates a widening wealth gap, wherein a select few individuals or groups wield substantial control over the nation's resources. A 2021 Oxfam report reveals that the combined net worth of the eight wealthiest individuals in Indonesia equals that of the bottom 100 million people.<sup>1</sup> As a predominantly Muslim nation, Indonesia adheres to the principles and values of Islam, which inherently promote economic equality among community groups. Islam places emphasis on social responsibility and equitable distribution within the economic system.<sup>2</sup> This underlying spirit is distinctly reflected in Quranic verses that advocate for economic justice across different strata of society and articulate a narrative resisting the concentration of wealth enjoyed by a privileged few.

Up to this point, scholarly investigations delving into the principle of socio-economic equity through the lens of Quranic interpretation, as exemplified by Khalilurrahman et al.'s research, have been observed.<sup>3</sup> Khalilurrahman's study centers on the ethical considerations of wealth distribution, employing a thematic interpretation methodology. The verses alluding to economic parity, such as zakat, infaq, and alms, are succinctly summarized based on interpretation texts, leading to the formulation of conclusions. Khalilurrahman's focus primarily pertains to individual ethics and does not extend to an exploration of how social entities, such as the state, govern the economic equity of their populace. In contrast, Utomo and Baratullah<sup>4</sup> contribute a critical analysis by scrutinizing certain ideologies within the economic context. Through their

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<sup>1</sup> Nirwana Bangun dan Teja Rinanda, "Pengaruh Oligarki Terhadap Pertumbuhan Ekonomi Indonesia," *All Fields of Science Journal Liaison Academia and Society* 2, no. 2 (2022). 339.

<sup>2</sup> Wahbah Al-Zuhaili, *Akhlaq al-Muslim 'Alāqatuhu bi al-Mujtama'* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2010). 136.

<sup>3</sup> Khalilurrahman, Muslim Ibrahim dan Edi Yuhermansyah, "Etika Distribusi Kekayaan Menurut Perspektif Alquran," *Al-Iqtishadiyah* 2, no. 2 (2021). 80-99.

<sup>4</sup> Yuana Tri Utomo Utomo and Braham Maya Baratullah, "ISLAM DAN PROBLEM PEMIKIRAN: Fokus Kajian Ekonomi," *Mukaddimah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 7, no. 2 (December 30, 2022): 187–203, <https://doi.org/10.14421/mjsi.72.2969>.

examination of these ideologies, Utomo and Baratullah assert that economic detriment fundamentally emanates from the capitalist economic ideology, which deviates from human avarice. The core criticism of prevailing economic issues is articulated as stemming from flawed perspectives, specifically a denial of the role of religion in guiding societal economic regulations. However, these studies maintain a broad approach by normatively consolidating diverse Islamic economic theories, rather than concentrating on a direct examination of Islamic sources like the Quran or hadith. Additionally, certain studies concentrate solely on the viewpoints of a single commentator, such as Fakrurradhi's exploration of Ibn Katsir's interpretation<sup>5</sup> and Ihwanuddin's examination of Hamka's perspectives.<sup>6</sup>

This research endeavors to undertake a parallel investigation into the discourse surrounding equity and the mitigation of economic disparities through an examination of Al-Quran interpretation. However, the specific focus of this study diverges, concentrating on scrutinizing the Quranic resistance against economic oligarchy. This investigation refers to the interpretation of Surah Al-Humazah and Al-Hashr verse 7, utilizing the tafsir Nuzuli approach from the perspective of Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri. Two principal issues are slated for discussion: *firstly*, an exploration of the tafsir Nuzuli of economic principles in Surah Al-Humazah and Al-Hasyr verse 7; *secondly*, an investigation into the correlation between these verses and their contextualization in relation to economic oligarchy. These two issues will serve as the foundational framework for the discussion in this study. The initial step involves a definitive elucidation of the term 'economic oligarchy,' followed by an exposition of the interpretations of these verses from various mufasir. Emphasis on *sabab nuzul* becomes the primary component in the tafsir Nuzuli approach, serving as an entry point to examine the correlation and contextualization of these verses.

The tafsir Nuzuli approach to Quranic interpretation involves not only analyzing how a mufasir interprets the textual meaning and content of a verse but also considering the context in which the verse was revealed and its relationship with Prophet Muhammad's missionary journey. Al-Jabiri asserts a correlative relationship between the

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<sup>5</sup> Fakrurradhi, "Prinsip-Prinsip Ekonomi Islam Dalam Alquran Menurut Tafsir Ibnu Katsir," *Misykat Mashaadir* 2, no. 2 (2021). 1-15.

<sup>6</sup> Ihwanudin, Nandang dan M. Burhanuddin, "Relevansi Pemikiran Ekonomi Hamka (1908-1981) dalam Tafsir al-Azhar dengan Ekonomi Islam di Indonesia," *Eco-Iqtishodi* 1, no. 2 (2020). 97-115.

life of the Prophet (*masār as-sīrah an-nabawiyah*) and the formative history of the Quran (*masār at-takwīnī li al-Qur'ān*). Addressing the inevitability that one verse may have various *sabab nuzul*, it becomes imperative not to rely solely on a single historical account. Al-Jabiri underscores the importance of paying attention to the broader Arab social context, encompassing both the pre-Islamic era and the dynamics of the emergence of Islam itself. Additionally, the dialectic of *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah* gradualism must be examined to establish a common thread of contextualization with contemporary conditions.<sup>7</sup> In his tafsir work, al-Jabiri categorizes verses under one theme based on the connection of *sabab nuzul*.<sup>8</sup> In essence, through his Islamic post-traditionalism thought, al-Jabiri posits that efforts to contextualize Islamic teachings can be pursued with a critical approach to the treasures of tradition (*turās*), presenting the past as a foundation for shaping the future.<sup>9</sup>

### **Economic Oligarchy: Dominance by a Select Few**

Initially, the term oligarchy was originally associated with a political system denoting the dominance of a select few individuals. However, the definition of oligarchy has evolved to encompass economic dimensions, where the material element supporting power is symbolized by the abundant wealth concentrated in the hands of a limited number of individuals. In the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* characterizes oligarchy as a form of governance wherein power resides within the control of a small minority. Etymologically, the term oligarchy derives from the Greek word *oligarkhia* (ὀλιγαρχία) signifying "the rule of a few." This term is constructed from (ὀλίγος) meaning few and *arkho* (ἄρχω) signifying to organize, rule, or dominate.<sup>10</sup> In the Arabic language, oligarchy is assimilated as *al-ūlīgārshīyah/al-ūlīgārkiyyah* (الأوليغارشية/الأوليغاركية) or is juxtaposed with the term *hukm al-'aqalliyyat* (حكم العقلية).<sup>11</sup> Consequently, oligarchy can be defined as the exertion of power or influence stemming from the possession of wealth, practiced by a small group within a social community.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *Madkhal Ilā Alqurān al-Karīm*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdah al-'Arabiyyah, 2006). 239-246.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *Fahm Alqurān al-Hakīm: al-Tafsīr al-Wāḍih Hasba Tartīb al-Nuzūl*, 1st ed. (Maroko: Dar al-Baida', 2010). 15.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *al-Turās wa al-Hadāsah: Dirāsāt aa Munāqasyāt* (Beirut: Dirasat al-Wahdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1991). 24.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey A. Winters, *Oligarchy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). 1.

<sup>11</sup> 'Abd al-Wahab al-Kayālī, *Mawsū'ah al-Siyāsah* (Beirut: al-Muassasah al-'Arabiyyah li ad-Dirasat wa al-Nasyr, 1985). 415.

Terminologically, the utilization of the term oligarchy to denote the influence of a select few individuals dates back to the inception of debates concerning the dynamics between rulers and the public, particularly during the era of Greek philosophy. Socrates, for instance, identified oligarchy as a form of governance where the affluent hold sway, emphasizing the glorification of material possessions.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Plato characterizes oligarchy as a constitutional framework predicated on wealth assessment, wherein the wealthy govern while the less affluent are excluded from governmental participation. This perspective aligns with Aristotle's more intricate assertion, positing that oligarchic governance is orchestrated by a select group of affluent individuals often referred to as aristocrats. Their primary objective is to pursue self-interest, rendering notions of equality and justice inconsequential.<sup>13</sup> The conceptualization of oligarchy as the exertion of influence, power, or rule by a limited number of wealthy individuals has evolved into the prevailing definition of a political system grounded in oligarchic principles.

The intricate relationship between power and economics is evidenced by the utilization of the term oligarchy in certain discourses, transcending its mere association with the political realm and frequently amalgamating with the term economy to connote an economic oligarchy. While contemporary governments do not explicitly declare adherence to an oligarchy-based power system, the accommodation of oligarchic principles often permeates democratic structures. Despite democracy's emphasis on the equal political standing of every citizen as outlined in the constitution, the influence wielded by the 'wealthy few,' whether occupying formal state positions or not, can foster a power dynamic hindering the equitable growth of a nation's wealth, thereby contributing to economic inequality.<sup>14</sup> This power dynamic manifests in various forms, such as the selective distribution of potential wealth to a privileged few or the existence of policies facilitating the control of market dynamics by oligarchic elites. The catalyst for such conditions undeniably originates from and results in an unequal distribution of wealth between a small elite and the broader population. This distorted circulation of wealth

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<sup>12</sup> Sara Ahbel-Rappe dan Rachana Kamtekar, *A Companion to Socrates* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006). 414.

<sup>13</sup> Leo Strauss dan Joseph Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1987). 61.

<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey A. Winters dan Menjamin I. Page, "Oligarchy in the United States?," *Perspective on Politics* 4, no. 1 (2009). 732.

epitomizes the concept of economic oligarchy, where economic growth and prosperity hinge on the monopolistic control exercised by the affluent.<sup>15</sup>

### Tafsir Al-Humazah: Examining the Economic Elite of the Kafir Quraisy

QS. Al-Humazah [104]: 1-9

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ {١} الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ {٢} يُحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ {٣} كَلَّا لَيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ {٤} وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ {٥} نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْقُودَةُ {٦} الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ {٧} إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّاةٌ {٨} فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ {٩}

“Woe to every scorner and mocker [1] Who collects wealth and (continuously) counts it. [2] He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal. [3] No! He will surely be thrown into the Crusher. [4] And what can make you know what is the Crusher? [5] It is the fire of Allah, [eternally] fueled, [6] Which mounts directed at the hearts. [7] Indeed, Hellfire will be closed down upon them [8] In extended columns. [9]” (QS. Al-Humazah [104]: 1-9).

Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi documented four narrations pertaining to the sabab nuzul of Surah Al-Humazah, each addressing the Qur'anic condemnation, expressed through the term *wailun* (وَيْلٌ), directed at specific individuals among the pagan elite of Quraisy during that era. These individuals are identified as Ubay bin Khalaf, al-Akhnas bin Shuraiq, Jamil al-Jumahi, or Umayyah bin Khalaf.<sup>16</sup> Al-Thabari, referencing a narration from Ibn 'Abbas, indicates that this surah was revealed in response to the behavior of polytheists at that time who habitually denigrated and verbally abused Muslims, particularly the Prophet Muhammad saw.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, Ibn 'Assur provides a more extensive list of names than al-Suyuthi, though the essence of the information leans towards the conclusion that the surah targets a specific group of polytheists led by their prominent figures. This interpretation arises from the consideration of the surah's language, which is general and does not specifically implicate one individual or event.<sup>18</sup>

Fundamentally, the terms *al-humazah* (هُمَزَةٌ) and *al-lumazah* (لُّمَزَةٌ) denote acts of ill-treatment aimed at vilifying others. However, diverse interpretations exist for these two terms. Al-Zajjaj posits that both words convey the same meaning, implying

<sup>15</sup> Francois Bourguignon dan Thierry Verdier, “Oligarchy, Democracy, Inequality and Growth,” *Journal of Development Economics* 62, no. 1 (2000). 288.

<sup>16</sup> Jalaluddin al-Suyūfī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Kutub al-Tsaqafiyah, 2002). 305.

<sup>17</sup> Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ayi Alquran*, 24th ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1998). 621.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Ṭāhir ibn 'Āsyūr, *al-Tahrīr Wa al-Tanwīr*, 30th ed. (Tunis: Dar al-Tunisiyyah li an-Nasyr, 1984). 536.

backbiting and criticizing others behind their backs. In contrast<sup>19</sup> al-Nasafi references various interpretations drawn from the Companions and the early Tabi'in generation. Some distinguish between the two words based on the intention behind denouncing directly in front of the person or behind their back, while others interpret the distinction in terms of physical actions such as physical harm coupled with verbal swearing.<sup>20</sup> The connection between these reprehensible traits, censured by the words of God, and the subsequent verse elicits two opinions. Some assert that the phrase "Who collects wealth and (continuously) counts it" is conceptually linked with "swearers and detractors," forming a cohesive thematic unit. Others propose that it represents a distinct subject, albeit one also subjected to condemnation in the Quran. Isma'il Haqqi contends that the second verse is causally connected to the preceding verse, implying that the motivation for swearing and criticizing stems from individuals having substantial wealth they take pride in. This is substantiated by additional information indicating that al-Akhnas ibn Shuraiq, associated with the revelation of this verse, possessed considerable wealth.<sup>21</sup>

Concerning the interpretation of the second verse, variations in *qira'at* among the mufasirs introduce differences with implications for the meaning. The term *jama'a* (جَمَعَ), when lacking *tashdid*, signifies collecting, whereas with *tashdid* (جَمَّعَ), it conveys the notion of continuously accumulating or collecting wealth. Similarly, the term *'addahu* (عَدَّدَ), as per ar-Razi, holds three potential meanings when read with *tashdid*: *firstly*, a derivation from the word *'uddah*, denoting provisions or ammunition, implying the preparation of treasures for future needs; *secondly*, counting treasures, with *tashdid* indicating the frequency of such activities; and *thirdly*, signifying multiplication or doubling. In the absence of *tashdid* (عَدَّدَ), two plausible meanings emerge: *firstly*, the act of amassing wealth and establishing its numerical value; and *secondly*, gathering wealth and counting the individuals willing to support him. This implies that possessing abundant wealth and redistributing it to garner increased sympathy and support from one's community is regarded as a source of pride.<sup>22</sup>

Irrespective of the mufasir's preference in presenting various *qira'at* and elucidating the meaning of each word in the first and second verses, the impetus behind

<sup>19</sup> Ibrāhīm ibn al-Sarī, *Ma'ānī Alqurān Wa I'rābuhu Li al-Zajjaj*, 5th ed. (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1988). 361.

<sup>20</sup> Abu Hafṣ al-Nasafī, *al-Taysīr Fī al-Tafsīr*, 15th ed. (Istanbul: Dar al-Lubab, 2019). 474.

<sup>21</sup> Ismā'īl Haqqī, *Tafsīr Rūh al-Bayān*, 10th ed. (Beirut: Dar Ihya', n.d.). 508.

<sup>22</sup> Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghaib*, 32nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1981). 184-185.

the phrase "collects wealth and (continuously) counts" stems from the perpetrator's conviction that such actions can confer perpetual life in this world. Al-Zamkshari expounds that the allure of immortality manifests in human nature through four distinct motives: *firstly*, an intense obsession with wealth to the extent that one's imagination transcends mortality, overlooking the inevitability of death; *secondly*, a pursuit of creating a lasting legacy, perhaps through constructing significant structures, aiming to be remembered by future generations or fearing a loss of societal presence in the absence of wealth; *thirdly*, an excessive affection for wealth, leading to the belief that a lack of it renders one vulnerable to hunger and even death, giving rise to a sense of miserliness; and *fourthly*, a desire to accrue virtuous deeds with the aspiration of attaining eternal bliss in heaven. Among these four motives, the latter is considered the most noble.<sup>23</sup>

The interpretation of the fourth verse onward entails the Quranic admonition directed at those individuals harboring these reprehensible traits. Mufasirs adhere to the principle that the *ibrah* (moral lesson) in Quranic verses does not solely reside in the specificity of the *sabab nuzul* (occasion of revelation) but rather in the generality of the *lafaz* (textual expression). Individuals exhibiting such characteristics are unequivocally warned of a painful retribution in the form of the scorching Hell of *Hutamah*, a torment that extends to the very core. The explicit declaration of this agonizing punishment underscores the Quran's rejection of the polytheists' erroneous belief that their cunning practices—vilifying and cursing those who do not align with them, amassing wealth to transcend death, and preserving their existence and societal standing—are mere false illusions. Instead, they are destined to face severe consequences. Sayyid Qutb highlights the rhythmic coherence at the culmination of each verse within the *surah* as a device emphasizing the gravity of this stern warning.<sup>24</sup>

### **Tafsir Al-Hasyr Verse 7: The Redistribution of Wealth in Accordance with Maslahah (Public Interest)**

QS. Al-Hasyr [59]: 7

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<sup>23</sup> Mahmūd bin ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kasysyāf*, 6th ed. (Riyadh: Maktabah al-‘Abikan, 1998). 429.

<sup>24</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *fī Zilāl Alqurān*, 6th ed. (Kairo: Dar al-Syuruq, 1968). 3972.



وَمَا آفَاءَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ فَلِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

“And what Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns - it is for Allah and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and orphans and the [stranded] traveler - so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you. And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.” (QS. Al-Hasyr [59]: 7).

Ibn Katsir documented that this verse was revealed in the context of the distribution of the assets acquired by the Prophet from Banu Nadhir following their surrender.<sup>25</sup> As elucidated by al-Suyuti, Surah Al-Hashr was revealed approximately six months after the Battle of Badr, specifically in connection with the surrender of Banu Nadhir, a Jewish community residing in Medina.<sup>26</sup> This verse issues a directive to partition the acquired property into five shares, with the provisions emanating from Allah's explicit command. This newly established provision marked a departure from previous practices. According to al-Thanthawi, this provision not only applied to that specific instance but also laid the groundwork for the Prophet's community in subsequent periods. The underlying motivation behind ensuring wealth distribution extended beyond the affluent underscores the Quranic guidance aimed at fostering societal well-being, mitigating economic disparities between the rich and the impoverished. Consequently, the cautionary note in the passage, "and whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from," reinforces adherence to the Prophet's directives in matters of wealth distribution.<sup>27</sup>

Ibn 'Ashur contends that this verse serves as evidence of the Quran's commitment to upholding the principles of *maqasid al-syari'ah*, particularly in the realm of economic equity. The division into five groups, coupled with the stipulation "so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you," underscores the principle of safeguarding property or *hifz al-mal*. This method of division diverges from the prevailing Arab custom where a quarter of war spoils typically belonged to the tribal leader. Certain

<sup>25</sup> Ismā'īl ibn Katsir, *Tafsīr Alqurān al-'Azīm*, 13th ed. (Kairo: Muassasah Qurthubah, 2000). 483.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl Fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. 257.

<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Sayyid al-Ṭanṭawī, *al-Tafsīr al-Wasīṭ Li Alqurān al-Karīm*, 26th ed. (Kairo: al-Risalah, 1987). 376.

perspectives maintain that, in principle, the provisions for these five groups can be upheld, albeit with varying applications. This flexibility arises from the verse's instructions, which signify the authority of a leader (imam) as long as it ensures fairness and promotes economic equality. Notably, scholars like Wahbah al-Zuhaili propose an interpretation suggesting that the verse specifically addresses spoils acquired not through war, as it employs the term *fay'u*, while war-related contexts typically use the term *ghanimah*.<sup>28</sup> However, these five groups are also the entities referenced in the Quran concerning the distribution of *ghanimah*, exemplified by Al-Anfal verse 41, as follows:

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ إِن كُنْتُمْ  
ءَامَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ الْجُمُعَانَ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“And know that anything you obtain of war booty - then indeed, for Allah is one fifth of it and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and the orphans, the needy, and the [stranded] traveler, if you have believed in Allah and in that which We sent down to Our Servant on the day of criterion - the day when the two armies met. And Allah, over all things, is competent.” (QS. Al-Anfal [8]: 41).

Al-Zamakhshari interpreted the term *dūlatan* (دُولَةٌ) as *dūlatan jahiliyyah*, denoting the wealth circulation prevalent during the pre-Islamic Jahiliyyah era. In that period, officials or elites considered themselves entitled to a significant share of war spoils. Their esteemed status as dignitaries perpetuated this practice, often enforced with the mindset of "مَنْ عَرَّ بَرًّا" (who snatches, he wins!).<sup>29</sup> Al-Syinqithi, by citing Al-Zamakhshari's perspective, elucidates Islam's strong emphasis on economic equality, as any disparities in wealth could lead to social divisions among Muslims. This verse serves to counteract ambiguous economic ideologies, asserting that a societal community or state is even permitted to collect capital from the affluent and redistribute it among the less privileged. Arguments suggesting that such policies may destabilize economic and market flows are dismissed as illusory and unsubstantiated.<sup>30</sup>

### Contextualizing Interpretation: A Critique of Economic Oligarchy

The revelation of Surah Al-Humazah during the Meccan period and Al-Hasyr Verse 7 in the Medinan period establishes a correlative connection between the *Makkiyah*

<sup>28</sup> Wahbah al-Zuhaili, *al-Tafsir al-Wasit* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2001). 2656.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kasysyāf*. 78.

<sup>30</sup> Muhammad al-Amīn al-Syinqithi, *Aḍwā' al-Bayān Fī Īdāh Alqurān bi Alqurān*, 8th ed. (Jeddah: Dar 'Alam al-Fawaid, n.d.). 54.

and *Madaniyah* verses. Surah Al-Humazah serves as the initial point where the Quran critiques those engaged in economic oligarchy, as evident in the interpretation of the second verse emphasizing the accumulation of wealth and its exclusive distribution among their associates who, in turn, provide support or assistance at specific junctures. This condemnation finds a subsequent response in Al-Hasyr Verse 7, which provides tangible evidence on implementing economic policies to counteract oligarchy. The proposed solution involves the equitable distribution of wealth, ensuring it does not solely circulate among the affluent. The sequential descent of these verses underscores the continuity and gradual application of Islamic legal principles. This ongoing process necessitates adaptation to contemporary contexts while upholding the core principles. The concept of *fay'u* or *ghanimah* inevitably evolves with changing dynamics, yet the resistance against economic inequality leading to the monopolization by a select few, resulting in social disparity, remains a foundational principle that must be consistently applied.

The context behind the revelation (sabab nuzul) of Surah Al-Humazah sheds light on how the affluent status of the pagan elite in Quraisy during that era was linked to disdainful conduct and swearing. The insults and curses directed at the Prophet and Muslims at large can be interpreted as a defensive response to the introduction of new teachings that contradicted their established narrative, posing a threat to their standing as respected individuals. Islam aimed to challenge the prevailing norms of what was then termed *jahiliyyah*, attempting to overthrow the perceived status quo derived from wealth with a forceful rejection and the looming threat of hellish torment. Consequently, they propagated negative narratives to encourage people to join in denouncing and cursing the teachings brought by the Muslims. Their reluctance stemmed from a desire to maintain their undisturbed existence and societal standing. Considering the historical context of Arab civilization, from the pre-Islamic period to the emergence of Islam, these attitudes were deeply ingrained in Arab society. The entanglement of tribal fanaticism and the veneration of wealth often fueled displays of arrogance and pride, leading them to justify cunning strategies to preserve their attained status.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Al-Gazālī ‘Alī Kasār Gadīr, “al-Māl ‘inda al-‘Arabī Qabla al-Islām, Ahammiyatuhu, Wasāil Isti’Malihi, wa Asaruhu ‘Alā Mujtama’ Syibh al-Jazīrah al-‘Arabiyyah,” *al-Bahith Journal* 20, no. 1 (2018). 332.

For instance, one of the figures involved in the *sabab nuzul*, namely al-Akhnas ibn Shuraiq, reportedly defected from the Battle of Badr and wielded considerable influence over many polytheistic troops during that period, showcasing his prowess in rhetoric and propaganda. This characteristic had been evident even before his conversion to Islam and subsequent companionship with the Prophet, as documented by Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani.<sup>32</sup> This historical context emphasizes the significance of Surah Al-Humazah's criticism of their conduct, particularly due to the potent propaganda they disseminated. Analogously, in contemporary settings, economic oligarchs often employ propaganda tactics that can influence shifts in societal values and public policies for their benefit. While acknowledging the inevitability of wealth disparities, economic oligarchy, as referred to here, pertains to the absence of a commitment to fostering economic prosperity for the less privileged, especially those outside their immediate circles or lacking symbiotic relationships.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, the affluent companions of the Prophet demonstrated a different approach. They did not exhibit excessive pride in their wealth and refrained from manipulating it to monopolize social justice. Their vision of economic equality manifested through acts of generosity, such as initiating public amenities like opening water sources for the broader community.<sup>34</sup>

The Quran's opposition to the customs of the *jahiliyyah* concerning wealth distribution inequality is evident in both the *asbab nuzul* and the essence of Al-Hasyr verse 7. As elucidated earlier, the Quran introduced a shift in the wealth distribution paradigm that diverged from the traditional Arab *ghanimah* practices, where the lion's share typically went to the leaders of the tribe or *kabilah*. This historical deviation is reflected in the following poem, quoted by Jawwad 'Ali, that pertains to *ghanimah*:

لَكَ الْمِرْبَاعُ مِنْهَا وَالصَّفَايَا \*\*\* وَحُكْمُكَ وَالنَّشِيطَةُ وَالْفُضُولُ

The term *mirba'* denotes a quarter of the spoils, rightfully claimed by the tribal leader; *shafaya* encompasses special items, such as invaluable jewelry typically reserved for the war commander; *nasyitah* pertains to discovered treasure or booty during the

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalanī, *al-Iṣābah fī Tamyiz al-Ṣahābah*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1995). 192.

<sup>33</sup> F., Regilme Jr. dan Salvador Santino, "Constitutional Order in Oligarchic Democracies: Neoliberal Rights versus Socio-Economic Rights," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 19, no. 1 (2023). 126-129.

<sup>34</sup> Muhammad ibn 'Alwī al-'Aydus, *Kayfa Takūnu Ganiyyan*, n.d. 15.

journey to or return from war; whereas *fudhul* encompasses the remaining treasure, not claimed by the elites, including items like donkeys and horses. The considerable share acquired by tribal leaders and other elites may expand, and it is indeed imperative for them to be regarded as the primary beneficiaries by the less influential members of the tribe.<sup>35</sup> The reformative essence of Islam towards all the social systems prevalent in Arab society during the era classified as jahiliyyah must persistently be revitalized. This aligns with Ibn 'Ashur's interpretation, asserting that the verse provides guidance on the conduct expected from a leader or societal figure in line with *maslahah*, countering any endeavors to perpetuate the dominance of a select few over public wealth, which can result in economic disparity. Economic oligarchy, evolving over time with diverse patterns, stands as an obstacle to achieving social welfare.

### Conclusion

By employing the tafsir Nuzuli approach advocated by Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, this investigation successfully identified a correlation between the exegesis of Surah Al-Humazah and Al-Hasyr Verse 7, illustrating resistance to economic oligarchy as a persistent phenomenon in the nascent Islamic preaching community. Surah Al-Humazah, classified as Makkiyah, vehemently opposes the conduct of the elite from pagan Quraisy, who disseminated propaganda to perpetuate their economic dominance. This opposition is further exemplified in Al-Hasyr Verse 7, explicitly articulating a vision of economic equality by challenging the distribution of wealth confined to a select few affluent individuals. The gradual and reformative progression evident in the revelation of these verses intimates that the Quran aims to combat economic oligarchy. Contemporary contextualization endeavors can draw inspiration from this vision, allowing the Quran to serve as a timeless solution or enduring guidance for Muslims amidst the evolving forms of oligarchies. Meticulously examining the interwoven historical context, linking the life of the Prophet (*masār as-sīrah an-nabawiyyah*) and the formative history of the Quran (*masār at-takwīnī li al-Qur'ān*), constitutes an earnest attempt to contextualize Quranic interpretation in accordance with the exigencies of the present era.

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<sup>35</sup> Jawwād 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tarīkh al-'Arab Qabla al-Islām*, 5th ed. (Baghdad: Jami'ah Baghdad, 1993). 486.

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