

## A Non-Linear Systemic Analysis of Conceptualization in the Holy Qur'an

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### Abstract

The Holy Qur'an employs a unique and, in technical terms, "Non-Linear" order and organization in articulating its concepts. The explanation of Qur'anic meanings cannot be adequately contained within a purely "lexeme-meaning" system alone; rather, it is the various patterns of order and the relationships among Qur'anic words, verses, and chapters that are responsible for conveying its meanings. The Qur'an constructs conceptual networks, expressing its intended meanings through chain-like interconnected relations. This study, which aims to analyze this non-linear system, employs textual analysis and examines concrete examples to identify various forms and processes of conceptual processing in the Qur'an. These include symmetry, opposition, repetition, morphological variation, derivation and inflectional extension, semantic gradation and contextual layering of vocabulary, generalization and specification, the use of different or similar rhetorical structures, and other forms of interrelation and proportionality among words, verses, and chapters. Attention to these relationships and proportional structures, as well as to the Qur'an's distinctive mode of conceptualization, indicates the existence of a coherent and systematic conceptual universe within the Qur'an. In contrast to the long-standing scholarly focus on the external order of the Qur'an, these non-linear and systemic dimensions of Qur'anic conceptual organization have not received sufficient attention in academic research. The Holy Qur'an does not employ this mode of expression with the intention of artificial complexity, hardship, or confusion for the audience. Rather, since it is intended to serve as a "Clarification for Humankind," it necessarily adopts such a structure. This form of relational organization prevents stagnation and the monopolization of Qur'anic meanings, thereby demonstrating its perpetual explanatory capacity, its effectiveness in addressing human problems, and, ultimately, its enduring authority.

**Keywords:** Conceptualization, Qur'anic Dynamism, Qur'anic Order, Authority, Conceptual Network.

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## Introduction

The discussion of the existence of "Proportional Relationships" in the Qur'an, based on the divinely ordained arrangement of verses and chapters, has been addressed in the works of scholars such as *Zarkashī* (2006 AD/1427 AH: 36-48), *Biqā'ī* (1969 AD/1389 AH: 1, 1-16), *Suyūṭī* (n.d., type 62; 1985 AD/1406 AH: throughout the book), as well as several exegetes including *Ṭabrisī*, *Fakhr Rāzī*, *Ālūsī*, *Hawwā*, and others.

Similarly, the "Order and Composition" of the Qur'an has occupied a significant place in classical Islamic scholarship (cf. *Jurjānī*, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 1, 51-55). The type of order discussed by these scholars is generally an external or surface-level order. However, as one moves from this apparent layer into the internal layers and meanings of the Qur'an, this order can also be observed at deeper levels.

Regarding the internal structure of the Qur'an, some scholars have used the term "Non-linear Order" in contrast to "Linear Order." Linear structure refers to the arrangement in which linguistic units such as phonemes, words, or utterances are sequentially connected, one after another. This feature reflects the temporal dimension of speech and presents it like a narrative with a beginning and an end (*Qayturi*, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 21).

But in "Non-linear" order, the speaker moves the discourse from one point to another while the ultimate purpose remains one; then returns to the beginning of the discourse, operating like a loop, in such a way that no explicit vertical structure or connecting thread is apparent in the surface level of the speech, and the discourse appears to have a discontinuous form (*al-Farrāhī al-Hindī*, 1967 AD/1388 AH: 54). However, this order is not limited to a circular relationship; rather, it is a general arrangement in which the components appear, on the surface, to lack a clear semantic connection and give the impression of conceptual dispersion.

This order is also not identical with the "Eloquence" defined by scholars. Eloquence is the delivery of meaning in its optimal form (*Mamouri*, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 24). Its scope is relatively limited, and through its three pillars, semantics, rhetoric, and embellishment, it ultimately concerns the composition of words within expressions; it neither enters the domain of letters and individual lexical units (*al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī*, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 3-5), nor does it address the systemic relations and structural correspondences among verses, thematic units, and surahs. These two domains are not necessarily in conflict; they may overlap without contradiction. That is, certain linguistic structures and phenomena, while having specific rhetorical justifications, simultaneously reveal particular processes in conceptual formation.

The Holy Qur'an, based on its own specific system of intended relations and proportions, possesses first and foremost a "System" for conveying its meanings; that is, it employs organized processes or mechanisms through which it delivers its intended message to the audience. Secondly, this system is given a networked and systemic (symphonic) structure (cf. *Darrāz*, 1956 AD/1376 AH: 155-159; *Sharifi*, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 86; *Qaemini*, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 8). Meaning is fundamentally formed within a network of relations, and meanings [and concepts] in any given language or text are governed by a system in which all semantic relations are defined (*Paktchi*, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 66). The concepts of the Qur'an cannot be fully conveyed through a simple "Word-Meaning" system or translation alone.

Proper understanding of its conceptual processes requires a holistic view and attention to the networked structure among its components, as well as the study of multiple instances and the analysis of patterns of relations and correspondences among them (cf. Khoshmanesh, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 27).

With this introduction, this research, responding to the question of how the Qur'an's conceptual order is formed, examines a limited set of Qur'anic expressive structures such as contrast, symmetry, derivation, morphological transformation, lexical derivation, layering of vocabulary, summarization and elaboration, and the use of different or similar rhetorical styles. The aim is to demonstrate the implicit non-linear conceptual processes embedded within them.

Given this distinctive conceptual order, the assumption of dispersion or lack of coherence in the Qur'an, as a "Continuous system," is invalid both at the level of verse interrelations and in the ordering of surahs from *al-Fātiḥa* to *al-Nās* (al-Zayn, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 13). Instead, the Qur'an provides the possibility of endless semantic generation and conceptual dynamism, and is thereby protected from interpretive distortions, deviation from its intended purpose, loss of effectiveness in addressing human problems, restriction of meaning, and loss of its authoritative and explanatory nature.

### Research Concepts

**System:** The original meaning of this term has been defined as the act of composing and placing something alongside something else (Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 5, 443). *Ibn Manẓūr* states: "Everything that you connect to another or join part of it to another part, you have arranged." (Ibn Manẓūr, 1983 AD/1414 AH: 12, 578) System has also been described as a string or thread of a rosary that holds its beads together and upon which their arrangement depends (ibid.). In other words, anything that performs the act of composition or arrangement can be called a system. The Holy Qur'an possesses a system for processing its concepts, arranging components in specific forms and relationships to convey its intended meaning. A key feature of these interconnected components is their unity and coherence (al-Farāhī al-Hindī, 1968 AD/1388 AH: 75-76).

**Conceptualization:** It is the process of meaning-making and is connected to the dynamism of human thought, in which language also plays a role (Qaemini et al., 2016 AD/1395 SH: 7-8). It also refers to the process of determining the meaning of a term and how a concept or idea is formed (C. Dixon, 2016: 95). It is usually associated with mental and cognitive activity; it is structured, hierarchical, and a condensed representation of real experience (Leszczah, 2022: 13). It appears indirectly, and the only way to examine it is through the study of various instances of the phenomenon under investigation (Pederson & Nuyts, 1977: 3).

**Dynamism:** This term is derived from the French word "Dynamique," meaning "Powerful." (Bomhard, 1966: 296) This word itself comes from the Greek root "δύναμαι (dúnamai)," meaning "I am able," or "Dynasthai," meaning "To be capable or to have power." Since 1856 AD, it has also been used in the sense of "Active, dynamic, and energetic," and it is the opposite of "Static," meaning immobile or fixed (W. Skeat & colleagues, 1882: 186). The dynamism of the Qur'an refers to its continuous flow and its non-restriction to any specific

time or geographical context: "Indeed the Qur'an is alive; it does not die, and it flows just as night and day flow, and just as the sun and moon flow, and it flows over our latter ones just as it flows over our first ones." (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 35, 403)

#### Foundations of the Research

This study is based on the divinely determined arrangement of verses and surahs, which has long held an important place in Qur'anic sciences (cf. Zarkashī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 183; Suyūṭī, n.d.: 1, 179; Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, 1977: 71; Khū'ī, 2013 AD/1434 AH: 237-257). It also adopts a holistic and structural approach to the Qur'an (cf. Darrāz, 1956 AD/1376 AH: 163), meaning that all components are viewed as interrelated parts of a single unified whole in a coherent manner.

The existence of proportionality and symmetry among Qur'anic surahs is another foundation of the study, traces of which can be found in grouped naming conventions such as "*Ḥawāmīm*, *Musabbihāt*, and *Ṭawāsīn*," (Suyūṭī, n.d.: 1, 163) or in paired surahs such as "*Zahrāwān* or *Mu'awwadhatayn*," as well as in identified pairwise relationships like "*al-Anfāl* and *al-Tawbah*, *al-Ḍuḥā* and *al-Inshirāḥ*, and *al-Fīl* and *Quraysh*," which are reported in narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) (cf. Ibn Bābawayh, n.d.: 1, Book of Prayer and Its Limits, 485).

The discussion of symmetry in the Qur'an can also be found in Western scholarship influenced by Biblical studies, such as in the works of Jacques Berque (*Relire le Coran*) and Michel Cuypers, which will be addressed in the following section.

#### Research Background

Among the works on the systematization of Qur'anic concepts are those of Toshihiko Izutsu, including "The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Qur'an" (translated by Fereydoun Badrei, 1999 AD/1378 SH) and "God and Man in the Qur'an" (translated by Ahmad Aram, 2002 AD/1381 SH). Izutsu discusses the existence of a semantic network in the Qur'an but does not address the various processes of conceptualization.

On the other hand, most studies related to the Qur'an's conceptual system have focused on a single concept within the Qur'an; for example, the article "Conceptualization of Attribution Styles of Pleasant and Unpleasant Events in the Qur'an," *Journal of Cultural Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2023 AD/1402 SH), by Ali Bayat and Mohammad Sadegh Shojaei. Qaraei Soltanabadi, in his article "Understanding the Qur'an in Light of Its Networked or Non-Linear Order," *Journal of Qur'anic Linguistic Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2015 AD/1394 SH), while acknowledging the notion of "System" in understanding the Qur'an, remains purely theoretical and does not provide concrete examples.

The present study, while affirming the Qur'an's conceptual system, also analyzes conceptual processing mechanisms to the extent possible within the scope of the research. Other works may also be mentioned, such as the article "Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Order of the Qur'anic Text" (*Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2011 AD), 1-24) by Michel Cuypers, a Belgian Qur'anic scholar, who argues for the existence of a specific order and coherence in the Qur'anic text rooted in Semitic rhetoric. While Cuypers, like the present study, emphasizes interconnections among Qur'anic components, his analysis

is derived from Biblical studies and is structured around the concept of "Symmetry," which, aside from debates about its validity, has been shown in some cases to have counterexamples. The present study, however, views the relationships among Qur'anic components as systemic and network-based rather than strictly symmetrical, considering symmetry only one of several conceptual processing patterns alongside others.

### Research Method

This study employs content analysis to examine concrete examples from the Qur'an. Content analysis is a method for studying relationships (Mohammadi Mehr, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 31) and a technique for drawing reliable and replicable inferences from textual data (Krippendorff, 2013 AD/1391: 25). In this method, the influence of subjective biases on findings is minimized; the findings are necessarily interrelated, and they are not merely driven by the researcher's hypotheses (cf. Holsti, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 14-16). The scope of content analysis encompasses the entire communication process (Mohammadi Mehr, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 49).

One form of inference in content analysis is the systems approach, which in the case of the Qur'an corresponds to a holistic, structured, networked, and continuous perspective. In fact, for someone who understands the system, data relating to one configuration inherently implies all subsequent configurations (Krippendorff, 2013 AD/1391 SH: 44).

The Qur'an's conceptual processing mechanisms, grounded in its internal correspondences and proportional relationships, can operate in various forms, some of which are discussed below.

#### The Qur'an describes the **Proportionality in the Form of Symmetry**

structure of existence as dual and symmetrical: "And of everything We created pairs, so that you may reflect." (al-Dhāriyāt: 49) According to this verse (cf. Hosseinzadeh, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 116, 88, 60), the entire creation, including the Qur'an itself and all its components such as surahs, verses, words, and even letters, cannot be exempt from the principle of pairing. This notion of correspondence in the Qur'an is also reflected in the slayings of the Prophet Muhammad and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). Examples include referring to Surahs *al-Baqarah* and *Āli 'Imrān* as "*al-Zahrāwain*," (Ibn Ḥajjāj, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 1, 553) or *al-Falaq* and *al-Nās* as "*al-Mu'awwadhatayn*." (ibid: 558) Other examples include the recommendation to recite certain surahs together in prayer as if they constitute a single surah, such as *al-Fīl* and *Quraysh*, and *al-Duḥā* and *al-Inshirāḥ* (Ibn Bābawayh, 1984 AD/1363 SH: 1, 306). Likewise, narrations mention the reward and virtue of reciting certain surahs alongside others, such as *al-Ṭalāq* and *al-Taḥrīm*, *al-Mujādilah* and *al-Ḥadīd*, *al-Anfāl* and *al-Tawbah*, and others (Ibn Bābawayh, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 106, 117, 119). These are all examples of such correspondences.

Under the category of symmetry, several forms of conceptualization can be identified, which often appear as nested or interwoven concepts:

## 1. Summarization and Elaboration

In Surah *al-Mujādilah*, the most prominent theme is secret counsel in its various forms. The well-known verse of secret counsel states: "O you who believe! When you consult the Messenger privately, and then offer something in charity before your consultation..." (*al-Mujādilah*: 12)

This verse makes private consultation with the Prophet conditional upon giving charity. The concept of charity is mentioned only twice in this surah, yet in the adjacent surah, *al-Ḥadīd*, it is elaborated in a far more extensive and detailed manner. According to historical reports and narrations, only Ali (AS) fulfilled this Qur'anic request for charity (Ḥuwayzī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 5, 265). Among the wisdoms attributed to this ruling are the exposure of hypocrites around the Prophet and the identification of sincere believers (Ālūsī, 1984 AD/1415 AH: 14, 224).

Interestingly, the theme of charity in Surah *al-Ḥadīd* is deeply interwoven with topics such as hypocrisy, miserliness, the reality of worldly life and possessions, and allegiance to the Messenger. It also discusses the relationship between charity and humility of the heart, the avoidance of hardness of heart, and the concept of spiritual life; its relation to the People of the Book, the "Wrath-incurring ones," the Party of God and the Party of Satan.

In both surahs, charity and spending serve as a basis for companionship with the Messenger. In a broader sense, the organization of the economic system, whether individual or social, can shape one's relationship with the Imam and determine social affiliations and factional alignments.

Surah *al-Ḥadīd* is also part of the group of *Musabbahāt* surahs, many of which prominently address economic issues, which is relevant to the present discussion. If we were to ignore all other themes of Surah *al-Mujādilah* and focus solely on the concept of charity, we would see how a single word expands, connects with multiple dimensions of human life, and continues to unfold without being confined or limited in meaning.

## 2. Presentation of Truths in a Oppositional Form

Opposition in the Qur'an appears in various forms, including directional, linear and diagonal, derivational, gradational, complementary, bilateral, and others (cf. "Types of Lexical Opposition in Qur'anic Usage," Qaemini and Mirzababaei, *Journal of Mind*, 2015 AD/1393 SH: no. 60). In this section, the phenomenon of opposition is examined in two corresponding surahs *al-Inshiqāq* and *al-Muṭaffifīn*. Surah *al-Inshiqāq*, whose atmosphere is made weighty by the intensity of the letter "*Qāf*" (Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, 2009: 281-282), as well as the notion of a severe "Split" and "Kadh" (meaning earning or striving through hardship; Rāghib, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 704), introduces oppositional structures from the very beginning of the surah:

**Table 1: Oppositions in Surah *al-Inshiqāq***

| Heaven                                                   | Earth                                                   | Directional opposition            |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| "When the sky is rent asunder"                           | "And when the earth is stretched out..."                | Conceptual and inverse opposition |
| "So as for he who is given his record in his right hand" | "But as for he who is given his record behind his back" | Semantic opposition               |

| Heaven                                       | Earth                                                                              | Directional opposition               |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| "He will soon face an easy reckoning"        | "He will call for destruction and enter blazing Fire"                              | Conceptual opposition                |
| "And he will return to his people rejoicing" | "Indeed, he had once been joyful among his people, thinking he would never return" | Oppositional and conceptual contrast |

The same dual oppositional atmosphere in its corresponding surah, *al-Muṭaffifīn*, is expanded in a more detailed and elaborate form. People who stand before the Lord of the Worlds are divided into two groups, with two opposing records and two opposing destinies:

**Table 2: Oppositions in Surah *al-Muṭaffifīn***

| Fujjār (wicked)                                                                       | Abrār (righteous)                                                     | Type of opposition    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Record of the wicked: "No! Indeed, the record of the wicked..."                       | Record of the righteous: "No! Indeed, the record of the righteous..." | Contrast              |
| <i>Sijjīn</i> : "indeed, it is in <i>Sijjīn</i> "                                     | <i>‘Ilīyyīn</i> : "indeed, it is in <i>‘Ilīyyīn</i> "                 | "                     |
| Hellfire: "then indeed they will enter Hellfire"                                      | Bliss: "indeed, the righteous will be in bliss"                       | "                     |
| Veiled from their Lord: "No! Indeed, they will be veiled from their Lord on that Day" | Seated in comfort: "on adorned couches, observing..."                 | Oppositional contrast |
| The criminals mocking believers                                                       | Believers laughing at disbelievers on that Day                        | "                     |

In these two corresponding surahs, we observe various forms of opposition in which, on the surface, no direct relation appears to exist; rather, they speak of deep separations and contrasts. Nevertheless, they actively generate meaning, through which the two opposing groups and their implications are identified.

The more one seeks to understand one group, the more necessary it becomes to understand its counterpart properly. What supports the correspondence between these two surahs is the overall presence of dual oppositional structures in both texts. Even if the "People of the Right and Left" in *al-Inshiqāq* cannot be identified exactly with the "*Abrār* and *Fujjār*" of *al-Muṭaffifīn*, one can still observe shared conceptual components that are presented in one surah in a more detailed and complete manner than in the other.

In the section on the opposition of phenomena, there exist numerous types and diverse possibilities for the formation of meanings. For instance, the two opposing phenomena of "Night" and "Day" can relate to each other through "Difference," (*al-Mu'mimūn*: 80) "Penetration," (*Wulūj*) (*al-Ḥadīd*: 6) "Envelopment," (*Ghashyān*) (*al-Ra'd*: 3) "Effacement," (*Maḥw*) (*al-Isrā'*:12) "Turning," (*Qalb*) (*al-Nūr*: 44) "Shedding," (*Insilākh*) (*Yāsīn*: 37) and "Rolling up," (*Takwīr*) (*al-Zumar*: 5) Each of these states conveys a kind of conceptual processing that, in applied and referential contexts, can be regarded as a distinct method.

### 3. Similar Modes of Expression

Surah *al-Jāthīyah* is among the *Hawāmīm* chapters. At the beginning, after mentioning the revelation of the Book from God, the Mighty, the Wise, it refers to a set of "Signs" and phenomena:

- "Indeed in the heavens and the earth are signs for the believers." (3)
  - "And in your creation and in what He disperses of living creatures are signs for a people who are certain." (4)
  - "And in the alternation of night and day, and what God sends down from the sky of provision whereby He gives life to the earth after its death, and in the turning of the winds are signs for a people who reason." (5)
  - "And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, all from Him. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reflect." (13)
- In these four verses, the expression of "Signs" is presented in three different forms:
- First verse: "Indeed... are signs for the believers";
  - Second and third verses: "Signs for a people who are certain and signs for a people who reason";
  - Fourth verse: "Indeed in that are signs for a people who reflect (A similar pattern also exists in Surah *al-Naḥl* (11-13) and Surah *al-An'ām*." (97-99)
- Several points can be derived from this mode of expression:
- 1) Different perspectives on phenomena can generate differences in meaning and produce concepts appropriate to each viewpoint. This Book, revealed by God the Mighty and Wise can grant humans faith, certainty, intellect, and reflection (and in other verses of *al-An'ām* and *al-Naḥl*, using the same style, it also grants knowledge, remembrance, and understanding). It is a comprehensive source (*al-kitāb*) whose manifestations branch out according to the type of need, mode of engagement, and manner of utilization.
  - 2) With the formation of different expressions, meanings do not become contradictory; rather, they are mutually reinforcing and confirmatory. In this set of verses, the "Sign-ness" of phenomena is presented in three different forms:
    - "O! A more general expression regarding the heavens and the earth, where benefiting from them is tied to "Faith";
    - "O! In the second and third verses, where phenomena are more precise and complex, and the resulting knowledge requires stronger certainty and intellectual capacity, reference is made to "Certainty" and "Reason," which are not universal but specific to certain groups;
    - "O! Even this group cannot access all levels of meaning, and the indefinite form of "Signs" indicates this limitation. The fact that the forms of phenomena correspond precisely to certainty and intellect is itself noteworthy;
    - "O! The thirteenth verse assigns "Reflection" as the condition for mastery over phenomena. This verse is slightly separated from the previous three in order to describe the state of the arrogant and those who reject the aforementioned signs.

The types of punishment for such people are also categorized as humiliating punishment, great punishment, and painful punishment.

The parallel surah to *al-Jāthiyah* is Surah *al-Dukhān*, in which this graded and stage-based system of revelation is also evident. The surah speaks of a revelation in a blessed night: "Indeed, We sent it down in a blessed night." (3) This, in light of its correspondence

with the opening verse of Surah *al-Qadr*, "Indeed, We sent it down in the Night of Decree," (1) and also verse 21 of Surah *al-Hijr*, "And there is nothing except that its treasures are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure," can indicate a structured, tiered, and graded conceptual understanding.

In the continuation of Surah *al-Dukhān*, we also observe the "Differentiation" of concepts and of what has been decreed by God the Mighty, the Wise (4-5), and it speaks of a heaven and earth that were not created in vain and that are capable of receiving these predetermined meanings (9 and 38).

Finally, it should be noted that both Surah *al-Dukhān* and Surah belong to the *Hawāmīm* group and together form an extensive, *al-Jāthiyah* interconnected conceptual network.

#### 4. Conceptual Movement from Part to Whole

The two surahs *al-Ṭalāq* and *al-Taḥrīm* are a paired set, both beginning with the vocative style address "O! Prophet." This address links and binds the subject matter of the surah to the "Prophet," even though on the surface it appears to be addressing other social issues. On the one hand, the expression: "O! Prophet" indicates the Prophet's juridical/persona-based identity, yet the content of the surah enters his home and household. This indicates the deep and intense interconnection between developments within the "Household" and the "Household's" status as the locus of leadership, as well as their impact on society's immediate and ultimate fate.

In both surahs, the discussion concerns the family, the household, and their stability; in a comprehensive reading, the intertwining of the destinies of family and society is clearly observed in this paired structure.

Surah *al-Ṭalāq*, after discussing the proper conduct toward divorced women, reminds us that if the framework of divine limits regarding women is not observed, it leads to disobedient communities that defy God and His messengers, ultimately suffering the most severe punishment and ultimate loss (*al-Ṭalāq*: 8-9). In contrast, the piety of believers in this regard leads to benefiting from the Messenger's recitation and guidance, thereby emerging from darkness into light (*al-Ṭalāq*: 10-11). Therefore, preserving the true status of women and the family completely transforms the fate of society and the community.

This truth is also evident in Surah *al-Taḥrīm*. In this surah, after referring to the incident involving betrayal by some members of the Prophet's "House" in revealing his secret, and after describing the qualities of righteous wives, the believers are commanded to safeguard their own "Households." It also refers to companionship with the Prophet and the light that accompanies the believers, a companionship that is not merely a matter of outward belief in this world, but one that requires its necessary conditions, namely full adherence to the Prophet and complete obedience to him (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1970 AD/1390 AH:19, 336).

Thus, believers' concern for preserving their families and disciplining them (*ibid*: 9, 335) becomes an essential prerequisite for accompanying the Messenger in striving against disbelievers, hypocrites, and the enemies of the Islamic community, and for moving under the light of faith (*al-Taḥrīm*: 5-9). This light, as stated in Surah *al-Ṣaff*, through God's direct agency and the striving of the believers, will bring about "Inheritance of the earth" and the

supremacy of the divine religion (al-Şaff: 8-11).

**Diagram 1. Conceptual Movement from Part to Whole**



### Deriving the Concepts of a Surah from a Single Word

From one perspective, Surah *al-Fajr* can be regarded as the surah that explicates the concept of "*Dhī Hījr*," apart from the fact that the expression "Possessor of stone" itself evokes a form of conceptual construction. It is as if God has employed a word and then used its necessary implications to articulate the intended meaning and purpose. "*Hījr*" means "Stone," and "*Dhī Hījr*" means "One possessing stone." From stone, according to the Qur'anic expression, hardness and firmness emerge (Then your hearts became hardened after that, like stones-al-Baqarah: 74), as well as strength and solidity. Moreover, the root (*h-j-r*) is related to and derivationally connected with (*h-j-z*) which mean separation or a barrier between two things, carrying within them the notion of limit and boundary (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 5, 331).

According to Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, a human being who is described as "Possessing Intellect," who is capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood, is called "*Dhī hījr*" in the sense that he adheres to limits and boundaries (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 20, 280).

On the other hand, the surah also refers to other "Possessors of stone," whose tool for advancing their goals was rock and stone, and who possessed strong and solid fortifications; yet at the same time, they themselves were not firm and rational (*Dhī hījr*) individuals, but rather were characterized by "Transgression." Transgression means exceeding limits and crossing established boundaries, which stands in direct opposition to having limits and boundaries and, in the terminology of Surah *al-Fajr*, being "*Dhī hījr*."

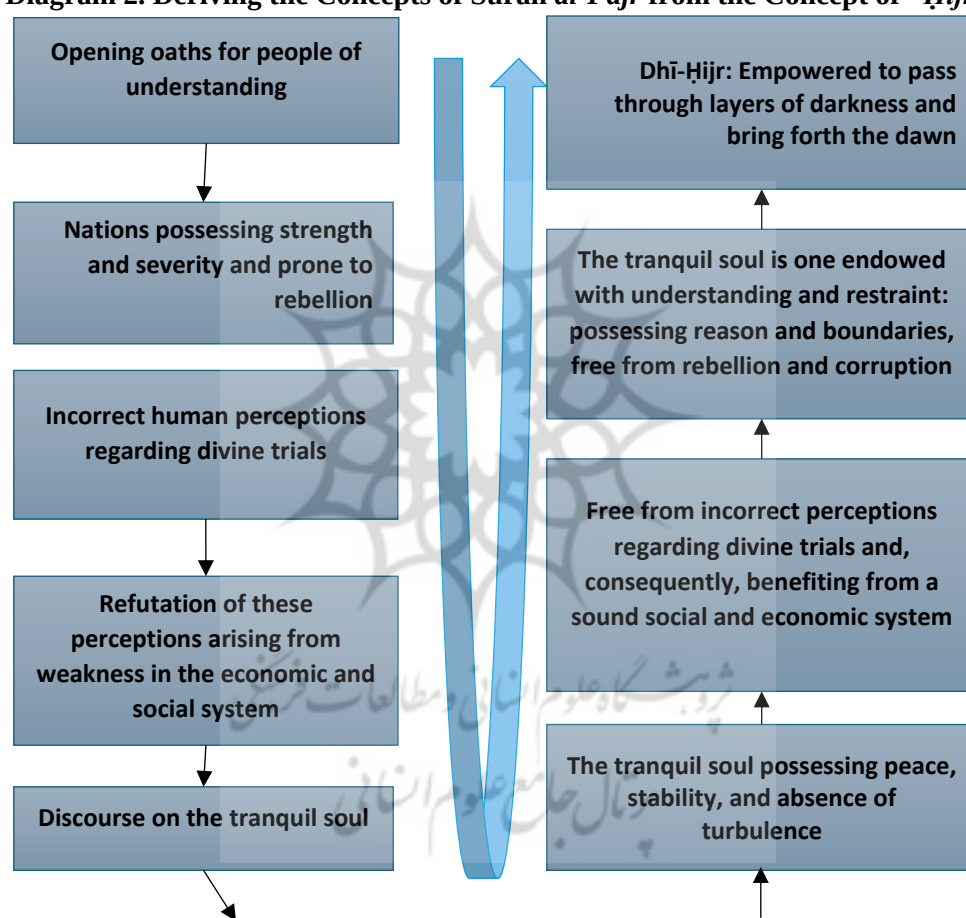
Based on this very concept of "*Hījr* and *Dhī hījr*," the surah analyzes the issue diagnostically and offers solutions: "According to "*al-Wuqūf al-Sajāwandī*," the entire Surah *al-Fajr* constitutes a single coherent discourse. At the beginning of the surah, God swears oaths and states that these oaths are specifically for the "*Dhī hījr*." (1-5)

The connection between the oaths and this concept becomes clear in the following verses: first, it speaks of nations that possessed strength and power, but whose very power led them into transgression and corruption on earth (6-14).

Then two general propositions about human beings are presented: "When a human being is granted blessings, he considers it a sign of God's honor, and when he is constrained or deprived, he considers it a sign of humiliation from God; thus, he constantly fluctuates between these two states (15-16). However, God subsequently rejects this assumption and attributes its cause to deficiencies in economic conduct, such as failing to give charity, seizing the wealth of the needy, greed, covetousness, and miserliness, and He speaks of the punishments awaiting them in the Hereafter." (17-26)

At the end of the surah, a distinct type of human being is described: "The "Tranquil Soul," which is "Pleased and Pleasing," meaning one who possesses qualities of contentment, submission, tranquility, and stability. (27-30) This soul does not suffer from the false conception that leads to human anxiety; therefore, according to the surah's own diagnostic framework, its economic and social system is free from the aforementioned flaws." But how did this tranquil and non-agitated soul reach such a state? According to the coherence of the surah, this soul had been "*Dhī ḥijr*," that is, it possessed intellect and maintained boundaries in all its affairs and was not given to transgression. It is precisely this soul that is capable of passing through layers of darkness and bringing forth the dawn (*Fajr*).

**Diagram 2. Deriving the Concepts of Surah *al-Fajr* from the Concept of "*Ḥijr*"**



### Different Contexts of Words

In the discourse of the Holy Qur'an, when a single word appears in different contexts, it conveys distinct meanings and concepts. As in the discussion of "Semantic facets and parallels," scholars, when defining semantic facets as a single word that possesses multiple meanings (Suyūṭī, n.d.: 2, 121), have relied on the context in which the word is used (ibid: 121-131). Likewise, some exegetes have placed special emphasis on contextual interpretation and the "Qur'an by the Qur'an" method in their exegesis (cf. al-Mīzān: 1, 12; al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr: 1, 23; Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān: Book text).

In this regard, the word "*Ummī*" serves as an example. The term appears in two contexts:

"Twice in relation to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and four times in relation to other human beings. This contextual difference has led to a difference in meaning and conceptual implication between its usage concerning the Prophet and its usage concerning others."

According to research, "*Ummīyyah*" (being *ummī*) is a relative concept which, contrary to common assumption, does not mean illiteracy. In relation to the Prophet, it refers to a process or trajectory that, when followed, brings success and guidance to any individual or society, at any time or place, thereby fulfilling the ultimate purpose of all prophetic missions and establishing the continuous flow of divine glorification. In relation to others, however, it refers to "Lack of access to divine teachings," despite possessing a revealed scripture (Khoshmanesh & Pouran, 2019 AD/1399 SH: 61).

As is evident, contexts themselves are meaning-generating mechanisms. Moreover, if the style of expression within each context also differs, the variety of meanings becomes even greater.

In this regard, one may refer to several Qur'anic expressions related to the word *Samā'* (heaven):

- And when the heaven is stripped away (al-Takwīr: 11);
- When the heaven is split open (al-Infītār: 1);
- When the heaven is torn apart (al-Inshiqāq: 1);
- By the sky full of constellations (al-Burūj: 1);
- By the sky and the night visitor (al-Ṭāriq: 1);
- And by the sky full of return (al-Ṭāriq: 11).

In all these verses, although the same "Heaven" is mentioned, the referent in each case is not identical. In the first three instances, the sky is depicted within temporal conditions and in three different states. In the latter three, it appears as an oath in three distinct contexts.

Thus, the sky, depending on the context and discourse in which it appears, takes on different states. Naturally, these varying states of the sky, along with its relations to other phenomena within each surah, generate different conceptual meanings.

#### Derivation and Root-Based Extension

Another form of Qur'anic conceptualization that goes beyond simple roots is derivation. Derivation refers to deriving a word from another word or words while maintaining a correspondence in both form and meaning. It has different types, including minor, major, and extended derivation (Suyūṭī, 1986: 1, 346).

Many linguists (including Ibn Jinnī, 1951 AD/1371 AH: 1, 5-13; Suyūṭī, 1986: 1, 346-354; Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, 2009: 1, 186, 212; and 'Abdullāh Amīn, 2000: 13) have addressed this issue positively in their works. Despite some disagreements, they have not rejected its fundamental validity. The existence of numerous examples of this phenomenon in the Qur'an has also been established and studied in various research works (e.g., Khoshmanesh, 2025 AD/1404 SH; Faez & Masror, 2017 AD/1397 SH).

Moreover, what is discussed in this section is entirely based on primary lexical sources and the Qur'anic text itself, and its validity becomes evident throughout the analysis. In any case, root-based semantic relations among words provide an important clue and a unique

means for understanding Qur'anic meanings, one that is particularly characteristic of the divine language of the Qur'an.

As an example, the word "*Marḥabā*" (welcome) in the Qur'an appears only twice in two consecutive verses of Surah *Ṣād*:

- This is a crowd rushing in with you. No welcome (*Lā Marḥaban*) for them! Indeed, they will burn in the Fire. (Ṣād: 59).
- They will say: Rather, no welcome (*Lā Marḥaban*) for you! You brought this upon us, what an evil abode! (Ṣād: 60).

Two other forms of this root appear in a similar expression in Surah *al-Tawbah*:

- And the earth, despite its vastness, became straitened for you, and then you turned back fleeing (*al-Tawbah*: 25).
- Until the earth, despite its vastness, became straitened for them, and their own souls became straitened for them... (*al-Tawbah*: 118).

*Ibn Fāris* explains the root (*r-ḥ-b*) as meaning "Expansion" and "Vastness": "The letters *al-Rā'*, *al-Ḥā'*, and *al-Bā'* form a single consistent root indicating spaciousness... and in supplication they say: "*Marḥaban*," meaning: "You have come to spaciousness [i.e., welcome; you have come abundantly]." (*Ibn Fāris*, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 2, 499)

*Ibn Manzūr* defines "*Sahlan*" as "Ease (not constriction)," and *Rāghib* adds "*Ahlan*" to it, stating that *Marḥaban* and *Ahlan* mean: "You have arrived at a place of openness and comfort." "*Lā Marḥaban Bihim*" means: "May no ease or spaciousness be granted to them." (*Rāghib*, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 1, 346)

The reverse form of this root is "*Baḥr*" (sea), so named due to its expansiveness and vastness (*Farāhīdī*, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 3, 219). Other related and phonetically transformed roots such as (*r-h-b*), (*r-gh-b*), (*r-'-b*), and more distantly (*r-h-w*), are also considered substitutes of this root, all carrying meanings of vastness:

"In (*r-h-b*), although fear is the dominant meaning, '*Askarī* distinguishes it from simple fear by stating: "*al-Rahbah* is prolonged and sustained fear," (1, 236) indicating an extended form of fear, i.e., an intensified dimension of it."

One of the two root meanings of (*r-gh-b*) is "Expansion in something," (*Ibn Fāris*, *ibid*: 2, 415) and *Khalīl* describes "*Rajulun Raghib*" as "One with a wide belly, an overeater," (*Farāhīdī*, *ibid*: 4, 413) again indicating abundance and largeness.

Likewise, one of the three root meanings of (*r-'-b*), according to *Ibn Fāris*, is "Fullness." (*Ibn Fāris*, *ibid*: 2, 410) A "*Saylun Rā'ib*" is a flood that overwhelms the desert (*Farāhīdī*, *ibid*: 2, 131). In a verse containing a reversed form of this root: "And leave the sea calm and open." (*al-Dukhān*: 24)

*Ṭabarī* interprets *Rahw* as "Easy, without obstruction," (1, 220) while *Zamakhsharī* defines it as "A wide open space." (4, 276) Similarly, in a verse containing two transformed forms of the root: "O you who believe! Many of the rabbis and monks consume people's wealth unjustly..." (*al-Tawbah*: 34)

Here, excess and transgression are evident in their conduct. The roots (*r-b-ḥ*), (*ḥ-b-r*), (*r-w-*), (*r-y-*), (*r-w-ḥ*), and (*r-ī-ḥ*) are also considered derivationally connected to this root, all carrying the semantic field of "Expansion." (cf. *Farāhīdī*, *ibid*: 3, 294; 2, 243; *Ibn Fāris*, *ibid*:

2, 454, 467; Rāghib, *ibid*: 1, 369; Ibn Manẓūr, *ibid*: 8, 138; Azharī, *ibid*: 3, 112)

As is evident, "*Marḥabā*" conveys an image of openness, spaciousness, and expansion, while "*Lā Marḥabā*" signifies its opposite. This is also reflected in its usage in context. The context of Surah *Ṣād* is filled with vocabulary that depicts an atmosphere of constriction and hardship: "A rushing crowd, boiling scalding water, an evil return, an evil resting place, doubled punishment, and disputes among the people of Hell."

In contrast, the dwellers of Paradise in the same surah are portrayed in a manner that evokes "*Marḥabā*": "A reward for those of strength (indicating generosity and expansiveness of action), an uninterrupted and limitless provision, and concluding verses in which the Prophet is described as not being among those who impose hardship or constriction."

In Surah *al-Tawbah* as well, "*Raḥubāt*" is interpreted in light of its contextual companions, all of which convey the opposite of constriction.

This meaning is also reflected in the phonetic features of the three consonants (*r-ḥ-b*) and their points of articulation. In general, they lack emphasis and intensity; they exhibit the opposite of free flow of breath, and their softness predominates. "*Rakhāwah*" is the opposite of intensity and refers to the release of sound during articulation due to the weakness of both the consonant and its point of articulation (cf. Amīn, 2000: 358-361).

Among the derivations of the root (*r-ḥ-b*), however, we encounter (*r-b-ḥ*), which is a case of root-based extension. It refers to words that occur only once in the Qur'anic text, with no derivatives or cognate forms appearing elsewhere in the Qur'an, or that are used, regardless of frequency, only within a single verse or context (Kariminiya, 2013 AD/1393 SH: 256-257). Such words and constructions can themselves represent another domain of Qur'anic conceptualization, and their usage in the Qur'an is not without wisdom.

The only occurrence of the root (*r-b-ḥ*) is in the following verse: "Those are the ones who have purchased error in exchange for guidance, so their trade has brought no profit, nor were they rightly guided." (al-Baqarah: 16)

"*Ribḥ*" (profit) is the opposite of loss "*Khusrān*," (Ibn Durayd, 1988: 1, 276) and it denotes increase in buying and selling (Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 2, 474).

Fayyūmī, citing Azharī, defines "*Ribḥ*" in trade as gain or profit (Fayyūmī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 215).

Its reversed form is (*ḥ-b-r*), which is, in a sense, associated with expansion and openness: "*al-Ḥabrah*" (with *fatḥa*) means blessing and abundance in livelihood (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 4, 158). "*Ḥibr*" also means "Trace" or "Effect," indicating increase and expansion of something such that its effect becomes visible. In the verse: "So they will be in a garden, rejoicing." (al-Rūm: 15)

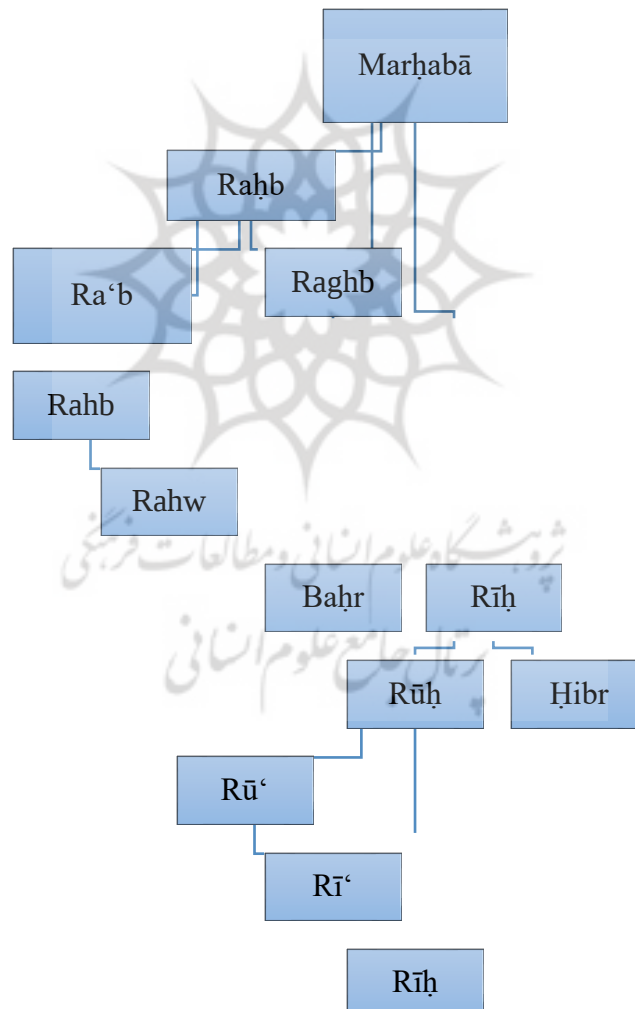
It means they are delighted, and the effects of the blessing are evident in them. Likewise, even a vast land is called "*al-Miḥbār*" (Farāhīdī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 3, 219). This meaning is also observable in other related derivatives such as "*Rūḥ*, *Rīḥ*, *Ruw*", and *Riy*."

It is remarkable that when this verse is read within its broader context (al-Baqarah: 6-20), it precisely reflects the same atmosphere conveyed by the phrase "*Lā Marḥabā*" in Surah *Ṣād*: "An atmosphere of constriction, fear, and deprivation. It is a dark and terrifying space in which benefit and utilization are impossible, and all human capacities are rendered

ineffective." (al-Baqarah: 17-18)

The parable of those who exchange guidance for misguidance and fail to profit in this "Trade" is like a heavy rain falling from the sky: "Outwardly abundant and seemingly beneficial, yet ultimately yielding no usable benefit." (al-Baqarah: 19-20) This form of systemic conceptual processing in the Qur'an appears unique: "Understanding a word is not limited to its root alone, but extends to its reversed, substituted, and derived forms as well." Moreover, if cross-linguistic lexical relations are taken into account, an even broader semantic network emerges. In this way, root-based extension words (here: *Rī'*, *Ruw'*, *Ribh*), while singular, are not isolated; they remain active within their contexts as well as alongside other roots. Root-based extension reshapes lexical and interpretive understanding of the Qur'an and manifests the Qur'an's distinctive linguistic system in conveying meaning (Kariminiya, 2013 AD/1393 SH: 282).

**Figure 3. Derivational Understanding of Words**



### **Semantic Correspondence between Form and Meaning**

One of the other domains of Qur'anic conceptualization is the harmony between word form and meaning (Suyūṭī, 1986: 1, 48-49, 53-55; Ibn Jinnī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 2, 151-168). This

issue appears in various forms in the Qur'an, ranging from the general atmosphere of surahs to rhythmic and musical transformations across groups of verses, as well as within expressions, words, and letters (cf. Khoshmanesh, 2019 AD/1399 SH: 171-216).

As an example, one may cite the harmony between the verse endings of Surah *al-Najm* and Surah *al-A'la* and their meanings. All verses of Surah *al-Najm* end with the "*Alif Maqṣūrah*": "By the star when it descends... he did not err... the passion... is revealed... the power... then he rose... the highest... then he drew near... nearer... revealed..." Similarly, the verses of Surah *al-A'la*: "Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High... then He proportioned... and guided... the pasture... darkened... so do not forget..."

The musical rhythm of the surah, produced by the opening of the mouth in pronouncing the final "*Yā' Maqṣūrah*" gives an upward, ascending orientation. This corresponds to the meaning of exaltation in Surah *al-A'la* and is also present in Surah *al-Najm*, where the same sense of elevation and height prevails. In addition to their similar rhythmic structure, these two surahs also share a similar semantic trajectory.

In another example, all verses of Surah *Muḥammad*, except for two verses (10 and 24), end either with the pronouns "-Hum" or "-Kum." The surah speaks of two groups, believers and disbelievers, and their actions, centered on the Messenger of God as the guardian of society. It constantly shifts between these two groups, comparing them and alternating between rebuke and honor. It is as if the distinguishing feature of these two groups in their response to the Messenger is embedded in those two exceptional verses that do not follow the usual pattern of endings and instead conclude with a prolonged "*Alif*." A society that is not unified, where separation from the guardian and from what has been revealed to him leads to its destruction and imbalance. In fact, these two exceptional verses simultaneously diagnose the existing condition and present the means of its resolution.

### Changes in Morphological Structure

The Qur'an sometimes employs a single root in different morphological forms. Even a slight change, such as the addition of a letter or a shift in inflection, produces a new layer of meaning.

Sometimes these derivations appear together, such as "*Anzala* and *Nazzala*" in the following verse:

- He has sent down (*Nazzala*) upon you the Book in truth, confirming what came before it, and He sent down (*Anzala*) the Torah and the Gospel (Āli 'Imrān: 3).

Or the derivations of the root (*q-t-l*) in:

- Indeed, God has purchased from the believers their lives and their wealth in exchange for Paradise; they fight in the path of God, so they kill and are killed... (al-Tawbah: 111)

At other times, such forms appear separately, such as "*Yalbasu* and *Yalbisu*" both derived from the root (*l-b-s*), which according to *Ibn Fāris* "Indicates mixture and interpenetration." This mixture reduces clarity and conceals the essence of a thing. Although both verbs preserve the root meaning, a change in vocalization produces different meanings: "The first means "To wear," while the second means "To confuse or mix with falsehood."

- *Yalbasu*: "He it is who has subjected the sea so that you may eat from it tender meat and extract ornaments which you wear...", (al-Naḥl: 14)
  - *Yalbisu*: "Thus the partners made the killing of their children seem fair to many polytheists in order to destroy them and to confound their religion..." (al-An'ām: 137)
- Another example is "*Yaşuddu* and *Yaşiddu*," respectively meaning "To hinder" and "To clap":
- *Yaşuddu*: "And when it is said to them, "Come so that the Messenger of God may seek forgiveness for you," they turn their heads aside, and you see them turning away arrogantly." (al-Munāfiqūn: 5)
  - *Yaşiddu*: "And when the son of Mary is presented as an example, your people immediately laugh/mock." (al-Zukhruf: 57)

## Conclusion

The Holy Qur'an employs a distinct "System" for processing its concepts. This system operates through non-linear processes; that is, it does not necessarily conform to conventional human mental ordering, and at first glance it may even appear as a form of dispersion or fragmentation.

This non-linear conceptual system emerges from various types of relationships and proportional correspondences among the different components of the Qur'an, forming a systemic (network-like) structure in which diverse elements, each positioned in a specific relation to the others mutually reinforce and support one another from both near and distant points in order to convey the intended meanings.

Within this conceptual system, various linguistic structures and phenomena, such as symmetry, contrast, repetition, derivation, etymological transformation, root-based extension, lexical layering and contextual embedding, ellipsis and elaboration, and different or similar rhetorical styles, all of which were examined in this study, are not merely rhetorical features indicating the literary capacity of the speaker. Rather, they guide the audience through the hidden layers of this network-like order, enabling them to apply it in contextual domains to develop methods and theories across various fields of knowledge and real-life issues.

The purpose of this systemic and non-linear structure is not to create difficulty or confusion for the audience. Rather, it facilitates and embodies the Qur'an's principle of being "A clarification for humankind," and is a necessary requirement for its dynamism, continuity, and non-restrictive nature. Far from being a deficiency, this feature is one of its distinguishing characteristics.

From a conceptual perspective, this mode of expression is non-static; it can adapt to the needs and challenges of every era.

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