The Linguistic and Numerical Aesthetics in Sūrat Yūsuf

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Abstract

This research paper traces the aesthetics of the Arabic language in Sūrat Yūsuf on multiple levels, the level of single word, the level of phrase, the level of rhetorical style, and the level of numerical significance. The level of single word includes words such as "sibling, fathers, pit, wolf, shirt, guile, prison, king," while the level of phrase includes phrases such as "she, in whose house he was, The Governor's woman." As for the level of rhetorical style, the paper focuses on metonymy and opposition. Additionally, this paper discusses the significance of the single word, the phrase, and the rhetorical style according to non-linguistic approaches such as history, interpretation, and numerical inimitability.

The study concludes that the language in the Holy Qur'ān, and particularly in Sūrat Yūsuf, is characterized by aesthetics that exist beyond its apparent lexical levels in order to achieve hidden purposes. These hidden purposes involve taking into account emotional sensitivity and matching the aims of the Sūra – as it appears in the words "fathers" and "sibling" – or taking into account the historical spatiotemporal context – as it appears in the words "pit" and "king" – and pairing the numerical connotations of the words' letters or their repetitions in a group of words that form motifs, causes, and conclusions which revolve around deep semantic axes – as it appears in the words "shirt", "guile", and "prison".

Finally, the study finds a strong relationship between rhetorical styles and the significance of some of the verses in Sūrat Yūsuf, especially metonymy and opposition.

Keywords: *Sūrat Yūsuf, linguistic connotations, numerical inimitability, Arabic rhetoric.*

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Introduction

The story of the Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph), peace be upon him, is considered exceptional from many perspectives. For instance, it is considered "the best of narratives," as described in the Holy Qurān verse: "We narrate unto thee (Muhammad) the best of narratives in that We have inspired in thee this Qur'an" [12: 3]:

﴿نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ ٱلْقَصَصِ بِمَآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ هَٰذَا ٱلْقُرْءَانَ وَإِن كُنتَ مِن قَبْلِهِۦ لَمِنَ ٱلْغَٰفِلِينَ﴾

Additionally, Sūrat Yūsuf is characterized by having a unique language, a distinctive plot, and rhetorical styles that require reflection and the ability to link between form and content.

The entire Sūrat was mentioned once in the Holy Qur'ān, and it is the twelfth Sūra according to the Qur'ānic arrangement. The Sūra is called "Yūsuf," and the number twelve refers to the number of Yūsuf's siblings, including Yūsuf himself, as well as the number of the tribes of Israel. Moreover, the verses of the Sūra amount to one hundred and eleven verses, and the number eleven is also significant in the Sūra. This is since Yūsuf is the eleventh brother among his siblings. The number eleven was also mentioned in the dream that Yūsuf had: "When Joseph said unto his father: O my father! Lo! I saw in a dream eleven planets and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves unto me." [12: 4]:

﴿إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَٰٓأَبَتِ إِنِّى رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَٱلشَّمْسَ وَٱلْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِى سَٰجِدِينَ﴾

The numerical values of the words' letters and the repetition of some words in the Holy Qur'ān did not happen by chance. Instead, these numerical values are part of the Qur'ān's numerical inimitability. Besides this, these numerical values have an aesthetic significance, most of which will be revealed for the first time throughout this study.

The following is a discussion about the significance of some words and expressions, their particularity, and why they were specifically chosen in the context of this Sūra.

We will link some of these words to their numerical connotations and explain the extent to which this relationship contributes to developing the plot and the logic of the causal sequence of events. We will also employ the two styles of metonymy and opposition to unpack some expressions and to demonstrate numerical relations clearly and creatively.

1. Sibling and Siblings

The word "brother" and it is plural form "brothers," which refer to sons who share the same father and mother, are not mentioned in Sūrat Yūsuf. Rather, the words "sibling" and "siblings" are employed to signify sons who share only one parent but not the other. Yūsuf's siblings all shared the same father and mother, except for Benjamin and Yūsuf himself who had a different mother; their mother was in fact the sister of their other siblings' mother, that is, their siblings' aunt.

The Jewish religion is unlike the Islamic religion in that it allows two sisters to be combined in one marriage with one husband. And this is what happened with Jacob (Yaʿqūb); he loved Rachel, but her father forced him to marry her older sister Leah, so he remained in love with Rachel while Leah bore him ten children. Jacob later married Rachel, and she bore him Yūsuf and Benjamin. (The Old Testament, 29: 16-35)

This is the reason Jacob favoured Yūsuf and Benjamin, his two sons from Rachel, and why their siblings were jealous of them.

The word "brother" would have combined the sons of Jacob together, but the word "sibling" differentiated them. While in the situations that required the word "sibling," we see that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word "brother" in line with the significance of the story and its moral lesson, which, in this case for example, is the unity of one family.

In one of the verses, Yūsuf says to Benjamin: "And when they went in before Joseph [Yūsuf], he took his brother unto him, saying: Lo! I, even I, am thy brother, therefore sorrow not for what they did." [12: 69]:

﴿وَلَمَّا دَخَلُواْ عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ ءَاوَىٰٓ إِلَيْهِ أَخَاهُۖ قَالَ إِنِّىٓ أَنَا۠ أَخُوكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

Here, the verse did not refer to Yūsuf and Benjamin's relationship as siblings but as "brothers." This is evidence of Yūsuf's wisdom as well as the message that the verse is aiming to deliver.

However, what is remarkable is that when Yūsuf's siblings came to Egypt to buy wheat during the famine, Yūsuf had asked them to bring with them a brother from their shared father: "And when he provided them with their provision he said: Bring unto me a brother of yours from your father..." [12: 59]:

﴿وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ ٱئْتُونِى بِأَخٍ لَّكُم مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ ...﴾

So, did Joseph want to deliver a message to his siblings that he knew secret family details about them?

The details that are summarized in the Qur'anic text and mentioned in the Book of Genesis clarify the picture. In the Book of Genesis, it appears that Yūsuf was accusing his siblings of spying, so they narrated to him the details of their family story: "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of a certain man in the land of Canaan; the youngest, however, is now with our father, and one is no more… But Joseph said to them, "It is just as I have said to you; you are spies!... Here is how you shall be tested: as Pharaoh lives, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here!" (The Old Testament, 42: 13-15).

It is noticed here that the Book of Genesis mentioned "Pharaoh" as the ruler of the country, while the Qur'anic text mentioned the word "king," specifically in Sūrat Yūsuf. But we will turn to this idea later in the paper.

Nonetheless, this same principle can be applied to a saying by Yūsuf's siblings: "they said: If he stealth, a brother of his stole before. But Joseph kept it secret in his soul and revealed it not unto them. He said (within himself): Ye are in worse case, and Allah knoweth best (the truth of) that which ye allege." [12: 77]:

﴿۞قَالُوٓاْ إِن يَسۡرِقۡ فَقَدۡ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَّهُۥ مِن قَبۡلُۚ فَأَسَرَّهَا يُوسُفُ فِى نَفۡسِهِۦ وَلَمۡ يُبۡدِهَا لَهُمۡۚ قَالَ أَنتُمۡ شَرٌّ مَّكَانَاۖ وَٱللَّهُ أَعۡلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ﴾

It may occur to the reader that Jacob and his sons spoke Hebrew, not Arabic, and that the Hebrew origin of the term does not distinguish between the two cases with two different words, it rather employs only one word. This is since the Bible only uses the words: "brother" and "brothers": "As for Benjamin, the brother of Joseph, was not sent by Jacob with his brothers, because he said: "perhaps he will be harmed" (The Old Testament, 42: 4).

The word "brother" was used in the Hebrew text in the context of talking about a sibling: "he lifted up his eyes, and saw Benjamin, his brother from his mother" (The Old Testament, 43: 29).

After research and investigation, I did not find in the Hebrew a specific word for the word "sibling". Rather, the word "brother" means both cases. Thus, Sūrat Yūsuf offers a more accurate translation of the story.

2. Parent and Parents

The words "parent" and "parents" appeared in many places in Sūrat Yūsuf, in contrast to the words "father" or "mother" which did not appear in this Sūra. Even in the context of Yūsuf talking about his father Jacob and mother Rachel, only the word "parents" was used: "And when they came in before Joseph, he took his parents unto him, and said: Come into Egypt safe, if Allah will!" [12: 99]:

﴿فَلَمَّا دَخَلُواْ عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ ءَاوَىٰٓ إِلَيۡهِ أَبَوَيۡهِ وَقَالَ ٱدۡخُلُواْ مِصۡرَ إِن شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ ءَامِنِينَ﴾

Here, the word "parents" refers to "mother and father", because it denotes Yūsuf speaking to Jacob and Rachel (while the same does not apply to the rest of his siblings except for Benjamin; this is since Benjamin is Yūsuf 's brother from the same father and mother). In addition, when the Sūra mentions the dream, Yūsuf's father and mother were likened to the sun and

the moon: "When Joseph said unto his father: O my father! Lo! I saw in a dream eleven planets and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves unto me" [12: 4]:

$$﴿إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ﴾$$

The words "father" and "mother" did not appear here, neither in fact nor as a metaphor. Furthermore, we do find elsewhere in the Sūra that the word "parents" refers to grandparents, and not "father" and "mother": "…as He perfected it upon thy ancestors, Abraham**,** and Isaac. Lo! thy Lord is Knower, Wise." [12: 6]:

$$﴿كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَى أَبَوَيْكَ مِن قَبْلُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾$$

In this verse that addresses Yūsuf, the word "parents" points to Ibrahim and Isaac, who are Yūsuf's forefathers.

The same applies to the singular form of the word, that is "parent", as it is the word that prevails in the story. In contrast, the word "father" never appears. So, what is the difference between the word "father" and the word "parent"?

Dictionaries define the word "parent" as: "The reason for the existence of a thing, to make it appear, or to raise it. The parent is thus called a parent because he/she raises their children through education and takes care of them through food" (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993, 8).

As for the word "father", it refers to the biological parent or the direct parent. Likewise, the word "mother" refers to the biological parent, that is, the one who gave birth to the child.

Muḥammad Dawūd believes that what is common between the words "parent" and "father" is that they both refer to the reason for the existence of a child through kinship relations. While the word "father" denotes private kinship, the word "parent" denotes general kinship. Thus, the word

"parents" is suitable to use to signify grandparents and uncles as well as fathers and mothers.

Specifically, in Sūrat Yūsuf, the word "parents" was mentioned to mean uncles and grandfathers, and the word "parent" was mentioned instead of the word "father" because of the existence of more than one mother; referring to Jacob's wives, Rachel, and Leah. For instance, in the context of talking about Jacob and Rachel, the verse used the word "parents" and not "father" and "mother": "And he placed his parents on the dais." [12: 100]:

﴿وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ... ﴾

In my opinion, the reason behind this is that the Sūra did not call for separation, but rather for unity. This is because the word "parents" also refers to the parents of siblings from different mothers, so the word "parent" was employed here to refer to the general understanding which denotes unity. This is since the story of the Sūra is based on the dispute between Yūsuf and his siblings.

3. The Pit

The word "pit" appears twice in the Holy Qur'ān, and both times are in Sūrat Yūsuf: "One among them said: Kill not Joseph but, if ye must be doing, fling him into the depth of the pit; some caravan will find him." [12: 10]:

﴿قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا۟ يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ فِى غَيَبَتِ ٱلْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطْهُ بَعْضُ ٱلسَّيَّارَةِ إِن كُنتُمْ فَٰعِلِينَ﴾

And: "Then, when they led him off, and were of one mind that they should place him in the depth of the pit, we inspired in him: Thou wilt tell them of this deed of theirs when they know (thee) not." [12: 15]:

﴿فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا۟ بِهِۦ وَأَجْمَعُوٓا۟ أَن يَجْعَلُوهُ فِى غَيَبَتِ ٱلْجُبِّ وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُم بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَٰذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ﴾

Here, the word "pit" is synonymous with a natural water source, and not a man-made water well (Ibn Manẓū , 1993, 250).

Al-Zamakhsharī stated that the word "pit" refers to a pit that has not been folded (that is, its walls are not erected with stones) (Al-Zamakhashrī, 1983, 304). Thus, the word "pit" here indicates a natural water well that was not constructed by humans. This can be considered evidence that the pit referred to in the story exists in the deserts and other uninhabited places.

Having noted that, the word "well" that refers to man-made water wells was mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān only once: "How many a township have We destroyed while it was sinful, so that it lieth (to this day) in ruins, and (how many) a deserted well and lofty tower." [22: 45]:

$$\text{﴿فَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَٰهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا وَبِئْرٍ مُّعَطَّلَةٍ وَقَصْرٍ مَّشِيدٍ﴾}$$

This previous verse clearly indicates that man-made wells are found in inhabited places. As mentioned in the verse, the well became inoperative after the villages were emptied from their people.

Nonetheless, the use of the word "pit" in Sūrat Yūsuf is accurate and indicative. Yūsuf's siblings were in the desert when they wanted to get rid of Yūsuf by throwing him in a deep pit. They were not concerned with searching for a well with walls covered with stones and bricks, because the stones and bricks would have helped Yūsuf to escape. Rather, they were concerned with a natural water pit (Dawūd, 2008, 98).

4. The Wolf

The word "wolf" appears three times in Sūrat Yūsuf, and the central question is related to the meaning in which the word came to define, at least in the first time it was mentioned. The verse says: "He said: Lo! in truth it saddens me that ye should take him with you, and I fear less the wolf eat him while ye are heedless of him." [12: 13]:

﴿قَالَ إِنِّي لَيَحْزُنُنِي أَن تَذْهَبُواْ بِهِۦ وَأَخَافُ أَن يَأْكُلَهُ ٱلذِّئْبُ وَأَنتُمْ عَنْهُ غَٰفِلُونَ﴾

It seems that the wolf was known to Jacob (peace be upon him), as he saw in one of his dreams that a wolf was eating Yūsuf. Al-Qurtubī narrated this story from al-Kalbī (Al-Qurtubī, 2013, 93). And Rashīd al-Badrāwī affirmed in a narration, whose source is not mentioned, that when Jacob saw the shirt stained with blood but with no signs of tearing, he said: I have not seen before in my life a wolf like this, he ate my son, but he did not tear his shirt" (Al-Badrāwī, 1997, 446).

The word "wolf" appears for the second time in the context of the following verse: "They said: If the wolf should devour him when we are (so strong) a band, then surely we should have already perished." [12: 14]:

﴿قَالُواْ لَئِنْ أَكَلَهُ ٱلذِّئْبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّآ إِذًا لَّخَٰسِرُونَ﴾

The one who understands the meaning of this verse can clearly see that Yūsuf's siblings accepted the idea of the wolf devouring Yūsuf. Hence, they did not refute it or exclude it. Instead, they only hinted that such an event would make them appear like losers (rather than saying that it is impossible for the wolf to eat Yūsuf since they are a band).

The word "wolf" appears for the third time in the context of the following verse: "Saying: O our father! We went racing one with another, and left Joseph by our things, and the wolf devoured him, and thou belie vest not our saying even when we speak the truth." [12: 17]:

﴿قَالُواْ يَٰٓأَبَانَآ إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِندَ مَتَٰعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ ٱلذِّئْبُ وَمَآ أَنتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَٰدِقِينَ﴾

It is noticeable here that Yūsuf's siblings adopted the idea of the wolf that eats Yūsuf. In addition, this verse is considered longer than the previous two verses in which the wolf was mentioned. This is since it orates the introduction and fabrication of the siblings' story. For instance, they said to

their father after they mentioned the wolf, "thou believest not our saying even when we speak the truth". Here, the siblings misconceived their father, Jacob. This is even though in the first verse in which the wolf was mentioned Jacob had said to his sons: "You are heedless of him [the wolf]", displaying his good intentions towards them. This shows that the siblings are among those with an immoral soul, while Jacob was one of those with a moral and kind one (Al-Ghāmdī, 2021).

It seems that kindness is one of the characteristics of the father, Jacob, and this is the case with all the prophets. This also becomes clear when considering that Jacob previously said that the wolf will "eat" Yūsuf. Here, he did not say the wolf will "devour" him. This is because devouring includes slashing of the neck (Al-Zamakhashrī, 1998, 16), which means cutting the neck (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993, 160), while eating comes after hunting and slashing the neck. Hence, the word "devour" carries the meaning of slashing and cutting, and the word "eat" is nicer and lighter.

However, it is noticeable that the Book of Genesis used the term "devoured", and it came on Jacob's tongue. When his sons gave him Yūsuf's (Joseph) shirt, Jacob said: "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces" (The Old Testament, 37:33).

The difference between the two accounts is clear from several aspects: the first is the lack of identification of the beast, and the second is the use of the indefinite noun form, and last is the reference to predatory eating.

What can be noticed here is that the verb that Jacob (peace be upon him) assigned to the wolf was indicative of receiving (eating it), and with the intention of assuming the event. The siblings, on the other hand, used the past verb "devoured" in both times, to confirm the intention to make the event happen. In addition, the siblings mentioned the wolf twice, compared to their father who only mentioned the wolf once. This indicates the siblings' approval of the idea, and it is clear from the previous verses which paved the way to show the siblings' envy of Yūsuf and their desire to get rid of him or conspire against him. This is implicit foreshadowing, showing the siblings' premeditated intent that is full of equivocation and deception (Ḥamīd, 2020, 134).

5. The Shirt

The shirt in the story is not just an ordinary garment, woven from a special material to perform a sensory task. Instead, it is a message that carries within itself certain connotations, signs, and ambiguities that cannot be overlooked or bypassed (Mūsā, 2020, 4143).

The shirt in Sūrat Yūsuf plays as a motif that carries multiple references; when Jacob bought Yūsuf a coloured shirt, the shirt was a cause of jealousy among his siblings: "Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves… But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him" (The Old Testament, 37:3-4).

"And they came with false blood on his shirt" [12: 18]:

$$﴿وَجَآءُو عَلَىٰ قَمِيصِهِۦ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ ... ﴾$$

This verse did not mention that they tore the shirt. Hence, what is meant here is that the siblings slaughtered a sheep or an animal and smeared the shirt with its blood. And, if the wolf had really devoured Yūsuf, then the blood would have flown and stained the shirt from the inside. This shows that the siblings were lying, which is what is meant by false blood.

Moreover, the shirt is also the evidence of Yūsuf's innocence in his story with the Governor's woman, when she tore his shirt saying: "So when he saw his shirt torn from behind, he said: Lo! this is of the guile of you women. Lo! the guile of you is very great." [12: 28]:

$$﴿فَلَمَّا رَءَا قَمِيصَهُۥ قُدَّ مِن دُبُرٍ قَالَ إِنَّهُۥ مِن كَيْدِكُنَّ إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيمٌ﴾$$

This was narrated on her husband's tongue, Al-ʿAzīz.

In addition, the shirt also refers to the tool that was used to heal Jacob from blindness: "Go with this shirt of mine and lay it on my father's face, he will become (again) a seer…" [12: 93]:

﴿ٱذْهَبُواْ بِقَمِيصِى هَٰذَا فَأَلْقُوهُ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِ أَبِى يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا ... ﴾

Finally, the word shirt appears 6 times (shirt = 240) (total = 1440). We will discuss the significance of this number in the next part.

6. The Governor's woman

The woman of the governor (Al-ʿAzīz) is mentioned in Sūrat Yūsuf three times, twice directly using the word "the woman of Al-ʿAzīz" and once with an indirect expression (she, in whose house he was). The names of women are not directly mentioned in the Holy Qurʾān, except in the case of Maryam (Mother Mary). Instead, women are usually referred to indirectly as the woman of Lot, the woman of Noah, the woman of ʿImrān, the woman of Al-ʿAzīz, among others.

The Holy Qurʾān tends to be brief in most cases, and the use of indirect naming (she, in whose house he was) is a metonymy. Indirect naming is also one of the expressions that indicate lengthening. This is because instead of declaring to mention something, it only mentions its requirements (Wahba & Al-Muhandis, 1984, 310).

The phrase "she, in whose house he was" was mentioned at the beginning of the events, when things were kept secret and hidden. However, when the matter was revealed and exposed, the Qurʾanic text began to explicitly use the word "the woman of Al-ʿAzīz". Here, I observe that the metonymy was used for the aim of concealment, despite it being the longest version.

This metonymy may be in line with a previous metonymy for Al-ʿAzīz himself, which appeared in the two preceding verses. Here, we find the same expressive style being employed: "And he of Egypt who purchased him said unto his wife" [12: 21]:

﴿وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِى ٱشْتَرَىٰهُ مِن مِّصْرَ لِٱمْرَأَتِهِۦٓ ... ﴾

The verse did not explicitly say "Al-ʿAzīz said…". This is because indirect naming is perhaps the most appropriate to be used in this context, as the characters are still unknown to the reader until later in the story.

We also draw attention to the fact that choosing the word "woman" and not "wife" can be found in other places in the Holy Qur'an, in which the word "woman" is employed to mean "wife" but the word "wife" itself is not used. Examples of these are the woman of Pharaoh, the woman of Lot, and the woman of Noah. Al-Baydānī points out that the word "wife" expresses harmony between the two parties in terms of belief, procreation, or loyalty, while the word "woman" expresses a split and a sense of inconsistency (Al-Baydānī, 2012). This is true in the case of Pharaoh, Noah and Lot and their wives, especially in terms of faith; the wives of Noah and Lot were non-believers[1], in contrast to their husbands, while the wife of Pharaoh was a believer, in contrast to her husband. [2] It is interesting to note here that the Holy Qur'an used the term "woman" for Zachariah's wife when she was barren, but when she got pregnant the Holy Qur'an referred to her with the word "wife". [3]

Similarly, in the case of the woman of Al-ʿAzīz, the incompatibility between her and Al-ʿAzīz is related to their lack of children. This clear when considering what Al-ʿAzīz told his wife about Yūsuf when he bought him [12: 21]:

$$\{ ... ـ أَكْرِمِى مَثْوَىٰهُ عَسَىٰ أَن يَنفَعَنَآ أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُۥ وَلَدًا ... \}$$

The Bible indicated in the Old Testament that Al-ʿAzīz was a eunuch (could not reproduce): "Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there" (The Old Testament. 39:1).

Looking through numerical connotations, we find an interesting relationship between the woman of Al-ʿAzīz and Yūsuf. This is shown in the figure below:

	Numerical Values of Word Letters
she, in whose house he was	960
The woman of Al-ʿAzīz + The woman of Al-ʿAzīz	1534
Yūsuf (repeated 25 times in the Sūra)	3900
Shirt (repeated 6 times in the Sūra)	1440

The sum of the numerical values related to "the woman of Al-ʿAzīz":
3934 =1440 +1534 +960.

The numerical values of the repeated word "shirt" have been added to indicate that the shirt plays a major role in this relationship. This is because it is the evidence of what happened during the events, and it is the evidence of Yūsuf's innocence.

On the other hand, we find that the numerical value of the word Yūsuf is = 3900. Of course, the numerical values of "the woman of Al-ʿAzīz" are superior to the numerical values of "Yūsuf" (3934>3900), and the difference between them is 34, which is equal to the numerical value of the word "guile".

7. Guile

Guile = 34, and the word "guile" is central in the verse number 34: "So his Lord heard his prayer and fended off their guiles from him. Lo! He is Hearer, Knower." [12: 34]:

﴿فَٱسْتَجَابَ لَهُۥ رَبُّهُۥ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْعَلِيمُ﴾

Guile: the guile of siblings is great that they threw him in the pit out of hatred = 216.

The Pit = 36

216/36 = 6, which is the number of times the word "shirt" is repeated. Here, the shirt appears to be the motive of the plot that leads to the pit. Number 6 is also the number of times the word "prison" is repeated, and prison is the result as the pit is a form of imprisonment.

The guile of women is so great that they threw him in prison out of love.

The women threw Yūsuf in prison out of love, while the men threw him in the pit out of hatred (Sharqāwī, 2015, 118).

Love leads to women's guile that is full of passion, while the pit leads to men's guile.

8. Prison

The word "prison" is repeated 6 times (144), and the number 6 is equal to the number of times the word "shirt" is repeated. Yet, the sum of the letters of the word "shirt" in the six times is 1440, which is ten times the total of the letters of the word "prison" (144). This relation to number 6 indicates the existence of a relationship between the shirt and the prison, as if the prison is a result of the transformations of the shirt; the striped shirt led to the first prison (the pit), and the events continued until the shirt reaches the woman of Al-ʿAzīz and Yūsuf enters prison. Also, the number 10 refers to Yūsuf's siblings (other than Benjamin) who conspired against him and were very jealous of his shirt that they stained it with false blood. In addition, there are other connotations to the shirt, for example healing Jacob, peace be upon him. This makes the word "shirt" greater in its numerical value than the numerical connotations of the word "prison".

Moreover, the prison is considered a pivotal point in the story's plot. The pit, which is the first and temporary prison, brought Yūsuf to Egypt and led to a rupture with his father. The second, and long-term, prison introduced Yūsuf to the king's butler and the baker, and this is when Yūsuf began to interpret dreams, which resulted in him becoming the first minister of Egypt. This was due to Yūsuf's leadership qualities, whose ingredients were derived from his relationship with God (Ziyūd, 2018). Here, Yūsuf used various types of thinking at this stage, including social, deductive, and synthetic thinking, for him to reach his future goals (Fawāris & al-Aswad, 2020, 107).

For instance, Yūsuf has reached the acquittal of the accusations of Al-ʿAzīz's wife, and he has obtained a senior ministerial position that gave him power and control over the course of affairs at the state level as well as the level of his relationship with his siblings (Al-Muḥārib, 2019, 19).

9. Rhetorical Opposition and its Numerical Significance

Verses 26 and 27 of Sūrat Yūsuf provide us with a rhetorical opposition which can be found in the discussion about the shirt and the scene of Yūsuf's innocence of the accusation of Al-ʿAzīz's wife. The witness, who is a child, suggests that the shirt is the evidence of Yūsuf's sincerity: if the shirt is ripped from the back, then this would be evidence of his innocence since Yūsuf would have run away and ripped the back of his shirt.

It is interesting to note here that the shirt in the scene of the siblings was not torn by the wolf, so the lack of tearing was evidence of the siblings' dishonesty, while in this situation the tearing of the shirt was evidence of the dishonesty of Al-ʿAzīz's wife and Yūsuf's innocence.

Verses 26 and 27 demonstrate a rhetorical opposition that is clear in the witness's speech, and the figures of opposition appear between 6 words. These are:

Liars	Speaketh truth	Before
Truthful	Hath lied	Behind

In verse 26 (Joseph) said: She it was who asked of me an evil act. And a witness of her own folk testified: If his shirt is torn from before, then she speaketh truth and he is of the liars.

﴿قَالَ هِيَ رَٰوَدَتْنِي عَن نَّفْسِى ۚ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَآ إِن كَانَ قَمِيصُهُۥ قُدَّ مِن قُبُلٍ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ ٱلْكَٰذِبِينَ﴾

In verse 27, And if his shirt is torn from behind, then she hath lied and he is of the truthful.

﴿وَإِن كَانَ قَمِيصُهُۥ قُدَّ مِن دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ ٱلصَّٰدِقِينَ﴾

The word "shirt" is repeated 6 times, and the opposition regarding the shirt can be identified in 6 words. The link between verses 26 and 27 is the letter W (و), and the numerical value of this letter, as it is known in sentence arithmetic, is also 6.

If we add the numerical values of each of the six words so that the first three words oppose the other three, we will reach the following result:

Before	Speaketh truth	Liars	Total
132	674	814	**1620**
Behind	Hath lied	Truthful	
206	1102	286	**1594**
		The difference between them	**26**

Which is the number of the verse mentioned above

10. The King

The word "king" appears 5 times in Sūrat Yūsuf, and the Holy Qur'ān distinguishes between "pharaoh" in the rest of the Qur'ān and "king" in Sūrat Yūsuf. Al-Badrāwī points out that Yūsuf was in Egypt during the Hyksos period, a foreign dynasty that invaded northern Egypt and expelled the Pharaonic dynasty to the south. Therefore, the Hyksos rulers were named kings, not pharaohs (Al-Badrāwī, 1997, 463).

Likewise, Sir Allen Gardner, an expert in the ancient Egyptian language, asserts that the word "Hyksos" means foreign rulers of the country. Also, the historian Josephus asserted elsewhere that "Hyk" means "king" and "Sos" means "shepherds", thus Hyksos means the Shepherd Kings (Gardiner, 1973, 173).

Referring to the ruler as a king and not as a pharaoh indicates the historical accuracy of the Holy Qur'ān.

Summary and Conclusion

This study analyzed Sūrat Yūsuf from a linguistic, numerical perspective. The linguistic perspective included the connotations of words and expressions and their unique positions. As for the numerical perspective, the study extrapolated some of the numerical connotations and rhetorical styles found in Sūrat Yūsuf and linked them through their significance. What we mean by numerical connotations is the number of times a word is repeated, the number of the verse in which it came, and the calculation of the numerical values of the letters. As for the rhetorical styles, the study discussed metonymy and opposition.

The study unpacked the reasons for choosing a particular word over others, as well as the relationship between words, rhetorical styles, and numerical connotations. The study also incorporated history, hermeneutics, as well as comparisons with the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament of the Bible.

The study concluded that this specific choice of words stems from considerations related to the story's plot, its moral significance, the language from which it was translated (that is, Hebrew), and its spatial and temporal nature. The numbers 6, 11, 12, 34, and others are deeply related to the events of the story, just as the word "shirt" is linked to different contexts, motifs, and events: throwing Yūsuf in the pit, Yūsuf's incident with Al-ʿAzīz's wife, and averting the blind father's sight. Equally, the word "guile" is linked to two types of jealousy: the jealousy of men and the jealousy of women.

Metonymy and opposition contribute to the interpretation of certain expressions as well as the establishment of numerical connotations. This confirms that words carry symbolic dimensions and thus they can express themselves by more than one means of expression.

The Bible illuminates some aspects of the Sūra, and as much as the difference between the Qurʾān and the Torah is pointed out, Sūrat Yūsuf exposes the great similarity between the two texts.

Endnotes

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[1] "Allah cited an example for those who disbelieve: the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot, who were under two of Our righteous slaves yet betrayed them so that they (the husbands) availed them naught against Allah and it was said (unto them): Enter the Fire along with those who enter" (Sūrat Al-Taḥrīm: 10).

[2] "And Allah cited an example for those who believe: the woman of Pharaoh when she said: My Lord! Build for me a home with thee in the Garden, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from evil- doing folk" (Sūrat Al-Taḥrīm: 11).

[3] See: "He said: My Lord! How can I have a son when age hath overtaken me already and my wife is barren?" (Sūrat Āl ʿImrān: 40), and "Then We heard his prayer, and bestowed upon him John, and adjusted his wife (to bear a child) for him." (Sūrat Al-'Anbiyāʾ: 90).

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