

Quasi-Sentence Constructions (*Shibh al-Jumlah*) in *Surah al-Qadr*: A Syntactic-Semantic Analysis of Transcendental Space and Time

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Abstract

This study examines how quasi-sentence constructions (*shibh al-jumlah*) contribute to temporal and spatial meaning in *Surah al-Qadr*. It employed a qualitative textual design combining Qur'anic stylistics, formal Arabic syntax, and contextual semantics. The corpus comprised the complete Arabic text of Q.S. *al-Qadr* [97]:1–5. The analysis identified each quasi-sentence, classified its structure, examined its *ta'alluq* (syntactic attachment), and interpreted its function within the immediate context. Six constructions were identified: *fī laylati al-qadr*, *min alfi shahr*, *fihā*, *bi-idhni rabbihim*, *min kulli amr*, and *hattā maṭla'ī al-fajr*. All six take the form of *al-jār wa al-majrūr* (prepositional phrases); no independent *al-zarf* (adverbial) construction was found. Their governors and functions vary, expressing temporal location, comparison, contextual reference, divine permission, source or scope, and a temporal endpoint. Temporal organization is more directly encoded than spatial location, while spatial meaning is inferred from the clause describing the angels' descent rather than from *fihā* alone. The study provides a focused syntactic-semantic account of *Surah al-Qadr* without extending its findings into a comprehensive theory of Qur'anic cosmology.

Keyword: *Qur'anic Syntax; Shibh al-Jumlah; Surah al-Qadr; Syntactic Attachment; Temporal and Spatial Meaning*

A. Introduction

The Qur'an has occupied a central place in the development of Arabic linguistic scholarship because its interpretation depends partly on careful attention to grammatical structure and lexical meaning. In the tradition of linguistic exegesis, grammatical analysis is not merely concerned with identifying word endings or sentence patterns; it also helps determine how relations among words guide the interpretation of a verse. Al-Farrā's *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, for example, demonstrates the historical importance of Arabic grammar in Qur'anic interpretation (Mustaqim, 2019). Contemporary studies likewise recognize *naḥw* (Arabic syntax) as an important instrument for examining how Qur'anic expressions are organized and understood (Sofwan et al., 2024).

A linguistic reading of the Qur'an requires syntax and semantics to be considered together because grammatical relations and semantic interpretation operate as interconnected dimensions of linguistic structure (Gani & Arsyad, 2018). Syntax identifies the grammatical relationships that organize an utterance, while semantics examines the meanings generated by those relationships in a particular textual context. Qur'anic stylistics, or *al-uslūbiyyah*, provides a framework for connecting these levels because it examines linguistic choices across phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and figurative dimensions (Amrulloh & Ikhwan, 2021; Nasution, 2022; Qalyubi, 2017). Recent syntactic-pragmatic research also indicates that grammatical forms in Qur'anic discourse can perform contextual functions that extend beyond their formal classification (Tjalau et al., 2025). Nevertheless, interpretations derived from grammatical structure must remain proportionate to the textual evidence and should not treat a single syntactic feature as sufficient proof of an expansive theological claim.

One construction that requires such integrated analysis is *syibhu al-jumlah* (a quasi-sentence). In Arabic grammar, this term commonly refers to an *al-jār wa al-majrūr* construction, or prepositional phrase, and an *al-ẓarf* construction, or adverbial expression of time or place. Modern analyses further demonstrate that Arabic prepositional phrases possess internal syntactic structures in which the preposition, its complement, and their semantic relation must be examined together (Assiri, 2021; Fassi Fehri & Alrawi, 2024). Unlike an independent clause, a quasi-sentence generally depends on an explicit or implicit governing element for its grammatical and semantic completion. This relationship is known as *ta'alluq* (syntactic attachment), while the element to which the construction is attached functions as its *āmīl* (governor). Determining this attachment is important because different analyses may affect the grammatical position, or *i'rāb*, and the contextual meaning assigned to the construction (Bahri, 2023). Broader discussions of Arabic word and sentence classification confirm that the relationship among linguistic units remains central to understanding Arabic sentence structure (Ali Ulhaq & Wahyudin, 2024).

Surah al-Qadr provides a concise corpus in which several constructions associated with spatial and temporal meaning occur. The surah describes the revelation of the Qur'an during *Laylat al-Qadr* (the Night of Decree), the descent of the angels and the Spirit, and the continuation of peace until dawn. Six constructions are particularly relevant: *fī laylati al-qadr* ("during the Night of Decree"), *min alfi shahr* ("than a thousand months"), *fihā* ("during it" or

“therein”), *bi-idhni rabbihim* (“by their Lord’s permission”), *min kulli amr* (“concerning every matter”), and *ḥattā maṭla‘i al-fajr* (“until the emergence of dawn”). Their formal categories, governing elements, and grammatical positions require careful analysis before conclusions can be drawn about their contribution to the surah’s representation of space and time.

Previous scholarship has established the linguistic richness of Surah al-Qadr from several perspectives. Hizkil and Qalyubi (2021) examined the surah across phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and imagery-related levels. Amasha and Ibrahim (2024) investigated Qur’anic readings in al-Bayḍāwī’s interpretation of Surah al-Qadr, while Alsbbagh et al. (2024) examined the linguistic and cultural challenges involved in translating the term *al-Qadr*. These studies provide important foundations, but their principal objectives differ from the more focused problem addressed here. They do not systematically inventory the quasi-sentence constructions in all five verses, compare their patterns of *ta‘alluq*, and relate those patterns specifically to the textual representation of transcendental space and time.

Accordingly, this study addresses three questions: (1) What structural categories of *syibhu al-jumlah* occur in Surah al-Qadr? (2) How are these constructions attached to their explicit or implicit governors, and what grammatical positions do they occupy? (3) How do their syntactic relationships contribute to the surah’s representation of transcendental space and time? The study aims to identify and classify the relevant constructions, examine their patterns of attachment, and interpret their semantic functions within the immediate context of the surah.

The contribution of the study is deliberately limited to a syntactic-semantic account of a single Qur’anic chapter. It does not claim to establish a comprehensive theory of Qur’anic cosmology or to replace established approaches to exegesis. Instead, it seeks to demonstrate how a detailed analysis of quasi-sentence constructions can clarify the linguistic organization of spatial and temporal meanings in Surah al-Qadr. Its findings may also provide material for teaching Qur’anic Arabic and linguistic interpretation in higher education, although the pedagogical application itself remains to be examined through separate empirical research.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative textual design with descriptive and analytical procedures to examine quasi-sentence constructions in Surah al-Qadr. The analysis combined Qur'anic stylistics with formal Arabic syntax and contextual semantics. Qur'anic stylistics was used to relate grammatical choices to their textual functions, while syntactic analysis identified the internal structure, grammatical relationships, and possible governors of each construction. This combination is appropriate for examining how linguistic form participates in the production of meaning without treating grammatical analysis as sufficient evidence for broad theological conclusions (Mustaqim, 2019; Nasution, 2022).

The primary corpus comprised the complete Arabic text of Surah al-Qadr, consisting of five verses. The entire surah was examined because the relevant constructions are distributed across its description of revelation, comparison, angelic descent, divine permission, and the temporal limit marked by dawn. The unit of analysis was *shibh al-jumlah* (a quasi-sentence), operationally defined as either an *al-jār wa al-majrūr* construction, or prepositional phrase, or an *al-zarf* construction, or adverbial expression of time or place. The study did not include ordinary nominal and verbal clauses unless they functioned as the governor or immediate syntactic context of a quasi-sentence.

Data collection was conducted through repeated close reading of Q.S. al-Qadr [97]:1–5. Each candidate construction was recorded together with its verse number, Arabic form, constituent particle, governed noun or pronoun, structural category, and immediate clause. This procedure produced six units: *fī laylati al-qadr*, *min alfi shahr*, *fihā*, *bi-idhni rabbihim*, *min kulli amr*, and *hattā maṭla' i al-fajr*. The identification was checked against established descriptions of Arabic syntax and published analyses of Qur'anic grammar, particularly al-Darwish's *I'rāb al-Qur'ān wa Bayānuhu* (1994). Previous stylistic and linguistic studies of Surah al-Qadr were used for comparison rather than as substitutes for analysis of the primary text (Amasha & Ibrahim, 2024; Hizkil & Qalyubi, 2021).

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, each unit was classified as *al-jār wa al-majrūr* or *al-zarf*, and its internal components were identified. Second, its *ta'alluq* (syntactic attachment) was examined by identifying the explicit or implicit *'āmil* (governor) to which it was related. Alternative grammatical interpretations were retained when the available sources did not support a single uncontested analysis. Third, the immediate semantic function of each construction was interpreted, including temporal location, comparison,

permission, source or scope, and temporal endpoint. Fourth, the findings were synthesized to examine how these relations contribute to the representation of transcendental time and, more cautiously, spatial movement in the surah.

Analytical credibility was maintained through three procedures: the corpus was examined in its entirety; structural identification was separated from semantic interpretation; and interpretations were compared with published grammatical and stylistic analyses. Claims concerning space and time were limited to meanings supported by the immediate textual context. In particular, *fihā* was interpreted primarily as an anaphoric reference to *Laylat al-Qadr*, not as direct grammatical evidence that the earth functions as a spatial container. Similarly, competing analyses of *hattā maṭla‘i al-fajr* were reported rather than resolved through unsupported inference.

Because this study analyzed a publicly available sacred text and published scholarship, it did not involve human participants or require research ethics approval. Its principal limitation is the use of a single short surah, which does not support generalization to all Qur’anic representations of space and time.

C. Results and Discussion

Structural Categories of the Quasi-Sentence Constructions

The corpus analysis identified six quasi-sentence constructions in Q.S. al-Qadr [97]:1-5. All six take the form of *al-jār wa al-majrūr* constructions. No independent *al-ẓarf* construction was identified. This result describes the formal distribution within this specific surah; it does not imply that prepositional phrases have an absolute or exclusive function in Qur’anic representations of time and place.

Table 1. Quasi-Sentence Constructions in Surah al-Qadr

No.	Construction	Verse	Particle	Governed element	Immediate function
1.	<i>fī laylati al-qadr</i>	97:1	<i>fī</i>	<i>laylati al-qadr</i>	Temporal location of revelation
2.	<i>min alfi shahr</i>	97:3	<i>min</i>	<i>alfi shahr</i>	Comparative complement
3.	<i>fihā</i>	97:4	<i>fī</i>	<i>hā</i> , referring to <i>Laylat al-Qadr</i>	Temporal setting of the descent

4.	<i>bi-idhni rabbihim</i>	97:4	<i>bi-</i>	<i>idhni rabbihim</i>	Permission or authorization
5.	<i>min kulli amr</i>	97:4	<i>min</i>	<i>kulli amr</i>	Source, reason, or scope
6.	<i>ḥattā maṭlaʿi al-fajr</i>	97:5	<i>ḥattā</i>	<i>maṭlaʿi al-fajr</i>	Temporal endpoint

Source: Authors' analysis of Q.S. al-Qadr [97]:1–5, informed by al-Darwish (1994).

The identification of *min alfi shahr* is important because the phrase constitutes an *al-jār wa al-majrūr* construction attached to *khayrun* in the comparative statement “The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.” Including *min alfi shahr* ensures a complete inventory of the quasi-sentence constructions in the surah. The six constructions therefore represent temporal location, comparison, contextual setting, authorization, source or scope, and temporal limitation.

This distribution supports the first research question by showing that Surah al-Qadr relies on prepositional structures rather than independent adverbial nouns to organize these relationships. The finding should not be presented as a statistically meaningful “100 percent” result because the corpus contains only six units. Its value lies in the structural pattern found within the surah, not in numerical generalization.

Patterns of Syntactic Attachment

The six constructions do not share the same type of governor. They are attached to verbs, a comparative predicate, or—where verse 5 is concerned—a construction for which more than one grammatical interpretation has been proposed.

Table 2. Syntactic Attachment and Functions of the Quasi-Sentence Constructions

No.	Construction	Proposed governor	Type of governor	Syntactic-semantic relation
1.	<i>fī laylati al-qadr</i>	<i>anzalnāhu</i>	Explicit past-tense verb	Specifies when the revelation occurred
2.	<i>min alfi shahr</i>	<i>khayrun</i>	Explicit comparative predicate	Completes the comparison
3.	<i>fīhā</i>	<i>tanazzalu</i>	Explicit present-tense verb	Locates the descent within the night

4.	<i>bi-idhni rabbihim</i>	<i>tanazzalu</i>	Explicit present-tense verb	Marks divine permission
5.	<i>min kulli amr</i>	<i>tanazzalu</i>	Explicit present-tense verb	Indicates source, reason, or scope, depending on interpretation
6	<i>ḥattā maṭlaʿi al-fajr</i>	<i>salāmun</i> or an elided expression of continuation	Disputed or elliptical attachment	Marks the endpoint at dawn

Source: Authors' analysis of *Q.S. al-Qadr* [97]:1–5, compared with *al-Darwish* (1994).

The first construction is directly attached to *anzalnāhu* (“We sent it down”), establishing *Laylat al-Qadr* as the temporal setting of revelation. The second is attached to *khayrun* (“better”), supplying the lower term of comparison. This construction does not describe movement, location, or cosmological space; its function is comparative.

Three constructions in verse 4 – *fihā*, *bi-idhni rabbihim*, and *min kulli amr* – are most directly read in relation to *tanazzalu* (“descend”). Their shared governor creates syntactic economy: one verb is successively qualified by a temporal setting, authorization, and a relation of source, reason, or scope. This pattern does not require a new category such as “fixed-governor convergence.” It can be described more accurately as several prepositional phrases sharing a verbal governor.

The phrase *fihā* requires particular caution. The pronoun *hā* refers back to *Laylat al-Qadr*. Its direct function is therefore temporal – “during it” – although the verb *tanazzalu* itself introduces a vertical movement associated with the descent of the angels and the Spirit. The spatial dimension is inferred from the event expressed by the clause as a whole, not encoded independently by the pronoun. For this reason, the phrase cannot by itself establish the earth as a “container” for celestial beings. This restrained interpretation is consistent with cognitive-semantic research showing that the Qur’anic preposition *fī* may express temporal duration and abstract contextual relations rather than literal physical containment in every occurrence (Sardaraz & Ali, 2017).

The final construction, *ḥattā maṭlaʿi al-fajr*, establishes dawn as the endpoint of the condition described in verse 5. In this context, *ḥattā* functions as a preposition marking an endpoint, and *maṭlaʿi* is consequently genitive. However, the attachment of the phrase is not entirely uncontested. One analysis relates it directly to *salāmun*, while another supplies an omitted expression

conveying continuation until dawn. Al-Darwish (1994) notes the syntactic difficulty created by separating a verbal noun from its complement and regards an elided expression of continuation as preferable. The present study therefore treats the temporal endpoint as clear while leaving the exact governor open to more than one established analysis.

These findings answer the second research question without claiming that every quasi-sentence occupies an identical accusative position. Prepositional phrases are governed constructions, but their functions differ according to their governors and clause-level contexts. Accordingly, the six constructions should not be assigned an identical syntactic position; their functions depend on their respective governors and clause-level contexts.

Temporal and Spatial Representation

The most explicit semantic pattern in Surah al-Qadr is temporal. The phrase *fī laylati al-qadr* identifies the night during which the Qur'an was sent down. The comparison *min alfi shahr* evaluates the night through an extended temporal measure. The anaphoric phrase *fihā* returns the description to that same night, while *hattā maṭla' al-fajr* marks its endpoint at dawn. These constructions connect the opening declaration, the evaluation of the night, the descent described in verse 4, and the concluding statement of peace.

The temporal relations are not identical. The first phrase locates an event, the second establishes comparative value, the third maintains textual continuity through pronominal reference, and the sixth sets an endpoint. Their contribution is cumulative rather than mathematically deterministic. They organize the sequence of revelation, comparison, descent, and peace within a bounded night, but they do not provide grounds for claims about "absolute cosmological coordinates."

The spatial dimension is less directly marked. The verb *tanazzalu* denotes descent, and its subjects—the angels and the Spirit—introduce vertical movement. The three prepositional phrases connected with that verb further specify when the descent occurs, under whose permission it occurs, and the relation of the descent to divine matters. The clause can therefore be interpreted as representing movement between distinct realms. Nevertheless, the identification of those realms as a measurable celestial–terrestrial geography goes beyond what the quasi-sentence constructions alone demonstrate.

The phrase *bi-idhni rabbihim* places the descent under divine authorization. It does not necessarily express *al-muṣāḥabah* or "absolute accompaniment."

Similarly, *min kulli amr* has received different exegetical readings concerning origin, reason, accompaniment, and the matters decreed for the night. The present analysis retains its general relation to the scope or source of the descent rather than selecting one theological interpretation as an uncontested grammatical result. This cautious treatment is also supported by evidence that the Qur'anic preposition *min* displays context-dependent semantic behavior and cannot consistently be reduced to a single static spatial meaning (Sardaraz et al., 2019).

Relationship to Previous Studies

The present findings refine rather than replace previous studies of Surah al-Qadr. Hizkil and Qalyubi (2021) analyzed the surah across phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and imagery-related levels. Their study establishes the relevance of stylistics to the surah as a whole, whereas the present study narrows the analysis to quasi-sentence constructions and their governors. The contribution is therefore a more detailed syntactic map, not the first linguistic analysis of the surah.

Amasha and Ibrahim (2024) examined Qur'anic readings in al-Bayḍāwī's interpretation of Surah al-Qadr. Their work indicates that linguistic interpretation can also vary according to the accepted readings and their exegetical treatment. The present study does not conduct a comprehensive analysis of variant readings and must therefore limit its conclusions to the textual form used in the corpus.

Alsbbagh et al. (2024) examined the challenges involved in translating *al-Qadr* into English. Their findings concern lexical and cultural equivalence, while the present analysis addresses the relations among prepositional structures, their governors, and their contextual meanings. The comparison suggests that interpretation depends on both lexical decisions and grammatical organization; neither level should be treated as sufficient on its own.

More generally, the results are consistent with studies that regard *naḥw* as relevant to Qur'anic interpretation (Mustaqim, 2019; Sofwan et al., 2024). The present study adds a small-scale application by showing how the identification of a governor can constrain semantic interpretation. For example, attaching *min alfi shahr* to *khayrun* prevents the phrase from being mistakenly classified as a spatial or movement-related construction. Likewise, recognizing the alternative analyses of *ḥattā maṭla'ī al-fajr* prevents one disputed parsing from being presented as the only possible interpretation.

Pedagogical Relevance and Limitations

The results may be used as an instructional example in courses on Arabic grammar, Qur'anic linguistics, or linguistic exegesis. The six constructions allow students to compare verbal and nonverbal governors, anaphoric reference, prepositional meanings, and disputed attachment. This potential application is consistent with scholarship emphasizing the integration of linguistic analysis into Arabic instruction and the contribution of *naḥw* and *ṣarf* to the interpretation of Qur'anic texts (Hapianingsih & Fadli, 2024; Putriyana & Yusuf, 2025). However, the present study did not collect classroom data, test a teaching model, or evaluate student learning. It therefore cannot claim that the proposed use is effective, transformative, or preferable to other teaching approaches.

Three limitations restrict the findings. First, the corpus consists of only five verses, so the distribution cannot be generalized to the Qur'an as a whole. Second, the study focuses on syntax and contextual semantics and does not provide a balanced analysis of phonology, rhyme, or all accepted Qur'anic readings. Third, some attachments and prepositional meanings permit more than one grammatical or exegetical interpretation. Future studies could compare the same constructions across classical works of *i'rāb*, linguistic exegesis, and accepted readings, or examine a larger corpus of surahs containing related temporal and spatial expressions.

D. Conclusion

This study identified six quasi-sentence constructions in Surah al-Qadr, all of which take the form of *al-jār wa al-majrūr: fī laylati al-qadr, min alfi shahr, fīhā, bi-idhni rabbihim, min kulli amr*, and *ḥattā maṭla'ī al-fajr*. Their governors and functions are not uniform. They express temporal location, comparison, contextual reference, divine permission, source or scope, and a temporal endpoint. Three constructions in verse 4 share *tanazzalu* as their most immediate governor, while the attachment of *ḥattā maṭla'ī al-fajr* permits more than one established grammatical analysis.

The findings indicate that temporal organization is more directly encoded than spatial location. The constructions connect the revelation, comparative value, angelic descent, and peace of *Laylat al-Qadr* within a period extending to dawn. Spatial meaning arises more cautiously from the verb of descent and its participants rather than from *fīhā* alone. The study therefore supports a syntactic-semantic reading of the surah without treating grammatical structure as conclusive evidence for a comprehensive cosmological theory.

The study is limited to one short surah and does not examine all accepted readings, phonological features, or pedagogical outcomes. Further research may test the analytical procedure across a broader Qur'anic corpus and compare alternative grammatical interpretations in classical works of *i'rāb* and linguistic exegesis. The six constructions may also serve as material for teaching contextualized Arabic grammar, but that educational application requires separate empirical investigation.

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