

Pragmatics of deixis in Sūrat Yūsuf (Yusef), peace be upon him.

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Abstract:

The Qur'anic discourse forms a rich corpus for pragmatic study, particularly the narrative sections, as they encompass linguistic and contextual issues. Deixis is one of the most important topics in pragmatics for studying this kind of discourse. For this reason, the research is entitled: 'Pragmatics of deixis in Sūrat Yūsuf (Yusef), peace be upon him'.

The study focuses on the different types of deixis (person, temporal, spatial, discourse, and social), based on the context, situation, and circumstances in which the discourse was produced. The study aims to trace deictic elements, identify their references and reveal their role in meaning.

The most important result is that the story of Yūsuf contains a variety of deictic units because it is the longest story narrated in detail in the Qur'an. These deictic elements significantly contribute to an understanding of the pragmatics of the discourse and the identification of its components.

Keywords: pragmatics, deixis, Qur'anic discourse, surat Yusef..

INTRODUCTION

Since their inception, linguistic studies have focused on the study and description of human language through various approaches and methods. This is clearly reflected in the pragmatic trend, which focuses on how linguistic signs are used and how interlocutors understand and produce discourse in different contexts.

Pragmatics is a field of study with its own approaches and methodologies. One of its most important themes is deixis, as it involves linking elements to their linguistic and contextual references. Deictic expressions carry multiple referential meanings within the pragmatic context, according to various classifications (person, temporal, spatial, discourse and social deixis). Due to their role in forming discourse and connecting it to its context, deictic expressions cannot be understood independently of their context of use.

As the Holy Qur'an is considered the best text for study, we applied deixis to narrative Qur'anic discourse. For this reason, our research is entitled:

'Pragmatics of deixis in Surat Yusef (Yusef), peace be upon him'.

What is pragmatics?

The term 'pragmatics' appears in some Qur'anic verses. For example, the Qur'an says:

'If you are touched by an injury, then there has already been an injury like it. We alternate those days among people so that Allah may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you...1"

In this context, the term refers to a change in people's condition from one state to another.

In another place, the Qur'an states:

'Whatever Allah has bestowed upon His Messenger from the people of the towns belongs to Allah, the Messenger,

1- Surat al Imran verse 140.

the near relatives, the orphans, the needy and the traveller, so that it will not become a fortune circulating only among the rich among you.' Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids you from, refrain from it...2'

Here, the meaning is that wealth should not be limited to the rich, so that the poor are not left behind, and that people should follow the Messenger's commands and avoid what he forbids, since he commands what is good and forbids what is wrong.

Linguistic definition

The term 'pragmatics' comes from the Arabic root '(دَوَلَ)' whose meanings are related to the ideas of 'change' and 'transformation'

Al-Khalil (d. 170 AH) says: 'Dawala: Al-dawla has two readings, and from it comes al-idala. Al-Hajjaj said, 'The land will change beneath us, meaning we will end up in its belly as we were on its back3''

Ibn Manzur (d. 711 AH) also mentions:

'Dawala: It refers to changes in wealth and war. It is said that *dawlah* (with damma) refers to wealth and *dawla* (with fatha) to war. In the hadith about the signs of the Hour, 'If the matter becomes dowal' — meaning it is the plural of دولة. The word is derived from the idea of something being exchanged or handed over. Al-dawla refers to the action of transitioning from one state to another...4'

Although the linguistic meanings of the term 'pragmatics' vary, they all agree on one core meaning. Transition and change from one state to another, both sensory and conceptual.

Terminological definition (academic usage): scholars of language and researchers recognise the difficulty of providing a single, comprehensive and precise definition of pragmatics due to its wide scope within modern thought. Pragmatics offers many perspectives that reflect the intellectual diversity from which pragmatic thinking emerged. This may explain why Françoise Armischo said:

'From the very beginning, should we say "pragmatics" or "pragmatics-es"? As a research field at the height of its development, it has not yet been fully defined, and researchers have not yet agreed on its assumptions or terminology5.

In other words, pragmatics is still growing on the ladder of development and progress. Despite the variety of its modern academic concepts, pragmatics is generally defined as follows:

The study of language as a discursive, communicative and social phenomenon' (Jacques Francis)6.

and for its pioneer, J. L. Austin: 'Pragmatics is part of a broader science concerned with linguistic behaviour, as it is part of social behaviour.' In this sense, language moves from a purely linguistic level to a social level within the sphere of influence and interaction7.

Therefore, pragmatics is a field that studies language as a social phenomenon, focusing on the relationship of influence and interaction between speaker and listener. In this approach, pragmatics studies how speakers choose appropriate signs and expressions for a given context to achieve the highest goal of successful communication. successful communication — by understanding and grasping the speaker's intentions.

Based on the above, pragmatics is the study of language in use. It is a modern line of thinking that emerged to address what structural linguistic theories had overlooked: external influences (context). Pragmatics restores the importance of context by linking utterances to external conditions relating to both the speaker and the speech/discourse. The academic definition complements the linguistic definition because the meaning of discourse depends on its context.

The Nature of Deixis (Deictic Expressions)

2- Surat al-hashr , verse 7

3- The Book of Ayn: al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahido; Khouroum Saloum, Daoud Salman al-anqi, and Inam Daoud Salman; Lebanon Library; Beirut, Lebanon; 1st ed.; "d-w-l" (entry); p. 260.

4- (The Tongue of the Arabs): Ibn Manzour; Dar sadir; Beirut, Lebanon; 1st ed.; entry "d-w-l"; 1863; vol. 5; p. 327.

5- Pragmatic Approaches: Françoise Armischo; trans. Said Alyouch; National Development Center, Beirut; n.d.; 1986; pp. 10–11.

6- Pragmatics: From Austin to Goffman: Flipp Blanche; trans.saber al-houbasha; Dar al-hiwar for Publishing and Distribution; Latakia, Syria; 1st ed.; 2007; p. 19.

7- Linguistic Reference in Pragmatic Theory: abd al-hakim ibn issa; Dar al-Maarifa al-Jamiya; n.d.; Journal of Literary Studies, University of Oran; Issue 1; May 2008; p. 11.

Its Concept in Language

In *Lisan al-Arab*, the root (sh-w-r) has several meanings, including:

‘He indicated to him with such-and-such an order: he commanded him.’ The word *isara* (to indicate) means to signal with gestures, using one’s hands and eyes. It is also said: I signalled to him with my hand... He *isir* (indicates) when he expresses his opinion.⁸

Clearly, the meaning of ‘indication’ in Ibn Manzur’s lexicon revolves around gestures and body language, especially the hands and eyes.

In *Language Standards*, it is stated:

‘The root (sh-w-r) has two consistent foundations: the first is showing or exhibiting something, and the second is taking a thing.’⁹

It further explains:

‘Deixis/indication points to something determined by its subject and evokes a specific idea in the mind. It includes intention in communication and refers to an event or thing that points to another event or thing.’¹⁰

Therefore, although the term has different meanings, they all revolve around the ideas of specifying, determining, and clarifying something.

Its Concept in Terminology (Academic Usage)

Deictic expressions (deixis) are words that refer to elements that are both present and absent at the same time. Wolfensohn classified them as follows: personal, spatial, social and discourse deixis¹¹.

Researchers in pragmatics argue that their role in the pragmatic context extends beyond their surface form. They argue that it extends to another layer, which is deeply embedded in the structure of the discourse at the moment it is produced. Generally, a discourse contains at least three deictic expressions, often referred to by scholars as (I/here/now)¹².

Some researchers limit these to the three aforementioned elements:

I (person deixis): all pronouns (speaker and addressee).

Here’ (spatial deixis): all relative nouns and expressions of place.

Now (temporal deixis): expressions of time, which may be explicit or implied.

Pragmatics scholars define deixis as follows: “Internal links that connect the units of the text, achieving its coherence and consistency, as well as links that connect it to the external world.¹³” Deixis (reference) is determined through linguistic elements and the existential/external context. Therefore, studying the deictic dimension of the linguistic sign is part of the discourse’s goals. Deictic elements such as ‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘here’ are understood in their external context and only become meaningful through use.

Accordingly, a linguistic sign can only be understood within its discourse context and cannot be interpreted independently of it.

Finally, George Yule states: ‘Using words to refer to people or things is relatively straightforward because people are accustomed to using these words, which makes it difficult to explain how they use them.’ But we know for sure that words by themselves do not refer to anything — people are the ones who refer. Thus, deixis is an action in which a speaker or writer uses linguistic forms to enable the listener or reader to identify something. ¹⁴

Deictic expressions play a prominent role in understanding the circumstances of discourse and its components — particularly when they point to specific figures, places, or times, or when they are indicative of a particular meaning intended by the speaker through the employment of that linguistic unit. By means of this, the referenced matter can be understood whether it is tangible or abstract.

8- (The Tongue of the Arabs): Ibn Manzour; vol. 3; entry “sh-w-r”; p. 431.

9- (Dictionary of Language Standards/Principles): Ibn Faris; vol. 3; p. 262.

10- The Basic Terms in Text Linguistics and Discourse Analysis: A Lexical Study: Nuaman bougera; Dar al-Kitab al-alam; Jordan; 1st ed.; 2009; p. 86.

11- Ibid., p. 87.

12- See: Pragmatics: Its Foundations and Directions: Jawad Khatam; Treasuries of Scientific Knowledge; n.d.; 2016; pp. 75–76.

13- The Linguistic Pragmatic Theory (Pragmatics): A Study of Concepts, Origin, and Principles: Mahmoud Akasha Maktabat al-adab for Printing, Publishing and Distribution; 2013; p. 84.

14- Pragmatics: George Yule; trans. Qusay al-sabi; Dar al-arabiyya li-ulum (Arabic House for Sciences), n.d.; 2010; p. 39.

Based on the foregoing, it is evident that, despite their differing approaches and definitions, concepts of deixis consistently emphasise the importance of context in determining the meaning of utterances. Speakers must therefore take care to regulate these meanings in order to achieve the intended goal of the discourse or message to be conveyed to the recipient.

Thus, deictic expressions are 'a condition for understanding the utterance and giving it meaning because they are linked to the situation (context/milieu)'¹⁵. They fall within the first-order pragmatics, referring to the person for whom the discourse was produced, as well as the time and place of the discourse.

Most pragmatics researchers agree that there are five types of deixis: person, temporal, spatial (locational), discourse (textual) and social. Qur'anic discourse has communicative value and aims and indications that are defined within the scope of context. Moreover, pragmatic deictic expressions constitute a linguistic phenomenon within Qur'anic discourse with a beneficial communicative effect, seeking to address the human mind to activate thinking and reflection

In the applied section, we have chosen the Qur'anic narrative of the story of Yusef (peace be upon him) as a model for study due to the large number of deictic mechanisms it contains. We will examine its types (person, temporal, spatial, discourse and social) in detail within the discourse. This is achieved by considering the context, situation and conditions of the discourse's production in order to identify the deictic elements and their referents, and reveal their role in meaning.

The deictic communicative context and situation in Surat Yusef

Sūrat Yūsuf contains numerous deictic expressions whose forms vary according to the communicative context and situation of this noble chapter, depending on what is required. This variation aligns with the chapter's themes and narratives, as well as changes in place, time and the participants of the discourse (the addresser and addressee), and the discourse's topic.

To clarify this, we will examine the components of the 'communicative context' as defined by Roman Jakobson. These are: the addresser (speaker); the addressee (receiver); the referent; the communication channel; the topic of the discourse; and the code (message system/signifying code). We will address these in some detail as follows:

Addresser and addressee

The sūrah includes several discourses. The first is between God Almighty and the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him). This can be seen in two ways:

- a comprehensive dimension, embodied in the sūrah as a whole because it was revealed to our Master Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him); and
- A partial dimension, represented by God Almighty's discourse at the beginning and end of the narrative.

The second dimension is represented by the discourses among the interlocutors in the narrative. These discourses change from one scene to another.

The referent

The referent consists of the characters, places and times mentioned in the surah. These can be clarified as follows: Characters: Yusef, his brothers, Bani Yamin, Yaakoub, the caravan/trade party, the wife of Al-Aziz, Al-Aziz of Egypt, the king, the two prisoners/companions in prison, the king's messenger, the witness, the women and the cupbearer.

Places: the well, prison, Egypt, the land, the village, the nomads, the throne, the house, and the city.

Times: Most Arab historians attribute the period in which our Master Yusef (peace be upon him) lived to the era of the 'servants and Asian pastoralists', commonly referred to as the Hyksos. Ibrahim Mihran, Professor of Ancient History at 'Ain Shams University, states that the Bible's Book of Genesis mentions that Yusef (peace be upon him) rode in the second chariot alongside the king. He suggests that this indicates that the Egyptians were not familiar with chariots as a means of transport prior to the era of 'kings and shepherds', and that they were the first to introduce fast chariots to Egypt. He also notes that historical inscriptions on temple walls do not date these chariots to a period earlier than the Hyksos era, i.e. before the time of the pharaohs.

The communication channel is the Qur'anic discourse itself. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is regarded as the conveyor of the revelation because the Qur'anic account of Yusef's (peace be upon him) hardships and trials in his call to pure monotheism functions as a narrative filled with lessons and admonitions. It provided

15- Towards an Arabic Theory of Anaphoric Reference: Miloud Nazzar; Journal of Human Sciences; University of Biskra; Issue 42; 2009; p. 4.

the noble Messenger and the Companions with hope that ‘after hardship comes ease’¹⁶, and that so long as God is with His righteous servants, He will support them against the polytheists, even if it takes time.

The Topic of the Discourse

The surah covers a range of topics. Considered one of the greatest narratives in the Qur’an, it carries profound meanings and valuable lessons. These include the cyclical nature of worldly conditions, such as hardship and relief, and references to both worldly life and the afterlife. These include:

Yusef’s (peace be upon him) vision and its concealment due to envy.

The brothers’ jealousy and their scheming.

The plot to get rid of Yūsuf.

Yusef’s emergence from the well.

The trial of desire and seduction/temptation.

His entry into prison.

His rise to become the “al-‘Aziz” of Egypt.

Yūsuf’s meeting with his brothers.

His meeting with his father and family.

The fulfilment of the vision.

The codes (the ‘scholarly/communicative laws’)

By ‘codes’ (or ‘laws’), we mean the grammatical, syntactic and pragmatic rules that serve as the basis for classifying deixis according to the types of deictic expressions present in the model (i.e. in the sūrah).

Deictic expressions in Surat Yusef (peace be upon him)

In this section of the study, we highlight deictic expressions of various types in the Qur’anic narrative discourse as they appear in Surat Yusef.

1. Person deixis in the story of Yusef

We begin by addressing the opening discourse of God Almighty directed to the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him). This is due to the occasion of revelation (as related to the circumstances surrounding revelation) and the other interlocutors involved across different scenes.

Person Deixis in God Almighty’s Discourse Addressing the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him):

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
That	Distant demonstrative pronoun	Verses of Surah Yusef	01
you: We sent it down. Indeed, we revealed.	Connected first-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	03
We	Detached first-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	01
upon us – to you.	Detached second-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).	02
You were	Connected second-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him)	01

Table: Person deictic features in God’s address to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) (verses 1–3).

These verses contain a set of person deictic expressions. The discourse involves two parties: God Almighty, who is the sender, and the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him), who is the recipient. The message is that God informs His noble Prophet that these verses are part of the Clear Book, meaning they provide explicit and complete clarification in both wording and meaning.

God Almighty sent down the Qur’an in Arabic. No earlier scripture preceded it in the language of the Arabs. Only

God is able to relate the best stories, i.e. the best accounts of earlier prophets and righteous people¹⁷.

The noble verses begin with disjointed letters, then use the demonstrative 'taleek' (those), which belongs to the ambiguous/demonstrative forms that do not stand alone but require reference to what is pointed to within the sūrah. This usage also serves to magnify and venerate the referenced matter. The addressee pronoun represents a form of person deixis that refers to all servants of God.

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type:	Reference	Repetition
- (that)	Distant demonstrative pronoun	The story of Prophet Yusef (peace be upon him).	01
- ('we' – 'We reveal it')	Embedded first-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	01
- (the kaf: 'to you')	Connected second-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).	01
- (the second-person ta: 'you were')	Connected second-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).	01
- the plural waw: 'they all/gather'	Connected third-person pronoun (masculine)	The brothers of Yusef (peace be upon him).	01
- They	Detached third-person pronoun (masculine)	The brothers of Yusef (peace be upon him).	01
- (the ta: 'you were keen/striving')	Connected second-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).	01
- (you ask them)	Embedded second-person pronoun (-)	The brothers of Yusef (peace be upon him).	01
- They ask them.	Detached third-person pronoun (masculine)	All people	01
- (upon him/on him)	Connected third-person pronoun (masculine)	Those whom he (peace and blessings be upon him) forbade	01
- (he)	Detached third-person pronoun (masculine)	Conveyance/propagation of the message	01

Table: Person Deixis in God's Address to the Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him) (Verses 102–104)

God Almighty conveys a message to the Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him), telling him that his earnestness in conveying the call to the people will not make them all believers, nor should he expect payment from them in return for their faith. Rather, what he conveys is a reminder/admonition, not a means of obtaining reward. The word "people" can be interpreted in two ways: either it refers to all people, since the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) was sent to humanity as a whole to deliver the religion of pure monotheism, or it refers to a specific group, namely the people whom the Prophet was calling¹⁸.

17- (Exegesis: Shaping and Illumination): al-tahir ibn ashour; vol. 12; p. 201.

18- See: Exegesis: Shaping and Illumination); al-tahir ibn ashour; vol. 12; p. 62.

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type:	Reference	Repetition
you (say)	Embedded second-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).	01
I (call)	Embedded first-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).	01
I (I and those who follow me), (and I am not)	Detached first-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).	01
ya' (my path) (follow me)	Connected first-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)	01
he (should) follow me	Embedded third-person pronoun	The Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him).	01
the kaf ("before you")	Connected second-person pronoun	The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)	01
we (reveal)	Embedded first-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	01
na ("we" [We sent])	Connected first-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	01
the plural waw (you all understand)	Connected second-person pronoun	The Arabs	01
they (to them), (before them)	Connected third-person pronoun	Messengers	01
we (reveal)	Embedded first-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	01

Table: Person Deixis in God's Address to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) (Verses 108–109)

God Almighty addresses the noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). He commands him to convey the message to people on the basis of what has been revealed to him concerning the story of Yūsuf (peace be upon him) in the Qur'an, because it is the true path to enduring success. The demonstrative noun "هَـٰذَا" (this), it is a deictic unit whose referent is unspecified in isolation; it is identified as "السَّيْلُ" (the way/path), as clarified by the subsequent context in the following verse. Thus, it appears as a clear divine shari'ah that remains hidden from neither sound reason nor discerning minds.

1.2 Person Deixis in Yusef and His Father Yaaqub's Address (peace be upon them)

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type:	Reference	Repetition
O my father	Calling (vocative)	Yaaqoub (peace be upon him).	01
Ya' of the speaker ('my father')	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him).	01
Ya of the speaker ('indeed I', 'for me')	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him).	02
Ta' of the speaker ('I saw', 'you saw [to the speaker]')	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him).	01
O my son / O my sons	Calling (vocative)	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
Ya' (my son)	Connected first-person pronoun	Yaaqoub (peace be upon him)	01

You (relate)	Embedded second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him).	01
The kaf of address (your vision), (your brothers), (will select you), (your Lord), (will teach you), (upon you), (your parents), (your Lord).	Connected second-person pronouns	Yusef (peace be upon him).	10

The table below shows personal deixis in the discourse between Yusef and his father Yaaqub (peace be upon them) (Qur'an verses 4–6).

Through these noble verses, we can see that there are two discourses between Yusef and his father Yaaqub — peace be upon them — yet both revolve around a single theme: the vision. In the first discourse, Yusef's dream vision is described; in the second, there is a prohibition against relating the vision.

Accordingly, the pronouns (deictic references) change depending on the nature of the discourse. Yaaqub — peace be upon him — shifts from the role of addressee in the first discourse, represented by the vocative form (my father / ya abati), to the role of speaker/issuer of instruction in the second discourse, indicated by the first-person pronoun (my son / ya bunayya) in the verse. Meanwhile, the hidden second-person pronoun appears once in the phrase (لَا تُفَصِّلُنَّ), whereas the second-person object pronoun / (كاف المخاطب) is found more than ten times.

The pronoun of the absent third person in the verse “ (فَيَكِيدُوا / فيكيدوا)” refers to Yusef's brothers, although their names are not mentioned throughout the narrative.

Although the discourse occurs between two parties, deictic references to Yusef appear approximately fifteen times, in contrast to Yaaqub, who is referred to only once. This indicates that Yusef is the central character of the story and that the events revolve around him. There were not many separate exchanges with his father: only two, the first concerning the vision and the second regarding bringing it about/fulfilling it. This can be attributed to Yusef's separation from his father.

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type:	Reference	Repetition
He said	Embedded third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	02
Ya' (my father), Ya' (my vision), Ya' (my Lord), Ya' (me).	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	08
Bring me out! Between me and my brothers, my Lord.	Connected first-person pronoun	Yaaqub (peace be upon him)	01
O! O my father!	Vocative	Yaaqub and his family	01
The plural waw: Enter!	Connected second-person pronoun (plural)	Yaaqub and his family	01
You, with you.	Connected second-person pronoun (plural)	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01

Table showing personal deixis in the discourse between Yusef and his father, Yaaqub (peace be upon them both), in Qur'an verses 99–100.

These noble verses represent the second discourse between Yusef and his father Yaaqub. They constitute the fulfilment of Yusef's vision, as he said: “Yā abati, hādhā ta'wīlu ru'yāya min qablu qad ja'alahā rabbī haqqan” (“O my father, this is the interpretation of my dream of old; my Lord has made it true”).

The deictic references indicating Yaaqub occur only once in the form of a vocative (call), and twice with his family/household. By contrast, the deictic references indicating Yusef occur eight times. This is due to Yusef's central role in the dialogue, emphasising the realisation of his vision and confirming the interpretation given by

his father.

1.3 Personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with his brothers

There are no dialogues between Yusef and his brothers in the first half of the narrative. This is because he was separated from them after they plotted against him out of envy and hatred, whereas he was patient and gentle with them when they later needed his help.

The first discourse between them occurs when Yusef 's brothers go to Egypt to request provisions, i.e. for weighing and measuring.

Personal deixic pronouns/indicators	Type:	Reference	Repetition
He said	Embedded third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
ya' (bring me) (indeed I) (with me) (you come to me) (you draw near)	Connected first-person pronoun	The brothers of Yusef	05
plural waw (bring me) (you will see) (you come to me) (you draw near)	Connected first-person pronoun	The brothers of Yusef	04
the kaf of address ("for you"): (your father) (for you)	Connected second-person pronoun	Yusef brothers	03
I (will reward/complete) (the ones who alight/settle)	Embedded first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	02
I	Detached first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01

Table showing personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with his brothers (Qur'an verses 59–60).

In this discourse, the pronouns vary according to the participants' roles:

First-person (speaker) pronouns: the first-person singular pronoun 'ya' (ياء المتكلم / "I") appears five times.

The pronoun "ana" (أنا) appears twice — once as a suppressed/implicit pronoun and once as an explicit independent form — and these forms function to indicate the sender (Yusef).

- Deictic references indicating the addressee (second person): these occur in two forms.

1. The plural "واو الجماعة" / 'you (plural)'), repeated four times.

2. The second-person object pronoun "كاف المخاطب" / 'you'), repeated three times.

Meanwhile, personal deixis indicating the brothers is relatively limited because, within the structure of the discourse, they primarily function as recipients of commands. These references are less frequent than those to Yusef, since he is the issuing party (the one who orders and forbids) in the context of this dialogue.

Personal deixic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
they said	Embedded third-person pronoun	The brothers of Yusef	01
O esteemed one	Calling (vocative)	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
the kaf: "we see you / I see you" (as required by context)	Connected second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
he said	Embedded third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
the plural nun (we take) (we found) (our goods) (those who are unjust/oppressors)	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	04

the plural nun (we took) (we see you) (indeed we)	Connected first-person pronoun	The brothers of Yusef	03
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Table showing personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with his brothers (Qur'an verses 78–79).

Yusef 's brothers begin the exchange by requesting that Yusef show mercy to Binyamin, offering to take his place instead. They provide convincing justifications, but Yusef refuses, invoking the law.

The deictic units (pronominal references) indicating Yusef occur seven times, reflecting his prominent role in the dialogue, particularly in making the decision. By contrast, the deictic references indicating the brothers occur three times.

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
they said	Embedded third-person pronoun	The brothers of Yusef	02
'The kaf: (Is it indeed you?) (I leave?)	Connected second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
You:	detached second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	02
I	Detached first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
This is my brother	Demonstrative noun/pronoun	ben Yamin	01
Ya': (My brother is with my shirt.) (My father, bring me.)	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	04
Na': 'upon us'	Connected first-person pronoun	ben Yamin and Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
the kaf: (upon you), (for you), (with your family).	Connected second-person pronoun	The brothers of Yusef	03
Plural Waw: Go, then cast it, bring me.	Connected second-person pronoun	The brothers of Yusef	03

Table showing personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with his brothers (Qur'an verses 90–93).

Deictic elements referring to Yusef appear six times. Deictic elements referring to the brothers also occur six times. This symmetry indicates a kind of dialogic exchange and mutual engagement between the two groups, which culminates in the brothers acknowledging their mistake.

1.4 Personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with his brother Binyamin

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
They entered; they were.	Embedded third-person pronoun	The brothers of Yusef	02
He said	Embedded third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
Indeed, I	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
I	Detached first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
your brother	Connected second-person pronoun	ben Yamin	01
Do not be grieved/despair.	Embedded second-person pronoun	ben Yamin	01

Table showing personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with his brother Binyamin (Qur'an, verse 69).

The dialogue is one-sided, originating from Yusef . It takes the form of a message addressed to Binyamin, in which Yusef introduces himself and reassures his brother that he should not grieve over what the brothers did to him. Accordingly, the personal deixis are distributed equally between the two parties (Yusef and Binyamin), as both participants are represented by pronominal references.

1.4.1 Personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse directed to God (Allah).

Personal deixic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
He said	Embedded third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
my Lord	Calling (vocative with omitted particle)	Yusef (peace be upon him)	04
ya (to me) (they call me) (from me)	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
I (to be patient) (I will be / I am)	Embedded first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	02
plural waw (they call me)	Connected third-person pronoun	The women and the Aziz	01
they (their plot) (toward them)	Connected third-person pronoun	The women	02

Table showing personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse addressed to Allah (Qur'an, verse 33).

Yusef asks the Almighty, Glorified and Exalted, to divert the plot of the women, including the wife of al-'Aziz, away from him. Thus, the verse takes the form of a supplication and plea from Yusef to Allah for deliverance from their plotting. This demonstrates Yusef 's reliance on and attachment to Allah's protection.

Accordingly, the personal deixic references referring to Yusef appear in the form of first-person (speaker) pronouns, represented by the pronoun " / آيَاء المتكلم ", occurring six times.

As for the deixic references to Allah, they appear in two patterns:

In the form of an omitted vocative (i.e. a call to Allah without an explicit particle of address); and

Through second-person addressee pronouns, which occur five times as implicit (hidden) pronouns and once as an explicit independent form.

Personal deixic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
my Lord	Calling (vocative with omitted particle)	God Almighty	01
ya: (my Lord) (You bestowed on me) (You taught me) (my protector) (take me) (join me)	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	06
you (You bestowed on me) (You taught me) (the Originator) (take me) (join me)	Embedded second-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	05
you: (You are my protector)	Detached second-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	01

Table showing personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse addressed to Allah (Qur'an, verse 101).

Yusef lists the blessings that Allah has given him. This demonstrates his veneration of Allah's majesty and shows that he does not become arrogant about what he has been given. Instead, he acknowledges that all grace/blessing belongs to Allah. He then proceeds to supplicate Allah for a good end and to be joined with the righteous.

1.5 Personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with the wife of Al-'Aziz

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
Ha (Him/it) (she tried to seduce him) (his very self)	Connected third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	02
the one who / which (relative pronoun)	Relative noun	The wife of the Aziz	01
he	Detached third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
his house	Connected third-person pronoun	The wife of the Aziz	01
she: (she tried) (she closed) (she said)	Embedded third-person pronoun	The wife of the Aziz	03
he said	Embedded third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
Ha (indeed he)	Connected third-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	01
he: (is best / does well)	Embedded third-person pronoun	The Divine Essence	01
you	Embedded second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
the kaf: (for you)	Connected second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
ya: (my Lord) (my dwelling)	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	02

Table showing personal deixis in the discourse of Yusef and the wife of Al-Aziz (Qur'an, verse 23).

Personal deixis effectively clarifies what the wife of al-'Aziz did with Yusef when she attempted to seduce him. It also illustrates Yusef 's stance on the incident, which resulted in his imprisonment.

Accordingly, the pronouns referring to Yusef occur four times. Similarly, the pronouns referring to the wife of al-'Aziz occur four times, though they appear in the third-person (absent) form. Additionally, she is referred to once through a relative/connected noun (اسم موصول) that points to her.

Furthermore, Yusef only addresses the wife of al-'Aziz directly once, in this situation. In his reply, Yusef does not mention her, even though she is present. This indicates that he did not comply with her command.

1.6 Personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with the two prisoners

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
ya' (indeed I) (he shows me)	Connected first-person pronoun	The prisoner (01)	02
ya' (indeed) (he shows me) (my head)	Connected first-person pronoun	The prisoner (02)	03
I (I press / I extract)	Implicit first-person pronoun	The prisoner (01)	01
I (I carry / I bear)	Implicit first-person pronoun	The prisoner (02)	01
na' (tell us) (indeed we)	Connected first-person pronoun	The two prisoners	02
we (we see you)	Implicit first-person pronoun	The two prisoners	01

he said	Implicit third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	
you: tell us	implicit second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
the kaf: (we see you)	Connected second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
the kaf: (will come to you both) (you have told you both) (to you both) (one of you)	connected second-person pronoun	The two prisoners	04
The dual “alif” (you two will be provided)	Connected second-person pronoun	The two prisoners	01
he: (then he will be given to drink)	implicit third-person pronoun	The prisoner (01)	01
he: (then he will be crucified)	Implicit third-person pronoun	The prisoner (02)	01
ta’: (you foretold) (you left) (you followed)	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	03
(taught me) (my Lord) (indeed I) (my companion)	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	04
na: (for us) (upon us)	connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	02
we (we associate / we partner)	implicit first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
O my companion	address / interjection (vocative)	The two prisoners	02
you (you worship) (you named her) (you worship)	Connected second-person pronoun	The two prisoners and the people of Egypt	03
your fathers	Connected second-person pronoun	The two prisoners and the people of Egypt	01

Table showing personal deixis in Yusef ’s discourse with the two prisoners (Qur’an verses 36–41)

A lengthy conversation took place between Yusef (peace be upon him) and the two prisoners. In it, he invites them to worship Allah alone. He refutes the existence of gods other than Allah by contrasting the single God with multiple deities. He then concludes by emphasising that each person’s chosen path has different outcomes, which has an impact on their inner selves and motivates them to return to Allah.

Due to the length of the speech, many personal deictic elements appear. Deictic references to Yusef occur 13 times, while deictic references to the two prisoners together occur 14 times.

1.8 Personal deixis in Yusef ’s discourse with the cupbearer

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
Vocative address: Yusef	Vocative: its particle is omitted)	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
O man of truth (أيها الصديق)	Vocative	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
You: (“You will solve for us”)	Connected second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
ya particle: “Perhaps I return	Connected first-person pronoun	The cupbearer	01
i: (“I will return”)	implicit first-person pronoun)	The cupbearer	01

Plural "group" waw:** ("You will plant," "raise/bring forth," "you will eat," "you will preserve/protect")	Connected second-person pronoun	The people of Egypt	04
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Table showing personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with the king's messenger (Qur'an verses 46–49).

Yusef and the king's cupbearer, who had been released from prison, engaged in a conversation in which Yusef addressed the cupbearer. The purpose of the conversation was to obtain an interpretation of the king's vision. The deictic references to Yusef appear in two forms:

A vocative/calling form, found in "Yusef ()" and (أيها الصديق)".

This vocative has a strong pragmatic/communicative function, clarifying Yusef 's status and position in the eyes of the cupbearer, and indicating respect and acknowledgement of Yusef 's authority.

Other pronominal deictic forms appear in Yusef 's discourse and underscore the fact that the outcome depended on what Yusef would say, not merely as an interpreter, but as someone who could offer solutions to the impending crisis of drought and scarcity that would affect the people of Egypt. In this sense, Yusef became a source of hope for the Egyptians, and his accurate interpretation exposed the lack of credibility of other interpreters who had dismissed the vision as mere confusing dreams.

1.9 Personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with the king's messenger

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
(he):("came to him," "he said")	Implicit third-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	02
You:("Return," "ask him")	Implicit second-person pronoun	The king's messenger	02
Kaf of address):"your Lord"	Connected second-person pronoun	The king's messenger	01
My Lord / my Master:	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01

Table showing personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with the king's messenger (Qur'an, verse 50).

Yusef had a conversation with the king's messenger, who had come to release him from prison. However, Yusef refused to leave until his innocence had been proven to the king and all the people, so that he would be vindicated regarding the accusation involving the women.

The personal deictic references in this exchange highlight Yusef 's strong character. He rejected the idea of leaving prison, even if commanded to do so by the king. He did not seek freedom in exchange for interpreting the dream, treating the matter as something that should be done without payment, just as he had done with the dreams of the two prisoners. Yusef desired to be recognised as innocent so that he could experience the freedom that had effectively been confined within the prison walls.

1.10 Personal deixis in Yusef 's discourse with the king

Personal deictic pronouns/indicators	Type	Reference	Repetition
he *said"	Implicit third-person pronoun.	The king	01
("indeed, you...")	Connected second-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	01
**Plural nun:("for us" / "with us")	Connected first-person pronoun	The king	01
he:said"	Implicit third-person pronoun	The king	01

ya' particle: ("Make me [remember]," "Indeed I...")	Connected first-person pronoun	Yusef (peace be upon him)	02
"Make me ... / have me ... [remember]"	Implicit second-person pronoun	The king	01

Table showing the personal deixis in the speech of Prophet Yusef (peace be upon him) with the King (Qur'an 54–55).

The king addressed the prophet Yusef (peace be upon him) to reassure, honour and elevate him. Yusef asked only to be entrusted with the treasures of Egypt. The king accepted his request because he knew of his integrity, truthfulness and extensive knowledge.

The personal deictic expressions indicate Yusef's self-confidence and boldness in making the request, as well as his ability to manage the state's treasures, despite having no previous experience of such work and having been imprisoned for years.

2. Temporal deixis in Surat Yusef (Yusef).

Before examining the temporal deixis units in the story of Yusef , it is necessary to consider the existence of two different time periods. The first is the time at which this Qur'anic surah was revealed to our Master Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). The second arises from the various times required by the events of the narrative, as clarified by the context of the discourses. The story of Yusef contains many temporal deixis units, each with its own reference. These units play an important role in determining the frame within which the events of the story occurred.

We would like to point out that the time at which this story is told first corresponds to the time at which our Master Muhammad received revelation. Other times then follow within the unfolding discourse. The following is a detailed explanation of this phenomenon:

2.1 Before: the deictic unit 'قَبْلَ' ("before")

The deictic unit *قبْلَ occurred in several places in the story ,including:

In the verse: {وَأِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الْعَظِيمِينَ ...}

The verse contains the deictic unit "قَبْلَ", which is attached to a third-person pronoun. As the discourse is addressed to our Master Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), the unit is also linked to him. This indicates that the story did not occur to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) before, because the events occurred in the past and he could not have known about them unless Allah had revealed them to him.

In Yusef's speech to the prisoner, the deictic unit 'قَبْلَ' indicates a near time associated with the arrival of food. Yusef informs them that he can predict the type of food they will receive. This is part of what Allah taught him, as stated in the verse: {قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيَكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُزَرِّقَانِهِ إِلَّا نَبَأْتُكُمَا بِنَاوِيلِهِ قِيلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا ذَلِكَمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي}

Yusef's brothers came to their father and asked him to let Benjamin accompany them. Their father responded by reminding them of what had happened to Yusef after they had been entrusted with him. The discourse contains a temporal deictic unit referring to a past event — "before" (قَبْلَ) — whose reference is the incident between Yaaqoub (peace be upon him) and his sons when they asked him to let their brother Yusef graze and play, promising to protect him, but then betraying their pledge. {قَالَ: هَلْ أَمْنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَا أَمْنُكُمْ عَلَى أَخِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ} (64)

- He began with their bags before his brother's, and then he took it out of his brother's bag. (76)

Here, 'قَبْلَ' added to the noun 'وعاء' (container/bag'), and it refers to the containers of Yusef's brothers that were searched for the thief of the king's cup. As for its pragmatic value, it serves to ward off the suggestion that the affair was planned in advance. In this regard, Ibn Ashour states: 'He began with the containers of the remaining brothers before the container of his full brother... and beginning with the containers of someone other than his brother removes the possibility that what is found in his brother's container was intended from the outset.¹⁹

{قَالُوا إِنْ يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَأَسْرَهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ (77)}

The word 'قَبْلَ' appears as a deictic unit indicating the past. It refers to the allegation fabricated against Yusef by the girl's aunt, who claimed that he had stolen the sacred garment of his father Isaac after she had turned it into a belt and placed it beneath Yusef's clothes. Another view is that he took a statue from the church. A third view states that he hid food under the table and gave it to the poor. In all cases, these are falsehoods and fabrications

against Yusef (peace be upon him)²⁰.

(80) ... قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ: أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ أَبَاكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ. وَ مِنْ قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُمْ فِي يُوسُفَ

The temporal deictic unit “قَبْلُ” here refers to before the negligence regarding Benjamin — i.e. the negligence of Yusef’s brothers. This occurred after they took Benjamin, made him go with them and put him in the well, breaking their pledge to their father after promising to keep Benjamin safe.

{ (وَيَمِّمْ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَمَّا عَلَىٰ أَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ 6) ... }

The deictic unit ‘قَبْلُ’ here indicates the time of Yusef’s parents — that is, the period in which Abraham and Isaac lived. It was a time characterised by miracles: Abraham was saved from the fire by Allah, and Isaac succeeded in the sacrificial ordeal (‘i.e. he was ransomed/saved’)²¹. In other words, Yaaqoub (peace be upon him) tells his son Yusef that Allah will elevate his status and make him like his parents, Abraham and Isaac.

{ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رَجَالًا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ أَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ }

The noble verse contains two temporal deictic units. In the first, ‘مَنْ قَبْلِكَ’ is attached to the singular addressee pronoun, referring to the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him). The second unit, ‘مَنْ قَبْلِهِمْ’, is attached to the plural third-person pronoun and refers to the disbelieving communities that denied the messengers.

{ (وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا ... { 100 }) }

In this verse, there is a temporal deictic unit, ‘قَبْلُ’, within a time ظرف (adverbial phrase), indicating Yusef’s (peace be upon him) dream, in which he told his father that the prostration that had happened before them was the realisation of his long-ago vision, in which the eleven stars, the sun and the moon had prostrated themselves to him.

2.2 ‘إِذْ’ appears in the story of Yusef twice, namely:

{ (إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ { 4 }) }

Its reference is to the time when Yusef told his father, Yaaqoub (peace be upon them), about his dream.

{ (إِذْ قَالُوا لِيُوسُفُ وَأَخُوهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْنَا مِمَّا نَحْنُ غَضَبَةٌ إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ { 8 }) }

It refers to the time when Yusef’s brothers gathered and discussed their two brothers.

2.3 This deictic unit appears five times in Surat Yusef; we clarify its occurrences as follows:

{ (أَقْبَلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ إِيْطِرْخُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهَ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ) }

2.4 It is added to the ḥā’ (the pronoun suffix) that refers to the time when Yusef (peace be upon him) was disposed of.

{ (ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوُا الْآيَاتِ لَيْسَجْنُهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ جِيئَ { 35 }) }

Its reference returns to the time when the signs and proofs became clear to them, showing that Yusef was innocent of the charge made by the wife of Aziz, and that she had fabricated the accusation against him.

2.5 Isha (Night/Evening)

“And they came to their father at night, weeping.”

This indicates the coming of darkness. After committing their crime, the brothers of Yusef (peace be upon him) took the cover of night to visit their father, hiding from themselves the signs of their deceit and treachery. The use of this rhetorical device is not meaningless; rather, it highlights the brothers’ corrupt intentions and base nature²².

2.6 Ummah (a long span/period): “And the one who was saved of the two said, ‘I will inform you of its interpretation—so send me.’”

According to some exegetes, the word “ummah” denotes a long duration. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi says, “As for ‘ummah’, there are different aspects. First, ‘after an ummah’ means after a certain time.” This only occurs when there are many days, just as ‘ummah’ occurs when the gathering is immense. So there is ‘an ummah’ among days and hours...²³

It also appears through a temporal indicator unit: ‘After’ indicates the time of remembering that comes after forgetfulness.

20- (The Spirit of Meanings in the Exegesis of the Great Quran and the Seven Oft-Repeated [Verses]): al-Ālūsī; Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-arabi; Beirut, Lebanon; vol. 13; n.d.; n.d.; p. 31.

21- See: (Comprehensive Statement on the Interpretation of the Verses of the Quran): Mohamed ibn Jarur al-tabari; ed. Bashshar awwad Maarouf; al-Risala Foundation; Beirut, Lebanon; 1st ed.; 1994; p. 331.

22- (Exegesis of the Noble Quran): Mohamed Rashid Ridha; (The Manar Printing Press); Egypt; 1st ed.; n.d.; vol. 12; p. 266.

23- Tafsir al-Razi (The Commentary of al-Razi) (Keys to the Unseen): Fakhr al-Din al-Razi; Dar al-Fikr for Printing, Publishing and Distribution; Beirut, Lebanon; 1st ed.; 1981; vol. 18; p. 152

2.7 Sinin (Years)

> “He said, ‘You shall sow for seven years in succession...’”

The phrase ‘seven’ precedes it, and it refers to the duration of cultivation requested by Yusef (peace be upon him) in his reply to the king’s dream. He linked the number of these years with the number of cattle and the number of green ears of grain that the king had seen in his dream. This is what al-Qurtubī mentioned in his interpretation:

‘The seven are seven fat cattle and seven green ears of grain, and seven years of fruitful abundance. But the seven lean cattle and the seven withered ears are seven years of hardship, consecutive years.’

In other words, it indicates that cultivation will last for seven consecutive years.

‘Bidh’ (a few/several): ‘And he said to the one who thought he would be saved of the two, “Mention me to your Lord.”²⁴ But the devil made him forget to mention his Lord, so he remained in prison for a few years.’

This is preceded by the word “bidh” (meaning “a few”), indicating that Yusef (peace be upon him) remained in prison for additional years.

2.8 ‘Today’ (اليوم) occurs twice.

We clarify this as follows:

1) “The king said, ‘Bring him to me; I will have him for myself.’ Then, when he spoke with him, he said, “Indeed, today you are established with us, trusted.”

This refers to the moment when Yusef (peace be upon him) met the king — on an unspecified occasion — as an honour to Yusef and to exalt him. This is because, once it became clear that Yusef (peace be upon him) was innocent of the accusations against him and that he had been imprisoned because of the women’s plotting—as confirmed by their testimony of his innocence and the raising of his standing—that was the ‘today’ spoken of.

2) (قَالَ لَا تَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ الْيَوْمَ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِيْنَ 92)

‘He said, “No reproach is there for you today. May God forgive you — and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.’

This ‘today’ indicates the moment of forgiveness and the removal of blame, as well as what follows it in time. When the brothers realised that the Mighty One was their brother Yusef, they admitted that they had been wrong.

2.9 Now (الآن) — one occurrence:

“The wife of the العزيز said, ‘Now the truth has become clear. I sought to seduce him, but he is indeed among the truthful.’”

This refers to the time when the women admitted to the king and exonerated Yusef (peace be upon him). At that moment, the truth became manifest and the wife of the ‘عزيز’ could not avoid confessing the full truth and Yusef’s innocence.

2.10 When/until the time (حين) — one occurrence, with ‘after’ also present:

“Then, after they had seen the signs, it became apparent to them that they would surely imprison him until a time.”

The noble verse contains two indicative units: “after” (من بعد) and “until a time” (حين).

The first (‘after’) refers to the time when the ‘عزيز’ and his companions saw the evidence of Yusef’s innocence concerning the accusation.

As for “حين”, it refers to the duration of Yusef’s imprisonment, which is not specified.

2.11 The Hour (الساعة) refers to sudden and unexpected timing.

“Do they then feel secure that there will come upon them a covering punishment from God, or that the Hour will come upon them suddenly, while they do not perceive?”

This verse determines the time period for those who carry out such actions: either they will be overtaken and engulfed by God’s punishment until it removes them, or the Hour will suddenly come upon them while they are unaware.

2.12 When’ or ‘as soon as’ (لَمَّا) — multiple occurrences, each with its own reference

The temporal indicator unit ‘لَمَّا’ appears in many places within the story, and each occurrence has its own specific reference. The details are presented in the following table:

Verses (Qur'an)	Repetition
'So when they went away with him and agreed to throw him into the depths of the well...' (22).	The time when Yaaqoub accepted/agreed to their request.
'And when he reached his full strength, We granted him judgement and knowledge.' (22)	- The time of reaching maturity (puberty).
'Then, when he saw that his shirt had been torn from behind...' (28).	- The King and the witness seeing the shirt
'Then, when they heard of their plot, they sent for him, and she prepared a couch for them.' (31).	- The wife of al-Aziz hearing the women talk.
'And when they saw him, they cut their hands.' (31).	- The women seeing Yusef.
'Then, when the Messenger came to him, he said, "Return to your Lord and ask Him..." (50).	- The messenger coming and informing Yusef of the king's vision.
'Then, when he spoke to him, he said, "Indeed, today, with us, you are established and trustworthy..." (54).	Yusef's presence before the king and his speaking to him.
'And when he had made provisions for them, he said, "Bring me a brother of yours from your father..." (59).	Yusef preparing provisions for his brothers
'Then, when they returned to their father, they said, "O our father, the measure has been withheld from us..." (63).	- The brothers' return to their father
'And when they opened their goods, they found their merchandise had been returned to them.' (56).	- The brothers opening their luggage
'And when they entered where their father had ordered them to enter...' (68).	- Their journey to Egypt.
'And when they entered the presence of Yusef, he embraced his brother.' (69).	- The brothers' entry to their brother
'Then, when he had prepared their provisions, he placed the drinking cup in his brother's bag.' (80).	- Yusef preparing his brothers' equipment and provisions
'Then, when they had lost all hope of finding him, they went off alone to talk in private.' (80).	- The brothers' despair at the thought of their brother's return
'Then, when they approached him, they said, "O exalted one..." (88).	- The brothers' meeting with Yusef (peace be upon him).
'And when the caravan set out, their father said...' (94).	- The time of the caravan's departure from Egypt
'Then, when the bearer of good news came, he cast it upon his face and could see again.' (96).	- The time when the bearer of good news (al-Bashir) came to Yaaqoub (peace be upon him).
'Then, when they entered the presence of Yusef, he sheltered his parents.' (99).	- Yaaqoub and the brothers' arrival to see Yusef (peace be upon him).

2.13 The Hereafter (al-Akhira)

"And certainly the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believe and are mindful of God."

God informs us that what He has stored for His Prophet Yusef (peace be upon him) in the Hereafter is greater, more immense and more honourable. The verse does not specify a particular time for 'the Hereafter', nor the timing of the reward; rather, it indicates the greatness of the promised recompense.

It is also mentioned elsewhere using the expression "the abode of the Hereafter" in His saying:

{وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ} (109) >

"And the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who are mindful of God – will you not then reason?"

God clarifies to people that this world is transient and passes quickly, whereas the enduring reward and all goodness belong to the Abode of the Hereafter; therefore, it is better than the worldly abode.

2.14 A Year / The Year (عام)

"Then, after that, there will come a year in which people will be given relief, and in it they will press (things)."

This indicates the period after the seven harsh years: it is a time when rains and torrents increase, people are relieved, and the word "عام (a year)" specifies the time period during which the hardship disappears.

2.15 A few/several years (بضع)

“And he said to the one who thought he would be saved of the two, ‘Mention me to your Lord.’ But the devil made him forget the remembrance of his Lord, so he remained in prison for a few years.’

It indicates a specified period of time. From the context, it is clear that he asked to be mentioned to the king after informing him that Yusef had been wronged and imprisoned for no reason. He therefore remained in prison for several years because he asked his master, the king, not his Lord.

2.16 A caravan came, and they sent their water-carrier, who lowered his bucket and said, “Good news! Here is a boy!” They concealed him as merchandise. And God knew what they were doing.”

The word “sayyārah” (sayyārah) means a travelling group of people (those who are journeying). They are called this because they travel through the land, such as a caravan intending to go to Egypt but going astray from the route. One of them lowered his bucket and Yusef (peace be upon him) was caught by it. It is said that the caravan arrived on the third day after Yusef had been thrown down, and it is in this detail that the element of time lies²⁵.

2.17 Will/soon (سوف)

“He said, ‘I will seek forgiveness for you; my Lord will forgive you. Indeed, He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’²⁶”

Yaaqoub (peace be upon him) said, “I will ask God,” hoping that He would forgive them. God forgives the sins of His repentant servants and covers them with His mercy. It is also said that seeking forgiveness occurred during the night until dawn, as this is the time when forgiveness is most likely to be granted.

2.18 In this world and the Hereafter (الدنيا).

“My Lord, You have indeed granted me some sovereignty, and taught me something of the interpretation of events. You are the Originator of the heavens and the earth. You are my Protector in this world and the Hereafter. Cause me to die as a Muslim, and join me with the righteous.’

Yusef (peace be upon him) acknowledges God’s blessings upon him, such as granting him sovereignty, while calling upon God to be his guardian in this world and the Hereafter and to join him with the righteous.

3. Spatial indicatory expressions (الإشارات المكانية) in Sūrat Yūsuf (peace be upon him)

3.1 “Earth / land” (أرض)

(أَقْبَلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ 9)

It indicates a distant and unknown place. The proof is that it is mentioned as ****indefinite (nakira)****, which points to a land that is unknown and far from habitation. From the context, it is understood that Yusef’s brothers carry malice in their hearts, leading them to think about harming him and getting rid of him in an unknown place.

3.2 The well / pit” (الجب)

(قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ وَالْقَوْهَ فِي غِيَابَاتِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ 10)

It indicates a place hidden from people’s sight. The well (al-jubb) is a pit that is not built or lined with stones. From the context, it becomes clear that Yusef’s brothers abandoned their plan to destroy him and instead agreed to remove him from his father’s care by throwing him into the depths of the hidden well.

3.3 “Egypt” (مصر)

It is mentioned in two places:

(وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لِامْرَأَتِهِ: أَكْرِمِي مَثْوَاهُ عَسَى أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا ... 21 > 1)

(قَلَمًا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ أَوْى إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَاهُ وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِينَ > 2)

The word ‘Egypt’ functions as a spatial ‘مَظَرَف مَكَان’, indicating the city to which Yusef migrated, and therefore the setting of his story shifts from the desert to the city. Regarding the verse, Ibn ‘Āshūr said:

‘The city of Egypt is Manf; it is also called ‘Manf’. It is the capital of Lower Egypt, ruled by the Canaanite tribes known to the Copts as the Hyksos (‘shepherd kings’).²⁷”

3.4 The town/village (القرية):

‘Ask the town in which we were, and the caravan that came with us. We are telling the truth.’

The word ‘town/village’ is presented with the definite article (al-), indicating a known place — namely, the place where they had measured/collected the goods and from which they had come. From the context, it is clear that their brother had stolen, and they demanded that he ask the townspeople and the caravan to be believed.

3.5 ‘At/with (near)’ (عند) — four occurrences:

25- See also: Exegesis: Shaping and Illumination: Mohammad al-Tahir ibn Ashur, vol. 12, p. 175.

26- See Ibid., p. 188.

27- (Exegesis: Shaping and Illumination). Mohammed al-Tahir ibn Ashur, vol. 12, p. 245.

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ الذِّيبُ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ ١٧

It indicates proximity; thus, it functions as a spatial ظرف. It refers to the fact that Yusef was left near their belongings for protection while they went to race and enjoy themselves.

(وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا: اذْكُرْنِي عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ. فَأَنْسَاهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ. فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِينَ. 42)

It is constructed with the word 'your Lord' (رَبِّكَ), meaning that Yusef (peace be upon him) asked the cupbearer to mention him to the king, so it denotes a place or position of great value.

(فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كِغْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُون 60)

It is added to the first-person possessive 'my' (يَا الْمَلِكُ), indicating that the matter of measurement/provision ('the measure') primarily concerns Yusef himself. This implies the status and power that Yusef (son of Yaaqoub) had attained.

(قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَنْ نَأْخُذَ إِلَّا مَنْ وَجَدْنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهُ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّظَالِمُونَ 79)

It is added to a pronoun referring back to his brother (i.e. Binyamin, the missing brother). It indicates that Yusef judges justly, therefore the 'place/position' is attributed to him.

3.6 'Land/earth' (الأرض)

'الأرض' appears as a spatial ظرف in many verses, and its reference differs according to the context in which it appears. A detailed breakdown is presented in the following table:

Verses (Qur'an)	Repetition
'And thus We established Yusef in the land, that We might teach him the interpretation of sayings (dreams/expressions).' (21)	Earth of Egypt
'He said, "Appoint me over the storehouses of the land. Indeed, I am a knowing guardian.'" — (55)	Earth of Egypt
'And thus did We establish Yusef in the land; he could settle wherever he wished. We bestow Our mercy upon whom We will, and We do not allow the reward of those who do good to be lost.' — (56)	Earth of Egypt
'They said, "By Allah, you certainly know that we did not come to cause corruption in the land, and we were not thieves.'" — (73)	Earth of Egypt
'So I will not leave this land until my father permits me or Allah judges for me, for He is the best of judges.' — (80)	The earth, generally.
"Creator of the heavens and the earth, You are my Protector in this world and the next. Take me to You as a Muslim and let me join the righteous.' — (101)	The earth, generally.
'And how many a sign there is in the heavens and the earth that they pass by while they turn away from them.' — (105)	The earth, generally
'And We did not send before you any but men whom We inspired among the people of the towns. Have they not travelled through the land and observed the end of those before them?' — (109)	The earth, generally

3.7 The Prison

The locative term "السِّجْنُ" (the prison) occurs several times in the story. We cite the relevant instances as follows:

(1) "He said: My Lord, prison is more dear to me than that to which they invite me. And unless You turn away from me their plot, I shall incline toward them and be among the ignorant." (33).

In this context, its meaning refers to the place where Yusef (peace be upon him) preferred to remain.

(2) "He entered the prison with him, and two youths said: One of them said: I see myself pressing wine.'

And the other said, 'I see myself carrying bread on my head, which the birds eat.' Inform us of its interpretation, for indeed we see you among the righteous." (36).

The reference returns to the place into which Yusef entered with two others.

(3) "O my two companions in prison, are separate lords better, or the one supreme God?" (39).

This phrase refers to the place.

(4) 'O my two companions in prison: As for one of you, he will give his master wine to drink, and as for the other, he will be crucified and the birds will eat his flesh. The matter has been decreed concerning your inquiry" (41).

This refers to the companion of that place and the suffering that Yusef (peace be upon him) experienced within it.

(5) 'And he said to the one who he thought would be released: 'Remember me to your lord', but the devil made him forget to mention this to his lord, so he remained in prison for some years" (42).

This refers to the place in which Yusef remained for a limited number of years.

(6) 'Indeed, God was gracious to me, for He brought me out of prison and brought you to me from the desert after Satan had stirred up conflict between me and my brothers.' Indeed, my Lord is subtle in what He wills; indeed, He is the Knowing, the Wise' (100). (100).

In this verse, the reference is not to the prison in Egypt in which Yusef was imprisoned. Rather, it refers to the well (or pit) into which his brothers cast him.

3.8 place (مكان)

This deictic unit indicating place appears in the following two verses:

(1) "They said: If he steals, then indeed a brother of his has stolen before. But Yusef concealed it within himself and did not reveal it to them. He said: You are worse in position, —and God knows best what you describe" (77)

In this passage, "مكان" refers to the status/standing of the brothers—their being "worse in position."

(2) They said, " 'O exalted one, indeed he has an old father, very advanced in years. Take one of us in his place. Indeed, we see you among the doers of good.' (78) Here, 'مكان' carries the meaning of 'substitution/standing in place of', since Yaaqoub (peace be upon him) could not bear to be separated from his son Benjamin after already having parted with Yusef²⁸.

3.9 Fear

36. Two young men entered the prison with him. One of them said, "I dreamt that I was pressing grapes to make wine." The other said, "I dreamt that I was carrying bread on my head, and birds were eating it. 'Explain their meaning to us,' they said, 'for we see that you are one of the good.'

So he began with their bags before his brother's, and then he took it out of his brother's bag. Thus did We ordain for Joseph: he could not take his brother away under the king's law unless God willed it. We raise the rank of whom We will; above every knowledgeable person, there is a more knowledgeable person.' (76) This refers to a figurative place, namely the highest level of knowledge. It indicates that there are different levels of knowledge and that God is the most knowledgeable of all.

3.10 31. When she heard about their plot, she sent for them, prepared a place for them to sit and gave each of them a knife, saying, 'Come out to them.' When they saw him, they were amazed, cutting off their hands and saying: 'God forbid! This is not a man, but an honourable angel.'

From the context, it is clear that the word 'matka' refers to a comfortable seat. In this case, it refers to the dining room where the women were seated on cushions. After seeing Yousuf (peace be upon him), they cut off their hands. (3:11) "The woman who lived in the house made advances to him, saying, 'Come here.' But he replied, 'God forbid! My master has been good to me and has provided me with a good home. The wrongdoers will not succeed.'" The word 'بيت' is a place name added to the pronoun 'ها', which refers to the wife of the vizier. This indicates that it is a well-known place.

3.11 House/Residence

"And the woman in whose house he was sought to seduce him; she closed the doors and said: Come!" (23).

The phrase "بيت" appears as a locative expression added to the pronoun referring to the wife of the العزيز ("in her house"). This construction indicates that it is a well-known, specific house.

3.12 Front / Forepart (فُتْل)

"She said: He it was who sought to seduce me from myself.'

And a witness from her household testified: 'If his shirt is torn from the front, then she is telling the truth and he

28- See Exegesis of al-Nasafi: (Perceptions of Revelation and Realities of Interpretation): Abu al-Barakat al-Nasafi, trans./ed. Yusuf Ali Badawi; reviewed by Mahi Eddine Dib. Dar al-Kalim al-Tayeb, 1st edition, vol. 2, 1998, p. 127.

is lying.” (26)

‘فُتِلَ’ denotes the front/forepart (i.e. the anterior side). In this context, it is clear that the wife of the Aziz was telling the truth: the tear must have been at the front because Yusef (peace be upon him) was the target of her advances, and the resulting struggle required her to defend herself — hence the shirt was torn at the front.

3.13 The City (Al-Madina)

“And the women of the city said: The wife of the ‘عزيز’ is trying to seduce her young slaves; her love has certainly captivated him. We see her as being in clear error!” (30)

Here, ‘the city’ refers to Egypt, where the Aziz lived. It is where the women gathered with the wife of the Aziz, who had tried to seduce Yusef (peace be upon him).

3.14 Back/Rear (Dabul)

‘If his shirt is torn from the back, then she has lied, and he is among the truthful.’ (27)

“When he saw his shirt torn from the back, he said: ‘Indeed, this is from your scheming. Indeed, your scheming is great!’ (28).

The meaning of these verses is that Yusef (peace be upon him) is truthful. It was the wife of the Aziz who attempted to seduce him. Yusef fled, and she followed him and grabbed his garment, tearing it from the rear. In other words, the shirt anchors the locative meaning, functioning as the referent for the locative unit ‘ذُئِرَ’

3.15 Between/in-between (بين)

‘There is certainly an admonition in their stories for people of understanding—this is not a fabricated statement, but a confirmation of what came before, as well as a detailed explanation of everything, and guidance and mercy for those who believe.’ (111).

“And he raised his parents upon the throne, and they fell down in prostration... He said: My father, this

Here, the locative unit is Egypt, representing the king’s court. Yusef’s brothers came from Canaan, also known as the land of Sham, and they were desert dwellers. They went to Egypt seeking food.

3.19 Near/at hand (لدى)

‘They rushed to the door. She tore his shirt from the back, and we found her master at the door. She said, ‘What is the recompense for one who intends evil for your family, except that he be imprisoned or punished severely?’” (25)

‘Lada’ denotes nearness, i.e. the Aziz was close to the door from which Yusef had emerged, along with the Aziz’s wife, after what had occurred between them. Therefore, she did not expect to find her master standing directly by the door.

Rhetorical deictic expressions in the story of Yusef

We will track the rhetorical deictic expressions in the surah according to the scenes contained within it, since these scenes form short narrative episodes in themselves²⁹.

4. Scene of Yusef’s Dream (Qur’anic citation):

“Yusef said to his father, ‘I saw eleven stars, the sun and the moon in my dream. I saw them prostrating themselves to me.’ His father replied, ‘My dear son, do not tell your brothers about your dream, lest they devise a plot against you. Indeed, Satan is a manifest enemy to mankind.’” (5)”

The most excellent narratives include many stories, some of which are set in a particular period of time. The story of Yusef — peace be upon him — begins with him telling his father about his dream, because he had previously learned from his father that dreams have interpretations and meanings. Furthermore, the prostration of noble beings before him serves as a metaphor for the greatness of his status. In this sense, the dream functions as a prelude to forthcoming events. A truthful dream is one way of conveying knowledge of the unseen, and this is one of the distinguishing features of prophets and the righteous. Yusef inherited this virtue from his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac³⁰.

The rhetorical-signalling unit is evident in the fact that Yusef was cautioned not to tell his brothers about his dream. His father knew that the dream signified an elevation in status and that his brothers would be jealous of him, since God favoured him over them in creation and character. Fearing that such jealousy might grow into envy, he warned Yusef³¹. However, he knew that this warning would not make Yusef hate his brothers because he was

29- See: Exegesis: Shaping and Illumination: Mohamed al-Tahir ibn Ashour, vol. 12, p. 181.

30- See Ibid., p. 208.

31- See Exegesis: Shaping and Illumination: Mohamed Al-Tahir Ibn Ashour, Vol. 12, p. 213.

confident in his intelligence and morals.

Scene of the Brothers' Plot (Qur'anic citation):

"When they said, 'Yusef and his brother are more beloved to our father than we are, though we are a band.' Indeed, our father is surely in clear error³². Kill Yusef — or cast him down to the earth — so that the face of your father may be devoted to you, and you may become righteous people after him." Then one of them said, "Do not kill Yusef ; instead, cast him into the depths of the well, and some travellers will find him, if you are determined to do something. "

Opening their statements with the formula 'they said' using the Lam of emphasis indicates their intent to confirm the truth of the report. The rhetorical element is expressed by the fact that none of the brothers doubted that Yusef and his brother were more beloved by their father than they were. They all agreed on one thing: their father was on the wrong course. They then diverged on how to remove Yusef from their father's consideration, either by killing him or casting him into the well.

Scene of Yusef 's Request to His Father (Qur'anic citation):

"He said, 'It grieves me that you should take him away. I fear that the wolf will devour him while you are heedless of him.' They said, "If the wolf devours him while we are a group, then we will indeed be losers." (14)"

The rhetorical unity lies in Yaaqoub's fear and hesitation about taking his brothers with Yusef because he knows how they feel about him. This is especially in light of the presence of wild wolves in that region; he fears they will leave him unattended and expose him to the wolves. However, they dismissed the idea and reiterated the meaning of 'a band' (عُصْبَة) mentioned earlier, thereby displaying an outward appearance of righteousness while concealing malice, plotting and the intention to destroy.

Scene of the Deception with the Shirt (Qur'anic citation):

"And they came with his shirt stained with false blood. He said, 'No — you have been prompted by yourselves to do something. So patience is beautiful, and God is the one to be sought for help against what you describe.' (18). Yaaqoub — peace be upon him — was not convinced by his sons' account that a wolf had eaten Yusef . Rather, he considered it nothing but fabrication and lying; they had been led by their own desires towards evil and had thus plotted against their brother.

The linguistic form "nay" (بَلْ) functions as a marker of correction and disruption, playing an important pragmatic role in highlighting the unity of rhetoric and signalling manifested in Yaaqoub's denial and rejection of what his sons presented — fabrications and falsehoods.

Scene of Yusef 's Sale (Qur'anic citation):

"And there came a caravan. They sent their water-carrier and he lowered his bucket. He said, "Good news! Here is a boy!' They concealed him amongst their merchandise. God knows what they did. They sold him for a paltry sum—a mere handful of dirhams—and were indifferent to his fate. (19–20).

The rhetorical unity of the caravan is evident in their agreement to take a young boy from the local population and sell him for a low price.

Scene of Buying Yusef (Qur'anic citation):

"The man who bought Yusef from Egypt said to his wife, 'Honour his dwelling, for perhaps he will benefit us or we may adopt him as a son.'" Thus, We established Yusef in the land so that We might teach him the interpretation of sayings. God has full authority over all affairs, yet most people do not know." (21).

The noble rhetorical signifiers indicate that God's will — Glorified and Exalted — prevailed over the will of Yusef 's brothers, who attempted to destroy him. Thus, God overpowered them, nullified their plotting and intervened in accordance with His decree. The preposition "upon" (على) appearing after the word "prevailing" (غالب) suggests that Yusef 's brothers sought to contend with God concerning Yusef , intending to carry out an action that contradicted God's will. Hence, God uses the particle "but/indeed" (لَكِنَّ), which conveys a contrast (استدراك) to what the preceding ruling would imply. It affirms a firmly established reality that cannot be disregarded. Accordingly, this linguistic formulation highlights the fact that most people are unaware of the indications and proofs of God's will, which is not subject to dispute³³.

Scene of the temptation by the wife of al-'Aziz (Qur'anic citation).

"And she in whose house he was sought to seduce him from himself. She locked the doors and said, 'Come, you

32- See Ibid., p. 222.

33- See 'Exegesis: Shaping and Illumination: Mohamed Al-Tahir Ibn Ashour, Vol. 12, pp. 247–248.

may have whatever you desire.' He replied, 'God forbid! Indeed, He is my Lord — He has made my dwelling place excellent; wrongdoers do not prosper.' (23)"

The trial that Yusef faced is greater than that of his brothers. Despite the presence of many motives to do otherwise, Yusef prioritised the love of God, Glorified and Exalted, and therefore remained patient in refraining from disobedience to God, placing God's will above the desires of the self to do evil. He considered what he was obligated to do: leave what God had forbidden by distancing himself from this sin.

The second trial was one of compulsion or necessity, like hardships that befall the servant. In such a case, patience is the only refuge.

Scene of the Manifestation of Truth (Qur'anic citation):

"Then, when he saw his shirt torn from behind, he said, 'It is indeed from your plotting. Indeed, your plotting is great.'" (28).

When a witness from her household testified, the 'Aziz of Egypt' saw Yusef's shirt, peace be upon him, torn from the back. This confirmed Yusef's innocence. He then declared with full certainty that women's plotting and schemes are formidable to the extent that they can falsely accuse someone.

Scene of the Women of the City (Qur'anic citation):

"And the women of the city said, 'The wife of Al-Aziz is seeking to seduce her servant; she has captivated her with her love. Indeed, we surely see her in clear error.'" (30).

The women of the city judged the wife of al-'Aziz, considering her actions shameful and unacceptable for someone of her social standing. They blamed her for seducing him and agreed that she was on the wrong path. Yet beneath this reproach lies a concealed matter: their plotting was aimed at getting a glimpse of the man who had captivated the wife of al-'Aziz³⁴.

Scene of the Women Seeing Yusef (Qur'anic citation):

"Then, when she heard of their plotting, she summoned them, prepared a couch for them, and gave each of them a knife, saying, 'Go out to them.' When they saw him, they were overwhelmed and cut their hands. They exclaimed, 'God is great! This is no mortal; this is none other than a noble angel.' (31) She said, "That is the one you blamed me for. I indeed sought to seduce him, but he resisted. If he does not obey me, he will be imprisoned with the humiliated.'" (32)

When the women cut their hands in astonishment at Yusef's beauty, the wife of Al-Aziz felt she had triumphed over her rivals. She therefore spoke openly and without modesty about her attempt to seduce him. The term "withheld himself" (استعصم) indicates intensification, emphasising that his refusal was all the firmer because he understood that her request was sinful. She also emphasised imprisonment using the heavy emphatic nun—as though it were an oath—serving as a threat grounded in her own power and that of her husband. Thus, Yusef invoked God, asking that imprisonment would be easier than committing disobedience.

The Following of the Prophets' Way (Qur'anic citation):

'And I followed the religion of my fathers — Abraham, Isaac and Yaaqoub. It was not for us to associate anything with God. This is God's grace upon us and upon humankind, yet most people do not give thanks.' (38)

Yusef — peace be upon him — informs us that he remained steadfast in the religion of the prophets. He calls the two imprisoned men to worship God alone with sincerity and abandon shirk (associating partners with Him). Faith is a blessing and favour from God, yet most people neglect to thank Him and devote their worship purely to Him.

Scene of Calling the Two Prisoners to Monotheism (Qur'anic citation):

"You do not worship anything besides Him except names that you and your forefathers have invented yourselves. God has sent down no authority for them. The command is God's alone. He has commanded that you worship none but Him. That is the true religion, but most people do not know." (40).

Yusef — peace be upon him — calls the two prisoners to worship the one true God. He explains that the objects of their worship are nothing more than names invented by them and their forefathers. The upright religion is tawhīd (monotheism), which God has commanded His servants to follow and which forbids the worship of anything or anyone other than Him.

In this context, the rhetorical unity is realised through the corrective particle "but/indeed" (لكن). This particle conveys a contrast: Despite the proofs and evidence that God has revealed and the messengers He has sent to

34- See Exegesis: Shaping and Illumination: Mohamed al-Tahir ibn Ashur, vol. 12, pp. 247–248. Muhammad al-Tahir ibn Ashur, vol. 12, p. 261.

delineate the true religion, people do not truly know it.

The linguistic construction ‘لكن’ expresses correction/contrast and carries a rhetorical-pragmatic function. It indicates that people do not give thanks for God’s favours and blessings, even though He sent messengers to guide them to the truth of faith. Instead of honouring what God has commanded, they oppose it and thus set up gods and partners alongside Him — objects that cannot truly harm or benefit. Consequently, they abandon the worship of God alone and instead worship what they have no right to worship, despite clear evidence of His oneness.

Scene: Interpreting the Dream of the Two Prisoners (Qur’anic citation):

“Yusef , O two prisoners! One of you will serve his lord wine; the other will be crucified and birds will eat from his head. The matter has been decreed concerning which you both seek information.” (41).

Yusef begins his address with a call — ‘O my two companions in prison’ — to draw attention to the significant interpretation he is about to convey. He organises his response into a single, concise statement that summarises the interpretation of both dreams. He starts with the favourable outcome so that they will not be shocked: the first will be released from prison and become the king’s cupbearer, while the second will be crucified and birds will eat from his head. Yusef then adds that he is certain about what he has said and that these events will inevitably occur³⁵.

Scene of Interpreting the King’s Dream (Qur’anic citation):

“Yusef , O truthful one! Interpret for us the dream of the seven fat cows that the seven lean ones will eat, and the seven green ears of grain and the seven dry ones, so that I may return to the people and tell them what it means.” (46)

“You shall sow for seven years in succession; then whatever you harvest, leave it in its ear, except for what you need to eat. After that, seven hard years will come, consuming what you have prepared for them, except for what you preserve. After that, a year will come when people will be given relief, and they will press the fruits.” (47–49). Yusef — peace be upon him — distinguished himself through his truthfulness and his knowledge of how to interpret the king’s dream. The seven fat cows and green ears of grain signify seven years of abundance, while the lean cows and dry ears of grain indicate seven years of famine. Thus, they were certain of the veracity of his interpretation. Yusef was fully certain of what he said because he knew it was revelation from God, Glorified and Exalted.

Scene of the Truth Becoming Manifest (Qur’anic citation):

“He said, ‘What is your matter when you sought to seduce Yusef from himself?’ They replied, ‘Exalted is God! We know of no evil in him.’ The wife of al-‘Aziz said, “Now the truth has become clear. I tried to seduce him, and he is indeed among the truthful.” (51).

The king addresses the women who had their hands cut off for attempting to shift the blame after their offence became evident. What has become of you? What was your intention when you tried to seduce Yusef? Did you observe any wrongdoing in him? They answered, seeking refuge with God, that Yusef could not have been anything but pure and incapable of the shame attributed to him. Then the wife of Al-Aziz declares that the truth has now emerged after being concealed: it was she who tried to tempt him, but he refused. He is indeed among the truthful. This scene is a continuation of the scene of Yusef’s accusation, in which the truth is revealed and falsehood is extinguished.

Scene of Yaaqoub Calling His Sons to Enter Separately

The linguistic form ‘but/however’ (*lakinna*) functions as an addressive referential marker pointing to the ignorance of the people and the knowledge of the Prophet Yaaqoub (peace be upon him), especially in the context of Yaaqoub forbidding his sons from entering Egypt together. Therefore, it is clear that this negation does not contradict the decree of God, but is tied to a need within Yaaqoub’s own heart, which he expressed out of concern for his sons. People do not possess the knowledge of Yaaqoub (peace be upon him). By ‘these people’, the text refers to the polytheists who do not know that God guided His allies to sciences that benefit them in this world and the next.

Thus, this referential unit clarifies that the knowledge of prophets and messengers surpasses that of ordinary people.

Scene of Searching the Containers

35- See Exegesis: Shaping and Illumination: Mohamed Al-Tahir Ibn Ashour, Vol. 12, pp. 247–248, 261, 278. Mohamed al-Tahir ibn Ashour, vol. 12, p. 278.

"And he began with their bags before the bag of his brother; then he brought it out of his brother's bag." Thus did We plan for Yusef . According to the king's law, he could not have taken his brother unless God willed it. We raise whom We will in degrees, and over every possessor of knowledge there is one who knows more." (Qur'an 12:76) To remove any suspicion that the act was intentional, the search began with their containers before his brother's. Yusef (peace be upon him) knew that they were his brothers and understood how they thought. When he discovered the truth, he did not announce it, observing rather the requirements of real, objective truth. At that point, Yusef was able to achieve his goal of keeping his brother with him without arousing suspicion. God facilitated this 'plot' for Yusef because its purpose was not blameworthy: He placed the judgement of the thief in Yusef's hands so that the matter would not be referred back to the king, thereby allowing Yusef's plan to unfold. Accordingly, God raised Yusef (peace be upon him) by degrees of beneficial knowledge, and above every knowledgeable person there is someone more knowledgeable, until knowledge reaches the realm of the unseen and the witnessed³⁶.

Scene of Yaaqoub's Doubt Concerning His Sons' Statement

"He said, 'No, it is you who have been prompted to think something; so be patient and persevering.' Perhaps God will bring them all to me. Indeed, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise' (Qur'an 12:83).

The word 'nay' (*bal*), which conveys a sense of disturbance or inner uncertainty, is used here as an addressive referential unit by Yaaqoub (peace be upon him) in response to his sons. He doubts their words, much as he previously doubted the matter related to the story of Yusef (peace be upon him). The difference lies in the sons' statements concerning Yusef and Benjamin: in the first case, they acted on impulse and schemed against their brother, and were therefore liars, as affirmed by God Almighty. In the second case, however, they are truthful: they testify to what they saw, and they have genuine proof — namely, the testimony of the townspeople and the caravan.

Thus, the addressive referential unit has a pragmatic value, as evidenced by Yaaqoub's ongoing doubt about his sons' report, which is rooted in their initial deception. This explains his sustained lack of trust, even if their later statement about Benjamin is true.

Scene of Yaaqoub's Trust in God Almighty

"I only complain of my suffering and grief to God," he said. "I know things that you do not. O my sons, go and search for Yusef and his brother, and do not despair of God's relief. Indeed, none despairs of God's relief except the disbelieving people'" (Qur'an 12:86–87).

Yaaqoub declares that he only voices his grief and sorrow to God, who is able to relieve him, and that he does not complain to his sons or any other created being. They may say what they wish, but Yaaqoub knows that God will surely bring his sons back to him and comfort him through their reunion. He then instructs his sons to return to Egypt and search thoroughly for information about Yusef and his brother. They must not lose hope in God's mercy. For no one loses hope in God's mercy except the disbelieving people.

Accordingly, the referential unit of address is embodied in Yaaqoub's trust in God Almighty and his conviction that he will meet his sons again.

Scene of the Sons Recognising One Another

"They said, 'Surely you are Yusef ?' He replied, 'I am Yusef , and this is my brother.' God has indeed granted us favour. Whoever fears God will not lose the reward for doing good.' They said, 'By God, you have certainly favoured us over ourselves, even though we were truly wrongdoers.' Yusef replied, "No blame will fall upon you today. God will forgive you, for He is the Most Merciful of the merciful'" (Qur'an 12:90–92).

In this scene, the brothers recognise one another. They realise that the one addressing them is Yusef . Yusef tells them that God has favoured them through faith and piety in this world, and that whoever is patient and fears God will not lose the reward for their good deeds. They then respond by acknowledging that God has indeed favoured them with noble character: 'He has removed you from your father's loss and elevated you,' meaning that Yusef has been raised up beyond what they thought possible. Here, the brothers confess their wrongdoing towards Yusef (peace be upon him). In turn, Yusef forgives them and prays for forgiveness and mercy for them.

Therefore, the referential addressive value is manifested in the brothers' admission of their sin and regret for what they did. It is also manifested in the principle that those who bear the calamities of this world patiently and do not disobey God will be rewarded with goodness in both this world and the next.

Scene of Yaaqoub's Eyesight Returning

"Then, when the bearer of good tidings came, he cast it upon his face, so he recovered his sight. Yaaqoub said, "Did I not tell you that I know from God what you do not know?" (Qur'an 12:96).

When Yaaqoub's sons approached their father, the messenger cast Yusef's shirt upon Yaaqoub's face. His eyesight returned as if he had never been ill. God Almighty honoured His Prophet Yaaqoub (peace be upon him) with this miracle.

This scene follows the earlier divine instruction: 'Go with this shirt of mine and cast it upon my father's face, and he will regain his sight. Bring me your entire family.' (Qur'an 12:93).

For every ailment, there is a remedy of its kind. The shirt carried the fragrance of Yusef, which had become intertwined with Yaaqoub's deep sorrow and longing. When Yaaqoub smelt it, his spirit returned, and with it his eyesight. God is wise and has secrets, none of which all His servants can comprehend. However, Yusef was aware of them. He told his brothers, "Bring your whole family to me," so that they would be reunited and their suffering would end.

Moreover, in the verse: "Did I not tell you that I know from God what you do not know?" Yaaqoub says this to his sons — and to anyone who denies and refutes his words. He already knew that God would restore Yusef to him and return his eyesight.

Scene: The Brothers Seeking Forgiveness

"They said, 'O our father, ask forgiveness for us for our sins. Surely we were at fault.' He replied, "I will soon ask forgiveness for you, for my Lord is indeed All-Forgiving and Most Merciful" (Qur'an 12:97–98).

The brothers acknowledge their wrongdoing and say to their father: 'O our father, seek forgiveness for our sins.' They confess that they were mistaken in their treatment of both him and their brother. Yaaqoub responds to their request by saying: "I will ask God to forgive you soon," meaning that he will ask God to forgive them and envelop them in His mercy.

Scene of the Fulfillment of the Vision

"And he raised his parents upon the throne, and they fell down prostrate before him." He said, "O my father, this is the interpretation of my vision from before. My Lord has indeed made it true. He showed me kindness when He brought me out of prison and brought you here from the desert, after Satan had caused division between me and my brothers. Indeed, my Lord is subtle in what He wills; surely He is all-knowing and all-wise." (Qur'an 12:100)

Yaaqoub's parents are seated on the royal throne, and they, along with Yusef's brothers, prostrate themselves before him as an act of reverence and honour. When Yusef witnesses this scene, he recalls his earlier vision and recognises that its interpretation has now been realised.

This episode is connected to the preceding one: at the beginning of the surah, Yusef's vision is recounted, and by the end, it has been fulfilled. Thus, the story of Yusef (peace be upon him) has a clear beginning and end. Yusef tells his father that God has made his vision true, and that it was not just a confused dream. God has been gracious to Yusef by freeing him from prison and reuniting him with his family. Notably, Yusef does not mention the episode of the well because his complete forgiveness of his brothers is the priority here. All praise belongs to God, who humbled Satan and reunited the family after a long separation.

Indeed, Yusef states that his Lord is subtle with his servants. He bestows goodness upon His servants in ways they do not perceive, guiding them to elevated stations. Since God's knowledge encompasses the outward realities and inner secrets of His servants, Yusef — peace be upon him — attributes the kindness to himself only in the sense that God's favour reached him. Glory be to the One who grants His mercy to whomever He wills.

Scene of Taking Lessons from the Stories of the Prophets

"Indeed, in their stories there is a lesson for those who have understanding. It is not an invented tale, but rather a confirmation of what came before and a detailed account of everything. It is also guidance and mercy for people who believe." (Qur'an 12:111)

The linguistic form 'but/however' (*lakinna*) in this address is a softened form of *lakin* and indicates contrast and clarification. As a referential addressive unit, it highlights the content of the Qur'an regarding the stories of prophets and messengers, along with their lessons. It also emphasises that these lessons are truthful and correct, not false fabrications as claimed by the disbelievers.

5. Social addressive deixis in Surat Yusef (Yusef).

This type of deixis includes any expression that indicates a social relationship between the addressees. The story of Yusef contains multiple social addressive units, depicting formal and intimate relationships between

interlocutors, and portraying customary social norms of the time. Examples of these units include:

5.1 “We” (نَحْنُ)

‘We relate to you the best of stories...’ (Qur’an 12:3).

The noble verse includes a social addressive unit: ‘We’ (*naḥnu*). This is a formal expression denoting magnification, because it refers to the Great One, who knows the realities of what He willed and decreed for His creation and the wisdom and power that issued from His command.

5.2 “O my father”/“Father” (أَبَتِ)

This addressive unit occurs in two contexts of address:

- 1) ‘He said to his father, “O my father, I have seen...”’ (Qur’an 12:4).
- 2) ‘He said, “O my father, this is the interpretation of my dream...”’ (Qur’an 12:100).

In both verses, Yusef (peace be upon him) addresses his father Yaaqoub (peace be upon him). The implied relationship is intimate (ḥamīmī), expressing respect, love and closeness

5.3 ‘The Throne’ (الْعَرْشِ)

And he raised his parents upon the throne, and they fell down in prostration before him...’ (Qur’an 12:100).

In this verse, the social address unit ‘the throne’ (al-‘arsh) refers to Yusef’s royal seat. After Yusef’s parents entered, he had them placed upon it as an act of honouring and dignifying them.

5.4 “Prostrating” (سَاجِدِينَ)

I saw them prostrating to me.’ (Qur’an 12:4)

The verse includes the social addressive unit ‘prostrating’ (*sājidīn*). It functions as a formal marker of a salute of veneration: at the end of the story, the stars, the sun and the moon — standing for Yusef’s brothers and his father would perform an act of reverence towards Yusef, which is exactly what occurred.

5.5 ‘An organised group/a strong band’ (غُصْبَةً)

‘When they said, “Yusef and his brother are more beloved to our father than we are, whereas we are a strong group...”’ (Qur’an 12:8).

The word ‘‘uṣbah’ (غُصْبَةً) is used as a social addressive unit. It conveys their boasting about their strength and close-knit unity, since they see themselves as ‘the group’, and therefore argue that their father should not prefer one individual over the whole group.

Also, in the following verse:

‘They said, “If a wolf were to devour him while we are a strong group, then indeed we would be losers.”’ (Qur’an 12:14).

Here, ‘‘uṣbah’ again serves a social-deictic function, indicating that Yusef (peace be upon him) would be harmed if the group was unable to protect him.

5.6 ‘My son’ (بَنِيَّ)

‘He said: “My son, do not tell your brothers about your dream, lest they plot against you...”’ (Qur’an 12:5).

The verse uses ‘my son’ (*bunayya*) as an intimate social address. It reflects tenderness, affection and close paternal guidance, and is paired with Yusef’s warning to his brothers.

A social deixis (social reference unit) appears in the noble verse, represented by the word “بَنِيَّ” (My sons). This term indicates the relationship between Yaaqoub and his son Yusef — peace be upon them — which is characterised by warm affection and cordial intimacy, since it occurs in Yaaqoub’s response to Yusef when Yusef related his vision to him.

> ****** (يَا بَنِيَّ أَذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِنْ يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا تَبْتَغُوا مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُبَشِّرُ مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرُونَ 87 >

The verse carries the word “بَنِيَّ” (My sons) in the plural, signifying the affectionate bond between a father and his sons. Despite what his sons did to Yusef, this did not stop Yaaqoub from addressing them as: “Ya Bani (O my sons).”

5.7 The elites (الْمَلَأَ)

> ****** (يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ افْعَلُونِي فِي رُؤْيَايَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّؤْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ 43 >

The word ‘الْمَلَأُ’ (the elites) appears in the story of Yusef — peace be upon him. It is a social deixis unit during the king’s address to his subjects when he saw a vision in a dream and requested its interpretation if they were able to interpret visions. It is indicative of the king and his court/companions.

5.8 The Aziz (الْعَزِيزِ)

(قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَخَدْنَا مَكَانَهُ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ 78

In the noble verse, the word ‘الْعَزِيزِ’ (the Aziz) appears. It is a formal social deixis unit because it is used for one of

Egypt's prominent dignitaries. From the context, it becomes clear that the people of Egypt use this term to address those in positions of power in the state as a mark of honour and reverence, in the same way that they revere the king. Thus, a social relationship exists between the addressers and the addressed.

5.9 The King (الملك):

(وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَى سَنَعُ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَنَعٌ عَجَافٌ 43)

The term “King” (ملك) in the noble verse refers to the ruler of Egypt and its King. It is a formal social deixis unit** applied to the ruler. From the context, we observe that anyone who enters upon him addresses him with the term the King,” out of **veneration for his status

5.10 A people / group (قَوْمًا):

أَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَبْلُغُ لَكُمْ وَجْهَ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ 9)

The noble verse carries the word “قَوْمًا” (a people/group)”, which is a social deixis unit. From the context, it is understood that they killed Yusef and cast him into an unknown land far from habitation. Then, after killing Yusef , they return to God in repentance, seeking forgiveness from Him after their sin.

5.11 His brothers / his brother (إخوته – أخوه):

(لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٍ لِلْمُتَلَكِّينَ 07)

(إِذْ قَالُوا لِيُوسُفَ وَأَخُوهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْنَا مِمَّا نَحْنُ غَصْبٌ إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ 8)

Both noble verses include the words “إخوته” (his brothers)” and “أخوه” (his brother)”. These are social deixis units that embody the existence of brotherhood, which is affectionate and indicates love.

5.12 His wife (امراته):

21. And the man who bought him from Egypt said to his wife, ‘Be kind to him, for we hope he will be useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son.’ And thus did We establish Yusef in the land, and teach him the interpretation of dreams. And Allah is the Lord and Master of all things, but most people do not know.

In the noble verse, the social deixis unit ‘امراته’ (his wife)’ appears. It indicates a bond of relationship between the interlocutors, since it is understood from the context that when the caravan/traders went to Egypt and sold Yusef , the Aziz of Egypt bought him. When he bought him, he was captivated by him, and his wife advised him about Yusef . The term also indicates a formal relationship.

5.13 The caravan/traders (السيارة):

(وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ قَالَ يَا بُشْرَى هَذَا غُلَامٌ وَأَسَرُّهُ بِضَاعَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ 19)

The verse includes the word ‘السيارة’, which means ‘caravan’. It is a social deixis unit, and the term refers to a group of travelling people. They were called ‘caravans’ because they travelled through the land, forming social relationships as they went.

5.14 ‘Your household’/‘your people’ (أهلك):

(وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَأَلْفَا سَيِّدَهُ لَدَى الْبَابِ. قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا إِلَّا أَنْ يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ. 25)

In the verse, the word ‘أهلك’ (your household/people) appears. It is a social deixis unit meaning ‘your wife’. It indicates a formal relationship in the discourse. From the context, it is understood that Yusef — peace be upon him — ran towards the door wanting to leave, while she hurried to catch him and tore his garment from behind. When they reached the door, they found her husband, and she said, ‘What is the recompense of anyone who intends evil towards your wife, except that he be imprisoned or be punished with a painful torment?’

5.15 Companions of the prison :

(يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَرَبَابٌ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ 39)

In the Noble Verse, the phrase ‘صاحبي السجن’ (the companions of prison) occurs, meaning the residents of the prison, i.e. the people in it. The use of ‘companionship’ refers to the duration of their stay together there. It is a social deixis unit indicating a bond of companionship that links them to that place.

5.16 His youths/his servants :

(وَقَالَ لِفَتَاتِهِ: اجْعَلُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رَحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يُغْفَرُونَ إِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ 62)

In the verse, the word “fityanahu” (his youths/servants) appears, meaning his young men — i.e. his workers/employees in his service. It is a social deixis unit indicating the existence of a relationship between the interlocutors.

6. An Analytical Approach to the Types of Deixis in Surat Yusef (Yusef)—Peace Be Upon Him

Through our study of the types of deixis (“deictic units”) present in Surat Yusef, we observed the recurrence of each type separately, as follows:

6.1 Personal Deictics

A table showing personal deictics and their frequency in the discourses of Yusef.

Personal signs	Repetition
The divine self	19
Muhammad, peace be upon him	12
Yusef, peace be upon him	98
Yaaqoub, peace be upon him	6
Yusef brothers	23
Binyamin	4
The wife of the vizier	5
The women	3
The two prisoners	23
The cupbearer	2
The king's messenger	3
The king	4
The Egyptians	8
The family of Yaaqoub	2
The fathers of Yusef, peace be upon him	3
The vizier	1
The companions of the Prophet	1
The Arabs	1
The messengers	1
All mankind or the group that he called upon	1
The total	220

6.2 Temporal Deictics

A table representing the recurrence of temporal deictic elements in surat Yusef

Temporal Deictics of unit	Repetition
Before	09
When	02
After	05
Tomorrow	01
Dinner	01
Nation	01
Seven years	02
Today	02
Now	01
When	01
The hour	01
When	18
The Hereafter	01
Year	01
A few years	01
Coming	01
Will	01
This world	01
Total	40

6.2 Spatial Deictics

A table representing the recurrence of spatial deictic elements in Surat Yusef.

The spatial unit	Repetition
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Land	01
Earth	08
Mountain	01
House	01
Egypt	02
Above	02
Near	04
Between	02
Resting place	01
Prison	06
Near	01
Village	01
Before	01
Steps	01
Back	02
They came and entered	01
Place	02
City	01
Throne	01
Total	39

2. Discourse/Contextual Deictics

With regard to discourse deictics in the story of Yusef, we note that they appear in most scenes of the sura: each scene follows another and completes it. The first scene represents the beginning of the narrative, when Yusef tells his father about his vision. At the end of the story, the vision is realised and the interpretation proves true.

Based on our study, we found that there are 24 scenes containing discourse deictic units that vary from one scene to another, such as prohibitions, fear, denial, negation, affirmation/truth, rejection of truth, confession of sin, emergence of truth and trust in God.

The linguistic forms that indicate discourse deictic elements include “ ,” which conveys irregularity/hesitation and appears twice in the sūrah. This has a pragmatic value expressed in Yaaqoub’s doubt regarding what his sons said initially, and reflects his lack of enduring confidence in them and their statements and actions.

We also find the corrective/contrast particle ‘ (لكن) ,’ which appears five times in the sūrah. The narrative shifts from the ultimate goal of love to the ultimate goal of the pit (the well), from the prison floor/mat to the throne. Thus, patience in the face of harm leads to safety and dignity, while the end of plotting leads to regret. Trust in God is sufficient, dispensing with all other people. Everything that befalls a human being is a divine measure. Within every outwardly evil thing lies an inwardly good thing. Prison for chastity is preferable to palaces of vice. Forgiveness is victory, and hope illuminates human life. The beautiful vision of God’s righteous servants is even more beautiful in reality.

3. Social Deictics

A table showing the recurrence of social deictic elements in Surat Yusef.

The Social Sign Unit	Repetition
We are	01
Father	02
The Throne	01
Prostrate	01
His Companions	01
The Council of Elders	02
Sons	02
Of the assembly	01
The mighty	01
The King	01

A people	01
His brother	01
His brothers	01
His wife	01
The Queen	01
His family	01
The Jailer	03
The total	22

7. The ordering of deictic units in the surah.

Personal deictics took the lead in the hierarchy of deictic units, occupying the first position in terms of the number of personal deictic elements present in the surah. There are 220 in total, distributed in varying numbers and different forms in terms of the types of pronoun (speaker, addressee or absent third party), whether they occur separately or attached, as well as in the forms of address and demonstrative nouns/pronouns and relative nouns. Next come discourse deictics, which vary in form across the sūrah in the form of scenes expressing short narratives. Their coherence produces a sequence of events and shapes the overall story.

The other types are less frequent. Temporal deictics occupy third position, with a total of 50. This is due to the important role they play in understanding the temporal frame of the events within the narrative.

Next come spatial deictics, totalling 39. They play a fundamental role in clarifying the landmarks of the events and in understanding the intention of the discourse by specifying places.

Finally, social deictics total 20, clarifying the nature of the relationship between the interlocutors in both formal and informal contexts. Formal and informal. They reveal hidden relationships among individuals during the discourse.

In conclusion, the story of Yusef (peace be upon him) contains a significant amount of various types of deixis. Perhaps enumerating them all would require careful insight and broad knowledge. What has been presented is the outcome of a limited effort, reflecting the deictic elements contained within the narrative.

Conclusion:

From the foregoing, we conclude that Surat Yusef — peace be upon him — is a narrative account relating the events and hardships endured by the Prophet Yūsuf — peace be upon him. It is a story told through discourses rich in both explicit and implicit meanings. These meanings are embodied in the dialogues of the addressed characters, through which the intentions of the speakers are clarified, the spatiotemporal frame of each discourse is delineated, and the social relations binding the story's characters are made clear.

The references (i.e. the discourses) are only determined within the context of the pragmatic/discourse interaction in which they occur. There are five types: personal deictics, temporal deictics, spatial deictics, discourse deictics and social deictics. Furthermore, the pragmatic function of each deictic unit is renewed as the contexts of discourse change and the reference shifts.

The following outlines the roles played by deictic elements within the narrative discourse of Surah Yusef:

Personal deictic elements within the Qur'anic discourse reveal its communicative and propagative aspects by linking pronouns to the spoken context. They point to the two parties involved in the address, each of which determines the corresponding reality.

Temporal deictic units play an important role in understanding the temporal frame of an event or utterance within the Qur'anic narrative discourse. As for spatial deictics, their use and interpretation point back to the speaker's position within the discourse and are determined by the context in which they occur.

- Discourse deictics contribute to constructing the speakers' stances. Within the sūrah, they introduce corrections to prior speech or signify shifting away from it. They also draw upon time and place in order to generate a pragmatic discourse.

Social deictics establish the social relationships present in the real timeline of the story's events.

The density of deictic references increases in the story of Yūsuf as the events progress. All types of deictics are prominent in the surah, but personal deictics especially dominate because the sūrah is a narrative in which events are expressed through characters.

Deictic elements play an important pragmatic role in analysing the story's discourse: they establish the references and ranks of the interlocutors and map the place and time of utterance, while also reflecting the characters' psychology and revealing the contrast between love for the stranger and resentment towards the familiar.

Every story has a lesson and meaningful implications can be drawn from it. The story of Yusef — peace be upon him — was rich in moral lessons and guidance for human beings in life. Patience is the key to relief, and after hardship comes ease; and whoever firmly holds fast to the rope of God will not be harmed by anyone on earth

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