

Rhetorical Force and Inimitability in the Qur'anic Statement "In Legal Retribution There Is Life" (Qur'an 2:179)

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Abstract

This study examines the rhetorical force and dimensions of Qur'anic inimitability embodied in the statement, "In legal retribution there is life" (Qur'an 2:179). Adopting a descriptive-analytical approach, it investigates the verse's lexical selection, syntactic organization, semantic density, concision, antithetical structure, and persuasive effect. The analysis demonstrates how the verse establishes an apparently paradoxical relationship between retribution and life, transforming a legal provision commonly associated with death into a principle for protecting individuals and society. Its rhetorical power arises from the precise coordination of form and meaning: a highly concise construction communicates deterrence, justice, social security, and the preservation of life without unnecessary elaboration. The indefinite form of "life" broadens its semantic scope, encompassing the protection of potential victims, the prevention of retaliatory violence, the restraint of prospective offenders, and the preservation of public order. The verse also combines rational persuasion with psychological influence by directing attention toward the preventive and life-sustaining purpose of legal retribution. The study concludes that the statement's inimitability lies not only in its brevity and stylistic elegance but also in its capacity to integrate legal, ethical, psychological, and social meanings within a compact linguistic structure. These findings contribute to Qur'anic rhetorical studies by illustrating how linguistic economy and semantic depth operate together to communicate a comprehensive philosophy of justice and human preservation.

Keywords: antithesis; legal retribution; linguistic concision; Qur'anic inimitability; Qur'anic rhetoric; semantic density

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Introduction

The Qur'anic statement, {"In retaliatory retribution there is life"} embodies profound rhetorical effects and remarkable aspects of Qur'anic inimitability, foremost among them conciseness. Classical Arabic rhetoric regards conciseness as one of the highest manifestations of eloquence. Thus, despite the brevity of its wording, this Qur'anic expression is replete with profound meanings and abundant semantic implications. It clearly conveys the fundamental objective of legal retribution, leading people to accept this prescribed legal punishment with contentment and submission.

Indeed, when a person realizes that whoever intentionally kills another will himself be subject to retaliatory retribution, he is deterred from committing unjust homicide. Consequently, this specific form of lawful killing namely legal retribution prevents countless acts of unlawful killing among people. The prevention of murder thereby becomes a source of life for society as a whole. What life could be greater than this? It is truly a magnificent and comprehensive preservation of human life.

This study aims to highlight the rhetorical features characterizing the Qur'anic statement {"In retaliatory retribution there is life"}, while also demonstrating the miraculous aspects that distinguish its linguistic composition. The verse explicitly states the ultimate objective of legal retribution, and its structure exhibits several remarkable rhetorical characteristics, most notably the definite form of the word the retaliatory retribution and the indefinite form of the word life. These linguistic choices undoubtedly embody subtle rhetorical nuances, profound miraculous precision, and significant semantic and stylistic implications.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address the following questions:

What are the rhetorical dimensions of this Qur'anic expression?

Where do the aspects of its Qur'anic inimitability reside?

How can legal retribution, which entails lawful killing and the deprivation of an individual's life, be portrayed as the very locus and means of preserving life?

What is the rhetorical significance of employing the definite form in the word retribution? And what is the underlying wisdom behind the use of the indefinite form in the word life?

1. The Meaning of the Qur'anic Verse

"And there is life for you in legal retribution, O people of understanding, so that you may become righteous." (Qur'an 2:179)

Before the advent of Islam, Arab society as well as many other societies suffered from severe social disorder, one of its gravest manifestations being the widespread disregard for the sanctity of human life and the excessive shedding of blood. The right to life was frequently violated to such an extent that society was threatened with destruction. The strong preyed upon the weak, while the weak sought protection from tribes capable of offering support. Tribal alliances and rivalries fueled continuous conflicts, resulting in prolonged wars and escalating bloodshed.ⁱ

Among the most notable examples were the Basus War, during which vengeance became an endless cycle.ⁱⁱ Whenever a member of a tribe was killed, his relatives sought revenge by killing the murderer. If the murderer could not be reached, another person of equal status or even several individuals might be killed instead. This practice, known as measuring blood with blood, reflected the belief that the blood of a noble person could only be compensated by the lives of many others.ⁱⁱⁱ In some cases, retaliation was calculated at two, ten, or even one hundred lives, causing cycles of revenge to intensify until they threatened the annihilation of entire tribes. Thus, Mohalhil ibn Rabi'ah pursued vengeance for the killing of his brother Kolaib, nearly exterminating the tribe of

Bakr ibn Wael. Likewise, immense bloodshed occurred during the famous Dahis and al-Ghabraa War, a conflict immortalized by the poet Zohair ibn Abi Salama, who wrote:

You restored peace between 'Abs and Dhobyān after they had nearly destroyed one another and crushed the perfume of Minshām between them.

With the coming of Islam, God bestowed His blessing upon humanity by establishing a legal system that included legal retribution,^{iv} whereby the offender is subjected to a punishment proportionate to the crime committed. Through this legislation, human life is safeguarded, bloodshed is prevented, and wrongdoers are effectively deterred. Hence, Allah says: "And there is life for you in legal retribution."^v Whoever knows that intentional murder will inevitably result in lawful execution is unlikely to commit murder in the first place. Likewise, witnessing the lawful execution of a murderer deters others from committing similar crimes. If the punishment for murder were less than death, the same degree of deterrence would not be achieved. This principle likewise applies to the other prescribed punishments established in Islamic law.^{vi}

The word "life" appears in the indefinite form in the verse to emphasize its greatness and the abundance of its benefits. Since only those endowed with sound intellect and profound understanding can fully appreciate the wisdom embodied in this ruling, the Qur'an specifically addresses "people of understanding".^{vii} Those who possess such insight are worthy of praise for recognizing the profound wisdom of divine legislation. The verse concludes with the words: "so that you may become righteous," indicating that whoever truly knows God and understands the profound wisdom, noble purposes, and elevated meanings underlying His legislation will willingly submit to His commands, refrain from disobedience, and thereby attain the rank of the righteous.^{viii}

This verse is preceded by another that prepares the legal foundation for the ruling on legal retribution:

"O you who believe! Prescribed for you is legal retribution regarding those who are killed..." (Qur'an 2:178).

Since legal retribution necessarily involves the infliction of pain upon the offender, one might ask how such a ruling accords with the perfection of God's mercy toward His servants. To address this question, the Qur'an immediately clarifies the underlying wisdom behind this legislation by declaring: "And there is life for you in legal retribution." Thus, the temporary hardship imposed upon the offender serves the far greater objective of preserving human life, preventing the spread of violence, and maintaining justice and public order within society.^{ix}

2. How Does Legal Retaliation Constitute Life?

How can legal retaliation be described as a source of life, given that it involves the taking of a human life? Since retaliation entails the removal of life, it may appear paradoxical to describe it as life itself. The answer lies in the fact that the legislation of legal retribution ultimately preserves life in several respects: it safeguards the life of the potential murderer, the intended victim, and society as a whole.

With regard to the potential murderer, if a person knows that intentionally killing another will inevitably result in his own execution under the law of legal retribution, he will refrain from committing the murder and thus preserve his own life.^x As for the intended victim, the would-be killer, fearing legal retaliation, is deterred from carrying out the crime, thereby allowing the intended victim to remain alive. With respect to others, the legislation of legal retribution also preserves the lives of those who might otherwise become involved in cycles of revenge, including relatives and supporters motivated by tribal or familial loyalty.^{xi} Since murder often gives rise to widespread social discord and prolonged blood feuds, the institution of legal retribution eliminates the causes of such conflicts. By removing these causes, it ensures the preservation of life for the entire community.

3. One of the Meanings of the Qur'anic Statement: "In Legal Retaliation There Is Life"

Among the meanings of the Qur'anic statement, {And there is life for you in legal retaliation}, is its comparison with the well-known Arab maxim: "Killing is the greatest deterrent to killing." However, it must be emphasized that "there can be no comparison between the speech of the Creator, Glorified and Exalted, and the speech of His creation. Rather, scholars merely exert their intellectual efforts to discern what appears to them in this regard."^{xii}

The Arabs were renowned for eloquent expressions characterized by brevity, rhetorical elegance, and subtle meanings, and this proverb is one example. Nevertheless, the Qur'anic expression, {In legal retaliation there is life}, represents the pinnacle of eloquence,^{xiii} conveying the intended meaning with far greater precision. As al-Baqillani observed, "The Arabs possess no speech that combines such eloquence, originality, remarkable stylistic mastery, subtle meanings, abundant wisdom, numerous insights, rhetorical harmony, and literary excellence to such an extent."^{xiv}

The legal retribution mentioned in the verse refers to a specific form of lawful execution whose ultimate purpose is the preservation of life, a meaning immediately apparent from the wording itself. By contrast, the Arab proverb does not fully convey its intended meaning unless interpreted in light of the Qur'anic expression, because it contains an ellipsis requiring supplementation. Its intended meaning would therefore be: "Execution by way of legal retaliation is more effective in preventing unjust killing than abandoning retaliation." This implied interpretation is itself derived from the Qur'anic verse. Indeed God knows best it may be regarded as no more than a paraphrase of the verse itself.

Accordingly, attributing this saying to the pre-Islamic Arabs warrants critical examination. It is more likely that it belongs to the category of proverbial wisdom that circulated widely in later times. This is the conclusion reached by al-Rafî, who stated:

"We are left with no doubt that this saying was fabricated by one of the heretics, who derived it from the noble Qur'anic verse in an attempt to present it as a rival expression. Indeed, the editor of the newspaper Al-Balagh once wrote that the expression was an ancient Egyptian proverb, and we do not deny that this may be the case."^{xv}

A comparable expression is Abo 'Tammim's famous saying, "Blood is protected by blood,"^{xvi} found in his verse:

I make you fear lest you sheathe your swords,

For blood, once shed, is guarded only by blood.^{xvii}

It is as though the poet Abo 'Tammim had never heard the saying, "Killing is the greatest deterrent to killing," or as though that expression had not yet come into existence. This further suggests that the Arab maxim was modeled after the Qur'anic style. As al-Rafî remarked, "Its derivative nature is unmistakable, and the marks of deliberate stylistic imitation are plainly evident."^{xviii} Consequently, the proverb appears to have been inspired by the aforementioned Qur'anic verse,^{xix} and its formulation most likely postdates the revelation of the Qur'an.

4. The Aspects of the Qur'anic Miracle in the Noble Verse

This segment of the noble verse, {"And there is life for you in retribution"} (Qur'an 2:179), is distinguished by numerous rhetorical and eloquent features in both its structure and semantic content. These may be explained as follows:

– Brevity:

Brevity is one of the foremost objectives of Arabic rhetoric; indeed, it has often been regarded as the very essence of eloquence.^{xx} This statement is made by way of predominance, as it is reported that may Allah be pleased with him asked Şoḥar al Abdi, "What do you consider eloquence among yourselves?" He replied, "Brevity." Likewise, al-Mofaddal ibn Moḥammed al-Ḍabbi related: "I asked a Bedouin from among us, 'What is eloquence?' He answered, 'Brevity without inadequacy.'"^{xxi} Thus, brevity consists of expressing abundant meanings with the fewest possible words.

Accordingly, the Qur'anic expression, despite the limited number of its pronounced letters,^{xxii} conveys profound and abundant meanings while clearly fulfilling its intended purpose. As al-Sayōṭi explains: “When a person knows that if he kills, he himself will be executed, this realization deters him from committing murder. Consequently, through the implementation of legal retribution, many instances of people killing one another are prevented, and the prevention of killing becomes a means of preserving their lives.”^{xxiii}

– Explicit Declaration of the Intended Purpose (Life):

The Arabic maxim “Killing is the greatest deterrent to killing” merely implies the negation of killing, whereas the absence of killing does not necessarily entail the realization of life. The maxim explicitly refers only to the prevention of killing, which is not an end in itself but rather a means to the preservation of life. In contrast, the Qur'anic verse explicitly affirms life itself as the intended objective. This direct declaration of the desired outcome is more effective in encouraging acceptance of the prescribed legal punishment. As al-Rāfi'ī observes, “The term life is, in its philosophical reality, far more comprehensive than the expression ‘the negation of killing,’ for the latter signifies only a single aspect of life—namely, the preservation of the soul within the body and carries none of the elevated meanings beyond this simple natural sense.”^{xxiv}

– Retribution as a Great Form of Life:

The definite form of the word retribution together with the indefinite form of (life) serves a rhetorical function of magnification and exaltation. As al-Zamakhshari explains, “One of the highest achievements of eloquence lies in making retribution definite while leaving life indefinite, because the intended meaning is: ‘In this category of legal judgment, namely retribution, there is a magnificent and immeasurable life for you.’”^{xxv} Thus, retribution is portrayed as a great and enduring form of life, one that ensures continuity and preservation, similar to the expression of the Almighty: {“And you will surely find them the most eager of all people for life.”} (Qur'an 2:96).

Retribution Ensures the Preservation of Life:

legal retribution invariably serves to preserve human life, as it constitutes a specific and legally regulated form of killing. It cannot therefore be equated with every form of killing. Unlawful killing, for example, only perpetuates further violence and results in the continued loss of human lives.

– The Qur'anic Verse Is Free from Redundancy:

The Qur'anic expression is entirely devoid of repetition, whereas the Arabic proverb contains repetitive wording with closely related meanings. Such repetition has been regarded by rhetoricians as stylistically undesirable,^{xxvi} since a concise expression free of redundancy is considered superior to one that contains repetition, even if the latter does not compromise eloquence. Rather, it merely falls short of the highest level of rhetorical excellence.^{xxvii}

– The Verse Requires No Elliptical Reconstruction:

The Qur'anic verse is complete in itself and contains no ellipsis, unlike the Arabic proverb, which requires the reconstruction of omitted elements. These omissions include the preposition *min* following the comparative form, the word legal retribution associated with the first occurrence of killing, and the word unjustly associated with the second. The implied meaning is: “Killing by way of lawful retaliation is more effective in preventing unjust killing than abandoning it.”^{xxviii} Such reconstruction is indispensable because comparative structures in Arabic necessarily require both the object of comparison and that with which it is compared.

– The Verse Incorporates a Rhetorical Figure of Badi:

The verse contains a rhetorical device classified within the science of Badi and known as an adjunct to antithesis.^{xxix} Although legal retribution entails death, which is the opposite of life, it paradoxically becomes the means by which life is safeguarded.

– The Placement of One Opposite Within Its Contrary:

The verse also exhibits a remarkable rhetorical feature by presenting one opposite death and extinction as the locus of its contrary, namely life. This figurative construction conveys the idea that placing something within its opposite ensures its preservation, just as a container protects what it holds from dispersion. In this context, legal retribution protects life from destruction and aggression.^{xxx} Depicting life as residing within death thus constitutes an eloquent form of rhetorical exaggeration.

– The Ease and Fluency of the Qur'anic Expression:

The Qur'anic wording is distinguished by its smooth phonetic flow, unlike the proverb, which contains a succession of light syllabic structures characterized by the frequent alternation of movement and pause. Classical rhetoricians regarded such a pattern as phonetically cumbersome because uninterrupted vocal movements allow the tongue to articulate speech with greater ease and eloquence. By contrast, when every vowel is immediately followed by a pause, the continuity of pronunciation is interrupted. This is analogous to an animal that is repeatedly allowed to move only to be restrained again, leaving it unable to proceed freely or move according to its natural course.

The verse is free from the echoing articulation of the letter "K", which produces a sense of pressure and harshness, and it also avoids the nasal resonance associated with the letter "N".

The verse is composed of harmoniously compatible sounds. The transition from the letter "K" to "S" is phonetically coherent, since "K" belongs to the emphatic consonants, while "S" combines the qualities of elevation and occlusion. This contrasts with the transition from "K" to "T", which is a non-emphatic consonant and therefore less compatible with "K". Likewise, the movement from "S" to "H" is more harmonious than the transition from lām to hamzah, owing to the considerable articulatory distance between the tip of the tongue and the deepest part of the throat.

The pronunciation of the letters "S", "H", and "T" produces a pleasing acoustic effect, unlike the repeated occurrence of "K" and "T", which creates a heavier and less agreeable sound.

The verse is free from apparent contradiction. The proverbial expression appears self-contradictory at first glance, since one thing cannot negate itself. It is comparable to saying: "If you kill your opponent, he will not kill you." Such a statement merely repeats itself and represents rhetorical confusion rather than eloquence.

The verse avoids the explicit use of the word "killing," which evokes brutality and violence. Instead, it employs the word "life," a term that is naturally more acceptable to human disposition. By contrast, the Arabic proverb reflects the atmosphere of ignorance, injustice, and tribal savagery that characterized pre-Islamic society, where an influential tribe would refuse to surrender one of its members who had committed murder, choosing instead to protect him. Consequently, the entire tribe became implicated in the crime through tribal solidarity, and the only means of removing the disgrace of bloodshed from the victim's tribe was warfare and mutual extermination. Thus, the proverb conveys the notion that killing is the only way to eliminate the shame of killing, without reference to legal retaliation or judicial justice.^{xxxii}

The term legal retaliation inherently conveys the principle of equality and justice, unlike the unrestricted term "killing." Hence, the Qur'an states, "In legal retaliation there is life," rather than "In killing there is life." As al-Rafī explains, the expression is deliberately qualified by a form that denotes recompense and accountability; it therefore excludes any notion of initiating aggression or exceeding the limits of equitable retribution, whether in excess or deficiency.^{xxxii}

The Qur'anic verse is expressed in the affirmative, whereas the proverb is formulated in the negative. Affirmation is rhetorically superior because it is primary and direct, whereas negation is secondary.

The proverb cannot readily be understood unless one first realizes that legal retaliation preserves life. By contrast, the Qur'anic statement, "In legal retaliation there is life," conveys this meaning immediately and intuitively. As al-Rafī observes, the word "killing" in the proverb cannot be restricted to the specific meaning of legal retaliation except through the guidance of the Qur'anic

verse itself. The verse therefore gives the expression its true human and moral significance, making it intelligible only through its own meaning. This, in itself, constitutes an aspect of the Qur'an's miraculous eloquence and demonstrates the inadequacy of the proverbial expression.^{xxxiii}

The Qur'anic verse is free from the use of the comparative/superlative pattern derived from a transitive verb, whereas the Arabic proverb employs this construction.

The comparative form generally implies the existence of a shared attribute between two entities. Accordingly, the proverb suggests that refraining from retaliation also prevents killing, while legal retribution merely prevents it to a greater extent. This, however, does not accurately reflect the intended meaning. The Qur'anic verse is free from such an implication.^{xxxiv}

The verse serves as a deterrent against both homicide and bodily injury, since legal retribution encompasses both. Likewise, the preservation of life is realized through retaliation for bodily injuries, because the loss of a limb diminishes the benefits and integrity of life itself. Thus, the verse encompasses "all forms of legal retaliation, from homicide to lesser bodily offenses."^{xxxv}

The verse also signifies the principles of verification and judicial caution. The term legal retribution, by virtue of its morphological pattern, conveys the necessity of careful investigation, allowing the accused the opportunity to contest the charge and present a defense. Consequently, retaliation may only be carried out when it is legally deserved and founded upon justice. For this reason, the Qur'an employs the term legal retribution rather than legal retribution, despite the latter being more common in usage, because denotes an individual's act of retribution, whereas legal retribution represents the justice administered by society as a whole.^{xxxvi}

The literary sublimity of the expression is highlighted by al-Rafii, who states:

"One aspect of the miraculous eloquence of the word legal retribution is that God used it to describe the execution of the murderer, rather than calling it 'killing,' as in ordinary Arabic usage. This is because one of the two acts of killing is a crime and an act of aggression, whereas the other is an act of justice. Thus, God exalted legal justice above even the slightest resemblance, in wording, to criminal violence. This represents the highest degree of literary refinement in expression."^{xxxvii}

Another aspect of the miraculous choice of the word legal retribution, instead of the word "killing," is that it anticipates future eras of civilized and legally advanced humanity. In such an age, people may perceive the execution of a murderer as no less objectionable than the killing of the victim. The victim may perish for various causes, whereas executing the murderer is based solely on the deliberate intention to take his life. Therefore, the Qur'an employs terminology that remains appropriate even within a sophisticated legal and philosophical discourse, selecting a word whose semantic breadth fully encompasses the philosophy of punishment in all its dimensions.^{xxxviii}

These are but some of the subtle aspects of the Qur'an's miraculous eloquence that distinguish its expression from the well-known Arabic proverb. In truth, no comparison can be drawn between the speech of the Creator and that of His creation. Human sages are remembered only for a limited number of sayings, and poets for a finite collection of verses, however eloquent and brilliant they may be. Yet even the finest human speech is not free from occasional inconsistency, affectation, artificiality, exaggeration, or strained expression flaws that become evident only through prolonged and careful examination.^{xxxix}

Conclusion

After careful reflection on the Qur'anic statement, {"And there is life for you in legal retribution"} (Qur'an 2:179), examining its structure, semantic dimensions, and the various aspects of its eloquence and miraculous expression, the study reaches the following conclusions:

The Qur'anic expression is characterized by remarkable conciseness, conveying profound and numerous meanings through the fewest possible words. This represents the very essence of eloquence, as brevity is one of its fundamental defining characteristics.

The purpose of legal retribution is explicitly and unmistakably conveyed in the verse. One of the rhetorical implications of the indefinite form of the word life is magnification and exaltation, as if the verse were saying: life and what an extraordinary life! It signifies a noble, secure, and fulfilling existence, which constitutes the primary objective of the legislation of legal retribution.

The term legal retribution is comprehensive in scope, encompassing all forms of legally prescribed retaliation, including homicide, bodily injury, and similar offenses.

The definite form of the term indicates that the intended retribution is a specific and legally regulated form of killing, which can only be carried out after thorough verification and careful judicial investigation. Otherwise, the wisdom underlying its legislation would be undermined.

Among the meanings embodied in the noble Qur'anic statement, {“And there is life for you in legal retribution”}, is the well-known Arabic proverb: “Killing is the greatest deterrent to killing.” However, the full meaning of this proverb becomes apparent only when understood within the context of the Qur'anic verse, since the proverb itself relies on ellipsis and implicit meaning. Furthermore, it falls short of expressing the comprehensive intent of the Divine legislation for several reasons, the most significant of which are:

Not every act of killing serves as a deterrent to further killing; unjust killing, for example, may instead provoke additional violence.

The intended purpose of killing in the proverb is implicit and lacks the clarity found in the Qur'anic expression.

The proverb contains lexical repetition, which diminishes its rhetorical elegance.

Accordingly, no comparison can be made between the speech of the Creator and that of His creation. The Word of Allah is unmatched in its eloquence and cannot be equaled or paralleled by any human expression.

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ⁱⁱⁱ It was a fierce, protracted war sparked by a race between Dahis the horse of Qays ibn Zuhayr, chieftain of the Banu Abs and al-Ghabra the horse of the chieftain of the Banu Fazara (of the Ghatafan tribe). The conflict resulted in heavy casualties before peace was finally brokered between the warring parties by Haram ibn Sinan and al-Harith ibn Awf.

^{iv} See: Muhammad Ali Taha al-Durra, *Fath al-Kabir al-Muta'al: I'rab al-Mu'allaqat al-'Ashr al-Tiwal* The Victory of the Great and Exalted: Grammatical Analysis of the Ten Long Mu'allaqat, Al-Sawadi Library for Distribution, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 2nd ed., 1409 AH 1989 CE, Vol. 2, p. 271.

^v Al-Zawzani (Abu Abd Allah), *Sharh al-Mu'allaqat al-Sab* Commentary on the Seven Mu'allaqat, edited and annotated by Ali Muhammad Zinu, Al-Risalah Publishers, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1465 AH 2004 CE, p. 108.

^{vi} Al-Sharif al-Jurjani (Ali ibn Muhammad), *Kitab al-Ta'rifat* Book of Definitions, Riad Al Solh Square, Beirut, n.d., 1985, p. 183.

- vii Al-Suyuti (Jalal al-Din), *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an The Perfect Guide to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, edited by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut, supervised by Mustafa Shaykh Mustafa, Al-Risalah Foundation Publishers, 1st ed., 1429 AH / 2008 CE, p. 531.
- viii Ibn 'Atiyyah (Al-Qadi Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq ibn Ghalib), *Al-Muharrar al-Wajiz*, edited by 'Abd al-Salam 'Abd al-Shafi Muhammad, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1422 AH / 2001 CE, Vol. 1, p. 246.
- ix Al-Sa'di ('Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir), *Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan*, foreword by Sheikh 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Aqil and Sheikh Muhammad ibn Salih al-'Uthaymin, edited by 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu'alla al-Luwayhiq, Al-Risalah Foundation, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1st ed., 1423 AH / 2002 CE, p. 86.
- x Al-Razi (Fakhr al-Din), *Tafsir Fakhr al-Razi* (known as *al-Tafsir al-Kabir* and *Mafatih al-Ghayb*), edited by Khalil al-Mays, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1401 AH / 1981 CE, Vol. 5, p. 60.
- xi Al-Shawkani (Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad), *Fath al-Qadir*, edited by Abd al-Rahman Umayrah, Dar al-Wafa, n.d., n.p., n.e. Vol. 1, p. 324.
- xii Al-Razi, *Tafsir Fakhr al-Razi*, Vol. 5, p. 61.
- xiii Al-Subki (Baha' al-Din), *Arus al-Afrah fi Sharh Talkhis al-Miftah*, edited by Abd al-Hamid Hindawi, Al-Maktabah al-Asriyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1423 AH / 2003 CE, Vol. 1, p. 586.
- xiv Al-Sakaki (Abu Yaqub Youssef), *Miftah al-Ulum*, edited by Akram Uthman Yusuf, Dar al-Risalah Press, Baghdad, Iraq, 1st ed., 1402 AH / 1982 CE, p. 494.
- xv Al-Baqillani (Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Tayyib), *'Jaz al-Qur'an The Inimitability of the Qur'an*, edited by Al-Sayyid Ahmad Saqr, Dar al-Ma'arif, p. 53.
- xvi Sheikh Ahmad al-Qayidi wrote a series of articles titled "Slips in Language and Literature" for the newspaper *Kawkab al-Sharq* under the pseudonym "Al-Sayyid" in Rajab 1352 AH. In one instance, he drew a comparison, stating: "The Arabs of old expressed the meaning of retribution by saying, 'Killing is the greatest deterrent to killing'; then the Qur'an followed the Arab tradition, stating: 'And there is life for you in retribution'." He concluded that the Arab saying was more eloquent than the noble verse. Al-Rafi'i refuted him in an article titled "A Faithful Word in Response to an Unfaithful Word," effectively dismantling his claim and demonstrating the shortcomings of the Arab saying from several perspectives. See: Al-Rafi'i, *Wahy al-Qalam*, Vol. 3, pp. 380–381.
- xvii Al-Rafi'i stated: "The poet's phrase is derived from the Quranic verse as evidenced by the entire line of poetry suggesting that Abu Tammam had never heard the saying 'Killing is the surest way to end killing'; I am certain that the phrase had not yet been coined by that time." See: Al-Rafi'i, *Wahy al-Qalam Inspiration of the Pen*, Vol. 3, p. 380.
- xviii Abu Tammam (Habib ibn Aws), *Diwan Abi Tammam The Collected Poems of Abu Tammam*, commentary by Al-Khatib al-Tabrizi, Dar Al-Ma'arif (Cairo, Egypt), 4th ed., n.d., Vol. 3, p. 200.
- xix Al-Rafi'i, *Wahy al-Qalam*, Vol. 3, pp. 380–381.
- xx Al-Razi stated: "People used to cite the proverb 'Killing is the surest way to end killing' because they admired it; however, when the Quranic verse was revealed, they abandoned that saying." This statement implies that the maxim predated the Quran, whereas the truth and God knows best is that it was derived from the noble verse, as we have previously explained. See: Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn al-Husayn), *Nihayat al-Ijaz fi Dirayat al-I'jaz The Pinnacle of Conciseness in Understanding Inimitability*, edited by Nasrallah Haji, Dar Sader (Beirut, Lebanon), 1st ed., 1424 AH / 2004 CE, p. 215.
- xxi Ahmed al-Hashimi, *Jawahir al-Balaghah fi al-Ma'ani wa al-Bayan wa al-Badi' The Jewels of Rhetoric: Semantics, Imagery, and Stylistic Devices*, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, n.d., 1428 AH / 2008 CE, p. 32.
- xxii Al-Jahiz (Abu Uthman 'Amr ibn Bahr), *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin Eloquence and Exposition*, edited by Abd al-Salam Muhammad Harun, Al-Khanji Library, Cairo, 6th ed., 1418 AH / 1998 CE, Vol. 1, pp. 96–97.
- xxiii The number of letters in the Almighty's saying *fi al-qisas hayat in legal retribution there is life* is ten: (f, l, q, s, a, s, h, y, a, t). As for the letters in the Arab saying *al-qatl anfa lil-qatl killing is the greatest deterrent to killing*], there are fourteen letters: (a, l, q, t, l, a, n, f, y, l, l, q, t, l). The criterion here is the count of spoken sounds, not written characters.
- xxiv See: Al-Alusi (Abu al-Fadl Shihab al-Din), *Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim wa al-Sab' al-Mathani The Spirit of Meanings: Exegesis of the Great Qur'an and the Seven Oft-Repeated Verses*, Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 51.
- xxv Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, p. 531.
- xxvi Al-Rafi'i, *Wahy al-Qalam*, Vol. 3, p. 384.
- xxvii The highest rank of eloquence. See: Ibn Hazm al-Zahiri (Abu Muhammad 'Ali ibn Ahmad), *Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa-al-Ahwa' wa-al-Nihal*, edited by Muhammad Ibrahim Nasr and 'Abd al-Rahman 'Umayrah, Dar al-Jil (Beirut, Lebanon), 2nd ed., 1416 AH / 1996 CE, Vol. 3, p. 27.
- xxviii Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 387.
- xxix Al-Zamakhshari (Abu al-Qasim Jar Allah), *Tafsir al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq al-Tanzil wa-'Uyun al-Aqawil fi Wujuh al-Ta'wil*, edited and sources verified by Khalil Ma'mun, Dar al-Ma'arif (Beirut, Lebanon), 3rd ed., 1430 AH / 2009 CE, p. 111.
- xxx Al-Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani*, Vol. 2, p. 51.
- xxxi Al-Subki, *Kitab 'Arus al-Afrah*, p. 588.
- xxxii Al-Khatib al-Qazwini (Jalal al-Din Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman), *Al-Idah fi 'Ulum al-Balaghah: al-Ma'ani wa al-Bayan wa al-Badi' Clarification on the Sciences of Rhetoric: Meaning, Imagery, and Stylistic Devices*, annotated by Ibrahim Shams al-Din, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1442 AH / 2003 CE, p. 144.
- xxxiii This type of contrast between *al-qisas* (retribution) and life is classified as a form of antithesis, as is defined as "combining a thing and its opposite within speech." See: Ali al-Jarim and Mustafa Amin, *Al-Balaghah al-Wadiha*, Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, Cairo, Egypt, 1st ed., 1439 AH / 2018 CE, p. 310.
- xxxiv Al-Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani*, Vol. 2, p. 51.
- xxxv Al-Rafi'i, *Wahy al-Qalam*, Vol. 3, p. 382.
- xxxvi Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 382.
- xxxvii Al-Rafi'i, *Wahy al-Qalam*, Vol. 3, p. 382.
- xxxviii Al-Suyuti may Allah have mercy on him outlined in his book *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (The Perfect Guide to the Sciences of the Qur'an) approximately twenty aspects of the miraculous nature distinguishing this segment of the verse: "In legal retribution there is life." He also highlighted the limitations of Arabic rhetoric in this regard; we have endeavored to understand and summarize these aspects, and subsequently reformulate them.
- xxxix Al-Rafi'i, *Wahy al-Qalam*, Vol. 3, p. 384.