The Miraculous Antioxidant Fig in The Quran: Exploring its Quranic *Uslūb* and Profound Significance

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Abstract

This research delves into the intriguing mention of the fig in the Quran, considering it a remarkable fruit possessing extraordinary Quranic *uslūb* (linguistic style). Scientific investigations have revealed the presence of antioxidant compounds within the fig. The primary objective of this qualitative study is to comprehensively examine the fig in the Quran, along with its Quranic *uslūb*, to unravel their profound significance. The method used in this qualitative study is content analysis. Data that were collected through content and document analysis were thematically analyzed using the descriptive and analytical methods. The findings highlight that the fig, uniquely mentioned in Surah Al-Tin 95:1, represents the sole instance where an antioxidant fruit is referenced in the Quran, characterized by distinctive *uslūb* when compared to other antioxidant fruits. The implications of this study substantiate that the fig is an exceptional miraculous antioxidant fruit, thereby providing empirical evidence for the miraculous nature of the Quran (*al-i'jāz al-Qurani*) through its scientifically miraculous content (*al-i'jāz al-'ilmī*) and linguistic miracle (*al-i'jāz al-lughawī*).

Keywords: Quran, Fig, Antioxidant, Islamic Science, Naqli Aqli

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Introduction

Fig fruit (Ficus carica L.) holds significant agricultural importance in tropical and subtropical regions. Its consumption has been deeply rooted in the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures since antiquity, symbolizing longevity (Arvaniti et al., 2019) and contributing to health promotion (Çalişkan & Aytekin Polat, 2011). The renowned Mediterranean diet, known for its health benefits, has consistently incorporated fig fruit (Solomon et al., 2006).

The fig is mentioned in the opening verse (*āyah*) of Surah Al-Tin, a *sūrah* revealed in Makkah during the early period of prophethood. Makkah, renowned as the site of revelation for this *sūrah*, was characterized by its barren landscape, devoid of human habitation, sustenance and

even water. This aridness is vividly portrayed in the narrative of Prophet Ibrahim, his wife Hajar and their son. Al-A'zami (n.d.) provides a comprehensive account of this historical narrative:

a. Prophet Ibrahim brought Hajar and Prophet Ismail to the desolate expanse of Makkah, a sun-scorched valley devoid of human presence, sustenance and even water resources.

1. Source: al-A'zami n.d.

The establishment of the first settlement in this barren region became possible through the emergence of Zamzam water, which miraculously gushed forth from beneath the sand near the infant's feet. This significant historical occurrence is documented in a comprehensive narration transmitted by Ibn Abbas (Al-Bukhari, 2001, Book of Prophets, Chapter And Allah's Statement: "… hastening", ḥadīth no 3364, 4:142):

ثُمَّ جَاءَ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ، وَبِابْنِهَا إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَهْيَ تُرْضِعُهُ حَتَّى وَضَعَهُمَا عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ عِنْدَ دَوْحَةٍ، فَوْقَ زَمْزَمَ فِي أَعْلَى الْمَسْجِدِ، وَلَيْسَ بِمَكَّةَ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَحَدٌ، وَلَيْسَ بِهَا مَاءٌ... فَتَبِعَتْهُ أُمُّ إِسْمَاعِيلَ فَقَالَتْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَيْنَ تَذْهَبُ وَتَتْرُكُنَا بِهَذَا الْوَادِي الَّذِي لَيْسَ فِيهِ إِنْسٌ وَلاَ شَيْءٌ فَقَالَتْ لَهُ ذَلِكَ مِرَارًا، وَجَعَلَ لاَ يَلْتَفِتُ إِلَيْهَا فَقَالَتْ لَهُ آللَّهُ الَّذِي أَمَرَكَ بِهَذَا قَالَ نَعَمْ. قَالَتْ إِذًا لاَ يُضَيِّعُنَا...

Meaning: Ibrahim brought her and her son Ismail while she was suckling him, to a place near the Kaabah under a tree on the spot of Zamzam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was nobody in Makkah, nor was there any water.... Ismail's mother followed him saying, O Ibrahim! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to enjoy)? She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her Then she asked him, Has Allah ordered you to do so? He said, Yes. She said, Then He will not neglect us…….

The mention of the fig in the Quran, within the context of Makkah, signifies the familiarity of Makkan society with this fruit during the period of revelation. The socioeconomic lifestyle prevalent in Makkah exerted influence on the introduction of external goods and commodities. Being renowned as traders and merchants, the Makkans had extensive exposure to a diverse array of products and culinary items sourced from various regions, which they subsequently brought back to Makkah. Surah Quraish 106:2 employs the reference to seasonal journeys undertaken by the Quraysh tribe to emphasize a distinct facet of their business engagements with different sub-regions of the Arabian Peninsula. During the summer, commercial caravans would venture to the region of Syam, while in winter, their routes extended to Yaman (Al-Waqidi, 1989). The fig fruit represents one among the numerous products that the Makkans were well-acquainted with, as it was brought from the Mediterranean region.

Methods

The qualitative study employed a content analysis approach, wherein data were collected through content and document analysis. The focus of the study involved examining the relevant Quranic *āyahs* pertaining to the fig fruit. To ensure a comprehensive collection of Quranic *āyahs* and enhance the accuracy of findings, the Quranic content was examined in both electronic and hard copy formats. The electronic version of the Quran was sourced from the website (https://quranenc.com/) and the *Al-Maktabah al-Syāmilah* software, facilitating a streamlined process of accessing, comparing, and verifying the identified *āyahs*.

The specific keyword *al-tīn* was keyed in into the *Al-Maktabah al-Syāmilah* software to retrieve Quranic *āyahs* related to the fig fruit. For the analysis of antioxidant compounds, relevant data were sourced from scientific articles and reputable references. The examination of Quranic *uslūb* was conducted by scrutinizing the *uslūb* present within the Quranic *āyahs*. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. The Arabic words were italicized and transliterated for clarity and consistency throughout the study.

Results and Discussion

Sūrah al-Tīn specifically mentions two antioxidant fruits, namely the fig and the olive. This *āyah* encompasses a distinct thematic focus, which is elucidated in Table 1.10.

Table 1.1 *Āyahs* on Antioxidants in Sūrah al-Tīn

Sūrah & Āyah Number	Āyah on Antioxidants	Theme
al-Tīn 95:1	وَالتِّينِ وَالزَّيْتُونِ By the fig and the olive	Fig and olive fruits and their location

Fig in the Quran

The prevailing consensus among scholars indicates that Surah Tīn is a revelation of *Makkiyyah* origin, as affirmed by Al-Baghawi (1999), Al-Razi Fakhruddin (1999), Al-Zamakhsyari, (1987), Ibn Kathir (1998). This perspective aligns with the opinions of al-Hassan, Ikrimah, Aṭa' and Jabir. However, Ibn Abbas and Qatadah present an alternative view, considering this *sūrah* to be of *Madaniyyah* nature, as noted by Al-Mawardi (n.d.). Nevertheless, Tantawi (1997) argues that there is insufficient evidence to support this claim. The more accurate interpretation suggests that Surah Tīn is indeed a *Makkiyyah sūrah*, primarily based on the reference to *al-balad al-amīn* in *āyah* 3, which is understood by Maududi (n.d.) and Tantawi (1997) as a direct allusion to Makkah. This interpretation is further supported by the explanations of Ibn Kathir (1998) and Al-Qurtubi (1964), who also interpret the term as referring to Makkah.

The content contained within this *sūrah* signifies its placement within the initial phase of the Makkah period. Notably, there is no substantiated evidence indicating the occurrence of

a conflict between Islam and non-believers at the time of its revelation. The stylistic characteristics observed in this *sūrah* closely resemble the patterns observed in the earliest revelations of the Makkan era (Maududi, n.d.).

Scholars hold differing perspectives regarding the interpretation of *al-tīn* (fig) and *al-zaitūn* (olive) in Sūrah al-Tīn 95:1. The first viewpoint suggests that *al-tīn* refers to the actual fruit of the fig, while *al-zaitūn* signifies the olive that yields oil. This stance is supported by Al-Sa'di (2000) and Jalal al-Din Mahalli & Jalal al-Din Suyuti (2000). Additionally, Ibn Abbas, Al-Hassan, Mujahid, Ibrahim, Aṭa' bin Abi Rabah, Muqatil and Al-Kalbi concur with this interpretation, as highlighted by Al-Baghawi (1999).

The second perspective posits that *al-tīn* (fig) and *al-zaitūn* (olive) refer to specific locations. Maududi (n.d.) presents a dissenting view from the first opinion, emphasizing that the oaths taken by the two fruits and the subsequent mention of Mount Sinai and Makkah in the following *āyahs* align with a thematic coherence centered on the two locations rather than the two fruits. Maududi (n.d.) further asserts that when Allah takes an oath in the Quran, it is not based on the glory, uses, virtues, qualities, or benefits of the subject matter, but rather, every oath bears relevance to the theme that follows it. Accordingly, he argues that the merits and attributes of the two fruits cannot serve as justification for the oath taken by them.

Qatadah suggests that *al-tīn* represents a mountain situated in Damsyiq, while *al-zaitūn* signifies a mountain located in Baitul Maqdis, as these two fruits are native to those specific mountains. Al-Dahak proposes that the two fruits symbolically refer to two mosques in Syam. Ibn Zaid, on the other hand, interprets *al-tīn* as the mosque in Damsyiq and *al-zaitūn* as the mosque in Baitul Maqdis. These interpretations presented by scholars, as documented by Al-Baghawi (1999), encompass a range of locations, including Damsyiq, Syam and Baitul Maqdis. In this study, it is asserted that the reference to *al-tīn* (fig) and *al-zaitūn* (olive) in the *āyah* encompasses both the fruits themselves and their respective habitats or regions where they thrive abundantly, namely Syam and Palestine in present-day context. Scholars have extensively expounded upon the uses, benefits, virtues and qualities associated with these two fruits, supported by numerous studies. Thus, the first viewpoint considering *al-tīn* and *al-zaitūn* as referring to the fruits themselves remains pertinent and applicable.

The second perspective should be duly considered due to the cultural practice observed among Arabs, whereby a territory was often named after a fruit if it thrived abundantly there. Thus, the meaning of *al-tīn* (fig) and *al-zaitūn* (olive) could be interpreted as referring to the land where these two fruits grow in abundance, namely Syam and Palestine (Baitul Maqdis). The familiarity of the Arabs with the cultivation of fig and olive trees in these regions is well-documented. Al-Zamakhsyari (1987) and Al-Alusi (1994) have supported this rationale, while Al-Tabari (2000) leans towards the first interpretation but acknowledges the possibility of the names referring to the geographical regions known for the growth of these two fruits. Ibn Kathir (1998) also recognizes the validity of this explanation.

The interpretation of Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:259 and al-A'rāf 7:22 includes references to the fig fruit. In Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:259, the term *ṭaāmuka* is understood to signify fig, as elucidated by Jalal al-Din Mahalli and Jalal al-Din Suyuti (2000) and Al-Baghawi (1999). Similarly, Al-Baghawi (1999) explains that the term (*waraq al-jannah*) in Sūrah al-A'rāf 7:22 denotes the leaf of the fig. Al-Tabari (2000) also presents various narrations that define this term as a fig leaf. Furthermore, according to an authentic narration recounted by Al-Hakim

(1990), when Allah removed the garments of Prophet Adam and Hawa due to consuming the forbidden fruit, they employed a fig leaf to conceal their *'aurah* (Al-Hakim, 1990, *Al-Mustadrak ala al-Ṣaḥīḥāin, Kitāb al-Tafsīr, Tafsīr Sūrah al-A'rāf,* ḥadīth no 3245, 2:350. The chain of narrators of this ḥadīth is reliable.).

Antioxidant Compounds in Fig

Dried figs are known for their high polyphenol content, making them a notable source of phenolic compounds that exhibit substantial antioxidant activity (Bachir Bey et al., 2014). These bioactive substances play a crucial role in enhancing and preventing the oxidation of plasma lipoproteins. Figs possess a range of essential nutrients, particularly antioxidants, which contribute to their protective and preventive effects against oxidative stress (Amjadi et al., 2014).

The phytochemical analysis of figs revealed the presence of various secondary metabolites such as total phenolics, flavonoids, alkaloids and saponins, which contribute to the fruit's notable antioxidant activity. The volatile components of figs unveiled significant quantities of essential compounds including vitamin E, α-amyrin, stigmasterol, campesterol, oleic acid and tocopherols (Soni et al., 2014).

Phenolic acids and flavonoids are the primary classes of phytochemical compounds identified in both fresh and dried figs. The levels of these compounds are influenced by various factors such as fruit color, fruit part, fruit ripeness and drying duration. Gallic acid, chlorogenic acid, rutin, quercetin-3-O-rutinoside and epicatechin are among the most observed phenolic acids and flavonoids in both dried and fresh fig varieties (Arvaniti et al., 2019).

The leaves and fruits of the fig tree are abundant in phenolics, organic acids, coumarin, fatty acids, polyphenols, and flavonoids. Psoralen and bergapten are the primary coumarin compounds identified in the wood and stem bark, with higher concentrations observed in the wood compared to the stem bark (Rameshrad et al., 2015). The fruit skin of figs contains a higher proportion of phenolic compounds compared to the fruit pulp. The ripening stage of the fruit influences the maximal concentrations of phenolic compounds, with ripe fruits exhibiting the highest levels. The antioxidant potential of figs is closely associated with the quantity of phenolic compounds present (Arvaniti et al., 2019).

Dark-fruited fig trees predominantly produce psoralen and bergapten, while green-fruited varieties have lower levels of these coumarins. Extracts derived from dark cultivars contain a higher abundance of phytochemicals, including polyphenols, flavonoids and anthocyanins, compared to extracts from light-colored types (Rameshrad et al., 2015). The phenolic compound content is greater in extracts from dark-colored fig cultivars than in those from light-colored ones (Arvaniti et al., 2019). Fig peel exhibits the highest concentration of phytochemicals and displays the highest antioxidant activity in comparison to the pulp (Rameshrad et al., 2015).

A Unique Miraculous Linguistic Quranic Styles (*Uslūb*) of Fig and Their Significance

The fig is mentioned specifically in one *āyah* of the Quran, denoted as *al-khās* (the specific). Despite its singular mention, the fig is described in a distinctive manner. The Quran underscores its significance and qualities by taking an oath by it. The act of swearing in the Quran signifies the importance of the subject matter being addressed. Just as Allah swears by the concept of time in Surah al-Asr, highlighting its value, the swearing by the fig indicates the profound significance associated with this fruit.

The fig is mentioned in a definite form and precedes the mention of the olive in Surah Al-Tīn 95:1. The name of Surah Al-Tīn itself is derived from the very first word *al-tīn* (fig), as asserted by Maududi (n.d.). Khafagi and others (2006) note that only one *sūrah* in the Quran is named after a plant, which is the fig. This naming choice reflects the fig's distinct qualities that set it apart from other fruits. For instance, figs serve as an optimal functional food due to their low calorie and fat-free nature, along with their balanced content of sugar and carbohydrates that provide essential energy to the body. When a *sūrah* in the Quran is specifically named after a particular subject, it signifies the significance and importance of its content. This can be observed in other *sūrahs*, such as Surah Al-'Asr, Surah Maryam, Surah Yusuf and others, which are named after significant themes found within those respective *sūrahs*.

The fig fruit holds great significance due to its distinctive linguistic features and its unique method of creation. Notably, the mutual relationship between fig trees and the wasps that pollinate them represents a prominent example of insect-plant co-evolution. In this symbiotic interaction, both species rely on each other for reproduction. The wasp, often referred to as a queen or foundress, plays a vital role by entering the fig's enclosed structure called a syconium, where it deposits its eggs and fertilizes the fig's ovaries. Ultimately, the wasp's life cycle concludes within the syconium (Ramya et al., 2011).

After the hatching of the eggs, the male and female wasps engage in mating. The male wasps, devoid of wings, begin carving an opening through the fig's wall, allowing the females to exit and seek out suitable young figs to continue the reproductive cycle. Subsequently, the male wasps succumb to unconsciousness. In certain species, the fig may be entirely coated with pollen prior to the female's departure, or the females themselves may deliberately gather pollen from mature anthers and store it in specialized pollen pockets (Simon & Jean, 2004).

The Ficus genus is characterized by its unique reproductive structure, where the seeds are housed within the ovaries (Ramya et al., 2011). This structural attribute holds significant implications worthy of contemplation. Figs offer valuable benefits for individuals with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), particularly women, due to their high potassium content. Potassium plays a vital role in reducing blood pressure and safeguarding heart health, both of which are crucial considerations for individuals with PCOS. Moreover, figs serve as an excellent source of dietary fiber, aiding in the management of PCOS symptoms and facilitating weight loss, thereby promoting improved cardiovascular well-being (Anonymous, n.d.).

Fig stands apart from other fruits, such as dates, grapes, olives, and pomegranates, due to its unique characteristics. Figs belong to the extensive Ficus genus and within this genus, certain species of figs are known to be toxic. The definite form of *al-tīn* in the Quran refers

specifically to the edible species of figs, scientifically known as Ficus carica or commonly referred to as the common fig. To differentiate between edible and inedible fig varieties, it is essential to observe the distinctive features of the leaves. Edible fig leaves possess discernible variations in size, texture, shape, and appearance (Polamo, 2019).

One of the notable attributes of the fig is its adaptability to diverse environments, enabling its growth in various geographical locations. However, it is worth noting that the size and characteristics of figs grown outside Mediterranean climates may differ from those grown within such climates. The consumption patterns of figs also distinguish them from other fruits. According to a *ḥadīth*, the consumption of dates as an antidote for poison is recommended in multiples of seven. The Prophet said:

مَنْ تَصَبَّحَ سَبْعَ تَمَرَاتِ عَجْوَةٍ لَمْ يَضُرُّهُ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ سَمٌّ وَلاَ سِحْرٌ.

> Meaning: He who has a morning meal of seven '*ajwah* dates will not suffer from any harm that day through poison or magic (Abu Daud, n.d., Sunan Abī Dāud, Book of Medicine, Chapter Regarding 'Ajwah Dates, ḥadīth no 3876, 4:8. This ḥadīth is ṣaḥīḥ according to al-Albani.).

The fig is renowned for its remarkable efficacy and beneficial properties, as even a small quantity of one or two figs is sufficient to harness its advantages. Consequently, the fig is widely recognized as a potent and functional fruit, acclaimed as the world's healthiest fruit, a nutrient-rich powerhouse and a fruit with significant pharmacological and medicinal attributes.

The precedence of fig over olive (*al-taqdīm*) signifies its distinction as a superior functional food. Figs are renowned for their ability to enhance the body's energy levels due to their carbohydrate and sugar content (Peterson et al., 2011). With its low-fat content and minimal calorie count, fig stands as a healthy and potent fruit. On the other hand, dates have a high sugar content compared to their overall nutritional value. Individuals, especially those with diabetes or a need to regulate blood sugar levels, should be cautious about their sugar intake when consuming dates (Nall 2018). The Quranic utilization of the fig employs a linguistic miracle (*al-i'jāz al-lughawī*) that indirectly alludes to the scientific miracle of the Quran (*al-i'jāz al-'ilmī*).

In Surah Al-Tīn 95:1, fig and olive are mentioned together in consecutive order. Scholars argue that the fig mentioned in this *āyah* symbolizes Syam, while the olives represent Baitulmaqdis, as the Mediterranean climate in Syam favors fig cultivation compared to the arid region of Hijaz. This interpretation suggests a metaphorical journey between these distant locations, emphasizing the geographical distance between them. Fig and olive oil, when combined, form a perfect blend for travelers undertaking long journeys, as it provides a substantial boost to their energy levels.

The mention of fig and olive together signifies their exceptional characteristics and health benefits. Figs are renowned for their abundant nutritional value, containing natural sugars, soluble fiber, vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, antioxidants and essential minerals such as magnesium, manganese, calcium, copper, potassium, as well as vitamins K and B6. Whether consumed fresh or dried, figs stand out as a unique fruit, offering a wealth of potent antioxidants (Achanta, 2019).

Conclusion

The linguistic miracle (*al-i'jāz al-lughawī*) and the scientific miracle (*al-i'jāz al-'ilmī*) of the Quran are two facets of the miracles of the Quran that are revealed in this paper. The Quran employs *uslūb* such as *al-khās* (definite form), *al-ta'rīf* (defining attribute) and *al-taqdīm* (precedence) to emphasize the exceptional qualities of figs. Fig is portrayed as the best functional fruit, abundant in nutrition and unique among antioxidant fruits mentioned in the Quran. The linguistic miracle of the Quranic *uslūb* regarding figs also signifies the presence of beneficial antioxidant compounds, including phenolics, flavonoids, alkaloids and saponins. This study suggests that people worldwide can incorporate figs into their diets for their numerous benefits and that combining figs with olive oil can serve as an energy-boosting and satisfying option for travelers.

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