

## A Comparative Ontological Study of the Existential Layers of the Quran in the Divine and Created Realms, from the Perspective of the Quran and Islamic Mysticism

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### Abstract

The present study conducts an ontological study of the Quran, explaining its existential layers in the Divine Realm, also known as the World of God or the World of Necessity, and the Created Realm, also known as the World of Being or the World of Contingency. Based on the views of mystics and Quranic verses, it explains the existential ranks of the Quran and its specific names. The importance of this issue lies in proving the single, multi-ranked existence of the Quran and demonstrating that the Quran is present at every stage of existence, from the World of God to the World of Creation, each with a specific station and name. Through a comparative study of these ranks with Quranic verses, this article concludes that the Quran, as divine knowledge in the form of divine speech, saying, book, and both creative and written words, is present in an integrated manner at every rank of existence, accompanying the Perfect Human. A key finding of this article is that the ontological ranks of the Quran are sometimes expressed with a specific name in the Quran, such as *Umm al-Kitāb* (The Mother of the Book), *Kitāb Mubīn* (The Clear Book), and *Nūr* (Light), each pointing to a specific rank of the Quran's existence. In some cases, there is no specific name for a particular existential rank of the Quran in the verses, but the rank is referenced. For example, it is stated that the Quran was sent down from the rank of the name Allāh or the names *al-Rahmān* or *al-Hayy*. This paper was written using a hybrid research method (textual-argumentative) and based on library and software data collection. It is an attempt to, for the first time in a coherent study, use mystical sources and Quranic verses to articulate the specific name of the Divine Book at each existential rank or at least the name of its existential rank.

**Keywords:** Existential Ranks of the Quran; Quranic Ontology; The Perfect Human; The Divine Realm; The Created Realm

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## Introduction

Based on the teachings of the Quran and the views of mystics, the Divine Book has an existence that is commensurate with every rank of existence (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 1, 141; Janābadhī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 4, 33; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 17, 368). This is because every realm has its own specific revelation and command "And He revealed in each heaven its command. "(al-Fuṣṣilat: 12) The truth of the Book is in a constant state of descent and ascent between the heavens: "The command descends between them. "(al-Ṭalāq: 12)

Based on the verse, "He knows that you will not be able to count it, so He has turned to you in mercy. So recite what is easy of the Quran, "(al-Muzzammil: 20) access to the truth of all the Quran's existential and cognitive ranks is contingent on the existential and cognitive ranks of the reciter (Amoli, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 1, 242). Counting or encompassing it (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 77) is not possible for everyone. Each person becomes familiar with and recites the Quran to the extent of their existential and cognitive rank.

The recitation of the Quran has various degrees, to the extent that some recite the Quran from its original copy and *Umm al-Kitāb*, meaning they have an existential union with its reality (Hasanzadeh Amoli, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 2, 179). The Holy Quran has an existence that flows from the station of Absolute Oneness to the material world and possesses numerous ranks and stations.

Likewise, humans, based on the different ranks of their existential journey, have different levels of benefit from the various ranks of the Quran. A hadith states: "The Book of Allāh is on four things: on expression, on allusion, on subtleties, and on realities. The expression is for the common people, the allusion is for the elite, the subtleties are for the saints, and the realities are for the prophets. "(Majlisī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 89, 20 and 103)

Those who connect with the lower ranks of the Quran gain acquired discursive knowledge which is subject to forgetting and decay. However, the Perfect Humans, who are connected to the higher ranks of the Quran, attain divinely-bestowed and *Ladunni* knowledge and receive the realities of the Quran from the stations of "*Indahū* "(with Him), "*Indallāh*"(with Allāh), and "*Ladallāh* "(at Allāh's disposal). Therefore, their knowledge is called "*Ladunni* knowledge "or "Divinely-bestowed knowledge." "And indeed, you receive the Quran from one who is Wise and Knowing. "(al-Naml: 6) (Javadi Amoli, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 207)

The Quran is the manifestation of Allāh's Absolute Knowledge (Hasanzadeh Amoli, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 2, 187), which appears in the form of speech (the inner aspect) and a book (the outer aspect), encompassing both the creative (existential) and legislative (written) realms. As Divine Speech, the Quran, from its station of emanation to its station of descent, possesses a single truth that extends from the station of absolute oneness and inclusive unity to the station of multiplicity, physicality, Arabicism, and being distorted.

This truth is accompanied by the truth of the Perfect Human, who is also the complete manifestation of Divine Knowledge, to the extent that in the higher ranks there is complete unity and identity, and in the lower ranks and the emergence of multiplicity, there is concomitance. This union and concomitance exist in all existential ranks of the Perfect Human.

This multi-ranked and gradational nature of the Quran's truth is why it is referred to by different names in the Quranic verses, such as *Umm al-Kitāb*, *Kitāb Mubīn*, *Kitāb Maknūn*, and *Furqān*. "As for the names of the Quran: "In one world it is called "*Majīd*" (glorious): "Rather, it is a glorious Quran" (al-Burūj: 21). In another world, its name is "*Alīyy*" (exalted): "And indeed it is in the Mother of the Book with Us, exalted and wise." (al-Zukhruf: 4) In another realm, its name is "*Mubīn*" (clear): "And a clear Book" (al-Naml: 1). And in another station, its name is "*Nūr*" (light): "And the Light which We sent down, "(al-Taghābun: 8) "There has come to you from Allāh a Light and a clear Book. "(al-Mā'idah: 15) And in a station, it is "*Azīm*" (great): "And the great Quran" (al-Hijr: 87). And in a rank, it is "*Azīz*" (mighty): "Indeed, it is a mighty Book. "(al-Fuṣṣilat: 41) And in a manifestation, it is "*Karīm*" (noble): "Indeed, it is a noble Quran. "(al-Wāqi'ah: 77) And in a phase, it is "*Hakīm*" (wise): "*Yāsīn*, by the wise Quran. "(*Yāsīn*: 2) (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1987 AD/1366 SH: 2, 23)

In some verses, the Quran is called "*Nūr Mubīn*" because its truth is a simple, luminous one that contains all true sciences and knowledge (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 3, 96). Therefore, all sciences are manifestations of the truth of the Quran, and the Quran is the totality of all sciences in their highest and most noble form (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1987 AD/1366 SH: 2, 604, footnote; ibid: 6, 23).

Likewise, the Quran sometimes says, "*That is the Book*" (al-Baqarah: 2) and sometimes, "*This Quran*. "(al-Isrā': 9) The use of the distant demonstrative and the near demonstrative indicates that the ranks of the Quran's existence extend from the World of the Unseen to the World of the Perceptible.

In some cases, it is called "*Kalām Allāh*" (The Speech of Allāh) (al-Baqarah: 75), and in others, "*Kitāb Allāh*" (The Book of Allāh) (al-Fātir: 29). "*Kitāb*" refers to the created aspect, and "*Kalām*" refers to the commanded aspect. "*Kitāb*" refers to the rank of detail, separation, and multiplicity of the Quran, while "*Kalām*" refers to the rank of summarization, collection, and simplicity. Therefore, "*Kalām*" is the inner reality of "*Kitāb*. "(Lahiji, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 490)

Since the Quran is a single, multi-ranked reality, it can be examined from various perspectives; both from a cognitive and scientific aspect (the geometric structure of the Quran and its chapters, as well as its apparent, interpretive, inner, and allegorical meanings), and from an existential and ontological aspect. This article aims to explain the Quran's existential ranks from an ontological perspective.

This study will first briefly discuss the epistemological aspect of the Quran and then delve into the existential and ontological discussions of the Quran, which have been less noticed. The importance of this article lies in addressing this aspect of the Quran, which transforms the Quran from a book into a living, multi-ranked reality and opens a new horizon for Quranic researchers. A significant and novel point of this article, in addition to detailing the existential ranks of the Quran, is the attempt to apply these existential ranks to Quranic verses, which is a very difficult and novel task.

## 1. Research Questions

The main questions of this study are:

- Does the Quran have different existential ranks from an ontological perspective?
- What are the Quran's existential ranks from the perspective of mystics?
- Are there different names in the Quran to refer to these existential ranks?

## 2. Methodology

The present study is a mixed-methods research that combines textual-argumentative methods with descriptive and analytical data processing. The outcome of using this method is the clarification of the existential ranks of the Quran in different worlds, the connection of each rank to the ranks of the Perfect Human's existence, and the understanding of the truth of revelation at each rank. The data for this study was collected using library methods, by studying and taking notes from electronic and printed libraries, existing software, and information available on the internet, and was then explained using a descriptive-analytical method.

## 3. Literature Review

This topic has not been addressed in a separate book or article, although some articles have dealt with certain aspects of the subject, but not its entirety. The Quran's ranks have been mentioned in a scattered way, but those ranks have never been explained in detail, nor has a precise application of Quranic verses to those ranks, their characteristics, and their connection to the existence of the Perfect Human been studied.

Some of the most important of these articles are discussed below:

- 1) The article "The Human Need for Scientific and Epistemological Expertise in Understanding the Inner and Deeper Layers of the Quran. "(Ramezani, 2021 AD/1400 SH)
- 2) The article "The Hidden Layers in the Holy Quran. "(Ahadinasab, 2020 AD/1399 SH)
- 3) The article "The Outer and Inner Meaning of the Holy Quran. "(Kalantari, 2003 AD/1382 SH)
- 4) The article "A Study of the Epistemological Layers of the Quran, the Levels of Understanding of the Audience, and Their Extent of Benefit from Quranic Guidance Based on Verses and Narrations. "(Najibi, 2023 AD/1402 SH) The mentioned articles relate to the explanation of the epistemological layers of the Quran. Articles have also been written in the field of Quranic ontology:
- 5) The article "The Existential Ranks of the Holy Quran from the Perspective of Muslim Mystics. "(Mozaffari, 2022 AD/1401 SH) This article briefly and scattered addresses some of the Quran's ranks, but it does not seek to conduct a comparative study of the Quran's existential ranks with Quranic verses.
- 6) The article "The Ranks of Existence in Mysticism with a Glance at Philosophy. "(Kashaniha, 2018 AD/1397 SH) This article briefly discusses the ranks of existence in the World of Being and does not address Quranic ontology.

The innovation of this article is that in addition to explaining the ranks of existence of beings in the Divine Realm and the Created Realm from the viewpoint of mystics, it applies these ranks to the Quran's existential ranks through Quranic verses, stating the specific name or at least the existential position of each rank of the Quran in the verses and applying it to the existential ranks of the most perfect Human.

#### 4. The Epistemological Aspect of the Quran: Its Longitudinal Layers of Knowledge

The Quran, as Divine Speech, is rooted in Divine Knowledge (Javadi Amoli, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 9, 342), which is itself multi-ranked, from the knowledge of the Essence of the Essence and the knowledge of the Divine Names and Attributes to the knowledge of the Divine Actions. The "*Kalām*" of the Almighty God is one of His primary attributes, known as the seven essential attributes (life, knowledge, will, speech or saying, power, generosity, and justice) (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 60-61), which are the source of all other divine attributes and the mothers of all attributes. These attributes are all rooted in the knowledge of the Essence of the Essence in the First Determination, where they are referred to as the Keys of the Unseen (the Words of Allāh) (ibid: 1, 67-68). The Keys of the Unseen, which are the Divine Words, are the inner reality and origin of the seven essential attributes, which are famous as the seven Imams or Mothers (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 1, 99-100). Among these attributes, the attribute of life is the origin, and its reality and inner meaning are the very knowledge of the Holy Essence (Essential Knowledge) (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 67-68). So, the Divine attribute of knowledge (descriptive knowledge) originates from Divine life (Hasanzadeh Amoli, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 627) and is one of its derivatives, and the Divine attribute of speech or saying is also a derivative of Divine knowledge after the attribute of will is attached to it (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 60).

Since the origin of speech and saying in humans is the breath from the human inner self, Divine Speech also originates from the Breath of the All-Merciful, which is rooted in life, knowledge, and will (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 61).

From an epistemological perspective, the Holy Quran has ranks for understanding its knowledge. The highest cognitive rank of the Quran, which is monotheism (Javadi Amoli, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 222-223; Javadi Amoli, 2019 AD/1399 SH: 19), is accessible to its people through annihilation in the Quran and unity with it (Amoli, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 1, 240-241). Therefore, the Perfect Human in that rank attains the knowledge of the Quran through union and annihilation in inclusive unity.

The lower ranks—the rank of perceiving the beautiful Divine Names and the essential or effective perfections—are attained through embodiment, witnessing, illumination, and inspiration. In the lower and outward ranks of the Quran, Quranic knowledge is cast in the form of sound, word, and meaning, whether in the imaginal or material world. The more the Quran's knowledge descends and reaches the station of word, concept, and discursive and mental knowledge, the more it falls within the scope of the Quran's outer meaning, not its inner meaning (Javadi Amoli, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 43). The outer meanings have ranks, depending on which human faculty they are attained with. They are acquired through sensory, imaginal, and intellectual discursive knowledge, and intellectual knowledge is deeper than sensory knowledge.

Every stage of understanding the Quran's knowledge has its own specific effect and guidance. It is said that looking at the Quran is worship, reciting the Quran from the text is worship, and reflecting on and contemplating its verses is worship. Therefore, closeness to the Quran's knowledge at any level has its own specific light and guidance, each of which also has its own degrees and possesses an outer and an inner meaning.

To understand the inner meanings of the Quran, which are in the higher existential ranks, one must connect with the world of the unseen, just as the Prophet received from the Mother of the Book at the station of *Ladun*. "And indeed, you receive the Quran from one who is Wise and Knowing. "(al-Naml: 6) (Javadi Amoli, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 37-43)

## 5. The Existential Aspect of the Quran: Its Longitudinal Layers

In the discussion of the Quran's ontology, there are several points which will be addressed below.

### 5.1. The Concomitance of the Scientific and Objective Existence of the Quran: Transmitting and Sending Down

The scientific and objective existence of the Quran is never separated from each other (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1987 AD/1366 SH: 2, 604). Both are the rays of a single light that has manifested from the side of the Truth. The manifestation of the objective, luminous, existential truth of the Quran is called sending, and the manifestation of the scientific truth of the Quran is called transmitting. These two are not distinct from one another at the ranks of absolute oneness and singularity, except conceptually (in the world of singularity). However, in the lower ranks and the manifestation of multiplicities, they separate, and the Quran appears as a speaking Quran and a silent Quran, and the silent Quran—the Quran's cognitive aspect—is revealed upon the speaking Quran—the Quran's existential aspect. "He it is who sends down upon His servant verses of clear evidence "(al-Hadīd: 9).

The Quran emphasizes (al-Nisā': 153) that the request of the People of the Book in Medina for the descent of the Quran upon someone other than the Messenger of God is a tyrannical request and a great injustice (Tabātabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 5, 129 and 13, 205; Javadi Amoli, 2003 AD/1383 SH: 20). This is because divine verses in heavenly books are only sent down upon divine messengers. The criterion for this is Allāh's knowledge of who has the existential capacity to bear this burden (al-An'ām: 124).

### 5.2. The Quran, in Concomitance with the Perfect Human

The Quran is in concomitance with the truth of the Perfect Human (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1982 AD/1361 SH: 6, 23) and is one of its existential manifestations. This means that the truth of the human being has an existential encompassment of the Divine Book, because the place of the Quran's manifestation is the station and rank of the Muhammadan Truth (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 67-68). The Quran is in concomitance with the Messenger of God, "And followed the light which was sent down with him "(al-A'rāf: 157) (Javadi Amoli, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 39). Therefore, the place of the Quran's external existence is the truth of the Perfect Human, who is himself light and is homogenous with the Quran, which is also light (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 67-68).

The Perfect Human is someone who, in the cognitive aspect, is a manifestation of the Quran's knowledge and knows the outer and inner meaning of the Quran and is familiar with its interpretation and allegorical meaning. Such a person is a speaking Quran, meaning an existential Quran that has been embodied externally, like the pure progeny of the Prophet, because the knowledge and meanings of the Quran reside in their noble souls. In the

existential aspect, they have a superior existential rank to the Quran. Therefore, the Perfect Human and the impeccable Imam are the embodied Quran (Javadi Amoli, 2014 AD/1383 SH: 31).

*Sadr al-Muta'allihīn* considered the original copy of the Holy Book to be the Perfect Human and made the recitation of verses from that original copy conditional on the tearing of thousands of veils, and he considers the intellect, like imagination and sense, to be a veil (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1981: 7, 30; Javadi Amoli, 2017 AD/1386 SH: 1, 235).

The layers of the Quran's meaning, correspond to the existential realms of the Perfect Human. The outer meaning of the Quran must be aligned with the outer meaning of the Imam, meaning the Imam's understanding of the outer meaning of the Quran. Thus, the most complete understanding of the outer meaning of the Quran belongs to the Perfect Human, and the most complete understanding of the Quran's inner meaning and its interpretation belongs to the Imam. The same is true for the subtleties and allusions of the Quran; in all cases, the criterion for understanding them is the Perfect Human. "Only he who is addressed by the Quran knows it. "Therefore, the final degree of the Quran, which is *Umm al-Kitāb*, is also the place of the Imam's presence: "And indeed, it is in *Umm al-Kitāb* with Us, exalted and wise. " From this, one can conclude that the Perfect Human and the truth of the Quran are united at the station of simplicity and collection and are the best example of the union of the knower and the known (Javadi Amoli, 2017 AD/1386 SH: 1, 235).

### **5.3. The Existential Ranks or Ontological Layers of the Quran**

The Quran has a single external, absolute existence whose scope extends from the material world to the intellectual world, then to the Divine world, and finally to the rank of the Essential Oneness, and it encompasses all these ranks in an integrated manner. Each rank is realized in its own place and has its own specific ruling. The "External existence of the Quran "refers to its true existence in the different worlds (Javadi Amoli, 2014 AD/1383 SH: 31).

It is because of this vastness of the Quran's existence that it is sometimes referred to with a distant demonstrative, "That is the Book in which there is no doubt, " (al-Baqarah: 2) and sometimes with a near demonstrative, "Indeed, this Quran guides to that which is most upright. "(al-Isrā': 9) The secret behind this duality of expression is that the Quran has ranks. Where it says "This Quran, "it speaks of guidance in the earthly world, and where it says "That is the Book, "it speaks of the "unseen "in the World of the Unseen, "who believe in the unseen. "(al-Baqarah: 3) This indicates that the Quran has a rank of "*Ladallāh* "(at Allāh's disposal), of the "Unseen, "and of a "Protected book "which is the truth, the inner reality, and the origin of the lower rank of the Quran that has manifested in the perceptible world, as "*Lada al-Nās* "(with the people) and in clear Arabic words. It is something made: "Indeed, We have made it a Quran in Arabic that you may understand. "That is, We made that simple truth (referred to with the pronoun "it") in the station of its descent by divine act, and We manifested its unseen knowledge in the form of Arabic words and provided it to them in the form of a written book. "And if We had sent down to you a book on paper and they touched it with their hands. " (al-An‘ām: 7) ( Javadi Amoli, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 35-36)

All the contents of the Quran lead to monotheism and the World of Absolute Oneness (the unity of truth despite the multiplicity of ranks and subtleties). This topic requires much study and contemplation, a brief part of which is mentioned below.

### *5.3.1. The Concomitance of the Written Book and the Cosmic Book*

The Holy Quran, which is Allāh's Written Book, has both concomitance and harmony and unity—of the inner and outer kind— (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1970: 1, 120) with the universe's Cosmic Book. This means that if everything related to the universe and humanity—including the physical world, the angelic world, the world of power, the earth, the heavens, the Throne, the Footstool, and the angels—were to be formed into a book, that book would be the Holy Quran.

Likewise, the Holy Quran, which is Allāh's Written Book, if it were to manifest in an objective and external existence, would be transformed into the heavens and the earths and what is in them and between them, the Throne and the Footstool, the Tablet and the Pen, the Preserved Tablet, the Tablet of Erasing and Affirming, and the like. The same is said about the Perfect Impeccable Human, because both are in harmony with each other, and their difference is like that between a text and a commentary, or a summary and a detailed explanation. With this understanding, some consider the human to be the minor world and the universe the major world, while others consider the universe the minor world and the human the major world (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1970: 1, 120; Javadi Amoli, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 1, 120; Hasanzadeh Amoli, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 2, 193-194).

### *5.3.2. Application of the Quran's Ranks to Existential Ranks*

With the help of Quranic verses and the principles of mysticism, some of the existential ranks of the Quran are mentioned (Hasanzadeh Amoli, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 2, 179).

#### *5.3.2.1. The Ranks of the Quran's Existence in the Divine Realm*

Some of the Quran's ranks are in the Divine Realm, or the World of Necessity, which are after the rank of the Essence and the Unseen of the Unseen, which are not accessible. The Divine Realm has ranks: the station of Absolute Oneness (the First Determination and the First Manifestation), the station of Singularity and Divinity (the Second Determination and the Second Manifestation), the Divine Names and Attributes (the Names of the Agents and Divine Operators), and the Fixed Essences (the receptive essences or the scientific existence of realities and quiddities in the rank of Divine Knowledge and before creation). The truth of the Quran exists in all these ranks, because it is stated in mystical books that "Existential Identities "whatever they may be, are from the ranks of the manifestations of the Essence of the Almighty God and the flashes of His glory and beauty, and the existential identity of the Quran is no exception to this rule (Ashtiyani, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 250-251). Therefore, the existential ranks of the Quran in the stations of the Divine Realm are...

#### *A) Quran at the Level of Oneness*

The highest level of the divine realm is the "level of Oneness." At this level, there is true unity, and multiplicity exists only as a unified, essential aspect, with no external multiplicity

present. According to mystics, the level of "*Aw Adnā*" mentioned in the verse, "Then he drew near and came down, until he was two bow-lengths away or even closer," (al-Najm: 8-9) refers to this station.

This is the ultimate level that the human essence, as a superior being, can reach.

"*Aw Adnā*" marks the end of the stages of *Wilāyah* and annihilation (*Fanā*)—the station of two bow-lengths away (*Qāb Qawsayn*). After the stages of annihilation are complete, the stages of Prophethood and Imamate—survival after annihilation, or "*Aw Adnā*"—begin, which themselves have many levels (Muhaqqiq Tūsī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 3, 390-391; Kashani, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 283-284).

Some verses of the Quran allude to this reality, such as "Then He revealed to His servant what He revealed," (al-Najm :10) which speaks of revelation. This means a sublime reality of the Quran's existential levels, known as "*Umm al-Kitāb*" (the Mother of the Book), is united with the perfect, most complete human being (the Muhammadan Reality) and is an aspect of his being (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 1, 111).

Revelation at this level differs from revelation at lower levels, as this is the "Station of survival after annihilation." In this station, revelation has a unique meaning because the word of God (*Kalām Allāh*) and the book of God (*Kitāb Allāh*), which is the reality of the Quran, is only an aspect of the essential oneness of truth and has no real or even an assumed independence (Muhaqqiq Tūsī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 3, 390-391; Kashani, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 283-284).

In the verse, "And with Him is the Mother of the Book," (al-Rā' d: 39) the pronoun "He" (*Hā*) in "With Him" ('*Indahū*) refers to absolute identity (Hasanzadeh Amoli, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 2, 184-186). This indicates that the origin of all divine books and words is *Umm al-Kitāb*, which is the "First Emanation" and the "Opener of the Book." (It should not be hidden that every higher existential level of the Quran is the Mother of the Book and the origin relative to its lower level; these are relative Mothers of the Book, but the absolute Mother of the Book is this very level). Just as the Surah *al-Fātiḥah* is the essence of all Quranic knowledge, so too is *Umm al-Kitāb* the essence and summary of all existential levels of the divine book. It is called *Fātiḥah* because it is the first manifestation with which the book of existence begins (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 1, 111). It is the source of all creative words and is infused throughout all beings (Tirmidhī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 324-325). It is like the ink for the pen of creation mentioned in the verse, "Nūn. By the pen and what they inscribe." (al-Qalam: 1)(Janābadhī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 4, 194)

*Umm al-Kitāb* is the reality of prophethood and the perfect human being, whose parts are equal to the parts of prophethood (Tirmidhī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 246-247; Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 60-65). It is such a person who is the Caliph of God. As Imam Ali stated, "Indeed, the entire Quran is in the letter *Bā'* of *Bismillāh*, and I am the dot under the *Bā'*." (Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 7, 32; Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 1983 AD/1363 SH: 21)

This is because this dot is the original copy of the Quran (Hasanzadeh Amoli, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 2, 177 and 190). Since the perfect human being encompasses all levels of perfection and is the Caliph of God, the first level of the Quran's revelation must be united with the perfect human being (Hasanzadeh Amoli, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 2, 185).

This level is called the Throne of Identity ('Arsh al-Huwīyyah) or the Throne of Life ('Arsh al-Hayāt). The verse, "And His Throne was upon the water," (Hūd: 7) alludes to this, where the pronoun "His" (*Hu*) indicates that the Throne is indeed the Throne of Identity, and its foundation is "The Water". The verse, "And We made from water every living thing," indicates that this Throne is indeed the Throne of Life (Ibn 'Arabī, 1906 AD/1336 AH: 52-53).

### **6. Quran at the Level of Unity**

At the level of unity or divinity, unity is a comprehensive or all-encompassing unity, and it is real, but the multiplicity is a comprehensive, conceptual multiplicity. This is because Allāh is the one essence that encompasses all divine attributes in a comprehensive manner. At this level, too, there is a level of the Quran and Quranic revelation, as in the verse, "There has come to you from Allāh a light and a clear book." (al-Mā'idah: 15) This verse considers the origin of the Quran's existence to be the divine world (*Min Allāh*) or the "all-encompassing unity" level and its reality to be light, which is the reality of knowledge. Because the reality of the book at this level is light, it is called "*Kitāb Mubīn*" (a clear book). This is because light is a level of the creative word of truth that is manifest by itself and makes other things manifest, and by its manifestation, it creates the divine signs (*Āyāt*) and makes the multiplicities manifest (Tabātabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 5, 244).

In the verse, "*Tāsīn*, these are the verses of the Quran and a clear book," (al-Naml: 1) the word "These" (*Tilka*) indicates that the verses of the Quran are located in a distant and high station within the clear book. The word "Verses" signifies the manifestation of multiplicities, although the multiplicity here is a conceptual, comprehensive multiplicity within the book, which is itself an aspect of divinity and the name of God (Allāh), which encompasses all multiplicities. The verse, "A book whose verses have been perfected," (Hūd: 1) refers to this level of the Quran's existence and comprehensive unity, where before their detailed and diverse manifestation, the verses had a perfected and simple existential unity, after which they became detailed and diverse (Sabzevari, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 3, 530; Qomshei, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 136: Introduction; Homaei, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 1, 210).

In a narration interpreting the verses "*Hāmīm*, and the clear book: "We sent it down on a blessed night. Indeed, We were warners. In that night is made distinct every wise matter," the level of the clear book is considered to be united with the luminous existence of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Imam Ali (AS) (Kulaynī, 1942 AD/1362 AH: 1, 479).

### **7. Quran at the Level of Divine Names and Attributes**

Regarding the existence of the Quran in the world of "Names and Attributes," the Quran says, "A book whose verses have been detailed as an Arabic Quran for a people who know; a revelation from the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful." (al-Fuṣṣilat: 2-3) The verse indicates that the Quran, after the level of divinity and the comprehensive divine name (Allāh) which contains all names and attributes in a simple and summarized form, first originates from the principles of the seven main names that permeate all divine names, at the stage of the detailed names and attributes. The following explores some of the existential levels of the Quran within the divine names, inspired by these verses:

### 7.1. *Quran at the Level of the Name al-Rahmān (The Most Compassionate)*

According to the verse, "Hāmīm, a revelation from the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful, a book whose verses have been detailed as an Arabic Quran for a people who know." (al-Fuṣṣilat: 2-3) At the level of names and attributes, the divine creative book first originates from the name *al-Rahmān* and is revealed from that station to the world of creation. The origin of the divine book is the name *al-Rahmān*, which is the most general of the divine names. It is the source of the Quran's revelation through its union with the name *al-Rahīm*, which signifies God's special and gracious mercy. Therefore, the Arabic Quran is in fact the manifestation of the union of the names *al-Rahmān* and *al-Rahīm* (Amoli, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 569).

The name *al-Rahmān* is the manifest aspect of the name Allāh, and the name Allāh is its hidden aspect. The name Allāh encompasses multiplicities, and all nominal multiplicities are contained within it. However, the name *al-Rahmān*, which is at a level subsequent to the name Allāh, is the name that manifests and gives existence to multiplicities (Janābadhī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 2, 456). God Almighty says, "Say, call upon Allāh or call upon *al-Rahmān*. By whichever name you call, to Him belong the most beautiful names." (al-Isrā': 110) This means God's essence can be called by the name Allāh or *al-Rahmān*; by whichever name He is called, it is in truth Him who is called (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 13, 223). This is because each of these two names has beautiful names that are its branches and subsets. Besides the names Allāh and *al-Rahmān*, every general name is a relative "Greatest Name" with respect to the names it covers. However, Allāh and *al-Rahmān* are the absolute Greatest Names (Javadi Amoli, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 2, 77-78).

The essential names of God, such as Allāh and *al-Rahmān*, are referred to as "*Mafātīh al-Ghayb*" (Keys to the Unseen). They are the source of all names, both divine (*Haqqī*) and cosmic (*Khalqī*). This is because the Keys to the Unseen are the source of the "Mothers of Names" or the seven names (The Living, The Knowing, The Powerful, The Willing, The Speaking, The Hearing, and The Seeing), from which all other names are branches. This is alluded to in Quranic verses, such as: "Say, if the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought another sea like it as a supply." (al-Kahf: 109) Here, "My Lord" (*Rabbī*) refers to the Lord of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which is the "Greater Muhammadan Spirit," who resides at the level of unity. This is referred to by the word "He" (*Huwa*) and is the hidden aspect of the name Allāh, which is the comprehensive name of all divine names, and everything ultimately returns to Him: "And to Him will all matters be returned." (Hūd: 123) The verse indicates that the words of Muhammad's Lord have no end (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 104-106).

### 7.2. *Quran at the Level of the Name al-Hayy (The Living)*

From the subsets of the name *al-Rahmān* at the level of the essence is the name *al-Hayy*. The name *al-Rahmān* (The Expansive Existence) is the name through which existence is bestowed upon all beings. Wherever existence is, the "Armies" (agents) of existence—which are life, knowledge, power, will, etc.—are also present. Therefore, the name *al-Rahmān* encompasses and surrounds the names *al-Hayy*, *al-'Alīm* (The Knowing), *al-Murīd* (The willing), *al-*

*Mutakallim* (The speaking), *al-Qadīr* (The powerful), *al-Jawād* (The generous), and *al-Ādil* (The just) (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 62).

Some verses in the Quran refer to this issue, including "*Alif Lām Mīm*. Allāh, there is no god but Him, the Living, the Self-Subsisting. He has revealed to you the Book with the truth, confirming what came before it, and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel." (Āli 'Imrān: 1-3)

In these verses, before mentioning the revelation of the Quran, two names of God, the revealer of the Quran, are presented: "*al-Hayy*," which is the comprehensive name of the names of the essence, and "*al-Qayyūm*," which is the comprehensive name of the names of action. It says that the revelation of the Holy Quran originated from the "Living, Self-Subsisting" (*Hayy Qayyūm*) source, and it is due to the nominal union between *al-Hayy* (the head of the names of attributes) and *al-Qayyūm* (the head of the names of action). It also states that the God who is the Living, the Self-Subsisting, and there is no god but Him, revealed His Quran and book to you in the companionship and association with the truth (due to the "truth created by" or the mystical expansive existence) (Javadi Amoli, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 27). It also indicates that the reality of the Quran at that level is associated with the "Truth created by," or the expansive existence, and in fact, the truth is the cause for the Quran's revelation, as in "And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them except with the truth." (al-Aḥqāf: 3; al-Hijr: 85) (Yazdanpanah, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 1, 554-559)

It is also called the Comprehensive Treasury or the "Mother of the Book" inscribed on an unfolded scroll: "And a book inscribed; on an unfolded scroll." (al-Ṭūr: 2-3) This indicates that the source of the inscribed book is *Umm al-Kitāb* (Yazdanpanah, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 1, 554-559).

### 7.3. *Quran at the Level of the Name al-Rabb (The Lord)*

The "Level of Lordship" is the stage after the Essential *al-Rahmān*, which is the Essential *al-Rabb*. This is the place of the dominance of the name *al-Rabb*, which encompasses the Lordship of all names in the divine realm and is the Throne of Names (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 115; Qūnawī, 1961 AD/1381 AH: 162-168). Since all divine names desire to manifest their rule in the world of existence, a kind of conflict arises among the divine names for the exercise of their authority in the world of creation. Here, it is the name *al-Rabb* that decrees which name's rule and authority should be manifested and which should remain hidden, in order to resolve this conflict (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 1, 323-324). The verse, "He disposes the matter and details the verses that you may be certain of the meeting with your Lord," (al-Ra'ḍ: 2) indicates that the name *al-Mudabbir* (The Disposer) in union with the name *al-Mufaṣṣil* (The Detailer) manifests the divine verses in the world of creation in a fitting manner (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 1, 323-324; Fanari, 2010: 396).

At the level of *al-Rahmān*, unity is real simplicity and summarization. For this reason, its manifestation in the world of creation (divine actions) is the Muhammadan Spirit, which is pure abstraction. However, at the level of essential Lordship, unity and summarization are conceptual and relative. For this reason, its manifestation in the world of creation (divine actions) is the station of the Muhammadan Universal Soul, which supervises the entire

physical realm and manages all the spiritual and material worlds, and is the Lord of the worlds (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 115; Qeysari, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 696). This is located after the Lord of Lords or the Lord of Muhammad (PBUH) (Amoli, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 6, 43 and 51).

An existential level of the book of God is united with the name *al-Rabb* and is revealed from there: "Indeed, it is a noble Quran; in a protected book; none can touch it except the purified; a revelation from the Lord of the worlds." (al-Wāqi‘ah: 77-80) The existential level of the book at the level of the name *al-Rabb* is the same existential level as the Lord of the worlds at the second determination, which is after the Lord of Muhammad at the first determination and has less simplicity and summarization (Qūnawī, 1961 AD/1381 AH: 168; Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 123). Based on the mentioned verse, the existential rank of the Quran at the level of the Lord of the worlds is the source of the revelation of the other existential levels of the Quran (Qūnawī, 1961 AD/1381 AH: 155-162 and 222).

### 7.3.1. Existential Levels of the Quran in the Created Realm

The created realm, also called the world of existence or contingency, is in fact the Divine inscribed book. This means the entire world of contingency is the divine inscribed book, which is written on an unfolded scroll (*Raqq Manshūr*) (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1970: 3, 455), which the existence is revealed from the divine realm. Since contingent existence has levels, this inscribed book also has levels (Hasanzadeh Amoli, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 2, 182).

#### 1. Universal Intellect or Spiritual Throne (*Tabāṭabā’ī*, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 14, 129)

This is the first existential level in the world of creation (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1994: 4, 325). The Spiritual Throne is the place of the Supreme Pen (Qalam A’la), the "First Intellect" or "Universal Intellect," and the "Greater Spirit" and the "subjugated angels." (Fanari, 2010: 2, 391; Ibn ‘Arabī, 1970: 1, 290; Khomeini, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 272) The Supreme Pen encompasses all contingent determinations, and it is through this creative pen that the beings of the world of contingency are inscribed on the luminous pages and scrolls of existence (Fanari, 2010: 395; Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 110). In the Quran, God Almighty refers to this reality with the names "*Haqq*" (Truth), "*Qalam*" (Pen), and "*Rūh*" (Spirit), and in tradition, it is mentioned with the name Intellect (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1906 AD/1336 AH: 51-52).

The Quran says, "And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them except with the truth," (al-Hijr: 15) which means God created the heavens and the earth through the truth. God's purpose in manifesting His words is to manifest the truth: "God intends to establish the truth with His words." (al-Anfāl: 7) Therefore, whether in creative or transcribed words, it is this "First Intellect" or "Truth" that manifests, and it is this Supreme Pen that details the realities (*Tabāṭabā’ī*, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 1, 240). The intellectual level of the Quran, which presides over and authenticates all divine books, is revealed through the truth (First Intellect) : "And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, confirming what came before it of the Book and presiding over it." (al-Mā’idah: 48) Faith in God and the book that came from the truth is necessary: "And why should we not believe in Allāh and what has come to us of the truth?" (al-Mā’idah: 84) (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1970: 3, 160)

Thus, the reality of the Quran existed at the level of the Spiritual Throne and was then

revealed and detailed. The Supreme Throne is the same as the Glorious Throne ('*Arsh Majīd*) (Ibn 'Arabī, 1906 AD/1336 AH: 52-53). The Quran states, "Possessor of the Glorious Throne." (al-Burūj: 15) (Ibn 'Arabī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 1, 83) This level of ownership over all that is other than God is realized at the level of the Pen (Janābadhī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 4, 245). The origin and inner reality of the Glorious Quran are here, and from this level, the Quran is written on the Preserved Tablet: "But it is a glorious Quran; in a preserved tablet." (al-Burūj: 21-22) This is because it was written on the Throne and the Preserved Tablet by the Supreme Pen and was revealed (Qummī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 2, 415).

## 2. Whole Soul or Great Throne ('*Arsh 'Aẓīm*)

This is the second level in the world of creation (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 1, 290; Ibn 'Arabī, 1994: 4, 325; Fanari, 2010: 391). "And He is the Lord of the Great Throne." (al-Tawbah: 129; al-Naml: 26; al-Mu'minūn: 86) At a level lower than the Spiritual Throne, the Preserved Tablet is the place of the Universal Soul (the fixed universal rational soul) (Fanari, 2010: 395-396; Ibn 'Arabī, 1906 AD/1336 AH: 52-53). When God Almighty created the Supreme Pen, He next created the Universal Soul, which is the same as the Preserved Tablet and is the place of the noble angels. The Great Throne or the "Preserved Tablet" is referred to in verses such as "But it is a glorious Quran; in a preserved tablet." (al-Burūj: 21-22)

The "Preserved Tablet" is the detailed manifestation of all realities, which existed in a summarized and simple form on the Spiritual Throne (the Glorious Throne) and were written in detail on the Preserved Tablet by the Supreme Pen: "An admonition and a detailed explanation of all things." (al-A'rāf: 145) (Ibn 'Arabī, 1906 AD/1336 AH: 59-60) The "Preserved Tablet" is the place where books are revealed, and the first book, the "Glorious Quran," was revealed on the Preserved Tablet (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 2, 18). Of course, "*Umm al-Kitāb*" is also applied to the Preserved Tablet, as every higher level of the Quran is the mother and origin of its lower level (Rouzbahan, 2008: 3, 275).

Therefore, the manifestation of the Supreme Pen in the world of creation is the Throne, which is the manifestation of the level of oneness. Similarly, the manifestation of the Universal Soul or the Preserved Tablet is the "Great Throne," which is the manifestation of unity (Forghani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 2007 AD/1428 AH: 1, 131-135).

## 3. Physical Throne or Universal Nature

In mysticism, this includes the world of archetypal forms and the material world, both celestial and elemental (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 1, 290; Ibn 'Arabī, 1996: 4, 325). This is the "Throne of al-Rahmān": "The Most Compassionate is established on the Throne." (Tāhā: 5)

This is a Throne that has eight bearers (al-Hāqqah: 17) and is the beginning of the world of composition (Ibn 'Arabī, 1906 AD/1336 AH: 57). The Quran was revealed from the Merciful Throne: "A revelation from Him who created the earth and the high heavens. The Most Compassionate is established on the Throne." (Tāhā: 4-5) This Throne encompasses and manages the world of archetypal forms and the material world: "Then He established Himself on the Throne, managing the matter." (Yūnus: 3) (Ibn 'Arabī, 1906 AD/1336 AH: 56)

The reality of the divine book at the level of the Merciful Throne manifests in the form of "*al-Furqān*" (the Criterion) (Ibn 'Arabī, 1970: 1, 217): "Blessed is He who sent down the

Criterion upon His servant that he may be a warner to the worlds" (al-Furqān: 1). Since the heart of the believer is the Throne of *al-Rahmān*, the Quran at the level of the Merciful Throne is revealed to the heart of the Messenger of God: "The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down. Upon your heart."

(al-Shu‘arā’: 193-194) (Janābadhī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 3, 143) The Quran is first revealed on the Night of *Qadr* to the heart of the Messenger of God or the level of his Spirit, and then it is revealed in the form of the Arabic Quran, and the realities that have perfection and summarization become distinct: "In that night is made distinct every wise matter. A command from Us. Indeed, We were senders."

(al-Dukhān: 4-7)

#### 4. Noble Throne ('Arsh Karīm) or the *Kursīyy*

This includes the details of the world of the heavens and the elements and their primordial matter (*Habā'*) (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1970: 1, 290; Ibn ‘Arabī, 1996: 4, 325). Based on the verse, "His chair extends over the heavens and the earth" (al-Baqarah: 255), the station of the *Kursīyy* (Chair) includes the heavens and the earth, which is the entirety of the physical contingent system (Javadi Amoli, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 12, 127). The *Kursīyy* refers to the existential level of divine knowledge, which is also called the divine creative book (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 1, 83). It is the place of the "Managing Angels" who manage the material world (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1970: 1, 290; Ibn ‘Arabī, 1996: 4, 325). The archetypal forms are in fact the suspended similitudes from the Glorious Throne in the Noble Chair (Sabzevari, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 1, 22).

#### 5. The External Existence of the Quran

Finally, this level appears at the last existential level and takes on the garment of material existence. It flows from the heart of the perfect human being (Tustarī, 2002 AD/1423 AH: 18) to his chest and then to his tongue, taking on a verbal existence (Rouzbahan, 2008: 3, 212), and finally a written existence: "Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran that you might understand." (Yūsuf: 2) (Qūnawī, 1973 AD/1372 AH: 162; Ibn ‘Arabī, 1970: 3, 95 and 161)

This level is the corporeal (material) and verbal level of the Quran that was revealed in the Arabic language to the Prophet of Islam: "This is the Book about which there is no doubt, guidance for the righteous." (al-Baqarah: 2)

### Conclusion

The existence of the Quran is a reality with many levels, originating in the eternal knowledge of God and manifesting from there. In each manifestation, the Quran appears with a specific existence. Therefore, it has many names that are applied to it according to its existential stations. The precise determination of the Quran's name at each existential level is only possible for divine prophets, impeccable imams, and divine saints. This article has attempted to use Quranic verses to explain some of the names of each existential level, some of the properties of each level, or at least the name of the existential level where the Quran is present, which is a unique effort.

The Quran exists in conjunction with the reality of the perfect human being and is one of the manifestations of his existence. Like him, its existential scope extends from the world of nature to the level of essential unity. Levels of the Quran exist in the divine realm, which includes the stations of unity, oneness, divine names and attributes, and fixed essences. The existential level of the Quran at the level of unity is called "*Umm al-Kitāb*." At the level of oneness, it is called "*Kitāb Mubīn*." At the stage of names and attributes, the Quran has been revealed and is a manifestation of universal names like *al-Rahmān*, *al-Rahīm*, and *al-Ḥayy*. At the stage of the created realm, the Quran has also passed through levels of intellectual, spiritual, archetypal, and material existence. The Quran is present on the Supreme Throne and has a purely intellectual and abstract existence called the "Supreme Pen." At the level of the Universal Soul, the Quran acquires a spiritual existence and is called the "Preserved Tablet." At the stage of the physical Throne or universal nature, the Quran is called the "Throne of *al-Rahmān*." At the stage of the Quran's existence in the physical Chair, it is called the "Noble Chair" or the "Divine Book." Finally, at the stage of its material, elemental existence, the Quran flows from the heart of the perfect human being to his chest and then to his tongue, acquiring a verbal existence and finally a written existence. This is the corporeal (material) and verbal level of the Quran, which was revealed in the Arabic language to the Prophet of Islam.

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