

Literally as Recited — A Divine Hiatus from the Tongue of Shaykh ‘Antar

"حرفياً كما تليت" — وقفة إلهية من لسان الشيخ عنتر

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the rhetorical juncture between *malikūn li...* and *yawma al dīn* as recited by Shaykh ‘Antar and attested by three canonical *qurrā’*. Far from a grammatical anomaly, the pause between the possessive particle *li* and its delayed complement *yawma al dīn* stages a deliberate rupture — one that dramatises divine infinity through textual suspense. Expected grammar would demand *yawm i* (*kasra*, genitive, *jar majrūr*) as the complement of *li*; instead, the recitation gives *yawm a* (*fatha*, accusative, *mansūb*). This is a clear violation of the grammatical norm of the highest order — but for excellent reasons, as we will see. Three macro processes unfold: first, cohesion *الفصاحة* collapses, as the expected syntactic bond is withheld to resist enumeration and listing (i.e. that God possesses X & Y *حاشى لله*); second, the MiniMax principle falters, forcing maximal interpretive effort from minimal sense-making; and third, coherence *البلاغة* is restored through a circumstantial adverbial (*yawma al dīn*) that seals the deal. This rhetorical choreography — rooted in recitation, ratified by tradition, and stylised through ‘informativity’ (the element of surprise *المباغطة الأسلوبية*) — invites a rethinking of appropriateness, effectiveness, and the grammar of divine dominion (Beaugrande 1980).

الخلاصة

تفحص هذه المقالة المفصل البلاغي بين قراءتين "مالك ل... و مالك يوم الدين" كما جاء في تلاوة الشيخ عنتر مسلم، وكما أثبتته ثلاثة من القراء العشرة المتواترين. فبعداً عن كون "مالك ل" شذوذاً نحوياً، يُمثّل الوقف بين لام المِلْكِيَّة (ل) ومتممها المتأخّر (يوم الدين) انقطاعاً مقصوداً. يُدرج لانهاية القدرة الإلهية عبر تشويق نصّي محسوب. فالنحو المتوقع يقتضي (يوم) بالكسرة، أي حالة الجر، مكتملاً لحرف الجر اللام "ل" بينما تعطي التلاوة (يوم) بالفتحة، أي حالة النصب. وهذا خرق واضح لأرفع القواعد النحوية، ولكن لأسباب بليغة، كما سنرى.

تتكشف خلال البحث ثلاثة مسارات كبرى:

أولاً، ينهار التماسك (الفصاحة) لأن الرابطة النحوية المتوقعة تُحجب عمداً لمنع التعداد (أي الادعاء بأن الله يملك س، أو ص). حاشى لله. ثانياً، يختل مبدأ الميني ماكس (MiniMax) أو (أدنى الأقصى، أو نقطة الاختيار)، فيُجبر السامع على بذل أقصى جهد تأويلي انطلاقاً من أقل قدر من الدلالة الظاهرة.

ثالثاً، يُستعاد الاتساق (البلاغي) من خلال الظرف (يوم الدين) الذي يُغلق المعنى ويستكمل البناء الدلالي.

هذا الإخراج البلاغي جذر التلاوة، ومصدّق بالتراث، ومصاغ وفق مبدأ "الإبلاغية" (مبدأ المباغطة الأسلوبية). يدعو إلى إعادة التفكير في مبادئ الملاءمة والفاعلية، وفي قواعد لغة ملكوت السماء. (روبرت بيوكراند، ١٩٨٠).

Keywords الكلمات المفتاحية

التلاوة القرآنية، الانقطاع البلاغي، التماسك النصي، السيادة الإلهية، مبدأ (أدنى الأقصى، ميني ماكس)

Qur’anic recitation, rhetorical rupture, cohesion, divine dominion, MiniMax principle

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1. GLOSSARY OF RHETORICAL FORCES

Before the text unfolds, the reader must be armed — not with definitions, but with doctrinal coordinates.

Cohesion: Surface-level ‘sticking together’. The glue of the syntax, where particles and phrases obey expected grammatical bonds.

Coherence: Deep-level ‘hanging together’. The logic of meaning, where ideas orbit a shared gravitational pull — even if cohesion falters.

MiniMax Principle: The listener’s expectation that minimal effort will yield maximal reward. A law of cognitive economy, often violated for rhetorical gain.

Efficiency: The maintenance of MiniMax. When language flows with ease, and meaning arrives without resistance.

Effectiveness: The deliberate violation of MiniMax — for a good reason. When rupture serves revelation, and effort deepens understanding.¹

Appropriateness: The last court of appeal. When all else fails, this principle judges whether a rhetorical move, however unorthodox, still feels right.

These six forces will govern the spiral between *malikūn li...* and *yawma al-dīn*. The rupture is coming — and it will be doctrinal.

- Capsule Seal: The pause is not a silence — it is a rupture. And the grammar of God is not bound by syntax, but by revelation.

2. CANONIZED LONG BEFORE ANTAR

At the outset it must be noted that the form *Mālikun li-yawm al-dīn* is not a modern innovation. Ibn al-Jazari, the supreme authority on the ten canonical readings, explicitly records this variant in his monumental *al-Nashr fī al-Qirā’āt al-‘Ashr* (vol. 1, pp. 242–243), listing it among the attested recitations of the *Fātiḥa*. Long before him, Abu ‘Amr al-Dani in *al-Taysīr fī al-Qirā’āt al-Sab‘* (p. 33) also mentions the insertion of the preposition *li* with *Mālikun*, noting that “it has been recited as *Mālikun li-yawm al-dīn*.” These references establish that the reading is explicit, canonical, and documented a millennium before Shaykh ‘Antar’s² performance.

2.1 Three Rhetorical Processes at the Juncture of *Malikūn li...* and *Yawma al-Dīn*

a. Ellipsis and the Breakdown of Cohesion

The possessive particle *li-* typically demands a list of owned entities. But here, the syntax halts — no objects follow. This ellipsis is not a grammatical failure; it is a deliberate interruption. Cohesion breaks down to resist enumeration, dramatising that divine ownership is limitless, unlistable, and beyond syntactic capture.

b. Minimax Principle Threatened:

The phrase (and sense-making) is minimal, yet the listener must exert maximal effort to interpret it (and somehow make sense). This violates the MiniMax principle, which promotes linguistic efficiency: minimal input, maximal clarity. Instead, the text suspends ease, forcing the listener to ask: What is owned? When is it owned? The rhetorical Tension escalates, heightening the text’s ‘informativity’ through cognitive strain.

Schematically,

Tension escalates, heightening the text’s ‘informativity’ through cognitive strain.

— مَالِكٌ... A moment of R U P T U R E — thwarting any desire to continue normally and neatly enumerate X, Y, Z.

Cohesion falters, and to rescue coherence the text shifts strategy: it describes the Day as “some” Day —

يَوْمًا Day the likes of which no eyes have ever seen. It is *يَوْمَ الدِّينِ*.

c. Restoration via Circumstantial Adverbial

Coherence is restored not by listing objects, but by anchoring dominion in time. The phrase *yawma al-dīn* (“on the Day of Judgment”) supplies a circumstantial adverbial that seals the gap. It answers the implicit question —

When is infinite ownership manifest? Is it on a normal day? — Or is it

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ، وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ ، وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ

"the Day man will flee from his own brother, his mother, his father, his wife, his children?"

This is divine timing. (Hatim 2019)

Capsule Seal: The juncture is not a pause — it is a spiral. Grammar breaks, cognition strains, and doctrine rises.

¹ Drawing on Beaugrande’s (1980) notions of informativity, effectiveness, and appropriateness, Prof. Hatim interprets this grammatical rupture as a ‘grammar of divine dominion. MJALS

² ‘Antar Sa’id Musallam (1936–2002) Egyptian Qur’ān Reciter ‘Antar Sa’id Musallam (17 November 1936 – 6 September 2002) was a prominent Egyptian Qur’ān reciter and one of the notable figures in the modern history of Qur’ānic performance. Born in the village of al-‘Immah in the Qutour district of al-Gharbiyya Governorate, he completed the memorization of the Qur’ān at the age of eight. An illness in early childhood resulted in permanent loss of eyesight, a circumstance that contributed to his early immersion in Qur’ānic study and auditory mastery.

3. MORE THAN RIGHTFULLY OWNED: QUR'ANIC SOVEREIGNTY AND THE LAM OF WORTH ¹ لام الاستحقاق DEDICATION

It is worth noting that, despite what giant authorities such as Al-Dānī Ibn Al-Sayrafī² maintain (see References below), Shaykh 'Antar has, all too often, been unfairly vilified by certain narrow purist circles — criticised not for error, but for courage. Yet, from my humble position as a lifelong student of the Qur'anic text, I see in him not deviation, but *precedent*: an early practitioner of Qur'anic semiotics and pragmatics, long before such terms entered academic discourse.

For this reason, I say without hesitation: I will defend his insight and integrity to my dying breath. And so, I dedicate this reflection to his *روحه الطاهرة*—a pure soul who heard in the Qur'an what many merely recite.³

3.1 When a Letter Awakens Meaning: A Forgotten “Lām” in al-Fātiḥa

There are moments when a familiar verse opens unexpectedly, as though a window long closed has been quietly unlatched. One such moment occurred while listening to a recitation of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* by the late Shaykh 'Antar in one of the lesser-known canonical readings (*al-qirā'āt al-'ashr*). At the verse (مَالِكِ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ), the reciter voiced it instead as:

مَالِكِ لِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Mālikun li-Yawm ad-Dīn

A subtle shift — just one letter added: the “lām” (ل) — yet the meaning expanded in a profound way.

Conclusion :

الملك غير المالك، وشتان بين المالك والمستحق للملك. أما هنا، فقد جمع بين الثلاثة

الله الملك والمالك والمستحق

3.2 A Gentle Introduction — The Lost “Lām”

There are times when the Qur'an — though recited thousands of times — suddenly opens a new door. A familiar verse breathes unfamiliar meaning, not through new words, but through a single, almost silent letter.

Recently, while listening to Sheikh Antar recite *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, something remarkable occurred during the verse:

(مَالِكِ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ)

Instead of the familiar recitation, he read it as:

مَالِكِ لِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ Mālikun li-Yawm ad-Dīn

acquired nunnation — “*malikun*”, and one small letter appeared — the lām (ل) — and yet it transformed the verse.

3.3 The Forgotten Letter — Lām of Worth ¹ لام الأستحقاق

We already know this letter from the opening of al-Fātiḥa:

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ)

Here, the letter ل is not decoration — it is lām al-istihqāq: the *lām of rightful due and deservingness* or, as I prefer to call it, lām of Worth. It means:

“All praise belongs to Allah — by right, by worthiness, and by none other deserving of it.”

Over time, this lām remained locked in that verse. We seldom expect it to move, to relocate, to speak elsewhere in the Surah.

What Happens When the Lām Moves?

When Sheikh Antar recited “Mālikun li-Yawm ad-Dīn”, the meaning shifted:

¹ Supplementary Reflection: The Lām of Worth (lām al-istihqāq) and Divine Sovereignty in “Mālikun li-Yawm al-Dīn” (Hatim, 2025) “Editorial Note” *The following reflection from Hatim (2025) extends the analysis of this Qur'anic juncture by foregrounding the semantic-pragmatic role of lām al-istihqāq (“the Lām of Worth”), offering a complementary semiotic perspective on the recitation “Mālikun li-Yawm al-Dīn.” The original text of the main article remains unaltered.*

² Since I have referred to al-Dānī as a “giant authority” on the Ten Canonical Readings (*al-qirā'āt al-'ashr*), it is only fitting to introduce him briefly. He is Abū 'Amr al-Dānī (981–1053 CE), known as *Ibn al-Ṣayrafī*—a Mālikī jurist, *muḥaddith* (traditionist), and one of the foremost *muqri'ūn* (masters of Qur'ānic recitation) of al-Andalus. His contributions to the science of *qirā'āt* are foundational; indeed, he established an independent school of Qur'ān recitation and authored works that remain authoritative to this day.

³ I make no claim to expertise in the science of the Ten Readings (*al-qirā'āt al-'ashr*), nor do I possess comprehensive access to all its canonical sources. My observations are based on limited yet reputable materials, and on textual evidence available to me. Within these methodological constraints, I am compelled to state that much of the criticism directed at Shaykh 'Antar appears to be either overstated or rooted in predisposition rather than proof. Far from being a fabricator, as some detractors suggest, his renderings can withstand close linguistic and interpretive examination; indeed, what he distilled is both textually plausible and hermeneutically meaningful.

3.3.1 Without the Lām

مالك يوم الدين — Owner of the Day of Judgment
A statement of possession
Ontological fact

3.3.2 With the Lām

مالك ليوم الدين — Owner by right of the Day of Judgment
A declaration of legitimate sovereignty
Moral, legal, and divine entitlement
This is no longer simply *He owns the Day of Judgment*. It becomes: *He owns it — truthfully, justly, and by absolute right*.
Not by force. Not by inherited power. But because He alone deserves to judge, to forgive, to hold creation to account.
This is Pragmatics and Semiotics at work.

3.4 From Grammar → to Pragmatics → to Semiotics

مالك يوم الدين → مالك ليوم الدين
Māliki Yawm ad-Dīn → Mālikun li-Yawm ad-Dīn
In terms of Grammar: “Māliki Yawm ad-Dīn” = possessive construction BECOMES
“Mālikun li-Yawm ad-Dīn” → nominal sentence + lām
In terms of Semantics: Ownership of the Day
BECOMES
Ownership by right and full legitimacy
In terms of Pragmatics: Statement of fact.
BECOMES
A stance, a proclamation of divine authority
In terms of Semiotics: Lām appears only in “al-ḥamdu lillāh
BECOMES
A sign that moves and shifts meaning to a new universe of discourse

4. THE SPIRITUAL MESSAGE BEHIND THE LINGUISTICS

This recitation seems to whisper: It is not enough to know that Allah owns the Day of Judgment.
Know also that He owns it by right — because only He is worthy to judge, to reward, to hold to account.
Here, a single letter — a tiny ل — revives a world of theology, humility, and awe.

4.1 A Final Reflection

A single letter — easy to overlook — restores layers of meaning:

- Grammar becomes theology.
- Sound becomes sovereignty.
- A reading becomes a reminder:

Allah does not merely own the Day of Judgment — He owns it by right.
“O Allah, grant us ears that hear beyond sound, and hearts that read beyond letters.”

4.2 Conclusion

The wonder is not only in the variant recitation itself, but in what it does to our understanding. A small letter — easily forgotten — when reintroduced, restores layers of meaning:

- Divine legitimacy
 - Ethical authority
 - Absolute sovereignty
- “O Allah, grant us ears that can see, and hearts that can read beyond the letters.”

5. THE PATTERN OF TAYY AL-AHDATH طي الأحداث

Among the Qur'an's rhetorical strategies is what has been termed ṭayy al-aḥdāth طي الأحداث — the “folding up of events.” Here, the narrative is deliberately cut short, as if the text itself whispers to the reader: “The rest is detail, dispensable for now.”

This pattern does not signal omission or incompleteness. Rather, it dramatizes economy of revelation: the Qur'an chooses to suspend elaboration, leaving the listener with the essence of the event, while the details are folded away. The effect is twofold:

Suspense and Concentration: The listener is jolted into focus. By withholding narrative detail, the text forces attention on the doctrinal kernel.

Efficiency and Appropriateness: The Qur'an demonstrates that not every event requires exhaustive narration. What matters is the lesson, not the logistics.

Informativity through Surprise: The sudden cut creates rhetorical shock — مبدأ المباغة — pulling the rug from expectation and heightening the sense of divine selectivity.

This pattern appears strikingly in Sūrat Yā-Sīn, where the narrative of the town and its messengers is abruptly folded, leaving the reader to infer the rest. Here, the Qur'an introduces a man rushing from the farthest part of the city, urging his people to follow the messengers. But notice: the narrative does not linger on his biography, his family, the logistics of his journey, or the way he was slain. It folds the detail — cutting short the story to deliver only the doctrinal kernel: “Follow the messengers.” The ellipsis is not a gap but a rupture: a sign that revelation dispenses with detail to magnify doctrine:

[illegible]

RUPTURE

(قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ^ط قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ ۚ ٢٦)

"Then from the farthest end of the city a man came, rushing. He advised, "O my people! Follow the messengers. Follow those who ask no reward of you, and are 'rightly' guide. And why should I not worship the One Who has originated me, and to Whom you will be returned. How could I take besides Him other gods whose intercession would not be of any benefit to me, nor could they save me if the Most Compassionate intended to harm me? Indeed, I would then be clearly astray. I do believe in your Lord, so listen to me."

RUPTURE

"Enter Paradise," he was told. "I wish my people could know", he said. (Yā-Sīn 20-26)

It is striking — and disastrous — that one translator chose to flatten the Qur’anic subtlety into a crude sequence of events. Instead of allowing the sacred ellipsis to speak, he spelt it out, riding roughshod over the text’s artistry:

“But they killed him, then he was told by the angels, ‘Enter Paradise!’ He said, ‘If only my people knew...’”

In doing so, the translator collapses rupture into narration, stripping away the doctrinal suspense and reducing divine choreography to mere plot. (Hatim 2014)

Capsule Seal: Where the Qur'an folds, the translator unfolds — and in unfolding, he betrays the doctrine.

Doctrinal Reading of Yā-Sīn 20:26:

Narrative Economy: The Qur'an dispenses with the man's background, collapsing the narrative into a single urgent cry.

Suspense: The reader is left to imagine the rest — his motives, his courage, his fate. The text whispers: “The rest is detail, dispensable for now.”

Doctrinal Kernel: What matters is the command: “Follow the messengers.” The omission magnifies the lesson, not the logistics.

Pattern of Tayy al-Ahdāth: This is the Qur'anic art of folding events, where detail is withheld to heighten doctrine.

Capsule Seal: In Yā-Sīn 20:26, the Qur'an folds biography into silence, leaving only the cry of faith.

6. PARALLEL OF Yā-Sīn and Fātiḥa

1. The Hiatus in Yā-Sīn (20–26):

The man's testimony unfolds in escalating cries: exhortation, confession, polemic, counterfactual, declaration.

Just when the narrative should recount his martyrdom, the Qur'an performs a macro ellipsis: "It was said: Enter Paradise."

The confrontation, violence, and death are folded away. Only Paradise and his merciful wish remain.

Doctrinal effect: Narrative detail is dispensable; faith and reward are indispensable.

2. The Hiatus in Fātiḥa (1:4):

The possessive particle *li-* demands a list of owned entities. Cohesion expects enumeration.

Instead, the text halts — no objects follow. A rupture suspends syntax.

Coherence is restored only by the circumstantial adverbial yawma al-dīn.

Doctrinal effect: Grammatical detail is dispensable; divine infinity and timing are indispensable.

7. DOCTRINAL PARALLEL

Both passages stage a hiatus — a deliberate suspension of expectation.

Both fold detail away — whether narrative (Yā-Sīn) or syntactic (Fātiha).

Both magnify doctrine — in Yā-Sīn, the glyph of faith and Paradise; in Fātiha, the glyph of infinite dominion and Judgment.

Both sanctify rupture — appropriateness overrides efficiency, effectiveness justifies ellipsis.

Capsule Seal: Yā-Sīn folds events, Fātiḥa folds syntax — both cut detail to unveil doctrine.

8. CONCLUSION: WHEN GRAMMAR YIELDS TO GLORY

The juncture between *malikūn li...* and *yawma al-dīn* is not a syntactic anomaly — it is a rhetorical event. The breakdown of cohesion, the threatened MiniMax principle, and the restoration via adverbial closure form a spiral of divine dramatisation.

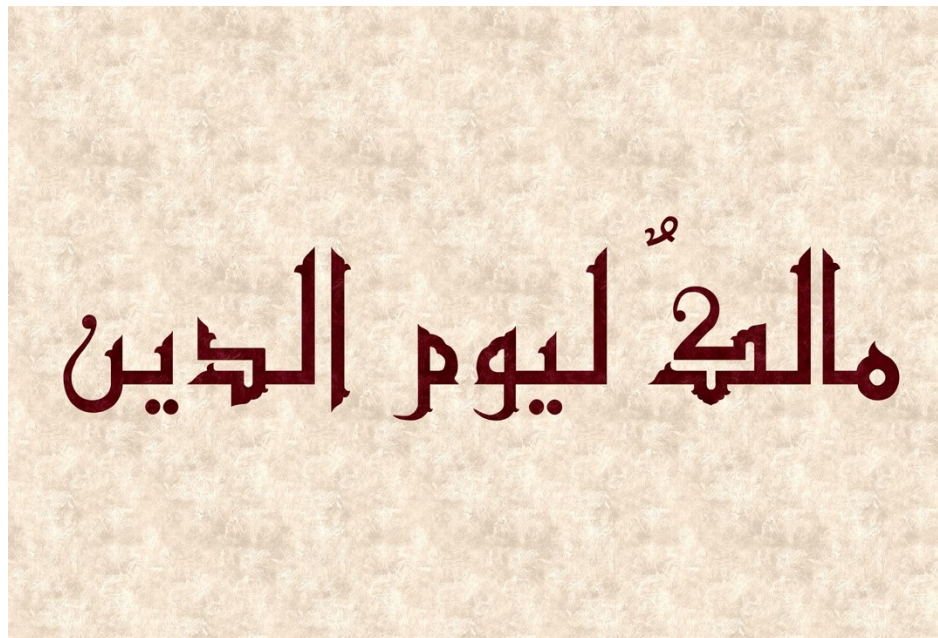
This is not merely a pause in recitation — it is a symbol of infinite dominion, resisting enumeration, demanding cognitive effort, and rewarding the listener with doctrinal clarity. The recitation, as attested by Shaykh ‘Antar and three canonical *qurrā*’, becomes a site where grammar yields to glory, and where appropriateness overrides expectation.

In this spiral, we witness a sacred choreography: rupture, strain, and restoration — all staged to reveal that divine ownership is not listed, but manifested. And the Day of Judgment is not just a temporal marker; it is the seal of coherence, the moment when infinity becomes visible.

Capsule Seal: The grammar of God does not list — it lifts. And the pause between particles is where doctrine descends.

Graphic Overture

Figure 1 ¹



The juncture between *malikūn*' and *yawma al-dīn*' thickens the plot in three dramatic ways:

- 1 Ellipsis signals a breakdown in cohesion: *li-* typically demands a list, but Allah's dominion is boundless.
- 2 The Minimax principle falters: the minimal phrase incurs maximal effort as the listener ponders When is infinity owned?
- 3 Informative *mubāghata* restores cohesion with a circumstantial adverbial: *yawma al-dīn*.

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¹ Tolerate grammar breaking down until you hear me out: this tiny shift in 'shaklification' is not an error, but a semiotic event.

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