

Food security in the story of the Prophet Ibrahim in the Holy Qur'an - A Contemporary Reading

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Abstract: The idea of this article appears in analyzing the positions related to food security in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Holy Quran, highlighting its importance in reaching the overall landmarks related to food security in the Quranic approach, and the practical realistic applications associated with it. The article examines the issue of food security in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in verses from Surahs: Al-Baqarah, Hud, Ibrahim, and Adh-Dhariyat, as well as comparing between the stories of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Yūsuf in the same matter. This article has yielded several results, including the contexts that included food security positions in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Holy Quran being confined to the context of Allah's selection of Prophet Ibrahim, the call to monotheism and establishing religion, the context of honoring guests, and the centrality of the issue of food security in the Holy Quran. Therefore it has been indicated by its diverse presence in Meccan and Medinan Surahs, and the integrated concept of achieving food security in the stories of the prophets in the Holy Quran; it has included the belief aspect, the ethical aspect represented in some positions in the story of Prophet Ibrahim, and the practical aspect represented in the story of Prophet Yūsuf.

Keywords: Contemporary reading, Food Security, Prophet Ibrahim, Prophetic stories, Quranic stories.

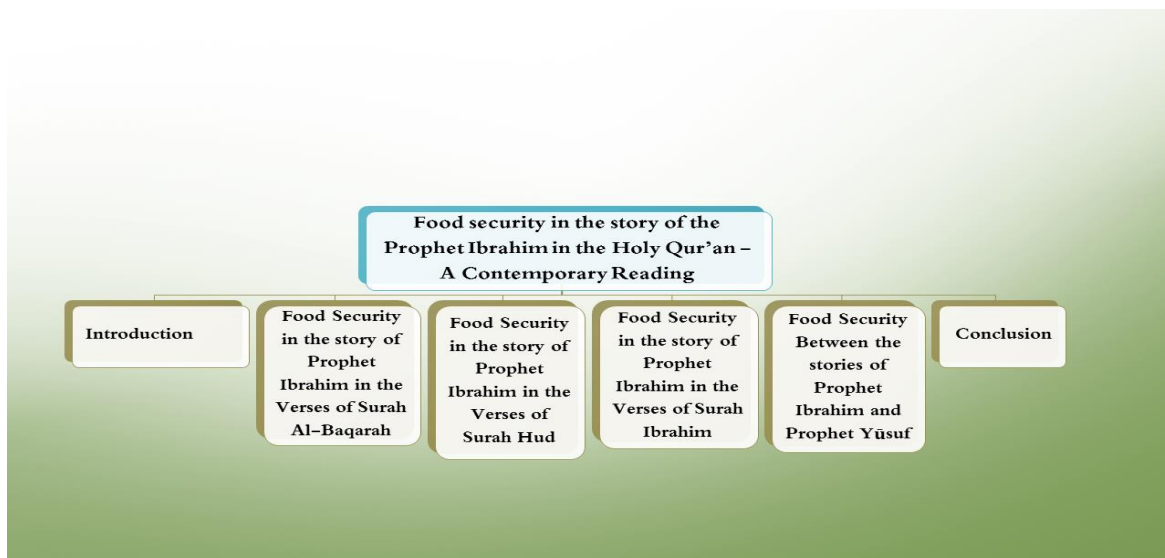


Figure 1.
The mind map of the article.

1. Introduction

Praise be to Allah who sent down the Holy Quran as guidance for mankind, and entrusted in the Holy Quran the stories of the prophets to serve as a guide for those who seek success in this world and the Hereafter. Among these timeless stories is the story of Prophet Ibrahim, a narrative that encompasses many situations and addresses numerous issues. Within these issues, I have observed a significant contemporary issue, which is "food security".

The importance of achieving food security in individual and societal life is not hidden, as it is one of three elements that, when combined, make a person feel as if they possess the world and have it in their hands. This is evidenced by the saying of the Prophet Muhammad, 'Whoever among you wakes up secure in his property, healthy in his body, and has his food for the day, it is as if he owns the whole world' (Tirmidhi, Hadith 2346, Hasan, 1998).

Previous studies have addressed multiple definitions of food security in Islam, with one of the most precise being 'ensuring the continuous flow of the usual level of halal food necessary for consumption at any given time' (Al-Khaza'leh, 2001, p. 8). Many previous studies have also focused on the issue of food security in the story of Prophet Yūsuf in the Holy Quran.

Therefore, in this article, I aim to shed light on the issue of food security in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Holy Quran, attempting to present it in a contemporary manner. I will analyze the contexts, draw implications, and extract both theoretical and practical concepts from it.

2. Food Security in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Verses of Surah Al-Baqarah

2.1. The Overall Meaning of the Verses

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:125-129) discusses Allah's selection of Prophet Ibrahim and the story of Prophet Ibrahim building the Kaaba. "Allah made the Sacred House a place of gathering for people, where their hearts would incline towards it, and He made it a place of safety for them where they would not be harmed. Allah instructed people to take the standing place of Ibrahim as a place of prayer while building the Kaaba. Allah also commanded Ibrahim and his son Isma'il to purify the Sacred House and prepare it for those who seek worship through circumambulation, seclusion, prayer, and other acts of worship.

Ibrahim supplicated to his Lord, saying, O Lord, make this city (Mecca) a place of security and provide its people with fruits. At the time of raising the foundations of the Kaaba, Ibrahim and Isma'il prayed, Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord, make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim [in submission] nation to You. And show us our ways of worship, and turn towards us in mercy. Indeed, You are the Accepting of Repentance, the Merciful. Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise" (Markaz Tafsir, p. 19-20, 1436 A.H.).

2.2. Meccan and Medinan Surahs

The mentioned verses are from Surah Al-Baqarah, which is a Medinan Surah according to the consensus of scholars of interpretation (Ibn Kathir, 1/155, 1999).

What is noteworthy here is the following:

A. Surah Al-Baqarah covers topics related to belief, such as the stories that confirm the belief in Allah's ability to resurrect the dead and the concept of resurrection after death. It also covers topics related to legislative rulings, such as verses addressing some fasting rules, Hajj, divorce, and others. This is evidence that Medinan Surahs are not limited to legislative rulings and transactions only—as some commonly believe—but they also confirm beliefs. Surah Al-Baqarah is a clear example of this fact.

B. The mention of Prophet Ibrahim in Surah Al-Baqarah is not limited to one instance but appears in several places discussing various events in Prophet Ibrahim's life.

The first event: When Prophet Ibrahim and his son Isma'il built the Kaaba (Al-Baqarah: 125-129).

The second event: When Prophet Ibrahim debated with a king about the belief in monotheism and faith in Allah (Al-Baqarah: 258).

The third event: When Prophet Ibrahim asked Allah to show him a sign of resurrecting the dead, not out of doubt in faith but to increase the heart's assurance and certainty (Al-Baqarah: 260).

After mentioning these events, it is necessary to pause "reflect, study, and analyze them to reach new and beneficial scientific and practical concepts" (Mazroaa, 2023, p.1239).

Upon reflection, it becomes apparent that all the situations related to the Prophet Ibrahim in Surah Al-Baqarah revolve around the themes of belief and faith. This includes the construction of the Sacred House of Allah in Mecca, which is the first house of worship established by Allah on earth, as well as the debate with the king regarding the oneness and lordship of Allah, and also the belief in Allah's ability to resurrect the dead and bring them back to life after death.

2.3. Reflections on the Context

The context of the verses is Allah's selection of Prophet Ibrahim as an imam for the people, his task of building the Kaaba, and preparing the Sacred House in Mecca for rituals such as circumambulation, seclusion, and prayer.

Upon reflection on this context, the following points emerged to me:

A. Seeking goodness and its continuity for oneself, one's children, and descendants is a natural inclination, as evidenced by Prophet Ibrahim's request to Allah for it (Al-Baqarah: 124).

B. A characteristic of exemplary figures in society is praying for their well-being and prosperity and actively working towards achieving it.

C. Food security ultimately comes from Allah, the Provider, and the means to attain it include supplication along with utilizing available material resources.

D. Allah's wisdom and mercy extend to all creatures by providing sustenance universally, regardless of faith, reflecting His lordship over all creations.

E. Leadership in religion is not general but reserved for those with knowledge, piety, and steadfastness.

F. Food security is interconnected with overall safety and well-being for individuals and society, as seen in Prophet Ibrahim's prayer in these verses.

G. Food security is linked to establishing religion and achieving worship and monotheism. In accordance with the context of the verses, the provision of food is instrumental in upholding religious practices and monotheistic beliefs.

3. Food Security in the Story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Verses of Surah Hud

3.1. The Overall Meaning of the Verses

The verses of Surah Hud (Hud: 69-76) narrate the story of the angels' visit to Prophet Ibrahim. "The angels came in the guise of men to Prophet Ibrahim, giving him and his wife the glad tidings of Ishāq, then Ya'qūb. The angels greeted Ibrahim, who responded to them, and he hurriedly went to prepare a roasted calf for them to eat, thinking they were humans. When Ibrahim realized that they did not eat from the food, he became apprehensive of them. Upon seeing Ibrahim's fear, the angels reassured him, saying, "Do not fear; we are sent by Allah to the people of Lot to bring about their deserved punishment.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim's wife, Sarah, was standing nearby. The angels informed her that she would give birth to Ishāq, who would later have a son named Ya'qūb. Sarah laughed with joy upon hearing this news and exclaimed in wonder, "How can I give birth when I am old, and my husband is of old age? The angels replied to Sarah, do you marvel at the decree of Allah? Your marvel is with Allah Himself, for He is capable of all things.

After Ibrahim's fear subsided, and he received the glad tidings, he began to argue with the angels regarding the people of Lot, hoping to delay their punishment and save Lot and his family. The angels

then advised Ibrahim to desist from this argument concerning the people of Lot, as the command of his Lord had come to inflict punishment upon them"(Markaz Tafsir, p. 229-230, 1436 A.H.).

3.2. Meccan and Medinan

These verses are mentioned in Surah Hud, which is a Meccan surah (Al-Baghawi, 4/156, 1997, and Al-Fayruzabadi, 1/246, 1996).

3.3. Reflections on the Context

The context of the verses presents the story of Prophet Ibrahim with his guests from the angels and his hospitality towards them, following the presentation of events from the stories of the prophets Noah, Hud, and Salih, along with their people.

Upon reflecting on this context, the following insights emerge:

A- This situation from the life of Prophet Ibrahim in Surah Hud is closely linked to what Allah mentions at the beginning of the surah regarding His guarantee of providing sustenance and food for all creatures on earth (Hud: 6). This creates a strong connection between the beginning of the surah and Prophet Ibrahim's act of ensuring food for his guests and honoring them.

By linking these two aspects in Surah Hud, I perceive a divine message, indicating that believers should take the initiative to honor guests, show kindness to people, and provide food to those in need, without fearing any shortage or loss, because Allah has taken responsibility for providing sustenance for all creatures and their food needs.

b- Rushing to honor guests and not delaying in doing so, and this is among the virtues of the prophets.

c- Alongside providing food for others, blessings come, as evidenced by the glad tidings given to Prophet Ibrahim by the angels regarding Ishāq and later Ya'qūb.

It seems that the Quranic message understood from this is that whoever honors others, Allah will honor them by fulfilling their needs.

d- By providing sustenance and food to others, blessings and increase come from Allah, as mentioned in verse (Hud: 73).

I also point out that the story of Prophet Ibrahim with his guests from the angels appears in another part of the Holy Quran with a variation in style. This occurrence is in Surah Adh-Dhariyat (24-30), and upon reflecting on this part, the following observations come to mind:

a- Surah Adh-Dhariyat is a Meccan surah (At-Tabari, 21/479, 2000, and Al-Qurtubi, 17/29, 1964), similar to Surah Hud being Meccan. Just as Surah Hud begins with the divine assurance of providing food for all creatures; I noticed that Surah Adh-Dhariyat also emphasizes that provisions come from the heavens (Adh-Dhariyat: 22) before mentioning the story of Prophet Ibrahim with his guests.

After narrating the story, the conclusion of Surah Adh-Dhariyat emphasizes that the purpose of human creation is to worship and submit to Allah's oneness, Who takes care of providing sustenance for all creatures. He does not seek provision or food from anyone (Adh-Dhariyat: 56-58).

The similarity between the two surahs can be seen from several aspects:

- 1) Both surahs are Meccan.
- 2) They mention the story of Prophet Ibrahim with his guests.
- 3) Both surahs emphasize Allah's provision of sustenance and food for all creatures, either at the beginning of the surah as in Surah Hud or at the end as in Surah Adh-Dhariyat.

b- The description of the food offered in Surah Hud as "roasted, fully cooked" (Hud: 69) and in Surah Adh-Dhariyat as "fattened" (Adh-Dhariyat: 26) indicates Prophet Ibrahim's utmost care and hospitality towards his guests.

c- These verses illustrate the etiquettes of honoring guests and the ethics of providing food to those deserving of it, showing their nobility and refinement:

- 1) The hastening to offer food to guests (Ibn Ashur, 26/359, 1984), as indicated in (Hud: 69) and (Adh-Dhariat: 26).
- 2) Prophet Ibrahim personally served food to his guests, rather than delegated this task to others.
- 3) Choosing the best, most generous, and most delicious food, as mentioned in (Adh-Dhariat: 26), rather than offering inferior or flawed food.
- 4) Prophet Ibrahim bringing the food to his guests and sitting with them (Ar-Razi, 28/177, 1420 A.H., and As-Sa'di, 810, 2000), as indicated in (Adh-Dhariat: 27), rather than the guests going to the food.

This approach seems to be closer to honoring and caring for guests, especially when the number of guests is small. However, if the number is large, it may be more appropriate for guests to go to the food, depending on the situation and circumstances.

From the above, I can say that the Quran, through the story of Prophet Ibrahim with his guests, presents the best examples of providing food for others comprehensively in all aspects:

*Time. *Place.
*Food qualities. *Provider.

The result is the perfection of care, attention, and honor for the fifth party: the deserving recipient of food, or the one to whom the food is being provided.

4. Food Security in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Verses of Surah Ibrahim

4.1. The overall meaning of the verses

The verses of Surah Ibrahim (Ibrahim: 35-41) narrate Prophet Ibrahim's supplication after settling his son Ismail and his mother Hajar in the valley of Mecca, saying: "O my Lord, make this city where I have settled my family a secure city, and keep my children away from the worship of anyone besides You. And whoever follows me in monotheism, he is indeed of me; and whoever disobeys me - then surely You are Forgiving and Merciful. O my Lord, I have settled some of my family in Mecca, where there is no cultivation or water, near Your Sacred House, so that they may establish prayer there. So incline the hearts of the people towards them and provide them with fruits, so perhaps they will be grateful.

Our Lord, You certainly know what we conceal and what we reveal. Nothing on earth or in heaven is hidden from You. Praise be to Allah who answered my prayer and gave me from the righteous ones. O my Lord, make me and those of my descendants who keep up prayer. Our Lord, accept my prayer.

O our Lord, forgive me, my parents, and the believers on the Day when the judgment will come to pass" (Markaz Tafsir, p. 260, 1436 A.H.).

4.2. Meccan and Medinan

The verses mentioned are from Surah Ibrahim, and it is a Meccan surah (Al-Tabari, 13/588, 2000).

4.3. Reflections on the Context

The context of these verses includes a series of prayers from Prophet Ibrahim, in which he asks Allah for security for Makkah. He also prayed for steadfastness in monotheism for himself and his descendants, provision of food and sustenance for his offspring, perseverance in worship and prayer, and forgiveness for himself, his parents, and the believers on the Day of Judgment.

Upon reflecting on this context, several insights emerge:

a- Prior to the verses narrating the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the surah named after him (Surah Ibrahim), there is a reminder of Allah's blessings upon humanity, including the creation of the heavens and the earth. It mentions the sending down of rain from the sky, which leads to the emergence of various fruits and diverse foods from the earth, providing sustenance for all humanity (Ibrahim: 32). Thus, the issue of food security is present directly before the verses narrating Prophet Ibrahim's story in

this surah, indicating a complete similarity in context between the story of Prophet Ibrahim in Surahs Ibrahim and Adh-Dhariyat.

b- It is a sign of completeness of intellect and wisdom for a believer to prioritize praying for their children because they are part of their actions, and their righteousness brings benefit and good remembrance to them. Therefore, we notice Prophet Ibrahim's concern for this in verse (Ibrahim: 35) and verse (Ibrahim: 40).

c- The goal of securing sustenance and worldly benefits is for a person to be able to devote themselves to worship and obedience. Prophet Ibrahim illustrated that he sought ease in sustenance for his children so that they could devote themselves to establishing prayers and fulfilling duties (Ar-Razi, 19/105, 1420 A.H.). From this, it can be said that food security is one of the most important factors supporting the establishment of religion.

In the following, I present several points that clarify the foregoing in this study.

Table 1.

A summary of the study of each occurrence of the food security issue in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Holy Quran.

SEQ.	Study position	Postion	Meccan or Medinan	Context	Topic type
1	Al-Baqarah (125-129)		Medinan	The selection of Prophet Ibrahim and his assignment to build the Kaaba	Creed/belief (Aqeedah)
2	Hud (69-76)		Meccan	The story of Prophet Ibrahim with his angelic guests after presenting scenes from the stories of the prophets with their people	Moral virtues (Makarim Al-Akhlaq)
3	Ibrahim (35-41)		Meccan	Supplications of Prophet Ibrahim asking for security for Mecca, steadfastness in monotheism, and provision of food for his offspring	Creed/belief (Aqeedah)

Table 2.

Statistics for analyzing the occurrences of the food security issue in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Holy Quran.

Category	Count	Percentage (Out of 3 occurrences)
Meccan	2	66.6%
Medinan	1	33.3%
Creed-related occurrences	2	66.6%
Virtues-related occurrences	1	33.3%
Context of Prophet Ibrahim's selection	1	33.3%
Context of Prophet Ibrahim's story with his angelic guests	1	33.3%
Context of Prophet Ibrahim's supplications	1	33.3%

Based on the previous statistics, the following observations can be made:

- a. The positions regarding food security in the story of Prophet Ibrahim were twice as frequent in Meccan surahs compared to Madinan surahs.

- b. The positions regarding food security in the story of Prophet Ibrahim were twice as frequent in topics related to creed/ belief (Aqeedah) compared to topics related to moral virtues (Makarim Al-Akhlaq).

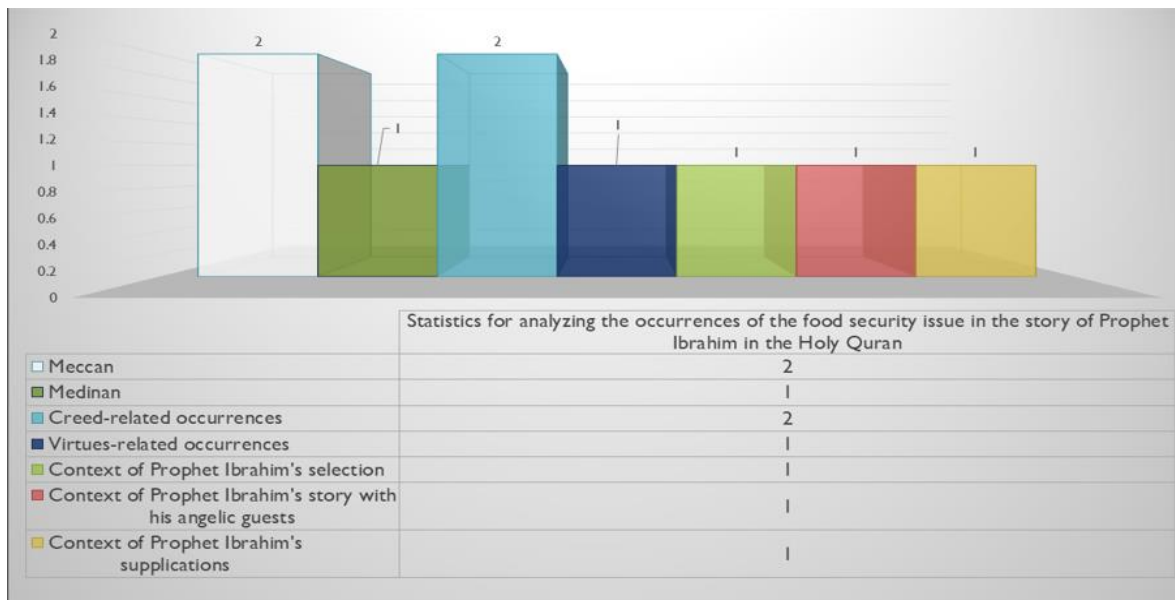


Figure 2. Chart for studying the occurrences of the food security issue in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Holy Quran.

5. Food Security Between the Stories of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Yūsuf

5.1. The Overall Meaning of the Verses About Food Security in the Story of Prophet Yūsuf

The verses of Surah Yūsuf (Yūsuf: 46-49) narrate the dialogue between a royal servant and Prophet Yūsuf regarding the interpretation of a dream. The servant inquires, "Yūsuf, O truthful one, inform us about the interpretation of the vision of one who saw seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean cows, and saw seven green ears of grain and seven dry ears. Perhaps I can return to the king and those with him so that they may know the interpretation of this vision.

Prophet Yūsuf interpreted the dream, explaining that it signifies seven consecutive years of abundant harvest. He advises storing the produce from each of these years in its husks to prevent spoilage, except for a small portion needed for consumption. Following these years of abundance, seven years of scarce harvest will ensue, during which the people will consume all the stored produce, except for a small portion reserved for sowing. Finally, a year of heavy rainfall and flourishing crops will arrive" (Markaz Tafsir, p. 241, 1436 A.H.).

5.2. Meccan And Medinan Surahs

These verses are from Surah Yūsuf, which is a Meccan surah.

5.3. Reflections on the Verses of the Two Stories

A- The story of Prophet Yūsuf highlighted a practical mechanism to achieve food security and meet the society's needs, especially during periods of crop shortage or famine. This was evident in Prophet Yūsuf's interpretation of the dream seen by the ruler of Egypt during his time (Yūsuf: 47-49). The key elements of the practical mechanism proposed by Prophet Yūsuf to achieve food security were:

1. Working on producing food crops.
2. Preserving this production in a way that prevents its spoilage.

3. Rationalizing consumption to benefit from this rationalization during seasons of crop shortage or famine.

B- Two important points should be noted:

1. Historical precedence.
2. Lineage.

In terms of historical precedence, we notice that Prophet Ibrahim preceded Prophet Yūsuf in existence. Regarding lineage, Prophet Yūsuf's lineage is: Yūsuf is the son of Ya'qūb, who is the son of Ishāq, and Ishāq is the son of Ibrahim, and based on this, Prophet Ibrahim is the great-grandfather of Prophet Yūsuf.

By considering the historical and lineage factors between Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Yūsuf, I can say that the overall features of food security outlined in the story of the great-grandfather (Prophet Ibrahim) were clarified by the practical model for achieving food security, which was mentioned in the story of the grandson (Prophet Yūsuf).

C- I can say that what is mentioned regarding food security in the stories of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Yūsuf in the Holy Quran paints a comprehensive picture of food security in the Holy Quran. The story of Prophet Ibrahim contained what I can call the theoretical framework, while the story of Prophet Yūsuf included a practical implementation model.

Table 3.

A comparison table between the details of food security issues in the stories of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Yūsuf.

Seq.	Story	Prophet Ibrahim's story	Prophet Yūsuf's story
	Aspect of comparison		
1	Multiplicity of surahs	Multiple Surahs	Within a single surah, Surah Yūsuf
2	Mecca and Madinah	Meccan and Medinan	Primarily Meccan
3	Context	Selection, supplication, hospitality	Interpretation of the king's dream
4	Theme	Belief, moral virtues	Economic management and strategic planning

6. Conclusion

In this article, I addressed food security in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Holy Quran. This study highlighted the connection of food security in the Quranic perspective with both theological and social aspects. The theological connection of food security is evident through its association with establishing religion, achieving servitude, and unity. Similarly, the social connection is evident through its association with the general security of individuals and society.

The varied treatment of food security in the story of Prophet Ibrahim in Meccan and Madinan verses indicates its central importance. This centrality is logical, as food security is essential for sustaining life and is relevant in all times and places.

It became clear that achieving food security in the Quranic framework is not an end in itself, but it is a means to a higher purpose, which is establishing religion and achieving unity. While the story of Prophet Yūsuf focused on detailed mechanisms for achieving food security, the story of Prophet Ibrahim presented fundamental ideological and moral principles related to food security.

From this discussion, the alignment and authenticity achieved by King Faisal University by making its institutional identity revolve around food security and environmental sustainability are evident.

Notes:

1. The verses discussing Prophet Ibrahim's stance in Surah Al-Baqarah were three, all related to creed, faith, and belief in Allah.
2. The Madinan verses affirmed beliefs and were not limited only to legislative rulings and transactions. Surah Al-Baqarah is evidence of this fact.
3. The context of food security verses in Surahs Al-Baqarah and Ibrahim was related to creed, while the context in Surahs Hud and Adh-Dhariyat was about moral virtues.
4. Results of achieving food security, as seen in Prophet Ibrahim's story in the Holy Quran, include establishing religion, receiving glad tidings, and fulfilling requirements.
5. The discussion of food security in the stories of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Yūsuf provides a comprehensive view of food security in the Holy Quran.
6. The Quranic methodology encourages Muslims not only to receive but also to give, with the etiquette of honoring guests serving as evidence of this principle.

***Recognitions:**

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