

استكشاف المعنى المتعدد الأوجه لكلمة "رحمة" في القرآن الكريم: تحليل تعدد المعاني.

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المخلص

تعد التعددية الدلالية واحدة من أهم المواضيع التي تتم مناقشتها على جميع المستويات اللغوية، بما في ذلك التعدد المعجمي أو التعدد الدلالي البديل. في المناهج اللغوية لمعاني الكلمات، هناك دائماً معاني تتأثر بعناصرها المتزامنة داخل نظام بنيوي، ويتم إجراء تحليلها الدلالي على أساس العلاقة المتبادلة بين عناصر هذا النظام وعملية الخطاب في النص. إن الاهتمام بالسياق اللغوي والنص الإجمالي، بعد الفحص الإتيولوجي واكتشاف المجال الدلالي للكلمة، يوضح بشكل فعال التطور الدلالي والتعدد الدلالي الناتج عن تلك الكلمة. من أهم جوانب البحث القرآني اكتشاف وتفسير معاني الكلمات بدقة داخل بنية الخطاب الإلهي لتسهيل فهم وتفسير المقترحات الدينية المستمدة منها. تركز هذه الورقة على الفحص اللغوي الذي تم إجراؤه على تنوع معاني كلمة "رحمة" في القرآن الكريم، وإظهار تطورها الدلالي ضمن البناء الكلي للآيات القرآنية، فضلاً عن تحديد المعاني التي تلعبها على المعنى الأساسي والعنصر السياقي المتضمن بالاعتماد على التفسير القرآني. في هذه الدراسة، فيما يتعلق ببنية الكلام الإلهي، فإن كلمة "رحمة" في القرآن الكريم لها عدة دلالات مثل الإسلام والسماء والإيمان والمطر والرزق وغيرها، وكلها تُفهم على أساس المعرفة الخلفية جنباً إلى جنب مع السمات اللغوية الأخرى.

الكلمات المفتاحية : القرآن الكريم، تعدد المعاني، الرحمة

Exploring the Multifaceted Meaning of 'Rahmah' (Mercy) in the Holy Quran: A Polysomic Analysis

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Abstract

Polysemy is one of the most significant topics discussed at all linguistic levels, including lexical or substitutive polysemy. In semantics, meanings are always influenced by their co-occurring elements within a structural system, and their semantic analysis is conducted based on the reciprocal relationship between the components of this system and the discourse process of the text. Attention to the linguistic context and the overall text, after an etymological examination and discovering the semantic field of a word, effectively illustrates the semantic evolution and resulting polysemy of that word. One of the most important aspects of Qur'anic research is the precise discovery and explanation of word meanings within the structure of divine speech to facilitate understanding and interpretation of the religious propositions derived from them. This paper centers on the linguistic examination made of the variety of meanings of the word "Rahmah" in the Holy Qur'an, showing its semantic development within the holistic construction of Qur'anic verses as well as determining meanings it plays off against the core meaning and contextual element involved by relying upon the Qur'anic exegesis. In this study, About the divine speech structure, the term "Rahmah" in the Holy Qur'an has several connotations like Islam, heaven, belief, rain, sustenance, etc., and all of them are understood against the background knowledge along with other linguistic features.

Keywords: Holy Quran, Polysemy, Rahmah.

1. Introduction

The most great of the Qur'an is that the words have various meanings. Even though the arrangement of parts of the Qur'an sounds eloquent. A single word in the Qur'an can have many various meanings up to twenty meanings, which is not common in other languages. "Vocabulary is so crucial to learning any language. Words have meanings that humans assign to them based on their needs, and they change those meanings as circumstances change. Meaningless forms or vocabularies are meaningless linguistically as well as practically. Jacobson once said that words without meaning render language worthless. In other words, we can say that depending on how they are used different meanings can be attributed to each term. If a name exists but there is nothing behind it within the given context then such a term has no sense attached to it; henceforth it becomes meaningless" (Jackson, 1988: 112).

Semantics is a term that describes the study of meaning in language generally. Furthermore, it is essential to communication (Leech, 1974: 105). Though there are other ways for sharing information – through signals, images, and gestures among others – people have still held on to words as their major means for sending messages. For a long time, the most generally accepted theory of semantics has held that meanings are nothing other than ideas or concepts transferred from the speaker's to the hearer's mind by putting them in one language or another form (Lyons, 1997: 136).

Blank (1999: 11–15) "describes a sense or phrase that has a number of meanings but distinct meanings as a polysemy. The challenge in evaluating polysemy is that the test for polysemy draws from it an indeterminate sense of relation. Examining the etymology of words can be used to identify polysemy among other methods, however, this is just one possible way; over time some types of word-origin fade and a useful distinction in the sense that existed may cease to hold true. The English language is filled with many polysemous words. One such example is the verb 'get' which is used quite often in different contexts. It can mean 'to obtain' such as in the sentences; I will get the drinks (meaning I will go to the bar and procure some drinks). Or, it can also be understood in the sense of 'to become' in phrases; She got scared (that is, she became scared). It can also connote 'To comprehend'. For instance, in the phrase 'I get it.' In addition to that, there is still a lot of work that remains to be done in examining the polysomic possibilities of the word 'rahmah' as presented in the text of the Holy Quran. As a result, this means that polysemy is the main problem of the present research, which in turn, opens up a very interesting field of study for researchers".

2- Etymology of The word *Rahma*

"*Rahmah*" (mercy) denotes compassion and kindness. It derives from the root "رَحِمَ" (rahima), which means *compassionate*. According to Al-Raghib, this compassion and empathy are accompanied by benevolence and goodness, though sometimes it can refer to compassion without goodness or goodness without compassion (Al-Raghib, 1992: 329).

'*Rahmah*' is an intrinsic quality that stems from human emotion and conscience. It is an inner state and the source of benevolence. When God is described with this attribute, it signifies His bestowal of blessings upon His servants because this attribute pertains to qualities and categories of human experience, and attributing such qualities to God is impossible (Al-Husayni Al-Kafawi, 1998: 471). Therefore, it can be said that the divine mercy mentioned throughout the Quran refers to God's blessings and grace, which manifest in various forms in the world for all beings, and in the hereafter are specifically reserved for the believers, representing their eternal reward. In Surah Al-A'raf, Allah says:

“ورحمتي وسعت كل شيء فسأكتبها للذين يتقون ويؤتون الزكاة والذين هم بآياتنا يؤمنون (الأعراف: 156)

“*And My mercy encompasses all things. So, I will decree it [especially] for those who fear Me and give zakat and those who believe in Our verses*” (Qur`an, Al-A'raf :156).

In this verse, Tabarsi clarifies *rahmah* as a blessing and writes, “My mercy encompasses everything,” meaning that no Muslim, non-Muslim, obedient, or disobedient person is excluded from it (Tabarsi, 1957AH, vol. 2 : 404).

Thus, the essential meaning of the word "rahmah" can be interpreted as *benevolence and goodness*. (Al-Zamakhshari, 1986, vol. 3:499). Based on this, Muqatil ibn Sulayman mentions other semantic aspects of this word in the context of the Quran. The following discussion will explore this multiplicity of meanings based on the linguistic principle of co-occurrence of linguistic units in the structure of verses, focusing on the core meaning concerning the views of exegetes and linguists.

3-Semantic Analysis of *Rahmah*

In the study of language vocabulary, we often come across connotative meanings which may be influenced by the contextual elements of their collocations in a particular linguistic system. This analysis is undertaken in terms of the mutual relation between these elements. Thus, exploring the root meaning after looking at the general language context and the text as a whole reveals the direction of how the word is used and its polysemy—since it may also have several meanings. The word "Rahmah" is one such Quranic term that, according to these conditions, simultaneously holds various semantic aspects such as Islam, paradise, prophethood, and so on within the Quranic context (Al-Balkhi, 2006: 39).

- **Islam**

In the first sense, *Rahmah* is interpreted as the religion of Islam. In the first place, the story about the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah and everything around it is in Surah Al-Fath where Allah recounts this favor upon Muslims and their victory over non-believers. Verse 25 of this surah shows that the victory has been gained, the victory which was not obtained by fighting or killing and also shows that certain people out of many polytheists have turned into Muslims.

"هم الذين كفروا وصدوكم عن المسجد الحرام والهدي معكوكا ان يبلغ محله ولو لا رجال مؤمنون ونساء مؤمنات لم تعلموهم ان تظنوهم فتصيبكم منهم معرفة بغير علم ليدخل الله في رحمته من يشاء لو تزيلوا لعذبنا الذين كفروا منهم عذابا اليمما " (الفتح: 25)

"They are those who disbelieved and hindered you from the Sacred Mosque and prevented the offering from reaching its place of sacrifice. And if it were not for believing men and believing women whom you did not know, that you might trample them and there would befall you from them dishonour without your knowledge, that Allah might admit to His mercy whom He wills. If they had been apart, We would have punished those who disbelieved among them with painful punishment." (Qur'an, surah alfath: 25).

Considering the context of this verse, it becomes clear that the divine mercy intended here is the religion of Islam, which some of the polytheists embraced after the peace treaty. Kashif writes about this, stating: "Here, the intended meaning of mercy is the religion of Islam, and it means that God withheld the Muslims' hands from killing during the conquest of Mecca because He knew that some of the polytheists would be guided and embrace Islam, which indeed happened" (Mughniya, 2003, vol. 7: 99).

Such a meaning for this word can be deduced from its collocation with other linguistic elements in the verse, such as the verb "لِيُذْخِلَ" (to admit), which explains the cause indicated by the verse. This meaning is related to the core concept of *rahmah* which is the bestowal of blessings upon the servants, as the religion of Islam is one of the divine blessings bestowed upon His servants. According to Al-Zamakhshari (1986, vol. 1 : 613), when interpreting the phrase "وَأَذْكُرُوا" "تِبْعَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ" (And remember Allah's blessings upon you) in Surah Al-Ma'idah, the blessings are the nature of Islam. Thus, this serves as a semantic specification of the word "*rahmah*" in the verse as a whole.

- **Al-jannah\ Paradise**

In its other semantic aspect, the term "*Rahmah*" is equated to *paradise*. Verses 174 and 175 of Surah An-Nisa bring out specific personal and communal duties and further describe the people's rewards for sticking to those instructions;

"فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِهِ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ" (النساء: 175)

"As for those who believe in Allah and hold fast to Him, He will admit them into mercy

and bounty from Him, and guide them to Himself on a straight path." (Qur'an, Surah

An-Nisa:175). *Rahmah* in these verses is metaphorically spoken for by the rhetoricians as it is in the context of metonymy where its relationship to paradise is situational since paradise is recognized as an abode where there is always a manifestation of mercy. In this respect, therefore, this rhetorical device serves as one of the factors, which has led to the widening of *Rahmah*'s connotation hence the multiple meanings it currently holds. When this happens, linguists argue that grasping numerical concepts and their functions is based on how well co-occurring units are understood in speech. Therefore, interpreting these signs is about understanding the linguistic units along the syntagmatic axis. Based on this, considering the structure of the verse and the combination of words along this axis, the word "*Rahmah*" in conjunction with words like "آمَنُوا" (they believed), "عَتَصَمُوا" (they held fast), and "فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ" (He will admit them) takes on the

meaning of *paradise*, because faith and adherence to the divine verses are accompanied by eternal reward, and entry into paradise is its prerequisite.

"Those who acknowledge the oneness of God, confirm His Messenger, and hold fast to the light that He has sent down upon His Messenger, God will admit them into His mercy and bounty, which is paradise and the excess reward beyond their merit." (Al-Tabarsi, 1958, Vol. 6:171).

In verse 107 of Surah Al-Imran, by analyzing the conceptual relationships among the words at the sentence level, such a meaning of the term "Rahmah" can also be derived from the Qur'an:

“واما الذين ابيضت وجوههم ففي رحمة الله فيها خالدون”

"As for those whose faces turn white, they will be in Allah's mercy forever." (Qur'an, Surah Imran: 107).

Taking into consideration the linguistic contextualization in which the passage occurs together with its word-relations concerning concepts as well as grammar systems; those things that co-occur with *Rahmah* elicit conceptions related to heaven. Thus, one finds expressions such as *turned white* (اَبْيَضَتْ) and *their faces* (وَجُوهَهُمْ) which are suggestive of how believers look in the mind's eye because they represent the eternal reward that can be inferred from the term "Rahmah", this kind of life is described in details by the phrase “خَالِدُونَ” (*forever*). The intention behind referring to God's mercy as paradise is to imply that even if a believer spends his entire life in obedience to God, he will not enter paradise except by the mercy and grace of Allah (Thaqafi Tehrani, 1977, Vol. 1:475).

The concept of paradise derived from the term "Rahmah" is connected to the core meaning of this word, which is benevolence and generosity. This is because one of the instances of divine blessings, which is specific to the righteous servants in the Hereafter, is paradise. In the interpretation of the verse:

“يستبشرون بنعمة من الله” (سورة ال عمران 171)

"They do not rejoice in any blessing from Allah..." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Imran :171)

The term "rahmah" is explained as paradise (Thaalabi, 1997 AH, Vol. 2:137).

• Rain

The term "Rahmah" is used in another context to signify *rain*. In the verse: هو الذي يرسل الرياح بشرا بين يدي رحمة الله حتى اذا اقلت سحابا ثقالا سقناه لبلد ميت فانزلنا به الماء فاخرجنا به من كل الثمرات كذلك نخرج الموتى لعلكم تذكرون (الأعراف:57)

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقْلَتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سَقْنَاهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ

الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (الأعراف:57).

"And it is He who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy until, when they have carried heavy rain clouds, We drive them to a dead land and send down water thereby and bring forth

thereby fruits of all kinds. Thus will We bring forth the dead, that perhaps you may be reminded." (Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7:57). The structure of these words in this verse are arranged beautifully, elucidate that Allah is only behind this expression. Words such as "He sends" (يُرْسِلُ) and "the winds" (الرياح), "clouds" (سَحَاب) and "We drive" (سُقْنَاهُ) that come before and after this word connote the movement of winds, fertilization of clouds, bringing down of water on barren lands and causing the growth of vegetables, a powerful cohesive sequence of concepts that substantiate why "rain" occurs most frequently with *Rahmah*. This therefore forms an introduction for the explanation process as to how resurrection happens on Judgment Day. This serves as an introduction to explain the process of resurrecting the dead in the Hereafter.

Allameh Tabataba'i, in his commentary on this verse, writes: "The term 'Rahmat' here refers to rain, and the phrase 'بَيْنَ يَدَي رَحْمَتِهِ' means before the descent of rain. In this expression, an imaginative metaphor is used, comparing rain to a person whose family and friends eagerly await his arrival, and someone comes ahead of him to announce his coming." This verse uses the analogy of bringing life to the earth as an argument for the Resurrection and the raising of the dead. When those who deny the Resurrection see the earth coming to life in spring with their own eyes, they are compelled to acknowledge the Resurrection as well (Tabataba'i, 1955, Vol. 20: 2008).

The representation of such a meaning of the word "Rahmah" is also interpreted in the verse:

"فانظر الى اثار رحمت الله كيف يحيى الأرض بعد موتها ان ذلك لمحيي الموتى وهو على كل شي قدير" (شورى 28)

"So observe the effects of the mercy of Allah—how He gives life to the earth after its death." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Shura, 28). The addition of the word "effects" (آثار) to "Rahmah" and the presence of the phrase "the earth" (الأرض) after it serves as indications that the term "Rahmah" refers to rain. In the interpretation of *Ruh al-Ma'ani*, God's mercy in this verse is interpreted as rain, and the intended "effects" are the growth of green plants, trees, and various fruits after the earth's death, which stands as evidence of God's power to resurrect creatures on the Day of Resurrection (Al-Alusi, 1994, Vol. 11: 53). In this verse, The linguistic context shows that the semantic scope of the word "Rahmah" has expanded to encompass the concept of rain, which fits the context of the speech and is related to the core meaning of this word, which is benevolence and divine favor. Rain is, without doubt, one of the greatest divine favours upon which the life of all living creatures on the earth depends. Likewise, in his exegesis of Bahr al-Uloom, he explains:

"ياايها الناس اذكروا نعمت الله عليكم هل من خالق غير الله يرزقكم من السماء والأرض لا اله الا هو فاني توفكون" (فاطر: 3)

"O people, remember the favor of Allah upon you! Is there any creator other than Allah who provides for you from the heaven and the earth?" (Qur'an, Surah Fatir, 35:3)

- **Prophecy\ Al-Nubuwwah**

"اهم يقسمون رحمة ربك نحن قسمنا بينهم معيشتهم في الحياة الدنيا" (الزخرف:32).

"Is it they who would portion out the mercy of your Lord? It is We Who portion out between them their livelihood in this world", (Quran, alzugraf:32).

Do they dispense the mercy of your Lord? It is We who are meaning?

The word "Rahmah" is sometimes used to refer to prophethood. The thematic nature of *Surah Al-Zukhruf*, which focuses on the sending of prophets and the rejection of the polytheists along with their baseless excuses, indicates this interpretation. The context of the verse:

"Do they dispense the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world..." (Qur'an, Surah Az-Zukhruf: 32) suggests that the term "Rahmah" has taken the place of the word "prophethood," and in conjunction with the linguistic sign "يُقْسِمُونَ" (*they dispense*), it appears with the meaning of "prophethood." The interpretation of this verse states that: *"Do they dispense the mercy of your Lord"* so that they may grant prophethood to whomever they wish and send down the divine book upon him, and withhold it from whomever they do not wish? They are mistaken; it is your Lord who distributes His mercy, and He knows the best who is worthy of this great rank (Makarem Shirazi, 1954, Vol. 21: 50).

In many verses of the Qur'an, the concept of prophethood is mentioned with the term "Rahmah" Paying attention to the connotation in the verse:

"ام عندهم خزائن رحمة ربك العزيز الوهاب" (صا:9)

"Or do they have the treasures of the mercy of your Lord, the Exalted, the All-Bestower?" (Qur'an, Surah Saad :9) also directs the mind to an implicit indication of (treasures) "Rahmah." The addition of this word to "treasures" (خزائن) in light of the preceding verses, which emphasize the warning of the prophets and the denial of the polytheists, leads to its association with the concept of prophethood. *"Are the treasures of the mercy of your Lord with them, and are the keys to prophethood and apostleship in their hands, so that they can give it to whomever they want and distribute it as they wish?"* (Mirza Khosrawani, 1954, Vol. 7: 200). It is in these verses, we see an enlargement in the meaning of the word "Rahmah" as well as an increased frequency of use in the Quran. "Rahmah" denoting prophethood is used within the sentence, it is still tied to the main idea and therefore interpreted understandably. One of the greatest divine blessings bestowed upon humanity is the blessing of prophethood, as stated in the commentary of Tafsir Al-Tabari. The word "rahmah" in the verse:

"يعرفون نعمت الله ثم ينكرونها واكثرهم الكافرون" (النحل:83)

"They recognize the favor of Allah, yet they deny it, and most of them are disbelievers." (Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl: 83). They are aware of this verse that it refers to the prophethood of the Prophet(PBUH), but they deny it.

• Quran

The term 'Rahmah' (mercy) does not only refer to the kindness extended to mankind but also alludes to the holy book of Muslims.

او تقولون او انا انزل علينا الكتاب لكننا اهدى منهم فقد جاءكم بينة من ربكم وهدى ورحمة فمن اظلم ممن كتب بايات الله وصدق عنها سنجزى الذين يصدقون عن اياتنا العذاب سوء العذاب بما كانوا يصدقون" (سورة الأنعام: 157)

“Or you may say, ‘If only the Book had been revealed to us, we would have been better guided than they.’ But now there has come to you a clear proof from your Lord, and a guidance and mercy.” (Surah Al-An'am, 6:157)

We can see that the words “revealed” (أُنزِلَ), “the Book” (الْكِتَابِ), “clear proof” (بَيِّنَةٌ), “guidance” (هُدًى), and “mercy” (رَحْمَةً) create a consistent semantic network that establishes the meaning of each term in relation with others. The revelation of the *Book*, its guidance, and its enlightenment apply to the Qur'an, and as a result, the word "Rahmah" is interpreted as referring to the clear Qur'an itself. The Qur'an, being a clear and evident proof, a means of guidance for humanity towards eternal blessings and great rewards, has come to you. (Al-Tabarsi, 1958, Vol. 9: 23). Similarly, in the verse:

“ماكان حديثا يفتري ولكن تصديق الذي بين يديه وتفصيل كل شيء وهدى ورحمة لقوم يؤمنون” (يوسف:111)

“It is not a fabricated story, but a confirmation of what came before it and a detailed explanation of everything, and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe.” (Qur'an, Surah Yusuf:111). Interpretation of the word "Rahmah" derives from the interaction of linguistic constituents in the Qur'an. The transition in meaning from such words as “fabricated story” (يُفْتَرَى), “confirmation” (تَصْدِيقٌ), “detailed explanation” (تَفْصِيلٌ), and “guidance” (هُدًى) into the word “Rahmah” is a semantically different phenomenon signifying the Qur'an. Tafsir *kashif's* commentary in regards to this verse where it has been made clear that Qur'an serves as guidance for adherents and serves as mercy for practicers (Mughniyah, 2003, Vol. 4: 368).

• Al-Rizq/Sustenance or Livelihood

One of the meanings that can be attributed to the word “Rahmah” (mercy) has to do with (sustenance) “Rizq” In every case, this way of interpreting would always be dependent upon the way a particular verse has been constructed, with regard to co-occurring terms. Such as :

“قل لو انتم تملكون خزائن رحمة ربي اذا لامستكم خشية الانفاق وكان الانسان قتورا” (الاسراء, 100)

“Say, ‘If you possessed the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, then you would withhold out of fear of spending.’ And man has always been stingy.” (Surah Al-Isra, 17:100)

the co-occurrence of words like “possessed” (تَمْلِكُونَ), “treasures” (خَزَائِنَ), “withhold” (أَمْسِكْتُمْ), “spending” (الْإِنْفَاقَ), and “stingy” (قَتُورًا) alongside the word "Rahmah" suggests a substitutional relationship between "Rahmah" and "sustenance." When you consider possessing wealth, two words come to mind: stinginess and deprivation of material things that are important for one's survival or health. The verse elucidates on this point by saying that if you had sustenance." or bounties with which Allah provides His servants, you would be miser and would not give it out.

The word "قَتُور" means miserly or stingy (Tafsir, 496). Similarly, in the verse:

“وإذ اعتزلتموهم وما يعبدون الا الله فأووا الى الكهف ينشر لكم ربكم من رحمته ويهيء لكم من امركم مرفقا ”

(الكهف, 16)

“And when you have withdrawn from them and that which they worship other than Allah, retreat to the cave; your Lord will spread out for you of His mercy and will prepare for you from your affair a facility.” (Qur`an, Surah Al-Kahf: 16)

The grammatical and semantic relationship among the words in the verse leads to the interpretation of "Rahmah" as *Sustenance*. The imperative form (فَأْتُوا إِلَى الْكُهْفِ) “retreat to the cave” — which means seeking refuge in a dark cave without any means of sustenance — reflects the certainty of the Companions of the Cave in receiving the mercy and sustenance of Allah. This semantic chain is completed with the phrases “will spread out” (يُنْشُرُ) and “facility” (مِرْقَفًا) (Tantawi, 1997, Vol. 8: 484). The word “Rahmah” subject to contextual changes has gone ahead to widen its sense and is now interpreted to mean sustenance (Rizq). Such an explanation is linked to the primary meaning of the word and is viewed as one of God’s rahmah. The stated is supported by the verse:

“فكلوا مما رزقكم الله حلالا طيبا واشكروا نعمت الله ان كنتم تعبدون”(النحل: 114)

“So eat of what Allah has provided for you, lawful and good.” (Surah An-Nahl, 16:114). Same word, different meanings. That’s one of the significant interpretations of the sustenance rahmah that is mentioned in the Quran.

- **Help\ victory**

Another interpreted meaning for the word "Rahmah" is *divine help*, as seen in the verse:

“قل من ذا الذي يعصمكم من الله ان أراد بكم سوءا أو أراد بكم رحمة ولا يجدون لهم من دون الله وليا ولا نصيرا”

“Or who will protect you from Allah if He intends harm for you or intends mercy for you? And they will not find for themselves besides Allah any protector or helper.” (Surah Al-Ahzab:17). The previous verses of this passage describe the events of the battle, the hypocrisy of some who attempted to flee the battlefield, and the divine support and help granted to the Muslims by Allah. In light of these circumstances, words such as ‘intends’ (أراد), ‘harm’ (سوء) and ‘compassion’ (رحمة), which come before the word ‘Rahmah’, provide an understanding of the word’s meaning. On the other hand, terms such as ‘protector’ (وليًا) and ‘helper’ (نصيرًا) serve additional functions with this word suggesting the interpretation of God’s mercy in this context as providing *help support*. This is because the victory of the small group of Muslims against the vast number of polytheists and Jews in this battle was only achieved through God's will and support. The interpretation of this verse also conveys such a concept of the word "Rahmah":

“If He intends punishment and retribution for you or intends mercy—meaning His support and honor—then surely no one has the power to prevent God's will” (Al-Tabarsi, 1958, Vol. 20: 64).

In this verse, the conceptual scope of the word "Rahmah" expands to include another form of divine blessing, which is specified as support and assistance. The reason for this concept's connection to the core meaning of the word "Rahmat" is seen in the verse:

"ياايها الذين امنوا اذكروا نعمة الله عليكم اذ جاءتكم جنود فارسنا عليهم ريحا و جنودا لم تروها وكان الله بما تعملون بصيرا
(الأحزاب:9)"

"O you who have believed, remember the favor of Allah upon you when armies came to attack you, and We sent upon them a wind and armies you did not see. And ever is Allah, of what you do, Seeing." (Surah Al-Ahzab :9)

In this case, Allah describes the support granted to Muslims and the prevention of the mischief of the disbelievers as a reward. This seems to be the interpretation that Allameh Tabatabai provides with a great deal of stress on the relationship between divine help and the more general concept of Rahmat which is one of the plentiful blessings of God.

• Health

Besides, in the Holy Book of Qur'an, "Rahmah" is also associated with good health. consider the following example from the scripture:

"ولئن سألتهم من خلق السموات والأرض ليقولن الله قل افرأيتم ما تدعون من دون الله ان ارادني الله بضر هل هن كاشفات ضره او ارادني برحمة هل هن ممسكات رحمته قل حسبي الله عليه يتوكل المتوكلون" (الزمر:38)

"Say, 'Do you see if Allah intends harm for me, can they (the idols) remove His harm, or if He intends mercy for me, can they withhold His mercy?'" (Qur'an, Surah Al-Zumar:38). The context and the collocation of linguistic elements create a chain of conceptual relationships within the linguistic framework of this verse. The word "Rahmat" is connected to the word "ممسكات" (withhold) (replacing the word "well-being" (عافية), and in conjunction with the phrase "كاشفات ضره" "remove His harm" (it forms a semantic contrast, manifesting in the meaning of protection from any harm or affliction, such as illness. Due to such a relationship of collocation and substitution, the interpretation of this verse explains "Rahmah" as representing *good and health*:

"Say: Do those you call upon besides Allah, if Allah intends harm for me, such as illness, poverty, calamity, or hardship, can they remove His harm from me? Or if He intends for my mercy, that is, good and health, can they withhold the mercy that Allah bestows upon me?" (Al-Tabarsi, 1958, Vol. 21: 182).

Such an explanation of the word "Rahmah" is based on its core meaning because one of the greatest blessings of Allah is manifested in the form of well-being and health. Similarly, in the verse:

﴿فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْهُ لَمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾ (آل عمران: 174)

"So they returned with the blessing of Allah and bounty, no harm touched them." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Imran:174). The term "blessing" (نعمة) has been interpreted as well-being and health bestowed by Allah (Tabari, 1997, Vol. 12: 1274).

- **Faith**

The word "Iman" (faith) is interpreted in some Quranic exegeses as being synonymous with "rahmah" (mercy). This semantic extension occurs through the association of co-occurring elements. For instance, in the verse:

قَالَ يَقُومُ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَأَتَانِي رَحْمَةٌ مِّن عِنْدِهِ فَغَمَّيْتُ عَلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ
(هود، 28).

"He said, 'O my people, have you considered: if I should be upon clear evidence from my Lord, and He has given me mercy from Himself, but it has been made obscure to you, should we force it upon you while you are averse to it?' (Qur'an, Hud: 28).

The inclusion of the phrase "evidence" before the word 'rahmah' acts to introduce the conceptual relation between both words. An obvious proof and argument brings the heart to a level of faith and belief that can only be reached by God. In some interpretations, "rahmah" in this verse is interpreted as prophethood. Sayyid Qutb writes that the mercy of God means granting a quality or trait that merits receiving the rank of prophethood (Shadhli, 1991, vol. 4, 1873). It seems that faith is the most significant of these traits, as mentioned in Quranic interpretation: "Bayyinah means the proof and argument through which one clarifies their stance regarding any matter, and rahmah means the divine blessing that signifies knowledge and faith in God" (Khateeb, vol. 11:326).

Faith is the core meaning of the word "rahmah" that can be inferred from this verse:

الْم تَرَىٰ إِلَىٰ الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْنَارِ (إبراهيم: 28)

"Have you not seen those who have exchanged the favor of God for disbelief and led their people to the home of ruin?" (Ibrahim: 28). The inner meaning of term 'نعمة' 'favor' is quoted to mean 'faith and direction' (Moghniyah, 2003, V 4: 446). Thus, faith is one of the examples of divine favors specifically for the believers, which results in the widening of the meaning of the word 'rahmah' in the Quran.

- **Flexibility or Ease**

"Rahmah" in the Quran means relief or ease in this verse:

“يا أيها الذين آمنوا كتب عليكم القصاص في القتلى الحر بالحر والعبد بالعبد والأنثى بالأنثى فمن عفى له من أخيه شيء فاتباع بالمعروف وأداء إليه باحسان ذلك تخفيف من ربكم ورحمة فمن اعتدى بعد ذلك فله عذاب اليم”.

(البقرة: 178)

"O you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered—the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But whoever overlooks from his brother anything, then there should be a suitable follow-up and payment to him with good conduct.

This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. But whoever transgresses after that will have a painful punishment.” (Al-Baqarah: 178). The thematic context of this verse refers to the laws of retribution (Qisas) and their implementation in Islamic society. These concepts are expressed sequentially through the interconnection of linguistic units within the context of this verse and their interaction with each other.

“Diyah” (blood money), which is specific to Muslims is a crucial ruling related. The phrase *“then there should be a suitable follow-up and payment to him with good conduct”* reflects this notion, as it signifies a form of easing and resolving pre-Islamic difficulties related to this matter. This establishes a conceptual link with the phrase *“This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy”*. The Arabic verb *لخفيف* (alleviation) signifies any form of easing of conditions in order to bring about a solution and remove obstacles. Contextual interpretation of the words used in this verse show that the term ‘rahmah’ which is often associated with *لخفيف* has instead replaced the term *سعة* (flexibility or relief) and has gained the meaning of relief through the process of semantic shift. In the exegesis of Jalalayn, “rahmah” is also interpreted as relief in this context, as it facilitates the matter of retribution, allowing neither side—neither the killer nor the victim’s guardian—to be solely condemned to retaliation, like the followers of the Torah, nor solely to pardon and blood money, like the followers of the Gospel, but rather having the choice in this matter (Mahalli, 1995, vol. 1: 30).

Relief in matters is one of the divine blessings mentioned in the verse:

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَىٰ بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَئُوسًا " (الاسراء: 83)

“And when We bestow favor upon man, he turns away and distances himself; but when evil touches him, he is ever despairing.” (Qur’an, Al-Isra: 83). AL-Zamakhshari interprets the “favor” (نعمة) in this verse as *health and relief* AL-(Zamakhshari, 1986, vol. 2: 689).

The opening is another aspect of the semantic inclusion of the word "rahmah" in the Qur'an
:is the notion of "relief" or "ease." In the verse

"يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنثَىٰ بِالْأُنثَىٰ فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ أَعَدَّىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ" (البقره، 178).

"O you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered - the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But whoever overlooks his brother anything, then there should be a suitable follow-up and payment to him with good conduct. This is alleviation from your Lord and mercy. But whoever transgresses after that will have a painful punishment." (Qur’an , Al-Baqarah:178).

The thematic content of this verse focuses on that of legal retribution and laws applicable in an Islamic society. In this aspect of this particular verse, the relationship of these ideas with one another is expressed as a chain-like sequence beyond the unity of linguistic units. Among the many regulations attached to the idea of retribution, which was provided to the Muslims upon the arrival of Islam, the issue of providing blood money (diyah) is perhaps the most central, and one can also

see the intent behind the phrase *"follow-up with what is right and payment to him with good conduct"* in this regard. It indicates therefore the intention of easing and softening pre-Islamic notions of blood revenge in this context which gives a theoretical justification for the statement, *"This is alleviation from your Lord and mercy"*.

- **Forgiveness(maghfirah)**

In some Quranic surahs, the word “rahmah” is also used to mean (forgiveness), based on the context of the verses. For instance, in the verse:

قُلْ لَيْسَ لِي فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قُلٌّ لِّلَّهِ كَتَبَ عَلَي نَفْسِي الرِّحْمَةَ اَنۡيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ اَلَّذِينَ حَسِبُوۡا اَنۡفُسَهُمْ فَهۡمَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوۡنَ (الانعام:12).

“Say, ‘To whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth?’ Say, ‘To Allah. He has decreed upon Himself mercy. He will surely assemble you for the Day of Resurrection, about which there is no doubt.’” (Al-An'am: 12), the structure of the verse allows us to understand the semantic relationships between its linguistic units through the arrangement of the words. The meaning of the word "rahmah" is interpreted in connection with the elements following it in the context of the verse.

The phrase *"He will surely assemble you for the Day of Resurrection"* serves as an explanation and elaboration of its meaning. Every individual must give account of his or her actions and the day of resurrection is intended for such purpose. Furthermore, considerations of mercy before this day, entail basic premises like the chances of one repenting from his or her wicked ways, and hence securing a pardon. God promises not to torment Muhammad's nation like other nations for their sins or afflict them with punishment for denial, but rather He will give them respite until the Day of Resurrection. *"Verily, He will gather you on the Day of Judgement"* - *Indeed, His compassion towards you is that at least up to the Day of Judgement, He will extend mercy and thereafter, He will gather people for accountability of their actions. This explains the intention of the term 'rahmah' (Al-Tabarsi, 1958, vol. 8: 23).*

Based on the preceding debates, it can be concluded that the term "rahmah" in this Ayah, in a compositional axis particularly in collocation with the statement ‘He will surely assemble you’ and the statement ‘the Day of Resurrection’ bears the meaning of *forgiveness (maghfirah)*. The significance of the term ‘rahmah’ in this ayah is still relevant to the core meaning of ‘rahmah’ which is divine love, blessing, and pardon which is another aspect of God's mercy and grace. In the phrase *"May Allah forgive you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favor upon you"* (Al-Fath: 2), the completion of grace afforded to the Prophet by Allah comes together with forgiving him his sins. This view helps explain that too is why Tantawi says that the prophetic intercession comes after this completion of divine benevolence (Tantawi,1997, vol. 13).

- **Friendship and affection**

The semantic field of the word "rahmah" (mercy) in the Quran has expanded to include the meaning of affection and friendship. This is clearly illustrated in the verse:

ثُمَّ فَفَعَيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَفَعَيْنَا بِعِيسَىٰ ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهَابِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (الحديد: 27)

“Then We sent following their footsteps Our messengers and followed [them] with Jesus, the son of Mary; and We gave him the Gospel and placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy” (Al-Hadid: 27).

When it comes to Rahmah’s definition, is more geared towards kindness and goodwill, especially to give out good, useful, and rewarding things to people in proximity. There is a wider terrain associated with the practice of kindness, which also includes being forgiving and generous, as well as tending positively to others. The inclusion of the verb ‘جعلنا’ in the meaning of approach and attitude towards Jesus and his followers evidences that these attributes are bestowed by God showing what is important in the personality of Jesus (PBUH) and his disciples. The conjunction "wa" as 'and' also means that the two characteristics are synergistic in that they complement each other aiming at the highest degree of love, compassion, and mercy. Apparently, placing "ra'fah" and "rahmah" in the hearts of Jesus's followers means that God enabled them to have compassion and mercy towards each other, leading them to live together based on mutual support and peace (Tabatabai, 1955, vol. 19: 304).

From this interpretative point, it can be inferred that following Jesus (PBUH) and living peacefully with one another implies friendship among them. The word "rahmah" in collocation and semantic interaction with units such as "ra'fah," and then its association with the verb “they followed” (ittaba‘uhu), takes on the meaning of friendship. This is similar to the verse:

“ وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۗ وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا ” (عمران: 103).

“And remember the favor of Allah upon you when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together, and you became, by His favor, brothers” (Qur’an, Al-Imran: 103), which mentions God’s favor of bringing hearts together after enmity, resulting in brotherhood.

4. Conclusion

The term “rahmah” is an example of a polysemic lexical item found in the Holy Quran, the central religious text of Islam, since one cannot assign a static and absolute meaning to it. The studies conducted in this research indicate that language is a collection of dynamic and living words that are systematically interconnected. The semantic interpretation of each piece of data in this chain depends on the relationship with co-occurring elements and the discourse process of the text. The interaction of these linguistic signs guides the mind towards an implicit connotative understanding of a word.

The unique structure of the Quranic verses and the arrangement of words within these verses significantly expand their semantic scope. The precise explanation of lexical meanings and the religious propositions derived from them is determined within the context of the discourse and by considering the linguistic context of the verses and surahs. Therefore, if a word maintains its

semantic expansion over time through the process of collocation and with regard to the diachronic perspective, then, ultimately, commentators, when analyzing its meaning and providing a precise explanation of its signification within the context of a verse, act based on a synchronic perspective and the collocating elements, selecting a concept that aligns with the context of the discourse.

The word "رحمة" (rahma) plays a significant role in many Quranic verses. To prove its polysemy, a root analysis and the discovery of its core meaning are necessary. This analysis facilitates the understanding of the hidden semantic layers of this word in light of the context of the verses and surahs. The term "rahma (رحمة)" in the Quran is contextualized meaning religion, Islam, paradise, faith, rain, sustenance, etc, depending on paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations in the discourse. All these meanings are dealt with in relation to the primary meaning, and their meaning relations with other units of language in the organization of the discourse.

In this direction, the instances of combination with the core meaning are extended, and each time a new concept might be assigned to it. Taking into account the contemporary linguistic perspective and comprehension of the doctrines, examining interpretive texts provides valuable insight into the discerning of the meaning of the term.

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