

## The words of the Holy Qur'ān and their renewed meanings

### Kata-kata dalam Al-Qur'ān dan makna yang diperbaharui



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#### Abstract

This study emerges from the need to understand semantic shifts in the Qur'ān more comprehensively, particularly for the terms “qā'il” and “al-Amānah”. The **main objective** is to show that the words of the Holy Qur'ān may acquire new meanings or usages, based on various factors, and that the expanded meanings of Qur'ānic words have implications for the overall understanding of the respective verses. The **methodology** involves reference to classical and modern lexicons, as well as contextual inquiries grounded in tafsīr literature. The data were analyzed qualitatively by integrating different perspectives.

The **main results** show that “qā'il,” commonly understood as “one who speaks,” may also refer to “one at midday,” while “al-Amānah” does not necessarily refer to “material trusts or religious rites,” but also to the “human intellect and the obligation to exercise it to find God” based on the evidence for the existence of God. These semantic developments pave the way for a richer and more responsive understanding of the Qur'ān, resonating with current scholarly discourse. In terms of **contribution**, this research proposes an integrative “textual-contextual” approach that highlights semantic, historical, and scientific elements. Such a framework can enrich scholars' efforts in interpreting Qur'ānic verses and relating them to social realities and advances in knowledge. In **conclusion**, the expanded meanings of these two terms affirm that Qur'ānic interpretation is dynamic. By considering linguistic, historical, and modern contexts, this study offers fresh insights that bring the Qur'ān closer to contemporary understanding, without dismissing the enduring value of classical tafsīr.

**Keywords:** Semantics, Qā'il, al-Amānah, Textual-Contextual

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#### Abstrak

Studi ini muncul dari kebutuhan untuk memahami pergeseran semantik dalam Al-Qur'an secara lebih komprehensif, terutama untuk istilah “qā'il” dan “al-Amānah”. **Tujuan** utamanya adalah untuk menunjukkan bahwa kata-kata Al-Qur'an dapat memperoleh makna atau penggunaan baru, berdasarkan berbagai faktor, dan bahwa makna yang diperluas dari kata-kata Al-Qur'an memiliki implikasi untuk pemahaman

keseluruhan dari masing-masing ayat. **Metodologi** ini melibatkan referensi ke leksikon klasik dan modern, serta pertanyaan kontekstual yang didasarkan pada sastra tafsir. Data dianalisis secara kualitatif dengan mengintegrasikan perspektif yang berbeda.

**Hasil utama** menunjukkan bahwa “qā'il,” yang umumnya dipahami sebagai “orang yang berbicara,” juga dapat merujuk pada “seseorang di tengah hari”, sementara “al-Amānah” tidak selalu mengacu pada “kepercayaan materi atau ritus keagamaan,” tetapi juga “kecerdasan manusia dan kewajiban untuk menggunakannya untuk menemukan Tuhan” berdasarkan bukti keberadaan Tuhan. Perkembangan semantik ini membuka jalan bagi pemahaman yang lebih kaya dan lebih responsif tentang Al-Qur'an, yang beresonansi dengan wacana ilmiah saat ini. **Kontribusi**, penelitian ini mengusulkan pendekatan “tekstual-kontekstual” integratif yang menyoroti unsur-unsur semantik, sejarah, dan ilmiah. Kerangka kerja seperti itu dapat memperkaya upaya para sarjana dalam menafsirkan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an dan menghubungkannya dengan realitas sosial dan kemajuan pengetahuan. **Kesimpulannya**, Kesimpulannya, perluasan makna dua istilah tersebut menegaskan bahwa penafsiran Al-Qur'an tidak bersifat statis. Dengan mempertimbangkan konteks linguistik, sejarah, dan modern, penelitian ini menawarkan wawasan baru yang membawa Al-Qur'an lebih dekat ke pemahaman kontemporer, tanpa mengabaikan nilai abadi dari tafsir klasik.

**Kata Kunci:** Semantik, Qā'il, al-Amānah, Tekstual-Kontekstual

## A. INTRODUCTION

The unique linguistic features and rhetorical devices of the Holy Qur'an allow its words to signify different meanings and its sentences to convey different propositions, which has contributed to the dynamicity of the field of Qur'an interpretation, which, in turn, led to producing different interpretations over the past 14 centuries (Najib & Malik, 2020). Besides these linguistic elements, the practice of tafsir was influenced by historical, social, socio-political and scientific factors (Hamid & Imamuddin, 2024), as well as by historical contexts and the opinions of the Prophet's companions, which led to different approaches that are based on the Prophet's verbal heritage and that of his companions (Faris, 2023). The dynamic nature of this field may also benefit from cultural intricacies and variation between the dialects of Arabic, both old and contemporary ones, but the new interpretations must not contradict the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah.

This paper proposes new meanings for two words in the Holy Qur'an, which leads to new understandings of the verses containing them. The proposal is based on the fact that words in all languages acquire new, sometimes slightly different, meanings, connotations and usages that are derived from the original or literal meaning of the word. To illustrate, the original meaning of the Arabic word 'kāfir', which means 'infidel,' is 'farmer' (Al-Fayrūzabādī, 2005, p. 471; Qāhirah, 2004, p. 791). Because the farmer puts the seed in the ground and then 'covers' it with soil, the word 'kāfir'

acquired the meaning of 'rejecting religion' or 'refusing to believe in the Prophets,' i.e., 'disbeliever,' since the disbeliever 'covers his knowledge of the necessity of religion in life and hides his belief that the Prophets are telling the truth.' This is because this knowledge and belief are instilled in the human nature, in the soul from which God took the pledge of Islam to His Lordship, as stated in verse (172) of Surah al-A'rāf, and also in the mind, which God created able to search for God and reach Him.

Verse (60) of Surah Ṣād provides another example of what this paper endeavors to achieve. The meaning usually assigned to the word 'qarār' in this verse is 'home, end-state, or destiny,' as stated in the standard exegesis books (e.g., Ibn Kathīr, 1999, p. 79). However, this word can also be understood to mean 'decision' (Qāhīrah, 2004, p. 725), which leads the verse to be understood as follows: 'You have advised us to follow you, what an unwise 'decision' we made by trusting you and following you, you were misguided and thus misguided us.'

The above examples illustrate that the words of the Holy Qur'ān can acquire new meanings that lead to new interpretations of their respective verses. Another example is provided by verse (7) of Surah al-Ṭāriq. The majority of commentators agree that the meaning of the word 'aṣ-ṣulb' is 'the man's backbone/spine,' and that the word 'at-tarā'ib' refers to either the man's or the woman's upper trunk bones, specifically the part of the chest 'between the breasts' or 'between the shoulders to the chest' or 'between the breasts, legs and eyes' or 'the man's neck.' Thus, 'aṣ-ṣulb' and 'at-tarā'ib' are parts of the man's body, or parts of the man's body and the woman's body. According to some colloquial dialects of Arabic, a person's 'ṣulb' is the column that holds up his back and supports his body, i.e., the spine.

Despite these convincing interpretations, endorsed by religious and language scholars, modern science brings us another interpretation of verse (7) of Surah al-Ṭāriq, the Surah which discusses the sky and stars in its first three verses. According to this new interpretation, the water/liquid from which man was created also comes from between the 'aṣ-ṣulb' and the 'at-tarā'ib,' but that 'aṣ-ṣulb' means the hardened 'steel' at the center of stars and 'at-tarā'ib' means the clay or 'dust' (or cement, as scientists say) that is thrown into space when stars explode, laden with oxygen. When stars explode, oxygen, which is formed as a result of nuclear interactions inside the stars, combines with hydrogen in space to form water, indicating that water reached our planet when stars began to appear, and later explode (Forrester, n.d.). This means that water, from which every living creature was created, descended to earth

from outer space. This interpretation receives support from Qur'ānic verses that state that man was created from water and clay or dust, like verse (30) of Surah al-Anbiyā' and verse (7) of Surah al-Sajdah respectively.

Regardless of the extent to which this new interpretation conforms to our previous knowledge, it is worthy of acceptance, for at least two reasons. The first is that the words 'aṣ-ṣulb' and 'at-tarā'ib' may also mean 'steel' and 'dust,' respectively, and the second is that the water from which we were created is formed from the interaction of the elements of oxygen and hydrogen, which are found in the components of stars and outer space; thus, modern discoveries support this new understanding. The word 'tarā'ib' is the plural form of the word 'tarībah,' which, according to exegesis books and dictionaries, refers to the bones of the chest, but it is also possible as a plural form of the word 'turābah,' which is 'a type of chemically cooked dust mixed with water, lime, sand and gravel, and which becomes very solid when it dries, and which is used to build roofs, walls and the like' (Mas'ūd, 1992, p. 204). Thus, it is similar to the mixture of water and clay from which mankind are created. Also, 'aṣ-ṣulb' means 'steel' (Mas'ūd, 1992, p. 498; Qāhirah, 2004, p. 519).

Another attempt to understand these two terms, and one which adheres to their literal meanings, says that 'aṣ-ṣulb,' which means 'solid,' is the tailbone or sacrum (the last piece in the spine), which never decays, as prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) says in the ḥadīth (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 1991, p. 2271), hence the word 'sulb' is an appropriate description of the tailbone. Besides, the spine is not solid (but is made up of solid pieces, namely the vertebrae), which is why we are able to prostrate, kneel and bend in general. And if 'aṣ-ṣulb' is the 'tailbone,' which does not decay, i.e., does not turn into dust or 'turāb,' then 'at-tarā'ib' are the rest of the human body parts because they decay, that is, they all turn into dust (Al-Balushi, 2021).

Verse (29) of Surah al-Qamar provides yet another example. It describes what the people of prophet Ṣāliḥ (pbuh) did after they unanimously agreed to slaughter the camel, an evil mission that their naughty-one, Qudār bin Sālif, carried out. Qur'ān scholars had different views on the meaning of the word 'ta'āṭā.' Al-Ṭabarī says that 'ta'āṭā' means 'took the camel with his hand' (1994, vol. 7, p. 196), and Al-Baghawī says that it means 'took the camel with his sword' (1989, vol. 7, p. 431). Al-Qurṭubī says that 'ta'āṭā' means 'took up the act' or 'embarked on the act' (2006, vol. 20, p. 96). Ibn Kathīr says that 'ta'āṭā' means 'dared' (1999, vol. 7, p. 479), and Al-Sa'dī says that it means 'submitted to what they ordered him to do' (2002, p. 974). Sheikh

Muḥammad Al-Sha'rāwī says that the naughty-one did not have a sword, so he 'ta'āṭā,' i.e., took someone else's sword, meaning "he snatched a sword from one of them and killed the camel," because the verb 'ta'āṭā,' which implies interaction, refers to 'sharing an act' or 'dealing with another person' (1991, p. 14781).

Although these interpretations are correct in describing the incident and analyzing its details, they are not the only possible ones. According to Sayyid Quṭb, 'ta'āṭā' means 'drank wine to become bold enough to perform the crime he committed' (2004, vol. 6, p. 3433), which is similar to Ḥusnī's view, who says that the naughty-one had taken an intoxicating drink, which made him drunk, and thus unable to foresee the consequences of the atrocious act (2017, p. 73). This view is similar to Ibn Kathīr's, who says that drinking alcohol made the wicked man daring enough to commit the heinous act, as intoxicants weaken the sense of guilt (i.e., remorse of conscience) and sensibility in general. This modern interpretation intersects with those who argue that 'ta'āṭā' means 'to ingest,' since the use of intoxicants (and drugs) is by 'ingesting' them through the mouth or the nose. Nowadays, the word 'ta'āṭā' is commonly used in relation to the ingestion of alcohol and drugs.

Another example is the interpretation of the word 'yumnā' in verse (37) of Surah al-Qiyāmah as an adjective in the feminine form, as a description of the word 'nuṭfah,' meaning 'sperm' (Al-Balushi, 2022). According to this analysis, 'yumnā' has three meanings, which are 'blessed', 'comes from the right side' and 'strong' (Al-Fayrūzabādī, 2005, p. 1241), instead of just perceiving it as a present tense passive form of the verb meaning 'emitted or thrown into the womb', as a description of the word 'semen,' or even as a description of the word 'nuṭfah' on the reading in which it is pronounced as a feminine verbal form, 'tumnā' (Al-Qurṭubī, 2006, vol. 21, p. 441; Al-Baghawī, 1989, vol. 8, p. 287; Ibn Kathīr, 1999, vol. 8, p. 283; Al-Samarqandī, 1993, vol. 3, p. 428).

The following section will investigate two Qur'ānic verses with the question of whether two of their key words can have novel meanings, and what this means for the interpretations of the respective verses. These two words are 'qā'il' in verse (19) of Surah al-Kahf and 'al-Amānah' in verse (72) of Surah al-Aḥzāb. The word 'qā'il' is chosen because it has only one meaning in all exegesis books, and the word 'al-Amānah' is chosen because most interpretations either link it to 'material trusts,' which are already referred to by the word 'al-Amānāt' in verse (58) of Surah al-Nisā', or to religious rites, which are mentioned in numerous Qur'ānic verses.

## B. DISCUSSION

### 1. The Nineteenth Verse of Surah al-Kahf

This section reviews the meaning assigned to the word 'qā'il' in verse (19) of Surah al-Kahf, in (1), in some of the exegesis books and presents a new meaning. Most scholars assume that the word 'qā'il' means 'speaker', as the translation in (10) shows. Al-Ṭabarī did not comment on the word 'qā'il' and expressed its meaning through the 'question and answer' exchange between the youths (1994, vol. 5, p. 88). Similarly, Al-Baghawī did not comment on the meaning of 'qā'il,' assuming that it means 'speaker' (1989, vol. 5, p. 159), which is what Al-Sa'dī assumed (2002, p. 549). Al-Qurṭubī, too, did not comment on the meaning of 'qā'il' and seems to have assumed that it is the active participle of 'qāla,' which means 'say,' as evidenced by his statement that "they [the youths] entered it [the cave] at midday, and God sent them out in the evening" (2006, vol. 13, 235-236). Likewise, Ibn Kathīr did not comment on the meaning of 'qā'il,' assuming that it means 'speaker,' since he said, "as if they entered the cave at the beginning of a day, and their awakening was at the end of a day, which is why they said that they slept for part of a day" (1999, vol. 5, p. 145). This is also the view shared by Al-Andalusī (2001, vol. 3, p. 505) and Ibn 'Ādil (1998, vol. 12, p. 448-449), among others.

*1. 'Even so, We awakened them, so that they may ask one another. A speaker [qā'il] among them said, "How long have you stayed?" They said, "We have stayed a day, or part of a day" (19).'*

This is also the view of contemporary commentators, such as Ibn 'Āshūr, who interprets the sentence with the word 'qā'il' to mean "someone among them said," and says that it explains the sentence "so that they may ask one another" (1984, vol. 15, p. 284). Besides, Al-Shanqīṭī says, "in this verse, God Almighty stated that He raised the youths of the cave from their long sleep so they would question each other, that is, to ask each other how long they stayed in the cave in that sleep" (2005, vol. 4, p. 59). This is also what Ṭanṭāwī (1984, vol. 5, p. 852) and Al-Sha'rāwī (1991, p. 8861) maintain.

Despite this consensus, I will say that the word 'qā'il' in this verse is not just the active participle form of the verb 'qāla,' meaning 'to speak.' The word 'qā'il' in this verse may also be understood as an active participle of the verb 'qāla' with the denotation related to noontime 'qā'ilah,' which means 'midday.' Thus, 'qā'il' means 'one who spends noontime' (Al-Fayrūzabādī, 2005, p. 1051), i.e., it describes a human being (or their activity) at midday. This

understanding indicates that the cave youths woke up from their long sleep at midday or a little earlier, contrary to what commentators maintain about the time they woke up from their sleep. While the predominant view, i.e., that the youths entered the cave at midday and woke up in the evening, is not based on linguistic evidence, but rather on the youths' comment that 'they slept for part of day,' the current proposal is based on another meaning of a key word in the verse, and is thus more plausible.

Examination of the Holy Qur'ān reveals that the word 'qā'il' is mentioned in 6 verses, some of which refer to the meaning of 'speech,' some refer to the meaning of 'noontime,' while the others support both interpretations. The verses that unambiguously refer to the meaning of 'speech' are (100) of Surah al-Mu'minūn, in (2), and (18) of Surah al-Aḥzāb, in (3). This is because the word 'qā'il' in verse (100) of Surah al-Mu'minūn contains a clitic pronoun that refers to the object, which is the noun 'word' that precedes it in the same sentence. The word 'qā'il' in verse (18) of Surah al-Aḥzāb is also followed by one of its objects, which is the prepositional phrase 'to their brothers,' which includes the second object. Thus, when the verb 'qāla' is followed by an object, it must be in the sense of 'speech' because it is transitive in this sense only.

2. *'That I may do right in what I have neglected.' By no means! It is just a word that he utters [qā'il]. And behind them is a barrier, until the Day they are resurrected (100).'*  
 3. *'God already knows the hinderers among you, and those who say 'qā'il' to their brethren, "Come and join us." Rarely do they mobilize for battle (18).'*

The verse that unambiguously refers to the meaning of 'noontime' is verse (4) of Surah al-A'rāf, in (4). This is because the word 'qā'il' is mentioned in contrast to the word 'sleeping at night' in the verse, i.e., to illustrate the contrast between nighttime and midday, i.e., napping. The other reason is that the verb 'qāla' here is not followed by an object, i.e., it is intransitive, and thus refers to a description of the state of 'a person at midday'.

4. *'How many a town have We destroyed? Our might came upon them by night, or while they were napping [qā'il] (4).'*

The other three verses, including verse (19) of Surah al-Kahf, which is the topic of this section, are left to ijtihād; that is, they can be interpreted in either sense, depending on the available evidence. The word 'qā'il' in verse (51) of Surah al-Ṣāffāt, in (5), refers to the meaning of 'speech', because this verse describes a scene that takes place in Paradise, starting from verse (40) of the same Surah. And because this scene takes place in Paradise, it indicates the absence of the sun (which indicates

the specific time of the day), or even the absence of the concept of time, which indicates that 'qā'il' most probably refers to the meaning of 'speech,' not 'noontime'. As for the word 'qā'il' in verse (10) of Surah Yusuf, in (6), it could refer to 'speech' or even 'noontime', since there does not seem to be any evidence favoring either sense, because the time when prophet Joseph's brothers conferred about what they would do with him could be noon or any other time.

5. *'One of them will say [qā'il], "I used to have a friend" (51).'*

6. *'One of them said [qā'il], "Do not kill Joseph, but throw him into the bottom of the well; some caravan may pick him up—if you must do something (10)."*

The current claim that the youths of the cave were asking each other at midday receives support from the fact that the next part of the verse, in (7), talks about a suggestion by one of them to bring food. This food is very likely to be lunch food, since the verse mentions the need for discreetness and concealment, which suggests that the boys woke up in the middle of the day, and thus need to hide their identity and also to act gently, as the latter part of the verse, in (8), shows, so they would not be recognized.

7. *'They said, "Your Lord knows best how long you have stayed." "Send one of you to the city, with this money of yours, and let him see which food is most suitable, and let him bring you some provision thereof" (19).'*

8. *'And let him be gentle, and let no one become aware of you (19).'*

Additional support for the current claim comes from the fact that the 'speaker' sense of 'qā'il' is already available in the word that immediately precedes 'qā'il' in the verse, which is the verb 'qāla' meaning 'said.' In other words, had the meaning of 'speaker' been intended by the word 'qā'il', God Almighty would have said, 'one of them said,' not 'a speaker of them said,' which is a shorter expression in Arabic, one that follows the rule of 'less is more informative,' but perhaps the Almighty wanted to draw our attention to the time the youths were asking each other, which is the time of 'qā'ilah' or noon. Also, if, as commentators maintain, they woke up at the end of the day, darkness would have concealed their identity, and they would not have needed to be discreet to conceal it.

Abū Ḥayyān, who maintains that the meaning of 'qā'il' is 'one who speaks,' states the following regarding the need for concealment, "And let him be gentle in his concealment and discreetness, both when entering and exiting the market. Al-Zamakhsharī said: 'Let him be extra kind and particularly gentle when he buys the food so that he would not be cheated, and also in relation to the matter of concealment so that he would not arouse suspicion'" (Abū Ḥayyān, 1993, vol. 6, pp.

106–107). If we assume, as we say here, that the youths entered the cave at the end of the day and woke up in the middle of the day, it would still be appropriate for them to conclude, about the amount of time they spent sleeping, that they slept ‘for a day or part of a day;’ thus, this statement is not necessarily an argument for the predominant view.

The colloquial Arabic dialects slightly differ in the meanings they assign to the word ‘qā’il’ in the sense of ‘the state of a person at noontime.’ For example, ‘qā’il’ in the Egyptian dialect refers to ‘spending the time after noon or lunch sleeping;’ in the Omani dialect, ‘qā’il’ refers to ‘spending the midday time eating lunch, either at one’s home or as a guest of someone.’

## 2. The seventy-second verse of Surah al-Aḥzāb

This section discusses verse (72) of Surah al-Aḥzāb, in (9). I will start by introducing some of the most important interpretations of the word ‘al-Amānah,’ which is very important as a concept. I will then present a new understanding of ‘al-Amānah,’ one that is consistent with the uniqueness of the only creature that chose to carry it, the human being. The availability of different interpretations of the word ‘al-Amānah’ indicates that it is a rich and profound concept. Al-Ṭabarī cites scholars who said that ‘al-Amānah’ is “obedience to God, His statutes, religion, and ordinances, as well as everything that the concept of trust applies to, such as people’s trusts and deposits” (1994, vol. 6, p. 204). Al-Shanqīṭī maintains that ‘al-Amānah’ refers to the “religious obligations with their consequent rewards and penalties” (2005, vol. 6, p. 666).

9. *‘We offered the Trust [al-Amānah] to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains; but they refused to bear it, and were apprehensive of it; but the human being accepted it. He was unfair and ignorant (72).’*

Al-Khāzin presents the following opinions regarding the meaning of the term ‘al-Amānah’ in this verse: “Ibn ‘Abbās says that ‘al-Amānah’ refers to obedience and the obligations that God ordained that His worshippers perform ... Ibn Mas‘ūd says that ‘al-Amānah’ refers to performing prayers, giving zakāt, fasting during Ramaḍān, pilgrimage to Mecca, being truthful, repaying loans, ensuring justice in transactions, and even more so giving back people’s trusts; others say it refers to all what God has commanded mankind to do and not to do, or it is fasting and showering after intercourse, and all that is subtle in laws. Abdullah bin ‘Amr bin Al-‘Āṣ says that ‘al-Amānah’ refers to the genitals, the ears, the eyes, the hands and the legs, and that one without ‘Amānah’ is without faith; Ibn ‘Abbās is also reported to have said that ‘al-Amānah’ refers to people’s trusts and fulfilling covenants, such that no believer

may cheat a believer, not even an enemy, at all. God offered this 'Amānah' to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, and said 'would you carry this 'Amānah' along with the promise of reward for adherence and punishment for neglect?' they said, oh Lord, we are subjected to your commands, we want neither reward nor penalty, and declined the offer due to fear and awareness of its immense responsibility, but they did not decline the offer as an act of disobedience to Him" (Al-Khāzin, 2004, vol. 3, p. 438-439).

It, however, does not seem that the word 'al-Amānah' in verse (72) of Surah al-Aḥzāb means 'the trusts and deposits of people,' because this sense of the word 'al-Amānah' is explicitly referred to in verse (58) of Surah al-Nisā', in (10). Also, it seems that the meaning of offering the 'al-Amānah' to the heavens, the earth and the mountains was to these creatures themselves, and not to their inhabitants (i.e., the angels, people and jinn). This is because God Almighty mentioned the mountains, and if the inhabitants of these three places (the heavens, the earth and the mountains) were addressed with this offer, He would not have mentioned the mountains because the 'inhabitants of the mountains' are included in the 'inhabitants of the earth,' because the mountains are on earth. This understanding is also supported by the fact that mankind chose to carry 'al-Amānah' though they were from the inhabitants of earth.

*10. 'God instructs you to give back things entrusted [al-Amānāt] to you to their owners. And when you judge between people, judge with justice. God's instructions to you are excellent. God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing (58).'*

Ibn 'Āshūr states, "thus 'al-Amānah' could refer to faith, which is belief in the Oneness of God, which is God's covenant with the descendants of Adam, mentioned in verse (172) of Surah al-A'rāf, 'And when Your Lord summoned the descendants of Adam, and made them testify about themselves. "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we testify". Ibn 'Āshūr continues, "this means that God instilled the evidence for His Oneness in people's souls, linking it to human thought, as a covenant, rendering it a trust implanted in human nature and bestowed upon humanity rather than upon the heavens, the earth, or the mountains. This aligns with the principle that only beings endowed with knowledge and life can bear such a responsibility, because knowledge is necessary for reasoning" ... Ibn 'Āshūr continues, "al-Amānah could also be the human intellect, called a trust because of its vital importance as well as underscoring its preciousness, entrusted to mankind with the obligation to protect it as a divine trust" (1984, vol. 22, p. 126-127).

Ṭanṭāwī says that 'al-Amānah' refers to "the religious obligations that include giving back people's trusts. The meaning of man's carrying the 'al-Amānah' is that he accepts the obligation to honor it, either through God preparing him with the talents, instincts, nature, and abilities that He has instilled in him, or by accepting it verbally on the day God took the covenant upon mankind while they were in the state of atoms" (1984, vol. 8, p. 237-238).

Al-Sha'rāwī says that 'al-Amānah' "is creating the human soul [i.e., mankind] with the ability to choose, but if it [the human soul] is compelled to behave in a specific manner, or forced by the testimony of witnesses, then it would no longer be an 'Amānah.' Thus, the 'Amānah' offered by the Almighty to His creatures is the trust of the ability to choose whether to believe or disbelieve, to obey or disobey, and everything except mankind refused to endure this responsibility" (1991, p. 12212).

After having surveyed the scholars' views on the meaning of the word 'al-Amānah', I propose that it means pledging to exercise the endowed abilities and practice the learning skills that God Almighty has instilled in the human intellect for the purpose of reaching the conclusion that God is the Deity worthy of worship, based on the evidence that God has placed in the universe and in the human soul for His existence as well as for His right to our faith and worship, essentially without seeing Him, despite the fact that the human being is created with the ability to make choices and decisions about whether to believe in God or not. As such, not only is the proposed meaning for the word 'al-Amānah' comprehensive, but it addresses the more fundamental aspect of religion, which is faith (which both precedes religious rites and determines the quality of performing them), since it refers to the intellect and its endowed abilities and skills. It is worth mentioning that my conception of 'al-Amānah' is close to Ibn 'Āshūr's, who says that it is the intellect and pledging to believe in the Oneness of God, as well as to Al-Sha'rāwī's, who says that it is the trust of the ability to choose. The current proposal is supported by a number of arguments, stated in the following paragraphs.

First, God Almighty created mankind and granted them the intellect which is capable of reaching conclusions based on evidence, and so God demands that they believe in Him without seeing Him (i.e., the concept of 'Belief in the Unseen'). In other words, God enabled mankind to conclude that God exists and that He deserves their faith and worship, based on the evidence that He placed in the human soul as well as in the universe, for our eyes to see and our minds to critically think about. Reference to this notion is stated in verse (53) of Surah Fuṣṣilat, in (11).

11. *'We will show them Our proofs on the horizons, and in their very souls, until it [i.e., what was revealed to prophet Muḥammad (pbuh)] becomes clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient that your Lord is witness over everything? (53).'*

Differently stated, God granted mankind various learning abilities to help them reach the truth about Him, which is why mankind are obliged to use these learning abilities and research skills and not neglect them, since if they neglected these abilities and skills and did not use them for their main purpose, then they would have failed to honor the obligation to bear the responsibility by carrying the 'al-Amānah.' Not honoring 'al-Amānah' amounts to not believing in God, which will lead to penalty in Hellfire.

Second, verse (73) of Surah al-Aḥzāb, in (12), which is the verse that immediately follows the verse which is the topic of this section, talks about hypocrisy and polytheism, which are concepts related to creed and faith, not to religious rites and practices or people's trusts. Thus 'al-Amānah' is related to creed and faith, not to the religious rites that the commentators claimed 'al-Amānah' refers to. This verse also establishes a contrast between hypocrites and polytheists, on one hand, and believers, on the other hand. Thus, verse (73) of Surah al-Aḥzāb talks about faith in God, which is 'Belief in the Unseen', which mankind are required to proclaim after having reached the right conclusions about God, using the learning abilities and skills which God instilled in the human intellect.

12. *'God will punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the idolaters, men and women. And God will redeem the believers, men and women. God is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful (73).'*

Third, my concept of 'al-Amānah' is supported by verse (153) of Surah al-Nisā', in (13). This verse says that when the people of Moses (pbuh) asked him to show them God plainly, something to which they had no right, since God had granted them the intellect necessary to reach Him and believe in Him without seeing Him, He penalized them with the thunderbolt. In other words, God penalized them with the thunderbolt because of their 'wrongdoing,' as the verse says, which is neglecting 'al-Amānah,' i.e., for not exercising the intellect for the purpose it was created for, which is reaching God through evidence.

13. *'The People of the Scripture ask you to bring down to them a book from the heaven. But they had asked of Moses [even] greater than that and said, "Show us Allāh outright," so the thunderbolt struck them for their wrongdoing [zulm]. Then they took the calf [for worship] after clear evidences had come to them, and We pardoned that. And We gave Moses a clear authority (153).'*

In fact, a more accurate translation for the Arabic word 'ẓulm' in verse (153) of Surah al-Nisā' is 'transgression,' that is, 'exceeding the bounds in violating laws and duties.' And by the way, the word ẓulm, which God uses in this verse to describe neglecting 'al-Amānah,' is the same word used in verse (72) of Surah al-Aḥzāb, repeated in (14), which is 'ẓalūmā.' This is to indicate that the transgression in both verses is the same, which is not using the learning intellect and its endowed abilities and skills to achieve the high goal behind creating us and granting it to us.

14. 'We offered the Trust [al-Amānah] to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains; but they refused to bear it, and were apprehensive of it; but the human being accepted it. He was unfair [ẓalūmā] and ignorant (72).'

### C. CONCLUSION

This paper has provided evidence that Qur'ānic words are capable of acquiring new meanings, which could lead to new understandings of the relevant verses. It was shown that the word 'qā'il', which is typically understood as 'the one who speaks,' may also signify another meaning, which is 'resting or doing an activity at midday.' This view prompts a reinterpretation of the time at which the youths of the cave woke up and also of its relevance to the Surah's details. As for the word 'al-Amānah,' it was shown that it does not refer to the tangible or material trusts nor to religious rites, but rather to a greater conception of trust, which is the ability to make decisions, which mankind chose to carry as a result of being endowed with a learning intellect, an organ with many learning abilities and research skills, one that is capable of showing them the truth if they used it effectively.

Therefore, the process of interpreting the Holy Qur'ān is not restricted to a specific mind or a specific intellectual approach or a specific linguistic theory or a specific dictionary or a specific dialect of Arabic or a specific philosophy. This study thus asserts that Qur'ānic terminology has richer etymological and semantic roots than is often assumed in traditional, one-dimensional interpretations. It also shows that following a multidisciplinary methodology may provide fresh insights that facilitate a clearer mapping of semantic shifts in religious contexts, an aspect rarely explored by classical exegetes.

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