

# A Semantic Analysis of “Wizr” in the Holy Qur’an: Integrating Structural Semantics and Historical Etymology

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## ABSTRACT:

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The semantic field of sin in the Holy Qur'an encompasses various terms, among which *wizr* is prominent. Semantic studies of the Qur'an typically focus on either synchronic or diachronic approaches; the present research investigates this concept by applying both methods simultaneously. In comparative Semitic etymology, the root Z-R represents condensed and hard force. This force creates three distinct states depending on its interaction with the subject: support, protection, and pressure. In the synchronic analysis, both syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations independently indicate the presence of consistent concepts within the semantic network of *wizr*. Collocation analysis reveals that heaviness is a central component common to both the lexical root and its Qur'anic application. However, other components, such as undesirability, deviation from moderation, non-transferability, and the embodiment of deeds, are derived exclusively from the Qur'anic usage of the word, with no trace in its primary lexical meaning. An examination of paradigmatic concepts further corroborates the semantic components derived from syntagmatic relations. Therefore, it is more appropriate to define *wizr* as the heaviness of human actions that possess a degree of moral repulsiveness, manifesting across various concepts within the domain of sin, such as *sayyi'ah*, *khaṭī'ah*, *ithm*, and all divinely prohibited or even detestable acts. Consequently, the most suitable equivalent for this term is the application of its literal meaning, heaviness.

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## 1. Introduction

The Holy Qur’an is a program for guidance, the adherence to which ensures eternal felicity. A prerequisite for understanding the Qur’an is the comprehension of its vocabulary with a focus on the context of the verses; this is because a specific semantic continuity exists between Qur’anic words and sentences, all arranged by the Almighty to convey a particular message. Semantics serves as a tool for discovering and elucidating various semantic levels within the Qur’an and achieving a more precise understanding. Regarding the discourse of sin in the Qur’an, a vast semantic field is traceable where numerous concepts are interlinked. This diversity should not be overlooked; rather, each word must be examined within its own context and framework.

The root W-Z-R is one of the high-frequency word-building roots in the Qur’an. Words derived from this tri-literal root appear 27 times across 14 verses (Abd al-Baqi 1996). The frequency of its various morphological applications is evidence of its prevalence in the Arabic language of the Qur’an. This root appears in the Qur’an in various morphological templates, including the active participle, verbal noun, verb, and broken plural, in forms such as *wāzīrah*, *tazīru*, *wizr*, *wazīr*, and *awzār*.

Upon examining the verses, we find that this root, despite having identical orthographic forms, is used in some verses in meanings distinct from sin. In Q. 20:29 and Q. 25:35, the word *wazīr*, in the form of an adjective, refers to Aaron assisting Moses in the capacity of a minister or helper. In Q. 75:11, the word *wazar* refers to a refuge on the Day of Resurrection. In Q. 94:2-3, the Almighty states: “*and relieve you of your burden which [almost] broke your back, which weighed down your back.*” The majority of exegetes have interpreted the term *wizr* as the heavy burden of messengership, revelation, the elucidation of laws, and the guidance of the people (al-Ṭabrisī 1993; al-Bayḍāwī 1997; al-Zamakhsharī 1986; Tabataba’i 1996; Ibn ‘Āshūr 1999). In Q. 20:87, and Q. 47:4, the use of *awzār* refers respectively to the weight of jewellery and the burdens of war equipment (Figure 1).

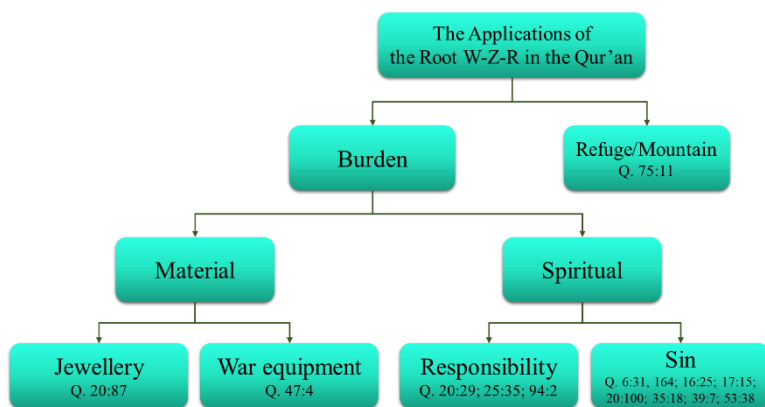


Figure 1. The Applications of the Root W-Z-R in the Qur'an

In this study, an attempt is made to redefine the semantic components of the concept of *wizr* by employing structural semantics and examining both syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations.

## 2. Literature Review

In recent decades, in addition to exegetical and lexical studies, numerous research projects in the form of books and scholarly articles have been published to investigate and elucidate the concepts within the semantic field of sin in the Qur'an using various methodologies. Specifically regarding the concept of *wizr*, one may note the entry "Load of Burden" by Patrick Gaffney (2003, 2: 227-228) in the Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an. He considers the concept of "burden" in the Qur'an to be a symbol of human responsibility and obligation on one hand, and the weight of sin and divine duties on the other. However, this burden can lead to human growth and purification and reflects one's moral and social impact. Ultimately, liberation from the burden is a reflection of divine mercy and guidance. He regards this concept as one of the most pivotal ethical and anthropological metaphors. Sarmadi (1998) identifies the literal meaning of this root as carrying or bearing on one's shoulders. While noting the morphological structures derived from this root in the Qur'an, including verbs and nouns, he details the meanings of each structure.

The current study, in its first step, undertakes a diachronic study of the root W-Z-R to represent the semantic components of this root in Semitic languages, and subsequently, through a synchronic study, endeavours to formulate its semantic components within the semantic system of the Qur'an.

### 3. Methodology

From a semantic perspective, vocabularies are considered a network of conceptual relations. Conceptual relations are of two types: one group is subject to substitution and another is combinatorial; or, according to Saussure’s perspective, they follow paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes (Lyons 1995). The paradigmatic axis relates to the association of similarities, while the syntagmatic axis relates to the possibility of units occurring together to form larger units. In other words, paradigmatic relations involve potential similarities, while syntagmatic relations involve actual co-occurrence. Therefore, semantic proximity between co-occurring words finds expression through syntagmatic lexemes, much like paradigmatic lexical relations which are based on similarity (Geeraerts 2010, 139). The importance of recognizing these relations for the purpose of refining the concept of a word can be traced in the words of John Firth and Zellig Harris. Firth states that you shall know a word by the company it keeps. Harris also believed that if a word can substitute for another at a specific point in a context, it can be considered synonymous with that word (Geeraerts 2010, 145). These relations can be traced within structural semantics.

In addition to structural semantics, the historical semantics of the Arabic language in the centuries leading up to the period of the Qur’an’s revelation can guide us in achieving an accurate semantic understanding of a word. However, it is essential to note that in the semantic system of the Qur’an, innovative components are sometimes superimposed upon the word as it existed at the time of revelation. Thus, to accurately understand Qur’anic concepts, the historical etymology of a word, only when coupled with structural semantics and attention to the textual context of the verses, can lead us to a more precise understanding of Qur’anic concepts. To study the historical aspects of Qur’anic terms in the Semitic family, a comparison of four branches and sub-branches with Arabic is necessary. For each of these four branches, a pivotal language is considered: Akkadian, Hebrew, South Arabian (Yemeni), and Ge’ez (Ethiopic); furthermore, within the Aramaic branch, Syriac is examined. Delving into the concept of a word in Semitic languages is one of the tools of historical study (Pakatchi 2012).

Therefore, the present research employs a combination of these two approaches to refine the meaning of *wizr*. Structural semantics, alongside the study of a word’s meaning through its historical trajectory in Semitic languages, can serve as a corroboration for the validity of understanding a word and prevent deviations caused by subjective interpretations.

## 4. Semantic Analysis of the Concept of *Wizr*

In this section, to identify the semantic components of *wizr*, we first undertake a historical study across Semitic languages. Subsequently, an investigation within the Arabic language is deemed necessary. In the following stage, by employing structural semantics in an intra-lingual study, the semantic components of this root within the Qur'an will be elucidated.

### 4.1. Diachronic Study of the Concept of *Wizr*

For the historical and diachronic study of the concept of *wizr*, we begin by examining it across the primary branches of the Semitic language family, including Sabaic, Ge'ez, Akkadian, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Since Arabic, alongside languages such as Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, Phoenician, etc., is considered one of the branches of the Semitic family, it is also essential to review the perspectives of Arabic lexicographers. The language of any ethnic group undergoes transformations over time and through migration to different territories; some words experience semantic expansion or restriction, while others are forgotten. Linguistic changes are accompanied by morphological, syntactic, and phonetic shifts. Nevertheless, the semantic core of a word can often be traced back to its linguistic ancestor (protolanguage).

In Aramaic, one of the significant North-Central Semitic languages and the closest relative to the Canaanite language (the second major language of the Eastern Mediterranean), a word with the phonetic form *vezary* is found, meaning "giant animals." Another word, *vazuo*, exists in the morphological category of a noun meaning "cave" (Jastrow 1903, 3: 106–107). In specialized Targumic lexicons, no direct entry for the root W-Z-R is recorded. However, the phonetic metathesis Z-W-R in Targumic Aramaic (a variety of Jewish Middle Aramaic) indicates applications meaning "to scatter," "to sprinkle," and "to distance." Concepts such as "sin" and "fault" in the Targums were expressed through roots such as Ḥ-W-B, Ḥ-Ṭ-', and 'W-N (Sokoloff 2002).

Hebrew lexicons (Brown et al. 1939, 255) mention the use of a word with the phonetic form *vazer* meaning "beasts of burden." In lexicons of Sabaic, the most widespread dialect of Old South Arabian, there is mention of a word with the phonetic form *waza*, meaning "to be large" (Beeston 1982, 280). Furthermore, the phonetic form *wuza* is observed in Akkadian in the morphological category of an adjective meaning "heavy" (Black et al. 1999). As previously noted, etymological data suggest the component of heaviness through meanings such as giant animals acting as beasts of burden

in Aramaic and Hebrew. The concept of largeness in Sabaic also attests to this component. Additionally, in the genealogy of the word *wizr*, the concept of a cave is traceable.

Another branch of the Semitic family is Arabic. In the following section, by reviewing the opinions of Arabic lexicographers, we shall examine the presence or absence of polysemy at a single point in time, the trajectory of semantic evolution over time, and the phenomena of semantic restriction and expansion. Al-Farāhīdī (1990, 7: 380) defines *al-wazar* as a mountain sought for refuge and *al-wizr* as the heavy burden of sins. In other words, within the concept of *al-wizr*, bearing/burdening (*ḥaml*) constitutes its general meaning, while heaviness (*thiqālah*) serves as its specific qualifier. In al-Azharī’s (2001, 13: 167) exposition, the general concept of bearing is likewise identifiable through the attribute of heaviness.

Other lexicographers have either explicitly stated or assumed the general concept of bearing, while specifically mentioning the condition of heaviness (Ibn Durayd 1987, 2: 712; al-Jawharī 1990, 2: 845; Ibn Sayyidah 2000, 9: 103; al-Ṣāhib ibn ‘Abbād 1994, 9: 83; al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 867; al-Fīrūzābādī 1994, 2: 250; Muṣṭafawī 1989, 13: 101). Ibn Fāris (1983, 6: 108) identifies two primary meanings for the tri-literal form W-Z-R: first, refuge, and second, heaviness. Consequently, he derives the meanings of sin (*dhanb*) and weaponry (*silāḥ*) from this root.

Based on the foregoing, some lexicographers define *wazar* as a refuge, citing the mountain as an exemplar, while defining *wizr* within the general framework of bearing qualified by heaviness; its application to sins is attributed to the weight that sin imposes upon the human being. An examination of lexicographical opinions reveals the use of the terms *dhanb* and *ithm* to define *wizr*. These data indicate a lack of semantic evolution, restriction, or expansion within the Arabic language regarding this term.

The preceding analysis examined the root W-Z-R in Semitic languages and Arabic. However, due to the significant correlation some lexicographers have drawn between the roots W-Z-R and ‘-Z-R, it is necessary to first elucidate the latter root (‘-Z-R) in Arabic and subsequently its ancestry in Semitic languages. This inquiry may lead us to the bi-literal core of this root and provide a key to finding a common semantic component among the various meanings of the root W-Z-R (refuge, mountain, and heaviness).

In the Arabic language, *al-‘azr* signifies the “back” (*al-ḏahr*) or “waist.” When one aids another, it is as if they have firmly girded their waist or become a support for their back, a meaning traceable in verse Q. 20:3: “*Strengthen my back through him*” (al-Farāhīdī 1990, 7: 302; al-Jawharī 1990, 2: 298). The application of this root in the *fa’īl* form, *‘azīr* (as an active

participle or a permanent adjective), is not observed. However, its verbal usage meaning “to aid” is seen in the verbal form of *mufā‘alah* (*āzara – yu‘āziru*). In this verbal form, for ease of pronunciation, *al-hamzah* has been transmuted into an *al-wāw*. Ibn ‘Āshūr (1999, 16: 115) posits that because the Arab ear was accustomed to hearing the *al-wāw* in cognate words (such as *muwāzīr* and *yuwāzīru*), this habit was extended to the root word itself; consequently, the initial *al-hamzah* in *‘azīr* was converted to *al-wāw*. They harmonized the word *‘azīr* phonetically with *muwāzīr*, giving birth to the word *wazīr* (minister/helper). Had this word been derived from *wizr*, it would convey the meaning of heaviness and burden. However, since it stems from *‘azr*, it signifies power, support, and reliance. He believes the transformation of *‘azīr* to *wazīr* is a morphological exception (non-analogical/irregular) intended to convey the meaning of assistance (*qā‘idah al-ḥaml ‘alā al-naẓīr*) (Table 1).

Table 1. Rationale for transformation of *‘azīr* to *wazīr*

Root	Primary Derivation	Final Evolution	Rationale for Change
‘-Z-R	<i>mu‘āzīr/ yu‘āzīru</i>	<i>muwāzīr/ yuwāzīru</i>	Morphological rule: Transmutation of <i>al-hamzah</i> to <i>al-wāw</i> due to the preceding <i>al-dammah</i>
	<i>‘azīr</i>	<i>wazīr</i>	Influence of <i>muwāzīr</i> : Frequency of usage and linguistic habituation to the <i>al-wāw</i>

The most compelling evidence corroborating Ibn ‘Āshūr’s (1999, 16: 115) perspective is the textual context of the verses. In verses Q. 20:29-31 constitute a complete semantic unit. From the perspective of structural linguistics, the repetition of the root ‘-Z-R immediately following the term *wazīr* indicates the presence of a semantic network. That is to say, Moses employs the word *wazīr* and subsequently glosses its root and meaning through the verb *ushdud* (strengthen) and the object *azrī* (my back):

- Request for office: “*And appoint for me a minister (wazīr) from my family*” (Q. 20:29).
- Identification of the instance: “*Aaron, my brother*” (Q. 20:30).
- Elucidation of function: “*Strengthen my back (azrī) through him*” (Q. 20:31).

In Hebrew, the closest cognate to Arabic, the root ‘-Z-R signifies precisely “to help” and “to assist” (Koehler & Baumgartner 1994, 811). In ancient Semitic languages (such as Akkadian, the language of Babylon and Assyria), the word *izīru* was used to mean “belt” or “something bound

around the waist to strengthen the body.” This corresponds exactly to the meaning of *al-ʿazr* in Arabic and the expression *ushdud bihi azrī* (strengthen my back through him) (Klein 1987, 466). A close examination of other Semitic languages, such as Edomite, Hadramautic, and Qatabanic, regarding the root W-Z-R (characterized by the semantic component of heaviness) reveals that the traces of this root are not as prominent as those of ʿ-Z-R. This suggests that the semantic component of power and support in ʿ-Z-R is a primal Semitic root, whereas the component of gravity and heaviness may represent a secondary semantic evolution (Gordon 1965). Corroboration for this can be found in Ugaritic, a language significantly older than Hebrew, where only the root ʿ-Z-R was utilized, and the root W-Z-R emerged through subsequent linguistic developments (Dietrich & Sander 2013, 173). Consequently, the hypothesis of bi-literal unity and tri-literal diversification is strengthened. Thus, an investigation into the bi-literal core Z-R is essential.

In Akkadian (the earliest linguistic stratum), the bi-literal core Z-R appears as *zuru*, meaning back or a high and firm section (Black et al. 1999, 302):

- Connection to *wazīr* (ʿ-Z-R): Here, Z-R directly denotes the physical “spinal column.” One who fulfills the role of Z-R acts as the support and pillar for another.
- Connection to Refuge (*wazar*): Since the mountain was perceived as the “back of the earth” and its high firm part, this core was used to describe high crags (refuges).

In Hebrew and Aramaic (Jastrow 1903, 496; Koehler & Baumgartner 1994, 388), the bi-literal core Z-R manifested in two forms, *zer* or *zur*:

- Fortification and Rock (*tzur/zur*): In Hebrew, the word *tzur* signifies an extremely hard and massive rock. This corresponds to the Arabic *wazar* (mountainous refuge), a rock which, due to its solidity, serves as a place of salvation.
- Pressure and Confinement (*tsar/zar*): The word *tsar* means narrow, tight, or to place under pressure. This corresponds to the Arabic *wizr* (heavy burden/sin). Sin and heavy burdens are psychological or ontological spaces that place the human being under distress or pressure.

The bi-literal core Z-R in Ugaritic (Ancient Canaanite) is employed in the sense of a “firm belt” or “girding” (strengthening) (Dietrich & Sander 2013, 301). This corresponds precisely to the concept of *ʿazr* (*ushdud bihi azrī*) to which Ibn ʿĀshūr (1999, 16: 115) alluded.

In light of the foregoing, it can be posited that this bi-literal core Z-R

unifies three primary meanings within the roots W-Z-R and 'Z-R. In comparative Semitic etymology, the core Z-R symbolizes “condensed and hard force.” Depending on how this hard force interacts with the subject, it creates three distinct states:

1. Support: If this hard force (mountain/pillar) is positioned behind the person, it becomes *'azr/wazīr* (supporter/helper).
2. Protection: If the person is positioned within this hard force (rock/mountain), it becomes *wazar* (refuge).
3. Pressure: If this hard force (rock/load) is positioned upon the person's shoulders, it becomes *wizr* (heavy burden/sin).

## 4.2. Synchronic Study: Examination of Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Relations of *Wizr*

In this section, through a textual study and the application of structural semantics, we first examine the syntagmatic concepts (collocations) and subsequently the paradigmatic concepts to elucidate the meaning of *wizr* in the Qur'an.

### 4.2.1. Syntagmatic Relations of *Wizr*

In this part, to identify the semantic components of the concept of *wizr* in the Qur'an, its co-occurrences (collocations) are analyzed.

#### 4.2.1.1. Heaviness

The concept of heaviness manifests prominently through the co-occurrence of the concepts of bearing (*ḥaml*) and weight (*thiq*) with derivatives of W-Z-R. The root Ḥ-M-L (to bear/carry) stands in a direct syntactic relationship with the concept of *wizr* in numerous verses. In verse Q. 20:100, the Almighty states: “Whoever disregards it shall bear (*yaḥmilu*) its onus (*wizran*) on the Day of Resurrection.” Verse Q. 16:25 speaks of the gravity of the *wizr* in this world and its complete bearing in the Hereafter: “that they may bear (*li-yaḥmilū*) their entire burdens (*awzārahum*) on the Day of Resurrection... Look! Evil is what they bear (*yazirūn*).” Similarly, Q. 6:31 refers to the loss of those who deny the Resurrection, mentioning the bearing of burdens (*awzār*) and the heavy load carried on (*yaḥmilūna*) their backs.

In these verses, the root Ḥ-M-L stands in a complementary relationship with the root W-Z-R. In verse Q. 35:18, the root Ḥ-M-L is in an intensifying relationship with the derivatives of W-Z-R: “No bearer (*wāziratun*) shall

*bear (lā-taziru) another’s burden (wizra), and should one heavily burdened (muthqalatun) call [another] to carry (ḥimlihā) it, nothing of it will be carried (lā-yuḥmalu).*” Accordingly, among five verses that speak of bearing the *wizr* (Q. 6:31; 16: 25; 20:87; 20:100; 35:18), four relationships are complementary and one is intensifying.

Lexicographers are unanimous regarding the meaning of *ḥaml/ḥiml*. *ḥiml* refers to heavy external loads carried on the back, whereas *ḥaml* is applied to loads carried internally, such as a fetus in the mother’s womb (al-Farāhīdī 1990, 3: 240; al-Azharī 2001, 5: 59; al-Jawharī 1990, 4: 1167). Muṣṭafawī (1989, 2: 334) considers the application of *ḥaml* to be broader than material matters and notes that it is not exclusive to humans. So, the concept of heaviness and gravity, derived from the use of the root Ḥ-M-L, which is the most frequent collocate, is extended to the semantic network of *wizr* due to this syntagmatic association.

In six verses containing the expression, *Lā taziru wāziratun wizra ukhrā* (No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another), *wizr* stands in a complementary relationship with its own derivatives (Q. 6:164; 17:15; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38). This specific construction is not traceable in any other concepts within the semantic domain of *sin*. The theme of this expression indicates that no individual shall be held accountable for the sins of another, and each person is only called to account for the transgressions they themselves have committed (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 8: 634; Tabataba’i 1996, 17: 366).

In his commentary on this phrase, Javadi Amoli notes that in the Hereafter, all avenues of assistance are closed: neither can you carry this load yourself, nor will we transfer your burden to others, nor will your pleas and entreaties be of any avail (Javadi Amoli 2020, 49: 78). These verses speak of the human encounter with the gravity of one’s own deeds, pointing toward the primary semantic component of *wizr*. Consequently, the collocation of the concept of bearing (*ḥaml*) in a complementary relationship with the derivatives of W-Z-R, along with the high-frequency expression, *Lā taziru wāziratun wizra ukhrā*, evokes the component of gravity and heaviness.

Evidence for the heaviness associated with the concept of bearing (*ḥaml*) can also be traced in other verses. Verse Q. 24:54 speaks of the gravity and weight of turning away from obedience to God and His Messenger: “Say, ‘Obey Allah and obey the Apostle.’ But if you turn your backs, [you should know that] he is only responsible for his burden (*mā ḥummila*) and you are responsible for your burden (*ḥummiltum*).” This verse not only highlights the exclusivity of the deed to the doer but also, through the use of the terms *ḥummila* and *ḥummiltum*, indicates the weight and gravity of defying the

obedience of God and His Prophet.

Verse Q. 2:286 further suggests the relation between the concept of bearing (*ḥaml*) and divine obligations (*takālīf*) in this world that are burdens within the scope of human capacity: “*Allah does not task (lā-yukallifu) any soul beyond its capacity. Whatever [good] it earns is to its benefit, and whatever [evil] it incurs is to its harm... ‘Our Lord! Place not upon us a burden (lā-taḥiml) as You placed on those who were before us! Our Lord! Lay not upon us (lā-tuḥammilnā) what we have no strength to bear.’*” The gravity of human duties in this world becomes apparent when examining the root K-L-F. *Takalluf* is a noun for a task performed with difficulty and heaviness (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 721). Muṣṭafawī (1989, 10: 110) also points to the concept of material and spiritual hardship and toil within the root K-L-F. According to the verse, the heaviness and difficulty of human obligations are proportionate to one’s capacity, which must inevitably be borne in this world. It stands to reason that if one refuses to fulfill divine obligations in this life, they will find the embodiment of their sin in the form of a heavy burden in the Hereafter. In view of the above, the collocations within the semantic network of *wizr* point to heaviness as its core semantic component.

#### 4.2.1.2. Non-transferability

In several verses, the Almighty employs the expression, *lā taziru wāziratun wizra ukhrā*, to emphasize that no sin-bearing soul (*wāzirah*) shall carry the burden (*wizr*) of another (Q. 6:164; 17:15; 39:7; 53:38; 35:18). If an individual becomes weary and feels the weight of their own sin, appealing to others for assistance will yield no result, even if the person appealed to is a close relative or next of kin (Q. 35:18).

Furthermore, on the Day of Resurrection, there is no porter or refuge (Q. 75:11). In other words, an individual’s action is their own effect and is exclusively linked to its agent. According to Qur’anic verses, this principle extends to racial and ethnic issues; no nation, tribe, or group is responsible for the actions of another; every community possesses its own deeds and carries its own burden (Q. 2:134, 141): “*That was a nation that has passed: for it (lahā) there will be what it has earned, and for you (lakum) there will be what you have earned, and you will not be questioned about what they used to do.*” The preposition *lām* in the phrases *lahā* and *lakum* denotes exclusivity, pointing toward the ontological and necessary link between the action and the agent, which operates within the causal system (Javadi Amoli 2020, 7: 188).

This exclusive link between action and agent is traceable in other verses

as well (Q. 17:7): *"If you do good, you will do good to your [own] souls, and if you do evil, it will be [evil] for them."* The Qur'an considers the retribution for sin to be proportionate to the corrupted deed, and no more (Q. 78:26). Regarding righteous deeds, it states: *"and that nothing belongs to man except what he strives for"* (Q. 53:39). Even the wrongdoer acknowledges and declares that their injustice does not reach others (Q. 7:160). These verses indicate that it is impossible for an agent not to witness the effect and retribution of their own work, just as it is impossible for one to see the effect of an action they did not perform: *"our deeds belong to us, and your deeds belong to you"* (Q. 2:139; 28:55); *"So whoever is guided is guided for his own sake, and whoever goes astray, goes astray to his own detriment"* (Q. 39:41; 10:108); *"Neither are you accountable for them in any way, nor are they accountable for you in any way"* (Q. 6:52); *"We have attached every person's omen to his neck"* (Q. 17:13).

Conversely, according to the literal appearance of some verses, a human occasionally bears the burden of another. Within the semantic network of *wizr*, verse Q. 16:25, states: *"That they may bear their entire burdens on the Day of Resurrection, along with some of the burdens (awzār) of those whom they lead astray without any knowledge,"* which appears to contradict the verse, *lā taziru wāziratun wizra ukhrā*.

In verses Q. 29:12-13, it is said: *"The faithless say to the faithful, 'Follow our way and we will bear [responsibility for] your iniquities.' They will not bear anything of their iniquities. They are indeed liars. But surely they will carry their own burdens and other burdens along with their own burdens."* This verse refers to the commission of two sins by the leaders of misguidance: their own misguidance and the act of misleading others. When leaders of errancy establish an evil tradition, as long as there is an agent in the world acting upon that foul tradition, the originator of that tradition, by virtue of their false leadership and the propagation of evil, will bear the entirety of that *wizr* as well (Tabataba'i 1996, 16: 107).

Similarly, verse Q. 7:38, speaks of the doubling of the punishment for both the oppressed and the arrogant: *"Every time that a nation enters [hell], it will curse its sister [nation]. When they all rejoin in it, the last of them will say about the first of them, 'Our Lord, it was they who led us astray; so give them a double punishment of the Fire.' He will say, 'It is double for each [of you], but you do not know.'"* The secret behind the double punishment for certain groups is that they committed two distinct sins, not that they are bearing the punishment for an action they did not perform. The arrogant caused their own straying and the straying of others, while the oppressed first bear the burden of their own misguidance and subsequently the gravity (*wizr*) of accepting the leadership of oppressors, which served to empower

the latter.

An analysis of the syntagmatic relations and the structure of the phrase *lā taziru wāziratun wizra ukhrā* demonstrates that within the conceptual system of the Qur'an, *wizr* is understood as a personal and non-transferable load. Therefore, one can posit the components of individuality and non-transferability as essential semantic features of *wizr* in its Qur'anic application.

#### 4.2.1.3. Undesirability

The term *sā'a* (how evil) co-occurs with the verbal derivatives of the root W-Z-R in two verses (Q. 6:31; 16:25). At the conclusion these verses, the Almighty employs the expression, *alā sā'a mā yazirūn* (*evil is what they bear*) to describe the arduous state of those who deny the Resurrection. In these verses, the root S-W-' stands in a complementary relationship with W-Z-R.

Lexicographers define *sū'* as a comprehensive noun applicable to all ailments and afflictions (al-Farāhīdī 1990, 10: 327; Ibn Manẓūr 1993, 1: 97; al-Zabīdī 1994, 1: 177; al-Azharī 2001, 13: 89; al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 441). Among the meanings cited for this root are grief and sorrow; some lexicographers define it as the antonym of joy and delight (Ibn Manẓūr 1993, 1: 95; al-Jawharī 1990, 1: 55). The inherent sense of the root S-W-' conveys undesirability. The syntagmatic association of this word with the derivatives of W-Z-R, coupled with a meticulous analysis of the Qur'anic context, speaks to the undesirability of the burden (*wizr*) that human is inevitably forced to carry. On the syntagmatic axis, the collocation of *wizr* with a negative evaluative attribute, such as *sā'a*, demonstrates that this term possesses a negative evaluative component in its Qur'anic application; that is, the load of *wizr* is not regarded as a neutral physical weight, but rather as a reproachable or blameworthy burden.

#### 4.2.1.4. Consequence of Deviation from Moderation

The collocation of the concept of *farrāṭa* (to neglect) and the intensifying relationship of *ḍalla* (to stray) with W-Z-R indicates that *wizr* in the Qur'an is regarded as the outcome of a form of transgression or deficiency. In verse Q. 6:31, the Almighty states: "*They are certainly losers who deny the encounter with Allah. When the Hour overtakes them suddenly, they will say, 'Alas for us, for what we neglected (farrāṭnā) in it!' And they will bear their burdens on their backs. Look! Evil is what they bear!*" The theme of this verse describes another adverse effect of the polytheists' denial of the Resurrection: negligence in this world, following the denial of the Meeting

with God, leads to the aforementioned burdens (*awzār*).

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (1991, 631) defines *ifrāt* as excessive haste or overstepping, and *tafrīt* as falling short or failing to reach the goal/destination. Ibn Fāris (1983, 4: 490) defines *ifrāt* as exceeding the limit and *tafrīt* as negligence/shortcoming. Muṣṭafawī (1989, 9: 65) notes that the root F-R-Ṭ signifies a departure from a specified limit. Qorashi (1992, 5: 163) views *farṭ* as overstepping the bounds, whether through *ifrāt* (greater transgression) or *tafrīt* (greater neglect or deficiency). Thus, a departure from moderation is traceable within the concept of *farṭ*.

Exegetes likewise point to negligence in matters of the Hereafter when explaining verse Q. 6:31 (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 4: 345; al-Zamakhsharī 1986, 2: 17; Makarem Shirazi 1995, 5: 205). Ibn ‘Āshūr (1999, 6: 99) define it as wasting or being sluggish in one’s affairs. Therefore, the concept of exceeding the limit identified in the root F-R-Ṭ, due to its syntagmatic association with *awzār*, is extended to the semantic network of the root W-Z-R.

The intensifying relationship of *ḍalla* (to stray) with W-Z-R serves as further evidence of this deviation from moderation. In verse Q. 17:15, the Almighty states: “*Whoever is guided is guided only for [the good of] his own soul, and whoever goes astray (ḍalla), goes astray only to its detriment. No bearer shall bear another’s burden.*” Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (1991, 509) defines *ḍalla* as deviation from the Straight Path. Ibn Fāris (1983, 4: 246) describes deviation as being in opposition to moderation. Consequently, a close examination of the root Ḍ-L-L and its contrast with moderation corroborates the idea of deviation from moderation in the Qur’anic applications of W-Z-R. Thus, the component of being a consequence of the deviation from moderation can be posited for *wizr* in its Qur’anic usage.

#### 4.2.1.5. *The Embodiment of Deeds*

The theme of certain verses, coupled with the co-occurrence of *al-sā‘ah* (the Hour) and *yawm al-qiyāmah* (the Day of Resurrection), points to the bearing of the *wizr*, or more precisely, the realization of its weight, in the Hereafter. In verse Q. 6:31, the Almighty states: “*They are certainly losers who deny the encounter with Allah. When the Hour overtakes them suddenly, they will say, ‘Alas for us, for what we neglected (farraṭnā) in it!’ And they will bear their burdens on their backs. Look! Evil is what they bear!*”

In this verse, the phrase “*when the Hour overtakes them suddenly*” refers to the moment when the bearing of the *wizr* is perceived. The textual context of the verse identifies the denial of the spiritual meeting of Allah or the denial of the realization of the Resurrection as loss (*khusrān*). This loss will

be embodied as a physical, heavy load in the afterlife. This is because belief in the Hereafter not only prepares the human being for eternal felicity and invites them to pursue intellectual and practical perfections but also exerts a profound influence on self-control against pollution and sins. In other words, the denial of the Resurrection leads to the violation of divine commands and prohibitions, each of which can become a *wizr* upon the individual's shoulders. Thus, the denial of the Hereafter can be considered the fountainhead and origin of the *awzār* (burdens) in the Resurrection.

In Surah Ṭāhā, after various discussions regarding the eventful history of Moses (PBUH), Children of Israel, the Pharaohs, and Sāmirī, the text concludes with a general summation: “*Thus do We relate to you some accounts of what is past. Certainly We have given you a Reminder (dhikr) from Ourselves. Whoever disregards it shall bear its onus on the Day of Resurrection*” (Q. 20:99–100). The intended meaning of *dhikr* (Reminder) in these verses is that the Qur'an encompasses diverse forms of knowledge, concerning realities, ethics, and laws, which God has articulated through stories and parables (Tabataba'i 1996, 14: 208). Consequently, whoever disregards the Qur'an and its teachings will, by virtue of the embodiment of deeds, carry a heavy load on the Day of Judgment. The subsequent verse alludes to the weight and hardship of this mass with the expression: “*Evil is their burden (ḥiml) on the Day of Resurrection.*”

At the opening verse Q. 16:22, the text refers to faith in the Origin and the Return (Resurrection), subsequently identifying the cause of denying these two manifest realities as the trait of arrogance (*istikbār*) and a refusal to submit to the Truth. Otherwise, the proofs of monotheism are clear to those who seek the truth and are humble before reality. Verse 24 presents the inquiry regarding the Prophetic invitation (and the Qur'an) and the response of the disbelievers. Then, in verse 25, the embodiment of these actions (denying the Origin, the Return, and Prophecy, as well as the spirit of arrogance) and the act of misguiding others is characterized as *wizr* and heaviness, the full carriage of which is realized in the Resurrection, though the human being is not deprived of the *wizr* of their deeds even in this world.

In verses Q. 39:7, the collocation with the derivatives of W-Z-R announces the discovery and perception of the realities of deeds in the Resurrection: “*...No bearer shall bear another's burden; then to your Lord will be your return, whereat He will inform you concerning what you used to do.*” In other words, *wizr* is the embodiment of human's evil deed, which manifests in the Resurrection in the form of a load and gravity; this serves as corroboration for the embodiment of sin in the Hereafter. The frequent association of this root with the context of verses concerning the Day of Resurrection indicates that *wizr* is a heavy load resulting from an action,

which is carried by the human being in the Hereafter as a sensible (perceivable) entity. This syntagmatic network demonstrates that *wizr*, in its Qur’anic application, possesses the semantic components of result of action and a sensible matter that emerges in the Resurrection. This component is precisely what is recognized in exegetical literature as the embodiment of deeds.

In light of the above, an examination of the collocations indicates that the component of heaviness is a central and shared feature in both the lexical and Qur’anic usage of this concept. However, other components, such as undesirability, departure from moderation, and non-transferability, are derived exclusively from the Qur’anic applications of the word, with little to no trace of them in general lexicography.

#### 4.2.2. Paradigmatic Relations of *Wizr*

To identify the paradigmatic concepts (substitutes), one must examine the syntagmatic concepts of the collocations of *wizr* within contextual proximity. The result of this reflection reveals concepts such as *thiqal* (weight), *ḥiml* (load), *khaṭī’ah* (error/sin), *ithm* (sin), and *sayyi’ah* (evil deed) as substitutes for *wizr*. This provides further evidence for the components of heaviness, undesirability, and the embodiment of deeds.

##### 4.2.2.1. Heaviness

The component of heaviness and gravity is found not only in syntagmatic relations but also among paradigmatic concepts. The substitution of the concepts of *thiqal* and *ḥiml* points to this additional component, as elucidated below:

The root Ḥ-M-L is among the high-frequency concepts within the context of verses related to *wizr* (Q. 16:25; 6:31; 20:100). This root is also employed in collocation with *thiqal* in shared contexts. In verse Q. 29:13, the Almighty states: “*But surely they will carry (layaḥmilunna) their own burdens (athqālahum) and other burdens along with their own burdens.*”

In this verse, the root *ḥaml* stands in a complementary relationship with *athqāl* (weights). The theme of the verse speaks of bearing weight and heaviness on the Day of Resurrection; a meaning nearly identical to this is frequently mentioned in the context of the *wizr* verses. The substitution of *thiqal* for *wizr* in the Qur’an serves as further corroboration of the component of gravity and heaviness in the concept of *wizr*. This is a heaviness and gravity borne by the individual person, not by a hired laborer or any other entity.

The root Ḥ-M-L, in addition to its high-frequency syntagmatic association with the derivatives of W-Z-R, can also be considered as its substitute. On the one hand, the collocation of *sā'a* with *wizr* is expressed in the expression, *sā'a mā yazirūn* (*evil is what they bear*), in Q. 16:25; 6:31. On the other hand, the phrase *sā'a lahum yawm al-qiyāmati ḥimlan* (*evil is their burden on the Day of Resurrection*) is traceable in Q. 20:101. Given the contextual proximity of these verses, *ḥiml* can be a substitute for *wizr* and further evidence for the component of heaviness. The distinction, however, is that in *ḥiml*, the correspondence between the owner of the load and the carrier is not necessary, whereas in the meaning of *wizr*, the owner and the carrier are one and the same.

#### 4.2.2.2. Undesirability

In verse Q. 6:164, the logic of the polytheists is criticized in the context of the struggle against polytheism: “Say, ‘Shall I seek a Lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things?’ No soul does (*taksibu*) evil except against itself, and no bearer shall bear another’s burden.” In this verse, an intensifying relationship between *wizr* and *kasb* (earning) can be identified on the one hand, and an omitted object can be traced in the phrase, every soul earns not except against itself, on the other (Safi 1997, 8: 350). An examination of the applications of *sayyi'ah* (evil deed) reveals that this root is expressed in an intensifying relationship with *kasb* in Q. 39:48: “The evils (*sayyi'ātu*) of what they had earned (*kasabū*) will appear to them” and in Q. 39:51: “So the evils (*sayyi'ātu*) of what they had earned (*kasabū*) visited them.”

Therefore, *sayyi'ah* can serve as a paradigmatic substitute for *wizr*. Some lexicographers regard *sū'* as a comprehensive noun for all ailments and afflictions (al-Farāhīdī 1990, 7: 327; Ibn Manẓūr 1993, 1: 97; al-Zabīdī 1994, 1: 177; al-Azharī 2001, 13: 89; al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 441). Consequently, the component of undesirability in Qur'anic usage manifests through this substitution. It is noteworthy that the root S-W-' also co-occurs syntagmatically with *wizr*; this association further clarifies that *wizr* in the Qur'an is not a neutral weight, but an undesirable load with a negative value that harms the agent themselves.

#### 4.2.2.3. Consequence of Deviation from Moderation

*khaṭī'ah* (Error/Sin) and *ithm* (Sin) are other paradigmatic substitutes within the semantic network of *wizr*. In Q. 29:12, the verb *naḥmil* stands in a complementary relationship with *khaṭāyākum* (your errors), and *ḥāmilīn* (bearers) is in a complementary relationship with *khaṭāyāhum* (their errors):

“we will bear [responsibility for] your iniquities (*khaṭāyākum*). They will not bear anything of their iniquities (*khaṭāyāhum*).”

The root Ḥ-M-L (to bear) is a shared collocate for both concepts, *wizr* and *khaṭī’ah*, within proximate contexts. Lexicographers identify the root Kh-Ṭ-’ as signifying deviation, straying, and departing from the correct path (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 287; Muṣṭafawī 1989, 3: 79). Moderation and the middle way represent the commendable path intended by the prophets. Given the meaning of deviation and departure from correctness inherent in *khaṭī’ah*, its substitution can be seen as a manifestation of the component consequence of deviation from moderation for *wizr* in its Qur’anic application.

Another piece of evidence for the component consequence of deviation from moderation in the Qur’anic usage of *wizr* is the substitution of *ithm*. It was previously stated that in Q. 6:164, *kasb* is expressed in an intensifying relationship with *wizr*. In a proximate context, in verse Q. 4:112, the root *kasb* is traceable in a complementary relationship with *ithm*: “But someone who commits an iniquity (*khaṭī’atan*) or sin (*ithman*) and then accuses an innocent person of it, is (*iḥtamala*) indeed guilty of calumny and a flagrant sin (*ithman*).” Therefore, *ithm* (or *khaṭī’ah*) can be considered a substitute for *wizr* and the omitted object in the phrase “every soul earns not except against itself.”

A careful look at the end of this verse reveals further evidence for this substitution: the root Ḥ-M-L, one of the high-frequency collocates in the semantic network of *wizr*, is expressed here in a complementary relationship with *ithm* (through the form *iḥtamala*). An examination of the meaning of *ithm* in Arabic lexicons reveals the component resulting from this substitution. The majority of lexicographers identify the concept of slowness and delay at the semantic core of *ithm* (Ibn Fāris 1983, 1: 60–61; al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 63; Muṣṭafawī 1989, 1: 38; al-Fīrūzābādī 1994, 4: 73). The concept of slowness and delay is itself a manifestation of the deviation from moderation.

#### 4.2.2.4. The Embodiment of Deeds

The root S-W-’ in the structural form *sā’a mā...* (evil is that which...) stands in a complementary relationship with *yazirūn* (they bear) in two verses (Q. 16:25; 6:31): “*sā’a mā yazirūn*.”

This specific linguistic structure (*sā’a mā...*) is also traceable in a complementary relationship with *ya’malūn* (they do/work) in other verses (Q. 5:66; 58:15; 63:2; 9:9). Verse Q. 5:66 alludes to the profound impact of piety and faith on the material lives of human beings: “Had they observed

*the Torah and the Evangel, and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would surely have drawn nourishment from above them and from beneath their feet. There is an upright group among them, but evil is what many of them do (sā`a mā ya`malūn).*” According to the theme of this verse, the action which serves as an instance for *wizr*, or, in other words, the deed whose embodiment in the Resurrection is *wizr*, is the failure to practically adhere to the principles and teachings of the Heavenly Books. It is noteworthy that the phrase “*what was sent down to them*,” mentioned after the Torah and the Gospel, refers to other books attributed to the prophets of old that were available to the People of the Book at that time, such as the Psalms of David (PBUH), which the Qur’an calls it the Zabūr (Tabataba’i 1996, 6: 52).

In Q. 58:14-15, regarding the account of a group of hypocrites who maintained friendship and affection for the Jews while showing enmity toward God and His Messenger, it is said: “*Allah has prepared a severe punishment for them. Evil indeed is what they used to do (sā`a mā kānū ya`malūn).*” Considering the preceding verse, the embodiment of this friendship and heart-felt inclination toward [those who earned God’s wrath] in the Resurrection is *wizr*. Such an inclination can serve as a prelude to the commission of numerous undesirable acts, each of which can impose a heaviness upon the human being’s shoulders.

In verses Q. 63:1-2, the Almighty describes the condition of hypocrites. These verses refer to their outward expression of faith (masking inward disbelief) and subsequently describe their obstruction of the path of guidance with the phrase, *sā`a mā kānū ya`malūn*. Therefore, according to these verses, the barring of the way of Allah by the leaders of disbelief and hypocrisy are deeds whose embodiment in the Resurrection is *wizr*.

This action is also traceable verse Q. 9:9: “*They have sold the signs of Allah for a paltry gain, and have barred [the people] from His way. Evil indeed is what they have been doing.*” This verse identifies the trading of divine signs for a meager price as one of the signs of the polytheists’ defiance and disobedience. According to the theme of the verse, their objective, typical of the leaders of polytheism and disbelief, is to obstruct the way of God for the sake of ephemeral material interests. According to a report from Mujāhid, Abū Sufiyān once prepared a banquet and invited a group of people to a feast in order to incite their enmity against the Prophet of Islam (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 5: 18). It is evident that the verse possesses a broad conceptual scope and encompasses all leaders of disbelief and hypocrisy.

Action is inherently neutral, whereas *wizr* is inherently negative and a burden. In other words, it can be said that *wizr* is something that results from human action and is embodied as a sensible and carryable entity; in the

Qur'anic context, this sensible entity, marked by a negative value, manifests in the Resurrection.

## 5. Conclusion

Etymological data of the root W-Z-R points to the component of heaviness in the meanings of large-bodied animals or beasts of burden in Aramaic and Hebrew, which is also traceable in the Sabaeen language. Furthermore, in the genealogy of the word *wizr*, the concept of a cave is identified. Arabic lexicographers have likewise defined *wazar* as a refuge, citing a mountain as one of its instances. They regard *al-wizr* in its general sense as carrying (*ḥaml*) qualified by gravity (*thiqālah*), noting that its application to sins stems from the weight of sin upon the human being. An examination of the views of lexicographers indicates the usage of the term *dhanb* (sin) in the sense of *wizr*. Thus, the concepts of refuge (mountain), *dhanb*, and *ithm* (sin) have been articulated in the views of Arabic lexicographers across different periods, indicating a lack of semantic evolution, narrowing, or expansion within the Arabic language. By examining the meanings of the root 'Z-R and retrieving the common ancestor of these two roots, a unity in their bi-literal root and a multiplicity in their tri-literal root are traceable. The base Z-R symbolizes a condensed and hard force. Depending on how this hard force interacts with the subject, it creates three states: support (*'azr/wazīr*), protection (*wazar*: refuge), and pressure (*wizr*: a heavy load and sin).

Synchronic investigation of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations independently reveals identical concepts within the semantic network of *wizr*. Analysis of collocations indicates that the component of heaviness is a central feature common to both the lexical definition and the Qur'anic application of this concept. However, other components, such as undesirability, deviation from moderation, non-transferability, and the embodiment of deeds, are derived exclusively from the Qur'anic usage of the term, with no trace of them in the primary lexical meaning. An examination of paradigmatic substitutes further corroborates the validity of the semantic components derived from syntagmatic relations.

Consequently, it is most appropriate to define *wizr* as the gravity and heaviness of human deeds that possess a degree of moral depravity. This manifests in concepts within the domain of sin, such as *sayyi'ah* (evil deed), *khaṭī'ah* (error), *ithm* (sin), and all divine prohibitions, and even disliked acts. These include actions such as polytheism (*al-shirk*), denial of the Resurrection, rejection of divine signs, and hypocrisy. Thus, the most suitable equivalent for this term is the application of its lexical meaning,

gravity and heaviness. The high-frequency use of the root W-Z-R in a complementary and intensifying relationship with itself in the expression, *lā taziru wāziratun wizra ukhrā*, a structure not seen in other terms within the domain of sin, serves as further evidence for this conclusion.

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