

QURANIC VERSES ON FILIAL PIETY (BIRR AL-WĀLIDAYN): A LEXICAL-SEMANTIC STUDY

آيات برّ الوالدين دراسة معجمية دلالية

Madji Mourad
Sharia Laboratory
Faculty of Islamic Sciences, University of Algiers1
m.madji@univ-alger.dz
Pr Mohammad bashir Bey
Faculty of Islamic Sciences, University of Algiers1
m.bashirBey@univ-alger.dz

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Author Correspondence, Madji Mourad m.madji@univ-alger.dz

ABSTRACT :

This study investigates Quranic discourse on filial piety (*birr al-wālidayn*) through a comprehensive lexical semantic and structural analysis of the relevant verses. Drawing on classical Arabic lexicons and major works of exegesis, the research examines the linguistic roots, syntactic constructions, and rhetorical devices that shape the Quranic portrayal of parental rights. The findings reveal the Quran's remarkable ability to convey profound ethical obligations through concise, precise vocabulary—a manifestation of its *i'jāz* (inimitability) and its principle of *jawāmi' al-kalim* (concentrated expression). By tracing the semantic layers of key terms such as *iḥsān*, *birr*, *waṣiyyah*, and *qaḍā*, the study clarifies the breadth of duties owed to parents, including legal, moral, emotional, and social dimensions, as articulated in Islamic tradition. The research further demonstrates how these verses establish a persuasive ethical model rooted in recognition of parental compassion, the reciprocity of benevolence, and the imperative of respectful conduct in all forms of interaction. Through this integrated linguistic and thematic approach, the study offers a deeper understanding of the Quran's comprehensive framework governing the treatment of parents.

Keywords:

Birr ;Iḥsān; Islamic Ethics; Lexical Analysis; Parental Rights; Quranic Semantics.

ملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة الخطاب القرآني المتعلق ببرّ الوالدين من خلال تحليل معجمي-دلالي وبنوي شامل للآيات ذات الصلة. وانطلاقاً من المعاجم العربية التراثية وأمهات كتب التفسير، يبحث هذا البحث في الجذور اللغوية والتراكيب النحوية والأساليب البلاغية التي تُشكّل التصوير القرآني لحقوق الوالدين. وتكشف النتائج عن القدرة البيانية البليغة للقرآن الكريم على التعبير عن التزامات أخلاقية عميقة من خلال ألفاظ موجزة دقيقة، وهو ما يُجسّد جانباً من إعجازه البياني ومبدأ «جوامع الكلم» القائم على التكثيف الدلالي. ومن خلال تتبع الطبقات الدلالية لمفاهيم محورية مثل الإحسان، والبرّ، والوصية، والقضاء، توضّح الدراسة اتساع نطاق الواجبات المقررة للوالدين، بما يشمل الأبعاد الشرعية والأخلاقية والعاطفية والاجتماعية كما قررتها التعاليم الإسلامية. كما تُبيّن كيف تؤسس هذه الآيات نموذجاً أخلاقياً إقناعياً يقوم على استحضار رحمة الوالدين، ومبدأ تبادل الإحسان، ووجوب التحلي بأدب الاحترام في جميع صور التعامل معهما، ومن خلال هذا المدخل اللغوي والموضوعي المتكامل، تسعى الدراسة إلى تعميق الفهم للإطار القرآني الشامل الذي ينظم معاملة الوالدين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأخلاق الإسلامية. الإحسان، البرّ، التحليل المعجمي، الدلالة القرآنية، حقوق الوالدين.

1. INTRODUCTION

The blessings of God descend unceasingly upon humanity, and His mercy flows without restraint, for God is the Self-Sufficient (*al-Ghani*) while humanity remains in perpetual need of Him. Parents extend care and affection while possessing independence from their children, whereas children remain utterly dependent upon parental compassion, requiring their nurturing and tenderness throughout the formative years of existence.

Since God distinguished parents through their precedent favor and created them with an inherent inclination toward their offspring and natural affection for them, He conjoined their mention with His own in the Quranic discourse, linked their rights to His divine right, and mandated gratitude to them alongside gratitude to Him. Thus, when the Quran commands worship of God alone and prohibits association of partners with Him, it immediately appends thereto the command of benevolence toward parents and prohibition of their mistreatment—thereby emphasizing their significance, reminding of their exalted station, clarifying their rights, magnifying their status, and establishing their merit.

Numerous verses in the Noble Quran command filial piety and excellence toward parents. These verses employ minimal vocabulary yet convey comprehensive meanings abundant in their significations, fluid in their structures, and precise in their constructions. This phenomenon exemplifies the Quranic principle of expressing maximal meaning through minimal expression.

Proceeding from the foregoing, this research poses the following inquiries: How is the Quran's concern with filial piety manifested in its precise selection of vocabulary and syntactic structures? To what extent do the verses on parental piety encompass all dimensions of interaction with parents—materially, socially, and psychologically?

This study endeavors to demonstrate the significance of lexicographical analysis of terminology employed in verses concerning filial piety, revealing the abundance of their linguistic meanings and semantic values. It further aims to identify the Quranic inimitability (*i'jāz*) in establishing parental rights and comprehensively addressing literary, social, and psychological dimensions regarding proper interaction with parents—including obligatory obedience and compliance with their commands without causing offense or diminishing their dignity. The meticulous comprehensiveness of these verses regarding filial piety, through remarkably detailed treatment, confirms the Quran's miraculous capacity to convey abundant meaning through concise expression.

This study integrates multiple methodologies in service of its subject matter, systematically tracing verses on filial piety in the Quran, attempting thematic analysis while examining their lexicographical meanings and linguistic-structural significations through comprehensive investigation employing description, analysis, clarification, and reasoning. Primary dependence is upon authoritative Arabic lexicons, exegetical works (*tafsīr*), and specialized texts on Quranic vocabulary (*gharīb al-Qur'ān*).

To achieve the foregoing objectives, this study is organized into an introduction, two principal sections, and a conclusion, in addition to a list of the most important sources and references consulted. Section 2 investigates the semantic dimensions of the terms *ihsān* (excellence) and *birr* (righteousness) as employed in relation to parents. Section 3 provides a detailed lexical analysis of specific Quranic verses on filial piety, addressing four thematic subsections: the mother's precedence, detailed injunctions of prohibition and command, gratitude and obedience, and honoring parents after their death. The conclusion synthesizes the study's key findings and advances a set of recommendations for future research.

2. The Semantics of Excellence (Iḥsān) and Righteousness (Birr) toward Parents

2.1 The Term *Iḥsān*: Linguistic Meanings and Semantic Dimensions

The term *iḥsān* (excellence, benevolence) constitutes the most significant lexical item employed in the Quran to depict the proper relationship between child and parents, encompassing what is incumbent upon the child regarding obedience,

service, treatment, and respect—including propriety in deed and speech. In multiple Quranic passages, the term *ihsān* appears in direct connection with parents.

Lexicographically, *husn* (beauty, goodness) denotes the antonym of *qubh* (ugliness), with the beautiful aspects (*mahāsin*) of something contrasting its defects (*masāwī*). The term represents the apex of perfection in quality (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 3, p. 143; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 4, p. 183; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 5, p. 2099; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 2, pp. 57-58). To the extent that *ḥasan* signifies all that is beautiful and pleasing, it conversely negates everything unseemly and repugnant, denoting the ultimate degree of excellence. Thus, the meaning of *ihsān* becomes impressed upon the hearer's consciousness, impelling them toward serving and honoring parents in the most complete and finest manner.

The semantic depth of *ihsān* is illuminated by the Prophet's response—peace be upon him—when the angel Gabriel asked him about this concept. He replied: "That you worship God as though you see Him, for if you do not see Him, He indeed sees you" (al-Khaṭṭābī, 1988, vol. 1, p. 181; Ibn Baṭṭāl, 2004, vol. 1, p. 98; al-Qāḍī 'Iyād, 1998, vol. 1, p. 204). Were a servant to stand before his Lord with the vision of direct sight, he would perform what is commanded in the finest and most complete manner—with reverence, humility, neediness, submission, tranquility, dignity, and a heart filled with love and veneration. The terminology of this hadith indicates that the station of *ihsān* in worshipping and acknowledging God's oneness represents the most complete and exalted degree that the servant should strive to attain.

Commensurate with what is incumbent upon the servant regarding attainment of *ihsān* in worshipping his Lord, he is required to achieve the station of *ihsān* with his parents to the extent possible. Since realizing *ihsān* in the right of God through worship and the right of parents through honoring them is difficult to achieve entirely, the believers are commanded to approximate and draw near to this ideal.

The command of *ihsān* toward parents is conveyed through the verbal form *waṣṣaynā* (We enjoined), whose root w-ṣ-y indicates joining and connection. One says: *waṣaytu al-shay'*—"I connected the thing; I joined it" (al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 6, p. 2525; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 6, p. 116). This signifies, through semantic opposition, the negation of all severance and estrangement from parents, regardless of whatever ignorance or error may issue from them.

The intensive form (*fa'āla*) in *waṣṣaynā* indicates emphasis and abundance (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 7, p. 177). The past tense signals a pre-established injunction, an anciently existing and divinely legislated directive among previous nations. It also indicates a concluded covenant and binding obligation requiring compliance. God states:

(وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِأَلْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا)

"And when We took a covenant from the Children of Israel: 'You shall worship none but God, and show excellence to parents'" (al-Baqarah: 83). The *mīthāq* (covenant) denotes the firm compact and decisive command. God enjoined upon the messengers, then enjoined upon the believers what He enjoined upon His prophets; God's injunction regarding parents is among the most emphatic obligations He imposed upon His prophets.

The term *waṣiyyah* (injunction, bequest) is typically employed in matters of paramount importance, with parental rights holding a position of supreme significance before God. It is also employed regarding those whose weakness elicits compassion. God has observed the rights of parents since one's infancy and weakness, together with their vitality, strength, and abundant energy. Even in this condition, He mandated their honoring and obedience, required their companionship, prohibited their mistreatment and harm, and warned against exhausting them—indeed, He issued stern warnings. More emphatic than this situation is that when parents reach old age and frailty, one must observe their weakness by providing everything they require, furnishing all they desire, and accepting whatever issues from them with patience. None of this is achievable except through diligent striving in honoring them and exerting utmost effort therein.

More emphatic semantically than *waṣṣā* is the term *qaḍā* (decreed), indicating injunction with additional force. God states:

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا﴾

"And your Lord has decreed (*qaḍā*) that you worship none but Him, and excellence to parents" (al-Isrā': 23). The word *qaḍā* in this verse may be understood according to multiple linguistic meanings: it signifies decreed, willed, ordained, judged, enjoined, covenanted, informed, commanded decisively, and mandated (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 5, p. 185; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 6, p. 2464).

Ibn Fāris clarified that this root indicates perfecting, completing, and executing a matter toward its conclusion (Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 5, p. 99). Ibn Qutaybah stated: "The original meaning of *qaḍā* is 'decreed decisively' (*ḥatama*), as in God's statement:

﴿فَيُمَسِّكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ﴾

He then retains those upon whom He has decreed death (al-Zumar: 42)—meaning He decreed it upon them decisively. Subsequently, decisive decree acquires various meanings, as in His statement: 'And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him' (al-Isrā': 23)—meaning commanded, for when He commanded, He decreed decisively through the command" (Ibn Qutaybah, n.d., p. 247).

The prepositional phrase *bi-l-wālidayn* (to/with parents) precedes *iḥsānan* (excellence), drawing attention to heightened concern and prioritization over

others—a precedence not implying exclusivity or restriction, since one is commanded to exercise excellence toward all people, with parents being most deserving of kind treatment and prioritization over others.

The verb of *ihsān* is rendered transitive through the preposition *bā'* (with/to) to convey the meaning of gentleness (*lutf*) and righteousness (*birr*) through semantic implication (*taḍmīn*), indicating direct exercise of excellence, honoring and respecting them personally without delegation or proxy (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, vol. 5, p. 49; Ibn Bādīs, 1995, vol. 1, p. 66). The child is obligated to maintain constant service to parents, accompanying and adhering to them, neither detaching nor distancing except as necessity permits. *Ihsān* toward parents encompasses everything to which this designation properly applies—words and deeds, consoling them, and extending goodness and sincere counsel.

The term *lutf* (gentleness) warrants examination. It denotes tenderness (*riqq*) and honor (*takrimah*); *laṭīf* (gentle) means the refined, delicate, soft one (al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 6, p. 1427; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 5, p. 250). The *laṭīf* is one who conveys to you what you love with kindness. The term applies to speech and other matters that are not coarse (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 7, p. 429; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 13, p. 235; Ghulām Tha lab, n.d., p. 42). One is thus commanded to be gentle, refined, tender, and soft in all words, deeds, and conduct with parents.

2.2 The Term *Birr*: Semantic Values from the Prophetic Narratives

As for the term *birr* (righteousness, piety, dutifulness), it appears in two locations in Sūrat Maryam regarding the accounts of the prophets Yaḥyā and 'Īsā—peace be upon them. God states regarding Yaḥyā:

(وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا)

"And dutiful (*barran*) to his parents, and he was not arrogant or disobedient" (Maryam: 14).

He states on the tongue of 'Īsā:

(وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا)

"And [made me] dutiful (*barran*) to my mother, and He has not made me wretched and insolent" (Maryam: 32).

Lexicographically, the root of *birr* signifies truthfulness (*ṣidq*), from which the remaining meanings derive, including connection (*ṣilah*), dutifulness, and obedience (*tā'ah*) (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 8, p. 259; Ibn Sīdah, 2000, vol. 10, p. 240; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 1, p. 177). *Birr* is a word expressing goodness and righteousness (al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 15, p. 134). Al-Suddī stated: "*Birr* is a comprehensive designation for varieties of goodness" (al-Qāḍī 'Iyād, n.d., vol. 1, p. 84). *Birr* also signifies piety (*taqwā*); God states:

(وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مِنَ اتَّقَىٰ)

"But righteousness is [in] one who fears God" (al-Baqarah: 189). The poet Labīd versified: "Righteousness is naught but concealed aspects of piety."

Thus, *birr* expresses virtuous deeds characterized by outward rectitude and excellent conduct, together with inner truthfulness and a sound conscience. *Birr* also denotes expansiveness in benevolence and increase; one says: *abarra 'alā ṣāhibihi*—"He surpassed his companion in such matter"—meaning exceeded him. The *barriyyah* (wilderness, open land) is so named for its expansiveness (al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 15, p. 138). Hence, the statement "dutiful (*barran*) to his parents" conveys: obedient, honoring, beneficent toward them, gentle, tender with them, loving them, and hastening to fulfill their requests.

The morphological form *barran*—functioning as *bārr* (dutiful one) on the pattern of the infinitive—indicates abundance and intensity (al-Baghawī, 1420 AH, vol. 5, p. 222; al-Shinqīṭī, 1995, vol. 3, p. 380; Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, vol. 16, p. 77), meaning: exceedingly dutiful to his parents.

Ibn Jarīr stated regarding "dutiful to his parents": "He hastened in their obedience and love, never disobedient to them" (Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 18, p. 160; al-Naḥḥās, 1421 AH, vol. 3, p. 12; Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālib, 2008, vol. 7, p. 4533; Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, 1422 AH, vol. 4, p. 15).

Both verses contain—whether explicitly stated or semantically implied from context—the injunction and obligation of filial piety that is religiously mandated. Regarding 'Īsā's account—peace be upon him—the term *barran* appears in the accusative case as it is conjoined to *mubārakan* (blessed), meaning "and made me dutiful." This is evidenced by his speaking in the cradle concerning matters yet to transpire. The term may also be conjoined to the locus of the prepositional phrase *bi-wālidatī* (to my mother). Supporting this interpretation are the variant recitations of Abū Nahīk and Abū Mijlāz: *wa-birrin bi-wālidatī* with the genitive case (Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 18, p. 192).

There is no difficulty in construing the verse according to both interpretations: 'Īsā informed of what God decreed for him of merit, goodness, and prophethood, while as a prophet, he was enjoined with dutifulness to his mother—for filial piety is among the most emphatic injunctions commanded in his law and the laws preceding him.

Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālib stated: "'And dutiful to my mother'—meaning: and made me dutiful to my mother. Abū Nahīk recited *wa-birrin* with *kasrah* on the *bā'* and *rā'*, meaning: and enjoined me with dutifulness to my mother" (Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālib, 2008, vol. 7, p. 4533).

Ibn Jinnī commented after transmitting recitations with the genitive of *birr*: "It is conjoined to the locus of the prepositional phrase from His statement: 'And He enjoined upon me prayer,' as though He said: He obligated me to righteousness and acquainted me with my mother, for when He enjoined him therewith, He indeed obligated it upon him" (Ibn Jinnī, 1999, vol. 2, p. 43).

The selection of the term *birr* is significant given its aforementioned semantic range and the obligation to implement these meanings with parents. The verse *wa-bil-wālidayni ihsānan* (and to parents, excellence) represents comprehensive speech (*jawāmi' al-kalim*) indicating what follows implicitly, due to the precision of terminology employed regarding abundance of significations, richness of meanings, elegance of construction, and excellence of arrangement.

The deployment of the term *al-wālidayn* (the two parents), derived from *wilādah* (giving birth), indicates their merit toward the child—as they constitute the cause of one's existence in this world. They therefore deserve utmost excellence, whether Muslim or disbeliever, righteous or dissolute, beneficent or harmful (Ibn Bādīs, 1995, vol. 1, p. 67).

3. Detailed Analysis of Verses on Filial Piety

3.1 Honoring Parents During Their Lifetime: The Mother's Precedence

The majority of verses appearing in Quranic passages and prophetic traditions employ the designation *al-wālidayn* (parents) derived from *wilādah* (giving birth). This etymology indicates that the mother's right is greater, and dutiful treatment and benevolence toward her take precedence over the father, given her prior merit, abundant kindness, and greater compassion and affection. She endured hardships from the time the child was an embryo in her womb, bore the pains of childbirth, then nurtured the infant in her lap until maturity—all while she continued showing compassion and tenderness. Should the entire world turn against someone, those around withdraw, companions, spouse, and children abandon them—the mother feels one's affliction and grieves, hopes for recovery and yearns, stands beside consoling; none possesses comparable affection.

Indicating this maternal precedence, God states:

(وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهَنَا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ)

"And We have enjoined upon man concerning his parents—his mother carried him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years—'Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the destination'" (Luqmān: 14).

And:

(وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا)

"And We have enjoined upon man concerning his parents excellence. His mother carried him with hardship and delivered him with hardship, and his gestation and weaning is thirty months" (al-Aḥqāf: 15).

After enjoining concerning parents and gratitude to them, God inserted between these commands a parenthetical clause (*jumlaḥ i'tirādiyyah*) depicting what the mother endures of effort, hardship, and toil—specifying, emphasizing, alerting, and explaining—to indicate that the mother is most deserving and entitled to this

injunction and gratitude. Exegetes have clarified that the meaning of *wahnan* 'alā *wahn* (weakness upon weakness) denotes hardship upon hardship, effort upon effort, difficulty upon difficulty, and weakness upon weakness (Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 20, p. 137; al-Baghawī, 1420 AH, vol. 3, p. 588; Abū 'Ubaydah, n.d., vol. 5, p. 284; Ibn Qutaybah, 1978, vol. 1, p. 344; al-Zajjāj, 1988, vol. 4, p. 196; al-Naḥḥās, n.d., vol. 5, p. 284).

Lexicographically, *wahn* signifies weakness (*ḍa'f*) (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 4, p. 92; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 6, pp. 33-34; Kurā' al-Naml, 1988, vol. 1, p. 350; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 6, p. 2215; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 6, p. 49). Woman is inherently weaker in constitution, and pregnancy exhausts her, adding weakness upon weakness throughout months and days. When labor arrives, it increases her hardship; when she delivers, she nurses for two years, the child remaining attached until maturity. She thereby deserves multiple times the affection and companionship due to the father.

In the authenticated collections (*al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*) from the Prophet—peace be upon him—when asked: "Who among people is most deserving of my good companionship?" He replied: "Your mother." He was asked: "Then who?" He said: "Then your mother." Asked again: "Then who?" He said: "Then your mother." Asked once more: "Then who?" He said: "Then your father." This hadith explicitly indicates that the mother's right in dutiful treatment is more emphatic than the father's, her portion exceeding his (Ibn Bādīs, 1995, vol. 1, p. 67).

Both mother and father share in His statement "and to parents excellence," with the mother's aspect preponderant in the dual form given the mention of pregnancy—from whom one gives birth—and then nursing expressed as weaning. The hadith thus accords with the verse, the mother preceding the father three times in emphasis. The father was mentioned fourth—a reminder that the child is incapable of fully recompensing parental benevolence, let alone the mother's.

In the verse of al-Aḥqāf, the phrase *ḥamalathu ummuhu kurhan wa-waḍa'athu kurhan* parallels *wahnan* 'alā *wahn* in Luqmān, signifying what the mother endures of severity and hardship during pregnancy and delivery. Among the meanings of *kurh* in Arabic is difficulty and hardship (al-Fārābī, n.d., vol. 1, p. 161; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 6, p. 2247; Ibn Fāris, n.d., vol. 1, p. 782; Kurā' al-Naml, n.d., vol. 1, p. 515).

3.2 Detailed Injunctions: Prohibition and Command

When God—glorified be He—mentioned the obligation of excellence toward parents in summary fashion, He elaborated with specific detail, seeking compliance, indicating the condition wherein disobedience and negligence are most feared: the

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state of parental old age and weakness, the diminishment of their strength. When parents reach this condition and have issues from them—what issues from a person in advanced age—matters embarrassing to mention—and they become as the child was in infancy, perhaps causing annoyance and weariness, and the child lacks the natural inclination toward parents comprising love and preference that would make dutifulness an accustomed nature and familiar disposition—when parents reach the state of incapacity, the child is alerted against anything that might offend them, however minimal.

The child is prohibited from uttering the mildest expression of displeasure: the interjection *uff*—the most minimal articulation of annoyance—whether feeling burdened by their service or disgusted by their condition. Proscription of this expression implies prohibition of what exceeds it *a fortiori* (*min bāb awlā*). The phoneme *fā'* forming this interjection is among the weakest Arabic consonants in articulation and acoustic quality, indicating prohibition of expressing annoyance through any speech or sound, however weak and insignificant.

The expression '*indaka* (at your presence, with you) indicates that should parents be with a child until they age and become incapacitated with no caretaker other than that child, their care devolves upon him and honoring them becomes obligatory. The burden thus becomes heavier and patience regarding their affairs more difficult, perhaps leading him to assume responsibility for what they formerly managed for him in his childhood. He is therefore commanded to shelter them under his protection without disdaining to shelter them.

The prohibition *lā tanharhumā* (do not rebuke them) means: do not address them raising your voice, shouting in their faces, or being annoyed by what issues from them (al-Zajjāj, 1988, vol. 3, p. 234). It is improper for a child to address parents with harsh speech by way of rebuke, threat, estrangement, or intimidation (Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 17, p. 417; Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, n.d., vol. 7, p. 29).

The root *n-h-r* indicates opening and splitting in something; hence the river (*nahr*) is so named for its splitting the earth and carving a path through it (al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 6, p. 2525; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 5, p. 362). Parents in their benefit to the child resemble the earth containing vegetation, water, and creatures upon it. What they harbor of love, benefit, and desire for the child's good is more precious than what the earth contains of sweet water, treasures, and precious minerals. One must therefore beware of rebuking them with speech that wounds their feelings, inflicts upon their hearts an unhealing injury, an unmendable break, unceasing sorrow, and grief bringing distress. Their feelings are more susceptible than farming soil to being furrowed.

When God prohibited causing them harm through reproachful, blaming, and condemning speech, He commanded conversely with gentle speech, describing it as

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karīm (noble, generous): indicating a pure origin and precious substance. The *karīm* is the magnanimous one, abundantly good; the *karīm* is one characterized by noble character and praiseworthy attributes, free from all defects and blemishes, combining varieties of honor, goodness, and virtues; the *karīm* is good-natured, excellent in conduct, pure in conscience, and forgiving of offenders (Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 5, p. 172; Ibn Manẓūr, n.d., vol. 12, p. 510).

It behooves one that the tongue reflect noble origin and generous substance; a kind word extended to parents occupies a position in their souls more precious than expending gold dinars and silver dirhams. The verse implicitly indicates repentance from their mistreatment by following a misdeed with a good deed that effaces it. The human being was created weak and hasty, quick to react and anger, perhaps erring and doing what was prohibited. It thus becomes incumbent to rectify what was issued through kind speech and seeking forgiveness and pardon.

Having commanded propriety of speech, God proceeded to command propriety of action:

﴿وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذَّلِيلِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ﴾

wa-khfiḍ lahumā janāḥa al-dhulli min al-raḥmah—"And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy" (al-Isrā': 24).

Khafḍ (lowering) lexicographically contrasts with raising (*rafʿ*), also denoting gentle motion. *Khafḍ* denotes a pleasant, comfortable, leisurely life in prosperity and ease (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 4, p. 178; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 7, pp. 53-54; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 3, p. 1075). Lowering the voice (*khafḍ al-ṣawt*) means its softness (*ghaḍḍuhu*) (al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 3, p. 1075). Among their expressions: "a woman of lowered voice" (*imra'ah khafīdat al-ṣawt*)—when soft, gentle, and easy—indicating dignity without sharpness in her tongue (Ibn Sīdah, n.d., vol. 5, p. 44; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 7, p. 54).

Dhull (humility) denotes submission, compliance, and softness, derived from *dhalūl*—the tractable riding animal. *Dhull* contrasts with *ʿizz* (might), derived from *ʿazāz*—hard, firm ground—indicating strength and power, along with its concomitants of dominance and subjugation (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 8, p. 176; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 4, pp. 1701-1702; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 5, p. 172).

Raḥmah (mercy) denotes tenderness, compassion, and kindness (Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 2, p. 492).

These lexical items, with their proximate linguistic meanings indicating gentleness, softness, tenderness, compassion, and other noble virtues, collectively establish and emphasize implementing every generous character these terms indicate, and extending every virtuous deed as benevolence and reverence for parental rights.

The child is commanded to be like the bird sheltering its chicks, striving to provide their living necessities, surrounding them with compassion, kindness, affection, and tenderness. The addition of "wing" (*janāḥ*) to "humility" (*dhull*) indicates gentle demeanor and self-effacement, emphasizing utmost humility before them.

This alerts the child to his condition in childhood and how parents surrounded him with kindness, tenderness, care, and benevolence—to better remind him of what they endured on his behalf, and more strongly motivate him toward serving them and repaying something of their prior kindness, with humility, modesty, and self-abasement before them, minimizing and considering insignificant every service rendered to them compared to what they rendered.

The phrase *min al-rahmah* (out of mercy) indicates that the commanded lowering should arise from instinctive mercy embedded in human nature, a desire flowing from a heart overflowing with tenderness and streaming benevolence—sincere love whose interior accords with exterior, not affectation reckoned as a debt to repay (Ibn Bādīs, 1995, vol. 1, p. 71).

The verse indicates the importance and great reward of heart-deeds (*a'māl al-qulūb*). Parents extend goodness and sacrifice what is precious and rare, both desiring—sincerely—that the child thrive. As for children, if one finds a child caring for them according to God's command, the child does not desire for them what parents desire—health and longevity—sometimes claiming death is a concealment. Were one to know the immense reward of filial piety, one would desire for them what one desires for oneself.

3.3 Gratitude and Obedience

In Sūrat Luqmān, God states:

(أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ)

an ushkur lī wa-li-wālidayka ilayya al-maṣīr—"Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the destination" (Luqmān: 14).

Shukr (gratitude) lexicographically signifies recognizing kindness (*ʿirfān al-iḥsān*), disseminating it, and praising its bestower (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 5, p. 292; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 10, p. 10)—or alternatively: thanking the benefactor for the favor conferred (al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 2, p. 702; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 3, p. 207).

Since gratitude occurs in return for prior benefaction, the imperative *ushkur* (be grateful) indicates prior parental merit and favor, obligating recompense through abundant gratitude, whose proper fulfillment comprises three dimensions: gratitude of the heart (*shukr al-janān*), gratitude of the tongue (*shukr al-lisān*), and gratitude of the limbs (*shukr al-jawāriḥ wa-l-arkān*).

Gratitude of the heart is the heart's acknowledgment of the binding nature of parental rights, the magnitude of their station, the greatness of their merit, and the precedence of their goodness, together with the admission of inability to recompense their benevolence. The heart is commander of the limbs and their leader; the limbs'

actions mirror what the heart contains and indicate what it conceals. The first instance of dutifulness is through the heart—acknowledgment and admission generating gratitude and recognition manifested in the limbs.

Conversely, when the heart ignores parental rights, neglects their prior merit, and turns away from religious texts clarifying and commanding their honoring and prohibiting their mistreatment, the heart corrupts, becoming blind, grumbling, complaining, and claiming grievance through assertions of failing to provide requirements for a happy life. The limbs then follow their commander, drowning in the swamp of disobedience and estrangement, their actions incurring the wrath and displeasure of the Most Merciful, with the disobedient one punished with torment and failure.

Gratitude of the tongue consists of kind speech, while the Law expressed through the minimal expression *uff* that what exceeds it is proscribed *a fortiori*—including rebuke, scolding, and shouting. The child is commanded to address parents with pleasant speech that dispels their loneliness, comforts their solitude, and removes all worry and distress.

Gratitude of limbs and members consists of directly serving parents, providing their sustenance, maintaining their companionship, vigilantly ensuring their comfort, and avoiding whatever grieves or angers them.

Regarding the conditional statement:

(وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا)

wa-in jāhadāka 'alā an tushrika bī mā laysa laka bihi 'ilm fa-lā tuṭi 'humā—"But if they contend with you to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them" (Luqmān: 15)—

The term *jāhada* (strives, contends) indicates their exerting utmost effort, striving and employing every means and stratagem to induce the gravest and most repugnant sin imaginable: associating partners with God. God thus commanded non-compliance with their statement and prohibited yielding to their command.

The prohibition *lā tuṭi 'humā* (do not obey them) indicates non-companionship and non-compliance with them in what contravenes God's law. It is preferable to the hypothetical *i 'sihumā* (disobey them) given the latter's indication of separation and discord proscribed in dealing with parents. The root *ṭ-w-* indicates compliance and yielding (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 2, p. 209; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 3, p. 1255; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 3, p. 431), while *-ṣ-y* indicates separation and divergence (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 2, p. 197; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 6, p. 2428; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 4, p. 334)—the latter being inappropriate in the parental context.

Since the context might be misunderstood as permitting absolute non-obedience and abandonment, God followed it with:

(وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا)

wa-ṣāhibhumā fī al-dunyā ma'rūfan—"But accompany them in this world with kindness" (Luqmān: 15).

Ṣāhibā (accompany) denotes association, proximity, and compatibility (Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 3, p. 335). The Arabs sometimes employed it for supplication: *ṣāhibaka Allāh*—"May God accompany you"—meaning: may He protect and shelter you (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 3, p. 124; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 4, p. 154). Companionship entails preservation, care, and protection. God states:

﴿وَلَا هُمْ مِنَّا بِصَحْبُونَ﴾

wa-lā hum minnā yuṣḥabūn—"And they have none to protect them" (al-Anbiyā': 43)—meaning: to defend and shelter them (al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 4, p. 154).

Companionship indicates mutual benefit between companions (al-'Askarī, n.d., p. 308). Hence, it appears as a quality in times of hardship and adversity given the expectation of obtaining protection and defense. *Ṣāhib* applies to the sincere, devoted friend and traveling companion. *Ṣāhibah* is among the names for wife.

It is as though the employment of *ṣāhibhumā fī al-dunyā ma'rūfan* constitutes a reminder and emphasis of establishing all dutifulness and benevolence, and the prohibition of all disobedience and estrangement—even should parents reach the utmost in opposition, hostility, disbelief, and tyranny. The verse's apparent meaning indicates obligatory dutifulness even if they summon their polytheism (al-Shinqīṭī, 1995, vol. 3, p. 85).

As for *ma'rūf* (kindness, what is recognized as good), its morphological structure indicates tranquility and assurance, for one who knows something finds repose therein and feels secure, while one who denies something recoils and shies from it. Hence the designation *ma'rūf*—being what souls find repose in (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 2, pp. 121-122; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 2, p. 208; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 4, pp. 281-282).

Ibn al-Athīr stated: "*Ma'rūf* is a comprehensive designation for everything recognized as obedience to God, drawing near to Him, benevolence toward people, and everything the Law encouraged and prohibited among commendable and reprehensible matters. *Ma'rūf* is fairness and good companionship with family and others" (Ibn al-Athīr, n.d., vol. 3, p. 216).

This companionship is qualified with the worldly realm (*al-dunyā*) because one does not seek forgiveness for a polytheist or pray for God's mercy upon them (see al-Tawbah: 113). Thus, whoever's parents contend with them to associate with God what they have no knowledge of must contend with them through good companionship, honoring them with kindness, extending sincere counsel, and inviting them to God's oneness with gentleness, while exercising patience and seeking reward for whatever issues from them of opposition and obstinacy, and multiplying supplication for their guidance.

Among aspects of dutifulness and benevolence toward parents is obeying them in commands and prohibitions. Among disobedience is contradicting them

therein; however, contradicting them is only permissible when they desire one to abandon obedience or commit disobedience, for there is no obedience to creation in disobedience to the Creator (Ibn Bādīs, 1995, vol. 1, p. 68).

Indeed, parental command takes precedence over supererogatory worship (*al-nafl*). When one commences supererogatory prayer and parents request something, one must discontinue and respond to their request; otherwise, one is counted disobedient. In the narrative of Jurayj the worshipper—interrupted while praying in his cell when his mother called him three times, and he each time chose to continue his prayer—she supplicated against him (Muslim, n.d., no. 2550, vol. 4, p. 1976; al-Bukhārī, 1422 AH, no. 2482, vol. 3, p. 137). The lesson from this narrative is that God answered her supplication; evidence that parental companionship and attending to their affairs takes precedence over supererogatory communal obligations.

Indeed, honoring parents is an individual obligation (*farḍ 'ayn*) while jihad is a communal obligation (*farḍ kifāyah*). In the authenticated collections, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr narrated: "A man came to the Prophet—peace be upon him—seeking permission for jihad. He asked: 'Are your parents living?' He replied: 'Yes.' He said: 'Then strive in their service (*fa-f̣himā fa-jāhid*)'" (al-Bukhārī, 1422 AH, no. 5972, vol. 8, p. 3; Muslim, n.d., no. 2549, vol. 4, p. 1975). In Abū Dāwūd's collection from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, he said: "Return to them, seek their permission; if they grant you permission, then engage in jihad; otherwise, honor them" (Abū Dāwūd, n.d., no. 2530, vol. 3, p. 17). For honoring parents is an individual obligation while jihad is a communal obligation, and emigration and jihad with the Prophet are among the most meritorious acts of devotion and greatest in reward (Ibn Bādīs, 1995, vol. 1, pp. 68-69).

Jihād denotes difficulty, typically applying to matters reaching the utmost in exhausting a person. It also applies to complete strength and energy exerted in treating a matter. Hence its appropriate application to one fighting in God's path, given what jihad contains of difficulty and hardship, the warrior expending his utmost effort and complete strength, sacrificing what is dearest—wealth and self—in support of religion and elevation of God's word. Employment of the term *jihad* regarding parents is guidance toward expending one's utmost effort, complete energy and strength, and dedicating what they require toward serving them and ensuring their comfort while maintaining their companionship.

From Abū al-Dardā', who narrated that he heard the Messenger of God—peace be upon him—saying: "The parent is the middle gate of Paradise (*al-wālidu awṣaṭu abwāb al-jannah*)" (Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, n.d., no. 27511, vol. 45, p. 504)—meaning the finest and best.

Wasat lexicographically signifies justice (*'adl*) and excellence (*khiyār*). The *wasat* of everything is its most balanced and finest (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 7, p. 297; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 13, p. 21; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 3, p. 1167; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 6, p. 108). God states:

(وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا)

wa-kadhālika ja 'alnāikum ummatan wasaṭan—"Thus We made you a median community" (al-Baqarah: 143)—meaning just and excellent (Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 3, pp. 42-43; al-Farrā', n.d., vol. 1, p. 83; Abū 'Ubaydah, 1381 AH, vol. 1, p. 59; Ibn Qutaybah, 1978, vol. 1, p. 64; al-Zajjāj, n.d., vol. 1, p. 219). He also states:

(قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ)

qāla awsaṭuhum—"Said the most moderate of them" (al-Qalam: 28)—meaning the most just, excellent, and virtuous in word and deed (Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 23, p. 550; Ibn Qutaybah, 1978, vol. 1, p. 480; al-Zajjāj, n.d., vol. 5, p. 208).

Al-Bayḍāwī stated: "Meaning the best and highest of gates. The meaning is that the finest means of reaching Paradise and attaining entry thereto is compliance with the parent and observance of their side" (al-Bayḍāwī, 2012, vol. 3, p. 253; al-Ṭībī, 1997, vol. 10, p. 3166).

The term "parent" (*wālid*) appears masculine because the father is the primary authority in the family; his commands and prohibitions are thus more frequent and compliance more obligatory. The father's intellect is more balanced, his judgment more resolute, and he is more attentive to children's interests and more considerate of their future outcomes given the predominance of mercy and compassion toward offspring. The mother's commands and requests are therefore easier for the child despite their paucity. Nevertheless, the term *wālid* is employed to indicate primarily observing the mother's position and prioritizing her absolutely, since the designation *wālid* applies to her literally (*haqīqatan*) while applying to the father metaphorically (*majāzan*).

Among proprieties incumbent in dealing with parents is not addressing them by name, but rather addressing them with what befits their station of fatherhood, motherhood, and parenthood—as propriety toward them, acknowledgment of their merit, and reverence for their significance. Hence, in numerous Quranic texts regarding prophets mentioning their parents whether narratively or suppliantly, their designation appears as parenthood, with prophets addressing them: *yā abati* (O my father). The righteous among this nation's best followed their example. Multiple predecessors considered it discourteous for a man to call his father by name.

Among proprieties is that the child not precede the parent in walking, sitting, eating, or speaking, and that he initiate greeting and salutation with them. If walking before in nighttime darkness or noonday brightness to remove potential harm, that is acceptable. It is established from Abū Hurayrah advising a son regarding his father: "Do not call him by his name, do not walk before him, and do not sit before him" (al-Bukhārī, 1989, no. 40, vol. 1, p. 30).

Among proprieties is maintaining good opinion of them and negating suspicion from them. God states on 'Īsā's tongue:

(وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا)

wa-barran bi-wālidatī wa-lam yaj‘alnī jabbāran shaqiyyan—"And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me wretched and insolent" (Maryam: 32).

From ‘*Īsā*—peace be upon him—we learn propriety in negating suspicion from parents without mentioning or evoking the suspicion by its terminology. In his statement "dutiful to my mother," his speaking in the cradle constituted vindication of his mother—he did not say "my father" so they would know it was something from God (*al-Wāḥidī*, 1430 AH, vol. 14, p. 243; *Ibn al-Jawzī*, 1422 AH, vol. 3, p. 130; *al-Qurṭubī*, 1964, vol. 11, p. 103).

When her affair was as God decreed—that she conceive without a husband, an impossibility for people to believe—God decreed that her child be the greatest vindicator for her. God caused him to speak in his cradle confirming and exonerating her from all evil. When she pointed to him and he addressed the people while in the cradle, her worries dissipated, she was consoled, and her soul found peace and tranquility. Before, her soul had yearned for death and demise (*Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī*, 2000, vol. 18, p. 184).

3.4 Honoring Parents After Their Death

God commanded honoring parents even after their death; one is commanded to supplicate unceasingly for them, as in the verse:

(وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا)

wa-qul rabbi irḥamhumā kamā rabbayānī ṣaghīran—"And say: 'My Lord, have mercy upon them as they raised me when I was small'" (*al-Isrā'*: 24).

The verse indicates obligatory supplication for them—during their lives and after their death. Making their nurturing the cause (‘*illah*) for supplicating for them indicates that the child, however striving and acting, patient and expending, ascending in the degrees of dutifulness and benevolence without weariness, remains unable to fulfill their right and repay their prior merit. When the child's condition is such that he cannot recompense them with transient mercy and benevolence of righteousness, he is commanded to conclude by petitioning his Lord for eternal mercy of forgiveness and pardon, multiplying supplication for mercy and forgiveness after their death.

The verse's context indicates that the particle *kāf* conveys causation (*ta l'il*) additionally, incorporating the meaning of comparison (*tashbīh*) implying certainty—meaning: supplicate firmly and certainly, with conviction of its occurrence and affirmation of its existence; mercy as though actualized and

completed as their nurturing and raising actualized and completed (al-Qūnawī, 1995, p. 165; Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, vol. 26, p. 32).

The child is also commanded to thank God for what He bestowed upon both the child and parents, as appears in Sūrat al-Naml on the tongue of Sulaymān—peace be upon him. God states:

(رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ)

qāla rabbi awzi'nī an ashkura ni'mataka allatī an'amta 'alayya wa-'alā wālidayya—"He said: 'My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents'" (al-Naml: 19).

This recurs in the fifteenth verse of Sūrat al-Aḥqāf after God enjoined concerning parents with excellence.

The generality of lexicographers and exegetes concur that the meaning of *awzi'nī* in the verse signifies "inspire me" (*alhimnī*) and "impel me" (*ḥarriḍnī*) (al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, n.d., vol. 2, p. 207; al-Azharī, 2001, vol. 3, p. 64; al-Jawharī, 1987, vol. 3, p. 1297; Ibn Fāris, 1979, vol. 6, p. 106; al-Farrā', n.d., vol. 2, p. 289; Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 19, p. 140). Ibn Qutaybah clarified that the root of *īzā'* is: incitement toward something and absorption therein (Ibn Qutaybah, 1978, vol. 1, p. 407).

The root w-z- ' also signifies restraint and prevention; one says: *waza'tu al-rajul*—"I restrained the man"—meaning prevented him. Whoever construes it according to this meaning renders it: restrain me from what distracts and distances me from gratitude to You. Al-Zajjāj stated: "The meaning of *awzi'nī* is: *alhimnī* (inspire me), and its interpretation linguistically is: 'restrain me from matters except gratitude for Your favor'; meaning: distance me from what distances me from You" (al-Zajjāj, 1988, vol. 4, p. 113; al-Naḥḥās, n.d., vol. 5, p. 122).

Ibn Bādīs indicated this meaning: "'Enable me to be grateful'—inspire me with gratitude for Your favor.... So 'enable me with gratitude for Your favor' means: make me restrain gratitude for Your favor, meaning prevent it from departing and escaping me; the intent: make me constant in gratitude to You, never ceasing to thank You" (Ibn Bādīs, 1995, vol. 1, p. 263).

Conjoining "parents" with the grateful one in His statement *'alayya wa-'alā wālidayya* indicates the obligatory gratitude of the child to his Lord for what He bestowed upon his parents as he thanks Him for what He bestowed upon himself, for blessings upon the child are blessings upon parents—especially blessings pertaining to religion.

Al-Zamakhsharī stated: "He incorporated mention of his parents because blessing upon the child is blessing upon parents, particularly blessings reverting to religion. When one is pious, one benefits them through supplication, intercession, and believers' supplication for them whenever they supplicate for him, saying: 'May God be pleased with you and your parents'" (al-Zamakhsharī, 1407 AH, vol. 3, p. 357).

In Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Abū Hurayrah narrated that the Messenger of God—peace be upon him—said: "When the human being dies, his deeds cease except for three: continuous charity, knowledge benefiting others, or a righteous child supplicating for him" (Muslim, n.d., no. 1631, vol. 3, p. 1255).

Among supplications is frequent seeking of forgiveness for them; perhaps thereby God pardons them and elevates their degree in Paradise. In *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, Abū Hurayrah stated as a suspended narration (*mawqūf*): "The deceased's degree is raised after his death. He says: 'My Lord, what is this?' It is said: 'Your child has sought forgiveness for you'" (al-Bukhārī, 1989, no. 36, vol. 1, p. 28).

Among filial piety is the man maintaining connection with his father's relatives and friends, showing benevolence, gentleness, honoring, and welcoming them. Ibn 'Umar narrated that he heard the Messenger of God—peace be upon him—saying: "Among the finest righteousness is a man maintaining connection with his father's beloved ones after his departure" (Muslim, n.d., vol. 4, p. 1979).

4. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the Quranic discourse concerning filial piety employs a deliberate, masterful selection of terminology possessing profound semantic dimensions. The lexical-semantic analysis reveals that the command of parental piety often appears following the command of divine unification (*tawḥīd*), thereby rendering filial piety the second most important obligation in the Islamic ethical hierarchy.

Key Findings:

The term *iḥsān* encompasses the highest degrees of excellence in treatment, requiring perfection in both inner character (*bāṭin*) and outward conduct (*ẓāhir*). It demands that the child strive to achieve with parents what the worshipper strives to achieve with God—the station of worshipping as though seeing the Divine. The term *birr* comprehends truthfulness, righteousness, obedience, and maintaining connections—qualities that must characterize the child's relationship with parents in all circumstances.

The Quranic verses employ the simplest expression of displeasure—the interjection *uff*—to indicate prohibition of what is greater *a fortiori*. The selection of this phonetically weak utterance demonstrates the Quran's precision in conveying that even the most minimal expression of annoyance toward parents is proscribed. The mother's right is prioritized over the father's given her unique sacrifices during pregnancy, delivery, and nursing, with the hadith literature confirming this three-fold precedence.

The study further demonstrates that filial piety extends beyond parents' lifetimes through supplication, maintaining their social connections, and honoring their memory. The obligation of dutifulness remains binding even toward non-Muslim parents, with obedience prohibited only in matters of polytheism and divine

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disobedience—yet even then, good companionship (*muṣāḥabah bi-l-ma'rūf*) remains obligatory.

The semantic richness of the Quranic vocabulary—including *waṣṣā*, *qaḍā*, *iḥsān*, *birr*, *luṭf*, *khafā*, *dhull*, *raḥmah*, *shukr*, and *ma'rūf*—demonstrates the text's capacity to convey comprehensive ethical teachings through concise, eloquent expression. This lexical precision constitutes a dimension of Quranic *i'jāz* (inimitability), wherein maximal meaning is conveyed through minimal, yet perfectly selected, vocabulary.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are advanced for future scholarship:

First, comparative lexical-semantic studies should be conducted examining Quranic vocabulary concerning family relations alongside their usage in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, to further illuminate the distinctiveness and inimitability of Quranic expression in this ethical domain.

Second, the semantic analysis of Quranic ethical terminology should be integrated into academic and educational curricula at the university level, offering students a rigorous linguistic approach to understanding Islamic values and their textual foundations.

Third, future interdisciplinary research is encouraged that bridges Quranic lexical semantics with psychological and sociological scholarship, exploring the practical impact of these Quranic directives on contemporary family structures, intergenerational relationships, and social well-being.

Fourth, specialized lexicographic studies focusing on the semantic fields of *iḥsān* and *birr* across the full corpus of classical Arabic literature would further enrich our understanding of the Quran's ethical vocabulary and its resonance within the broader Arabic linguistic tradition.

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