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A Semantic Analysis of the "Burden of Responsibility" in the Holy Quran with Emphasis on the Exegetical Perspective of Martyr Ayatullah Khamenei

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to conduct a semantic analysis of the concept of the "burden of responsibility" in the Holy Quran and to elucidate its dimensions with particular emphasis on the exegetical perspective of Martyr Ayatolluh Khamenei. To this end, the Qur'anic terms *thiql* (ثِقْل), *iṣr* (إصر), *ḥaml* (حمل), *kall* (كلّ), *wizr* (وزر), *wazn* (وزن), and *waqr* (وقر) are examined as lexemes belonging to the same semantic field as the notion of the "burden of responsibility." Drawing upon the interpretive explanations and discourses of Ayatullah Khamenei, responsibility within the Quranic horizon is understood as a form of divine commitment, obligation, and guardianship (*wilāyah*).

The research adopts a descriptive-analytical method grounded in lexical semantics and semantic field analysis. The findings indicate that each of these terms represents a distinct dimension of the burden of responsibility: *thiql* denotes weightiness, value, and the dignified gravity of human responsibility; *iṣr* signifies a demanding obligation and binding covenant; *ḥaml* refers to the acceptance and bearing of duty; *kall* conveys the notion of dependency and social burden; *wizr* indicates the burden of sin and penal accountability; *wazn* relates to measurement, justice, and the evaluation of deeds; and *waqr* signifies perceptual heaviness and an epistemic impediment to accepting the truth.

Based on this analysis, the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility" in the Quran presents a multilayered portrayal of the responsible human being—one who is accountable before God, the self, society, and the truth. Ayatullah Khamenei's exegetical emphasis on human responsibility in the spheres of faith, action, and social life further reinforces this semantic understanding within the broader framework of the Quran's social guidance. The study concludes that the concept of the "burden of responsibility" in the Quran extends beyond individual obligation, constituting a comprehensive ethical, social, and epistemological system for articulating commitment, accountability, justice, and the acceptance of truth

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Introduction

Semantics, as a field concerned with the systematic study of the meanings of words and the relationships among them, is considered one of the important tools for an accurate understanding of religious texts, particularly the Holy Quran. This discipline makes it possible to examine Quranic concepts not only at the level of individual words but also within a network of semantic relations. In this regard, the approach of semantic field analysis, which focuses on the internal connections among words and their roles within a shared conceptual domain, can provide a deeper understanding of the fundamental concepts of the Quran. This is because the meaning of each word becomes evident within the context of the linguistic system and through its relationship with words belonging to the same lexical family or semantic field (Bāqirī 1995, 296). Such a perspective is also of particular importance in the social interpretation of the Quran, since many of its ethical concepts derive their meaning from their connection with human relationships, social responsibilities, and the moral order of society. From this viewpoint, the Holy Quran, through the careful and deliberate selection of vocabulary, constructs an ethical and social framework whose precise understanding requires semantic analysis.

Among the ethical concepts of the Quran, the notion of the "burden of responsibility" occupies a central position. This concept refers not only to the individual responsibility of human beings before God, but also to their responsibility toward society, other people, and the moral order of life. To express this concept, the Holy Quran employs a set of terms that all fall within the semantic field of "heaviness." Words such as *thiql*, *iṣr*, *ḥaml*, *kall*, *wizr*, *wazn*, and *waqr* each, in their own way, reflect different dimensions of human responsibility in both individual and social life. Examining these terms within a semantic network can demonstrate how the Quran moves the concept of responsibility beyond the level of a purely individual obligation and transforms it into a multidimensional phenomenon within the sphere of ethics and social life.

Alongside this semantic reading, attention to contemporary exegetical interpretations can further clarify the implications of the concept of responsibility. In several statements and materials published on the website KHAMENEI.IR, the verse of the Trust (*āyat al-amānah*) has been explained through expressions such as "commitment," "duty," and "divine guardianship," and responsibility has been understood as the burden of a divine obligation placed upon human beings (Khamenei, 2022/06/01, "In the Manner of the Verses | The Path to Success in the Affairs of Life," https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=50352; Khamenei, 2018, "Ethical Hadith Commentary | On the Characteristics of the Closest People to the Prophet on the Day of Resurrection," https://farsi.khamenei.ir/newspart-index?tid=4449). Similarly, in a note entitled "Accepting Responsibility: The Arena of Divine Accountability," responsibility and leadership in Islam are described as a trust; by accepting it, an individual undertakes a commitment and accountability before God (Khamenei, 2019/12/02, https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-note?id=44305). Therefore, such interpretations can serve as contemporary exegetical support for strengthening the understanding of the implications of the "burden of responsibility."

The main research question of this study is: what dimension of the "burden of responsibility" does each of the words in the semantic field of *thiql* in the Holy Quran represent, and how do these semantic distinctions contribute to the formation of the Quran's ethical and social system? In other words, how does the Quran, through lexical diversity, formulate the various dimensions of human responsibility—from commitment and obligation to sin, judgment, and even the cognitive barriers to responsibility?

The primary aim of this research is to elucidate the Quranic ethical system through the concept of the "burden of responsibility," by conducting a contrastive analysis of the vocabulary within the semantic field of *thiql* and identifying the distinctive implications of each term. The study is based on the hypothesis that although these words share the general meaning of "heaviness," each possesses a different semantic

domain and ethical load, and has been employed to express specific dimensions of human responsibility in the Quran—dimensions such as commitment, practical obligation, social dependency, sin, the weighing of deeds, and even cognitive impediments to the acceptance of responsibility.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to map the semantic network of *thiql* in the Holy Quran and analyze the relationship among words associated with "heaviness" within an integrated ethical and social system. The significance of the study can also be viewed from two perspectives: first, theoretically, as it may contribute to the enrichment of semantic studies and Quranic ethics, while also revealing the precision of the Quran in expressing the degrees of human responsibility; and second, practically, as its findings may be beneficial for Quranic exegetes, translators, and researchers in Islamic ethics in attaining a more precise understanding of the Quranic concepts of responsibility, commitment, and accountability.

Literature Review

The literature relevant to this study may be classified into two broad areas: first, studies related to structural semantics and the analysis of semantic fields; and second, research concerned with Quranic ethics and human responsibility. In the first area, works such as *An Introduction to Semantics* [in Persian] (Ṣafavī, 2018) have explained the theoretical foundations of componential analysis and semantic relations among words, thereby providing a theoretical basis for the analysis of semantic networks. Similarly, the study *The Development of Semantics in the West and Iran* [in Persian] (Pūrnāmdāriyān, 2019), adopting a comparative approach, has examined the possibility of applying modern semantic methods to classical and religious texts.

Among classical sources, Abū Hilāl ʿAskarī's *al-Furūq al-Lughawiyyah* (1991), due to its focus on subtle distinctions among

closely related words, represents an important model for understanding semantic differences in the Quran. In addition, works such as *al-Taḥqīq fī Kalimāt al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (Muṣṭafavī, 2009) and *al-Muʿjam fī Fiqh Lughat al-Qurʾān wa Sirr-i Balāghatih* (Vāʿiz-Zādih Khurāsānī, 2009), through their precise lexical analyses, have made a significant contribution to the development of Quranic semantic studies. Likewise, *A Lexicon for the Analysis of Similar Words in the Quran* [in Persian], published by the Center for Quranic Culture and Knowledge (2019), has taken an effective step toward understanding the semantic structure of Quranic concepts through a comparative examination of words belonging to the same semantic domain.

In Western scholarship, Toshihiko Izutsu, through his two major works, *God and Man in the Qur'an* (1964) and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (1966), has exerted a profound influence on Quranic semantic studies. Employing the method of structural semantics, Izutsu analyzed the key concepts of the Quran within a conceptual network and demonstrated that Quranic ethical concepts can be understood only in relation to one another. His method is based on identifying "semantic fields" and linking them to the Quranic worldview. Although he does not directly address the semantic field of *thiql*, his approach to connecting semantics with the ethical and social system of the Quran provides a theoretical and methodological foundation for the present study.

In the field of Quranic ethical studies, most research has addressed the question of human responsibility primarily through philosophical, educational, or theological approaches, while paying less attention to the lexical structure and semantic network of the relevant concepts. Many of these works examine responsibility at the individual level and as a matter of personal obligation, whereas the Holy Quran also presents responsibility in connection with social relations, collective commitments, and human moral accountability before others.

Accordingly, concepts such as *kall* and *iṣr*, in addition to their individual connotations, carry social and relational implications that have received less attention in previous studies.

In a study closely related to the present topic, Fayḍī, Pārsā'iyān, and Khusravī-Murād have examined the concept of social responsibility in the Quran and sociology through an interdisciplinary approach. They show that social responsibility, in both the Quran and sociology, originates from three dimensions—cognitive, affective, and practical—and can be analyzed across various domains, including social, political, cultural, economic, ethical, and environmental dimensions; the difference is that, in the Quran, the military dimension of responsibility is also taken into consideration. These findings confirm that the concept of responsibility in the Quran acquires meaning in relation to human social life and one's commitment to society as well (Fayḍī, Pārsā'iyān, and Khusravī-MurādFeyzi 2025, pp. 117-150).

Despite the richness of lexical, exegetical, and semantic sources, the main gap lies in the absence of a study that analyzes the semantic network of *thiql* as a coherent structure for explaining the "burden of responsibility" in both individual and social spheres, while comparatively examining all components of this network in relation to one another. Previous studies have either been mainly lexically oriented, limited themselves to the examination of a few words, or have not analyzed the ethical and social dimensions of this semantic field in an integrated manner. The present study therefore seeks to address this gap by employing modern semantic methods and emphasizing a social approach, in order to offer a coherent picture of the concept of the "burden of responsibility" within the semantic network of the Holy Quran.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The present study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach and is grounded in structural semantics. It seeks to explain the various dimensions of the concept of the "burden of responsibility" in the ethical and social system of the Holy Quran through an analysis of the semantic field of words related to *thiql* ("heaviness"). In this approach, words are examined within a network of conceptual relations, since meaning in the Quran is not derived solely from the lexical definition of a word, but is also disclosed through its place within the overall structure of the text and its relation to other concepts belonging to the same semantic field. Accordingly, drawing on semantic field theory, the present study attempts to show how Quranic terms associated with "heaviness" form a semantic system that expresses different degrees of human responsibility in both the individual and social spheres.

The theoretical framework of this research is based on semantic field theory, a theory that emphasizes the internal relations among words and their role in the production of meaning. Within this framework, the concept of the "burden of responsibility" is understood as a multilayered notion encompassing the ethical, social, and even epistemic dimensions of human life. By employing the metaphor of "heaviness," the Holy Quran presents human responsibility as a binding matter that affects both individual conduct and social relations. From this perspective, terms such as *wizr* refer more specifically to the burden of sin and the moral consequences of social behavior; *iṣr* denotes difficult obligations and binding constraints; *ḥaml* signifies the acceptance and bearing of responsibility; and *wazn* relates to the weighing of deeds and justice in evaluating human actions. Thus, each term represents one aspect of the semantic system of responsibility and, together with the others, contributes to a comprehensive picture of social ethics in the Quran.

The research procedure is organized into three stages. In the first stage, all Quranic verses related to the selected terms were identified and extracted from the text of the Holy Quran. Then, by referring to lexical sources, the root meaning and the principal semantic components of each word were examined. This stage makes it possible to identify both the shared conceptual core among the terms and their fundamental differences.

In the second stage, the usage of these words was analyzed within their Quranic and exegetical contexts. In this part, the relevant verses were examined with attention to their context, intratextual relations, and ethical and social implications, while exegetical sources were consulted for a more precise clarification of the concepts. The aim of this stage was to determine the semantic range of each word in the Quranic text and to explain how it is connected to the concept of human responsibility. It also sought to show how each term, in different contexts, delineates a particular type of relationship between the human being and God, the self, and society.

In the third stage, the findings were comparatively analyzed and organized into a semantic network. At this stage, the similarities and differences among the words were examined, and the distinctive implications of each were identified in order to clarify their place within the ethical system of the Quran. This comparative analysis demonstrates that, in expressing the various levels and dimensions of social and ethical responsibility, the Holy Quran employs terms marked by different semantic nuances. This lexical diversity itself reflects the precision of the Quran's conceptual system in explaining human relations and social ethics.

The methodological innovation of this study lies in its semantic analysis of the "burden of responsibility" in the Quran through examining the semantic field of *thiql* as a conceptual network for understanding human responsibility in both individual and collective

life. In addition to enabling a more precise understanding of the semantic differences among these terms, this approach can contribute to explaining the ethical and social structure of the Quran and the role of language in shaping the human system of responsibility.

Data Analysis

In this section, the selected terms belonging to the semantic field of the "burden of responsibility" in the Holy Quran are analyzed on the basis of lexical semantics and with attention to the context of the relevant verses. The aim of this analysis is to identify the shared semantic core among these terms and to explain the distinctive connotations of each in representing the various dimensions of human responsibility. Accordingly, each term is first examined from a lexical and etymological perspective; its Quranic and exegetical usages are then analyzed; and finally, its position within the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility" is determined.

This approach makes it possible to clarify how the Holy Quran, through terms such as *thiql*, *iṣr*, *ḥaml*, *kall*, *wizr*, *wazn*, and *waqr*, delineates a multilayered system of responsibility, commitment, accountability, and moral evaluation**.**

1. Semantic Analysis of *Thiql*

The word *thiql*, derived from the root *th-q-l*, lexically denotes heaviness and a weight placed upon something, making its movement or endurance difficult. Ibn Fāris regards the root of this word as indicating "heaviness and weightiness," and states that all of its derivatives in some way return to the notions of heaviness and weight (Ibn Fāris 1983, 1:386). Rāghib Iṣfahānī likewise defines *thiql* as something considered heavy due to its significance, value, or weight; such heaviness may be perceived sometimes in a material sense and at other times in a spiritual or conceptual sense (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 167). Therefore, in Quranic

usage, *thiql* does not refer merely to physical weight, but also comes to signify notions such as importance, responsibility, and moral burden.

In the Holy Quran, the word *thiql* and its derivatives are used in various senses, all of which are in some way related to the concept of heaviness and significance. One of the important usages of this word appears in the expression *thaqalān* in the verse, (*sanafrughu lakum ayyuhā al-thaqalān*): *"We shall soon make Ourselves unoccupied for you, O you notable two!"*[1] *(Quran 55:31),* which refers to the two groups of human beings and jinn. Exegetes have interpreted this expression as referring to beings endowed with status, value, and, at the same time, responsibility (Ṭabāṭabāʾī 1996, 19:116). From this perspective, the use of the word *thiql* for human beings and jinn indicates that these two groups, due to their possession of reason, free will, and the capacity for choice, bear the burden of obligation and responsibility within the order of creation.

From a social perspective, the use of the word *thiql* in this verse indicates that the Holy Quran does not view the human being as a merely individual entity; rather, it presents him as a member of a responsible community whose actions and choices also affect others. For this reason, the divine address to the *thaqalayn* in fact refers to a collective of morally accountable beings who play a role in the sphere of social and ethical life. This usage shows that heaviness here signifies not only existential value and importance, but also the burden of responsibility placed upon the human being.

Moreover, in some verses, the concept of *thiql* is associated with heavy natural or material loads, such as verses referring to the *athqāl* of the earth or to heavy burdens. Although these usages appear, on the surface, to relate to material matters, from a semantic perspective they provide a basis for transferring the concept of heaviness to the domain

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1. ﴿سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ أَيُّهَا الثَّقَلَانِ﴾ (الرحمن/۳۱)

of ethics and responsibility. Through this conceptual metaphor, the Quran portrays human responsibility as a heavy burden that requires endurance and commitment in the fulfillment of duty.

From the perspective of semantic analysis, *thiql*, in comparison with other terms within this semantic field, primarily denotes the basic notions of "heaviness" and "significance" and thus forms, in a sense, the central core of the semantic field. Other words, such as *wizr*, *ḥaml*, and *iṣr*, each express a particular aspect of this heaviness. For instance, *wizr* refers more specifically to the burden of sin; *ḥaml* denotes the acceptance and bearing of a burden; and *iṣr* emphasizes a difficult and binding obligation. By contrast, *thiql* is a more general concept that may be regarded as the foundation upon which this semantic network is formed.

Within a social framework, it may be argued that *thiql* in the Holy Quran is a concept that points to the human being's value and responsibility within society. As a being endowed with reason and free will, the human person bears the burden of commitment before God, the self, and others. This responsibility encompasses not only individual actions, but also social conduct and its effects on the moral order of society. Therefore, the use of the word *thiql* in the Holy Quran indicates that the human being is a creature of dignity and, at the same time, one who bears a weighty responsibility within the ethical and social order of the world—a responsibility whose acceptance constitutes the basis of human obligation and accountability before God.

The Supreme Leader has also described responsibility as a "weighty" matter and as a duty placed upon the shoulders of the human being. In his remarks at the Fourth Strategic Thought Forum, he states: "This is what responsibility means. It is a weighty responsibility. The responsibility-taking that we praise so highly means precisely this" (Khamenei, 2012/11/13, "Remarks at the Fourth Strategic Thought Forum," https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=21471).

2. Semantic Analysis of *Iṣr*

The word *iṣr* occupies a fundamental position within the semantic network related to the "burden of responsibility" in the Holy Quran. From a social and ethical perspective, it may be understood as referring to a "heavy commitment," a "binding covenant," and a "difficult responsibility." In classical lexical sources, this term is recorded with the meanings of "confinement" and "binding." Farāhīdī defines the root *i-ṣ-r* as meaning "to confine and to bind" (Farāhīdī 1993, 1:87), while Jawharī interprets it as "a covenant or pledge," explaining that something by which a person becomes bound and obligated is called *iṣr* (Jawharī 1986, 2:795). Ibn Manẓūr likewise identifies its primary meaning as "binding and connection," writing: "*al-iṣr*: the covenant and solemn pledge … and its root meaning is confinement" (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 4:21).

From a semantic perspective, Ibn Fāris identifies two central meanings for the root *i-ṣ-r*: "confinement and binding" and "kinship." He explains that every covenant or pledge that entails obligation is derived from this root (Ibn Fāris 1983, 1:110). Rāghib Iṣfahānī, with attention to Quranic usage, regards its primary meaning as "binding and restraining," and interprets *iṣr* as "that which prevents one from good" (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 78). ʿAllāmah Muṣṭafavī, adopting an etymological approach, similarly analyzes the basic meaning of the root *i-ṣ-r* as "prevention and restraint by means of something firm," deriving the meaning of "covenant" from the same notion, since a covenant prevents a person from violating an agreement (Muṣtafavī 2009, 1:129).

This term occurs in three verses of the Holy Quran: *al-Baqarah* 2:286, *Āl ʿImrān* 3:81, and *al-Aʿrāf* 7:157. In the verse, (*lā taḥmil ʿalaynā iṣran*): *"… Place not upon us a burden …"*[2] *(Quran 2:286),* some exegetes have interpreted it as a "covenant," while others have

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2. ﴿…لَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إِصْرًا…﴾ (البقره/۲۸۶)

understood it as a "difficult obligation" or a "heavy command." In the verse, (*a-akhadhtum ʿalā dhālikum iṣrī*): *"... accept My covenant on this condition?..."*[3] *(Quran 3:81), iṣr* has been interpreted in relation to the violation of a covenant and the abandonment of a pledge. Likewise, in the verse, (*wa-yaḍaʿu ʿanhum iṣrahum*) *"... and relieves them of their burdens ..."*[4] *(Quran 7:157),* the late Ṭūsī interprets it as a "heavy and burdensome obligation" (Ṭūsī, n.d., 2:386; Wāḥidī Nayshābūrī 1994, 1:410; Ṭabāṭabāʾī 1996, 2:445).

From a social perspective, *iṣr* signifies a type of binding relationship between the individual, God, and society. Commitment in the Quran is not merely an individual matter; rather, it regulates the very structure of human relations. From this viewpoint, *iṣr* represents a responsibility that derives its meaning through loyalty, adherence, and the avoidance of breach of contract. A society formed upon ethical and religious covenants requires commitment to this very *iṣr* to maintain justice and collective trust. Consequently, the "heaviness" inherent in this term refers to the social weight of obligations, the neglect of which leads to ethical fragmentation and the disruption of collective order.

The core meaning of *iṣr* is, in fact, "binding, confinement, and heavy commitment," which, in the ethical context of the Quran, is interpreted as the "burden of responsibility." From this root, other meanings such as "firm covenant," "difficult obligation," and "sin" have developed. Ibn ʿĀshūr considers its primary meaning to be "binding and knotting," while regarding "covenant and pledge" as its figurative (metaphorical) meaning. Furthermore, in some exegeses, *iṣr* has undergone a semantic expansion to mean "that which prevents one from good," indicating the broadening of this word's conceptual scope within religious and ethical contexts (Ibn ʿĀshūr, n.d., 2:602; Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 78).

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3. ﴿...أَخَذْتُمْ عَلَى ذَلِكُمْ إِصْرِى...﴾ (آل عمران/٨١)
4. ﴿...وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ...﴾ (الأعراف/١٥٧)

Semantically, *iṣr* is connected within the lexical network of the "burden of responsibility" to concepts such as *ʿahd* (covenant), *thiql* (heaviness), *ḥaml* (bearing/carrying), and *ghurm* (liability or burden). In Quranic verses, this term can at times also be understood alongside concepts such as *ghull* (shackle), all of which denote a form of binding, restriction, and the bearing of weight or burden. Likewise, in the exegesis of relevant verses, *iṣr* has been regarded as synonymous with, or closely related to, notions such as "obligation," "breach of covenant," and "hardship." These semantic relationships demonstrate the place of *iṣr* within the lexical field of religious duties and ethical commitments as a form of the "burden of responsibility" (see Sajistānī 1995,102; Zajjāj 1997, 1:370-371).

In his interpretation of verse 157 of *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf*, Ayatullah Khamenei explains the term *iṣr* as follows: "*Iṣr* refers to those ropes that are tied to the bases of a tent so that the wind does not carry it away; that is, they connect it to the ground… *āṣār* are those things that attach us to the ground and prevent our flight" (Khamenei, 2012/11/13, "Remarks at the Fourth Strategic Thought Forum," https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=21471).

3. Semantic Analysis of *Ḥaml*

The concept of *ḥaml*, as one of the fundamental elements of this semantic network, primarily focuses on the practical and operational dimensions of ethical commitments and religious obligations. In classical lexical sources, its primary meaning is recorded as "carrying on the back." Farāhīdī defines this root as "to carry on the back" and "to take along," and interprets *ḥamūlah* as a load-bearing camel (Farāhīdī 1993, 2:289). Ibn Manẓūr compiles various statements and writes: "*al-ḥaml*: the burden that is carried upon the back… and *al-ḥamūlah* refers to an animal that carries heavy loads," meaning that *ḥaml* denotes a load borne on the back, while *ḥamūlah* refers to an

animal used to carry heavy burdens (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 11:142). Jawharī likewise confirms these meanings and places *ḥaml* in contrast with *khiffah* (lightness) (Jawharī 1986, 5:1848).

In semantic analyses, Ibn Fāris identifies the central meaning of the root *ḥ-m-l* as "carrying and transferring something," explaining that from this root various meanings such as "load-bearing," "pregnancy," and "obligation" have been derived (Ibn Fāris 1983, 2:106). Rāghib Iṣfahānī, adopting a practical and Quranic approach, explains that the word originally refers to "bearing a load on the back," and was later metaphorically extended to meanings such as "pregnancy" and "obligation." He also distinguishes between outward burdens (such as physical objects) and inward burdens (such as the fetus) (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 257). ʿAllamah Muṣṭafavī, from an etymological perspective, analyzes the core meaning of the root *ḥ-m-l* as "the transfer or conveyance of something together with its preservation," and on this basis explains its semantic relationship with concepts such as "protection," "obligation," and "responsibility" (Muṣṭafavī 2009, 2:267).

The word *ḥaml* and its derivatives occur in sixty-four verses of the Holy Quran and express the burden of responsibility within various contexts. In the verse (*wa-mina al-anʿāmi ḥamūlatan…*): *"Of the cattle [some] are for burden…"*[5] *(Quran 6:142), ḥamūlah* is interpreted as animals such as camels that carry heavy loads. In the verse, (*…wa-liman jāʾa bihi himlu baʿīr…*): *"…Whoever brings it shall have a camel-load [of grain]…"*[6] *(Quran 12:72), ḥiml* refers to a visible and tangible load. Likewise, in the verse, (*…wa-taḍaʿu kullu dhāti ḥamlin ḥamlahā…*): *"…every suckling female will neglect what she suckled…"*[7] *(Quran 22:2), ḥaml* is interpreted as the fetus in the mother's womb, referring to an inner burden and a natural responsibility (see Ṭabarsī 1997, 3-

5. ﴿وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ حَمُولَةً...﴾ (الانعام/۱۴۲)
6. ﴿...وَلِمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ...﴾ (یوسف/۷۲)
7. ﴿...وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا...﴾ (الحج/۲)

4:580 & 5-6:382 & 7-8:111,113; Thaʿlabī 2002, 4:199; Zamakhsharī 1986, 2:73; Ālūsī 1996, 8:58 &13:37; Burūsawī 2001, 3:144 & 6:6; Ṭūsī, n.d., 6:171).

The central meaning of *ḥaml* is "bearing or carrying a load," yet in the Quran this concept expands beyond physical burdens to include ethical and obligatory responsibilities. In Quranic usage, *ḥaml* refers both to visible, heavy loads (such as the transportation of goods by animals) and to internal or concealed burdens (such as the fetus carried in the womb, water carried within clouds, or fruit borne by trees). This semantic expansion demonstrates that the word moves beyond purely material meanings and also functions in expressing religious obligations and human responsibilities.

Within the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility," *ḥaml* is associated with concepts such as *thiql* (heaviness), *naql* (transfer), *ḥamūlah* (beast of burden), and *taklīf* (obligation). *Naql* primarily denotes movement and transfer, whereas *ḥaml* emphasizes the act of bearing the burden itself. The term *ḥamūlah*, referring to a pack animal, reflects a part–whole relationship with *ḥaml*. Moreover, *ḥaml* stands in contrast to terms such as *khiffah* (lightness), thereby highlighting the weight and gravity of responsibility. These semantic relationships help clarify the conceptual scope of *ḥaml* and its place within the lexical field of ethical and religious obligations.

Martyr Ayatullah Khamenei, in explaining the concept of responsibility, interprets it as the acceptance of the hardship of service and the fulfillment of commitments toward the people. Accordingly, responsibility in the Islamic system is not merely an administrative privilege but rather a burden placed upon the individual—one that must be borne with divine intention and practical commitment (Khamenei, 2019/12/02, "Accepting Responsibility: The Arena of Divine Accountability," https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-note?id=44305).

4. Semantic Analysis of *Kall*

The word *kall* represents the burden of responsibility in the form of heavy social obligations and support for dependents. In classical lexical sources, its primary meaning is recorded as "the heaviness of a burden." Farāhīdī

assigns to the root *k-l-l* the meaning of "bearing and heaviness," noting that the expression *kalla al-rajulu* means that the burden of a man's family became heavy upon him (Farāhīdī 1993, 3:1591). Jawharī writes: "*al-kall* means dependents (*ʿiyāl*) … and *rajul maklūl* refers to a man upon whom there are many dependents"; that is, *kall* denotes one's household or dependents, and a *maklūl* man is one who bears the burden of a large family (Jawharī 1986, 5:1811). Ibn Manẓūr also gathers various lexical opinions and defines *kall* as "dependents, those whose livelihood is provided by another, and a person who becomes a burden upon someone else" (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 11:591).

In semantic analyses, Ibn Fāris identifies three central meanings for the root *k-l-l*, the third of which is "the heaviness of a burden, especially that of dependents and family," a meaning closely connected with the concept of heaviness (Ibn Fāris 1983, 5:121). Rāghib Iṣfahānī, with attention to Quranic usage, analyzes *kall* as "the heavy burden of dependents" and writes: "*al-kall*: dependents; they are so called because, in receiving support and assistance, they rely upon him," meaning that they are called *kall* because they depend on someone else for help and support (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 704). ʿAllamah Muṣṭafavī, adopting an etymological approach, analyzes the primary meaning of the root *k-l-l* as "the need and dependence of one thing upon another in order to fulfill its need." Accordingly, dependents and those under one's care, who are in need of their guardian, are called *kall* (Muṣṭafavī 2009, 10:108).

The word *kall* occurs only once in the Holy Quran, in verse 76 of *Sūrat al-Naḥl*, (*…wa-huwa kallun ʿalā mawlāhu…*): *"… and who is a liability to his master…"*[8] *(Quran 16:76).* This usage describes a servant who has no ability to accomplish anything and is therefore regarded as a burden and source of heaviness upon his master. This

8. ﴿... وَ هُوَ كَلٌّ عَلى مَوْلاه ...﴾ (النحل/۷۶)

Quranic context clearly reflects the primary meaning of "heaviness" and the "burden of responsibility," while emphasizing the ethical dimension of bearing the burden of dependents.

The core meaning of the root *k-l-l* is heaviness and being a burden, which, within the semantic network of *thiql*, has developed into the notion of responsibility toward dependents. This meaning is also clearly evident in the aforementioned Quranic expression, where the incapable servant is described as *kall* upon his master. The semantic development of this word has further extended to the domain of "dependents" and "those under one's care," denoting persons who rely upon their guardian and place upon him a burden of livelihood and ethical responsibility.

Semantically, the word *kall* is related to concepts such as "dependents," "followers," "a burden," and "one who lives at another's expense." In the interpretation of the aforementioned verse, exegetes have explained it as "the heaviness of a dependent's maintenance" and "the servant becoming a burden upon his master" (Sajistānī 1995, 391; Wāḥidī Nayshābūrī 1994, 3:75; Ṭūsī, n.d., 6:410; Zamakhsharī 1986, 2:623; Ṭabarsī 1997, 5-6:578; Ibn ʿĀshūr, n.d., 13:183). These semantic relations clarify the position of the word within the conceptual domain of dependence, guardianship, and social responsibility, thereby establishing it as part of the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility" in the Holy Quran.

From the perspective of Ayatullah Khamenei, responsibility within the Islamic system has the character of a trust (*amānah*) and entails accountability before both God and the people. In explaining managerial responsibility, he emphasizes that responsibility in Islam is a "divine trust," and whoever accepts it must be answerable for it (Khamenei, 2019/12/02, "Accepting Responsibility: The Arena of Divine Accountability," https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-note?id=44305).

5. Semantic Analysis of *Wizr*

The word *wizr* is one of the key terms within the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility," and in the Quran it most frequently denotes the burden of sin and penal liability. In lexicographical sources, this word is originally defined as a "heavy burden." Farāhīdī, for the root *w-z-r*, mentions the meaning of "seeking refuge and relying on a mountain," and from the same root explains *wizr* as a heavy burden (Farāhīdī 1993, 8:325). Ibn Manẓūr likewise reports: *al-wizru: al-ḥiml al-thaqīl* ("*wizr* is a heavy load"), noting that the term originally signifies a heavy burden and was later also used in the sense of a refuge or shelter (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 5:452). Jawharī also explains the word in two meanings: "heavy burden" and "refuge" (Jawharī 1986, 3:1241).

In semantic analyses, Ibn Fāris identifies two central meanings for the root *w-z-r*: first, "seeking refuge and support," and second, "a heavy burden." He emphasizes that both meanings can be observed in Quranic usage (Ibn Fāris 1983, 6:158). Rāghib Iṣfahānī, adopting a Quran-oriented approach, interprets *wizr* as "bearing sin," explaining that sin envelops a person like a heavy load and renders him morally and existentially burdened (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 875). ʿAllamah Muṣṭafavī likewise considers the primary meaning of the term to be "taking a heavy burden upon one's shoulders," and regards the sense of "sin" as an extension derived from this original meaning (Muṣṭafavī 2009, 11:54).

In the Holy Quran, *wizr* and its derivatives appear in association with concepts such as *dhanb* (sin), *ḥaml* (bearing), *thiql* (heaviness), and *wazn* (weighing), emphasizing the ethical–penal dimension of the burden of responsibility. In the verses, (*wa-lā taziru wāziratun wizra ukhrā*): *"...and no bearer shall bear another's burden..."*[9] *(Quran 6:164; 17:15; 35:18; 39:7),* the fundamental principle of the individuality of responsibility is articulated: no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another. This principle also carries a clear social

9. ﴿...وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى...﴾ (الانعام/۱۶۴؛ الاسراء/۱۵؛ فاطر/۱۸؛ الزمر/۷)

implication: moral and penal responsibility is non-transferable, and every individual must be accountable for his or her own actions. Thus, by negating the transfer of the burden of sin, the Quran both affirms individual justice and prevents the emergence of unjust mechanisms in which the wrongdoing of one person is imposed upon another.

Likewise, in the verse, (*wa-waḍaʿnā ʿanka wizrak*): *"and relieve you of your burden"*[10] *(Quran 94:2), wizr* has been interpreted as the heavy burden of the Prophet's mission or responsibility. Exegetes have also explained this term as referring to "sin," a "heavy burden," or "responsibility" (see Ṭūsī, n.d., 5:21; Ṭabarsī 1997, 3:235; Zamakhsharī 1986, 2:112; Ṭabāṭabāʾī 1996, 7:48; Ibn ʿĀshūr, n.d., 15:37). From this perspective, *wizr* is not merely a negative moral burden but may also refer to the heavy pressure of responsibility—one that rested upon the Prophet (s) in the arena of calling, guidance, and social reform. This reading indicates that, in the Quranic perspective, social responsibility—even at its highest level—is accompanied by hardship, weight, and endurance.

From the perspective of the semantic network, *wizr* appears alongside terms such as *ithm* (sin), *dhanb* (offense), *ḥaml* (bearing), and *thiql* (heaviness), and constitutes one of the most significant Quranic expressions for describing the relationship between human beings and their actions. Within this framework, *wizr* is not merely a physical burden; rather, it denotes a moral and sinful burden that renders a person accountable before both God and society. Such an understanding also highlights the social dimension of the concept, since a society in which responsibility is understood as individual is less prone to the spread of wrongdoing, the projection of blame onto others, and injustice. For this reason, *wizr* in the Quran functions as a warning concept, directing human beings to the consequences of their actions and to the necessity of accountability for them.

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10. ﴿وَوَضَعْنَا عَنْكَ وِزْرَكَ﴾ (الشرح/٢)

In some of his statements, the Supreme Leader has described the presence of unqualified individuals in positions of decision-making not only as a cause of loss for themselves but also as creating *wizr* and burden for society. This observation indicates that improper assumption of responsibility, beyond its personal consequences, also carries social effects and can become a collective moral burden (Khamenei, 2019/12/02, "Accepting Responsibility: The Arena of Divine Accountability," https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-note?id=44305).

6. Semantic Analysis of *Wazn*

The word *wazn* within the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility" denotes the concept of measurement, balance, and the evaluation of the degree of heaviness and value. Classical lexicographical sources trace the basic meaning of this root to "measuring weight and establishing balance." Farāhīdī defines the root *w-z-n* as referring to "the measure of an object's heaviness" and to the act of weighing or measuring (Farāhīdī 1993, 3:1948). Jawharī likewise defines *wazn* as "the amount of weight," and describes *mīzān* as the instrument used for measuring and determining weight (Jawharī 1986, 6:2351). Ibn Manẓūr also explains *wazn* as the quantity of heaviness of something, and the act of weighing as determining that quantity (Ibn Manẓūr1994, 13:476).

In semantic analyses, Ibn Fāris identifies the central meaning of the root *w-z-n* as "the equality and balance of two things," explaining that weighing is the search for this balance in determining the heaviness of objects; hence words such as *mīzān* (scale) and *mithqāl* (a unit of weight) derive from the same semantic origin (Ibn Fāris 1983, 6:107). Rāghib Iṣfahānī interprets *wazn* as "knowing the measure and quantity of something," whether in a material or a non-material sense, emphasizing that the concept extends from the realm of tangible objects to the domain of moral values and human actions (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 868). ʿAllamah Muṣṭafavī likewise considers the fundamental

meaning of this root to be "equality and balance between two things," viewing *wazn* as extending beyond physical measurement to include any form of evaluation aimed at establishing justice and ethical-social balance (Muṣṭafavī 2009, 13:90).

In Quranic usage, *wazn* and its derivatives occur in twenty-three verses and, beyond the material and economic domain, assume an important role in the sphere of ethics and social responsibility. In the context of transactions, the Qur'an emphasizes the observance of justice in weight and measure, presenting shortchanging and the disruption of economic balance as signs of social corruption. This usage turns *wazn* into a criterion for the realization of justice in economic and social relations. Likewise, in the verse, (*fa-lā nuqīmu lahum yawma al-qiyāmati waznan*): *"… On the Day of Resurrection We will not set for them any weight"*[11] *(Quran 18:105),* reference is made to the weightlessness and worthlessness of the deeds of those who have distanced themselves from their ethical and faith-based responsibility. Exegetes have interpreted this verse as referring to "the lowliness of their rank and the worthlessness of their deeds" (Ṭūsī, n.d., 7:98; Ṭabarsī 1997, 5:767). From this perspective, *wazn* moves beyond a merely physical concept and becomes a symbol for measuring the degree of human moral value and responsibility (Ṭabāṭabāʾī 1996, 13:400; Ibn ʿĀshūr, n.d., 15:143).

From a social perspective, *wazn* expresses the necessity of establishing balance in human and social relations. A society in which the criteria for measuring value, justice, and responsibility are disrupted moves toward instability and corruption. Therefore, by emphasizing *wazn* and *mīzān*, the Quran calls human beings to observe fairness, justice, and responsibility in social interactions. Within this framework, the heaviness of righteous deeds symbolizes social commitment,

11. ﴿…فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا﴾ (الكهف/١٠٥)

justice-oriented conduct, and responsibility, whereas lightness of weight signifies a person's emptiness of moral values and inability to fulfill individual and collective responsibilities.

In sum, within the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility," *wazn* denotes a concept that goes beyond material measurement and becomes a criterion for evaluating moral value, social justice, and human responsibility. This word shows that, in the Quranic view, human beings and societies are constantly subject to assessment, and their value depends on the extent of their balance, justice, and responsibility.

7. Semantic Analysis of *Waqr*

The word *waqr*—as well as *wiqr*—within the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility" fundamentally denotes heaviness, weightiness, dignity, and an epistemic-cognitive burden. Early lexicographical sources explain this root primarily around the axes of "heaviness" and "dignity." Farāhīdī records the meaning of the root *w-q-r* as "dignity and heaviness," and gives *waqara* the meanings "to carry" and "to become heavy" (Farāhīdī 1993, 3:1948). Jawharī likewise states: *al-wiqru: al-ḥiml al-thaqīl* ("*wiqr* is a heavy load"), and interprets *ittaqara* as "to carry"; he also uses *waqara* in the sense of "dignity and heaviness" (Jawharī 1986, 6:2351). Ibn Manẓūr similarly records: *al-waqru: al-thiql wa-l-wiqār* ("*waqr* means heaviness and dignity"), and explains *ittaqara* as *ḥamala* ("to carry") (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 13:476).

In semantic analyses, Ibn Fāris regards the root *w-q-r* as grounded in "heaviness," and understands *wiqār*—dignity or solemnity—as the effect and outcome of that heaviness (Ibn Fāris 1983, 6:108). Rāghib Iṣfahānī, adopting a Quran-oriented approach, defines *waqr* as "heaviness and weightiness," explaining that the word is used both in the sense of bearing a load and in the sense of dignity, whose necessary

implication and outward manifestation is heaviness (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 868). ʿAllamah Muṣṭafavī likewise identifies the fundamental meaning of this root as "heaviness and weightiness," viewing dignity as its consequence in conduct and thought (Muṣṭafavī 2009, 13:90).

Quranic usage of this word shows that *waqr* moves beyond the level of physical heaviness and is also applied to perceptual, epistemic, and even psychological heaviness. In the verse, (*wa-fī ādhāninā waqr*): *"…and there is a deafness/heaviness in our ears…"*[12] *(Quran 41:5), waqr* refers to a state in which the ears have become incapable of hearing the truth and the grounds for understanding and accepting it have been closed off. Here, heaviness is not merely a bodily condition; rather, it is a sign of perceptual blockage and an inability to confront the truth. From this perspective, *waqr* becomes a kind of intellectual and epistemic burden that prevents human beings from hearing the message of truth and keeps them in a state of stagnation and ethical non-responsiveness.

From a social perspective, this meaning has particular significance, for *waqr* may be regarded as a symbol of epistemic irresponsibility. A society in which ears become "heavy" toward the truth gradually loses its capacity for reform, dialogue, and recognition of error. Such heaviness is not merely an individual problem; it also spreads to the level of collective relations and prevents the formation of shared understanding and the acceptance of ethical responsibilities. Within this framework, *waqr* functions as a social obstacle: one that prevents the proper comprehension of messages, the acceptance of critique, and accountability before the truth.

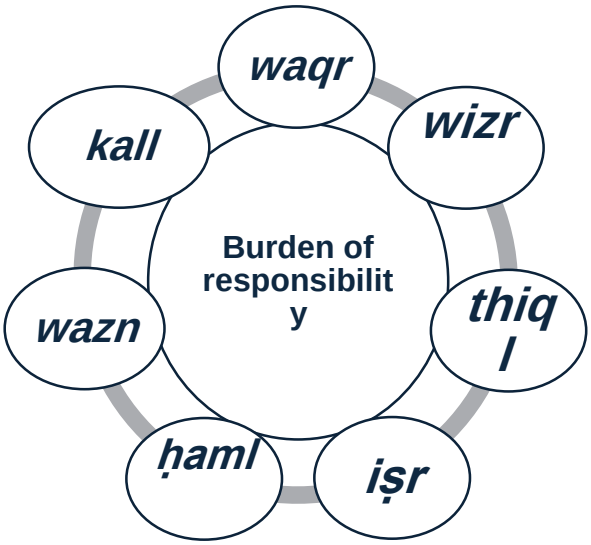
Thus, within the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility," *waqr* does not merely denote physical heaviness or outward dignity; rather, it refers to an epistemic and perceptual burden that may prevent

12. ﴿…وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ…﴾ (فصلت/۵)

individuals and societies from perceiving the truth, understanding their duties, and accepting responsibility. By employing this term, the Quran highlights a dimension of responsibility that goes beyond outward conduct and is connected to the quality of perception, listening, and confrontation with the truth. This meaning indicates that, in the Quranic perspective, human responsibility is realized not only in action but also in the way one understands, accepts, and responds to the truth.

In explaining the obstacles to accepting the truth, martyrAyatullah Khamenei has emphasized the role of constraining bonds and barriers (*iṣr*s) that restrict human movement and prevent individuals from commitment and progress. He likens them to restraints that limit human action and hinder the fulfillment of responsibility. This statement indirectly establishes a connection between perceptual heaviness and epistemic obstacles on the one hand and the concept of responsibility on the other (Khamenei, 2012/11/13, "Remarks at the Fourth Strategic Thought Forum," https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=21471).

Overall Research Diagram



Conclusion

The semantic analysis of the words related to the concept of the "burden

of responsibility" in the Holy Quran shows that this concept, within the Quranic semantic system, encompasses a network of ethical, epistemic, and social notions. Words such as *ḥaml*, *thiql*, *wizr*, *wazn*, and *waqr* each reveal a particular dimension of this semantic network and together present a comprehensive picture of human responsibility toward oneself, society, and the truth.

The lexical and semantic examination of these terms demonstrates that the shared axis among many of them is the concept of "heaviness"—a heaviness that manifests at different levels of human life. At the individual level, this heaviness may refer to bearing the burden of one's actions, the moral consequences of behavior, and accountability for one's deeds. The concept of *wizr* in the Quran, for example, expresses the heavy burden of sin and the responsibility that every individual personally carries. At the ethical and evaluative level, *wazn* and *mīzān* appear as standards for weighing deeds, indicating that the value of human behavior in the divine order is assessed on the basis of balance, justice, and responsibility.

Moreover, some of these terms highlight the epistemic and perceptual dimensions of responsibility. For instance, *waqr* in Quranic usage refers to a kind of perceptual heaviness that prevents the hearing of the truth and the acceptance of the divine message. This meaning shows that human responsibility in the Quran is not limited to the sphere of action; rather, it also includes responsibility with respect to understanding, listening to, and accepting the truth. Within such a framework, the inability or refusal to comprehend the truth may itself be regarded as a failure in fulfilling one's epistemic responsibility.

From a social perspective, the semantic network of the "burden of responsibility" in the Quran points to fundamental principles governing human relations. The Quranic emphasis that "no bearer shall bear the burden of another" reflects the principle of the individuality of responsibility and the rejection of transferring guilt or error within

society. This principle constitutes a foundation for social justice, since every individual must be accountable for his or her own actions and no social system should unjustly shift responsibility from one person to another. Alongside this principle, the concept of *wazn* also stresses the necessity of justice in economic and social interactions, regarding any disturbance in balance and proper measurement as a sign of social corruption.

Based on these findings, it can be said that the Quran, through a set of terms associated with heaviness, burden, and weighing, presents a multidimensional conception of human responsibility. In this framework, responsibility encompasses epistemic, ethical, and social domains. Within this semantic system, the human being is a creature who continually bears the burden of choices, actions, and even the manner in which one understands and confronts the truth. A society shaped according to this logic would therefore be one in which justice, accountability, and responsibility are recognized as fundamental principles of social life.

Finally, the semantic study of these words demonstrates that the concept of the "burden of responsibility" in the Quran is dynamic and multilayered, providing a basis for a deeper understanding of social ethics in Quranic thought. By emphasizing the weight of the consequences of human behavior, the necessity of just evaluation of deeds, and human responsibility before the truth, this semantic network offers a framework that can inspire the analysis of human relations and the organization of social life.

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