Semantic Analysis of "Tabzir" Based on Etymological Data and its Comparison with "Israf"

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Abstract

fall into this category. While the semantic differences between these two terms were clear to Arabic speakers in the early Islamic centuries, the passage of time and their frequent co-occurrence have led to a semantic overlap between them today. This study seeks to answer the following questions using modern linguistic data and library research: What is the semantic distinction between "Israf" and "Tabzir"? What equivalent can be proposed for "Tabzir" to clarify its distinction from "Israf"? Among the findings of this research is that, based on etymological data, the term "Tabzir" carries a primarily metaphorical meaning, equivalent to "squandering." On the other hand, "Israf" consists of two semantic components: consumption and emotional behavior.

Keywords: Etymology, Israf, Linguistics, Quran, Tabzir

1. Introduction

The Quran is the most fundamental religious source for Muslims and has been the central focus of Muslim scholars since ancient times. Throughout history, Muslims have endeavored to derive their lifestyle from this book to align themselves with divine guidance. One aspect of human life addressed in the Quran is economics. Based on this, scholars have sought to extract a unique economic lifestyle from its verses. Among the topics emphasized in the Quran, with the aim of reforming individuals' lifestyles, is the domain of consumption. In this regard, the Quran contains numerous terms such as *Israf* (extravagance), *Takathur* (competition for accumulation), *Itraf* (luxury), and others.

One of the key Quranic terms related to consumption is *Tabzir* (wastefulness). This term appears only in two verses, 26 and 27 of Surah Al-Isra:

«وَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا (٢٦) إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ ۖ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا(27) »

"And give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not waste wastefully. (26) Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful. (27)"

Exegetes and lexicographers throughout history have endeavored to explain the meaning of *Tabzir* (wastefulness), but it seems that they have faced certain inadequacies and inefficiencies in this endeavor. The primary inadequacy lies in the entanglement of the meanings of *Tabzir* and *Israf* (extravagance). In other words, if we examine the works of Muslim scholars throughout history, we find that Muslim researchers have consistently used these two terms interchangeably without paying attention to their semantic distinctions. For example, in various narrations, *Israf* and *Tabzir* are often paired together, leading to their perception as equivalents.

Imam Ali (AS) said: "Indeed, giving wealth inappropriately is *Tabzir* and *Israf*, and it elevates a person in this world but degrades them in the Hereafter" (Razi, 1994, p. 183). In this narration, both *Israf* and *Tabzir* are interpreted as spending wealth in inappropriate ways.

In another narration, Imam Sadiq (AS), while advising a needy person about giving charity, said: "Fear Allah, and do not be extravagant (*Israf*) nor stingy, but maintain a balance between the two. Indeed, *Tabzir* is a

form of *Israf*, as Allah Almighty has said: 'And do not waste wastefully (*Tabzir*)'" (Kulayni, 1987, vol. 3, p. 501). As evident from this narration in Kulayni's *Al-Kafi*, Imam Sadiq (AS) equated *Tabzir* with *Israf* or considered it a specific type of *Israf*. In any case, we again observe the co-occurrence of these two terms.

In *Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, Amidi narrates a saying from Imam Ali (AS): "You must avoid *Tabzir* (wastefulness) and *Israf* (extravagance), and instead adopt justice and fairness" (Tamimi Amidi, 1990, p. 445). Based on this narration, Imam Ali (AS) prohibits individuals from committing *Israf* and *Tabzir* and advises them to uphold justice and fairness. As before, we observe the co-occurrence of these two terms, which likely implies their equivalence.

Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, in *Bihar al-Anwar*, under one of the hadiths discussing *Israf*, writes about its meaning: "*Israf* is *Tabzir* (wastefulness), and it is said to be spending in disobedience [to Allah], or exceeding moderation" (Majlisi, 1982, vol. 33, p. 491). As can be seen, Majlisi also equates *Israf* precisely with *Tabzir* and emphasizes this point at the beginning of his explanation. Notably, after this equivalence, he adds other definitions of *Israf* with a sense of uncertainty (*qila*).

Ahmad ibn Hanbal also narrates a hadith from the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), in which the Prophet, in response to a question about the permissible amount of using the wealth of an orphan under one's care, outlined the criterion as follows: "Eat from the wealth of your orphan without extravagance (*Israf*), wastefulness (*Tabzir*), or hoarding wealth" (Ibn Hanbal, 1996, vol. 14, p. 361). The criterion is to avoid *Israf* and *Tabzir*! The point here is that the distinction between *Israf* and *Tabzir* remains unclear, and the ambiguity is further compounded.

It is important to note that the co-occurrence of *Israf* (extravagance) and *Tabzir* (wastefulness) has become a problem in modern times. However, the fact that the infallible Imams (AS) used these terms together indicates that the semantic distinction between them was clear in their era, and thus, there was no need to explain it. In both Shia and Sunni hadiths, we witness the co-occurrence and semantic equivalence of *Tabzir* and *Israf*. Another area where this equivalence and co-

occurrence are evident is in Persian translations of the Quran. For example, five Persian translations of verse 26 of Surah Al-Isra (وَ لَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا) are as follows:

1. Mahdi Elahi Qomsheei: "And never be extravagant in your actions."
2. Hussein Ansarian: "Do not engage in any form of extravagance or wastefulness."
3. Naser Makarem Shirazi: "And never engage in extravagance or wastefulness."
4. Mohammad Reza Safavi: "And never engage in extravagant spending."
5. Mohammad Mahdi Fooladwand: "Do not be wasteful or extravagant."

In these well-known contemporary translations, the term *Israf* is used to translate *Tabzir*, indicating their inability to distinguish between the two terms and their tendency to equate them. This further complicates the task of clarifying the semantic distinction between *Israf* and *Tabzir*. Lexicographers, in their works, have also discussed *Tabzir* when addressing the root "بذر" (*b-dh-r*). They, too, have linked *Tabzir* to *Israf* in their semantic analyses. Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi, referring to verse 29 of Surah Al-Isra, considered the primary meaning of *Tabzir* to be the squandering of wealth and spending it extravagantly. He also provided two technical definitions for *Tabzir* using the term *qila* (it is said): one is spending wealth in sinful and disobedient ways, and the other is spending all one's wealth to the extent that nothing remains for basic needs, leaving the individual dependent on others. Later lexicographers, such as Ibn 'Abbad and al-Jawhari, followed a similar approach (Khalil, 1989, vol. 8, p. 182; Ibn 'Abbad, 1994, vol. 10, p. 74; Jawhari, 1957, vol. 2, p. 587). It seems that Khalil derived these two additional technical definitions from narrational sources, which suggests that the lexical meaning of *Tabzir* remained unclear to him. Among later lexicographers, the author of *Taj al-Arus* analyzed *Tabzir* as follows: "و بَذَّرَه تَبْذِيراً: خَرَّبَه و فَرَّقَه إِسرافاً. و تَبْذِيرُ المالِ: تَفريقُه إِسرافا" (Zabidi, 1994, vol. 6, p. 67).

As observed in the semantic analyses of *Tabzir* by lexicographers, their definitions, like those of other Muslim groups, are directly

intertwined with *Israf* (extravagance). It appears that they, too, were confused about the semantic distinction between *Israf* and *Tabzir*.

As noted, in the Islamic scholarly tradition, the semantic distinction between *Israf* and *Tabzir* is rarely explained, and the two are often treated as synonymous. It is also important to mention that, in addition to this, there are differing opinions among exegetes regarding the semantic analysis of the term *Tabzir*, and various interpretations have been proposed. Below, we will discuss the exegetical analyses related to the root *Tabzir*.

Muslim scholars have devoted significant attention to understanding the Quran since ancient times. In different periods, they have approached the interpretation of this divine book using various methodologies, the oldest of which is *tafsir ma'thur* (narrated interpretation). This approach has influenced later exegetes, many of whom have derived the theoretical foundations of their interpretations from these narrations. By examining the meaning of *Tabzir* in Shia and Sunni narrative commentaries, we find five meanings attributed to *Tabzir*, which are as follows.

It is worth noting that in early lexical exegetical sources, such as Ma'ani al-Quran by al-Farra', no specific commentary is provided for verses 26 and 27 of Surah Al-Isra. It is possible that these sources simply bypassed the interpretation of these verses altogether. Furthermore, upon reviewing later exegetical works, we observe that all of them have considered the intended meaning of Tabzir to fall under one of the following categories. Therefore, to avoid prolonging the discussion, we will refrain from delving into these interpretations (for examples, see: Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 2, p. 661; Tabarsi, 1993, vol. 6, p. 634; Alusi, 1995, vol. 8, p. 61; Tabatabai, 1982, vol. 13, p. 82).

2. Theoretical Framework

a) Spending Wealth in Inappropriate Ways / Squandering Wealth in What Does Not Last:

This refers to an individual spending their wealth in a manner that is not its rightful or appropriate place. To facilitate understanding, consider the following example: Imagine a child who lacks clothing, and the

father has only enough budget to buy one set of clothes for the child. If, despite this need, the father spends the money elsewhere—for instance, by going to a restaurant and eating a meal—according to this definition, he has engaged in *Tabzir* (wastefulness). Upon examining Sunni sources, we find that Ibn Abbas and Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, both companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), have accepted this definition of *Tabzir* (Tabari, 1992, vol. 15, pp. 53–54; Fayz Kashani, 1995, vol. 3, p. 188).

b) Spending Wealth in Sinful Acts:

Some exegetes have defined *Tabzir* as spending wealth in ways that involve sin and disobedience. For example, if someone spends money to purchase intoxicants, according to this definition, they have engaged in *Tabzir*. This interpretation has been promoted by Qatada and Ibn Zayd, two companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (Tabari, 1992, vol. 15, p. 55; Suyuti, 1984, vol. 4, p. 177).

c) Spending Wealth in Disobedience to Allah:

Some exegetes define *Tabzir* as spending wealth in ways that do not align with divine pleasure or obedience to Allah's commands (Tabari, 1992, vol. 15, p. 55; Qummi, 1984, vol. 2, p. 18; Fayz Kashani, 1995, vol. 3, p. 188; Huwayzi, 1995, vol. 3, p. 156).

d) Giving Away All Wealth / Spending Entire Wealth:

Some definitions describe *Tabzir* as giving away all of one's wealth. In other words, if someone spends all their assets, even in the path of Allah, to the extent that nothing remains for their own livelihood, they have engaged in *Israf* (extravagance) (Huwayzi, 1995, vol. 3, p. 156).

e) Spending Wealth Wastefully (Israf):

If someone spends their wealth extravagantly, they have engaged in *Tabzir*. In this definition, we again observe the co-occurrence of *Israf* and *Tabzir*. In other words, as mentioned earlier in the lexical section, one of the meanings attributed to *Tabzir* is *Israf*. This equivalence between *Tabzir* and *Israf* is also evident in exegetical works (Tabari, 1992, vol. 15, p. 53).

Quranic exegetes have proposed various interpretations of *Tabzir*, which complicates the understanding of its true meaning. There is an overlap between the meanings provided by lexicographers and exegetes, indicating that lexicographers, when defining Quranic terms, often rely on narrations related to those terms. This approach has typically prevented them from conducting a systematic and lexical analysis of the terms effectively.

Thus, in the Islamic tradition, *Israf* and *Tabzir* are often mentioned together and treated as synonymous, which does not seem accurate. Additionally, the differing interpretations of *Tabzir* in semantic analyses are not entirely convincing.

Through extensive research, it has become clear that this study, which uses etymological analyses to distinguish between *Israf* and *Tabzir*, is unprecedented in its approach. No researcher has previously addressed this question. In the following sections, we will use etymological data to clarify the meaning of *Tabzir* and then analyze the semantic distinction between *Israf* and *Tabzir*.

3. Results

3-1. Semantic Analysis of Tabzir

To analyze the meaning of *Tabzir* and the root بذر (*b-dh-r*), we will first examine the lexical analyses provided by lexicographers under the root بذر. Then, using etymological methods, we will explore the meaning of the root بذر

3-1.1. Semantic Analysis of Tabzir in Lexical Sources

The tradition of Arabic lexicography has continued from ancient times to the present. To understand the semantic evolution of a word, it is necessary to compare and analyze the interpretations of various lexicographers. This approach allows us to identify the semantic components of a root in the Arabic language. Below, we examine the root بذر from the earliest lexical works (such as *Al-Ayn* by Khalil ibn Ahmad) to contemporary dictionaries to uncover the semantic components of this root in Arabic. Based on the lexical data, the meanings can be categorized as follows:

3-2. The Meaning of Scattering and Dispersing

The first meaning addressed by Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi under this root is "scattering." This refers to anything that is spread or scattered on the ground, like fruit seeds (Khalil, 1989, vol. 8, p. 182). Ibn Faris and Raghib al-Isfahani, like Khalil, consider the primary meaning of this root to be "spreading" or "scattering" (Raghib al-Isfahani, 1992, p. 114; Ibn Faris, 1984, vol. 1, p. 216). The objects of scattering can vary, including living beings, livestock, and wealth, with the key semantic component being "dispersal" (Ibn Duraid, 1980, vol. 1, p. 303; Ibn 'Abbad, 1994, vol. 10, p. 74). As mentioned earlier, Raghib defines the primary meaning of the root بذر as "scattering" or "spreading plant seeds," while *Tabzir* is equated with squandering wealth and spending it without justification (Raghib al-Isfahani, 1992, p. 114).

 The nominal form *al-badhr* (البَذر) refers to any seed that can be scattered (Khalil, 1989, vol. 8, p. 182). Later lexicographers narrowed this meaning slightly, limiting it to seeds suitable for agriculture. In other words, lexicographers after Khalil defined *al-badhr* as equivalent to the Persian term *bazr-e kashtani* (بذر کاشتنی), which refers to the seeds that farmers bury in the ground each planting season to yield crops (Ibn 'Abbad, 1994, vol. 10, p. 74; Azhari, 2001, vol. 14, p. 308).

3-2-1. The Meaning of Plantable Seeds and the Metaphorical Meaning of Progeny

Khalil also introduces a metaphorical meaning under this root. According to this metaphor, the progeny and offspring of individuals are also referred to as *badhr* (seeds) (Khalil, 1989, vol. 8, p. 182; Ibn 'Abbad, 1994, vol. 10, p. 74). Just as farmers plant seeds to produce crops and then replant a portion of those crops the following year to ensure future harvests—a cycle that repeats annually—human progeny is likened to seeds. This is because, according to the laws of nature, individuals have children through reproduction, and their children, in turn, have offspring, continuing this chain indefinitely. The similarity between human generations and agricultural seeds lies in this cyclical nature. Just as crops from the previous year's harvest must be planted annually to yield future produce, each generation of humans must

reproduce so that their descendants can continue the cycle, ensuring the perpetuation of the lineage. **

3-3. Talkativeness and Inability to Keep Secrets

Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi mentions another usage of this root, which later lexicographers have also noted. The term *al-badhir* (البذير) in Arabic refers to a person who cannot keep a secret and reveals it. This term seems equivalent to the Persian expression *dahan laq* (دهن لَق), which describes someone who, after being entrusted with a secret, discloses it to others (Khalil, 1989, vol. 8, p. 182; Azhari, 2001, vol. 14, p. 308; Ibn 'Abbad, 1994, vol. 10, p. 74). Another related usage, reported by Ibn Duraid, is *baydhara* (بَيْذَرَةٌ) and *baydharah* (بَيْذَارَةٌ), meaning a talkative person (Ibn Duraid, 1980, vol. 1, p. 303).

It appears that these two metaphorical meanings under the root بذر(b-dh-r) stem from the semantic component of "scattering." In other words, just as a farmer does not pay attention to exactly which seed is planted in which part of the field and scatters the seeds across the land, a talkative person also "scatters" words without considering the context or situation. Similarly, a *dahan laq* (someone who cannot keep secrets) does not pay attention to which words should not be spoken in certain contexts. **

3-4. Various Meanings of the Root B-Z-R

Some scattered meanings have also been mentioned under this root. For example, the term *tabadhdhara al-mā'u* (تَبَذَّر الماءُ) is used to describe water that has changed color and become spoiled. In some poetic contexts, the name of a place is reported as *Badhdhar* (بَذَّر) (Azhari, 2001, vol. 14, p. 308; Ibn 'Abbad, 1994, vol. 10, p. 74). Additionally, food that is abundant and satisfies many people is referred to as *ṭaʿām kathīr al-budhārah* (طعامٌ كثيرُ البُذَارَةِ) (Khalil, 1989, vol. 8, p. 182; Azhari, 2001, vol. 14, p. 308). This term emphasizes the abundance of the food, making it distributable and accessible to all.

Lexicographers have proposed various meanings for different uses of the root بذر. However, as observed, no clear or unified definition has been provided for *Tabzir*. Instead, each lexicographer has offered an

analysis based on their own intuition. This highlights the need for a more precise examination of the meaning of this root. Therefore, in the following section, we will explore the meaning of the root بذر based on an analysis of etymological data from Semitic languages.

3-5. Semantic Analysis of Tabzir Based on Etymological Data

According to scholars of Semitic languages, the Arabic language has undergone five stages of development from its inception to the present day. These stages, in order, are: Ancient Arabic, Old Arabic (pre-Quranic), Quranic Arabic (early classical), Classical Arabic, and Modern Arabic (Pakatchi and Afrashi, 2020, pp. 90–92). It is important to note that the data from Arabic dictionaries are limited to the last two stages of the language. Additionally, we lack written sources from the earlier stages of Arabic. In other words, to access Quranic Arabic, we would need a source from that era. However, the only surviving text from that period is the Quran itself, and no dictionary of Quranic Arabic exists to help analyze the semantic components of its vocabulary. Therefore, we must rely on historical linguistics, particularly etymology, to uncover the meanings of words from this period.

Etymology, as a branch of historical linguistics, studies the changes in the structure and meaning of words throughout their history. By employing etymological methods, it becomes possible to trace the meaning and structure of a word from ancient times to the present and analyze its transformations (ibid., p. 85).

To trace the history of Arabic vocabulary, linguists study the oldest known period, which is the ancient Afroasiatic or Proto-Hamito-Semitic era. This period, dating back approximately 12,000 years, is considered the ancestral stage of the Arabic language. The Afroasiatic language family is classified into various branches, including Semitic, Egyptian, Cushitic, Berber, and Omotic. An important point is that the members of the Afroasiatic family began to diverge during a specific period. In other words, Afroasiatic-speaking peoples started migrating to different parts of the world, giving rise to distinct language families. Around 6,000 years ago, the ancestors of the Semitic peoples separated from the Afroasiatic group and migrated to another region (Kitchen & colleagues, 2009, pp. 2705–2706).

After many years, various Semitic groups also began migrating from their original homeland, leading to the emergence of different Semitic branches and the languages within them. The first wave of migration and divergence within the Semitic family began around 5,000 years ago. Ultimately, after multiple migrations, Semitic languages were classified into three main branches: Eastern, Southern, and Northwestern (ibid., p. 2707). It is worth noting that among Semitic scholars, there are some disagreements regarding which language is closest to Proto-Semitic. Some consider Hebrew, others Arabic, and still others Akkadian (Assyro-Babylonian) to be the closest to the Proto-Semitic language. Another point of contention is the origin of the Semitic people, with scholars proposing various theories about their ancient homeland, including Armenia, Babylon, southern Iraq, and the Levant coast. Examining and critiquing these disagreements is beyond the scope of this discussion and will be addressed elsewhere (Wolfensohn, 1929, pp. 4–8).

3-5-1. Semitic Languages

After presenting the Afroasiatic and ancient Semitic root *b-ḏ-r*, the following section will discuss the applications of this root in the Semitic language family. It is important to note that after examining all Semitic regions and various languages, the following findings were obtained. Naturally, the omission of a language indicates that no usage of the root *b-ḏ-r* has been reported in that language.

3-5-1-1. Northwest Semitic Region

The Northwest Semitic region refers to the following languages, divided into two branches: Canaanite and Aramaic. The Canaanite branch includes Hebrew, Phoenician, and Punic, while the Aramaic branch includes Aramaic, Targumic Aramaic, Syriac, and Mandaic (ibid., 91). Below, the reported usages of the root *b-ḏ-r* in the Northwest Semitic region will be discussed.

a) Hebrew: According to Gesenius, two forms, *bāzar* and *bizzēr*, are used in Hebrew, meaning "to scatter" or "to disperse" (Gesenius, 1939, p. 103).

b) Aramaic: In Aramaic, two different forms derived from the root *b-ḏ-r* are used. The verbal form, similar to Hebrew, is *bāzar*, meaning "to scatter," "to disperse," or "to spread." The nominal form is *bizrā*, which, like the ancient Semitic form, gives the absolute meaning of "edible grain" (Jastrow, 1903, p. 154).

c) Mandaic:

Macuch also reports two nominal forms, *bazira* and *bazra*, meaning "edible grain" in Mandaic (Macuch, 1963, p. 46).

3-5-2-1. South Semitic Region

The South Semitic region is divided into two main branches:

a) Ethio-Semitic or Ethiopian Languages:

This group of languages is found in the southern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula, throughout the Red Sea region, and primarily in modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea. Languages such as Ge'ez and Amharic fall under this category (Faber, 1997, pp. 6-7). Based on examinations of dictionaries within this language family, the nominal form *bəzra*, meaning "edible grain," is used in Ethiopian Semitic languages (Leslau, 1987, p. 118). As can be observed, the same meaning prevalent in the Northwest Semitic branch is also used in this branch of South Semitic languages.

b) Modern South Arabian Languages:

These languages are primarily spoken by small minority groups in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in Yemen and Oman. Members of this family include Harsusi, Soqotri, and Jibbali (Faber, 1997, pp. 6-7). After reviewing the dictionaries of these languages, the following usages are noted:

- **Jibbali (Shehri):**
  In this language, the verbal form *ʾibzir*, derived from the root *b-z-r*, is used to mean "adding pepper to food" (Johnstone, 1981, p. 33).
- **Mehri:**
  In the Mehri language, similar to Jibbali, the root *b-z-r* is reported as *bəzār*, meaning "pepper" (Johnstone, 1987, p. 61).

- **Harsusi:**

    Researchers have reported the use of the root *b-z-r* in Harsusi, similar to its cognates mentioned above. The form *bəzār* is used, giving the nominal meaning of "pepper" (Johnstone, 1977, p. 22).

As observed, in the Modern South Arabian languages, the general meaning of "edible grain" seen in Ethiopian Semitic has taken on a more specific meaning—"pepper." In other words, the broad sense of "edible grain" in this language family has narrowed to refer to a specific type of edible seed, namely pepper, thus acquiring a more specialized meaning.

3-6. Afroasiatic and Ancient Semitic

In this section, the root *b-ḏ-r* (seed) will be examined at two levels: Afroasiatic and ancient Semitic. In Afroasiatic sources, an ancient root *bižar*, meaning "edible grain," is mentioned, which appears to be the archaic form of *b-ḏ-r* (Orel, 1995, p. 67). Orel and Stolbova, in their Afroasiatic dictionary, have identified the ancient Semitic form of this root as *bizr*, retaining the same meaning of "edible grain" (ibid.).

3-6-1. Semantic Dating and Analysis of the Root b-ḏ-r

The Quranic term *tabdhīr* (تبذیر) falls under the category of economic terms in the Holy Quran, which Almighty God has prohibited believers and Muslims from committing. By examining available sources in Semitic languages, it becomes clear that this term has undergone the semantic evolution: [edible grain > scattering > wastefulness].

Initially, the simple meaning of "edible grain" was prevalent among Afroasiatic and ancient Semitic peoples (Orel, 1995, p. 67). Subsequently, since most people, in addition to consuming these grains, would scatter a portion of them on the ground during the planting season to ensure a food supply for the following year, the root *b-ḏ-r* gradually acquired the meaning of "scattering." This meaning, alongside "edible grain," emerged in Semitic languages related to Arabic. In Arabic, the root *b-ḏ-r* entered the *tafʿīl* form (تفعیل) and took on a metaphorical meaning equivalent to "wastefulness" or "squandering." In terms of structural typology, the Persian term *rīkht o*

pāsh kardan (ریخت و پاش کردن, meaning "wastefulness") follows a similar semantic trajectory: [pouring > wastefulness].

In verses 23 to 39 of Surah Al-Isra, Almighty God addresses Muslims, outlining some general principles and religious commandments (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1970, vol. 13, p. 39). In verses 26 and 27 of Surah Al-Isra, two economic directives are provided to reform the lifestyle of Muslims. First, it is recommended that individuals fulfill the rights of their relatives, the poor, and travelers. Immediately afterward, it is cautioned that one should avoid wastefulness in this regard. This means that one should not recklessly spend or give away resources without considering their own means or the needs of others. In the following verse, it is stated that Almighty God fundamentally opposes such economic behavior—spending wealth aimlessly and without foresight. Furthermore, those who engage in such behavior are sternly warned and, in a unique usage reserved for the wasteful, are referred to as "brothers of Satan." Indeed, through this, Almighty God intends to combat this undesirable economic trait.

3-7. Semantic Analysis of Extravagance (Isrāf)

The root *srf*, as mentioned by Arabic lexicographers, carries two primary meanings. On one hand, it is widely understood as "excess" or "overindulgence," and on the other hand, it conveys meanings such as greed and haste (Akhavan Tabasi & Hosseinzadeh Aivari, 2023, pp. 6–9).

In Semitic languages, the root *SRF* also holds two distinct meanings. The first is related to eating and its various forms (drinking, tasting, gulping, sipping, sucking, swallowing, etc.), from which the meaning of consumption and utilization has also been derived. The second meaning is "burning," which has given rise to the sense of destruction (ibid., p. 10). Based on the research conducted, the root *srf* in Arabic originates from two separate roots in Semitic and ancient Semitic languages:

1. **The first root**, with the phonetic form *ŜRB* (shrb), belongs to the ancient Nostratic period, and its primary meaning was "drinking." As it entered the Afroasiatic and Semitic realms, a phonetic shift (*b > p/f*) occurred, resulting in variations such as *SRP* or *SRF*. In this

context, the *F* in *SRF* (related to eating) is not original; rather, it originally represented *B*. Over time, its meaning evolved and expanded to include various forms of consumption (e.g., swallowing, gulping, etc.) and general usage. In Arabic, this root has preserved the form *shrb* (شرب) while also producing forms like *ṣrf* (صرف), meaning "to consume," and *srf* (سرف), which carries a secondary meaning related to eating (ibid., pp. 11–14).

2. **The second root**, with the phonetic form *SRF* (srf), belongs to the Afroasiatic period, and its original meaning was "heat." The *F* in this root is original and ancient, not a result of phonetic shift. As it entered the Semitic realm, this root was used to mean "burning," and in Semitic languages, it also acquired the meaning of "destruction." In Arabic, from the meaning of burning, it developed the sense of "greed, avarice, and agitation" (ibid., pp. 15–19).

In Arabic, the concept of *isrāf* (إسراف, from the *if ʿāl* form) emerged as a result of the semantic integration of the two aforementioned roots. A similar integrative concept is observed in Syriac (in the *tafʿīl* form: *sarraf*). This indicates that the concept of *isrāf* encompasses both the meanings of "eating/consuming" and "greed/agitation," as well as "destruction" (ibid., p. 20).

Thus, the semantic components of *isrāf* can be summarized as follows:

1. A form of eating or consuming (undesirable and inappropriate).
2. Consumption or utilization.
3. Greed, haste, and agitation.

3-8. Corruption and destruction

In essence, *isrāf* refers to a type of "undesirable or inappropriate consumption." Its undesirability stems from two aspects: psychological and teleological. From a psychological and internal perspective, *isrāf* involves consumption driven by "greed and avarice," leading to the consumption of food, drink, or other resources beyond the body's needs or conventional human requirements. The presence of greed and avarice during consumption results in excessive behavior, causing significant harm to the individual.

From a teleological and external perspective, *isrāf* (extravagance) is a form of consumption that leads to the depletion and destruction of consumable goods. This is because excessive and unrestrained consumption rapidly depletes existing resources and wealth, eliminating the opportunity for their recovery and renewal. If *isrāf* becomes a widespread cultural norm and a class known as *musrifīn* (the extravagant) emerges in society, food resources and other assets will be squandered by this group, leaving others deprived.

To elaborate on this point, it is important to note that during the era of the Quranic revelation, the Arabian Peninsula was a dry and barren region with very limited water and food resources. Additionally, the economy of the Peninsula at that time was not particularly strong, and one could not expect an abundance of wealth or goods in that society. Therefore, the emergence of a culture like *isrāf* and the rise of an economic class known as *musrifīn* in that society could have been far more dangerous and devastating than in any other society. It could quickly lead to shortages of food and goods, the spread of poverty and hunger, the disruption of social balance, and economic and social collapse. This is why we observe that the Quran vehemently opposes the culture of *isrāf* and the class of *musrifīn* (ibid., pp. 21–22).

4. Summary and Conclusion

The Quran is the primary source of Islam and has always been a focal point for Muslims, influencing their general culture throughout history. *Isrāf* (extravagance) and *tabdhīr* (wastefulness) are two Quranic terms that, based on etymological data, acquired new meanings during the Quranic Arabic era.

As mentioned earlier, *isrāf* is derived from the combination of two distinct roots with different meanings: "consumption" and "fire." In the Quran, it conveys a sense of deviant behavior arising from emotional impulsiveness and haste, manifesting in various contexts such as food consumption, retribution for murder, and more. The common understanding of *isrāf* in public discourse is its application in the realm of consumption. For example, when someone eats only part of an apple and throws the rest away, they are considered to have committed *isrāf* according to public norms. Similarly, leaving a water tap running

unnecessarily, leading to water wastage, is also seen as *isrāf*. Thus, in public discourse, *isrāf* is equated with wasting or excessive consumption of resources, whereas its Quranic applications carry much broader and distinct meanings that are often overlooked in common usage.

On the other hand, *tabdhīr* is derived from the ancient root *b-dh-r*, meaning "seed" or "agricultural grain." Over time, various metaphorical meanings have been attached to this simple concept, traces of which can still be found in Arabic. In the Quranic era, the term *tabdhīr* was formed from this root, and based on its historical semantic components and its usage in the Quran, it can be understood to mean "squandering and spending wealth without a plan." In public culture, this usage of the root *b-dh-r* has become common, often used alongside *isrāf*. Therefore, it seems appropriate to translate *tabdhīr* as "squandering" to distinguish it from *isrāf* while also acknowledging the semantic components of the root *b-dh-r*.

As observed, the common understanding of *isrāf* in public discourse closely resembles that of *tabdhīr*, and this similarity has historically led to confusion and ambiguity between the two terms. Since both *isrāf* and *tabdhīr* fall within the semantic domain of deviant consumption—referring to undesirable behavior in consumption—and both imply the waste of resources, this has caused people in public culture to use them interchangeably. This is also why, in lexical sources, each term is listed as a synonym of the other. In this research, an effort was made to explain the reasons for the semantic confusion between *isrāf* and *tabdhīr* and to clarify their distinctions using etymological data.

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