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The Semantics of "Despair" (*Ya's*) in the Qur'an With Emphasis on the Application of Semantic Component Analysis along the Axis of Substitution

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Abstract

Semantic analysis of Qur'anic vocabulary, which approaches the text through a modern, systematic methodology, can greatly facilitate the comprehension of Qur'anic verses. Among the words that appear in various contexts in the Qur'an and carry diverse meanings is the term "Despair" and its derivatives. Accordingly, the present study, employing a semantic approach grounded in structuralism, seeks to analyze and explicate the semantic field of despair along the axis of substitution scientifically and systematically. It addresses the key question: 'What is the denotation of the word despair and its usages in the Qur'an when examined through semantic analysis based on the axis of substitution?' The findings indicate the presence of substitutes such as *khawwān* (treachery), *khattār* (grave danger), *āthim* (sinful), *ṣabr* (patience), *jaza'* (impatience), *qanūt* (despair), *fadhū du 'ā' arīd* (one of prolonged supplication), *lā yarjūn* (those who do not hope), and *al-ẓānnīn bi llāh ẓann al-sū'* (those who harbor evil thoughts about God) as substitutes for despair in the Qur'an. The frequency of these terms in the Qur'anic text is, respectively: two, one, two, one hundred and three, two, one, one, nine, and one occurrences. Based on these substitutes, semantic components such as ingratitude, betrayal, inner sinfulness and covenant-breaking, lack of patience, misguidance, attachment to worldly life, rebellion and arrogance, heedlessness, negligence, and evil suspicion of God are evident for the term despair. The shared semantic component among all these instances is "Lack of concern (negligence), heedlessness, and indifference". In Qur'anic usage, this concept manifests as: "Awareness of people's heedlessness and lack of concern toward divine invitation" in relation to the prophets; "Awareness of the negligence of the Aziz of Egypt" in the story of Yūsuf's brothers; "Indifference toward menstruation and lack of expectation of its occurrence" when referring to postmenopausal women; and "Awareness and certainty of God's guidance of all humankind" for believers, appearing in a negative (negated) context.

Keywords: Qur'an, Despair, Semantics, Axis of Substitution, Semantic Components.

1. Statement of the Problem

A deep understanding of words across various texts is essential for accurately identifying the

intended meanings, purposes, and concepts they convey. This necessity becomes even more critical in analyzing religious texts, which are

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fundamentally oriented toward human guidance. Accordingly, employing diverse methods of textual analysis is crucial for identifying the denotation of Qur'anic vocabulary. One of the most effective methods in conceptual analysis of words, particularly Qur'anic terms, is semantics.

Semantics is a technical term referring to the study of meaning (Palmer, 2002, p. 13) or the scientific study of meaning (Safavi, 2012, p. 27). Few scholars have engaged with Qur'anic semantics, largely because of limited attention to semantics within linguistics (Sharifi, 2015, p. 69). Semantics has various types and approaches, including cognitive, structural, and historical semantics. Structural semantics examines semantic relations at the lexical level, associated with morphology, and at the sentence level, related to syntax.

Based on this approach, rooted in Saussure's ideas, the relationships between words in a language reflect the relationships among phenomena in the minds of its users. Through a structural lens, words can be analyzed in terms of syntagmatic (co-occurrence) and paradigmatic (substitutional) relations, leading to a more precise semantic understanding.

This study aims to identify the semantic components of the word "Despair" through the axis of substitution, using structural semantic methods to identify its lexical substitutes. One way to identify substitutes is by examining words that co-occur with the same collocates as despair. Subsequently, the contexts of verses containing these words are compared with those of verses containing despair. Through this comparative method, verses containing substitute terms are aligned with verses sharing similar phrasing and contextual structures related to despair. By identifying the semantic fields of each substitute, the semantic components of despair have become more refined and explicit.

According to available research, no prior study has examined the root *Ya's* in the Qur'an using this specific semantic approach. Thus, this research is an innovative attempt to answer the primary question:

'What is the denotation of the word *Ya's* and its Qur'anic applications when examined through semantics based on the axis of substitution?'

2. Literature Review

Numerous works have been published in the field of structural semantics. The books *An Introduction to Semantics* and *Foundations of Semantics* by Kourosh Safavi explain the basic principles of structural semantics. In recent years, Qur'anic scholars have also produced several works in the field of semantics.

Two prominent works by Toshihiko Izutsu, "Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an" and "God and Man in the Qur'an", are among the most influential studies on Qur'anic semantics and have been widely received. Contemporary Qur'anic scholars have both benefited from Izutsu's methods and content and offered critiques in the form of articles and books.

Following Izutsu, numerous studies employing syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, as well as semantic fields, have been published in reputable academic journals on Qur'anic vocabulary. Examples include:

- "A semantic study of *Rizq* in the Qur'an" (Hadavi et al., 2017);
- "The semantics of *Nafs* with emphasis on syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations" (Zarsazan, 2019);
- "A semantic analysis of *Rijs* in the Qur'an" (Mustafaei et al., 2022);
- "Semantic fields of *Layl* in the Qur'an" (Taheri Dolatabadi et al., 2021);
- "Analysis of the semantic components of *imam* in Qur'an (Yāsīn/12) using syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations" (Fattahizadeh & Amini, 2017).

All these studies achieved systematic and precise understandings of their respective terms. However, no research was found that examines the word *Ya's* through a semantic approach. Therefore, the present study is unprecedented and innovative.

3. Structural Semantics

In linguistic definitions, *Dalālah* (meaning) literally refers to guidance or indication, and technically to studies concerned with meaning. Semantics is divided into lexical meaning and sentence-structure meaning and maintains a close relationship with phonology, morphology, and syntax. Without semantics, these disciplines lack vitality and dynamism (Marzban, 2015, pp. 5-6).

Structuralism is one of the semantic schools developed in the last century to study intra-linguistic meaning. It focuses exclusively on internal linguistic relations and does not address

referential meaning or encyclopedic knowledge, nor the relationship between words and the external world (Lyons, 1987, p. 150). Structural lexical semantics includes three main approaches:

- a) Lexical field theory;
- b) Componential analysis;
- c) Relational semantics (Geeraerts, 2016, p. 131).

Lyons is regarded as a key theorist in this field. He proposed that the meaning of a word can be described in terms of its set of semantic relations with other words. Instead of synonymy and antonymy, he emphasized semantic similarity and opposition, establishing networks of semantic relations (Geeraerts, 2016, pp. 184-185). This approach became known as relational semantics or conceptual relations (Sayyid Khorasani & Fathi, 2019, p. 114).

Ferdinand de Saussure argued that language is an organized system whose elements are interdependent (Baqeri, 1996, p. 147). In structural semantics, both "Word" and "Sentence" function as units of semantic analysis (Safavi, 2000, p. 34). Therefore, examining vocabulary and the semantic relations governing it within sentences is crucial. When words are arranged horizontally according to grammatical rules, a syntagmatic (combinatory) relationship is formed (Baqeri, 1996, pp. 42-43).

In addition to this horizontal axis, there is a vertical axis in which a word can be replaced by another of the same grammatical category within a given context; this is called the paradigmatic or substitutional relationship (Baqeri, 1996, p. 43).

Thus, while words possess inherent meanings in isolation, once they appear within a sentence and a connected chain of words, their meanings may shift due to syntactic roles and contextual influence. Each word contributes collectively to the rhetorical meaning of the sentence. Hence, words must be examined within their lexical and contextual networks (Rafi'i & Jadidi, 2022, p. 64).

4. Lexical Conceptualization of *Ya's* (Despair)

Classical lexical sources define the primary meaning of despair as the "Opposite of hope" (Farāhidī, 1989, v. 7, p. 331; Ṣāhib ibn 'Abbād, 1994, v. 8, p. 420; Ibn Fāris, 1984, v. 1, p. 153; Ibn

Manzūr, 1994, v. 6, p. 259). In analyses of despair, this term has been interpreted as a human psychological state that arises from immersion in material life. This condition leads to a rupture from the spiritual realm and the loss of expectation or anticipation of reaching a goal beyond material causes and worldly inclinations (Muṣṭafawī, 1989, v. 14, pp. 224-225).

Among other expressions used to explain despair in lexical sources is the word "*Qana'a*" (Ibn Manzūr, 1994, v. 6, p. 259; Ṭurayhī, 1996, v. 4, p. 125). Another meaning attributed to despair is knowledge. In other words, despair implicitly carries the meaning of knowledge, because one who despairs knows that a certain matter will not occur (Ibn Fāris, 1984, v. 1, p. 153; Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1992, v. 1, p. 892; Ṭurayhī, 1996, v. 4, p. 125).

Accordingly, from a lexical perspective, despair should be understood as encompassing the meanings of opposition to hope, certainty, or knowledge, and the absence of expectation and anticipation.

5. Despair in the Qur'an: Collocates and Substitutes

After examining the denotation and concept of despair in lexical sources, the study turns to the semantic analysis of each substitute concept for despair. To identify substitutes for despair in the Qur'an, it is first necessary to identify despair's collocates. In the next step, collocates of these collocates are examined; in other words, one must analyze which words co-occur with despair collocates. These secondary collocates are referred to as "Substitutes". Finally, by analyzing the concepts that co-occur with the substitutes of despair, the shared semantic components between them and the word despair are identified.

The term despair appears 13 times in the Qur'an (across 9 surahs and 11 verses). The Qur'anic derivatives of despair include the following:

- Used once in the Qur'an:
Istay'asū, lā tay'asū, faya'ūs, laya'ūs, ya'isna, istay'asa, and ya'ūsan.
- Used twice in the Qur'an:
Yay'as, ya'isa, and ya'isū.

The verses containing derivatives of *Ya's* were examined from the perspective of their collocates. Some of these verses contain collocates that either refer to a specific individual, such as the Aziz of Egypt, for whom no parallel instance exists in the Qur'an to serve as a substitute, or are too general, such as

"Those who believe" and "Those who disbelieve", whose Qur'anic usage does not yield distinctive semantic substitutes for *Ya's*. Additionally, certain collocates of *Ya's*, such as *Maḥīd* (menstruation) and *Rūḥ Allāh* (the Spirit of God), occur only in limited Qur'anic contexts; therefore, substitutes for *Ya's* cannot be derived from them.

Based on this, Table 1 presents Qur'anic

usages of *Ya's* along with those verses for which semantic substitutes exist. Table 1 includes the derivatives of *Ya's*, the verses in which they occur, the collocates of *Ya's*, the frequency of those collocates within the Qur'anic corpus, the substitute word(s), and the frequency of the substitutes in the corpus (excluding their role as collocates or substitutes).

Table 1. Frequencies of Collocates and Substitutes of *Ya's* in the Qur'an

Row	Derivatives of <i>Ya's</i> (Despair)	Related Verse	Co-occurring word	Frequency of co-occurrence in the statistical corpus	Substitute word(s)	Frequency of substitutes in the statistical corpus
1	La ya'ūs	And if We let man taste mercy from Us and then withdraw it from him, indeed he becomes despairing and ungrateful (<i>Hūd/9</i>)	Kafūr (ungrateful)	12 occurrences	-Khawwān (treacherous) -Khattār (greatly treacherous) -Āthim (sinful)	-2 occurrences -1 occurrence -2 occurrences
2	istay'asa	Until, when the messengers despaired and thought that they had been denied, Our help came to them... (<i>Yūsuf/110</i>)	al-Rusul (the messengers)	18 occurrences	Ṣabr (patience) (specifically for the <i>Ulū al-ʿAzm</i> messengers)	103 occurrences
3	ya'ūsan	And when We bestow favor upon man, he turns away and distances himself; but when evil touches him, he becomes despairing (<i>Isrāʾ/83</i>)	Massahu al-sharr (when evil touches him)	4 occurrences	-Jazūʿ (anxious, impatient) -fa dhū duʿāʿ arīd (then he becomes one of prolonged supplication)	- Root j-z-ʿ: 2 occurrences -1 occurrence
4	Yaʿisū	And those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and the meeting with Him—those have despaired of My mercy, and for them is a painful punishment (<i>Ankabūt/23</i>)	liqāʾ ihī / liqāʾ Allāh (meeting with Him/meeting with Allah) Min raḥmatī (My mercy)	<i>Liqāʾ</i> : 24 occurrences 16 paired with Allah or Lord 8 paired with Hereafter or Day Raḥmah (mercy): 114 nominal occurrences	-lā yarjūn (they do not hope) -Qanūt (utter despair)	-3 occurrences -9 occurrences
5	Fa ya'ūs	Man does not tire of supplicating for good, but when evil touches him, he becomes despairing and utterly hopeless (<i>Fuṣṣilat/49</i>)	massahu al-sharr qanūt	massahu al-sharr (evil touches him) – 4 occurrences qanūt (utter despair) – 3 occurrences	-Jazūʿ (anxious, impatient) -fadhū duʿāʿ arīd (one of prolonged supplication)	- Root j-z-ʿ: 2 occurrences -1 occurrence
6	Yaʿisū	O! You who believe, do not take as allies a people upon whom Allah's wrath has fallen; they have despaired of the Hereafter just as the disbelievers have despaired of the companions of the graves (<i>Mumtaḥanah/13</i>)	Ghaḍība Allāhu ʿalayhim (Allah's wrath is upon them)	3 occurrences (1 occurrence: "Allah's wrath is upon him")	al-zānnīn bi Allāhi ḡanna al-sūʿ (those who assume evil thoughts about Allah)	1 occurrence

6. *Ya's* along the Axis of Substitution

The semantic components of the word *Ya's* can

be identified by examining its substitutes, namely, the collocates of the collocates of *Ya's* within the Qur'anic text. This section analyzes these components.

6.1. *Khawwān* (Treachery)

The word *kafūr* (extremely ungrateful) appears as a collocation of *Ya's* in the Qur'an. This word occurs twelve times within the Qur'anic corpus. Of these occurrences, it appears twice as a collocation of *Ya's* and once as a collocation of *khawwān*. Therefore, among the words that fall within the semantic field of *Ya's* along the axis of substitution is *khawwān*.

This word derives from the root (*kh-w-n*) and appears in eleven verses, though the intensive form *khawwān* is used in only two of them. In Qur'anic lexical sources, the root *khawn* denotes "betrayal", standing in contrast to trustworthiness (*Amānah*), and *khawwān* denotes one who betrays excessively (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1992, v. 1, p. 305).

The shared collocation of *khawwān* and *Ya's* with the word *kafūr* is evident in the following verses:

"And if We give man a taste of mercy from Us and then withdraw it from him, indeed he becomes despairing and ungrateful" (Hūd/9).

"Indeed, Allah defends those who believe. Indeed, Allah does not love every treacherous, ungrateful one" (Hajj/38).

Since the collocate of a collocate is considered a substitute, *khawwān* must be regarded as a substitute for *Ya's*. The word *khawwān* occurs twice in the Qur'anic corpus.

In the verse (Hajj/38), where *khawwān* collocates with *kafūr*, the semantic component of ingratitude is inferred. In another verse:

"And do not argue on behalf of those who betray themselves. Indeed, Allah does not love one who is treacherous and sinful" (Nisā/107).

Here, *khawwān* collocates with *athīm* (sinful), yielding the semantic components of betrayal and sin. Given the substitution relationship between *khawwān* and *ya's*, the semantic components of ingratitude, betrayal, and sin may likewise be attributed to *Ya's*.

6.2. *Khattār* (Treacherous Deceiver)

The word *kafūr* appears as a collocate of *Ya's* in the verse:

"And if We give man a taste of mercy from Us and then withdraw it from him, indeed he becomes despairing and ungrateful" (Hūd/9).

The term *kafūr* occurs twelve times in the Qur'anic corpus. Of these occurrences, it appears twice with derivatives of *Ya's* (Hūd/9) and once with the root (*kh-t-r*) in the verse:

"And when waves like canopies cover them, they call upon Allah, sincere to Him in religion; but when He delivers them to land, some of them are moderate. And none rejects Our signs except every treacherous, ungrateful one" (Luqmān/32).

In lexical works and Qur'anic lexicography, the root (*kh-t-r*) denotes "Treachery and deception", and *khattār* is an intensive form meaning "Extremely treacherous" (Farāhīdī, 1989, v. 4, p. 236; Zamakhsharī, 1979, p. 152).

Due to its collocation with *kafūr*, which itself is a collocation of *Ya's*, the word *khattār* functions as a collocation of a collocation of *Ya's*, and therefore qualifies as a substitute for *Ya's*. Considering its usage in Luqmān (Verse 32), its collocation with *kafūr* and denial of divine signs, as well as the lexical meaning of its root indicating treachery and deceit, two semantic components can be established for *khattār*: treacherous covenant-breaking accompanied by deception, and ingratitude.

In light of the substitution relationship between *khattār* and *Ya's*, these two semantic components may also be attributed to *Ya's*.

6.3. *Āthiman* (Sinful)

Kafūr (disbelieving) is one of the collocates of *Ya's* (despair) in the Qur'an and appears 12 times in the statistical corpus (the Qur'anic verses). Of these occurrences, it is paired twice with *Ya's* and once with the word *āthiman* (sinful). Accordingly, among the words that belong to the semantic field of *Ya's* and have a paradigmatic (substitution) relationship with it is the word *āthiman*, which in fact may be considered a "Collocate of a collocate" of *Ya's*.

In lexical and Qur'anic semantic sources, *Ithm* is defined as "Sin", "Wine", and "Anything that contains harm and damage", and "Prevents a person from doing well" (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994, v. 12, p. 5).

The shared collocation of the two words *āthiman* and *Ya's* with the term *kafūr*, based on the verses:

"And if We give man a taste of mercy from Us and then withdraw it from him, indeed he is despairing and ungrateful" (Hūd/9), and "So be patient for the judgment of your Lord, and do not obey among them a sinner or an ingrate"

([Insān/24](#)), may be considered evidence for the substitution of *āthimān* for *Ya's*.

The word *āthim* occurs twice in the statistical corpus (the Qur'anic verses). In the above verse, it is collocated with *kafūr*, in which the semantic components of "Sin" and "Ingratitude" are evident. This word is also used in the verse:

"And if you are on a journey and do not find a scribe, then a pledge may be taken. But if one of you entrusts another, then let the one entrusted fulfill his trust and fear Allah, his Lord. And do not conceal testimony, for whoever conceals it, his heart is sinful, and Allah is Knowing of what you do" ([Baqarah/283](#)), where it is collocated with the heart. This verse continues the discussion of the previous verse concerning debt. It states that if you are traveling and cannot find a scribe, then collateral may be taken in place of writing. After stating this ruling, it adds that if you trust one another, there is no need for collateral, and in such a case, the debtor must fear God, repay the debt on time, and restore people's trust. Another ruling is that testimony must not be concealed; whoever conceals testimony, his heart commits sin and transgression ([Ja'fari, 1997, v. 2, p. 50](#)).

Here, *ithm* is associated with the concept of the heart. Therefore, the notion of "The heart being sinful" can be considered a semantic component of *āthim*, which, due to its substitution relationship with *Ya's*, may also be regarded as one of the semantic components of *Ya's*.

6.4. Šabr (Patience)

The word *al-Rusul* (the messengers) in the verse:

"Until, when the messengers despaired and thought that they had been denied, Our help came to them, and We saved whom We willed; but Our punishment is not averted from the criminal people" ([Yūsuf/110](#)) is collocated with *Ya's*. The term *al-Rusul* appears 18 times in the statistical corpus (the Qur'anic verses). Most occurrences of *al-Rusul* in the Qur'an are collocated with verbs related to the prophetic mission or with temporal adverbs such as "*Min qabl*" (before), none of which have a meaningful relationship with the concept of *Ya's*.

Only in one Qur'anic occurrence is *al-Rusul* collocated with *šabr* (patience):

"So be patient as those of determination among the messengers were patient ..." ([Aḥqāf/35](#)), which may share a conceptual connection with *Ya's*. It should be noted that *šabr* here is not associated with all prophets, but specifically with "*Ulū al-'azm min al-rusul*" (the resolute messengers). Nevertheless, compared with other Qur'anic usages of *al-Rusul*, this instance has a closer semantic relationship with *Ya's* and thus may be considered a "Collocate of a collocation" of *Ya's*, or in other words, its substitute.

The word *šabr* occurs 103 times in the statistical corpus (the Qur'anic verses). Most of its uses are exhortations that sometimes address the general public and sometimes specific individuals. Only in the verse:

"So be patient as those of determination among the messengers were patient ..." ([Aḥqāf/35](#))

Patience is associated with the prophets, which is the focus of this study.

In this verse, the prophets are commanded to be patient. The concept of *šabr* stands in opposition to *Jaza'* (anxiety and restlessness), and in this sense, the command to patience in this verse stands in contrast to the despair of the messengers in verse 110 of Surah *Yūsuf*. Therefore, the semantic component of "Lack of Patience" may be inferred from the paradigmatic and oppositional relationship between *Ya's* and *šabr* in these verses.

6.5. Jazū' (Anxious, Impatient)

Among the collocations of *Ya's* in the Qur'an is the expression *Massahu al-sharr* (when evil touches him). The shared collocation of the two words *Qanaʿ* and *Ya's* with the expression *Massahu al-sharr*, meaning "Human confrontation with suffering, hardship, and affliction", is evident in the verses:

"And when We bestow favor upon man, he turns away and distances himself; but when evil touches him, he is despairing" ([Isrā/83](#)) and "Man does not tire of supplicating for good, but when evil touches him, he is despairing and despondent". ([Fuṣṣilat/49](#))

In this category, the attribution of *Ya's* can be related to "Human nature". Human beings, when confronted with evil (calamity, suffering, harm, or poverty), fall into despair ([Ḥusaynī Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīmī, 1984, v. 7, p. 432](#)).

The expression *Massahu al-sharr* occurs four times in the Qur'an, two of which are in the

above verses where it is collocated with derivatives of *Ya's*. The other two verses are:

"When evil touches him, he is anxious" (Ma'ārij/20) and "And when We bestow favor upon man, he turns away and distances himself; but when evil touches him, he becomes one of extensive supplication" (Fuṣṣilat/51).

In these two verses, *Jazū'an* (excessively anxious) and *Fadhū du'ā'in 'arīḍ* (one of prolonged supplication) are collocated with *Massahu al-sharr*, and thus are considered collocates of the collocate of *Ya's*, or in other words, substitutes for *Ya's*. *Jazū'*, a substitute for *Ya's*, is an intensive form derived from the root *Jaza'*. This root appears elsewhere in the verse:

"... and they will all appear before Allah, and the weak will say to those who were arrogant: "Indeed, we were your followers; so can you avail us anything against the punishment of Allah?" They will say: "If Allah had guided us, we would have guided you. It is all the same for us whether we panic or endure patiently; there is no escape for us" (Ibrāhīm/21), where it is used as *Jazi'nā* (we panic). In this verse, the leaders of disbelief tell their followers that impatience and patience are now the same, and that there is no escape. Here, *ṣabr* (patience) is placed in opposition to *Jaza'* (panic). *Rāghib Isfahānī* explicitly identifies *Jaza'* as the opposite of *ṣabr* and notes that it contradicts endurance and steadfastness (Rāghib Isfahānī, 1992, v. 1, p. 194).

Accordingly, the semantic component of "Lack of patience" is evident in *Jaza'*, and given its substitution relationship with *Ya's*, this component may also be considered among the semantic features of *Ya's*.

6.6. Fadhū Du'ā'in 'Arīḍ (One Given to Extensive Supplication)

As previously noted, among the collocations of *Ya's* in the Qur'an is the expression *Massahu al-sharr*, which appears four times in the Qur'an. Two of these occurrences are in verses containing derivatives of *Ya's*. One of the remaining occurrences is:

"When evil touches him, he is anxious" (Ma'ārij/20), which has already been examined in this study. The other occurrence is:

"And when We bestow favor upon man, he turns away and distances himself; but when evil touches him, he becomes one of extensive supplication" (Fuṣṣilat/51)

In this verse, *fadhū du'ā'in 'arīḍ* is collocated with *massahu al-sharr*. Given the collocation of *Massahu al-sharr* with *Ya's*, this phrase may be regarded as a collocate of the collocate of *Ya's*, or in other words, a substitute for *Ya's*.

The expression *fadhū du'ā'in 'arīḍ* (one of extensive supplication to God) appears only once in the statistical corpus of this study, namely in verse 51 of Surah *Fuṣṣilat*. What is meant by *Du'ā' arīḍ* is a broad and prolonged supplication, which is itself a metaphor for the continuity and insistence of the supplicant in prayer. The noble verse is in a context of reproaching and censuring human beings, pointing out that when God grants them a blessing, they turn away arrogantly, but when He withdraws it, they remember God, turn toward Him, and persistently supplicate (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1997, v. 17, p. 403).

Thus, *Fadhū du'ā'in 'arīḍ* refers to a person's insistence and persistence in supplication. Considering the context of the preceding verses, this request occurs during worldly life, when a change of circumstances is still possible. By contrast, the verse:

"Man does not tire of supplicating for good, but when evil touches him, he is despairing and despondent" (Fuṣṣilat/49) refers to the Hereafter, where, once deprived of good and afflicted by evil, human beings have no opportunity for request, insistence, or entreaty, and thus fall into despair. Likewise, the verse:

"And when We bestow favor upon man, he turns away and distances himself; but when evil touches him, he is despairing" (Isrā/83), considering the preceding verse, refers to the blessing of the Qur'an, which is healing and mercy for believers, but those who turn away from it fall into despair when evil touches them.

Accordingly, since the context of the verse containing *Fadhū du'ā'in 'arīḍ* refers neither to the Hereafter nor specifically to the blessing of the Qur'an, it appears that the substitution of this expression for *Ya's* cannot provide a shared semantic component that would significantly affect the semantic analysis of *Ya's*.

6.7. Qanūṭ (Despondency)

Among the collocations of *Ya's* in the Qur'an is "Divine mercy" as seen in the verse:

"And those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and the meeting with Him, those have despaired of My mercy, and for them is a

painful punishment" ([Ankabūt/23](#)).

The word *Rahmah* (mercy) appears 114 times in the statistical corpus (the Qur'anic verses). Most occurrences of *Rahmah* are general and presented in declarative statements. Among these, the collocation of "Divine mercy" with the root *Qanaʿ* reveals a structure relatively similar to that of *Ya's* in verse 23 of Surah *Ankabūt*.

The shared collocation of the two words *Qanaʿ* and *Ya's* with the expression *Rahmat Allāh*, based on the verses:

"Those have despaired of My mercy" ([Ankabūt/23](#)), "And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord except those who are astray?" ([Hijr/56](#)), and "Say: O! My servants, who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah ..." Zumar/53), indicates that *Qanūʿ* is a collocation of the collocation of *Ya's*, or in other words, a substitute for *Ya's*.

Qanūʿ appears once in nominal form and twice in verbal form in the statistical corpus. Its nominal usage in the verse:

"... And when evil touches him, he is despairing and despondent" ([Fuṣṣilat/49](#)) is collocated with *Ya's*, revealing the close conceptual relationship between these two words. Based on the two verbal uses of *Qanaʿ* in verses 56 of Surah *Hijr* and 53 of Surah *Zumar*, its collocation with *Isrāf 'alā anfusihi* (excess against oneself, arising from sin) and with *dāllūn* (the misguided) is evident. From these collocates, the semantic components of "Sin" and "Misguidance" may be derived.

Given the substitution of *Ya's* with the root *Qanaʿ*, these semantic components may also be attributed to *Ya's*.

6.8. *Lā Yarjūn* (they do not hope)

"Meeting with God" (*liqā' al-ilāhī*) is among the collocations of "Despair" (*Ya's*) in the Qur'an. The expression "Meeting with God" occurs 24 times in the Qur'an; of these, 16 instances are attributed to "Allah" or "Lord", and 8 instances are related to meeting in the "Hereafter" and the "Day". The phrase "Disbelief in the signs of Allah and in the meeting with Him" in the verse:

"And those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and in the meeting with Him, they have despaired of My mercy, and for them is a painful punishment" ([Ankabūt/23](#)) is associated with "Despair".

Another collocation of "Meeting with God"

that is conceptually related to "Despair" is "Lack of hope", expressed with the verb *Lā yarjūn* (they do not hope) in the verse:

"Indeed, those who do not hope for meeting Us and are satisfied with the life of this world and feel secure in it ..." ([Yūnus/7](#)).

The expressions "Indeed, those who do not hope ..." and "Those who disbelieve ..." in the verses ([Ankabūt/23](#)) and ([Yūnus/7](#)) both occur alongside "Meeting with Allah". Therefore, "Disbelief" (*kufr*) and "Lack of hope" (*ʿAdam rajāʿ*) may be regarded as substitutes for one another; On the other hand, "Despair" in the above verse is also associated with "Disbelief". Thus, "Despair" may likewise be interpreted as a substitute for "Lack of hope", since a collocation of a substitute functions as a substitute.

By studying the verses containing the phrase "Meeting with Allah" as a collocate of the substitute of the word "Despair", a clearer understanding can be gained of the characteristics of those who do not hope for meeting God. The collocates of "They do not hope for meeting Us", which are also considered results of having no hope in meeting God, include:

- They are satisfied with worldly life.
- They feel secure in it.
- They are heedless of Our signs.
- They wander blindly in their transgression.
- They act arrogantly within themselves.

Thus, those who lack hope are content with worldly life and rely on it; they are people of transgression and arrogance. Accordingly, the components of "Attachment to the World" and "Rebellion and Arrogance" may have a close relationship with the concept of "Despair", since "Lack of hope" and "Despair" stand in a substitutive relationship.

6.9. *al-Zānnīn billāhi ẓanna al-sū'* (those who think evil thoughts about God)

Among the collocations of "Despair" in the Qur'an is the phrase "Allah's wrath is upon them". This phrase occurs three times in the Qur'an, and once in the form "Allah's wrath is upon him". Among these instances, two refer to characteristics of disbelievers or polytheists who incurred divine wrath.

The first verse: "O! You who believe, do not take as allies a people with whom Allah is angry; they have despaired of the Hereafter just as the disbelievers have despaired of those in

the graves" (Momtāḥanah/13).

Here, the feature associated with divine wrath is "Despair".

The second verse: "... And that He may punish the hypocrite men and women and the polytheist men and women, those who think evil thoughts about Allah, upon them is a turn of evil fortune; Allah is angry with them, has cursed them, and prepared for them Hell, an evil destination" (Fath/6).

Here, the feature associated with divine wrath is "Having evil suspicion toward God", expressed as "Those who think evil thoughts about Allah".

Thus, the collocation of "Despair", namely "Those who think evil thoughts about Allah", is considered a substitute for this word, whose semantic component is "Harboring evil suspicion toward God".

7. Semantic Analysis of "Despair" Based on Substitutive Relations

The substitutes for "Despair" discussed in previous sections can be divided into several semantic categories, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Ya's* and its Substitutes

With <i>kafūr</i> (ungrateful)	<i>khawwān</i>	ingratitude, treachery, sin
	<i>khaṭṭār</i>	covenant-breaking with deceit, ingratitude
	<i>āṭhim</i>	sin of the heart (in contrast to impatience)
With messengers	<i>ṣabr</i>	lack of patience
With touch of harm	<i>jaza'</i>	lack of patience
With meeting with Allah	<i>qanūṭ</i>	sin, misguidance attachment to the world,
	<i>lā yarjūn</i>	transgression, arrogance
With divine wrath	<i>al-zānnīn bi- llāhi ḡanna al-sū'</i>	Harboring evil suspicion toward God

From these four categories, the following semantic components emerge: ingratitude, treachery, sin, inner sin, deceitful covenant-breaking, lack of patience (impatience), misguidance, attachment to the world, transgression, arrogance, and harboring evil suspicion toward God.

To identify a shared semantic component among these, examining the context of the relevant verses is necessary.

- Category 1 context: Disbelievers betray the trusts granted to them and neglect their preservation. This leads to ingratitude, deceit, excessive scheming, weakness, and sin, culminating in despair. The underlying factors are negligence and a lack of care regarding the blessings granted to them.

- Category 2 context: When humans are granted blessings, they turn away. This turning away involves neglect and a lack of attention to divine blessings. Thus, impatience and restlessness associated with despair also include a prior element of heedlessness and negligence.

- Category 3 context: "Lack of hope" (*ʿAdam rajā'*) in lexicons is defined as lack of concern, negligence, indifference, and carelessness. Its association with "Meeting with Allah" reflects indifference toward the Hereafter, leading to satisfaction with worldly life and heedlessness of divine signs.

- Category 4 contexts: Those who incur divine wrath are characterized by harboring evil suspicion toward God, which also stems from neglect and inattention to divine signs and blessings.

From the sum of the four categories mentioned above, the following semantic components were derived: ingratitude, betrayal, sin, and heartfelt (inner) sin, treachery accompanied by deceit, lack of patience, namely anxiety and restlessness, misguidance, attachment to the world, rebellion and arrogance, and negative suspicion toward God.

To identify the common semantic component among the above elements, it is necessary to examine the context of the relevant verses, which were previously considered for each substitutive term.

In the context of the verses of the first category, the disbelievers, through betraying the trusts entrusted to them and neglecting their preservation, fall into ingratitude, deception, and excessive scheming, the result of which is weakness and incapacity. The commission of sin leads to the emergence of a state of *Ya's* (despair), the outcome of which is hopelessness. On this basis, there is a fundamental component shared by sin, ingratitude, betrayal, and covenant-breaking, to which all of these return, namely, negligence and indifference on the part of the disbeliever toward the blessings granted to him.

The context of the verses of the second category refers to human aversion when

blessings are bestowed. When a person is granted a blessing, he turns away and becomes indifferent. This aversion and turning away inherently contain the component of negligence and disregard for divine blessings. Therefore, human anxiety, restlessness, or impatience at the time of despair in the verses of the first category also contain the prior component, namely indifference, heedlessness, and negligence. It should be noted that the call for patience addressed to the resolute messengers (ulū al-ʿazm) does not arise from any neglect of divine blessings on their part; rather, this call serves to strengthen the path upon which the messengers tread and to increase their commitment to their mission.

In the verses of the third category, *Qanūt* (despair) and lack of hope are regarded as substitutes for *Ya's*. In lexical sources, lack of hope is defined as "Lack of concern for a matter, negligence, inattention, indifference, carelessness, and recklessness" (Farāhīdī, 1989, v. 6, p. 176; Ṣāhib ibn ʿAbbād, 1994, v. 7, p. 174; Ibn Manẓūr, 1994, v. 14, p. 309; Fayyūmī, 1994, v. 2, p. 221; Muṣṭafawī, 1989, p. 335). In light of these meanings, the co-occurrence of this term with the meeting with God in the verses of this category can be understood as indicating indifference, lack of concern, and lack of importance that a person shows toward meeting God in the Hereafter. According to the context of these verses, such a person becomes content with worldly life and heedless of divine signs. Clearly, this heedlessness is itself a form of carelessness and negligence.

The context of the verses of the fourth category refers to those who have incurred divine wrath. A defining characteristic of these individuals is negative suspicion toward God. Such negative suspicion toward God also originates from negligence and inattention to divine effects and blessings.

Accordingly, the most fundamental semantic component of *Ya's*, which it shares with its substitute of lack of hope, can be identified as the concept of "Lack of concern, negligence, inattention, and heedlessness". This concept is evident across all the aforementioned semantic categories, in light of the explanations provided.

Considering the semantic components obtained, *Ya's* can be analyzed as follows:

Ya's is a lack of concern, negligence, and heedlessness toward a particular matter, which,

for disbelievers and heedless individuals, leads to consequences such as intense sorrow and restlessness, despair of God's mercy, deep immersion in worldly life, denial of the Hereafter, negative suspicion toward God, and the like.

In cases where lexicographers have defined *Ya's* as "Knowledge of hopelessness", *Ya's* may be understood as knowledge of negligence and failure to carry out a specific matter, the result of which is hopelessness, intense sorrow, and similar states. Likewise, instances in which lexical sources have defined *Ya's* as "Having no expectation or anticipation" bear a close semantic relationship to indifference and heedlessness. Lack of concern for a particular matter entails inattention, carelessness, and the expectation that it will not occur.

8. Examining the Qur'anic Uses of *Ya's* Based on Substitutive Relationships

The root *Ya's*, with all of its derivatives, is used thirteen times in eleven verses of the Noble Qur'an. Interpreting the verses that contain the word *Ya's* in light of the semantic analysis derived from its substitutive relationships can yield more precise results and provide stronger interpretive possibilities with respect to the relevant verses.

8.1. The Disbelievers Becoming Indifferent

"Despair" (*Ya's*) appears in verbal form (*Ya'isa*) in the verse: "... Today those who disbelieve have despaired of your religion ..." (Mā'idah/3).

Together with the phrase "Today I have perfected your religion for you," it raises the issue of the guardianship (*Wilāyah*) of Imam ʿAlī (AS) (Furāt Kūfī, 1990, v. 1, p. 117; Tūsī, ۱۰۱۰, v. 3, p. 435; Abū al-Futūḥ Rāzī, 1987, v. 6, p. 233). What all Shi'i exegetes have recorded in their books, and what numerous narrations through well-known Sunni and Shi'i chains confirm, and which fully accords with the content of the verse, is that this refers to the Day of *Ghadīr Khumm*, the day on which the Prophet of Islam formally appointed ʿAlī as his successor. That day, the religion of Islam reached its final perfection, and the disbelievers fell into despair (Makarem Shirazi, 2003, v. 1, p. 491).

Thus, it can be said that the perfection of religion through *Wilāyah* confirms, under this part of the verse, the meaning of the disbelievers

becoming indifferent and no longer concerned with obstructing the matter of religion, a meaning that also implicitly includes hopelessness.

In the verse: "Those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and in meeting Him — they have despaired of My mercy ..." (*Ankabūt/23*).

"Despair" is likewise attributed to disbelievers. Clearly, the disbelievers' lack of concern and inattention toward God's signs and the meeting with Him result in nothing but despair of God's mercy and abundant grief for them.

8.2. Heedlessness of the Hereafter and of the Dead in the Graves

"Despair" is used twice in: "O! You who believe, do not befriend a people with whom Allah is angry; they have despaired of the Hereafter just as the disbelievers have despaired of those in the graves" (*Mumtaḥanah/13*).

The first instance refers to people under God's wrath (the Jews) (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1997, v. 19, p. 243*), and the second is used in relation to disbelievers. Considering the meanings derived from the substitutive relations of "Despair" in the Qur'an, two possibilities may be considered in understanding this verse:

1. Believers are told: Do not befriend the Jews, who show no concern for the Hereafter and are heedless of it, just as disbelievers are heedless and indifferent toward their dead and, according to exegetes, do not believe their dead possess existence or life.

2. Another possibility is that "Disbelievers" here carries the general meaning of "Concealers." In that case, the final part of the verse indicates that just as those who cover (bury) the dead are heedless of those in the graves and show no attention or concern toward them.

8.3. Lack of Expectation and Indifference Regarding Menstruation

"Despair" appears in: "As for those of your women who have despaired of menstruation, if you are in doubt, their waiting period is three months ..." (*Talāq/4*).

Here, "They have despaired of menstruation" may also be interpreted as the lack of concern of this group of women regarding menstruation. Accordingly, a menopausal woman (*Yā'isah*), contrary to the common meaning "One who has lost hope of menstruating or youth", refers to a woman who

is indifferent toward the matter of menstruation and has no concern about it.

This concept has a close semantic relation to "Having no expectation" and "knowledge". As previously mentioned in the semantic analysis of *Ya's*, these two meanings have been used in combination with the concept of "Lack of concern and inattention". Thus, a menopausal woman knows that she no longer concerns herself with menstruation or does not expect it, which is very close to the idea of indifference.

Some exegetes have also interpreted despair of menstruation as the cessation of menses for any reason, menopause or other causes, which is the same as lack of concern with menstruation (*Faḍlullāh, 1999, v. 22, p. 294; Samarqandī, 1996, v. 3, p. 462; Ibn Juzay, 1996, v. 2, p. 386*).

8.4. Heedlessness of Deliverance and Guidance

The root appears in the verb form in: "... O! My sons, go and search for Yūsuf and his brother, and do not despair of the relief of Allah; indeed, none despairs of Allah's relief except the disbelieving people" (*Yūsuf/87*).

The word *Rūḥ* (with fatha on *rā'* and sukūn on *wāw*) means "Breath" or "Pleasant breath", and wherever it is used, it metaphorically indicates relief. The reason for this metaphor is that severe hardship and blocked paths of salvation are imagined as suffocation, while deliverance is seen as breathing freely (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1997, v. 11, p. 234*).

If the meaning of *Ya's* based on substitutive semantics is applied here, "Despair of Allah's relief" can mean indifference and lack of concern regarding the deliverance, well-being, and openings that God has provided for humanity, even in outwardly difficult conditions. If a person has no concern in this regard, they fall into grief, severe restlessness, hopelessness, and negative suspicion toward God, which ultimately leads to disbelief.

Another occurrence:

"... Have those who believe not despaired (not known) that had Allah willed, He would have guided all people?" (*Ra'd/31*).

Considering the semantic analysis, this may mean: Do they not recognize that if God willed, He would have guided all people? Referring to forced guidance, which the verse critiques. Exegetes have interpreted "Despair" here (in negative form) as "Knowledge," which is

semantically related to attention and concern (Ibn Qutaybah, 1991, v. 1, p. 195; Farrā', 1980, v. 2, p. 63; Samarqandī, 1996, v. 2, p. 227; Tha'labī, 2002, v. 5, p. 293).

8.5. Inattention to Divine Blessings

"Despairing" (*Ya'ūs*) appears in: "... Then he is despairing and ungrateful" (Hūd/9).

It occurs alongside the removal of divine mercy and the embrace of disbelief. The disbeliever, described as despairing, has shown no concern for divine mercy; the result is hopelessness, grief, severe restlessness, negative suspicion toward God, and similar effects.

Likewise, in (Isrā'/83) and (Fuṣṣilat/49), when hardship afflicts humans, despair arises because humans show no proper concern for the many blessings God has granted them and cannot adequately give thanks. Thus, when misfortune strikes, they experience the consequences of this inattention as suffering, sorrow, restlessness, and hopelessness.

8.6. No Expectation from the Governor of Egypt

The form *Istay'asa* appears in: "When they despaired of him, they withdrew to confer privately..." (Yūsuf/80).

Yūsuf's brothers, when they despaired of rescuing Benjamin, went aside and spoke privately about returning to Canaan. Here, despair is not attributed to disbelievers, humanity in general, or women, but specifically to Yūsuf's brothers.

The *Istif'āl* form sometimes denotes seeking, and sometimes reckoning or coming to know. Here, despair from the governor of Egypt was reckoned or concluded, meaning they realized the governor had no concern for Benjamin's release. As a result, they no longer expected his help.

8.7. Knowledge of People's Heedlessness

Istay'asa also appears in: "Until, when the messengers despaired and thought they had been denied, our help came to them..." (Yūsuf/110).

The messengers, in calling people to the truth, came to know of their lack of concern. Thus, the verse may mean that the prophets realized people's indifference toward their call (or that they no longer expected people to

accept the truth). The verse then mentions God's help and the punishment of criminals.

As observed in all Qur'anic usages, this word has a close semantic relationship with the general concept of lack of concern and inattention toward a specific matter, while the well-known meaning of hopelessness can be considered one of the results of this broader concept in certain contexts.

9. Conclusion

The semantic components of *Ya's*, derived through substitutive relations (i.e., the collocates of it collocates), include ingratitude, treachery, inner sin, deceitful covenant-breaking, lack of patience, misguidance, attachment to the world, transgression, arrogance, and negative suspicion toward God.

Since the core element in sin, ingratitude, treachery, and covenant-breaking is negligence and inattention toward divine blessings, and since impatience, worldliness, transgression, arrogance, and negative suspicion toward God likewise stem from negligence toward divine blessings and human purpose, the primary semantic component of *Ya's*, shared with "Lack of hope," is: "Lack of concern, negligence, heedlessness, and indifference."

This concept appears in all Qur'anic verses containing *Ya's*. Depending on context, it manifests as:

- Indifference to menstruation (menopausal women),
- Knowledge of the governor's lack of concern (Yūsuf's brothers),
- Awareness of God's universal guidance (believers),
- Recognition of people's heedlessness (prophets).

Thus, hopelessness, impatience, negative suspicion toward God, and knowledge of non-expectation can be understood as consequences of this overarching concept.

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