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## Determining the Intended Meaning of Words in a Religious Text: An Intertextuality-Oriented Approach

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### Abstract

The aim of the present study was to show how intertextuality could be a viable approach to determine the intended meaning of words in religious texts such as the Holy Quran. In order to do just this, the researcher selected two Quranic words to be the data of the study. These were *al-gibaal* (Arabic: الجبال) and *al-rawasi* (Arabic: الرواسي)<sup>1</sup>. As for the machinery, a three-level analysis was attempted. At the first level, the denotational and connotational meanings of the two lemmas (dictionary entries) as illustrated in some major Arabic dictionaries are provided. At the second, the meanings of these words were sought in the interpretations of some major Muslim expositors. Finally, some attempts were made to provide alternative explanations by bringing out the local and global intuitions that the words invoke in the Quranic text as a coherent whole. The analysis of data revealed that *al-gibaal* and *al-rawasi* are both not part of the Earth; *al-gibaal* is different form *al-rawasi* in that whereas *al-rawasi* is the main part of a mountain digging deep in the earth, *al-gibaal* is the outside part; *al-gibaal* serve a different function as compared with that of *al-rawasi*; and finally, unlike *al-rawasi*, there are three kinds of *al-gibaal*.

**Key words:** Intertextuality; Synonyms; Near synonyms; The Holy Qur'an

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### INTRODUCTION

The meaning of words is, on the whole, a central aspect of language because many other linguistic aspects (e.g. syntactic, pragmatic, etc.) are strongly tied to it. Wierzbicka (1996) states that to investigate language without taking the meaning into consideration is like studying road signs from the point of view of their physical properties. Indeed, in order to determine the actual meanings of words involved in a text, the common practice seems to look them up in dictionaries. Consequently, many linguists in general and lexicographers in particular have profoundly worked on dictionaries to make them show the meanings wanted free of both text and context.

Lexicography, a rather modern linguistic branch specialized in compiling dictionaries, has occupied a salient position among other branches of linguistics according to its commonplace applications. For example, Mouristen (2010) states that dictionaries are largely the legitimate resource and (possibly the final) resort that provide us with the meaning of words. He adds that judges, for example, do not prefer depending on context or text to determine the meaning of words concerned with their trials to pass their judgments. That is probably because they frequently encounter several meaning-

<sup>1</sup> Whereas the word *al-gibaal* has a singular form (*gabal*) and a plural form (*gibaal*), the word *al-rawasi* is plural in Arabic and does not have a singular form.

based obstacles in which contextual cues and legislative definitions do not assert the intended meanings varied by lexis. Accordingly, judges prefer consulting dictionaries which, they believe, are the resources most dependable for determining word meanings (for details, see Mouristen, 2010), a state of affairs that our current research endeavor tries to challenge.

Apart from dictionaries, current approaches in lexical semantics that deal with word meaning have not yet solved the problem of how to find out word meanings and how to remove ambiguity which causes several problems to language users. Recently, intertextuality has come to the fore as a viable alternative. By couching word meaning within this theoretical framework, we hope to highlight a technique which is all text-bound in order to find out the meaning of words in different texts.

As the central theoretical concern of a study like this is to lay down the basic premises of the most appropriate approach to deal with synonymy as a semantic relation, we review in the next section (1.1) the literature on intertextuality as a viable approach on how to establish word meaning. In (1.2), we survey some of the major claims about synonymy that are traditionally thought to be relevant in determining word meanings. We try in (1.3) to put forward an alternative interpretation that could be substantiated from a Quranic perspective, and try to construct an alternative model that complements the linguistic framework. We take, as a starting point, the current linguistic conception of 'synonymy', but then depart from it by focusing on religious considerations that we believe are central to what synonymy is, how synonymy should be viewed, and how it helps to establish textual networks in a religious text such as the Quran. In section 3, we discuss our findings on how word meaning is established for the two dictionary entries in a religious text such as the Qu'ran. In section 4, we conclude with a summary of the main findings of this research endeavor.

## 1. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 1.1 Intertextuality

According to Allen (2000:15), the term intertextuality was first coined by Julia Kristeva who introduced the work of the Russian literary theorist M. Bakhtin to the French speaking world in the 1960s. Kristeva (1980: 66) defines intertextuality as "any text that is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text that is the absorption and transformation of another". According to her, the necessary elements which lead to getting an accurate interpretation of a text should be involved inside the text itself. Therefore, society and history are external to textuality.

Waijman (2010) defines intertextuality as a literary approach focusing on the relations between texts. Because intertextuality supports the fact that all texts express their

meaning by making a network relation to other texts, Allen (2000) claims that in order to get the interpretation of a text correctly, the reader has to follow a network of textual relations. Consequently, meaning "becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations (Allen 2000:1).

Claiming that the text itself is the mere source for determining the meanings of words involved, Al-Jarrah (2011) argues that practical reasoning (Arabic: الاستنباط) which bridges the linguistic and social aspects of communication could prove a dynamic approach to figure out the intended meaning of words in a text. According to Al-Jarrah (2011), this inference-based approach could be an effective way of getting the intended meaning of a religious text such as the Quran correctly. Hence, 'cut off' texts (spoken or written) are never detailed enough to convey what is really intended. Unsaid (or unstated) information constitutes a major part of the intentions, goals, beliefs, etc. of the interactants in the discourse. Al-Jarrah (2013) adds that "what matters is not only what an expression means, but more importantly, what a speaker intends to convey by means of a message in some social context." Unlike possibly all previous theoretical frameworks, Al-Jarrah (2011, 2013) claims that even the social and historical information, that is often considered external to the text, can be obtained from the religious text itself provided that the network of textual relations is webbed successfully. To this end, the pole between the presupposing information (the elements being interpreted) and the pole of the presupposed (the required information) should be linked properly.

In order to test the viability of this psycholinguistic theoretical construct, Al-Jarrah (2013) puts the two lemmas "sanah and °am in the following Quranic verse to test:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا  
(14) حَمْسِينَ عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ الْعَنكَبُوتِ

*And indeed We sent Noah to his people, and he stayed among (in) them a thousand years (Arabic: sanah) less fifty years (Arabic: °am)*

Upon wondering why the word *sanah* is replaced by °am in the same Quranic verse, Al-Jarrah's main thrust of argument is that "the Holy Quran never makes the claim that Noah lived to be 950 years old" as almost all Muslims theologians (and of course ordinary people) have claimed. To illustrate, he argues that the switch between *sanah* and °am in this verse is definitely intentional in "that the speaker intends to create 'some' contextual effect on the addressees and ultimately achieve some goal. Therefore, Al-Jarrah refutes altogether the common practice of calculating Noah's age as follows:

$$1000 \text{ sanah} - 50 \text{ °am} = 950$$

simply because “the two sides of the equation are different: 1000 *sanah* less 50 °*ām*”. He further asserts:

In mathematical terms, we say that X can be subtracted from Y only if the value of each variable is already known (For, apples cannot be subtracted from oranges and vice versa).

His practical ‘reasonings’(or train of thought - so to speak) about the two lemmas (*sanah* and °*ām*) are tested by touring the text to trace the relations between all the occurrences of the two words in the Holy Quran, where the investigation is not only concerned with the linguistic units themselves, but also with the interrelationships between language and society.

## 1.2 Synonymy

Although some researchers (e.g. Halliday and Hassan, 1976) view synonymy as one of the basic semantic relations by which a discourse can be interwoven, and claim that synonymy implies that two or more lexical items have the same meaning, others (e.g. Susur, 2010; Soare, 2011) believe that synonyms do not necessarily express the same concept and, thus, are not always homogeneous in terms of meaning. Lyons (1995) sets three conditions that determine what is called “absolute synonymy”. These include that

- all their meanings are identical,
- they are synonymous in all contexts, and
- they are semantically equivalent in all dimensions of meaning, both descriptive and non-descriptive.

Cruse (1986), however, is skeptical about absolute synonyms (words that can occur in all of the same contexts, but no others), writing “There is no obvious motivation for the existence of absolute synonyms in a language, and one would expect either that one of the items would fall into obsolescence, or that a difference in semantic function would develop” (Cruse, 1986, p.270). Baxter (2009, p.100) claims that “The greater the overlap in the range of meaning of two words, the more likely it is that they may be used synonymously”. In Lyons’ (1995) terms, words whose meaning overlap are ‘near synonymous’ in the sense that they “are more or less similar, but not identical, in meaning”. According to him, near synonymy cannot be used interchangeably because they do not have the same meaning or some aspect of it. Such kind of synonymy gains considerable plausibility among linguists as it largely depicts the actual linguistic relation found between lexical items.

### 1.3.1 Perspectives on Word Meaning

In their attempts to grasp the meaning of words, phrases, utterances, and sentences, semanticists often distinguish between two types of relations: *sense relations* and *reference relations*. Whereas the former deals with the type of relationship that exists between the linguistic elements themselves (i.e., intralinguistic relations), the latter deals with the relationship between the linguistic elements (i.e., words, idioms, phrases, sentences, etc.)

on the one hand, and the non-linguistic elements (i.e., external word of experience) on the other (Palmer, 1981, pp.29-32).

Bloomfield’s (1933) awareness of the impracticality of incorporating reference relations into his linguistic model simply because they include the sum of human knowledge, made him exclude semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic considerations altogether from the realm of linguistics, focusing mainly on those aspects of language that can be dealt with in a scientific way. In other words, Bloomfield’s argument hinges on the assumption that precise definition of meaning can be sought “when this meaning has to do with some matters of which we possess scientific definition” (ibid: 139). Yet, according to him, abstract words such as *love* and *hate* are excluded from the category which can be scientifically described because “we should have to have a scientifically accurate knowledge of everything in the speaker’s world” (ibid: 139).

The futility of seeking a scientifically accurate definition of each form of a language led Chomsky (1965) to focus on competence rather than performance in formulating the framework of his linguistic theory. His often-quoted statement “Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance” (Chomsky, 1965, p.3) makes it clear that such theory can be based upon anything but context. Chomsky therefore argues in favor of a linguistic theory whose scope does not exceed the limits of the linguistic text where nonlinguistic features are always deferred. To him, any linguistic theory of performance or variation –if there were any– must be built upon a well-established, boundary-defined theory of competence. It should be borne in mind that Chomsky’s notion of ‘a theory of performance’ incorporates the context at the discourse level. In other words, it involves all those discourse entities that are “contextually evoked” but none of those that are “situationally evoked” (Prince, 1981b, p.236). Elements such as the age of the speaker, the relationship between speaker and listener, their social class(es) can by no means be part of that linguistic endeavor.

All these proposals have one thing in common: incorporating into the linguistic theory “the maximally decontextualized sentences” (Lyons, 1977, p.590). However, proponents of the belief that the context should be incorporated into the study of language have shown that any theory of “context of situation” must have two versions: a *weak form* and a *strong form*. At the weak level, the context –linguistic or nonlinguistic– contributes to the overall meaning of the message being communicated; hence the linear order of the linguistic

items fails most of the time to convey the message independent of all the non-linguistic features that are present at the time of speaking. “*Deictics*” is just one example that all languages make use of in a way or another. Sentences like “*Bring that one, I want this*” are ambiguous unless they are contextualized. In Arabic it is not an unusual thing for a father to use the lexical item *boy* to refer to his 50-year-old son. When the father says, for example, “*Bring that chair, you boy*” it can by no means be understood that *boy* here refers to a grown-up man who is 50 years old or so unless it is contextualized. Whatever attempts are made to exclude this part of meaning will be doomed to failure, for the scientific account of language or the abstractness of utterances can be anywhere but the layman’s language.

On the other end of the scale, the stronger form of the theory accounts for meaning not just as partially inferred from the context, but assumes that the context can totally account for the meaning the speaker wants to communicate to his audience. In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Malownisky (1923), due to his failure to translate into English some of the texts from the language he was studying, noticed that languages categorize meaning differently, and that such categorization is almost futile once it is decontextualised. In addition, he noticed that some words of the language do have solely social function; those words, which he termed ‘phatic communion’<sup>2</sup> are expressions of greetings, family questions and the like. To him, expressions like these are meaningless once decontextualised, for they serve social functions.

Firth (1935), influenced by the ideas of Malinowski (1923), went on considering the context as part of the linguist’s devices not very much different from tense, aspect, gender, number, etc. More importantly, according to Firth, context does not only comprise the setting (time and place) in which the message is communicated, but it also includes the verbal action, the nonverbal action, the participants and objects involved, and the result of the verbal action. To put it differently, the linguistic items (i.e., words, phrases, sentences), the nonlinguistic features (i.e., facial expressions, body language, mood of the speaker), the speaker and hearer(s), and the effect or “response it calls forth in the hearer”- to use Bloomfield’s words- do all count as part of the message the speaker wants to communicate to her/his audience. Once one of these factors changes, the overall meaning will inevitably change accordingly. To the proponents of the Discourse Representation Theory, the meaning of the discourse “isn’t simply the conjunction of the first-order representations of its individual sentences” (Blackburn & Bos, 2005, p.2)

One fascinating idea in this approach is the fact that specialists need not talk about proposition or core

meaning, but a state of affairs in which context – in its broadest sense- can become a legitimate field of linguistic investigations. When conducting his research, Labov (1966; 1972) found out that the “massive free variation” in the speech of New Yorkers is largely determined by context. This free variation, according to Labov, cannot be accounted for in light of some current linguistic theories that give context (including socioeconomic factors, of course) only a marginal role. An “enlargement” of the framework of that linguistic theory to include these factors has become an urgent need. He writes:

*The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms: these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage.* (Labov, 1972, pp.120–121)

Hymes’ communicative competence (1972), and Gumperz’s contextualization clues (1979) are just no more than some ways of achieving this goal, and the restrictions that de Saussure (1916[1959]), and Bloomfield (1933) put forward for almost total exclusion of context are no longer convincing.

In this vein, Baxter (2009, p.89), for instance, states: ... , the primary meaning contained in the pages of the Word of God is found in what the writers say in the sentences themselves, rather than in the words that are the building blocks of those sentences. This is not to say that words do not have meaning, but that it is only when words are examined within the sentences of the biblical text that their meaning can be discerned. For that reason God has given us literary works rather than a dictionary in which his message has been communicated to us. Recognition of the importance of context for determining word meaning has been one of the positive results of the work of modern linguistics.

What this basically means is that Baxter tries to shed light on the importance of context in Biblical interpretations.

### 1.3.2 An Alternative Approach

Unlike possibly all these theoretical models of analysis, our theoretical standpoint that we will try to advance here, however, is like this: the division between sense relations and reference relations is not needed in the interpretation of a religious text such as the Qu’ran. This is probably so because, following Al-Jarrah (2011, 2013), intralinguistic relations (like interlinguistic relations) can also be obtained from the religious text itself provided that the presupposing information and the presupposed are pulled together maximally effectively. The interesting inquiry that should be settled in advance is therefore twofold:

- How much contextual information can be brought into the religious text?
- How much contextual information can be derived from the religious text?

<sup>2</sup> Leech (1974: 62-4) uses ‘phatic function’ instead.

The theoretical premise we undertake here is that only contextual information which the text itself motivates can be relevant in determining word meaning in a religious text such as the Quran. This theoretical stand is an inevitable ingredient of the belief that the religious text is coherent-whole and self-contained. What this basically means is that word meanings in the religious text such as the Quran are never dependent on external knowledge which the words of “God” do not provide evidence for. It is an article of faith that word meaning can only be discerned from the verses of the religious text itself. In other words, we depart from all previous models of analysis as we claim that contextual information can be ‘imported’ from the religious text, but should never be ‘exported’ into it.

A point worthy of mention here is that our current model then refutes altogether some common practices by religious expositors. First, we no longer need what Muslim expositors call “occasions of revelation” to get the intended message correctly. The reason is that for the word of God to be universal, it has to surpass the limits of time and space of its first revelation. What this basically means is that while we agree with Kristeva (1980) that texts are not finished, consumable products as they encourage readers to keep coming up with their own interpretations, we refute altogether her claim that they are connected to on-going cultural and social processes. On the contrary, we believe that religious texts, in particular, should embody stable meanings that people’s non-stop searches should target. This is probably so because Kristeva (1980) herself acknowledges that “we do not create meanings of texts from our own minds, but rather compile them from pre-existent texts.” Our theoretical stance therefore calls for obliterating the line of demarcation between the individual text and the cultural text.<sup>3</sup>

Second, the current approach obviates the need to resort to dictionaries to figure out word meanings. This is probably so because, according to Chomsky (1955), the dictionary definitions are not a faithful representation of word meaning.

According to Mouristen (2010), dictionaries do not give all meanings of a word in their particular contexts since lexicographers who produce dictionaries collect records of the uses of a word in a citation file, and they may not know every context in which the term is used. In fact, they fail to provide us with the intended meaning in some special texts which are substantially dependent on context or which are text-bound such as the religious ones. Furthermore, dictionaries provide prototypical meanings based on common understanding that, we believe, may not be accurate all the time. Following Baxter (2009), it is an article of faith to us that “it is only when words

are examined within the sentences of the biblical text that their meaning can be discerned”. In summary, the researchers believe that dictionary meanings do not reflect objective truths, but people’s experience – a state of affairs that may sometimes distort the “primary meaning contained in the pages of the word of God”, to quote Baxter (2009, p.89).

### 1.3.2.a The Machinery

As meaning is underdetermined by form (Carston, 2000) in the sense that “no sentence ever fully encodes the thought or proposition it is used to articulate” (Kolaiti, 2008, p.342), the inferential nature of verbal communication is stressed. The task of the reader is to supply missing information by looking for it elsewhere in the text—a process of retrieving information processed at some other stages in the discourse (the presupposing and the presupposed). As Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.4) state, “The one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it.” Halliday and Hasan (1976) recognize that a reiterated item may be a repetition of an earlier item, a synonym and/or a near-synonym, etc.

According to Kolaiti (2008), presupposed information may be sentential, discursal across adjacent sentences, discursal across non-adjacent sentences, intertextual, and/or encyclopedic. In Sperber and Wilson’s (1986 [1995]) terms, whereas local intuitions account for how “two adjacent segments are related”, global intuitions account for how the text “hangs together as a whole” (Wilson 1998, p.64). However, according to Kolaiti (2008, p.346) “the core question ought to be how receivers move from an area X of their cognitive environment—where X is the utterance under interpretation which, roughly speaking, functions as the stimulus that instigates the process of conceptual information retrieval—to some other area Y of their cognitive environment in search of the presupposed conceptual information.” According to Sperber and Willson, it is the following of a path of least effort until an interpretation which satisfies the expectation of relevance is found. In Halliday and Hassan’s terms (1976), it is the movement from the presupposing to the presupposed, where presuppositions can be *anaphoric* (pointing backward), *cataphoric* (pointing forward), *exophoric* (pointing to something outside the text), or/and *endophoric* (pointing to something inside the text). According to the relevance-theoretic model of analysis, the cognitive environment of the individual “consists of not only all the facts that he is aware of, but also, all the facts that he is capable of becoming aware of, in his physical environment” (Sperber & Wilson, 1986 [1995], p.39).

<sup>3</sup> The division between the individual text and the cultural text may seem a fascinating idea in Judeo-Christian tradition as it brings the idea of individual sovereignty to its maximum. This may not be totally true when it comes to Muslims’ theology which capitalizes on the universality of the religious message.

Accordingly, we hypothesize that every single Quranic verse, functioning as presupposing information, calls for conceptual information retrieval. Readers are required to navigate across the text to locate the bit of information that is being called for. Realizing that the Holy Quran is an interpretable whole, a lexical item can be related with another lexical item, which in turn can be related to another text, and so on. Needless to say, this lexical relation does not hold between pairs of words as one might wrongly conclude, but through 'lexical chains' (meaning relations), where the goal is, using a Hallidayian term, to establish a 'conceptual tie'. In addition to the social, cultural and situational factors that influence language usage, this lexical cohesion, as referred to in the Hallidayian model, helps construe meaning.

Finally, it should be pointed out that in order to establish conceptual ties, we aim to make the most of all information structuring devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, lexical cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, 1985; Hasan, 1984), foregrounding and backgrounding, i.e. relating text to one's own knowledge (Prince, 1981b, 1992; Wallace, 1982; Farhady, 1982; Bardovi-Harlig 1983; Carrel & Eisterhold, 1983; Chafe, 2005), word order (Gundel et al., 1993; Birner, 1994; Birner & Gregory, 1998), thematisation or 'staging' (Grimes, 1975), anaphora and co-reference (Reinhart, 1983a, b), syntactic simplification (Siddharthan, 2004), repetition, tense and aspect (Yule, 1999; Leech, 2004;), etc. Cognitive processes, such as bottom-up and top-down processing (Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983) are also relevant. In Halliday and Hassan's (1985, p.81) terms, both Componential Cohesive Relations and Organic Cohesive Relations should be established. In Kolaiti's terms, it is the establishment of a cohesive tie which holds between two areas of the text. To her, cohesion is a text-defining property when a relation of presupposition between two areas in the text is obtained.

In the next section, we undertake the task of testing these claims. The goal is to show that the meaning of the two closely related synonymous terms *al-gibaal* and *al-rawaasi* can be totally text-bound, including their sense relations (those that exist between the linguistic elements themselves) and their reference relations (those that exist between the linguistic elements and the external word of experience).

## 2. DISCUSSION

### 2.1 *Al-Gibaal* and *Al-Rawaasi*: Dictionary Definitions

The two lexical entries *al-gibaal* and *al-rawaasi* which are roughly rendered into English as "mountains", appear recurrently in different verses of the Holy Quran. For instance, consider the following two verses:

وَيَوْمَ نُسِئِرُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً وَحَشَرْنَاهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا" (الكهف، 47)

And (remember) the Day We shall cause the *mountains* (Arabic: *al-gibaal*) to pass away (like clouds of dust), and you will see the earth as a leveled plain.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رِوَاسِي وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغِشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ" (الرعد، 3)

And it is He Who spread out the earth, and placed therein firm *mountains* (Arabic: *al-rawaasi*) and rivers and of every kind of fruits He made *Zawjain Ithna'in* (two in pairs - may mean two kinds or it may mean: of two varieties, e.g. black and white, sweet and sour, small and big). He brings the night as a cover over the day. Verily, in these things, there are *Ayat* (proof, evidence, lessons, signs, etc.) for people who reflect.

Upon consulting a number of relatively 'authentic' translations of these verses, it has become evident that the two lemmas are almost always rendered into English as 'mountains', and thus making no distinction, however slight it might be, between the two. What this basically means is that the switch between *al-gibaal* and *al-rawaasi* in the two verses is never made clear to the reader of the translated version of the text. We strongly believe that one reason why translators often fail to communicate the intended meaning right is that they have two sources of information available to them: (1) dictionary knowledge, and (2) expositor's commentaries. Both sources, we believe, fail to provide them with enough informative data to help them get the intended meaning across successfully. To illustrate, both entries are approximately defined in almost all of the Arabic dictionaries nondistinctively. For instance, *al-gibaal* is defined in *lisaan al-arab* (Arabic: لسان العرب), a major source of word meaning, as a huge peg of the earth:

"الجبل: اسم لكل ودي من أوتاد الأرض إذا عظم وطال من الأعلام والأطواد والشناخيب، وأما ما صغر وانفرد فهو من القنان والفور والأكم، والجمع أجبل وأجبال وجبال"

In *al-muḥeeṭ* (Arabic: طي ح م ل ا), another major reference, it is also defined as a huge peg:

الجبل: كل ودي للأرض عظم وطال، فإن انفرد: فأكمة أو فنة.

Similar 'non-distinguishing' definitions are provided for *al-rawaasi*. Consider how the word is defined in *lisaan al-arab*:

رَسَا الشَّيْءُ يَرْسُو رُسُوءًا وَأَرْسَى: تَبَّتَ، وَأَرْسَاهُ هُوَ. وَرَسَا الْجَبَلُ يَرْسُو إِذَا تَبَّتَ أَصْلُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ، وَجِبَالٌ رَاسِيَاتٌ. وَالرَّوَاسِي مِنْ الْجِبَالِ: التَّوَابِتُ الرَّوَاسِيخُ؛ قَالَ الْأَخْفَشُ: وَاحِدَتُهَا رَاسِيَةٌ. وَرَسَتْ قَدَمُهُ: تَبَّتَتْ فِي الْحَرْبِ. وَرَسَتْ السَّقِينَةُ تَرْسُو رُسُوءًا: بَلَغَ أَسْفَلُهَا الْقَعْرَ وَانْتَهَى إِلَى قَرَارِ الْمَاءِ فَتَبَّتَتْ وَبَقِيَتْ لَا تَسِيرُ، وَأَرْسَاهَا هُوَ. وَفِي التَّنْزِيلِ الْعَزِيزِ فِي قِصَّةِ نُوحٍ، عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَسَفِينَتُهُ:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرِيهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا، وَقَرَى: جُرْيَهَا وَمُرْسِيهَا، عَلَى النِّعْتِ  
 اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ؛ الْجَوْهَرِيُّ: مَنْ قَرَأَ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا، بِالضَّمِّ، مِنْ  
 أَجْرَيْتَ وَأُرْسَيْتَ، وَمَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا، بِالْفَتْحِ، مِنْ رَسَتْ وَجَرَّتْ؛  
*al-rawasi* is defined in *al-ṣiḥāḥ fi luḡah*, another  
 major reference, as follows:

رَسَا الشَّيْءُ يَرْسُو: ثَبِتَ وَجِبَالَ رَاسِيَاتٍ. وَرَسَتْ أقدامهم في الحرب، أي  
 ثَبِتَتْ. وَرَسَتْ السَّفِينَةُ تَرْسُو رُسُوًا، أَي وَقَفَتْ عَلَى اللُّجْرِ. وَقَوْلُهُ تَعَالَى:  
 بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا " بِالضَّمِّ مِنْ أَجْرَيْتَ وَأُرْسَيْتَ، وَ: "مَجْرَاهَا  
 وَمُرْسَاهَا" بِالْفَتْحِ مِنْ رَسَتْ وَجَرَّتْ. وَرَسَوْتُ بَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ رَسُوًا، أَي  
 أَصْلَحْتُ. وَالرُّسُوَةُ: شَيْءٌ مِنْ خَرَزٍ يَنْظُمُ كَالدَّسْتِينِجِ. وَرَسَوْتُ عَنْهُ  
 حَدِيثًا: أَي حَدَّثْتُ بِهِ عَنْهُ. وَيُقَالُ أَيْضًا: رَسَوْتُ، إِذَا ذَكَرْتُ مِنْهُ طَرَفًا.

As shown in the dictionary definitions above, it is clear that the two lemmas (*al-gibaa* and *al-rawaasi*) are defined text-independent, and thus building lexical knowledge mostly on common background information.

## 2.2 Al-Gibaa and Al-Rawaasi: Quranic Interpretations

Worse even is that these 'inaccurate' dictionary definitions are extensively utilized by almost all interpreters of the Quran. For example, consider the interpretation of the following verse:

وَيَوْمَ نَسِيرُ الْجِبَالِ أَن تَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً وَحَشْرَتَانَهُمْ فَلَمْ تُغَادِرْهُنَّ  
 الْكُهْفَ، (47) مِنْهُنَّ أَحَدًا

And (remember) the Day We shall cause the mountains (Arabic: *al-gibaa*) to pass away (like clouds of dust), and you will see the earth as a levelled plain.

Commenting on this verse, *Ibn Katheer* (Arabic: *ابن كثير*), one of the well-known (and possibly most reliable) religious expositors in the history of Islam, claims that it probably has the following interpretation:

يخبر تعالى عن أهوال يوم القيامة وما يكون فيه من الأمور العظام كما قال تعالى: " يوم تمور السماء مورا وتسير الجبال سيرا " أي تذهب من أماكنها وتزول كما قال تعالى " وترى الجبال تحسبها جامدة وهي تمر مر السحاب " وقال تعالى " وتكون الجبال كالعهن المنفوش " وقال " ويسألونك عن الجبال فقل ينسفها ربي نسفا فيذرها قاعا صافصفا لا ترى فيها عوجا ولا أمثا " يذكر تعالى بأنه تذهب الجبال وتتساوى المهاد

What is worth noting from this is that *Ibn Katheer* barely provides us with an accurate meaning of *al-gibaa*; rather he describes the scenery of the Day of Judgment on his common appreciation of the words of the verse such as *al-gibaa* but never details what *al-gibaa* in reality is, or how *al-gibaa* is different from *al-rawaasi*, for example. This is probably true for all other interpreters of the Holy Quran (e.g., *Al ḡabari*, *Al-Qurtubi*, inter alia).

What is possibly lacking in such interpretations, we believe, is drawing a fine line of demarcation between the Quranic word (*al-gibaa*) and all other closely related

synonymous terms such as *al-rawaasi*. The various interpretations of the Quran, we have consulted, do not provide a satisfactory explanation for the intentional switch between *al-rawaasi* and *al-gibaa* in a Quranic verse such as this one:

وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيًا أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ" (النحل، 15)

And He has affixed into the Earth Mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and rivers and roads, that you may guide yourselves.

Commenting on the interpretation of the this verse, *Ibn Katheer* provides the following interpretation in which he uses the two words simultaneously without marking out a distinguishing line:

ثم ذكر تعالى الأرض وما ألقى فيها من الرواسي الشامخات والجبال الراسيات لتقر الأرض ولا تميد أي تضرب بما عليها من الحيوانات فلا يهنا لهم عيش بسبب ذلك ولهذا قال " والجبال أرساها " وقال عبد الرزاق: أنبأنا معمر عن قتادة سمعت الحسن يقول: لما خلقت الأرض كانت تميد فقالوا ما هذه بمقرة على ظهرها أحدا فأصبحوا وقد خلقت الجبال فلم تدر الملائكة مم خلقت الجبال

Worse even is that most expositors refer to *al-rawaasi* as a characterizing feature (Arabic: *صفة*) of *al-gibaa*, a state of affairs that will definitely bring about overwhelming amount of confusion, and therefore misunderstanding. Consider, for example, how the meaning of *al-rawaasi* in the following verse is illustrated in a number of resources:

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيًا وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ (الحجر، 19)

And we have provided therein means of living, for you and for those whom you provide not [moving (living) creatures, cattle, beasts, and other animals].

*Al ḡabari*, for instance, considers *al-rawaasi* as mountains:

قوله: { وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيًا } رَوَاسِيًا: جِبَالُهَا. يَقُولُ: وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِي ظُهُورِهَا رَوَاسِيًا، يَعْنِي جِبَالًا ثَابِتَةً؛ وَقَدْ بَيَّنَّا مَعْنَى الرَّسُو فِيمَا مَضَى بِشَوَاهِدِهِ الْمَغْنِيَةِ عَنْ إِعَادَتِهِ

According to *Ibn katheer*, the interpretation is as follows:

ذكر تعالى خلقه الأرض ومدته إياها وتوسيعها وبسطها وما جعل فيها من الجبال الرواسي والأودية والأراضي والرمال وما أنبت فيها من الزروع والثمار المتناسبة

On the whole, we dare to conclude that neither the dictionaries nor the Quranic commentaries do provide an accurate definitions of the two terms, definitions that could help the reader of the religious text draw distinguishing lines between the two words, and thus be

able to understand the intentional switch between them in tens of verses of the Quran.

### 2.3 *Al-Gibaa* and *Al-Rawaasi*: An Alternative Analysis

Shielded with the basic theoretical premise that no two words have an identical meaning (Soare, 2006), the thrust of our argumentation in the forthcoming discussion section is twofold: (1) to show that the two lemmas *al-gibaa* and *al-rawaasi* neither have the same meaning nor yield the same connotations; and (2) to provide evidence that the switch is intentional, and therefore informative.

Upon surveying all the Quranic verses in which these two words are mentioned, it can be concluded that *al-gibaa* have specific characteristics and, admittedly, certain functions which are completely different from that of *al-rawaasi*. In section 3.1 below we will try to detail the main characteristics of *al-gibaa* vis-avis that of *al-rawaasi* by bringing forth the Quranic verses validating our claims. Then, in 3.2 the functions of *al-gibaa* and those of *al-rawaasi* are contrasted. In 3.3, we will show that the Quran distinguishes between three kinds of *al-gibaa* in comparison with only one kind of *al-rawaasi*.

## 3. FINDINGS

### 3.1 Characteristics of *Al-Gibaa* and *Al-Rawaasi*

#### - *Al-Gibaa* and *Al-Rawaasi* Are Not Part of the Earth

One important presupposed characteristic of *al-gibaa* and *al-rawaasi* is that they are both not part of the Earth, a text-bound fact that is often overlooked by the interpreters of the Quran. This somehow peculiar finding is yielded by a prudent investigation for all verses in which the two words *al-gibaa* and *al-rawaasi* are mentioned. For example, consider the following verses which explicate that *al-gibaa*, as a constituent, is independent of the earth:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا (الأحزاب، 72)

Truly, We did offer *Al-Amānah* (the trust or moral responsibility or honesty and all the duties which Allāh has ordained) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it (i.e. afraid of Allāh's Torment). But man bore it. Verily, he was unjust (to himself) and ignorant (of its results).

Accordingly, Allah has offered *Al-Amānah* to three separate entities. These are:

- 1- The heavens “السَّمَاوَاتِ” (*asamawat*)
- 2- The earth “الأرض” (*al-āraṣ*)
- 3- The mountains “الجبال” (*al-gibaa*)

It seems quite paradoxical to believe, as many have, that the heaven (Arabic: السَّمَاوَاتِ) is independent of the earth (Arabic: الأرض), but the mountain (Arabic:

*al-gibaa*) is part of the earth when in fact they are all introduced in the same verse as three independent entities conjoined by the coordinated conjunction “*wa*” (English *and*). What this basically means is that if *al-gibaa* were part of the earth (as common understanding would suggest), their introduction in this verse would be helplessly redundant. However, a text-motivated understanding of this verse refutes altogether such understanding and stresses the belief that *al-gibaa* is utterly different from the earth (Arabic: *al-āraṣ*). Hence, they are conjoined by a coordinating conjunction along with the heaven (Arabic: *al-samawaat*), another utterly independent entity.

Consider also how the split between the earth and *al-gibaa* is stressed in this other Quranic verse:

وَحُمِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَاحِدَةً (الحاقة، 14)

And the earth and the mountains shall be removed from their places, and crushed with a single crushing

By conjoining the earth with the mountains (Arabic: *al-gibaa*) in this Day of Judgment event (namely removing them from their places), the need to think of them as two independent entities should be highlighted. This claim is strongly confirmed in a third Quranic verse:

وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالُ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً وَحَشْرْنَاهُمْ فَلَمْ نُعَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (الكهف، 47)

*And (remember) the Day We shall cause the mountains to pass away (like clouds of dust), and you will see the earth as a leveled plain, and we shall gather them all together so as to leave not one of them behind.*

In this verse, it is explicated that what will happen to the earth on the Day of Judgment will be different from (and possibly independent of) what will happen to the mountains (*al-gibaa*). Whereas the earth will be leveled plain (Arabic: بارِزَةً), the mountains will be caused to pass away (Arabic: تُسَيِّرُ). This ‘passing away’ of the mountains as an event that will take place on the Day of Judgment is stressed in other verses:

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ” (التكوير، 3)

*And when the mountains are made to pass away;*

وَسُيِّرَتِ الْجِبَالُ فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا (النبا، 20)

And the mountains shall be moved away from their places and they will be as if they were a mirage.

This split between the earth and the mountains as two independent entities is further implicated by the following verse which states that whereas both the earth and the mountains will shake violently on the Day of Judgment, only the mountains *al-gibaa* will be like a heap of sand poured out:

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَكَانَتِ الْجِبَالُ كَثِيبًا مَّهِيلًا {المزمحل 14

*On the day when the earth and the mountains will be in violent shake and the mountains will be a heap of sand poured out.*



The following verse explicates the same destiny for the mountains on the Day of Judgment:

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ نُسِفَتْ (المرسلات، 10)

And when the mountains are blown away.

Likewise, a number of Quranic verses highlight the autonomy of *al-rawaasi*. Consider the following verses:

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ (الحجر، 19)

And the earth we have spread out (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance.

وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَاراً وَسُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (النحل، 15)

And He has affixed into the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and rivers and roads, that you may guide yourselves.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَاراً وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (الرعد، 3)

And it is He who spread out the earth, and placed therein firm mountains and rivers and of every kind of fruits He made Zawjain Ithnaïn (two in pairs - may mean two kinds or it may mean: Of two varieties, e.g. black and white, sweet and sour, small and big). He brings the night as a cover over the day. Verily, in these things, there are Ayât (proofs, evidence, lessons, signs, etc.) for people who reflect.

On the whole, the fact that *al-rawaasi* were set (placed, fixed, etc.) (Arabic: *وقدلاً*) in the earth as all the previous verses explicate supports the claim that they (like *al-gibaaal*) are not an integral, but added, entity to the earth for certain functions.

### - *Al-Gibaaal* and *Al-Rawaasi* Have Different Forms

In the previous subsection, our main concern was to show that *al-gibaaal* and *al-rawaasi* are independent entities of the earth, a finding that possibly conflicts with previously established common beliefs. The sovereignty of the *al-gibaaal* and *al-rawaasi* should, we believe, be respected no less than the sovereignty of the earth or the heavens.

However, our previous discussion brings about no less important concern, namely the difference between *al-gibaaal* on the one hand and *al-rawaasi*, on the other. In the next few pages we set ourselves the task of drawing a line of demarcation between the two. Cautiously, we hope to show that there is ample evidence in the Quran to believe that whereas *al-rawaasi* is that part which is hidden in the earth, *al-gibaaal* is the outside upper part as shown in Figure 1 below:

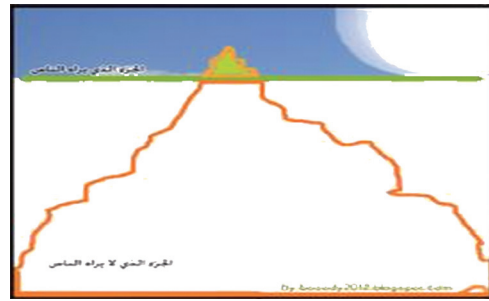


Figure 1  
*Al-Gibaaal vs. Al-Rawaasi*

Source: <http://kaheel7.com/pdetails.php?id=583&ft=3>

Our "intertext" search made it obligatory for us to try to bring to light the local and global intuitions the two lemmas might invoke in the Qur'anic discourse. We were able to detect the following:

- Unlike *al-rawaasi*, *al-gibaaal* can be seen by the naked eye. This difference is explicated in the following verse:

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ (النمل 88)

And you will see the mountains (*al-gibaaal*) and think them solid, but they shall pass away as the passing away of the clouds. The work of Allah, Who perfected all things. Verily He is well-acquainted with what you do.

- Unlike *al-rawaasi*, *al-gibaaal* are compared to the waves of the sea in the Quran:

وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزَلٍ يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَب مَعَنَا وَلَا تَكُن مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ. (هود، 42)

So it (the ship) sailed with them amidst waves like mountains (*al-gibaaal*), and Nûh (Noah) called out to his son, who had separated himself (apart): "O my son! Embark with us and be not with the disbelievers."

- Unlike *al-gibaaal*, *al-rawaasi* is always displayed as a constituent laid inside the earth. Consider how the preposition "فيها" (English *in*) collocates with *al-rawaasi* but never with *al-gibaaal*:

"وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَاراً وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ. (الرعد 3)

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ (الحجر، 19)

وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِّلنَّاسِ لِيْنِ (فصلت 10)

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ. (ق 7)

And it is He who spread out the earth, and placed therein firm al-rawaasi

- Unlike *al-rawaasi*, *al-gibaaal* can be curved out to make houses as dwellings for people:

وَكَاثِرُوا يَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا آمِنِينَ. (الحجر، 82)

And they used to hew out dwellings from the mountains (feeling themselves) secure.

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِمَّا خَلَقَ ظِلَالًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ أَكْنَانًا  
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُمُ الْحَرَّ وَسَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُم بَأْسَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ يُتِمُّ  
نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُونَ. (النحل، 81)

And Allâh has made for you out of that which He has created shades, and has made for you places of refuge in the mountains, and has made for you garments to protect you from the heat (and cold), and coats of mail to protect you from your (mutual) violence. Thus does He perfect His favor unto you, that you may submit yourselves to His will (in Islâm),

and for other creatures, such as bees:

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنْ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ. (النحل، 68)

And your Lord inspired the bees, saying: «Take you habitations in the mountains and in the trees and in what they erect

- Unlike *al-rawaasi*, the term *al-gibaaal* collocates with the verb “رَخِي”, which explicitly reveals the mental image of falling down as in the following verse:

تَكَادُ السَّمَاوَاتُ يَنْفَطَرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَتَشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًا. (مريم، 90)

At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin.

This verse introduces us with a mental image of *al-gibaaal* as they could *fall* in ruins. What this basically entails is that *al-gibaaal* are entities standing up, so that they could fall in ruins when the earth is split asunder.

To sum up, the previously-quoted verses invoke the intuitions that *al-gibaaal* are the outside part of what people commonly call a mountain. There is no verse that explicates *al-rawaasi* as entities seen by the naked eye, engraved and used as a residence for both people and some other creatures such as bees, or as fallible objects. Therefore, we dare to make the claim that what people commonly refer to as a mountain (Arabic: *al-gibaaal*) divides into two main parts: the part which lies above the earth surface, and that which lies inside (and, of course, hidden part). In Quranic terms, whereas the former is referred to as *al-gibaaal*, the latter is called *al-rawaasi*.

### 3.2 Functions of *Al-Gibaaal Vis-A-Vis Al-Rawasi*

Muslim expositors, Arabic dictionaries compilers, and Quranic interpreters have never indicated that *al-gibaaal* serve different functions compared with those of *al-rawaasi*. By detecting the global intuitions that the two terms invoke in the Quran as a whole, our intertextual

analysis has provided evidence that *al-gibaaal* serve functions utterly different from those of *al-rawaasi*.

#### Functions of *Al-Rawasi*

*Al-rawasi* are explicated in the Holy Quran as huge entities which serve mainly one function: to prevent the earth from shaking (Arabic: بكم). So, they function like roots. Consider all the Quranic verses which explicate this function:

أَلْقَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ. (النحل، 15)

And He has affixed into the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and rivers and roads, that you may guide yourselves.

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِهِمْ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ. (الأنبياء، 31)

And we have placed on the earth firm mountains, lest it should shake with them, and We placed therein broad highways for them to pass through, that they may be guided.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَأَلْقَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ. (لقمان، 10)

He has created the heavens without any pillars that you see, and has set on the earth firm mountains lest it should shake with you. And He has scattered therein moving (living) creatures of all kinds. And we send down water (rain) from the sky, and we cause (plants) of every goodly kind to grow therein.

#### Functions of *Al-Gibaaal*

On the other hand, because *al-gibaaal* differ from *al-rawaasi* in terms of position and size relative to the earth, they are displayed in the Quran as entities preventing the earth from bulging (sticking out). In order to clarify this, consider the following verses:

وَالْجِبَالِ أَوْتَادًا (النبا، 7)

And the mountains as pegs?

This Quranic statement that *al-gibaaal* function as pegs tells that if they were removed, the earth would definitely bulge as explicated in the following verse:

وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً وَحَشْرْنَاهُمْ فَلَمْ نُعَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (الكهف، 47)

And (remember) the Day we shall cause the mountains to pass away (like clouds of dust), and you will see the earth bulged (Arabic: بَارِزَةً), and we shall gather them all together so as to leave not one of them behind.

### 3.3 Kinds of *al-gibaaal*.

Upon examining all verses of the Holy Quran where the word *al-gibaaal* and *al-rawaasi* are mentioned, it turned out that it is plausible to make another finer distinction

between the two: Whereas there is only one type of *al-rawaasi*, *al-gibaal*, on the other hand, separate into three main kinds depending on their colors. These include renewable lily-white (Arabic: جدد بيض), red of varying degrees (Arabic: حمر مختلف ألوانها), and coal black (Arabic: غرايبب سود) as explicated in the following verse:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُخْتَلِفًا  
أَلْوَانُهَا وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيْضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ  
سُودٌ. (فاطر، 27)

See you not that Allâh sends down water (rain) from the sky, and we produce therewith fruits of various colors, and among the mountains are renewable lily-white, and red of varying colors, and coal black.

The following illustrations explicate the idea:

1. جدد بيض



**Figure 3**  
***Al-Gibaal* That Are Renewable Lily-White**

Source: <http://www.mollybawn.com/icebergs.html>

2. حمر مختلف ألوانها



**Figure 4**  
***Al-Gibaal* That Are Red of Varying Degrees**

Source: <http://www.ss9ss.net/vb/t23859.html>

3. غرايبب سود



**Figure 5**  
***Al-Gibaal* That Are Coal Black**

Source: <http://www.dorarr.ws/forum/showthread.php?t=58658&page=1>

## CONCLUSION

By couching it within an intertextuality framework of analysis, the present study investigated the intended meaning of two synonymous dictionary entries *al-gibaal* and *al-rawasi* in the Holy Quran. We hope to have shown that intertextuality could enable us to read the religious text such as the Quran (and probably better understand it) without needing to consult other sources of information such as dictionaries and commentaries. This theoretical stand is motivated by our current article of faith that the religious text (such as the Holy Quran) should prove that it is coherent-whole and self-reliant. Information should be imported from it but never exported into it. In this study, one of our main purposes was to show how this approach could be used as a significant tool to help solve many problems that have faced lexicographers (dictionary compilers) and expositors (religious text interpreters) for ages.

As for the findings, we claim to have arrived at the following assumptions: *Al-gibaal* and *al-rawaasi* are both not part of the Earth. *al-gibaal* is different from *al-rawaasi* in that whereas *al-rawaasi* is the main structure of a mountain which goes deep under the surface of the earth, *al-gibaal* refers to the outside part of it. In addition, they are different function-wise. Finally, we claim to have figured out from the text that there are three kinds of *al-gibaal*.

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**Translations of the Quranic verses into English are adapted from the following web pages:**

<http://www.qurancomplex.org/Quran/Targama/Targama.asp>  
<http://Quran.muslim-web.com/>